

The most badly designed shower in the world

By Arthur Lewbel May 2008

I've traveled a bit, and dealt with some pretty odd showers. Rusted pipes, no hot water, (or having to put a coin in to get hot water), mold, showers that are nothing more than a hose attached to a bathtub faucet, showers that have no curtain and just a drain in the center of the bathroom, and even once (in a private residence in Germany) a shower stall that was on a raised platform in the kitchen. But last week I experienced the world's most badly designed shower.



The Russell Hotel, Bloomsbury, London

The “contemporary single” room in the classy looking Russell hotel in London has the most badly designed shower in the world. It's an impressive, completely modern shower, with both overhead and side mounted shower heads. The controls consist of two knobs, one small and one large, each with four small buttons on them.

The overhead and side showerheads cannot spray at the same time, because turning the small knob to the left makes the overhead shower come on, while rotating it to the right turns on the side mounted head spray. The only way to turn the shower off completely is to carefully set the small knob exactly between left and right. This took some trial and error to discover.

Normally you would reach into a shower to turn it on from outside the stall. But this shower is cleverly designed to have its door be just too far from the knobs, so even a long armed guy like me cannot reach the knobs without standing in the stall.

I guessed badly when I first tried the shower, by turning the small knob to the right. The effect was identical to having an ice cold garden hose pointed straight at my stomach. I

tore open the shower door to jump out of the way of the cold while waiting for the warm water.



Three shower heads, two mystery controls. One of the bumps on the large knob is the secret hot water button.

The shower door is perfectly placed so that, if you leave it open after jumping out as I did, the water from the side mounted shower head is reflected by the door into the bathroom, soaking the toilet (and toilet paper), and flooding the floor. Even the floor is designed to maximize damage, by being angled ever so slightly away from the stall, so the splashed water runs across the floor, under the bathroom door, and into the hallway carpet on the other side.

I then dashed back into the shower, hurriedly closing the door, and pressed myself against the shower wall to have as little of the cold spray on me as possible, while trying to find warm water. I turned the large knob as far as it would go to the right. The water stayed

cold. I turned it all the way to the left. The water got even colder. I turned the small knob. That made the cold water drench me from above instead of sideways.

After much experimentation during the cold soaking, I found the secret to warm water. All the little buttons on the small knob, and three of the four buttons on the big knob, do nothing. But the fourth button on the big knob is the super secret hot water source. Once you realize that this shower was designed to be as difficult and uncomfortable to use as possible, it becomes obvious. Just press and hold down the one secret button while simultaneously turning the big knob, and you will be able to turn it further to the left than before. Then wait long enough, and warm water arrives.



Door on the left, designed to prevent reaching the controls from the outside or shelves from the inside, and to reflect water into the room.

No design flaw has been omitted from this shower, no matter how minor or easy to fix. There is, for example, no soap dish and no shelf in the shower. There is absolutely nowhere to put your soap except on the floor of the shower, where it is immediately washed to the drain under your feet. There's a shelf that runs along the walls of the bathroom that one might put soap on, but by a sufficiently fiendish placement of the shower door, that shelf is made inaccessible from inside the shower, even if you were willing to open the door and soak the bathroom to reach out for it.

I looked carefully to find the brand name of this monument to unintelligent design. No name was printed anywhere. My message to whoever created this shower is: I don't blame you for not signing it. I wouldn't either.