

CARMEN MAURA



She appeared on the silver screen for the very first time in 1969 as an uncredited *chica de la fiesta*- "a girl at the party", but at the age of seventy, Carmen Maura is now the most important woman of Spanish cinema with four Goya awards and a prolific, diverse filmography of around 140 film and television roles (complemented by her long career in prestigious theatres and in dubbing), both in her native Spain and abroad, especially in French-speaking productions (her role in *The Women on the 6th Floor* earned her a César in 2012).

Carmen Maura studied philosophy and literature at the prestigious École des Beaux-Arts in France and found her lifelong passion as a member of a student theatre ensemble and as a cabaret singer, despite the fact that she comes from a prominent conservative family that was shocked by her choice of acting. Her brave and seemingly controversial decision was the start of the key collaboration of her career. In 1980, when she was the leading actress of the National Theatre in Madrid, she launched herself into the preparation for a role in an independent, punk and at that time highly scandalous debut film of a director named Pedro Almodóvar. With utmost gusto, Maura portrayed Pepi in *Pepi, Luci, Bom and Other Girls Like Mom*, which became an iconic hit and the symbol of the *La Movida Madrileña* wave – an underground-based, radical, sexually liberated and formally ground-breaking renaissance of independent cinema. The star of Almodóvar with Maura as his muse ascended with the following films, where she played Gloria incredulously asking *What Have I Done to Deserve This?*, and a transsexual named Tina Quintero, the sister of the main protagonist crazily in love with young Juan (Antonio Banderas) in *Law of Desire*. The pinnacle of their professional partnership were *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, nominated for the Oscar for the Best Foreign Language Film. The role of Pepa, who is looking for her lover while having to deal with her friends' problems and extinguishing a bed on fire, earned Maura her first Goya award, the main prize at the Venice IFF, and also the European Film Award Felix for the best actress. However, the international critical and audience success also meant a breakup between Maura and Almodóvar. Artistic reunion came eighteen years later with *Volver*. The film's female cast, including Almodóvar's new muse, Penelope Cruz, won awards in Cannes, and Maura herself won another Goya award.

Carmen Maura's acting range is supercalifragilisticexpialidociously wide, and combined with her consistently courageous role selection, her characters are always multi-layered thanks to the use of her indisputable physical beauty, extroverted charisma and dramatic depth which she bestows both on distinctively complex roles and comical miniatures, emphasising her characteristic and unique comedy talent. In connection with her ability to express the rich, often emotionally conflicting inner life of her characters, she provides a symbiosis between tragedy and comedy. This is the core of one of her most important films, *¡Ay, Carmela!* by the legendary Spanish director Carlos Saura. The film is set at the dramatic end of the Spanish Civil War when three vaudeville artists find themselves in the middle of a lethal political conflict. Maura, in the leading role, embodies the elements of slapstick and a key moment in history approached with cinematic radicalism, which earned her another Goya and Felix.

Febiofest's tribute to Carmen Maura, who will receive the Kristian Award, includes not only the iconic *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* and *¡Ay, Carmela!*, but is complemented by a

philosophical sci-fi by Belgian Marion Hänsel. *Sur la Terre Comme au Ciel*, which was awarded at the Karlovy Vary IFF, and *Vanity* – a French-Swiss dark comedy about euthanasia from 2015.

In Heaven as on Earth / Sur la terre comme au ciel / Na zemi jako v nebi (Belgium, France, Spain, Netherlands) **Director:** Marion Hänsel (Tribute to Carmen Maura)

Vanity / La vanité / Bláhová noc (Switzerland, France) **Director:** Lionel Baier (Tribute to Carmen Maura)

Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown / Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios / Ženy na pokraji nervového zhroutení (Spain) **Director:** Pedro Almodóvar (Tribute to Carmen Maura)

¡Av, Carmela! / ¡Av, Carmela! / Ach, Carmelo! (Spain, Italy) **Director:** Carlos Saura (Tribute to Carmen Maura)

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