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GRAPEVINE



ISSUE ELEVEN: AUGUST 5 - AUGUST 18 YEAR 3

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the REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

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being built somewhere between the years 1968 - 1976.

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LETTERS

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

RE: Fan Mail, really...

Back in January when I followed Bart and Ed's tag team of idiocy, otherwise known as "Daily Life from Iceland," I would often log on and think to myself, ok, what are Beavis and Butthead up to now. Not only was the writing arrogant, cynical, and completely ethnocentric, but the subject matter was downright boring and mind-numbingly repetitive. Plus, I wondered, how could these two guys live in Reykjavík and have such bad hair? Caring deeply about this sort of thing (that is, having to look at it), I was relieved to read that Bart recently had an appointment at Rauðhetta & Úlfurinn. Now, at least when I see his picture in the Grapevine, I'm spared his agro grimace and the floppy, Hugh-Grant-circa-1995 hair. Good move Bart. Anyway, my point is, in January I wasn't Bart's #1 fan, and that's putting it mildly. I actually stopped reading Iceland Review all together for fear of cerebral implosion.

One can imagine my disappointment when I learned that Bart would become the editor of the Grapevine -- for that narrowed down my English reading options even further. However, I must admit that I have been impressed with both the writing, and with the subject matter (and diversity) of the articles in the Grapevine during Bart's tenure (yes, that's a compliment). Perhaps it is because after living in Reykjavík for 7 months I have developed a cynicism of my own. Or perhaps it is because the Grapevine actually is a worthy news source (which is more than some can say). Whatever the reason, I have learned to appreciate the editor's position, writing, and point-blank honesty. Hell, I half-expected to see him picking up a car battery with his nuts at the Jim Rose Sirkus. While other Icelandic publications suffer from gross embellishment and misrepresentation (ever get the feeling that things (nature aside) in Iceland don't live up to their reputation?), the Grapevine keeps it real. So, Bart, my hat is off to you. Good job, seriously, on both the hair, and the Grapevine.

J. Nebolini

and PS...

Do you really think The Leaves are good?? I mean seriously, does the World need another Radiohead tribute band? Those guys are *awful.*

Thank you, Mr. Nebolini. Iceland Review serves a different purpose and a different readership—given the restrictions placed on Mr. Weinman, I feel he does an excellent job. As for my former career as a daily blogger—I simply never understood or valued the

medium, and I have been ecstatic to be away from it. If you think it's hard to read dumb stuff, you have no idea how painful it is to write it. Or to have it quoted back to you.

The main reasons for the recent success of the Grapevine have been the support, and the forgiveness, of readers like yourself, the support we've gotten from the community at large, and the hard work of the staff here, all of whom have dealt with both my demands and my haircuts admirably.

Regarding The Leaves... yeah, sorry about that. You're not the only one to complain about them. Mercifully, you wrote instead of grabbing me at a bar and screaming at me. I say to you what I said to Mr. Drunky Drunk on Friday at Bar 11: A) There's room in this world for pop. B) My standards on live shows differ greatly from those on recorded material. C) Please stop hitting me.

For future letter-writers, please refrain from discussing the editor's hairstyle or testicles.

Subject: Come thou divine mistake! A poet's guide to pretentious, inaccurate drivell.

Hi, Look, I dislike Árni Johnsen and what he stands for as much as anyone else. But would it be too much to ask that the apparently incredibly enlightened 'Nyhil' poets actually stick to the facts when they pick themselves such an incredibly obvious target to put down? Árni Johnsen was not released from jail to sing in the Westman Islands during his stint in prison, although an appeal was made. Rather, a helicopter carried a bitter letter from him to the festival planners, which was lowered onto a stage and read to the crowd. It was a pretty surreal moment and one that I would have thought would have appealed to the intellectual powerhouse responsible for the article in question.

I understand the concept of poetic license and all that, but this is simply sloppy journalism. If indeed such an obviously hamfisted and biased tirade about 'Us' and 'them', 'them' being the great unwashed who have no appreciation for the finer arts such as, say, the 'Nyhil' poets, can be called journalism at all. Ari Eldon

Thank you for correcting this. I spoke with the writer. He explained that the historical inaccuracy in his piece was, indeed, poetic license. "Poetic License" can now be defined as fundamental historical inaccuracies that give editors ulcers. I don't know about you, but I'm drumming my fingers in anticipation of our upcoming articles "Iceland is Actually Walt Whitman, a Kosmos, Floating on Marshmallows in a California Supermarket" and "How Spain Won D-Day."

Hi, Bart

We thoroughly enjoyed the last issue. I haven't finished it all yet, but I especially liked Prof Hydrogen and the Puffin dude. As a Canadian, I can relate to such a superhero. Naturally, we really liked reading the editorial. We were preening for days over it. One of our Icelandic acquaintances even recognized us, since we had mentioned to her days before that we had stopped by your office. Are you getting lots of fan mail? Or just shit-hit-the-fan mail? And isn't it more weird irrationality that I emailed you about my cartoons just before the issue came out? It's a vortex.

Is it merely a joke that you were once an avid (pun intended) bird watcher? 'Cause I was, too. I've been a bunch of things, I think I told you, and bird watcher is one of them. I even banded for a summer, and kept a lifer list. I even, I can admit to you, snuck up on several trees that were squeaking in the wind. I had to finally promise myself never to do it again. Which reminds me: do you know how to tell the front of a tree from the back of a tree? Of course you do. Everyone knows. Who would ever pee in front of a tree?

V

We rarely print fan mail, but as you included a joke about bodily fluids, we're making an exception. Regarding the Issue 9, The Puffinaire Issue, our cover artist, Tómas Þorbjörn Ómarsson may have done too good a job: tourists were seen ripping the cover off of the magazine for souvenirs and throwing the rest into the garbage. We would like to take a small amount of credit for what we feel is a side effect of the issue: one of our featured cartoonists, Hugleikur Dagsson, has started an English-language alternative comic magazine called Very Nice Comics, the first issue of which is currently on sale.



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EDITORIALS



Bart Cameron, Editor

Government Intervention Works. The Libertarians Proved It.

Our journalist, always looking to make friends, said “A tax evader and murderer from Norway?”

“That’s absolutely right,” the teenagers said, and decided we were good friends of Iceland.

According to economist David Friedman and Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and anthropologist Jared Diamond, the original government in Iceland was the libertarian ideal of the Free State. For the first three hundred years, there were no taxes, no police, no army, the few functions typically handled by the state in other countries were initially handled privately here, including criminal prosecution. In his essay “Living on the Moon,” Jared Diamond claims the Icelandic Free State which lasted from 930 to 1262 was a disaster and showed the failure of such a system. The problem is, many people here, and many scholars looking at the system with a healthy perspective, believe that the Icelandic Free State succeeded quite well—332 years is doing better than the system set up in America, for example.

While the success of the Icelandic Free State is open to debate, we can at least acknowledge that when Davíð Oddsson started pushing Libertarian values in Iceland, he was reverting to one of the most celebrated times in Icelandic history. And as his Coalition Government has managed to privatize the last of the extremely profitable major state-run corporations in the country this week, Síminn, the Iceland telecommunications company,

Oddsson has transformed his home into something resembling that glorious Free State of history. And to his credit, there is a good deal more wealth in Iceland than there was fifteen years ago. True, there is a wider gap between the rich and the poor, and true, the average personal debt in the country is enormous, but the quality of life still seems to have gone up.

As the current government chugs along, spouting alarming anti-government rhetoric, we at the Grapevine are sometimes cast as extreme for asking that the government regulate employers’ treatment of immigrants, or that government officials who privatize banks and end up profiting from the privatization at least be monitored—we haven’t printed our request that Iceland begin a recycling program in earnest because the look of shock on the faces of Icelanders in the room convinced that we were truly going over the top.

The view of so many people here is “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” And, most of the year, it’s hard to argue. Kids with high school degrees are running multi-million dollar businesses, there’s work enough for everyone, and the social services, while on the decline, are still available to most. But then you get days like August 7th, the day of the Gay Pride Festival, which should remind locals of the move by the current government to pass Gay Union Legislation in 1996, three years before the first Gay Pride Festival.

The fact that few in the country remember extended public debate over gay partnership laws, and that nobody has been able to point out to us any significant public action that may have spurred on this law, leads us to follow the conclusion many locals have about this case: a few powerful politicians decided to be forward-thinking, and the nation followed. By passing a law about lifestyle, Parliament was able to shape a tolerant community.

Laws like the Gay Union Legislation should be celebrated, but they also remind those of us interested in politics how much is at stake, how much good can be done. Legislation in Iceland led the way to a more gay-friendly society, and legislation could lead the way to a more environmentally-friendly society, to a better-educated society, and to a more integrated society (the diversity is already here). This country may have been founded by a group of landowners who disliked legislation and enforcement of laws, and for their time the Icelandic Free State did some great things, but in modern times, as demonstrated by the actions of Mr. Oddsson in 1996, a more aggressive and conscientious government is necessary to build the kind of society that creative and productive citizens want to be a part of.

According to some, Iceland is the dream model for a conservative government. The former prime minister and key member of the Coalition Government, Davíð Oddsson, has toured the world touting his conservative policies, speaking at the neo-con think tank the American Enterprise Institute about the miracles he performed in Iceland by privatizing state-run corporations. Oddsson, who has cited Margaret Thatcher as a hero, has even lambasted former British Prime Minister Sir John Major in England for being so foolish as to pay minimum wage—Iceland doesn’t have one.

Not that Mr. Oddsson’s pro-big business, anti-taxation and government services stance is anything new. During June 17th, some local teens put the settlement of Iceland into perspective. Pointing to the statue of Iceland founder Ingólfur Arnarsson, they asked us, assuming we were run-of-the-mill foreigners, “Do you know who this is?”

Reykjavík’s Uncertain Future

since changed radically.

The more research and interviewing I did for this issue’s feature, the more I came to the frightening realization that city planning can actually be a matter of life and death. Take my home town of Baltimore, for example. During the industrial boom the town saw during the Second World War, city planners built an almost entirely residential area in the southwest area for those working in the factories. When the war ended, so did the jobs. Instead of reaching out to this community by developing industry in the southwest, city planners instead began widening the road, separating the neighbourhood from the city centre, changing the road, eventually, into an expressway. The result was swift: the neighbourhood, cut off from the city’s core of goods, services and jobs by an expressway, found itself plunged into poverty. Today, southwest Baltimore’s most profitable industry is the corner drug

trade, with murders occurring on an almost daily basis there, at the highest rate in the US – all because of shoddy planning.

Reykjavík is at a crucial juncture, poised to become either a divided town – like Baltimore – or a thriving, sustainable city. One of the things that I love most about living in Reykjavík is that you can walk from your residence to your job, to the shops, and to any number of cultural activities. That’s an example of a successful planning strategy called “integration”: easy access to all the needs of your daily life. In talking to the various players with designs on dealing with Reykjavík’s growing population, I was pleased to find that many people want to continue the city’s integration strategy. On the other hand, I was horrified by some of the ideas of others, whose plans seemed based more on unrealistic nostalgia than creating a sustainable city. I mean, building houses on

tiny islands might sound like a sexier idea than “good integration of urban space,” but in the end, I’ll always choose a plan that works over a pretty idea destined to cripple the city.

This is why city planning should be of interest to us. The heart of planning has nothing to do with how many pine trees are planted on a traffic median; it rests on nothing less than whether or not the city can keep us alive.

Reykjavík is a long way from being like Baltimore and hopefully will never take on my home town’s more tragic aspects. As City Council elections are coming up this spring, this vote might prove to be the most important one we cast. Ultimately, it’s a question of casting our ballot for Reykjavík’s transformation into a successful city or a failed dream.



I didn’t used to consider city planning a particularly interesting issue. Just uttering the phrase “high-density urban areas” was enough to induce a deep yawn from me, invoking images of a roomful of guys in horn-rimmed glasses pouring over stacks of incomprehensible blueprints. To me, city planning had all the relevance to my life as the design of rotary engines for milkshake machines. My attitude has

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Why the Gay Pride Festival Isn't for Páll Óskar

An interview with one of the Gay Pride organizers

A few months ago, the Reykjavík Grapevine sat down with former Eurovision competitor Páll Óskar to get the down low on this not-so-covertly kitsch phenomenon. This summer, Páll Óskar stopped by the Grapevine office again to explain how the Gay Pride Festival that he has helped organize and figurehead, has gotten so popular in Iceland, and why participating in the festival is only a first step.

Grapevine: The Gay Pride Festival is hardly something one has to promote anymore. It's now the biggest celebration in the country.

Páll Óskar: It has come a long way. Last year there were 40,000 people. [Novelist and playwright] Andri Snær Magnason wrote a piece in *Fréttablaðið* that we included in our brochure this year that sums everything up. It's not just that our Gay Pride has the spirit of a carnival, it's the spirit of fight. The 17th of June used to be like this. (Reading from Andri Snær's article and paraphrasing) The Gay Pride Festival here now bears most of the symptoms of a national celebration: the sense of duty, the flag, here we have people who proudly carry the flag and people [for whom] the flag still has meaning.

The Gay Generation knows what they were celebrating—they would never dream of changing their flag for an Og Vodafone flag.

Grapevine: Ah, yes, for tourists, a couple of years ago Og Vodafone, a telephone company, gave out flags during Independence Day.

Páll Óskar: Gay Pride has no sales tents. We're all about the event, pure and simple. If anything is sold, we do it personally, only gay pride flags and t-shirts, with the income going to a fellowship for the next generation.

Grapevine: It is a successful event. But I have some concerns. I covered a drag competition last year, and one of the contestants had been beaten up the night before the show. Are there incidents of violence against gays in Iceland?

Páll Óskar: I would like to see the rate of physical violence against gays in Iceland. I think it is very low. I have experienced verbal abuse. That takes place Fridays and Saturdays after midnight. Under the excuse that you're allowed to say things when you're drunk. But I have never had the experience of being kicked out of an apartment or out of a job, as I know happened to previous generations. Previous generations lived in fear. They had no emotional freedom. They really had to think twice about coming out of the closet.

Grapevine: Is it accurate to say that you are a member of the first generation of accepted openly gay Icelanders?

Páll Óskar: I am. I was born in 1970.

Grapevine: In fact, some say you're one of the reasons the Icelanders accept openly gay culture.

Páll Óskar: I'm not the reason, but yes I am one of the reasons. Me and a handful of other brave people who were just out there. Interestingly, I

came out of the closet in 1987, when the AIDS epidemic was reaching its climax in Iceland. I remember in 1984, the first talk show about AIDS had three panels. There were doctors, gays and religious people. My father said, "All these faggots should be shipped to a desert island and left there to die." So I realized I had work to do.

Grapevine: It's hard to believe things were ever like that. How were you able to cope with that?

Páll Óskar: I had some encouragement. I'm the youngest of seven. My mother was extremely helpful. When I told her, she said 'If Páll has the talent to fall in love, he should nurture that talent. And he has as much a right to sit down at my table with his partner as anybody else does with their partner.'

Grapevine: That's the family side. The private side. How does that compare with something like this parade.

Páll Óskar: Telling your parents is coming out. I do not consider walking down Laugavegur with a green wig on your head and shouting 'I'm Gay!' to be coming out. That's easy.

The Gay Pride is something we call Organized Visibility. It's for those who are still in the closet, still leading a double life. Living the life of a mole, really. While those people still exist, this parade has to be.

Grapevine: There is a limit as to what this does, in my opinion.

Páll Óskar: This whole festival has only one message, if you read between the lines: You are not done. It's also a way of saying thanks to the heterosexual people who get the picture. Because without them this whole gay lib would not have taken place.

Grapevine: It's extremely successful, and all the shops say 'Yeah, we're gay friendly' for that weekend. But I get the impression that most people return to the closet soon after. Gay friends from America have told me that they hear the 'I'm not advertising it,' line about being gay a lot.

Páll Óskar: That sounds right. I don't agree with them. It's not a question of advertising it. Straight people have wedding rings and children and kiss and hug in the swimming pools. If a gay man says that he has a problem with advertising, then he has a problem with his sexuality. But the gay society has all colours. We don't agree on politics. Some of us love each other, some of us hate each other.

Grapevine: If Iceland is so gay friendly, where are the prominent



Probably the best-dressed man in Iceland.

gay businessmen and women? Where is the openly gay politician? There isn't one gay member of parliament that I know of.

Páll Óskar: That's a good question. Come to think of it, I only know of two gay men in parliament. Neither are out. We have yet to see the day when an openly gay politician is elected. But we have quite a few gay-friendly and liberal politicians.

Grapevine: How safe is it for gay people in this country? Is it safe, for example, for a gay man to take a job in a fishing boat?

Páll Óskar: I know quite a few gay men on fishing boats personally, and, yeah, it's quite safe. I believe the only place you can find prejudice is in sports.

There's a good article [in the Gay Pride brochure] on the lesbian football team of the 1980s. Many of them were forced out of their team, Valur. They moved over to Haukur in Hafnarfjörður.

Grapevine: Is it as safe for a straight woman to work anywhere in Iceland as it is for a gay man?

Páll Óskar: I don't know. It's a good question, though. I know that as a gay man you experience verbal abuse from your fellow workers. We have learned not to react with a 'Oh, the world is so mean to me.' If someone is mean, it's usually caused by not enough information: ignorance and fear. Never victimize yourself.

Grapevine: Even when being verbally assaulted at work?

Páll Óskar: Yeah. We've come to learn that this is caused by ignorance. Give information. I'm a firm believer in information as a tool. It should be given and even promoted as it is in Gay Pride.

Grapevine: Reading through literature about the Icelandic gay scene, I came across an argument that Iceland doesn't have gay clubs because it is so incredibly accepting that gays interact just like straight people.

Páll Óskar: That's a cute argument. I don't agree. The Reykjavík gay community is always waiting for that one man with money to appear from the sky. It's a social issue. We have to socialize somewhere. Right now, the only gay club I attend is the MSE, the Leather Club. This is the only bar where I can be gay, no questions asked. Ever. I like that just as a football fan likes going to a sports club and watching a live broadcast of his team with his mates.

But let's not forget that bars and clubs are only open two days a week. What are you going to do the rest of the week? Sadly, the gay community is often dependent on the bars. It seems some men are content with being creatures crawling in the night. Naturally, that's not something I'm happy about. How gay are you for the rest of the week?

Grapevine: I know you spend time on the Continent. Have you thought

about just living somewhere where there's a more active gay scene?

Páll Óskar: I would never leave Reykjavík and move to a bigger city because of the gay scene. If someone had a great job and a great platform to show my art maybe, but never for the gay scene.

Grapevine: I think a few people come out to Iceland, knowing of the acceptance of alternative lifestyles, and think there's going to be a gay scene and are disappointed when there isn't.

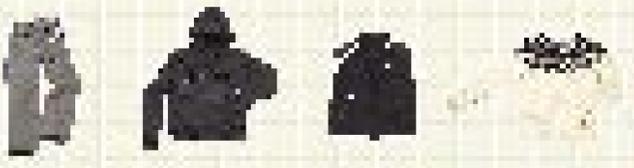
Páll Óskar: I think it's wrong to promote Iceland as a gay paradise.

For information on the Gay Pride Festival, visit www.gayice.is.
■ By Bart Cameron

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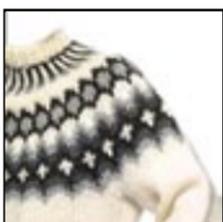


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COLUMN BY ÞÓRDÍS ELVA ÞORVALDSDÓTTIR BACHMANN

THEY KILLED KENNY! – Or was it the Vikings?

Offensive humour is on the rise. Things that once were considered taboo are now a laughing stock in television shows such as the hugely successful animated series South Park and The Simpsons. The humour is so dark that even death becomes a laughing matter. In South Park, one of the children, named Kenny, dies in a horrible accident in every single episode. In fact, Kenny's death has become a joke viewers anticipate with amusement every week. Older generations not used to today's less-than-holy humour are often taken aback by the issues that evoke laughter from young audiences. The above-mentioned TV programs are frowned upon for setting a bad example for children, leading to protests. In Britain, authorities of the King's School at Ely encouraged parents to ban their children from watching South Park, for example. However, it needs to be pointed out that this type of violent satire is far from being a new phenomenon. As a matter of fact, it was perfected in our very own treasured Icelandic sagas.

It seems the authors of the Viking tales were thinking along the same lines as the modern South Park viewer. For example, Snorri Sturluson, one of our most famous



and respected writers of medieval Icelandic literature, wasn't ashamed to poke fun at morbid matters. In his saga Gylfaginning (written in the 1220s), a man named Týr is tricked into putting his hand in the mouth of a vicious wolf, who bites his hand off. The tale tells that "everyone laughed except for Týr. He lost his hand." (Gylfaginning, chapter 34)

Those who protest South Park and similar shows argue that they normalize violent behaviour. If that is true, then a good chunk of history does so too. Malicious humour goes way back, beyond the Viking era.

In Roman times, gladiator fights were the emperor's finest source of entertainment. Seeing a slave torn to pieces by hungry lions humoured the high class for centuries. In comparison to the actual bloodshed and loss of human lives, South Park with its crass animation seems harmless and innocent. Why such a fuss now? It is important to bear in mind that the lack of sentimentality in today's entertainment is, in fact, history repeating itself.

The normalization of violence should be considered a serious matter. However, the above-mentioned television series, no

matter how insensitive they may seem at a glance, do not encourage violent behaviour. On the contrary, The Simpsons comments on violent TV material with its "Itchy and Scratchy" cartoon, which Bart and Lisa love to watch. "Itchy and Scratchy" is an utterly ironic feature of The Simpsons, in which a cat and a mouse find horrible methods to torture and kill each other in every episode, causing Bart and Lisa to roar with laughter. These sketches cleverly deliver the message that there is an alarming amount of violence on TV, even in children's programs.

Nevertheless, the South Park generation does not have a lower regard for human life than the Romans or the Vikings did. Ultimately, the values instilled in us as children are the most instrumental in shaping our respect for life and other human beings. The messages in modern cartoons, no matter how cleverly put forward, can never replace a good upbringing. Those who hold that opinion are the ones we should truly be worrying about.

COLUMN BY DAVID BROOKS



Order now: supplies are limited.

Fuel Crisis in America

I read an online article this morning about a 'war games' simulation conducted in America showing how fuel prices could soar as a result of certain events, such as terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia and Alaska, political instability in Nigeria and other scenarios. In short, fuel supplies would be choked, the cost of oil would soar to \$120 per barrel, gas would rise to \$5.30 per gallon and the U.S. would slide into an economic recession.

Let's put this in perspective, current fuel prices in Iceland are approximately 110 kronur per litre. At today's rate of exchange of 65 kronur per dollar, the cost of a gallon of gasoline in Iceland is \$6.43. Talk about "crisis level" prices! The current U.S. national average for gasoline is \$2.21 per gallon, that would be 37.8 kronur per litre. If we saw this price at our local gas station, we would be shocked by the amazing deal being offered. We would immediately fill our gas tank to the top and then alert all of our friends. The "crisis level" price of \$5.30/gallon as stated in this article, correlates to approximately 91

kronur per litre. This would still be considered a deal.

Americans are cry babies. They need to face the reality that their energy policies, attitudes and behaviours are woefully ignorant and backwards. Most Americans believe that driving is a birthright and if they want a 500 horsepower, 10-cylinder, Viper-powered sport truck that gets six miles per gallon then, so be it. Wait till these people have to spend \$250-300 to fill their 40-gallon (152-litre) tank. The average European is already dealing with what the average American would call "crisis level" gas prices. They do it by purchasing automobiles with small displacement gasoline and diesel engines. Most of the trucks (SUVs) here are diesels, very few are in America. In fact, in many cases, in America diesels aren't even offered.

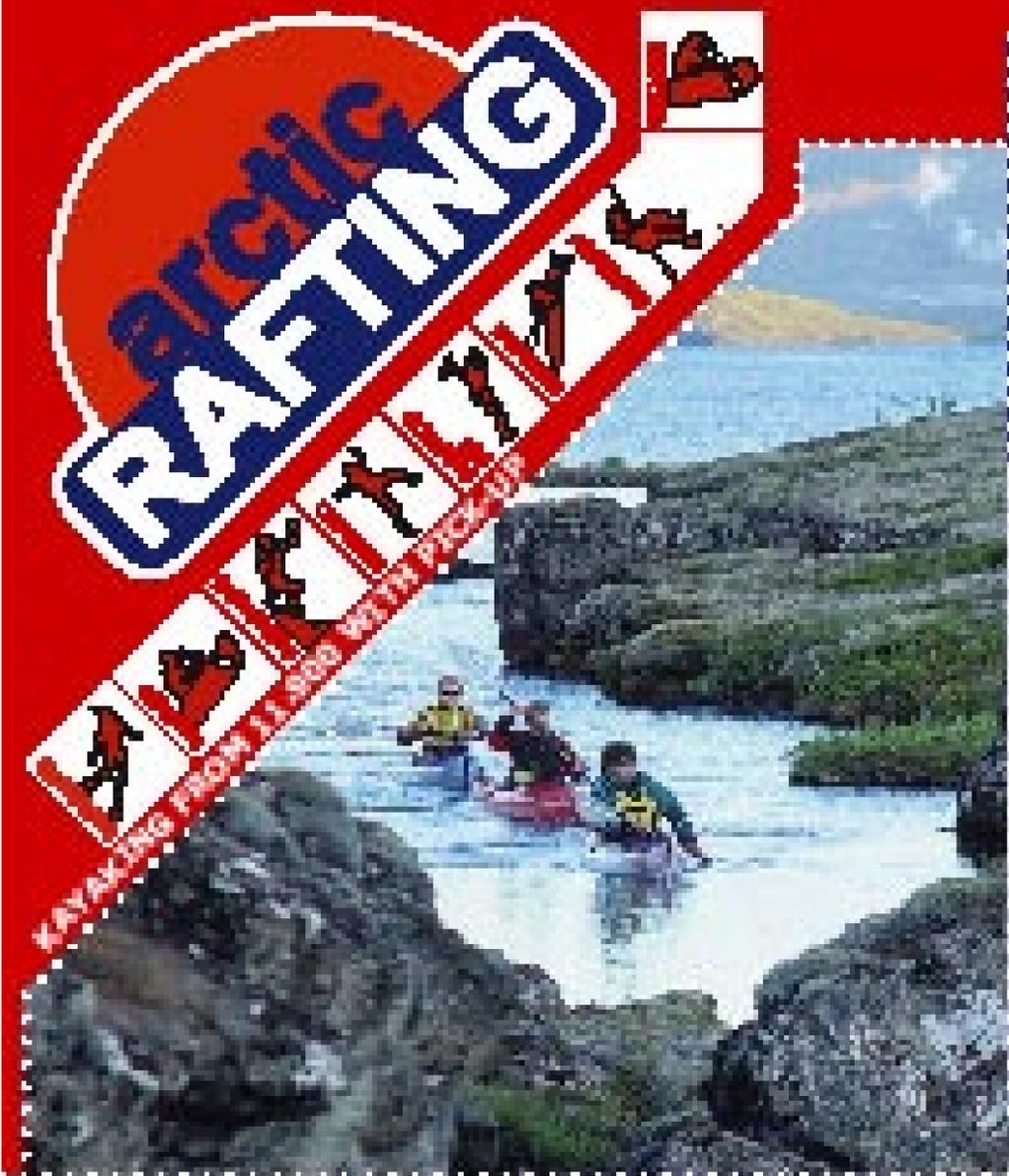
I am always converting prices in Iceland to U.S. dollars. This is something I should stop doing because I can't help but be consistently amazed at how expensive things are here. But living in Iceland has taught me

to adapt. Yes, fuel is expensive here - so is everything. So, drive a smaller car. I am not saying that Icelanders are somehow inherently more environmentally enlightened than Americans. If you ask me, Icelanders are a lot like Americans: they love their cars and they are major consumers. It's just that the tax climate and general high costs of life in this country are very prohibitive. And, Icelanders remember more vividly what it is like to go without.

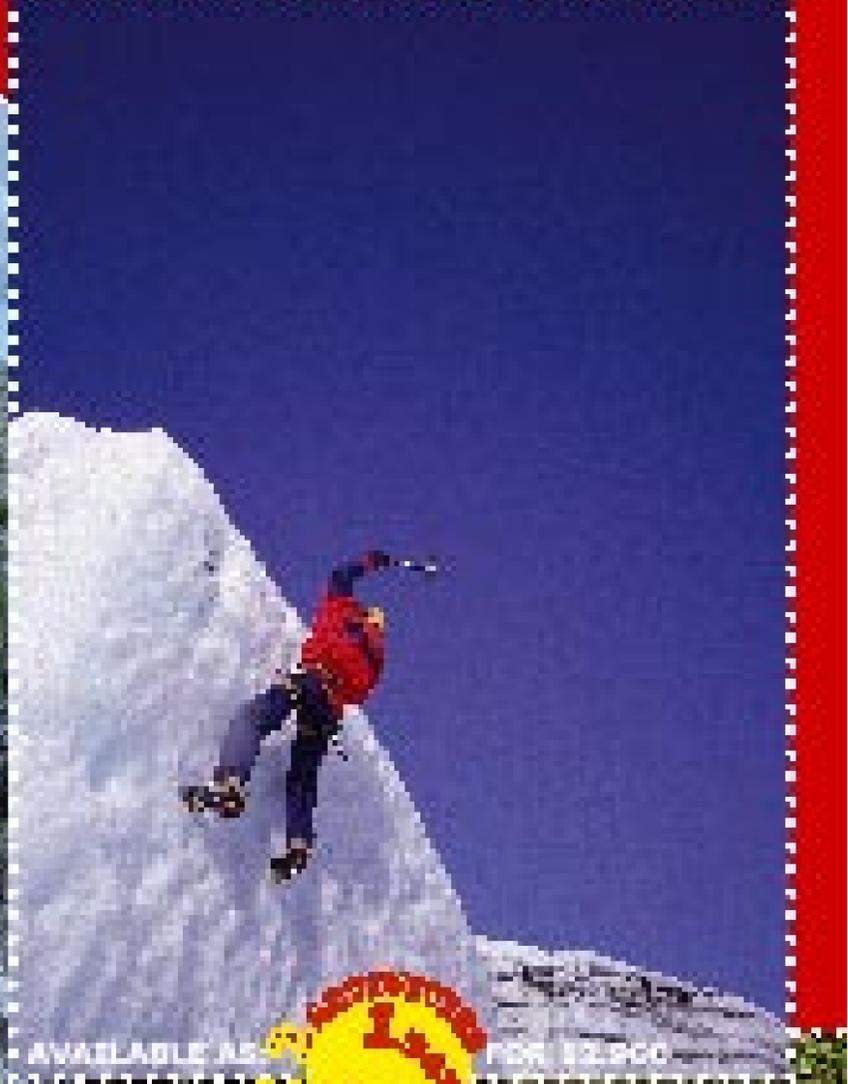
The current consensus is that fuel prices will not stay at this level and will most likely drop again. Many experts claim that this is an issue of refinery capacity, not a lack of oil. Nevertheless, it seems obvious that this is a sneak preview of what's to come for the world in general and the United States specifically. I don't know about you, but this sneak preview frightens me. I don't see much movement in Americans' willingness to embrace change in the energy arena. We can only hope that they wake up to this looming global reality and that the next U.S. president will be a strong leader, willing to promulgate a more sensible and logical energy policy.

RAFTING

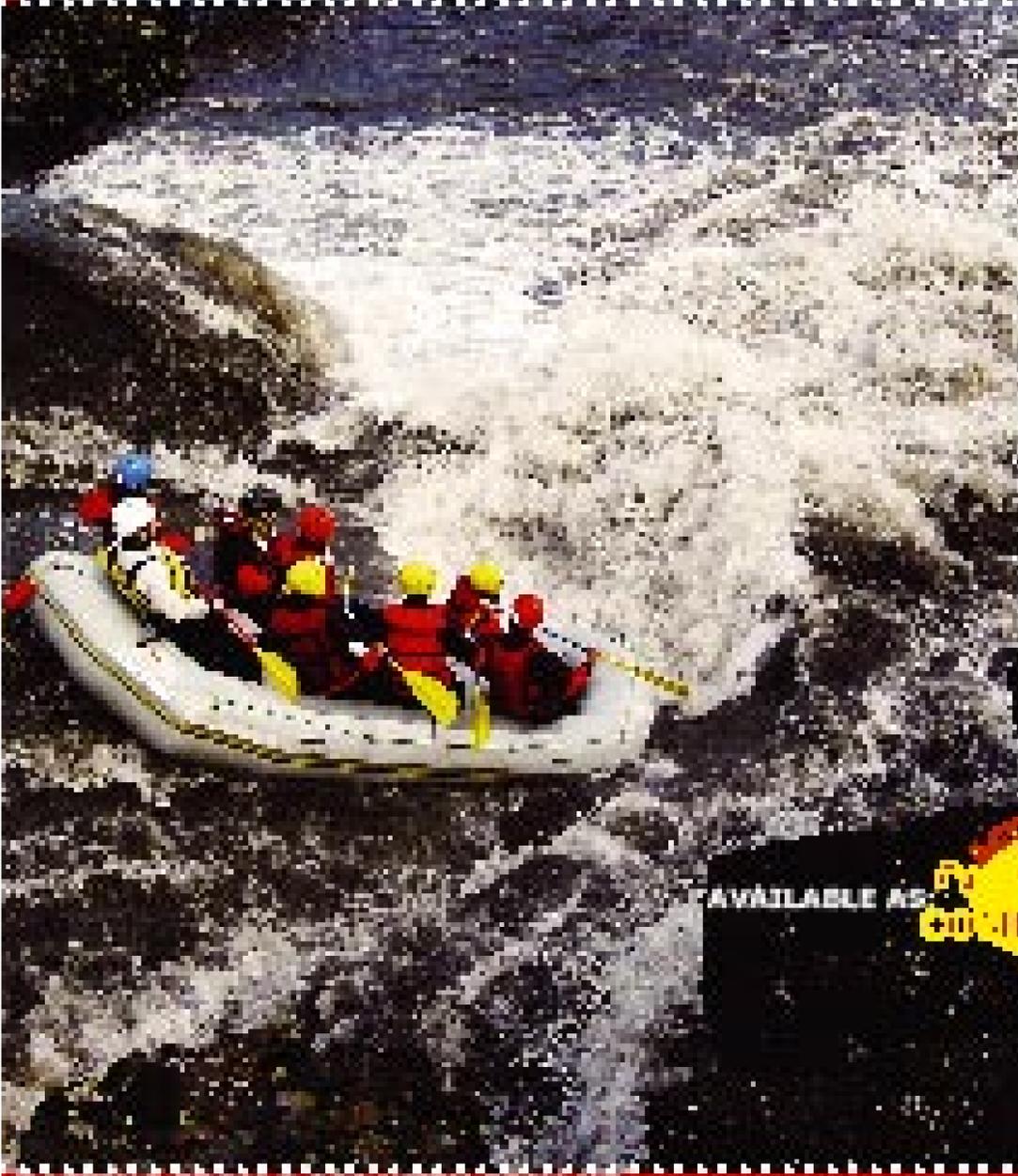
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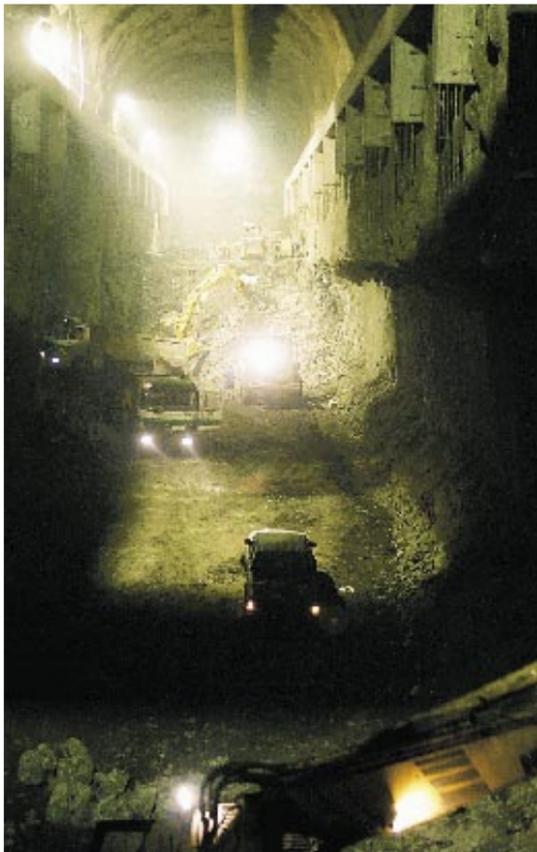
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Kárahnjúkar Protests: The Drama Continues



Three protestors from the campsite near the Kárahnjúkar work area were arrested around midnight on the night of 26 July. After chaining themselves to a few vehicles, they later unchained themselves voluntarily at the request of the police, but were then arrested. According to Morgunblaðið, a few protestors also went to the worksite and damaged property by spray-painting signs and equipment. Later that night, two men on bikes went to the protest site and spray painted their tents and their welcome sign. All parties involved were assumed to be adults.

The next day, in a statement received by the Grapevine from one of the spokespeople for the group of protestors near the Kárahnjúkar work site, the protestors accused the police of sexually assaulting a female protestor.

The statement said in part, "The protest was peaceful and the relations with the workers were friendly until the police arrived at about 3 AM. The police ordered the drivers of the vehicles that [protestors] were locked on to, to start their engines. The police sexually assaulted one woman while another protestor was assaulted by security personal while being held by police. Three people are being held on fabricated assault charges."

The police have contended that the protestors resisted arrest. One policeman, who did not want to be identified, told the Grapevine that he had heard about the charge of sexual assault. Helgi Jenson, assistant chief of police in Egilsstaðir, told the Grapevine that the sexual assault charge was "rubbish," adding, "These protestors were fighting the police with all their force." The protestors' permit to be in the tent camp has since been revoked following the alleged incident and were told to move by noon the following day.

According to Morgunblaðið, the new camp is at the farm Vaði in Skriðdal, just south of Egilsstaðir. This is the same farm owned by Guðmundur Ármannsson, the farmer who refused to sell his land to Landsvirkjun to make way for roads to power lines, a story the Reykjavík Grapevine reported on last year.

According to Vísir, the protestors face charges of destruction of property and in one instance assault, from Impregilo. Sigurður Arnalds, spokesperson for Kárahnjúkar, said that Landsvirkjun is considering

NEWS IN BRIEF

Little Change in Party Support

According to the latest Gallup poll results, support for the different parties has changed little since the last poll a month ago. 38% of respondents said that they support the Independence Party, while the Alliance Party received 32%. The Leftist-Green Party went up a point to 16%. The Progressive Party hangs onto 9%, while the Liberal Party remains steady with 5%. Oddly, while 50% said they are happy with the ruling coalition, support for both parties in the coalition - the Independence Party and the Progressive Party - is at a combined total of 47%.

Australian Environmental Minister Condemns Icelandic Whaling

Ian Campbell, the Australian Minister for the Environment, has harshly criticized Iceland's scientific whaling policy, saying that the scientific reasons are "dubious" and the process inhumane. As Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society campaigner Philippa Brakes also pointed out, "The difference between whaling and killing livestock on land is that with whaling, you are taking it on knowing that a percentage of animals are not going to be killed cleanly. By definition, this can never be a humane kill."

Minister of Fisheries Árni Mathiesen dismissed the comments outright, saying the Australian minister doesn't understand the facts of the case.

Highlands Animals in Flux

The wildlife in the Highlands is going through changes, some not for the better. According to RÚV, reindeer have started changing their migratory path, moving closer to Fljótsdalsheiði and away from Vesturörfi where they used to be - an area close to the Kárahnjúkar work site. Pink-footed geese have also dropped dramatically in number, from 13,000 in 1991 to 4,000 today.

MPs Rated in "Hot or Not"

Every member of the Icelandic parliament has had their photos posted on the popular website Hotornot.com, wherein people post their photos to be judged for their general attractiveness. According to the results at the time of this writing, the "hottest" member of parliament is Progressive Party MP Siv Friðleifsdóttir, who is averaging 9.5 on a scale of 1 to 10.

The Independence Party is currently the hottest party, taking four of the ten top seats. Prime Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson is rated 11th, averaging as an 8.4, while Foreign Minister Davíð Oddsson is rated 27th, averaging as a 7.7. The website includes an image of a mid-twenties male with dreadlocks dubbed "Heldriver." The Grapevine has no doubt that "Heldriver" is not a member of the Icelandic parliament.

Magnússon New Radio Director

Páll Magnússon, formerly the news director for television channel Stöð 2, has been chosen by Minister of Education Þórgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir to be the new radio director of state-run Ríkisútvarpið. Speaking to Morgunblaðið, Magnússon said in part, "I am grateful for being shown the trust to direct this respectable and important institution, and I look forward to taking charge of this project." Magnússon will start his new position on 1 September.

Phone Company Sold

The formerly nationalized phone company Síminn has been sold at last for 67 billion ISK (a little over 1 billion USD) to a multitude of investors. By government accounts, the proceeds will be able to pay off 28% of the national debt. Many have proposed using the money to build a new hospital or to develop Sundabrat.

Surtsey Considered a Potential Tourist Destination

The island of Surtsey, which was born from a volcanic eruption in 1973, is being considered a possible tourist destination after being closed to all but geological experts since its creation. Progressive MP Hjálmar Árnason told Vísir that he believes Surtsey could be opened to the public, but only "under the strict supervision of experts."

The Icelandic Nation Optimistic

According to the latest Gallup poll, Icelanders are very optimistic and positive about life in general at the moment. The nation is, in fact, more positive than ever before since the poll was started in 2001. The views of the Icelandic people are 11% more optimistic than last month, and 15% higher than last year at the same time, having grown by 13% during the past 12 months.

31 Refugees Coming to Reykjavík

31 refugees, 24 from Colombia and 7 from Kosovo, will be arriving in Reykjavík shortly. According to Vísir, the Red Cross has been making preparations for the new arrivals, with the hope that everything will be ready before primary school begins on 22 August. This is the first time in nearly 25 years that refugees have come directly to Reykjavík.

■ By Paul F Nikolov

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Who They Are:



The Leftist-Green Party (Vinstrihreyfingin-Grænt Framboð)

Guiding principles: Far-left, pro-environmental, anti-NATO, feminist.

Party Chairman: Steingrímur J. Sigfússon

Number of seats: 5

Registered members: about 1,400

Ministers: none

Strange but true: Chairman Steingrímur J. Sigfússon and MP Kólbrún Halldórsdóttir were born just days apart from each other. There might be something to this astrology thing after all.

Website: www.vg.is

E-mail: vg@vg.is

Phone: 552-8872

Address: Pósthólf 175, 121 Reykjavík



The Alliance Party (Samfylkingin)

Guiding principles: Left-centrist, social-democratic.

Party Chairman: Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir

Number of seats: 20

Registered members: about 20,000

Ministers: none

Strange but true: Have invited the public to a barbeque in Þórsmeð. For more information, go to <http://www.samfylkingin.is/?i=4&co=2588>.

Website: www.samfylkingin.is

E-mail: samfylking@samfylkingin.is

Phone: 414-2200

Address: Hallveigarstígur 1 (2nd Floor), Box 160, 101 Reykjavík



The Progressive Party

(Framsóknarflokkurinn)

Guiding principles: Right-centrist; believes in fewer economic and environmental regulations while strengthening the social system.

Party Chairman: Halldór Ásgrímsson

Number of seats: 12

Registered members: about 10,000

Ministers: Prime Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson, Minister of Social Affairs Árni Magnússon, Minister of Agriculture Guðni Ágústsson, Minister of Health Jón Kristjánsson, Minister of Industry Valgerður Sverrisdóttir

Strange but true: Valgerður Sverrisdóttir recently wrote a lengthy response to an opinion piece in Fréttablaðið by Björgvin Guðmundsson, wherein she said the piece of journalism was designed to "bring the Prime Minister down" and help put Alliance Party chairman Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir in the PM's chair.

Website: www.framsokn.is

E-mail: framsokn@framsokn.is

Phone: 540-4300

Address: Hverfisgata 33 (2nd Floor), 101 Reykjavík



The Liberal Party (Frjálslyndir)

Guiding principles: Right wing, pretty much the same as the Independence Party, with more emphasis on the rights of fishermen.

Party Chairman: Guðjón Kristjánsson

Number of seats: 3

Registered members: about 2,000

Ministers: none

Strange but true: Party manager Margrét Sverrisdóttir, in an opinion piece that appeared in Morgunblaðið, denounced the lack of punishment for those involved with the bank scandal, as opposed to a man who was recently sentenced to 45 days in prison for stealing a leg of lamb.

Website: www.frljalslyndir.is

E-mail: xf@xf.is

Phone: 552-2600

Address: Aðalstræti 9, 101 Reykjavík



The Independence Party

(Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn)

Guiding principles: Right wing, believes in further privatization in all areas of society.

Party Chairman: Davíð Oddsson

Number of seats: 23

Registered members: about 34,000

Ministers: Minister of Fisheries Árni M. Mathiesen, Minister of Justice Björn Bjarnason, Minister of Foreign Affairs Davíð Oddsson, Minister of the Economy Geir H. Haarde, President of Parliament Solveig Pétursdóttir, Minister of the Environment Sigríður A. Þórðardóttir, Minister of Communications Sturla Böðvarsson, Minister of Education Þórgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir

Strange but true: The Association of Young Independence Party Members (SUS) celebrated their 75th anniversary last June.

Website: www.xd.is

E-mail: xd@xd.is

Phone: 515-1700

Address: Háaleitisbraut 1, 105 Reykjavík

And Where Do They Stand On...

How the sale of the state-owned national telecommunications company Síminn to private investors was handled?

Leftist-Green Party: Against
The party has been against the privatization of the utility from the beginning, as it continues to be now.

Alliance Party: Supporting, with reservation
"We're happy about the price, but a little worried about the foreign investors who weren't among the buyers, as well as some of the connections between the new owners." MP Guðrún Ögmundsdóttir.

Progressive Party: Supporting
"It's clear that after this sale we can do things that we otherwise couldn't have done in the areas of communications, health, the development of jobs and other important aspects of society," PM Halldór Ásgrímsson, speaking to Vísir.

Liberal Party: Supporting, with reservations
"It's seemed well handled, although it's a shame they've just learned now how to handle the sale of such properties. We were also worried about what effects privatizing the phone company might have on the infrastructure. But they seem to have made a fair sum from the sale, so we're happy about it." Liberal Party manager Margrét Sverrisdóttir.

Independence Party: Supporting
"I'm very happy about everything." MP Drífa Hjartardóttir.



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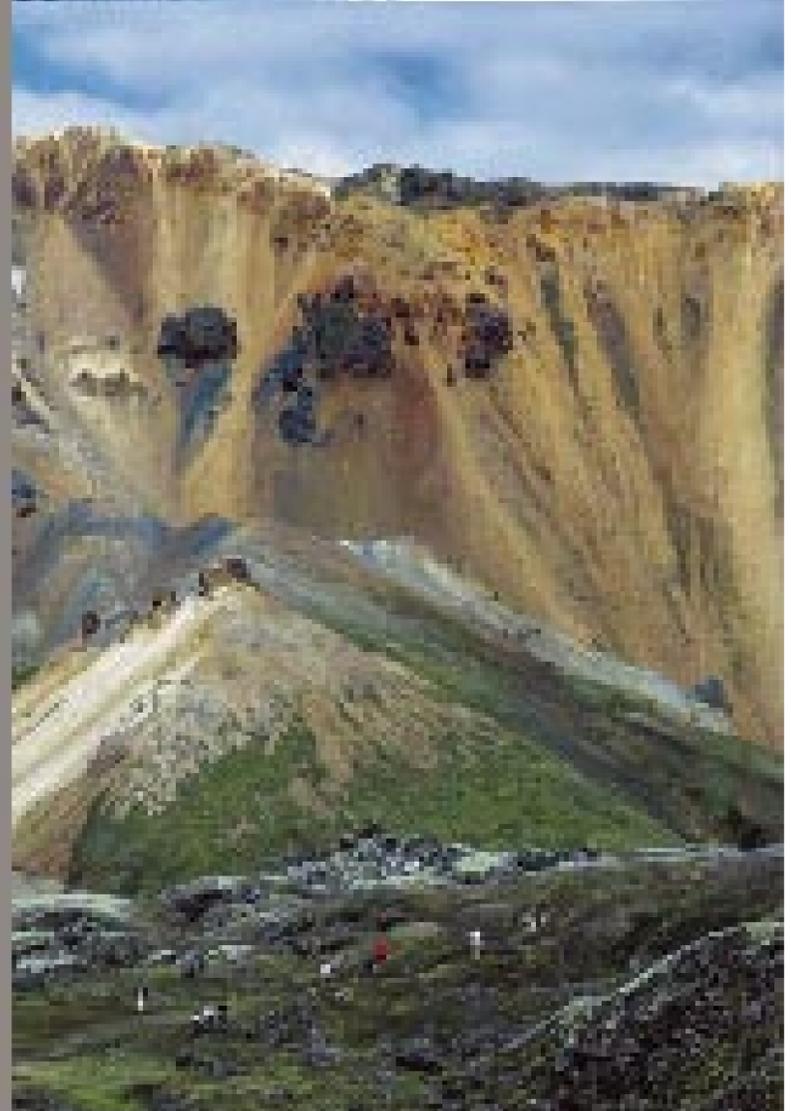
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A tourist shop is situated at the factory in Vík, where all its products are sold along with an extensive assortment of souvenirs. Vikurprjón also runs a store in the centre of Reykjavík, called Vik-Wool. Whether you are looking for a genuine Icelandic souvenir or simply a stylish garment, Vikurprjón and Vik-Wool are the places to start and end the search.

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The sun is already high in the sky as I board the number S2 bus at Hlemmur, just after 8am. The S2 is one of the new "Express" bus routes (making it all the more ironic that the S1, or S-Einn in Icelandic, means "late"). It begins at the Hlemmur bus terminal, in the east of downtown, and makes its way along major roads to Hótel Nordica and then Skeifan, loops back along Miklabraut to Kringlan Shopping Centre, before beginning a dash out to the suburbs of Kópavogur, ending – or beginning – its journey in the new suburban development of Vatnsendahvarf, which overlooks the beautiful Elliðavatn Lake and Heiðmörk Park.

The S2 is a good example of the new routes that have been created in the Strætó bus system. Strætó was founded in 2001 as a combination of the transport systems of the seven municipalities that make up the greater Reykjavík area. At that time, the new city-wide bus routes were more of an amalgamation of the existing lines, and not very efficient for commuters, according to Strætó officials. The new system is therefore the result of planning that began four years ago.

The official line from Strætó is that the new system has been created after extensive consultations and with the needs of the public transport user in mind. The main objective is to increase usage of public transport. In a city with car ownership of roughly 600 per 1000 inhabitants (the European average is 300-400), and a very large inhabited area, this is a great challenge. "We are competing with the second or third car in each home," says Pétur Fenger, Assistant Manager at Strætó. "We say take the bus, and use the money for the third car to go abroad once a year."

It's the economic argument that Fenger believes will convince Icelanders to leave their SUVs at home. "Icelanders don't notice air

pollution so much," he says. And although Strætó participates in a European scheme that operates a small number of hydrogen buses, it's not exactly great for the environment to run huge buses with only two or three occupants. In fact, according to Glúmur Jón Björnsson of the libertarian association Andriki, fuel consumption per passenger mile on the bus is much higher than for the average automobile, since the buses in Reykjavík are running at a very low capacity. So apparently the only way to convince Icelanders to travel by public transport is to tell them they can buy more cool stuff with the money they save from doing so.

Back on the S2, I am expecting a throng of people to get on during the first stretch heading from downtown to Skeifan. After all, it's rush-hour and this area has a number of businesses. But the total number of passengers for the first leg of route is five, including myself. Overall, the riders appear to be comprised of the perceived audience for public transport in Reykjavík: elderly people, the young, tourists and foreign residents. Strætó has a long way to go to reach its target of 8% market penetration in the next 20 years (it is currently 4%) when a huge segment of the population is missing from its regular users.

Einar Örn Hreinsson, the bus driver, tells me that this is a normal number of passengers for this time of day (the busy time!) He has driven entire routes with just himself and Talstöð radio for company. On this day and time, passengers are mostly going to work. Everyone I speak to (and that was virtually all of the nine passengers who travelled on the route during the time I was there) is a regular Strætó user. About half of them like the new bus system, while half feel it has increased their commuting time. Mohammed, originally from Tunisia, says it was difficult to understand information on the system for those who don't

speak Icelandic. Of the passengers, only Leifur owns his own car and still chooses to take the bus.

For a relatively small city, Strætó operates an extensive and regular bus system that is clean, friendly, and cheap (for the user, but not for the taxpayer). Einar says that taking the bus can be more relaxing than driving, and that it is generally safer in traffic to be on a bus. The tourists I spoke with were also impressed with the helpfulness of the drivers and the ease of transport.



No, he doesn't have change for a \$5 bill.

It's an uphill battle to build a strong customer base, though. The old Catch-22 arises: people don't use the system because buses don't run often or quickly enough to where they want to go, and this is because not enough people use it. In the new Kópavogur neighbourhood where the S2 travels, the houses haven't even been built yet, but the buses are already there in the hope that, once the very large detached homes have been completed, their occupants will want to economize by taking the 30-minute bus ride into town instead of driving their own gas-guzzling jeeps.

As I climb off the S2 back at Hlemmur, I can't help but feel a bit sad that Strætó's noble and well-intentioned targets are perhaps slightly too quixotic for Reykjavík's still basking in the glory of having the highest disposable incomes in Icelandic history. Will all this change in two generations when the effects of pollution are more noticeable? Will it happen when gasoline prices increase to such an extent that people can't afford that third car? Or when huge new infrastructure projects designed to accommodate more and more vehicles destroy valuable green space and natural habitats? Actually, maybe it's me who is the idealist.

A bus yesterday. Baffled public not shown.



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All the Museums: All the galleries and museums in the greater Reykjavík area are accessible by bus. Get yourself a day pass and go crazy!

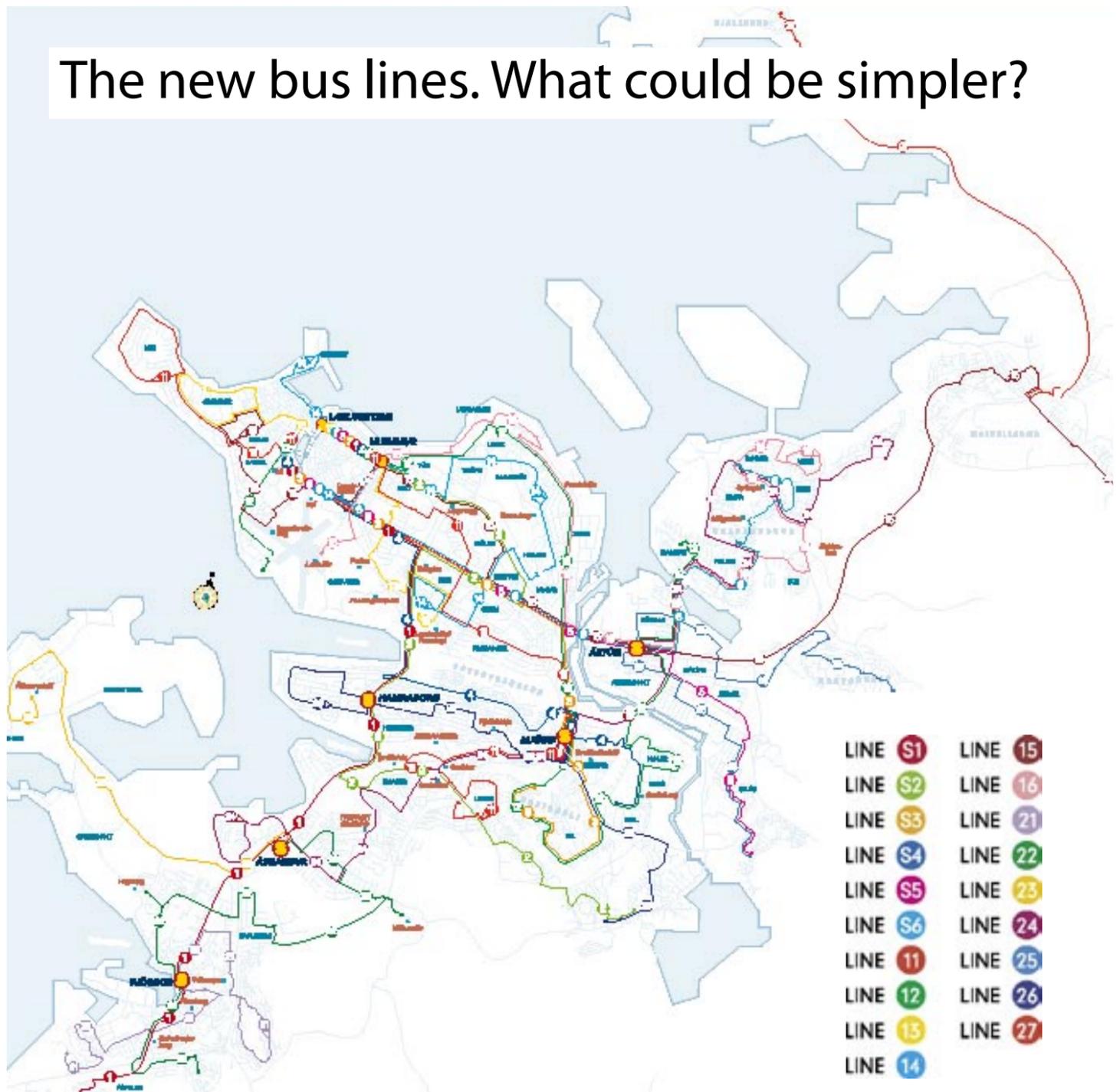
Nauthólsvík: Reykjavík's answer to Bondi Beach is a short walk from the last stop of number 16.

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By Eliza Reid

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*Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;*

(William Wordsworth, Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802)

On the morning of the bombings I had been sleeping when the telephone rang out three times and stopped. This short unanswered punch into my sleep dragged me from the safety of my slumber and delivered me into the arms of the chaos that was unfolding on my television. The scenes of injured, bloody people lying debilitated on the pavement in London. The terrorists had drawn their new front line right through the gardens, homes, schools, streets and straight through the hearts of every man, woman and child of this city.

For the many years of my childhood and recent life I grew up with London having the image that it was a magically big, creaking and harmless old giant, a city with vibrancy, each smell dynamic, every language new, all faces different and unique but not this terrifying monster that I was seeing now.

People in London had subconsciously been anticipating terrorist attacks since 9/11 and with the ever increasing activities in Iraq, tension about security had heightened but that didn't stop London going about its business, staying positive about every day life, this incessant spirit is what connects people to this giant city. The day after the bombings it was of no surprise to me that London picked itself up and carried on defiantly.

London didn't have the shocking impact that the pictures from 9/11 had, or the political upheavals that the Madrid bombings triggered, but as the identities of the bombers came to light, the unbelievable fact that not only were the attackers suicide bombers (a first in Western Europe) but that they were young disenfranchised men who were a product of British society.

As a kid I had lived in the cosmopolitan borough of

Hackney, which was one of the poorest places to live in Western Europe. London was like a fantasy place for me, everything amazing. At school, the children who attended had stories that were as if conjured from the tongues of great storytellers. One friend, a Vietnamese refugee, had fled his country during the later stages of the infamous war, on a boat with his family. During transit they were spotted and shot at by the Khmer Rouge, apart from my friend and his two brothers, the whole family died, leaving the brothers to drift along in the boat for three days, feigning death, lying amongst the bodies of his dead relatives until they found safety. Later on it was London that gave them a home, security and a future. Stories of this magnitude and staggering humanity are commonplace in this city, which plays host to 300 different languages and ethnicities.

Now finding myself thousands of miles away in Iceland with incidents still escalating in London, I stop and look at my new hosts directly in the eyes. I have found that Icelanders tend to generally have a knack of staring at you so intensely you can feel the holes burning through the back of your head as they are working out which country you are from, but normally as soon as I open my mouth and the slur of my English accent sprouts forth, I am always greeted with the greatest of warm smiles and a huge handshake. More recently since the tragic events, people have been much warmer towards me, giving their condolences and support. A friend of mine pointed out to me that London is in some ways closer to the heart of Icelanders now than to any other foreign place, even above Copenhagen, with many big Icelandic businesses, students and travellers regularly being based in London, it is a special place to a lot of my new friends.

Looking through the local papers the biggest thing hitting the headlines at the moment are subjects akin to "...Guðmundur catches 13lb salmon", this in contrast to "...suspected suicide bomber taken out on tube by police", in London, seems rather dull but reassuringly so.

■ By Stephen Taylor-Matthews

Gunnhildur Hauksdóttir Ásmundur Ásmundsson



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Barði and members of Mínus take a break after another studio power outage.

The Professionals: A Very Expensive Hour with Barði and Krummi

If you know the public images of Barði Johannesson and Krummi, the words stone sober music geeks probably don't come to mind. The Grapevine visited with the front men two Bang Gang and Mínus at a studio in Hafnarfjörður as they completed work on their first, and according to them last, collaboration: a soundtrack for the Róbert Douglas movie Strákarnir Okkar, (English title Eleven Men Out). What we found was an extremely clean suite of rooms, and two quiet musicians that you'd never expect to get on stage.



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Grapevine: This is the cleanest studio I've ever seen. And that's an accountant's lamp you're writing under. I was expecting more rock and roll—but why are you dressed up?

Krummi: (Shrugging.) This? This is casual wear: just black t-shirt, black pants. T-shirt, trousers and shoes. No underwear though.

Grapevine: Oh. Well, now I know. And what are you writing?

Krummi: The chorus for the song I'm going to record as soon as you leave.

Grapevine: I think a lot of readers familiar with Mínus are curious about what will come out on this record. Having seen some recent shows, you seem to be presenting more raw material, and yet here you are recording with the most refined stylist in the country, Barði.

Krummi: Yeah, well we just played our whole set list for our fans. And they shouldn't be surprised about me playing with Barði—we've been friends for a while. We always wanted to work.

Barði: And this film is a good reason to get together.

Grapevine: The film is a fictional account of a national gay soccer team. Are you saying you got together because you believed in promoting the social significance? Or did you see the rough of the film and like it?

Krummi: We knew there was humour. We liked that. But we didn't think too much about it, because it would put us in a corner.

Grapevine: And why combine Bang Gang and Mínus?

Barði: They wanted something between our two bands, so we got a studio and made it work.

Grapevine: But the gap between Bang Gang, an ultra-smooth melodic, relaxed European club band, and Mínus, a tooth-and-nails hard rock band, seems enormous. Doesn't that leave just about every type of music that includes vocals in the middle?

Krummi: They wanted something fresh. What you have to understand is, only musically is there a difference between us.

Barði: We play in the same league, but different teams. We're both the national team.

Grapevine: You're saying you both have an understanding of writing music that is similar?

(Silence.)

Barði: Something we have in common is that neither of us care about selling records in Iceland.

(Krummi pours a dark brown, non-bubbly substance from a Coke bottle into a glass and drinks.)

Grapevine: Okay. Krummi, are there drugs in that glass or something? Liquor? That looks like a big glass of flat Coke. But, is there something more rock and roll in it?

Krummi: No, it's just flat Coke. It's better for the voice.

Barði: Because he's singing in G-flat.

Grapevine: Dear God. But I should point out, you're here doing this soundtrack when both of you could be out making a lot more money touring or recording your own music. Barði, you've just toured successfully in France, and your Lady and Bird work is attracting a lot of international attention. Krummi, you've obviously been doing well touring on the last album, Halldór Laxness.

Krummi: True. But we're doing this because it's something fresh.

Barði: We both agree on that.

Krummi: And we like the romance of the film. And it's fun working together. It's always fun getting away from your band style and trying something new. And if you think of soundtracks, some bands really come up with something strong. Like the AC/DC soundtrack for Maximum Overdrive.

Grapevine: True, that is a great album for a movie I don't really

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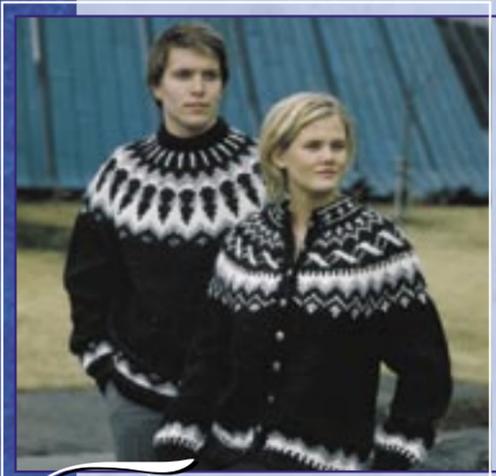
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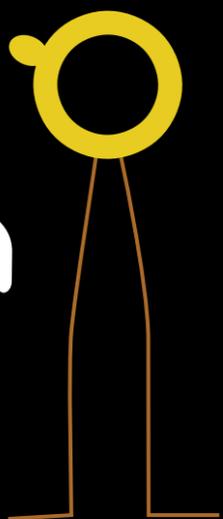
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Krummi demonstrates his
phrenological expertise.

know. Is there a chance that this session will permanently change your sound or style? Suddenly Bang Gang will involve screaming?

Barði: (laughing) Probably not at all.

Krummi: (laughing) Why would it? I seriously doubt that Mínus is going to bring in a string quartet.

Barði: Maybe a banjo player.

Krummi: Maybe when we're really old and sick of doing records we'll bring in a string section and have Barði arrange it.

Grapevine: Okay, this is almost disturbing. You're both happy and easygoing. Isn't this the end of the recording week? How many hours have you spent together? Shouldn't you be fighting or at least moody?

Barði: Well, I do now have a lot of tattoos. I'm covered in them.

Krummi: Hanging out with me 15 hours a day, he's now into Black Metal. But this is how we get by, emotionally and physically. Of course we get annoyed and jaded but it only comes out in the music not on each other. We just get up and let it all out. Let the dick hang out.

Grapevine: Yes. You refer to your

crotch a lot.

Krummi: That's where it all happens, Bart. The life cycle all comes from right here. (Pointing at his crotch.)

Grapevine: True. So this session has been easy.

Krummi: We didn't know how things would work out, but when we got together we were really happy about it. If you don't enjoy working in the studio, you should go handle a cash register at Hagkaup.

Barði: The tour bus, that's different.

Krummi: Yeah, then people really get on each other's nerves. But then you have shows to get everything out.

Grapevine: I've heard only two tracks off of what you've recorded so far. One was extremely heavy, and you said it was atypical. The other had a very Kiss Dynasty disco feel, with a vocal range that I didn't expect from Krummi.

Krummi: There is some Kiss influence. Maybe it could even be a Kiss song from when they were doing 4/4-time.

Grapevine: Given the success, what

happens when people want to hear more?

Barði: If they want to hear more, they're unlucky.

Krummi: We just wanted to write good songs. We've accomplished that.

With that, our time is up. All in all, including off the record comments about the local music scene, a brief studio tour and getting to hear a few tracks from the new record, I have had an hour with two of the most successful young musicians in Iceland. Barði Johannesson has been taking note of this, apparently.

"We'll send you a bill for one hour of studio time," he tells me on my way out.

■ By Bart Cameron

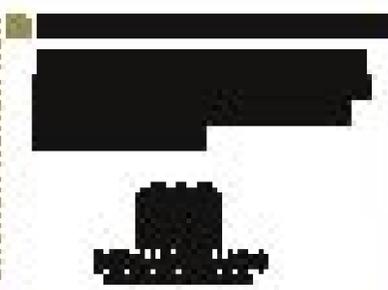
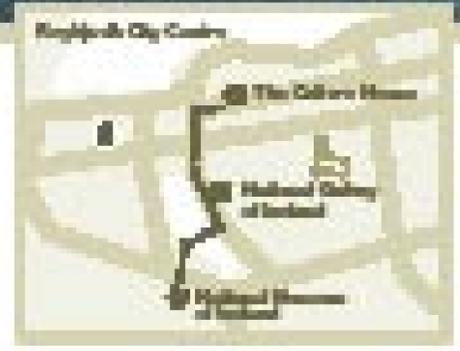
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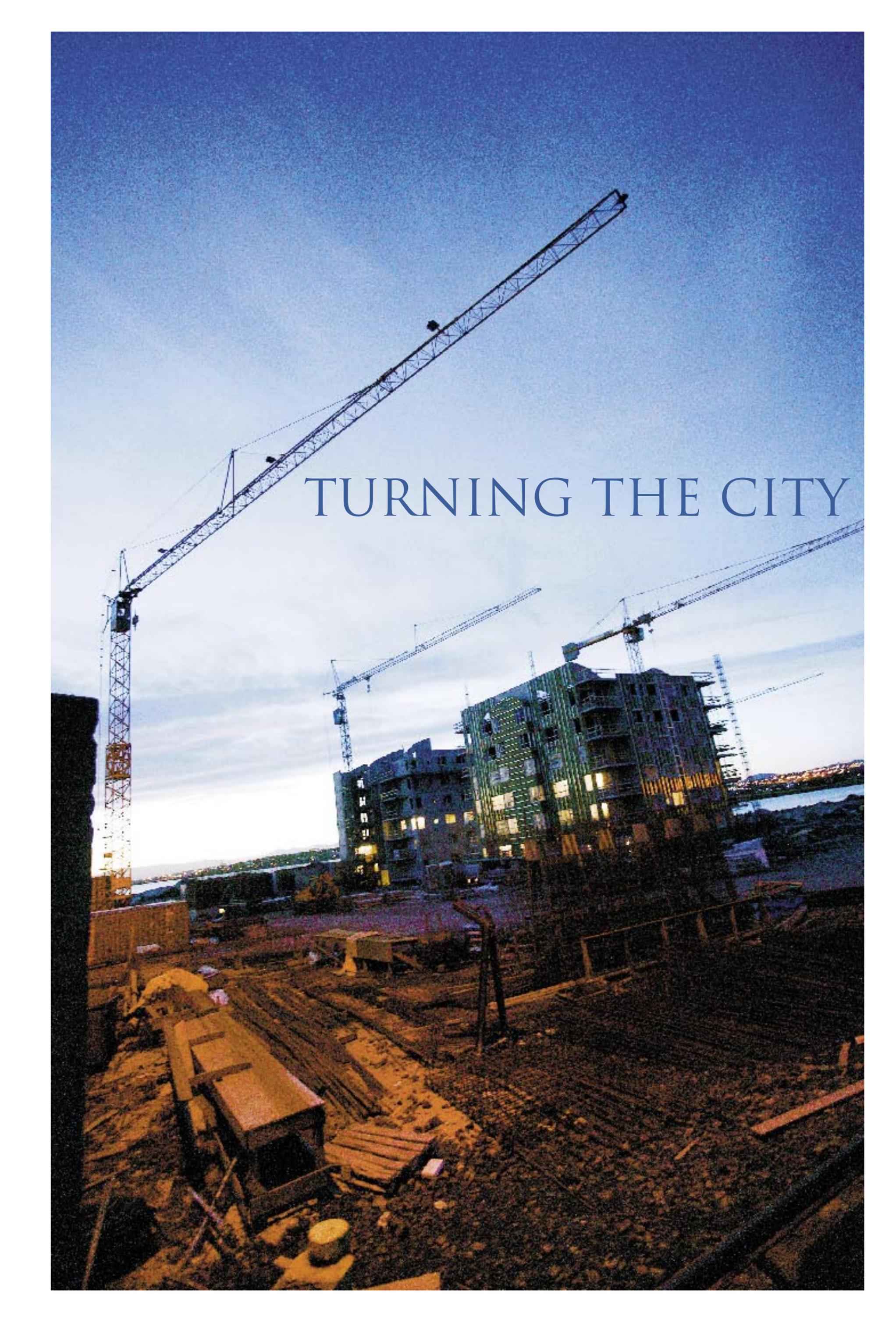
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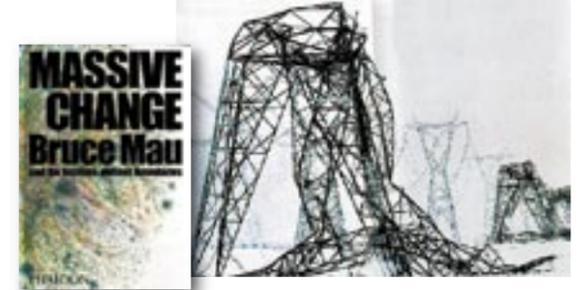
THE **Origins** TOUR



A photograph of a construction site at dusk. The sky is a deep blue, and the ground is dark. In the foreground, there is a large pile of construction materials, including wooden planks and beams. In the middle ground, several tall cranes are visible, their long jibs extending into the sky. A multi-story building is under construction, with its structure partially visible and some windows illuminated from within. The overall scene is one of active construction in an urban environment.

TURNING THE CITY

Reykjavík is teetering between turning into the suburbs and becoming a city. On the one hand, a leading conservative on City Council is proposing the construction of island communities of predominantly single-family homes in the west, and the building of a freeway through the middle of the city to connect them to the mainland – an idea charming to some but ultimately unsustainable. On the other hand, opposition alliance R-list (which holds a slim majority of seats on City Council), is taking a more integrated, mixed-use approach for residents and businesses alike – an idea that while not exactly headline-grabbing would transform Reykjavík from a town to a thriving, sustainable city. In essence, the fight over Reykjavík’s future is a fight between nostalgia for a past that never existed, and common sense regarding what Reykjavík could be.



“For most of us, design is invisible. Until it fails.”

- Massive Change, Bruce Mau and the Institute Without Boundaries

INTO THE SUBURBS

THE FUTURE OF REYKJAVÍK

TEXT BY PAUL F. NIKOLOV



Reykjavík is a car city, for better or worse. According to Statistics Iceland, as of 2003 there are 69,727 private cars in the city alone - one car for every 1.6 people. As Dagur B. Eggertsson, chairman of the Reykjavík Planning Council, pointed out to the Grapevine, "Homes with two or even three cars are all the more common. There are now actually more cars than there are driver's licences." Former city engineer of Copenhagen Dr. Jens Roerbech addressed the problem in the latest issue of aVs magazine, where, in discussing Reykjavík he said in part, "I cannot remember having been in a city where 96% of all trips take place by the private car."

One of the big reasons why Reykjavík is such a car city has a lot to do with the building of the Kringlan mall in 1987, when Davíð Oddsson was mayor and the conservatives controlled City Council, which shifted the residents' focus away from shops downtown that they could walk to, to a mall that they could drive to. As Chief Planning Official of the Reykjavík Planning Office Helga Bragadóttir explained to the Grapevine, the city had begun building multi-family units in Skuggahverfi in 1985, with the hope that one result would be more people using mass transit (which in Iceland's case means the bus) or travelling on foot, but then, "Kringlan opened in August 1987, which of course had an impact on the city centre. Here you had bigger shops contained indoors, free parking, big lots - the concept was that among other means, you come by car. The private car has had a big impact on the cityscape and how people move to and from work."

A car city has more to worry about than just traffic jams: apart

in Reykjavík for climate reasons, Roerbech is on the same page as the Planning Council in one regard: emphasizing mass transit.

The Planning Council wants to put greater emphasis on buses and walking.

"The fact is," said Bragadóttir, "we have to better utilize land for development and link homes to work sensibly, where we can bring transportation down to a human scale, such as walking on foot."

Eggertsson agrees, adding that he would like to see the city adopt a "think train and drive bus" policy, wherein the city would be able to "guarantee to city residents in high population areas a constant stream of transport with a train-like bus system, that is, one with speed and efficiency."

Others, such as Einar Örn Stefánsson, managing director of the Downtown Development Society, have proposed a new bus line for the city centre.

In an article he wrote in the July 2005 issue of the downtown magazine Miðborgin, Stefánsson put forward the idea of a bus route downtown that would run on a continuous loop, travelling down Laugavegur from Hlemmur to Lækjartorg, and then travelling back up to Hlemmur on Hverfisgata - an idea that he believes would greatly reduce downtown traffic, adding, "There is no walking street in Reykjavík, which is strange, as I think every major city in the world has a walking street. I think the best solutions to reducing traffic downtown would be to encourage further use of parking garages, have a walking street, and to have bus service form a loop" between Hlemmur and Lækjartorg.

Already changes to the mass

Vilhjálmur Þ. Vilhjálmsson, leader of Independence Party representation on City Council, takes that argument further. He would in fact like Reykjavík to be even more of a car city than it already is.

"Icelanders have decided themselves to use personal vehicles," he told the Grapevine, "and this is something that we have to accept. The weather here is always changing from rain, to cold, to wind and snow, all very quickly. People just don't want to walk 500 to 700 metres to a bus stop and wait 10 or 15 minutes in bad weather for a bus to come. This is our Icelandic reality. We don't see people driving fewer cars."

To further accommodate cars in Reykjavík, Vilhjálmsson and the Independence Party have proposed removing a number of traffic lights from the Miklabraut-Hringbraut roads, which currently run down the middle of the Reykjavík peninsula, effectively creating an expressway through the middle of the city. Such an expressway would cut off the Vatnsmýri area - which has been slated by most involved for multi-family units - from the downtown area.

Looking for some perspective, the Grapevine consulted Kevin Firchow, of the urban planning consulting firm Schreiber Anderson Associates in Madison, Wisconsin. Madison has repeatedly earned the best small city in the US award, all while coping with population booms and geographic limitations - the Northern city faces much harsher weather overall, including much colder winters, than Reykjavík, and is located entirely on a narrow isthmus. Firchow pointed out that an expressway running through the middle of a city like Reykjavík would actually run counter to the goal of

remain shut off from downtown.

Solomon found the proposal slightly difficult to believe, stating that, "I think an expressway would make the city more like the suburbs. I wouldn't push the city in that direction, in terms of dealing with traffic density."

Yet making the city more like the suburbs is precisely what Vilhjálmsson and the Independence Party have in mind for Reykjavík.

when questioned about making celebrated public land private. "But visitors to Viðey have been on the decline."

The islands would be built up with mostly single-family homes. While this seems like a straightforward, albeit temporary, solution to the problem of Reykjavík's population boom, the underlying reason for Vilhjálmsson's method of expanding Reykjavík doesn't seem to be to find room for



Island communities: better than building a moat.

One of the more radical planning ideas being suggested by Vilhjálmsson and the Independence Party concerns the islands surrounding Reykjavík: Geldinganes, Akurey, Engey, and to some extent even Viðey have been slated as possible sites for predominantly single-family homes. This would create the ultimate "gated communities," using water instead of high walls, and would be accessible only by a two-lane or four-lane road. Bridges would connect Geldinganes, Engey and Viðey to the mainland, but the gap of water between Öfrisey and Akurey would be filled in with earth. While many have expressed concerns about the idea of landfilling as a means of expanding the city geographically, it's not exactly a new technique to the city. As Vilhjálmsson told the Grapevine, "Landfilling has been ongoing in Reykjavík for the past decades. In the past 15 to 20 years, some 240 hectares have been added, 125 of which are around Öfrisey."

The idea of developing these islands isn't without controversy. Viðey in particular has attracted the affections of many people in the city as a historical setting worth preserving.

"I can certainly understand this point of view," said Vilhjálmsson,

the city's new residents, but rather, to hang on to the better-off of the current ones.

As Vilhjálmsson explained to Grapevine, "In Reykjavík last year, there were 343 new residents. Compare that to 900 new residents in Kópavogur and 1000 new residents in Hafnarfjörður. In the suburbs, you have more choice of sites for families and mostly families in single-family homes, while in Reykjavík there are mostly multiple-family homes. Most people want to live in single-family homes, and that's why there's been this flight into the suburbs. There are now people moving as far afield as Hveragerði and Selfoss. We want to keep families in Reykjavík."

If the majority of the 39,000 possible new residents expected over the next 30 years live in single-family homes, this will mean thousands of new cars in Reykjavík, a city that by that time would only have expanded geographically by a few hundred hectares. The wear-and-tear of roads, air pollution and traffic injuries and fatalities associated with private car usage in Reykjavík would increase dramatically. Not to mention the fact that low density areas like single-family home neighbourhoods require more sewer lines, more power lines, and greater



from concerns regarding air pollution and fuel consumption, there's also the problem of "traffic islands" - neighbourhoods boxed in by heavy car traffic - especially true in Reykjavík, where nearly 50% of the available land is used for roads, parking spaces, and other traffic-related structures.

"The city's neighbourhoods have been split up," says Eggertsson, "into neighbourhoods where parents are afraid to let their children outside to play. It's a quality of life issue."

To deal with this problem, Dr. Roerbech proposed in the same issue of aVs that Reykjavík increase parking restrictions and provide better facilities for bicycle traffic, stating that the city, "should build bicycle paths and special bicycle roads." While there are those who've been reluctant to bicycle traffic

transit system have begun, with 10% of bus stops removed from some of the city's denser areas in the hopes of increasing travel time in those areas. Ilene Solomon, a designer for the Institute Without Boundaries - who recently returned from a trip to Iceland - agreed with the changes to the bus system, telling the Grapevine that, "I understand the logic behind it, in that it does increase efficiency. Fewer stops also mean the buses use less fuel, expending less exhaust."

Not everyone is thrilled with the idea of the changes to the bus system - there have been some public grumblings, including television personality Gísli Marteinn criticizing the changes on the news-discussion television show Kastljósið on the grounds that the new system will "take a long time to learn."

reducing traffic.

"Anytime you run freeways through the middle of a city," he told the Grapevine, "you're effectively forcing them to use car travel by cutting them off from other parts of the city. This increases car use, which creates more congestion. Eventually, you have to widen the freeway further, and the land for that expansion displaces buildings and cuts people off further. A better approach is to integrate uses and provide more options for travel."

In other words, splitting Reykjavík in two with an expressway could turn the Vatnsmýri area into a slum - a dense residential area cut off from basic goods and services. Even if the people who would live in Vatnsmýri bought cars to access the expressway, this would only snarl traffic more; the community would

Last chance to form a sovereign state in the island of Viðey



lengths of piping for water and heating than high-density multi-family areas. They are, in other words, less efficient and more costly to maintain.

At the same time, the Planning Council doesn't exactly warmly embrace the idea of developing the islands and having an inordinate proportion of single-family homes in Reykjavík.

Bragadóttir cut to the heart of the argument, taking the pragmatic approach: "Before we build on land fillings and the islands," she told the Grapevine, "we should first build on the land we already have on the peninsula. We should wait a while before using land fillings. It's just common sense. It's true that people did live on Víðey, but that changed, and we should now first consider where it's already more practical to build, on the peninsula."

Others, such as Stefánsson, don't even consider the plan realistic. As he told the Grapevine, "I find the idea of developing the islands around Reykjavík to be a kind of utopia that's fun to think about, but I don't think it would be a reality."

In order to maintain high density and a high quality of life, the Planning Council has proposed a development "mix" of apartments and single-family homes. That proposal, called the "Five Flowers," focuses on five areas of the city: the Mýrargata-Slippasvæði of the west harbour area, the east harbour area, the neighbourhood around the bus terminal Hlemmur, the largely industrial area of Elliðaárvogur, and the crucial Vatnsmýri, where the city airport currently resides. All of these areas will be predominantly apartments, thereby keeping density high, but Bragadóttir doesn't believe

that necessarily means building upwards.

"I don't think building up is the only answer," she told the Grapevine. "We can build denser by building lower, maybe five to seven stories high. An important thing to be aware of is urban spaces on a human scale and an easy access to daily needs and the nature around us. It's a question of quality of life."

When asked how taller buildings would affect the quality of life of the city's residents, Bragadóttir cited aesthetics, saying, "You get the view, but the building can be out of touch with the space. Regarding the importance of quality of the urban space, you have to have in mind, for example, at this altitude tall buildings cast very long shadows and can in fact generate a windy micro-climate."

Eggertsson is particularly passionate about what he'd like to see happen in the Five Flowers.

In addition to building apartments in the west harbour area, he told the Grapevine that he'd also like to "build up the harbour atmosphere with fish markets, squares, and ports for small boats. The Maritime Museum just opened there, which is a good start, but we want to see more, with a link to the city centre." In the east harbour, the Planning Council has designs on building a concert hall, hotels, retail outlets, restaurants and even a new headquarters for Landsbanki.

Hlemmur seems to be what Eggertsson would like to be the new hub of Reykjavík youth culture.

"We'd like to see at least a thousand new apartments in that area," he told the Grapevine, "maybe with a focus on young people and students, who use the bus more than

other demographics, and to build fewer car parks. Right now the area is too much like a slum. What we want is a dynamic mix of youth, culture and city functions."

The largely industrial area of Elliðaárvogur is trickier, as the question arises, how do you convince people to move into an industrial area? On this point, Eggertsson says, "[The area] could be one of the most beautiful places to live and work. We've proposed moving the heaviest industries to the outskirts of town or having them refreshed. Instead, we want to see a dense residential area by the sea."

But the real crown jewel of the bunch is Vatnsmýri. If the city airport is moved to Skerafjörður as many have proposed, this will free up an enormous swath of land within city limits. Bragadóttir herself sees the area as having the potential to contain "thousands of flats," while Eggertsson adds that he'd like to see the area be the new science and technology district of Reykjavík.

"The area could be home of the knowledge industry in its closeness to the University of Iceland, the hospital and the University of Reykjavík," he told the Grapevine. "We want knowledge-based industries to find a home there."

When told of the Five Flowers proposal, Firchow was very positive.

"That sounds like the right approach," he told the Grapevine. "In the 1950s in America, you had these 'bubbles,' where there were single-family homes in one bubble, apartments in another, and services in yet another. This segregation of services puts a lot of pressure on a city's infrastructure. Integration of use [like the Five Flowers plan]

is a much more appropriate use of space."

These housing ideas and others are still up for debate, and will undoubtedly be debated fiercely in the planning meetings to come. More often than not, these discussions become politicized. One undercurrent as to why city planning in Reykjavík is often very politicized is illustrated in University of Iceland Professor of Urban Planning Trausti Valsson's book *Planning in Iceland from the Settlement to Present Times*. Valsson contends that politics often get in the way of effective development.

Created in 1972, the Development Office has seen different ruling parties come and go - the Leftists who came to power in the late 70s rejected many of the conservatives' earlier planning proposals, and when the conservatives regained power in 1982, they, in turn, rejected many of the development proposals the Leftists had begun, such as further development of Reykjavík's far eastern, mainland section. Politicizing development naturally slows down the process.

Knowing that any plan set forth during your watch will immediately be cancelled if another political party is elected makes for rash decisions. Many cite as an example the current Miklabraut-Hringbraut construction project that connects these two four-lane roads with a six-lane road that bows over 50 metres away from the hospital. Apart from the fact that placing a six-lane road as a connection between two four-lane roads is an invitation to severe bottlenecking of traffic in either direction, there were also

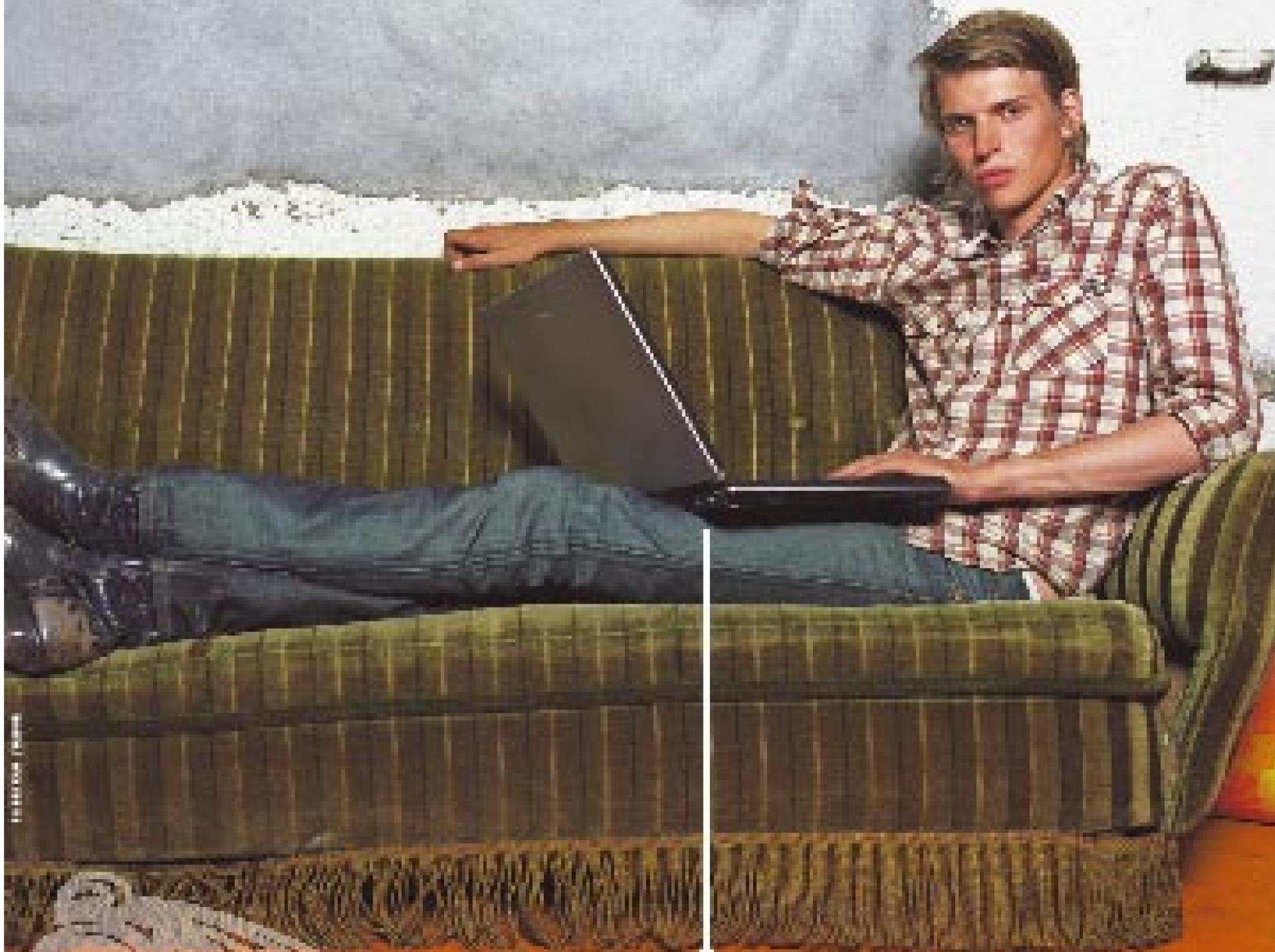
complaints that the plan was pushed through and approved quickly, with little chance for discussion among planners or the public. The plan's lack of popularity - yet its ultimate passage - can be taken as a warning of things to come: Vilhjálmsson's expressway and island communities might not be very popular ideas, but that doesn't necessarily mean they won't be approved.

On the other hand, as of now, the Independence Party does not control City Council. They hold six of the council's fifteen seats, with opposition alliance R-list controlling eight seats (the fifteenth seat is held by the sole Liberal Party member on the council, Ólafur Friðrik Magnússon). In addition, Mayor Steinunn Valdís Óskarsdóttir hails from the Alliance Party. R-list holds the majority - albeit a slim one - so the planning ideas put forth by the Independence Party could be defeated by the opposition. Or, if the next elections go the other way, Independence Party proposals could roll through with relative ease - latest Gallup Poll results indicate that 47% would vote R-list and 48% would vote Independence Party if City Council elections were held today. Whether it goes one way or another has a lot to do with public involvement from the very start - planning meetings are regularly advertised and are open to the public. With City Council elections coming up next spring, Reykjavík's residents can also choose through their votes what they want their city to be: an unsustainable suburb that ultimately serves no one, or a thriving city that maintains a high quality of life for all and could even set an example for capital cities the world over.

Plans for high rises on Reykjavík's Skuggahverfi by the City Planning Council



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IN YOUR POCKET

4 PAGES TO THIS SECTION

It's free!

GRAPEVINE IN YOUR POCKET, ISSUE NO-11, 2005

Your Inside Guide to Reykjavik



Jónsi, seen here singing his little-known single, "My Sixpack Will Destroy You."

GAY PRIDE CELEBRATION:

Saturday August 6th

Last year's Gay Pride Celebration brought in a reported 40,000 visitors, though from our office, downtown Reykjavik looked a good deal more packed than that. As local author Andri Snær

Magnason has claimed, the Gay Pride Celebrations in Iceland have surmounted June 17th, Icelandic Independence Day, in numbers of celebrators, and possibly in meaning—many marching under the rainbow flag remember a time when being openly gay was not as accepted as it is now.

NASA, the large night club in downtown Reykjavik near the home of Iceland's founding father Jón "Forseti" Sigurðsson, will hold the official Gay Pride Party, with proceeds going to support local youth groups. But almost every club in town will present live music, and the streets will be packed until morning with tolerant revellers.

For more information, visit www.gayice.is.

Gay Pride Day: makes Independence Day look like an insurance seminar.



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Recommended by the *Florman Guide to Europe's Best Restaurants*



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The Reykjavik Grapevine Info

Arrivals

Information

Apparel

CD / DVD

Events

Lounge

Departures

Open 12 - 22

Laugavegur 11

see centerfold for location



Power To The Tourist!

CAFÉS



1 **Café Roma**
Laugavegur 118

Is the closest thing you'll find to a New York deli in town. A lively cross-section of artists, students and office workers enjoy home-baked panini and great coffee all at low prices.

8 **Tíu Dropar**
Laugavegur 27

A very nice "grandma" style café. It's not that apparent from the street, being in on the bottom floor, but is actually bigger than it looks. They serve traditional treats such as hot chocolate and waffles, but grandma is also known to come up with new delicacies, such as the Snickers cake, and you can even try her latest work in progress.

15 **Vitabar**
Bergþórugata 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.

22 **Pravda**
Austurstræti 22

Located in the centre of Reykjavík, Pravda is one of the larger clubs/bars in downtown Reykjavík as it is divided between two floors and also separately in to the Pravda Bar and the Pravda Club. Club section of Pravda is ideal for dancing, with DJs playing house and techno music, while the Bar section is somewhat more quiet and chilled out, with occasional live jazz and sometimes reggae. The building itself has interesting history as the first and only king in Iceland stayed there during his reign back in the early 18th century.

25 **Rex**
Austurstræti 9

A favourite hangout for Kate Winslet look-alikes. Rex is one of the more posh hangouts, dress code is not insisted upon, but you'll find yourself out of place if you're too casual. Also rumoured to be a haunt for generous middle-aged ladies.

28

From the I've-just-and-boy-am-I-piss walls, to the hard speakers and steaming whiskey at the bar for the aggressive

2 **Ráðhúskaffi**
City Hall

With a 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 customers and, in the lobby of City Hall, you'll find a big 80m2 model of Iceland as well as changing exhibitions.

9 **Kaffitár**
Bankastræti 8

Expanded and improved, this is the downtown store for one of the country's finest coffee importers. While anything here is good, the speciality coffee drinks are truly remarkable: our favourite, the Azteca, an espresso drink with lime and Tabasco.

16 **Vegamót**
Vegamótastígur 4

Wants to be the in spot to be seen, and succeeds to some degree. Dress up, flaunt it and enjoy the view as others do the same. It's a jungle in there, and the fittest, or at least the fittest looking, come out on top. Kitchen open every day until 22. Specials of the day and weekend brunch. Try the lobster pizza.

23 **Kaffi Kúltúr**
Hverfisgata 18

For those who grow tired of seeing nothing but palefaces about town, Kaffi Kúltúr might be a pleasant diversion. During the day it's 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, as a free lesson from 8-9 p.m. precedes the tango night itself.

26 **Thorvaldsen**
Austurstræti 8

Posh as the fifth circle of hell. That said, they make a mean Mojito. DJs on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Arrive before 12 if you want to avoid the queue. Theme nights during the week, wine and cheese on Wednesdays, Finlandia nights on Fridays and Sunday roast on, well, Sundays. Civilian attire is looked down upon.

29

One of the few pr... Reykjavík, so you whatever game ha... the TV screens. T... is basically based... so you won't have... for a drink. Open... a reputation for la...

3 **Grái Kötturinn**
Hverfisgata 16a

Grái Kötturinn (grey cat) is across the street from the National Theatre and is quite 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.

10 **Te & Kaffi**
Laugavegur 24

The downtown location for the other big coffee importer (see Kaffitár for the competition), Te og Kaffi boasts the nation's best-trained barista, as proven in a recent competition. Newly situated on the sunnier side of the street, this coffee shop has an ideal angle for people-gazing. Everything we've ever tried here is good, especially if it has chocolate in it.

17 **Póstbarinn**
Pósthússtræti 13

Situated by Austurvöllur, Póstbarinn is a bistro prized restaurant, a rare treat. It is also one of few restaurants in Reykjavík with decent outdoor service. Live jazz once a week and check out the reasonably priced fish menu they have, only 1490ISK.



Kolaportið Flea Market

As the film 101 Reykjavík by Baltasar Kormákur, and the book on which it is based by Hallgrímur Helgason, teaches us, you can find almost anything in this flea market. Located down by the harbour in the same building with customs, beyond plastic Christmas trees and that sort of thing, they also have a good budget-friendly priced fish market, with delicacies from salmon to shark, offering a good possibility to taste the local flavours. Take it easy when chewing *harðfiskur*, the dried, white cod eaten as a snack by people with no sense of smell.

Kolaportið, Geirsgata, Sat, Sun 11 - 17.

11 **Sólun**
Bankastræti 7a

Named after (in his own opinion, at least), Iceland's greatest man, Sólun is a pretty crowded nightclub on Friday and Saturday nights. It seems to have more lives than one, however, since in the day it's a fairly artsy coffeehouse and in the evening (weeknights) they have a decent menu. You can get a three-course fish of the day meal for under 2000 krónur, or try the delicious fish and meat mixed sticks.

18 **Rósenberg**
Lækjargata 2

Perhaps the closest we have to a jazz club, and old instruments line the walls. People go there for conversation and listening to music rather than dancing. The place tends to have jazz or blues type music.

4 **Kaffi Hjómaland**
Laugavegur 21

A peaceful, non-smoking café with perfect windows for people watching and a lot of daylight. Hjómaland is run by a non-profit organization and it only serves organic & fair trade products. Also music performances and art exhibitions.

12 **Café 22**
Laugavegur 22

The top floor is dedicated to artist Jón Sæmundur, aka Dead. 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 01:30.

19 **Grand Rokk**
Smíðjustígur 6

A place true to the spirit of rock 'n' roll and bands that don't do covers. Better and lesser-known Icelandic bands play there, usually no less than three bands a night, four nights a week. Whether they charge admission or not is up to the bands, but if they do, all proceeds go to starving artists. Grab a beer and rock on! During the day this is a hangout 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.

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. This is the place to go for the best waffles in town.

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 seems to be trying to prove the point, with musicians, actors and writers ranging from the hopefuls to the world famous. Blur's Damon Albarn owns a share of the bar, probably figuring it was cheaper than buying drinks all the time. Another owner is the director of the film 101 Reykjavík.

20 **Bar 11**
Laugavegur 11

The rock hangout, be it live music or the riff-heavy jukebox. Many of Iceland's rock bands are regulars. Live music especially on weekdays, weekends crowded till late, or better said early in the morning.

6 **Bakhúsið**
Laugavegur 55

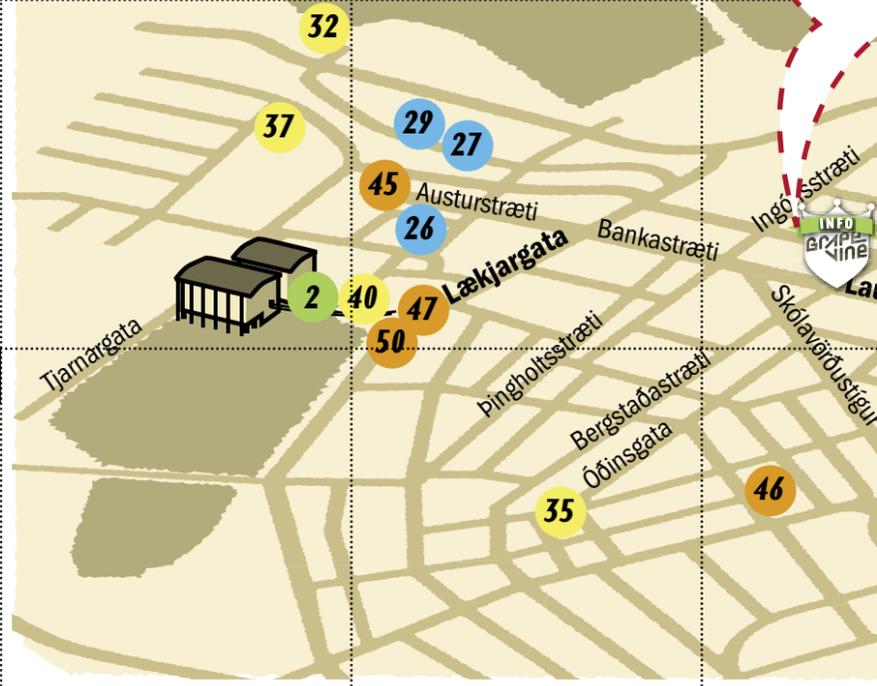
Bakhúsið is a cosy newcomer in 101, a well-hidden café on a quiet backyard just around the corner from Laugavegur. It's the place to go to for a perfect cup of traditional Italian coffee, advisably enjoyed with the best chocolate cake around. We wouldn't suggest sharing a piece, though, as fighting for the bites may well cause some tension around the table. We can also warmly recommend the menu.

14 **Sirkus**
Klapparstígur 30

"Welcome to the Jungle/ We got fun and games," quoth the poet. With tropical palm trees on the outside and tropical heat on the inside, welcome to the party that never came to an end and doesn't seem to be ending any time soon. Usually full of regulars (many of whom are, were or want to be students of the Icelandic Academy of Arts) mixed with musicians and other members of the city's underground. The upper floor, for whatever reason, looks like the inside of a bus.

21 **Hressingarskálinn**
Austurstræti 20

The celebrated site of one of the more famous coffeehouses in Iceland, this bar/ coffeehouse/ restaurant brings a European flair to the city. That is until about 11, when things get to rockin', and you can see the true character of Reykjavík.



7 **Svartakaffi**
Laugavegur 54

Read the newspaper, have a cup of coffee, have a philosophical conversation with your cigarette and enjoy the speciality of the house, soup in a bread bowl. Aim high, it's not on the ground floor.



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Dillon
Laugavegur 30

been-to-hell-
sed art on the
rock on the
ly-flowing
e, Dillon is vying
crowd.

31 RESTAURANTS

La Primavera
Austurstræti 9

Everybody laughed when we discovered a contemporary restaurant that has its most notable influences from northern Italian cooking but using local Icelandic produce. The unique menu that results from this combination features homemade pastas, risotto, gnocchi, polenta and a wide variety of the freshest vegetables, fish, poultry, meat and game. The menu, the atmosphere and a comprehensive, exclusively Italian wine list has made La Primavera a favourite among the locals. They laugh no more!!

Glaumbar
Tryggvagata 20

roper sport bars in
can go and watch
appens to be on
the establishment
around the bar,
to go a long way
until five, and has
ate night partying

32 Tveir Fiskar

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. s.

34 Humarhúsið

One of the oldest restaurants in the country, this fine dining establishment is known for its humar (lobster), but also for an impressive cognac lounge, and for intimate dining.

37 Tapas

For those with a bit of money and time on their hands, the evening is well spent at Tapas, where you can while away the evening having course after course of wonderful miniature dishes served. Recommended is the garlic-fried lobster and lamb in apricot sauce. If you don't feel like getting up right away afterwards, there's also a lounge to lounge in, and the paintings there are worth a look.

44 Bæjarins Bestu

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, remoulade (don't ask), fried and raw onion. The standard Icelandic hot dog, only somehow it tastes better.

CLIP n' SAVE PRACTICAL INFORMATION

PUBLIC TRANSPORT
Reykjavik has no trams, trains nor subways - only buses. The price of a single fare is 220ISK for an adult (60ISK for children under 12). If you are in town for more than a few days, the nine ticket package for 1500ISK would be a better deal. Bus cards valid for two weeks, a month or three months are also available. You have to pay as you step on board and it has to be the exact amount, as the driver cannot give you change. You can ask the driver for a free, time-limited transfer ticket if you need two buses to complete your journey. The bus system is closed at night, between 24:00 and 6:40 approximately. For more information and bus rides, go to Hlemmur and Lækjartorg, the main bus stops in town.

TAXIS
The main taxi companies in Reykjavik are Hreyfill 588 5522, BSR 561 0000, Borgarbilastöðin 552 2440 and BSH 555 0888.

INTERNET
There's an excellent wireless internet network coverage in Reykjavik, which means that you only need a network card on your laptop to log on almost anywhere. Wireless network hot spots are marked in listings. If you're not travelling with a laptop in your bag, there are computers for internet use, e.g. at following places: Ráðhúskaffi, the city hall. Tourist information, Aðalstræti, also see ad. On page 4. City library, Tryggvagata 15.

FOR WIRELESS NETWORKS, TRY:
Kaffibarinn, Bergstaðastræti 1. Hressingarskálinn, Austurstræti 20. Kaffi Hljómálinn, Laugavegur 21.

SUPERMARKETS:
Supermarkets are generally open between 9 and 18. For longer opening hours, go for 10-11. 10-11, branches around Reykjavik, try the one on Austurstræti Krumbúðin, Skólavörðustigur Bónus, Laugavegur Heilsu húsið, Skólavörðustigur (for the veggies and vegans)

SHOPPING MALLS
Kringlan, Kringlunni 4-12, 103 Reykjavik. Eg. buses 111, 115 or a 30-minutes walk from the city centre Smáralind, Hagamári, 201 Kópavogur. Buses 16, 17



38 Jómfrúin

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 first rate smörrebröd at Jómfrúin. They even import their own eel directly from Denmark to make one of Scandinavia's delicacies.

45 Hölla Batar

The first sub sandwich shop in Iceland, opened in 1986, Hölla Batar has a large selection of subs filled and named with creativity and imagination. Brave souls might want to try the Cúmmi-Batur (rubber boat), which might seem like an oversized relative of the ever-present pylsa, or go local and choose Sýslumannabatur (sheriff sub) with lamb filling.

39 Shalimar

Prides itself on being the northernmost Indian restaurant in the world. How this affects the food, we don't know as there are no comparisons in town. The daily special, comprised of two dishes on your plate, goes for roughly 1000ISK. But we recommend the Chicken Tikka Masala, known to be highly addictive. And if the curry gets to you, they have a self-service ice cream cone machine.

46 Eldsmiðjan

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.

40 Tjarnarbakkinn

Above the Þró theatre, so it's a good place to go before shows, or during if you prefer a more quiet atmosphere. If you sit by the window you get a nice view of the pond. It's not a bad place to try one of Iceland's culinary specialties, the lamb steak, one of those rare traditional treats that does not come as a shock to the uninitiated.

47 Quiznos Sub

A new branch of the American Quiznos has entered the thriving downtown sub market, and it's you, our dear, hungry reader that gains from it. A good selection of tasty subs, but also sandwiches, salads, soup of the day. This is Quiznos first European restaurant, your response will decide how many more will come East.



41 FAST FOOD Nonnabiti

The owner is a miser who charges additionally for everything, but this is almost certainly the best junk food in the Greater Reykjavik 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.

48 Fine Vegetarian

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.

42 Pizza King

Yes, you can go here late at night and grab the best pizza in town, but it is also home to the best lunch specials, and food so good you'd eat it sober, something you can't say for most food in Reykjavik. Call in advance if you're going during the day.

49 Dominos Pizza

Welcome to Iceland, home of the most profitable Dominos franchises in the world. You know the taste. The number, for anywhere in Iceland, is 58-12345. Go local and hit the global chain. Look by the harbour downtown.

Litli Ljóti
Laugavegur 6b

IC Andersen
y Duckling. The
the very best
night, when
nights you can
artner is saying,
lunch menu.a
night partying

33 Hornið

Means "the corner" and the place lives up to its name. This is actually the oldest Italian restaurant in town, celebrating its 25th year, which says something about the scene here before then. Excellent quality pizza, pasta and salads and yet remaining one of the more affordable ones. Try the calzone.

36 Pasta Basta

An affordable Italian place, the pasta is in generous portions and the salad with grilled chicken is a good light option. The garden is nice, with a glass ceiling protecting punters from the wind and the rain at all times of year. Upstairs, the Blue Bar offers a more bar type atmosphere.

43 Purple Onion

Stepping up Reykjavik's diversity a notch, the Purple Onion serves up Eastern European and Mediterranean food fast. If you are as uncultured as we are, just smile and say you're hungry, and they'll give you something nice for under 1000 ISK.

50 Mamas Tacos

With a new location comes a new selection: Mama's Taco's now has fast and cheap Mexican food downstairs, and outstanding and more regional Mexican cuisine upstairs. You must try Mama's own homemade tortillas.

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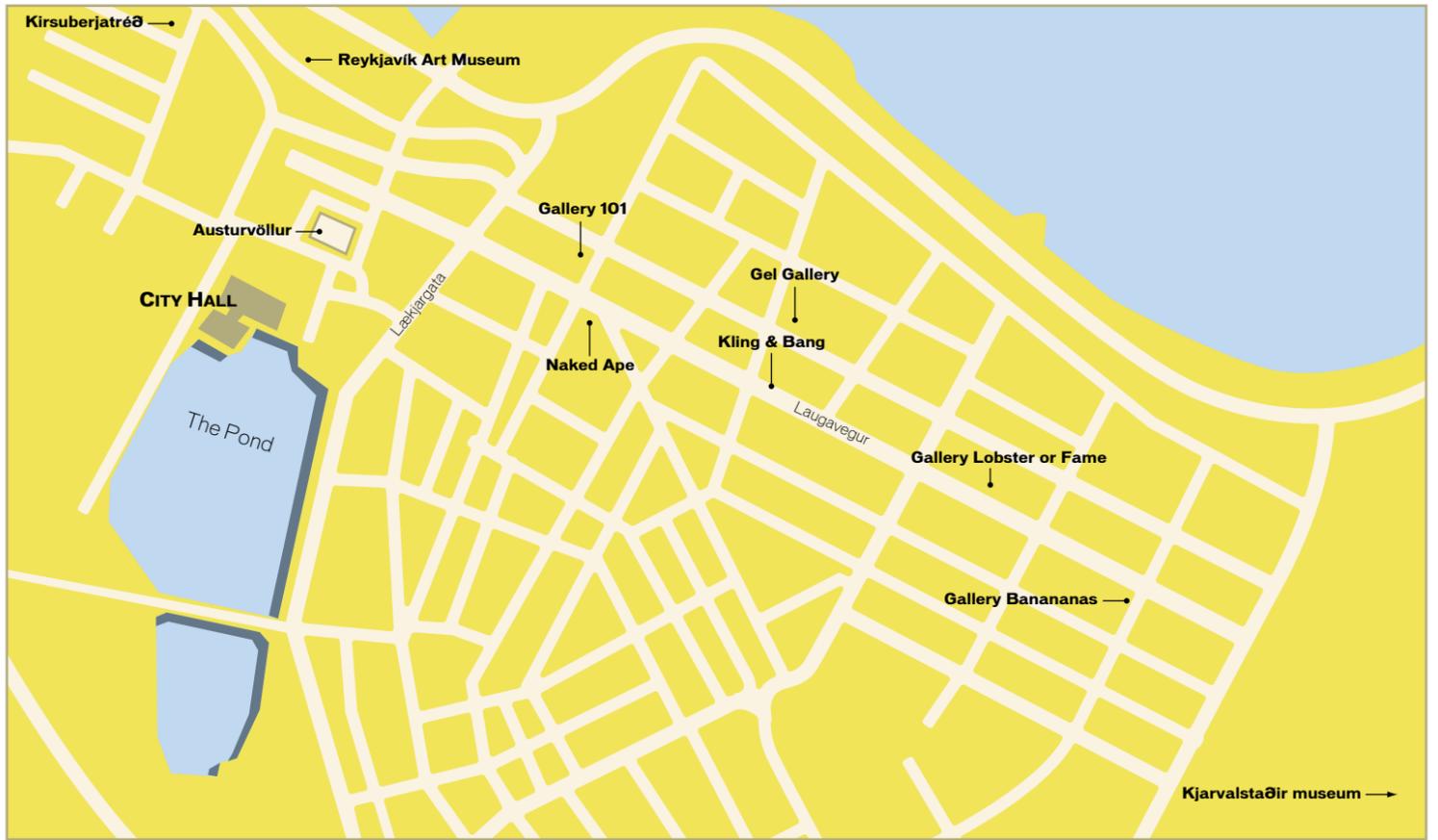
CLIP n'SAVE PRACTICAL INFORMATION

MUSEUMS

- The Reykjavík Art Museum**
Hafnarhús
Tryggvagata 17
- Kjarvalsstaðir**
Flókagata, 105 Reykjavík
- Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum**
Sigtún
- Árbajarsafn**
Árbaer
www.listsafnreykjavikur.is
- The Culture House**
Hverfisgata 15
www.thjodmenning.is
- Reykjavik Museum of Photography**
Tryggvagata 15
www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is
- Nordic House**
Sturlugata 5
www.nordice.is
- Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum**
Laugarmestangi 70
www.lso.is
- Reykjavik Electrical Museum**
Refstöðvarvegur
www.rafheimar.is
- ASÍ Art Museum**
Freyjugata 41
www.asi.is
- Einar Jónsson Museum**
Eiríksgata and the sculpture garden,
Freyjugata
www.skulptur.is
- National Gallery of Iceland**
Frikirkjuvegur 7
Ásgrímur Jónsson collection
Bergstaðastræti 74
www.nationalgallery.is
- National Museum of Iceland**
Suðurgata 41
www.natmus.is

The Pond and Beyond

Grapevine Picks for Museums and Galleries



City Hall - Ráðhúsið

Vonarstræti



In the spacious room, next to the smallish version of Iceland, you'll find the glass-fusion of local artist Póa. She works mainly with glass, creating sculptures, lamps and wall-decorations that reflect on Icelandic nature and ideas of freedom. The exhibition is called Looking at the Sky so be sure to look for the birds – not only outside but in various artistic versions as well.

Kirsuberjatréð (The Cherry Tree)

Vesturgata 4, phone: 562-8990



Experience, watch and touch all kinds of art, jewellery, felt, pottery and clothes in cosy surroundings. A group project of ten funky Icelandic artists the store is a great place to stop and admire the colours, craft and originality of Icelandic design. You can buy stuff too, and it's one of a kind.

Gallery Bananas

A rite of summer, the outdoor, constantly-revolving gallery is a must for a sunny afternoon. Okay, there are probably two sunny afternoons a summer in Iceland. If you get one, get out to Gallery Bananananas. *Laugavegur 80. Outside.*



Indriði Klæðskeri

Skólavörðustígur 10, phone: 551-2805



Walking through the "Flower street" Skólavörðustígur you can look inside the arty store of Indriði and find an interesting exhibition by Þóroddur Bjarnason. In this project he works with the Bible tale of Sakkæus and creates a conversation among space, ideas, words and audience. His statements can also be seen outside from the street but the message is clearer if you just go in and ponder a bit.

Reykjavík Art Museum

Tryggvagata 17, phone: 590-1200



For the Reykjavik Art Festival, the downtown Reykjavik Art Museum features a collection of German artist Dieter Roth, who lived in Iceland during a key moment of his creative output, and who has had a significant influence on the local scene ever since.



WWW.GRAPEVINE.IS



THE EINAR JÓNSSON MUSEUM

By Eiríksgata, opposite the Helgum Eiríksson Memorial Church
Open:
 Decr. May and Sept. 10h-17h
 Sat. 11-15h and Sun. 14-17h
 June-Sept. 10h-17h
 Daily except Monday 11-17h
 Jan. and Dec. closed.
 The sculpture garden is always open, entrance from Freyjugata



Kirsuberjatréð

Kirsuberjatréð, Iceland's finest/Icelandic design, Vesturgata 4, 101 Reyk., tel. 5628990
 Opningartíðir: Júní-Sept. 11-18/10a-17h, Okt. 11-18/10a-17h, Nö. 11-15/10a-17h, Dec. 11-15/10a-17h

Cafè Rosenberg

Live music Thu-Sat

Lækjargötu 2, tel. 551-8008

Kjarvalsstaðir

at Flókagata



Collecting the most influential Icelandic works of the last century, this exhibit, on loan from the National Gallery, comes highly recommended. Jóhannes Kjarval, for whom the museum is named, is of course on display in this exhibit—and he still may be the scene-stealer.

Gel Gallerí

Hverfisgata 37, phone: 551-7733



Inside the hair salon Gel is a gallery that currently exhibits the works of Krístrún Eyjólfsdóttir, simple paintings of sophisticated shape, every day snapshots of familiar people in minimalistic surroundings. The exhibition is called "I Don't Know" and is colourful, humorous yet tinged with sadness. Gel Gallerí is one of the most interesting galleries in town, enjoy the music and dance if you need to, and if you want to sit down you might even get a haircut.

Naked Ape



Naked Ape is a newly-opened gallery and a store, an art centre with works by Ólafur Orri Guðmundsson, Berglind Ágústsdóttir and Hafsteinn Mikael at the moment, and a colourful line of prints (clothes, bed linen, bags) by the owner Sara María Eypórsdóttir. It also contains a small workshop, a handsome commercial addition to the artistic community...which also makes good use of the word "Ape", something we'd like to see a lot more of. The word "Ape". Charlton Heston-style. As in "Get your hands off me." Gallery Naked Ape, Bankastræti 14. Phone: 531-1415



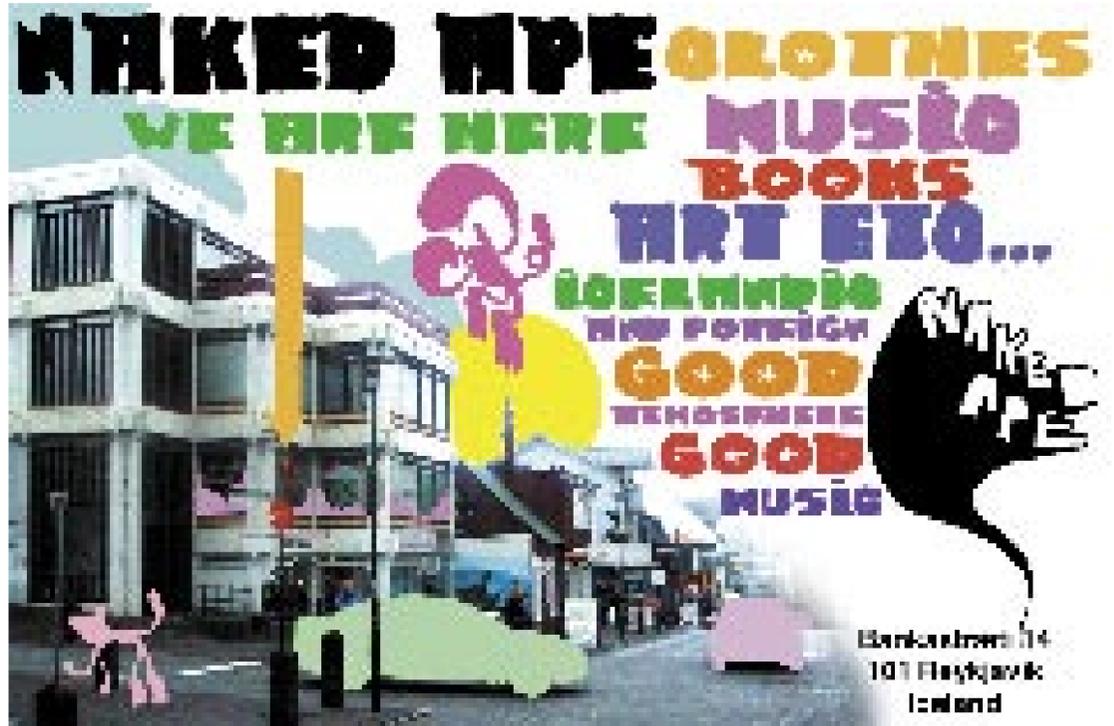
Grapevine survival tip #4

What to do if you get lost in an Icelandic forest?

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Power To The Tourist!

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Apparel



Books



The Reykjavík Grapevine Info

Open 12 - 22
Laugavegur 11
see centerfold for location



Night and Day: Two Very Different Approaches, If Shirts Are Your Thing

By Bart Cameron

Nonnabúð

The most celebrated t-shirts in town have come out of Nonnabúð for years. Even a casual visitor will notice mobs of young people, and many older people trying to be young, in black shirts with skulls. Jón Sæmundur is consistently in danger of making t-shirts that are so popular that they become too popular.

“The ideas are always changing. He’s always got a new line-up. I’d look to see him getting away from the traditional Dead idea,” Elsa, store clerk and sometime Singapore Sling back-up singer, told us on our recent visit.

The shirts on display included a range of artists and writers, including of course Laxness, given a respectable silver on black rock treatment, and the illustrious local illustrator Flóki. These shirts, which cull the best and most romantic of local history, are priced at about 3900 ISK.

Of course, the skull thing still appeals to the masses. While we were in the shop, a couple stopped by to see if the black skull jacket looked good, and we imagine people will be checking out the same jacket for years.

Nonnabúð, Laugavegur 20b, 101 Reykjavík. Phone: 551-6811.

Indriði

On a sunny day, you can find the shirt store Indriði by the line of women getting help at the desk. Which at first glance may be curious: all the shirts in the shop are men’s shirts, designed by Indriði himself.

At Nonnabúð, we heard the Cramps and the Raveonettes. When we come in to Indriði, we hear James Last, the German composer who liked to lighten up pop. My friend describes Indriði, sitting at his design counter, as the easiest-going, goofy shop-owner he’s ever met.

Every shirt in Indriði is priced the same: 8900 ISK. Every shirt is classical with subtle style touches and custom fabric, all designed by Indriði. And every shirt is a limited item—only 30 of each design are made and sold.

Maybe it’s the casual demeanour of the shop, or maybe it’s the fact that every shirt in the store looks like it’s someone’s favourite, the one they wear to every family photo, but the 8900 seems reasonable. And, indeed, a shirt I had my eye on was gone on a second visit.

Indriði explained his clientele: “It really doesn’t matter the income. It’s the type. If you like small and personal, then you end up here.”

Indriði, Skólavörðustígur 10, 101 Reykjavík. Phone: 551-2805.

Only blocks apart from each other, two local craftsmen have done wonders with... the shirt. Different as night and day, or maybe as different as the left and the right hemispheres of the brain, Indriði and Jón Sæmundur, owners and creators of Indriði and Nonnabúð, respectively, are making shirts that feel more like art than clothes.



GRAPEVINE’S PURCHASES THAT JUSTIFY EXISTENCE

1 Jonagold Apples from Bónus, still 14 ISK/kg. A bargain, and, according to our own Paul Nikolov, nature’s own toothbrush.

2 Ten ticket pass for the ITR Reykjavík swimming pools. For only 1900 ISK you get ten entries to the Reykjavík pools AND locker rooms. That’s a lot of naked people. Throw in heated outdoor pools, hot pots, steam rooms, and you’ve got a bargain. For a list of pools go to www.itr.is.

3 Cheap books! A new thing to Iceland, Penguin Popular Classic paperbacks from Eymundsson. That world classic with an Icelandic focus, Jules Verne’s Journey to the Centre of the Earth, costs only ISK395.



Gljófrasteinn
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Reykjavík

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Winter: Tuesday - Sunday 10.00-17.00
Last four hours at 15.00

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in the North

Brynja

Brynja, Aðalstræti 3, Akureyri
Open weekdays 9.00-23.30, weekends 10.00-23.30

Buy Fruit

— The Grapevine Celebrates Capitalism —

FOREIGNER'S GUIDE TO VEGETARIAN EATING

The rumour has long been that it's a dedicated (or fabulously wealthy) soul who decides to eat vegetarian in Iceland. As most fruits and vegetables have to be imported, they tend to be more expensive than locally raised, grass-fed meat-makers – even more so if you want organic. But you needn't necessarily take out a six-figure loan just to do a week's vegetarian grocery shopping, provided you know where to shop.



Shopping

On the low end of vegetarian shopping, there's always our favourite standby, Bónus. At the time of this writing, whole wheat flour is going for 68 ISK/kg, loose potatoes for 47 ISK/kg, and onions are going for a laughable 1 ISK/kg. A kilo of onions for a single króna – don't let anyone tell you that you can't live the high life in this country.

On the higher end is Heilsuhúsið. This corner store is a hybrid of vegetarian shop, vegan shop, gourmet shop, miniature library and small pharmacy. Here you'll find more than the standard bird-and-rabbit food fare of most vegetarian shops: for those uncertain how to eat healthier – vegetarian or otherwise – there are a few shelves of books on the subject to choose from. At the same time, there are multiple shelves of vitamins, minerals and other supplements. The current meat alternative – soy meat – is for sale there for 350 ISK/500g. We've had soy meat before, and you don't need to worry: it'll taste like whatever you cook it with/in, so we personally recommend using it in pasta dishes. Organic fruits and vegetables are also available, but with grapefruits going for 622 ISK/kg and oranges for 422 ISK/kg, you might be better off just eating the pesticides on regular fruit and hoping for the best.

Dining Out

Through some New Age twist of fate, three of Reykjavík's vegetarian restaurants are located within a few second's walk from each other.

Grænn Kostur boasts heaping portions of both vegan and

vegetarian fare with most meals under 1000 ISK. When the weather's nice, they set up tables outside so you can enjoy the view of the neighbouring parking garage. Two blocks away is Á Næstu Grösum, a restaurant that might change its menu now and then but always has the same prices: 1200 ISK for lunch, 1490 ISK for dinner, and 550 ISK for soup. Not too shabby, especially with unlimited bread and hummus to go along with it. Across the street is Kaffi Hljómalind, which advertises itself as a "non profit" organic café. Meals there hover around 1000 ISK while offering sidewalk dining in nice weather, which makes for great people-watching as this restaurant is on Laugavegur. Not only can you watch people from your perch at Hljómalind, you can judge them as inferior, both for eating meat, and for eating for profit.

Outside of the cosmic vegetarian block, in the more distant but just as worthy Borgartún, is Maður Lifandi, a combination vegetarian restaurant/health food store. The vegetarian dining is consistent there, but most of the clientele—typically a rush around lunch and early dinner—are interested in the organic chicken, said to be the only not sugar-saturated chicken in Iceland.

Not to be ethnocentric, it should be remembered that Asian people had perfected vegetarian cuisine long before Dr. John Harvey Kellogg invented granola. To this end, we recommend checking out three places of interest.

Shalimar is an Indian restaurant with an extensive vegetarian menu. There you can eat your fill for between 1200 ISK and 1500 ISK. A little further west is Krua Thai, which we

personally consider to be the best Thai restaurant in town: large portions and limitless rice, with most meals under 1000 ISK. Smack-dab in the middle of downtown is Indokína, a combination Chinese-Vietnamese restaurant with a number of soy, noodle and vegetarian dishes that are all reasonably priced.

So there you have it. With all these shopping and dining options, you now have no excuse to buy that cheeseburger... you murdering bastard!

Bónus, Laugavegur 59, 562-8200

Heilsuhúsið, Skólavörðustígur 12, 568-9266

Grænn Kostur, Skólavörðustígur 8, 552-2028

Á næstu grösum, Laugavegur 20b, 552-8410

Kaffi Hljómalind, Laugavegur 21, 517-1980

Maður lifandi, Borgartún 24, 585-8700

Shalimar, Austurstræti 4, 551-0292

Krua Thai, Tryggvagata 14, 561-0039

Indokína, Laugavegur 19, 552-2399

■ By Paul F Nikolov

DINING, EATING & GRUBBING

The Ideal Place for...
Eliza Reid on Reykjavík Dining

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\$ \$ \$
Between ISK 2500 and ISK 4000

\$ \$ \$ \$
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LAUGA ÁS



\$ \$ \$
*Lauga Ás Seafood Restaurant,
Laugarársvegur 1,
Tél. 553-1620*

It's the kind of place your parents could have been going to religiously every Monday for the last 20 years. Lauga Ás proudly proclaims itself the oldest restaurant in Reykjavík, which speaks for its popularity in a land of fads and trends. Its unobtrusive location in a strip mall almost next to the Laugardalur swimming pool isn't likely to draw in any casual passers-by, but it is clear from the regulars inside that Lauga Ás is a well-regarded secret.

Family-run (and family-friendly: there is an extensive children's menu and small play area for kids), this restaurant has a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere. You won't feel out of place if you turn up a little scruffy from swimming, hiking, or souvenir-shopping all day. That's a welcome change from some places downtown, where you might not feel like you fit in unless you have the right haircut.

The décor is, I imagine, almost exactly as it was when the restaurant opened in 1979, yet it does not seem tired or overly dated. Actually I think the matching checked curtains and lampshades, as well as the three-foot ceramic chefs holding the menus, seem to add to the charm of the place.

Lauga Ás specializes in seafood and fish (especially varieties that are unavailable elsewhere, states the menu), and offers a number of three-course menus centred around lobster tails paired with fish, meat, or game. Ignore or enjoy the rather galling spelling errors in the English part of the menu, something which seems common to every restaurant in Reykjavík, and you will be able to choose from a lobster feast (2990 ISK) or lobster party (lobster paired with another food, 2900 – 3300 ISK), or select from the a la carte assortment, including hamburgers and pasta dishes. The main courses may seem a trifle pricey, but they all come with soup. For dessert, I can recommend the ice cream products: my ice cream cake had a delicious layer of marzipan for added texture and flavour. Portions are generous, well-presented, and just plain yummy.

If you're staying in the Laugar Valley area, this is a recommended place for friendly service and good food without a gourmet price. Think Humarhúsið for people in outdoor wear and hiking boots.

*Open Weekdays 11:00 – 21:00 Weekends 15:00 – 21:00
www.laugaas.is (featuring great photo of the ceramic menu-holding chefs)*

OLIVER



\$ \$
*Laugavegur 20, Tél. 552 2300,
www.cafeoliver.is*

There seem to be three things that are crucial to the successful running of the bistro-bars that are ubiquitous in Reykjavík:

1. Good food, preferably served with artistically drizzled balsamic glaze
2. Surroundings that are comfortable for anyone from laptop users or gossiping girlfriends, to first daters and giddy revellers
3. A healthy assortment of beautiful young Nordic people drinking lattes or Coke

Oliver, the current bar du jour in Reykjavík, is expert in all these fields. The food was delicious and well priced. My starter of gnocchi provencal (890 ISK) was creative and flavourful, and presented with the requisite balsamic glaze. The goat's cheese stuffed chicken breast (1950 ISK) was fantastic and my companion raved about her baked cod (1890 ISK). Everything was beautifully presented and the coffee cups were especially nifty (they are from the "Body Talk" series, if that provides any hint of the reason). Thanks to the large portions, the food is very good value. Many starters would easily suffice for a main course.

The atmosphere at Oliver is very similar to its bistro-bar competitors. There's a spacious patio on the roof at the back for the few sunny days of summer. A nice touch is the rule that the ground floor remains non-smoking until 10 pm.

The managers at Oliver may be following the pattern of these types of establishments to the letter, but the news is not all good, however. The service, while friendly, was sporadic. It took a while for drinks to arrive and to get someone's attention to order dessert. The service was fairly indicative of the general mood of the restaurant. Oliver knows it has good food. It knows it is the most popular bistro at the moment. Why does it need to do anything else?

This complacency certainly does not seem to be affecting Oliver's popularity. Maybe the food and some eye candy really are all people are looking for.

SIGGI HALL



\$ \$ \$ \$
*Siggi Hall at Hótel Óðinsvé
Þórsgata 1. Tél. 511 6677*

Next to the menu on display outside Siggi Hall is a selection of quotes from various illustrious sources: "The food is amazing"

(CNN); "Might be worth a trip to Iceland all by itself" (Forbes). It would seem from what is written here that this is one of the greatest places on earth. That's a lot to live up to. And although the guidebooks rave, some Icelanders I have spoken to say it's not as good as it used to be. The truth, of course, lies somewhere in between, but far more on the positive side than the negative.

The atmosphere at Siggi Hall is bright and cheerful, yet classy. It's set in the sunroom of the Hótel Óðinsvé, so there is lots of natural light. The jazz greats are crooning in the background. It's fine to dress casually, but a bit of effort in the fashion department would not be amiss. This is not a romantic environment; save your marriage proposal for somewhere a bit more intimate. But if you want to celebrate your recent promotion, or just to enjoy a bit of a splurge night out on your last evening in town, this is perfect.

As one would expect from a place this highly rated, the food was of superior standard and creatively presented. The menu features several fish items, and certainly the parmesan-crusted halibut (2900 ISK) was delicious, although my lamb with blueberry sauce (4000 ISK) was also good. The steamed puddings were well worth the 20-minute wait to cook them. One of the most original creations was an *amuse bouche* of smoked salmon marinated in gin and tonic – a noticeable yet subtle flavour.

Siggi Hall himself, a famous personality within Iceland from his days as a TV chef, is a real presence in his restaurant. He visits each table at least once to chat amiably in various languages. I found his meanderings quite charming.

Siggi Hall has been around a while. Having visited to find out whether it had lost its sheen, this place may not have the thrill of a new experience, but it's still a strong contender in the Great Reykjavík Restaurant stakes.

siggihall@odinsveum.is

Open for dinner only. Closed Mondays.

Reservations recommended but not required.

Ga-Jol, Good for Cooking



Turns Pork Loins into Chicken

Restaurants in Reykjavík

3 Frakkar Baldursgata 14 Phone: 552 3939
Hornið Hafnarstræti 15 Phone: 551 3340
Jómfrúin Lækjargata 4 Phone: 551 0100
Maru Aðalstræti 12 Phone: 511 4440
Pasta Basta Klapparstígur 38 Phone: 511 2238
Tapas Vesturgata 3B, Phone: 551 2344
Tveir Fiskar Geirsgata 9 Phone: 511 3474
Vox Nordica Hotel Suðurlandsbraut 2, 444 5050
Cafe Victor Hafnarstræti 1-3, Phone: 561 9555
Cafe Sólun Bankastræti 7a, Phone: 562 3232
Vegamót, Vegamótastígur 4, Phone: 511 3040
La Primavera, Austurstræti 9, Phone: 561 8555
Shalimar, Austurstræti 4, Phone: 551 0292
Á næstu grösum, Laugavegur 20a, Phone: 552 8410
Tilveran, Linnestígur 1, Hafnarfjörður Phone: 5655250

BEZT Í HEIMI hornið

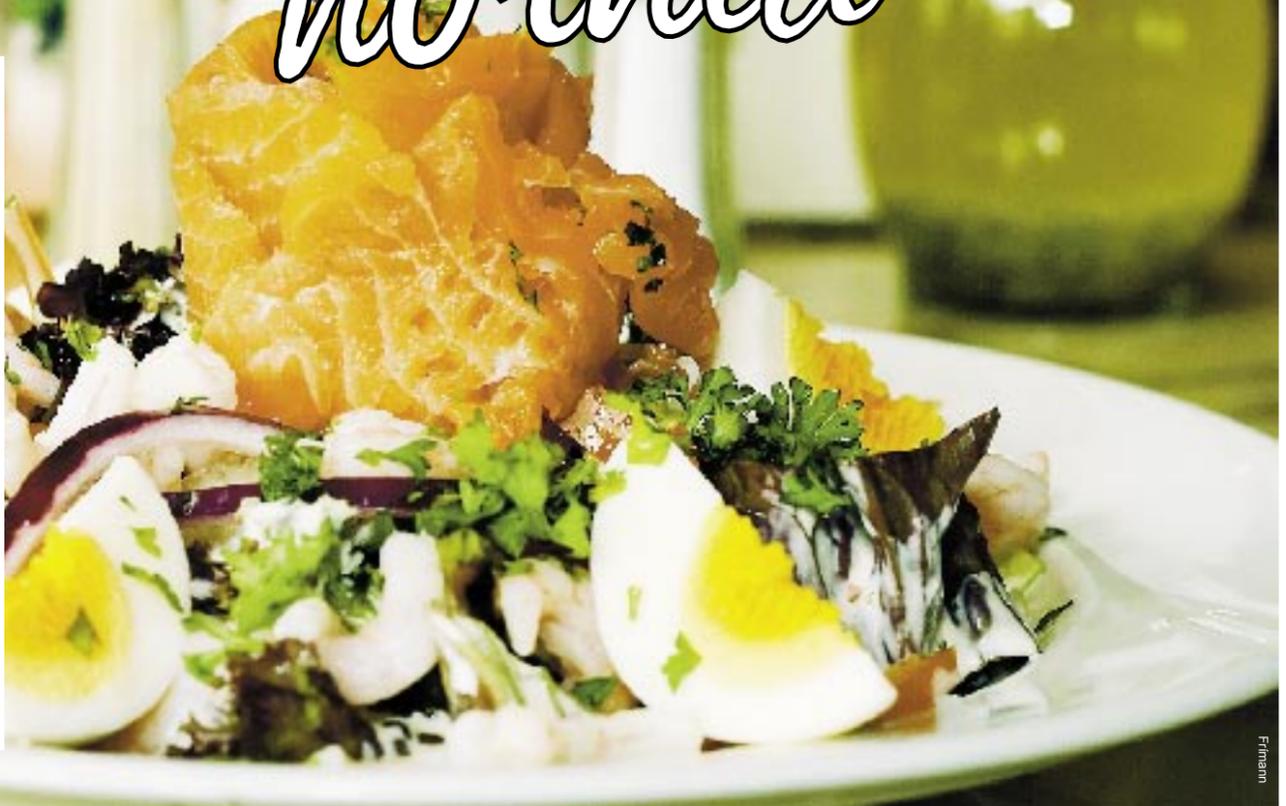
Hornið: The Chianti in wicker kind of classy

How do you take a quaint restaurant with the kind of consistently good Italian that always goes with the Chianti that comes in a wicker basket? Well, you make it affordable. Hornið, which has been in the same location for 20 years, has maintained its quality and its affordability throughout. This is the kind of place you take your gal to, or, if you're a struggling student or artist, that you treat yourself to once a month.

The great thing about a mid-range restaurant that has been around so long is the ease that the staff has with the clientele. In fact, Hornið has the best service in Reykjavík among restaurants with dishes under 4000 ISK. It also has the best spaghetti carbonara (1650 ISK) in the city and extremely refreshing pizzas.

This restaurant is an institution in town: it will not get more hip, and it will probably not be covered in any local magazines, but it is timeless, or, even better, somewhat dated—to twenty years ago when people just went to restaurants to enjoy the food and feel pleasant. *Hafnarstræti 15, 101 Reykjavík Phone: 551-3340. www.hornid.is*

■ By Bart Cameron



Previous Bezt í Heimi winners:



Ostabúðin

Go there for a Friday lunch and have the blackbird salad. If you're starving, add a fish steak. Praise the chef. Even hope you might seduce the chef and secure your future.



Lobster Soup at Sægreifinn

Sægreifinn is one of the charming locales in Reykjavík where English doesn't pop up at all. It is a shop for locals, and the lobster soup, at 650 ISK, is a cherished secret.



Ísbúð Vesturbæjar

Serving the old (gamli) style ice cream, which, according to customers in the ever-present line, is water-based, this is the favourite for any true Reykjavíkur.



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ARTS AND CULTURE LISTINGS

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!

EVENTS

Compiled by Atli Bollason.
atli@grapevine.is

Akureyri's summer of art

If you're thinking about going to the countryside, Akureyri (aka the capital of Northern Iceland) is probably the place for you if art and culture is your trade. They have their own arts festival which is running throughout the summer. We're so impressed we're going to print the whole programme for the next two weeks:

Thursday, August 4.: Ketilhouse: Hot Thursday Jazz, 21:30. Quartett Margot Kiis: Kjartan Valdimarsson, piano, Gunnar Hrafnsson, bass, Halli Gulli, drums, Margot Kiis, singer.

Saturday, August 6.: Ketilhouse: Django Jazz Festival, concert, 21:30

Thursday, August 11.: Deiglan: Hot Thursday Jazz, 21:30. B3-Trio: Agnar Mar Magnusson, hammond-orgel, Asgeir Asgeirsson, gítar, Erik Qvick, drums.

Friday, August 12.: Ketilhouse: Concert for lunch: Three singers bass, sopran, mezzosopran & pianoplayer, 12:00

Thursday, Aug. 18.: Gallery Gersemi (Blaa kannan): Concert for lunch, 12:30

Deiglan: Hot Thursday Jazz: 21:30. Trio Benjamin Koppel from Denmark

Friday, August 19.: Ketilhouse: Concert for lunch: Duo, sax & piano, 12:00

Saturday, August 20.: Akureyri Museum Church: An evening of song, 20:30

Sunday, August 21.: Ketilhouse: Concert: Sopran, violin & piano, 16:00

Ongoing exhibitors:
Ketilhouse: Gudrun Palina Gudmundsdottir, Portret & paintings
Deiglan: Sigurdur Petur Hognason, oil on canvas
Akureyri Art Museum: Monsters, Icelandic contemporary art
Café Karolina: Eiríkur Arnar Magnusson, etching

5-7 AUGUST

Lýsuhóll, Snæfellsnes

If you feel like leaving the city the Krútt-festival (Cute-festival) which is taking place on Snæfellsnes this weekend would be a real catch. Besides having almost 15 bands on its roster, including múm and Mice Parade, an art exhibition will be opened at 15:00 on August 6th. The exhibition features work by Pétur Már Gunnarsson, Elsa D Gísladóttir, Davíð Örn Halldórsson, Bryndís Ragnarsdóttir, Baldur Geir Bragason, Baldur Björnsson, Hildigunnur Birgisdóttir, Kolbeinn Hugí, Þór Sigurbjörnsson, Berglind Ágústsdóttir, Sígga Björg, Hugleikur Dagsson and Guðný Rúnarsdóttir.

7 AUGUST

Árbæjarsafn

Chess-tournament.

8 AUGUST

17:00

Sólón

Performance of the play How do you like Iceland? by Benóný Ægisson. The play takes you on an intelligent, informative and hilarious tour through Icelandic history in approx. 50 minutes. It's shown on Mondays and Wednesdays for the next few weeks and admission is 2000 ISK with a drink included. Further info: <http://www.this.is/great/>

9 AUGUST

20:30

Sigurjón Ólafsson museum

Waltzes about love and one hangover poem is the title of this concert by Iceland's best known double-bass player Tómas R. Einarsson. He'll be accompanied by Óskar Guðjónsson (sax), Snorri Sigurðarson (trumpet), Ómar Guðjónsson (guitar) and Matthías M.D. Hemstock (drums).

14 AUGUST

Árbæjarsafn

The Icelandic shepherd's dog; an introduction and programme (this is not a joke).

16 AUGUST

20:30

Sigurón Ólafsson museum

Arias, cantatas and pieces for teorba by Gasparini, Scarlatti, Cazzatti, Strozzi, Picinini, Frescobaldi. Jóhanna Halldórsdóttir alt, Heike ter Stal teorba, Steinunn Ambjörg Stefánsdóttir cello and Guðrún Óskarsdóttir harpsichord.

ONGOING

101 Gallery
Þórdís Adásteinsdóttir until 9th of September.
Thu - Sat 14:00 - 17:00
<http://www.101hotel.is/101hotel/101gallery>
Hverfisgata 18a, tel: 561 0125

Art Gallery S. Har
Mon - Fri 12-18, weekends 12-16
Skólavörðustígur 25a, 101 R

Árbæjarsafn, Folk Museum
Thu - Fri 10:00-17:00,
Sat-Sun 10:00-18:00
<http://www.minjasafnreykjavikur.is>
Kistuhyl 4, 110 R, tel: 577 1111

ASÍ museum
Summer exhibition until 14th of August
Tue-Sun 13:00 - 17:00
<http://www.asi.is>
Frejyugata 41, 101 R, tel: 511 5353

Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum
The Man and Material
Daily 10:00-16:00
<http://www listasafnreykjavikur.is>
Sigtúni, 105 R, tel: 553 2155

Banananas
Laugavegi 80, 101 R.

CIA - Center for Icelandic Art
Mon-Fri 10:00 - 16:00
<http://www.cia.is>
Hafnarstræti 16, tel: 562 7262

Culture House
Medieval manuscripts - Eddas and Sagas though the ages and The National Museum - as it was
Daily 11:00-17:00
Guided tours in English every weekday except Wednesdays,
<http://www.thjodmenning.is>
Hverfisgata 15, tel: 545 1400

Einar Jónsson Sculpture Museum
Tues-Sun 14:00 - 17:00
<http://www.skulptur.is>
Njardargata, tel: 551 3797

FUGL - Reykjavik Project Space
Þóroddur Bjarnason - ORÐ to 31st of July.
Mon-Fri 10:00-18:00, Sat 11:00-16:00
<http://fugl.is>
Skólavörðustígur 10, tel: 695 4202

Gallery Fold
Mon-Fri 10:0-18:30, Thu 10:00-21:00, Sat 10:00-18:00 Sun 13:00-17:00

<http://www.myndlist.is>
Kringlan Mall, tel: 568 0400

Gallery Gel
Ég veit það ekki - Krístrún Eyjólfsdóttir
Mon-Fri 11:00-19:00 Sat 12:00-17:00
Hverfisgata 37, tel: 551 7733

Gallery Hulduhólar
Sat 11:00-14:00
<http://www.hulduholar.com>
Mosfellsbæ, tel: 556 6194

Gallery i8
A Pursuit of Happiness ASAP - Lawrence Weiner until 20th of August
Wed-Fri 11:00-17:00, Sat 13:00-17:00
<http://www.i8.is>
Klapparstígur 33, tel: 551 3666

Gallery of the Icelandic Printmakers Association
Tue-Sun 14:00-18:00
<http://www.islenskgrafik.is>
Tryggvagata 17, tel: 552 2866

Gallery Lobster or Fame
Comics in a bomb shelter
Mon-Sat 12:00-18:00
<http://www.smekkleysa.is>
Laugavegi 59, tel: 534 3730

Gallery Skuggi
Thu-Sun 13:00-17:00
<http://www.galleriskuggi.is>
Hverfisgata 39, tel: 511 1139

Gallery Sævar Karl
Sigrún Ólafsdóttir
Mon-Fri 10:00-17:00
<http://www.saevarkarl.is>
Bankastræti 7, tel: 551 3470

Gallery Tukt
Weekdays 09:00-17:00
<http://www.hitthusid.is>
Pósthússtræti 3-5, tel: 520 4600

Gerðarsafn, Kópavogur Art Museum
Material Time/Work Time/Life Time until 21st of August.
Tue-Sun 11:00-17:00
<http://www.gerdarsafn.is>
Hamrabrægi 4, tel: 570 0440

Gerúberg Culture Center
Collectors II - What do Icelanders collect?
Mon-Fri 11:00-17:00
www.geruberg.is
Gerúberg 3-5, tel: 575 7700

Gljúfrasteinn - Laxness museum
Thu-Sun 10:00-17:00
www.gljufurasteinn.is
Mosfellsdalur, tel: 586 8066

Gyllin hæð - Icelandic Academy of Arts
Wed-Sun 14:00-18:00
Laugavegi 23

Hafnarborg - Institute of Culture and Fine Art - Wilhelm Sasnal, Bojan Sarcevic, On Kawara and Elke Krystufek.
Wed-Sun 11:00-17:00
<http://www.hafnarborg.is>
Strandgata 34, tel: 555 0080

Hafnarfjörður Folk Museum
Weekends 13:00 - 17:00
<http://www.hafnarfjordur.is/byggdasafn>
Vesturgata 5, tel: 565 5420

Hafnarhús - Reykjavik Art Museum
Train - Dieter Roth
Daily 10:00-17:00
<http://www listasafnreykjavikur.is>
Tryggvagata 17, tel: 590 1200

Icelandic Institute of Natural History
Tue, Thu, Sat, Sun 13:00-17:00
<http://www.ni.is/>
Hiemmur 5, tel: 590 0500

Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum
A Selection of 20th Century Works
<http://www listasafnreykjavikur.is>
Daily 10:00-17:00
Fjókgata, Miklatún, tel: 552 6131

Kling & Bang Gallery
Ásmundur Ásmundsson & Gunnhildur Hauksdóttir until 21st of August.
Thu-Sun 15:00-18:00
<http://this.is/klingogbang>
Laugavegur 23, tel: 696 2209

National Gallery of Iceland
Train - Dieter Roth
11:00-17:00 except Mon
<http://www listasafn.is>
Frikirkjuvegur 7, tel: 515 9600

National Museum of Iceland
Daily 11:00-17:00
<http://www.natmus.is>
Suðurgata 41, tel: 530 2200

Nordic House
Terra Borealis - Andy Horner
Grús both until 28th of August
Tue-Sun 12:00-17:00
<http://www.nordice.is>
Sturlugata 5, tel: 551 7030

Orkuveita Reykjavíkur - Galleri 100°
Train - Dieter Roth
Mon-Fri 8:30-16:00, Sat 11:00 - 17:00
<http://www.raffheimar.is>
Bæjarhálsvegur 1, tel: 516 6790

Ófeigur's Arthouse
Mon - Fri 10:00-18:00 Sat: 10:00-14:00.
Skólavörðustíg 5, tel: 551 1161

Reykjavik Museum of Photography
Unsettled - 8 South African Photographers
Mon-Fri 12:00-19:00, Sat-Sun 13:00-17:00.
<http://www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is>
Tryggvagata 15, 6th floor, tel: 562 1790

Safn
Wed-Fri 14:00-18:00, Sat-Sun 14:00-17:00
<http://www.safn.is>
Laugavegur 37, tel: 551 4409

Saga Museum
Historical figures and major events in Icelandic history.
Every day 10:00-18:00
HYPERLINK "<http://www.sagamuseum.is>"
<http://www.sagamuseum.is>
Perlan (The Pearl), Óskjuhlíð, tel: 511 1517

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum
Acquisitions and Donations
Tue-Sun 14:00-17:00
<http://www.iso.is>
Laugarnestangi 70, tel: 553 2906

Skemmtihúsið Theatre
The Saga of Guðríður
Every Thursday at 20:00 and every Sunday at 18:00; admission 2000 ISK.
Laufásvegur 22, tel: 552 4201

The Living Art Museum
Wed-Sun 13:00 - 17:00
<http://www.nylo.is>
Laugavegur 26, tel: 551 4350

Volcano show: Red rock cinema
Part One at 15:00 & 20:00, Part Two at 16:00 & 21:00
Hellusund 6a, tel: 845 9548



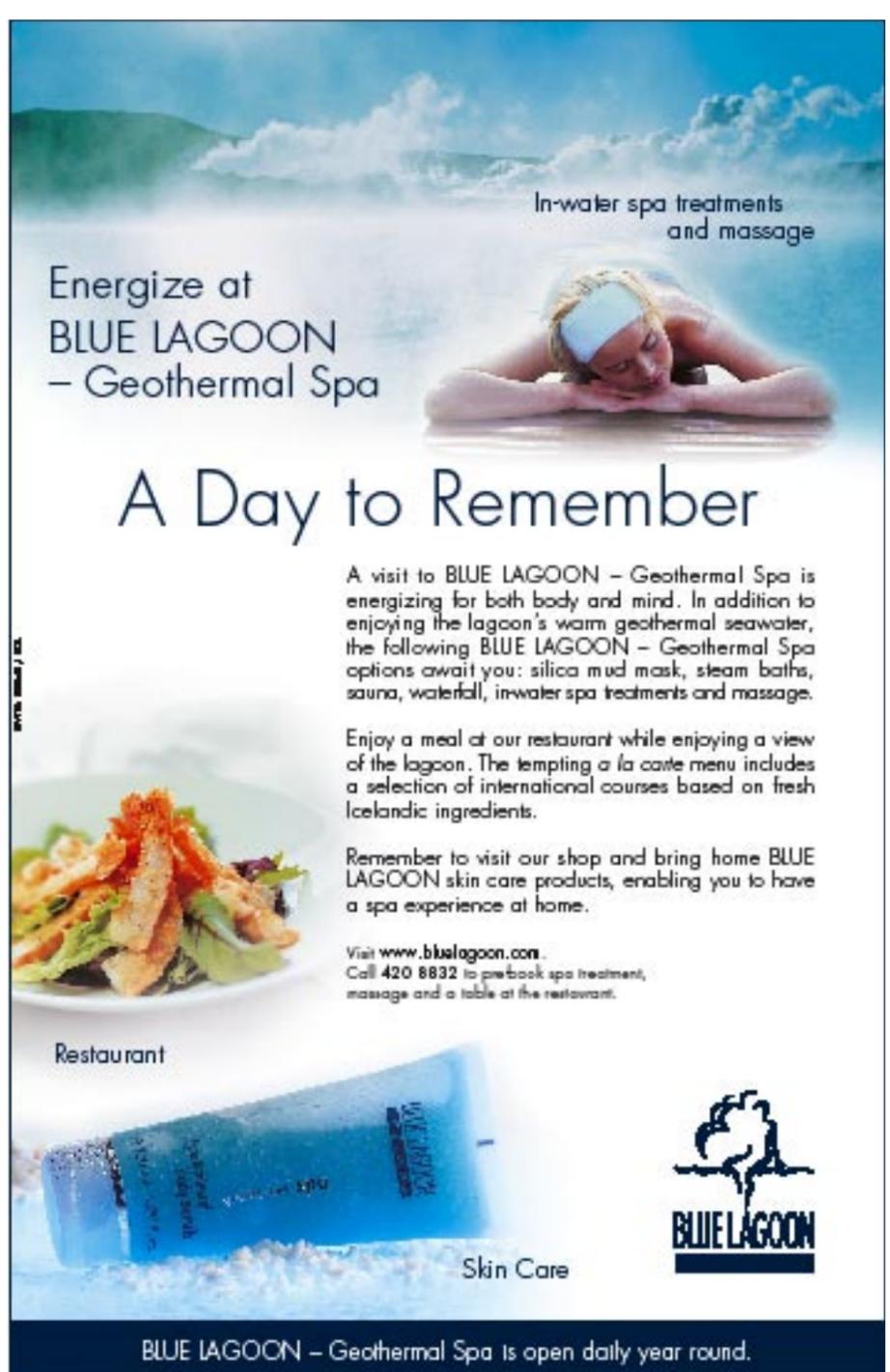
A PICTURE OF PAUL MCCARTNEY

IN MY OPINION THE VERY BEST VEGETARIAN RESTAURANT IN THE WORLD

OK, Sir Paul McCartney did not eat at our place the last time he came to Iceland but we are pretty sure that he will visit us very soon. Join the many very famous people who like Bono and Angelina Jolie and become one of our regular customers. Where the stars eat you are very safe!

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Restaurant

Skin Care

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GRAPEVINE BAD TASTE SUMMER

REVIEWS

JULY 23

ÚLPA

Úlpa from Hafnarfjörður have been around since late 1999 and have playing around with various styles and influences. Often have they come up with some great ideas but not always have they managed good enough songs from all of them. Their recent show demonstrated that their new material is straighter forward (in a good way) and more stripped down which suits them well.

JULY 23

LIGHTS ON THE
HIGHWAY

Lights On The Highway consists of ex-members of bands like the extreme noise-core band Klink, Bisund, Solid I.V. and stoner-rock band Brain Police, but they sound nothing like those bands. Their sound world is more similar to the late Jeff Buckley, or, to some extent, a mellow acoustic Alice In Chains. It's so hard not to hear the vocal harmonies of Layne Staley and Jerry Cantrell, which isn't at all a bad thing, but not too original. Their sound is huge and this band is damn tight, but one still hopes they'll move away from their influences.

JULY 29

THE HEAVYCOATS

The Heavycoats from Baltimore (Maryland, USA) were described as a softer and less gloomy Interpol and that pretty much says it all. This band consists of five twenty and thirty something guys clad in black and with stylised haircuts. The rocky walls of the gallery made the reverb guitars sound a little bit too thin, almost painfully thin. This band should throw away their Interpol records and focus more on their song-writing instead their hairstyles.

JULY 30

FILASTINE

Grey Filastine from Seattle (Washington, USA) is a politically active disc jockey/musician who mixes together rhythms and sounds from hip-hop, electronica, dance hall, drum 'n' bass and experimental noise. He's to some extent similar to a guy who calls himself DJ Rupture (who has, by the way, released almost every Filastine album). Grey has been around all South America and has recorded chants from countries like Cuba and more, and he samples them into his eccentric mix, which is really interesting. It's a shame how few people witnessed this guy. Hopefully he'll be back and maybe play a proper show in a darker place.

INFO

GRAPEVINE



SERIES



STEINTRYGGUR
AUGUST 5 ■ 17⁰⁰

GALLERY
LOBSTER
OR FAME

STEINgrímur and SigTRYGGUR are both drummers, the former an expert with the Indian tabla, and together they craft a mesmerizing rhythmic cocktail more creamy, crispy and upright than a Cadillac milk truck on a slippery mountain road to hell.

HELGI VALUR
AUGUST 6 ■ 15⁰⁰

SIRKOS

Helgi Valur won the national radio's troubadour contest. With an outstanding range and phrasing that wouldn't sound out of place in a Joe Cocker concert, Helgi has proved to be one of our best singers, perfectly realizing that less can be more and that it's possible to evoke an emotional response without using a distortion pedal.

**BENT
AND
7 BERG
AND
NBC
AND
THUGS
ON PAROLE**
AUGUST 11 ■ 21⁰⁰

BAR 11

Bent & 7berg are the most abstract of the Icelandic hip-hop lot, mixing poetic rhymes with liquid beats from producer Tryggvi. Bent's flow is rapid, while 7berg is more laid back. But both can handle when the beats jump between time signatures. NBC is the duo of Stjáni (formerly of Afkvæmi guðanna) and Dóri DNA (of Bæjarins bestu). Stjáni has a reputation as one of the cleverest and wittiest rappers around; Dóri is equally well-known for his humour and incredible battle skills. Thugs on Perole are debuting, but as you can tell from their name they're a pack of mean muthas. On parole. Misspelled. Harsh.

PALINDROME
AUGUST 12 ■ 17⁰⁰

GALLERY
LOBSTER
OR FAME

It's always nice when a band performing very straightforward rock (or pop for that matter) can manage to put on a good show based only on the strength of their songs, without having to resort to attempts at avant-garde or prog-rock. This is what Palindrome do best.

SIGURLAUG GÍSLADÓTTIR
BIG BAND
AUGUST 13 ■ 17⁰⁰

SIRKOS

Just back from playing in Nürnberg, Sigurlaug Gísladóttir is debuting her own material in Iceland with this gig. Still, Sigurlaug is an experienced and accomplished singer; she et. al. won the Icelandic college singing competition in 2004. Don't expect Celine Dion though, but a bit of electric guitar, a bit of bass, a bit of electronica and the most soulful voice this side of the Faroes.

JAKOBÍNARÍNA
AUGUST 18 ■ 21⁰⁰

BAR 11

Jakobínarína won the Battle of the Bands this year and not without reason. Being young enough to be most familiar with the post-Strokes garage/new-wave revival "when-indie-became-fun-again" scene of all scenes – Jakobínarína suck all those influences in and create an Icelandic hybrid of the genre.



MUSIC AND NIGHTLIFE Album Reviews



FLÍS
Vottur

There's usually integrity to any release from 12 Tónar, Iceland's independent record label that closely resembles

America's Nonesuch Records. The store and the local music scene always have a stake in one of their releases, and even the failures are compelling. And when 12 Tónar hits the right note, they can capture the local imagination. (Yes, they did that Mugison thing.) The new jazz album, *Vottur*, by Flís, is so strong and immensely likeable, that it should creep into the local culture soon. A respectable three-piece including Davíð Þór Jónsson on piano, Valdimar Kolbeinn Sigurjónsson on bass, and Helgi Svarar Helgason on drums, the group here reinvents the Icelandic standards originally performed in the fifties by Haukur Morthens. The blend of moody ballad with classical touches and lyric jazz takes on the endearing gothic tone that Tim Burton might ask for were he to direct a movie of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*.

The discovery here, which may have more magnitude than Mugison, is that music existed in Iceland before rock, and it may have been very very good. Kudos must go out to the recording engineers, and Mr. Sigurjónsson on bass. The tone of the lows throughout this album are extraordinary.



**Worth five beers.
Costs three. Winner.**



**Lights on the Highway
Self-titled.**

**Worth four beers.
Costs three beers.**

There's a lot of layered acoustic guitar here, and a lot of layered vocals. Vocal effects and outstanding fill-heavy drumming also figure in prominently. The total of the parts sounds much like 90s Seattle band Alice in Chains, though instead of Layne Staley's drug addiction focus, Lights present more palatable relationship fare. While it may not be especially innovative, this record is extremely melodic, and using the tools of Alice and Chains in more poppy material seems like a good idea.



Björk
Music from Matthew Barney's Drawing Restraint 9

**Worth five beers.
Costs four**

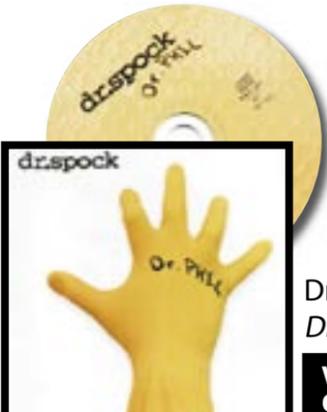
With this new release, we get the dubious proposition of attempting to understand both Björk and Matthew Barney, wonder artist behind the *Cremaster Cycle*. What we can report is that Matthew Barney and Björk work well together on the tracks they wrote together—both touch on root instincts and emotions, using surprisingly adept and modern tools. The advantage the listener has in this CD is a more straightforward narrative drive. The vocals on this album are outstanding, especially an early Will Oldham track that draws a great deal of inspiration from Captain Beefheart. Most surprising, Björk's voice only shows up on two tracks. Without her superstar voice, the mood and feel of her compositions is allowed to come through, and it survives very well. An extremely evocative disk.



Nix Noltes
Orkidpur Hawaii

**Worth four beers.
Costs three beers.**

We got an early review copy of the debut release from a favourite live band the Nix Noltes. As best we can gather, Nix Noltes deliver frenetic Balkan music that mixes the ABBA song structure prevalent in fiddle music from around the world with unique time signatures. Live, this music is extraordinary. And this album replicates a live experience as best as we've ever heard. The slight trick is that if you're not dancing, the song structure can be a little draining.



Dr. Spock
Dr. Phil

**Worth one beer.
Costs four.**

Explaining why he enjoys Icelandic staple Dr. Spock, who are releasing their first CD after having played live around Reykjavík for anywhere between a decade and four years, depending on the source, a fan said: "They have the lyric 'I like pussy and pussy likes me.'" That's a good one. The music, well-produced punk with virtuoso rhythm section, is similar to a band we have recommended, RASS—who share a couple members and the same label. But where RASS captured our imagination with their punk lyrics and style, Dr. Spock annoys the crap out of us.



Original Music from the film Screaming Masterpiece

Worth nothing. Possibly less. Costs four beers.

Many visitors and fans of Iceland enjoy the film *Screaming Masterpiece*, by Ari Alexander Magnússon. The film features the best and brightest of Iceland's "Cute Generation", and some of our staff were so repulsed by it that we ran a feature discussing how many things had to go wrong in the world before this film came out. To Mr. Magnússon's credit, he documented a great number of extraordinary musicians, among them Björk, Mugison, Sigur Rós, Bang Gang and Apparat Organ Quartet. He also found the exact theme that unites them... or the flaw. While all of these musicians can be appreciated on their own, together, on one disk, they became intolerable. So much cutey cute, so much sugar, and you begin to hate the whole lot of them. If you are a fan of any of the bands on this disk, avoid at all costs.

Guide to the ratings system:
In prison, you deal in cigarettes. In Iceland, you deal in beers. We don't condone this, we just accept it as fact. One beer=500 ISK at the seedy bars we frequent. That means a mainstream release costs up to 2500 ISK... or \$40. Yes, that much. That's why we do the beer thing.

All music featured in this section and plenty more is available at the Grapevine Info.

The Reykjavík Grapevine Info

Open from 12 - 22 on Laugavegur 11 see centerfold for location

t.A.T.u: Good Music, Sleazy Origins

Invented pop groups – bands formed by managers more concerned with marketing than talent – have been with us since the Monkees first oozed forth onto America's airwaves. Malcolm McLaren claimed to have created a punk version of such with the Sex Pistols. Even Iceland has its own version, in the form of Nýlon.

Singers and groups created primarily for marketability have become so commonplace that we hardly bat an eyelash when another one comes rattling off the assembly line, unless they bear some sort of gimmick that grabs our attention. This is precisely what Ivan Shapovalov had in mind when he created the Russian pseudo-lesbian singing duo t.A.T.u. in 1999.

Within the span of barely four years, t.A.T.u. – comprised of singers Lena Katina and Yulia Volkova – managed two hits from their sole album to date, 200 km/h in the Wrong Lane – the teen angst anthems All the Things She Said and Not Gonna Get Us – in addition to an ill-received cover version of the Smiths' classic, How Soon Is Now?

Shapovalov was pretty straightforward about his vision for the band, telling Blender magazine, "At first, the idea was just underage sex. Every time, the audience needs new images—for this project, new images were lesbian teenagers."

All the while, Katina and Volkova remained vague and non-committal to the image Shapovalov had created for them, stating in repeated interviews that they "just love each other."

The sensationalism and downright sleaziness, made for great copy, and drew the ire of the British press in particular. The March 2003 issue of Q magazine printed a scathing portrait of the band – wherein two grown men called two 18-year-old girls "cunts" – as well as the band's manager, who belched forth the comment, "Society needs to be protected from people who want to protect society from t.A.T.u."

The gimmick worked to a large extent. Sexually confused teenagers and closet pedophiles the world over embraced them, albeit for drastically different reasons. In the hubbub, what few parties noticed was that the music the band put out was actually decent.

What sets t.A.T.u. apart from the Monkees, Nýlon and the Sex Pistols is that Katina and Volkova actually possess talent. In the review section, Q magazine gave their album three out of five stars, stating in part, "the mechanical rock and lascivious pianos come not just with sugar-coated pop, but industrial strength, turmoil and alienation." For my part, I've listened to the Russian version of their album and I believe the songs are tightly composed, featuring the signature minor scale that Russians love so dearly, and push the normally light mood of pop music into unsettling, nearly explosive emotional territory – a soundtrack that goes very well with posting the daily news.

The biggest reason why I put emphasis on the Russian versions



Yulia Volkova (left) and Lena Katina, pleased with their matching shirts.

of their songs is twofold. As a native-born English speaker, I not-so-grudgingly admit that Russian sounds better than English, especially when sung. Don't even try to write me and dispute this. You simply won't convince me that "love" sounds nicer than "ljubov." Secondly, Russians are suckers for wordplay and double entendres. Take for example the song, "Prostie Dvizhenia" ("simple movements") – in English, the song is overtly about masturbation, whereas in Russian, the main verse roughly translates as, "Without you, I just keep going through simple movements," which in Russian can mean going through the motions of day-to-day life despite the absence of a lover or "rubbing one out".

Nonetheless, there's one basic problem: how does one enjoy t.A.T.u.'s music without financing a sleazy Svengali? Unfortunately, the only viable way involves depriving the band itself of funds as well.

Visit t.A.T.u.'s Russian website – www.tatu.ru – and click on "Downloads" (one of the few portions of the site in English). There, you can download all of their songs, both in Russian and English, numerous videos, and even a feature-length documentary of the band, all free of charge for now. The diehard fan will find rare videos and artwork, including a bizarre video montage featuring Russian President Vladimir Putin, and those sceptical but curious can hear for themselves what the band has to offer with a

clean conscience. For best results, I recommend listening to the songs on Windows Media Player, with the graphic equalizer set on "Dance," and the visualizer set on "Battery: I see the truth."

In 2004, t.A.T.u. split from Shapovalov and the image he created for them. According to the official website, their new album – Dangerous and Moving – is due for international release this October from Interscope Records. Here's hoping Volkova and Katina will eventually be able to shake the creepy spectre Shapovalov foisted upon them, and let the music speak for itself on their new album.

■ Paul F Nikolov

place

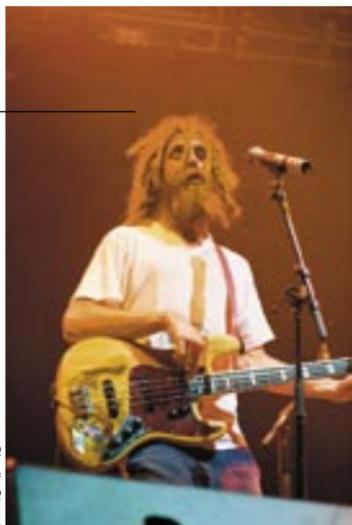


ПРАВДА
CLUB / BAR

LIVE MUSIC REVIEWS

SNOOP DOGG

SNOOP DOGG,
HÆSTA HENDIN,
HJÁLMAR,
FORGOTTEN LORES
EGILSHÖLL STADIUM,
JULY 17



Charlie Strand



Snoop Dogg delighted to hear his name chanted. Over and over.

PIMP MY COUNTRY

Despite being probably the world's second best-known rapper (after Eminem), Snoop Dogg still saw reason to end his European tour with a quick stop in Iceland. The mainly sub-16-year-old crowd came a bit as a surprise when I entered the ridiculously large Egilshöll stadium. I felt overdressed as insanely short skirts sitting on bodies yet to grow hips appeared to be the norm.

Once I'd set my worries about how I was dressed aside, I waited for the show to start. And then I waited a bit more. And when a full hour had passed Icelandic rap group Forgotten Lores came on stage.

Widely considered one of Iceland's best, they at least proved to be an ambitious group, supported by a lot of instrumentalists including a trombone player. Visibly enjoying themselves, FL jumped around the stage in true hip-hop fashion and ran through a number of decent songs. Between songs they acted out short skits that unfortunately reminded me of Skrekkur, Reykjavík's secondary school talent competition. This was countered by original and strong grooves and impressive word-play from rapper Birkir. However, the sound did FL no justice, the added trombone was never heard, the keyboards drowned in too much bass and there was no way of following FL's rhymes a long way as they tended to give way to the drumming. Bad sound actually turned out to be the main theme of the night.

Icelandic reggae-kings Hjálmar were next on stage. Much like Forgotten Lores they put some extra effort into their show that night,

expanding their normal line-up to include a brass section. That gesture was nice, adding a lot of flavour to Hjálmar's sometimes risk-free approach to reggae. I'll admit I'm not a huge fan of Hjálmar but it's hard to deny they're very talented performers and fun to watch, especially because of the bass player's intimate and bodily relationship with the music, displayed in a tribal-like dance. But the sound didn't pick up, and Hjálmar actually ran through a whole God damn song without the lead singer ever being heard. Can it be that the mixer-man simply didn't



"Alright, who threw that 40?"

grasp the fact that for one song organ-player Sigggi sang, instead of guitarist Kiddi? Why didn't someone rush on stage and replace the faulty microphone, if that was the case? Why did Hjálmar have to fall victim to such a horrendous sound system? Why did the audience have to put up with this shit?

Rap group Hæsta hendin were the last of the supporting acts



Dieter Roth
Reykjavík 14 May - 21 August 2006

Train



No, sweetie. No, no, no.

Charlie Strand

to perform. Having the dubious honour of putting out an album with one of the ugliest covers ever printed, Hæsta hendin are much more traditional than their peers in Forgotten Lores. No instruments - only a DJ and two MCs, although they did have guest rappers on stage during every single song. Erpur Eyvindarson aka Blazroca or Johnny Naz, formerly of Iceland's most popular hip hop band XXX Rottweilerhundar, who opened last year for 50 Cent, is one of Hæsta hendin's two MCs - and it says a lot about the sound that night that he was not heard once during their whole set. It also says a whole bunch that the playback actually sounded like it was coming from a pretty poor pair of PC speakers. The sound was muddy, thin, ill-balanced and utterly disgusting in every way imaginable. But Hæsta hendin played on. As an indication of the quality of their set, its high-point was a medley of XXX Rottweilerhundar songs performed by the reunited members of the now-retired band. An insider told me Hæsta hendin were commanded by Snoop's crew (scary body-builder guys) to cut the set short when they still had more than ten minutes to go and that would explain the chaos that characterized the latter half of their set.

It was now time for Snoopy. He made it perfectly clear that he

was coming on stage when what appeared to be a full-length feature film started rolling on the large screens on both sides of the stage. It had 80s B-film style credits and cheesy G-funk grooves. It started out like a mysterious crime flick but it didn't take long to morph into a lesbian-soft-porn movie, with tittie licking and all. As I said previously the crowd was mainly comprised of kids barely 16 years old, and some of the younger attendants were there with their parents. I can't imagine what went through a parent's mind when it turned out Snoop wasn't just a rapper but a porn enthusiast, too, and not afraid to display that side of him in concert.

The porno movie soon gave way to a performance of Murder was the Case from 1993's Doggystyle. Half of the songs turned out to be off that album, including What's my Name and Gin and Juice. The sound hadn't picked up - so nothing besides Snoop himself, bass, drums and the occasional keyboard could be heard from the ten-strong Snoopadelics. This was really sad, because I'm sure the backing vocals and grooves were a lot more interesting than Snoop's soulless performance of 12-year-old songs. There I said it; Snoop was a terrible performer. And he was wearing the most distasteful clothes I've ever seen, not because they were obscene or anything; just so fucking ugly you wouldn't believe it.



Snoop Dogg dressed in the world's largest "doo rag."

But Doggystyle is one great album. Actually, it's my favourite hip hop album of all time. I find Dr. Dre's (well, actually George Clinton's) grooves irresistible and Snoop's smooth delivery is one of a kind. And this strong set of songs managed to save the concert from being a catastrophe. Of course, the contents of the lyrics are debatable, and there was actually some intense debate going on in Iceland a few days before the concert, where rappers and feminists got to argue in front of a camera without any results or conclusions - only sparking small talk on who "had won". I don't know whether Snoop hates women (according to his videos he's actually

quite fond of them...) or if he's just getting people to think about the world's current status as all great art should do, but he's an egotistical maniac - that much is clear.

Snoop Dogg played for 90 minutes and I'm positive he used at least 45 minutes for having the crowd shout "we love you Snoop", chant "Sha-na-na-na Snoop Dogg" and regularly asking "what's my motherfucking name?" It was fun for a while, but when he said "say it like you mean it" and expecting a "we love you Snoop" for the tenth time in a row it wasn't all that exciting anymore.

When I left Egilshöll stadium I couldn't help but think only

one thing: It is insulting to an audience that has paid 4900 ISK (approximately \$70 or 60 euros) for their ticket to have the sound as horrible as it was during this concert. Throughout the whole show - that's four bands - the sound was always ridiculous. I don't know how the consumer laws are on this kind of stuff - but there should be laws, and they should ensure that half of the people that bought tickets for Snoop Dogg will get at least half of the price refunded.

■ By Atli Bollason

Happy hour for the homesick

Text for free between 6 and 7 pm every day

Choose TAL for the Og Vodafone network in Iceland
This promotion is valid for travellers in Iceland until August 31st 2005.
Some home operators may charge a minimal fee.



How are you?

MUSIC AND NIGHTLIFE LISTINGS

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 AUGUST 5

Concert: Andrím followed by DJ Palli from Maus.
Bar 11
Cute-festival: Mice Parade, múm, Hudson Wayne, Kimono, Skátar, Benni Hemm Hemm and more. Admission is 3900 ISK, and that includes camping. Sæmundur at BSI is offering special deals on busses.



NASA, 16-17th August

SONIC YOUTH

Name any indie band to hit the ground running after 1990, and I, the all-knowing picker, will personally guarantee you that they cite Sonic Youth as an influence. These guys (and girl) made noise an artform and made lyrics poetry long before teenagers scribbled Nirvana lyrics on their binders, and they continue to surprise and delight their fans. Come see where it all started.

Lýsubóll, Snæfellsnes
DJ Bjóssi from Mínus.
Café 22
DJs Þróstur 3000 and Brynjar Már.
Sólun
Gay-pride ball.
Pravda Club
Grapevine Bad Taste: Steintryggur at 17:00.
Smekkleysa plötubúð
Hera celebrates new CD with a concert.
Nasa
Troubador: Atli & Leifur at 10 pm, then DJ Heiðar Austmann.
Hressó
Troubadors Atli and Leifur.
Hressó

SATURDAY AUGUST 6

Cover-band Vax.
Hressó
Cute-festival.
Lýsubóll, Snæfellsnes
DJ Palli from Maus.
Café 22
DJs Atli skemmtanalögga and Áki pain.
Pravda Club
DJs Silja and Steinunn.
Café Cultura
DJs Þróstur 3000 and Brynjar Már.
Sólun
Gay Pride festivities at 11 pm: DJ Páll Óskar. Admission 1000 ISK
Nasa
Grapevine Bad Taste: Helgi Valur.
Sirkus
Hawaiian night.
Gaukur á Stöng
Hip-hop: Forgotten Lores.
Stúdentakjallarinn
Rock-concert: Jan Mayen and Weapons. DJ Krummi from Mínus afterwards.
Bar 11

SUNDAY AUGUST 7

Cute-festival.
Lýsubóll, Snæfellsnes

TUESDAY AUGUST 9

Rock: Nilfisk.
Gaukur á Stöng

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 10

Concert: Prince tribute
Gaukur á Stöng
Hip-hop night.
Pravda Club

THURSDAY AUGUST 11

Concert: Prince tribute.
Gaukur á Stöng
Concert: Snakebird.
Café Cultura
DJs Tommi White and Andrés.
Sólun
Live jazz.
Pravda Club
Rock concert: Dýrðin and 5ta herdeildin.
Grand Rokk
Troubador Hermann.
Hressó

FRIDAY AUGUST 12

Band Ég (I) plays.
Grand Rokk
Concert: Bacon followed by DJ Gulli from Ósóma.
Bar 11



Kaplakriki, August 13th

ALICE COOPER

Nothing rocks more than watching a senior citizen with turkey jowels and black eye makeup in his crow's feet singing, "School's out forever!" Seriously though, without Alice Cooper there would be no Marilyn Manson, Korn, Slipknot, and a ton of other bands that were teenagers around the time that Alice Cooper came out in Wayne's World. He might be more grateful if you threw inhalers onstage than your knickers, mind you. Yeah. Welcome to my nightmare.

Concert: Númer núll followed by DJ Matti.
Bar 11
DJ Gulli from Ósóma.
Café 22
DJs Atli skemmtanalögga and Áki Pain.
Pravda Club
DJs Þróstur 3000 and Brynjar Már.
Sólun
Grapevine Bad Taste: Sigurlaug Gísladóttir Big Band, 15:00.
Sirkus
Reggae: Hjalmar at 11 pm. Admission 500 ISK.
Nasa
Rock: Singapore Sling.
Grand Rokk
Trygvi troubador.
Hressó

TUESDAY AUGUST 16

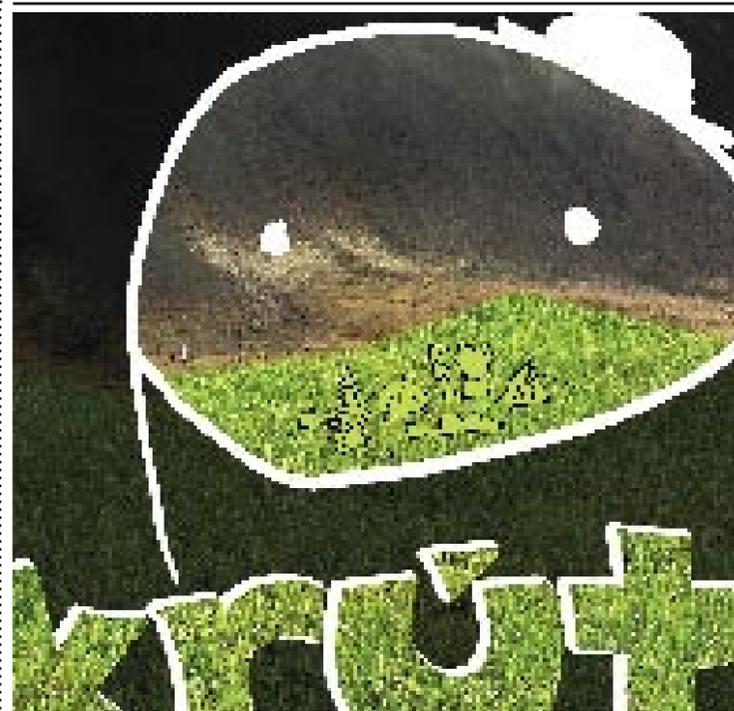
Sonic Youth w/ Band of Brides. Admission 4500 ISK.
Nasa

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 17

Hip-hop night.
Pravda Club
Sonic Youth w/ Curver. Admission 4500 ISK.
Nasa
The Doors tribute band at 9 pm. Admission 1500 ISK.
Gaukur á Stöng

THURSDAY AUGUST 18

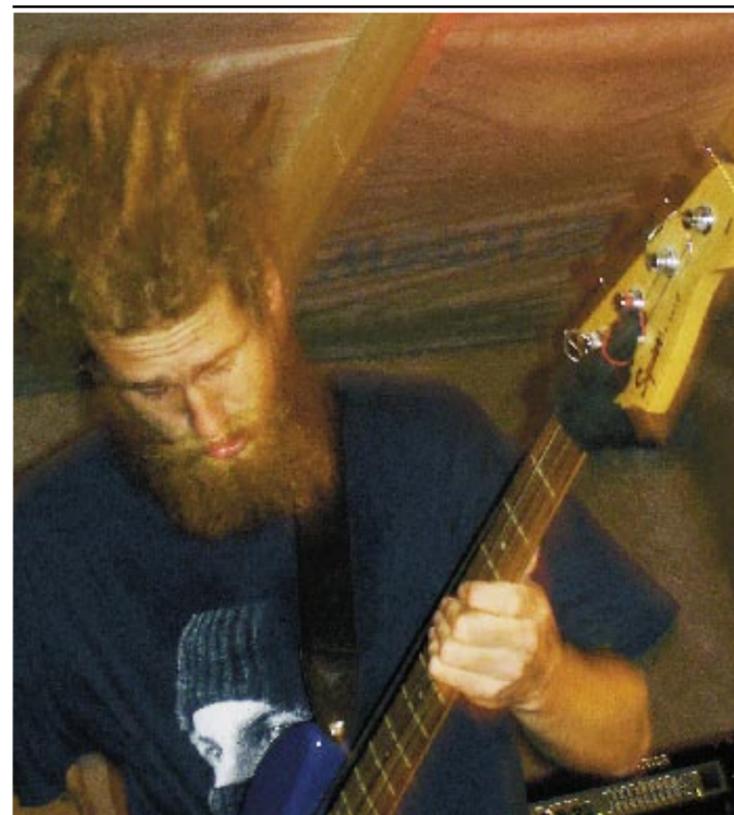
Jazz singer Hattie StJohn, 22:00.
Hotel Nordica
Cover-band Mát.
Hressó
DJs Tommi White and Andrés.
Sólun
Grapevine Bad Taste: Jakobínarína.
Bar 11
Live jazz.
Pravda Club
Lokbrá.
Grand Rokk
The Doors tribute band at 9 pm. Admission 1500 ISK.
Gaukur á Stöng



Snæfellsnes, August 5th-7th

KRÚTT FESTIVAL

Means "Cute Festival", and features cute bands that play cute harmless music for cute audiences. The most famous cute bands to come out of Iceland are Sigurrós and Múm, and although they're not playing this festival you needn't worry. Bands such as Benni Hemm Hemm, Kimono, Skátar and Hudson Wayne are headlining, movies will be screened, art exhibitions opened, and much more. Best of all, the festival will take place outside the city - only a couple of hours drive away - the band play outside and tickets are only 3.900. Tickets are available at BSI bus terminal. Bring a tent.



NASA, August 13th

HJÁLMAR

Iceland's only half Swedish band reggae band are known for putting on extremely enjoyable live shows. For those tired of Hjalmar's old songs, they will be playing a lot of new songs from forthcoming album. For those unfamiliar with the band, go see them regardless of what songs they play: they are one of the best live bands in Iceland. They've got the groove.

Cover-band Trio.
Hressó
DJ Bjóssi from Mínus.
Café 22
DJs Atli skemmtanalögga and Áki pain.
Pravda Club
DJs Þróstur 3000 and Brynjar Már.
Sólun
Grapevine Bad Taste: Palindrome, 17:00.
Smekkleysa plötubúð
Rock: Dimma, Sign, Dead Sea Apple and Noise.
Gaukur á Stöng

SATURDAY AUGUST 13

Alice Cooper.
Kaplakriki sports hall



Bar 11, August 18th

JAKOBÍNARÍNA

Jakobínarína won this year's Battle of the Bands (Icelandic young band's competition) and are 15-year olds. If current music heavyweights and former BOTB winners Dáðadrengrir set a trend, we can expect great things from these guys, whose sound has been described as "like BritPop when it was still good and fun."

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- * Live music every week
- * Everyday until 20:00
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- * 10% discount on food and beer to worldwide students

Stúdentakjallarinn v/hringbraut - 511 09 05 - kjallarinn@hi.is



Cabaret at the Icelandic Opera

The famous musical comes to life with all necessary glamour and decay. Based on the Berlin tales of Christopher Isherwood it tells a story of an American writer who arrives in Berlin in 1932 and gets caught up in a love affair and the political changes in Germany. The writer (Felix Bergsson) finds himself falling in love with the party girl and night club-singer Sally Bowles (Þórunn Lárusdóttir), and parallel to their struggle is the story of an elderly couple, the Jewish Herr Schultz (Borgar Garðarsson) and the independent Fraulein Schneider (Edda Þórarinsdóttir). And

of course the notorious Kit-Kat club and its gender-bending party-crowd is present as well with the MC (Magnús Jónsson) in charge, they sing and dance and set the background of the musical. Of course, all this offers a lot of drama, emotionally bursting into cabaret singing, crying, laughing and basic fun. The music is classic as is the production in general; director Kolbrún Halldórsdóttir walks down a familiar path with her emphasis in this project. Some extreme situations are a bit melodramatic but that is something you can always expect in musical theatre.

However the first open rehearsal of the musical lacked a lot of energy. The famous Cabaret songs, especially those performed by Þórunn Lárusdóttir, were great; she is a talented singer and gave a great performance, but she could not hold up the whole show by herself. The other actors seemed to be saving themselves, in the songs you could see the potentials of their performance but the tempo was too slow. The elderly couple really slowed things down and their relationship – a romantic one in a highly dramatic situation – didn't capture my attention as acted. The

control-freakish MC seemed to be haunted by Tourette's syndrome but was much more fun after the break when his devilish side was more visible. The five singing/dancing/provoking girls were charming in an odd way.

One must hope that the artists will surely boost up their performance before the premier.

■ By **Kristrún Hauksdóttir**

The Art of meeting People in Reykjavík

What is the difference between Reykjavík and cities such as Edinburgh, Oslo or Hamburg? The main difference between Reykjavík and other European cities is geothermal water. Reykjavík is heated with thermal water, a natural resource that causes virtually no pollution.

One of the many uses of geothermal water is bathing. Nowhere else in the world are there as many pools and baths per capita as in Reykjavík, and no other nation frequents swimming pools as often as the Icelanders.

Reykjavík's Thermal Pools and Baths have an extremely positive affect on overall wellness, the main reason why so many residents visit them regularly. Reykjavíkars also enjoy going to the thermal pools to meet people and discuss matters of the day, a custom they have in common with the ancient Romans. This social activity mostly takes place in the hotpots: small circular pools of thermal water kept at temperatures ranging from 37°C - 42°C (98°F - 111°F).



Reykjavík's thermal swimming pools and baths – Sources of health, fitness and well-being.

Water in the hotpots has a unique natural ability to transform all who sit in it into philosophers – which is why visiting hotpots at the Thermal Pools is a great way to meet Reykjavíkars. Not long after you sit in one of these hotpots, someone will address you in Icelandic. When you explain that you are here on a visit, an interesting conversation may well begin about anything between heaven and earth. And if you need reliable information about something in the city, for example advice about a good eatery or what's "hot" at the moment, a hotpot chat is probably the best and most dependable source of information.

You haven't really been to Reykjavík until you have visited a Thermal Pool and Bath, and sat back in a hotpot filled with wellness water and interesting people.

A various selection of all the latest icelandic and international

CD's for only ISK 1999,- Open until 22:00 every night



...skemmtir þér ;)

Skífan Laugavegi 26

MOVIES AND THEATRE



Alex the Lion will eat you, but his instincts are to blame.

Come On, People. How Deep Do Your Cartoons Have to Be?

MADAGASCAR

Okay, Madagascar came to Iceland late, so we had already heard earfuls of “it’s too superficial” and “just a bunch of CGI” before the movie got here. This is how it goes with Dreamworks movies, viewed as the slow cousin of Pixar, producers of *The Incredibles*, *Toy Story* and *Finding Nemo*.

Lucky for us, those who import movies to Iceland seem to only take on movies that get abysmal reviews: yes, last summer we got *Punisher*, *Cat Woman* and *Alexander* on as many screens as possible.

But Madagascar has been done wrong, just as *Ice Age*, and *Shark Tale* were done wrong before that. First, let’s take the intelligence of a film named Madagascar. True, the film’s writers act on the unusual assumption that Madagascar, a country of 15 million with a remarkable archaeological history going back 2000 years, is uninhabited by humans. But on the bright side, they get this key point: they identify that there is a place called Madagascar, that it is an island, and that it contains lemurs and fossae—the amazing localized fauna that prove so useful in an evolution discussion. Getting a child to talk about lemurs is a step in the right direction. Along those lines, if the child is a little older, you

pique the young one’s interest by telling him that courtesy of the BBC, you can watch fossae eat lemurs online, or you can watch fossae have screaming wild fossae sex. (We found archives of both at www.arkive.org.)

Have we sold you on the intelligence thing? No? Well how about the other aspect that Dreamworks does right: they keep their references entirely in the low brow—a possible exception was a Tom Wolfe reference in Madagascar. But that was evened out by the context. Two monkeys escape the zoo, and they discuss seeing Tom Wolfe do a reading. The one monkey, interpreting the other’s sign language, says, “Are we going to throw poop at him? Of course.” Sheer comic brilliance.

The favourite low brow reference includes Saturday morning cartoons—Hanna Barbera’s *Help!* It’s the Hair Bear Hour -- is all over Madagascar’s opening half hour, just as *Shark Tale* owed a lot to that the high point of Saturday morning cartoons, *Jabberjaw*. And kudos go to Sacha Baron Cohen (*Ali G*). Playing a party-animal king of the lemurs, Mr. Cohen pulls a direct imitation of Peter Sellers’ vilest, and funniest, comic moment—his role as Indian stereotype *Hrundi V. Bakshi* in Blake Edward’s *The*

Party (1968).

One reason for strongly recommending Madagascar comes from our perusal of *Screen It!* (www.screenit.com) a website dedicated to providing information for concerned parents, (with sponsorship from Zoloff and Propel Fitness Water). *Screen It!* warns parents of “Disrespectful/ Bad Attitude” in the film: “Alex [the lion] develops a bad attitude toward Marty [the Zebra] and the others when they don’t follow his idea... He also tries to eat Marty, but that’s more out of nearly uncontrollable instincts/ urges rather than purposeful malevolence.” The website also warns of 20 acts of violence, which qualifies it for a “moderate” rating.

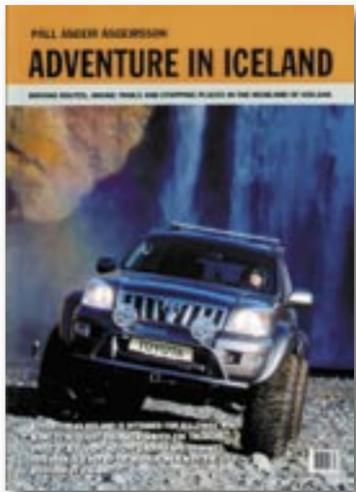
And of course the biggest reason for recommending Madagascar is really the use of poop jokes. There are two of them in the film, and we are proud to state that we have just progressed in emotional maturity to Freud’s anal stage.

■ By Bart Cameron

BOOK REVIEWS

Shelved Books Worth a Second Look

■ By Bart Cameron

Páll Ásgeir Ásgeirsson.
Adventure in Iceland.
(2005)

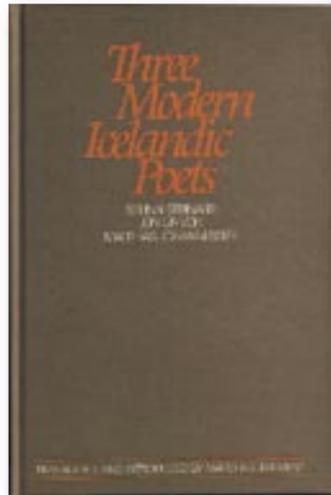
The curiously dated front cover looking like something from a 1980s bowling alley, and an odd title are misnomers. Look at the small print and you'll see this book includes

“Driving routes, hiking trails and stopping places in the highland [sic] of Iceland.”

From the cover on you get an interesting dynamic: the book is full of essential information that you really can't get anywhere else if you're an English-speaker. Want to know how to get to the large hot springs in the highlands, all there. What about basic advice: translations of all the signs, suggestions on how to find good work roads (if you see powerlines, there is usually a workroad underneath that you can follow), and back history. The care, dedication, and sheer knowledge catalogued in Mr. Ásgeirsson's book should be commended.

For me, as more of a hiker than a driver, this book was especially helpful, as it allowed for pleasant reading at night, after the hikes. Eccentricities like the design, photo layout, and some of the purple prose inside, somehow make the book a more interesting keepsake.

Marshall Brement.
Three Modern Icelandic
Poets: Steinn Steinarr,
Jón Úr Vör and Matthías
Johannessen. (1985)



An inexpensive and relatively brief hardcover, the translations of the works of Steinn Steinarr alone

justify a purchase. Brement, a much-loved ambassador from the US, was not a poet himself, but his translations are modest—which works especially well with the bold but understated Icelandic master Steinn Steinarr, maybe the Tomas Tranströmer of Iceland. A translation of Time and the Water displays some of the effect of Steinarr's voice:

*The sun,
The sun was with me,
like a thin woman,
in yellow shoes.*

*At twenty fathoms
my belief and love slept
like a two-colored flower.*

*And the sun walked
over the unsuspecting flower
in yellow shoes.*

Translations of Vör and Johannessen are good to have, but may not be as attractive to a contemporary audience.

TECHNOLOGY REVIEW

Things to Fear

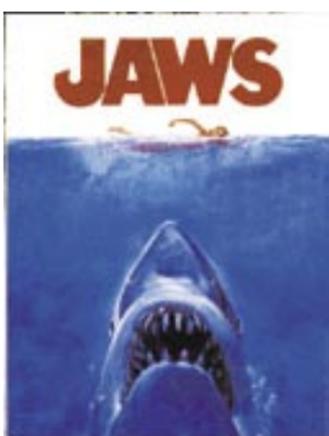
□ By Bart Cameron

04



Laptop entertainment centres. Apple always understood it, but now HP and Toshiba have caught up, and you can watch TV and rip DVDs—actually, you can produce Titanic—on your lap. Which is nice. Now you can go on a plane and say “Hey, look at my lap, I'm making Titanic in my lap.” The over-the-top new-to-Iceland Qosmio by Toshiba has so many gigahertz, you can make Titanic and Wonder Boys at once. Good for minutes of look-

03



Jaws Unleashed. Picture this: a sunny day, a beautiful yacht, a scuba diver, then the blood-curdling scream. Okay, you're used to the shark attack idea. But Universal Entertainment and Majesco have put together a new video game that allows you to BE THE SHARK. Yes, as the shark you eat and maim divers, swimmers, etc. The most depressing realization: absolutely everyone I've told about this video game wants to own it. One friend declared he now wants to buy a TV and a Playstation just so that he could experience this game.

02



Ray Guns. Duh. Of course you should fear ray guns. In July, New Scientist Magazine reported that a 95 GHz microwave ray gun was being tested in New Mexico. In fact, according to Reuters, the Active Denial System, a massive ray gun, is set for deployment in Iraq in 2006 where it will be considered a “less lethal” weapon. What is “less lethal”: the machine apparently is aimed into rioting crowds and causes “heating and intolerable pain” in less than five seconds.

01



The Podcast. Steve Jobs of Apple has released his five-hundredth society-altering idea and copyright. Bearing the catchy name Podcast, the new broadcasting option allows senders to listen to poorly produced radio programming. At present, this is the most over-hyped piece of useless technology since the MP3... just before the MP3 took off and found an audience and completely transformed the world.

Cabaret
the musical

The
Icelandic Opera
Reykjavik 2005
www.kabarett.is

The Violent Outburst of Graphic Design



Sassy colours and war images. What's not to love?

Liberal economist Thorvaldur Gylfason recently mentioned that once upon a time, and until quite late, history had been saturated with politics. Yes, from his words one could gather that history had once even been political history, pure and simple, whereas this would no longer be the case. What history consists of today, he did not mention, but certainly graphic design is a prominent candidate. One might even risk declaring the precise point where it, not so secretly, took over.

At the beginning of the 20th century visuality entered a new era with the arrival of the camera. In a civilization founded on texts, where the rule of law has been the rule of the word, the arrival of direct visual testimony to the universe and habitat of humans was loud, even violent. The most violent response

to the new visuality may be found in Nazism, which can, quite cynically, be seen as strictly centred on graphic design: to make humanity stylistically coherent.

Of course, bringing Nazism up in any context is usually a rhetorical suicide. So this should be clarified and qualified a bit: things have been made to look this way or that way for a long time, for many different reasons, aesthetic or pragmatic. But it was only after the birth of the photocamera, and the subsequent birth of cinema, that propaganda on the scale of Nazi Germany became possible. And Nazi Germany is not merely the most infamous manipulator of those recent visual powers, but the first to employ visuals so fully for conscious mobilization and manipulation of people. What is more, the visual

aspects of Nazism reached much further than propaganda, and can be interpreted as its aim: people and their habitat were supposed to fit an overall design concept.

Adolf Hitler was stopped, as no graphic designer should be that powerful – and he was probably caught in an incoherent thought anyway: the main conclusion of the 20th century might be that you don't need to make the world fit an image, you can simply ignore the world and make an image fit the image. Subsequently, reality has now left the planet and landed in Photoshopland, possibly declaring the only actual winner of the wars of the 20th century: the poster.

Graphic designers rule

The influence of Nazi aesthetics on graphic design is no secret to

graphic designers themselves, who generally look in awe at the immense coherence and sophistication of the work of Leni Riefenstahl and her coworkers. The principles of Nazi aesthetics are more easily applied to Iceland than many other places, and its influences can be found, quite clearly in many places. For example in advertisements for Icelandic museums that collectively invite visitors to realize the origins of Icelanders – showing blonde natives, in sharp, sophisticated full-page profiles. (Subsequently, foreign visitors have been known to call the museum tour the Eugenics Tour.)

The designers. They are no popstars, usually they are rather timid or shy creatures, often handsome, well-dressed or in any case stylistically conscious – but with

a slight grin on their faces. Because they know. They might not brag about it, but they know it's their world now.

One pseudo-scientific way to check that statement is the Google test. "Grafískur hönnuður", Icelandic for "graphic designer" gives around 16,000 result pages. "Ljóðskáld" – poet – gives 850. That's 20 mentions of graphic designers for every poet. "Myndlistarmaður" – visual artist – gives 3,600. "Blaðamaður" – journalist – does come close to the designers with 15,400, but even "Stjórnmalamaður" – politician – is far behind, at 4,170. "Nakin kona" – naked woman, only receives 194 pages. I guess the outcome might be somewhat different in English, but as I want to keep my bias, I refuse to check. On Icelandic webpages, graphic designers are 800 times more

Langbest

Pizzeria Stelkhús

[Redacted text blocks]

Fireworks at Jökulsárlón

Saturday August 13th, at 22:00

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Last year over 1000 people witnessed this event - do not miss it this year

"One of the greatest things I have ever seen"

For information call 487-2122 or email: info@jokulsarlon.is



The rebus is a dying art form. Thankfully.



Find the arrow and win ... absolutely nothing

popular than naked women.

So they are all around. Obviously, all in all, even if their omnipresence may at times irritate those who claim to put substance above surface, graphic designers are not Nazis, and ours are not straightforward fascist times. Far from it. Graphic design may be just as powerful as it was in the 1930s, even more so, but its powers are used differently now than then. How then?

As every other entity in today's neoliberal universe, graphic designers are a headless army. There is no central committee of market-oriented stylistics that controls what will be cool next season. And the phrase itself, 'cool' along with its synonyms, would seem to defy centralization. 'Cool' is the adjective of youth, a cultural phenomenon that more or less dates back to the end of WWII, applied by those people old enough to have money but young enough to have little or no inescapable social duties, such as attending children. At the same time, 'cool' is the leading adjective category of graphic design, going hand in hand with youth: having money, being loud, but defying duties. And they do make a lovely couple, youth and design, making the world look like a lovely – and cool – place.

Since most of contemporary graphic design is not aimed at establishing the Third Reich, what is it there for? First of all, of course, graphic design is supposed to make you want things, or at least not run away from them. They are oil to make the machinery of the economy run smoothly. In doing this, graphic designers and creative teams must strike a balance between familiarity and the sense of safety; the sense of belonging, on the one hand, and surprise or freshness on the other – the establishment and repetition of themes is needed to create a brand, at the same time, care must be taken that the audience/consumer does not become bored, that the ad is not absolutely predictable. Which is how a stylistic history evolves.

Graphic designers are, all in all, amazingly sensitive to new trends and where the world might be headed. In the wake of the Iraq invasion, for example, Apple's design team decided to switch from their operating system's innocent and subtle 'aqua' look to the more masculine, harder, stainless steel look of recent versions. The world militarized, and so did Apple computers. A bit.

And as the graphic designers get more apt at reflecting the state of the human spirit, less and less seems to be asked from words on page. Such is the power of graphic design that you can actually publish magazines that say the same thing over and

over again, but make it seem "fresh" "inviting", "cool" and even "true", by hiring the correct creative team and feeding them enough energy drinks. You can actually publish tons of them.

Why would someone do that? Why would someone publish a magazine and fill it with text if he or she has got nothing valuable or interesting to say?

The key concept to understand that might be that of exchange value. It was Karl Marx who first pointed out how the 'real value' of phenomena would potentially be swallowed up by their 'exchange' value, under a capitalist system. We have reached the point, a while ago already, where the idea of 'real value' started sounding like so much metaphysical nonsense. Economists don't believe in it. 'How much is it?' they ask and grin.

The wheels of the economy expect there to be a certain amount of printed material each day, to catch readers' interests, upon which brands can be loaded, to keep their place in the market.

And the drum keeps on rolling ...

German philosopher Theodor Adorno and his companion, Max Horkheimer, coined the phrase 'culture industry' in the 1950s. Their main concern was the state and direction of culture in the world of exchange-values, that is: culture as commodity. Adorno described this state, with an analogy of the circus, or variety-acts:

"What really constitutes the variety act, the thing which strikes any child the first time he sees such a performance, is the fact that on each occasion something happens and nothing happens at the same time. Every variety act, especially that of the clown and the juggler, is really a kind of expectation. It subsequently transpires that waiting for the thing in question, which takes place as long as the juggler manages to keep the balls going, is precisely the thing itself. In variety the applause always comes a fraction too late, namely when the viewer perceives that what was initially imagined to be a preparation for something else was just the event of which he has been cheated as it were. ... Thus variety already represented the magical repetition of the industrial procedure in which the selfsame is reproduced through time – the very allegory of high capitalism which demonstrates its dominating character even as it appropriates its necessity as the freedom of play."

Which would basically be the way graphic design makes shopping feel like a game, and dresses the carriers of advertisements and upcoming trends, as free, democratic discourse.

Behind our reading, our shopping and film-going we hear the circus drum roll ... and it just keeps on rolling.

Not that no one has anything to say. Among the spinning wheels of the economy, you will find quite a lot of wheels putting in a bit of extra effort, doing a bit more than is asked of them, for their own sheer pleasure ... you might even find most souls hanging on to a meaningful existence by doing more – the excess, that extra little doodle on the page, the subtle colour coordination, the subversive break in that colour coordination, or even the words on the page, may originate in the simple aesthetic will, political aim or creative joy of the person behind it.

When a whole publication is founded on an idea other than simply making money and creating an aura – that is, when it is founded

not merely on exchange values, but on something subjectively valuable to those who establish it – the reader can find himself taken by surprise. Joy and wonder. As if she actually has something in her hands.

Of course, such occurrences do not really affect the totality of the publishing industry, which marches on regardless: whether or not you have anything to put on paper, the paper will be printed, there will be words on it, it will all look quite neat, and it will be read.

Potential

All right. So there you are with this magazine in your hands and you're wondering if this particular article would be worth reading if you would subtract from it all the rather nifty design tricks added to it before printing. Of course, in this particular case, no – for without

those spiky designers, there would be little to speak of here. The problem with problems is that often their only solution seems to lie within themselves. That is: there seem to be few ways to actually tackle the mindless flow of aesthetically pleasing bullshit around us, with any other weaponry than its own. And so some graphic designers have started seeing themselves as part of a problem, and hope to be part of its solution – they have started acting against what they seemed doomed to be part and parcel of, and use their visual powers for subversive acts. Some examples of their work are published with this article, other brilliant material can be found on: politicalgraphics.org and adbusters.org. For example.

■ By Haukur Már Helgason

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Snæfellsnes

Death Hikes, Berserker Lava Fields, Hag Mountains and Desolated Islands:

The Under-reported Joys of Snæfellsnes

Given the heat of the sun and the rate of glacial melt in today's Arctic, we have about 2 hours to get to Snæfellsnesjökul before it completely evaporates, I tell the driver as we head out to Iceland's most cherished peninsula in a last second decision to flee the city of Reykjavík and travel on a budget of 8000 ISK for two. We spend 4000 ISK immediately, filling our car with gas, and buying bread, cheese, cappuccino yoghurt, juice and chocolate for our entire trip at Hagkaup in Kringlan on the way out of town.

We have three different maps in the car, each with circles and notes from Icelanders suggesting different spots in Snæfellsnes that one should never miss: or at least, that used to be that way in the 1980s and 1990s. We have received numerous lectures on the north side versus south side (the north shore of the peninsula contains the larger picturesque fishing villages, the south shore contains the more ominous historical points.)

As we leave the Reykjavík city limits on a sunny July day, the Snæfellsnes glacier seems to stay at the exact same distance, the snow glowing above the horizon like a large steel cloud. For the first few miles, I keep myself occupied with the notion that the glacier isn't getting any bigger as we get closer. Perhaps this is because it is pouring into the ocean, causing desalination that will immediately shift the Gulf Stream, bringing about another small ice age by the end of the day.

But then, coming out of Borgarnes onto Iceland's most conventionally beautiful stretch of highway in full sunlight, I am distracted from the glacier by the local mountains and waterfalls, and by Eldborg, a massive crater that provides the kind of landscape you see photographed in New Mexico. Sunlight and good scenery clear my head of environmental concerns

as quickly as healthy campaign contributions clear the heads of elected officials around the world, and suddenly I am right as rain. To further clear my head and brighten my mood, I take my friend on a death hike.

The death hike is a short trek up a creek located just off of highway 54 between Búðir and Arnarstapi. At a specific location, which I can't name for reasons I'll present later, a crevice forms in a mountainside. This crevice attracts large masses of seagulls, who seem to thoroughly enjoy the updraft against the cliff. The problem: at one point, in the back of this crevice, there is a place for the seagulls to land where there is no wind whatsoever. If the seagulls land there, they cannot fly, and they must descend a waterfall to get out of the crevice. This being against their nature, they tend to starve to death or consume each other.

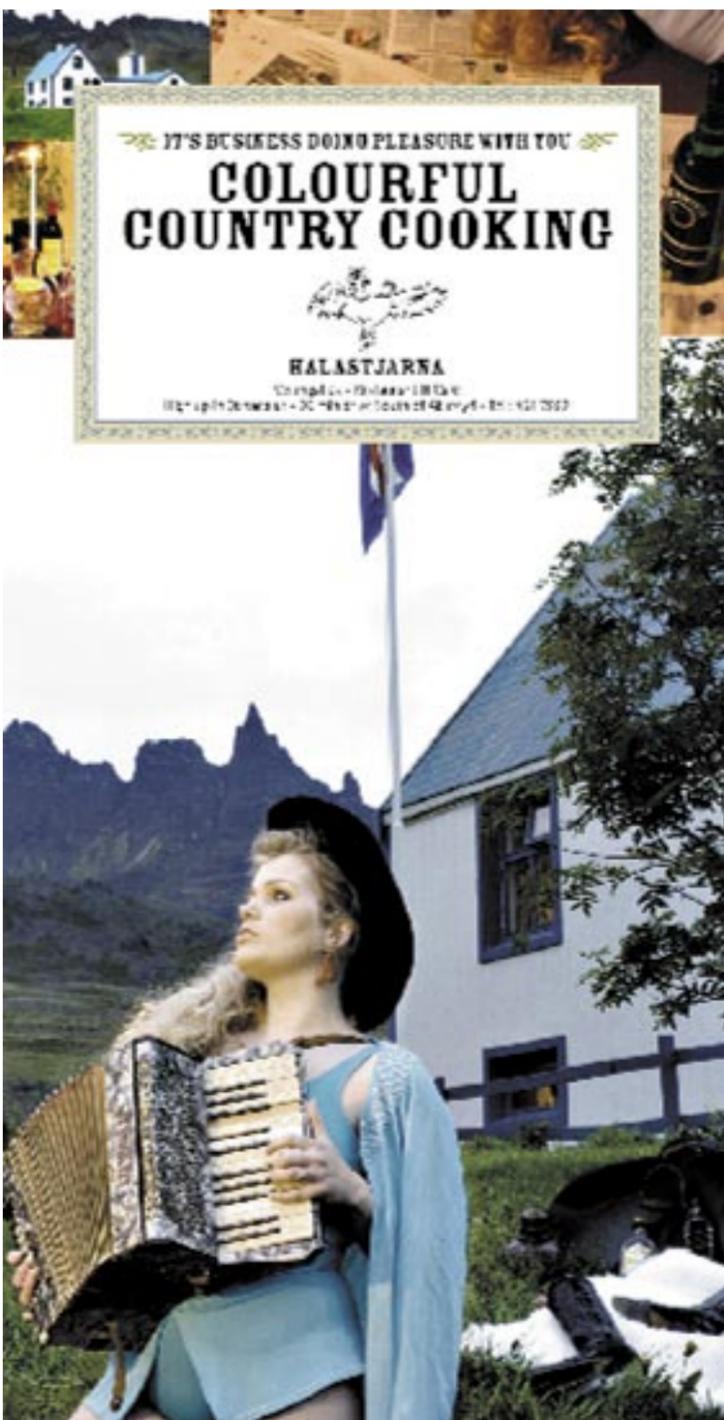
If you are interested, you can hike up this crevice, though it requires some advanced climbing and understanding of how to climb with the aid of a rope—which some noble sportsman has fastened so that countless many can view the slow death of seagulls. On an earlier trip, I travelled with a group of experienced hikers, including a Norwegian teenager, who had his heart completely broken by watching

the seagulls in such a state. On this trip, I brought an inexperienced hiker and realized that a good deal more than your heart can get broken if you climb an eight-foot waterfall in a cave without proper precautions. As it happened, all worked out fine: my friend got to see dying seagulls and various carcasses, but she was not amused by her own near death experiences. She suggested that I not recommend the exact location to beginner hikers, unless I wanted their miserable, agonizing deaths on my hands.

Following the cave of death, we drove a small 1989 Toyota sedan up the Snæfellsnes glacial road. The glacier was large and icy and many people were walking around the base of it attempting to imbibe the spiritual essence of it.

Imbibing the spiritual essence of the mystic Snæfellsnes glacier involves a special chant, which goes like this: "Can you walk there? Yes, I think so. But it said deep chasms. And isn't this protected. Look, snowmobiles. Does anybody rent them? Maybe if we wait... This is really ancient."

This is really ancient is the deep moment that indicates you have found a deeper state of being or that you are ready to go back down the hill and use the toilet.





After our Snæfellsnes hike, we set out for the most celebrated Icelanders-only camping spot in Southern Iceland, the small patch of grass at the end of the Berserkerhraun lava field.

To get to the Berserkerhraun lava field, simply follow the signs off of highway 56. One reason few tourists go to the lava field is that the road doesn't look easy to handle, and it definitely isn't. Our sedan bottomed out repeatedly, and we had to employ our jack during one strangely humiliating experience. But on following the small old road through the lava field, we came to a peaceful stretch of grass that was, indeed, packed with Icelanders. Frolicking, jeep-owning Icelanders. We easily found our own lava shaded cove, and camped out for the evening, waking up only intermittently to ask ourselves why, exactly they named the lava field after Berserkers, and to contemplate whether we hadn't been over-reacting about the notion of climate change—near the glacier, even on the hottest day of the year, and even when the sun stays up all night, it gets cold enough that

a good sleeping bag and tent are necessary.

The next morning, we set out for the quaint north side of Snæfellsnes, hoping to catch a ferry out to the island of Flatey, the largest of the many islands in Breiðafjörður bay. We set out as early as we can, but we still don't make it to Stykkishólmur in time for the 9 am ferry. Missing the ferry... by three hours, gives us time to properly explore the north end of the peninsula.

While we were in a rush to get to Kviabryggja, Iceland's nicest prison, we couldn't pass Kellingarfjall, or Old Hag Mountain, located just off of the old highway 56, and not stop. Kellingarfjall, named so because of a story of an old woman troll being caught in the sunlight, has a lighter shade, rougher texture, and more surreal patterns than any other mountain on the peninsula—set among the lush green land of the area, the large sand-toned monument valley mountain looks cut-and-pasted. A brief hike demonstrated that the whole mountain has the biting traction of shark skin.

After our hike, we set out for Kviabryggja again but got side-tracked at Grundarfjörður. There we came upon a mass of yellow houses, yards, and even cars. Signs everywhere welcomed us to Gulibær, or yellow town. A few blocks in, we found blue town, and green town.

"They do this every year," a visitor from Skagaströnd, who was sitting at a gas station looking at the yellow flags, told us. "And it's just for themselves. Just for something to do. Just one weekend every year."

"Makes perfect sense. And do you do this in Skagaströnd?" I asked, at which point the visitor smiled politely and looked away as though he was expecting someone.

We returned to Stykkishólmur and caught the 1:50 ferry, spending 1850 ISK per roundtrip ticket to Flatey on the Sæferður ferry company. Our two-hour journey allowed us to scope out a half a dozen of the more attractive small islands in Breiðafjörður before descending below deck to watch Finding Nemo on DVD. Travelling on the ferry with a great deal of local island dwellers, the experience was not dissimilar to riding the commuter rail from New York to Connecticut. Most people on the train were in their mid 30s, and many had market and grocery items with them. The experience of arriving in Flatey was also similar to arriving in a commuter town. There are no shops or restaurants waiting for you, just a few families waiting to pick up whoever went to town. The half dozen tourists on the boat with us set off in different directions to try to use our four hours on the island well.

For our tourist adventure, we set

about trying to count every house on the island, (there seemed to be about 27, though dive-bombing Arctic Terns distracted us). The church of Flatey was a draw, with a remarkable painting on its walls and ceiling by Baltasar of Katalonia, the celebrated artist whose son, Baltasar Kormakur, is one of Iceland's most celebrated directors.

Riding back on the ferry, I reflected on my ancestry loudly: mine are a potato-picking people, not a people meant to be on a ferry in moderate seas after two days of nothing but cheese and yoghurt.

"I don't get sea sick," my Icelandic companion told me, though she did accompany me to the deck, where we were surrounded by many Icelanders



Beyond the church and a small monument to Sigvaldi Kaldalóns, the man who composed the national anthem and who made a home in Flatey for 3 years, the main attraction was a small coffee shop which didn't really need a name, as it was the only coffee shop in town, and a pair of unruly sheep.

In hours one and two, my travelling partner and I marvelled at how quaint Flatey was. Hours three and four consisted of making sure we were in place when the ferry got there, as we were terrified of being left on the island overnight.

who would classify themselves as more in the shepherd than master fisherman category.

"Just think of the dead seagulls, then," I told her.

And she grimaced and seemed to be enjoying the stomach-churning sensation that in many cultures is taken as a sign of love. Yes, it ends as a love story, a lamer than Cameron Crowe love story.

By Bart Cameron

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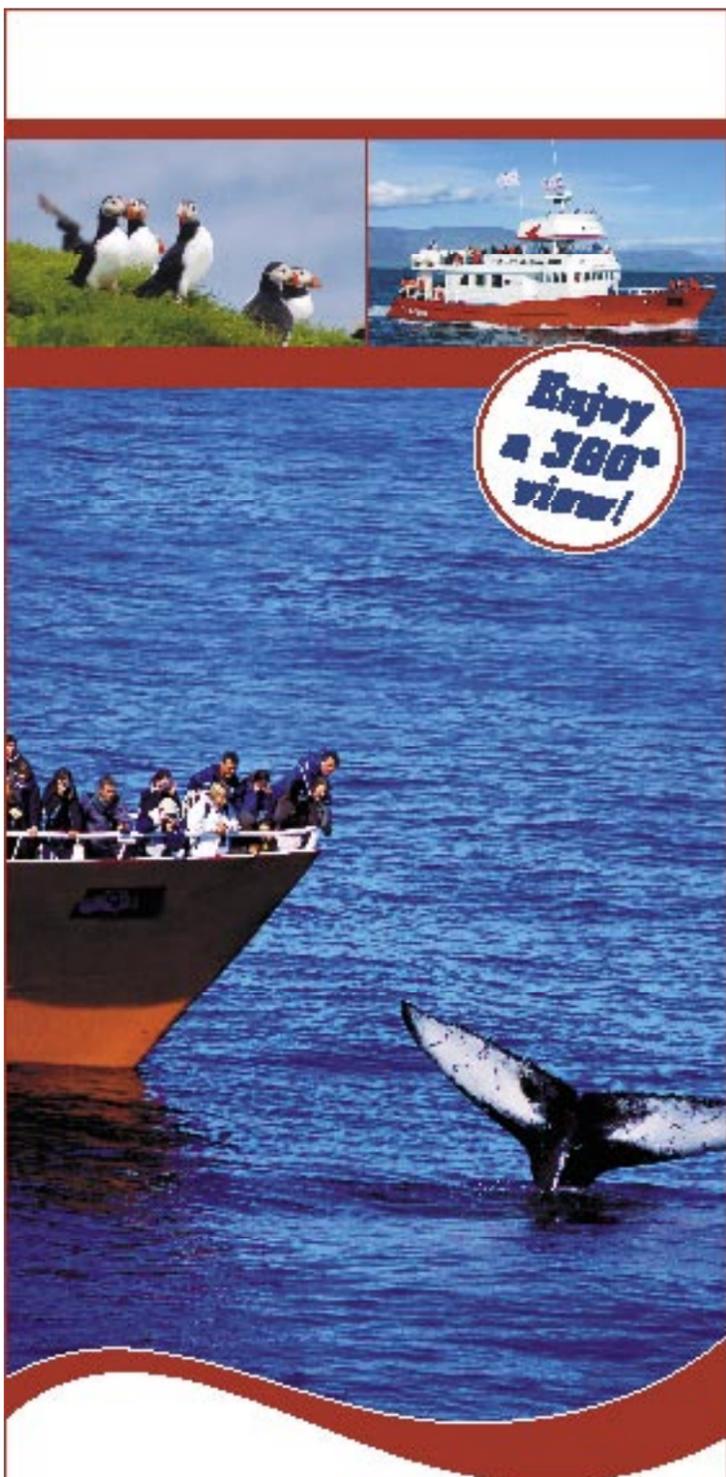
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Except where the party does include Europe



By Bart Cameron

Sónar Festival for Advanced Music and Multimedia Art in Barcelona and G! Festival in the Faroe Islands.

Grapevine designer Hörður Kristbjörnsson, one half of the dynamic DJ-duo Skratch n Sniph, loves music festivals. He can't get enough of them. Or at least of the Sónar and the G! Festival. In this extremely intimate Q & A, he tells all the Grapevine readers what makes a festival hot enough for his liking. And that is hot indeed.

What are the names of the music festivals you attended this summer? Woodstock 2005? Techno-Woodstock? It's called Sonar Festival for Advanced Multi-Media... ah what the hell. And G festival Faroe Islands. Techno-Woodstock would actually be a kick-ass festival. Live remixing of the Woodstock 69.

Tell me, you're hip. You attend hip festivals. What makes a festival hip? The hip people that show up make it hip.

So it's not the music. No I wouldn't say it was the music. It's all about the hype. If it's cool magazines or cool people, people go there just to go there.

What magazines are you talking about? You were supposed to say music and I would mock you. The lifestyle magazines like I-D, dazed and confused and all these hipster lifestyle magazines. Douche bag magazines, mainly from England.

So you intentionally put yourself in the path of hipsters. No, I went to Sonar because it's the kind of music I listen to. I've been there three years, but this year I realized I shouldn't have gone. Because this year it was crowded with people who were there just to say they'd been there.

from the band the Puppetmasters. Subtle, from Oakland. They're like a hip-hop with electronic beats. Miss Kittin. The future Ms. DJ Sniph. Soft Pink Truth, one half of Matmos, the producers behind Björk's Medulla and Vespertine. And Jamie Lidell. His performance was interesting. People were dressing him while he was playing, wiping on make-up and glasses, it was just an



A Subtlerecommendation, golden gloves and skunk hair tops are so next season.

What are the highlights of Sonar festivals in the past? De La Soul this year.

I saw them recently and they sounded canned and rehearsed, not something I like in my old school. I thought they were okay. They were playing old stuff and their old albums... I just like.

Other highlights? Mocky, this guy from Berlin, he's

interesting performance.

Are you surprised to hear that I not only know none of these artists, but I don't think I know anybody who knows anybody who has heard of any of these artists? How many people came to hear them in Barcelona at the Sonar Festival? 20,000 for the whole festival. But the thing is it's divided into two venues, day and night. By day you're in a museum made into a concert place for three days. By day you see a lot of progressive and mellow music, some clicks and cut and weird music. By night it's at almost an aircraft hangar. It has three concert stages. There you can see the DJs, it's more upbeat.

It still surprises me how this large a music movement can exist outside the attention of many music fans. It surprises you? Like I said, the people that show up there are people who want to say that they have been there. But originally it was a smaller



Jamie Lidell, turbans on the other hand are last season.



G! FESTIVAL

Faroe Islands

crowd, more people listening to music.

Is it Björk that led you into this?

Yeah, you could say that. She was the headlining act the first time I went there three years ago.

Ah ha, so Björk is the sole reason everything is hip in Iceland.

She opens up a lot of new acts and stuff you haven't heard before by collaborating with many of those artists.

So where can I hear the best of Sónar? Is it on the radio? On the internet?

It's not on the radio. It's basically hard to get. It's the music you have to put effort into getting. Once you get into it, you see that Sonar really has the cream of what's going on in that genre.

Turning from an alternative techno-festival in Barcelona to... what is the G-Festival, and would you recommend it as strongly as Sonar?

I would recommend G Festival, not for the music, though. I would recommend G Festival just for the trip to the Faroe Islands. It's a weird place. Especially if you're there seeing a music festival. It's just weird. You're in a town not bigger than Suðavík, with 500 people max, and it's turned into a beach party with

Europe playing.

There were 30 bands playing, I probably saw eight, I remember three, vaguely. I remember Europe, and it was by far the worst performance I've ever experienced in my life. I really can't say in words how much they sucked, so I would have to use the photo from the trip to show how I felt. I mean I'm not kidding, it was really really bad. I've been to bad concerts, but this was absolutely the worst... ever.



Why would you want to see an exotic locale for a music festival? Doesn't the festival overrun the town the same way a cruise ship might overrun a village?

Just to see it. It's unbelievable how the people of the Faroes pull this off. It's even in remote place in the Faroes. You have to rent a car or get a bus just to get out there. Though, thinking of the acts, is Faroes worth going to see Europe, I don't think so. But drinking Faroes style is definitely worth it.

What about the mainstream festivals, then? In Europe? Like Glastonbury or Roskilde?

I wouldn't want to go to Glastonbury, and Roskilde I've been

to but it's too big. If you go to one of those, you're going just to have fun and party your ass off. It's not about the music. If I had a favourite band, I wouldn't want to see them at Glastonbury, because it's not the kind of place you can see someone play at.

The other thing that gets me is that festivals now market themselves by having popular bands. Not to do an 'In My Day', but, seriously, for a short while they at least let bands with artistic integrity who would never be profitable come along for the ride.

Yeah, I know. People go for that because they don't want to go to too many concerts a year. But seeing a band play a festival is not the same as seeing a musician play their own concert where they are their own act.

People are essentially multi-tasking by going to these festivals. Checking off their schedule. They are. And you can see it with Vestmannahegi, where people see the Westmans while seeing a festival, or even people who fly out to Iceland just for Iceland Airwaves and feel they're going to see everything.

If you fly to Iceland Airwaves, at least you can see good bands in small venues. And good local music, something I don't see promoted at other festivals.



Europe, in Europe, doing one of their smash hits... emm ... wings of despair.

Mainly local music. That is what's good about it. As a foreigner all of this is new to you. And those Icelandic bands that know how to perform, perform world class.

Still, let's rip on festivals in general. It seems like any band that plays a big tent and tits festival is pandering so badly, putting their sound quality and artistic integrity at so much risk to play in front of a hammered crowd, that

it's hard to respect them. I would say that's true for the average festival. But Sonar is different. The sound and how they treat artists is so impressive. And with that, you get to see so many good artists that you don't have to see any more good concerts this year.

And you don't want to see too many concerts a year either. You multi-task? Not really. It just happens that way with Sonar, it has everything I like to see.

That's because you don't like local music. Admit it. You don't like the local scene and need to jump ship to see this. Sure.

Bastard.

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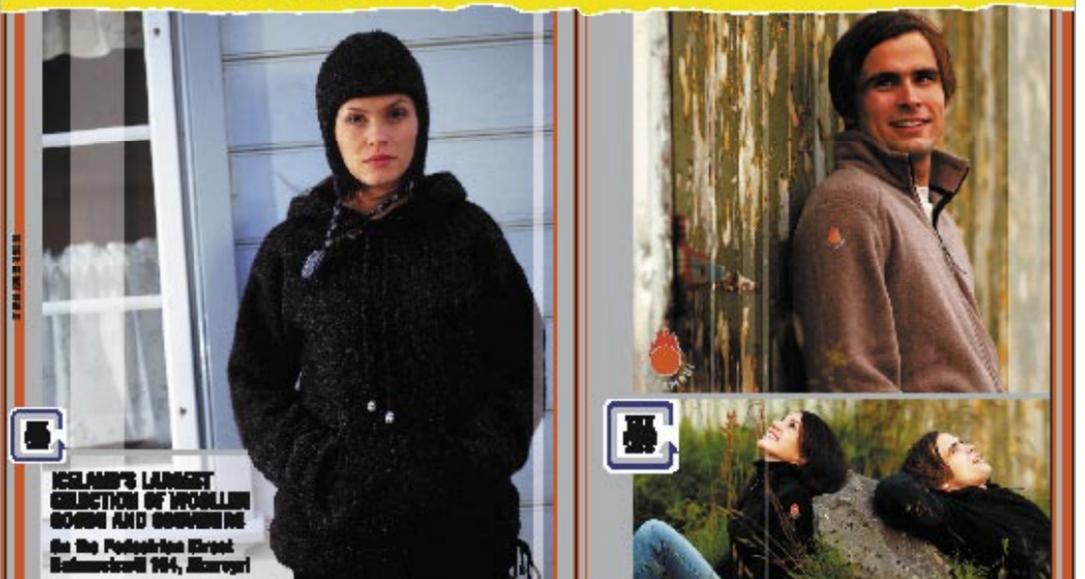
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The Nohito and Other Brennivín Cocktails

When the nicest guy in rock, Dave Grohl, recently visited Iceland again, he insisted that the local rotgut, Brennivín, was the best liquor in the world. Rumor is that he wants to import it to America on the large scale.

Brennivín is a fine hard caraway-flavoured schnapps, traditionally served as cold as possible. So cold that the liquor gels, if possible. To achieve this effect, place the bottle inside a milk carton full of water, and let it freeze overnight. This allows the bottle to maintain a solid block of ice.

The Grapevine decided that if Brennivín is going to be the next big hard alcohol, there should be some appropriate Brennivín cocktails. For the most part, this led to gastrological disasters, which we will list below, but one charming bartender at Sirkus, the place in Iceland you're least likely to order or be served a cocktail, invented the definitive Brennivín cocktail, the Nohito—with alternative spelling No-Heat-O, if you're in the mood.

To enjoy a Nohito, combine one part Brennivín, one and a half parts Martini Bianco, one half part dark rum, lemon and lime, a dash of Bols Peppermint, and top off with three parts ginger ale. The result is a full-bodied, sneaky drink reminiscent of Burt Reynolds in his 70s heyday. Yes, that smooth.

After investigating rumours from the North, our reporter swears by the ultimate Icelandic cocktail. He calls it the Mountain King. Ingredients are two

parts Brennivín, four parts Mýsa (the dairy run off you get when you make yoghurt, available for purchase in most grocery stores), and Mountain Dew.

The other classic from the North was the "1972"—not quite a cocktail but extremely popular in Húsavík. Coca-Cola is rested on a radiator until extremely warm, then combined with three shots of Brennivín.

Along the disaster category, the first is Brennivín and Magic energy drink, which both tasted bad and produced dastardly effects on mind and liver, something called the Pink Pig, made at Sirkus, which was nicknamed the Appendix by a man who claimed his appendix burst after one sip, and the OC, Original Confusion, a Brennivín and Egils Appelsín orange soda beverage that hurt a great deal.

The long and short of it is this: Brennivín can work well in cocktails, namely the Nohito and the Mountain King, but be extremely careful. You're playing with something a lot more powerful than fire. And the fact that it can have such disastrous consequences makes the whole experience that much more pleasurable.

■ Bart Cameron and Helgi Þór Harðason



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O.C. / Original Confusion



Nohito a.k.a. No-Heat-O

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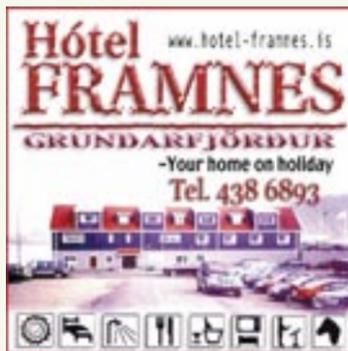


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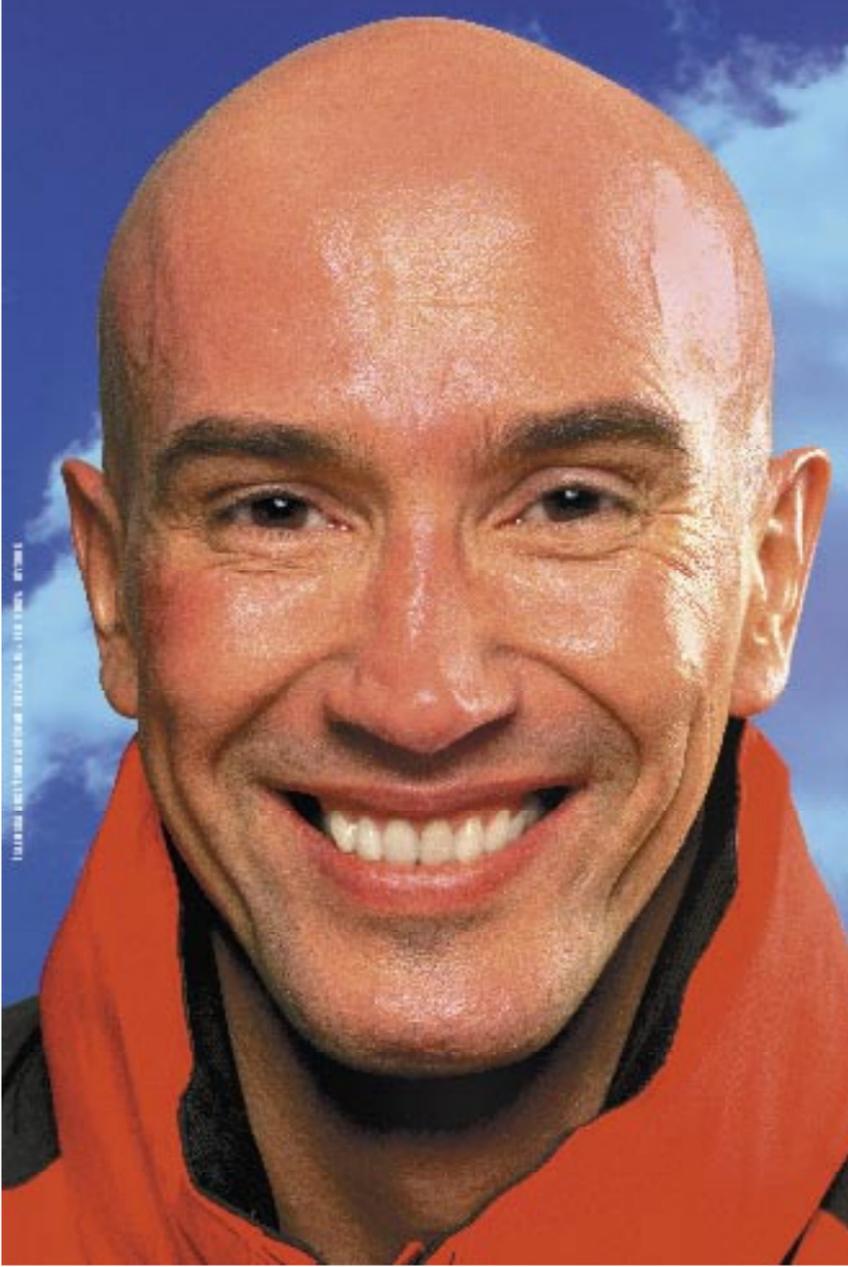


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Haukur Már Helgasson on graphic design
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Bart Cameron, from his editorial.
PAGE 05

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Paul F Nikolov, on his review of t.A.T.u.
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"The unbelievable fact is that not only were the attackers suicide bombers (a first in Western Europe) but they were also young disenchanted men that were a product of British society."

Stephen Taylor-Matthews on the London bombings.
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"T-shirt, trousers and shoes. No underwear though."

Krummi from Mímus explains his attire.
PAGE 18

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