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## Revel booked solid heading into Memorial Day weekend

By DONALD WITTKOWSKI, Staff Writer | Posted: Friday, May 25, 2012 11:45 pm

ATLANTIC CITY — Beyonce's concerts are sold out. Hotel rooms are booked. And restaurant reservations? Well, even the CEO says it may be hard for him to get an open table.

Memorial Day weekend is shaping up for Revel, Atlantic City's newest casino resort. An estimated 100,000 people are expected to crowd Revel's casino floor and other attractions Friday through Monday.

"We're expecting a very, very busy weekend," Revel CEO Kevin DeSanctis said.

After an eight-week preview period that essentially served as Revel's start-up phase, the \$2.4 billion megaresort is holding its official grand opening celebration throughout the holiday.

Pop superstar Beyonce will headline the weekend with four concerts in Revel's 5,500-seat Ovation Hall. Tickets sold out in minutes. Gov. Chris Christie and his family are scheduled to attend Saturday night's concert and will spend the night at Revel, spokeswoman Maureen Siman said.

Revel's 1,200 hotel rooms are booked and the restaurants will be packed, too, DeSanctis said. He joked his family is mad at him because he neglected to make reservations and may not be able to snag them seats for dinner.

"It will be pretty hard to find a place to eat," he said.

Revel is unveiling itself to the public amid high expectations. In glossy print ads and slick TV commercials, Revel is marketing itself as a luxurious resort destination first, and a casino second.

"It seems very impressive. I hope the place matches the price," said Adrianna Gonzalez, of Boston, who, along with her fiance, Michael Shreeve, visited Revel for the first time Friday.

"It looks very expensive," Shreeve added.

Gonzalez said her mother bought her an \$800 VIP ticket for Beyonce's concert Friday night. Shreeve said he planned to check out the casino while Gonzalez attended the show.

Revel is trying to make a favorable impression on guests following a preview period marked by difficulty in integrating 55 technology systems. DeSanctis said the preview allowed Revel to work out most of the kinks, especially some technology glitches that interrupted TV reception in the hotel rooms.

However, DeSanctis made it clear that Revel now knows it should have had a longer shake-out period to get the technology and operating systems ready for the public.

“We’ve learned it would be better to have a 16-week preview,” he said.

Revel still has not brought all of its attractions online. DeSanctis said just five or six of about 20 new retail shops will be open over the weekend. Although Revel has 1,200 hotel rooms now, it will not hit its full complement of 1,900 rooms until later.

Revel plans to create a high-energy party vibe throughout the weekend, headlined by Beyonce. The Grammy-winning singer is performing her first live concerts since she and her hip-hop mogul husband Jay-Z celebrated the birth of their daughter, Blue Ivy , in January.

“I can’t think of a better act than Beyonce,” said Mitch Gorshin, Revel’s executive director of fun and creative.

Even the iconic decorative sphere atop Revel’s 47-story hotel tower will pay tribute to Beyonce and her legion of fans, dubbed the “Beyhive.” Gorshin said the sphere will sport a beehive theme, illuminated in lights depicting bees flying around a honeycomb.

One of the more unusual attractions being unveiled this weekend is a show called “Hallucination,” which combines music, digital art and live dancing. Backed by Hollywood-style special effects, dancers perform acrobatic moves on a catwalk and large wheel in Revel’s “DigiPit,” a section of the casino floor that features a hybrid of electronic table games and live dealers.

“It’s just a big party,” DeSanctis said of the weekend activities. “Almost everywhere you walk around here, it will be fun.”

Although Revel hopes the entire holiday will be fun and games, there is a serious undercurrent to the grand opening. Revel is looking to boost its gambling revenue after taking in only \$13.4 million from the slot machines and table games in April, placing it just eighth among Atlantic City’s 12 casinos.

DeSanctis noted that now is the time to begin making money as Revel and the rest of the casinos shift into the peak summer tourist season.

Revel is offering free slot play, free parking and other giveaways through the weekend to lure more gamblers as part of a promotional campaign called “Let the games begin.”

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