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Daddy Issues **Reincarnation and Rock 'n' Roll**

by [Alison Hallett](#)



[My Reincarnation](#)

dir. Jennifer Fox

Opens Fri Dec 9

[Clinton St. Theater](#)

PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS are a bitch—but *My Reincarnation* offers the gentle suggestion that material obligations are much easier to escape than spiritual ones. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is a Buddhist master who, after fleeing Tibet, established himself as a teacher in Italy, where he married and had a family. His son, Yeshe, is identified as the reincarnation of another prominent Buddhist teacher—but there's a catch. The Italian-born Yeshe is neither particularly interested in his destiny as a spiritual leader, nor in the village full of Tibetans who await his return.

Director Jennifer Fox began filming the family in 1989, when Yeshe was a gawky, rebellious teenager, his face covered in cystic acne. "Everybody knows about me, but nobody knows me at all," he laments in the fashion of angsty adolescents everywhere, explaining that he doesn't care if he *is* the reincarnation of a big-deal Buddhist—he'd rather play music. Fast forward 13 years and he's working in the tech industry, while his father continues to teach despite his declining health.

My Reincarnation is primarily about Yeshe's slow, roundabout coming to terms with his spiritual calling, but it also provides a revealing look at the burdens of being a spiritual leader—after meetings, dozens of supplicants line up for individual counsel, wanting to know why their meditation isn't working or, in one particularly affecting scene, how to use Buddhist principles to recover from HIV. (Norbu's pragmatic advice boils down to "see a good doctor, and try to relax.") As a teenager, Yeshe hardly sees his father, who admits to being better at caring for the people who come to him for help than his own family. It isn't until relatively late in both of their lives that the father and son's paths seem to converge—a process Fox documents with subtlety and care.