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## GaTa

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Photo: John Lavel / Press

There may have been a time, in a blogosphere far away, when GaTa was an unknown commodity to the world of entertainment. But there has never been a place where he was a stranger to pressure. Two years ago, the rapper turned actor (with absolutely no previous experience) delivered a scene-stealing performance on the set of the inaugural season of *Dave* on FXX. His portrayal of a happy-go-lucky rapper who suddenly found himself entrenched in an internal battle with bipolar disorder was so terrifically raw that it brought several cast and crew members to tears — while the director was still shooting.



Officially, this marked the fifth episode in a developing story arc that was built predominantly around the lead actor of the show, Lil Dicky. But emotionally? Episode five was an introduction to GaTa — both as a person and a performer. It was almost as if the show's writers took a temporary detour from Lil Dicky's comedic joyride so they could explore the depths of memory lane with his co-star GaTa in tow. In an attempt to model the show's character after GaTa's real-life experience in the rap game, this particular broadcast was properly named "Hype Man."

For many, the air date of this episode (March 25, 2020) was the night that GaTa landed squarely on their viewership radar. That's because the show's fifth episode tackled the complexities of mental health, during a time when the nuances of this psychological illness have risen to the forefront of pop culture and mainstream media in America. "Hype Man" was by far the most sincere episode of what would go on to become a record-breaking first season for *Dave* on FXX.

The believability and potential impact of this episode was placed squarely on the shoulders of GaTa and he delivered pure gold. His performance even garnered an unexpected co-sign from one of his biggest inspirations as an actor: Leonardo DiCaprio. "I met him at an undisclosed location in Malibu," GaTa shares with *EUPHORIA*. "He told me that he saw the first season and that episode five was his favorite. He told me that my performance was phenomenal and tear-jerking. He said that it was real."

"And he said to me: 'GaTa! Man, never go to acting classes, because what you have naturally is what they try to teach people in acting classes.' That meant a lot to me coming from him," he says.

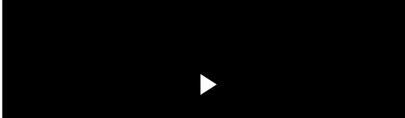
Much like the writer (Saladin Patterson) and director (Tony Yacenda) of the memorable episode from last season, DiCaprio believes that GaTa can handle a great deal of responsibility as an actor, even though he's fairly new to the craft. GaTa was made for the spotlight, and apparently, he's also made for career-defining moments that have the potential to make or break brand new television shows, long before they've been renewed for a second season by network executives.

With season two of *Dave* set to premiere on FXX tonight, the notion that GaTa was once the best kept secret on primetime television has slowly drifted out of sight, like a desert sunset in the rearview mirror of a metaphorical land cruiser. This year, he's riding shotgun next to one of the most popular rappers in the world on one of the most critically acclaimed comedy shows of 2020. Indeed, the past two years of GaTa's life have been a whirlwind of awesomeness. He went from having to audition for the role of himself, while *Dave* was in the preliminary phase of casting — to earning so much clout that he now has the freedom to walk in and out of the writer's room in order to contribute fresh ideas to the show's storyline. A storyline that covers everything from music business and romance to social issues and race relations.

Although GaTa portrays a character that's loosely based on his real-life experiences, it would take a lot more than 30 minutes of sequential television to do his actual story justice. Regardless of how brilliantly told the weekly episodes were. The real-life saga of this Los Angeles native is a comeback story for the ages about a rapper who gained the world, lost it and gained it all back again.

## GaTa Leaves College For the School of Hard Knocks

GaTa grew up in South Central LA surrounded by poverty, violence, and gangs. His mom and sister instilled a work ethic in him that inspired his ambition at a very young age. Determined to break the mold of despair in his neighborhood, he enrolled in Santa Monica College in 2006. But, when an opportunity to tour with an up-and-coming rapper named Tyga came along, GaTa decided to drop out of college so that he could work with his childhood friend.



Tyga was the first rapper to sign with *Fueled By Ramen*. At the time, this indie label featured two of the most popular rock bands in the world: Fall Out Boy and Gym Class Heroes. So, when the label tapped Tyga as the opening act for their headlining rock groups, he asked GaTa to be his hype man for the live shows. Although this experience was short lived, the tour itself became a moment in time that would forever change the trajectory of GaTa's career path in the entertainment industry.

In a way, his everyday interaction with Fall Out Boy and the Gym Class Heroes was his introduction to fame and everything that came with it. "I was able to develop the mentality of being a rock star! That's why I always felt like deep down inside, I would be a star one day," recalls GaTa. "Just seeing how they moved and how dedicated they were to their fans and stuff. That's one thing I love about music: Touring shows how big you are. It made me realize how big of an arena I was in."

GaTa remained Tyga's hype man for a five-year span, from 2006 to 2011. Back then, it seemed like an opportunity of a lifetime. It was an experience that ultimately led to GaTa being featured in Tyga's debut music video for "Coconut Juice," a live performance on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*, and his very own recording session with Lil Wayne — in person. But unfortunately for GaTa, this was merely a small glimpse of what was to come. Because before he knew it, all of the glitz and glamour was gone and he was right back to square one: A starving artist living in South Central LA.

"When I stopped touring with [Tyga], it seemed like the magic carpet just got snatched from underneath my feet," he says. "When the cameras and stuff aren't around, then you get to see who your real friends are. Things didn't go as planned, but the universe just put me in a better position. I feel like it made me realize that it's about learning. It's about growing. And realizing that the fun is actually a job. When I was working with Tyga, I was just so caught up in being around all the stars. And doing this and doing that. So, I really wasn't capitalizing off of the business and making money off of the stuff that I was doing."

For GaTa, this was a devastating life lesson that taught him about the harsh reality of the entertainment industry. What followed was yet another experience with poverty and a pitfall into a depressing abyss that triggered a newfound struggle with bipolar disorder. He didn't know it at the time, but these events would make him a much more interesting person in the future. And about 10 years later, they would also inspire the episode of *Dave* that would put him on the map as an actor.

## "Gandering" and "Wiggling" With GaTa

One thing's for sure, with a new outlook on life and a yearning for upward mobility, the next time an opportunity came along for GaTa to have staying power in the entertainment industry, he was going to be fully prepared. Therefore, the young creator invented a new vernacular to help him navigate his way back to the top. A "fake it, till you make it" form of expression that he calls "Gandering" and "Wiggling." But the truth is GaTa was living on government assistance at the time and like so many other starving artists living in Los Angeles, he didn't know if his big break would ever come. But nevertheless, it did, when GaTa received a text message that would change his life.

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"One day, I was just chillin' on the block and I got a text message from one of my old managers that used to manage me and Tyga," he says. "He said: 'Yo GaTa, I got this new artist. He's Jewish and he's really funny, but he's never done a concert. I think you'd be a dope hype man for him.' And this was when he was introduced to Lil Dicky.

"So, I went to go meet Lil Dicky (at my old manager's office) in Santa Monica," GaTa says. "I went in there with a fake camera man and a fake personal assistant. I was 'Gandering.' You know? I was creating an image for myself because this is what I was used to seeing all the big stars do. And I was doing it just to make myself feel good because I knew I didn't have shit going on. I thought to myself: This could become something."

He was right. Because that "something" has evolved into a close friendship with Lil Dicky. Which, in turn, has led to a great working relationship, on and off stage. The real-life adventures these two friends have encountered together are now being re-told on the most watched comedy series in the history of FX Networks. GaTa is back where he belongs: in the limelight. His prowess as a hype man has enabled him to "Gander" and "Wiggle" his way into the hearts of television viewers, iconic actors, and network executives alike.

## Season Two of *Dave* Premieres Tonight on FXX

With season two of *Dave* on the horizon, GaTa is primed and ready to further establish himself as one of the most dynamic new actors on network television. As a matter of fact, he now refers to his acting skills as his "Leonardo (DiCaprio) bag." If last year wasn't indication enough that slapstick comedy and urban dramas fit together perfectly, season two will further that premise. This season's story arc will provide the show's viewers with an even closer look at GaTa's onscreen relationship with his friend Lil Dicky. So far, their chemistry has proven to be a winning formula that's been shining a much-needed light on some of the darkest moments of GaTa's upbringing.

"Coming from where I come from in the inner city, we need laughter," he says. "We don't want to watch tough movies all the time with people crying and people struggling all the time. So, Lil Dicky was a breath of fresh air to the urban community because he lets us know that it's okay to let loose a little bit and laugh. This season, we're going to take a deeper dive into my character and we're going to show you how I'm faced with new challenges that are coming my way. And we're going to deal with my friendship and (working) relationship with Lil Dicky. We're just going to be growing as partners."

With the world buzzing about his acting chops, GaTa is now a rising star on television. But his first love was music. So, nothing would mean more to him than redeeming the missteps of his musical past with a newly revised rap career as a solo artist today. "The fact that I get to be on TV and make a living off it means that I can fund my music dreams now. I have new music on the way, I'm shooting music videos and I'm going to be dropping music, popping up at clubs once again, hosting and doing concerts," exclaims the rapper/actor. "So, it's just a good feeling to know that 'OK, it probably didn't work out the way I wanted it to (10 years ago as Tyga's hype man), but look at the position that I'm in now. I get to be on TV, people get to know me and then I get to go straight to the radio stations.' So, it kind of worked out in my favor."

The hype man from South Central LA has "Gandered" and "Wiggled" his way back from the depths of obscurity all the way to the spotlight in Hollywood. His name is an acronym that means "Going against the average." The road less traveled may have taken GaTa over a decade to complete, but the steps have given him substance, individuality, financial freedom, and a solid blueprint for a bright future.

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