

# Mistaken for Strangers

★★★

**Dir. Tom Berninger.** 2013. N/R. 75mins. Documentary.

Riding high on the success of their 2010 album, *High Violet*, Brooklyn-based indie-rockers the National embarked on an extensive world tour. But don't expect a typical behind-the-scenes chronicle from Tom Berninger's calculatedly ramshackle, though often poignant, doc debut. Berninger is the brother of lead vocalist Matt Berninger, who hires his younger sibling as a roadie for the group. In between his backstage responsibilities, Tom videotapes the band's comings and goings and conducts a few hilariously off-point interviews that inevitably circle away from his subjects and back to him.

Tom's blundering ineptitude is part of the charm, of course, and his numerous *what-kind-of-movie-am-I-making?* laments are the very thing that eventually give his project focus. What holds *Mistaken for Strangers* back from greatness—or even goodness—is the frequent impression that Tom is playing up his foibles and failures for effect. He's so much the depressive ne'er-do-well that he seems like a walking contrivance created to give the National a more human face while still promoting the group's hipster-courting brand. The brotherly-love epiphany to which the film builds does effectively pluck the heartstrings, but there's a lingering sense that we're being had. (IFC Center; opens Fri)—*Keith Uhlich*

**THE BOTTOM LINE** Too much mock, not enough doc.



**Sibling revelry** Matt and Tom Berninger have a brotherly beer.