



BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL

TWO STRANGERS TRYING NOT TO KILL EACH OTHER (12A)

Director: Jacob Perlmutter, Manon Ouimet

Starring: Maggie Barrett, Joel Meyerowitz

UK/Denmark/US, 2024, 1 hour 40 minutes, English/French/Italian + English subtitles

An extraordinary presentation of a disarmingly ordinary situation, *Two Strangers Trying Not To Kill Each Other* follows elderly couple Joel Meyerowitz and Maggie Barrett as they reflect on their lives, contemplate their encroaching mortality and navigate the challenges and pitfalls of their troubled, but intensely loving, relationship.

For this film, documentarians (and real-life couple) Jacob Perlmutter and Manon Ouimet took the committed step of moving in with Joel and Maggie for an entire year, becoming party to some of the couple's most intimate, vulnerable and emotionally-fraught moments together.

Joel is an acclaimed, distinguished street-photographer while Maggie is a comparatively unfêted novelist, artist and composer. This discrepancy bubbles up as a source of friction between the two, a faultline that only widens when Maggie breaks her femur. This forces their relocation from topographically-challenging Tuscany to Joel's Manhattan apartment (itself, having been the site of family life for Joel's past marriage, a reliquary of memory and a minefield of emotionally-fraught associations). It also puts Joel - at eighty-four, seven years Maggie's senior - in the position of carer and intensifies Maggie's existential insecurities about decrepitude, impermanence and obscurity.

The contrasts between the two - the rising panic of Maggie's tremulous, papery voice threatening to burst against Joel's soft-leather murmur - are palpable and yet so is the weather-beaten tenderness and love that lies between them.

Perlmutter and Ouimet frame their subjects with remarkable care and visual artistry (Perlmutter himself has a background in photography) while at once discreetly concealing their presence. The result is almost unbearably intimate and, ultimately, deeply moving.

Winner of multiple awards, *Two Strangers Trying Not To Kill Each Other* is required viewing for lovers of understated, honest, touching documentary-cinema.

Notes compiled by Thomas Martin