

On Nadine: Hot pink cropped top and skirt both by Jian Lasala. On James: Navy paisley button-down, vest, suit jacket and pants all by Francis Libiran

The JaDine Chemistry

This up-and-coming love team levels up, with a growing fan base and their very own *teleserye*, *On the Wings of Love*, to boot. *StarStudio* gets to know more about the boy and the girl that make up this fast-rising tandem

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Just a few years ago, James Reid and Nadine Lustre were still both on the lookout for that much-needed showbiz break.

Then came the offer which would ironically make both their careers beautiful: *Diary Ng Panget*.

For a love team's first movie project, *Diary Ng Panget* did well, earning almost P120 million.

Banking on its success, the tandem—which their fans dubbed JaDine—went on to star in another Wattpad story-turned-movie *Talk Back and You're Dead* with Yassi Pressman and Joseph Marco. The movie, co-produced by Viva Films and Skylight Films, grossed P79.8 million.

James and Nadine also starred in the movie *Para sa Hopeless Romantic* with Julia Barretto, Inigo Pascual, AJ Muhlach and Shy Carlos. The movie, another co-production venture of Viva Films and Skylight Films, was based on a book written by Marcelo Santos III.

Following their contract signing with ABS-CBN in August 2014, the two also starred in a *Wansapanataym* series titled “My App Boyfie” in September 2014; the hashtag “My App Boyfie Pilot Episode” reportedly trended on Twitter worldwide.

Undeniable Chemistry

The on-and-off-screen chemistry of James and Nadine is undeniable, and it's easy for people to think there's really something going on between the two. However, they've been vocal about the real status of their relationship—that they're just friends, and yes, a hot love team.

“Okay na kami eh. Baka mamaya kapag dinagdagan namin ng isang factor, it might ruin everything,” Nadine says when asked if there's a chance their reel-life love team can turn into a real-life one. “Baka



mamaya konting away lang, konting tampuhan, hindi na kami makapagtrabaho nang maayos. It's like that. *May mga nagsasabi na kahit magkaaway kami, okay lang. Pero hindi talaga eh. Mahirap magfake ng chemistry, lalo na kung negative 'yung pinanggagalingan mo tapos you have to act positively towards the person."*

Meanwhile, James explains, "Nadine and I are really just friends. We're in a love team—we're actors and we make people believe in love, make people feel love. That's our job. But we're really just friends, although the fans are very persistent. But Nadine and I are really close because we're alike and we both came from nowhere. We learned so much about each other along the way and we depended on each other. We give each other support."

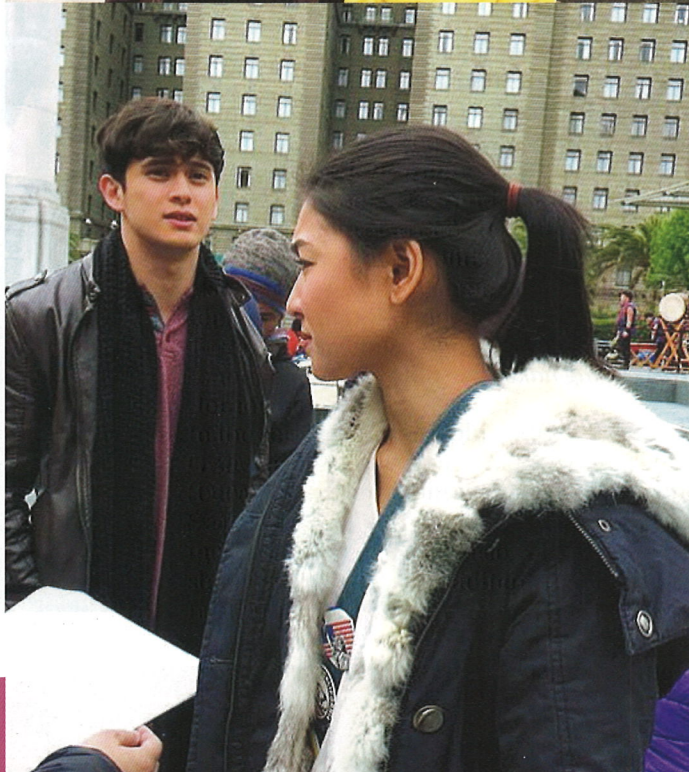
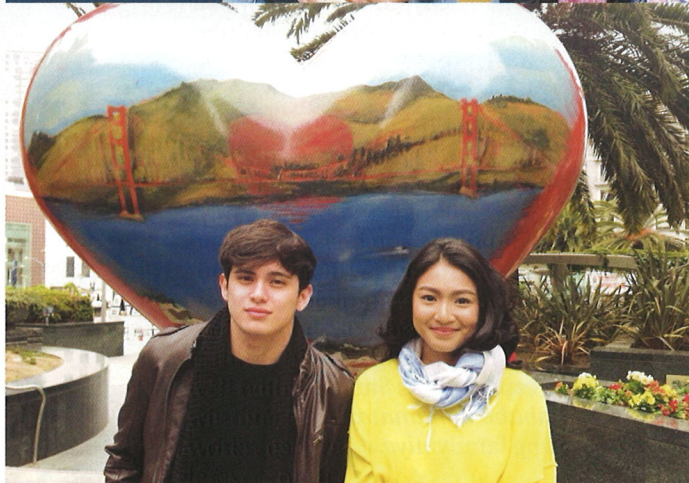
Despite that, JaDine still appeals to many, perhaps because they're not forcing their chemistry. Her girl-next-door Filipina features and his handsome *amboy* features blend perfectly well with each other. This winning combination works, especially for their latest project. Produced by Dreamscape Entertainment Television, *On the Wings of Love* is set to air this month and is helmed by Antoinette Jadaone, who directed the box-office hit *That Thing Called Tadhana*.

The show is set in San Francisco, California, and also stars Nanette Inventor, Bianca Manalo and Joel Torre, among others.

James as Clark

In the series, James plays an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) living in the United States who will be entangled in a love triangle between co-stars Arjo Atayde and Nadine Lustre.

Last May, James and Nadine flew to San Francisco, USA to shoot some sequences for *On the Wings of Love*. The show was taped abroad because it revolves around a "marriage for convenience" plotline, which many Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) can relate to. With their obvious on- and off-cam chemistry, it was easy for Nadine to put a fun twist to an otherwise complex and serious topic.



"It's my first time being cast as the lead star in a *teleserye* so it's a big deal," James stresses. "I'm very nervous. It's Direk Antoinette's first *teleserye* as well. She's really good at directing romantic comedies, so I think we have one of the best directors for the job. It's really different. It's more mature. We play young adults who have a lot of responsibilities. We take care of our families and we're the breadwinners, so it's definitely more mature."

Because *On the Wings of Love* is his first *teleserye*, James vows to work harder for the success of the show. "I want to take it really seriously so I took these workshops to help me with my character, and the director was there to watch over us. We did a lot of exercises, like improvisation. I had to improvise and the director said I got it down perfect. So I was really happy with that."

When asked what kind of approach Direk Antoinette used to help them internalize their respective characters, James reveals, "There's character building. She really likes spontaneity when it comes to shooting. So you have to know your character well because she might require you to deliver a line on the spot. And the character's personality is far from mine—he hates his father who rejected him as a child. And he misses and loves his mother who died when he was young. Whereas for me in real life, it's the opposite. But I was able to internalize the character enough to be able to feel for my mother and to feel enough rage for my father, which is different for me because in real life, I love my father very much. But it's a good challenge. I feel like it helped me really move a step up in this project."

Painting the Town Reid

His life has been a roller-coaster ride, but despite the many sharp twists and turns, James

Reid has braved the loops and remained strapped in. And now that he has arrived at a wonderful destination, he is more than ready to take the world in his hands and make a lasting mark in the entertainment industry



Gray pullover by Bench, navy sports jacket by Uniqlo and burgundy chino pants by Topman

Nadine as Lea

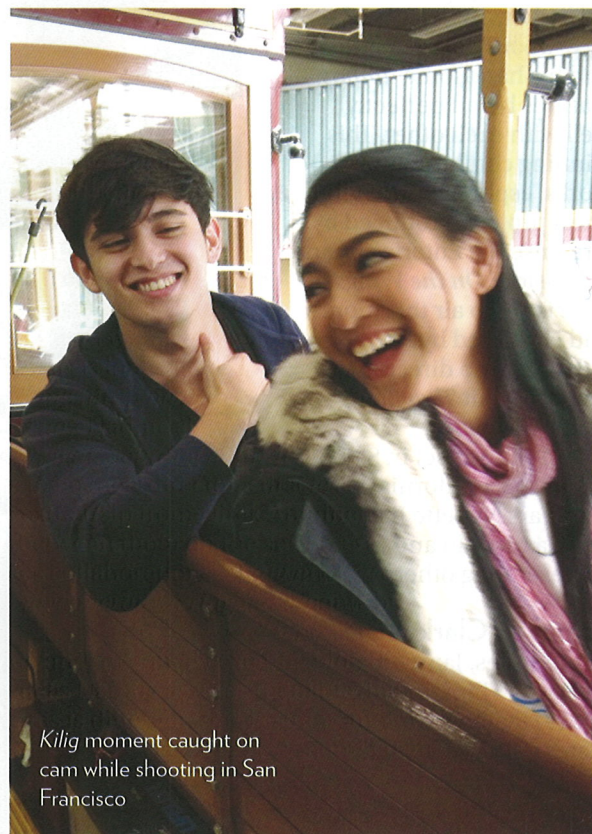
Nadine plays Lea, whom she describes as “*mabuting anak at kapatid*.” She’s a hard worker. Ever since *bata pa lang siya, ang dream na niya talaga, makarating sa Amerika*, especially *sa San Francisco, kasi ’yung mother niya doon nag-trabaho at namatay*. So, she dreams of going there to work *at dalhin ’yung family niya doon* for a better life.”

The show may be a romantic-comedy, but it is layered with serious scenes which require more *hugot* (or an emotional anchor).

Nadine says it’s fun but challenging at the same time, especially since this is her first *teleserye* and with the Kapamilya network at that. “*Medyo mahirap kasi this is longer. Hindi naman kasi from the bottom up ’yung shoot. So ang hirap na kailangan alamin mo ’yung pinanggalingan mo na eksena*,” Nadine shares. “It isn’t just a rom-com. *May drama siya, may bigat. Sobrang nahirapan din ako*.”

The show also happens to be their director’s first *teleserye*, so Nadine likes that she gets extra help from Direk Antoinette and that there’s collaboration between them on the set. She says, “She’s very hands-on and she likes collaborations. *Ayaw niya na sa kanya lang nanggagaling. Gusto niya meron ka ring nako-contribute sa character mo*.”

With an exciting location and an equally exciting plot, the JaDine fans are surely up for a treat as Nadine assures them of what to expect: “*Maraming kilig*. This is different; this is a new and more mature JaDine.”★



Kilig moment caught on cam while shooting in San Francisco

It may be difficult to believe, but truth be told, James Reid really is no stranger to struggles in life. In fact, his journey through showbiz is but a testament to that fact.

It was back in 2010 when 16-year-old James, fresh from the *Land Down Under*, first found himself suddenly ushered into the limelight of Philippine television after joining the *Pinoy Big Brother: Teen Clash 2010* as one of the 'teenternational' housemates (though he was the only housemate who had Filipino blood).

As witnessed by the show's viewers, James' life in the Big Brother House was no walk in the park—he was almost force-evicted twice but by some stroke of fate, he overcame the odds, and emerged that season's Big Winner.

However, his first forays into the showbiz industry were not extraordinary. But once again, just as he did in the Big Brother House, he overcame the odds.

Now, five years later, he is on the

culsp of true stardom, starring in one hit movie after another, and securing a lead role in *On the Wings of Love*.

Life Down Under

James was born into a privileged life and traces his roots back to Mosman—a suburb located on the Lower North Shore of Sydney, Australia, where the cost of living is fairly high. There, he grew up with his Australian father, Robert Malcolm Reid, together with his six half-siblings.

He was just two years old when his father separated from his Filipina mother, Maria Aprilyn Marquinez, a former singer and dancer. After the separation, she went back to her family in the Philippines, leaving the young James behind.

"I just grew up used to the fact that my dad was in Australia and my mom was in the Philippines," James shares. "It was just the way it was, and for me, it was normal."

James shares that every year since

he turned three, his father would take him on holidays to the Philippines so he could spend time with his mother. That's why growing up, James never asked any questions about his parents' set-up. He says, "My dad only told me about the separation when I was 16."

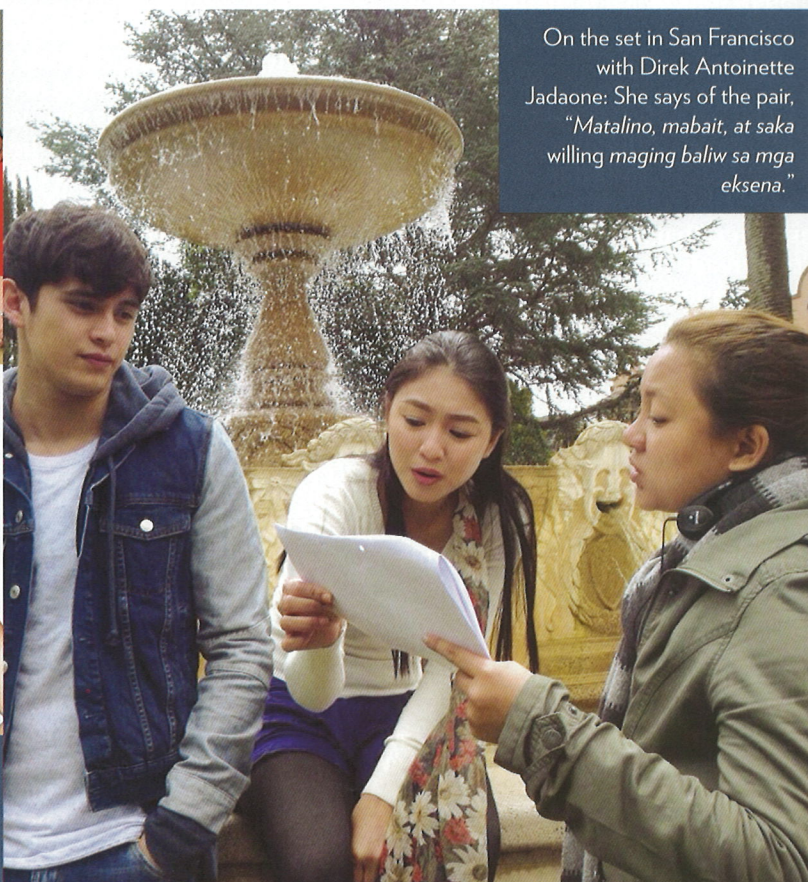
Because his father had made a good living working as a land developer in Australia, James grew up with a silver spoon in his mouth. They resided in a million-dollar house that stood right down by the beach—the very beach that holds all of James' happiest memories in Sydney. "I just loved riding my scooter," he recalls of his childhood.

"In the morning I'd ride it to the local store, and then buy milk and bread. I would put those in the basket attached to the handles of the scooter. Then I would ride back home, and make myself a bowl of cereal."

And because he grew up having a comfortable life, James confesses that he used to be the typical spoiled child.



Top) *On the Wings of Love* cast Nico Antonio, Bianca Manalo, Joel Torre, James Reid, Nadine Lustre, Albie Casiño, Cherry Pie Picache and Nanette Inventor. (This photo) James and Nadine with Direk Jojo Sagun, one of the producers of JaDine's teleserye *On the Wings of Love*.



On the set in San Francisco with Direk Antoinette Jadaone: She says of the pair, "Matalino, mabait, at saka willing maging baliw sa mga eksena."

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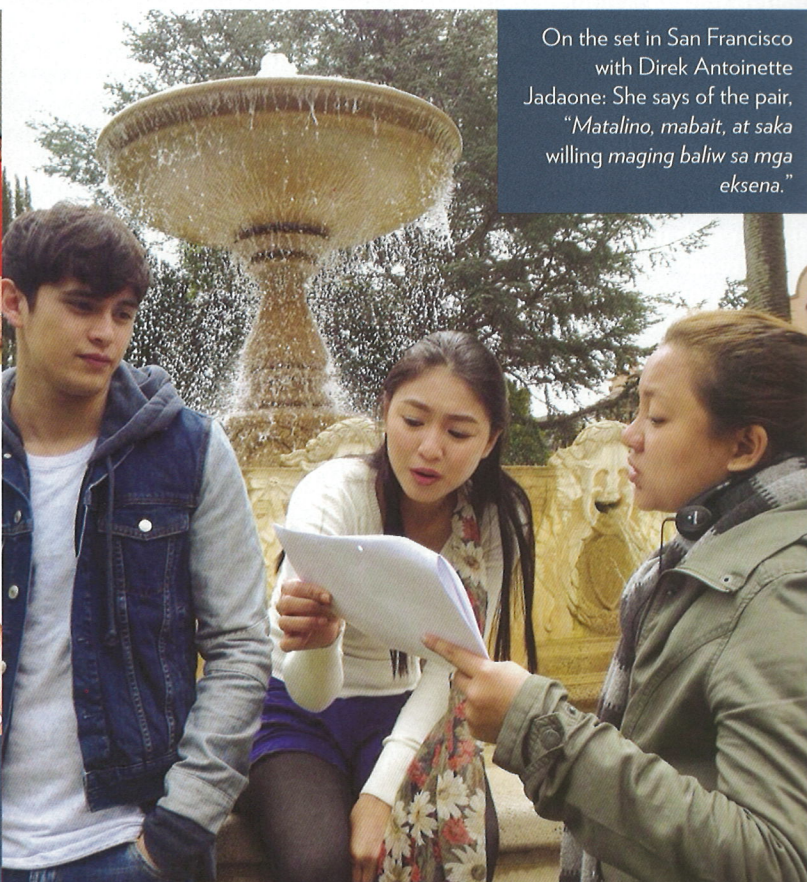
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(Top) *On the Wings of Love* cast Nico Antonio, Bianca Manalo, Joel Torre, James Reid, Nadine Lustre, Albie Casiño, Cherry Pie Picache and Nanette Inventor. (This photo) James and Nadine with Direk Jojo Sagun, one of the directors of JaDine's teleserye *On the Wings of Love*.

"I watched videos of me as a kid and I was a spoiled, annoying little brat. I got everything I wanted," he shares.

But even when his parents weren't able to raise him together, they still made sure James grew up not feeling any less loved. If anything, he is grateful especially to his father for having taken great care of him.

On the other hand, James describes his mother as a "very sweet" person who always went out of her way to spoil him. "When I was little, she'd always sing to me so I could sleep. She would always spoil me because she always had two weeks a year to see me back then," he shares.

James recalls he was only 10 years old when things started to take a sudden turn for his family, as his father started experiencing financial troubles. Because of these constraints, their family had to downgrade twice. His father got into a court battle with a loaning company that had a tie-up with lawyers, which made the conflict more complicated to resolve.

"All throughout high school, it got a bit tougher," he continues. "We suffered a lot of financial problems to the point where my shoes would have holes, and I had to walk to school in them. We'd just eat eggs for dinner. We were almost broke. It was that bad."

Big Brother's Call

By the end of 2009, James had to face another major change in his life: leaving Australia to move to the Philippines with his father. That time, their resources were already running dangerously low, and his father suffered from an illness and needed medical attention.

"My dad got sick in Australia and he was at the hospital for two months straight," James relates. "That's why he wanted to move here, because he felt that his time was almost up."

But the big move proved to be tough for James who felt that he left everything behind in Australia. He continued his studies at Makati Science High School, where his boy-next-door *mestizo* good looks didn't go unnoticed by girls who would take photos of him as he passed along the halls.

However, try as he might, he still had a very difficult time adjusting to his new life in the Philippines. He especially found it extra challenging to adapt to a regular Filipino school because of the language barrier, and the different

academic set-up. Eventually, his father decided to enroll him in Karabar High School Distance Education Centre, an Australian distance-learning center located at Karabar, New South Wales.

"That time, I went through a lot of depression," James shares. "I was alone here with my dad. I left my friends and my career path behind. I was getting bored and depressed. I didn't know what to do with myself anymore. I just lost direction. I was alone and I felt like there was no point in everything. I would cry a lot."

Being homeschooled, it was easy to see why James became more depressed and withdrawn—he didn't have the chance to have any social interaction with teenagers his age. Because of that, his father encouraged him to join the *Pinoy Big Brother: Teen Clash Edition* reality show in 2010 so he could meet people and make new friends.

"Talent scouts had been trying to get me all the time," he says. "They were telling me to come to this network, come and join this management—but I wouldn't. Then one day, a guy met me and my dad at a restaurant and asked me to join *PBB*. My dad dared me to do it because it's a way to meet people. So I did."

When James learned he was finally in after an arduous audition process, he admits he felt so terrified because first and foremost, he was very, very shy. "I wasn't the outgoing type," he expresses. "I wasn't talkative. I didn't have any talent—I just liked to cook and that was it. I hated being on the spot. Whenever I get nervous when I'm put on the spot, my ears would get red. But that doesn't happen anymore. I've gotten over my social fear."

The Big Win

On April 30, 2010, James entered the *Pinoy Big Brother House* as one of the 10 'teenternational' housemates.

One of the highlights of his *PBB* stint was being asked to sing "Pyramid" by Charice, and that was when he discovered his talent for singing, something which later on turned into a full-blown passion for music.

"The first time I ever opened my mouth to sing was in the *PBB House*. It was the very first time I started singing in front of everyone. It was funny because it was the first time I sang and they said, 'You have a really good voice!' and I was like, 'Really?' My dad doesn't

James was born on May 11, 1993 in Mosman, a suburb located on the Lower North Shore of Sydney, Australia. He must have been a happy kid, judging from this photo of him.



have any talent so I think my talent comes from my Filipino side."

However, his stay there wasn't always been smooth-sailing, as he was almost force-evicted twice because of his lung problems. Initially, the doctors had diagnosed him with costochondritis, an inflammation of the cartilage that connects a rib to the breastbone.

But it was during his second trip to the hospital when the doctors had found a hole in one of his lungs which was causing difficulties in his breathing. Eventually, the doctors had cleared him to return to the Big Brother House, but with conditions of having to rest frequently and wear an oxygen tube 24/7, for a week.

Because of his health issues, James admits he came to a point where he was thinking of giving up and leaving the Big Brother House. He says, "Everyone wanted me to stay. Big Brother wanted me to stay. The audience wanted me to stay. The housemates wanted me to stay. I was the only one who didn't want to because every day, for two weeks, I was lying in bed, not being able to participate in the challenges. I said to myself, 'Am I going to get until the end of this competition without even participating?' So I wanted to leave. But then eventually, I got some good news that I was getting better, and I could start participating again. So that's why I stayed."

And it proved to be the right decision. After all, his hard work inside the Big Brother House paid off when he was crowned as the *Pinoy Big Brother: Teen Clash 2010* Big Winner. That, James says, was the moment when everything has finally brightened for him and his family.

Good Things Come

Apart from the prizes which came with being crowned as the Big Winner, James had also secured a two-year contract

with Star Magic. He was paired with his co-housemate Devon Seron in some ABS-CBN shows like *Shoutout!* and *Good Vibes*. In that same year, he released a digital album, *We Are Whatever*, together with his best friend and fellow *Pinoy Big Brother: Teen Clash 2010* alum Bret Jackson. The album featured four original songs composed by James and Bret themselves.

However, in 2011, James' career came to a screeching halt and he fell off the radar completely. "As in I didn't have any work," he says. "I was just getting mall shows on my own. I was traveling a lot, doing that just to make money. I wasn't taking my career too seriously. I was too young and had too much fame—I didn't know what to do with it. I didn't realize what I had. I didn't really know what I wanted."

In the long run, James started experiencing the repercussions of not having stable work. With the perils of financial troubles looming from the horizon, he decided to man up and do something about his life once and for all.

"In 2012, I went to Viva and told them I wanted to be successful," he shares. "I told them I wanted to sing. After hearing me sing, they agreed to help me release an album. Great things come out of desperation, so that's what it took for me to develop my passion for performing. I never realized I had a passion for music until I started doing mall shows when I was freelancing. I learned some songs. I even learned to play the guitar, and that's when I really fell in love with singing."

After signing a contract and becoming a talent of Viva Artists

Agency, James launched his self-titled debut album in 2013. It contained two covers, two original songs composed by James himself and two more tracks from Viva which were written specially for him.

But Viva's plans of reviving James' career didn't stop at just making music. In fact, they had big plans for the young man and envisioned him to become the next matinee idol.

"Viva wanted to put me in a movie straight away but they wanted to wait for the perfect role—with the right cast, the right story, the right everything. That's why it took one year. And just when I was starting to have my doubts, they told me, 'We found it! Here's the role!' Finally, I was picked specially for a role in a movie."

That movie, of course, is none other than the box-office hit *Diary ng Panget*, which instantly catapulted him and his onscreen partner Nadine Lustre to the popularity he once enjoyed after his *Pinoy Big Brother* victory. Based on the best-selling book of the same title, it was one of the first Wattpad stories to have ever been made into a movie. *Diary ng Panget* was released on April 2, 2014 and earned at least P119.5 million in the course of its four-week run.

Now that he's starting to make a serious impact in showbiz, James is more at ease because this time around, he already knows how to properly handle his renewed fame. "They say, 'Strike while the iron is hot,'" he remarks, "So we followed up more movies and the ride has gone non-stop from there."

Reaping the Fruits

With the projects he has done in a fairly short period of time, James can proudly

say he has come a long way as an actor.

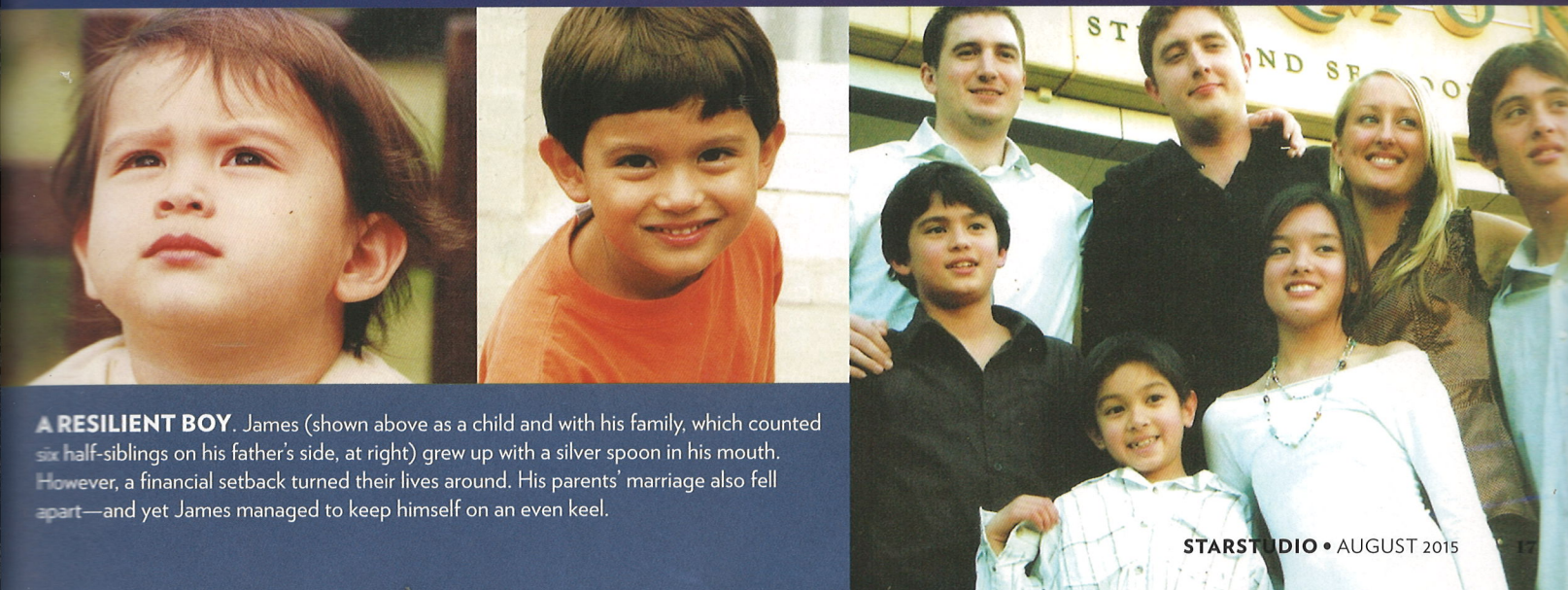
But now that he has a new *teleserye* under his belt, James is happy to declare he has gotten his groove back, and he's more than ready to tackle his latest role as Clark Jones in *On the Wings of Love*.

Even if he has gotten so busy with his acting commitments, James still finds time to enrich his other passion, which is making music. In fact, just last Valentine's Day, he launched his second album, *Reid Alert*, under Viva Records, which he describes as "a real OPM album." When it was released digitally, it debuted at number two on the Philippines's iTunes pop music album charts just behind Taylor Swift's *1989*.

"All of the songs were written by Thyro Alfaro and Yumi Lacsamana," he continues. "Thyro writes a lot of songs for Sarah Geronimo. I actually have a lot of influence on the album because Thyro knows me. We have worked so many times before so he knows the kind of feel that I want. And it's really just... all the songs are really catchy. For me it's really good music. I think it's, like, one of the best albums—I'm not being biased because it's my own album. It's actually Thyro's music and I'm just singing on it. But it's one of the best OPM pop albums out there."

Following the success of his second record, James reveals he has plans to release a third one, saying, "Right now, I'm working on some stuff on my own."

With the steady flow of projects coming his way since *Ang Diary ng Panget*, James shares that so far, the only breaks he's ever had would total to five. "I had one over labor week last year, which was only seven days, then I was back to working non-stop every single day until November 1 through 5 when I



A RESILIENT BOY. James (shown above as a child and with his family, which counted six half-siblings on his father's side, at right) grew up with a silver spoon in his mouth. However, a financial setback turned their lives around. His parents' marriage also fell apart—and yet James managed to keep himself on an even keel.

went on a trip up North. And then after that, I worked again every day until Christmas. I had a short break during the holidays then back to work after the New Year. And then it was non-stop again until the Holy Week of this year when I went to Tokyo alone because I was so over fatigued. I was tired and stressed out so I went to Tokyo just to be alone and to get refreshed—get away from the Filipino pop culture for just a minute to breathe.”

Fortunately, James has now learned to adapt to his hectic schedule more easily as he has grown accustomed to the daily grind in showbiz. “They say because I’m young, I don’t need



Gray tank top and chambray button-down by Forever 21 Men and leatherette bomber jacket by Bench

On a High

With her blossoming acting and music career, there’s no denying it’s Nadine Lustre’s time to shine—and with the passion she displays for her work, that sparkle sure looks like it’s meant to last

Nadine Lustre arrives at the satellite office of Viva Entertainment in Quezon City for her interview with *StarStudio*, wearing a plain white shirt, blue jeans and sneakers. Sure, this is often used to describe celebrities, but for the 21-year-old singer-actress, it seems most apt—Nadine looks so low-key and unassuming you wouldn’t think she is one of the country’s most popular young stars.

It’s a few minutes past 11 in the morning, and she just came from taping *On the Wings of Love*, her first *teleserye* with ABS-CBN. She sits on a sofa, and jokingly asks her road manager Barbie if she can remain seated there for the whole day.

Barbie smiles; he knows his talent is kidding. Nadine has a scheduled guest appearance for the opening of a shopping center in Manila in three hours, and she still needs to have her makeup done. But like a consummate professional, there’s no hint of panic in her voice. Nadine

knows, and everyone around her knows, she’ll get the job done.

In Control

Nadine, the eldest child of parents Ulysses and Myraquel, hails from Quezon City. Her father had a trucking business while her mother had a small retail business which she ran from their home. She lived a simple life with her siblings, although Nadine admits being spoiled at the time as she was her parents’ only child for six years. It was a typical childhood for the most part.

“My childhood is very simple *lang*. *Medyo batang kalye*. So *habulan, ganyan*—the usual *na ginagawa ng bata*. Nothing really special. I mean, *sabi nila* I was really hyper,” she says. “There was one time *sa kasal ng tita ko sa Paco Church*, my father ended up pulling me inside the car kasi ‘*yung fountain, gusto ko raw tumalon ‘dun*.”

It didn’t take long, however, before Nadine’s life turned from normal to extraordinary.

Upon the prodding of her mother, Nadine became a child star of sorts via *Storyland*, a weekly children’s variety show on the television channel that was then known as RPN-9, when she was nine years old. She also did the usual rounds of television commercials and modeling.

Nadine admits she really didn’t want to enter showbiz; hyper but a little insecure, being a performer was the farthest thing from her mind. What she wanted to be was a visual artist. But young as she was, the prospect of being



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sleep and it's true," he muses. "There are things I can do in terms of work that other people can't survive, but that's because I'm young and healthy. But whenever I get the chance, I go to the gym because I need to keep fit. It's the only way I can keep up."

Despite his fame, there are things in his life which still haven't changed—like his love for cooking. "I still want to be able to cook, and I still do. When my dad goes back from Australia, he brings home meat. I only like cooking when it's worth eating. So he really brings good quality meat from Australia here, then I cook it."

But more than his culinary prowess remaining intact, it is how he still

prioritizes his family—a trait which he credits getting from his father—that is, perhaps, what is most admirable about the young actor. And with his achievements in showbiz thus far, he is just happy that he can finally give back to his family.

"After my success last year, I made a lot of money. Now that I'm in the position to help my family, that's exactly what I did. When my little brother was having trouble in Australia—he was getting bullied a lot and he was having a hard time at school—I asked him to come and live with me here so that I could take care of him, because his mum was not doing a very good job.

Now, he lives here. My older brother Tom was also having a hard time in Australia so I asked him to come live with me. And then my sister Lauren, who is only a couple of weeks older than me—she's always been independent, but she really wanted to be successful like me so I told her to come here so I could help her out."

Now, says James, they're all where they should be. "Now there's four of us here in the Philippines, just like it used to be when we were kids. We're all back together in the same house, under one roof. And that's what my dad had always wanted, for all of us to be together." ★ —MOC

independent appealed to her. She would earn her own money, an opportunity to buy the things she wanted without the help of her parents. Most of all, it gave her the semblance of being in control at a young age. So without fully understanding what she was getting herself into, she flew straight into show business.

Because of her showbiz commitments, she finished elementary school two years behind her peers. And a vacation with her family to the United States right after school made her months behind enrollment for high school. Being a couple of years older than her would-be classmates—and with a showbiz career that seems to be beckoning—Nadine and her parents decided she should finish high school via homeschooling.

Missing Out

In theory, homeschooling was the perfect set-up for Nadine, who was well on her way to climbing the ladder to showbiz success. It gave her the luxury of time to fulfill her showbiz commitments without sacrificing her studies.

And since she did her school work at home, Nadine felt she's missing out. Apart from showbiz commitments, she had, in her own words, nothing. "I didn't have friends, I had no activities. I was doing TV commercials and print ads, but my life was boring," Nadine explains.

Despite that lonely feeling, Nadine was starting to enjoy performing and

singing. She also loved dancing. And she was earning good money, enough to help her parents with their finances. So in 2009, when Nadine was 15 years old, her mother yet again urged her to audition—this time to be part of the Viva Entertainment's all-female teen girl group Pop Girls.

Originally composed of Nadine, twins Lai and Mar Bustria, Rose Van Ginkel and Schai Sigris, the group was launched during the 2010 concert of fellow Viva artist Sarah Geronimo. The plan was to take the group international, the same way Korea has exported K-Pop to other countries in and out of Asia. It was Nadine's biggest break in showbiz—and a chance to experience the same things girls her age do.

"With Pop Girls, it was a different experience. It was really fun *kasi may mga kasama ka*. You were in a group. It was different *kasi* I wasn't used to being trained every day in singing, dancing. As in every day," she says. "*At 'pag may nagkamali na isa, uulit ka sa umpisa*. I was really trained *na* everything I do, *kailangan maayos para hindi ka uulit*."

It was hard work, but it paid off. Nadine was working non-stop and she had the opportunity to perform constantly and regularly. If she was missing out on something because of showbiz, it suddenly felt like showbiz was giving her something in return for what she had lost.

The Fall

It suddenly felt like showbiz was the right decision. So in 2011, when the

opportunity came to become more than just a part of a girl group, Nadine took the chance. With Schai (who is known by the name of Shy Carlos), she left Pop Girls and went solo.

"Me and Shy, we had an opportunity with TV5. At the time, Channel 7 was saying *na palitan na lang kami*. They didn't want to pull out the group *kasi sayang naman kasi kawawa 'yung tatlong maiiwan*," she says.

Nadine became one of the many young stars who played supporting roles in a number of TV5 shows. Significantly, she starred in the weekly youth-oriented show *Bagets: Just Got Lucky* in May 2011 and the daily soap opera *P.S. I Love You* in November 2011. *Bagets* was a remake of the popular youth-oriented movie franchise which originally starred Aga Muhlach, Herbert Bautista and William Martinez, among others; while *P.S. I Love You* was inspired by the movie starring Gabby Concepcion and Sharon Cuneta. As one of the network's stars, she was also a regular in *Hey, It's Saberday*, TV5's Saturday noontime variety which was made up mostly of young artists.

She enjoyed the experience of doing *Bagets* the most, since the cast was mostly composed of young actors, including former Pop Girls member Shy. With *P.S. I Love You*, she got to dip her toes in doing drama, a new territory for the young performer. Nadine was happy. She got to act her age while working and earning good money.

Then in an instant, Nadine lost everything. After 40 episodes and an

eight-month run, TV5 cancelled *Bagets: Just Got Lucky, Hey, It's Saberday* and *P.S. I Love You* in February of 2012.

"Yung time na nawala 'yung Bagets, nawala lahat, I was thinking to myself, 'Dapat pala hindi na ako nag-showbiz.' I was regretting entering showbiz," she shares.

Nadine further shares: "My career was going up sa TV5. I thought it was going up. *Tapos nu'ng nawala 'yung lahat ng projects*, it went down. That's when I realized *na siguro kaya lagi akong nagrereklamo, hindi ko sineryoso*. In the middle of it, *nu'ng nawala 'yung Bagets*, it became boring."

She started regretting her decisions—her decision to further pursue showbiz, her decision to be homeschooled. "I was regretting *na, 'Sana di ako nag-homeschool.*' I wasn't able to experience having a prom, *hindi ako nagkapag-school fair, wala akong barkada,*" Nadine says.

Nadine got depressed. Although they're close, Nadine felt she couldn't tell her mother about what she was feeling. "I didn't want to disappoint them. I didn't want her to feel bad *na, 'Bakit ko ba siya pinilit?'*"

Fast Lane

Nadine spent most of 2012 and 2013 feeling low most of the time. She focused on school, and tried to get back in the commercial and modeling grind. She became a student jock at a radio station, RX 93.1. It was her way of getting rid of the big black dog that was depression hounding her everyday life. But despite the setback, she made the decision—difficult as it may have been—to remain in showbiz even though the prospects were not too bright.

The biggest factor for her choice not to quit showbiz? "I guess the people around me just wanted me to keep going."

She singled out two particular people—her family, who she was able to help out financially due to showbiz; and Viva's big boss Vic del Rosario, who continuously reassured her and told her to wait it out, because he was sure her big break would come.

"Kasi before, *nu'ng nasa TV5 ako*, I liked the thought of me being able to take (my family) out. In a way, *gusto ko na nagbibigay ako sa kanila. Ayoko na sila 'yung nagbibigay sa akin.* I want to help them din, in a way," Nadine says.

A SIMPLE GIRL WITH SIMPLE DREAMS.

Nadine is the eldest in a brood of four. Her childhood was simple until she entered show business and her life became less than ordinary. (Bottom) Nadine, in white, with parents Myraquel Paguia-Lustre and Dong Lustre, and siblings Ezequiel, Isaiah and Naomi Alexa



"And Boss Vic encouraged me. *Sinasabi niya, 'Okay lang 'yan. 'Pag dumating na 'yan, mag-iiba buhay mo. Gaganda.' S'yempre*, we all want the good stuff *naman*. That's what wheels us in. *Sa akin, meron pa ring hope*. But *siguro, mga 70 percent*, I really wanted to quit. The rest, there's still hope. So *sabi ko, bahala na.*"

During the latter part of 2013, Boss Vic told her the good news. "*Lagi naman akong kinakausap ni Boss Vic*. He always tells me *na, 'Hindi, pagtiyagaan mo lang. Darating din 'yung magandang project.*' *Ini-encourage niya ako na ituloy ko pa rin kasi* at the time I was really planning to quit *na*. Feeling *ko wala na, wala na ito,*" Nadine reveals. "Then, he told me about *Diary ng Panget.*"

Diary ng Panget was Viva's movie adaptation of the Wattpad (a computer/Internet based program where community members can share stories that they write) novel of the same name. It started Viva's series of book-to-movie adaptations that began with *ABNKKBSNPLAKo* by Bob Ong.

Nadine was cast as Eya Rodriguez, a "poor plain Jane" who became the personal maid of pretty rich boy Cross Sanford, played by James Reid. From a workless actress, Nadine was about to headline a potentially big movie project with extremely hefty expectations.

"I was really excited, but I was also nervous. *Kasi I know the book*. My friends were really into the book. So I was nervous. I really had to give justice to the character. I didn't want to disappoint anyone *kasi ang daming na-in love sa story. Nakakadismaya sa readers ng book* if you didn't do it properly. And *s'yempre*, my name was on the line always. If *hindi ko siya magawa ng maayos, hindi ako effective,*" she says.

It was Nadine's first major role—ever. Meanwhile, the movie would serve as James' comeback of sorts after being off the showbiz radar for a couple of years. The odds were stacked against them; launching a successful love team via a movie without prior appearances on a regular TV drama wasn't unheard of, but it was definitely unusual. To say that *Ang Diary ng Panget* was a make-or-break project was an understatement. If the movie fails to become a hit, it was game over for Nadine.

But it wasn't.

The movie which opened in theaters April of 2014, became a surprise hit. According to box-office tallying site Box Office Mojo, the movie earned over P100 million.

"I felt so relieved *na* I got through it, *na* we made it. I was a little bit emotional, *kasi shucks, buti na lang di ako nag-quit*. I was emotional also *kasi* I was thankful to the people who kept pushing me forward, *na nagsasabi sa akin na huwag akong sumuko*. I couldn't believe it. I felt I was dreaming *lang*," Nadine enthuses.

She adds: "*Para akong naka-strap sa rocket ship instead na plane. Parang nasa fast lane eh*. One project, and then boom. After that, my life was totally different."

The movie also created the James and Nadine love team, dubbed as JaDine by their fans. More important, *Diary ng Panget* also helped Nadine move past her depression.

Nadine further says: "*Pakiramdam ko parang nasa cheering squad ako na may nag-lift sa akin at hindi na ako bumalik. Paghagis sa aking ganu'n, pataas pa rin ako*."

Last year, Nadine also launched her self-titled debut album under Viva Records, much to the delight of her growing number of fans.

Steady

And now, with the success came the intrigues. "*Siyempre lahat naman tayo, we don't want that. We don't want people talking bad about us. Noong una, 'di ako sanay*. I would feel bad. *Pero nasanay na rin ako*," Nadine says.

In particular, there are netizens who would bash Nadine for her resemblance to fellow ABS-CBN star Kathryn Bernardo, arguably one of the most popular young stars in the country today.

"*Tayo talaga, we Filipinos, we like comparing. We have that attitude na, 'Hindi, mas maganda si ganyan, si ganito*.' We're like that. *Kahit sobrang layo naman*. So it's really not her fault," Nadine says. "I get affected before, *kasi* I'm not used to it. But *nasanay na ako*. Ngayon, *kapag tinatanong ako about it or bina-bash ako about it, gusto kong sabihin na 'wala na bang bago?' Kasi ang tagal na*."

Admittedly, Nadine is the type of person who tends to fight back against bashers. But as a public figure, she knows when to step back. "Before, *naiinis ako*. On Instagram, I have bashers, *kung anu-ano sinasabi. Gusto kong patulan*. I want to say, '*Ano ba 'yan, ang lame naman ng binabato mo*.' *Gusto ko siyang patulan kasi can't you*

think of any other pun or bashing than that? *Pero now, tinatawanan ko lang*."

Filipinos also like pitting celebrities against one another. "We're not trying to out-shadow anyone. We're just happy we're here, James and I. *Kasi 'yun, kapag na-stuck na 'yun sa utak mo na you're not competing, we're just here, we just want to enjoy what we're doing, malinaw na malinaw sa iyo na you won't be threatened by anyone*. You'd be happy *na magiging kaibigan mo pa sila*," Nadine shares.

Being in a successful love team also means fans would move heaven and earth to see their idols end up together in real life. This is also the case with the JaDine love team. But Nadine says, "*Hindi naman kailangan maging kami para maging love team*. We're not a real-life couple. We're a love team."

The two are working on *On the Wings of Love*, their first teleserye since signing up with ABS-CBN in 2014. Helmed by first-time television director Antoinette Jadaone (the director behind the hit movies *That Thing Called Tadhana* and *She's My Boss*), *On the Wings of Love* is a fitting project for James and Nadine, as they aim to work on more mature projects. It'll be a challenge for Nadine as she admits being scared of doing drama. "But I will do my best," she says.

Ready

What's next for Nadine? No one knows for sure—and Nadine herself doesn't want to speculate or plan what comes after this. All she knows is she's happy. Nadine has, after all, expressed how to lose what she perceives as showbiz success in an instant. All she knows is she wants to keep her foot planted on the ground. She's one of showbiz's darlings, yet she herself wouldn't believe her own hype. She's taking it one step at a time.

After *Diary ng Panget*, Nadine says she changed her attitude towards work.

"*Naging workaholic nga ako bigla eh*. I learned to love it. I enjoy," she shares. "*Kahit pagod, kahit nakakapagod, kahit stressful, I'm still enjoying*. I don't know, *hindi ko alam kung paano, pero bigla na lang siyang nagbago*. I had a change of heart towards show business. Now, *kahit mainit, kahit sunod-sunod 'yung trabaho*, sometimes I complain, but then *parang hindi eh. Gusto ko ito*."

She has no long-term dreams or goals in her showbiz career. "Gusto ko may thrill. Like now. '*Ano kaya mangyayari sa akin in 10 years?*'

Nadine realizes that her place as one of today's most popular young stars is something she has to work hard at. She's prepared to do what it takes, including tackling roles she finds difficult. "But I will do my best," she says.



Black satin dress by Ryan June Castillo

Asa'n kaya ako nu'n?' Ayoko na planado na in 10 years, na dapat ito na ang naabot ko, na dapat ganito na ako."

Again, it's her father's words that stick to her. "*Sabi niya sa akin, huwag akong magbabago. Kung paano ako dati, dapat ganu'n pa rin ako...Para* I'll still get surprised. *Kasi once na pumasok na sa utak ko itong lahat, mawawala 'yung thrill. Sabi niya rin na gawin ko na agad 'yung best ko para hindi na ako mag-regret next time*."

The young actress finishes her interview while having her makeup done. It's almost one in the afternoon; Barbie tells her they have to leave "in five minutes" if they want to get to their appointment on time. She stands up from the makeup chair and asks for lunch (because of her busy schedule, Nadine says she has no time to work out, although it doesn't really show from how she looks). Despite hardly getting any rest the night before, Nadine's performance during the opening of the shopping center in Manila goes off without a hitch. Her appearance even made it to the trending topic list of social media site Twitter.

This isn't really surprising. "*Wala naman po talaga akong ibang gusto. Gusto ko lang makatulong sa pamilya. Gusto ko lang may masaya, may napapasaya ako*. Like '*yung supporters, 'yung fans napapasaya namin sila*. '*Yun lang, okay na ako dun*,'" Nadine says. ★
—CS