

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

Bar #175:

Lush

1130 Duval Street

www.greenpineapplekw.com

Saturday, 10 August, 5:00 PM

Full Sail Amber Ale (bottle) \$4.84

Lush! Right up my alley, you say? Not so fast, there, SkeeziX. This here "lush" is, methinks, more like an allusion to fertility, green pastures, and thrivingly alive tropical flora. Do not sound so much like me now, do it?



If you've seen Lush Bar, you know, *for sure*, that this bar is just not me. It is about wine. Wine *and* chocolate. *Annd* tea, and coffee. Ohhhh kaaaay.



But rumor had it that they also had a small selection of organic craft beers to complement those other, less base, tastes. So, it found its way onto my Hopping List, and *I* found my way to *it*.

When I first saw their lavender-and-green sign hanging over the sidewalk, I have to admit I was perplexed. Usually such a sign

hangs over the front door, but here there was no door, just the plate glass window of a very nice and very trendy shop called Green Pineapple. The GP had its own sign, hanging over its door, but Lush had no portal.

I did the classy thing and pressed my face up against the glass to see what could be seen. Way in the back of the store, there seemed to be a recess, and I thought I saw the profile of a woman sitting on a high seat, leaning on a counter. Hmm.



When I walked back toward the open door of the GP, I noticed the chalkboard. The name Lush (with the word "bar" in much smaller letters, almost as if they preferred not to admit what it was) was all done up amid a pastel swirl of feathery plumage. Is that redundant? Eh.

Under the name, in squarer letters, it read, "Put the chocolate in the bag and nobody gets hurt." Worth a chuckle. They clearly were emphasizing the chocolate aspect, and they did have a sense of humor. It was tempting to think, *they're going to need one*, but I was solo this time, and I can behave when behaving is the thing to do. I don't don't *like* it much, but I *can* do it.

One very nice thing about Key West in the summertime is that it is almost difficult to be underdressed. A tank top, reasonably clean shorts, and a pair of flip-flops will get you in all but the snootiness places.

Green Pineapple wasn't snooty anyway, though; it was Vermont, with maybe a touch of Martha's Vineyard. They describe themselves as "an Eco Chic boutique, with eclectic gifts and vintage jewelry." Ha, and you thought I wouldn't fit in. Who is more Eco Chic than the Hopster?

It was bookstore quiet in here, and the light aroma of some fruity incense hung in the air. I barely glanced at any of the goods on the shelves or racks or tables; I went straight for the back of the store. That must have looked a bit odd to any of the browsing women who may have noticed me. Tall guy in a tank top, with a canvas bag slung across his shoulders, strides through the store without the tiniest interest in shopping. Who invited *him*??

I rounded a corner, and there was the bar. It's really kinda trippy. The bottom part is old corrugated steel standing upright -- the same stuff that the fishing store place, The Live Bait Lounge (#155), used to make their funky bar -- and the bar top is made of nice wooden planks nailed together and lightly polished. Nothing fancy. The stools are light: aluminum frames with dark wood slats for back and bottom. Paneled wooden six-by-six posts

support a two-foot tall girder overhead.

Just beyond the final seat, there was a very comfortable looking sofa, but it was fronted by another chalkboard, which admonished, "PLEASE Do Not Walk Past This Point." It made me wonder if running or tumbling or dancing



past that point would be OK. Do a double-summy from the bar into that couch and all is well? I still wonder.

All of this arrangement faces sideways to the street, so it's almost impossible to see from outside -- a nice secret hideaway for chocolate loving winos.

But what would they have that a craft beer lover might enjoy? As I settled onto my stool, the dark-skinned woman on the backmost stool set aside her laptop and walked behind the bar. (Is "swarthy" an insult? It should be simply an adjective, but people get pissed if you call them *swarthy*. Just for the record, though, she was swarthy, but not "swarthy" or *swarthy*.) She was a healthy slim, with good posture and discreet glasses. There was a managerial air about her, as if she had been doing some monthly cost analysis chart and I had interrupted her.

It's possible too, that she was the only employee on duty, had been Facebooking all afternoon, and had to interrupt a hot and sexy back-n-forth with Antonio, the exotic and erotic dancer in Brazil, to serve my whims. Ya, I know, nice upgrade. You're welcome. I named her Gisela.

The modest selection of organic beers was on display on two small shelves on the wall behind the bar. There were about a dozen to choose from. I wondered if I'd end up having another Butt Crack, like I had had at Flaming Buoy (#164). But, no, ha ha, I spied a familiar face and promptly asked Gisela for a Full Sail Amber Ale. Can't say where I've had that fine brew before, but I knew that it had been an enjoyable time. It should be a pale ale, though, yes? Just to get that *ail-ale-ale* rhyme rolling.

I declined the offer of a glass and took a thirsty slug from the bottle. Gisela either sensed that I had everything I needed, or was dropping her best hint for me to drink up and go, because she softly laid a little tray on the bar next to my bottle and returned to Antonio. The ornate tray had my bill, anchored down by a smooth rock. We had no further exchange. That was

fine with me; I did indeed have everything I required -- a beer to consummate the Hop -- and had no need to intrude on her diversions. Have a fiiiine fantasy dance, Gisela.

My beer boasted on its label that it was "ridiculously tasty." You see plenty of advertising superlatives as you go through daily life, but "ridiculously tasty" is a claim that will catch your eye. It reminded me of Circus Time popcorn, when I was teenager. The bag had the cartoon picture of a laughing clown's face, which was OK, I guess, but the kicker was a yellow starburst near the top of the bag, with the all-caps words "WICKED GOOD". Now, this was the Boston area, so "wicked" was another way of saying "very," but you still had to love the oxymoron.

Lush was a very different place to drink. Women milled about the front part of the establishment, their brains fully awash in Shopping Mode. There was a gentle rustling to their movements. Soft murmurs, almost like distant mooing, wafted back this way. Nothing here sounded or smelled like any other bar. I was a total fish out of water.



My Full Sail didn't last long. Without distractions, the beer becomes the prime focus and it just goes downwwwn. I took just enough time to post my Facebook status and officially claim Hop Done. Then I left the appropriate funds in the ornate tray -- under the rock -- shouldered my bag, and moved quietly towards the exit. Gisela was too absorbed to note my departure.

On my way out, I made a weak attempt at "shopping", but I just couldn't pay the tiniest bit of attention to whatever was for sale. I don't have a Shopping lobe in my brain. Best to leave that chore to those who are good at it (i.e., women, and certain gay men).

This lush bid adieu to Lush Bar, thinking that I just might be back someday, and exited out into the SoDu world.