

Bar Hoppin' With Hops

The Second Century Tour

Hops MacBarley's Summer 2013
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Bar #105:

Gumbo Limbo Bar

3990 South Roosevelt Boulevard

www.doubletree.hilton.com/Key_West

Thursday, 6 June 2013, 6:00 pm

Sam Adams Boston Lager (draft)

\$4.50

This Tour stop required timing. The radar showed a big red blob on the move down US-1. It wasn't a big huge blob, but it wasn't a little tiny one either.

I hate it when people use those phrases: "big huge" and "little tiny." They are such idiotic redundancies. I often come back at them with, "as to opposed to little huge?" or "so, not big tiny?" Is the word "huge" not sufficient? Does "tiny" not express enough smallness? Next time, I'm just gonna slap the bastid.

Anyway, the rain was imminent, so I jumped into the Green Monsta and raced that blob to the east end of island. Green Monsta is the interim name for my newly purchased van. It's large and green, and I'm a Sox fan, so duh. But it's not a monster; it's pretty refined, especially for a doppel of donkey dung like me. I need to do an overnighter in it to figure out its name. Gotta sleep with the bitch before I can name her. Or him. ;)

Hawkmobile, The PB, Sally (my sweet Mustang), The Roadhouse (my first van), The Moose, The Terp, Spuds, Max (the only brand new vehicle I ever bought, a Ramvan that lasted 291,000 miles), The Penthouse, Blue Man, Rex, Moby (who passed 200K in March), C-Note, and now What's-His-Name.

So, yeah, Bar Tour. I beat the storm to the "Doubletree Resort by Hilton Hotel Grand Key – Key West." Yeah, that it's correct name. That's as bad as the characters in those Icelandic sagas: *I am Hrothgar, son of Halfdan, brother of Halga, uncle of Hrólfr Kraki, and meanest sumbitch in Iceland.*



The parking lot was full, so I had to park way around on the south side of the property. The sky was getting really dark to the southwest; that band from TS Andrea was poised to soak K-Dub purdy good -- it wouldn't last very long, but it would get us very wet. My plan was to spend a leisurely hour or so chilling in the DT's mellow indoor bar, get out the iPad Mini, plip away for a while, and get caught up on some Tour updates while I quenched my thirst with a fine malt bev.



BUT, there was a big ol' fly in that there ointment. The Southernmost Coconut Castaways, a festive bunch of Howard Livingston and the Mile Marker 24 Band groupies, were out in force, and their function had the indoor bar booked, packed, and rockin'. Bah. With the deluge imminent, the outdoor bar just wasn't gonna do. Now, the SCC

group was jaunty and affable and several other fine adjectives; they were just in my freaking way.

It was what it was, though, so I stepped back into the great outdoors to procure a cold beer.

Normally, the Gumbo Limbo Bar would be a fine take. It sits on an upper level overlooking the large pool and wide deck. It's a sturdy white wooden structure with an overhanging roof and a couple dozen tall and padded bar seats. Definitely a sweet place to hang on a lazy, sunny day.

My initial hope was that the overhang would be wide enough to shield us patrons from the rain. Didn't seem likely, but maybe being on the leeward side of the hut would help. One of the two cheerless barkeeps poured me a Sam. They both had that *oh shit no tips tonight* look on their faces. It can be pretty touch-and-go in their profession; hard to bank



on having the rent money covered when your shifts can be washed out several days in a row. I scooped my four bits change and laid a buck on the bar. The other barkeep came by and took it without a word or a nod. Yeah, you're welcome.

The rain began. Heavy drops right off the bat. In less than a minute, it was pouring. And windy. That overhang was proving to be of little use. The chair was a no-way; the back stuck out too far, and the cushion got sopping

wet in no time. Standing up close against the bar was not cutting it either. My canvas shoes were soaked through and the gusts were tossing spray up across the bar. It was like being on a freaking boat.



done. Put #105 in the ledger. I skedaddled back inside where all those dry-looking people were.

It was much *quieter* inside. The steel drum band was between tunes, and the Castaways were in a lull as well, and when the door shut behind me, it was like a *whoooosh* as the controlled environment swallowed me whole.

I amused myself by taking pix of the enormous cylindrical aquarium that is the centerpiece of the hotel lobby. The aquarium fish are good-lookin', but I sure hope they are really, really stupid. I mean, so thoroughly stupid that every time they swim around to the back side of the tank, they think, *Oh wow, look at that coral, that is so pretty*. If they had zero short-term memory, every day would be non-stop string of fresh discoveries and new wonders. And they would always be happy. But have you ever seen a fish that looked happy? Neither have I.

After that thrill wore off, I opted for sitting in a lobby chair and breezing through the latest edition of *Conch Color*. I even read an article, about the remarkable Czerwinski twins, Erin and Liz, who were valedictorian and salutatorian for the mighty Conchs. Way to go, girls! That makes six years in a row that the school's #1 student was a cross country runner. Yee-ha.

But this was not exactly great bar-style fun, sitting in a lobby like I'm waiting for a freaking cab. It was still deluging outside. And now my beer was empty. What ta do, what ta do? There was a gap showing on radar, but it looked to be at least 20 minutes away. WWHD?



If you guessed, Hops would go back outside in the torrential rain and get another Sammalamma, you are right. Give yourself three points. No, just three.

There is a wide awning that hangs above the door that

leads to that bar, and the rain was beating it like eleven hundred drunken monkeys. Not just a thousand. It was freaking **loud**. It was practically a din. Yes, a din.

I love little words like that. Din. Ilk. Vex. Orb.

Stringing them together is even better: *The din that that orb is making is sure to vex Hrothgar and his ilk.*

I stood there for a moment, taking in the sight. I got a chuckle out of the cone sign standing in a large puddle near the top of the stairs: *Caution Wet Floor*. There was another dude there too, just standing under the monkeys and diggin' the downpour. People like to look at water. Seems that way, anyway. The ocean, rivers, lakes, waterfalls, swimming pools, lawn sprinklers, or the swirling spiral of a flushing toilet -- people seem to be transfixed by water.

The overhang of the Gumbo Limbo Bar is only a few feet from the awning, but it was funny to watch the postures and demeanors of the handful of servers and customers who were braving that gap. They were ducking their heads as if being less tall might mean less wet. They waited, waited, waited, then dashed across the short space like they had the ability to time the drops just right. One server, to his credit, simply put his hand over the cocktails to keep the rain from diluting them and never changed stride; there's a man I would tip.

Years ago, I first heard the poser: *Do you get wetter walking in the rain or running in the rain?* That usually popped up after a long run on a rainy afternoon. I'd always roll my eyes and retort, "if I was walking, I'd still be out in the rain, still getting wet, and with a lonnnng way to go."

But, despite that, I approached Gumbo Limbo at a stroll, letting a few dozen fat drops splat me on the head and shoulders, as if to demonstrate that this rain business was no big whoop. Anyone who happened to be looking in my direction would surely have admired my cool calmness as I stepped through the puddles. Or maybe they would have muttered, *That damn moron doesn't even know it's raining!*

The barkeeps had put up about half of the big planks that seal up the hut. I ordered my Sam and again got service without expression. She didn't grunt at me, but she might as well have; it was a body language grunt. For the second

time, I picked up my two quarters change and dropped a dollar bill in its place. For the second time, it was whisked away without a hint of a thank you, in neither word nor gesture. Hey, barkeeps, it wasn't me who made it rain! Don't grump on Hops!

I took my beer inside to let it have a look the fishies, then another lobby sit ensued. I did some plippage with my sippage until that radar gap finally arrived, then exited, stage left.

