

## American Idol Step Aside, Cruise Ship Entertainment Takes Star Billing

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World Renowned Stars and Broadway-Class Productions Are Transforming Entertainment at Sea

Oscar-winning movie star Jennifer Hudson got her start at sea, world-famous opera singer Fredericka von Stade sets sail this year, the Boston Symphony Chamber Players and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art step on board as well, and The Second City, the comedy club that launched the careers of America's funniest people, from John Belushi, Bill Murray and Martin Short to today's hottest stand-up and TV stars, has audiences rolling in the aisles, even when the ship's not moving.

The 12.6 million people who took a cruise last year are already in on the secret. For anyone else who has not had a vacation at sea in a while, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) has a message: there's a whole new world of entertainment out there and it's like nothing you've ever seen before on a cruise ship.

'A new generation of cruise ships offering state-of-the-art facilities and technology, including full-sized theaters and show lounges with totally professional production values, has enabled many CLIA members to make entertainment a top priority,' said Terry L. Dale, president and CEO of CLIA. 'The results are world-class, and not just because these ships sail in all parts of the world.'

CLIA member lines have pioneered a unique concept in vacationing that offers incredible choice, flexibility and variety in all aspects of a shipboard experience, from itineraries and shore excursions to enrichment programs and dining. Entertainment is no exception. Of course, the scope and character of entertainment varies with each cruise brand and even with the size of a particular ship, which may carry 100 passengers or more than 3,000, but the acts receiving thunderous applause on many of the lines are nothing short of spectacular. Some lines even encourage passengers to get into the act.

Really Big Shows Carnival Cruise Lines' 'Big Easy' show, on the SuperLiner Carnival Freedom, takes audiences on a trip down the 'Big Muddy' to New Orleans, with more than 40 songs in a multimedia production that mixes video, lighting and pyrotechnic effects with elaborate sets and costumes. Other shows on Carnival include 'Legends,' in which passengers are invited to perform, completely costumed, as Elvis, Madonna, Cher or other famous singers.

Another new ship, Celebrity Cruises' Celebrity Solstice, has teamed up with Poet Theatricals, producers of the first worldwide touring show of the Lido de Paris, to create three original productions, including 'Solstice,' a 'celestial' European-style theatrical circus featuring vocalists, physical comedy, breathtaking group acrobatic and aerial performances and other specialty acts. The ship also will feature a unique glass-blowing show developed with The Corning Museum of Glass.

Celebrating 'Cruising Italian Style,' Costa Cruises offers a great variety of cosmopolitan entertainment on its fleet of 12 ships, sometimes including performers who went on to become famous Italian television stars. There are Broadway-style productions with stunning visual effects, participatory shows that bring passengers into the act, theme occasions often tied to the destination visited by the cruise ship, and plenty of dancing, including out under the stars.

Among the highlights of entertainment on Cunard Line's transatlantic crossings on Queen Mary 2 are performances and workshops by Britain's famous Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and a September crossing will feature the Boston Symphony Chamber Players. And, on the new Queen Victoria, guests in private Royal Court Theatre Boxes enjoy the entertainment with hors d'oeuvres, Veuve Clicquot Champagne, chocolate truffles served by White Star bellboys and later can meet the performers backstage.

Disney Cruise Line's Disney Wonder, where Jennifer Hudson, Oscar-winning star of Dream Girls began her career, and Disney Magic are the only cruise ships that launch actual fireworks as part of their nighttime 'Pirates in the Caribbean' deck party. The swash-buckling adventure features Captain Hook and his rowdy buccaneers rappelling from atop the funnels as they take control of the ship in a fun-filled evening. Disney's newest show - the largest ever - is 'Toy Story - The Musical.'

Holland America Line puts the spotlight on fashion in a series of Broadway-inspired productions with 55 original costumes by the legendary Hollywood designer Bob Mackie. Titled 'The Hits of Broadway, the Designs of Bob Mackie,' and 'Love Songs from Broadway, Designs from Bob Mackie,' the shows highlight the most popular hits of the Broadway musical songbook and are featured on six HAL ships, ms Amsterdam, ms Rotterdam, ms Ryndam, ms Statendam, ms Veendam and ms Zaandam.

As part of its new Freestyle 2.0 initiative, Norwegian Cruise Line has introduced new entertainment on Norwegian Jade as it sails in Europe this year. It includes four new off-Broadway musicals, the popular show, 'Tony n' Tina's Wedding,' and an expanded The Second City comedy show. The wide variety of entertainment, designed to offer more flexibility - evening shows are offered twice per cruise to allow guests more choice - also includes a classical dance production by award-winning choreographer Twyla Tharp.

Guests of Princess Cruises are treated to full-scale production shows such as 'Destination Anywhere,' with 18 singers and dancers performing music of the Cole Porter era, and 'Motor City,' featuring the sounds of Motown. Passengers also are invited to take part in 'Ballroom Blitz' - an opportunity to learn a variety of ballroom dances during the cruise and then show off their moves in a series of evening competitions. The 'Princess Peer Factor' pits teams against one another in such skills as pizza making, casino dealing and ice carving.

On Royal Caribbean International's Explorer of the Seas guests can join top professional dancers and samba, cha-cha, waltz or swing themselves to fame in 'Invitation to Dance,' created in conjunction with Louis van Amstel, the Emmy-nominated choreographer for the huge TV hit, 'Dancing with the Stars' and that show's two-time winner, Cheryl Burke. Four couples are chosen to compete for the title of best dancers at sea.

Something Completely Different If many of CLIA's larger ships specialize in producing grand-sized entertainment, others are just as impressive for their more intimate offerings. John Lithgow, the award-winning actor, for example, will perform on Silversea Cruises' Silver Whisper this summer. And, a classical music cruise on Crystal Cruises' Crystal Symphony stars the opera superstar Fredericka von Stade, and internationally acclaimed master of the rare soprano saxophone, Anders Paulsson. Other headliners during the year on Crystal will include Tommy Tune, Marvin Hamlisch and Frankie Avalon. According to the line's Website, Barbara Walters is slated to be a speaker on a summer cruise as well.

The nine-piece "Regent Signature Orchestra" performs aboard Seven Seas Mariner, Seven Seas Voyager, and Seven Seas Navigator, lending concert-quality musical support to production shows and breaking into smaller units for combo performances around the ships. Regent Seven Seas Cruises recently hosted a 'Theatre at Sea' voyage on the Amazon River that featured such performers as Ed Asner, Tovah Feldshuh, Anne Jackson, Karen Mason, Patricia Neal, Lee Roy Reams and Eli Wallach. A 'Cabaret Convention at Sea' featured many of the biggest names in Broadway cabaret, including Marilyn Maye, Billy Stritch, and Steve Ross. On Nov. 15, 2008, Regent will host a "Public Television at Sea" voyage aboard Seven Seas Voyager. Acclaimed hosts of public broadcasting will lead accomplished figures from the media, politics, and academia in stimulating discussions of current affairs, art, theater and television.

Strike up the Band Finally, a number of CLIA member lines put an entertainment emphasis on live music designed for dancing, socializing or listening, often performed by artists with outstanding resumes. MSC Cruises features several theme cruises with an emphasis on entertainment. One example is the Big Band Cruise on MSC Lirica's Deep Caribbean itinerary sailing Dec. 3, 2008, and Caribbean featuring Panama itinerary sailing Feb. 22, 2008, both sailing roundtrip from Fort Lauderdale. The cruises will feature the 15-piece Les DeMerle Big Band with vocalist Bonnie Eisele, with the sounds of Ellington, Basie, James and Miller, plus Broadway hits, rock 'n' roll classics, hot Latin grooves and show-stoppers from the '40s through today. The band will also perform a Big Band Jazz Concert and conduct a lecture on the Big Band.

On Majestic America Line, where live music is a centerpiece of entertainment, onboard music directors have worked with such legends as Barbra Streisand, Elvis Presley, Liberace, Andy Williams, the Glenn Miller Band, Patti Page, Tommy Dorsey, the Platters, Drifters, Coasters or the Dukes of Dixieland. Hurtigruten, which offers adventure and coastal Norway cruises, also features such themes as classical music and big bands on specific voyages. And Seabourn Cruise Line offers a club-like luxurious ambience for live guitar or harp music, intimate cabarets and classical recitals.

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