

## Yuanyang New Year

With the onset of the Chinese New Year I was planning on moving on from Yuanyang especially after my hotel owner informed me that he was shutting down for the Holiday and I had to leave. However, the bus to the next town I was heading was also not running for the Holidays, so I was stuck in Yuanyang for New Years. There are much worse places to be stuck. I was still forced to find new lodging. I was forced to take refuge in the government run, The People's Governmental Hotel of Yuanyang County, a place that had all the quaint homely charm that the name implies. A quintessential relic of Communist era utilitarian architecture, complete with tiled floors and drab concrete walls with no idle frills. To call it institutional would be to kind. Chinese New Years seems to be a cross between Christmas Eve and a Forth of July free for all. Most everything is closed and it seems to be mainly a family celebration. The Chinese invented "black" powder and they definitely love to use it. It's interesting how a society that cherishes and pampers there kids, in many cases because they were allowed only one, seems to have no problem arming every single one of them with enough explosives to demolish a small building. Fireworks and firecrackers are set off constantly in the run up to New Years. On New Years Eve almost any direction I turned there were fireworks of some sort being ignited. I spent the time in the main square where a hand full of people were also setting of fireworks and the family-less like myself were watching the display. One end of the square looks out over the valley. Across the valley every village was marked by the flashing lights of distant fireworks. By 10:00 pm it seemed to be winding down and being tired from a long day I went back to my cell in the People's Hotel. This is where the materials used to manufacture my current sleeping chamber would play a significant roll in my "awaking" to another aspect of Chinese New Year. At midnight I think everyone in the town set off string of



**Firework's going off over Yuanyang on Chinese New Year's eve**



**Woman buying fireworks and firecrackers, Yuanyang**

firecrackers. The concrete walled, tile floored room I was in acted as the perfect resonate echo chamber for these blasts. I've never been inside of a snare drum but I think it must sound something like the "shock and awe" barrage of firecrackers that woke me at midnight. Fortunately with the exception of a few stragglers who must have either had their clock set wrong, or who had dozed off like me and awoke not wanting to miss out on the fun, it was a momentary burst and I was able to return to sleep through the first few hours of the year of the pig.



**The year of the pig, well maybe not this one, sitting out front of a shop in Yuanyang.**