

The U.S. vs. Laxness

Icelandic Surfers Take to the Ocean • Reykjavík Rockers Fight for Their Right to Party
Revisiting the Tragedy of República de Cromañón • Daytrips Around Reykjavík



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The Reykjavík Grapevine crew

The Reykjavík Grapevine
Vesturgata 5, 101 Reykjavík
www.grapevine.is
grapevine@grapevine.is
Published by: Fróken ehf.

Editorial Office
+354 540-3600 / editor@grapevine.is
for inquiries regarding editorial content.

Marketing Office
+354 540-3605 / ads@grapevine.is
for inquiries regarding advertising, marketing, distribution and subscriptions.

Publisher's Office
+354 540-3601 / froken@grapevine.is
for inquiries regarding this publication.

The Reykjavík Grapevine Staff
Publisher: Hilmar Steinn Grétarsson / publisher@grapevine.is
Editor: Sveinn Birkir Björnsson / birkir@grapevine.is
Assistant Editor: Steinunn Jakobsdóttir / steinunn@grapevine.is
Marketing Director: Jón Trausti Sigurðarson / ads@grapevine.is
Support Manager: Oddur Óskar Kjartansson / oddur@grapevine.is
Art Director: Gunnar Þorvaldsson / gunni@grapevine.is
Photographer: Óskar Hallgrímsson / skari@grapevine.is
Staff Journalists: Haukur Magnússon / haukur@grapevine.is
Sales staff: Aðalsteinn Jörundsson / adalsteinn@grapevine.is
Jón Trausti Sigurðarson / jontrausti@grapevine.is
Distribution: Sæmundur Þ. Helgason / saemi@grapevine.is
Proofreader: Jane Victoria Appleton

Cover illustration by: Sara Riel
On cover: Halldór Kiljan Laxness and the American Eagle

Printed by: Prentsmiðja Morgunblaðsins printing press
of copies: 30.101.

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

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HOT SPRING

From the Editor's Chair

Iceland has been gripped with handball fever for the past month. The Icelandic national team recently participated in the International Handball Federation World Championship, the handball equivalent of the FIFA World Cup. Handball is the single biggest unifier in Iceland. It brings together people of different ages, genders, religions and, lately, races.

Unfortunately, the results were not as fruitful as many had hoped. Team Iceland ended up in eighth place, a respectable result for sure, but a disappointment nonetheless, considering the team lost a game against Denmark in the eight-team finals by the narrowest of margins, in overtime. Had the results of that game been different, Iceland would have been in one of the top four spots. But, such is life in sports (see www.grapevine.is for more detailed cover-

age of the tournament and an explanation of the part Tom Cruise played in the whole fiasco).

In the wake of the tournament, many Icelanders have felt a little... sad. In Iceland, it is perfectly reasonable to ponder if there is life after handball? It ranks right up there with the other big philosophical questions, such as: Is there a god? Does life have a meaning? Should I stay or should I go?

Still, it seems that not everyone is of the opinion that handball is a matter of life and death. There are people who believe that the outcome of handball games, or any other sporting result for that matter, should be met with stoic indifference and who fail to understand how this can affect people. That is a gross misunderstanding. I can relate to people who say they don't particularly enjoy sports. I myself do not particularly enjoy

fishing and have a hard time imagining myself getting worked up over standing waist deep in a salmon stream. That doesn't mean I cannot relate to people who do enjoy fishing. And I cannot relate to people who feel that the results of a sporting competition carry no weight for people off the field.

Being a sports fan, like much else in life, is about picking sides. You pick a side based on individual preference; there is simply something on one side that appeals to you. You enjoy the game and you hope the results will be favourable to the team you support. When they aren't, you feel disappointed. This is the exact same rationale that takes place in politics, music, public debate, what have you... One side appeals to you more than the other.

Denying this is preaching absenteeism and detachment from the world of feelings.

Obviously, sports do not carry the same weight as important political issues in the grand scheme of things, but let us not forget that wars have been fought over such preferential matters as religion (actually, wars have been fought over sporting results as well). Does religion carry more weight than sports? And if you think so, why?

Allowing yourself to be affected by sporting results is another way to affirm and embrace life. It simply means that you care, that you are willing to take sides in life and care about something other than yourself. To me, that is an admirable quality.

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Sour Grapes

Say your piece, voice your opinion, send your letters to letters@grapevine.is.

Gabriele Gudbjartson writes "If you do say you are a believer, how well do your actions separate you from an unbeliever?" The arrogance is breathtaking. Show me one shred of evidence that believers are kinder, more generous or more willing to make sacrifices to help others than atheists.

Religious belief involves superstition and irrationality and sometimes, pure nastiness. These are a few of the actions of believers:

In Nicaragua last year, the Catholic Church led the successful campaign to ban all abortions, even where it might save the mother's life.

In the US, Christians have been trying to have Creationism, under its new name of Intelligent Design and for which there is no evidence, taught as an equal alternative to evolution, for which there is a mountain of evidence.

Plenty of churches view homosexuality as a sin, including the Catholic Church, Anglican churches in Africa and plenty of US evangelicals. Millions are condemned and in many countries their lives are in danger because of something that occurs naturally and not just in humans.

Many Christians oppose the use of condoms, which are an effective weapon in the battle against AIDS. For religious reasons, the US has cut support to AIDS projects that include the use of condoms. And by the way, Christians appropriated the 25th December, not to mention the Christmas trees, yule logs, holly, ivy and mistletoe. They are all as pagan as wicker men.

Andrew Clarke

Is the lesson, then, that not only various Christians, but also Atheists, Pagans, Moslems, Buddhists, Libertarians, Communists and Freemasons – PEOPLE, for short – foster tendencies to be self-righteous and sanctimonious? And that it is suspect to generalize about large groups of people? I would think so!

HM

Sir I picked up a copy of your wonderfully entertaining and enlightening Grapevine during my recent four-day stay in Iceland. Of course, four days were more than enough for me to become thoroughly acquainted with the country's special charms and also to understand immediately the solution to all its problems (just kidding).

I did notice that the issue I read (number 18) carried a number of articles about the immigration debate. This debate is not unique to Iceland – many countries are dealing with similar issues. But for Iceland immigration has a special dimension: with its small population, it would take only a small number of unsuccessful immigrants to disrupt society's delicately balanced social contract.

In my opinion – and I realize that no one has asked for my opinion – Icelanders should actively seek out immigrants who identify completely with Icelandic values (self-reliance, full civil, political and economic rights for everyone – women included) and who are anxious to work hard to advance themselves and their children and to integrate into the surrounding society. Don't try to use immigration to solve the world's problems. Iceland is small and the world's problems are big. Don't bring in large communities that will reproduce generation after generation of their misogynistic, backward societies in ghettos, educating their children to live forever off Iceland's generous welfare system. If you bring in the right people – and by "right people" I emphatically do NOT mean people of a certain skin color or religion – then immigration will make Iceland a better place for everyone, immigrants and old-timers alike. But if you bring in the wrong people, you will saddle yourselves and your children with problems that will never, ever go away.

Best of luck to your lovely country in making the right decision on this and all other issues you face. I personally cannot wait to get back for a much longer visit.

Alex Ragen
Jerusalem, ISRAEL

Dear Alex, I applaud in your general direction, too. Bringing in large communities of misogynistic, backward, ghetto-folk that reproduce incessantly and educate their children to live off Iceland's generous welfare system would be a truly bad idea. Call off the boats, close the gates and draw the bridge: The backward ghetto-societies are upon us yet again!

While I refuse to pander to my tremendous urge to make jokes on your expense about the usefulness of building giant, steel walls around those backward people-filled ghettos, I will allow myself to say that I am truly appalled by your deterministic view on human beings in general.

But it's great that you like our country, and feel free to come back as often as you want. You are clearly neither backward nor misogynistic. And you don't seem interested in abusing our generous welfare system.

HM

Greetings. I'm happy that I have found your publication, as I like to keep up with what is going on in Iceland and unfortunately Morgunblaðid publishes only in Icelandic. I am curious, however, why you refer to persons in your articles by their patronyms instead of their given names after the initial reference. Is it because most Westerners are accustomed to that style of address? Thank you for posting your paper. It's good reading.

Sincerely, Tom Booker

Your guess is absolutely spot-on! We DO refer to persons in our articles by their surnames or patronyms instead of their given names after the initial reference because most Westerners are accustomed to that style of address. If it's bothering you at all, we might consider changing our ways, but this arrangement has worked fine thus far.

Thank you for your kind words about our paper and enjoy life, wherever you find yourself.

HM

Winner of the December/January Readers' Survey Lottery is

Kate Smith

She receives a day trip to Greenland with Air Iceland and a day trip of her own choice from Reykjavik Excursions.

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News in Brief

Text by Haukur Magnússon, Steinunn Jakobsdóttir and Sveinn Birkir Björnsson.

Ousted Manager Splits From 'Liberal Party', Party Then Splits

Last weekend's 'Liberal Party' (Frjálslyndi Flokkurinn) conference saw a lot of action, as the party's Vice-President, Magnús Þór Hafsteinnsson, narrowly beat his challenger, ousted Party Manager Margrét Sverrisdóttir, in an election for the position with 460 votes against Sverrisdóttir's 351. Her defeat prompted Sverrisdóttir to formally resign from the party, as did several of her followers (around two dozen have resigned thus far, and more are expected to follow). The conference and its voting process has been highly criticised by Sverrisdóttir's supporters, with some claiming that Hafsteinnsson's supporters were enlisting new party members and paying their fees a full hour after voting commenced.

Sverrisdóttir opted to challenge Hafsteinnsson in the wake of a huge in-party debate that followed Supreme Court lawyer Jón Magnússon and his also-ran political party Nýtt Afl ('A New Force') joining Frjálslyndi Flokkurinn last November. The group's entry was marked by a significant change in the party's stance on immigration issues, with Magnússon famously running an article entitled 'Iceland for Icelanders?' in major newspaper *Blaðið*, spurring many to declare him "Racist!" as the party gained a much wider following than it was used to (going from 2% to 10% in some polls).

It soon became clear that the party was split in its stance towards the new members, with some welcoming the increase in following as others tried to quell allegations that they were using racist dialogue to appeal to uninformed sectors of society. What followed can only be classified as a political shitstorm, with Sverrisdóttir, the main critic of Nýtt Afl's entry, being ousted from her position as Party President, Guðjón Arnar Kristjánsson after he pledged his support to Hafsteinnsson, a highly criticised move by some.

In a declaration announcing her imminent resignation, Sverrisdóttir wrote that "... Frjálslyndi Flokkurinn MPs and Nýtt Afl's representatives have clearly been trying to push me out of the party's forefront. In light of the methods employed at last weekend's party conference, it is clear to me that I can no longer work within its ranks. I am sure that my supporters can see as clearly as me that the party abandoned me, rather than me abandoning the party."

She closed by stating that she was by no means leaving politics, and was currently looking at her options. Her supporters within the party then sent out a statement explaining their resignation from Frjálslyndi Flokkurinn, claiming that the parties' focal points and work methods had changed since Nýtt Afl's members joined. She has since hinted that a new right-wing party, headed by her,

is in the making and will run in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

As stated above, dozens of members have resigned from the party since the conference, but chairman Kristjánsson maintains that there is no split within their ranks. In an interview with 'Icelandic National Radio' (RÚV) Kristjánsson said that he was sorry to see Sverrisdóttir and her supporters leave the party, and that he regrets her decision to do so, stating that her claims that she was being forced out of the party were untrue, she merely lost in a fair fight. He also said that the party would respond to her allegations of an unfair election after meeting with the party's Central Committee, although that response remains to be seen.

Sigurjón Þórðarson, one of the party's three MPs, wrote on his blog that there was no rift between the party and Sverrisdóttir over issues, stating that her leaving has more to do with her dislike for some of the party's recent Nýtt Afl additions.

Ísafjörður Teen Attacked With Car Door

On a late-January Friday night at 4:45 AM, a teenager walking alongside the Ísafjörður expressway, Skutulsfjarðarbraut, suffered minor injuries as a hooligan-filled car passing by knocked him over. According to Ísafjörður police, the hooligans opened one of the car doors as they passed the unfortunate young man, resulting in him being knocked to the ground. After being tended to at the Ísafjörður hospital, the badly bruised boy was taken to his home for recovery.

Ísafjörður police apprehended the 22-year-old driver shortly after the assault, and note in their journals that his car door was quite damaged. The driver reportedly refuses to reveal which one of his passengers opened the door in question. It remains to be seen if further interrogations have persuaded him to reveal the assailant's identity.

It should be noted that the act of "getting someone with the door" is an oft-told joke among Icelandic teens on the "Rúntur" (driving around in circles with friends, a popular activity in small and large towns alike), although there are few documented cases of them actually going through with it.

Immigrants: Not Evil After All?

The steadily rising flow of immigrants and migrant workers Iceland has seen in the past decade or so is actually highly beneficial to the Icelandic economy, as well as Icelanders themselves, according to Þóra Helgadóttir, a specialist at the Kaupþing Bank (formerly Búnaðarbanki, KB Bank) Analysis Division. In an interview published in the business section of Morgunblaðið's on-line edition, Helgadóttir is quoted as saying that an imported workforce has been one of the key factors in holding back inflation and over-expansion in the Icelandic economy – one that's forever

on the brink of succumbing to such trends. The analyst goes on to list some of the various benefits an economy can gain from immigrants and migrant workers; that they contribute more to society through taxes than they receive from it, and that they usually staff jobs that locals are either unwilling or unable to, for instance. Helgadóttir closes by stating that the Analysis Division of Kaupþing assesses that the flow of immigrant workers to Iceland will mostly depend on the economy's demand for them.

This is, of course, excellent news for those recently outspoken Icelanders concerned that an influx of bloodthirsty "Sons of Allah" was on its way to destroy civilization as we know it. Rather, Icelanders now get to reap the benefits of an underpaid immigrant workforce and its tax money without any obligations at all!

Reykjavík Icicle Alert!

Mid-January, Reykjavík police issued a warning on their website, alerting the city's pedestrians to stay on the lookout for icicles falling off ledges, roofs and other high places. The announcement went on to say that falling icicles can prove quite dangerous for unguarded heads, and that homeowners and custodians should take action to clear any rogue ice off their ledges. As is plainly stated in the 7th article of the Reykjavík police agreement: "The owner or custodian of a building is obliged to remove from said building snow and icicles that may fall down and cause danger to pedestrians."

A picture accompanying the police warning displayed quite well the dangers that hanging icicles can pose, as well as how some Reykjavík homeowners are ignoring their duties towards society.

Magni Denied

Things looked bleak for Rockstar: Supernova contender Magni and his rising music career at the beginning of January. Magni, who was supposed to be touring the States with Rock Star: Supernova and the Supernova house band, was stuck in Iceland for the first part of the tour because of an incomplete application for a performance visa in the U.S.

Magni was far from being OK with the situation. On his MySpace, he wrote: "Ok just as if my life isn't complicated enough (my fault - I know) - my visa application to go on the rockstar tour got denied today!!!! It's my understanding right now that the reason for my denial is that my dear friends on the other end seem to have failed to file the application properly - and so I have to do it again - this time I'm putting it into the hands of someone I trust... This is bloody irritating and I really piss [sic] because I am so looking forward to having some fun with my friends and see the US - people say it's nice - I hope I'll get to agree on that soon!!!"

His idolaters were pissed off as well and

the responses at magni-ficent.com, his official fan-site, were no less interesting to read. Devastated fans apologized for the "incomprehensible behaviour of the US government" among other things. Others offered to pull some strings and even have a talk with the country's ambassador. And Icelandic devotees of course had their own solutions to the dilemma. One fan wrote: "Sorry about that Magni. But we live in Iceland, call Valgerður our foreign minister [sic], first thing tomorrow morning! I'm not joking! She wants votes!!!" Numerous other supporters expressed the same opinion while threatening to take serious action if the problem wasn't fixed pronto.

Iceland's golden boy luckily managed to procure a visa in the end and can now be found performing cover versions of mid-nineties grunge songs in front of adoring audiences.

Activists Raid London: Tate Modern Unscathed

On New Year's Day, protesters associated with the group Saving Iceland (savingiceland.org) climbed London's St Paul's Cathedral and the Tate Modern Art Museum, with banners to draw attention to the destruction of wilderness at the hands of the aluminium industry in Iceland and in Trinidad.

Strong winds hampered the action at St. Paul's Cathedral, as the big banner could not be straightened out in a readable manner. Security guards quickly removed the protesters from the Tate Modern.

Oil Companies Lose Court Battle With Reykjavik, Public Transit

Iceland's three major oil companies, Ker, Oluverslun Islands and Skeljungur were ordered recently by Reykjavik district court to pay a fine of 72 million krónur to the city of Reykjavik, and 5 million to its public transit system, Strætó Bs. The claims were put forth on the grounds that the three oil companies had cheated considerable amounts of money from the plaintiffs during a specified period of time by illegally consulting on pricing policies.

The city's and Strætó's barristers were quoted as saying that the results were satisfactory, even though the court had not ruled in favour of their original, much higher claim, which amounted to around 140 million krónur.

The "competing" oil companies on the Icelandic fuel market have long been known to co-operate with one another when deciding prices and such. Some of them responded to a highly incriminating report by the Icelandic Competition Authority a few years ago (on which the aforementioned case is partially based) with an excruciatingly embarrassing ad-campaign that had their executives posing with common pump-jockeys and cleaning ladies.

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The Joy of Failing Miserably, or: Why Icelanders Really Are Happy

Text by Haukur Magnússon Photo by Gulli

Award winning journalist Eric Weiner has seen a lot of the world. His post as a foreign correspondent for respected U.S. radio station NPR (National Public Radio) has brought him to over fifty countries, as far as Tokyo and New Delhi, covering a wide range of topics including growing tensions in Iraq and the rise of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. Now on leave from some of his journalistic duties, Weiner is researching a book he has in the works, entitled 'The Geography of Bliss - One Grump's Search for the Happiest Places in the World'. And the self-proclaimed grump's search brought him to Iceland for two weeks this January.

/// What inspired your search for the happiest places on Earth? And what does such a search entail?

One reason is that I've been visiting a lot of places where bad things are happening, which is what you do as a foreign correspondent. I saw some amazing things, but it's a depressing job, because by definition you're pretty much going to places where people are unhappy. Where they're killing one another, dying of disease. And if you go to a happy country, you look for the tensions, where things are falling apart. That's where journalism is; we're negatively oriented.

And this gets depressing. About a year ago, I thought to myself, why am I traveling halfway around the world to interview people that are more miserable than myself, which is basically what I do for a living. So I thought, what if I spent a year only travelling to the happiest countries and got a publisher to pay me for it? That's what I've been doing, travelling to about a dozen countries, trying to figure out if they really are happy. If A, the surveys and 'science of happiness' are

right. B, if so, then why? And C, if there are any lessons for the rest of us, for America, in terms of what they're doing in Iceland, Switzerland or India; are there any life lessons to be found there. It's like flipping journalism over, I'm actually looking for the good stuff in the country.

Where has your trip taken you, and why? And why Iceland?

I've visited, or will visit, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Iceland, Indian Bhutan, Thailand, Qatar, Moldova - the least happy country in the world, by the way, I went there for comparison. All these happy places were getting me down, so I went to Moldova and I can tell you, they're really unhappy there. When I go someplace, I'll pose the question, could I be happy here? I try not to behave like a tourist, but not like a journalist either. So I set up shop here and pretended to live here for a couple of weeks, not doing touristy things. Also, I'll do some reporting in the U.S., look at America, why people move to certain cities, and why they are considered the most liveable.

And that's all based on...?

I partly base my criteria on happiness research. I am in Iceland mainly because the surveys consistently show that Iceland ranks as one of the top three happy countries in the world. Denmark scores a little higher, but I thought Iceland was more interesting, and it's more counter-intuitive. Iceland is a more interesting country than Denmark, and then you have the artistic scene, which you really don't have in Denmark to such an extent. You've got some weird characters too, strange people that make for some interesting stories.

Take Hilmar Örn Hilmarrson, who I just met for the second time. He's a musical com-

poser and head of the Ásatrú sect. He's a character, in a good way. Here's a guy that composes the most amazing musical scores for Hollywood, and he's also a heathen. In America that has really negative connotations, but over here it's just another religion and respected as such. He was interesting, as was just about everyone I've met, you know. You meet a lot of people who've done like five different things and their CV is all over the place. I think that's common in Iceland, and when investigating what makes Icelanders happier I think one of the main differences lies in that, the flexibility in careers you see here.

The possibility of change?

Yeah, you don't get pigeonholed here, and you can always start over. And you can fail. That's a big thing I've discovered here, that failure is always an option. And it seems that Icelanders like failures, people who have failed, the heroic failure. Not that they want to fail, but it's OK to fail.

Wouldn't that be a result of the Social Democratic system that has been prevalent in Scandinavia, and is rather on the decline?

Yeah, that is a part of it. Is the trend towards fewer benefits these days? Even still, compared to the U.S., you're working with a net. We're working without one. Ironically, America is supposed to be the land of opportunity and risk-takers, but the system is actually set up to discourage risks, to discourage someone from quitting their job at the insurance company to become an artist, because then they won't have health insurance and a net. But I don't think the differences in welfare systems tell the whole story.

There's also the familial safety net.

That's true. One of the people I interviewed

told me that in Iceland you never fall into a black hole, and this is true. There is a sense of belonging that other countries don't have, and I think that's a source of happiness for people. It may get a bit claustrophobic at times, but then that's what you have the airport in Keflavik for, so you can get out. I think there's a reason why Iceland is happier at this moment of time instead of twenty years ago, you're wealthier and there's a freedom of movement that maybe wasn't here for your parents' generation.

So you've concluded that Icelanders actually are happier?

Yes. Statistically, you have a good combination of capitalistic opportunities and a social safety net. You're halfway between the U.S. and Europe, geographically, of course, but also in other ways. Culturally. You have the American can-do attitude and entrepreneurial spirit, which a lot of European countries lack, and you have the social safety net.

Not to say that those things cancel each other out, but we certainly don't have the same amount of social safety we used to. The extremes are growing. Someone will take a chance and succeed, and that will move them further away from the general population...

Next thing you know they're flying in Elton John to perform at their birthday! That's a good point, that's why I think happiness is a fluid thing and there is such a thing as geography of happiness, it's geography and points in time. And Iceland, maybe you're enjoying the success of five or ten years ago. People and nations tend to be their happiest when about to achieve something great, not when they've already achieved it. Afterwards, you feel a bit lost; you don't know what to do next. Right before, that's a good place to be, and maybe you've already passed that curve.

Then again, Reykjavik is a good place to be young and artistically inclined right now, bursting with energy, some say.

Definitely, and that's what I've been trying to answer, first of all: does that contribute to happiness? And yes, the artistic scene contributes to it, but why?

Couldn't you just as well say that having a safe and happy nation would contribute to the artistic scene?

That's true. I've heard a lot of answers; that sense of safety, that it's OK to fail, the histories and the Sagas, which give people firm ground to stand on, and the land itself, which for someone like Hilmarrson provides a lot of inspiration. The land shapes the culture, and I think the people in 101 Reykjavik still have that element of the fisherman in them, however far removed. But those are all fuzzy concepts.

I've chosen three words to frame my trip to Iceland: small, dark and hip. The dark would be the winter, which some people hate and others claim to thrive on, citing a beauty to the cold, dark winter. This was surprising, as the American concept of paradise is more along the lines of a tropical beach. The small part is, then, the family ties and connections, that village feel, which has some negative sides too. And there's the hipness, this creative thing. Why are there so many writers, filmmakers and artists here? There are certain periods of history that are hotbeds of creativity, ancient Greece, Florence, maybe Reykjavik in the nineties was a place like that, everything was lined up and the right scene for creativity was born. Overall, I'd say that you guys are happier than you think you are. You take care not to say it too loudly.

But you've been interviewing a very specific portion of the population, artists and journalists, mainly, rather than the farmers and factory workers.

Yes, I have. I'm not trying to be comprehensive, and I haven't gone to villages and talked to fishermen. I've talked to the people who work at my hotel, but you're right, I am looking at a slice of the demography. But I still think that underlying with anyone I've talked to is a good, positive and mentally healthy attitude. You have all the ingredients; you're a wealthy country, a fairly humanitarian one, a creative one... It's sort of like all the stars are lined up for a happy country.

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Should Iceland Pursue a Seat in the United Nation's Security Council?

In the build up to the 2007 parliamentary elections, The Reykjavik Grapevine will be asking representatives from each of the political parties to answer questions regarding the most pressing issues.



Sæunn Stefánsdóttir Candidate for the Progressive Party

xB

Yes, I think we should. In the United Nation's charter, the Security Council is given the main responsibility of retaining peace and security in the world. As members of the United Nations for more than 60 years we are bound to contribute to pursuing these main goals. Therefore it is time to take full action and apply for a seat on the Security Council.

My opinion is actually that Iceland's candidature on the Security Council isn't a goal in itself but a logical continuation of the development in securing Iceland's foreign interests, with an active participation in international cooperation, not least in the United Nations. As a prosperous and sovereign nation we have a duty to take responsibility in inter-

national relations.

I'm therefore convinced that such candidature would strengthen Iceland's position in the international arena and take care of Iceland's interests in foreign affairs, and other Nordic countries interests as well, as our candidature is Nordic.

If Iceland is elected and takes a seat in the UN Security Council I am convinced that we have a valid role in being there. Iceland is a peaceful nation and doesn't have any complex interests to protect around the globe. Therefore we have credibility and we will be listened to.

Iceland's emphasis in the candidature focuses on these facts and I like it. There, the emphasis

has been on respect for international law, human rights and democracy; respect and tolerance in international relations and the importance of facing threats against security in the widest context, especially regarding individuals' safety and connection between development and peace building. The importance of considering the needs of women in war-torn areas and in peacekeeping has also been stressed, which I find very important as women are often victims of conflicts, directly and indirectly.



Ármann Kr. Ólafsson Candidate for the Independence Party

xD

It is tempting for a nation like Iceland, with only 300 thousand inhabitants, to get a seat on the Security Council and have a profound influence on the development of world affairs. In short, this influence, could help present our good causes in the international community. We can't forget though that the five member states who have permanent seats on the Security Council - Britain, The United States, France, China and Russia hold veto power which underlines the great imbalance between real powers of influence in the Council.

When Iceland pursued a seat on the Security Council for the term 2009 to 2010, everything

indicated that there was broad support for that decision. Support from the Nordic countries was known in advance, and usually that should be enough. Later on, Turkey also made a claim for a seat and therefore Nordic solidarity is no guarantee for Iceland's plans becoming a reality, seeing that three states want the two seats available. The struggle for the seat will therefore become really expensive, as would membership itself.

In my opinion it is possible to achieve many noble goals with systematic work-methods and less expenditure than by joining the Security Council. Here we can point to specific projects in the field of human rights, development and welfare aid.

The question here was: Should Iceland apply for a seat in the UN Security Council?

The status now is that Iceland has done that and if we get the seat we have to be careful that we will be listened to. We can't just present some general goals. Iceland's initiative has to be to review specific matters concerning individual nations. What the international community gains by our membership is that we don't have any interests vested in the states the Councils powers are, for the most part, governed by and we can arrive fresh to the table.



Magnús Þór Hafsteinsson Candidate for the Liberal Party

xF

The chapter addressing foreign affairs in the Liberal Party's political proposal, which was accepted at the party's national convention held January 26th and 27th, reads as follows:

"The Liberal Party declares that it is against Iceland's application for a seat in the United Nation's Security Council and criticizes the amount of money spent already.

We in the Liberal Party are opposed to Iceland applying for a member seat on the Security Council and think that the money supposed to be wasted in applying would be better spent in developing aid for states and ethnic groups that need guidance and help to pursue a better life

and education. We can't see how it can be justifiable to spend hundreds of millions just to undergo such world-power dreams and ambitions. In our opinion, that amount is better spent on other projects and humanitarian issues."



Guðmundur Steingrímsson Candidate for the Social Democratic Alliance

xS

No, I see little reason for that. Participating is expensive and I think the money would be better spent elsewhere. Besides, it is hard to see what we are meant to do in the Security Council. I suspect that what we have here is the extravagant ambition of a few people who rushed in on this without asking a single soul. It has never been explained well enough why on earth it is supposed to be important for us to join the Security Council with all the expenses attached.

The diplomatic service's strengths would come to better use in other projects, in development aid for example or to support Icelandic interests in foreign trading. The main reason why

I don't feel we have a specific business in the Security Council is because the nation's foreign policy has been deeply abject in recent years, if not always. We have gone along with the United States far too much, as can be seen in the government's support of their invasion in Iraq. We have presented an independent foreign policy far to rarely. Icelandic authorities emphasized disarmament on open waters by the time of the Cold War, but any other examples are hard to find.

If we, on the other hand, had adopted an independent, unique and noteworthy foreign policy, which would emphasize pacifism and the fact that this nation has no army - a fact that gives us

unique position - I think we could possibly have some purpose in the Security Council, as an essential voice. But sorry to say, this isn't the voice Icelandic government uses when addressing foreign affairs. As long as this is the case, we have no business in joining the Security Council except for drinking cocktails and chatting with powering nations



Katrín Jakobsdóttir Candidate for the Left-Green Movement

xV

It is natural for an independent nation with some ambition in international issues to want a seat on the Security Council. But then, the purpose has to be clear. What business has Iceland in the Security Council?

An issue Icelanders should address in this assembly is respect for international law, increased emphasis on peace-building and unconditional denunciation of war-invasions of any kind. We can also point out more initiative in international environmental affairs, such as climatic change, which will by all likelihood become the biggest security issue in the future.

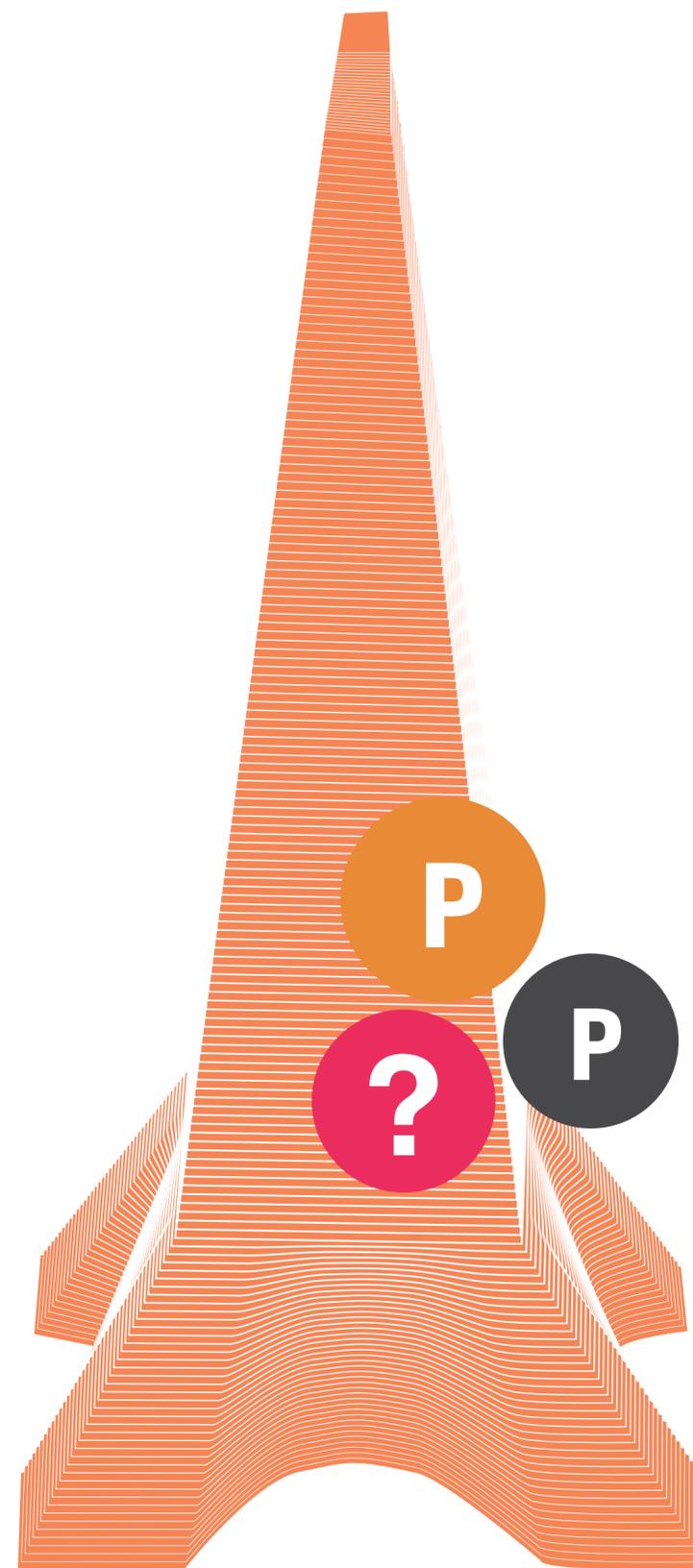
It's really important that a responsible na-

tion take the initiative in working against climate change and, in that field, Icelanders could have a significant role if there were the political will to adopt a new environmental policy.

On the other hand, it is hard to see what Icelanders are planning to do in the Security Council if the present foreign policy does not change, where we would always look to the American representative before passing a vote. That's how Iceland's foreign policy has been in reality; unconditional support of Uncle Sam, probably reaching its peak with our support of the pointless and bloody war in Iraq in 2003. While we still follow such foreign policy we have no business in join-

ing the Security Council and it's plainly a waste to spend hundreds of millions in such process.

The main issue in foreign affairs should be to change this policy. Before we do that, we have no business in the Security Council or any other international institutions where important decisions are made.



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194 Young People Who Just Wanted to Rock

Text and photo by Jade Augusto Gola

Concert disaster is a good chance to understand a little of Argentina

The main concept of tourism for young people in Brazil is the search for cheap places that are completely different from the typical national identity. This New Year's holiday I thought it would be perfect to fly to Buenos Aires, a city that feels European, filled with beautiful people, good food and cheap currency (thanks to our über-valorized reals). It was also the anniversary of the tragedy at Plaza Once, where 194 died (including babies, one of them only ten months old) and 714 were injured in a fire in República de Cromañón, one of the five biggest nightclubs in Buenos Aires. Two years after the second biggest non-natural disaster in Argentina, Plaza Once is as much alive as it has ever been with protests, marches and shouts for justice on the "porteño" streets.

On a still night on December 30, 2004, the band Callejeros (Spanish for "streetwise") were playing at the República de Cromañón nightclub for an audience of 3000 people, when a pyrotechnic flare set fire to a plastic net roof. The panic spread while a huge toxic black cloud formed. Most victims died from asphyxia and burning of respiratory organs by carbon monoxide and cyanidric acid. Others died from burns and from being crushed in the middle of the choas, some of them having come back into the club to rescue friends. The official capacity of Cromañón was 1300 people, and four of the six emergency doors were locked with padlocks so attendants couldn't come in without paying.

In Argentina, flares have always been used in rock concerts, just as much as in soccer matches, with the same passion and cathartic intensity. The fact that the person responsible for lighting the flare has never been found is not the most tragic aspect of this episode. It is the neglect that is frightening: the old brown classic building didn't have exterior ventilation; ten of the fifteen fire-extinguishers were not pressurized; the club's fire inspection certificate had expired

two years before; and the exterior roof intended for expelling toxic air was covered with two soccer fields (!). Among the dead were a few children of the employees, who took their kids to the place because it was a holiday.

Punishment

Osmar Chabán, Cromañón's owner, was immediately accused. A famous local promoter and stage person since the 80s, he helped shape the Buenos Aires rock scene as it is today: hard guitars in pop tracks, extreme competition among the bands and huge concerts with pyrotechnics. While Chabán has been jumping from prison to prison for the past two years, investigators have found ghost companies created by Chabán, intended to clean up dirty money. So far, he is the only one who has been arrested in relation to the incident. There are 17 more people awaiting trial in early 2008, including the band members.

The investigations lead to the resignation of Anibal Ibarra, mayor of Buenos Aires, mainly because of his suspected links with Chabán and for not attending to any of the 40 alerts about the awful situation in several Buenos Aires venues, including Cromañón. Anibal and Chabán are the two main villains called "¡ASESINOS!" (murderers) in all marches, including the recent two-year anniversary protest in Plaza de Mayo.

A judge accused the Callejeros of "the promotion of pyrotechnics with absolute disrespect for physical health of its fans". They deny all charges but some witnesses have said that they wanted fire that night, even helping people to get into Cromañón through backdoors, far from the security. Others say that three little kids ignited the flare, some claim it was the stage assistant. The truth will probably never be known.

In the wake of the tragedy, all clubs and stages in Buenos Aires were closed and they could only be reopened when proper documentation and new safety and fire systems were in place. It took months for the city to

get its musical scene back, and people started travelling on weekends to other cities in Buenos Aires province, such as Mar del Plata, to party.

District Rock

I watched a retrospective about Cromañón on a local TV news station. In an interview with the TV station, a young rocker said that he and some friends would fight against the restriction of fires at concerts, because "it was part of a culture". Argentines are as attached to their traditions as they are to good wine and barbecues. The rock audience behaviour can, in some ways, be compared with soccer hooligans. The bands come from the suburbs, bringing with them young neighbours supporting the guys who grew up in the same distant area, loving only THAT band, and no other. It is district rock, something that conservatives would even call "gangs". Callejeros came from the poor Villa Celina. While they have been chastised for being opportunistic and irresponsible, they are also, somehow, victims of the fire: the singer lost his fiancée and the guitarist four relatives.

In 2005, any intentions for the band's comeback were ruined by a noisy protest by an association of victims' families. The band members are often called murderers and attacked on the streets. Furthermore, no manager or promoter wants the "fire band" in their venue. It was only in July 2006 that they returned to the stage, as guests of a famous band they were friends with. The rock crowd remain the staunchest supporters of Callejeros, including the music media. "It was the biggest penal discussion in Argentina's history but some tried to divert it to the rock field: to its musicians, audience, and media", said the last Argentinian edition of the Rolling Stone, with a huge six-page-interview with Chabán.

Sanctuary

The Cromañón ashes are now a perfect vehicle for a foreigner to comprehend the Ar-

gentinian soul. A sanctuary was built close to the venue for the victims with chairs, posters, homages and altars. People come there to pray, cry, remember, think and leave personal belongings, letters, gifts and the like (a mother left a pack of Marlboro close her son's picture). The space functions as a permanent cemetery where people can express not only their views, but mainly their sadness. A cop told me it's common for people who are sad for any reason to go there to sit and cry, seeking solace in the company of the victim's families and sensible "b-side" tourists. It's almost impossible not to feel depressed visiting the space, and the way Argentines deal with the loss and the sadness is almost poetic. It is not by chance they have the tango and the highest number of psychologists per capita in the world.

In the building, protest paintings, posters and lots of burnt Converse All-Stars hang on a rope, the official symbol of the tragedy. The text "Los Pibes Solo Querian a el Rock" (The people only wanted to rock) inscribed on several of them makes this "symbol" look like a morbid art installation. Another symbol of Cromañón is a sign with "Prohibido Olvidar" (Never Forget), that made me think about Brazil. Rather than glamourizing sadness, Argentina really preserves what happens in its history. The cliché aphorism about us Brazilians, "Brazil has no memory", is sometimes true: a plane crashed here a few months ago killing 150 people and we don't even know if they have families mourning them! It's the price we pay for being "the Latin-American country of the future!" – we end up without a past.

When I left the Cromañón sanctuary, I noticed one more sign that serves as a final note on this travesty. A hundred metres from the venue, a huge advertisement, the only coloured thing in Plaza Once, reads: FUEGOS ARTIFICIALES JÚPITER (Júpiter Pyrotechnics). It is stupidly ironic, if not sad.

Jade Augusto Gola is the asst. editor of www.rrauri.com in São Paulo, Brazil



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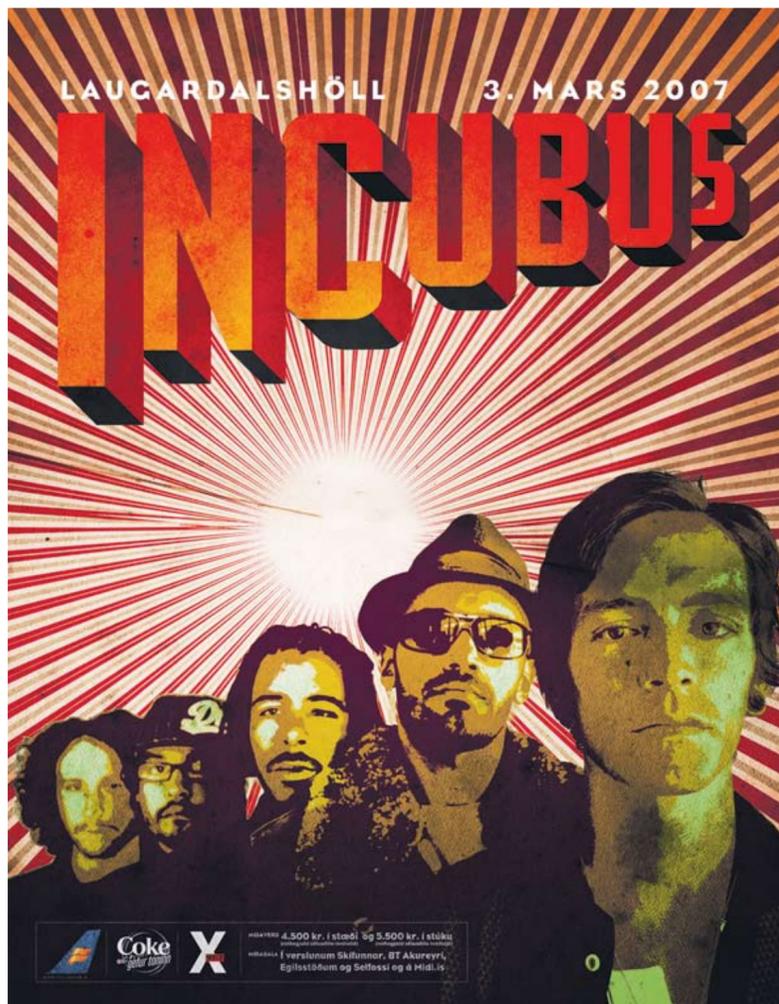
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Coke X

Think Like a Tourist

By Gabriele R. Gudbjartsson



I don't drink and the smell of smoke makes me want to wear a gas mask. And just for the sake of confusion, no, I am not a nun. Based on my "unique lifestyle" and standard appetite for mental, audio and visual stimulation, at times I feel stuck between a rock and a hard place when it comes to making weekend plans. I have done my share of frequenting the cinema and bowling to funky sounds from the disco era and frankly, I'm a bit tired of the whole scene. In my position, one has to be quite creative in choosing leisurely activities on the weekends in Reykjavik. Thinking of ways to "seize the day" has become quite a challenge, and since being surrounded by the intoxicated or smelling like an ashtray the morning after is not scripted in my daily journal, my only option at this point is to change my frame of reference.

When the decision was made to move from New York City to Reykjavik I knew I would be faced with the dilemma of limited entertainment options. Relocating to any new environment requires adjusting to a whole new social setting, and to avoid wallowing away in the sea of regret I had to take a look around and really recognize what Iceland had to offer. In order to have a satisfying social life I had to think outside of box and adapt a nomadic perspective. Sometimes we need to adopt the mindset of a temporary wanderer to soak up and appreciate the precious time we have while existing in such a unique place.

The majority of weekend entertainment that Reykjavik's "downtown" has to offer consists of an available seat or private corner to stand in, an expensive glass of liquid courage and blaring beats vibrating from the speakers of a fairly lavish sound system. Therefore the entertainment portion of the evening is left solely up to the consumer and the magical antidote concocted by the slaving bar tender behind the counter. Henceforth, you find yourself not exactly being entertained, but often being the focal point of the show itself. Even still, weekend after weekend downtown Reykjavik continues to

be the busiest place in town where life completely changes her wardrobe after 10 pm.

I, on the other, hand prefer the traditional alternative of being entertained – by professionals who at least appear to be sober while performing their God-given talent. Live jazz music on a random Tuesday night, discovering an authentic new Middle Eastern restaurant with old friends or catching a dynamic play or show that won't be in town too long are some of the things I miss doing without having to sacrifice a quarter of my salary. Although it is quite unfair to compare New York and Reykjavik in the category of entertainment, I do wish the industry could be more creative in its business ventures when it comes to amusement activities. By the sheer number of bars compared to any other form of late night diversions, it is clear what product is valued most by consumers and commerce alike.

In order to feel entertained in this city, thinking like a tourist is beneficial because you are forced to think of outings that promote an experience to remember, therefore making each event worthwhile and devoid of anything routine and ordinary. When I lived in New York City I used to ask native New Yorkers all the time if they had ever been to the Statue of Liberty, climbed the steps all the way to the top of her crown and looked out over the Hudson River. Most people had the same answer – no, but I live here, so I can go anytime.

Unfortunately after September 11th, that golden opportunity to stand atop Lady Liberty has been taken away and now that memory only exists for the millions of people that have simply "passed through" New York City. Thinking like a tourist gives you the motivation and energy to do things you wouldn't ordinarily do. However, as a resident we often forget to take advantage of the jewels of our distinctive surroundings and, like many New Yorkers, we miss the boat altogether.

Just last week a friend and I visited the National Gallery of Iceland to see the French Expressionist Exhibition. Taking an afternoon to surround oneself with the works of the masters definitely provides a break from the monotony of daily routine. It was a Wednesday afternoon and although the museum was quite empty I felt like a tourist appreciating what the city had to offer. There was also a slight feeling of privilege in taking a moment to value such talent in the midst of work and running errands. Adapting this new perspective in thinking differently about what I do with my time has made life much more interesting and enjoyable. My advice from all this is to take the time to be creative and seize the day before the day ends up seizing you.



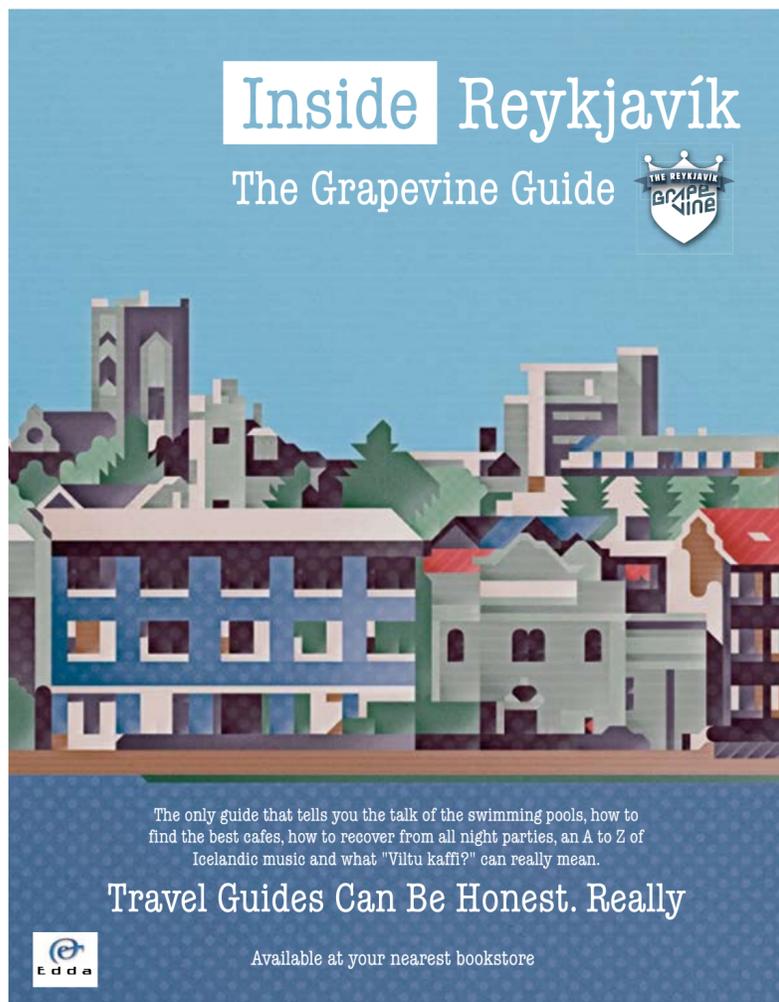
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Garage Days Revisited?

Text by Haukur Magnússon Photos by Skari

Tónlistarþróunarmiðstöðin, a rehearsal space and concert venue, hosts fifty bands that operate in the Reykjavík area. It has been a haven for fledgling musicians for close to four years now. Due to a lack of funding, it will likely close down for good sometime over the next few months. The Reykjavík Grapevine paid a visit.

Standing in the corridors of Tónlistarþróunarmiðstöðin ('The Music Development Centre' or TPM) on a given Sunday afternoon can be an unnerving experience. First of all, there's the relentless banging of many drums. Countless Dave Lombardo disciples kicking the shit out of their hard-earned kits, an aggressive arrhythmia pounding its way through your skin, inducing sweat and anxiety. Then there are guitars, so many guitars, all distorted and muffled, coupled with the steady rumbling of capricious bass players trying their best to bring down houses. And at first it all sounds like so much static, but you manage to make out a tune through the rubble: in one of these rooms, someone's aptly ploughing through Cindy Lauper's 'True Colors'.

It was beautiful.

Founded in March of 2003, TPM has been going strong for over four years now, hosting a myriad of concerts by nearly every damn band operating in Iceland (and some visiting ones too). It has provided many of them with much needed space to rehearse, grow, turn their hobbies and tinkering into concrete structures, albums, blissful shows; untold hours of pure, clean fun with friends. It acts as a home to fifty bands of all styles and inclinations (although rock is surely the predominant form), so it can be assessed that well over 200 people, mainly youngsters, employ it to their benefit. Many of the great acts you saw at last year's Airwaves festival, they've

been hanging out there a whole lot.

Comfortable and safe practice spaces, a bunch of 40m² rooms each shared by 2-3 bands, are TPM's biggest draw. Bands are unpopular tenants in Reykjavík's garages, which are commonly over-priced, under heated and vulnerable to burglars wanting to make a quick few thousand króna. Even those places are hard to come by. TPM's practice spaces are relatively available and they're monitored by a security service, so their popularity is understandable. For these amenities, and others, bands will pay 25,000 ISK per month.

Hardly Getting Over It

One of TPM's more popular features, especially among the all-ages crowd, is a spacious concert venue, Hellirinn ('The Cave'), which can play host to up to 300 patrons and offers a slew of professional PA and lighting equipment most garage bands have a hard time gaining access to. "It's just a real comfortable place to play," says Birkir Fjalmarsson, frontman of local hardcore legends I Adapt, who've played close to a dozen shows there. "It's the best all-ages venue available in the area. Throwing a show at Hellirinn means you can concentrate on just playing the music. It's free of all the hassle that comes with playing bars and the like, renting a PA, having your equipment stolen, dealing with shitty sound and annoyed staff."

Plans are also underway to install a professional recording facility on the premises that would serve as a haven for fledgling musicians making their first forays into committing their sounds to plastic. That might not happen, however, as TPM could be seeing its last months of operation, as the organization behind it is waist-deep in debt. Repeated calls for added public funding, most recently with a giant all-day concert event at Listasafn

Íslands entitled 'Steel Meets Steel', have been steadfastly ignored by city and government officials alike. So it's likely that this valiant effort will come to a close sometime during the next six months and those 50 bands, those 200-plus musicians, will thus soon be on the prowl for garages and basements. Not to mention a kick-ass concert venue.

Although things seem bleak at the moment, TPM manager Daniel Pollock seems unabashedly optimistic when we meet for a conversation in his very own TPM practice space. Pollock is a rocker in his own right, making a name for himself playing alongside his brother Michael and pop star Bubbi Morthens, among others, in Iceland's infamous punk pioneers Utangarðsmenn. He is, as always, working on a multitude of musical endeavours while overseeing TPM's day-to-day activities and searching for ways to keep it in operation. He seems more interested in talking about the various projects TPM has spurred and its ambitious plans for the future, than any problems with running it, although those concerns inevitably get aired.

Expendable Youth

Pollock claims TPM has had some very positive effects on the Reykjavík music scene and its participants, not least the youngsters who are entering the field and need help realizing their visions and ideas. This is echoed by the kids I speak to while there, and on numerous on-line chat boards. It might be said that aside from the practice spaces and concert venue, TPM also offers a resource for bands in other respects. Advice from some of the veteran musicians operating there is often invaluable, according to Pollock. He says that a camaraderie and community is formed with the musicians, them bouncing ideas around and finding inspiration from one another, all under the tenet of mutual respect.

"There are no rules, that's the only rule," Pollock says. While that's strictly speaking not completely true (there is, for instance, a total ban on the use of intoxicants on the premises), TPM seems more about offering these kids a place and the freedom to do their own thing than preaching the values of hard work and clean living. If those get transferred along the way, then that's all the better. "There are guidelines, but we mainly demand that the bands show each other and themselves some respect. That's a key factor. There are other places to drink, we play our music here, we do this kinda shit here... if you want to do the other thing, then you've got to go somewhere else. This is a place of creation, work, and the kids respect that."

"Everybody needs a place to do what they're gonna do, and there's so few places left," he continues. "This scene has always been so disorganized, but now we have this collective here and we can get things done more easily, pass the information along, exchange ideas and help each other make them a reality. And we're seeing some results. Bands that work or have worked here run their gambit all around town, Iceland Airwaves, Culture Night, whatever is going on, they come and go. Look at Airwaves, the bands were better prepared this time around than ever."

And he believes it's a result of some of their experiences at TPM. "It's almost like a rock and roll high school, we get people here who don't know anything about getting a good live sound, setting up a show, but after practicing here and associating with their peers they get familiar with the tools of the trade. Those with the experience will pass it on, give guidance and answer questions but that's the extent of it. You still have to do it yourself, with all the freedom that entails. That's the best way."



Fight Fire With Fire

Lanky 19-year-old student Benjamin Mark Stacey is quick to agree with Pollock's sentiment. His band, Sudden Weather Change, have been honing their craft at TPM for little under a year, and he even took on a part-time job as an attendant there. He says he spends most of his free time at TPM and that he has witnessed many exciting happenings at the premises since he started going last year. "The metal bands are incredibly diligent at throwing concerts, they do an excellent job at that. And, you know, it's a nice place to hang out and meet people." As he tells me this, a tall, longhaired blonde dude passes, a whole three guitars strapped to his torso. A shorter dude deftly follows him, lugging drums. Always something going on.

An hour earlier, Pollock explained TPM's current financial plight, and that if governmental and municipal authorities reject their call for support they will have to close down in a matter of months. He tells me they are asking for 12 million ISK in support annually, which is half the yearly cost of running the facilities. "I've been working on this project for five years and we keep telling them the same thing year after year, over and over again. We've gotten the best responses so far this year, but then come the other complications, 'cause we are in major debt and we need to sell the house. Then some council members might think that the owners of the house [actually Pollock himself, and a business associate] will make a tremendous amount of money. That's fucked up, but the owners are businesspeople, we [the TPM organization] have never owned anything, we've always rented. That's the way it should be done."

What Pollock is perhaps confusingly referring to is the fact that the area which TPM is based in, Grandi, has recently been named as a likely candidate for being developed into a residential area, thereby driving property values up considerably. While this means that he and his business associate will likely get a fair amount of money when they sell the house, the partnership is still not connected with TPM and its operation, and no funding earmarked for TPM will find its

way into the owners' pockets. The two entities are entirely unconnected. "The house needs to be sold, the owners [sic] are already in minus and the need to sell it to bring the debt to zero. Then we'll rent it off the new owners while we develop this further and then find a bigger, larger location when the time comes. There are bands waiting for a space here right now."

5-4 = UNITY

The responsible officials are finally starting to take notice, according to Pollock, although that has yet to bear any fruit. Meetings with government officials are lined up, and Pollock seems hopeful that they will turn in some positive results. "The city council received many, many e-mails from all sorts of people regarding this, somewhere around 3,000. We have 700 union members, aside from all the other artists and foreign bands that have performed here, so we have a group. And there's power in unity, we have a political force of sorts, with parents, grandparents and concertgoers. I calculate that somewhere around 30,000 people pass through here annually. Responses have been getting better, but they're still up and down because this is new and they don't know how to take it. But I think they're finally getting it through their heads that this is a very important part of the local culture, and will only grow in importance as time progresses."

Twelve million ISK annually may seem steep for some, but compared to the public funding some other hobbies receive, it's only a drop in the ocean of, say, the hundreds of millions poured into the heavily disputed symphony hall under construction in downtown Reykjavík. Grapevine's correspondents from the music scene also consistently point to public funds earmarked for sports activities. But not bitterly, they all just seem to feel that their respective hobby deserves the same amount of support the others seem to warrant. Let me forget, the City of Reykjavík and the whole of Iceland continually take pride in a vibrant music scene and use it to their benefit, for instance in marketing Iceland to foreigners.

...Still Don't Get It

Says Birkir Fjalmarsson, not afraid to raise his voice: "I know kids will always find ways to play their rock if they want it bad enough. But if we really want this scene to flourish, I believe some support is in order. There's more room for creation if you've got a decent space to create in and some resources. And I've learned through my work with teenagers [Viðarsson works as a counsellor in a Reykjavík youth community centre] that for every kid that's into sport, there's a kid who's into being in a band, going to shows and following his favourite groups around."

"Literally thousands of youths in Iceland prefer this hobby to sports. And the lack of support for their dreams and aspirations makes me feel kinda like officials are ignoring the needs of one of their kids, while pampering the other. Other Scandinavian countries have been providing support for these activities for decades. The idea of TPM is old-hat there, and has given various results, hell, even stimulated the economy. If the state wants to partake in various recreational activities, that's fine, I'm all for that, but they can't be hypocritical and pander to one half and not the other. That's unfair and unreasonable."

An assumption one could make at this point is that Reykjavík's interest in all things rockin' has finally grown to the level that demands action and support on behalf of the powers that be, not unlike what happened with the sports movement early in the 20th century. There are enough kids with fresh guitars, drums, keyboards and basses out there that want to pursue their passions that an overhead organization such as TPM is sorely needed. And TPM is providing steady ground now, with years of experience and know-how, not to mention passion for the work, already there. Pollock concurs: "This is a golden opportunity, and if people look at the big picture over a long term, they will find that something like this is needed, and we have it right here, now. A whole industry can build around this, whether it be with instrument stores, repair shops, sound engineers, studios... there are so many aspects to this if you expand the scope to 10 or 20 years. Even since I started with The Outsid-

ers (Utangarðsmenn) I've seen an economy build up around rock."

And there's still room for one more comparison to the sports movement: "It takes a tremendous amount of money to run a sports arena, but it's used consistently. And we use this more than that is used, 'cause there's something going on here from noon 'til midnight, sometimes all night long, constantly. And we're really only getting 20% of what we need right now. The people in charge need to understand the possibilities, that this is an important thing that needs to be supported. That this is for the future. Otherwise, these groups will end up on the street."

I Wanna Rock!

When leaving TPM after a long conversation with Daniel Pollock, I am drawn to the sounds of someone wailing metal on an electric guitar, spewing out riffs and licks that tickle my inner Slayer-fanboy. I cautiously enter and am confronted with a couple of longhaired Spicoli-ish dudes ragging on their Flying-V's and Dime' model Deans. They have huge amps. They are shy boys, and comprise the guitar section of two-year-old thrash-metal band Blood Feud. They write lyrics about serial killers, and God. They love it here, and they love playing music, their band practices three times every week, and they hope to get in even more practice time in their new, less-crowded room. Soon, they will record their demo. And they fund their hobbies with their summer-jobs.

"Of course our dream is to get to play music all the time, tour the world. We're working on that. We've played four shows here in Hellirinn, and one at Kaffi Amsterdam. The difference is great; the sound in Hellirinn and all the gear provided is awesome. At Amsterdam, we get beer however, so that's good."

I ask them how they would feel if TPM closed down. "Man, well, that would fuckin' suck."



info.

▲ Incubus and Mímus Rock the House *Food and Fun Festival in Reykjavík* Alex Zaklynsky *An Exhibition About Us* Emilie Simon, Air and a Grand French Film Festival *French Spring in Iceland* Reykjavík Underworld *Taking Dance to the Extremes* Music, Art, Films and Events Listings ▾



(transformation)

The Icelandic Dance Company gets ready for the premiere pose.



Laugardalhöll – 3 Mar. at 20:00

Incubus and Mínus Rock the House

Those into the mainstream US rock scene should start digging deep into their wallets as the California-based rock group Incubus are on their way to Iceland next month. This will be their first visit ever, something their many devotees have been anticipating for months. The concerts taking place in Laugardalhöll March 3rd is part of the band's worldwide tour in support of their latest album, *Light Grenades*. Featuring songs like *Dig*, *Love Hurts* and *Anna Molly*, the album is produced by Brendan O'Brian, famous for working with Pearl Jam, Soundgarden and Rage Against the Machine, and debuted at number 1 on the Billboard 200 list last year. This first album since 2004, which saw the release of *A Crow Left of the Murder*, has been well received by

fans who are pleased that the band still has what it takes.

Their career spans 15 years, with seven studio albums, and tours with the likes of System of a Down, Black Sabbath, Korn, Primus, Mr. Bungle and Deftones. Several awards and nominees have also helped make Incubus a multi-platinum seller and its members, especially frontman Brandon Boyd, pop icons in the alt-metal music scene. *Light Grenades'* first single, *Anna Molly*, has been on top of the charts all around the globe, including in Iceland. Playing a mixture of hard rock and softer power ballads, the band's live gigs are renowned for being energetic and spicy, performing for full houses wherever they go.

Uncrowned kings of Iceland's rock

scene, Mínus, will be the opening act at Laugardalhöll. This should be an awesome event for all true fans, as they are also promoting their forthcoming album, *The Great Northern Whale Kill*, which is their fourth studio album, scheduled for an early summer release. This should be reason enough to arrive early and jump in the mosh pit at Laugardalhöll, anything else would plainly be inexcusable. After opening for Metallica, Foo Fighters and Queens of the Stone Age, they sure know how to do the job right.

Tickets can be bought at mid.is, in all Skifan stores and BT for 4,500 ISK.

Music Art Films Events

Reykjavik Art Museum – 21 - 25 Feb.

Food and Fun Festival in Reykjavík

February is the time for lots of food and an equal serving of fun when the annual gourmet fiesta invades various restaurants around the city. Iceland Naturally, a group of Icelandic seafood, agriculture, water and tourism leaders, Icelandair, Icelandic agriculture and the City of Reykjavík are the hosts of this five-day festival, where world-renowned chefs from France, Germany, Finland, Norway, the UK and USA collaborate with Reykjavík restaurants to create a special Food and Fun menu by using only Icelandic ingredients. The participating restaurants this year are: Apótek, Domo, Silfur, The Grill, La Primavera, The Pearl, Salt, The Seafood Cellar, Siggí Hall at Öðinsvæ, Skó-

labrú and VOX.

If a meal at any of those places isn't enough to satisfy your stomach or your interest in fine dining, the grand Cooking Competition, taking place at the Reykjavík Art Museum, February 25, is a special treat for the taste buds and especially fun to watch. During that event, which also marks the end of the festival, all participating chefs have to produce a three-course menu and cook it on the spot, creating a massive cooking show open to all.

Reykjavík Art Museum, Tryggvagata 17. More info at www.foodandfun.is



Gallery Gel – 16 Feb.

Alex Zaklinsky

On February 16th, New York native and multi-talented artist Alex Zaklinsky will open a solo exhibition in Gallery Gel, where a trendy hair salon and a small exhibition space coalesce under one roof at Klappargistig 27.

Entitled *Spirit Exposés*, the exhibition features sculpture instal-

lations inspired by the nature surrounding the Kárahnjúkar area, as well as paintings and altered T-shirts. The opening party will start at 18:00 where guests can examine the art while enjoying some light refreshments.

Gallery Gel, Klappargistig 27.

Music Art Films Events

The Nordic House – 20 Jan. - 4 Mar.

An Exhibition About Us

An exhibition about being Nordic has opened in one of the worst exhibition spaces in Reykjavík: the basement of the Nordic house which architect Alto intended for storage. This should not stop you from seeing the photographs by Finnish artist Susanna Majuri currently on display.

Entitled *You Nordic*, Majuri seems to have a romantic notion of Nordic inhabitants, and she has photographed people in Iceland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

"I want to show that one can find fantastic from near by. Fiction blends into our life. The imaginary is in fact actual," says Majuri in describing her project.

Many of the pictures revolve around water. One that catches

your eye is a photograph of rusty boat going under the surface. A young boy is staring at us from the cockpit, the background is warm autumn colours, and it leaves you feeling uneasy but might also evoke a sense of recognition.

"I follow the logic of colours, when I combine places, people and clothes. To me, the most important quality of photography is its capability to convey emotions. I want to start secret love affairs with places. I want to be attracted," she explains.

The Finnish photographer was indeed attracted to Iceland; she stayed in Reykjavík for months. **EMF**

The Nordic house, Sturlugata 5, 101 Reykjavík



Regnboginn

Cold Trail with English Subtitles

The acclaimed Icelandic thriller *Cold Trail*, which premiered in Reykjavík a month ago, will be showing with English subtitles in the movie theatre Regnboginn. Directed by Björn B. Björnsson and starring Þróstur Leó Gunnarsson and Aníta Briem,

the film has received great reviews from critics and has been doing extremely well at the box office.

Regnboginn, Hverfisgata 54. For dates and screening hours visit: www.bio.is

If you would like to be included in the Grapevine listings, free of charge, contact the Grapevine by email at listings@grapevine.is.

Music

Bar 11

Laugavegur 11

A popular hangout for Reykjavík's rockers and their young idolaters with DJ's playing classic rock'n'roll hitters.

Fri 09.02 DJ Gulli Ósóma

Sat 10.02 DJ Óli Dóri

Fri 16.02 DJ Óli Dóri

Sat 17.02 DJ Palli Maus

Fri 23.02 DJ Gulli Ósóma

Sat 24.02 DJ Óli Dóri

Fri 02.03 DJ Palli Maus

Sat 03.03 DJ Gulli Ósóma

Fri 09.02 DJ Gulli Ósóma

Sat 10.02 Ten Steps Away + guests in concert followed by DJ Óli Dóri

B5

Bankastræti 5

Fri 09.02 Grapevine Party. Ta! Ta! Ta! and Esja. Starts at 22:00

Broadway

Ármúli 9

Sat 17.02 Tina Turner tribute show with Sígga Beinteins

Fri 23.02 Queen Party

Sat 24.02 Tina Turner tribute show with Sígga Beinteins

Café Amsterdam

Hafnarstræti 5

Fri 09.02 Coburn and Ronda & the Runestone Cowboys in concert followed by DJ Master. Starts at 23:00

Sat 10.02 Buff and Brain Police

Thu 15.02 Dust Cap and Red Motor Dog in concert. Starts at 22:00

Fri 16.02 Envy of Nona release concert

Sat 17.02 DJ Fúsi

Thu 22.02 Hjalti and Silli from Dimma

Fri 23.02 DJ Master

Sat 24.02 DJ Master

Café Cultura

Hverfisgata 18

Music from the world's four corners

Fri 09.02 DJ Lupin

Sat 10.02 Russian Night with DJ Sergej

Café Rósenberg

Lækjargata 2

A true jazz club featuring live gigs with some of Iceland's finest jazzists almost every night of the week.

Fri 09.02 Sviðin jörð big band in concert

Sat 10.02 Sviðin jörð big band in concert

Wed 14.02 Einar Snorri trio

Thu 15.02 South River band

Fri 16.02 Ljótú hálfvartarnir in concert

Sat 17.02 Ljótú hálfvartarnir in concert

Thu 22.02 Misery Loves Company in concert

Thu 01.03 The Icelandic Symphony Orchestra: Eroica. Ludwig van Beethoven; Symphony no. 3

Sun 04.03 French singer Emilie Simon in concert

Hitt Húsið

Pósthússtræti 3-5

Tue 15.02 British rockers The October Game in concert. Also performing are The Foreign

Monkeys, The Unknown, UnaStef and Vafurlugi. Open to all ages free of charge.

Deco

Austurstræti 12

Fri 09.02 Vocal House Night: Singer Seth Sharp and DJ Tommy White

Dillon

Laugavegur 30

Legendary rock pub featuring live

concerts every Wednesday night and rock DJ's every weekend.

Fri 09.02 DJ's Steinunn and Silja

Sat 10.02 DJ Andrea Jóns

Wed 14.02 Bennys Crespo's Gang + friends

Thu 15.02 Grasrætur in concert

Fri 16.02 Foreign Monkeys + DJ's Steinunn and Silja

Sat 17.02 DJ Andrea Jóns

Wed 21.02 Perfect Disorder in concert

Fri 23.02 Grasrætur + DJ Mikko

Sat 24.02 DJ Andrea Jóns

Wed 28.02 Live concert

Thu 01.03 Beerday + Grasrætur

Fri 02.03 DJ Mikko

Sat 03.02 DJ Andrea Jóns

Wed 07.03 Live concert

Fri 09.03 Notice in concert followed by DJ Mikko

Hallgrímskirkja Church

Skólavörðuholt

Tue 27.02 Concerts with French organist Vincent Warnier

Háskólabíó

Hagatorg

Thu 01.03 The Icelandic Symphony Orchestra: Eroica. Ludwig van Beethoven; Symphony no. 3

Fri 09.02 DJ Alfons X

Sat 10.02 DJ Benni B-Ruff

Wed 14.02 DJ's Steinunn and Silja

Thu 15.02 DJ Pétur

Fri 16.02 DJ Arni Sveins

Sat 17.02 DJ Gisli Galdur

Thu 22.02 DJ Tommy White

Fri 23.02 Don Balli Funk

Sat 24.02 DJ Alfons X

Wed 28.02 DJ Benni B-Ruff

Nasa

Thorvaldsenstræti 2

Sat 24.02 Sálín in concert

Thu 01.03 Lisa Ekdahl in concert

Sun 04.03 Lisa Ekdahl in concert

Tue 06.03 Stranglers in concert

Wed 07.03 Stranglers in concert

Prikió

Bankastræti 12

This old coffeehouse turns into a hip-hop mania at weekends where not only DJs but also drummers and bassists create a crazy pit at the dancefloor.

Fri 09.02 Franz and Kristó followed by Blautt Malbic extravaganza: Danni Deluxe, Dóri DNA and DJ Óli

Sat 10.02 DJ Peter Parker warms up the crowd before DJ Anna Rakel and DJ Hjalti

Wed 15.02 DJ Andri

Thu 15.02 DJ Kári

Fri 16.02 Franz and Kristó followed by Gisli Galdur and Addi the drummer

Sat 17.02 Old-school night with Benni B-Ruff

Wed 21.02 DJ Playmobile

Thu 22.02 Lay Low and Pétur Ben in concert followed by DJ Benni B-Ruff

Fri 23.02 Franz and Kristó followed by Blautt Malbic extravaganza: Danni Deluxe, Dóri DNA and DJ Óli

Sat 24.02 DJ De la Rósa and DJ Óli

Wed 28.02 DJ Gunní Stef

Sirkus

Klappargistig 30

Playing reggae, country and occasionally hosting at least one live gig at weekends.

Sat 24.02 DJ Alfons X

Wed 28.02 DJ Benni B-Ruff

If you want Blood ... you've got it!

Sat 10.02 DJ Biggi Veira: GusGus pre-release party

Thu 15.02 DJ Roesbert

Fri 16.02 DJ Krummi

Sat 17.02 DJ Jón Atli

Thu 22.02 DJ Chuck

Fri 23.02 DJ Krummi

Sat 24.02 DJ Arni Sveins

Wed 28.02 Sprengjuhöllin in concert and Best of 2006 Party with madchester.is

Sportbarinn

Jafnarsel 6, Breiðholt

Sat 10.02 Benefit concerts for children suffering from heart diseases: Foreign Monkeys, Perfect Disorder, Dimma, Celestine and Helshare. Starts at 22:00. Tickets for 1000 ISK.

Aurum

Bankastræti 4

Mon.-Fri. 10-18

Sat. 11-16

www.aurum.is

The Einar Jónsson Museum

Eiríksgrata

Tue.-Sun. 14-17

www.skulptur.is

Permanent exhibition

The work of sculptor Einar Jónsson

Á næstu grösum restaurant

Laugavegur 20B

www.aneastugrosum.is

Current exhibition

Vera / Stay

Ellen Marie Fodstad photo exhibit

The Culture House

Hverfisgata 15

Open daily 11-17

www.thjordmenning.is

Until 27 Feb

Icelandic Fashion 2006

Permanent Exhibits



Háskólabíó – 3 Mar. - 1 Apr.

Emilie Simon, Air and a Grand French Film Festival

A true fiesta for all movie lovers, especially those fascinated with French cinematography, the annual French Film Festival will take place for the seventh time next month when French flicks will be screened daily in Háskólabíó Movie Theatre from March 3rd to April 1st.

Among a broad selection of 35 films to be featured is the romance *Paris I Love You* (Paris, je t'aime), a co-operative project where 18 directors join hands in a film set in various locations around the city, each with their own take on the subject of love. Also included in the program will be: *My little Finger told Me* by Pascal Thomas; *Me and My Sister* by Alexandre

Leclère; a series of films starring Isabelle Huppert, a symbol of French filmography; and a cycle of nine films by award-winning filmmaker Pierre Coulibeuf, of which *Warriors of Beauty* with Erna Ómarsdóttir should be an interesting piece.

To mark the opening of the festival, talented French songbird Emilie Simon will throw a concert in Háskólabíó on March 4th. Known for her crystal voice, she took on the task of composing the soundtrack to the film *March of the Penguins* and is becoming an extremely popular electronic artist in her home country. Her latest album, *Végétal*, released in 2006, was highly praised and her reputa-

tion has spread. As if all this isn't enough, a grand concert with the experimental electronic duo Air is scheduled for July. Their newest album, *Pocket Symphony*, is set to be released on March 5th.

A 50% discount is offered to all members of Alliance Française buying tickets. The program will be available online at the Alliance Française website, www.af.is, in a brochure available at Háskólabíó and in the March issue of the Reykjavík Grapevine.

Háskólabíó Movie Theatre at Hagatorg. www.haskolabio.is

Klappargistig 33

Tue.-Fri. 11-17

Sat. and by appointment 13-17



10 Feb – 4 Mar
Exhibition by Helgi Hjaltalin and Pétur Örn Friðriksson where they emphasise technology mania as a recognized lifestyle
■ Liborius
At *Mýrargata*
www.liborius.is
Open daily from 11-18, except Sundays
Fri. 17 Feb
Art auction from Skafftfell Cultural Centre at 17:00. The works will be on display at Liborius shop from February 9th.
■ Living Art Museum
Laugavegur 26
Wed., Fri.-Sun. 13-17
Thur 13-22
www.nylo.is/
Until 18 Mar
Presque Rien
A contemporary art exhibition with works of French artists like Robbert Filliou & Joachim Pfeufer, Michel Blazy, Rebecca Bourningault, Jean-Baptiste Bruant & Maria Spangaro, Clôde Coullier, François Culet, Gérard, Philippe Meste, Hugues Reip and Jean-Michel Wicker.
■ Mokka
Skólavörðustígur 3a
Open daily 9:30-23:30, Sun. 12-23:30
www.mokka.is
Until 5 Mar
Jaguar
Guðmundur Heimsberg photo exhibit
■ The National Gallery
Frikirkjuvegur
Tue.-Sun. 11-17
Free Entrance
listasafn.is
■ Dec – 25 Feb
Un Regard Fauve
French Expressionism
■ The National Museum
Suðurgata 41
Open daily 10-17
natmus.is/
Until 29 Apr
With a Silverneedle
Elsa E. Guðjónsson textile designer
Until 12 Mar
Guðni Þórðarson photo exhibition
Ingimundur Magnússon and Kristján Magnússon photo exhibit
Permanent Exhibitions:
The Making of a Nation
■ The Nordic House
Sturlugata 5
Tue.-Sun. 12-17
www.nordice.is/
20 Jan – 4 Mar
Þið þessi norrænu / You Nordic
Finnish photographer Susanna Majuri exhibition
■ Reykjavík 871 +/- 2 : The Settlement Exhibition
Aðalstræti 16

Open daily 10-17
■ Reykjavík Art Museum – Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum
Sigtún
Open daily 10-16
Admission ticket is valid for three days in all three museums.
Free entrance every Thursday.
www.listasafnreykjavikur.is
Until 18 Mar
Ásmundur Sveinsson – Man and Material
Selected works from Ásmundur Sveinsson, illustrating his use of materials such as wood, clay, plaster, bronze and other metals.
■ Reykjavík Art Museum – Hafnarhús
Tryggvagata 17
Open daily 10-17
2 Feb – 29 Apr
Erró - Gleymd framtíð / Erró – Forgotten Future
100 watercolour paintings by Erró from the period 1981-2005.
2 Feb – 18 Mar
Installation and photographs by Birta Guðjónsdóttir in the D Gallery
23 Feb – 29 Apr
Fagnaðargáðurinn / Celebration Park
French artist Pierre Huyghe displays his recent works.
■ Reykjavík Art Museum – Kjarvalstaðir
Flókagata
Open Daily 10-17
10 Feb – 29 Apr
Foss / Falling Water
The exhibition explores the relationship between art and nature through the work of Hekla Dögg Jónsdóttir, Ólafur Eliasson, Pat Steir and Rúri.
10 Feb – 2 Sep
K-Pátturinn / The K-Factor
Jóhannes S. Kjarval retrospective.
4 Feb – 6 May
Kjarval og bernskan / Kjarval and childhood
Jóhannes S. Kjarval exhibition especially for the young ones. A program for children every Sunday at 14:00.
■ Reykjavík Museum
Kistuhylur 4
www.arbaejaarsafn.is
■ The Reykjavík Museum of Photography
Grófarhus, Tryggvagata 15, 6th floor
Weekdays 12-19
Sat.-Sun. 13-17
Free Entrance
www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is
11 Jan – 20 Feb
Menjar tímans / Relics of Time
Sissú photo exhibit
24 Feb – 25 Mar
Jo Duchene photo exhibition displaying his documentary of private, public, industrial and religious housing in

Iceland.
■ Safn
Laugavegur 37
Wed.-Fri. 14-18
Sat.-Sun. 14-17
Free Entrance
www.safn.is
Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum
Laugarnestangi 70
Tue.-Sun. 14-17
Permanent exhibition
The work of sculptor Sigurjón Ólafsson

>>> OUTSIDE REYKJAVÍK

■ Hveragerði Library
Austurmörk 2, Hveragerði
Mon.-Fri. 15-19
■ Skafftfell
Austurvegur 42, Seyðisfjörður
www.skafftfell.is
2 Dec – 20 Feb 2007
Haraldur Jónsson exhibition
Open 13-17 on weekends
■ Gallery Klettur
Helluhraun 16, Hanfarfjörður
Open Sat. 10-14. At other times by arrangement.
■ Hafnarborg
Strandgata 34, Hafnarfjörður
Mon.-Sun. 11-17
www.hafnarborg.is
11 Jan – 4 Feb
Faroese Paintings
Edward Fuglø, Astrí Lúihn, Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir, Torbjörn Olsen, Eyðun av Reyni and Ingálvur av Reyni
■ Gljúfrasteinn / Halldór Laxness museum
270 Mosfellsbæ
Open daily except Mondays from 10-17.
■ Hafnarfjörður institution of continuing education
Skólabraut 1, Hafnarfjörður
Paintings by Sigurður Örlýgsson, Árni Rúnar Sverrisson, Inga Dóra Guðmundsdóttir, Ester Jóhannsdóttir, Helga Sigurðardóttir, Kristín Pálmadóttir, Svandís Egilsdóttir, Charlotta S. Sverrisdóttir, Ágúst Bjarnason and Kristbergur Pétursson
■ Kópavogur Art Museum – Gerðasafn
Hamraborg, Kópavogur
Open daily 11:00-17:00 except Mondays
www.gerdasafn.is
13 Jan – 11 Feb
The exhibition INDIGO
Helgi Þorgils Friðjónsson, Daði Guðbjörnsson, Eggert Pétursson, Kristín Gunnlaugsdóttir, Sigtryggur Bjarni Baldvinsson, Sigríður Ólafsdóttir, Sigurður Árni Sigurðsson, Birgir Snæbjörn Birgisson, Ransu and Jóhann Ludvíg Torfason.
■ Suðsúðvestur

Hafnargata 22, Keflavík
Thu.-Fri. 16-18
Sat.-Sun. 14-17
www.sudsudvestur.is
■ DaLi Gallery
Brekkgata 9, Akureyri
Mon.-Sat. 14-18
■ Gallerí+
Brekkgata 35, Akureyri
■ Jónas Viðar Gallery
Kaupvangsstræti 12, Akureyri
Fri.-Sat. 13-18
www.jvs.is/jvgallery.htm
■ Akureyri Art Museum
Kaupvangsstræti 12, Akureyri
Tue.-Sun. 12-17
www.listasafn.akureyri.is
From 13 Jan
Les yeux de l'ombre jaune
Jón Óskars exhibition
www.skafftfell.is
10 Feb – 17 Mar
Kristín Helga Káradóttir exhibition
■ DaLi Gallery
Brekkgata 9, Akureyri
www.daligallery.blogspot.com
■ Populus Tremula
Kaupvangsstræti 12, Akureyri
poptrem.blogspot.com/
■ VeggVerk
Strandgata 17, Akureyri
Open all hours
27 Jan – 9 Mar
Our Greatest Fear
Werner Berger and Timothy Murphy paint statements on the mural



Films
■ Rocky Balboa
A Sylvester Stallone comeback about the infamous boxing hero Rocky Balboa. In this final part of the series, a middle-aged Rocky steps back into the ring for one last fight against heavy-weight champion Mason Dixon.
■ The Prestige
A flick about the battle between two magicians whose rivalry leads to a dangerous obsession with the ultimate last trick. Starring Christian Bale, Hugh Jackman and Scarlett Johansson.
■ Charlotte's Web
Wilbur the pig gets friendly with other farm animals and a talking spider named Charlotte who helps him await the destiny of becoming the Sunday dinner. Based on the popular children's book.
■ Night at the Museum

A comedy involving a museum guard played by Ben Stiller who wakes up a lot of creatives one night. Icelandic Robbie Rotten Stefán Karl Stefánsson lends his voice to some Icelandic Vikings. Supposed to be quite hilarious.
Smárabíó, Laugarásbíó, Regnboginn, Borgarbíó Akureyri, Selfossbíó, Sambíóin Keflavík.
■ Apocalypse
Mel Gibson's newest blockbuster drama set in the ancient Mayan region in Mexico, and centres, as the name suggests, on the decline of civilisation.
Smárabíó, Laugarásbíó, Sambíóin Keflavík.
■ Dreamgirls
Beyoncé Knowles, Eddie Murphy and Jamie Foxx, in a 1960s-style adaptation of a popular Broadway musical.
From 13 Jan
Tyrfingar
Adam Bateman installation
■ GalleriBOX
Kaupvangstræti 10, Akureyri
www.galleribox.blogspot.com
10 Feb – 17 Mar
Kristín Helga Káradóttir exhibition
■ DaLi Gallery
Brekkgata 9, Akureyri
www.daligallery.blogspot.com
■ Populus Tremula
Kaupvangsstræti 12, Akureyri
poptrem.blogspot.com/
■ VeggVerk
Strandgata 17, Akureyri
Open all hours
27 Jan – 9 Mar
Our Greatest Fear
Werner Berger and Timothy Murphy paint statements on the mural

Various locations – 22 Feb. -12 May.

French Spring in Iceland

An extensive French Cultural festival will be taking place in Iceland for the first time this year, entitled Pourquoi Pas? Its opening act, a project organized in collaboration with the Reykjavík Winter Lights Festival starting the same day, features Michel Moglia playing a fire-organ at Austurvöllur, February 22nd.
 There are almost continuous events taking place during the festival, in the field of art, music, film, fashion, science, performing arts and literature. If highlights are to be recommended, Grapevine would first of all like to point out the final days of the exhibition Regard Fauve at the National Gallery. Anyone who hasn't yet seen this exhibition should hurry up and do so quickly, as it's not every year locals get the chance to see the works of French masters such as Bonnard, Dufy, Marquet,

The full program will be available online at www.pourquoipas.is.

Miklabraut – 22 Feb. -28 Feb.

Reykjavík Underworld

There are at least two groups who may never agree on whether graffiti is a creative art form or just pure vandalism. These are the graffiti artists on the one hand, who see their spraying and painting as a modern work of art, and the Reykjavík City cleaning team on the other, which couldn't agree less.
 Last January, artist Rósa Sigrún Jónsdóttir devoted her time to the continuous war between these two groups, by photographing the small underpass where Lönguhlíð and Miklabraut cross. That particular underpass has long been a popular graffiti spot, where the walls function as a large canvas. Armed with their spray-cans, the graffiti artists continue their struggle for domination and freedom of expression by decorating the walls in various colours, while the cleaning team arrives shortly



Foreldrar (Parents) tackles the role of parents in modern society. *Sambíóin Álfabakka, Sambíóin Akureyri.*
■ Babel
By 21 Grams director Alejandro González Iñárritu, an Oscar nominated thriller with Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett among the cast. Set in the Moroccan desert, it starts with a female tourist being shot by two Moroccan boys, triggering a chain of events linking her with a Japanese teen in Tokyo and a nanny smuggling two kids into Mexico. *Sambíóin Álfabakka, Sambíóin Keflavík.*
■ Perfume: The Story of a Murderer
Tom Tykwer takes on the tough task of filming the best-selling novel by German author Patrick Suskind, Das Perfume. Starring Ben Whishaw as the young killing perfumer, Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, who was born with a unique olfactory sense. The movie, set in 18th-century Paris, follows the story of Grenouille, and his search for the perfect perfume. *(February 9)*
■ Smokin' Aces
This film centres on a young snitch getting prepared to testify against the mob. Rather than keep a low profile while waiting to face his destiny, he runs off to a Lake Tahoe casino with a group of angry assassins chasing after him before he gets the chance to squeal. *(February 9)*
■ Anna and the Moors
An Icelandic animated flick about Anna, who wakes up one morning looking like a Marilyn Manson replica and is terribly moody and is shipped to Dr. Artman's lab to fix the problem.

Björk lends her voice to Anna, Damon Albarn to Anna's father and Terry Jones is the narrator. *(February 9)*
■ Pursuit of Happiness
A Will Smith drama based on a true story about a single dad who dreams of a better life for his kid. *(February 9)*
■ Hannibal Rising
Yes, Hannibal the cannibal has returned yet another time, now telling the tale of the man-eating maniac when he is still an innocent teenager. After witnessing his parents getting killed during WW2 he ends up in an orphanage and slowly starts changing into the brutal serial killer movie-goers know all too well. *(February 16)*
■ Notes on a Scandal
Starring Cate Blanchett as a pottery teacher who begins an affair with one of her underage students. *(February 16)*
■ The Number 23
A thriller with Jim Carrey taking on the role of a man whose life will soon change after discovering a mysterious book he thinks is based on his life. As the book ends with a murder, he becomes paranoid and scared and tries to fight what he is now convinced is his brutal destiny. *(February 23)*
■ Last King of Scotland
Set in Uganda, this movie is inspired by the life of the country's dictator Idi Amin and his brutal governance in the 1970s as experienced by his Scottish personal physician. Forest Whitaker takes on the role of Amin. *(February 23)*
■ The Good Shepherd
Directed by Robert De Niro and star-

ring him, Matt Damon, Angelina Jolie and Patrick Wilson, this political flick about misdeeds and corruption in the CIA has gained very mixed reviews but at the same time will be among the nominees at the next Oscar Award ceremony. *(February 23)*
■ Regnboginn, Hverfisgata 54
101 Reykjavík, Tel. 551-9000
■ Sambíóin, Álfabakki 8
109 Reykjavík, Tel. 575-8900
■ Smárabíó, Smáralind
201 Kópavogur, Tel. 564-0000
■ Háskólabíó, Hagatorg
107 Reykjavík, Tel. 525-5400
■ Kringlubíó, Kringlan 4-12
103 Reykjavík, Tel. 575-8900
■ Selfossbíó, Eyravegur 2
800 Selfoss, Tel. 482-3007
■ Laugarásbíó, Laugarás
104 Reykjavík, Tel. 565-0118
■ Sambíóin Akureyri, Ráðhústorg
600 Akureyri, Tel. 461-4666
■ Nýja-Bíó, Hafnargata 33
230 Reykjanesbær, Tel. 421-1170

Events
■ Prét-á-Porter in Hafnarfjörður Movie Theatre
10.02 The National Film Archive of Iceland in Hafnarfjörður continues offering old classics to cinema lovers for only 500 ISK per ticket, this time screening Robert Altman's controversial flick Prét-á-Porter.
The National Film Archive of Iceland, Hvaleyrarbraut 13, starts at 20:00.
■ French Wine Seminar
13-15.02 Everyone who enjoys a glass of red or white with dinner knows the quality of French wines, but one can

always become a little wiser. In order to help Icelandic people become more familiar with the rich wine culture, the French-Icelandic Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Icelandic Wine School, have organised a French Wine Seminar, taking place February 13–15th at Hotel Reykjavík Centrum. Guests will get to taste some of the renowned French wines while the Wine School headmaster guides them through the distinctive flavours of their taste.
Hotel Reykjavík Centrum, Aðalstræti 16, starts at 18:00. For more info visit: www.vinskolin.is
■ Roots of Competitiveness
16.02 A convention dedicated to competitiveness in international trading will be held at Nordica Hotel, February 16th from 09:00-16:00. Dr. Christian Ketels, a member of the Michael E. Porter's Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness at the Harvard Business School, will lecture on the subject, and administrators from Actavis, Landsbankinn Bank, Össur and Exista will give short presentations. After lunch, all participants will be offered to partake in workshops where the subject is analyzed further. Participation fee is 19.500 ISK.
Nordica Hotel, Suðurlandsbraut 2. More info at www.mbah.is
■ Performance by the Iceland Dance Company
23.02 The Iceland Dance Company premieres two new dance pieces created by choreographers Roberto Oliván and André Gingras.
Reykjavík City Theatre, Listabraut 3. For

tickets visit: www.id.is
■ How do you adopt the Euro?
02.03 The University of Reykjavík together with Glitnir Bank present a lunch meeting where the question of how to adopt the Euro will be examined and the requirements set by the European Union reviewed. Inigi Arruga Oleaga, a Principal Legal Counsel at the European Central Bank, will give a lecture. Participation fee is 1.500 ISK with a light lunch included. To register, call 599-6267.
The University of Reykjavík, Ofanleiti 2. Starts at 12:00.
■ Tango at Ólónó Theatre
06.03 Every first Tuesday each winter month, teachers Þórdís and Daði show guests how to dance the Tango, step-by-step.
Ólónó Theatre, Vonarstræti 3, starts at 20:00.
■ The French Commercial Days
08.03 Within the framework of the French Culture Festival, the French-Icelandic Chamber of Commerce presents the fifth annual French Commercial Days. From March 8th to 18th, French products will be promoted in more than twenty shops around Reykjavík's centre – including L'Occitane, Kisan, and Du Pareil Au Mème – and a series of events will take place around the city. At the same time, the French Book Week will take place at Mál og Menning bookshop where book lovers can get acquainted with French literature.

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<p>1 CAFÉS Kaffi Hjómálinn Laugavegur 21</p> <p>This organic, free-trade café prides itself on being a non-profit company and a dedicated venue for the hardcore and cultural scene by hosting concerts, lectures and poetry nights. Serving delicious soups and vegetarian dishes as well as organic tea, coffee and cake, this is the place to visit for a reasonably priced healthy lunch.</p>	<p>8 Tíu Dropar Laugavegur 27</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>15 Næsti Bar Ingólfrstræti 1a</p> <p>Næsti Bar can be a godsend on those nights when queues seem to snake all the way down Laugavegur, no seats are available anywhere and you just want to chat with some friends over a beer. Frequenting the literary and acting elite, those folk usually don't mind if you pop in for a quick beer and make use of some of the (usually) available tables, so long as you don't sing.</p>	<p>22 Boston Laugavegur 28b</p> <p>Located above the second-hand fashion store Sputnik, with its roomy bar floor and nice sofas in the lounge room upstairs, Boston is a fresh addition to the Reykjavík bar scene. Old-school yet stylish interiors, and enough tables to create a good vibe, make the place a comfy café as well as a laid-back tavern where the music is good but never intrusive.</p>	<p>25 Ölstofan Vegamótastígur 4</p> <p>Ölstofan has been attracting a clientele of late twenties and up who come for the drink and stay for the company, as blasting DJs here have been replaced by nice background music to go with the drink. Better show up early on weekends before the regular clientele rushes in as its popularity makes it hard to find a table.</p>	<p>28 Barinn Laugave</p> <p>Up-and-coming Bar quite popular among scenesters. Its three numerous bars get interesting weekends where downstairs and chat for a good night out DJ bar, Barinn occasion and is always a fun p</p>
<p>2 Grái Kötturinn Hverfisgata 16a</p> <p>A small antique-style non-smoking coffee house in a Hverfisgata basement, legendary for its early opening hours, amazing breakfast and strong coffee that will easily wake you up in the morning. We especially recommend The Truck, American style breakfast consisting of eggs, bacon, pancakes, fried potatoes, tomatoes, syrup and toast. The bagels are also excellent.</p>	<p>9 Súfistinn Laugavegur 18</p> <p>On the top floor of the giant bookstore Mál og Menning, you'll find the casual booklover coffee house Súfistinn. What we love about this place is the selection of books and magazines you can take from the store and read while enjoying a breakfast, light lunch or afternoon coffee. Browse the shelves and grab a table.</p>	<p>16 Vegamót Vegamótastígur 4</p> <p>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.vegमत. If you like Oliver, try Vegamót and vice versa.</p>	<p>23 Café Cultura Hverfisgata 18</p> <p>Located inside the Intercultural Centre, Cultura is a restaurant/bar with a cosmopolitan feel, hosting an array of events and various theme nights like Salsa teaching, tango nights and fusion parties. The menu features all sorts of international dishes like Thai soup, Spanish tapas, fajitas and falafel mixed with bistro regulars such as sandwiches and salads.</p>	<p>26 Deco Austurstræti 12</p> <p>Located in a former drugstore, Deco is an upper-middle priced bar/bistro catering to those who prefer elegant surroundings. A good choice for a light lunch or an afternoon glass of red wine. Features an above average whiskey selection.</p>	<p>29 Q-Bar Ingólfrst</p> <p>A spacious designer for an evening drink vated Q-Bar is a well night life downtown, fortale surrounding atmosphere, a good seats, the place never ably crowded nor 1 versation, making it destination.</p>
<p>3 Mokka Skólavörðustígur 3a</p> <p>Mokka has been attracting coffee-thirsty regulars since 1958, making it the oldest café in the city centre and the founder of a very rich coffee culture in the country. Its old interiors full of character make the stay both relaxing and comfortable and a great place to linger on a Sunday afternoon. Mokka's regular art exhibits are always worth a look.</p>	<p>10 Svarta Kaffi Laugavegur 54</p> <p>A cosy second floor café offering lunch snacks and cappuccinos to Laugavegur pedestrians every day of the week. The appeal lies partly in their famous Súpa í brauði, (translates Soup in bread), but also in the romantic atmosphere created by candlelight on every table and easy-listening music. A nice hideaway in the early evening for a drink or two.</p>	<p>17 Café Cozy Austurstræti 3</p> <p>Reykjavík's only gay-bar at the time of writing, Café Cozy is indeed very cosy, and especially so if you happen to be same-sex oriented. During weekends, this small café usually turns into a full-fledged discotheque with bouts of table dancing and general hedonism while weeknights find the clientele discussing current-affairs over pints and cups of coffee.</p>	<p>SPOT THIS: Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar Geirsgata 1, 101 Reykjavík, Tel.: 511 1888</p> <p>Frequently lauded by Iceland's hamburger aficionados as the best place to get a real hamburger in Reykjavík, 'Búllan' (as it's affectionately known to the locals) does indeed serve up some extra-tasty burgers that are sure to take the edge off any hangover. What makes it so good is hard to say, but liberal helpings of rare beef contribute a lot.</p>		
<p>4 Ráðhúskaffi Tjarnargata 11</p> <p>Located inside the City Hall with a great view over the pond, this coffee house has a good selection of cakes and pastries for pedestrians who like to relax after a stroll in the centre. A large topographic model of Iceland and regular art exhibits add to the pleasure.</p>	<p>11 BARS 'N' BISTROS Litli Ljóti Andarunginn Lækjargata 6b</p> <p>Known for its all you can eat fish buffet, this restaurant/guesthouse is also a fine place to sit down and relax with a latte or some beer when suffering from a case of severe hipster-burn.</p>	<p>18 Rósenberg Lækjargata 2</p> <p>Café Rósenberg features a venue for easy going troubadours, jazz bands and blues groups, providing a relaxed atmosphere almost every day of the week and making Rósenberg one of a very few jazz clubs living up to its name in Reykjavík. The live gigs, which are almost guaranteed on weekends, attract a very mixed crowd, all looking for that chilled-out feel.</p>			
<p>5 Babalú Skólavörðustígur 22a</p> <p>Walking up Skólavörðustígur, you can't miss café Babalú, a pleasant destination in its own right, as it has to be ranked as one of the cosiest places for a coffee and cake. With nice old sofas and books lining the shelves, you can't help feeling you are at your grandma's place. We could sit there every day, all day, if our daily duties wouldn't pull us out again.</p>	<p>12 Belly's Hafnarstræti 18a</p> <p>A spacious pub, although the complete opposite of bright and airy, Belly's deserves praise for having the cheapest bar-price around, selling a large beer for only 350 ISK. Attracting a mixture of students, sailors and all those who don't want to drain the wallet, there are enough tables for everyone and TVs on every wall for all you sports enthusiasts out there.</p>	<p>19 Óliver Laugavegur 20a</p> <p>If you like trendy party-types who dance like crazy to a lively mix of music where glamour is all that counts on the spacious dance floor, the stylish Óliver is the nightclub for you. For all the others who hate that kind of a party, the good air-conditioning, fine food and excellent brunch served during the day makes Óliver a recommended choice for mid-priced meals.</p>	<p>20 Bar 11 Laugavegur 11</p> <p>Featuring occasional concerts on Friday nights and DJs calling the tunes every weekend, Bar 11 is a popular late-night haunt on two floors. Emphasizing old rock'n'roll classics and chart-toppers, the crammed dance floor tends to turn into a war zone at weekends when it's impossible to have a private chat. That whole fiasco can be an interesting experience, especially if you join in the fun.</p>		
<p>6 Segafredo By Lækjartorg</p> <p>The Italian coffee-chain found its spot in the heart of Reykjavík, with its windows facing the Lækjartorg Square. Serving lunch snacks like paninis and strong espressos for coffee lovers whether you need to grab a cup and sandwich on the way to work or want to enjoy your drink on the spot.</p>	<p>13 Kaffibarinn Bergstaðastræti 1</p> <p>A popular coffee place on weekdays, especially among students and downtown workers who like to enjoy a bottle of beer after a busy day. At weekends, Kaffibarinn becomes the opposite of a quiet destination, as its two floors fill up with the late-night souls. With DJs playing live sets from Wednesday to Saturday, the party doesn't start winding down until early morning.</p>	<p>20 Bar 11 Laugavegur 11</p> <p>Featuring occasional concerts on Friday nights and DJs calling the tunes every weekend, Bar 11 is a popular late-night haunt on two floors. Emphasizing old rock'n'roll classics and chart-toppers, the crammed dance floor tends to turn into a war zone at weekends when it's impossible to have a private chat. That whole fiasco can be an interesting experience, especially if you join in the fun.</p>	<p>21 Hressó Austurstræti 20</p> <p>A spacious neutral place with no particular type of clientele, Hressó is a place where the menu spans a variety of lunch dishes during the day and troubadours and tap-beer are the order of the night. A somewhat basic club during weekends, notable for its size and amount of seats.</p>		
<p>7 Kaffitár Bankastræti 8</p> <p>At Kaffitár, making coffee is a way of celebrating life. Offering all sorts of delicacies to go with your morning fuel and a nice selection for those with a sweeter tooth, it's an excellent choice for eat in or take away. Their special coffee-blends are a tad pricey, but well worth that little extra change. If you like your coffee, buy a bag of beans to take home.</p>	<p>14 Sirkus Klapparstígur 30</p> <p>Attracting a mixed crowd of party-people, the small bar Sirkus has always been popular among musicians and the creative crowd who get along well although the breathing space can be limited on weekends. While Sirkus's DJs provide for the greatest party possible every weekend, the bar occasionally hosts concerts on weeknights.</p>	<p>21 Hressó Austurstræti 20</p> <p>A spacious neutral place with no particular type of clientele, Hressó is a place where the menu spans a variety of lunch dishes during the day and troubadours and tap-beer are the order of the night. A somewhat basic club during weekends, notable for its size and amount of seats.</p>	<p>24 Prikið Bankastræti 12</p> <p>This two-floor café/pub has been a part of Reykjavík's bar scene for decades. With a large and fairly cheap bistro menu, Prikið attracts a mix of university students with their laptops and elderly devoted regulars during the day while the younger clientele fills up the space during the evening and especially at weekends when the music is mostly dedicated to hip-hop and R&B.</p>	<p>27 Kaffi Amsterdam Hafnarstræti 5</p> <p>One of 101's more established taverns, Kaffi Amsterdam seems to have been in business forever, really, as some of their decorations bear witness. Recently re-invented as a live venue, weekends see some of Reykjavík's most rockin' bands strut on their guitars for some... rockin'. The beer's also cheap and you will get exposed to some 'colourful' characters.</p>	<p>30 Dillon Laugave</p> <p>The quintessential rc tures moderately pri and cosy mood and music (especially w DJ Andrea Jóns ma tattooed, beer-lovin' out there on school-1 legions of parka-clé weekends, creatin that's always fun to p</p>

REYKJAVÍK WINTER LIGHTS FESTIVAL

FEB. 22 - 24, 2007
Full schedule

in collaboration with Pourquoi Pas?

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Thursday, Feb. 22

>>> 20:00

Opening of Reykjavik Winter Lights Festival 2007

The Mayor of Reykjavík, Vilhjálmur Þ. Vilhjálmsson, formally opens the Reykjavik Winter Lights Festival on Austurvöllur. French artist and musician Michel Moglia plays the fire organ, a unique instrument that transforms heat into noise. A concert that jolts the imagination. In collaboration with Pourquoi Pas?
Location: Austurvöllur.

Rock and Roll, Break Dance and Street Theatre

Thursday Forplay in the basement, where rock and roll takes over. Break dancers strut their stuff on the third floor. The Street Theatre roams around the building.

Location: Hitt húsið, Pósthússtræti.

Reykjavik Underworld

31 photos by Rósa Sigrún Jónsdóttir taken from January 1 – January 31, depicting the daily changes in a tunnel under Miklabraut, where graffiti artists and city workers fight a war over the walls.

Location: Tunnel under Miklabraut by Langahlið. Open from February 22 – 28.

>>> 20:15

Theatre Talk

The team behind the play Day of Hope, shown in the Reykjavik City Theatre, discusses the production with guests.

Location: Reykjavik City Library – Kringlusafn, Kringlan.

>>> 20:30

Exhibition Opening

Selected works from the Reykjavik City Library’s Artotek. Author Þráinn Bertelsson selected the works and opens the exhibition with a short talk.

Location: Reykjavik City Library – Grófarhús, Tryggvagata 15.

>>> 21:00

A Dark Light

British artists Kathryn Thomas, Tamany Baker and Simon Whetham visited Iceland in December 2005 and were captivated by the endless darkness and the harsh Icelandic winter. The result is their joint exhibition, A Dark Light, consisting of paintings, photographs and soundbytes. The exhibition is open until March 1.

Location: City Hall, Vonarstræti.

The Salvation Quartet Salvages Winter Old Tunes in new Clothes

The Salvation Quartet sings and plays various instruments, such as a donkey jaw, a tummy, milkglass, guitar, noseflute, kazoo and more.

Location: Frikirkjan, Frikirkjuvegur.

A Concert With Taste

French Music – French Food

Harp player Marion Herrera introduces French musical pearls in words and music, performing pieces by Caplet, Brassens, Debussy, Faure, Piaf and Forestier. Iðnó chef, Magga Rósa, produces French delicacies for the modest price of 1000 ISK.

Location: Iðnó, Vonarstræti.

La Guardia Flamenca

Anda La Banda

Dance group La Guardia Flamenca mixes the passion of the flamenco dancer and the planning of the majorettes in a charming and funny way. Also performed during Museum Night and on Saturday night at 21:30. Brought to Iceland with the assistance of Iceland Express

Location: Reykjavik Art Museum – Hafnarhús, Tryggvagata.

Vem Kan Segla?

Áland on the Horizon

Music and mingling – tones and talk – exciting Áland Islands cuisine.

Location: Nordic Association by Óðinstorg.

Landsbankinn History Exhibition

A guided tour of an exhibition of the 120 years of Landsbankinn’s history.

Location: Aðalstræti.

Kramhúsið Dance Festival at Nasa

A diverse multinational dance program from Kramhúsið. The Motion dance group displays urban dancing, while more traditional dances such as Argentinian tango, Egyptian belly dance, and afro will also be on display. Special guests: Ólöf Arnalds, Vatnadsnemyjafélagið Hrafnhildur and the People’s Choir. Balkan band Strakovsky Horo plays dance music for guests after the program. Doors open at 20:00.

Location: Nasa by Austurvöllur.

Friday, Feb. 23

>>> 09:30

Frére Jaques

400 young children from the city’s day care centres perform Frére Jaques (Are You Sleeping) in French and Icelandic in Austurberg Sports Hall, led by former President Visdís Finnbogadóttir. The Mayor of Reykjavík and

the French Ambassador join the children in singing along with elderly citizens.

Location: Austurberg Sports Hall.

>>> 13:00

Exhibition Opening

Children from Barónsborg day care centre open an exhibition of paintings and drawings. Open until March 23, from 08:20 – 16:15.

Location: Þjónustumiðstöð Miðborgar og Hlíða, Skúlagata 21.

>>> 13:30

Parade and Singing

Parade from Hlemmur with children from three day care centres, along with Lúlli the Police Bear, the motorcycle police and the Police Choir. The parade will end in Miklatún where everyone will sing together.

Location: Hlemmur – Miklatún.

>>> 14:00

100and1 Dreamland

100and1 and Draumaland youth centres perform around the city centre from 14:00 – 16:00.

Location: City centre.

>>> 16:00 - 18:00

Meet Your City Council Member

Reykjavík City Council members invite citizens to sit down with them and discuss city matters. Light refreshments.

Location: City Hall.

>>> 17:00

Graffiti themed art Exhibition Ólátagarður

An exhibition inspired by hip-hop culture. Paintings, clothes, sculptures, video art and live music.

Location: Kartöflugeymslan by Ártúnsbrekka.

The Beast in Me

Joint exhibition of six artists from Egilsstaðir in East Iceland. The exhibition is called The Beast In Me, and each of the artists constructs a piece to interpret the title.

Location: Kartöflugeymslan by Ártúnsbrekka.

>>> 18:00

Tónabær Freestyle Dance Competition

Dance competition for young people, both single and groups. Admission 700 ISK.

Location: Loftkastalinn, Seljavegi 2.

>>> 19:00

Museum Night

The opening of Museum Night. Detailed program can be found on the back page.

Gallery Opening

Textill is a new gallery by Hallgrímskirkja. Textile designs, photos by Þórólfur Antonsón and Hrönn Vilhelmsdóttir and artwork by various artists relating to Hallgrímskirkja and the statue of Leif Eiríksson. Textill opens on Museum Night and welcomes guests.

Location: Lokastígur 28.

>>> 20:00

Another Ping

A performance by Andrew Burgess on the façade of the Icelandic Parliament House. A virtual animation of the architecture will be projected on the building for four hours.

Location: Austurvöllur

Viðey Art Walk

The ferry leaves for Viðey at 20:00. All participants receive a torch. First stop in Viðey is the Blind Pavilion, by Ólafur Eliasson. Next stop is the proposed site for Yoko Ono’s Imagine Peace Tower, city lights will be in plain view. After the walk, hot chocolate will be waiting in Viðeyjarstofa, where the history of the island will be recounted. The ferry heads back at 22:15.

Location: Sundahöfn

Saturday, Feb. 24

>>> 12:00

France in the Mind of Icelandic School Children

A drawing competition among Icelandic schoolchildren in fifth and sixth grade. The theme of the competition is France and French culture. 100 to 200 works will be selected for an exhibition from February 22 – March 4. Awards will be presented on February 24 at 12:00. First prize for each grade is a ticket for two to Paris with Icelandair. Edda Publishing awards places 2-6 with books. The competition is run in cooperation with the Winter Lights Festival and the French cultural festival Pourquoi Pas?

Location: Ingólfsnaust, Aðalstræti 2.

>>> 13:00

Winter Games

Fákur Horse Club

Competition in nine different categories, from youngsters to professionals.

Location: Horse track Viðvelliir, Viðidal.

Children's International Day

All the Continents in one Place

See sidebar for details

>>> 13:30 - 17:30

Afternoon Sing-Along

Solo concerts by graduating students from the Reykjavik Academy of Singing and Vocal Arts. Before, during and after the concert, guests will be asked to join performers in sing-alongs for winter songs.

Location: Reykjavik Academy of Singing and Vocal Arts by Snorrabraut 54.

>>> 14:00

Poetry in the Forest

A poetry walk through Elliðarárdalur, courtesy of the Reykjavik City Library. In Elliðarárdalur, guests will find a “poetry forest” and wandering poets will join them in walking through the exhibition.

Location: Rafveituheimilið, Elliðaárdalur.

Urban Youths

The Centre for Oral History collects childhood stories from Reykjavik citizens, old and young. Come and share your story.

Location: Reykjavik City Library, Tryggvagata 15

French Contest

A French contest for French language students in Icelandic secondary schools. The contest theme is “France in Your Eyes”. Students will communicate in French, using almost any medium they can think of. Students can choose to work alone or in groups. Preliminary contests will be held in all secondary schools and the best project from each school will enter the main contest.

Location: Iðnó, Vonarstræti.

>>> 15:00 - 18:00

Senior Citizens' Festival

With the participation of: Arni Ísleifsson’s Dixieland jazz band, Ástbjörg Gunnarsdóttir’s dance group, Gerðuberg Senior Choir, Senior Citizens Theatre Group, Árskógar Song Group, Young dancers from Breiðholt, Hrunamannahreppur’s Theatre Group, Poetry, Dance Group, an honorary guest, and Breiðholt’s folk dance group. The band Vinabandið will play a few dance tunes.

Location: City Hall, Vonarstræti.

>>> 16:00

Galleri Tukt

Margrét Agnes Iversen and Ásta Fanney Sigurðardóttir open a joint exhibition at Galleri Tukt.

Location: Hitt húsið, Pósthússtræti 3 - 5.

Saturday, Feb. 24, 22:00 at Reykjavik Art Museum - Hafnarhús



Dionysos Live in Iceland

Dionysos are living proof that French creativity is still alive. They might not be the only jewel in the crown, but they do shine more brightly than most. Dionysos playfully rein-

>>> 18:00

Music in the Basement

Up and coming bands from Reykjavík offer a glimpse of the diversity of the Icelandic music scene. Everyone welcome, no admission fee.

Location: Hitt Húsið, Pósthússtræti 3 - 5.

>>> 19:00

KR Super Challenge

KR sports club will host the Super Challenge in swimming, at Laugardalslaug swimming pool between February 23 – 25. 550 participants are expected from 35 clubs in Iceland, Scotland, Denmark, Croatia and Germany. IAdmission: 200 ISK.

Location: Laugardalslaug swimming pool, Sundlaugavegur.

>>> 20:00

Ten-Year Anniversary

Ekka Dance Theatre Company

Ekka Dance Theatre Company celebrates a ten-year anniversary this year. During the Winter Lights Festival, the group will present a production in relation to the anniversary, providing insight into the history of the Ekka Dance Theatre. Among participants will be: Kolbrún Anna Björnsdóttir, Aino Freyja, Karen María Jónsdóttir, and others.

Location: Kartöflugeymslurnar by Ártúnsbrekka.

>>> 22:00

Dionysos Live in Iceland

Dionysos is a French rock band formed in 1993 in Valence. The group has released eight albums, garnering critical and popular success in France. Their music, a unique blend of pop melodies and folk rock, evokes images of a surreal world, full of mythical creatures. The song La Metamorphose de Mister Chat tells the story of a lady’s man transformed into a cat. They have been hailed as saviours of French creativity. In cooperation with the Pourquoi Pas? Dionysos will close the Winter Lights Festival before a full house on Saturday night.

Location: Reykjavik Art Museum – Hafnarhús, Tryggvagata 17.

<p>This program is subject to change. More info, updates and a detailed program available at www.visitreykjavik.is.</p>
<p>Admission is free unless otherwise stated.</p>

<p>Saturday, Feb. 24, 13:00 - 18:00 at Gerðuberg and Miðberg</p>
<h2>Children’s International Day</h2> <p><i>All the continents in one place.</i></p>
<p>For the third time, the Children’s International day is a part of the Winter Lights Festival. An exciting opportunity for children of all ages to get to know exotic cultures from far off places. Extensive programs for children and teenagers that are intended to introduce various elements of world culture. Dance workshops, musical workshops,</p>
<p>and various workshops such as Sri Lankan paper mache, writing in Arabic and much more. At the end of the day, the results will be performed and displayed at Gerðuberg.</p>
<p>The children’s international day is held in cooperation with the Intercultural Centre, Kramhúsið, Gerðuberg and Miðberg.</p>
<p><i>Workshops:</i></p>
<p>Africa <i>Afro-dancing</i> Energetic dance lessons to a powerful drum beat. Lots of motion, lots of rhythm. <i>Arabic Calligraphy</i> How does the Arabic alphabet work? Children learn about the Arabic alphabet, and draw a few Arabic letters. <i>Ghana dancing</i> The dance reflects the history of Ghanaian aborigines, tribal struggles and mating rituals.</p>
<p>Europe <i>Icelandic folk dances</i> Instruction in Icelandic folk dances and vikkivaki dances. <i>Balkan dances</i> The Balkans are known for their rich dancing tradition and mesmerising music. <i>The viking tradition</i> Workshops in both weapon making and fencing.</p>
<p>North America <i>Hip Hop and Krump-dancing</i> Hip-Hop originates from the streets of North-American cities. Krump is the newest dance style from South Central L.A. Fresh and fun workshop. <i>Balloon decorations</i> Balloon artist Glenn Barkan will demonstrate and teach the art of balloon decorations. <i>Rap 'n' Rhymes</i> Dóri DNA and Steindór Andersen teach this modern form of poetry with old roots.</p>
<p>South America <i>Caribbean dancing</i> The most popular dances from the Caribbean. Excellent opportunity to get to know South-American and Caribbean culture. <i>The making of maracas</i> How to make maracas. South American carnival atmosphere.</p>

<p>Museum Night, Friday, Feb. 23</p>
<h2>Museum Extravaganza</h2>
<p>Reykjavik Museum Night is an extravaganza where all museums in Reykjavik open their doors and invite guests to enjoy special programs, free of admissions. The Museum Night bus will offer free rides between museums between 19:00 and 01:00, making transportation easy. There are is a variety of attractions available, most museums offer</p>
<p>lectures or guided tours through their exhibitions, and in many cases there are special exhibitions put on display for the occation. The full program for the Museum Night can be found on the back page. Carefully study the program to select an art cocktail of your liking.</p>
<h2>We Want to Preserve Your Family History</h2>
<p>In relation to the Reykjavik Winter Lights Festival, The Reykjavik Municipal Archives wishes to obtain documents from the citizens of Reykjavik for storage. The museum is particularly interested in diaries, letters, photographs, post cards and other cards; and other personal documents. The documents will be preserved for future generations for educational and historical research purposes. It is possible to restrict access to the documents. The museum is especially interested</p>
<p>in obtaining documents from immigrants to Iceland, not necessarily in Icelandic. To learn more, please contact the museum by phone, 563-1770 or by e-mail, borgarskjalasafn@reykjavik.is, or come by the museum Monday – Friday between 10:00 – 16:00. The museum can provide translation service if required.</p>
<p><i>The Reykjavik Municipal Archives Tryggvagata 15, 3rd floor.</i></p>
<p><i>You will find the full schedule for the Museum Night on the back page >>></i></p>

Thursday, Feb. 22, 20:00 at Austurvöllur



l'Orgue a Feu The Fire Organ

l’Orgue a Feu or the Fire Organ is an instrument by French artist Michel Moglia that transforms the heat from a flame into sound. The thermal exchanges that take place in the

tubes of the Organ, which are generated by multiple vibrations within, are directly linked to meteorology. In collaboration with Pourquoi Pas?

On cover: French band Dionysos Photo by: Benni Valsson

Thursday, Feb. 22, 21:00 at Reykjavik Art Museum – Hafnarhús



La Guardia Flamenca Anda La Banda

La Guardia Flamenca mixes the passion of the flamenco dancer and the structure of the majorettes in a charming way. With horns blowing, the group marches in an organ-

ised fashion but then the emotions of the flamenco beat take over and the organised majorettes turn into dramatic expression of individuality.

Museum Night *Friday, Feb. 23*

Participate in Museum Night and have a chance to see the real *Mona Lisa*. Participation slips available at the Tourist Information Office in *Ádalstræti 2* and all participating museums. Get stamps from the museums. One lucky winner will travel to Paris and see the *Mona Lisa*. Only on Museum Night. More information at www.visitreykjavik.is

Einar Jónsson Art Museum

Opening of Museum Night
>>> 19:00 The Museum Night starts in the mystical garden of the Einar Jónsson Art Museum where a chilly winter evening will be transformed into a quiet summer night.
>>> 20:30 & 22:00 Concert. Performers: Pamela de Sensi, flute, and Sophie Schoonjans, harp.
Njardargata, open 19:00 – 24:00.

National Gallery of Iceland

>>> 20:00 Look at art. A guided tour through the exhibition Regard Fauve for the whole family.
>>> 21:00 Authors Pétur Gunnarsson and Sigurður Pálsson talk about European art and literature at the beginning of the 20th century.
>>> 22:30 Guided tour through the exhibitions Jón Stefánsson Pupil of Matisse and Regard Fauve.
Frikirkjuvegur 7, open 19:00 – 24:00.

Sigurjón Ólafsson Art Museum

>>> 20:00 School children introduce works which they have selected from the museum's website www.iso.is.
>>> 22:00 Guided tour through the exhibition.
Laugarnestangi 70, open 19:00 – 24:00.

Gerðuberg Cultural Centre

>>> 19:00 - 22:00 "Street Market" in the cultural centre.
>>> 21:00 The artist Rúri gives a guided tour through an exhibition of her works, Time – Relativity – Value.
>>> 20:00 & 22:00 Installation by the Percussion group BENDA.
Gerðuberg 3-5, open 19:00 – 24:00.

Reykjavík Heritage Museum – Árbæjarsafn

Program focused on youth culture in relation to the exhibition Disco & Punk – Different Ages. Guided tours through the exhibition every hour on the hour from 20:00. Bands from nearby neighbourhoods perform. Guests will have an opportunity to learn the basic moves of disco dancing.
Kistuhylur 4, open 19:00 – 24:00.

Reykjavík Heritage Museum – Árbæjarsafn, Reykjavík Botanical Gardens and Reykjavík Energy History Museum

Museum Night – Dirty laundry
>>> 20:00 Reykjavík Heritage Museum – Árbæjarsafn, Reykjavík Botanical Garden and Reykjavík Energy History Museum invite you for an educational walk from Hlemmur to Laugardalur and the Reykjavík Botanical Gardens. Along the way, historians will inform participants on the life of Reykjavík women, who before the days of electricity used the geothermal springs in Laugardalur to do laundry. Ca. one and a half hour.
>>> 22:30 A shorter version of the walk from the Gazebo in the Botanical Garden to the laundry springs.
Hlemmur – Laugardalur, open 19:00 – 24:00

National Museum of Iceland

People From the Past Come Alive
>>> 20:00 & 22:00. Örn Magnússon, Marta Halldórsdóttir and Sigursveinn D. Kristinsson perform beautiful songs from past centuries, using old instruments. Guests are encouraged to sing along.
>>> 19:00 – 24:00. Historical people come to life. Guests can try their hand at games and quizzes related to these people and the collection.
>>> 20:00 – 22:00. Exhibition of photographs from the 1950s and the 1960s by Guðni Þórðarson. People in the photographs step

forward and tell the story behind the photo.
>>> 19:30 & 21:00. Guided tour of With a Silver Needle, exhibition of women's artistic handicraft through centuries past.
Sudurgata 41, open 19:00 – 24:00.

Reykjavík City Library – Grófarhús

>>> 19:00 – 24:00 Urban Youth. The Centre for Oral History collects childhood stories from Reykjavík citizens, old and young. Come and share your memories and stories.
>>> 19:00 – 01:00 Lets Make Poetry! Join us in creating collage poems.
>>> 19:00 – 01:00 Arts Exhibition. Artwork from the City Library's Artoteque.
>>> 20:00 – 24:00 Knitting Café. The City Library's handicraft enthusiasts instruct guests in the art of knitting and other handicraft.
>>> 20:00 – 24:00. Film a Short. Shoot your own short movie and make it available online with the help of Theodór Kristjánsson, animator and computer expert. All equipment will be available.
>>> 20:00 & 23:15 Casting the Runes. Learn to use tarot cards and old magical runes with Eva Hauksdóttir from the Witchcraft Store.
>>> 20:00 – 20:30 Writing a Song. Musician Ingvi Þór Kormásson instructs guests in the basic principles of song writing.
>>> 21:00 & 22:00 Breaking the Silence. Have you always dreamt about being loud at the library? Join Óskar Einarsson, conductor of the Reykjavík Gospel Choir, in communal singing. Everyone can join in!
Reykjavík City Library, Tryggvagata 15. Open 19:00 – 01:00.

Nordic House

>>> 19:00, 20:30, 22:00 & 23:30 Parques Majeures "Alive and virtual installation". World premiere of a 20 minute virtual reality tour through the human body and consciousness, into the horrible reality of life in modern day Baghdad. One night only. Part of Pourquoi Pas?
Sturlugata 5, open 19:00 – 24:00.

Reykjavík Museum of Photography

>>> 19:00 Opening of two photography exhibitions. Jo Duchene Icelandic Houses – The Guests Eye and Damien Peyret – Swimming and Steam. Part of Pourquoi Pas?
>>> 19:00 – 01:00 Making Paper Boats – A tribute to French sailors in Iceland in the past.
>>> 19:00 – 01:00 What is Daguerreo? – Daguerreo photography technique explained.
>>> 19:00 – 01:00 Exhibition of French photographs belonging to the museum.
Grófarhús, Tryggvagata 15, open 19:00 – 01:00.

Reykjavík Art Museum – Hafnarhús

>>> 20:00 – 22:00 Hlaupanótan Concert. The National Broadcasting Service gives listeners a taste of what is happening in the Icelandic music scene.
>>> 20:30 Erró – Forgotten Future – water paintings from 1981-2004. Þorbjörg Gunnarsdóttir gives a guided tour through the exhibition.
>>> 21:30 Guided tour through the exhibition Celebration Park – Pierre Huyghe. Part of Pourquoi Pas?
>>> 22:30 D1 Birta Guðjónsdóttir – Guided tour.
>>> 23:00 Guja Dögg Hauksdóttir director of the Reykjavík Art Museum – Architecture Department talks about the architecture of Hafnarhús.
>>> 23:30 French songs performed by Sigríður Thorlacius and Hjörtur Yngvi Jóhannsson, accordion player.
Tryggvagata 17, open 19:00 – 01:00.

Reykjavík Art Museum – Kjarvalsstaðir

>>> 19:30 & 20:30 Kjarval and Youth – guided tour and projects for children of all ages.
>>> 20:00 Guja Dögg Hauksdóttir director of the Reykjavík Art Museum – Architecture Department talks about the architecture of Kjarvalsstaðir.
>>> 21:00 K-Factor. Curator Einar Garibaldi Eiriksson gives a guided tour of the exhibition.

>>> 21:30 Björn Thoroddsen' Trio plays French music.
>>> 22:30 Foss. The artist Rúri gives a guided tour of the exhibition.
>>> 23:00 La Guardia Flamenca perform Anda la Banda.
Kjarvalsstaðir, by Flókagata, open 19:00 – 24:00.

Reykjavík Art Museum – Ásmundarsafn

>>> 19:00 – 21:00 Workshop for children – Thinking about form and colour
>>> 20:00 Guided tour of the exhibition with special focus on Sveinsson's Paris years.
>>> 21:00 Guja Dögg Hauksdóttir director of the Reykjavík Art Museum – Architecture Department talks about the architecture of Ásmundarsafn.
>>> 21:30 "A O" musical installation by Þórunna Dögg Björnsdóttir. Four saxophone players and four projected images. Saxophone players: Sigurður Flóason, Jól Pálsson, Eyjólfur Þorleifsson and Óskar Guðjónsson.
Ásmundarsafn by Sigtún, open 19:00 – 24:00.

ASÍ Art Museum

>>> 19:00 – 24:00 Exhibitions in Ásmundarsalur and Gryfja: Trance by Eygló Harðardóttir. Paintings, drawings and text done in a hypnotic state of mind.
>>> 20:00 – 24:00 Exhibition opening in Arinstofa: Etienne de France. LIFE SUCKS! Photographs.
 Etienne de France is a young French artist. In his works he deals with the virtual reality of the internet and proposes questions regarding utopia, reality and virtual community. The exhibition is part of Pourquoi Pas?
>>> 21:00 & 23:00 Rikharður H. Friðriksson performs Threads, a musical piece written for electric guitar and interactive computer system. The piece is based on elements from Eygló Harðardóttir's exhibition Trance.
Freyjugata 41, open 19:00 – 24:00.

Maritime Museum

>>> 19:30 From Flyðruvöllur. Exhibition of paintings. Artist Bjarni Jónsson gives a guided tour.
>>> 20:30 French Sailors in Icelandic waters. Elin Pálmadóttir displays photographs.
>>> 21:00 Icelandic French: Short lecture by Steinunn Þórhallsdóttir
>>> 21:30 History of the Porridge Dish. Guided tour by Hinrik Bjarnason.
>>> 22:00 Two Gíslis From Akranes. Former and present mayor of Akranes, both called Gíslí, sing and play for guests. Repeated at 23:00
>>> 22:30 Wine tasting. Selected French wines sampled.
Grandagarður 8, open 19:00 – 24:00

The Icelandic Food Institution

>>> 20:00 and 22:00 Biscuit for a Mitten A short lecture on food relations between Iceland and France in the past. Sigrún Ólafsdóttir, ethnologist.
>>> 21:00 French songs. Performed by Sigríður Thorlacius and Steingrímur Karl Teague.
Grandagarður 8, open 19:00 – 24:00

The Living Art Museum

>>> 19:00 – 24:00 Almost Nothing, That is Not Nothing. Exhibition by Michel Blazy, Rebecca Bourningault, Jean-Baptiste Bruant & María Spangaro, Clóde Couplier, François Culet, Robert Filliou & Joachim Pfeufer, Gérard, Philippe Meste, Hugues Reip and Jean-Michel Wicker. The focal point of the exhibition is the 1978 work Poipoidrome, by Robert Filliou and Joachim Pfeufer. The artists will work around the piece, furthering the idea of the "République Géniale" to benefit mankind. Part of Pourquoi Pas?
Laugavegur 26.

Natural History Museum

>>> 19:00 Have you Seen a Polar Bear? Exhibition on the history of polar bears in Iceland and climate change.
>>> 19:00 Q & A: Experts from the Natural

History Museum answer questions.
Hlemmur bus terminal.
19:30, 21:00 & 22:30 Natural History Museum? Yes Please! Guided tour and discussions in the museum's exhibition area.
Hlemmur 3 - 5.
>>> 20:30 & 21:30 Climate Change and Life in the North. Short lectures and discussions: Dr. Snorri Baldursson and Dr. Guðmundur A. Guðmundsson from the Natural History Museum.
Möguleikhúsið, Hlemmur, open 19:00 - 24:00

The Reykjavík Municipal Archives

>>> 19:00, 21:30 & 23:30 Projection of old Reykjavík post cards.
>>> 19:30, 20:30 & 22:30 Our Town (1957). A Reykjavík movie by Magnús Jóhannesson.
>>> 20:00 Savings, Stocks and Bonds – Options and Possibilities. Lecture from SPRON bank for all.
>>> 21:00 Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, historian gives a lecture on Iceland's defences against nuclear attacks during the Cold War.
>>> 22:00 Halldór Guðmundsson, literary scholar talks about the author Þórbergur Þórðarson.
>>> 23:00 Modern Magic. The ideology behind magic and how it is manifested in modern society. Lecture by Eva Hauksdóttir from the Witches' Store.
>>> 00:00 Magga Stína and Kristinn H. Árnason perform songs by Megas and others.
The Reykjavík Municipal Archives, Tryggvagata 15, open from 19:00 – 01:00.

The Culture House

>>> 20:30 The final days of the exhibition Icelandic Fashion Design Featuring ten Icelandic designers. Exhibition ends February 27.
>>> 21:30 & 22:30 Ólöf Arnalds performs songs from her upcoming CD.
>>> 19:00 – 21:00 Manuscript Exhibition. Try your hand at writing with a feather pen and homemade ink.
>>> 19:00 – 24:00 A 30 minute film by renowned nature filmmaker Páll Steingrímsson documenting the co-existence of animals and man in Icelandic nature. The film runs continuously.
Hverfisgata 15.

The Saga Museum

>>> 19:00 – 00:00 Various ancient handwork on display. Vikings in full armour walk among guests.
Sögusafnið, Perlan, open 19:00 – 00:00.

Museum of the Icelandic Printmakers Association

>>> 19:00 – 24:00 Shadows of Love by Bragi Ásgeirsson. Lithography on Hahnemühle A3 paper. 100 numbered copies available.
Hafnarhús, Tryggvagata 15 (entrance on port side).

SÍM – The Association of Icelandic Visual artists

>>> 19:00 – 01:00 The SÍM house is decorated with a piece by SÍM's January guest artist, Shingo Yoshida from Japan, Comfort Place #3. Inside, an exhibition by February guest artists, Megan O'Beirne and Clare Carter.
Hafnarstræti 16.
>>> 19:00 – 24:00 Guest artist Sigbjörn Bratlie from Norway and Fiona Kelly from Ireland exhibit in the showroom on the ground floor of Seljavegur 32.
Seljavegur 32.

SPRON

– A special supporter of Museum Night
>>> 19:00 – 24:00 Artist Ragnhildur Stefánsdóttir will exhibit sculptures in the SPRON branch on Skólavörðustígur.
>>> 21:00 La Guardia Flamenca perform Anda la Banda.
SPRON, Skólavörðustígur 11.

This program is subject to change. More info, updates and a detailed program available at www.visitreykjavik.is

31 RESTAURANTS
Vor
Laugavegur 24
 Vor's refreshing take on café-style eating is marked by its use of fresh ingredients and a health-conscious menu that emphasizes French and Mediterranean cuisine. The fresh spring salad and the excellent carrot-ginger soup are excellent pick-me-ups on rainy days, and the coffee served is of the highest quality.

32 Maru
Ádalstræti 12
 Last time we checked, Maru manages to shell out some near-perfect sushi at very reasonable prices. Their downtown location makes it an excellent place for take-away, a fact that's emphasized (and suggested) by the menu. When dining in, however, make sure to compliment your spicy tuna maki with a nice glass of Asahi 'Super Dry' and a chaser of sake.

33
Ástuturstræti 6
 bar specially suited k, the newly renovated addition to the in stylish and comfy, with a lounge-like vibe and plenty of er gets uncomfortably noisy for a popular pre-dub

34 Argentina Steakhouse
Barónsstígur 11
 True to its name, restaurant Argentina specialises in Argentinean steaks and southern decorations where dancing flames in the fireplace welcome every guest that walks inside. The tender meat, excellent wines, generous portions and a selection of quality cognac, whiskey, liqueurs and cigars all helped in making it a recommended place for fine dining.

35 Icelandic Fish Chips
Tryggvagata 8
 Not the regular fish'n'chips diner but a healthy restaurant using only organic vegetables, quality fish products and no wheat or white sugar in its kitchen. Deep-fried catch of the day served with oven baked potatoes and Skyrness, a sauce made out of the fat-free milk product Skyr and flavoured with all sorts of spices, on the side for 1350 ISK. They also offer take-away at all times.

36 Sjávarkjallarinn
Ádalstræti 2
 In an elegant setting, Seafood Cellar chefs serve gourmet fusion style dishes, where the emphasis is not only on ocean delights, but also on all sorts of tempting Asia-inspired dishes. The most fun is to order the exotic menu, a range of courses carefully selected by the chef, and share it with your dining partners.

37 Indian Mango
Frakkarstígur 12
 Located on a quiet Laugavegur side street, Indian Mango has infused the Reykjavík restaurant scene with incredible delicacies originating in the rich food traditions from the Goa region in India, honed to perfection at the Four Seasons, during the owner's period as head chef. A local favourite, Indian Mango is known both for the quality of the food as well as the service.

38 Sægreifinn
Verubúð 8, Geirsgata
 Located right next to the Reykjavík harbour, Sægreifinn fish shop and restaurant is truly like no other you'll witness in the country. The menu features various fish dishes and a rich portion of the best lobster soup we've ever tasted. It also caters to groups upstairs where the room looks more like a cabin than a diner and the Sea Baron himself can often be seen. The good food and welcoming service make this place a must-try.

39 Apótek Bar-Grill
Austurstræti 16
 With airy and stylish interiors and excellent menu, it's no wonder this restaurant is always packed during weekends. Located inside a building that used to house the downtown pharmacy, the restaurant is a true haven for food lovers where the pleasure of dining in the open and lively environment is almost indescribable. After the meal, order a Mojito – it's the best you'll get in the city.

40 Við Tjörnina
Templarasund 3
 One of Reykjavík's classics, with a view over the pond and a menu almost solely consisting of traditional Icelandic dishes, this restaurant is just as popular among tourists as it is among Reykjavík's residents. The reindeer-steak with port-sauce or the pickled herring and fermented shark served with Icelandic schnapps both come highly recommended.

41 FAST FOOD
American Style
Tryggvagata 26
 What makes American Style burgers distinct from all the other ones in the city is the size, the soft bun and the amount of fresh veggies used as toppings. Grab a seat in one of the booths with your bbq heavy special with bacon and cheese, fries and a soda, and you won't be hungry for hours.

42 Pizza King
Hafnarstræti 18
 This small pizza place is not only cheap but offers the largest slices of pizza you'll get downtown. Charging only 350 ISK per slice, not to mention the special lunch offer where a 10" pizza with three toppings of your choice and a can of Coke costs only 800 ISK. Pizza King is a local favourite. The fact it's open until 6 on Friday and Saturday nights doesn't hurt either.

43 Bernhöftsbakari
Bergstaðarstræti 13
 It's a bakery, the oldest one in the city in fact, selling all sorts of bakery goods, snacks and an extensive selection of the sweet stuff from early dawn. We particularly love the spelt bread in the morning, and some snúður, kleina and vinarbráúð to go with the afternoon coffee.

44 Bæjarins Bestu
Tryggvagata
 There's a good reason why there's always a line in front of Bæjarins Bestu, regardless of the weather or time of day. Selected the best hot-dog stand in Europe by The Guardian, a fact locals realized decades ago, it has been serving "ein með öllu" ("one with the lot") to downtown pedestrians since 1935, making it the oldest fast food restaurant in the country. Grabbing a bite couldn't be easier.

45 Quiznos
Lækjargata 8
 A chain of sandwich outlets specializing in toasty baguette-style subs, but also serving soups and salads. Choose your toppings and variety of sauces and you'll get a fresh sandwich to suit your taste. Ask for the lamb sub, an Icelandic speciality. Then put a double chocolate chunk brownie in your take-away box and you're good to go.

46 Nonnabiti
Hafnarstræti 9
 Renowned for its greasy sandwiches, Nonnabiti, or Nonni as the locals call it, is one of the more popular junk food places around, offering a large selection of take-away or dine in subs, sandwiches and burgers with a nice dash of the unique Nonni-sauce. If you have a late night craving there's no need to worry, Nonni is open longer than most other places.

47 Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar (Búllan)
Geirsgata 1
 Frequently lauded by Iceland's hamburger aficionados as the best place to get a real hamburger in Reykjavík, "Búllan" (as it's affectionately known to the locals) does indeed serve up some extra-tasty burgers that are sure to take the edge off any hangover. What makes it so good is hard to say, but liberal helpings of rare beef contribute a lot.

48 Á næstu grösum (Á næstu grösum)
Laugavegur 20B
 Many locals claim this to be the best vegetarian restaurant in town offering a menu with plenty of vegan and vegetarian options, both healthy and tasty. Ask for the daily special or try the selection of three different courses. The Indian theme on Fridays is usually a hit and the sugar free banana cake just one of the highly tempting desserts.

49 Kebab Húsið
Lækjargata 2
 Fancy a kebab? There aren't many choices – Kebab Húsið is the only place selling them in the city. But if you don't set the standard too high and note that you'll never have to wait longer than five minutes for your piping hot döner with veggies, yoghurt and chilli sauce, you're in for a fine meal. Especially popular among hungry club crawlers on weekends.

50 Austurlanda-hraðlestin
Hverfisgata 64A
 Although a little pricey for a take-away, charging around 1600 ISK for a main course, the food is well worth that extra spending once in a while. Serving typical Indian dishes, the menu is a treasure chest for those with a penchant for a spicy bite. There are also a few tables inside for those who choose to dine in.

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Rauða húsið

Búðarstigur 4, 820 Eyrarbakki, Tel.: 483 3330

Located in a roomy, red building at Eyrarbakki, a small historic fishing village on the south-coast of Iceland, the restaurant Rauða húsið (The Red House) is a friendly place definitely worth visiting. Due to its popularity, the restaurant moved to a larger locale two years ago. Its two floors and small and cosy bar in the basement are open every day of the year, catering to big groups as well as couples and individuals from lunchtime to late in the evening.

This is predominantly a seafood restaurant, but while the main attractions on the menu are the various fish dishes, Rauða húsið offers plenty of options for meat lovers, including lamb-carpaccio and a steak and lobster combo.

Since it's not every day that one has such delicious seafood dishes on offer, I decided to stick with the ocean's delights. As a starter, the Rauða húsið speciality – a creamy seafood soup, rich with vegetables and the catch of the day – was an easy pick. Served with freshly baked bread and extremely tasty, chunky hummus, the soup alone would have easily sufficed as a main course, and is, understandably, a reason for the restaurant's loyal customer base, which doesn't let the 45 minute drive from Reykjavik prevent them from enjoying that delicious hearty dish. My dining partner was equally satisfied with his creamy lobster soup, with cognac and large pieces of lobster, and, as with my soup, it was a generous portion.

As a main dish, I ordered the lobster. Cooked to a melt-in-your-mouth perfection, served with salad, lemon slices and garlic butter, just as simple as a lobster dish should be in my view, it made me wonder why on earth I hadn't visited this place long before. The Lamb-Symphony was too inviting to get my companion to try anything else. Although a little too well done to his taste, the lamb, together with the fresh herbs, potato-omelette and Madeira sauce, more than satisfied his expectations.

As if the aforementioned food wasn't enough, there was still some room for the sweet stuff. The Lava of Þjórsá was the most tempting dessert. A warm chocolate cake with ice-cream and fruit, together with a cup of coffee, provided the perfect ending to an outstanding meal. The excellent service and friendly atmosphere made the stay even more pleasant.

Reviewed by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir



Domo

Pinghóltsstræti 5, 101 Reykjavík, Tel.: 552 5588

Domo first opened its doors a little over a month ago. In the short time since its opening it has garnered a good reputation through word of mouth. I am pleased to inform you that the reputation is mostly well deserved.

The restaurant's simplistic, yet elegant design presents an aura of no-frills attitude towards fine dining. Monotonous black and white interior, peppered with warm wood and red décor that give the place warmth, despite the minimalist design. It fits the menu perfectly. With a dominating Asian themed cuisine, Domo offers a lot of sushi types and other "cold" dishes; yet, each dish is nicely decorated, earning praise from my companion as "the most beautiful food in Reykjavik." If nothing else, a dinner at Domo is an aesthetic experience.

We selected the Domo Surprise, a five-course combo selected by Domo's chefs. At 6,800 ISK (ca. \$100) it could be considered a bargain, as on average, a simple starter comes at around 2,000 ISK and a main course around 4,000. The wine selection was left in the hands of the waiter, and he proved fit for the job.

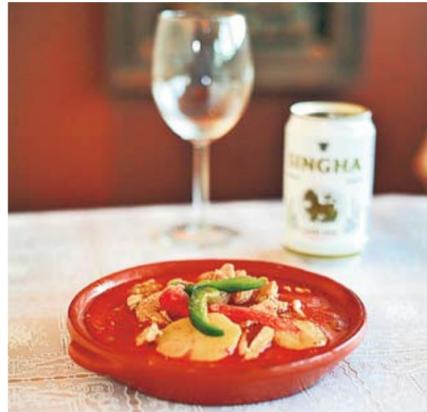
For starters, we were served a mixed sushi platter, eight different kinds in total, with a glass of light Italian wine that proved fitting. They were all good and although my companion did not care for squid, I must mention the salmon maki, which I thought stood out among them.

The second starter was a delight. First, a lightly broiled kangaroo, served with pears and cashew nuts. Perhaps fittingly, the kangaroo was served with a glass of Australian white Riesling. Second, perfectly fried scallops with coriander. It was the peak of the night.

The main course consisted of fried cod in garlic and Soya, a delicious treat, lightly fried duck breast, a very good choice, and grilled lamb with plum sauce, which I frankly felt was beneath the standards set by previous dishes. But again, the red Australian Shiraz Cabernet was a fitting selection. After enjoying chocolate tarte, raspberry ice cream and exotic fruit, the evening was brought to a close by another excellent selection by the waiter, a glass of France Muscat wine.

As far as fine dining in Reykjavik goes, Domo is up there with the best of them.

Reviewed by Sveinn Birgir Björnsson



Ban Thai

Laugavegur 130, 101 Reykjavík, Tel.: 552 2444

Many regard family run Restaurant Ban Thai as one of Reykjavik's hidden treasures in terms of authentic Thai cooking. I have been a regular there for many years, and their meticulously prepared food and relaxing atmosphere have always lived well up to my standards (although the service can be a little haphazard at times, depending on how crowded they are). A personal favourite (especially when eating on a budget) is the perfectly spicy Tom Kha Kai soup, a single order of which provides more than enough food for two persons, especially when enjoyed with a Singha beer or two.

Ban Thai was completely empty the Monday evening a companion and I dined there for reviewing purposes. The mood was comfortable nonetheless, with mellow lighting and some pleasant Thai music blaring from the speakers. After browsing through the informative menu (among other things, it features a detailed account of Thai food, and how to enjoy it) we decided on some Poh Tia Tord (spring rolls) and Pla Mug Chup Pang Tord (deep fried squid) for starters. Our entrées were tasty and crunchy in their deep-fried pleasantness, and the sweet and sour dipping sauce that accompanied them complimented the taste nicely.

Outside was quite cold, it being January and all, so we opted for some of the hotter dishes for our main course. The Chicken Pad Khing's ginger-laced infusion suited the flu-season finely. Although we agreed that it could have done with a bit more spice the taste of fresh ingredients shone through.

Our favourite by far was the Kaeng Mas-Sa-Man, pork in a typical South-Thailand Masman curry. There's a lot to be said about properly spicy Thai food. Many Icelandic Thai restaurants tragically turn down the heat to accommodate the nation's virgin taste-buds, not realising that those who long for mild food will simply... order mild food. While not scathingly hot, the pork dish still managed to sear our tongues while still allowing room for taste, something that makers of spicy food should always strive for in my opinion. The added nuts were a pleasant bonus.

Ban Thai has yet to fail me.

Reviewed by Haukur Magnússon



BEZT Í HEIMI: Fylgífiskar

Skólavörðustigur 8, 101 Reykjavík, Tel.: 533 1300

The streetscape of Skólavörðustigur, stretching up from Laugavegur to the Hallgrímskirkja church, has changed rapidly in the past few years. Where there used to be less inviting clothing shops and old apartment buildings there are now numerous galleries, designer stores and gourmet shops. Among them is Fylgífiskar, translated as Follow that Fish, a gourmet fish store and lunch deli specializing in everything that can be caught in the ocean. A true pleasure palace for all food lovers and the first of its kind in the city centre, the shop is a welcome addition to the downtown dining tradition, especially for all the workers and inhabitants in the area. A generation that craves a diverse, healthy diet and modern ways in preparing fish has therefore welcomed the chance to choose from an astounding array of the seafood served in the shop from lunch to dinner hours.

Only freshly caught fish is good enough for this shop. Although somewhat small in size, it offers a large variety of fish products, including halibut, haddock, scallops, monkfish, lemon sole, shrimps, catfish, salmon and cod and if anyone knows how to cook those delicious treats, it's the chefs at Fylgífiskar.

Serving daily specials until 14:00 every weekday, Fylgífiskar is an excellent choice for hungry patrons who can grab some spicy oriental fish soup, tortilla wrap generously filled with salmon and vegetables, fish of the day or just eat on the spot seated on a bar-stool with magazines to read. Small salads including piri-piri shrimps, smoked-trout salad, the best crab

salad one can get in this country and excellent sushi trays are true luxuries and available for a reasonable price.

Another opportunity to enjoy a fine Fylgífiskar meal is to choose some take-away. The wide selection of pre-prepared fish that's been marinating in all sorts of exotic sauces is a treat every day of the week and comes highly recommended. You may select from at least eight different items and several small courses. Be it a dish of artichoke with sesame seeds, fresh coriander, garlic and sweet chilli-sauce or the traditional favourite Icelandic plökkfiskur, a homely fish stew with potatoes and onion in white sauce, a recipe just like you would get at your moms place. Add some rye bread and butter to your basket, crucial combos to the Icelandic speciality, and you're all set for a yummy meal. In fact, if your hungry for some fish and salad on the side, there's no need to stop anywhere else on the way home. Selling veggies, sauces, potatoes, rice, cheese and almost everything needed for preparing a whole meal, and you don't even have to cook. Just put the fish in the oven and wait 20 minutes for a piping hot meal. Dinner preparations can't get any simpler than that.

Opening hours: Open weekdays 11:30 to 18:30. Closed between 14:00 and 15:00.

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir



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Soloist :: Gunnar Kvaran
Hector Berlioz :: Le Corsair, overture
John Speight :: Cello Concerto
Ludwig van Beethoven :: Symphony no. 3

SATURDAY, MARCH 10TH @ 3:00PM

FAMILY CONCERT
Conductor :: Berharður Wilkinsson
Benjamin Britten :: Young Persons' Guide to the Orchestra

SATURDAY, MARCH 10TH @ 5:00PM

CHAMBER MUSIC AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND
Una Sveinbjarnardóttir, violin
Sigurgeir Agnarsson, cello
Anna Guðný Guðmundsdóttir, piano
Hafliði Hallgrímsson :: Metamorphoses
Ludwig van Beethoven :: Piano trio 1 & 2
Claude Debussy :: Piano trio

THURSDAY, MARCH 15TH @ 7:30PM

RUSSIAN GIANTS
Conductor :: Rumon Gamba
Soloists :: Tatiana Monogarova
Sir John Tomlinson
Igor Stravinsky :: Fireworks
Sergei Rachmaninov :: Isle of Death
Dimitri Shostakovich :: Symphony no. 14

THURSDAY, MARCH 22ND @ 7:30PM

ROMEO & JULIET
Conductor :: Pietari Inkinen
Soloist :: Sif Tulinius
Piotr Tchaikovsky :: Romeo & Juliet
Sofia Gubaidulina :: Offertorium,
Concerto for Violin & Orchestra
Serge Prokofiev :: Romeo & Juliet,
from suite 1 & 2

THURSDAY, MARCH 29ND @ 7:30PM

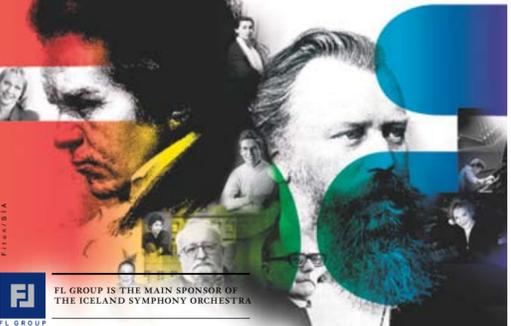
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Dental emergency: 575 0505

AA: 551 2010

Information: 118

Telegrams: 146

■ Tax Free Refund

Iceland Refund,

Aðalstræti 2, Tel: 564 6400

www.icelandrefund.com

■ Laundry Service

HI Hostel, Sundlaugarvegur 34,

Tel: 553 8110, www.hostel.is

Úðafoss, Vítastígur 13,

Tel: 551 2301, www.udafoss.is

■ Post Office

Post offices are located around the city as well as in the countryside.

The downtown post office is at Pósthússtræti 3-5. For a full list and info on opening hours visit www.posturinn.is.

Stamps are also sold in bookstores, gas stations, some grocery stores and tourist shops.

■ Embassies and Consulates in Iceland

United States, Laufásvegur 21,

Tel: 562 9100

United Kingdom, Laufásvegur 31,

Tel: 550 5100

Russia, Garðastræti 33,

Tel: 551 5156

China, Víðimelur 29,

Tel: 552 6751

For a full list visit Ministry for Foreign Affairs: www.mfa.is/diplomatic-missions/icelandic-missions/

■ Internet Access

Most coffeehouses have wireless Internet access.

Computers with Internet connections are available at:

Ráðhúskaffi City Hall, Tjarnargata 11

BSÍ Bus Terminal,

Vatnsmýrarvegur 10

Ground Zero, Vallarstræti 10

The Reykjavik City Library,

Tryggvagata 15

The National and University Library, Arngrimgata 3

Tourist Information Centre,

Aðalstræti 2

Icelandic Travel Market: Bankastræti 2

■ Opening hours

Bars and clubs: According to regulations bars may be open until 01:00 on weekdays and 05:30 on weekends.

Shops: Mon-Fri 10-18, Sat 10-16, Sun closed. The shopping centres Kringlan and Smáralind as well as most supermarkets and tourist shops have longer opening hours.

Swimming pools: weekdays 06:30-22:30, weekends 08:00-20:30 although some may be open an hour longer.

The State owned ÁTVR liquor stores: Mon-Thu 11-18, Fri 11-19, Sat 11-18.

Banks in the centre are open Mon-Fri 09-16.

Getting Around

■ Public transport

The only public transport system in Reykjavik is the bus. Most busses run every 20 minutes and price per fare is 250 ISK for adults and 75 ISK for children. Complete route map at: www.bus.is. Tel: 540 2700

Busses run from 07:00-24:00 on weekdays and 10:00-24:00 on weekends

■ Rent a bike

Borgarhjól, Hverfisgata 50,

Tel: 551 5653, www.borgarhjol.net

HI Hostel, Sundlaugarvegur 34,

Tel: 553 8110, www.hostel.is

Tourist Information Centre,

Aðalstræti 2, Tel: 590 1550,

www.visitreykjavik.is

■ Taxi

Hreyfill-Bæjarleiðir,

Tel: 553 3500 or 588 5522

BSR, Tel: 561 0000

■ For disabled travellers

Reykjavik Group Travel Service,

Brunastaðir 3, Tel: 587 8030, www.randburg.com/is/reykjavik_group_travel_service/

A useful brochure, Accessible Reykjavik, can be found at tourist offices.

■ Car rentals

Átak Car Rental, Smiðjuvegur 1,

Tel: 554 6040

ALP, Dugguvogur 10, Tel: 562 6060

Avis, Knarravogi 2, Tel: 591 4000

Eurocar, Hjallahraun 9, Tel: 565 3800

A.G Car Rental, Tangarhöfði 8-12,

Tel: 587 5544

Atlas Car Rental, Dalshraun 9,

Tel: 565 3800

Berg Car Rental, Tangarhöfða 8,

Tel: 577 6050

Hertz, Flugvallavegur, Tel: 505 0600

■ Airlines

Air Iceland, Reykjavikflugvöllur,

Tel: 570 3030, www.flugfelag.is

Air Vestmannaeyjar, Tel: 481 3255,

www.eyjflug.is

■ Bus Terminal

BSÍ, Vatnsmýrarvegur 10,

Tel: 562 1011, www.bsi.is

■ Samferða.net

A reasonable choice for the budget traveller. You log on to the website www.samferda.net, choose your destination and hopefully find a travel buddy to share the cost.

Cultural Centres and Tourist Offices

■ The Intercultural Centre

The Intercultural Centre throws occasional cultural events and conferences but its main purpose is to be an information and counselling centre and serve as an advocate for the rights of immigrants in Iceland.

Hverfisgata 18, Tel: 530 9300

www.ahus.is

■ Icelandic Travel Market

Bankastræti 2, Tel: 510 5700,

www.kleif.is

Information on day tours, accommodations, car rental and everything else you need to know when travelling in Iceland.

■ Iceland Visitor

Lækjargata 2, Tel: 511 2442,

www.icelandvisitor.com

A travel agency offering travelling package trips and custom-made tours as well as car rental, day tours and accommodations for visitors.

■ Tourist Information Centre

Aðalstræti 2, Tel: 590 1550,

www.visitreykjavik.is

Offers information for tourists as well as providing internet access, booking service, a phone centre, money exchange service, tax refund and selling the Reykjavik Tourist Card. The Reykjavik Tourist Card gives admission to city busses, various museums, Reykjavik swimming pools, The Family Park and Reykjavik Zoo, The Culture House and the National and University Library.

■ The Icelandic Tourist Board

Lækjargata 3, Tel: 535 5500,

www.visiticeland.com

All information needed before travelling in Iceland.

■ Goethe Institute

Túngata 14, Tel: 561 5921,

www.goethe.de/island

A cultural institute that offers movie screenings, lectures and German language courses.

■ Nordic House

Sturlugata 5, Tel: 511 7030,

www.nordice.is

The Nordic cultural centre organises various cultural events, conferences and exhibitions.

All major tourist spots in Reykjavik also offer brochures, maps and information for travellers.

Useful Information

■ Where to learn Icelandic as a foreign language

Icelandic on the Internet,

www.vefskoli.is

Mimir Continuing Education,

Skeifán 8, Tel: 580 1800, www.mimir.is

Námsflokkar Reykjavíkur,

Frikkirkjuvegur 1, Tel: 551 2992

Fjölmenning, Laugavegur 59,

Tel: 511 1319, www.fjolmenning.is

The Icelandic College of Engineering and Technology, Höfðabakki 9,

Tel: 577 1400, www.thi.is

Iðnskólinn í Reykjavík,

Skólavörðuholti, Tel: 552 6240,

www.ir.is

The University of Iceland – Department of Continuing Education,

Dunhagi 7, Tel: 525 4924,

www.endurmenntun.is

■ Religious movements

The national church in Iceland is the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Masses are generally held on Sundays at 11:00 in churches all around the capital.

Service in English is at Hallgrímskirkja

every last Saturday each month, starting at 14:00. The Roman Catholic Church also has masses in English and Polish.

Other religious movements in Reykjavik are for example:

The Muslim Association of Iceland,

Ármúli 38

Ásatrú Association, Grandagarði 8

Bahá'í, Álfabakka 12

The Church of Evangelism,

Hlíðasmári 9

The Icelandic Buddhist Movement,

Víghólastígur 21

Reykjavik Free Lutheran Church,

Frikkirkjuvegur 5

Pentecostal Assembly, Hátún 2

Roman Catholic Church,

Hávallagata 14

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Ásabraut 2

Jehovah's Witnesses, Sogavegur 71

Seventh-Day Adventists,

Suðurlíð 36

Zen Buddhism in Iceland,

Reykjavíkurgvegur 31

Independent Church,

Háteigsvegur 101

The Russian Orthodox Church in Iceland, Sólvallagata 10

The Cross, Hlíðasmári 5-7

■ Trade Unions

The Icelandic Federation of Labour,

Sætún 1, Tel: 535 5600, www.asi.is

The Federation of State and Municipal employees, Grettisgata 89,

Tel: 525 8300, www.bsrb.is

The Association of Academics, Borgartún 6,

Tel: 581 2090, www.bhm.is

Efling, Sætún 1, Tel: 510 7500,

www.efling.is

The Commercial Workers' Union,

Kringlan 7, Tel: 510 1700, www.vr.is

Union of Public Servants, Grettisgata 89,

Tel: 525 8340, www.sfr.is

■ Useful Websites

www.visitreykjavik.is (The official tourist website of Reykjavik)

www.gayice.is (Information about the gay scene in Iceland)

www.fjolmenningarsetur.is (The Multicultural Centre)

www.hostel.is

(Hostel International in Iceland)

www.vinnumalastofnun.is (Public employment services)

www.gulalinan.is (The yellow pages)

www.leigulistinn.is (Rent a flat)

www.simaskra.is (Icelandic telephone directory)

■ Where to get ...

Work and residence permit: The Directorate of Immigration, Skogarahlíð 6, Tel: 510 5400, www.utl.is.

Insurance and benefits: The State Social Security Institute, Laugavegur 114-116, Tel: 560 4400, www.tr.is

Icelandic citizenship: Unless you come from a Nordic country, foreign citizens have to have had an unrestricted residence permit in Iceland for at least seven years in order to get an

Icelandic citizenship although some exceptions exist to that general rule.

Applications are at the Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs, Skuggasund, Tel: 545 9000,

www.domsmlaraduneyti.is

Unemployment benefits: Directorate of Labour, Public Employment Service, Tryggvagata 17, Tel: 515 4800,

www.vinnumalastofnun.is

Icelandic social security number (kennitala): National Register, Borgartún 30, Tel: 560 9800,

www.hagstofa.is

Driver's license: Those who have a foreign license don't need an Icelandic one for the first six months. After that time you have one month to apply for an Icelandic driver's license. Applications are at police stations.

Tax card: Tax office, Laugavegur 166,

Tel: 563 1100, www.rsk.is

Rent subsidies: Social Service Office, Tryggvagata 17, Tel: 411 9000

www.felagsthjonustan.is

Facts on Iceland

■ Iceland is a constitutional republic with slightly more than 300,000 inhabitants. Reykjavik has been the country's capital since 1786 and today almost two-thirds of the population live in the greater capital area.

■ The 17th of June 1944 Iceland became an independent republic. That day is the national holiday and is celebrated all around the country.

■ Alþingi, the national parliament, is the oldest assembly in the world, established at Þingvellir in 930 but restored in Reykjavik in 1844. The parliament is comprised of 63 members, who are elected by popular vote every four years. Icelandic citizens over 18 years of age have the legal right to vote.

■ Parliamentary elections were last held in 2003 with 33.7 percent of votes going to the Independence Party. The Social Democratic Alliance got 31 percent, the Progressive Party 17.7 percent, the Leftist-Greens 8.8 percent and the Liberal Party 7.4 percent. The Independence Party and the Progressive Party formed a coalition and together lead the government.

■ Iceland has 12 ministers with the prime minister and head of government being Geir H. Haarde, who is also chairman of the Independence Party. The President of Iceland is Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, who has been in office since 1996. He is the Chief of State although his duties are mostly ceremonial.

■ Time Zone: GMT 0

■ Currency: Íslensk króna (ISK).

■ International Dialling Code: +354

■ Weather: Average temperature during summer is around 10°C and winter 0°C. For information on weather in Iceland visit www.vedur.is or Tel: 902 0600.



Taking Dance to the Extremes: Trolls and Transformations in February's Grand Premiere

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir Photo by Skari

This February will see the premiere of two new pieces performed by the Icelandic Dance Company, an independent national institution focusing solely on contemporary and modern dance. Working this time with two internationally acclaimed choreographers, the group is in its final stage of rehearsing and creating the next performance that will premiere February 23rd.

While trying to be as versatile as possible, nurturing young artists, developing the art form and pushing it to the furthest limits with the aim of introducing Icelandic and international talents to the public and the world, the Dance Company has always emphasized giving the audience a chance to see cutting-edge performances often connected with a wide range of local music creations to give it that little extra kick. In recent years, the Dance Company has worked with artists and composers such as Quarashi, Gusgus, the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, and múm to name just a few.

Currently, it is a company of 14 dancers. Despite that fact, the group has been touring the world in recent years and earning a good reputation, being described as an energetic, humorous, vivacious and sexy group and a world-class company, by critics across the globe. Its international recognition is growing by the minute and with this year's schedule – the group is not only preparing for the February show, but is working on a dance-film project, a dance-theatre competition and various workshops, not to mention scheduled tours to China, USA, France and The Netherlands – there's no way to predict how far the group can go in the international dance community.

When the company was established in 1973 it used to consist of all women dancers. Since then it has undergone certain changes and now includes seven male professional

dancers. Remarkably, six of them are foreigners. Grapevine



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Prizes are valid throughout the year

HALLDÓR LAXNESS AND THE CIA

Text by Chay Lemoine Illustration by Sara Riel

...the Agency can neither confirm nor deny the existence or nonexistence of records responsive to your request...

In 1946 Halldor Laxness' epic novel *Independent People* was published in America. The publication and the success of the novel in the United States caused Laxness and Iceland to become of interest to both the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency. Laxness was an unknown author writing about a country and a culture that to most Americans existed in the realm of the fantastic. Laxness did little to dispel that notion, depicting an archaic nation struggling with a world that was changing, giving and taking away small crumbs of opportunity.

The book became a best seller in the United States selling 450 thousand copies. It was a main selection by the Book-of-the-Month club and mailed to thousands of households around the country. Before the advent of television, book clubs and reading were a main source of entertainment in the United States. American readers embraced the often difficult and lyrical novel. There was even speculation in an article in the *New York Times Book Review* as early as August 1946 that Halldor Laxness was shortlisted for the Nobel Prize for Literature.

In 1955 the highest literary honour, the Nobel Prize, was awarded to Halldor Kiljan Laxness. By then, Laxness was no longer a favourite of the American reading public and out of print in the United States. In a front page article on October 28, 1955, the *New York Times* chronicled the award of the Nobel Prize, focusing on Laxness' past Communist interest and steering away from his literary accomplishments. The article stated: "informed sources said the Swedish Academy, some of whose members disapprove of Mr. Laxness' political views, decided to award him the prize this year only because of the relaxation of East-West tension."

American academic and writer Brad Leithauser helped to reintroduce *Independent People* to the American reading public by personally taking an interest in the novel and lobbying a publisher to reissue it, resulting in the book being reissued in January, 1997 by Vintage International. Once again

the book sold well to the surprise of the publishers and began appearing on lists of the greatest novels of all time. Writers and academics were rejoicing the republication of the novel. Halldor Laxness' reputation was becoming solidified. The reissuing of his other novels previously translated soon followed.

The Red Scare

Of course the works of Halldor Laxness were not lost. They were still published and read with great interest in Iceland and in Europe. Why was Laxness not reissued in the United States after he had won the Nobel Prize for Literature? Certainly there would have been at least minimal interest in the Icelandic writer after winning the highest literary honour in the world.

The answer to that question is that Halldor Laxness was blacklisted in much the same way that many American writers were blacklisted for their political views. Much has been written about the blacklisting of American writers and artists during the "Red Scare" in the McCarthy era but little is written about foreign writers whose works in translation were not published or reissued because of pressure from the United States government.

Two years ago I received information under the Freedom of Information Act which proved that J. Edgar Hoover and the Federal Bureau of Investigation had an interest in Laxness. Top secret memos to and from Hoover regarding the income derived from the sale of Laxness' book in the United States show that Halldor Laxness was a person of interest. There was great concern that the money gained from the sale of *Independent People* would fall into communist hands. In a memo from the State Department, J. Edgar Hoover was asked to provide information regarding payments to Laxness from the Book-of-the-Month-club: "Your office should endeavor to discreetly ascertain the amount of money Laxness has received from the sale of his book in this country through the Book-of-the-Month-Club. This information should be

furnished to the Bureau promptly."

Paranoia gripped the FBI players as evident in another memo to Hoover from the New York office of the FBI which states "It's not deemed advisable to direct a letter to the Treasury Department for the above information in view of the apparent discreetness of the investigation requested by the State Department."

American publishers were warned not to publish works from Communist sympathizers. Best selling American writer Howard Fast was jailed for three months for his political views, and pressure from the United States government forced Little Brown to cancel publication of his historical novel *Spartacus*. He was forced to publish it himself and it became a huge success and a movie based on the book was also successful.

The Bureaucratic Run-around

I have previously written an article, published in *Mannlíf* in February, 2005, based on my research regarding Halldor Kiljan Laxness and the FBI, explaining and detailing aspects of the "Red Scare" and the firm grip J. Edgar Hoover had on all branches of government in the United States at this time.

The day before the *Mannlíf* article hit the newsstands I received a call from the State Department. The caller was civil and acted as if this was common practice. The FBI gets thousands of Freedom of Information Act requests every year and many of these requests take years before the information is forthcoming. I have asked several individuals who have requested information under the Freedom of Information Act and they never received a phone call. A few had been waiting for over a year for an answer to their written request.

I hope you will permit a bit of paranoia on my part. I had resisted publishing this article in view of the media's reporting that there was domestic spying taking place in the United States. At this time in my career I do not feel it is in my best interest to make myself a "person of interest". I am a literary researcher, teacher and writer. My interest in politics

is minimal. I sent \$10 to Hilary Clinton last year and I always encourage my students to vote. I'm hardly a radical.

Although I had received much useful information from the FBI after many requests and waiting close to a year, I still did not have all of the information. After receiving the documents there were several pages that were sent "blank" and I had sent a request asking for the information on these blank pages.

I was told by the caller that the remaining three pages I requested were not forthcoming at this time but my request was currently being taken under advisement. Yes the call made me a bit nervous. I had published recently declassified documents in another country. I was the only Laxness researcher currently with an interest in this topic and I had some new information so of course I was going to publish.

I waited a few months and placed a call to the State Department official. I had his number and since we are on first name terms I decided that I would try to find out the status of my request. He returned my call and said that the office that handles these requests did not receive it. My request for the three missing pages was "lost". He did say that he would make sure that it received immediate attention. I waited a month and made another call. There was some action on my lost request. I was informed that the files in question were not FBI files, but files from another agency. That particular agency would make the determination if these files were to be released. I asked when this would happen and he said that was up to the other agency. I asked which Federal agency had jurisdiction over the files, but I was not allowed that information.

Once again I waited several weeks. I was not surprised to receive nothing from the "alleged other agency" regarding the status of my request. I decided to move in several directions. I sent a letter to the FBI requesting the three pages that were missing from the documents. I also tried under the Freedom of Information Act to find out the agency that



Was the CIA in Iceland watching the movements of Halldor Laxness? I cannot say for certain that was the case. But I can say for certain that the CIA had an interest in the Icelandic people and had much to say about Iceland, Icelanders and their political situation.

had jurisdiction of the documents I wasn't receiving.

Initially I thought the agency that had had the documents must be The Department of Immigration. Today, that department has been renamed as The Department of Homeland Security. I would comment on the name change but I don't want another phone call. I had spent hours going over every inch of the FBI files for any information that was not obvious on the first reading. I did find in the corner of one of the documents Laxness' Department of Immigration file number. One of the ploys of the Freedom of Information Act is to send you a form letter saying that they "can neither confirm nor deny the existence of the files". Before you can gain access to the files first there has to be an admission that the files actually exist. That admission happens when you receive the files in a large brown envelope and not before. The Department of Immigration could not deny that the files were in existence so I saved them some postage.

Because of the encouragement of a few who had an interest in my work I sent a request to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). I reasoned that with the current political climate, the CIA was not going to send me any files even if the documents did exist. I was right but I did uncover some interesting information which makes me believe that the CIA may very well be the agency that has the missing documents.

FBI Appeal

After waiting several months for a reply to my FBI request for the three missing documents I received a denial October 9th. The post mark on the envelope was October 3rd. The denial letter was written August 17th. You have 60 days to file an appeal from the date of the denial letter. Mailing this letter almost two months after it was written was a good way to ensure that I would have little or no time to file an appeal. With each denial comes a letter explaining the appeal process. The process on how to appeal this particular denial did not accompany the letter. I had less than a week to appeal and I had no information on how to appeal this particular denial. I wrote a sarcastic letter and in a couple of weeks received instructions on how to appeal. I filed an appeal and it was of course denied.

The denial letter stated:

"I note that your appeal is limited to concerns you have related to the FBI's referral of records to another agency. After carefully considering your appeal, I have decided to affirm the FBI's action on your request. The FBI referred eleven pages that originated with another government agency for processing and direct response to you."

Hold on! I was originally told there were three pages denied. On the phone the State Department had mentioned nine pages. Now in this denial I was being told there were eleven pages.

The Department of Homeland Security

My request to The Department of Homeland Security went much smoother. The fact that I had Laxness' Department of Immigration file number cut down the number of letters where they would "neither confirm nor deny the existence of the file". July 8th 2005 I received a big brown envelope and a letter stating that "We have completed the review of all documents responsive to your request and have identified 8 pages that are responsive to your request". All but two of the pages were totally blank. "We are withholding 6 pages in full". One of the pages that I was allowed to access was not legible. The other page was one that I had in my FBI documents. There was a notation that was not on my FBI copy. Hand written in fairly large print was the word "Subversive Library Index". I have subsequently tried to get a copy of this index but that request was denied and the FBI will neither confirm nor deny if it exists.

Central Intelligence Agency

I was of the opinion that asking for documents from the CIA would be a complete waste of time. Still there are those who had followed my research and suggested that I follow up with a request for any documents that the CIA should have in its possession. In a matter of several months I was both denied the documents and the appeals. The letter states:

"The Agency Release Panel has considered your appeal and has determined that the Agency can neither confirm nor deny the existence or nonexistence of records responsive to your request on the basis of the Freedom of Information Act exemptions (b)(1) and (b)(3).

"Exemptions (1) (b) applies to matters that are in fact properly classified pursuant to such Executive Order." "Exemption (b) (3) applies to matters that are specifically exempted from disclosure by statute provided that such statute establishes particular criteria for withholding or refers to particular type of matters to be withheld".

The files are classified and the type of classification stated means they do not come under the umbrella of the Freedom of Information Act. I firmly believe that the CIA has classified files not only on Halldor Laxness but on the CIA's presence in Iceland during the late 40s. The withholding of information may be more about cold war espionage than surveillance of Halldor Laxness.

I had always found it odd that J. Edgar's Hoover's interest in Laxness seemed to end in September/October 1947. There are a few insignificant pages regarding Laxness' visit to the United States in 1957. Except for a telegram in 1948 sent to the Secretary of State by the American Legation (Embassy) in Iceland the FBI seems to have forgotten that Halldor Laxness was a person of interest. If this particular individual was a threat to national security why was there not a follow up on his alleged subversive activities?

The answer as to why the FBI seemed to lose interest according to the FBI documents in my possession may lie in the fact that under the provisions of the National Security Act of 1947 the Central Intelligence Agency was established on September 18, 1947. It was the Central Intelligence Agency's task to coordinate all international intelligence activities. We know from the 1948 telegram that the American Legation (Embassy) in Iceland was reporting on Laxness' movement. What is of note about the telegram sent in 1948 is that it was a top secret aerogram notifying the Secretary of State of the United States that Halldor Laxness had left Iceland for the winter, was visiting France and was believed to be in Italy at this time.

Was the CIA in Iceland watching the movements of Halldor Laxness? I cannot say for certain that was the case. But I can say for certain that the CIA had an interest in the Icelandic people and had much to say about Iceland, Icelanders and their political situation. In a 9 page classified CIA document called "Current Situation in Iceland" published 18 October 1949 and declassified

23 January 1978, the CIA makes political observations regarding security, the communist threat and the economic status of the country:

"The Communist Party is no longer a very important factor in Icelandic politics; it can neither make nor unmake a government. Despite their lack of direct political influence, the Communist can still arouse and solidify a fairly strong segment of public opinion, and create doubts as to the wisdom of government policy on certain issues.

"Icelanders are opposed to the establishment of foreign military bases on their island in time of peace, but would probably be willing to receive NATO forces if war or the threat of war made Iceland's involvement seem imminent.

"Solely because of its strategic location, Iceland has been drawn into the current of world affairs, albeit unwillingly and hesitantly. Icelanders desire only to be left alone, but it is as clear to them as to others that their island will not be left alone in war; perhaps not even in peace.

"A Communist decision to seize control of the island could be implemented with as few as 500 organized armed men. Although the Communist Party has been capable over a considerable period of seizing power by force of arms it's unlikely that the Communist would attempt a coup without prior assurance of Soviet support, without which they could not consolidate or maintain their position except for a relatively short period." There are nine pages of observations that certainly could not have been made without a CIA presence in Iceland. If there was a CIA presence in Iceland and the FBI was very concerned just a year before about Iceland's most famous citizen it would not take a leap of imagination to infer that the CIA was observing Halldor Laxness. The CIA has sent me a form letter saying they can "neither confirm nor deny" the existence of CIA files on Halldor Laxness. I will not speculate on what is in those files but I will speculate that they do exist.

Chay Lemoine is a Laxness scholar in the United States. chayusa@gmail.com

If David Letterman Only Knew...

By Erik J. Davidek



David Letterman once said that everyone should memorize three funny stories about themselves and be ready to tell them at any time. This is one of mine, and it is all true. I wish to God it weren't, but it is.

About two years ago I started having some digestive problems. I'll spare you all the messy details, but let's just say that things weren't flowing through the pipes like they should have been. Like any real man, I ignored all the signs of trouble, thinking that everything would magically fix itself. I hoped that maybe it was just something that would go away on its own, like the Ebola virus.

But of course it didn't, which meant a visit to the doctor. And not just any doctor – I needed to see a proctologist. Our meeting was destined to happen for the dreaded prostate exam that every man must eventually endure, but I wasn't supposed to receive my first good probing until I was 40. I had expected about ten more years to prepare.

The only way that I knew how to deal with the discomfort that awaited me at the doctor's office was with humour. As the doctor asked me questions about my condition and my general health, I peppered him with one-liners.

"Well, at least it looks like you have very soft hands..."

"I usually have to buy someone flowers and dinner for this kind of action..."

"Have you ever been in prison?" He didn't laugh, and for some reason that bothered me even more than having most of a stranger's hand in my large intestine. His hunt for the cause of my condition took about ten minutes, with a prostate check thrown in for good measure.

"Since we're in there anyway," as he put it.

The good news was that my prostate felt wonderful (at least from his end). The bad news was

that my digestive condition would require surgery.

Today's modern equipment allows surgeons to perform many procedures without the need to cut the patient open, and luckily my procedure could be done in this manner. Unfortunately the most convenient path through which the surgical equipment could enter my body was the place where things usually come out. I was getting the feeling that making it through this was going to take far more humour than I possessed, but I could give it a shot.

The morning of my surgery, I had my wife pick up a black permanent marker on the way to the hospital. When we got into the prep room, I asked the nurse which side of my body I would be laying on during the invasion. Right before they wheeled me in, I laid on the gurney in the position that I would assume during the procedure and had my wife write the famous line from the opening of Star Trek, "To boldly go where no man has gone before..." on my butt cheeks with the marker. If this didn't make him laugh, nothing could. At least I figured that it would be something that his proctologist buddies would get a good chuckle out of the next time they played golf, or finger painted, or did whatever proctologists do in their spare time.

I expected to experience a significant level of discomfort from the surgery, but when the drugs wore off I felt like I had just calved a baby elephant. There was a birthday party happening in my rear and my anus was the piñata. I was curled up in the foetal position in one of those horrible hospital gowns with the split down the back, exposing my abused underside for the world to see. All I could do was lay there sucking my thumb and moaning.

My wife saw that I was awake and that I was completely incapacitated, so she came over to spread a blanket on my shaking body. As she brought the blanket around my violated backside, she stopped and started laughing hysterically. Based on the way I was feeling, I thought that the view might be more scary than amusing, so I asked her gruffly what in the hell could be so hilarious. All she could say was, "He wrote you back."

I struggled to my feet and made my way over to the mirror in the bathroom. Twisting to see my ass in the mirror, I pulled back the blue hospital robe and saw new lettering written in blue marker. It read, "Been there, done that." I guess he had the last laugh.

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Those Crazy Kids, What Will They Think of Next?

Text by Haukur S. Magnússon Photo by Skari

Who: Booka Shade
Where: Gaukurinn
When: January 19, 2007

No matter what anyone tells you, the 101 Reykjavik nightlife scene is druggy, and it is a cousin of both tears and regrets. People who frequent clubs and bars during the weekend are most likely found in the city's movie theatres on Sunday nights, as those give a great excuse to not talk at all for two hours or so. Preferably more.

What we have here is a city filled with unhappy, traffic-jammed, annoyed folk, that magically transform into party-hat wearing, breast-flashing Vikings come Friday night. And these are chemicals at work, the people and the alcohol and the nicotine (I don't have a valid source for this, but it is often suggested that Iceland has the highest ratio of weekend-only smokers in the world).

So, this is not a clean-living, healthy city, and its inhabitants are anything but balanced. And this isn't necessarily a bad thing. It makes for some decent nights out, as vapid vacatness and desperation are bound to breed decadence; what those out after the hours of 1am on a Saturday are surely looking for. So I was surprised when told by a veteran of the 101 dance music scene, at the

site of a show by recently revered techno-hipsters Booka Shade, that he could "hardly spot any drugs on anyone." I had just assumed otherwise, going by what I thought I knew.

See, I am naïve. I am from the countryside, and I have no idea how to tell if anyone is sorted for E's and whizz. Where I come from, we stick to beer and glue-sniffing. Add to that the fact that I decided on reviewing the Booka Shade show in question out of curiosity; because I hadn't really attended such an event up until then and thought it would provide ample opportunity to acquaint myself with Reykjavik's dance music culture, and dance music in general. How can you tell, I asked, and he answered that he usually just could. "You learn to notice. Tonight is marked by a notable absence of some of the drug crowd that I'm used to seeing at these happenings."

What he was perhaps insinuating was that Booka Shade, surprise techno superstars and the night's headliners, were appealing to a much wider crowd than these dance-offs usually do. And that seemed obvious to me upon further inspection. Among those present was an unusually high (I'm told) percentage of people rarely seen outside of Reykjavik's rock clubs. People wearing Motörhead T-shirts. This is clearly techno for

the masses, as was made abundantly clear as the night progressed.

As I entered Gaukurinn, a crowd pulsed. It cheered as it flung its arms into the air. Some lights blinked, and blinked. All this commotion was in order to prove that said crowd was in fact "ready for Booka Shade!" as had been repeatedly asked by a blonde woman standing on a stage more accustomed to hosting shitty Icelandic pop-rock outfits than Teutonic techno giants. After untold hours of well-received warm-ups from popular local artists such as FM Belfast, Hairdoctor and Jack Schidt, Booka Shade's appearance was finally imminent.

I was drawn from where I stood at the short-stocked bar, conversing with some rocker types whom I hadn't expected meeting here, by a pulsating melody I couldn't recognise but made for a sort of siren song through my g&t induced haze. In an interview with Polish web-zine Juju, Booka Shade's Arno Kammermeier cited British new-wave and electronic music from the eighties as a prime inspiration. The Smiths, Tears for Fears, Soft Cell. "That's probably where our love for melancholic melodies comes from." And that may explain some of their appeal to rock audiences weaned on the legendary club '22', where those bands were played non-stop, and the people did indeed dance.

And so, my face turned to the stage, I was entranced. Booka Shade somehow managed to procure music that appealed at once to my booty and my brain, bringing to mind some exotic blend of the finest pop I've heard together with the heaviest metal. I was lost in music, as were my compatriots out on the dance floor. I thought some thoughts: "Why would the crowd in a dance-music event be facing the stage? Shouldn't they be grinding against one another? Or dancing? Why are the girls here prettier than at rock shows? Why do the audience participate more than at regular concerts, instead of bouts of head nodding and foot-tapping?"

And it slowly dawned on me that those questions were all wrong. For what I was witnessing was no techno dance spectacle, I was witnessing a rock show. And this is why most of the crowd, especially those who had been exposed to the band's songs during visits to non-musically segregated clubs like Kaffibarinn, loved it, while techno purists were intrigued and, in some cases, put off.

See, Booka Shade's show is highly marked by... showmanship. Something that seems to be sneaking through the back door of dance music once again, after The Prodigy all but killed it with their silly haircuts and sub-par albums. One of techno's trademarks for a long time has been relative anonymity for its artists. They will release countless albums under countless monikers, slowly making names for themselves within small circles of informed hipsters. It is pointedly anti-celebrity.

So what am I to make of the two deuschmen standing on stage before me? One of them is playing 'E-drums', triggering samples by hitting plastic shields. The other is singing into a microphone. No audible lyrics, but he's still singing. It's actually pretty corny. And their melodies are reminiscent of The Cure. So this is a hybrid of sorts, and this is why they seem to be reaching out to a greater audience. And this is why the purists were confused, while those out of vogue loved it.

Booka Shade's command of their audience was all but revelatory. Although forward-facing, and noticeably drug free, they managed to shake them like no rock band I've ever seen (with the exception of Black Sabbath feat. Ronnie James Dio and my mom, in '92). Their big hits, Mandarine Girl and Body Language, set the room afire and even got my chubby legs shakin'. And it was a notably sweaty, happy crowd that left Gaukurinn that Friday night.

In conclusion, Booka Shade are more like a rock or pop act than a techno one. This is why I really enjoyed myself. I like rock, and I like pop, and I know how to read those genres. The fact also made this less of a learning experience for me than I had thought. It was kinda like Sebadoh at GrandRokk in 2003, in a way. Some things I did learn, however, were that you can supposedly tell if someone's on E if they're dancing with arms interlocked, speed or coke if their jaws are grinding, and just plain drunk if they're stupidly dancing, facing the stage. That's what I did.



Skúli Sverrisson *Sería*

Skúli Sverrisson is a world renowned bass player. Over here he's probably best known for his work with the New York group Blonde Redhead. It is mostly an instrumental album, except for 3 tracks where Ólöf Arnalds sings. This is a tough album to describe. It is melancholic, sad and beautiful. It's not an aggressive album, it is subtle and low-key without fading to the background as sometimes occurs. It is obviously the work of very skilled people – it sounds professional. It has great Quality with a capital Q. The various musicians are all known for excellent work, but it's Skúli's bass, guitar and dobro playing that form the backbone of each track. It is a mature piece of music that is very pleasing to the ears.



Forgotten Lores *Frá heimsenda*

15 tracks of Icelandic rap. Forgotten Lores arrive with a much anticipated follow up to their debut, Týndi hlekkurinn. Their live shows are always fun. At the recent Airwaves festival their performance was one of the highlights. Rap is about words and Forgotten Lores include Iceland's best rappers. Their flow and rhymes are really, really good. The beats and music fall into the same category. It is so rewarding to hear the innovative ways these guys use language. Icelandic hip-hop is not heard very often, so I had high hopes for this album, wanting to hear a solid and good rap record. I was not disappointed. It is full of ideas, fun and excellence. Makes me want to rap. Music that does that to you is great.



Jónas Sigurðsson *Par sem malbikið svifur mun ég dansa*

Jónas Sigurðsson has been making music for a long time. He was a drummer in Trassarnir and the singer in Sólstrandargæjarnir. Ask any Icelander no older than 40 to sing "Rangur maður" by the Sólstrandargæjar and you will be treated to a fine example of music that everyone knows and likes but pretends to dislike. This debut album is not at all like that. It is very personal and its Icelandic lyrics are better than average. The music is also much better than average. It's easy-listening pop with meaning. Jónas writes good songs but the arrangements make this album excellent. It's innovative and quirky and really needs to be heard to be understood. Jónas is obviously a talented musician. A very fine album.



Canora *Kelvinator*

Metal can be great. We all know that. Almost any kind of metal is great, with the exception of black-metal, which is not great. It is bad. The cover of Canora's first album hinted at black-metal. Therefore I was moderately pleased when Kelvinator turned out to be a good metal album with no songs about church burnings or members named Gormarsloth or the like. At times Canora sounds like classic nu-metal, at times heavy-rock and at times like metal influenced pop. It is melodic and interesting. The lyrics, which are in English, are very metal which is fitting but won't win any awards. Basically it boils down to this: Kelvinator is a solid metal album – the kind boys will like but girls won't but all should. Why it's named after a refrigerator is a puzzle.



Shadow Parade *Dubious Intentions*

Melancholic and dark. Shadow Parade follows bands like Coldplay or Radiohead. In fact, the singer's voice is almost a carbon-copy of Thom Yorke on some tracks. This isn't necessarily bad and in this case it isn't... most of the time. This is a fine album. It is well played, haunting and eerie. It is radio friendly. It sounds international. It has the potential to be very popular, possibly all over the world. And it would be great if only Radiohead wasn't looming in the background like a white elephant. But sometimes Shadow Parade makes you forget and then it really clicks. Then it's simply good song writing and playing. But then Mr. Yorke steps back into the room and I don't like having him around. Shadow Parade have made a good, but not so original, album.



Björgvin Halldórsson *Björgvin ásamt Símfóníuhljómsveit...*

This is a live CD, accompanied by a DVD, recorded in September 2006 at Laugardalshöll. Björgvin has been one of the nation's most popular performers for decades, graduating from sexy teenage idol to seasoned, pudgy crooner. This concert was a big one. The booklet states that 300 people took part in organizing it but the biggest part is played by Björgvin, singing some twenty songs, sometimes solo and sometimes with others. His son Krummi, of rock band Minus, sings with him and his daughter Svala who is in Steed Lord. Björgvin proves that he's popular and if you like him then this is excellent stuff. It is big and bold and a little bit tacky. The symphony orchestra is excellent and the arrangements fit most of the time. Check this out if you dream of going to Vegas to see Frank Sinatra but would settle for an Icelandic singer backed by a symphony orchestra in a sweaty sports hall.

All reviews by Páll Hilmarrsson

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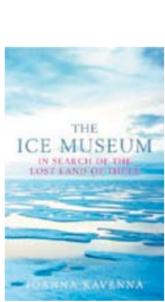
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Recent Books about Iceland

Reviewed by Ian Watson

These five intriguing books are all either wholly or partly about Iceland and all have come out over the past year or so. All are available on loan from Reykjavík’s libraries, or can be ordered online or from Bóksala studenta.



The Ice Museum: In Search of the Lost Land of Thule
By Joanna Kavenna.

The Ice Museum is a kind of travelogue about north European regions, with chapters on Oslo, Shetland, Iceland, northern Norway, Estonia, northwest Greenland, and Svalbard, loosely tied together by the puzzle of trying to identify the place that the ancient explorer Pytheas called Thule. Kavenna also reports on a visit to Munich where she tries to understand the Nazi fascination with the north.

I found Kavenna’s web site on the Internet, and saw that she has also written some fine travel journalism and a novel. But this book, unfortunately, offers little to those who know the north already. The search for Thule is too thin a concept to sustain a book, as she half admits. Nor is The Ice Museum a fully satisfying travel book. Kavenna’s love of commas and run-on sentences makes her prose sputter and cough, and her insights into this jumble of eight very different places are necessarily shallow. Her Iceland write-up rehashes earlier journeys by Burton, Auden, and MacNeice, and she wastes three pages ranting about the Volcano Show in Reykjavik, to which she took a peculiarly strong dislike.

Kavenna lives in London, in an apartment overlooking an expressway, and what she is really chasing is an elusive, half-real landscape of open space and broad ice fields, not the human reality of the countries that she visits. Over and over she uses phrases like “northern dreamworld,” “silence of the plains,” and “purity as a plain white space,” and she admits to an “anti-social impulse.” Recalling part of a winter spent living near Trondheim, Kavenna says that “everyone was quiet and friendly in this snow world [and] they waved from a distance” – a compelling image if you are squeezed into a sweaty subway train in London, but one which turns the people who live in the snow world into stick figures. There are few insightful character sketches in the book, she seems ill at ease with people, she spends a lot of time in bars, and many of the interactions she reports on are anonymous. In Iceland, the only person with whom she reports a conversation is a poet she meets briefly in a pub who claims to write in the tradition of the sagas.

How much better a book this might have been if Kavenna had been able to make readers genuinely feel the paradox of human settlement in the far north: lives lived out every day on the brink of habitability, the fragility of supply and communication, the coexistence of beauty and danger, and the small scale of social institutions. Her Greenland chapter comes closest to managing this, and also has the most interesting cast of characters. But for the most part, I found The Ice Museum hard going.



Inside Reykjavik: The Grapevine Guide
By Bart Cameron

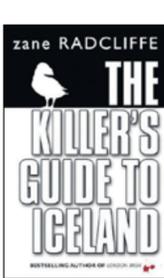
Yes, I have a conflict of interest in reviewing this book, as I have done work for the author, and the Grapevine holds the copyright, and some of its material originally appeared here in this magazine. But hey, I’m not on this newspaper’s staff, and nobody else on the island seems to have reviewed this truly unusual book. Someone had to do it, and because I have slogged away in the travel guidebook industry for nearly 20 years and am supposed to have developed some kind of perspective on it, I gave myself the job.

Inside Reykjavik is not precisely a guidebook to Reykjavik, as it’s way more sophisticated and doesn’t cover hotels, transport or sightseeing. It’s more of a companion to the city. It lists restaurants and clubs, but not their hours or prices. It covers daily life, swimming pools, cafes, food, going out, shopping, music and art, and daytrips. There are more than thirty superb candid photos, selected by Guðmundur Freyr Vigfússon. (I recognised a few people I know; so might you.)

Bart means to be tongue-in-cheek when he says that the book is “doing a commendable and historical sociological service in documenting the phenomenon that is Reykjavik today,” but in fact this is just what the book does. And it’s cutting edge. It’s ahead of the curve. As Bart himself might put it, the book voices “key thoughts” about Iceland that many people think but are “unable to state.” It’s one of the best things to come out in English on Iceland since Amalia Lindal’s Ripples from Iceland.

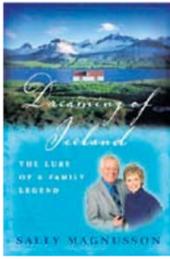
Bart bursts tourist clichés. He shows you how to think beyond weather, volcanoes, and the old story about Iceland and Greenland being misnamed. He explains why you shouldn’t discuss elves, Vikings, or geology with Icelanders. He includes Sólhimeijökull, Hafnarfjörður, and EVE Online in the daytime section. He reviews swimming pools and fast food, and dares to discuss cod worms. Actually, I found the fish section a bit weak, but the other 99% of the book convinces me of the merits of guidebooks written by people who really know a town, not scribblers who fly in one week and fly out the next. For travel guidebook junkies: Inside Reykjavik has similarities to A User’s Guide to Tallinn, put out by students at the Estonian Art Academy several years ago, but it is more practical and less fartsy.

The best thing about this book: This guy Bart Cameron can write. There’s one great sentence after the next. And he’s never boring. Some of the listings will be out of date soon, but this book will always be a monument to Reykjavik in 2006.



The Killer’s Guide to Iceland
By Bane Radcliffe.

The main character in this novel is a Scottish dot-com entrepreneur who sells his company and moves to Iceland to live with an Icelandic geologist he meets by chance in Glasgow. She doesn’t know that he is still haunted by memories of his former girlfriend and business partner. But she too turns out to have a more interesting past than he bargained for. Despite its implausible plot, stereotyped characters, sometimes clumsy dialogue, and misspelled Icelandic, why did I actually enjoy reading The Killer’s Guide and not want my time back? I think it was because of the pleasure of seeing the Reykjavik I know on the pages of a cheesy British novel. Radcliffe did his homework and much of the description of Iceland reads quite true to life. And, having been once new in Iceland myself, it feels a bit flattering to see the experience of newly arrived foreigners here given book-length treatment. Still, I wish I had a hundred crowns per “Heimæy,” “Bíra” and every other misspelled word in the book, and anyone who actually lives here will find some of the story details a bit too much to swallow.

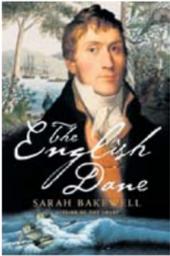


Dreaming of Iceland: The Lure of a Family Legend
By Sally Magnusson

Scottish television anchor Sally Magnusson asked her father, the Icelandic-Scottish translator and television personality Magnus Magnusson, to go with her on a trip to Iceland to visit the places his family came from (mostly around Akureyri

and Húsavík). While not a work of genius, the book that resulted is short and easy to read, Sally Magnusson comes across as a friendly sort of person, and if you have a maiden great-aunt (especially in Britain) who has never been to Iceland but would like to read something about it, this might be the gift for her. And I gotta say one really good thing about this book: Sally got herself a damn fine proofreader. All the Icelandic is spelled absolutely right. There are no Sigridurs or Þorbjorgs in this book.

The Magnussons are not your average Icelandic family. Though born in Iceland, Magnus Magnusson grew up in Scotland where his father was the head of the SIS export office in Edinburgh and later the Icelandic consul there. These are fine folk. They take a taxi from Keflavik to Reykjavik and their cousin built Hótel Borg. Sally and her dad are familiar to millions of British television viewers and they get the red-carpet treatment from everyone they meet. So this is kind of a celebrity confessional book, and one which will mean most to those who know Sally and Magnus from TV. It’s also a book about family history (someone else’s, of course), as well as an example of a rare genre: Icelandic diaspora literature. Sally, to her credit, is smart, and not a snob, and tries to ask critical questions about her Icelandic heritage and her family’s myths, though she doesn’t have room to go into much depth.



The English Dane
By Sarah Bakewell

On 25 June 1809, the Danish governor of Iceland, Frederik Trampe, was arrested in his home on Aðalstræti in Reykjavik, marched under armed guard to the harbour, and imprisoned on the British ship Margaret & Anne. The next day Iceland was proclaimed free and independent of Denmark, and Jørgen Jørgensen, a Dane who had lived for some years in England, was appointed acting governor. Chapters four and five of The English Dane, a fine biography of Jørgen Jørgensen, tell the story of his brief “reign” as protector of Iceland in 1809.

I had only a vague knowledge of the story, and had been under the mistaken impression that Jørgensen was some kind of deranged sailor who acted alone in proclaiming himself sovereign of an unprotected Iceland. In fact, there was a whole group of adventurers involved, Jørgensen was not even necessarily the ringleader, and no less prominent a figure than Sir Joseph Banks was in on the plan. The episode had not only to do with the power vacuum in Iceland after the Danish military was disabled in 1807, but also with British interests in breaking the Danish trade monopoly in Iceland.

Jørgensen lived an eventful life. He was born in Copenhagen in 1780, into a well-connected Danish watchmaking family. He had already sailed around the world on British ships before his Icelandic caper. Afterwards, he spent several unhappy years in Britain, ending in bankruptcy, a theft conviction for pawning his landlady’s mattress, and ultimately, in 1826, transport as a convict to Tasmania. There he worked as a police constable, what we would now call a freelance journalist, and as a hired explorer, mapping trails through the wilderness of western Tasmania.

Jørgensen is a troubled figure, swinging between debt, depression, drink, and gambling on the one hand and great energy, generosity, organisational skill, and prolific writing on the other. He had a talent for messing up his life, and sometimes my stomach churned with embarrassment at the scrapes he got himself into. There are many high points, such as the banquet he attended on Viðey island on 27 June 1809, and many low points, not least his narrow escape from a death sentence.

The book is meticulously researched and referenced, but all the footnotes are kept out of the text and the narrative is pretty lively and fast-moving. A few sections may go into a bit too much detail for the casual reader, but overall this book, which is also available in an Icelandic translation, gets my thumbs up.

The Bell of Iceland *An excerpt*

By Halldór Kiljan Laxness Translated by Keneva Kunz

Chapter One

There was a time, the story goes, when the Icelandic nation possessed but one thing of value. A bell. This bell hung from one gable-end of the Law Council house on the plains of Thingvellir on the Öxará river, suspended from the roof beam where it had been secured. It tolled the judgements of the Council and was a signal for executions. The bell was so old that no one knew its age for certain any longer. But by the time this story begins, the bell had long since developed a crack and the oldest men seemed to recall that it had once rung with a clearer tone. All the same, the old men had a great affection for this bell. In the presence of the magistrate, a lawyer, an executioner and a man who was to be beheaded or a woman to be drowned, the sound of the bell could often be heard, accompanied by the din of the waterfall in Öxará, the breeze slipping down from the nearby mountains Súlur, and the smell of the birch shrubs in the groves of Bláskógar.

Until the year came when the proclamation was borne out to Iceland, that the king’s subjects were to surrender all the copper and brass they possessed, for the purposes of reconstructing Copenhagen after the war, and men were sent off to fetch the ancient bell from the plains of Thingvellir on the river Öxará.

Only a few days after the Council had adjourned, two men rode up trailing pack horses along the path following the western shores of the lake and descending the steep canyon path to cross the river at the shallows of its delta. There they dismounted at the edge of the lava fields near the Law Council building. One of them was pale and fair-haired, with small, close-set eyes. He walked with his elbows protruding out from his sides in a child’s imitation of a gentleman, wearing a now shabby coat several sizes too small for him which had once clothed an aristocrat; the other was a swarthy and ugly pauper.

An old man and his dog making their way from the lava field cross the path of the horsemen.

And who might the two of you be?

The fat man answers: The administrator and representative of His Royal Majesty’s justice I am.

Isn’t that so, mumbled the old man, his voice hoarse as if it had come a long way.

I’ve a letter to prove it said the king’s representative.

I’d expect as much, said the old man. There’ve been so many letters. And many a letter yet to come.

Are you accusing me of lying, you old devil, the king’s representative asked.

At this the old man ventured no closer to the horsemen but sat down instead on the remains of the stone wall encircling the Law Council building to watch them. There was nothing to distinguish him from other old men, a grey beard, red eyes, woollen cap, twisted legs, bluish knuckles clenched around the walking stick upon which he leaned forward, his head swaying slightly back and forth. The dog continued over the fence to sniff the travellers without giving voice, as is the way with sly and vicious dogs.

In the days of old there were no letters, the old man mumbled to himself.

At that the swarthy one, the pale one’s companion, called out, Right you are, friend. The hero Gunnar of Hlíðarendi never had a letter.

Who are you? asked the elderly man.

He’s nothing but a rope thief from Akranes who has been lying in the Slaves’ Hold at the Governor’s residence at Bessastaðir since Easter, answered the king’s representative aiming a brutal kick at the dog.

At this the dark one spoke with a grin that showed more than one white tooth, And he’s the king’s executioner from Bessastaðir. All the dogs pee on him.

The elderly man sitting on what was left of the wall said nothing, nor did his expression reveal anything as he continued to watch them, one eye blinking slightly while his head swayed to and fro.

Now, Jón Hreggviðsson, you wretch, climb up on the roof of the building, said the king’s executioner, and cut the rope holding the bell. It tickles my fancy to think that the day His Majesty has proclaimed that I should put the rope around your neck here on this site there won’t even be a bell to ring.

the cry,

A bone seldom breaks when it’s got no backing, man, as Axlar-Björn said when they were breaking his.

When the king’s executioner had turned the bell so that he could strike it on the inside, with the flagstone for support from the back, it split apart along the crack. The elderly man had sat down on the remains of the wall again. He stared into the distance, his head gently swaying and his sinewy hands grasping his stick tightly.

The executioner had another shot of snuff. The bottoms of Jón Hreggviðsson’s feet could be seen as he perched up on the roof.

D’you plan on riding that roof top all day, or what? called the executioner to the thief.

To this Jón Hreggviðsson responded from the rooftop of the Law Council building

Never shall these strapping arms entwine

A maiden, nor on her sweet couch recline,

Nor on her sweet couch recline

Lest she be plump and rich and kind.

They gathered up the pieces of the bell in a large sack which they then lifted up onto the pack saddle on the opposite side of the sledge hammer and axe and then mounted the horses. The swarthy one drew the pack horses after him. The fair-haired one rode at the head of the train as suited his position.

Farewell then, you old Bláskógar devil, he said. Give the my regards to the minister along with those of the Lord and you can tell him that this was the work of his Majesty’s own administrator and representative Sigurður Snorrason.

Jón Hreggviðsson chanted:

On we march young squires straining,
Gallant lords and ladies uncomplaining
Gallant lords and ladies uncomplaining
Gallant lords and ladies uncomplaining,
With iron bits their stallions scarce restraining.

The train of horses left the same way as it had come, crossing the ford of the Öxará river, climbing the steep path through the canyon across from the river delta and heading southward along the west shore of the lake over the heath of Mosfellsheiði.

About the Author

Halldór Kiljan Laxness was born in 1902 in Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, but spent his youth in the country. From the age of seventeen on, he travelled and lived abroad, chiefly on the European continent. He was influenced by expressionism and other modern currents in Germany and France. In the mid-twenties he was converted to Catholicism; his spiritual experiences are reflected in several books of an autobiographical nature, chiefly Undir Helgahnúk (Under the Holy Mountain), 1924. In 1927, he published his first important novel, Vefarinn mikli frá Kasmrí (The Great Weaver from Kashmir). Laxness’s religious period did not last long; during a visit to America he became attracted to socialism. Althy-dubókin (The Book of the People), 1929, is evidence of a change toward a socialist outlook. In 1930, Laxness settled in Iceland. Laxness’s main achievement consists of three novel cycles written during the thirties, dealing with the people of Iceland. Þú vinviður hreini, 1931, and Fuglinn í fjörinni, 1932, (both translated as Salka Valka), tell the story of a poor fisher girl; Sjálfstættfolk (Independent People), 1934-35, treats the fortunes of small farmers, whereas the tetralogy Ljós heim-sins (The Light of the World), 1937-40, has as its hero an Icelandic folk poet. Laxness’s later works are frequently historical and influenced by the saga tradition: Íslandsklukkan (The Bell of Iceland), 1943-46, Gerpla (The Happy Warriors), 1952, and Paradisarheimt (Paradise Reclaimed), 1960. Laxness is also the author of the topical and sharply polemical Atómstödin (The Atom Station), 1948.

From Nobel Lectures, Literature 1901-1967, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969



Should You Be Eating This?

Text by Haukur Magnússon Photo by Skari

The annual Þorrablót celebrations are at hand. They make for a fine excuse to get drunk.

Once again, it is time for the traditional weird-food article, to be published around the month of February, for our foreign readership to scoff at all the strange, foul-tasting stuff Icelanders will traditionally eat around this time of year, and for locals to scoff at the Grapevine for getting it all wrong, yet again. It's a seasonal thing, and now is the season. So, let's go:

If you are reading this before February 18, and you are located in Iceland, you are currently experiencing the month of Þorri according to the Old Norse calendar. Known as the harshest, most unforgiving month of them all, Þorri begins on a Friday of the 13th week of winter (which occurs January 19-25) – known as Bónadagur, or Husband's Day – and stays with us until the traditionally gentler Góa month commences on the Sunday of the 18th week of winter (February 18-24). That particular Sunday is also referred to as Konudagur – 'Housewife's day' or 'Women's day', and has its own set of accompanying rituals, just like Bónadagur.

Þorri is probably best known for the month's accompanying feasts – and the point of this article – the Þorrablót. Þorrablót are held at random points during the month and usually feature lots of drinking along with the consumption of spoiled and/or rotten food (with a few exceptions). The feasts are Icelanders' way of honouring their ancestors' methods to store food, as there were no refrigerators available and salt was a rare treat, they resorted to pickling, smoking, drying and rotting some of their foodstuffs to be consumed during periods when fresh food was scarce. Deadly winters used to be the norm before this whole global warming thing, you know, people would freeze to death on their way to the barn.

So Icelanders will gather with their Brennivín and their pickled foods to honour their

ancestors' traditions, and to get shitfaced while at it, as they have done for the past 50 years or so. Þorrablót is an important part of Icelandic culture, so much that those living abroad will even celebrate in small groups and import foul food for the occasion. They make for excellent parties, and those who can't stomach the pickled ram testicles can usually get by fine consuming the dried fish and the smoked lamb.

Aside from the rather pleasant smoked lamb and dried fish, there's the usual fare an Icelander will tell you about when wanting to gross you out and seem special. There's Svið, the seared sheep's heads that are readily available year 'round albeit specially enjoyed during Þorrablót, and the Sviðasulta, Svið-jam, which is Svið in compressed, gelatinous form. Putrid shark is also a staple of Þorri cuisine, usually enjoyed with a shot of Brennivín. Magáll is essentially smoked sheep's abs, pressed to a hard core. The aforementioned dried fish and smoked lamb are pretty self-explanatory and remain favourites of those not inclined to the sour taste of pickled meats.

Which brings us to the sour-division. Lundabaggar are a concoction of internal organs from sheep, rolled up in nets, boiled and soured in mysa (whey). The year-round food of Slátur (Iceland's version of Haggis, sheep's liver or blood mixed with rye and sewn up into sheep's stomachs) also gets the sour mysa treatment, which makes it taste a lot weirder than it usually does. And that's saying something. And last, and definitely least (in one reporter's opinion), in the weirding-tourists-out division are the sour ram testicles, or Hrótsprungur. The name says it all, a ram's testicles are pickled in mysa for an extended period of time. All that pickled stuff has the same foul taste, really, so it's rather the texture of the pickled items that counts. And testicle texture really isn't all that swell. But, you know, try a bite. It'll make for an interesting story at some stupid bar in the future.



Friday Night Amongst the Bingo Die-hards

Text by Gulla Hermannsdóttir Photo by Skari

The air is hazy with cigarette smoke and the odour it generates blends with the faint scent of cheap glue and hefty markers, the two most essential weapons of the bingo player. I glide through the grand hall, peering through the fog for an available spot for my amateur self amidst the committed veterans, my eyes battle the colour glory beaming from bingo cards in the shade of neon, toning with flamboyant shell suits of flocks of grey-haired ladies, make up the majority of competitors, bearing shawls of their own manufacture with their fragile glasses neatly placed either on their heads or noses.

I get the last vacant seat in the house and frantically search for a pen so I can start my humble attempt for the prize, which for me is the honour of being able to stand up and shout the code word loud and clear. The mother and daughter duo sitting beside me rapidly scan through their row of cards, barely leaving time to reach for the large bag of sweets situated between them. I decide to ask the fellows sporting matching fleece sweaters on the opposite table for brief instructions.

The game is on. Numbers are read in a monotonous voice and the location is so quiet I can hear the lady seated behind me scratch her wig. I tighten the grip on my pen and clear my throat to prepare the cry of victory. All of a sudden the crowd bursts out with laughter. The announcer has misspoken and the incident has loosened up the atmosphere. The buzz of interrupted players travels through in a wave and sweat gets wiped off anticipating faces. I put myself in gear once more. Just

two more numbers. A moment goes by, in which I play my leap of triumph over in my mind, when suddenly it happens. The bingo patrol rushes up to the proud winner, who is holding up one of dozen cards, just to make sure everything is in order.

A recess is declared and I gather myself and move towards the home-brewed coffee, which I pour into a plastic cup. I walk about this landscape of unfamiliar faces until I come across a much smaller playing area where the action is broadcast on several television screens. The inhabitants of this room are even older than those in the main room and I wonder if I have perhaps wandered into the VIP section. Then I notice the non-smoking signs and the respirators overshadowing some of the residents. Maybe these folks started out playing in the bigger room and moved down here over the years.

I purchase another card, which this time is in bright orange. I head towards my seat and notice that the bag of candy has been emptied. I get into my bingo posture once more but all of a sudden a shadow is cast over the table. I look up at a joyful face asking me if I'd like some smørrebrød on the house, which I happily accept. The announcer's soft timbre is accompanied by the smacker of mouths full of marzipan and mayonnaise and I'm thinking there are worse ways to spend a Friday night.

*Bingó in Vinabær
Wed, Fri and Sun at 7: 15 pm – 11:00 pm
Skipholt 33, 105 Reykjavík
Tel.: 553 4054, www.bingo.is*



Lisa Ekdahl Interviews a Grapevine Journalist

Text by Sveinn Birgir Björnsson

Swedish sensation, Jazz diva, and pop idol Lisa Ekdahl is on tour yet again, having played in Norway and Denmark recently, she is on her way to play in Iceland for the third time in two years, playing dates in Reykjavík, Akureyri and Bolungarvík, before heading to Sweden. The Grapevine contacted Lisa to ask her a few questions about her ongoing tour, but the roles were quickly reversed.

Is there much anticipation for your shows in Sweden?

I do not know exactly how it looks, but I hope so. I am traveling with a slightly different set-up now than usual. It is a much more intimate production. It is just one more person with me on the stage, so the concerts are very intimate.

This is the third time in two years you play in Iceland, how come you keep returning?

When I first came to Iceland two years ago, I did not even know I had fans in Iceland, so it was such a positive surprise. I was very glad to experience how people welcomed me. I just thought I would be a representative from Sweden in some sort of Nordic exchange program. But then I found out that I had an audience in Iceland, and that made me very happy.

You are playing in Bolungarvík this time;

I will bet you that it is the smallest town you have ever played.

Really, well how big is it? **Around 800 maybe...**

Oh my... Oh my. But do you think maybe there will be people from neighbouring towns there perhaps?

Probably, there is a bigger town close by, about 5000 people, and other towns as well, so...

Have you ever been there?

Yes, sure.

Well how does it look?

It is rather beautiful actually, especially in the wintertime...

Well, how do you get there? I do not know if I am flying or if you drive there.

You will probably be flying to Ísafjörður, which is a bigger town.

OK, and then you drive the rest?

Yes, it is about 20 minutes drive.

I am really looking forward to it. But I also think, in a way, when you have such a little set up, just me and one other person, it makes it possible for me to play a small town like that, rather than if you are bringing a big band. But I do not know... What do you think?

Well, I do not know, there has been this sort of trend for famous bands to play in these small towns in Iceland. Belle &

Sebastian played in Borgarfjörður Eystrí last summer, and that is a town of maybe... 100 people.

Wow... how exciting. Exciting for them as well. When you are used to playing for a large audience, it can be very exciting to play for a small crowd.

You have managed to be successful in two different genres, both as a jazz singer, and as a pop musician, do you have a preference of the two?

Usually, I like best what I am doing at the time. Most people find it to be the other way around; they think the thing they are not doing at the time is better than what they are doing. But for me it is the other way around, and I think that is very good, that you can get into what you are doing. I think it is very cool to do jazz, because there is a lot of improvisation involved, but then I am not writing my own music, so then I really miss writing. That is why I've just done those two albums in Swedish, because I really like writing, I think that is such a big part of me as an artist.

What about the language then, do you have a preference whether you sing in English or Swedish?

Hmmm... I sort of like both actually. I think it is very important what you have to say, and that people understand what you are singing about. I think it is cool when I am playing

in the Nordic countries to be able to sing in Swedish. But when I am playing somewhere else, then I think it is cool to be able to sing in English so other people can understand as well, so really, I just want to communicate. I want people to understand. But I guess in Iceland, many people understand Swedish or what?

Well, I guess... Everyone is supposed to learn Danish in school, so we have a little grasp of Swedish I guess.

But what about outside Reykjavík, do you think people there are going to understand less Swedish?

No, I believe it is about the same, they might even understand more Swedish outside Reykjavík.

Really?

Yes, people can be a little focused on English in Reykjavík, but back to you. So, you are about to start working on a new album?

No, not really, I am just sitting around and playing for my self really. There is always this period when I sit with my guitar and play, and just take a little time with it.

How do you go about writing then, is it just you alone?

Yes, I always sit alone and I write the music and the words at the same time. I just try different things to see what works. Sometimes nothing comes of it, but sometimes, it clicks. I guess it is mostly about patience. That is why I am just sitting around with my guitar now, if you just sit around and play a little for long enough, you start to form ideas after a while.

Do you give it much thought whether to sing in English or Swedish?

No, I do not give it much thought. There is a need for music in Swedish here in Sweden as well, even if everyone understands English. There is still a need for music in the mother tongue, don't you think? I mean, it has to be the same in Iceland; you probably need a little bit of both, don't you?

Well, I guess, but I also think a lot of bands chose to sing in English, so they will have more of a chance...

Yes, I understand, but you never know when or if you are going to get the chance you know. That is very hard to know. I am just very glad to have the Nordic countries, because it means I don't have that much of a need to be very famous, I mean there are people who understand, so I always have many potential listeners even it is not distributed all over the world.

But there are a lot of musicians and artists coming out of Sweden in the last few years; do you have any sort of explanation as to why Swedish musicians are doing so well?

No, I do not know, but I think you are right, there are more Swedish musicians being noticed than there are Danish musicians for example. But I do not know what it is. Maybe there is this tradition, like Abba maybe, even if that is not the kind of music people are listening to now, but there is this idea among Swedes that we can make it outside Sweden, I guess, but I don't know. What do you think?

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Exploring the Þingvellir Lava Fields From the Inside Out

Text by Sveinn Birgir Björnsson Photo by Skari

It is still pitch dark outside at nine in the morning when my photographer and I meet up with our guides from Arctic Rafting outside the Cintamani Centre on Laugavegur, heading for the Þingvellir National Park, about an hour outside Reykjavík, to explore the lava cave Gjáðakkahellir in the lava field Gjáðakkahraun, formed in volcanic eruptions from a nearby shield volcano south of Mount Hrafnabjörg thousands of years ago.

Gjáðakkahellir, considered 15,000 years old, was discovered during the construction of the nearby Kóngsvegur (King's Road), built for the visit of Fredrik VIII, King of Denmark (and Iceland) in 1907. At the time, there were about 30 caves of this kind known around the country. Today, there are about 500 known lava caves around Iceland. The caves have formed in previous volcanic eruptions, when the top layer of the flowing lava cools down, creating a hard crust near the surface, while underneath, conduits form where a stream of low-viscosity lava continues to flow. When the lava eventually stops flowing, small tubes, or tunnels, are left as the lava drains through, leaving cave-like channels like this one.

On location, we were joined by 14 tourists from France and Italy, eager to find out what lurked beneath the surface of the mys-

terious lava formations around Þingvellir. First order of business was to fit the two-inch ice-spikes on my size 12 boots and to fit the helmet and the headlamp on my considerable cranium. The light is obviously of vital importance, but the spikes are equally necessary when exploring deep caves in the Icelandic wintertime. Rainwater seeps through the layers of lava, taking a good 20 years to travel from the surface to the floor of the cave, 18-20 metres below. Once there it forms thick chunks of ice on the floor, making it nearly impossible to travel across without the spikes to dig in.

Cold and Dark Places

About 20 metres into the cave, all trace of daylight had vanished and we were reduced to using the small headlamps attached to our helmets. In order to make the transition smoother, we sat down for about two minutes, allowing our eyes to adjust to the darkness. Sitting in the dark, nearly blind, the other senses were brought to the forefront. The distinctive smell of soil and mould that is present in most caves became very obvious and the sound from the constantly dripping water became twice as loud. And even though this was a relatively warm January day, the outside temperature around 5°C,

there was no mistaking the cold in the cave at -2°C.

Once our eyes had adjusted to the darkness, we began to see the peculiar shapes of the cave. The awe-inspiring and rugged scenery creates a subliminal feeling in the viewer. The roof is filled with both long icicles, formed as the dripping water hardens in the cold, as well as lava stalactites, formed when the melting hot low-viscosity lava drips from the ceiling while it cools down and hardens. The surface, or the cave's "floor" on the other hand, is littered with rocks that have come loose from the ceiling and walls.

It is safe to enter the cave during the winter months, while the frost holds everything together. There is a two to three week period during June/July when the frost thaws from the soil and big rocks from the cave's ceiling come loose and fall to the ground, the cave is not recommended as a travel destination during that period.

The most important thing to remember during cave exploration is to keep your eyes glued to the ground, every single step of the way. First-timers tend to forget this and start walking while gazing at the cave's incredible roof, often resulting in nasty spills and badly sprained ankles on the uneven surface. Travelling through the cave can be quite a

challenge. Apart from the stony and jagged floor, the slippery ice and the darkness, I soon found out that it is absolutely impossible to move gracefully wearing spikes. My foot-eye coordination was severely hampered by the two extra inches strapped to my soles and it took a few minor bumps to figure that my legs were a bit longer than I was used to. On top of that, the spikes kept getting tangled up in my trouser legs, and I nearly tripped over a few times.

After one hour, light finally started to appear in front of us as we reached the other end. After climbing up through a relatively small hole, up towards the roof, we were back in the sunlight, again waiting for our eyes to adjust to the light.

"How long do think the cave is?"

Our guide was asking participants to guess how far we had travelled in one hour. I will not reveal the right answer, in case you should ever find yourself on a guided tour through Gjáðakkahellir, but indicative of just how deceptive your senses can be in this sort of environment, guesses ranged from 300 metres to three kilometres.

Trip provided by Arctic Rafting Laugavegur 11, Tel.: 562 7000 www.arcticrafting.is



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45 km



Laugaskarð Swimming Pool

Notable for its greenhouses and floriculture, Hveragerði locals have made several clever moves to make use of the geothermal heat. The swimming pool Laugaskarð, built in the 1940s, is one of them. Ranking among the top pools in the country, and the best in the world according to some Grapevine staffers, the swimming pool alone attracts dozens of visitors every weekend who just want to relax in the hot tub. Together with the quiet village vibe in the calm country town, the stay is almost indescribable for those who haven't tried it.

But every pool in the country has a hot tub, so what's special about this one? There are several things that make this pool distinct from all others within close reach. First, and most important of all, is the fact that it's an outdoor pool with an incredible view. While

soaking in the hot tub, you can gaze at the steep mountain hills that seem to be only metres away. Its architecture is also interesting. The pool is moderately designed and, although constructed almost 70 years ago, it's equipped with all the up-to-date indulgences we modern folk crave so much, including a jacuzzi, natural steam bath, massage parlour and spa.

After lingering in the hot tub for hours, there's no better way of completing the day than dropping by at Eden for some ice cream. Just ask whoever you pass on the street, they will know the way. Its ice-cream is so good that despite the ice-cream kiosks located on almost every street corner in Reykjavík, people still drive all the way to Hveragerði for a taste of the local ice-cream.

Distance from Reykjavík

ca. 30 km



Krýsuvík

Ten minutes south of Lake Kleifarvatn is Krýsuvík. As these two areas are closely connected, geothermal heat with its bubbling mud pots and hot springs is even more characteristic of Krýsuvík than Lake Kleifarvatn. When driving the main road, you'll notice the steam soaring from the hills immediately as the distinct and somewhat unwelcoming smell of sulphur from hot-springs seeps into your car. A few metres from the marked out parking lot, the colourful area appears.

Surrounded by lava and peculiar flora, this area is especially beautiful during winter, when the contrast between the snow and the green, white and beige setting, shaped by the bubbling pits and hot-springs provide for a unique photo-opportunity.

As this is a popular tourist destination, platforms have been put up around the area

for a better view of the sights. Just be careful not to walk too close to the hot-springs, as the surface can easily give way with dangerous consequences. Follow the signs and you should be safe.

The most active volcanic area is named Seltún, located in Hveradalur valley. Mud pots, fumaroles and boiling hot springs can be spotted in every direction and a warm rivulet floats down the valley. Here, the evidence of geothermal heat is visible every day of the year. For an even more amazing experience, if you hike up to the mountain Sveifluháls, you'll get a magnificent panoramic view over the whole area.

Only minutes away south from Krýsuvík is the Krýsuvíkurborg cliff, where thousands of seabirds nest with a view over the Atlantic Ocean.

Distance from Reykjavík

71 km



Icelandic Folklore at Stokkseyri

Time passes easily when visiting the small village of Stokkseyri, situated at the south-coast and only a 45-minute drive from the capital. There are plenty of interesting sites to visit, a gourmet restaurant, Fjöruborðið, specializing in the art of cooking lobster to pure perfection, and various impressive museums established by the town's creative inhabitants. Among them is the infamous haunted Ghost Centre, located inside the Art and Culture House at Hafnargata 9, a building that formerly served as a freezing plant. There, guests will not only come into contact with some of the country's most famous ghosts (who are very friendly phantoms on the whole) they can also listen to all sorts of old ghost stories while exploring the museum. Don't miss out on going into room number 19, although it will most definitely

make your heart jump a little. After the tour a drink at the Ghost Bar, located in the building where the Brennivín-Ghost rules his kingdom, is highly recommended.

As there are many more curious creatures and intriguing spirits living among us humans, Stokkseyri residents naturally recognised the need to open up a new museum on the ground floor, dedicated to elves and trolls. Opening to the public in the beginning of March, the 1,200m² museum, entitled Icelandic Wonders, will feature an ice bar lit up by northern lights, with ice transported from the Vatnajökull Glacier, and the opportunity to visit the incredible world of elves, trolls and hidden people.

Both museums will be open daily from 14-21 during summer, and from 14-18 on weekends during the winter months.

Distance from Reykjavík

ca. 30 km



Lake Kleifarvatn

At nine square kilometres, Lake Kleifarvatn is the largest lake on the Reykjanes peninsula and the third largest in southern Iceland, although its size tends to vary a bit, especially in recent years. After an earthquake in 2000 the lake started draining rapidly. Like water draining from a sink, its water level began to decrease. This obscure occurrence caught the attention of local as well as international geologists who are still speculating how this was even possible.

Located in the middle of a highly volcanic area about 35 kilometres south of Reykjavík, the lake, surrounded by a barren landscape of sandstone cliffs and black sand beaches, is easy to reach and ideal for a day trip as there are many great hiking trails around the area. Lake Kleifarvatn isn't only interesting for its size and surroundings. At numerous spots

around the lake, the grey sandstone has been used as sculpture material. Inspired by ancient cave paintings, creative visitors have started decorating the walls by carving their names or pictures in the stone, and you can clearly see some of these modern rock paintings when driving the road leading to the lake itself.

Also worth mentioning for all those fishing enthusiasts out there, trout can be caught in the lake, especially at the southernmost part.

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“As Long as There’s Surf, We Won’t Be Leaving!”

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir Photos by Gulli

On a chilly January afternoon, a Grapevine journalist and a photographer followed a group of local surfers to Þorlákshöfn, where they jumped into the freezing ocean to ride the large waves breaking right off the rocky coast.

When I used to think about surfing, I would always connect it with beautiful white sandy beaches, turquoise-blue sea, tropical climate, sun-lotion, shorts or bikinis. Perhaps even some Piña Colada to cool down while relaxing in a small beach-hut between waves. Given this is the picture I had painted in my head, I hadn’t even considered that a thriving surfer-culture existed in Iceland, where my own concept of surfing is far removed from the reality.

It would be altogether more reasonable to picture the extreme-sport enthusiasts trooping to the mountains for snowboarding around this time of year. I never thought the barren Icelandic coastline would rank as a desirable destination to practice the sport of surfing, attracting a loyal group that hits the water even in January when the average temperature often goes below zero and the ocean’s temperature is little more than five degrees Celsius. But for hard-core surfing devotees, the only thing that matters is the waves, not the glorious extras.

I discovered that surfing spots in Iceland are considered to be top of the line and the surfing conditions rank highly on the world-scale. If you don’t mind the cold and the strong currents, the locations easily qualify as outstanding surfing destinations, particularly during the winter months when the size and frequency of waves are at their peak.

After a 40-minute drive from Reykjavík, we arrived in the small fishing village of Þorlákshöfn. Located on the south coast of Iceland, Þorlákshöfn is blessed with quality waves breaking right off the coast. Once

there, we met up with Ingó, who has been surfing here for seven years, Tinna, a beginner in the sport, and Arana, a New Zealand native who has been surfing in Iceland for the past five years. While putting on their gear they explain that you need to be well prepared and dress in a 6mm wetsuit from top to bottom, covering every inch of your skin, except for the face, to hit the water.

“Yeah, these aren’t exactly friendly conditions,” Arana says as we stand at the parking lot and look down towards the rocky coast. Although it’s a beautiful day, the temperature is only a few degrees above zero. Only two days ago it had been snowing and I can’t help wondering if this isn’t as extreme as surfing can possibly get.

“Has anybody told you you’re insane?” was my first obvious question.

“Well, yeah, all the time! We sometimes meet the people who are waiting for the ferry to Vestmannaeyjar here at the harbour. If they have been watching us out there, they usually ask us if we’re nuts,” Arana says. “I never even imagined that there was the slightest possibility of surfing in Iceland before I came here. I just found out about it after meeting Ingó. But here, the waves can get up to seven metres high. That’s just amazing,” he adds.

Two other surfers step out of a car parked right next to ours and start getting ready. I am curious to know if the surfing scene is big in Iceland. They tell me it’s not a large group. About ten Icelandic regulars and an occasional foreign surfer have caught on to the idea. Every year a few new surfers join the group but, understandably, not all can stand such harsh conditions. It’s not enough to buy all the expensive gear: in the end, all that will keep you out in the water long enough is a strong will and determination.

The wind is favourable according to the weather forecast. The group speeds to the

next good surf spot, which are plentiful, apparently, especially around the Reykjanes peninsula and Snæfellsnes. Some of them are well known, such as Þorlákshöfn, Sandvík and Grindavík. Other spots are kept a secret. Only the die-hards know about them, and they like to keep it that way.

Watching the long stretch of unwelcoming rocks covered in seaweed that separate the land from the black ocean, I ask Tinna if she isn’t at all scared of banging her head on one of them.

“Yes, a little bit, but the guys tell me there’s no need to worry,” she says.

With that said, she pulls the wetsuit hood over her head, climbs down a rocky cliff with her surfboard under her arm and jumps into the water. I guess it’s all just a question of facing your fears, I tell myself as I stumble down after them and try not to fall on my head.

The threesome paddle out to the point where the waves break. One after another, apparently unafraid of any serious crashes, they start dropping into the waves like nothing was easier. From where I stand, they look like small seals swimming around in the distance. I can only imagine how they are feeling. Not only are they free from a crowd of noisy beach-goers, but the landscape out here provides dramatic scenery probably not familiar to many non-Icelandic surfers, making it all the more special.

Suddenly Ingó comes running out of the sea. Considering the conditions, my first thought was that he had fled the cold water to seek some warmth. My guess was far from correct. He only wanted to change a surfboard. “As long as there’s surf, we won’t be leaving!” he said, and ran back to the ocean.

As the weather can be quite unpredictable the surfers have to use every last minute they can go out. They never know when it

will be possible to ride the breaks again. After more than two hours, when me and my photographer are starting to get pretty damn cold standing there on the slippery rocks and staring out to the ocean that seems to be going flat by now, one after another, the surfers put their feet on dry land again and start heading back to the car.

“These were some OK waves today. Yesterday was much better though,” Ingó tells me as the three of them start packing their stuff back in the car.

“But aren’t you all freezing?” I ask.

“Well, a little bit yeah. The waves weren’t as good as they usually are. Having to wait so long in between makes it a little cold to be out in the water,” Arana says. Even if he is shivering from the cold, only pure enjoyment shines from his face.

“The worst thing is when you have to take your wetsuit off outside the car when the temperature is below zero,” Ingó adds: “But still, we are definitely going back tomorrow.”

With the car’s heating system set to the max, we wave goodbye to the group. What we’d learned was that although it takes time, patience and stamina to get any good at surfing (a reason why so many beginners don’t stick it out for long before giving up), when you accomplish standing on your board and ride the wave for the first time, there’s no turning back.

It is a feeling so addictive that neither snow nor frost can keep you from running back into the freezing cold sea. This is why a group of surfing-maniacs returns to the water over and over again and continue searching the coastline for some new undiscovered spots and the wave of a lifetime.

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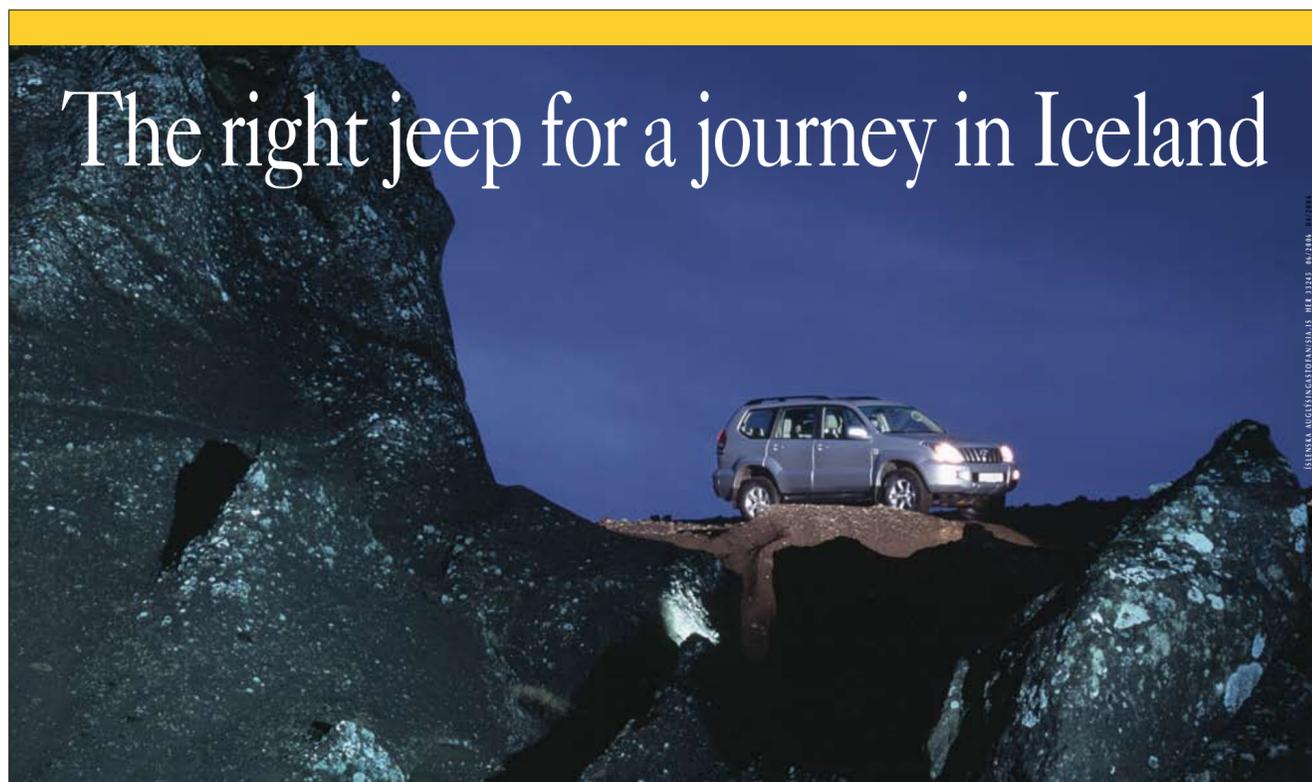
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Chay Lemone speculates on intelligence gathering on key figures in Iceland during the cold war.

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My foot-eye coordination was severely hampered by the two extra inches strapped to my soles and it took a few minor bumps to figure that my legs were a bit longer than I was used to.

Sveinn Birkir Björnsson goes underground

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Right before they wheeled me in, I laid on the gurney in the position that I would assume during the procedure and had my wife write the famous line from the opening of Star Trek, "To boldly go where no man has gone before..." on my butt cheeks with the marker.

Erik Davidek had his insides checked out.

Page 19

Aside from the rather pleasant smoked lamb and dried fish, there's the usual fare an Icelander will tell you about when wanting to gross you out and seem special.

Haukur S. Magnússon samples some of the traditional Icelandic food.

Page 24



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