

**Bar Hoppin' With Hops**  
The Second Century Tour  
Hops MacBarley's Summer 2013  
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Bar #101:

**World of Beer**

511 Greene Street

<http://wobusa.com>

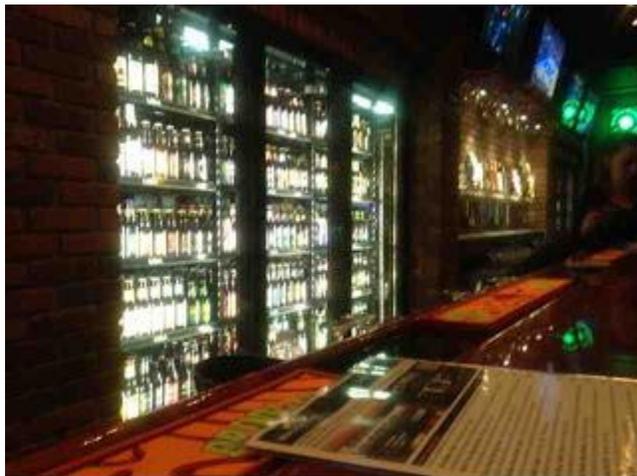
Saturday, 1 June 2013, 9:00 pm

*Laughing Skull Amber Ale \$6.00*

World of Beer opened in April, way too late to make the Hops 100, and just a bit too late to slurp their share of the Spring Break moolah. They most certainly would have been included in the *PLIPAT* if they had been available. 'Tis a worthy bar indeed. Hundreds of brews from all over the planet.

Well, maybe not all over. Somalia? Didn't see any. Latvia? Patagonia?

Anyway, WOB's Loyalty Club seems to be a hit. You drink 50 different beers and you get a shirt that commemorates the accomplishment. At 100, you get another one. When you reach 500, you get your very own plate on the wall: a 3" x 9" piece of laser-engraved brass on which you can say whatever you want, and it will be posted permanently on the wall behind the bar.



This night was, I believe, the 51st night since WOB opened their KW doors. Adam M -- listed at the top of the colorful Loyalty Club chalkboard -- has 306 beers to his credit. That is nice tidy math:  $306 / 51 = 6$ . Adam has had (on average) six different beers every single day since the bar opened. He is clearly a man who understands commitment.

WOB beers are not cheap (though I've been impressed with how many good IPAs can be had for under \$6), so

I figure Adam drops \$40 a night, at least, including tip. Yeah, that is over TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS. Ching fucking ching, WOB.

Brian and Jan were my companions for what I'll call Bar 101. Brian is kicking my Loyalty Club ass. He's up to 44, and I have a measly 12.

No, that's not fair; my 12 beers did not have the measles.

Anyway, I'd have a few more, but Brian's quest for the 50 shirt has spawned a noble generosity, and he has bought me a couple. Of course, if he's buying me the brew, then the brew is going on **his** card, not on mine.

WOB has 41 locations now, with 7 more currently listed as "opening soon." A few weeks ago, they participated in -- maybe even coordinated -- a nation-wide toast during American Craft Beer Week. At 8:00 PM, the local beer poobah, whose name escapes me, picked up a mike and led us all in a scripted toast. He'll soon be opening up his own brewery -- Bone Island Brewery -- behind the restaurant store.

I started tonight with a Lagunitas IPA. I've had it before and knew of its yumness, but I had not yet had it as a member of the Loyalty Club. I was about to pack up and scarify myself when Brian's Loyalty Club zeal roared to life again: *You want another one? It's on me.*

Now, how **rude** would it be to brush off that offer? I couldn't hurt my friend's feelings, so I put my bag back down, settled back in the cushioned bar seat and set about making my choice.

Sometimes you get a beer for its name: Butt Face Amber, at Ram Sports Bar in Seattle; Moose Drool, at some hick mountain saloon in Montana; Alien Amber Ale at Pub 48 near Roswell, NM.



And sometimes, it's the label. Our seats gave us a primo view of the coolers lined with hundreds of varieties of canned and bottled beers. A slow perusal of the selection revealed an eye-catching bottle on the bottom shelf. The label had a crazy design with the words Laughing Skull under a very cartoony skull that was, well, laughing. I had to give it a try. I asked Brandon, our astute and affable barkeep, what kind of beer it was, and he told me it was an amber ale. Sold!

It was tasty too! Then I was moved to wonder; was the name of the beer spawned by the design of the label, or was the design commissioned to match the name of the beer? I'm sure I'll never

know. Then again, until I just wrote this paragraph, I forgot that I once cared. Fukkit.

The entertainment was pretty good. They were a classic KW mutt band -- three solo performers thrown together -- and they played a pretty good variety of tunes, best of which was Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here*. The percussionist was actually a street performer. He wears a ribbed metal tie which he plays like a washboard, and he drums away on a kid's size drum set. I had only seen him on Duval's sidewalks, so it was interesting to see him in a more professional venue.

On my very first visit here, I was pleased to see Andy, formerly a barkeep at Krawl Off Duval, on duty. We did the usual howyabeen's and I ordered up my one-and-done. I drained it nobly (of course) and dropped a 20 in the little back billfold thingo that they give you your bill in. Andy took it away, and returned a moment later with a big handshake and a seeyasoon. I finished reading whatever it was I was reading and went to pack up. My change seemed light. Hmmmm, \$5.34 change from a \$20 for one IPA draft. Hmmmm.

I summoned Andy, and he looked at the slip, and pointed to the bold line at the bottom that read **\$14.66**. At that point, we both noticed the small print phrase above it, "Your Change."

Like I said, I originally feared over-the-top pricing -- and you *can* pay a lot if you order the more exotic, rare, or potent brews -- but one night I had a tall, cold glass of a 7% ABV IPA for \$5. The last time I was across the street at Sloppy Joe's, they charged me \$5.50 for a plastic cup of Yuengling. So, yeah.

WOB will almost surely have better success than the prior occupants of this address. Crabby Bill's was here for a while, but fell flat. Guy Harvey's had a decent run, with both the restaurant and gift shop dedicated to the artist's works, but even on their busier nights, the huge room still looked empty. McFadden's Beach Club opened to high expectations, but fizzled fast once summer arrived and then ditched within a year. Finally, Steel Horse Saloon took a stab at it, but bottomed out even faster than McF's.



The place was just too damn big. It must have had room for 200 or more seated, and 300 or so with standees. That's a lot of space to air-condition, especially with wide-open windows and doors. It's great if you actually *get* 200 patrons, but when you get 40, you're hurtin'. Add to that the horrendous food cost of an unsuccessful restaurant, and you have a whirlpool that will suck a business under in a hurry.

So, common sense finally prevailed; the site was divided into three separate businesses, and food was taken out of the equation. WOB is easily big enough for a good crowd, and is divided into front and back rooms so you don't get that big vacant hall effect, even in the slow daytime hours.

The TV's were just full of good things for us this night. The Bruins shut out the heavily-favored Penguins in Game 1 of the NHL Eastern Conference Finals. The Red Sox trounced the Junkies of New York, 11-1, at Junkie Stadium. Annd, the Pacers evened the NBA Eastern Final series with Miami, 3-3. (Sorry, Heat fans, I just don't like LeBron.)

An auspicious start to the sequel tour.