

# CRUISE *business* REVIEW

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*In the spotlight*

**BALTIC INFRASTRUCTURE**

**SOUTHERN CARIBBEAN PORTS**

**EUROPEAN WINTER CRUISING**

**BRAND ALLIANCES**

**20** *th Year of Editorial  
Excellence*

## **SHIPS IN THIS ISSUE**

Marina

Pacific Pearl

Spirit of Britain



# DISNEY DREAM



## Marina brings 'prestige' to Oceania

If Frank Del Rio were in the movie business he'd be known as an auteur, and his latest project would be a stylish Academy Award-winning film. But Del Rio, Chairman and CEO of Prestige Cruise Holdings, is of course in the cruise business. And he's the creator of a stunning new ship, the Marina, the first newbuilding for Oceania.

By Fran Golden

**F**runk Del Rio bragged more than once on a three-day early February christening cruise out of Miami that the 66,084 gross ton and 1,258-passenger ms Marina is the "most beautiful, sophisticated and stylish ship launched in the modern era of cruising - a span of some 50 years." It's easy to understand his excitement. Del Rio launched Oceania in 2002 with the ms Regatta, ms Insignia, and ms Nautica, three 30,277 gross ton and 684-passenger "R" ships from defunct Renaissance Cruises.

Starting the upper-premium line, with destination-rich itineraries geared towards passengers age 55 and up, was considered a whim. Then Prestige Cruise Holdings was formed in 2007 to manage select assets of Apollo Management's cruise investment portfolios, including Regent Seven Seas Cruises. Newbuilding orders placed with Fincantieri's Genova-Sestri shipyard for the Marina and sister ship ms Riviera, due in April 2012, followed.

During the naming ceremony - with American TV personality Mary Hart

as godmother - Del Rio, who came to Miami as a Cuban refugee in the 1960s, was referred to as a David against Goliath. "When we started the company, many people thought we were crazy," says Oceania President **Bob Binder**. Like a film director, Del Rio was by all accounts very exacting in what he wanted for the line's new flagship. He and Binder had a hands-on role in choosing much of the Marina's furniture and fabric. The pair also handpicked the Marina's stunning art collection.

"No expense was spared," Del Rio says, noting the extensive use of materials including marble and granite and fine woods and fabrics. The ship's quoted \$600 million price includes everything onboard. Y&S Partner **Gunnar Aaserud**, lead architect on the Marina, says Del Rio is the "toughest" man he has ever worked for, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. "Frank is difficult in the positive sense," Aaserud tells Cruise Business Review. "He knows what he wants, which is fantastic."

### Last-minute changes

But there were some rather last-minute changes. For instance in April, Del Rio decided to upgrade 20 Vista and Oceania suites, the latter a new category for the line. He brought in noted furniture designer **Dakota Jackson**, who promptly threw out schematics and made structural changes, such as moving doors and adding features including some archways. Even Jackson, who never worked on a cruise ship before, admits he wasn't the most popular person at the Fincantieri shipyard. But Aaserud, who did the original design for the suites, smiles about the changes now. "I think Frank just wanted to go different. He did not want a standard cruise product," Aaserud says. "That's fine with me, as long as we can control the work in the yard."

Another Del Rio/Binder whim that works beautifully on the ship can be found in the reception area. With its center grand staircase, the area is recognizable as an Oceania signature feature. But then the executives got the idea to incorporate French Lalique crystal. The result is a stunning space with dark wood and lots of Lalique - in circular medallions, pillars, screens, finials, lighting and as the base for a table at the bottom of the stairs.

Aaserud says the best thing about working with a hands-on CEO is he was able to embrace the latest design trends practically up to the last minute. "It [Marina] comes out as a very up-to-date-ship, but also embraces the Oceania brand, only



Red Ginger



Jacques



The Grand Staircase

larger," Aaserud says. The Marina has a bunch of firsts including a culinary center with actual cooking stations, Master Chef **Jacques Pepin's** first namesake restaurant at sea and Owner's Suites furnished top to bottom in Ralph Lauren Home. The ship also impressively has 10 dining venues and a Canyon Ranch SpaClub.

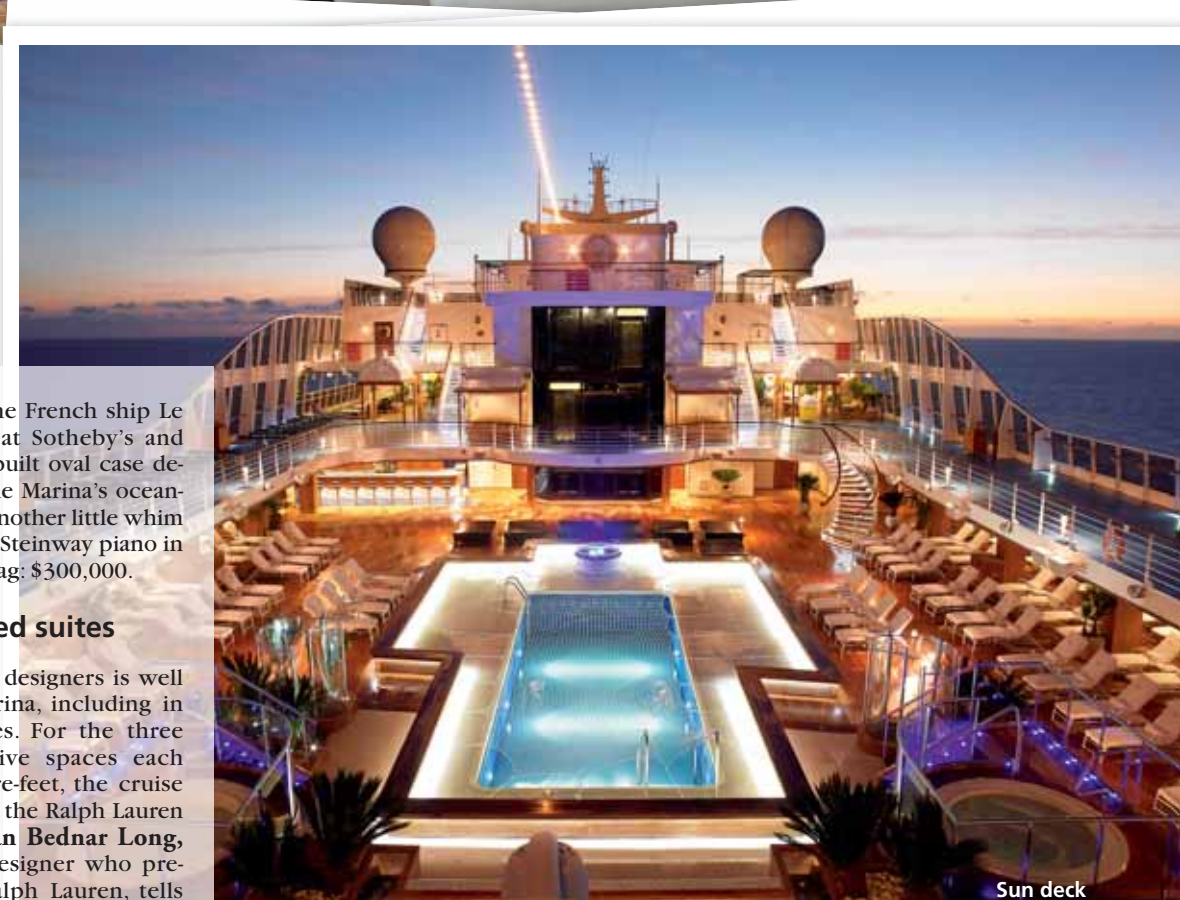
### Biggest wow from the artwork

But it's the Picassos that may draw the biggest wow from art fans. It was Del Rio himself who let us know there are 16 Picassos on the ship, six located in the Casino Bar - a hip, purple-lighted room that the CEO says is one of his favorites. There was no mention of the Picassos in press materials, possibly because the nude sketches are a tad risqué. The other Picassos are harder to see, located in the Vista suites and two of the Oceania suites. The ship also has works by **Miro**, Cuban painter **Wilfredo Lam** and others of note.

Del Rio will not say what he paid for the art, but admits that on their quest for the perfect collection, he and Binder scoured galleries around the world and went over budget. "Of all the facets of building the ship, the one that was most stressful to me was choosing the art," Del Rio tells CBR. So why not just hire a firm to do it? That translates as "institutional," he says. And that's not the look he wanted on the Marina.

The art and artifacts also include a fan-

Photo credit: Mike Louagie



Sun deck

tastic 1883 model of the French ship *Le Champagne*, acquired at Sotheby's and displayed in a custom-built oval case designed by Jackson in the Marina's ocean-view Horizon Lounge. Another little whim is the Jackson-designed Steinway piano in the Martinis bar. Price tag: \$300,000.

### Designer-appointed suites

The work of top-flight designers is well on display on the Marina, including in the top-category suites. For the three Owner's Suites, massive spaces each more than 2,000-square-feet, the cruise line decided to go with the Ralph Lauren Home Collection. **Susan Bednar Long**, a Connecticut-based designer who previously worked for Ralph Lauren, tells CBR she went for "a very American feel, comfortable, not so trendy." About 95% of what's in the suites, which include a living room/dining room, music room, bedroom and exercise room, is from the Home Collection, although there's also the addition of a Yamaha baby grand piano.

As American and timeless as the Lauren suites are, Jackson's 20 Vista and Oceania suites are all about sleek and modern, and range in size from 1,000 to 1,500 square feet. Jackson tells CBR his approach to the spaces was residential, based on a direct dialog between himself and Del Rio. He calls his basic design concept "cerebral." Jackson says, "I had an embarrassment of space to deal with. Frank wanted the most sumptuous spaces ever done, but

also minimalist, and I think that's where everyone is surprised."

One suite has a layered wall of squares for a look Jackson calls "climbing walls." Another has a rounded dining alcove with a backdrop of ceramic sticks in wood tones. Jackson is now marketing furniture he created for the ship as his Marina Collection. The ship's standard cabins are stylish too, with dark woodwork and warm colors, fluffy and comfortable beds and flat-screen TVs. They are also generously sized - standard balcony cabins are

282 square feet. Outsides have floor-to-ceiling windows.

### Four specialty restaurants

Oceania is known for its cuisine, and passengers on the Marina can impressively have dinner in the 650-seat main dining room or four specialty restaurants. Everyone is guaranteed a reservation for one night at each venue. Noted French Chef Jacques Pepin, the line's culinary advisor, serves up Jacques, replete with real oak floors salvaged from a barn in



Entrance to Casino

Lyon and a rotisserie that diners can view through a kitchen window. The extensive menu is upscale French brasserie, offering everything from escargot to roast chicken. But the unexpected hit on the ship is the new Red Ginger, a contemporary pan-Asian restaurant, done up with glass bamboo walls and serving such delicious dishes as miso-glazed Chilean sea bass. As on the other Oceania ships, the Marina also offers Italian cuisine at Toscana and a classic steakhouse at Polo.

For a hands-on food experience, the Bon Appetit magazine Culinary Center is truly impressive with its 10 cook tops, where students working in pairs can actually cook while following the directions of a visiting chef instructor (\$49 per person). La Reserve by Wine Spectator magazine is a vintner room that seats 24 for a seven-course meal (with an \$89.50 per person charge for the wine). The venue includes an outdoor area and is also used for wine tastings.

Privee is a new, hip little private dining room, done up in red and white, where for \$1,000 flat fee, chefs will create a customized menu for 10. The ship's coffee bar, near the library and large Internet café, is not only free but has espresso prepared by a real Italian barista - on our cruise a fellow from Verona. The Terrace Café and Waves Grill offer an extensive buffet and excellent gourmet burgers, respectively. Starting in April, Oceania will be adding local cuisine specials in the grand dining room across the fleet.



Horizon Lounge

## Recreation and relaxation

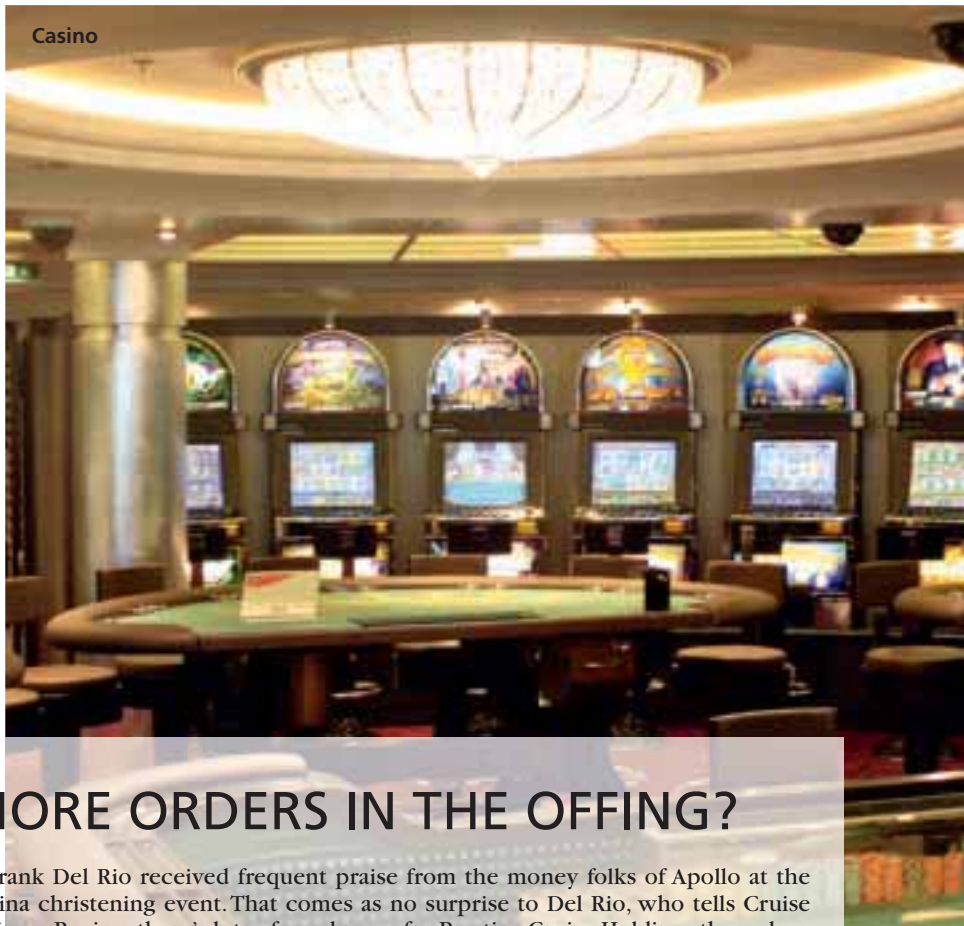
The Mariner's pool deck is classy and has that resort feel - a long pool flanked by two whirlpools, with cushy loungers and Balinese day beds for two. Wander around, and you'll also find secret little open-air spots: A bench here, a daybed there.

The Canyon Ranch SpaClub has a soothing décor that includes sea-foam green tiles and a wood floor. Within the oasis is a quiet outdoor area with cushioned sun beds, two hot tubs and an open-air massage corner, as well as an indoor relaxation area with heated ceramic chairs. Both are open to all guests without charge. Signature treatments, for a charge, include Thai massage. In the ocean-view fitness center, state-of-the-art machines have iPod docking stations and individual air-conditioner units.

The ship's upper deck 9-hole putting green is designed by Adventure Golf Services for 18-hole play - each hole has two cups, so players can do the course in the opposite direction at the same time. The course has faux rock obstacles and contouring and undulations to add to the challenge. Active types can play paddle-tennis on a netted court. The ship also has a separate croquet court and two shuffleboard courts.

For gaming action, the ship offers a casino operated by Century Casinos, which recently extended its agreement with the line and operates the casinos on all Oceania's ships. On the Marina, gaming options include blackjack, poker, roulette and a full-size craps table. There also is a wide variety of ever-popular slot machines, including classic reel slots, video slots and video poker.

Indeed, for all the focus on style, the Marina also offers a whole lot of substance. ■



## MORE ORDERS IN THE OFFING?

■ Frank Del Rio received frequent praise from the money folks of Apollo at the Marina christening event. That comes as no surprise to Del Rio, who tells Cruise Business Review there's lots of good news for Prestige Cruise Holdings these days, beyond the new ship.

"Prestige is now a \$1 billion-a-year in revenue company with \$3 billion in assets," Del Rio says. Oceania's prices will hit a record this year and had double-digit increases in 2010, while sister line Regent just missed a record year last year and will hit a price record in 2011, Del Rio says. The number of repeat guests on Oceania is approaching 50% and on Regent 60% on any given sailing, he adds.

So will that translate into new ship orders? The Marina increases capacity for Oceania Cruises by 60%. And Del Rio says it's the smallest ship the line could build that made good economic sense. "Once we know we can fill the ones we've got, we'll order more. For now we're happy with what we've got." But Del Rio adds he's "beginning" to think about Regent's expansion. ■



Photo credit: Teijo Niemelä

Frank Del Rio and Bob Binder