

Bar Hoppin' With Hops

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

Hop #315

Tree House

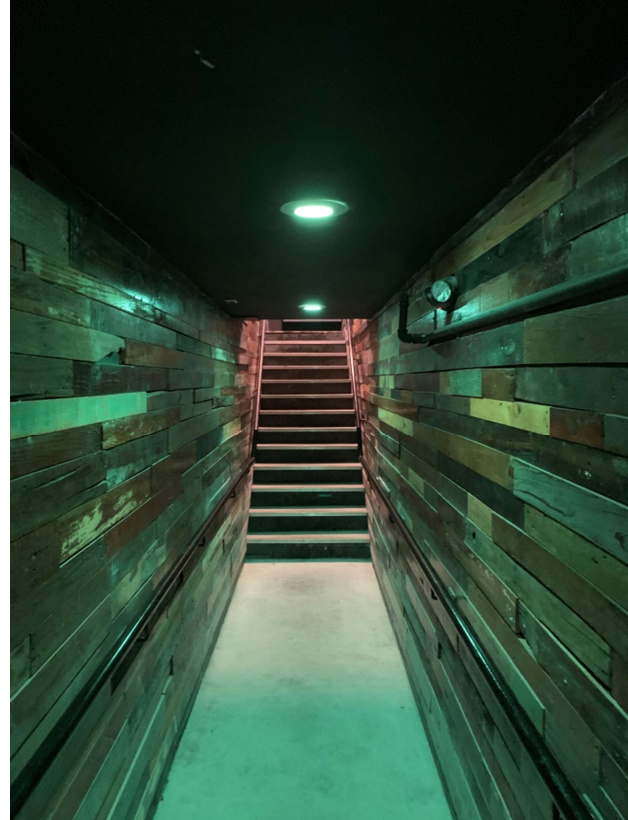
501 Greene Street
Sat 4/6, 11:59 pm

Hop Gun IPA (18-ounce draft) \$9

I love the entrance to this place. It has a real *Get Smart* kind of feel, as if the stairs are really sliding doors that will split in the middle when approached.

The long hall (which we are in it for, of course) is walled with wooden planks of differing hues. The wood is in keeping with the prevailing ethos of the establishment. Tree House is the long-anticipated upstairs space of The Green Room (#241), which features rescued wood (including some fabulous mahogany) in its bar tops, tables, and walls, and manifests an overall "green" – as in environmentally conscious – theme.

This Hop blindsided me. It had been in the offing for a good year or two. The upstairs windows were blocked with brown paper, and rumors swirled about what-all would be up there. But it had been a while since I had heard anything, so it had gone outa mind.



I had been with my esteemed co-hoppers, B&J, earlier in the evening, but with NIH (No Imminent Hop), we parted ways sometime after 9:00. I had a delivery to make at Smokin' Tuna (#33), so I grooved on some rockin' licks by Caffeine Carl & The Buzz while I collected and quaffed my delivery fee. A little bit of Duval wandering ensued thereafter.

The 200 block can be quite entertaining sometimes. One of my favorite spots is the corner of Duval and Charles, that narrow street across from Irish Kevin's (#153). There are always bikes parked there, but the very corner, between the curb and the small tree is usually clear. The bikes prevent pedestrian traffic from trying to squeeze by, and I just stand there in the shade, soaking up the tree's negative ions, sipping my beer and watching the drunks flow and stumble on by.



But, after a while, the urge to saunter hit me. I sauntered westward, past Red Garter (#124), Tree Bar (#111), Durty Harry's (#86), Angelina's (#222), and Rick's (#123) – nearly 200 feet! – until I reached the corner or Greene. Something was different. There was motion somewhere where there had never been motion before. Hey! There are people up there above Green Room! It's OPEN!! HOP ON!!

But I was given the held-up hand at the door. Apparently, this was a soft opening for "people we know" only. The bouncer shouted over to the barkeep, Ben, whom I knew from Duval Central (#283) and Gas Monkey (#294), "Hey, this guy OK?" Ben gave the big ya-ya wave, and door dude let me pass.

The hall was my first impression, but I already told you about that. At the top of the stairs (which, thankfully did not split in half and open up), is a square, foyer-ish kind of room: dance bar entrance to the right, outdoor porch entrance straight ahead, and rest rooms to the left. That is where you'll find the single most noteworthy item of the place: a glaring white neon sign that reads, "Please do not do coke in the bathroom." A practical request, I'd say. Brought to you by the makers of Pepsi.



I was the oldest guy here. By a lot. But I haven't let that daunt me for a long time. I wear it like a badge of honor.



But, it does tend to steer me away from the hip-hop throbs of a dance bar, so I continued straight ahead and out onto the large wooden porch. The first that caught my attention was the small-but-heavy cloth bag that thudded onto my foot. Oh! They have a cornhole game up here! I don't know if I would've chosen to put it right next to the doorway, but whatever.

This porch is dang coolo. Big, wide area to the left for a band or a barbecue or a tent, and the narrower part that wraps all around the Greene Street side and onto the Duval Street side. Gonna be a verry popular spot during Fantasy Fest and New Year's.

And there was walk-up window service! The only bar up here is deep inside the dance bar room, but you can be out on the porch and procure your bev through the open window. Kinda like being at Dairy Queen, but more boozy.

But the dance room was pretty empty, as it turns out, so I ventured in to get my libation. The music sounded really good – not exactly my tastes, but I could nod to it – and the set-up is pretty cool. The DJ's station is the brightest and most colorful part, aglow in blacklit paint.



The bar is right next to it. There were four keepers on duty. Customers were at the windows as well. Decision time was imminent. I had reached the That's Enough For Tonight marker a while ago. It wasn't that I was wasted and couldn't handle anymore; it was just that I had decided to call

off the dogs for the sake of a more comfortable morning. How very mature. What would expect from The Oldest Guy In The Bar?

But my damn Scottish thrift would not relent. The choice: 12-ounce draft for \$7, or an 18-ounce draft for \$9. The large one is only \$6 per 12 ounces. Such a freakinng deal!

You added 50% of the 12-ouncer to get the 18-ouncer, but the difference was only 33% of the 18-ouncer. Capisce? Ahh, marketing math...

So, yeah, I got the big one. Duh.

