

Funny Guy

A veteran of stand-up comedy lands his first film role in the new Kevin James comedy, **Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2**

By DINA SANTORELLI



Vic DiBitetto

PHOTO: Dina Santorelli

VIC DIBITETTO, a 30-year veteran of stand-up comedy, was doing a gig in Albany, New York, in January 2014 when his cell phone rang showing a private number. Normally, the 54-year-old Brooklyn native doesn't pick up private calls, but this time he did, and it would be a split-second decision that would affect the rest of his career.

On the other end of the line was actor/comedian Kevin James. James, who was familiar with DiBitetto's act, wanted him to appear in his new film, *Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2*. DiBitetto, who thought the call was some kind of prank, eventually realized James was legit and that this finally could be the career break he had been waiting for.

A weekend comic who, until very recently, drove a school bus on Staten Island, New York, by day, DiBitetto developed a name for himself two years ago with a 30-second YouTube video titled, "Bread & Milk"—a spoof of the panic that drives residents to nearby supermarkets to stock up on food whenever a big snowstorm is forecasted. At presstime, the clip had more than 13 million views. "I've been doing comedy for 30 years," DiBitetto tells *Family*, "and what gets me noticed is a 30-second YouTube video"—a video, by the way, that DiBitetto recorded on the fly and almost deleted, thinking it wouldn't be of interest to anyone.

DiBitetto's stand-up details much of his years spent in Brooklyn, Staten Island, and New Jersey, where he now lives with his family, and is chock full of warm, exaggerated stereotypes of Italian-Americans. He tells stories of growing up with plastic-coated upholstered furniture and bottle-cap-sized swimming pools as

well as self-deprecating jokes that call to mind the late comedian Rodney Dangerfield. DiBitetto, too, likes to say he gets no respect—he bills himself as the "Donkey of Comedy" and a "Working Class Zero"—and often bemoans his life as an overworked and underappreciated dad destined to mow the lawn every weekend while his wife shops and his kids lounge around the house.

DiBitetto details much of his comedic journey through video vignettes that he posts on his social media pages, from trading barbs with his mother-in-law in his kitchen to car trips with his comic friends to Atlantic City. His videos alternate between comedy and sincerity and usually end with his trademark facial expression, a cross between Robert De Niro's "You talkin' to me?" and the average New Yorker's "You gotta be kidding me."

DiBitetto says active-duty military often write to him to say how much they enjoy his work. "They tell me, 'Your vignettes get us through the night,'" he says. "Hearing from our brave men and women out there?

It's so gratifying."

For decades, DiBitetto's star has been slowly rising (in 1991, he was a \$10,000 grand prize winner on ABC's *America's Funniest People*), but since the arrival of "Bread & Milk," DiBitetto has been selling out comedy venues throughout the tri-state New York area. Last year, he also began appearing on *The Todd Show* on WPLJ Radio in New York for a weekly segment called "Ticked Off Vic."

DiBitetto got his start at Pips Comedy Club in Brooklyn, a place he calls "the boot camp of comedy." "That's the only club where the owner would heckle you," he says. He shared the stage with comics such as Andrew "Dice" Clay and Richard Jeni who went on to have high-profile careers. Although DiBitetto watched their success from behind the steering wheel of a bus, he never gave up hope that he would get his shot, and as the new *Paul Blart* film is set to open next month, it seems he finally has.

As DiBitetto likes to say to his Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube followers: "Hang in there, folks. The best is yet to come."



When actor/comedian Kevin James called Vic DiBitetto to ask if he wanted to be in *Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2*, DiBitetto thought it was a prank.