

100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 89:

Blue Heaven

729 Thomas Street
www.blueheavenkw.com
Saturday 10/20, 4:20

Dogfish Head 60-Minute IPA
(bottle) \$5.00

GOOMBAY!!!! Fantasy Fest week is always the last full week of October, and Goombay kicks it off on Friday night. Petronia Street fills up for this Caribbean Street Fair: tables, tents, carts and portable restaurants, selling food, crafts, beverages, food, art, food, beverages, food, and more food. Reggae and steel drum music pervade it all, and bands take to the big stage in the field at the end of the street. I'm not sure what the word "Goombay" actually means (something to with drums), but it's a fun word to shout out.



Friday night had been a bit raucous and late late late, so after a good noon-sleep, a couple of hours of relearning my brain functions, and some good

home food, I was ready to saddle the Party Horse once more. Fantasy Fest week is no time to slack. You don't want wuss out and miss any of the craziness. You'll have plenty of time to recover before New Year's, KW's next nutty night.

But the Party Horse would start at a slow walk this day. Perhaps trotting, cantering, and maybe even full-out yee-haaaa galloping would come (again) later. But four o'clock in the afternoon is a little early for that kind of unbridled zeal.

And that made Blue Heaven an easy choice. I had been saving the Heaven for Goombay. In fact, I was here for a while last night, digging the band and the crowd of festival revelers. I did not purchase a beer here, though -- I was packing my own supply in my canvas biohazard shoulder bag -- so I could not count it as an official Tour Stop. I don't think it would have been a very lucid account anyway.

So, at a little bit later than twenty-past-four, in mild but appropriate celebration, I strolled off Petronia Street and into Blue Heaven. The entrance gets me in a cool frame of mind right away, with the wooden gate, the thick tropical





vegetation along the path, and the quaint gift shop and porch on the left.

Emerging into the courtyard can be a trip, too, depending on where the band is playing. The first I saw them up by the water tank on the roof over the bar, it cracked me up. Not a problem if you're a trumpeter or

flutist, but I bet the drummer gets a tad peeved about hauling his set up and down those steps. They look dang cool up there, though.

Blue Heaven has splashes and accents of bright cheerful primary colors all over the place, but the predominant vibe is Backyard. If they ever put fresh coats of paint on the walls and fences, the place would lose 90% of its charm. There's sand underfoot in the immediate bar area, and the table zone has a reasonably-level brick floor. Umbrellas and trees cover your heads from the sun, rain, and, umm, droppings.

Roosters and chickens roam the yard, as they do everywhere else in Key West. I don't mind the chickens, but roosters are the most godawful obnoxious animals in God's creation. There is no noble trumpeting to usher in the day, as some city folk believe. A damn rooster screeches like a chimp with its balls in a vice, and he does it 24/7. Those infuriating beasts are, hands down, the worst thing about living in KW.

As a front desk agent at Key Lime Inn, I certainly sympathized with the hotel guests when they'd come in all bleary-eyed on a Saturday morning after a late-late, only to have the raucous rooster ruckus kick in at 5AM right outside their rooms. I offered my sympathy but no rebate. One time, a woman came in all bullshit about the noisy cocks, and I could only smirk and reply, "Not as cute as when you were feeding them on your front step yesterday afternoon, hmm?"

Those vulgar creatures notwithstanding, Blue Heaven has more character than any place in Key West. Drinking, eating, ping-ponging, digging tunes, getting a gift for someone -- BH has it covered. And the food is goood, too -- even for breakfast. I had the pineapple pancakes one morning (late morning, of course), and I got a plate with three huge flapjacks just smothered in fresh papples. Mannnnn, were they a spot-hitter.

But no food this time. Just an easy get-my-groove-back beer and some camera-grazing around the grounds. Goombay was in the late-afternoon lull. The midday /lunch crowd had gone wherever their ilk goes, and the supper time folk were still an hour or so away. Blue Heaven was suitably mellow. The Four Old Negroes band on the roof was just finishing up their last set, and the next band, the Young White Rednecks -- on the ground level stage -- (I might have those names wrong) -- was getting ready to get ready to set up. They were in no hurry. Nobody that I could see had a shred of urgency about them.

It hasn't happened very often that I'm here at a non-busy time. The upstairs



was completely empty. It was cool to be able to wander around the dining area and check out the decorations and stuff without staring across some lady's dinner, or asking her to move her damn salad so I could photograph the cool tabletop pattern.

Pics acquired and Dog-60 consumed, I made ready to leave. A group of about eight people -- six men, 2 women, or thereabouts -- had begun some strange low murmuring chant. It was starting to get louder, and the one-word chorus that was punctuating each verse with growing fervor was *Fellatio!* Something inside me suggested that I hang out for a few moments longer, dunno whyyyyy.

There didn't seem to be anything developing from that, though, so I headed towards the gate, past the shower with its famous sign, and back out into the thrum of Bahamas Village's big party.