

ARTS and FEATURES

Spanish director Pedro Almodovar's new film es muy loco

Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down! "Atame!"
Directed by Pedro Almodovar
Victorio Abril, Antonio Banderas,
Francisco Rabal, Loles Leon
Varsity
●●●●

Ay yi yi Caramba! Es loco when the Spanish director Pedro Almodovar focuses his camera at the anxieties of modern life in Iberia. Those who have seen his previous works — the most recent being *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* — are already familiar with the black humor of his social satire. But this time his images seem a little closer to home.

Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down! means what it says, although there are no whips or chains for sado-masochists to drool over. The story is simple and naive like the hero, Ricky (Antonio Banderas). Upon his release from the safe, confined walls of a sanitarium, this young Spaniard sets out with 50,000 pesetas (\$), a smile on his face and a dream to marry, settle down and father ninos.

Ricky chooses an ex-junkie porn queen named Marina (Victoria Abril) whom he met during one of his many

Gigi Branch Cinema

escapes from the mental institution for his bride-to-be. However, when he visits her on the set where she is working, she doesn't recognize him. No importa. Our hero resorts to more drastic measures of persuasion: he decides to kidnap her and to hold her hostage until she falls in love with him.

Naturally, Marina is not exactly receptive to this. When she resists, there are some scenes of violence as well as some steamy, graphic scenes of passion. Remember, this is the country where Carmen once danced the Flamenco and bullfighting is a national pastime.

Enough typecasting. Almodovar's film combines a zany script with the modern-day dilemma of relationships and the obstacles of commitment. But don't get your hopes up — he doesn't offer any viable solutions. In fact I left wondering if his ending was to be taken at face value or if his humor had passed me.

Almodovar uses many of the same people who were in *Women on the Verge*. His female characters run the show while the handicapped males seem out of touch with reality. A modern Don Quixote, the idealistic Ricky chases after traditional rainbows, while Marina's aged, wheelchair-ridden director is tormented by an inflated libido which unfortunately overwhelms his deflated testosterone.

The images hint at a nostalgic longing for the past when tradition was predictable. While modern Spain may be liberated from Franco's rule, the streets are infested with drugs, violence, larceny and porn. These disturbing images run hand-in-hand with Almodovar's glimpses at human desire that defies logic and reason. For those of you who plan to see the film, I won't divulge the end; much of its strength lies in its outlandish conclusion.

Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down is entertaining and will even allow for some self-examination — if you let it. You'll leave the theater asking yourself how to handle a modern-day relationship and how to come to terms with desire. As for Spain, the film shows they've come a long way, baby, or have they?



Victoria Abril and Antonio Banderas from a scene in 'Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!'

Corporate finance fu and an old coot retired sheriff

The Art of the Deal, Part 2, by Donald Trump

Many people ask me what a normal day in my life is like.

I usually start by giving a quarter to the doorman at Trump Tower. I used to give him a dollar, but now it makes the guys down at Manufacturers Hanover a little nervous.

By 8:15 I'm on the phone, doing deals. The first call is Randy Simpson, my man over at Chase Manhattan. He has a question about a \$20 million interest payment.

"Hey, Randy, that's not due till Tuesday. Check your calendar!"

I've known Randy for years. We frequently joke during business deals.

Randy tells me if I don't pay up, he'll take my yacht and mansion in Florida. In a typical Donald Trump day, we call this "Banker Talk."

Next, breakfast with three of my largest investors — Bob Samson at First Fidelity Bancorp, Nick Wallinsky at Bankers Trust and Fred Ferragamo at First Fidelity Boston. We're having what's called a "meeting" to talk about "money."

At 10:15 I excuse myself, turning the bankers over to my closest adviser, Vinnie "The Hammer" Margolis. No sooner do I get back to my desk than another phone call comes in. It's Stu Slussman, my personal divorce attorney and a pretty fair golfer in his own right. Stu has a question about Marla. He wants to know how many times we "did it." I know it sounds funny, but the

Joe Bob Briggs At the Drive-in

strangest things can affect corporate income in a real-estate business as large as mine.

I have just a few moments after lunch to prepare for my two o'clock meeting with the Sultan of Brunei, who wants to buy the Plaza Hotel. Even though it's my favorite property, I'm never ashamed of taking a profit when the opportunity presents itself. Unfortunately, I get a call at 1:45 from three Japanese banks informing me that they will be meeting with the Sultan and that, if I try to horn in on the meeting, they'll foreclose on \$100 million worth of high-rise condo properties on the west side of Manhattan. Vinnie The Hammer advises me to stay in my office, and I always do what Vinnie says.

John Mahoney calls from the Taj Mahal, my casino, and tells me a Japanese businessman had won \$400,000 at the bacarrat tabl. Then he had a terrible run of luck and now owes the casino \$600,000. I make my decision quickly.

"Take his money and kick him out."

I find that it's always best to speak briefly when it comes to business.

People sometimes ask me, "Do you ever guarantee loans with your personal money?" And of course, most real estate investors would tell you "No" or perhaps "Never" or perhaps "Are you

crazy?"

Not me! I have \$2 billion in bank debt, and \$500 million of that is guaranteed by me personally. That's why I have to go meet with eight more bankers right now. It's funny what bankers will do when you personally guarantee loans. They'll take your yacht, they'll take your luxury vacation homes, they'll take your airline, they'll take your hotel, they'll take the royalties from your books, they'll take your game show — I suppose if they could, they would take this new book I'm writing, but there are certain privileges you have when your name is Donald Trump, and there's no way they can take away "The Art of the Deal, Part 2" unless they actually walked into my office and starting carting away furniture and then they walked up to me and took my paper away and my dictaphone and then took the pen out my... (manuscript ends here)

Speaking of time running out, they finally made the movie version of the hit song *Big Bad John*. I know it might seem like it took a long time, since the song went to number one on the charts in 1961, but think of it this way. The people who have been waiting for the movie are starting to develop brain tumors. They released this sucker just in time.

Jimmy Dean, the king of pure-pork sausage, stars in the movie, but here's the weird part: They don't use his version of the song *Big Bad John*. I don't know who it is singing it, but he doesn't have near the pipes Jimbo does. (Or did

Jimmy's 62 years old.)

Anyhow, except for that, and except for a lot of the plot not making sense, it's a pretty decent flick about an old coot retired sheriff living with his beer-drinking dog Catfish in a Louisiana swamp cabin — until Jack Elam and Ned Beatty come find him and convince him to go find Big Bad John, who killed a man and ran off with the sheriff's daughter.

Jimmy Dean plays the sheriff who goes trucking up through Colorado and New Mexico in search of BBJ, and he decides to take along the only friend he'll need "Gator," a quadruple-barreled shotgun. It's kind of one of those action swamp western mining love stories. Kinda grows on you.

We've got zero breasts. Two dead bodies. One excellent rocket-propelled dope-smuggler's monster truck. Poolcue head-cracking. Exploding target. Exploding bar. Exploding coal mine. Three brawls. Convenience store Fu. Drive-In Academy Awards for Doug English, the All-Pro defensive tackle for the Detroit Lions, as Big Bad John, who's so sweet it makes you sick; Ned Beatty, for being such a perfect slimeball; Bo Hopkins, as Lester, the town ex-con who wants to waste the sheriff; Jake, as Catfish the Sarcastic Dog; Jimmy Dean, Mr. Sausage, for working on this sucker for 29 years; and Burt Kennedy, the veteran director of westerns, for making another western but *disguising it so nobody'll know*.

Three stars. Joe Bob says check it out.

Racing wear company hopes to ride in with Cruise and 'Thunder'

From Associated Press reports

CHARLOTTE — Even before the new Tom Cruise movie, *Days of Thunder*, makes its national debut tomorrow, several North Carolina companies were running all out to market T-shirts, toys and other souvenirs from the much-hyped film about stock car racing.

"This is the biggest thing ever to hit us," said Jim Coble of Hendrick Sportswear, a Charlotte firm which is marketing *Days of Thunder* T-shirts and caps. "We hope it will be the launching pad for this company to introduce a complete line of racing wear."

The company is owned by Charlotte businessman Rick Hendrick, who owns four racing teams and built most of the cars used in the \$60 million movie.

Cruise, one of the top draws in Hollywood after starring in such pictures as *Rain Man* and *Top Gun*, has credited Hendrick with planting the seed for the movie about a young driver trying to break in on NASCAR's tough Winston Cup circuit.

Cruise first became interested in racing when he starred in *The Color of Money* with racing enthusiast Paul Newman. Once he took a ride with Hendrick, he became hooked on stock car racing.

Many fans of the traditionally Southern sport are hoping the movie will help give stock car racing a national following.

"Tom Cruise should give a whole lot more respectability to the sport," said Jane Gossage, who owns a sports marketing company in Charlotte. "It will come into its own."

The movie, to be released nationwide by Paramount Pictures, also stars Robert Duvall and Randy Quaid. Australian actress Nicole Kidman will co-star as Dr. Claire Lewicki, Cruise's romantic interest.

"I hope when a person sees the movie they'll care about the NASCAR people and feel they're on a journey with them," Cruise told the Charlotte Observer in a story printed Tuesday.

One of those people is Hendrick, who Cruise described as irreplaceable. "We couldn't have made this film without Rick's help," he said.

Hendrick fields such drivers as three-time champion Darrell Waltrip, Ken Schrader, Ricky Rudd and Greg Sacks, who runs a limited schedule. Other field no more than one team.

In Charlotte, considered to be the heart of NASCAR country, stock car racing fans have been awaiting the

release of the movie for months. Parts of the movie were filmed at Charlotte Motor Speedway. Filming also was done at five different Winston Cup races, including the Daytona 500.

The movie is so hot in Charlotte that there were two special screenings Tuesday night.

One was hosted by Coca-Cola — the maker of Mello Yello, which "sponsors" one of the cars driven by Cruise's character, driver Cole Trickle. Defending Winston Cup champion Rusty Wallace and fellow drivers Kyle Petty and Alan Kulwicki also were invited.

A second screening was hosted by Hendrick and his City Chevrolet car dealership along with WBTV, the local CBS affiliate, and two of the movie's sponsors, Exxon and Hardee's. Waltrip, Schrader, Rudd and Sacks — who was Cruise's stunt double for the film — were invited to the screening.

Hardee's, North Carolina's home-grown fast-food chain that ranks third in the nation in sales, has jumped on the *Days of Thunder* promotional tour in a big way.

"We think Tom Cruise will do for NASCAR what he did for jet planes," said Hardee's spokesman Jerry Singer. He was referring to the success of *Top Gun*, which also was directed by Tony Scott of *Days of Thunder*. *Top Gun* producers Jerry Bruckheimer and Don Simpson also were reunited with Cruise for the project.

Last week, the Hardee's restaurant chain began selling toy race cars patterned after the ones that appear in the movie. The chain has already ordered 7 million of the cars.

Hardee's also will sell a kid's meal package in the shape of a racing garage, as well as other promotional items.

"We think it will direct traffic to us in the summer, which is the most competitive time of the year," Singer said Tuesday. "We don't think it's going to be another California Raisins (the chain's hugely successful promotion) but it will help us hold our own this summer."

At Exxon service stations, customers can get a free *Days of Thunder* family fun book with a fill-up. The oil company has reportedly ordered 30 million of the books.

"We've given a lot of them away," said Donna Sullins, a cashier at the Exxon station at the intersection of Woodlawn and Park in southeast Charlotte. "There's a lot of interest, especially with the kids."

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