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## 'Pain & Glory' - Pedro Almodovar's latest touching self-portrait

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Image provided

"Pain and Glory" is probably the most personal of the famous director, Pedro Almodovar. The Spanish movie scene's "enfant terrible" is now 70 years old, and with this film, part autobiography and part fiction, the director brilliantly covers his tracks for the spectators' pleasure.

Antonio Banderas plays Salvador Mallo, an aging director, riddled with pain, dealing with depression and in danger of becoming a cocaine addict. As a local theater presents the first film he made 32 years prior, he looks back on his life, holed up in his museum-like apartment.

His first memories are that of his beloved mother (played by Penelope Cruz), portrayed here as a courageous and hard working woman. He sees himself again in a small rural Spanish village, a poor boy whose universe opens up through music and reading. Almodovar creates an idyllic and bucolic portrait of a simple and beautiful life, close to nature and innocence, a kind of lost paradise in stark contrast with his present days.

Now the aging man in constant pain with arthritis and recurrent migraines abuses drugs and can no longer fuel his inspiration.

Every memory seems to echo Almodovar's real life, even the physical appearance of Banderas with a grey beard

and tousled hair. But all is, of course, smoke and mirrors as Almodovar does create and is inspired to give us this calmer than usual, but delightful and poignant movie.

Those who have loved the Spanish director's previous movies will enjoy the references to these films, such as the scene between Salvador as a child and a priest that is a reminder of the 2004 film "Bad Education."

Almodovar talks about first loves, next ones, his mother, death, people with whom he worked, the '60s, the '80s, today, the impossibility to make a difference between creation and real life, and the terrible emptiness when one realizes that it is too late to create.

It is not necessary to know the director's previous work to enjoy this movie, at times emotional, at times ironic, always very human.

"Pain and Glory" is Almodovar's 21st movie. In the United States he is best known for films such as "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown," "All About My Mother," "Talk To Her" or "Bad Education." Banderas won the Best Leading Actor award at the 2019 Cannes International Film Festival for his role as Mallo; it was a huge success in Europe. "Pain and Glory" opens Feb. 7 at the Orinda Theatre as part of the International Film Showcase for at least a one-week showing. For showtimes, visit [www.Orindamovies.com](http://www.Orindamovies.com).

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