

MOTLYS IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH DON'T LOOK NOW PRESENTS



OSLO, August 31st

A film by Joachim Trier



OFFICIAL SELECTION
UN CERTAIN REGARD
FESTIVAL DE CANNES



SYNOPSIS

Anders will soon complete his drug rehabilitation in the countryside. As part of the program, he is allowed to go into the city for a job interview. But he takes advantage of the leave and stays on in the city, drifting around, meeting people he hasn't seen in a long while. Thirty-four-year-old Anders is smart, handsome and from a good family, but deeply haunted by all the opportunities he has wasted, all the people he has let down. He is still relatively young, but feels his life in many ways is already over. For the remainder of the day and long into the night, the ghosts of past mistakes will wrestle with the chance of love, the possibility of a new life and the hope to see some future by morning.





COMMENTS FROM JOACHIM TRIER

VARIOUS DESTINIES

OSLO, AUGUST 31ST is the story of a resourceful person with a very dark mind. The paradox to the Anders character is that he's gifted, formerly ambitious, but he lost years of his life because of a lifestyle he couldn't sustain. I've been getting more and more into character studies and I have an ongoing fascination with observing middle class life. I've always been curious about the various destinies I've seen around me. For example, my friends from my teenage years as a skateboarder. I saw how their lives went into very different directions. Some became drug addicts, others turned out having very successful careers. There's also great drama in the lives of those with choices.

I've always seen myself as a filmmaker who looks at things from a critical point of view, at the same time I make films about the seemingly fortunate and the privileged. I always get a bit sad when people say life is so good here in Norway that there's nothing to tell stories about, that we don't have any conflicts. I completely disagree. There are great tragedies in middle class life as well.

BOTH VERY PERSONAL FILMS

My first film *REPRISE* is about a younger stage of life, while in *OSLO, AUGUST 31ST* the characters are older. Anders, at 34, has reached an age where he is beyond hoping for a great future. The film is about a fundamental loss of faith in oneself, and this time he is past his youthful aspirations. He is asking fundamental questions about life. But it's hard for me to compare the two films. They are both very personal films, in their themes and style, and also because the characters and I come from a similar milieu.

LE FEU FOLLET

I was working on a US project (*LOUDER THAN BOMBS*), which was taking longer to get off the ground than expected, and I wanted a film to do now. My co-writer Eskil Vogt and I knew the French book "Le Feu Follet" (Will O' The Wisp) written by Pierre Drieu La Rochelle in 1931. We felt there was a timelessness to the story that could be transferred to other cities, other cultures, and still be relevant. The book was made into the 1963 French film *THE FIRE WITHIN* by Louis Malle about an alcoholic. Although the book only inspired the screenplay of *OSLO, AUGUST 31ST*, we decided to keep him a recovering drug addict like in the book.

BLATANTLY EXISTENTIAL

My co-writer Eskil Vogt and I wanted to explore how to create a story that focuses on the emotional, and almost physical, experience of an existential crisis. "I'm lost. How do I move forward?" So *OSLO, AUGUST 31ST* is about the state of being lost and that particular loneliness that accompanies it. Cinema is a wonderful art form for talking about loneliness. We can experience films together with other people. It can be a collective experience of loneliness. We're alone in the dark of the theater, but with other people.



EMOTIONAL COMPLEXITY

REPRISE is very playful with form and we spent four years writing the screenplay. *OSLO, AUGUST 31ST* was written much quicker, and we wanted to reach for simplicity but still maintain an emotional complexity. We wanted there to be a lucidity, a clarity, to this film. Eskil and I share this skepticism about sentimentality and how easy it can be achieved in cinema. We strive to avoid being emotionally conservative.

INSPIRED BY BRESSON

I wanted to move towards a simplistic clarity in my mise en scene, but I have a restlessness in me as a director, so I always end up not being the purist that I set out to be. In *OSLO, AUGUST 31ST*, I also wanted more use of real time and I wanted to even incorporate some documentary aspects. We used Steadicam on the streets of Oslo amongst real people, not extras. I love the clash between a clearly planned misé en scene and the chaos of real life situations.

I have always admired the purity of Robert Bresson's films. His style is impossible to emulate, but the spirit of his cinema is incredibly inspiring.

THE WAY A DAY PANS OUT

A situation in the book "Le Feu Follet" that interested me particularly was the scene where the main character goes to see his best friend to have an earnest talk about his situation. I am interested in how a friend deals with another friend in such a dark moment in his life. For the screenplay of *OSLO, AUGUST 31ST*, we wanted a conversation between two good friends, where one has lost faith in his life and the other feels responsible to enter into a painful and complex conversation with him. Although we needed to create and update the characters, we wanted to keep the spirit of this idea from the book. Basically a conversation that takes the time it needs, it was the biggest risk dramaturgically in the film. But we're interested in exploring dialogue and dramaturgy in different ways. In *OSLO, AUGUST 31ST*, we wanted the film to unfold the way a day pans out. There are long stretches of silence and suddenly bursts of talk.





ANDERS

OSLO, AUGUST 31ST was written with Anders Danielsen Lie in mind as the lead. Before we started writing, I offered it to him and fortunately for me he said yes. Anders is not a classically trained actor. He was actually in medical school when we cast him in *REPRISE*. He is now a doctor. In addition to being a very intelligent person, he's also very emotional. In *OSLO, AUGUST 31ST*, I wanted to go deeper with him. I knew he would go the extra mile with this part. He changed his physique, gained weight. He thoroughly researched drug addicts so that the detailing would be realistic. It was a very tough time for him. For most of the shoot, he stayed in his trailer, kept to himself.

A SENSE OF THEIR PERSONALITY

In *OSLO, AUGUST 31ST*, the majority of the dialogue is as written. I sometimes do loose takes where I let the actors improvise around the already set idea of the scene, but I'm not a big believer in free improvisation. I feel a filmmaker must create an open space for the actors to bring some of themselves into the film. I work on a very individual basis with actors. I don't have one method. I mix trained actors with non-professionals a lot. I like non-actors because they don't have a need to show their craft. They just work hard to get into the moment. In working with a cast member, I need to get a sense of their personality. I need to establish a strong relationship before going on set. Hans Olav Brenner, who in real life is the host of a literary TV program, plays Anders' friend Thomas. He might not be trained as an actor, but, for me, he had the right credentials. He will spend half a day interviewing a writer like Philip Roth, laying aside his manuscript, still guiding the conversation to the right places. He has proven that he knows how to listen attentively, that to me is acting.

FALL IN OSLO

I wanted to portray Oslo in late August, early September. There's an emotional melancholy to the city at that time of the year. That beauty of a late summer day when fall is arriving. I was worried that it might be too yellow or orange, but I think that we managed to capture just the right colors...

THE DOCUMENTATION OF THINGS

I've always been curious about the relationship between memory and identity and how this relates to place, who we are and how we grew up.

For example, the enormous sense of another time which we experience when we watch old movies and see the streets, cars, buildings how they used to be. This sense of collecting little moments and seeing them years later is my ongoing fascination with film.



I shot specific places in *OSLO, AUGUST 31st* so that years later people will be able to see them. Oslo is a very rapidly changing city. When Anders approaches the city at the beginning of the film, we see a whole new part of town. For the moment, it's one big building site. But in a few years it will be a place where people will live. I'm interested in the documentation of things. To create a fiction film that encapsulates that, that is rewarding and fun for me. We experience the world through films. Paris streets in early Eric Rohmer movies have such a presence. The wind in the trees in a Malick movie.

The poetic observations of places in Tarkovsky's films. There's a way that concrete material of a film can link into a bigger philosophical discussion about memory and perception, in a phenomenological way. This is a natural aspect of cinema that I've become very curious about.

I am also a part of a generation that has had our whole life video taped. So I can speak for an hour about how the ending of Antonioni's *THE ECLIPSE* is a great statement on cinematic space, but at the same time we have had our own banal experiences of lost moments and places captured on super-8 or video and this is also a part of my film upbringing.

FRENCH INFLUENCE

I guess you could say I am a film buff, my passion for film began as a spectator. French cinema has influenced me since I was a kid. My mom took me to see Tati's *MON ONCLE* when I was seven years old. The influence of the Nouvelle Vague has been important in my use of actors based on their own persona. I think I've been inspired by Alain Resnais' approach to temporal playful cinema. I don't literally try to copy old films of Resnais or Godard. But the spirit – a free form cinema that plays with film language and believes that cinema can be both intellectual and emotional – I subscribe to that.

IN A NUANCED AND EMOTIONAL WAY

I want to explore what the poetic is in cinema through viewing the world in a nuanced and emotional way. How can you express thought in film? How can we specifically show thoughts in a character? As a director, in my view, the most personal is how you see things.

I like the idea of taking something dark and making something beautiful. But it's not my aim to make films that are depressing. I think even the saddest moments in life still have beauty. Life is not just one feeling at a time. Life is chaotic. Films should mirror that. As a director, I do whatever is necessary to try to capture and control that chaos for things to come alive.



JOACHIM TRIER DIRECTOR

OSLO, AUGUST 31ST is Norwegian director Joachim Trier's second feature film. He made his feature debut in 2006 with *REPRISE*, which received numerous international awards, including Best Director at Karlovy Vary and the Discovery Award at Toronto. Joachim was also named one of Variety's 10 Directors to Watch at Sundance. *REPRISE* also won the Amanda (Norwegian Oscar) for Best Film, Best Director and Best Screenplay.

Joachim previously won acclaim with a number of prize-winning shorts and commercials, such as *PROCTER*, a short about the unexpected footage found in a dead man's video camera.

Joachim, born in Copenhagen, 1974, grew up in a filmmaking family and began shooting his first 8mm films at the age of five. He became a national skateboarding champion in Norway and made skateboarding videos. After attending the European Film College in Denmark, he trained at the British National Film and Television School.

2011 *OSLO, AUGUST 31ST* 2006 *REPRISE* 2002 *PROCTER (short)* 2001 *STILL (short)* 1999 *PIETÀ (short)*

ANDERS DANIELSEN LIE AS ANDERS

Anders Danielsen Lie appeared in the title role of *HERMAN* (1990) when he was 11 years old. He was rediscovered by Joachim Trier when he got the lead role in *REPRISE* (2006), and they teamed up again for *OSLO, AUGUST 31ST*. Anders also had one of the main roles in the critically acclaimed Norwegian TV-series *KOSELIG MED PEIS (NORWEGIAN COZY, 2011)*. The same year Anders made his musical debut with the album "This is Autism". Anders, born in 1979, has a medical degree and will start working as a general practitioner this fall.





TECHNICAL DATA Motlys in co-production with Don't Look Now presents A film by Joachim Trier *OSLO, AUGUST 31ST*

CREW Director Joachim Trier Screenplay Eskil Vogt and Joachim Trier freely adapted from the novel "Le feu follet" by Pierre Drieu La Rochelle © Editions Gallimard, 1931 Producers Hans-Jørgen Osnes, Yngve Sæther, Sigve Endresen Line Producer Therese Naustdal 1st Assistant Director Hans-Jørgen Osnes Director of Photography Jakob Ihre Production Designer Jørgen Stangebye Larsen Editor Olivier Bugge Coulté Composer Ola Fløttum Composer and Music Clearance Torgny Amdam Sound Design and Mix Gisle Tveito Casting Christian Rubeck, Emil Trier Script Aslaug Konradsdottir 2nd Assistant Director Emil Trier Gaffer Stian Jorde Grip Bo Lundgreen Sound Andrew Windtwood Art Director Solfrid Kjetså Costumes Ellen Dæhli Ystehede Make up Maria Roli

CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE Anders Anders Danielsen Lie Malin Malin Crépin Rehab Counselor Aksel M. Thanke Thomas (Friend) Hans Olav Brenner Rebekka (Thomas' Wife) Ingrid Olava David (Editor) Øystein Røger Tove (Sister's Girlfriend) Tone B. Mostrau Mirjam (Woman Hosting Party) Kjærsti Odden Skjeldal Petter (Man at Party) Petter Width Kristiansen Calle (Man Hosting Party) Emil Lund Johanne (Woman Anders Meets) Johanne Kjellevik Ledang Renate (Petter's Date) Renate Reinsve Karsten (Dealer) Andreas Braaten Øystein (Man at Bar) Anders Borchgrevink

Financed by Norwegian Film Institute, Nordic film & Tv Fond, Hanne Palmqvist, Storyline Studios, Norsk Filmdistribusjon, The Match Factory, NRK, SVT, DR, Don't Look Now, Motlys © 2011 Anders Danielsen Lie, Hans Olav Brenner, Ingrid Olava, Øystein Røger, Tone B. Mostrau, Kjærsti Odden Skjeldal, Johanne Kjellevik Ledang, Petter Width Kristiansen, Renate Reinsve, Anders Borchgrevink Written by Eskil Vogt and Joachim Trier freely adapted from the novel Le feu follet by Pierre Drieu La Rochelle © Edition Gallimard 1931 Casting Christian Rubeck Production Designer Jørgen Stangebye Larsen Costumes Ellen Dæhli Ystehede Composer Ola Fløttum and Torgny Amdam Sound Design Gisle Tveito Line Producer Therese Naustdal Editor Olivier Bugge Coulté Director of Photography Jakob Ihre Produced by Hans-Jørgen Osnes, Yngve Sæther and Sigve Endresen Directed by Joachim Trier



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