

## Bar Hoppin' With Hops

The Keep Calm and Hop On Tour  
Hops MacBarley's Ongoing  
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Bar #312:

### Smokin' Tuna On Duval

218 Duval Street  
Fri 2/22, 7:15 pm

*Prestige Lager (bottle) \$6*

By the time you read this Hopter, this here bar will be gone. Another one bites the dust at good old 218. Teasers owns the building, and they moved downstairs for a while while they remodeled their traditional upstairs location. I should've taken the hopportunity to pad the stats a bit by doing a Teasers-Down Hop, but I, well, didn't get around to it.

Anyway, once they went back upstairs, they offered Tuna a chance at this Duval frontage, apparently on a trial basis.

Apart from a cool, brushed-aluminum, plasma-cut sign, though, STS never did much with the place. That kind of stuff can cost big bucks in a place this large, and Tuna certainly does not need to slurp away funds from what is a pretty durn good bizniz in their classic backyard venue.



Caffeine Carl & The Buzz, among others, consistently bring in good nighttime crowds back there, so the one-block walk down Charles Street to their in-the-know locality appears to work better than having a big, wide-open entrance on the 200 block of Duval. Go figure.

This place opened under the STS flag last year, like right around Fantasy Fest time, but

I didn't Hop it right away because I wanted to give it a chance to develop its own personality first. It looked too much like that empty shell of a bar that was Two Eighteen (Hop #261), which, as you surely recall, just had a low-class strip bar air about it.

But, on this night, the time had come. I had just gotten word from B&J, who keep their thumbs on the pulse of this sort of thing, that Smokin' Tuna On Duval (STD – unfortunate abbreviation, I think you'll agree) was in its last week of operation, with February 28th as their final day. So, basically, Hop it now or forever hold your cheese between your knees, please, Louise.



An entertainer was doing his thing when we walked in. Well, I need to reword that. You're only called an *entertainer* if there is someone being *entertained*. It would be more accurate to call him a "guitar-playing singer". There were two people other than him in the establishment: his girlfriend and the bartender. Now, though they probably did find him farrrrrr more entertaining than the stark-naked silence of a large, empty room, they pretty much *had* to be there. *He* certainly did, anyway, unless he chose to just walk out on his job. I would not have blamed him at all for that.

I'd bet that bardude thought he was all set, snagging that gig right on the 200 block of Duval. That should be like finding the mother lode, right? You rake in a couple hundred bucks in tips per night, ya, you're one of the best known faces in town, yo baby, life is gooooooood.

But there's a snag, isn't there? You need customers to make tips. And for whatever reason, this place was just not drawing any in. Night after night, I had walked by, looking in to see if there was any uptick in biznizz, and it had gotten to the point where, if I saw a group of six people hanging in there, I took it as a positive. That is pretty sad, especially for such a prized location.

The STD did have a pretty cool area, but you couldn't see it unless you walked in, and then went all the way to the back. In that rarely-seen alcove, there were a half-dozen big, brown, and very comfortable-looking couches, the kind you just want to settle into and go "ahhhhhhh" for a while. You could have quite a gathering back here, with everyone fat-assing their lives away for a while. Maybe have a good game on the big screen or

something. There was even a small stage already set up, just for Sofa City, with a drum set and mike stand at the ready. Potential, for sure.



But if people didn't come in, they didn't walk back here, and they didn't see it. Plus, management never seemed to have any light turned on back here, so I guess they didn't want people to come in for some fat-ass time.

Anywaaaay, B&J and I dutifully bellied up to the bar. No problem finding three stools in a row. It's a pretty long bar, with at least a dozen seats. They have curved backs, which is nice, and they have padding on the sitting area, which is also nice. The bar itself was very plain, though.

Brian got his usual Coors Light, Jan clearly saw that we would not be in Linger Mode and just got a cup of ice water, and I went with a chilled squat bottle of Prestige, and imported lager from the Netherlands, or Holland, or some Dutch place like that. I had never had it, and strongly suspected that I would not like it.



Most middle-European lagers do not appeal to me; they taste skunked. Yes, even Heineken and Amstel. When I was in Amsterdam, a couple of summers ago, I made a point of going to bar (no shit, right?) and getting a legitimate locally-brewed Heinie. It was really good! They must laugh their asses off about the USA version that they ship over here. Although, I would bet that many a traveling Dutchman has been taken aback when they take their first American alarming swig of their cherished home brew.

So, I wasn't expecting much, and I got exactly what I was expecting. Brian asked how it was, and my best off-the-cuff reply was, "It's the Dutch PBR." No offense intended to you Pabst Blue Ribbon fans out there (both of you), of course.

We drank up, paid up, and stood up. The entertainer — hey, we were entertained by him — thanked us for coming and went back to being a guitar-playing singer, crooning away for his best gal (and an eavesdropping worker).