

100 Bars in 100 Days

Hops MacBarley's 2012 Key West Bar Boondoggle
"The Peace, Love, and I.P.A. Tour"

BAR 6:

Red Fish Blue Fish
407 Front Street
Monday 7/23, 7:00 pm

Key West Sunset Ale (draft)

My only history with RFBF is that Jacko and I came in here once about three years ago to use up a \$25 gift certificate. We got a burger and beer at the bar, paid up the difference and left. That's not much history.

I've passed by it hundreds of times, of course; it has a sweet location that you would think would give it tons of sunsetter business, either going-to or coming-from. But it always seemed empty when I passed. I wondered if it was just too big for its own good. You know, the type of place that holds 200, so if you see 60 people – and 60 is a decent dinner/drinks crowd – it still looks like nobody is there.

That's the kind of thing that helped to doom Guy Harvey's, McFadden's, and Steel Horse. The place is so spacious that it never looked crowded, and if it's not crowded, then it must not be very good, right? If it were up to me, I'd divide that building into 2-3 separate small bars with different styles and make it kind of a bar-mall. They could even all share the same kitchen. Make one a sportsy thing, another a craft beer thing, and the third a sexy thing. Maybe a zebra-striped bar, or The Tie-dyed Taproom. Whatever.

BUT, I digress. Again.



So, yeah, Red Fish Blue Fish. The place really is big, but I guess I never looked around much in my sole prior visit. It has a very cool outdoor patio area, shaded by both tall trees and stretched blue canopies. The main dining room is all new polished wood, including this beautiful peaked ceiling. It's a sweet room.

The bar itself, with its wooden-backed stools, is comfortable enough, and the barkeep was friendly enough. Very importantly, the beer was cold enough.



There were about a half-dozen people at the bar, with another 20 or so in the various dining areas. The music was bouncy, and at conversational volume. It was clearly Dinnertime Mode, not Happy Hour Mode. They were after family din-din bizniz,



not noisy drunken 2-4-1 bizniz.

I wasn't sitting right next to anyone, but I don't know if any conversation would be struck up anyway. On my roadtrips in the 80s, 90s and 00s, I'd often take a break in some roadside bar, pub, tavern, or saloon, and take out my Notbook (not notebook, Notbook – long story), and

start jotting down the observations and experiences of the previous hours or days. I'd get the writing juices flowing and my pen would be zooming. And in a large majority of cases, after watching a decent bit of my empasioned scribbling, my bar neighbor(s) would lean over and say, *Whatcha writin'?*

Sometimes, they'd have some clever addition like, *your memoirs? Or the Great American Novel?* Har har. And sometimes, I felt like replying with *Your obituary.* Or give them a crazed look and snarl, *My suicide note!* Or maybe just say, *None of your freaking business, butthead.*

One time, in western Colorado, the guy caught me at just the right moment though, when my pen had pretty much gushed out all it had to gush right now and I was pausing for a beer break. He asked, *Whatcha writin'?* I took a look at what I had just penned, chuckled, closed the Notbook, grasped by fresh beer and replied, *Aaaaaabsolute SHIT.* We both got a hearty laugh out of that and ended up with an hour or so of good convo.

But this is a new age. I have yet to have anyone, ever, lean over and say, *Whatcha texting?* Writing gets people curious. Texting gets a shrug at most; it's just not interesting. People assume you're just answering somebody in digital conversation, or maybe tweeting or facebooking, so they don't bother. But actually writing? Dayummm, that's weirrrd.



TV's were not a big feature here either. From where I sat, two normal size screens were visible, though one required more twisting than I felt good about. The one I was left with was showing Tourist TV. Really? The Olympics start in two days and we're watching Bill Hoebbe's face? Isn't there some pre-Olympic table tennis or something on?

I did my one-and-done, as planned. This is not, after all, a Get Drunk At 100 Bars venture. Neither my wallet nor my liver could afford that.