



## Big Screen Classics

# Volver

### Volver

Director: Pedro Almodóvar

©/Presented by: El Deseo

Production Companies: Ministerio de Cultura, Instituto de Cinematografía y Artes Audiovisuales  
With the participation of:

TVE Televisión Española, Canal+ España, Junta de Comunidades de Castilla-La Mancha, Consejería de Presidencia de la JCCLM, Consejería de Cultura de Castilla La Mancha

Executive Producer: Agustín Almodóvar

Produced by: Esther García

Production Accountant: Oscar Valero

Production Co-ordinator: Verónica Díaz

Production Manager: Toni Novella

Unit Managers: José Mariano Serrano, Mariona Julbe

Location Manager: Sergio Díaz

Post-production Co-ordinator: Ascen Marchena

1st Assistant Director: Rafa Carmona

Script Supervisor: Yuyi Beringola

Casting Director: Luis San Narciso

Screenplay: Pedro Almodóvar

Director of Photography: José Luis Alcaine

Camera Operator: Joaquín Manchado

Key Grip: Carlos Miguel Miguel

Steadicam Operator: Joaquín Manchado

Visual Effects Supervisor: Eduardo Díaz

Digital Effects: Ranchito

Special Effects: Reyes Abades, César Abades,

Óscar Abades, Daniel Reboul, Tomás Urbán

Editing: José Salcedo

Art Director: Salvador Parra

Set Decorator: Mara Matey

Costume Designer: Bina Daigeler

Key Make-up: Ana Lozano

Make-up Artist: Mariló Osuna

Make-up Assistant: Ana Caballero

Hairstylist: Máximo Gattabrusi

Pre-production Hairstylist: Marco Aldany

Original Score/Music Composed by:

Alberto Iglesias

Song 'Volver' Performed by: Estrella Morente

Music Conducted by: Alberto Iglesias

Dance Coach: Nuria Castejón

Sound Recording: Miguel Rejas

Boom Operator: Jaime Fernández-Cid

Sound Mixing: José Antonio Bermúdez

Sound Editors: Manolo Laguna, Diego Garrido

Sound Effects: Manolo Corrales

Cast:

Penélope Cruz (*Raimunda*)

Carmen Maura (*Paula's grandmother Irene*)

Lola Dueñas (*Sole*)

Blanca Portillo (*Agustina*)

Yohana Cobo (*Paula*)

Chus Lampreave (*Aunt Paula*)

Antonio de La Torre (*Paco*)

Carlos Blanco (*Emilio*)

Ma. Isabel Díaz (*Regina*)

Neus Sanz (*Inés*)

Leandro Rivera (*production assistant*)

Pepa Aniorte (*neighbour*)

Yolanda Ramos (*television presenter*)

Alfonsa Rosso, Fanny de Castro, Eli Iranzo,

Magdalena Broto, Isabel Ayucar, Concha Galán,

Natalia Roig (*neighbours*)

Elvira Cuadrapani

Carlos García Cambero

Marí Franç Torres

Spain 2005©

121 mins

Digital

Pedro Almodóvar has let his hair go grey. Though his bushy locks remained suspiciously dark well into his fifties, now 'the snows of time have silvered his temples.' This poetic description comes from the lyrics of 'Volver', the bittersweet tango that lends Almodóvar's sixteenth feature its title. 'Volver' means 'going back' or 'coming home'. And after the rigours of the male-dominated *Bad Education* (2004) the new film stages at least six returns: to comedy, to women, to his native La Mancha, to his actress-muses Carmen Maura and Penélope Cruz, to the theme of motherhood in general, and to his own much mourned mother in particular. Almodóvar himself goes further, claiming that this return to his roots is also a celebration of a 'bright, light Spain' where a funeral can be a fiesta. It's a world away from the black legend of Spanish ruralism, steeped in reaction and repression.

But things aren't quite so simple. *Volver* suggests that if you go back to the country, you might return with more than you bargained for, not least an undead body in the boot of your car. The film is a tale of two sisters. Feisty Raimunda (Cruz) is a desperate housewife coping with an unexpected emergency: her daughter has accidentally killed the abusive father who tried to rape her. Timid Sole (newcomer Lola Dueñas) has her own problems: on revisiting their native village to attend a funeral she encounters the ghost of their mother (veteran Carmen Maura), who accompanies her back to the city where she has unfinished business to settle.

*Volver* is the first feature by the famously agnostic Almodóvar to host a supernatural theme. And the superstitious have noted that the director's sixteenth feature marks six years since his mother's death and 26 since his father's, and that in the 1980s Almodóvar made six famous films with Carmen Maura, who is now 60 years old. But more is at stake here than this string of sixes. Once movie-mad Spain has seen a steep fall in its box office over the past year and Almodóvar himself is no longer the most popular person in the industry, having recently resigned from the Film Academy after being snubbed at the Goyas (Spanish Oscars). As *Volver* opens he is about to receive a rare retrospective at the Paris Cinémathèque, in which his oeuvre is screened alongside those of Sirk and Cukor, Murnau and Renoir. But the director remains a prophet misunderstood in his own land, and one wonders whether with *Volver* he can rescue an ungrateful Spanish film industry one more time. Will the new Spain, where smoking is banned in public places and same-sex marriage commonplace, wish to see the ghosts of the past resurrected or will it find this uncanny revival of rural roots too embarrassing?

When Almodóvar himself appeared on television to promote *Volver*, he shed tears not for his mother, whom he said was so close during the shoot, but for his father, a much more distant figure. And *Volver* shows the conscious, even chilly mastery of technique we've come to expect from the director's mature period. Rejecting the tricky flashbacks and reversals of *Talk to Her* (2002) and *Bad Education*, *Volver's* structure seems simplicity itself, with Almodóvar cutting coolly between the highly coloured city narrative (the disposal of a corpse) and the plainer rural strand (the encounter with an all too realistic ghost). The shooting style is similarly transparent: the camera tracks fluidly through the gravestones in the opening cemetery sequence, but more often

## Big Screen Classics

### Modern Times

Mon 31 Mar 18:10; Tue 15 Apr 18:15;  
Sun 20 Apr 12:00

### Mildred Pierce

Tue 1 Apr 20:40; Sat 5 Apr 12:15; Sun 13 Apr 18:10;  
Fri 18 Apr 20:45

### Daisies Sedmikrásky

Wed 2 Apr 17:55 (+ intro by Ella Kemp, Letterboxd  
Editorial Lead (UK & Europe)); Mon 7 Apr 20:55;  
Wed 23 Apr 21:00

### Happy Together

Wed 2 Apr 21:00; Thu 10 Apr 20:50; Thu 17 Apr  
20:50; Tue 22 Apr 18:10; Tue 29 Apr 21:00

### Pather Panchali

Thu 3 Apr 20:35; Thu 17 Apr 18:05;  
Sun 27 Apr 11:45

### Volver

Thu 3 Apr 20:40; Sat 12 Apr 20:40;  
Wed 16 Apr 17:50 (+ intro); Thu 24 Apr 12:00

### The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie

Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie  
Fri 4 Apr 20:40; Fri 11 Apr 12:30; Sat 26 Apr 11:45

### Tampopo

Sun 6 Apr 15:10; Fri 11 Apr 20:40;  
Wed 30 Apr 18:10 (+ intro)

### 35 Shots of Rum

35 Rhums  
Sun 6 Apr 18:40; Wed 23 Apr 18:10 (+ intro by Ruby  
McGuigan, Programme Development Manager)

### Spirited Away

Tue 8 Apr 18:10; Mon 21 Apr 12:00;  
Mon 28 Apr 20:35

### Life is Sweet

Wed 9 Apr 18:10 (+ intro); Mon 14 Apr 20:45;  
Fri 25 Apr 20:55

### The Flavour of Green Tea Over Rice

Ochazuke no aji  
Sat 19 Apr 11:45; Tue 22 Apr 20:45

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simply sits alongside the women and asks us to pay attention to what they are saying. The occasional high-angle shots come as a surprise, as when Sole is mobbed by mourners or the camera looks cheekily down on Cruz's cleavage as she slaves over the washing up.

Even the score by Almodóvar's close collaborator Alberto Iglesias is discreet and unshowy. Deftly following the film's frequent changes of register, Iglesias offers Hitchcockian strings for the thriller elements and tender harp chords for the supernatural apparitions. Almodóvar no longer needs to prove himself through the flashy visuals and soundtracks that characterised his earlier films, but seems rather to be posing – like his main character – as a simple workhorse. It's typical that when *Volver* visits Madrid's high-tech, Richard Rogers-designed new airport terminal it is only because Raimunda has a part-time job mopping the floors. The director's achievement is to get us to accept Cruz as an ordinary working woman, even as we (and he) marvel at her beauty. Like the film itself, she combines force and fragility.

The last line of dialogue in *Volver* is: 'Ghosts don't cry.' Uncovering what he has called (in a typically rural metaphor) 'a well of emotions', Almodóvar has shown that after the bracing coldness of *Bad Education* he can return to deep feeling. It is a move he has made under the pressure of great expectations, both at home and abroad. Indeed, Carmen Maura has described how different it is filming with the director now rather than in the early days, when they were unconcerned by money or fame and just out to have fun.

Almodóvar himself is well aware of how difficult it is to sustain artistic creativity: recently he spoke of Fellini as a director who didn't know when to quit, and as Spain's own Fellini – once famous for his love of the grotesque – he must fear that he too will run out of inspiration. But his latest film bears no sign of decline. On the contrary, it continues an unbroken run of some 25 years of artistic and commercial successes that has few precedents in European cinema.

The tango 'Volver', sung by Cruz's character to her dead mother, promises that the encounter with the past is painful, but not impossible. And the film *Volver* proves that Almodóvar's body of work is now enriched by facing up to his own past. Suddenly the one-time 'most modern man in Madrid' can afford to look behind him, even likening filmmaking to therapy. Almodóvar, for all his silvery temples, is surely at the peak of his powers.

Paul Julian Smith, *Sight and Sound*, June 2006