

Mostly ready for its close-up

The new W emphasizes the Hollywood myth in its design and service. It's a tall order, but the staff often pulls it off.

BEVERLY BEYETTE

"Welcome to Hollywood!" said the man in black who opened my car door.

"Welcome to Hollywood!" said the woman in black who checked me in.

Even the bellboy in black welcomed me to Hollywood.

I hadn't warbled my way into the "American Idol" finals. I was merely spending a night at the W Hollywood, which opened a month ago near Hollywood and Vine.

The W doesn't want you to forget you're in Hollywood — the Hollywood of myth, glitz and glamour, not this still-seedy part of town. Guests enter on a red carpet stretching from the motor court through the lobby and onto the plaza fronting Hollywood Boulevard.

Tucked behind a renovated Metro Red Line station, the high-end 305-room hotel shares a block with the 143 luxury condominium Residences at W Hollywood, retail space and mixed-income apartments, an intriguing urban mix. There's a hotel entrance off the Hollywood Walk of Fame, but the motor court entrance is around the corner on Argyle Avenue.

There's much to like about the W. The lobby, or Living Room, is a knockout, a light-filled space 60 by 45 feet with a soaring 34-foot ceiling, a footbridge suspended overhead and a red-carpeted floating staircase. A stunning 18-foot-tall chandelier, a swirl of crystal prisms and fiber-optic strands tipped with tiny lights, manages to be both delicate and massive.

At cocktail hour, guests settle into black leather sofas or gather at the lobby bar, whose backlit onyx facade lends a warm amber glow. At one end of the room, in front of a curving wall of mirror tiles, is a circular seating area centered with an oversized white croc-embossed leather ottoman.

Floor-to-ceiling glass doors open from the Living Room to the Station, an open-air space behind the Metro entrance with a bar, seating groups, two fire pits and a 600-square-foot pull-down movie screen.

The lobby-level Delphine Eatery & Bar, designed by New York-based Mark Zeff, is an inviting, more traditional space with a blue-green and white tile floor and a vaulted wooden ceiling with large fans. Blowups of French Riviera beach scenes and shelves with books and antique objects add warmth.

Unable to get a dinner reservation (why don't hotels accord room guests some preference when it comes to reservations?), I nabbed a spot at the bar, which was ideal — friendly bartenders, a view onto the street and really good roast chicken.

The restaurant features such French favorites as bouillabaisse,

cassoulet and *moules frites*, with dinner entrees from \$12 (macaroni gratin) to \$36 (whole roasted lobster). At lunch, service needed a little fine-tuning. My server tried twice to take away my salad and, when I asked for vinegar, plopped a big container — it looked like a recycled wine bottle — on the table. I didn't pad the 15% gratuity that W automatically adds to food and beverage bills.

Sharilyn Olson Rigdon of Portland, Ore.-based Designstudio Ltd., which created the public and guest rooms, has introduced old Hollywood elements and reinterpreted '60s modern. She cited the futuristic sets of "A Clockwork Orange" and the Hollywood vision of the future in "Barbarella" as inspiration for guest rooms. "They have a little bit of fur [a throw], cool colors, white lacquer furniture," she said, and headboards of tufted white vinyl and a neutral palette of white, silver and bronze with a punch of red. The minibars are enclosed in a circular cabinet covered in padded white vinyl. "We tried to envision vignettes," said Rigdon — in this case, "like James Bond mixing up cocktails."

My room (hotel category "Fabulous," \$309 double) was about 350 square feet, with a bronze vinyl and chrome chaise longue and a pillow-enhanced window seat. (Alas, the view was of a parking lot.) The bed wall was covered in a woven bronze material, one of many interesting textures throughout the hotel. I loved the little circle of rhinestones around the peepholes in guest room doors.

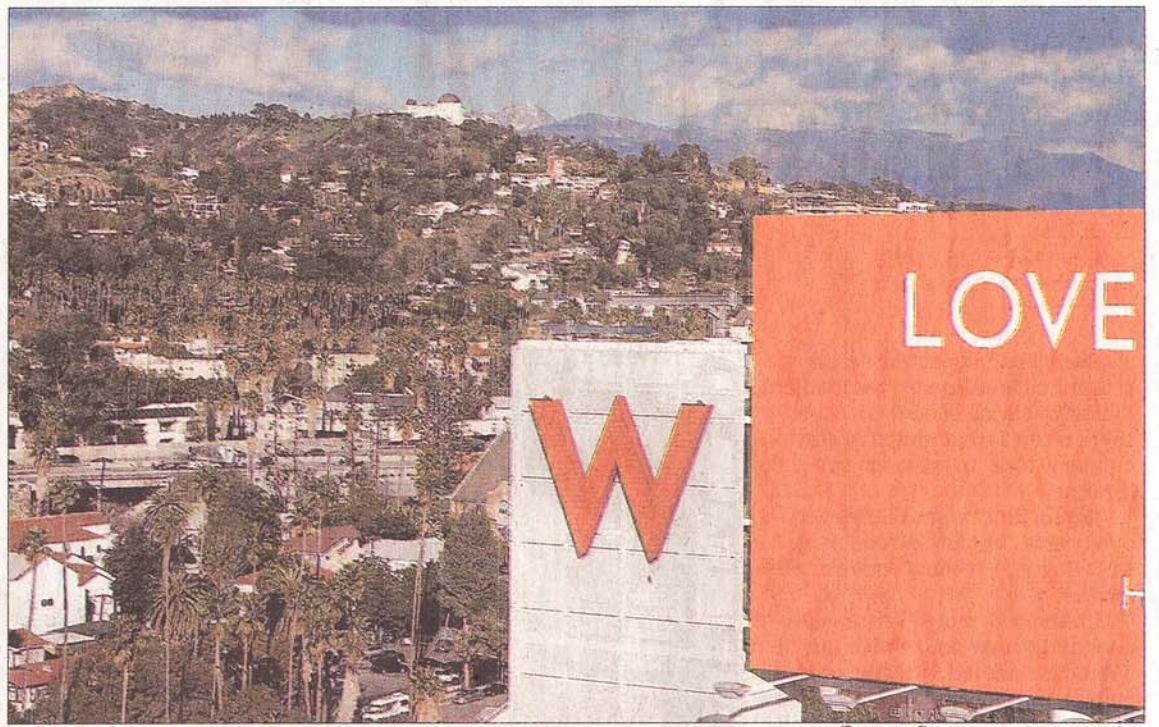
In-room options included DVD rentals, free use of an iPod and Wi-Fi — \$14.95 for 24 hours. (There's also complimentary Wi-Fi in the Living Room.) There was a wall-mounted 42-inch flat-screen TV.

Inside the wardrobe was a well-positioned safe, an iron and board. Wardrobe doors had full-length mirrors. The marble bath was on the small side, with a single sink and a stall shower with a large showerhead that didn't yield a very forceful stream. There was a terrylined pique robe and the usual amenities, but no extras such as a shower cap.

The low king platform bed had Egyptian cotton sheets, a down duvet and down pillows. There was a good reading lamp by the chaise, another on the oversized desk and, for mood lighting, a globe lamp poking through a shimmery curtain in one corner. That curtain was just for effect. The window had a pull-down blackout shade and a sun-diffusing shade.

The W is offering introductory rates starting at \$239 through March 30, but it's pretty easy to bump up the bill. In-room are Munchie Boxes (Snickers or Crackerjack, \$7), \$9 liters of Fiji water and bottles of Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon (\$35) set out with two glasses.

Continental breakfast from room service cost \$18, plus 20% service charge and \$4 delivery charge. There was no coffeemaker, so I ordered a small pot of coffee, which cost \$15.51 but did arrive in five minutes on a pretty white tray with white bone china. And the server called me by name and wished me a good day.



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

IN THE HEART OF HOLLYWOOD: The high-end 305-room W Hotel is tucked behind a Metro Red Line station and shares a block with luxury condominiums, retail space and apartments.



TIM STREET-PORTER

RED CARPET: The lobby is a light-filled space 60 by 45 feet with a soaring 34-foot ceiling and an 18-foot-tall chandelier.

Trays sat out in the hallway for hours. Other things were less than perfect. I was charged twice for overnight parking, as though \$38.50 weren't enough. And there never seemed to be enough staff at reception.

W Hollywood has a PAWS (Pets are welcome) policy but charges a nonrefundable \$100 deposit and a \$25-a-day cleaning fee. Yes, there's a room service pet menu (hand-cut prime chopped steak, \$14). Pet owners can order a cheeseburger with fries for \$19.

W is fond of cute, as in Wow, Welcome, Wish, Whatever/Whenever. I

saw a WOW suite, which is pretty impressive, with an enormous patio, marble foyer, kitchenette and dining table for 10. I can't say I thought having the large master bath open to the bedroom was a great idea, especially for a brochure rate of \$3,000 a night.

The hotel has a large fitness center, Sweat, and a Bliss spa. In star mode, I booked a double chocolate pedicure. Seated on a pillow-strewn window seat, I nibbled a mini-brownie and sipped hot chocolate while watching a classic film on one of two flat-screen TVs. My pedicurist, Brandy, scattered choc-

If you go

W Hollywood Hotel, 6250 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; (323) 798-1300, www.starwoodhotels.com. This newly opened hotel offers double rooms starting at \$239 (if booked 21 days in advance) through March 30.

latimes.com
/whotel

For a longer visit

Go online for more photos of the new W Hollywood.

olate chips in a metal foot basin and poured in milk. I'm not sure what the chocolate did for my feet, but the pedicure was good. The tab: \$70 for the hour. I opted out of buying a basketful of suggested foot beautifiers.

Other Bliss options include the "quadruple thighpass" anticellulite treatment (\$125) and the "peeling groovy" antiwrinkle facial (\$125). Among offerings for men is the "homme improvement oxygen facial."

The 12th-floor rooftop pool and bar have a sweeping view of the Hollywood hills and downtown, tented cabanas (\$500 a day) and poolside curtained daybeds (\$250 a day). The pool is open to the public on weekends. Sharing the top floor will be Drai's, a steakhouse and nightclub opening March 11. It is cantilevered over Hollywood Boulevard.

W promotes public art. Over the motor court is "Wave," a canopy of 40,000 LED lights on a stainless-steel grid 170 feet long and 55 feet wide. It represents "the movement of a crashing wave," said New York artist Erwin Redl — 13 feet high at its low point, cresting at 26 feet. His goal: to make "a celebratory statement, to welcome people to that area at night."

travel@latimes.com