



Early Almodovar: Los inicios de Almodovar



This mini-retrospective returns to the young, vital, and rarely revisited stage of Almodóvar's storied career, tracing his progress, from the manic energy of *Pepi, Luci, Bom...* to the darkly humorous feminist comedy *What Have I Done to Deserve This?*

As one of the most beloved foreign filmmakers in the United States, Pedro Almodóvar has been blending melodrama, suspense, black humor and visceral emotion for more than 30 years. His eclectic filmography dabbles in everything from excess, passion and the complexity of family and identity. At the core of his movies, though, are his fascinations with the disenfranchised, with the roles adopted by women (in particular the figure of the housewife), and questioning the established definitions of gender, class and sexuality.

Simultaneously flamboyant, humorous and deeply earnest, Almodóvar's films contain some of the most memorable stories and characters in contemporary cinema. Almodóvar's complex humor, poetic irreverence and deliberate refusal to conform to "politically correct" norms, make him one of the most controversial cultural figures in cinema today.

After a provincial upbringing, Almodóvar began his career in the mid-1970s, during the period of Spain's transition into democracy and amid Madrid's vanguard underground cultural movement known as *La Movida*. His provocative early work and his involvement with punk music and publishing formed a distinctive sense of personal and social liberation, which carried him on to international acclaim.

PEPI, LUCI, BOM AND OTHER GIRLS LIKE MOM

FILM
SAN FRANCISCO

Sat, May 21–
Thu, May 26, 2016

Venue

Roxie Theater, 3117 16th St, San Francisco, CA 94103

[View map](#)

Admission

Want to see all six? The Roxie is offering a limited number of \$60 passes that provide access to all six films. [Buy your Pedro Pass.](#)

More information

[Roxie Theater](#)

Credits

Co-presented by Roxie Theater and [Cine+Mas SF](#). Photo by Suki Dhandu.



- On Saturday, May 21 at 5 pm. [Buy tickets.](#)
- On Tuesday, May 24 at 7 pm. [Buy tickets.](#)
- Directed by Pedro Almodóvar, Spain, 1980, 80 minutes. In Spanish with English subtitles.

Pepi, Luci, Bom... began as a fotonovela published by Almodóvar in an underground Madrid zine. The film's episodic plot expresses the movida's revolution in social and sexual attitudes by tracing the various indignities suffered and inflicted by its eponymous heroines: a rape victim, a masochistic housewife and a lesbian punk rocker. Made on a shoestring and shot in 16mm with help from Almodóvar's many friends from across Madrid's various underground movements, *Pepi, Luci, Bom...* offers a refreshing irreverence towards sexuality and social mores that recalls the 1970s films of John Waters.

WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE THIS?



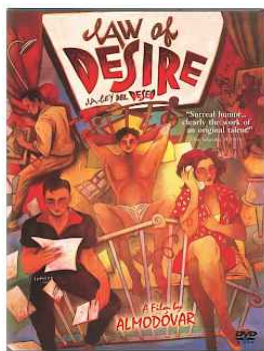
- On Sunday, May 22 at 6 pm. [Buy tickets.](#)
- On Monday, May 23 at 7 pm. [Buy tickets.](#)
- Directed by Pedro Almodóvar, Spain, 1984, 101 minutes. In Spanish with English subtitles.

Almodóvar's fourth film perfects the mix of satire, melodrama, irony and farce that characterize his earliest internationally successful comedies that followed. Its title a lament from its beleaguered housewife protagonist, *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* follows the woman's hilarious attempts to deal with an abusive husband, a drug-dealing son, a disapproving mother-in-law and a rogue's gallery



of neighbors. This razor-sharp ensemble comedy satirizes the influx of consumerism that swept into Spain following the end of the dictatorship, while offering a rich character study of a woman, like a Fassbinder heroine, trapped between stultifying tradition and a banal present.

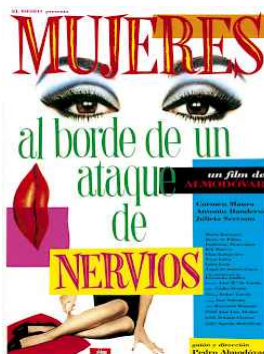
LAW OF DESIRE



- On Saturday, May 21 at 9:30 pm. [Buy tickets.](#)
- On Thursday, May 26 at 7 pm. [Buy tickets.](#)
- Directed by Pedro Almodóvar, Spain, 1987, 102 minutes. In Spanish with English subtitles.

Law of Desire takes place in a feverish universe in which life is theatre, and to truly live is to overact. Almodóvar takes as his protagonist a prolific writer-director, Pablo (Eusebio Poncela) and through him explores the possibilities of utter desire –desire that is at once a possession, and the wish to possess. Pablo is obsessed with a young lover, Juan, who can't be had; but it is Antonio, a one-night stand replacement for Juan, who teaches Pablo about true obsession when he wakes up the morning after, possessed and possessive. The most florid of over actors –and the one with the most to teach the relatively mild-mannered Pablo– is the actress Tina, Pablo's sister, who was his brother until an Oedipal flip flop made him want to be a girl, who wants nothing to do with men. Tina is the magnificent creation of the huskily beautiful Carmen Maura.

WOMEN ON THE VERGE ON A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN



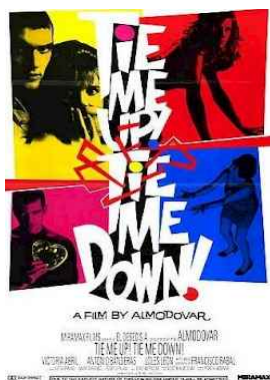
- On Friday, May 20 at 7 pm. [Buy tickets.](#)



- **On Wednesday, May 25 at 9:15 pm.** [Buy tickets.](#)
- Directed by Pedro Almodóvar, Spain, 1988, 90 minutes. In Spanish with English subtitles.

Mix one part Doris Day–Technicolor frivolity with the melodrama of Nicholas Ray’s *Johnny Guitar*, shake with an ample portion of screwball comedy, and update the film’s location to Madrid circa 1988– the result is this farcical hit comedy by Pedro Almodóvar. Soap star Pepa (Almodóvar favorite Carmen Maura) is losing her mind because her lover, Iván, is leaving her. Iván’s wife goes on a gun-toting rampage when she finds out. Meanwhile, Pepa’s friend Candela needs a place to hide because she has unwittingly fallen for a Shiite terrorist. At Pepa’s, she meets Iván’s son Carlos (Banderas), whose fiancée has been drugged by Pepa’s Valium-laced gazpacho. Confusing? Absolutely. But how can you resist a film where kindly grandmothers make the nightly news and the mother of a notorious killer endorses detergent? (Harvard Film Archive).

TIE ME UP! TIE ME DOWN!

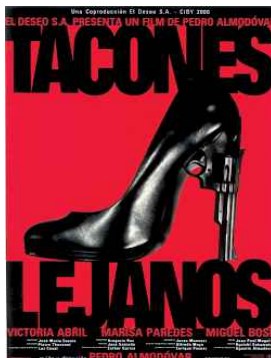


- **On Saturday, May 21 at 7 pm.** [Buy tickets.](#)
- **On Wednesday, May 25 at 7 pm.** [Buy tickets.](#)
- Directed by Pedro Almodóvar, Spain, 1989, 111 minutes. In Spanish with English subtitles.

After the kitschy melodrama of *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, Almodóvar returns to the darker terrain of *Law of Desire*, concentrating on the relationship between soft-porn actress Marina (Abril) and the two men who try to control her. The more benign is her director in the movie-within-the-movie (Rabal), a genial, wheelchair-bound obsessive who leaves romantic messages on her answering machine and beguiles his lonely hours watching her masturbate on video. Less kindly are the attentions of Ricky (Banderas), recently released from a psychiatric hostel and determined to father Marina’s children. He kidnaps her in her apartment, beats her up, and ties her to the bed while he goes out to score drugs for her. Almodóvar turns a standard hostage thriller into a grim examination of the power games implicit in marriage; Marina, addictive in all things, soon becomes a willing accomplice in Ricky’s fantasy. Almodóvar withholds all comment, and many will hate his refusal to moralise; others will relish the opportunity to think for themselves. A very black comedy in the vein of Buñuel’s *Belle de Jour*, and worthy of the comparison.



HIGH HEELS



- On Sunday, May 22 at 8:15 pm. [Buy tickets.](#)
- On Thursday, May 26 at 9:30 pm. [Buy tickets.](#)
- Directed by Pedro Almodóvar, Spain, 1991, 112 minutes. In Spanish with English subtitles.

An aging singer (Marisa Paredes) returns home after many years to reconnect with her estranged daughter (Victoria Abril). Her daughter has found success in her career as a television newscaster and in love with the owner of the TV station, who also happens to be one of her mother's ex-boyfriends. When he turns up dead, the relationship between the two women faces its greatest test. Drawing explicitly from Hollywood's great women's movies of the 1940s, Almodóvar lovingly brings to life his heroines who embody both presentational performance and sacrificial integrity.