

## Bar Hoppin' With Hops

The Keep Calm and Hop On Tour  
Hops MacBarley's Ongoing  
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Hop #317

### The Rooster Tale

211 Duval Street  
Sat 5/24, 7:00 pm

*Yuengling (draft) \$3 HH*

We hopped here from next door. I had just joined B&J at Lineup Bar (#303), arriving just as they were paying up, and they announced they were relocating here. Hence, I proclaimed Hop On.



The Rooster Tale — yes, the spelling is deliberate, giving a nod to both the literary and tall-tale natures of K-Dub — is the latest attempt to make good at 211 Duval. Cheeseburger Key West (#173), Johnny Rockets (#221), and Gas Monkey (#263, #277, and #294), have all hosted Hops and his merry band of Hoppers, but none have lived to tell the tale. Maybe this Tale will.

It's a huge place, but that can be a huge part of the problem. Rent is astronomical and utilities must be too. Factor in food costs and payroll, and you gotta sell a LOT of stuff to make a profit. And *that* means you gotta pack 'em in and keep 'em coming back.

I wondered as I looked around — once we got past the cool six-foot rooster statue they have in the front yard and got inside — where they would be “packing 'em”. The bar seemed like it could have had a good bit more seating. There were only like 8 stools and just a few two-top tables along the wall. Not exactly pack-in numbers.



But, there is an out-front seating area with a handful of patrons, a side-alley seating area that had a couple of tablefuls, and a backyard seating area where a modest gathering was, um, gathered. There is also a large upstairs room, so seating capacity overall is pretty high.

This is a bar hop, though, not a restaurant review, so I shall concentrate myself with bar things only henceforth.

AJ was our barkeep. As we seated ourselves at the eight-seat bar, he promptly got Brian his draft beer, then... went away. I think the Bud Light keg had kicked and he skedaddled off to tap a new one. He was gone a while. A female server stepped behind the bar to, well, tidy up, I guess, because she showed no intention of serving anyone. How ironic.



There were two TVs behind the bar, but they were on some really shitty show that might have been less shitty if there was audio but was really shitty without. It had a lot of insects in it. With AJ off on his tapquest, the server was just standing there doing a whole lot of nothing. It was as if she



was protecting the bar from any invasion we might have been planning. I asked her if she could change the channel. She shrugged and said she didn't know how. Okaaay. No drink and crappo video. This Hop was not off to a bango start.

So we sat there, Jan and I dry, and waited. It gave me a chance to look around and survey the lay of the land. One of the best features was, of course, the ceiling! You know me and my ceiling fetish. There was a large and well-painted Conch Republic flag up there.

There was a chalkboard behind the bar, just over the beer taps, which read "Bottled Beer Only" over a list of brews. Huh?? Bottles only? W(here)TF did AJ go then? To tap a case?





The bar top was all about coins. Pennies and doubloon-ish things were sealed in clearcoat, with one area in a palm tree arrangement. Nice touch.

AJ returned and... walked right by us. Then he walked back the other way. When he passed by the third time, I asked Brian — rather loudly — “how’s that beer, B-Dog?” And whaddyaknow, it worked. AJ did a bit of a peeved “huh??” then realized that he done screwed up. With an almost-but-not-quite apologetic tone, he asked Jan and I what we would like. We told him, he got it for us, and all was well. Finally. Ha. He also changed the channel. A *Star Wars* movie was on. **Much** better, even without sound.

An older man and woman were here and there around the bar area, attending to various details. They were the owners, Jan told me, and they had sunk their retirement into this place. They seemed like nice folks, though their resumes in the food-n-bev industry were pretty much blank. Jumping into the fire with a high-rent locale on the 200 block of Duval was a risk, for sure. Even moreso when they opened their doors jussst as season was ending.

B&J spent a little time swapping pleasantries with both of them. I got the feeling that not a whole lot of locals had been frequenting TRT and that B&J’s semi-regular visits over the last few weeks were very much appreciated.

We knocked off our drinks and initiated our departure sequence. Before we reached the door, the owner lady came and gave Jan a big hug and thank you, then gave Brian a big hug and thank you. I stood there next, with my arms half-outstretched and this *Do I get a hug too?* look on my face. She turned my way and



a look of horror swept across her face. I chuckled and moved on out through the doorway.

I felt like telling her that it was bad luck to not hug Mr. Hops, but I just let it go.

ADDENDUM: June 2019

She should have hugged me. They didn't last another month. I felt bad for the owners. They did seem like nice people, despite shunning my hug, but they were overmatched. Another one bites the dust. I wonder what became of the big rooster.

The final sad thing about TRT's short life is that the *Key West Citizen* ran a large article giving them some good press in Saturday's paper. They closed up for good the very same day.