

**THEATER**

# Nicky Katt: From Boston To Broadway

By Iris Wiener

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Nicky Katt riled up television viewers for three years in what is perhaps his most memorable role as *Boston Public's* tough-loving do-gooder Harry Senate. But Katt has consistently brought his dark humor and sly sensibilities to roles big and small while working with some of today's most influential directors including Steven Soderbergh and Richard Linklater. Most recently seen in *School Of Rock*, he can also be found in *Dazed And Confused*, *Boiler Room*, and *Full Frontal*. He'll soon be found in the upcoming Quentin Tarantino project, *Sin City*.

Katt is currently starring in the Off-Broadway production of *A Second Hand Memory*, an original play written and directed by Woody Allen. His emotional turn as Eddie, a confused man forced to confront the life he has built for himself, has already garnered positive reviews and has led to an extended run at the Atlantic Theater. The humble actor recently spoke with **The Long-Islander** about his New York stage debut.

**You've completed projects with quite a few big directors before. Has working with Woody Allen been a landmark for you?**

It was such an honor to go meet Woody and to be a part of something like this, so I just went for it, not knowing what it was going to be like - there was no script at the time that I had to make the decision to do the play. You have to go with your instincts. It all sort of happened really quickly, but if he handed me a phone book I would act in it. I was really flattered. It has been such a nice welcome to New York.

**Eddie is a very tormented person, and he goes through a lot of changes throughout the play. What did you find to be the biggest challenge in playing such an intense role?**

Theater is kind of new ground for me, so I just take it day by day. Once the initial show kicks in, and you sort of kick into gear you really don't think about anything other than putting yourself in the position of how that person would feel, and you really try to deliver the optimum per-



Photos Courtesy Boneau/Bryan-Brown

**Nicky Katt (sitting at right in the photo above), is known to many as Harry Senate on the television program Boston Public. He is currently starring in Woody Allen's Off Broadway show A Second Hand Memory. Katt has also been seen in full-length feature films such as School Of Rock, Dazed And Confused, Boiler Room, and Full Frontal.**



ascious. You know the text really well, but you want to have fun with it and also really convey what the characters are feeling. There's a lot of heavy themes in the play, with people feeling unfulfilled and frustrated, and feeling like grass is always greener, and there's some heavy issues that a lot of people deal with. That's not what people would typically expect of Woody, which makes it even more of a challenge. I know that some people might be expecting more of a gay romp. But I really like the fact that we roll up our sleeves and get down and dirty.

**This is a big show. In addition to Allen's hand, your co-stars include Michael McKean and Dominic Chianese. How does this stage work compare to what you've done in the past?**

I did a play in LA when I was 13 with John Cassavetes and Gena Rowlands. My mother was a costume designer and she was doing the wardrobe for the play, and I was always just sort of sitting around backstage. John came up to me and asked me if I'd help read with actors, and then I ended up landing a part in it. But that's really my only stage experience.

**You obviously started performing at a young age. Did you always want to act when you 'grew up'?**

I grew up around the business. My mom did a lot of really cool stuff like *The Sonny And Cher Show*, and I was exposed to it at a very young age. I was really into dance and was obsessed with Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly. I took dance lessons for quite a few years because I think I thought I was Fred Astaire! I got really into tap dancing and stuff like that, so I think acting just kind of seemed like the next logical thing. When I got into my teens it became more difficult to do that, to start a career that early and be like a normal kid, so I kind of backed away and didn't really take acting seriously until I was in my early 20s and it sort of re-surfaced again.

**So when and how would you say you had your biggest break?**

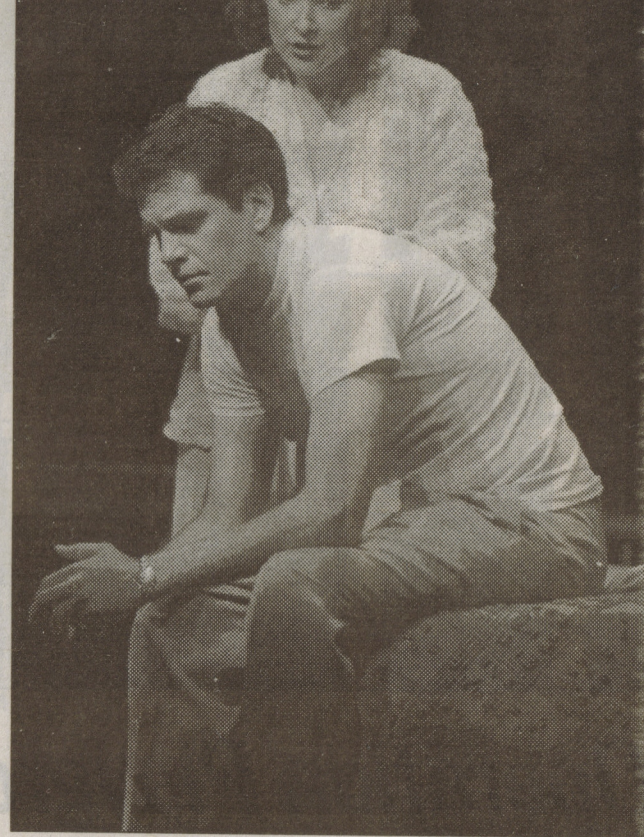
I was working as a Harley-Davidson mechanic at the time. I ran into a director I had worked with when I was young – I was in a film of his, and I had actually been cut out, so I think he felt like he owed me one. I wasn't acting at all at that point and he asked me to be in a film and I said, "Sure." From that experience I got an agent, who then suggested I look into something called *Dazed And Confused*. Once I was sort of exposed to that whole world and Richard Linklater and all the people that were in that film, I really got the bug to try to make a career out of acting.

**You have a lot of fans from your work on *Boston Public*. Do you ever reflect on the experience you had working on that show?**

Television was a little strange for me because I hadn't really done it before. Doing one episode is like doing an indie movie every eight days – it's a lot of work. I sort of got in the condition to where I liked the appeal of being able to do different films. The thing that was frustrating on television was that you're kind of hammering away on the same character. And at a certain point your head is spinning, because you're re-shooting episodes and getting rewrites for further episodes and you have a different director every week – it was a new world for me. It wasn't so much that I was discontent, but it was something that I wanted to give the old college try to see if I was suited for it, and I wasn't. But all the people were really cool and nice to work with. It just wasn't really my cup of tea.

**So *A Second Hand Memory* must be a REALLY nice experience for you.**

It's great, I love the consistency of it, and I love being able to share in the experience with new people every



night because they're such a big part of it. I love the idea that people can take Manhattan and come see a play and have such a fulfilling reaction to it. How could anyone not enjoy this play? It's got Woody Allen AND Nicky Katt!

*A Second Hand Memory* will play through January 23 at the Atlantic Theater Company. Tickets are available by calling Tele-Charge at 212-239-6200. For more information visit [www.atlantictheater.com](http://www.atlantictheater.com).