



# Rocking The

By Dana Rebmann

Concerts and cruise ships. There was a time when they had nothing in common. No more. Thanks to some creative composing and logistical maneuvering of the floating variety, Carnival Cruises has brought the seas alive with the sound of music. A first-of-its-kind in the competitive industry, the Carnival Live Concert Series offers music loving guests the chance to spend sun filled hours in popular ports before ending their day on a high note with a star-studded show.

The vacation concert combination makes sense. So much so, you wonder why somebody didn't think of it sooner. All of the not so fun parts of seeing your favorite act sink and disappear at sea. No driving, parking and fighting crowds in theaters and stadiums. Just sitting in the sun, and

strolling to the show with optional umbrella topped drink in hand. After the final encore, it's a short walk back to your cabin, or to one of many bars for another colorful drink.

Artists don't sail on the cruise; they fly into ports of call to meet ships when they dock. But all performances take place onboard. Smaller theaters that range from 900 to 1,300 seats deliver intimate performances to music lovers in vacation mode. Think of shows where you can watch changing facial expressions and see guitar picks flying through the air. The theater set ups allow performers to interact with the audience in ways not possible in traditional concert settings. During a Styx Concert aboard Carnival Breeze in Cozumel, Mexico some lucky concert goers in the first row got to reach

out and pluck a few guitar strings. Moments later Lawrence Gowan borrowed a nearby fan's iPad and took some on stage Styx selfies.

With the exception of the first handful of rows, all concert seats are general admission. They're also pretty cushy and a whole heck of a lot more comfortable than typical stadium seats. Doors typically open an hour before the show. Some dedicated fans will line-up before show time to get the best seat, but we're only talking about a couple hours, because these music lovers have other important vacation must-dos like spend the day in Cozumel snorkeling or soaking up some sun on the beach. Zip lining is a popular way to spend a pre-concert day on Catalina Island. It's not a bad way to get your adrenaline flowing either.

One of the biggest critiques of cruising is that there's not enough time to explore destinations beyond the often touristy port areas. Carnival Live ships enjoy an extended day in port - to the tune of sometimes 15 or more hours. Folks taking in a concert have more than enough time to explore, come back aboard to shower and catch the show. In some ports, there's even enough time to head back onshore for one last call before the ship sets sail.



# e Boat



The inaugural 2014 Carnival Live Concert Series includes 49 performances with 15 cart-topping artists including names like Styx, Lady Antebellum, Jewel, Chicago, Jennifer Hudson and Martina McBride.

The 2015 Spring Series kicks off in March. Docking in Nassau, Cozumel and new Carnival Live port St. Thomas, it has all the makings for a harmonious dose of sunshine and tunes. In addition to the popular ports, there's the popular names that have signed up for seaside entertainment duty. Journey, Smokey Robinson, Little Big Town and Rascal Flatts are all coming aboard. Styx is returning for the second season.

If the vacation-concert combination wasn't enough, ticket prices have fans singing a happy tune.

Ranging from \$35 to \$60, you can't touch a concert ticket for that price on terra firma. Would-be vacationers can book their concert tickets at the same time they book their vacation. Not sure you're ready to rock it on the high seas? You can wait and buy tickets onboard, but you run the risk of the show selling out and being left empty handed. If you can afford to splurge, VIP tickets run \$125 to \$250. For the same cost many folks are accustomed to paying for a concert, you score seating in the first four rows, a meet and greet that includes a photo with the artist and a souvenir concert pass.

*Dana received a complimentary Carnival Live sailing, but as always her thoughts and opinions are her own.*