

Does Brickell Nightlife Still Belong to the Bro?

BY RYAN PFEFFER

Few places in Miami are growing as fast, or as tall, as Brickell. By 2019 Miami's Downtown Development Authority anticipates the area's population will hit 37,087. It was only 12,904 in the year 2000. And in the general Greater Downtown Area, there are roughly 36,931 residents between the ages of 25 and 44 — nearly half the area's population. Those are 36,931 people, young and thirsty, ready to hit the town and consume.



But, of those 36,931 young professionals, how many are choosing Brickell as a nightlife destination? Even more pressing: of those 36,931 people, how many are bros?

The bro — you know the type. They come in different shapes and sizes, but the general characteristics remain the same: shirt a bit too tight, high-fives a little too forceful, speech a little too belligerent. They will elbow you out of the way at the bar, offering to buy your girlfriend a drink along the way. The bro's drive for fun is a selfish one, and anyone standing in the way — whether that be of more alcohol, sex, or dibs on shotgun in the Uber — is only an obstacle that needs to be eliminated. Like the Dementors that tormented Harry Potter and his crew, the bro has fun while simultaneously sucking it out of everyone within earshot.

How does this relate to Brickell's nightlife? Well, Brickell, to some, is synonymous with the bro.

The area has been known to house a rainbow of bros — a rainbro, if you will. Thrillist even included Brickell on its list of America's 12 Bro-iest Neighborhoods. As Miami's finance district, Brickell is home to, obviously, the finance bro: the bro who hits happy hour in a suit and tie to talk too loudly about all the sick deals they closed this week. But there's also the UM bro: usually a frat kid dressed like a colorblind dad. There's even the female bro, AKA the bro-ette.

Remember the girl who tore apart that Uber like a supermodel going to town on a McDougle the day after a bikini shoot? Yup, she was a bro-ette. And that incident happened in Brickell.

But every area of Miami has its own reputation and stereotype. Often, those who frequent or live in those areas plagued by certain stereotypes are quick to rattle off a list of reasons why those aforementioned stereotypes are, at the very least, hyperbolic.

When Dan Binkiewicz first opened Blackbird Ordinary at the end of December, 2011, the area didn't have much to offer in terms of nightlife. "When we first opened, the only thing it had around us were, like, four or five — a multitude — of different Irish bars," he says. Precisely the sort of environment conducive to some pretty bro-tastic activity.

Binkiewicz and his team, who already owned and operated Miami Beach's Purdy Lounge, saw an opportunity to give Brickell something it didn't have. "We wanted to do everything opposite of what was already in the neighborhood. And all that was in the neighborhood was Irish bars and Blue Martini — which, for me, is just a little cheesy."

So Binkiewicz launched what he hoped would be the best cocktail menu in Miami. From there, he focused on the bar's live music. And soon, Blackbird was packing them in. Though, at first, Binkiewicz admits it was a lopsided crowd. "What we didn't like about the beginning is that it was maybe a little too college-y. Like, in the beginning we got hit hard by the UM students. But that's died down and now it's more what a Miami crowd is." Blackbird's demographic today, he says, is like the rest of Miami: mixed and diverse. "It could be anybody from any part of the world, really."

A three-minute walk north of Blackbird, sitting along the Miami River, is American Social. AmSo, a bar and gastropub with classic sensibilities, moved into Brickell on December 1, 2015. Its original location opened in Downtown Fort Lauderdale in 2012. American Social's co-owner, Paul Greenberg, saw nothing but opportunity in Brickell when looking to expand out of Broward.

"Brickell's a hot, happening area," Greenberg says. "We thought it would be a prime location to go to. And being on the water is phenomenal." And, at least from the outside, it looks like Greenberg's instincts were right. It didn't take long for American Social to find its place in Brickell, and nearly a year after it opened, it's one of the area's most popular bars.

But Greenberg says he sees no specific demographic when it comes to Brickell. "Our clientele is mixed... You come in during happy hour and you'll see a lot of people dressed up in suits and ties and professional work attire. You get into dinner and we have more casual people sitting outside and relaxing — anywhere from ages 25 to 65." Sunday brunch, Greenberg says, is filled with families — babies, even. On the weekends, there is a younger, more energetic crowd. But, to Greenberg, it's a little bit of everything. "The clientele — it's so hard to put a nail on it — because we really get a ton of different people."

Binkiewicz is confident Brickell has moved on from the reign of the Irish bar. "[People] might have misconceptions, but [Brickell has] changed... The whole area's busier than it's ever been. If [the misconceptions are] left over, it's just left over from people who decided not to come back from a long time ago."

Is it possible the Brickell bro's days are numbered? Has a more eclectic crowd and more diverse options forced the bro to drive his (or her) BMW out of Brickell's congested streets in search of more comforting watering holes? Not entirely. Insanely high rent is sure to stifle any sort of art scene that tries to bloom in Brickell. And Brickell's role as the financial capital of Miami means the finance bro ain't going anywhere.

A bro can still slap a \$100 bill onto the bar at Fado, order a round of car bombs, and dance wildly to "Don't Stop Believin'." But places like Sidebar, Blackbird, El Tucán, and Better Days will continue to draw more diverse crowds. Wynwood's baby, Coyo Taco, will be moving into the neighborhood soon. More like it will surely follow.

And as the bro Ubers home with a belly full of Baileys and Guinness, explaining to the driver why Trump would actually be, like, the best thing to happen to this country since Reagan, a slightly different Brickell will flash by outside the window. Every day, looking less and less like the bromantic pastures of yore.