

Seattle to the max

Hotel Max really rocks -- as does the city's fall arts calendar

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Seattle is a fine place for a little R&R and at Hotel Max, there's a double spin on the phrase.

The hip downtown hotel is all rock 'n' roll -- at least on the fifth floor, where Charles Peterson's celebrated photographs capture Grunge-era stars Nirvana, Hole, Pearl Jam and more, in concert and in breathtaking door-length images on all room entrances.

Strikingly, the entire Stewart Street boutique inn is covered in original art created by Seattle-based artists, with some 350 works on its nine renovated floors. Its room doors are reserved for photographs (one photog per floor), ranging from intimate portraits of hand-clasped couples to stage-diving Soundgarden fans.

All that art is catalogued in the great little book *Maximalism: Art at the Hotel Max*, listed for \$20 on the honour-bar menu. Here, the hotel is revealed as something of an adults-only experience, with the metal box-housed "intimacy kit" positioned next to the Pringles chips and priced at \$30.

Hotel Max is a fine place to start a rock 'n' roll adventure, Seattle style. Plenty of touring bands stay in the hotel, and the lobby swims with cool music; I heard Nick Cave and the Pogues while lounging with the aged copy of *Touch Me, I'm Sick*, a collection of Peterson's Grunge-y photos. It was like my dream library in there, with copies of *Crossroads: The Experience Music Project Collection* and Brian Cogan's *The Encyclopedia of Punk* also for the reading.

Emerald City is experiencing a bit of a Grunge revival, with girls' flannel shirts flying off shelves at Costco and Kurt Cobain T-shirts hogging wall space at shops near Pike market. Not only that, the boy from Aberdeen is also about to be given serious space at Surrey Art Museum. The simply titled Kurt exhibition, which opens next May and runs until September, will celebrate Cobain's life and work in a broad range of media by artists including Rodney Graham, Douglas Gordon and Elizabeth Peyton. "This exhibition," says the blurb on the museum's website, "will cause viewers to question why and how Kurt's visage and his gestures came to mean so much to a generation."

Right now, though, the focus at SAM is squarely on Michelangelo Public and Private, an eye-popping collection of drawings by the chap responsible for the Sistine Chapel ceiling (among many other revolutionary things). It's a rare glimpse of treasures from the Casa Buonarroti in Italy, and it's all on view until Jan. 31.

Seattle's fall arts calendar is rife with live events, such as Tom Stoppard's *Rock 'n' Roll* play, which closed Nov. 8 at ACT Theatre. Next on the boards there is the company's 34th annual (!) production of *A Christmas Carol*, starting Thursday, Nov. 12.

In fact, Christmas is huge in Seattle theatres: Pacific Northwest Ballet's version of *Nutcracker* is staged for an entire month; *Sister's Christmas Catechism* enjoys a similar run at ACT; Seattle Men's Chorus returns