



## Presenting Princess Shaw Discussion Guide

Director: Ido Haar

Year: 2015

Time: 83 min

### You might know this director from:

9 Star Hotel (2007)

Melting Siberia (2004)

## FILM SUMMARY

As a mass hub of information, communication, and creativity that anyone, anywhere, with a connection can add to at any time, the Internet is arguably a black hole for a constant stream of content. **PRESENTING PRINCESS SHAW** is a touching example of the potential for the Internet to spark connections and change the lives of those watching, creating, and collaborating.

Take, for example, Samantha Montgomery, a.k.a. Princess Shaw. Raised in an abusive setting, Shaw explains in one of her many videos, “As a child I only knew pain, torture, and despair.” She turns to music, crafting songs out of hardships and uploading her creations and vulnerable, heartfelt monologues onto Youtube, dreaming of fame.

Travel the globe 7,000 miles to Ophir “Kutiman” Kutiel, an internationally acclaimed producer, musician, and YouTube video mash-up artist. By mining and connecting uploaded content on YouTube, he creates entirely new pieces, sweeping sonic spheres of magnificent proportions. Happening this time upon Shaw’s song “Give It Up,” he constructs an emotionally moving composition out of her voice and many others’ instrumentation.

When Kutiman discovers Princess Shaw, his friend and filmmaker Ido Haar begins to document her under the guise of making a documentary about YouTubers. He documents her attempts to escape the mundane, to find her way into the spotlight, all the while knowing nothing about Kutiman nor his work with her music. When she learns of the Israeli creator and the mash-up video he made featuring her song, Haar is there to capture her jubilation as the YouTube views tally grows into the millions and document her journey as her dream comes true. The resulting **PRESENTING PRINCESS SHAW** serves as testimony not only to these two artists’ individual talents but to the collective harmony and immense positive potential of the “Interweb” into which our lives are woven.

## FILM THEMES

While the human longing to express and connect remains alive and well, the vast potential of the Internet to unite strangers reaches an apex of gorgeous emotional expression, with YouTube as the channel.

### SHARING AS CONNECTION

YouTube is a channel for the people, a platform for the public to post content. With a simple click of the upload button, an individual goes public from the privacy of their own chosen environment. By offering a virtual place for anyone to post, a sanctuary of expression, anyone can share via the World Wide Web. As a megaphone for the unheard, loneliness can be eased, making otherwise impossible connections a possibility, providing an outlet for those struggling to be heard and received.

### THE STRUGGLE FOR SUCCESS

Just how success is defined, how it can be quantified and calculated, how one can know when they've crossed over the line from failure is up for constant dispute. In the Internet world, number of views or going viral serve as benchmarks in the quest to measure triumph. Princess Shaw aches for success, battling against herself, unrelenting in her strive towards recognition and being discovered. Posing her question to an anonymous audience, she asks, "Why am I going on in the same direction with no direction? In your eyes I'm no one." Although the parameters of success differ between us, we all want to be seen for what makes us unique and sets us apart.

### FREE CULTURE

"Kutiman invented a new language. He created a completely new piece out of a mix of YouTube videos," stated the announcer at the Habima Theatre show in Tel Aviv. By plucking material from the web and creating audio-visual symphonies, Kutiman is regarded as a pioneer. As an adherent to the Free Culture Movement, a system questioning the power system behind digital technologies, Kutiman believes that the underrepresented can be empowered through digital accessibility. Since so much of our life is dictated by digital media, opening up the access of content to all and making media free to everyone, the silent are granted a voice they previously did not possess.

### THE HEALING POWER OF MUSIC

For Samantha Montgomery, music is an outlet, a connection to her pain, a beacon of light in the midst of her darkest moments, a tool for releasing the tangle of hurt within her. For Ophir Kutiel, music too is an outlet, a connection to himself, a means of creative expression. As its entirely own entity, music transcends boundaries and knows no limitations. With its uplifting potential, music heals, serving as the balm of the wounded spirit. In the case of Kutiman and Princess Shaw, music connects two apparently disconnected souls in an unbreakable bond, broadcasting powerful emotions across the Internet's invisible band waves.

**"I write my own songs. I just want to be successful."**

Princess Shaw

**"A free culture is one where everyone thinks of themselves as a voice in a huge choir, whose power and beauty comes from its size and diversity."**

Free Culture Movement

**"When you keep trying and have the rug pulled from under you and the door slammed in your face 1,000 times, it makes you want to give up."**

Princess Shaw



## FILM FACTS:

- PRESENTING PRINCESS SHAW, originally named THRU YOU PRINCESS, had its world premiere at the 2015 Jerusalem Film Festival. It has gone on to receive numerous awards, including the Audience Award at the Sheffield International Documentary Festival, and award nominations such as the IDFA Audience Award in Amsterdam.
- When Ophir “Kutiman” Kutiel was six years old, he heard his neighbor playing piano. Ever since then he has been fascinated with music and has devoted his life to creating it. In 2009 he released “Thru You,” his first collection of musical and video mash-ups, which received 10 million hits in two weeks. In 2014 he released sequel “Thru You Too,” with Princess Shaw’s “Give It Up” being the first track made available. Living on a kibbutz—a collective housing setup—in Tel Aviv, Kutiman continues his work as a musician, composer, producer, and video artist.
- Director Ido Haar, a friend of Kutiman’s, saw “Thru You” and felt inspired to make a documentary about YouTubers. He contacted Princess Shaw and traveled to New Orleans on and off for one year, documenting her life.
- The term YouTuber refers to an Internet celebrity who gained fame by posting videos on YouTube.
- Princess Shaw was born in Chicago and moved to New Orleans in 2006. Since meeting Kutiman, she has traveled the world with his band and the film.
- YouTube was founded in 2005 by three former employees of PayPal, due to their frustration at not being able to locate certain video clips online. Google bought it from the friends in 2006 for \$1.65 billion, and as of 2016 the business was based out of California. The majority of YouTube videos are free to watch and supported by advertising. Various countries have banned YouTube at certain times, such as China and Iran.
- Both Kutiman and Haar ascribe to the Free Culture Movement, defined as “lifting barriers to the full range of human potential and empowering those lacking representation and power through media and technology.” The movement now functions as the Free Culture Foundation, with the mission “to bring an end to the subjugation enabled by private ownership over media, ideas, and technology.”
- PRESENTING PRINCESS SHAW screened at the UN Headquarters in New York City in June 2016.
- Director Haar did not tell Shaw about his connection to Kutiman until she found the “Give It Up” clip herself. In his words, “When I told her I knew for nine months and I knew Kutiman very well, it was a great moment.”
- The Internet turned 25 in 2014. That same year, the Pew Research Center conducted a study on American’s views of this ubiquitous force. 90% of those surveyed said the Internet had more of a positive than negative impact on their life.

## WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. **Share** PRESENTING PRINCESS SHAW with both the dreamers and disbelievers in your life. A tale of trial and error, of glorious success and heartbreaking defeat, there is a message that resounds in us all.
2. **Discover** the internet’s creative potential. There are many people using the internet in new, unusual, exciting ways—whether it be musicians, storytellers, virtual reality experts, journalists, and beyond. Take the time to find a content curator who you trust to point you in the direction of material that you connect with.
3. **Make** your own musical mash-up. Kutiman’s project [Mix The City](#) is an interactive web app offering anyone the chance to mix up the sounds of Tel Aviv. The potential to come together and create is boundless.
4. **Follow** Princess Shaw, whose indomitable spirit and devotion to her artistic pulse is a true inspiration, as she continues on her creative journey through life. Find her on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [YouTube](#).

## 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.**