

Southfield native returns home to show off his comedic chops

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DETROIT - Once a class clown at Southfield-Lathrup High School, Mike Young has turned his talent to amuse into a full-fledged career. The Southfield native, 41, said he always knew he'd be a comedian.

"I honestly love making people laugh," said Young, now living in Los Angeles.

He'll return to his roots for a special show Oct. 9 at the Detroit Opera House, opening for comedian and "Howard Stern Show" personality Artie Lange. The event is a benefit for Adam **Niskar**, 26, of Beverly Hills, who became paralyzed after a 1999 diving accident on Walnut Lake.

Young knew **Niskar** and his brother, Ross, growing up in Southfield.

"I've known the Niskars for years," Young said. "I grew up playing baseball in the neighborhood with (them)." A few years ago, Young got a call from Adam **Niskar**, who knew of his connections in Hollywood and his talent for writing, and proposed he write a movie about his life and his experiences following the accident.

He gave Young his journal, and Young, fascinated by it, turned it into a screenplay. "Right Angle" is now being produced by Camelot Pictures.

" (Actor) Emile Hirsch was at one point signed on - right now they're working through the details," Young said of the film that is both a drama and a comedy. " (**Niskar's** manuscript) was one of the best things I've ever read. As sad and as tragic as it was, it was also hilarious.

(Adam's) attitude throughout the whole thing was funny. You would never expect it, and it makes for a great drama and comedy at the same time. There are hundreds of hilarious scenes in there." The movie and upcoming comedy show are just a piece of what Young has been up to in the years since he graduated high school in 1986, left Southfield, attended college at the University of Arizona, and made a home and a career in L. A.

He has written another script for Camelot Pictures; signed a deal with ABC Television for the sitcom "Forever Young," which is coproduced by Tobey Maguire; toured with Bob Saget, Dave Chappelle, Wanda Sykes and Dave Attel; and formed the Young American Comedy Tour, which performs across the country.

" (It's) a tour for the hottest upand-coming comedians in the game," Young said. "They're all friends of mine. We've done 26 cities and we're taking it to the next level, which is having a major sponsor and going back on tour." Young is looking forward to working with Lange at the Detroit show.

"It worked out beautifully that Artie signed on," Young said of the comedian whose own father suffered a fall and was paralyzed, which led to his death a few years later. It was this connection that motivated Lange to agree to do the benefit.

"It's going to be a huge show," Young said.

Also, he's pumped to return home, where he has family still living in the area.

"Southfield was the greatest place to grow up," he said. "It is so diverse. ... It was the greatest breeding ground for creative energy.

It's just a special place." The upcoming comedy show is but one of many fundraisers that have been held for Adam **Niskar** in the years since his accident.

Ross **Niskar** has organized golf outings, wine tastings and bar nights in the past.

Ross **Niskar** said his brother is now engaged and expecting a baby with his fiancé in December. "He needs someone to come in and help him with personal things several times a week, so that's about \$30, 000 per year, plus the cost of modifying his vehicle, and the portion of the wheelchair that isn't covered. It's hard enough to make a living just for yourself these days, without an extra \$50, 000 in medical expenses." Tickets to the show are on sale now through Ticketmaster at (248) 645-6666.

For more information about the Friends for Adam **Niskar** Trust, visit www.friendsforadam.com. For more information about Young, visit www.youngamericancomedytour.com.

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