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# SUGAR AND SPICE AND MODERN VICE

**THE PURE IMAGINATION (AND DETERMINATION)  
OF SHOEMAKERS JORDAN & JENSEN ADONI**

Photographed by HARRY FELLOWS Styled by CELESTE LINDSEY & LIZABETH CERVANTES

Entering the Modern Vice factory is like walking into Willy Wonka's workshop, where all of the irresistible candy has become brightly colored shoes. It's a delectable treat for any shoe aficionado. There are mint green lasts, neon pink and yellow rubber soles and a small room full of perfectly weathered leathers, from rich brown to lime green snake and every color in between.

The visual inspiration and network of machinery is especially incredible considering that before Jensen and Jordan Adoni — Modern Vice co-founders and designers — took over the floor, it was just an empty loft. Now, the space holds both the Modern Vice factory and showroom. It hasn't taken the two long to settle in and produce orders for large accounts. "We started Modern Vice over a year ago as an import business," explains Jordan. The brothers began with sneakers, creating a dressy, versatile model that could be worn for any occasion; "to work, to hang out with friends, to go to a business meeting and to a night club," explains Jensen. Since the factory opened in February 2012, they've expanded from sneakers, but continue to incorporate this concept of versatility into all of their designs.

The Modern Vice Collection is the newest addition to the brand. This line, conceptualized in July 2011, consists of higher-end domestic products made entirely in their NYC factory, a point of pride for Modern Vice. The Adoni brothers joined forces with co-production manager David Siskin — jokingly referred to as "their father from another mother" — and collaborators Natalie and Dylana Suarez. It turns out that fashion doesn't just run in the Adoni family; style bloggers Natalie (Natalie Off Duty) and Dylana (Color Me Nana) Suarez are also siblings. Together, the brother and sister duos created the Natalie & Dylana Suarez x Modern Vice Collection, which launched in September 2012 with the "Jett" style and, shortly after, the "Benni" design.

How did this collaboration come about? "I used to go through blogs for inspiration a lot," says Jensen. "I worked for my father's old ventures — Pour La Victoire and Kelsi Dagger, and we always put up mood boards and I



always checked out what the cool girls around town were wearing. So, I came across Natalie."

When it came time to open up the factory, Jordan got in touch with her. "I brought Natalie in here, and I think we had three samples that we made by hand — the shittiest shoes. We still have them. If I showed them to you, you'd die. And I was like, 'we're gonna make these fuckin' shoes!' I was cursing, going a million miles per hour." Despite the fact that "[Natalie] was just looking at [him] like [he] was crazy," Jordan's enthusiasm must have been contagious. Natalie decided to come on board, bringing her equally stylish sister Dylana to the collaboration.

The company is certainly a family affair, and it wasn't long before Natalie and Jordan's relationship moved beyond just a professional one. During part of our interview the boys' father Jay Adoni interrupts us to give Jordan and Natalie (who have both been sick) some good advice. "Get chicken soup from Ben's [next door.] Listen to me, it's called Jewish penicillin. It's got special broth. You want me to order it for you? Get chicken soup with some matzo balls and noodles, matzo balls on the side. Make him drink the whole thing; you drink the whole thing tonight. You'll feel better." The interruption is a perfect portrayal of this hilarious, shoe-obsessed Israeli family.





models' own clothes  
cuff SPECIES BY THE THOUSANDS  
shoes MODERN VICE COLLECTION JETT JODPHUR  
in LIPSTICK RED

**"IT'S MORE LIKE AN ATTITUDE. IT'S SO A GIRL OR  
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"We were all in the shoe business, on both my mother's and my father's side," explains Jordan. Jay founded a shoe brand and manufacturing company. Their mother was very integral to Jay's factory and line in the '70s and '80s, and owned her own footwear store. "I think it's just in the blood," says Jensen.

With great industry coaches available to guide the brothers in their fashion venture, there was another key element that helped accelerate the realization of their business and production. In the process of building Modern Vice, Jensen and Jordan discovered Klingbeil, a 60-year old ice skate manufacturing company that was closing down. They recognized a great opportunity, bought Klingbeil and its machinery and moved the entity from Jamaica, Queens to the heart of the fashion district on West 38th street where design and production are in full swing.

The Modern Vice shoe line is exquisite, each shoe handmade. It all started with the Jett style. "[Natalie and Dylana] had a really good idea for a vintage-looking bootie," explains Jensen or as Natalie calls it, "[our] dream boot." It's made from the finest Italian leathers, with three buckles and tasteful studs on the back. According to Color Me Nana (Dylana's blog), they are "made with a hand-touched feel and infused with pure rock and roll." Natalie explains that during the design process, Dylana was reading a book about Joan Jett's band The Runaways. Thinking that Joan Jett's '70s rock 'n' roll style matched the booties she decided to name the style the Jett.

The second wildly popular shoe design — a below ankle, lace-up bootie that comes in pony hair — was named Benni, but not because of the Elton John classic "Bennie and the Jets." Natalie laughs, commenting that she finds it funny that they're always talking about Benni[s] and the Jetts. But Jordan explains that it wasn't titled after the song; the name just came about naturally.

Designing the shoes, like the naming process, came about organically as well. "It was a real collaboration, honestly," says Jordan. Almost an illustration of that point, Natalie finishes his sentence: from "the sketches, the inspiration, the boards," to which Jordan adds "the materials, to finding the right last. There is not one part of this that any of us didn't have something to say about... We're constantly throwing ideas around about colors and hardware, and this and that. There's bits and pieces of us all in it." There seems to be bits and pieces of everyone in the Jetts, actually. Natalie sums up why they're so versatile: "[they're] kind of for everybody."

While inspiration comes from their personal styles, they don't design with a particular person in mind. "It's more like an attitude. It's so a girl or a guy who's wearing the shoes can emulate a certain look and feel that the shoes are an exclamation point," says Jensen. "They're the most powerful part of their outfit, they tie it together. Look at her outfit right now (pointing to Natalie, who's sporting the fuschia Bennis) and look at the shoes. The shoes pop."

Part of this "pop" must come from the vast range of colors they use, a statement that Jordan agrees with. "The colors are a big part. My brother travels to Italy and finds the best leathers in the world." The Spring/Summer colors for the Jett are particularly exciting: turquoise, cornflower blue, pink, lemon; one would really think she'd fallen into Willy Wonka's factory.

Other exciting new developments for the Spring/Summer season include color-changing leather, neon espadrilles, handbags and a new line, Giraffe Walk.

When asked about the color-changing leather, Jordan explains the chemical technology. "It's like a solvent, and you take a heat gun and you can put the heat wherever you want and the color from underneath comes out. So there's white, let's say, and when you put the heat, neon color will come out."

More experimentation with color will lead to neon. According to Jensen, "we have neon espadrille bottoms that are really funky," and will be composed, in part, of neon rope. Jordan also discussed the development of a "whole loafer program with neon trim" which he thinks will "be huge in summer."

While the shoes make the man (men), the Adonis have been hard at work on expanding their accessory production to include handbags. "One of my brother's specialties is bags," explains Jordan. They've been collaborating with Natalie and Dylana to expand the Jett and Benni line to bags. Natalie notes the first one they finished is "red suede."

"We want to go to the biggest department stores in the world with it," says Jordan. "We think it's that good. It's like the Jett: it's fresh, it's new. We think that this bag has huge potential." They also plan to expand outside of the Benni and Jett lines. "We have a ton of bags planned that will go to the Modern Vice Collection. We have backpacks" whole loafer program with neon trim" which he thinks will "be huge in summer."

The last big thing they have planned for Spring/Summer that they can talk about ("We don't want to give away all of our secrets," jokes Jensen), is Giraffe Walk, an eco-friendly footwear line. Artisans from Chennai, India use vegetable tanned leather to weave the uppers, or the parts of the shoe above the sole. The soles are also composed of vegetable tanned leather, and manufactured in Italy. They are then finished in the Modern Vice factory, with a special lasting system — each is hand-stitched on the bottom. They come in cool colors, and look like flats with tiny heels. One style has laces, too.

Although their shoes are being sold at "maybe 70 stores," according to Jordan, they definitely want to open up stores of their own. Natalie, who's designed two clothing collections for Volcom, plans to get more into design, and more into music. She plays guitar, piano, writes and sings: she even performed at the Benni and Jett launch party earlier this year. If you've ever heard her YouTube covers with sister Dylana, you'll notice how awesome their husky and powerful voices are.

And while Jensen jokes that he "ghostwrites" Natalie's music, he and Jordan are sticking with their day jobs. No matter how popular their shoes have become, Jordan still thinks that, "one of the most exciting things for us is when we wake up and see all these fashionable girls wear the shoes and how they style them out. You see everything from a girl rocking them with suspenders and a t-shirt to literally a girl wearing them with a Celine bag or Givenchy shirt." If that's not the epitome of personal style, we don't know what is. **ModernVice.com** **CASSIE TITLE**

*Modern Vice shoes are currently available at department stores like Macy's, NYC boutiques, including Cloak & Dagger and Wink and ModernVice.com.*



shoes **MODERN VICE COLLECTION BENNI** in **FUSCHIA**  
Natalie's own clothing

photographer **HARRY FELLOWS**  
stylists **CELESTE LINDSEY & LIZABETH CERVANTES**  
hair **LIZ NEVIN**  
makeup **SUZANA HALLILI** using **MAKE UP FOR EVER**  
location **MODERN VICE FACTORY, NEW YORK**  
special thanks to **BRANDY JOY SMITH** at **NEXT MODELS**