

## Document Citation

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## Ay, Carmela!

### Carlos Saura

Spain/Italy, 1990, 105 minutes  
Colour/35mm

Production Company: Iberoamericana Films, S.A.  
(Madrid)/Ellepi (Rome)

Producer: Andres Vicente Gomez

Screenplay: Carmen Soranio, Carlos Saura, Rafael Azcona, based on the book by Sanchis Sinisterra

Cinematography: Jose Luis Alcaine

Editor: Pablo G. del Amo

Art Director: Rafael Palmero

Sound: Gilles Ortion

Music: Alejandro Masso

Principal Cast: Carmen Maura, Andres Pajares, Gabino Diego, Maurizio di Razza

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Over the past two decades, Carlos Saura has achieved international acclaim, while remaining a quintessentially Spanish director. One of the first to represent the Spanish Civil War and its implications, Saura nonetheless trod lightly, limiting the expression of his views until after Franco's death in 1975. With *Ay Carmela!*, Saura returns to the subject of the Civil War, this time with plenty of wry humour and flashing satire. The year is 1938, and the War is coming to an end as Franco's Nationalists press their advantage against the Republicans and the International Brigades. Carmela and Paulino are two cabaret performers who entertain the beleaguered Republican troops at the front with vulgar jokes, sexy dances, and patriotic songs. Carmela is a simple, passionate woman, while Paulino is a determined survivor who left the seminary to work as a comedian. One foggy morning, on their way to Valencia, the pair find that they have wandered into a Nationalist column and are jailed. To save their skins, Carmela and Paulino offer to perform. They frantically adapt their material to appeal to the fascists, however the performance ends unexpectedly, as the two comedians clash — Paulino following his instinct for survival, and Carmela standing up for her beliefs. Andres Pajares, a well-known stand-up comic, and Carmen Maura, one of Spain's most loved actresses and a member of Almodovar's infamous troupe, are thoroughly outstanding in the title roles. While presenting a stark portrait of the artist's dilemma while under autocratic rule, Saura has crafted a light-hearted yet poignant film, reminding us that fascist dictatorships are not yet ancient history.

**Carlos Saura** was born in Huesca in 1932. As a young boy, he experienced the Spanish Civil War first hand. He was educated as an engineer before turning to professional photography in 1949. Saura began making films in 1965. Spain's most celebrated director, Saura has won many major awards. Feature films include: *Fast, Fast* (80), *Blood Wedding* (81), *Sweet Hours* (81), *Antonieta* (82), *Carmen* (83), *The Stilts* (84), *A Love Bewitched* (85), *El Dorado* (87), *The Dark Night* (89), *Ay, Carmela!* (90).

Helga Stephenson