



PRESENTS

# BILLY THE KID

A film by Jennifer Venditti

85 minutes – Color – English

## **FILM FESTIVALS**

HOT DOCS FILM FESTIVAL 2007  
FULL FRAME FILM FESTIVAL 2007  
SXSW FILM FESTIVAL 2007  
LOS ANGELES FILM FESTIVAL 2007  
MELBOURNE FILM FESTIVAL 2007  
EDINBURGH FILM FESTIVAL 2007  
WOODSTOCK FILM FESTIVAL 2007

## **AWARDS**

BEST DOCUMENTARY, SXSW FILM FESTIVAL 2007  
BEST DOCUMENTARY, LOS ANGELES FILM FESTIVAL 2007  
AUDIENCE AWARD, MELBOURNE FILM FESTIVAL 2007  
BEST DOCUMENTARY, EDINBURGH FILM FESTIVAL 2007

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# BILLY THE KID

**"Many memorable dramatic films about adolescence have been made over the decades, but few of them can match the impact of BILLY THE KID, a striking, heartfelt documentary that deserves to have a long shelf life."**

-Stephen Farber, The Hollywood Reporter

**"The first twenty minutes alone is worth the price of admission for the contribution to furthering the language of documentary."**

-Michael Lerman, indieWIRE

**"Venditti believes in willing away labels and seeing beauty without demanding to understand it, and the film proves her right."**

-Alicia Van Couvering, Filmmaker Magazine

**"As quietly inspiring as it is genuinely heartbreaking, BILLY THE KID is an act of passionate empathy."**

-Geoff Pevere, The Toronto Star

**"The story of Billy resonates as that of an American anti-hero: a loner lost in a fantasy world."**

-Claire Birchall, The Guardian (UK)

**"BILLY THE KID ventures into a small, contained community to focus on a single life and thereby turns the camera on the world."**

-Denis Seguin, Screen International

**"Venditti's enormously affecting documentary about a thoughtful Maine boy's coming of age has won awards at all four of the festivals it's competed in. Believe the hype."**

-Josh Rothkopf, Time Out New York

## 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 a provocative coming-of-age story, 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 young love. By turns exhilarating and disturbing, we see the world from the intimate view of an expressive and seemingly fearless outsider.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

You could say I'm a sucker for the underdog. In life, I've always recognized beauty in the unconventional. As a filmmaker, my intent is to take the viewer into the worlds of complex, unique people. I hope to compel the viewer to recognize the extraordinary in the ordinary, to confront stereotypes and broaden our appreciation for individuality. As a casting director, I cast projects that look beyond the scope of traditional or existing talent pools. During the 10,000+ interviews I've done, in the back of my mind I always thought about exploring the most expressive of these people in feature form.

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, studying the particular cliques and wondering if any kids ever tried sitting with someone other than their usual set. I filmed a table of bullies who recounted a story of inviting a victim to their table. Apparently, this particular kid "freaked out" at the way they treated him. As they all laughed after telling me this story, I asked them who this kid was. They gestured across the room to a boy sitting by himself. "Over there," they said. "His name is Billy."

I introduced myself and within seconds I was both awed and unnerved by his personality. I was mesmerized by his candor and his disregard for any of the usual conversational boundaries. But 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 expressed concern that he was so volatile. I cast him in the film I was scouting for and a few months later, I returned to film this portrait of him.

In making the film, I wanted to convey to an audience the feeling I had when I was with Billy. While many adults were amazed and patient with him, the majority were suspicious, alarmed and cautious. My urge to figure out what was wrong with him was quickly replaced by uncomplicated appreciation and empathy. I became tethered so readily to his feelings and perceptions. His commentary on so many subjects was unwittingly wise and bright, but it was always ignored by his peers and his community. I saw him in some ways as a young Don Quixote. Though 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 intense childhood, first time love, and life as an outcast.

The film captures a moment in Billy's adolescence when his thoughts, dreams, and actions are still actively designing his future. Ultimately, I feel Billy's journey is connected to all of ours and that what we strive for, no matter how different we seem, is the same: acceptance, understanding, and love.

I intend to continue making films that challenge the viewers' expectations, and my hope is that audiences will leave the theater either inspired or unsettled enough to start their own discussion.

## **CREW**

Director/Producer	Jennifer Venditti
Producer	Chiemi Karasawa
Executive Producers	Barnet Liberman Bob Alexander Lubov Azria
Associate Producers	Jordan Mattos Danielle Digiacomio
Director of Photography	Donald Cumming
Additional Photography	Paris Kain
Editor	Michael Levine
Additional Editor	Enat Sidi
Sound Design	Damian Volpe
Re-recording Mixer	Tony Volante
Dialogue Editor	David Ellinwood
Original Score	Christian Zucconi Guy Blakeslee
Production Coordinator	Nina Day Chaudhuri
Story Consultant	Fernanda Rossi
Assistant to Producer	Jaclyn Paris
Additional Camera	Rod Lamborn
Stills Photographer	Shane Sigler
Titles & Graphics	Seth Zucker
Assistant Editors	David Aslan Jenny Chiurco
On-line Facility	Postworks, NY
D I Colorist	John Crowley
Online Editorial	Pat Kelleher
Post Audio Facility	Goldcrest Post, NY Sound Lounge
Audio Equipment	Gotham Sound

## **CREW BIOGRAPHIES**

### **JENNIFER VENDITTI, DIRECTOR/PRODUCER**

Named one of *Filmmaker Magazine's* "Top 25 New Faces in Film," Jennifer Venditti makes her directorial debut with the award-winning documentary 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 collaborators who have been excited by her singular 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.

### **CHIEMI KARASAWA, 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), Stephen 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 & Florida Film Festivals 2006/7), and is currently producing a feature film directed by John Turturro.

### **DONALD CUMMING, DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY**

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

### **MICHAEL LEVINE, EDITOR**

Michael Levine most recently edited Amir Bar Lev's MY KID COULD PAINT THAT (2007) and Bennett Miller's debut documentary THE CRUISE (1998), a feature-length portrait of Tim "Speed" Levitch, an eccentric NYC tour bus guide. Levine has worked with Ken Burns on THE WEST and BASEBALL, Dan Klores on BOYS OF 2nd STREET PARK and RING OF FIRE: THE EMILE GRIFFITH STORY, and on George Hickenlooper's FACTORY GIRL with Sienna Miller.

### **ENAT SIDI, EDITOR**

Enat Sidi edited Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady's 2007 Oscar-nominated JESUS CAMP, 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.

## **ABOUT ELEPHANT EYE FILMS**

Elephant Eye Films is a New York City-based film studio that produces, sells and distributes high-quality feature films. The Principals are producers Kim Jose, Dave Robinson and Vicky Wight, who combined have more than 25 years of experience in each of the most crucial areas of the film industry: production, distribution and sales.