

SORE BOOZER

ERIC THE WORKIE tried to drink 150 beers in three days at the National Festival of, um, Beer. It's a wonder his article makes any sense at all

Eric pines for the days when he drank milk

BEER COUNT

22

23

24

25

26

IN FRONT of me on the bar is a beer. In the usual sequence of events I pick up the glass, raise it to my lips and tip, experience a moment of pleasure, and swallow. I like it. Which is good. In the next three nights I have to drink another 149.

I'm standing among the cattle sheds at Brisbane's showgrounds for the National Festival of Beers. The number of different beers available changes depending on who I talk to, but there are bars everywhere. In one, the band Andy Had a Brick play. The singer asks for requests. "Pub With No Beer," shouts a bloke holding a jug of the stuff.

My first beer, a full-flavoured Tenterfield Saddler, is followed by a Coopers Pale Ale with a pleasant aftertaste. Good start.

Two guys are looking at their beers instead of drinking them. Gavin and Stephen must be beer enthusiasts.

I know this because they dress like people who say they're "insane". Steven, for example, is in a red shirt, multicoloured tie, silly hat and huge glasses.

"We've been here in previous years, so there's a lot we won't try," says Steven. "There was one that tasted like cloves one year."

"I like Tennents Draught," says Gavin. "It's got a mellow taste, a nice rounded sort of a flavour."

I've got 148 beers left to drink.

I have a VB, which is a lot like other VBs I've had. I knock back a XXXX. Burping quietly, I try another bar. It looks like it should be selling food, but there's just beer. Food stalls are tucked way over at the back so they don't get in the way of the drinking.

Beez Neez is served by a good-looking barmaid in a white top. She's the best part of the whole experience, especially as it's a cold night. The beer tastes like watered-down lemon squash. People around

me like it a lot, but I feel the kind of confidence in my opinion that comes from complete ignorance.

I order a Naked Ale. It's not bad, but if it's an ale, it's wearing the trench coat and shades of a wheat beer.

The place may only be half full, but my feet are already sticking to the floor. I hope it's beer slops, and try not to imagine an alternative.

I feed myself a ginger beer. It's delicious – just like soft ginger beer, only alcoholic.

Reschs Draught is alright. It's got interesting flavours and a slightly sour finish. I'd probably have another if there weren't 141 to go.

A bloke called Peter tells me he's already had 26 beers. I thought I was doing well on nine. "Must be 26," he says with the great care of someone who's had more than 10 beers. "And a couple of whiskies."

His mate Simon rocks up with a half-full jug. "Dunno what this is, but it tastes like something you'd do at

the toilet." I expect he doesn't mean the *Sun-Herald's* quick crossword.

"We drink an average of a keg a week – about 18 litres," says Simon. "We've bought \$50 worth of tickets each and we've nearly run out."

I hope they're not going to drive home. Simon's eyes pop out at the thought. "Ah shit, yeah," he laughs. "I've got the semi parked outside."

I order an Indian Chief Wheat. Mmm – quite strong, I think. Malty. Cloudy. Maybe a hint of rubber glove. Perhaps a bit of washing-up liquid.

A band called Indiana start playing. The vocalist and lead guitarist are spunky rock chicks. They happily thrash through a tune no-one except themselves would ever recognise, as much of the sound disappears up into the high, echoing roof.

I discover the microbrewery room, which is full of niche beers. The bartenders here actually own and brew the stuff they serve, so they can tell me all about it. All. In detail.

TOP MOMENTS IN BEER HISTORY

Beer has been everyone's top drop forever – nearly



6000 YEARS AGO
ANCIENT Sumerians discover beer. The world's first brew is probably the result of an accident – a piece of wet bread being left to ferment.

5999½ YEARS AGO
THE Sumerians suffer the world's first hangover. With the world's first Berocca still millennia away, it comes as no surprise when their empire collapses in the second millennium BC.

4000 YEARS AGO
BORED with just one type of beer, zany Babylonians invent 20 different varieties. They also pioneer the tradition of getting pissed quicker by drinking beer through straws while sitting in the sun.



3700 YEARS AGO
BABYLONIAN King Hammurabi decrees his subjects will receive up to five litres of free beer a day – a top excuse for not turning up to work ever again. Babylon also starts exporting slabs to Egypt.