

Revel in a word: “Wow!”

By CHUCK DARROW

POSTED: TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 2012, 5:15 PM



Like its other public spaces, Revel's casino was created by a company that specializes in theater design. Photo: Chuck Darrow

Almost since the day it was announced back in 2006, Revel, the \$2.4 billion pleasure dome on the eastern end of Atlantic City's boardwalk, has been seen as a “game-changer.” That is, gaming industry observers and insiders have pinned the mega-resort as the Great Blue Hope (for its acres of azure exterior glass) that will restore AyCee's former glory as the epicenter of East Coast gaming and entertainment.

Whether or not Revel can compel former Atlantic City visitors to return while simultaneously creating a new customer base of those who heretofore have resisted the seaside gambling capital's particular charms can be charted as of April 2, when the 6.5 million-square-foot behemoth begins welcoming the public. But in terms of New Jersey's gaming realm, Revel doesn't just change the game, it creates an entirely new one.

That's the takeaway from the exhaustive three-plus-hour tour media types took earlier today. The property is so overwhelming in its layout, décor and amenities that it probably isn't fair to discuss it in context of the town's existing 11 gaming halls.

Revel's closest relative is Borgata Hotel, Casino & Spa, and that property's almost-4-year-old sibling, The Water Club. They all share a cool, modern ambiance aimed at more well-heeled customers. But Revel takes the high-end, cutting-edge concept not just to another level, but to several levels above what exists now.

The so-called “Wow! Factor” greets the visitor around every corner (actually, that is a poor choice of words since corners and 90-degree angles don't seem to exist in too many

places within the sprawling complex). It starts with the drive up to the main entrance (or “porte cochere” as they say in Casino-speak). The access road takes guests within yards of the Atlantic Ocean (a not so subtle hint that this property, not being your grandparents' casino, embraces the natural resources at its front door rather than try to distract customers away from them).

Once inside, it's almost too much to take in with a single visit. Part of this is the building's sheer size (sneakers or comfortable shoes are recommended for traversing the property). But it's much more that the public spaces—casino, Ovation Hall (the largest of three planned performance venues) and retail and dining areas--were not conjured by interior designers, but a company—Montreal-based Sceno Plus—that specializes in theater design.

Revel is nothing, if not theatrical. This is especially evident in the 130,000-square-foot casino which is certainly the most dramatic and visually compelling gambling parlor I've ever seen. With its odd contours, varying-height ceiling, almost incandescent red carpeting and colorful and interesting ceiling fixtures, the space is bold, bright and unlike anything gamblers have experienced in Atlantic City.

And then there's the outdoor spaces overlooking the beach and ocean that are a total departure from what's come before, and which no doubt deserve a blog post of their own.

I can go on with the superlatives, but here's the bottom line: Revel appears poised to deliver everything it's promised for the past five-plus years. Whether it succeeds depends on much that is entirely out of the hands of those running it (e.g. gas prices, the economy, out-of-state competition). But it is indisputably a must-see attraction the likes of which we've not seen before.

Posted by Chuck Darrow @ 5:15 PM