

## NICE GUYS (2016)

- Shane Black direct
- 50 million dollar budget
- Warner Bros. Picture
- Rated R for violence, sexuality, nudity, language and brief drug use
- 116 minutes

## QUICK THOUGHTS

- Phil Svitek
- Demetri Panos
- Sara Stretton

## DEVELOPMENT

- The project was initially proposed as a TV series but was re-tooled as a film after the pilot seemed to be going nowhere
  - “We gave [*The Nice Guys*] to CBS at that time, and they loved it and they wanted to do a series. Thank God it didn’t happen. Thank God it didn’t happen, but we were in a situation trying to do a series, and then for whatever reason we couldn’t cast it right and we couldn’t get it right. I remember there was this scene where [[Ryan Gosling](#)’s character, Holland March], his daughter is in the trunk and he says, ‘Why’d you come?’ and he closes the trunk, leaving her in the trunk. And of course, he goes back and opens it - and CBS said you can’t put her in the trunk. ‘But in a second you’ll open it!’ ‘It doesn’t matter, you can’t put her in the trunk, she’s a little girl.’ ‘But he takes her out in a second!’ ‘No.’ So, there were those kinds of taste issues, and it was a contemporary story.”
  - The concept of doing a script about these two characters—that goes back to 2001, when we just decided to do it, apropos of nothing. We like detective stories. They don’t make too many of them anymore. We wrote one as a feature. No one wanted it. And so, bright-eyed and bushy tailed, we tried to make it a TV show at CBS, and that wasn’t going to fly. The Standards and Practices were just going to kill us. They were so egregiously offended by even the most minor edginess. Now, that makes it also sound like it’s our choice to not do it—no. CBS didn’t want to see it. So, off we went. HBO, we tried to do it. Same two characters, present day storyline—they didn’t want us. So finally in this last gasp effort around 2010, [producer] Joel Silver, who’s my most consistent supporter, said, “Try it again.” And we did it in the '70s this time, and that seemed to be the one that people had more response to.
- In June 2014, it was announced that [Shane Black](#) would direct a film titled *The Nice Guys*, with [Russell Crowe](#) and [Ryan Gosling](#) starring and [Joel Silver](#) producing
- [Warner Bros.](#) handles the North American rights to the film
- Most of the interjected humor for the plot are based on the true events of Jay Joseph, a [Marine Corps](#) veteran who also worked as a private investigator and mole while stationed in [Beaufort, South Carolina](#) in the mid-to-late 1990s
- Producer [Joel Silver](#) had briefly met Joseph while he was performing contract work at Silver’s [Auldbrass Plantation](#) estate in 1999
  - Joseph’s adventures as a young, new investigator, paralleled with his tenacity as a Marine, seemed to always lead to him being placed in comical - albeit dangerous - situations

- Silver always thought that some of these events would be great fodder for a detective plot
- Some of these stories, simply through word of mouth, were also used in the 2005 film *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*

## WRITING

- Black finished the *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* script but couldn't get anyone to read it. Black decided to pass some time by noodling around with a script idea with his friend and sometime writing partner Anthony Bagarozzi. Neither had a clear idea of what they were writing — detectives in L.A. was about all they had to go on — but they started churning out scenes to see what would happen. "Shane would write a scene and send it to me, then I'd write a scene and send it to him," says Bagarozzi. "That's how Shane works. He just writes a bunch of scenes and sees what fits." Over time, they found themselves working on an homage to the gumshoe novels they both worshipped: *The Nice Guys* was born.
- Black: I love the notion of the feckless sort of knight in tarnished armor who would love to fill the shoes of the legendary hero but just can't. And then find a moment when they do. And I love the idea that there's a myth waiting for each of us to occupy.

## STORY/CAST

- On September 16, [Margaret Qualley](#) and [Angourie Rice](#) joined the cast
- On September 29, [Matt Bomer](#) was added to the cast
- On October 20, [Keith David](#) and [Beau Knapp](#) were added to the cast to play hitman partners
- On October 21, [Kim Basinger](#) joined the film to play a chief justice with dubious interests
- On November 7, [Ty Simpkins](#) was added to the cast to play Bobby, a young boy whose shocking discovery sparks the mystery that the duo must solve
- On November 13, [Jack Kilmer](#) joined the film to play Chet, a young film projectionist who is a friend and confidante of Amelia, and proves vital to the investigation
- First reunion of Russell Crowe and Kim Basinger since *L.A. Confidential* (1997) and also second time Russell Crowe and Ty Simpkins are together in a movie, the first was in *The Next Three Days* (2010)
- [Russell Crowe](#) as enforcer Jackson Healy
  - It's kind of an embarrassing story. I read it and I really liked it, and I thought, "Wow, that's cool." Please don't ask me who was on this list because that would be extremely unkind for me to say. I said to my agent, "I liked it. I was really surprised. The narrative is really dense. There's a lot going on." He said, "The studio is sending you a list of people that they want to be in the movie with you." And I read the list and called my agent and was like, "Listen, obviously this is not the project I thought it was. It's something else. I must have really wanted it to be something because I read too much into it. Just don't bother expressing interest." And he said, "Shane Black got on the plane five hours ago." I was like, "Seriously?! Okay." I had a plan, where I would invite him over to my house, offer him a drink and cook him a steak, and then half-way through, I'd say, "You know, I really thought it was something else. I'm sorry I wasted your time." So, he arrived and I said, "Hey, man, would you like a drink?" He said, "I don't drink." That was most of my plan. He had to be drinking, in order to hear what I had to say. I was like, "What do you mean, you don't drink?" He said, "I'm allergic to

alcohol." I said, "What do you mean, you're allergic to alcohol?" He said, "Yeah, one drink and I break out in handcuffs." I was like, "That's funny." So, I said, "Look, we've got a bit of a problem. I've gotta tell you something." He said, "Well, I've gotta tell you something. Can I go first?" I said, "All right, you go first." And he said, "Ryan Gosling." I was like, "What?!" He said, "Ryan Gosling. I had a meeting with him before I went to the airport. He knows it's going to be you. He wants to play the other character. What do you think of that?" I was like, "How do you want your steak?" And then, the evening got back on track.

- You always have a stunt guy around. I've spent most of my career doing as many 100% shots for the director as I can. The older I get, the less that's physically possible. When I was young, I remember doing all of my stunts, and the occasional older actor would go, "Why are you doing it? Why don't you let the stunt guy do that?" And now that I'm an older guy, I'm like, "Oh, man, that was a piece of kindness and wisdom that missed me, at the time."
- What I decided to do was just to live a completely sedentary life. What am I going to do, compete with Ryan? What's the fuckin' point of that?! So, I just decided to go the other way. In terms of great comedy duos, like Bing Crosby and Bob Hope or Abbott and Costello, there seems to be a physical difference, a lot of the time. And in the script, there was a physical difference required, so I just decided to emphasize that a little bit more.
- **Ryan Gosling as private detective Holland March**
  - Gosling is famously tough to cast. Did you have to go sell him?
    - No. He was sold by the script, I think. I don't even know if Gosling would have read the script normally, but he happened to be this huge fan of a thing I did with Fred Dekker in the '80s called *The Monster Squad*. And so he saw my name and went, "Oh yeah, that *Monster Squad* guy." Not even "that *Lethal Weapon* guy," you know? And so he came back within a day and said, "I think this is what I want to do." So the next day I flew to Australia—dropped the phone like a cartoon and went to Russell Crowe. And Russell, who was basically ready to turn me down, said, "Wait a minute, Gosling wants to do this?" And, so, within three days, literally 72 hours, it came together after 13 years of complete inactivity. Which was sort of mind-bending, the way things happen.
    - Black: Ryan is extremely playful, more so than I would've ever thought having seen him in movies like *Drive*, where it just seems everything's so measured. He's always suggesting things, and I love that. Russell likes to get it right. He's meticulous. If he wants to change one word, he'll make a point of it. He's the most precise actor I've ever worked with.
- **Angourie Rice as Holly March**
- **Matt Bomer as John Boy**
- **Margaret Qualley as Amelia Kutner**
- **Murielle Telio as Misty Mountains**
- **Keith David as Older Guy**
- **Kim Basinger as Judith Kutner**
- **Beau Knapp as Blue Face**
- **Yaya DaCosta as Tally**
- **Ty Simpkins as Bobby**
- **Jack Kilmer as Chet**

- [Hannibal Buress](#) as Bumble
- [Lois Smith](#) as Mrs. Glenn

### EASTER EGGS / TRIVIA

- One quote in particular for this movie, "You're the world's worst detective", was a line that was actually spoken by Joseph's younger sister after he told her a story about sleeping with a woman that he was supposed to be conducting surveillance on for adultery
- One of the film's nods to "The Rockford Files" is the yellow pages ad for Gosling's detective agency. It is almost a complete copy of the ad used for Jim Rockford
- First film directed by [Shane Black](#) to not star [Robert Downey Jr](#)
- During March's opening monologue about the downturn of society, a porno theatre in the background is playing "Bang Bang Kiss Kiss," a play on Shane Black's earlier film Kiss Kiss Bang Bang (2005)
- A guest at the porno producer's party who is dressed up like Pinocchio says, "It's not my nose that grows". "It's not his nose that grows" was the tagline for a 1970's pornographic version of Pinocchio
- The film takes place in 1977 and mentions 'The Big Three' U. S. Automakers. However, in 1977 it was 'The Big Four': General Motors, Ford, Chrysler-Plymouth - and American Motors
- There's a Tim Allen marquee for a comedy show in the background towards the end of the movie. As the film references the state of Michigan, Tim Allen lived in Detroit. He also spent time in Indianapolis, IN; another automotive city. As the second and third acts involve airlines, Tim Allen was once arrested in real life at an airport in Kalamazoo, Mich
- While Ryan Gosling's character is often shown carrying or lighting a cigarette, he is never shown smoking. The closest he comes is a single puff required to start a cigarette burning
- The second movie that Jack Kilmer and Margaret Qualley have done together. The first one was Palo Alto
- When Jackson and Holland are driving at night, you can see movie poster's for Airport '77' (1977) which came out the year this movie takes place in and Jaw's 2 (1978) which came the year after

### DIRECTING

- Writer/Director Shane Black also wrote Lethal Weapon. Both movies are LA-based mysteries that start with a naked dead girl on top of a wrecked car
- Director Trademark: the end of the film reveals the aftermath to take place at Christmastime
  - Thirty years into Shane Black's Hollywood career, first as a screenwriter and then full-on auteur, it is clear that he loves three things: buddy badinage, labyrinthine crime plots, and Christmas. *Lethal Weapon*. *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*. *Iron Man 3*
  - All feature the holiday season. And it is not a huge spoiler to reveal that Black's latest movie, the Ryan Gosling- and Russell Crowe-starring action-comedy [The Nice Guys](#), continues that trend. So, why is the filmmaker so crazy for Christmas?
  - "It tends to be a touchstone for me," he admits. "Christmas represents a little stutter in the march of days, a hush in which we have a chance to assess and

retrospect our lives. I tend to think also that it just informs as a backdrop. The first time I noticed it was *Three Days of the Condor*, the Sydney Pollack film, where Christmas in the background adds this really odd, chilling counterpoint to the espionage plot. I also think that Christmas is just a thing of beauty, especially as it applies to places like Los Angeles, where it's not so obvious, and you have to dig for it, like little nuggets. One night, on Christmas Eve, I walked past a Mexican lunch wagon serving tacos, and I saw this little string, and on it was a little broken plastic figurine, with a light bulb inside it, of the Virgin Mary. And I thought, that's just a little hidden piece of magic. You know, all around the city are little slices, little icons of Christmas, that are as effective and beautiful in and of themselves as any 40-foot Christmas tree on the lawn of the White House. So that, in a lot of words, is the answer."

- It's interesting that critically, your films were sort of dismissed as action garbage the first time around. But they've had this total reappraisal as now being emblematic of a cinema that was both fun and somewhat serious and that has now disappeared in a wave of superhero movies.
  - Yeah. I think it's evident, too, in the *Nice Guys* with the two leads, because it's so common nowadays if you're doing a detective or cop buddy movie to just pluck two *SNL* alumni and say "Be funny." And that's something I was never capable of. I need guys who are organically good—who have the gravitas and the acting chops to do the dark moments as well.
- The *Nice Guys* is a movie that takes place in, and is very much about, Los Angeles, which has been true of most of your movies. What's the appeal of the city to you?
  - Chandler was L.A. Ross MacDonald was L.A. So, for me, my two favorite noir authors sort of fell in love with the city and were my tour guides even before I got here at age 14. They prepped me for what was to be the promised land. And this place still is this sort of end-game destination for every American dreamer. It's as far west as you go. It's the coast. And you can still see the shape of the land. You can imagine standing on a hilltop in Beverly Hills, and seeing the land just, you know, with dirt roads and just nothing but strawberry patches. Which is not something you could say of Paris or New York or any other city. I think there's a sort of feeling here of romance and beauty and man sort of coexisting with nature but, at the same time, it's so easy to get baked into obscurity here.
  - One of my favorite L.A. movies is *Ed Wood* and it's about how Bela Lugosi went from being this movie star personality to living in a little bungalow with his cats in the valley where if you walked by you'd have no idea. He'd come out and get his paper and you'd go, "That guy looks familiar." So there's this sort of timeless sort of entropy about L.A., which I love. People don't go up in a flash. They just disappear with a whimper here and the sun bakes us all into the ground.
  - And at the same time there's the illusion of glamour. And what I loved about the '70s was you had the Hollywood sign in tatters. You had a crust of smog over the city to the extent that on certain days there were sirens which would go off, meaning get your kids inside. Hollywood Boulevard was a cesspool. So, the era of *The Nice Guys* really emphasized to me the dime-store chic of L.A. It was like a fading beauty queen with a tattered gown still trying to parade nightly across the sky.
- You talk about L.A. as the promised land, but your vision of the city is very dark—especially regarding women, who in your movies come here and get chewed up.

- Yeah. They do. They come here and the seasons don't change so time goes by in a blur, a blink. And so these wonderful bright-eyed passengers disgorge from these buses, you know. Hundreds of girls every day come vomiting off in search of fame and glory and they wind up kind of head spun and sun blinded and they blink and it's 14 years later and they're realtors and they don't know what happened.
- Why be so hard on realtors?
  - No. Realtors are fine, but it's not what they wanted. They thought they were going to be Julia Roberts and instead they're salesman of the month.
- What keeps you up at night as a director?
  - There's always a certain fraudulence I feel, because I think the dirty little secret is that it's truly a collaborative medium. What it boils down to is, there's a camera rolling, and I'm standing there saying stuff, and at the end of that three months, there's a product. I've been in this business for 30 years, and I've seen a lot of people I came up with — people whom I respected, admired or thought they were much better — just fall by the wayside, and somehow I'm still making movies at a fairly decent level. I'm blessed and incredibly, unaccountably lucky to have that opportunity. I'm just the luckiest guy in the world. I'm scared to lose that.
- Black: This is my fourth film with Joel Silver, the Producer. He seems to appreciate my work, which is always very pleasant. He might have been part of my being hired. He sent me the script. I enjoyed it very much. It was well-crafted, funny, enjoyable and very entertaining. I had seen many films written by the Director, Shane Black—all really good.

## PRODUCTION/CINEMATOGRAPHY

- [Principal photography](#) began on October 27, 2014, in [Atlanta](#) and [Decatur, Georgia](#)
- Filming also took place in [Los Angeles](#)
- Downtown Atlanta doubled for 1970's Los Angeles during filming. Prop cars were given California plates and a car was painted to resemble a 70's era L.A. cab, "Hollywood Taxi Co"
- Philippe Rousselot Shot It:
- Know for Big Fish, Sherlock Holmes, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Beautiful Creatures
- What style did you and Director Shane Black decide on? A 1970s look?
  - That was a question: should we make it look like a film from the 70s? My answer was, "I was working in the 70s, so what are we talking about? My style or somebody else's style? There were as many styles as there were DPs, filmmakers and directors in the 70s. So which one are you going we pick?" My second argument was: if you pick a film from the 70s, are you really going to entertain your audience with the way films were shot in the 70s? Obviously, I don't think that would be the case. My third point was that the sets, wardrobe, dialogue and the music would all be sufficient to evoke the 70s. You don't need to add lenses from the 70s or film techniques from the 70s to tell the audience that it takes place in the 70s. I don't think the camera has to mimic a period that most people have forgotten in terms of how films were lit at the time or how they were shot. So basically for me, it was taking the script, looking at what was happening in front of the camera and shooting it in the most visually efficient manner for the film to be enjoyable.

- Does that influence your lighting?
  - At the time “The Nice Guys” took place, streets were very often lit with sodium lamps. There were tungsten fixtures and fluorescent lights indoors. TV sets didn’t look like the pure light that we have from them now. Things were different, so we had to take that into account. Also, it’s a thriller. At times it’s a comedy, but for a very good portion it’s a thriller that does not necessarily go with convention.
- I remember that. What lenses did you use?
  - We used the Panavision G series primes and the Angénieux Optimo 56-152mm A2S T4 Anamorphic zoom... They matched pretty well.

## EDITING/VFX

- Joel Negron edited
- Known for *Shallows*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *21 Jump Street*, *Transformers*, *Pain & Gain*

## SOUND/MUSIC

- Music by David Buckle (known for *Good Wife*, *Brothers Grimsby*, *Batman Arkham Knight*)
- John Ottman composer (known for *X Men Days of Future Past*, *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, *Usual Suspects*)
  - Also a director
- The movie take place in the year 1977 and a couple of songs in the film did not exist during that year. 1 is Boogie Wonderland by Earth Wind and fire which was written in 1979 and Get down on it by Kool and the gang and that song did not come out until 1982

## PROMOTION

- In the United States, the film was originally scheduled for a June 17, 2016, release, which [Warner Bros](#) moved to May 20, 2016, giving its previous date to [Central Intelligence](#)

## BOX OFFICE

- As of May 24, 2016, *The Nice Guys* has grossed \$13.6 million in North America and \$1.7 million in other territories for a worldwide total of \$15.3 million
- In North America, the film opened on May 20, 2016, alongside [Neighbors 2: Sorority Rising](#) and [The Angry Birds Movie](#), and was projected to gross around \$10 million from 2,865 theaters in its opening weekend

## RECEPTION

- *The Nice Guys* has received positive reviews from critics
- On [Rotten Tomatoes](#), the film has a rating of 91%, based on 160 reviews, with an average score of 7.5/10
- The site's critical consensus reads, "*The Nice Guys* hearkens back to the buddy comedies of a bygone era while adding something extra courtesy of a knowing script and the irresistible chemistry of its leads."
- Audiences polled by [CinemaScore](#) gave the film an average grade of "B–"
- Mike Ryan of [Uproxx](#) gave the film a positive review, praising Black's writing, and saying: "If you like Shane Black, you will like *The Nice Guys*. It's probably the Shane Black-est of

all the Shane Black movies. Black has a knack for turning action movie expectations on their head mixed with knowing and rich dialogue."

- [IGN](#) gave the film a 9/10, writing, "Working from a tight and sharp script that perfectly balances the characters like a yin and yang of screw-ups ensures *The Nice Guys* is an absolute joy every step of the way."

## **SEQUEL**

- "I think it's a little premature to consider a sequel. I don't believe in jinxes necessarily, but we really need people to see this one before we can even talk about that. We're up against some stiff superhero competition and we just need people to, you know, maybe see *Captain America* six times, but not the seventh and see us instead."

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**