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open table **interview**

By Stacy Shoemaker Raven

THE KINGS OF CLUBS

Thirty years in, nightlife impresarios Noah Tepperberg and Jason Strauss keep raising the bar



The story of best friends and business partners Noah Tepperberg and Jason Strauss is one that movies are based on. While Tepperberg spent his early childhood in Brooklyn, they both grew up in Manhattan and met when they were in high school. Tepperberg got into the nightlife promoting business after he threw a cast party for Stuyvesant High School's annual musical (he also had relationships with people in the bar and club business through his older brother, who had a band); Strauss was captain of the football team at Riverdale Country School and got his feet wet throwing the Homecoming party, which is ironically where he first met Tepperberg. "From that, we started doing prom parties and collegiate parties, and soon, older people in the industry found out that we could wrangle people and be pied pipers," Strauss says.



Tao Group Hospitality's Noah Tepperberg and Jason Strauss



The Highlight Room, originally designed for the Dream Hollywood, has been reimagined for New York at the Moxy NYC Lower East Side by Michaelis Boyd

Photos by JEFF SPICER, AVABLU PHOTOGRAPHY, and courtesy of TAO GROUP HOSPITALITY



The Highlight Room's bar in New York, accented with greenery



Designed by Rockwell Group, a curved stair leads to Sake No Hana at the Moxy NYC Lower East Side, which exudes a 1980s punk vibe



Studio Collective designed the earthy Lavo Ristorante, on West Hollywood's Sunset Strip

Tepperberg went to the University of Miami and Strauss attended Boston University, but they continued promoting both at school and on breaks, communicating via fax and beepers, enticing people to come to their events (which grew to spring break packages) through "old-school, hand-to-hand" tactics: calling their rolodex on a landline phone and meeting at Kinko's late night to print flyers. "We would get creative," explains Strauss. "I [remember] I made a flyer that looked like a parking ticket, and we [put a flyer on] every car at the cafeteria—[anything] to get notoriety." Adds Tepperberg: "At one point, we started sharing papers [since] we were taking the same business classes and for our final project senior year, we both did a business plan on opening a nightclub. We were entrepreneurs even in college; we always got together during the breaks and figured out ways to throw parties, make money, bring our social circles together, and that was the foundation for what we have today. Three decades and a couple generations later, we are still doing it, just on a much bigger scale."

Those college parties, dubbed "Jason and Noah present" on their fliers, continued after graduation, moving from an off-campus house to a small office in New York as well as their studio apartments, where they enlisted the help of friends to make calls and answer phones. Soon they were running multiple events a week, packing places with a discerning, sought-after clientele. "You would get on our guestlist by leaving a message on our answering machine," remembers Tepperberg. "We always knew how well our clubs were going to do by the length of the beep, because [that meant we had] a lot of messages for that night."

Changing the Game

Their promotion business grew into Strategic Group, a full-fledged marketing, PR, and special events company that offered their roster of Fortune 500 companies the novelty of all three services under one roof. The natural next step was to create the same magic in their own brick and mortar locations. First were a few celeb-favorite hangouts in the Hamptons including Conscience Point and Jet East, then came Manhattan haunts Luahn and Suite 16. "We [became] really seasoned in ways to communicate with the corporate world, as well as to bring this club culture to a corporate world and unite them in a marriage," explains Strauss.

In 2003, they introduced gamechanger Marquee. Housed in a former parking garage in New York's up-and-coming Chelsea neighborhood, it was the first nightclub to offer