

100 Bars in 100 Days

Hops MacBarley's 2012

Key West Bar Boondoggle

"The Peace, Love, and I.P.A. Tour"

BAR 100:

The Garden Bar at New Orleans House

724 Duval Street

www.bourbonstpub.com/gardenbarbsp.html

Saturday 10/28, 4:00 PM

Red Hook Long Hammer IPA (draft) \$2.00

THE ONE-HUNDREDTH BAR!! One-fucking-hundred fucking bars! How many towns can you do that in? Yah, yah, New York, Chicago, L.A. Right. Let me know how much money you spend on cabs, parking, and cover charges.

This has been going on for more than three months. 14 weeks. That's more than *a full season* of going to a different bar *every freaking night*. 100 goddamn bars. I am so impressed with myself. Such commitment. Such resolve. Such thirst.

The Peace, Love & IPA Tour was in its second week before I ever thought to look up what the final date would be. There had to some higher power at work there, hitting me with such an off-the-wall whim on exactly the right day. I reckon this was just my destiny. Pretty lame destiny, yes, but it beats being a near-sighted proctologist.

Once the preliminary easing-in process was done at SoMoBC, it was stupidly easy to get back into my Boozin' Stride. It was not quite at the "graceful" stage yet, but it was loosening up quickly; my system was still purdy durn lubed from the last few nights.

Fantasy Fest week is like a good campfire. You set it up and light it, then you feed it till it roars, let it mellow out, feed it again, let it mellow, then just when you know that the end is near, you chuck all the remaining wood on the damn thing and stoke up a blaze they can see from space.



I didn't pounce on Bar Number 100 like a wounded wombat, though. There was some strollin' and struttin' to do on Duval first. Saturday afternoon is a right cool time in Fantasy Fest Land. Vehicles are verboten and the people posture, prance, and promenade. Those steel-rail, hook-together fences have been deployed all along the parade route, but with enough spots still unhooked to allow street-sidewalk passage.

What happens is that the crowd -- already thousands strong -- filters itself: Those Who Observe The Madness, and Those Who Participate In The Madness. In more wieldy terms, The Watchers and The Weird. The Watchers take over the sidewalks, staking their claims for the best Parade-viewing spots. The Weird walk.

The Fantasy Fest events schedule lists this time as The Promenade. Costumed revelers take to the street that is the heartbeat of Key West and fire up the defibrillator. From perversely sexual to naively childish, from skin to feathers, from paint to plumage, it's all on display one last time.

A number are repeats from last night's Masquerade March (I think), but many are the *Piece de Resistance* (whatever that means) that folks have been building towards all week long. It's not exclusive; Watchers and Weird can mix freely, and bars teem with costumed revelers, with plain-clothed people mingling among the peacocks on the street.

And it goes on for hours.

I had set up base camp on Eaton, a block east of Duval. It was one of my best scores. After a paid-to-park Friday night at a metered space on Whitehead, I went on the prowl and found a free space just as close by. Park it, lock it, not movin' it till sometime on Sunday, and sleeping in it again tonight.

So, today, Saturday, in a nutshell: woke up, felt like death, found this spot, biked home, took a snooze, rallied, went to SoMo Beach Cafe, biked back, and here we are.

I donned my promenadin' attire -- the well-known, time-tested, much-

beloved Zebra Man, complete with cape, cane, and matching koozie -- poured myself a big 24-ounce cup o' Yuengling, and took to Duval, where 41 of the 100 *Peace, Love and IPA Tour* bars can (or once could) be found. 41%. I would have guessed higher. But, still, 41 bars on one street is pretty slick.

I strolled the street, sippin' my sauce, and flashin' my dazzling stripes for all to see. Z-man really is a visual assault. Each time I'd stroll past Eaton Street, in either direction, I'd detour a block to "check on the van" and return with a full cup o' Gling. It was like magic, but less amazing.



Quite a few Watchers asked to take my picture, and I happily posed for them. At one point, I spied two zebra-striped women -- mid-20's, slim, and lovely -- on the street. I approached them joyfully, claiming that they were my long-lost daughters who had gotten separated from me in the great Serengeti Stampede of '07. They went along with it and great hugs took place. It was as I was hugging the first woman that I realized that their form-fitting zebra suits were actually just well-sprayed body paint, and that they were, in fact, totally naked. Not even a g-string. Ahhh, my lovely daughters! BIGGG HUGGGS for yo' Daddy!

One of their boyfriends thought the whole thing was a hoot-and-a-half and was eager to get a picture of the reunion. I took a daughter under each arm, draping the cape over their shoulders as well, and placed each hand softly and fondly on each daughter's outer breast. It was nice. The boyfriend loved it and insisted that I "hold it right there" while he took several pics. I thought we should hold the pose for an oil painting, but the moment had run its course. It would have been creepy to linger, so I bid them farewell and moved on up the road. I wish I had that picture...

So, after a few of those van-checks, the time and the mood were right for Bar Number One Hundred. I had decided early on that the Final Bar would have to be something appropriate to the occasion: some place that would be Key West crazy, and be loaded to the gills for the climax of Fantasy Fest.

Lots of bars slam it pretty good for K-Dub's most festive days, but New Orleans House / Bourbon Street Pub / The Garden Bar always roars with the best of them. They never shy away from a street party. Quite a few places would be drunk and whacked out on this day, and costumes would abound everywhere, but it just seemed as though things would have an extra edge here. You can always count on the Bourbon Street Pub (BSP) boys for loud music, lively MC-ing, dancin' in the street, and general frivolity.

BSP is one of the focal points along the Fantasy Fest parade route. The street is spotlit, a zealous MC is whipping up the crowd, and any float or marching group struts their finest stuff here.



It's not as slammin' as New Year's Eve is, though. The midnight countdown dropping of the famed diva Sushi in the Big Red Shoe draws a crowd that suffocates the street for well over an hour. A rip-rockin' drag show, with all the local stars, leads up to the climactic descent. The fact that CNN covers it just puffs up the crowd even more. Everyone likes to be on TV, even if they can't possibly be seen in the back half of the dense throng.

BSP also closes the 700 block for a Saturday afternoon in April for the Drag Races, a recklessly silly display of high heels and tight dresses tumbling and

stumbling through an obstacle course of tires, cones, wheeled carts, and booze.

And when Fairvilla begged out as sponsor of the annual Red Ribbon Bed Races, BSP readily took it on, once again reveling in the street, with a post-race party by the pool in The Garden Bar. The GB is usually closed in -- this is a guest house, after all -- but for the Bed Race party and for Goombay, they throw open all the gates and let the public in.

I could have waited till after the Parade to come in here for #100, but I know myself too well. Some "distraction" could all-too-easily come along and stray me from my task, and before you knew it, midnight would've closed the 100-day window and the Mighty Quest would have failed.

It's true, too, that any chance of recounting this visit would be greatly improved by stopping in earlier in the day, before The Fogs Of The Night might come and play Etch-A-Sketch with my recollections. It happens from time-to-time, especially Fantasy Fest times.

Anyhow, I strutted grandly across the sidewalk and into the front room of BSP. I really dig wearing a cape. It flows out behind you as you walk and you just feel like King Shit.

Things inside were in pretty high gear, and very colorful. You can definitely count on gay men for enthusiastic costuming. I wandered through the large front bar room and down the back hallway, leaving the night-club-dance-bar atmosphere, and heading for the sunshine and open air of the Garden Bar.

This place is dang cool. About 16-20 tall barstools surround the well-shaded, fan-cooled bar. A huge avocado tree towers over it. To the right are the swimming pool and hot tub, and way back beyond that is the stage. Hazel's Grill occupies one corner, where Hazel will cook you some good food at really good prices. The sandy area between grill and stage morphs to whatever the event calls for: lounge chairs for afternoon sunbathing, tables and chairs for fabulous evening events, or even the foam pit for BSP's renowned Foam Parties.

I'm not sure if this was an all-male crowd today or not; costumes can blur

that distinction, especially in a place like this. As I stepped up to the bar, I was briefly reminded of that scene in *Star Wars* where Obiwan brings Luke into a bar where all these really odd creatures are hanging out and drinking. These patrons were not at that level of oddness, but the diverse appearances were pretty damn funny.

The barkeep did a good *whoa jeezus* look when I flagged him down. He got a good laugh out of the ZM attire. The taps weren't brimming with variety, but the Red Hook IPA filled the bill. Gotta wrap up the *Peace, Love and IPA Tour* with an IPA. I apprised the barkeep that this was the culmination of my quest. I don't think he really heard me that well, or didn't know what the hell I was talking about, but he got the gist that something big was afoot, and he gave it a good double fist pump.

Another thing about a costumed event, there were fewer naked people than I expected. Maybe some in the pool were, but none walking around. Some were pretty scanty, or in paint, but I bet there were more clothes on today than on your usual Saturday afternoon. There was more nudity out on Duval than in here.

This 100th bar was going to be a one-n-done, but my \$4 bought me TWO brews, not just one, and I was not about to walk out on the free refill. Still, there was too much Good Time happening on the street to languish away too much time in a bar. Any bar.

Plus, as I drank my IPA, I couldn't help but be astounded by the drag performer Elle Taylor. First of all, he had one of those zero body fat physiques that display every sinew of every muscle. You could rip the



chart off your doctor's office wall and put Elle's picture up there.

But what really wowed me was what he did with it. This dude -- probably mid-late-20's, 5'6" and 100 pounds -- had the flexibility and stretch that only a trained gymnast would have. Remember what I said about gymnasts in the Bar 69 (Teasers) blurb? Yah, that applies.

And he used fire! He doused the stage with charcoal lighter fluid, lit the fluid with his two flaming wands, then, as it gushed to life, stepped into the middle of fire. He ran the wands over himself, bending waaaaay backwards and every which way, then dropped into a split and did a fire swallowing act. All without missing a lip-synched word. Lordy, lordy!

I definitely had to drop a few bucks in the bucket for that effort. This was not your run-of-the-mill drag gig. Dayummmm!

I collected my second-for-one and headed back out to the swelling madness of Duval. Quest attained. Tour completed.

A hundred bars.

Touring was fun, but it was almost a relief to be done. Now I'd have the leisure to revisit some of the coolest places that I had discovered along the way.

Or, maybe once I get all these finally blogged out (i.e., now), I'll launch another tour. There are still a lot of bars I didn't get to, and some new ones that have just recently opened. Perhaps a 30-in-30 might be a fun way to pass a month. We'll see.

A hundred goddamn bars. One hundred goddamn fucking bars.

Now, with my solemn duty done, it was time to get down to some **serious** festing.

Ahhhhh, Key West. No place like ya.



A lotta bars in this photo! I think another Tour is coming in Summer '13. :)