



FILM: **PAIN AND GLORY**

FDG RATING: 3.3 ☺☺☺○○

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Pedro Almodovar: *director/writer*  
Antonio Banderas: *actor, Salvador Mallo*  
Leonardo Sbaraglia: *actor, Federico Delgado*  
Asier Etxeandia: *actor, Alberto Crespo*

DATE: March 22, 2020

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **PAIN AND GLORY**

Most film critics praised Almodovar's 2019 film, *Pain and Glory*, which earned an Oscar nomination for best International film. The star, Antonio Banderas received the best reviews of his career for his Oscar nominated performance as Salvador Mallo, an aging film director in his physical decline, who has run out of stories to tell (partially auto biographical, Almodovar is now 71). To quote another accolade "Almodovar's film captures the way life is reflected in art in ways that only a master filmmaker could possibly even attempt." The renowned film maker revisits familiar grand themes of love, desire, death, forgiveness and reconciliation through memories from his childhood through his adult life.

We were less enthusiastic, recognizing the self indulgent aspect of the film, typical of aging celebrities who feel the need to capture their life story in the way they want it to be told. One resident reviewer described this aspect as embellished memories, amplified by the vivid colors, a visual style characteristic of his films. For Almodovar fans or those familiar with his other award winning films such as *Talk to Her* and *All About My Mother*, *Pain and Glory* may come across as less intriguing. Admittedly slow paced, with a bit too many heroin addiction scenes, the structure is interesting. A film within a film fluidly rolls from beginning to end. Most of us enjoyed this creative technique although a few thought it was cliché. Some of us didn't realize until the last scene when we see the cameramen and crew that many of his memories were actually the film within the film.

Salvador's emotional, personal journey, has many poignant scenes such as when a man with whom he had a very loving relationship a long time ago, happened to be in town and stops by to see him. It was his first adult love in Madrid in the 80s and the pain of the breakup of that love while it was still alive and intense is commingled with his pleasure at seeing Federico once again. The scenes with his aging mother are also very tender. As is a flashback to when he was a boy and handed the muscular young male brick layer a towel who was cleaning up after whitewashing the walls for his mother and Salvador saw his nude body for a brief second. The laborer is also an artist and did a sketch of Salvador sitting and reading in the sun. The lost sketch turns up towards the end of the film which becomes a heartwarming part of the story.

A very clever scene in the beginning, used colorful, almost playful graphics to illustrate all the ailments in Salvador's body. Capturing all the discomfort of Salvador's movements made Antonio's performance exceptional. Penelope Cruz is also excellent as Salvador's mother, in flash backs to his childhood. Performances by Leonardo Sbaraglia as Federico Delgado, his first love, and Asier Etxeandia as Alberto Crespo, the lead actor from his early film, *Sabor*, that is being re-released to appreciative audiences, are also outstanding. Salvador has not spoken to him for 32 years due to a quarrel over the influence of the actor's heroin which caused his performance to be less than desirable.

We liked the cinematography and the nostalgia of the 70s. And learned about Almadovar's childhood, and the physical pain he has endured while achieving his success. But the movie seems anticlimactic and missing the creative edginess of his other films. It's a movie about love, loss, reconciliation, and memory but ironically, not one of his most memorable films. We gave it a not so glorious 3.3 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best)



See you at the movies!

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