

Press Kit: Bleeding Blue Bird

Introduction	2
Director - Lev Prudkin	2
Why This Film Matters	2
Producers	3
Origins and Family History	3
Synopsis	3
5 Questions and Answers	4
Artistic Framework	6
Cast	6
Key Crew	7
Key Facts	7
Contacts	7

Introduction

When an actor walks out during rehearsals for Maurice Maeterlinck's stage classic *The Blue Bird*, the director steps into the role, and the fragile boundary between reality and performance begins to unravel.

Director - Lev Prudkin

Lev Prudkin is the writer, director, and editor of *Bleeding Blue Bird*. A graduate of VGIK Moscow and a filmmaker who studied screenwriting in Los Angeles, his previous feature *No-One* won more than ten international awards including Best Film and Best Director. His work is defined by a commitment to cinema as an experience of transformation and atmosphere rather than conventional narrative.

Director's Note

"*Bleeding Blue Bird* is not an adaptation of Maeterlinck play but a film about what happens when art escapes the stage and invades life."

Why This Film Matters

Bleeding Blue Bird is a discovery film built for festivals, critics, and cultural discourse. It is anchored by a soundtrack that bridges cinema and music culture, featuring tracks from Depeche Mode, Actress, and Else alongside an original score by Jim Cornick and Matt Loveridge. This musical identity extends the film's reach into music, art, and academic coverage.

With Arthur Darvill (*Doctor Who*, *Broadchurch*) and Hannah Arterton (*Walking on Sunshine*, *The Peripheral*), the film brings recognisable names into an avant-garde setting. *Bleeding Blue Bird* is not positioned as mainstream entertainment but as an art-house experience designed for audiences that value originality, experiment, and cultural lineage.

For programmers it is a bold addition to festival lineups. For critics it is a work that insists on originality and philosophical depth. For academics it is a case study in the living legacy of Symbolism and surrealism.

Bleeding Blue Bird, premiering at the Chelsea Film Festival this October, carries a powerful connection to Depeche Mode. The film features "Little 15," written by Martin Gore, a haunting composition that underscores its surreal and symbolic world. With its blending of theatre and cinema, *Bleeding Blue Bird* resonates with the same intensity and atmosphere that has long drawn audiences to Depeche Mode's music.

Producers

Produced by Mirage Adventures Studios and Sterling Pictures.

Vladimir Prudkin is an accomplished filmmaker and theatre director whose career spans several decades across Europe. He has produced and directed numerous works including *Autumn Wind*, *Scenes of Death*, and *No-One*. *Bleeding Blue Bird* stands as a major undertaking that carries international acknowledgement and affirms the family's distinguished legacy in theatre and cinema.

Michael Riley is the London-based Executive Producer with a track record of distinctive independent films including *Sugarhouse*, *Chosen*, and *Crowhurst*. For *Bleeding Blue Bird* he brought international industry experience and oversight, ensuring the project could bridge artistic ambition with professional production standards.

Origins and Family History

The origins of *Bleeding Blue Bird* go back to the 1990s, when Prudkin began writing the script while studying at VGIK in Moscow. He drew from his memories of childhood Sundays at the Moscow Art Theatre, where he often watched Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird* from the director's box. His grandfather, Mark Prudkin, was one of Stanislavski's leading actors, and his grandmother, Yekaterina, worked as a first assistant director.

For the young Prudkin, the backstage world was a place of enchantment and danger, where transformations were constant and performance never truly ended. His earliest draft already included the dramatic twist that remains central to the finished film: an actor vanishes from the stage mid-performance, forcing the director to step in.

The project was revived in 2017 after Prudkin's award-winning feature *No-One*. He rewrote the script from the ground up as a director's script, prioritising image, transition, and rhythm rather than commercial formulas. When it came to production, Kyiv's Theatre on Podil on Andriivskyi Descent was chosen for its mixture of modernity and history.

Synopsis

Short

A travelling theatre troupe stages Maurice Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird*. When an actor abandons his role, the director steps in and the fragile line between stage and reality collapses.

Medium

A troupe performs *The Blue Bird* in Kyiv. When the actor cast as the Cat abandons his role, the director takes his place on stage. From that moment rehearsal unravels, outsiders infiltrate, and dream logic takes hold. Archetypes fracture, identities blur, and the search for happiness mutates into obsession and corruption.

Long

Bleeding Blue Bird follows an international troupe preparing a staging of Maurice Maeterlinck's play. During the performance the actor playing the Cat abandons his part, forcing the director to step in. The shift opens a rift between art and life. Outsiders enter the stage, rehearsal dissolves into dream, and the theatre becomes a place of intrusion and conspiracy. Roles transform, identities blur, and visions overtake reality. The symbolic pursuit of happiness mutates into corruption and destruction. The film is not an adaptation but a surreal exploration of Symbolist theatre, dream imagery, and the fragility of art itself.

5 Questions and Answers

Q1. Where did the idea for Bleeding Blue Bird originate?

It began in the 1990s when I was a student at VGIK. I wanted to capture the atmosphere of the Moscow Art Theatre, where I spent much of my childhood. I often watched *The Blue Bird* from the director's box and imagined the backstage world as a place of transformation and danger. The idea of an actor vanishing mid-performance was there from the start.

Q2. The film is often described as Symbolist, surrealist, and metacinematic. How do these traditions intersect in your work?

Symbolism provides the philosophical backbone, surrealism provides the dream logic, and metacinema provides the structure. Together they allow the film to break down the separation between theatre and life.

Q3. Transformation is a recurring theme in the film. Why does it play such a central role?

Transformation is at the heart of both theatre and life. In *Bleeding Blue Bird*, identities blur: actors become their characters, outsiders take on roles, and masks replace faces. I wanted this instability to be physical and visible. Sometimes viewers may wonder if they are watching the same person from one scene to the next. For me, this reflects the truth that nothing in art or life is fixed - everyone is always changing, and the stage makes that visible.

Q4. The soundtrack is unusually central to the project. Why did you bring in artists like Depeche Mode, Actress, and Else?

Because sound and music are not background but part of the film's identity. Depeche Mode connects the film to a global cultural memory, while Actress and Else bring a contemporary avant-garde edge. Combined with the original score, they create a soundscape that is as fragile and transformative as the images.

Q5. Why did you decide to film in Kyiv?

The Theatre on Podil was perfect because it is both modern and historic. It embodies transformation, and it gave the production a real sense of urgency since we had only twelve

days to shoot. The choice was artistic, not political. For me, Kyiv became part of the film's dreamscape.

Artistic Framework

"Bleeding Blue Bird is an experiment. I wanted to see what remains when all the familiar hooks are taken away: romance, psychology, comfort. What is left are rhythms, codes, and rituals, fragments of story and haunting presentiments. I created a place where a story can unfold, and the characters invade this space, some with clearly malicious intent."

Symbolism

The film's foundation lies in Symbolist theatre. Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird* embodied the Symbolist commitment to allegory and dream. *Bleeding Blue Bird* does not adapt the play but confronts its legacy. Dialogue references Maeterlinck's *The Life of the Bee*, linking philosophy with fanaticism. Symbolism here is structural, shaping atmosphere, imagery, and the unstable boundary between dream and reality.

Metacinema

The play within the film merges with the film itself. Audiences experience both the performance and the cinematic frame, caught in a hall of mirrors. This places *Bleeding Blue Bird* within a lineage of works such as Bergman's *Persona* and Kaufman's *Synecdoche, New York*, where identity fracture and artistic recursion form the drama itself.

Surrealism

Dream logic guides the film. Transformations occur abruptly. Costumes and makeup erase identities until recognition is uncertain. The Mystic Hall banquet merges multiple realities into one vision, echoing Buñuel's conviction that dream is ultimate reality. Surrealism here is not only visual but philosophical, shaping rhythm, editing, and perception.

Resonance

At its core, *Bleeding Blue Bird* asks what happens when art is repeated without renewal. Inheritance becomes rigidity, and rigidity turns into fanaticism. Transformation, intrusion, and collapse are not only themes of the story but the structural principles of the film itself.

Cast

- Arthur Darvill as The Director / The Cat (*Doctor Who*, *Broadchurch*)
- Hannah Arterton as Queen of Night (*Walking on Sunshine*, *The Peripheral*)
- Iryna Kudashova as Sonya (*The Taste of Freedom*)
- Alina Kovalenko as Light (*The Rising Hawk*, *Kruty 1918*)

Supporting ensemble includes Valeriya Fokina, Mikhail Kukuyuk, Irina Avdeenko, Darina Panasenکو, Dmitriy Sova, Tatiana Yurikova, Anastasiya Leonenko, Liza Bakulina, Ernest Zhmutskiy, Mykhailo Samarsky, Olexiy Kuzhelny, Olexander Romashko, Ganna Bashcheva, Artem Plonder, and Dmitry Korostilyov.

Key Crew

- Director, Writer, Editor: Lev Prudkin (No-One)
- Producers: Vladimir Prudkin, Mirage Adventures Studios, Sterling Pictures
- Executive Producer: Michael Riley (Sugarhouse, Chosen, Crowhurst)
- Director of Photography: Boris Litovchenko
- Production and Costume Design: Olena Drobna
- Makeup Design: Tetiana Tatarenko
- Sound Design: Michael Goorevich
- Original Music: Jim Cornick and Matt Loveridge
- Tracks by: Depeche Mode, Actress, Else

Key Facts

- Title: Bleeding Blue Bird
- Director: Lev Prudkin
- Producers: Vladimir Prudkin, Mirage Adventures Studios, Sterling Pictures
- Executive Producer: Michael Riley
- Country: United Kingdom - Ukraine - Israel
- Year: 2025
- Language: English
- Runtime: 1h 43m
- Genre: Surreal Drama and Metacinema
- Filming Location: Theatre on Podil, Kyiv
- Format: DCP, ProRes | Aspect ratio 2.40:1 | 5.1 surround

Contacts

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