

Bar Hoppin' With Hops

The Keep On Hoppin' Tour
Hops MacBarley's Ongoing
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Bar 250:

Pilar Bar (The Saint Hotel)

www.thesainthotelkeywest.com

Friday, June 26, 2015, 9:00 PM

Sierra Nevada Torpedo IPA (bottle) \$7.00

TWO-FITTY! Two-goddamn-fitty bars. All of 'em on the island of Key West. That's incredible. When the *Peace, Love & IPA Tour* launched in 2012, I was pretty confident that 100 would not be a problem. *The Second Century Tour* took some thinking -- and was helped some by closing/opening bars. Now, we just *Keep On Hoppin'*. 250 is accomplished. 300 will come, but it will take a little while. Anyway, what's the rush?



So. #250. Yayyy. That calls for a beer!

The Southern Cross Hotel was a staple of Duval Street for a lonng time. It wasn't always spoken of well, but its location pretty much guaranteed it business. Still, I doubt many were surprised when its sign came down and its doors closed up.

Now it's freshly open under the name The Saint Hotel, and we got a bit of an insider invite to come and check it out. The timing was excellent, too, since it meant getting a Milestone Hop on my birthday. Yay, Hops. HFBTM. I even had an entourage: B&J, Double-A, and older bro Malt, who trekked down from Beantown to the southernmost city for the occasion.

Malt was still half-dead from last night's Duval

Street Overdo. How many times does it happen, huh? A visitor comes to town and Duval Street just chews him up and spits him into the gutter. He had me as his guide, a veteran of this legendary avenue, but rather than follow my savvy pace and have a beer per stop, he doubled me up a couple of



times. I've seen that movie before and it never ends well. I finally dragged his hurtin' butt off my sofa at about 4 PM, but he was somnambulant at best. People thought an episode of *The Walking Dead* was being filmed. We got some hair of the dog into him and by the time we got here from the Gecko, he was finally starting to regain form.

It was a tad odd, for a brand new place, that when we got to the front door, the lighted sign wasn't working properly; it said merely "The Hotel." Even stranger, though, in the photo, the only legible word is "Saint." Freakin' weird, huh? Ha.

The place looks like an ordinary house

with a red door, but it blew us away when we stepped into the lobby. Whoever the designers were, they didn't hold anything back. Floor-to-ceiling white curtains, highly polished floor, a crazy oversized chair, a high-cushioned couch that takes up almost a whole wall, outlandish white fur cushions on chairs... it was striking.

Then we stepped into the bar. It, too, was long and narrow and swank. Nice walls, large graphic of Hemingway's boat, the *Pilar* -- hence the name of the bar -- Polynesian-head side tables, and chrome bar seats. Yeahhh, *chrome* bar seats. Niiice. Just when you thought the whole world was going Ikea.



These things are definitely heavier and more solid than any other metal ones I've seen in a while. As Malt pointed out, though, they must be a bitch to keep clean; they show every damn fingerprint. I did observe, however, one's back and one's bottom would do a good job off wiping some of the prints away.



There are no TVs, but John says one is coming soon. We got by with actual conversation. It was novel. I busied myself, also, by snapping picky-wicks of the bar and the pool area beyond the glass door. Everything out there was lit up cobalt blue. A very good look.

And they had this chair that looked like it belonged to #2 in the '60's cult classic TV show *The Prisoner*. It was suspended from above, spherical without a face, padded on the bottom, and trimmed with chrome-ish stuff. The wicked cool part of it, though, was when you sat in it and spoke, it messed with your voice bigtime. Hard to describe, so I won't. But purdy dang cool.

We took a walk down a hallway and checked out the modern abstract paintings on the wall, annnnnnnnd, the blue-lit men's room. Funnkyy.

If you think that all this swank means that everything carries a high price tag, you are correctamento. My Torpedo was seven bucks, which is not all that far out of line with some other places on the Tours. But Brian's Coors Light was six bucks, which is. I took some solace that I got all that extra flavor, alcohol and quality for just a dollar more. What a smart shopper. Mama MacBarley woulda been proud.

We were not hotel guests, though we were invited guests, so we decided not to overstay our welcome. Our entourage thanked John for the nickel tour and headed off to, well, to find cheaper beer.







