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James Franco and Drag Queen Art Star Kalup Linzy 'Turn It Up' on Dance-y Debut

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James Franco is a man of many trades, his latest being dance music maven alongside unlikely collaborator Kalup Linzy, a video artist drag queen R&B singer. Most of Linzy's work has been in the art world -- his avant-garde opera opens next month at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art -- but he's joined his famous friend in the pop-culture sphere with their recently released experimental, bass-heavy 'Turn It Up' EP.

According to Linzy, Franco approached him a few years ago after seeing him speak at the prestigious Art Basel Festival in Miami. The two became friends, sharing a mutual respect for each other's work.

"There's something different going on with him; he's not just in the movie world," Linzy tells Spinner of his A-list pal and collaborator. "What's funny is that he was painting before his acting career took off and I was acting before my art career took off."

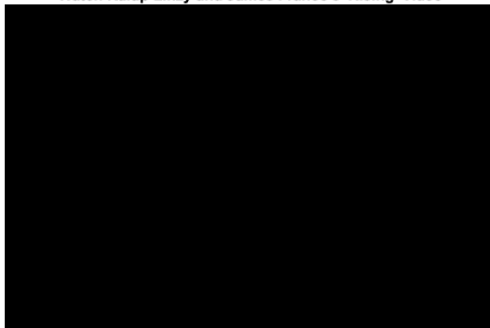
Over the period of a year, the pair co-wrote and recorded the disc together. Initially, Linzy assumed the former '[Freaks and Geeks](#)' star would simply add some spoken-word elements to the mix but Franco had other plans, pushing to full-on sing on the release, which was co-produced by [DJ/Rupture](#), as well as offer his own musical direction.

"He's so talented, he might have been able to make the record on his own," says Linzy, noting there was such a flow of output "we could even have released a double-album, but he's so busy with all his movies."

"The EP definitely went in an electronic direction," he continues. "But I see it rooted in the tradition of R&B but with dubstep and also some Motown sounds -- some [tracks] can be played in the club, but there are certain textures that are also meant to be listened to with headphones. I hope with that this new record will be added to the conversation of contemporary music, but as well within the conversation of art."

The video for their current single, 'Rising' -- which features lo-fi video shot by Franco from the set of [General Hospital](#), where the Hollywood star has a recurring role as vagabond artist Franco, as well as footage of Linzy's green screen work referencing Picasso and Basquiat -- should certainly help drum up discussion. It might also tip off a few more people to the fact that Linzy, himself, did a stint on ABC's daytime soap.

Watch Kalup Linzy and James Franco's 'Rising' Video



It was Franco who pitched him to the producers at 'General Hospital,' who eventually brought Linzy on to play Franco's pal Kalup Ishmael, a character that mirrors his own flamboyant art persona.

"It was a very comfortable experience," says Linzy. "I saw they had a board set up with all my pictures and past performances with James [at various society events]. It was inspiring to see that they had really researched and integrated our lives together into the show. My character's story line ran for four episodes."

Appearing on 'General Hospital' was actually a logical career move for the artist as he's explored gender and family issues through his own self-produced soap operas. Linzy points to his childhood in Florida where he watched daytime TV staples such as 'Guiding Light' with his grandmother for introducing him to the medium.

"By the time I got to junior high, I caught on to the storylines and started following the characters," says Linzy. "They started influencing my creative thinking and I started making these soap operas as a teenager with my cousin."

"My great grandmother used to listen to 'Guiding Light' on the radio in the 1930s," he adds. "So that's where it began."