

BILLY THE KID

A FILM BY JENNIFER VENDITTI

www.billythekiddocumentary.com

Los Angeles Film Festival Screenings
Sunday June 24, 7 PM Landmark Regent Theatre
Thursday June 28, 5 PM, The Landmark

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EIGHT FILMS & ISOTOPE FILMS presents BILLY THE KID / in association with IndiePix Directed & Produced by Jennifer Venditti Produced by Chiemi Karasawa

Executive Producers Barnet Liberman, Bob Alexander, & Lubov Azria

Documentary Feature, Color, 85 Minutes © 2007 BILLY THE KID, LLC All Rights Reserved

CREDITS

Director/Producer Producer	JENNIFER VENDITTI CHIEMI KARASAWA
Executive Producer	BARNET LIBERMAN BOB ALEXANDER LUBOV AZRIA
Associate Producers	JORDAN MATTOS DANIELLE DIGIACOMO
Director of Photography Add'l Photography Editor Add'l Editor	DONALD CUMMING PARIS KAIN MICHAEL LEVINE ENAT SIDI
Sound Design Re-recording Mixer Dialogue Editor Original Score	DAMIAN VOLPE TONY VOLANTE DAVID ELLINWOOD CHRISTIAN ZUCCONI GUY BLAKESLEE
Production Coordinator Story Consultant Assistant to Producer	NINA DAY CHAUDHURI FERNANDA ROSSI JACLYN PARIS
Additional Camera Stills Photographer Titles & Graphic Design Assistant Editors	ROD LAMBORN SHANE SIGLER SETH ZUCKER DAVID ASLAN JENNY CHIURCO
On Line Facility D I Colorist Online Editorial Post Audio Facility Audio Equipment	POSTWORKS, NY JOHN CROWLEY PAT KELLEHER GOLDCREST POST, NY SOUND LOUNGE GOTHAM SOUND

The Producers gratefully acknowledge the subjects whose honesty, trust & courage made this film possible:

Billy
Penny & Ethan Baker
Fay Smith
Heather Pelletier
David Farnum
Rick Farnum
Janet Coffman
Frank the Moxie Man
The Students, Faculty & Administration of Mt. Ararat High School
Little Lisa's
The Community of Lisbon Falls, Maine

SHORT SYNOPSIS

"I'm not black, I'm not white, not foreign...just different in the mind – different brains, that's all..."

Billy

Jennifer Venditti's debut film is the provocative coming-of-age story BILLY THE KID, an odyssey into the soul of an American teenager. Following Billy as he bicycles through the quiet streets of small town Maine, we watch him traverse the frustrating gap between imagination and reality, grappling with isolation and first-time love. By turns exhilarating and disturbing we see the world from the intimate view of an expressive and seemingly fearless outsider.

LONG SYNOPSIS

“The future is not written. There’s no fate except what we make for ourselves.”

Billy (quoting from The Terminator)

A contemporary documentary, BILLY THE KID begins as an intimate portrait that quickly expands into broader social observation of teenage self-discovery; both the darkest and brightest places in youth. Shot in eight days over two seasons, summer and winter, the film uses a trans-genre-verité approach in which the subject seems to be directing the movement of the film as equally as the filmmakers behind the camera.

Jennifer Venditti stumbled upon Billy while casting Carter Smith’s short film, BUGCRUSH, from non-actor high school students in rural Maine. Intrigued by his eccentric wisdom and pop-infused sensibility, Venditti decided to include Billy along with other everyday heroes that she had encountered through her casting career in what she initially imagined as a multi-voiced documentary on iconoclastic characters. Filming began with a mini-dv camera and fellow BUGCRUSH alum, actor Donald Cumming, as DP. He and Venditti traveled up to Maine to capture moments from the precocious teen’s everyday life. Unfazed by the wireless microphone that he faithfully wore each day, Billy allowed Venditti and Cumming to follow him and witness the highs and lows of school, taunting from bullies and the colorful locals of Main Street, as well as intimate emotional discussions with his mother.

In the midst of shooting, Billy serendipitously crosses paths with his crush Heather at the local diner, and the film takes an unexpected turn as the filmmakers track the nuances of first-time teenage love and its aftermath. Billy shares intimate and acute observations about himself and those around him without restriction. Penny, Billy’s mother, proves to be a valiant touchstone. She shares their difficult history with Billy’s addicted, abusive biological father and we see glimpses of how Billy’s attitude towards women was shaped by his inability to protect his own mother when he was a child. His fantasy world is similarly constructed from heroic desires to overcome demons from their shared past and prevail.

BILLY THE KID is the coming of age journey of a teenage outsider who confronts obstacles with courage and awareness. He struggles to define himself apart from his past and others’ notions of who he is. The film challenges viewers to look beyond labels and to contemplate a teen’s undetermined future.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

You might say I'm a sucker for the underdog. I have always looked for beauty in the unconventional. I cast projects that look beyond the scope of traditional or existing talent pools. I've probably interviewed 10,000 people, maybe more and I always thought one day I would explore in feature form the most expressive of these people, and it was nearly accidental how Billy became the subject of this film.

I first met Billy when I was scouting a high school in Maine to cast real kids as extras for a film. I sat in the lunchroom for several days, marveling at the particular cliques and wondering if any kids ever tried sitting with anyone different. I filmed a table of bullies who described a scenario when they invited a new victim to their table. Apparently, the kid freaked out at the way he was treated. As they all laughed, I asked who this kid was, and they pointed across the room at a boy sitting by himself. "Over there," they said, "His name is Billy."

I was both awed by and uneasy with his personality; he was so completely open and without boundaries. When I asked teachers about him, they used phrases like 'emotional disabilities,' 'extreme caution' and 'special learning environment'. Other students seemed either jealous that I was so fascinated by him, or concerned that he was so volatile. The more I was warned away from him, the more I wanted to know. I cast him, of course, and came back a few months later to learn more and shoot some footage of my own. This footage turned into *Billy The Kid*.

As I drove back to the city after shooting for five days, the one thing I couldn't get out of my head was Billy saying, "Sometimes the imaginative world's much better than the real world, but there's one difference: Imagination ain't real!" By courage or necessity, Billy had created a technique to help him survive in an environment of pain, conformity, and labels. Pop culture superheroes became his source of confidence. I saw a kid who unknowingly made brilliant, wise comments that were fleeting and overlooked by his community, like a young, modern day Don Quixote.

In making the film, I wanted to pass along to an audience the feeling I had when I was with Billy, while many adults were amazed and patient with him, a majority were suspicious, alarmed and cautious. My urge to figure out what was wrong with him was quickly replaced by uncomplicated appreciation and empathy. Every day we were laughing and crying along with Billy, tethered so readily to his feelings and perceptions. You might say we began filming as outsiders and ended as insiders. We saw his mother Penny being his only real friend but someone too close to his emotional gravity. While I conducted several interviews with teachers, students, family members and specialists, I ultimately threw them out in favor of Billy's voice. He tells the story himself, by being himself. All we have to do is experience Billy while he responds to a painful and riveting childhood, first time love, and life as an outcast.

With Billy up on screen, in the dark, I am interested in a life in progress, capturing a moment during this coming-of-age time when his thoughts, dreams, and actions are still actively designing his future. Like Billy, I too believe that the imaginative world can become reality. Ultimately, I feel Billy's journey is connected to all of our journeys, and that what we strive for, no matter how different we seem, is the same: acceptance, understanding, and love.

Jennifer Venditti, May 2007

BIOS

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER JENNIFER VENDITTI makes her directorial debut with *BILLY THE KID*. Venditti started her New York City based casting agency JV8INC in 1998. Traveling all over the world, street scouting real people for advertising, fashion, and film she discovers an inspired repertoire of diverse talent otherwise ignored by traditional casting methods. Photographers Richard Avedon and Bruce Weber and director Spike Jonze are just a few who have been impassioned by her refined aesthetic. It is her interest in finding the beauty in everyday heroes that provided her natural transition into filmmaking. While casting Carter Smith's short film *BUGCRUSH* (Sundance Short Film Winner 2006) in a rural Maine high school, Venditti discovered Billy Price whose unique and winning character inspired her feature documentary. For more information: www.jv8inc.com

PRODUCER CHIEMI KARASAWA founded Isotope Films in 2005 to produce content for feature films based on non-fiction sources as well as independent documentary films. Her career includes over 15 years working in film, television and commercial production with such notable directors as Spike Jonze (*ADAPTATION*), Jim Jarmusch (*GHOSTDOG*, *COFFEE & CIGARETTES*), Larry Clark (*KIDS*), Spike Lee (*SUMMER OF SAM*), Steven Frears (*HIGH FIDELITY*), and in episodic television (*THE SOPRANOS*, *SEX IN THE CITY*, *ED*). She recently produced Katja Esson's *A SEASON OF MADNESS* (Woodstock & Austin Film Festivals 2006, Florida Film Festival 2007), and is currently producing a feature film directed by John Turturro.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY DONALD CUMMING is a Renaissance man. As a filmmaker, Cumming has shot, directed, and edited many of his own short films. *BILLY THE KID* marks his debut camera work on a feature length film. An actor and also a model, Cumming was featured in Carter Smith's *BUGCRUSH* (Sundance Short Film Winner 2006) and has also worked with such acclaimed photographers as Peter Lindbergh, Terry Richardson, and Ryan McGinley. Cumming will also release a debut album with his band *THE VIRGINS* later this year on Atlantic Records.

EDITOR MICHAEL LEVINE most recently edited Amir Bar Lev's *MY KID COULD PAINT THAT* (2007). He also edited Bennett Miller's debut documentary *THE CRUISE* (1998) a feature length portrait about Tim "Speed" Levitch, an eccentric NYC Tour Bus guide. Levine has worked with Ken Burns (*THE WEST*, *BASEBALL*), Dan Klores (*BOYS OF 2ND STREET PARK*, 2003), as well as on *RING OF FIRE: THE EMILE GRIFFITH STORY* (2005) and *FACTORY GIRL*, starring Sienna Miller.

EDITOR ENAT SIDI edited Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady's 2007 Oscar Nominated *JESUS CAMP* (Magnolia Pictures 2006), a documentary about kids attending Evangelical summer camp, as well as the poignant and heartrending *THE BOYS OF BARAKA* (SXSW Winner Special Jury Award 2005) released by THINKFilm.