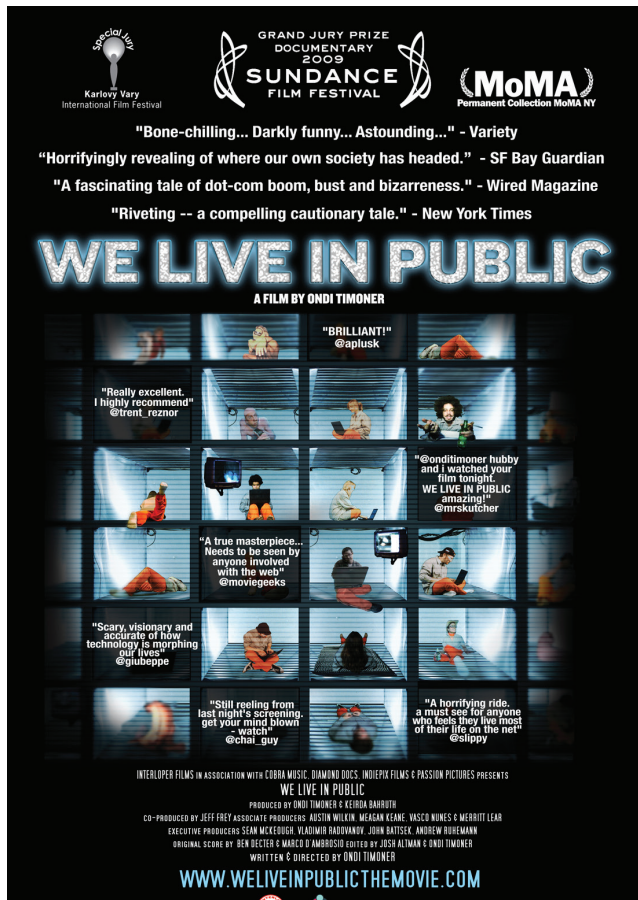


# INFLUENCE | FILM CLUB

www.influencefilmclub.com



## We Live in Public Discussion Guide

Director: Ondi Timoner

Year: 2009

Time: 90 min

You might know this director from:

Cool It (2010)

Join Us (2007)

Dig! (2004)

## FILM SUMMARY

88% of Americans use the Internet on a daily basis. Ask your average American, “Have you ever heard of Josh Harris?” and you’re likely to receive a blank-eyed “No” for an answer. According to director Ondi Timoner, Josh Harris is “the greatest Internet pioneer you’ve never heard of,” a point she skilfully executes in her Sundance award-winning documentary *WE LIVE IN PUBLIC*.

At times, *WE LIVE IN PUBLIC* plays out like a debauched after-party in the most permissive of settings. Naked girls, free drugs and alcohol, all of anything you could wish for day and night – except your privacy. Digging down into the core of the human psyche and our incessant hunt for fame and glory, Timoner’s decade-long filming escapade into the life and times of Josh Harris makes for a rollercoaster ride.

Trying to keep track of Harris’ movements – from his Californian birthplace, to his millionaire status in the fast lane of Silicon Alley, to his underground bunker for the filming of human experiment “Quiet,” to his Soho loft with online girlfriend Tanya Corrin, to the depths of depression when the net-com bubble burst, to an apple orchard in rural New York, to a dust-filled village in Ethiopia – leads to a dizzying state of mind. Like data traveling over high-speed broadband, Harris and his ideas of where technology is inevitably leading us flash rapidly forwards.

*WE LIVE IN PUBLIC* tells the tale of one man’s multi-colored maniacal life, a man ahead of the times, predicting with uncanny clarity what technology had in store next, who in his own words “held on and waited for the market to catch up.” The tale of Harris offers raw, stripped-down proof that the lives we used to conduct in the privacy of our own homes and the secrets we once coveted behind closed doors are a thing of the past. If we put ourselves online – anywhere, anytime, anyhow – we too are living in public.

## FILM THEMES

The predictions of Josh “the Warhol of the Web” Harris sound with clarity as our most private moments become public property and the Internet claims omnipotence over one and all.

### VISIONARY OR DELUSIONARY?

As a child, Josh’s family called him “the nutty professor.” Alienated from his mother, handled with white gloves by his siblings, Josh internalized his emotions and spent his upbringing in front of the television, embracing the visions of “Gilligan’s Island” creator Sherwood Schwartz. This cocktail of quirky circumstances resulted in a man joining the ranks of visionary, conducting a life way ahead of the general curve, spotting trends long before they hit the public map. Josh was painted with many brushes, allegedly a madman, genius, schizophrenic, control freak, techy nerd, and artistic nutcase. As with many who live ahead of their time, the line between visionary and delusionary is blurred.

### PRIVATE TURNED PUBLIC

“I am sitting here, six in the morning. I am staring at two people basically naked in the shower together with 30 people watching and it’s like, uh okay, but that’s the future.” Commenting on his human experiment “Quiet,” Josh embodied the wave rushing into society when privacy was abandoned over the power of technology. When sex, arguably the most private and intimate part of any person’s life, is made public, when it is normalized, the core of humanity is put to the test. Willing to share everything in order to be granted the key to the electronic Pandora’s box, humans become slaves to the digital, sacrificing dignity, self-respect, and pride in the name of the public domain.

### QUEST FOR CELEBRITY

What began with “Quiet” continues with Facebook today. People become wrapped into judging themselves by Likes, views, online ratings, and are legitimized by our daily dose technological interaction. We are at the beck and call of the technology available to us and how it directs us to interact. We are fascinated by watching and being watched and feel like we more substantial once we are seen. When eyes are watching, we are willing to sacrifice incredible things in order to become visible and achieve a semblance of internet recognition. A new reality was born with the advent of the Internet and as we connect ourselves to people we only know electronically we are at risk of trading virtual intimacy for physical relationships.

### IN CONTROL/BEING CONTROLLED

Setting up the laboratory, executing the trial, and then succumbing to his own evil trap, technology caught up with Josh. Just as 9/11 split New York into the pre and post city, so was Josh’s life severed in two: the millionaire madman, full of potential, power, and possibility, versus the financially destitute loser, the emotionally bankrupt rat in his own wicked laboratory. The swings and roundabouts of life catch up with us all, and what we set up for others can’t help but find us in the end. When we stop listening to our internal needs, the controller becomes the controlled.

**“Andy Warhol was wrong. His view was that people want 15 minutes of fame in their lifetime. Our view is that people want 15 minutes of fame every day.”**

Josh Harris

**“Josh embodies a spirit and a vision that’s literally one in a million.”**

Andy Morris



## FILM FACTS:

- WE LIVE IN PUBLIC was awarded the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance and Best Documentary at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, as well as being nominated for Best Documentary at Warsaw International Film Festival. The Sundance win was the second time director Ondi Timoner had been awarded that prize.
- Director Ondi Timoner graduated cum laude from Yale University, with a major in Film, Theater, and Literature Studies. In addition to her documentary work, she has directed commercials and web series for the likes of McDonalds, Ford, and The Army. In 2011, Timoner directed the opening film for President Clinton's birthday/fundraiser concert at the Hollywood Bowl, which starred Jay-Z.
- Josh Harris was raised in Ventura, California, and went on to receive a BA in Communications from the University of California, San Diego. After his Internet exploits of the 1990s and early 2000s, he ran an apple orchard in upstate New York, managed African Entertainment Network in Ethiopia, and then returned to New York City, where he worked on a project entitled "Net Band Command," billed as a "Truman Show for today," a sort of online reality TV show that encourages participants to compete against one another.
- The first Big Brother was a character in George Orwell's novel "1984," published in 1949.
- 37% of the Web contains pornography.
- Tanya Corrin and Josh Harris lived in a loft in Soho, New York, during the filming of their online project [welveinpublic.com](http://welveinpublic.com) in 2000, with the intention of having 32 cameras filming them 24 hours a day for 100 days.
- Tanya Corrin, Harris' infamous "fake girlfriend," was living in New York City with her two daughters as of 2014, and describes herself as a "somatic healer, meditation teacher, coach, and writer." Her articles have been published in "The Guardian," "New York Observer," and "Glamour."
- The term Silicon Valley, a nickname for the southern part of the San Francisco Bay Area, was coined in 1971. Silicon Alley, which refers to an area of Manhattan housing many high tech industries, was first used in 1995 to attract candidates who were interested in working in Silicon Valley. Jason Calacanis, who is featured in WE LIVE IN PUBLIC, founded the Silicon Alley Reporter in 1996, a trade publication focused on news and events in Silicon Alley.
- The first examples of reality television include "Queen for a Day," which debuted in 1945, and "Candid Camera," which debuted in 1948.
- In 2013, it was revealed that the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) Surveillance Program had violated its work by holding millions of email contact lists, searching email content, and secretly tapping in to Yahoo and Google data centers to collect private information.

## WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. Are you living a life in public, walking a tightrope between respecting your own privacy needs and relying on electronic feedback and assurance? Disconnect yourself at least one hour more per day than last week.
2. Support Online Privacy Matters, which is working to create global standards for respecting online privacy.
3. Data Privacy Day is an international event held on January 28 every year. Get involved!
4. Check out director Ondi Timoner's project - A TOTAL DISRUPTION - a collection of series involving innovators who use technology to transform our lives.

## We believe a good documentary is just the beginning...

In a world of sound-bites, documentaries provide an opportunity to think, understand, share, and connect with the world.

They are controversial, divisive, fascinating, unexpected, and surprising. They can be thrillers, dramas, comedies, romance, tear-jerkers, and horror films.

Documentaries provide the perfect topic for meaningful conversations. If you want to talk about the things that matter with people that matter then pick a film, invite your friends, and watch & discuss together. It's as easy as that.

**Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.**