

Blind faith

What's the best way to score a date: online, a matchmaking service or the good old-fashioned setup? Two singles—a thirtysomething gay male writer and a 23-year-old straight female grad student—give each method a go, and tell the tales of their dating adventures. By **Web Behrens** and **Maude Standish** Photographs by **Taylor Castle**

The Dating Issue

He said

It's time to discover what the pros can do. I dial up **In Good Company** (360 N Michigan Ave, 312-499-9900, igc-chicago.com), a two-and-a-half-year-old dating service for gay and lesbian professionals. At a meeting in its downtown office, I fill out a questionnaire, and then Emily, the company president, asks about my family, career, personal interests and taste in men, a process that takes a little more than an hour. As long as you're matchable (and I imagine you'd have to be a complete moron not to make the grade), out comes the contract—an agreement that covers one year or 12 matches, whichever comes first, and costs \$1,100. Considering the hours so many guys spend trolling Gay.com, I start to understand the cost-benefit analysis.

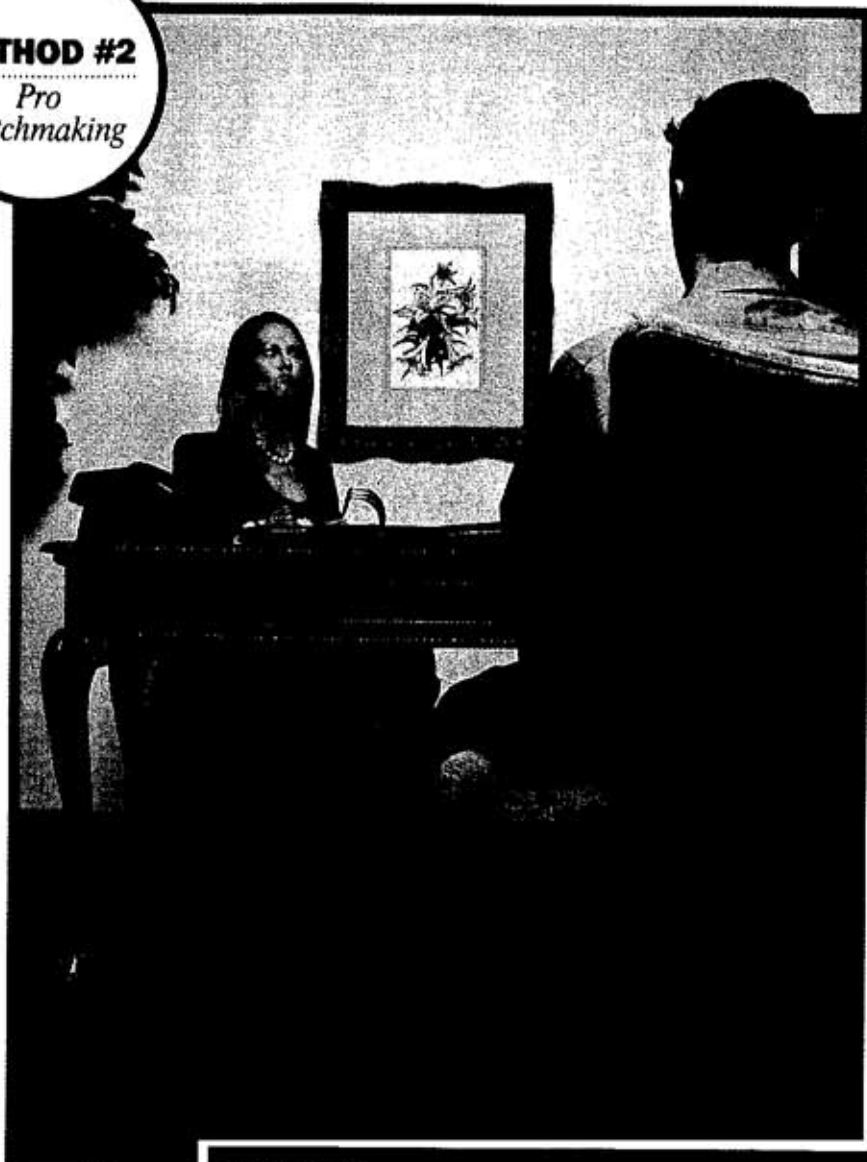
What happens, I ask, when a client finds Mr. (or Ms.) Right after just the first or second introduction? "Then they've made a great investment," Emily replies with a big smile. There is a little leeway—if she finds a good match for you early on and you'd rather not date around, you can freeze your membership for up to a year while you decide if you've found a keeper. A day or two after the meeting, Emily calls to tell me about my first introduction, giving me his first name, profession and a few of his interests. IGC then arranges a time for us to meet—Sunday brunch at Charlie's Ale House in Andersonville, one of more than two dozen IGC "member restaurants."

I'm the first to arrive; IGC times our brunch well, just before the noonish rush. My date joins soon afterward, and he's kinda handsome—although that's not really the first reaction I'd like to have when I meet my future husband. He's also socially awkward, and not in a cute way: For instance, when the conversation turns to theater, he tells me about the time he attended a one-woman show written and performed by a "crippled midget," and how he felt weird in an audience full of small people. I manage this rejoinder: "Well, I guess you gained a new perspective."

We share a chuckle or two, mostly over the spotty service and soggy French toast. He nonetheless suggests we tip 20 percent, so at least he can be generous. As these sometimes-awkward "thanks but no thanks" partings go, this one was pretty painless.

METHOD #2

*Pro
matchmaking*



THE VERDICT

In Good Company struck out, but presumably the feedback from each unsuccessful match helps improve the company's judgment for the next one. And though it took up more of my time, Gay.com led to a fun meeting that probably never would've happened without the Internet, as my date and I are both busy and live in different 'hoods. (It's possible we'll see each other in the future, but we haven't communicated since.) The clear winner is the "friend setup" option—that date lasted longest, and we had an awesome time. We've already been in touch via phone and e-mail and will definitely hang out again. It's way too soon to tell where it's going, but this is a sweet beginning to a great '08.