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*How we can become the world's
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the REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

ISSUE TWO : JUNE 11 - JUNE 24 , 2004

Articles

- 06 *DRINK IS GOOD FOR YOU*
How we can become the world's greatest lovers
- 08 *SISTER RUTH SEARCHES FOR POVERTY*
A nun decides to help Reykjavik's unfortunates
- 13 *EINAR MÁR: Quiet, Confident and Ignored in America*
- 26 *WHOSE INDEPENDENCE? The Republic celebrates 60 years*

Feature

- 10 *INDEPENDENT WOMEN: Is feminism still necessary?*

Movies & Theatre

- 18 *THE NEW QUEENS BEGIN THEIR RULE.*
A gay cabaret makes its debut
- 19 *LIBERAL AMERICA STRIKES BACK.*
The Day After Tomorrow

Arts & Culture

- 20 *OOPS I DIDN'T DO IT AGAIN.*
Porvaldur Þorsteinsson, Jack of All Trades
- 21 *ORTHODONTISTS, ARTISTS AND HAIRSTYLISTS TO THE STARS*
The youth of Mosfellsbær tell their aspiration

Music & Nightlife

- 22 *KRIS KRISTOFFERSON: Dylan's Janitor Discovers Genius*
- 23 *THE PIXIES AND KORN: From Drugs to Comfort Food*
- 24 *The 2nd Worst Thing You Can Say on a 2nd Date*

Outside Reykjavík

- 28 *STICK PINS AND SLAP THEM ON THE CHEEK*
Dealing with the local ghosts

The Reykjavík Grapevine crew

The Reykjavík Grapevine
 Hafnarstræti 15, 2nd floor
 grapevine@grapevine.is
 Editors: 561-2323 / 845-2152 / editor@grapevine.is
 Advertising: 562-1213 / 869-7796 / ads@grapevine.is
 Distribution: 562-1213 / 898-9249 / dist@grapevine.is
 Listings: 562-1213 / 869-7796 / listings@grapevine.is

Publisher: Hilmar Steinn Grétarsson
Editor: Valur Gunnarsson
Co-editor: Robert Jackson
Listings editor: Jón Trausti Sigurðarson
Production manager: Oddur Óskar Kjartansson
Creative director: Hörður Kristbjörnsson
Photographer: Hörður Sveinsson

Advertising directors: Hilmar Steinn & Jón Trausti
Distribution: Hrafn Þráinsson & Jóhann Páll Hreinsson

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LETTERS

Complaints, criticism, suggestions, praise, money in new, unmarked bills, anything at all: Contact letters@grapevine.is or send your mail to: The Reykjavik Grapevine, Hafnarstræti 15, 101 Reykjavik

Hi,
One of our editors was in Reykjavik recently and he picked up a copy of your newspaper. I really liked the pull-out center section, "Guide to the City Center," and I'd like to get in touch with the person who wrote that. Do you think it's possible to send me that writer's e-mail address, or to give mine to her or him?
Thanks!
Jason Cochran
Senior Editor
Budget Travel magazine

We would, but it sounds like you want to give him an assignment. We find that when people start offering our writers money for their work they become much harder to deal with. So we're sorry but we are unable to help you.

Hello
I wanted to thank you for an amusing article on the exhibition in our museum in your paper in issue 1, year 2. It was nice to get such a lively commentary on this exhibition, I hope you'll pass that on to the writer involved.
Regards and thanks
Harpa Þórsdóttir
Head of Exhibitions
National Gallery of Iceland

Fine, praise them if you must, as long as you don't start offering them money.

In the style of "101 Reykjavik", I tried to 'live' in Hallgrímur Helgason's head and share his thoughts and observations. I found it a rather mystifying place to be. In particular I had a problem with the Icelandic society, which apparently is the "best the earth has ever seen." I wondered if the society where 'nobody goes hungry to bed, no one is cold at night, the healthcare system covers everybody, most people travel abroad three times a year and every home has an Internet connection' was the same society that I was living in. Then it struck me that I did not have the benefit of Hallgrímur's rose-tinted double-glazing. I was also puzzled that he spent five years in Paris and 'there was nothing going on' and that he felt more isolated there than in Reykjavik. But I guess when in Paris he was an unknown wannabe, whereas later in Reykjavik, a celebrated author, artist, essayist, playwright, competition judge and town planning expert, clearly a serious case of Big Fish/Small Pond Syndrome. As for his theory about a small society turning against one that becomes too big, I feel confident that he has nothing to worry about.
Hassan Harazi
101 Reykjavik

Dear Hassan
In response to your query, we sent a reporter and a Catholic nun on location to see if poverty exists in Iceland. See page 8. They failed to find it in the first attempt, but that doesn't mean it's not there. Anyone wanting to send pointers or even write articles about the subject please get in touch.
Grapevine - Here to help.

Dear Grapevine,
I'm delighted that you're back! I missed your fresh commentary on Icelandic society during the winter months. As chairperson of the Multicultural Council I was happy to see an article about the new law about foreigners recently passed by the Icelandic Parliament. I was involved in the month-long protest against the passing of that law, along with 12 other organizations, and was one of the people who testified to Members of Parliament about some of the clauses which would violate the human rights of foreigners.

Unfortunately, there are a number of inaccuracies in the article that appeared in the Grapevine and I would like to clear them up.

This law has nothing to do with what age a foreigner must be before being able to apply for a bank loan to buy a house or apartment. The 24 year age limit has to do with residence permits for foreign spouses of Icelanders. It says that foreign spouses of Icelanders who are younger than 24 can no longer automatically get a residence permit solely on the basis of being married to a native.

1) The author mixed up the names of 2 different institutions as well as the people who head them. He said that a meeting on Friday May 21st was held by the Multicultural Centre. There is no such place in Reykjavik. There is an institution called the Intercultural Centre. In fact, the open meeting was held by the Reykjavik Cultural Committee.

2) Later in the article the author gives the name, phone number, and e-mail address of Halldóra Gunnarsdóttir as the contact person. This woman does not work at the Intercultural Centre but in fact works at City Hall as an information task manager in the Development and Family Department of the city government.

3) The open meeting about cultural activities had nothing whatsoever to do with the new law about foreigners.

4) Neither did the Multicultural Carnival which was advertised as being held in first Ingólfstorg and later Lækjartorg and NOT at Stjórnarráð, as mentioned in the article.

I would like to point out that if anyone is interested in more information about services for foreigners, to drop in at the Intercultural Centre on Hverfisgata 18, directly across the street from the National Theatre and pick up the current and back issues of their magazine which has articles in many languages, including English, about foreigners' services and rights.

Respectfully yours,
Hope Knútsson
chairperson, Multicultural Council

*Paul Fontaine-Nikolov responds:
I was pleased to hear that someone was fighting for us, the forgotten Icelanders, when this dreadful set of laws was passed. While I appreciate your clarification on the "age 24" law, I would like to point out:*

1) This group was called the "Multicultural centre", in English, several times in the meeting. The name Halldóra Gunnarsdóttir was given several times at this meeting as the person to contact if any foreigners had any ideas as to how to make Reykjavik more multicultural. I spoke to one Halldóra Gunnarsdóttir about this meeting, told her what was said, and asked if she was indeed the contact person for this group. She confirmed that she was.

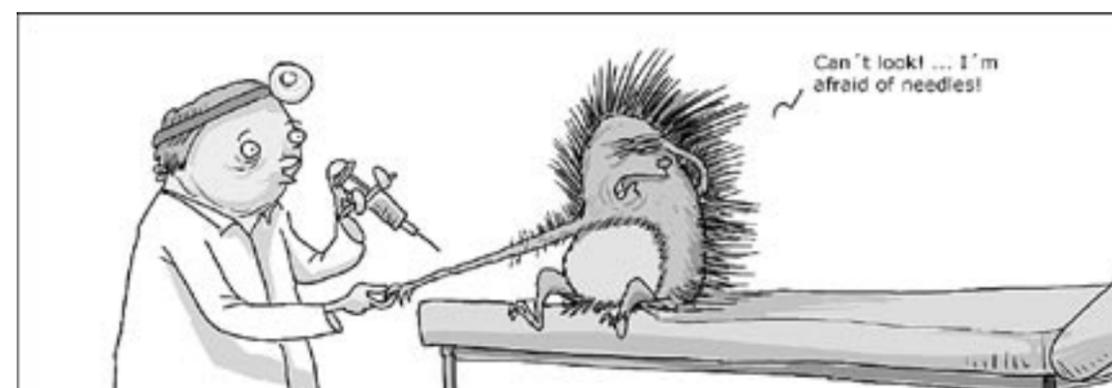
2) The open meeting might not have had anything directly to do with the new laws, but the purpose of this meeting - to make Reykjavik more multicultural - is both pertinent and relevant within the context of these new laws especially.

3) They did indeed discuss providing services to foreigners, e.g., a database website of every foreigner organisation in Iceland, and not just involving foreigners in more cultural activities, as you assert.

3) In no point in the article did I say that the festival took place at Stjórnarráð. I said that I went to a "meeting" (which ended up being a hoax) at Stjórnarráð, while "the festival set up across the street" - which would be Lækjartorg.

While these laws seek to marginalize, these events seek to include. Aren't we all working towards the same goals, after all?

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TROUBLE IN PARADISE

by Valur Gunnarsson

Fjölmiðlafrumvarpið. There. I've said it. The F-word. Now, let us never mention it again. At least not this issue. As we all get ready now for the media not bringing up anything but the F-word for most of the summer, we'll be focusing on other aspects of the country. And, quite apart from everything to do with the F-word, all is not well in the state of Iceland.

At our party two weeks ago I spoke to a Bulgarian girl who said that the reason she initially wanted to come to Iceland was that she had heard it was very liberal, with a great gay scene and the first female president. After she came here, though, she has been somewhat disappointed.

The gays are doing their best, putting on a great show at Jón Forseti, despite a cast member having been beaten up by gay bashers the night before (see p. 18). Bigotry? There's no such thing in Iceland. It's interesting that these days the ambassadors here of the old imperialist Anglo-Saxon powers of Britain and the USA have dark skin. The countries that once took up the White Man's Burden are now being represented by blacks in the whitest country in the world (much admired as such by the Nazis). But of course, we welcome people of every colour and creed. Sure, when a deal was reached with the Americans in 1946 to station troops here, there was a secret clause demanding that no black soldiers come to Iceland. Bigotry? There's no such thing in Iceland.

In the film Troy, Helen, supposedly the most beautiful woman in history, is portrayed by a blonde, pale-skinned German. This apart from the fact that the story is set in the Eastern Mediterranean, and Helen would no doubt have had much darker features. The same

goes for Achilles, portrayed by the no less blonde and fair skinned Brad Pitt. Throughout history, heroes of the ancient world, (Jesus being a case in point) have always had their appearances changed to accord with the ideals of the Northern European peoples who write it.

For our cover, and linking in with articles on women in Iceland as well as 60 years of independence, we decided to put on the cover a picture of a woman wearing the traditional costume. To counter localised ideals of beauty, as well as to embrace the multicultural society, we decided to ask a black woman to

wear the costume. We thought this was kinda nice. Little did we expect the reaction. The lady who was going to lend us the costume withdrew her offer upon hearing of who was to wear it. Not because she didn't like the person in question, or had ever met her before, but because she was black. We then decided to rent a costume. The answer was the same. We asked the woman who owned the rental whether she would refuse a person point blank to rent a certain costume on the basis of her colour, to which she replied she would.

We had to go all the way to Laugavatn and borrow a costume from the Woman's Association there, who of course had no objection to the idea, to finally make the shoot. The result is, as we had hoped, a beautiful picture. If anyone is offended, well...

On a lighter note, we also have a new staff member, Beerman. He won't be around the office much, but you'll see him at the bar. These days, as a practitioner of irresponsible sex, he's very worried about the chlamydia epidemic that's been going round. Well, it's a good thing someone is, because the health department sure isn't. As mentioned in the last issue of Grapevine, they don't think it necessary to keep chemists open after midnight since the only people that come there ask for syringes and condoms. If helping people to avoid life threatening diseases such as hepatitis C and HIV, as well as lesser evils such as chlamydia and unwanted pregnancies is not important then what, pray tell is?



Passing through



Names?

Elizabeth Corcos (right) & Miriam Stewenson (left)

Where are you from?

We're both from England but I (Liz) live and work in Munchen Germany and I (Miriam) live in London.

Have you been here long?

For two days now and we're going to stay here four days total.

How do you like Iceland?

We love it! The people are friendly and helpful and we feel safe here.

How do you not like Iceland?

It's expensive!

How many people live in Iceland?

288.000?

What's your favorite spot in Reykjavik?

Perlan! It's a beautiful building, has a good museum inside (Perlan saga

museum) and from it there's a great view over the city of Reykjavik.

Do you know who Björk is?

Yes.

Do you know who Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson is?

...ehh... I saw that name today... hmm.....could it be him who founded Reykjavik.... or no! He's probably your president or something.

Have you heard about the current debate in Iceland?

Well we can remember three debates: 1. Iceland joining the EU, 2. That hydro-electric project in the east of

Iceland and 3. Iceland's decision to start whaling again, that is a big issue here isn't it?

Have you tried any Icelandic delicacies?

Well, we went to Tveir Fiskar restaurant and ate fish. It was great!

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16 HOTELS AROUND ICELAND

DRINK IS GOOD FOR YOU!

by Robert Jackson

So here's the scene. I'm sitting at my desk looking out of the window of the Grapevine offices. Below me is the world's most famous hotdog stand and in the distance Esja is throwing off the last of the winter's snow. It's 12:30 on a Saturday morning, it's a fine day, I'm feeling good, so I'll drink a beer while I write this piece. I lift the ring pull, hear the gentle release of gas and take a sip. "Ah... that's better," I think to myself.

If you are a visitor reading this piece there's not much that you would consider out of the ordinary about my actions. But if you are from Iceland, the image would prompt the question "So, you want to get drunk, do you?"

You see, Iceland has not embraced the concept of 'social' drinking. Whilst the rest of Europe, with the exception of my own country, England (and I'll come back to them), have grown and developed with alcohol as a mild and pleasant social stimulant, the majority of Icelanders treat alcohol as a Saturn rocket does liquid nitrogen.

A glass of wine with your meal, a beer after work with your friends, a dram of whisky as a night cap are part of daily life for tens of millions of Europeans. Europe's drink laws treat us as responsible individuals. Children are introduced to the pleasures of moderate alcohol consumption, whilst at the same time learning about the obvious dangers of abuse. In these countries people learn from an early age that to get drunk and appear to be drunk is to appear to be a fool, an embarrassment to not only yourself, but also the people you are with.

A sober country from Sunday to Friday

Iceland remains a temperance based society where strict drink laws and a high liquor tax prevail - there is no tradition of 'social' drinking here. The distribution and sale of alcohol is run by the state monopoly; they alone can sell the stuff and they do so through a restricted number of outlets at restricted hours. They

also tax the hell out of the product. Just over 15 years ago beer was still banned from the country on the basis that it would have a corrupting effect on Icelandic youth. An Icelander cannot buy alcohol until he is twenty years old and even then he will pay four times more than his European counterparts for his bottle of beer, his glass of wine or whatever it is he wants to drink when he is finally allowed to shop at the wine monopoly. In addition, most households do not store liquor and the majority do not drink alcohol from Sunday lunchtime to Friday evening. Instead, Icelanders drink water, coffee, milk or cola with their lunch and supper.

On the face of it, all should be well. But research has shown that while temperance-based cultures drink less alcohol per capita than more relaxed countries, when they do take to the booze, they drink not for the gentle stimulant a glass or two can provide; they drink instead to get drunk. And here in Iceland, they drink to get Viking drunk. Let me add, that in a Grapevine devoted to sexual equality, Icelandic women kneel shoulder to shoulder in the gutters with men when it comes to getting out of it on a Saturday night.

Do Icelanders drink less than others?

The other remarkable thing about temperance-based societies is that on average they have six to seven times as many Alcoholics Anonymous groups per capita as non-temperance countries. On this matter Iceland has managed to achieve a remarkable first - whilst it has one of the lowest levels of alcohol consumption



in Europe, it has the highest ratio of AA groups per head of population. Something is not working.

What has become clear is cultures that accept responsible social drinking as a normal part of life have less alcohol abuse than the cultures that fear and condemn alcohol. The drinking culture in Iceland really does need to change. Yes, the laws should change in line with other European cultures, but that should also happen as a determined effort is made to reposition alcohol in the Icelandic psyche.

Drinking to oblivion is not bad morally. But it can and does lead to fistfights, drunk driving and unwanted pregnancies as well as being a bore for others who have to endure it. There are a growing number of serious musicians in Iceland who will only play at early gigs as they want their music heard and their lyrics listened to but the environment that exists in many clubs as midnight approaches prevents this.

How to avoid bad sex

Coming from England, a country not renowned for the sexual prowess of its males, it may sound a bit rich commenting on Icelandic sexual behaviour but I feel on solid ground in referring to Europe's more famed lovers, the French and Italians, who treat alcohol as a sexual stimulant - not an anaesthetic. Perhaps it is

time that Icelanders did the same. Getting blasted leads so often to bad sex, unwanted bad sex, unwanted babies, unwanted partners, unwanted partners' diseases. It really isn't that appealing.

Icelandic males will tell anyone who will listen that this country has some of the most beautiful women in the world. If that is the case, why do they have to get half comatose to get into bed with them? And as for the women, perhaps getting drunk is the only way to make an Icelandic male seem beddable. It just doesn't add up.

Icelanders have never travelled more, and hopefully this exposure to countries with an enlightened approach to drink will help. The defining moment will be when moderate use of alcohol is encouraged and presented as equally acceptable to abstinence. At the same time, excessive drinking will be seen as socially unacceptable and certainly never accepted as an excuse for bad behaviour. It's the way the rest of the world is going and there is nothing to be gained in Iceland not going with them.

I long to see families sharing a bottle of wine over their lunch in the cafés of Reykjavík. It may be a long time in coming, but come it will.

News in brief

President refuses to sign



The President refused to sign a bill passed by Parliament which would have proscribed cross-media ownership. This is the first time in the history of the Republic that the President has refused to sign a bill. The bill will now go to a national referendum, the first in the history of the Republic

Government and opposition don't get along



A meeting was convened between government and opposition ministers as to how the referendum was to be conducted, as no specific rules exist. The meeting was broken off after less than 15 minutes, in a reputedly hostile atmosphere. Parliament will reconvene on the 5th of July, even though this has traditionally been a part of its long summer vacation.

"I'm an Icelandic viking and I'm making a noise!"

by Örn, Reykjavik poet

It's never been hard to stop drinking. Getting ready for the first beer; that's the hard part. It took me a few years. Thinking about whether to start or not. Alcoholism in my family and all that. But when I finally made the decision, a whole bottle of Vodka was down.

I remember, vaguely though, rolling down the stairway in my block. It was Christmas and a school dance I was looking forward to. I even had a girl waiting - my date. Something every 16 year old is excited about. The bottle was emptied and the party over; somehow I got to the dance.

It was on a boat. Disco lights everywhere. My girl said hello but I didn't even recognise her. The Russian liquor was the only thing on my mind.

After a few minutes of me dancing with myself I went to the deck, rolled over, and laid there in my own puke. It was really a magical moment. The headmaster, my teacher and the student advisor walked towards me. I only wanted to be left

alone.

"I think it's time you go home," the headmaster said. There wasn't much room in my head for argument so I did what he said.

That night changed my life. I had a new friend and his name was Smirnoff.

I miss those old times. Getting drunk the first time is somehow like losing your virginity. Very often those things go hand in hand. My first time with a woman was in Vestman Islands.

The night before I had emptied a whole bottle of Hot and Sweet - pepper vodka. My friends were working in the town and I went to a party at their place. After a few beers my body got limp, somehow stopped working. My head was pretty clear though. I remember my friends making a circle around me. Singing a song about how drunk I was.

Then I got up and managed to run out. The next thing I remember is waking up down in the valley. With no telephone, jacket, wallet or shoes;



only a handful of yellow credit card notes in my pocket and a half full bottle of Jack Daniels. Trying to find myself I walked around in a frenzy. Then somebody yelled my name. I turned around and saw two guys pointing at me laughing.

"God you were drunk tonight," one of them said.

"Do I know you?," I answered.

"I sure don't hope so. We were listening to the band when you suddenly kicked your shoes off, un-

buttoned your pants and took a shit on the dance floor. Then you wiped your ass with some credit card notes in your wallet. It was crazy."

I suddenly remembered what I had found in my pocket and ran away.

Those kind of things are bound to happen when you are young. People who don't drink will never experience the beauty of a bad hangover or a massive black out. But all good things must come to an end. It was a few days before my 17th birthday. A

A group of young men, plotting no good on the dancefloor, no doubt.

Culture night in Reykjavík city. I was drinking Smirnoff straight from the bottle and got separated from my friends. Suddenly I found myself in a strange party. Everyone dressed like Marilyn Manson. Nick Cave singing - Death is not the end. Outside people were yelling. The fireworks just ahead.

We got out and climbed on to a rooftop. The sky exploded and everything turned black. Later someone said I had almost rolled off the roof. But the night wasn't over. Not for me at least. When I opened my eyes I was hanging down from a light post. The police yelling at me to get down. I assembled all my energy and screamed as high as I could: "I'm an Icelandic Viking and I'm making noise."

Then, looking down, I saw my parents. I waved at them and at the same time lost my grip. It was a beautiful ending to a Culture night in Reykjavík and a turning point in my life.

From then on things could only get better.

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SISTER RUTH SEARCHES FOR POVERTY

by Pádraig Mara



Sister Ruth was last seen dancing with a group of mentally handicapped children in the grass of the town square, a statue of the Virgin in her arms.

I first spoke with Sister Ruth over the phone one Friday. I explained that I wrote for a local newspaper and asked if it would be alright if I accompanied her the next day as she ministered to the needy, homeless or otherwise troubled and wrote an article on it. She accepted happily. "That would be wonderful", she said. "I've been molested and attacked with swords before while attending to my work... that won't happen if there's a man with me".

I paused, unable to respond for a second. Swords? Where had she been working? I gathered myself. "No Sister", I replied. "That won't happen".

I walked down to Cabin Hotel at 11 o'clock on a beautiful Saturday morning to meet Sister Ruth. As I waited in the lobby for her to come downstairs, I wondered why the Sisters of Saint Francis had put her up in a hotel. Shouldn't she be staying at one of the rectories in either Reykjavík or Hafnafjörður? Or at one of her sister convents? My thoughts were cut short as Sister Ruth approached, a woman of advanced middle age, dressed in "civilian" clothing, topped with a Jesus Fish baseball cap. Propped in her arms, facing me, she carried a two foot tall statue of Mary. I scratched my head.

We walked down Borgatún in the dazzling Reykjavík summer sunshine, the sky blue and clear. Reykjavíkingar were out in force, enjoying the weather. Sister Ruth had been on the television the night before, ensuring her instant recognition. People smiled and pointed as we walked past. It was established that Sister Ruth is a missionary nun, based in London, with her home convent near Knock in Ireland. She said that she had been all over the world ministering. I asked her where she would like to begin in Reykjavík. She said that she would like very much to meet my wife and child. I wondered why, but didn't ask. As we continued walking my eyes kept drifting back to the statue she carried. It looked solid and heavy. My guilt grew, I scratched my head. "Sister," I said, "Let me carry that for you". She gave it to me. Now I was part of the parade. Damn it... I quickened my pace to my apartment.

The Plot to Kill Lady Di

At my house Sister Ruth held my daughter, drank tea and chatted. She talked briefly about her experiences in different countries. She spoke about working with prostitutes in Amsterdam's red-light district. "You know they sit in those windows with no clothing on, and I just sat beside them and talked" she said. My wife replied that must not have been good for business. I stifled a laugh.

It soon became obvious that Sister Ruth had no idea of where to find the needy in Reykjavík. I found it

"I really believe the Virgin will spare Iceland when the atomic holocaust finally ushers in the end."

odd that she should be sent out to do her work without so much as a connection with any Catholic charities. My wife and I myself busied ourselves calling soup kitchens, poverty assistance centers and finally the Salvation Army, attempting to find some unfortunates for Sister Ruth to lead to salvation. My daughter cooed and hooted in the nun's lap, trying repeatedly to grab the likeness of Mary on the table in front of her. Sister Ruth explained that she always carried the statue of Our Lady because it opens up people's hearts. She informed us that once on a plane a gentleman sitting next to her identified himself as a member of British Intelligence. He went on to confess that Princess Diana had in fact been murdered as part of a conspiratorial plot between the Royal family and MI5. I scratched my head and cleared my throat.

Enter the Satanists

We were soon driving to Samhjálp, a soup kitchen located downtown on Hverfisgata. As we drove, Sister Ruth (statue propped on her lap, looking out the windshield) regaled me with tales of ex-Satanists in America confessing to her, solemnly and with much weeping, to all manner of perversion, drug abuse, even human sacrifice. I drove faster. She said she doubted if there was much of that here. I agreed whole-heartedly. Probably very, very little. I parked the car, we both got out. I

rang the door bell. I slammed on the door. Samhjálp was closed. I was getting desperate to find someone, anyone for Sister Ruth to help... I was becoming more and more convinced that Sister Ruth was herself desperately in need of help.

Our next stop was the Salvation Army. I rushed the front desk and asked in clumsy Icelandic if any of the Army were around. He looked at me, perplexed. I asked again, this time in English, if any of the salvation soldiers were around. Behind my shoulder he saw Sister Ruth, Mary in hand, chatting with German backpackers trying to check in to the hostel that the Salvation Army runs.

Sister Ruth- Hello and where are you two from?

German Backpacker Girl- We're from Leipzig, Germany.

Sister Ruth- Oh how nice! God bless. (in a horrible German accent) Und danke schoooooone!

The backpacker looked at me for an explanation. I had none to offer. The gent behind the desk offered us a seat in a waiting area and kindly assured me he'd get the head of the house here in a few minutes.

England Goes to the Dogs (and the Freemasons)

We waited for a half an hour for the soldier of salvation. Sister Ruth detailed the suffering she experiences routinely while she is back at

"They're all Satanists, the Freemasons, did you know that?"

her London base. She is constantly spat at, beaten up, chased, mocked and molested, even while carrying the likeness of Mary with her at all times. England is going down the tubes. There's pornography everywhere. The children are all hooligans. All the women are having abortions. "It's all to do with the Freemasons you know", she says, "they've become very strong in Britain in the last years...they're trying

Sister Ruth and friend



to stamp out Christianity, they're all Satanists, the Freemasons, did you know that?" No, I replied. I did not know that. The Salvation Army chief shows up, in full regalia, white shirt, white hat, white beard. He is from Norway, has only very recently arrived and has NO idea where we might find some homeless or otherwise helpless. Sister Ruth and the Norwegian chatted away happily for a few minutes, about what I don't know. I asked the desk clerk for the address of any rehab centers, halfway houses, anything. He gave me one. I thanked him, collected Sister Ruth and made a hasty exit.

The weather had turned, and I drove slowly through the rain. Our Lady of Victories, Sister Ruth and myself kept our eyes peeled for the address of the halfway house the desk clerk gave me. At last we located it, and of course it was empty, and seemingly abandoned.

By now it was raining quite hard for Iceland. Sister Ruth offered to buy me a cup of coffee. I politely refused; I had to be at work soon. I had best drop her back at her hotel. On the way, she cheerfully assured me of how lucky I am to live in Iceland. "They seem not to have lost their love for Our Lady here, as they have in so many other European countries" she said. "You know we're living in the End Times, Armageddon times, but I really believe the Virgin will spare Iceland when the atomic holocaust finally ushers in the end." I said I was glad to hear it. When I left her in the lobby of Hotel Cabin, she gave me and my wife gifts. Miniatures of Mary and Christ. For my daughter, a rosary that glows green

in the dark, to be hung over her bed.

Sister Ruth was last seen dancing with a group of mentally handicapped children in the grass of the town square, a statue of the Virgin in her arms.

News in brief

Icelandic commander in Kabul



An Icelandic commander was put in charge of the International airport in Kabul by NATO forces. The airport has 900 personnel, 17 of whom are Icelandic. Foreign minister Ásgrímsson was present as the airport was handed over to the Icelandic commander. The previous commander had been German, and both countries anthems were played.

Flags distributed to children



The Independence Day Committee has decided to issue all kindergarten toddlers with the Icelandic flag to commemorate Independence Day next June 17th. Boy Scouts will be despatched, and all in all 5.700 flags will be distributed. The first flags arrived at Grænborg kindergarten on the 7th of June.

Mayor wants to clean up city



Authorities are taking still more interest in the city's kindergartens. Mayor Þórólfur Arnason announced a drive to clean up the city on a visit to Sæborg kindergarten, as many visitors are expected to the capital around Independence Day celebrations. Garbage bags have been placed in strategic locations and city officials asked to get their staff to be more tidy. Skólavörðustígur has been designated as a flower street, and flower pots have been handed out to residents.

Palestinians held in custody



The Supreme Court confirmed a ruling that three Palestinians who had stolen or forged passports are to be held in custody until the 16th of June. The ruling says there are reasonable grounds for suspicion that the men are involved counterfeiting official documents, breaking the foreigner law, links to break-ins in Denmark, and suggests a possibility that they are part of an international crime syndicate.

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INDEPENDENT WOMEN:



The 19th Century Russian radical and writer Chernyshevsky claimed that women had been so long subjugated to men that mere gender equality was no longer enough, that men should now take their turns as underdogs. To prove his point, he insisted that his wife be with as many other men as she wished, whereas he would remain loyal and true.

Olga, the prettiest girl in Saratov, considered this an appealing prospect. Even if the nihilist was neither attractive nor good conversation, he would supply a steady income and otherwise let her do as she wished. In their nine year marriage she boasted of many affairs, most notably with a Polish émigré in the alcove while her husband worked in the same room. When the nihilist was convicted of treason, she eventually came to Petersburg for his trial, but went shopping and to the opera before visiting him. Their relationship ended with his exile to Siberia. His feminist novel, *What is to be Done?*, has been described “with reason as the worst novel ever written,” but was

a huge influence on Russian nihilists. One of them, Nicholas Shelgunov, took the idea even further. When his friend Michael Mikhaylov, who was having an affair with his wife, was sentenced to exile in Siberia, Shelgunov insisted he and his wife go with him so that the two lovers could be together.

Is it perhaps now men’s turn to be the underdogs? Could it be that they even deserve it? Is it, perhaps, inevitable? If women are used to working twice as hard for half a chance, it would follow that once they achieve actual equality, they will advance quicker, and should before long find themselves in more positions of authority. Has the battle for women’s rights been won, or do we still have a long way to go?

We asked four young people (including my aging self) for their thoughts on the situation for women in Iceland today. So, in the manner of a reality TV show, let me say: Two guys, two girls, four points of view.

Were there no women in history? *Valur Gunnarsson* *Icelandic male*

Reading through most history books, you find a conspicuous absence of women. Before the 19th Century, there's Elisabeth of England, Catherine the Great of Russia, Cleopatra, Joan of Arc, but not many other key players to be found. One is given the impression that their impact on history was slight. The Sagas beg to differ. They are full of strong-willed women who put events in motion. When the men are at each others throats, it is often the women who egged them on, prompting the saying "köld eru kvennaráð" (cold is a woman's counsel). Some scholars have even suggested that Laxdæla saga was written by a woman.

In the Sagas, women display a number of traits not traditionally considered feminine. They can be ambitious, vindictive, arrogant and very, very cunning, using their wits as well as their beauty to get their way. Sometimes, they're even physically braver than the men. In the Saga of Eric the Red, after coming to America, his daughter, Freydis, finds one of the men lying dead. At that moment the natives arrive again, and she bares her breasts and lays them on the dead man's blade, which frightens the natives away.

Perhaps the Sagas give a more accurate portrayal of actual gender relations in history. The men may have acted out most

of the major events (and have taken most of the credit), but no doubt they were often guided by strong-willed women behind the scenes.

In our own time, women from Thatcher to Bruntland to Aquino should have proved without a doubt that women can be just as effective leaders as men, whatever their politics, whereas recent events in Iraq may have shown that they can be just as cruel when presented with the tools of oppression. It is high time women were allowed to enter the history books. But from now on, they will also have to share their part of the blame.

IS FEMINISM STILL NECESSARY?

Eve Takes the Fall *Paul Fontaine-Nikolov* *American exile*

I blame Justin Timberlake. And I blame CBS. Maybe I should even blame U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft. But maybe I should be thanking them as well. After all, they did remind us all that feminism has a long way to go.

I'm referring, of course, to the "incident" at the Super Bowl when Janet Jackson's breast was briefly exposed on national television. Both Jackson and Timberlake admitted that this thing was staged and just exposed more skin than intended, yet who got raked over the coals? Who got chuckled about on Jay Leno, chastised by CBS, and lambasted by Ashcroft? The woman, of course.

I know America's rabidly puritanical society, wherein watching a woman being murdered on primetime TV is acceptable but watching a woman being made love to is not. And it's true that the NFL's complaint was that the Super Bowl is a "family show" but even tiny infants have seen breasts up close and in personal. And yes, it's also true that Ashcroft is the same guy who ordered a sheet draped over the Justice statue's exposed breast once before giving a speech, as it offended his tender sensibilities. But when the story broke here in Iceland, I was surprised by how many people didn't talk about the overly puritanical reaction of

the American public - rather, they too laughed at Ms. Jackson. Is this some Adam and Eve thing, where both sexes are culpable of doing something pretty innocuous and yet the woman takes the fall? Perhaps. But the reactions to this incident reminded me how far feminism still has to go before any real equality will be achieved. According to a Norwegian survey (www.likestilling.no), among unskilled workers, Icelandic women make about 883 kronur for every 1000 a man makes. In skilled labour, that ratio is 714 to every 1000

It could it be that women are being paid less than men for the same work because they're not taken seriously. Need proof? Just flip channels some time on Icelandic television and see what gender is hosting which programs. When it comes to political analysis, roundtable discussions, and interviews with the elite, you can always expect to see a man hosting the show. But if you want to see what how the famous decorate their homes or what to wear this summer, well, that's women's work, isn't it?

To make the equality between the genders not just a legal but a cultural reality takes the effort of both genders. It's not just the woman's burden for her to assert herself in the workplace, at home, on the street or in popular culture. Men can, should, and

in many ways are furthering the cause for equality, which isn't easy. The general assumption among men is that "feminist men" are either spineless, "whipped", or just plain strange and best avoided. Since men are so sensitive about the opinion of their peers, many choose to remain silent.

We also have to watch our own behavior and be sure that we don't fall into the all-too-comfortable assumptions passed down from generation to generation. Most of all, if we can't defend our mothers, daughters and sisters, do we even know what justice is? We have to remember that this is not an issue of gender; it's an issue of humanity. The rights we fight for belong to everyone.

Justin Timberlake is doing just fine; Janet Jackson has all but disappeared from view. But I hope she makes a comeback, big time. Not that I'm a big fan of her music, but it'd be so nice to see her back again, unapologetic, doing what she does best. It's at least comforting to know that she'll probably outlive John Ashcroft. Maybe his tight-lipped, puritanical, sexist ideas will die with him. The choice, as always, is ours.

The Girl Power Generation Grows Up *Eydís Björnsdóttir* *Student*

Back in the days when I saw life in black and white, right or wrong, I would watch "Rosemary's Baby" religiously and then imagine her husband being pushed down the stairs as punishment for his wicked ways. My blood thirst only got stronger when I read the book and I had a hard time understanding how women got stuck in abusive relationships. Then life hit me. Some years and quite a number of life-changing experiences later, my firm beliefs were not quite what they used to be. Gone was my irresistible longing to punish the treacherous villain, now that I had realised life just isn't as simple as that. To this day, I always get a mild shock when I hear a woman who wishes torture upon rapists or laws upon men who outrank her. And if there's one thing I have little patience for, that's women who demand equal rights. It's not that I dislike what these feminist fascists are endlessly trying to accomplish, i.e. these so called "equal" rights. I just dislike the way they go about it, claiming there to be great injustice in the way society works. I don't care how they try to justify it, there just shouldn't be a law saying that if two equally qualified people apply for the same job in a male dominant industry that

the employer must hire the woman. Of course it should also be about whether the applicant suits the work atmosphere, to name one example. An employer should be able to hire anyone he (or she) damn well pleases, anyway.

The University of Iceland offers something called "gender studies" (*kynjafraði*). These studies focus mainly on women, their standing in different societies, the history of women's fight for equal rights and feminist approaches in academic works. Apparently, men aren't a gender. If you don't believe me, feel free to look it up in the University's book of modules. I admit I'm being just a little bit unfair, they do have one course on men and manhood (*karlar og karlmennska*). But it is funny that they should specifically mention that this course not only looks at men's constructive forces but their destructive ones as well. Now, I'm not saying that men are saints. But what surprises me is that they haven't remarked much on the fact that males are becoming the oppressed gender in society. Women get all sorts of "special treatment" because we're constantly being told that we are a minority group. Not too long ago four qualified people applied for the job of a Supreme Court judge. The

job then went to the Prime Minister's nephew. The three men only had the Parliament's ombudsman to turn to with their grievances, while the woman could complain to the Equal Rights committee as well, which is a group of people that investigates whether women applying for jobs have been wrongfully turned down. Such committees are spreading fast and you can find one in almost every town in Iceland. Yes, it has gotten to the point where men have started to flee into other lines of work. More and more men are taking on women's uniforms as workers in health care and education. Women, on the other hand, are taking over the University, where 62% of the students are female. Their numbers have been rising fast, as only ten years ago they were little more than half of all the students. As long as women are treated as a minority group, we will never get any headway with the "unjust gap" between the sexes. Equal rights are not about helping the minority groups. They're about making sure that no one gets special treatment, not even the minority groups.

Pink Choices *Katrín Anna Guðmundsdóttir* *Spokeswoman of the Feminist Association of Iceland*

The feminist movement in Iceland has taken a huge leap in the last year or so. Being fed up of still getting less pay, too few women in management and politics, pornification of the public space and lack of action to improve the situation, Icelandic women and men joined forces in the Feminist Association of Iceland. The Feminist Association of Iceland was founded just over a year ago, on April 14th. The association has several groups that each concentrate on a specific topic. We have a security council that concentrates on reducing violence against women, a stereotype group, culture group, men and feminism group, health group, education group, a web group, and a group for young feminists. There has been a lot of activity in the last year. We started just before the last parliamentary elections so we organized meetings with all the parties, both before and after the election. This was also the season of beauty pageants so of course we wanted a discussion about the purpose of them in our society.

Among our actions was to open an art exhibition that showed the history of protests against beauty pageants from 1970 to

date. We marched on Labour day, May 1st, all dressed in pink and on June 19th, the day women got the right to vote, we organized a national campaign named "Let's paint the town pink", in cooperation with other women's organizations. That day we encouraged everyone to show their support for equality by wearing something pink. We delivered pink coloured stones to four significant men in our society: the President of Iceland, the Minister of Health, The Mayor of Reykjavik and the Bishop of Iceland. The stones were an encouragement to remember to have equality in mind in all decision making.

The biggest event our first year was a 9-day Feminist Week, filled with actions every day. We encouraged all women to ask for a 15% pay increase and asked employers to compare the wages between their female and male employees. We had an art exhibition with self portraits of women and another one about pornography available through Icelandic websites. We held symposiums about women's health issues, women in management, pay difference, and met with three of the receivers of the Pink Stones from June 19th, the Minister of Health, the

Mayor of Reykjavik and a representative from the Bishop of Iceland. Much more was accomplished this week and it ended with a ball where female bands performed. More information of what we have done can be found on our website, www.feministinn.is.

Gender plays a big role in our lives and men and women are viewed differently, meet different expectations and have different economical and political power. Our goal is not to make everyone the same but to celebrate the diversity and to view our differences as equal. We want both genders to have as many options to choose from as possible and we want the pink choices to be just as important and valuable as the blue choices. With this in mind we are currently organizing our second campaign of "Let's paint the town pink" with other women's organizations. If you happen to be in Iceland on June 19th, remember to put on something pink to show your support for equality.



MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS

EDDAS AND SAGAS

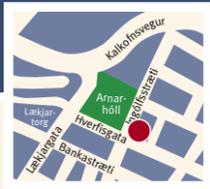
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COLUMNS

THE IDIOSYNCRACIES OF LEARNING ICELANDIC

by Angela Stokes

Icelandic can be a daunting language to learn - aside from the unusual letters and the tongue-twisting consonant-clusters. Hveragerði, a town in the south, is pronounced 'kveragerthi'. The grammar in particular can appear outrageously complex, especially for those whose mother tongue grammar is simple by comparison.

The idiosyncracies of learning Icelandic are not restricted to the grammar - the curious habit you may have noticed of inhaling words or even whole sentences to indicate something is clear, or mutually understood, was a feature I wasn't keen on when I first came to Iceland nearly three years ago. Now this inhalation is so prevalent in my speech that it even affects my English, leading friends at home to believe I'd developed some bizarre form of asthma.

To indicate a simple lack of comprehension, Icelanders normally exclaim 'Ha?' in a tone more often reserved for confrontation in other languages. It is another trait that doesn't import well to English. One advantage of learning Icelandic is that there are far fewer words in the language than in English (one estimate I recently heard suggested English contains about a million words compared to approximately 400,000 in Icelandic), indicating that mastering a basic vocabulary at least should not be too taxing.

As my understanding of Icelandic increases, I realise the beauty of this ancient language - who can fail to be moved for example by the greeting 'komdu sæl og blessuð' - literally 'Come to me joyfully and blessed' - an everyday way of saying 'hello' here. I also discover words I

**PÖÐÝÆÚÐ
ÖÐÝÆÐÖ
ÆÖÐÐÞ**

ÆPÐ

only wish had English equivalents - for example, 'dugleg' - a versatile, common adjective for anyone who has done a job well. It is well known that Icelanders protect their language fiercely, with a special board appointed to create new words for products like computers (tölvur) rather than borrowing from English like many other languages. It is also forbidden here to give your child a name that is not on the official list of acceptable Icelandic names, overseen by the Name Committee (Mannanafnanefnd). Personally, this strikes me as a rather fascist and limited system, coming from a country where people are free to name their children at will. But, in

a world where minority languages die out at astonishing rates, Icelanders hold proudly to their roots - although almost everyone you meet here speaks excellent English and some adverts now even appear with English text, there is no sign of a decline in the importance of the native language in this isolated community.

Icelandic is certainly a unique challenge for the language-learner, but with a rich heritage and a future hopefully secured by protective measures, it seems it's definitely time, for me at least, to be 'dugleg' at learning more...

Why Iceland is Inhabitable

by Marcie Hume

-or is it?

This winter, I saw people walking around with no hats, sometimes no coats, while I ventured out wrapped in endless layers of wool wearing the hood of my Gore-Tex jacket over my head. I was told I looked like a foreigner.

Opening the door one morning, considering the idea of going on a little walk, I stared out at the mountains through the snow that tore through the sky sideways and realised, for the first time, how it really is possible for someone to freeze to death in twenty minutes.

Summer is here and I'm excited. The grass is now the deepest green, migrating birds have ended their winter's journeys and children play outside late into the evening where dusk replaces night. There's a sense of ease on the streets, everyone is friendlier; a stranger might even smile at you on the street.

Traditionally it was believed that none of this would be possible without the the Gulf Stream. The unseen force that is responsible for some of Western Europe's warmer weather, for making the winters livable and summers more summery. The Gulf Stream begins south of Florida, moves up the East Coast of America and finally much of it shimmies around Great Britain and the Faeroe Islands. The warmer water at the equator naturally moves towards colder water further north. It is helped on its way by the wind and



It looked like it was going to be a sunny day when he set off for Esjan

the Earth's rotation which move the stream in an arc, so it brushes against our southern shores.

Recently, Gulf Stream researchers at Columbia University discovered that it is only part of what makes Iceland's climate more bearable. The ocean retains heat throughout the warmer months and slowly releases it during the winter. Winds drop down over the Rocky Mountains in the western United States and continue forcefully over the Atlantic Ocean, carrying the Atlantic's heat with them, all the way over to us here in Iceland. The study suggests

that this process is of much greater influence on the climate here than the Gulf Stream. So it is due to both of these factors that Icelanders can live happily through months of both ice and sun.

Iceland is famous for its long shimmering summer days but in retrospect I find the winter more perplexing, more fulfilling. It is during these dark months when I truly experience the grand sweep of nature: enduring, existing, fighting against whatever weather falls from the sky. It is winter that is the real heart of Iceland.

EINAR MÁR

by Bart Cameron

Quiet, Confident and Ignored in America

Along with writing two of the first sophisticated Icelandic screenplays, six novels and a Nordic Prize-winning memoir, Einar Már is frequently referred to as the father of the modern, popular Icelandic poetry. I ask him to explain his effect on poetry to those who don't read Icelandic. "It was just more sparse, my style. We were influenced by Bob Dylan, the Beatles, Baudelaire, the English Mercy Poets, the Beats..."

Einar Már Gudmundson is driving me back to 101 Reykjavík from his suburban home in his soccer mom-style SUV. He turns off the Icelandic news and puts on a full-band, late 70s Dylan album.

"Bob Dylan is an outsider, too. Or maybe he is just an insider everywhere. He is from..." and then it starts again, "HMMMMMMMM," louder and louder for about two minutes. "HMMMMMM," as we drive past Breiðholt. And I finally interrupt and say "A small town outside Duluth, Minnesota." And he says "Hibbing, Minnesota. You see, small town. Everybody is always traveling to find the center of things, and so often it is the place people are leaving."

"It is true of the suburbs, too. Look, we are in my suburb now. This is where I grew up, not far from Bubbi (the singer/ songwriter known as Iceland's Bob Dylan). And Fridrik Þór (the director of Angels of the Universe and two other films Einar Már wrote) was just a building over. And then out on the next suburb, the suburb of the next generation,

that's where Björk is from."

It is a polite rebuttal to the notion, hinted at by Einar Már's friend Hallgrímur Helgason and latched onto by the Sirkus hipster crowd, that all life in Iceland takes place in 101 Reykjavík. The art that inspires and connects with Einar Már is the work of writers in especially unhip places, in urban sprawl where, he says, "the children have to create their own culture."

Rambling Danes in libraries

It is only a fifteen minute ride to the National Library from his house, but in that time Einar Már never stops talking. He tells me that he spent five years at the Danish National Library in Copenhagen which was so comfortable and full of outsiders "like a bus station" which he visited when he went back to Denmark no longer as lonely and no longer as broke as he once had been, where he found the same rambling Dane working on his dissertation on Joyce, where he found the same American who claimed a new best friend every month and a new course of study every year, it is nice to know there



are people like that at every national library... and at every bus station. (The mention of bus stations is especially eerie given the conclusion of Angels of the Universe based on Einar Már's brother and his last few months at the Hlemmur bus terminal before committing suicide.)

I interviewed Einar Már for two hours in his studio: a remodeled garage covered floor-to-ceiling with heavily creased paperbacks in English, Danish, German and Icelandic, broken only by a wall of picture windows which face the house and on which his family knocks and waves frequently, a large black and white photo that seems to show Einar Már with long hair, rebelling, but that may well be his deceased brother Páll. He granted the interview despite the fact that he is in the middle of writing a novel and is otherwise making few public appearances.

Small town writers

From the minute I arrive, Einar Már starts grabbing books and tossing them into my hand. As he talks, he keeps as much of his thought process as transparent as possible-- humming when he is searching for an extremely specific point, standing when he is explaining a broader idea that may be of mutual interest, crawling on the floor to see book spines, overturning masses of seemingly organized stacks of books to show me photos of small towns in Minnesota and small town writers. The table in front of me has a tower of books to explain his point, with Ljóð, Einar Már's hefty collection of works since 1980 on bottom. He digs through another stack and gives me some translations of his poetry in a small American literary magazine, Visions. The poetry is strong, but the

publication is not well-known. I ask him why such a small press, to which he shrugs. He hadn't even submitted. Hallgrímur Helgason had helped him get it published.

"The saga writers had to wait."

While his work is translated into 20 languages, Mál og Menning is the only press publishing any of his work in English. This seems a significant slight. He shrugs it off: "Good literature will always get through. The Saga writers had to wait 500 years." Then he indicates his frustration with English-language presses: "In America they are impatient. They have a one-book rule. They don't work with authors. It's the capitalization of the publishing industry." He grimaces at capitalization - he means this as a strong insult. With that, Einar Már returns to his book stacks and starts discussing obscure writers with me: Richard Brautigan, Sinclair Lewis, Aksel Andemose, William Heinesen - all these writers demonstrate his point that great writing can come out of the smallest places. But, I want to say, these writers are only known by other writers, they are barely in print. As Einar Már discusses Faroese writing in detail, flipping through Heinesen's Lost Musicians, I see any talk of sales or fame would be entirely off-topic. Einar Már would simply like his books to be read quietly and appreciated. It isn't the attitude that gets books flying off the shelves at Barnes and Noble, but it's an attitude that has allowed for great writing.

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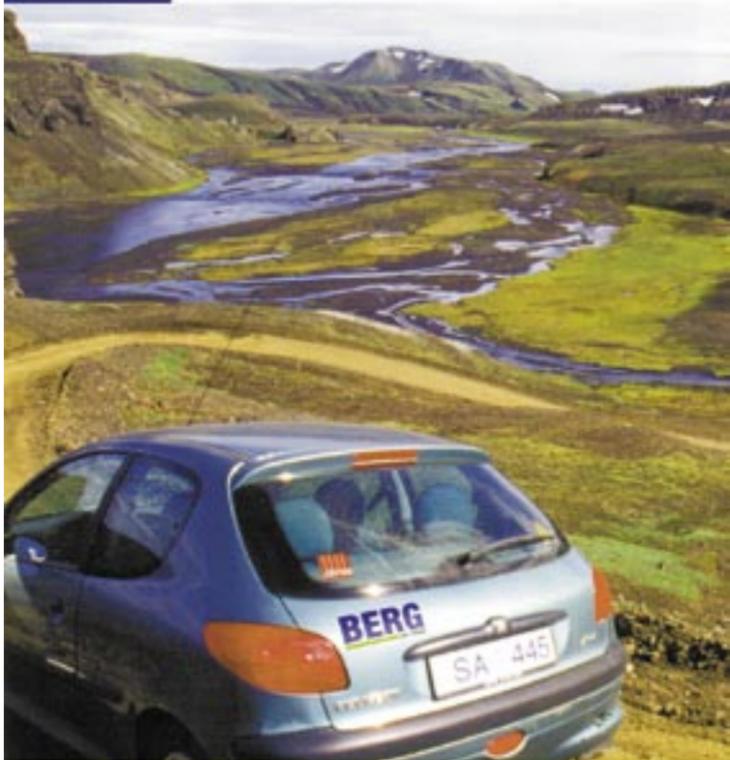
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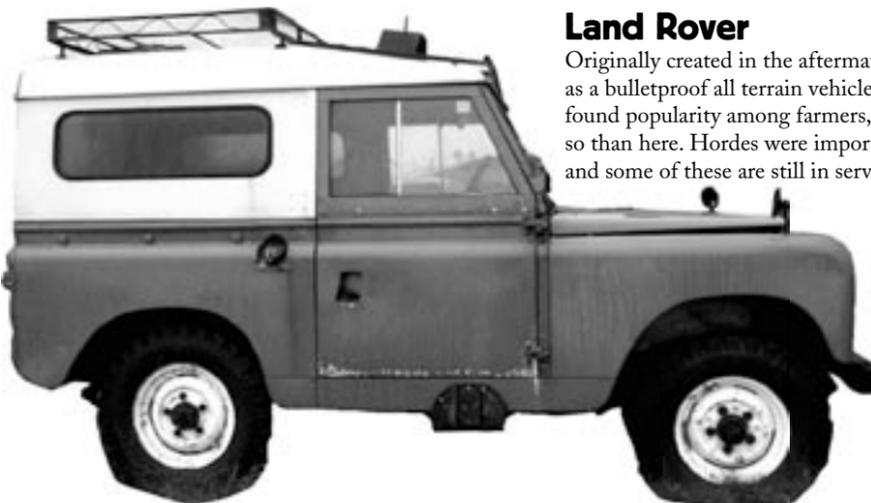
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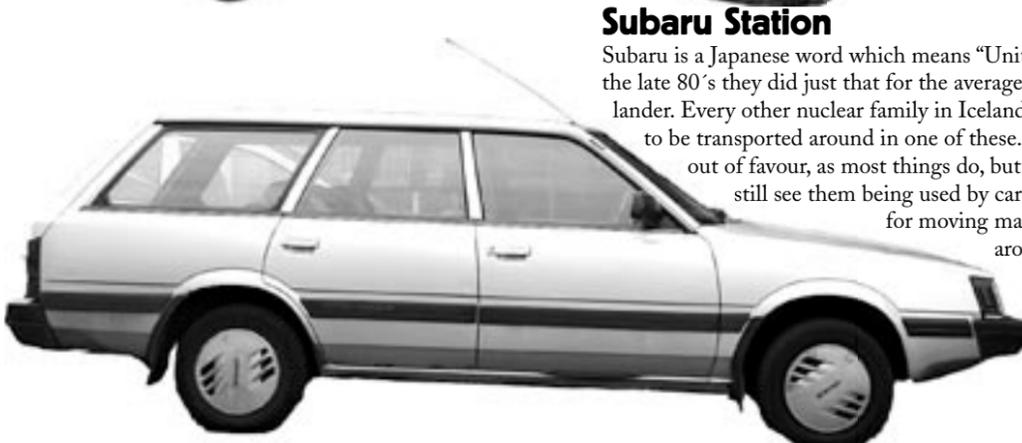
WANDERINGS

**THE CARS THAT SHAPED THE
GENERATIONS**



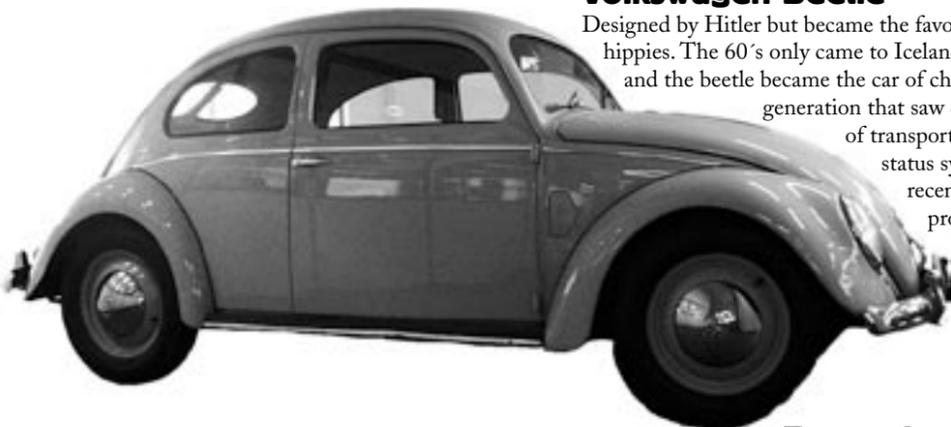
Land Rover

Originally created in the aftermath of World War II as a bulletproof all terrain vehicle for the army, it soon found popularity among farmers, and nowhere more so than here. Hordes were imported in the late 60's, and some of these are still in service.



Subaru Station

Subaru is a Japanese word which means "Unite." In the late 80's they did just that for the average Icelander. Every other nuclear family in Iceland seemed to be transported around in one of these. They fell out of favour, as most things do, but you can still see them being used by carpenters for moving materials around.



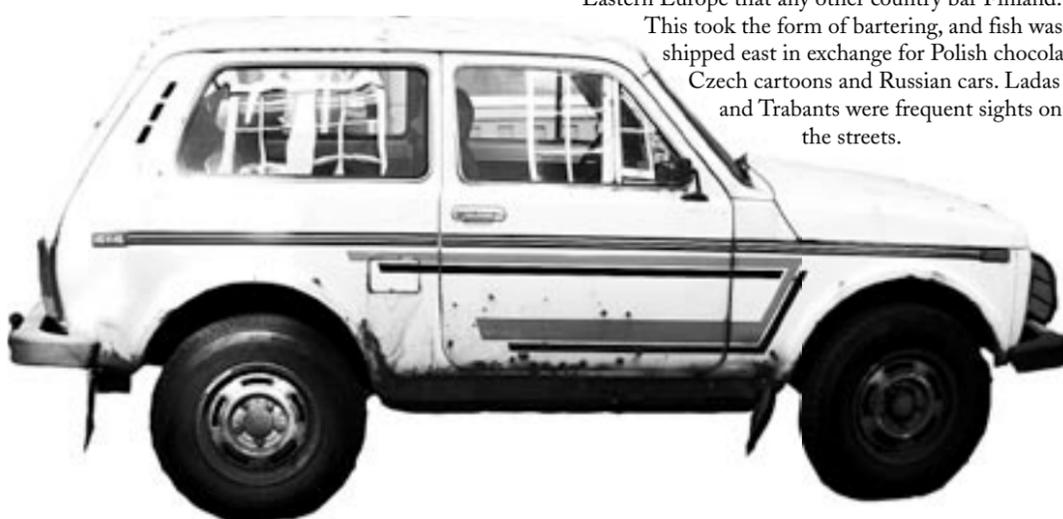
Volkswagen Beetle

Designed by Hitler but became the favourite car of the hippies. The 60's only came to Iceland in the 70's, and the beetle became the car of choice for the generation that saw cars as a mode of transport rather than status symbols. It has recently gone out of production.



Toyota Landcruiser

In Iceland, where the weather tends to be very unpredictable, the rich don't drive limo's or sports cars. They drive jeeps which allows them to leave the city as well as to look down at others in traffic. This is the slightly cheaper version for those who can't afford a Range Rover.



Lada Sport

In the days of the Cold War, Iceland traded more with Eastern Europe than any other country bar Finland. This took the form of bartering, and fish was shipped east in exchange for Polish chocolate, Czech cartoons and Russian cars. Ladas and Trabants were frequent sights on the streets.

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VIKINGS AND ODIN WORSHIPPERS

Hold Their Annual Festival

photo by Aldís Pálsdóttir

Icelanders rarely go to church outside of weddings and funerals. For the last three decades, however, there has been something of a revival in the worship of the Old Norse gods. Iceland became Christian in the year 1000, and it wasn't until 1973 that the old gods were once again granted official recognition. At the time, it was the only country where such recognition was granted, but Norway has since followed suit. The religion today numbers some 700 members.

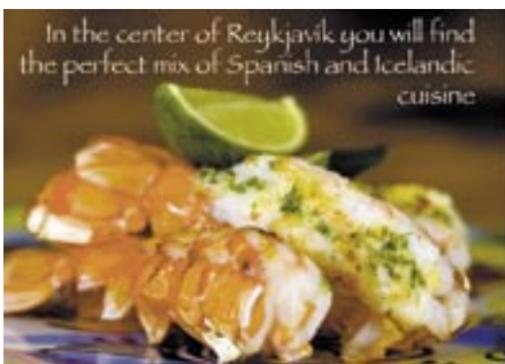
The order has become intertwined with the Viking festival, held in Hafnafjörður every year at summer solstice, where worshippers and Viking aficionados gather together from all over the world. This year, the festival runs from the 16th to the 20th of June. Among the attractions is a virtual fight between Christian and heathen Vikings. Sparks fly as blades clash, shields are battered and men are bruised, and the Christians will, no doubt, be soundly beaten. The Viking ship *Icelander* accepts passengers for cruises, and this year's special guests are a theatre group from Africa. The host of the event is, as always, the Viking Elvis himself, Steinn Ármann. At six o'clock on the final day, the pagans march, in full Viking regalia of course, towards the stone gate by the harbour and raise their flags, coincidentally at the seat of the first Lutheran church in Iceland. Thereafter, the Allsherjargoði, the head of the worshippers, consecrates the festival by lighting their symbol. The festival accommodates all sorts, from Englishmen primarily interested in the fighting styles, to more peaceful Swedes more interested in the storytelling aspect of Vikingdom, to American true believers who come here to worship the old Gods. But everyone is welcome to participate, and get some impression of what life was like here in Viking times. And the pagans are known to be generous with the beer.



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GUIDE TO THE CITY CENTER

This pullout has all the information one might need, so for a safer journey, pull it out and put it in your pocket.

CAFE'S

1. Segafredo

By Lækjartorg
McDonalds has departed from the centre of Reykjavík and instead Italian chain Segafredo has arrived, which isn't a bad trade-off. You can smoke indoors, which gives you a nice continental feel, the staff is Italian and the prices are in Euros as well as krónur. Although Segafredo isn't one of the more expensive places, you wonder whether knowing how much things cost might ruin your vacation.

2. Ráðhúskaffi

City Hall
With view over the city pond, Ráðhúskaffi is situated inside the City Hall. Coffee and great cakes as you enjoy the view. Free internet access for costumers and, in the lobby of City Hall, you'll find a big 80m² model of Iceland.

3. Grái Kötturinn

Hverfisgata 16a
Grái Kötturinn is across the street from the National Theater and is very small and very popular in the early hours of the day. A good place to start a day the British way, with eggs and bacon and other traditional breakfasts on the menu. The lunch menu is also inviting, but somewhat pricey.

4. Súfistinn

Laugavegur 18
A smoke-free café in the city centre, right inside Mál & Menning bookstore. You can buy or borrow books, magazines and newspapers from the bookstore, and read them there over a cup of coffee and/or a snack.

5. Mokka

Skólavörðustígur 3a
An Icelandic tradition since 1958, Mokka is the oldest café in Reykjavík and the first one to make coffee with an espresso machine. The walls are covered with art for sale and, though seats are usually filled by loyal customers, every now and then you'll catch a glimpse of the owners, a really nice and friendly couple in their seventies who have owned the café since its inception.

6. Kaffivagninn

Grandagarður 10
By the harbor where fishermen and sailors along with bus drivers and aging tough guys gather for lunch and a cup of coffee. If you want to try out traditional Icelandic food, pancakes, or bread with smoked lamb, this is the right place to see another side of Reykjavík.

7. Café Paris

Austurstræti 14
Situated in the heart of the city with a view over Austurvöllur, spacious,

popular and usually full in the afternoon, Café Paris is international like the city it's named after. In the mornings it is more quiet and a hangout for philosophers and artists. Offers you light meals and the opportunity to sit outside when the weather is nice.

8. Tíu Dropar

Laugavegur 27
With the exception of Mokka, Tíu Dropar is the oldest café in downtown Reykjavík. The place has a very special feel to it, the decor, the tables and the chairs, along with the service makes you feel very much at home. It's almost like your sitting down for a cup of coffee in your grandma's kitchen. The menu is limited, but has the advantage of constant changes, with new items every day.

9. Café Árnes

By the harbour
Once a ferry, Café Árnes has recently been turned into a coffeshop by day and seafood restaurant by night. The cardeck in the basement now functions as a bar. Situated by the harbour (obviously), have a traditional waffle with lots of jam and cream and watch the whale watchers come in.

10. Bleika Dúfan

Laugavegi 21
The name means the Pink Pigeon. A bookstore that specialises in books in English, so there are a lot of foreigners there as well as people who work in the surrounding area. A mostly veggie menu (apart from

the ham and cheese sandwich) and internet.

BARS & BISTRO

11. Hverfisbar

Hverfisgata 20
Very long queues to get in, and once there, you wonder what the fuss was about, or whether the queue was in fact the best part. When it's four o'clock on a Sunday morning and you're still going strong, this might be the place you'll wind up, by which time you probably won't care that the same song seems to come on every half hour.

12. Café 22

Laugavegur 22
Has recently undergone a major facelift. The top floor is now dedicated to artist Jón Sæmundur, aka Dead, whose Dead label can be seen on quite a few people these days. Downstairs is a decent bistro (try the Gringo), whereas the middle floor houses a dancefloor. Open until the wee small hours, and a great place for a late night drink for those who want drink along with a less trendy (and perhaps more cool) crowd. Be warned, though, they do charge 500 krónur entrance after midnight.

13. Kaffibarinn

Bergstaðastræti 1
Kaffibarinn is Cool Reykjavík, or at least tries to be. Reykjavík prides itself on having more artists per capita than any other capital in the world, and the crowd here seem to be trying to prove the point, with

musicians, actors and writers so famous. Blur's Damon Albarning it was cheaper than buying the director of the film 101 Re in the film.

14. Sirkus

Klapparstígur 30
"Welcome to the Jungle/ We g welcome to the party that never ending any time soon. Usually or want to be students of the I musicians and other members floor, for whatever reason, look

15. Nelly's

Þingholtsstræti 2
The cheapest beer in Reykjavík drinkers as well as expats. Trou covers though. In the weekend large dancefloor on the upper floor, midnight on weekends.

16. Vegamót

Vegamótastígur 4
Wants to be the inspot to be se up, flaunt it and enjoy the view there, and the fittest, or at least Kitchen open every day until 2 brunch. Try the lobster pizza.

17. Kaffibrennsli

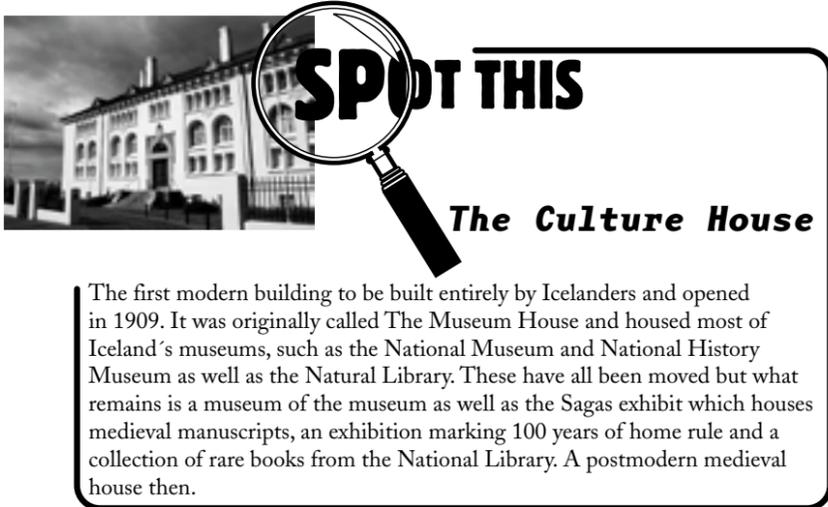
Þingholtsstræti 9
One of the largest selection of few bars in Reykjavík where you after midnight on weekends. C they are generous with the refil

18. Celtic Cross

Hverfisgata 26
Arguably the bar in town that Irish, even though the Dubliner back, it's very much alive. I dour on the upper floor and a best to make a living as human

19. Grand Rokk

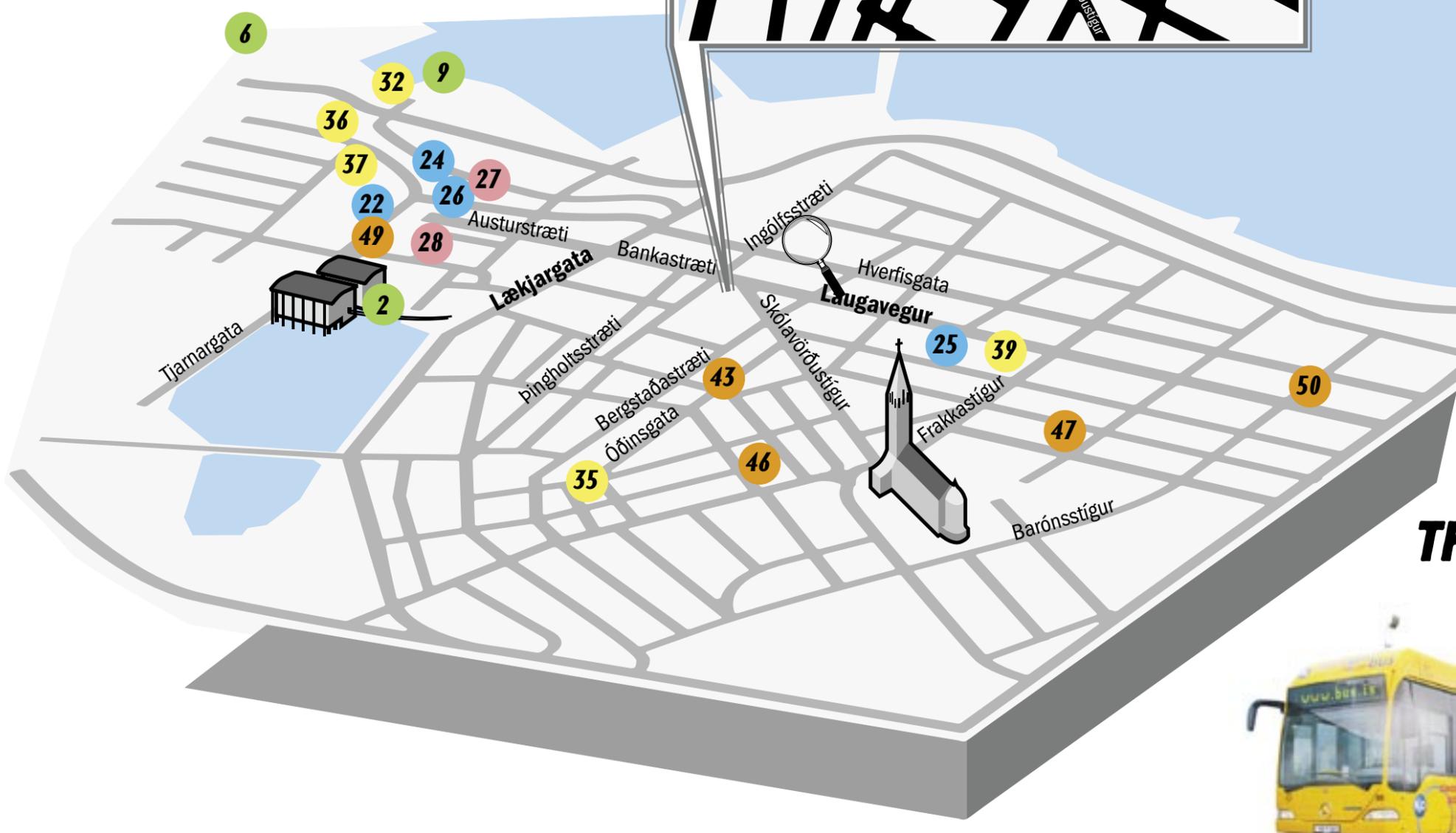
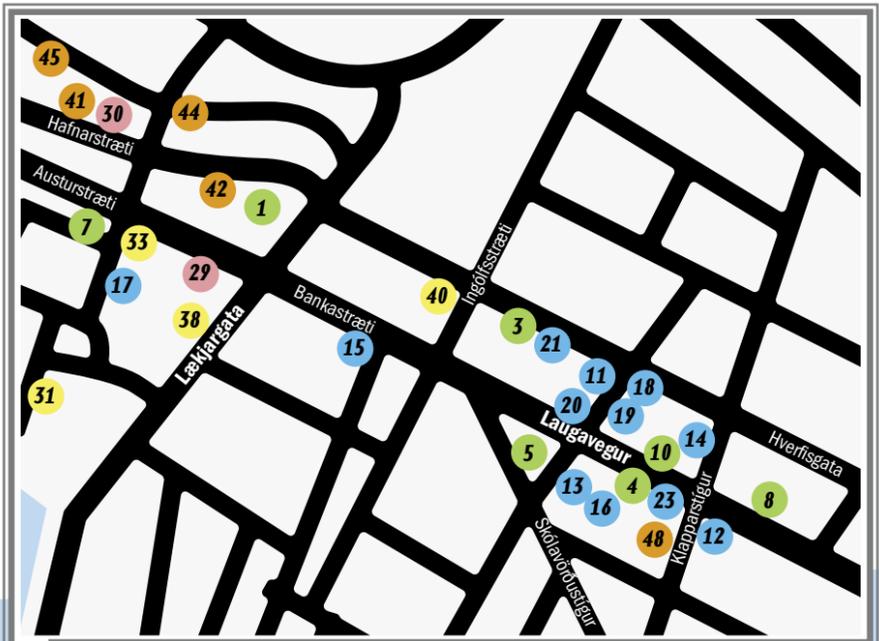
Smíðustígur 6
A place true to the spirit of Ro covers. Better and lesser know less than three bands a night, f

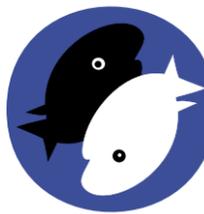


SPOT THIS

The Culture House

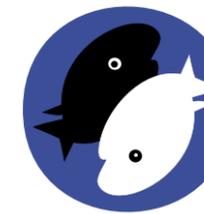
The first modern building to be built entirely by Icelanders and opened in 1909. It was originally called The Museum House and housed most of Iceland's museums, such as the National Museum and National History Museum as well as the Natural Library. These have all been moved but what remains is a museum of the museum as well as the Sagas exhibit which houses medieval manuscripts, an exhibition marking 100 years of home rule and a collection of rare books from the National Library. A postmodern medieval house then.





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anging from the hopefuls to the world owns a share of the bar, probably figur-drinks all the time. Another owner is Reykjavík, and the bar figures prominently

admission or not is up to the bands, but if they do, all proceeds do go to starving artists. Grab a beer and rock on! During the day this is a hang-out for chess players, challenging each other and anyone that might wander in here for a game, as every table doubles as a chess board. One of the best places to meet locals for a chat, every night of the week.

20. Bar 11

Laugavegur 11
The rock hangout, be it live music or the riff-heavy jukebox. Iceland's premier rock band Minus are regulars. Bands play and/or poetry is recited most Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, A good place to come down on Sundays, with a screening of cult films.

21. Kaffi Kúltur

Hoerfisgötu 18
For those who grow tired of seeing nothing but palefaces about town, Kaffi Kúltur might be a pleasant diversion. During the day its something of a hangout for the actors from the National Theatre, just across the street, but in the evening it is populated by both new and older Icelanders. They have multi-ethnic food and frequent concerts. Wednesday night is tango night. Anyone can join in, but this is not a place to learn as the regulars know their way around a dancefloor.

22. Jón Forseti

Aðalstræti 10
The oldest house in Reykjavík is now, you guessed it, a gay club. Named after founding father and national hero Jón Sigurðsson, who lived there for a while, it now has various events, including concerts, plays and a gay cabaret, performed on a small stage that tries its best to look big with curtains and everything. So how long until they change George Washington's old place into a gay bar? You heard it here first.

23. Café List

Laugavegur 20a
"List" means "art", the art mostly consisting of jazz bands that play there frequently. Looks perhaps more like a hotel bar than a seedy jazz club, but the prices of beer has gone down, so they deserve our support.

24. Glauubar

Tryggvagata 20
This American looking bar often feels like the Beverly Hillbillies have come to downtown Reykjavík, got drunk and ended up here. A classic pick up joint for those who've tried everything else and are running out of options.

25. Dillon

Laugavegur 30
A nice place to sit and chat, good folk themed music and no dance floor to worry about. Has interesting horse themed décor, and the balcony is open on the weekends. Finds a nice medium somewhere between the hipsters and the drunks.

26. Dubliner

Hafnarstræti 4
The city's main Irish pub, which, as in many cities, means that it's a hangout for all sorts of foreigners. At the weekends there's also a large influx of locals, often of the slightly older variety. If you like the darker stuff on tap, this is probably the best place to go.

CLUBS

27. Gaukur á Stöng

Tryggvagata 22
Iceland's oldest club is turning 20 this fall. During the day it's a pool pub and on weekday evenings there are live rock concerts by more mainstream bands. On weekends there is usually a lot of action with cover bands playing everything from Britney to the Beatles. Without exception you'll be charged at least 1000kr for entrance in the evenings. Crowd: 20+

28. Nasa

by Austurvöllur
Used to be a theatre, but is now a club. Great sound system and occasional live bands. The town's biggest club, but the high prices do limit the crowd somewhat. Admission 1000 krónur.

29. Pravda

Austurstræti 22
Despite its Soviet-themed name, this is a place where young and heavily made-up consumers go to flaunt it. Somehow the word "plastic" comes to mind, along with dyed hair and solarium tans. Look out for Ken and Barbie, as they are known to party here from time to time.

30. Kapital

Hafnarstræti 17
The town's premier dance music venue. Regularly features top dance DJ's from around the world, as well as the hottest local talent. Watch out for DJ Fashionably laid, who is also the art director of a reputable local publication. Occasional live bands as well. Huge dance floors on both floors.

RESTAURANTS

31. Við Tjörnina

Templararúnd 3
The most novel fish restaurant in Iceland. The owner, Chef Runar Marvinnson, is known for innovative fish dishes made from a variety of rare fish and shellfish and related raw materials. Mr. Marvinnson is also a respected food and cooking personality and the author of several cookbooks. His respect for his raw materials is a tribute to fish and shellfish, showing off their natural goodness without artificiality. Chef Marvinnson is really a natural wonder and a particular favourite with Icelanders!

32. Tveir Fiskar

Geirsgötu 9
Seafood restaurant, although they also do land-based animals. At lunchtime you can have a three course meal for 2300, which isn't too bad, all things considered. The chef has been awarded the Medal of the Order of the White Rose by the President of Finland.

33. Apotek

Austurstræti 16
Formerly the central drugstore of Reykjavík, established in the late 1800s, the Apotek is now a modern restaurant with an Art Deco interior. You can still see the names of the chief managing pharmacists/owners on the wall of the bar. Today, this "drugstore" serves a different type of milkshake. Now look for a sizzling visual kitchen (behind a glass wall) with a Super Menu! Apotek is an eating experience not to be missed.

34. Vox

Nordica Hotel
Perhaps a typical off-lobby restaurant, bistro, bar in a four-star hotel, the Vox looks at first glance like a fancy cafeteria spiced up for an official reception. But please do not let that glance throw you off! The restaurant has a modern interior with extremely un-Icelandic décor, however the kitchen saves the situation. Run by a master chef, a recent winner of the super gastro competition "Bocuse d'Or," the Menu is tops.

35. 3 Frakkar

Baldursgata 14
This is a restaurant that cannot be ignored. A very small place with an atmosphere. Here you may enjoy the house specialties of Icelandic traditional dishes prepared in the good, old-fashioned manner, including catfish, shark, and whale steaks. And of course much more. If you're lucky, Chef Ulfar Eysteinnson, the owner, may be present regaling the clientele with wild whaling tales. Don't forget to ask Chef Ulfar for dark Icelandic pumpernickel bread with pure Icelandic butter, and don't forget to make a reservation!

36. Naustið

Vesturgata 6-8
Probably the oldest traditional restaurant in Reykjavík, Naustið has a reputation for fine food and service tailored for visiting groups. The main dining room is fashioned as the interior of a ship. Here the tables and booths are named after famous vessels. Visiting royalties have made this place a must for traditional Icelandic food, such as pickled sheep testicles and other delights.

37. Tapas

Vesturgata 3b
For those with a bit of money and time on their hands, the evening can hardly be better spent than at Tapas, where you can while away the evening having course after course of wonderful miniature dishes. Particularly recommended is the garlic-fried lobster and duck in apricot sauce. If afterwards you don't feel like getting up right away, there's also a rather large lounge to relax in, and the paintings are worth a look.

38. Jómfrúin

Lækjargata 4
In this global age, it can be hard to find good smörrebröd even in Copenhagen. Never fear: out here in the colonies you can still find fine rate smörrebröd at Jómfrúin. They even import their own eel directly from Denmark to make one of Scandinavia's delicacies.

39. Rossopomodoro

Laugavegur 40a
This is a new chain of eateries trying to move away from the American image of pizza joints. Originally a local Napoli venture, now a string of modestly cool restaurants striving to make it in Northern Europe. Iceland is one of the first places for Rossopomodoro outside Italy. A clever beginning in a country absolutely free from Neopolitan traditions. A modest wine list with good prices

40. 101 Hotel

Hoerfisgata 10
The former headquarters of the Icelandic Social Democratic Party completely reformed, by owner/designer I. Pálmadóttir, to a Mecca of the capitalist world of fine arts, contemporary architecture and beautiful people. The hotel is elegant, the restaurant/cafeteria fashionable and the atmosphere is international. A perfect place to have a glance at the jetset eating hamburgers! The martinis are super.

FAST FOOD

41. Nonnabíti

Hafnarstræti 11
The owner is a miser who charges additionally for everything, but this is almost certainly the best junk food in the Greater Reykjavík area. The subs are great, none of that Subway commitment to healthy living, and they probably contribute significantly to the ever-increasing "size" of the nation. They also serve burgers and sandwiches, and have lunchtime offers.

42. Serranos

Hafnarstræti 20
A Mexican themed eatery, but light on the chilli. Slightly cheaper and lighter on the cholesterol than its neighbour Nonni, but somehow not quite as fulfilling, although you might feel better in the morning. You can get a large burrito and soft drink for 599, which is one of the cheaper ways to fill your belly in this far too expensive town.

43. Bernhöftsbaká

Bergstaðastæti 13
A bakery with traditions going back some 150 years, although it has changed locations. Apart from a supermarket, a bakery is still the best way to fill your belly. Try the staple of Icelandic childhood and beyond: a snúður roll with chocolate milk.

44. Baejarins bestu

Tryggvagata
They claim to have the best hot dogs in town, and for once the product lives up to the hype. Ask for one with everything, and you'll get a dog in a bun with ketchup, mustard, remulade (don't ask), fried and raw onion. The standard Icelandic hotdog, only somehow it tastes better.

45. Pizza 67

Tryggvagata 26
The local pizza chain that's trying to take on the world, and who currently operate a place in the Faeroes and China, as well as all over Iceland. The have a Summer of Love theme, which doesn't really extend beyond the names of the pizzas, a few slogans and a few posters, but the pizzas are nice. They also do deliveries. They have a lunchtime buffet for 990, for those in search of quantity for the króna.

46. Eldsmíðjan

Bragagata 38a
Oven-baked pizzas simply don't get much better than this. It is slightly more expensive than other pizzerias, but well worth it. A wide selection of toppings, including that sorely missed pizza delight, snails. You can also turn the chef loose and let him decide what goes on it - you'll rarely be disappointed. Take away, order delivery, or eat in at the cosy restaurant upstairs. The paintings are worth a peek as well.

47. Vitabar

Bergþórsgata 21
Actually a bar, but best known for its hamburgers. A burger with fries for 500 is one of the best meal deals in town, but special mention must go to the Forget-Me-Not blue cheese and garlic extravaganza. The Viking beer always feels particularly cold and refreshing here.

48. First Vegetarian (Á naestu grösun)

Laugavegur 20b
Used to be called One Woman Restaurant, as there was always the same woman working there. Has new owners and a larger staff, but the theme is still vegetarian, with one vegan and one wheat-free dish always on offer. The only vegetarian restaurant licensed to carry beer and wine. Remains on the right side of the 1000 krónur bill at lunchtime, slips slightly over in the evening.

49. Pizza Pronto

Vallarstræti 4
Conveniently located by Ingólfrstorg, and serves slices until late at night. A good place to have a snack in between bars, particularly if you don't want a whole Hlöll. They also have a menu (in 9 languages, no less) of three sizes of pizzas with a good selection of toppings. Nice, but seems a bit pricey for the surroundings.

50. Reykjavík Bagel Company

Laugavegur 81
Situated a bit from the immediate centre but close to Hlemmur bus-stop. Bagels, wraps and coffee that might make you feel better in the morning than the more hardcore fast foods farther down the street.

The Best Spot in Reykjavík

What's the best spot in Reykjavík to eat, drink or just to hang out? Send your suggestions to letters@grapevine.is or to Reykjavík Grapevine, Hafnarstræti 15, 101 Reykjavík. Entries will be put into a hat and one will receive a meal for two at the establishment of our (no, we didn't forget the y) choice. Additionally, we welcome suggestions to places that belong on our list but aren't, as well as thoughts on what is on the list but shouldn't be. Results will be announced fortnightly.

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Pharmacies find your closest or call 118

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BSI, Vatnsmyrarvegur 10, 101 Rvk. 591-1000
Netkaffi, Kringlan mall, 103 Rvk. 533-2424
Reykjavík Travel Service, Lækjargata 2, 101 Rvk. 511-2442
Ground Zero, Vallarstræti 4, 101 Rvk. 562-7776

Useful Websites
www.icelandtourist.is
www.visitreykjavik.is
www.grapevine.is

Car rentals
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Avis 591-4000
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Other useful numbers
City bus info, 551-2700
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BSR 561-0000

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Reykjavík travel service, Lækjargata 2, 101 Rvk. 511-2442
Reykjavík Youth Hostel, Sundlaugarvegur 34, 105. Rvk. 533-8110

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The bus system is closed during the night, you can catch your first bus between 6:40 and 7:00 in the morning, and last call is around 24:00. The main bus stops in Reykjavík are Hlemmur and Lækjartorg (see map), there you'll be able to get all the information you need.



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Museums

ASÍ Art Museum, Freyjugata 41, 511-5353
 Árbæjarsafn Folk Museum, Kistuhylur 4, p: 557-1111
 Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum, Sigtún, p: 553-2155
 Culture House, Hverfisgata 15, p: 545-1400
 Einar Jónsson, Sculpture museum, Einarsgata, p: 551-3797
 Gerðarsafn, Kópavogur Art Gallery, Hamraborg 4, p: 551-3797
 Gerðuberg Cultural Center, Gerðuberg 3-5, p: 577-0440
 Hafnarborg Art Gallery, Srandagata 34 Hafnarfj, 555-0080
 Hafnarhúsið, Reykjavík Art museum, Tryggvagata 17, p: 590-1200
 Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Hlemmur 5, p: 590-0500
 Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Flókagata, p: 517-1290
 Museum of Medical History, Neströð 170, p: 561-1016
 National Film Archive, Vesturgata 11-13 Hafnarfj, p: 565-5994
 National Gallery of Iceland, Frikirkjuvegur 7, p: 515-9600
 Nordic House, Sturlugata 5, p: 551-7030
 Numismatic Collection of the Central Bank, Einholt 4, p: 569-9964
 Reykjavík Botanical Garden, Laugardalur, p: 553-8870
 Reykjavík City Library, Tryggvagata 15, p: 563-1750
 Reykjavík Elestrivity Museum, Rafstöðvarvegur, p: 567-9009
 Reykjavík Museum of Photography, Tryggvagata 15, p: 563-1790
 Reykjavík Zoo & Family Park, Engjavegur, p: 575-7800
 Saga Museum, Perlan Öskjuhlíð, p: 511-1517
 Sigurjón Ólafsson Sculpture Museum, Lauganestangi 70, p: 553-2906
 Telecommunications Museum, Suðurgata, p: 550-6410

Galleries

Art Studio Gallery, Vesturgata 12, p: 562-5757
 Kling og Bang, Laugavegi 23, p: 822-0402
 Gallery Fold, Rauðarárstígur 14-16, p: 551-0400
 Gallery Hnoss, Skólavörðustígur 16, p: 561-8485
 Gallery Hulduhólar, Hulduhólar, p: 566-6194
 Gallery i8, Klapparstígur 33, p: 551-3666
 Gallery Meistari Jakob, Skólavörðustígur 5, p: 552-7161
 Gallery Ófeigur, Skólavörðustígur 5, p: 551-1161
 Gallery Sævar Karl, Bankastræti 7, p: 551-3470
 Gallery Tukt, Pósthússtræti 3-5, p: 520-4600
 Hafnarhúsið, Tryggvagata 17 harbour side, p: 588-7576
 Handverk og Hönnun, Aðalstræti 12, p: 551-7595
 Safn, Laugavegur 37, p: 561-8777
 SÍM-house, Hafnarstræti 16, p: 551-1346
 Teddi Workshop, Kapparstígur 2
 The Icelandic Printmakers Association, Tryggvagata 17, p: 588-7576

Other

Hallgrímskirkja church, Skólavörðuholti, p: 510-1000
 Klink og Bank, Brautarholt, p: 822-0402

Theaters

Borgarleikhúsið, City Theatre, Listabraut 3, p: 568-8000
 Þjóðleikhúsið, National Theatre, Hverfisgata 19, p: 551-1200

Restaurants

101 Hotel, Hverfisgata 10, p: 580-0101
 3 Frakkar, Baldursgata 14, p: 552-3939
 Apótek Bar Grill, Austurstræti 16, p: 575-7900
 Jómfrúin, Lækjargata 4, p: 551-0100
 Naustið, Vesturgata 6-8, p: 554-0500
 Rossopomodoro, Laugavegur 40a, p: 561-0500
 Tapas, Vesturgata 3b, p: 551-2344

Tveir Fiskar, Geirsgata 9, p: 511-3474
 Við Tjörnina, Templarasund 3, p: 551-8666
 Vox Nordica Hotel, Suðurlandsbraut 2, p: 444-5050

Cafés

Bleika Dúfan, Laugavegur 21, p: 517-1980
 Café Árnes, by the harbour, p: 551-5101
 Café Paris, Austurstræti 14, p: 551-1020
 Grái Kötturinn, Hverfisgata 16a, p: 551-1544
 Kaffivagninn, Grandagarður 10, p: 551-5932
 Mokka, Skólavörðustígur 3a, p: 552-1174
 Ráðhúskaffi, City Hall, p: 563-2169
 Segafredo by Lækjartorg, p:
 Súfstínn, Laugavegur 18, p: 552-3740
 Tíu Dropar, Laugavegur 27, p: 551-9380

Café, Bar and Bistro

Ari í Ögri, Ingólfsstræti 3, p: 551-9660
 Bar 11, Laugavegur 11, p: 511-1180
 Café 22, Laugavegur 22, p: 511-5522
 Café List, Laugavegur 20a, p: 511-1420
 Café Victor, Hafnarstræti 1-3, p: 561-9555
 Celtic Cross, Hverfisgata 26, p: 511-3240
 De Palace, Hafnarstræti 18, p: 551-6780
 Dillon, Laugavegur 20, 511-2400
 Dubliner, Hafnarstræti 4, 511-3233
 Glaumbar, Tryggvagata 20, p: 552-6868
 Grand Rokk, Smiðjustígur 6, p: 551-5522
 Hressingarskálinn, Austurstræti 20, p: 561-2240
 Hverfisbar, Hverfisgata 20, p: 511-6700
 Jón Forseti, Aðalstræti 10, p: 551-0962
 Kaffi Kúltur, Hverfisgötu 18, p: 530-9314
 Kaffibarinn, Bergstaðastræti 1, p: 551-1588
 Kaffibrennslan, Pósthússtræti 9, p: 561-3600
 Nelly's, Þinghólstræti 2, p: 551-2477
 Prikkið, Bankastræti 12, p: 551-3366
 Sirkus, Klapparstígur 30
 Sólon, Bankastræti 7a, p: 562-3232
 Thorvaldsen bar, Austurstræti 8, p: 511-1413
 Vegamót, Vegamótastígur 4, p: 511-3040

Clubs

Gaukur á Stöng, Tryggvagata 22, p: 551-1556
 Kapital, Hafnarstræti 17, p: 511-7007
 Leikhúskjallarinn, Hverfisgata 19, p: 551-6010
 Mojito, Austurstræti 16, p: 575-7905
 Nasa, by Austurvöllur, p: 511-1313
 Pravda, Austurstræti 22, p: 552-9222

Fastfood

Bæjarins bestu, Tryggvagata, p: 894-4515
 Bernhöftsbakari, Bergstaðastræti 13, p: 551-3083
 Eldsmiðjan, Bragagata 38a, p: 562-3838
 First Vegetarian (A næstu grösum), Laugavegur 20b, p: 552-8410
 Nonnabiti, Hafnarstræti 11, p: 551-2312
 Pizza 67, Tryggvagata 26, p: 561-9900
 Pizza Pronto, Vallarstræti 4, p: 517-5445
 Reykjavík Bagel Company, Laugavegur 81, p: 511-4500
 Serranos, Hafnarstræti 20, p: 551-1754
 Vitabar, Bergþórugata 21, p: 551-7200

THE NEW QUEENS BEGIN THEIR RULE

by Bart Cameron



I am looking at three men dressed as nuns stretching out their legs for our photographer. A fourth member of the Vanity and Hoping for Wind in the Sail gay amateur theatre group tells me "This is not your typical drag show."

"We're changing what a drag show is. I'll be singing in Arabic," he says, and then gives a crotch-exposing pose.

I haven't been backstage at many drag shows, but the mood isn't what I expected.

A French-Canadian with the stage name Salamambo says this is the only place he's done a drag show. "There is no woman in me trying to come out," he says deadpan through heavy make-up.

"We're all writers," he says. I notice that, at present, everyone in the room is speaking in Icelandic, Swedish, French and English at once.

"How many of you are graduate students?" I ask.

"At least eighty percent," he says. He then gives a nervous laugh. "I'm so stressed."

It is the first time I've seen anyone here not look fully self-assured. I ask if he's suffering from stage fright.

"No. My partner got into a brawl last night and can't go on stage."

His partner, an Icelander going by the stage name Alexandra

Gloppovich, is helping with backstage preparations. He sports fresh stitches over his left eye. He lets me get a good look at the injury and says, "There was a gay bashing last night."

The show, held at Reykjavík's oldest house and newest gay club, Jón Forseti, was more theatre than drag show. Closest, maybe, to a drag vaudeville. The opening number showcased a couple of dancers in French showgirl garb dancing and

smiling maniacally, and breaking into flat-out pantomime and physical comedy. Following this, three nuns descended the staircase at stage right and presented a remarkably strong improv sketch that moved from bawdy to campy to relaxed and earnest as the nuns harmonized, monkeyed with instruments and provided a grad school style metadrag moment when a particularly shy nun was dressed up as a glamorous woman on stage and broke into "Dancing Queen." The highlight of the evening was a pitch-perfect performance of a prissy blonde succumbing to alcoholism while putting on a cooking demonstration. (The actor's resemblance to the host of the television show Folk added greatly to the amusement.) The evening also provided more standard drag fare, and, indeed, it also included an "Iraq in Drag" section, which brought the full house of Icelanders to tears, but left those of us from more politically correct backgrounds a little bewildered.

In the end, the show provided the relaxed anything goes atmosphere that Reykjavík's nightlife badly needs. The Vanity and Hope for Wind in the Sail theatre group will continue to put on performances all summer before touring Iceland in the fall - it is obviously a cause worth contributing to and, more importantly, at ISK 500 their shows are also one of the best options for a night on the town. (A night "out" if you need the pun.)

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12.6	DJ Lezer (Jón Atli)
13.6	Movie Night - Dark Crystal / Nightbreed 21.00
16.6	21.00 - 23.00: Poetry II from midnight DJ Palli & Þorri Maus
17.6	Norton (concert)
19.6	Dakta (concert) DJ Lupin from Midnight
20.6	Movie Night - Scanners / War of the Worlds 21.00
23.6	Invertis (concert)
24.6	Viking Giant, Bob, Justman (concert)

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Saturday June 12th
 Band Blísbyltan

Sunday June 13th
 Indigo, Bob Justman, Viking Giant

Wednesday June 16th
 Mistery Index

Saturday June 19th
 Hjálmar

Smiðjustíg 6, p: 551 5522

PICKS MOVIES and THEATRE

Regnboginn cinema.

THE REYKJAVÍK SHORTS AND DOCS FESTIVAL,

The third year running, this will go on all day from the 10th to the 13th. 12 new Icelandic shorts as well as a pick of international ones, including the Finnish film Screaming Men about a male choir that terrifies its audience with its performances.

Reykjavík City Theatre

ROMEO AND JULIET

The theatre closes down for summer on the 20th, so there's still a last chance to catch some of its performances. The most notable show is probably the acrobatic Romeo and Juliet, just back from roaring success in London. There are still tickets left for the afternoon performance on Saturday 12th at 15.00. Call the theatre to see if there are any tickets available for the evening performance. Don Quixote and the new Iceland play Belgian Congo are on the following day at 20.00, and Chicago winds up on the 19th.

MOVIES AND THEATRE

The Day After Tomorrow is that rare beast, a summer blockbuster that has its heart in the right place. And that despite killing more people (even if offscreen) than any movie since Star Wars, which managed to do in an entire planet.

LIBERAL AMERICA STRIKES BACK

by Valur Gunnarsson



Although originally from Germany, director Roland Emmerich has long made a point of being more American than the Americans. Here, at least, he is a different kind of American. Whereas Independence Day and Godzilla's apparent message was: Increase military spending, otherwise we'll be attacked by space aliens and large firebreathing dragons, and The Patriot's more simple statement was: Kill the English; here, we get "stop global warming." This, then, is perhaps the first environmentalist action film since Steven Seagal's On Deadly Ground, where he would beat up evil oil men before giving them lectures on environmental safety. Now, if only someone would

take that approach to the Bush administration...

The adversary here, though, isn't the bad guys. True, there is a vice president (who looks like Dick Cheney on a diet) that doesn't seem to care about global warming, but even he repents before the end rather than being pickaxed by Dennis Quaid. And the good guys aren't bullet-and-one-liner spewing muscle men. In fact, they seem verging on the pinko and the liberal. There are divorcees, intellectuals and even atheists (who still appreciate the cultural value of God) who prevail by their wits rather than by gunning down bad guys. Although the major message of the film is the environmental one, others

creep in. Drop the debt. Be nice to the third world, we might need them someday. Snacks and sweets are not very nutritious. And, although it may be okay to burn books to keep alive, there are other uses for books. They even help you cure diseases. Is all this something we want our children to hear?

So even if characterisation is poor and the plot mostly nonsensical, it's a relief to finally be able to enjoy a major Hollywood blockbuster guilt free, without feeling that you're supporting American militarism. And any film that portrays the weather as the enemy is bound to strike a chord with people living in Iceland.

From the Rental

Starship Troopers

The War on Bugs

This sci-fi shoot 'em up, set in a militarist dystopia, now seems strangely prophetic. Buenos Aires is attacked by bugs from outer space, leaving untold civilians dead. The outrage is so great that humanity launches an attack on the bugs homeland with the aim of exterminating them all. Meanwhile on the homefront, heretofore innocent bugs are killed on the streets by pedestrians. The invasion of the bugs' homeland does not go according to plan, but when man discovers the inhuman enemy to be a lot smarter than they thought, they take prisoners who are then tortured in order to learn more about them. The society that mankind lives in is hardly inspiring. It



still has the trappings of democracy, but everything's centred around the needs of the military, even the right to vote. People aren't drafted into the army, but society pushes them to serve so that they can be all that they can be.

All the actors are ridiculously beautiful (and can't act), so you can't help thinking director Verhoeven takes glee in having some of the main characters brains sucked out (or perhaps that's just Grapevine). The battle scenes with the bugs are stunning but the film's satire seems to have been lost on most. A good night in, but for God's sake avoid the straight to video sequel.

Screenings start roughly every two hours, at 18, 20 and 22. However, with films getting ever longer starting times may vary. There are usually ads and trailers for roughly 15 minutes from announced starting time. Almost all films have a short interval in the middle.

MOVIES : LISTINGS : june 11 - june 24

REGNBÖGINN

Hverfisgata 54
Phone: 551-9000
www.regnboginn.is

PREMIERS:

11. june Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind
16. june Mean Girls
16. june The Punisher

Still running:

Day After Tomorrow
Kill Bill vol. 2
Jersey Girl

LAUGARÁS BÍÓ

Laugarás
Phone: 553-2075
www.laugarasbio.is

PREMIERS:

11. june Win a Date with Tad Hamilton
18. june The Punisher

Still running:

Laws of Attraction
Butterfly Effect
Peter Pan

SAMBÍÓIN

Álfabakka 8
Phone: 587-8900
www.sambio.is

PREMIERS:

11. june Eurotrip
16. june The Ladykillers
16. june Mean Girls

Still running:

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban
Troy
Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen

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www.smarabio.is

PREMIERS:

11. june Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind
16. june Mean Girls
16. june The Punisher

Still running:

Day after Tomorrow
Kill Bill vol.2
Jersey Girl

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PREMIERS:

11. june Eurotrip
16. june The Ladykillers
16. june Mean Girls

Still running:

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban
Troy
Laws of Attraction

HÁSKÓLABÍÓ

Hagatorg
Phone: 530-1919
www.haskolabio.is

PREMIERS:

11. june Mors Elling (Elling 2)
16. june The Ladykillers
16. june Mean Girls

Still running:

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Troy
Van Helsing
Touching the void

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ARTS AND CULTURE

OPPS!

"I DIDN'T DO IT" AGAIN

by Marc Mettler

Although the title of Þorvaldur Þorsteinsson's latest exhibition clearly claims "I Didn't Do It," a glance at the artist's CV quickly proves otherwise.

From playwriting to installation art, painting to photography, books to documentary film, he's done it, and nearly all of it will be featured June 11th through August 8th at the Reykjavík Art Museum.

"I Didn't Do It" will display various works created by Þorsteinsson in the forty-three years of his life, ranging from early sketches and texts to newer pieces of sound, video and photo installations. But for Þorsteinsson, the exhibit isn't simply a retrospective of one man's life.

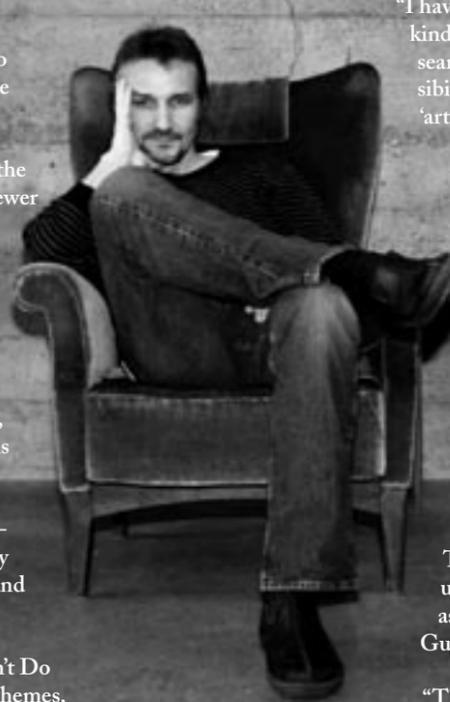
"These pieces are a part of me as someone from Akureyri or someone who grew up in the 60s and 70s," he said. "It's not so much about me as it is about my generation."

Þorsteinsson is perhaps best known in Iceland for his play "And Björk, of Course..." and the Betterby books for children. But he attributes his desire for using art forms other than writing to living in Iceland.

"It's a great advantage to grow up as an artist in Iceland," he said. "Iceland is a perfect breeding ground for people who can't decide what they want to do. It is so small you can literally walk into whatever you like and try things out."

While Þorsteinsson modestly asserts that the central theme of "I Didn't Do It" is "to have fun," many of his pieces offer insight into more serious themes.

Jesus is Closer to Home is a documentary about people from Amsterdam's Red-Light District. Icelandic Art compiles TV stills of Icelandic politicians and officials being interviewed in front of traditional Icelandic paintings. Most Real Death is a video project of people enacting their own deaths.



Through its interaction with the audience, much of Þorsteinsson's work suggests a discussion about the role of the artist. And it seems this is a question Þorsteinsson wrestles with often.

"I have a problem with art that is masturbatory, when artists are 'generous and kind' with others to 'allow' them to be artists for a day," he said. "I am still searching for a form to trigger the awareness of people's own value and possibilities of being creative, without having to bring them to a museum or art 'artistically'."

But Þorsteinsson hasn't given up completely on using the museum as a tool for his art. "I Didn't Do It" includes a piece called Verkaskipti (or Work Exchange) in which personal valuables are displayed alongside stories about the objects in exchange for something in the museum.

"The piece is not only about 'what is art' but the social context of the person or her story. Its value is tested there," he said. "My role as an artist is simple: to point out things and show what is already there."

The words "awareness," "value," and "possibility" are terms Þorsteinsson uses often. Perhaps they are words he has picked up through his experience as a mentor with Fully Alive Coaching, a program in Los Angeles started by Guðni Gunnarsson that teaches holistic medicine and yoga.

"There is a close link between my life as an artist and as someone doing yoga and teaching spiritual things. It's all about the awareness and responsibility of someone who has the power to create what matters," he said. "I see it more and more as one big art piece, or one whole idea of simply being alive as a whole person."

"I Didn't Do It" runs June 11th through August 8th at the Reykjavík Art Museum located in the Hafnarhús, Tryggvagata 17, 101 Reykjavík.

Freaky Fridays by Hitt Húsið

In downtown Reykjavík, in what was once a jail and a police station at Pósthússtræti 5, you can now find Hitt Húsið, (The Other House). This is the youth cultural centre, so called because it's supposed to be a home away from home, which indeed it is for many. During the summer months a large number of young and creative people work at Hitt Húsið and receive their wages from the City. The youngsters are divided into different groups, each with different tasks but sharing a common goal of making the city center more alive. This year's groups, of which there are 18 in total, include 5 bands playing their own music but also taking requests and groups drawing pictures and cartoons and even writing novels. In addition, acting groups will perform sketches and scenes from plays and there is even a group designing clothes. So if you are wondering why there are belly-dancers making a scene in the streets, chances are Hitt húsið will have had something to do with it. On Friday 11th and again on the 25th between 13:00 and 15:00 all the groups from Hitt Husid will perform by Austurvöllur, Lækjartorg square, Ingólfstorg square and Austurstræti street, appearing out of the blue whenever the weather permits. Anyone situated there can expect a little bit of art, a little bit of culture and a lot of general crazyness.



PICKS ARTS and CULTURE

Reykjavík Museum of Photography, The City of Reykjavík Library

NEW REALITIES

New Realities, part of the Reykjavík Festival, features Finnish contemporary photography at its finest. The exhibition has been rated as one of the most intriguing on offer in Europe today. Also French photographs of The Cod industry in the 1920s.



Einar Jónsson Museum

PERMANENT SHOW

This permanent show of the country's groundbreaking sculptor whose influence on all visual arts has been considerable. A comprehensive exhibition in a fine building.



Gerðuberg culture center

WOMEN OF THE WORLD

A collection of images of 176 women from 176 countries. Motherhood, kindness, housekeeping, fertility - the show seeks to find the essence of womanhood.



Gallery i8

GABRIELA FRÍÐRIKSDÓTTIR

A show which is part of the Reykjavík arts festival and runs until 26 June. The show includes paintings, videos, drawings, sculptures and photographs. Gabriela will represent Iceland at the 2005 Venice Biennale.



Perlan

SAGA MUSEUM

The permanent exhibition recreates key moments in Icelandic history using tableaux and a whole range of light and sound effects. A visit to the museum offers an opportunity of an unrivalled panorama of Reykjavík from Perlan.

Around Iceland

INDEPENDENCE DAY

17 JUNE

Iceland will celebrate 60 years of Independence. Go downtown and see Iceland at its most nostalgic. The ceremonies start at 11.00 am. Music, poetry, speeches, boy scouts and much flag waving. It always rains, so be prepared.



Gallery of Iceland

CLOSE UP

An exhibition of dissimilar artworks by various contemporary American artists who are united by their method of expression. Andy Warhol, Bruce Nauman and Geoff Koons all feature in this eclectic show.





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Orthodontists, Artists and Hairstylists to the Stars

by Marcie Hume

Mossfellsbær is a quick drive north from Reykjavík, but it feels like the deep countryside, with horses close to the road and green in all directions. The town tends to escape remark in many tourist guides, but it can now add a new contemporary art gallery to its list of attractions.



The gallery is situated within a cluster of old structures which, in the diffused evening light, add an aesthetic contribution of their own. An abandoned wool factory looms authoritatively near a building which houses an old swimming pool, a recording studio utilized by Sigur Rós and, in an attached structure, the newly renovated Þrúðvangur gallery and workspace recently opened

by Ólöf Oddgeirsdóttir. In rooms where the factory workers once ate their grub, the artist has created a hospitable show space and has gathered many of her female colleagues to contribute to this initial exhibition which honors the 60th anniversary of Iceland's independence on 17 June. It's an evocative setting for this collection of work which celebrates the evolution of Iceland since its rela-

tively recent political independence, a tribute to both the nation's expansion and its cultural stability.

Each artist's work is in some way intimately connected to Iceland whether it regards the nation's unscathed natural environment, its people or its politics. The show presents a broad spectrum of photographs, video and installation pieces. A piece by Hlíf Ásgrímsdóttir uses a combination of all of these. Large sheets of plastic are draped across the floor, on top of which sits a monitor with a film of the artist removing the plastic from a river in nearby Álafoss. Behind this display are several photographs in which similar pieces of plastic have drifted into natural settings and have become entangled within pristine settings. The photographs fluently attest to the supremacy of nature, its capacity to integrate and overcome. Small branches have wrapped around the debris, incorporating the otherwise offending plastic into their form. It is a testament to the persistence of nature against the change instigated by human forces. One of the most gripping and simultaneously entertaining pieces is one entitled "Portrait", created by the exhibition's organizer. It is shown on a television which sits in a small corner between two rooms of the gallery and presents various teenagers from

Mossfellsbær discussing their ideas and aspirations for their own futures.

We see each teenager close-up as they sit for an initial portrait-like shot, not speaking, looking into the camera. There is an instant intimacy with these faces as we see all their imperfections and insecurities, the restrained apprehension about what they are meant to be doing for the camera, and the innate timidity that is generally paired inextricably with the teenage years.

One face is that of a classically pretty girl with long blonde hair, a lovely face, and a mouth full of braces. She smiles hugely, looking mostly into the lens, but her smile fades intermittently as she briefly looks to the artist's face behind the camera in order to gauge what she should do next. And in this brief close-up look we feel that sharp contrast of innate beauty living side by side with human awkwardness and uncertainty. Each discusses various aspirations: the girl with braces wants to go to America to learn to be an orthodontist. Another would like to be a doctor, to go to Norway for a couple of years and then return home. One says that he would definitely like to eventually end up still close to Reykjavík because, well, everything is in Reykjavík, and he will probably consider being a psychologist or an

artist because those are the well-paid jobs (not all artists in Reykjavík are rich. I just thought you should know -ed.). Another girl wishes to become a master hairstylist to the stars in Hollywood. But even as the words leave her mouth she begins to smirk and giggle, saying that a life like that is really just a dream and she will probably stay in Mossfellsbær instead. She smiles openly at herself, and we might be smirking alongside her, not necessarily at her teenage buoyancy, but at the recognition of how silly our early dreams can be, how common and implausible such wishes are, and still how blissful. Each has their own scheme about career and travel and purpose, but the one thing that all eleven reveal is an ultimate intention to return to Mossfellsbær or a similar location in Iceland. And this is the piece's deepest connection to the theme of the exhibition. The video is a portrait of Iceland today, the newest generation who are fully prepared to take on the entire world while retaining everything of their country. This is the great storehouse of potential and possibility, the younger years that show, through all the overt inelegance, their true belief in their lives as Icelanders. This is Iceland 60 years later.

ARTS and CULTURE LISTINGS : june 11 - june 24

Want to be seen in the listings? Send us a mail to listings@grapevine.is and your event will be announced in the next issue, and the best thing is that being in the listings is free!

ONGOING

Hafnarhúsið, Reykjavík Art Museum
10:00-17:00 every day

Private exhibition of Thorvaldur Thorsteinsson and the summer exhibition at the Reykjavík Art Museum-Hafnarhúsið.

Gallery of the Icelandic printmakers association
Tue-Sun 14:00-18:00

Festival of the sea, international photoexhibition

Klink og bank artist workplace
workplace for artist, open when something special is going on.

SÍM-house
Mon-Fri 9:00-16:00

Exhibition by Guðbjörg Hákonardóttir and Guðný Hafsteinsdóttir

Culture House
11:00-17:00 every day

A summer exhibition entitled The Poetic Edda. The exhibition is intended to provide visitors with some insights into these ancient poems that have as their subject matter the mythology, ethics and Germanic heroes revered by the Norse peoples during the Viking age.

Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum
10:00-16:00 every day

The Man and Material. A retrospective exhibition of works by Ásmundur Sveinsson.

Telecommunications Museum
Tue,Thu&Sun 11:00-17:00

Pictures and items related to the history of telecommunications.

Reykjavík Zoo and Family Park
10:00-18:00 every day

Icelandic horse and sheep, along with local varieties other animals in the zoo. Right beside it is the Park, which has various activities for the whole family.

Reykjavík Botanical Garden
10:00-22:00 every day

All kinds of plants and flowers on display.

Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum
10:00-17:00 every day

Roni Horn: Her, her, her and her: Photographs taken in the Reykjavík Swimming Hall. Francesco Clemente: New Works. Exhibition of new works by the famous Italian artist.

Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum
10:00-17:00 every day

Works from the Kjarval Collection. Kjarval's career as a painter spans the years 1901 to 1968. An overview of Kjarval's work which shows how he developed as an artist.

Einar Jónsson Sculpture Museum
Tue-Sun 14:00-17:00

Works of Einar Jónsson, Iceland's first sculptor.

Hafnarhúsið, Reykjavík Art Museum
10:00-17:00 every day

I Didn't Do It. Private exhibition of Thorvaldur Thorsteinsson - the museum's summer exhibition.

Hafnarhúsið, Reykjavík Art Museum
10:00-17:00 every day

Part of the Erró Collection on show.

National Gallery of Iceland
11:00-17:00 every day

Close-up. American Contemporary Art. Includes the Jacko porcelain statue, the most expensive piece of art ever to come to Iceland.

Sigurjón Ólafsson Sculpture Museum
Tue-Sun 14:00-17:00

Works by the artist.

Reykjavík Museum of Photography
Mon-Fri 12:00-19:00, Sat&Sun 13:00-17:00.

A collection of Finnish contemporary photographs.

Museum of Medical History
Sun, Tue, Thu, Sat 13:00-17:00

Artefacts, tools, instruments and pictures on the subject.

Numismatic Collection of the Central Bank
Mon-Fri 9:00-17:00, Closed 12:00-13:00.

Icelandic coins and banknotes.

Icelandic Institute of Natural History
Tue, Thu, Sat, Sun 13:00-17:00

Geological, botanical and zoological exhibits, displaying the nature of Iceland.

Nordic House
Mon-Fri 8:00-17:00, Sat&Sun 12:00-17:00

Paintings by Sigurður Þórir and Exhibition On the way from Helsinki to Vilnius Ends June 13

Saga Museum
10:00-16:00 every day.

The Saga museum intimately recreates key moments in Icelandic history and gives a compelling view into how Icelanders have lived and thought for more than a millenium through the use of life size likenesses

Culture House
11:00-17:00 every day

Many of Iceland's national treasures are on display in the Culture House's featured exhibition Medieval Manuscripts - Eddas and Sagas. The exhibition Home Rule 1904 is held on the centenary of Home Rule in Iceland 2004.

Gerðarsafn, Kópavogur Art Gallery
Tue-Sun 11:00-17:00.

Private Collection - Icelandic Painting in Denmark. Also Opus, Paintings on Plexiglas by Bjarni Sigurbjörnsson. Ends June 20

Gerúberg Cultural Center
Mon-Fri 11:00-19:00, Sat-Sun 13:00-17:00.

Women of the world - art exhibition. Works of 176 women from 176 countries.

Reykjavík City Library
Mon-Fri 10:00-16:00

Books and periodicals in Icelandic as well as English, Scandinavian and other languages. Also has a childrens and a comic book section.

Gallery Fold

Mon-Fri 10:00-18:00 Sat 11:00-17:00 Sun 14:00-17:00

One of the largest Galleries in Iceland, works by many know artists.

Handverk og Hönnun
Mon-Fri 09:00-16:00

Craft and design. Craftspeople transfer - in modern and dynamic ways - nature's shapes, colours and materials to their work.

Gallery Hnoss

Mon-Fri 12:00-18:00 Sat 11:00-16:00

Auður Eysteinsdóttir works with aquarelle, pastels and stained glass. Hildur Margrétardóttir works with oil on canvas and aquarelle.

Gallery i8

Thu&Fri 11:00-18:00

Katharsis. In her work Gabriela Friðriksdóttir presents the manifold faces of melancholy in many of her sculptures and drawings.

Gallery Meistari Jakob

Mon-Fri 11:00-18:00, Sat 11:00-14:00

The gallery is run by eleven artists who work in ceramics, textiles, printmaking and paintings and you will always find one of them at the gallery.

Gallery Ófeigur

Mon-Fri 10:00-18:00, Sat 10:00-16:00

Exhibitions by Sunna Sigurðardóttir. Ends June 16

Gallery Sævar Karl
Mon-Fri 10:00-17:00

Ari Svavarsson installation inside the clothes store.

Gallery Tukt

Mon-Thu 13:00-18:00, Fri 13:00 - 17:00

Various artists.

Gallery Hulduhólar
Sat 11:00-14:00

Ceramic artwork from Steinunn Marteinsdóttir.

Safn

Wed-Fri 14:00-18:00. Sat&Sun 14:00-17:00

The works were the artists' most current works at the time of the museums purchase. The artists in Safn include: Donald Judd, On Kawara, Karin Sander, Lawrence Weiner, Dan Flavin, and Dieter Roth.

Teddi - Workshop
10:00-18:00 every day

Open workshop of tree sculptures of Teddi

Art Studio Gallery

Mon-Fri 10:00-16:00

Ceramic by Svetlana Matusa and oilpaintings by Helgi Hálfánarson

FRIDAY

JUNE 11

Nordic House: Concert, Reykjavík 5 and Jazz-band

Culture House: A summer exhibition entitled The Poetic Edda will be opened. The summer exhibition will continue through August.

SATURDAY

JUNE 12

Klink og bank artist workplace: Saleshow in the Greenhall begins

Hafnarborg Art Gallery: New Exhibition opens.

SUNDAY

JUNE 13

Árbæjarsafn, Folk Museum: Focus on Icelandic wool sweaters. Church service 2 pm.

MONDAY

JUNE 14

Hafnarborg Art Gallery: Concert by Antonía Hevesi playing the piano and Davíð Ólafsson playing bass.

WEDNESDAY

JUNE 16

Hafnarborg Art Gallery: Concert by Antonía Hevesi plays the piano while Auður Gunnarsdóttir sings.

THURSDAY

JUNE 17

All around Iceland: June 17th is the National Day of Iceland when the country declared full independence from Denmark in 1944.

Klink og bank artist workplace: Many things going on, open market, music, art and more

Árbæjarsafn, Folk Museum: Iceland's National Day. National costumes. Folk dancing 4 pm. Exhibition of traditional jewellery.

Hallgrímskirkja Church: Lunch Time Concert

FRIDAY

JUNE 18

Nordic House: A concert for playschoolchildren. Free admission!

SATURDAY

JUNE 19

Hallgrímskirkja Church: Lunch Time Concert - Christopher Herrick

Nordic House: Summer Solstice Concert

Admission: Icel. kr. 1.200

SUNDAY

JUNE 20

Árbæjarsafn, Folk Museum: Focus on Icelandic herbs and their use for medicinal purposes, in food and as dyes.

Nordic House: Familyconcert., Free admission!

Hallgrímskirkja Church: Evening Concerts Sundays - Christopher Herrick

MONDAY

JUNE 21

Klink og Bang Gallery: Exhibition opens, worldfamous american artists Paul McCarthy and Jason Rhoades.

TUESDAY

JUNE 22

Árbæjarsafn, Folk Museum: Midnight Sun guided walk in Elliðaárdalur valley. Departure at 10 pm from museum entrance.

Sigurjón Ólafsson Sculpture Museum: Hjörleifur Valsönn, violin, Tatu Kantomaa, accordion and Kristinn H. Arnason, guitar. Music by the Czech composer Václav Trojan including the suite composed for Jiri Trnka's puppet film: The Emperor's Nightingale.

THURSDAY

JUNE 24

Hallgrímskirkja Church

Lunch Time Concert - Announced later



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MUSIC AND NIGHTLIFE



KRIS KRISTOFFERSON

by Valur Gunnarsson

Dylan's janitor discovers genius

In late 1965, Bob Dylan was on a roll. He had spent years playing the coffee shops of Greenwich Village and had become a star on the folk scene, putting the message back into music for the first time since Woody Guthrie. That year he had already released the albums *Bringing it Back Home* and *Highway 61 Revisited*, plugged his guitar in, invented folk rock, been booed by his audience and become an influence on everyone.

So when he entered the studio again at the end of the year, he had a lot to live up to. Dylan rose to the challenge and the subsequent album, *Blonde on Blonde*, is universally hailed as one of the best in rock history. The sessions stretched to six months as compared to *Highway 61's* six days. But in the process, genius was unleashed. In fact, so much of it seemed to be channelled into the studio that for a while, everyone seemed to have become infused. His band (The Band), previously an above average Canadian bar band, went on to record their own great albums in the following years, *Music From Big Pink* and *The Band*. The explosion of genius that took place at CBS studios was so great that even the janitor made a masterpiece. The janitor's name was Kris Kristofferson. He had been a Rhodes scholar at Oxford before becoming a helicopter pilot in the army. He turned down a job teaching English literature at West Point in order to move to Nashville to become a

songwriter. There he got a job in a studio, emptying ashtrays and vacuuming floors at night, hoping to find someone to release his songs. When Dylan was up all night writing songs on very expensive studio time, the janitor didn't dare approach him. Dylan was then the hottest thing in pop and even had a police escort to keep fans away. It wasn't until 1969, when Johnny Cash recorded the Kristofferson song *Sunday Morning Coming Down* that the ball started rolling. Legend has it that Kristofferson landed on his lawn in a helicopter with a bottle in one hand and a tape in the other. The following year, Bobby Neuwirth from Janis Joplin's band attended a Kris concert and was impressed. He told Janis about him and introduced the two, who proceeded to have an affair. Another master songwriter, Leonard Cohen, said once that he met Janis on an elevator and she asked him whether he was Kris Kristofferson. He told her he was, and the two of them had an

affair as well, immortalised in the Cohen song *Chelsea Hotel No. 2*. Joplin's affair with Kristofferson was also fruitful; she recorded his song *Me and Bobby McGee* and had a number one hit with it, albeit posthumously. Kristofferson's first album, *Songs of Kristofferson*, came out in 1970. He's since gone on to write many more songs, but it is his first album that remains his definitive statement. Even if you've never heard of Kristofferson before, you've probably heard most of the songs here somewhere. Kristofferson was one of the first people to realise the similarity between the traditional country/western outlaw hero and the new hippie counterculture hero, and he combines these elements on the album. The first song, *Blame it on the Stones* takes the side of the longhairs, and he goes even further in *The Law is for Protection of the People*, equating the crucifixion of Christ with hippie bashing in the American South. Dylan would never again make masterpieces as easily as he did with *Blonde on Blonde*. But he's still playing, on his so-called his *Never-ending Tour*. Kristofferson is still playing too. He'll be here, in Laugardalshöllin on the 14th of June. I wonder whether he needs a janitor.

12 Tónar: Rock star and classical musician run record store

by Jón Trausti Sigurðarson

The name means 12 tones and when it comes to variety of music, it's a music store that indeed fills the whole octave. With a friendly staff of four, including a rock star and a classical musician, two floors full of CDs, a sofa and free coffee, you're in good hands when it comes to finding what you want. The classical stuff is on the ground floor but in the cellar you'll find new and old Icelandic releases - it's all there.



12 Tónar are also active as wholesalers for other music stores and are "getting bigger and busier as a record label" says Jói, who is one of the owners. The 12 Tónar record label is expanding fast; some of their featured artists include Mugison from Ísafjörður (record of the year in Japan), Eyvör Pálsdóttir from the Faroe Islands and Slowlow from Iceland.

So how did it all come about? "12 Tónar were founded in my cellar six years ago. At first we only sold one album, just in wholesale. It was the

great "Nordisk Salon Musik" album which was a best seller in Iceland during Christmas of '99. "It was such a success that we decided to open a store of our own and for the past three years we've been situated by Skólavörðustígur."

What was 12 Tónar's next release? "Trabant live at Bessastaðir. It's out soon, in only 500 copies and features Icelandic band Trabant playing live in a party held by the President of Iceland. On the cover are the band

with the president in his office, and one track is simply a thanks speech to the band from the president just after that particular gig. It's going to sell very fast."

Grapevine orders a copy of the new Trabant album, bids farewell and walks smiling down Skólavörðustígur to go back to work, hoping it won't be broke by the time that album comes out.

PICKS MUSIC AND NIGHTLIFE

Grand Rokk, June 11th, 22:00

BOTNLEÐJA



Band Botnleðja has been around for more than 10 years now. They won the Icelandic battle of the bands back in '95, have since then released 5 albums, toured with Sparta and made friends/toured with Blur. Apart from playing in Botnleðja, the members have solo projects, too - the vocalist/guitarist Heiðar makes live appearances armed with only an acoustic guitar, and drummer Halli released a children's album not too long ago. Botnleðja has always been a great live band.

Laugardalshöll, June 23, 19:00

DEEP PURPLE



"Smoke on the water" anyone? Deep Purple are back...err...in Iceland playing two gigs this time. They are probably fulfilling their gig duty since their last time in Iceland when they only played half a gig due to electricity problems. But that was back in 1970 or something. Legend has it that they're just as good a live band as they were back in the old days, and though Blackmore has been replaced by Steve Morse, Ian Gillian is still there, screaming his lungs out. Tickets are still available in Hard Rock Café, Kringlan shopping mall. Call 568-9888 for more info.

Bar 11, June 17, 21:00

NORTÓN

Nortón are an Electric Funk happy happy joy joy 3 piece band who will, along with a pint of beer, help you forget all your worries and concentrate on dancing! No Entrance fee.

Jómfrúin, June 12, 16:00

GUITAR ISLANCIO



When two of Iceland's greatest guitarists Björn Thoroddsen and Gunnar Þórðarson join hands with bassplayer Jón Rafnsson, it's bound to work. Gunnar Þórðarson is former member of bands Hljómar (Thor's Hammers) and Trúbrot whose record Lífun (Living) was recently elected as one of the best records ever made in Iceland. This time Guitar Islancio are playing Scandinavian traditional tunes along with, well hopefully, Icelandic folk songs. Enjoy, it's free.

Sjónvarpshúsið (Laugavegur 172), 17 June, 17:00

MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE



Well now! It's time to go nuts, stagedive and break sweat at the largest Hardcore festival ever held in Iceland, from the US come bands Shai Hulud, Give up the Ghost and 27. From Reykjavík's dark back yards, bands like I Adapt, Changer, Dys, Drep, Fighting Shit and Afsprengi Satans will play. Admission 2000ISK

Kaffi Ligt, 12 June, 23:00

RAGNHEIÐUR GRÖNDAL QUARTET



Jazz vocalist Ragnheiður has been doing great things with her three piece band; Sigurður Þór Rögnvaldsson playing guitar, Pétur Sigurðsson playing bass and Kristinn Snær Agnarsson playing drums. Jazz with soul. Admission 500ISK

UPCOMING EVENTS

Weekends: Upstairs:
Troubadour

Weekends: Downstairs:
Live band playing covers

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When superstars go from drugs to comfort-food, the next step is Iceland

by Aðalsteinn Jörundsson

All hell is breaking loose in the imports division of the Icelandic music scene. World famous pop and rock bands come surging onto our shores and we, the rock-thirsty Icelanders, stand in awe and appreciation while the likes of Violent Femmes, Deep Purple, Kraftwerk and most recently Pixies (May 25th) and Korn (May 31st) come to give us the performances we've heard about for ages but never seen with our own eyes.

I idolised these bands as a teenager and in my early twenties. Back then I was the only one in my circle of friends who liked the Pixies and I've always been grateful to Korn for putting metal-esque music back into the mainstream. I never thought that those bands would consider the possibility of coming here but they did - finally.

Both the Pixies and Korn had really obscure experimental-noise bands as a warm up number. The Icelandic group Ghost Digital opening the Pixies show were fantastic, with brilliant sound engineering from the noise artist Curver and Einar Órn's (former Sugarcubes member) cataclysmic shout outs. Mike

Patton's (from Faith No More) pet project, Phantomace, came with Korn and played, what I would like to call, mind-fuck n' roll. It was a mix of death-metal, hard-core and noise music which was fun to experience. Still, somehow I had the feeling that it would have been more interesting to see them in a smaller venue.

The headlining performances were not as entertaining. Both the Pixies and Korn made it too obvious that they were on the job. It was as if they had just clocked in to play their songs and they wanted it over and done with fast. I had heard that the Pixies always used to be quite immobile on stage but I didn't



expect them to never address the audience nor did I expect them to play their songs in the exact same versions as on their albums. Korn's performances weren't as dead as Pixies but the lead singer, Jonathan Davis, had the annoying habit of disappearing from the stage in between songs. I know he has to breathe in oxygen during a show but is it that urgent to do it after every single song? He isn't moving that

much. Don't get me wrong. I loved seeing those bands. And maybe I shouldn't be bitching about their stage performances while I should be talking about their music, which was, of course, brilliant. Neither of the bands made any obvious mistakes playing their instruments (so you didn't get your money back? -ed.) and both played all my favourite songs. Regarding their music and the



sound on the concerts I have nothing to complain about. It's just when I pay to see a show like that, I want to experience something more than what I can get from listening to their albums. It's just not enough to see the musicians play the music you've already heard. I want to see them put on some kind of a show to go with the music.

The summer isn't over yet. More bands are coming; some old, some new. Some bad, some good. We, the inhabitants of Iceland, can only hope that the rest haven't yet passed their prime.

MUSIC and NIGHTLIFE LISTINGS : june 11 - june 24

Music and nightlife events usually start around 21:00, unless otherwise stated. Pubs close at 01:00 on weekdays and much, much later on weekends. For those just wanting to party, the pubs and clubs don't get crowded until after midnight on weekends, although Thursday is a semi-official night out.

FRIDAY JUNE 11

Prikió: 20:00 Búðarbandið play fun stuff 23:00 DJ KGB
Dubliners: 22:00 Troubadour Spasky 01:00 Troubadour Bjarni Tryggva
Grand Rokk: 23:00 Bands Botnleðja and Hoffman, see picks for details
Celtic Cross: A troubadour playing upstairs and a live band downstairs
Nasa: Band Starsailor (sold out) after they finish Coverband Buff play
Dillon: DJ Andrea Jóns
Felix: DJ Andri
Hverfisbar: DJ Benni
Bar 11: DJ Dóddi from band Trabant
Sirkus: DJ Kári
Café 22: DJ Matti from radiostation X-íd
Vegamót: DJ Sóley (buttercup)
Kaffibarinn: DJ Tommi White
Thorvaldsen bar: DJ's Daddi Diskó & Hlynur
De Palace: DJ's Devious & Extreme
Jón Forseti: DJ's Fun
Muhitos: Launch feeling with a dancefloor
Miðbar: Pianist Magni plays
Café Sólón: Sólón Summer party, DJ Þróstur 3000
Nelly's: Stand up comedians compete
Kapital: State of Mind; DJ's Arnar & Frímann
De Boomkikker: Troubadour Óskar Einarsson, and then DJ Heavy Metal
Ari í Ögri: Troubadours Halli & Kalli
Gaukur á Stöng: A band from Húsavík called The Hefners play covers
Café Victor: DJ Heiðar Austmann
Amsterdam: DJ Steini
Glaumbar: DJ Þór Bæring
Pravda Barinn: DJ's Tommi & Einar play a mix of R'nB & 80's hits

SATURDAY JUNE 12

Jómfrúin: 16:00 Guitar Islanico play, see picks for details.
Dubliners: 22:00 Troubadour Spasky 01:00 Troubadour Bjarni Tryggva.
Grand Rokk: 23:00 Bands Babbist and Norton
Kaffi List: 23:00 Ragnheiður Gröndal with band, see picks for details
Celtic Cross: A troubadour playing upstairs and a live band downstairs
Nasa: Band Skítamóral from Selfoss plays covers
Dillon: DJ Andrea Jóns
Hverfisbar: DJ Andri
Café 22: DJ Andri from radiostation X-íd
Sirkus: DJ Árni Sveins
Felix: DJ Doktorinn
Prikió: DJ Gísli Galdur pulls tricks on listeners
Kaffibarinn: DJ Kári
Bar 11: DJ Lazer (Jón Atli)
Vegamót: DJ Rampage/Dóri
Café Sólón: DJ Þróstur 3000
Kapital: DJ's Alfons X & Hjalti
Thorvaldsen bar: DJ's Daddi Diskó & Hlynur
De Palace: DJ's Devious & Extreme
Jón Forseti: DJ's Fun
Miðbar: Guitarist/pianist Sigurjóns plays covers and singalongs
Muhitos: Launch feeling with a dancefloor
Pravda Barinn: Private DJ Party

Nelly's: Troubadour Einar
De Boomkikker: Troubadour Óskar Einarsson, and then DJ Heavy Metal
Ari í Ögri: Troubadours Halli & Kalli
Café Victor: DJ Heiðar Austmann
Glaumbar: DJ Þór Bæring
Amsterdam: Happy coverband Buff
Gaukur á Stöng: Pop band "Menn í Svörtum Fötum" with frontman Jónsi, who claims he's not gay, play covers.

SUNDAY JUNE 13

Bar 11: 21:00 Hung over? Movie Night: Dark Crystal / Nightbreed
Grand Rokk: Bands; Indigó, Bob Justman, Viking Giant
Dubliners: Troubadour Andy Garcia

MONDAY JUNE 14

Dubliners: Troubadour Stebbi Stef

TUESDAY JUNE 15

Dubliners: Troubadour Stebbi Stef
De Palace: 21:00 US based, female fronted, chilled rock band, 27 will come by on Iceland as part of their european tour. They play one show with Icelandic indie experimental bands Kimono, Future-Future and Lights on the Highway. Admin is 500 ISK

WEDNESDAY JUNE 16

Prikió: 20:00 Band Búðarbandið play all sorts of stuff, 23:00 DJ Jói
Café 22: 20:00 DEAD opening party, artist Jón Sæmundur reopens his Dead label store at a new location, beer, booze and BBQ
Bar 11: 21:00 Poetry 11, poems and short stories, 00:00 Grapevine's favorites DJ's Palli & Biggi from band Maus
Dubliners: 22:00 Troubadour Homer 01:00 Troubadour Mundi

Kapital: A lot of drinking going on, good DJ's see coupon in Grapevine for details
Grand Rokk: Band Misery Index plays
Dillon: DJ Andrea Jóns
Felix: DJ Andri
Kaffibarinn: DJ Árni Sveins
Nasa: DJ John Digweed from the UK. Admission 2900ISK
Sirkus: DJ KGB
Hverfisbar: DJ Kiddi Bigfoot
Café Sólón: DJ Svalli
Nelly's: Party Party Party
Pravda Barinn: Scrabble & Trivial Pursuit night
Ari í Ögri: Troubadours Acoustic play covers
Gaukur á Stöng: Band Írafár (Rush) plays covers
Gaukur á Stöng: Bands Dikta and Tristian play their own songs
Amsterdam: Coverband Oxford
Café Victor: DJ Heiðar Austmann
Glaumbar: DJ Þór Bæring

THURSDAY JUNE 17

Hverfisbar: 21:00 Acoustic duet called Bítlarnir (Beatles) plays covers
Bar 11: Band Norton play funk, see Picks for details
Hressó: Beloved Icelandic pop star Eyfi plays various pop tunes, and later on Band Búðarbandið play covers
Prikió: DJ Andri
Kaffibarinn: DJ Jón Atli
Sirkus: Live bands in the back yard
Dubliners: Troubadour Bjarni Tryggva

FRIDAY JUNE 18

Prikió: 20:00 Band Búðarbandið play along
Dubliners: 22:00 Troubadour Bjarni Tryggva 01:00 Nasitam
Nasa: Band Icelandic Flag plays mostly old Icelandic pop hits
Dillon: DJ Andrea Jóns
Hverfisbar: DJ Andri
Bar 11: DJ DCR (Daniel) & friend
Felix: DJ Doktorinn

De Boomkikker: DJ Heavy Metal
Café 22: DJ Rafnar
Kaffibarinn: DJ Raggi
Café Sólón: DJ Svalli
Sirkus: DJ Þormar
Jón Forseti: DJ's and Fun
Thorvaldsen bar: DJ's Daddi Diskó & Hlynur
De Palace: DJ's Devious & Extreme
Muhitos: Launch feeling with a dancefloor
Ari í Ögri: Troubadours Acoustic play covers
Celtic Cross: A troubadour playing upstairs and a live band downstairs
Amsterdam: DJ 18
Café Victor: DJ Tutti Frutti
Glaumbar: DJ Viking

SATURDAY JUNE 19

Bar 11: 22:00 Band Dikta 01:00 DJ Lupin
Dubliners: 22:00 Troubadour Bjarni Tryggva 01:00 Nasitam
Dillon: DJ Andrea Jóns
Sirkus: DJ Andri
Hverfisbar: DJ Benni
De Boomkikker: DJ Heavy Metal
Prikió: DJ Jóri
Felix: DJ Kiddi Bigfoot
Café Sólón: DJ Svalli
Jón Forseti: DJ's and Fun
Thorvaldsen bar: DJ's Daddi Diskó & Hlynur
De Palace: DJ's Devious & Extreme
Kaffibarinn: DJ's Gullfoss & Geysir
Café 22: DJ's Palli & Biggi from band Maus
Grand Rokk: Iceland's only reggae band Hjalmar or Helmetts play
Muhitos: Launch feeling with a dancefloor
Nasa: Massive MTV Party, look for posters in the streets of Reykjavík for more info
Kapital: The great DJ Margeir
Ari í Ögri: Troubadours Acoustic play covers
Amsterdam: DJ 19
Café Victor: DJ Tutti Frutti
Glaumbar: DJ Viking
Gaukur á Stöng: Band "Menn í Svörtum Fötum" plays cover. Front man Jónsi contributed for Iceland in last Eurovision contest

SUNDAY JUNE 20

Bar 11: Hung over again? 21:00 Movie Night: Scanners / War of the Worlds
Dubliners: Troubadour Ingvar Valgeirs

MONDAY JUNE 21

Dubliners: Troubadour Stebbi Stef

TUESDAY JUNE 22

Prikió: Guest DJ's
Dubliners: Troubadour Stebbi Stef

WEDNESDAY JUNE 23

Kaffibarinn: DJ Kári
Bar 11: Punk Rock band Innvortis, watch out for that bass player! Loads of fun
Pravda Barinn: Scrabble & Trivial Pursuit night
Dubliners: Troubadours Bjarni and Ingi

THURSDAY JUNE 24

Hverfisbar: 21:00 Acoustic duet called Bítlarnir (Beatles) plays covers
Bar 11: Bands Viking Giant, Bob and Justman, no admission
Klink og bank artist workplace: Concert, Hýsill Kitchen Motors
Café Sólón: DJ Andrés play a Green room session)
Kaffibarinn: DJ Raggi
Prikió: DJ Sóley aka. Buttercup
Kapital: Trance.is night
Dubliners: Troubadours Bjarni and Ingi
Glaumbar: Ari & Gunnir unplugged

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THE 2ND WORST THING YOU CAN SAY TO A GUY ON A 2ND DATE

by Beerman



Illustration by Þorsteinn Davíðsson

She tasted like whiskey, and I hadn't tasted whiskey in a long time. It's not that I don't like the taste, you see. It's the morning after. And when you have your first sip and you're already smelling the morning after, it's time to find new ways to erase your mind.

This wasn't just my imagination running wild. She really did taste like whiskey. It was her New Year's resolution. To acquire the taste. And she was doing just fine. She started out on bourbon, but I knew she would soon graduate to scotch. She was my kinda gal.

To be frank with you, most girls are my kinda gals. But I'm not most gals kinda guy. I don't dance. I don't buy drinks. I'm not into risk investment. Buy a girl a drink, the chances of getting her to sleep with you are still pretty slim. Drink enough of them yourself, and you can be sure of get-

ting drunk. That's the one thing you can always count on with alcohol. And me, I go for the sound investment. But this one bought her own drinks. As I told you, she was my kinda gal. All I had to do was have a beer and wait for her to do all the work, and then I'd reap the reward. She was already halfway there when we met. By the time she finished her drink, she was moving over my way. Maybe it was the whiskey. I didn't mind. And I didn't mind the taste when

she put her tongue in my mouth. But I've already told you that. Where were we...ah? Just so you don't get the wrong idea. I am not without morals. I do think it wrong to sleep with women more drunk than you are. So usually I try to catch up. But I was running out of time.

It wasn't the first time we met. We'd met before, under similar circumstances. Done the deed. We were equals then. Alcohol is the great equalizer. The beautiful and the hideous, the old and the young, the ignorant and the wise, at the end of the night, no one can hold a conversation any better than they can hold their drink.

Which was why I liked bars. That great socialist Jesus must have been drunk when he said the last shall be first, the first shall be last. Its guys like me that always fall down last. This is where we get our revenge. But I digress. So far, everything was going according to plan. The plan's always the same, but women rarely play according to rules, much less plans. Even if most plans include them.

And I had plans for Miss Bourbon. And Miss Bourbon was playing along. The fiddler plays the tune and she was tapping her foot in time. It wasn't as if I was doing anything wrong, I mean, she had already acquiesced once. Do you ever make

the same mistake twice? Or is that just being careless?

I had another hit of equalizer and she lent over toward me. She whispered in my ear, softly. But what she said wasn't what I wanted to hear. The very worst thing a woman can say to a man on a second date is: "I'm going to have your baby." A child is 18 to life. There's no "I'm sorry babe, it won't happen again." Once the words are spoken, it's too late for regrets, too late for see-you-laters. All you can do is harden yourself to a decade of hangovers in movie theatres watching afternoon cartoons with a kid that'll grow up to be just like you.

But that wasn't what she said. What she said was the second worst thing a woman can say on a second date. "I think I have Chlamydia," she said. That was a downer on the general mood of where the night was going. I no longer felt like holding tight and drowning in her sinking eyes. I made my excuses the way you do, but it wasn't even morning yet. I had other plans for the morning. I had waiting rooms and doctors and piles of outdated magazines with pictures of people you'd like to sleep with, if only you weren't going to see the doctor. That's what I had in the morning. That, and a hangover. So much for the cartoons.

Paddy's Top Five Burger Joints

by Padraig Mara

Hamburgers are by now a staple of the local diet, and it shows. But which ones are the best? We asked an expert from the United States, Dr. Padraig Mara, to do some research, to which he replied: "Fuck it, I'll just ask some folks and go eat some burgers."

Hard Rock Cafe Kringlan Mall

Originally I had intended on skipping the larger chains like Hard Rock. However, during my thorough and highly scientific poll of hamburger scholars, the place came highly rated over and over. I went and asked the waitress what her favorite burger was. She brought a magnificent 200 gram slab of beef patty, smothered (but not too smothered) in hickory smoked BBQ sauce, dressed in melted cheese, red onion, lettuce and tomato. Always listen to your waitress.

Hamborgarabúllan Tryggvagata 4-6

Hamborgarabúllan is an interesting place; it's shape can best be described as...weird. Inside, the walls

are covered with hipster Americana; a promotional poster for the first Blues Brothers movie, a portrait of Johnny Cash looking all speed-sick and beautifully ugly and a picture of the cast of the Sopranos blocked to put you in mind of DaVinci's Last Supper, though without the mighty J.C. But out the windows, you can watch as the boat Hrefna Rós gets a new coat of paint before launching back into the bay.

The burgers are excellent. I had a simple single patty with lettuce, tomato, mayonnaise and ketchup with melted 'yellow cheese'. I was so happy to discover my beloved American cheese on the burger, I was nearly moved to tears. I highly recommend this place. Great burgers in an interesting spot, cooked right in front of you.



Grillhúsið Tryggvagata 20

At Grillhúsið I again relied on the opinion of one of the servers. And again it paid off. I was presented with a juicy burger, cooked perfectly medium rare (exactly as I asked and it's easier said than done) topped with melted cheese, bacon and a 'special sauce'. The burger was so good, when I got home I actually wrote: A beautiful example of hamburger artistry.

Kaffi Brennslan Pósthússtræti 9

Here I was honored with a Dijon-glazed grilled burger, piled high with lettuce, tomato, red onion, cheese, and an excellent mustard mayonnaise sauce. This was a true gourmet bit of work, not too be missed. Kaffi Brennslan will soon be changing

their already excellent menu, but I was assured they would retain the old favorites like this burger.

Vítabar Bergþórugata 21

I left Vítabar for last because it's the closest to my heart. It's also the closest to my house. I ordered the burger that has made them famous throughout the city. A full 200 grams of burger with all the fixings, covered in a blue cheese and onion dressing, all this going on between the best hamburger bread I have encountered on either side of the Atlantic. I can only describe it as fucking rocking. I highly recommend you take a walk to this place on a Sunday afternoon and order this meal accompanied by two or three pints. If this doesn't cure your hangover, I recommend a pistol and some time alone.

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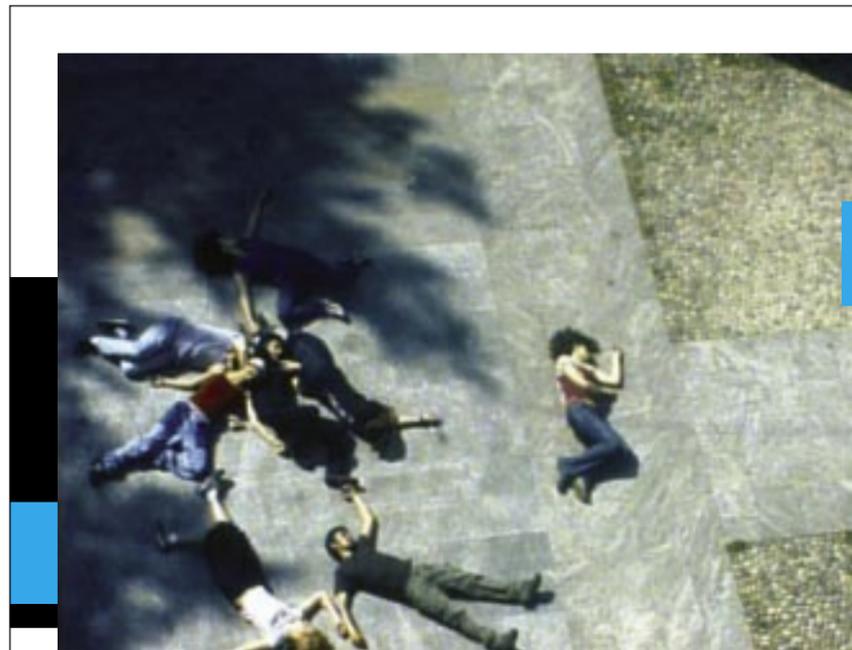
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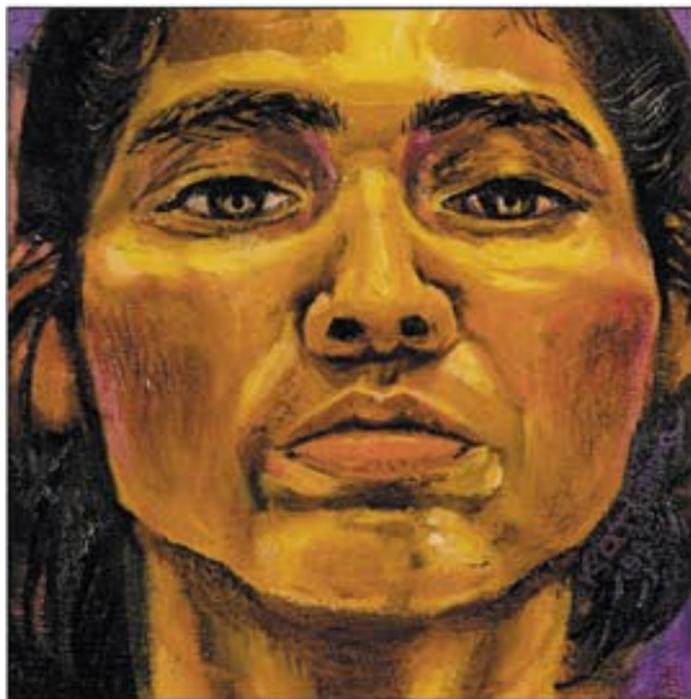
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WHOSE INDEPENDENCE?

by Valur Gunnarsson

Icelandic history can be briefly summed up as follows: Iceland was populated by a race of noble heroes, lost its independence, misery followed for all, then in the 20th century it reclaimed its independence and became the happiest nation on earth.

This will be the version we'll be hearing on the 17th of June, when Iceland celebrates its 60th anniversary as a republic. This, by and large, is also the version taught in Icelandic schools. In the struggle for independence from Denmark (which actually took the form of lawyers from both sides haggling with each other about age-old agreements), the writing of Icelandic history became a weapon in the struggle. Of course, everything that ever went wrong had to be the fault of the Norwegians and the Danes. Icelandic history is long overdue for an overhaul. Some historians now claim that the quest for independence was actually a reaction by a conservative farmer's society against new liberal values coming in from Denmark. But these voices, as yet, receive little attention.

Independence, we are told, is the reason for Iceland's prosperity. We even have a party named after it, and people obligingly vote for it every four years. It is interesting to note that whereas in Scandinavia, the parties that attract the largest following of people tend to be social democrats, here the largest mass party is the conservative one. Actually, it was formed under the name The Conservative Party in 1924, but underwent a name change five years later and has since been called the Independence Party. A few weeks before the Republic celebrates its 60th birthday, the party celebrated its 75 years. After 13 consecutive years in power, the party is today more disputed than it has often been, but its success with the electorate throughout the history of the republic is beyond dispute. What then explains this success, rare for right wing parties in Europe?

The First New Society

Perhaps we need to go farther back into Icelandic history to find causes to this, much farther back than the actual founding of the party. We need to go back to the very founding of Iceland itself. Every nation has, to a greater or lesser extent, mythological foundations. This is even more true of settler communities who were consciously founded as new societies. The American scholar Louis Hartz said:

"When a part of a European nation

is detached from the whole of it, and hurled outward toward new soil, it loses the stimulus toward change that the whole provides. It lapses into a kind of immobility."

To put it another way, and as stipulated in Richard F. Tomasson's book *Iceland: The First New Society*, settler communities are inherently conservative. The puritans did not embark on the Mayflower from England to America in order to build a new society. They went in order to preserve a way of life that they no longer found themselves able to continue in their old home. By the same token, Ingólfur Arnarsson and the first settlers here did not come to Iceland to form a new society, but to get away from a new order in the old one, in this case being imposed by the unification of Norway. For almost 400 years they managed to preserve their clan-based society here, until this led to interminable blood feuds and the Norwegian king needed to be called upon to impose peace. This might go somewhat towards explaining the conservative streak in most settler communities to this day. While it is true that what happened a thousand years ago may not have much direct impact upon our actions today, the story of our foundations have entered our collective consciousness, and how we define who we are.

A Nation of Kings

However, there are noticeable differences between Iceland and other immigrant societies. First of all, settlers from Europe came here almost a millennium before colonisers flocked North America and to parts of the British Empire. And whereas the United States prided itself on receiving Europe's hungry and poor, Iceland, it seems, was populated solely by kings. If these brought any subjects along, they receive scant mention. Upon the unification of Norway, all the petty kings there left and moved to Iceland. In the Saga age, we are told, every man in Iceland was a king. These are the stories we are brought up on. Icelanders did not come here in search of a better life in a land of milk and honey. They came here for their independence. So whereas the American dream is one of overnight success, the Icelandic dream is one of being



The Republic celebrates 60 years



your own man. We are an independent people, a nation of kings. But in a nation made up solely of kings, it is very hard to organise things. Icelanders are, unlike their Norwegian cousins who stayed behind to serve the new state, very bad at thinking in terms of groups. Small wonder then, that what is probably the most successful organisation in Icelandic history, managing to represent consistently roughly 40% of the population, stands not for what is best for the group but what is best for the individual. The Independence

Party was formed as a club for the upper classes. In a nation of kings, everyone assumed this meant them.

The New Kings

In a year that celebrates 100 years of Home Rule, 60 years of independence and 75 years of the Independence Party, considerable changes have emerged in the landscape. Realignments of financial power have taken place in the last decade that are nothing short of revolutionary. In the 90s, restrictions were eased and the economy was opened up, and vast fortunes were made by people who did not have strong ties to the Independence Party, whereas the wealthiest people in the past always did. Their fortunes are now immeasurably greater than those of the old families (the 14 families or the Octopus, as they were known) who formerly controlled the Icelandic economy. But as the nouveau-riche have not yet been accepted by the old guard still in control of the Independence Party, there now exists a rift between financial and political power that is rarely seen in history. A similar situation existed in France in the 18th Century. There financial power was being amassed by the bourgeois but the nobility still held a monopoly on political power, and this led to revolution.

That is not very likely to happen here. Before long, there will no doubt be a realignment. Money will, as always, find its way into government. Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson is stepping down in September. Perhaps the next generation of Independence Party leaders will be more accommodating to the new financial interests. Or perhaps the new money men will find other parties to look after their investments, in which case the Independence Party might wind up, ironically, as truly representative of the people. As always we'll be the last to know, since Iceland, unique as always, is the only democracy which does not insist upon political parties displaying their accounts. We don't get to see who pays our representatives bills, and hence have no idea on who's behalf they speak. At least, for now, there are two voices being heard in Iceland instead of one, since the political elite and the financial elite no longer speak with a single, unified voice. That's something. But don't expect it to last forever. And don't expect the new kings to be any different from the old.



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STICK PINS IN THEIR FEET AND SLAP THEM ON THE CHEEK

by Eydís Björnsdóttir

I cut across the adhesive tape, only to discover that there were staples underneath which held the box firmly shut. I eventually got it open and proudly displayed the skeleton that was hiding inside.

No, not a scene from the latest horror flick, but for me an average day at work last summer. It was only a plastic skeleton, but this shiny, clean heap of bones was destined to end up in the Ghost Museum at Stokkseyri. The Museum is a great addition to the range of museums found in Iceland, and should serve as fine entertainment for everyone interested in what has been lurking about in the darkness of Iceland's winter nights. And it shouldn't only tickle the curiosity of foreigners but also any Icelander who enjoys a good tale.

Maybe you don't believe in ghost stories? In that case you could probably do with a trip to some desolate spot in the country. It's amazing what pitch darkness, devoid of civilisation, will do to any man's belief in the eerie. You might not come back believing in ghosts and goblins, but you'll definitely have a better understanding of the soil from which Icelandic ghost tales have sprung. People tend to think up such stories when they're faced with nothing but darkness for the better part of the year and soon they'll find themselves believing them. Iceland is no exception for here abound stories of resurrected bodies, haunting spirits, killer seals, trolls, men turning into beasts of all kind, and even the devil himself.

The one word they can't say

Anyway, back to ghosts. Here no one is so entirely dead as to be unable to walk once more. The deceased longs to return and this is exactly what the living must prevent him from doing. For this there is a procedure. Firstly, close his eyes so he cannot see. Secondly, carry the corpse feet first to the grave so that it can't find its way back. It is usually the wrongdoers or those who died swiftly or disastrously and can't abandon what was left behind, who become ghosts capable of haunting the living.

Icelandic ghosts generally are far more physical than the spectral apparitions we're used to in the movies. They wreak havoc and can be strong as an ox. These ghosts even touch humans; the most relentless ones will pursue a person's descendants

for up to nine generations. There is also the occasional hopeless romantic who comes back for the love of his life, mad with jealousy because she will eventually wed another (which definitely brings the concept of a jealous boyfriend into new dimensions).

While possessing many supernatural powers, Icelandic ghosts can't say the word Guð (God). Whenever a traveller came upon a farm, he would knock three times and say "Hér sé Guð" (Here be God) to prove that he was but a human visitor. This was important to do because the common belief was that ghosts only came to visit after the sun had set, as they had difficulty walking in sunlight.

Red sweaters and big hats

In the Viking era, a spirit could be helpful or serve as a premonition. Those spirits could be in the form of an animal or somehow representative of the person's character. Later, the Roman Catholic Church denied the existence of ghosts and punished those who believed in them. But superstitions die hard and although the edicts from the Church changed some minds, the common people refused to give up entirely - they adapted instead. As an example, ghosts cannot bear to hear Catholic verses being spoken and the most effective of them all is Lilja, written by the monk Eysteinn Ásgrímsson in the 14th century.

Accompanying spirits of the 17th century and onwards seldom helped the living, but such behaviour wasn't entirely unheard of. The mean spirits were distinguished by gender. Móri is the male spook and he usually wore a reddish sweater and a big hat or something similar to a coif. Skotta is the female spook and she could be recognized by her red cap which had a tail.

Reciting poetry with a troll

People had huge faith in the spoken word, especially poetry, and a poet of power could spellbind with his uttering. Ghastly creatures such as ghosts and trolls sometimes sought to increase their power by using poetry, but they then made themselves vulnerable to their victim who could either finish reciting their poem before they could, or reply with



another poem. If that happened, the ogreish being was powerless against the measly human. No matter how fiendish the creature, the right protection is always to be found in folklore. And there are many ways to protect yourself, depending on your means. Burning the hooves of a bull inside your house will ward off any possible intruders of an otherworldly nature, as will the burning of ram horns. It is also possible to scare them off by throwing urine on them, but for those who do not wish to resort to such desperate measures, it is quite enough to hang a horseshoe over the door. The horseshoe has to turn upside down though (i.e. being the image of a frown, not a smile) or it won't be of any use at all.

Should you be in close proximity to a corpse, you could always stick some needles in the soles of its feet, making it unbearable for the poor wretch's ghost to walk. Another, probably simpler method would be to give the corpse a fierce slap on the cheek. The ghost should then go off to haunt someone else. If all else fails you can at least be comforted in the knowledge that ghosts usually don't live much longer than 300 years.



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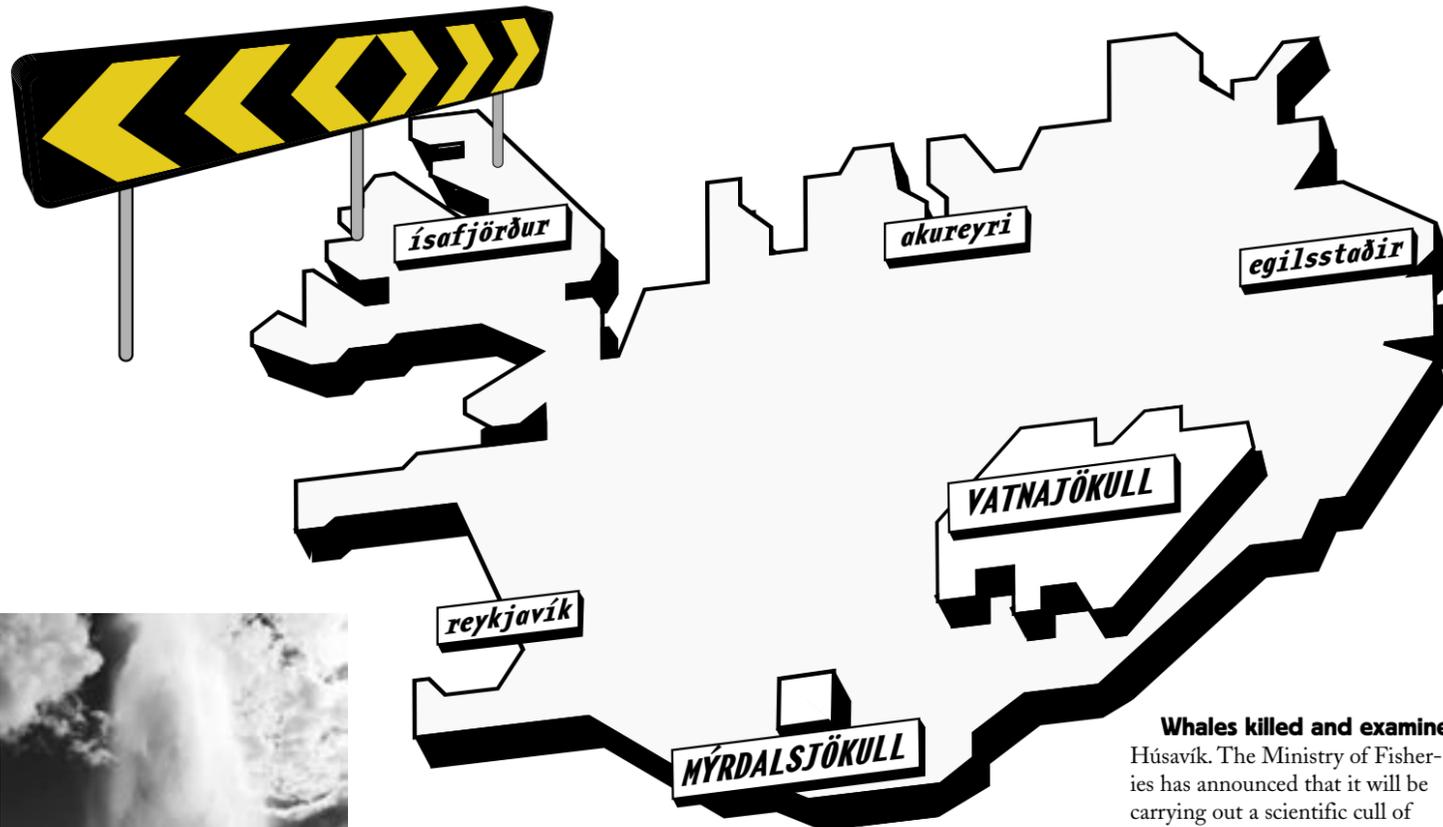
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Geysir

by Robert Jackson

Iceland is often accused of having been dealt a poor hand by whoever it was who handed out nature's goodies all those years ago. No oil, no mineral wealth, no forests, no sun. This was a country that seemed to be sucking on the hind-teat of Genesis, a place destined to receive Mother Nature's nul-points for life.

"I've given all the good stuff to my believers a little closer to the biblical homelands" said the man with the fluffy white beard, "See what you can do with a few volcanoes, several prairies of lava fields, a basket load of geothermal activity and more rain than you can handle."

His one concession to this unpromising cocktail of raw materials was to lump some of the more interesting bits close together and not too far away from where Icelanders decided to set up their capital city here in Reykjavik.

As a result, a good day out is to drive round what is called in the brochures 'The Golden Circle'. Now don't be put off by the overactive imagination of whoever it was at the tourist board who came up with this particular misnomer; he was only doing his job. The route takes the visitor to the three main attractions to be found close to Reykjavik: Þingvellir, Geysir and Gullfoss. As I was travelling

with my two young sons, we decided to forego the visit to Þingvellir and focus instead on the natural attractions.

The drive to Geysir takes just over an hour, most of it through some pretty unpromising country which becomes littered with summer houses the closer you get. Arriving at the site gives a sense of impending anti-climax for although the visitor centre is new and stuffed full of merchandise, and the hotel's flagstaffs are fluttering with flags from several nations, a notice board tells us that we've come not to see The Geysir itself erupt. Apparently this only kicks into action during times of earthquakes, state visits and other natural calamities. We've come instead, we find out, to see its poorer relative, Strokkur.

Containing our disappointment, we plod our way up the path shrouded in sulphurous steam to the roped off area where Strokkur is building up for its next display. What happens

next is utterly compelling.

You can see the water swelling up inside the hole and then feel that you are standing uncomfortably close to several thousand litres of superheated vapor which is about to be hurled into the air. You know that it's about to blow, but you don't know exactly when, and then, just when you think that nothing is going to happen, a huge blister of water forms over the entire opening which then is blasted into the sky. Your only reaction is to flinch and withdraw to safety. The

children yelled with pure pleasure and excitement, as did their father. We stayed spellbound for at least another half hour's worth of eruptions.

10 kilometers further on is Gullfoss and something equally worth seeing. Here the land cracked open and created these falls. These are not the highest in the world, but a huge volume of water flows over the precipices into a tight gorge. The effect is thundrous, spray-laden air which greets the visitor as he walks beside them. I recommend driving to

ISLAND LIFE

Drunk man wields knife

A man in Ísafjörður was arrested for waving knives in the air during an argument with another man late Sunday evening. The man, who was very drunk, was taken away by police and locked up for the night. No one was hurt, but police say they are looking into the situation very seriously.

Sea eagle chicks hatched

Sea eagles have successfully hatched chicks in a secret location in the north of Iceland. The species has in the past suffered from predation of habitat and persecution from eider farmers. There are only 60 known breeding pairs in Iceland.

Smaller cod

Concern is growing in the Icelandic Fishing industry for the health of cod stocks. Cod specimens are now much smaller than they have been in recent years. Whether the decline is caused by overfishing, climate changes or a mixture of the two is yet to be discovered.

Whales killed and examined

Húsavík. The Ministry of Fisheries has announced that it will be carrying out a scientific cull of minke whales. A similar cull last year created a storm of protest and caused Greenpeace to send their ship Rainbow Warrior to these shores. This year 25 whales will be killed and examined, less than half of last year's figure.



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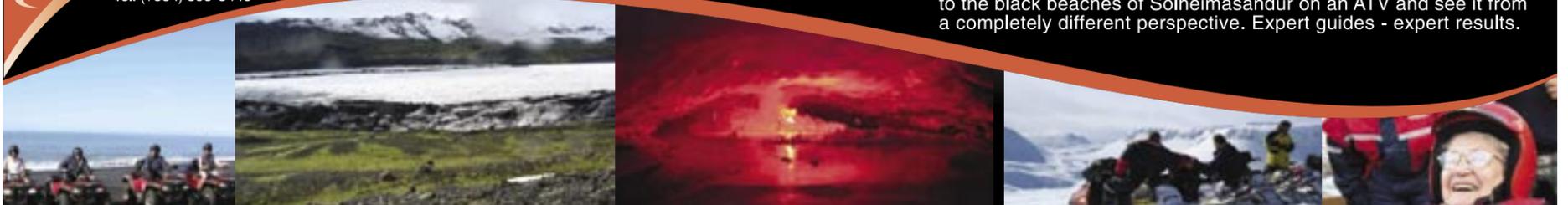
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8 TOP**BOOKS****by Eiríkur Norðdal**

Ljúgðu Gosi, Ljúgðu (Lie Pinocchio, Lie) is a book of poems from Iceland's most insane poet/author. Steinar Bragi feels like an incandescent and divine kick in the plebeian groin of society, a mad screaming "j'accuse!" against just about everything, mostly the moralist j'accusers themselves. It's an utterly hopeless picture of the world, and completely void of any socially redeeming value, or hippy ideas of common responsibility - written as the poet's bloody and wet farewell kiss to a testicle he lost through cancer. In an Icelandic landscape of mostly boring poetry books, and boring whiny poets, Steinar's more or less overlooked poetry book creates pulsating burrahs and bravos where once there were, at best, only sighs of relief at realizing that the poet had not completely soiled the trousers of creativity itself.

TSp

1. Ljúgðu Gosi, Ljúgðu (Lie Pinocchio, Lie) by Steinar Bragi.
2. Augu þín sáu mig (Your Eyes Saw Me) by Sjón
3. Ofvitinn (The Man Who Knew Too Much) by Þórbergur Þórðarson
4. Glímuskjálfti (Wrestling Tremors) collection of poems by Dagur Sigurðarson
5. Gæludýrin (The Pets) by Bragi Ólafsson
6. Áhyggjudúkkur (Dolls of Worry) by Steinar Bragi
7. Petta er allt að koma (We're Getting There) by Hallgrímur Helgason
8. Tómas Jónsson -Metsölubók (Tómas Jónsson - Bestseller) by Guðbergur Bergsson



Eiríkur Norðdal is a poet and member of the radical poetry group Nyhil. He has so far published three poetry books of his own works as well as translated the best selling Stupid White Men by Michael Moore into Icelandic and made a CD of a translation of Howl by Allen Ginsberg. He currently resides in Ísafjörður and is working in his novel Hugsjónadruslan (Idealist Slut, roughly -ed.) as well as more Ginsberg translations for a printed collection.

The words of this book seem to be shouting at each other, through an endless interconnectivity of ideas and basic play with contradictions that escalate to a point where the reader practically explodes in a neurotic fit of laughter and shame. The community of Pinocchio-words doesn't allow the rules of grammar to confine their meaning - which is given about as much respect as the plebeian intelligentsia as the poet wonders, when he has nothing better to do, if today is not the day to stick one's penis up the presidents shithole. (this review doesn't allow the rules of grammar to confine its meaning either -ed.) It's a community that beats with a natural pulse, instead of keeping perfect time in the ever going nationalist march that is Icelandic culture.

But it's more than just a punk book somehow - and more than just mad

ramblings. There's also a type of sensitivity in it, the punk elements aren't there for their own sake, they're used to convey the feeling that society consists mostly of wankers. Or to be more precise: wanking. It's the sort of book that makes a man want to get off his sofa-loving ass and cancel his subscription to internet porn and Morgunblaðið, and go dance in the streets with an ever-loving hip-swing of nihilistic joy. To resign the position of spectator in one's own life and go around flipping the bird, picking fights and giving hugs, kicking ass and taking names - and numbers - to each his own in a society of people that are mostly too well raised to say anything of importance - and yet admitting that we all have the beautiful ability to cease our eternal wanking and do something more interesting than reading bad poetry written by boring poets.

8 TOP**ALBUMS****by Freyr Eyjólfsson**

Megas og Spilaverk Þjóðanna - Á bleikum náttkjólum I have listened to this album a million times and still haven't found a weak spot on it. Master Megas and one of the best ever Icelandic bands, Spilaverk Þjóðanna (Spilaverkið for short), join forces, and the result is an album that's as Icelandic as dried cod, mutton and the cold wind. Legend has it that Spilaverkið wanted to try to make one album with Megas before he killed himself with his hard living, but then Megas surprised everyone when he showed up at the studio with handwritten notes and tons of songs.

TSp

1. Megas og Spilaverk Þjóðanna: Í bleikum náttkjólum (In pink nightgowns)(see above)
2. Stuðmenn: Tívoli.
3. Langi Seli og Skuggarnir: Rottur og kettir. (Rats and Cats).
4. Mínus: Halldór Laxness.
5. Spilverk Þjóðanna: Sturla.
6. Björk: Vespertine.
7. Bubbi: Ísbjarnarblús.
8. Ske: Life, Death, Happiness and Stuff.



Freyr Eyjólfsson is a presenter on Rás 2 radio station. He's also a member of the bands Miðnes and Geirfuglarnir, who are currently Iceland's reigning champions in the Battle of the Bands pop quiz Poppunktur.

There's some very Icelandic magic at work here and this album manages to be varied, surprising and clever. Megas had just gotten the first taste of punk and wrote the song Paradisarfuglinn (Bird of Paradise) where guitarist Valgeir Guðjónsson plays the most manic guitar solo I've heard on an Icelandic album. The song chronicles independence heroes, drug use, insanity, folk myths and the lives of dock workers. Some of the best moments are the upright bass at the beginning of the album, Megas' wordless singing at the end of Sæmundur Fróði (Sæmundur the Wise), and Orfeus og Evrídís, one of the most beautiful love poems in existence. It is always said that Megas is just a wordsmith, but he's just as good at composing music; just listen to the singing on the album. He sings Orfeus and Evrídís ten-

derly and beautifully, he screams out Paradisarfuglinn and has a different style on every track.

The chord arrangement in Útumholtghólablús is both wired and jazzy, one of his best songs. Karl Sighvatsson shines on the Hammond and the band as a whole are outstanding.

When the album was remastered and re-released a few outtakes were included, which illustrate how much fun it must have been when all this talent came together in a studio in 1977. A very Icelandic album without equal in all of music history. Acoustic jazz, psychedelia, folk, punk and everything, listening to this is an adventure in itself. Megas is the last of the national poets; and a magician. (He's also a godlike genius with a devilish grin -ed.)

8 TOP**MOVIES****by Robert Douglas**

Robert Douglas is of mixed Irish-Icelandic parentage. He first came to prominence through winning a series of awards at short film festivals. He has directed two feature length films; Íslenski draumurinn (The Icelandic Dream) and Maður eins og ég (A Man Like Me). His latest film, out this year, is Slá í gegn (Small Mall), a documentary about the life and dreams of people working in a mall.

TSp

1. Georg Lifandi Lag. Short film by Lortur.
2. Varði Does Europe. Documentary by Grímur Hákonarsson.
3. Lost Weekend. Short film and graduation project by Dagur Kári (director of Nói Albínói)
4. Rokk í Reykjavík. Documentary by Friðrik Þór.
5. Amtmannsstígur 5. Short film by Jón Sæmundur.
6. Verði fer á vertíð Documentary by Grímur Hákonarson.
7. Klósettmenning. (Toilet Culture) Short film by Rúnar Rúnarsson
8. Burst. Short film by Reynir Lyngdal.



The best Icelandic film in my opinion is Georg Lifandi Lag (George Live Song), a short film made by the production group Lortur and portrayed an Icelandic karaoke singer who dreams of fame and fortune in his chosen field. He heads off to Denmark to make it on the karaoke scene. This is one of the funnier shorts I've seen. Everyone's acting is astoundingly good and the idea is good and well executed, and even if it is somewhat raw in parts it works very well, again primarily because of the humour. I don't particularly like writing long treatises on films that I've seen, they're either good or bad...and this was good. It would be fun to see this made into a full length feature one day. This is my top 8 list, but like all lists it changes from day to day and depending on the mood.

Ljúgðu Gosi, Ljúgðu by Steinar Bragi**Á Bleikum Náttkjólum Megas & Spilverk Þjóðanna****Georg Lifandi Lag Short film by Lortur**



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