

## **Return to Paradise Carnival**

On June 24th 2005 Koh Phi Phi celebrated its 'Return to Paradise' with a spectacular carnival on Loh Dalum beach. The area, which once played host to over a hundred bungalows, was transformed into a party setting by a myriad of festive banners and decorations along with the presence of many restaurants, bars and clothing stalls from around the island providing for the carnival guests.

The day kicked off with a variety of crazy beach games including everything from a snorkel treasure hunt and sandcastle competition to a three legged obstacle races and a giant tug of war. The soccer and volleyball tournaments provided a more serious competitive edge and with the spectacular 'Return to Paradise' trophies on offer, the play was quite intense.

Thirty Phi Phi children who currently attend school on the mainland came back for the day to join in the celebrations and their smiles and energy was a wonderful boost to the day. More excitement came from the presence of the Miss Hong Kong finalists who spent time talking and interviewing volunteers and residents about the island and the work that has taken place here.

The famous Thai band "Job to Do", ushered in the evening's events with a funky fusion of Thai and reggae music which enticed the crowd out to dance despite the late afternoon downpour.

As night fell and the skies cleared, more and more people returned to the beach. At 9pm the raffle was drawn and Kiya, currently our youngest volunteer at 9 years was the lucky winner of our star prize, 3 nights accommodation at Phi Phi's 4\* Holiday Inn resort.

At this point the evening was far from over, and following a great display of modern Thai dancing by three of the school children, the crowd finally got what they'd all been waiting all day for; a selection of our very finest male Hi Phi Phi workers, giving the performance of their life...as ladies. They were a hit and the crowd went wild.

Returning to the stage for their final set of the evening "Job to Do" calmed things down by performing a number of haunting songs by candlelight. It was an emotionally charged moment, as for many of the band members it was their first trip back to the island since December.

The final show of the evening took place at midnight when Claire O'Meara completed her challenge of learning how to do a fireshow in a week with a performance in front of a very large and very appreciative audience. The rest of the fireshow was made up of over 15 of the island's most talented performers and provided a visually stunning end to the carnival.

The carnival, whilst primarily an opportunity for the island to come together to celebrate, also worked as a great money-raiser. During the day, donations, fireshow sponsorship, raffle tickets and the very popular Return to Paradise t-shirts raised a combined total of 56,000 Baht, a record breaking amount for any previous Hi Phi Phi island fundraiser.



Our banner at the pier welcoming all new arrivals to the event



Clare being interviewed by the Miss Hong Kong Finalists



Smiles all round from the kids of Phi Phi



Netti, getting the events started.



The winning three-legged team



The tug of war



'We all fall down'!



Welcome mosaic made out of recovered floor tiles



Jim filling in the first 5000 Baht raised on our wonderful coconut tree money chart



Vocal support for the soccer tournament from the head of the Thai workers, Bang Bow



The band getting set up to play



The Hi Phi Phi takes to the beach



Our sell-out t-shirts, proudly on display



Three girls getting themselves ready to perform



Mr Lee takes centre stage as the 'ladies' strut their stuff



Dion gets a little too caught up in the action



Everybody is enjoying the show



Trying to get some last minute donations for her sponsored fireshow proves painful work for Claire.



Claire surrounded by fire during her show.