

Bar Hoppin' With Hops

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

Hop #320

2 2 & Co. II

502 Angela Street

Saturday, August 10, 5:45 PM

Captain & Coke \$7

If you're saying to yourself, "heyyyy, self, didn't we just see this bar about 32 Hops ago?", you are very astute indeed. It bore the same name but occupied a significantly smaller space back in those days. But the location -- on the 200 block of Duval -- and its format -- with its stools just inches from the sidewalk, and thus too welcoming for the impulse drinker to pass up -- will be tough to match in this side street, up-the-road location.



Jenn didn't abandon her primo spot. No, no, no, bo zo. She was shoved out into the cold tropical night by the owners of Teasers, from whom she had been leasing the space while they did their upstairs renovations. Once those were done, they wanted their space back and she had to move on out.



Michael and Kimball, the owners of Aqua (#97), were gracious enough to make available a space next to their own satellite drinkery, The Side Bar (#268), and let her set up shop.

This was truly magnanimous. How many bars -- especially ones that are going through their own efforts to attract customers -- are going to invite a competitor to move in right next door. Maybe 2 2 & Co. customers who had never known Side Bar existed might check it out while they're here? Maybe?

Anyway, size-wise, this was a significant upgrade, and the extra space gave them a chance to strut their artistic stuff. Two motifs, especially carried

over from their Duval location: flamingoes abound, and artificial grass covers the flat front of the bar. The opposing wall is painted with striking designs in yellow, light blue, and vivid magenta.



Then, of course, there is The Nook. You know you're in a cool place when it has a nook. I didn't notice any crannies, but we're not talking English Muffins here, are we?

In the back, beyond the bar, there is a six-foot-by-twelve-foot (estimated) chamber. A very small table stands in the middle, and the three walls have a built-in padded bench. A unicorn made of small mirrored tiles adorn one side, and the large words "TUTUS RULE" dominates the back wall. There are no other tables in here, so for a group of four or more who don't fancy being spread out along the bar, the nook is a perfect hangout.



I, of course, was more than content with a bar seat. The round, back-less, padded, fountain-style stool suited my posterior just fine, thank you much.

It was Lobster Fest weekend, so I was doing the obligatory walkaround, sipping my tall-old while perusing the various wares on display. No, I didn't

eat any lobster. Despite living very near the ocean throughout my life, I never developed a taste for seafood. Wendy's fish sandwich is pretty tasty, but that shouldn't be categorized as seafood, should it?

Anyway, I was carrying my 30-ounce Polar Camel (YETI knockoff) tumbler, filled with ice, Coke, and Pilar Blonde Rum. A truly fine walkaround bev, I must say.

Thirty ounces sounds like a lot, doesn't it? That's almost a quart. It's almost a liter too, but who gives a snig about that? A thousand milliliters, my ass. Who can possibly drink 1000 of anything? How could you ever keep count? You'd have no idea when you're all litered out.

Anyhoo, the 30-ounce tumbler is a bit misleading. It will tidily hold the full contents of the standard, 14-cube ice tray, but thus iced, you'll be lucky to get more than 12 ounces of fluid in there. Try pouring a standard can o' Coke in there. You'll have to wait for it to foam down, then eke the rest of it in. Once the ice melts some, the capacity grows, of course, but ice retention is one of the bragging points of these items.

YETI and Rtic are the best, using 18/8 "kitchen-grade" stainless steel in two layers, while most of the knockoffs (like Polar Camel, for instance), use a less expensive version of the metal so their ice retention is noticeably less as well. I still like Polar Camels, though, partly because I can get them for less than the cost of an IPA, and I can print full-color graphics on them. So there.



My Pilar & Coke had gotten low. I rationed it on the five-block walk up here. The plan was to be knocking down the final solid swig right at the corner of Angela and Duval. 2 2 & Co. had no outside sign yet, so they're really gonna need word of mouth to get things going. I was here on their opening weekend, along with half the other drinkers of Key West. Everyone goes to check out the newest place and to wish them well. A bunch of us will have to keep going back, though, if they're going to thrive.



I walked in, admiring the place, and calling out congratulations to Jenn. I placed my tumbler on the bar and asked Grant, the guy who was tending bar (and Jenn's main man IRL) for a Cap'n & Coke. When you put up a cup that big and ask the keeper to toss in a refill, you usually get a nice pour. In reality, you should still get the four-count, but a lot of keeps just hit the soda gun and tilt the bottle in synch until the glass fills up. Sometimes you get a seven- or eight-count. Which is nice.

I didn't count along with the pour this time, but Grant was generous. I settled in to enjoy my bev. Both of my bar neighbors were friendly and relaxed older gentlemen. Yes, even older than me. We shared some amiable chat. One of their wives had a white poodle with her. Hubby was glad to escape from the poodle-cooing ("*Oooh, who's a good boy, hmmm? Yesss, you are! Yess, you are a GOOD boy!*" -- gaggg) and have some real conversation for a bit. I hung out for a while and watched people come and go, all them wishing Jenn and Grant the best of luck. It was a good-natured and content crowd.

Shorty Scotty came in to offer his well wishes too, and, of course, he and Grant launched into a booze convo: what rums, what vodka, what bourbons, how about this fruit extract that I use instead of muddling at the bottom of a Manhattan, huh?? Topics only a bartender could love. It was like a kid showing off his Christmas toys to his buddy.

I casually sipped about half my big-ass cocktail and then initiated my mosey. I decided to ration the rest for my return to the fest. It would have been dumb to stroll without rum. I'd have enough for the walk, in case I met Peter Falk.