

SNEAKING OUT ON THE TOWN

Five tall dudes—and one of normal stature—want to tell you where to go tonight

BY JONATHAN LERNER
PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS STANFORD



Their slightly goofball guy talk makes the offices of their nightlife website SneakySunday.com reminiscent of a frat house. But these fellows all have corporate titles that reveal businesslike ambition. Paul

Broft, for example—6'3", 31, background in finance—is the start-up's CEO. "We were at Dantanna's, one of our favorite sports bars," he explains of their moment of inspiration. "It was a Sunday night, crowded, and we wondered, How would people know to come here on a Sunday?" They realized that between them they had friends in many cities who knew not only which restaurants and entertainment venues were the coolest, but also which nights each one is best. That insider information, in essence, is what you will find on their new site, which launched April 1st. And its wacky name? "We used to always

call going out on Sunday nights 'Sneaky Sunday.' Anybody can go out on a Friday or Saturday. Sundays, Mondays your expectations are lower, but often that's when you have the best time," Broft explains, adding—from personal experience, no doubt—"and then you pay for it the next day."

Besides Broft, the group includes Jason Williams, 6'3", 30, background in interactive design, Chief Technology Officer; Chris Tuff, 6'3", 27, current day job media trend spotter, Chief Marketing Officer; Cary Franklin, 6'4", 30, current day job commercial-loan banker, Chief Operating Officer; Dean Roland, 6'3", 35, current day job member of Collective Soul, Chief Strategy Officer ("No, Chief Rock Star," insists Chris); and John Davis, 5'8" ("But I kick ass!"), 33, art direction background, Chief Creative Officer.

You can probably tell from both these mini-resumés and the accompanying photo that these fellows have several traits in common. They're all

straight, white, good-looking, 30something, tall (mostly), well-educated professionals. Inevitably, their picks of where to go out will share a certain sensibility. So what are they looking for?

"A, we don't want chains, to the extent possible," says Cary Franklin. "B, it's not just one thing, it's the total experience. It's the crowd, the way the place looks. Is the food great? You take everything into account. Is it more city or more suburban? Is it a staple of the city or is it just some trendy little hotspot?"

Chris Tuff chimes in. "El Bar is a perfect example. It's the hottest place right now—on Ponce, right behind El Azteca. There's no signage or anything, but it's the best place to go on Thursday."

"Or MJQ," adds Jason Williams. "At one point they had the best dancing in Atlanta. But you talk to some people who have lived here for years and they don't even know it exists. And some people would



A sneaky bunch. (Left to right) Jason Williams, Chris Tuff, Paul Broft, Cary Franklin, John Davis and Dean Roland.

disagree, because they don't really want to get out on the floor and dance, or they think it's a little too dark or too dirty. But that's what I would like to do."

And why, pray tell, should we trust their essentially subjective opinions? "Well," says CEO Broft judiciously, "it's a trust we're going to try to build over time."

"Plus, we've partied"—adds CTO Williams.

"We've had a lot of experience," Chief Rock Star Roland confirms.

One more reason to trust them is that they pay their own way. The site presently offers nightlife guides to over 90 major U.S. cities. The reviews of places outside Atlanta are mostly supplied by their friends. "But there are places," says Broft, "where people we don't know are coming to us. We have to screen them, but we can ask them the right questions about their backgrounds, tastes, frequency of

going out, their income level."

The site features video clips of many of the places listed (available on SneakySunday.tv), so users can get a more useful impression of which ones might be appropriate for a date, say, versus a

Insider information is what you will find on their new site.

dinner with business associates. Refinements to come include a shopping-cart-like "night planner" that will allow a user to prepare an evening's itinerary in advance and e-mail that to friends, and technical modifications that will ensure that the site works seamlessly on BlackBerries and iPhones. Also possible are special events and promotions. Sneaky de

Mayo, anyone?

A lot of people have inaugurated equally ambitious, simple, attractive websites to fill a range of perceived needs. Many of those ventures never earned a dime. But these entrepreneurs are motivated at least in part by the desire to amass this kind of information for their own use. "The places we cover are places we want to go," says Williams. And Broft adds, "Whether we sell it for a lot of money or own it for the rest of our lives, the worst-case scenario is that Dean, as he travels to all these cities with Collective Soul, has got this amazing guide that he's never had up till now."

To which Tuff counters, with a note of entrepreneurial aspiration, "Let's hope it's a little bit bigger than that." ☺