

STARTING YOUNG

Coming on the scene – an iClubbing app

Thanks to two ex-nightlife pros, clubbers can now click with the hottest parties in town, says **MA XIANGYU**

DRESSED in crisp pink oxfords and cloaked in an air of casual debonair, the pair of Subaish Rajamanickam and Mano Kunasegaran from Biggest Baddest Parties (BBP) do not cut the image of your usual technopreneur.

Not geeks by trade, the pair are former nightlife professionals trying to build BBP into an on-line service that can present all of Singapore's nightlife offerings on one stylish web application.

The core idea behind BBP is simple. The two are building web and mobile apps on iOS and Android platforms where users, after signing in with their Facebook accounts, will be able to check out all the parties happening in Singapore clubs, sign up for guest lists, and check out the parties their friends are going to. When they want to, they can check in themselves and join the party.

The application is not out yet, but a Facebook page is up and running. Mr Subaish, CEO of BBP, is a former senior marketing and entertainment director with local entertainment company Creative Insurgence, and at age 29 has had five years of experience in the entertainment industry. His partner, Mr Mano, 27 and COO of BBP, is a self-described "film and TV guy" who founded his own production company and has had nearly a decade's worth of experience "doing just about every job in a club bar, including cleaning and security".

The genesis of the BBP idea was this: Mr Mano had originally conceived BBP as a TV series of the most rambunctious parties in Singapore back in August 2008.

The idea slowly grew to include online and web-app tie-ins as promotional tools for the main TV series. In the six months the two spent hawking their plan around for funding, it

dawned on them that the ancillary portions of their business plan showed more promise. Work on the web-app started in earnest from December 2010. "We realised that there wasn't really any existing site that catered to the larger party scene. There are sites catering to the niche clubbing spots, sure, but there isn't one that covers everything well," Mr Mano says.

"The more we pitched our ideas around, the more we became convinced that this was where the promise was, so we swung 180 (degrees), forgot about the TV show, and started to focus on developing the web and mobile apps."

The reformulated plans earned them a \$50,000 Action Community for Entrepreneurship grant from Spring Singapore in August 2012. They were thereafter incubated under the aegis of the Institute of Innovation & Entrepreneurship at the Singapore Management University.

BBP's appeal for users is its free offerings. Clubs are not charged to be featured either so the app can be a powerful promotional tool, Mr Subaish says. All clubs need to do, he said, is provide necessary information to the staff at BBP and then regularly update and maintain their own sections on the app.

"The sell to clubs is very simple. The clubs all know who comes in and spends the \$5,000 every night. What they don't know is who comes in to spend the \$100, \$200. But these are the people that make the club. Without them, the clubs won't have those big spenders coming in for the VIP tables," he says.

Mr Subaish hopes BBP's equitable approach to the club promotion game can shake up the existing scene where those who can pay for the best promoters win.

"Most if not all the clubs now work by paying promoters to bring people in. The clubs



Not your usual technopreneurs: But the plans of Mr Mano (left) and Mr Subaish earned them a \$50,000 Action Community for Entrepreneurship grant in 2012. PHOTO: ARTHUR LEE

with the strongest promoters are the ones who do the best," he says.

"We hope to change that. We want to be a neutral non-partisan platform. We want to be fair to everyone. We don't want to be a platform where someone pays more for more airtime or to get larger icons on the app."

BBP expects to generate most of its revenue through advertising. Mr Subaish gave the example of promotions advertising via push-notifications as one example of how companies can advertise through BBP's apps. He says that banks and liquor companies he has spoken to have expressed interest.

Conservatively, he expects BBP to generate a turnover of \$100,000 by the end of the year.

It hasn't been easy, the pair concede. Some clubs are chary, having been soured by empty promises previous start-ups had made. Others

simply share a stodgy stubbornness against technology. Some are resistant to change. "It can take a while to convince them," says Mr Mano.

The idea behind BBP is hardly unique, and the road behind it littered with past failures. But the duo, banking on their experience and credibility with local nightlife players, are convinced that their project can make it where their predecessors could not.

"Anybody can build technology but not everybody has the understanding of the nightlife business we do. That's where the value-set for us is. We know just about everything there is to know about parties in Singapore," says Mr Mano.

Clubs know BBP has the background and experience to back its plans, and it has secured the cooperation of at least 10 clubs, he adds.

Already, the pair are also looking ahead, seeing other opportunities in Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, and much of South-east Asia.

"The lack of a single go-to website or app isn't just true in Singapore, it's the same for so many places. It frankly stupefies me. That's why we're so confident and eager to expand our offerings outside of Singapore," he says.

"Two months after we launch in Singapore we'll be launching in KL, and then another city. The third city we're yet to decide."