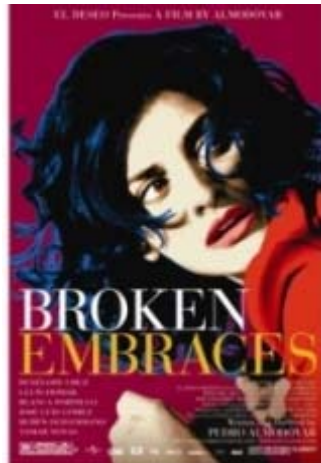


Mongrel Media

Presents

Broken Embraces

A film by Pedro Almodóvar



(128min., Spain, 2009)

Distribution



1028 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M6J 1H6
Tel: 416-516-9775 Fax: 416-516-0651
E-mail: info@mongrelmedia.com
www.mongrelmedia.com

Publicity

Bonne Smith
Star PR
Tel: 416-488-4436
Fax: 416-488-8438
E-mail: starpr@sympatico.ca

High res stills may be downloaded from <http://www.mongrelmedia.com/press.html>

1. SYNOPSIS

A man writes, lives and loves in darkness. Fourteen years before, he was in a brutal car crash on the island of Lanzarote. In the accident, he not only lost his sight, he also lost Lena, the love of his life.

This man uses two names: Harry Caine, a playful pseudonym with which he signs his literary works, stories and scripts, and Mateo Blanco, his real name, with which he lives and signs the film he directs. After the accident, Mateo Blanco reduces himself to his pseudonym, Harry Caine. If he can't direct films he can only survive with the idea that Mateo Blanco died on Lanzarote with his beloved Lena.

In the present day, Harry Caine lives thanks to the scripts he writes and to the help he gets from his faithful former production manager, Judit García, and from Diego, her son, his secretary, typist and guide.

Since he decided to live and tell stories, Harry is an active, attractive blind man who has developed all his other senses in order to enjoy life, on a basis of irony and self-induced amnesia. He has erased from his biography any trace of his first identity, Mateo Blanco. One night Diego has an accident and Harry takes care of him (his mother, Judit, is out of Madrid and they decide not to tell her anything so as not to alarm her). During the first nights of his convalescence, Diego asks him about the time when he answered to the name of Mateo Blanco, after a moment of astonishment Harry can't refuse and he tells Diego what happened fourteen years before with the idea of entertaining him, just as a father tells his little child a story so that he'll fall asleep.

The story of Mateo, Lena, Judit and Ernesto Martel is a story of "amour fou", dominated by fatality, jealousy, the abuse of power, treachery and a guilt complex. A moving and terrible story, the most expressive image of which is the photo of two lovers embracing, torn into a thousand pieces.

2. THE TITLE

The two protagonists, who have taken refuge in a bungalow at Famara Beach, on a mountainside facing the beach, are lying in each other's arms on a couch. They are watching, on a little television set, "Viaggio in Italia" by Rossellini.

The film tells of the collapse of an American marriage -the couple are played by Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders- during a trip to Italy. On the television we see the sequence in which Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders visit some excavations in Pompeii just when the workers are carefully digging up the remains of the ancient city, destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvius two thousand years before. Sanders and Bergman witness how the men who are excavating there find the bodies of a man and a woman together ("perhaps husband and wife", says the archaeologist), whom the lava immortalized while they were sleeping. The image is a shock for Ingrid Bergman who walks off a few feet, shaken by the emotion. The immortalized love of the couple from thousands of years before makes her think of the deterioration and pettiness of her own marriage. And she can't hold back her tears.

It's a simple scene, not at all rhetorical, direct and deeply moving. After seeing it on the television, Lena (Penélope Cruz) hides her face on the chest of her lover (Lluís Homar), as moved as Ingrid Bergman although, unlike her, Lena is being firmly embraced by the person she loves.

She thinks she'd like to die like that, wrapped in an eternal embrace with Mateo. He guesses Lena's fervent desire. He gets up from the couch, sets up his camera and puts it on automatic. He goes back beside Lena, embraces her tightly, the two look at the camera until the flash immortalizes their embrace like the lava from the volcano in Rossellini's film.

But unlike what happens in the Italian film this won't be an eternal embrace. Weeks later someone will tear up that photo and many others.

3. THE CREDITS

The credits appear superimposed on a strange texture, very different from that of the rest of the film. It's a texture that's hard to identify. The images, stolen, show a couple in front of the camera, around them a group of men enter and leave the frame. The couple are silent, she facing the camera, he with his back to it, barely looking at each other.

These images were filmed, unknown to the protagonists, by the video camera that is linked up to the Panavision camera with which the film was shot. This is a control camera to see the takes during and immediately after shooting them. Its images aren't printed, but that's what I did and the result is the strange texture that acts as background to the opening credits.

In these images the silent couple leave their positions in front of the camera and are replaced by Penélope Cruz and Lluís Homar. The man and the woman at the beginning are the lighting doubles for Penélope and Lluís.

Penélope looks strangely serious, she's concentrating, impervious to what's happening around her. In the next scene she'll have to cry and I guess she's getting in touch with her personal store of grief. Although her hairstyle is inspired by that of Audrey Hepburn in "Sabrina", her attitude reminds me of the replicant (Sean Young) in "Blade Runner". We can hardly see Lluís Homar's face, he has his back to us, motionless, looking at Penélope. They seem like two strangers.

The director of photography blocks the camera lens with his head, creating a spontaneous fade to black. This is a film in which the fades to black are very significant.

I chose these images to begin the film because they are stolen and furtive images that establish cinema as the territory where most of the action will take place. Also because I'm fascinated by the casual scenes that occur in front of the camera in those moments when no one is shooting. I often stand spellbound looking at them. For me, they are a real show. Shoots today (and life as well) are full of different sized screens which reflect the film and its surroundings... I'm fascinated by all the surfaces that reflect the film. Reflections add a ghostly, mysterious quality to the reflected image.

4. EDITING

The plot of “Broken Embraces” dramatizes the importance of editing, its direct relationship with the director and the fragility of the film if someone gets between the editing and the director.

Editing is in the origin of the narrative, it is the cinematic narrative, strictly speaking. I edited my first sixteen films on a moviola. So I’m paying homage to that machine, so closely linked to my cinematic biography, and to all the magnetic and photographic materials that new technology has swept from the editing rooms.

It isn’t by chance that there’s a close-up of the core of a reel rewinding frantically, and that this image dissolves to that of Mateo hurrying down the studio steps. Both movements evolve at the same rate and in the same direction. Both have the same center and it’s the same passion that drives them.

But I don’t want to be nostalgic, above all I don’t want to be paralyzed by nostalgia. I’m willing to embrace the new techniques, in the same way that Mateo embraces on the television the kiss that is so digitally enlarged it looks totally broken on the screen. It is precisely the flickering of the pixelation that makes the image so forceful.

5. MAKING OF

The protagonists of “Broken Embraces” are shooting a comedy, “Girls and Suitcases”. Mateo Blanco is the director and Lena Rivero is the protagonist. Judit García is the production manager and Ernesto Martel, Lena’s lover, is the producer. Ernesto Martel Junior is in charge of the “making of” video.

Mateo falls in love with Lena from the moment he sees her, the same thing happens to Lena (although she’s living with Martel and the tycoon is madly in love with her). Years before, Judit had a love affair with Mateo and still hasn’t got over it, although that doesn’t prevent her from working with him, in fact she’s his right hand. Ernesto Martel is a broker (from the generation of the financial boom of the 80s) with lots of money and few scruples. He isn’t a producer, but as Lena shows an inclination for Thalia’s art, he produces Mateo’s film in a desperate effort to hold on to her. Ernesto Martel’s son, named after his father, is a childish young man who likes cinema and men, in particular Mateo. Martel Senior commissions Martel Junior to make a documentary about “Girls and Suitcases”, what would now be called a “making of”, that way he can spy on Lena. His only problem isn’t moral, but technical. The first videos have got terrible sound. Martel Senior improvises and reinvents dubbing, hiring a neutral lip reader.

All these elements are typical of a comedy, but “Broken Embraces” is a drama with very dark touches, more like a 50s thriller.

Although morally I detest the way Martel is using the “making of”, a mere pretext in order to control all of Lena and Mateo’s movements on and off the set, I like the idea that the “making of” is a parallel narrative to the original (the film which it reflects), an

independent, furtive narrative. I've always dreamed of making a film whose story is seen through a "making of". A "Making of" reveals not only the technical secrets but also the secrets of the people responsible for cooking up and coordinating the fiction, at times embodying it. It turns those responsible for the fiction into fiction.

The ideal "making of" should strengthen and complete the original story. But it can be dangerous (all fiction is dangerous and also therapeutic, that's why we find it irresistible), it's a living material, moved by its own impulses which can only be tamed and transformed if you submit them to editing. Martel Senior sees the filmed material in its raw state. He projects the video tapes just as they come from his son's camera, supervised only by the lip reading automaton.

When Lena comes into the large sitting room of the mansion and finds Ernesto Martel, with the lip reader, viewing her violent argument with Ernesto Junior, Lena becomes a duplicate of herself, the woman who from the screen confesses to Martel that she doesn't love him. At that moment, the "making of", produced by Martel with perverse intentions, turns against him. Lena leaves him doubly, on the screen and from the door of the sitting room, behind him. As a result of Martel's harassment, the humiliation and pain when Lena leaves him is doubled.

6. DUPLICATION (NOT DUPLICITY)

The "double" is one of the hallmarks of "Broken Embraces". The "double" not in the sense of a moral term ("ambiguity", "duplicité"), but as "duplication, repetition or enlargement".

The film begins with the image of the protagonists' two stand-ins. Ernesto Martel Junior *duplicates* his father's behavior, even though he's the last model he would like to imitate. When his father dies, Martel Junior plans to take his revenge on his memory with a film that tells how his father crushed and destroyed him while he was alive. Even though he's homosexual, Martel Junior got married twice, like his father. He's got two children who hate him as much as he hates his father (in this character's construction there are echoes of the story of Hemingway and his son Gregory who as a young boy liked the feel of silk and taffeta, and who, after drinking more than his father, hunting larger elephants than he had hunted and having had more children than the writer had, ended up having a sex change when he was almost sixty, fifteen years after the death of his famous father). Martel Junior's story isn't as terrible. After his father's death, he unconsciously continues to imitate the paternal behavior he detests so much.

The male protagonist has got "two" names. When blind Mateo starts to call himself Harry Caine, he does so to escape from himself. His reality is unbearable. He can only survive by "supplanting" or "duplicating" himself.

Before the accident, Harry Caine was already a prolongation of himself. Mateo Blanco had playfully invented the pseudonym in order to sign the scripts and stories he wrote. Like many authors, fiction was a rehearsal of reality.

A director who can't direct and who moreover has lost the woman he adored, has only got grief and despair to look forward to; if he wants to survive he'll have to do so through imposture.

Several of the characters in “Broken Embraces” work in film. I’ve always said that for me film is “representation” of reality and at times is its most faithful reflection, its “duplication”.

Even though, the moment they are finished, all films are the past, I see premonitory qualities in them. It’s a theory that appears frequently in my filmography. In “Matador”, the two protagonists go into a cinema where “Duel in the Sun” is being shown. They arrive just at the end, when Jennifer Jones fires at and in turn is gunned down by Gregory Peck, with whom she melds in (another) eternal embrace. The female lawyer and the bullfighter in “Matador” see the anticipation of their own end on the screen.

Something similar happens in “Bad Education” when Mr. Berenguer and the devilish Angel go into a cinema as an alibi in order to kill some time, while Ángel’s brother is dying, the victim of exceptionally pure heroin which both of them have given to him, the cinema is showing two thrillers “Double Identity” (by Billy Wilder) and “Thérèse Raquin” (by Marcel Carné). Both tell of crimes by lovers, similar to the one they have committed. The cinema maintains a very vivid awareness of crimes carried out by lovers who were induced to commit them.

When they leave the cinema, Mr. Berenguer (the lover who has become a criminal), overwhelmed, laments: “It’s as if all the films were talking about us”.

Film and reality: Two ride together

Penélope Cruz plays “two” characters in “Broken Embraces”. Magdalena, a woman who is too beautiful and too poor to resist the poisoned generosity of the tycoon Ernesto Martel. And Pina, her counter-figure, the protagonist of “Girls and Suitcases”.

7. GIRLS AND SUITCASES

I won’t deny that “Girls and Suitcases” is freely based on “Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown” But it isn’t a self-homage, I hope no one interprets it like that. When I was writing the script I decided that Mateo Blanco would be filming a comedy because it is the opposite genre to the drama the protagonists are living. In that way their problems would take on greater relevance, and the efforts, for example, by Lena to achieve the light, sparkling tone that comedy demands are more obvious and pathetic. I only needed three or four sequences of “Girls and Suitcases” to act as background to the main story and I thought the best thing was to adapt some of my own material in which I could move with total freedom. That’s why I chose “Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown”.

Once we were in the penthouse of the new “Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown” (curiously we shot this *duplication* in the same corner of the studio where I filmed the original twenty years ago) I had great fun adapting myself. The experience was so inspiring I wrote and filmed more sequences than necessary. I couldn’t include them in the final edit because their tone is the opposite to that of the general narrative and they’d be disconcerting. I’d imagined as much when we were filming them but I couldn’t resist the temptation. Fortunately there’ll be the DVD and they’ll be included in it as additional material.

In this new version of “Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown” Pina isn’t an adaptation of the role played by Carmen Maura, but rather of the role of her model friend Candela. The character also has echoes of Holly Golightly from “Breakfast at Tiffany’s”, the most modern ingénue of cinema and American literature, although the hairstyle is that of another character played by Audrey Hepburn, Sabrina.

Most of the female roles I’ve written in my life are a mixture of my mother and her neighbors in La Mancha, mixed with Golightly, the Giulietta Masina of “La strada” and the Shirley MacLaine of “Some Came Running” (V. Minnelli) and “The Apartment” (B. Wilder). All those women are inside Penélope, so are their opposites, the “grandes dames” of American film noir, Gene Tierney, Linda Darnell, Constance Bennett. Penélope can be any of them, and also Sofia Loren, Magnani and Claudia Cardinale and all the heroines of Italian neo-realism, a style that has always been an inspiration to me.

8. NOIR

When Lena falls into Ernesto Martel’s clutches she has all the attributes of the “femme fatale”, dark, ambitious beauty, a humble past and a family in a precarious situation, the intelligence not to resign herself and to take risks; but she has too many scruples and she lacks cynicism. Her love for Mateo precipitates her tragedy, even though she would have eventually left the tycoon and he wouldn’t have allowed it. Lena isn’t a “femme fatale”, she’s condemned to misfortune.

Mateo, Lena and Ernesto Senior make up a typical “noir” trio. The three love fiercely and one is very powerful, violent and unscrupulous. Combustion is served. The trio is flanked by Judit García, who brings treachery, a secret son and a guilt complex to the group, ingredients that will make the relationship between the four even thicker.

Film “noir” is one of my favourite genres. I’d already moved in that direction in “Live Flesh” and “Bad Education” and I’ve done so again in “Broken Embraces.” The scene of Ernesto Senior’s feet, walking up to and then away from the door of the room where Lena is, followed by the scene on the staircase are definitely “noir.” After an hour’s narrative, the scene on the staircase reveals the genre to which the film belongs, and that sensation of blackness doesn’t leave us until the end.

9. UP AND DOWN

The staircase is a real cinematic icon. It suggests the idea of displacement, and movement is what differentiates cinema from photography. I remember the staircase which the pregnant Gene Tierney throws herself down in “Leave Her to Heaven” (John M. Stahl), along with “Él”, by Luis Buñuel, the best film about the madness of jealousy. I remember Richard Widmark tying a paralytic woman to her wheelchair with a telephone wire and pushing her from the top of a staircase because the woman refused to reveal her son’s whereabouts, in “Kiss of Death”, by Henry Hathaway. A horrifying thriller and a horrifying Richard Widmark.

The steps in "Battleship Potemkin" by Eisenstein are the mother of all steps, undoubtedly, the most impressive scene with steps that cinema has ever given us. Brian de Palma's tribute in "The Untouchables" is also memorable.

And the operatic grandeur of the final scene of "The Godfather, Part III" or the great red staircase on which Vivien Leigh loses her baby in "Gone with the Wind". Or Norman Bates and Baby Jane (Anthony Perkins and Bette Davis in "Psycho" and "What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?", respectively) two deadly characters if you meet them at the top of a staircase.

Gothic terror, epic drama and the thriller are genres that have made the most of staircases. But so have the crazy comedy and the musical. I remember a number in Busby Berkeley's "Ziegfeld's Girl" that consisted exclusively of a group of young ladies, among whom were Lana Turner and Hedy Lamarr, coming down endless, winding stairs, while placed inside enormous costumes.

Without intending to compare myself with all the above, I feel very proud of the staircase scene in "Broken Embraces", a sequence that is the backbone of the narrative.

10. THE PHOTO

Once again, duplicity.

In Lanzarote, Lena and Mateo are looking at the impressive Golfo Beach. Mateo is taking photos, while Lena embraces him from behind. They don't see them, but down below, on the beach of black sand, an embracing couple mirrors them. Mateo discovers them when he prints the photo (the eye of the camera sees farther than the human eye) and pins it on the wall of the bungalow where they have taken refuge. The photo reflects Mateo and Lena's situation better than any other image does. They are fugitives, alone in the immensity of the volcanic island, melding one with the other, blending into the landscape, like the couple in the photo.

I had taken the photo which we used nine years ago, on my first visit to Lanzarote. The island had bewitched me. I'd never seen such dramatic colors in nature. For me it wasn't a landscape, it was a mood, a character. From that moment I wanted to film there.

My first visit to Lanzarote occurred at a very special moment. My mother had died a few months before. My spirits, still in mourning, found reflection and consolation in the blackness of the island, a kind of soothing energy. I was more aware that my mother's death had made me into an adult.

Just as in my youth I'd been trapped by the technicolors of the Caribbean, my trip to Lanzarote first developed my fascination for black and the more somber semitones of red, green, brown and grey. As confirmation of the island's mystery, I took the photo on Golfo Beach. Like Mateo, I hadn't seen the couple embracing at the bottom of the photo. I discovered them when a 24-hour developing store gave me the print. The landscape was incredible but what really struck me was the discovery of the couple embracing, alone, minute against the immensity of the landscape. Obsessed as I am with my work, (thinking perhaps about the photo taken in the London park in "Blow Up" which, when enlarged, revealed a body hidden in the bushes) I imagined that there was a secret behind that

furtive embrace and that I had the photographic evidence of it. I wanted to know everything about the couple, or at least some detail with which to spin a fictional story.

I looked for the couple during the remainder of my stay on Lanzarote, but I couldn't find them. I imagined their situation and I wrote various fictional options that ended with the solitary embrace, but none of them was of interest.

I went back to Lanzarote and searched again in its volcanic landscape for a story that would include the embrace on Golfo Beach, without finding anything that satisfied me. The secret of the embrace was reluctant to reveal itself. I still had the island, as a setting. I tried to introduce it into all the scripts I wrote from then on but I didn't find the story that could include it until 2007-2008, when I finished the script of "Broken Embraces".

Lanzarote would be the island where Lena and Mateo hid, Famara their refuge, their Pompeii, and the roundabout their Vesuvius. They were the couple on Golfo Beach, as Lena tells Mateo while she cuts and peels fruit in the kitchen of the bungalow in Famara.

11. PARENTS AND CHILDREN. THE MONOLOGUE

One of the important themes in the film is the relationship between parents and children, maternity and paternity. The family, in short.

The monologue of "The anthropophagous councilwoman", which will also appear on the DVD as a short, is the child of "Girls and Suitcases". We could say it's a spin off of Carmen Machi's brief but hilarious character.

I didn't film it in order to include it in "Broken Embraces", although it complements the film, but once it was written, and even though I didn't have time, I shot it in one day. It was a prank, a whim and a liberation, something I've committed in other stages of my life and which I hadn't allowed myself to do for a long time.

In the monologue about the erotic fantasies of a councilwoman for social affairs I recover that free, playful, very politically incorrect, irrepressible, crude tone of the "Patty Diphusa" of the early 80s. I confess that it was a refreshing, liberating experience, and an enormous pleasure to see how the great Carmen Machi performed it. I was also delighted to see that that tone is still there, that it hasn't disappeared with maturity, the grey hair and the headaches.

12. DECLARATION OF LOVE

Cinema plays a very important role in all my films. I don't do it as a pupil revering those directors who have preceded him. I don't make films "in the style of." When a director or a film appears in one of mine, it's in a more active way than as a simple homage or a nod at the spectator.

I could give a lot of examples. When in “Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown” Carmen Maura has to dub a sequence of “Johnny Guitar,” I’m not paying tribute to Joan Crawford or Sterling Hayden or even to Nicholas Ray, one of my essential directors. I’m using his marvellous, heart-rending love scene (“Lie to me and tell me that you still love me the way I love you”) in order to accentuate the loneliness and abandonment of THE character. Carmen (Pepa) is a dubbing actress, so is her lover Iván. That morning he isn’t with her, dubbing Sterling Hayden as he was supposed to, because they’ve broken up and he is avoiding her. Iván went to the studio before she did so as not to meet her, and he dubbed his part alone, on a separate soundtrack. Pepa has to listen to his voice over the headphones and slot in her replies. She will never again hear words of love directly from Iván’s lips. She can only listen to them over the headphones, in a recording studio. Her loneliness and abandonment are more obvious through the famous scene from “Johnny Guitar”.

At times, the best way I can transmit a character’s feelings is by doing so through cinema, using words that another author wrote before I did.

In “High Heels”, Victoria Abril and Marisa Paredes talk in a courtroom in the Supreme Court. Marisa, the mother and star, is horrified and can’t understand why her daughter has accused herself publicly (on the TV news program which she presents) of the murder of her husband, who was also her mother’s lover. In order to explain how she has felt about her mother since she was a little girl, Victoria tells her a scene from “Autumn Sonata”, in which Liv Ullman has an unusual visit from her mother, a famous pianist, and she plays a sonata to flatter her and in her honor. The mother (Ingrid Bergman) thanks her unenthusiastically and then sits down at the piano and explains how that sonata should really be played. And that demonstration is the greatest humiliation the mother can inflict on her subdued, insignificant daughter.

I could have said it was a homage to Bergman, one of my five key directors, but that isn’t so (my great excitement about the stage version of “All about my mother” opening in Stockholm has got nothing to do with my vanity, but with that fact that it’s performed in the same language that Bergman spoke). When Victoria Abril recounts the scene to Marisa Paredes she feels as insignificant and humiliated as Liv Ullmann. In the end she admits that she accused herself publicly on television of having murdered her husband, not just to cover up for her mother, who had killed him, but to get her attention. To tell her, with such an excessive gesture, how much she loved her.

In “Broken Embraces” I also use the transparent simplicity of Rossellini’s “Voyage to Italy” to show the effect on Lena-Penélope of the discovery of the couple burned to death in Pompeii two thousand years earlier.

I feel it’s the first time I’ve made such an express declaration of love to cinema; not with a specific sequence, but with a whole film. To cinema, to its materials, to the people who give all they’ve got around the spotlights, to the actors, editors, narrators, those who write, to the screens which show the images of intrigues and emotions. To films as they were made at the moment they were made. To something that, although you can make a living from it, is not only a profession but also an irrational passion.

PEDRO ALMODÓVAR – BIOGRAPHY

He was born in Calzada de Calatrava, province of Ciudad Real, in the heart of La Mancha, in the 50s. When he was eight, he emigrated with his family to Extremadura. There he studied for his elementary and high school diplomas respectively with the Salesian Fathers and the Franciscans.

At seventeen, he left home and moved to Madrid, with no money and no job, but with a very specific project in mind: to study cinema and direct films. It was impossible to enrol in the Official Film School because Franco had just closed it. Despite the dictatorship that was suffocating the country, for an adolescent from the provinces Madrid represented culture, independence and freedom. He worked at many, sporadic jobs but couldn't buy his first Super-8mm camera until he got a "serious" job at the National Telephone Company of Spain in 1971. He worked there for twelve years as an administrative assistant, he shared this job in the mornings with other multiple activities which provided his real training as a filmmaker and as a person.

In the mornings, in the Telephone Company, he got an in-depth knowledge of the Spanish middle class at the start of the consumer era, the seventies, its dramas and its misfortunes, a real gold mine for a future story teller. In the evenings and nights, he wrote, loved, acted with the mythical independent theatre group Los Goliardos and made films in Super-8 (his only school as a filmmaker). He collaborated with various underground magazines and wrote stories, some of which were published. He was a member of a parodic punk-rock group, Almodóvar and McNamara, etc. And he had the good fortune that his personal explosion coincided with the explosion of the democratic Madrid of the last seventies, early eighties. That was the period the world knew as La Movida.

His films are the heirs and the witnesses of the brand new born Spanish democracy. After a year and a half of eventful shooting on 16mm, in 1980 he opened "Pepi, Luci, Bom", a no-budget film made as a cooperative effort with the rest of the crew and the cast, all beginners, except for Carmen Maura.

In 1986, he founded the production company El Deseo S.A. with his brother Agustín. Their first project was "Law of Desire". Since then, they have produced all the films that Pedro has written and directed, and have also produced other young directors.

In 1988, "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" brought him international recognition. Since then, his films have opened all around the world. With "All About my Mother" he won his first Academy Award for Best Foreign Film, and also the Golden Globe, the César, 3 European Film Awards, the David de Donatello, 2 BAFTAs, 7 Goyas and 45 other awards. Three years later, "Talk to Her" had the same or better fortune (Academy Award for Best Script, 5 European Film Awards, 2 BAFTAs, the Nastro de Argento, the César and many other awards throughout the world but not in Spain).

He produced four very special films, highly rated throughout the world for their valour and delicacy ("My Life Without Me", "The Holy Girl", "The Secret Life of Words" and "The Headless Woman", by Isabel Coixet and Lucrecia Martel alternatively).

In 2004, "Bad Education" was chosen to open the Cannes Festival. It received extraordinary reviews throughout the world. It was nominated for numerous awards (Independent Spirit Awards, BAFTAs, César, European Film Awards) and won the prestigious Award for Best Foreign Film given by the New York Critics' Circle and also the Nastro de Argento.

In 2006 he is awarded with the Prince of Asturias Award to the Arts. That very same year he presents "Volver" in competition in the Cannes Film Festival, where it got the Best Screenplay Award as well as the Best Actress Award for the six actresses of the film, leaded by Penélope Cruz. The film received 5 EFA awards, 5 Goya awards, the Fipresci award, the National Board of Review, and many others (up to 72). Penélope was nominated to the Best Actress Academy Award, being the first time a Spanish actress was nominated for a Spanish speaking film. Up to now, "Volver" has been his most popular film in terms of box office.

FILMOGRAPHY

1974-1979	Various films of differing lengths on Super-8mm, including some on 16mm (Salomé)
1980	Pepi, Luci, Bom
1982	Labyrinth of Passions
1983	Dark Habits
1984-5	What Have I Done to Deserve This?!
1985	Trayler para amantes de lo prohibido (medium length, on video, for TVE)
1985-86	Matador
1986	Law of Desire
1987	Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown
1989	Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down
1991	High Heels
1992	Acción mutante (Producer)
1993	Kika
1995	The Flower of my Secret
1997	Live Flesh
1999	All About my Mother
2000	The Devil's Backbone (Producer)
2001	Talk to Her
2002	My Life Without Me (Producer)
2003	Chill Out! (Producer)
2003	Bad Education
2004	The Holy Girl (Producer)
2005	The Secret Life of Words (Producer)
2006	Volver
2008	The Headless Woman (Producer)
2009	Broken Embraces

CAST – BIO-FILMOGRAPHIES

PENÉLOPE CRUZ

After having appeared in “Live Flesh”, “All About my Mother” and “Volver”, Penélope has worked again with Pedro Almodóvar.

After studying acting at Cristina Rota’s school, she made her debut while still a teenager in “Jamón, Jamón” (1992). In this film she already showed an extraordinary capacity for playing the common characters which would bring her such success in the future, and also attracted the attention of the most important Spanish directors with whom she would later work. Bigas Luna in the above mentioned “Jamón, Jamón” and “Volaverunt”, Fernando Trueba in “Belle Epoque” and “La niña de tus ojos” (for which she received the Goya for Best Actress), Alejandro Amenábar in “Abre los ojos” or Agustín Díaz Yanes in “Sin noticias de Dios”. She has also had a more than notable international career which includes “The Hi-Lo Country” (Stephen Frears), “All the Pretty Horses” (Billy Bob Thornton), “Blow” (Ted Demme), “Captain Corelli’s Mandolin” (John Madden), “Vanilla Sky” (Cameron Crowe), “Non ti muovere” (Sergio Castellito), “The Good Night” (Jake Paltrow), “Vicky Cristina Barcelona” (Woody Allen) or “Nine” (Rob Marshall).

With “Non ti muovere”, by Sergio Castellito, she won the David di Donatello award and the European Film Academy’s *People’s Choice Award* for Best Actress. The New York Times selected her, for that film, as one of the ten best female performances of the year.

With “Volver” she won the Best Actress award at the Cannes Festival, ex aequo with the other actresses in the film. She also won the EFA and the Goya and was nominated for the Academy Award, the Golden Globe and the BAFTA awards.

Her performance in “Vicky Cristina Barcelona” has earned her more than ten awards and an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress.

She doesn’t discount the possibility of directing in the future and in the meantime she is experimenting with photography, one of her favourite pastimes.

LLUIS HOMAR

Born in Barcelona 51 years ago, Luis has managed to combine theatre with cinema and television, although he has devoted most of his extensive career to the stage. He studied Law at Barcelona’s Autonomous University after which he attended various acting courses: Uta Hagen (1986-87) in New York or John Strasberg (1985) among others.

He was one of the founders of the Teatre Lliure and was its director from 1992 to 1998. He has acted in and directed over thirty productions for the company. In 1999, he directed and starred in Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” for the Festival Grec. Among the authors he has staged and performed are David Mamet (“Speed the Plow”) Molière (“George Dandin”, “Le misanthrope” and “L’école des femmes”) and Ibsen (“Hedda Gabler” and “The Master-Builder”), Pirandello (“Mountain Giants”) and Thomas Bernhard (“Histrionics”).

He has appeared in over thirty films, working with directors such as Pilar Miró (“El pájaro de la felicidad”), Vicente Aranda (“Si te dicen que caí”), Mario Camus (“Después del sueño”, “Adosados” and “La ciudad de los prodigios”), Julio Medem (“Caótica Ana”), Montxo Armendáriz (“Obaba”) and Jose Luis Iborra (“El sueño de Valentín”) among others.

In "La mala educación" he played one of the key characters, Mr. Berenguer, and had a great success. This is why he has now worked again with Almodóvar in "Los abrazos rotos". In 1986 he won the National Acting Award, in 2000 the Silver Fotogramas for Theater and the Butaca Award for Best Catalanian Actor for "Valentín".

BLANCA PORTILLO

Born in Madrid in 1963, she studied at the Higher Royal School of Dramatic Art where she began a successful theatre career. This has earned her such recognition as the La Celestina and Max awards for "Madre, el drama padre", the Max, Union of Actors and Teatro de Rojas awards for "Como en los mejores familias" or the Miguel Mihura and Union of Actors awards for "La hija del aire", by the prestigious director Jorge Lavelli.

She has appeared in some thirty theatre productions. At present she is starring in "Hamlet", directed by Tomaz Pandur, with whom she also worked in "Barroco". José Carlos Plaza directed her in "After Play" by Brian Friel, which was a huge success, and Andrés Lima directed her in "Hamelin", by Juan Mayorga.

Very popular thanks to the TV series "Siete Vidas", Blanca has also worked in fifteen films, with directors such as Milos Forman ("Goya's Ghost"), Agustín Díaz Yanes ("Alatriste"), Belén Macías ("My Prison Yard") and Gracia Querejeta ("Siete mesas de billar francés"). In 2005, she began her collaboration with Pedro Almodóvar in "Volver".

She was nominated for a Goya as Best Newcomer for "El color de las nubes" (Mario Camus) and as Best Supporting Actress for "Volver". She won the Union of Actors award in that category for the film.

At the Cannes Festival, she received the Best Actress award ex aequo with the rest of the actresses for "Volver" and the Silver Conch for Best Actress at the San Sebastian Festival for "Siete mesas de billar francés".

JOSÉ LUIS GÓMEZ

He trained as an actor in the Institute of Dramatic Art in Westphalia (Bochum) and at the Jacques Lecoq School (Paris). He did his early professional work as actor and director in the main theatres of the Federal Republic of Germany. In 1971 he came back to Spain where he produced, directed and performed in productions such as "Report for an Academy", by Kafka, "Gaspar", by Peter Handke and "The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui", by Bertolt Brecht.

After his leading role in the film "Pascual Duarte", by Ricardo Franco, for which he won the Best Actor award at the Cannes Film Festival (1976), he worked with directors such as Jaime de Armiñán ("Nunca es tarde"), Juan Sebastián Bollaín ("Las dos orillas"), Enrique Brassó ("In memoriam"), Jaime Camino ("Luces y sombras"), Jaime Chavarrí ("Dedicatoria"), Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón ("Sonámbulos"), Eloy de la Iglesia ("La estanquera de Vallecas"), Joseph Losey ("Les routes du sud"), Pilar Miró ("Beltenebros"), Carlos Saura ("Los ojos vendados" and "El séptimo día"), Gonzalo Suárez ("Rowing with the Wind"), Mariano Barroso ("Hormigas en la boca") and Milos Forman ("Goya's Ghosts") among others.

In 1978, after a period of studies in New York with Lee Strasberg, he took over the management of the Centro Dramático Nacional, along with Nuria Espert and Ramón Tamayo, and two years later that of the Teatro Español.

In 1992, he directed "La vida es sueño" in the Théâtre de l'Odéon and the following year "Carmen" in the Opéra de la Bastille, both in Paris.

Since then, he has concentrated on the conception, administration and management of the Teatro de la Abadía, opened in 1995, where he has tackled a wide repertory, encouraged the training of actors and invited important European directors.

In 2008, he directed the opera "Simon Boccanegra", by Verdi, in the Gran Teatre del Liceu. He has won numerous awards, the most notable of which include, as well as the above mentioned Best Actor award at the Cannes Film Festival, the National Theater award, Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, granted by France, the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Gold Medal from the Círculo de Bellas Artes and the Gold Medal for Merit in Fine Arts from the Spanish Ministry of Culture.

RUBÉN OCHENDIANO

Born in 1980, he studied acting with Juan Carlos Coraza, contemporary dance with Michelle Mann, Eileen Standley and Mónica Page, and singing with Inés Rivadelaideira, as well as other courses which enriched his theatrical training.

He has worked in highly successful TV series such as "El comisario", "Hospital Central", "Al salir de clase" and "Periodistas".

In theatre, he has worked for such directors as Antonio Mercero in "The Green Fields of Eden" and Miguel Narros in "Así es... si así os parece", for which he was nominated as Best Leading Actor by the Union of Actors.

He has made over fifteen films, including "Silencio roto", by Montxo Armendáriz, for which he was nominated for a Goya for Best Newcomer, "Guerreros", by Daniel Calparsoro, "La flaqueza del bolchevique", by Manuel Martín Cuenca, for which he was again nominated by the Union de Actores, "Chill Out!", by Félix Sabroso and Dunia Ayaso, "Tapas", by Juan Cruz and José Corbacho, for which he won the "El Mundo" award, "Che", by Steven Soderbergh, "My Prison Yard", by Belén Macías and "Biutiful", by Alejandro González Iñárritu.

TAMAR NOVAS

At only 22, he can boast of having worked with some of the most important directors in Spain, Alejandro Almenábar, José Luis Cuerda or Gerardo Herrero, as well as this film by Pedro Almodóvar.

He began studying dramatic art with Juan Carlos Coraza. His first film was "La lengua de las mariposas", by José Luis Cuerda (1999) which was followed by "The Sea Inside", by Alejandro Amenábar, for which he received the Goya for Best Newcomer and the Union of Actors award in the same category. In 2006, he worked in "Goya's Ghosts" with the director Milos Forman and the following year in "Una mujer invisible" by Gerardo Herrero. He has worked in TV series such as "Cuenta atrás", "La señora" and "Siete vidas", among others.

He made his debut in theater with the play “La noche” by Bernard-Mari Koltés, directed by Carlos Neira.

He is undoubtedly one of the rising stars of Spanish cinema.

CREW - BIOGRAPHIES

AGUSTÍN ALMODÓVAR

Born in La Mancha, he graduated in Chemical Sciences from Madrid’s Complutense University.

Since 1985 he has worked actively in cinema. He joined the crew of “Sé infiel y no mires con quien” (Fernando Trueba) as production trainee. That same year he began his ceaseless participation in his brother’s films, working as assistant director on “Matador” and in 1986 he and Pedro set up their own company, El Deseo.

Since then he has produced all of Pedro’s feature films (winning the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film with “All About my Mother”) and has also produced the work of other directors (Alex de la Iglesia, Mónica Laguna, Daniel Calparsoro, Guillermo del Toro, Isabel Coixet, Félix Sabroso and Dunia Ayaso, Lucrecia Martel and Belén Macías). With El Deseo, he has also been involved in numerous coproductions with France.

ESTHER GARCÍA

Esther, who was born in Segovia, has won five Goyas for “Acción Mutante”, “All About my Mother”, “The Secret Life of Words” and “Volver”. She has been production director on over ninety films and TV series since she began in 1976 with “Curro Jiménez”.

She has worked in every aspect of production from trainee to executive producer, a position she has held since the film “My life without me” (Isabel Coixet).

As well as working uninterruptedly with Pedro since “Matador”, she has done production work for Fernando Trueba, Mariano Ozores, Luis María Delgado, Gonzalo Suárez, Emilio Martínez Lázaro and Fernando Colomo.

As part of the El Deseo team, she has directed production on “Acción Mutante” (Alex de la Iglesia), “Tengo una casa” (Mónica Laguna), “Pasajes” (Daniel Calparsoro), “The Devil’s Backbone” (Guillermo del Toro), “Chill Out!” (Félix Sabroso and Dunia Ayaso) and “My Prison Yard” (Belen Macías).

Along with Agustín Almodóvar, she has gone into television production (“Mujeres”, by Dunia Ayaso and Félix Sabroso) and international production (“My life without me” and “The Secret Life of Words”, by Isabel Coixet, “The Holy Girl” and “The Headless Woman”, by Lucrecia Martel).

ALBERTO IGLESIAS

Born in San Sebastian in 1955, he studied piano, guitar, counterpoint and harmony with Blanca Burgaleta and Francisco Escudero in his home city. He broadened his studies in Paris with Francis Schwartz and in Barcelona with Gabriel Brnčić. He has collaborated with Carlos Saura, Bigas Luna, Julio Medem and Iciar Bollaín, among others.

He has developed a close collaboration with Pedro since they first worked together on "The Flower of my Secret", and since then he has been the regular composer on his films.

His soundtracks include "Los amantes del círculo polar" (Julio Medem), "All About my Mother", "Talk to Her" and "Volver" (Pedro Almodóvar). He has received seven Goyas for his work on the above mentioned films and also for his scores for Julio Medem's films "La ardilla roja", "Tierra" and "Sex and Lucia". He won the European Film Award (EFA) for "Volver".

He was nominated for the Oscar for "The Constant Gardener" (Fernando Meirelles) and "The Kite Runner" (Marc Foster). He won the National Cinema Award in 2007. His most recent works include "Che" (Steven Soderbergh).

In addition to his film work, he has composed symphonic and chamber music and also several ballets for the National Dance Company.

JOSÉ SALCEDO

The master of editors, Pepe Salcedo has edited over ninety films to date, including Pedro Almodóvar's entire filmography.

He was assistant to Pedro del Rey and Pablo del Amo and began his career with the film "Una mujer prohibida". Since then he has won three Goyas for his work on "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" (Pedro Almodovar), "Nadie hablará de nosotros cuando hayamos muerto" (Agustín Díaz Yanes) and "All About my Mother" (Pedro Almodóvar). He has worked along with some of the most important Spanish directors, including Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón, Eloy de la Iglesia, Pedro Olea, Gonzalo Suárez, Jaime Chávarri, José Luis Borau, Manuel Gómez Pereira and many, many more.

RODRIGO PRIETO

He was born in Mexico in 1965 and has already worked on more than twenty films as director of photography. A specialist in creating atmosphere and in the mastery of chiaroscuro, he is known for his unconventional use of the camera. He has worked with directors such as Curtis Hanson ("8 Mile"), Spike Lee ("The 25th Hour"), Oliver Stone ("Alexander"), Kevin MacDonal ("State of Play") and, as well as being director of photography on all of Alejandro González Iñárritu's films, he has collaborated on Ang Lee's last two films "Brokeback Mountain", for which he was nominated for the Oscar for Best Photography, and "Lust, Caution".

CAST LIST

Lena: Penélope Cruz
Mateo and Harry Caine: Lluís Homar
Judit: Blanca Portillo
Ernesto Martel: José Luis Gómez
Ray X: Rubén Ochandiano
Diego: Tamar Novas
Lena's mother: Ángela Molina
Concierge: Chus Lampreave
Madame Mylene: Kiti Manver
Lip reader: Lola Dueñas
Edurne: Mariola Fuentes
Chon: Carmen Machi
Model: Kira Miró
Julieta: Rossy de Palma
Alex: Alejo Sauras

Carlos Sanpedro
Ramón Pons
Cote Soler
Marta Aledo
Carlos Leal
Chema Ruiz
Dani Martín
Asier Etxeandía
Jons Pappila
Javier Coll
Juan Bautista Cucarella
Lyng Dyrup
Enrique Aparicio
Enrique Vargas
Viviana Espinosa
Fernando Lueches
Fernando Iglesias
Javier Giner
Carlos García Cambero
Bina Daigeler

CREW LIST

Written and directed: Pedro Almodóvar
Producer: Agustín Almodóvar
Produced by: Esther García
Original Score: Alberto Iglesias
Editing: José Salcedo
Director of Photography: Rodrigo Prieto, ASC, AMC
Art Director: Antxon Gómez
Production Manager: Toni Novella
Direct Sound: Miguel Rejas
Sound Editing: Pelayo Gutiérrez
Mix: Marc Orts
Make-up Artist: Ana Lozano

Hair Stylist: Massimo Gattabrusi
Costume Design: Sonia Grande

“A ciegas” performed by Miguel Poveda

Casting Director	Luis San Narciso
Direction Assistant	Guillermo Escribano
Director’s Assistant	Lola García
Script Supervisor	Yuyi Beringola
2nd Direction Assistant	Daniel Rivero
	Ferrán Rial
Director’s Assistant	Fernando Lueches
3rd Direction Assistant	Andrea Vázquez
Direction Trainee	Cecilio Caparrini
Production Director	Sergio Díaz
Production Coordinator	Covadonga R. Gamboa
Production Coordinator’s Assistant	Verónica Díaz
Cashier- Payer	Pilar Pérez
Production Assistants	Federico Rozadillas
	Concha Fontenla
2nd Production Assistants	Marina H. Molini
	Israel Mendoza
Production Trainees	Juan Luis de la Puente
	Mirella Cuesta
Camera Assistant	Juan Leiva
2nd Camera Assistants	Álvaro García
	Pablo Sánchez
Video Technician	Falkwyn de Goyeneche
Video Technician Trainee	Miguel Ángel Viñas
Still Photographers	Paola Ardizzoni (A.F.C.)
	Emilio Pereda (A.F.C.)
Boom Operator	Jaime Fernández-Cid
2nd Boom Operator	Rodrigo Merolla
Decorators	Pilar Revuelta
	Marta Blasco
Set Decorators	Mara Matey
	Sonia Aranzábal
1st Art Assistant	Clara Notari
2nd Art Assistants	Nuria Muní
	Juanjo Gracia
	Esteban Arranz
Decoration Coordinator	Antía León
Props	Iñaki Rubio
	Susana Fernández
	Zalao Ziluaga
Set Props	Juan I. Viñuales
	Gonzalo Anso
Preparation Set Props	Mikel Izaguirre
	Joost de Jager
Preparation Set Props Assistant	Esteban Vieytes
Painter	Tania Wahlbeck
Decoration Labourer	Jesús Calzada
Decoration Trainee	Carlota Casado
Costume Designer Assistants	Macarena García

Costume Designer Trainee
1st Make-Up Assistant
2nd Make-Up Assistant
1st Hair Stylist Assistant
Head of Electricians
Electricians

Jefe de maquinistas
Maquinista
Efectos Especiales

Jefe de especialistas
Especialistas

Diseño gráfico
Studio Gatti

Diseñador carteles "La última Kunda"
"Madres Paralelas"

Coordinadora postproducción
Ayudantes de montaje

Montaje de sonido
Montador de diálogos
Ayudante montaje de sonido
Auxiliar montaje sonido
Ayudante mezclas
Técnico de grabación de efectos sala
Efectos Sala
Efectos Visuales
Supervisión
Composición

Laboratory
Colour Grading
Digital Molding
Financial Management
Producer's Advisor
Producers' Secretary
Production Secretaries

Lucía López
Joaquín Montull
María Lacambra
Eva Quilez
Yael Fernández-Maqueira
Mónica Miguel
Fernando Beltrán
Marcelo San Eugenio
José Reboul
Enrique García
Alberto Sánchez
Carlos Miguel
Roberto Miguel
Reyes Abades
Óscar Abades
César Abades
Daniel Reboul
Joaquín Vergara
Jordi Casares
Oscar Abades
Antonio Lemos
Camino Capellán
Ángel Gómez
Katia Fernández
Juan Gatti
Juan Sánchez
Gabriel de Boca
Isidro Ferrer

Ascen Marchena
Manolo Laguna
Rosa Ortiz
La Bocina
Álex F. Capilla
Eduardo G. Castro
Iñaki Sánchez
Mario González
Patrick Ghislain
Julien Naudin
El Ranchito
Eduardo Díaz
Inma Nadela
Sonsoles L. Aranguren
Bahar Cetin
David Esteve
Ramón Ramos
Ezequiel Larrú
Fotofilm Deluxe
Miguel Pérez
Yolanda Hurtado
Diego Pajuelo
Mauricio Díez
Adela Donamaria
Yuriria Montero

Publicity
Publicity Assistant
International Relations
International Relations Assistant
Materials
Accounting

Accounting Assistants

Administration
O.N.C.E. Advisors

O.N.C.E. Trainers

Hospitals Advisor
Lluís Homar's Trainer

Lanzarote Crew
Production Manager
2nd Production Assistants

2nd Camera Operator
Camera Assistant
Props
On Set Props
Painter
Make-Up Assistant
Sound Assistant

Cecilia Maric
Déborah Palomo
Mercedes González
Bárbara Peiró Aso
Liliana Niespial
Javier Ruiz
Beatriz Gordo
Arancha Yusti
Silvia Sancho
María Paz Sancho
Aida Yusti
Mercedes Selgas
Libertad Peris
Carla Díaz
Diana G. Jimena
Rafael Lorenzo
Almudena Gómez
Marina López
Javier Heras
M^a Ángeles Pérez Chica
Rafa Bautista

Chus San Pascual
Grace Ayaso
Domingo Guadalupe
Ismael Curbelo "Pampa"
Belén Lamuedra
Gustavo Brito
María Garcés
Joaquín Manchado
Luis Lattanzi
Isabel Tristán
Alexis Santos
Gastón Amarilla
Haridian Nóbrega
Ángel Fraguela