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The Reykjavík Grapevine

Vesturgata 5, 101 Reykjavík
www.grapevine.is
 grapevine@grapevine.is
 www.myspace.com/reykjavikgrapevine
 Published by Fróken ehf.

Editorial: +354 540 3600 / editor@grapevine.is
Advertising: +354 540 3605 / ads@grapevine.is
Publisher: +354 540 3601 / froken@grapevine.is

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
Editorial Intern: Zoë Roberts / zoe@grapevine.is
Marketing Director: Jón Trausti Sigurðarson / jontrausti@grapevine.is
Support Manager: Oddur Óskar Kjartansson / oddur@grapevine.is
Art Director: Gunnar Þorvaldsson / gunni@grapevine.is
Photographer: Óskar Hallgrímsson / skari@grapevine.is
Contributing writers: Haukur Magnússon / haukur@grapevine.is
 Ian Watson / www.ianwatson.com
Sales Director: Aðalsteinn Jörundsson / adalsteinn@grapevine.is
Distribution: Sæmundur Þ. Helgason / saemi@grapevine.is
Proofreader: Jim Rice

Press releases: listings@grapevine.is
Submissions inquiries: editor@grapevine.is
Subscription inquiries: +354 540 3605 / subscribe@grapevine.is
General inquiries: froken@grapevine.is

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From the Editor's Chair

Finally, the elections are behind us and we can all exhale and relax a little bit. At least until the presidential election next year. When is it time to start discussing candidates for the presidency anyway? Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, our current president might not seek re-election so we could have an exiting election ahead of us. Boy, I am exited just thinking about it, and I don't even know who is running.

Last week (well, depending on when you are reading this I guess) the French street theatre company Royal De Luxe visited Reykjavík with their giant puppets, putting on a production that lasted for two days. It was a great show that caught the attention of most Reykjavíkians. Obviously, an eight-meter high doll is hard to miss.

My favorite part of the production however, was the artificial geyser that was located in a car park in Vesturgata, just outside my office window. Herds of people gathered everyday to watch the geyser burst out a column of hot water. It was such a great attraction in its simplicity. I think it is amazing that we, Icelanders, need a French theatre company to get such brilliant ideas for us. I mean, we pretty much invented this thing called geyser. Now, the theatre company is gone, and so is the geyser.

So, this is my call to city officials. Please, can we get another one up? I think Lækjartorg Square would be a perfect location. Let's face it: Lækjartorg Square is the ugliest city square in all of Europe and possibly the world. It serves

no purpose what so ever in its current condition. We need to rebuild the square, give it some sort of function, some attraction, and I really could not think of anything that would better serve the square than a hot geyser, spewing out water, and attracting tourists. Can't we make this happen?

In this issue of the Grapevine, we are making some changes, adding new sections and re-defining old sections. In a celebration of the upcoming summer, we have brought you not one, but two covers. Make sure you get a copy of both for your collection.



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Sour Grapes

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

Dear writers,

reading your comments on the Jyllandspostencartoons we are sure you in Iceland never had to deal with neo-fascism called islam. Hereby I would advise you to read the koran and specially sura 9 and after that the only conclusion you can draw is that islam is the problem, not the cartoonists.

Hoorblazer
bugel@vrij-en-onverveerd.org

Hoorblazer, Such a well-articulated and argued position deserves a well-articulated and argued response. No, wait! My mistake, your letter is neither well articulated nor argued. Or particularly intelligent at that either. I have no tolerance for racism and I have lost all patience with people who generalize based on religion, race or gender. Christian fundamentalists have proven to be such a particularly lenient and accommodating group or what? Religion or race has little to do with the fact that dickheads are freely available around the world. Stop the hate brother.

Editor

Grapevine can fuck off and die you racist homosexuals! Supporting paul nikolov you commies stop wasting the time of people with lies and propaganda

anepof@gmail.com

Wow! Two such intelligent letters in the space of two weeks. Apparently, we are doing something right if we are pissing of the extremists. Anepof, I don't know how you reached the enlightened conclusion that we are racist homosexuals – and frankly, judging from your punctuation, I am amazed that you managed to spell out such a long word with out screwing it up – but obviously you have no idea what these big and complicated words mean. I suggest you call the doctor and tell him that it is time to fill out that prescription again.

Editor

Dear Grapevine,

Iceland has rather strict rules on immigration. Therefore, I was very happy the other day when I saw a sign of a milder legislation in Fréttablaðið (070504). There was an article about a Latin American girl who had come to Iceland in October 2005, just one month after I first arrived here, and she had already received an Icelandic citizenship. In the interview she told that she knew she could become a good Icelandic citizen because she was well-educated and energetic, and furthermore she loved traditional Icelandic food and the beautiful landscape here. It was also stressed that the fact that her boyfriend's mother, Mrs Jónína Bjartmarz, is a Minister in the Icelandic Government, hadn't affected her application for citizenship at all.

"Perfect", I thought, and went straight to the Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs, the authority in charge of immigrants' applications for citizenship, to take advantage of the new more liberal policies myself. But to my huge surprize the woman working in the reception informed me that I would have to spend another two

and a half years on Icelandic soil before I was entitled to membership in this exclusive club.

"But I've already been here one month more than she has", I said, showing the newspaper with a photo of the smiling girl posing in lopapeysa. "And I'm also quite a fan of the Icelandic nature."

"Aha, the minister's daughter-in-law", the woman said and excused herself and her office. "We weren't the ones deciding about that."

So, to keep the readers of Grapevine, of which some surely are waiting for an Icelandic passport themselves, updated on the latest laws on how long time you have to stay in this isle to get citizenship:

- * Seven years for people from southern or eastern Europe or the rest of the world.
- * Four years for us from other Nordic countries.
- * Three years for the ones who are married to an Icelandic.
- * Some seventeen months for the ones who are together with children of Icelandic ministers.

And to make it even more absurd, this girl will be able to vote for her mother-in-law in the up-coming Alþingi election, 12 May. As George Orwell put it, all are equal, but some are more equal.

Best regards
Joakim Lilljegen

PS. A greeting to the geographical illiterates of the Young Independence Party, who published an election add with a mal-treated map of Europe in Grapevine #5-07: Serbia and Montenegro are no longer the same country, "Litvía" is more known as Latvia, and "Bulgaria" is not another name for Macedonia.

Dear Joakim, Of course, some are more equal than others. I have a very hard time believing that the girl's mother in-law had nothing to do with her being granted a citizenship. But that is just another example of Icelandic politicians misusing their position of power. Not new there really. I am more worried that the Ministry of Education, which of course, has been ministered by the Independence Party for at least the last 12 years now, will have to take a long hard look at how geography is taught in this country. Although, Young Independents are often too focused on America to realise that Europe is continent, not a country.

Editor

"Grapevine can fuck off and die you racist homosexuals! Supporting paul nikolov you commies stop wasting the time of people with lies and propaganda"

Make me an offer I can't refuse or better yet, take the Grapevine readers' survey!



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Be my Valentine "Lost"

Text by Marvin Lee Dupree

One of the worst things you can go through is an anti-climax, because it is important enough to make you cringe at the onslaught of tumultuous emotions that occur afterwards. However, these dreaded moments are never enough to justify a diatribe you just end up looking like the archetypical, self righteous jerk in need of a hug.

I am obviously guilty of the above. I probably have a "roller coaster inside my brain" and therefore I am putting myself out on a limb, so here it goes: Eurovision sucks. Everything about it is so bizarre and surreal in a bad way, like Mister Mxyzptlk or Leave it Beaver. It just reeks of plebeian music taste, although there have been a few redeeming qualities such as Abba, Ágústa Eva as Sívía Nótt, Páll Óskar and then there are the annual parties each year. Maybe this makes me a bad person, but I find our contribution to be contrived, sort of like a poor man's version of Meatloaf. Mind you this is coming from a man who loves the tunes from Karate Kid II and Say Anything.

However, this roller coaster of emotional taxation has more to do with the "upcoming elections" or, by the time this is published and if you have not skipped over this page, the election results. My anti-climax has already begun. I have already voted in the Icelandic embassy in London, although my futile attempt at voting was almost thwarted by West Ham's premier star, Eggert Magnússon, who almost skipped ahead of me in the queue the queue being me and my Fante book. After voting I felt and still feel an odd sense of relief, as if I did my duty, stood up and cheered for my team. Essentially "the tiger trapped inside the cage" had been let out with this catharsis of a simple pencil stroke.

During the past months politicians have "Said Anything": Empty promises, belligerent comments and riveting performances of how terrible things will be or become if the other individual and his party come to power. You can almost hear some candidates whispering in your ears: "I am the man who will fight for your honour; I'll be the hero that you're dreaming of. We will live forever". If that doesn't work there are always scare tactics such as: "If we get such terrible results in the elections then we won't form a government". Gee, do you think so, darling? Real progressive and against the grain thinking going on there.

Another example of a myriad of bad tactics is that if the left leaning parties come to power, i.e. Social Democrats and Left Green, where you can expect a total collapse of the economy or to paraphrase Clinton's "It's the

economy, stupid" becomes: "Stupid, they are stupid about the economy". Nevertheless, none of this really matters. You can always recollect the good things that the government has done for the last twelve years, because it won't really matter anyway. Ditto for the bad things, which in my opinion are almost enough to warrant a massive eBay shopping spree of guillotines for unnamed crooks, sorry, I mean, politicians. It is completely irrelevant, of course. Short term political memory does play a part but it is allegiance that is the most important factor here in Iceland regarding both football clubs and politics.

Politics here in Iceland are lot like Eurovision and English football teams. It doesn't matter who has the best song or best team. You just always pick your team, for good or for worse, although sadly enough most people forget rather suddenly why they chose their particular party or team. A good example would be Manchester United supporters and the Independence party fanatics. Go ask a person in downtown Reykjavik why they like both. To avoid looking foolish, the social construct of the conversation would of course depend on whether or not it was sports or politics. So here is an example: "Hi, what is your favourite football club, brother?" "Oi, tis Manchester United! Rooney!!" "Eh, why, brother?" "Because they are the best!" Now the same principal can be applied to politics. "Why do you vote for the Independence Party?" "Because he/she is such a great leader and they have such great policies (line-up)". "Huh, can you name some?" "Shut up, you are an Arsenal (Left wing) fan, of course you cannot begin to understand such greatness". Evidently this also applies to all the political parties. It almost makes you yearn for some votes to be more equal than other ones. Or at least some sort of test to be held before each person is handed a ballot because you should at least know why, and be able to articulate why, you support or vote for your team.

But when push comes to shove, maybe I shouldn't hyperventilate over the fact that I have voted; things will probably just stay pretty much the same, even though we convince ourselves differently and think that "in the eyes of our teams or parties we are complete". Meanwhile, everyone else cheering for the other side is an Other. Maybe I am just the only one who feels that Icelandic politics are lost and stagnated. However, I do know one thing I would have loved to cast as many votes as I wanted for 99 ISK, just like we all do in Eurovision.

Politics here in Iceland are lot like Eurovision and English football teams. It doesn't matter who has the best song or best team

A Letter From the Moon

Text by Haukur Magnússon

What you are currently reading is an opinion column in a magazine called The Reykjavik Grapevine. Said magazine is mostly aimed at English-speaking tourists who happened to think Iceland (of all places!) would be a fun place to spend their hard-earned money and vacation time. The growing number of English-speaking immigrants in Iceland (who greatly enrich our relatively young republic) is also a large part of its readership, as is the slew of Icelanders who have, through the wonders of television and video games, acquired a most excellent comprehension of the English language.

The young (-ish: I'm 26 now) man writing the aforementioned opinion column you seem to still be reading is a former journalist of said magazine. He is currently un-employed, stuck with the apparently endless task of finishing a philosophy thesis. He has held a number of occupations since entering the job-market at the tender age of twelve, more often than not they have involved moving around boxes of frozen fish in the frosty belly of huge trawlers, or alternatively gutting untold tons of fish that usually wound up frozen, in boxes that would be moved around by somebody else at a later date. He has also held jobs writing (mostly) insignificant things in magazines, newspapers and even political party propaganda literature. He shares an apartment with three cats.

Anyone who's been following Icelandic news for the past two weeks will know that current events lately should provide ample fodder for one of those opinion columns that I've been going on about for the last 300 words or so. We famously (at least 'round these parts) didn't make it through the preliminary round of the Eurovision song contest. We also had an election last Saturday, an election that proved beyond a doubt that 48% of Iceland's population is really, really happy with the way things have been run for the past twelve years, and would like to see another four years of the same. At the time of writing, negotiations between the political parties are still underway so we still don't know which parties will be our unquestioned overlords for the next four years.

I could probably write something seemingly insightful on those topics (if I used enough big words), but I won't. I like the parties, general tastelessness and abundance of pizza that Eurovision provides, but am otherwise indifferent to the whole spectacle. As for the elections: I could care less. No matter what the outcome, at the end of the day we'll still be ruled by POLITICIANS. And those who enter politics at an early age (and our system has made it clear that that's the only way to succeed in the field)

are arguably (give or take a few exceptions) those least qualified to run ANYTHING. In fact, if democracy is ever going to live up to its name, we really have to start representing blank votes with empty seats in the house of parliament. If, say, 20% of the population isn't satisfied with any of the parties running, and voices that dissatisfaction by turning in blank votes, then a fifth of the seats in parliament should be empty. Don't hire 'em if they're not good enough, I say.

Being responsible citizens, we had of course all turned in our votes earlier that day and were thus excited to watch election night TV. We had a legendary dinner (did you know that raw strips of beef make for an excellent starter if you dip them in a soy/wasabi concoction?) after which we sat down in front of the TV with some beers, red wine and soft drinks in hand. We got really excited when it seemed the government was going to fall; our excitement waned considerably as the night progressed and we realised that probably wouldn't happen.

So we thought up some things to amuse ourselves. The newscasters on channel one (RÚV) would often read out loud witty poems e-mailed to them by the audience. We noticed that the poems' chance of being read greatly increased in direct proportion to how far away they came from. A poem from a viewer in the UK, for instance, was usually read instantly, while limericks from places like Hafnarfjörður and Skagatrönd had to wait a while.

So we wrote some poems. The first three, we sent from a fictional diplomat in Rotterdam. We got a mention, but they unsurprisingly never read the thing (it was quite rude). We gave it another go and sent one from a team of scientists on some remote Asian islands. Nothing. Desperate times call for desperate measures, so at 3 AM, we wrote a poem and attached it to a letter explaining that we were four buddies stationed at a research facility on THE MOON, following the elections via satellite. "This will never fly", we joked, but the act itself was plenty funny to us.

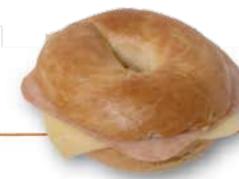
To our great surprise and joy, reporter Elin Hirst apparently bought our shtick, and started reading the letter ON LIVE TV. "We just received a letter from a research facility on the moon..." she read, tired eyes betraying a sense of confusion behind her smile. Our collective jaws dropped. Election night had been saved.

However, our joy only lasted for about five seconds, as her slick and sun-tanned co-host quickly figured out our evil scheme and changed subjects.

But those five seconds, boy were they awesome.

At 5 AM, we wrote a poem and attached it to a letter explaining that we were four buddies stationed at a research facility on THE MOON, following the elections via satellite.

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The Immigrant Representative

Text by Sveinn Birgir Björnsson Photo by Skari

Paul F. Nikolov was born in America, but immigrated to Iceland seven years ago. After working as a journalist for the Reykjavík Grapevine for several years, Nikolov resigned his post and decided to enter politics last spring. In the recent elections, Nikolov was voted as a vice M.P. for the Left-Green Movement. While the Grapevine has never gone out of its way to endorse the candidacy of Paul F. Nikolov, we felt that now, with the elections behind us, we could safely sit down and discuss his political career, without putting him in a position where he would be accused of using his personal/professional relationship with us to further his own political agenda. A Grapevine journalist sat down with Nikolov on what turned out to be a proud day for him, as he had just received his Icelandic passport – a confirmation of his new nationality.

Maybe you could start by telling our readers how you came to enter Icelandic politics.

The municipal elections in 2006 pretty much convinced me to get involved. I was not really happy with the results. I was not happy with the way many people behaved themselves and I believed that the immigrant community in Iceland was sorely under represented and no party was serious about representing us so we would have to do it ourselves. For that reason I started the New Icelanders Party in July. Suddenly, other people began to take interest in immigration issues. The Social Democratic Alliance (Samfylkingin) contacted me and another immigrant representative to a meeting and basically asked: what do you people want? We went down a long laundry list of things that we wanted to change, but then I did not hear from them again. Then I was approached by people from the Left-Green Movement (Vinstri grænir) and told very specifically that they wanted to integrate our immigration platform, that they wanted to represent the immigrant community and they wanted me to help them write a platform. I was familiar with their platform, but not entirely, so I looked over it and found I was in more agreement with their platform than anyone

else's, so there was no conflict of interest for me to join them.

So, you were a Left-Green before joining them?

Yes, I voted for the Left-Greens in the municipal elections. I had met [party member] Hlynur Hallson in Akureyri back in 2003 and I interviewed him for this little online magazine I had at the time and I came away very impressed with him. So, yes.

How would you describe going through this process, being a foreigner and running in an election in Iceland? Did you feel you were being treated differently at any time because you are an immigrant?

No, actually, I got more shit for being an American for working for the Grapevine, to be honest. When I would get complaints, or read complaints on websites like malefnin.com, [a political discussion forum] there would be a cult of people who hate the Grapevine. The complaints were usually about my American political correctness. This cracked me up. But during this campaign, whether people really liked me and supported me or whether they despised me, my nationality never came in question. For that I am really grateful. I do not want to be treated differently because of my nationality. Whether people like me or despise me, I want it to be because of what I stand for, not because of what country I am from.

Early on, especially around the primaries, some concerns were raised over your Icelandic skills. Did you ever feel that it would be a barrier?

Not really. I mean, I do speak Icelandic and you can see on my blog that I write in Icelandic. The other people in my party have spoken nothing but Icelandic with me. Language has not been a problem for me. I enjoy speaking Icelandic. It is the language of this country and it is the language that is spoken in the Parliament, so to me it is a non-issue. Of course, I would be speaking Icelandic in Parliament.

Now you are in a position where you are a vice-M.P. and you are likely to take a seat in Parliament at some point during the next four years. What do you hope to accomplish once you get there?

Our immigration platform. The only platform that we have now in the Left-Greens is one that was made through the combined efforts of literally dozens of people who got together in meeting after meeting after meeting, week after week, for months on ends and culminating in its final approval on our National Convention last February. I think it is by far the best immigration platform in the country and what I am going to be focusing on is getting this platform passed. Getting the things that are detailed in this platform approved first and foremost.

What do you think are some of the main issues that need to be addressed as far as immigration issues go?

There is a long list of changes that we do want to make, but if I was to pick the top three... Language classes would be the first one. We want to make it free, more widely available, and available in the workplace when possible. If employers want to offer language classes, we want to provide them every opportunity to do so. We believe that there should be a standard to how Icelandic is taught as well as the qualifications somebody needs to teach Icelandic. That is very important. We also want a separate curriculum for teaching immigrant children Icelandic from the one that is used to teach Iceland born children, because if you are born here and brought up by Icelandic parents you hear it every day for six years before you started school. If you just came to this country and you are already 12-years old, your comprehension needs to be focused on other areas. You cannot start at the same level so there needs to be a separate curriculum.

Second is working rights. I point out the Confederacy of Icelandic Labour Unions (ASÍ) have written these pamphlets that detail the working rights of foreigners and is translated in close to 20 different languages. We would like to see that when people come to this country to work, they are given this kind of document in their native tongue.

The third one also regards immigration. Many people who come to this country have a university education. But unfortunately, this education is often not recognized. We think

Whether people like me or despise me, I want it to be because of what I stand for, not because of what country I am from.

that should not be the case. The University of Iceland is a fine university, but there are other fine universities in the world that provide equally good education. We are poorly lacking educated people, for example in health care where there is a shortage of nurses. Of course, a lot of that has to do with how poorly the nurses are paid; they definitely need a pay rise, of course. But we also need to get more educated people into the market, definitely. There are a slew of other immigration issues that we want to address and it is all available online where anybody can read it.

What do you think is the reason for these shortcomings? Is it because people in Iceland generally lack an interest in immigration issues, or were we not prepared for the increase of immigrants to the country?

I think it is a number of reasons. The general attitude has been that people were coming here temporarily or they cannot vote anyway, so who cares? But in the last year, the government took an active interest in immigration issues and I think a lot of that has to do with the efforts of people like Toshiki Toma and myself and groups like Iceland Panorama and the Intercultural Center, as well as the Left-Greens and the efforts that we have pushed forward. I think immigration matters to the average Icelander. I describe them as multicultural moderates, OK? They do not necessarily like the idea of the government playing a role in making Iceland more multicultural. But at the same time, they are very uncomfortable with people who start discussing immigration issues with a nationalistic tone.

Icelanders in general do not agree with racism. They do not agree with nationalism at all. So they shy away from discussions about immigration issues because no one wants to be thought of as being racist. But if you have concerns, of course they need to be talked about. There is nothing wrong with that. But when particular people raise questions like: what if Muslims move to Iceland? And do not seem to realise that there are already thousands of them living here. You know, that already makes people want to shy away from the discussing the issue altogether. But I think it does matter to Icelanders and most of the people I know, whether they are to the left or to the right, have the same attitude, that is, everybody should have the same opportunity to make it in our society. It is all a question of how you go about doing it. It is a question of process, so there is a difference to how different parties approach it.

The Liberal Party [The only party in Iceland to speak out against immigration] toned it down before the elections. I don't know if that was because they were being politically wise, or if they actually wised up a little bit. But in general, I think people are not comfortable bringing up the subject because they do not want to express certain words and are concerned with being thought of as being über-nationalistic. That is understandable, but we do need this discussion. Both sides need to be able to communicate with each other because [the lack of communication] is exactly why there have been problems in other countries like Denmark, Germany and France. If you open the doors to your country and allow the people to come in and you let them do all the shit jobs but you don't do anything to actively integrate people into the society and you don't do anything to teach nationalists about the culture and the people who are moving here, then you are just asking for trouble. That does not have to happen here. The answer is not to close the borders or putting some arbitrary number on the number of people who are allowed to move here, that actually accomplishes nothing and would do a lot of damage to our economy as well.

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A Loss for Democracy

Text by Sveinn Birgir Björnsson Photo by Skari

The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Or so it would seem, judging from the recent Parliamentary elections in Iceland, Saturday, May 12. Before the elections, the right-centrist government coalition majority of the Independence Party and the Progressive party had been in a ruling position for three consecutive terms, a total of 12 years. The Independence Party had actually been a member of the previous government coalition as well, so they had 16 years of uninterrupted government participation under their belt.

Leading up to the elections, the government opposition had placed the focus of their campaign on bringing the government's reign of power to an end. For the most parts, their campaign was not so much focused on political issues. Their efforts were mostly directed at the Progressive Party, the smaller of the two coalition parties with roughly 18% support in the last elections. Looking back this might be considered to have been a mistake on the opposition's part. A week before the election, journalist and political analyst Arna Schram said in an interview with the Grapevine:

"The remarkable thing about this campaign is that there do not seem to be any issues that stand apart, there is no single issue that people are voting on in particular as opposed to often before. I thought the environment might be that issue, and their stand on the environment has surely helped the Left-Greens, but environmental issues still don't seem to capture the people."

The opposition failed to engage people in a political discussion on the future (or the next 4 years at least) of the country and thereby missed their opportunity to control the discourse and capture the voters' hearts and minds.

Early Outlook

Election Day was sunny and bright, usually not a good sign for voting turnout. There were 221,368 voters registered and at the end of the day, 183,547 of them had voted. That is around an 83% turnout, one of the lowest turnouts ever recorded in Iceland, a nation that has always prided itself on strong

participation in elections.

When the first numbers from the count were released at 10 pm, all signs pointed to the government having lost their majority, as the opposition held a majority of one in the number of M.P.s. Leaders of the government parties spoke cautiously, although they sounded pessimistic.

At 12 pm, the next batch of votes had been counted and new numbers were released. The government was still in a minority, but the Progressive party needed only 300 votes to acquire one more representative at the expense of the Social Democratic Alliance, the biggest party of the opposition.

When the next numbers were released, the situation had been turned on its head. The government was back in the driver's seat, with the combined number of M.P.s from both parties being 32 as opposed to 31 M.P.s from the opposition; but it would only take 64 votes to swing the situation again. For the rest of the night, the two blocks, the government and the opposition alternated holding the majority. When I vacated my post in front of the television to get some sleep around 4 pm, the government was standing.

The Results

And that was the final outcome – the only outcome that mattered at least. Of course there were many ways to interpret the results of the elections, but at the end of the day, with every vote counted for, the government was still in charge and nothing had changed since the day before.

Of course that is not entirely true. The Independence Party, the bigger of the two government coalition parties, had received 36.6% of the votes, a sizeable addition since the last election and enough to get them three new M.P.s elected and 25 in total. If not for the Left-Green Movement, who doubled their vote tally (14.4%) and managed to get four new members elected and a total of nine M.P.s, the Independence Party might have been considered the winners of the election.

The Liberal Party (which, turns out, is not so liberal after all) more or less maintained their number of votes and representatives

with four M.P.s. The Social Democratic Alliance managed 26.8%, a decrease that cost them two representatives in the Parliament giving them 18 M.P.s. The Iceland Green Movement received only 3.3%, which does not warrant them a seat in Parliament under the current legislation.

The smaller of the government coalition parties however, The Progressive Party, suffered a loss that can only be compared to Custer's last stand. Having faced diminishing interest from voters in their political platform since early last decade, the party only managed to gather a paltry 11.7% of the votes and seven representatives. The party's chairman, Jón Sigurðsson, was not among the seven, despite running number one in the Reykjavik' North district.

But, despite the Progressive Party's big loss, the government coalition still held the majority, thanks to the increased votes for the Independence Party.

Florida All Over Again

The real blow of this election was not delivered to a party, but rather to democracy itself. Due to the peculiarities of the Icelandic electoral system, the operating government coalition at the time received a combined number of 32 M.P.s despite only being endorsed by 48% of the nation. Meantime, the opposition parties received a combined total of 52% of the votes, but only 31 M.P.s. That is a 4% difference, a huge number by all accounts.

Icelandic electoral legislation is not easily explained, but the key behind this deficiency is the enormous difference in population between districts. The weight of the votes is skewed, so that votes from more depopulated rural districts actually weigh more than votes from larger districts. That means that there are proportionately fewer voters per M.P. in the rural districts and an M.P. from a large district, such as either of Reykjavik's districts, will need proportionately more votes to get elected. In addition, each party must receive at least 5% of the total votes to be eligible for a seat in Parliament. This clearly affected the Iceland Green Movement, which received enough number of votes for two M.P.s, if not for the 5% rule.

Obviously, this means there is no such thing as 'one man – one vote' in Iceland. If all votes counted equally in the elections, the coalition would have received 30 M.P.s based on the number of votes they received, while the opposition would have received 33. If this election revealed anything, it is the need for electoral legislation reform in this country. A government majority that is not supported by a majority of the people in a popular election can hardly be considered a government of the people.

Epilogue

An hour before this issue was shipped to printing on Thursday, May 17; the coalition parties had come to their senses after five taking five days to consider their alternatives and announced their decision to part ways. In a government with a majority of one, every single member of the government coalition effectively holds a veto power on any legislation, which makes it very unstable. Leader of the Independence Party and Prime Minister Geir H. Haarde said: "We are not interested in being in government, just to be in government. A one vote majority is simply not secure enough."

Haarde announced that he would probably initiate talks with the Social Democratic Party to form a new coalition. Whether those negotiations will be fruitful remains to be seen. If the two parties will manage to reach an agreement on cooperation, that government would be supported by 63.4% of the nation. Perhaps there is a chance for democracy after all.

If this election revealed anything, it is the need for electoral legislation reform in this country.

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Trassar Regroup for Another Attack

Text by Sveinn Birkir Björnsson Photo by Skari

"But it's been 14 years of silence, it's been 14 years that are gone forever, and I'll never have again," sang Axl Rose on Use Your Illusion II in 1991. I am pretty sure he never heard of the Icelandic thrash metal band Trassar, but incidentally, since taking a break in 1991, there were exactly 14 years of silence until the band regrouped again in 2005.

Despite a prestigious following in the late eighties - early nineties, the band never managed to put out an album. Still, every music nerd with a nose for metal music knows the band to this day. They have now released their first album, Amen, on the record label Geimsteinn. The Grapevine contacted one of the two remaining founding members, guitarist Rúnar Þórarinnsson, to learn more about the gathering.

"It basically started as a nostalgic trip," Rúnar explains. "Me and Bjössi [guitarist and founding member Björn Þór Jóhannsson] always wanted to get the band working again and make an album. At first, we just did not know the right musicians to do it. Later, we were never living in the same area at the same time for long enough to do it. When Bjössi moved to Reykjavik recently, I decided to buy a house with a garage basically to be able to start jamming there."

The band was originally contrived in Eiðar, a small boarding school on the East coast of Iceland in 1987. The name, Trassar was originally obtained from a song by Iceland's best metal band at the time, Bootlegs. "They had this song called Thrash Attack, and I called their guitarist and asked if I could use that name for my band. He said yes and I was very excited. I was 14 at the time. Later, when we played some live shows in Egilsstaðir, the kids would yell out Trassar instead of Thrash Attack for some reason. We just decided that it would be a perfect fit for our band [Trassar essentially translates to "slackers" in English] so we decided to change the name. And it proved right. We have been slacking for 14 years making this album."

After creating a local fan base through legendary live performances and finding receptive crowds in Reykjavik where the band was voted runner-up two years in a row in the Battle of the Bands, Trassar decided to move to Reykjavik in an attempt to take the band to the next stage in 1990. That is when the group started to break up.

"It was just your typical band bullshit. Being in a band is like being married to multiple people. It is always a battle between ideas and directions. Bjössi and myself wrote basically all the material, and when we came to Reykjavik we were all living in different places and we had no practice space. Everyone was working in their own corner, heading in different directions musically and ideologically. Some people had more influence than others and people handled that differently. After a while it just dissolved in a dish of sour grapes, even though me and Bjössi always remained great friends."

In 2005, it was time for another try. At first, it was

only the two guitarists. But after jamming together for three months in an unheated garage in the middle of winter, they added bassist Lúðvík Þórir Guðmundsson who had played with Bjössi in another band. Soon thereafter, Ampop drummer Jón Geir Jóhannesson joined them and along with him they added Ólafur Árni Bjarnason, who had spent the last 15 years honing his tenor voice performing operas around Europe.

With this formation, the band headed for the studio to finally record the album that was scheduled to happen 14 years ago. "When we started playing again, it was like stepping into a time machine," Rúnar says. "And when we started rehearsing the old songs, we could hardly go through one song with out coming up with a new one."

14 years is a long time and the world of metal has changed considerably since the heyday of thrash metal in the late eighties. When writing new songs, are Trassar still influenced by Ride the Lightning and Master of Puppets?

"We have added to our influences considerably. Myself, I have been playing a lot of blues and jazz music. If you listen, you will hear some influences from Alice in Chains and Björk in the vocal sections. I don't know. It is difficult for me to judge this myself. Bjössi and me have both become big Led Zeppelin fans over the years. Bjössi never liked them when we were young. But we are not trying to run away from our past. Our biggest influences will always be the four big groups of the thrash metal era: Metallica, Megadeth, Anthrax and Slayer. This is what we built on. The song Hamfarir is partially a tribute to the great Ham. We purposely "quote" the riff from Partybær, but other than that, it is basically a very heavy blues song with lyrics stemming from Robert Johnson."

Trassar intend to play extensively this summer in support of their long awaited release, but plans are already underway for the next album. "This album was not even finished when our creative producer, Jón Hallur Haraldsson, started talking about the next release. We still have over 20 songs in store that are almost fully prepared," Rúnar says, determined not to spend the next 14 years in silence.

"Being in a band is like being married to multiple people. It is always a battle between ideas and directions."



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12_RVK_GV_06_2007_AWESOME NEWS



t.A.T.u. – The Greatest and Most Awesome Band in the World, Part 3

Text by Paul F. Nikolov

It's been entirely too long since I last reported to you about t.A.T.u. - the greatest and most awesome band in the world - and as you can imagine, they've been busy spreading their greatness and awesome around the globe. So great and awesome has their greatness and awesomeness been that mere words fail to capture it, in much the same way that a Nokia default ringtone fails to capture the achievements of the world's greatest composers. Nonetheless, here it is: your latest update on Lena Katina and Yulia Volkova, singers for the greatest and most awesome band in the world, t.A.T.u.

Yulia Volkova got married last March, but not to her on-again-off-again boyfriend pop singer Vlad Topalov, but rather to some guy named Parviz, a friend she made before the Dangerous and Moving Tour and kept in touch with on the road. She is apparently madly in love and told the Russian magazine Tvooy Den, "I want to bear Parviz a son, and not only one. In general, for me the question of motherhood is very important now. I wish that there is a fruit of our love, which would make us the most happy people under the sun." She did not, contrary to tabloid reports, convert to Islam - she remains an atheist. Which is odd, as it's hard to imagine that a human being like Yulia Volkova could be created by mere chance. I imagine she was created by a team of wizards on top of Mt. Sinai, but to each their own!

One of t.A.T.u.'s most enigmatic songs, Obezyanka Nol (Monkey Zero), was recently explained on their official site. In their own words they explained that the song is saying that, "Nobody is responsible for anything anymore, everybody is on one's own. Everything that we believed in died under the pressure of triviality and cynicism. It's a sad memory about somebody who was joyous and funny - but in the past. Monkey Zero is an unprotected, sincere and honest human being crushed by our violent reality." Has anyone done more to point out what needs improving in our world than t.A.T.u.? Amnesty International, the Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity - lightweights, all of them.

t.A.T.u. plan to release a new album this year, which they say will be "less heavy" than their sophomore effort, Dangerous and Moving. As of last February, demos were recorded but a set release date has yet to be established. As Volkova explained, "We'll make something less heavy.

You can't make psychological and complicated things all the time." So for those of you who had your minds shattered so utterly by Dangerous and Moving, you can breathe easier knowing the girls are going to have mercy on your puny brains this time around.

Perhaps the greatest and most awesome news to date, however, is that the Russian-American film company RAMCO has entered the final stage of Pre-Production for the feature film "Finding Tatu", based on Alexey Mitrofanov's novel "Tatu Come Back", to be shot in Moscow this month. Roland Joffé (The Killing Fields, Super Mario Bros.) was invited to direct, on a budget of \$12 million. Here's what t.A.T.u.'s official press portal has to say about the plot:

"Janie Sawyer is a cute American teenager. She's been living in Moscow for a year, but still has no friends. Janie's loneliness and love for music bring her to the fandom of Tatu, and in one of the Internet chatrooms she meets Lana Starkova, a fellow fan from a provincial Russian town. Together they plunge into the attractive yet dangerous world of nightlife, experience adventures on the verge of fairy-tale and nightmare, and undergo trials of their own friendship. Despite all the conflicts, betrayal and disappointment, the girls shall renounce false values and discover new feelings and talents within themselves."

The movie is scheduled to be shown at Cannes this year. My prediction is this movie will take the Palme D'Or, and will win at least seven Oscars. In fact, I'd put a steak dinner on the Academy creating a new award - The Most Greatness and Awesomeness in a Motion Picture - just so they can award it to t.A.T.u., the greatest and most awesome band in the world.

t.A.T.u. Fun Fact #203

The letters in Yulia Volkova and Lena Katina can be rearranged to spell "A yolk lava ink evaluation." And I won't insult your intelligence by explaining what that means.

t.A.T.u. Quote #771

"When an artist climbs up there's a certain stage of conquering heights. It's very important then not to fall down." Yulia Volkova gives advice to all you ballers out there.

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Share Your Ancestors

Text by Ian Watson Photo by Tempest Anderson

Iceland's genealogy is nearly done. "Finishing" a whole nation's genealogy would be unthinkable in North America or Western Europe, where one looks back at previous centuries' populations as unencompassable, surging masses of migrating humanity. But, as so often, Iceland is a little different from some other parts of the world.

You may have heard that Iceland has unusually good genealogical records dating all the way back to the saga age, and that Icelanders can trace their ancestry to the Vikings. The truth is a bit less romantic. The earliest detailed record of every single Icelander is the 1703 census. Most Icelandic church records date only from 1785. The majority of lines fade into the darkness of time as one tries to trace back through the 1600s. Most Icelanders who lived in the year 1600 did not leave a record of even their names for posterity. The only memories that survive are of the wealthy, learned, or notorious.

England, for example, has arguably better genealogical records than Iceland. English church records date back to the 1600s and sometimes the 1500s. Many more records of individual people survive from seventeenth-century England than from seventeenth-century Iceland. You can usually trace English ancestry back about a hundred years further than Icelandic ancestry before the lines begin to fade out.

There are a certain number of prominent Icelandic lineages which can be traced back to the 1600s to the settlement period. Just to take a wild guess, say one in every twenty Icelanders listed in the 1703 census has a traceable ancestor in the year 1000, and that the average Icelander today is twelve generations distant from the people in the 1703 census. Since every person has 4096 ancestors in his

twelfth generation back, that would mean that the average Icelander has about two hundred ancestors in the 1703 census whose lineages can be traced to the settlement age.

Here again, though, Icelanders are no more special than other western Europeans. Kings, dukes, and other prominent people are the only ones whose names and birthdates survive from medieval European history, just like Iceland's prominent settlement-age figures. Many Western Europeans could trace a few of their ancestral lines to these people. Probably the majority of current western Europeans are descended from Charlemagne, just as most living Icelanders are probably descended many times over from the settlers like Ingólfur Arnarson who first came to the island in the ninth century.

But there is something really special about Icelandic genealogy. Iceland is an island. Its population is small, closely related, and geographically constrained. Only in the past ten years has immigration surged, and before World War I there was very little immigration at all. When tracking any given group of Icelanders through time, fewer disappear for points unknown than when researching in other countries. It's hard for any Icelander to fall through the cracks. (This is arguably true not only genealogically, but also in modern-day social relations.) So for the period during which good records are available – the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries – just about all of the Icelanders who ever lived have been put into a database called Íslendingabók (The Book of Icelanders), which is largely the personal project of a man named Friðrik Skúlason.

Friðrik Skúlason and Íslendingabók
Friðrik Skúlason is a software entrepreneur by trade and an amateur genealogist on his

own time. He is a specialist in computer viruses and for years his main product has been the anti-virus program F-PROT. His company, FRISK Software International, occupies a small building in downtown Reykjavík and employs perhaps a couple dozen people. In the early 1990s, when Skúlason was still working in systems administration for the University of Iceland, he created a genealogical database program called Espólin, and started adding Icelanders to it. Friðrik did well in the software business and built up a considerable personal library of Icelandic genealogical books.

In 1996, a controversial Icelandic neurologist, Kári Stefánsson, founded a company in Iceland called Decode Genetics. His idea was to combine Icelandic medical and genealogical records to zero in on the genetics of inherited disease. Decode Genetics needed comprehensive Icelandic genealogical records to make their business model work, so Kárasón turned to Skúlason. Together, their companies started a new venture called Íslendingabók. The goal was to build on Skúlason's software, his existing database, and his personal library. Decode, flush with venture capital, pumped enough money into Íslendingabók to hire twenty staff members and to push the number of individuals in the database towards its theoretical maximum. The staff worked systematically through Iceland's census and church records, published genealogies, and other sources. When they were done with the easy tasks, they tackled the problem cases and ultimately brought the number of entries in the database up to the current total of 740,000. This probably represents about half of all of the people who have ever lived in Iceland.

Decode had some modest successes, but has also become entangled in legal, ethical, and political battles. Their hopes for a comprehensive marriage of medical and genea-

logical records have been thwarted by privacy concerns, the refusal by some Icelanders' to release their medical data, and the problem that Icelanders call "rangfeðrun": the fact that people's recorded fathers are not always their genetic fathers. (This matters little when one is constructing a family tree as a hobby, but a lot when inherited disease is at issue.) With Decode's business fortunes shaky, funding to Íslendingabók has been cut. Friðrik is now down to two staff members who are kept busy in a book-lined office in the basement of his company's building. They add new births to the database, process corrections sent in by users and, when they have time, work on improving the existing family trees, particularly the eighteenth-century ones.

Íslendingabók is connected to the net (www.islendingabok.is), and any Icelander can sign up for a free username and password. Many have and find Íslendingabók fun to use, despite the fact that they are not allowed to see everything in it. If you have a password, you are allowed to see a list of all other Icelanders' names and birthdates. You can view full information on everyone who shares a great-grandparent with you. You can also ask the computer to find out whether you have a common ancestor with any given Icelander – if you do, the computer will show you the lines of descent to both people. And you can see all information on individuals born before 1700, including their full ancestral charts. One way Icelanders commonly use Íslendingabók is to see how closely prospective boyfriends or girlfriends are related to them or if they are related to notable Icelandic persons, such as Björk or the Prime Minister. Another is simply to find out about people's families and to answer the Icelandic question of "hverra manna ert þú" – "who are your people?"

Between the online Icelandic tele-

You may have heard that Iceland has unusually good genealogical records dating all the way back to the saga age, and that Icelanders can trace their ancestry to the Vikings. The truth is a bit less romantic.

phone book, the National Registry (open to anyone with an Icelandic bank account), the online index of Icelandic newspaper obituaries, and Íslendingabók, it is possible to find out a lot about peoples' families in Iceland. This generally accepted lack of privacy stuns Americans in particular, many of whom live in fear that someone might find out their mother's maiden name. (See my article on personal identification numbers in Iceland in this magazine – Issue 14, 2005.)

Genealogy Moves Onto the Internet

Genealogy is not only an Icelandic national pastime; it's also one of the most popular hobbies in North America and Britain. While much research is still done in libraries using books and microfilm, the Internet has revolutionised the field and research material is increasingly moving online. Online material is divided into two types. There are original records which have been transcribed, scanned, or indexed, such as census rolls and birth certificates. Then there are compiled genealogies – family trees that someone else has already put together by going through the original records. The 1703 Icelandic census is an example of an original record that has been transcribed and placed online. Íslendingabók is an example of online compiled genealogy.

Although Íslendingabók is online, only Icelanders qualify for access. Even they may not see all of it. Non-Icelanders, even Americans and Canadians researching their Icelandic ancestors, are not allowed in. Skúlason's transcriptions of the primary sources – Icelandic censuses, church records and the like – are not publicly available either.

Íslendingabók is not the only large online Icelandic genealogy database. Hálfðan Helgason, a retired engineer who has made a hobby of genealogy since he was a teenager, maintains a database of 520,000 individuals (accessible via www.halfdan.is/aett), but you need a user name and password from Helgason to get in). The database is not as complete as Íslendingabók, but it's not small either. Hálfðan takes care of all the updating. The search interface is multilingual and once you are in there are no restrictions on whose data you can see.

When asked, Skúlason and Helgason both explain the middle road they have had to steer between making their databases too open to the public and making them too restricted. Hálfðan's database is housed on a small server which is not powerful enough to cope with unlimited access. If either database was released publicly, Friðrik or Hálfðan would have to get a clear legal opinion on what kind of pruning would be necessary so that the disclosure of information on living people would not run afoul of Iceland's data protection laws. Even if genealogy is more of a hobby than a business, it doesn't feel right to give away years of hard-earned work for free. At the same time, both of them are proud of their work and want to see people benefit from it. Their dilemma echoes a debate with in the field of genealogical research.

Consider the Scotland's People website (scotlandspeople.gov.uk), where practically all of Scotland's legally open birth, death, marriage, church, census, and probate records are available, fully indexed, from the comfort of your chair for a per-record fee; or Ancestry.com, a commercial site which costs about \$350 a year to join, which consolidates thousands of different kinds of records (primarily North American) on one site. For example, census records have been scanned, transcribed, and put into a searchable database which is linked to images of the original census page. There is also a section where people can search and submit compiled family trees – the results of their own research – although there is no guarantee of their accuracy, and they have not been compiled as carefully as Íslending-

The computer indexing of genealogical sources and printing of paper indexes was the first wave, making it all of a sudden much easier, quicker, and cheaper to find information about our ancestors. In the second wave, all this information moved online and, as Internet access penetrated to the average household, it became possible to research your family history without having to go to the library.

Collaborative online genealogy is likely to be the third wave. Imagine that we create a web page for each of our forebears. Each individual's web page contains their name and important dates, copies of photos and source documents, and links to spouses', parents', and children's sites. These pages are open to the public so that everyone can see, add to, and correct each others' work. In effect, this would be the Wikipedia of genealogy.

Many people have had this idea at the same time, and I have found at least ten different web sites which are trying to put it into practice one way or another (gencircles.com, geneanet.org, mytrees.com, zoof.com, geni.com, ancientfaces.com, deadfred.com, rodov-id.org, wikitree.org, familypursuit.net, and familylink.com). There are, as well, a number of "virtual memorials" or "web cemeteries" on the Internet (such as www.cemetery.org or catless.ncl.ac.uk/vmg).

Not surprisingly, the Mormon Church has gotten interested in this idea. The church has supported genealogical research handsomely for decades, because Mormon theology encourages church members to research their family history. The church has decided to develop a collaborative project of its own, whose working title is New FamilySearch (see labs.familysearch.org). If it works well and catches on, New FamilySearch could blow the other ten start-up sites out of the water and become the world's standard collaborative genealogy site, just as Wikipedia has become the world's standard collaborative encyclopaedia. Harnessing the power of all the individual genealogists out there, it would create one mass Wiki-memorial, housed on the Mormon Church's servers in Utah.

Iceland may be the country best positioned in the world to take advantage of such a system. It's fascinating to see that Friðrik Skúlason and Hálfðan Helgason have already created thickly linked genealogical databases that try to cover the entire, limited, universe of Iceland. They have even put them on the web. They're just in a form that – for now at least – doesn't include photos and documents and lacks the participatory accessibility of a wiki.

There is one other person in Iceland who dreamed of a collaborative Icelandic genealogy site way back in the early 1990s and came very close to putting it into practice. His name is Magnús Gíslason and he is now the head of Unix systems administration for the University of Iceland's computing service. Right after the World Wide Web came into being, Magnús designed a web genealogy application called "w3aett." All the people in w3aett's database had their own web page. The web page listed each person's basic genealogical data, gave links to parents, children and spouses, and included a photograph. Submissions from the public were permitted, although in practice Magnús entered most of the information himself – 56,000 individuals. Magnús long since stopped developing the computer code, but the database is still on the web at w3aett.rhi.hi.is and he does still add to it now and then. Magnús deserves credit as one of the very first people in the world to develop a workable prototype of an Internet collaborative genealogy site designed to comprehensively cover an entire region. Magnús says, in fact, that if New FamilySearch wanted to copy his data they'd be welcome.

For now, Iceland is (as far as I know) the first country which has more or less finished the last three centuries of its genealogy. Icelandic genealogists deserve a lot of credit for their work. The next step may well be to put it all online in a fully accessible, and likely collaborative, format. Somewhere between the approaches of Friðrik Skúlason, Hálfðan Helgason, Magnús Gíslason, Scotland's People, Ancestry.com, FreeBMD and New FamilySearch possibly lies a new business model for putting Icelandic genealogy data online. Ideally, one wants a model which rewards the database's creators, encourages maintenance and expansion, and brings in enough money to run the

servers. One wants to allow public participation but to deter free-riding and vandalism. We surely want to memorialize our ancestors, organize our records of the past, open Icelandic data to non-Icelandic speakers, and help people enjoy the time travel and detective work of researching their family history.

A Cemetery of Virtual Identities

We all know we won't live forever but, even if we don't admit it, we all wonder whether we will be remembered forever, or at least be part of something that continues forever. Genealogy, like cemeteries, books, and other monuments to peoples' lives, are ways in which we project peoples' lives across the ages.

People who lived in the 1500s, whose names don't survive in any records, are now forgotten and lost to our collective memory. We know they existed, but we know them like fish in the sea or stalks of wheat in a field, whose individual identities we never consider.

While many people these days recoil from the idea of being "just a number" in an identification system, the act of numbering someone – and bringing them into a database – is, oddly enough a way of giving them a name, an identity in the collective memory of humanity, a line in the Book of the Dead. That means – as long as that database and its numbering system persists -- a sort of eternal life, though in digital form now rather than in stone.

Indeed, we now grant individual identity – and thus the same kind of eternal existence in our databases and catalogues – to many other groups of things beyond humans. We have long labelled sheep and cattle, we now earmark our cats and dogs, and we tag polar bears and migrating birds. We assign numbers to books, cars, computers, and even sales orders, assuring that we can distinguish one individual from the next, and that these identities will be recoverable for a long time to come.

Genealogists rescue their ancestors from this same kind of oblivion. They extend the honour of inclusion among the known, the recorded, and the connected to a larger and larger group of people. Icelanders are truly special in having so comprehensively kept their forebears' identities safe from the crumbling of records and the weathering of gravestones.

While we are surely not going to stop physically remembering the past in archives and cemeteries, it looks more and more like memorializing our ancestors is another one of the things that is going to move online. Just as Google and Wikipedia have revolutionized the organization of written knowledge in a matter of a few years, it looks like collaboration on the web may soon revolutionize the way we keep track of our family history. If Iceland can find a way to take part, we will all feel proud when the world sees how well our history is preserved.

Free, publicly accessible Icelandic genealogy databases

www.archives.is
1703 and 1835 censuses of Iceland in searchable format

www.gardur.is
Database of all cemetery burials in Iceland

www.mbl.is/mm/gagnasafn/minningaleit.html
Morgunblaðið obituaries 1986-present

timarit.is/mbl
Morgunblaðið full text index and images, 1913-2000

www.halfdan.is
1816 census of Iceland in PDF format, plus many links to compiled genealogies online, Hálfðan Helgason's own online database (password needed), and advice in English on Icelandic genealogy research

w3aett.rhi.hi.is
Largest publicly accessible compiled genealogy database in Iceland, created by Magnús Gíslason, but not actively maintained



Later, Björk would play the main stage, drawing adoration but also more than a little frustration.

Standing in the Desert, Thinking of Rain

Text by Bart Cameron Photos by Brian Romero

On day one of the 2007 Coachella Valley Music Festival, Jarvis Cocker offered the weekend's most touching, politically poignant observation: "This is very different than England. I'm going to sing a song about rain, but this is the desert and it doesn't even rain here."

Yes, the Coachella polo grounds were not rainy. And this astounded the former Pulp frontman. He spent the better part of thirty minutes trying to wrap his head around that.

A few days later, driving away from the desert site of the ultimate preview for the rock royalty here in America, I suffered a moment of Cockeresque confusion—if Coachella was a decidedly American setting, bigger than life, surrounded by gated communities and then freeway, with an audience full of American film stars including Cameron Diaz, Drew Barrymore, Ron Jeremy and Jason Lee (Earl J. Hickey from My Name is Earl), it was a little surprising to realize that most of the best received artists were from across the pond. The future of critically acclaimed commercial rock in America looks to be British.

I should explain what Coachella is and why it is so important, but I'm having trouble coming to grips with it. Originally, Coachella was just a bad idea come to fruition, a concert held in a desert oasis in the summer offering 25,000 fans a chance to get sunstroke while watching Rage Against the Machine—which may still be the recommended manner in which to take in a Rage concert. Slowly, the festival has grown in influence, as bands like Iggy and the Stooges and the Pixies chose it as the site for their reunion concerts. Then, last year, Gnarl Barkley used the venue to step into the nationwide spotlight and it seemed pretty clear that this was the kingmaker among festivals: CMJ could get a band a write up in Pitchfork

and blogs, but Coachella gets radio, TV and newspaper coverage.

And before I describe the festival, it's worth describing the coverage. In years past, there was mention of reunions and revelry. This year, one act garnered nationwide attention: Björk. She offered an energetic, enigmatic live introduction of Volta to thousands of fans and she got bewildered but mostly positive praise... for her wardrobe. Beyond Björk, bands weren't mentioned nearly as much as the celebrities in the crowd.

Listening to a Clear Channel station on my way out of LA after the festival, I got the summary that mass media was using to summarize the festival in the curious fragment from a pleased DJ: "Yes, and this year at Coachella, Cameron Diaz and Drew Barrymore were dancing in the grass. That's a memory."

Friday

My festival experience began with two hours of waiting to park and get in—due to traffic mishaps in LA before that, this meant missing Of Montreal, the indie sensation from Athens Georgia, and Nickel Creek, a young bluegrass outfit that has redefined the genre. When I got in, the Arctic Monkeys were on the main stage, which one might think would be the worst of possible omens. The Arctic Monkeys may be the least original and most over-hyped of the Brit pop scene. It is one thing to dislike teenagers for by-the-numbers rock with lyrics that confuse sneer for wit, syllables for intellectualism, but it is another to see these kids get up before thousands and play these songs with a sense of humour, and tighter than any band I've seen. Had I never seen them on a magazine cover, or in the New York Times, had I never listened closely to the lyrics, I would have been a fan for life.

Rufus Wainwright presented a bewildering performance. From the start, with a peculiar wardrobe malfunction involving a to-die-for butterfly brooch, he offered causal quips between his smooth, honest and awkward songs. Here's an explanation of the show: the self-described "Gay Sinatra" joked, nightclub style, "It's great to be here in the desert where all the rejects have to go... you know, the gays the homosexuals..." to hoots and hollers, and then jumped into Going to a Town (That has Been Burnt Down), with the refrain "I'm so tired of America", a performance that would bring a theatre crowd to their feet and, having captured our attention and intellect, he declared he was hot. Taking off his clothes he pulled off a robe to reveal a red, white and blue striped shirt and shorts combo.

Among other remarkable moments Friday: the Mexican act Felix the Kat getting a sing-along going from a small but vocal following; Jarvis Cocker's aforementioned rambling show that delayed the whole evening a little—he not only felt like talkin', but he was also about 45 minutes late; and Interpol getting on stage and getting the best response of the festival.

That should come as a shock Interpol being a festival favourite. Yes, all dressed in black, their singer kind of looked like Mark Hamill in Return of the Jedi, which is neat, and their songs sounded like they did on the radio only a little more full. It was an odd moment, for all the eclectic performances of the night, Interpol's straight-faced, straight-laced show, with no antics save the bass player growing a moustache, was the show of the night.

Later, Sonic Youth would play to an older crowd and Björk would play the main stage, drawing adoration but also more than a little frustration. Björk's visual performance was

stunning, but as she ain't exactly tall. The video monitors that helped the crowd of upwards of 25,000 get a guess as to what was going on were focused on the motions of her DJs hands, not too much of the crowd saw more than the singer's bobbing head. Her material from her forthcoming album, Volta, was mostly in minor keys and a little more laid back than her stage antics suggested, or than the crowd probably wanted.

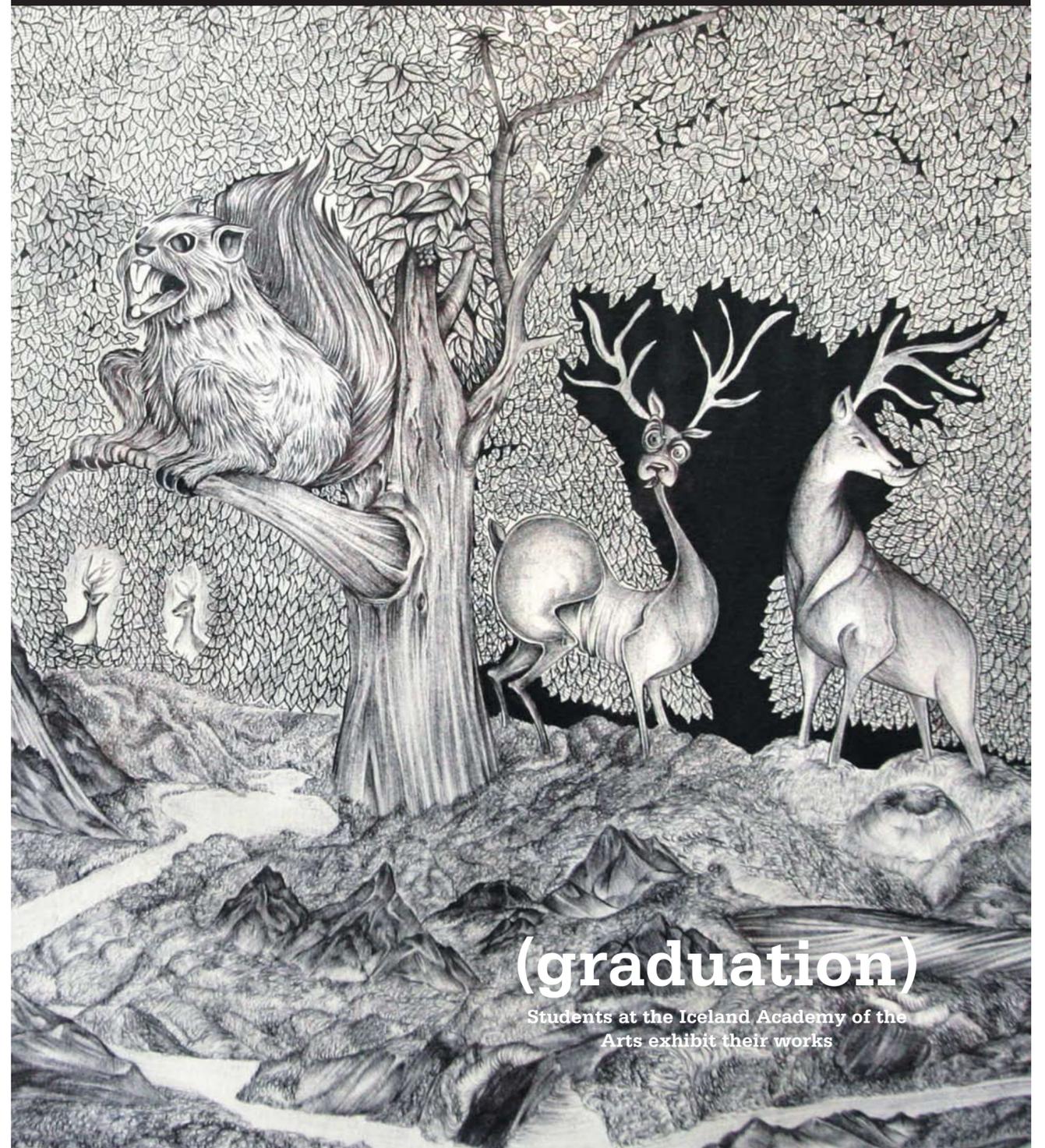
Saturday

On day two of the festival, heat became an issue. Late in the afternoon I was rammed into a packed tent watching Hot Chip blare through The Warning, with 4,000 20-something shirtless kids bouncing next to me, when the room spun in a bad way and I had to crawl out. The temperature outside of the non-air conditioned tent at 5 pm: 103 degrees (about 40 degrees Celsius).

It had been difficult earlier in the day. When I saw the Icelandic band the Fields play the same tent at noon, their conventional takes on the pop song and their laid back manner had been virtues, perfect for lazy viewing in the heat. I had abandoned The Crips, who played so hard you sweated just looking at them, and headed out to the open air to see New Jersey's once great hope Fountains of Wayne. And I had been grateful, somehow, to Regina Spektor for apologizing to the crowd for the ridiculous heat. Spektor's presence on recordings can be a little sentimental—she can be breathy and overly cute. But live, from a somewhat daring opening a cappella number through her next six numbers from Begin to Hope, her skill, her perfect pitch and rhythm, made for a charming performance, even when her sometimes slightly overly precious and cute

info.

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Analyzing Digital Photography Goran Bregovic Eyjafest 2007 Spencer
Tunick Pockemon Graduation Show AMI Docs & Shorts Food Reviews
Music, Art, Films and Events Listings ▾



(graduation)

Students at the Iceland Academy of the Arts exhibit their works



Kjarvalsstaðir – May 19 - Aug 26

Icelandic Contemporary Design

On May 19, a unique exhibition focusing on Icelandic contemporary design opens in Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum. Entitled Magma, the exhibition is part of the Reykjavik Arts Festival and is one of the most comprehensive presentations of Icelandic design to date. As the title suggests, the exhibition is supposed to reflect the simmering creative energy that defines Icelandic designers. By featuring a wide range of art-works from clothing, architecture, furniture, lighting, textile, jewellery and technical innovations, the aim of the exhibition is to show all of the distinctive aspects of Icelandic contemporary design and its importance in our daily lives.

The exhibition's curator, de-

signer Guðrún Lilja Gunnlaugsdóttir, selected works by around sixty of Iceland's most prominent and progressive designers. The ideas they present to the public in this group exhibit are as diverse as their experimental use of materials or the purpose of the objects they have created – and that was exactly the intention. With this large-scale exhibition, Gunnlaugsdóttir wants visitors to acquire a deeper understanding of what design is, where it comes from, and what thoughts lie behind the works. Viewers will be able to examine watches designed by Gilbert O. Guðjónsson as well as a rocking chair by Guðrún Lilja Gunnlaugsdóttir, baking forms by Hrafnkell Birgisson and snowboard prints by Katrín

Pétursdóttir, to name just a few of the astonishing developments.

In addition to this, five new innovation projects were specially created and sponsored for this exhibition, designed by: Ninna Þórarinsdóttir, Páll Einarsson, Sigríður Heimisdóttir, Unnur Friðriksdóttir and Þóra Árnadóttir. During the Magma exhibition, the North Gallery at Kjarvalsstaðir will be devoted to design as well, with a special educational programming entitled The Spark – Design For Everyone.

The exhibition will be open until August 26.

Reykjavík Art Museum – Kjarvalsstaðir, Flókagata, 105 Reykjavík, www.artmuseum.is.

Wed 23.05 Dean Ferrell contrabass player + friends in concert. Starts at 20:00.

■ Café Paris

Austurstræti 14

Fri 18.05 DJ Lucky plays soul, funk, reggae and hip-hop

Sat 19.05 DJ Börkur plays soul, funk, reggae and hip-hop

Thu 24.05 DJ Lucky plays soul, funk, reggae and hip-hop

Fri 25.05 DJ Lucky plays soul, funk, reggae and hip-hop

Sat 26.05 DJ Börkur plays soul, funk, reggae and hip-hop

Sat 02.06 DJ Börkur plays soul, funk, reggae and hip-hop

■ Dillon

Laugavegur 30

Legendary rock pub featuring live concerts every Wednesday night and rock DJs every weekend.

Fri 18.05 DJ Andri Capone

Sat 19.05 Grasrætur and DJ Andrea Jóns

Wed 23.05 Atómstöðin and Wulfgang in concert

Thu 24.05 Silent River play old-metal

Fri 25.05 Brain Police in concert followed by DJ Mikkoðlufur

Sat 26.05 DJ Andrea Jóns

Wed 30.05 Dust Cap play desert-rock

Thu 31.05 Grasrætur

Sat 19.05 DJ Kristin

■ Café Hljómald

Laugavegur 21

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

Music

■ Austurbær

Snorrabraut 37

Tue 29.05 Jeff Buckley tribute show

■ Bar 11

Laugavegur 11

A popular hangout spot for Reykjavik's rockers and their young idolaters with DJs playing classic rock'n'roll hits.

Fri 18.05 House DJ

Sat 19.05 House DJ

Fri 25.05 House DJ

Sat 26.05 House DJ

Fri 01.06 House DJ

Sat 02.06 House DJ

■ Barinn

Laugavegur 22

Vibrant late-night party place and a nice roomy bistro during the day.

Fri 18.05 DJ Casanova / DJ Heineken music and Artic Wave present: Baroque Records and DJ Keith

Sat 19.05 DJ Yamaho / DJ Impuls

Thu 24.05 DJ Helgi Már

Fri 25.05 DJ Casanova / DJ Drulla

Sat 26.05 Tommi White and friends

Wed 29.05 DJ Rain

■ Café Cultura

Hverfisgata 18

Music from the world's four corners

Fri 18.05 DJ Lupin

Sat 19.05 DJ Kristin

■ Café Hljómald

Laugavegur 21

Music Art Films Events

Safn - From May 19

Ever-changing Installation

The contemporary art museum Safn presents the opening of two new solo exhibitions on May 19. The wall facing Laugavegur will be devoted to Unnar Örn J. Auðarsson, who will be working on a rather unusual installation entitled Museum of the Surface, Desire Archive and Decay Complex. Unnar has built a large glass-casket, which he calls an archive, and attached it to the museum. The archive will grow in size from day to day when Unnar starts collecting various materials to put into the casket as soon as the exhibition opens. He will

continue that task until the exhibition comes to an end on October 20. This continuously changing and surprising installation will therefore never be exactly the same.

David Örn Halldórsson's exhibition entitled Museum of the Surface, Desire Archive and Decay Complex. Unnar has built a large glass-casket, which he calls an archive, and attached it to the museum. The archive will grow in size from day to day when Unnar starts collecting various materials to put into the casket as soon as the exhibition opens. He will

Safn, Laugavegur 37, 101 Reykjavík, www.safn.is



NASA – May 31 at 21:00

Time For Tango

After an incredible worldwide success, the Argentinean tango orchestra, Orquesta Tipica Fernandez Fierro, will finally visit Iceland and perform at NASA on May 31. Founded by a group of students in Buenos Aires in 2001, the band consists of twelve musicians in total with a line-up which includes: violins, viola, violoncello, four bandoneóns, piano, bass and a singer. The group started performing in the streets of San Telmo, a neighbourhood in the Argentinean capital, and quickly grabbed the attention of locals and curious tourists, who were not used to such a large

group of talented street performers playing tango with a rock and roll attitude. In 2002, the band released its debut, Envasado en Origen, and have been travelling the world ever since.

In addition to the concerts at NASA, Orquesta Tipica Fernandez Fierro will be among the performers at the Akureyr Music Festival and play Sjallinn on June 1.

Tickets are for sale at Kramhúsið, Skólavörðustigur 12, www.kramhusid.is.

Fri 25.05 Touch followed by DJ Maggi

Sat 26.05 Touch followed by DJ Maggi

■ Iðnó Theatre

Vonarstræti 3

Thu 24.05 Grapevine presents: Take Me Down To Reykjavik City Concert Series. Motion Boys, Fm Belfast, Sprengjuhöllin and Hjaltalin. Starts at 21:00.

■ Kaffibarinn

Bergstaðastræti 1

With a mixture of techno, reggae, hip-hop and classic dance hits, the DJs are usually capable of crowding this frisky bar every single night of the week.

Sat 19.05 DJ Casanova

Fri 25.05 DJ Benni B-Ruff

Sat 26.05 DJ Árni Sveins

■ Laugardalshöllin

Engjavegur 8

Sat 19.05 Rite of Spring: Goran Bregovic and the Wedding and Funeral Band

Sun 27.05 Deep Purple and Uriah Heep in concert

Fri 01.06 Beatles tribute show: The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra together with Jón Ólafsson rockband and a group of singers, including Egill Ólafsson, Stefán Hilmarrsson, Björgvin Halldórsson, Páll Rósinkranz, Sigurjón Brink and KK will perform the masterpiece Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band

■ Nasa

Thorvaldsenstræti 2

Fri 18.05 Rite of Spring Festival: Salsa Celtaica, and Samúel Jón Samúelsson Big-band

Sat 19.05 Sálin in concert

Fri 25.05 Reykjavik Arts Festival: Jazztrío EST

Sat 26.05 Reykjavik Arts Festival: Jazztrío EST

Thu 24.05 Reykjavik Arts Festival: Argentinian tango group Orquesta Tipica Fernandez Fierro

Fri 01.06 90s Party with DJ Kiki-Ow and Curver

■ Prikjó

Bankastræti 12

Fri 18.05 Tetrix Night: DJ Benni and guests

Sat 19.05 DJ Andri and DJ Gulli Ósoma

Thu 24.05 Ladycats

Fri 25.05 Franz and Kristó followed by DJ Óli Hjörtur

Sat 26.05 DJ Rósa

Wed 30.05 DJ Ernir

■ Q-bar

Ingólfsstræti 3

Stylish and vibrant gay / straight-friendly bar and party venue. Cozy on weekdays and full of surprises on weekends.

Fri 18.05 DJ Skafti and Tommi White

Sat 19.05 Beauty and the Beast

Wed 23.05 DJ Amma

Thu 24.05 DJ Anna Brá

Fri 25.05 DJ Yamaho

Sat 26.05 DJ Peter Parker

Sun 27.05 DJ Gilli and DJ Þórdís

Wed 30.05 DJ Gay Thug

Thu 31.05 DJ Þórir

■ Sirkus

Klapparstigur 30

Playing reggae, country and occasionally hosting live gigs on weekdays, Sirkus's veteran DJs keep the party going till late on weekends.

Fri 25.05 Reykjavik Arts Festival: Jazztrío EST

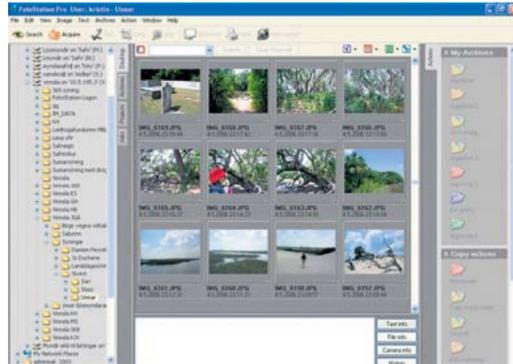
Kléberg – May 25 - May 27

Capoeira Workshop

From May 25 to May 27 locals will get the chance to attend the first Capoeira workshop in Iceland at the Kléberg gymnasium in Kjalanes. Capoeira is a Brazilian form of art that combines fight, dance, rhythm and movement. Balázs Pesti from Hungary is organizing the event, but he has trained the sport for years and even spent some time in Rio de Janeiro to train Capoeira in the place it originated. Along with his master, Mestre Pontapé from Brazil he will teach everyone interested the basics of Capoeira and samba.

Pesti explains that the challenge is within everyone's reach, regardless of age, race, gender or athletic experience. The rhythm and speed are determined by music and songs, which makes Capoeira lively and energetic and in the most part, a lot of fun.

Those interested in learning more about Capoeira and the workshop in Iceland can visit the website www.capoeira.reykjavik.bz



Reykjavik Museum of Photography – May 15 - Jul 4

Analyzing Digital Photography

No one can deny that digital cameras have transformed the way people look at photographs and photography in general. Professional photographers as well as amateurs can today create their own digital photo albums by using the computer and store thousands of images, share them on the Internet, or forget about them altogether. This digital revolution is the idea behind Unnar Örn Jónsson's exhibition at Skotid. Entitled The Resistance Collection, Unnar displays 4773 pictures,

which he has shot for the past four years and downloaded on his computer, no matter if they have some artistic value or not. With this exhibition Unnar wants the viewer to consider the effects of digital photography and the role the photograph plays in the lives of people today. The exhibition is open from May 15 to July 4.

Reykjavik Museum of Photography, Tryggvagata 15, 101 Reykjavík, www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is

Wed 23.05 DJ Frosti Gringó

Thu 24.05 DJ Roesbert

Fri 25.05 DJ Gisli Galdur

Sat 26.05 DJ Jón Atli

Museums & Galleries

■ 101 Gallery

Hverfisgata 18

Thu.-Sat. 14-17 and by appointment

www.101hotel.is/101hotel/101gallery/

Current exhibition:

La Grande Colline

Lóa Hlin Hjálmtýsdóttir exhibition. The show includes portraits of suburban baronesses, small dukes and various aristocrats.

■ Anima Gallery

Ingólfsstræti 8 / Lækjargata 2

Tue.-Sat. 13-17

www.animagalleri.is

Current exhibition:

Kristinn G. Harðarson exhibition at Ingólfsstræti 8

■ Artótek

Tryggvagata 15

Mon. 10-21, Tue.-Thu. 10-19, Fri. 11-19, Sat. and Sun. 13-17

www.sim.is/Index/Islenka/Artotek

■ ASÍ Art Museum

Frejjugata 41

Tue.-Sun. 13-17

Free Entrance

May 5 – May 27

From One to Infinity

Nordic textile exhibition

■ Auga fyrir Auga

Hverfisgata 35

Open Thu.-Fri. 15-19, Sat.-Sun. 14-17

■ The Einar Jónsson Museum

Eiríksgata

Tue.-Sun. 14-17

www.skulptur.is

Permanent exhibition:

The work of sculptor Einar Jónsson

■ The Culture House

Hverfisgata 15

Open daily 11-17

www.thjodmenning.is

Permanent exhibitions:

Medieval Manuscripts; The National

Museum – as it was; The Library

Room; The Road to Zion; Berlin

Excursion

Current exhibition:

Surtsey - Genesis

The exhibition traces the emergence and evolution of the island Surtsey until the present day and predicts its geographical and ecological development over the next 120 years.

■ Dwarf Gallery

Grundarstigur 21

Opening Hours: Fri. and Sat. 18-20

www.this.is/birta

■ Gallery 100 Degrees

Bæjarháls 1

Mon.-Fri. 8:30-16

www.or.is/ForSIDa/Gallery100

Permanent exhibition:

Artwork owned by Reykjavik Energy

■ Gallery Fold

Rauðarstigur 14-16

Mon.-Fri. 10-18

Sat. 11-17

Sun. 14-16

www.myndlist.is

Sells a large selection of Icelandic and international art and hosts exhibitions



Laugardalshöll – May 19

Balkan Big-Band in Laugardalshöll

The arrival of Bosnian musician Goran Bregovic this weekend should be an enjoyable treat for all true music lovers. Bregovic is a universally admired artist who's been playing sold out shows across the world for years and recently managed to crowd a square in Montreal with an audience of approximately 200.000 people. His music has gained an incredible cult following and now he's about to win the hearts and souls of Icelanders as well. Along with his Wedding and Funeral Band, Bregovic will be performing the concert Tales and Songs for Weddings and Funerals in Laugardalshöll on Saturday May 19.

Born in Sarajevo in 1950, Bregovic is a highly respected composer and guitarist. He founded his first band, The White Button, at the age of sixteen, which became the most popular rock band of the former Yugoslavia and transformed the Yugoslav rock scene. After the war broke out, Bregovic had to abandon his home country and found exile in Paris, where he continued working on his adventurous music career. Fans should remember that Bregovic composed the soundtrack for a couple of movies directed by award-winning Bosnian filmmaker Emir Kusturica, such as Time of the Gypsies, Arizona Dream and Underground. Bregovic has also composed original music for various

film directors, orchestrated music for theatres and collaborated with musicians as diverse as Iggy Pop and Cesaria Evora. At the concert at Laugardalshöll, Bregovic will be accompanied by a 40-piece big-band, which includes a brass section, a string ensemble, percussionists and a large choir playing Balkan inspired gypsy rhythms with a rock n' roll twist.

The Rite of Spring Festival in collaboration with the Reykjavik Arts Festival produces the concert which starts at 21:00.

TICKETS AT [midi.is](http://www.midi.is)

on a regular basis.

Current exhibition:

Arakne

Guðrún Óyahals exhibition

■ Gallery Sævar Karl

Bankastræti 7

Mon.-Fri. 10-18

Sat. 10-16

www.saevarkarl.is/

onwards.

■ **Reykjavík Art Museum – Hafnarhús**
Tryggvagata 17
Open daily 10-17

From May 11
My Oz
Roni Horn retrospective

May 10 – Jun 17
Works by Sigurður Guðjónsson at the D Gallery. The exhibition will include a new film and sound installation.

May 10 – Aug 17
The Erró Collection
Works from the museum's Erró collection: A further examination of the diverse subjects and stages of Erró's artistic oeuvre.

■ **Reykjavík Art Museum – Kjarvalsstaðir**
Flökagata
Open Daily 10-17

February 10 – September 2
K-Pátturinn / The K-Factor
Jóhannes S. Kjarval retrospective.

May 19 – Aug 26
Kvika / Magna
Icelandic contemporary design

May 19 – Aug 26
The Spark – Design for Everyone
Design exhibition, with special educational programming

■ **Reykjavík Museum of Photography**
Kistuhylur 4
www.arbaejaarsafn.is

■ **The Reykjavík Museum of Photography**
Grófarhús, Tryggvagata 15, 6th floor
Weekdays 12-19
Sat.-Sun. 13-17
Free Entrance
www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is

Until May 26
Swim and Steam
Damien Peyret exhibit displaying polaroids of people relaxing in Kópavogur swimming pool and a screening of his short film A Taxi for Reykjavík, made in 2001. (Pourquoi Pas? Festival)

Until May 26
Made in Iceland
Jo Duchene photo exhibition displaying his documentary of private, public, industrial and religious housing in Iceland. (Pourquoi Pas? Festival)

May 15 – Jul 4
The Resistance Collection
Unnar Örn exhibition

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

March 17 – May 21
Eden
Hugues Reip presents his installation entitled Eden, featuring images of flowers he has enlarged, printed and mounted on a wooden structure. (Pourquoi Pas? Festival)

March 17 – May 21
Jardin Vilayet

Sigurður Arni Sigurðsson photo exhibition.

May 19 – Oct 20
Museum of the Surface / Desire Archive / Decay Complex
Unnar Örn J. Auðarson exhibition

May 19 – Jul 1
Quadro Pop
Davið Örn Halldórsson exhibition

■ **Sigurjón Alþásson Museum**
Laugarnestangi 70
Tue.-Sun. 14-17

Permanent exhibition:
The work of sculptor Sigurjón Ólafsson

■ **Start Art / Art Shop**
Laugavegur 12b
www.startart.is

May 10 – May 28
MINI VOTT
Installations by Anna Eyjólfsdóttir, Ragnhildur Stefánsdóttir, Rúri and Þórdís Alda Sigurðardóttir.

Outside Reykjavík

■ **Skafftelli**
Austurvegur 42, Seyðisfjörður
www.skafftelli.is

May 19 – May 23
An exhibition by the artists Finnur Arnar, Jón Garðar Henryson and Þórarinn Blöndal consisting of installations, 3D and photographs. On the same occasion, the first exhibition of the summer on the West-wall opens showing the collaboration of the Evil-Madness duet, Helgi Þórsson and Sigtryggur Berg Sigmarsson.

■ **Gallery Klettur**
Helluhraun 16, Hafnarfjörður
Open Sat. 10-14. At other times by arrangement.

■ **Hafnarborg**
Strandgata 34, Hafnarfjörður
Mon.-Sun. 11-17
www.hafnarborg.is

May 11 – Jun 24
New paintings by Temma Bell exhibition

May 11 – Jun 24
Paintings by Louisa Matthiasdóttir and Leland Bell

May 11 – Jun 24
Installations by Ruth Boerefjinn

■ **Gljúfrasteinn**
– **Hallidór Laxness museum**
270 Mosfellsbær
Open daily except Mondays from 10-17.

■ **Kópavogur Art Museum – Gerðarsafn**
Hamraborg, Kópavogur
Open daily 11:00-17:00 except Mondays
www.gerdarsafn.is

May 5 – May 26
Stoned glass by Gerður Helgadóttir, drawings by Barbara Arnadóttir and Magnús Á. Árnason

■ **The Icelandic Museum of Design and Applied Art**
Lyngás 7-9, 121 Garðabær
Opening hours: Tues. –Fri. 14-18; Sat. and Sun. 16-18.

www.mudesa.org
Exhibitions devoted to Icelandic design.

■ **The Icelandic Settlement Centre**
Brákarbraut 13-15, Borgarnes
Opening hours: May to September 20-20; September to May 11-17.
www.landnam.is

Permanent exhibitions:
The Settlement of Iceland; The Saga of Egill Skallagrímsson

■ **Suðsuðvestur**
Hafnargata 22, Keflavík
Thu.-Fri. 16-18
Sat.-Sun. 14-17
www.sudsudvestur.is

May 26 – Jun 17
Birgir Snæbjörn and J.B.K. Ransu exhibition

■ **Vatnasafn / Library of Water**
Bökhöðustígur 17, 340 Stykkishólmur
www.libraryofwater.is
Open daily from 11 – 17.

Permanent exhibition:
Roni Horn installation. She has replaced stacks of books with glass containers containing water gathered from Iceland's glaciers and glacial rivers.

■ **Sandgerði Museum**
Gerðavegur 1, Sandgerði.
Until February 7, 2008
Polar Adventures
Exhibition on the life and work of the French polar explorer, scientist and doctor Jean-Baptiste Charcot.

■ **Jónas Víðar Gallery**
Kaupvangsstræti 12, Akureyri
Fri.-Sat. 13-18
www.jvs.is/jvgallery.htm

May 5 – May 27
Þorvaldur Þorsteinsson solo exhibit

■ **Akureyri Art Museum**
Kaupvangsstræti 12, Akureyri
Tue.-Sun. 12-17
www.listasafn.akureyri.is

May 5 – Jun 24
Rhythms of Life
Sculptures by Australian artist Andrew Rogers

■ **DaLi Gallery**
Brekkgata 9, Akureyri
Mon.-Sat. 14-18
www.daligallery.blogspot.com

Current exhibition:
Paintings by Inga Björk Harðardóttir

■ **GalleriBOX**
Kaupvangstræti 10, Akureyri
www.galleribox.blogspot.com

Current exhibition:
Þórunn Eymundardóttir exhibition

Akureyri

■ **Spiderman 3**
Smárabíó, Laugarásbíó, Regnboginn, Borgarbíó Akureyri, Selfossbíó, Sambíóin Álfabakka, Sambíóin Keflavík

■ **Painted Veil**
Regnboginn

■ **Inland Empire**
Regnboginn

■ **Severance**
Laugarásbíó

■ **The Condemned**
Laugarásbíó, Háskólalabíó

■ **Blades of Glory**
Laugarásbíó, Sambíóin Kringlunni, Sambíóin Álfabakka, Sambíóin Akureyri

■ **Shooter**
Laugarásbíó, Selfossbíó, Sambíóin Álfabakka

■ **Das Leben der Anderen**
Regnboginn

■ **Next**
Háskólalabíó, Sambíóin Keflavík

■ **Goal 2**
Sambíóin Kringlunni, Sambíóin Akureyri

■ **The Reaping**
Sambíóin Kringlunni, Sambíóin Álfabakka

■ **The Hoax**
(May 25)

■ **Pirates of the Caribbean: At Worlds End**
(May 25)

■ **Reykjavik Shorts and Docs Festival**
Tjarnarbíó (May 25 – 28)

Movie Theatres

■ **Regnboginn**, Hverfisgata 54
101 Reykjavík, Tel. 551-9000

■ **Háskólalabíó**, Hagatorg
107 Reykjavík, Tel. 525-5400

■ **Laugarásbíó**, Laugarás
104 Reykjavík, Tel. 565-0118

■ **Smárabíó**, Smáralind
201 Kópavogur, Tel. 564-0000

■ **Sambíóin**, Álfabakki 8
109 Reykjavík, Tel. 575-8900

■ **Sambíóin**, Kringlan 4-12
103 Reykjavík, Tel. 575-8900

■ **Sambíóin Akureyri**, Ráðhústorg
600 Akureyri, Tel. 461-4666

Films

■ **Fracture**
Smárabíó, Borgarbíó Akureyri, Háskólalabíó

■ **It's a Boy Girl Thing**
Smárabíó, Regnboginn, Borgarbíó



Vestmannaeyjar – May 25 - 26

Eyjafest 2007

The annual music festival Eyjafest will take place at three different venues in the Westmann Island from May 25 to 26. Don't let a short flight to the island keep you from the music extravaganza as this years year's lineup is guaranteed to attract a mixed crowd of pop and rock lovers who can choose from an extensive list of diverse participants, featuring both popular as well as less known bands. Among confirmed artists, in no special order, are Jan Mayen, Nilfisk,

Foreign Monkeys, Weapons, Leaves, Awful Truth, Johnny and the Rest, Arni and Védis, Magnús Kuvahara, Parallel Delusion, Hoffman, Jack London, Coral, Motýl, Andrúm, Noise, Envy of Nona, Wulfgang and Brain Police. The party starts at club Prófasturinn on Friday night and won't start winding down before early Saturday morning.

For more info see www.myspace.com/eyjafest

■ **Nýja-Bíó**, Hafnargata 33
230 Reykjavík, Tel. 421-1170

■ **Selfossbíó**, Eyrarvegur 2
800 Selfoss, Tel. 482-3007

Events

■ **San Francisco Ballet**
18.05 – 20.05 The San Francisco Ballet is the oldest ballet company in the US. Artistic Director Helgi Tómasson has created a show specially designed for an Icelandic audience, based on some of the ballets Tómasson has choreographed for his company. In conjunction with this event, an exhibition of Helgi Tómasson's career and the San Francisco Ballet's history will open in the foyer of the Reykjavík City Theatre on May 16.

Reykjavík City Theatre, Listabraut 2.

■ **Opera by Hafliði Hallgrímsson**
18.05 Icelandic Symphony Orchestra and eight solo singers perform Die Wäلت der Zwischenfälle, an opera by Hafliði Hallgrímsson. Described by critics as an absurdist classic, the opera has been staged in Vienna and Lübeck. Its Icelandic premiere will take place at Háskólalabíó on May 18. The concert starts at 19:30.
Háskólalabíó Concert Hall, at Hagatorg.

■ **Britain and Europe: The Emotional Deficit**
18.05 History professor Peter Hennessey will lecture on Britain's stand on the merger in Europe. Hennessey is a professor at the Queen Mary, University of London and among the most respected scholars in Britain. The lecture is open to everyone free of charge.
University of Iceland, Oddi room 101 from 12-13.

■ **Festival of Nations**
31.05 – 10.06 The annual arts and cultural festival, The Bright Days, will be held in the town of Hafnarfjörður from May 31 to June 10 this year. One of the events is a Multi-lingual Singing Contest and the Intercultural Centre is looking for contestants to participate in the contest, which will take place in the Hafnarfjörður Theatre on June 2.
If interested see www.ahus.is

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A Cross Between Power and Vulnerability

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir Photo by Skari

New York artist Spencer Tunick is an internationally acclaimed photographer and performance artist, renowned for his abstract creations featuring groups of nudes posing in public spaces around the world. Since early in the 90s, he's been documenting massive nude installations where he gathers volunteers to lie among thousands of other naked people to create different shapes and forms, all in the name of art. Grapevine met Tunick at Gallery i8 where he is currently exhibiting some of his most recent works, including photographs he shot in Iceland a year ago.

You just came back from Mexico, where you got 18,000 volunteers to pose nude for the photo shoot, and set a personal record in the meantime.

Yes, I was in Mexico City a few days ago, working very hard in making my art. I don't really consider this as a record though. I obtained the most amounts of people to create the largest sculpturally expansive work that I've ever made. I kind of look at it that way. If I start talking about my work as records, for me, it takes it down a level, but I totally understand where you're coming from. There were 18,000 Mexicans that showed up. I just can't believe it.

That must have been a little bit overwhelming.

It's hard to control Mexicans and you really don't want to control Mexicans. You want to

give them freedom and then try to work with them. So this was difficult but wonderful.

When you started this ongoing art-project, did you expect it to be easy getting thousands of people stripping down for you?

Well, it hasn't been easy at all. It took me four years of work to get these 18,000 people. Just look at a band like the Strokes. They can get 18,000 people to fill up a stadium in a few hours. To get people naked is lot more work. Let's say I did an installation and the Strokes were helping me organize it, then maybe I could get 25,000 people.

The photo is just one piece of the whole performance. What do you like the most: witnessing how many show up and controlling the event or seeing the final result, the photograph?

I have to fill up a space that I set out in my mind so it's not exciting for me to see if less people show up. It's exciting for me to get the number of people I need to make my artwork. I love the six-day period when I am in another country making my work. That's an incredible ride. It's a wonderful experience to be the organizer and also to be the artist. But I also love moments when I get to exhibit my work. These moments are so humbling, so I think it's half and half.

When looking at your photos I can't help but being reminded how small, isolated and sometimes vulnerable the human being is in the big city, surrounded by

giant man-made creations as monuments, buildings and large bridges. Is that your're intention?

In my work I like to approach the vulnerability of human nature against the anonymity of public space. At the same time I think the body sometimes becomes a very powerful element, a cross between vulnerability and power. I started this project to try to combine my love for constructed art and what I love the most, the human form. I love the human form more than I love rocks or flowers.

In a way my medium is very wonderful, it moves quickly, it has legs and can walk away. It's a wonderful thing to work with a lot of people that are like minded, that are open minded and that are freethinkers.

The reaction to the installations haven't all been positive though and not all people are as open minded as your volunteers. You've been arrested a couple of times and some people have even had some difficulties accepting your work as art.

I don't think many people don't accept this as art. People are usually against my work in general, usually the government, because they are so used to associating the naked body with aggression or a crime. But then I just have to get the right people to whisper in the right politician's ear. Often my works happen but sometimes they don't happen in locations or places that I want. Then I just have to flow through that.

I think it would be difficult to get Icelandic people naked en masse, but I would love to work with around 400 people. I think it would be beautiful work.

How do you choose your locations?

I'm invited mostly by contemporary museums and am commissioned by them. I don't often have the opportunity to pick a country and say that I wanna work here and do it by myself because I need security, police, volunteers and organizers. It's a big process, which usually takes a museum to organize.

You're again organising a photo shoot in Iceland. Was it any problem getting volunteers?

Tomorrow morning (last Saturday) I will do these individual portraits in Iceland again. I think it was mentioned in the newspaper that I was looking for people and there was a nude image used with that article, but still people were emailing me thinking that it wasn't a nude photo shoot, a lot of models. When I emailed them back, telling them it was nude they were like: "Oh, we didn't know it was nude". So I asked myself, what are they doing? Don't these models do a little research? But then I got more than enough people to be in my individual portrait series and I hope to exhibit the work near the end of the show.

Have you never considered doing a large group installation in Iceland?

I need a large infrastructure to do a public installation. Almost 90% of my work is done with contemporary art museums. It would have to be an art festival or a museum that commissioned me to do it. That hasn't happened. No one has approached me. I think it would be difficult to get Icelandic people naked en masse, but I would love to work with around 400 people. I think it would be beautiful work. I could do one in the city and one in the nature, one near the hot springs. You'll never know.

Can you tell me a little bit about the exhibition at Gallery i8.

I did shots in Iceland for my individual portrait series, which I'm exhibiting now. Those works are poetic. The pieces from the other countries show a different type of my work from a large mass posing in Chile to a more concept oriented piece where I separated people with long dark hair and worked with the reflections of architecture. I like to be in Iceland now to exhibit the result of my works as photographs as for me, an exhibition is a different thing. This is half of my life. The other half is organizing the installations. It's nice to share. That's what we artists do. Hopefully people will enjoy the work and hopefully they will take them someplace they haven't been before.



C'est la vie for Pockemon

Text by Zoë Robert Photo by Skari

Who: **The Pockemon Crew**
Where: **Reykjavik City Theatre**
When: **May 8, 2007**

The French art festival Pourquoi Pas? has brought some fantastic music, dance and art to Iceland's shores in the last couple of months. Pitched as one of the highlights of the festival, world renowned French hip-hop dance group the Pockemon Crew performed two shows in Reykjavik.

The Pockemon Crew began in 1999 when a few young break-dancers who spent their time dancing in front of the National Opera in Lyon decided to form a group. Hoping to reclaim the area outside the building, but hesitant to evict the dancers, the director of the Opera invited them inside to work. Since then, Pockemon have established themselves as one of the world's foremost hip-hop dance groups by winning the 2003 French and World Championships, the 2004 and 2005 European Championships and the World Championships again last year. With such an impressive portfolio, I was interested to see what sets them apart.

Pockemon are unique in several ways – not only due to their pioneering dance moves, but also because of their adaptability to different genres of stage performance. Blurring the boundaries between high art and street art, the group has performed in traditional theatre productions. This evening's show combined dance, comedy, music, video footage and dramatic play.

Known as the "Rois du Break" (Kings of Breakdancing), Pockemon have succeeded in making hip-hop dance accessible to a wide audience. My guess is that most

of tonight's punters had only recently caught on to the dance craze. The three-quarters filled theatre was mostly occupied by children – a school group, perhaps.

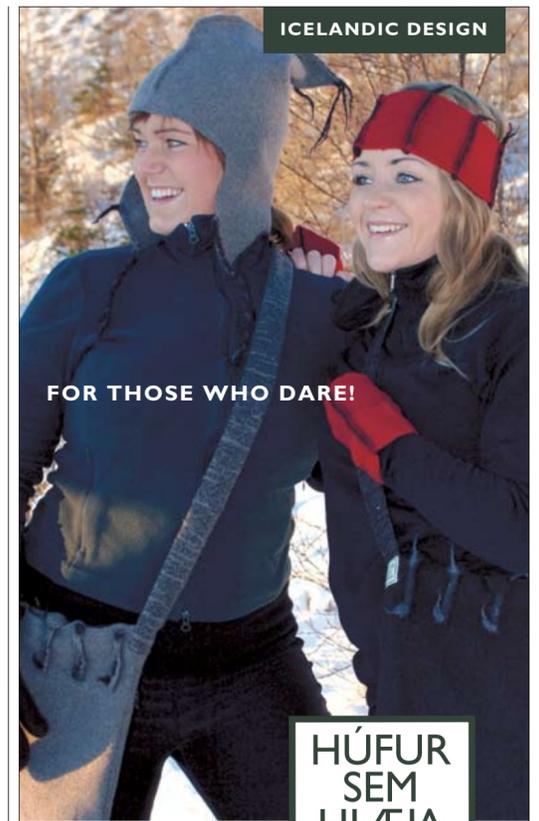
A dark stage and loud thumping beat provided the scene for Pockemon's entrance. As the curtains opened, a row of lights on the stage floor were illuminated and the eight dancers, clad in pale blue tracksuits and white trainers, began their powerful routine. With striking news footage displayed on the screen behind them, their intro couldn't have been more dramatic.

The one hour intense production showcased the group's energy, creativity, athleticism and sheer perfection of dance moves. It is obvious why these guys have received so much attention, not only within the hip-hop universe, but also from unsuspecting fans, such as the crowd on that night who were perhaps curious to take a look at the City Theatre's slightly different offering.

The appreciative crowd was responsive and clapped along to the beat. The atmosphere was somewhat different when political footage – mostly associated with the war on terror – was projected onto the screen. The show closed with the words "C'est la vie!" referring to the earlier footage of them on tour.

Not as many traditional downrock or powermoves, that are associated with break-dancing, were displayed as I had expected. But moves such as the flare, windmill, head spin and various freezes were mixed with French can-can, cartwheels and somersaults.

Although some complained that they had missed out on part of the performance by not understanding the French text on screen, judging by the volume of the crowd's cheers they enjoyed it nonetheless.



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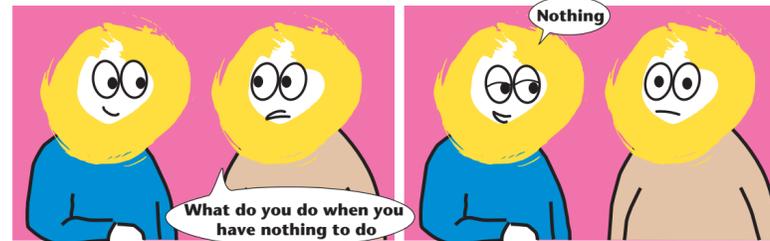
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1 EATING

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 emphasises 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.

2 Hornið
Hafnarstræti 15

The casual family-friendly Italian-style corner restaurant has operated at the same spot since 1979 when it became a loyal member of the Icelandic dining-out tradition. Most famous for its pizzas and the generously stuffed calzone, the wholesome menu prides itself on all sorts of high-standard pasta dishes, vegetarian and meat courses, all very affordable.

3 Argentina Steakhouse
Barónsstígur 11

True to its name, restaurant Argentina specialises in Argentinian 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 help make it a recommended place for fine dining.

4 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 Skyronnes, 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.

5 Sjávarkallarinn
Aðalstræti 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.

6 Indian Mango
Frakkastígur 12

Located on a quiet Laugavegur side street, Indian Mango has infused the Reykjavik 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.

7 Sægreifinn
Verubúð 8, Geirsgata

Located right next to the Reykjavik 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. The good food and welcoming service make this place a must-try.

8 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.

9 Bernhöftsbakari
Bergstaðastræti 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 vínarbrauð to go with the afternoon coffee.

10 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.

11 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.

12 Á næstu grösum (First Vegetarian)
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.

13 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.

14 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.

15 DRINKING

Grái Kötturinn
Hverfisgata 16a

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.

16 Kaffi Hjómaland

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.

17 Segafredo
By Lækjartorg

The Italian coffee-chain found its spot in the heart of Reykjavik, 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 your way to work or want to enjoy your drink on the spot.

18 Tíu Dropar
Laugavegur 27

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

19 Súfistinn
Laugavegur 18

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.



SPOT THIS: Bæjarins bestu
Tryggvagata, 101 Reykjavik

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.



21 Sirkus
Klappargistur 30

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.

22 Vegamót
Vegamótastígur 4

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

23 Oliver
Laugavegur 20a

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 Oliver 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 Oliver a recommended choice for mid-priced meals.

20 Kaffibarinn
Bergstaðastræti 1

A popular coffee place on weekends, 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.

tveir fiskar
At the Reykjavik harbour, Geirsgata 9, 101 Reykjavik
Tel. +354 511 3474 restaurant@restaurant.is, www.restaurant.is



30 SHOPPING

G-Star Raw
Laugavegur 86

Buying jeans used to be a simple task. With the ever-growing selection, successful jeans hunting can take days. The task did not get any easier with the recent addition of a store from the industry powerhouse G-Star Raw. This Dutch brand features an edgy collection, authentic details and innovative washings.



32 Kirsuberjatræð
Vesturgata 4

Kirsuberjatræð is the perfect little gift shop. A co-op gallery/gift shop owned and operated by ten women artists and designers. Kirsuberjatræð is the commercial outlet where they sell their products. The selections range from clothes, baskets, ceramics, copper sculptures, fish skin items, paper crafts, contemporary jewelry, felt items, and various other designs.

33 Vinberíð
Laugavegur 43

This small boutique sells all kinds of sweets. From chocolate fondue mix, to handmade chocolates, to lollypops and Belgian chocolate with such flavours as lavender and ginger. Vinberíð also sells Icelandic sweets, including the popular licorice products. A must stop for the sweet toothed.

34 Laugavegur 28
Laugavegur 28

A fresh addition to the Laugavegur fashion scene, four separate stores under one roof, second-hand clothing and accessories stores Elvis and Rökk og rósi, and CD experts Smekkleysa, all staples of the Laugavegur shopping experience. In addition, the new store, Pop, supplying neat stuff for the home. The collective will offer unique clothing and ornaments and supply the score to your life.

35 Gullkúnnst Helgu
Laugavegur 13

This spacious and classy store sells jewellery made from lava and other stone. Gullkúnnst Helgu, which is housed in the 1924 built shop on Laugavegur 13, has been selling unique jewellery such as necklaces, bracelets and watches for 15 years.

36 Börn Náttúrunnar
Skólavörðustígur 17a

The children's toy store Börn Náttúrunnar, located in a Skólavörðustígur basement, sells clothes and toys made only of organic products as well as books about childcare and parenthood. Here you can buy creative wooden playthings and woolen products for the young ones carefully selected by the parents who own the shop.

31 Underground
Veltusund 1

Located in a basement by Ingólfstorg, former pro skater, Mike Carroll's skateboard shop Underground is aptly named. The shop offers all the relevant skating gear, be it clothing or boards, from industry leading brand names such as DC, Circa and others. A wide array of T-shirts, shoes, and other skating necessities available.

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37 Islandia
Bankastræti 10

The store Islandia has a modest selection of postcards, Icelandic wool products, cups with tacky designs, mini sculptures of Icelandic symbols such as Vikings and puffins, Icelandic flags, books, handbags, wallets and even underwear sporting the Icelandic flag. Great for some last minute souvenirs. Look for the sign with the Viking helmet.

38 Trilogía
Laugavegur 7

A collection of trendy designer wear fills the space at fashion shop Trilogía, including amazing designs by Alexander McQueen and Chloe alongside Robert Cary Williams, Erotrotiks and many, many more. Summer dresses, sweaters and skirts for all the fashion conscious girls out there as well as cool accessories to complete the look.

39 Kolaportíð
Tryggvagata 19

A trip to the downtown indoor flea market Kolaportíð down by the harbour is always a fun way to spend a Saturday afternoon. Endless stalls offering all kinds of second-hand goods, candy and even fermented shark and Icelandic liquorice. If ready to spend some time thoroughly examining the selection you can find some great bargains. Only open on weekends.

40 Nakti Apinn
Bankastræti 14

Nakti Apinn, located on the second floor at Bankastræti 14, offers an amazing variety of colourful street-clothing, including hooded sweatshirts, T-shirts and leggings designed by the owners and hand-printed with different patterns, graphics and figures. Inside you'll also find a good selection of Icelandic music, books on art and design, accessories, baby clothes and international designer wear.

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41 Thorvaldsens Bazar
Austurstræti 4

Located inside a dignified wooden building, Thorvaldsens Bazar is among the oldest shops in Reykjavik, opening in 1901 and run by the women's charity organization the Thorvaldsen Society. Selling souvenirs, handicrafts, woolen underclothes and sweaters as well as Icelandic jewellery, the friendly saleswomen work as volunteers and all profits are donated to charity work.

42 Friða Frænka
Vesturgata 3

This small boutique is a jam-packed treasure chest overflowing with antique furniture and items to perk up your apartment. In every corner of the shop, you'll find some unique items, including candle holders, lamps, pillows, gorgeous 60's sofas, tables, vases and a selection of clothes and vintage jewellery.

43 Iða
Lækjargata 2a

The spacious Iða bookstore is a great source for all kinds of reading material offering an excellent range of books, travel guides, magazines, post-cards and great gift items. The first-class service will help you search for what you need. On the second floor you'll find restaurants serving sushi, soups and sandwiches.

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Thorvaldsens Bazar
Austurstræti 4

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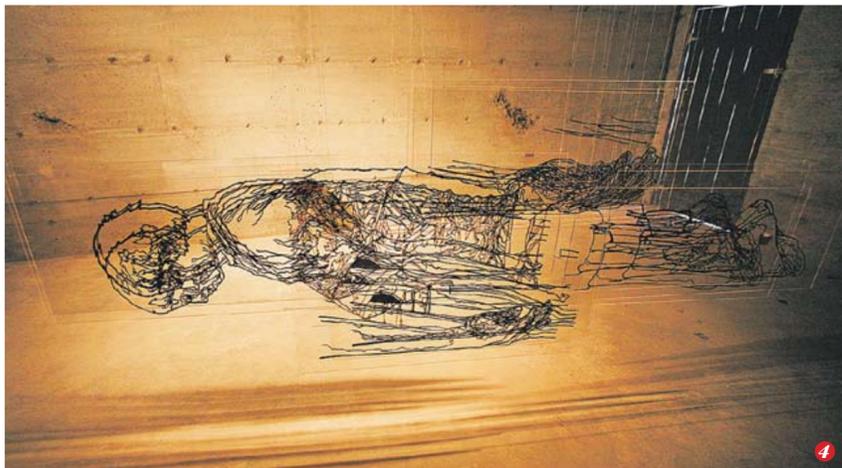
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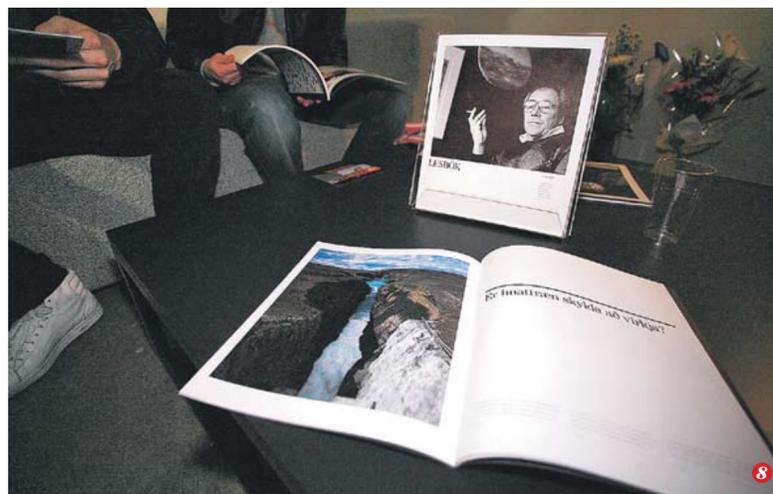
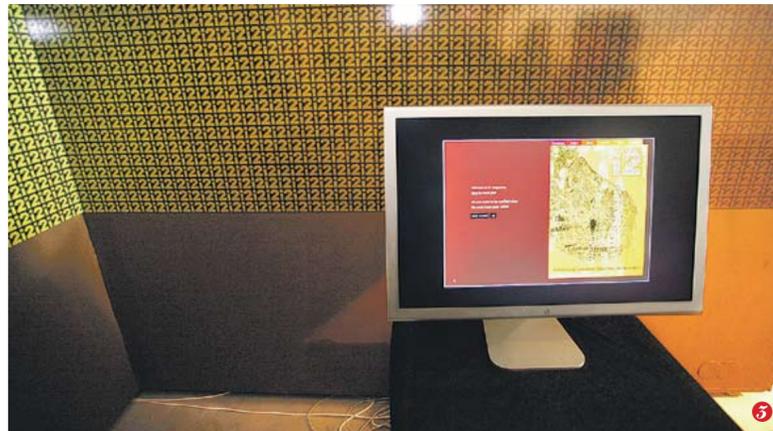
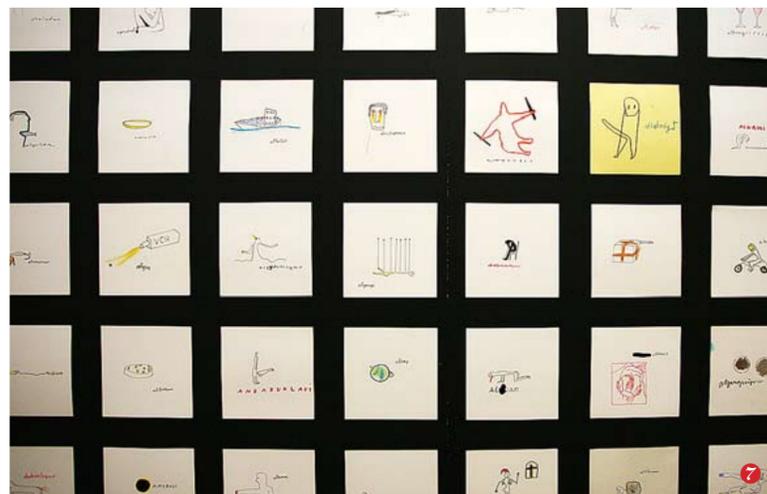
INDIAN LUNCH 990.-
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Students' Graduation Exhibition

Last Saturday, May 12, the 63 students graduating from the Iceland Academy of the Arts filled up every inch of the old potato storage at Arntónsholt when their exhibition was finally opened to the public. This unusual space was transformed into a raw gallery, which perfectly suited the creativity and diversity that characterized the students' art-works and innovative creations. The exhibition is open daily from 12:00 to 18:00 until May 27.

1. Bryndis Sveinbjörnsdóttir - Fashion Design
2. Anna Þórunn Hauksdóttir - Product Design
3. Björn Lárus Arnórsson - Graphic Design
4. Eoghan O'Reilly - Fine Arts
5. Guðni Björn Valberg - Architecture
6. Baldur Helgason - Graphic Design (also on page B1)
7. Halldór Örn Ragnarsson - Fine Arts
8. Steinar Ingi Farestveit - Graphic design

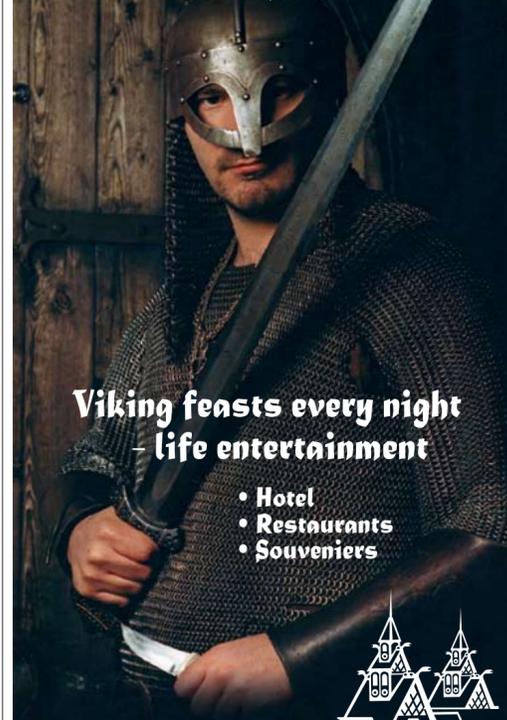


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Thursday 11:00 - 01:00
Fri - Sat. 11:00 - 03:30





Asía

Laugavegur 10, 101 Reykjavík, tel.: 562 6210

Opening its doors in 1989, Asía is among the oldest Asian restaurants in the city. Specializing in the Chinese cuisine with a western twist, the restaurant offers both take away and a roomy dining area adorned with Chinese-style decorations. The restaurant is open from lunch to the dinner hours.

A big draw is the Asía lunch buffet, served every day from 12 to 14, where for 1.200 ISK you can help yourself to some soup and six pre-prepared dishes accompanied by rice and salad. Those who like to order single dishes should ask for the lunch menu, which features a wide range of familiar dishes including: fried egg-noodles with shrimps and chicken, spring-rolls, lamb in curry, sweet and sour chicken and pan-fried vegetables in oyster sauce. Add this with the fact that most of the dishes cost 990 ISK and you get a fair restaurant worth visiting during lunch breaks.

Our waiter brought us the lunch menu and when asked recommended the chicken noodle-soup, adding that it was the most popular dish on the menu. I took his advice and, after finishing the soup, I could easily understand why.

I was served a giant bowl full of noodles, vegetables and chicken as well as chilli paste and fresh ginger on the side. At first the soup was a little bland, but after adding a full spoon of chilli and a little bit of ginger to spice it up a bit, the soup turned into a full-bodied energy boost. Some might say I overpowered it a bit, but for me it was just what I needed and woke me just up as if I had finished a couple of strong espressos. I later learned that this particular miracle soup at Asía is a famous hangover remedy among the downtown party animals who need to get rid of the pain quickly, and that really didn't surprise me a bit.

My dining partner ordered the deep fried chicken in chilli sauce and was served a stuffed plate with rice and salad. Not as spicy as my soup, he was satisfied with the nicely cooked and rich portion although the deep fried chicken was a little too soggy to make me order it the next time around.

A special praise has to be given to the service, who were friendly and attentive at all times.

Reviewed by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir



Vegamót

Vegamótastígur 4, 101 Reykjavík, tel.: 511 3040

Dining at Vegamót is in my view never a disappointing experience. The exceptionally large, varied and reasonably priced menu – if you consider the quality and rich portions – puts this casual two-floored bistro, which turns into a vibrant nightclub during weekends, into a special category. The menu includes some over-the-top dishes such as my favourite, the Louisiana chicken strips, as well as steak-sandwich covered with béarnaise sauce, chicken burritos, bagels, lobster soup and Cesar salad a la Vegamót, along with some decent wines to go with the meal.

In my experience with this place, I can always count on enjoying a nice meal in a lively atmosphere as can be expected, and I'm not the only one to hold that opinion. During lunch or dinner hours every table at Vegamót is usually full, so I was a bit surprised when my friend and I arrived a little before seven on a Thursday evening and the place wasn't packed. I soon realised that it probably had nothing to do with decreasing popularity but all to do with the fact that Eiríkur Hauksson was about to hit the stage in the Eurovision competition in Helsinki.

It had been a warm day, so the outdoor terrace was still lined with tables. It was a little bit too chilly for us to sit outside so we settled for the inside seating, but I have to add that on a sunny day the terrace becomes a great sunspot, perfect for drinking, eating and relaxing.

But back to the food. I can almost guarantee that all diners will find something to suit their tastes on the menu and the today's specials never cease to impress either. In desperate need of a good dose of proteins and vitamins, I decided on the fish of the day: pan-fried catfish served with Provencal sauce, vegetables and couscous. My friend ordered the tagliolini lobster pasta and was more than satisfied with the tasty blue cheese and pesto dressing and the garlic sautéed lobster tails that stuffed her plate. Both dishes proved to be just as we had expected – full-flavoured and gratifying.

For dessert, we couldn't resist the chocolate brownie, which at Vegamót is served warm with chocolate sauce and vanilla ice cream. The cake proved to be an absolutely delicious ending to a great meal.

Reviewed by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir



Café Cultura

Hverfisgata 18, 101 Reykjavík, tel.: 530 9314

Situated on the ground floor of the Intercultural Centre opposite the National Theatre is the aptly named Café Cultura – a restaurant/bar with a relaxed feel.

The cosmopolitan bistro-style menu focuses on simple fusion food and includes variations of popular international dishes. The current menu consists of: sandwiches, falafels, hamburgers, soups, salads and light meals including pasta dishes, Quesadillas, Indian or Chinese style chicken, and Spanish Pintxos. The menu of the day can be found written on the board above the bar.

The lively music aside, the place was fairly quiet when my friend and I stopped by for an early meal one Friday evening. As we took our time choosing from the diverse menu, we ordered the Pan Catalan as a starter, which our friendly waiter brought to us just moments later. The slices of toasted baguette were drizzled in olive oil and topped with a flavourful mix of tomatoes and herbs. A serving of crunchy mixed lettuce and mint came with the well presented and delicious appetizer – perfect for two.

The vegetarian options on the menu are a little limited and vegetable lasagne is not something I would usually order, but Cultura's variation with layers of bell peppers, zucchini, crunchy celery, carrot, and creamy béchamel sauce topped with mozzarella was a good choice from the menu of the day. Accompanied by a mix of fresh salad, at 1,190 ISK it made for a nice summer-ish meal.

My friend opted for the Greek Chicken Souvlaki Sandwich at 1,230 ISK. The toasted pita was filled with fried chicken, feta, crisp salad and onion - all covered in a tangy yogurt sauce. Served with a rich portion of fries, my hungry companion could barely eat fast enough. "When food is this good you have to enjoy it," he replied when I jokingly threatened to focus my review on his table manners.

It is refreshing to see adequate rather than impossibly huge sized portions being served. While the dessert menu of Cultura brownie, Apple cake and Blanco y Negro was tempting, we decided to skip it for another time.

Come by Café Cultura for its no fuss approach to fresh and well presented food. At an average price of 1,200 ISK for a main course, Cultura is an affordable option for a light meal in downtown Reykjavik.

Reviewed by Zoë Robert



International Music Festival in Akureyri

Organised for the second time, this year's Akureyri International Music Festival (AIM) will take place at various venues in the town of Akureyri (located in the northern part of the country), from May 31 to June 2. With artists as diverse as the Argentinean tango orchestra Orquesta Tipica Fernandez Fierro and the Icelandic punk band Morðingjarnir, the blend of tango, jazz, pop, electro and punk-rock that fills up the three day programme is intended to bring together a mixed crowd of festival-goers from all over the country. Among the artists performing this year are: VilHelm, Bob Justman and Bela, who will be playing at Deiglan on May 31; Blúskompanið, Park Project and Mór will take on the stage at club 1929 on June 1; that same night Cuban composer Hilaríó Dúran together with Tómas R. Einarsson and his big-band will be creating a Latin jazz vibe at 1929. To mark the end of the festival, The North Iceland Symphony Orchestra will throw a concert at 1929 on June 2.

Morr Music Labelnight

As part of the festival, the German independent music label Morr Music will take over the concert venue Græni Hatturinn on Friday night. Thomas Morr founded the label in Berlin in 1991, which today is highly influential in the music world, having released approximately 75 albums with bands such as: The Notwist, múm, Styrofoam, B. Fleischmann, Phonem and Ms. John Soda

The concerts at Græni Hatturinn will feature Berlin based electro post-rock duo Tarwater, Belgian dance-pop group The Go Find and the electro duo Isan from the UK. The two Icelandic bands that are signed to the label, Benni Hemm Hemm and Seabear, will of course partake in the event.

Those unfortunate souls who for some reason are unable to attend the festival can hold their breath. After performing in Akureyri, all of the aforementioned Morr musicians will play another show together at Iðnó Theatre in Reykjavík on June 5. Thomas Morr and DJ Apfelblut will keep the crowd entertained between acts. Tickets for the concerts at Iðnó are for sale at the 12 Tónar record shop on Skólavörðustígur 15.

Tickets for the AIM Festival are available at www.midi.is. For a full programme see www.aimfestival.is

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir

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

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Services■ **Useful Numbers****Emergency number:** 112**Police:** 569 9000**Medical help:** 1770**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, Vitastígur 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, Viðimelur 29,

Tel: 552 6751

For a full list visit Ministry for Foreign

Affairs: www.mfa.is/diplomatic-mis-

sions/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 Li-**brary,** Arngrímsgata 3**Tourist Information Centre,**

Aðalstræti 2

Icelandic Travel Market: Bankastræti 2

■ **Opening hours****Bars and clubs:** According to regula-

tions 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 super-

markets 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 chil-

dren. 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 week-

ends

■ **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_trav-

el_service/

A useful brochure, Accessible Reykja-

vik, 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,** Hjallalhraun 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■ **Air Lines****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

■ **Samferda.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 oc-

casional cultural events and confer-

ences 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.klei.fi.is

Information on day tours, accommo-

dations, 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 ex-

change service, tax refund and selling

the Reykjavik Tourist Card. The Reykja-

vik 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 travel-

ling 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: 551 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 informa-

tion for travellers.

Useful Information■ **Where to learn Icelandic as a****foreign language****Icelandic on the Internet,**

www.vfeskoli.is

■ **Mimir Continuing Education,**

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

■ **Námstflokkar Reykjavíkur,**

Frikirkjuvegur 1, Tel: 551 2992

■ **Fjölmenning,** Laugavegur 59,

Tel: 511 1319, www.fjolmenning.is

■ **The Icelandic College of Engineer-****ing and Technology,** Höfðabakki 9,

Tel: 577 1400, www.thi.is

■ **Iðnskólinn í Reykjavík,**

Skólavörðuholti, Tel: 552 6240,

www.i.is

■ **The University of Iceland – Depart-****ment 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, start-

ing at 14:00. The Roman Catholic

Church also has masses in English and

Polish.

Other religious movements in Reykja-

vik are for example:

■ **The Muslim Association of Iceland,**

Armúli 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,**

Frikirkjuvegur 5

■ **Pentecostal Assembly,** Hátún 2■ **Roman Catholic Church,**

Hávallagata 14

■ **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-****Day Saints,** Ásbraut 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,**

Sættún 1, Tel: 535 5600, www.asi.is

■ **The Federation of State and Mu-****nicipal employees,** Grettisgata 89,

Tel: 525 8300, www.bsrb.is

■ **The Association of Academics,** Bor-

gartún 6, Tel: 581 2090, www.bhm.is

■ **Efling,** Sættún 1, Tel: 510 7500,

www.efling.is

■ **The Commercial Workers' Union,**

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

■ **Union of Public Servants,** Grettis-

gata 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.gulalinnan.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, Skogarhlíð

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 unre-

stricted 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:** Director-

ate of Labour, Public Employment

Service, Tryggvagata 17, Tel: 515 4800,

www.vinnumalastofnun.is

■ **Icelandic social security number****(kennitala):** National Register, Bor-

gartún 30, Tel: 560 9800,

www.hagstofa.is

Driver's license: Those who have a

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lyrics grated.

At 6:15, Saturday's schedule offered performances from the following bands: Kings of Leon, the Decemberists, !!!, and Andrew Bird. I got involved in a number of lengthy discussions about which show a journalist should cover—all four bands essentially being the future of critically-acclaimed rock. The conclusion was absolute. No doubt about it, I had to go cover the Decemberists show. Why? Because the Decemberists had an amazing gimmick: they were hosting a wedding during their concert. Wow. A wedding. At a rock festival. Now that was a story, I was told.

I like the Decemberists. Hell, they were a key reason I came to the festival, even if their recent album didn't exactly wow me. But at exactly 6:15 Saturday, I completely lost it over their constant neat little press stories. Bios are cool. And maybe I can take the occasional documentary, theirs gets pretty regular play on the Sundance network, but when you take that and combine it with the press off of their nifty little green screen fan-submitted video stint and then their guitar off with Stephen Colbert, and then a wedding on stage, you get this annoying geeky amalgam.

So I bagged the Decemberists concert and the easy story, though I assume the wedding went through. About halfway through their concert a bunch of journalists walked by my post at Kings of Leon writing in their notebooks and smiling that Oh-aren't-they-clever-and-cute smile.

It was the best decision I could have made. Kings of Leon got up looking like the coolest kids from high school, not mine by the way but that high school in Dazed and Confused, and completely revived a heat-stroked audience. I'm not going to say that people danced quite the way they did at the Hot Chip show, this was a bit more reserved, but people moved and moved well. It was bliss. The key reason, beyond the sheer beauty of the band, was their powerhouse rhythm section which seems to have locked in through their extensive touring schedule. But there was also a quality to their show that the other highlight, the Black Keys, would have: they

were polite, but they got to their business. They didn't talk about how neat it was to be in the desert or name their albums—there was no damn jibba jabba. They made good music, they obviously felt the music and enjoyed the stage, and then they thanked everyone and left.

Arcade Fire later played the same stage, with a doomed opening from Neon Bible in which their use of so many voices and instruments all played vigorously but without, honestly, notes—just a couple monotonous chords—and which made anyone not in the Arcade Fire cult question their prestige. As the set went on, though, they moved to their standards and stopped being so damned schtick and they nailed a couple tunes.

The Red Hot Chili Peppers followed Arcade Fire, and would dedicate a song to the Canadians during their set. I didn't see many people looking forward to the Chili Peppers; they haven't gotten much airplay on the local radio, especially compared to Sunday's headliner, Rage Against the Machine. When they took the stage with a blazing instrumental freak out, featuring Jon Frusciante going ballistic on guitar, I think quite a few thousand casual observers realized that maybe the Red Hot Chili Peppers could put out something great. But as soon as they broke into their set and as soon as Kiedis started singing, honestly, the energy got sapped. There's only so much you can do when you're freaking out to the lyrics "Turn Off Your Television."

Sunday

"I'm here for Rage and nothing else. I don't give a fuck about anything else," an earnest young man with a shaved head told me as he wandered through the alternative energy demonstrations at The Energy Factory in the centre of the festival grounds.

Yes, on day three of the festival, Rage Against the Machine were having their reunion show and suddenly the number of people with shaved heads, goatees, and large, saggy pecs increased about 1000%. It was obvious that Rage had gotten quite a few kids through their workouts—workouts that

stopped with the band's break-up seven years ago.

I did my best to enjoy the day before what I guessed would be a testosterone meltdown at the end of the day. A bluegrass hybrid called The Avett Brothers put together an early surprise: three young guys who have been touring constantly since 1999. They have evolved a sound that blends Bright Eyes and Neutral Milk Hotel, that wonder combination that every alt country indie band is dying for, but that I've never heard captured quite so well.

Hours later, Rodrigo Y Gabriela, a couple from Mexico City who launched their career, curiously enough in Dublin, Ireland, opened for Damien Rice and presented the best performance of the festival. Rodrigo y Gabriela have developed a manic following based on their unique take on the uses of nylon string acoustic guitars—namely, they've developed a style that blends heavy metal percussion, classical technique and thrash metal melodies. This all sounds novel enough, but when you combine it with enthusiastic devils horns, and the honest-to-God ability to work a crowd, you get the live performance that brought down Coachella with a satisfying chant of Me-xi-co.

As the day wound down, The Roots kept the crowd mellow with a decent set which provided no surprises. Willie Nelson, celebrating his 74th birthday, got a dazed response. For all the pop and rock of the festival, Nelson was the only performer offering lyrics that could stand up well on their own. What is more, as most of the audience had never heard his lyrics—I met an enthusiastic young woman who was there only because she knew about Nelson's bio-diesel buses—the intelligence and wit of the Nelson show caught the crowd by surprise.

Air, Damien Rice and Manu Chao all performed decently, but none of them did anything to indicate they had much new on the horizon. Then I realized that I was close to the front of the Rage Against the Machine concert about 10 minutes before start time.

After three days of mellow, polite buzz,

"I'm here for Rage and nothing else. I don't give a fuck about anything else"



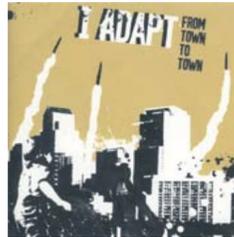
it looked like things were going to go sour. Scrambling to get to the back of the crowd, I narrowly missed a large bouncer-type who was spreading out his arms to stretch his pecs and who then clapped his hands together and groaned out "Let's do this."

When Rage came on, I was a quarter mile away, looking over a sea of people who seemed to like two things: beef and Rage Against the Machine.

The crowd bristled as Zack De La Rocha walked up to the mic and offered the understated intro: "Hello. We're Rage Against the Machine from Los Angeles, California." And, almost nonchalantly, they jumped into Testify, followed by Bulls on Parade and People of the Sun and a set list that reminded you how great the band had been seven years ago.

As for the violence I was expecting, nothing happened. The mass of muscle all shifted when De La Rocha took the mic. Arms went down to front pockets then raised, almost universally holding cell phones. From my viewpoint, I could see thousands of tiny blue cell phone screens; Rage Against the Machine performing a flawless set in front of what looked like an enormous human switchboard.

No doubt about it, I had to go cover the Decemberists show. Why? Because the Decemberists had an amazing gimmick: they were hosting a wedding during their concert. Wow. A wedding. At a rock festival.



I Adapt
From Town to Town

Hardcore mainstays I Adapt have been quietly building steam for their next full-length album, dubbed A Chainlike Burden. The upcoming album was second on the Grapevines most awaited albums year-end list last December. While fans wait for the full-length release, I Adapt have recorded a 7-inch vinyl with three new songs, released by Six Feet Under records to coincide with a recent US tour. These songs are heavier than previous I Adapt work, more guitar driven, and lyrically more introspective. It is mature work. Side A sports a great song called Future In You featuring one of the greatest guitar hooks I can recall. Side B features Thought Time Would Forget and Subject to change, both very strong offerings. I Adapt at their best are in a class of their own. *PH*

www.myspace.com/iadapt



Severed Crotch
Soul Cremation

Severed Crotch is a five piece progressive Death Metal band out of Reykjavík. Severed Crotch is what you get when you mix Death Metal with quantum physics and ADHD. Their debut, Soul Cremation, is a self released 5 track EP and its harrowing complexity reeks of admiration for the Canadians in Gorguts, although the tunes ain't quite as brilliant and the kick drum mix is terrible. What you have to sacrifice in order to play in the same league as their Canadian influences (Gorguts, Cryptopsy, The End) however is catchiness, which makes this disc about as memorable as your last shower. If this small genre is your particular cup of tea then by all means invest. I know I would. *BB*

www.myspace.com/severedcrotch



Trassar
Amen

I do not have the faintest idea what this is and lacking any kind of musical reference point I don't know how to pass judgement. There is some blatant Bush-bashing going down here and a bit of Bible belittlement to boot, so a few points are definitely scored. Guitarist Rúnar wields poetic prowess like a velvet scythe and if only his string strumming would produce songs half the brilliance of what drips out of his pen these guys might actually catch my ear for longer than a nano-second. But they don't. The clean singing grates my eardrums and neither guitar nor drums show signs of aspiration. Having said that, track number 5, "Tveir Prestir", might grow on me—as it lacks the false metal pretense of its brethren—but ultimately this piece of plastic best serves as a beer coaster while sipping a brew and diving head first into the mesmerizing lyrical booklet. *BB*

www.myspace.com/iadapt



Silvia Night
Goldmine

Sylvia Night is a fictional character that is based on a satire of Paris Hilton and other celebrities that have a questionable claim to fame. She was responsible for a much talked about mockumentary TV show where she would annoy people endlessly with her prima donna behaviour. She took her Diva act one step further during last year's Eurovision song contest where she managed to piss off Europe collectively, taking a golden shower during her performance after talking to God and in the process became the first contestant to be booed on stage. If only for her previous gimmicks, she deserves a lot of respect as an artist. Goldmine is her first full length release, and while it is as generic as her persona, in its conventional MTV trash pop; it is extremely well executed and produced. The songs run through smoothly, although nothing much grabs you. A word must be reserved for the cover production however. *SBB*

www.myspace.com/silvianight



Spilverk fjóðanna
Surtla

Spilverkið was the first band to bring Icelandic folk influences into the context of rock music. The members' side project, spoof band Stuðmenn, eventually took over their careers, but they were never better than this. The previously all acoustic and always anachronistic Spilverk discovered electricity in '77, making this their Dylan in 66 album. Without all the boeing. Not bad a year, for they also helped Megas make Á bleikum náttkjólum, sometimes called the best Icelandic album of all time. Opener Sirkus Geira Smart is still a campfire classic, but it's the song Húsin mjakast upp, sung by opera star Diddú, about a couple so busy working overtime and building a new house that they are too tired to make love, that makes this the ultimate Icelandic album of the 70's. And still relevant today. *VG*



Various Artists
Rokk í Reykjavík

Icelandic punk was a late bloomer. But when it finally reached its peak in 1982, it was no pale imitator of its British ancestor. It seemed that everyone found a way to do their own thing, and something unique, and uniquely Icelandic, emerged from the mix. It hardly lets up, from openers Vonbrigði, singing their ode to Reykjavík from the point of view of disgruntled Kópavogur teens. The parent rockumentary that this is culled from was originally meant to be a documentary about Bubbi and his band Ego, and they remain the set's stars. But it was members of Peyr, Purkkur Pillnikk and Tappi Tikarass, who together formed the super group Sugarcubes, that would eventually take on the world. But cool Reykjavík has never been so cool. *VG*



Tómas R. Einarsson
Let Jazz be Bestowed on the Huts

Tómas R. Einarsson's new CD draws its inspiration from W.H. Auden's poetry, and draws its name from "Journey to Iceland." Einarsson has effectively captured the euphoric abundance of Auden's curious Iceland book, Letters from Iceland; however, as with Auden's Letters, if you go in seeking a continuous clear line of thought or vision, you may find the work distracting. There are successes, specifically, the bolero "Heart", sung by Kristjana Sefánsdóttir, is an easy-going classic, whereas "For Europe is absent" an interpretation of one of Auden's great poems, falters badly and violates the spirit of the poem. "Icelandic Blues" presents a surprisingly on-key showing from Einar Örn Benediktsson. The CD seems to allow you to pick favourites, but to not want to keep your hand too far away from the next track button. *BC*

www.myspace.com/tomasreinarsson



Barði Jóhannsson
Haxan

Barði Jóhannsson's accompanying symphonic score to Danish recluse Benjamin Christensen's 1922 surreal witchcraft documentary is very much Barði, with Bang Gang's signature brooding melodies and dignified air, albeit taken much farther in their scale and bombast, but still retaining the cold, aloof and somewhat depthless atmosphere for which he is known. The moments of calm, yet torturous, restraint between the storms of noise are the best parts, letting Barði's vision attain the scope it could only hint at in earlier works, whereas his weaknesses become more evident in his attempts at dramatic oomph, such as the would-be sinister riffs of the fifth 'movement'. But Haxan falls short due mostly to Barði's lack of imagination. The second movement is especially ruined when after about ten minutes of sweeping grandeur, rock drums and an irritatingly pedestrian melody kicks in, something which would have been perfectly bearable on a pop music project, but just seems lazy here. *SE*

www.myspace.com/haxanalbum

Reviews by Bart Cameron, Bogi Bjarnason, Páll Hilmarsson, Sindri Eldon, Sveinn Birkir Björnsson and Valur Gunnarsson

How to drive in Iceland

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

Gravel roads, blind hills & blind curves

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



approaching another car coming from the opposite direction by moving as far to the right as is safely possible.

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



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Weight Issues and Gimmicks

Text and photo by Bogi Bjarnason

Who: **Iron Lung, I Adapt, Celestine**
Where: **Barinn**
When: **May 9, 2007**

I'm quietly kicking myself for not having paid attention to Celestine earlier. What tightness they might lack in the live setting, they more than make up for with their ear shattering intensity. For pure unadulterated heaviness, theirs is definitely the level for which to aspire to. The drummer is a man with the mission of breaking cymbals and bursting drum heads, while the singer seems to be going through some sort of primeval catharsis. Meanwhile, the guitarists belt out riffs so thick and harsh they defy adjectives. Equipment failure plagued the band throughout the set but was quickly mended. The end result resembled what you'd get by filtering slower Converge tracks through a sieve of early Isis.

Once Celestine were led away for angst therapy, Hardcore mainstays I Adapt took the floor. With Metal usurping the Icelandic Hardcore scene, this quartet might be your last resort to getting a pit started in Reykjavik city, that is if you have any time to spare from observing singer Birkir's own private and personal pit performance. The guy goes at it like a prize fighter slugging it out with an imaginary foe, as he gurgles water between rounds and spits it out on the soon to be drenched hardwood floor.

With their possessed front man leading

the charge, the band does what Hardcore bands are supposed to do – express furious anger through loud outbursts of aggressive aural punishment, while possibly cramming in some social commentary between songs – and they do it well.

After the night's only pit broke out during the last I Adapt number – with which the whole crowd sang along – the evening's headliners took a long time setting up, giving the audience ample time to up its collective blood alcohol level. Iron Lung, despite being a mere duo, are the loudest thing I've witnessed since Artimus Pyle graced Grand Rock some years back – an achievement thundering through four digit amp wattage.

Their press release referenced power violence, grindcore and fastcore among other things, but what my long suffering ear drums detected was mainly short bursts of Crust. Touring with a set list featuring 14 songs that strive for the one minute mark, you'd best cultivate a good sense of humour and really milk the stage patter, which their drummer/singer does while throwing out jokes about his own weight problem and commenting on their Golden Circle daytrip.

The performance was a thing of beauty, although more of a shock and awe kinda thing than a deft recitation of quality musical pieces. In the end Iron Lung felt like a humorous/furious gimmick and not so much a band bent on serious emotional expression through a shared love of musical form.



Nubean Nintendo

Text by Helgi Valur Photo by Skari

Who: **Konono N°1**
Where: **The Reykjavik Art Museum**
When: **May 11, 2007**

When I hear the term "World music" I automatically think of Nick Hornby's negative connotation. He used the word describing how lame his next door neighbour was: "Ray was into whatever world music that was trendy at that time." But when I think of my experience with world music it has been one of enlightenment and joy. Great artists such as Femi Kuti and African Black Mambos come to mind. What Hornby was implying with his remark is that even though something is foreign and exotic it doesn't mean it is any good. I was hoping for a musical spiritual experience among all the Rays in attendance that night, sipping their red wine and trying without success to forget they were middle-aged.

Konono N°1 is an unusual African band that has gotten critical acclaim in recent years. Best known for their usage of the unusual instrument likembé, also known as a thumb piano, the founder of the group Mawangu Mingiedi discovered a novel way to mic up his likembé using magnets from old car parts. Joining Mingiedi were two other likembé players, a singer, and three drummers who use Kongos, drums and pots and pans.

Walking into the hall of the art museum I could feel the history of the Kinsasah people gushing from the sound of their traditional African music mixed with the sound of likembé, which reminded me of the sound from Nin-

tendo computer games. The female singer was grinding her mic stand like their was no tomorrow and I felt it was a shame that concert promoters hadn't supplied a straight mic stand which would have gone much better with her dancing. The male singer played bass likembé, while dancing and singing at the same time, and you could watch each one of the drummers in awe.

People loved the music, which was something you can't really imagine until you hear it. It was hypnotizing, real and inspiring. It was a contagious happiness that even the rhythmless crowd could feel. People tried to keep their cool and resisted the urge to dance. It was repetitive music the way it should sound – powerful and pure. In the end, this gathering of uptight middle-aged people lost control. Everybody was dancing like a four year-old school girl on PCP.

After the band left the stage people were exhausted from their ass shaking ceremony, but managed to put together their hands and get an encore. The band reformed one by one, building up tension as each instrument laid like a brick in the heavenly wall of sound. Mingiedi, the Jimi Hendrix of the likembé, had been standing still all evening only moving his thumbs. Now he walked on stage dancing, shaking his hips like a twenty year old porn star in a music video. "What a cool dude!" I could hear many people utter.

I had asked for a musical spiritual experience but I got so much more. In the end, Konono N°1 had every rhythmless freak dancing. Hurray for the arts festival for making squares dance.



2,100 ISK

Sangitamiya, which means "nectar music" in Sanskrit, stocks a wide range of musical instruments, including these colourful African nut shakers. Traditionally worn on the ankles by women who are performing dance, they make for a fun gift.
Sangitamiya, Corner of Klapparstigur and Grettisgata, 101 Reykjavik



1,700 ISK

Musical instrument store Sangitamiya sells instruments from across the globe including Africa, India, China and Australia. There are plenty of small instruments such as these ocarinas and wooden fish which make perfect gifts for children.
Sangitamiya, Corner of Klapparstigur and Grettisgata, 101 Reykjavik



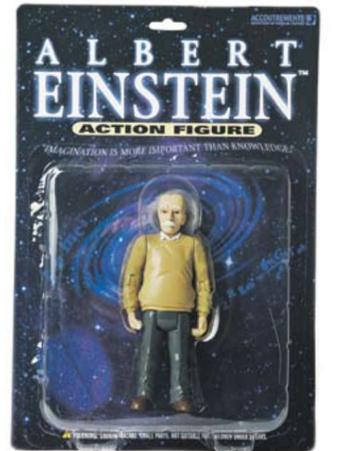
7,900 – 10,500 ISK

Essential oils can be added to the water of these steam vaporisers, which are both practical and decorative. The aromatic smell, the steam and the sound of running water produce a calming effect. Green Apple also stocks fruit-shaped vaporisers for children with asthma.
Green Apple, Laugavegur 20, 101 Reykjavik



2,500 ISK

Funky t-shirt store Ósoma has added these colourful ties to their range. Described by the designer as being "for people who don't like wearing ties," they come in various colours and patterns – including the store's logo: the Ósoma sheep.
Ósoma, Laugavegur 27, 101 Reykjavik



1,250 ISK

Who would want to play with some fictional superhero character when you can buy an Albert Einstein action figure that will easily kick Spiderman's ass in any one-on-one battle just by using his brains? This wacky gift for kids and adults alike is sold at the concept shop Kisan.
Kisan, Laugavegur 7, 101 Reykjavik



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Pay Attention!

Hljóðheimurinn Sangitamiya

Sangitamiya, Corner of Klapparstigur and Grettisgata, 101 Reykjavik

If you never leave Laugavegur to do your downtown shopping, you might easily miss it – Hljóðheimurinn Sangitamiya or, as it's colloquially known, "that music store with the sitar in the window." And when you first walk in, instruments such as gongs, kotos, didgeridoos and sitars are the first things you notice. The store's most popular item is the xylophone, but this store also features smaller and equally overlooked instruments such as jaw harps, kazoos, tin whistles and bamboo flutes. You get the impression that in the very near future we'll be seeing some of these instruments gracing the stages of Reykjavik's clubs.

The store is a long time favourite among Reykjavik kindergarten teachers and people looking for different kind of birthday presents,

but it is also frequented by members of the symphony orchestra, while Björk has been known to shop there as well.

Sangitamiya is not an exclusively high-end store. There are the aforementioned kazoos, jaw harps, xylophones and bamboo flutes, and even some instruments for children. Particularly addictive are the 'swing straws' – flexible plastic tubes that produce different tones when swung through the air at different speeds – and the 'boom wackers', which are plastic tubes that produce different tones when struck on the ground.

So, if you are searching for that special sound for your band, Sangitamiya is the place to look.





Scenes From a Dying Dream of Cuba

Text and photos by Bogi Bjarnason

Coming out the door at Havana's José Martí Airport, hygiene goes right out of the window as dirt, sweat and clammy handshakes start melding with my body like yellow pulsating maggots consuming me.

Claus, a bum-looking German, plants his skinny ass in the cab along with a sorry pale Briton, itching to prove his uselessness. As Europe's The Final Countdown sets the tune for Havana over the car radio, Claus fails to keep his stories straight and I plot accommodation and Mojitos with Eddie, the nervous Londoner whom I just recruited out of the ATM line.

The heat immediately hits like a sucker-punch but is blessedly free of humidity. My over-stuffed suitcase berates my poor research out of the grimy trunk, and every sleeved and hooded article starts feeling the lack of love in the air. After a cold shower in a hotel on the main drag, the further lack of research unveils the surprise of two different local currencies, one 26 times the price of the other – a Commie device to milk the tourist dry.

The street is still a mystery and the vibe is yet to be felt, so we stroll down the boulevard as blank slates for the onslaught of Cuban mockery of all things culinary. Five time zones and nine hours of flight out of Gatwick and I never thought I'd encounter a plate I'd be willing to trade for the vile vein clogging ways of an English breakfast.

Not ones for the soft-sell, these capitalism craving hustlers, vendors and service providing men of Havana. I hone my deaf, dumb and blind act further for each assault. Walk straight and goal oriented while turning a blind eye and feigning ignorance of both the English and Spanish language. Turn reasonable doubt on its head and acquit no smile of guilt or you will find yourself so deeply befriended you end up in someone's living room battling incredible deals on stolen cigars,

crap weed, black market casas particulares (i.e. Bed & Breakfast) or an undesirable piece of ass.

On the Road

Eddie is slowly slipping away and I let him and his touristy ways go without a care. We are just back from the road and traffic bears new, preposterous connotations. Hitch-hikers of refugee camp proportions give way to rickety horse and carriage, melding with traffic going the wrong way or a pair of oxen with cart, trudging forward in medieval slow-motion with produce in tow for a trek the length of the Crusades.

Fact or tourist book legend has it that filling vacant seats with hitchers is compulsory in Cuban law and the sheer amount of raised thumbs supports it. Eddie pops his cherry driving on the right side of the road and raises desperate cries of distress from a ravaged gear-box whose stick he's accustomed to fondling with his left hand. The vehicle – which is neither washed or cleaned out between customers – rolls its merry way on my credit card and I quickly strip him of his driving rights so that he may focus his terrified little worldview on refusing even those hitchers who give us directions at rural intersections.

The landscape is like beauty stacked upon beauty ad infinitum. Eddie's hesitant, accented Spanish is engaged with a blond eyesore of a girl he reluctantly picked up as a reward for her directions. My keener and more cynical eyesight, coupled with my lesser Spanish skills, flash us back to where Eddie went from being a fellow adventurer to an untrustworthy object of scorn, where common love of rum and photography ceased to matter – the point where my communist curiosity folded in front of the forces of suspicion.

In the street every impoverished soul is

happy as can be and I wonder why because this does not look like a façade. And we're exploring and we're walking aimlessly and we take friendly smiles and gestures at face value...and we're in for a surprise. Or at least I am. Eddie is a dozen paces ahead of me and we're barely talking, just exchanging observations.

Making New Friends

The guy is young, tall and slender and he slides up to me like a serpent while employing stock hustler terms of endearment. We'll call him Pedro, as it's the first name that comes to mind and you'll go along and he'll be a person and not just an object signifying the moment Cuba became a chore. Naturally he informs me of our friendship, like they all do, and of course he wants to know where I'm from; he's not thrown off by my unorthodox answers. I instinctively never let go of my high-end camera, although it hangs on a leash around my neck.

I reject his attempts at bonding through musical tastes and he goes straight for the kill with his left hand, still holding my corresponding shoulder, while the right one lunges for the camera – only to find itself dropping down rapidly along with his scrawny legs pursuing in an arc where his face impacts with pavement alongside the lens.

People tend to freeze with fear I am told and I have seen it in the faces of witnesses at fatal car crashes before, but I have seldom frozen myself. So with my arm around Pedro's neck for a brief moment, with my elbow and knees to the blacktop, I glimpse Eddie looking like a wild eyed statue and his kick will not come to my aide. So Pedro slips out like a snake and scrambles to his feet and the locals are as blind as Eddie is immobile. Even with my camera still in my grip, blood thirst swells within me and Pedro retreats

backwards from my gathering fury and pulls a long, double-edged, ornately hilted knife to sedate my urge for a cold blooded hunt just before turning to run like Forrest Gump.

And Eddie still stands there as if made from stone. I might well just slap him out of his stupor or part my disgusted way with him right there – but I don't – and as I walk away blood trickles down my forearm from where gravel is lodged deep in the elbow.

Caribbean Dreams

Back on the road, the girl leads us to a hilltop lookout so scenic I'd buy property if someone were standing there accepting Visa. We find our way to a restaurant at the edge of a field, where a guy hand rolls cigars sitting at a workbench and the food is just as terrible as everywhere else. The patron takes me into the tobacco drying barn where I finally invest in some cigars because nothing can be as perfect as this – or because the Mojitos are kicking in and it buys me some time away from Eddie and his little 50 mile romance.

Hours later we roll through an army checkpoint, from the directions given by a hitcher,

Five time zones and nine hours of flight out of Gatwick and I never thought I'd encounter a plate I'd be willing to trade for the vile vein clogging ways of an English breakfast.

while still unaware of the signature Cuban practice of charging tourists for services they've unknowingly received – which we'll soon become accustomed to at possible gunpoint. But the beach is serene and the scuba diving spear fishermen we encounter is exactly the stuff my Caribbean dream is made of.

After paying through our noses going back the way we came, we end up where superlatives go to die: A deep valley modelled after heaven with sheer rock walls hundreds of meters high, painted with Jurassic scenes commemorating the archaeological finds made right here at this spot with cheap, rustic huts converging on a pool and a small museum.

The price is right and joy starts bubbling inside me again. Inside our bargain hut there are two cots and nothing else but my brimming glee born out of large cigars and swigs of rum straight out of the bottles offered poolside by vacationing school kids. At last I find an edible meal hidden in a backyard full of Scandinavians and Britons dining under the cover of darkness.

Inefficiency Cuban Style

Mastodon is spinning on the car stereo as we run out of asphalt. I'm looking back at the police cluster under the overpass behind us when Eddie starts screaming and I see we are rolling on grass. No signs are posted. The officers aren't waving people to slow down. The road just ends. What will they think of next? How about having you go to four different registers to pay for different kinds of merchandise at the Supermercado or checking your bag with an old lady? Yup, you bet they got that kinda backwardness in check. Such a sweet vacation spot for queue aficionados indeed. Nobody does inefficiency like the Cubans.

How about me getting the fuck out, I say, although my flight is in 3 weeks and I haven't been to a Spanish tutor yet. So I go find one and my handful of Spanish trumps her table scraps of English. We give and take for a while and I learn some and she gains some. But the armed robbery jitters funnel down into my paranoia tank and I'm spending more and

more time hanging out at the Hotel Nacional, which looks Bond movie sleek apart from the explosions and long legged Bond girls.

Eddie is history – having hightailed it for the airport amidst a scene where our landlords are desperately trying to sell him whatever shit he had said he might possibly buy later every time they pushed it on us. I, on the other hand, cruise Havana for a few days and spend my nights in an easy chair writing prose while hooked to a Cuba Libre I.V listening to a city where living rooms open to the street and keeping secrets must be a bitch, as you can hear every word said – even if your neighbour's wife is faking it.

Goodbye Cuba

I slip out under cover of night and Landlord Luis won't be on my case again with the cigars his grandma heisted from work. I won't be roused every day by friends rapping on my door trying to get in. No more street corner Domino games where I'm expected to donate a bottle of Havana Club. Only one last day

of endless walking and clicking the shutter, turning architecture – glorious, colonial and crumbling – to pixels, capturing street life in its vibrant vitality and leaving only tourist revenue in return.

The Sunday street market is like a carnival and elsewhere men mix cement with shovels right on the street to patch their derelict homes or take the wrench to their aging Ladas. Canine faeces leave trails like Hansel in the bewitched forest and open sewers run like babbling brooks by foot-high curbs of roads where chariots of Detroit motor companies jerk you kicking and screaming back to the 50s in full Technicolor, spewing plumes of exhaust like Indian signal fires.

Early morning I sit headphoned and finish the last paragraph of my book on the floor of José Martí. The gate is about to open and half a pair of Swedish girls is on the last page of her book as well, and the other half looks surprised when I propose a book trade in Swedish – and behold, I've got me a posse for the Mexican leg of my journey.

Horse Riding in Hafnarfjörður

Text by Sveinn Birkir Björnsson
Photo by Skari

Since the Icelandic horse has lost most of its practical value in modern society, having been replaced by more modern modes of transportation, mainly the automobile, riding horses has become a hugely popular hobby in Iceland. The Icelandic horse has also become a very popular riding breed in Europe and North America, chiefly because of its unique gaits. Apart from the usual walk, trot, and canter, Icelandic horses are able to tölt. The tölt is a four-beat lateral gait in which the horse always maintains at least one foot on the ground. Since there is no moment of suspension, tölt is very smooth and comfortable for the rider.

It had been over ten years since I last sat on a horse and I was a little worried that it might show. Riding a horse is different from riding a bicycle in that manner. You are dealing with a living animal, not an object. In other words, unlike bikes, horses have character – some of them are moody and others are lazy, so even if you do not forget how to ride a horse, building confidence in your skills requires you to spend time with the animals and to get to know them.

Ghost Rider

All my worries vanished when I met the guides, however, who obviously had things under control and were used to dealing with the horses and, more importantly, insecure riders such as myself.

They lectured me on the basics – sit deep in the saddle and keep your heels down in the stirrups. They schooled me on their two rules: have fun and do not scream. Then they brought me a horse named Móri after the most famous of Icelandic ghosts. Luckily, Móri the horse was far more even-tempered than Móri the ghost.

It was a fine day for riding horses. It had rained earlier in the morning, but the rain had let up and the weather was still, with cloudy skies and a mild temperature of around 10° C – the perfect conditions to enjoy the outdoors. Our two-hour ride went smoothly and took us around the beautiful lava formations around Hafnarfjörður and the surrounding area.

It is an incredible feeling to experience nature from the back of a horse rather than behind the wheel of a car. Perhaps because essentially the horse is a part of the very nature you are exploring. You are able to enjoy the full range of your senses, with sounds, smell, and even taste being a part of the experience. Unfortunately, the tour was over just when I had built enough confidence to start trying some of the trick manoeuvres.

Tour provided by Íshestar Riding Tours
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Summer Spots in Reykjavík Text by Sveinn Birkir Björnsson Photos by Leó Stefánsson and Skari



Austurvöllur Field

The small field in front of the parliamentary building is buzzing with life at the first sight of sun during the summer. Located in the heart of the city centre (and only a few meters from a state alcohol store), it becomes the meeting place for people of all ages as they gather to enjoy a beer in the grass, take in the sun and chat with friends. If you know anyone in Reykjavík, chances are you will run into them on Austurvöllur on a sunny day. For those more fond of chairs than grass, cafés around Austurvöllur serve hot and cold drinks outside in the afternoon sun.



Miklatún Park

Reykjavík's biggest park offers a wide array of possibilities for outdoor activities in the summer. There are football fields, outdoor basketball courts, as well as a beach volleyball court, a frisbee course, a playground for kids and a long asphalted path that is perfect for inline skating or teaching kids to ride bikes. The grassy fields are also ideal for sunbathing on warm summer days with trees all around supplying shelter from every wind direction. The park is also occasionally used to host large outdoor music concerts, such as last summer's Sigur Rós concert which drew 20,000 people.



Nauthólsvík Beach

When you think of beaches, you are likely to be thinking of Southern California or possibly Ibiza or Mallorca, but probably not Reykjavík, the Northern-most capital in the world. Oh, but for the wonders of geo-thermal energy, Reykjavíkians can enjoy their very own sandy beach on hot summer days. With the average summer sea temperature around 10-11°C, the sea is mixed with geothermal hot water bringing it up to 18-20°C, a perfect temperature for bathing on a sunny afternoon. A warmer pool is also located off the shore, perfect for the young ones. Now, if we could only geo-thermally induce more sunny days...



Viðey Island

A few hundred meters off the shore of Reykjavík is the island Viðey. At 1.7 km², it is the largest island on Kollafjörður bay. It is a beautiful place to spend a sunny afternoon. The house Viðeyjarstofa, a former Governor's mansion and which was built in 1755, is the oldest construction made of stone and cement in Iceland. It was recently restored and now houses a small restaurant. Bicycles are readily available for those who wish to ride a bike around the island, but horse rental is also on location for the more adventurous ones. The ferry to Viðey leaves from Sundahöfn every hour between 13:00 – 19:00.



Old Harbour

The old harbour in Reykjavík is best enjoyed on a still summer night when the gentle sea breeze has let down. The colourful small fishing boats create beautiful reflections in the still water while the evening sun lights up the skies. In the daytime, you can sit down at the nearby Kaffivagninn and enjoy the atmosphere when the local fishermen gather for coffee and to discuss world affairs. Stop by one of the shops nearby and pick up a nylon thread and a hook and try to angle for a fish from the pier. It is surely cheaper than one of those expensive fish restaurants.



Ægissíða Shore

Close by Vesturbæjarlaug lies Ægissíða, a long shoreline on the Southwest side of Reykjavík with an asphalted walking path, ideal for romantic walks, inline skating or bike trips along the shore. The Southwest location offers the best possible viewpoint for enjoying the midnight sun and the occasional sunset during the early and late weeks of summer. The shoreline is full of diverse birdlife and there is a beautiful view over the sea and the mountain circle on Reykjanes. The walking path on Ægissíða stretches on through Nauthólsvík and all the way up to pristine nature reserve in Þórsmörk.

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A Thrill Like No Other

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir
Photo by Skari

On a sunny Friday afternoon in May, the Grapevine staff parked in front of a small hut by the roots of the majestic Snæfellsjökull glacier, located on the tip of the Snæfellsnes peninsula. Our excursion guide of the day awaited us and lent out helmets, suits and gloves before leading us to the snowmobiles on which we were about to speed up the 1,446 metre high snow covered volcano.

The glacier is one of the country's most recognized landmarks, not only due to its spectacular natural beauty but also for possessing some sorts of mystical powers and energy sources. The truth of these kinds of speculations was not about to be disputed during our trip, especially after spotting the snowmobiles lined in a row and just waiting for some action. In a heartbeat we turned into a bunch of small children, acting just as eager as if we were waiting to open the presents hiding under the Christmas tree.

After learning how to control the vehicle, the eagerly anticipant group followed the guide from the parking lot. I had brought my snowboard so I had to choose between getting my own snowmobile or share one as a passenger on the way to the top. Without hesitation I chose the latter alternative, and while desperately trying to hold the board with one hand and clenching the driver with the other we raced to the mountain peak. I really didn't need to steer the vehicle to experience the extreme rush that could easily become addictive.

But the best part was yet to come. I cannot remember when I last witnessed a more inviting vision than the untouched powder snow I discovered when we reached the top. For me, riding down the glacier's slopes where no snowcats have pressed the snow down, no fellow skiers were in my way, and no lift queues nor marked trails led the incredibly scenic way down, was like nothing else and is definitely a must try for all the adrenaline enthusiasts out there. Unfortunately, you might have to wait until next season.

Tour provided by Snjófell
Tel.: 435 6783, www.snjofell.is



"My favourite spot in Reykjavik is Laugavegur. That is where all my favourite stores, cafés and restaurants are located; and the clubs and bars as well. That is where I most like to be."

Svala Björgvinsdóttir runs the store POP on Laugavegur 28 and is a singer for the myspace.com megaband Steed Lord.

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Student from Poland is looking for a job as a waiter, bartender, kitchen assistant or any other from July (preferably in Reykjavik). I've already got experience from working in Iceland. Contact by mail: tlesna@poczta.onet.pl

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Writers and Curious Travelers! The 8th Annual Writers' Week in Hofos, 24-28 May and/or 5-9 June. Spend mornings talking, writing, reading and afternoons riding, walking, fjord-watching, fishing or manuscript work. Housing in Hofos, splendid food at Solvik, long pink nights. Full room/board US\$850 (or is. kronor equivalent) wk (less for tenters). Bill Holm, American writer and Icelandophile leads the workshop. icelandworkshop@yahoo.com
Bill Holm
USA
507.872.6950 (anytime) or
507.829.0861 (cell) or
898.5472 (in Iceland after May 15)
icelandworkshop@yahoo.com

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organist MICHAEL RADULESCU

<p>organconcert LANGHOLTSKIRKJA</p> <p>May 17 2007 at 8 pm</p> <p>Michael Radulescu plays works from the baroque era by J.S. Bach Buxtehude Vivaldi and others</p>	<p>organconcert HALLGRÍMSKIRKJA</p> <p>May 20 2007 at 5 pm</p> <p>„Organ Virtuosi of today II“ Michael Radulescu plays on the Klais Organ of Hallgrímskirkja works of J.S. Bach César Franc Brahms and his own compositions EPIPHANIAI and RESURREXIT</p>	<p>masterclass LANGHOLTSKIRKJA</p> <p>May 21– 23 2007</p> <p>Masterclasses given by Michael Radulescu in Hallgrímskirkja & Langholtskirkja</p> <p>Open session in Langholtskirkja May 23 at 10-12 am & 1-3 pm</p>	<p>concert LANGHOLTSKIRKJA</p> <p>May 24 2007 at 8 pm</p> <p>Two cantatas by J.S. Bach BWV 193 <i>Ihr Tore zu Zion</i> & BWV 21 <i>Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis</i></p> <p>Choir and Orchestra of Langholtskirkja with soloists Conductor: Michael Radulescu</p> <p>Tickets available at midi.is Skífan at Laugavegur and Langholtskirkja</p>
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Stuffed with stuff

People tried to keep their cool and resisted the urge to dance. It was repetitive music the way it should sound – powerful and pure.

Helgi Valur witnessed Konono no1.
Page 20

Iceland is an island. Its population is small, closely related, and geographically constrained

Ian Watson examines Icelandic Genealogy.
Page 16

Icelanders in general do not agree with racism. They do not agree with nationalism at all. So they shy away from discussions about immigration issues because no one wants to be thought of as being racist.

Paul F. Nikolov discusses Icelandic politics.
Page 6

Yes, on day three of the festival, Rage Against the Machine were having their reunion show and suddenly the number of people with shaved heads, goat-ees, and large, saggy pecs increased about 1000%.

Bart Cameron attended the Coachella music festival.
Page 14

When I vacated my post in front of the television to get some sleep around 4 pm, the government was standing.

Sveinn Birkir Björnsson followed the Parliamentary elections.
Page 8



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