THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

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HERE & THERE

■ *Christianne Sharman*

Hot, new hotel opens in Seattle

I'm not proud of it.

But I confess that I like when someone else makes the bed for me. It's a little vacation, a quick visit to decadence-ville.

I'm guilt-ridden enough to tidy the covers a bit, but still. I don't go all the way.

So if a hotel offers anything above and beyond, that's just gravy to me.

The brand-spanking new Hotel Max in Seattle – set to open Saturday – has no interest in a bar set that low.

"Everything about it is totally unique," says Dave Watkins. "It's not your normal experience."

This will give you an idea what he means: Anywhere else, Watkins would be known as the general manager. He prefers "Big Kahuna in Pink Socks."

"This hotel has so much fun and character, I thought I'd develop a little individuality and character for myself," he says.

And, yes, he wears pink socks. Every day.

Hotel Max takes up the space that used to be the Vance Hotel. But don't call it a "remodel."

"It's a new brand, new culture, new life, new service motif, new theme," Watkins explains. "It's a totally new experience."

Art is the aforementioned theme and you can just throw a rock to hit something arty. Work by more than 150 Northwest artists – including Jackie Barnett, Andrée Carter, Junko Yamamoto and Pam Baker – appears in guestrooms, corridors and other public spaces throughout the hotel.

Seattle photographers John Armstrong, Roniq Bartanen and Charles Peterson display their wares as well, and Tony Evanko was commissioned to design the elevators.

"The red-leather cabooses, we call them," says Watkins.

Enjoy the ride.

If you need still more excitement, the hotel offers a series of packages that may or may not interest you, depending on your proclivities.

The "Hubba Hubba Hanky Panky Romance" package makes no bones about its intentions. Start with a bottle of Washington wine and locally made chocolates, toss in "pleasure-loving linens" (I swear, that's what they call them) and an "in-room intimacy kit," and I think you know where they're going with this.

I'll be honest. I didn't know what an in-room intimacy kit was. So I had to ask.

The collection of lubes, condoms and lotions awaits in your room's honor bar. You do whatever seems natural with those – but I don't want to know what you use the macadamia nuts for.

You can get your Hubba Hubba on for $179 – and they'll even let you stay late. Checkout time is 2 p.m.

"Gaycation" runs along the same lines, with a bottle of Washington wine and an "intimacy gift" tailored for a pair of men or women. Max seems to think you'd like to leave your room, too, so a city map and GO card with free access to attractions like the Space Needle and the Seattle Underground get you out and about.

For less libidinal fun, "Art with a Pulse" exercises your art appreciation muscles with tickets to the Seattle Art Museum and a copy of "Maximalism," a book featuring every artist and photographer in the hotel.

Rates for both of the above start at $199.

Lastly, "Rock This Way…" combines Experience Music Project tickets with admission to a concert at a Seattle venue and a keepsake CD for around $229.

You can make reservations and get answers to your questions at (866) 833-6299 or www.hotelmaxseattle.com.