

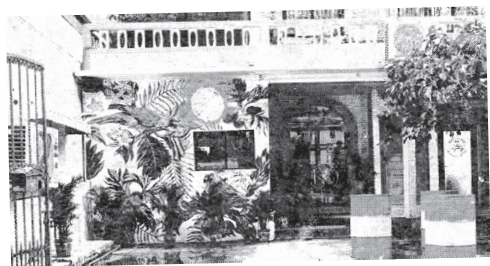
KIKI'S RUM DIARIES: TROPIC CITY, BANGKOK

BY CHESS BRADLEY

There's not much in the built-up urban jungle of Bangkok that will remind you of the Isle of Man: just a few old expats drinking pints in Irish bars; overpriced, imported Percy Pigs; the sound of motorbikes racing through the streets. However, hidden in the Bang Rak, is a bar that'll evoke memories of Kiki's. Think of Tropic City as Kiki's sophisticated, urbanite Thai aunt, a home away from home for the lost Manxie in the big city.

First, to set the scene, Bang Rak is a district of Bangkok that your Mum would describe as "trendy": it's full of cocktail bars, art galleries and high rises. It's distinctly cosmopolitan: bouncing between bars and restaurants in the heart of the financial and gay district (the duality of man) on a Friday night is the best way to live out any Carrie Bradshaw fantasies.

Yet Tropic City isn't in a high rise or beside a metro, it's based on a small soi (a side street). In a vast city filled with rooftop bars, there's a feeling that you've stumbled across a neighbourhood bar. Of course- it's not just any old neighbourhood bar: Tropic City ranks number 6 on Asia's 50 Best Bars list and number 66 on the World's 50 Best Bar list.



What is it about Tropic City that'll remind you of Kiki's? You won't find Drew Fleming's kilowatt smile or heyboys, but you will find an abundance of pineapples, tropical decor, neons, and, of course, incredible cocktails. They even have the occasional cheesy 90s and 00s DJ sets: Jamie Lewis eat your heart out.

Just as Kiki's is the island's only tropical bar, Tropic City prides itself as being "Thailand's first Tropical Cocktail Bar". This confused me- a self confessed pedant- at first. Surely all cocktail bars in Thailand are tropical- we're in the tropics. But one look at the menu and you'll understand the claim: the bar specialises in making magic with rum and tropical ingredients. There's a vague cuban and hispanic energy that runs through the bar, including the stunning mural of a woman smoking a cigar, but Tropic City doesn't forget which tropic city it is based in, and highlights like the 'Mango Sticky Rice' demonstrate a commitment to bringing out distinctly delicious Thai flavours.



A bar is more than the sum of its drinks- though Tropic City's drinks are certainly incredible enough to make it worth a visit on the basis of those alone. What makes Tropic City is that it is a distinctly fun bar- without trying too hard or being gimmicky. It's not pretentious: it's somewhere that you just want to spend time with mates because you know you'll have a good time. It's a relatively small bar and the intimacy works in its favour- proof that bigger isn't always better.