

## 100 Bars in 100 Days

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

### BAR 8:

Cowboy Bill's (Front Bar)  
616 Duval Street  
Tuesday 7/24, 10 pm

Samuel Adams Summer Ale  
(draft)



This was virgin ground, the first such place on the PLIPA Tour. I had walked through here before, on my way in or out of Cowboy Bill's Honky Tonk Saloon, but I had never sat down or ordered anything. In fact, I had hardly ever before seen much sign of life or business in here in all the times I had walked by.

The place has mystified me since it opened. I forget what was at #616 Duval before: some clothes store, most likely. Duval store fronts change often, and it doesn't take long for a gone-under or left-town business to drop from memory. Now, Cowboy Bill's Honky Tonk Saloon already was alive and thriving as a backyard hootenanny with a down-the-alley entrance at 610½ Duval. They must have thought that they were doing even better than they were, or else they thought that they needed more visibility on the main drag, because they opened this room with great expectations. The *live music every night* thing lasted for a while – I give 'em credit for trying -- but finally common sense won over. Bands don't like playing empty rooms, and bar owners don't like paying bands to do it.

There is an on-going marriage with Salsa Loca, a Mexican restaurant, wherein they share the space under both names, but I can't figure that out either. The Salsa Loca sign is still up on Duval, but they seem better known as the restaurant/bar in the alley on Angela Street. Sometimes quirky and secluded is a better draw than being BIG and EMPTY.

When CBHTS was just the down-the-alley backyard, there was a lure and some mystery to it. When you walked down there, even if it didn't really grab you, you didn't want to look like a know-nothing shmuck and walk right back out, so you got a beer, hung for a while, and maybe found something that tickled your fancy.

But when the front bar opened at 616, that mystery was gone. You looked in, saw nobody having fun, and went off to look for places where they do have fun.

Anyway, on this the 5<sup>th</sup> night of the Tour, I was rolling by on Trekkie, my reflective blue hybrid bike, waiting for my Booze Muse to speak up, when I was struck by the rare sight of a decent sized group of people near the front of the bar. Had they been in the back, I would have seen a LOT of empty room, and a small group of people. But you put 'em near the front door, and, hey, maybe the whole damn bar is that crowded!

This one was gonna have to happen somewhere in my 100, so it might as well be now. I parked Trekkie and came back to have a slosh. I cringed when I discovered that it was a country karaoke thing – about a dozen people strong -- but a mission is a mission, and I resolved to gut it out.

This bar must not be accustomed to much business because when I went to pay for my Samuel Adams Summer Ale draft with a twenty dollar bill, the barkeep returned with tall stack of singles. The same thing happened with the next two customers. I finally heard him ask his manager for bigger bills: *They all keep paying with twenties, man!* Since when is that an odd thing?

The karaoke could have been worse. Don't get me wrong, it could have been a lot better too. It wasn't unbearable, but I was still quite willing to leave by the time my bev reached the last big gulp.

Then, though, the best one of them all took the stage. He was smashed. Unsteady and downright ugly to boot. He may have just crawled in from the gutter, he looked that bad. Maybe he wasn't even part of the group, but no one was willing to move him along.

Anyway, I had to laugh and settle back in when he started to sing Garth Brooks' *Friends In Low Places*. Could not have picked a more fitting song. His antics suited it well too. The group sang along heartily with the chorus, and was having a hoopin' hollerin' good ol' time.

Worth the extra few minutes, but not enough to make me hunker down. Chalk up another one-and-done at Bar #8.

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BAR 8A:  
Cowboy Bill's Honky Tonk Saloon (Back Bar)  
<http://www.cowboybillskw.blogspot.com>  
610½ Duval Street  
Tuesday 7/24, 10 pm

Red Hook IPA (draft)

*At first, I counted this as a separate bar. It sure seems like one. But I think it would be cheating a bit: same name, connecting doors, ehhehh, same bar. Anyway...*

The Honky Tonk Saloon, truly, is the back bar, and this was certainly not a first-time visit. This place can be a lot of fun. Get in here on a busy night when the party



mood is running rampant, and you'll have plenty of entertainment. And if this whole complex is full, you have a LOT of people, and I've seen it that way several times.

You're not going to find any country music in my mp3 collection, and I'm not into the croony tunes at all, but if you get a good rockin' cowboy band in a shitkickin' mood, I can definitely knock back a few brews and roll with that. Get the women out on the dance floor movin' their best characteristics, and some drunk guys making Absolut Idiots out of themselves, and it becomes quite a show.

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rides -- but the total trainwrecks are the best. Best In Show, though, is almost always The Bull. Ahhh, the old mechanical bull, silent and menacing in its blood red thick rubber pit. Match that beast up with drunken women and good times abound. Even the better riders jiggle and jostle enough to stir the loins of the caballeros – on the right nights, you might even see some topless rides -- but the total trainwrecks are the best.

One night, I saw five or six young ladies in a row straddle the beast and ride. The dude on the controls was going kinda easy on them, keeping the machine in middle gears, and letting the girls put on a show. The crowd was hootin' and hollerin' for the buxom riders.



But then this plump and shitfaced guy strode up to the bull, gesturing about how he was gonna show us how to reaaally ride it. Welllll, you know what you would have been rooting for, and yeah, we all were too. Plumpo clambered atop the beast's broad back, and, when he should have been taking hold of the strap, he raised both arms to drink in the crowd's cheers and jeers.

I was standing near the controller dude, and I heard him shout, *Are you ready??* The rider gave no sign that he heard. Control Man looked around and a few voices from the crowd yelled, *Hit it!* He gave this *Ohhh-kayyy* look and, with Plumpo still wide-armed on the bull, he hit the gas.

The bull's butt shot straight up, tilting its body radically forward, and launching Plumpo into the air. If the bull had a head and horns, he would have been ripped apart. Instead, with arms flapping and face locked in a classic *Ohhhh fuccck* look, he flew forward. His first point of impact was his nose. It was the quintessential faceplant. I thought he broke his freaking neck, the way his body dropped like a huge sack of mashed potatoes, right on his head.



The crowd had one of those odd moments: instinctive bust-out of laughter, then a split-second of *oh shit, is he dead?*, a big no-he's-OK guffaw. To Plumpo's credit, he rallied to his feet and had a good laugh at himself.

But, alas, nobody was braving the bull on this night. The feisty machine sat inert and alone in its red padded pit. The band wasn't bad, and neither was the crowd, especially for a Tuesday night in July, but my work was done here.

On my way out, I walked through the almost empty pool room – just two women chatting with the not-making-much-cash-tonight barkeep – and out through the front bar. It was -- anyone? anyone? – empty.