

100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 3:

Krawl Off Duval

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Krawl-Off-Duval/178941635481516>

506 Southard Street

Friday 7/20, 10:30 pm



Shipyard Monkey Fist I.P.A.

It's a tad ironic that Krawl Off Duval comes right after The Porch. Being another small venue that features a large selection of craft beers, it opened up to suspicions of being a Porch copycat. I'm happy to report that Key West is *absolutely* big enough for both bars to exist in harmony, even if they are just four blocks apart.

Nobody will accuse KOD of harboring snots and snooties; it is craft beer for the common man. The lighting is brighter, the music tends to be edgier, and the crowd is a bit crunchier, whatever that means.



All around the room, inactive tap toppers hang like icicles, displaying the breadth of the rotation of brews that flow through their dozen active nozzles. They have a nice selection of wines, as well, but the aura of craft beer just permeates the place.

The one-room barroom is the ground level of a converted two-story house next to the wide alley walkway that leads to Lobo's and such. What do you call that area in there? Yeah, that place.

Inside, they have about five tall stylish brushed steel tables. I like the way they clang under your glass when you put down your just-drained glass. The porch outside has another two tables, which offer a good view of the often-entertaining goings-on at Mr. Z's across the street.

In a place like this, the barkeeps need to Know Their Stuff – not just know their stuff – about the brews, and that's not easy with so many and such a rapid changeover. Patrick, KOD's Kommander, is all over that info, giving you a quick description without

trying to impress you with brewing jargon and shit. And, as the bossman, he should know all that.

But, let's face it, sometimes a hottie's nice smile and endearing cleavage makes up for certain blank spots in their expertise. If a guy looks at you from behind a craft beer bar and says, *Hey, man, I don't know much about the differences*, you kinda roll your eyes and think, *How'd you ever get the job, dumbass?* But if a Lovely tells you, with a dimple and giggle, *This one is yellow and this one is kinda orangierish*, you tend to chuckle and say, *I'll have an orangierish one.* And all is well.

I'm exaggerating, of course. And KOD keeps are not like that anyway; you do get good answers and info from the KOD staff. They'll tell you what's what, so you don't end up with a strawberry wheat when you thought you were getting a porter.

The taps change pretty regularly – they use the fire extinguisher kegs instead of the big barrels – and it's not uncommon to order more of the same and find out that you just had the last one in the house. No worries: try something new. Scratch another one off the Never Had That Before list.

You don't know what that beer is like? So what?? Go by the name! Craft brews have some dang coolo names. Why do you think I ordered a Monkey Fist IPA? Because it's an IPA? Well, yeah. Because Shipyard makes it and I love Shipyard brews? Well, yeah. But *mainly* because it's a Monkey Fist. No idea what that means or stands for, but it has a dang coolo ring to it.

It's like when I was on a roadtrip up in Montana several years ago, and I pulled into this shack of a roadside bar for one more late night beer before crawling off to sleep in the van. I sat down, looked at the taps as the bovine 55-year-old redneck woman barkeep shuffled my way. As she stepped close enough, I said with due incredulity, *You have a beer called Moose Drool??*

She kept on chewing her cud and said blandly, *It's kinda dark.*

I had to laugh at that and figgered, if not now, probably never, and ordered one up. It was *very* dark, and it did have a lot of flavor. I told myself that it was good flavor, and I suppose it was, especially seeing that Miller Lite and Miller High Life were about the only other choices. And at least it was beer flavor. Out here, with a name like that...

Another time in Seattle, at one of my favorite places, called Ram Sports Bar, I voiced the same incredulity as the barman waited out my perusal of his taps: *Butt Face? You have a beer called Butt Face??* Then I saw the tap image of two rams butting their



faces together, and it all made sense, especially given the name of the bar. I had more than one of those; it was a fine amber ale indeed.

So, here at Krawl on Tour Night Uno, Monkey Fist was the name that grabbed me. And it was about seven shades of yum. Next time I see a monkey make a fist, I'll remember this brew.

Elizabeth was my barkeep. She's hot, dresses hot, and was as friendly as you could reasonably expect a hot young woman to be with my senescent ilk. I was not very familiar with her, and I lamented that neither Patrick nor Tammy was around. They would have livened up the visit. If Patrick is the Big Dawg here, then Tammy is The Sassy Cat. She wears her heart on her sleeve and shoots from the hip – maybe that's part of the reason the crowd is crunchier, whatever that means.

But Elizabeth was just fine and dandy, thank you please. I was a rare one-and-done here this night. As I paid my \$7 for the Fist, I noticed the white plastic Krawl Off Duval VIP card in back slot of my wallet. Thinking I might save a buck or so, I asked her about it:

I got this VIP card from Patrick a while ago. Does it do any cool things for me?

I don't know what that does. But I've only been here a month and a half.

Fair enough, I guess. None my friends seem to know what theirs do either.

This particular night was quite quiet at this point. That's one fun thing about a small place; it can go from "slow" to "packed" with the arrival of a taxi and a couple of bikes. There was nobody in the alley playing the beanbag toss game (I have trouble with the term "cornhole" for that, not sure why), only one porch table was taken, and maybe a half-dozen people were keeping me company inside.

There was nothing compelling on the big TV behind the bar, and the tunes didn't have me by the scruff either. Krawl can be a good hunker-down spot, but this night was a 1er-dunner. I was eager to check out the band down the street at Bar #4.

Back soon.