

"I've Heard the 'This Is Your Moment' Speech So Many Times"  
*After false starts and failed star vehicles, Armie Hammer is finally getting taken seriously. Just don't tell him that.*

By Seth Abramovitch

Photographed by  
Brian Bowen Smith

Hammer was photographed at Paramour Mansion in Los Angeles' Silver Lake on Aug. 15. "I definitely wasn't like, 'This is how everybody grows up,'" he says of his one percent upbringing. "We got to live in amazing places. We would drive around in really nice cars — but at the same time, if we rolled down the window, my mom would be like, 'You're wasting air conditioning!'"

Styling by Ilaria Urbinati  
ATM shirt, COS swimsuit, Oliver Peoples sunglasses.



Like much else about his charmed life, Armie Hammer's handwriting is perfect — all swooping loops and exacting peaks, like something from a bygone era. I'm paging through one of his obsessively maintained notebooks while we idle at a red light in his black pickup truck, American-built and high off the ground, much like the 6-foot-5 actor himself. On this cloudless, late-summer afternoon, as he drives on the Pacific Coast Highway to his favorite Greek spot in Malibu, I flip the pages — diligent notes pertaining to Martin Ginsburg, husband of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, whom Hammer will portray in an upcoming biopic of the Supreme Court justice starring Felicity Jones. "That's what happens when you grow up on a British island," says Hammer, 31, after I remark on his meticulous penmanship. "You have mandatory cursive classes."

He's referring to the Cayman Islands, where he spent a good chunk of his childhood. His father had never laid eyes on the Caribbean tax haven until it showed up in the 1993 Tom Cruise movie *The Firm*; but so entranced was he by what he saw, he decided to relocate the family. If that rings odd, then you probably did not grow up in the same bubble of extreme privilege as Hammer, great-grandson of Russian-Jewish oil tycoon Armand Hammer. His namesake (his full name is Armand Douglas Hammer) graces landmarks and buildings all over Los Angeles. Case in point, our journey begins at Holmby Park in Beverly Hills, home to the Armand Hammer Golf Course. "They were going to turn it into high-rises in the early

'80s," explains Hammer. "So my great-grandfather just gave them an endowment."

As irksomely perfect as his existence may seem, Hammer's journey from the "fucking paradise" of the Cayman Islands to movie star (a label that makes him bristle) has faced its fair share of false starts. After his breakthrough playing the Winklevoss twins in 2010's *The Social Network*, Hammer has struggled to emerge as a bankable leading man. There was his starring role in 2013's *The Lone Ranger*, for which Disney lost \$200 million, leading to studio head Rich Ross' ouster. Two years later, he co-starred with Henry Cavill in the underperforming *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* And his performance in 2016's *The Birth of a Nation*, a role some thought could earn him a best supporting actor Oscar, was overshadowed by a rape scandal involving its director and star, Nate Parker.

But 2017 could turn out to be Hammer's perfect year. He currently stars in *Call Me by Your Name*, a sultry art house film set mostly within a 17th century Italian villa. In it, he plays Oliver, an American academic in his mid-20s who embarks upon a sexually charged affair with the 17-year-old son of a professor (rising star Timothee Chalamet, also in the white-hot indie *Lady Bird*). The movie, based on the novel by Andre Aciman and directed by Luca Guadagnino (*I Am Love*, *A Bigger Splash*), was rapturously received at Sundance and Toronto, with Hammer garnering early awards buzz. Little could he know that a typhoon of sexual misconduct claims would soon submerge Hollywood, potentially heightening sensitivity to a film about

sexual discovery that involves a teenager. Burned before, Hammer is ready for any curveballs. "Given my history," he says, "I'm waiting for the other shoe to drop."

We're ensconced amid bougainvillea-covered walls on the terrace of Taverna Tony — which sort of aspires to the seductive Mediterranean backdrop of *Call Me by Your Name*, without leaving the 310. Our waiter offers Hammer, a regular, a robust welcome. "How's the arm?" he asks. "So much better," says Hammer. "I found a really good physical therapy place that got me back in four months. They said it would take a year." A little later, between swigs of beer and forkfuls of roast lamb — Hammer insisted I try some off his plate — I inquire about the injury.

"I tore my pectoral muscle lifting weights," he says. "I can still hear the sound in my nightmares." Hammer describes the experience of standing up and watching in horror as his right arm "drooped, like, totally flaccid." When he lifted his T-shirt and looked in the mirror, "my chest muscle had just shot to the middle of my torso. There was a hole where the pec used to be." Nausea and excruciating pain set in. "I'm like, 'Wife!'" (Hammer jokingly addresses his spouse, 35-year-old former *E!* *News* correspondent Elizabeth Chambers, as "wife.") "Wife!!! I need ice!" Then I'm like, 'And a bowl! I'm going to be sick!' "The timing could not have been worse: Elizabeth was due to give birth to their son in five days, and Hammer didn't want to miss it. "Finally, my wife said, 'Go get the damn surgery. You're not doing me any good like that.'" Hammer did, and spent the next five months confined to a sling. "I went to a dark place: 'You're done. You've peaked.'"

Hammer and his wife were introduced by a mutual artist friend, Tyler Ramsey. "It was one of those lightning-strikes moments," says Hammer. Elizabeth had a boyfriend at the time, and Hammer was "aggressively not looking." So for three years they were "just friends, which was incredibly liberating," says Hammer. "It was like, 'I don't have to impress you. I'm going to tell you everything.

I'm going to tell you if I slept with somebody. If I took drugs.' We became closer, until one day I said, 'You have to break up with your boyfriend so we can start dating.'"

They married in Beverly Hills on May 22, 2010. Tom Ford first encountered the couple soon after, at a gala at the Hammer Museum. "I could not take my eyes off of them," says Ford, who would direct Hammer in 2016's *Nocturnal Animals*. "He looked at her the entire evening. I remember being charmed by how earnest he was and how in love he was with her." The couple raise their two children — daughter Harper, 3, and her 10-month-old brother, Ford (not named for Tom) — in Holmby Hills, just a few miles from where Hammer was born, in Santa Monica.

"I definitely wasn't like, 'This is how everyone grows up,'" Hammer says of his one-tenth of one percent upbringing. "We got to live in amazing places. We had great things, toys, stuff like that. We would drive around in really nice cars — but at the same time, if we rolled down the window, my mom would be like, 'You're wasting air conditioning!'" Hammer was 7 and his brother, Viktor, was 5, when they began life anew

Above: Hammer (left) and Chalamet in *Call Me by Your Name*. Below: Hammer (left) and his namesake on a private jet in the late 1980s. Opposite: Despite his matinee idol looks, when Hammer first started out, he was blowing most of his auditions, something he attributes to "overindulging my newfound freedom. You're young and in L.A. and you, you know, just go nuts a little bit."

Polo Ralph Lauren sweater, J Brand chinos, Lucky Brand belt, Panerai watch.



in the Caymans. Those years in the Caribbean taught Hammer some valuable life lessons: "You can't hide behind anonymity. You have to be nice to everybody, or else you get a reputation." It was also where he first became acutely aware of his whiteness: "Everybody was multiracial. There was a lot of mixing. So I was always 'the white boy.'"



GROOMING BY KC REEFORSHEDD; HAIR AND ORBIE AT THE WALL GROUP; MAKEUP COURTESY OF SONNY PICTURES CLASSICS; VINTAGE COURTESY OF SUBJECT.

The island was where Hammer developed a fascination with movies. Television was strictly forbidden at home, but he was allowed to go to the town's one cinema. "When *Titanic* came out, they put it on both screens for months. I probably saw it six or seven times," he recalls. The family's move back to L.A. came as Hammer, 12, was entering puberty. Having spent the previous five years macheteing coconuts, he found himself ill-equipped to handle the social rigors of middle school. "I had zero pop culture references," he says. "It was like, 'I'm sorry, I don't know who Nirvana is. I don't know who the Lakers are.' People were

like, 'Have you been living on an island?' 'Yes, I have, actually!'" Hammer's big announcement to his parents at age 17 that he had decided to drop out of high school to pursue acting was greeted with the expected disapproval. But his Polo-ad good looks and ease in front of the camera would serve him well, landing him representation with Endeavor. Small TV parts came his way ("I played Student No. 2 on *Arrested Development*"), but Hammer was blowing most of his auditions, something he attributes to "over-indulging my newfound freedom. You're young and in L.A. and you, you know, just go nuts a little bit."

His agent threatened to drop him. "It was the first time I was ever truly motivated by fear of failure." He "busted ass" on his next audition and landed a part, but not just any part. At 19, Hammer was cast in 2008 as Batman in *Justice League Mortal*, a Warner Bros. superhero epic to be directed by *Mad Max* mastermind George Miller, which was to be the biggest-budget movie in the studio's history. Adam Brody was to play The Flash, Common was Green Lantern — until tax breaks were rescinded, the writers strike gripped Hollywood and Christopher Nolan signed on to make his second movie about the

Caped Crusader, *The Dark Knight*. "Nolan was like, 'I don't want another Batman! I'm making the Batman story,'" says Hammer. "Then one day they were like, 'We need everyone to come to the production office and bring every script and every note you have.'" The studio had pulled the plug. Hammer thinks it may have been for the best. "No one wants to see a 19-year-old Batman."

Fortunes turned the following year when David Fincher cast Hammer as Mark Zuckerberg's twin nemesis — characters that felt incredibly familiar to him. "Not only did I know those guys, I was told that I had to be like those guys. If I went out and my hair wasn't brushed or I looked sloppy, my parents would be on my case, telling me I 'represent the family' every time I leave the house." After a nationwide search for real twins came up short, Hammer was cast opposite 6-foot-3 model-actor Josh Pence to play fraternal ones. One week later, Hammer and Pence were called into Fincher's office. "He's like, 'OK, here's what we have to do: These twins have to be identical. So Armie, we're going to double you. Josh, we're going to put dots on your face.' You could cut the tension with a spoon."

In the end, Pence agreed to have Hammer's face superimposed onto his own. The pair have remained friends, and Pence soldiered on — he had a tiny part in *La La Land* — but, Hammer concedes, "I would hate me" if the tables were turned. As for the Winklevii, they "told me they were 'happy someone was finally telling their side of the story.' That's how they saw it. I was like, 'Sure, OK, whatever you say.'"

Hammer has no regrets about *Lone Ranger*, a shoot that was at once both "hellaciously arduous" and "the best time of my life." Director Gore Verbinski says Hammer is a movie star "in the classical mold" and "always had a smile and excitement that simply said, 'Look at what we get to do today!' He reminded all of us how lucky we are." Hammer thinks the movie was unfairly trashed by critics. "I felt like people jumped on a bandwagon of 'Let's destroy this movie,'" he says. "They were

like, 'We know what we're being sold here, and it's new amusement park rides and new toys.'" The reception of *Birth of a Nation* also left a bad taste. That film — a fact-based drama about the 1831 slave rebellion led by Nat Turner — was the toast of Sundance 2016, leading Fox Searchlight to pay a record \$17.5 million for distribution rights. But just as awards season kicked into gear, a 1999 rape allegation from Parker's time at Penn State resurfaced.

The timing of the headlines "was orchestrated for sure," says Hammer. "There was another person in the industry, who had a competing film for the Academy Awards, who decided to release all of the phone records and information. I've been told who did it — by several people." (Hammer refuses to say who he believes it was.) He thinks the incident reveals a double standard. "Nate had the stuff in his past, which is heinous

atrocious — but his entire life is affected in the worst possible way. And the other guy won the highest award you can get as an actor. It just doesn't make sense."

I point out the details of the Parker trial — a claim of gang rape on a heavily intoxicated woman, followed by his accuser's suicide — are much graver than what Affleck was accused of, which involved a pattern of demeaning and lewd language and, in one instance, drunkenly climbing into bed with a woman without her consent. "Look," says Hammer. "I'm not saying Nate should not have been in trouble. I'm saying that they got in different levels of trouble. And that's the disparity. It's like there are two standards for how to deal with someone who has this kind of issue in their past, you know?"

Hammer ended up watching the Academy Awards from his couch. Of the now-infamous comedy of errors that momentarily crowned *La La Land* best picture over *Moonlight*, he says, "I don't think I've ever laughed so hard. I literally stood up off my couch and applauded — in a schadenfreude way." Though he was invited this year to join the Motion Picture Academy, one of a record 774 new additions that sought to diversify the membership and lower its average age, he has his theories as to why. "I always open my mouth too much, but fuck it," he says. "I think I got accepted into the Academy largely because of the way the *Birth of a Nation* thing was handled."

Left: Says *Call Me by Your Name* director Guadagnino, no one except Hammer could ever have been his Oliver.

Kelly Cole T-shirt, Polo Ralph Lauren chinos, Panerai watch.

Below: Hammer (right) with (from left) brother Viktor, sister-in-law Angelia De Mestre Hammer, father Michael Armand Hammer, mother Dru Ann Mobley Hammer and wife Elizabeth at a 2014 cancer fundraiser in Beverly Hills.



and tough to get beyond. I get that," he says. "But that was when he was 18, and now he's in directors jail. At the same time, the guy who went and won an Academy Award has three cases of sexual assault against him."

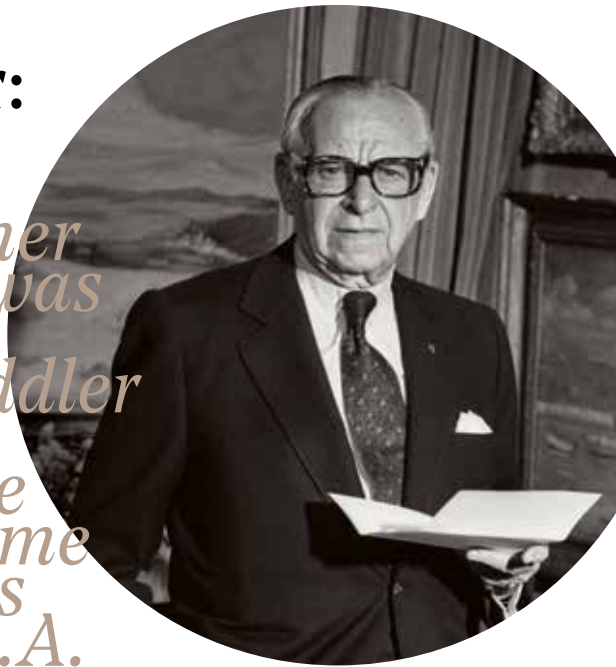
I ask if he is referring to Casey Affleck, who was sued in 2010 for sexual harassment by two female crewmembers on the set of *I'm Still Here* and who won the 2016 best actor Oscar for *Manchester by the Sea*. "Yeah," he says. (Affleck, in fact, had two civil suits filed against him, both of which were settled out of court and dismissed.) "And [Parker] had one incident — which was heinous and

As Guadagnino tells it — and that's with a thick Italian accent and much gesticulation — no one except Hammer could ever have been his Oliver.

The adaptation of *Call Me by Your Name* had been in development almost since the book's 2007 release. In 2014, James Ivory (the 89-year-old half of Merchant Ivory Productions) came on board to write and potentially direct. Guadagnino, who was born in Palermo, Italy, was brought on as a consultant. By 2016, when the film had secured its \$3.5 million budget, he had taken over as director. And he knew who he wanted as his star.

Hear Hammer reveal the movie genre he'd like to tackle next at [THR.COM/VIDEO](http://THR.COM/VIDEO)

# Built by Hammer: Armie's great-grandfather Armand was a colorful, booze-peddler turned billionaire whose name still looms large in L.A.



Born in the Bronx in 1898, Armand Hammer, Armie Hammer's larger-than-life great-grandfather, attended medical school but made his first million by stockpiling whiskey and selling it to doctors as "medicine" during the Prohibition. When he died in 1990 at age 92, he was one of the world's highest-profile billionaires, having turned Occidental Petroleum — a two-well operation for which he paid \$50,000 — into the country's 16th largest corporation. (He also made fortunes from art dealing, cattle breeding, a pencil factory and other ventures.) Hammer settled in L.A. in 1956 and his name adorns major buildings in the city, as well as in New York and D.C.



**Hammer Museum, Los Angeles**  
The Hammer name is carved in 3-foot-tall letters outside the Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center in Westwood, which opened in 1990 and houses a portion of his \$500 million art collection — including Rembrandts and Rubens.



**LACMA's Hammer Building, Los Angeles**  
Hammer pledged his collection of masterpieces and rare books (like da Vinci's *Codex*) to LACMA. But after a nasty showdown with trustees over how the works would be displayed, he reneged. The campus still features a Hammer Building.



**Armand Hammer Golf Course, Los Angeles**  
Holmby Park is an oasis in the same Beverly Hills neighborhood where Armand Hammer once lived and his great-grandson currently does. After he saved the spot from development in 1981, a golf course there was named for him.



**The Armand Hammer Foundation Gallery, Los Angeles**  
This gallery inside the Petersen Automotive Museum, on whose board Armie's father, Michael, sits, is dedicated to the intersection of art and cars. Keith Haring and Jeff Koons had exhibits there.



**Julius and Armand Hammer Health Sciences Center, New York**  
Hammer endowed his medical school alma mater, Columbia University, with \$5 million toward medical research by establishing this 16-story research center, named for his father and himself.



**The Frances and Armand Hammer Auditorium, Washington, D.C.**  
A \$2 million gift saved this 193-seat historic theater, steps from the White House and inside the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Hammer shared naming rights with third wife Frances Tolman, who died in 1989.



FAMILY: TONYA WISE/INPHO; ARMAND HAMMER: BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES; LACMA: JARED ROSENTHAL; MUSEUM: ELOM SCHOENHOLZ; AUDITORIUM: COURTESY OF THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY'S CORCORAN SCHOOL OF ARTS AND DESIGN; GOLF: ZEEZEZO/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS; HEALTH: BEYOND MY KEN/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

But, despite being “one of the most beautiful scripts I’ve ever read — I cried,” Hammer was positive that Oliver wasn’t someone he could inhabit. “There were things in the movie I’d never done on film. Not just the nudity, but the really intimate stuff. It scared me, to be honest.” Hammer called Guadagnino to pass — but the director had other plans.

“Filmmakers are like charlatans,” Guadagnino says with a devilish smile. “It requires a sort of seduction. So I said to him, ‘Think about the fact that maybe your fears are a counterpart of your desires. Don’t shy away from your fears!’” By the end of their conversation, Hammer was on board. (Guadagnino even managed to get Hammer to agree to full-frontal nudity — none of which made it into the final cut.)

“Luca is a sensualist,” Hammer tells me as we make our way back to the city. “He floats through the ether like he wants to make love to everything. He’ll literally be like, ‘Ooohh — I love your jeans.’” He leans over and places a hand on my thigh, then slowly slides it toward my knee. “At first you’re kind of like, ‘Whoa.’” (I

And Luca says, ‘Let’s just start at scene 62.’ So we flip to the scene, and the stage directions read: ‘Elio and Oliver are laying on the berm making out aggressively.’” What followed was a moment of quiet hesitation. “Then we just went for it. Trial by fire.” Chalamet, 21, says their offscreen dynamic was like that of close brothers — watching Mike Tyson documentaries and boxing matches and feasting at their favorite restaurants in Crema, the northern Italy town that served as the film’s backdrop.

Tougher even than the love scenes for Hammer was one sequence in which Oliver dances with abandon at a disco to “Love My Way” by the Psychedelic Furs. “That was not fun — I don’t really enjoy dancing,” he says. “I very quickly become the 6-foot-5 gangly guy that’s very easy to spot from across the room.” In the scene, the locals, including Elio and some summering French girls, are entranced by the Adonis with the sick moves. “So Luca calls ‘action’ and literally everyone is ogling me, including, like, 50 extras off camera. And the music’s pretty quiet, so we can record the dialogue. Here I am, dancing to this quiet music. And I’m just like, ‘I hate myself! I hate my life!’” The scene has already gone viral on social media — as has much about *Call Me by Your Name* ahead of its Nov. 24 release. (The movie has developed a young and enthusiastic online fan base, the type typically associated with YA franchises, not art house fare. That’s partly thanks to Chalamet’s teenage hormonal following and partly because the film plays out like an elaborately mounted fanc.)

Hammer is well aware that the optics of the Elio-Oliver age gap (they are 17 and 24 in the book; Chalamet and Hammer were 19 and 29 during the shoot) will inevitably draw criticism. It did from James Woods, who tweeted in September that the project “chips away the last barriers of decency.” Hammer’s reply was swift and deadly: “Didn’t you date a 19 year old when you were 60?” — a tweet that drew 64,000 likes. Hammer wasn’t expecting his response to go viral; he was merely acting on impulse, irritated that Woods, who hadn’t even seen the film,

“had no moral high ground to stand on and was cheapening what we did.”

“We weren’t trying to make some salacious, predatory movie,” Hammer continues. “The age of consent in Italy is 14. So, to get technical, it’s not illegal there. Whether I agree with that or not, that’s a whole ‘nother Oprah, you know? Would it make me uncomfortable if I had a 17-year-old child dating someone in their mid-20s? Probably. But this isn’t a normal situation: The younger guy goes after the older guy. The dynamic is not older predator versus younger boy.”

As for the harassment scandals that have upended Hollywood, Hammer voices his unwavering support for the victims. “It’s been permissible for too long for people in positions of power to abuse, and for the powerless to be expected to just take it. The system seems to be shaken, and thank God.” But he’s also certain that “no such power dynamics were at play in these two characters, and I’m excited for people to see the movie and realize that.”

Of course, there’s another way to consider *Call Me by Your Name* in this particular moment, and that’s as a rare same-sex love story — one in which, as Hammer puts it, “no one gets AIDS, no one has their personal life destroyed and no one gets lynched.” It’s also a movie that prizes things like language, intellectualism, foreign cultures and fine art. In other words, a perfect rejection of our current political climate. All of which is to say that this could be Armie Hammer’s perfect year.

Just don’t ask him. “I’ve heard the ‘This is your moment’ speech so many times,” Hammer sighs as we return to the idyllic park where our journey began, the one bearing his great-grandfather’s name. “I’m telling you, Armie, this movie is going to be the thing.’ ‘No, Armie, *this* movie is going to be the one.’ The way I look at it is I’m building a collage of my work. *Call Me by Your Name* is going to do what it’s going to do. And then the only thing I really care about is: Can I get more work afterward?” **VIR**



Above: “I had zero pop culture references,” he says of moving back to L.A. as a teen. “It was like, ‘I’m sorry, I don’t know who Nirvana is. I don’t know who the Lakers are.’ People were like, ‘Have you been living on an island?’ ‘Yes, I have, actually!’”  
Below (from left): Elizabeth, Ford, Harper and Hammer at the *Cars 3* premiere in Anaheim in June.



too was like, “Whoa.”) “But then you’re like, ‘Yeah! They are really nice! Feel this part over here!’”

To get Hammer and Chalamet, both of whom are straight, comfortable with the many intimate moments depicted in the film, Guadagnino tossed his actors into the deep end. “It was our first official rehearsal,” recounts Hammer. “We’re in the field behind the villa — me, Timothee and Luca.