

HOMETOWN HUMOR

Southfield native hopes comedy show reinvigorates Detroit

By Kristin Bull
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Mike Young came home for Thanksgiving on a mission of laughter.

The Southfield-boy-turned-L.A.-funnyman is on a quest to inundate the city of Detroit in humor, one variety show at a time.

"Everyone is talking about how bad it is, how rough things are," said Young, a comedian who describes his act as Richard Pryor-meets-Seinfeld, inspired by real-life experiences. "I want to use comedy as a platform to breathe a little life back into the city."

His Young American Comedy Tour stops at City Theatre inside Hockeytown Café at 8 p.m. Wednesday. Young calls it a variety show inspired by the Kings of Comedy and the Blue Collar Comedy Tour; it features DJs and go-go dancers with standup comedy at its core.

Young, 41, describes himself as single and unapologetic. In Los Angeles, he plays basketball with Tobey Maguire and hangs with "Entourage" star Kevin Connolly.

He works on sitcoms for Vince Vaughn. He performs with Bob Saget, Wanda Sykes and Dave Chappelle. He writes screenplays and rarely stops the laughter.

But back home in Detroit, he is "Fun Uncle Mike." In his nephews, 9-year-old Ian and 8-year-old Cameron, Young sees a reflection of his own childhood. The boys' father is Mike Young's younger brother,

Robert Young — his partner in all things comedy.

"We've been best friends our whole lives, and he has been behind me since day one," says Mike of his brother, who is behind the scenes as producer of the comedy tour. "We grew up in a funny household, where laughter was the thing."

Back in the day, Robert was mostly Steve Martin; Mike was more Eddie Murphy.

Their father ran a scrap metal business; their mom worked as a teacher. They graduated from Southfield-Lathrup High School in the 1980s and went to University of Arizona, where

Robert played football and Mike "earned a degree in nothing."

When their father died of cancer in 1990, Robert dropped out of college and returned home to take over the family business, which allowed Mike to finish his senior year of college.

Robert, now owner of Young & Sons Insurance Reconstruction Specialists in Farmington Hills, has no regrets.

"I always looked up to him," said Robert, 39, of his older brother. "He was always a great public speaker, and I was the younger brother who couldn't form a sentence. There isn't anything I wouldn't do for him."

Robert lives in Commerce Township with his sons and wife, COUNI. Despite their geographic distance, Robert works along-

side Mike in all of his entertainment projects.

The brothers' ultimate goal is for the tour to make



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Robert Young, left, and Mike Young imitate the Three Stooges in front of the City Theater. "We've been best friends our whole lives, and he has been behind me since day one," Mike says of his brother.

monthly stops in Detroit; they hope to establish it as Motown's answer to the Apollo Theater.

"We're looking to build a little empire," said Robert Young.

In the meantime, Mike is keeping it real with humor. Comedy writer and "Entourage" creator Doug Ellin calls Mike Young one of the best comics he has seen in a long time.

"His material is dead on when it comes to subjects like friends, family and relationships," Ellin said.

What's next

Mike Young has both TV and film projects in development, including the movie "Right Angle," which he recently sold to Camelot Pictures. He describes the movie as a dark comedy based on a tragic real-life diving accident that paralyzed his real-life friend, Adam Niskar. Young said the studio is in talks with Emile Hirsch, star of "Into the Wild," to star in the movie, which will be filmed next year in Detroit.