

ShoreScene

LBI Idol champ 'Walking on Sunshine'

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The Island seemed vacant on Aug. 22 while I was on my way to the Surf City Hotel, but as I arrived, I realized that the countless amount of rainy days wasn't enough to keep the population of Surf City in their homes. The Beach Club at the Surf City Hotel was packed with barely enough space to walk between the crowds of people.

"This year was a lot of fun," said Surf City Hotel General Manager Tom Gentry. "It was very successful and the contestants were more competitive this year than last and they all had amazing talent."

What started off as a slow start last year has quickly grown into a popular event on LBI during the summer.

"Last year was good, but it started off slow," Gentry said. "But this year it was great from the beginning. The level of talent was great, the prizes were improved and the competition was higher."

This year's winner took home a 5-day, 4-night all-expenses-paid vacation for two to Punta Cana valued at \$2,500, sponsored by CheapCaribbean.com. Second place received a \$1,500 vacation gift certificate to anywhere, which was sponsored by Bud Light. The third place prize was a \$100 gift certificate to the Surf City Hotel.

Prizes weren't the only upgrade to the competition this year, Eleven:Eleven added a few more songs to their list.

"Some people made suggestions that there weren't enough female oriented songs, so Eleven:Eleven added 12 new songs to their list," Gentry said.

And luckily they did because two of the three finalists were in fact female. Kelcey Fredrickson of Surf City and Jennifer Sieminski of Spring Lake were two of the three finalists. Michael Macomber of LBI was the third finalist for the contest.

For the finals, the three were required to perform one song of their choice and one song picked for all of them, which was "Walking on Sunshine." The three judges, Terry Tompkins, General Manager for Mad Dragon Record, Al Geary, CEO of Shore Bets Entertainment, and Kathy Wagner, Radio Personality for Classic Rock 102.9 WMGK, had criteria to follow when judging the contestants. The contestants were judged in three categories, stage presence and audience reaction. Vocal performance was 50 percent of the score while stage presence and audience reaction made up only 25 percent each of the total score.

Bartenders and hosts, Sue Vilardi and Kristin Salmon, were busy all night, serving drinks and announcing the performers. For the finale, LBI Idol brought special guest singers to perform in addition to the actual final contestants. Singer Rob Fiske hit the stage and 2006 LBI Idol winner Nelson Cantillo returned for another performance.

The crowd seemed to be enjoying the night out, especially after a week of rain. Prizes for the crowd further entertained those in attendance. Raffles were sold and announced, including three where winners received gift certificates for CheapCaribbean.com. Laughter was loud and tension was high as the crowds and contestants awaited the final say in who would be Long Beach Island's next Idol.

After a long and stressful wait, the judges returned with their final decision. Bartender Vilardi took the microphone and announced that the third place prize, a \$100 gift certificate for the Surf City Hotel, was awarded to Macomber. There was a silent drum roll in everyone's head as they announced that second place went to Fredrickson and the new LBI Idol winner was Sieminski.

Ecstatic, she threw her arms in the air and the crowd went wild. She was given a large basket of goodies and of course, her 5-day 4-night vacation package. With excitement and almost disbelief, Sieminski took the microphone and thanked all her family and friends that came to support her. Eleven:Eleven concluded the night on stage, offering their congratulations.

"The night went great," Gentry said. "We were very pleased with the turnout and all the performances. Everyone really seemed to be having a great time and we will definitely do this again next year."

Go ahead and start practicing LBI Idol wannabes, because before you know it, summer will be here again and it will be your time to shine on the stage with Eleven:Eleven at the Surf City Hotel.

Who knows, you could be the next Idol.*



LBI Idol II winner Jennifer Sieminski performing with Eleven:Eleven at the LBI Idol II finals on Aug. 22 at the Surf City Hotel. Sieminski took home a 5-day, 4-night all-expenses-paid vacation for two to Punta Cana valued at \$2,500, sponsored by CheapCaribbean.com. (PHOTO: CRYSTAL FREEMAN)