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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

FRIDAY, MAY 19, 2006

Cannes Day Four

Heading to the first film of the day at 8 in the morning. The church bells are ringing, as if a Quasimodo of Cannes is pulling on the ropes and yelling, "Cinema! Cinema!" Or as my friend put it more simply, we're being called to prayer. The Lumiere is jammed because today is the premiere of Almodovar's *Volver*. Will this be the year he finally wins the Palm d'Or?

VOLVER *** or *** 1/2

Maybe this will be his year. Almodovar's movie gets solid applause and will be the front runner throughout the festival. Entertaining, satisfying. With Almodovar, crazy events seem quite natural -- ghosts, a dead body in the freezer, Penelope Cruz mopping floors -- it all seems perfectly reasonable. It plays like an old Hollywood movie though without any melodrama, with Cruz in the Joan Crawford role of a movie who has to take care of things when her daughter stabs her dead-beat dad after he tries to rape her. (She's adopted.) Men barely register in this film -- it's all about the women. And Cruz's lovely breasts deserve equal billing with her fine performance: only Almodovar could have come up with the frankly appreciative overhead shot that shows Cruz washing dishes -- the only image in the frame is the sink, the dishes, her hands and those wonderful breasts. Almodovar is a momma's boy in the best sense of the phrase.

BOFFO! *

Apparently, when Stephen Spielberg was filming "Jaws," the mechanical shark wasn't working and he had to come up with all the mysterious, tension-building shots where the shark attacked but we didn't see it -- the shots that made the film a classic. And if that anecdote is news to you, you might enjoy this supremely superficial documentary in which loads of Hollywood players are asked banal questions about the industry. (I had a bet with friends about how long it would take someone to quote William Goldman's truism that in

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