Are the royals going to vlog?

The young attractive royal couple that is *not* Harry and Meghan has dropped a truly chaotic intro video for their shiny new official YouTube channel. In the video, the presumed future queen and king of the United Kingdom (also known as Kate Middleton and Kate Middleton's husband) laugh and chat awkwardly in what looks like their home. It's well-lit but not *too* well-lit: a reasonably good YouTuber rig but not exactly one of royal magnificence.

"Be careful what you're saying, these guys are going to start filming," says Prince William to his smiling wife, as though she doesn't know how cameras work. The general feel of the clip is the first few seconds after a camera starts rolling but before the YouTube stars start vlogging in earnest. Except they don't vlog. The video then cuts to what can only be described as a hype reel of public appearances at public functions or at their various charities – not exactly an exclusive glimpse of the royals at home. Where is Oprah? *Where are the chickens?*

What is this new channel even for?
It's not as though Will and Kate's new channel is going to be a royal pioneer in the world of awkward webcam recordings with dubious production values. For one thing, it looks like they've invested in an actual setup. For another thing, the British royal family – as an official, monolithic institution – has had a YouTube channel since 2007. And for the past year, while much of the world has been in lockdown, the channel has become replete with recordings of Zoom meetings. From such bangers as "The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge host bingo" (100K views) to less inspired videos like "The Earl of Wessex joins a video call with the National Youth Jazz Orchestra"

(4.8K views), the House of Windsor has been very busy addressing the masses from their laptops, at home.

So will the Cambridges vlog or won't they? What is this new channel even for? And what's the deal with their weird Instagram follower count, anyway?

It's impossible not to connect this latest foray into the world of #creator #platforms with Meghan Markle and Prince Harry's bombshell interview with Oprah or to contrast it with that other couple's deals with Netflix and Spotify. The supposed bad blood between the princes and their wives might be more tabloid projection than reality, but it's at least true that one couple is set to one day succeed to the throne, while the other has dealt the British monarchy a blow as severe as the 1995 Princess Diana interview with Martin Bashir.

The royals will be the last people on earth to find out that print is dying

Is the new Will and Kate YouTube channel a response to the burgeoning Harry / Meghan media empire? Is it a bid for independence from the British tabloid press? Or is it just the Kensington Palace comms team trying out something new that will wind up just as anodyne and dull as the rest of the royal family's internet presence?

In truth, it's bizarre that the British royal family is just barely keeping up with the newest changes in the media landscape. A dysfunctional rich family whose sole purpose in life is to be famous? The Windsors were influencers before they were called the Windsors and long before being an influencer was even a thing. How is their entire brand still in the grip of the tabloids? It's like the royals will be the last people on earth to find out that print is dying.

Of course, previous attempts at the "Royals: They're Just Like Us" narrative have been met with mixed results. On the one

hand, these behind-the-scenes-type video treatments have always done gangbusters in television ratings. On the other hand, the family has uniformly hated and despised these documentaries, like the hilariously awkward 1969 BBC documentary depicting the everyday life of the royals, which is rumored to have been banned by the queen, though not until after approximately 350 million people viewed it worldwide. (The documentary made its way onto YouTube earlier this year and was quickly taken down via copyright notice.)

Restraint is rarely a recipe for social media success
Then there's the 1994 ITV documentary about Prince Charles (you know, the one who married Diana) that was so disastrous for his image that a subsequent poll by *The Sun* found that two-thirds of respondents did not want Charles to succeed as the next king.

Will and Kate's request for people to like and subscribe is the latest in a weighty media legacy spanning from Edward VIII's abdication radio broadcast to Elizabeth II's televised coronation to the tabloid warfare that Prince William's own parents waged against each other before his mother's untimely death while chased by paparazzi looking to feed the content mill. Given this history, it's understandable why the couple's online presence in all things is so tightly controlled. However, restraint is rarely a recipe for social media success, and the royal family's reticence and general fear of candor is exactly one of the reasons why the Meghan / Harry and Oprah interview was such a wild success.

But who's to say how things will turn out after all? The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are, essentially, taxpayer-funded celebrities. Surely, they've put more thought into this than we have.

https://www.theverge.com/2021/5/5/22421736/prince-william-kate-middleton-youtube-channel-vlog