

Almost anything can be a stage.

Many years before originating the classic role of Damian in *Mean Girls*, starring as the boundary-breaking HIV-positive Eddie in HBO's *Looking*, launching the successful **YASS! You're Amazing!** two-year comedy tour, hosting his own podcast *Yass, Jesus!*, and raising awareness for the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation, Daniel Franzese identified the inclusive potential of entertainment. As a child in Brooklyn, the actor, writer, producer, comedian, podcaster, and activist hopped on the coffee tables of family and friends and recited jokes, sang songs, told stories, and inspired smiles.

These formative performances set the stage for him to emerge as a confident body-positive voice for entertainers in the LGBTQ community and beyond.

"My grandfather had twelve brothers on the same block in Brooklyn where we all lived," he recalls. "Whenever I learned something, he would take me around to see family and friends, and I'd perform in their living rooms. Now, I call it the '*Coffee Table Circuit*.' Very early on, I learned I could bring people joy by entertainment. Comedy was always a part of me. It's been there throughout my life. I used laughter to battle everything I dealt with growing up. When I came out of the closet, it allowed me to be fully authentic, and authenticity is exactly what you need to be a comic. For the first time in my career, I feel like I'm being who I'm supposed to be. This is the real version of me."

He quietly worked towards unveiling this version. After booking his first commercial in second grade, Daniel committed himself to acting. He often visited a local Barnes & Noble and "*bought a coffee just to read all of the books in the acting section*." Graduating from high school in Florida, he caught his first big break with a role in Larry Clark's cult classic *Bully*. Following *Party Monster* in 2003, he lit up the screen in *Mean Girls* a year later. The blockbuster emerged as a cultural force and accelerated Daniel's career. Relocating to Los Angeles, he appeared in everything from Steven Spielberg's blockbuster *War of the Worlds* to the critically acclaimed remake of *I Spit in Your Grave*. He wrote and created his own rock opera, *JERSEY SHORESICAL: A FRICKIN ROCK OPERA!* Following its premiere at *The Fringe Festival* on the East Coast, it ran at the Hayworth Theatre in Los Angeles. In its wake, he launched the one-man Off-Broadway show *I've Never Really Made the Kinda Money to Become a Mess* and achieved viral success with the YouTube series ***Shit Italian Moms Say* viewed over 10 million times.**

In 2015, he joined the cast of *Looking* for the duration of the second season as well as *Looking: The Movie*. Depicting the first HIV-positive character on scripted television in a decade, *Entertainment Weekly* christened Eddie as "*such a modern version of someone living with HIV*" and "*very groundbreaking*." Around the same time, Daniel became an ambassador for the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation. As part of his activism, he implored Hollywood to spotlight the stories of characters living with HIV and AIDs, presenting a media playbook to *MSNBC* in tandem with the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation and GLAAD. 2016 saw him star in ten episodes of *Recovery Road* on Freeform before playing Jackson Morrison on ABC's *Conviction*. While filming the latter in Toronto, he immersed himself in standup by regular performances at The Second City. This paved the way for the *YASS You're Amazing!* tour. Not only did he pack clubs, theaters, and colleges, but he also built a platform for up-and-coming comedians to shine such as Anthony Desamito, Nicky Paris, Katie Molinaro, and many others.

With more tours and roles on the horizon as well as increased activism for the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation and launch of his *Yass, Jesus!* podcast, he continues to empower and unite from any and all stages.

***Yass, Jesus!* is a faith and sexuality affirming podcast that believes you don't have to pick between gay and God. Hosts, Daniel Franzese (Actor, Mean Girls, Looking) and Azariah Southworth (former host, The Remix on TBN) meet each week in this hilarious take on a Sunday service to explore big questions and find out what it means to be a Christ-loving member of the LGBTQIA+ community during these divided times. New episodes every Sunday.**

"I like to unify audiences," he leaves off. "I try to create something where everyone can be involved. I endeavor to be a people curator and bring everyone together."

