



H E A R T W O R M

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY MIRIAM LOUISE ARENS & MITCHELL ARENS

ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT





Title *HEARTWORM*

Tagline Hold On To What's Real.

Genre Scfi-fi, Drama

Runtime 106 min

Country United States

Language English

Cast Amber Gray, Juan Riedinger
Lillias White, Derrick Baskin
Ellie Reine

Written & Directed by Miriam Louise Arens, Mitchell Arens

Produced by Miriam Louise Arens, Mitchell Arens
Sultan Pirzhan, Flavia Amon
Nancy Foy, Melanie Ramos



LOGLINE


In this sci-fi drama spanning Reality, Virtual Reality and Memory, Avena, a bereaved mother, battles to rescue her grief-stricken husband from NeuraLife, the virtual technology dominating their world. As she unravels her family's tragic past, she confronts her own isolation and discovers the true power of what it means to be human.

SYNOPSIS


Bereaved parents Avena and Mark are living separate lives in NeuraLife, a virtual platform indistinguishable from Reality. When Avena is unexpectedly awoken by their daughter's spirit, she is thrust on a cerebral journey of self-discovery. In search of human contact, she sets out to free Mark from NeuraLife. Her struggle to reconnect proves herculean in the face of their shared grief, Mark's technological dependence, and a miraculous glitch in NeuraLife's system. When memory and reality begin to blur, the couple are propelled toward their conflicting destinies. As Mark becomes further entrapped in his virtual world, Avena must journey across realms in order to save him. And herself.

Featuring a breakout performance by Broadway star Amber Gray, Miriam and Mitchell Arens' feature debut is a mind-bending reflection on our own fraught, technologically-driven society. Seamlessly blurring the lines between what is real and what is artificial, HEARTWORM begs the question of what is more powerful: our reality or a virtual one?



A cinematic still from a trailer. A man with short hair, wearing a dark, heavy coat, is shown from the chest up. He is looking off-camera to the right with a serious expression. The scene is set at night, with rain falling vertically across the frame. In the background, there are blurred lights, including a prominent warm yellow light source on the left. The overall color palette is dark and moody, with a strong blue tint on the man's face and the rain.

TRAILER



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

HEARTWORM was conceived after a devastating miscarriage. While wrestling with our grief we felt a strong detachment from our community. In our isolation, we found we were mourning something much larger than we initially thought — the loss of human connection. In reconciling this loss, the story of HEARTWORM emerged.

Since the genesis of social media, teen suicide has increased by 30%, feelings of isolation affect over 50% of Americans, and the average adult checks their mobile device 144 times a day. And now, only eighteen years after the first iPhone was released, we are facing another massive reality shift with the introduction of A.I.

Aldous Huxley once said, "People will come to love their oppression, to adore the technologies that undo their capabilities to think." We are sitting on a technological precipice and the time to act is now. We don't have to let Big Tech decide the fate of humanity. We can decide our own fate. We can lift our heads up and return to Reality TOGETHER.

HEARTWORM is the story of one woman daring to go on that journey and discovering the astonishing power we all carry within. The astonishing power of what it means to BE HUMAN.



DIRECTOR'S BIO

Miriam & Mitchell Arens are an award-winning filmmaking duo, hailing from NYU's Tisch Asia. Their focus on innovative production techniques has allowed them to make movies with almost no budget or traditional equipment all over the globe. Crewing in a variety of positions from director to producer to cinematographer to sound mixer, they have journeyed from the caves of Dongzhong, China to the low-land rainforest of Borneo to the Siberian tundra. Their work has premiered at festivals including Sundance, Cannes, Venice, SXSW, TIFF, IDFA, Doc NYC and Berlinale. Their roots are currently planted in Los Angeles with their two children, but their souls continue to explore. HEARTWORM is their co-directorial feature debut.

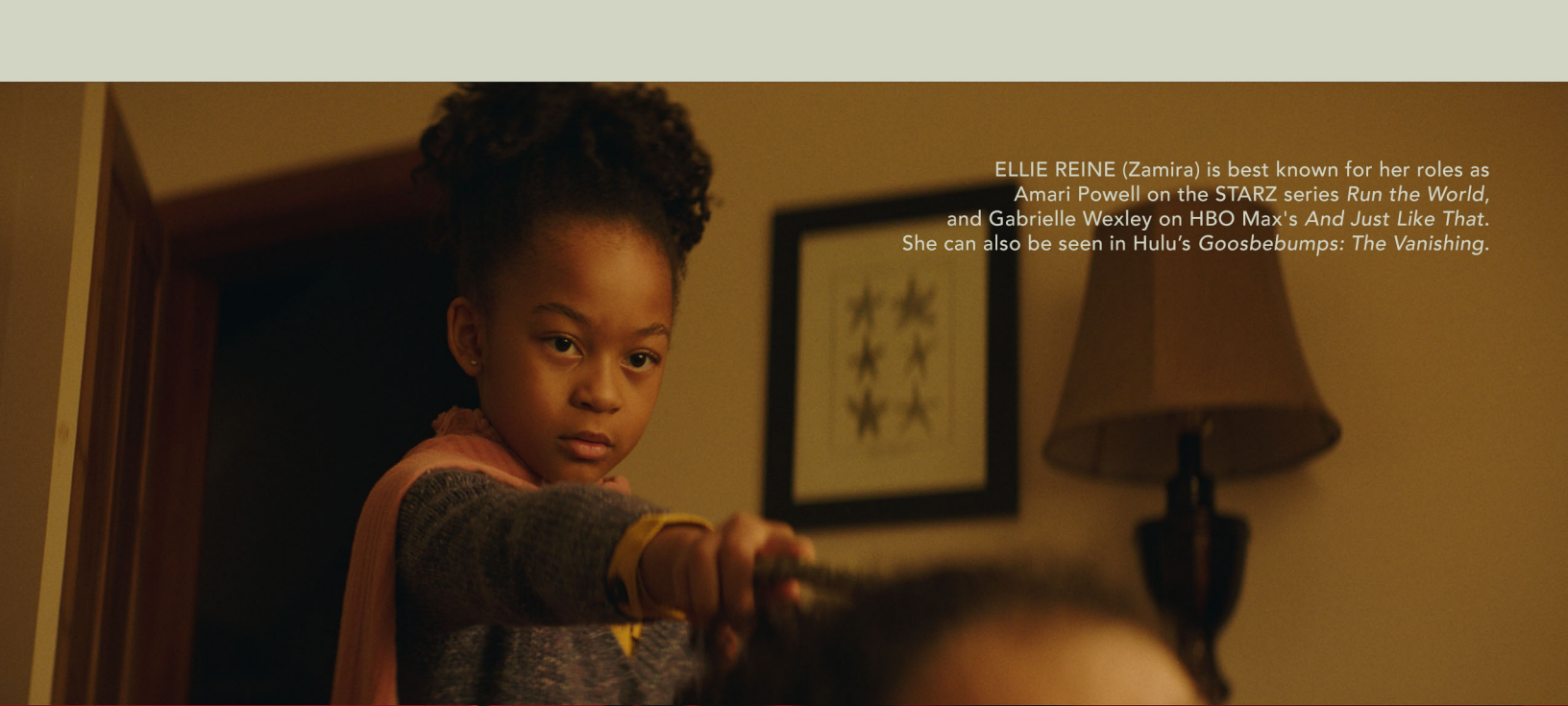


CAST BIOS

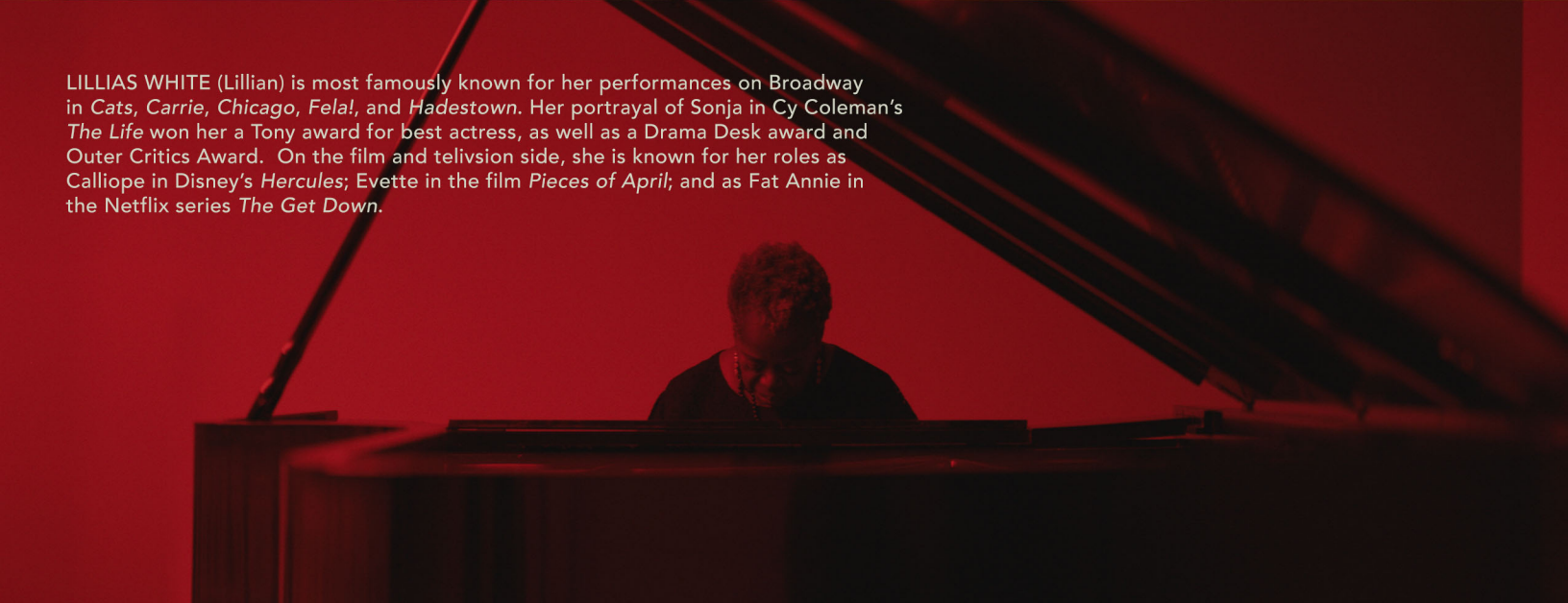
AMBER GRAY (Avena) is best known for originating the role of Persephone in the Tony Award–winning musical, *Hadestown*. Her performance earned her nominations for a Tony award, The Lucille Lortel Award, and The Drama League Awards. Additionally, she won the Outer Critics Circle Award. Amber also won the Theatre World Award for Outstanding Debut Performance for her portrayal of Helene Kuragina in *Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812* on Broadway. Amber has starred in plays on and off Broadway for the past fifteen years, including, but not limited to, *Macbeth* (starring Daniel Craig and Ruth Negga), *On the Razzle*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *An Octoroon*, and *Oklahoma!* She can also be seen in Barry Jenkins' series *The Underground Railroad*, and *Master* (2022 Sundance Jury Prize nominee) both on Amazon Prime.

JUAN RIEDINGER (Mark) was born to a Peruvian mother and a German father in Banff, Canada. He has over a hundred film and TV credits. His notable performances include: recurring as Carlos Lehder on *Narcos* for Netflix, recurring as Teo on TNT's *Good Behavior*, recurring as Jeo Dupree on TNT's *Claws*, and for starring as Rufus Decker in the Canadian CBC series, *The Romeo Section*. Most recently he has appeared in CBS' *Tracker*, and NBC's *The Irrational*.






ELLIE REINE (Zamira) is best known for her roles as Amari Powell on the STARZ series *Run the World*, and Gabrielle Wexley on HBO Max's *And Just Like That*. She can also be seen in Hulu's *Goosebumps: The Vanishing*.



LILLIAS WHITE (Lillian) is most famously known for her performances on Broadway in *Cats*, *Carrie*, *Chicago*, *Fela!*, and *Hadestown*. Her portrayal of Sonja in Cy Coleman's *The Life* won her a Tony award for best actress, as well as a Drama Desk award and Outer Critics Award. On the film and television side, she is known for her roles as Calliope in Disney's *Hercules*; Evette in the film *Pieces of April*; and as Fat Annie in the Netflix series *The Get Down*.



DERRICK BASKIN (Steven) is best known for his role of "Comfort Counselor" Mitch Mahoney in Broadway's *The 25th Annual Putnam Country Spelling Bee* and received a Tony nomination for playing 'Otis Williams' in *Ain't Too Proud*. He also originated the role of 'Gator' in *Memphis* on Broadway and appeared in the film version. He co-starred as Nate in Hulu's *Difficult People* for three seasons. Most recently he was in *The Offer* on Paramount+ and *Killing It* on Peacock.



CREDITS

STARRING AMBER GRAY JUAN RIEDINGER LILLIAS WHITE ELLIE REINE WITH DERRICK BASKIN
CASTING BY NANCY FOY MUSIC BY ANDERSON ALDEN JOSHUA HILL & MITCHELL ARENS COSTUMES BY SHANNON FITZGERALD
PRODUCTION DESIGNED BY MOLLY MARTIN & JOHN SAVAGE CINEMATOGRAPHY BY MITCHELL ARENS EDITED BY MITCHELL ARENS
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ANDREW CARDONE NICOLE CARDONE LYNN DITCHFIELD MICHAEL DITCHFIELD
NICK HASSON DUSTIN HODGE FRANK MCKENNA ASHLEY MELONE JIJO REED JOEY SPONSELLER
PRODUCED BY MIRIAM LOUISE ARENS MITCHELL ARENS SULTAN PIRZHAN
FLAVIA AMON NANCY FOY MELANIE RAMOS

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY MIRIAM LOUISE ARENS AND MITCHELL ARENS





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or any supplemental materials herein.