

100 Bars in 100 Days

Hops MacBarley's 2012

Key West Bar Boondoggle

"The Peace, Love, and I.P.A. Tour"

BAR 98:

Aqua Nightclub

711 Duval Street

www.aquakeywest.com

Thursday 10/25, 10:30 pm

Sam Adams Boston Lager (bottle)

\$5.50

It was a fun walk here from Wharfstock, albeit just a tad wobbly. Fukkit. I had had the foresight to use one of my last vaykay days for tomorrow, so release those hounds! Woof woof!



I also had the wisdom to park the van over on Simonton, away from the Duval Din, where I could slumber till sunrise and beyond. 'Tis good to have a van. The Belly

o' th' Mobe has been a worthy night chamber on many, many, many occasions.



It was also a good place to change out of those outrageous tie-dyes. Already over the top at a Tie-Dye Party, that attire would have been ludicrous up here. Can you *imagine* how much the drag queens would *shit on* a dude wearing a rainbow tie-dyed *cape*?? I did the quick revert back to my Redneck Party duds, dude.

Aqua was full for the Aquanettes show. I grabbed me a Sammalamma and found a niche to stand and watch. I come here now and then; it's a fun show. Inga is a total boot in the brain. She's huge, for one thing, but not blubber-huge, more big-boned huge. Blonde wigs, crazy dresses (self-made, I'm told), unabashed antics, out-rageous songs, and an infectious smile make her a big draw.

Faith and Inga have been headlining this show for a long time. Over the years, the act has been polished and refined and so has the club. When I first arrived, this place was called, appropriately, Divas (right next to Dudes). Then it changed very little but became KWest. Then, with new ownership, Aqua was born, and though Joe Average Guy might not get the difference -- *hey, a freakin' drag bar is a freakin' drag bar* -- Aqua parallels the overall upscaling of Duval. It's not as drastic as Ripley's becoming Walgreen's or Environmental Circus being replaced by Nine West -- it *is* still a drag bar -- but the sleaze element that may have existed in its predecessors has given way to table service and fully-clothed comedy/music.

They keep the acts reasonably clean, which draws a good crowd, and they



She is wearing nothing but paint. That has nothing to do with Aqua, but it's worth mentioning.

try not to make it too gay. Aqua may, in fact, be a gay bar, but they thrive on the straight crowd. Colby Kincaid, a former performer here (RIP, CK), once told me that most queens preferred a straighter audience: "Straights are so easy to freak out; gays just say, *so what, I do that at home.*"

I once played a terrible prank on Colby. He was up on stage, doing his thing, getting a good response from the crowd, but not getting a lot of dollar bills. The night before, I had taken a picture of him performing and edited it into a scan of a \$100 bill. The back had only text on it, something like, *Ha! I owe you a buck.* I folded it up, approached the stage and slipped him the bill. He knew something was up by the weirdass look I gave him, so he looked at the bill and got *pummmmped*. He unfolded it, and held it up for the audience to see. After a couple of seconds, he finally noticed the back. To his credit, he gave a little laugh and carried on. He told me after his set that he thought it was funny as hell, but did not want to let on to the crowd that he had been punked. "I don't want to encourage any copycat behavior," he said in his Texas twang.

I tip the performers at drag shows. WTF, the club doesn't charge locals a cover charge, and the show girls are doing a shitload more than the barkeep. If I toss the keep a dollar just for reaching into the cooler and opening a beer bottle, the least I can do is slip a buck to the dude in make-up and a dress lip-synching to Madonna.

Inga did one of my favorite Inga songs, *Cuz I Got High*. It's not your stereotypical drag number; it's not even sung by a female, but the crowd loves it. Another crowd favorite is sung to the tune of *This Is The Dawning Of The Age Of Aquarius*, but, of course, the lyrics are changed a good bit to *There's nothing grosser than a man with a hairy ass.*

Aqua was full but not packed, and the show seemed like the usual nightly show, nothing notably Fantasy Festive about it, so I one-n-dunned it and

resumed reveling on Duval where there was still plenty of sleaze.

98 bars, 98 days. Good pacing, Hopster.