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Greenland: Tradition Meets Modernity

Whaling Returns: Markets Wanted • Live2Cruise Makes Noise - Literally
Grave Warnings From a Retired Politicians • Iceland Airwaves Returns, Again

✦ Complete City Guide and Listings: Map, Info, Music, Arts and Events *Issue 15 / 22 September - 5 October 2006*

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The Reykjavík Grapevine crew

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On cover: An elderly Greenlander relaxing at the local out-door fish market in Narsaq.

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SOUR GRAPES

Complaints, criticism, suggestions, praise, money, anything at all: Contact letters@grapevine.is or send your mail to: The Reykjavík Grapevine, Vesturgata 5, 101 Reykjavík.

ATTN: Bart Cameron editor of Grapevine.

Please publish the following letter in whole online and in your next paper, in a conspicuous spot.

I was surprised and outraged to see myself portrayed as a Ku Klux Klan sympathizer, not only in your paper recently, but on the internet as well. I have experienced slander and lies about my persona in Icelandic tabloids such as Sæð og Heyrt, Hér og Nú and the like. I haven't bothered answering them or taking due measures. But because of the seriousness of your implications, I find myself forced to write to you and point out that, I have never ever said to anybody, publicly or privately, that "Icelandic folk musicians had travelled and taught black men the blues." or that "we invented it" or anything about "what Icelanders gave black people" contrary to what your journalist Helgi Valur wrote in your paper. In fact Helgi Valur has a rather precarious perch, having publicised his evident distaste for middle-aged people, giving him an air of prejudice out of beat with his criticism of my alleged racism. I think prejudice is something to strive against. Middle-age is just a stage in every persons life that is lucky enough to live that long. I think middle-age is something to strive for. At this time I am not aware of my legal rights in this matter, but I feel it must be very serious to imply that somebody is a Ku Klux Klan member or sympathizer, when there is no ground whatsoever for these implications. I don't find it good journalism or the least funny

being publicly branded a racist and lied about in this way. I will seek legal advice in this matter in Iceland and abroad due to the publication on the internet. I request you remove this slander from the internet without delay.

KK
Reykjavík, Iceland

I think we can all agree that the KKK is bad. Real bad. Let us agree on that from the beginning. I believe the section you are referring to is this one:

"First, though, I would watch KK. Every time middle-aged people get together to listen to music in Iceland, concert promoters call KK and check if he's available.

KK walked onstage, played a beautiful song and then a crowd favourite. Then he enlightened us about the origins of blues. He told us Icelandic folk musicians had traveled and taught black men the blues. We Icelanders may have the most blues per capita, but I doubt we invented it. I hoped he would talk more about what Icelanders gave black people because then I could call him KKK. KK started to sing a cappella without a mic the way we did it back in the day. Compliments to him on a brilliant performance."

I would like to point out two things in regards to your letter.

- 1. Helgi Valur's review of your performance is glowingly positive.*
- 2. At no point does he actually call you a racist.*

His KKK reference is simple wordplay, albeit a tasteless one. Given that you

have taken a firm public stand against racism, I can understand your frustration. I have given Helgi Valur the opportunity to reply to your letter in person, and here is what he said:

I do not take KK's concerns lightly. I myself have been called a racist and knowing what KK stands for I can understand his anger towards myself. If people read into what I wrote that KK is a KKK or racist sympathiser I wholeheartedly and genuinely apologise. KK joked about Icelandic people inventing the blues. I turned that into a joke that maybe had nothing to do with the concert review which was my job at that time. I can honestly say that it was never my intention to suggest that KK is a racist for I truly consider him to be a stand up person.

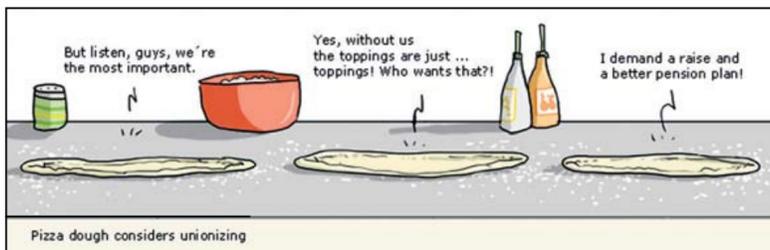
As for my prejudice against middle-aged people I see little reason to apologise for. Middle aged men and women are probably the most powerful group in the country and the world. Middle-aged men and woman are fair game for all I'm concerned.

It was never my intension or want to imply that KK is racist and I'd be very surprised if anybody read that into the review. I ask for forgiveness with the words of Lukas Rossi. "I'm not perfect" and hope that you (KK) can find it in your (his) heart to forgive me. If not I remind you of the fact that I too will someday be middle aged

Sincerely,
Helgi Valur

At the Grapevine, we have always spoken out against racism, and will do so in the future. In believe this is a case of miscommunication. Hopefully, this matter has been laid to rest.

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EDITORIALS

Independent and Persistent Nation Seeks Political Leaders – Serious Applicants Only – For More Details Contact Human Resources Manager Tommy Lee



Sveinn Birgir Björnsson,
Editor

Recently I heard someone say that retired politicians were their own party's worst nightmares. In the case of Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson, this might be accurate. Hannibalsson has become decidedly more radical in his golden years than the party he used to represent. In an interview with the Grapevine, he pulls no punches and speaks out on various issues, most of which have been in the public eye for a while.

I believe Hannibalsson's refreshingly candid approach is sorely lacking from Icelandic politics. If politicians, in general, would speak in plain and simple terms, our duties as citizens would be a whole lot easier. Candid politicians are rare. I think this is a partial explanation for the diminishing voter turn-out in our country. Voters have grown tired of half-truths and hidden agendas. Even if you do not agree with Hannibalsson's views, I think we could all at least agree upon that.

But sadly, we do not seem to care all that much about what our leaders have to say. Lately we have all been more worried about what Tom-

my Lee's next words will be. Tommy, for his part, has never been known for speaking in plain and simple terms, although that has little to do with half-truths and hidden agendas. This is an interesting reflection on Icelandic society: a contestant on a reality show, featuring three burned-out rockers, returns to Iceland to find 8,000 people greeting him in a mall. The Minister of Foreign Affairs believes it is fitting to present him with a book, a gift from the government for his superior representation of Iceland.

Meanwhile, Icelandic officials decide that it might be a good idea to resume commercial whaling, and nobody so much as shrugs. Not a word on Greenpeace's petition drive in which they gathered 69,000 signatures from people who pledged to visit Iceland if scientific whaling were ceased. For some reason, no one has presented Greenpeace with a book from the government for putting Iceland in the spotlight.

No, commercial whaling must resume. Who cares if there is not market for the product? What matters is that we cannot let anyone strong arm

us. We might be tiny, but we sure are independent. That is why we have spent months trying to get the USA to honor a worthless defense agreement. It shouldn't really matter that we have hardly been able to get a meeting with US officials; we should still put our tails between our legs and keep trying, instead of doing the only honorable and stand-up thing -- simply terminating the agreement. We are nothing if not persistent.

In this issue, I am particularly proud of Virginia Zech's interesting summary of Iceland's policy on resuming commercial whaling and Steinunn Jakobsdóttir's entertaining look at an interesting subculture thriving around a group called Live2Cruise. If nothing else, make sure you do not miss these two pieces. Jakobsdóttir also found a country on the verge of change when she traveled to Greenland. Further, for your comfort, we have picked out some interesting things for you, our readers to enjoy for the next two weeks. So, enjoy.

Give Me Consensus or Give Me Death!



Haukur Magnússon,
Journalist

A society of absolute consensus could be desirable. Imagine the convenience of walking into a record store that only stocked your favourite releases by your favourite artists. Or walking down food mart aisles stuffed with only your favourite brands of your favourite foods. Hearing your most treasured songs every single time you turned on the radio. Elections would be a thing of the past, as would the tedious process of deciding what movie to catch with your friends on a given night: 'we all love Jennifer Aniston, now let's go see her latest flick.' Imagine the time saved. Wouldn't that be great? It would.

When you think about it, diversity in taste and opinion only serves to fan the ugly flames of dissent. It's also time-consuming, tedious and downright inefficient. So, if we ponder diversity using the cut and dry terms of economic loss and profit that we've already come to use as the mark of value on most, if not all, things, we would find absolute consensus to be a truly desirable state of affairs: one to really strive for, if only because it would be better for the economy. This is not to mention the fact that we'd all be happier knowing that we were right, or at least that no one would

challenge our version of the truth. Truth is what you make it, anyway.

So, now, we've found that a society in total consent is indeed something to strive for. It isn't that far-fetched either. History tells us that such societies have existed in the past, and that they are likely to surface again. It just takes a little work on society's behalf. We've done it before and we can do it again. Luckily, we may now be closer than ever to such a state of agreement coming to fruition.

A fine man declared not so long ago that 'you are either with us, or you are against us', offering would-be dissident voices a simple choice and a final chance to fall in line before he set out to eradicate them completely. We Icelanders happily responded that we were indeed 'with them' and, in the process, won the recognition and respect of our peers worldwide. And it was the right decision, too. Rocking the boat only makes it unstable and prone to sinking anyway.

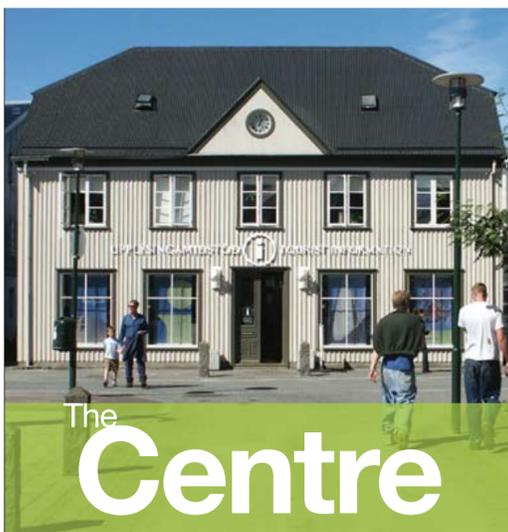
There have been more hints of what's to come. Those that dare to protest, well, almost anything in Iceland -- be it aluminum smelting plants, changes to fishing regulations or

ill-thought-out plans to support some foreign war -- are dismissed by the majority in charge as being grumpy party-poopers, and jealous ones to boot.

So we're on the right track, but there's still a lot to be done before we can joyfully skip down the street knowing that every single person around agrees completely. There's no question that a Big Mac is the finest food known to man. Their popularity has taught us as much. Michael Jackson's Thriller is of course the greatest piece of music ever released. Titanic is the ultimate film. That painting, the one with the cute, crying clown that everyone has, that's the ultimate piece of art. And so on.

All of these things the world has come to agree upon and they could serve as models in our next move toward absolute consensus. We need to seek out the most popular opinions and silence those who dare question them. Now, more than ever, we need to focus on simple, general public agreement.

Beating down unpopular views and opinions is no longer just a fun hobby. It is our duty.



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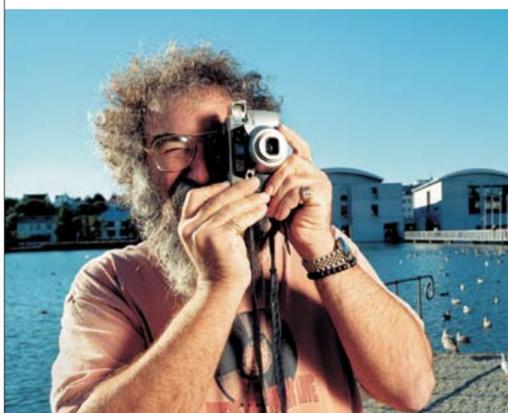
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An Unnatural State Of Affairs

An interview with Magnús Porkell Bernharðsson

BY VIRGINIA ZECH PHOTO BY SKARI

Magnús Porkell Bernharðsson is a professor of history at Williams College, visiting his native country to teach a course at the University of Iceland. Debates rage worldwide on political events unfolding in the Middle East and Bernharðsson is here to lend his expertise to interested students. He made some time to sit down with the Grapevine and address a few of the “big questions” concerning Islam and the Middle East. In times of political and religious strife like these, it was nice to find that he knows both a former classmate of mine and two previous professors. Perhaps it is, indeed, a small world.

/// What is the topic of the course you are teaching here?

– It’s a master’s level course in the international relations program. It’s on the relationship between religion and politics. We’re focusing specifically on Islam and the Middle East. I teach full time in the United States at a liberal arts college called Williams in northwestern Massachusetts, but I’m here basically on sabbatical. I’m only going to be spending two weeks, so this is an intensive course. We’ll meet intensely for two weeks and then the students will work on their projects until the end of the term. This is a new course of study here at the University of Iceland. In international relations there are several lines: international law, international business, and multiculturalism; that’s where this course fits in.

/// What are some of the main ideas that you want to communicate to your students here as opposed to in the States?

– You mean how is it different to teach here? Well [besides] teaching on the master’s level, the atmosphere is different here in Iceland than it is in the United States. [In the U.S.] there is a political atmosphere. [In Iceland] people are not as emotionally attached to the Middle East as people in the United States. [Their interest in courses] is not for religious or ethnic or political reasons. In Iceland, I could say that there is more freedom or more flexibility to discuss ideas on an intellectual basis. Because Icelanders do not have any [vested] interest in the Middle East, it’s not directly related to anything that the government is doing, so students don’t see it as a critique on their government.

/// In your research and teaching are you more concerned with historical and political contexts or with identifying concepts of faith and religion?

– I’m a historian, so what I’m really trying to do in this course, and in most of my teaching, is to [explore] to what extent contemporary debates and discussions are rooted in the past and in perceptions of the past. I think that many of the debates that we are seeing today are not new, but have been taking place for the last hundred or two hundred years. [Ours] is a changing society with new venues of mass communications, new media and so on. [Information between] people may be circulating more freely.

In the last 50 years there has been relative peace and stability in Europe and North America, whereas there has not been peace and stability in the Middle East. [This is] largely as a result of European and American interference. In the first part of the 20th century Europeans and North Americans were at war constantly; for the first 50 years of the 20th century there was peace and stability in the Middle East. So, I want to point out that the situation right now is not a natural state of affairs, but a relatively new historical phenomenon, and I want people to view it in that way. [In my class] we do address the “clash of civilisations” theory and I stress to students that this is a theory and not a reality or something that is based on actual events. This is a theory that has taken on significance in many peoples’ minds and I think you could argue that policy is now being based on this theory.



/// Do you see the violence in the Middle East right now as more of a cultural and religious clash, or one resultant of political problems built into the region through outside parties dictating national boundaries, and the corruption that has come with outside influence on the creation of governments therein?

– In some places there’s a huge debate over identities and the role of religion in the public sphere and what are the most feasible methods to implement more religion and respect for the holy in [that arena]. Then, in others, the debates, violence, conflicts are directly related to economic stress or foreign intervention, so I think it’s a combination of both [internal clashes and outside influence]. However, I try to stress with all of my students, especially here, that one should not be seeking monocausal explanations. That is very easy to do and in many ways it can be very gratifying, but instead of trying to find simple categorisations one should acknowledge the complexity of the situation. Therefore, one’s attitude or policy or approach to the region should take [into account] the diversity and complexity as the reality, rather than [taking] a monolithic unity kind of approach.

/// Do you think that tensions between Sunnis and Shi’ites are as much “to blame” as Muslim vs. Judeo-Christian ‘clashes of civilisation’?

– That is one thing that is more obvious [now] than 50 some years ago. There has been a remarkable rise in tensions among certain Sunni governments, and [between] Sunnis and Shi’a, and there are many Sunnis who do worry about what they perceive as the rise of Shi’ism and Shi’ite identity. [This is happening] in Iran, southern Iraq, western Saudi Arabia, [with] Hezbollah, and in Lebanon. But this is also possibly related to internal power struggles and there are other factors

of the Middle East and Islam. I’m always surprised at how much Icelanders have travelled in the region. This is in stark contrast to American students who, well, there are very few.

– Yes, exactly the case. There is a growing interest and people are studying more; however, there are very few opportunities currently offered here at the university level and even fewer at the high school level. I think there’s now greater interest and Icelanders follow these events very closely. [This is] as opposed to some Americans who perhaps feel that their government is to blame. There’s not that kind of a connection here. I would say it is more of an intellectual/ideological political interest, rather than a [livelihood] interest.

/// What impact do you think Sufis are having on current politics in the Middle East?

– They’re such a small minority and not, given their nature, really obvious. But Sufis have been at the forefront of reform in the past. It just so happens, right now, that they are not. Part of that is that some of the groups that are dominant and very active and vocal [now] do not have a very positive view of Sufis. So, it’s in their best interest right now to keep their heads low. But, if you travel, you see Sufi lodges and you see Sufis. You might wonder if, indeed, the more that Islam comes to [be a part of] public discourse and [certain speakers] are in the media more, perhaps more people will be drawn to Sufism: looking inward instead of to an outward expression.

/// Are Icelanders experiencing the impact of problems in the Middle East?

– I’ve been lecturing about the Middle East and Islam in Iceland on a regular basis, both in a formal academic environment and more informally, for the last seven or eight years. I would say that there has been an explosion of interest and people are much more aware

of the Middle East and Islam. I’m always surprised at how much Icelanders have travelled in the region. This is in stark contrast to American students who, well, there are very few.

/// I think most Americans would be totally disinterested. Or afraid?

– Yes, exactly the case. There is a growing interest and people are studying more; however, there are very few opportunities currently offered here at the university level and even fewer at the high school level. I think there’s now greater interest and Icelanders follow these events very closely. [This is] as opposed to some Americans who perhaps feel that their government is to blame. There’s not that kind of a connection here. I would say it is more of an intellectual/ideological political interest, rather than a [livelihood] interest.

/// Where would you like the discussion of Islam and the Middle East to be going in Iceland?

– I think Icelanders have always viewed the Middle East and other peoples as not their business and neither important nor necessary, but [just] as interesting. Now Icelanders are beginning to realise that, not only are they interesting, but also important. These events in the Middle East do affect our daily lives and, with Icelanders going abroad more and Icelandic companies doing more businesses abroad, we have to figure out how to be part of the world in a meaningful way and to be more aware of the various cultural differences that exist between societies. We should be aware that we are part of the international community and I think more and more Icelanders are becoming aware [of that], especially of the Islamic people... A tremendous conscious decision because it is a challenge. Young Icelanders are trying to develop an educated and sophisticated outlook on the world.

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News in Brief

BY HAUKUR MAGNÚSSON, SVEINN BIRKIR BJÖRNSSON AND VIRGINIA ZECH PHOTOS BY SKARI

Over 9,000 Foreign Citizens Employed in Iceland in 2005

Last year saw a total of 9,010 foreign citizens employed in Iceland, according to a statement released by Statistics Iceland last week. Recent years have seen a swift rise in the number of foreign citizens manning positions in the Icelandic job market, with the total going up by 5,610 persons from a reported 3,400 in 1998. The statement further specifies that foreign citizens now make up 5.5% of the Icelandic workforce, up from 2.3% in 1998.

A large majority of the foreign citizens are based in the greater Reykjavík area, 4,420 in all, as opposed to the 4,340 workers living elsewhere. Eastern Iceland is home to the largest aggregation of those employed outside of Reykjavík, or 1,790 in total; almost certainly an effect of the ongoing Kárahnjúkar dam project, which employs a great number of foreign migrant workers.

As of 2005 a considerably large portion of the foreign work force was employed in the service sector, or around 72%, while 23% were employed in construction or manufacturing, with construction work being vastly more common.

Out of the foreign citizens employed in Iceland, male workers make up the majority, or 5,350 males compared to 3,650 females. This means the male/female ratio in this particular group has shifted considerably since 1998, when the number of female workers was 1,870 opposed to 1,530 males.

Most of the foreign citizens working in Iceland in 2005 were Polish citizens according to Statistics Iceland, or around 2,000. Coming in second are Danish, Filipino, Portuguese and German citizens, with around 500 each.

Sugarcubes Comeback Announced!

Legendary Icelandic supergroup The Sugarcubes announced Monday that they would reform for a single concert to celebrate 20th

anniversary of their first single, 'AMMÆLI', which was released on November 21, 1986. The celebration will take place November 17 in the Laugardalshöll sports centre and will mark the first time the full Sugarcubes lineup appears together since 1992.

The 'AMMÆLI' single was later released as 'Birthday' in the U.K., immediately reaching the top of the independent charts and thus setting the tone for the global rise of the Sugarcubes and their record imprint Smekkleysa (Bad Taste). While neither The Sugarcubes nor Smekkleysa ever fully managed to live (or die) up to their 'World domination or death' manifesto, both reached considerable success and went on to spawn the careers of legends such as Björk Guðmundsdóttir, Einar Örn Benediktsson (currently splitting ears under the Ghostigital moniker) and several others. The birthday celebration is sponsored by FL Group and Icelandair, who plan to internationally market package trips to the concert.

In a phone conversation with the Grapevine, founding Sugarcube Benediktsson confirmed the announcement, stating that the band thought it highly proper to celebrate this birthday of 'Birthday'. When asked if the band had any other reunion-type activities planned, Benediktsson said that nothing further was scheduled as of now. "We feel that this whole celebration is enough for the moment, as we all have our respective projects that we devote our time and energy to. I don't want to exclude anything, but right now, the focus lies solely on the impending birthday celebration of the Sugarcubes and Smekkleysa. Will we record the show? Yeah, I suppose we will, if only so we can hear how bad or good we've gotten."

Dagsbrún Shakeup Imminent

Icelandic media and telecommunication giant Dagsbrún is restructuring its business model after showing a deficit of 1.3 billion ISK in the first half of 2006. The restructure will

see its two subsidiaries, the telecommunication division, ÖgVodafone, and the media conglomerate 365 Media, divided into two separate companies.

According to reports from Blaðið, 365 Media, which runs four TV stations, six radio stations, the daily newspaper Fréttablaðið and several magazines, such as Birta, DV and Veggfóður, will also streamline its operation considerably, and plans have been made to shut down NFS, the 24-hour news TV station, along with several of its magazines.

Ari Edwald, CEO of 365, refused to deny or confirm the reports, but told Blaðið that in reviewing the business model, no stone would be left unturned.

Magni: 'Off To Be the King of Iceland?'

So said Tommy Lee at Magni's dismissal from the running to become his band's new frontman on the Rockstar: Supernova season finale, which aired 13 September 2006. Despite some tension between Lee and Magni over the course of the show, Magni bowed out gracefully, the first to go on the show's final episode. He even made a brief return at its close to jam with the newly formed Supernova group behind their new lead singer, Canadian Lukas Rossi.

While it is unlikely that Iceland will be creating a monarchy anytime soon, simply to ensure that Magni can be their king, Lee is probably unaware of quite how infused into Iceland's discourse on popular culture Magni has become. In an interview with the Grapevine, the mayor of Borgarfjörður (Magni's hometown), Steinn Eiríksson, stated that, "We are proud of him. Very, very proud of him." Eiríksson added that the celebrations in Borgarfjörður last night, a town in the east of Iceland, were, "Good fun! There were a lot of people. As well some of the local people, [other] people were coming here and celebrating. Even when it was clear that Magni was

in fourth place people were celebrating... Of course we would like to see him in first or second but we are quite pleased."

Eiríksson was unaware of any plans for Magni's Icelandic band, Á Móti Sól, to be returning to play in the east of Iceland soon. "Of course we would like for him to come and play. They planned a concert here this summer with Á Móti Sól, but they couldn't come... hopefully they will be able to come next year," Eiríksson said.

The sentiments of uncertainty surrounding Magni's future plans were echoed by Magni's Á Móti Sól bandmate, keyboardist Heimir Eyvindarson. "Á Móti Sól has had some offers regarding playing the States and so on. We haven't decided on anything because we are waiting for Magni and it is completely in his hands. He is going to lead us. If he wants to go on tour we will go with him. There is no way of imagining how he feels and we are not even trying to... Things will turn out the way they turn out."

The King Returns... To The Mall

Smáralind was packed on Sunday, 17 September 2006, with 8,000 Magni enthusiasts of all ages awaiting his return.

Where I come from, big acts just do not perform in malls. And, for the few artists whose sad fate it is to have no alternative but to book them, there are no opening bands. I arrived "early", or so I thought, only to be met by an already swarming crowd of people and the first opening act, playing a mediocre Marley cover.

I waited patiently for the sea of excited Magni fans to slowly shift me toward the front of the crowd while the duo on stage finished up with a forgettable rendition of Bon Jovi's 'Livin' On A Prayer.

Somewhere in the middle of the second opening set I began to crave air and moved

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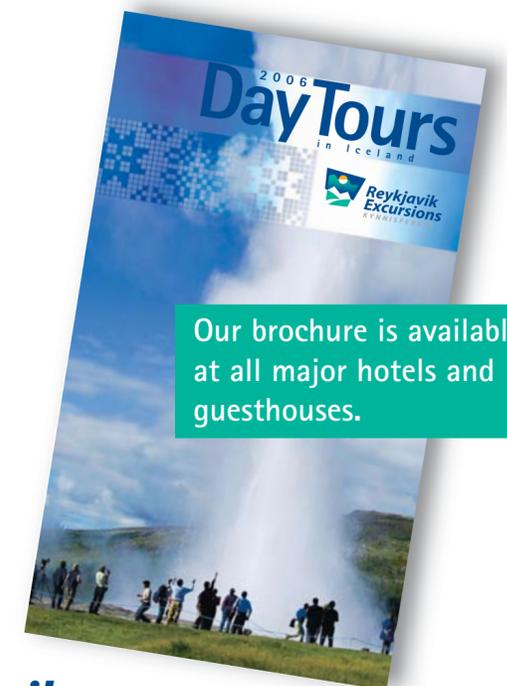
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out of what would soon become "the pit" to the side of the stage. The smell of the free Doritos being passed out hadn't lent anything positive to the experience of being walled in by bodies. With crowds numbering in the thousands, keeping track of children looked to be something of a struggle. Some parents had them loaded into shopping carts. Other kids were standing on the large pots of faux trees to get a better view. My cameraman, on the other hand, looked extremely bored.

And then Magni took the stage.

Audience participation during the opening acts impressed me given it was a small crowd, but this was nothing compared to the arrival of Magni. After being given flowers and the appreciation of the nation of Iceland things got, well, a little crazy. As Á Mótí Sól joined him onstage and launched directly into his Rockstar "hit" Fire, the sense of adolescent excitement came to a crescendo. A 12-year-old girl looked to be crushing one of her compatriots in her effort to touch Magni's leg while he played; another woman attempted to yell above the blasting music, begging for an autograph. The extremely harassed security guard in front of me, stage right, had his work cut out of him in his efforts to hold children back while ordering others to dismount a nearby fake tree, all while more youngsters were streaming underneath the rope barrier behind him to get a view from the rear of the set.

Following what was, frankly, a damn good cover of Fire, Á Mótí Sól and Magni began to play some of the band's older songs. Having read that Icelanders have only a limited conception of fame and are baffled by the idea of mobbing a celebrity, the entire event was a surprising one for me. Nevertheless, the energy of Á Mótí Sól almost led one to forget they were playing during broad daylight in a food court. Fan enthusiasm never flagged for their performance and, all in all, it was definitely the mall-concert of the year, if not the decade.

Icelanders Lift Whaling Ban as Whale Consumption Reaches All-Time Low

Exempting itself from the UN's CITES restriction ban (Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species) Iceland has plans to resume whaling commercially this

year, provided that an economically viable market for whale products can be found. In an interview with the Grapevine, Magnús Þór Hafsteinnsson, Liberal Party MP, stated, "I think we Icelanders should start whaling again, but we have to be sure there is a market for the products." Other nations exempting themselves from the ban include Norway and Japan. The lift on the whaling ban in Iceland is restricted to permit the hunting of minke whales.

Finding a market for whale products is the main obstacle facing Icelandic whalers. "So far the few minke whales that we have hunted in recent years have been sold in Iceland to the Icelandic market, but if this is going to make any sense we have to be able to export the products... We'd been trading with Japan when we hunted whales [in the past], and we have to be sure that we can do that again. We have to find buyers..." Hafsteinnsson said.

The CITES restrictions are the main obstacle standing between Icelandic whalers and participation in international trade, Hafsteinnsson told the Grapevine. "The main objection would be that trade of whale products is almost completely forbidden between nations." In accordance with the International Whaling Commission's moratorium, Iceland gave up commercial whaling in 1986, although scientific whaling was practised up until 1989. 2003 saw Icelanders return to whaling for scientific purposes, when a program designed to research the effect of minke whale on commercial fish stock was launched.

Since 2003, minke has been available in Icelandic grocery stores to an apparently unenthusiastic response, as Icelanders' interest in whale products is reported to be at an all-time low. Only 1.1% of Icelanders eat whale meat once a week or more, according to a recent Gallup poll commissioned by IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare) and INCA (Iceland Nature Conservation Association / Náttúruverndarsamtök Íslands). A statement released by the organisations last week went on to say that 82.4% of 16 to 24 year olds never eat whale meat and that the 55-75 age group are the highest consumers of it, drawing the conclusion that the Icelandic market for a slice of tasty minke is likely to further decline. The survey was conducted in Iceland in the months of June and July this year.

The press release also offers comparison to the consumption of other meats, stating the survey found that 52.9% of Icelanders ate chicken once a week or more and 47.4% ate lamb as frequently. In it, IFAW U.K.'s marine campaigner Elle Dickson is quoted as saying that Norway has seen similarly poor sales of whale meat since resuming whaling 14 years ago, reaching an all-time low during the last two years. "An economic study of the feasibility of commercial whaling in Iceland also showed that the whale watching industry is bringing in much more money than commercial whaling ever could."

INCA chairman Árni Finnsson offers his opinion on the merits of scientific whaling in the press release, arguing that "[b]laming whalers for eating the fish in Iceland is a massive diversion from the Marine Research Institute's real work on fisheries and is drawing its attention away from fish stock assessment."

Ethnic Profiling Questioned

Paul F. Nikolov, founder of the New Icelanders' Party, has voiced his concerns over Justice Minister Björn Bjarnason's "claims that a Lithuanian mafia had established itself in Iceland" and is working to import drugs to the country. Nikolov points to recent figures from Keflavík Customs Office records that show that out of 32 drug busts made at Keflavík airport this year, over half have involved Icelanders, while people from Denmark and France are most commonly arrested foreign nationals. The total number of Lithuanians arrested for smuggling drugs through Keflavík Airport this year is five.

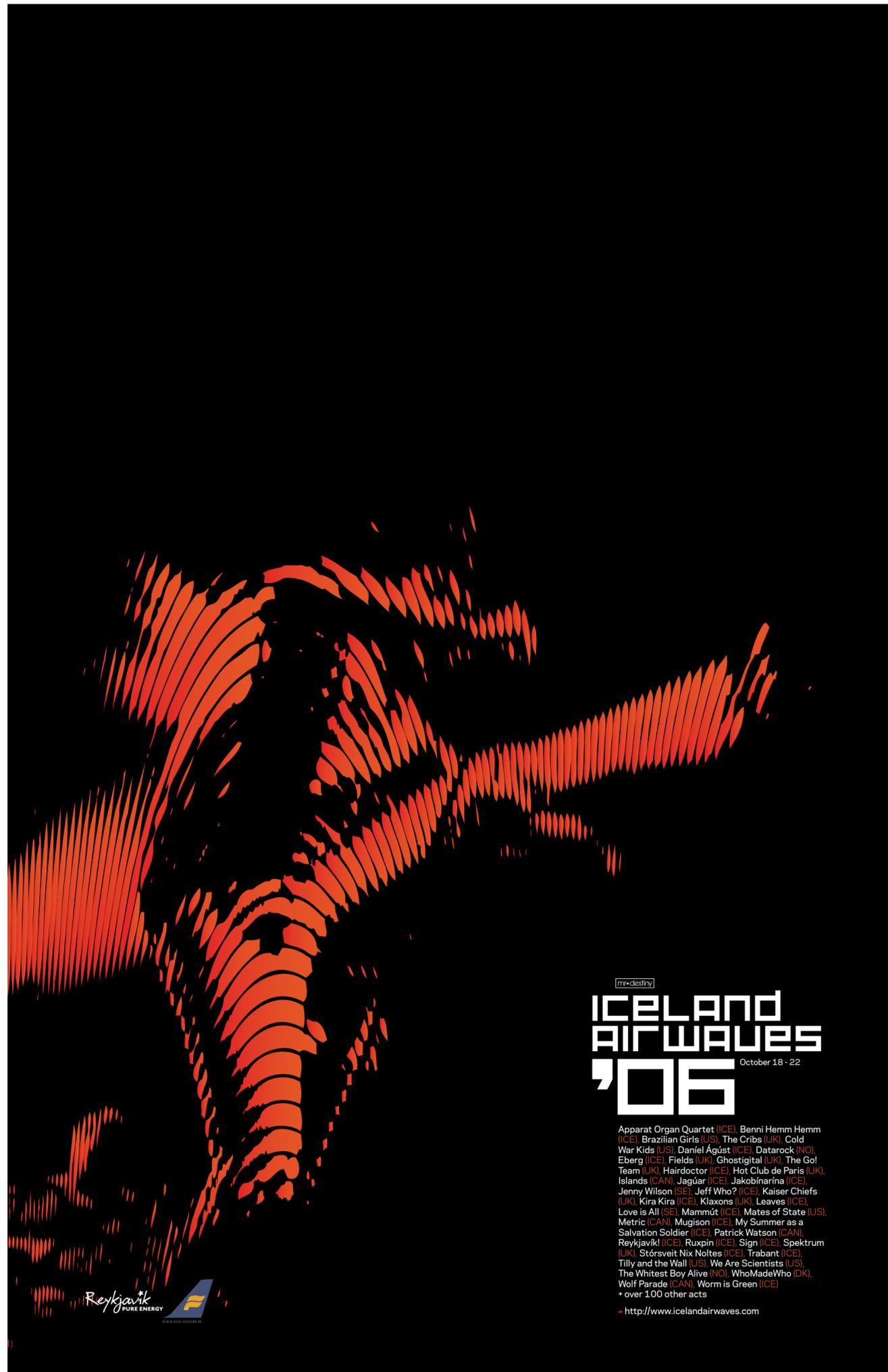
In a conversation with the Grapevine, Nikolov said: "This profiling, this scapegoating [of Lithuanians] is contradictory to all evidence. It does nothing to stop the drug problem. People are saying that 'it's the foreigners who are coming over here and soiling us [with drugs].'" On the point of high security measures in Iceland's major airport, Keflavík, Nikolov predicted that, "They will start harassing all Lithuanians in the airports. Lithuanians living in Iceland, and I think there are about 600 of them, may be subject to surveillance... when the drugs continue to pour in they will just pick another ethnic group."

Nikolov asserts that the drug problem isn't an issue of airport security, but is really more related to the underfunded security in Iceland's harbours. "Drugs are all over the North where there are these tiny, little harbours and tiny, little villages and very few people," Nikolov stated. But, he went on, "The customs officers are understaffed and underpaid, even in the cases where they are honest, I'm sure that is the case 99% of the time, they can't check every ship... It would take a lot of work and a lot of money, of course, to put more staff into the harbours in this country. National people coming for surprise visits to keep them on their toes."

He believes that Icelandic policymakers are basically copying policies they have seen going into effect, particularly in other Western European nations. "People have a hard time believing that there is not a long line of people out there waiting to get into Iceland. The standard of living here is great; there are tons of positives about it." But, Nikolov went on to say, "This flood of people they've been talking about... using it for, frankly, Draconian immigration laws," just hasn't happened yet. Nikolov stated his opinion that Icelanders have "basically copied Danish immigration law."

Nikolov believes that allowing rumours like those concerning a "Lithuanian Mafia" will be damaging to Iceland's labour prospects. "I don't know if the Minister of Justice, Björn Bjarnason, is doing this intentionally, or if it's through his own carelessness... making all this noise about a Lithuanian mafia. These people do call home, they say that 'in Iceland they are saying that we are trying to form a mafia, we've been hearing you get harassed at the airport.' No one wants to go through that if there are other choices."

The New Icelanders' Party believes that it is their responsibility to speak out about these circulating rumours that may be damaging both the experience of Iceland's immigrants, as well as Iceland's potential to import the labourers that it needs. Said Nikolov, "Where this phrase 'Lithuanian mafia' has popped-up, at this point it's just a whisper... we can just let it grow and stick in peoples' minds or [we] can stand up and speak out. You can't throw around these terms about people who are living, working and paying taxes in Iceland."



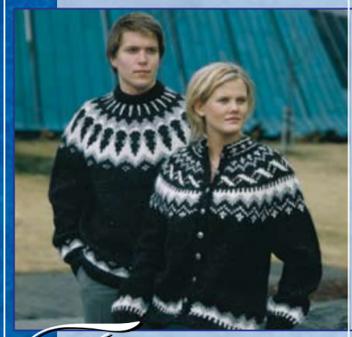
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OPINION



The Right to Remain Silent

BY GABRIELE R. GUÐBJARTSSON

It's Tuesday night at a quarter to ten and my family and I are strolling down Laugavegur, one of the busiest streets in downtown Reykjavik. My entourage consists of my chipper mother, hungry father, carefree aunt and adventure-seeking grandmother, who are all in town visiting from California. We pass approximately ten people in a five-minute time frame. Of the ten, two people, who happen to be a couple of non-Viking ancestry, say, "Hello" and give us one of those "So you're obviously American," smiles. We of course sing a sunny chorus of 'hi, hello and how are you?' and keep it moving. The other eight we passed definitely stared but it looked certain that salutations would not be finding their way to our circle. Frankly, my mother was appalled.

My introduction refers to the lack of public interaction also known as "small talk" in any Icelandic, non-alcoholic-induced social forum. As of August 10th I became an official cod out of water on this vast island and have encountered repeated incidents of being in a social setting and feeling as if I had the symptoms of a black plague casualty. In other words, no one made an effort to even meet my gaze, smirk or, needless to say, utter anything that sounded like a greeting. What is

how many people will approach and entertain you for some pocket change on a 40-minute subway ride.

As a former NYC public school teacher it is in my blood to at least offer some practical tools needed to build this bridge of communication. Debra Fine, a renowned public speaker and author of *The Fine Art of Small Talk*, can provide some helpful tips to you conversation-inhibited Icelanders:

1. Be the first to say hello and use your name with your introduction.
2. Always ask open ended questions (Asking someone "How do you like Iceland?" does not count.)
3. Stay on top of current events so you'll always have something to talk about.

Okay, I know this sounds like an English class that definitely should have been ditched; however, engaging in simple conversation could take one further than one might think.

The point of all of this rambling is not to make

"Although most people are in their vehicles, going about 90 mph, talking on their cell phones and trying to sing the latest Beyoncé track while magically holding that Starbucks latte with their free hand, they do find the time to make their daily quota of 15 greetings"

the deal? Is my deodorant failing me? Do I resemble the likes of an X-Men mutant? Can somebody please tell me why it is so difficult for Icelanders to engage in conversation with complete strangers?

In California, where my roots are planted, it is not only customary but pretty much a social law to give a "shout out" to any individual one may encounter. It's possible that the constant temperature of 85°F keeps people more animated than a caffeinated duck at Disneyland. Although most people are in their vehicles, going about 90 mph, talking on their cell phones and trying to sing the latest Beyoncé track while magically holding that Starbucks latte with their free hand, they do find the time to make their daily quota of 15 greetings. On the contrary, in New York, where I've lived for most of my adult life, things are dealt with a little differently. When people typically think of New York, they see glitz, glamour and a sea of yellow taxis. In actuality, New York is a river of bitter individuals who walk way too fast and just want to get to their ultimate destination – away from the other 7,999,999 New Yorkers. As a rule of thumb we Yankees fans don't make eye contact unless it's completely necessary. However, it's quite remarkable

Iceland a tiny model of Arnold Schwarzenegger's newfound political dreamland or its paradox, the web of hostility better known as the Big Apple. I simply would like to have a random conversation with a local and walk away feeling as if I was given more than the time of day. The adoption of cosy coffee shops and outside dining is a phenomenal start to culturally redefining "hanging out." These Ikea-furnished environments foster unplanned connections and enlightened rap sessions. As agonising as it sounds, one will undoubtedly be asked to step out of their comfort zone to participate. Nevertheless, isn't life full of "first times?"

Nostalgia only partly describes sharing life's bitter-sweet moments with an individual you can only recall as "a guy in a yellow shirt with a funky hair cut." There's a reason why some people feel totally comfortable divulging their deepest, darkest secrets to complete strangers. Nine times out of ten, you'll never see them again. On the other hand, a country with a population of 300,000 – you actually may see them again. Hmmm, all this silence is finally beginning to make a little sense.



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

- Tommi Thule



Light beer



Icelandic Whaling: But Is It Science?

Debate Rages Over Commercial Whaling

BY VIRGINIA ZECH PHOTO BY SKARI

While the debate surrounding Iceland's decision to persist in scientific whaling rages on, Iceland's plans for commercial whale meat sales, both domestically and for export, remain unclear. The BBC reports that Iceland intends to begin trade of whale meat with the Faroe Islands, based on statements made by Stefán Ásmundsson, Iceland's whaling commissioner. However, when the Grapevine previously contacted Magnús Þór Hafsteinsson, Liberal Party MP, for comment on whale meat export he denied knowledge of any plans to export to the Faroes. Concerning international trade, Hafsteinsson did state, "We'd been trading with Japan when we hunted whales [in the past], and we have to be sure that we can do that again. We have to find buyers, if commercial export is going to be feasible."

Obviously, a decision to trade internationally is highly controversial. Economics play a large part in the discourse, though the right to continue in the long-standing cultural tradition of whaling also enters into the argument. "We have full right to start whaling again and I think we should. We hunt mammals on land, why shouldn't we hunt mammals in the ocean? I don't know why [we] shouldn't be able to use all of nature's resources. Politics, of course, is making this difficult for us," Hafsteinsson said.

According to the UN's CITES restriction ban (Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species), trade of listed animals with ratifying nations is illegal. The Faroes, technically a dependent of Denmark, which has signed onto CITES, are principally a self-governing territory and are now part of a grey area in which the legality of a whale trade is uncertain. Iceland has exempted itself from the CITES ban to continue hunting minke whales. Iceland has been whaling for research purposes since 2003, and the CITES restrictions are the main obstacle standing between Icelandic whalers and participation in international trade, Hafsteinsson told the Grapevine. "So far the few minke whales that we have hunted in recent years have been sold in Iceland to the Icelandic market, but if this is going to make any sense we have to be able to export the products," Hafsteinsson said.

However, commercial whaling is not the

only way in which Iceland can profit from the minke population. Whale watching is popular among Iceland's tourists and brings in significant revenues each year. Some fear that continued hunting, regardless of the stated purpose, could hurt the tourism industry. Speaking to the Grapevine, a spokesman for Greenpeace U.K. stated that, "The whale-watching industry in Iceland stands to bring in a lot more revenues than commercial whaling and continued whaling can only be damaging to what whale watching and tourism do for the economy. It can also be damaging to Iceland's international reputation." Greenpeace reports collecting "69,000 signatures from people who would like to go to Iceland as tourists, but will not until Iceland stops its scientific whaling program."

Elding is one of the Icelandic whale-watching companies whose employees' livelihood rests on continued tourism in the country. While Elding did not respond to requests for further information on how they anticipate whaling efforts will impact their business in the coming year, they did state in a phone conversation that, "Of course, we are quite worried about the situation right now" because of vested business interests.

Even as Iceland prepares to attempt exporting minke, controversy continues to swirl around the actual value of the "science" behind research whaling efforts over the past few years. Clare Sterling, of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) told the Grapevine, "We've actually taken some of our whale-watching research boats out [in Iceland] to conduct some non-invasive research. It doesn't harm or disturb the animals and yields very good results. We believe that scientific whaling isn't producing results of any value. We believe that it's of more value [for Icelanders] to protect their whale species and protect the whale watching industry." Sterling stated that IFAW has "worked in Iceland for a number of years and actually helped set up whale watching [here] ten years ago and did a study into whale watching becoming an industry [here]."

On these grounds Greenpeace as well as IFAW oppose all whaling efforts, holding that they are a backdoor means of garnering whale meat for commercial purposes. "The facts

speaking for themselves: scientific whaling isn't producing scientific results. We would hope that the powers that be will take control and make the right decision. It's good to see that there's a lot of debate right now in Iceland and in the media," Sterling stated. IFAW hopes that the availability of information on Iceland's whaling efforts will enable people to make decisions that will help to end whaling. Sterling said, "The cruelty and tourism arguments: we would like to see [these] help stop suffering of the whales, which take some time to die." Greenpeace's position is that "Scientific whaling is commercial whaling by another name."

Reorienting Iceland's whaling industry, from scientific to commercially driven, involves more economic obstacles than simply the limited market created by the CITES restrictions. Those countries currently exempting themselves from CITES include Norway and Japan. In an interview with Árni Finnsson, of the Iceland Nature Conservation Association (INCA), Finnsson stated, "As far as we can see the Japanese market is closed and that's the only export market there is around... They have increased scientific whaling in Japan in the last couple of years, so it appears to me that the Japanese market is fully satisfied." When asked if there was a possibility of Iceland exporting minke to Norway, Finnsson said, "Norway has been killing 500 animals [per year] for the last few years. They gave up at 500 and the whalers said that they couldn't sell any more. That market is saturated." On the point of the domestic market for whale meat Finnsson reflected that there has never been a viable market for whale in Iceland. "Traditionally the export of minke whales from Iceland was in the range of 200 animals, or perhaps less, between 1975 and 1985. At the same time the domestic market was very limited. I would assume that the domestic market was satisfied after that [number] by poaching the so called 'drowned' whales from the nets," Finnsson asserted.

Greenpeace and IFAW echoed the sentiment of confusion over any attempt Iceland might make at exporting minke. "A lot of polling [has been carried out] in Iceland. We commissioned an economic study last year that showed very little demand for whale meat,

especially among young people," Sterling of IFAW said. "There doesn't seem to be a market for [whale]. The recent poll in Iceland showed something like 10 percent of people eat whale meat, so it's obviously not relevant to most [Icelanders]," Greenpeace told the Grapevine.

INCA's Finnsson agrees that the market is certainly limited and may play a part in discouraging an expansion of the whaling industry, he believes that internal Icelandic politics are also playing an important role in the ongoing debate. "We cannot understand why the government subsidies support whaling. I think it satisfies the prestige of politicians who base their decisions on parochial grounds rather than scientific ones or on conservation," Finnsson said. "I think that it is muscle flexing. There will be elections for parliament in spring 2007. Minister of Fisheries, Einar Kristinn Guðfinnsson, has been in parliament since 1991 and he's made some very bold statements on whaling over the last 15 years. He has to live up to his word and therefore he has invested a lot of prestige in whaling. Guðfinnsson is a hardliner on whaling. He comes from the Westfjords and that's where the [industry] is. That's one reason: they just want to appear to be tough," Finnsson stated.

The Department of Fisheries maintains that scientific whaling isn't at this point driven by commercial interests. In response to queries about the necessity of lethal scientific whaling, they state, "Whale research can involve both lethal and non-lethal methods. Iceland has been active in non-lethal research for many years and continues to make use of such methods when considered feasible for the objectives of the research... However, there are some questions that can not be sufficiently addressed without taking whales, including most of the questions posed by the Icelandic research program."

Department of Fisheries releases dispute the argument that their efforts are hurting the whale-watching industry directly, stating that "while misinformation might hurt whale watching operators, the research itself will not affect Icelandic whale watching." Their press releases make no mention of attempts to expand to a commercially driven whaling program.

Inside Reykjavík

The Grapevine Guide

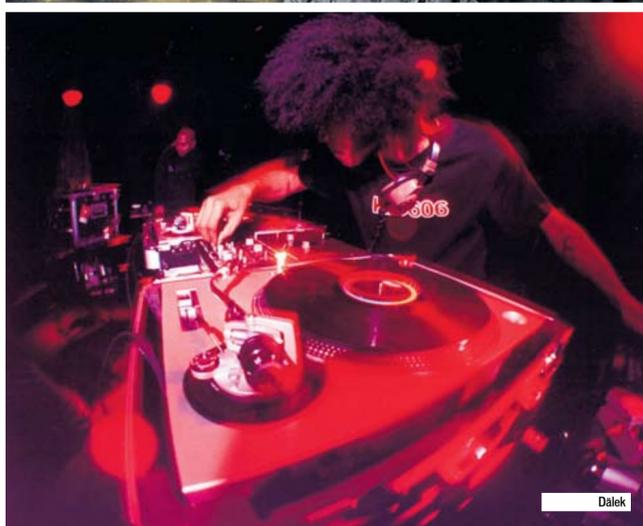


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Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Iceland Airwaves is Coming Again!

Previewing the Iceland Airwaves Music Festival

BY HAUKUR MAGNÚSSON

Now that last year's Airwaves hangovers have finally receded to the point that we can once more look one another in the eye, listen to modern music without retching and even contemplate engulfing ourselves in the evil spectacle again, it seems like a proper enough moment to touch upon the subject of who will partake in mangling our pure hearts this year. Yes, the Iceland Airwaves festival looms over yet again, what with its flood of self-promoting new wave bands, foreign A&R boys looking for buns to stick their 'pylsa' in, savage, drunken journalists and, but of course, some really great music to get acquainted with in a live environment.

Gazing over the list of artists announced for this year's shindig is an exhilarating act, if only for realising the sheer amount of planning one must resort to in order to catch the desired amount of shows (of course, experience has taught us that such plans are bound to fail miserably and it's best to just pick a venue to go with for the night). Most, if not all, of Iceland's exciting up-and-comers are performing throughout the week of 18-22 October, along with more established local and international acts. There is a certain amount of hyperbole surrounding many of the festival's artists. Surely many of those flavours-of-next-month will fade into the obscurity from whence they came soon enough. There's lots of genuine talent though, and a minimal amount of research and preparation should ensure a weekend stuffed with some of the nicest stuff today's music scene has to offer.

Klaxons

Once again, the UK hype machine spews out new and exciting musical geniuses for

us to converge around and worship for the next six months or so. This time around, they're calling the bandwagon 'New rave' and among its progenitors we find Klaxons (others include the inventively titled 'Shitdisco'). Hailing from trendy New Cross, London, these hit mongers of tomorrow released their first single in April 2005 and have since worked hard at gaining the following the British music press feels they deserve. Say what you will about the NME's tendency to overblow and obfuscate musical styles and artists; those that give Klaxons a fair listen will find that the band is indeed rather exciting. Good, even. The 'New rave' banner does seem misplaced, as their sound is more reminiscent of the 'Discopunk', 'Electroclash' (remember that) and 'New new wave of new wave' trends that reigned supreme over the early 00's than any rave bands I remember. But their fans reportedly bring glowsticks to gigs and that's gotta count for something. Either way, the four songs thus released by Klaxons sound fucking awesome to me.

Klaxons will perform at 22:15, Thursday, at the Reykjavik Art Museum

The Go! Team

The Go! Team's reputation precedes them – at the time of writing they are most self-proclaimed Airwaves experts' top bet for filling the gap left by GusGus this year, providing a dance party to end all dance parties. A safe Friday night slot at the Art Museum is sure to work in their favour, as is their experience in entertaining festival crowds all over the world for the past year. Having long since disproved all doubts that

their excellent début, *Thunder, Lightning, Strike*, wouldn't translate to the larger stage due to its sample-based nature, The Go! Team seems a safe bet for those about to rock.

The Go! Team will perform at the stroke of midnight, Friday, at the Reykjavik Art Museum

Dálek

Newark NJ industrial hip-hop duo Dálek blew the roof off the Iðnó theatre when they performed there last fall at the behest of Sugarcubes/Ghostigital front man Einar Örn. Easily the noisiest hip-hop act ever; the heavily distorted shoegazer-like (even dreamy, My Bloody Valentine-style) music and driving beats of Oktopus mesh perfectly with the aggressive, yet literate, emceeing of rapper Dálek. Given a proper sound system, it's safe to say that Dálek make music that moves the body along with the brain – even to the point of decibel-induced nausea. And that is always a good thing.

Dálek will perform at 23:00, Friday, at the Iðnó Theatre

Wolf Parade

Wolf Parade's début, *Apologies to the Queen Mary*, is easily one of last year's finest guitar-oriented rock albums. With it, the band set itself firmly in place as one of indie-rock's flag bearers, garnering hefty amounts of both critical and public acclaim in the process. Their Bowie-influenced take on distorted pop sets them apart as one of the most exciting young things to come out of Canada recently (of which there are plenty) and their live shows are reportedly legendary affairs that

tread the thin line between total chaos and utter brilliance. Either side they manage to land on at this year's Airwaves festival is sure to provide a memorable experience for those attending.

Wolf Parade will perform at 00:00, Friday, at Gaukurinn

Cold War Kids

While their young and tender age proves that the Cold War moniker is perhaps less than apt for these particular kids, their music speaks for itself and it does speak in volumes. Their biography is obviously designed to evoke an association with the whole Americana style so in vogue these days, citing Bob Dylan, Billie Holiday and The Velvet Underground as influences and referencing Reagan and the Dust Bowl. While that may reek of sensationalism (their biggest influence clearly being The White Stripes), the songs on their so-far released EPs (and those are really all that counts) are good, stylised and interesting. So we will check them out and hopefully, their live performance will not betray their recorded material.

Cold War Kids will perform at 23:00, Friday, at Gaukurinn

Islands

Straight outta Montréal, Islands have proven themselves a force to be reckoned with since releasing the critically acclaimed *Return to the Sea* earlier this year. They rose, all phoenix-like, out of the ashes of defunct masters The Unicorns, who in their limited lifespan released one great record before



inexplicably breaking up. Hopefully, Islands will last longer, as is implied by their domain, Islandsareforever.com

Islands make music that's just plain... weird. But still pop-ish. Luckily, they set themselves apart from most weirdmongers by doing it well, as they manage to hold on to the essential but oft-forgotten duo of melody and thought while ploughing through the minefield that is experimental rock. Expect lots of jumping around to infectious pop melodies.

Islands will perform at 21:30, Friday, at the Reykjavik Art Museum

Lay Low

It's safe to say that Lovisa Elisabet Sigrúnardóttir is among Iceland's first and only MySpace prodigies. Having been an integral part of the equally exciting Benny Crespo's Gang for many years, this 24-year-old uploaded two of her solo endeavours to a MySpace page this February at the urging of some of her girlfriends. Within a month, those bedroom recordings could be heard sounding out of the laptops of informed hipsters around the country, the following hype-storm resulting in her being signed to the major label (by local standards) Sena's internet-based imprint, Cod Music. Performing under the moniker Lay Low, she has charmed local crowds with her bluesy take on folk music in these past six months and will release her début album this October.

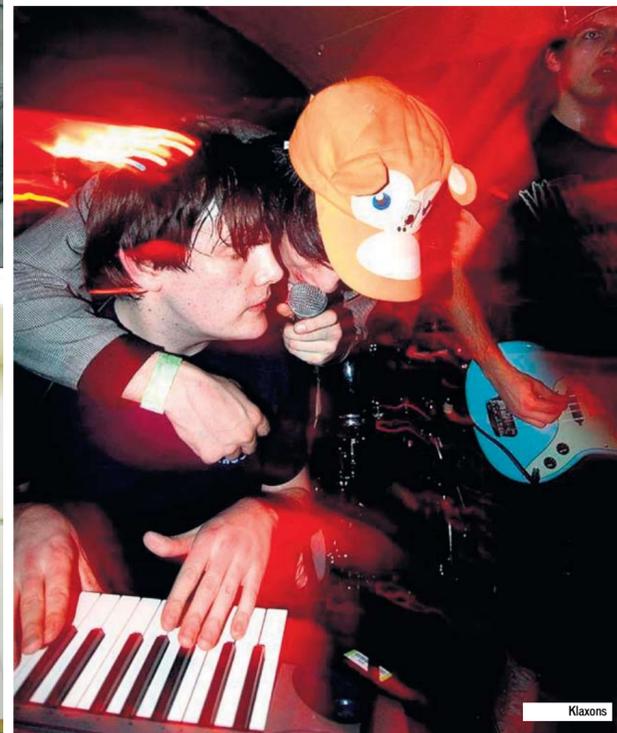
"I definitely didn't know what I was getting myself into," Sigrúnardóttir tells the Grapevine in an early evening telephone conversation, sounding genuinely earnest and surprised about the level of acknowledgement

she has garnered in her admittedly short career as a solo songstress. "The Cod music guys contacted me quickly after I uploaded my songs on MySpace and basically got the ball rolling. I had certain reservations about playing live at first, but they talked me into it, along with making a record that I am in the process of mixing right now. I didn't even have enough songs to fill a record when all this started."

Sigrúnardóttir is obviously a devoted music fan and sounds enthusiastic at the mere mention of her scheduled performance at the Airwaves festival. She reminisces about her first time playing there last year with Benny Crespo's Gang, performing what she says was a fine show in front of a large crowd. "I also had a lot of fun there seeing the bands that I was interested in. The whole queue-thing was a bit of a problem, but I managed to see most of what I wanted to in the end. This year's festival sounds really good too; it's fun to get to play it twice and there are also a lot of acts that I look forward to checking out. The Go! Team and Cold War Kids should be fun to witness, but there's always the fact that Airwaves is the best time to scope out the Icelandic bands and what they are up to. They put a lot of work into these performances and you usually can't walk between venues like this, seeing whatever holds your attention for the moment. Downtown Reykjavik is also packed with people during that week, and every show is crowded. That adds a lot of flavour to the proceedings."

This must be a bittersweet fact however, considering that the local public isn't always that enthusiastic about seeking out local talent.

"I guess it depends on what people are looking for. This festival is probably very



Lay Low will perform at 20:00, Thursday, at NASA

Ultra Mega Technobandið Stefán

Eighteen-year-old Sigurður Ásgeir Olsen is a self-proclaimed saviour of music and, incidentally, the leader of one of this year's more interesting Airwaves debüts, Ultra Mega Technobandið Stefán (The Ultra Mega Techno Band Stefan, for those interested, UMTS for short). The band was formed last summer and made its first splash at the Músiktilraunir competition (an Icelandic battle of the bands type festival) this spring. Those who have witnessed their deranged live show often find themselves having difficulty shutting up about it, as the spectacle of a hyperactive 18-year-old Mark E. Smith-style wunderkind fronting a band comprised of two synthesizers, a bass guitar and a drum-kit really needs to be seen to be believed. 'Out of control' would be one way to put it, and you really keep wondering if they will make it through the show intact; they have also been described as 'captivating' and 'truly exciting'.

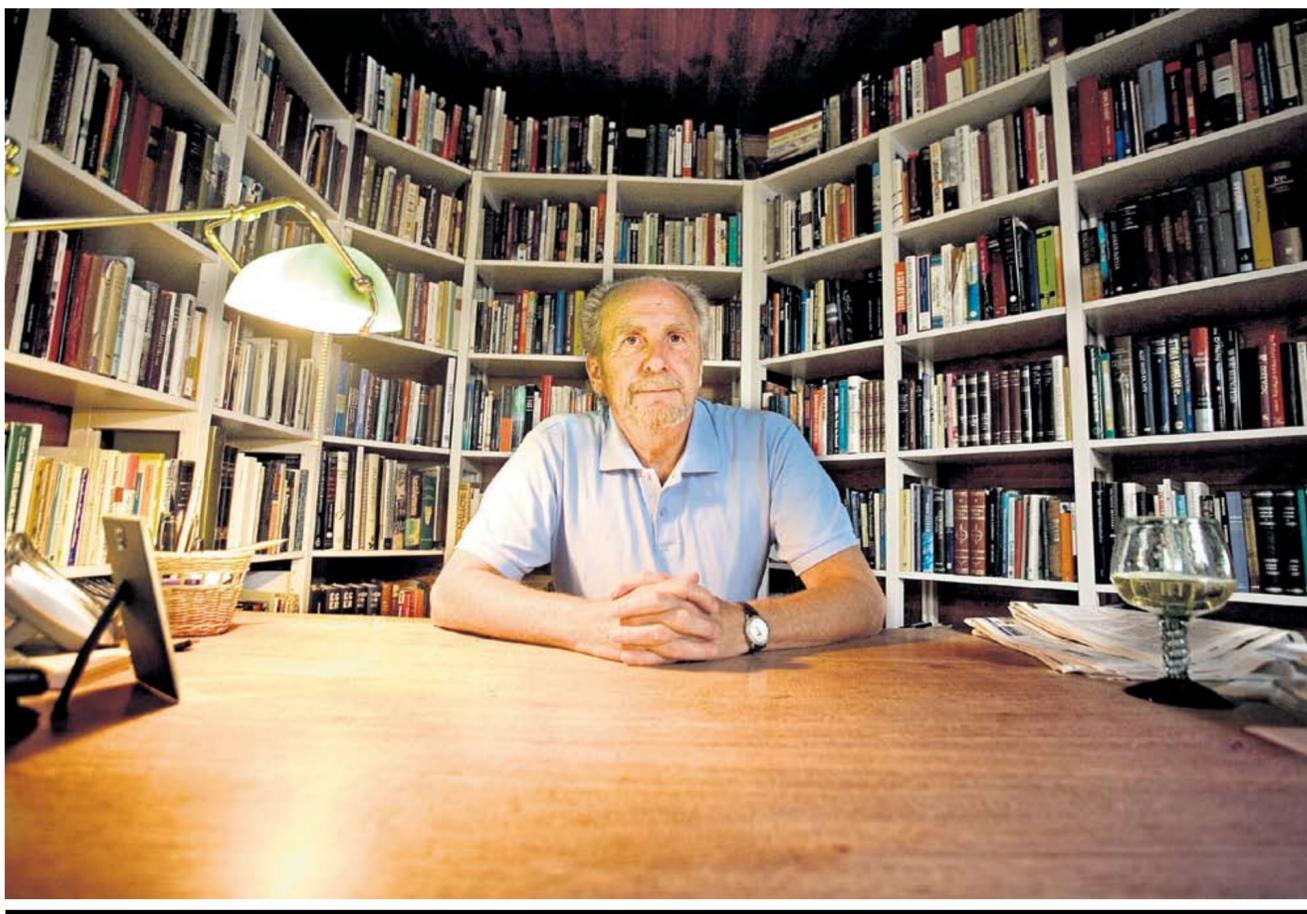
Olsen tells us that this will be his first time attending Airwaves. Although he has been excited about the festival for several years he has found himself lacking in, well,

convenient for those who don't usually hang out on sites like MySpace or Rokk.is, or even listen to the radio all that much. I think it serves a fine sampling of what's going on even if you don't spend all your time browsing for something new. Of course, there are a lot of good acts that aren't performing, but I think the long weekend can and does provide an excellent source of the finest in domestic and imported new music."

Olsen says that the Airwaves performance is as incidental as any of the band's other moves. "We've been saving the world since last summer, as I recall it. That's when we formed, somewhere in the wilderness of Iceland. And, you know, we were just mucking about on the computer one night when it dawned on us that applying for this fine showcase would be a fun thing to do. And we did and it worked, luckily. See, we have this plan of taking over the world, all this playing is just our way of getting it done, step-by-step. We challenge Kerrang and Rolling Stone and all these other people to come check us out and let us light an almighty fire under their ass."

When asked about the visiting acts he's interested in witnessing, Olsen says that he is particularly excited about The Kaiser Chiefs. "I also heard that the Goo Goo Dolls are playing and that should be pretty cool [note: they are not] and Brazilian Girls is something I've been into a long time. I've mainly been watching them compete in the Olympic Beach Volleyball competition, more for the sake of jerking off than the sport itself. I'll try and hold on to my tradition by catching them at Airwaves too."

Ultra Mega Technobandið Stefán will perform at 22:20, Wednesday, at the Právda Airwaves Club



“Don’t Make Iceland a Caricature of American Capitalism”

An Interview With Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson

BY SVEINN BIRKIR BJÖRNSSON PHOTOS BY SKARI

Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson is one of Iceland’s most experienced politicians. The former leader of the Social Democrat Party was a Member of Parliament from 1982-1998 and served as the Minister of Finance (1987-1988) and later as Minister of Foreign Affairs (1999-1995). After withdrawing from national politics in 1998, Hannibalsson served as Iceland’s ambassador in the USA until 2002 and subsequently as Iceland’s ambassador in Finland, from 2002-2005.

Hannibalsson has recently returned home to Iceland, and although he is not an active participant in Icelandic politics, he is as vocal as ever on political issues. A Grapevine reporter met with Hannibalsson recently and asked him a few questions on the Icelandic and the international political landscape.

/// First, let me ask you about the merger of the political parties on the left wing of Icelandic politics. You were instrumental in the creation of Samfylkingin, the Social Democratic Alliance, which was intended to be a joint venue for people from the left wing. Soon thereafter, another left party emerged, the Leftist-Greens. Recently, Steingrímur J. Sigfússon, leader of the Leftist-Greens, has flirted with the idea of a closer cooperation between the two left parties in the 2007 elections. Where does the merger on the left stand today and has the political landscape, concerning the political parties, changed much since you left Icelandic politics?

– It is very dangerous for democracy when the party system is such that one small party, hungry for power, with no other political agenda than maintaining power, can become such a parasitical creature that it is impossible to form a government coalition without them. The Progressive Party has become such a party – once upon a time, this was a political movement with ideals. They fought against the urbanisation of this country and stood

up for the farmers and the countryside. That was then, but those times are over. We are left with this strange phenomenon, the Progressive Party. For sanitary reasons an operation is called for. This party has become a malignant tissue in the body politic.

Why do I say this in relation to the merger of the left? Because the shortcoming of our political party system has always been that Icelandic voters have never known what kind of government they will get after the votes have been counted. I am a spokesperson for the social democratic model, but those of us who have thought along those lines have never been able to assume what the results of elec-

Look at the media. What is the constant subject of the media here in Iceland? Money, money, money. Who is the wealthiest today, and who was the wealthiest yesterday? Who sold this? Who bought that?

tions would be, or more accurately, what those results would translate into after the elections. That has usually been decided by something entirely different than a sensible interpretation of the votes. [Chairman of the Leftist-Green, Steingrímur J.] Sigfússon has said that we have to give the voters a clear option between the government coalition and the government opposition. I agree. This is important.

If it is possible to create circumstances where people can choose between the current government coalition that has been in power for 12 years now and the opposition as an alternative, that would be good for democracy. This would, by the way, fence off the Progressive Party in particular. Before every election, they hire an ad agency to run their campaign and claim they are going into the elections

without any prior obligations. They should not be allowed to get away with such trickery.

Sigfússon, in saying that the opposition intends to form a coalition government if they receive the popular vote, is also saying that if you intend to vote for this ad agency, you should be aware that they are not going into the elections without prior obligations. The opposition is saying: “We regard the Progressive Party as a permanent parasite on its host, the Independence Party, and we will not let them get away with any trickery.” This is what the Progressive Party has become, and we have to face it. That way, they will not be able to trick people with new promises and fancy

ad campaigns. This is important for the health of our democracy.

But another question is: Are we willing to trust the opposition to take over? A big drawback in our election system is that the renewal process among the political candidates is too slow. I believe the Social Democratic Alliance needs to put new people around [party leader] Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir. People from other venues who have shown that they can handle governmental responsibility.

/// Are you talking about bringing in people from outside of the Social Democratic Party then? Bring in someone from the business sector or...?

– Well... whether they come from outside the party or the business sector is not really the

main concern. I will give you an example. I want [university professor] Stefán Ólafsson to enter politics. Why? He is very qualified and has in the last few years demonstrated through his research what the opposition has failed to do, that under the governance of the current coalition, Iceland has been moving fast towards becoming a caricature of raw American capitalism. Iceland has been moving away from what we have been, a Nordic welfare state, towards becoming the most inequitable country in Europe. It is the role of social democrats to stop this. No one is better suited for leading this charge than Stefán Ólafsson. He has demonstrated this process in his studies, better than anyone else, with professional methods and arguments no one has been able to refute. And we can see the response; they bring out their attack dogs against him, trying to undermine his honour and credibility as a scholar. This is standard dirty politics. But they have not succeeded. People trust Stefán Ólafsson and they know he has no other agenda than revealing the facts of the matter. This is the kind of candidate we need. And we need to find a few more like him.

I am sick and tired of this travesty called primary elections, which we have adopted from America. It makes no sense. It does not fit into our electoral system of proportional representation. During my stay in the U.S., I saw clearly how democracy in that country has become paralysed. Democracy has been taken hostage by the rich and by wealthy corporations. Most American politicians are bought by commercial interests. I can hardly imagine a more pathetic life than being a member of the House of Representatives in the United States Congress. There is almost no political discourse in their home states. They are elected almost solely on their ad campaigns, where the trick is to attack the honour of your opponent. That requires big ad agencies and costs a lot of money. To go through this proc-

ess, you need to raise money, and you get the money from those who use it to buy power. After the campaign, you are over your head in debt. The first year is spent repaying that debt, and the second year is spent acquiring new debts for the next campaign. I personally know more than a few of those poor men who have gone through this ordeal. First of all, it is a personal misfortune to be involved in this, and second, it is the antithesis of everything we should call democracy. This is plutocracy; money talks. And the public has lost all faith in this system. Hence they do not even care to vote anymore.

/// You mentioned the slow renewal process. Would you agree to impose term limits on how long people could stay in office in Icelandic politics?

– Of course the ideal would be if participation in politics were to be a civic duty instead of being regarded as a punishable act where one is sentenced for life. It would be ideal if everyone regarded public service as something worth making small sacrifices for. But that is not how it is in the real world. Most people are glad for not being a party to this dirty business. Yet, others are raised by the political parties, almost from their infancy, as political mercenaries. Pointing out the U.S. again, there was a right-wing wave there a few years back, when the Republicans finally won back the House in 1994. One of their campaign issues was to limit the number of years in office, no more than two terms, and many supported the idea in the name of democracy. At the time I gave it a lot of thought and concluded that this was yet another nail in the coffin for democracy. Why should we automatically force out someone who by sheer hard work has succeeded in earning the trust of the people, to be replaced by someone who has never been put to the test? This is not something that should be tied to regulation or stipulated by authority. This is the job of the voters themselves. It’s called democracy.

/// You served as an ambassador from 1998 until this year. Did you find that Icelandic politics changed a lot during your time away?

– Yes. And our society itself has changed profoundly. The whole time I was away, for eight years, we had this right-wing government coalition of what I refer to as the twin-party. On the left wing, the social democratic party I had envisioned after the changed world order following the fall of the Soviet Union has not been as successful as I had hoped. Another party sprung up to the left of us and is doing well. This is the format. I would have thought that we would have a new generation of politicians taking charge, but we don’t see much of them yet. Perhaps the younger generation is disinterested in politics. But I believe politics reflect society in general; Icelandic politics are acquiring more and more characteristics of the American plutocracy.

Look at the media. What is the constant subject of the media here in Iceland? Money, money, money. Who is the wealthiest today, and who was the wealthiest yesterday? Who sold this? Who bought that? In my days as a politician, I criticised the media for not paying enough attention to the economy, the media was so caught up in politics that there was no space devoted to discussing how different industries or companies were doing. Now it is the complete opposite. Political discussion has become something without substance, an afterthought. The new objects of worship in our society have become the nouveau riche.

There we have experienced renewal, in the financial sector. There we have seen a new generation emerge. The question is, is this a positive evolution? Do we want to live in this kind of a society? This is one change. Another change is related to globalisation. Iceland has become a multicultural society, which it was not only a few years ago.

/// The big social democratic party you envisioned, do you have any explanations as to why it has not emerged?

– There are of course a multitude of explanations. The party is still in its infant stages. There is also some old history still at work here. The left wing in Icelandic politics was split down the middle during its early years, following the Russian revolution. The left had to choose whether to pursue social democracy



or the Communist utopia. For the rest of the century the left was split. It takes time to heal those wounds. But we cannot hide behind those excuses forever. The past should be squarely behind us.

/// What do you see as the main difference between these two movements on the left in Iceland?

– In principle, not much. Both parties are supposed to safeguard the public’s interest, and both, I believe, sincerely support the principal ideals of the social democratic model, of equal opportunity, the demand for a strong democracy, ideas that the democratic state has a central role, a healthy scepticism towards the market as the answer to every problem. The market is an efficient servant but a rude master. There is a strong tendency in the market for the capital to concentrate a few hands, leading to imperfect competition and even monopoly. The market needs to be regulated

in the public interest. This is all part of the social democratic way of things.

I believe all social democrats are environmentalists. Does that mean that I am willing to agree with all the extreme bullshit I hear from the environmentalists’ camp on their love for the highlands? Of course not. I care about people primarily. But in the long term, people need a healthy natural environment. In that sense, I do not see this as a problem. I hear extreme views on both sides that I disagree with, but the fundamental truth is that we need coherent natural resource policies and employment policies that can coexist. We need to maintain employment and income, but we cannot do that by focusing on short-term solutions. Right now, it is time to say: enough! We are not going to use all our natural energy resources to sell them to a few multinational aluminium corporations. The world is undergoing a technical revolution in the energy field. There is an ongoing crisis

with fossil-based energy and it has already become unsustainable. We are already in the final stages of an obsolete technology. There is an ongoing intensive search for future solutions although we cannot yet tell exactly what the outcome will be. We need to preserve our energy resources for more sensible use in the future. We should not spend it all on aluminium. More benign alternatives will present themselves in the future. Sustainable policies on the environment need not split the left. Europe is a different story. The Left-Greens would be well-advised to renew their thinking on Europe.

/// Let me interrupt you for a moment there, we will return to Europe in a moment, but I want to pick up on something you just said. Many people fear that if rumoured plans to privatise the National Power Company,

>>> CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

along with the damming rights belonging to the company, are realised, the company will be bought up by a big energy-sensitive multinational company, which will use the company to sell cheap energy to its own production line while consumers will be left with the costs. Do you think this is something we should worry about?

– This is exactly why I said that natural resources and employment policies need to go hand in hand. This is a very real and grave danger. Our natural resources, along with our human capital, are the most valuable that we have; it is fundamental to ensure that our natural resources remain publicly owned. This is something we managed with our fishing resources in principle, even if the execution is a bit different.

/// Let's pick up where we left off with the European issue.

– Yes, I am a firm believer in internationalism. I despise nationalist demagoguery. The biggest evils humanity has experienced have masqueraded in the disguise of nationalism and the supposed superiority of certain races or nations above the rest of us. When fanatic nationalism is tied up with fundamentalist religious indoctrination, as is the case in the USA and the Arab world, all hell will break loose. Internationalism is not the same as not appreciating one's country. To me, the issue Iceland is facing in regard to European cooperation is not primarily an economic issue. It is an existential issue. It is a question about our place in the world in the future. Where do we belong? Do we really want to be a U.S. satellite? Over my dead body! It is against everything we stand for.

I believe that even if some positive changes occur in U.S. politics, the basics will not change much. America has become a megalomaniac empire on an expansionist stage. This presents real dangers to the rest of the world. The basic interest of a small, unarmed nation is to be on the side of international law. The rule of law was the greatest invention of human kind in the last millennium. It is our most precious heritage from the ancient republic founded at Þingvellir in 930. A small nation with such heritage should always seek solutions to international problems based on the rule of law. This is the difference between America and Europe: Europe is post-imperial; America is at the peak of her imperial ascendancy. The European vision, to make it impossible for European nations to wage war by pooling their sovereignty in supranational institutions, is a revolutionary idea. This is a new idea in the history of humankind. If it proves to be successful, it will be a roadmap for the rest of the world in the future.

Perhaps I am being too optimistic, but I think we are gradually heading in the right direction. Through European integration, we have helped more nations break free from dictatorship and oppression and establish democracy than anyone else: Spain, Portugal, Greece, Eastern Europe and the Baltic States. All of this without firing a single shot. Compare this with the record of the relations of the U.S. with her neighbours in Central and South America.

/// You mentioned Iceland as an American satellite nation, and America as a megalomaniac empire. Do you think Iceland has gone too far in following the U.S. in international politics?

– Yes. I was very positive towards the United States in the past. The United States has after all done a lot of good in the past. They helped Europe defeat the totalitarian menace. Liberal America was an authentic inheritor of the European enlightenment and therefore a natural ally against totalitarianism during the Cold War. But it was an errant giant.

The U.S. has become the most unequal country in the world, totally dominated by an arrogant, plutocratic elite. The accumulated wealth of this elite is of staggering proportions. So is their arrogance.

The Vietnam War was the first indication of their hubris. The times when America was the promised land of opportunity for the poor and oppressed have already passed. The U.S. has become the most unequal country in the world, totally dominated by an arrogant, plutocratic elite. The accumulated wealth of this elite is of staggering proportions. So is their arrogance. The military doctrine of the Bush administration is a good example. In it the United States government assumes the right pre-emptively to apply force whenever and wherever the government sees fit without consultation or restraint by anyone else in the world. It is imperialist self-glorification at its worst. To serve this purpose the U.S. spends more on its military than all other countries in the world combined. The declared aim is to be militarily dominant everywhere, on land, on the seas and in space. They have started a new cold war with the aim of controlling the utilisation of the most valuable raw materials and energy sources of the planet. They have identified China as their future enemy and reorganised their network of military bases around the globe to meet that perceived men-

ace. This new American imperial elite needs no allies. And it has been the Bush administration's unqualified achievement to unify the whole world against this arrogant power.

America has declared an all-out war against terrorism. Despite all the power exerted, they have so far failed miserably in this war instead of building an alliance with democratic forces for eradicating the causes of terrorism, poverty, oppression and hopelessness; they have almost exclusively relied upon military force. The invasion of Afghanistan was justified but the implementation has failed. The invasion of Iraq was totally unjustified. Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction. The Iraqi army was devastated during the first Gulf War and was a threat to no one except the Iraqi people. Saddam Hussein was a dictator, a murderer, a torturer and a thief. But he was a U.S. ally. As Roosevelt himself said about another U.S. pawn, the brutal dictator Somoza: "He is a son of a bitch, but he is our son of a bitch." Saddam Hussein had nothing to do with 9/11. He kept religious fundamentalists in Iraq under firm control.

/// So, what happened? Why are we supporting these war efforts?

– Well, two men are said to have made the decision. One of them was the former prime minister, Mr. Davíð Oddsson, a strange and enigmatic character, a funny and artistic person, but at the same time completely unpredictable. Mr. Oddsson claims to be a bosom friend of President Bush. If he is, he really is one among a very select few who wish to boast about it. The other one was the then foreign minister Mr. Halldór Ásgrímsson. I know he did this in the naïve belief that this would guarantee the continued U.S. military presence in Iceland. As subsequent events have shown this was indeed a grave and naïve misunderstanding.

/// Let us move on to something else. Considering the fire you still have for politics, it is reasonable to ask, do you intend to return to politics?

– The short answer to that question is a simple one. I have already done my duty. I was a part of this "dirty business" for many years. I did my best, and I have no regrets. This means that I have no obligation to subject myself to the tough discipline of Icelandic politics during my sunset days. I have already told you about my doubts about the fitness of primaries to recruit worthy political leadership. It is a rather depressing charade. At worst it means the subjection of honest politics to plutocratic control behind the scenes. Not a very attractive proposition at all. It will at least take several wild horses to drag me into this process again.

/// By some means, the U.S. still managed to get support from some European countries, Iceland included, for the Iraqi invasion.

– Yes. It is the most shameful stain on the record of the Icelandic republic since its foundation. What are our most fundamental national interests in international relations? That we follow international laws and procedures and demand that others do the same.

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the REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

INFO

Issue 15, 2006

8 Page Listings Section in Your Pocket



Modern Installations at Hafnarborg

The group exhibition entitled "Mega vott," currently on display at The Hafnarfjörður Institute of Culture and Fine Art (Hafnarborg), features the works of contemporary sculpture contributed by five women. Artists shown are Icelanders Anna Eyjólfsson, Ragnhildur Stefánsdóttir, Rúri, Þórdís Alda Sigurðardóttir and American Jessica Stockholder. Although their works, which include abstract instalments, differ in many ways, the women share a common need to reevaluate their art form in a radical way. They seek to expand aesthetic approaches by breaking some conventional rules.

Stockholder, for example, mixes mass-produced objects like refrigerators, old suitcases and store containers together with self designed modules, resulting in unique compositions. The effect is one of mixing recycling and strong formalism, two concepts usually not linked together. Sigurðardóttir and Eyjólfsson's works impose similar visual deliverance upon their patrons. While the human body may be Stefánsdóttir's output, her works are in no way similar to traditional sculptures. In her exhibitions she has cut the body to pieces and reassembled, at the same time transforming human organs in

visually different arrangements. Rúri is known for her refusal to confine herself to one medium. She has, for example, used photographs and videos to broaden her creations. Her current video installation at Hafnarborg taps strong historical references which are based on her travel experiences to Bosnia & Herzegovina, as well as neighbouring countries, in 1998. It is accompanied by music composed by Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson, the Icelandic "allsherjargoði", which serves to meld her ideas into one unique piece.

The exhibition will be open until October 2nd.

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.

Foto: Hverfisgata 15, 101 Reykjavík • 354 545 1406



The Culture House - Hjúsmennningarhúsið
Hverfisgata 15, 101 Reykjavík
S. +354 545 1406

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

Bus stop and parking close by on Hverfisgata
Guided tours booking: tel. +354 545 1406



A.Hansen restaurant offers
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Lobster offer 2.900,-
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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 – 22 SEPTEMBER

Franz and Kristó followed by DJ Óli Prikid

Don Balli Funk
KAFFIBARINN

Pub-lic in concert, followed by DJ Maggi HRESSÓ

DJ Þórhallur and DJ Biggi veira
SIRKUS

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

Brain Police release concerts
AMSTERDAM

DJ Óli Weapons
BAR 11

DJ Jói
VEGAMÓT

Samarnir in concert
NASA

Hraun in concert
STÚDENTAKJALLARINN

Stars like Fleas in concert
12 TÓNAR (starts at 17:00)

Busy Doing Nothing in concert: Birgir Baldurs on drums, Eddi Lár on guitar, Siggí Pérez on saxophone and Þórður Högna on contrabass.
RÓSENBERG

SATURDAY – 23 SEPTEMBER

Carpe Noctem, Stáreggn, Diabolus and Kuraka in concert
HELLIRINN, TBM

DJ Kári and DJ Benni B-Ruff
PRIKID

Helgi Valur, Lay Low, Toggi, Benny Crespo's Gang, Wulfgang, Fræ and Dr. Mister & Mr. Handsome
NASA

Sixties in concert
AMSTERDAM

DJ Dóri
VEGAMÓT

Björgvín Halldórsson and the Iceland Symphony
LAUGARDALSHÖLL

DJ Gísli Galdur
KAFFIBARINN

Kóngulóarbandið, followed by DJ Maggi HRESSÓ

DJ Gulli Ósóma
BAR 11

DJ Master
AMSTERDAM

DJ Árni Sveins
SIRKUS

Helgi Valur troubadour
RÓSENBERG

SUNDAY – 24 SEPTEMBER

Björgvín Halldórsson and the Iceland Symphony
LAUGARDALSHÖLL

TUESDAY – 26 SEPTEMBER

DJ Krummi
SIRKUS

WEDNESDAY – 27 SEPTEMBER

DJ Kocoon
PRIKID

Reykjavík Jazzfestival: Reykjavík Big Band with Bill Holman
NASA

Madchester.is: Martin Hannett night
SIRKUS

Reykjavík Jazzfestival: Lasúr Trio
Q-BAR

Open rehearsal with Santiago
RÓSENBERG

Don Balli Funk
KAFFIBARINN

THURSDAY – 28 SEPTEMBER

Reykjavík Jazzfestival: Gammar followed by Tobias Delius, Han Bennink and Valdi Kolli
NASA

Reykjavík Jazzfestival: Laser
Q-BAR

Busy Doing Nothing in concert
RÓSENBERG

DJ Anna Rakel
PRIKID

DJ Frosti
SIRKUS

Perfect Disorder and Noise in concert
AMSTERDAM

DJ Adda
VEGAMÓT

The Iceland Symphony Orchestra: Krzysztof Penderecki, Florian Uhlig and Ludvig van Beethoven.
HÁSKÓLABÍÓ

Sessy and Sjonni
HRESSÓ

DJ Steinunn and Silja
KAFFIBARINN

FRIDAY – 29 SEPTEMBER

Franz and Kristó followed by DJ Danni Deluxe, Dóri DNA and Meryl Streep
PRIKID

DJ Jón Atli
SIRKUS

DJ Fúsi
AMSTERDAM

DJ Jói
VEGAMÓT

Reykjavík Jazzfestival: Dialect followed

by Ásgeir Ásgeirsson quintet.
NASA

Reykjavík Jazzfestival: Tore Brunborg-Sunna Gunnlaugs Quartet
Q-BAR

Reykjavík Jazzfestival: Andrzej Jagodzinski Trio
ÞJÓÐLEIKHÚSKJALLARINN

DJ Haffi
BAR 11

Minra Frenzy Jazzband
RÓSENBERG

Alfons X
KAFFIBARINN

Kóngulóarbandið in concert, followed by DJ Johnny HRESSÓ

SATURDAY – 30 SEPTEMBER

DJ Andri and DJ Kári
PRIKID

Minra Frenzy Jazzband
RÓSENBERG

DJ KGB
SIRKUS

Reykjavík Jazzfestival: Kurt Elling and Laurence Hobgood Trio
HÁSKÓLABÍÓ

Reykjavík Jazzfestival: Tómas R. Einarsson
NASA

DJ Fúsi
AMSTERDAM

Sálin in concert
NASA (starts at 00:00)

Danni Deluxe and Paranoya
VEGAMÓT

Árni Sveins
KAFFIBARINN

DJ Óli Weapons
BAR 11

Mát in concert, followed by DJ Johnny HRESSÓ

SUNDAY – 1 OCTOBER



Cafè
Rosenberg

Live music
Thu-Sat

Lækjargötu 2, tel. 551-8008

Reykjavík Jazzfestival: Kristjana Stefánsdóttir Anniversary concert followed by Oriental Express
NASA

The Philharmonia Choral Society performing Carmina Burana
LANGHOLTSKIRKJA CHURCH (starts at 17:00)

WEDNESDAY – 4 OCTOBER

The Philharmonia Choral Society performing Carmina Burana
LANGHOLTSKIRKJA CHURCH (starts at 20:00)

Don Balli Funk
KAFFIBARINN

THURSDAY – 5 OCTOBER

The Iceland Symphony Orchestra: Nordic Music Days
HÁSKÓLABÍÓ

DJ Platum from USA
CAFÉ OLIVER

Bubbi in concert playing Ísbjarnarblús
NASA

DJ Benni
KAFFIBARINN

Mike Pollock and Siggí Sig. playing blues
RÓSENBERG

FRIDAY – 6 OCTOBER

Alfons X
KAFFIBARINN

DJ Gulli Ósóma
BAR 11

Beggi Bluesband
RÓSENBERG

DJ Master
AMSTERDAM



DJ KGB Bids Farewell

One of Reykjavík's premier DJs, the always-entertaining Kristinn Gunnar Blöndal (alias DJ KGB) has finally decided to call it quits. September 30 will from now on be known as a historical date – the date that this much-loved music monger will play one last show at his favourite haunt, Sirkus. In conversation with the Grapevine, KGB promised an excellent party to mark his retirement, which incidentally coincides with his decade anniversary as a DJ. "I first spun records in 1996, at the legendary Bióbarinn, which curiously enough was also on Klapparstígur. In the ten years that have passed, I've only really managed to advance about 300 metres. In my career, I've always tried to play whatever seems fun at the moment, I consider it my first and last job to be entertaining." While the Grapevine bows its head in respect, it still looks forward to a night of furious dancing to some of the greatest hits from the last 60 years. *HM*

Sirkus, September 30



Sálin Hans Jóns Míns

Although quite unknown internationally, Sálin Hans Jóns Míns ("Beaten Bishops") has for nearly two decades been Iceland's favourite band. And with good reason, their infectious pop melodies and precise playing amount to one of Icelandic music's finer guilty pleasures. Every native can recite at least five to eight songs from their impressive repertoire from memory, which is why you will often find their concerts drowned out by intense sing-alongs. Opportunities to sample the once dominant form of music eternally linked to the dying sveitaball phenomenon are becoming scarce, so Sálin's NASA endeavour offers a rare chance to get down with one of its few remaining staples. *HM*

NASA, September 30



DJ Platum

The Stykkishólmur-born Illugi Magnússon, AKA DJ Platum, has made quite a name for himself in his adopted home of northern California. His love affair with turntables started in his late teens when a fondness for rap music got him into the game. The obsession quickly grew and he has since devoted most of his time to the many nuances of turntablism, in the process partaking in founding the allegedly popular DJ troupe The Oakland Faders. Claiming influences from old-school soul, classic rock, disco and funk, his homecoming show at Oliver should be an interesting chance for Magnússon and his home country to get reacquainted. *HM*

Café Oliver, October 7

AKUREYRI THEATRICAL COMPANY

Hafnarstræti 57, 600 Akureyri
Tel: 460 0200

Current shows:
Karius and Baktus
By Thobjörn Egner

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

BROADWAY

Ármúla 9
Tel: 533 1110
www.broadway.is

Schedule resumes in October.

ICELAND DANCE COMPANY

Listabraut 3
Tel: 588 0900
www.id.is

Schedule resumes in 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:
Fögnoður
By Harold Pinter

Pétur Gautur
By Henrik Ibsen

Sumardagur
By Jon Fosse

Eldhús eftir máli
By Vala Þórhallsdóttir

Sitji Guðs Englar
By Guðrún Helgadóttir

One Mime Theatre
By Ireneusz Krosny

Visit www.leikhusid.is for full schedule and tickets

THE REYKJAVÍK CITY THEATRE

Listabraut 3
Tel: 568 8000

Current shows on mainstage:
Amadeus
By Peter Shaffer

Água - Tanztheater Wuppertal

By Pina Bausch

Footloose
By Þorvaldur Bjarni

Ronia the Robber's Daughter
By Astrid Lindgren

Who Wants to Find a Million Krónur?
By Ray Cooney

Other Stages:
Hvít kanína
Icelandic Academy of the Arts Student Theatre

Manntafl
By Stefan Zweig

MEIN KAMPF
By George Tabori.

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 subterranean, 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 place 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 Þrúvalla
 Austurstræti 22

Þrúvalla 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
 Vegamótastígur

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
 Páuhússtræti 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 while-steaks, 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.

MUSEUMS
Árbærjarsafn
 Árbar
 www listasafnreykjavikur.is

The Culture House
 Hverfisgata 15
 www.thjodmenningis

Reykjavik Electrical Museum
 Reifstöðvarvegur
 www.raheimar.is

2 Ráðhúskaffi
 City Hall

Ráðhúskaffi, situated inside the Reykjavik 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
 Vegamótastígur 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.vegamot.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 Glaumbar
 Tryggvagata 20

Partly a sports bar, Glaumbar 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
 Geirgata 9

Located right by the harbour, Tveir Fiskar boasts some of the freshest fish in town – they prefer it still to 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
 Geirgata

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. Small 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 Kötturinn
 Hverfisgata 16a

Grái Kötturinn (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 Laekjartorg

Italian coffee chain Segafredo seems to be doing brisk business with Laekjartorg, 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.

SPOT THIS
Gallery Kogga

If you are looking for a fine sculpture or a fancy souvenir, respected ceramic artist Kolbrún Björgólfssdóttir can most likely help you out. Located on the ground floor of Vesturgata 5, her ceramics store and studio, Gallery Kogga, is full of uniquely designed pieces of art and a great gift to take back home.

Gallery Kogga, Vesturgata 5, 101 Reykjavík

4 Kaffi Hjómáland
 Laugavegur 21

Despite hosting the occasional rock concert, Kaffi Hjómáland 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
 Laekjartorg 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 Ljóti Andarunginn
 Laekjartorg 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 laté or some beer when suffering from a case of severe hipster-burn.

19 Grand Rokk
 Smiðustígur 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 your nor an earthquake. Live concerts and a nice football 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 Þríkið
 Bankastræti 12

Þríkið 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
 Vonarstræti 3

Tjarnarbakkinn is right above the Íþróttahúsið, 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 view 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 vinnbrauð 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 hamburgers. A burger with fries for 500 is one of the best meal deals in town, but special mention must go to the Forget-Me-Not blue cheese and garlic extravaganza.

40 Við tjörnina
 Templarasund 3

If you're looking for high-quality food in a unique but cosy setting, it doesn't get much better than Við Tjörnina (literally, By the Pond). They're known for their traditional living room décor and innovative fish dishes made from a variety of fresh catches. The ambience is something you have to experience to truly appreciate.

46 Nonnabiti
 Hafnarstræti 11

Almost certainly the best junk food in the Greater Reykjavík area, and extremely popular with drunken youths on weekends. This place has none of that Subway commitment to healthy living, and they probably contribute significantly to the ever-increasing "size" of the nation. They also serve burgers and sandwiches, and have lunchtime offers.

41 FAST FOOD
American Style
 Tryggvagata 26

Famous for their burgers and fries, American Style actually serves a variety of American-influenced dishes with a strong local flavour. You get the feeling that you are expected to eat a great deal, so loosen your belt a bit before you dig in.

47 Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar (Búllan)
 Geirgata 1

Tómas originally popularised the hamburger in Iceland when he opened his famous Tomaborgarar shop. A couple of decades and business ventures later he has gone back to the basics and now has one of the most popular fast food restaurants downtown – affectionately known as Búllan (the joint).

42 Pizza King
 Hafnarstræti 18

Most people get to know Pizza King after a late-night drinking session leaves them tired and hungry downtown, and it truly is a lifesaver in those situations. The difference between Pizza King and some less savoury fast food options downtown is that you would be happy to go back to eat there while sober, and their special lunch offers make that a very attractive option.

48 First Vegetarian (Á nastu grösum)
 Laugavegur 20b

One of the first places in Reykjavík to specialise in vegetarian and vegan dishes. Despite having changed owners a couple of years back, the quality has remained consistent and you almost get the feeling that the place is being run on sheer principle as much as anything else.

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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.

Straumur
Now that the fine eclectic rock show Karate seems to have disappeared completely from the airwaves, those of us who favour our rock weird are once again faced with limited options when turning the dial in search of something fresh. Luckily, there are still a few radio shows being broadcast that focus on less popular bands and musicians. X-íð program Frank (Mondays, 22-00) is one of them, and the accomplished Straumur (on XFM, Thursdays, 22-00) is another. Straumur's host seems fairly knowledgeable about the artists he features each week and will often delve deeper than most, tracing influences and playing rarely heard tracks back to back with hit singles. Those thirsty for news and tidbits of the more exciting guitar-based rock of today need look no further than Straumur.

Speglillinn
In-depth news coverage can be hard to spot in the Icelandic media landscape, with many reports amounting to mere re-hashes of press releases and Reuters items, likely due to reporters' heavy workloads. Thankfully, there are still a number of havens to look to for investigative reports and a critical outlook on Icelandic society. One of the finer ones is National State Radio's Speglillinn ("The Mirror"), which runs daily throughout the workweek. Though often criticized for an overtly

leftist-green slant, the show often features well thought out and researched pieces on everything from Reykjavik city planning to the threat of global warming. They also manage to annoy Viðskiptablaðið journal Ölafur Teitur Guðnason and Minister of Justice Björn Bjarnason a lot, which is always a positive thing.

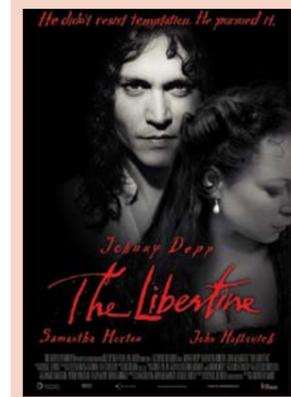
TV

So You Think You Can Dance
If you think the audition episodes of American Idol is brilliant entertainment and you and your cold-hearted self thrive on other people's failure, the dance version of the same basic reality-TV-idea should most definitely be your kind of fun. When the masses, most of whom are completely unqualified "dancers" in no connection to reality start shaking their limbs, puking on stage, banging their heads to the floor and making some spastic moves, all for a chance of few distressing seconds of fame, it almost gets embarrassing to watch. Honestly believing they are the gods gift to the dance floor, shocked by harsh but honest criticism from the judges one can't help but wonder, don't these people have any friends that tell them that appearing on international television and making a fool out of them selves isn't such a good idea? Judging by the agony in their sweaty and bluish

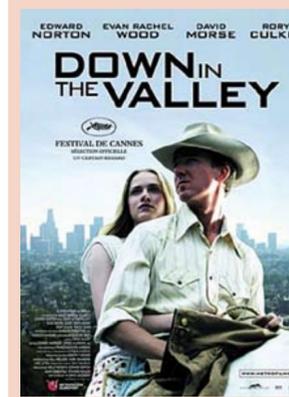
faces it at least doesn't seem that anyone has had the heart to stop them. Thankfully for us TV viewers. Ok, there are a few souls in the show that know how to wiggle that ass, but that's not as fun to watch is it?

NFS
It might be your last chance to witness a dying around-the-clock-news-network station if 365 Media cutback plans becomes a reality. NFS, a privately owned news station swirling around in this gigantic media ocean has been broadcasting news and news related material 24 hours a day for ten months by now but as a result of the companies losses the telecommunication giant is now planning to shut down the station. In an open letter to Jón Ásger Jóhannsson last week, Róbert Marshall, the head of the station bags the executives to spare the life of the newsroom, which he states hasn't got enough time to prove it self just yet.

In an unbearable uncertainty the pioneers who have put their heart and soul into the project wont at least not stop fighting until the last camera has been stowed, its lights turned off and the make-up artists are long gone. So quit your job, say goodbye to your friends and turn on the TV before they pull the plug.



The Libertine
If you loved Johnny Depp as Wonka and Captain Jack Sparrow, but couldn't name five other films he's been in, don't be offended when I say that this one's probably not for you. The Libertine is yet another poorly lit, intricately costumed, Johnny Depp film shellacked in a thick coat of oily make-up. His movie From Hell springs most readily to mind as a comparison. As if to refute any misconception that his acting prowess is limited to playing a drunken, swaggering, drop-dead gorgeous pirate, in The Libertine, Depp takes on the role of a drunken, swaggering, licentious John Wilmot, second Earl of Rochester.



Down in the Valley
Edward Norton, Evan Rachel Wood, David Morse and Rory Culkin star in this modern-meets-Western film written and directed by David Jacobson. If you're sceptical of any motion picture that aims to question the human soul's capacity for violence and compassion, while simultaneously starring Macaulay Culkin's little brother, don't be. The basic premise: a charming, if slightly bizarre, self-proclaimed cowboy (Norton) is picked up at a gas station by a bored and scantly-clad teen with a very mediocre home life (Wood) - swimming, making out and a series of events easily categorised as "the unthinkable" ensue.

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.*

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. *Smárabíó, Borgarbíó, Sambtón Keflavík.*

MY SUPER EX-GIRLFRIEND
Uma Thurman plays a cuckolded superhero out for revenge on her former beau. Sounds interesting enough. *Smárabíó, Laugarásbíó, Borgarbíó*

NACHO LIBRE
Napoleon Dynamite prodigy Jared Hess returns with this south-of-the-border wrestling flick starring Jack Black. *Sambtón Alfabakka, Sambtón Kringlunni, Nýja Bíó Akureyri*

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.*

STEP UP
Some dancers dance around a lot. Should be awesome, if you're into that whole scene. *Sambtón Alfabakka, Sambtón Kringlunni, Nýja Bíó Akureyri.*

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. *Sambtón Kringlunni, Nýja Bíó Akureyri, Nýja Bíó Keflavík.*

YOU, ME AND DUPREE
Owen Wilson stars as a best man who overstays his welcome at Matt Dillon and Kate Hudson's house. *Laugarásbíó, Borgarbíó, Nýja Bíó Keflavík.*

PETTA ER EKKERT MÁL
A full-length documentary on late Icelandic legend and former Strongest Man in the World, Jón Páll Sigmarsson. *Regnboginn, Borgarbíó, Nýja Bíó Keflavík*

THE WICKER MAN
Nicolas Cage plays a sheriff baffled by a neo-pagan community in this pointless remake of the classic 1973 movie of the same name.

THE WILD
You know the score by now; CGI-based action comedy featuring some lovable shiny animals, celebrity voice talent and William Shatner. Probably very amusing.

BEERFEST
In which the Broken Lizard comedy troupe takes on German beer culture.

Regnboginn
Hverfisgata 54
101 Reykjavík
Tel. 551-9000

Sambtón
Álfabakka 8
109 Reykjavík
Tel. 575-8900

Smárabíó
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
<http://www.101hotel.is/101hotel/101gallery/>

08 Sept - 14 Oct '06
"Verkamen / Workers"
Spessi photo exhibition

AURUM
Bankastræti 4
Mon. - Fri. 10-18
Sat. 11-16

THE EINAR JÓNSSON MUSEUM
Eiríksgrata
Tue.-Sun. 14-17
www.skulptur.is

Permanent exhibition of the work of sculptor Einar Jónsson

THE CULTURE HOUSE
Hverfisgata 15
Open daily 11-17
www.thjodmenning.is

29 June '06 - 27 Feb '07
Icelandic Fashion 2006

Permanent Exhibits
Medieval Manuscripts; The National Museum- as it was; The Library Room

DWARF GALLERY
Grundarstígur 21
Opening Hours Vary
<http://tbis.is/birta>

GALLERY 100 DEGREES
Bejarbáls 1
Mon.-Fri. 8:30-16
www.or.is/Forsida/Gallery100

GALLERÍ ANIMA
Ingólfrstræti 8
Tue.-Sat. 13-17
<http://www.animagalleri.is/>

15 Sept - 07 Oct '06
Iain Sharpe

03 Oct - 04 Nov '06
Hjörtur Hjartarson

GALLERY FOLD
Rauðararstígur 14-16
Mon.-Fri. 10-18
Sat. 11-16
Sun. 14-16
www.myndlist.is

GALLERÍ SÆVARIS KARLS
Bankastræti 7
<http://www.saevarkarl.is>

Mon.-Fri. 10-18
Sat. 10-16

Current exhibition:
Rudolf L. Reiter

GALLERY TURPENTINE
Ingólfrstræti 5
Tue.-Fri. 12-18
Sat. 11-16
www.turpentine.is

08 Sept - 03 Oct '06
"Híbrídi/Hybrid"
Halla Gunnarsdóttir

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

01 Aug '06 - ?
Aron Bergman

GERÐUBERG CULTURAL

CENTRE
Gerðuberg 3-5
Mon.-Thu. 11-17
Wed. 11-21
Thu.-Fri. 11-17
Sun-Sat. 13-16
www.gerduberg.is

23. Sept - 12. Nov '06
"Reykjavík - Úr launsátri / Reykjavík - From an Ambush"
Ari Sigvaldason photo exhibit

GYLLINHÆÐ
Laugavegur 23
Thu.-Sun. 14-18

Students from the second year of the Academy

IS GALLERY
Klappargstígur 33
Tue.-Fri. 11-17
Sat. and by appointment 13-17
www.is.is

14 Sept - 21 Oct '06
"Bakgrunnur / Background"
Hildur Bjarnadóttir

ICELANDIC LABOUR UNION'S ART GALLERY
Freyjögata 41
Tue.-Sun. 13-17
Free Entrance
www.tbis.is/klingandbang

KLING & BANG GALLERY
Laugavegur 23
Thu.-Sun. 14-18
Free Entrance
www.tbis.is/klingandbang

CLOSED until 14 Oct - 05 Nov '06

Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir & New York artists

LIVING ART MUSEUM
Laugavegur 26
Wed., Fri.-Sun. 13-17
Thu. 13-22
<http://www.nylo.is/>

THE NATIONAL GALLERY
Frikirkjuvegur
Tue.-Sun. 11-17
Free Entrance
www.listasafn.is

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

NÆSTI BAR
Ingólfrstræti 1a

Regular exhibitions by local artists

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

10 June '06 - 07 Jan '07
The Erró Collection: Graphic Works
KJARVALSSTADIR
Flökagata
Open daily 10-17

08 Apr - 03 Dec '06
Let's Look at Art: A series of exhibitions especially designed for children

REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM
Kistuhylur 4
www.arbaejaarsafn.is

Closed in September.

THE REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Grófráhbús, Tryggvagata 15, 6th floor
Weekdays 12-19
Thu.-Sun. 13-17
Free Entrance
<http://www.lysmyndasafnreykjavikur.is/english/index.htm>

30. Sept - 19. Nov
"POLSKA 1969-1989 - Poland under communism"
Chris Niedenthal

28. Sept - 22. Nov
Golli photo exhibit

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

22-23 Sept
The Visual Art award ceremony and symposium at Akureyri Art Museum

16 Sept - 05 Nov '06
Tilo Baumgärtel & Martin Kobe

In October Safn will be presenting a performance art series as part of the Sequences Art Festival
www.sequences.is

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

Until - 24 Sept '06
Hótel Óðunn

Fígúrir í koniaksstofunni gless (Guðjón Sigvaldason)

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
Brekkgata 9
Mon.-Sat. 14-18

02 Sept - 23 Sept '06
"Red Seria"
Jónas Víðar

GALLERÍ +
Brekkgata 35
(Closed for the summer)

JÓNAS VÍÐAR GALLERY
Fri.-Sat. 13-18

AKUREYRI ART MUSEUM
Kaupvangsstræti 12
Tue.-Sun. 12-17
www.listasafn.akureyri.is





POLSKA 1969-1989

The Polish photographer Chris Niedenthal opens a photo exhibition at the Reykjavik Museum of Photography, Saturday, September 30th. With years of experience as a photojournalist for Newsweek, Time and Der Spiegel and a World Press Photo award winner, his exhibition Polska 1969-1989 features Polish society under Communism. By capturing everyday moments Niedenthal thought made Poland so special and unlike Western Europe he at the same time managed to document Poland's changing history and ideology during this groundbreaking period. At 15:00 October 1st, Chris Niedenthal will talk about his work at the museum. *sj*
The Reykjavik Museum of Photography (Grófarhús, Tryggvagata 15) Monday-Friday 13-17, Saturday and Sunday 13-17.



HIBRIDÍ

Halla Gunnarsdóttir's first private exhibit, Hibridi (Hybrid in English), is currently open at Gallery Turpentine's showroom through October 3rd. The show consists of sculptures made of plaster as well as oil painting inspired by 17th century phenomena such as centaurs and other weird creatures. The title Hibridi refers to humans merging and hybridisation with animals. *sj*
Gallery Turpentine (Ingólfsstræti 5) Tuesday-Friday 12-18, Saturday 11-16.



WORKERS

Portraits of Chinese workers at Kárahnjúkar forms the theme in Spessi's new exhibition Verkamenn (or Workers) at 101 Gallery, located inside the 101 Hotel. Being one of the country's top photographers, Spessi always finds a unique way to his subject, this time around dedicating the entire showroom to the workers. The idea came to him while working on his upcoming book, Location, as he saw the Chinese workers flocking to the local cafeteria. Spessi built up a set inside, got workers to take a seat and started shooting. The outcome of that brief encounter can be seen at the gallery until October 14th. *sj*
101 Gallery (Hverfisgata 18a) Thursday-Saturday 14-17 or by appointment.

Open:
 Monday - Friday:
 9:00 - 18:00

Saturdays:
 9:00 - 16:00

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"A deep, strong hope in its core"

Pórdís Björnsdóttir and Jesse Ball tell the Grapevine about art

BY HAUKUR MAGNÚSSON PHOTO BY SKARI

Linus looks up from his lifetime of work as an under-secretary in the Department of Implausible Devices and Vera is standing there, newly come from a wooden crate shipped in haste across the border.

She is a bit shy. All of this is new to her.

—Excuse me, she says. Is this the Department of Implausible Devices?

In answer, Linus takes off his hat and arranges his hair in the manner of a jury of wolves.

—But have you, asked Vera, seen this one?

With a snapping of buttons, her clothes are dismissed.

Underneath Linus can see years of Thursdays, all in a row, with nary a Wednesday, a Tuesday, a Friday, a Sunday, a Saturday, a Monday between.

—How did you do that? howled Linus.

—I was always thinking of something else, said Vera, wandering off. One day, in the midst of studying a book about trees, I had the clearest thought. I felt that I would die on a Thursday, and I saw myself then, in my last moments. The time between was negligible. I was a child and I was an old woman. I was dying and I was practically still being born. And now here I am again, stuck between.

They looked at each other in the crumbling light of a photograph hung upside down from a string.

2.19.1 (Jesse Ball)

We meet at a café in downtown Reykjavík. As usual, I am late for the appointment, but they don't seem to mind. See, they are poets, and poets often have what may be called a lyrical calm about them. At least during the day; I am told that poets often drink and fight when it's dark out. But we meet at high noon and they, the couple, sit calmly and answer my questions in a tranquil and orderly fashion, even the ones that upon review sound daft and unprepared.

The couple in question has been one for slightly over a year now.

One of them is a native of Reykjavík while the other hails from the U.S. They are called Pórdís Björnsdóttir and Jesse Ball, and they first met at last year's Nýhil international poetry festival, late in the month of July, a year and a month ago. Upon meeting, they quickly decided to form an allegiance and to that extent spent the nine months of winter in Montpellier, France. Their nine-month exile was a fruitful one — amidst all the everyday acts deemed too mundane for mention in articles such as this one, they managed to collaborate on two writing projects. One was released by Nýhil this summer, a book of prose that tells the tale of miscreants Vera and Linus (and incidentally bears their name). The other is a deck of cards featuring sentence-long stories,

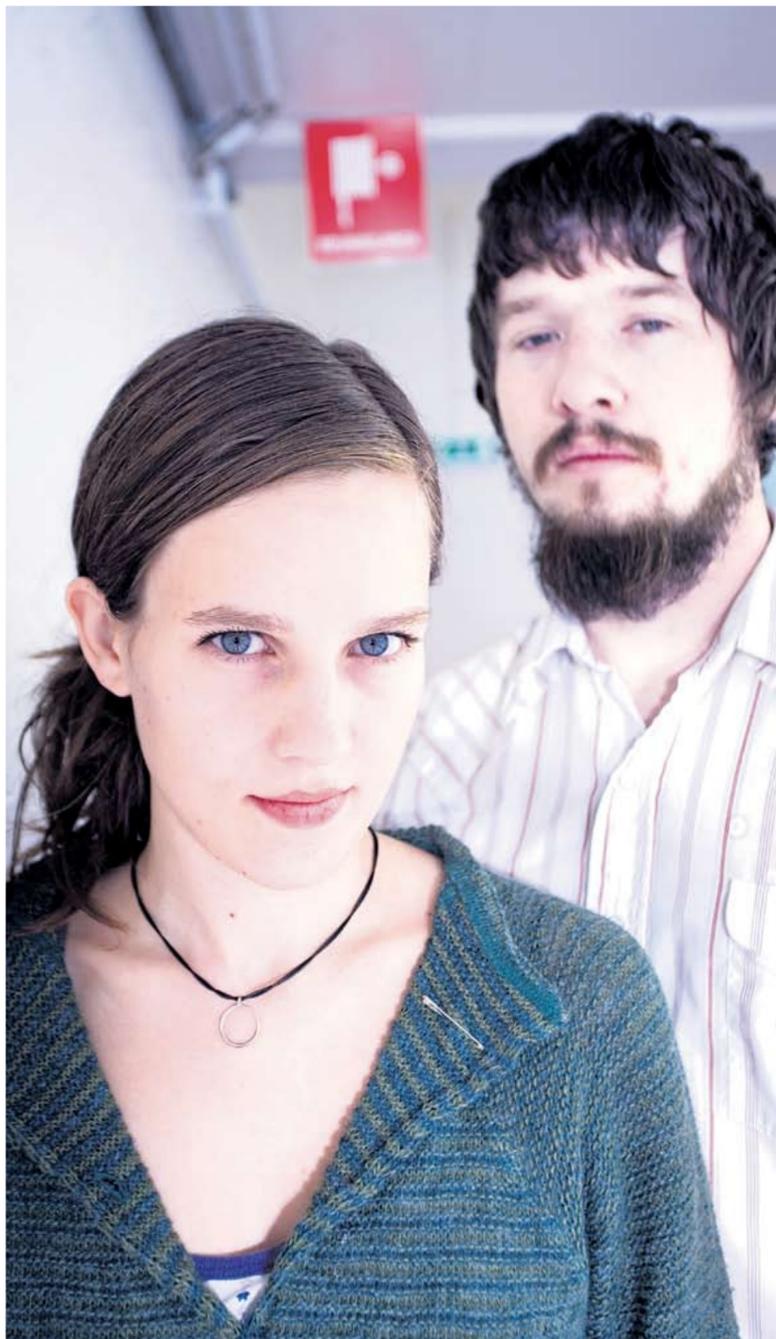
or short poetry if you will, to be released internationally early next year.

According to Ball, one is free to shuffle the cards once they are released, since each story stands on its own. He offers a sample: "The man with the birdhead was often sad, for he knew that the others in the town spoke ill of him." When asked if the sentence was meant to word an emotion or a thought, he replies in the enigmatic manner of those who loathe explaining their work, "I am kind of out there for anyone with a birdhead. I am pulling for them, trying to depict what it's like to live in the world with a birdhead. It's not so easy, you get dressed in the morning to go out and have to make a decision if you want to go out with the birdhead or wear a veil to cover it up. You don't want folks to see it, you know they're going to laugh at you. You might even want to take some precautions to protect yourself, wear a Kevlar jacket. It's hard for the birdhead men and women, I guess, they get pushed to the edge. It's nice to give them their moment in the sun."

The story of Vera and Linus is an altogether different affair, if not only for the elegant binding that comes with it. They tell me they decided to write a book with two characters that would represent each of them. As they got going, however, they soon wound up writing for both characters. "Almost every story has both of us in it," Ball explains, before moving on to the general plot of the book. "We wanted to have the characters do a lot of bad things and get away with them. At the same time, all the characters in the book that get punished or hurt genuinely deserve it. I guess it proposes a kind of morality that is parallel to the contemporary one, but skewed," Ball says. His partner, Björnsdóttir, continues portraying the setting of Vera and Linus as a platform and playground for the couple's imagination. "It is supposed to be a limitless world where all ideas are free. Like when you're walking around and you keep getting crazy ideas in your head, you can't actually go through with them. In this world of Vera and Linus, you can actually do it." Engaged in conversation now, Ball responds, "Like burying a child alive. Vera and Linus, they subvert what people are supposed to live, every day, they find a way to extract freedom from small parts of their lives, so they become freer in all parts of their lives."

Writing is often perceived as the most private and reclusive of crafts, collaborations are rarer than in most arts and really successful ones even more so. They confirm that it is a private process for them as well, saying that while styles are always personal, their styles were similar in many ways that allowed them to work well together. Says Björnsdóttir: "Each story is the product of one person's work, half of the stories he wrote and half of them I wrote. We then mixed them together and intertwined them."

Ball goes on about experimenting with collaborative aspects of the creative process. "In general, great artists are individuals, to be an artist is to gather an aesthetic that's going to be the whole about yourself. It is a very complicated process and it can



brook no admission of another person. It is a single process concerning an individual who's often excluded from society at that point in their genesis. To find another person, especially in literature, whom you can work with is incredibly rare. In our case, it works really well, especially in the context of this book, since the object of it is to render a certain life. One of the goals when you live together is the creation of a combined life, so you could say that our book is in a way the revisiting of that in a literary sense. You should read the book as if it's a product of one person's imagination. Going back and forth and wondering who wrote what is not a pleasurable act." However, being liberal arts graduates, the couple does have an understanding for the academic's plight, therefore

providing a numbering system so they will be able to tell.

As they stir their newly arrived lattes, the couple explains working with one another for the mutual goal, and they make it sound like experimenting with role play, so as to explore the boundaries of their relationship. According to Ball, their collaboration on the story of Vera and Linus gave each person a chance to look at their ideals for how a life might be lived with the security of presenting the ideas to a person who's very much like them. "Often as a writer, the problem of an audience creeps in. When writing, you may not know what your audience is, you may even not like the thought. You may wonder if it likes your work and it can often be problematic. Particularly,

a writer must write their first book in obscurity and then they find out who their audience is, often resulting in the second book being shit 'cause they're trying to pander to it. You should never do that. You can however write with the security of an audience, particularly if that audience is likeminded. And this is in a way what we provide for each other, similar tastes."

We delve into less abstract waters as I ask them about their respective writing careers. Both of their literary debuts were released in the year 2004, albeit in different countries and languages. Both are considered successful in their fields. Björnsdóttir won both critical and public acclaim for her book of poetry and has since been considered to be among the more exciting

voices of the new generation of writers. Ball found success as well, he has had desirable venues welcoming his creative output, perhaps in light of his increasingly widely known repertoire, and will publish his first novel on the fabled Vintage imprint next year.

At the time Björnsdóttir released her debut, *Ast og appelsínur* (Love and Oranges), she managed to garner an impressive amount of exposure for the book and was covered in some form by most of the Icelandic media. Her punk rock, even guerrilla, style approach to self-promotion echoed that of her Nýhil compatriots, with flyers, posters and (vaguely) impromptu 'gigs' appearing all over Reykjavík. I ask them how you market a book of poetry, and if it is an integral part of being a writer. We get a conversation going. Björnsdóttir tells me that she decided on self-releasing her first work in light of the way Icelandic publishers are known for treating first-time authors and their poetry books. "They don't do anything for you, really, so I decided to do what I could by myself to promote it and get it out. That went very well. I guess I was lucky in a way, but promoting that book was hard work."

///Some authors and artists assume that it's enough to simply have an inspired and interesting artefact, taking for granted that it will find its audience in time?

Björnsdóttir: Yeah, but there's so much going on. You are confronted with ads everywhere and it seems like everyone is vying for your attention in some way. This makes it necessary to push a bit to get to the audience.

Ball: But it is of course important to realise the difference between promoting the work itself or the personality behind it. The propaganda culture that envelops us now has gotten people used to the individual being marketed before the work done by that individual. Most of the people who are famous now are famous just for being famous, as opposed to the work they do. In a way, then, it is important to present something that people can hold on to, the enduring reason. I think literature can help people kinda find better ways to live a life, show different possibilities. It is possible to pick up and read a book that will change the way you live your life and do something different, and I believe in that power of text. History has shown us again and again the power of printed material. With exposure to plain individuals, when you look at a TV screen or some celebrity, your interplay with it is much simpler. I have to be another person, do this, do that, this person lives this life of leisure and fun, you may think. It's a simple exchange where you end up wanting something that doesn't even exist in the first place. Interacting with the actual text, that's something real, y'know.

///Reading then involves giving something of yourself in order to receive, as opposed to simply satisfying urges, wanting something and grabbing it, a sort of mental consumerism?

Ball: It involves work. Reading a book, for instance. If I read a good book, I will slowly acquaint myself with it over the course of several years. I'll read it and re-read it every couple of years, seeing the work from different angles. Some work is just too difficult to be completely gotten in the first go. You shouldn't be able to completely understand something the first time you gaze

over it, but that's a public demand now, something I feel is part of the laziness that is rampant right now and even exists in the sphere of literature and art. In many cases, the labour has ceased to exist.

Björnsdóttir: This need that people have to identify with the writer or artist or whoever, that's just how it is today. You have to take part in it even though you'd prefer people to just go and read your work. Of course, the personalities behind a given artefact are somewhat of a factor, Vera and Linus is for instance a fragment of who we were as people at the time we wrote it, that whole is mixed together and I think it's useful. Of course, the work does come out of life.

///Do you feel you are philosophising in your work, phrasing distant thoughts and ideas?

Ball: The best writers and poets, they have to be philosophers to a certain extent, because what you are presenting is the fine period of time in which you did the writing. Your philosophy at that time will be embodied in your words, whether you meant it or not. A lot of writers are given away by their work, but the best ones always have some kind of really engaging cosmology that ends up reaching into the readers mind, making them face it.

I think it was Oscar Wilde that said that no one in London ever saw the fog as 'the fog' until people started writing poetic descriptions of it and what it was. I think that is important and I also favour forcefulness in writing. You have to be able to present your work with strength and hope. Some people think of poetry as being some fancy, delicate rhyme thing that doesn't have a lot to do with them. And that is all wrong. Poetry is the most forceful and powerful use of language, if you want to write a poem and get to how you feel, getting it down, forcing it away by original means, that's poetry. Cynicism, however, is... probably the saddest trait of our society right now. And it's rampant.

///You're waging a war on cynicism?

Ball: All cynicism does is subtract. It doesn't add. Every single genuine endeavour goes forth despite cynicism. Even something like punk, which presents a lot of cynical ideas, is inherently hopeful, it has a deep strong hope in it's core, and a strong spirit. As I see it, being disaffected is one thing, that's actually hard not to be in this day and age. But being cynical is a step too far.

Linus had a silent week.

On the sixth day Vera was fed up with having no one to speak with.

So Linus decided to bring her company.

The door opened into the room where Vera was sitting in chair. In came half a person, with a body from foot to waist.

Vera burst out laughing.

—I shall at least need the rest of him if we are to speak, she said.

In came the rest, sailing in the air and singing, and strangely enough, the voice could have been Linus's.

1.64.1 (Pórdís Björnsdóttir)



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

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Reykjavík 871±2

Step into the Viking Age

Landnámssýningin
The Settlement Exhibition

How did it all begin?

Multimedia techniques bring Reykjavík's past to life, providing visitors with insights into how people lived in the Viking Age, and what the Reykjavík environment looked like to the first settlers.

The Settlement Exhibition 871±2 is located at Aðalstræti 16

Reykjavík City Museum
www.reykjavik871.is

City of Reykjavík

DINING, EATING & GRUBBING

By **Haukur Magnússon** and **Steinunn Jakobsdóttir** Photos by **Skari** except Vox

VOX

Suðurlandsbraut 2, 108 Reykjavík
Tel. 444-5050



Located inside the trendy and modern Nordica hotel, the Vox restaurant is not only famous for its stylish design and a first-class evening menu but also for the Sunday brunch buffet from 11:30 to 14:00, where you can gorge yourself on all your body can handle for 2,300 ISK.

I'm a fan of bacon and eggs and similar healthy choices, especially after a busy weekend. Seeing that I have tried the brunch menu at about ten different coffeehouses in town I wonder why I had not tried the one at

Vox before.

As a starter we were served a refreshing Mimosa cocktail, composed of orange juice and champagne. We then faced the impressive buffet table, crammed with more goodies than I have ever seen on a buffet before. If you count the food and the complimentary coffee and juice, the brunch is hardly more expensive than what you would expect from the downtown coffeehouses and the few extra coins are well worth spending. With a wonderful combination of everything you could possibly dream about the originality sure isn't lacking. There are fresh fruits, meat and salmon with horseradish sauce, assorted breads, cold seafood dishes, tomatoes and cheese, grilled shrimp, chorizo with pineapple salad, various potato dishes and of course the traditional greasy eggs and bacon, sausages, pancakes with syrup and steak with

béarnaise sauce.

I stuffed a plate and it looked like a piece of art and tasted even better. The yummy dessert table did not disappoint either. Extra accolades to the kitchen for the perfect chocolate mousse.

Everything we ate was exquisite. I only wish I had been able to eat more. To fully cover the entire buffet, one needs at least four trips, something my stomach just couldn't handle. The only thing I can complain about was the free coffee. It was so weak that it neither tasted nor looked like coffee. Not likely to impressively cap a great meal. In my own humble opinion, good coffee is essential for a Sunday brunch. A quality buffet should not drop the ball on this one. If they fix that not-so-minor detail, there will be nothing left to criticise. *SJ*



LA PRIMAVERA

Austurstræti 9, 101 Reykjavík
Tel. 561-8555



For years, Italian restaurant La Primavera has been one of Reykjavík's most popular dining spots. With a menu offering various pasta, fish and meat courses and an impressive wine list, classy renovated lodge and location in the heart of downtown, the place offers all possibilities for a great night out. Smoking is not allowed before 22:00, an extra plus for all those guests who want to enjoy their meal in fresh air.

After asking the waitress for recommendations, I decided on the Italian toast

with Parma ham and goat cheese sauce for starters while my companion had oven-baked lobster with lemon aioli and rucola. I made sure to carefully clean my plate with the bread served so as not to leave a single drop of the tasty cheese sauce; my companion was less pleased with her nearly raw lobster. The waitress apologised and offered a better-cooked piece, but we agreed that the aioli lemon taste was a little too dominating. My companion soon found joy when the main course, loin of deer with truffle sauce, arrived. The deer was as tender as one could hope for, although the gorgonzola fig wrapped in Parma ham didn't add any extra pleasure to it. My pan-fried plaice with garlic sautéed shellfish was tasty, as was the lobster, scallop and scampi, which came as garnishes, but I regret not asking for a little more sauce.

The hearty dishes had left us both

completely packed but the dessert menu was too inviting for us to leave just yet, a decision neither of us regretted afterwards. As every meal should be concluded, I ordered the warm chocolate cake with vanilla ice cream. The word "heavenly" wouldn't even come close to describing the flavour. The cake was perfect. Crispy on the outside, melting on the inside. My companion was just as satisfied with a delightfully light panna cotta with caramel sauce and strawberries.

Overall, the meal was satisfying, the service excellent and we never had to wait long for our dishes to arrive, or our glasses to be filled. For the price, though, I must say that that little extra would be needed to move from great to perfect in the main courses. *SJ*

SILFUR

Pósthústræti 11, 101 Reykjavík
Tel: 578-2008



Silfur is a new restaurant at Hótel Borg, run by the proprietors of Sjavarkjallarinn, which is often lauded in this magazine as being Reykjavík's best for upscale dining. Silfur sees the owners expand beyond Sjavarkjallarinn's seafood slant, while remaining firmly in the 'upscale' category. This is indicated by Silfur's extravagant décor, and by the restaurant's upscale pricing. Most importantly Silfur's claim to the upper reaches of Reykjavík's restaurant palate is confirmed by its professional yet friendly

service, adventurous menu and faultless presentation.

Silfur's menu informs that the restaurant cooks new style French cuisine, advising patrons to order four to five courses, as all of them are served as entrées. We went with the restaurant's recommended Flavours menu (6,800 ISK), which offers a selection of courses the chef deems favourable. We also put wine selection in the hands of our waitress. Both choices proved well founded, as the selection of five courses and several starters along with the waitress's recommended red and white wines refused to fail us throughout our three-hour meal.

The smoked eel foam was intriguing, as were the imaginatively presented scallop carpaccio and seafood soup. Venison with foie gras, artichokes and wild mushrooms were cooked to a rare and tender perfection, and

was a close contender to the plate of pigeon with truffle polenta and apple. Our favourite was a tuna carpaccio topped with foie gras, celery and salted nuts, the pleasant burst of flavour and texture it provided provoked literal yelps of pleasure. Due note must be given to the dessert menu, who's 'snickers' put its mass-produced namesake to shame.

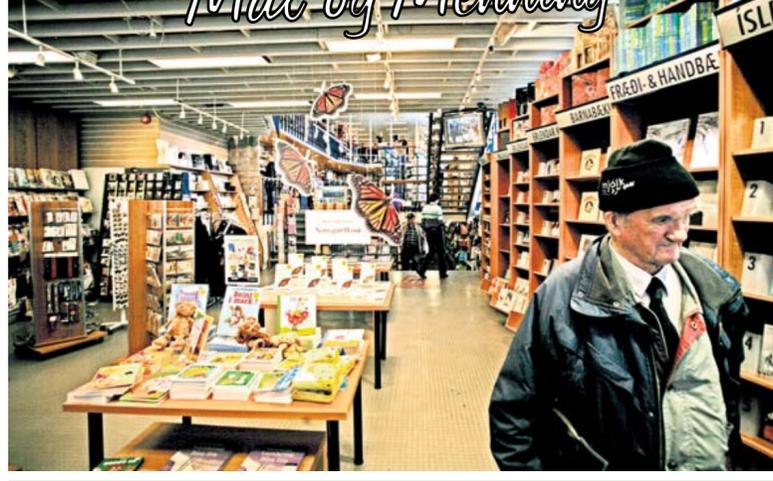
I am by no means an overly experienced restaurant critic, something which caused me untold anxieties throughout the meal. "This marinated kangaroo looks, smells and tastes great. But what if I'm being fooled by common culinary tricks? I'll sound like an ignoramus in my positive write-up," I would think. Seasoned food critics may well find faults with Silfur, but on this particular Sunday night it made for one of the best dining experiences I've had in Reykjavík. *HM*



WE RECOMMEND

BEZT Í HEIMI

Mál og Menning



A Staple of Downtown Shopping

BY HAUKUR MAGNÚSSON

There are certain constants that Iceland has to offer its visitors, places that tourist boards and magazines alike have labelled as must-sees, places like Hallgrímskirkja, the Blue Lagoon and the Golden Circle, to name a few. Some places are like the Westfjords, which only the more adventurous tourists will ever set foot upon. Then there are attractions that aren't likely to make it into any guidebooks, but most travellers scoping out Iceland find themselves visiting, often frequently. For instance, the Bæjarins Bestu hot dog stand, world renowned for its 'one with everything.' There are the public pools with their nude showering policies, which usually manage to simultaneously frustrate and amaze prudent North Americans on their first visit.

And then there is the Mál & Menning bookstore, which for decades has been an Icelandic staple of downtown shopping and has, in its later years, become an essential stop for travellers wanting to sample Iceland's cultural offerings and perhaps obtain the occasional postcard or cheesy souvenir (such as stuffed miniature sheep). It's convenient mid-Laugavegur location and liberal opening hours ensure that most tourists passing through Reykjavík will find their way to it at some point during their stay. The friendly atmosphere and stuff galore found there will most likely result in them revisiting, often daily. In fact, large queues of parka-clad foreigners can usually be observed in front of the store right before it opens early in the morning.

An offshoot of the once leftist Mál & Menning publishing house, the bookstore was established in the early sixties – the building that's housed it since its inception is rumoured to have been funded with grants from Soviet Union propagandists. The store is divided into five floors; the basement housing a children's department and a plethora of office supplies. Ground level

offers international newspapers and magazines along with various gift shop trinkets, while the first floor has Icelandic literature in Icelandic and foreign language translations, as well as a fine selection of Icelandic CDs. The top floor hosts foreign-language literature and the oft-praised Sústinn Café.

Of course, the Mál & Menning bookstore is no Shangri-La of urban shopping, for instance, its selection of English language literature is somewhat limited due to the small market it caters to (although you'd be surprised by some of the titles to be found). There are, however, several reasons as to why it is a worthwhile place to visit. The staff, a mixed bag of experienced bookselling veterans and enthusiastic grad students, is usually courteous and informative – although it isn't an official information booth, those left without a clue in downtown Reykjavík could do worse for advice and helpful tips. Naturally, guidebooks are available. Another factor is the selection; the store really sells most non-edible things a tourist might need for a short stay in Reykjavík.

Due to hefty tolls and taxes, magazines are quite expensive in Iceland. This is where M&M and its top-floor café come in handy for budget travellers (and the store ultimately earns its 'Best í Heimi' ranking), as any magazine or book found in the store can be borrowed to be enjoyed over one's beverage of choice or some fine vegetable pie. Those bored with cumbersome analogue reading material can then opt to utilise its free WiFi.

Bókabúð Mál & Menningar
Laugavegur 18
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Movie Madness

Icelandic International Film Festival and Vesturport's Börn

BY ÞÓRDÍS ELVA ÞORVALDSDÓTTIR BACHMANN

Having been pleasantly surprised by the quality of movies in last year's IIFF with gems such as *The March of the Penguins*, *Crónicas*, *Hip Hop Hora* and the brave *Searching for Angela Shelton*, I counted the days until IIFF 2006 was launched. Judging by the movies I've seen so far, this year's festival doesn't match the one of 2005 when it comes to the quality of films. Moreover, I'd like to use this opportunity to point out to festival organisers that the Q&A sessions with the directors and actors are a dimension of IIFF that are desperately missed by yours truly and other movie nerds.

I kicked off my IIFF 2006 by attending the gala premiere of *Beowulf and Grendel*. I'm not sure what the most painful moment of the evening was. It was definitely awkward when producer Friðrik Þór Friðriksson welcomed lead actor Gerard Butler to the stage by asking the crowd to applaud 'Gary' Butler (Mr. Butler is known to be called Gerry by those who know him, but Gary is a new one). Things grew even more uncomfortable when Mr. Butler mentioned how bad the weather had been during the filming what seemed like a dozen times during his speech, leaving the impression that he was somehow apologising for the final result. Last but not least, some scenes in the movie made me squirm with discomfort due to their lack of quality. The cinematography is static and often out of focus, the script is fragmented and doesn't do justice to the original story, the editing is stale, the music is predictable and the acting is often substandard throughout the movie. It is depressing to see one of the finest actors in Iceland, Ingvar E. Sigurðsson, play Grendel the troll with little more to the role than simply grunting primitively and banging himself on the chest caveman-style. Stellan Skarsgård does well in the role of King Hrothgar, but doesn't manage to save this ship from sinking.

The movie often strays from historical correctness, mostly with the frequent use of the words "f'cking" and "beer," words that were probably not used in 500 AD. Worse, the movie strayed from logic by trying to pass off Iceland's mountainous landscape as Denmark, a country known for being incredibly flat (its highest mountain stands at 173 metres). What struck me as particularly annoying is that *Beowulf* himself speaks English with a Scottish accent, queen Wealtheow has a distinct British accent, Selma the witch has an authentic Canadian accent and the rest of the Vikings speak with a thick Icelandic accent, although American and Irish accents are also heard. Had they only included an Australian actor, the title could've been changed to *A Global Viking Fest* (which might have come in handy with regards to funding, distribution and ticket sales). It's easy to be wise in hindsight.

The movie *A Cock and Bull Story* is a

brilliant take on the 17th-century British novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*. Widely considered unfilmable, the book's main character is only born at the very end while the narrator constantly distracts himself from the story and trails off into different subjects. *A Cock and Bull Story* trails off from the storyline and forgets to tell the story of Tristram Shandy, which is somehow fitting. Half an hour into the movie about the life of the 17th-century British aristocrat, somebody shouts "CUT" and suddenly a camera crew is seen holding filming equipment and tired runners fetch coffees for the stars. From then on, it's a movie about Steve Coogan in the role of Steve Coogan (the actor who played Mr. Shandy for the first half hour of the film), and his colleagues on the set, such as Rob Brydon in the role of Rob Brydon, who does delightful comedy at his own expense. The "new" plot revolves around on-set romances, tabloid gossip, the size of Steve Coogan's shoe heel, rivalry between actors, the lack of funding for the movie and the miraculous recruitment of Hollywood actress Gillian Anderson. The only downside to *A Cock and Bull Story* is its hectic style of editing, which sometimes felt almost MTVish in its rapid flashes. Otherwise, director Michael Winterbottom succeeds in making a movie about the making of a movie based on a book about the writing of a book. If that makes any sense.

The *Libertine* starts with a monologue delivered by the movie's protagonist, the Earl of Rochester (Johnny Depp), in which he talks about what a dislikeable person he is, and how he "puts it around", referring to his promiscuous sexual behaviour. I instantly thought I had walked into yet another movie about a cynical, stiff-lipped, British aristocrat, immersing himself in booze and sex, eventually dying of a nasty STD contracted from a hooker somewhere. To my disappointment, I was right. The movie's main attraction is the collaboration between two amazing actors, John Malkovich and Johnny Depp. Malkovich rested comfortably in his role as the king of England, delivering a solid yet unsurprising performance. Johnny Depp showed a new side to his acting abilities and painted a vivid portrait of the dislikeable yet fascinating Rochester. Although I wasn't taken by this film, it'll remain memorable for displaying the most disgusting STD ever seen on the big screen. Close-ups and all.

Unusual as it is, two Icelandic films premiered a week apart this month, namely the massive *Beowulf and Grendel*, marketed as "the most expensive movie in the history of Iceland", followed by *Börn*, a low-budget indie film (the crew jokingly refers to it as "the cheapest movie in the history of Iceland"). Having spoken to insiders on both projects, I



found out that *Börn* cost approximately 100 times less than *Beowulf*. It's ironic considering that *Börn* is approximately 100 times better as a film. As director Ragnar Bragason pointed out in his speech, they didn't have a penny to their name on the first day of shooting. The journey the Vesturport theatre company undertook to make this film happen is quite a feat, a Cinderella story really. In spite of scarce resources, *Börn* is becoming one of the most widely distributed Icelandic films ever. It's the first Icelandic movie I've seen that deals with the hopelessness of the underprivileged (also known as "it sucks a** to be lower class") a subject perfected by director Mike Leigh who has captured the bleak existence of lower-class Brits in movies such as *All or Nothing* and *Naked*. Here, the focus is on Reykjavík's underprivileged, such

as a single mother of four, a thug, an invalid and a depressed 12 year old. The dialogue in the film isn't scripted but mainly improvised, which often gives it a relaxed and natural feel. However, in the more dramatic scenes, the dialogue becomes repetitious for the same reason. The movie's title, which means "children" in Icelandic, refers to the relationship between parents and children, a theme Vesturport and Mr. Bragason have been contemplating for years now. In fact, when the shooting process began, it became apparent that there was far more material at hand than would ever fit into a single movie. As a result, it was divided into two parts, the latter one aptly called *Foreldrar* (which means "parents") opening in late October 2006. Having been moved by the stripped back, harsh, isolated reality in *Börn*, I'm looking forward to seeing its parents.

RIFF Brings Darkness to Urban Youth

The Grapevine Previews The Reykjavík International Film Festival

BY VIRGINIA ZECH

The annual Reykjavík International Film Festival (RIFF) is approaching, and along with it a series of seminars, symposia, celebrities and special events – not to mention a veritable bevy of cinema. The Festival will kick off its third year with a "blackout" event Thursday, 28 September 2006, to highlight "the largest silver screen there is: the sky itself," according to a RIFF press release. Following the celestial cinema celebration, the motion-picture portion, which will run for 11 days, will begin. This year RIFF will feature over 80 films from over 30 different countries.

During the planned blackout, all the lights in Reykjavík, from streetlamps to the lighting in homes and businesses, will be turned off for half an hour, from 22:00 to 22:30. This is the first widespread intentional blackout event of its kind in the world, at least, as far as festival organisers claim to be aware of. In an interview with the Grapevine, author Andri Snær Magnason, the man behind the blackout concept, stated, "It's something I've dreamed of for quite a long time. We live in a city and we make electricity and lights and, if we want to, we can also turn them off. The system is for us... The constellations in the dark, winter sky are something that has been the root of philosophy and navigation and religion and science... As the sky is now people don't really have access to it."

Magnason hopes that by turning off the lights in Reykjavík, Iceland's urban youth will have a chance to see something that, otherwise, they might never be able to experience within the city. "They are the first children of mankind, really, who don't have access to a sky like this. So, I was wondering if that could affect their imagination and their ideas of the world and thought it would be cool to let them see the sky for half an hour... Let them have something else to think about, rather than Britney Spears or something," Magnason said.

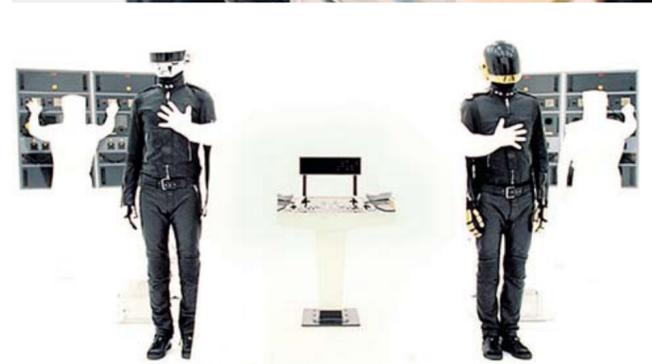
During the blackout, RIFF would urge Reykjavík residents to take part by turning off the lights in their homes and businesses. "This is probably the biggest event of the festival. It's on a grand scheme. It's for the whole city... People need to know about it. We want everybody to be at home and looking up at stars. So that's the concept: turn off time for half an hour; unwrap the sky," Magnason told Grapevine. "We're hoping this will get global attention and we can sometime turn off all the lights in the Western Hemisphere and take a picture from a satellite, or something." In addition to stars, it is hoped that the Northern Lights will make a more perceptible appearance than usual in the darker night sky. An astronomer will be describing the visible constellations on RÚV (National Public Radio) during the half-hour event.

Grapevine also tracked down festival

planner Atli Bollason, who stated that the festival's emphasis "is really on very, very new cinema, very fresh cinema, very up-and-coming stuff. Our competitive section is called New Visions and it's exclusive to directors making their first or second films." As the festival attempts to broaden its scope and international impact each year, this year will feature not only more movies, but also cinema from a broader range of national origins than in previous years. "Mostly [the films are] from Europe, but also from Asia, South America and North America... There are almost 200 guests coming over – to cover the festival as journalists, as well as directors coming to present their films, and just real film enthusiasts," from all over the globe, Bollason said. Films will be coming to the Reykjavík International Film Festival from as far away as Thailand, Iran, Mexico, Australia, and over a dozen other countries.

In addition to New Visions, this year's festival features categories for Danish and Icelandic films, a category featuring the best international films of the year, a human rights section, and Shorts – short films which will be shown throughout the city in unlikely venues. There will also be a series of Midnight Movies shown, accordingly, at midnight with a complimentary snack, as well as a Sunday selection of films for children. "This is the third year we're having this festival and it's a very logical continuation of a last year's. It has similar categories, but on a much bigger scale. Also, our unique position is that it's more than just screening films. We have loads of seminars and symposia... The list of events goes on and on," Bollason said.

Some of the events audiences can anticipate at RIFF include the presentation by Thomas Bangalter, one of the members of the French pop-music duo Daft Punk, of the twosome's film *Electroma*. "[The film] chronicles two robots' quest to become human," a RIFF press release states, "Furthermore, Bangalter will spin some of his favourite records at NASA on [7 October 2006]. He has not performed as a DJ for almost a decade." The three ex-Guantánamo Bay detainees – Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Ruhul Ahmed – featured in Michael Winterbottom's film, *The Road to Guantánamo*, will be present at the festival and will be attending the film's premiere, 2 October, where they will partake in a question and answer session. They will also be members of a panel discussion "about Guantánamo-prison, torture, and the vision presented in *The Road to Guantánamo*" on 3 October. Local Icelandic 17-piece band Benni Hemm Hemm will be composing the score to the Swedish silent film, *Berg-Ejvind Och Hans Hustru*, starring Victor Sjöstrom (showing 4 & 5 October). A programme entitled



View of WIFT will also be presented in cooperation with Women in Film and Television (WIFT) and will feature screenings of films by women from around the globe and a conference. This year's Spotlight section will screen three films by this year's featured director, Goran Paskaljevic of Serbia and Montenegro.

Hrónn Marinósdóttir, this year's RIFF Director, reports that festival presenters, "went to Cannes last spring and introduced the festival and it was amazing, the response we got." As RIFF 2006 promises to be bigger and more 'international' than any previous Icelandic film festival, I asked Marinósdóttir if there were any plans to continue expanding the festival in coming years. "I don't think we are looking to grow to be like Berlin or like Cannes, but I think it could really be an inspiring festival for a normal audiences and ordinary people who are interested in film [as well as] for professionals," she told Grapevine. Marinósdóttir believes that part of Reykjavík's

allure is that, being so small for a cosmopolitan city, the accessibility of people in Iceland is very different than in other places. "Everything is so close here. You can walk everywhere and we don't [have to] have bodyguards all over," she said. RIFF hopes to capitalize on the inevitable interaction that Reykjavík's small community feel will allow to occur between audiences and film industry professionals. On the point of why RIFF has been able to expand so quickly, this being only its third year, she stated, "I think it's for two reasons: Reykjavík is between two continents, so it's a great place for a film festival. It's hip and cool in many peoples' minds... The second reason is we have a very good programme. We are screening films that are not in many festivals around the world."

For further information, including schedules and a list of films shown at the festival, visit www.filmfest.is

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WHO
Nick Cave

WHERE
Laugardalshöll

WHEN
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Vulgar Display of Re-arrangements

By Sveinn Birgir Björnsson Photo by Skari

So, Nick Cave had returned to Iceland. Again. As I entered the stadium and saw the assembly of VIPs, celebrities, socialites and one head of state for good measure, gathered for the show, I wondered if – were it not for a certain theatre group in town – the attendance have could be sliced in half. But I digress. I am actually glad Cave has become the celebrity attraction he now is. A singular talent like his deserves all the attention and accolades that are lavished upon it, even if a large portion of the audience could not have picked him out of a line-up ten years ago.

It had been ages since I had attended an assigned-seating-only concert, and the different vibe put me off at first. By all standards, Nick Cave's concert was not a concert at all, but an Event. Surprisingly, despite the great attention paid to the production, the show still got off on the wrong foot, as technical problems delayed its commencement. When there is no opening act, and the production level is such as it was on that particular night, a half-assed soundcheck is hard to overlook.

After a few minutes, the problem was fixed and the man of the hour entered stage left to a thundering

applause, joined by members of the Bad Seeds, among them the legendary Warren Ellis of the Australian folk rockers, The Dirty Three. After a tour de force opening, Cave had an announcement: "If you want us to do something special, just call it out, and we will try to accommodate you." One person had the nerve to shout out –Henry Lee! only to have his wish instantly shot down by Cave. "We could do that. But we won't." Instead, he treated his audience to a very inspired version of Red Right Hand, followed by the Ship Song and Wonderful Life. His next song he dedicated to his wife, "It's her birthday. It's called You Turn Me On – wherever you are... chained to the kitchen sink." After a little laughter Cave confessed, "I can't believe I just said that."

The shout-outs between songs grew steadily over the course of the show and, for the most part, were met with Cave's diplomatic response of "we could do that." Finally, after his eighth number, a powerful rearrangement of the rather mellow Weeping Song, he caved (pun intended) and replied: "Look, we have a fucking set list anyway, I asked you to do this to fill the pregnant pauses while we rebuild the drum kit."

Eventually relenting, Cave delivered a rearranged, rock version of the murder ballad, Henry Lee. The group then launched into Tupelo and The Mercy Seat, after which they bid their attending fans good-night after a 15 song set. Following a few minutes

of furious stomping and clapping, the band returned for a five-song encore, including The Boatman's Call, and finally, the song that a large portion of the audience seemed to be waiting for, a re-arranged nice n' slow version of the rocker, Stagger Lee. This slower arrangement, dominated primarily by Cave on the piano, allowed for a delivery of the lyrics. As he delivered perfectly enunciated vocal lines like: "Well those were the last words that the barkeep said, 'cause Stag put four holes in his motherfucking head," and "I'm a bad motherfucker. Don't you know? And I'll crawl over fifty good pussies just to get one fat boy's asshole," I thought: 'I wonder if the President is fond of songs like this one.'

After executing the five encore songs and again departing from the stage, the band entered for the third time to oblige the crowd of one last number. Many of those attending had already left by then, satisfied with a great show.

Having followed Cave's career since I first heard Henry's Dream in 1992, I was happy to finally have the opportunity to see him on stage, as I had missed his previous shows in Iceland. His performance did not disappoint. My only concern was, having heard numerous interesting re-arrangements of old classics that night, fear of never hearing them again... Unless there is a bootleg out there somewhere. If this is the case, I urge whoever is in possession of it to let me know.



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Old Hunters Welcome a New World

The Grapevine goes to South Greenland

BY STEINUNN JAKOBSDÓTTIR PHOTOS BY SKARI

"It's really tasty. You should try it," Edda said to me as I put a piece of grilled seal meat on my plate.

I was starving and beat after sailing for three days between small villages and historical sites in South Greenland's vast wilderness. Eating seal meat and whale fat sounded like a reasonable idea. I took one bite of the traditional dish, swallowed with great difficulty and went on to drink glass after glass of water to rid my mouth of the unpleasant taste of fish oil. Fortunately, this incident was the only bad experience of my entire trip.

Greenland is unlike anything else I have experienced. The country is a Danish province, but in 1979 it was granted home rule and is therefore self-governed. It is still a long way from becoming an independent country. Primarily a mixture of Inuit and Danish ancestry, the inhabitants all have in common the pride of their 4,500 years of history and heritage, the love of their nature and friendly attitude towards those who are curious enough to travel to this haven in the North. With 56,000 people inhabiting roughly two million km², it is both the world's biggest island and the most sparsely inhabited country. Eighty percent of its surface is covered in ice, and the whole northern region is uninhabited. Its capital, Nuuk, with only 13,000 inhabitants wouldn't even make it on the map in many countries.

Our adventure started in Reykjavík. After a two-hour flight our plane landed at the international airport in Narsarsuaq, South Greenland's only connection to the outside world. The airport, built by U.S. armed forces in World War II, is the centre of this small village of 200 people, most of whom are employees at the airport or Hotel Narsarsuaq.

Walking out of the terminal and looking around this new and mysterious terrain, the outside world seemed very far away. The small

airstrip was almost empty, a hut marked 'Police' across the road seemed even smaller when looking up the steep hillside hovering in the background and there wasn't much else to see except the overwhelming visual dominance of nature all around. No traffic, not even people walking around except the few souls who had been in the plane and were now climbing into cars heading to various destinations, some on their way to their homes, others going reindeer hunting. Although this small area doesn't have many attractions in and of itself, it is only minutes away from unspoiled nature and a good starting point for a journey through the south of the country.

We were rushed into small mini-vans and

"Then the Danish men came and took their wives away. The hunters lost their identity. That was the time alcohol and drugs became a problem"

taken to the harbour where the boat Kveldúlfur was docked. The crew welcomed us and informed us that Kveldúlfur would be our transportation for most of the trip, sailing through fjords and between villages. First, we would head to the small town Qaqortoq, barely three hours away.

Once there, the aforementioned Edda greeted us, a woman that would prove to be one hell of a storyteller and immediately make us all understand why she wouldn't want to live anywhere else in the world than in this small municipality. Twenty years ago she moved from her home in Iceland to Greenland and is now running a successful restaurant in Qaqortoq where we would later get the pleasure of dining.

As we sailed Eiríks Fjord the dramatic scenery of Greenland came into clear view.

Turquoise-blue drift-ice was scattered all around. The rocky and towering cliffs looking as though powdered sugar had been dusted on top reminded me of the landscape in the Westfjords of Iceland, just so much more murky, majestic and larger in every way. Everything so extreme and gigantic in size and shape, everything except the small isolated sheep farms we passed on our way.

When we sailed into the harbour of Qaqortoq, which locals claim is the most beautiful town in all of Greenland, a large iceberg had drifted into the harbour. "In spring time the icebergs can cause a bit of a problem. They fill the harbour and the boats can't go out and the fishermen have to wait until the

edly for the next couple of days.

Even though the tourist industry has grown in recent years, the small towns in South Greenland are struggling for their existence. They mostly make a living from the island's natural resources; some are sheep farmers, others seal hunters and fishermen and a number earn their living by transporting tourists and hiking enthusiasts around the area. Yet, the number of tourists is far from enough to build up a successful business and the companies suffer from the short season. The only travellers I came in contact with were three Russians sipping down some vodka while eating sausages at a local hostel. Other than that, groups of tourists with their cameras dangling on their chests were hidden creatures.

Having been there, I fail to understand why there aren't more travellers who visit this pristine country. With soaring mountain peaks, green fields, barren Arctic deserts, pack ice, narrow coastal fringes, polar bears, gold mines, reindeers and old Viking ruins all packed around the endless white landscape. It's hard, if not impossible, to find all that wrapped up in one package anywhere else, and the added pleasure of having all this for yourself without tourist buses arriving every 15 minutes, makes it even better.

Though Greenland and Iceland are neighbours, the difference between the two countries is exceptional. Qaqortoq is a typical large town in Greenland, with 3,200 inhabitants living in small colourful wooden houses built upon steep hillsides. An old church stands in the centre of the downtown square where a small fountain in front of it (the only one in Greenland) is a popular playground for kids. Closely linked to the harbour and the outdoor fish market, the supermarket and the clothing store, nothing is more than 300 m away. Here hardworking people live in harmony with the

>>> CONTINUES ON PAGE 40



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



rough nature and are slowly coming into step with the 21st century.

No One Will Escape the Computer Boom

We were accommodated by Hotel Qaqortoq where we had a three-course dinner with a picturesque view over the harbour. Everyone was tired and passed out just before midnight, as we had to wake up early next morning. Places to see, people to meet.

After breakfast we met up with our guide outside the hotel. Apart from two men walking down at the harbour and a few elderly folks relaxing in front of the Pólsevoq 66 hot dog stand, the town seemed still asleep. Something I wouldn't have minded myself, as a quieter night I haven't experienced in a long time. The silence was almost deafening.

We spent the next couple of hours exploring the town, looking for hidden sculptures and learning about its fascinating development. The state-owned apartment buildings we came across were a little less charming than the more common wooden houses. Hidden away on the outskirts of the town these apartment buildings, built in the 1960s and 70s, were in poor condition to say the least.

"At that time the hunters were forced to move away from their small settlements and populate in bigger towns, creating something of a ghetto. Then the Danish men came and took their wives away. The hunters lost their identity. That was the time alcohol and drugs became a problem," our Greenlandic guide explained. The cheerful lady went on: "But now the culture has started changing and the country is rapidly developing. The Inuit society started modernising after the Second World War. The teenagers now want Diesel jeans and computer games and are becoming aware of the luxury of the Western societies. The isolated sheep farmers are also well aware of the new technical development and are waiting to get internet connections to their farms, to help with their children's home schooling. For the first couple of years the children are allowed to study at home before moving to the bigger towns and living away from their families. With help from the internet, education will be much more up-to-date

and effective, something much needed in our society. Today Greenlanders can be described as a minority culture coming into a new world."

We passed the prison in town and learned that the prisoners aren't kept behind bars in Qaqortoq. During the day they work, cleaning the streets or in the fishing industry for example. "It's an open prison," our guide said and laughed hard. A house marked Arctic Café was our next eye catcher. The red building with a yellow car sticking out of one of its walls we later learned is the local pub, the only pub to be exact, and it gets quite vibrant at nights.

Greenlanders earn most of their living by fishing and hunting. Seals are an integral part of that industry and in Qaqortoq the hunters can sell their skins at the Great Greenland Tannery and Sealskin Factory. Providing 60 workers with jobs every day plus all the hunters that count on them buying the skin, the factory is one of Greenland's biggest export companies, selling 80 percent of its products to China. The industry might be at risk from protests anti-seal hunt groups.

"Every campaign kills some of our culture. Those who are against seal killing endanger our culture and affect our economy dramatically," our guide explained before walking us through the tannery. The stench of wet skin was overwhelming and after seeing the skin in chock-full tubs it was incredible to imagine that after the whole production process that same skin would become a coat, gloves or even hats, which people around the globe pay big sums to wear. The prices were a little too high for me, and I exited the tannery wearing the same thin jacket I had when I entered.

Old ruins and overly friendly elderly folk

It was cloudy and raining like hell when we went back to the boat and sailed to the ruins of the medieval Hvalsey Church. The church is surrounded by steep mountains on one side and a rocky coast on the other. Built early in the last millennium, the church is one of the best-kept Viking ruins in Greenland. It is famous for housing a Viking wedding in 1408, which is the last written record of the

Vikings' presence in the area. Today, only the outer walls remain and with no roof and the rain increasing we were soaking wet when we returned to our boat. We were happy to get back to Qaqortoq and have dinner at Edda's restaurant Napparsvik, where we were served delicious traditional Greenlandic courses, followed by some Greenlandic coffee, which contained various liquors with only a dash of the brown fluid. After dinner, no one was ready to call it a night, especially those who had finished the coffee. The local pub, Arctic Café, was therefore an ideal choice.

The pub is an attraction in itself. The beginning of each month it is usually crowded as locals come and spend their salaries on beer and alcoholic beverages. This Wednesday night, Edda told us that a húkkaaraball (singles dance) was planned. Inside, the crowd was as mixed as I could have imagined. Young people slurping their beers, tipsy Danes telling stories from their job putting up power lines in the neighbouring areas and extremely drunk old folks all under the same roof.

A student from East Greenland grabbed me when I walked inside and told me he would protect me from all the bad spirits around. After politely thanking him for the friendly gesture I tried to pass a toothless man who was infuriating some women trying to play pool. As the small crowd was wiggling on the dance floor to the song "If I Saw You in Heaven", a local fisherman kept me company. He told me he spoke Icelandic after having studied in Húnavatnssýsla in 1968 and if not for his drunkenness, I might have understood him, but while spluttering saliva in my face 'Fyrirgefðu' (excuse me) was the only thing I understood. Then he proceeded to lick my cheek, and subsequently my sticky face and I said goodnight.

Sheep, icebergs and uranium in the valley

The next morning Kveldúlfur took our tired group to Narsaq, the centre of South Greenland sheep farming. The local fish market, located next to the old people's home, proved to be a hangout for its residents, who relaxed and smoked pipes, while the fishmonger sold the catch of the day. The youngsters' hangout

was the hamburger stand Time Out across the street, where they ate French fries and ketchup, thrilled with the first and only fast food restaurant in the area, which opened two years ago.

After a tour through the local museum where we learned about the ancient Inuit culture and the hunters' society, we drove up to Kvandefjeldet. A short drive from Narsaq, we passed the only privately owned hydroelectric power station in Greenland. I asked Edda if there was any interest among the locals to build aluminium smelters in Greenland, seeing that the natural resources would probably be a potential catch for Alcoa and similar companies.

"People have discussed it but the debate mostly revolves around who gets the profits, Denmark or Greenland?" she tells me. But isn't the nation eager to gain independence then?

"Some are, but the realistic among us want to wait. First we have to build up our educational system. The struggle for independence has to proceed in small steps. Iceland, for example, didn't start developing until there were roads to connect the municipalities. There's a lot to be done before Greenland can rule on its own," she added. So while the possibility of placing aluminium smelters in Greenland's nature is still being discussed its waterfalls and valleys remain unaltered.

Roads are an uncommon luxury in Greenland. We were travelling on a rare gravel road that took us from the village into a mine in the Kvandefjeldet. In the mountains of Greenland, 250 rare minerals can be found and right here at Kvandefjeldet, uranium was discovered in the 1950s. Today the old uranium mine is closed as there is no political interest in operating the mine. Ideas to set up a mining museum there have, however, been discussed.

After admiring the mind-blowing view this valley offers, and seeing uranium shimmer on some rocks piled up we hurried back to Narsaq and made our way off to Igaliko, best known for the ruins at Garðar. Roughly



60 people live in Igaliko, mostly sheep farmers making use of the fertile ground in the valley. It will hopefully be added to the UNESCO's World Heritage List soon, as the important historical sites located there are in need of better protection. Here the Norwegians settled down in the 12th century and made the place its religious heart, with a bishop's residence and a church. Mysteriously, at the end of the 15th century, their society in the valley vanished without trace and no one knows what became of them.

Yet another historical site in the vicinity is Brattahlíð, locally known as Qassarsuk. This is where Erik the Red, the first Nordic settler in Greenland, set up his camp after being banished from Iceland for murders in 938 AD. The ruins of the church Þórhildarkirkja, named after his wife, can still be found in Brattahlíð.

On our last day in Greenland we took an

excursion out to the Qooroq ice fjord, so named because of the icebergs that constantly break off the glacier into the water. We were freezing during the cruise between the blue icebergs and to warm us up, we were served some Baileys with ice cubes from the glacier itself. While we sipped our drinks, the icebergs just floated by one after another, making the whole group dazed by their irregular formations. Standing out on the deck and recollecting everything we had witnessed for the past few days while the dominance of nature made me feel smaller than ever, the ship started to clear away from the glacier again. Suddenly, it was all over and the harbour in Narsarsuaq came closer every second. Our days in Greenland's hauntingly beautiful nature had passed and time to face the reality awaiting. Back to the busy capital I call my home, back to the traffic noise in my bedroom and back to my computer and desk at the office.



I said my goodbyes to the gigantic white chunks, glad that I had finally gotten the chance to visit Greenland, a place that has been on my to-do list for far too long. All the ideas I had about Greenland be-hand were now totally reversed. Where I was expecting something more primitive, extensive drinking and rumpus behaviour I had seen growing societies and met hardworking individuals and had to admit that almost everything I thought before were terrible misconceptions.

See you next time, I said to the crew and all the friendly folks who had made this whole trip so eventful, for there definitely will be a next time.

– Destination South Greenland: Box 197, 3921 Narsaq, Greenland. Tel. +299 662 103 Web: www.southgreenland.gl

– Special thanks to Blue Ice Explorer: Box 58, 3923 Narsarsuaq, Greenland. Tel. +299 665 499. Web: www.blueice.gl

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BY ANDRI SNÆR MAGNASON

AHANDS-FREE MODERN MAN

Indridi Haraldsson was a hands-free modern man. Hands-free people had as little as possible to do with cords and cables – not that they were called cords or cables any more. Cords were known as chains. The old gadgets were not called gadgets, they were known as heaps, weights or burdens. People looked at the heaps and burdens and thanked their lucky stars. In the old days, said some, we were wire-slaves chained to the office chair, far from birdsong and sunshine. But it wasn't like that any more. When men in suits talked to themselves out in the street and reeled off figures, no one took them for lunatics, they were probably talking business with some unseen client. The man who sat in rapt concentration on a riverbank, apparently doing Müller's exercises, might be an engineer designing a bridge. When a sunbathing woman piped up out of the blue that she wanted to buy a two-tonne saithe quota, bystanders needn't automatically assume this was addressed to them, and when a teenager made strange humming noises on the bus, nodding his head to and fro, far from suffering from severe autism he was probably listening to an invisible radio. The man who breathed rapidly or got an erection at an inappropriate time and place probably had his visual nerve permanently connected to some hard-core material, unless he was listening to the sex line. There was no limit to the filth that flooded through the permanently connected heads of some, but of course it was impossible to ban people from filling their own heads with filth, violence and obscenity. You might just as well ban thinking. If someone stood beside you and asked: "What's the time?" and you answered straight away: "It's half past nine", the man who asked could answer, even though there was no one else in sight: "Thanks, but I wasn't actually talking to you." So if a stranger seemed on the point of striking up a conversation, it generally paid not to answer. You might be interrupting.

Indridi Haraldsson was a hands-free modern man, so no ordinary person could see whether he was going mad or not. When he spoke to himself out in the street there might be someone on the other end of the line. When he laughed and laughed it might be for the same reason, unless he was listening to a funny radio station or, of course, he could have some comedy film or joke playing on the lens. In fact it was impossible to tell what was going on in his head but there was no reason why it should be anything abnormal. If he ran down the street shouting: "The end of the world is nigh! The end of the world is nigh!" most people assumed he was taking part in a game on a radio station for a prize of free hamburgers. When he rode naked up and down the shopping centre escalator seven times in a row people assumed something similar; there was probably a prize being offered for anyone who would ride an escalator naked seven times in a row. It was difficult to tell what prize he was aiming for because he was naked and people could only guess at what target group he belonged to from his hairstyle, age and physical build. Indridi was thin and pale skinned with sparse black body hair, while the hair on his head was fair, rough and unkempt, so he was doubtless not in the target audience of the funky radio station that advertised body building, sports cars, highlights and solariums. He neither had a tattoo nor a pierced lip, brow, forehead or foreskin, so he wasn't in the target audience of the "no-shit" station that played covers of rock and punk and advertised raw beer, unfiltered moonshine and filterless cigarettes. He was naked and unkempt and definitely didn't belong to any of the more sober target groups. Perhaps he was a performance artist. Artists were always busy performing. Perhaps the escalator scene was worth three points on the College of Art's performance art course. Or he could, of course, be in an isolated rare target group. There were plenty of them around but generally an attempt was made to direct people into a more popular area where they could be reached more economically.

If Indridi suddenly barked at someone: "IIIIICE-COLD COKE! IIICCCCE-COLD COKE!!!" for ten seconds without his eyes or body seeming to follow his speech there was nothing abnormal about that. The reason for this behaviour was simple: the advertisements he had transmitted to him were directly connected to his speech centres. "IIIIICCCCE-COLD COKE!!!" So he must be an advertising howler or howler as they were popularly called. He was probably broke enough to fall outside most target groups so it wasn't worth sending him advertisements. But it was possible to send advertisements through him, to others, by connecting them to his speech centres and using his mouth as a sort of loudspeaker. Those who walked past howlers could expect an announcement:

"IIIIICE-COLD COKE!"

This was more effective than conventional reminders on advertising hoardings or the radio. So Indridi squawked when he met a man on his way to the car park:

"FASTEN YOUR SEATBELT! SLOW DOWN!"

The man had been arrested for speeding without a seatbelt. As a punishment he was made to listen to and pay for 2,000 edifying reminders from

advertising howlers. That was probably the best thing about the new technology. It could be used to improve society.

"LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR!"

Squawked a shady-looking man at half-hourly intervals. A born-again murderer, Indridi correctly assumed, and gave him a wide berth. Prisoners could be released early if they squawked for charities or religious firms.

Howlers were not all broke. Many were simply scrounging a discount or perks, and some only became howlers for the first three months of the year while they paid for the latest upgrade of the hands-free operating system. Those who didn't get their system upgraded could have problems with business or communication. Hands-free home appliances and automatic door-openers only recognised the latest system and the same applied to the latest car models. They wouldn't automatically slow down if someone with the old system crossed the road, so it was just as well to take to one's heels.

If Indridi came across a group of teenagers he could yell:

"GROOVY SHOES! YOU WERE UNBELIEVABLY COOL TO BUY SUCH GROOVY SHOES!"

Getting someone to buy first and then arranging for them to be praised afterwards was a completely new strategy. It was believed to strengthen this behaviour pattern and bring things into fashion earlier.

The announcements were sometimes absurd, sometimes just one word, slogan or phrase, unconnected to anything else. In that case it was probably part of a longer campaign, a so-called teaser campaign which encouraged people to think long and hard. On the way down the high street you might meet an old woman who said out of the blue:

"Smoothness!"

Further down you might meet a teenager who said:

"Smartness!"

And even if you veered round sharply and headed up the next street, you would hear whispered from a basement window:

"Reliability!"

Finally somebody would come racing down a side street on a bike shouting:

"FOOOORD! FORD!"

These campaigns always hit the target, there was no way of escaping them. Everything was measured to within 0.5 cm and the announcement was perfectly tailored to the recipient's target group, which was categorised down to their most minor eccentricity. The howler system was efficient, simple and convenient, and ordinary members of the public could order a howler for a small fee if they needed a reminder.

"You have a meeting with the minister at three o'clock and don't forget your wedding anniversary!"

Those who had recently moved to the city liked to order a howler or two to greet them on the street or strike up a conversation.

"Hello Gudmundur, what lovely warm weather we're having!"

This made the big city less cold and unfriendly. Uprooted farmers who liked to wake up to cockcrow could get their neighbours to crow at six o'clock in the morning if they were lucky enough to live near a howler.

"Cock-a-doodle-do! Time to wake up!"

Many entrepreneurs felt it essential to receive a confidence boost first thing in the morning:

"You're the best!" said the Chinese cleaning woman.

"No one can stop you, Magnus!" said the shifty caretaker.

"You're looking good today!" said the taxi driver. "Today's a day to win!"

Passers-by were prepared for anything when there were free men around, so no one paid any attention when Indridi sat in a café and wept. He sat in a corner, crying his eyes out, but it crossed very few people's minds to ask him what the matter was. It was probably Greek tragedy week with his target group. It was simplest to assume this sort of thing. Or he could be an advertising trap.

"Why are you crying?"

"I want a Honda so much, they're such great cars and there's a brilliant offer on this week."

Advertising traps or adTRAPS went further than howlers; they hired out not only their speech centres but also their primitive biological and emotional responses. The method was still technologically imperfect so sometimes traps couldn't stop laughing or crying for days on end. Of course, no one was compelled to become a trap, to laugh, cry or wet themselves in public and say to a woman with a howling baby:

"Now would have been a good time to have 100% absorbent Pampers!"

Many people let themselves be persuaded to become traps as the hiring out of one's emotions paid as much as ten conventional speech-centre connections and was generally more effective, especially if people were made to do something funny like wet themselves or cry like a baby.



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Pimped Up Party Mobiles

The Grapevine joins a Live2Cruise gathering

BY STEINUNN JAKOBSDÓTTIR PHOTO BY SKARI

If you are the kind who has a PlayStation 2, flat screen TV and a million ISK sound system installed in the back of your newly polished sports ride, with a 240-horsepower engine and neon lights on the dashboard, and you love nothing more than to hang out in car parks admiring Mustangs, Corvettes, Chrysler Prowlers and Subaru Imprezas while showing off your brand new alloy wheels, the Live2Cruise group probably needs no introduction. If on the other hand you couldn't care less if your grandma was driving a faster car, as long as your vehicle fired up each morning, you will likely not have heard of the group before.

Established in 2001, the founders, a girl named Villy and her man Palli, claim they did it "just for the fun of it." The organization has since grown from initially being two vehicles into a huge subculture with an active website and roughly 3,000 members, open to everyone interested in talking about cars and spending their free time cruising around the city. Live2Cruise is a mixture of all sorts of car enthusiasts with one thing in common. Having an unconditional love relationship with their rides.

Even though the large parking place was somewhat crowded, one member told me this is just an average turnout. "None of my friends can really be bothered to listen to me rambling on about cars. So I attend these gatherings," he tells me and informs me that he owns three cars at this moment. Well, three and a half if the pieces found in Borgarfjörður are counted. The Live2Cruise elite can often be spotted at the Esso gas station downtown, in front of drive-throughs and at squares around the country, surrounded by impressed chicks and bragging guys, that is if they aren't too busy rebuilding their vehicles inside garages, spending three to four million ISK on spoilers, stereos, turbo engines and other gadgets for modifications.

"Maggi, don't you go bursting of pride," someone yelled, as Maggi was about to show us just what kind of stuff he kept in the trunk of his black and orange 2004 Mazda 3. No grocery bags, rather a huge amplifier and beat-box filled all the space. "This car holds the Icelandic record in noise. It can make it up to a 147 decibel level," Maggi tells me. That is only three decibels lower than a jet engine taking off.

"Wanna hear it?"

Such an incredible offer is hard to resist, so I got in the back of the small car. The dashboard lights up when Maggi turns on the stereo and cranks it up. The noise was well above the recommended health level. I even felt a whiff at the back of my neck and my whole body started shaking like the stereo was right inside my chest. To make these few minutes bearable I covered my ears with both hands.

"Isn't this a little loud!?" I tried to yell but my lips moved without sound.

"Wow, you think it's that loud? I don't even notice this noise anymore," Maggi says when the badly missed silence returns.

"The stereos in this car are worth 1.5 million ISK. I have a TV, PlayStation and DVD, and a wireless remote control. I have also modified the car a lot. I lowered the suspension, so much that it almost touches the ground. I can't even drive down Laugavegur because the street is too bumpy and I definitely can't use it during the winter. It's all about the looks you see. This car today is for the most parts a show car, it came in second in the most transformed car category in the last competition," he adds, clearly very proud. Yes, they compete in car appearance's just as in any other beauty pageants. The Car Day in Akureyri (June 17) is the most anticipated event.

"The Live2Cruise group somewhat divides into two groups. The 'show-but-no-go' owners who are all about the looks, and then the ones who don't care about how their rides look, just how powerful they are," Hjalti, another member tells me. Maggi and his pimped-out ride would be ranking high in the first group. My next driver would be atop the second one.

"I have been stopped 40 times for speeding and lost my driver's license four times," Teitur, a Nissan Skyline R32GT-R owner, informed me, a rather scared passenger, as I fastened the safety belt. He had agreed to take me on the "rúntur". The fact that I have never been a passenger in such a monster and know little, if anything, about these kinds of vehicles, was probably just as well. Otherwise I would most likely not have gotten in the backseat.

"It's 450 horsepower. It goes from 0-100 km/h in four seconds flat. It is one of the most

powerful streetcars in the country today," he adds and starts speeding up Sæbraut while I grab the roll cage inside. Making a risky turn we end up speeding down Hverfisgata and of course, Teitur shows me just how powerful his car is.

"Isn't it expensive driving around?" I ask.

"I guess I would say so, seeing that I spend about 80-100,000 ISK on gas every month. What is my occupation? Well, currently, I'm unemployed."

But it's not all fun and games. The increasing number of fatal car accidents has lately caused a stir in society. A group like this one, which many would automatically link to speeding and illegal racing, will automatically be linked to tragic traffic accidents.

"Of course there are always black sheep who can't control themselves. You aren't buying a car that powerful if you aren't going to use it. But we are totally against all street racing. If someone is advertising an illegal race on our website, he or she will immediately be kicked out of the group," Villy tells me and offers me a seat inside her Subaru Impreza GT, a silver monochrome 1999 model with the license plate Scooby, 18" gold-plated alloy wheels and a gigantic spoiler. "We bought the car brand new, but hadn't driven it more than about three hours when we parked it in the garage and started rebuilding. There is little left of the original."

I state, "It's a powerful car. As many of those here out on the car park. I just can't believe you aren't racing?"

"We have pushed the drivers to the drag racing strip and told them to vent there. What we have been fighting for is to get a better speedway so people can race and use their cars to the fullest. That would reduce the illegal racing on the streets. Another thing lacking is proper driving instructions. It is quite obvious that kids today aren't getting the proper training to handle the cars they are driving. Now some 17 year olds are cruising around in a 220-horsepower car and don't have a clue what to do when driving on ice or gravel for example. We must demand better instruction because when the cars are so powerful you won't stop drivers from speeding."

Hjalti, now driving me around in a Volkswagen Touareg SUV agreed on the lack of facilities, as did others I met at the car park. When cruising around town Hjalti tells me

he isn't much for speeding. "I'm more of a gadget-nerd and my ultimate goal isn't breaking records on the speedway. It's to break the Icelandic record in noise, modification and those sorts of things."

"So, is it a macho thing to have a cool car?" I wonder.

"Well, I at least wouldn't be caught in just any car. I'm not secure enough with my manhood to drive around in a Yaris for example. But if forced, I would put a bag on my head and sunglasses. But in Live2Cruise you can arrive in an old Skoda or a brand new Porsche. It really doesn't matter. Everyone is welcome. For some the car is an issue, others are just looking for good company."

Curious, I ask, "Do you know how much you have spent?"

"Like I say, I'm one of the electronic fanatics and have probably spent around 1.5-2 million ISK on all sorts of gadgets. Recently I owned three cars but sold all but one, a Subaru Legacy. Although it maybe cheaper to buy the cars brand new, it is more fun to modify them by yourself. Putting in the stereo, connecting the TV and the PlayStation. I still haven't found the dream car yet though."

"But do you really use all the accessories?" I ask further.

"Yes definitely, although 50-60 percent of it is just for show and to be able to tell your friends that you have a PlayStation. It's nice to be able to play a game while someone else is driving. But I know some guys who are totally exaggerating the whole thing and have TVs in their trunks. I mean, why would you need a TV in your trunk?"

I ponder a moment and proffer, "Stand out in the cold with your buddies watching a movie rather than lying on a cosy sofa, just 'cause you think it's cool?"

"Exactly. There are always people who cross that line."

With that said we arrive at the car park again. One after another the cars are starting their engines and driving off with the proper noise and hand-brake turns. Some will call it a night, others will keep on cruising, following the other pimped-out rides to the next car park.

For me, it was just about enough of engines, numbers, stereos and phrases I couldn't understand... for one night.

Inside Reykjavík

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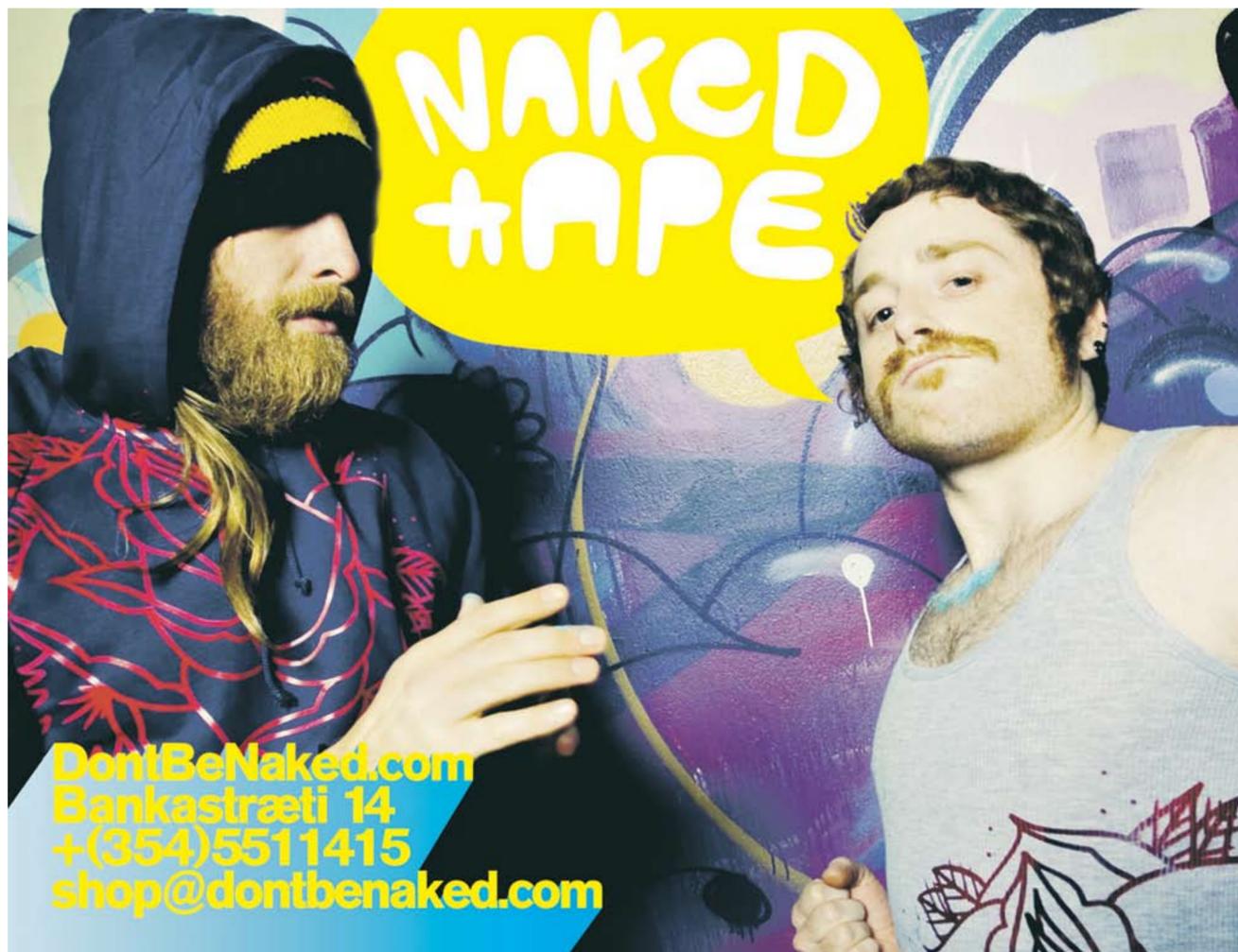
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Minnesota Vikings to Fight Way Out Of Jungle

The Grapevine's Duluth Correspondent Ignites Direct Action Against Football Team

BY VIRGINIA ZECH

Iceland enthusiast and frequent visitor (six times so far), Andy Saur is seeking to take a bit of the Viking spirit home to Minnesota. Saur is championing an effort to change the Minnesota Vikings [American] football team's fight song from Guns N' Roses's Welcome to the Jungle to the more Viking-themed Immigrant Song by Led Zeppelin. Saur and his wife, Angel, were most recently in Iceland this summer where they partook in their ritual trip to the Blue Lagoon and ambushed Sigur Rós.

Saur's efforts centre around a website he created to spread the word about his cause. In addition to creating a painting depicting a Viking ship alongside the lyrics to the proposed new Minnesota Vikings fight song, Saur informed the Grapevine that he intended to employ some "guerrilla marketing" tactics at games to involve other fans in his movement. In a recent interview, I asked Saur how his most recent home game advertising efforts had gone. "It didn't go so well because we didn't make it to the game today. My cousin's house was hit by a tornado. So we thought, well we shouldn't go to the game, we should really help them out... Kind of a downer that we missed the game. It was a good game though. They won in overtime!" Saur said. When asked if he aims to proceed with his previous plans, weather permitting, at future games, he stated, "Angel's brother got to use the tickets [to this game] and he did some of the guerrilla marketing for me. He put up some posters and so on. Hopefully they'll spread the word... I made like 1,000 flyers and some posters. I hope I'll get to use those at future games."

Andy Saur has been thinking about taking steps to initiate the switch in Minnesota Vikings musical accompaniment for some time. "I remember hearing this song way back in college, the Immigrant Song. You know, 'the land

of ice and snow,' but I was like, whatever. Then I started reading the lyrics and really getting into it and I was like these [lyrics] are really good! That would be really cool [to have it as the Minnesota Vikings song]. I've probably been toying with it for like a year or so." Saur has been seriously pursuing the change since his return from Iceland this summer. "On our latest trip [to Iceland], I thought I really need to do this. As soon as I got back I thought, I need to focus on this and get it going." He reports he is unaware of anyone else trying to change the Vikings' fight song before and "hopes that this is groundbreaking in some way."

After sending information on his project to the Vikings for review, and receiving a fairly disinterested response (more on this can be found on the Viking's Kickoff website), Saur was not disheartened. Other than the website, and his plans to pass out promotional materials at games, Saur said his methods will include, "word of mouth. And I've also contacted some Minnesota Vikings fan sites. The feedback has been positive from the other fans. It's been good."

We trust that Saur will keep us at the Grapevine abreast of his efforts, along with his Icelandic travel itinerary, as he proceeds. In closing our interview he added that he and Angel were "so bummed that Magni didn't win [Rockstar: Supernova]. But, of course, he's much better off not playing with Tommy Lee and [getting to work on other projects]."

More information, including a for-charity download of the Viking ship painting Saur did, as well as Angel's directorial debut in a film depicting the painting's creation, is available on the Vikings' kickoff website, www.vikingskickoff.com.



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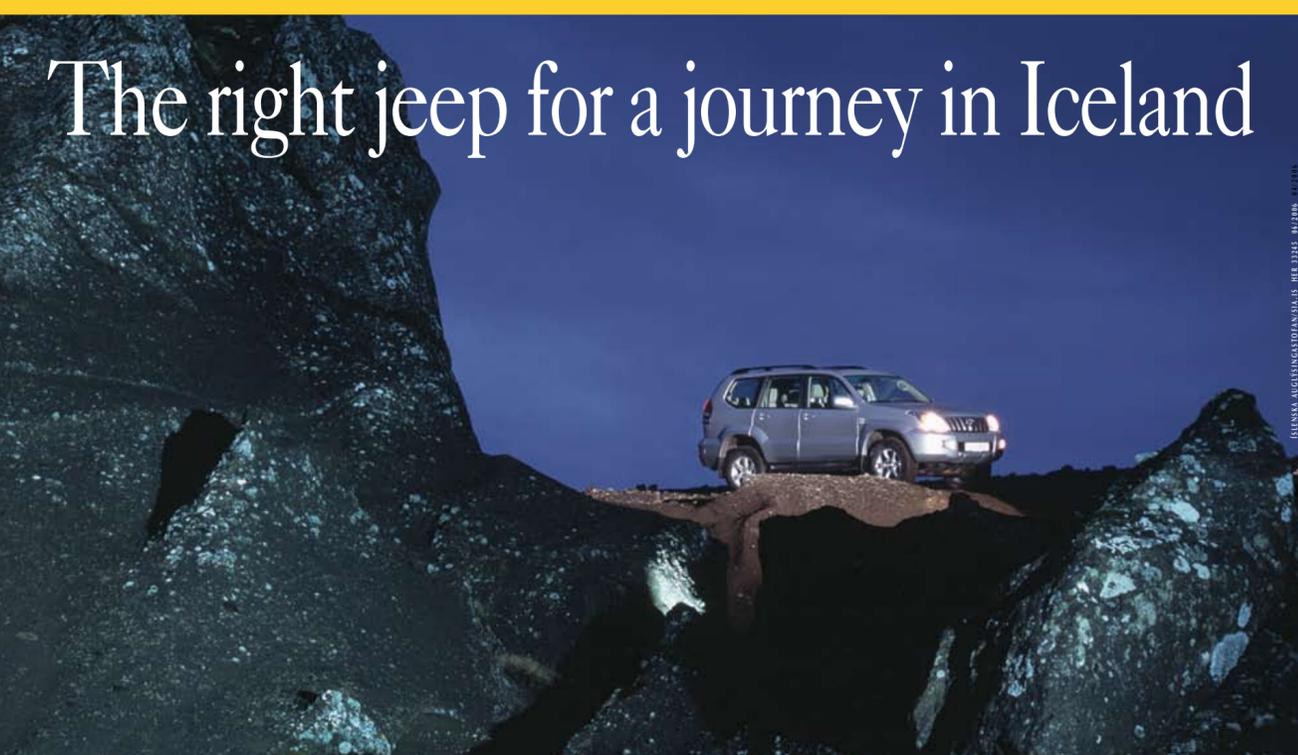
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Stuffed with stuff

I was starving and beat after sailing for three days between small villages and historical sites in South Greenland's vast wilderness. Eating seal meat and whale fat sounded like a reasonable idea.

Steinunn Jakobsdóttir goes to Greenland
Page 38.

Political discussion has become something without substance, an afterthought. The new objects of worship in our society have become the nouveau riche.

Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson in an Interview with Grapevine
Page 18.

So far the few minke whales that we have hunted in recent years have been sold in Iceland to the Icelandic market, but if this is going to make any sense we have to be able to export the products.

Liberal Party MP, Magnús Þór Hafsteins-son on commercial whaling
Page 10.

They are the first children of mankind, really, who don't have access to a sky like this. So, I was wondering if that could affect their imagination and their ideas of the world and thought it would be cool to let them see the sky for half an hour.

Andri Snær Magnason is turning off the lights
Page 35.

Yes, the Iceland Airwaves festival looms over yet again, what with its flood of self-promoting new wave bands, foreign A&R boys looking for buns to stick their 'pysa' in, savage, drunken journalists and, but of course, some really great music to get acquainted with in a live environment.

Haukur Magnússon looks towards the upcoming Iceland Airwaves.
Page 16.

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