

project plan

BLINDFOLD VISION

for an application for financial support from Brabant C
20 February 2020



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1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

FEATURE FILM, 90 MIN 'BLINDFOLD VISION'

Summary

Sulphur City, the once tranquil and quaint interurban space made up of charming canals, cute little alleyways and kids sitting at the ice cream counter. Now, a cesspit of gangsters, hookers, thieves and crooked cops. Only the old and nearly dead remember "the good old days." The flashing blue lights and sirens echoing between the narrow streets is a common theme as the worn-out cops fuelled on shitty pay-checks, instant coffee and cheap cigarettes remain at war with everyone else.

Then there's Sam Sertie, a failing record storeowner with only his cats to keep him company. Down on his luck, he's addicted to Internet dating and self-help seminars from "change your life" guru Sid Lake. Then, out of nowhere, a sack of diamonds falls into his lap after Sertie's the wrong guy, in the wrong place, at the wrong time. But emboldened by Sid, he hides the diamonds in a place no one, possibly even himself, will ever find them.

Kidnapped, Sertie literally faces his own demons as he's held captive by his own double. When he mysteriously loses his sight, he's only fuelled by the predator within himself as he discovers sinister secrets about the city's murderous past, and murderous present! Whose vision is true? Bergman, the cynical cop who in a later timeline tries to decipher the events; Lacroix, the crooked cop who negotiates for Sertie's release; Magdalena, mob "cleaner" with her own agenda; or Sertie, who might just have a lesson for us all.

Credits

Screenplay	David Grover & Phil O'Sullivan
Director	Nicci Thompson
Cinematographer	Antonio Cisneros
Composer	Avanpost
Financial partners	Glass House Distribution, Digital Cube
Sales Agent	Glass House Distribution
Noord-Brabant Producers	David Grover, Falcon Grove Productions, Den Bosch Monne Tuinhout, Branded Cinema, Eindhoven

2. REASON AND IMPORTANCE FOR THE APPLICANT

The "Blindfold Vision" story revolves around a blind man claiming in a police interrogation that he was held hostage by himself, told in a similar style to THE USUAL SUSPECTS, with a police interrogation intercut with flashbacks as the interview unfolds; the "self-hostage" plot being a metaphor representing how we all tend to "hold ourselves hostage" at one time or another. In fact it's an English expression.

Prior to becoming a film producer and moving to Den Bosch, David Grover, producer and co-writer, worked as a banker at ING, where he often "held himself hostage" when facing adversity. David's coach at ING used a metaphor that we all have inside of us a 'Predatory Self' – a version of ourselves that gives in to self sabotaging thoughts in our heads that keep us from living and enjoying the lives we deserve to live.

BLINDFOLD VISION is ultimately a story about one man's struggle to keep his cool and not let his 'Predatory Self' run amok under life threatening circumstances. This ultimately became the backbone of the story, with actual pieces of David Grover's business coaching used as the "self help" seminars the protagonist listens to get his life back on track. There's legitimate psychology behind the humorous spin we put on self-help.

Den Bosch is the perfect backdrop for the story to unfold, with its gritty urban warehouse locations and it's tight canals creating a claustrophobic feel. We plan to feature Hieronymus Bosch sculptures in several shots to contribute to the surreal atmosphere where we are never sure what's real and what's imagined. Think IN BRUGGES, but in Den Bosch. Think FIGHT CLUB. BLINDFOLD VISION can't be classified in a single genre. It starts out as a "heist" film, but abandons this genre's conventions at the end of the first act when it veers to the "psychological thriller" genre.

Nicci Thompson, the director, formally trained in Los Angeles and residing in Aberdeen, Scotland, has added another feature to the project, creating the comic book setting 'Sulphur City' where the story will unfold. Nicci and his long time collaborator, Cinematographer Antonio Cisneros, are going to transform Den Bosch into a city where after dark, anything's possible.

Further cementing ties to Brabant, Monne Tuinhout, Branded Cinema, Eindhoven brings his company's growing track record filming in and around Brabant. Filming in Brabant, with the maximum use of Brabant-based crew, is our plan A.

We plan to spend a minimum of €400,000 in Den Bosch, which will benefit local entrepreneurs across hospitality, location rentals (centered around the Tramkade) and equipment and services (makeup, wardrobe, security, toilets, etc.). Den Bosch based film entrepreneurs will be given the first opportunity to earn day fees. In short, every single Euro investment by BrabantC will be spent on cultural investment and other film professionals.

The end-result will be that Brabant-based producers will have made a feature length genre film with Den Bosch as a setting that will reach an international audience.

It's worth highlighting some unique aspects of the project. First, it's an English-language action/thriller. Second, we aren't seeking selective funding from the Netherlands Film Fund (we will be applying for the 35% Dutch Cash Rebate on qualifying spend), nor are we pursuing an international co-production, which tends to inflate budgets and can limit creative flexibility. Third, the project has been packaged in cooperation with international sales agents at an early stage to maximize the chances of the project crossing international borders. Several sales agents have provided us with letters of intent and global sales estimates in support of the project. Fourth, a private equity investor that has been convinced that at minimum there is a good chance his investment will be repaid has backed the project. Fifth, because of the above factors and because we have written the script with the budget in mind (two-thirds of the story occurs in two rooms), we have kept the budget low in order to increase the chances we can repay our investor and BrabantC.

BLINDFOLD VISION will show that digital technologies have brought down barriers in filmmaking, and while on one hand it makes the industry more competitive, it also provides

opportunities for promising filmmakers to chart their own course, and not get stuck for years in the financing stages.

With digital filmmaking you can give relatively inexpensive films the look and feel of a film with a much higher budget. The cost of equipment and computer processing power are no longer hurdles. For example, we can rent an Arri Alexa Mini camera from United Studios in Den Bosch relatively inexpensively. For post production, computing power has advanced to such a degree that freelance visual effects artists are flexible and mobile. For example, on KILL MODE, we set up a cluster of visual effects artists from throughout the Netherlands in Utrecht, where they produced studio-quality visual effects for a fraction of the cost. We plan to replicate this arrangement in Den Bosch for Blindfold Vision, with stagiaires also taking part to facilitate knowledge transfer. With relatively inexpensive computers, an entire film can be rendered in less than a day.

Falcon Grove's collaboration on KILL MODE has proven that a genre project of international quality can be made for a low budget in the Netherlands with a Dutch cast and crew. With the help of BrabantC, with BLINDFOLD VISION we hope to help build and further support genre filmmaking in the Netherlands.

David Grover, Producer Falcon Grove Productions, Den Bosch
Monne Tuinhout, Producer Branded Cinema, Eindhoven

3. ARTISTIC VISION

Director's statement:

I have dedicated my life to filmmaking. Being a director is what I have always aspired to do, and I have planned my life around becoming that. After my first post-grad degree and a number of short films I was lucky enough to be accepted to study on a part-scholarship at a film school in Los Angeles. It was here I really homed in on my craft being taught by industry professionals, working on well-known studio backlots and crewing on established and budgeted film projects.

I've been lucky enough to build some excellent industry relationships during my relatively short career. Even though Blindfold Vision will be my first feature and my largest scale project to date, I am very accustomed to working with industry professionals in the appropriate environment and I have directed/managed projects that have large amounts of crew and equipment. The size of this production and all that comes with it is not something that intimidates me or makes me feel uneasy, quite the contrary; I feel that is a great challenge that I am more than ready for. I am natural creative collaborator and problem solver, having more space to collaborate with larger groups of people all working toward the same goal on a film project is something that excites me greatly. I look forward to our crew beginning to take shape more than anything, taking on art directors, set designers, cast and other roles will allow me to really begin the creative process in exploring the options we have and how collaboratively we can pull it all together. I have already begun this process with the project cinematographer, Antonio. When we visited Netherlands, it was a great experience first and foremost, but was helpful for my creative process. Visiting locations and seeing where we will be shooting was integral not just for script visualization, but also for discussing technical application. We already have a solid team on the project

and I feel very comfortable in collaborating with them, David, Phil, Monne and Antonio have been great to work with thus far and we have seen a great shift in progress over the last 6 months or so. From here on out it is exciting to think how the team will expand and see the project take shape even more.

From a stylistic standpoint, Den Bosch where we will be doing most of the filming truly is a unique and beautiful place. It seems so incredibly untapped from a film perspective. The unique history and heritage is still there to be seen and the layout and architecture is perfect for the settings and tone of the script. I'll be honest, when I first read the script and in particular the location descriptions, I found it difficult to picture it in my head. When I visited these locations it all made sense. They are unique. They are locations I thoroughly looking forward to sharing with larger audiences through the film.

This is a big deal for me personally, no doubt about it. It's my biggest challenge yet but is one that I am relishing. Blindfold Vision and all that comes with it is an ideal project for me.

Cooperation with Brabant Production Companies / Stagiaires

In collaboration with Brabant-based production companies (Van Osch Films, Branded Cinema, Dirty Paws Media) that have already integrated stagiaires, we will give them the opportunity to apply to be part of the production team, where talents can gain experience in different departments (writing, camera/light, production design, styling, production, sound). The approach will allow us to work with stagiaires from the moment we are green lit, rather than be forced to wait for academic schedules to align with the production schedule.

The stagiaires will benefit from the guidance of Los Angeles-trained Nicci Thompson and Antonio Cisneros (cinematographer). Nicci Thompson is a media lecturer in Aberdeen, and has previously run a non-profit foundation to give local filmmaking talent in Aberdeen the opportunity to produce a short film of high international caliber using industry standard equipment. Thus, he is well equipped to execute the educational goals of the project. Grover is a substitute lecturer at St. Joost, and advised final-year fiction film students on their project screenplays.

Team CV, selected credentials:

Nicci Thompson - Director:

- Education: New York Film Academy, Los Angeles (2014).
- Lecturer at Robert Gordon University School of Creative Cultural Business (2016 - present).
- Co-founded Crow House Projects Foundation to produce high caliber films working in collaboration with local filmmaking talent.
- Film experience: THE ANATOMIST, WE SIT. WE DRINK. NO GUNS.

Antonio Cisneros – Director of Photography:

- Master in Cinematography at the American Film Institute class of 2012
- Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film & TV from New York University Kanbar Institute of Film and Television
- Feature narrative film experience: THE ILLEGAL, MR. PAANWALA, HALF WIDOW.

David Grover - Producer:

- CEO of Falcon Grove Productions, based in Den Bosch since 2015.

Film Experience: KILL MODE (Action/Science Fiction), shot in the Netherlands almost exclusively with a Dutch cast and crew. Currently being sold by international sales agent Raven Banner.

Monne Tuinhout - Producer:

- Co-founded Branded Cinema in 2014 with Harrie Verbeek, based in Eindhoven.
- Graduated in 2010 from the Sint Joost Art Academy (Breda).
- Film Experience: GOING HOME, BLOODBURN, INTERLUDE.

4. COMMERCIAL APPROACH | DISTRIBUTION | MARKETING PLAN OUTLINE

Our commercial interests are safe because we have a big network of excellent sales agents. Several parties have already shown interest in representing Blindfold Vision and we have already received global minimum and high estimates (see Finance Plan).

In correlation to the film's expected sales we have made a correspondingly realistic production budget so we can achieve our artistic goals and maximize our chances of commercial success. This, we hope, will result into a realistic chance of full recoupment for all equity and lending providers.

In line with the market for internationally distributed genre films above the micro-budget level, a large part of the film's success will depend on casting. We will need a moderately well known actor to attract distributors to the project and make back the production budget. We have not yet officially started casting, although we have had preliminary discussions with several casting directors. Glass House Distribution, our likely sales agent, has offered to help us with this and also pay for an US-based casting director. We foresee at least one role to be internationally known, possibly two. It doesn't necessarily need to be the lead; it can be also a significant supporting role where we can get a well-known name but we don't need that person for many days. We aren't looking for an A-lister (that will probably be too expensive), but a well-known B-lister. Glasshouse has advised us to start casting six months from the beginning of the shoot, so that would be March for a September shoot. Actors have a pretty good idea of their schedules by then, and we stand a better chance of getting someone well known for a reasonable price if that person has a gap in his/her schedule.

Positioning

BLINDFOLD VISION is positioned squarely as a genre project by a talented director, Nicci Thompson, who has demonstrated his mastery of the look, feel and tone of the film through his previous projects. The film is unique in that there is a genre shift at the first act climax, from heist action/comedy to thriller with a touch of sci-fi. Comparable films include IN BRUGES, FIGHT CLUB, SIN CITY, THE USUAL SUSPECTS, MEMENTO and THE BIG LEBOWSKI. Building on Falcon Grove's Twitter network of 70,000+ followers, we will build an audience base using still photos, cast and crew videos and edited teasers in advance of the film's release.

Target audience

PRIMARY: MALE / FEMALE 25-60. Lovers of the crime, heist, neo-noir, underground genres, thrillers with twists, redemption, reality/hallucination. Nostalgic for thriller, neo-noir classics, cat lovers. Main leads from an older demographic 30/40/50s. Secondary themes:

dealing with inner turmoil/midlife crisis; life coaches and therapy; genX and older adapting to Internet dating.

SECONDARY: MALE/FEMALE 18-34. Secondary themes: Millennials meshing with older generations.

Target Group	Admissions
Primary	25-60 male and female
Secondary	16-25 male and female

Source: Falcon Grove / Branded Cinema

Sub-Genres

We also target a female audience through the “Mystery Thriller” and “Romance Thriller” subthemes. Mystery Thrillers tend to skew older female due to the suspense, more story driven and emotional drama. Romance thrillers also skew older female due to their obvious romantic nature. In *Blindfold Vision*, the female lead is also undergoing a crisis, one that many older females (and males) may identify. Humor attracts both men and women alike.

BLINDFOLD VISION SUB-GENRES

Theme / storyline	Sub-genre	Skew
mid-life crisis	Drama	25-60 male and female
older dating	Romantic Thriller	25-60 female
Diamond robbery	Heist	25-40 male
“Finding yourself”	Psychological Thriller	25-60 male and female
Missing diamonds	Mystery Thriller	25-60 female

Source: Falcon Grove / Branded Cinema

To skew younger, the film would need more pure action elements. The horror genre also works well to target younger audiences. While there are some action sequences and visual effects that will attract younger audiences, as well as a younger female representing the “young rebel” demographic, we see the under 25 crowd as a secondary target.

Exploitation: theatrical and non-theatrical

While we hope to achieve a theatrical release in some territories, we don’t view a theatrical release in the Netherlands as a critical must have for the success of the project. In some situations, a theatrical release doesn’t make economic sense, and can hurt the profitability of the project. For example, if a distributor overspends on theatrical marketing, it is entitled to reclaim this expenditure from sales in other windows (TVOD, SVOD, etc.).

With the increasing popularity of streaming and the launching of many new streaming platforms (HBO Max, Disney+, Apple, etc.), there is also the possibility to go direct to a streaming platform with a very small or no theatrical release.

Our distribution strategy will revolve around hiring a top-level sales agent. We will rely on the sales agent to execute the best deals on our behalf, with the sales agent required to reach minimum sales hurdles in each territory. Our overriding goal will be to reach the as many viewers as possible in the most efficient way, while being platform agnostic. In this way we maximize our chances of putting Den Bosch on the international cultural map.

The financial success of a film such as *Blindfold Vision* won't depend on a successful theatrical release – we see it as more of a potential upside. Depending on the actors we sign, we might have small theatrical releases in a few territories, but the goal is more to use any theatrical release to increase the value of the film in the next release windows such as DVD (declining) VOD and streaming. During the sales process led by our sales agent at the film markets (Cannes, Berlin, Los Angeles, Hong Kong), most distributors will offer minimum guarantees (these are the numbers in sales estimates – see Financing Plan), and then they will execute their individual release strategy. For example in the United States for *KILL MODE*, we got an offer for a theatrical release along with a minimum guarantee (“MG”), but we opted not to take it because we felt the risk was too great the distributor would spend too much on advertising, and if it didn't recoup its advertising spending from the theatrical release, it could recoup this money from the other release windows. We ended up doing what's called a "straight" revenue share deal where there is no MG but we split revenues with the distributor from the first money in. The estimate from our sales agent was that we would make far more money this way than the offer that included the theatrical release. However, some filmmakers go for the theatrical because they want the prestige of having a film in theaters in the US. The exploitation period will take 3 years, with the most (about 70%) occurring in year 1, 20% in year 2 and the last 10% in year 3. (These are just rough estimates).

Preliminary marketing & publicity strategy

We will devise national and international marketing plans in collaboration with our Dutch distributor and international sales agent. In the first stage of the project, our priority will be “BtoB” marketing, which will entail working with our international sales agent to best market the film to regional distributors to buy the film for their specific territory. For this, we've completed a draft of a marketing “one-sheet”, which will contain the most relevant information for a domestic buyer (distributor) to consume in under a minute. The one-sheet includes: comparable films, project timeline, target market, psychographics, promotional material available, marketing and publicity plans to include prior work of the director, cast, talking and selling points and social media strategy.

The launch of the global sales effort will be accompanied by an article in a major film publication such as *Screen Daily*, and the sales agent will also advertise and screen the film at one of the major film markets (Cannes, Berlin, Los Angeles).

Traditionally, positioning the film with audiences has been the job of regional distributors. However, smart filmmakers help and guide the regional distributors as much as possible. We plan a social media budget of €10,000 to run targeted marketing in cooperation with distributors that may decide to invest their own marketing and advertising funds as well. We will, to the extent possible, coordinate social media postings across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Falcon Grove's social media strategy focuses on Twitter, where Falcon Grove associated accounts have garnered over 70,000 followers.

Marketing specifics

Our marketing approach must be viewed on two levels:

- 1) B2C marketing (consumers),
- 2) B2B marketing (distributors, press).

- Pre-production and production (BtoC): Various PR moments during the shooting period, distributed via Twitter/Instagram/Facebook. Nicci Thompson will maintain a VLOG with an explanation of the filming process.
- Crowdfunding (BtoC): we will run a €20,000 crowdfunding campaign to begin to build our target audience.
- Pre-release date (BtoC): We will begin to release short edited clips to stimulate awareness. These will be deployed in a targeted way through a paid social media campaign for which we have budgeted €10,000.
- Full trailer and poster (BtoB, BtoC): Shortly before the film is finished, we will make a fully edited trailer for use by our sales agent to stimulate awareness among distributors, as well as post on YouTube to build awareness with consumers. In cooperation with our sales agent, we will design a poster to be shared on social media.
- PR direct emails (BtoB, BtoC): We maintain a contact list of editors and reporters at the major international and national film publications, and will send them updates when we reach significant milestones.

Graphic Novel

During the pre-production phase, Falcon Grove and Branded Cinema will commission a graphic novel or comic book based on the screenplay. This will serve three purposes:

- 1) Install a base of underlying intellectual property (IP). International sales agents and domestic distributors look more favorably upon projects with underlying IP as this can help to re-risk the film sales process. It also means there will be an installed demographic that have read the graphic novel and will be positively inclined to see the film.
- 2) We will run a crowdfunding campaign to raise funding for the graphic novel. We anticipate total costs to publish the graphic novel not to exceed €12,000. The producers will make up any shortfall in crowdfunding proceeds to ensure there is sufficient funding. We will also begin to build a fan database of graphic novel crowdfunding supporters to aid in marketing the film.
- 3) The graphic novel crowdfunding process will give the producers experience in running a crowdfunding campaign and we can apply lessons learned to the film crowdfunding campaign.

5. PLANNING

Pre-production and financing	Sep 2019 - May 2020
Production	Jun 2020
Directing workshop	Jun 2020
Cinematography workshop	Jun 2020
Post-production	Jul - Sep 2020
Editing workshop	Sep 2020
Screening, Den Bosch	Oct 2020
International premiere:	depending on selection from international film festival in consultation with sales agent.
	Intended: Berlin Film Festival Feb 2021
Release	Spring 2021

6. AFTER BLINDFOLD VISION

After we successfully made a Brabant based feature film for the international Genre film market, our ambition is to continue to make more films that are Brabant based. With Blindfold vision on our track record we will have the international proof of Brabant as a beautiful and rich film location. We will continue developing projects that have a good balance of project costs compared to sales potential. There will be three moments to look back on Blindfold Vision in order to keep growing towards new projects:

- After Principal photography
- After the first secured pre-sales
- After the première.

In addition, apart from Blindfold Vision, Falcon Grove and Branded Cinema plan to submit a developmental funding request to BrabantC for Brabant based microbudget feature project, which will be a research project to produce two commercially oriented low-budget genre projects for €250,000 each. The scripts will be developed with limited locations and cast in order to facilitate short shooting periods. Brabant cast and crew will be utilized to the fullest extent possible, with the goal that Brabant filmmakers with limited feature experience are given a chance to contribute to feature projects. Following a structure we have seen in other countries, most participants will participate in each project's profit sharing in the event we are able to sell the films on the international marketplace. In this way, Branded Cinema and Falcon Grove are thinking beyond one feature project in order to strengthen the Brabant film infrastructure. We plan to submit this request in the coming couple of months.