



TRAVELLER

Top 100

The Rainbow: rockin' out in Fitzroy since 1872

OVER THE RAINBOW

Chris Canty calls in to see how The Rainbow Hotel in Fitzroy is going under new ownership.

When The Rainbow Hotel sold last year, a communal gasp reverberated around Fitzroy, as locals wondered what would happen to their beloved music pub. Would it be turned into apartments? Would it become a yuppy gastro-pub without any atmosphere? Would it remain silent, devoid of tunes?

The new owners, brothers Adam and Jason King of Lambs Go Bar fame, have started to put these fears to rest – but they did tread lightly.

“Most of the locals already know us, either from the Lambs Go Bar or from here at the Rainbow,” Jason says. “We took over the Rainbow at the end of March 2010 and, whilst we were running the two venues, we made a very conscious decision not to make too many changes that might put people off-side, but to get a real feel for the place.”

The history of the pub wasn't lost on the two lads either, which is why they decided to keep the name. “There has been a public house on this site since 1869 and it's been called The Rainbow Hotel since 1872,” Jason says. “Adam and I aren't going to muck around with that much history.”

After a renovation earlier this year, the much-loved horseshoe bar has gone, but the bar top was saved and placed at the far end of the room. This provides much better space for patrons to see the bands, and has exposed the fantastic ornate ceilings. A remodelling of the under-utilised beer garden, now with direct access to the bar, has also been welcomed.

The Rainbow is still a music pub, with tunes each night from Tuesday to Sunday, but the King brothers have brought their appreciation of beer that was so evident at Lambs

Go Bar. At the time of writing, they were in the final stages of completing a designated beer lounge, which Jason says will feel as if Lambs never closed. It's easy to tell that, while they loved Lambs (like the rest of us), it was getting too small for their ambitions.

“I was looking at different venues for quite some time, and whilst we are sad to leave our Greeves Street address, it must be said that we were being somewhat constrained by the small size of the venue,” he says. “Combined with the fact that it's less than a five-minute walk from our old venue, and that we've always wanted a corner pub in Fitzroy.”

With a new keg cool room built, they have put on ten taps which showcase a range of quality, local craft brews such as 3 Ravens Golden Ale, Hargreave's Hill Pale Ale and Mountain Goat's Steam Ale. And what about those who were members of the Lambs 101 Club, whereby patrons are encouraged to try 101 different bottles of beer?

“We'll also be offering reciprocal rights to all our 101 members who had completed the list at the Lambs, and any old cards can still be accessed and completed. A new Rainbow version of the 101 Club is also about to start.”

Enter the Rainbow today and one of the most notable differences from the past is the variety of people there. Families have dinner out in the beer garden, while university students play pool, and the after-work crowd, with ties loosened, chat over an Ale in the bar. When asked who comes to the Rainbow these days, it was clear that this was the boys' wish.

“All of the old Rainbow regulars as well as the Lambs Go crew,” Jason says. “Pretty much anyone who fancies great beer, fantastic food and cool tunes.”

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