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A mighty pleasure dome - by Carol Todreas

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Clearly Encore has done what it promised from the point of view of market position. It has provided a mighty pleasure-dome, a veritable island, for fun and games around the clock for the well-heeled visitor. If you haven't yet partaken in the revelry, you can still get in at 8:30 on a Saturday night with free parking. The resort is not yet up to speed. Encore is its own universe like most casinos. Compared to other New England casinos, all aspects of Encore are expensive, the slots, the restaurants, and the retail. While the Encore/Wynn brand is known to be top of the line, for Boston there is not an opportunity to tweak the brand to be more accessible to a greater demographic than just the rich tourist and local silk-stocking crowd. Think shops and restaurants.

There are only five bona-fide stores: mens, womens, beauty, watches of Switzerland, and a drugstore. Except for the watch store, all are Wynn Collections, merchandised and operated by Encore. All of these stores are beautifully designed with very expensive merchandise. The one exception is the Wynn Beauty store with a few items available like hand cream for an affordable \$12.00.

Encore's 15 restaurants are mostly expensive, such as Rare, the steakhouse, the two Italian eateries, Fratelli and Sinatra. Even the buffet, which in most casinos is usually the affordable fall back place to eat, at Encore comes in at a pricey \$38.99 compared to \$29.00 at Foxwoods and \$25.00 at Mohegan Sun. At the Spa in Encore, a massage starts at \$210, which is about the same price as The Spa at the Mandarin Hotel.

The take away: What a delightful experience it might be to have lunch and shop at Encore especially during Boston's long winter. Inside and safe, and with parking without the enormity of a huge mall. Or imagine a date night with massage for two at the spa and then dinner without re-parking. Or perhaps you simply want to be entertained. No monies needed, Encore is exciting with its extravagant setting and its endless parade of the most diverse people under one roof as can be seen in all of Boston. Would it not be even better if on their next round of development, they broaden their retail offerings to include some imaginative local shops, new direct to-consumer brands, and a few smaller chef-driven restaurants?

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