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SXSW '07 CRITICS NOTEBOOK | Quiet, Personal Moments Make Biggest Impact at 2007 SXSW Fest

by Michael Lerman (March 15, 2007)

Easily the most-talked about documentary in this year's SXSW Film Fest, and with good reason, is **Jennifer Venditti's "Billy the Kid"**. To say the film is a haunting, intimate portrait of a teenage boy struggling through the regular hardships of adolescence would be selling the film short. Venditti's work is one of the strongest directorial visions, one made over the course of eight shooting days and months of precise, creative editing. The first twenty minutes alone are worth the price of admission for the contribution to furthering the language of documentary. Venditti's pulls the audience in with a series of telling vignettes, wrapping us in the whirlwind of Billy's life and dropping us deep into the verite of his first relationship, all the while never undermining but rather enhancing her subject. The touching nature of Billy's story is the epitome of the emotional experience that this year's SXSW has been; a crucial factor in why the film won the top documentary jury prize.