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Focus is on "Funny" for "Half Nelson" duo

Tue Aug 11, 2009 1:36am EDT

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LOS ANGELES (Hollywood Reporter) - Focus Features will finance, produce and distribute the next film from the writer-director team behind the 2006 drama "Half Nelson," which garnered a best actor Oscar nomination for Ryan Gosling.

The Universal Pictures specialty division has boarded "It's Kind of a Funny Story," a coming-of-age comedy-drama that Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden are directing from a script they wrote.

"Story" centers on a 15-year-old boy who is battling depression and checks himself into a psychiatric hospital but finds himself in the adult ward. He develops a series of colorful and dramatic relationships with adult patients and a girl his age.

"Story" is based on a young-adult novel by Ned Vizzini, a 450-page tome that gained critical acclaim when Miramax Books published it in 2006.

Producers aim to cast the film with a name-driven adult ensemble and a number of discoveries for the teen roles.

Fleck and Boden gained acclaim with their debut feature, "Half Nelson," which told the story of several New York City students and their devoted but crack-addicted teacher (Gosling).

The pair also were behind the immigrant baseball drama "Sugar," which caused a stir at Sundance in 2008 and whose screenplay was nominated for a Spirit Award.

(Editing by Sheri Linden at Reuters)

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