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Circ: 2,101,611

TRENDING



CALEB SHARP

A scene from the game "Paradiso: Chapter 1"

Only the Clever Escape

When does an entertainment reach critical mass? Arguably, when it's found on a cruise ship. That is the case with escape rooms, in which players in a locked room filled with clues try to escape before time runs out, usually in 60 minutes.

Royal Caribbean's new Harmony of the Seas, which carries 6,780 guests, has "Puzzle Break: Escape the Rubicon," in which 12 guests work together. Royal Caribbean introduced escape rooms on its Anthem of the Seas and Ovation of the Seas last year.

Escape rooms are often billed as bonding exercises. "When you play these games it's an amazing fun time, and when you're done you have this shared experience," said Nate Martin, a founder and chief executive of Puzzle Break, which designed the attractions. On terra firma, the latest advancement in escape rooms incorporates Hollywood-style production design. "Paradiso: Chapter 1" in Midtown Manhattan uses holographic images and music and follows a narrative that is, said a creator, Michael Counts, "based loosely on 'The Divine Comedy' meets 'Blade Runner' meets 'Mr. Robot' in a Stanley Kubrick-ian style."

A potential ceiling for the escape room business is that once you have figured one out, you're unlikely to return. The team behind Paradiso aims to open more installations to gain repeat clientele.

Escape rooms also tend to pop up at temporary attractions. A Halloween park near Milwaukee called Wisconsin Fear Grounds plans to add a five-minute escape feature to its haunted houses.

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