



KATI WITH AN I

A film by Robert Greene
An Icarus Films Release

"Critic's Pick! Achieves an un-self-conscious transcendence that can't be scripted" –*The New York Times*

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FILM SYNOPSIS

KATI WITH AN I is an intimate documentary portrait of a teenage girl in Alabama on the verge of her high school graduation. The film captures three tumultuous days in which Kati's future is cast into doubt.

We pick up the story on eighteen-year-old Kati's last day of school and follow her moment-by-moment, until she leaves Alabama with her parents. The center of her life is her relationship with her boyfriend, 21-year-old James. As she tries to convince him to come with her and leave everything he knows, the truth of their relationship slowly becoming emerge.

In this film, equal parts universal and personal, the radically singular experience of one girl breathes and comes live.

A lifetime in the making—the director Robert Greene, Kati's step-brother, has been documenting her since childhood--KATI WITH AN I is a moving, affecting story about one girl growing up.



KATI WITH AN I. PHOTO COURTESY ICARUS FILMS.

FILM CREDITS

Starring	KATI GENTHNER
Featuring	JAMES HOLSEMBACK BRIAN GENTHNER TOMI GENTHNER BRIDGETT TAYLOR BOBBY TAYLOR MELLAH ORTEN DAIANA PARKER RICK BURGESS CECELLA ROE ROBERT GREENE CLINTON CARTWRIGHT
Directed by	ROBERT GREENE
Cinematography by	SEAN PRICE WILLIAMS
Produced by	DOUGLAS TIROLA SUSAN BEDUSA ROBERT GREENE SEAN PRICE WILLIAMS
Co-Produced by	CLINTON CARTWRIGHT
Associate Producers	MIGUEL CAMNITZER DANIELLE ROSEN
Edited by	ROBERT GREENE
Assistant Editor	DEANNA DAVIS
Post-Production Supervisor	CHARLES POEKEL
Production Assistant	SETH HURLBERT
Sound Mixer	MARC ALAN GOODMAN STRANGE WEATHER MATT GUNDY
Music Supervisor	STUART WOLFERTMAN
Music by	MARC ALAN GOODMAN LESLIE STEIN STUART WOLFERTMAN

KATI WITH AN I — USA — 86 minutes

2010 © 4TH ROW FILMS
PREWAR CINEMA PRODUCTIONS

AN ICARUS FILMS RELEASE.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

KATI WITH AN I chronicles three days that most people have gone through - those days before and just after high school graduation - when the world seems to be opening and closing at the same time. The film is built on moments that are simultaneously universal and achingly personal. Everything is changing. Kati clings to her childhood as she simultaneously tries to be older - she's engaged to be married and is ready to move in with James, her lovably hapless older boyfriend.

As Kati says in the film, "What happened... happened." What we captured is what we hope is a fresh and clear-eyed portrait of one eighteen-year-old girl, the American South and that time in one's life where everything moves, everything slips, where our actions suddenly have consequences and where we start to become who we'll be. I have been filming Kati for pretty much her entire life. Kati is my half-sister. As an aspiring filmmaker in college, I always found myself turning the camera on her because of her sweetness, her grace and the look on her face that always seemed to be hiding something.

I asked Sean Price Williams to help film her last days of school with me. He is the greatest cinematographer I know (he shot *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo* and *Frownland*, among many others) and this project is very much a collaboration between the two of us. What we got was a surprising, dramatic and emotional experience for all of us, both in front of and behind the camera. With Sean's attention to detail, Kati's story, and the people and places that intersect her life over these fateful days, I hope to make *Kati with an I* something like the anti-NYC Prep or maybe even an answer to *American Teen*.

I love documentary films. They have changed my life. But rarely do we see the workingclass kids I grew up with - and especially not as natural and un-clichéd as I believe we were able to capture. Today it seems that emotional and trying circumstances hardly ever come free of reality-TV confessional theatrics. We wanted to film the rhythms of one young girl's life and let the drama come from within that experience. Hopefully we have achieved this while still making a unique and engaging movie. --Robert Greene

ROBERT GREENE BIOGRAPHY

Director ROBERT GREENE'S second feature documentary, *KATI WITH AN I*, was nominated for a Gotham Award for "Best Film Not Playing At A Theater Near You" after hit screenings at festivals including Doc NYC and True/False. The film made its theatrical premiere in April 2011 at the Maysles Cinema and received glowing reviews, including a Critic's Pick from The New York Times. Greene's feature debut, *Owning the Weather* (2009) premiered at the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival and was released theatrically in 2010. His third film, *Fake It So Real* (2011) premiered at the True/False Film Festival. Greene produced and edited *An Omar Broadway Film*, which premiered on HBO in 2010 and *All In: The Poker Movie*, which will be released theatrically in 2012. He also edited *Making the Boys*, which had its theatrical premiere in March 2011, and co-edited the award-winning documentary *Anytown, USA* (2005). Before concentrating on features, Greene had numerous documentary and experimental shorts play in festivals around the world. His first one-person show took place at the Millennium in New York in 2002. Robert Greene is a documentary producer at 4th Row Films.

SEAN PRICE WILLIAMS BIOGRAPHY

SEAN PRICE WILLIAMS has become one of the most sought-after cinematographers working in independent film today. His films have been featured in high profile film festivals around the world, including SXSW, CineVegas, Tribeca, Hot Docs, Silverdocs, and Full Frame. He has photographed award-winning films including *Frownland* (directed by Ronald Bronstein, 2007), *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo* (directed by Jessica Oreck, 2009), *Beijing Taxi* (directed by Miao Wang, 2010), *The Color Wheel* (directed by Alex Ross Perry, 2011), *Slacker 2011* (segment directed by Bob Byington and Clay Liford), and *Somebody Up There Likes Me* (directed by Bob Byington, 2012). He spent many years working with legendary documentarian Al Maysles and was assistant cameraman on films including Martin Scorsese's *SHINE A LIGHT*. Sean has also acted in many independent films, including *Daddy Longlegs* (directed by Ben and Joshua Safdie, 2009) and *Alexander the Last* (directed by Joe Swanberg, 2009).

DOUGLAS TIROLA BIOGRAPHY

As President of 4th Row Films, DOUGLAS TIROLA has produced four documentary films: *Owning The Weather* (2005), *KATI WITH AN I* (2010), *Making The Boys* (2011) and *Fake it So Real* (2011). He also directed two documentary features: *An Omar Broadway Film* (2008) and *All In: The Poker Movie* (2012). He is currently directing two more documentaries, one about the story of the National Lampoon, and the other about the culture of cocktails. Tirola created and serves as Executive Producer of the television series *The X-Effect*. His screenplay, *Victor in December*, which he will also direct, won a Writer's Guild Award and was optioned by Bob Balaban. Tirola has directed and produced thousands of commercials for companies including American Express, Ford, Proctor and Gamble, NFL, Smirnoff, Hershey, Guinness, Mercedes-Benz, and Coca-Cola. Tirola has worked as a screenwriter for Paramount, Universal, Fox, Warner Brothers, Sony and New Line. He has also worked in production on films including *When Harry Met Sally*, *Searching for Bobby Fischer* and *A League of Their Own*. He is represented by the William Morris Endeavor Agency.

SUSAN BEDUSA BIOGRAPHY

SUSAN BEDUSA is the Vice President of Development at 4th Row Films, and serves as a producer on all television and film projects at the company. She began her career with positions at Amy Robinson Productions, Bob Balaban's Chicago films and Michael Corrente's Revere Pictures. She then moved into development at StudioNext, and has since served as Director of Development at Emerging Pictures, working under Fine Line founder Ira Deutchman. In the past four years, Susan has produced six feature-length documentaries: *An Omar Broadway Film* (2008, HBO Documentary Films), *Owning the Weather* (2009, IFC International), *KATI WITH AN I* (2010, Icarus Films), *Making the Boys* (2011, First Run Features), *Fake It So Real* (2011) and the forthcoming *All In: The Poker Movie* (2012). In television, Bedusa created and produced the MTV series *The X-Effect*, which ran on the network for three cycles. She will also serve as Producer on the upcoming narrative features *Victor in December* and *Lucky Strikes*. Currently, she is producing 4th Row's next documentary feature, about the story of the National Lampoon.

SELECTED PUBLICITY & REVIEWS

THE NEW YORK TIMES

MOVIE REVIEW: "'KATI WITH AN I': A GIRL MOVES TOWARD ADULTHOOD"

CRITICS' PICK

07 APRIL 2011

BY JEANNETTE CATSOULIS

Taking its own sweet time to release information, "KATI WITH AN I," Robert Greene's endearing documentary about a strong-willed Southern girl's transition to adulthood, finds virtue in vagueness and significance in the everyday.

Unfolding mainly during the days leading up to Kati's high school graduation, the film follows her as she hangs out with friends — at a mall, a swimming pool, an amusement arcade — and worries about her impending separation from her fiancé, James. Yet the camera's intimacy (tenderly executed by the cinematographer Sean Price Williams), never feels abrasive, effortlessly capturing the shape of a life poised between two stages and the trembling need to cling to the past while reaching for the future.

Though we learn a great deal about the film's rural Alabama setting from throwaway remarks and seemingly inconsequential conversations, "KATI WITH AN I" transforms one teenager's particular story into a moving portrait of Anygirl, U.S.A. Time passes, and people pass by (often unidentified), the leisurely pace at odds with the turmoil of Kati's emotions. Interjecting home movies of Kati as an articulate and imaginative 8-year-old, Mr. Greene (who is her half brother) adds a poignancy that's remarkable for its complete lack of contrivance. A scene in which Kati and James sing together in a car achieves an un-self-conscious transcendence that can't be scripted.

Buoyed by a fully integrated soundtrack, "KATI WITH AN I" delivers a lovingly personal observation of young people at a crossroads. The film's sound is not always crisp, but no matter: Kati's story is written in every vital, vérité frame.

NEW YORK MAGAZINE

"FILM: 'KATI WITH AN I'"

CRITIC'S PICK

APRIL 2011

Kati with an I

✓ **Critics' Pick**

(NO LONGER IN THEATERS)

Rating: No Rating
Director: Robert Greene **Cast:** Kati Genthner
Running Time: 86 minutes
Reader Rating: [Write a Review](#)

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Review

This beguiling, intimate documentary portrait of a young Alabama teen and her coming of age takes the ordinary and makes something uniquely cinematic out of it, thanks to Greene's welcome flair for the poetic.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
"KATI WITH AN I"
BY STEVE DOLLAR
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

A moving portrait of an Alabama teenager during the 72 hours before her high-school graduation, this documentary won the Gotham Awards 2010 prize for Best Film Not Playing at a Theater Near You. Well, now it is. As part of curator Livia Bloom's bimonthly series devoted to new documentaries, "KATI WITH AN I," by New York filmmaker Robert Greene, gets a weeklong run, with bittersweet glimpses of a young life in transition that owes little to polished MTV realities. Despite shooting on the fly with a Mini-DV camera, cinematographer Sean Price Williams's work here is downright lyrical, and the film's subject, Kati Gethner, is a candid prism of emotion. (She's also the director's half-sister, which doubtless adds to the film's bug-on-a-windshield intimacy.) "Kati" shares a bill with Peggy Ahwesh's experimental 2010 short film "The Third Body," which uses NASA video from the 1980s to juxtapose the realms of faith and science. Mr. Greene will be present at Friday and Saturday screenings.

THE VILLAGE VOICE
"KATI WITH AN I": CHAPERONING A HIGH-SCHOOL SENIOR IN ALABAMA"
06 APRIL 2011
BY NICK PINKERTON

Documentarian Robert Greene chaperones 18-year-old Kati Genthner through the three days before her graduation (with honors) from Pleasant Valley High School near Jacksonville, Alabama. She is preparing to leave for the comparatively cosmopolitan Charlotte, North Carolina, where her out-of-work parents have preceded her. In their absence, she has clung to boyfriend-turned-fiancé James, who shows a pulse but is otherwise an unambitious live-at-homer. Greene, who is Kati's elder half-brother, meshes with the surroundings enough to play fly-on-the-wall, establishing his outsider-aesthete status by rendering her existence in ethereal atmospherics and soundtrack post-rock. (The subject's native music suffices: tuneless marching bands, muttered chorales, cheeseball "soaring" radio rock.) Without belaboring any point or entrapping his subjects, Greene—whose film is repetitive even while detailing such a brief period of time—suggests Jacksonville's social options as recombinations of TV room, mall, backyard pool, church, and public school. (The other time-passer is s-e-x.) Throughout, perspectives on the film's present are offered via the past (footage of a lively eight-year-old Kati) and the future (Kati's narration, sober with pee-test revelations, recorded two months after filming). Greene may intend Kati's story as a quiet tragedy, but the native feeling of that's-just-the-way-it-is lethargy ("Only in Alabama can you be a home-school drop-out") is rather convincing.

ISLANDS OF MEANING
"KATI WITH AN I"
16 MARCH 2010
BY KYLE PUETZ

Shot almost entirely in the span of three days, *KATI WITH AN I* chronicles the life of Alabama teenager Kati Genthner as she approaches her high school graduation. Small points of conflict arise — Will her fiancé James follow her to North Carolina? Can she peacefully co-exist with his

mom? — but they largely take backseat to a collection of singalongs, pool parties, and trips to the mall. Shunning narrative but infused with momentum by director Robert Greene's terrific editing, *Kati* foremost represents a tenderly wrought and free-floating treatment of adolescent angst and frivolity and, in the words of my friend Chris Boeckmann, "a fantastic, hazy portrait of a moment."

Due to its small scope, *Kati* ultimately feels somewhat slight for much of its duration. Fortunately, *Kati* benefits from a powerhouse ending — one casually related, easily missed revelation and a brief, terrible moment of introspection — that not only lends a necessary emotional weight to the preceding 80 minutes but even elucidates the canny structure of the film by grounding the conclusion in the present. The relative lack of narrative, small jumps in scenes that evoke the skipping of a record, the periodic reemergence of home videos featuring a younger Kati's hopes for the future, conversations lost and recovered by the flow and ebb of the nicely understated score: All of these facets converge to recall the imperfect, desultory turning of memory. Considering the skill with which Greene manages to convey this, *Kati* represents a minor masterpiece of documentary editing.

The revelation additionally helps contextualize the shimmery, ethereal aesthetic offered by Sean Price Williams' luscious cinematography as injecting a dose of defiant, rose-tinged nostalgia in the face of the future's inexorable forward march. A principal's bizarrely inappropriate call to arms posits the transition to adulthood as momentous, James' mom's teary offering that "Pomp and Circumstance" is a sad song marks the same as tragic, and *Kati* plays with the friction between these two conceptions of looming responsibility with an appropriate ambivalence. Yet its whole invokes in me the sad recognition that you don't realize the best times, the moments of greatest promise and delight, until they've already passed. For all its small moments of mirth rooted in the everyday and its joyful experimentation in editing, *Kati* is at heart a melancholy reproval to the folly of wasted youth.

THE L MAGAZINE

"'KATI WITH AN I': MOVIES CAN SHOW THINGS THAT SOCIAL MEDIA CULTURE CAN'T."

28 OCTOBER 2010

BY MARK ASCH

Next week, beginning on Wednesday, the nonfiction film festival DOC NYC comes to downtown Manhattan. Among the films making their New York bows is the festival favorite KATI WITH AN I about an Alabama teen on the cusp of her high school graduation. Last week the film received a Gotham Awards nomination in the category of Best Film Not Playing at a Theater Near You (previous winners have included You Won't Miss Me, Sita Sings the Blues and Frownland; all five of this year's nominees play at MoMA in November). We asked director Robert Greene a few questions about the film over email.

Your film follows Kati "with an I" through three tumultuous days at the end of high school. Kati's your half-sister—at what point did she become an inspiration for a feature film?

Well, Kati and I didn't grow up together but she always ended up as the subject of my camera experiments, student films, class projects, etc. (many fragments of which made it to this film). She was even the photo subject of an ex-girlfriend's award-winning stills. She has something the camera likes. So when she was about to graduate, I called my pal, the great cinematographer Sean Price Williams (who had filmed her before as well) and talked him into capturing Kati's graduation and the days leading up to it. We were never sure it was going to be a film. It just as

easily could have ended up a graduation gift. A story developed and the film happened, almost like magic. At the time we had no idea how fateful those days were.

For a long time, documentary films, filmmakers and audiences have been dogged by the question of whether people act differently when they know they're being filmed (Fred Wiseman is said to follow his subjects with an empty camera for a month or so before he starts filming, to acclimate them). What's different about filming people who were born in the 1990s, and have been on camera their whole lives? (Although I suppose the family relationship complicates the question somewhat...)

There is a different kind of honesty, I think, with kids that are constantly obsessed with projecting their identities as images. When you put the camera on them, you are definitely getting a performance. But with modern teens, this performance is constantly happening whether you're there with your camera or not. With all the ways teens mediate their own experiences, they've become expert "subjects," able to tap into emotions and longings that we may have been more protective of in the past.

Somewhat along those lines, what do you think is the value of a professional document of adolescent drama, when teens are so caught up in documenting and publicizing their emotional experiences themselves?

Our job (if that's what you'd call it) was to penetrate the facade, if you will, and get past the typical narcissism inherent in the act of constant self-documentation. If you hold a shot for some time or film the mundane in a certain way, other truths will emerge. Our story is built on some real tension over three tumultuous days. But what we were able to see, and what the audience hopefully sees, is a more universal, sort of "invisible" sadness that one experiences when they're being dragged into adulthood. Movies can show things that instant social media culture can't.

Your film has been compared to Gus Van Sant for its lyrical approach to adolescence—and I've lately seen a number of films whose makers have applied a shoegaze-y arthouse plangency to the lives of more pop-oriented working-class kids. I wonder, is there a difference in sensibilities you're conscious of reconciling?

Well, meaningless lyricism is useless and boring. And no one, including "pop-oriented" teens wants to see it. If a film is shoegazing for its own sake, then these kids are showing great wisdom in not paying any attention. I'm also really wary of making a film in which the subjects of the film would never watch it. That's one reason why it's really important for me that Kati calls it "her film." On the other hand, most of the "pop-oriented" depictions of teenage life are a waste of time. When was the last film or TV show that you saw that made you feel like a teen again or helped you really understand what that mindset is? That's what we were after.

INDIEWIRE

"STRANGELY ALLURING: 'KATI WITH AN I'"

06 NOVEMBER 2010

BY ERIC KOHN

In "KATI WITH AN I," documentarian Robert Greene ("Owning the Weather") turns his camera on his teenage half-sister on the brink of her high school graduation. That backdrop offers nothing new, but Greene's patient, understated portrait renders a universal rite of passage in strangely alluring, poetic terms.

A world premiere at the newly launched DOC NYC festival (although it first screened at the True/False Film Festival), "KATI WITH AN I" landed a 2010 Gotham Award nomination for "Best Film Not Coming to a Theater Near You." The category is fitting for a movie that knowingly dismantles the cheery fantasies of teenage life depicted in mainstream entertainment.

A resident of the close-knit Christian community in Piedmont, Alabama, Kati Genthner doesn't have it easy. Greene captures a key moment of transition in her life during the three tense days prior to her graduation. A few months earlier, her parents moved back to their home in North Carolina after her father lost his job. Living with her friend Bridgette for her final two months of school, Genthner appears firmly entrenched in her surroundings even as she expresses a deep-seated desire to escape them. Her boyfriend, James, lacks Genthner's decisive energy to leave Piedmont, despite his pledge to stick with her when she goes off to college. Meanwhile, her parents urge her to drop the guy and come home. Forced to make big decisions without any reliable support system, Genthner looks perpetually troubled, and Greene captures her discomfort in close-up.

An unsettling look at the early onset of adulthood, "KATI WITH AN I" belongs to an emerging genre. Others have compared it to the insider glimpse of lower class family dynamics in last year's "October Country," which also contained a cross-generation clash of values, but I also saw echoes of "45365," a documentary about life in Sidney, Ohio, where the tranquility of the locale clashes with an eerie sense of alienation. In "KATI WITH AN I," the young protagonist constantly grapples with the very same duality, clinging to her roots while holding out hope for the future. The realism of her plight exists in stark contrast to the reality television framing of Nanette Burstein's "American Teen," which rendered a similar transition in "Breakfast Club" terms.

At times, Greene seems too enamored of his subject. A few scenes, where virtually nothing happens, overstay their welcome; Genthner's story works better in the form of a collage rather than pure fly-on-the-wall verité. The immersion has a cumulative effect: Since Greene establishes the tenuous prospects of Genthner and James's relationship, an extended scene where they belt out the lyrics to The Red Jump Suit Apparatus single "Your Guardian Angel" is weighted with mixed feelings and unintended irony.

Greene's greatest strengths come from his ability to capture the inner rhythms of his half-sister's life - the quick glances and sudden expressions that hint at an active mind. Lusciously shot by cinematographer Sean Price Williams ("Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo," "Frownland," "Yeast"), the movie often feels like an attempt to evoke Genthner's fragmented thought process. In one scene, she's relaxing next to James on his bed while he strums a guitar, and the warmth of their connection dominates the room. Later, she stands in the crowd of her graduating class and appears to get lost in the shuffle. Her dogmatic principal preaches to the outgoing pupils: "I want to apologize on behalf of my generation for removing god from the public schools," he says. She looks unperturbed by his ravings. Or maybe just bored by them.

It's unclear whether Genthner identifies with the religious ideology imposed on her, but she discovers her own agenda in far more personal terms: "Your mom is holding onto you with an iron fist," she tells James, struggling for the right words. It's almost refreshing that she can't find them. Despite her misdirection, Genthner sustains her innocence. She's a likable object of pity, and Greene notes as much with an end credit listing her as the movie's "star." Indeed, Genthner delivers a heartfelt screen presence that ranks among the best performances of the year, and it's certainly the most legitimate one.

criticWIRE grade: A-

HAMMER TO NAIL
"KATI WITH AN I': TEENAGE PLANS"
07 APRIL 2011
BY PAMELA COHN

KATI WITH AN I opens for a one-week theatrical run on Friday, April 8, 2011, at *Maysles Cinema* in Harlem.

Kati is filmmaker Robert Greene's much younger half-sister and he has been shooting footage of her since she was a little girl. In this über-intimate portrait, a very "small story" indeed, Greene captures Kati, a teenager about to graduate high school and already engaged to her childhood sweetheart whom she plans to marry "in five years," over the course of three emotional days. Her future, in many ways, is set in this vivacious girl's mind—she has it all planned out in the way we, as little girls, used to do when we could describe in minute detail our dream wedding day. The problem is, little boys dream of other things, even while professing undying love and devotion, wailing romantic songs along with the radio behind the wheels of pickups in the dopey earnest way teenagers do. We see many of Kati's dreams disintegrate as she encounters the irrevocable onslaught of young adulthood, its expectations and endless responsibilities, which come way, way too soon. *KATI WITH AN I* has the same poetic pangs of angst and bewilderment as Matthew Porterfield's beautiful *Putty Hill*, providing resonant collective memories of what it's like to be an unsophisticated child "on the verge." Greene's and Sean Price Williams's cinematography is a revelation, lush and sensuous. And Greene's editing is both sophisticated and visceral, enhancing the deeply emotional journey of their young subject with all of the pain-filled splendor she can muster for the camera. It's remarkable that Green has made a feature film this nuanced and fulgent with just 14 hours of footage.

THE BOSTON PHEONIX
"REALITY BITES AGAIN"
31 MARCH 2010
BY CHRISTOPHER GRAY

At the tail end of February, for the second consecutive year, I (barely) escaped a late-winter hurricane to enter a Midwestern oasis of grass-fed beef, cheap cigarettes, Johnny Depp impersonators, and some of the finest documentaries you might just see this year. The True/False Film Festival, which Paul Sturtz and David Wilson modestly debuted seven years ago, has become a premiere doc fest with an original, heartening vision. Instead of being swarmed by glad-handing industry types and eager filmmakers looking to score distribution, T/F presents itself as a respite from that bustle, a weekend-long social mixer for filmmakers and fans both avid and amateur. Included in all of these groups is the increasingly notorious "Maine contingent," which grows annually.

This year, I accompanied a couple of Maine filmmakers (Cecily Pingree and Jason Mann, of Rockland's Pull-Start Pictures), Nat May and Jon Courtney (the trip's commander-in-chief) of SPACE Gallery, Camden International Film Festival director Ben Fowlie, local roots ragers the Toughcats (who played near-constant "busking" gigs before screenings all weekend), and others to Columbia, Missouri, for the long weekend. While some of us ventured to see as many films as logistically possible over three days, others, like Courtney and Fowlie, squeezed in some face time with directors in hopes of landing Maine screenings of their favorite films from the festival.

It's an effort that pays dividends. Of last year's slate, seven films (including two recent Oscar nominees) have or are about to have their Maine premieres through SPACE or CIFF (read more about the latest, *October Country*, below); both men made some solid headway this year, with Courtney reporting he's looking at about a half-dozen films for future showings and Fowlie taking home a stack of screeners. One of the best T/F efforts this year, in fact, has already had a private screening at SPACE with the director's permission. (The film, BBC journalist Adam Curtis's *It Felt Like a Kiss*, will likely never screen in the US for copyright reasons; see the capsule review below.) Of the 13 works I saw in Columbia this year, these seven were the best. Look forward to seeing some at SPACE or elsewhere in the coming year.

KATI WITH AN I: Taking place in the three days leading up to an Alabama teenager's high school graduation, Robert Greene's lingering, lyrical film is an indelibly pure portrayal of contemporary young love that could have been made by Gus Van Sant (*Milk*, *Paranoid Park*).

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

"EXPRESSION, WITH INTENT TO DISTRIBUTE: FOR ONE LOCAL FILMMAKER, THE GOTHAM INDEPENDENT FILM AWARDS ARE MUCH MORE THAN THE OPENING SHOT OF OSCAR SEASON"

29 NOVEMBER 2010

BY BRUCE BENNETT

In the 20 years since they were conceived, the annual IFP Gotham Independent Film Awards have coincided with a period in American cinema in which the lines between mainstream and independent film have blurred considerably. Consequently the Gothams, which will be handed out Monday night at Cipriani Wall Street, have evolved from the local upstart film community's self-acknowledgment to the first act of an award season that will climax in February at the Academy Awards. (Last year's Best Feature winner at the Gothams, Katherine Bigelow's "The Hurt Locker," went on to win six Oscars.)

Bound neither by the Oscars' historical tradition nor by the Academy's obligation to recognize the full range of craft and technical achievements in the film industry, the nonprofit Independent Feature Project has continuously retooled and refined a handful of Gotham Awards categories to reflect the changing ways that independent films are made and seen. The Breakthrough Director prize, awarded since the Gothams' 1991 inception, was supplemented by a Breakthrough Actor award in 1998 and a Best Ensemble Cast award in 2005—all to acknowledge the increasing primacy of actors and casting agents in ambitious low-budget filmmaking.

Also in 2005, the IFP created the category of Best Film Not Playing at a Theater Near You, an award meant to address the distribution bottleneck pitting increasing numbers of independently financed films against dwindling theatrical venues. For Robert Greene, the Beacon, N.Y.-based director whose second full-length feature, "KATI WITH AN I," is nominated for the award, the category is indeed an apt one.

"What's great about this," Mr. Greene said, "is that the award insinuates that we want to play in a theater, which is totally true."

Shot mostly over the span of a few days on a MiniDV camera format that has documented more family vacations than blockbusters, Mr. Greene's nonfiction account of the events surrounding his half-sister's Alabama high school graduation nevertheless achieves theater-worthy drama and irony with its striking photography and affecting emotional generosity.

"The film was made, for better or for worse, for a theatrical setting," Mr. Greene said. "That was what was behind the choices I made."

Though set entirely in the South, "KATI WITH AN I" owes its existence to Mr. Greene's decision, a decade ago, to leave his native North Carolina for New York City. "I came here to go to graduate school at City College, basically because it was a cheap degree and potentially a reason to get to New York," he said. Then 24, the filmmaker had never set foot in the city. Nevertheless, Mr. Greene said, his relocation first to downtown Brooklyn and then to the Sunset Park neighborhood became a kind of homecoming.

"My grandmother was actually born in Brooklyn," he said. "She left Brooklyn when she was in her 20s to go have kids in the South. That's sort of the origin of our family. When I got to Brooklyn I just felt totally at home with everybody. It was weird, like it was where I'm supposed to be even though I'd spent most of my life in the South."

Another auspicious choice on the road to future Gothams recognition came in early 2001, when he applied for a job at the venerated downtown institution Kim's Video. The Kim's staffer who hired Mr. Greene to work in the now shuttered St. Mark's Place store was future "Kati With and I" principal photographer and co-producer (along with Mr. Greene, Susan Bedusa and Douglas

Tirola) Sean Price Williams. "I walked in and made a [iconic French filmmaker] Jean Eustache reference, and Sean pretty much hired me on the spot," Mr. Greene said.

Mr. Williams recalled the moment. "You're able to judge people very quickly on something as superficial as their movie tastes," he said. "You know if you're going to have something to talk about at least."

The video store's rental floor eventually became a talent pool. "Everybody felt like we should be making movies instead of just talking about them and watching them," Mr. Greene said. So he tapped Mr. Williams to shoot his City College thesis film in 2001. The pair then filmed unrelated casual interviews with Mr. Greene's half-sister, Kati Genthner, introducing her to the filmmaking process and laying the groundwork necessary to document her life truthfully years later in "KATI WITH AN I."

Mr. Williams subsequently photographed Kim's regular Ronald Bronstein's feature debut "Frownland," which won the Not Playing at a Theater Near You award in 2007 (Mr. Bronstein is nominated for Breakout Actor this year for his role in "Daddy Longlegs"), as well as Jessica Oreck's 2009 documentary "Beatle Queen Conquers Tokyo."

On the heels of premiere screenings in the recent DOC NYC festival and at the Museum of Modern Art, and on the eve of a possible Gotham Award win, Mr. Greene characterized his path from rental floor to red carpet as a group effort. "We were all pretty cynical about it actually working out," he said. "But there were times that we would let our cynicism drop a bit and we would actually think, 'You know, maybe this is kind of special, this group of people.'"

IFC.COM

"HOW KIM'S VIDEO BROUGHT TOGETHER A FILM CREW: THE FORMER DOWNTOWN INSTITUTION PLAYED A ROLE IN THE MAKING OF GOTHAM NOMINEE 'KATI WITH AN I'"

29 NOVEMBER 2010

BY ALISON WILLMORE

Over at the *Wall Street Journal*, Bruce Bennett chats with Robert Greene, the director of the low-budget indie documentary "KATI WITH AN I," one of the nominees in the Best Film Not Playing at a Theater Near You category of the Gotham Awards, which take place tonight. Greene shares that his journey toward making the film, which follows his half-sister as she approaches her high school graduation in Alabama. It turns out the late, lamented Kim's Video in the East Village played a significant role in the film getting made.

The Kim's staffer who hired Mr. Greene to work in the now shuttered St. Mark's Place store was future "Kati With and I" principal photographer and co-producer (along with Mr. Greene, Susan Bedusa and Douglas Tirola) Sean Price Williams. "I walked in and made a [iconic French filmmaker] Jean Eustache reference, and Sean pretty much hired me on the spot," Mr. Greene said. Mr. Williams recalled the moment. "You're able to judge people very quickly on something as superficial as their movie tastes," he said. "You know if you're going to have something to talk about at least."

The video store's rental floor eventually became a talent pool. "Everybody felt like we should be making movies instead of just talking about them and watching them," Mr. Greene said. So he tapped Mr. Williams to shoot his City College thesis film in 2001. The pair then filmed unrelated casual interviews with Mr. Greene's half-sister, Kati Genthner, introducing her to the filmmaking process and laying the groundwork necessary to document her life truthfully years later in "KATI WITH AN I."

Though I treasure my Netflix streaming account, I miss the ever more rare video stores, most of all for the idea that they were havens for die-hard cinephiles and aspiring filmmakers who traded likes and dislikes and plotted future projects between checking out rentals and handing out jobs based on Eustache references. Kim's, a New York institution, surely figures into other stories just like Mr. Greene's.

THE JACKSONVILLE NEWS

"PLEASANT VALLEY GRADUATE'S LAST DAYS OF SCHOOL FOCUS OF DOCUMENTARY"

21 DECEMBER 2011

BY EDDIE BURKHALTER

It can be easy to forget how unique each of us are, but it might not be so hard if we could watch our lives play out as a movie. For Kati Genthner, a former Jacksonville resident and 2009 graduate of Pleasant Valley High school, a critical period in her life was made into a film. 'KATI WITH AN I' was filmed over a three-day period in 2009 and follows Kati during the three tense days leading up to her graduation. The documentary, which premiered in February at the True/False Film Festival in Columbia, Mo., was the idea of Kati's documentary filmmaker half-brother Robert Greene.

Kati moved to Alabama with her family several years ago so that her father could help care for his ailing mother. After her grandmother died the family moved back to their native North Carolina while Kati moved in with a friend in Jacksonville to finish school. Throw in a boyfriend from Piedmont and uncertainty about life after high school, and an unexpected twist ending, and you have a film about an ordinary person facing the extraordinary dilemmas of growing up.

Speaking of his sister, Greene said she has always been good on camera.

"She just comes alive. She's just one of those people that the camera really likes," said Greene. "She's weirdly honest in a way that a lot of people are more protective. She's just very open and even though you can see her flaws she doesn't hide from them. She's got this self confidence I think that sort of comes through."

Greene has been shooting film of his little sister since his days in film school. "KATI WITH AN I" is his second feature film. His first, "Owning the Weather," premiered in 2009. His latest film, "Fake it so Real", about a group of independent pro wrestlers, is set to make its premier in early 2011. Greene has worked on several other films in his position as a post-production supervisor and documentary producer at 4th Row films in New York

Making a documentary of your sister's struggles could be construed as exploitive, but Greene said Kati was comfortable making the movie and after watching the edited final version she approved.

"If you watch the film, we purposefully are doing a lot of things in the film that sort of remove that feeling of it. For me the fact that she calls it her film is a big part of it," said Greene. "Part of what we were going for is that she's not quirky. She's a normal person. I feel like a lot of films these days are about quirky characters with ticks, or they invented something amazing or they're about to go off to a war. All these things are spectacular character traits.

"Her normalness, there's something universal about it. I think people from the South, definitely

people from the region will recognize a lot of stuff in there, but I've had people from Maine and upstate New York and all over the country say that 'this really looked like my high school' so we're going after a sort of universal theme and she really contributes to that," said Greene.

Kati's movie picked up a Gotham Award nomination in the category of "Best film not playing at a theater near you," and if it wins Greene said the distribution problems documentaries so often have to deal with would likely be solved for the film.

All five films nominated for a Gotham this year were shown at The Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan last week. You won't be able to drive into Anniston and catch a viewing, but Greene said it might play in Atlanta later this year. "The hope is that it's going to continue to travel the festival circuit and then maybe it will be available for download and on Netflix," said Greene.

Once you get the chance to view it, you'll likely see familiar things. Pastoral landscapes in and around Piedmont flash by as Kati and her boyfriend ride together in the backseat, singing along with the car radio, and the arcade in Quintard Mall makes a cameo. What Greene hopes is that viewers will see some of themselves in a young person faced with hard decisions and uncertain ends, surrounded by a world that refuses to wait for her answer.

"When you watch the film it feels intimate. She knows what the cameras doing. She knows what we're doing. She feels comfortable and we're not getting her in situations where she's not being completely herself, and in the end the film says something bigger about youth and growing up, and if it does that then I think it's justified."

CREATIVE LOAFING: ATLANTA

"KATI WITH AN I" INTRODUCES DECATURDOCS' NONFICTION FILM SERIES"

04 JANUARY 2011

BY CURT HOLMAN

The slice-of-teen-life documentary *KATI WITH AN I* is exactly the kind of nonfiction film that makes you want to find its subjects and ask "So what happened *next*?" after you've seen it. Fortunately, Atlanta's new documentary series DecaturDocs gives audiences that very opportunity. DecaturDocs introduces itself to the local film community with an inaugural screening of *KATI WITH AN I*, followed by a Q&A with filmmaker Robert Greene and his young half-sister and heroine, Kati Genthner.

DecaturDocs marks the latest venture of Gabe Wardell and Paula Martinez, for four years the executive director and managing director, respectively, of the Atlanta Film Festival. (Full disclosure: Wardell now regularly contributes to our Screen Grab blog.) In June, the festival's board of directors relieved Wardell and program director Dan Krovich of their duties, stating financial motivations and a desire to make the festival more populist. Martinez resigned her position a month later.

With the new series, Martinez says, "We want to be the first venue in the region to screen the *next Exit through the Gift Shop*, *Restrepo* or *Waiting for 'Superman'*, films fresh off of premieres at festivals like South by Southwest, Sundance, Hot Docs, DOCNYC, and others." The series offers the Southeastern premiere of *KATI WITH AN I*, following its world premiere at DOC NYC in November and its IFP Gotham Award nomination for "Best Film Not Playing at a Theater Near You."

DecaturDocs' first two films showcase Southern themes. *KATI WITH AN I*, screening Sat., Jan. 8, chronicles the three days leading up to a teenage girls' high school graduation in small-town Alabama. On Jan. 22, *Hey, Boo: Harper Lee and 'To Kill a Mockingbird'* explores the history and impact of the great American novel. Martinez explains that DecaturDocs won't focus exclusively on Southern film. "We think the dichotomy of their methodology perfectly illustrates the wide array of documentary films DecaturDocs will explore. *KATI WITH AN I* is a premium example of contemporary, cutting-edge nonfiction filmmaking while "Hey, Boo!" is more of a traditional "Ken Burns" documentary about an iconic American novel and its author, featuring archival footage, clips, talking head interviews with notable celebrities and experts, and voice-over narration."

In part, *KATI WITH AN I* presents the fly-on-the-wall perspective on a young woman being herself, and the audience can enjoy little quirks like the way she holds the front part of her hair in her teeth while she brushes out the back. The narrative initially seems to meander as we follow Kati from her temporary home — she's been staying with friends to finish high school while her parents move to North Carolina — to the ceremonies marking the end of her high school experience. Frequently the director captures the grace notes of hanging out in backyard swimming pools with friends.

A plot clicks into place with the appearance of Kati's boyfriend and sort-of fiancée James Holsemback, an underemployed high school dropout whom Kati hopes will follow her to Charlotte, S.C. Kati clearly loves James and he seems to reciprocate, but he doesn't seem 100 percent behind the move to Charlotte. We can't always tell if his apparent passivity and cool emotions reflect his actual feelings for Kati, or if he's just self-conscious at being off-camera. When the couple sing along to the power pop strains of a rock song, the film captures a feeling of two hearts beating as one, but *KATI WITH AN I* builds suspense over whether James will let her down or not.

Martinez says that it's a coincidence that DecaturDocs presents its films at Decatur High School's state of the arts performing arts center and its inaugural film focuses on female high schoolers. "It's not a bad coincidence, though, and we hope this story resonates with Decatur High School students, and surrounding high schoolers as well. The sad truth is that teen audiences—the target demographic for Hollywood's 'fast food' product—tend to think of documentaries like a plate of vegetables. When in fact, films like *Kati* are probably best suited for a young audience more amenable to less traditional story telling, it is a challenge to get them in the door."

Martinez envisions DecaturDocs as joining the ranks of Atlanta's other high-minded film series that celebrate cinema as an art form. "We are pleased to join venerable cultural stalwarts such as Linda Dubler at the High Museum, Matthew Bernstein's Cinema Club, and Andy Ditzler's Film Love series on the front lines in providing viable alternatives to the cinemaplex," she says. "Rather than play to the masses—*Yogi Bear*, *Little Fockers*, etc.—we will showcase works of particular substance for thinking audiences."

THE VILLAGE VOICE
2010 YEAR-END FILM POLL

BEST UNDISTRIBUTED FILM	VOTES	MENTIONS
1. Film Socialisme	34	17
2. The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu	21	8
3. Mysteries of Lisbon	19	9
4. Black Venus	16	8
5. The White Meadows	15	6
6. Oki's Movie	12	8
7. Tabloid	11	5
8. Shit Year	6	2
9. Ruhr	6	3
10. Street Days	5	2
11. Persecution	5	3
12. Tournée	5	3
13. KATI WITH AN I	5	2
14. You Are Here	5	4
15. Rebecca H. (Return to the Dogs)	4	3

How the film poll works:

This year, 85 critics from across the country voted for their favorite films, performances, and filmmakers in 13 categories. For six of those categories (Best Film of the Year, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actor, Best Supporting Actress, Best Undistributed Film), critics had the option to either "rank" or "unrank" their votes. For example, in the Best Film category, where ten votes are possible, a ranked ballot's #1 choice was awarded 10 points, the #2 choice nine points, etc. If a voter only listed eight films, the #1 film was awarded eight points, the #2 film seven points, etc. On ballots designated as "unranked," films were awarded five points each, and performances two points. Ties of any kind were not allowed.

For a film to be eligible in this year's poll, it must have opened commercially for the first time in the U.S. since January 1, 2010, or be scheduled to open between now and December 31, 2010. The rule of this poll is simple: A film is eligible only in the year that it was first distributed in the U.S. For the category of Best Undistributed Film, only those films from the past 12 months that have yet to secure a theatrical distributor were eligible (as opposed to those films with distributors that simply won't be released until next year).

TORONTO SCREEN SHOTS
"KATI WITH AN I"
BY JAMES MCNALLY
11 FEBRUARY 2011

Shot mostly over a tumultuous three-day period leading up to Kati's high school graduation, this moving portrait, directed by her older half-brother, offers an intimate window into one particular life at one particular time and in the process achieves a beautiful sense of universality. By cutting in older home movies of his sister, Greene makes the documentarian's capture of passing time even more poignant. We see this confident little girl growing into a slightly less-confident young woman on the verge of leaving her rural Alabama hometown and her childhood friends.

Her sense of panic manifests itself most keenly in her clinging attachment to boyfriend James, a sensitive young man a few years older who's content to work at the local McDonald's. After graduation, she's moving to North Carolina to rejoin her parents and attend college, and she's insistent that James come with her. He's clearly hesitant to leave his own family, but professes his love with seeming sincerity. Yet her desperation seems to paralyze him, and he can't promise her when they're going to leave. Graduation day approaches, and her parents are coming to see her. They want her to return with them, but she's terrified that if she leaves without James, he won't follow.

The camera trails her everywhere in these emotionally fraught days, as she enjoys precious time with friends she may lose forever and as she prepares to face an unknown future as an "adult." Seeing the shots of her as a younger child reinforces the fact that in many ways, she hasn't grown up. This rite of passage seems an absurd and artificial border into an adulthood she doesn't want to enter just yet. Clinging to James is her adolescent equivalent of clinging to a teddy bear. Her romantic illusions about James are intact but she seems aware that they're precarious. There are some absolutely lovely moments of them together, especially when the two join in singing along to a CD of "their song" while riding in the car. The presence of her older brother, even unseen, capturing these fleeting moments adds depth to the moment and makes it nostalgic even as it's happening. The whole film is suffused with a keen sense of these moments passing away even as they're captured.

Despite the fact that this is a deeply personal film, and that the sound and video quality are at times uneven, there is a lot to love about *KATI WITH AN I*. Like a few other recent docs (*October Country*, *Billy the Kid*, *45365*, *The Way We Get By*), this film shows us a part of America not usually seen in the movies: rural, white, deeply religious and conservative, full of flawed but genuine people trying to get by. And by turning the camera onto a member of his own family, Greene is expressing something of his own feelings about his roots. Although some may find the film uncomfortably intrusive, it's never exploitative. On the contrary, *KATI WITH AN I* is a powerful expression of love, from a brother to a sister, from an adult to a child, and from an urban sophisticate to his rural roots. It's moving and lovely and particularly alive. Like Kati.

DOCUMENTARY TECH

"MAKING A DOC ON ONLY DAYS OF SHOOTING: ROBERT GREENE'S TWO IN A YEAR, PART 127"

MARCH 2011

BY DOCUMENTARYTECH

When Robert Greene, who had been primarily an editor at 4th Row films in New York, decided to make his first feature documentary, it was an exercise in economy (as he documented in part 1 and 2 of a series last year). Doubling up family road trips with a shooting schedule, mailing cameras to friends who could shoot for him, "Owning The Weather," about using science to manipulate the climate, had a hands-down payoff: It premiered at Full Frame, made its way to iTunes and Netflix, and has had a wide array of screenings.

Greene is now bringing out two new films in one year that are taking the idea of economical filmmaking further – "KATI WITH AN I" and "Fake It So Real" were feature-length films made with shooting schedules numbering in days, rather than weeks or months, and which have again hit: "Kati" premiered at DocNYC last September, was nominated for a Gotham Film Award, and was called one of the "top undistributed film of 2010" by the Village Voice (although distribution will certainly happen). "Fake It" premiered a few weeks ago at True/False, one of the most interesting emerging film festivals in the country.

Greene has worked this all around his position as producer and head of editing at 4th Row, which has also produced "An Omar Broadway Film" (Tribeca, then HBO) which Greene edited and co-produced.

Busy, indeed. Which is why when he went to Alabama in the week leading up to high-school graduation of his half-sister, Kati Genthner, as she pondered whether she'd leave for North Carolina to join her parents moving from the town in which she grew up, or stay on to be with her boyfriend. Greene knew that in that story was drama.

"The way we came to *KATI* was I'd made *Owning the Weather*, which was a much bigger film that involved scientists and experts and big landscape shots, and it took me a year to shoot it. I wanted to do something different with "Kati," so I went entirely in the opposite direction. When we started the filming we didn't even know if it was going to become a film; we knew it was going to be in a compressed amount of time, but whether you're going to get what you need in that amount of time is another thing.

Greene is a professional – making a full-time living in the film business – who's never been all that enamored with the hardware. As with *Owning The Weather*, he shot *KATI* with a Mini-DV camera he says he's shot more family vacation footage on that documentary work (although his shooting over the years has yielded lots of family footage with Kati in it). Working with cinematographer Sean Price Williams, he knew going in that it was going to be an intense window of shooting.

The reason you shoot a film in a year is because that's what you need to do in order to get what you need. We shot this in a way that was an experiment: Keep it very, very direct, and very intimate, and very quick; the end was that we knew her graduation was going to be the end of the film. What we got was something we thought was filmworthy, because of what happened on the days we shot, and also something that was not manipulation in the strongest sense, but the setting up of scenarios we knew would allow us to be able to film stuff.

But as a seasoned editor, he also had clear intention. He gravitated toward the project clearly intending to have a film. "For Kati, it was about her, as a character, in a situation: She was about to graduate. The South, high school, high school girls, high school boys and relationships – they were all pithy things anyway, they were cinematic. That's why there are so many high-school movies.

"I didn't know the extent of the situation she was in – and it was pretty awful – but we did know that these days were going to be pivotal. She had to decide whether she was going to go or stay, or whether her boyfriend was going to come or stay behind. The movie is, basically, she and her boyfriend deciding whether they were going to stay in Alabama or go to North Carolina. It ended up being about how these days were deeper and harder than they even understood.

"Having gathered the footage, the work on the edit began the process of finding its narrative. In a life-situation that can be all around us but for which we might have limited ability to observe, bringing story out of a mass of experiences finds its challenge in edit. It's a hard story – meaning hard to find, not difficult. It was hard to find a very clear narrative. The first 25 or 30 minutes are a little bit more impressionistic, and then a narrative kicks in. And that's how we experienced it. And some people have said it has a feel of a narrative film, rather than a documentary.

"When I'm editing, I try to impart some of the experiences I had in making it, because I feel that adds some energy. We didn't have a story line. We had a concept, and we wanted to get impressions. Then there was the thing we didn't know, which was the whole relationship with James, which we didn't know about when we went down there. That became a pivotal couples of days her – we got lucky.

"One of the ways to make that palatable, and real, is an event. I read somewhere that for the old Italian Neorealist movies of the 1940s, a lot of times they weren't all that story-driven, but that you often had to end the movie with someone leaving – The Guy Who Left Town. Because something happened, things had changed, and you moved on. It's a matter of what are the aims of your character or characters, how are they going to experience it, and how are you going to watch them experience it. And then an end point. It's like, say, three days before a gay person comes out. Those days will build emotionally to what's going to happen. You're going to see the before, the during, and then the aftermath."

There were some mild "directing" choices that attempted to find situations that Greene knew were part of Kati's life – for example, he asked her to go to the mall with her friends, something she did a lot of but might not have done that day. But more often than not it was following her through her week. The fact that Kati has grown up familiar with her older brother's camera going was probably part of why she was willing to be open to being in the project.

The fact that he could have abandoned the project at fairly low cost is likely one of the reasons he could make the film as he has. Greene says if there is one aspect of filmmaking, it's the technological changes that have opened up so many possibilities, allowed for so many films, and at times ruined its share of projects because of it. One of the things we have with the technology, with the light cameras and the way we can edit now, we have infinite choices. Sometimes infinite choices can be really crippling. Especially when you're starting out, you just don't have the confidence that you're making the right choice. Sometimes that can be really self-defeating, and you can end up over-thinking things. I like the idea that you throw yourself in the fire, basically. Hold your camera, see what happens, and see what comes of it.

TIME OUT NEW YORK

"'KATI WITH AN I': A YOUNG HIGH-SCHOOL GRAD FACES SOME TOUGH LIFE DECISIONS"

05 APRIL 2011

BY DAVID FEAR

A typical 17-year-old teenager, Kati Genthner is preparing to graduate and go out into the real world. But having stayed in Jacksonville, Alabama, to finish high school when her family moved to North Carolina, she's now forced to rejoin them—and leave behind her skateboarding fiancé. Robert Greene's documentary captures so many wonderfully delicate, private moments in Kati's life (a scene in which she and her boyfriend sing together could melt a cynic's heart) that it seems churlish to wish the film said more about what it's actually like to be a young woman today, or that its dramatic denouements didn't feel like reality TV writ only slightly larger.

VARITEY

"'KATI WITH AN I'"

05 APRIL 2011

BY ROBERT KOEHLER

A smart teen girl about to graduate from high school faces an uncertain future in Robert Greene's sensitive if somewhat messy docu, "KATI WITH AN I." As if shot from the p.o.v. of one of Kati Genthner's girlfriends, Greene's film heightens the chaos that runs through everyday life, occasionally shifting to clips from Genthner's childhood in the small town of Jacksonville, Ala. With a following built on the fest circuit, pic's weeklong run, starting Friday at New York's Maysles Cinema, could kick-start a grassroots national tour.

Two days before graduation in a house overrun with pets, Genthner readies for a baccalaureate honors ceremony while hanging out with best friend Bridgett Taylor. The ceremony's Christian overtones are surprising in an apparently public school, but Genthner and her family never seem especially religious. Aspiring rocker and b.f. James Holsemback visits, leading extended discussions about their future as Genthner plans to move with her parents to North Carolina. Holsemback is 21 but doesn't seem to have her smarts, yet they clearly love each other. Darker themes are played before the film is over. Tech package is rough.

ROOFTOP FILMS

"'KATI WITH AN I' OPENS TONIGHT IN NYC!"

08 APRIL 2011

BY LELA SCOTT MACNEIL

Get tickets here for Rooftop Alum Robert Greene's beautiful new film *KATI WITH AN I*, opening TONIGHT! Looking for something to do this weekend? Well look no further, because Rooftop Alum Extraordinaire Robert Greene's gorgeous new film *KATI WITH AN I* opens TONIGHT, right here in our fair city. *KATI WITH AN I* is an intimate documentary portrait of Kati, a teenage girl in Alabama, about to graduate high school. The film captures her moment-by-moment emotional transformation over the course of three tumultuous days that leave her future in doubt. With microscopic focus, through the searching lens of cinematographer Sean Price Williams, the movie explores the period in one's life when the only constant is motion. As Kati says, "What happened...happened." The film is playing for one week only at the Maysles Cinema in Harlem.

SLANT MAGAZINE
"KATI WITH AN I"
06 APRIL 2011
BY CHRISTOPHER GRAY

There's a strange and probably impossible purity to *KATI WITH AN I*, Robert Greene's first documentary feature (his second, *Fake It So Real*, is currently on the festival circuit). Impossible because it's a contemporary story about young love that doesn't display or refer to any text messages or emails or Facebook, because it makes a Red Jumpsuit Apparatus song sort of make you want to cry, and because its central tension feels so profoundly earnest.

Shot in 2009, *KATI WITH AN I* follows the smart, well-adjusted 18-year-old Kati Genther (Greene's half-sister, though you don't learn this during the film) from her last day of class through her graduation from a high school in Jacksonville, Alabama. Through its abstract yet fluid first half hour (composed of grooming rituals, home videos of a young Kati reciting poetry, and cleverly employed phone conversations between Kati and the director), the facts of Kati's rather confusing circumstances are established: At the end of the week, she's moving to North Carolina (where her parents have recently relocated, leaving her to complete high school) to attend college, presumably with her 21-year-old boyfriend, a PacSun-outfitted McDonald's employee named James.

Punctuated by ceremonies that each serve as rites of passage (a pool party, a Baccalaureate, a graduation), the film is keen to the fact that these events only lead to a terrifying, gaping void: the summer before college, when teenagers think life will actually begin. The emptiness of this span hangs over the film like a pall, as Kati spends her last long, boring days with her friends and boyfriend in Alabama. Apart from one jarring graduation speech, which vigorously illustrates the setting's red-state bona fides, Greene largely avoids anthropologizing this love story. His gaze is focused firmly on the gazes and touches of his young subjects, and the minor details that remind you of their youth: a *Twilight* poster on a bedroom wall, a mirror bordered with the phrase "I love you so much it's retarded" written in Wite-Out.

The film's sun-dappled images (by Sean Price Williams, whose work—along with Greene's sound editing—make the film an aesthetic cousin to Donal Mosher and Michael Palmieri's similarly poetic *October Country*) indulge in their uncertain languor. Stretches spent wandering around a mall or hanging out by a pool feel endless, and will doubtless test some viewers' patience, but they're fraught with telling gestures that Kati clearly agonizes over, trying to dilute minor squabbles spoken and silent with "I love you's. There's an indelible tension here, and Greene milks it for all its worth; in a way, *KATI WITH AN I* is the *Everyone Else* of naïve high school love stories, complete with two extended musical numbers and a suitably ambiguous ending.

WHAT (NOT) TO DOC
"IN THEATRES: 'KATI WITH AN I'"
07 APRIL 2001

Opening in NYC for an exclusive one-week run at the Maysles Cinema tomorrow, April 8:
KATI WITH AN I

Robert Greene's compelling and intimate look at a few days in a teenage girl's life premiered at the last year's True/False Film Festival and later screened at the inaugural DOC NYC. It went on to be very appropriately nominated as one of the Best Films Not Playing at a Theatre Near You in

the 2010 Gotham Awards. I wrote about the film in my coverage of True/False for *indieWIRE*, saying:

In many ways both a universal and a singular portrait of an adolescent woman's life, director Greene deftly reveals a handful of ordinary yet pivotal days at the end of his half-sister's high school senior year. While on the surface, there doesn't immediately appear to be much that distinguishes Kati from your typical teenager, that's partially the point – she stands in as an everywoman, or everygirl, as she begins, naively at times, to make the transition from late childhood to early adulthood, not fully foreseeing the consequences of her decisions.

INDIEWIRE

"17 NEW MOVIES THIS WEEK. WHICH 1 IS WORTH SEEING?"

08 APRIL 2011

BY EUGENE HERNANDEZ

A whopping 17 films are reviewed this week by the *New York Times*, which customarily surveys new movies opening in local theaters. "Hanna" looks interesting and I'm hearing good things. "Meek's Cutoff" has had a terrific fest run. "To Die Like a Man" is terrific. I'm rather intrigued by "Blank City" despite missing it during the Tribeca fest two years ago.

But, there's just one new movie I *really* want to see this weekend. Robert Greene's "KATI WITH AN I," a doc that I heard about after last year's True/False Film Fest. I've been wanting to catch the Gotham Award nominee for a very long time. Described as "an intimate documentary portrait of Kati, a teenage girl in Alabama, about to graduate high school. The film captures her moment-by-moment emotional transformation over the course of three tumultuous days that leave her future in doubt." It is opening way uptown at the cool Maysles Cinema in Harlem.

The daunting list of new movies in NYC this weekend:

"Hanna," directed by Joe Wright (Focus Features)

"Meek's Cutoff," directed by Kelly Reichardt (Oscilloscope Laboratories)

"Arthur," directed by Jason Winer (Warner Bros)

"Your Highness," directed by David Gordon Green (Universal Pictures)

"Henry's Crime," directed by Malcolm Venville (Moving Pictures Film and Television)

"To Die Like a Man," directed by João Pedro Rodrigues (Strand Releasing)

"Blank City," directed by Celine Danhier (Insurgent Media)

"Ceremony," directed by Max Winkler (Magnolia Pictures)

"American: The Bill Hicks Story," directed by Matt Harlock and Paul Thomas (Variance Films)

"Meet Monica Velour," directed by Keith Bearden (Anchor Bay Films)

"The Family Jams," directed by Kevin Barker (Factory 25)

"Born To Be Wild 3D," directed by David Lickley (Warner Bros)

"KATI WITH AN I," directed by Robert Greene (4th Row Films)

"Soul Surfer," directed by Sean McNamara (TriStar and Film District)

"Mysteries of the Jesus Prayer," directed by Norris J. Chumley (Magnetic Arts and Passion River Films)

"The Elephant in the Living Room," directed by Michael Webber (Edify Media)

"Meeting Spencer," directed by Malcolm Mowbray (Paladin and Orbit Pictures)

POPMATTERS

"KATI WITH AN I: FULL OF DIFFICULT, NON-TRIVIAL CHOICES"

BY CYNTHIA FUCHS

08 APRIL 2011

Editor's note: *KATI WITH AN I* is opening at Maysles Cinema, as part of its Documentary in Bloom series, followed by a Q&A with Greene on April 8th and 9th. The film is showing with Peggy Awesh's 2009 short, *The Third Body*, which considers intersections of religion and science in their contemplations of bodies and desires.

"I love the way that you're the one I dream of," says Kati Genthner. She's reciting a poem she wrote for her boyfriend James, you're looking at a front porch. Her voice is grainy, a telephone recording, sharing the story of her all-committed love. "The first time he heard it," she reports, "he actually cried."

It's the last day of high school as *KATI WITH AN I* begins, and Kati's about to graduate. She's also agreed to let her half-brother, the documentarian Robert Greene, and the cinematographer Sean Williams, follow her with a camera as she prepares not only to leave school, but also to leave Piedmont, Alabama. During the last months of her senior year, she's been living with a friend, Bridgett. When her dad Brian lost his job, he and her mother Tomi moved back to North Carolina. "We all thought," Kati explains, "The best thing for me was to stay in Alabama and finish off the last 82 days of school. And that's how it all happened."

For the few moments the camera spends in it, the girls' bedroom appears both cramped and expansive, a *Twilight* poster and a ferret in a cage, a cluttered makeup table and a wooden tchotchke hutch. The fact that you barely see these details in the first scene—early morning, when shadows fill the room—suggests the film's frequently impressionistic effect. A collection of closely observed details and tight mobile frames, the movie is part verité observation and part Kati's diary, that is, her all-consuming concerns, her limited views.

This structure allows for you to see variously and unclearly, but also precisely and deeply, as Kati describes her experience and also performs it. So, as Kati and the couple-of-years younger Bridgett are parting ways, she receives a note from Bridgett, something like an appreciation of their friendship. And as Kati reads it out loud to James—he's driving them to the mall—you witness a shift, away from the closeness of the girls in Bridgett's room and to another sort of understanding, at least on Kati's part. Despite their occasional disagreements, Kati reads out loud. "It's become a great experience for me... You have made one of the biggest impacts on my life." Her primary confidant now is James, 21 years old, McDonald's employee, and son of a truck driver. He nods as Kati confesses, "It made me cry when I first read it," and says, "I'm about to tear up myself." She looks at him: "Seriously?"

Blessed with perspective and poise, Kati's responses to the world around her repeatedly suggest both affection and disbelief, openness and a hope for more control. This sensibility is visible in footage from Kati's childhood, her direct address at once fresh and self-aware. "None of the boys admit that they like me," she says, "But I can tell." Or again, "I think school's cool, I think being in school is better than summer vacation." Now that she's older, Kati is no less self-possessed, even as pressures mount.

Like so many high school graduates, Kati's feelings are mixed. While she's glad to be getting out of the small Christian community in Piedmont (at graduation rehearsal, the pale-blue-gowned participants are reminded to choose Jesus Christ: "I tell you, it's not an easy choice," says a

pastor, “because life is not easy, life is full of difficult, non-trivial choices”), she’s also apprehensive to leave the life she knows. Splashing in the pool with her girlfriends or watching James play videogames, she’s comfortable and confident. “I don’t know why I’m wearing these stupid pants,” he complains, as if for the camera. “Because you love me,” Kati smiles, “And you know I like those pants.”

After high school, when she moves back with her parents for the summer and then goes to college (Johnson & Wales University in Charlotte), Kati means to have James along. When her parents suggest he might not be ready to move with her, she insists otherwise. Dad worries that he’s working at McDonalds (“He wants to become a meteorologist,” Kati protests) while Tomi suggests there are, after all, a couple of McDonald’s where they live, and she knows one of the managers.

Kati puts the choice to James in terms she understands. They sit on a motel porch, her parents in a room behind them: the camera peers at them, the night wrapped around them. Perceiving that James is reluctant to leave his mother (“She’s holding on to you with, like, a iron fist”), Kati asks, “What’s more important? Going and make something better of your life and actually being in a real city or living in Alabama, in Piedmont, where it’s okay to have sex with your mother?” He pauses and sighs and you get the feeling that she’s stuck.

But you also get the feeling that James—who looms so large in her thinking now—isn’t so crucial to Kati’s experience. Uneven and earnest, subtle and beguiling, *KATI WITH AN I* reflects her experience without judging it, and suggests a context without overstating it.

LITTLE ROCK FILM FESTIVAL

“‘KATI WITH AN I’: A BEAUTIFUL CINEMA VERITE DOC IN COMPETITION FOR THE OXFORD AMERICAN BEST SOUTHERN FILM AWARD”
24 MAY 2011

I knew *KATI WITH AN I* was a documentary when we programmed it, but I subconsciously miss categorized it as a fictional narrative film in our first schedule. Director Robert Greene says this has happened before. My mistake is a testament to what is most successful and rare about this film—it is a documentary with the beauty, power, character and emotion of a scripted work. The filmmaker disappears from the story never to be acknowledged, and the characters, like actors, seem to not even know the camera is present. This style of documentary filmmaking requires incredible patience and trust of the characters and the action that unfolds, un-directed in front of the camera. These days true verite films are mostly absent from American television and theatrical screens. It was not always this way, The Maysles Brothers, DA Pennebaker, Frederick Wisman, and Richard Leacock became famous making non-fiction films in the 60’s and 70’s devoid of sit down interviews, voiceovers, and on camera commentators; and utilizing hand held cameras and natural lighting, in order to bring a more intimate and authentic story to the viewer. We are always looking for films like *kati and I* to showcase at the LRFF, because we understand that the pure simple stories that make it onto screen in this kind of work, often require the most skill to produce well.

I spoke with Director Robert Greene about casting his half-sister in a documentary, shooting in the South, and the filmmakers who influenced him.

Tell me about KATI WITH AN I. Who is Kati, and why did you decide to make a film about her?

Kati Genthner is my half-sister. We did not grow up together, but she was always my favorite subject – for short student films, camera tests, you name it. While watching another documentary, I had the idea to go down to Alabama and film her graduation. So I called my good friend, the great cinematographer Sean Price Williams, and pitched him the idea. He had also filmed Kati over the years and was very interested. Minutes later, amazingly, I got a call from Kati asking me to come film the ceremony. Without knowing much about how troubled her situation was, I told her my idea to turn her last days of high school into a film. She was excited and we went for it, never sure if the project would become a movie or end up a very fancy graduation present.

One thing I love about KATI WITH AN I is that it doesn't "feel" like a documentary, the characters could almost be actors in a narrative fiction film. Was this a conscious decision in how you approached the film?

Well, I think it was a very conscious decision in that films that "feel" like documentaries are not always the most cinematic or organic and we really wanted KATI to give audiences a glimpse of what it was actually like to be *with* Kati on those fateful, tumultuous days. We didn't want anything to stand in the way of that experience, so it does feel more narrative, I think. Kati's presence in the film has even been described as a "great performance," which is funny and revealing. I'm always happy when people see the film and say they got lost in it like they were watching a fiction film. But the best "cinema verité" films of Fred Wiseman and the Maysles, among others, were always trying to be movies first and "documents" second, so I like to think we're just working in that tradition.

Your characters in the film seem completely at ease with the camera, in fact they seem to barely notice it all. This is one of those rare documentaries where it feels like the people involved would pretty much be acting the same way and doing the same things whether you were there at all. How did you accomplish this?

The simplest answer is that Kati knew Sean and it was often just the two of them – or Kati, Sean and one or two other people. They were often in very small places together and Sean has a way of sort of "disappearing." But I also think the people in the film *are* performing to some extent. Young people are so comfortable filming *themselves* that their performance and their "private, real selves" are so tightly wound together that you can't separate them. When you linger on them with a camera for a while, you start to see this – which is definitely one of the things we were after in the film. But as the days get more dramatic for Kati, a lot of stuff is stripped away and we're really just there while she deals with some heavy things that are rushing past her. We vanished into the background because she had a lot more important things to deal with.

The film feels very Southern, though I guess it could have been set in any number of small communities in the US. Are you from the South? Why did you choose to make a film there?

I am very proudly from the South. I was born and mostly raised in North Carolina, went to high school and college there, and didn't step foot in New York until I moved here 10 years ago. My followup to KATI is a film called FAKE IT SO REAL, which is playing on the festival circuit now and is also set in the South, so I think it's just what I'm comfortable with and what I find most interesting. It goes without saying that most depictions of southern life are riddled with stereotypes and clichés, so maybe I want to fight that a little. I also think there are aspects to living and being in the South that are never shown in films, never felt or seen by "outsiders." "The South" is a pretty giant thing- so many different types of people and types of places. But I take great pride in trying to reveal a little more about what I know is true and intriguing about the region and its

people. Having said that, the greatest compliments I've gotten have been when people who are not from the South talk about how universal the film is and how it transports them back to their own awkward high school days, no matter where they're from.

KATI WITH AN I
LITTLE ROCK INDIE MOVIE EXAMINER
BY NELSON TERRY
04 JUNE 2011

KATI WITH AN I is a documentary by Robert Greene released in 2010. It is showing at the Little Rock Film Festival. The film is centered around his half-sister, Kati. It is a combination of documentary footage from the last three days before she graduates from High School mixed with home video of her ten years prior.

The narrative is unscripted and runs without any Q&A on the part of the filmmaker. We just see Kati in her world as she...lives. He hangs out with her best friend Bridgett. We find out that she also currently lives with Bridgett. Her parents had to leave Alabama and move to North Carolina for work, and they didn't want to uproot Kati while she was in the middle of her school year. We also learn about her fiancée James. He's supposed to travel with her to North Carolina after she graduates, though the footage give a sense early on that he may not be fully on board with that. We see footage of her as a younger kid, doing what kids do. Kati spends these last two days planning her move while she tries to have as much fun as she can in the meantime.

There are some really excellent spontaneous moments in the documentary. At one point, Kati is riding in James's truck. They find a Red Jumpsuit Apparatus cd with 'Their Song' on it. Next thing you know, they're both singing. It's a pretty sweet moment. Adulthood is on the horizon, but you get the sense that Kati still likes being a kid even as she lays the groundwork for her future. Her parents arrive in town on graduation day. The ceremony itself is mostly your standard graduation ceremony. Afterward, we see Kati trying to find everyone. Hugs and tears are shared.

In many ways, Kati's story is our story. The specifics are different, but we all go through that period of anticipation and anxiety when it comes to the future. What's ahead? She has no idea, and neither did we. We in the audience were in for a treat, as both Robert Greene and Kati were in attendance for a post-screening Q&A.

ALAMO DRAFTHOUSE CINEMA
ROBERT GREENE'S KATI WITH AN I IS A RARE DELIGHT
03 AUGUST 2011
BY DANIEL METZ

The qualities that make a great documentary film are often difficult to describe and impossible to truly comprehend. How is it that real life can be captured, manipulated, and presented in a way that can be touching, scary, funny, exciting, heart-breaking? And, perhaps even more perplexing, how is it possible that some filmmakers can repeat the feat, making compelling and emotionally resounding films whenever they step up to the camera?

Yet there are filmmakers like the Maysles Brothers, Robert Flaherty, D.A. Pennebaker, Dziga Vertov, Robert Frank, Frederick Wiseman, and Werner Herzog who use their cinematic eye to

persistently make beautiful movies. They see the world in a special way, they are able to take the raw materials of life and construct narratives of painstaking brilliance where other people would simply see the passage of time. That is what makes a great documentary film.

Our upcoming guest, Robert Greene, has that uncanny ability of a great documentarian to find beauty in unlikely places. When I first met Greene, I had already had the pleasure of seeing his major feature, *KATI WITH AN I*. The film, about a young girl on the brink of maturing into adulthood, is one of the most staggering works on the subject ever made. It was also shot over three days, in bedrooms, cars, and ugly motel rooms.

I said to him, "You are either a genius or you're very lucky." But the more I talked to him and learned of his style, and saw his next feature and short, I discovered that it was much more the former. *KATI* is a compassionate portrait of a southern girl perching over the border of her youth. She is days away from graduating high school, and with that event her life will change forever; there's a vast future in front of her, and one that is much more frightening than it is promising.

Although very much rooted in the culture of impoverished, semi-rural Alabama and the unique situation of this girl, the film hits notes of our universal struggle with change and uncertainty. In that way, her story is one that will melt your heart. This is very much due to the skill of director Robert Greene (with credit also going to his cinematographer, Sean Price Williams), who seems to have a preternatural ability to find moments of exquisite rawness and open identity, even within a community of people who are afraid to show who they really are. To see his works are to see his subjects as they cannot see themselves - and it is both a marvel and a privilege to do so.

INDIEWIRE

"'KATI WITH AN I' ACQUIRED BY ICARUS FILMS"

10 OCTOBER 2011

BY CHRISTOPHER CAMPBELL

Exciting news came last week for one of my favorite documentaries of the past year: Robert Greene's *KATI WITH AN I* was picked up for distribution by Icarus Films, according to the company's Facebook page. There are no details yet on a release date or any other exact plans, but we'll hopefully hear more on that soon. The Gotham Award-nominated documentary, which chronicles three days in the life of a girl about to graduate high school, already had a minor theatrical opening in NYC back in April. I'm not sure if that means Icarus will only put the film out on DVD or if they'll handle another run. It's a beautifully shot doc that deserves to be seen on a big screen, so it'd be very nice if it's the latter. I saw the film almost exactly one year ago at the first DOC NYC festival and fell in love with it. I'm a sucker for docs that play like realist narratives, and this is one of those terrific dramas that just so happens to be true and documented first-hand. That anyone would avoid it because it's a documentary is unfortunate.

Here's a snippet of my review, posted ahead of that early theatrical bow:

The documentary's devotion to the verite aesthetic and principles means we're also not made privy to the roles of every person on screen, including Greene himself, who appears anonymously at one point driving Kati around (I only know this now, because I've seen what he looks like). The truth is, the girl is the filmmaker's half-sister, but another fact is that this isn't important to the narrative at hand. Just as the comparable *October Country* was co-directed by the main subjects' sibling and not directly acknowledged as such (you can surmise from the surname match there, at least), "Kati" is similarly not concerned with explaining inconsequential

details. Its objective is to be objective, and given the subjectivity of the director's interest in his protagonist, it does a remarkable job.



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Icarus Films
32 Court Street, Floor 21
Brooklyn, NY 11201
(718) 488-8900
mail@icarusfilms.com
www.IcarusFilms.com

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