

Bar Hoppin' With Hops

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

Hop #321

Loose Cannon

217 Duval Street

Friday, November 15, 2019, 6:26 PM

Jai Alai (draught) \$4

Yet another tenant has moved in at this coveted, high-rent address. The Rooster Tale (#317), Gas Monkey (#263), Johnny Rockets (#221) and Cheeseburger Key West (#173) all had their shots here and couldn't keep it going. Rooster Tale lasted just two months, but skepticism had abounded about them right from the get-go. Gas Monkey had some corporate backing, and Johnny Rockets is a pre-eminent worldwide burger chain, but, still, up they folded and went they outed. More hops for Hops, that's how I look at it. Skroo-um.



And this actually was kind of a double-hop. There had been a pre-hop a fortnight ago that I had every intention of counting at the official Hop, but I hadn't started to plip the Hopter yet, so when Jan urged a visit to see the refinished bar, I proclaimed Hop On. My tour, my rules, after all.

We — that would be B&J and I — had been having a tough time. We just weren't in synch with the drinking gods or something.

Ever have one of those days when your timing is just off? It doesn't seem like your fault, but things just aren't clicking, and the world seems to be conspiring against you. You hit three HAWK crosswalks in a row on North

Roosevelt, or you get cut off four times in the first mile of your commute, or you get behind not one but *two* golf carts puttering along, and you gotta think to yourself, if I left home *ten seconds earlier or ten seconds later*, I'd be cruuuuisin', dammit.

By the way, there really is no better way to punctuate a sentence than with a good "dammit."

No, officer, I don't know how fast I was going, dammit.

Oh, barkeep, another beer, dammit.

Sorry I'm late, dammit.

Will you marry me, dammit?

The river? Dam it, dammit.

Bless its heart, dammit.



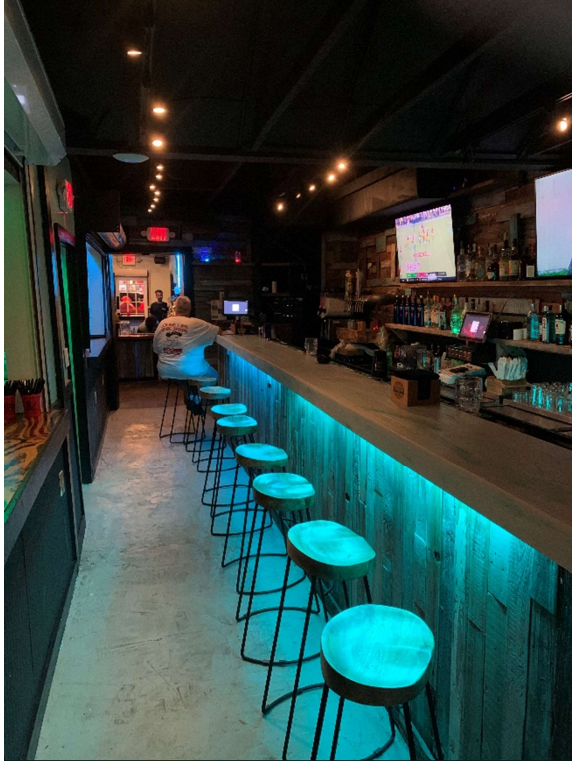
I don't think it helps to bring God into it, not even in the colloquial lower-case "goddammit." No sense violating that Separation of Church and Other Stuff decree.

And, of course, you can use the more grammatical "damn it", especially in conversation. There is no audible difference between the two, unless you run afoul of one of those pompous twits who say it like "dammm nit." I **hate** those guys.

So, right. Where was I, *dammn nit*? Oh ya, being outa synch.

There's a name for that, where the timing of your world is just off. It's called Malachron Syndrome. You can look that up if you want to. I'm banking that you won't.

When it happens to you, all you can do is shrug and say, "screw it." Fighting it just makes it worse. That's right, you just give up and surrender to your



fate. Ya got hosed, ya hoser. Like Johnny K used to say, "Ya gotta love your hosings."

And once you ride out the storm, you might just find yourself pulling into your favorite parking space – right after somebody pulled out – and getting into work three seconds before the downpour starts.

So WTF was *that* all about? Oh ya, gettin' to Loose Cannon.

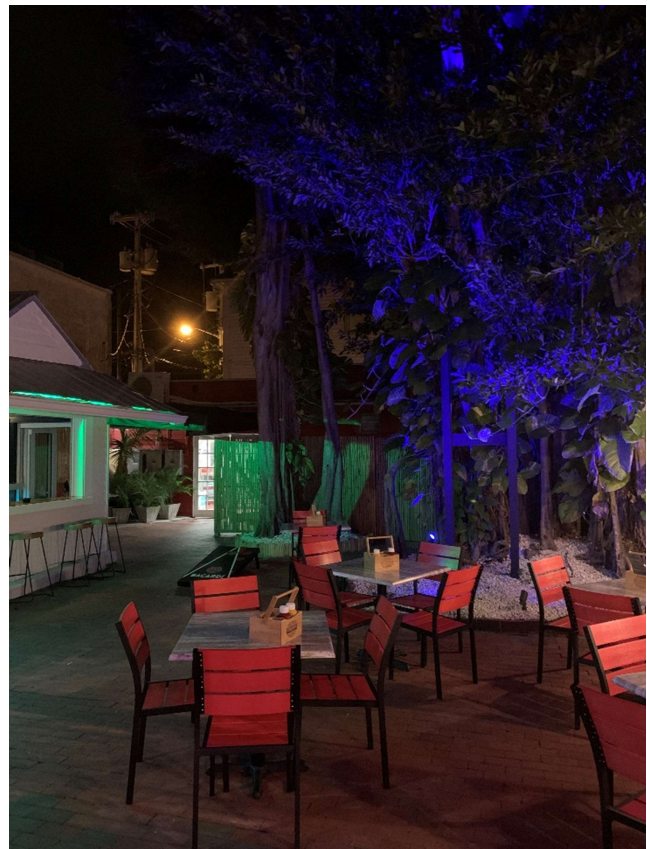
The three of us — that would be B&J and I — first met up at Ram's Head Southernmost (#323) to christen it with a Hop on its opening night. **EHHH**, *denied*. No seats at the bar, Lamar. Of *course*, there weren't; KW always flocks

to Grand Openings. Annnnd, it was Happy Hour, so double-duh on us for expecting to just walk on in and have our pick of seats.

Thus, we postponed the RHS Hop and meandered northward to lower Duval. The word was that Leslie was working at Hard Rock Cafe (#79), so thither we strolled. Well, Leslie was indeed on the schedule, but she had worked the day shift, would be working an upstairs party later, and was conspicuously absent at the moment. **EHHH**, strike two.

No worries, no worries, if there's ever been a good place to "have to find another bar," Key West is it. (Though, I will say that Dublin's Temple Bar Area kicks KW's ass for bar density. That zone is freaking nuts.)

Mostly undaunted, we took the one-block walk to Lucy's to visit Will



upstairs in the Lineup Bar (#303). Before we could get through the gate, though, Jan reminded me that I needed go into the back bar of Loose Cannon (i.e., here), right next door, and check out the newly redone bar.

So, hither we came, but we were in for yet one more denial, which I'll get to in a moment.

Thirteen days prior, on 11/2, at 9:30 pm, I was doing a typical Duval saunter when I stopped outside Lucy's (#316) to listen to the Rob Benton and K-Ru\$h who were performing on the front porch. The sidewalk crowd was large and appreciative. Listening to music is thirsty work, though, and I



soon felt that dryness in the throat that we all know so well. Getting through the sidewalk audience, and then the crowd at The Service Bar (#306), did not look like any kind of a breeze, though.

Then I looked left, and -- whaddyaknow? -- the new bar next door (i.e., Loose Cannon) was now in business! I walked on in under the "Grand Opening" banner, smiled at the smiling hostess, angled down the wide-open eating area, and turned left into the indoor bar to get me a brewski.

Of course, there were opening night flaws. The draft beer wasn't available yet, the bar tops weren't finished, wall decorations were lacking, etc. There were gaps in the staff's knowledge too, of course. My barkeep wasn't sure about the Happy Hour deals, and she did not know how to ring in a local's price, which irked me just a tad.

So, deciding that LC was not quite ripe for a Hopping, but resolving to return when they were, I took my beer back to the sidewalk to resume watching the Rob & K.

And now, *finally*, I can start to tell you about Hop 321. Ha.

As B&J and I walked in, like I said, we were a closing in on Strike Three. [That would not have stopped us, though; this ain't baseball.] We immediately noticed that the open eating area and the wide alley that led back to the backyard bar were, well, gone. Instead there was a large, gray, garage door. A dude with a guitar – who probably should have been out back– stood in front of that forbidding backdrop and crooned his tunes from there. As a result, the

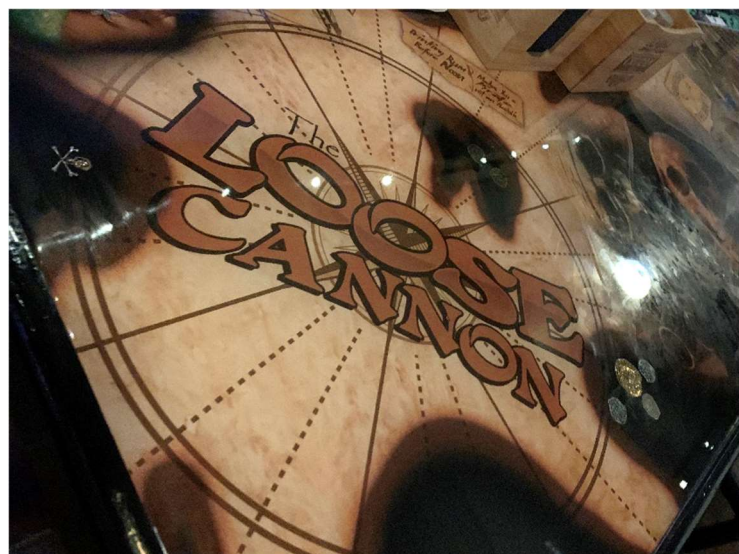


front yard was pretty full, and the front bar, which is pretty small anyway, was almost full. Three people had just departed, so we were lucky enough so slide right on to their vacated backless stools. Our luck was starting to change.

The bar was still ironing out its growing pains, though. That garage door was down, we were told, because a very unfortunate leak in a pipe that just happened to be smack dab in the middle of the eating alley. The puddle was too big of a slip risk, so down the door went. Just about the last thing a new bar needs on a Friday night.

At one point, the dude who was manning the back bar, wandered out and said to his colleague, "I might as well be closed." He was right. I knew the layout and even *I* felt like I was going into an Employee Only zone when I walked through the door into the indoor bar (the site of my pre-Hop). There were no customers in there. Nada one. Bad for the bar, but good for a guy who wanted to snap a few pics of it. For me, it was a bonanza.

Good looking bar, too! They had an array of sepia-tinted images printed on vehicle-wrap and sealed in with clearcoat. At one point, a foot-tall lighthouse stood proudly above it. I clicked with reckless abandon. Never would've been able to do that





if there had been barful of boozers. Those many hosings had provided a bounty.

B&J kinda had a familiarity with the bar dude already (which seems to happen a lot) and our drinks had been served with alacrity. The draft beer was operational, and my chilled glass of Jai Alai was waiting for me when I came back out. B's Coors Light, though, was not so blessed. Someone had made a

walk out back to get him a "good" one, and B was appreciative, but when the guy nodded and walked away, B mouthed "this is waaarrrrrm." At that point, I knew we'd be one-n-done here.

We chatted a while and listened to the entertainer. He was pretty good, albeit misplaced and in front of a depressing background. B signaled that he was abandoning his tepid brew and was ready to skedaddle. So, I knocked off the rest of my Jai Alai and placed a sawbuck on the bar for the tender. He swooped it up, and returned a moment later, placing a pile of singles in front of me. Accustomed to getting just tree bux back, I barely gave it a thought as I spread the pile a little to separate the tip.

Wait a tick!
There's more than three bills here! Four. Five. Six! Six bux! A cold Jai Alai draft for just fo bux! Fo bux! Suh-weeeet!

See? Don't fight your hosings and things turn around. Ha.

