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Mike Young
By Emma Kat Richardson
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Mike Young

Let's Get Detroit Smiling Again



"The last thing I want to do is have a white bread comedy tour." This is the gospel according to Mike Young, himself a devoted apostle of all things comedy. (See: messiahs Richard Pryor, George Carlin and the holy scripture of All in the Family).

But don't let his own white bread, dual-syllabled name fool you. Sure, there may be enough Michael Youngs on Whitepages.com to fill the seats of several thousand Carnegie Hall comedy specials, but there's only one Mike Young out there committed to rising the rungs of the comedy ladder while simultaneously rendering the entertainment world hospitable for some of the most talented, Generation Y-oriented comedians — comedians who, at present, are simply seething under the surface of comedic superstardom.

But before diving headlong into this entrepreneurial undertaking, it's critical to know about the man behind the philanthropy. He's a native of Southfield who once got jumped by a gang of hoods in Berkley. (The home turf of this story's author). Some Internet sources peg him as 35 and some as 40, but he's 105, if his MySpace page is to be believed. (Perhaps adding yet another layer of quasi-Biblical intrigue). He's also a self-described class clown, a rebellious and often uproarious student of comedy's top tutors — a sharp-tongued natural who always had the perfect one-line comeback waiting to be delivered.

"I mean, it's literally as simple as I was a class clown and loved making people laugh," Young says of his youthful discovery. From the time he was 10-years-old, he knew he had a gift. "I'd watch stand-up comedians on TV like Pryor and Eddie Murphy, and I'd just have this weird thought that, 'Wow, it would be great if I could be that.' It was really just like a dream, and I just loved the effect and the responses I got from cracking people up. I wasn't a great student, but I could get the whole class laughing, and of course I'd be sent right to detention. But I always had a quick comeback comment for anything the teacher said, and I love being disruptive."

Class clowning — and its subsequent trips to detention — are, of course, a fairly uncomplicated endeavor. Any half-wit with a desire to compensate attention in the classroom for a lack of attention at home can make a disruptive scene, but Young is neither half-witted nor the product of neglect. It takes a special kind of drive to transition from juvenile antics to artistically developed and well-honed profitable ones, and Young's determination and passion for comedy led him to stray far from the well-tread path of the average nogoodnik.

Not satisfied with toiling in class clown obscurity, Young departed Metro Detroit for the more receptive arms of Los Angeles. Like so many others hoping to achieve fame, he began signing up for three-minute sets at L.A.'s infamous Comedy Store, a virtual talent factory responsible for the likes of David Letterman, Robin Williams, Whoopi Goldberg and Jim Carrey, among a list of venerable names that stretches onward. It was here, among so many other hopefuls, that Young was plucked from virtual obscurity by Mitzi Shore, the club's legendary founder with a considerable eye for untapped talent — a comedy goddess whose benevolent will has launched the careers of dozens of legends. "I was doing three-minute sets all around L.A., and then one day Mitzi Shore saw me onstage at The Comedy Store, and pulled me to the side and was like, 'I want you to be a regular here,'" Young explains.

Remember
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weekend.