



MARJORIE PRIME

Written and Directed by Michael Almereyda

Starring Jon Hamm, Geena Davis, Lois Smith and Tim Robbins



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About *MARJORIE PRIME*

Memories are sometimes all we have to lean on. We remember good times and bad, though it's not uncommon to bury memories that are troubling and painful. So what if memories could be remembered for you – or forgotten for you?

This question intrigued New York playwright JORDAN HARRISON in 2012 when he set to work on *MARJORIE PRIME*, a commission for the off-Broadway theater group, Playwrights Horizons. “My last few plays had been about the transition from the analog world to the digital one, and how humans are dealing with that,” he explains. “And how technology helps us feel more human, but also how it makes us bewildered and confused.”

Harrison had wanted to construct a play about artificial intelligence (AI), after reading Brian Christian's 2011 book, *The Most Human Human: What Artificial Intelligence Teaches Us About Being Alive*. The book relates Christian's experience participating in an annual Turing Test, pitting humans against a computer to determine which is the most “human,” basing results on their responses to test questions. “The thesis,” Harrison says, “is that since computers will continue to get better and better at being human, humans had better get better at being human.”

The playwright also had a more direct and emotional inspiration. His grandmother, in her 90s, was suffering from dementia. Harrison's parents, visiting her each day, started a caretaking journal – filling five notebooks by the time she passed. “What struck me about it was how much their daily task was to remind her who she was – who she loved, her favorite memories, and what she was good at,” he recalls.

This corresponded with Harrison's reading about artificial intelligence. “You give it [an AI program] details, and it becomes better at knowing itself.” What if a character – someone his grandmother's age – could interact with a computer program that knows more about her than she does? “Questions emerge: are we made of anything more than our memories? There has to be more than just that, because once a computer knows everything we do, who's to say it's not as human as we are?”

Harrison created *MARJORIE PRIME*, a story taking place in a future intentionally left undefined, though a few cultural clues are planted to indicate a timeline. (86-year-old Marjorie was proposed to by her husband-to-be after they watched the 1997 movie, *MY BEST FRIEND'S WEDDING*.) The play begins with Marjorie interacting with what appears to be a young man, perhaps a caregiver of some sort, though we soon learn he's actually a hologram of her late husband, Walter, as he appeared decades ago.

Marjorie lives with her daughter, Tess, and Tess's husband, Jon. It was Jon's idea to provide his mother-in-law with Walter Prime, to keep her company while Jon himself enjoys the process of “programming” the Prime, filling him in on his personal history. But Walter Prime's presence does not sit well with Tess, who is uncomfortable with this “fountain of youth version” of her dead father

As the story progresses, Marjorie passes away, and Jon brings a Prime version of Marjorie into the household, hoping to heal or resolve Tess's troubled relationship with her mother. But the attempt falls short and Tess, succumbing to despair, kills herself – leaving Jon to face his future (and his past) by once again inviting a Prime into the house, a replica of his dead wife.

Upon finishing the play, Harrison shared it with his friend Pam MacKinnon, a director at off-Broadway's Clubbed Thumb. MacKinnon brought it to legendary award-winning actress LOIS SMITH. "I was just crazy about it," Smith recalls. "I never, ever in my life had as excited a reaction, the first time I read a play. It truly was love at first sight."

Los Angeles's Center Theatre Group presented MARJORIE PRIME's premiere, with Smith starring as Marjorie, in September 2014 at the Mark Taper Forum. (The play was short-listed for a Pulitzer Prize the following year. When MARJORIE PRIME was given The Horton Foote Prize for Outstanding New American Play in September of 2016, it was Lois Smith, with some symmetry, who handed Harrison the award.)

Early on, Smith shared her feelings about the play with independent filmmaker MICHAEL ALMEREYDA. The two had long been friends, having worked together on two of the director's movies, THE ETERNAL (1998) and, more recently, THE MAN WHO CAME OUT ONLY AT NIGHT (3013). "She was excited about MARJORIE from the first table reading onward," he recalls.

The concept fascinated Almereyda. "I was intrigued by the premise, the idea that holographic companions might supplement and replace human memory. And Lois was so enthusiastic about it, the least I could do was fly to L.A. to see her do it."

The director caught the play late in its Los Angeles run, and found himself taken with the characters, the dialogue, and the way Harrison "fit big themes into a spare dramatic structure." "That night," Almereyda relates, "I told Lois I could imagine how to translate the story into a movie."

Smith sent Almereyda a copy of the play and put him in touch with Harrison, who was receptive. "I was lucky to find he trusted me," the director recounts. Adds Harrison, "I never saw MARJORIE as a film, so when Michael approached me, and wanted to do the adaptation, it seemed logical to let him." After three years of living with the play in his own head, he notes, "You get a little tired of your own voice. So it was interesting to see how someone who has so many films under their belt could open it up in ways that I don't think I would have thought of doing."

Almereyda's adaptation, in some respects, is restrained. "I didn't want to revamp or overhaul the play, but to distill it," he explains. He pared down dialogue, and eliminated characters who never appear onstage. He also expanded the role of Marjorie's caregiver, Julie, and invented another character, Marjorie's great granddaughter, also named Marjorie. Notes Smith, "There's less dialogue – a play is naturally much more verbal, while a film is more visual, which is a whole other language, and one which Michael knew how to incorporate with incredible finesse."

One of the most important changes involved relocating Marjorie's house to Long Island, moving the story to the beach, "I wanted to include the ocean as a reminder of nature and time, to frame the story within a non-human scale," the director explains. The stage version, by contrast, takes place in a single living room set, with Marjorie (and Marjorie Prime) seated in a big recliner for nearly the entire play. "In the film," says Smith, "he has us in the living room, the kitchen, in bedrooms, on decks around the house – and at the beach. It's a very different experience."

Almeryda also added a scene in a country club and a couple scenes in the family swimming pool. He wrote guest appearances for three dogs, and built defined seasonal shifts into the story, calling for rain and snow at crucial intervals.

"It never feels trapped, in the way that sometimes stage adaptations feel stagey and bound by walls and claustrophobic," Harrison describes. "It's open to nature and fluid. It's a nice vacation from people sitting on a couch talking! That was a big challenge to open it up, and something Michael did very skillfully, indeed."

Another new ingredient was the introduction of flashbacks. "I supplied each of the three principal humans with a single flashback," Almeryda explains. "As a way to measure their memories against versions of family history defined slightly differently in other scenes." Two flashbacks feature Walter in his younger days – also the age that he appears as a Prime – allowing us to see him convey more vulnerability than his holographic self can project.

The story also extends onscreen, to reveal more of Jon's life after Tess's passing. Jon and Tess's granddaughter gets introduced to her deceased grandmother in the form of Marjorie Prime. Almeryda says, "It's moving to imagine a child being able to make contact with a relative who's gone, to connect across generations, to transcend the bounds of time."

The director shared the screen adaptation and a "lookbook" with producer URI SINGER, with whom he had made *EXPERIMENTER* two years earlier. (The two will be collaborating again shortly, on *TESLA*, from a script Almeryda began writing 25 years ago.) At the time, Singer was visiting his own elderly mother, recovering from a stroke in Haifa, Israel. "She was also 86 – the same age as Lois and her character, Marjorie," the producer explains. "I told her, 'It's an amazing story,' and she said, 'Well, why don't you make it?'" He explained the business concerns of making an independent feature, but. . . "I took one look at her and said, 'But I so much appreciate the importance of this story being told, especially because of you – I'm gonna do it.' So I told Michael, 'You're on.'"

Casting and Characters

For Almeryda, there was no one else who could star as Marjorie but Lois Smith. "That was one of the conditions that Michael had given me," Singer notes. Smith was actually about to reprise the role onstage at Playwrights Horizons in New York. The movie was rushed forward to accommodate her, making sure Smith could begin rehearsals a day after filming wrapped. "Michael said, 'It has to be Lois. We'll make it work for her schedule.'"

For Smith, the transition from stage to screen was a relatively easy one. “It helped already having a lot of knowledge about the character and the story from having done the play,” she says. “I don’t think I’ve ever had an experience of being so familiar with a character.”

Theater and film are different mediums, of course, but the actress has had decades of experience working in both. “On the stage, there are times when the director is trying to create a sense of closeup. But, of course, in the film, that’s one of the strengths of the medium. There’s so much more you can deliver just in an expression, without lines.” Adds Harrison, “In the play, Lois had to be chairman of our experience for the audience, holding us in the palm of her hand. In the film, she gets to be more interior – she can wait for us to come to her, without having to deliver the ‘punchline.’”

Marjorie is loosely based on Harrison’s own grandmother, a former violinist, like Marjorie. “There’s a lot of my grandmother in her,” the playwright explains. “She was a violinist in the community symphony, but didn’t have greater ambitions than that. I think Marjorie is a little more serious a violinist than my grandmother was.” Marjorie’s personality, he notes, ‘is just a bundle of contradictions. She is very sharp, but also very confused. She’s very warm and then immediately cold. She’s not like Mrs. Claus – she’s not a cuddly version of an elderly person.”

She is in the beginning stages of dementia, though, Smith notes, “She’s not that far along. We do see her at a point in her life when she is losing her grip, losing her memories. But she’s full of life – and loves life, still. She may not always have things exactly straight, but she’s also not without some of her marbles – and some humor.”

The story also reveals that Marjorie has had her share of tragedy – she has not only lost her husband but, decades earlier, their son, Damian, committed suicide at a young age, forever damaging Marjorie’s relationship with her surviving child, Tess. As Harrison relates. “Marjorie proceeded forward after Damian’s death, but there was a black curtain drawn, in certain ways. We know that, without being able to actually observe it. She didn’t stop being alive in the world. She continued with the same kind of aplomb that is her way – before the memory loss began to make a big difference. She didn’t change who she was.”

Marjorie’s daughter, Tess, is played by GEENA DAVIS. “The film is done in such an interesting way, you don’t even know it’s a period movie, really, until it goes on for a bit,” the actress says. “And the pace and the tone that Michael brought to this, along with his strong artistic ideas about how he wanted it played and to look really made it something special.”

Tess, says Harrison, is someone “who just makes things hard for herself, with overthinking. She gets in the way of her own happiness. She feels she’s right, but also gets sick of her own voice, telling people what’s right. This is someone who’s been struggling even before the story begins, just to enjoy life and not analyze everything and find pure pleasure in things. And she doesn’t know how to break out of it, to escape herself.”

Chief among her struggles is the longstanding scars from the death of her brother – and the effect it has had on her relationship with her mother. “I think she’s always had a feeling that she was never quite enough for her mother, that her brother took up all of the space in her mother’s heart,” Davis explains. “And when he died, she probably felt like, ‘Finally, my mother needs me – I’m going to get that closeness that I always wanted.’” And when a dazzling, young version of her father shows up – Walter Prime – the Prime takes up the space in Marjorie’s heart that Tess always longed for. “She’s been waiting her whole life to feel a moment when her mother would truly love her, need her and appreciate her, and she never got it.”

The topic of Damian was never brought up – not even his name. “That’s how they process the grief in this family,” says Harrison, “by covering it with layers and layers of silence and denial, in that WASP-y way.” Notes Davis, “She hides it from Marjorie to take advantage of the fact that, due to her dementia, she doesn’t remember him.”

TIM ROBBINS plays Tess’s husband, Jon, an intermediary and peacekeeper in this fraught family atmosphere. “Tim is very selective about which projects he takes on,” Uri Singer notes. “But after we sent his agent the script, and she read it, she made sure it got to him. He read it, and he wanted in.” Robbins was busy directing a play in Los Angeles but, every weekend during the Marjorie shoot, he flew from Long Island to L.A., and back again. “We really wanted him,” Singer confirms, “and, as you see onscreen, he’s amazing. We were very lucky.”

Notes Davis, “I’ve known Tim forever, but we’ve never gotten to work together. He delivers a really smart portrayal, really lives in the moment. And it felt very real doing scenes together – I could feel their chemistry.”

Jon and Tess have a very close relationship – “I think they really enjoy each other,” she says, “they enjoy each other’s minds. I think they like to talk about things and argue about things. And I think he really feels like a rock to her, in some ways. She likes that he’s tuned in to her and wants to take care of her. Though, ultimately, he can’t fix her existential problems.”

His relationship with his mother-in-law is a unique one, Harrison states. “Jon refers to himself as ‘human morphine’ for Marjorie [in the play]. Since he isn’t her child, he gets a little more room to be playful with her – they don’t have a lifetime of history.” Jon also tends to be flexible with Marjorie’s memories. “It’s interesting the things he chooses to tell Marjorie,” including reminders of a relentless old flame, Jean-Paul, a “tennis pro.” “He very purposefully emphasizes the things about her that were exotic or dramatic or sexy. That, in itself, is potentially flawed, because he’s curating what she knows and remembers.”

Playing Walter Prime, the holographic edition of Marjorie’s late husband – as well as the real Walter in flashbacks – is JON HAMM, who also loved the artificial intelligence aspects of the story. “I’ve read stories similar to this over the years, such as *Ex Machina*, and it’s something that’s always intrigued me. And I was very comfortable that the story had been vetted, in some way, by having had a life on the stage. Though working with Lois could sometimes be a bit daunting – and exciting!

You know the person you're going in with is so prepared and already has a take on it. And I'm a big fan of Michael Almereyda's. I like his work a lot. I find him to be a very thoughtful and artistic human being, as well as a very interesting filmmaker. So it was a pretty attractive project to get to come be a part of."

Adds Davis, "It's been really fun telling people that Jon Hamm plays my father. They'll have to see it and figure out why that makes sense," she laughs.

Life with a Prime

So what exactly is a Prime? What are they for – why does one get one? The answers seem to be manifold. For the elderly or infirm, they're for company, and to help a people keep their minds sharp. But there's more to it.

"Jordan's concept of the Primes, as a kind of replacement memory system, is both sweet and chilling," Almereyda states. They're also therapeutic. "They were invented as a way to deal with grieving," Davis says. "Whether this is a good idea or not, it's to try to soften the blow of losing someone by having an imaginary version of them there. Like if you had old movies of the person – but you don't get to interact with or have a conversation with movies."

Being holograms, they you can't touch or be touched, the director points out. "Primes are not physical – they can't pick things up, they can't physically interact with people. But they look, speak and react to stimulus just as human beings do. That said, they're more than projections. They mirror their human companions, reflecting the energies and emotions that get beamed onto them. And in a very powerful way, they can be kind, they can be generous. As Jordan has said, Primes can become more tender and attentive, more human, than their original counterparts."

When Jon first begins informing Tess Prime about Tess's suicide, for example, the Prime responds with great compassion. "I think that's something that is innate in all of the Primes," Davis says. "The ability to listen and empathize, to be comforting, is in them, no matter which one it is."

Humans can select the vintage, the age, of the person they wish their Prime to embody. "It's the version of the person that you have unfinished business with," Harrison informs. "Marjorie picks the younger Walter for his Prime, because that was the age when everything happened with their son, when their lives broke. Tess talks to a version of her mother that was the one she most wanted to resolve." Adds Davis, "She wanted to hear 'I love you,' to finally get that affirmation and approval from her."

Each of the humans indeed has a different kind of relationship with the Primes. Walter Prime, for Marjorie, "is there to keep her company, and remind her of the things from her life, her history," Smith explains. And, it seems, she likes it. "She occasionally gets cross with him, when he makes a misstep," Harrison says, "but, in general, she's delighted to have this very handsome distraction. And she's willing to take the ride." She also gets to have a little naughty fun with him. "She likes that she's been able to teach him insinuating, sexual humor. It's kind of left for us, in the audience,

to see a little bit of the grotesquery of her flirting with someone half her age (in the play, he's 30). But, in general, she doesn't have a lot of neuroses about Walter Prime. It's kind of a functional relationship."

He's even therapeutic for her, with regard to Damian. "Only through the use of the Prime has she been able to go through that curtain again, to recover the blacked-out part of her life," Harrison notes.

Tess is not particularly comfortable with the idea of a Walter Prime. "If it was a person that you knew, it would seem like a lie," Harrison states. "It would smack you in the face. How could the computer possibly depict every nuance of the real person? And anything less than the real person would seem uncanny in the worst way – like in *THE POLAR EXPRESS*, the idea of the 'uncanny valley' – the thing that almost looks like a person is the most grotesque thing."

She fares better with the Prime version of Marjorie, though, after her mother's passing. "She's so closed off to the idea of a Prime, so disapproving – yet she finds comfort herself in a Prime of her mother," Davis states. "It kind of comes full circle for her."

Tess and Marjorie Prime find their way into a conversation Tess could never have had in real life with her mother, perhaps the kind of talk she had always wanted to have. "It's the closest thing they have to a connection, the scene between the two of them," Harrison says. "It's easier for her to talk to a computer version of her mother than it was to talk to her real mother. You need a little distance to open up. And it feels like Marjorie Prime listens to her in a way that the living Marjorie didn't, and it really lays Tess bare."

For Tess, that chance to have the mother she always wanted in a Prime version is not entirely successful; it falls fatally short. With regards to Damian, Davis explains, "Marjorie Prime, inquiring about herself, asks Tess if Marjorie has any other kids, and Tess answers, 'No.' Her mom's life had been so dominated by that loss and tragedy that it colored everything about her life and her relationship with Tess. So, suddenly presented with the opportunity for a do-over, where he doesn't exist, she takes the opportunity to leave it out of Marjorie Prime's memory. She's attempting to rewrite history."

But there's a cost to having this Prime of hers work out so well. "What sends her deeper into depression," says Harrison, "is that she feels love and catharsis with this thing that isn't even human. She's thinking, 'How is it possible that I achieved this connection with this thing, that I couldn't achieve with my own mother?'" She hasn't found her answer. "Ultimately, it's not satisfying," says Davis. "She was willing to go some way with it, but it didn't work. Nothing worked. 'I never got the love that I thought I was going to get, and there's no point anymore.'" In the film, Almeralda has Marjorie Prime reach past language and connect with Tess through music: Bob Dylan's "I Shall Be Released" (performed by The Band). But the sense of communion, of release, is bittersweet. It's the last time we see Tess alive.

Jon's relationship with Primes is initially more positive, if also shifting and ultimately disappointing. "He's really a cheerleader for this technology," says Harrison. "There's a little bit of a boyish, tech geek excitement about it for him. He's willing to try anything that will help Marjorie and that will help his wife, and doesn't share Tess's skepticism about technology." And that, of course, rankles Tess all the more. "For all his enthusiasm, he is doing unwitting damage by not quite realizing what it's like for his wife to see this computer version of her father trotted out."

Jon also relishes the "programming" aspect of owning a Prime – filling Walter in on details of the life he's enlisted to represent. In response, Walter Prime almost takes on a "bartender" role for Jon, providing a receptive ear, allowing Jon to share thoughts about his own life. "He's desperately trying to figure out, 'What is my relationship to this thing, and how do I approach it?'" Hamm notes. Of his costar, he observes, "Not only does Tim have an amazing presence, but he also has a very natural impish kind of curiosity, that I think comes through in our relationship in those scenes. He really understood Jon in a very deep way."

Towards the end of the story, the tables are turned, and it is Jon who has provided himself with a Prime – of Tess, after her death. And it's not quite so easy to do, now that the shoe is on the other foot. "He's been the cheerleader for this technology the whole film," Harrison notes. "Then, when it comes to him actually needing it, and needing to talk to his wife, and try to understand why she took her life, it becomes grotesque to him in the way that Walter was grotesque to Tess."

Making it all the more difficult for him is having to "program" her himself. "It's actually hard to watch, because we're seeing a Prime at the very beginning of its programming," he adds. "It's interesting," Davis notes, "we meet her when she's 'new' – fresh out of the box, still with the plastic on her, so to speak. She doesn't have much Tess yet, though she's eager to learn."

It's unlike what we see with Walter Prime, who knew some things about himself and was able to be playful with Marjorie, Harrison says. "But to see someone who looks exactly like his perceptive wife not even be able to understand that she's not alive – he feels the need to tell her that she's dead – is counterintuitive for him. Maybe someone might want the fantasy of being able to pretend all is well, but the Tess he would want to talk to is one that understands what has happened, and understands him. And in the play, the last we see of him is his decision that he can't continue with her, and he abandons the Prime."

But that is, by no means, the end of the Primes. Long after Jon is gone, the three Primes are seen carrying on together, regurgitating the same stories we saw them learning, as they have likely been doing for years, decades or centuries. "They know each other are Primes, yet they can't stop doing what they do – entertain and amuse and keep up dialogue," Davis observes. "During our stage version," Smith laughs, "we called this the 'Prime Party.'"

"What is the end game for these 'people,' who are, by all accounts, immortal?" Hamm ponders. "What's the point of memory? What is the 'what' there? They're remembering things they didn't actually experience. What is their happiness? What is that feeling?"

Playing a Prime was apparently as much fun as it looks. “That was really one of the really interesting things about this role – getting to play both Marjorie and Marjorie Prime,” Smith says.

Almeryda’s direction to his actors was fairly simple. “We tried not to exaggerate or emphasize differences between human behavior and Prime behavior,” he explains. “Primes are meant to be great copiers of human speech and human gestures, and I encouraged the actors to follow Jordan’s insistence that Primes get better at this as they age. So my main note was to avoid ‘robotic’ behavior, to make the Primes seem natural, even if they’re initially tentative, learning as they go.”

“What I tried to do,” relates Hamm, “was remember this is essentially like a brand new person, but with an installed set of operating instructions. He’s not child-like, he’s just kind of learning on the fly, but at a very, very, very accelerated rate. It’s a fine line and a fun balance to strike.” Adds Smith, “You’ve been well-crafted and programmed – but that’s about as far as it goes.”

The only hint that someone is a Prime – besides the fact that you can walk through one – is their language. The sometimes clunky, stilted tone in response to someone expressing irony, for example. “I love the ‘Great - I’ll remember that now’ lines,” Davis chuckles, referring to when a Prime is told a piece of history that it realizes it should ingrain in its backstory – for next time.

While his castmates are seen, for the most part, as humans, attaining their Prime status towards the end of the story, Hamm had the unique assignment of portraying a Prime for most of the film – but playing the real Walter, his human version, in a pair of short flashbacks. “It provides a nice depth and richness to this person who we don’t really know much about, other than through the lens of the other characters in the film talking about him,” he says. “From a narrative filmmaking standpoint, it’s something Michael has ably done, giving the audience some kind of mystery, and leaving them something to fill in for themselves.”

The Primes, and their human counterparts, were photographed entirely on location in Amagansett, in the Hamptons. Almeryda made use of a pair of houses, one on the beach, allowing for shots showing the ocean beyond the back porch. A second, inland house was the primary location. The two structures echoed each other, sharing an elegant modernist style featuring lots of exposed wood, railings and decks. Cinematographer SEAN WILLIAMS and production designer JAVIERA VARAS worked skillfully to blend the two locations, making them appear as a single abode. The film was shot quickly, within a 3-week period, from late August to mid-September in 2015.

“I’d never done a film completely on one location like that before,” Davis relates. “It felt like we were doing a play, almost like we were living there. The house felt lived in.”

Production designer Varas and costume designer KAMA ROYZ picked up on the muted tones from the beach, keeping the film’s palette to shades of gray and blue, pale yellow and tan, echoing surrounding sand, water and sky, allowing the actors faces to glow against these colors.

The ocean plays an important part in the movie, not just visibly – it is heard throughout the soundtrack. “It flows through the film,” says Almereyda. “It’s meant to be a reminder of an energy and scale outside human scope.”

In fact, the film’s score contains music directly inspired by the ocean: “Wave Movements,” a symphonic piece composed by RICHARD REED PARRY (of the Grammy-winning band Arcade Fire) and BRYCE DESSNER (of the Grammy-nominated band The National). Music supervisor LUCY BRIGHT pointed Almereyda to a performance of the 20-minute piece at The Grace Rainey Auditorium at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, in November 2015, shortly after shooting wrapped

“It had been performed only twice before, and it’s not commercially available, but we managed to get access to that night’s recording (performed by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra) and it became the chief component of our soundtrack,” Almereyda notes. The film also includes music by Beethoven, Bach, Poulenc, and the contemporary experimental composer Alvin Lucier.

While the director hoped to fill out the soundtrack with other recordings that would reflect Marjorie’s experience as a concert violinist, the film’s budget didn’t fully allow for the music he had in mind. “So I shared the film with MICA LEVI” (of Micachu & The Shapes; composer for the films UNDER THE SKIN and JACKIE). “I was hoping she might recommend replacement tracks. To my great pleasure and surprise, she liked the movie enough to jump in and write new pieces herself,” creating synth-based cues in her home studio. “These tracks add a rougher sound, a more raw emotion. They’re haunting.”

Audience reaction to the concept of Primes in stage productions of MARJORIE PRIME has been decidedly two-sided – and one can expect the same for the film, Smith says. “I know from doing it on the stage, there’s a wide range of reactions. The way people respond to the Primes, when they come to the end of the play, there are people who think it is absolutely lovely, and there are people who think it is creepy. There are people who weep and people who are angry and want to get out of there. It’s a complicated subject, and people respond to it so differently.”

MARJORIE PRIME raises many questions – about memories and about how much our identities are built on how we perceive these memories. “It has something to say about the unreliability of memory, but also the mystery of memory. I think Jordan’s also suggesting that memory can have a healing power,” Almereyda states.

“I tried to sharpen those themes, by tossing in the explicit mention of William James’s idea that our memories are always fading and dimming -- the scientific fact is that every time we retrieve a memory, we’re not going to the source, but to our last visit to that memory. And human nature can lead us to both clutch at the past, to try to recapture it, or to deny it altogether.” The concept is a chilling one, Davis notes. “My character delivers that William James line, and it’s a theory that has

haunted me ever since – the idea that when you revisit a memory, it's just a copy of a memory, it's not the actual event. That really stuck with me.”

It gives rise to other questions, as Harrison notes, “How do we construct ourselves? If we start to not remember things, because of dementia, then do we cease to be ourselves? Is there some kind of ineffable soul that binds all those memories together?” Adds Hamm, regarding technology, “How much do we want to make our memories real? As exciting and enthralling an idea as that might be, it could also have some unintended effects. Do we necessarily really want to go down that road in the world of artificial intelligence? Then what does that mean for our definition of relationships? I think that's what the film is asking.”

“Marjorie didn't remember her son, Damian, or what happened to him,” says Smith, “but she has mementos which she kept. They're hidden, but they're not gone. In a way, I think that's true of the memory, isn't it? It's hidden, but of course, it's not gon

Cast Bios

JON HAMM

Jon Hamm's nuanced portrayal of the high-powered, advertising executive Don Draper on AMC's award-winning drama series "Mad Men" has firmly established him as one of Hollywood's most talented and versatile actors. He has earned numerous accolades, including an Emmy Award in 2015 for Outstanding Actor in a Drama Series, Golden Globe Awards in 2016 and 2008, Television Critics Association Awards in 2011 and 2015, a Critics' Choice Television Award in 2011, as well as multiple Screen Actors Guild nominations. "Mad Men" concluded its seventh and final season on May 17, 2015.

Hamm will next be seen starring in Edgar Wright's *BABY DRIVER* opposite Ansel Elgort, Kevin Spacey and Jamie Foxx. The film will be released by Sony Pictures in August 2017. Also, out in 2017 is Radar Pictures' *BEIRUT* which Hamm stars in opposite Rosamund Pike.

This year (2016) Hamm starred in 20th Century Fox's *KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES*, opposite Zach Galifianakis and Isla Fisher. Directed by Greg Mottola (*SUPERBAD*), the film follows a suburban couple who become suspicious of their new hot neighbors. In 2015, Hamm loaned his voice to the wildly successful Universal Pictures animated feature, *THE MINIONS*, alongside Sandra Bullock and Steve Coogan. Hamm's previous film credits include Disney's *MILLION DOLLAR ARM*, based on a script by Thomas McCarthy and directed by Craig Gillespie, *FRIENDS WITH KIDS*, written and directed by Jennifer Westfeldt; *BRIDESMAIDS* with Kristen Wiig; Ben Affleck's *THE TOWN*, Zack Snyder's fantasy thriller *SUCKER PUNCH*, *HOWL* with James Franco, *SHREK FOREVER AFTER*, in which he voiced the character 'Brogan,' *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* with Keanu Reeves, Jennifer Westfeldt's *IRA & ABBY* and *KISSING JESSICA STEIN*, and *WE WERE SOLDIERS*.

Hamm's appearances on the Emmy-winning comedy, "30 Rock," from 2009-2012 earned him three Emmy nominations for Outstanding Guest Actor in a Comedy Series. He has also hosted "Saturday Night Live" three times, once in 2008 and twice in 2010 to critical acclaim. In addition to "Mad Men", Hamm also appears the second season of Netflix's "Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt" created by Tina Fey and Robert Carlock. Hamm played Reverend Richard Wayne Gary Wayne, the senior prophet who fools four women into being held captive for fifteen years while they believe to have survived the apocalypse. The role earned him an Outstanding Guest Actor in a Comedy Series. His additional television credits include, "A Young Doctor's Notebook," a BBC miniseries in which he stars opposite Daniel Radcliffe and also executive produced, the Larry David film *CLEAR HISTORY* for HBO. Hamm first came to audience's attention in the NBC series "Providence." Signed for a cameo role, he impressed the producers so much that he ended up with an 18-episode run on the series.

A native of St. Louis, Missouri, Hamm received his Bachelor of Arts in English at the University of Missouri-Columbia and currently resides in Los Angeles.

LOIS SMITH

Lois Smith was born in Topeka, Kansas, then moved to Seattle with her family at age 11 and attended school there, including two-plus years at the University of Washington School of Drama.

Lois's first role in professional theater was as Melvyn Douglas's teenage daughter in *Time out for Ginger*, on Broadway, followed by *The Young and the Beautiful*, *Blues for Mr. Charlie*, and the original production of *Orpheus Descending*. She began working with Chicago's Steppenwolf Theater in 1988 in *The Grapes of Wrath*, directed by Frank Galati, and became a member of the Steppenwolf Ensemble in 1993. *The Grapes of Wrath* traveled to London and to Broadway; Steppenwolf's *Buried Child*, directed by Gary Sinise, also moved to Broadway, and Smith received Tony nominations for her work in both of these plays. She also appeared in *The Mesmerist*, *Mother Courage*, *The Royal Family* and *The Tempest* at Steppenwolf.

She has appeared in many other plays, on and off Broadway, and in regional theaters. Favorites include three Chekhov plays: *Uncle Vanya* at the Mark Taper Farmer in Los Angeles, directed by Harold Clurman; *The Seagull* at the Guthrie in Minneapolis, directed by Lucian Pintilie; and *The Cherry Orchard* at Baltimore Center Stage, directed by Irene Lewis. Also, *The Front Page* at the Long Wharf, directed by Harris Yulin; *Escape from Happiness* by George Walker, directed by Irene Lewis at Baltimore Center Stage; *The Stick Wife* by Darrah Cloud at Hartford Stage, directed by Roberta Levitow; and *Defying Gravity* by Jane Anderson, off-Broadway, directed by Michael Wilson. She is a longtime member of The Actors Studio, and of Ensemble Studio Theater, where she has played in many one-act play marathons, especially plays by Romulus Linney, and *The Man Who Climbed the Pecan Trees* by Horton Foote. In 2005 – 2006, Smith played Carrie Watts in Horton Foote's *The Trip to the Bountiful*, directed by Harris Yulin, at New York City's Signature Theatre, for which she received five awards: An Obie, Lucille Lortel, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and the Kingsley-Evans Award. She also received a Jeff Award in Chicago when the production played at the Goodman Theater. More recently, Smith was seen in Playwrights Horizons production of *After the Revolution* by Amy Herzog, and in Tony Kushner's *The Illusion* and Sam Shepard's *Heartless* at Signature Theater in NYC.

When Smith began working in New York, there were many television drama anthology programs – Studio One, U.S. Steel Hour, Robert Montgomery Presents, Kraft Theatre, etc. She did many television plays; the earliest ones were live. They included *Miss Julie* and *The Master Builder* on Public Television's Play of the Week. Since then she has appeared in many TV films and miniseries, and guest-starred in series, both comedy (*Frasier*, *Just Shoot Me*) and drama (*Law & Order*, *Cold Case*, *ER*, *Grey's Anatomy*, etc.) On HBO, she has appeared in *True Blood*, *Truman*, *The Laramie Project*, and *Iron Jawed Angels*.

Her first film role was the barmaid in *East Of Eden* with James Dean. She won a National Society of Film Critics Award for *Five Easy Pieces*. Other films include *The Odd Life of Timothy Green*, *Diminished Capacity*, *Roadie*, *Please Give*, *Hollywoodland*, *Next Stop Greenwich Village*, *Four Friends*, *Black Widow*, *Falling Down*, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, *Twister*, *Larger Than Life*, *How to Make and American Quilt*, *Dead Man Walking*, and *Minority Report*.

GENA DAVIS

Geena Davis, one of Hollywood's most respected actors, is recognized for her tireless advocacy of gender equality in media nearly as much as for her acting accomplishments. She is the Founder and Chair of the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, which is successfully influencing film and

television content creators to dramatically increase the percentages of female characters — and reduce gender stereotyping — in media targeting children 11 and under.

In 2015, Davis launched the [Bentonville Film Festival \(BFF\)](#), an unprecedented initiative in support of women and diversity in the entertainment industry and serves as it's Co-Founder and Chair. BFF provides a platform to significantly boost the commercial value of content produced and starring minorities and women. This initiative is the only film festival to provide guaranteed theatrical, television, digital and home entertainment distribution for the winners.

In 2012, Davis was appointed Special Envoy for Women and Girls in ICT for the UN's [International Telecommunication Union \(ITU\)](#). She is an official partner of UN Women, working toward their goal of promoting gender equality and empowering women worldwide. Davis is also the Chair of the California Commission on the Status of Women.

Geena was recently awarded the Women in Motion award from Kering and the Cannes Film Festival for her contributions to the movie industry and the women's cause as part of a program that aims to support female professionals in the film business.

As an actor, Davis has appeared in several roles that have become cultural landmarks. Earning the 2006 Golden Globe Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series Drama, Davis broke ground in her portrayal of the first female President of the United States in ABC's hit show "Commander in Chief."

In 1989, Davis received the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her role in Lawrence Kasdan's *The Accidental Tourist*. She was again nominated for an Academy Award and Golden Globe for her performance as Thelma in Ridley Scott's *Thelma and Louise*. Davis went on to receive a Golden Globe nomination for Best Actress for her work in *A League of Their Own*. Other credits include iconic films such as *Tootsie*, *The Fly*, *Beetlejuice*, *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, and *Stuart Little*.

Few have achieved such remarkable success in as many different fields as Davis has: she is not only an award winning actor, but a world-class athlete (at one time the nation's 13th-ranked archer, and a semi-finalist in the Olympic Trials), and a member of the genius society Mensa. Davis holds honorary degrees from Boston University, Bates College and New England College.

Geena stars in the upcoming feature film "Marjorie Prime" with Tim Robbins and Jon Hamm and the new fall FOX series *The Exorcist*.

TIM ROBBINS

Born October 16, 1958 in West Covina, California and raised in New York City's Greenwich Village, Tim Robbins has a long list of notable credits as an actor, director, writer and producer of films and theater.

Key acting roles are in such films as *A Perfect Day*, *The Secret Life of Words*, *Catch a Fire*, *Mystic River*, *The Player*, *Short Cuts*, *The Shawshank Redemption*, *The Hudsucker Proxy*, *War of the Worlds*, *Arlington Road*, *Code 46*, *Human Nature*, *Five Corners*, *Anchorman*, *Austin Powers*, *Jacob's Ladder*, *Bull Durham* and HBO's *The Brink*.

Robbins has won numerous awards for his acting including an Academy Award, Golden Globe and Screen Actors Guild Award for Best Supporting Actor for *Mystic River*, Best Actor Award at the Cannes Film Festival, the Golden Globe for Best Actor for *The Player*, and a Golden Globe as a member of the ensemble in *Short Cuts*. He was nominated by the Golden Globes for Best Actor for

Bob Roberts and by the Screen Actors Guild for Best Actor for *The Shawshank Redemption*. He was most recently nominated for *A Perfect Day* as Best Supporting Actor at Spain's Goya Awards in 2015 and in 2014 at the Golden Globes for his performance in HBO's *Cinema Verite*.

As a film director, Robbins distinguished himself with *Cradle Will Rock*, which he also wrote and produced, winning the National Board of Review Award for Special Achievement in Filmmaking in the United States and Best Film and Best Director at the Sitges Film Festival in Barcelona.

Dead Man Walking, which he directed, wrote and produced, won multiple awards including the Academy Award for Best Actress, the Humanitas Award, the Christopher Award, and four awards at the Berlin Film Festival, as well as 4 Oscar nominations including Best Director and a Golden Globe nomination for Best Screenplay.

His first film, *Bob Roberts*, won the Bronze Award at the Tokyo International Festival and Best Film, Best Director and Best Actor at the Boston Film Festival.

In 2011, Robbins was honored to receive the Officier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres from the government of France.

For the past 35 years Robbins has served as Artistic Director for the Actors' Gang, a theater company formed in 1982 that has over 80 productions and more than 100 awards to their credit. Robbins has directed many plays at the Actors Gang including *Ubu the King*, *Violence*, *Carnage*, *Alagazam*, *Mephisto*, *Break the Whip*, *A Midsummer Nights Dream*, 1984, and *Harlequino; On to Freedom*.

As a playwright he has been produced in New York, London, Paris, Shanghai, Beijing, Chicago, Los Angeles, the Spoleto Festival in Italy and at the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland. In 2016 his most recent play *Harlequino: On to Freedom* toured in Italy and China. His 2004 play, *Embedded*, played to sold out audiences for over four months at the Public Theater in New York before playing the Riverside Studios in London and embarking on a National Tour in the U.S.

Robbins directed the Actors Gang in their shockingly relevant and wildly successful adaptation of George Orwell's 1984 which for the past 10 years has toured to over 40 states and to four continents, most recently at the 2016 Spoleto Festival in Italy. His production of *A Midsummer Nights Dream* has toured for the last 5 years throughout the world including performances in South America, Europe, Asia and the United States.

In addition, Robbins stage adaptation of *Dead Man Walking* has been performed in over 170 universities nationwide. Rights to perform the play are exclusive to educational institutions and in order to obtain the rights for the play, universities must involve two departments other than theater arts to offer courses on the death penalty. Throughout the country and the world for the past twelve years, symposiums, lectures and debates have been held in conjunction with the theatrical productions leading to a substantial increase in the dialogue and shared information surrounding this important issue.

Robbins is also very proud to sponsor educational programs with the Actors Gang that provide arts education to thousands of Elementary, Middle and High School students in underserved communities in the L.A. area. Since 2006 the Actors Gang's groundbreaking Prison Project has

provided theatrical workshops to incarcerated men and women in the California prison system. Recognized by the California Department of Corrections, the U.S. Department of Justice and the California governor and legislature, the program provides effective rehabilitation that significantly reduces recidivism rates for those that participate. In 2014 Robbins and Prison Project director Sabra Williams were instrumental in re-instating 3 million dollars into the California State budget for Arts in Corrections. U.S. Attorney Generals Eric Holder and Loretta Lynch have acknowledged and supported the Actors Gang work and in 2016 Sabra Williams was recognized by the White House for her work with the Prison Project.

Robbins lives in Los Angeles, and is the proud father of 3 mischievous young adults and two perfect grandchildren.

Crew Bios

MICHAEL ALMEREYDA (Director)

Though his startlingly original work has remained largely unseen, the Kansas-born writer-director Michael Almereyda has consistently elicited complex, arresting performances from name actors and non-actors alike in a series of films where narrative has remained secondary to emotional and visual impact. After dropping out of Harvard, he moved to NYC and began writing screenplays, quickly securing an agent and soon after his first Hollywood job rewriting the unproduced "Mandrake the Magician" for Embassy Pictures. Almereyda provided the tongue-in-cheek screenplay for Steve de Jarnette's sci-fi action feature "Cherry 2000" (1988), starring Melanie Griffith as a female mercenary hired to bust into a 21st-century robot warehouse operated by psychos in what used to be the American Southwest. He then escaped the trouble surrounding his yet-to-be filmed first feature as director, "Twister" (1989), to go to Australia and collaborate with director Bruce Beresford on an early draft of what would eventually become "Total Recall" (1990).

SEAN PRICE WILLIAMS (DP)

Sean Price Williams is an American cinematographer, film director, and film actor. He is known for his textured, fluid camerawork (often handheld) and a heightened attention to available light. The New Yorker film critic Richard Brody described Williams (in a memorial appraisal of documentary filmmaker Albert Maysles, for whom Williams served extensively as cameraman), as "the cinematographer for many of the best and most significant independent films of the past decade, fiction and documentary — including Frownland, Yeast, Fake It So Real, The Color Wheel, Young Bodies Heal Quickly, Listen Up Philip, the Safdie brothers' Heaven Knows What, and Alex Ross Perry's Queen of Earth." In a 2013 article for Film.com, critic Calum Marsh deemed Williams "micro-budget filmmaking's most exciting cinematographer."

Marsh would go on to write in a 2014 article in Toronto's National Post that "Williams, in particular, has proven indispensable to the [2010s American independent film] movement, and over the past several years has distinguished dozens of the films with his all but peerless talent for photography, from experimental nonfiction work like Maiko Endo's Kuichisan to more conventional comedies like Bob Byington's Somebody Up There Likes Me." [3] Williams has also worked several times with the director Abel Ferrara, whom he greatly admires.

Along with other celebrated figures of the New York independent film scene such as Perry, Kate Lyn Sheil, Robert Greene, Luke Oleksa, and Michael M. Bilandic, Williams was a long-time employee of famed New York video and music store Kim's Video and Music. Prior to that, Williams worked at the famed Video American stores in Maryland and Delaware. He also worked as part of the staff of Albert Maysles' production company Maysles Films.

Credits

Written For The Screen, Produced And Directed By
Michael Almereyda

Based On The Play By
Jordan Harrison

Produced By
Uri Singer, P.G.A.

Executive Producer
Rogerio Ferezin

Executive Producer
Luis Fragali

Executive Producer
Jon Hamm

Executive Producer
Adam Mirels

Executive Producer
Per Melita

Executive Producer
Tim Robbins

Executive Producer
Isen Robbins
Aimee Schoof

Co-Producer
Daniel Turcan

Co-Producer
Tal Vigderson

Associate Producer
Virginia Tomasi Paiva

Line Producer
Brian Cange

Director Of Photography
Sean Williams

Editor

Kathryn J. Schubert

Production Designer

Javiera Varas

Costume Designer

Kama K. Royz

Music By

Mica Levi

Also Featuring “Wave Movements” By

Richard Reed Parry

Bryce Dessner

Supervising Sound Editor

Rob Daly

Music Supervisor

Lucy Bright

Music Supervisor

Jonathan Finegold

Casting By

Billy Hopkins

Jon Hamm

Geena Davis

Lois Smith

Tim Robbins

Unit Production Manager

Stephen Tedeschi

First Assistant Director

Joan G. Bostwick

Second Assistant Director

Jana Camacho

cast
in alphabetical order

Julie	STEPHANIE ANDUJAR
2 nd generation Marjorie, age 10	HANA MAY COLLEY
Tess	GEENA DAVIS
young Marjorie	HANNAH GROSS
Walter	JON HAMM
young Tess	INDIA KOTIS
Mrs. Salverson	LESLIE LYLES
bartender	CASHUS MUSE
Jon	TIM ROBBINS
Marjorie	LOIS SMITH
2 nd generation Marjorie, age 30	AZUMI TSUTSUI
old Jon	W.A. WALTERS
stand-ins	BRITTANY OLINKIEWICZ CARMELA GIAMMARINO BOWMAN ROD NEWMAN SEPPO SILTANEN
set decorator	ROXANNE KRATT
on-set dressers	GRACE SLOAN MICHAEL STAFFIERI
set dressers	FELIX BROW-WESTBROOK CHARLES CORBI WILLIAM ENG WILSON KEITHLINE STEELE KRATT MEGAN WHINERY
property master	STEPHEN PHELPS
1 st assistant camera	KALI RILEY
2 nd assistant camera / DIT	ZACH MILLER
B camera operator	MAX WEINMAN
B camera operator and 2 nd assistant camera	ALEXANDRA BOCK
steadicam operator	BILLY GREEN

still photographer	JASON ROBINETTE
gaffer	JOHN FOSTER
best boy electric	BRIAN MCCANN
key grip	JASON MONTAGUE
best boy grip	STEVE STREHLE
additional grip	JUSTINE BERTI
sound mixer	JIM MORGAN
boom operator	MATT JOYER
additional sound mixer	MATT KING
additional boom operator	AUSTIN MOORE
wardrobe supervisor	SOFIJA MESICEK
wardrobe PA	TANYA JONES
makeup department head	JESSICA JADE JACOB
makeup assistant	LIA MICOL
key hair	ADAM LONG
location manager	HOLLY LI
production office coordinator	TRISH MCMINIMENT
assistant production office coordinator	LINDSEY ROESKE
office assistant	MONICA SERVA
script supervisor	ELIZABETH STERN
1st team PA	SUSANA MATOS
key PA	JOSH WILLIAMS
set PA's	FELIPE PAVA
	WILLIAM CAESAR AUGUSTONI
	FAITH CONROY
	SAMANTHA DEMAR
	JULIAN DFAULT
	LINDELLE LACEY
	RENALDO PERELIN
	JOSH ZIMMERMAN
office PA's	ELIZABETH BERRIDGE
	JOVONNE BERT-MILLER
	KOLADE ENIOLA
	TERI RUSIKE
	SUZANNE VEGA
assistant to Mr. Almereyda	PAUL DALLAS
production accountant	KELLEY TROTTER
1st assistant accountant	DRISHTY D'COSTA
tax credit accountant	BRAUER & CO
	DAVID BRAUER

casting associate	ASHLEY INGRAM
background casting	LORI EASTSIDE
grip & electric equipment	EASTERN EFFECTS
local accommodations provided by	MICHELE MASCOLO BISTRIAN
production vehicles	EDGE AUTO RENTAL
picture vehicles	AVENTURA MOTORS
animals provided by	ALL TAME ANIMALS, INC
catering / craft services chefs	DAVID DREISHPOON GOURMET CATERING DIEGO PINA & STEVE GILROY
1 st assistant editor assistant editor	PIIBE KOLKA SHAWNA FERREIRA
editorial facilities	GIGANTIC POST, NYC
transcoding facility transcoder	METROPOLIS POST, NYC JACK T. RIZZO
visual effects supervisor and compositor 3D matchmover	JONATHAN PODWIL MOHANNAD TURMAN
lab DI colorist DI assistant special thanks	METROPOLIS POST, NYC JASON CRUMP IAN BOSTICK JACK T. RIZZO
special effects supervisor	WALDO WARSHAW
post sound facility supervising sound editor/ re-recording mixer sound design assistant music editor music coordinator	DOMICILE FILMS POST ROB DALY TIMMY QUINN DARYL MEADOR GARRET MORRIS
credit design	JENNIFER BASNYAT
production attorney	TAL O. VIGDERSON
title and copyright	DENNIS ANGEL
insurance services	INTEGRO GROUP JESSICA BROWN

clearance counsel
additional clearance services

SUZY VAUGHAN ESQ
CLEARANCE UNLIMITED

script clearance research

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MUSIC

WAVE MOVEMENTS

performed by New York Philharmonic
conductor André de Ridder (November 2015)
composed by Richard Reed Parry
and Bryce Dessner
published by Chester Music Ltd
courtesy of New York Philharmonic,
Alan Gilbert, music director

I SHALL BE RELEASED

performed by The Band
written by Bob Dylan
published by Dwarf Music
courtesy of Capitol Records
under license from Universal Music Enterprises

STRING QUARTET OP 131

performed by The Kodaly Quartet
composed by Ludwig Van Beethoven
courtesy of Naxos Rights US Inc

CANTILENA: ASSEZ LENT

from Sonata for Flute
performed by Philippe Bernold (flute)
and Alexandre Tharaud (piano)
composed by Francis Poulenc
published by Chester Music Ltd
courtesy of Naxos Rights US Inc

I SHALL BE RELEASED

performed by Ruben Feffer
written by Bob Dylan
published by Dwarf Music
courtesy of Ultrassom

BASSOON CONCERTO

performed by Stepan Turnovsky (bassoon)
with the Vienna Mozart Academy
conducted by Johannes Wildner
composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
courtesy of Naxos Rights US Inc

DIAMONDS

performed by Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra
written & published by Alvin Lucier
courtesy of New World Records

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