



Photos by Melissa unless otherwise noted

Miracle In Tampa

By Melissa Wolcott and Al Martino

Lucky for Tampa, Carnival has chosen Lus as the home port for their newest “Spirit Class” cruise ship, *Miracle*, berthed at the port at Channelside. We went on their 2-day inaugural cruise recently and were duly impressed with the beautiful vessel.

The 2,124-passenger ship’s interior is striking with its eclectic mix of art deco and homage to the arts. Embarking into the lobby you are met with a Metropolis theme



“Clio” guards the elevator doors.

(*Superman*). The upper promenade is “Jeeves”, after the butler in P.G. Wodehouse’s novels, and the lower promenade is the *Fountainhead*, after Ayn Rand’s famous novel. The elevator doors are especially creative with intricate wood inlays designed after “Clio”, the muse of history. Her countenance is centered, so she is evenly split as the doors open. The glass elevators in the atrium ride past a huge, breathtaking reproduction of a French classic painting.

In addition to the bold artwork along the ship’s corridors being interesting, it is also



Magnificent artwork abounds on the *Miracle*.



Bold artwork decorates the corridors.

great as a navigation guide to your stateroom, as you will remember that the *Phantom of the Opera* or *Sherlock Holmes* is right outside your door. Carnival is known for



courtesy Carnival

having the largest staterooms, and their reputation continues with this ship. The rooms are light and airy with oak wood accents, and original artwork. Following a new trend, there are many more staterooms with balconies available on the *Miracle* than ocean-view alone. Eighty percent of the staterooms are ocean-view, and eighty percent of those have balconies. Interconnecting staterooms are available for families or gatherings. For two nights, any cabin type will do, but for longer cruises, we always opt

for one with a balcony — worth the price difference. Plush bathrobes are available for guest use in all ocean-view cabins, as well as a basket full of handy amenities. One of the prettiest sections of the ship is the promenade fashioned after F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great*

Gatsby. They’ve picked Gatsby’s garden as their theme, so there are lots of arches, vines and rattan furniture with pastel garden paintings along the walls. This is a great place to read a book or have a private chat in pleasant surroundings. There are many places on the ship where you can find comfortable, quiet

spots.

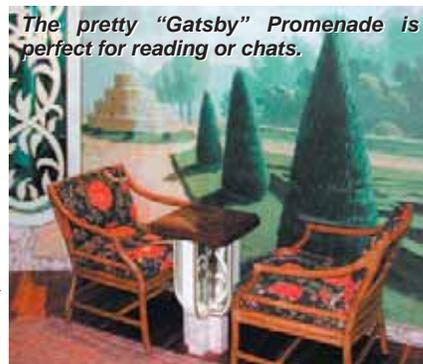
The casino is themed for the Cary Grant film, *Mr. Lucky*, and is fashioned after his illegal gambling yacht, “The Fortuna”. We found plenty of slot machines of all denominations, as well as table play.

“Bacchus” is the theme of the main dining room, and the room is adorned with large lit grape vines, with classical paintings throughout. Speaking of dining, one of the main reasons people cruise is for the food, so it has to be good. We can unequivocally



The Bacchus dining room is set up for small or large parties.

state that this cruise had some of the best food we have ever had on a cruise ship. Everything was fresh and tasty in every restaurant, from the casual pool deck to the elegant supper club. Dinner menus also now feature low carb choices with carb counts listed. The new ships have relaxed dining hours, as you may choose to eat in the casual dining room rather than the main dining room, and 24 hour room-service is available at no extra charge. Of course, the midnight buffet is a ship staple, so that hasn’t changed.



The pretty “Gatsby” Promenade is perfect for reading or chats.

The pool deck houses the casual restaurant, part of which is open 24 hours a day. The decor is after *Horatio Hornblower*, and his figurehead is repeated along the walls all around the room. The rest of the room is

decorated with wood beams and models of 19th century sailing ships.

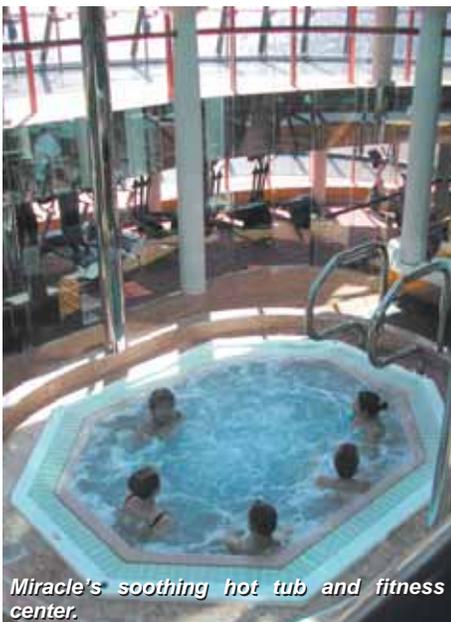
Upscale supper clubs on all Spirit and Conquest class ships are now available, and the *Miracle's* is named "Nick and Nora's", after the famous characters created by Dashiell Hammett, and memorably portrayed by William Powell and



"Nick and Nora's" beautifully presented lobster tail.

Myrna Loy in the classic movie *The Thin Man*. The attractive room, with ebony accents is merely a backdrop to the fabulous dinner we experienced — a generous cut of Aged Prime Beef, Chilean Sea Bass, Alaska King Crab Claws and Lobster Tail complemented with hand-selected wine, and exquisite desserts. At \$25 per person, the food, atmosphere, and service rivals any fine restaurant anywhere.

Along with eating all the fabulous ship's food, comes the fear of weight gain. Not to worry — the ship has plenty of fitness opportunities with high-tech exercise equipment, an aerobic room, jogging track, as well as a terrific spa with slimming and toning therapies, and a plethora



Miracle's soothing hot tub and fitness center.

of different types of massages.

Cruise ship entertainment has come a long way, with highly sophisticated shows with elaborate sets and costumes, and showrooms designed for excellent viewing no matter where you sit.

Another consideration of Carnival's is the attention to the teen population on board. You don't have to worry about your teen having a good time on the cruise, as they have made a concerted effort to entertain them without lumping them in with younger kids. There are sports, dance parties, and "Wizard's", a high-tech video game room. A "way cool" spot for them is "Dr. Frankenstein's Lab", which becomes a teen-only nightclub early every evening, before turning into an adult disco. The decor is terrific, looking like an old gothic castle, with a giant Frankenstein monster that is occasionally brought to life with electrical arcs.



The monster comes "alive" in "Dr. Frankenstein's Lab".

The younger children are also taken care of at *Pinocchio's*

Club, with lots of hands-on fun. The area has a baby-sitting service from 10pm to 3am, so that parents can have some nightlife fun.

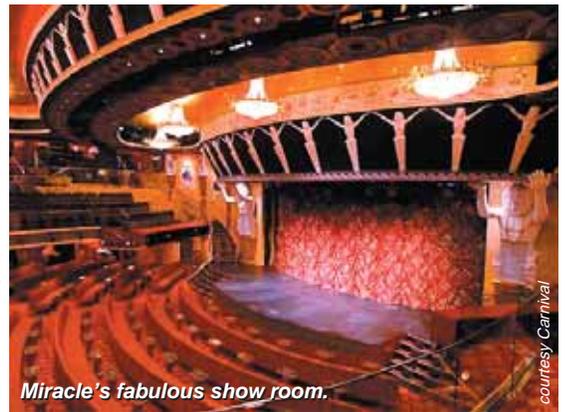
There is a kids dining program in place, during which they can dine with youth counselors on a kid-friendly menu.

As with all the new Carnival ships, they have introduced an Internet Cafe for accessing e-mail and web sites.

On exploring the ship, we came upon a beautiful little chapel with stained glass windows and Old Testament scenes, for personal meditation use or for weddings. There are several attractive wedding packages available at 1-800-933-4968.

If you're going to include classic movie themes, you cannot leave out *Casablanca*, and they didn't. The piano bar is named "Sam's", with Moroccan and Moorish decor.

Carnival *Miracle* has seven-day Western Caribbean cruises from Tampa, featuring the ports of Grand Cayman, Costa Maya, Cozumel, and Belize. But on February 2-7, 2005, the *Miracle* turns into a "floating hotel" right near the stadium for guests attending the Super Bowl in



Miracle's fabulous show room.

courtesy Carnival

Jacksonville on Feb. 6. So if you're lucky enough to get tickets to the game, you can make your experience extraordinary with

a booking on the *Miracle*.

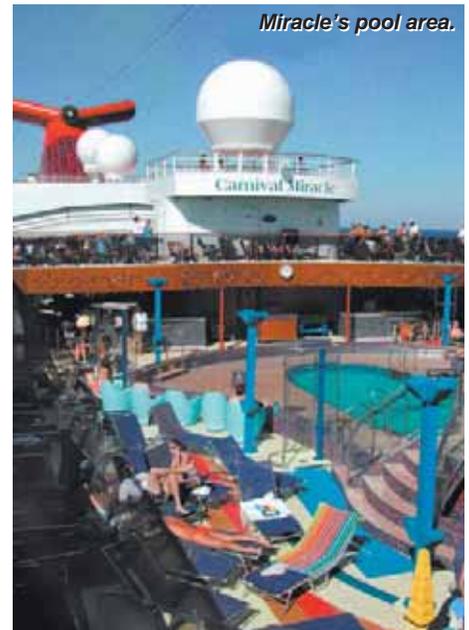
Carnival also has a "vacation guarantee", the only program of its kind in the cruise industry, which is perfect for jittery first time cruisers who are not sure if they are going to like cruising. It provides that guests may disembark in the first non-U.S. port of call — for any reason — and receive a pro-rated refund for the



The ship's attractive chapel.

unused portion of their cruise fare, along with reimbursement for coach air fare back to the ship's home port.

So, here's looking at you, kid — go for it — book an unforgettable cruise on the *Miracle*. For more information or reservations, call 1-800-CARNIVAL, or visit carnival.com.



Miracle's pool area.