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Diamond Ruff: A Story of Choices, Consequences, and Redemption

HARTFORD (Sept. 8, 2011) “I have always been fascinated by the human spirit and how powerful it is. Overcoming odds is very spiritual and *Diamond Ruff* shows this,” said Diamond's creator Joe Young Jr.

The strength and weakness of human nature are under the microscope in the *Diamond Ruff* book, and now the movie, which will be filming into early October. *Diamond Ruff* is about circumstances, the choices a person makes, the consequences, and second chances.

Orphaned at a young age, Diamond Ruff uses his intelligence and shrewdness to survive. He becomes an accomplished con artist, crime boss, and millionaire. His tool of choice is manipulating the weaknesses of others to his advantage. But on the eve of the biggest job of Diamond's career, his weaknesses surface setting in motion events that will have deadly consequences. Is prison the final fate of Diamond Ruff? Does the Rev. Trek Woods hold the key to Diamond's redemption? There are no easy answers.

Fredro Starr (*Save the Last Dance*, *Moesha*, and *The Wire*) takes on the challenging role of portraying Diamond. A founding member of the rap group Onyx, Starr leads a talented cast that includes Dennis L.A. White aka Dennis Da Menace (*Notorious* and *The Brave One*), Michael Colyar (*The Princess and the Frog* and *House Party III*), and Felicia “Snoop” Pearson (*The Wire*).

The movie will be shot mostly in Hartford, Conn., and in several other locations in the state. The movie's director is Mystic native Alec Asten. Young and his son Kyle Young, both of Springfield, Mass., are producing the film under Young Feature Films LLC.

“The movie is very emotional. It’s funny, serious, it’s touching. It hits a lot of emotions in a short amount of time,” said Joe Young, a cartoonist, animation producer, writer and president of Young Studios in Hartford.

“The movie makes you think about your purpose in life. You can identify with one or several of the characters.”

“This is a movie of scruples,” said Young, who grew up in the Hartford area.

Diamond Ruff is the latest embodiment of the scruples theme for this nationally recognized artist.

In 1988, Young created the comic strip *Scruples* about orphans dealing with social issues. Since its inception, *Scruples* has been featured in national syndication and on television. The 1999 *Guinness Book of World Records* recognized Young as the official holder of the longest comic strip in the world.

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Young has also been cited by the White House and locally for his community involvement through the Joe, Picture This Show Inc., a 501 (c) 3 youth arts agency, and its Hartford Animation & Film Institute.

Through the writing of the book and the making of the movie, Young said he wants to show people all things are possible. "When I start on a project I believe it can happen. I see it before it happens," he said.

"I want people to believe in themselves and go after their dreams," Young said. "I feel like people have given up and through *Diamond Ruff*, I want to tell [that] story."

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