

100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 76:

Little Room Jazz Club
www.facebook.com/LittleRoomJazzClub
821 Duval Street
Wednesday 10/3, 9:30 pm

Bell's Oberon Ale (bottle) \$4.00

The newest kid in town, the Little Room Jazz Club took over the space where Kent Gallery roosted for a long time. Kent had one of my favorite big pieces of art: the guy on the rope. I don't remember what the real title was, but if you passed by you couldn't miss it. One

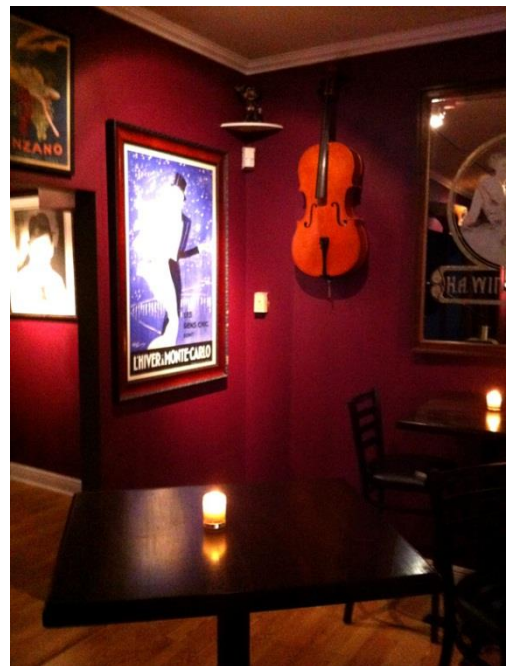


carved dude was desperately holding on to a rope to keep his carved buddy from floating off into space. I loved that thing.

But that was then and this was now. It was now. That sounds messed up. But what was now then becomes then now.

And now, 821 Duval is a cool and groovin' music venue. Yet another fine addition to the hilltop neighborhood, and this was their first week of operation.

There's a nice small sign out front, and some colored dots of light on the steep front steps. You climb up and are greeted with a really nice room. The burgundy-colored walls (same as Vinos) sport a lot of music-ish objects and framed classic jazz era art. It's on the dim side, as an entertainment venue tends to be. The lighting is all indirect, and small candles





glimmer on each of the dozen-or-so high-top tables. That's a good fit; the lighting defers to the stage, and lower tables with regular chairs would be way too "dining room." If you're sitting in the back, though, and some not-small people are at the tables between you and the almost-floor-level performance area, your view might get blocked just a teench.

The Little Room does seem to be little when you first see it, but there is an outdoor patio

in front; a foyer-type area with tables just inside the front door; the Louis XIV Room with cushioned, Renaissance style couches and chairs; and a curtained-off private room in the back. I didn't tally them all up, but I bet about 100 people could have a seat.

But the real grabber is the bar, and more specifically the Shark Screen. It's about six-feet wide, runs from just above bar-height to just-below-ceiling, and constantly displays a brilliantly blue and vivid video of a huge aquarium scene, complete with three great white sharks on the prowl. It can be hypnotic. I kept waiting for one of the other fishies to get chomped, but maybe the sharks weren't in the mood for sea food.

What's left of that wall is a criss-cross of red-wine cubbies and tidy shelves for a variety of glassware. The wood is rich and dark. Looks great. Hops digs dark wood. It eats up the light and keeps the room more mellow.

So I settled in at the middle of the bar, and commenced to get diggin' on the vibe. The bar was filled once I sat down, and just about every table was occupied.



A slim, light-bearded dude in his mid-twenties was the sole server, so he was rockin'. Brian was his name, and he was in admirably high spirits. It's easy to get edgy when the crowd outnumbers you and people are waving to get your attention, holding up empty glasses, drumming their fingers and just generally trying to get you to toss away whatever it is you're doing and go wait on *them*.

But he was feeding off the energy, and his good spirits were keeping the impatience at bay. The more they clamored, the more the dollar signs were dancing in his head. Ching, freaking ching. Good motivator.

When he got around to me, I asked about their beer selection. He said, "What do you like?"

"I like IPAs."

"I have just the beer for you. Ever have Oberon?"

"Nope. Who makes it?"

"Bell's."

"Mmmm, me like Bell's. Serve it up!"

He delivered it with a big smile. "Nice place!" I said.

"Yeah! Isn't it great?!" Such enthusiasm. A rare prize.

Then, of course, there was the music. Having live music all over town is one of the greatest things about K-Dub. The promise of a different style of music, too, was a good draw.



The band was a black dude named Yvan and a, um, large black woman called Queen Kathleen. When I walked in, they were in the middle of a Bob Marley tune. Reggae tunes in a jazz bar. Hmmm.

It was one of those things that you don't know what to make of. Her voice was really good, but the song didn't seem to be the

best use of it. Likewise, Yvan's playing was on the plunky side, without a lot of depth to it. I'm sure they were capable of a lot better.

Then they went on break. Bah.

The place was clicking on a lot of levels, and I likely would have stayed for the next set, BUT, thennnn there was Mary.

She was the woman seated to my left. Slim, a little stern looking, and close to my age, I observed as she ordered and rejected drink after drink. Brian was amazingly patient with her. I have to assume that he knew her – and fairly well (like his mom's best friend or something like that) – because he never lost his amiability through several sippings and pushing-aways. She tried a red wine, didn't like it. She tried a beer, didn't like it. A white wine, nah-uh. Another craft beer, pooh-pooed that as well.

Brian stayed true to the customer-is-always-right mindset, and kept whisking away almost-full glasses and bottles, and replacing them with her next whim. I'm sure she wasn't paying for each of these samplings.

Then, while Brian was too busy to amuse her fussies, and there was no longer any music to face me away from her, she turned her attention to me and struck up a conversation. After just a few initial sentences, she turned the topic to education. Seemed to come out of left field, but I rolled with it.

It quickly became a very unenjoyable conversation. What an education snob. She had a Swiss boyfriend who was well-educated, her dad was a CEO with impressive education, her solution to everything was, "It always comes down to education".

I tried changing the subject a few times, but she would not be distracted. Her tone was becoming more and more intense, as if the subject was obsessing her. This was not a conversation; I was merely someone to talk



at, not with. It was simply an opportunity for her to pontificate. It didn't matter to her that I am an educated man, and that I was an educator. I thought the fact that I was once on faculty at MIT (that's true) might slow the charge, but it sailed right past her without a hint of recognition.

Somehow the Roman Empire came up. I commented on its duration versus our country's mere two centuries. She cut me off with raised hand, asserting that the Empire lasted well less than 200 years. I tried to be reasonably polite about it, and reminded her that Julius Caesar took control well before the B.C./A.D. transition (a nightmare time for calendar makers, I bet), that the city of Rome wasn't sacked by Alaric's Visigoths until around A.D. 420 (☺) or so, **and** that the Eastern half – the Holy Roman Empire, Batman – went well into the Middle Ages. [Regularly watching the History Channel does have its benefits.]

But she would have none of it, snorting that I must not have paid very good attention in history class. I whistled down the last of my second Oberon, slid a tip to Brian, shouldered my bag, gave her a very cold look, said abruptly, "Have a nice night, Mary," and escaped into the night.

I knew I'd be heading back soon, though – probably even before the Tour was over. It was definitely worth a revisit, even if I just glug down some Oberons and stare at the sharks.

