

# Jumping without a Parachute

Natalia de Molina

by Silvia Bombardini / photography Philippe Gerlach

By all accounts Natalia de Molina is like a sunbeam in Berlin’s February gloom. The Spanish Shooting Star at the 65th Berlin International Film Festival received her award only a few days ago, from the hands of Natalie Portman no less — a moment just waiting to be framed. She is among the ten actors and actresses selected as the most luminous new talents in Europe this year, following her performance as the hitchhiker Belén in *Living Is Easy with Eyes Closed*. Natalia de Molina has already been showered with prizes for this bittersweet role, including the 2014 Goya Award for Best New Actress. Warm and radiant though she might be, she is also versatile and does not shy away from a challenge. We will soon be seeing her as the unemployed mother of an eight-year-old in Juan Miguel del Castillo’s social drama *Roof and Food*, and as Gloria, a young Lolita in Enrique Rivero’s *Pozoamargo*. As the Berlinale draws to an end, she speaks of her muses Gena Rowlands and Marilyn Monroe, of her own favorite scene with Javier Cámara, and how to find the right balance between fragility and maturity.

**Silvia Bombardini: Representing Spain on the international stage must be both an honor and a responsibility, I guess. And compared with the somber subjects addressed by many contemporary European films, and perhaps unexpectedly from a country so gravely afflicted by the financial crisis, the Berlinale jury described your performance as “a welcome burst of sunshine.” Indeed it’s said that creativity flourishes in hard times. From this perspective, how would you describe Spanish cinema today?**

Natalia de Molina: That’s a difficult question to answer! *[laughs]* Well, it’s not the best time for our industry in Spain, and we are not in our best moment either. It’s very difficult to produce a movie in my country now, but at the same time I think the moments of crisis in history have made our imagination grow. We continue making movies, a lot of movies, and we are around the world in festivals, and so on. We are known because we have very talented artists. We make good cinema and we won’t stop. The situation should stop, not us. And the government should support its culture more than it does.

**SB: The film they were referring to in particular was Trueba’s *Living Is Easy with Eyes Closed*, a heartwarming true story from the ’60s to remind us that times were even rougher once, and yet we managed to overcome them with our ideals intact. Your character is Belén, partly inspired by Andula in Forman’s *Loves of a Blonde*. How did you prepare yourself for the role, and what’s your favorite scene in the film?**

NdM: I spoke a lot with my mother about it because she lived through those times and she told me how hard it was being a woman in the ’60s under the dictatorship of Franco, even more so as a pregnant single woman. I needed to understand the society in Franco’s Spain to understand the fear that Belén felt. I had a lot of conversations with Dravid Trueba too, of course. He is the screenwriter as well as the director of the film, you know? He knew everything, had everything in his head. He’s the one who created the character of Belén. And in one of those conversations he told me about *Loves of a Blonde*. He recommended that I watch it in order to understand what he wanted Belén to convey — that kind of fragility and maturity at the same time. My favorite scene, the scene that I most enjoyed in the shoot, was the broken car scene. It was difficult too, because when I saw Javier Cámara with the hanky on his head I couldn’t stop laughing, he just looked so funny... We had to stop many times and start over. It was very funny. Uncontrollable laughter.

**SB: John Lennon is the personal idol of Cámara’s character in the film, and he comes to represent an ideal of freedom when it’s needed most. In cinema, do you have any idol of your own? Was there one specific actor or director who inspired you to start acting as a child, someone you looked up to or do still, who you would hope to work with in the future?**

NdM: Probably Marilyn Monroe. As a child I used to dress up to look like her. I loved and I still love Marilyn. She is my icon. When I grew up and went to drama school I discovered Gena Rowlands. She is still my favorite actress; she inspires me every day and every time I watch one of her films I learn something new about acting. I admire her capacity for crafting big characters with small details. As real as life itself. I also like Julianne Moore, Natalie Portman... So many

actors. It doesn’t really matter to me whether I work with known or unknown actors, but one actor that I would love to work with in the future is Ricardo Darin.

**SB: How about your fellow Shooting Stars? Is there anyone in this year’s selection you’d be especially keen to team up with?**

NdM: With all! They are really amazing and the best people. I would love to do a movie with all of them, all at once. Can you imagine? It would be a great movie.

**SB: I know you honed your talent in theaters before moving on to film. Did you always want to work in film or did it happen by chance? While a somewhat more intimate contact with the audience might be seen as a virtue of the stage, cinema would be less exclusive, reaches further, more directly documents its time. What is in your experience the main difference between the two, and is there anything about performing live you now miss?**

NdM: I always dreamed of making a film. The differences between the two I think are pretty obvious but I don’t prefer the one to the other; I grow and I learn with both of them. The acting is the same, what changes is the environment. I feel that cinema is more technique and theater is more adrenaline. I would like to do both in my career.

**SB: The Goya Award for Best New Actress that you rightfully won as Belén opened up many doors for you, including some towards darker themes apparently more consistent with the prevailing European direction. I’m thinking of your performance as Rocío in Juan Miguel del Castillo’s *Roof and Food*. What did you first think when you read the script, and after the wrap-up, what would you say that you’ve learned from her?**

NdM: The first time I read the script I couldn’t think of anything, I just cried. The story touched me so deeply that I spent several days with a knot in my stomach. At first, I was afraid to say yes to the project — it meant a great challenge for me, like a jump into the void without a parachute. But you know what? I love challenges so... *[laughs]* I did it. I jumped into the void without a parachute and now I don’t know what will happen with the movie. I can only hope it goes well, because it’s such a necessary film. We made this crisis visual;



coat *Armani*  
blouse *Replay*  
shoes *Laurèl*  
belt *Laurèl*  
pants stylist’s own

this film is to give people a voice. I’ve learned so many things playing Rocío that I think I’m still not aware of many of them. I need some time to process it.

**SB: Would you tell us something about your experience on the set of *Pozoamargo* with one of Mexico’s most gifted up-and-coming filmmakers, Golden Leopard-winner Enrique Rivero?**

NdM: Enrique is simply outstanding. He’s never worked with actors before. I am the first, so I feel very fortunate. The experience was amazing and it’s the kind of cinema that I’ve always wanted to work with. The shoot was quite magical. The film is a drama about a man with a venereal disease and I play the role of Gloria, she is a Lolita of sorts. I wanted to be in this movie to work with Enrique, whom I admire and adore,

and because I had a very difficult sequence to do as an actress. It is the climax of the film, a crucial moment, and I knew it was a challenge for me to play that character and I wanted to see myself being able to do it.

**SB: The 65th Berlin International Film Festival is in full swing as we speak, and with it a full schedule of industry meet and greet receptions for each 2015 European Shooting Star. What would you say has been the most remarkable or rewarding moment of your attendance so far?**

NdM: The moment I heard that Natalie Portman was going to deliver the award to us... Oh my god... she is one of my favorite actresses... That moment was very special. I will never forget it. I’m going to put a picture of that moment in my room. *[laughs]*

**SB: With *Living Is Easy with Eyes Closed* selected as the Spanish entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 87th Academy Awards and four more features just waiting to be released, what else might 2015 have in store for you?**

NdM: I have some projects in the making but I can’t speak of them yet. Sorry!