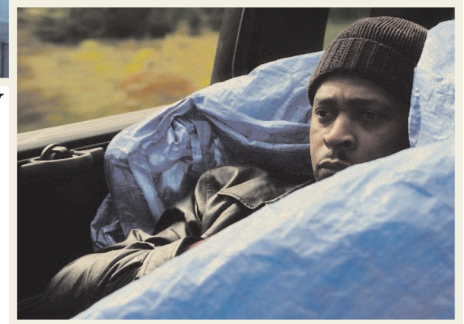




Photos by Phil Cormier

Above: Susan Clark, Tadin Brego and Jeffrey Charles Day. Right: Titi de Baccarat.

# 'Nice People' a 'labor of love' for two filmmaker friends



The film tells five interconnected stories set in Maine, without a lighthouse in sight.

**T**he synopsis for Maine filmmakers Ian Carlsen and Jeff Greicci's new Maine-made film, "Nice People," hinges on one particularly evocative line: "'Nice People' is five interconnected Maine stories about people suffering from kindness."

How can you suffer from kindness? Well, the very nice Carlsen and Greicci were only too happy to explain.

"There's very much a level of niceness that a lot of Mainers possess that will get us into trouble," said Carlsen. "There's an impulse to do good things and think others are good people, but not to see things from an objective perspective. We get in over our heads."

Greicci, who spent several years working in the film industry in Los Angeles, adds, "There's something about New England niceness that's

all about honesty. It's like curtness, but not mean in a weird way. Ian and I found the double meaning of 'Nice People.'"

Of course, it helps that Carlsen and Greicci are both genuinely nice guys and longtime friends and collaborators in the Maine film scene. That since "Nice People," which is now making the painstaking film festival rounds with an eye toward a Maine premiere later this year, was a uniquely drawn-out and demanding project. Begun over five years ago, "Nice People" has been a truly collaborative labor of love for two friends whose initial idea for a feature film made up of five interconnected tales of Maine life was finally finished only after a full half-decade of weekend shoots, juggled schedules, and peerless dedication from the filmmakers and their equally committed professional cast and crew.



Dennis Perkins  
Indie Film

### Films on Vimeo.

In such a no-budget, extended creative endeavor, collaboration is key. Said Biddeford resident Greicci, "I'd been away on the West Coast, and when I came back, I was gung-ho about getting back into creative narrative work again. I wanted to do a feature."

"And I wanted to do a short," countered Pownal resident Carlsen, who's collaborated with Greicci many times through their company Mint Films. "So eventually, we decided to make five shorts and basically squish them together."

Squish they did, although not without some pretty lofty goals for "Nice People," as demonstrated by the enthusiastic pair's roster of filmmaking influences on their project.

NICE PEOPLE (2023) Official Trailer from Mint

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# INDIE

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“We took loads of inspiration from people like Robert Altman, Jim Jarmusch and Aki Kaurismäki,” noted Greicci, citing a shared dryness and darkness of humor amongst the three movie giants. Pointing to the interconnected stories of Jarmusch’s “Night on Earth” and “Mystery Train” as influences on “Nice People,” Greicci also noted a particular Mainer’s kinship with the lonely, icy, wind-swept tales spun by Finnish auteur Kaurismäki.

“He loves following the losers,” Greicci said of the director of “Ariel” and “Leningrad Cowboys Go America.” “He champions losing. It’s so charming and tragic but also funny. Plus, the Finland landscape feels so similar to Maine in the winter. It’s gets cold up here, and there’s a sort of funny, self-inflicted harm of dealing with Maine winters that we all put ourselves through. It’s sort of special and sad in all of us.”

Indeed, the shifting main characters of “Nice People” are that special sort of Maine folk the former Portland residents know all too well – despite the film passing on some of the more clichéd Maine movie trappings. “We were adamant about wanting to make a Maine story, set in Maine,” said Greicci. “But we wanted to avoid the tropes used again and again. No lobstermen, lighthouses, drug dealers, boats or islands. We love ‘em, but there are more stories that can be told.”

Carlson concurred (after noting



Photo by Allen Baldwin

Jeff Greicci and Ian Carlsen review footage of a scene while Phil Cormier and Kalle Bailey set up the next shot on the first day of filming “Nice People” in April 2017.

that their no-budget film couldn’t have afforded a boat or lighthouse rental if they’d wanted one). “Doing this on a super micro budget, we relied on things that were actually going on around us. We drew from things we’d overheard, from friend-of-a-friend stories. We rooted the film in real stories. And if we couldn’t go big on budget, we thought, ‘Well, what can we maximize?’”

Having worked in the Maine film scene for more than a decade each, the chief resource at “Nice People’s” disposal were actors. “We know so many great actors,” said Carlsen. “People who would be fun for this type of person or that one. We’d build something for those folks. The film necessarily becomes about

small, slice-of-life social interactions that slowly unravel and get out of hand.” The filmmaking duo are also effusive about the film’s original soundtrack, with music, including a score from local musician Jimmy Doherty, playing an integral role in setting “Nice People’s” unique mood.

Said Greicci of their narrative of interconnected character tales, “There’s an inherently New England feeling that grows out of our own lives. Right out of the gate, it was something that felt like Maine.” Added Carlsen, “It’s really a love letter to a rich time in Portland history, sort of from 2010-18. We were living in the city and reacting to these people. There was so much joy in our lives in that.”

Praising the “Nice People” cast for bringing some top-shelf talent to their low-budget Maine movie, Carlsen further expounded on just what it is in the Maine character that lends itself to the film’s parade of uncomfortable comedy. “There’s a quality Mainers possess where they feel the need to do something morally right and justified, but they don’t have the full perspective on what other people are bringing to the conversation. For me, that interaction, where you think you’re doing the right thing but you don’t have the full picture – that can lead to comedy, and in some cases tragedy.”

For a no-budget, Maine-made feature hinging on awkward social interactions and subtle char-

acter work, “Nice People” might seem like a hard sell. The film is making the festival rounds, with Greicci and Carlsen patiently – not to say nicely – awaiting responses and planning the film’s future. “We have plans for Maine screenings, and other things,” said Carlsen. “We’re just letting the process run its course.”

As for their five-year collaboration, would these two busy Maine filmmakers do it again?

“You never start a project planning for it to take five years,” said Greicci. “It was just the simple reality – we went into this as a labor of love, we brought in so many players who were so generous in their work. Filmmaking’s not a singular art, it’s a collaborative effort with many moving parts.” Added Carlsen, “We have a lot of faith in each other’s work and talents at this point. That’s what makes Jeff such an excellent creative partner; his drive to get something done, to get started, to be in progress, filming. I love his camera work, his eye, the way his brain thinks about film. That’s the key, really. I feel very valued and trusted to feel like I have something to give to this creative relationship.”

“Nice People” may suggest the downside to Maine niceness, but, damned if these Maine filmmakers aren’t awfully nice.

For more information about “Nice People,” check out the film’s Instagram page, and Jeff Greicci and Ian Carlsen’s Mint Films website, [mintfilms.net](http://mintfilms.net).

Dennis Perkins is a freelance writer who lives in Auburn with his wife and cat.

# TIX

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com

**Weezer**, June 30. Maine Savings Amphitheater, Bangor, \$35.50 to \$125. [waterfrontconcerts.com](http://waterfrontconcerts.com)

**Bruce Hornsby & The Noisemakers**, June 30.

State Theatre, Portland, \$40 to \$75. [statetheatreportland.com](http://statetheatreportland.com)

**Rufus Wainwright**, July 1. Criterion Theatre, Bar Harbor, \$49.50 to \$99. [criteriontheatre.org](http://criteriontheatre.org)

**Peter Yarrow and Noel Paul Stookey**, July 1.

Waterville Opera House, \$58, \$68. [watervillecreates.org](http://watervillecreates.org)

**Eileen Jewell**, July 2. One Longfellow Square, Portland, \$25. [onelongfellowssquare.com](http://onelongfellowssquare.com)

**Memphis May Fire**, July 2. State Theatre, \$27.50. [statetheatreportland.com](http://statetheatreportland.com)

**Once An Outlaw**, July 2. Opera House at Booth-

bay Harbor, \$25. [boothbayoperahouse.com](http://boothbayoperahouse.com)

**Robert Plant & Alison Krauss**, July 3. Thompson’s Point, Portland, \$79.50. Sold out. [statetheatreportland.com](http://statetheatreportland.com)

**Tedeschi Trucks Band**, July 5. Maine Savings Amphitheater, Bangor, \$59 to \$250. [waterfrontconcerts.com](http://waterfrontconcerts.com)

**Goose**, July 6. Thompson’s Point, Portland, \$55. [statetheatreportland.com](http://statetheatreportland.com)

**Kruger Brothers**, July 6. Opera House at Booth-

bay Harbor, \$30. [boothbayoperahouse.com](http://boothbayoperahouse.com)

**Chris Stapleton**, July 7. Maine Savings Amphitheater, Bangor \$40.75 to \$115.75. [waterfrontconcerts.com](http://waterfrontconcerts.com)

**Livingston Taylor**, July 7. Opera House at Booth-

bay Harbor, \$30. [boothbayoperahouse.com](http://boothbayoperahouse.com)

**Rebellion**, July 8. Thompson’s Point, Portland, \$42.50. [statetheatreportland.com](http://statetheatreportland.com)

**Onward**, July 8. Cadenza, Freeport, \$21. [cadenza-freeport.com](http://cadenza-freeport.com)

**Big Time Rush**, July 11. Maine Savings Amphitheater, Bangor, \$29 to \$495. [waterfrontconcerts.com](http://waterfrontconcerts.com)

**Linda Eder**, July 13. Vinegar Hill Music Theatre, Arundel, \$75, \$85. [vinhillmusic.com](http://vinhillmusic.com)

**Windborne**, July 13. Opera House at Booth-

bay Harbor, \$20. [boothbayoperahouse.com](http://boothbayoperahouse.com)

**Annie Royer**, July 14. Vinegar Hill Music Theatre, Arundel, \$30. [vinhillmusic.com](http://vinhillmusic.com)

**The Faux Paws**, July 14. Opera House at Booth-

bay Harbor, \$20. [boothbayoperahouse.com](http://boothbayoperahouse.com)

**Susan Werner**, July 16. Vinegar Hill Music Theatre, Arundel, \$30, \$35. [vinhillmusic.com](http://vinhillmusic.com)

**Gabe Tonon’s Country & Western Review**, July 16.

Opera House at Boothbay Harbor, \$20. [boothbayoperahouse.com](http://boothbayoperahouse.com)

**Declan McKenna**, July 17. State Theatre, Portland, \$30. [statetheatreportland.com](http://statetheatreportland.com)

**David Mallett Band**, July 20. Opera House at Booth-

bay Harbor, \$30. [boothbayoperahouse.com](http://boothbayoperahouse.com)

**Hiss Golden Messenger**, July 21. Waldo Theatre, Waldoboro, \$30. [thewaldotheatre.org](http://thewaldotheatre.org)

**The Sweet Remains**, July 21. Opera House at Booth-

bay Harbor, \$25. [boothbayoperahouse.com](http://boothbayoperahouse.com)

**Action Bronson**, July 22. State Theatre, Portland, \$45. [statetheatreportland.com](http://statetheatreportland.com)

**Hiss Golden Messenger**, July 22 & 23. One Long-

fellow Square, Portland, \$35. [statetheatreportland.com](http://statetheatreportland.com)

**The High Kings**, July 23. Waterville Opera House, \$28, \$30. [watervillecreates.org](http://watervillecreates.org)

**Godsmack and Staind**, July 25. Maine Savings Amphitheater, Bangor, \$29.50 to \$125. [waterfrontconcerts.com](http://waterfrontconcerts.com)

**Leyla McCalla**, July 25. Strand Theatre, Rock-

land, \$26. [rocklandstrand.com](http://rocklandstrand.com)

**David Sedaris**, July 26. Criterion Theatre, Bar Harbor, \$60 to \$75. [waterfrontconcerts.com](http://waterfrontconcerts.com)

**Gregory Alan Isakov**, July 27. Thompson’s Point, Portland, \$46. [statetheatreportland.com](http://statetheatreportland.com)