

EXCLUSIVE

A HAPPY PLACE

Country music star Jana Kramer
is exactly where she should be,
personally and professionally

Words by Vanessa Pascale

Photo Credit: Jack Guy

One *Tree Hill* fans like myself remember Jana Kramer as Alex Dupre or they may associate her with *Friday Night Lights*, *90210*, or *Entourage*, which are among the various TV shows and films she has appeared in. But in recent years, the 32-year-old has transitioned into a full on country music star—with help from *OTH* which is where she debuted a few songs including her self-written song, “I Won’t Give Up.” In 2012, her debut single “Why Ya Wanna” went platinum, and she was chosen by Blake Shelton to open his Ten Times Crazier tour, and received the Academy of Country Music Award for New Female Vocalist of the Year in 2013. This year, Jana was nominated for the Female Vocalist of the Year Award by the ACMA and Female Video of the Year for “I Got the Boy” by the CMT Music Awards. It’s only been about five years and she’s already made her mark on the country music scene.

It’s a couple of hours before Jana’s Gramercy Theatre concert when I join her backstage. She just flew into New York City earlier today. “I have spit up on my shirt ‘cause I was traveling with my daughter this morning,” she warns me after hugging me hello and complimenting my look. The country singer-songwriter-actress is wearing a black tank top, patterned shorts, and a necklace with a tiny J. Her wavy, ombre tresses fall halfway down her back and dark, thick lashes frame her brown eyes. I pull up a chair across from where she’s curled up on the couch.

Every weekend since her daughter Jolie was 4-weeks-old, Jana has been performing at concerts, fairs, and festivals. It’s hard to believe that Jana had a baby only 6 months ago; the 5’4” musician is so skinny. “I have an amazing trainer; she actually

trains Carrie Underwood, and Lee Ann Womack. We worked out my entire pregnancy, so that helped me bounce back pretty fast too,” says Jana. Seven days after Jolie was born, Jana was walking up the hills in her Nashville neighborhood and lifting weights the following week.

To make her transition from an actress to a country singer, she knew she had to be in Nashville. “I moved there without having a record deal because I wanted people to know this is what I want to do. You have to commit to it 100%... You

need to be with songwriters and in a community, so that’s what I did. I love California but I don’t think I’m a California girl. I’m more of a Midwest girl, and Nashville is more my speed,” says the Michigan born and raised beauty about her move six years ago from Los Angeles to the country music capital.

Music is something that Jana has always wanted to pursue, especially having grown up in a musical family. “I just kinda fell into the

entertainment side of things. I knew that I didn’t have the best voice. I didn’t have the big Martina McBride- Carrie Underwood- voice, so I just kinda shied away from it. I thought it would be easier to hide behind a character than actually sing.” Eventually, her love of country music won out. “I want to tell a story and country music has helped me through the best and worst times of my life, so I wanted to be able to give that back. I stopped apologizing for not being the best, biggest singer because I’m telling a story. I have emotion. I’m hoping I can help someone through it. I love music.”

The masses have spoken and they love Jana’s music. Her sophomore album *thirty one* debuted at no. 3 on the country

OH SNAP!

Jana has been using the bee filter a lot on Snapchat, including with her daughter. “And we’re a bee family,” she laughs. “It’s ridiculous. I hated Snapchat for the longest time. I deleted it 5 times before I even tried it. Then I was out on the road last week and now I’m addicted. You can see people’s personality too, so that’s kinda nice. I feel like people can kinda get to know me on a weird, more annoying level. I love the bee filter ‘cause I could look however and I’m a bee!” Follow Jana at [Kramergirl248](#)

albums chart and was no. 10 on the *Billboard* Top 200 all-genre chart. *Thirty one* features 11 songs, half of which were written by Jana, including “Boomerang,” “Bullet” featuring Steven Tyler, “I Got the Boy,” and “Circles.” Her favorite self-written songs are “Dance In the Rain” and “Last Song.” “‘Last Song’ was right after a breakup. I walked into the writing room and I was like I have to write a

very raw and emotional song about literally this being the last song I ever sing about him... It’s just the most authentic real song I’ve written and it was just such therapy. But I feel like I’m better at writing ballads. I have a hard time writing up-tempos because ballads just call my heart more.”

Her gold-certified top 3 single “I Got the Boy” was named one of the 25 Best Country

Songs of 2015 by *The New York Times* and one of the Best Songs of 2015 by *Rolling Stone*. “‘I Got the Boy’ is a song I’ve been trying to write for years about my high school sweetheart. I remember the first time I heard that song. I was like, ‘Holy shit, someone wrote it better than I did.’ And it was 100% my story.” And then there’s “Bullet” featuring Steven Tyler. “I had just broken up with this guy and my therapist said, ‘You know what? Honestly, you dodged a bullet.’ I was like I’m going to write that right now, because I’m leaving here to go to a writing session. We wrote it with one of Aerosmith’s producers and he was like, ‘Man, Steven would sound so good on this song... He recorded it in L.A. and I recorded it in Nashville. It was so cool.’”

Since that song was written, life has taken a turn toward happily ever after. Last year, Jana married former NFL player

Mike Caussin and together they had daughter Jolie. “I love my baby girl and I’m so happy. I’m so glad we have that beautiful baby girl together.” What’s a Sunday like at the Caussin house? “We go to a non-denominational church in Nashville, and then we’ll come back and just hang out at the house and play with my daughter... I just like to be at home with my dogs, play with


my daughter, be outside, and go for a hike. And then when we put her down, drink wine, and watch TV shows that I need to catch up on,” she says with a smile that show off her dimples. Jana’s world finally feels complete. “I’ve always felt like there was a part of me missing, where I was never truly happy. Even in relationships, I was always trying to search... I’ve been successful in music. I’ve been successful in acting. I’m like, why do I still feel not happy? The second I had Jolie, she was my missing link. I finally feel like I have a

purpose now. I’m meant to be a mom at the end of the day.”

She talks about her relationships quite candidly and asks me questions too, which tends not to happen in interviews. With her, it’s more of a conversation. Being a country singer suits her, since she’s open about sharing her emotions to help others. What relationship advice can you offer? “Find your happiness first and don’t just be with someone because you’re afraid of being alone. I think that was always my issue. I’ve always jumped into relationships because I was always afraid of being alone. And at this point in my life, being on the road and with Jolie, I’ve finally found my content and I’m happy. But it’s still, it’s just hard. Marriage is tough at the end of the day. But be the best person you can be and if you can close your eyes and say that you were, you’re doing alright.”

One Tree Hill

“Aw, I love Sophia [Bush]. She’s sweet,” she says when I mention Sophia was our former cover girl too. The two still keep in touch. “*One Tree Hill* was great, it opened my career for music and I’ll forever be thankful to the creator for that. I had a great time and my character — she was imperfectly perfect and that’s why I loved playing her. She was a hot mess. I was like, ‘What kind of shit am I going to get into today?’ I love that my character was with Austin Nichols [who played Julian], ‘cause he’s like my favorite human being ever. He’s awesome.”



What word
would you use
to describe
yourself?

"I would say loving. I love my friends; I would do anything for my friends. I would do anything for my family. I would drop anything to help people."



Now that Jana has established herself as a country singer, she would like to get back to acting and has been reading some scripts. Ideally she would like to “mold the two back together a little bit more,” and pursue acting when music is slow during the winter months. “It just needs to be something that I’m passionate about, because I don’t want to do something just to do it. I don’t want to take time away from my family if it’s not something that would be good for me. I would like to play something more

like reporter-y or lawyer-esque, something that will challenge me a little bit,” she says, then mentions wanting to act in a time period movie or on a TV show like *Empire* or *House of Cards*.

While she’s trying to find the right script, she’s writing songs, playing every weekend, and enjoying family life. And she’s carving out time for a little rest and relaxation soon. “I’m going on a girls’ trip in October. I’m partnered with Diamond Resorts and

they have an amazing resort in Cabo, so I’m going to go out with the girls for a week, which will be nice,” she says with a big smile. **ML**

Keep up with Jana on
Twitter: *Kramergirl*, Instagram: *Kramergirl*,
<https://www.facebook.com/janakramermusic/>,
and www.janakramer.com.

We Want More!

What do you think fans would be surprised to find out about you?

I can be shy, which is weird I guess, 'cause I'm out performing on stage but if it's a small group and I have to publicly speak, I get really shy. I don't like to make speeches.

What are your tattoos?

One is believe. Wedding date and daughter's birthday. An arrow on my foot for forward steps. I have a feather on my ribcage. Serenity here. My mom and I have a cross on the back of our neck. I like tattoos.

What are you watching?

Scandal, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Bachelor in Paradise*, all the real classy shows. The Olympics now. I'll watch the Kardashians. I like to watch other people's drama to get me out of my own. It's a definite guilty pleasure. I'm always so envious of Kim's Snaps. She's got that voice every time she snaps (she lowers her voice to sound soft and sexy). Right? I love her.

Who are you listening to?

I like to listen to old things like Celine Dion, I like to bust out to her. The Eagles, James Taylor, anything that's slow. I love slow music, it just makes me happy, I know that's weird, the most depressing music makes me happy.

Favorite girl movie?

Just saw *Bad Moms* and it was hilarious. *10 Things I Hate About You*, and *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*. I can quote *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*. Love that movie. I met Matthew McConaughey and I was like I'm not letting go of you, Benny-boo-boo-boo. And he was like, 'Oh, you're one of those girls.' I so embarrassed myself, but I didn't even care. I was like I'm going to go down this train, I don't care.

Who would you like to work with?

I would love to do a duet with Adam Levine. I think he's got a cool voice. If not Adam, I think Colbie Caillat would be cool, 'cause I like that chill vibe.

What about onscreen?

I'd love to work with Hugh Grant. *Notting Hill* is one of my favorite movies. Hugh Grant and/or Julia Roberts. They're my two faves. Or Kate Hudson, if I could pick a girl that I wish I had the style, everything, it would be Kate Hudson, 'cause I feel like she's just so beautiful without trying. She's so pretty —her style, her body.

Have you met her?

I haven't. Do you know her? Let's Facetime her! I buy Fabletics, come on.