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American Masters
When You're Strange, a film about The Doors

Tom DiCillo
Director's Statement

The Doors' music is the rock equivalent to film. It has great drama, sex, poetry, and mystery. Their music is for all those who've ever felt the cool chill of isolation and oddness in themselves; which in effect is all of us. So much mystery and legend surrounds the Doors, the challenge was to find some personal truth and present it accurately. Delving into the original footage was like falling into a mirror of America; only one that was tilted back at a 40 year angle. It all had an intensity and immediacy as if it had been shot two days ago. It carried the drama and intimacy of a narrative film. As a result I decided to bend the documentary form a bit and not use contemporary interviews with talking heads referring back to a past event. I was much more excited by letting the film exist in a living moment as if it were happening in the present. The Doors insisted on complete artistic freedom in their music. They had a strange, completely original sound and were committed to the truth as they saw it. It was not always pretty--as Morrison's excesses increased it was frequently disturbing. But, as an independent filmmaker I related to this commitment. The Doors, they never sold out. It was deeply inspirational to be reminded that not everything is for sale.

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