

100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 24:

Mad Rooster

www.facebook.com/pages/Mad-Rooster/236155529768215

221 Duval Street

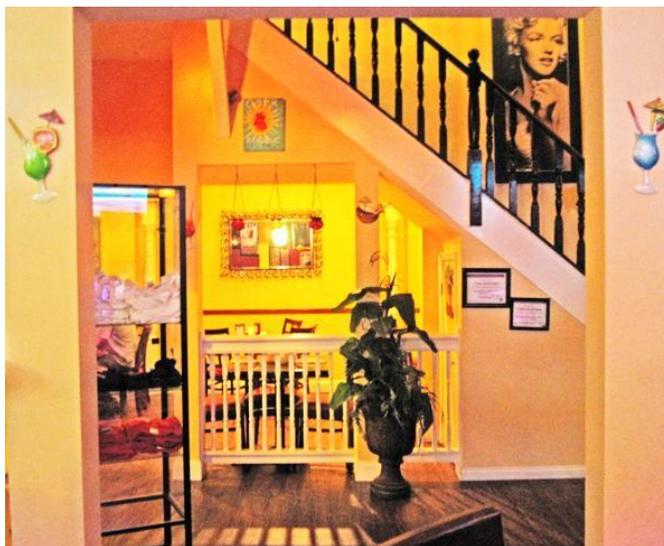
Saturday 8/5, 11:45 pm

Key West Sunset Ale (draft)

More virgin turf. Mad Rooster showed up not all that long ago, as a huge improvement over the All-You-Can-Eat Seafood Buffet place that nobody ever seemed to know the name of. You'd try to mention that place to anyone and they wouldn't know what you were talking about. Then you'd say, *You know, the All-You-Can-Eat Seafood Buffet place*, and they'd go, *Óhhhh, yeah*.



I never did set foot in there. It just seemed a little spooky. Every night, there would be dishes of food on display as you passed by on the sidewalk, and I'd be thinking. *Is that real food, or some kind of plastic model? Do they really make those meals every night and then just set them out for the humidity and bacteria to mush them down?* They never seemed to look as terrible as humidity-and-bacteria-mushed-down food should've looked. Did they spray them with something? I'll never know, now.



The rebuild for Mad Rooster was thorough. The tall 19th century house it's in was kept, but it was gutted to the beams and redone niiiice. Being on the 200 block between Flying Monkeys and Lazy Gecko, I'd walked past this place a LOT. Most times, I'd hear my mind say, *We gotta go in there sometime and check it out*, and then I'd be ten feet past it and that thought would have gone flying out my ear into the head of someone else.

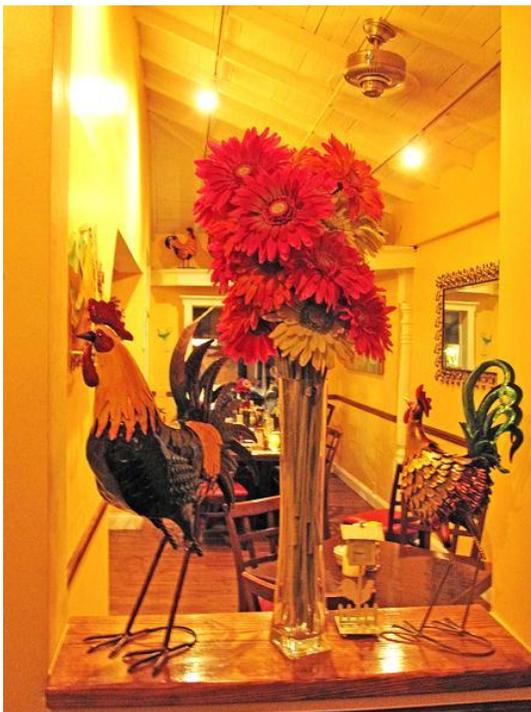
Even though the name sounds edgy, you can tell it's a nice place. My

mind would prod, *Hey, let's go in. It looks like a nice place.* Then the other side my mind would go, *Oh, nice place. Crap.*

The hostess has her stand right up on the edge of the sidewalk too. You could slap her or throw beer on her as you walk by, if you were inclined to do that kind of thing. Me? It would never even cross my mind.

But she's almost like a sentry there. I half expect to be questioned. It's like I'm being scrutinized before I can get close to the door, like she has time to push some hidden alarm button that brings a portcullis crashing down at the front steps, with a blinking sign that says, *Closed ... to YOU.*

I caught her off guard this time, though, slipping past while she was showing the menu to a decoy pedestrian. Once inside, I realized the Mad Rooster was easily the nicest place on the 200 block. Maybe that's not saying all that much. What's second nicest? Cheeseburger? Certainly not Irish Kev's. The other establishments on this block tend to bend towards the drinkin' crowd, while the MR is after the respectable diner, and the respectable diner is not as likely to be hunting the 200 block.



But, yeah, it's done up nice inside. Making a beeline to the bar, as I did, I had yet to see the best views around the insides, but that was OK; it was beer first, observe niceties later.

So, I bellied up at the closest stool to the door, on the front corner of the bar. As I settled in and spied the young woman who would be serving me, it occurred to me that the beer I was carrying was still about 80% full. Duh. Who the fook goes into a bar when they have a full beer?

Hi, she smiled, Can I get you something to drink?

If she only knew the irony of that question. I had set my bottle down behind the condiment cluster. It was discreetly cloaked in one of those scuba-style zipper koozies that I make at work.

This one bore the logo of the *Peace, Love, and IPA Tour*. It didn't seem that she saw it crouching behind the catsup.

I chose *catsup* instead of *ketchup* strictly for the alliteration. You're welcome. Oddly, the word *ketchup* comes from the Far East, goes back more than 300 years and means *fish sauce*. How about that shit, huh?

Thinking quickly, I smiled back and said, *Key West Sunset Ale, please*. Quick thinkin' there, Hopsy. She smiled sweetly and went to pour my beer.

A menu was right there, so I looked it over. Looks like good stuff. The prices aren't low, but they're not crazy high either. But between the price level and the obvious Good Behavior Expected Here vibe, I knew I wasn't going to be ordering *the usual* anytime soon.

The Olympic coverage was on the TV right above me. Some guy named Phelps was being interviewed. Maybe you've heard of him. The man and woman sitting next to me were big fans. I am too. Think about how ridiculously hard it is to win one Olympic medal. Just *one* freaking bronze. The odds are astronomical. Yet this goofy, lanky dude has 19 *golds*, and 22 total. Un-fucking-believable.

The sweet barkeep wandered down to our end of the bar to check on us. My glass was about half empty. She looked at it, then at me. I made no gesture, so she turned and wandered back. Once she turned, I took a slug of my beer and poured the last nine ounces of my bottle into the glass.



Before I could drain any of it, though, she wandered on back again. She looked really puzzled when she saw the now-full glass. I looked at her with this clueless *What?* expression. It took her a second to think of what she might say, then hesitantly she asked, *Are you... drinking... this?* I nodded eagerly and said, *Yeah, it's delicious!*

Before I left, I toured the ground floor, checking out the various dining areas. Cool place. Even the outdoor tables were colorful, with full-top floral images.

But the best was the view of the bar from dead on. The perspective from the end was good, but from the hallway, looking at the full spread, that bar looks dang cool.

