

# PRODIGAL SONS

a film by Kimberly Reed

86 minutes, Color/B&W, Stereo & Dolby E  
Exhibition Format: HDCAM or DigiBeta  
Production Format: HD  
English, USA, 2008



## **FIRST RUN FEATURES**

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*Winner— FIPRESCI International Critics' Prize for Best Film, Thessaloniki doc film festival*

*Winner— Special Jury Prize for Bravery in Storytelling, Nashville film festival*

*Winner— Special Jury Prize for Fearless Filmmaking, Florida film festival*

*Winner— Best Documentary Jury Prize, NewFest, New York's LGBT film festival*

*Winner— Best Documentary Jury Prize, Copenhagen LGBT film festival*

*Winner— Best Documentary Jury Prize, Tampa int'l LGBT film festival*

*Winner— Audience award, Dublin GAZE Int'l film festival*

*Winner— Honorable Mention, Viennale international film festival*

*Winner— Volunteer Award, Frameline - San Francisco Int'l LGBT film festival*

*Winner— "Best of Fest" top-ten audience award - Palm Springs Int'l film fest*

**FEATURING:**

The McKerrows, Oja Kodar, Orson Welles, Rita Hayworth, Helena High School Class of 1985

**— short synopsis —**

Prodigal Sons follows three siblings — a transgender woman, a gay man, and their adopted brother who discovers he's the grandson of Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth — back to their Montana hometown, where a powerful story of an entire family's transformation unfolds.

**— synopsis —**

Marc has had a rough life. Adopted as an infant, he was held back in preschool (putting him in the same grade as his younger brother), failed to graduate high school, and suffered a head injury at twenty-one. His entire worldview was that he was cheated by life. Then he discovered he is the grandson of Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth.

Unlike Marc, his sister Kim's life always seemed to be easy. She was the first child born to her attractive parents, into an extended family of tall Montana farmers. She was high school class president and valedictorian, voted most likely to succeed. She was also captain of the football team — you see, Kim used to be Marc's younger brother. Having these two siblings in the same grade in a small Montana town made for a perfect storm of brotherly rivalry.

Twenty years later Marc and Kim return home to their small Montana hometown, a springboard that hurtles Prodigal Sons into a year in the life of this Montana family, forcing them to face challenges no one could imagine. Seen through the eyes of Kim, the filmmaker, she is the most surprised of all as she discovers her brother Marc is still trapped in the brotherly rivalry she long ago abandoned. She sets out to unravel this complex history, and learns it is she who needs to resolve bygone days by confronting the ghost of her male past. Her rare access delicately reveals both family's most private moments and an epic vista, as the film travels from Montana to Croatia, from high school reunion to jail cell, and from deaths and births to commitments of all kinds.

Marc and Kim's relationship is an ideal polarizing test case for the universal issues every family confronts: sibling rivalry, gender, nature versus nurture, and the question of whether anyone can reinvent oneself. Their bond, which defies both Kim's gender and Marc's pedigree, exists as the fascinating heart of the film, and is orbited by a colorful, articulate cast of characters, including jailhouse chaplains, Montana farmers, intrigued high school classmates, and Orson Welles' soul-mate Oja Kodar, among others. Carol, the remarkably resilient mother who accepts her children's surprises with grace and optimism, provides a strong backbone for the family, as well as a clear-eyed entry-point to this drama of Wellesian proportions. All along the way surprising revelations abound: Marc's innate savant ability to play the piano, Kim's smooth acceptance from schoolmates and community, and their younger brother Todd's well-adjusted attitude about being gay.

In the end, we see that transformation happens when least expected. After pulling for this family through its trials and tribulations, we learn that a poignant sense of hope will carry them through.

— **director's statement** —

I started out making a film about my adopted brother's journey to discover his new lineage. It was undeniably a great story, a real-life fairy tale. I also felt guilty that life had been easy for me but not for Marc. I imagined that by celebrating his amazing tale I could ease his pain, and maybe heal our relationship. I thought I'd be making a film about the second chapter in our lives. Little did I know we weren't done with the first.

Anyone who has met Marc will tell you that you can't tell his story without telling mine. Our rivalry growing up was the most important dynamic in his life, and remains so to this day. So I knew I'd end up in this film, but I had no idea it would become the personal journey it did.

When you change your sex, you get tremendous pressure to bury your past, to let it disappear like the "M" that used to be on your drivers license. If you pass well in your new gender, the pressure is even stronger, especially from other transgender people who see passing as the Holy Grail. Returning to your past, much less reveling in it, is unthinkable. Before making this film I shared that view. But as the film evolved, and Marc and I began to have a relationship again, he was the only one who wouldn't let me get away with forgetting my past. I wanted Marc to let my male past die as I had, but he had enshrined this history and even insisted on cherishing remnants of it. As much as I resisted this, I couldn't ignore the kernel of truth in what he was saying: I had to stop renouncing my history.

I started out believing this film was about Marc's quest for identity, but it was about my own. I thought my transition was complete, but instead Marc taught me I was only halfway, and that I had to somehow resurrect the first half of my life I had buried alive. This freed me to return home and reclaim my past. Though my situation is rare, everyone I know who has a sibling relates to the dynamic between Marc and me, and to my desire for my family to recognize who I've become instead of who I was when I left home.

Prodigal Sons has a deep reserve of high-octane dramatic fuel, but the film is so much more than its astonishing characters or the explosive moments we caught on camera. What sets this film apart is its exploration of the universal truths every family grapples with. In the end, this film is quite simply about love, and how one family faces challenges and triumphs that no one would have ever imagined.

— characters & creative team —

CHARACTERS

Kimberly Reed — filmmaker, sibling  
Marc McKerrow — sibling  
Carol McKerrow — mother  
Todd McKerrow — sibling  
Oja Kodar — Orson Welles' companion; co-writer & star of *F for Fake*  
Claire Jones — Kim's partner  
Debbie McKerrow — Marc's wife  
Jan Haima — Carol's sister  
McKerrow family — aunts, uncles, cousins  
Helena High School Class of 1985

CREATIVE TEAM

directed by — Kimberly Reed  
produced by — John Keitel, Kimberly Reed  
co-produced by — Louise Rosen  
director of photography — John Keitel  
executive producers — Robert Hawk, Gail Silva  
associate producer — Israel Ehrisman  
edited by — Shannon Kennedy, Kimberly Reed  
a production of Big Sky Film Productions Inc., in association with:  
executive producers for CBC — Diane Rotteau, Catherine Olson  
supervising producer for Sundance Channel — Ann Rose  
executive producer for Sundance Channel — Lynne Kirby  
executive producers for BBC — Nick Fraser, Greg Sanderson

— credits (abbreviated) —

piano music by Marc McKerrow	executive producers Robert Hawk Gail Silva
director Kimberly Reed	associate producer Israel Ehrisman
producers John Keitel Kimberly Reed	consulting producer Peter Broderick
co-producer Louise Rosen	field producer, reunion Stephanie Cannon
director of photography John Keitel	composer T. Griffin
editors Shannon Kennedy Kimberly Reed	title design Glenn Rosko
	legal services Robert L. Seigel, Esq.

Cowan Debaets Abrahams & Sheppard LLP

Jan Haima  
Pita Rodriguez  
Chaplain John Moran

featuring (in order of appearance)

Kimberly Reed  
Carol McKerrow  
Marc McKerrow  
Claire Jones  
Lea McKerrow  
Gordon McKerrow  
Kathy McKerrow  
Glenn McKerrow  
Jasmine Fuentes  
Helena High School Class of '85  
Frank Mayo  
Cyndee Moe  
Tim O'Leary  
Diana MacDonald  
Todd McKerrow  
Debbie McKerrow  
Kelsie McKerrow  
Oja Kodar  
Sasha Welles  
Nina Palinkas  
Jakov Sedlar  
David Cannon  
Bridget Maley

*The Lady from Shanghai*  
Courtesy of Columbia Pictures

*F for Fake*  
Courtesy of Françoise Widhoff of Les Films  
de l'Astrophore, and Criterion Collection

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Greg Sanderson

— bios —

#### DIRECTOR, PRODUCER KIMBERLY REED

After studying cinema at UC Berkeley (B.A.) and San Francisco State University (M.A.), Kimberly Reed was looking forward to a promising career as a filmmaker. She was a young, award-winning filmmaker (*Views of My Father Weeping*), had worked as a commercial editor, had traveled the world directing and producing travel documentaries, and had become an early expert in the nascent field of digital filmmaking and postproduction. But then she transitioned genders and did what transsexuals are encouraged to do: She disappeared. Sequestering herself in the world of publishing, she applied her filmmaking knowledge to her position as editor-in-chief of DV magazine, and established her reputation as a frequent speaker and oft-quoted digital filmmaking expert in publications like the New York Times and USA Today. *Prodigal Sons* is her first feature-length documentary film, and marks her coming-out, in more ways than one. Kimberly Reed is already recognized as the first transgender feature filmmaker. She was selected for the Yaddo Artists' Community, the Squaw Valley Community of Writers Workshop, and Al Gore's Current TV Symposium on the Future of Non-Fiction Film. Her work has been featured for four consecutive years at IFP's Independent Film Week, and she was named one of Filmmaker Magazine's 25 New Faces of Independent Film.

#### PRODUCER, DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN KEITEL

John Keitel is an award-winning filmmaker whose work has screened at festivals from Sundance to Berlin and aired on MTV, HBO, Showtime, A&E, and BET. Current projects include JUSTLY

MARRIED (Producer, Director) featured on Advocate.com, SAVING THE BOOM (Producer, Director) and YOURS TRULY MISS CHINATOWN (Executive Producer). He is also a frequent contributor to Current Television. Additionally, he produces, shoots, and edits many behind-the-scenes specials and features for studios. He has collaborated on two documentaries with Drew Barrymore, and is the writer/director of the award-winning feature film DEFYING GRAVITY, as well as the editor of LATTER DAYS and KISS THE BRIDE. His documentary, AN ALL-AMERICAN STORY was an official Sundance selection and received the Gold Plaque award at the Chicago International Film Festival and won The David L. Wolper Certificate from the Independent Documentary Association. He is a graduate of Stanford University (B.A.) and USC Film School (M.A.).

#### INTERNATIONAL SALES, CO-PRODUCER LOUISE ROSEN

Louise is a documentary specialist with 25 years experience in international film and television. She has set up co-productions and presales on a wide variety of projects, including Oscar, Emmy, Sundance, Prix Italia and International Emmy winners. Current projects include THE PRICE OF SUGAR from Uncommon Productions, HOLLYWOOD CHINESE from triple Sundance-winning filmmaker Arthur Dong, Unity Productions Foundation's highly acclaimed MOHAMMAD: LEGACY OF A PROPHET and CITIES OF LIGHT: ISLAMIC SPAIN, SO MUCH SO FAST (West City Films), AL OTRO LADO (Altamura Films), KILLER POET (Northern Light Productions), SECRECY (Robb Moss, Peter Galison), VOWS OF SILENCE (Jason Berry) and THE POWDER AND THE GLORY (Arnie Reisman, Ann Carol Grossman). Louise is also a co-producer on several projects including SIR! NO SIR! (David Zeiger), and ZERO (Jan Egleson and Michael Williams of Scout Productions). Louise teaches and tutors each year at Europe's Discovery Campus Master School, is a featured speaker at the Real Screen Summit, a moderator at the HotDocs Doc Forum and guest lecturer at Emerson College.

#### EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ROBERT HAWK

Hawk, a venerable member of the indie film world for over 20 years, has his own business, ICI (Independent Consultation for Independents, [www.filmhawk.com](http://www.filmhawk.com)). Recent producing credits include Dayna Goldfine & Daniel Geller's BALLETS RUSSES, Jim Fall's TRICK, Alex & Andrew Smith's THE SLAUGHTER RULE, and Kevin Smith's CHASING AMY. Hawk has been credited with discovering and/or nurturing the talents of such filmmakers as Rob Epstein, Kevin Smith (beginning with CLERKS), Ed Burns (THE BROTHERS MCMULLEN), David Siegel and Scott McGehee (BEE SEASON, THE DEEP END), Nathaniel Kahn (MY ARCHITECT) and Geller & Goldfine (Emmy award, KIDS OF SURVIVAL). He has consulted on many narrative films and hundreds of documentaries, including Oscar winners/nominees such as COMMON THREADS, REGRET TO INFORM, IN THE SHADOW OF THE STARS, COMPLAINTS OF A DUTIFUL DAUGHTER and TROUBLESOME CREEK. He served on the Advisory Selection Committee (1987-1998) of the Sundance Film Festival and on juries for many domestic and international festivals. Hawk has also curated special film series for, among others, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., the International Documentary Congress in Los Angeles, and Sundance Film Festival.

#### EXECUTIVE PRODUCER GAIL SILVA

Gail Silva is an advisor and curator for arts organizations, individual artists and filmmakers. With nearly 30 years of service to the independent media field, Silva has garnered a reputation as midwife to countless film projects, maverick consultant and curator, and gadfly to the establishment. She currently serves as the President of the Board of California Newsreel, the leading distributor of films on the African American experience, films from Africa and a recent initiative on labor and globalization, and Treasurer of the Board of Shadowlight Productions, a

shadow puppet performance group. Advisory Board, San Francisco Cinematheque; World Doc selection committee, Sundance Film Festival; Nominating Committee, National Coalition of Independent Public Television Producers; Director & President, Film Arts Foundation 1979-2005; Director's Award, California Arts Council.

#### ASSOCIATE PRODUCER ISRAEL EHRISMAN

Israel Ehrisman co-produced Michael Aker's PHOENIX, which screened at the 2006 Philadelphia International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. He has also been the Director of Logistics for the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, and has worked at NewFest, the North Carolina Gay & Lesbian Film Festival, and the Sundance Film Festival.

#### EDITOR SHANNON KENNEDY

Shannon Kennedy edited THE TRIALS OF DARYLL HUNT, which was shortlisted for an Oscar, won 15 awards, and aired on HBO in 2007. In A WALK INTO THE SEA: DANNY WILLIAMS AND THE WARHOL FACTORY she applied her background as a visual artist to an exploration of Danny Williams' disappearance from Andy Warhol's Factory. The film won the Teddy Award for Best Documentary at the 2007 Berlin Film Festival, and the New York Loves Film Award at the 2007 Tribeca Film Festival.

#### COMPOSER T. GRIFFIN

T. Griffin is a songwriter, composer and producer working in Brooklyn, New York. Alone and with his band The Quavers he has released four critically acclaimed CDs of songs in a homespun electronic style that's been described as 'porch techno'. He has scored films for Michael Almereyda, Esther B. Robinson, Peter Sillen, Kimberly Reed and Jem Cohen, plays for Anne Bogart, and created live soundtrack shows for Cohen, Brent Green and for an international tour of the late Danny Williams' Warhol Factory films. As a producer, player and arranger he's worked with musical luminaries including Vic Chesnutt, Patti Smith, Tom Verlaine & members of Godspeed You Black Emperor, Fugazi and The Ex.

## PRODIGAL SONS – PRESS

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"An example of superb documentary filmmaking...no one could make this believable if it were fiction."

–David Wiegand, [San Francisco Chronicle](#)

"Exceptional...you will never think of Rosebud the same way again." –Ed Gonzalez, [Village Voice](#)

"One of the most admired and buzzed about films at this festival. (Outfest)" –Bryan Stamp, [Indiewire](#)

"Edgy and tense...sure to provoke some thoughtful conversation." –Peter Metcalf, [New West Missoula](#)

"Pretty amazing...takes you to some remarkable places." –Todd McCarthy, [Variety](#)

"There's a lot of America that would benefit from realizing how much this family resembles their own."-

Moriarty, [Aint it Cool News](#)

"Not to be missed, this documentary proves to be a masterpiece of sibling rivalry."

–[Reel Affirmations Festival](#)

"The most amazing examination of sibling rivalry I've ever seen on film."

–Margaret Murray, [Tampa International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival](#)

"PRODIGAL SONS is the best documentary I have seen this year, and that's saying something." –Lou

Mindar, [The Documentary Film Blog](#)

"A sweeping family saga that spans the globe and uncovers disturbing secrets as well as some remarkable connections...gathers a Shakespearian momentum, and which could make even the stoniest among us weep." –[Oxford American](#)

"Revealing and moving...not to be missed."–Erica Marcus, [Bay Times](#)

"This documentary proves to be a masterpiece study of sibling rivalry." –Alexis Whitham, [Frameline](#)

"A beauty of a film." –[Still in Motion](#)

"A Hidden Gem."-Lisa Kennedy, [Denver Post](#)

"[An] incredible story . . . a really focused look at sibling dynamics, which we can all empathise with."

–Harry Byford, [The Independent](#)