



RedEye

An edition of the
Chicago Tribune

Founded, October 30, 2002

Publisher: Scott C. Smith

Chicago Tribune Editor:

Ann Marie Lipinski

RedEye General Manager:

John O'Loughlin

RedEye Co-Editors:

Joe Knowles and Jane Hirt

A sib of the Trib

RedEye, an edition of the Chicago Tribune, is published five days a week, except on certain holidays. Unsolicited manuscripts, articles, letters and pictures sent to the Chicago Tribune are sent at the owner's risk. Copyright ©2004 Chicago Tribune Company. All rights reserved as to the entire content.

Contact us

News: polsen@tribune.com

lweber@tribune.com

Features: cdipasquale@tribune.com

Sports: ccmalcolm@tribune.com

Letters to the editor:

ritaredeye@tribune.com

■ Display advertising: 312-222-2411

■ Classified advertising: 312-222-2444

■ Newsroom: 312-222-4970

■ RedEye home delivery:

Call 1-877-4REDEYE

■ Circulation Customer Service:

Call 1-800-TRIBUNE

■ Or e-mail us at redeye@tribune.com

■ Online at www.redeyechicago.com

Real deal behind Mr. Hot Property



Alison Neumer

Chicago billboard king Chaz Walters, Mr. Hot Property himself, taps his pen restlessly on the conference room table.

"If you want to make something dirty out of it, you can, that's your prerogative," he says in a squeaky voice, "but that's not the intention of the campaign."

No, of course, I say. Your ads aren't meant to be provocative in the least.

But what about those sultry photos of Chaz staring down the camera? It's hard to win a G-rating with randy taglines like "Expose Yourself" or that unbuttoned third button. And yet the 42-year-old real estate entrepreneur—who is hardly the cheesy slickster I'd always imagined—insists he is all about attracting clients, not dates.

"Everybody and their brother who is a real estate agent, you look at their business card, and it's a nice professional IBM-type shot. ... So I decided to have an editorial shot and be dressed casually and cool and make my little statement."

That he did.

I was in high school when one of the first "Hot Property" billboards popped up on the side of a Lincoln Park building in 1993.

The photo's GQ styling threw me off, so at first I didn't realize he was selling real estate. Are you kidding? Who is that guy? All my friends wondered the same thing.

Those were the salad days for Chaz, who was new to the real estate biz and still needed to wait tables to support himself. The billboards? Out of his price range, but he sprang for it, and the vendor agreed to rotate the ad's location monthly. Often the company didn't have another ad to paste over Chaz's mug, and suddenly the Hot Property man seemed to be everywhere.

Then something odd happened. The campaign was eye-catching, sure, but it also generated a strange, unintended buzz among people with no need for a real estate agent and no interest in meeting one.

Now, after 10 years of billboards plastered all over town, Chaz is a bona fide fixture of Chicago pop culture. People throw his name around in conversation, as in "Dude, I'm hotter property than Chaz Walters." A local band titled a song after him—"Hot Property (Chaz Walters 3)." And the Lincoln Park Trixie Society, a spoof Web site, named him as the model dinner party guest. (See lptrixie.com/lifestyles, one of the last live pages on the group's facetious Web site.)

Recently I noticed the familiar Hot Property logo on a building in my neighborhood and pulled to a stop. Are you kidding? That guy is still at it. Really, what's his deal?

On the day of our interview he looked

the part: Tan, dressed in black head-to-toe with gelled, spiky hair, Chaz crossed his legs and leaned back in his chair. But instead of



Chaz gets razed for his glamor shots.

the wily salesman I'd expected, Chaz turned out to be an earnest guy with an extra healthy dose of ambition.

We chatted about his career, the goal behind the self-promotional campaign, blah, blah, blah. But here's what I really

wanted to know: Does he realize how he's perceived? That Mr. Hot Property has taken on a life of its own?

Not really. If Chaz has built himself into a Chicago caricature, he claims not to see it. He's genuinely tickled that strangers recognize him on the street or in restaurants.

Most likely, he's pretending not to notice the ridicule.

How else to survive it? People, especially other real estate agents, razz him about the campaign, Chaz says, but look where he is now—a top real estate agent with his own company who gets invited all over town and generates millions of dollars in sales.

"What did I have to lose?" he told me. "I had everything to gain."

asneumer@tribune.com

**48 HOUR SALE
THIS WEEKEND
ONLY!**

6030 N. SHERIDAN

WHY RENT WHEN YOU CAN OWN FOR

up to
**\$10,000
OFF**

purchase price on selected units**

as low as...

\$694.92

TOTAL MONTHLY PAYMENT*
WITH **NO MONEY DOWN**

100% FINANCING ON-SITE FINANCING AVAILABLE

AND BUILD EQUITY IN EDGEWATER'S FINEST CONVERSION ~ NEWLY REHABBED

CHICAGO'S LAKEFRONT
AT YOUR DOORSTEP!

OVER 70% SOLD
UNITS PRICED FROM \$109,900 - \$349,900
VIEW UNIT SPECS, AMENITIES AND FLOOR PLANS AT:
www.6030sheridan.com

VISIT OUR MODEL UNITS

OPEN HOUSES:
TUESDAY & THURSDAY • 11 AM - 7 PM
SATURDAY - SUNDAY • 11 AM - 5 PM

BROKER'S OPEN:
TUESDAY • 11 AM - 1 PM

Exclusively Listed by:
Sean Conlon and Arsiak Raffaelli
312.948.2555

FINE HOMES & ESTATES™

* Selling price \$109,000 - NO MONEY DOWN - First Mortgage \$87,920 3 year ARM @ 6.500% interest rate. \$476.23 interest only payment. Second mortgage \$21,980 @ Prime rate plus 2.75%. \$123.64 interest only payment. Monthly assessments equal \$150. Total monthly payment \$694.92. Real estate taxes additional. Products and rates are subject to change, contact our financing center for full disclosure of terms and details.
** Offer good on selected units on new contracts written on July 10, 2004 and July 11, 2004 ONLY! Cannot be combined with any other discount or offer. Pricing terms and conditions are subject to change. Co-op broker participation welcome, however selected units for this offer are not eligible for the previously advertised broker incentive program. Cash back only at closing.

Client Name: REDEYE/002/ALL
Advertiser: REDEYE/002/ALL
Section/Page/Zone: REDEYE/002/ALL
Description:
Ad Number:
Insertion Number:
Size:
Color Type: B&W

Chicago Tribune
Publication Date: 07/09/2004

This electronic tearsheet confirms the ad appeared in The Chicago Tribune on the date and page indicated. You may not create derivative works, or in any way exploit or repurpose any content.