

## 100 Bars in 100 Days

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

### BAR 13:

Virgilio's Key West Martini Bar

<http://www.virglioskeywest.com>

524 Duval Street

Sunday 7/29, 12:15 am

### Stella Artois (bottle)

I didn't leave The Shanty till after midnight. Hungover all day (didn't even stand up till almost noon), and felt like crap after my slow-ass dusk run, so I lazed around and watched the O-lympics on telly.

But a quest is quest – or in Key West, a Kwest – so I had to suck it up and suck one down.

Didn't know which bar I was headed to -- just kinda let my buddy Whim make up his usual tilted mind. And then, there we were at Duval & Appelrouth, with the Virgilio's sign dangling just a few dozen yards away. Ohh, yeahhh. I remember this place. I figured I'd take a peak in and if it was not totally empty, this would be the *bar du jour*. Or *du noir*. Or *du matin*, I guess.

Some soiled back-of-the-house employee – a dishwasher from La Trattoria, most likely – was coming out of the doorway as I neared it, and he was giving off some baaad vibes, like *WTF you doing here* vibes. Must have had a bad night. Of course he had a bad night – he's a dishrat, on a Saturday night. But it triggered a pause in me.

Now, I used to come here a lot back in the day. Virgilio's was one of my almost nightly spots: good bands, catchy art on the walls – prints of Marilyn Monroe, Ray Charles, and the like – and a cool night club atmosphere (as opposed to just a bar). It was a part of my Duval strolling routine. Leave Flats or Willy T's, saunter across the street and go catch a tune or two at V's.

Then one night, as I was about to enter carrying a half-full cup o' beer, the overweight door dude physically blocked me with an outstretched arm and sternly told me that I could not bring a beer in with me. Well, this was news to me; I had been walking in with cups for months. Often, I'd polish it off in short order and procure a replacement from their bar. I told him all that, trying to be good-natured, but with a *when did this policy start* tone. I wasn't too pleased about his surly manner either. Since when do you treat a regular customer that way?

In response, he practically shoved me away, snarling, *It's been that way all along, dude*. When I refuted that, he resorted to the most loser line ever, *Are you*

*calling me a liar?* What a total piece of dog crap this door douche was. So, I took my business elsewhere, and V's dropped out of the loop. (Kinda like the Hog's Breath Burger Saga.) Again, there was probably no reason to blame the establishment for a bad moment by a bad employee -- the shit-head most likely got shit-canned pretty soon thereafter anyway -- and that was at least two years ago, maybe even three. It was like I had forgotten that this place even existed.

Shame on me! But all that was what ran through my head when soily dish dude came bad-vibing out.

I gave him a wide berth and entered. Dayummm! People were everywhere! This place was The Place.

The entryway plants you in mid-bar, or rather, between bars. To your right, the room is roofed, mirror-walled, and wraps around a back corner stage where the band does its band thing. To your left, you immediately notice the old gnarled tree -- impossible not to notice it, you'd walk right into it -- and the sky appears above, framed by some extended canvas awnings. A few tall-n-small tables stand in the middle, just a couple of steps from the back-wall bar. Upwards lighting plays on the walls, highlighting large metal geckos and such.

Most people were dressed pretty nicely, at least, by KW standards. Many shirts had buttons and collars, and quite a few of the ladies wore dresses. It wasn't the whole crowd, for sure, but nobody was dressed like a slob. Might have been a group from some swank party doing a Virgilio's after party. Definitely martini bar mode. Those signature conical cocktail vessels held various colored mixtures all around the room.

Not to be drawn in, I perused the beer list and chose a suitably classy brew: Stella Artois. In the bottle, though, so no cool SA glass to wield.

As I settled in a small central table, the band came back from break. It was a three-piece "mutt" band, as I call them: a collection of random Key West musicians who've decided to play together for a few times, play some music they all dig, and pick up a few paychecks. I recognized the piano player, but, as usual, I couldn't recall his name. He's played solo and with numerous groups (Entrain is one, for sure), though most often on guitar.

They eased into Chris Isaak's *Wicked Game*, not the easiest song in the world, especially for the vocalist (*no, iiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii wanna fall in love...*), but they did a dang cool job on it. They flowed in and out of a good mid-song jam, and kept that kind of mood going through the next few tunes. It was a good take.

But the Stella ran out, as all good beers do, and Hops decided to hop on home. It's not gonna be three years before I go back, I'll tell ya that.