

Jamee NATELLA

Jamee Natella @jameenatella
Writer Madeline Rosene @madelinerosene
Photographer Ben Cope @ben_cope
Videographer Jeffrey Fountain @jeffreyyfuentes
Wardrobe Stylist Desiree Morales @desireemorales
Hair & Makeup Artist Kendall Cotta @kendallcotta
Location AKA Beverly Hills @stayaka



Humble and unaffected might be the best ways to describe film producer Jamee Natella, a dynamic wonder woman of many talents. Jamee is the founder of Blueyed Pictures, a commercial and multimedia content company. It is rare to find someone with so many gifts without an ounce of pretentiousness. Jamee is a producer with feature film credits such as “Opposite Day,” “Baby Geniuses,” “JL Ranch,” and “Love is the Drug,” an environmental activist who cares deeply for preserving the earth and its natural resources (particularly clean drinking water), world traveler, mother, and soon to be a children’s book author. With such passionate pursuits, there is no doubt that Jamee leads a full life in which she manages to balance many interests and talents. Like most successful and inspiring people, she has a tendency to put herself into new environments and situations, make the very best of those experience, and learn all she can, like when she moved to Tokyo, Japan for a production position and learned to speak fluent Japanese. She is poised and secure and probably has been since the 8th grade (Oh wait, she skipped the 8th grade). Maybe her composure and graceful disposition are due to the yoga, pilates, and personal training sessions, or perhaps from her Midwest upbringing in Chicago, Illinois. We sat inside her house in Beverly Hills at a large round table with a star carved into the wood, drinking water out of glass bottles, which Jamee will tell you is better than drinking from plastic bottles, that are often transported in unregulated, often high, temperatures, causing the plastic to heat up and release chemicals into the water. “They’ve done studies on this,” Jamee said. We then decided to move outside into the yard and enjoy the perfect Los Angeles June weather.



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Sergio Rossi Shoes
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Asos Coat
asos.com

Sam Edelman Shoes
samedelman.com

Luv AJ Jewelry
luvaj.com



MR: So you moved to LA when you were 17?

JN: Yes, I came out to LA to audition for a show called *Rags to Riches*. I graduated from high school when I was 17 and I knew I wanted to come out here and act.

MR: You graduated when you were 17. How did that happen? You must be smart.

JN: I skipped the 8th grade. I was smart in 7th grade. I don't know what happened after that. It's a bad year to skip. That one year makes a big difference. I entered Freshman year and all of my girlfriends were sexy and had boobs and I was still in an awkward puberty stage!

MR: You began your career in entertainment as an actress. How did you transition to behind the scenes?

JN: After only a few days of being in LA, I was driving down La Cienega Blvd and all of a sudden I looked over and my childhood friend, Lara Flynn Boyle, was in the other lane. She wound up staying with me in my studio apartment until her mom moved to LA. It reunited us. We were close friends in high school but she landed a mini series called *Amerika* in Canada so she was gone during our Sophomore Year. It was great running into her because she was already very established in LA as an actress. She had made a name for herself. I would watch her audition and it gave me a good sense of what I was up against. Just two Chicago girls in LA working in show business! I was working — auditioning and doing guest star appearances on TV shows. My real break came with a role on *Doogie Howser*. I remember being on set for *Doogie Howser* and they were also filming *Die Hard* at the same time. I kept looking over at that set and wondering, "What are they doing over there?" People hardly even knew who Bruce Willis was back then but I realized I really liked watching people be on camera and that I wasn't crazy about being on camera. I wanted to be behind the camera. I continued to work as an actress mostly because I promised my mom that I would work on that until I turned 18. After that time, I started working for Bruce Dorn as a production coordinator and then as a production manager.

MR: What was the first major studio you worked for?

JN: After working for Bruce, I went on to Warner Brothers. I worked for a producer there and after that, I landed a job at Alpine Pictures. I was the owner's assistant. They bought me a laptop and I learned how to budget and do sales and distribution. My boss was from Chicago as well so we hit it off. He financed a movie called *The Lord Protector* and I ended up being in it and also being his assistant for the movie! Ryan Carroll directed the movie and he and I became very close friends. He was a mentor to me and we are still very close. From there, I went on to get another studio job at Touchstone

Pictures. It was there that I realized I wanted to produce. I became friends with the talented Oscar-winning actor Benicio del Toro through his manager, Rick Yorn. Benicio asked if I wanted to help with a short film so I produced a short film for him. It was a passion project — not a lot of money. It really felt like a student project! We worked really hard to make his dream come true.

MR: What became of the short film with Benicio del Toro?

JN: The film was called *Submission*. It went to the Venice Film Festival and it was after that event that I was offered the opportunity to interview and produce a local morning talk show in Tokyo called *Tea Time*. It's the longest running show in Japan. It's kind of like the Japanese version of *The View*. The point was to educate the Japanese about Western Culture. I wound up moving to Tokyo for three years, without returning to the United States. The show had a special guest every episode. We were working with people like Bill Gates, Richard Branson, famous architects, you name it. I was given this opportunity and being paid really well.

MR: And you became very educated regarding Japanese culture, yes?

JN: When I moved there, I studied the Japanese language for an hour every day. I was working with all Japanese people, hardly anyone spoke English. Being there permanently with all of the magazines, media, and billboards, everything — I thought, I have to figure this language out! After eight months, I signed up with a program that matches you with a host family who only speaks Japanese to you. I moved in with a family in the countryside. I'm terrible with languages but the frustration of not being able to communicate pushed me to learn the language and assimilate. It was total immersion and that is the best way to learn a language. It took me about a year to learn how to speak Japanese.

MR: How did the production company you founded, Blueyed Pictures, come about?

JN: During the *Tea Time* period, I kept in touch with my production friends in the states. They had been supportive of me going to Japan. Helping my friends produce their shoots in Japan started becoming my full time job and I wasn't getting paid for it. So I thought, "Why not start a company and help my friends produce in Japan?" My first job was for Richard Branson and Mark Yamamoto who owned Virgin Cinemas. I helped Virgin expand in the Asian market and they became my first client, which led to working with a load of different Virgin entities as well as gaining other clients like Mitsubishi, Pepsi, Pioneer, Toyota, and some local Japanese brands. Eventually, I had offices in Tokyo, London, and LA. I was fortunate enough to sell a portion of it.

MR: The children's book series you are writing, *I AM SAM in...*, is about cultural differences, correct?

JN: Yes, it's been a project in the making for the last four years. I have a young son named Sam. When Sam was little, I would take him with me everywhere. I worked with nice clients who would let me bring my baby. I traveled with Sam to visit my Tokyo and London offices. During that time he would be intrigued and ask about the culture. He would want to know why things were the way that they were. "Why are they eating with chopsticks instead of forks?" or "Why do they have a queen?" He would ask me about the fish market in Japan and how they caught fish. He wanted to understand the reasons why there were double decker buses or why they drove on the left instead of the right. The thing is, not everything is easy to explain. Often, I would Google the answers to his questions and the explanations were so complicated, I had to figure out how to make a five or six year-old understand. It was these explanations that inspired the book series. I told Sam that I wanted to write a book series with him and he said we should do it together. It's called *I AM SAM in...* To start, one book will take place in London, one in Tokyo, and one in Los Angeles. I can't wait for it to be published.

MR: Tell me about your environmental pursuits.

JN: My passion is really about living as healthy as possible. I think it's really important, especially in this day and age, to be as healthy as you can, eat well, and exercise. But, most importantly, we have to think about keeping the planet healthy. I care a lot about our drinking water. The one thing our species cannot live without is water. If we don't change course now and change our habits, there will likely be wars revolving around clean water in the future. Humans have endured so much with plastic polluting our water and killing animals. Plastic is really harming the human race. It's a pretty clear example of cause and effect. The Antarctic is melting. *National Geographic* (I'm obsessed with *National Geographic* and *BBC*) recently conducted a ten year-long survey. Tons of water is being released into our oceans. That, of course, affects the water rising, creating floods.

MR: Why do you think you care so much about the planet while others don't?

JN: I guess I think, if I don't care, who will? When one person changes, it rubs off on to the next person. I care not just because I live on the planet, but because I've traveled all over the planet. I've seen the slums of India. I've seen the Antarctic. I've seen people who live in poverty, who don't have access to water. I've seen all kinds of conditions. What bothers me the most are the places in which clean drinking water access can be controlled and helped, yet nothing is done about it. For example, there's absolutely no reason why places in the United States, should not have clean tap water. We have polluted our water so much. Think

about how advertising makes us think we have to drink bottled water, yet when you drink plastic water, you are drinking water that has been put into plastic and shipped, heated up within the plastic, and not controlled. People are drinking bottled water from these major brands and they don't realize they're putting plastic into their bloodstream. A lot of our pipes are 80 years old and we have drinking water flowing through it. These are all situations we have created.

MR: Is travel important to you?

JN: I'm a Midwestern girl and I didn't really travel much before I lived in Tokyo. The job opportunity in Japan and living as an expat gave me a lot of experience with other cultures, especially in regards to how they do business.

MR: How has traveling changed your perspective on the world?

JN: I think it's made me aware of how privileged we are in America. We are spoiled, from the way we shop to our overabundance. We often don't take care and think about things like recycling our plastic bags. We can be irresponsible. With privilege comes responsibility. We have privilege and we are one of the most predominant countries in the world with great influence. If we don't set an example for other people, we're not doing our job.

MR: Do you think it's too late to save the planet?

JN: I don't think it's too late to save the planet. I think there are a lot of influential people like Al Gore and Leonardo DiCaprio who are changing the way people think. There are rangers in Africa who don't carry guns because they believe you should never have to kill an animal. I think anyone can make a difference. There are so many documentaries now bringing these environmental issues to light that make people more aware. But we just have to keep putting it out there and educating people.

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MR: How does one person make a difference?

JN: One person makes a difference by never giving up on what they believe in. It's about persistence. Some social media influencers are good examples of this. When one person influences a few others, it creates a ripple effect and it can impact thousands. There are a lot of great ideas out there — incubators and startups but it's the people with the great ideas that never give up who succeed. Then, when one person succeeds, that success leaves an impression on others and shows them what is possible with the right actions and decisions so that person can create their own success. It's a cycle of inspiration. Making a difference also comes from changing habits.

MR: How do you make a difference?

JN: I start by always giving more than what is expected. That's something that I've always done. People have expectations and I do my best to exceed them. Helping others and being grateful gives us a sense of meaning. I send a lot of thank you notes. I believe in creating more love. Surprise someone you love. Nurture your relationships. These are all things you can do and I think these are things we are doing particularly well in the sustainability field.

Someone I know told me I accomplish more in one day than they do in an entire week. I'm a believer in delegating and helping people work together. I give people the props to go ahead. I hire the best people for the position and then I let them do their jobs. I surround myself with the same kind of hardworking people.

MR: Where do you think your work ethic comes from?

JN: My mom had a big influence on me. My parents divorced when I was six months old. My brothers are ten and eight years older than me and I have an adopted sister from my father's previous marriage. I grew up more like an only child and it was my mom and me. She was always a hard worker. Both of my parents did so many things to make it possible for me to have the lifestyle that I had. Growing up, I was given a lot but I never felt like I had the merit to receive it. So I guess I still feel like I am making merit.

MR: How do you find balance in your life? How do you stay sane when juggling so many pursuits?

JN: Someone told me, "You need to focus and streamline," and

I thought, How boring... but maybe I should focus on one thing that I'm passionate about that I do very well. But then I realized, no. I believe I can accomplish all of these things and I don't have to choose.

On a day to day basis, I have to workout. I play tennis two to three times per week. I have a trainer and I love to bike. I like to get up before anyone is awake and go biking. It's how I detox. I need that time to workout. If I don't get my endorphins going, I can get moody. I make weekly goal lists and weekly to-do lists. I figure out what I need to accomplish.

MR: Are you happy with what you have accomplished so far? What's next?

JN: Yes, but I feel like I haven't gotten the projects that I really want yet. I have had to build a reputation and I've finally now shown that I can execute peoples' visions. At this point, I have

worked for so many people that people are more comfortable with me handling bigger projects now. I'm about to produce a movie that is sort of about vampires. When I first read that, I was like, "Really? Vampires?" But I actually think it's a great story and maybe I can learn something here. There's actually a lot to learn about vampires and lighting, setting tonality and trying to achieve a non-cheesy aesthetic. I've spent a lot of time researching with the director, Simon Needham, who I have repped for many years for commercials. We have worked on a lot of projects together. We've spent a lot of time on cars and lifestyle so it's nice to transition into features together. First and foremost, I am a business woman and a producer. I love the challenge

of having people come into a movie theater thinking one thing, and have them walk out with a different perspective, whether it's a sustainability project, or a movie about vampires. At the end of the year, I'll be producing a movie called *Nightmare 19* that author, Peter Moore Smith wrote.

MR: What do you want to be remembered for?

JN: Maybe that I made a difference in the way that people live their daily lives. Living in Los Angeles, surrounded by the entertainment industry, people are following their dreams and sometimes they get so caught up in chasing that dream, that they forget to be grounded and follow through on their promises. I hope that people remember my character as being true to her word. ■

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I believe in
creating more
love. Surprise
someone you love.
Nurture your
relationships.”

Links *we* Love

Jamee's company, Blueyed Pictures is a 16 year old company, established in Tokyo in 1998 with offices in London and Los Angeles specializing in creating award-winning commercials, digital branded content, corporate films and multi-media entertainment around the world. Here is an example of thier amazing work!



BODY GLOVE 'FEEL' WITH TATIANA WESTON-WEBB

Director Todd Grossman