**DJ KHALED BECAME SYNONYMOUS WITH A KIND OF UNEDITED SELF-APPROVAL**

Khaled has been talking himself up for as long as he’s been in the rapper-producer game. His 2010 hit "All I Do Is Win," which positioned Khaled at the top of his game, in hindsight, was basically his coming out anthem. His songs have always been paeans of success, but in 2015 his success story wasn’t just an element of his music, it was his entire being. On Khaled’s various social media accounts, this translated into easily consumable talking points that were, above all, funny. He films himself watering his lawn constantly, never missing a grass-is-green metaphor. His catchphrases about reaching for success are quippy and memorable: "Bless up" and "Another one." And then there are Khaled’s "keys to success," which include, among other things, cocoa butter, coconut water, normal water, pedicure and manicure once a week, weekly haircuts, a gold sink, clean heart, clean face, green apples, Dove deodorant, Dove bar soap, Listerine, and plants — lots of plants.

[**DJ Khaled Quotes**](http://engtuto.com/dj-khaled-quotes/)

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Nothing propelled Khaled’s memehood forward faster than his decision this past October to join Snapchat (he's @djkhaled305). A standard Khaled Snapchat story will feature some kind of meal courtesy of Khaled’s chef, Chef Dee (it often includes egg whites), a visual of Khaled’s personal grooming habits (I have watched DJ Khaled slather cocoa butter on his chest more times than I’ve seen most people do anything), and a ride on DJ Khaled’s home elevator ("People will try to bring you down, but you gotta go up"). And, in perhaps most Khaled-esque moment to date, he got lost at night on a jet ski this month, and Snapchatted the whole thing while looking increasingly nervous. Still, he was optimistic: "Always have faith always have hope," he wrote. "It's so real out here smh."

A lot has been said about the ways in which humans intentionally or not, construct personas, fashioning themselves as sentient brands. Historically, this has always been true for celebrities — there’s a reason Frank Sinatra is still considered a stand-up guy despite evidence to the contrary — but the advent of straight-to-user video platforms has created countless new avenues by which to do so. Khaled’s grateful, wide-eyed social media persona almost feels like an extension of perpetually hopeful content platforms like Upworthy, mixed with the surreal sincerity of justgirlythings. Over and over again, DJ Khaled says he suffers from success, which is another way of saying he’s not really suffering. He’s doing everything the exact right way, according to him. What makes Khaled so meme-able is his complete lack of inner turmoil. There is no wrong in DJ Khaled’s world; everything is good, or can be made good with a little effort. DJ Khaled seems consistently happy, and happiness is much more shareable than tragedy, or whatever the alternative is.

Some non-believers have suggested all of this is a publicity stunt or performance art — it’s a goof on hip-hop culture, or just a ploy for attention (for all his suffering and success, only one of his singles — "I'm On One" feat. Drake and Lil Wayne — has ever entered the top 10 of Billboard’s Hot 100). A YouTube video released last month titled "Wise Words with DJ Khaled" felt like a calculated distillation of everything Khaled had preached this year, with markedly better production values. Against a stark white backdrop, with a soft piano line twinkling, Khaled says slowly, very slowly, "You very smart... we the best... you a genius... I appreciate you." It echoes much of what Khaled has been saying on social media, but the video wasn’t filmed on a smartphone. It’s crisp and clear, shot in black and white, like a serious cinematic endeavor from the leader of a spiritual army. But when Khaled says, "I changed... a lot," (the title of his 2015 album), the whole thing suddenly feels very much like a commercial.

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Khaled’s questionable transformation from man to meme parallels a similar journey taken by Shia LaBeouf this year. LaBeouf too has assumed a kind of enlightenment fueled by very public introspection. In 2014, LaBeouf announced he was retiring from public life, but this year, he reemerged with new ways to get people to keep looking at him. First, he released "Just Do It," a video in which he stood in front of a green screen and shouted inspirational aphorisms like "Make your dreams come true" while flexing and sweating like an NFL coach with no job security. This year’s #AllMyMovies, a project in which LaBeouf watched all of his films in reverse chronological order at a New York theater, invited the public to get physically close to LaBeouf, both at the theater and through a live stream. And this month, LaBeouf asked people to call him at an art gallery in Liverpool and ask him questions about his life. He called the performance #Touchmysoul.

**A LEADER OF A SPIRITUAL ARMY**

LaBeouf’s retirement and resurrection also recalls Joaquin Phoenix’s antics leading up to the release of the 2010 mockumentary I’m Still Here, but DJ Khaled’s schtick feels more real than both. While LaBeouf sets up well-designed web sites and entire call centers to promote his work, and Phoenix’s character got play on the late-night TV circuit, Khaled just wakes up, picks up his phone, and films himself from bed. He’s letting the world into his home, letting us look at his garden, his breakfast sandwiches, and his mostly naked body. When I emailed Khaled’s publicist to ask if he had any consultants or crew for his Snapchat account, the response was unequivocal: "No one helps him, it's his own work of art."

Maybe Khaled the Meme will soon reveal itself to be a stunt designed to promote a DJ Khaled documentary or clothing line. But it really doesn’t matter if Khaled’s persona is real or created. Memes, by their nature, are fleeting. Who’s to say how long this one will last, until we get... another one.