

ANTHEM OF THE SEAS – The World's Smartest Cruise Ship

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By Peter Newall

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Peter Newall takes a tour of Royal Caribbean International's innovative ANTHEM OF THE SEAS.



ANTHEM leaving Southampton with the North Star raised.

ANTHEM OF THE SEAS is one of the most technologically advanced cruise ships in the world. Constructed at Papenburg, Germany by Meyer Werft, the 168,666-grt ship is also the world's third largest cruise ship. She is the second in a new class of Royal Caribbean International ships. The first, QUANTUM OF THE SEAS, was delivered last year and is now operating in China. With a length of 1,141ft ANTHEM is longer than the 154,407-grt FREEDOM-class RCI ships but with a narrower beam (136ft compared with 184ft.). She has eighteen decks and can carry up to 4,905 passengers. Many ship aficionados will no doubt say that she is an unattractive ship because of her large number of balconies. However, although she is a classic case of function taking precedence over form, her designers have produced a fine looking ship with a good hull form.

Ultra-fast internet.

ANTHEM offers unprecedented ultra-fast internet access provided by O3b Networks which has eight satellites orbiting the Earth. Passengers can use their smart phones or iPads throughout the ship to make dinner or entertainment reservations as well also normal internet activities. In each cabin there are two USB charging points. All passengers are also given a RFID (radio frequency identification) WOWband which allows easy access to the cabin and can be used to pay for drinks.



WOW bands



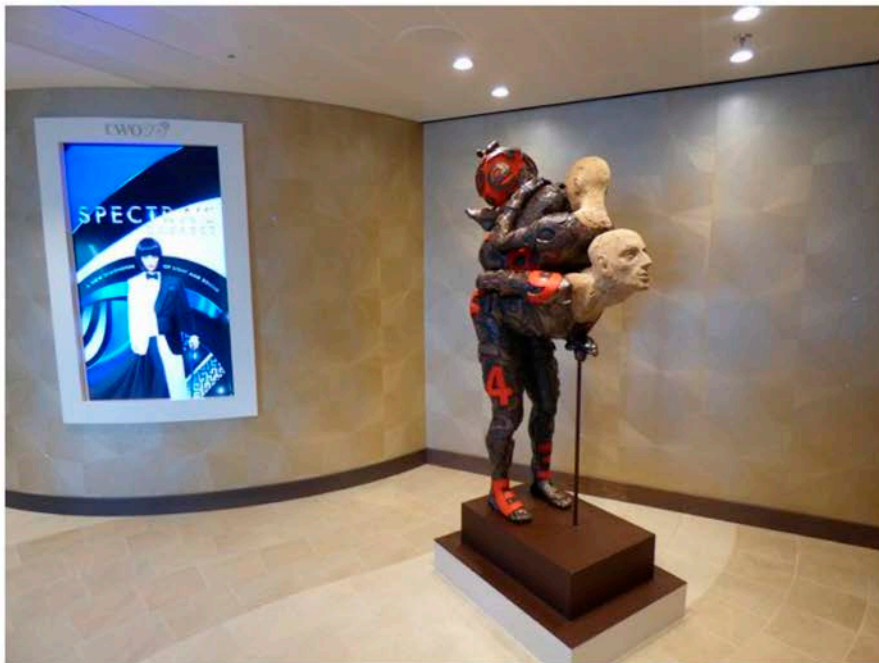
Cabin phone and tablet chargers.

Amazing artwork.

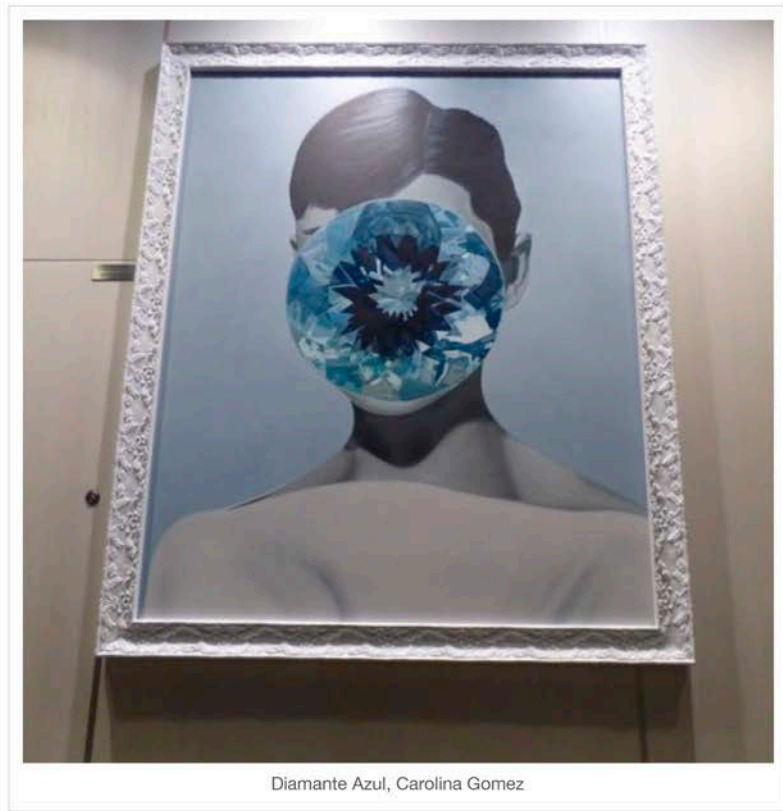
As well as being a great innovator RCI has led the field in the creative use of artwork throughout its fleet. Featuring an international array of artists and sculptors, the work on display is always inventive and interesting to look at. Each ship has its individual theme. Aboard ANTHEM the various artworks have been assembled under the banner of *Art is what makes life worth living*. Among the fascinating works is the British artist Richard Hudson's sensual, monumental, mirrored steel sculpture *Eve* which is the central feature in the Via on Deck 5. At the entrance to Two70 is an amusing ceramic sculpture by the Polish artist Marek Zyga entitled *Let's waste some time*, whilst on a stairwell is *Diamante Azul*, an oil on canvas by the Colombian painter Carolina Gomez. The first interactive "smart art" at sea can be found amidships on Deck 5. The Mexican Rafael Lozano Hemmer's installation *Pulse Spiral* is a chandelier made up of 200 light bulbs which pulsate to your heartbeat when you touch an iPad directly beneath the work.



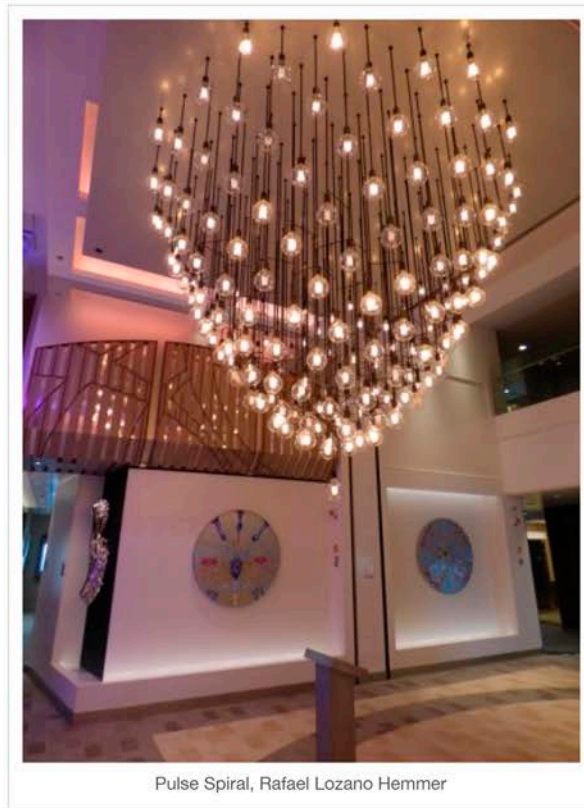
Richard Hudson's Eve.



Let's waste some time, Marek Zyga



Diamante Azul, Carolina Gomez

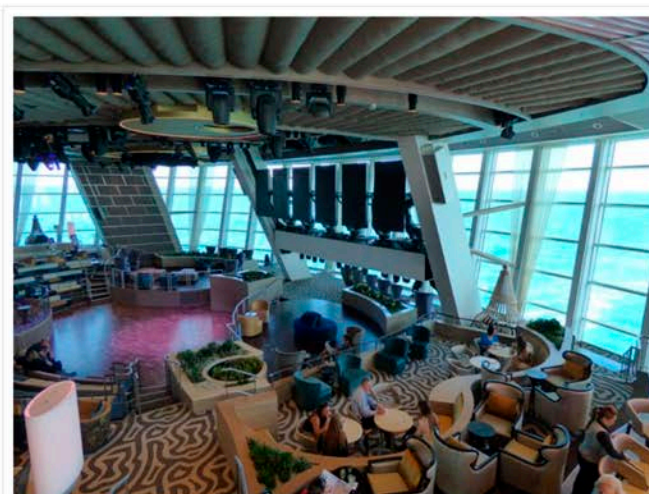


Pulse Spiral, Rafael Lozano Hemmer

Spectacular sea views.

Whilst many large ships nowadays tend to have few enclosed spaces with ocean views either aft or forward, ANTHEM has two such large areas.

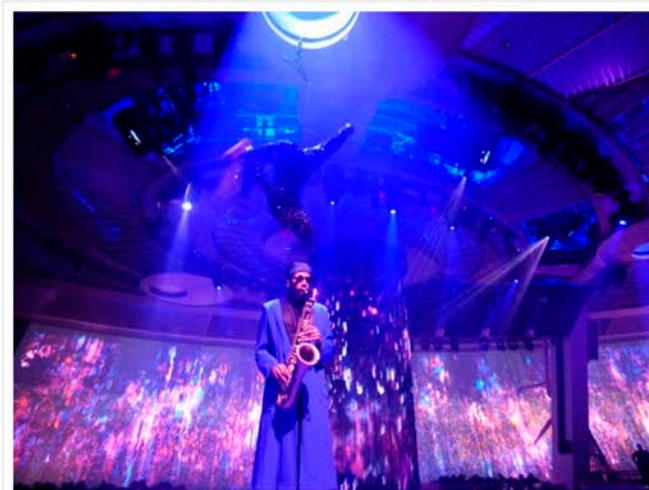
The first is the 540-capacity **Two70** lounge aft on Decks 5 and 6. In over fifty years of visiting ships I have never seen such an amazing lounge. It is two decks high with floor to ceiling windows offering 270° ocean views. During the day it is a comfortable space to relax and have a drink or something to eat from the **Café @ Two70** which offers deli-style soups, salads and sandwiches. In the evening the lounge is transformed into an extraordinary cabaret show with aerial acrobats, robotic LED screens and super-high-definition Vistarama projections from eighteen 8K projectors. The overall impact is breathtaking. Interestingly, the cost of the lounge is more than RCI's first cruise ship, SONG OF NORWAY (1970/18,416gt).



During the day in Two70.



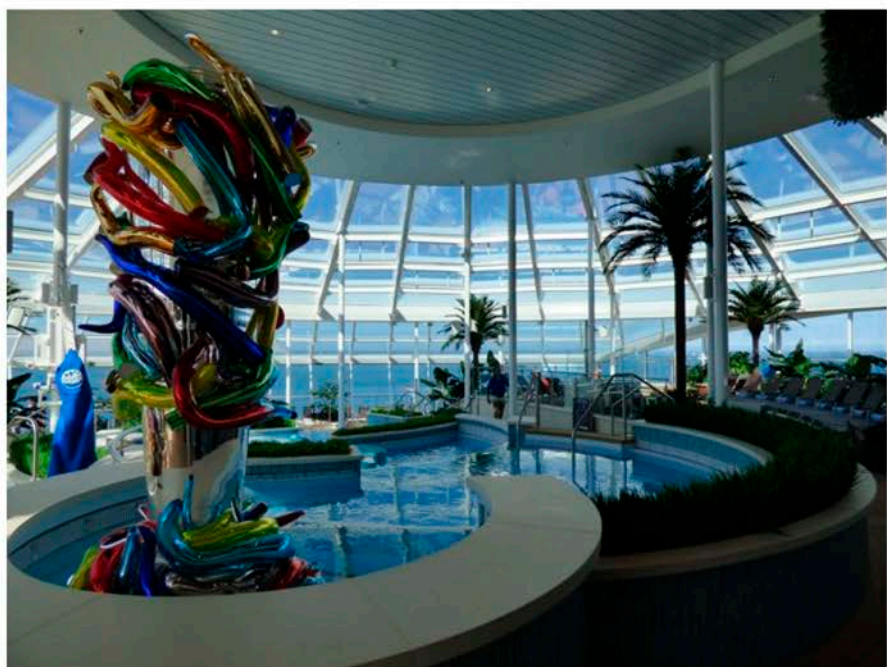
Virtual curtains in Two70.



Spectra's Cabaret in Two70.

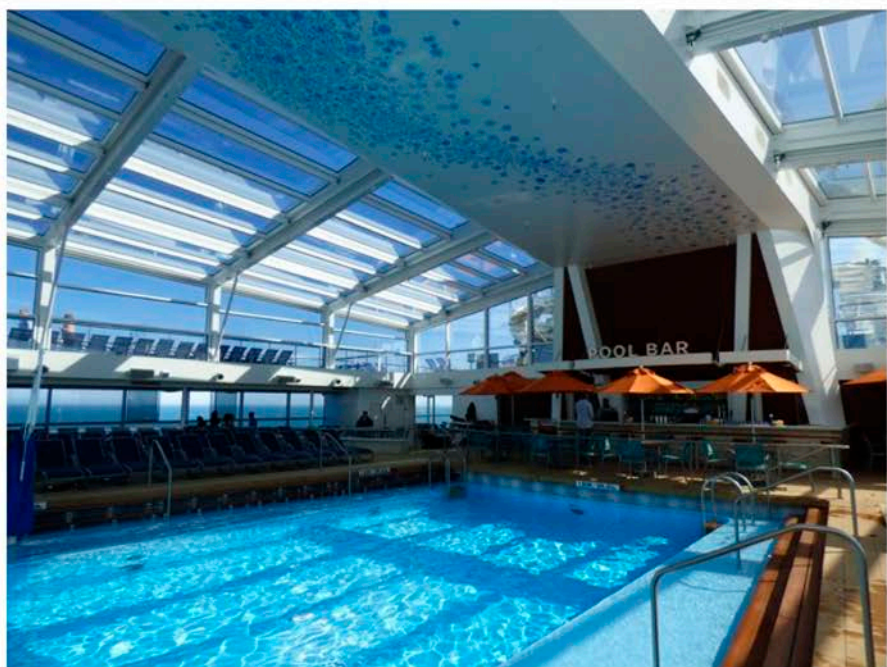
The second large enclosed space with 270° ocean views is the three deck high **Solarium** forward on Decks 13 to 15. This is an adults-only, glass-canopied

area with whirlpools and mini-waterfalls. It is a great place to relax and watch the world go by.



Solarium and the colourful glass and stainless steel sculpture by Marialuisa Tadei.

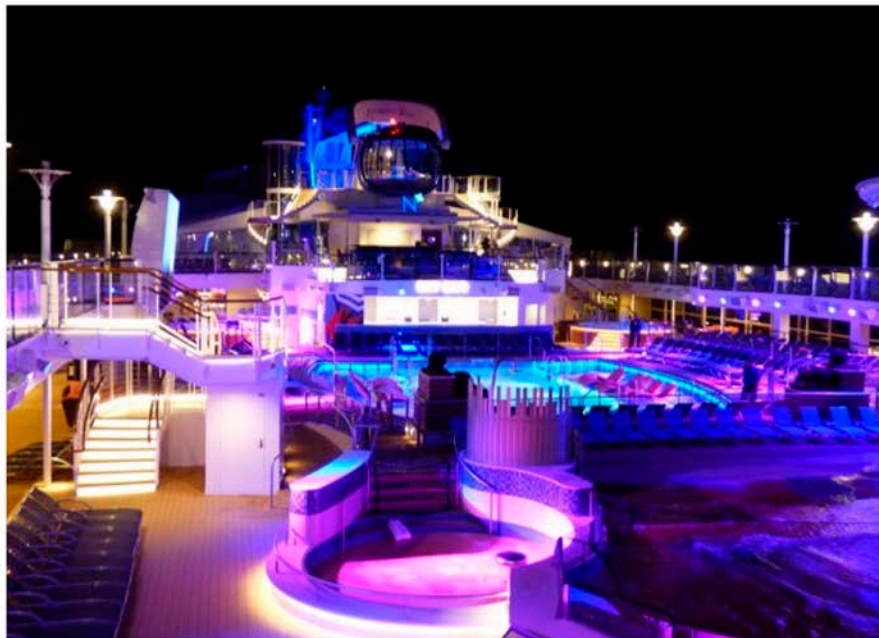
Aft of the Solarium is an indoor pool with retractable roof whilst the main outdoor pool is midships. There is also a running track/promenade on Deck 15 which wraps round the entire deck. At night the poolside area is lit with attractive lighting. There is also a large screen for open air movies.



Indoor pool.



Main pool.



Pool area at night.

A head for heights.

If you have a head for heights ANTHEM has three things which will make your adrenalin flow.

North Star is a passenger capsule which rises gently up to 300 feet above sea level and offers spectacular, panoramic views, not only of the ship but also the surrounding seascape.



North Star fully extended.

Ripcord by iFly is a unique wind tunnel installation situated aft on Deck 16 and just behind the Flowrider surfing simulator. This complimentary activity offers passengers the opportunity to experience skydiving without having to jump out of a plane.



Behind the Flowrider someone is enjoying a skydiving experience in the Ripcord by iFly.

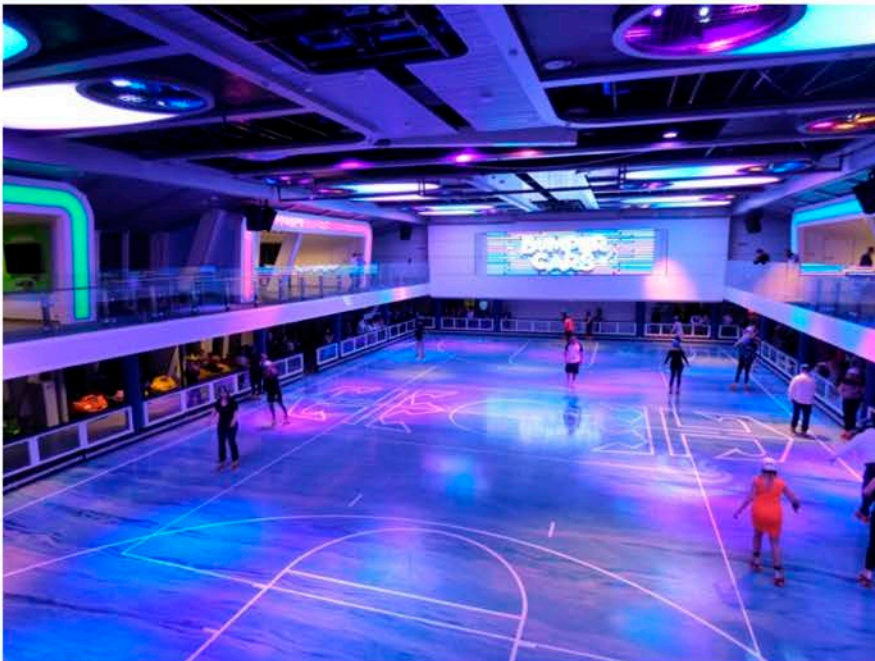
Standing on the **Glass floor on Deck 14** looking all the way down the aft lift lobby to Deck 5 takes some nerve.



The glass floor on Deck 14 is not for the faint-hearted.

SeaPlex indoor sports zone.

Situated aft on Decks 15 and 16 **SeaPlex** is the largest indoor sports complex at sea. In this versatile space passengers can enjoy basketball, roller skating, a flying trapeze, dance parties and bumper car rides. On the second level there are the usual shipboard activities such as table tennis and table football as well as a zone to play Xbox games on large screens.



Roller skating in SeaPlex.



Bumper cars are usually used in the evening.

Royal Theatre

The 1,300-seater Royal Theatre is ANTHEM's main entertainment venue. With perfect sight lines it offers a range of top notch productions including a version of the London West End show *We Will Rock You*.



We Will Rock You

Cabins and suites.

Unlike earlier RCI ships most of the passenger cabins on ANTHEM are situated above the main deck. This means that 82% of the 2,090 cabins are outside. A relatively high proportion (72%) also have a balcony. For the 18% of cabins which are inside passengers can decide if they wish to have a virtual balcony with real time sea views. There are a wide range of cabins to choose from although the most impressive are the eleven two deck high suites with large balconies situated aft on Decks 8 to 11.



The contemporary style lounge of one of the double deck suites.

Wide choice of dining.

RCL's answer to flexible dining is Dynamic Dining. This has been introduced on the Quantum class ships and will be extended to the rest of the fleet. Passengers can choose between flexible dining in one of 18 restaurants or a traditional, fixed, two sitting option in one of four 430-seater main dining rooms which have their own distinctive menu and ambiance.



American Icon Grill is one of the four main dining rooms.

Among the five pay-extra speciality restaurants is the 132-seater **Jamie's Italian** and the quirky 62-seater **Wonderland** with its molecular gastronomy meals.



A corner of Jamie's Italian.



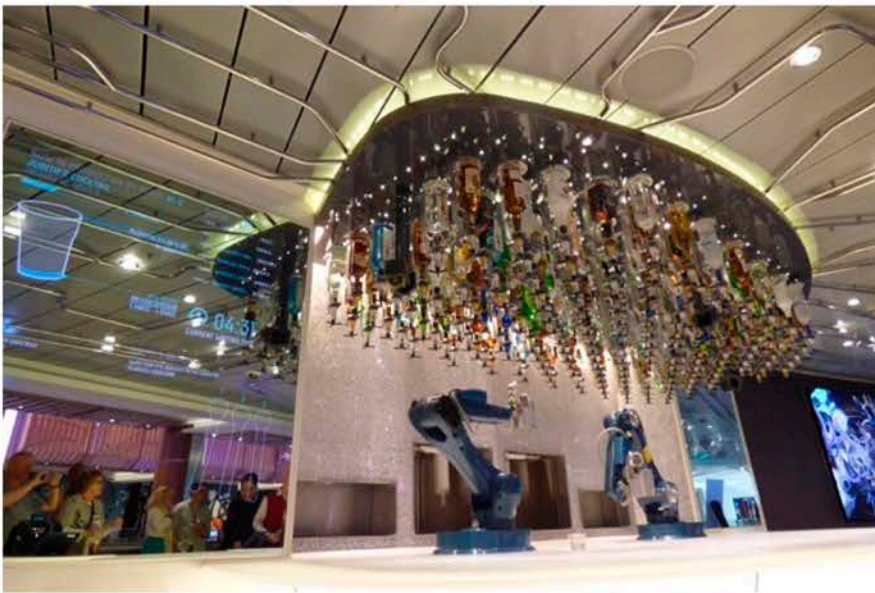
The entrance to the Wonderland restaurant.



The interiors of Wonderland are based on the Alice in Wonderland books.

The Bionic Bar.

No article about ANTHEM would be complete without mentioning one of its most talked about features, the **Bionic Bar** midships on Deck 5. Using smart tablets, passengers can order any combination of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks which are mixed at the rate of two drinks per minute by a pair of Italian-designed robots. The progress of the cocktail orders can be viewed on a screen and the whole process is great fun to watch. However, the only old-tech aspect of the Bionic Bar is the addition, per drink, of an 18% service charge!



Robots hard at work in the Bionic Bar.

Technical stuff.

ANTHEM has four ultra-efficient Wärtsilä engines designed for maximum efficiency and lowest emissions. Two 16V46 ones generate 19.2 MW per engine whilst two 12V46 generate 14.4 MW per engine. She also has four 3.5 MW bow thrusters and two 22.5 MW Azipod propulsion units producing a cruising speed of 22 knots.

Her hull design is also new and features an Air Lubrication System. This improves the efficiency of the movement of the hull through the water by enabling the ship to ride on a cushion of air bubbles that are generated by two large air compressors on board.



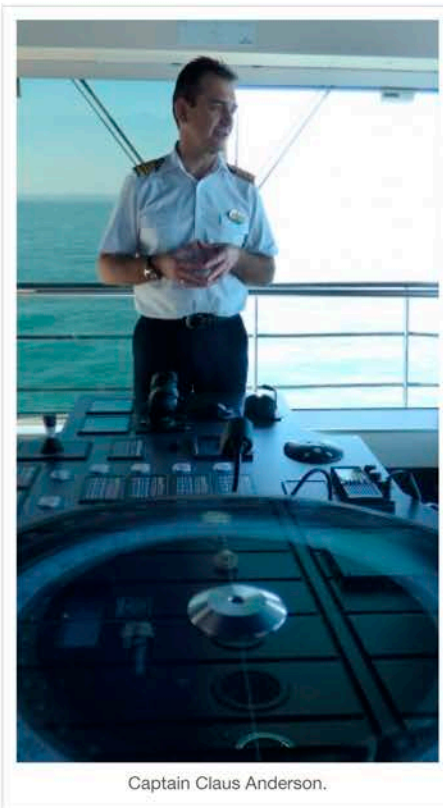
The wake of the Azipods.

For some time I have expressed my concern about the trend for lifeboats on large cruise ships to be placed in an outboard and more exposed position on the ship. I am pleased to note that on ANTHEM and her sisters the lifeboats are tucked into a more traditional position in the hull.



A view from the bridge of ANTHEM'S lifeboats.

Commanded by Captain Claus Anderson, an affable Norwegian who has been with RCI for seventeen years, the central controls of ANTHEM's large bridge are more like those aboard an aircraft than a ship.



Captain Claus Anderson.



The horseshoe-shaped main bridge console.

Naming ceremony.

The official naming of ANTHEM took place in the Royal Theatre on April 20, 2015. The ship's Godmother was Emma Wilby, a 27-year-old travel agent from Sunderland. In keeping with the high-tech theme of the ship, all guests were given a wrist band which changed colour during the elaborate ceremony. Emma Wilby also performed the naming by touching an iPad which sent a signal releasing a Perrier-Jouët Nebuchadnezzar bottle of champagne attached to the North Star. It then travelled down a zip line and smashed against the side of the open pool deck and at the moment of impact confetti showered the guests in the theatre.



ANTHEM's Godmother Emma Wilby and Richard Fein, Chairman and CEO, Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd.



Confetti showered guests in the Royal Theatre.

Head to head with P&O Cruises.

This summer, ANTHEM's home base is Southampton where she is in direct competition with P&O Cruises newest ship BRITANNIA. Although both ships have had excellent reviews, for me ANTHEM is a far better ship, not only in terms of facilities, but also interior design. BRITANNIA looks quite bland in comparison whilst ANTHEM is also a more innovative vessel. In fact, this class of ship has been so successful that RCI has announced plans to build a fourth Quantum-class ship due for delivery in 2019. The third, OVATION OF THE SEAS, will be completed next year and will join QUANTUM in China. Yet again RCI has produced a game-changer class of ships which will hopefully act as a catalyst for the rest of the industry to follow.



Another view of ANTHEM leaving Southampton. Note the panoramic windows of Two70.