

# Persmap



Motlys presents, in co-production with Lemning Film, "BLIND" a film by Eskil Vogt | With Ellen Dorrit Petersen, Henrik Rafaelsen, Vera Vitali and Marius Kolbenstvedt | Casting Tove Undheim | Costume design Ellen D. Ystehede  
Production design Jørgen Stangebye Larsen | Director of Photography Thimios Bakatakis | Composer Henk Hofstede | Music Torgny Amdam and Preben Grieg-Halvorsen | Editor Jens Christian Fodstad | Sound design Gisle Tveit  
Line producer Therese Naustdal | Co-producers Derk-Jan Warrink, Leontine Petit and Joost de Vries | Produced by Hans-Jørgen Osnes and Sigve Endresen | Written and directed by Eskil Vogt

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# BLIND

Een film van Eskil Vogt

*BLIND* vertelt het verhaal van Ingrid, die net haar gezichtsvermogen heeft verloren en zich terug trekt in haar appartement. Het is de plek waar ze controle heeft, alleen met haar man en haar gedachten. Maar Ingrid's problemen liggen tussen en niet buiten de muren van haar appartement. Al snel krijgen haar diepste angsten en onderdrukte fantasieën de overhand.

De Noorse regisseur Eskil Vogt maakte naam als scenarioschrijver voor Joachim Trier (*OSLO AUGUST 31ST*, *REPRISE*). Voor zijn regiedebuut *BLIND* schreef hij ook het scenario.



Genre: drama - Speelduur: 95 min - Land: Noorwegen – Releasedatum: 23 oktober 2014  
Distributie: Cinéart

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Meer informatie:

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Persmap en foto's staan op: [www.cineart.nl/pers](http://www.cineart.nl/pers) (inlog: cineart/wachtwoord: film)

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## Lange synopsis

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BLIND is the directorial debut of Eskil Vogt, the co-writer of Joachim Trier's acclaimed REPRISÉ and OSLO, AUGUST 31ST. With his first feature, Eskil created a complex, humorous, and original drama.

After losing her sight, Ingrid (Ellen Dorrit Petersen) rarely leaves her apartment. She can still remember how the world around her looks, but the images that were once so clear are slowly replaced by darker visions. Ingrid suspects her husband Morten (Henrik

Rafaelsen) doesn't always leave for work when he says he does. Is Morten there in the apartment with her? Sneaking around, silently observing her? Or when he claims to be writing e-mails to colleagues, is he actually chatting with his lover online?

Morten's old college friend Einar (Marius Kolbenstvedt) is an aficionado of film and music. But rather than fostering his passions, he keeps finding himself exploring the world of online porn and spying on Elin (Vera Vitali), a Swedish woman who lives across the street. Elin lost her entire social circle in her divorce. When she starts experiencing absurd, inexplicable events, she is left with no one to talk to but her ten-year-old daughter.

BLIND is a witty and unpredictable drama about how our innermost fantasies and desires affect how we perceive the world around us. With BLIND Eskil Vogt establishes himself as a director with an eye for detail and the deft ability to balance humor and drama through a creative and lively approach.

*"They say that my ability to picture things like this will disappear, that my nerves will wilt without new visual impulses...  
But I can slow it down."*

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## Cast

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### **ELLEN DORRIT Petersen** [Ingrid]

**Ellen** launched her film career in 2008, with a double-feature film debut: leading roles in Erik Poppe's *Troubled Water* and Knut Erik Jensen's *Ice Kiss*. Ellen was awarded an Amanda (the Norwegian Oscar equivalent) for Best Female Lead in *Ice Kiss*. Since 2008, she appeared in several films, including Marius Holst's *King of Devil's Island*, 2010 and Ole Giæver's *The Mountain*, 2011. Ellen trained at the Norwegian National Academy of Theatre and a current member of the permanent ensemble at The Norwegian Theatre.

*"It doesn't really matter if it's accurate, as long as I can visualize it, plain and clear."*

### **HENRIK Rafaelsen** [Morten]

The lead in Martin Lund's *The Almost Man*, 2012, **Henrik** was awarded the Best Actor Award at the Karlovy Vary Film Festival. He is known for his roles in *Happy Happy*, (World Cinema Grand Jury Prize, Sundance 2011) and *Limbo*, 2010. Henrik trained at The Theatre Academy in Stockholm and appeared in several Swedish films. He has worked with acclaimed playwrights such as Lars Norén, and acted in productions at the Swedish Riksteater and Stockholm's Stadsteater.

*"Of course I get that it must feel weird to be sucked off by a blind woman... even if you're married to her."*



### **VERA Vitali** [Elin]

**Vera** has filmmaking flowing in her blood. The daughter of costume designer Kersti Vitali and actor Leon Vitali. After acting in *Barry Lyndon*, Leon was Kubrick's personal assistant for many years. At the age of five, Vera decided to become an actor while wandering the set of *Full Metal Jacket*. Her feature film debut was in Ruben Östlund's *Involuntary*, 2008. In 2012, she earned the leading role in the Swedish miniseries *Hinsehäxan* – a widely acclaimed performance that established her as one of Sweden's most promising young actors. Vera plays the lead in Ulf Malmros's upcoming *My so-called Father*.

*"Why does everything have to be so fucking extreme... oversexed? Is that really what you're like?"*

### **MARIUS Kolbenstvedt** [Einar]

In the role as the lonely and yearning Einar in *Blind*, **Marius** makes his acting debut. Prior *Blind*, Marius was known as a playwright, theatre director, musician and stage artist. In 1993, Marius was a founding member of the theatre collective, *The Chosen*, who are internationally recognized for their documentary and experimental approach to stage art.

*"He found sides of himself he had no idea existed, weird perversions he couldn't possibly share with anyone..."*

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## Crew

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### **ESKIL Vogt** *Writer & Director*

With *Blind*, **Eskil** makes his debut as feature film Director. Eskil is recognized as one of Norway's leading screenwriters, known for his collaboration with Joachim Trier on films such as *Reprise*, *Oslo, August 31st* and *Louder Than Bombs* (in pre-production). He received his directorial training at the national French film school, La fémis in Paris. Eskil directed award-winning short films including *An Embrace* and *Strangers* as well as television comedies.

### **THIMIOS Bakatakis** *Cinematographer*

Born and raised in Greece, **Thimios** was the Director of Photography of the acclaimed films, *Dogtooth* (Prix Un Certain Regard: Cannes, 2009, Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Film, 2010) and *Attenberg* (prizewinner at the Venice International Film Festival). Thimios is sought after internationally for his work, and was Director of Photography for *Porfirio* and *Keep the Lights On*, Colombian and U.S. productions.



### **JENS CHRISTIAN Fodstad** *Editor*

**Jens Christian** is a well-established film editor in Norway. Editing films including, *I Belong*, *Limbo*, *A Somewhat Gentle Man* and the TV series *Norwegian Cozy*. Most recently he edited Hans Petter Moland's forthcoming film, *The Prize Idiot*. Jens Christian received his education at the National Film & Television School in London.

### **JØRGEN Stangebye Larsen** *Production Designer*

Just a few years after graduating from the Norwegian Film School, **Jørgen** is known as one of Norway's most prominent production designers. He was nominated for an Amanda for his work on both Joachim Triers *Oslo, August 31st* and Sara Johnsen's *All That Matters is Past*. Jørgen recently completed work on the soon to be released, Hans Petter Moland's *The Prize Idiot*.

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## Producers

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### **HANS-JØRGEN Osnes & SIGVE Endresen**

**Hans-Jørgen** has worked closely with Eskil Vogt on a number of films prior to *Blind*. As the Producer of *Oslo, August 31st* and as First Assistant Director on both *Reprise* and *Oslo, August 31st*. In 1983, **Sigve** co-founded one of Norway's oldest independent production companies, Motlys. Since then, Endresen has produced dozens of feature films and documentaries, titles such as *North*, *The Orheim Company*, *Turn Me On*, *Dammit* and the TV series *Buzz Aldrin*.

### **MOTLYS as**

With thirty years of production experience, **Motlys** is one of Norway's leading feature film production companies. In the last five years, Motlys has produced films such as *I Belong*, *The Orheim Company*, *Oslo, August 31st*, *Turn Me On*, *Dammit*, *North* and *The Man Who Loved Yngve*. Motlys' films have received national acclaim and premiered at international film festivals including Cannes, Berlin and Tribeca.

*“As roses and broken glass crunched under his feet, it hit him: at this moment I’m good, right now I’m happy.”*

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## **Interview with Eskil Vogt**

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***This is your debut as feature film director — what was the experience like going from being the writer to being the director of what you have written yourself?***

I’ve never actually seen myself purely as a screenwriter. This is my first feature film as a director, but I’ve always kept up with both directing, writing and my formal training is as a director. For me, writing and directing are inextricably intertwined. One writes not to produce a script, but a film. With strong screenwriting there ought to be clear thoughts about how a film should be made present within the text.

***Where did the idea of making a film about a blind woman come from?***

While I was developing another film as Director, I was reading a book written by a friend of mine, Terje Holtet Larsen, where one of the characters is blind. The text was completely un-filmable, an inner monologue of someone who can’t see. Despite that obstacle, it just stayed with me, I couldn’t shake it. When I put the other film aside and began to write, thinking about losing sight, just flowed out of me. There are so many interesting, exciting and funny things that fit into a film with a blind main character.

***What did you learn about being blind from working on the script?***

A lot. From the basic knowledge that most blind people have remnants of sight, to the more peripheral, like how in the USA they train miniature ponies to help the blind because guide dogs lives are so short... The impetus for my writing came from within and from my own preconceptions about what it would be like to lose sight. I tried to imagine it, both the totally fundamental existential transformation, but also the small everyday uncertainties, how one’s fantasy could easily run amok without having sight as a kind of constant “reality check.” When I was already a good ways into developing the film, I sat down with people who had actually gone through what I was playing with during the writing process. I read books and talked to ophthalmologists, but it was nothing in comparison to meeting those folks who actually were living it and who shared their experiences. A lot of what I imagined turned out to be not so far off, other things had to be adjusted, but I felt by using this method I made the story, in a way, more personal – I could use myself.

***How was the writing process on this film different than the work with Reprise and Oslo, August 31st?***

Since I wrote this script entirely on my own, I could rely even more on intuition. I am analytical by nature, so that part of me always comes out at some point in the process and cleans things up. With Blind, the subconscious and the un-articulated were allowed to dominate the writing much longer than usual. This left its mark on the film.

***Blind is a film about blindness and isolation, but could also be described as being funny – how do you manage to combine these two elements?***

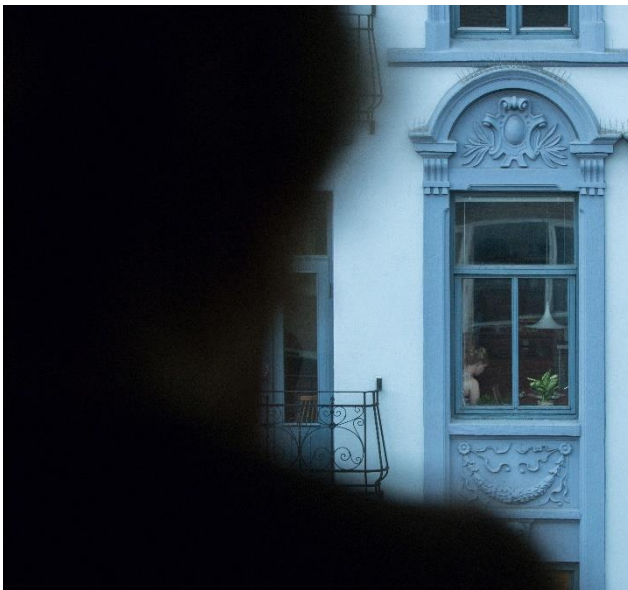
I wanted to make something that completely had its own logic, something freewheeling and surprising which could move from an exciting scene to more of an everyday scene to a scene that is broadly comic. It was important to me the film be an expression of creativity and liveliness. I wanted to show a person’s innermost being. And for that, the whole spectrum must

be part of it. Our sexual thoughts, our fantasies, our humor ...

***How did you approach and conceptualize the visual expression of a theme that is about not being able to see?***

How does one show blindness on film? The most obvious would be to let the screen go black, to let the viewers orientate themselves with sound – but using that method would mean quickly losing all contact with the character who is experiencing it. At the same time you'd be ignoring that other sense that is so important for someone who has lost their sight: the sense of touch. For me, it was often about limiting the visual input by isolating a detail or holding an image longer. One hears a sound, but instead of cutting to the source of the sound, a close up of the person hearing the sound is held longer. She doesn't know what made the sound – so why should we? What I found out in my research is that the blind don't feel they live in an all-encompassing darkness; images appear, especially for people who weren't born blind, representations of what is around them. This is the key to the film's form and style for me; I wanted to capture these interior images, not cling to an *idée fixe* of a life in the dark. And blindness, paradoxically enough is in and of itself, very filmic; it contains the most fundamental aspects of film: to see and be seen, light and dark...

***How would you describe your approach to the notions of physicality, sensuality and sexuality in the film?***



It was very important to me, if I was going to delve into the world of blindness, to do this credibly. I couldn't avoid Ingrid's sexuality. I talked to women who have lost their sight and they told me that they still want to be seen, to be desired visually. This linked in an interesting way to the exaggerated importance of the visual in our lives, how we are constantly bombarded with visual material in advertising, TV and online content in general. Nothing is fresh to our eyes anymore, everything becomes used up and ordinary before we even have a chance to experience it for ourselves. Yet, as the media is predominantly visual, one thing that hasn't been tamed that way and that

remains truly personal as a feeling and as an emotion is the tactile. To touch someone – or be touched by someone – is perhaps the purest and most intimate form of connection. I guess the way I treated and represented a physical, sensual and sexual world in *Blind* had to reflect that reality. And by referencing people's relationship to pornography, the contrast becomes evident: even though everything is accessible visually speaking, we can't necessarily touch everything. You can watch all the porn you want, you'll still long for someone to caress your cheek.

***Blind is an Oslo film; could it be set in any other place?***

The story could easily have taken place somewhere else – but then it would also have become another film. I like to let the personality of the places where I shoot play an important role in the film. The story gave me plenty of opportunities to capitalize on the exteriors. Ingrid, the blind woman, doesn't go out, she stays inside her apartment. Everything that happens outside becomes an expression of her yearning, her longing for the visual input that abounds in every big

city.

***How did you make the decision to work with the Greek cinematographer Thimios Bakatakis?***

I was without a regular Director of Photography, so when I got the chance to make my first feature film I naively started my search with the top names on the international list. Thimios was responsible for the striking visual compositions in the Oscar nominated Dogtooth. Not only does he have an unusually good eye for composition, but also a strikingly simple and natural way of using light. The strangest things might happen in his films, but thanks to the natural lighting he never loses contact with reality. I sent the script to his agent, but had no expectations especially since Thimios had just completed his first U.S. film. Very quickly thereafter he contacted me, he had read the script and was ready to jump on the next plane to Norway.

***You went to Sweden to find Vera Vitali, and Marius Kolbenstvedt is a theatre director and not really an actor — what was the process for choosing your leads like?***

Together with my assistant director Tove Undheim, who was responsible for casting, we tested everyone we could get ahold of – from amateurs to well-known actors. One of the roles called for a woman who just moved to Oslo from the west coast of Norway, recently divorced and lonely in Oslo. For some reason I never felt I got what I was looking for from those I met. When time was running out, I convinced myself to widen my search to Sweden. There I met Vera, who had precisely that difficult mix of comic timing and warm vulnerability that Elin (the character in the film) needed to have. And as a Swede, Elin's loneliness in a Norwegian city grew even stronger.

The role of Einar needed to be grounded in an immediate believability for people to relate to him. I wanted a new face, one the audience had no choice but to identify 100% with the role. Marius is a great theatre director who I originally turned to for casting tips. Luckily, I got the idea of auditioning him, and it quickly became apparent that he was an extremely gifted actor whose low-key approach affected everyone who played opposite him.

***What kind of person is Ingrid and how did you work with Ellen Dorrit Petersen to bring out her character?***

It was important for me that Ingrid wouldn't just be defined by her blindness. She is a hip and intelligent woman with a sophisticated sexuality and a lively fantasy... and she continues to be this after losing her sight. At the same time, this loss poses an immense challenge for an independent and proud woman. She keeps up a facade of handling things, but deep inside she has enormous problems adjusting to and accepting the loss of control that is forced upon her. Ellen Dorrit Petersen was the first one who came to mind for this role. I felt she could handle this very technically demanding role and at the same time instill the strength and intelligence that makes Ingrid more than just a victim. I auditioned many other actors, only to confirm my initial intuition: that Ellen was the one who could bring this character to life. Ellen risked everything for this film. It's an acting feat that I am extremely proud of having in my movie.

***How did you work with Ellen and Vera regarding the blindness — what was important for them to "learn" about being blind?***

Ellen worked for months to master the body language that is particular to the blind. She worked with a vision rehabilitation therapist, met blind people and took a rehabilitation course for people who have lost their sight. Most of the films with blind characters choose to use expressions for blindness that are very exaggerated. People who were once able to see don't stare stiffly into space the way Al Pacino did in Scent of a Woman. We tried to develop a more realistic means of expression; the blind people I met whose disease had run a similar course to



Ingrid's, can focus their gaze and move their eyes to follow sounds. Sometimes they didn't even look blind at all.

For the most part, Ingrid remains inside her apartment where she knows where everything is – so she can't stumble about fumbling for things to appear blind. Ellen's preparation for this role was so thorough that the blindness was just there in her body language, in the small gestures. Her performance is, quite simply, impressively authentic. Her gaze somehow seems emptied of sight even though it shifts and expresses feelings.

With Vera it is was a little different – she also worked with a vision rehabilitation therapist, but since her blindness is more an expression of Ingrid's fear than anything else, it made sense to make it more stylized.

***Sound must be incredibly important in a film about someone who can't see — could you say a few words about the sound work?***

Starting during the writing phase, sound was an essential part of the film. Our sound designer, Gisle Tveito, was one of the first people I discussed the film. A number of the sequences in the film are built up with sound as the driving force and the soundscape was often created completely from scratch during post-production.

***The composer is Dutch — how did your collaboration function, and what does the music contribute to the film?***

Henk Hofstede was sort of a 80s pop star in Holland with his group The Nits. And a cult band in France, which a friend of mine turned me on to. Henk had made film music before, but it was his sense of melody and the filmic soundscape in his records that attracted me. The music in the film was quite difficult to get right. It was only after my editor Jens Christian Fodstad and I heard a piano riff that Henk had made, which was just as wild and unpredictable as Ingrid's inner life, that the music began to fall into place.

***What do you hope to achieve with Blind — what would like your audience to take away from the film?***

The most important thing for me is to make a film that is sincere – one should never do something that one doesn't believe in because someone claims this is what "people" want to see. My guiding star has been to make a film that I myself would like to see in the theatre: something unexpected, surprising, thought provoking, intelligent and entertaining. I hope that this is the film that Blind has become.

