

BINGE-WORTHY BEAU: 'Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt' Star Mike Carlsen Hammers His Way Into Our Hearts

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By now you've probably already binged season 2 of Netflix's *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*—barricaded yourself in your bedroom, nestled under the covers with a bag of Doritos, and a bottle of the strongest stuff you've got in the closet. Good, boys and girls, good. By now you've undoubtedly clicked "yes, I'm still watching" five to seven times in one sitting and reluctantly taken a few bathroom breaks... it's bound to happen sooner or later, right? Oh and like the rest of us hopeless romantics, you've undoubtedly fallen hard for that charming meatball of a construction worker Mikey Politano. We've all been there (who am I kidding, we're still there), and trust me, we'll get through this together. #FemalesAreStrongAsHell

So who is the elusive actor behind everyone's favorite new binge-worthy beau? Well, it's none other than New York native Mike Carlsen. Carlsen, whose character on *Kimmy Schmidt* not only managed to win the hearts of millions of viewers worldwide, but also forward-thinking, and often abrasive Titus Andromedon's, is hopefully here to stay. Please stay—seriously, don't make us go all Titoncé and bust the windows of Mikey's Tilda Swinton decorated truck... again.



From the very beginning, Mikey and Titus had an instant spark, and without hesitation, the once closeted Mikey came out to Titus and our OTP (one true pairing) was born. I mean, aren't you glad he came down off his high horse from back when he heckled Kimmy in Season 1? I sure am!

Carlsen is just as sweet, if not sweeter than his fictional counterpart, and that's not just because he was totally riding a donut high while we chatted via phone during his latest visit to LA. We spoke about the evolution of his character, Mikey's detour from the Titus path, and the odds of his now beloved character returning to a recently renewed season 4. Let's say- it's highly likely. Mikey and Titus' story is far from over... and some would even say, it's *Unbreakable!*

So grab some delectable *donuts and check out my interview with this talented *Kimmy Schmidt* star...

*Donuts desired, not required.

MCKENZIE MORRELL: Can you describe your character on *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* to those few people who might not know about the show because they've been living in a bunker for the last fifteen years [laughs]?

MIKE CARLSEN: He's a sweet guy named Mikey. He was introduced to Kimmy in the first season when she liked my yellow hat. Last year, I became Titus' boyfriend and we dated until the end of the season. What else do I want to say about Mike? He's a good guy. He's a sweetheart. It's hard to talk about him.

MM: A glimpse of you was introduced in the first season. Did you have any idea you'd be brought back or was that a coincidence?

MC: Robert Carlock was the guy on set with me that day and he was really nice. He was like “we love you, we love your work and we would love for this to grow into something.” Then I think people really gravitated toward that episode and the work with Titus and it’s a very specific type of comedy and something I feel like I’m very good at and they might have seen that too and it grew from there.

MM: How much of yourself went into this character? There are some blatant similarities between his name, him being a New Yorker, a Mets fan. Was that built around you or was that a coincidence?

MC: I think some of it was a coincidence but also really good comedy, they write for their people. They get to know who they are as people. Really good writers are really good listeners and they’re able to understand people and language and how somebody speaks. We grew to know each other better and they were able to write for me more.

MM: Obviously the show is a comedy but there are some dramatic elements to it. You really nail the comedic and heartfelt moments. What kind of techniques or strategies do you use to teeter those lines between being funny and having more sentimental moments?

MC: I’m a big believer in if the writing is really good, as long as you’re true to the moment and the situation being put in front of you, and you’re honest about those moments, everything comes through. You’re honest but the jokes are clear because people know where you’re coming from emotionally. It’s kind of like an actor applying subtext to comedy. The jokes are on top and you’re layering it with that but the emotion is always the most important thing to play.

MM: There were some really emotional scenes this past season. I wanted to cry and laugh at the same time.

MC: Me too! Those days when we would fight or break up, those were weird days because you’re feeling so emotional. I think it really read well. I’m really happy with the work. I think it’s good.

MM: Why do you think people are drawn to your character? Do you think they see themselves in him?

MC: That’s very sweet of you to say they’re drawn to Mikey. He’s just a dude, you know? I think he’s just a really nice guy who wants to live his life and live his truth. I think that when people gravitate toward people that they want to see the best in. I think Mikey is that type of person where he looks for the best in people and he wants the best for people and I think with Titus, there’s a genuine real love there for what’s deep down as opposed to surface levels.



Photo by Netflix - © Netflix

MM: They're definitely polar opposites so it's a nice contrast to see those characters working together harmoniously when they're not broken up.

MC: Yeah. It's always good. It's good for conflict and good for relationships. Someone who is different from you is able to help you grow and that's important in life.

MM: If you could play one of the other characters on the show for the day, who would it be and what is the first thing you'd do in their shoes?

MC: That's a good question. I think Titus is hilarious but I could never think of trying to play Titus. No one can play Titus like Titus. If there's anyone Mikey is close to as far as character, I think it's Lily. They have the same kind of sensibilities. Mikey likes her because she speaks her mind. She's able to be more truthful and harder on people than Mikey is. There's something interesting about that. I really love Carol [Kane] and I think that's such a great character she's created with Lilian. It was so great to see her. I loved her arc this season. It was so great.

MM: Obviously the show is on Netflix. It's all the rage, binge watching shows and not having to wait each week for a new installment. Are you getting used to this sort of audience? What has the response been like on social media while people are tuning in?

MC: It's pretty intense because people are really intense for about two weeks then it starts to die down. Then you get random people saying hi and that they just started the show. But the first couple weeks are interesting. People are really able to live in that world with you for the days they're watching the show. They get so invested. It makes me feel great because they really start to care about the characters and care about the show so much. It's a completely different model but I think it's what we're going towards as a society. People love binge watching. I love binge watching. It's my favorite thing to do.

MM: What are you binge watching right now?

MC: I just started *The Keepers* on Netflix. *Raising Hope*. It was a comedy on Fox a couple years ago. I watched the last three seasons in like two days. We just finished *Bloodline* on Netflix which was amazing. *The Keepers* is a documentary, and it's really interesting.

MM: I've been hearing mixed reviews so I'm interested to get my take on it. Everyone has a different perspective so it should be interesting to see unfold.

MC: It is a super dark story.

MM: Obviously, in terms of your character, Titus let him go in hopes that he'd explore his options and ultimately come back to him. Do you think he made the right decision? Would you have done something differently?

MC: I don't know. That's difficult to say. First relationships are very intense and if he felt too much pressure to be somebody's first, that's completely understandable and I think they're both kind of figuring out their lives and if it's meant to be, it's meant to be. I hope it's meant to be but I'm not the one making the decisions. I think there's a lot of love still there between them. I think it was the right decision in the moment but we'll see what happens.

MM: I was watching the show the other night and I was like "I just need them to get back together already." After that finale, do you think there is hope for fans who want Titus and Mikey to get back together?

MC: I hope there's hope. I do think there's hope. I do feel like Titus wants him back. It's difficult to — I think there's hope to that relationship because I think there's still a lot of love there. Wherever there's a lot of love, there's a lot of hope. Life is funny. People go in and out and come back in. That's the way things go sometimes. I do think there's a lot of hope to that relationship.

MM: It takes a lot of love to let someone go and explore other avenues and other people because the only thing they know is that one person. That speaks volumes as well for those characters.

MC: True love is selfless. You see things in people they don't see in themselves and you're able to make the calls that you think will make them better or help them grow as people.

MM: What was your favorite thing about working with Titus in real life?

MC: I've been with Titus for a very long time. He was doing a Broadway show when I was doing a Broadway show about ten years ago. We've been pretty friendly for a while. The chemistry is there. I adore him. He's one of the most giving people I've ever met in my life. He's always having barbecues and having people over. He's a talent and I've known that for a while and I'm so happy the world is finally getting to see all the love that he puts out there. He's unbelievable. He really is.



MM: I love watching the show and you guys have great chemistry on the screen. It does show that you're friendly in real life.

MC: We hang out sometimes. He's a good dude.

MM: Let's get serious for a second. I have to be honest that I haven't seen a full game of Baseball since I'm a nerd. But I am dating a diehard Mets fan. So I consider myself a Mets fan by default and I have been advised to ask you what being a Mets fan means to you?

MC: I've always been the type — in my lifetime we've won one championship and that was 1986 and that was a great year. It's been a rough go as Mets fan. And I'm a Mets fan and a Jets fan and a Ranger fan. There haven't been many championships in my lifetime. I'm a diehard Mets fan. I'm a big believer in the Underdog. I'm a big believer in fighting and that 86 team that won the championship were a bunch of bad boys and we love them. Being a Mets fans, you're not a front runner. Being a Mets fan, I don't know — it's such an interesting

question. You know, you're an Underdog. You're a little scrappy. Being a Mets fan is more New York to me than being a Yankees fan. It's the working man's New York baseball team. I'm proud of that.

MM: I have a signature question that I try to sneak into all of my interviews. Are you ready? If you were to construct a doughnut based on your character's personality, what would it be and what toppings would be on it?

MC: That is a really great question. When I think of Mikey, I think of like bananas, because he's kind of gorilla ish to me. I'm thinking a donut with a nice banana glaze and chocolate syrup on there and some coconut on top, topped with some chocolate chips and slices of banana on top. I'm feeling a lot of banana and chocolate with Mikey.

MM: I could go for that. I am a donut enthusiast.

MC: I just got to LA and went to donut shop. Oh my God, we got like fifteen freaking donuts. It was so good. If I've been a little talkative it's because I'm still on a sugar high. These donuts are unbelievable.

MM: That works in my favor. Donut on! When you're back in the city one day we can grab a donut, you can school me on the Mets and I can learn something from you. To kind of wrap things up, when you are not acting, what can the fans find you doing? Any hobbies you want to tell us about? Any projects you're working on?

MC: I rock climb. I find it meditative. I run a lot. I play a little poker. I hate to say it but I'm quite a good poker player. I don't mean to toot my own horn but I think I am. I do meditation and stuff like that. I play some basketball.

MM: Those are all awesome things to do and keep grounded and stay fit. Well, thank you again for chatting with me. We can't wait to see what's next for Mikey!

Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt Season 1 – 3 is now streaming on **Netflix**

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