

# MODERN LOVE

*Hipster director Spike Jonze is back with a new film about love in the digital age*

Words **Sophia Stuart**

Spike Jonze cut his directing teeth making music videos for the likes of Beastie Boys, REM, Björk and Daft Punk before breaking through to the big screen with mind-bending cult classics *Being John Malkovich* and *Adaptation*. He cemented his status as the world's coolest director by being briefly married to Sofia Coppola and running a skateboard company in his spare time. But, other than 2009's *Where The Wild Things Are*, the 44-year-old director has been pretty quiet on the film-making front over the past decade. Not one to do things by halves, he's back with one of the most eagerly anticipated films of the year: *Her*. Joaquin Phoenix stars as a man who falls in love with his artificial intelligence operating system, voiced by Scarlett Johansson. We caught up with Jonze to talk technology, intimacy and the future of love...

***Her* is a beautiful film, but its message is terrifying: about artificial intelligence evolving to replace human connection...**

I did a lot of research for this movie. I read all of Ray Kurzweil (the author of *How To Create A Mind* and director of engineering at Google, working on artificial intelligence) and watched TED talks with neuroscientists. But when I sat down to write it, I realised the more I thought about those ideas, the more I'd got away from what I really wanted to write, which was a love story. I wanted it to work on both levels.

**How was it to work with Joaquin Phoenix?**

Joaquin brings so much heart and sincerity to the role of Theodore. Even though he holds so much sadness, he also has a capacity for joy and playfulness. I felt that I watched him become Theodore.

**Theodore works as a ghostwriter who creates beautiful personal letters for others but can't express his own feelings - until he meets Samantha...**

A lot of people are afraid of intimacy. That's what the movie is about. I'm not writing about technology that's sole purpose is to fulfil our needs. This is artificial intelligence that evolves its own personality. Samantha becomes a separate species.

**But she's just a disembodied voice on a digital device. She doesn't need to become human, as defined by biology; she has consciousness that goes beyond the physical form. Theodore and Samantha change, just like people. It's hard to grow and change together and, in relationships, it's inevitable that people can grow apart and that's painful.**



Sometimes people leave. As I show in *Her*, the only way you can grow is through pain, unfortunately.

**Are you still hopeful about the future of love?** In a romantic relationship, you can never really know the person you're with. You can find a way to trust them and love them but, ultimately, there's a leap of faith. So yes, I'm hopeful, but it's scary.

*Her* is in cinemas nationwide from January 10th >>

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP: Director Spike Jonze; leading lady Scarlett Johansson; Joaquin Phoenix in Jonze's film, *Her*

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