

Very Nice Day

h264 PRESENTS
A Couronne Nord PRODUCTION
DIRECTED BY
Patrice Laliberté



WITH
GUILLAUME LAURIN
SARAH-JEANNE LABROSSE

MARC BEUPRÉ
MARC-ANDRÉ GRONDIN



Logline

Jérémie, a bike courier who delivers anonymous packages, leads a marginal, solitary existence in downtown Montreal. When a new neighbour moves in, his life is turned upside-down and the fallout is drastic.

h264 presents
a COURONNE NORD production

Very Nice Day

Written by
NICOLAS KRIEF
PATRICE LALIBERTÉ

GUILLAUME LAURIN
GENEVIÈVE BEAUPRÉ

Directed by
PATRICE LALIBERTÉ

With
GUILLAUME LAURIN
SARAH-JEANNE LABROSSE

MARC BEAUPRÉ
MARC-ANDRÉ GRONDIN

Runtime
75 minutes

Production
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Bike courier Jérémie (Guillaume Laurin) speeds around the city delivering anonymous packages, blindly following the instructions of his boss Dom (Marc Beaupré). A solitary creature of habit, Jérémie records a podcast where he shares his conspiracy theories. When a famous Instagrammer, Élyane Boisjoly (Sarah-Jeanne Labrosse), moves right next to his appartement, he develops an obsession for his new neighbour's lifestyle. His life changes dramatically when, one night, he is so flustered by his obsession with Élyane that he misses a delivery. When Dom orchestrates a violent manhunt, Jérémie has no choice but to take action.

The film was shot entirely on a cellphone.

Patrice, your last film, *The Decline*, was the first Quebec film to bear the Netflix imprimatur. As a result, its audience increased massively – millions of people around the world have seen it since it was released online. With *Very Nice Day*, did you want to make a film more in a punk-rock spirit, with a similar energy as in your early short films?

Patrice Laliberté: The film was made in a hurry with the idea of being less mainstream. We actually started shooting it before we shot *The Decline*!

A few years ago, Guillaume and I collaborated on a project by the dance choreographer Dave St-Pierre where we used set writing, a practice common in the theatre but practically non-existent in cinema. In Quebec, I think no one but Robert Morin has explored that writing technique, where the script is written with the actors as you go along. I was intrigued by that way of doing things.

We'd been applying for grants for five years, unsuccessfully. By focusing too much on a project and overthinking a film, you lose sight of the initial inspiration. With *Very Nice Day*, we wanted to keep that instinct going and shoot in the present moment, as fast as possible, hence the idea of using a cellphone. *High Flying Bird* by Steven Soderbergh and *Tangerine* by Sean Baker convinced me that it was a path worth exploring. So director of photography Christophe Dalpé and I opted for this object that we all have in our pockets, while thinking about it like a traditional movie camera.

The possibilities offered by cellphones were a source of inspiration for the film's narrative construction. Usually, we build the story and then design the staging around it. Here, we had specific staging ideas, for example, having a scene in the Montreal metro, and we'd find ways of inserting them into the script. It was the opposite of the way you usually direct. I quickly asked Guillaume to take an active part in the film's conception, which is the result of our two worlds, the fruit of a decade of artistic collaboration.

***Very Nice Day* and *The Decline* share a fascination for conspiracy theories, apocalyptic scenarios and hidden truths. Where does that interest come from?**

Patrice Laliberté: Both films were developed simultaneously. Their starting point was online culture. While *The Decline* quickly ends up in the wilderness, it starts out with a survivalist YouTuber who sets off the narrative. That character, played by Réal Bossé, has become a kind of guru thanks to the Internet.

The way I see it, conspiracy theories are urban legends, stories we tell each other in the context of our technological reality. I was also inspired by the idea of derealization, where people feel detached from their body and believe they exist in a world that isn't real. In *Very Nice Day*, the Jérémie character believes he's Neo from *The Matrix*. When you're caught up in that spiral, you're convinced that rules and laws don't apply to you.

Guillaume Laurin: Patrice and I came up with the genesis of the film on a street corner, wondering if we were in a simulation and if the passersby were there to inspire us! The question of cellphones and social media got us thinking hard about privacy and our way of interacting and communicating. More than ever, we have access to other people's beliefs and personal opinions. When I was young, I wasn't exposed to conspiracy rhetoric. Now it's totally different. That way of thinking goes back to the short film *Late Night Drama*, where we studied the club culture of Montreal's northern suburbs. Social media provided us with reference points and helped us avoid caricaturizing that world.

Patrice, we could also draw parallels between *Very Nice Day* and several of your short films. Almost all of them deal with young men who are a bit lost, trying to find themselves and questioning their masculinity.

Patrice Laliberté: That's a fascinating subject. Personally, I don't feel trapped by toxic masculinity, far from it. But in *Late Night Drama*, the character played by Guillaume totally is. In *Very Nice Day*, Jérémie interacts in a strange way with the people around him.

Guillaume Laurin: Inevitably, we wondered if we could push Jérémie towards some form of radicalization. Jérémie has trouble finding his place in society. He doesn't really get people who find it easy to interact and who understand cues. Yes, he breaks into his neighbour's house, but it's motivated more by genuine curiosity than by sexual desire. He's basically trying to understand the cult of celebrity.

Patrice Laliberté: We quickly realized that the film was starting to look like a boy-meets-girl scenario, and we wanted to get as far away from that as possible. From a cinematic semiology viewpoint, it's crazy how much spectators see a male character and a female character and imagine a romance. The relationship between Jérémie and the influencer is about desire and mystery, but not romance. Jérémie is fascinated by this woman who, unlike him, gets love from tons of people. She takes it all for granted, whereas he's alone at home looking for the same thing in a way through his podcast. Nowadays, you only exist if you're on social media; otherwise you're a ghost. More than anything, *Very Nice Day* is a quest for identity.

I also see it as an update of Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*, which also deals with an alienated man obsessed with an unattainable young woman. Jérémie's podcast is like a nod to Travis Bickle's diary and his bike a nod to the taxi that criss-crosses the city at a different rhythm from that of "normal" people.

Patrice Laliberté: That was a source of inspiration. I wanted to explore the neo-noir genre, using voiceover and transposing it into a contemporary context with the podcast without it seeming pasted on. I studied that film at university. It's part of my cinematic grammar. I don't pretend otherwise, because *Very Nice Day* is a different film on the whole, but it starts from the same place.



You co-wrote the screenplay with Nicolas Krief and Geneviève Beaupré. What was it like writing as a group while keeping in mind that you wanted the possibilities offered by cellphones and locations to motivate the writing?

Patrice Laliberté: A first premise was developed by Nicolas, Guillaume and me. We'd shoot scenes and edit them. Then we'd look at the results before going back to filming.

Guillaume Laurin: We basically had around 30 pages of screenplay...

Patrice Laliberté: They were used to draw Jérémie's character arc. We pressed pause on the entire project because I went on a six-month leave of absence for personal reasons. When we went back to the project, we had some distance from it, so the missing elements became clearer. At one point, Nicolas could no longer work with us, so we asked Geneviève to come and work on Jérémie's podcast scenes.

I really like working collectively. It's so rewarding to channel each collaborator's strengths, like an orchestra conductor, to get to a result that doesn't just affect you, that provides a broader perspective.

Guillaume Laurin: We wanted the project to be an oddity. That back-and-forth between writing and shooting periods is rarely allowed in the Quebec funding structure. Screenplay-wise, Patrice and I sometimes felt like interlopers, but it gave us the chance to play with the filmic images, to go over what had been done and react to the things we thought weren't right.

Patrice Laliberté: We completely reshot some scenes, like some of the ones with Marc-André Grondin, because we felt that we hadn't quite found his character.

Guillaume Laurin: We couldn't have done that with a larger film crew. It was a unique experience that gave us a lot of freedom.

I'd like to go back to your decision to shoot on a cellphone. The films we were talking about earlier are proof positive that cellphones have certain advantages over more traditional film cameras and can become an aesthetic choice.

Patrice Laliberté: There are many advantages to working with a cellphone. It's not something that will be noticed in a crowd. If you show up someplace with an ARRI camera, it will attract attention. In this case, we could move around anonymously.

Guillaume Laurin: In the scene where we see Sarah-Jeanne Labrosse at a public event, she was actually doing interviews. We were there incognito.

Patrice Laliberté: I wanted to shoot guerilla-style, snatching footage where we could. I don't know how else we could have shot the bike scenes. We spent a day riding around the streets of Montreal, with me right behind Guillaume. It was very punk-rock.

Guillaume Laurin: It was an excuse to get in shape! The shooting methods were adapted to the accumulated experience. For example, we quickly realized that the shot/reverse shot scenes didn't work at all on a cellphone. The

director of photography also adapted his equipment as the production went along. For the second shooting session, his approach was already completely different.

Patrice Laliberté: We had to change the grammar and use a language closer to video games than to film. It was a laboratory where we tried to encourage accidents. I'd often show up on set not knowing what we were going to do. We discovered a lot in the moment, in the heat of the action.

Guillaume, how did you approach the role of Jérémie? He's a complex character that some will find appealing and others disturbing.

Guillaume Laurin: Jérémie is similar to other roles I've played in Patrice's films. What made Jérémie interesting to me were his awkwardness and his flaws. It was also the first time I'd played a starring role in a feature film. A set with a larger crew would have made me feel more confident. Fortunately, Patrice and I have worked together for many years, or else the experience of being in every shot, at the centre of the film, might have been overwhelming.

Jérémie is searching for his masculinity. I wanted to convey his fragility, his solitude. A solitude that he enjoys, all in all. He listens to his music, records his podcasts, waters his plants, rides his bike. I took on the role at a period in my life when I was a valet, working for a company as sketchy as the one Jérémie works for. I identified with him as an artist in a hostile society. Jérémie's delivery job is the only thing that drags him down. It was close to my life as a guy who just wanted to devote himself to art, but who had to work as a valet parking cars.

How did you cast the rest of the parts? The film features a bunch of well-known actors in cameo appearances. Patrice, did you want their popularity to contrast with Jérémie's anonymity?

Patrice Laliberté: We'd shot scenes with unknown actors, but they were cut. When you're shooting with a cellphone, without the support of more traditional film equipment, the acting has to be absolutely spot-on. We couldn't make any mistakes.

Guillaume Laurin: Sarah-Jeanne Labrosse and I knew each other by reputation, that's it. We contacted her through Instagram with no expectations, but she immediately jumped on board. She was familiar with what we'd done before. I think actors are attracted to anything involving pure creation. Straightaway, they're interested in experimenting, getting outside their comfort zone.

Patrice Laliberté: I wanted to work with actors I like. Sandrine Brisson had acted in my short film *Overpass*, and I like her tremendously. She's very giving. Marc-André Grondin is a good friend of Nicolas Krief and quickly became our friend. Deep down, *Very Nice Day* is a film built around friendship.







Director's note

Some projects move forward in a straight line, and then there's *Very Nice Day*, made in a spirit of meandering and searching. The film arose from an impulse, driven by a desire to create something atypical, at the risk of creating something imperfect.

Tired of the usual production schedules and not wanting to lose our creative spontaneity, we developed a basic screenplay, a canvas we could use to start shooting. We felt no obligation to follow it; instead we were trying to trigger accidents, keeping an eye out for lucky flukes.

Very Nice Day appropriates the neo-noir genre. It's my way of examining our solitude, our personal and digital identity and our relationships with other people. I wanted to explore the underlying paranoia of online culture and derealization syndrome. Jérémie embodies that social disorder. His perception of the world is coloured by the idea that reality doesn't exist, like a fantasy of being Neo in *The Matrix* (1999) or Truman in *The Truman Show* (1998). At the same time, we discover the loneliness that plagues Élyane, a professional Instagrammer with thousands of followers. We notice the contrast between the way she presents herself online and the loneliness of her everyday life.

That free creative approach immediately gave rise to the idea of using a cellphone camera to make the film. Aside from its technical flexibility and the fact that we always have a camera in our pockets, the phone became an essential, central part of the screenwriting approach. In the way we conceived our directing method, it becomes an extension of a person. Throughout the story, Jérémie (Guillaume Laurin) and Élyane (Sarah-Jeanne Labrosse) have one glued to their hands as a kind of technological extension of themselves, with their eyes constantly riveted to the screen. As we put the film together, we wanted to maximize its use. Right from the beginning, I could picture characters moving around in a crowd or in the Metro and us tracking them without attracting attention. Those are the staging ideas that built the screenplay as the shoot went along.

There were usually between two and seven people on the shoot. Since there were so few of us, an atmosphere of collective creation arose, with the same feeling as when I played with my punk band in high school or made my first films with my friends from CEGEP.



Biography of Patrice Laliberté

In 2012, screenwriter and director Patrice Laliberté co-founded the production company Couronne Nord. The company produced his short films *Le cycle des moteurs* (finalist at the Gala Quebec Cinéma 2016), *Late Night Drama* (TIFF 2016) and *Overpass*, which won the Short Cut Award for best Canadian short at TIFF 2015 as well as drawing acclaim at over 75 festivals around the world. In 2016, he co-wrote and directed the web series *GAME(R)*, which has so far garnered over two million views on Facebook. In 2020, along with launching season 2 of *Game(r)*, nominated for a Gémeaux Award for best direction, he released *The Decline*, the very first Quebec feature to be distributed by Netflix.

Filmography of Patrice Laliberté

2022	Very Nice Day
2020	The Decline
2020	GAME(R) – season 2
2017	GAME(R) – season 1
2016	Late Night Drama
2015	Overpass
2014	Le cycle des moteurs



Biography of Couronne Nord

Founded in 2012 by Julie Groleau, Patrice Laliberté and Guillaume Laurin, the multidisciplinary production company Couronne Nord strives to tell poignant, original stories that consistently provide an off-kilter view of the world. To kick off its impressive career, the company worked in short films (Overpass by Patrice Laliberté, best Canadian short at TIFF 2015, Intenselefun by Guillaume Laurin, Landgraves by Jean-François Leblanc), then in theatre (Détruire, nous allons by Philippe Boutin). Focusing on new ways of storytelling and distribution, in 2016 Couronne Nord co-founded Plein(s) écran(s), the very first film festival entirely on Facebook. The following year, the trio launched season one of GAME(R) live on Facebook, and the series has racked up over two million views so far. In 2018, Couronne Nord pushed the envelope by shooting the film Very Nice Day on a Google Pixel 2, the first time a Quebec feature has used a cellphone as a film camera. In 2019, the young company made history by producing The Decline, the first Quebec film entirely funded by Netflix, which was watched 21 million times in one month on the platform all over the world. The three members of Couronne Nord go the extra mile to produce strong, magnanimous works that jibe with the long tradition of Quebec culture.

Filmography of Couronne Nord

2022	Danny Greenwood U Shitface
2022	Very Nice Day
2021	Operation Carcajou
2020	The Decline
2020	Landgraves
2020	GAME(R) – season 2
2019	Jojo
2017	GAME(R) – season 1
2016	Late Night Drama
2015	Overpass
2015	Intenselefun
2014	Le cycle des moteurs

Cast and crew

With	Guillaume Laurin Sarah-Jeanne Labrosse Marc Beaupré Marc-André Grondin
Director	Patrice Laliberté
Written by	Nicolas Krief Patrice Laliberté Guillaume Laurin Geneviève Beaupré
Production	Julie Groleau Fanny Forest
Director of photography	Christophe Dalpé
Art director	Catherine K. Pelletier
Editor	François Lamarche
Sound	Francis Desgagnés Marc-Antoine Barbier
Sound design	Ilyaa Ghafouri
Mixing	Bernard Gariépy Strobl
Music	Marc-Antoine Barbier
First assistant director	Marilou Caravecchia-Pelletier
Opening sequence	Vincent Bilodeau David Baril

Technical specs

Original title	TRÈS BELLE JOURNÉE
English title	VERY NICE DAY
Shooting format	2K
Project format	Colour DCP
Sound	5.1
Runtime	75 minutes
Original version	French
Subtitles	English
Aspect ratio	2 :39
Country of production	Canada
Year	2022

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