

Maltin's Movies

Title	Broken Embraces
Alt Title	Los Abrazos Rotos
Year	2009
Director	Pedro Almodóvar
Rating	
Runtime	127
Review	<p>I felt a tinge of disappointment when I realized the hero of Pedro Almodóvar's latest film was a director. It struck me as a glib, easy way of concocting a story to express the Spanish filmmaker's love of cinema. I should have had more faith in him. <i>Broken Embraces</i> is a marvelous piece of storytelling that held me in its thrall for more than two hours, almost literally on the edge of my seat.</p> <p>As an homage to film noir (as well as Audrey Hepburn, Roberto Rossellini, and other iconic figures) it may strike some people as being overly self-conscious, but I ate it up, because Almodóvar is a master storyteller. What's more, he has given Penelope Cruz yet another outstanding showcase for her talent (and beauty).</p> <p>The reason the movie works on two levels is that while Almodóvar emulates the visual style and storytelling tropes of film noir, he also makes a serious dramatic commitment to them. This is no mere exercise. To add a layer of complexity, the story plays out in the present day and in flashbacks to the past. Cruz plays a secretary who becomes involved with a power-hungry industrialist—out of need, not love—and then finds herself cast in a movie, quite by chance.</p> <p>The director is played by a remarkable Spanish actor named Lluís Homar, whom we meet as an older man, now blind. He explains how he adopted a different name to suit his new identity, but we don't understand the full meaning of this until much later in the story.</p> <p><i>Broken Embraces</i> is presented to us as a series of vignettes that slowly merge into a seamless whole. In some films the intrigue diminishes as the pieces of the puzzle fall into place; here the effect is just the opposite. Much of the movie's power comes from its revelations, but Almodóvar doesn't shortchange us along the way: the buildup is just as interesting as the dénouement.</p> <p>I will leave it to others to catalogue the movie's many specific homages; I was too engaged to keep a running list. <i>Broken Embraces</i> is one of the high-spots of the moviegoing year.</p>
IMDb	tt0913425
MPAA Rating	[R]
Cast	Penélope Cruz, Lluís Homar, Blanca Portillo, Jose Luis Gomez, Rubén Ochandiano, Tamar Novas, Ángela Molina, Chus Lampreave, Kiti Manver, Lola Dueñas, Kira Miro, Rossy de Palma, Alejo Sauras
Country	Spain
Genre	Drama, Romance, Thriller
Review Plain Text	<p>I felt a tinge of disappointment when I realized the hero of Pedro Almodóvar's latest film was a director. It struck me as a glib, easy way of concocting a story to express the Spanish filmmaker's love of cinema. I should have had more faith in him. <i>Broken Embraces</i> is a marvelous piece of s</p>