

100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 26:

Two Friends Patio Restaurant
www.twofriendskeywest.com
512 Front Street
Thursday 8/9, 7:15 pm

Sam Adams Boston Lager (bottle)

Two Friends has (have?) been here a long time. I ate here once, and it was a long time ago. Like maybe eight years ago or so. I won a \$50 gift certificate at a 5K road race (no, in the raffle, but thanks), and George and I came here to spend it. It was surprisingly easy.

We didn't go crazy. No lobster. I think I had a steak and George had some fricasseed wildebeest groin or something. The GC either just barely covered my meal, or was just shy. I could have been a total putz and said, *Man, that was a good free meal. How much did yours cost, George?* but we just dropped it on the overall check and each had a half-price meal.

The food was really good, so the price made sense, and the atmosphere in there is dang cool, with the hanging lanterns and the tiki hut ambience. But I had not checked the menu first, and I was thinking it was less fine dining than it was. The tiki hut thing had my mind leaning the other way – away from fancy and more towards beachy – so the numbers next to the foods caught me nappin'.



I have never been a high-end restaurant kinda guy. Something about spending half a day's pay on a piece of food just doesn't sit right with me. If I got paid more, and it was quarter-day's pay, that would probably be OK, but I don't, so it doesn't. If a steak costs me \$30, I'll be thinking, *Damn, that's a bacon cheeseburger and **four** beers!* And I love bacon cheeseburgers.

If I'm ever in a position where I am offered a "last meal" – and I'm pretty sure that I

never want to be in such a position – I might very well go with a big hot juicy BCB, medium rare, with thin fries. Lasagna would be in the running too. Or a hot turkey dinner, like they used to serve at PT's Late Night. Yaaaah. PT's. Where hast thou gone?

On this Tour Stop, I chose to sit at the bar. It's a bar tour, after all. The barkeep asked if I wanted to see a menu. I politely declined, saying, *Just here for a beer*. A minute or so later, the hostess came over and placed a menu in front of me. I chuckled and slid it a few inches to the side. The barkeep came back with my beer, saw the closed menu, and asked, *Did you decide what you want to eat?*

Just here for a beer, I smiled. She looked puzzled, and took the menu away.

A quarter-beer later, a different hostess walked by, leaned over to me, and asked if I wanted to see a menu. I'm thinking, *Dayummm, they really want you to eat around here!* Maybe they just keep asking till you break down and cry out, *All right, all right! I'll fucking EAT!!* This was still daytime, with dinnertime still waxing, so they were all getting into the mode.



Two Friends is big on karaoke, but, to my relief, it was way too early for that noise. I'm not a fan, sorry. If you're not good enough to make your living at it, I don't need to hear you sing. Stop murdering the songs and put on the freaking radio. Once in a blue moon, it can be funny – like that drunk dude was at Cowboy Bill's (Bar #8) -- and every now and then you get somebody who has a decent voice. But it's still not as good as the originals. Spin the record, DJ.

I did karaoke once. Once. I don't see it happening again. But this particular time, I was where nobody knew who the fook I was, so there was no self-consciousness. It was in Tifton, Georgia, at a good-sized pizza restaurant. I was trekking back to Boston from another Florida roadtrip, and had a hankering for some 'za and suds. The parking lot was pretty full and there was a sign proclaiming *Karaoke Night*. Oh yay.

I found an empty table deep in the back corner, placed my order, and sat back for the show. Trouble was, there wasn't really any show. The karaoke host dude did his part, getting the music going, and even doing a couple of songs himself to get things rolling. But nobody bit on the hook. Everyone was too chickenshit to go first. The host, though, was determined to wait them out. Two or three more songs played without the vocal track, and the room just sat there.



This is fucking stupid, I thought, and grabbed the song list. I put on my black cowboy hat – which I had bought at Environmental Circus in Key West – and took the stage. I did *Tangled Up In Blue* in my best Bob Dylan, and got the crowd bouncing some. A few even did some sing-along on the chorus. And you should've seen the line form to sign up. Everyone was clearly thinking, *Shit, I can sing better than that!* So much for the embarrassment factor.

Remember Environmental Circus? I loved that place. The posters, clothing, accessories, paraphernalia – all hippie trippy shit. The owner wasn't the most cheery guy, but maybe the years just made him more and more of a misanthrope. He probably got shoplifted a real lot, and had burnouts coming in to just clog up his counters and aisles with blank stares. But when you bluntly say to a browser, *If you're not going to buy something, just get the fuck out*, you're not too concerned about customer relations.

So, since there was no karaoke at Two Friends at this dinner hour, I had the leisure to check out all the decorations around the place. Nautical things, naturally, dominated the décor. Floats, nets, brass boat pieces, taxidermied fish, lanterns, life preservers, turtle shells, and bells hung in various places along the walls.

One decoration was creeping me out though. As I looked up and left, there was this weird Asian guy sitting on a platform that hung by thick ropes from the ceiling. The dude wasn't alive – it wasn't *that* creepy – but he had this absurd grin, glassless glasses,



headphones, a bucket hat, a treasure chest overflowing with beads, a diver's suit, big boots on twisted dwarf legs, and something that looked like some detonation device hanging from his neck. He was the consummate WTF dude.

I finished my beer, tipped the empty bottle towards Weird Asian Dude, who just kept up his silent laugh, and headed out. At least he didn't offer me a menu.