

Billy the Kid



COUNTER CULTURE

Billy turns on the charm.

★★★★★

Dir. Jennifer Venditti. 2007. N/R. 85mins. Documentary.

Documentary filmmakers pray for miracles and, in a circumstance of shocking unfairness, Jennifer Venditti has three of them. The first is a lonely Maine teenager with shifting eyes and a slightly tentative gait, as if everything before him were ice. Billy Price was discovered when Venditti was scouting high schools for another project. Living with his adoring single mother, Billy clearly labors under a condition close to Asperger's syndrome. But the camera is respectful of him, and out of that respect comes the most extraordinary gentleness—"I've

never been the savior of a damsel"—along with an endearing love of Kiss.

The second miracle happens to be the presence of a perfect damsel. Heather works at a diner in the same small town and also has some kind of mental affliction. As Billy comes courting, in his oddly old-school, chivalrous manner, the film floods with a dignity that will have you both rooting for him and recognizing your own nervous first dates. *Billy the Kid* is not a fairy tale, though its humane approach to its subject and clean trajectory feel like magic. The third miracle? Too good to ruin. Suffice it to say, it makes you see our hero as much stronger than you did before. Do not miss this. (Now playing; IFC Center.)—*Joshua Rothkopf*