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The Reykjavík Grapevine crew

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Cover photo by: Rafael Pinho
 On cover: Roy Orbison by Helgi Þórsson at the Apostles' Clubhouse Exhibition at the Reykjavík Art Museum.

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Printed by: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja Ltd. printing press
 # copies: 30.101

The Reykjavík Grapevine can be found in:
 Reykjavík, Akureyri, Egilsstaðir, Selfoss, Keflavík and at key locations around road #1 and at all major tourist attractions and tourist information centres.

The Reykjavík Grapevine is published 18 times a year by Fróken ltd. Monthly from November through April, and bi-weekly (fortnightly) from May til October. Nothing in this magazine may be reproduced in whole or in part without the written permission of the publishers. Although the magazine has endeavored to ensure that all information inside the magazine is correct, prices and details may be subject to change.

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SOUR GRAPES

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Dear Reykjavík Grapevine editor/journalists.

On the back page of Fréttablaðið on the 3rd of September Mr. Davíð Þór Jónsson writes an article which in my opinion he rightfully calls "Reykjavík Greip Væl"

I'm very curious to learn about your reactions to this article as I could not have written a better, more appropriate article myself concerning the ever growing number of seriously narrow minded, backstabbing, negative (like the Bubbi Morthens story by S.Eldon to name one) and generally unfair and overly judgmental articles in your newspaper over the past few months. For instance, it's been a while since I have seen and read a really positive and a well written review about a concert that was held in Iceland this summer.

My question is this:

Do you guys hate everything that does not completely fit your taste a 100%, so much that you feel the urge to throw shit in all directions like Mr.Eldon seems to be really good at by the way or is this caused by some strange envy from some of your journalists to those who are in fact doing quite well at the moment like Sigur Rós? It just made me wonder after reading Sindri Eldon's review about the Klambrautin concert and it made me think: Why the hell did he go there in the first place rather than stay at home with his two super cool friends Mr.& Mrs. Know it all and listen to his "Ela" demos?

I work in the tourism business and since you have made it clear that your newspaper is aimed at

the foreign people living in Iceland and the tourists coming to Iceland and not for the Icelandic people I want to inform you that I used to give and recommend The Reykjavík Grapevine to every single one of the tourists that came here through the company that I work for.

I have stopped doing that after seeing The Reykjavík Grapevine turn sour like it has done in my and Mr.Davíð Þórs opinion as well as a lot of other people that I have discussed this matter with. They are much better off making up their own minds on things that take place in Iceland then reading what you are printing these days.

Whether you give a damn or not is really up to you of course and I won't cry myself to sleep if you decide not to lighten up a bit but it would definitely put you back on my list of reliable and entertaining source of information about Reykjavík and surroundings and what's going on in this northernmost capital of the world.

If not, I'm not going to try to cramp your new style by writing another letter to you or show up protesting outside your office. We have a saying in Iceland: "Vinur er sá er til vammis segir!" and this is me addressing what I feel is your "vamm" these days.

Sincerely yours,

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Jón Gunnar

This is a peculiarly negative letter on your behalf, stating an overtly negative criticism. I suppose, in your defense, that you are exercising your own judgment and reaching a critical conclusion.

I wish we were all allowed to do the same, but apparently, The Grapevine is held to different standard.

Your claim that the Reykjavík Grapevine has been overtly negative in its criticism lately is far from being accurate. Overall, the reviews in the Grapevine tend to be rather favourable. You point out two examples of negative criticism; one incidentally covers a national icon that seems to be above and beyond being judged by mere mortals. How quickly we forget, seeing as Bubbi has never been the one to bold back his opinion on people or issues in the last 20 odd years. It's good to be the king.

Your second example is of a negative criticism of a recent Sigur Rós's show at Miklatín. Sadly, you choose to ignore that in that same issue, actually on the preceding spread, there are two other glowingly positive review of Sigur Rós's concerts. That I find strange, because you claim that there has been a long time since you read a positive review in our paper. In clinical terms, this is called selective memory. But, since Sigur Rós is a matter of national pride, rather than a band, they too are apparently above being criticised.

I guess we should feel lucky that as an alternative to our magazine, we have an organization such as your own to present an objective view of the country and its nightlife while implying something else entirely.

EDITORIALS

The Times They Are A-Changing

In the two weeks I have been on the job as the editor of the Reykjavík Grapevine, I have repeatedly received the question, "Are there any changes in the works for the paper?" I find this question funny for two reasons.

First of all, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. The Reykjavík Grapevine is a publication that I have proudly attached my name to for a year now. I believe we have been putting out good paper; we have strived to be professional, objective and entertaining. These are principles we will stick to in the future while doing our best to further improve the publication.

Second, it seems obvious to me that new people always bring in a new emphasis. In that sense, it's highly unlikely that this paper will remain the same paper it has been under the leadership of my predecessor, Bart Cameron.

The Grapevine has gone through several staff changes as of late. This summer we said goodbye to long-time staff member, Journalist Paul F. Nikolov. Also, gone are Journalist Gunnar Hrafn Jónsson and summer interns Sindri Eldon and Valgerður Þóróddsdóttir. I wish all these people good luck in their future endeavors.

Among those who have been lately added to the staff are Steinunn Jakobsdóttir, who came to join us at the beginning of summer, and Haukur Magnússon, who has been with the Grapevine since August. Our latest addition is a young woman, Virginia Zech out of Sacramento, California, by way of New York City. I bid her welcome.

In light of these changes, I think it is safe to assume that the Reykjavík Grapevine is no longer the same paper it was a year ago, or even a

month ago. But some things will never change: we will still be a fiercely independent, critical and entertaining source of information for anyone interested in digesting some thought-provoking material.

In his issue we take a look at teen culture in Akureyri, follow the changes taking place in the Reykjavík Art Museum, and introduce one of the few remaining independent grocery stores left in Reykjavík. There's more stuff in here as well, all more or less equally exhilarating.

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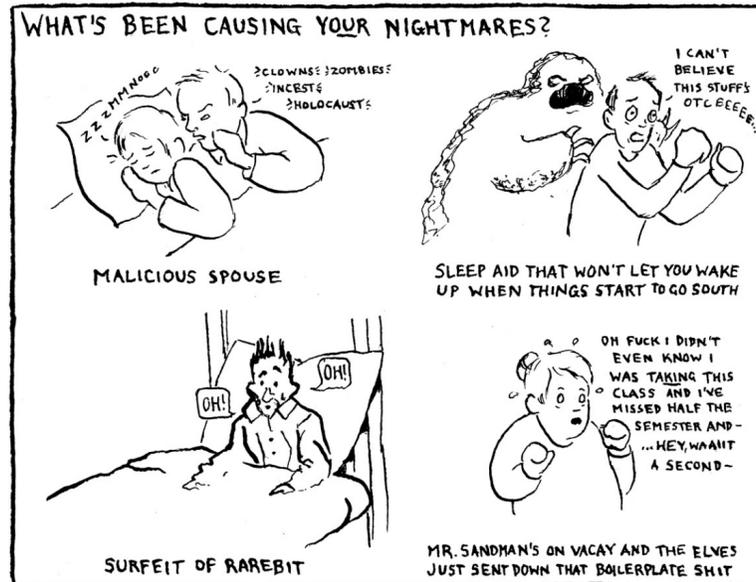
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LULU EIGHTBALL



Sveinn Birgir Björnsson,
Editor

Look Out, Reykjavík!



Virginia Zech,
Journalist

If you read the last issue of the Grapevine, well, you're probably not alone. Ever since I arrived in Iceland (admittedly, only just over a week ago) I have been impressed by how widely read all of the papers appear to be. Shocked, really, might be a more adequate word to describe how this appears to an American sensibility on print media consumption. I know this may be old news to you Icelanders. Being as you all read so much, I'm sure you've somewhere run across a blurb or ten on how well-read you reportedly are. For those picking up the Grapevine for the first-time, however, suffice to say that the locals are an updated bunch of folks.

Speaking of the press, do you know how much coverage a young copyeditor can expect to get at home in the States? Ten points to those of you who answered none. At my age, and with the unfortunate dream of becoming a writer or journalist, the most reasonably adventurous career aspiration a person could have would be of finding someone notable in the literary world to give them an internship, not pay them, send them out for coffee, yell at them occasionally, and eventually form the backbone of their flimsy resume. The press situation in Reykjavík would appear to be a [tiny, Icelandic] horse of a different color. Being as Yours Truly doesn't speak the native language (yet!), I am limited to two methods of discovery regarding whatever press coverage I may, miraculously, be getting. Example A, as

seen here, is writing said journalistic masterpieces myself. Example B, then, is being informed of this fact by Icelanders: "Yadda, yadda... did you see they misspelled your name in the paper this morning?"

"Qua?" says I, "How did you know how it was spelled?"

"Ah, well, they got it right a couple of days ago in..."

So what, besides the aforementioned pleasant conversation with the locals, brings me to Iceland for longer than the usual leisurely trip 'round the Golden Circle? Perhaps it is really nothing more than the promise of an opportunity for a little shameless self-promotion. So, I am the Grapevine's new addition. I'm a ski fanatic; originally from California and, no, I don't wish it were hotter here and I don't know how to surf. I am a recent graduate from a college in upstate New York. A lot of people don't seem to know that New York has an upstate. But it does. It's big, cold, and beer is very cheap up there. After four years of skiing, studying, partying (dude, it's remote, what can you do?), and discovering yet more parts of an automobile that can freeze on about a weekly basis, I'm finally in a position to say that I highly recommend it if you're into a rural vacation (which, so it seems, Icelanders are). Following the rest of my graduating class, I partook in the annual migration southward to "The City" in search of your usual fame, fortune,

and employment in the arts. I found a job as a secretary (they call them administrative assistants now) for Bette Midler's non-profit organization, the New York Restoration Project.

They restore parks. I did things like take all of the staples out of a two-foot high stack of papers so they could be recycled and get Cher's ex-publisher, when she would drop by, "a Diet Coke, cold, in a bottle not a can." I won't get too far into the details that built up to my leaving that job.

Now I find myself coming to the Grapevine after six months at The Onion's corporate headquarters. This is a strange excuse for an office in which an entire department of people works around a ping-pong table. My responsibilities there ranged from editing to delivering large quantities of Onion coasters to local bars. Clearly, I'm a versatile girl and, to that ends, I also freelance for an American magazine called Ski Racing which covers exactly what its name promises. Since coming to Iceland, I've been told that in my writing I need to refrain from linguistically hedging my bets (or, as a line-editor, other people's bets). So, you won't be seeing any final sentences like this one again because, in this writer's opinion, Reykjavík is, arguably, just the place to kill that bad habit.

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A Witness to the Execution

An interview with Ómar Ragnarsson

BY HAUKUR MAGNÚSSON PHOTO BY SKARI

Television reporter and aviation-enthusiast, Ómar Ragnarsson recently published an open letter in Morgunblaðið where he invited local V.I.P.s on a guided tour of the area affected by the Kárahnjúkar dam project. The people Ragnarsson specified in the letter were, along with President of Iceland Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson and Prime Minister Geir H. Haarde, the editors of the three daily newspapers, directors of the three broadcasting companies and the three Progressive Party ministers: Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Industry and Commerce, and the Minister for the Environment. The invitation has since been extended to all of the Icelandic government's ministers.

Although Ragnarsson is an extremely busy and active man, the Grapevine managed to coerce him into sitting down for a short interview discussing work.

/// Certain parties of interest have criticised you for being partial?

- Yes, it seems strange to me. No one jumps if Al Gore makes a documentary and everybody knows his views, but if one dares to do the same in Iceland everything goes upside down, with rampant accusations of partiality and abusing one's position, among other things. I have been accused of impartiality without ever making my views clear; it'll soon be seven years since it was first demanded that I be fired from my job as an RÚV reporter for allegedly abusing that position.

/// Who made the demands and what came of the whole spectacle?

- A 700-person coalition of 'friends of the industry' that convened at Hótel Valaskjál in Egilsstaðir. I was accused of featuring footage of the land that was to go under too prominently in my reports. The landscape I portrayed was said to be 'too beautiful' - a ludicrous accusation. It's like demanding that a report of plans to reduce Mt. Esja to a pile of gravel can't show the mountain itself, or only show it when it's enveloped in fog or bad weather. I was also accused of only interviewing those against the proceedings, and to have monopolised reports of the project.

Luckily, the State Radio Council took these accusations seriously enough to investigate. They went over every report of mine with a stopwatch and magnifying glass, and of course discovered that everything was in order and that I had in fact interviewed more people that were for the project than against it. That investigation was the best thing that could have happened to me; it cleared my name and allowed me to continue my reporting.

/// Did you receive any threats?

- Yes. As has been documented by the media, my wife got threatened and told that she had to prevent me from doing this coverage. They told her she had two choices: she could either stop me or someone else would take care of the problem. Soon after, the Hótel Valaskjál meeting took place.

/// Time to be frank. Do you oppose the Kárahnjúkar dam project?

- I have never claimed either view. I have covered several dams in my career and have of course had opinions on most of them, but never have I let them affect my reports or even thought to make them known. Some, I've doubted, but others I have endorsed wholeheartedly. I do not let my personal opinions affect my work.

/// Tell us about your open invitation letter.

- It seemed like the obvious thing to do, following my previous efforts in covering the debate. I started with news reports and documentaries and then published a book called Kárahnjúkar: For and Against. This summer, it dawned on me that there still was a side to the debacle that had thus far been ignored, and that was showing people the affected area



with their own eyes. As a reporter, I felt that Landsvirkjun's efforts to display the area were one-sided - of course, those interested could pursue the week-long hike across the area, but the Landsvirkjun bus was an easier route and I wanted to respond to that. I wanted to do my best to report both sides and I did so by flying over the area, the dams and construction sites too. They are truly vast and admirable on many levels and my tour fully acknowledges that. Landsvirkjun has held seminars and shows about the project in Végarður and they don't show a single photograph of the area that will go under. Not one. Lots of pictures of drills and tunnels and dams from all sides, but not one of the valley that will go under. I do not consider that kind of reporting to be up to modern standards and I think that Landsvirkjun has a greater obligation to such standards, being state run. We are the ones paying for it and thus have a claim for complete objectivity.

/// Morgunblaðið reported on your tour with Prime Minister Haarde and Minister of Education, Science and Culture Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir and quoted them as saying that even though they greatly enjoyed it and found the area to be beautiful, it would not affect the decisions already made.

- Yes, that was natural. Had they said they were reconsidering the project in light of the tour it would have been tantamount to admitting that they had made the biggest mistake in the history of Iceland. It was obvious that the tour couldn't reverse the government's decisions, but I thought it was important that they could see with their own eyes what that those decisions entailed. Viewing documentaries and reading dozens of articles on the subject only exposes you to roughly half of the story. Now they are familiar with all of it and the decision stands. It's clear.

I have taken dozens of people on the same tour and it all amounts to personal taste, opinions and priorities. Everybody who comes, be they for or against the dam, is greatly affected by the tour. Those in favour of the dam get to experience the power and force of the constructs firsthand and those opposing cry over the land that will be drowned. It is a very heated and heavily debated matter and each individual take on the experience varies.

/// Well, the decision has been made and

the area will be drowned this fall. Are your tours perhaps futile efforts?

- Steingrímur J. Sigfússon [the Leftist-Green's leader] said in the spring of 2003 that we would have to find ways to live with the dam. Nonetheless, I think that opposing it, even now, is only natural. What will go down in September is really a form of execution, an entire ecosystem is scheduled to be drowned and killed. We can take this analogy further; say you have a man who has for some reason been given the death penalty and is slated for execution soon. People would dispute the verdict and nobody would think it out of the ordinary for those opposing the sentence to fight it until the very last day.

/// And if evidence proving the man innocent was to be uncovered...

- Exactly. This is how I see it. People may think it strange to fight something that will almost certainly go forth, but I see it as an operation where an entire valley will be removed and filled with gravel. And that's the equivalent of an execution, even if it goes towards creating something new, an aluminium smelting plant in Reyðarfjörður in exchange for the area. Execution - creation.

/// If we stick to the analogy, will you be attending the funeral?

- I will witness it firsthand in my boat, the Ark. And I will of course also witness the creation. I plan on broadcasting the course of events on my website, www.hugmyndaflug.is, posting new pictures daily of both the destruction and creation aspects.

/// Like an art project?

- That may very well be. When they turn on the water, it will mark the creation and destruction of a new landscape daily. And with the rising smelting plant, that's changing every day, although it's a slower process. I have been photographing that since the beginning. It will make for some interesting contrasts, I think. The two or three years it takes to construct the plant versus the few days it takes to ruin the valley. There are two stories being told, really, of a slow build-up and a swift execution.

/// The dam project has in many ways been a greater part of the discourse this summer and seems to concern a lot more people than

before.

- Yes, it must be admitted. This is rather typical of the Icelandic mentality, what I call 'the last-minute syndrome' is inherent in us. Andri Snær Magnason's book was published at exactly the right moment in regards to that. My own book on the subject was published in 2004 and sparked a small interest in the project, but it was still too far removed from the actualisation of it to have the same effect as Draumalandið. The same goes for the geological reports [concerning the dam's apparently unstable building ground] that have been in the spotlight recently; all that was very clear two years ago and was the subject of some scientific papers but didn't manage to attract the same amount of publicity because of the timing. Now there's a new report out and along with Andri Snær's book, it managed to finally get the public interested.

/// A positive, if too-late, development.

- There's also a certain media law in operation, what I think of as the 'three times clause': you have to say the same things three times in order to get people's attention. For instance, I reported back in 1970 that Bláfjöll might prove to be Icelanders' future skiing grounds and preparations were being made. No one blinked. I did a follow-up and people started taking notice, but it wasn't until I did my third segment on it that people really realised the possibilities. I remember running the story on a Friday, the following weekend saw a huge traffic-jam form on the way there - thousands of Reykjavíkians suddenly decided to observe the site for themselves. If I had managed to find a way to report three times what Guðmundur Sigvaldason said at a seminar in the summer of 2002, there might have been a reaction similar to what we are seeing now. What he said was almost exactly the same that Grímur Björnsson is now saying and has everybody excited. I felt at the time that it was an important piece of information and was excited about 'scooping' it for the eight o'clock news. It wasn't deemed interesting enough for that; as I recall it the night's main story revolved around some stock-market scuffle, but I managed to edge it into the ten o'clock news, where it didn't attract anyone's attention. Now, the same results are being reported for the third time and all hell's breaking loose.

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News in Brief

BY HAUKUR MAGNÚSSON AND STEINUNN JAKOBSDÓTTIR PHOTO BY SKARI

Gallup Poll Shows Icelanders Side With Hezbollah

RÚV reported last week that a recent Gallup poll shows Icelanders sympathise with Hezbollah rather than Israelis in the ongoing conflict in Lebanon. While only 52 percent of those polled chose not to answer the question, the remaining 48 percent were vastly in favour of Hezbollah, with 35 percent of Icelanders responding that they sympathised with the organisation's cause and only 17 percent proclaiming sympathy for the Israelis.

The poll showed that those intending to vote for the Leftist-Greens or the Social Democratic Alliance in the coming elections are likely to be in favour of Hezbollah, or around 45 percent of those answering both questions. Those aligning with the Progressive Party were most likely to support the Israelis, or around 40 percent, while only 13 percent professed support for the opposite side. Supporters of the Independence Party sided with Hezbollah, with around 34 percent in favour.

Minister of Justice Calls for Discourse on Secret Service

Minister of Justice and Cold War enthusiast Björn Bjarnason publicly called for an open discourse regarding the need to establish a secret service in Iceland, addressing the East Reykjavík Rotary Club recently. In his speech, Bjarnason speculated about the manner in which such an establishment would be founded, should political unity form around it. He added that his ministry had already received advice on the subject from several European Union experts.

The speech is available through the website www.bjorn.is. In it, Bjarnason touches on subjects regarding Iceland's defences in the 21st century and stresses the need to stay alert, especially in light of NATO's sudden departure from Keflavík. The highest priority now, he said, is to "[...] reorganise the Icelandic system of government with regard to the state's increased responsibility for the nation's security."

The Minister quoted British and French officials' recent concerns regarding the current threat of terrorism and how to avoid it, reminding his audience that London is only a

three-hour flight from Keflavík – and that air transport was becoming more common every day. "The situation is certainly not the same in Iceland as in France or Britain, regarding our experience of terrorism or tension between people of different religions. However, we do live in the same world and the same area as the French and British, and thus cannot allow ourselves the luxury of overlooking their cold assessment of the state of security issues in light of the threat posed by terrorism."

He went on to recount some of the ways neighbouring nations have tackled the threat posed by random acts of terrorism, implying that such measures might have to be taken in Iceland. They include granting police the authority to use "special investigation tactics" of an unclear nature, going so far as enabling the police to serve as a sort of 'national security force'. He added that certain steps had already been taken to that end.

Bjarnason also criticised the U.S. government in light of the recent NATO discussions, stating that diplomatic finesse was obviously not one of its priorities.

Attempting to respond to Bjarnason's call for an open discourse, the Grapevine contacted Bjarnason with several questions pertaining to his statements; at the time of writing, he has not seen fit to reply.

Immigrant Children Refused the Right to an Education

At least eight children of Polish origin are being refused admittance to the Ísafjörður elementary school due to a hold up in bureaucracy.

According to Ísafjörður newspaper *Bæjarinn Besta*, the eight children are still waiting to get an Icelandic social security number (or 'kennitala') from the National Registry. Those lacking a kennitala are not legally considered as inhabitants of the municipality and therefore cannot attend the school, as that would be in violation of Icelandic law.

Due to a lengthy waiting list at the registry, the children might have to wait for weeks to be eligible for the Icelandic education system. Many Ísafjörður inhabitants are furious and shocked by the fact that the Icelandic system can keep children from their right to education, complaining about what

can only be construed as an utterly outrageous paperwork mess. This bureaucratic bilge also happens to violate the UN Convention on the Right of the Child, which in Article 28 states that all parties "recognise the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular: Make primary education compulsory and available free to all."

A Fine Day for Democracy

Convicted felon and former Independence Party MP Árni Johnsen's name has been cleared by some of Iceland's highest ranking officials, *Fréttablaðið* reported last week. The move is conveniently timed, with Johnsen's reported intention to re-enter politics, because, according to Icelandic law, only those with an 'untainted reputation' – legally defined as having a clean criminal record – are eligible to run for office.

In February of 2003, Vestmannaeyjar native Johnsen was sentenced to two years in prison for a variety of offences in his public position as MP, including, but not limited to, embezzling public funds, bribery and bearing false witness. Reports of his alleged corruption were rampant during the summer of 2001, when some of his fraudulent activities were discovered by chance. Johnsen initially denied the allegations, claiming a misunderstanding had occurred. During the ensuing media spectacle, he was repeatedly caught attempting to cover his tracks with lies and half-truths, ultimately leading to his resignation from office the following August.

According to *Fréttablaðið*'s unnamed sources, Prime Minister Geir H. Haarde, Supreme Court Head Gunnlaugur Claessen and Head of Parliament Sólveig Pétursdóttir recently signed a document clearing Johnsen's name at the urging of Minister of Justice Björn Bjarnason.

Icelandic law on the subject states that the President of Iceland can clear anyone's name by request when at least five years have passed since the subject finished his sentence, given the recommendations of the Ministry of Justice. However, it also says that under 'special circumstances', the five-year mark may be ignored, as appears to have been the

case with Johnsen's clearing. Notable is the fact that President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson has been abroad for several days, resulting in the aforementioned trio of signers acting as his substitutes.

Responding to the *Fréttablaðið* story, the Ministry of Justice issued a press release stating that Johnsen fulfils all necessary legal conditions for a name clearing, given that it's been over two years since he completed his sentence. The press release goes on to say that for a long time, name-clearing requests have been granted without exception, given that proper conditions are met.

Speculation on Johnsen's plan to run for office in 2007 has been high this summer, following a petition campaign by his supporters. He has yet to give a definitive statement on the matter, but these current developments signal his intent on participating in the Independence Party preliminaries for the upcoming election.

Nineteen Fatal Car Crashes This Year

A nineteen-year-old girl died in a tragic car accident at Eidiavegur road near Egilstaðir last week when her car collided with a garbage truck, resulting in both vehicles rolling off the road. The girl was taken to a nearby hospital where she died from her injuries but the garbage truck driver was not seriously harmed. The cause of the accident is still under investigation.

The accident marked the eighth fatal car crash in August – the 19th to occur this year.

According to the Icelandic Road Traffic Directorate (Umferðarstofa), most fatal accidents occur when driving conditions are optimal. When the weather is good, drivers are more likely to forego caution and ignore speed limits and safety laws, like using a seat belt, resulting far too often in serious injuries and even fatalities.

Although the number of car accident-related deaths this year is obviously far too great, it is still lower than in recent years, excluding 2005. In 2003 and 2004, 23 people died in traffic accidents, while the number was 29 in 2002 and a shocking 32 in the year 2000.

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September

Tue / 12 September / 8pm
Theaterkino [4] – Bertolt Brecht In 2006 is the 50th anniversary of Brecht's death
 Lecture about Bertolt Brecht by Bjarni Jónsson
 Academy of the Arts / Department of Theatre

Thu / 14 September / 11.30pm
On contemporary painting in Germany I
 Lecture by the artist Tilo Baumgärtel
 [in English / Admission free]
 Academy of the Arts / Department of Fine Arts

Fri / 15 September / 11.30pm
On contemporary painting in Germany II
 Lecture by the artist Martin Kobe
 [in English / Admission free]
 Academy of the Arts / Department of Fine Arts

Sat / 16 September / 4pm
Tilo Baumgärtel. Martin Kobe. Works
 Opening of the exhibition
 Sat / 16 September – Sun / 5 November
 Gallery Safn

Sun / 17 – Wed / 20 September / 8pm
'Água' by Pina Bausch and the Dance Theatre Wuppertal
 Performance of the internationale renowned & award-winning dance company
 Admission: 4.900 ISK
 Citytheatre / Big Stage

Tue / 26 September / 8pm
'The Educators'
Directed by Hans Weingartner, 2004, 126 min
 Young rebels take action against social injustice by re-arranging the world of rich business people
 Cinema [English subtitles, Admission free]
 Academy of the Arts / Department of Theatre

Thu / 28 September – Sun / 8 October
Reykjavík International Film Festival
 'Winter journey' by Hans Steinbichler
 'Four Minutes' by Chris Kraus
 'Balordi' by Mirjam Kubescha

October

Mon / 2 October / 12pm
Art as Self-Understanding
 Reflections on What Art Aims for
 Lecture by the philosopher Georg W. Bertram
 [in English / Admission free]
 University of Iceland / Institute of Philosophy

Tue / 10 October / 8pm
Theaterkino [5] – Performing Games
Live Art and performance in German Theatre
 Lecture by the assistant professor in performance studies & performer Dr. Annemarie Matzke
 [in English, Admission free]
 Academy of the Arts / Department of Theatre

Fri / 13 – Sat / 28 October
'Sequences' – real time festival, Reykjavík 06
 German contributions of the international crossmedia festival with the focus on time based art phenomena

Fri / 13 – Fri / 20 October
'Overtures'
 Hydroformances & symposium on natural resources

Tue / 24 October / 8pm
'Lost and Found'
 Filmlets from Germany
 Cinema [English subtitles, Admission free]
 Academy of the Arts / Department of Theatre

Tue / 31 October / 8pm
'Sophie Scholl – The final days'
Directed by Marc Rothemund, 2005, 116 min
 Cinema [English subtitles, Admission free]
 National Library of Iceland – University Library

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Sequences

Overtures

Citytheatre
 Listabraut 3

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A Building As Honoured As Its Inhabitants

BY STEINUNN JAKOBSDÓTTIR PHOTOS BY SKARI

The oldest secondary school in Iceland, Menntaskólinn in Reykjavík (MR), which is perched on the small hill by Lækjargata, won't go unnoticed when you walk through the city centre. The area surrounding it, growing quite vibrant at the moment due to all the students returning after a long summer vacation, is part of the neighbourhood called Kvosin, which is the oldest in the city.

The school has a history dating back to 1056, although it didn't move to its current location until 1846. Designed by Danish architect Jørgen H. Koch it was constructed between 1844-46, using imported timber from Norway. At that time it was the largest wooden building in Iceland.

The building is a dignified example of the classic and simple architecture that became popular in Denmark in the middle of the nineteenth century. With wooden panelling and old interior design, the schoolhouse has attracted many well-known individuals who later graduated from MR. The most notable among them probably being the president of Iceland, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, former president Vigdís Finnbogadóttir and former Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson who was also the chairman of the student body. Nobel laureate Halldór Laxness also studied there for a time.

In 1950 plans were made to tear down the building, as became the inescapable destiny of many other wooden houses in Reykjavík. Heated debates pulled the plug on all such ideas. The ensuing discussion was the impetus behind the establishment of the National Committee on Architectural Heritage in 1970. The MR building was put on the preservation list in 1973 and therefore cannot be destroyed under any circumstances.

"The building is among the country's most remarkable ones. It is special in many ways,

especially in size and shape. At the time of its construction, Reykjavík didn't have any large buildings like that one," Magnús Skúlason manager of the Committee and a former student of MR tells the Grapevine.

Throughout the years it has been renovated. The roof was at originally made of wood but around the turn of the last century it was reclad with corrugated iron. The central gable was also enlarged shortly after the construction and new annexes have been built around the main house to meet a growing number of students.

Although the main purpose of the building has always been to house the secondary school, many historical moments have taken place inside. The Icelandic Parliament, Alþingi, was re-established in the school's assembly hall July 1, 1845 and the national meeting was held in the same place in 1851, where Jón Sigurðsson and other attendees resisting the idea of making Iceland part of Denmark, ended the meeting with the famous quote: "Vér mótmælum allir" or "We all protest." The meeting is considered a milestone event in the fight for Icelandic independence, finally fruitful in 1944.

"The building has always served its purpose and still does. Although we need to meet the increase in the number of students by enlarging the premises the new accommodations have to be connected with the old house in some way. But even though the classrooms aren't as up-to-date according to architectural style, they work just fine for an educational institution. It isn't always necessary to tear down and change everything," Skúlason says. The school's flagship will therefore stay unaltered and dominate while its old classrooms keep welcoming freshmen year after year.

That's how it is today, and that's how it will endure.



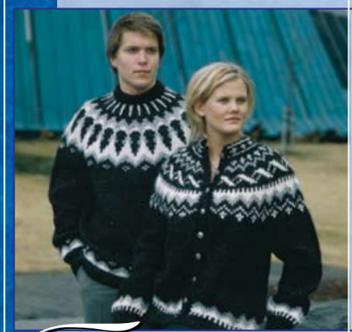
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OPINION

"Beware the Óvissuferð"



BY ERIKK DAVIDEK

For the past few months I have been chronicling my immigration to Iceland, and the cluster-fuck that it has been, right here in the Grapevine. Lately, though, things have started to settle down. My family is preparing to move into our new flat downtown. We bought a tiny, old Toyota station wagon to cruise the countryside and avoid the butt-puckering gas prices. Our daughter started school, and she is making friends and quickly becoming fluent in Icelandic. I even got a "real" job. An internationally respected Icelandic company decided to take a chance on this gringo and offered me a spot on the production line. So, I was beginning to settle into a comfortable rut: then came the "Secret Trip."

I had started my job a mere two weeks before the aforementioned trip was to take place. At first, the óvissuferð, or secret trip, seemed like a pretty nice idea; in return for the diligent work of their employees or to build morale, an employer rewards them with a mystery trip by bus to curious locations around the country. There are usually games and fun activities, and the evening is capped with a good meal. Because it was supposed to be secret, all I was able to discern was that the company would provide us each with three drinks at dinner and that we would need a swimsuit. So, basically, I knew that there would be a little drinking and that at some point I would be naked. What could go wrong?

Now, I have been on a few company trips in the States. They usually involved my co-workers and me walking to a nearby pizza place for a free lunch. Once, at a job I held in your standard office building, we ended the day early and all went bowling together. The company paid for the first game, the shoe rental, and they even bought everyone a Coke – and this was on a Tuesday! It felt like heaven. Man, I was so not prepared for the "Secret Trip"

There wasn't much buzz around work in the days leading up to the trip, so it almost slipped my mind. At 1:00 p.m., about an hour before the bus pulled into the parking lot, everything changed. Suddenly, my workplace was in a frenzy. The women were changing into nice clothes and putting on make-up, people were pulling previously hidden beer cans out of their bags. They dragged two guys out into the parking lot and sprayed them down with a hose. About 50 of us gathered around the bus as they opened the luggage compartment with a flourish, revealing at least 200 cans of Thule beer and almost as many bottles of neon orange and green Bacardi Breezers. I stood there with my mouth open and no idea how to react.

"Are these the drinks for dinner?" I asked.
"If they last that long," our manager responded.
The next thing I knew, people were crawling into the belly of the bus to get at the alcohol and somebody put a six-pack in my hands. I looked around for someone to share my treasure with, but everyone else already had their hands full. We piled onto the bus and headed out on our adventure, everyone singing between gulps. I realised that this was not going to be a quick trip to the local bowling alley.

Our first stop was just outside the city for some disk golf. This game is basically like regular golf, but involving a Frisbee-type disc being thrown at a chain-link basket. It is as boring as it sounds, unless you are with a large group of people that has been cut loose from work early and given enough beer to drown a whale (which, incidentally, I was). By the close of six holes I had downed two litres of beer, and discs were flying everywhere.

We then all filed back onto the bus and started heading out of town. Way out of town. I recognised the route as the way to the tunnel to Borgarnes. Sure enough, two pee breaks at the side of the road later, we were engulfed by the darkness of the mine. I have to admit that I have a slight fear of underground tunnels, and the thought of the roof caving in and me drowning on this bus with a bunch of relative strangers snapped me out of my beer-induced stupor. By the time we saw the light at the end of the tunnel, as it were, I was feeling pretty sober. But this was a party, and if I was going to fit-in I would have to play catch-up, quick.

Luckily, somebody brought a bottle of schnapps along for the ride, and they insisted that I take three hearty draws. I obliged, and before long I had forgotten all about the tunnel and had the sensation of only blue skies ahead. But first, I had another fear to deal with.

Being an American, I have developed a healthy feeling of shame about the naked human form. I was on the high school swim team, and I distinctly remember never seeing anyone's penis... ever. We all showered together but we never took our suits off, and at no time did our eyes drop below nose-level. Since then, I have come to Iceland over a dozen times, becoming increasingly comfortable with the swimming pool culture on each trip. I even shaved my face once at our neighbourhood pool, naked as a jaybird. But this was different. These were people I knew just well enough to conjure feelings of embarrassment. I needed more drink.

It all happened so fast that my anxiety proved unnecessary. Before I knew it, I had run the gauntlet from the shower and was submerged in the greenish water of one of the hundreds of country swimming pools found around Iceland. We were throwing people in the water and jumping off the starting blocks, which seemed a completely absurd addition to this pool as it was only five feet deep at its lowest point. At roughly ten metres long, any race held in this thing would take about 12 seconds. By the time we crawled out I had lost two open beers in the water, but had managed to get enough down my throat that I wouldn't have cared if the Pope saw me naked.

Back on the bus again and it was off to the tractor museum and cow house. While I couldn't understand him, it was easy enough to tell by the rest of the group's reaction that our local guide was both informative and

I have never driven a tractor and I don't like cows, but it's amazing how much fun all of that can be when you're drunk.

entertaining. I have never driven a tractor and I don't like cows, but it's amazing how much fun all of that can be when you're drunk. And everyone else was getting completely smashed right along with me! We were sharing embarrassing stories from our pasts. We were jumping over parked cars and stopping to piss in every corner available. People who worked next to each other were making out! We were taking over the countryside. We were not thinking about Monday.

The rest of the night becomes a cloudy blur of lapsed-cognition. I remember getting off the bus to go to dinner, but that's about it. I have heard that the lamb was fantastic. Someone said that I got involved in a pushing match with some of my new colleagues and a group of locals. I am told that I sang Icelandic songs the whole way back to town. But all I know for certain is that when I woke up on the couch in my living room at 6:00 a.m. on Saturday morning I was lying on the plastic base of my son's car seat and my head felt like it was under a truck tire.

Monday morning came. I, naturally in my mind, expected everyone to show up to work with sheepish grins on their faces for acting like complete asses in front of each other. How could our work life go on as it had before when we had said and done all of those ridiculous and awkward things?

Nobody said a word!
Two nights before, with the person standing next to me as I write, I had become completely drunk, shared stories that my wife hasn't heard, been naked and defended my new peers in a street brawl. In some cultures that constitutes a common-law marriage. Here it was business as usual. It would appear that the óvissuferð served only to teach me (the secrets of my co-workers aside) how much I still have to learn about my new home.

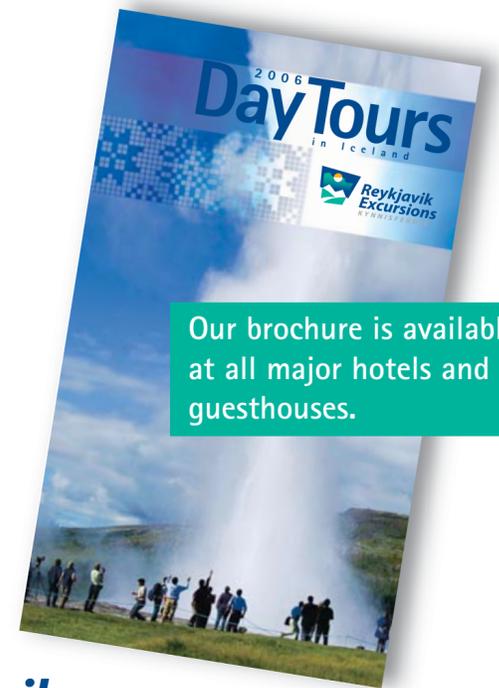
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A Cult Called KR

A Religious Experience in West Reykjavík

BY STEINUNN JAKOBSDÓTTIR PHOTO BY SKARI

"I try to attend all games, it doesn't matter who they are playing. You see, this place is my second home and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else in the world," an elderly man tells me as we stand next to the football field in Frostaskjól, watching a game in the women's champions league. Referring to the Reykjavík F.C., or KR as it is usually called, he tells me that he has been a member since 1934 and that, although his age prevents him from kicking some opponents asses, it doesn't stop him from cheering his team week after week in Vesturbær.

"Can you imagine anything better than this neighbourhood? Anything greater than this team? Are you from Vesturbærinn by the way?" he asks.

— Well no.

"Too bad for you," he adds as he turns away to chat with his local friends.

Yes, too bad indeed. Within the Vesturbær postcode of 107 there's something unique to be found about the people. Much like a religious group, they are devoted to a team of football players rather than a single leader. So proud are they of their neighbourhood and their sports-related pseudo-religious beliefs that when they talk about the area it sounds like some paradise isolated from other parts of the universe. And, truthfully, they have every reason to be so happy.

Being one of the oldest and most well-established neighbourhoods in the city, with one of the oldest and biggest sport clubs in the country, some call Vesturbær the only true Icelandic empire while others hate the grass they walk on. Vesturbær has all that is needed for the community's daily self-sufficiency: four elementary schools, the University of Iceland, the Vesturbærjarlaug swimming pool, the grocery store Melabúðin, classy restaurant Grillið, Háskólabíó cinema, Neskirskjan church, the scouting society Ægisbúar and even a local pub, Rauða ljónið, where KR supporters gather for beer after the game. It is a neighbourhood known for its charm and quiet, family-friendly atmosphere, old and solid houses, student dormitories and newly renovated apartment buildings. It is an area frequently turned to for housing by immigrants wanting to start a family in a safe en-

vironment. At the same time, when the mood for partying strikes, the noisier city centre is only a few minutes' walk away.

The locals are also usually very cool folks. They are nice people, especially if you catch them after a victory at their stadium in Frostaskjól, where the heart of the western part of Reykjavík beats. The sports club rules its kingdom, gluing the Vesturbær locals together with collective pride in a team they call their own, whether residents can kick a ball or not. For kids, being from the west side means something. Rivals are... everyone else. Those feelings don't change upon finding oneself all grown up, dressed in fancy suits with business cards that read bank president or Idol judge. All those titles will mean it better seats to games than the rest of the crowd.

"Either you are with KR or you are against it" I heard repeatedly when I spent a day there.

The one thing that will always unite all Vesturbær's residents, and KR fanatics in particular, is a loyalty to their team and neighbourhood. They're like Liverpool fans; they stick with their players whether they're good or not.

"Either you are with KR or you are against it" I heard repeatedly when I spent a day there. The sentiment is as black and white as their traditional colours.

The KR sports club was founded in 1899 by a couple of enthusiastic youngsters who wanted to play football together. A lot has changed since then and a sparse coalition of friends has turned into a large company counting 2,210 members in various divisions with a devoted fan club of 600 people and Bubbi Morthens as their premier songwriter. Where once was a wet and grassless area, now an impressive gym dominates the surroundings and the KR stadium stands as a centerpiece. Although initially founded as a football club, all kinds of sports are practised under the same flag: badminton, basketball, bowling, handball, table-tennis, skiing, swimming, chess and wrestling, with training

facilities located in many places in Vesturbær.

"The place wakes up at eight o'clock in the morning and usually doesn't calm down before eleven o'clock at night," Stefán Arnarson, the sports representative of KR, tells me while guiding me around the building. I pass some nine year olds who are too busy shooting baskets to notice my presence, while outside a group of girls the same age are practising their football skills.

"Here kids learn discipline; the club has immensely positive effects on them as they are less likely to start drinking, smoking and using drugs. We are doing an important job, which could be better appreciated by local authorities. If we are going to achieve something greater in the future we need more money," Arnarson says.

That is a dilemma all Icelandic sports clubs are facing. Here, they practise sports at the amateur level, teammates don't get the big bucks for practising their sport and the coaches aren't earning any super salaries either. Each member has to pay annual fees, the clubs get the same amount each year, but now those fees are becoming too expensive for some families. In the end, the clubs don't make a fraction of what is needed to improve their facilities. Although the clubs get funding from the city and the majority agrees on their importance, it is far from being enough. With donations from loyal fans and by collecting cans or selling pancakes, for example, clubs are trying to make ends meet. The lack of value the local authorities place on the functions of the clubs has been disappointing all around.

After school lets out, the sports clubs are second homes to kids until their parents come to pick them up. Today, KR is a healthy hangout for kids in the neighbourhood. KR, besides having a traditional training program, also cooperates with the primary schools in Vesturbær. It has its own radio station, houses

the music school Do-Re-Mi and operates as a community centre for teenagers. Here, active youngsters are not only able to get fit in a country growing fatter by the second, but are able to learn teamwork and build friendships. It is a community in its own right, helping to rear Icelandic youth. This is true of sports clubs throughout Iceland.

I realised that the club is just one big family: everyone knows each other by name and the coaches serve as role models for the youth with whom they interact. The staff is all former teammates; their kids practise various sports and continue their duties by working for the club after practise. KR families raise money by selling all kinds of goodies; grandparents come to the stadium to support the players while forming strong ties with generations of other KR folk.

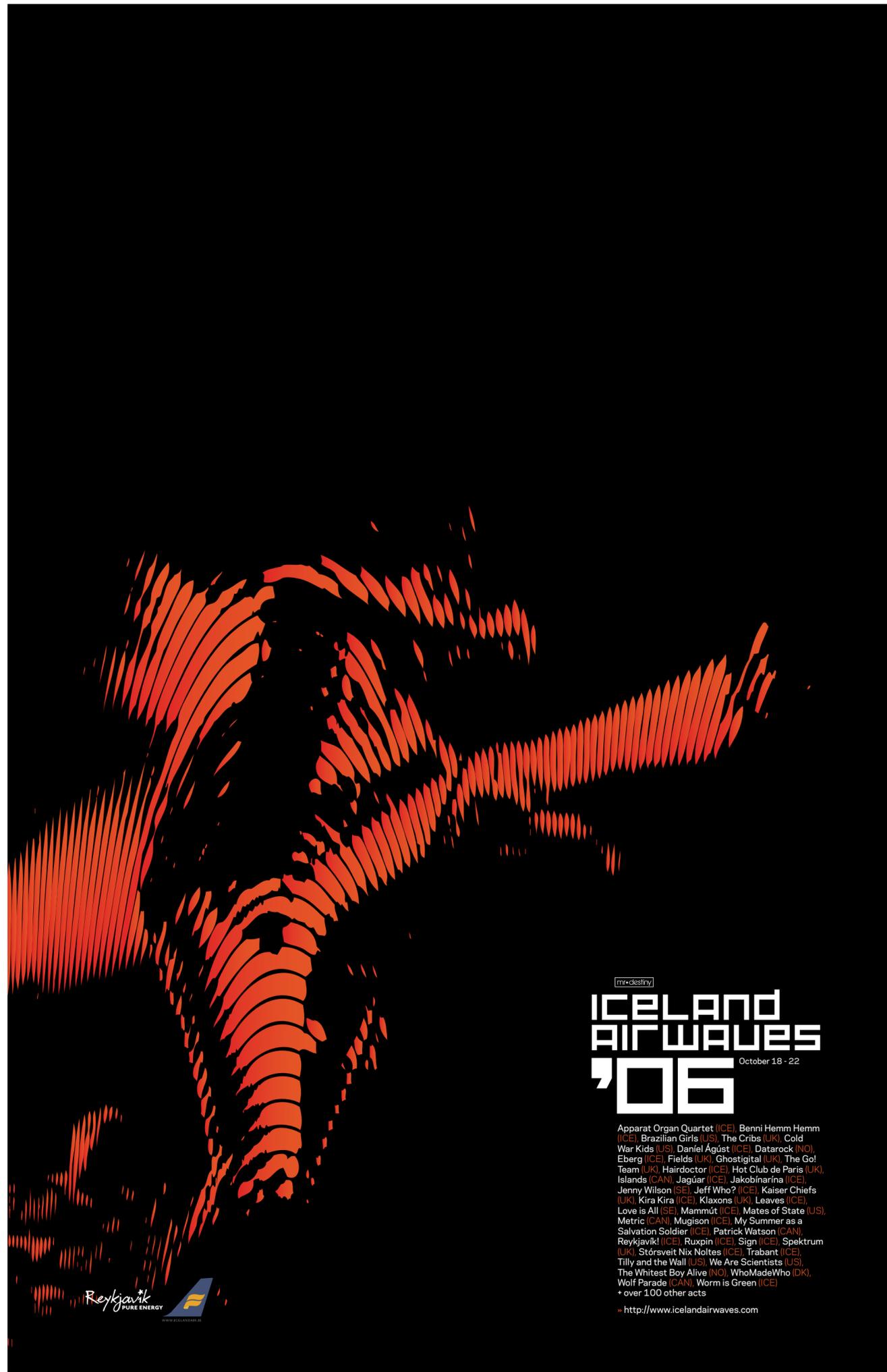
"The bond you make with the team is impenetrable. I have been a KR-ingur from 1937. I started playing football when I was seven and later worked as a coach at when my kids started training. Now my grandkids are becoming members," a man sitting with a group of senior citizens tells me. He sums up the sentiments I had been hearing all day. In a corner of the community centre dedicated to Þórólfur Beck, one of the best players KR has raised, the group relaxes with a cup of coffee before their daily walk around the neighbourhood.

"I was once asked if I was a member of a cult. I answered, 'Yes, I'm in KR,'" the man continues and the group nods in agreement.

"Once in KR, always in KR," his seatmate adds.

"It's the best company a man can ask for." When the conversation switched to a recent game in the Icelandic Cup in which KR played against Þróttur in the semi-finals I said my goodbyes.

"It wasn't luck, we were just that much better," I hear in the distance, a comment everyone in the nearby area would agree upon. As for the rest of the city, I'm not so sure. The undeniable fact is that nothing will stop this community from growing or cause its loyalty to fade.



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SUPERSTAR



Reality Check

Iceland goes nutty for a flop

BY BART CAMERON

I flew to America on a Tuesday, pretty much due to bad timing. Tuesday, in Iceland, is Rock Star: Supernova night, when we find out who's likeliest to get voted off, and we see Magni, local hero, survive another night. Watching at 2 a.m., from Iceland, it looks like Magni is David taking on Goliath, in the form of the massive America-based entertainment industry that nobody represents better than Tommy Lee, the key judge, who is famous for drumming badly, making porn, and abusing women and drugs, but who has somehow turned this into a money-making entertainer identity.

When we got off the plane, we asked my father and family, somewhat casually, if we were going to make it in time for Rock Star.

"What's Rock Star?"

He was the first to ask, but not the last.

It turns out, nobody in America is watching Magni defeat Goliath. Rock Star is a sensation in Iceland, so much so that the phone services are cutting rates to allow Icelanders to vote. Magni himself is becoming an icon, up there with boxer/fisherman/insurance salesman Bubbi Morthens, a tweaked-out 80s singer who judges Iceland's version of the Idol series. In fact, recently, a tweaked-out former editor of a porn magazine wrote a lengthy diatribe in Fréttablaðið against the Grapevine for our criticism of the stalwarts of Icelandic culture: Bubbi and Magni.

So how many people are watching Rock Star, this show that has porn kings and various other Icelandic spokesmen screaming that Magni is above criticism? According to Morgunblaðið, 7 million people watched Rock Star the last week of August, (it could be true, though the show didn't crack the top 20, which is as far as is generally reported in the Nielsen Ratings). This isn't American Idol, which got 33.6 million viewers in its opening night alone. In fact, the ratings are close to Rock Star: INXS, which was considered a failure when it had the same kinds of numbers.

But there's more to indicate why Rock Star is pretty much a flop--The show is on the most-watched American network, CBS, and it comes on immediately after one of their most popular shows, Big Brother. The best possible estimates suggest that at least two million of my reality TV-watching countrymen, arguably the laziest people on the planet, managed to get together the energy to click their remotes to

get away from Rock Star: Supernova.

Watching the show over the internet with this in mind, the whole world started to make a lot more sense. Cheering for Magni, who had another strong performance last week, I no longer felt confused by the song selection. Yes, of course viewers want to see a performance of a song by Live, a band from Pennsylvania likely on the state fair circuit. This is a show made to entertain... very, very few people.

Then again, the show is custom-made for Iceland. Most importantly, with so few viewers in America, Iceland's hundreds of thousands of active viewers, and voters, can strongly impact a vote -- it is likely that the national push could keep Magni going in this international competition. Second, CDs in Iceland are expensive, and not all that many are imported; it has no radio stations, to speak of, it has a brainless media conglomerate, 365, which doesn't let much of the outside world in, and for this reason, a show that features ten-year-old pop songs is as well-suited to the Icelandic market as it is to the small trailer towns in the Western states, where people are forced to listen to whatever is on the Wal-Mart shelves.

What does this all mean for Magni? On the bright side, the likeable frontman from the East Fjords has not done anything disgraceful. Even if he had, the record-buying public wouldn't notice. On the other hand, he is now spoken of in the same breath as Bubbi, the epitome of big fish in a small pond.

What does it mean for Iceland? I asked a range of record shop owners and DJs in my new home, Seattle. The most succinct answer came from the bartender at the College Inn, which has the best jukebox I've ever come across.

I asked him if Rock Star: Supernova would help people find out about Icelandic culture. "Everybody who knows music knows Iceland. You've got Björk, Sigur Rós, and that weird guy, Bang Gang," he told me.

I repeated the question, and had to explain what Rock Star was.

"Jesus, if I were in charge of Icelandic tourism, I wouldn't let anyone know an Icelander was on a reality TV show with Tommy Lee. Definitely not one that involved music. Someone should have nipped that in the bud. Like a presidential veto or something."

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Reykjavík PURE ENERGY



Halló Akureyri!

A Grapevine Reporter Gets A Taste Of Teen Culture In Iceland's Second City

BY VALGERÐUR ÞÓRODDSDÓTTIR PHOTOS BY SKARI AND ARNAR ÓMARSSON

How To Make a Small Town Sweat

Downtown Akureyri, just past midnight – I found the fast food stand Nætursalan already packed. In a single huddle, leaning against the glass of the counter, about 100 kids cluttered the shop in a queue that stretched out the door. The floor was black with dirt and littered with empty plastic bottles, wrappers and napkins. Running after orders for hamburgers and cigarettes, back and forth between the counter and the grill behind the soda cooler, were three employees in their late 20s.

They looked stern and bore the kind of blank look of concentration that comes with losing oneself in busywork, falling into a quick, machine-like rhythm. No one was shouting, but the people in the queue were stiff and pensive, pushing forward in an intoxicated mass, focused only on reaching the delicious greasy prize at the end of the line.

The size of the crowd made the staff anxious, sweating profusely in their terse movements. The only girl behind the counter was wearing a black tank top with her hair drawn back from her face. She swiped a debit card, taking a deep breath as she did, her neck and chest red from heat and anxiety. She placed the receipt on the counter in front of a heavily intoxicated patron. Without a pen in sight, he stared blankly down at the receipt and then up at her, she looked back with eyes wide as if she were about to cry.

During this year's Verslunarmannahelgi, the annual Merchant's Holiday, Akureyri's Ein með Öllu festival played host to approximately 18,000 people, not counting the locals – the highest attendance number for any festival in the country. Akureyri's population, the second largest outside the capital area, reaches just over 16,000. The northern towns sit in a deep fjord in the north of Iceland by a peninsula of water the locals call "the puddle". It is ostensibly a small town, with only 125 people per square kilometre as compared to

Reykjavik's 418. Still, according to the locals, it is a town with cosmopolitan potential.

Akureyri is caught between the circumstance of its isolation and the hip culture resulting from its recently modernised market. It was only in the last 15-20 years that the town attained its modern economy by de-industrialising: the fishing and tourism industries as well as its 19-year-old university replaced the agricultural production on which the town was founded. Akureyri holds strong to its rural traditions and comforts while promoting itself on its modern accomplishments. The town, still ignorant of its own obscurity, has developed quite the confused sense of identity.

The DJ stood in a small booth inside the bordering longer wall, sedately bopping with the music while apparently avoiding looking out over the empty dance floor, motionless under a single twirling disco ball.

Climbing up the gradual slope of the mountain backing away from the fjord, the streets of her residential area perhaps best capture Akureyri's atmosphere. The sidewalk is a bit cracked but it is clean, and while the paint has started to fade or chip around the steps of some of the two-storey houses sloping up the road, they all look quaint and comfortable, just nice enough. When a garden has a fence, it is low and doesn't hide the weeds.

As a result of the intense criticism the town has received concerning teen drinking during the Halló Akureyri festivities over the decades since the festival began, local authorities in Akureyri cancelled all Verslunarmannahelgi festivities in the summer of 2000. The celebration returned the following year with a repackaged "family-oriented" festival

called Ein með Öllu, eager to leave the binge-drinking traditions behind along with the apparently suggestive name. When a crowd of 18,000 visited Akureyri for the weekend this August, the town decided to show the rest of the country just how much of a little city it could be.

After a reported 66 separate drug busts in and around the town (out of 100 reported total throughout the country) festival spokesman Bragi Bergmann described the influx in policing throughout the weekend as the town's attempt to "send a clear message to drug-fiends: 'Stay out of Akureyri!'" In response to complaints from many local townspeople

Otherwise, we are very happy with the festivities and it went very well."

A Friendly, Leathery Thrust in the Right Direction

The weekend's first organised event designated for teens (16+) was a "teen-dance" with Páll Óskar at the KA soccer club on Saturday night. Starting at 23:00, the country's gay icon took the stage inside the enormous gymnasium, seven kilometres from downtown, and DJed for four hours for the some three- to four-thousand kids who had managed to navigate their way up the hill. Arriving at around 01:30 I found a mob of over 200 attempting to buy tickets, obviously preferring the drunken spontaneity of fighting their way towards the ticket counter in the rain to buying their tickets on presale at a 500 ISK discount.

Obviously I did too, and by utilising the combined cunning and manoeuvring skills of two of my local Akureyri friends, I managed to secure a ticket in just 30 minutes. Inside the gate around the entrance, hidden from the road by giant Eimskip containers, was an enormous horde crowding the even more enormous ramp and entrance to the centre. The scene outside was standard: everyone was drunk and loud, engaging in your basic inebriated debauchery. Inside it was the same; people were making out, dancing or passing out on the benches opposite the stage. Compared to the previous year, the turn-out was massive, and the enthusiasm was astonishing; the "teen-dance" was more happening than Akureyri's downtown.

After heading directly for the bathroom, I spent a good 20 minutes standing in the same spot before realising the feat was hopeless. The temporary visit to the well-lit area only confirmed for me that, despite the ban on alcohol inside the gym, everyone was completely wasted. I do not exaggerate, you may quote me: everyone.

Páll Óskar, now three-and-a-half hours



into his set, was still thoroughly engaging the audience by strutting around the stage in his black leather pants. While his mixing skills were somewhat lacking, he more than made up for them with an excellent choice of music, and he was perhaps best in his ability to properly gauge the mood of the enormous room at any given moment, capricious as the audience was.

On each side of Páll Óskar stood "bouncers", average looking local guys in their early 20s wearing a bright orange glow-in-the-dark vest, whose job was essentially to keep people from jumping onto the stage and throwing themselves at the singer. It was at the crowd's low point that a pair of local guys, recognising that these bouncers' main power was intimidation, decided to reclaim their power and mess with them a bit. As one of the bouncers took a break from the stage, a kid from the audience sat up on the edge of the stage and waited for the bouncer to ask him to move. When he didn't, the poor scraggly guy tried his best to push him off, but the attendee kept contorting his body so that he couldn't get a proper grip until Páll Óskar himself came over and helped carry him offstage to the extreme pleasure of the young man as well as the crowd.

Heading back to his mixing table, Páll Óskar seemed to be absorbing the drunken enthusiasm of the crowd. "Someone asked me whether I wouldn't play a few of my songs," he said enthusiastically. "But since I'm up here why don't I just sing them for you myself?" Páll then launched into a passionate rendition of Ég er eins og ég er, last year's gay pride anthem, and the crowd shouted along. He threw his arms out behind him, looking up towards the ceiling as if the appreciation from the crowd was raining down from above, and thrust his pelvis three enthusiastic times towards the crowd. By this point people were literally mobbing the stage, pushing each other against the edge as they tried desperately to reach towards Páll Óskar's lunging pelvis.

He looked over the crowd, the alcohol literally steaming off the sweaty bevy of hot bodies, and yelled as loud as he could, "Halló Akureyri!"

Starting to Like This Place

Around the plaza and outside Café Amor after the dance, people were slowly spilling back

into the downtown circle. This was the quintessential example of the late-night festivities. People stood and sat around in groups, slowly condensing and separating, mingling. Most people just wandered. Here everyone seemingly had, and needed, no purpose. There was no hostility, no awkwardness. Everyone was at this point in the same situation, the same mellow inebriated state. A sense of unspoken understanding permeated the evening air.

On one of the benches facing Amor, a boy ushered his drunk and obnoxiously loud girlfriend to a seat. Beside them only a few seconds later, a drunken man sat down, not paying the couple any attention, yet. Noticing him, the boy started to inch slowly away. As the boy turned his back on the man, the girl glared directly at him and in her booming voice yelled out an enthusiastic "Hi!" The drunk turned towards her, introduced himself,

The girls on the floor, moving only in controlled sways and constantly looking around them, quickly tired of dancing and sat out while their male counterparts seemed surprisingly able and willing to let go of all inhibition.

and offered her a sip from his flask, which he had decorated, or rather dressed up, to look like a dog. The girl heartily accepted, took a large swig, smiled and then continued on her loud discussion with her boyfriend. The drunk took a swig himself, got up and staggered away.

I sat on the benches with my comrades watching people pass, some too tired or confused to greet us, others stopping merrily and chatting for a moment before going on their way. A group, including a cheerful looking kid of 17, wearing a knit wool hat and nursing an alcohol-infused Sprite bottle, sat down nearby. He took out his cell phone and, glancing down at it, said he was worried because his mom hadn't called yet. "My curfew for this weekend is four and she usually calls to remind me. I don't get it, it's already 4:30." Then he shrugged, smiled, put his phone away and added, "Not that it matters, Verslö is basically over so she can't really punish me..."

If she says I can't go out tomorrow then, like, whatever, it's Sunday."

The kids sitting around us, Akureyri locals all between the ages of 17-19, were discussing the merit of Led Zeppelin. A girl with her hair dyed black, wearing a zip-up hoodie from the Dogma store in Reykjavik, was sharing how fantastic she thought the weekend had been. "It's amazing though, I finished all my vodka after just yesterday. It was insane, I had enough to fill almost four mix bottles."

The conversation then shifted towards Jimi Hendrix, his drug use, death, and then finally their own drug use and how "prime" it had been during the weekend. My new local friend turned towards me and asked whether I liked living in Reykjavik. I told him I did and he nodded in agreement and then half-turning to his friend, he said, "Yeah I can see that, it's like how in Akureyri a gram costs between

were littered only with well-dressed tourists, stopping with the cruise ships for a few hours each day. As far as nighttime entertainment goes, I wasn't quite sure what to expect.

In a white and conservative-looking, windowless house, Sjallinn sits a little bit apart from the main downtown circle, on the corner across from the ÁTVR (State Liquor Store). Originally built by the Independence Party (Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn) in the 1960s – in 1968 my grandparents met there and in 1981 it burned down only to be rebuilt a year later – the lower floor has been turned into a concert space. It is one of the biggest in town, apart from the KA soccer-club, and houses a small discothèque on the top floor.

Café Amor is perhaps the most popular and, really, the only other, club in town besides Sjallinn. But Sjallinn is nearly impossible to get into or, rather, stay in, when you're underage. When Verslunarmannahelgi was behind us, Sjallinn represented the freshest alternative to the now dismal downtown scene.

Since the lower floor opens up only when "big" bands come through town, we climbed up the three flights of stairs to the tiny disco, passing the bouncers standing awkwardly on the first landing and a pair of slot machines on the second. On one end of the small dance floor sat four dishevelled leather couches – most of the cushions were either missing, ripped or strangely mangled. On the other side of the room were tables and chairs, pushed up against a wall of mirrors. The DJ stood in a small booth inside the bordering longer wall, sedately bopping with the music while apparently avoiding looking out over the empty dance floor, motionless under a single twirling disco ball.

The three of us did the only thing that seemed natural in this very, very unnatural place. We started dancing. While the kids sitting in the shadows on each end of the floor sat and stared, the DJ immediately picked up and started dancing in his booth. Approaching him, we asked if he could play a certain song, and he nodded in recognition, but then shook his head and pointed to the pile of records in the corner. As if trying to make it up to us, he smiled and turned on the fog machines.

Immediately following this interaction, three heavily intoxicated guys in their early 20s shot from the bar and threw themselves

>>> CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE



around in the smoke, frequently shouting out "whoa" and "ow-ow" before pulling us into a dance circle. In the centre, with his buddies clapping around him, one of them launched into the robot while trying to demonstrate his pop-and-lock skills, as his friends cheered and hooted enthusiastically.

By this point, the bouncers had moved up the last flight of stairs to stand in the doorway to the disco. Behind the empty bar the bartenders were now watching the dancers, too. A few kids stood up from the tables and started throwing their heads from side to side. Soon the DJ appeared on the floor and began gyrating with everything in sight, only returning to his booth after he had danced with every guy and girl on the floor.

The girls on the floor, moving only in controlled sways and constantly looking around them, quickly tired of dancing and sat out while their male counterparts seemed surprisingly able and willing to let go of all inhibition. Still, we just wanted to dance, and while the DJ had understood that, our dancing companions, maximum eight at a time, hadn't, and eventually we were practically forced out of the club by their eagerness.

Finally breathing some fresh air, we realised what a heavy weight the reeking desperation had put in the air inside. Then again, it could just have been the smoke machine. I doubt it.

Seeing Things through a Different Pane

The night after our adventure at the discothèque, my local friend called to say that going on the "rúntur" was to be my true initiation back into town. Her cousin had a rare opening in his car and so, naturally, I would "rúnta" with them.

The designation "downtown" is, at night, restricted to half the city's commercial centre, awkwardly segmented by a circular forum-type plaza. Most of the town's restaurants and cafés are located here. On this summer Friday, while the practical half, with tourist shops, banks, clothing stores and hotels, sat quietly in the dark, the stretch around Café Amor, Kaffi Akureyri and the late-night food joints was in full-swing. By Akureyri standards, but certainly not by last weekend's standards, downtown was packed. Most of the people "seeing and being seen" downtown were crammed into cars.

We drove in circles for two hours: Café

Amor, Nætursalan, the parking lot of Sparisjóðurinn bank, and again past Amor. Every now and again we'd vary the tour, take a left at Kaffi Akureyri instead of a right, drive past the cheesy nightclub Sjallinn, and then either take the ocean route or head up the hill into the residential area, where the driver could vent his pent-up speed frustration. The purposes of our stops were limited to the acquisition of cigarettes and gasoline. Mostly, we stayed focused and en route, crawling with the long line stretching in front and in back of us on the main stretch.

As we drove around, I was baffled by the simplicity of this pastime. Driving on the rúntur was essentially like taking part in a very minimally animated game. As the cars in the opposite lane passed, we shamelessly stared, taking note of every passenger and gossipy detail suggested by their placement in the car. We were first and foremost collecting information. We were out in the world, but without really having to take part in it. For those acquainted with the base appeal of MySpace, this is its small-town, real-life version. Face-to-face interaction, the kind not involving a window acting as barrier, was extremely rare, even, it seemed, within individual cars. The main attraction was so all-consuming that, within their respective groups, the kids seemed unable to focus on much else. On the rúntur, people talked about the rúntur.

Hence, it was climactic when a pair of guys made the rash decision to stop their cars, and along with them the traffic flow from both directions, ditch their cell phones and indulge in brief face-to-face dialogue. While at first everyone slammed their horns in near unison, it was striking how calm the overall response was. For the full five minutes that this blockade lasted, some 30 cars trapped, not a single person yelled or got out of their vehicle. Everyone had immediately resigned themselves to the circumstances, patiently waiting for the moment to pass, enjoying it in their strange way while they could — or had to.

This exchange was, after all, a golden moment in the game. For those watching a rumour was born, for others it was confirmed and, for those directly involved, a red-carpet moment was achieved. Literally, these boys were enjoying their five minutes of fame and had temporarily become Akureyri's main topic of discussion.

The rúntur was comforting in its repetition, and somehow continually engaging despite the brevity of its high points. It was big enough so that new developments could occur, but small enough for these developments to remain largely trivial. So, really, it was a lot like Akureyri. Here, kids are kings of their own playground.

It was only around midnight when the cars slowly began to fall out of the line.



Finally, making a last circuit, we drove away from the lights of downtown, up the hill past the church, and then north towards the neighbourhood on the fringe of town. Here we rolled down our windows and turned off the music. Finally we haphazardly drifted from one empty street to the next. The darkness seemed to spill into the car through the open windows as we stared out at the sleeping town, as content in its solitude as we were.

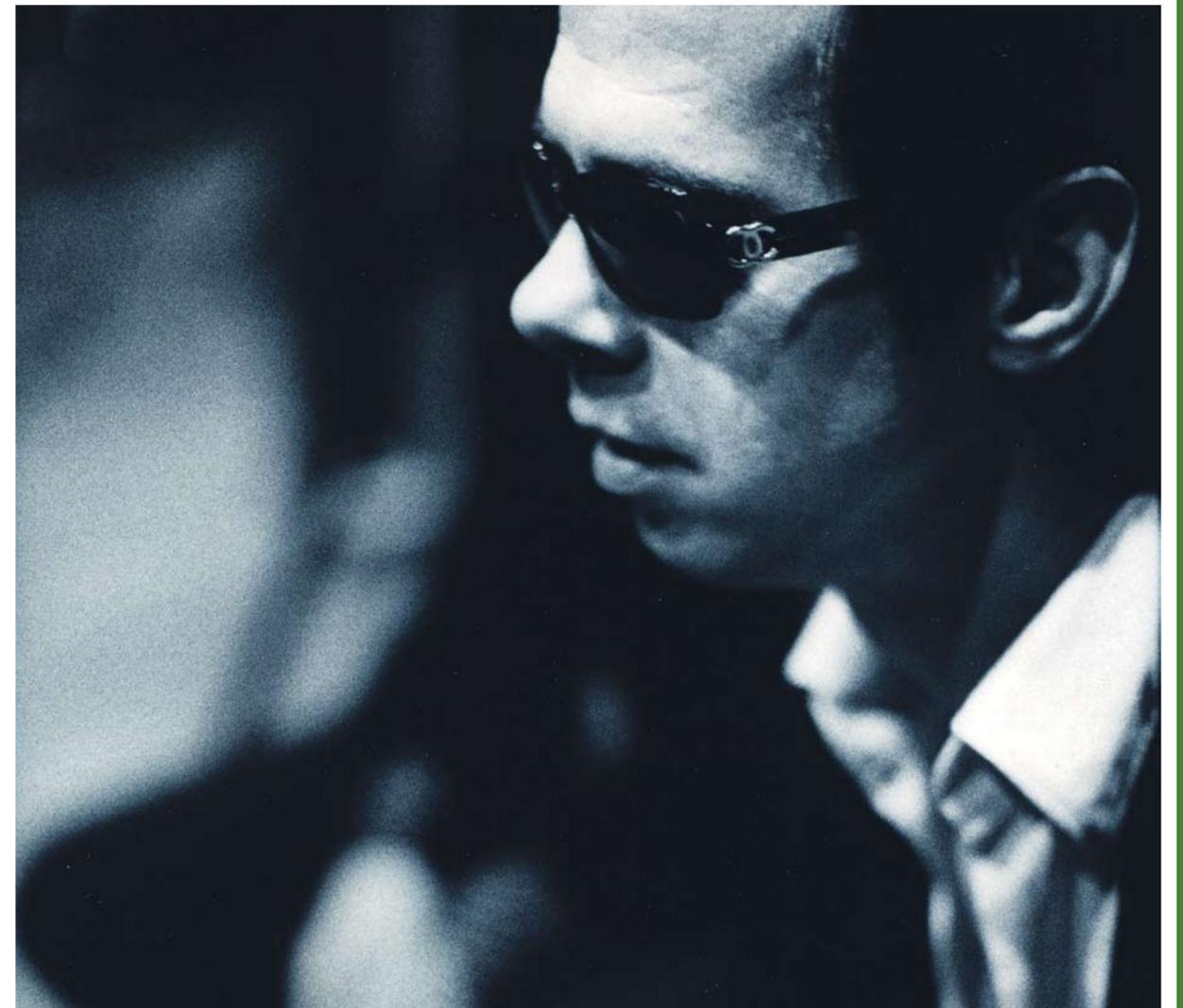
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Issue 14, 2006

8 Page Listings Section in Your Pocket



Nick Cave's Love Affair with Iceland Continues

In October 1986, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds visited Iceland. The visit has long since entered the annals of Icelandic rock n' roll history, not for the musical performance per se, as much as for the circulating rumours of how the singer's then-perilous heroin addiction was dealt with in a country where non-prescription-based opiates are not easily available.

Not one to let the past stand in the way of the future,

Cave has since returned to Iceland twice performing solo to sold-out concert crowds in 2002. Lately, the Aussie has been involved in Icelandic theatre productions, writing the score for the production of Georg Büchner's play, *Woyzeck*, for the Icelandic theatre group Vesturport. Cave also wrote his own play for the group. Cave will again return to Iceland this September, this time along with members of the Bad Seeds. He will at-

tend the opening of his film *The Proposition*, which will mark the close of the Iceland International Film Festival on September 15th. Cave will conclude his visit by performing at yet another sold-out venue on the 16th. *SBB*

Nick Cave, Laugardalshöll, 16 September 2006



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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.
Compiled by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir
listings@grapevine.is

FRIDAY - 8 SEPTEMBER

Mood Bluesband
RÖSENBERG

Apparat, Flís, Benni Hemm Hemm, Kira Kira, Paul Lydon and Hilmar Jenson
IDNÓ (starts at 22:00)

Rockabilly Riot at Bar 11: Kings of Hell and Weapons in concert, followed by DJ Curver and DJ Valdi
BAR 11

Sometime in concert
STÚDENTAKJALLARINN

Hörður Torfa in concert
BORGARLEIKHÚSÍÐ

Franz and Kristó followed by DJ Óli
PRIKIÐ

DJ Árni Sveins
SIRKUS

The Iceland Symphony Orchestra: Solveig Kríngelborn and Rumon Gamba
HÁSKÓLABÍÓ

Alfons X
KAFFIBARINN

Sólstafr in concert
DILLON

DJ Símon
VEGAMÓT

Mínus and Entombed in concert
NASA

DJ Master
AMSTERDAM

Gotti and Eisi, followed by DJ Maggi
HRESSÓ

SATURDAY - 9 SEPTEMBER

Mood Bluesband
RÖSENBERG

Skítamóral in concert
NASA

DJ Árni Sveins
KAFFIBARINN

The Iceland Symphony Orchestra: Solveig Kríngelborn and Rumon Gamba
HÁSKÓLABÍÓ

DJ Dóri
VEGAMÓT

DJ Maggi Legó
SIRKUS

DJ Tim Sweeney from NY with DJ Margeir and DJ Laser
BARINN

Bent & 7Berg, The Oak Society, Death-metal Supersquad and Potential Rap
KAFFI HLJÓMALIND (Starts at 17:00)

Rockabilly Riot at Bar 11: DJ Curver and DJ Gulli
BAR 11

Buff in concert
AMSTERDAM

DJ Kári and DJ Benni B-Ruff
PRIKIÐ

Gotti and Eisi, followed by DJ Maggi
HRESSÓ

SUNDAY - 10 SEPTEMBER

Rockabilly Riot at Bar 11: Kings of Hell in concert
BAR 11

WEDNESDAY - 13 SEPTEMBER

The Telepathetics in concert
PRIKIÐ

Nathan Fake, \7oi and Sketches for Albinos in concert
BARINN

DJ Baldur
KAFFIBARINN

Santiago in concert
RÖSENBERG

Reykjavík! in concert, followed by DJ Einar Sonic
SIRKUS

DJ Símon
VEGAMÓT

THURSDAY - 14 SEPTEMBER

Reykjanes Rocks: Æla and ... in concert
Þjóðleikhúsjallarinn

DJ Kári
PRIKIÐ

The Iceland Symphony Orchestra: Malcolm Arnold: Symphony nr. 5, Sjosta-kovitsj: Symphony nr. 12.
HÁSKÓLABÍÓ

DJ Maggi Legó
SIRKUS

Bubbi in concert
NASA

DJ Adda
VEGAMÓT

Diagon and Vera in concert
AMSTERDAM

Hljómsveit Söllu
RÖSENBERG

FRIDAY - 15 SEPTEMBER

Franz and Kristó followed by Danni Deluxe and Dóri DNA
PRIKIÐ

Partyzone night feat. Tiefschwarz, DJ Margeir & DJ Casanova
NASA

Pineapple Records: Kid Carpet and DJ President Bongo
SIRKUS

DJ Kári
VEGAMÓT

DJ Fúsi
AMSTERDAM

DJ Jón Atli
KAFFIBARINN

Krummafótur plays Django-jazz
RÖSENBERG

DJ Gulli Ósoma
BAR 11

Sálin hans Jóns míns in concert
LAUGARDALSHÖLL

Touch in concert, followed by DJ Johnny
HRESSÓ

Original Melody and Forgotten Loes in concert
STÚDENTAKJALLARINN

SATURDAY - 16 SEPTEMBER

DJ Gísli Galdur
PRIKIÐ

DJ Jón Atli
SIRKUS

The Iceland Symphony Orchestra: Chamber Orchestra concerts
LISTASAFN ÍSLANDS

DJ Margeir
KAFFIBARINN

Í Svörtum Fötum in concert
NASA

Fræ + guests in concert
STÚDENTAKJALLARINN

DJ Fúsi
AMSTERDAM

Nick Cave in concert
LAUGARDALSHÖLL

Helgi Valur troubadour followed by DJ Johnny
HRESSÓ

Krummafótur plays Django-jazz
RÖSENBERG

DJ Símon
VEGAMÓT

90s night with Curver
BAR 11

TUESDAY - 19 SEPTEMBER

DJ Ernir
PRIKIÐ

WEDNESDAY - 20 SEPTEMBER

DJ Kacoon
PRIKIÐ

DJ Baldur
KAFFIBARINN

DJ Kira Kira
SIRKUS

THURSDAY - 21 SEPTEMBER

DJ Maggi Legó
PRIKIÐ

Kentár bluesband
HRESSÓ

DJ Chuck
SIRKUS

Refuse + guests
AMSTERDAM

Skölfest 2006 - Say Goodbye to Summer: I Adapt, Momentum, Benny Crespo's Gang, Celestine, Changer, Morðingjarnir and Shai Hulud
TÞM Hellirinn

FRIDAY - 22 SEPTEMBER

Franz and Kristó followed by DJ Óli
PRIKIÐ

DJ Baldur
KAFFIBARINN

Pub-lie in concert, followed by DJ Maggi
HRESSÓ

DJ Þórhallur and DJ Biggi veira
SIRKUS

DJ Eron and DJ Buzby with drummer Alseny from Guinea play electronic and techno
KAFFI KÚLTÚRA

Brain Police release concerts
AMSTERDAM

DJ Óli Weapons
BAR 11

SATURDAY - 23 SEPTEMBER

Einar Scheving
RÖSENBERG

DJ Kári and DJ Benni B-Ruff
PRIKIÐ

Björgvin Halldórsson and the Iceland Symphony
LAUGARDALSHÖLL

DJ Gísli Galdur
KAFFIBARINN

Köngulóarbandið, followed by DJ Maggi
HRESSÓ

DJ Gulli Ósoma
BAR 11

DJ Master
AMSTERDAM

DJ Árni Sveins
SIRKUS

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Nathan Fake

This coming fortnight will see some interesting goings-on in and around Reykjavík, at least for those of us favouring good electronic music... and good music in general. One of the most intriguing events to surface in a long time comes in the form of a surprise visit by progressive techno's current poster-boy, Nathan Fake. This Norfolk, UK native has captivated the ears and minds of electro-lovers worldwide ever since putting out his first 12-inch three years ago. The later release of his 2006 debut LP, *Drowning in a Sea of Love* (which received a scorching 8.4 review on Pitchforkmedia.com) only tightened his grip on unsuspecting electrophiles.

The Barinn show has no admission. There, Fake will be supported by weirdly named local electronic musicians \7oi and Sketches for Albinos. This concert promises to be a rather progressive way to spend one's Wednesday night, whether you're a techno-head or just a fan of free stuff. *HM BARINN, September 13*



Tiefschwarz

Being recently lauded as The Reykjavík Cool-Police on the back page of local newspaper *Fréttablaðið*, we figured we might as well start recommending some genuinely 'cool' music instead of constantly flaunting the same overplayed, under-rehearsed rock. And what music could possibly be cooler than House, with its dumbfoundingly obscure celebrities and status as the international soundtrack for taking drugs while wearing sunglasses at night?

In all seriousness, the night of Tiefschwarz's performance at NASA's Partyzone Night is set to be a veritable reason for excitement among Reykjavík's dance-loving community. Long since attaining legendary status, house musicians Tiefschwarz have been going for ten years now to an ever-increasing level of success and a faultless reputation. Accompanied by sets from DJs Margeir and Casanova, it's hard to think of a better chance for the uninitiated to explore what house music has to offer than by checking out what its masters are up to. *HM NASA, September 15*

AKUREYRI THEATRICAL COMPANY
Hafnarstræti 57, 600 Akureyri
Tel: 460 0200

Current shows:
Little Shop of Horrors
By Howard Ashman

Visit www.leikfelag.is for full schedule and tickets.

BROADWAY
Ármúla 9
Tel: 533 1110
www.broadway.is

No schedule available.

ICELAND DANCE COMPANY
Listabráut 3
Tel: 588 0900
www.id.is

Closed until October

ICELANDIC OPERA
Ingólfsstræti
Tel: 511 6400

The Abduction from the Seraglio
By W.A. Mozart

Visit www.opera.is for full schedule and tickets.

THE NATIONAL THEATRE
Hverfisgata 19
Tel: 551 1200

Current shows:
Pétur Gautur
By Henrik Ibsen

Sumardagur
By Jon Fosse

Eldhús eftir máli
By Vala Þórhallsdóttir

Visit www.leikhusid.is for full schedule and tickets

THE REYKJAVÍK CITY THEATRE
Listabráut 3
Tel: 568 8000

Current shows on mainstage:
Ágúa - Tanztheater Wuppertal
By Pina Bausch

Footloose
By Porvaldur Bjarni

Ronia the Robber's Daughter
By Astrid Lindgren

Who Wants to Find a Million Krónur?
By Ray Cooney

Visit www.borgarleikhus.is for full schedule and tickets.

1 CAFÉ
Café Roma
 Laugavegur 118

Roma, at the far end of the main street Laugavegur, is a deli-type coffee house offering a variety of breads, soup and tempting cookies, cakes and other sweet things. Their specials around lunch time are always a bargain.

8 Tíu Dropar
 Laugavegur 27

A very nice, old-fashioned café. It's suburban, as all traditional coffee shops should be, and this place makes you feel warm, both with its atmosphere and the generosity of the coffee refills.

15 Café Victor
 Hafnarstræti 1-3

Spelled with a C rather than the Icelandic K, presumably in an effort to seem more cosmopolitan. This play seems to be working, as the bar has become a hangout for older foreigners. The Viking ship sitting on top of the building might also add to the appeal. The crowd is very mixed, both in origin and age, and so is the music.

22 Pravda
 Austurstræti 22

Pravda is one of the biggest clubs/bars in downtown Reykjavík, situated in one of the more ideal locations for such an institution in the city. It's divided between two floors, although the distinction between the ambience on the top and bottom floors has faded away in recent times.

25 Ölstofan
 Vegamótstígur

Ölstofan is an unpretentious, comfortable and straightforward place to relax. It's also known as a hangout for the 'intellectual' circles of Reykjavík, as well as some media types, the opposite of 'intellectual' in this country. Music is almost never played at Ölstofan – so you can actually have a conversation.

28 Kaffibrennslan
 Pósthússtræti 9

Café, bistro, restaurant, bar – whatever you want to call it, Kaffibrennslan is a consistently pleasant place to go for snacks and refreshments of whatever variety you happen to crave. They also have the largest selection of beers in Reykjavík. We recommend the Cobra and Staroprammen.

31 RESTAURANTS
Krua Thai
 Tryggvagata 14

This authentic Thai restaurant is one of the better bargains in town. We challenge you to find a better meal for the same price anywhere else. They have their menu outside with numbered colour images. Just say the number and eat the food.

34 Argentina
 Barónsstígur 11a

Perennial favourite, Argentina is a fine dining steak house. For whale-enthusiasts, you can also sample the local Minke, or excellent fish. This restaurant has maintained its reputation with three things: perfect cuts of meat, excellent service, and an excellent wine list.

37 Tapas
 Vesturgata 3b

Those with a bit of money and time on their hands would do well to spend an evening or two at Tapas, having course after course of wonderful miniature dishes served to them. Oddly, it's also a great place to get tasty and affordable lobster. If you don't feel like getting up right away afterwards, there's also a lounge.

44 Bæjarins Bestu
 Tryggvagata

A veritable institution in central Reykjavík, and probably the most consistently successful business the city has seen, Bæjarins Bestu is actually just a simple hot dog stand. Their menu consists of hot dogs and Coke – and nothing else. You don't have to be a Buddhist to ask them to make you one with everything.

2 Ráðhúskaffi
 City Hall

Ráðhúskaffi, situated inside the Reykjavík City Hall, is a comfortable choice for the view over Tjörnin (the pond). It's especially convenient on Iceland's so-called 'window weather' days – the days that are only beautiful if you stay indoors. Coffee, light snacks, art exhibitions, Internet access, a topographic model of Iceland and municipal politics: all conveniently under the same roof.

9 Kaffitár
 Bankastræti 8

This is the downtown store of one of the country's finest coffee importers, and the quality of the product is as excellent as you would expect. 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
 Vegamótstígur 4

Vegamót (crossroads) has an appealing lunch menu, they serve brunch during the weekends, and the kitchen is open until 22:00 daily. After that the beat goes on, and you can check the end results in photos published the day after on their website www.vegamat.is. If you like Oliver, try Vegamót and vice versa.

23 Café Cultura
 Hverfisgata 18

The trendy Café Cultura is located in the same building as the Intercultural Centre, and has a distinct international flavour. A good-value menu, friendly service and settings that allow you to either sit down and carry on discussions, or dance the night away.

26 Thorvaldsen
 Austurstræti 8

This place is fancy, and it knows it. Civilian attire is looked down upon, so don't expect to get in wearing hiking boots. DJs play on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Arrive before 12 if you want to avoid the queue.

29 Glaumar
 Tryggvagata 20

Partly a sports bar, Glaumar is also a popular venue for live bands and DJs, but mostly it's just a good place to get drunk and party. They can host private gatherings before midnight on weekdays, and you would be hard pressed to get a better deal on a keg party than here.

32 Tveir Fiskar
 Geirsgata 9

Located right by the harbour, Tveir Fiskar boasts some of the freshest fish in town – they prefer it to still be moving when they buy it. Their menu also dares to be different, and this just might be your only chance to sample the debatable delights of raw dolphin.

35 Vin og Skel
 Laugavegur 55

If you like fresh seafood and are in the mood for something a little different, this cosy but ambitious restaurant just might fit the bill. Shellfish, salmon, squid, lobster and other creatures of the deep predominate the menu here. There is no smoking in the restaurant, but if you want to have a go at sitting outside there are fleece blankets provided.

38 Sægreifinn
 Geirsgata

Places recommended for their local touch tend to instantly lose any element of the exotic, but Sægreifinn (The Sea Baron) is an exception. It's a combination of a fish store and a... well, not exactly a restaurant but a place that serves prepared food, located in a harbour warehouse. Smell of fish, the view over the harbour, an old man that looks exactly like an Icelandic fisherman should. What's not to love?

45 Subway
 Austurstræti

You know exactly what you get when you walk into a Subway restaurant, and their sub sandwiches are always made from fresh ingredients – right in front of your eyes. Reasonably priced and far healthier than most alternatives – provided you show some restraint when you order.

3 Grái Kötturrinn
 Hverfisgata 16a

Grái Kötturrinn (the grey cat) is a cosy place that's especially popular during the morning hours. Their breakfast is legendary, but they tend not to be open later in the day. A great place to nurse a hangover, or just to start the workday.

10 Segafredo
 By Lækjartorg

Italian coffee chain Segafredo seems to be doing brisk business by Lækjartorg, with locals and tourists alike flocking to sip their espressos at the conveniently placed tables outside. The staff are expert baristas, and, even though Iceland is proud of its coffee, nobody quite tops the Segafredo latte.

17 B5
 Bankastræti 5

B5 is a bistro with a Scandinavian focus on the menu. Don't be fooled by the impressive collection of design classics that you see in the window when passing by – it's neither cold nor overly expensive, but rather a cosy place with friendly service.

4 Kaffi Hjómaland
 Laugavegur 21

Despite hosting the occasional rock concert, Kaffi Hjómaland is a peaceful café with perfect windows for people watching and a lot of daylight. It's run by a non-profit organisation and only serves organic & fair-trade products. It's strictly a non-smoking establishment.

11 BARS 'N' BISTROS
Sólón
 Bankastræti 7a

Sólón is a nightclub on Friday and Saturday nights, but during the daytime it's a café/bistro. On weeknights they're a restaurant with a decent menu as well, and an art exhibition on the walls to finish the package.

18 Rósenberg
 Laugavegur 2

Perhaps the closest thing to a jazz club in town, here old instruments line the walls. People go there for conversation and to listen to music rather than dance. The place tends to have jazz- or blues-type music, and is developing a bluegrass scene.

5 Mokka
 Skólavörðustígur 3a

Kaffi Mokka is one of the oldest cafés in Reykjavík, dating back to the 1950s. Famous for their dark, smoky atmosphere, loyal clientele and some of the best waffles in town.

12 Litli Ljótí Andarunginn
 Lækjargata 6b

Known for its all you can eat fish buffet, this restaurant/guesthouse is also a fine place to sit down and relax with a latte or some beer when suffering from a case of severe hipster-burn.

19 Grand Rokk
 Smíðustígur 6

As the Viking-style garden and logo accurately signal, this hardcore chess hangout is no place for the weak. Yes, chess bars are that tough in Iceland. Even if the downstairs atmosphere can feel a bit ominous at times, it's one of the best venues for live music in town. If you speak Icelandic you can also take part in the pub quiz on Fridays at 17:30. Participation is free and the winner walks away with a case of beer!

6 Ömmukaffi
 Austurstræti

The name literally means "grandma's coffee shop", but here you can find people of all ages and all nationalities. It has a very friendly, down-to-earth feel to it. Affordable prices on coffee, cakes and the lunch menu. Try their speciality, the South African latte.

13 Kaffibarinn
 Bergstaðastræti 1

Kaffibarinn has a reputation as a hangout for artists and others who think they are hip. Friday and Saturday nights serve as the weekly peaks of claustrophobia, while weekdays and afternoons can be comfortable, if banal.

20 Bar 11
 Laugavegur 11

While the place is only open on the weekends, Bar 11 is a popular rock bar on Laugavegur and one of the main late-night party venues in town. You'll feel the floor jumping every Friday and Saturday, and it's neither you nor an earthquake. Live concerts and a nice foosball table upstairs.

7 Babalú
 Skólavörðustígur 22a

One of the youngest coffeehouses in Reykjavík is also the homiest. Almost like a living room away from home, Babalú keeps it simple, quiet and cosy with coffee and the occasional crêpe.

14 Sirkus
 Klappargata 30

Of absolutely no relation to the trashy culture guide, or trashy TV station that stole its name, Sirkus is worshipped like few other locales in Iceland. Elements of the odd and alternative cultural institution include an upstairs that looks and smells like a bus, a garden, a flea market and a queue on weekend nights that looks never-ending.

21 Hressingarskálinn
 Austurstræti 20

The celebrated site of one of the more famous coffeehouses in Iceland, this bar/café/bistro 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.

24 Prikið
 Bankastræti 12

Prikið has changed noticeably in character in recent years, as it used to be an old-fashioned and traditional downtown coffeehouse. Somehow the younger crowd caught on and transformed the place to its present form: a diner during the day and a rowdy nightclub on weekends. You can also borrow board games there, such as backgammon or chess, and it is a popular breakfast spot early in the morning.

27 Kaffi Amsterdam
 Hafnarstræti 5

Kaffi Amsterdam is a cosy tavern located in the centre of Reykjavík. Known mostly for its rambling late-hour drinking crowd, Amsterdam recently established itself as a fresh new venue for the city's music talent.

30 Dillon
 Laugavegur 30

Legendary Icelandic rockers have been known to DJ at this place from time to time, and Þróstur from Mímus has even tended the bar. You can pretty much guarantee this place will be rocking any time you walk in on a Friday or Saturday night.

33 Hornið
 Hafnarstræti 15

Means "the corner" and the place lives up to its name by... well, being on a corner. This is actually the oldest Italian restaurant in town, celebrating its 27th year, and it always seems to be consistently popular. Excellent quality pizza, pasta and salads – all priced affordably.

36 Tjarnarbakkinn
 Vönnarstræti 3

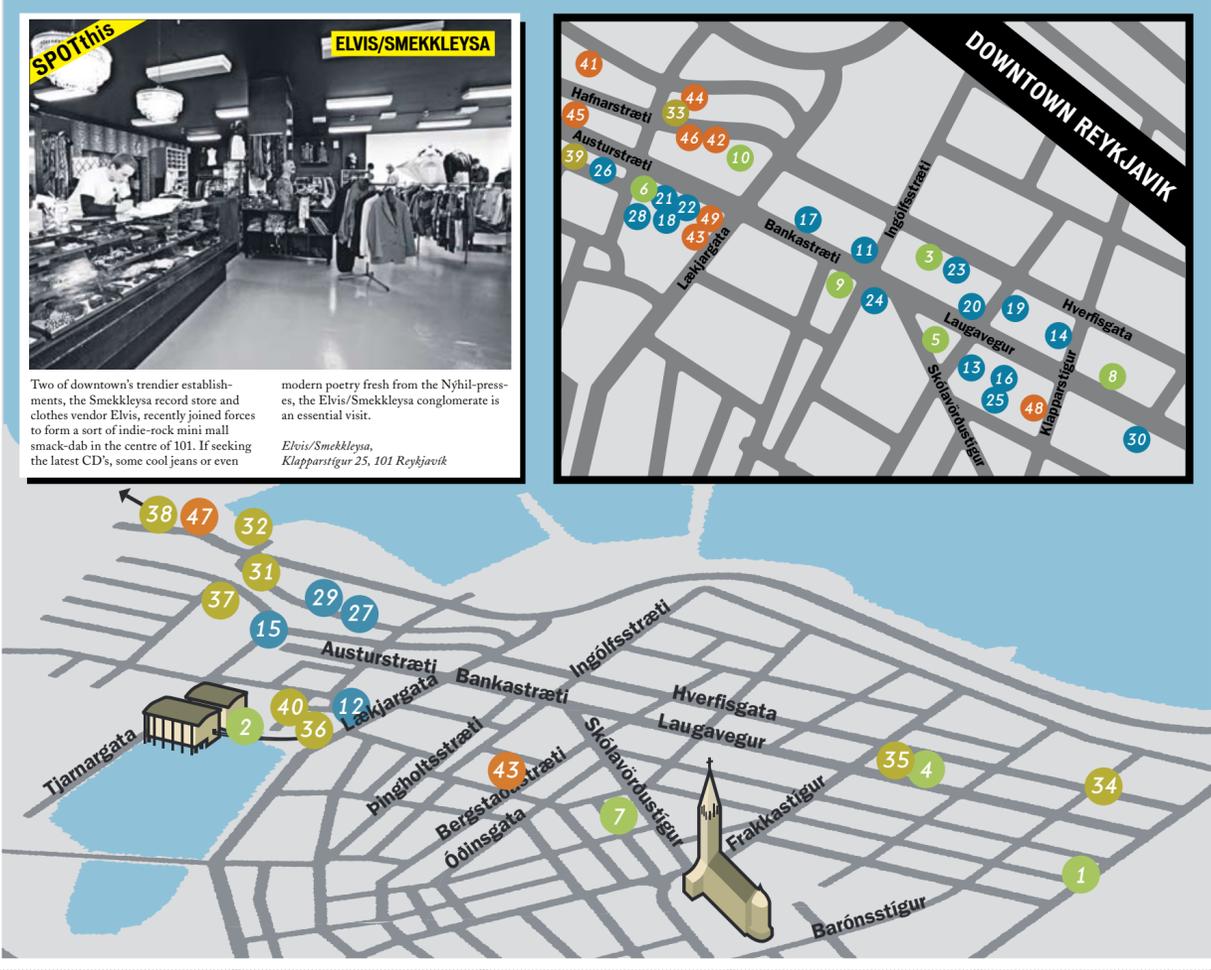
Tjarnarbakkinn is right above the Íðnó theatre, so it's an ideal place to go before shows, or during if you prefer a more quiet atmosphere. If you sit by the window you get nice views of the pond, and in the summers you can enjoy your meal outside. The lamb comes especially recommended; it's one of those rare traditional Icelandic dishes that aren't an acquired taste.

43 Bernhöftsbakari
 Bergstaðastræti 13

The oldest bakery in Reykjavík, founded in 1834. If you are particular about your bread this is about the best place in central Reykjavík to stock up on a variety of freshly baked loaves – they also do a particularly moist and juicy version of the ever popular vinarbráð pastries. You can even call ahead and have your favourite items reserved, if you're afraid someone else might beat you to that last snúður or kleina.

50 Vitabar
 Bergþórsgata 21

Actually a bar, but best known for its ham-burgers. 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.



Two of downtown's trendier establishments, the Smekkleysa record store and clothes vendor Elvis, recently joined forces to form a sort of indie-rock mini mall smack-dab in the centre of 101. If seeking the latest CD's, some cool jeans or even modern poetry fresh from the Nýhil-presses, the Elvis/Smekkleysa conglomerate is an essential visit.
 Elvis/Smekkleysa, Klappargata 25, 101 Reykjavík

MUSEUMS
Arþéjarsafn
 Árber
 www listasafnreykjavikur.is
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RADIO

Rás 1
Government radio station often featuring talk shows, radio soap operas, and traditional music.

Rás 2
More progressive government radio station, featuring a variety of music as well as news discussion programmes.

Bylgjan (98.9 FM)
Light pop music.

Útvarp Saga (99.4 FM)
Iceland's oldest station, featuring both Icelandic and foreign music from decades past.

Talstöðin (90.9 FM)
Talk radio station, in Icelandic.

Létt 96.7 (96.7 FM)
Office pop, easy listening.

FM 957 (95.7 FM)
One of the "hnakkistöðvar," playing pop-rock geared towards urban clubbing youth.

XFM (91.9FM)
Iceland's rock station, often playing cutting-edge releases.

Lindin (102.9 FM)
Christian broadcasting station, available all over the country.

Capone
The higher ups at X-FM Radio finally got some sense into their heads and reversed the cancellation of their ever-popular and highly polemical morning show Capone in which DJs Andri and Búi rule the studio from 7:00-10:00 every morning. Joined by some nagging guests and loyal fans who call in to discuss the hot topics of the day, they feature uncensored class-A material in which they don't hesitate to blurt out whatever crazy thought is on their mind at the time. Capone is guaranteed to wake you up in the morning like a truckload of coffee. And yeah, there's also some real music, no Justin Timberlake and Idol-star bullshit.

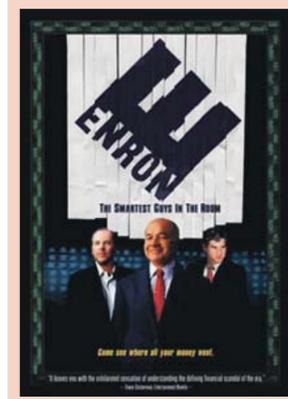
Viðsjá
Despite the raging debate on the purpose of the state-owned broadcasting company RÚV, it can pride itself on at least one thing. They produce good radio. One of the better shows on the air is Viðsjá, aired on Rás 1 every weekday between 17:00 and 18:00. This cultural program deals with arts, theatre and literature, featuring critical commentary on current events and new publications, mixed with informative interviews and exclusive reviews. You can even listen to old episodes on the show's website, www.ruv.is/vidsja.

TV

FC Nörd
Who would have thought that rounding up a group of nerds with zero experience playing football, turning them into a team, and teaching them how to actually kick a ball would be TV material? Sýn, that's who. Now all that remains to be done is proving they were right, and you just might be in for a treat. Icelanders obviously can't get enough of reality TV, or football for that matter, combining the two, and throwing the former national football coach into the mix to control the camp, could be a recipe for some brilliant television. Whether there will be any crying, backstabbing, or brutal fighting remains to be seen, but some hilarious moments are almost guaranteed. The high point promises to be the match between the still-nerdy, but no-longer-amateur, players and the Icelandic champions, which is scheduled as a grand finale at Laugardalsvöllur.

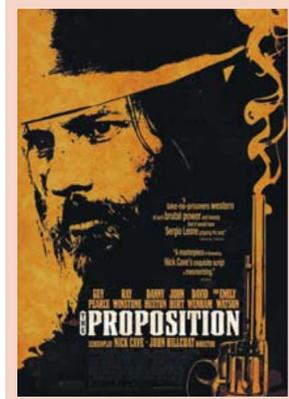


Nanny 911
Spoiled, aggressive, mischievous kids and exhausted parents living together in their messy homes are the unlikely stars of the Nanny 911 show on Stöð 2. When an experienced troop of nannies comes to the rescue and tries to bring peace to the chaotic war zone the families' homes have become audiences are bound to witness some very distasteful interactions. The nannies amazingly succeed in disciplining the brats: making them shut their greasy mouths while teaching the distraught and often not-so-bright parents how to handle similar situations in the future. This show is not only good entertainment, but an excellent form of birth control that will make you think twice about whether having children is a good idea, like, ever. For those of us who have already dug our own graves in that area, it may at least serve as a resource on how to take charge and remind us that our own homes may comparably be Heaven.



Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room

The Enron scandal is the focal point of this Oscar-nominated documentary directed by Alex Gibney. Among others John Beard, George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Peter Coyote and Kenneth Lay, take on roles as the lead characters. Based on the best-seller of the same name, the movie tells the infamous tale of the rise and fall of one of America's largest companies by taking viewers on a thorough tour inside the story and interviewing insiders. This film has enough drama, corruption, greed and disaster to glue every business fanatic and documentary enthusiast to their cinema seat. *SJ*



The Proposition

The Iceland International Film Festival will close this year with a gala premiere of the epic western The Proposition. It stars boxer-turned-Hollywood-leading-man Ray Winstone as a 19th-century British trooper trying to fight a gang of renegades on the run after committing a brutal rape and murder. Winstone himself will be present at the premiere, hopefully accompanied by Nick Cave, who not only wrote the script, but also composed the film's score. Set in the Australian outback, the visual element of this bloody and violent film is supposedly equally as stunning as Winstone's theatrical performance. The film also features Guy Pearce, Emily Watson and John Hurt. *SJ*

THE ALIBI

Based around the idea of an alibi service for adulterous husbands. Any movie starring Steve Coogan is at least worth a glance.

THE ANT BULLY

Julia Roberts, Nicolas Cage and Bruce Campbell (!) lend their voices to this CGI-flick about a man who shrinks and is forced to work in an ant colony. *Sambtón Alfabakka, Sambtón Kringlunni, Háskólabíó, Nýja Bíó.*

GARFIELD: A TAIL OF TWO KITTIES

Lovable cartoon cat Garfield frolics in England. Some castles are involved. *Smrárbíó, Laugarásbíó, Borgarbíó.*

FIVE CHILDREN AND IT

Featuring the voice talent of Eddie Izzard as a 'Sand Fairy', this English fairytale movie also stars Kenneth Branagh. *Sambtón Alfabakka.*

LADY IN THE WATER

M. Night Shyamalan's latest film stars Paul Giamatti as a building superintendent determined to save a strange woman he finds in his pool. *Sambtón Kringlunni, Sambtón Alfabakka, Háskólabíó.*

LITTLE MAN

Some of the Wayans brothers return

after their triumphant success in White Chicks. If you liked that, you'll love this. *Smrárbíó, Borgarbíó, Sambtón Keflavík.*

MIAMI VICE

Based on the TV series, undercover cops Crockett and Tubbs return and chase Miami drug dealers around in fancy suits and fast cars. Warning: Colin Farrell is in this movie. *Sambtón Kringlunni, Smrárbíó.*

MY SUPER EX-GIRLFRIEND

Uma Thurman plays a cuckolded superhero out for revenge on her former beau. Sounds interesting enough.

NACHO LIBRE

Napoleon Dynamite prodigy Jared Hess returns with this south-of-the-border wrestling flick starring Jack Black.

OVER THE HEDGE

A raccoon tries to steal a grizzly bear's food; the bear catches him and gives him one week to reclaim the food; hilarity ensues. *Sambtón Alfabakka.*

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST

A drunk pirate in make-up tries to sneak a peek into a human squid's locker. Bestiality activists need not apply. *Háskólabíó, Sambtón Kringlunni, Sambtón Alfabakka, Sambtón Akureyri.*

THE SENTINEL

A traitor in the Secret Service stirs things up as the president's life is in danger. Starring Michael Douglas, Kiefer Sutherland, Eva Longoria and Kim Basinger. *Smrárbíó.*

SNAKES ON A PLANE

Yeah, snakes. On a plane. *Laugarásbíó.*

STEP UP

Some dancers dance around a lot. Should be awesome, if you're into that whole scene.

UNITED 93

The first of the 9/11 feature films, this one attempts to give a real time account of the events on board United Flight 93, where passengers foiled the terrorist plot.

Regnbögnn
Hverfisgata 54
101 Reykjavík
Tel. 551-9000

Sambtón
Álfabakka 8
109 Reykjavík
Tel. 575-8900

Smrárbíó
Smáralind
201 Kópavogur
Tel. 564-0000

Háskólabíó
Hagatorgi
107 Reykjavík
Tel. 525-5400

Kringlubíó
Kringlunni 4-12
103 Reykjavík
Tel. 575-8900

Selfossbíó
Eyrarvegur 2
800 Selfoss
Tel. 482-3007

Laugarásbíó
Laugarási
104 Reykjavík
Tel. 565-0118

Sambtón Akureyri
Ráðhústorgi
600 Akureyri
Tel. 461-4666

Nýja-Bíó
Hafnargata 33
230 Reykjanesbær
Tel. 421-1170

Visit www.kvikmyndir.is for regularly updates on new films and showtimes.

The Grapevine lists exhibitions from galleries throughout Iceland. If you would like to be included, free of charge, contact the Grapevine by email at listings@grapevine.is.
Compiled by Virginia Zech

101 GALLERY

Hverfisgata 18
Thu.-Sat. 14-17 and by appointment
www.101hotel.is/101hotel/101gallery/

28.07-02.09.06
Serge Comte

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15.09.06-?
Iain Sharpe

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Sat. 11-16
Sun. 14-16
www.myndlist.is

GALLERÍ SÆVARIS KARLS

Bankastræti 7
www.saevarkarl.is
Mon.-Fri. 10-18
Sat. 10-16

Current exhibition:
Rudolf L. Reiter

GALLERY TURPENTINE

Ingólfsstræti 5
Tue.-Fri. 12-18
Sat. 11-16
www.turpentine.is

18.08-10.09.06
Aron Reyrr Sverrisson

08.09-03.10.06
"Hibrídi/Hybrid"
Halla Gunnarsdóttir

GEL GALLERÍ

Hverfisgata 37
Mon.-Fri. 10-19
Sat. 10-17

01.08-?
Aron Bergman

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Gerðuberg 3-5

08.14-10.09.06
Sculptures by Guðjón Stefán Kristinsson; Acrylic portraits by Jón Ólafsson; paintings by Ketill Larsen

GYLLINHÆÐ

Laugavegur 23
Thu.-Sun. 14-18

Students from the second year of the Academy

i8 GALLERY

Klapparástígur 33
Tue.-Fri. 11-17
Sat. and by appointment 13-17
www.i8.is

14.09-21.10.06
Hildur Bjarnadóttir

ICELANDIC LABOUR UNION'S ART GALLERY

Freyjugata 41
Tue.-Sun. 13-17
Free Entrance

19.08-10.09.06
Alexandra Signer & Tumi Magnússon

KLING & BANG GALLERY

Laugavegur 23
Thu.-Sun. 14-18
Free Entrance
www.tbis.is/klingandbang

02.09- 01.10.06

Kling og Bang: God's chosen people, various artists

14.10-05.11.06
Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir & New York artists

LIVING ART MUSEUM

Laugavegur 26
Wed., Fri.-Sun. 13-17
Thu. 13-22
www.nylo.is

12.08-03.09.06

Pétur Már Gunnarsson, Johann Maheut, Toshinari Sato

THE NATIONAL GALLERY

Friðriksjuvegur
Tue.-Sun. 11-17
Free Entrance
www listasafn.is

08.07-24.09.06

Landscape and folklore

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM

Sudurgata 41
Open daily 10-17
www.natmus.is/english

Temporary Exhibitions:
Photography from Iceland, 1938 Invisible women in Icelandic art Archaeological research and Iceland's new view of history

Permanent Exhibitions:
The Making of a Nation

THE NORDIC HOUSE

Sturlugata 5
Tue.-Sun. 12-17
www.nordice.is/english

30.07-30.09.06

Ilmur Stefánsdóttir & Steinunn Knútsdóttir

REYKJAVÍK 871 +/- 2: THE SETTLEMENT EXHIBITION

Adalstræti 16
Open daily 10-17

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM

ÁSMUNDUR SVEINSSON SCULPTURE MUSEUM
Sigtún
Open daily 10-16
Admission ticket is valid on the same day for all three museums.
www listasafnreykjavikur.is

HAFNARHÚS

Tryggvagata 17
Open daily 10-17

09.01- 10.22.06

Apostles' Club House Exhibition of works by young Icelandic artists.

10.06.06-07.01.07

The Erró Collection: Graphic Works

KJARVALSSTAÐIR

Flokkagata
Open daily 10-17

08.04-03.12.06

Let's Look at Art: A series of exhibitions especially designed for children

24.06-17.09.06

Summer Exhibition from the Permanent Collection

REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM

Kistubylur 4
www.arbaejarsafn.is

Closed in September.

THE REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Grófrárbús, Tryggvagata 15, 6th floor
Weekdays 12-19
Sat.-Sun. 13-17
Free Entrance
www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is/english/index.htm

01.06-24.09.06

Photography by Andrés Kolbeinsson

SAFN

Laugavegur 37
Wed.-Fri. 14-18
Sat.-Sun. 14-17
Free Entrance
www.safn.is

Until - 10.09.06

"Crystal Gray" Sean Shanahan, Alan Johnston, Ragna Róbertsdóttir and Roman Signer



16.09-05.11.06

Tilo Baumgärtel & Martin Kobe

SIGURJÓN ÓLAFSSON MUSEUM

Laugarnestangi 70
Tue.-Sun. 14-17

Permanent exhibition of the work of sculptor Sigurjón Ólafsson

>>>OUTSIDE REYKJAVÍK

Seyðisfjörður:

SKAFTFELL
www.skaftfell.is

26.08-24.09.06

Guðný Rósa Ingmarsdóttir & Gauthier Hubert

Hafnarfjörður:

HAFNARBORG
Mon.-Sun. 11-17
www.hafnarborg.is

Keflavík:

SUÐSUÐVESTUR

Hafnargata 22
Thu.-Fri. 16-18
Sat.-Sun. 14-17
www.sudsudvestur.is

Akureyri:

DALÍ GALLERÍ

Brekkugata 9
Mon.-Sat. 14-18

02.09.06-?

"Red Seria" Jónas Viðar

AKUREYRI ART MUSEUM

Kaupvangsstræti 12
Tue.-Sun. 12-17
www listasafn.akureyri.is





Summershow

As summer draws to a close, so does the exhibition 'Summershow' at Gallery i8. The show itself has no unifying theme other than featuring several out of the gallery's impressive roster of world-renowned artists in a fitting environment.

Artists such as Ólafur Eliásson (who's 'Color Spectrum Series' can be observed in the accompanying photograph), Finnbogi Pétursson, Karin Sander, Roni Horn, Guðrún Einarsdóttir and Birgir Andrésdóttir are among those displaying their works at i8, as Reykjavík experiences the last of a too short summer. *HM*
Gallery i8 (Klapparstígur 33) Tuesday-Friday, 11-17, Saturday 13-17. Until September 13



Digital Thailand

Amateur photographer Sveinbjörn Ólafsson (b. 1958) is a frequent visitor to Thailand these. Ólafsson's enthusiasm for the friendly Asian nation has now paid off for his Icelandic brethren, resulting in an exhibition of photographs captured on his journeys. The show marks the photographer's first public display of his work and, according to him, 'the first Icelandic photo exhibit featuring Thailand as seen through a digital camera exclusively'. For his photography, Ólafsson has thus far received six awards in various photo-competitions, and his work was also featured on the first Icelandic CD – Bubbi's 'Frelsi til sölu'. Taking place at popular vegetarian restaurant Á næstu grösum, Ólafsson collection of photographs entitled 'Thailand Dreams' will be on display until the 16th of this month. *HM*

**Á Næstu Grösum (Laugavegur 20b)
 Monday-Saturday, 11:30-22, Sundays,
 17-22. Until September 16**



Change In the House of Arts

The Avant Garde Finds a New Home

BY SVEINN BIRKIR BJÖRNSSON PHOTOS BY SKARI

Last September, Hafþór Yngvason was appointed the director of the Reykjavík Art Museum. This September however, he is truly taking the reigns. During his first year on the job, Yngvason had been carrying out a schedule that had already been planned a year in advance by his predecessor. That schedule has run its course and Yngvason is now free to pursue one of his own. And he has some changes in mind.

"It is necessary for a big museum like this one to have a long term plan. But my predecessor was nice enough to plan only one year in advance, which gave me time to settle in. Some of my colleagues in other countries have had to wait up to three years to put their own schedule in effect," Yngvason says.

It is two days until the opening of the museum's first major exhibition under his control. We are sitting in his office, located on the third floor of Hafnarhúsið, which from the year 2000 has served as one of three museums in the city that combine to make up the Reykjavík Art Museum. It is a large, grey, and squarish building by the harbour, formerly a warehouse for the Port of Reykjavík. It still looks very much like a warehouse.

"From the beginning, I had certain ideas on how I wanted to change the operation and I think now, with this show, people will start to experience what I have in mind for this muse-

um," he says, notably excited about the journey he is about to embark upon. He explains:

"We have two great buildings, Hafnarhúsið and Kjarvalsstaðir, [the third one, Ásmundarsafn, is dedicated to sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson] which have been run as one unit and the exhibition policy for Kjarvalsstaðir has really been deciding for both buildings. At first, this made sense, when this part of the museum had just been opened. But now, six years later, there is an opportunity to review and change this. I intend to divide the operation. The idea is that Hafnarhúsið will be a Museum of the Contemporary Arts, where we will explore the cutting edge and dive right into what is happening now."

A Philosopher Gone Astray

Yngvason speaks Icelandic with a slight hesitation, probably resulting from spending the last 23 years living and working in the United States. For the last ten years he has served as the director of public art at the Cambridge Arts Council. After finishing a bachelor's degree in philosophy at the University of Iceland, he went to the USA to pursue further studies in the field with the idea to finish a doctorate in philosophy and go into teaching.

During his studies Yngvason came under the tutelage of one of the world's leading philosophers and aestheticians, Stanley Cavell, at Harvard University. "He greatly influenced

my thought. His writings on the relations between music and philosophy were where my interest in the arts and philosophy was combined. This eventually led me to shift my focus from philosophy to art history, although I always intended to return to philosophy," he says.

Having spent over two decades living in the United States, Yngvason returned to Iceland last year to find a country, and city, drastically different from the ones he had left. "I came here for one month in 2002, and I realised how much Icelandic society had changed. When I left in 1982, Iceland was not a very interesting place. It was an island where people were very narrow minded. Communications with the outside world were very complex during the cold war and people had very strange ideas about the world, both the western block and the eastern block, which sort of hampered any normal way of thinking. I did not want to come back to the society I left. What has happened is that Reykjavík changed into a metropolitan city. When I came back, the only cultural shock for me was how few of us there are. If I could change one thing, I would want about 9 more million people here. After living here for a whole year, I really don't miss anything else."

The fact that Yngvason has not been a fixture in the Icelandic arts world for over two decades has left him free from the internal

politics and the petty bickering of that whole scene. He says he has made an effort to keep it that way. But his long absence has also given him an opportunity to rediscover Icelandic art.

"I left when I was 25 years old, and when I returned 23 years later, there was a whole new generation of artists who were now 25 years old. A new group of artists who were done with their education, had come up through the grassroots, had been exhibiting in alternative spaces and were now coming forward as fully developed artists. For me, this realisation was like discovering a treasure."

He maintains that the grassroots in Iceland is very energetic and that young Icelandic artists are willing to take more risks than their American counterparts. "People are more enthusiastic and feel more secure to experiment here than they do in America. Reykjavík is different from cities like Boston, where artist tend to be more cautious" He says the explanation is partly the size of the Icelandic market and the relatively few sales galleries. This gives Icelandic artists the opportunity to experiment without thinking about whether someone will buy their art. "The thought of selling their art does not really affect them. They have the freedom to create without being influenced by the market and are therefore able to take more chances and experiment

>>> CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

ART

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more freely. Of course it would be good to have a stronger market that could support more professional artists. But, on the other hand, the size of the market strongly affects the attitude of Icelandic artists as well."

The Need For Culture

Running an ambitious program for an art museum is an expensive endeavour. Once the subject of the Icelandic arts market has been broached, it is natural to inquire about the museum's finances. Yngvason admits that financing the operation is a constant struggle. "The city of Reykjavik does a tremendous job in supporting the museum. I don't know of another city of a similar size that maintains such an ambitious cultural program, and I am not just referring to the museum." But securing funds from the private sector is more difficult. "All private funding in Iceland is more or less in the form of joint projects with

the marketing division of different companies. This is of course also done in the U.S. The difference is that here, all funding is done this way, while in the U.S., capitalism is older and perhaps not as greedy. In the U.S. there is a certain understanding of what culture brings to society. This has been studied, quantified and calculated, and people know what an energetic cultural life is worth for the cities. If a city is to be able to compete as a new location for a large company, it needs to have museums, concert halls, theatres and film festivals. It needs to have everything that modern cities have that attracts the people that work for the company." The relationship between a rich cultural environment and a booming economic environment has been carefully documented. Yngvason considers it essential that official parties come into play to boost the culture. "In the U.S. the government has set up a frame-

work where they do not actually contribute money, but give companies tax exemptions from their contributions to culture. We need to create that sort of environment for the arts here in Iceland. This would not cost the city or the government much, but as long as there is no carrot at the end of the stick, companies will not be very supportive of the arts. If we want a more energetic city, we will have to create the right environment, instead of the city being responsible for directly supporting or subsidising the programs. This dimension of financing the museums is missing in Iceland. I think people generally understand this by now, but it has not become a part of the government's economic management." Yngvason is optimistic for the future. He claims Icelanders are receptive to art and enjoy visiting museums, although their taste is varied. "I want to make these organisational changes

so we can better meet people's different tastes in arts. It would be a misconception to say that in Hafnarhúsið, there will only be younger artists, while Kjarvalsstaðir will only house older artists. Hafnarhúsið will be a more experimental or avant garde gallery for sure, but the division is more between the contemporary and the classical." His first exhibition is a clear reflection of the changes he has in mind. As curators he has chosen two young Icelandic artists, Daniel Karl Björnsson and Huginn Þór Arason, both in their early thirties. In some respect, this exhibition could be viewed as a very bold opening statement. "It is okay to be bold. Soon after I came I realised how much energy was in the young Icelandic artists. These people are not just coming in off the street; they have been working on their art, developing it, exhibiting in alternative spaces and have grown to fully mature artists. I thought it was vital to bring



in artists from this sector who know what this generation is doing." The idea was to bring in someone from the outside to act as a curator instead of handling the selection process in-house. "I am not even sure this could have been done in-house. We here at the museum are learning immensely from putting on this exhibition." Yngvason contacted Björnsson and Arason last September, soon after he was appointed director of the museum. He gave them a year to put together an exhibition that would showcase what is happening in Icelandic art at the moment. "I explained to them that this is a museum, not an alternative space, and the exhibition would have to take that into account. They decided to approach this as if they were squatting the building. They do this very aggressively and take over the museum. I thought that was exciting. I came in here and wanted to change things up, and why not do that with the help of these young artist who are full of ideas and allow them to express them on their own premises."

big, otherwise it will be lost in the giant structure," Arason says. They have also made a point of trying to involve everyone in the creative process of the production, from the museum's staff, the designers to the artists selected for the showcase. The exhibition's name, The Apostles' Clubhouse is drawn from regular rave nights that were an influential part of the Reykjavik nightlife in the early nineties. "The name actually has several layers," Björnsson says. "All of the artists involved in the exhibition are born after the year 1968, and this is a reference to our coming of age in Reykjavik alongside those rave nights. Also, we are making a reference to the Hafnarhúsið being an old warehouse (a more accurate translation of the exhibition's Icelandic name 'Pakkhús Postulanna' would be the Apostles' Warehouse), and we are also making a reference to the artist as some kind of an apostle." They agree that the transition from smaller alternative spaces into the institution that is the Reykjavik Museum of Art is a pretty big step. "This is a completely different experience. The whole venue is completely different," Björnsson says. "In smaller alternative spaces, there is a lot more spontaneity," Arason continues. "Here, that is impossible, and that has been a bit of a conflict for us. The whole process here is much more institutional and bureaucratic. For us, a part of the whole experience has been to document this conflict, which we have done and the exhibition catalogue is mainly focused on how we dealt with the process of setting up the exhibition," Arason says. "This has been rather awkward situation at times. We are young and inexperienced, and we feel kind of awkward coming into this big institution, and the museum has been kind of awkward as well, since this is new to them also. There has been some tension in the air," Arason explains. I ask if it feels like in the beginning of a romantic relationship? "That is exactly how it has been. Little flirtation on both sides, without anyone really knowing how it will turn out."

ICELANDIC FASHION 2006

Nine of Iceland's top fashion designers reveal 38 extraordinary pieces in Iceland's first exhibit which focuses only on fashion in the new Icelandic culture.

The Culture House - Hjóðmenningarhúsið
Hverfisgata 15, 101 Reykjavík
S. +354 545 1400

The exhibit is on view from 29.06.2006 - 27.02.2007. Open daily from 11 am - 5 pm

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Kringlan Shopping Mall, tel. 568 0400 · www.myndlist.is

Artist: Karólína Lárusdóttir

Hressingarskálinn

Hressingarskálinn (Hressó) is a Classical Bistro, located in the heart of the city at Austurstræti 20.

Food is served from 10 until 22 every day. On Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, after the kitchen closes Hressó heats up with live music. Weekends, DJs keep the party going until morning, with no cover charge.

Step into the Viking Age

Reykjavík 871±2

Landnámssýningin
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How did it all begin?

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The Settlement Exhibition 871±2 is located at Aðalstræti 16

Reykjavik City Museum
www.reykjavik871.is

City of Reykjavik

DINING, EATING & GRUBBING

Haukur Magnússon and Sveinn Birkir Björnsson on Reykjavík Dining Photos by Skari

NÚÐLUHÚSIÐ

Vitastígur 10, 101 Reykjavík
Tel. 552-2400



The first thing that one notices upon entering Núðluhúsið is a small handwritten sign proclaiming 'Free coffee!' hanging directly over a pot of said liquid. As we were about to find out, the free coffee is the sort of watery slop commonly found at your average construction-site cafeteria and takes extravagant amounts of sugar and milk to get to the point of drinkability. But that is beside the point: Núðluhúsið does not claim to be a café and, more importantly, the coffee is free – an excellent service to provide patrons with while they wait, or after a

heartly meal. And the meals we experienced at Núðluhúsið were indeed hearty.

We visited this small, stripped-down restaurant late on a Wednesday evening and were surprised by the number of patrons who passed through during our stay. Although the atmosphere was pleasant, this is the sort of place where one comes to eat on-the-go and it prices itself accordingly. It is both notable and commendable that no single course will set you back more than 990 ISK, and most of them come cheaper. Even the beer is priced lower than at comparable establishments. The clientele seems to consist mainly of tourists looking for a cheap meal and locals fetching take-away food. Aiming to sample a range of the restaurant's menu, we ordered cashew chicken, strips of lamb in a very spicy sauce and Thai-style pad-Thai noodles. Suffice to say that all of the dishes met our standards. The

cashew chicken was pleasantly tender and juicy and the vegetables seemed to be fresh, as was the case with the rest of our orders. Providing a pleasingly hot aftertaste, our only complaint was that it could have done with more cashews.

The pad-Thai noodles were also surprisingly spicy (many Icelandic Thai restaurants tone down spice to accommodate natives' inexperienced taste buds) and had the bonus of being of the non-greasy variety. The combination of shrimp, eggs and crushed salty peanuts was pleasing to the extent that we oversampled and had little room for the final course.

The menu certainly did not lie about the strips of lamb having a spicy sauce. It made us sweat. We still managed to taste the distinct flavour of fresh ingredients. Overall, Núðluhúsið seemed well-suited for those seeking authentic Thai cooking while operating on a shoestring budget. *HM*



GALILEO

Hafnarstræti 1-3, 101 Reykjavík
Tel. 552-9500



Having previously enjoyed what I recall to be good pizza in a comfortable environment at the downtown Italian restaurant Galileo, I had certain expectations arriving there on a Friday afternoon. A friendly waitress greeted us and gave us a window table in the cosy restaurant. I ordered the chef's recommended combo of a carpaccio starter followed by a pesto-covered grilled fillet of lamb, while my companion opted for an entrée of cured ham with melon and chicken tagliatelle with chilli, mushrooms, garlic, cream and parmesan for

the main course. The cured ham and melon course was delicious and inventively presented; however, we were greatly disappointed by the huge plate of rucola-covered carpaccio.

The dish looked great, and the meat tasted fine – that was, until we reached the middle of the plate and discovered most of the carpaccio to be still frozen. Paying nearly 2,000 ISK for a plate of improperly defrosted beef, however attractive, is simply unacceptable. It should be noted that our waitress offered to replace our plate when we pointed this out to her, and went on to provide us with a genuinely friendly service throughout the course of our meal.

The tagliatelle was a rather bland affair, losing points for featuring dry bits of chicken but redeeming itself with the perfectly timed pasta. The grilled fillet of lamb was an altogether more impressive course, combining fresh ingredients with the never-disappoint-

ing Icelandic meat. Again, though, when we pointed out to a passing waitress that the meat rather leaned towards the 'rare' side of my requested 'medium-rare' grilling, she refuted the observation, stating that it was indeed medium-rare while offering to take it back to the kitchen for more cooking.

The high point of our Galileo dining experience was surely the delicious and rich chocolate cake we had for dessert. We could not help but wish that the rest of our meal had been to the same standard.

Galileo is a bit on the pricey side, with main courses going for around 2-4,000 ISK. While not suitable for the budget traveller, its comfortable surroundings, pleasant music and friendly service could provide for a fine night out – were their cuisine not tainted by some obvious though, one would hope, easily fixed culinary flaws. *HM*

INDIAN MANGO

Frakkastígur 2, 101 Reykjavík
Tel. 551-7722



The recently established Indian Mango, located on a Laugavegur side street, is probably the best addition to the Icelandic restaurant landscape in recent years. The owner, George Holmes, comes from the Goa region in India, and the menu is inspired by his native traditions.

The restaurant prides itself on producing Indian cuisine the authentic way – no shortcuts allowed. Holmes, himself an experienced chef from the Four Seasons chain, places a premium on the quality of the materials and the service he provides. He is a gracious host

and took great care in making our visit an enjoyable one. The menu has a rich selection of meat dishes but also offers an array of vegetarian and fish courses, as well as suitable children's meals. As a starter, my companion and I selected the Kathi kebab chicken and Malii tikka chicken. Both courses were delicately prepared and tasted great, though a word must also be reserved for the nice presentation of the dish.

We decided to give our host a carte blanche on selecting our main course. He recommended the beef Xacutti, a traditional Goan dish, and duck masala. The duck was excellent, but I could hardly describe the Beef Xacutti favourably enough. The sweet taste of coconut complemented the spicy meat perfectly. The rice, imported by Indian Mango to meet the owner's strict quality demands, proved to be something entirely different from

the ordinary off-the-shelf variety one might receive elsewhere.

A great accompaniment to the main course was the mango lassi, a drink made from yoghurt and mango juice. It was a new discovery for me, but I'll admit that I have since been all over the internet in search of good lassi recipes.

As good as the main course was, I was still not prepared for what our host had in store for us for dessert. I took a mango ice cream, a delicious treat that still paled in comparison to the sun-dried mango slices and the guava fruit accompaniment. A sweeter fruit combo I have yet to taste.

I can only thank my fellow journalist, who was originally scheduled to write this review, for falling ill that particular day, allowing me to step in to enjoy the best meal I've had since Christmas. *SB*



WE RECOMMEND

BEZT Í HEIMI

Visir



Old Habits Die Hard

BY STEINUNN JAKOBSDÓTTIR

As Reykjavík's oldest shopping street, Laugavegur, has evolved over the years; old shops have closed while new ones spring up constantly, but locals have always been able to count on getting their groceries at the legendary Visir on Laugavegur 1.

The store has been in business for over 90 years inside an old wooden building, being one of very few remaining independent grocers in the capital.

The building, erected in 1848, has housed the grocery store since 1915, serving generations of citizens with their food supplies. Current owner, Þórir Sigurbjörnsson, bought the business from his father, Sigurbjörn Björnsson, in 1974, after having worked in the store since 1960. Now, 46 years later, you are still guaranteed to find him filling the shelves or standing behind the counter while enjoying the outside Laugavegur view and chatting with customers, most of whom he knows by name.

Even if small stores like this one are becoming as rare in the city as good weather, largely due to the proliferation of all-in-one supermarket chains, Visir has been thriving for decades and its old charm stays the same.

"A lot has changed since the store first opened. Around the Second World War more families lived in the downtown area and bought their groceries at Visir. After the war the neighbourhood started to shift and the number of inhabitants decreased. Instead of being a residential area, it turned into more of a business and shopping district with fashion boutiques, coffeehouses, restaurants and offices. At that same time, the product range increased substantially and locals saw for the first time a selection of fresh fruits and food that hadn't been

known in the country before," Sigurbjörnsson tells the Grapevine.

To face the transition and growing competition, Visir aims at having a diverse range of goods and now offers all sorts of convenient snacks customers can grab on their way to work as well as selling household necessities, bakery goods, noodle soups and sandwiches, fruits, dairy products, cleansers and soaps, pasta, candy and even quick meals to heat in the microwave. For those really in a hurry, the coffee to go costs only 150 ISK a cup.

"I think it is really important to maintain a variety in the city centre and in recent years I have witnessed some positive changes. Thanks to a growing number of tourists and with new shops opening up in the surroundings, the area is becoming more vibrant again. Naturally, that helps in making the business flourish," Sigurbjörnsson adds.

Counting many regulars in the neighbourhood who return for the friendly and personal service, Visir isn't going anywhere. Buying groceries in this small store truly pulls you back to the past when it wasn't as complicated to go shopping. If you are getting frustrated with supermarkets so big that you're lucky to find the ketchup bottle you came to buy you need not worry. Visir will probably stay the same until our grandchildren become repeat customers.

Visir Grocery Store
Laugavegur 1, 101 Reykjavík
Opening hours: Monday-Friday from 8:00-18:00;
Saturday from 10:00-16:00.

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• Lamb cutlets	• Lamb cutlets
	• Roast pork
	Sundays:
	• Roast pork
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The Beatle Manifesto

BY EINAR MÁR GUÐMUNDSSON

Introduction in which the narrator reminds of his existence

A spectre is haunting the streets of the world, the spectre of the Beatles.

It's as if the earth is preparing itself for a wild drum solo. Huge flocks of kids appear, with nothing to lose but their virginity.

Parents and headmasters, vicars and barbers – in short, all those who fear for their lot – now consider a holy alliance. ...

It began something like that, the Beatle Manifesto, which was supposed to supplant all other manifestoes, the Communist Manifesto, the address to the nation, and of course the school rules. The rules hung in a frame on the wall beside the blackboard in the classroom. They contained nothing worth knowing and I could never be bothered to read them.

The only advantage to them was that I could see Helga's face reflected in the glass. From there I could extract her with a mental magnifying glass, although now I have no idea where she is.

It was I, Jóhann Pétursson, who wrote that manifesto – I introduce myself here at the very outset because I have previously featured on the pages of this author.

He does nothing more than write down what I say, but takes all the credit for it and collects the royalties that by rights should accrue solely to me.

But that's the way the cookie crumbles.

We fictional characters have no rights. We play all kinds of silly pranks and then the authors appear in the papers and say even more stupid things about us. Maybe we should take legal action and sue them, the way everyone else in society does.

Then you would read in the papers: Fifteen fictional characters sue an author, and conferences would be held: Characters held a meeting at Hótel Saga. Where else should they meet?

I see Bjartur from Summerhouses arriving by taxi with two bald-headed men who both claim to have created him, but he completely disagrees, and Hamlet is a bag of nerves at the bar, totally confused by all the people he has been.

And so on and so forth.

I trust that you forgive me this presumptuousness, but I have had to suffer internment in a drawer for I don't know how long. I was put there when the author could no longer be bothered listening to me. Yet I was far from having finished what I had to say.

I am well aware that it would look much cooler to come out of the closet, but I haven't been in any closet, just in a drawer, the drawer of an old desk whence I rise like a spectre from the pyjamas of time, to tell you this tale.

Let's spend the night together

I shall go over the story quickly and skip all the bullshit about the morning sun rising and the rain pounding on the roofs and all that boring bollocks in books.

Nor do I intend to trace genealogies or stir up a fuss about problems donkeys' years ago.

I just say like the soldier in The Tinder-Box: Nothing happens here until I show up.

He said that because he was supposed to be hanged.

I can promise you that I shall not be hanged, because it is forbidden to hang people in Iceland. No public execution has been held since 1830, although of course many people have hanged themselves since then.

But that's their problem and I don't intend to delve into them.

I shall just dart straight inside the white school building and start in Stella the Strong's classroom where everything is in chaos as often before.

Stella strides back and forth with her baton aloft. Her expression is fierce, her double chin determined. She looks on the verge of bursting or contracting measles.

I don't know how much Stella weighs, because I have never weighed her, but she is big and fat. She is sometimes called Fat Stella, but since I do not want to encourage prejudice against fat people I call

her Stella the Strong, which is quite natural because she used to put the shot in her youth.

At home she has a daughter who is also called Stella and is identical to her, like a photocopy taken at the maternity ward. I am told that they eat large quantities of liverwurst and sausage and devour curds with cream. I don't know whether she has a husband, but if so he is just some sparrow or peewit.

Stella's eyes give off sparks and everything falls completely silent. The problem is that someone has had the effrontery to slip a note into the register on the teacher's desk. Probably during the break.

That is why Stella has gone ballistic. She is like a dragon newly emerged from the crater of a volcano. She wants an explanation for the note, which says: "Let's spend the night together ..." followed by the signature of the headmaster, Herbert.

It says: "The headmaster, Herbert".

Turning over the note provides further instructions from Herbert, or more correctly, the details of his proposal.

It says: "Meet me in the broom cupboard at five o'clock."

Stella wants an explanation for this note, and she wants it now. I don't know how much Stella knows about the Rolling Stones, so I say that it's the title of one of their songs, written by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, while the other members of the group are Brian Jones, Bill Wyman and Charlie Watts.

"Charlie plays drums, Bill plays bass ..." I continue, but Stella does not want a lecture about the Rolling Stones, nor about the Beatles, the Who, the Small Faces, the Pretty Things, the Kinks, the Animals, the Spencer Davis Group or Them, who are Irish but very Icelandic in appearance.

Instead she screams, louder than even Janis Joplin could ever have dreamt of: "The point isn't what idiots it came from, but who wrote it?"

Silence descends again, until I put up my hand and say: "I think Mick Jagger writes the lyrics."

This information does not seem to soothe Stella either, because older people are not particularly fond of Mick Jagger, even though he would later be given a knighthood and could sleep with any woman he likes with one wave of his passport.

So I ask Stella: "What does it mean?"

The class erupts in laughter. My classmates love it when I say stupid things, which is why I always do, but this time Stella knows who the culprit is. She always knows who the culprit is, and I get on her nerves. I would get on mine too if I were her.

Although Stella knows nothing about Beatle music, she knows how obsessed with it I am. I often daydream from all the songs playing in my head. Sometimes I rest my forehead on the desk to keep my thoughts in rhythm. My head is a world where the stage is set for a gigantic concert.

Once Stella asked me the name of the capital of Finland and I was caught so badly off my guard that I said Ringo Starr, although of course I know it is called Helsinki and competes with Reykjavik for the world record in depression, since I subscribe to Children's Monthly which devotes a lot of coverage to Scandinavia, mainly Norwegian skiers and Swedish groups such as the Sven Ingvars band.

The editors of Children's Monthly are also very fond of the Soviet Union, but are strongly opposed to alcohol, which is strange considering how fond they are of the Soviet Union. Children's Monthly is full of articles about Russian child prodigies. They are generally introverted kids who sit at pianos or play chess. They are like the depressive poets in the School Anthology of Poetry, only much younger.

Be that as it may, I cannot escape my fate, for Stella comes striding over to me and sprays me with the words: "Isn't this your handwriting, Jóhann?"

"No," I say, because these are just clumsy block capitals, although Stella may well recognise them.

She stands over me, terrifying as a mountain, and because she says nothing, I say: "I'd just ask Herbert."

The class laughs again.

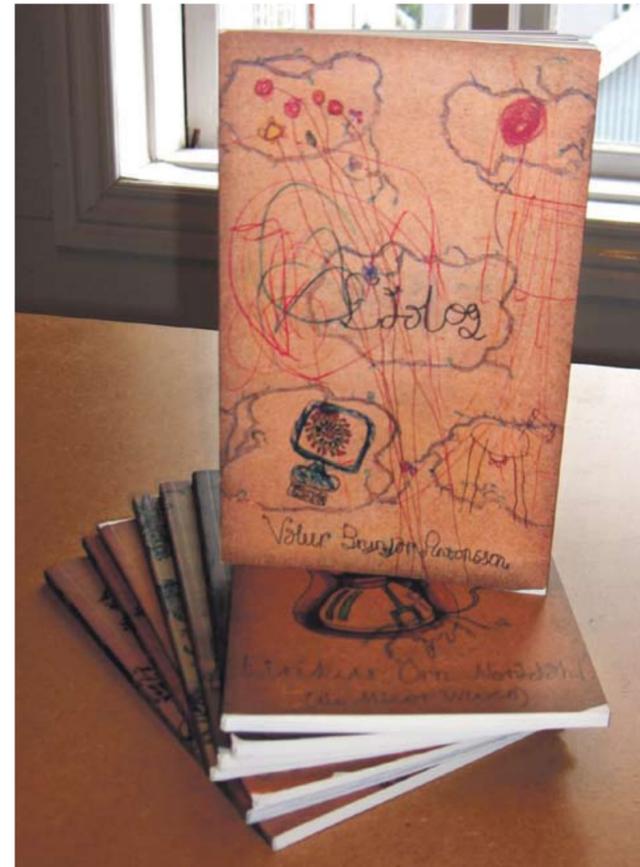
"Yes, maybe we should talk to him about it, Jóhann," Stella says, and before I know it she grabs my black Beatle sweater by the polo neck. And then I'm on my way to see the headmaster, and not for the first time.

Nýhil Poetry in the Grapevine:

Valur B. Antonsson

Valur B. Antonsson (b. 1976) is a poet and a graduate student of philosophy. In 2005, he was awarded the prestigious "Jón úr Vör" poetry prize, and subsequently published his first book of poems, *Ofurmennisþrá*, with Nýhil. This year he will produce his sophomore effort, titled *Eðalog*. Antonsson is currently working on writing projects on a stipend from the Icelandic Government.

According to Antonsson, the poems in *Eðalog* are modelled on the structure of the noble gases, as defined by the periodic table of elements. "The three states of each noble gas (solid, liquid and vaporized) are depicted in three different forms (prose, a poem, and a sphere-like form imitating the scientific conception of an atom's structure). Depicted here is the vaporized form of the last of the noble gases, Radon, in which the syllables represent the number of electrons found on each sphere." This is pretty deep stuff, right there. *HM*



MÚSIK presents Icelandic folksongs

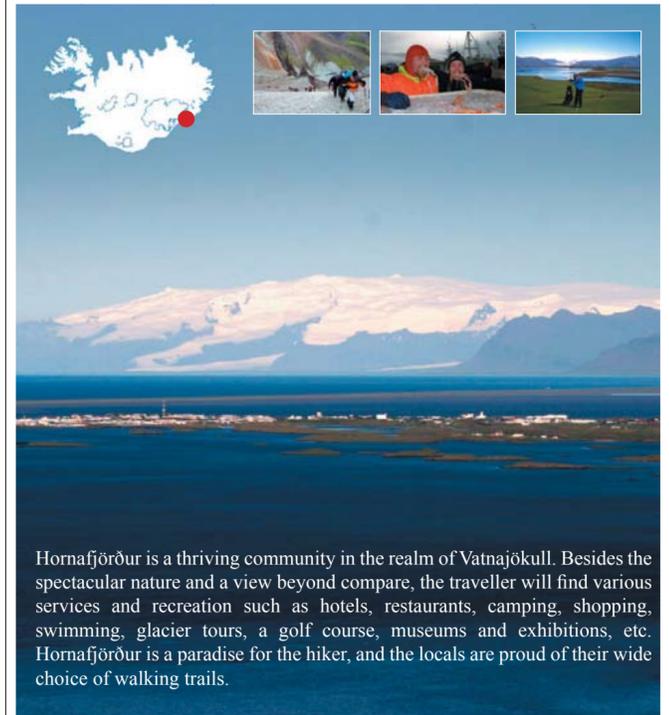
New songs to old folklore

A Feast on Ice

Krás á köldu svelli



Músik



Hornafjörður is a thriving community in the realm of Vatnajökull. Besides the spectacular nature and a view beyond compare, the traveller will find various services and recreation such as hotels, restaurants, camping, shopping, swimming, glacier tours, a golf course, museums and exhibitions, etc. Hornafjörður is a paradise for the hiker, and the locals are proud of their wide choice of walking trails.

The Glacier Exhibition in Höfn was reopened after significant renovations in June 2005. The aim of the Exhibition is to communicate knowledge in various ways about the country's nature as well as offering tourists interesting recreation all year around. The Exhibition is open on weekdays from October to April. From the beginning of May until the end of September it's open every day. Apart from regular opening hours the Exhibition can be opened on request.



Glacier Exhibition
in Höfn
www.joklasyning.is

LIVE MUSIC
REVIEWS

Good Intentions Fall Short

By Sveinn Birkir Björnsson Photos Palli H.

In the terminology of "the industry" (read: the entertainment industry), the phrase "to pull a spinal" is reserved for situations where, despite the producer's best intentions, larger than life expectations fail to be realised. It could be defined basically (if redundantly) as a live version of popular film *Spinal Tap*. The recent Jammfest music festival, which took place on Broadway during the first two days of September, had the word "spinal" written all over it. Despite the efforts of its well-meaning creators, it didn't quite come off as hoped.

The concept was good enough: gather some thirty-odd bands and artists from the lively Icelandic music scene, have them play on two different stages, and end each night with a jam session in which members of various bands engage in a musical experimentation set. As so often happens with good ideas, Jammfest was yet another victim of poor execution. Giving off the impression that it had been concocted during someone's drunken binge the previous weekend, Jammfest appeared to have been put into the works before any of its creators was sober enough to deal with logistical details such as publicity, or the choice of venue.

The line-up of artists was intriguing, despite the fact that the selection process may not have followed a strict criterion. The biggest trouble facing this festival was the promoter's failure to make people aware that a festival was taking place. Jammfest's publicity campaign seemed to rely primarily on word-of-mouth. Nine times out of ten, this treacherous means of building hype fails to yield the desired result. Oh, there was the occasional poster plastered to a wall downtown. The designer responsible for it should be forced to return his iMac to the store immediately, and take an oath that he will not purchase one again.

Another trouble facing this festival was the choice of venue. Broadway, easily capable of housing a crowd of 1000-plus patrons and, by all accounts, a good venue for a high school dance or a night with Ben Folds, is by no means a good fit for a rock festival. On Friday XXX Rottweiler's stage drew the largest crowd. I

counted around 40 people, probably half of which were members of bands that had either just come off stage or were preparing to go on. Broadway is too big, too posh, and too damn far away from anything else to ever harbour hopes of attracting concertgoers who don't intend to drive home. Furthermore, an establishment that prices a single beer at 700 ISK is not likely to win over the rock crowd.

More than anything else, the recent failings at Broadway bring attention to a serious problem facing the Icelandic music scene: the need for a medium-sized venue in the downtown area that is capable of hosting an event akin to Jammfest in size and purpose. If steps are not taken to remedy Reykjavik's lack of a suitable venue, the Icelandic music scene will inevitably suffer for it. Having spent small fortunes on promoting the city's vibrant music scene, local authorities might want to consider further actions towards that end, if not for the sake of the art, then at least to protect their investment.

Criticism of venue and advertising aside, there were some reasonably good performances to be found at Jammfest. While the dual-stage set-up kept me from viewing all the artists, and hence rendered me unable to form much of an opinion on many of their performances, I did see *Æla*, a loveable punk foursome out of the Reykjanes peninsula. *Æla* has rediscovered the beauty of the once-lost early-eighties Icelandic punk sound. Front man Halli Valli's voice and singing style is a dead-on re-enactment of Einar Örn during his Þurrkur Pilnökk days and works well on the bass-driven ditty *February*, their best song to date.

I caught the last two numbers of rapper Bent's set on the small stage, and, as far as I could tell, he really laid it down. I returned to the big stage where Noise had already set up and were about to take off. For fans of classic-style heavy metal, they may just be a godsend. They stay true to the genre and often do it justice, although they tend to sound a bit youthful or underdeveloped too: both sides were particularly evident during their cover of Alice In Chains' *Them Bones*.

I had mixed opinions on Lokbrá's performance. They didn't enthrall me. Admittedly, this may be because I tend to find the sound of the psych-prog-hard rock fusion they conjure to be, well, boring. On the other hand, as far as that sound goes, it must be



admitted that they have a knack for it. They managed to get a large portion of the audience moving along with them and received a hefty applause at the end of their set. As noted before, however, a large portion of this particular audience does not exactly constitute a crowd. Those who share their musical vision might find it worthwhile to give them a listen; but, to my ears, too much of it sounds like sonic masturbation that isn't going anywhere.

The best performance of the night was put on by the veteran hip-hoppers XXX Rottweiler Hundar, recently back together after a few years on hiatus. They absolutely murdered the first song and, incidentally, every song that followed. As mentioned above, they drew the night's biggest audience, some of whom actually paid an entrance fee to see them. They switched it up constantly while onstage and worked the 'crowd' with great skill. They never looked back, and the energy they projected on stage was the key to their great execution.

As a result of *I Adapt*'s last minute cancellation, Brain Police were the final band to take the big stage. Little by little, these stoner rockers are winning me over. I like them more every time I see them perform. Their sound is heavy and tight, and frontman Jenni is a hell of a rock-and-roll singer. Their Jammfest performance was as solid as the audience was receptive. Rooster Booster, the first single from their upcoming fourth studio album is a genuine crowd pleaser that should hit home with any fans of the genre.

During the days (note: not weeks) leading up to the festival it had been promoted as the first annual Jammfest. The fact of its infancy may excuse some of the festival's obvious problems in its first go-around. I only hope that its promoters will not be so discouraged as to not repeat the attempt. Learning from this festival's failings would make for a better event next year and the music scene in Iceland could do with more small festivals of the kind. The Reykjavík Tropik festival that took place earlier this summer is a good parallel example. Sadly, both festivals were commercial failures, but I genuinely hope that Icelandic promoters are not down for the count.

To end on a high note: I found an untouched and discarded pizza on my walk back home. I wish that sort of thing would happen more often.

WHO

Brain Police,
XXX Rottweiler
Hundar, Lokbrá,
Noise and Æla

WHERE

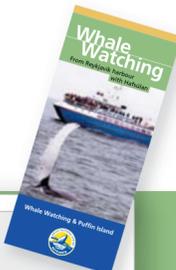
Broadway

WHEN

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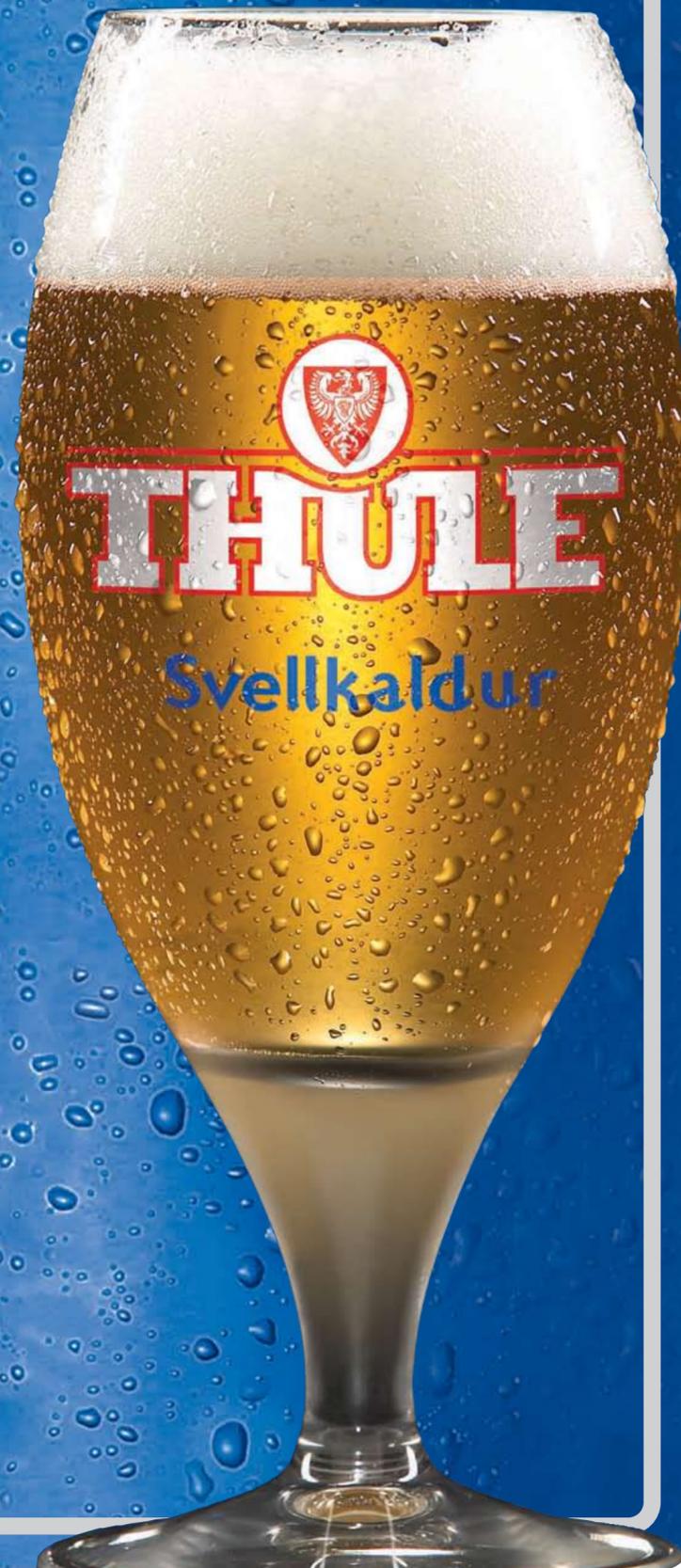
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13:00	13:00	13:00	
	17:00		

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“What's the difference between a man and E.T.?
E.T. phoned home.”

- Tommi Thule



Light beer

How to drive in Iceland

This is an advertisement

A relatively large percentage of foreign tourists in Iceland travel around the country by car. Conditions in Iceland are in many ways unusual, and often quite unlike that which foreign drivers are accustomed. It is therefore very important to find out how to drive in this country. We know that the landscapes are beautiful, which naturally draws the attention of driver away from the road. But in order to reach your destination safely, you must keep your full attention on driving.

This article is intended to point out the main dangers when driving in Iceland, especially the unusual ones that may come as a complete surprise to foreign drivers.

What are the speed limits?

The speed limit in urban areas is usually 50 km/hr. Speed limit signs are usually not posted unless it is other than 50 km/hr. The speed limit is often 60 km/hr on thruways, but in residential areas it is usually only 30 km/hr. The main rule on highways is that gravel roads have a speed limit of 80 km/hr, and paved roads 90 km/hr. Signs indicate if other speed limits apply.

Gravel roads, blind hills & blind curves

A common place for accidents to occur on urban roads is where a paved road suddenly changes to gravel. The main reason is that drivers do not reduce speed before the changeover to gravel, and consequently lose control. Loose gravel on road shoulders has also caused a great number of accidents. When driving on gravel roads—which are often quite narrow—it is important to show caution when approaching another car coming from the opposite direction by moving as far to the right as is safely possible.



Blind hills—where lanes are not separate—can be very dangerous, and should be approached with caution. There are also many blind curves in Iceland that test a driver's skill.

Single-lane bridges

There are many single-lane bridges on the Ring Road. The actual rule is that the car closer to the bridge has the right-of-way. However, it is wise to stop and assess the situation, i.e. attempt to see what the other driver plans to do. This sign indicates that a single-lane bridge is ahead.



Livestock on the road

In Iceland, you can expect livestock to be on or alongside the road. It is usually sheep, but sometimes horses and even cows can be in your path. This is common all over the country, and can be very dangerous. Sometimes a sheep is on one side of the road and her lambs

on the other side. Under these conditions—which are common—it is a good rule to expect the lambs or the sheep to run to the other side.

Seatbelts are required by law

In Iceland, drivers and passengers are required by law to wear seatbelts, regardless of the type of vehicle or where they are seated. Investigations of fatal accidents in recent years have shown that a large majority of those who died did not have their seatbelts fastened. Wearing seatbelts is especially important because of the nature of accidents in Iceland: many of them involve vehicles driving off the road and rolling over. In such accidents, seatbelts often mean the difference between life and death. It should be noted that children must either wear seatbelts, or be in car safety seats, depending on their age and maturity.

Necessary to bear in mind

It is against the law to operate a vehicle in Iceland after having consumed alcohol, and the punishment for violating this law is rather stiff.

Iceland requires that vehicle headlights be on at all times, day and night, when driving.

It is strictly forbidden to drive off-road. Such driving results in serious damage to sensitive vegetation, which may take nature decades to repair.

Foreign travellers requiring information regarding road and driving conditions should visit the Public Road Administration's website at www.vegagerdin.is

It should be noted that the Road Traffic Directorate has produced a video for foreign drivers, which covers all the points that have been mentioned here. The video can be viewed on the Directorate's website, www.us.is (under the English version).



ROAD TRAFFIC DIRECTORATE

TRAVEL

Outside Reykjavík

Kjölur



The Lonesome Traveller: Kjölur

Sleepless Nights by the Dead Man's Stream

BY FABRIZIO FRASCAROLI PHOTOS BY FABRIZIO FRASCAROLI

Kjölur – a strip of barren land stretching between the glaciers Langjökull and Hofsjökull, slicing the country north to south like a fence. This highland route, impassable in winter, is drawn out as a thin line in the middle of a gravel desert. As one of the most inhospitable locations in the country, a land of outlaws, ghosts and folk tales, few other places are capable of conjuring comparably dreadful images in the local collective consciousness. Being banned by civilised society and sent to Kjölur to scratch out a living among the rocks and winds was the punishment for criminals in the old days. The outlaws sent here have achieved an almost mythical status, isolated from their fellows and roaming the untamed regions of the country's interior. Tales of their exploits haunted and fascinated the living. A good example is Eyvindur, who fled along with his female companion Halla and wandered lawless in the highlands for over 20 years. In a process of role-reversal, as happens with the infamous, yesterday's villains have become today's heroes. Eyvindur, Halla and their ability to survive hardship even in the country's wildest regions is now celebrated in a stylised monument you can see in Hveravellir, the heart of Kjölur. Hveravellir is also, incidentally, the starting point of my journey to the interior.

In Hveravellir, the presence of an active geothermal area has fostered the formation of a tender oasis in the middle of the desert with patches of moss, fumaroles and steaming waters. It is a lovely place, which, without overwhelming the visitor, will forge a lasting impression. Ferðafélag Íslands (the Iceland Touring Association) built a hut here in 1938. The hut is still in use, and the presence of a natural bathing pool makes it an even greater aesthetic pleasure. The hut and its warm spring make an ideal destination for tired travellers or the passing evening party.

I was immediately impressed by the difficulty of reconciling the rigid discipline of the wilderness with the hip living I had found in Reykjavík. Waking up on a Saturday morning, still slightly hung-over after the alarm has been vainly yelling for over two hours, I real-

ised in dismay that I had missed my only chance to get to my destination with the morning bus I'd missed. The next course of action was clear: hitchhiking, a favourite in the lonesome traveller's repertoire, though never an endeavour to be openly advised.

Hitchhikers in Iceland will find they are picked up more out of mercy than enthusiasm. The empathetic characters I have encountered while hitchhiking have proven among the most touching and interesting of my lifetime. My rescuers came in the form of a father showing his two young daughters the places of his youth, where he used to man huts on behalf of the Touring Club. I was accepted kindly, offered coffee from a thermos and homemade sandwiches. My next ride came from Hafþór, a 4x4 and highland routes enthusiast, as well as being a volunteer for the rescue team. He drove peacefully, like someone who was just enjoying the opportunity to spend time in his natural environment. He took the time to guide me through the sophisticated workings and devices of the Icelandic 4x4 Club (Ferðaklúbburinn 4x4).

Hveravellir

I arrived in Hveravellir early Sunday afternoon, some 24 hours later than scheduled. There were few people around challenging the harshness of the wind. They seemed immobile and silent. I could smell autumn as I took a spin through the steam of the geothermal area's fumaroles and glass waters. Yet, the season was more obvious in the people I came across than the air.

Wind and a gentle drizzle accompanied my steps as I left Hveravellir. I watched the hut become small until it was only a luminous dot in the distance. A black stone stood out from the ground's monotony, a dozen meters in front of me. It looked like a fierce Cerberus from where I stood, a watchdog of the underworld I was about to tread my way through. I found myself faltering. This was the threshold of my voluntary exile. The barren landscape was embellished only by my Gore-Tex and North Face gear, the singular reminders of the

civilisation I had left behind in Reykjavík.

If my arrival on Kjölur was unwelcome to its ghosts, I probably chose the worst possible spot in which to set up my camp. My choice was at the end of a ten-kilometre walk up the banks of Dauðsmannskvísl, the Dead Man's Stream. A grim name mirrored by nearby Langjökull imposing its sepulchral contours on the landscape. Keen skills of observation were not necessary to discern a sharp drop in temperature at night. For the first time in five years, I found myself cold as I restlessly turned over in my sleeping bag. I was sure that I heard the wind turning sinister and running with menacing voices. It took me a while to manage to slide into a tormented sleep.

Fog, a thick fog at that, was the distinguishing mark of my second day. It made a soft and seemingly endless layer I had to pierce on my way around the glacier. The few times the mist cleared up, I had short glimpses of what the surroundings could look like in more forgiving weather: conic volcanic shapes, stains of red rhyolite on

almost as contrary to a healthy outdoors philosophy. Now I try only to accept and understand its subtleties.

After another night's frost, another troubled sleep, I woke to find the fog lifting at last. Now, a gentle and persistent drizzle had descended, which seemed meant to accompany me throughout the third day. My tent packed, reduced to a bundle of synthetic fabrics, water and coarse sand, I began the long traverse through the immense Hallmundur lava field.

The lava flow there has built a gothic necropolis: an intricate maze of arcane sculptures and black spires aiming to the sky. I was squeezing myself through narrow passages and frequently scrambling for footing. Beside the ramparts that encircle the vast lava flow, the land suddenly became green: water-bearing strata have created a wake of small lakes, and the ideal nesting environment for wild geese. I saw three of them flying off, alarmed by my approach. The journey assumed the shape and feel of a cruise navigating on rough waters, among cliffs, and through razor-sharp rocks that

Hitchhikers in Iceland will find they are picked up more out of mercy than enthusiasm. The empathetic characters I have encountered while hitchhiking have proven among the most touching and interesting of my lifetime.

the mountains' sides, faint blue tongues of ice descending from Langjökull. In total I must have had only a few minutes of visibility over the time of my eight-hour march. Yet, even on such a day of weather as I had, my encounter with the highlands remains one of the most impressive and fascinating I have had. Of course I am not speaking of encounters with other humans.

At this point I had not met anyone since I left Hveravellir, not that I had expected company anywhere on the trail. There is a sense of anguish given off by scapes of such seemingly infinite vastness, I thought it only natural to react by journeying inwards at this point. Inward journey became a seemingly unbreakable chain; I came across slivers of broken consciousness, rediscovered fragments of memories I considered gone, intimate truths I had thought lost. NASA astronauts were once sent to the Icelandic highlands, as an environmental preparation for moon-landing. Now, having been there, I understand why. I used to find this kind of hyper-consciousness while hiking distressing; I thought of it

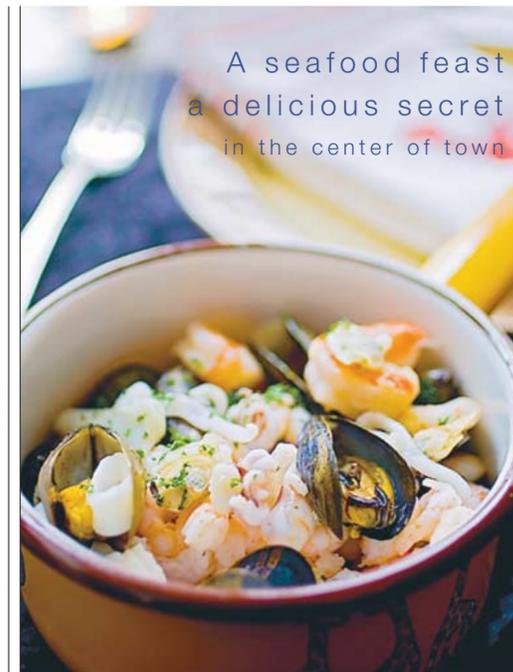
wreaked havoc on my rain pants. As the lava became less rugged, the traverse also turned easier. I proceeded on cyclopean plates of solid rocks, among cracks, pits and secret alcoves.

It could be stated that Iceland would have made a much better setting for The Lord of the Rings's Mordor than New Zealand. I thought as I crossed this charred environment. Scarcely original, perhaps, given J.R.R. Tolkien's inspiration in Icelandic epics. I was surprised at how well this barren and scarred place was able to provide decent camping grounds: one of the many hollows offered me an effective shelter against the incessant wind. The hard soil there has been tamed and made pleasant by the patient efforts of moss.

I awoke on Wednesday morning to see how the Eiríksjökull glacier snapped the scene into focus under the rejuvenating light of clear skies and warm sun. Eiríksjökull looks like a misshapen cake covered in icing, so different from Langjökull's sinuous elegance.

>>> CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

TRAVEL



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Langjökull merges seamlessly into the whiteness of the clouds. But, in that day's fair weather, Eiríksjökull was a most welcome sight, exploding onto the horizon, it seemed almost friendly. Using such a powerful reference point, navigation become ridiculously easy. I had no need for a GPS, a compass or even a map.

Next, the oasis of Flosagil made a triumphant appearance. Miraculously standing out even more remarkably than what I had seen that morning, it was surrounded by wasteland and desolation. Here lie the springs of the river Hvítá, not the raging waters that give birth to the celebrated waterfall Gullfoss. This is another one, homonymous to that of Gullfoss's fame. It is true that Icelandic toponymy tends to reproduce itself over the country with a sense of naïveté that can sound almost embarrassing to foreign ears. Here I was in a large valley, ploughed open by fast waters and encircled by glaciers. There are four of them: Eiríksjökull; its relative and antagonist Þórisjökull, rounded and capped with snow; Langjökull, guarded by sharp summits, like a watchful tyrant; and Strútur, a cruel peak, dark green and as perfectly conical as can be imagined, easily capturing one's gaze.

Here, as in the valley of Þórsörk in southern Iceland, the interplay of abundant waters and a favourable micro-climate have enabled the formation of rich brushwood vegetation. Nothing grows even close to the size of a dwarf bush, but a variety of colourful and tenacious flowers, fragrant moss, and – to my utter surprise – sturdy mushrooms have found

a way to proliferate on the borders of the lava. I am no horticultural connoisseur, but I would bet that some of them are edible, and would make an excellent contribution to a first-class risotto. It was here that I finally breathed a sense of peace. In the soft twilight, the wind was ordering the clouds about in the sky, driving them northwards with inexorable determination. A single wisp of cloud appeared reluctant to part from its romantic embrace with Strútur. Perhaps solitude was making me soft at this point, but I thought that I had never witnessed such a touching and poignant leave-taking from the nature before.

As I set out for the last stage of the journey, the wind picked up. It felt as chilling as a couple of days ago. The temperature, though, had clearly risen during the night. When I found a reprieve from the cold breezes, it was actually rather warm. The sky grew low again, oppressive. "The sort of sky that the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse wouldn't feel like a bunch of complete idiots riding out of," to quote the late Douglas Adams.

The climb to the top of Strútur was not difficult, not even under the weight of several days of supplies, nor the assault of the rain lashing my face. Only a measure of patience would be able to help me work out the easiest route around the mountain's flank. The enterprise was well worth the effort. From the summit, at almost 1,000 metres altitude, the view was simply breathtaking, even in the premature darkness imposed by a veil of clouds. My gaze reached every glacier, captured all their details. From here a hiker opposes,

almost in challenge, the snow-laden peaks of Langjökull. The valley below appeared in all its vastness, flattened under a heavy crust of lava. And there, stretching away in the distance, could be seen the highland route of Kaldidalur, leading towards the southern slopes of Langjökull. "I'll cross it one day," I promised myself.

Húsafell

I arrived at my final destination sometime in the afternoon. Húsafell was sleepy, blissful in its enviable location. The huts and campground rest there on the borders of a tender wood – rare in Iceland – and at once close to the glaciers and far away enough to escape their sinister shadows and coldest winds. It was a strange sensation to see this place almost deserted. Húsafell is often swarming, almost to the point of being overwhelmed by human life, as it is an ideal destination for Icelanders' family holidays and big firms' leisure trips. But just then only the wind seemed to move. All else was idle. Oh, there were few visitors, as in Hveravellir, I again had the impression that everything was happening in a sort of slow motion; people were whispering rather than talking. No one appeared particularly interested in knowing where I was walking from, why I give myself the displeasure of being a hiker, or where I was headed to. It didn't really bother me. Despite always being able to enjoy a chat at the end of a backpacking tour, I had grown used to quite a different sense of solidarity in exploring the Icelandic countryside.

Whatever, I thought. I could at least enjoy

my beer. It tasted even better after a beam of sun had cunningly found its way through the clouds and brought some unexpected warmth onto the restaurant's porch. Nevertheless it was a bittersweet pleasure at that point, imbued with melancholy.

Then I was on my way home, hitchhiking again. I witnessed a glorious sunset over Borgarnes. I saw Snæfellsjökull, the mystical glacier, in the horizon. The fading sun cast pink reflections on the sand, made translucent by the low tide. It felt quite ironic: after one month of travelling as far as possible from Reykjavik and urbanisation, I got to take the best photo of my summer there, in a comfortable spot only 70 km away from home. Yet, while I lit myself a cigarette by the shore, this image remained painfully imprinted on my mind as a last link to a world I was, at least for the moment, going to leave behind. From then on, it would be all a sequence of greasy hamburger smells, bored kids wielding their Coke bottles as weapons, mugs driving sports cars around gas stations.

It was still windy. As darkness fell, the mountains coloured purple. They felt very close as they imposed shapes in the night's cool air. A few scattered tents interrupted the industrial greenness of my campground. In Iceland, the fair season usually leaves suddenly, without transition, or even warning. One morning I will wake up to storms outside. And I will know that summer has gone. Just like that.

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A Punk Rock Way to Travel

Samferda.net Offers Budget Tourists A Means of Winning Friends and Influencing People

BY HAUKUR MAGNÚSSON

For the average tourist not in possession of a car, native or otherwise, getting from place to place in Iceland can be a hassle. Choices are usually limited to some form of public transit, be it flying or riding a bus. And while both are fine, if expensive, ways to commute, many travellers in Iceland operate on shoe-string budgets and seating on these modes of transport can be limited. Luckily, an alternative is now available for those of us not quite daring enough to hitchhike our way around Iceland's countryside, but feel adequately adventurous to share our travelogue with complete strangers. I am speaking of a website, and one that doesn't actually look all that impressive either, until one is impressed upon by the sheer and simplistic beauty of the idea behind it. Those among the Grapevine's German readership might be familiar with its concept, as it originated there; however, for most, it remains an undiscovered, though environmentally viable, source of thrift and adventure.

The website in question is called 'Samferða' (a word which roughly translates as 'travel together') and it offers travellers a chance to pool their resources, so to speak. As the site's operator, Birgir Þór Halldórsson, puts it: "The objective is really simple: to share the cost of travelling cross country. If

you are planning a drive to, say, Akureyri on a particular day and need a travel mate to share the cost, you can register your name, e-mail and phone number on the site. Those looking for a cheap ride to there can then contact you, arrange to be your travel mate and share the cost. You can, of course, also register if you are looking for a ride somewhere – then it works in the reverse. It is a known fact that travelling alone can be extremely boring, so getting a complete stranger to share the ride and its cost is a fun way to save some money and meet new people."

Halldórsson, a computer programmer and photography enthusiast, explains that the idea for the site came from a German friend who told him similar sites were popular in her native country. She had some problems travelling while visiting Iceland last summer and asked him to set something like this up. That's when www.samferda.net was born.

"It was only a matter of days until we got the site up and running, and I am proud to say that we got some traffic right away. The endeavour seemed very viable to me, as I love meeting new and interesting people... I have used samferda.net several times since we got it up and running. I wouldn't exactly say that I've made many friends using it, but I've certainly saved some money whilst managing

to avoid boredom. That's important."

The site has not been advertised, according to Halldórsson, and instead relies solely on word-of-mouth and the occasional media feature. "We're not really doing this to make money; that would be absurd, so advertising the site wouldn't make a lot of sense. I think about it more like a service I provide to interested parties who can seek it out and have done so in the past." Halldórsson is convinced that once the media starts taking notice, site traffic will pick up even more. Either way, the site doesn't take a lot of money or effort to run. The internet domain came cheap and a nature preservation organisation called Landvernd contacted him when they found the site and were so enamoured with the idea that they decided to sponsor the initiative.

Since its conception last July, www.samferda.net has been steadily growing, although the frequency and ratio of travellers utilising it depends on the season. "Our most busy time, thus far, has probably been around Verslunarmannahelgi [Merchant's Holiday]. That's when the numbers really go through the roof. But the e-mails and stories I've been getting indicate that signing-up for a ride is always worth a shot, if nothing else. From what I see, browsing our cache,

it seems to me that foreigners and locals are using the site about the same. We translated it to German and English, so I figure most people should be able to understand it. If there's anyone out there that would like to try his hand at translating the site into French, or maybe Japanese, they should drop me a line at birgir@bloggari.is It would be cool to make it available in more languages."

When asked if he has plans to expand the samferda.net network in any way, Halldórsson unveiled his scheme for constructing a similar site, albeit with a slightly different purpose: "Some students from Reykjavik University contacted me with the idea to make a website, similar to samferda.net, which would focus more on long-term, everyday carpooling. A lot of people commute a long way to work or school every day: sitting alone in their cars, stuck in traffic and listening to the radio. Since public transit in and around Reykjavik now seems to be completely disregarded, it would at least be better if people were sharing the ride from Borgarnes to Bifröst, or whatever. I don't live in Reykjavik so I couldn't use it, but I think a lot of people would. At least we'd be supplying a venue that makes it easier."



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A Viable Alternative to Pumping Gas

The Icelandic Student Innovation Fund provides ample opportunities

BY HAUKUR MAGNÚSSON PHOTO BY RÚNAR S

Highly advanced prosthetic limbs. Microwave ovens. Studies on the significance of Herbert Read's use of adjectives in his later works.

Without scholars, none of these things would enrich our lives and culture. But scholars require a healthy degree of stimulation and resources to properly function and although capitalism sometimes sees fit to support its scientists in hope of future profits, that is not always the case – especially since the gains of certain research projects aren't always measurable in nickels and dimes. This is where the state can often come in handy, as is the case with the Icelandic Student Innovation Fund, an organisation that has for 14 years provided Icelandic university students the opportunity to advance their research during the academic downtime of summer.

The fund's director, Hanna María Jónsdóttir, explains that the fund was originally established to provide students with a source of summer income at a time when conditions in the job market were particularly poor. Since then, it has evolved into a full-fledged research grant, funding studies that serve as valid contributions to the academic community.

"We provide university students with an opportunity to advance their studies by working on exciting and demanding projects during their summer vacations, a viable alternative to pumping gas. It is of course a great benefit for the community to have around 200 students working on various projects every year. At the end of each summer, we receive a lot of interesting results and it's fair to say that the whole project affects our surroundings in a positive way," Jónsdóttir says.

The Icelandic Student Innovation Fund is mostly financed by the Ministry of Education along with the city of Reykjavík. Certain research is co-financed by companies that are interested for whatever reason; some contact the fund looking to supply funding while applicants wishing to extend their funding seek others out. Jónsdóttir explains that the fund provides grants for both high-tech scientific projects that evoke the interest of companies such as Marel, as well as more obscure liberal-arts research that rather belongs within the confines of the university. "We provide 110,000 ISK per month and the students are free to expand that amount by seeking assistance from businesses of interest. One of the fund's stronger points is that it is incredibly diverse; we see a wide array of interesting projects going forward that would otherwise go unexplored. Our aim is to actively encourage innovation and fertile thinking among students of all persuasions and we fund about 140 projects yearly to accomplish that."

One of the students currently receiving the grant is 28-year-old philosophy major



Arnþrúður Ingólfssdóttir. Along with a friend, she applied for funding last year to make a documentary exploring teenagers' outlook on the role of gender as portrayed in the media. This year, the duo got further funding to finish editing the piece, which they expect to complete this fall. "I applied on behalf of two separate projects last year, one was a standard and strictly academic pursuit, endorsed by a professor at the University of Iceland while the other one was this less orthodox documentary with my friend, media student Vigdís Þormóðsdóttir. I was pleasantly surprised when the fund favoured the documentary, as I felt it was a riskier endeavour. This is one of the great things about these grants in my opinion, you can receive finances to do whatever it is you wish as long as it's sensible, interesting and has some academic merit."

I asked her to expand a little and talk about the documentary project and the motivation behind it: "Adults regularly complain about the low quality of the material directed at teenagers, bad sitcoms, music videos and fashion shows. Parents, teachers and scholars are very outspoken on the subject, but little is heard from the teenagers themselves. Maybe they don't receive enough motivation to criticise what's put in front of them; in any case, we wanted to present them with the opportunity and incentive to discuss it in the media itself. To that extent, we sought out and interviewed a wide variety of teens and a lot of what they said came as a real surprise. They are definitely more observant than they

usually get credit for – you just have to ask the right questions. Hopefully, our efforts can contribute to the image of a socially aware and critical teenager.

Ingólfssdóttir says that a professor encouraged her to apply to the fund. "I've been aware of it for a long time, as many of my friends and acquaintances have effectively used it to further their studies. I like the fact that it doesn't solely focus on the natural sciences and often provides the means for projects of an almost artistic nature. For instance, my friend Kristín once received a grant to study towers in Reykjavík, staging concerts and exhibitions there throughout the summer."

That doesn't mean that the Icelandic Student Innovation Fund ignores the more concrete sciences; on the contrary it seems to keep an accurate balance in choosing recipients. Sæmundur Jón Oddsson is a 25-year-old medical student who currently receives funding to further his research on stem cells. After spending a year in a Swedish stem cell research facility, he applied for a grant to be able to continue his studies while school was out.

"I think the fund is doing excellent work in allowing university students to carry on their work during the summer or realising some of the ideas they may have thought up in their studies. Although I've worked part-time at an ER this summer, I've managed to spend most of my time and effort on this project I am participating in. We've even managed to come up with some very interesting results

that we plan on presenting at an overseas science seminar soon."

Oddsson says the project is difficult to explain without reverting to complicated nerd-speak. In the simplest terms he and his fellow researchers are looking into what happens when an unspecified stem cell from a mouse embryo develops into a heart-muscle cell. He has hopes the research will one day inch the scientific community a tiny bit further towards improving the life expectancies of heart patients. "We have seen some progress, although it is much too early to predict how it will turn out. Either way, I am very happy to have had the chance to spend my summer on this project," Oddsson adds.

It is apparent that even if their current projects amount to nothing, Ingólfssdóttir and Oddsson's time has not gone to waste this summer and neither has the state money that goes into financing the Icelandic Student Innovation Fund. When asked if it can accommodate all grant-enquiries, Jónsdóttir tells us that they only have the financial means to support about half of their applicants each year. "We are always working on securing more finances for the project, as the number of participants has been steadily growing since the fund's inception. Of course, there are always a number of applications that we have to turn down, but we do provide for close to 190 students a year. That means a lot of work is getting done."

Inside Reykjavík

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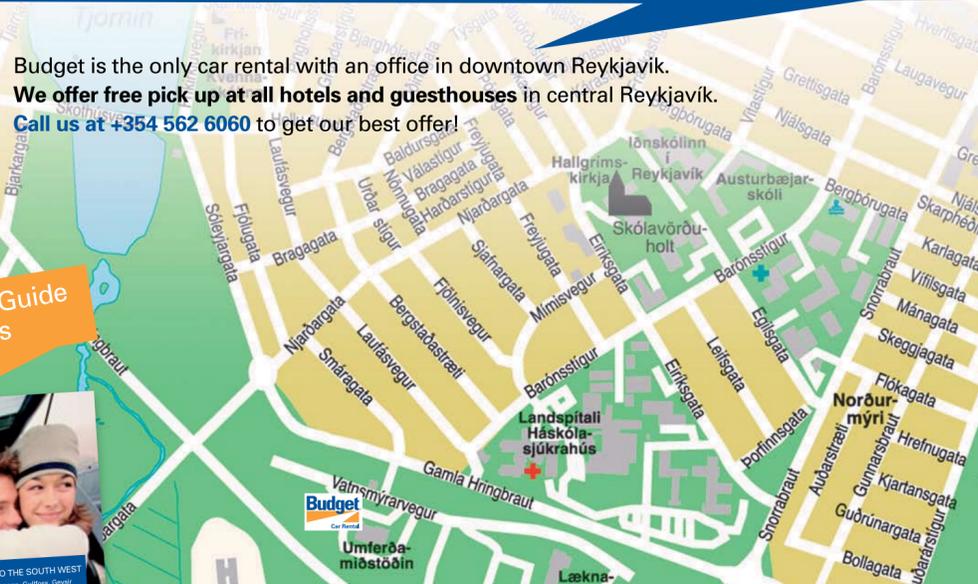
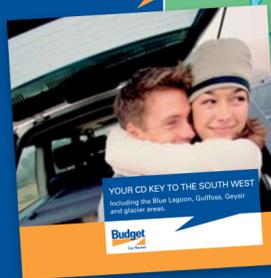
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The Grapevine Goes to the Movies

The Iceland International Film Festival

BY ÁSGEIR H. INGÓLFSSON, SVEINN BIRKIR BJÖRNSSON AND VIRGINIA ZECH

Getting Drunk On Movies

It used to be the alcohol: gallons of it on weekends, yet whosever drank a single beer on a Monday was labelled a drunk, but while our drinking habits are slowly approaching the ways of the civilised world the ways of our movie theatres have devolved back to the dark ages. After a summer almost completely devoid of films worth seeing, Reykjavík gets both its big film festivals with only a one-week hiatus in between. Festivals are great for overindulgence, to be sure, but like food, movies were meant to be digested.

So I'll give you the rundown of this reviewer's semi-digested weekend-long film binge and what better place to begin than Paris Je'taime – 18 short films in one? The concept is simple: 18 directors tackle 18 of Paris's 20 arrondissements, and it works like a charm. Of course, the title is a cliché but most of the directors work with it well. The Coen brothers' spin on guidebook culture will justifiably be most people's favourite, but other highlights include segments by Alfonso Cuarón, Sylvain Chomet, Alexander Payne and Wes Craven. Yet my personal favourite was Oliver Schmitz's beautiful vignette on the relationship between a dying stab-wound victim and the paramedic who treats him.

Staying with the French theme, we encounter Andre and Angela in Luc Besson's Angel-A. As the

title suggests this film is about a man and his angel. It could hardly be called subtle, yet the warmth in certain scenes and the coolness of the cinematography give it a fleeting sense of soul. The obvious nods towards Der Himmel Über Berlin and It's a Wonderful Life are misguided, if only because comparison to those masterpieces does this likeable but limited film few favours.

The supernatural is given an original spin in Pedro Almodóvar's latest work, Volver. This story, which follows several generations of women, hardly makes a nod towards its male characters. The line between the living and the dead in Volver may appear muddled for most of the movie, a genre known in Spanish-language literature as magical realism. The film's main strength is its ability to capture the most mundane of a housewife's chores and make them magically (no pun intended) exciting. The startling performance, not to mention appearance, of Penélope Cruz hints that dumping Tom Cruise may be an increasingly wise career move for Hollywood actresses.

Moving from female bonding to bonding of the male variety, we arrive at my favourite, Tommy Lee Jones's directorial creation The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada. The film moves from a crummy U.S. border town into the heartland of Mexico and on the way it explores the dysfunctional relationship between the two giants.

It is first and foremost, however, a stunningly beautiful, albeit grim, tale of friendship. About halfway through, it appears that the movie is turning into yet another revenge thriller, but we should have learnt by now that Tommy Lee is much too gentle a soul to settle for classic vigilante justification. An eye for an eye is not really his thing. Instead he espouses a much wiser and merciful maxim: You can't know a person unless you've walked a mile in his shoes. Jones's killer inevitably also fills the role of gravedigger. Intriguingly enough, I got the feeling that for Jones the film wasn't so much a chance to direct as it was an opportunity to act. Tommy Lee Jones proves, beyond all doubt, here that he is a fine and sensitive actor who has been victimised by typecasting. Most directors seem to think they're not really getting Tommy Lee Jones unless he shouts enough. Call it the Pacino syndrome.

All this and I've yet to mention Albert Brooks's terribly underrated Looking for Comedy in the Muslim World, Dave Chappelle's Block Party, which even won a non-hip-hop fan like me over, and the over-hyped but decent Factotum. Yet, to conclude, I must mention the excellent Tsotsi – a film that could also have been called One Hoodlum and a Baby. While it may just be a bad joke, the film gives viewers insight into the contrast between the issues of dealing with an unexpected baby in the first world we live in, and

the same situation occurring in the townships of Johannesburg, where Tsotsi lives. Further, it may simply be an illustration of the difference between just going to the movies and getting suitably drunk on them. *AHI*

Jack Stevenson 3: The Naked and the Wicked, A Century of American Sex Cinema

One of a series of three documentary films by the director of the same name, The Naked and the Wicked takes its title from one of the clips that makes up this cinematic montage. Jack Stevenson is an American-born film writer currently living and teaching in Denmark. Intending to see Al Gore's An Inconvenient Truth, but ending up at Regnboginn instead of Háskólabíó, I chose Stevenson's documentary blindly from the list of films showing at 20:00.

The documentary covers what it claims to, giving audiences a glimpse of naked Americans from the inception of motion picture film up through the 1970s. This one's got it all: from three men wrestling in thongs, women in (and out of) vintage swimwear, and advertisements for long lost dirty books, to public urination and downright hardcore porn. Speaking from experience, and omitting names to protect the innocent (that being the individual that led me to the wrong theatre), The Naked and the Wicked may be informative, humorous, or just

downright retro-dirty (if that's what you're into), but it is certainly not the best choice for a date. *VZ*

An Inconvenient Horror

Al Gore may have re-invented the whole horror-flick genre with his recent documentary on global warming. Who needs ghosts and space monsters when reality is much more frightening? Directed by Davis Guggenheim, the movie is essentially a footage from Gore's lectures on the subject, where he presents scientific data on CO2 levels and explains their meaning with the aid of dramatic footage of shrinking glaciers and dried lakes, a fancy slide show if I ever saw one. During one of the movies more dramatic scenes, Gore asks if it is possible that we could prepare for other dangers besides terrorism, I was left wondering why the terrorists should even bother, we'll self-destruct soon enough.

The film is strikingly effective in its simplicity and although those who have studied the subject before may not find any new information, they are likely to be affected by the urgency of Gore's delivery. The film suffers slightly from the biographical insights from Gore's political career and upbringing that have been intertwined between his lecture highlights. *SBB*

More information on Iceland International Film Festival can be found at: <http://icelandfilmfestival.is>



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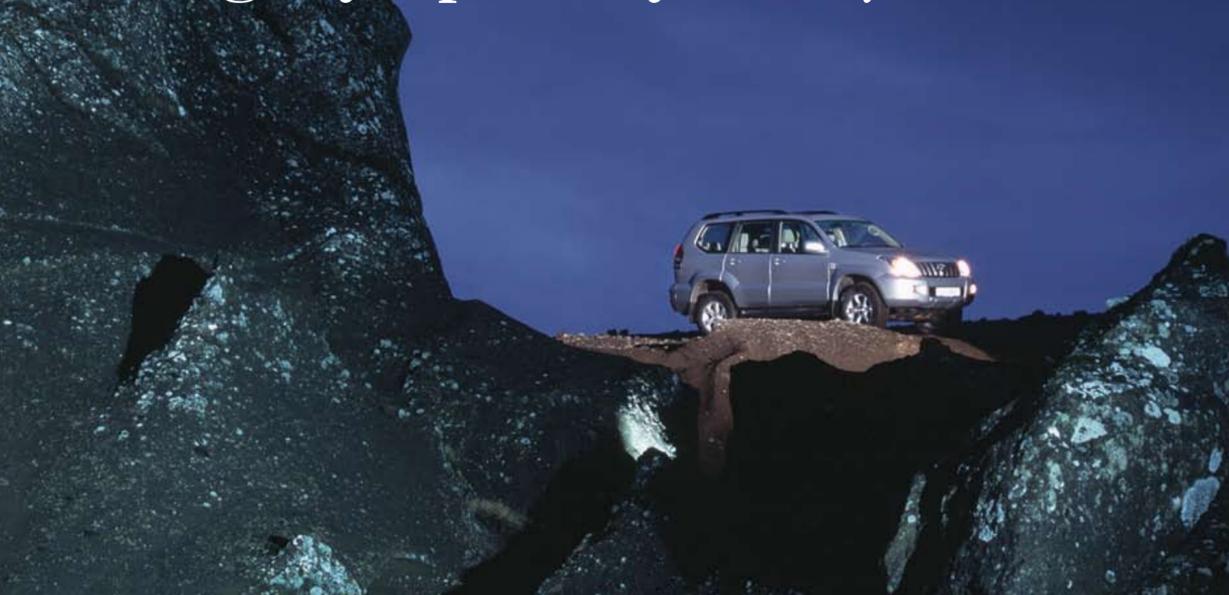
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Stuffed with stuff

"I was accused of featuring footage of the land that was to go under water too prominently in my reports. The landscape I portrayed was said to be 'too beautiful' - a ludicrous accusation."

TV reporter Ómar Ragnarson explains why he faced investigation by the State Radio Council.

Page 6.

"The objective is really simple: to share the cost of travelling cross country."

Birgir Þór Halldórsson explains the idea behind www.samferða.net.

Page 42.

"A great accompaniment to the main course was the mango lassie, a drink made from yoghurt and mango juice. It was a new discovery for me, but I'll admit that I have since been all over the internet in search of good lassie recipes."

Sveinn Birgir Björnsson visits the Indian Mango.

Page 32.

"I left when I was 25 years old, and when I returned 23 years later, there was a whole new generation of artists who were 25 years old."

Recently appointed director of the Reykjavík Museum of Art describes his homecoming.

Page 29.

"The project is kind of hard to explain without reverting to complicated nerd-speak."

Sæmundur Jón Oddsson describes stem-cell research.

Page 44.

"Being an American, I have developed a healthy feeling of shame about the naked human form. I was on the high school swim team, and I distinctly remember never seeing anyone's penis... ever."

Erik Davidek goes on a company trip.

Page 12.

Inside Reykjavík

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