

SUNDANCE 2007

SUMMER 2007

THE BLOG

RESOURCE DBASE

FEST CIRCUIT

INDIE FILMS

THE FORUMS

ARCHIVE '92 - '07

WEB ARTICLES

SEARCH FILMMAKER

SearchSubscribe to our
Weekly Newsletter!
subscribe**GLIDECAM**

25 NEW FACES OF INDEPENDENT FILM

Filmmaker's annual survey of new talent.



JENNIFER VENDITTI. PHOTO BY RICHARD KODEK

Jennifer Venditti

Jennifer Venditti has always walked backward into her future. "I was obsessed with characters and character through clothing — that's what got me into fashion," says the casting director turned director, who started out in the magazine world. She quit when she got close enough to see that for all its creativity and access to talent, the fashion industry espoused an idea of beauty that was as narrow as its waistlines.

Photographer Carter Smith had noticed Venditti's keen eye for street casting and brought her to Scotland to find real people for a *W* magazine shoot. That first job grew into one of the most dynamic and successful print-casting agencies in the city, stuffing its files with characters Venditti pulls off streets from Minnesota to Rio. Smith came back to Venditti to populate the world of his Sundance-winning short *Bugcrush*. She was casting with Smith in Maine when some bullies told her about the boy who would become the subject of her first film, *Billy the Kid*.

"Sometimes, of course, casting gets trying, seeing face after face," Venditti says. "It's a huge turnoff when people are trying to please or impress me. Billy wasn't even aware of the idea of conforming to the accepted. He wanted what other people had, but he didn't have any idea of changing himself."

Billy the Kid is as deep a character study as one is likely to find in documentary, and it was honored with a Jury Prize by the SXSW Film Festival. Billy, 15, is a strange and singular person, alone in his articulate, curious, passionate opinions. Without narration or any third-party commentary, Venditti plays the audience's temptation to judge and diagnose with a maestro's touch. He might be autistic, he might have Asperger's, but who cares? Venditti believes in willing away labels and seeing beauty without demanding to understand it, and the film proves her right. — Alicia Van Couvering

Contact: (212) 741-1281, www.billythekiddocumentary.com