

Squeeze Inn

5395 West 48th Avenue

Phone: 303-458-6440 7AM

Hipster Scale



Dive Bar Rating



Opened in 1947 as a drive-in restaurant called the Hilltop Lounge, and converted in 1959 to a bar because the two friends who built and operated it got sick of customers taking their carhops and marrying them, the Squeeze Inn acquired its current moniker in 1995 when the original owners decided enough was enough—the construction of I-70 had left their tiny tavern, which sits back on a massive parking lot along what's now essentially a frontage road, in the shadow of a monster. And besides: They were old, and the grandkids weren't going to stay young forever.

The maple coolers with chrome latches, black-and-white checkered linoleum floor, brick-wall-mounted turn-page jukebox (64% country, 35% classic rock, 1% Pussycat Dolls)—it's all as original and authentic as the idea that a 400 square-foot bar (capacity: 28) could thrive for more than 60 years in a residential neighborhood. Never in my life have I seen drop ceiling tiles as cigarette-smoke stained as the ones that hover above the Squeeze. These tiles—maintained, I reckon, just as much for the sozzled Sharpie scribbles as for general prosperity—are such a dark golden brown color and so encrusted in formaldehyde and other second-hand chemicals that they actually look like bricks. No shit.

Like any other group of regulars so tight they're more like family than friends, the fine folks who literally squeeze in, on and around the five or so tables, 18 chairs and 8-10 bar stools crave cold beer, stiff drinks, fast motorcycles and classic cars. To wit: The annual, formerly semi-annual, car show held in the parking lot each spring is so popular, there's a permanent tap installed on the side of the bar to facilitate easy access to \$2 beers. On bartendress Dawn's last day, a group of guys who arrived on motorcycles hoot, holler and knock over chairs while rolling dice against one another; a man so at home within these cramped confines that he walks around the bar and pours himself a new PBR while Dawn's out smoking has brought his shaggy dog with him—a regular in its own right, the little guy stands on a stool, props his front paws on the bar top and eats ice cubes off a nap-

kin; and an itty-bitty Asian man with a roll-top Igloo cooler walks itty-bitty circles around the room trying to sell homemade egg rolls.

While not afflicted with claustrophobia, I typically try to steer clear of joints so chockablock I could sip from three different drinks at once. For the Squeeze Inn, I'll make an exception every time.

