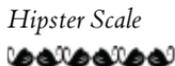


Squire Lounge

1800 East Colfax Avenue
Phone: 303-333-9106



The cops are everywhere by the time we roll up to the Squire Lounge just after 8 p.m.—two squads blocking (and facing) eastbound traffic, another pulled halfway onto the sidewalk, all of them screaming red and blue, all of it a familiar and strangely comforting display of Colfax drama at its finest. We linger and gawk for a moment, then head inside to find out what happened.

The story goes like so: Homeless Guy #1 hobbles/half falls in the front door gripping a wooden cane above his head and screaming about needing the police. Then Homeless Dude #2 tears in after him, demanding his stick back. A scuffle ensues. A bartender hops the bullet-shaped bar and bullies them to the curb, where they continue to have at each other. Someone calls the police. Two beats of a vagabond's drum later, five of Denver's finest have their guns drawn and their mad faces on. Yelling and handcuffing breaks out, and then: fire extinguished. Nothing to see here.

Welcome to the Squire, where drag-down skirmishes and verbal altercations between staff, customers, hobos and the 5-0 are not necessarily the rule, but certainly not the exception.

But then, that's why I love this place, this urinal-cake-smelling diamond in the rough. Except in the dead of winter, the front door's always open, which means shenanigans are never more than a few feet from wandering inside and attempting to bum a dollar or get a sip off that pitcher. Always on the alert, the staff is quick to castigate these (mostly) harmless clochards in front of everyone, and while the over-salted shuffleboard table with its scuffed-up, broken pucks is fun (and free), there's nothing better than watching the dirt get swept out the door from the safety of your bar stool.

With the fisticuff fiasco over and PBRs in hand, I proceed to tell a friend about a no-drama night here when Maggie and I parked ourselves at the bar next to a middle-aged man with worry lines etched into his forehead. After exchanging pleasantries, he told us his very sad story—about being from out of town, about his terminally ill son in a bed over at Children's and about his wife's insistence that he go

for a walk and find a drink. While talking, this man and my wife simultaneously discovered a \$50 bill on the floor by their feet. Is it yours? No. Is it yours? No. Let's drink on it, then; and we all did, until he needed to get back. And though he tried to let us keep the change, we insisted that he take it and buy something for his kid. "Take him somewhere nice when he gets out," we told him with probably false optimism.

I'm damn near weeping into my beer by the time I finish this story, but I'm drunk, and those things have a way of going together. It helps that everything is so fucking cheap (especially on Sunday nights, when you can bring \$10 and forget that you came) and perfect for memory loss—like the Bionic Beaver. Legendary on Colfax, the Beaver is a 52-ounce pitcher filled with whatever the bartender feels like including—rums, vodkas, beers, juices, whatever—and served with a handful of straws. It's notorious for both beginning and ending nights, sometimes simultaneously.

Good morning and good night.

