

# Rey Valentín co-stars in HBO's "Generation Kill"

By Lewis Beale  
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Actor Rey Valentín.

Rey Valentín admits he got into acting for the same reason a lot of guys do — the girls.

Valentín, co-star of "Generation Kill," a seven-part [HBO](#) miniseries about the [Iraq](#) war that debuts July 13, was a 14-year-old kid playing hoops in his hardscrabble hometown of [Bridgeport, Conn.](#), when a woman wandered onto the court with some girls in tow.

She asked if any of the players had ever thought about acting, and said if they had, they should come to the local arts center for some classes.

Valentín checked out the opposite sex, showed up at the center and was handed a script. But it was the reaction to his first stage role that really hooked him.

"I played this kid who got in trouble with a couple of girls, unplanned pregnancies, and I played a character close to a lot of people in my community," says the 29-year-old Valentín.

"I think what grabbed me was the response from the audience. After the show [The director] introduced me to all these kids who wanted to meet me because they related to my performance, and I thought that was really powerful."

Valentín perfected his craft at [SUNY-Purchase's](#) Acting Conservatory, then hit the boards in the [New York](#) theater world for Soho Rep. and [Shakespeare](#) in the Park.

"I worked with veterans who have done TV, theater. I always looked up to them, because they're always training, always working," he says.

Moving from the stage to the small screen, Valentín quickly copped guest-star roles on shows like "Law & Order," "CSI: NY," "[Numb3rs](#)" and "[One Tree Hill](#)."

But the actor, who's of Puerto Rican descent, admits that, initially, casting directors tended to think in stereotypical terms.

"When I first got out of school, it would be, 'Hi, can you make that more Latino?'" he says, laughing.

"But now, with the success of actors like [Javier Bardem](#) and [Benicio del Toro](#), it's opened up the range of possibilities."

In "Generation Kill," based on a true story, he plays Col. Gabriel Garza, a Mexican-American Marine machine gunner whose unit was the first to cross enemy lines during the Iraq war.

His character “starts off young and naive,” says Valentín. Then, “he falls in love with killing.”

Previous films and TV shows about the current war have not caught on with the public.

But Valentín feels this series is different, because “it really captures the kind of soldiers that are out there. A lot of them are doing it because they have no other choice, they need to feed their families. And the show is very blunt, it doesn’t hide anything.”

Valentín will also be seen this summer in “Crossing Over,” a film opening in August about immigration, in which he plays a man who sells IDs to illegal immigrants.

Valentín’s career is based in [L.A.](#) these days, where he moved about two years ago — without regrets.

Even though in the City of Angels, Valentín says, “I’m usually the only Puerto Rican among the Latino social circles I travel in,” he’s stuck on the West Coast.

“I am a sucker for sun and short pants,” he says.