



PRESS RELEASE: 3 May 2011

CRÍA CUERVOS
(Raise Ravens)

Directed by Carlos Saura

**Starring Geraldine Chaplin, Ana Torrent, Héctor Alterio,
Conchi Perez, Maite Sanchez**

Spain 1975 | 110 mins | Cert 12A

A BFI release

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Release date: 10 June 2011

Opening venues: BFI Southbank plus selected venues nationwide

'I believe we live immersed in a society that has been built upon an accumulation of errors ... We are the products of a repressive education that has left us disarmed and defenceless in the face of many things.' (Carlos Saura, 1975)

Shot in the summer of 1975 as General Franco lay dying, Carlos Saura's masterpiece takes its title from a sinister Spanish proverb: *'raise ravens and they'll pluck out your eyes.'* A subtle yet unmistakable indictment of the family as a repressive force in Spanish society, **Cría cuervos** was premiered in January 1976, just two months after the dictator's death.

Eight-year-old Ana (the spellbinding Ana Torrent from Victor Erice's *The Spirit of the Beehive*) lives in a mysterious mansion in central Madrid, cut off from the roaring traffic and urban bustle by a high-walled garden. Recently orphaned, she believes herself to have poisoned her cold, authoritarian father (Héctor Alterio), a high-ranking military man whom she blames for the death of her much adored, musically gifted mother (Geraldine Chaplin in a performance of exquisite tenderness). Now cared for, along with her two sisters, by her uptight, scolding Aunt Paulina (Mónica Randall), Ana has ample opportunity to observe the frustrations – emotional, sexual, professional – of her adult female relatives. This is a world of secrets and lies in which only the family maid Rosa (Florinda Chico) will respond frankly to questions about sex or the Spanish Civil War.

Looking forward to *Pan's Labyrinth*, **Cría cuervos** is one of cinema's most hauntingly vivid depictions of a child's fantasy-imbued reality. Having written his script with Ana Torrent, child star of *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973), firmly in mind, Saura was faced with the task of winning over her

parents who were reluctant to let her act in any more films. Nor was that the only problem: Geraldine Chaplin (Saura's partner at the time) gives a wry account of how Ana's unfortunate dislike of her created much tension on set, making it far from easy to portray the close, loving mother-daughter relationship demanded by the script. Yet in Geraldine's words: '*Ana Torrent was absolute magic ... you could read whatever you wanted into that face.*'

Although – once the film was complete – its makers feared that it would fail to find an audience, it proved a commercial success in Spain and other territories, winning the Special Jury Prize at Cannes and boosting Saura's international reputation. Darkly unsettling, deeply touching and comic by turns, ***Cría cuervos*** is a landmark of Spanish cinema, marking a key moment of political transition.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Cría cuervos plays at selected cinemas nationwide from 10 June.

Cría cuervos plays as part of the **Good Morning Freedom! – Spanish Cinema After Franco** at BFI Southbank from 2 to 30 June. It is hoped that director Carlos Saura will attend a special screening of ***Cría cuervos*** at BFI Southbank on Saturday 11 June.

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- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

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