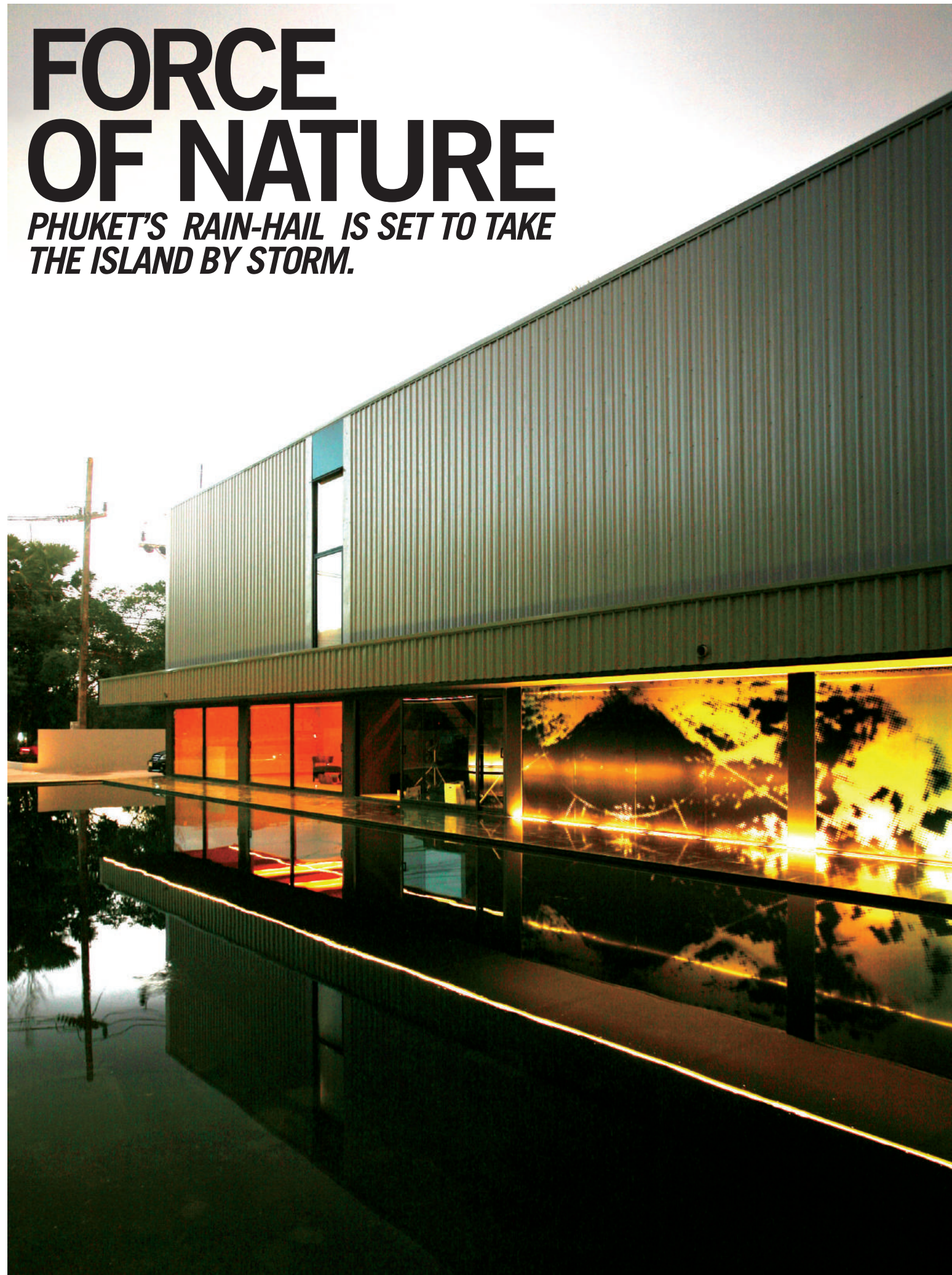


# FORCE OF NATURE

PHUKET'S RAIN-HAIL IS SET TO TAKE THE ISLAND BY STORM.



Situated on Bangtao Beach, on the quieter, northwestern side of Phuket, entertainment and lifestyle complex Rain-Hail is the island's newest kid on the restaurant and lounge block. Or rather pyramid as the sleek, triangular buildings which house restaurant Rain and lounge bar Hail are best described as a giant pyramid sliced into two parts, separated by a rectangular reflective pool. Targeted at upscale tourists and local expats, who are already spoilt for choice when it comes to dining on the island, Rain tosses a new ingredient into the mix: Pacific-rim cuisine, a first for the island.

"People are always looking for something different; a unique experience," says general manager Jinou Park. "It's not just traditional Thai food and Chinese anymore – Phuket is a



mature market." Leaving a successful career in international hotel management behind, Korean-American Jinou established the Terra Firma Groupe to develop leisure accommodations, restaurants and lounges; Rain-Hail marks the company's first project (and in case you were wondering, the restaurant was not named after the famous Korean singer).

Designed by award-winning Italian architects Liverani-Molteni, the newly opened restaurant and lounge duo is characterized by modern architectural design and simple, clean lines. Walking into the complex, the first thing you notice is the venue's stunning shimmering black pool – particularly dramatic in the evening when the fire-lit torches are ablaze. The reflective pool is flanked by two walkways – one of which leads up to glass-encased Rain, while the other takes you to Rain's alter ego, and lounge bar, Hail. Equally eye-catching is the lounge's floor to ceiling glass wall which stretches along the walkway, on which a weather map with a satellite infrared imaging of a storm has been projected. Jinou admits that "in terms of design we're ahead of the curve a bit," but predicts that Phuket will be seeing more of these types of venues.

The Bangtao Beach area, located just minutes from Surin Beach is seeing rapid development. Just down the road there's another uber-trendy restaurant, Coup d'Etat, from Bali, and several hotels and villas are being built in the vicinity. The grand opening of Rain-Hail attracted some 250 local Phuketians, guests and local and international media, who trekked out to this corner of the island to experience the

new arrival. Some may have grumbled that the venue was hard to find, but once on the premises of this eclectic, futuristic-looking structure, comments ranged from "This is the type of club I'd expect to see in the heart of London", to raves about Rain's exquisite cuisine.

The kitchen is headed up by Australian executive chef Derek Brown (Australia seems to have the dibs on exporting great chefs) and each evening he performs what must be some kind of 'Rain dance' in the kitchen, judging by the rich outpouring of gastronomic delights – some of the finest food we've tasted in a long time.

Derek's interpretation of Pacific-rim is 'modern Australian' infused with a dash of Thai and Japanese, both cuisines to which the chef admits a particular fondness. Point in case the *Togarashi spiced blue-fin tuna roll*, a crispy *futomaki* with asparagus, Japanese mayonnaise and sprinkled with black sesame, with a piece of lightly seared tuna on top. He also likes to adapt French techniques as proves *King prawn and scallop ravioli with Thai bouillabaisse*. "I'll take a few ideas and local ingredients and then play around," explains Chef Derek says, who, with his penchant for improvisation, likens himself more to a Jamie Olivier than a Gordon Ramsey. He reveals that he first started dating his wife by offering to cook for her. "Great pickup line!" he advises laughingly. "Pancakes in the morning work too!"

Guests can dine in Rain Inside, with its Scandinavian chic interiors and Mies Van Der Rohe and Flexform furniture, and observe the chefs in action in the open kitchen. If you prefer dining al fresco book a table in Rain Outside, a semi-outdoor area adjacent to the reflective pool. If you're not in the market for a full sit-down meal, head over to lounge bar Hail. Again, the menu has been carefully designed, offering an extensive selection of beverages including house pours, cocktails, liquors and wines. Not to be missed are its innovative cocktails such as *Phuket Island* (Pampero, triple sec, pomegranate, pineapple juice), *Haitini* (Belvedere, blue Curacao, lime juice) or *Shochu lemon grass caipirinha* (Shochu, lemon grass, lime, sugar cane). Hail's philosophy is "to keep the decibels to a level that conversation is still possible". This is certainly a refreshing and novel concept in Thailand, where every club seems intent on blasting your ears out with

pounding house or hip-hop music. We wish more clubs in Bangkok would follow this lead.

Jinou Park succinctly sums up his vision for Rain-Hail with the words "great design, great food, great service". We couldn't agree more.

**Rain-Hail Restaurant and Lounge**  
21 Moo 2 Chengtalay, Bangtao  
Talang, Phuket 83110  
Tel: +66 81 979 1967  
[www.rain-hail.com](http://www.rain-hail.com)

Rain (restaurant): 6pm – 11pm  
Hail (lounge): 6pm – 2am



General Manager Jinou Park