

100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 52:

Splash Bar
Comfort Inn
3820 North Roosevelt Boulevard
Saturday 9/8, 2:30 pm

Yuengling (draft) \$4.25

GORGEOUS freaking day. So, no surprise that a pool would be a popular place. Comfort Inn, unlike many hotels, welcomes the public to use their pool and pool bar. I'm guessing that the guests don't think very highly of that practice, but the locals sure seem to appreciate it.



In fact, I hear tell that there was a bit of a kaffuffle awhile back about some parents just dropping off their kids at the pool while they went off to Publix, Sears, Hawaii, or wherever. Takes brass ones to do that.

I parked out back and walked in through the gate, thinking about a cold beer and a cool leisurely dip. My first thought stopped me in my tracks, though: *Look at all the freakin' little kids in the pool!*

There had to be thirty kids aged five or under in or around the pool. I bet the water was warm, if you drift my catch. The beer suddenly took over top priority. No worries. Plenty of other swim options to follow.

Splash Bar is a fairly small shack that sits on the edge of the brick red pool deck. The high sloped roof offers good shade for the dozen or so barsitters. There are a dozen or so stools spread around three sides of the square bar, and all but one was taken. Until now. There is also a shark with a tropical shirt standing on the center island behind the bar. It's not alive, though.



As I waited for service, I did a quick scan of the clientele. A few people I knew, and many others looked vaguely familiar. More locals than guests here, for sure. I had to wonder how many, if any, of the kids were here on holiday. Wouldn't surprise me a bit if they were all locally brewed.

If you're a hotel guest, and you've been looking forward to some quiet reading by the

pool, how irked are you by this? Reasonably irked, I'd say. Maybe even vexed. Or perhaps downright exasperated.

The bar stools were all in the shade where it was comfortably cooler. Frozen drinks seemed to be the order of the day, though, as it took a while before the barkeep had a free moment. She seemed relieved when I ordered a simple draft, and from a tap just an arm's reach away. The mug was frosty. Bonus.

There was live entertainment here this afternoon: a solo reggae dude with steel drums. He was just finishing his set when I walked in, but recorded music played while he was on break. Despite the occasional shrill squeals of little girls who were terrified of getting splashed while they were in the pool, it was relaxing spot. Cool shade, cold beer, nice looking pool, tall palms standing over it all, and the reggae vibing like only reggae vibes.

But then, the inquisitive little urchins found their way to the stage, and discovered, to my dismay, the open mike that had been left lying unattended by the singer when he wandered off to do whatever reggae performers do between sets. (Ha.)

None of them tried singing. They basically just picked up the mike and blurted a nonsense syllable into it, just to see how loud it would be. It was quite loud. Each and every damn time. I'm not sure how many kids took a turn at open mike time but it was a having a cumulative grating effect.

What was kind of funny, though, was the way they handled the microphone. Instead of being placed in its holder atop the mike stand, it had been left lying near the front of the stage, which was just a small platform no more

than a foot or two above the pool deck. The kids kinda crouched and crawled over the front edge of the platform and reached it. They never stood up, and they never crawled completely onto the stage. It was as if they would not be violating the Keep Off The Stage edict if they managed to keep at least one toe in contact with the pool deck. They giggled and snickered like they were hiding under a table where nobody could see them, except they were on the damn stage, where *everybody* could see them.

After a while, I made a comment to the barkeep as she came by, *I'm surprised nobody on staff has told those kids to knock it off.* Seemed like a pretty blunt hint.

Yeah, she replied, giving a stern look in their direction, *you'd think someone would.* She seemed pretty peeved about the noise too. I was on the verge of saying, *Well, go do it!!* but I decided just to let it go.

The thrill must have worn itself out because the yells finally just stopped. I saw the last kid do his blurt, then look around for someone to pass the mike to, but his cohorts had already skedaddled back to the pool. He just shrugged, laid the mike down carefully, and went to join them.

I took my time with my Yuengling – always best to yuengle casually – but it still didn't last very long. I gathered my stuff and headed out.

There's a purdy dang good looking exercise room in a separate building behind the pool. Glassed-in, and with some very good looking machines within, it looked like a pretty sweet facility. It was, of course, empty.