

From Acting in Blockbusters to Working Behind the Scenes with Jamison Bret Newlander

Owen Shapiro 00:04

Welcome to Kino society with Owen Shapiro. Today on Kino society we have Jamison Newlander who is best known for playing gallon frog, one of the two vampire hunting brothers in the Lost Boys from 1987 alongside Corey Feldman. After this a couple of years later, he went to get a BFA in acting at NYU, and acted on stages in New York Fairmont, Kentucky and California throughout his 20s. While doing theater, neulander began writing and became an award winning playwright with his 1996 play. Remember this at actors theatre of Lewisville? We are talking with a true legend right here. Hi, Jameson. So Jamison, I'm curious, as a kid, did you ever dream about becoming an actor at such a young age or opportunity come up unexpectedly?

Jamison Newlander 00:57

So it's, you know, it's complicated. I mean, I think that, I think definitely, I was a performer since I was a little kid. And I think that that's really what propelled me in that direction. Because my mom noticed it, and we were in LA and so. So she just thought, Hey, I mean, I don't know what she thought. But she thought, hey, here's an opportunity. Here's a kid who I was a bit awkward for a little while, but then I, you know, coming into teenage years kind of began to look like this tall American kid. And so those two things combined, so there was both opportunity and also dry.

Owen Shapiro 01:34

So can you tell us a little bit about your past before embodying the character of alpha?

Jamison Newlander 01:40

Yes, so you know, I hadn't been acting for too long, I started out, it wasn't a kid actor, like I, you know, the Corey Feldman or the a bunch of the kids that I ended up working with. I didn't start then I was just kind of a regular kid. At that point, I went to school, I was, it wasn't until I mean, you know, in seventh and eighth grade I, I performed, you know, I was like the star, this spring sing, you know, at middle school, that sort of thing. But for the most part, I was I was a student and just have an interest like that. And, you know, I think I had a happy childhood. I, you know, revisit that constantly. Because I also was also a lot of strife. I had my parents were divorced, when I was three. And I, we had a really rough kind of custody battle. For a while when I was a kid. And then I also, I wore leg braces for two and a half years, when I was a kid, I had a little bone disease that you know, wasn't like it, you know, you can correct it with wearing a brace. So I, so I did. And so, you know, it was like a bit tumultuous. It was a good childhood, I think. And then started acting about age 14. So and then I got lost boys when I was 16.

Owen Shapiro 02:52

So obviously, you started on film industry, a very young age, how was that experience for you? And did you find it weird? Or did you absolutely.

Jamison Newlander 03:00

So that, you know, it's a complex? Answer, especially since I mean, you know, maybe if I think you would have asked me 10 years ago, or 20 years ago, or whatever, I might have said, Hey, it was just amazing. And because it was, in a lot of ways, it was amazing. Um, there was a lot of worry and stress on my part, as you know, as I've sort of unraveled in my adult life, because, you know, wanted to get that next job, and all of a sudden added as a teenager, thinking of these things, thinking of being out of work, or, you know, rather than just being a regular kid. So there were some disadvantages to that. And other kinds of disadvantages throughout throughout my adult life. That disadvantages, but there were trying to be trying to make it as an actor, as an adult. There were some challenges, like I was operating as a child, I was still, you know, when I would audition and things like that, I thought of myself as a teenager for many years. You know, I mean, so it's complex, and it was really amazing in a lot of ways and had its challenges too.

Owen Shapiro 04:09

So, as your typical routine, what was your typical routine as a young actor when entering les boys film set?

Jamison Newlander 04:18

So, um, you know, because I was young, and I was trying to figure out who I was, what kind of actor I was, things like that. I, I, it's not like I had a technique down like, Okay, I'm gonna do this. And now I do voice exercises. I didn't know anything about voice exercises. And, you know, I just, my routine really was. It's important, you know, as a teenager, it's important to be able to come on set and really be a pro and at the same time, not lose your teenager ness. You know. So I think that there's a bit of that trying to get that balance trying to be come to the set, you know, fully rested, fully prepared. You know, who knows? Your lines down well, is important, an important part of acting on film because you get a curveball in the middle of a scene. And if you don't know your lines that well, then you're gonna go off on your lines. And then everybody's, you know, like, God, we got to go back to the beginning. I mean, not always, but, you know, that happens a lot that people forget their lines, but that's a big part of it, just being prepared. Knowing my character, thinking about it, remembering how fun I was, it's a big part of the beginning, it's like that being a pro. And also being a teenager. You know, it's like, you got to remember to have fun. And that's kind of that's what people want to see on screen, you know,

Owen Shapiro 05:38

what were some more of the challenges that you encountered when acting at such a young age?

Jamison Newlander 05:44

So let's see, um, there, there are a few things like, number one that, um, I, I didn't, I wasn't on the football team. You know, I wasn't, I didn't know I liked water polo a lot. And I would have loved to have done that. But I, I did my after schools, were going on auditions, which was, you know, incredible. I was grateful to be able to do that. But I missed out on some of the some of the things you get to do as a kid. And so there's that. And then there's also the factor that people, you know, with me, and you know, again, these are ongoing, like, things that I'm unraveling, as I'm looking at, at, you know, looking at different things. And about my, my early career was like, people tended to look at me, like I knew what I was doing. And I really did, really didn't know what I was doing. I was a teenager, you know, and I knew

Corey Feldman may know what he was doing because he was he had a whole team around him who, who was making money off of him since they were three and Corey Haim same kind of thing. They were making big money off him, he had a team around him, I didn't really know what I was doing. And I had to figure it out. While people seem to think that I didn't know what I was doing. So that kind of thing can be a challenge.

Owen Shapiro 06:56

So how do you feel when you're called back to do the second event, the third movie as Lost Boys,

Jamison Newlander 07:02

from the beginning, they were talking about doing a sequel. I remember meeting with Joel Schumacher, director. And he This was in like, 1988, or something. And he was like, Oh, we got it just had a meeting was great. You know, we're gonna bring that to frog brothers and stuff. So I was really excited to do that, then, you know, there was a lot of, there's a lot of time that passed, you know, then, between the time when it might have been a great idea to do a sequel, until they eventually did do sequel, which was what 2007, I think maybe was the last boys to the tribe. And and then I think in the last playthrough was 2009 2010, something like that. So you know, a full, what is that? 20 years later, I think that I was thrilled to do it, I wish that they had made it a big movie, they made it they kind of backed into it in certain ways. Certainly the second one, you know, the first sequel, they backed into it, and I mean, that's my turn back into it. I mean, they didn't build what I think, you know, building on the assets of the original, which was, you know, the original cast and, and they kind of missed that opportunity. I like what they did with the second movie. I like how they added a new group of vampires. I just think that they Anyway, it was it was a second movie was a little bit, I think, unfocused from the point of view of the franchise. And that was a bit frustrating, because here we had all this momentum, and then we kind of lost it. And then by the time we got to loss boys, three, the fans had said, I mean, had said, you know, they had done their research, the Warner Brothers had done the research to find that the fans really do want the original characters back. And they were they loved Feldman. And the second one of the diehard fans would love Spellman and the second one, and so it made sense for the frog brothers to come back. And it was great to come back. And it was awesome to come back to work with Feldman and be the frog brothers again, because we have a certain kind of chemistry. Whenever we get together, we have this, this kind of chemistry, this sort of brotherly chemistry. And that was really great. And it was great to advance the frog brothers, you know, in the franchise and all that. So it was pretty great in those ways. And it was also I went to South Africa, we shot the whole thing in South Africa, which was really cool. I had a one year old kid, my mike my son who's 12 now is was one and it was just, you know, really cool to do that six weeks, we went over there the whole family being and my wife, and Nathan and, um, and we, so it was it was really great to do it. I I again, I wish he kind of came sooner and it was bigger. We're still trying to do something with Vlogbrothers. So so we'll see, but it was great to do it. I was thrilled. But

Owen Shapiro 09:49

what's the third one? Schumacher is no,

Jamison Newlander 09:52

it wasn't actually a second and third one. We're not Schumacher. He was you know he had to sign off I'm pretty sure I'm pretty sure. He owns the Part of the franchise but yeah, he didn't do the second or third one.

Owen Shapiro 10:04

Yeah, because if he did that would be a bit tricky now. I think he might have died recently.

Jamison Newlander 10:09

Yeah, he just died last month. I think it was it could be longer ago than that because time is gone in this bizarre way during, with all of us being at home.

Owen Shapiro 10:22

What were the differences you encountered when working as an actor for these three movies?

Jamison Newlander 10:27

Cool. Okay, so there were there were a bunch of differences. The first movie, I mean, you know, doing the first movie, it was a big movie, it was, you know, it wasn't like a huge thing where they were spending, it wasn't like they broke any records on what they spent on it. They did it, I think, fairly inexpensively for a movie at the time. But it was a big movie, in the sense that really, everybody in town knew about it knew was going on, you know, they got the top, like, you know, Jason Patrick and Kiefer. And Jamie, you know, they had their pick of, of the top people. And, and so it was, it was a pretty big deal. And I was kind of one piece of a bigger picture. And I was pretty young. And so it was it was like true. I guess that first movie was kind of like, True Hollywood, it was the 80s it was like a very Hollywood popcorn movie. And it was exciting. But I was also new. I was 16. And I had been, you know, doing parts here and there. So it was like a, it was a new experience for me to be a lead on a movie like that. So that was that was you know, its own thing. And then the second movie, because I was I really only had a very small part. The second movie was like this. They were they said, we're gonna do this. They started just shoot and they're like, there's gonna be a role for you. We're trying to work it out. And so little by little they had expanded Korea's role Corey Feldman's role in the second one, and they were ready to you know, and they were like, okay, let's get some let's get to James. And he was trying to get the frog brothers together. And it ended up in the special teacher. So it wasn't successful. Just one day I did on that on the second movie. And it was exciting to be back was exciting to like, look at a call sheet and see Lost Boys on it. And especially after all this anticipation of being like, every year, and being like, we're gonna, we're gonna do a sequel, you know, that was one thing. And then by the time the third movie came out, the second movie did really well, it did really well on it was just direct to DVD, but it did did really well on DVD. And so they were excited, we were excited again, about the third movie and about getting the frog brothers together and getting going to South Africa, we came down for six months, I don't know if you've ever been to Cape Town, but it's beautiful city. And I was there with you know, Feldman, and you know, with honey, my wife and my one year old son, and it was like, just really wild being all of a sudden, you know, involved in Lost Boys again, on this shoot, you know, a working actor, basically, I you know, I worked here and there, but I wasn't really a working actor, you know, that whole time. So, you know, all very different things. I was in very different places in my life, very different types of productions. And, I mean, in terms, you know, in terms of the, I don't want to go to off on the terms of the quality of the pieces. I just feel like, you know, a movie like Lost

Boys, you're not going to get that first you're not going to get that lightning in a bottle they had, you know, with last but I should say that we have lost Lost Boys one. Schumacher had this vision for it, you know, two and three, I think are nice movies, nice little movies. You can't really I think, compared to the original. I don't know if you feel that way. Or, you know?

Owen Shapiro 13:46

No, it's very understandable. Yeah. They're, they're direct to DVD sequels. What do you expect?

Jamison Newlander 13:53

Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

Owen Shapiro 13:55

So after the Lost Boys do for lunch, but it's tell us how you switch to theater directing where they come from.

Jamison Newlander 14:04

So, you know, again, it's one of those things, I'm still sort of unraveling exactly how it happened. I was, I had a lot of different things I could do as a kid, I was an honor student. And then I became an actor. And then I was, you know, acting is a really intense profession. And it was a little much for me the thing, you know, that you got to go in all the time and basically beg for a role. Like, I'll do the, I'll dance, you know, what do you want me to do? And so I wasn't as much as I loved acting and I, I, I loved the I love the artifact of the craft of acting. The pursuing it was was was really tough. And I thought I would go to New York and maybe get a theater base in it. So I went I studied theater at NYU and, and I did Theater in New York and, you know, regionally, you know, different theaters around the country. And it was great, but it doesn't have The same kind of career, longevity, you know, you do it. And there are people who, you know, who build a great stage career I wasn't I didn't build a stage career, I did some stuff. I was also had a foot in film, and then I, and I thought, Okay, let me try starting, let me try directing. Because I was writing and I was acting. And I'd even produced a little bit, I produced a short film. And I was like, You know what, let me just try directing. And so I thought so. So I did, I tried directing, I don't like directing, I don't really, these days, consider myself to be a director. I can, but mostly it's acting and writing. And so theater became this other thing where I, you know, theater, acting is incredible. You know, anybody who's listening who's an actor, can probably understand I mean, the, the idea that, you know, the audience is right there, and they're reacting to you tell a joke, and the audience could go crazy. I mean, that joy is, that's something that you can't, you don't get the same kind of feedback on the phone, you know, as you do from an audience, a live audience in theater. So, you know, that's kind of the long and the short of, of, you know, why it is artistically why I went in that direction. Part of it also goes back to the other side of where, you know, people might have thought I knew what I was doing, because I was getting these roles, but I didn't really know what I was doing. And I was, I didn't know how to build a career in that way. And so I my film career kind of stumbled. So all those things were going on at once.

Owen Shapiro 16:30

So tell us a bit of differences between the film and theatre industry.

Jamison Newlander 16:36

I think that, you know, when you get into the big time, it's all very similar. You've got people who are, who are putting a lot of money up, you know, in the case of a Broadway show, or even an off Broadway show, or a big movie or something, you know, people who put up a lot of money they want, they want to, they want their success, and they're willing, you know, they, they expect to top work they expect,

Owen Shapiro 17:00

you know, they expect,

Jamison Newlander 17:02

you know, you'd really bring it, everybody can really bring it. And so, so there's a lot of similarity at the top, when you start getting down into more of the, you know, that we're not at the big time you're at, you're doing shows, you might be doing shows, you might be doing independent movies, you know, you might land a commercial here or there. It's all very different theater. There's just a lot less writing on theater. I mean, there's, I mean, I, you know, at the same time, as I think about it, though, I've been involved in, you know, what I call like garage production, independent, very independent productions, and various independent productions of film are very similar, very independent productions on on stage, because everybody's scrambling, and everybody's creative, trying to come up with solutions and stuff. So it's hard to say it's complex question, I don't think I have a good answer to it. But, um, a lot of similarities, a lot of differences.

Owen Shapiro 17:53

You have any advice for people who want to make it big in the film industry,

Jamison Newlander 17:58

but I do have advice, which I think people should take or leave, because I may feel differently in a year. You know, it's like advice that changes constantly. But what I would say is this, this is, this is an industry about people. I mean, it's about your talents about your craft, absolutely, you got to be tip top on that you got to like, really push yourself constantly, artistically. But it's a people business, people who I know who are successful, very successful, they're, they're people who are not just good at networking, but they're, they're people who you want to be around the people who you want to go out and, and, you know, have a meal with your people who you want to talk to. And that's how kind of how a lot of block projects happen is that there's the business side of that, you go in and you go on auditions, and you go, you know, you got to show up, you got to bring your A game and everything. And then there's the kind of soft skills, which is that you want to go out after the shows you want to go, you want to go out, you want to go to the wrap party. So you want to keep in touch with people. Because those are the people that are going to be your colleagues and support people. You know, being competitive is is fantastic in terms of challenging yourself. But don't be overly competitive with your peers. These people are your your network. These people are your support system and be the support system for them. Go see your friends plays, go watch your friends, movies, if your friends are in a film festival, try and get there if you can, you know that's what I think supporting each other. building a community that's the advice that I think that I feel most strongly about.

Owen Shapiro 19:37

Finally, which were some of the movies that currently inspire your workers that you've watched as a kid and you've always

Jamison Newlander 19:46

cool cool. I love talking about my my favorite movies. There are some movies like First of all, jaws is one of my favorite movies. And I mean, I'm not a huge, even though I'm in the horror genre. I'm not a huge horror movie, and I don't necessarily consider jobs, you know, to only be a horror movie. But um, I think that's a great movie. And those performances, every one of those performances vary. Richard Dreyfus especially was a big influence for me early on. Also, I, I love the movie, Casablanca, which may sound like to like film, you know, like film theory class or whatever.

Owen Shapiro 20:28

No, no, I love that movie.

Jamison Newlander 20:30

Do you really get See I, I've met some people recently who didn't like it. And I was like, I don't understand how you don't like Casablanca. But of course, everybody has their opinions. But I mean, it's different than Citizen Kane, which, of course, is also a great movie. And they invented so many things. And most of the stuff we do now is based in some way on the inventions they made, you know, during Citizen Kane. But it's not the same kind of movie that I like, I like, you know, catalog is a popcorn movie. You know, it's like, it's this great movie with this hero and this reluctant hero, you know, who's eventually realizes that he has to step in. And you know, this is just classic movie, baby. So I love Casablanca very, very influenced by Casablanca. Um, there's a movie called broadcast news in the 80s. I don't know if you know that movie. William Hurd, Holly Hunter. Albert Brooks, were the three stars and I watched that movie, there was a time I would watch it weekly, I would watch it, you know, at least once a week. Part of it is that I had a little crush on Holly Hunter as a kid. I mean, as a teenager, but it's also that the film is I recommend watching it. It's a It's a beautiful movie about the news industry, and how it was changing toward, you know, these stars, these anchor anchors, who were stars and how it moved from, you know, at least this filmmaker believed that it was moving from journalism to stars and star system, and I think it was definitely ahead of its time in that way. The big chills a great movie, too. I don't know if you know that one. I guess he's also at the same time. Pulp Fiction is a big influence for me. I don't know if you're a Terran Tino fan?

Owen Shapiro 22:14

His entire filmography? Actually,

Jamison Newlander 22:17

yeah, it's understandable as a film buff that you would it's um, fiction I find to be just incredible. And I still can't quite figure out like it successfully through me that that the changing of timeline and all that if I guess people don't know the movie, then they won't know. But I just thought it's just a beautiful movie. And I thought, I think Tarantino is really special director doesn't always hit it. You know, we can't always be successful. Every single movie, but, you know,

Owen Shapiro 22:47

it's not that most of his movies were the only one I didn't I think that I thought was, was Death Proof.

Jamison Newlander 22:56

I didn't even see that. He didn't miss it completely. And then

Owen Shapiro 23:01

he didn't miss it completely. It's catchy. It's purposefully can't be but I mean, it's just it's not great.

Jamison Newlander 23:08

Yeah, that's the thing is you know, you didn't he did I just heard Tarantino said he's like, the only gonna make eight movies or something like that. And now he's done or about to be done.

Owen Shapiro 23:18

Did you hear this? I heard you use this. You're supposed to only make 10 movies and every time you attach, I hope that's not the case. Because he is a very good filmmaker. Yeah, yeah.

Jamison Newlander 23:29

Reservoir Dogs. Of course. I love that movie. I mean, that of course, but dark, dark movie. But also I mean, there's a there's a combination of Theatre and Film together to film that easily could have been a play. I even saw it as a play actually, reservoir games. Friend pointed it in. In Hollywood. I'm sure there's a bunch of other movies that are influential. I mean, Robert De Niro was incredibly influential. Dustin Hoffman was, I mean, these are the Ticino. I mean, probably, you know, those guys are kind of on the short side like me, so maybe that's why I like them. But, um, you know, great actors from when I was a kid, you know, people that I looked up to.

Owen Shapiro 24:08

Yeah, it's a lot of a lot of influences. Definitely. Yeah. So now that we've gotten over your career as an actor, writer, director, what's next for you? any upcoming projects? Yeah, you

Jamison Newlander 24:20

know, there's this. So there's a little bit of a bump going on right now where, um, you know, the 80s have been big, they were big. They've been big for a number of years. And eventually, that's going to fade but right now, it's still pretty strong. And so there's a big community of ad actors with Cobra Kai on the you know, the Karate Kid thing. And with this kind of, you know, the feeling that the frog brothers could be, could kind of have their own piece of the franchise that's, that's not quite as grand. It's not quite as You know, it's not lost boys. It's not, you know, it's it's a smaller, darker show. That's what that's what we're pitching right now. I have a meeting next week that I'm meeting next week to kind of, you know, begin to see if it's possible. I wrote a pilot script for it. So we'll see if we can get something like that on the air. There's also a project that I've been working on for a long time, one of my big early writing projects when I was in New York, but really when one of the first things I dug into when I was like, okay, you know, what I'm a writer, is a project called Virtual Adventures of riftcat. Politico is a play originally I did in New York. And I wrote then as a screenplay, got a little bit of a buzz when I was out here in the early 2000s. It's a virtual event, you know, a virtual reality story of a detective, noir detective and VR. And I'm more, I'm trying to, we're gonna be doing an audio version of it. I have a podcast

myself, I have a podcast that we we did a first season of a couple years ago called the Jamison new lander and some other guys show. It was my friend of mine was like, we, we don't need to know who I am. I'm just some other guys so and so we're gonna do a version of the riftcat bellido story on the air and audio, and then try to build that into something else. A really cool story, something I've been, it's been a kind of a pet project for a long time. And there's a bunch of other different things that now that these things are building a little momentum, I'm hoping to bring along some of these other things. I am acting a bit more now. A few years ago, I booked a few roles. Like I did a movie called bone Tomahawk, which was a new writer, director.

Owen Shapiro 26:41

You know that one? I've actually heard of it. I have not

Jamison Newlander 26:43

seen I recommend it if you can deal with very gory things. Yeah, it's a I think it's a great movie. there's a there's a there's some serious core points in it. Um, but so that and I did a few other roles. So acting is beginning to pick up a little bit more. And we'll see I kind of feel like there's a bit of a renaissance what I've been calling it James songs coming up here, where, you know, there might be a good opportunity for some more artistic expression out there in the in the film and theater TV world for me, would be great.

Owen Shapiro 27:23

Finally, where can my listeners find you and connect with you? So

Jamison Newlander 27:28

right now I'm on Twitter. My handle is at Jamison Nuland. I couldn't fit the ER when the when I started the account now I probably could. But it was at Jamison new land. That's the main place I interact with fans. There's a bunch of stuff going on on Twitter right now with me in London, there's a we did a kind of a ghost hunting thing. So there that's going on. If you come on Twitter and go on the Twitter feed, it's there's a lot of fun to be had. I'm not yet on Instagram, I've been kind of waiting for my moment to launch on to Instagram. So that'll happen soon. I think I think Twitter is really the spot. I'm also going to I'm in the middle of building my website, Jameson new lander calm, there's going to be some good content on that. And also links to wherever you can find me in different ways. on there, I'm also doing cameos. I don't know if you guys are familiar with what cameos are. It's an app where you can do you can get a video message from

Owen Shapiro 28:27

your, your favorite

Jamison Newlander 28:29

Star or even somewhat David star. So that's, I think that's right now the only places to find me, but I don't mean the only That's a lot.

Owen Shapiro 28:40

Thank you so much for your time JMC. That's all for today. Don't forget that you can subscribe to Kino society on iTunes and out of them.