

Bar Hoppin' With Hops
The Second Century Tour
Hops MacBarley's 2013
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Bar #144:

**Flying Monkey's (Indoor)
Saloon**

225 Duval Street

Tuesday, 9 July, 8:00 PM

Yuengling (bottle) \$4.00



It was Fantasy Fest In July -- a *let's talk it up on Facebook and see who shows* event staged by barkeeps extraordinaire Matt and Kyle -- and Jacko and I donned our finest masquerade finery and headed on down to join in.

When it comes to Fests, I figure that you can either (a) avoid the madness, (b) observe the madness, or (c) contribute to the madness. I go with C, whenever possible. Surprised? I'm touring 200 bars. Duh.

Anyway, the concept was appealing. Matty had posted something like, "This town just doesn't get dressed up often enough, so let's do a Fantasy Fest in July..." and set the date with an 8:00 start time at this venue.

It was a savvy ploy. This lesser-known (and definitely lesser-frequented) backside of Flying Monkeys (Hop #20) had recently added some booths and decorations, and they needed some kind of event to lure people in.

Jacko and I deemed it Good Enough, and decked out accordingly. I'm no stranger to the masquerade; I'll concoct a costume out of toilet paper and wine if I have to. Jacko, on the other hand, had been a tad elusive whenever such events came around. For at least a couple of years, he had given us the *Count Me In* for the Locals' Parade on the Friday of Fantasy Fest (see Hop #99 for an account of that), only to have a last-minute flingus count him out.

Last year, though, he had been boasting since February about having his costume all lined up, and for the next several months, we all got updates about acquisition and degree of readiness. So, by October, we were all fully expecting a costumed Jacko for the Masquerade March. But no. Not to be. A last-minute flingus -- whatever that is -- precluded his involvement once again. More frustrating for him than for us, to be sure, but we were starting to wonder.



Thus, it was with some uncertainty that I waited for the Jackal to emerge from his den. My own costume was in the van, ready to don upon arrival downtown.

Sure enough, out came Jacko, resplendent in tri-corner pirate hat, knee-length black-and-red satin cape, and white Phantom Of The Opera mask. Aside from the fact that the mask was a couple of sizes too big, it was a good look. And off we went.

My own attire for the affair would be the time-tested Zebra Man ensemble. A veteran of eight Fantasy Fest promenades, with tweaks and upgrades each year, it is a visual assault of black and white: pimp hat, long gloves, shades, snug velvet shirt,

bellbottom pants, and flowing full-length cape, all swirling and dazzling as only a zebra can -- with matching koozie and cane, of course.

So, we parked on Eaton and walked the block-plus down to Flying Monkeys. We got some serious WTF looks from people. July isn't teeming with tourists, but even the locals were double-taking. We walked past a high school burnout kid that I often see walking past my abode on his way to and from skipping school, that I've nicknamed Purple Head -- because he had a mop of bright purple hair when I first saw it, and has also been bright blue, brilliant orange, and bleached white -- and even he went "Jeeziz, dude!"

We were digging our notoriety, for sure. But when we reached the saloon, we deflated. Not a soul was in there, except for Matt and Kyle behind the bar, dressed, I think, like some characters from a Will Ferrell movie that I never saw. Granted, we arrived just a few ticks after 8, in a typically-late-arriving town. Plus, many of the barkeeps' friends also work in F&B and may have had shifts to finish before making the scene.

Still ... just us?? Nobody else? Really?? So much for the power of Facebook.

There was music, but it wasn't especially good, and it was loud enough to make conversation difficult. I would have preferred listening to Matt's or Kyle's iPod plugged into the sound system.

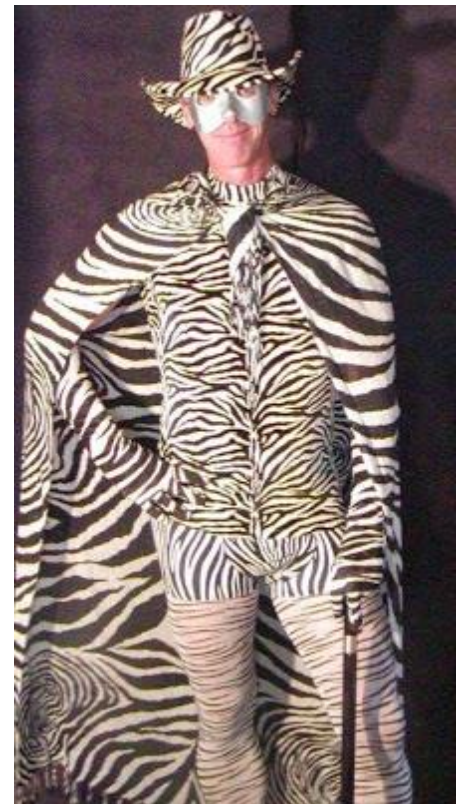
The indoor saloon was not an especially inviting place. If it had been in a small town in New Mexico, it probably would have been the goat's gonads, but in a bar-saturated place like K-Dub, it just didn't have any hook. It was much too plain. You'd look in as you walked by and go, *er ah umm nah-ah*, and move on.

Shortly after this place first opened, B&J and I stopped in -- it was between Touring Seasons -- and gave it a shot. The word "bleak" comes to mind, barely ahead of "grim". "Blah" is just not quite potent enough for the experience. Close, but "blah" leaves no impression; "bleak" is definitely a negative vibe. It wasn't just "not comfortable", there was something vaguely *uncomfortable* about it. The seats were OK, but we didn't just "not want to stay", we wanted to *leave*. *Why are here when we could be someplace good?*

The place just felt and looked like a bar some dude might build in his big basement: wood paneling, tile floor, very few wall decorations, way too much empty space, and lighting that looked like it came from a Wal-Mart sale on 20W bulbs. It just had no charm, no pizzazz.

But they "had a plan" and kept making little changes here and there, trying to tweak the atmosphere, plus experimenting with live music. Just before this event, booths had been installed all along the length of the left-hand wall, opposite the long bar. If they did have a plan, though, it might have been better to implement it fully before opening; that way, you open up a cool bar instead of some lame thing that is always empty and costs you more to run than you bring in.

It was what it was, however, and here we were to check out the improved version, hoping that having the place full of people would have put a whole new light on FMIS. But no, we were drinking bottled beer by ourselves, and watching sports bloopers on the lone TV, in full costume. Parrrrrrtyyyyy.



The staff had blown up some balloons to make the place festive, but they were just rolling around on the floor. I felt sorry for Matt; he did make a pretty good effort, with quite a few posts and promos on FB, trying to drum up a crowd. Kyle didn't seem as into it, but was along for the ride. They really couldn't put up any posters since that had no legal right to be using the phrase ***Fantasy Fest in July***. It might have helped to have something like that in the window for a week or so beforehand, but some slicko would have come along and sued them for using the name.

Maybe alter the name? *Festasy Fant? Phantasm Phest? Ruh-roh, it's Rantasy Rest!*

I asked Kyle if this indoor saloon had its own name. He replied with a sharp "No" that indicated that he thought, as I did, that it should have been given a title all its own. It certainly has **very** different character than its namesake, plus it has its own entrance. It does connect through at the back, but you'd never know it. Surely, someone could have come up with a clever name for it. *Monkey Around. The Monkey House. Anything!*

The sign is just plain shitty, too. That all-caps black boring plain lettering over the door is **IT**. There is no other sign. No effort or thought went into it. It foreshadows the room within. Shitty. Boooooo.

Gradually, the "crowd" began to grow. A few more people arrived, but they were pretty tamely costumed -- a little bit of face paint, some crazy socks and suspenders, topped with a fun hat -- so Jacko and I still stood out.

In fact, that is exactly what we decided to do: stand out ... on the sidewalk. At least there were people out there whom we could entertain and astound. That's half the point of masquerading, isn't it? Making people go *Whoaaa*, and *Gawd dayumm*, and *Holy Squirrel Tits, Betty Sue, looky thar!* is at least half the fun. Maybe four-sevenths of the fun. OK, maybe not four-sevenths -- that is kinda high -- but five-ninths, for sure.

Oh, yeah, and horrifying little kiddies. That's definitely part of the kick. You try to smile and say nice things, but the little girl still clings to Daddy's leg or buries her face in Mommy's skirt, or just plain stares. Actually, they seemed to be merely amazed by Z-Man, but the Phantom had them on the verge of tears.

We gave it two hours, and maybe a dozen people showed up, a few of whom were not even in costume. Slackers. The parking meter's ten o'clock run-out was our tipping point; we would either re-feed it and stay for more, or heed its tolling and call off the jam. Jacko seemed willing to stay a while

longer -- I think he was loving the sidewalk attention -- but really, there was nothing to do except stand around and drink \$4.00 Yuenglings, with work looming the next morning. We strutted back up Duval, posing for a few tourists' photos along the way.

Matt said later that there may have been "twenty or thirty people" who showed up. Maybe if everyone was there at one time, it might have seemed like a lively time. I think the choice of date was a large part of the problem -- two days removed from a long and festive Fourth of July holiday weekend. People's wallets were tapped out, as were their party spirits. Not me, though; you don't tour 100 Bars in 100 Days two summers in a row without having the knack of stringing out a few back-to-back-to-back-to-back-to-backers.

So, maybe next year, a mid-to-late-June celebration would work better. Perhaps on June 26th? Nothing ever happens on that date.

Addendum: September 2013

This place has CLOSED. It has run down the curtain and joined the choir invisible. Nailed to the perch or not, it is pushing up the daisies. Flying Monkeys, the original, remains and thrives on, but its little bastard offshoot has been flushed away and replaced with just what Duval Street has been crying for: another apparel store!

Initially, FMIS was not even going to be included in the Second Century Tour. The committee had DQ'ed it because it did not have its own name (nor its own bathrooms). But that decision lost a lot of steam as some other bars with similar issues got officially hopped. Arguments flew like magical wildebeests that could fly, but it wasn't until FMIS unequivocally proved its separateness by **closing** -- while its parent bar remained open -- that it earned inclusion.

The committee hemmed but couldn't haw about that, so, retroactively, the erstwhile FMIS assumes its woulda-been spot at Hop #144.