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THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LIFE, TRAVEL & ENTERTAINMENT IN ICELAND



President of Iceland?

Ms Andrea Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir

IN THE ISSUE Issue 8 • 2012 • June 15 - 28

+ COMPLETE CITY LISTINGS - INSIDE!

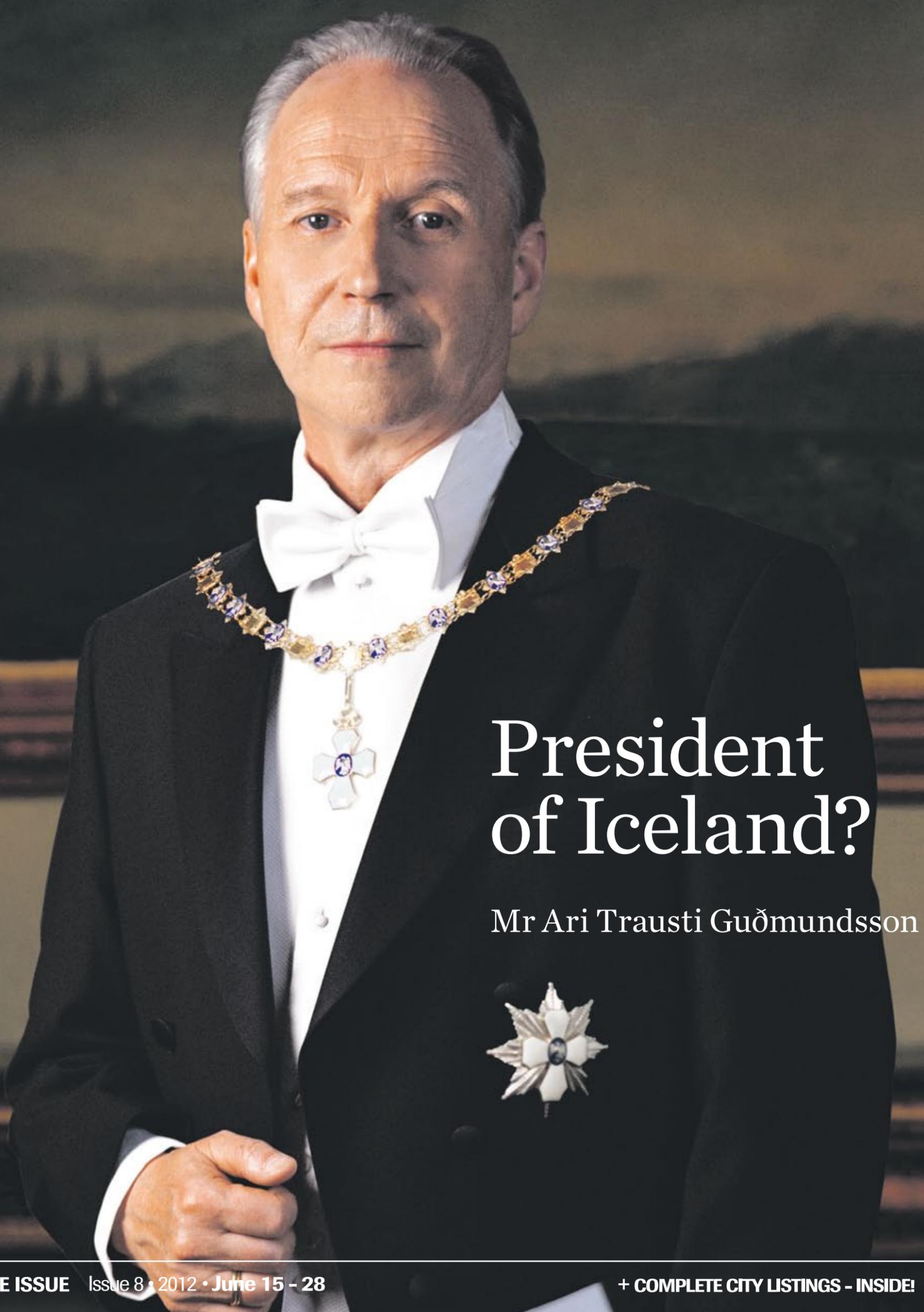


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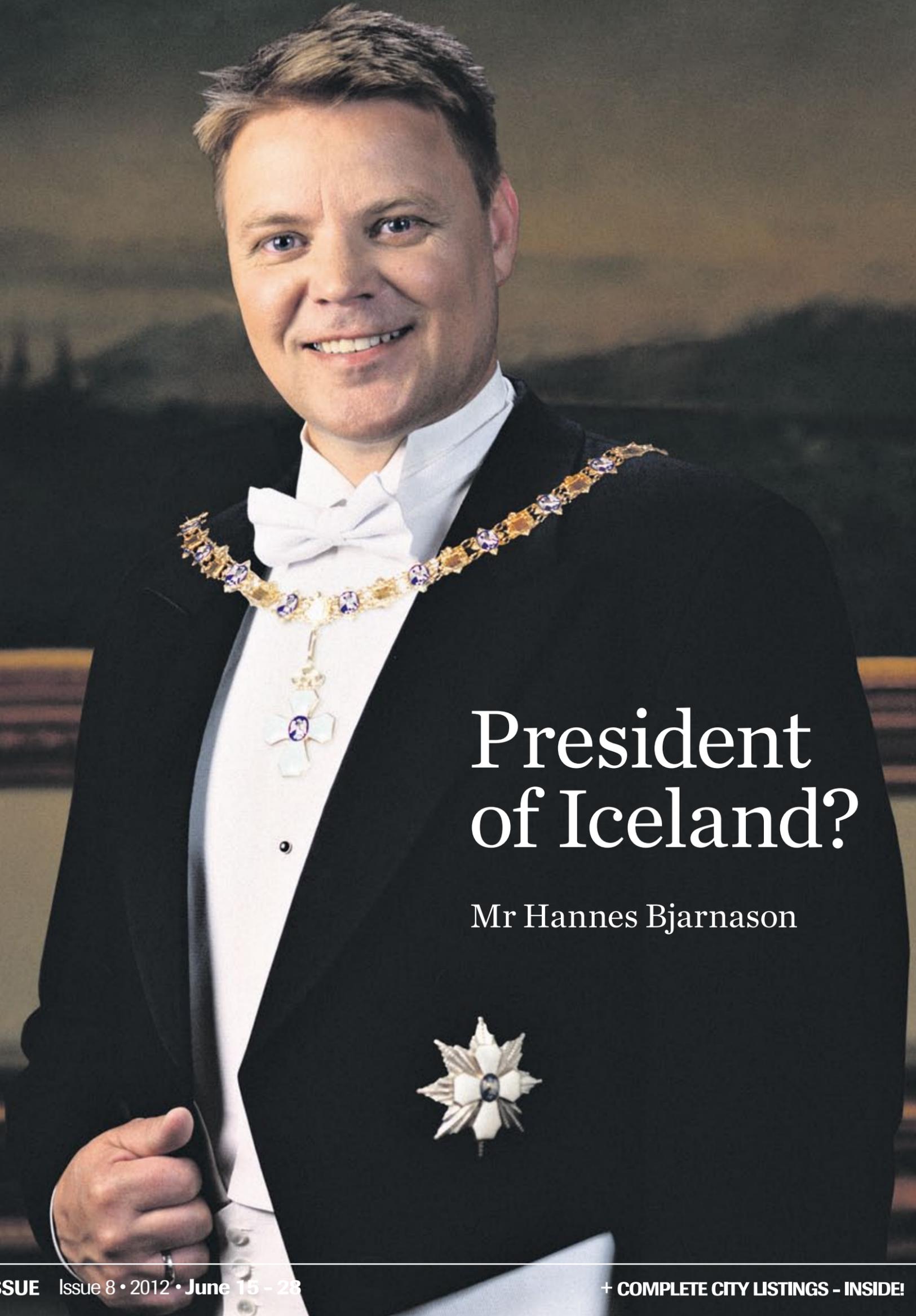


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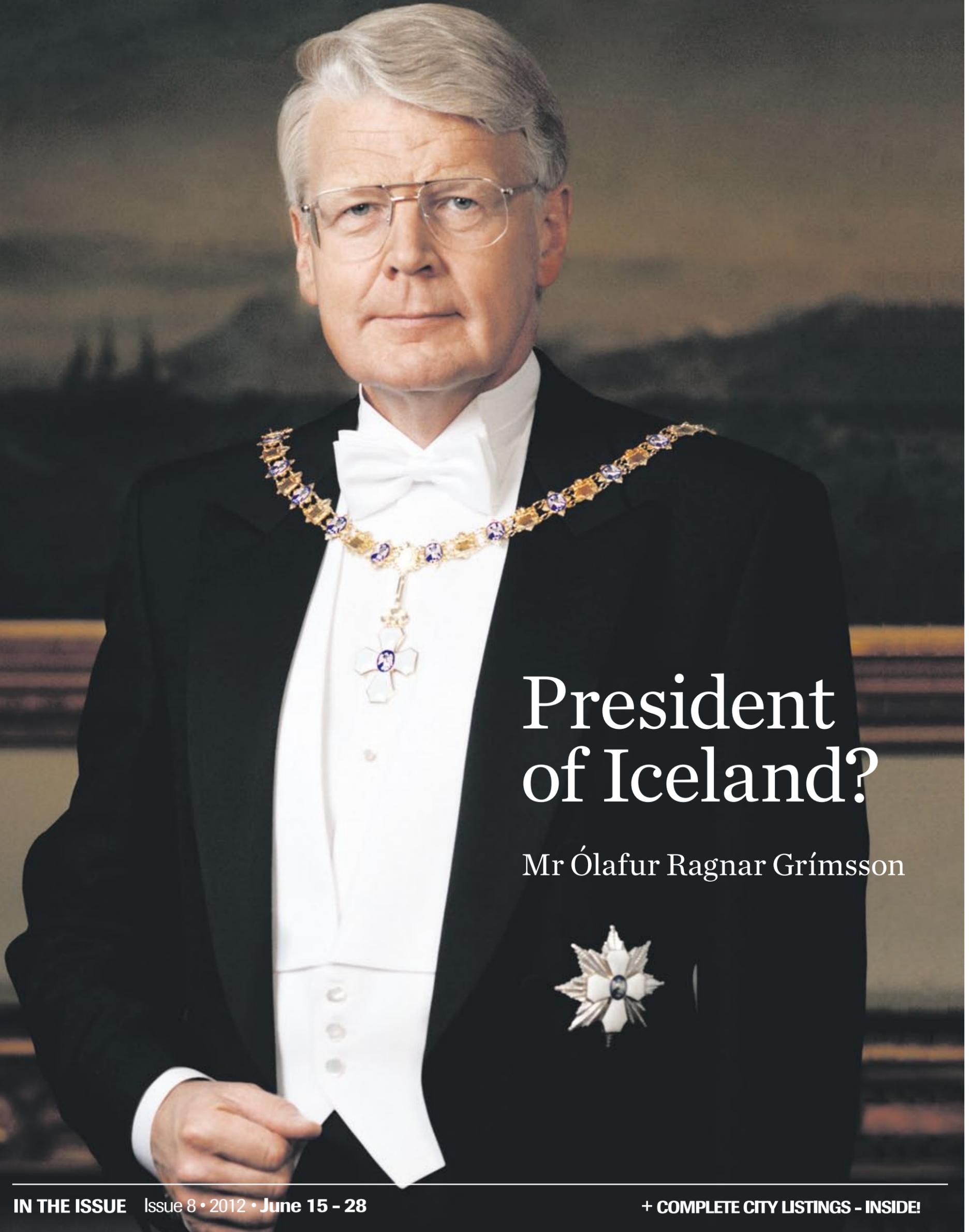


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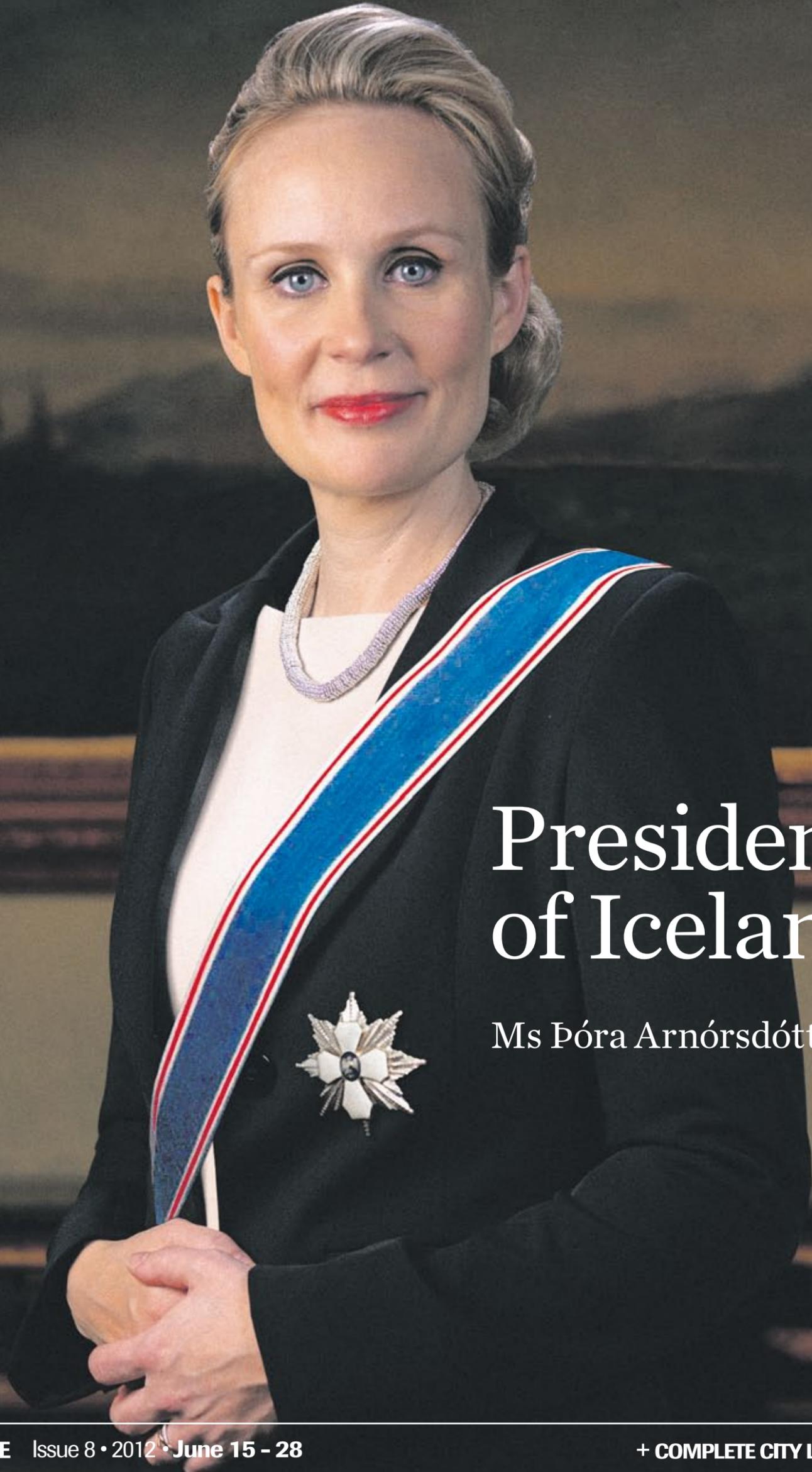


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You may not like it, but at least it's not sponsored (no articles in the Reykjavík Grapevine are pay-for articles. The opinions expressed are the writers' own, not the advertisers').

For President?

Anna's 9th Editorial



Iceland's presidential race has certainly been interesting to follow over the last five months. Only days after incumbent President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson delivered his New Year's Address, insinuating that he would not seek reelection, Iceland was abuzz with talk about who should take over after his sixteen-year reign.

Two comedians, Davíð Oddsson and Jón Gnarr, for instance, were amongst those repeatedly named in a poll conducted by Visir in early January.

The race has arguably gotten more serious since then. Ólafur decided, at the urging of 30,000 people, to run for a fifth term, which would make him the longest serving Icelandic president if elected.

However, for the first time, an incumbent president is facing some real competition. Namely, television personality Þóra Arnórsdóttir has been neck and neck with Ólafur in poll after poll, and it looks like this will be also be the closest presidential election in the history of The Republic.

It should be noted that Iceland is a parliamentary democracy in which the president has traditionally served as a figurehead. However, the president has certain powers defined in the Constitution, such as the right to refuse to sign a parliamentary bill into law and refer it to a referendum for approval or rejection.

Ólafur is the first president to exercise this power, using it not once, but three times, and in many ways, the presidential debates have centred on whether or not a president should be so powerful. Þóra, for instance, sees this power as an emergency measure.

But enough about Ólafur and Þóra. There are in fact six candidates, including Andrea Ólafsdóttir, Ari Trausti Guðmundsson, Hannes Bjarnason, and Herdís Þorgeirsdóttir, and they all have interesting thoughts on the matter, and you could argue that they haven't been given an equal opportunity to express those thoughts.

So we interviewed all six candidates and, with the exception of one of them who dropped out last minute, they all feature on our covers. Yes, you are

holding one of five versions of this paper.

Each candidate has posed much like Ólafur posed shortly after winning the 1996 election, so you can now envision each and every one of them as a president. More importantly, of course, read what they (minus one who perhaps couldn't find an appropriate dress for the occasion) have to say, inside.



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Attention: Our hamburger buns are not round. They are square. Does it taste better? You tell us.



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Sour grapes & stuff

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Dear reader. We love you very much, especially those of you that write us letters all the time. In fact we love you so much that we keep trying to reward you somehow for writing us those letters. They entertain us, and they keep us informed of what our readers think. That is a pretty great deal.

Now. Whoever wrote this issue's **MOST AWESOME LETTER** gets a prize. And it's a pretty great one. Yes, not one but TWO delicious hamburger-style meals at the wondrous **ICELANDIC HAMBURGER FACTORY**, which is an Icelandic themed restaurant that specializes in huuuuuge and mouth-watering burgers to Pt every occasion (we recommend the lamburger, unless you are a vegetarian. Lamb is not a vegetable). And if you for some reason didn't write this issue's **MOST AWESOME LETTER** don't panic. Their tasty burgers aren't that expensive, and you can always try for a **MOST AWESOME** letter later. Just write us at letters@grapevine.is



MOST AWESOME LETTER:

Hi there.

Thank you so much for your current issue, i got it yesterday and enjoyed reading it sitting in my little garden while drinking iced coffee and eating danish. I was a every Friday and Saturday sirkús girl and i loved your article about the lost but not forgotten bars in 101. Funny, in 1999 i came here first and in 2005 i met my husband- so we danced together until the party ended. I really could use your issue as i went out for dinner with hubby at KEX yesterday evening and we had a brilliant time. Later we went to Harpa and guess who i saw at the Elvis Costello concert (which we got tickets by accident, i felt sooo

young!), DJ KGB. My sirkús starlight! One thing though, you forgot to mention Nelly's. The beer there was 350.- if i remember correctly. But that is maybe all to remember about it.

Thank you again, your summer issues are like the Icelandic summer, full of energy

Kveðjur & liebe Grüsse
Korinna Elísabet

Dear Korinna,

Oh man, we remember Nelly's. You're right, their beer was super cheap, and the floor super dirty. That is lovely that

you met your hubby at Sirkús. The year 2005 was a good one, we guess. We also met a hubby at Sirkús, in 2008 on the night they closed the bar forever. We are now broken up, though, while you are married and eating a Danish in the sun. Thanks for rubbing it in. Just kidding! Your letter totally cheered us up! Please take your husband to Hamborgarafabrikkan and live long and prosper, unlike Sirkús and Nelly's.

Dear Grapevine,

Please ask Sindri Eldon to wash her mouth out with soap for her article "Rock Me, Sexy Jesus". What would her mother think of all the swearing she litters her prose with? Sindri, we get it, you fancy an old guy. You don't need to express it like a 50-year-old Arctic fisherman who has just stepped on a fishhook.

On another note Grapevine, please employ some more fucking proofreaders. Some of the typos are fucking awful!

Keep up the good work.

Phil
Sent from my BlackBerry® wireless device

Dear Phil,
We found your letter very interesting. For a variety of reasons, actually, not the least of which was the fact that you assumed our music critic Sindri was a 'she' simply because he swooned a bit over Bryan Ferry.

But besides that, we have some more questions. Like: Do people really still find swearing offensive? And what generation do you assume Sindri to be of such that his mother would be offended by the language he chooses to pepper his prose with? Honestly, for all you know, his mother is in her forties and an art rocker herself. Also: what do you

have against 50-year-old Arctic fishermen? They could very well have the golden hearts of poets, and their prose--though surely littered with obscenities--could very well sound like a chorus of cherubs softly laughing. At least that's what Sindri's pieces read like to us. Not sure what you're so hung up about.

Lastly, we know about all the typos. We had to drink a lot of beer while making our last issue and, well, it sorta showed.

Back from an excellent trip to Iceland for the International Gay and Lesbian Aquatics championships. Loved the meet, loved the country, and loved the Grapevine. Just one thing - why was Gay 46 the only bar in your 2012 bar guide with no star rating? Inquiring minds want to know. The night I was there it was full of stripped down swimmers, so boring it was not.

- Robb

Hey Robb! How were the aquatics championships? I hope all the attractive guys in speedos complemented the beautiful scenery.

As the gay American Grapevine intern who reviewed the bar, let me explain. If I were an outsider, I'd cry conspiracy! No stars in the Gay 46 rating? What's with all this homophobia? Fuck hate, am I right? But no, this was just a

simple copy mistake. Not enough proofreading, for sure. It just slipped in—something you may be quite accustomed to, Robb ;) For the record, the bar received three out of five stars.

I will admit, if I had been at Gay 46 when hordes of hot swimmers took to the dance floor, my opinion would be quite different. Alas, I've been to the bar about three times now, and each time I'm disappointed. A lot of lounging and playing pool, not enough dancing. A lot of middle aged types, not enough hot Icelandic young men.

--Cory



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Reykjavík, 07.06—The Federation of Icelandic Fishing Vessel Owners summoned dozens of ships from their fleet to Reykjavík harbour, to protest the government's proposed tax hike to the fishing industry and changes to the fishing quota system to which the industry has grown accustomed (more about all this in News In Brief and overleaf). As many from the ships' crews protested on Austurvöllur, the vessels blared their foghorns, imposing a not entirely unpleasant sort of cacophony over the denizens of 101 Reykjavík. Head to www.soundcloud.com/sjsbigband to hear a sampling of how it sounded. Photo: DV / Sigtryggur Ari

News In Brief: Early June Edition

June began on an optimistic note as the Pig Farmers' Society of Iceland announced that it was going to create **two organic, free-range pig farms**, a welcome change from an organisation that said last year that it would be prohibitively expensive to forego factory farming Iceland's pigs. As an added bonus, the general public is welcome to visit these farms to pet the pigs. So if you've ever wondered what it's like to pet a pig, now's your chance.

The idea of creating **an undersea power cable exporting electricity from Iceland to the UK** has also gained more traction, as British Energy Minister Charles Hendry visited Iceland to sign a willingness agreement supporting the plan. Former director of Norwegian power company Statnett, Odd Hákon Hoelsæter, told reporters that he thought the plan was realistic and could be good for Iceland in the long run.

On the election front, the **presidential debates** conducted by television station Stöð 2 caused a great deal of controversy. The station originally invited only sitting president Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson and his most viable opponent, Þóra Arnórsdóttir. Þóra then refused to participate unless the four other candidates were invited, and so the station extended the invite. However, when the candidates got wind

of the station's intention to pair them together in separate debates, three of the presidential candidates, Andrea Ólafsdóttir, Hannes Bjarnason, and Ari Trausti Guðmundsson, **refused to take**

"Ship horns sounded all day long from Reykjavík harbour as fisheries, ship owners, fishermen and related parties protested a proposed increase in their fishing fees and other changes to the quota system"

part. Although Herdís Þorgeirsdóttir said she disagreed with the station's set up, she decided to stay and so the three candidates stood behind two lecterns. It didn't get any better from there, and media analyst Egill Helgason remarked that **"there has hardly been a more embarrassing television show in Iceland."** Anyone familiar with Iceland's television history will know that that is a fairly harsh condemnation.

In other extraordinary events, **Venus moved across the Sun**, and was visible from Iceland and other parts of the Earth where the sun still shines between 22:00 and 4:00. Some 1,500 Icelanders observed the event from

Öskjuhlíð, home of Reykjavík landmark and revolving restaurant Perlan. This crossing happens roughly once every 243 years.

Back on Earth, Grapevine's Byron

Wilkes **recorded a video of a security guard assaulting a man** at the Hlemmur bus station, which sparked the attention of the rest of the Icelandic media. The guard, who has been fired, contended that the man in question had threatened his family with violence, but expressed regret for losing control of himself. The victim of the assault claims that he was attacked unprovoked, and plans to press charges against the guard.

There has been bad blood between these two guys ever since either a) a friend of the assault victim spat her dentures at the security guard and then stepped on them, or b) the security

guard shook the assault victim's friend so hard that her dentures fell out, upon which he stepped on them himself. Which of these stories is the case depends on whom you ask.

Ship horns sounded all day long from the Reykjavík harbour as fisheries, ship owners, fishermen and related parties protested a proposed increase in their fishing fees and other changes to the quota system. They claim that raising these taxes will force them to take the difference out of the pay checks of the fishermen they employ.

However, many have pointed out that the more important point is that the **quota system itself needs to be changed** (which is what the government is proposing, although not to the satisfaction of all parties involved) and that the fisheries could very well take a cut in profit without having to make up for it through the fishermen's wages.

Speaking of fish, **two former financiers were sentenced to four and a half years in prison for fraud**. Byr Savings Bank Chairman Jón Þórsteinn Jónsson and the lender's ex-CEO Ragnar Zophonías Guðjónsson allegedly lent money to Exeter, which in turn used the money to buy shares in Byr. The Supreme Court ruled that this was

a case of blatant fraud, handing down a sentence that could be given to others in its wake. So far, **no tycoons have been spotted trying to flee justice**, but hey, you never know. The year's only half over. ☹

Trivia | What do you know?

Trivia Question!

What was national voter turnout in the 2008 presidential election?

- A. 0%
- B. 38%
- C. 73.5%
- D. 80%
- E. 92%

Turn to page 33 for the answer. Hint: If you know your math, then this is obvious.



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How Can We Immigrants Choose Our Representatives?



The first Multicultural Assembly in Reykjavik in November 2010 saw the first elections for Reykjavik's new Multicultural Council. This council, which consists of seven immigrants, was intended to become "the voice" of immigrants who reside in the city.

There were two requirements for participation in the elections: one, only immigrants with legal domicile in Reykjavik could participate in the election, and two, they must be first generation immigrants.

Before the elections, there were concerns that the council might not be impartial if five of seven were Polish. In 2010, there were 3,264 Polish people living in Reykjavik, by far the city's largest immigrant group. However, the election result was unexpected. Not only were no Polish delegates elected to the council, but also none from EU countries. Some said the election itself was not well publicised among immigrants. Others said the candidates' ideas were not presented clearly, but regardless, the show must go on.

The city is going to hold elections for the Multicultural Council for a second time this autumn, and its Human Rights Office is reviewing the election system. And I think it is desirable and only fair that we immigrants participate in this review process by voicing our opinion.

I think it is important that the Council reflects the diversity of immigrants in Reykjavik, as we immigrants are very different from each other ethnically, culturally, mentally, religiously and so on. Not to mention, we have different legal rights as well. There are immigrants who have already obtained Icelandic citizenship, immigrants that have green cards, immigrants that have Icelandic spouses, immigrants from the EU/EEA area and from outside of the EU/EEA.

Among those, the biggest difference is whether immigrants are from the EU/EEA area or not with regards to their various rights in order to live in this country, so I therefore propose that this aspect of diversity be taken into great consideration.

To ensure diversity, I suggest we use the "quota" system, with three seats for immigrants from the EU and four for non-EU immigrants, or perhaps three from the EU and four for non-EU, depending on which quota is filled first. I want to do the same for gender equality in the council. The same method can be used for ensuring a balance between men and women. Namely both men and women cannot have more than four seats. This looks complicated, but in reality it's not; it's just like a simple puzzle. And by using this system, at least we can ensure the balance between EU immigrants and non-EU immigrants, and between male and female representatives on the council.

This is a rough sketch, and there are several things that we need to consider. For example, if we should limit only one person from one nation, how do we define the home country of an immigrant who was born in Sudan and then moved once to Germany before coming to Iceland—is this person a EU immigrant or non-EU? More such questions will arise.

It is my sincere wish that opinions and ideas from us immigrants can help to design a better election method, and that the upcoming elections for the Multicultural Council in autumn will be carried out in as democratic a way as possible.

So What's This Quota System I Keep Hearing About?

Since the beginning of our time, humans have had a difficult time not killing and eating everything that moves. Remember the mammoth? Well, we decided that the furry elephants were so cute that we needed to keep them with us at all times, inside our bellies, and well, the mammoth is no more. By 1980, Icelanders were well on their way to catching all our yummiest, fin-bearing friends, so a system of fishing quotas was introduced in 1983, setting a limit of how much each fishing vessel could catch of certain species to prevent over-fishing.

That sounds reasonable. Why is it controversial?

Though there are some people who are against any sort of limit on fishing, they are few and far between. But controversy has followed in the system's wake, starting with the way quota rights were allotted in 1983. And while most people accept the need for a system to manage the fisheries, the devil is in the details, this particular devil being Mammon.

What, you said furry elephants were extinct?

Not mammoths, Mammon, the personification of greed. To add to the controversy, in 1990, the system was changed to an individual transferable quota system. In essence, fishing quota rights became property that fishing company owners could rent out or sell, and many did, becoming filthy, filthy rich. In the process quota accumulated in the hands of a small number of companies. Many

small seaside communities, whose existence depended on the fishing industry, became economic wastelands when quota belonging to local companies was sold.

That doesn't sound reasonable at all. Can't quota be given back to those villages?

A parallel system of politically distributed quota for affected communities was introduced to save the pain of the worst afflicted. Due to the limited amount available, an inherent consequence of the system, only so much can be distributed. To add to the misery of coastal towns, because of the

municipal and rural communities (40%) and a marketing and development fund for the fishing industry (20%).

I hate to assume, but I'm guessing the fishing company owners have not taken this well.

Oh no, not at all. Landsamband íslenskra útvegsmanna (The Federation of Icelandic Fishing Vessel Owners, LÍÚ), the interest group of Icelandic fishing companies, has led the charge against it, ably abetted by the newspaper Morgunblaðið, whose two biggest shareholders are major players in the fishing industry. Thursday,

"He sleeps soundly at night, eats well, is kind to his relatives and likes to relieve stress by bludgeoning baby pandas to death"

transferable quota system, they live in fear of quota rights being sold without warning, destroying the community's livelihood.

Is the government doing anything about it?

The current government has proposed legislation that will alter the current system by making quota-allotment temporary, expiring after twenty years, and introducing a new taxation scheme. As is, the fishing industry, which makes a profit of around 370 million Euros annually, pays around 25 million Euros of those profits in taxes. The new tax earnings will be split between the Icelandic state (40%),

June 7, LÍÚ called for a protest against the government-proposed law.

Was that why there was all that noise in downtown Reykjavik?

Yes. Fishing company owners decided to send a large percentage of their fishing fleet to Reykjavik to bring their employees to the protest. While they were docked in the downtown harbour, the vessels sounded their foghorns relentlessly, making downtown Reykjavik, colloquially known as 101 Reykjavik, about as pleasant an environment to stay in as the garage of a heavy metal band whose members know only one chord, and not how

to tune their instruments.

Maybe, like mammoths, they were merely trumpeting to far-away supporters, summoning them to the protest.

A crowd did show up, around two thousand people, but half were counter-protesters, many of whom had their workdays ruined by the endless screaming of foghorns. So when the director of LÍÚ spoke at the protest, he was met by the People's Foghorn, the en masse foghorn impression of a thousand counter-protesters. As an added insult, when one of the fishing moguls was asked about the all-day foghorn blaring, he implied that the only people disturbed were the latte-sipping layabouts who supposedly make up the inhabitants of 101 Reykjavik.

Don't be so sensitive. Everyone has a stereotypical impression of places they don't live in.

Said mogul, Guðmundur Kristjánsson, lives in one of the most expensive properties in 101 Reykjavik. And since he indulged in a bit of harmless stereotyping, let us return the compliment by saying that as a filthy rich fishing mogul whose wealth comes from gaming Icelandic fishing communities, we can only assume that he sleeps soundly at night, eats well, is kind to his relatives and likes to relieve stress by bludgeoning baby pandas to death.

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Moving To The Motherland

The Village Idiot SPEAKS!



Being the Village Idiot is much like being President, everybody thinks you're stupid but you...

Growing up in a quaint old village in Kent, England, my Icelandic Dad liked to tell me stories about a man from Suðureyri, (a small fishing village in the Westfjords of Iceland with a population of 312). He was mentally handicapped and the whole community participated in his imagined world to avoid bursting his bubble. There is a legendary story of when he got stuck in an imaginary tractor in high tide. Waist deep in water, after hours of people cheering him along, he was finally saved by a local with a van and a rope. Being pulled out of the water was

Words

Álfrún Gísladóttir

Illustration

Álfrún Gísladóttir

the only way he would be rescued—break his mirage and you broke his spirit.

Similarly, I am caught in a strange position between insanity and hilarity. Whenever someone asks me where I'm from inevitably I will answer "Iceland," but there is something about the question that troubles my own sense of identity, so I add "originally." I am Icelandic but not quite. Like a growing number of Icelanders, I am the child of migrants. I was born in Reykjavik in 1987 to Icelandic parents. My name, Álfrún, means 'friend of the elves,' how kitsch and Icelandic, how Björk, how Sigur Rós. How thoroughly unpronounceable on an international scale! I realised this to my utter frustration and rage at the age of three when I first recall my name being changed to Katherine by the teacher, to make it easier for the other children to say. My name definitely does not compute in England, my home since I was three years old.

A couple of months ago, twenty years

after moving away, I decided to move to Iceland. I am lucky enough to speak Icelandic quite well; I lack vocabulary and make grammatical errors, but my accent is Icelandic. If you are Icelandic you might even think that I am too. After a few minutes of talking to me however, a look of confusion will come over you. Just after that, a sympathetic expression takes over when you realise there's something a bit off about me. Relief will come at about six minutes, when I will meet your confused look with an explanation. "Sorry if I sound like an imbecile, I'm actually English you see." You will, however, forget almost immediately and give me a funny look when I don't know who Gunnar Helgason is or that the Eyafjallajökull joke is still supposed to be funny. At this point I am stood in an invisible tractor, waist deep in water, being gently mocked by a room full of people, albeit in a compassionate way.

Last week I walked past a petrol station with a terrible headache and decided to pop in to buy some painkillers. After looking around for a few minutes, I asked the shop assistant where the paracetamol was kept. Leaning with her whole bosom spreading over the counter, a strange look came over her, as if she'd just remembered a dirty joke. Frowning her eyebrows, she stepped back. "Paracetamol?" I looked at her with determination; "Ibuprofen is fine, I just have a..." I trailed off as I noticed her laughing. "You can't get paracetamol here." "Oh," I said, "at the supermarket then..." "No, at the pharmacy, you can only get painkillers at the pharmacy" and she let out a content sigh as she turned to her colleague and rolled her eyes. Feeling like the village idiot, I slid out of the shop with my face burning. The pharmacy was closed.

Ironically, if I had spoken in English to the shop assistant, she would probably have offered me some painkillers from her personal collection in sympathy, but because I was stupid rather than foreign I received none of the famous Icelandic hospitality.

Storming into my friend's house with a face like thunder, the first response I got from my story was unadulterated laughter. "Don't worry," she says, "I think I've got some painkillers in my bag." My desire to burn down a petrol station was soon replaced with the very Icelandic notion: "Petta reddast" (It'll work itself out) and I was soon placated with a heavy dose of prescription drugs.

Iceland is a place that I have grown up through, rather than in, and like Alice going through the looking glass, I am taking the leap for curiosity's sake. The line between nonsense and logic is inevitably blurred whilst I stumble through my Icelandic experience, holding tightly onto

Tamper-Free Iceland



The foil seal has been torn back about 60% of the way, but not removed. When I see this, my ears start to make that 'WooooOoooooEEEE!!!!' noise that usually precedes the sort of white-hot rage that involves sacrificing small rodents or less sturdy pieces of furniture.

Icelanders have a strange way of dealing with these anti-tamper seals, which I find rather annoying. The chief culprits are the low, oblong packages like Smjörvi, rækjusalat and paté. The image above shows the blood-boiling behaviour.

It's worth carefully examining what Siggí has done here in his frantic race to inhale the Létt & laggott. He's gone mining. He's left the foil on, but opened a gap just big enough to be able to dig his knife in and extract the butter-substitute.

Leaving the foil in place seems to imply that he feels it has a function and when his excavation is complete, he semi-carefully lays the foil back in place, before... replacing the plastic lid.

...what?! He replaces the plastic lid?! Waddayamean? Clearly he acknowledges the inherent lid-ness of the lid and its ability to close things. But the foil? Why would anyone with an IQ greater than the outside air temperature in Fahrenheit do this? Why, other than myopia so strong that he regularly buys tennis balls instead of oranges, would he put the G.D. lid back on?

So, in the quest for an explanation of what seems like utterly illogical behaviour, I asked him why:

Me: "Why did you leave the foil on?"

Siggí: "Haa?"

Me: "Why did you leave the foil on?"

Siggí: "Aah, just, 'cos. I mean, why not?"

Curious, I gritted my teeth and kept going:

Me: "...ok. What does the foil do?"

A brief pause ensued during which time Siggí thought, and a slight smouldering smell filled the air between us.

Siggí crunched up his face and replied:

"It keeps it fresh."

I realised that I was nearing my 'coup de grace.' I reached for the plastic lid, lifted it high above my head, sharp edge down, then stabbed it forcefully and viciously into the void between Siggí and me.

"Then what, in the name of holy arse, is this for?" I asked.

"Um, that's the lid?" Siggí said.

I exhaled so hard I created a new part in his hair, admitted defeat, weakly dropped the lid/weapon and walked off, the white noise in my brain rising perceptibly.

This episode has been repeated enough times that I don't bother asking anymore because I know the answer. Icelanders simply don't know what anti-tamper seals are. They've never seen stories in their media about someone holding a mayonnaise manufacturer ransom or some homicidal maniac poisoning milk in the name of his twisted cause.

To Icelanders, the idea of tampering with food is completely alien. If you started explaining the need for anti-tamper seals to Siggí, his face would screw up in puzzlement, as if you had told to him that he needed to carry around a foil umbrella as protection against meteorites. "But why would anyone do that?" he'd ask.

So I finally came to learn that the teeth gnashing and the screaming white noise in my head were unnecessary. Instead, every time I see someone begin to peel back a foil seal, and start mining, I now simply sigh contentedly and smile smugly as I realise that Iceland is a place where tampering with food for evil means does not exist. ☺

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THE NEGOTIATOR

Accession to the EU hinges on whether Stefán Haukur Jóhannesson can strike a good deal for Iceland



A hulking home computer produced in 1982 sits on Stefán Haukur Jóhannesson's desk at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in place of what is usually his sleek government-issued desktop. The switch that morning is the work of office pranksters, he says. The graphics of an old spaceship-shooting video game fills the screen of the Spectravideo-328. "On the screen it had 'game over,'" Stefán jokes. "Hopefully that doesn't mean game over for me."

The game is about to reach its peak, actually. As the chief negotiator for Iceland's talks to join the European Union, Stefán will take part in the fourth formal meeting between ministers and diplomats from Iceland and the EU on June 22 in Brussels—an orchestrated affair to check off steps on Iceland's road to become the 28th member of the EU.

Between these intergovernmental conferences, diplomats and policy experts are abuzz, debating Icelandic fishery policies and EU budgetary provisions to try to cut Iceland the best deal in the name of international cooperation. Stefán, who works under Minister for Foreign Affairs Össur Skarphéðinsson, leads the accession talks under a 2009 mandate from Parliament to negotiate to join the club of bigger countries.

What's on the line? Stefán, wearing a neon tie splashed with purple, pink and orange, says joining the EU would "mean more stability, lower interest rates, greater competition and also investment." In other words, a style makeover to help an island struggling with high

inflation and interest rates get its economic mojo back.

"It's still a long and bumpy road ahead. It's not going to be easy," Stefán says.

UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE STALL

The two sides must come together on a dozen chapters, or policy areas like energy and regional policy, to hash out how Iceland will align its legislation with EU laws. Fifteen chapters have been opened, and 10 closed since negotiations began in July 2010, and Stefán says all eight remaining chapters could be opened this year with a national referendum by late 2013.

The remaining chapters include tough talks over the sacred cows (or cod) of Iceland's economy: fish and agriculture. Not to mention, the two sides haven't touched monetary policy and replacing Iceland's suffocating króna with the euro, a currency that itself has faced scrutiny with the economic slip-'n'-slide of core eurozone members like Greece, Ireland and Spain.

But Stefán is not interested in talking about that at first. Instead, he rattles off about what unites Iceland and the EU. There's NATO, the Schengen Agreement on border controls and the European Economic Area, which allows Iceland to participate in the EU's internal trade market without actually being an EU state. The EEA enables free flow of goods, people and capital. It does not, however, cover fish or agriculture, even though Stefán says Iceland maintains good EU market access for its fish products with low tariffs.

"What surprises many when I explain this to them in Brussels, in the member states and also here in Iceland, is how involved Iceland already is in the European project," Stefán says. "We have aligned our legislation to the lion's share of the EU legislation."

Fish: An Icelandic diplomat's favourite four-letter word

But that good start is meaningless without headway on fishing, which Stefán calls the toughest challenge standing in the way of Iceland's accession to the EU. "We've been very clear to the EU that this will make or break the deal," he says.

Negotiations with a country whose economy relies so strongly on fish—12% of gross domestic product and 5% of the labour force—is a first for the EU, Stefán says. But he sees room for compromise in the EU's common fisheries policy that would guide part of the industry's future without opening up waters to foreign competition.

"We are confident that our concerns can be accommodated without upsetting the principles of the EU," he says. "Obviously people are concerned in Iceland what implications membership would have on fisheries because the EU's track record on fisheries could be better," referring to rampant criticism of EU states' overfishing and mismanagement.

Foreign boats won't overrun Iceland's fishermen, he maintains. The principle of "relative stability" that allocates fishing quotas based on historical catch will keep Iceland's waters above the fray of foreign competition. No other nation borders the exclusive economic zone Iceland's citizens have fished in for 30 years, Stefán says, pushing back against fears that the country's waters—rich with cod and haddock—could be overrun by other fishing powerhouses like Spain.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

The other daunting hurdle is the erosion of public support for joining the EU, as the idea is often used as a political punch line.

A majority of Icelanders—54%—are against joining the 27-country European Union, according to a poll conducted last month by University of Iceland's Social Science Research Institute. The recent public

opposition casts an awkward net of defeatism around the negotiations that will ultimately face a national referendum.

The country's top presidential candidates also talked cautiously about joining the EU at a June 4 debate. Þóra Arnórsdóttir, the leading opposition candidate in the June 30 election, spoke out strongest, saying that to join the EU now would be "like renting a room in a burning house."

Stefán says that some misinformation poured out onto the airwaves by EU opponents gets under his skin. "The average person tends to simplify things to black and white,

"It's still a long and bumpy road ahead. It's not going to be easy"

and it isn't like that. There are so many aspects, so many shades of grey to the issues. Some hard-line sceptics have used arguments like [Icelanders will be in a] European Army and the EU is going to take away our fish," he says. "It's absolute nonsense."

But he also says these differences are what make Iceland a "thriving democracy," a well-crafted diplomatic remark by the diplomat. He agrees that the eurozone crisis is provoking hard questions about the future of the EU, but also maintains, "Potential EU membership is a long term issue. It's about the future. This is certainly a very serious crisis that the EU countries are going through. We'll obviously have to monitor the developments very well, but we certainly hope that the EU will manage its way through this crisis."

LET'S MAKE A DEAL

Stefán is optimistic not only about fisheries, but also about what he'll be able to swing on agriculture policy, which could lower some food prices, and regional policy, which could funnel structural aid into poor and sparsely populated parts of the country. The amount of subsidies Iceland receives from the EU hinges heavily on Stefán and the negotiating team's abilities to make a deal.

Negotiations, he says, involve a dialogue with dozens of different ministers and policy experts from each different country: "It's not one Mr. EU who sits here and talks to me."

"[EU countries] say themselves that they are 'united in diversity,' he adds. "They have all different opinions, but they all agree on one thing: Iceland is more than welcome to join, but there are principles you will have to observe and respect. When you join, they say, 'You join a club and we have a certain rule book.'"

Stefán's job, he says, is to present Iceland's perspective – telling other countries that some rules shouldn't undo the country's progress on fishing and farming.

"Obviously there are difficult issues ahead, but the willingness is there to find solutions," he says. ☘

STEFÁN ON...

Why the rules already say nobody is going to steal Iceland's fish

Seventy percent of fish stocks around our waters is local, and has only been caught by Icelanders for the last 30 years. This is very important, and I'll explain why. If you look at the Baltics, for example, you have many countries surrounding the same sea and share common stocks so they need a common management system for that. That's why there is a common fisheries policy. Even the rules on common fisheries in the EU are flexible because circumstances are different in the North Sea and the Baltic and in the Mediterranean. As Iceland is different in this respect, we also need some different rules there.

Why finding a solution to agriculture policy might not be far off

The challenge will be that agriculture in Iceland does not have overall very competitive prices, but in terms of quality, Icelandic agriculture is competitive. We have sustained agriculture through subsidies and high tariffs, while the EU agricultural policy is run in a quite different way. The way their subsidies are handed out is different. Also climate conditions are different in most of the EU. So it's very clear that we'll need specific solutions for Iceland so we can sustain a strong agricultural sector. There's a good level of understanding in the EU on that.

Why the euro would be better than the króna

We know what a challenge it is to sustain an independent currency, a very small currency, which means it's very volatile. If interest rates, which are always quite higher here, are lower in the Eurozone, this will mean a lot for the average households who are trying to buy a house with mortgages. Lower interest rates means that credit would be much cheaper.

What would happen to the króna right after EU membership

All new members are obliged to seek membership of the Eurozone, but it will not be imposed on any members. Sweden is a member and obliged to adopt the Euro but they still have the Swedish króna. But this is what the mandate from Parliament says, that we should seek membership to the Eurozone and [fix the króna with the] exchange rate mechanism as soon as possible.

How negative public opinion on the EU is affecting negotiations

It's not my role to tell people whether we should join or not, but it's my role to explain what we are doing and what our interests are so people can make an informed decision at the end of the day when we have a referendum, and obviously for those of us involved in negotiations on the Icelandic side, it is our overriding goal to achieve as good of an agreement as humanly possible for our interests.

Words

Cory Weinberg

Illustration

Alisa Kalyanova

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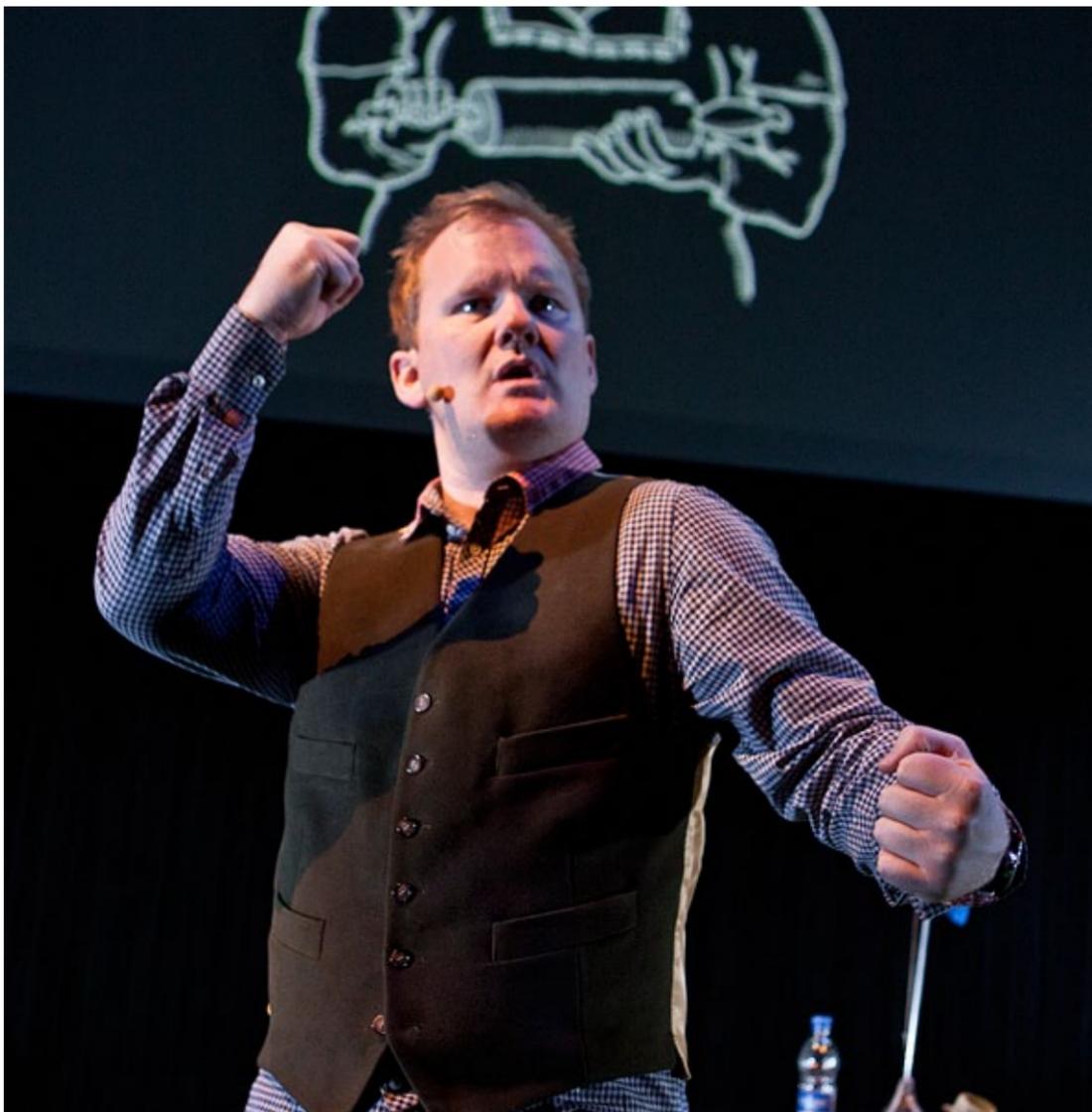


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Icelandic Comedy Gets Existential

Icelandic comedy gets existential - 'How To Become Icelandic In 60 Minutes'



The Icelandic self-image has changed dramatically since the crash. Before October 2008, Icelanders could attribute their keen business acumen to their Viking heritage (or so the President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson liked to say), and anyone who expressed doubts was just jealous. Foreign news stories praising the country were accepted wholesale, and there was a boorish, even arro-

gant, assumption that Icelanders were better looking, more genetically pure and smarter than everyone else. Even when said jokingly, there was still a wink that said, "No, really, we are pretty awesome."

Today, Icelanders are going through a reassessment of their previous attitudes, considering that maybe their swollen pride was destructive and that maybe the time has come to take stock of what they really value.

A POST-CRASH COMEDY

The comedy act 'How To Become Icelandic In 60 Minutes' is very much a post-crash Icelandic comedy. It plays with older tropes about Iceland while offering a

fresh take on what it means to be Icelandic.

The act opens with an animation sequence poking fun at the comedy gold mine that is the Settlement period. Only after the usual jokes about folks killing each other and the country descending into anarchy before being colonised and later gaining its independence do we witness the iconic Davíð Oddsson, flanked by bankers, as he pulls the arm of a slot machine, and wins himself (and the country) a row of three "BANKRUPT" signs. This sets the tone for what is to follow, namely the one-man act of Bjarni Haukur Þórsson.

Bjarni has a manic Lee Evans quality about him. Very much a physical humorist, he also engag-

es well with the audience, kicking things off by taking stock of what foreigners there were in the audience. As it turned out, there were many Americans, some Swedes, some Brits, a couple from India, and a fair number of Icelanders. Bjarni appeared taken aback to discover this, and asked the Icelanders, "What are you doing here? Identity crisis?" He was perhaps not far off the mark. In any event, his caricatures of different nationalities never came across as mean-spirited or archaic, and he was often spot-on (case in point: his imitation of how Danes sound when speaking English).

ON BEING ICELANDIC

Then, on to the lessons on being Icelandic. Most of these were studies in personality quirks, and he pulled no punches when it came to criticising Icelandic character traits. The first lesson is, for example, "You know best." If you're going to be Icelandic, you must always assert your expertise on any given subject and never admit when you are wrong because Icelanders love to argue. "There are 320,000 of us, and we have five political parties," Bjarni pointed out.

Added to this were such instructions as "Think big," citing Icelandic self-aggrandizement and "Be rude," explaining that by this he does not mean that Icelanders are intentionally hurtful people—just that they sometimes speak carelessly, and then don't apologise, as they feel it would be insincere to do so if you don't actually feel sorry. He added that the closest approximation for the Icelandic word for "please"—

"There was, of course, some reaching for the low-hanging fruit"

'vinsamlegast'—is most often said with a decidedly impolite tone.

There were also some interesting physical observations made in the Icelandic lessons, such as "Talk like you're dead," referring to the inflectionless speaking style of many Icelandic public figures, as well as demonstrating "the two walks." The first is a stilted, stiff-armed shuffle reminiscent of

a broken old man, while the second is a chest-puffed, bow-legged stride known as a 'þúfnagangur' (literally "tussock walk")—a reference to being on a farm and having to step over and around the grassy mounds that riddle pastureland.

Throughout these lessons, Bjarni made it a point to refer back to different nationalities that might be interested in becoming Icelandic. Americans, for example, would likely have little trouble mastering the 'þúfnagangur,' he observed, while Italians may find it difficult to have to speak in flat, expressionless tones.

There was, of course, some reaching for the low-hanging fruit. There was an extended bit about eating rams' balls that could have been cut down by half, if not removed from the show entirely, as well as the much-circulated video clip from two years ago of various news people trying to pronounce 'Eyjafjallajökull.' The show could have done without these, but they didn't detract from the overall comedic power of the performance.

WHY ARE WE HERE?

After very successfully condensing the entirety of the Icelandic Sagas into a 60-second dramatisation that is better seen than described, Bjarni posed a rhetorical question to the audience: With all the struggle and suffering that Icelanders have had to go through to survive in this country, "Why are we here?" There followed a video montage of Icelandic settings most of us have seen many times before—mountains, rivers, geysers and glaciers—but within the context of this show, it seemed less Tourist Board-approved and more reflective, almost philosophical.

My mind went back to the beginning of the show, to Davíð gambling with the country's wealth, and how his party had few qualms with prioritising money over the country's natural resources. Icelanders are reversing that priority, to the extent that preserving natural resources will be a part of the new constitution. Perhaps it took an economic collapse to remind us of what's important about being in Iceland—or even, being Icelandic. ✧

Words

Paul Fontaine

Photography

Promotional

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“Freedom Of Movement Is A Fundamental Right”

A conversation with No Borders Reykjavík



As if following the pattern of a migratory bird, Iceland's refugee issues have yet again flown into the discussion. Last year's harbinger of spring was an Iranian refugee's attempted self-immolation inside the Red Cross headquarters of Reykjavík. This time it was the jailing of two teenagers, one from Algeria and one from Morocco, who entered the country with forged passports (See Issue 6, page 18).

Grassroots activist movement No Borders plays a large role in this discussion. The movement can be traced back to the summer of 2008 when two men ran onto the runway of the Keflavík International Airport and stopped an airplane from deporting a Kenyan refugee to Italy. After a long and complicated process, the Kenyan man, Paul Ramses, was finally granted asylum in Iceland.

I met up with two No Borders

Words

Snorri Páll Jónsson Úlfhildarson

Photography

Alisa Kalyanova

activists—Haukur Hilmarsson, one of the two airport runners, and Jórunn Edda Helgadóttir, a master in International Law—to ask them about the movement's ideas and actions. Below is a glimpse of our conversation, which you can read in entirety on The Reykjavík Grapevine's website.

So, what is No Borders?

Haukur: It is a banner used by movements around the world that share the idea that borders are a form of violence that must be abolished. These movements work with

Haukur: Our priority so far has been to secure refugees' stay in Iceland, which has resulted in us not being able to focus enough on our fundamental anti-racist ideas, such as that borders should not exist. Instead, we have been kind of forced to constantly criticise the system on its very own terms.

A world without borders would mean the end of the nation state, wouldn't it?

Jórunn: At least as we currently know it. The strength of the nation state depends on the idea of sov-

“I believe it's good for people to enjoy freedom, to be able to travel to new places, to share their ideas and to get to know new ones”

refugees and immigrants by, for instance, assisting them in entering the countries they want to live in. As No Borders is a particularly informal network, it's up to each chapter to organise their work in a way best suited to achieve their goals.

Jórunn: The vision of a world without borders is also based on the idea that the freedom of movement is a fundamental right.

ereignty, which again depends on strong borders. Each time Iceland deports a refugee, the small and powerless state is showing that it can at least exercise this type of power, thereby reinforcing its sovereignty.

Haukur: Yeah, that's a good way of describing it. For me it's clear that abolishing borders inevitably leads to the end of The State. This idea has, however, been the big-

gest matter of contention within our group, and we haven't reached a consensus. Still, it has never been a hindrance to our activism. People who don't identify as anarchists can still agree that everybody should be allowed to travel over whatever imaginary line there is. People, who in many ways speak the language of state power, can very well see how that same state power is violating basic human rights. We all share this radical idea of opening up borders, which would imply huge changes that many people are afraid of, but we believe are good.

In what way would that be good?

Jórunn: I can envision a whole lot of potential positive effects, but as I consider the freedom of movement to be a fundamental human right, abolishing the borders and thus stopping the violation of this particular right is good enough in itself.

Haukur: First and foremost, I think it would lead to greater individual freedom on a global scale. I believe it's good for people to enjoy freedom, to be able to travel to new places, to share their ideas and to get to know new ones. I don't think that foreigners are dangerous to the locals of a given place, and I don't think the general public of the Western World has a single reason to be afraid of the public of the Third World.

At the same time, many people haven't hesitated to announce the death of multiculturalism...

Jórunn: Well, I have witnessed multicultural societies that work out very well and there are plenty of such examples. Those who state the opposite often just use a single example of conflict between different cultures to discredit this idea.

Haukur: People tend to think of a multicultural society as one where people who have slanted-eyes or dark-skin are allowed...

Jórunn: Where it is OK to cook exotic food...

Haukur: And to dance in a non-traditional way... but where people are nevertheless obliged to speak the language of the ruling system and raise their kids in that society's predominant culture. That is a very strange idea about a society of many cultures.

Back to the refugees, it would be fair to say that something has changed in recent years though, right?

Jórunn: If the policy used to be to refuse as many refugees as possible, it seems to have changed due to pressure. Statistics show that more refugees are granted asylum than before, and due to a new law, most of those who would in the past have been granted asylum on humanitarian grounds now fit a similar criteria as refugees and thus have stronger standing.

Haukur: However, I would hesitate to state that any permanent policy changes have been made. There have hardly been any irreversible changes, changes that can't be taken back at the single stroke of a pen by a new government.

Given that you don't expect your radical ideas about the abolition of borders and the nation state to be fulfilled in the near future, what do you want to see happen now? What are your current goals?

Jórunn: I would like to see the Directorate of Immigration (UTL) shut down and a new institution established in its place. That one should not be built on the UTL's old, fascist foundations and should be staffed with people working in the interests of immigrants and refugees. It should operate as a service institution, in favour of people's rights, not against them.

Haukur: I would like people to see the situation of refugees and immigrants in Iceland in the context of a global history of racism. I know so many people who would never attempt to justify the South African apartheid, but can nevertheless speak in favour of this segregation of refugees.

Jórunn: And it surely is a form of apartheid when people are not allowed to enter the country and are instead deported back to a place they don't want to be in, or even to places where their lives or dignity are at risk.

Haukur: Furthermore, it's not enough to understand—one also has to act in accordance with that understanding. I have no hopes of any acts from The State, but would like to see more people connecting personally with refugees. That will only happen physically, by meeting and empathising with them. ♡



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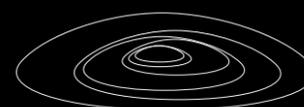
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**WHY SO MANY
COVERS,
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For this very special presidential election issue, we decided to run six different covers featuring every candidate in the 2012 Icelandic presidential elections emulating incumbent Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson's pose for his 1996 official presidential photograph, which was shot right after he took office. Even though we would eventually only run five different covers (YOU MAY READ WHY ELSEWHERE ON THIS PAGE), this is still some sort of record for us. Hurrah!

But why? We'll tell you: It is local advertising industry lore that Ólafur Ragnar won the 1996 election on the strength of having taken out a full page ad in the papers on the day before election day that featured him decked out in full presidential regalia. As the story goes, the ad allowed voters to visualise Ólafur Ragnar as their president, ultimately selling them on the idea that he was the ideal candidate.

We thought: "This story makes a lot

of sense. As much as people like to use reasoning and research to make their decisions, visual aids sure can help."

So we decided to provide the voters of 2012 with some visual aids of their own. We thus took the most iconic image of President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson in full regalia we could find, the one which is featured on the Office of the President's official website (not his campaign website, mind you), and printed that on our cover, as well as hav-

ing all the other candidates emulate his pose for their own photoshoot (for the female candidates, we also used former president Vigdís Finnbogadóttir as a reference). This would enable our readers to get an idea of how the different candidates might look were they voted into office, perhaps helping them reach a decision in the end.

Don't get us wrong. We don't believe you should make your decisions based on how a candidate looks. Don't judge

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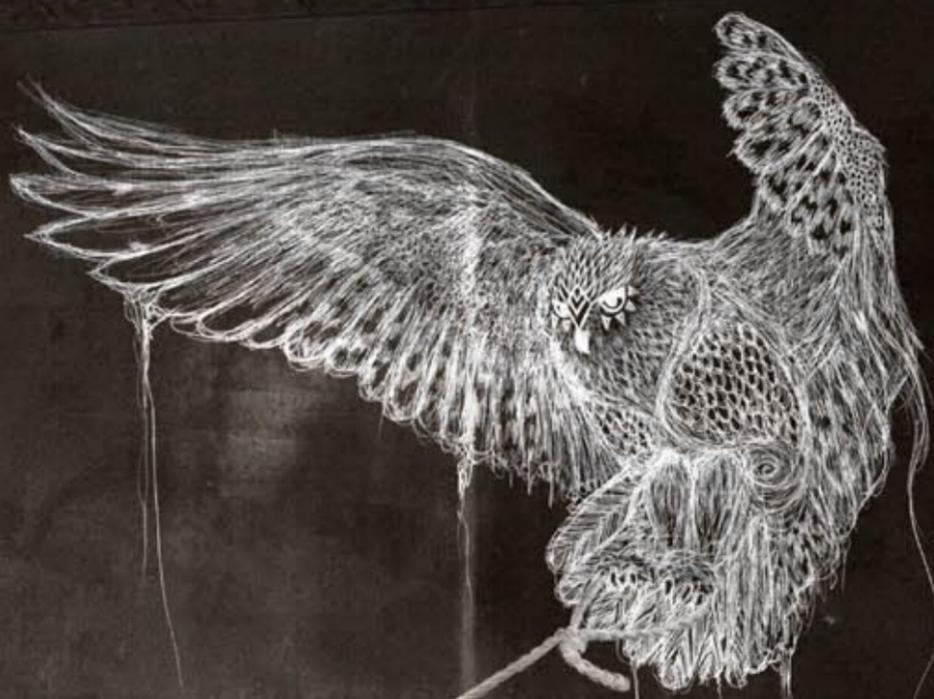
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Andrea Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir: The activist
Born: August 2, 1972 in Húsavík (Age 39)
Education: Has studied various fields at the college level, including management and education.
Occupation: Andrea has an activist streak: she has worked with several philanthropic and public service organizations in Reykjavík including the Red Cross and Amnesty International.
Tidbit: Andrea is intent on improving working rights and conditions in Iceland; so intent that, if elected, she says she will only accept minimum wage for the job of president.

ANDREA ÓLAFSDÓTTIR

What is this election about, in your eyes?

When you look at how the support is stacking up, it is obvious that people are voting based on candidates' positions on Article 26—the president's right to refer a bill passed by Parliament to referendum. I think that is why the incumbent president is getting a lot of support. In my eyes, however, this election is about whether people want to continue this journey towards a more stable democracy. It dawned on me when I read the Constitution that the authority and responsibility to provide a check to the powers of the government and Parliament lie with the president. The original idea, before we adopted the Constitution, was never to have parliamentary rule in this country, and during the presidencies that preceded Ólafur Ragnar, that idea failed. But I believe that by continuing to employ this constitutional right, and by having a national forum where the people are involved in shaping the guidelines for its use, this country will find a much more stable and secure democracy.

LATENT CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS

So you believe that Ólafur Ragnar has in some sense moved the presidency in the right direction? That those who protest his redefinition of the powers of the Office are in fact misunderstanding the Constitution?

Absolutely. Ólafur is moving it in exactly the direction it was always meant to go. This was the original idea, that there would be collaboration between representative and direct democracy. The right to veto is not the president's, that power lies with the people. He is not supposed to make arbitrary decisions about how to use this power. When the president refers something to a referendum, he or she is not taking

a political stance on the issue, he or she is only giving the people their right. I am grateful for this change and I am thankful for having revisited this history because I didn't realise it until he utilised the article. So I am grateful to him for that.

On the other hand, he also changed the office in the sense that he has been working directly for individual companies. That, I think, the presidential position needs to separate itself from entirely. It says in the Constitution that the president may not receive a salary from private companies or public institutions. But even if he is not receiving pay—if he is simply working on their behalf on a volunteer basis—he is overstepping the line separating the Office of the President from commercial life. The president is in the unique position of taking part in both the legislative and executive authority. But his role has never been defined as a liaison for companies on the international stage.

CHECKS AND BALANCES

But was the Icesave referendum a successful democratic exercise? There was so much propaganda surrounding those elections, propaganda promulgated and paid for by interest groups...

I thought a lot about that. The major cause of worry for me was how closely those elections were linked to advertising wars. I would have wanted to see, and would want to see in the future, the media take responsibility for ensuring informed and objective discourse. And then I'm talking about issue-driven discourse, not propaganda wars in advertisements. I think we are just taking the first steps, but we are on the right track. We need guidelines in place. But we are practicing. And I think democracy is always like that, we need to practice at it.

What is it about you that makes you fit to be president? What made you decide to run?

There is some kind of inner force that drives me forward. There is a very strong sense of fairness and a lot of courage. I can say that about myself. I also think I have shown how deeply I care about this nation and about de-

mocracy. When Kárahnjúkavirkjun was being built, for example, I tried, as best I could, to promote and to contribute to informed discourse. What I saw was that despite the fact that 75% of the nation wanted to have a vote regarding this issue, they were denied that right. I decided that if both the government and Parliament failed the people with regard to this claim to justice, it would be necessary to send a clear message to both the government and Parliament

“That we have come so far from that, I think, is cause for worry; that people have come to think of the president as just some general public relations officer or tour guide of Iceland”

by electing a person to the Office of the President who would be willing to emphasise the necessity of this Constitutional right. This is why I am running, to see if people are ready to use the presidency in this way.

THE ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT

Do you think there is too much emphasis in the media on painting personal portraits of the candidates? Rather than the issues?

It is of course somewhat important that people realise who this person is that is putting themselves out there, what he or she is like, and which values he/she reflects.

But at the same time there is the danger of people voting on only the 'personal'—such as the case with George W. Bush, when people seemingly chose a president who they could imagine having a beer with.

I think people need to think about what is the constitutional responsibility of the president, what oath he has taken, according to the Constitution. We have to wake up to what is the true role of the president and what it was originally meant to be. And this responsibility is that of checking the power of the government and the Parliament. That is the president's prima-

ry responsibility. That we have come so far from that, I think, is cause for worry; that people have come to think of the president as just some general public relations officer or tour guide of Iceland. I am sure that all of the candidates could serve this function—but this is not what matters most.

What matters in this election is who is most likely to stand guard of the interests of the people. Who is most likely to give the people this check of

All of the candidates have their issues. Ólafur Ragnar is going to continue being the spokesperson for companies, and he is going to use the right to appeal, of course, and he is going to fight against Iceland's accession to the EU. These are political issues. Herdís is focusing on human rights and democracy; Ari Trausti is talking about sustainable energy. I can't really name anything with regard to Þóra. There are no issues there, just reaching some kind of societal harmony and talking to people, which is legitimate. Am I forgetting someone?

Hannes.

Hannes is likewise talking about being a mediator. But I am emphasising issues that I chose because they haven't been solved in Parliament. And I am pointing out that we need better checks in place in order that these issues be solved. I want to be a certain bridge between the Parliament and the nation, in order to ensure that certain issues be solved. Many people ask me: don't these issues belong in Parliament? And my answer is: No. Not any more. These issues have been sitting in Parliament for decades, and have not been solved. And so something's got to give. The people have got to resort to something else, to use the presidency in order that these issues be solved. That is my message. Because I think that in the long term, this will result in a reawakening of people's trust in Parliament.

Do you think this polarisation will result in people making their decision last minute? Based on the latest opinion poll?

It could very well be that way. I think the development will be such that the votes will start evening out a bit, and once that happens, people will start making decisions from their heart, or rather, based on who they actually want to see in office. That is if this battle stops revolving around these two towers, where people are choosing sides so that the other person will not get elected. Whether or not that will happen, I don't know. ☺

Words

Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir

Photography

Alísa Kalyanova

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Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson: the incumbent
Born: May 14, 1943 in Ísafjörður (Age 69)
Education: BA in economics and political science and PhD in political science from the University of Manchester
Occupation: Ólafur is currently serving his fourth term as President of Iceland. He has served as Minister of Finance, as a Member of Parliament for the left-wing People's Alliance (Alþýðubandalagið). Prior to his roles in public service, he was a lecturer at the University of Iceland's first Professor of Political Science, as well as the editor of political newspaper Þjóðviljinn. He is currently number 21 on the list of the world's current longest ruling non-royal national leaders.
Tidbit: Ólafur has a dog named Sámur, named after the loyal canine of Gunnar, a main character in Njál's Saga.

ÓLAFUR RAGNAR GRÍMSSON

Incumbent President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson is Iceland's fifth elected president. If reelected on June 30, he will become the longest-sitting president in the history of the Republic. For the first time since he entered office in 1996, Ólafur faces real competition, with opposition candidate Þóra Arnórsdóttir polling right behind him. We met Ólafur at Bessastaðir, the official presidential residence where he has lived for the last sixteen years, to find out why he is running.

When you first ran for president in 1996, what drove you? What did you aspire to do? How did you decide that you were cut out for the job?

I wouldn't put it like that. The process leading up to my candidacy in 1996 was characterised by people from all over the country sending me letters, calling me, urging me to run for the presidency. This is unlike in many other countries where candidates decide themselves that they want to run for the presidency, and then they build up a machine and a big electoral system. It is an inspiring experience to go through this democratic process in Iceland. It shows that what in the classical philosophical literature is called the 'will of the people,' is a reality.

I have always been motivated by public service. So when I decided to run for president I saw it primarily as a way to serve the nation and to contribute to its advance. I also thought that at a time when globalisation was in its early stages, I could help to build bridges between Iceland and other countries and also help to convince the young generation of Icelanders that they could have a fascinating life as global citizens while being rooted in Iceland.

PROMOTING ICELAND

You don't think you went too far? For instance, you've been criticised heavily for being too friendly with the 'útrásavíkingar' ["Outvasion Vikings"—a term used to denote Icelandic bankers and businessmen who were active in Iceland's expansion/bubble].

'Útrásavíkingar' is a propaganda term that has been used in Iceland. What did it entail? It entailed promoting a large collection of many different companies. Of course there were the banks, but there were also companies that are still going strong, companies

Words

Anna Andersen

Photography

Alísa Kalyanova

that have in fact become the pillars of the Icelandic recovery, companies like Marel, Össur, CCP, Actavis, Icelandair, and many others.

I can also give you the example of LazyTown. You could ask yourself, is Magnús Scheving an útrásavíkingur? He came to me in the second year of my presidency with a play about LazyTown, which the National Theatre had refused to stage because a play about kids eating apples and doing gymnastics was boring. Magnús wanted to take it global. Since then, Dorrit [Moussaieff, first lady] and I have tried to help him, in the United States, Europe, China, Latin America and elsewhere, in the same way as we have helped designers, tourism companies, artists, and musicians.

I believe that it is the responsibility of the president to promote activity that can grow into productive contribution to the country. Of course there is no guarantee that they will all succeed. If the president can help to convince young Icelanders that their country of birth is their best option, I think the president has served the country well.

THE PRESIDENT'S ROLE

Right, so what is the president's role?

There are many roles. As the highest elected official, the president's role is to represent the republic. If the political parties in Iceland fail to agree on a government, it is also the president's responsibility to make sure that the country has a government. The history of the Republic shows us that this can indeed occur.

The president also has the authority to make sure that if a large part of the population wants to exercise its democratic will to decide on major issues, he can refer the matter to a referendum.

In addition, I think the president has increasingly become the spokesman for the nation in the global community, especially through the global media. You could say that this is a role that started somewhat in the time of Vigdís [Finnbogadóttir]. It didn't exist for the first three presidents because the global media simply didn't exist. This has increasingly become the role of the president, especially following the financial crisis, due to the Icesave dispute. I then had to enlarge this contribution in a big way because Iceland was being attacked in the global media. There were all kinds of falsehoods floating around, so it was important for me to come forward and defend the country and speak on its behalf.

But is it the president's role to define the role of the president?

There's no single forum where the role of the president is defined. First of all, the fundamental basis of the presi-

dency is defined in the constitution. Second, it is the will of the people that defines the role of the president. Many people forget that when they talk about the presidency; they analyse it backwards and forwards without once mentioning the term democracy, but that is the essence of the presidency. No president, whatever his or her wishes, can go against the national will. You could therefore say that the ultimate definer of the role of the president is the people.

The third dimension is the international environment. There is an endless series of events and meetings that relate to that dimension. Within these three dimensions—the constitution, the will of the people, and the international community—there are of course the desires and the views of the president himself.

Speaking of which, you recently said that the role of the president is not only to take walks and to think. What did you mean?

Sometimes one hears views that the president should simply sit here in Bessastaðir, read the books in the library, walk around the beautiful area, and then occasionally come forward like a wise man and utter some wis-

"If the president can help to convince young Icelanders that their country of birth is their best option, I think the president has served the country well"

dom about the nation. I don't think in the twenty-first century that it is doable for a country to operate a presidency like that.

Some people say that I'm too active, doing too much, that the president shouldn't be so involved. Then my question is, should the president say no to all these requests from communities, individuals, organisations, and educational institutions? Should I say no to the international media? Should I have said no to The Economist, which asked me to make a keynote speech at the World Ocean Summit? Should I say no to Google? Should I say to this multitude of people, 'No, sorry, now I'm going to reflect'?

A CHANGED PRESIDENCY

Do you think the presidency has changed during your time? That you've changed the presidency?

There have been changes in our soci-

ety. It has become much more multidimensional. All these non-governmental organisations that are interested in the environment, in welfare issues, in better health, in the fight against drugs, didn't exist 30 to 40 years ago. They all ask the president to be involved.

There seems to be some resistance to this change.

We live in a free democracy. People are perfectly capable of saying anything that they want about the presidency. It doesn't necessarily mean that they are right. Many people have said that I have changed the presidency, but I have not done anything that is not within the framework of the Constitution.

They are probably not referring to the fact that you've technically changed it, but that you've exercised powers that no other president has exercised.

Of course I've done that. I've exercised Article 26, but what people have to realise is that a presidency in the age of global media, in the age of the internet, has to be, by its very nature, different than the presidency in the 1950s.

THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE

Traditionally, you haven't had much competition, and the presidency hasn't been much of a competition. How is running today different than it has been in the past?

I've always had the view that the presidency is a democratic responsibility and therefore an election every fourth year should be the normal thing. I've never subscribed to the view that once you are elected you have an automatic right to the presidency. So I welcome this election. I think it is a healthy sign and it offers the nation an opportunity to debate the presidency.

You've said that part of the reason that you're running is because of uncertain times, the EU, the government...

As you know, I was urged by over 30,000 Icelanders to continue the presidency for a number of reasons. Many of them have to do with fundamental issues that have now been put on the table, the constitution is being completely revised, nobody knows what kind of constitution we're going to have in two or three years time; new political parties have been formed; we're negotiating EU membership; the economic crisis in Europe is still going on—we have never in our history had so many fundamental uncertainties.

Would you trust anybody else to take on these uncertainties?

That's not my view. People asked me to do it. People have given me their trust for sixteen years and I believe I have

a moral obligation to listen to them. It will also give me an opportunity, if I'm reelected, to use the next four years to make two contributions, which I think are very important. One is to try to make sure that the nation stops arguing about so many fundamental, divisive issues, that we try to eliminate these disagreements, reduce the tension in our society. Secondly, to help the nation to establish a solid foundation of progress in Iceland; help people to do new and fascinating things in many different areas.

Do you think you are a divisive figure, at odds with the government?

I don't think I'm a divisive figure. Every president in Iceland has had to make decisions that have created opposition. Vigdís, for example, has described in her autobiography how opposition to her decision to sign the European Economic Area Agreement was such that people stopped greeting her in the streets. All the other presidents also made decisions that made them unpopular or divisive for a while.

The president can, however, in many ways—through his effort, presence, and voice—try to help the nation to sort out big conflicts. No society can, for a long time, have so many fundamental and critical issues on the table. Just as no society can be healthy if parliament, the institution that sets the laws and rules, enjoys less than 10% trust.

I know many people have a critical opinion of me, but I believe that on the basis of my experience, I can try to help the nation to sort out these conflicts and move the attention from these divisive struggles and issues over to more constructive tasks, like building Iceland up as a forum for new things.

Finally, why should people vote for you? What sets you apart from the other candidates?

I have never ever said why people should vote for me. I didn't do it in 1996, and I won't do it now. The nation knows me well—it knows my good sides and my bad sides. When people vote, they should vote on the basis of what they think is best for the nation, not based on what the candidates tell them. Why do I say that? Because I see the presidency primarily and solely as a service to the people. ♡

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Ari Trausti Guðmundsson: The mountaineer
Born: December 3, 1948 in Reykjavík (Age 63)
Education: Cand. mag. in geophysics from the University of Oslo; graduate studies in geology at the University of Iceland.
Occupation: Ari's resumé is the probably most wide-ranging among all the candidates: he is an award-winning fiction writer, author of several science books, as well as a weatherman for television and radio, geophysicist and mountaineer.
Tidbit: Ari comes from a family of artists: his brother Erró is a renowned postmodern painter and collage-artist; their father Guðmundur Einarsson was a painter, sculptor, photographer and writer.

ARI TRAUSTI GUÐMUNDSSON

Through his 63 years on Earth, Ari Trausti Guðmundsson has enjoyed a varied career that has entailed him earning a degree in earth sciences, writing award-winning books of fiction as well as several scientific and/or educational non-fiction tomes, acting as TV and radio weatherman and programmer, being a mountain guide and founding a radical political organisation—among other things. And now he is vying for yet another job to list on his resume: being President of Iceland. “I have been a freelancer for the past 25 years, working around thirty jobs annually, so I have amassed a wide array of experiences,” he says as we sit down to discuss his candidacy. “Promoting Iceland, associating with scholars and national leaders, and so on. Through all this work as a freelancer, I have also learned to be efficient in many fields at once. I feel very qualified for this important position”

A FORMERLY NEW RADICAL

Your political history has been mentioned quite a bit in connection with your running for president. How have your political opinions evolved through the years?

I was apolitical at first, right up until moving to Norway as a student. This was during the whole social upheaval associated with the '68 period, and I was influenced by events such as the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Vietnam War and the student revolts in France and elsewhere. Those events inspired me to read up on radical political theory, which eventually led me to become a Marxist. When I returned to Iceland a few of us youngsters, who had been studying in Norway, unified in a leftist group; in fact there were a few leftist groups formed around that time that were sometimes united and sometimes fought, but we all shared the goal of forming a political party that would be to the left of Alþýðubandalagið [the socialist People's Alliance, current president Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson's old party].

However, that turned out to be impossible, and a lot of what we were preaching and believed in turned out to be wrong, or at least at odds with the real world. So the entire movement sort of faded away eventually, replaced

Words

Haukur S. Magnússon

Photography

Hristbjörnsson

by feminism and environmentalism—which is where today's radicals reside. I stopped being involved with politics at the same time that the socialist group I had co-founded dissolved, which was in 1983 if I recall correctly, thirty years ago. Since then I have fostered a great interest in all sorts of social affairs and community service, but have refrained from participating in political parties and other social interest groups.

What led you to abandon radical politics?

It was due to learning that reality only matched part of the theories we had been studying and espousing; those ideologies had grown stagnant and we weren't the people to properly evolve them or lead them into new directions. I reached the conclusion that my time would be better spent trying to exert a positive influence in other fields, which is something that has coloured every aspect of my life since. It has been a red thread in my work promoting nature, environmentalism, science and innovation. Social responsibility informs every non-fiction book I have written and I have long been the spokesman for the sustainable harnessing of nature. I have also talked extensively about global warming and other environmental threats, and I take them seriously.

A FRAMEWORK IS NEEDED

In light of your avowed environmentalism, would you, had you been in President Ólafur Ragnar's position, used your presidential powers to call for a national referendum on issues such as the very controversial Karahnjúkar dam?

Well, I believe the president's veto powers should be employed in light of society's general atmosphere. For me the question much more relates to the framework programme about our responsible harnessing of nature, which should have been created twenty or thirty years ago. Had we had such framework in place, we would have been working in light of a pre-determined nationwide consensus on these matters, instead of having to debate each case individually. As president, I would have focused on getting such a framework in place as soon as possible, and with that all the premises would have been a lot clearer. And it goes without saying that such a framework would have needed the consensus of a majority of Icelanders.

One thing is important; the president needs to ensure both interests of people outside of Reykjavík and of peo-

ple from the capital. The fast increasing differences between the people of the greater-Reykjavík area and people from outside of the city is one of the biggest societal issues Icelanders face, and it is a field where I wish to make an impact—not as a saviour, but as a sort of moderator, one who encourages and leads the discussion.

BEING USEFUL

The Office of the President should rightfully be considered an important one. What spurred you to run? Why do you believe you are the right man for the job, and how does one decide one wants to run for president of one's nation?

I am sure it is the same for many candidates. It starts by friends, family, acquaintances, colleagues and strangers mentioning the post to you and urging you to consider it, saying that you possess both the personal qualities and

“Each person should choose his or her favourite candidate and stick to him or her ; to not vote for the second best option to topple the one they believe to be the worst”

background to serve in such a position. Then it's time to do some soul searching, where you convene with your family and try to ascertain whether the job is right for you. In the end, you and your family need to answer the question: Do we want to do this, or do we not want to do this? And I decided that I wanted to embark upon this journey, and my wife María G. Baldvinsdóttir along with our three children agreed to join and support me.

I think I am the right person for the job, and this is ultimately why I made the decision to run. I have through the years amassed wide and sound knowledge on everything from nature and the environment to social affairs. That, along with the complex experience I have of completing projects and problem solving, convinced me that I have something to offer that the other candidates do not.

My decision is ultimately connected to my interest in society and serving my community. My old political ambi-

tions, so to speak. I think I have already served my community in a respectable manner with my life's work; I am well known for educating people about the world and their environment, and I have through my educational efforts and other works helped put pressure on the public sector to pay attention to environmental problems and put effort into things like science, education and innovation. Few things are more important. I feel I have been useful in that way and I wish to continue on this path as president, as well as finding new ways.

THE MAGICAL FAIRYTALE ISLAND

Did you participate in the 'pots and pans revolution'? What is your position towards it?

I participated, although I cannot say I did so to a large extent. I believe it was a justified act of civil disobedience, and that it led to some much needed and inevitable changes in society, even though the whole ordeal sometimes went too far.

The uprising demonstrated that the grassroots can exert an influence, and it opened new political doors. However it seems that, unfortunately, our political parties haven't been able to properly use the opportunities provided by these events, and one of the reasons for that is the endless bickering in parliament—the total lack of priorities and useless arguments about minor issues.

This has been the case with every politician and every political organisation in the country. They have spent way too much time on quarrelling about minor issues while neglecting the need to prioritise and cooperate under the very difficult circumstances we are facing. The state—our entire society—was going bankrupt, and we simply cannot allow ourselves to waste time on empty squabble.

Do I see 'the pots and pans revolution' as a lost opportunity? No, but it should have given greater results. For that to happen we would have needed a much stronger public organisation, we would have needed stronger political leadership.

Yet a lot of our international readers believe Iceland underwent some sort of revolution, that things couldn't be better here...

I think a lot of that is based on a lack of information, or misinformation even. But I would never say the past three years have been for nought. We've managed to curtail some of the collapse's potentially worst effects, and in

many cases we have even turned them around and are slowly moving forward. But we have not been on a continuous road to success, that is wishful thinking at best.

We should not forget the myth surrounding Iceland, not only politically but in every field. Iceland is the land of adventure, different from any other country, where the impossible can happen. For a more sobering view of our situation, I would rather look to parties that have been writing about Iceland for a long time and are familiar with our history and ways, such as the more analytical newspapers in Europe. They commonly tell an altogether different, more believable story.

NEW IDEAS, DIFFERENT METHODS, UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

What is your position to the reigning president?

He shouldn't remain in office any longer. It is necessary that the nation have an opportunity to benefit from new ideas and different methods than those Ólafur Ragnar has employed over the past sixteen years. It is evident that he has had a number of positive effects, and also many that are not so positive. I would like to mention his involvement in the matters of the Arctic, which I am very thankful for. As for the negative, I would say that he has been encouraging unrealistic expectations as to the president's political powers.

Do you feel it is normal that a president's role should be to define his or her role? How do you yourself view it?

For me the constitution is 90% clear on the president's role. I believe it provides enough guidance so that the president doesn't need to constantly define his or her job, especially if read it in its entirety and in context with what our presidents have done in the previous sixty years.

I look at the Office of the President as that of an elected representative of the nation, one who places emphasis on reinforcing intelligent discourse and ensuring that our democracy is always effective. If you want a different kind of president you will need to rewrite the constitution.

Lastly, I would like to add that each person should choose his or her favourite candidate and stick to him or her; to not vote for the second best option to topple the one they believe to be the worst. ♣



Þóra Arnórsdóttir: The television personality
Born: February 18, 1975 in Reykjavík (Age 37)
Education: BA in philosophy from the University of Iceland; MA in international and development economics from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies
Occupation: Þóra is a television journalist, news editor and quiz show host with the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service (RÚV). She has hosted a variety of pieces for television and radio, served as a tour guide for international travellers, as well as lectured in International Relations at the University of Iceland.
Tidbit: Though most of Þóra's journalistic work has focused on Icelandic news and politics, she has also worked on a documentary about the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Buddhist community in exile.

ÞÓRA ARNÓRSDÓTTIR

Þóra Arnórsdóttir is a 37-year-old mother, journalist, and presidential candidate. As a reporter and game show host for the state-owned broadcasting corporation, RÚV, Þóra has been a near nightly guest in Icelandic living rooms for years, but she has formed a solid reputation as a journalist for her reporting of the Icelandic financial crisis. During this campaign, Þóra has emerged as the candidate most likely to challenge incumbent President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson. Þóra and her husband, Svavar Halldórsson, have three children together, the youngest born mid-May this year. In addition, Svavar has three children from a previous relationship. We met Þóra at her home in the last days of her pregnancy to ask her about the campaign.

How is the mood at home?

The mood is very good, but obviously, this campaign has changed our plans slightly. We just bought a house, and we had planned on doing some renovation, and on top of that, we are expecting a baby in a few days. But maybe this havoc is what has kept us all grounded. I have been completely relaxed during the whole thing, but then again, everything has gone better than we dared hope for.

Your family life has come under the spotlight during this campaign. Many say that a woman who just gave birth belongs at home with the child and even that the father should not be put in the caretaker role. How do you two handle it?

Svavar and I are both career people and we have both worked full-time jobs in a demanding workplace while raising a family, much like most Icelandic parents do. We have always had to delegate the responsibilities at home. I've always said that equality is something that both sexes need to be responsible for. I think it is important that a

42-year-old male, with a good education and a steady job, is able to choose to stay at home with his children and support his wife without us, as a society, thinking that he has resigned his manhood. I've heard people claim that they could not vote for me, for the sake of the children, but it is not as if I was a stay-at-home mom before! I have never neglected my children as a working mother and I don't expect to do so in this job either. It is not like Icelandic women in the past have been sitting idly with their feet up in the air.

DECIDING TO RUN

At some point in the run up to this election, your name started to be mentioned as a possible presidential candidate. When did you consider this an option yourself? What pushed you to take the step?

It started with a few people mentioning the idea to me. I received letters and emails, both from people I know and complete strangers, urging me to consider the possibility. At first I just thanked people for showing me this trust, but I didn't really give it more thought.

In March, this started to gain some momentum and at that time it would probably have been easy to get swept up in the commotion, but the essential question for me was still if this was actually something that I wanted to do. I felt that I had an obligation to all the people who had contacted me then to at least give the question some consideration. Around the same time, there was a national poll that showed that the support was wider than just the people around me—it is easy to get wrapped up in the bubble of people around you. But you can't really run for someone else, you can only do it for yourself, so that was the big headache. Then I started to think objectively about the Office of the President of Iceland. What does the position entail? Is this something that I could do? Could I do some good in that post?

I spent a lot of time thinking about these questions. I also thought about my last few years as a reporter. It was a lively job in 2008, following the economic crash, then came 2009 and 2010, and nothing much changed. I

recently reread the Special Investigative Committee Report [SIC Report] on the crash, in particular the chapters that deal with ethics and our political system, and nothing had really changed. Now, the Office of the President cannot reform our political debate directly, but I believe it can influence it a lot.

In my opinion, the president has three kinds of power. We have heard a lot about the Article 26 of the constitution^[1], but I believe that we should only

“A President needs simple qualities: s/he must show moderation, humility, and respect”

have to face that question under very special circumstances. The President also has an important role in forming a new government following an election. But the most important power is the power of influence. The President should not be speaking from above, he does not wield a political power, but he has a great power of influence.

I think we have all felt a strong need for a change in this country. Iceland is a small country, and we pretty much agree on how this society should be. We should be able to move forward without constant fighting. But lately I've met a lot of people who avoid following the news, avoid participating in a political debate, and avoid having an opinion on social matters; because, if you express an opinion, you are setting yourself out to be put down.

This is what I thought about when I was making this decision, and in the end I came to the conclusion that I should run.

PRESIDENTIAL QUALITIES

During this process, what qualities in yourself did you put up on the scales? How do you come to the conclusion that you are the right person to become a president of a nation?

I think a president must be able to communicate and have good interpersonal skills, both domestically and

internationally. The ability to talk, and identify, with the people in the country is important. I love this country, I worked as a tour guide for years, and I have gotten to know people all around Iceland. I am educated in philosophy, economics and international politics, and for the last few years I have more or less worked with speaking to visiting foreign experts as a reporter for RÚV. I believe I can handle that part well, that is, representing the country. We are a small nation, and it is important that we benefit from the connections that are made through the power of the Office of the President. I have been asked if I believe the position of president should even exist. Whether we need it? I believe we do, and this would be a big part of the reason why; there are doors that can be opened solely through the power of the Office of the President.

What about yourself? Which of your qualities do you find to be “presidential”?

We are just ordinary people, really. I believe a president should have simple qualities. He or she must honour certain values, namely moderation, humility, and respect for the people and its country. As I said before, to be able to communicate with the people is the most important quality to have for this country's only nationally elected official. And to communicate in a language that everyone understands, so that everyone knows what he or she means.

I don't regard the Office of the President as a political post, but the president must be able to earn trust, both the trust of the people and the political leaders, who must be able to trust that he acts in accordance to his own best judgment and on behalf of the people, and not on behalf of some other interests. I think that's it, mostly ... It is very difficult to answer this question without sounding arrogant. When I look at the Office of the President, what I believe it stands for, and should stand for, I believe I can take it on and do it justice.

A DIFFERENT TAKE

What about the Office itself? The current president has shaped the role of the president considerably, and even changed how we view it^[2]. Do you agree with these changes to the Office?

I think all five presidents of Iceland have shaped the position during their time, and I would do so as well. It is my opinion that the president should not be a direct participant in political issues. He should watch over the democratic process and allow that to play out without taking a side. But this is perhaps exactly what I don't want this election to be about. You will never hear me say a derogatory word about our current President, or other candidates. This election is not about judging his sixteen years in office. We know what he is as a president, and we know what he stands for. I am offering something else. I don't want the campaign to be about what I would have done in the same situation, or if I agree with this or that decision, or how he has changed the Office during his time. I don't think it is important.

In the same manner, when you decide to run for president, you must be implying as well that you want to do things differently?

Well, I also believe that nobody should be president for more than 8 to 12 years. Sixteen years is a long time. My reasons for running for Office were not to “take on” the incumbent president. It is rather that he is on this track, and we know where it leads, but there are a lot of people who want changes, and I am obviously one of those people. Otherwise I wouldn't be running. This is all a part of the democratic process. ♡

[1] Article 26 of the Icelandic constitution authorises the President to refuse to ratify a law passed by the parliament, and thereby automatically moving it to a national referendum. This authorisation was first exercised by Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson in 2004, and again in 2010 and 2011. Before the article was first exercised in 2004, it was widely considered to be invalid as it would go against Parliamentary sovereignty.

[2] In particular, by activating Article 26 of the constitution, thereby potentially making the Office both more political and powerful.

Words

Sveinn Björnsson

Photography

Alísa Kalyanova



Hannes Bjarnason: The working man. Born: April 25, 1971 in Sauðárkrókur (Age 41) Education: BS in geography from the University of Iceland; Master of Management from BI Norwegian Business School (thesis outstanding). **Occupation:** Hannes has worked as a project manager in a number of municipalities in Norway—where he lived for the past fourteen years—as well as acted as a mediator between employers and trade unions. **Tidbit:** Hannes prides himself in the variety of his hands-on work experience; his broad resumé includes farming, slaughterhouse work, construction, hotel service, retail and industry.

HANNES BJARNASON

Hannes Bjarnason was a consultant and project manager for a small company in Norway before very recently moving to Iceland and then deciding to run for president. For much of Iceland's voting public, he is relatively, if not completely, unknown, which may in part explain his low polling numbers (somewhere just over 1%, which he has admitted doesn't surprise him at all). The Grapevine sat down with Hannes to get a better idea of just who this guy is, and what kind of president he wants to be.

When did you decide to run for president?

I've thought about this for many years. When [sitting president] Ólafur [Ragnar Grímsson] said he intended to be in office for only two years if he won this election—that's what I understood him to mean, anyway—I thought this was unsupportable. But I've actually been feeling quite passionate about the state of the nation since the economic crash of 2008. I see many opportunities to create a positive change for this country. Our natural world, green energy, clean water—there ought to be plenty of employment opportunities for Iceland. At first, I looked into the idea of getting involved in politics to see if there might be a place for me there. But I don't think I would make a good politician.

How do you mean?

Politics is about having a set of main platform points, running for office, and then of all the things that were in your platform, maybe getting one or two things done that you've promised your voters. I understand that that's just how politics is, but I feel really uncomfortable promising something and not being able to stand by it. Myself, I prefer to speak from the heart and talk about things as they are. I have a lot of respect for politicians; there are many who are working hard to do right by Iceland. We should keep in mind—

Words

Paul Fontaine

Photography

Hristbjörnsson

whether as presidential candidates or members of parliament—that we are role models for others, which is why we need to talk to each other with respect. I think that's been forgotten in politics.

SOCIETAL POLITICS, NOT PARTY POLITICS

What do you think the role of the president should be?

I see the president as a unification symbol for the country, a watch keeper of democracy. There is a kind of double-edged sword to this power, in that the president can be pressured by the general public to give them the vote on laws passed by parliament. If the president cannot unify different groups, he should at least be able to increase understanding and tolerance. As president, I would focus on this especially—to encourage people to listen to each other and treat each other with respect, even when they strongly disagree.

If I understand you correctly, you don't think the role of the president has much to do with politics.

Not party politics, no. But I make a distinction between party politics and societal politics. The president ought to focus on societal politics. The president can, for example, focus on fighting bullying in schools. That's something closely related to our system of ethics. The current president has focused on drug abuse. These are things I would say fall under the category of societal politics. But the president should avoid getting involved in party politics.

Do you think the current president has involved himself in party politics?

Well, every Icelandic president has made it a point to leave his or her mark on the office in some way. The current president comes from politics. He's been in politics since he was 16 years old, and he brings a lot of politics with him into the office. But I don't think he's changed the nature of the Office of the Presidency. He's simply used the power that he has, and he is very political. If I were president, I wouldn't be so political. I would have a clear division between the president and parlia-

ment. We live under a parliamentary democracy, even if it isn't perfect, and I do not want us to start moving in the direction of a presidential democracy, not at all.

PEOPLE HAVE TO KNOW EXACTLY WHERE YOU STAND

What's your take on the disagreement between the president and parliament over joining the European Union?

I believe the president should express his opinion. For example, [the president] is against joining the EU, although it is the platform of the government to join. I'm against joining the EU. I don't see any advantages to joining. But when I say that, I stop there because people need to trust that I am not personally working against the country joining the EU. This is important to me, as I believe the presi-

“We live under a parliamentary democracy, even if it isn't perfect, and I do not want us to start moving in the direction of a a democracy, not at all.”

dent should be a kind of mediator. In order to do that, people need to know exactly where you stand, period, and then you progress from there. This way, people aren't left wondering what you have going on behind the scenes or what you really mean when you say this or that. I know other candidates have other opinions on this matter. Þóra [Arnórsdóttir], for example, has said that a president shouldn't express an opinion because then the president can't be a mediator. I disagree. People have to know exactly where you stand. Otherwise you can't build trust.

OK, so you're against joining the EU. If the EU accepts Iceland, and a parliamentary majority passes a proposal to make this move, will you sign it into law or refer it to public referendum?

I think the people should decide a matter like this. It's a huge deal and I consider it only natural that the people vote on it. I can't imagine any president acting any differently than this. When it comes to referendums in general, I think it ought to be used in

the event of the most important, most crucial matters concerning the country. The current president has said that he believes a fishing quota law ought to be put up for referendum because fish is a natural resource. So I asked him, live on public broadcasting radio, what about geothermal power plants? If someone wants to build high-tension power cables across a tourist area? Should these power plants be put up for referendum? He didn't answer this question.

Do you think he made the right decision when it came to putting Icesave up for referendum?

I found it strange that he should talk about how he saved the nation by doing it. He couldn't do anything but refer this matter to referendum. It would have actually taken more bravery to sign it into law and not refer it to a referendum.

THE OFFICE SHOULD HAVE ETHICAL RULES

Should the president be allowed to promote Icelandic business interests abroad?

No, I don't think so. At least not for any particular company. The president should tread very carefully in this area. There ought to be ethical rules in place that say what the president may and may not do.

So you believe there should be ethical rules for the office of the presidency?

Yes, absolutely. The current president wrote what amounted to essentially a letter of recommendation for [former Kaupthing manager and former Interpol fugitive] Sigurður Einarsson. What is that, if not corruption? He was comparing Icelandic businessmen to the Vikings. It's all fine and good to cite history, but the Vikings weren't all good guys. They were traveling across Europe stealing and raping. It's ri-

diculous to say that we're so good with money because we used to be Vikings. You have to be very careful when connecting modern business with history. I think the president should be able to introduce foreign investors to the Icelandic market, but tread very carefully to ensure he isn't recommending a specific company over any others. The sitting president doesn't believe the office needs ethical rules because he points out that it's already against the law for the president to accept money. But that's not the only way to corrupt someone. What about flights in a private jet? Maybe I have a nice farmhouse out in the country I could let you stay in for a couple months, if you wanted. Corruption isn't all about money. There needs to be clear ethical guidelines for the office of the presidency.

If you're elected president, what are the first three things you would do?

One of the first three things I would do would be to work on making a code of ethics for the office. I think this is very important. Then of course there are the societal political matters that I mentioned earlier, such as fighting bullying in schools. And then there is the notion of what sort of image Iceland shows the rest of the world: our culture, our history, Iceland as a tourist destination, Iceland as an environmentally clean country. We have our fish, our power grid, our natural resources, all these foundation elements that make our country great. We have a lot of opportunities and should be looking to the future with this idea of maintaining an environmentally clean country in mind.

If you don't become president, what's your Plan B?

I don't think I'll get involved in politics. I have two children from a previous relationship in Norway. I might move to Norway until they're old enough to decide whether they want to move to Iceland or stay in Norway. I don't need to move to Bessastaðir to be happy. I can find happiness in Skagafjörður. That's not why I'm running for president. I'm running for president because I truly want to serve the nation. 🇮🇸

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Icelanders Sound Off On Presidential Candidates



Haukur Harðarson
Age: 37
Taxi driver
Vogar

"I'm voting for Ólafur. I can't see anyone else saving us, so it's Ólafur. He stood up for the people with the Icesave accounts as everyone knows."



Jóhannes Sigurðsson
Age: 45
Janitor
Reykjavík

"I'll be voting for Ólafur. He has been doing good things, and we know what he stands for, you know? I think it's okay to have him for a little bit longer. But I've been thinking, if it's four more years, he's more like a king than a candidate. I like some of the other candidates, like Ari, but I think it's good to have Ólafur for four more years."



Þórir Garðarsson
Age: 23
Bartender
Reykjavík

"I'll probably vote for Ólafur because he's held back Parliament. I also think he has the experience for the job."



Agnieszka Sienkiewicz
Age: 26
Student
Reykjavík

"I'm voting for Þóra because I want somebody new. It's about time to have another president. Iceland needs some change, a fresh start."



Ásta Kristín Benediktssdóttir
Age 29
Ph.D. student
Mývatnssveit

"I want someone else other than the president we have now. The five candidates mostly say the same things, but there's something about Þóra that makes me trust her. I like the way she emphasises that she won't have a political strategy. I think we've had enough of that."

AREN'T THERE SIX PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES? WHERE IS YOUR DR. HERDÍS ÞORGEIRSDÓTTIR COVER? WHERE IS HER INTERVIEW? DO YOU HATE HER? ARE YOU BIASED? WTF!?!



It is very true that one of the six presidential candidates is mostly absent from The Reykjavík Grapevine this time around. It saddens us greatly that the venerable Dr. Herdís Þorgeirsdóttir is the only current presidential candidate to not grace one of our covers for this issue or feature in an interview. What a bummer!

Here is why the venerable Dr. Herdís Þorgeirsdóttir is the only current presidential candidate to not grace one of our covers for this issue or feature in an interview: After initially granting us an interview and agreeing to participate in a photoshoot for the cover, Dr. Herdís decided (on the day before we went to print) that she would rather not be part of the whole endeavour. After some pleading and a bit of begging, we ultimately had to respect her decision and point of view, even though we really, really wanted everything to work out.

We are sorry everything didn't work out, Herdís!

Our whole idea with putting everyone running on our cover and granting them equal space in the paper was an attempt to support and strengthen our democracy by giving everyone the same amount of exposure and support, in an election that has been widely portrayed as a battle of 'two towers.' We like the thought of an open democracy—one where everyone has an equal access to the media, one where people are free to run for office to promulgate their ideas or views regardless of their finances or connections—and our intent with this issue was to actively promote that.

It's totally embarrassing that we weren't able to do that, but the situation was

unfortunately out of our control. We hope you understand our position, and we also hope you can try to understand Herdís's position (because everyone is entitled to their second thoughts, right?).

And we urge you to read up on Herdís's platform and ideas (accessible for instance on www.herdis.is), as well as familiarizing yourself with what the other candidates are proposing. Through writing and researching this issue, we have come to know all of the presidential candidates fairly well, and we can say with an amount of certainty that each and every one of them holds great qualities and is arguably running because of his or her will to serve the Republic of Iceland in the best way he or she can.

Democracy is important. Every election is important. This election is important. If you have the opportunity, you should read up on what the candidates are proposing, and then cast your vote to your best conscience on Election Day.

Because why wouldn't you want to participate in the democratic process? 🇮🇸

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“I Have Never Written A Love Song”

Bjartmar Guðlaugsson celebrates 60 years of singing songs, drawing glaciers and painting people's houses



“My heroes were the poet Steinn Steinarr and the drummer John Bonham,” says singer-songwriter Bjartmar Guðlaugsson who at 60 can still bang together a couplet or two. He was one of Iceland's biggest pop stars in the late '80s, which in retrospect can be seen as the golden age of Icelandic verse set to music. People like Bubbi, Megas, Hörður Torfa and even the joyful Stuðmenn competed in writing lyrics that were both instantly catchy and yet often scathingly critical in content.

Then Björk and Sigur Rós started being heard abroad, and for the first time since Icelandic rock's infancy in the '60s, English became the language of choice. Indeed, by the late '90s

Words

Valur Gunnarsson

Photography

Alisa Kalyanova

it seemed that the only people who still sang in Icelandic were inane pop groups who toured drunken gatherings in the countryside, while those with any real ambition concentrated on the outside world. Icelandic music became increasingly eclectic and original, but the words sometimes seemed like something of an afterthought. By this time, at the age of 40, Bjartmar packed his bags, sold all his belongings and moved to Denmark to study painting.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that his music only started being widely heard again after the economic collapse, when he re-emerged with his new band, Bergisarnir, and the album 'Skrýtin veröld' ("Strange World"), which dealt specifically with those tumultuous times. At the same time, younger acts like Mugison have also switched to their native language to widespread local acclaim. "I don't really care in which language people sing," Bjartmar says, "but I am an Icelandic writer and I'm happy about it. We have a lot of great writers here. Laxness and Þórbergur may still be the giants, but they have cast a light over what has come after, rather than a shadow."

TOO SENTIMENTAL FOR LOVE

Bjartmar, originally from the east coast of Iceland and of half-Faroese origin, started his career as a drummer in Vestmannaeyjar in the '70s. "We had all been working as sailors back then, so we had the money to buy the best equipment," he says. A housepainter by trade, he also designed band posters and when lyrics were needed, he tried

“Rather than rock and roll, it was his job as a housepainter that nearly proved fatal.”

his hand at that too. This would eventually lead him to write for big name artists (including the track "Afi," sung by a teenage Björk).

Many of his tracks are, like "Afi," ("Grandpa"), seen from a child's point of view. "I don't write children's songs, but I write songs about the world of children," he says. "There's a difference. Children don't think in the same cynical way I do." The trend was appar-

ent through his biggest hits, the albums 'Í fylgd með fullorðnum' ("Accompanied By Adults"), 'Vottorð í leikfimi' ("Skipping Gym Class") and 'Það er það að vera strákur' ("It's Hard To Be A Boy").

Another fixture of Bjartmar's verse is his alter ego, the braggart and drunkard 'Sumarliði,' who has so far appeared in nine songs and is also known to pop up in his pictures. "It's a form of black humour very prevalent on the east coast. My father said I grinned so much as a baby that I couldn't use a pacifier," Bjartmar explains. "I have a hard time writing love poems. I think my wife María would get tired if, after 30 years of marriage, I would constantly be writing love songs about her. I don't remember ever writing a love song, but María says it's ok because they are really all love songs. I think I am just too sentimental to write love songs. I could never watch 'The Little House On The Prairie' while hung over. It was on at a difficult time, at four on Sunday afternoons."

THE POETRY OF COLOURS

As we switch gears, from the sarcasm of his lyrics to his painting, a different Bjartmar emerges. His texts are littered with colourful characters, but his canvases show landscapes largely devoid of people. His current series is dedicated to glaciers. "Laxness says somewhere that the grass was so green it was red. People thought he was being pretentious, but he was right. This was the kind of poetry I wanted to learn when I went to study in Denmark, the poetry of colours," he says.

Bjartmar, the housepainter, songwriter, sailor and landscape artist, finds that these various pursuits augment one another. "Laxness drew, played piano and wrote," he says. "Icelanders by nature like to dabble in different fields, although this is not always considered cool." Some might beg to differ, as this might be seen as the very definition of Icelandic cool. Perhaps it comes with the smallness of the country; instead of spending years promoting your latest album, you can do something else, like paint.

TONSILS AND THE CITY

Bjartmar still has a home on the east coast, although he claims it's the city that inspires him most. "I have loved Reykjavík since I first came here at the age of three to have my tonsils removed," he says. "I have never gotten the hang of relaxing in the countryside. I suppose cities have a particular fascination for those who grow up in

sparsely populated areas." Nonetheless, he does not agree with the views of many of those on the east coast who want to build aluminium smelters all over the place: "All Icelanders should become nature conservationists. We should learn to love the country. All of it."

Bjartmar's phone rings. "That must be Sumarliði," he says, seeming intent on turning our conversation into a Paul Auster novel. It is not, in fact, his alter ego on the line, but rather his wife. Both seem equally indispensable to Bjartmar. "I've never gotten the point of this whole rock star thing. Icelanders are all one big family," he says. "I work with words, but I've never grabbed my testicles on stage."

DON'T FORGET THE SHEEP GUN, DARLING

Rather than rock and roll, it was his job as a housepainter that nearly proved fatal. At some point, he fell off a platform and severely injured his leg. For years, he experienced excruciating pain as a result. Doctors did not know what to do and he even went so far as to ask his wife to get the neighbour's sheep gun to end it all until, in 2007, a new laser treatment finally solved the problem.

While this partially accounts for his long absence from the music scene, he also had problems with local record companies. His self-titled 1994 album, 'Bjartmar,' which he claims is his best, was distributed in Sweden but not in Iceland. Still, he says he has no sour grapes. "We all have stories like that, but when you turn 60, you just want to give life a big hug. That's what I say to everyone my age. In 20 years time, we might all be together at the old folks' home and not even recognise each other, so we should hug each other now. After all, we are not taking out 50 year mortgages anymore."

Bjartmar may be back in vogue, but he still has some doubts about the future. "It's as if the boom is just on pause. Someone sat on the remote control, but the tape is still in the VCR," he says a bit anachronistically, adding, "I don't think young people have ever been as smart as they are now, but I worry about all the soon-to-be retired members of parliament and cognac sautéed ambassadors who will all be drawing triple or quadruple retirement benefits. At this rate, there won't be much left for poor Sumarliði." 🍷

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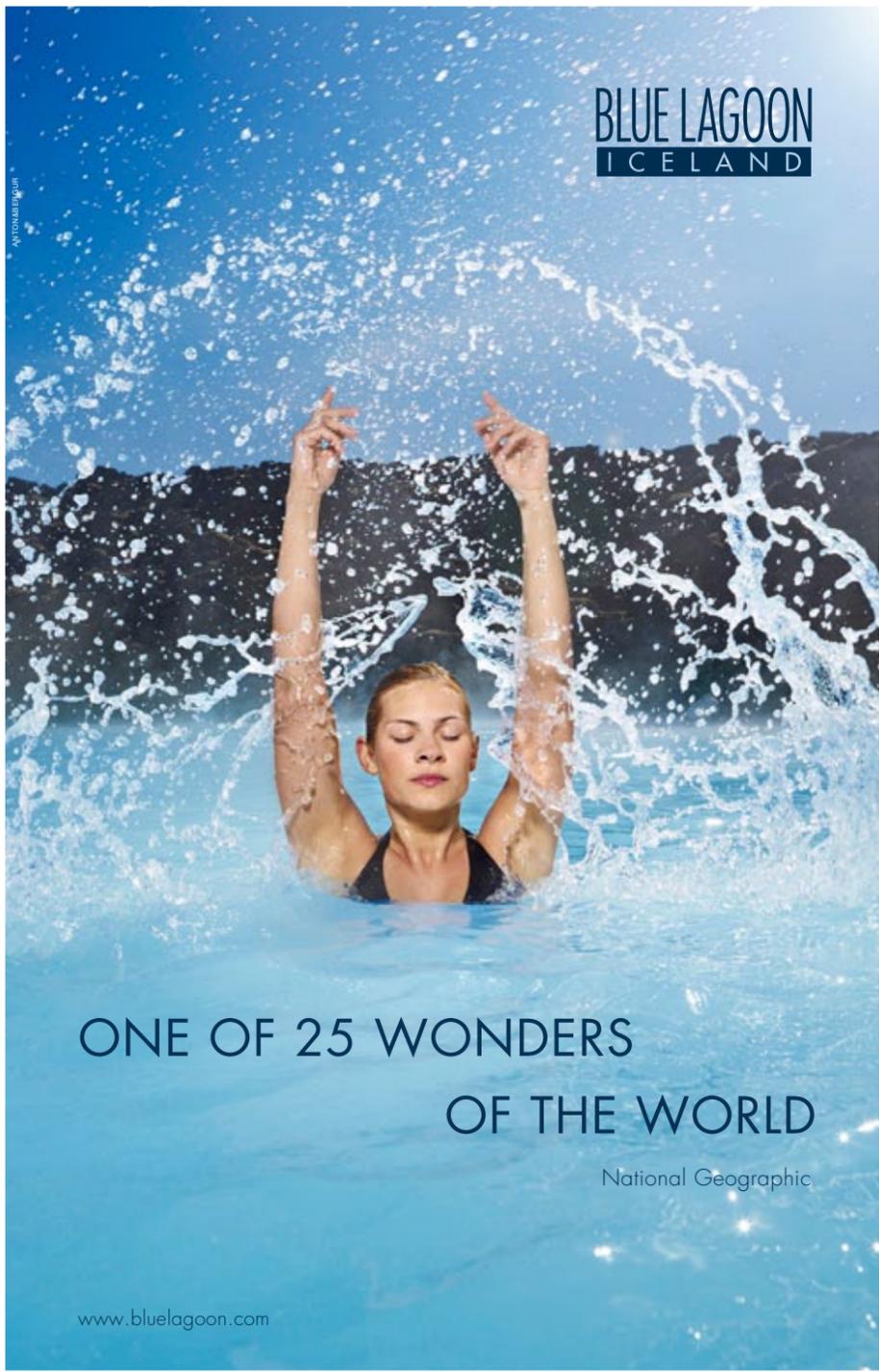


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<p>Roger Sayer</p>	<p>Willibald Guggenmos</p>	<p>20. júní kl. 12 / June 20 at 12 noon</p>	<p>1. júlí kl. 17 / July 1 at 5 pm 4. júlí kl. 12 / July 4 at 12 noon 5. júlí kl. 12 / July 5 at 12 noon 7. júlí kl. 12 / July 7 at 12 noon 8. júlí kl. 17 / July 8 at 5 pm 11. júlí kl. 12 / July 11 at 12 noon 12. júlí kl. 12 / July 12 at 12 noon 14. júlí kl. 12 / July 14 at 12 noon 15. júlí kl. 17 / July 15 at 5 pm 18. júlí kl. 12 / July 18 at 12 noon 19. júlí kl. 12 / July 19 at 12 noon 21. júlí kl. 12 / July 21 at 12 noon 22. júlí kl. 17 / July 22 at 5 pm 25. júlí kl. 12 / July 25 at 12 noon 26. júlí kl. 12 / July 26 at 12 noon 28. júlí kl. 12 / July 28 at 12 noon</p>
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Of Monsters And Men

My Head Is An Animal

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It'll sell 10 million copies. Make of that what you will...

In 2012, Of Monsters And Men rose above all to the status as Iceland's number one musical export, especially in the USA where their debut album stormed the Billboard charts, selling 55,000 copies in its first week of release (unheard of for an Icelandic act). And it's hard not to see why. The band is a wholesome bunch of young whippersnappers making inordinately HAPPY, easily digestible folk pop. Oh, and there's the small fact they signed to Universal Records last year.

Naturally, this has been decried by those who say: "Why?!?! It's just middle-of-the-road mush for idiots with no taste!" This may be true, but so what? Since its humble beginnings, pop music has been littered with simple, unpretentious tunes that play merrily in the background while you do the dishes. It's just the way of the world people. Pouring haterade on Of Monsters And Men is as pointless as hating the wind, or cheese, or Thursday.

That's not to say that there aren't problems with 'My Head Is An Animal' as an album. Production wise, it feels really bloated as if they've swallowed this stadium hoedown line of bullshit that goes: "whimsical, folksy music is authentic and contains true emotions. Hey, if we make the music BIGGER, those authentic emotions will be BIGGER too!" They've got extra guitarists, a brass section, and whacking great loads of big room echo on the drums and vocals. It sounds like bodybuilder music, all pumped up, but lacking real power underneath. Interestingly, when they ditch the hokeyness and write a straight up piano-led anthem, such as "Six Weeks," it's as good as anything else you're likely to hear.

Then there are the lyrics, which occasionally reach Dolores O'Riordan levels of inanity. The nadir is the first verse on "Dirty Paws" ("There once was an animal/ He had a son who mowed the lawn/ The son was an okay guy/ He had a pet dragonfly"). Oof! The rest of the album isn't quite as bad as that, but the saccharine quality of delivery means the songs come across like 'Watership Down' with all the bad bits taken out. Maybe this can be resolved by giving the band copies of "The Plague Dogs" and "Antichrist." Meanwhile, the vocal diction of singer Nanna Bryndís is really wonky on several occasions. She can definitely sing a good tune, but she seems to have a near violent reaction to pronouncing 'v' and 't' in words which, apart from distracting, can be a real liability on song titles like, "King and Lionheart" and "Love, Love, Love."

If you're one of those people looking for even a modicum of edge or emotional variety with your music, then keep walking. MHIAA is as sweet as it is inoffensive, and most people who just want something nice to listen to will take to them wholeheartedly. If this does represent the best of Icelandic music, though, then maybe we really need to start rethinking the game.

✂ - BOB CLUNESS



Of Monsters And Men

My Head Is An Animal

www.ofmonstersandmen.is

No Cynics Allowed

I moved to Los Angeles nine years ago, which is kinda the same as saying I've earned a Ph.D. in cynicism. It's not as if everyone here is a jerk—as the joke goes, we have a bad side too. It's just that, in a city so intimately tied to nearly every facet of entertainment, you grow accustomed to looking for the glue and strings holding things together. Don't believe me? Ask anyone who has had their commute blocked by a film shoot. Magic is overrated.

This is precisely why Of Monsters And Men's debut full-length succeeds so wildly. Meandering its way stateside some nine months after an initial release, 'My Head is an Animal' is a guileless folk-pop pleasure. The breezy eleven-song collection appears to be held together with a concept no larger than the quest for the perfect crescendo-led chorus. The charge is led by co-vocalists Nanna Bryndís Hilmarsdóttir and Ragnar Þórhallsson, marrying their voices together in pastoral harmony. Even for the most jaded, it is fair to call the result otherworldly (unless your day-to-day activities include spinning in a field à la Julie Andrews in 'The Sound of Music').

Granted, to tie any of the band's attributes to their country of origin would be, at best, a tenuous argument (A quick internet search shows that listeners draw most comparisons with Arcade Fire or Mumford & Sons, rather than their Icelandic contemporaries). Still, there's something to be said for Of Monsters And Men's ability to transcend the ordinary, even if the intoxicating combination of sweet romance and earworms of "Little Talks" edges ever closer to becoming ubiquitous radio fodder.

Still, it's the quieter moments where Of Monsters And Men show the greatest potential to expand past their crescendo-heavy formula. "Love Love Love" is a heart-breaking paean to lost love, Nanna's mournful voice sending off an indifferent lover with the help of a single guitar. But it is the album closer, "Yellow Light," that shines the brightest. Its ethereal wordless chorus is not just enchanting, but outright haunting. Cynics in any nation need not apply.

✂ - LAURA STUDARUS



TRACK OF THE ISSUE

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A swell little solo EP from Just Another Snake Cult. Short, sweet and kaleidoscopic, 'Birds Carried Your Song Through The Night' has a distinctly retro feel to it, with synthesizers echoing throughout like ghosts from the past. There is a dream-like, instrumental quality to the album, and although most tracks have lyrics, the resonating sharpness of the synths and singer/band leader Þórir Bogason's mumbled way of singing combine



Just Another Snake Cult

Birds Carried Your Song Through The Night

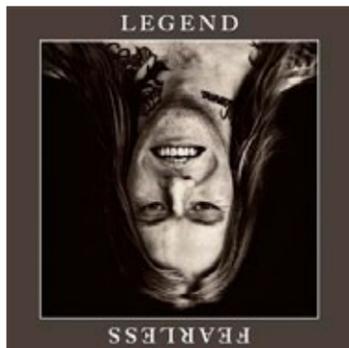
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A syllabus sea of synthetic waves. Nice.

to undercut them, almost to the point where they are not necessary. Even if you like music with 'depth' or whatever, this album can still appeal on the basis of this dreamy, midnight quality.

All up, an enjoyable EP. It has just enough of the old to satisfy my inner '80s child and enough of its own style to not be derivative.

✦ - BERGRÚN ANNA HALLSTEINSDÓTTIR



LEGEND

FEARLESS

It's a rare event that a debut album from a relatively new band could bring about severe fits of nostalgia for times not so long ago, yet easily forgotten. Though the members of LEGEND aren't n00bsauce at all, it could be said the product was a bit unexpected. Of course, they're actually old enough to have possibly experienced a real goth club once upon a time, and I wouldn't be surprised at all if that's the case. It took me until the middle of the album, on the track "Violence," to pinpoint my flashback: Project Pitchfork. That's what it is!

With its goth aesthetic and grave-wave genres spreading like a wildfire into this cultural landscape, ever veering away from positive dance-pop/indie dominance (or at least, occasionally, kicking against the pricks), this album is incredibly à propos. It has all the essential trappings of dark, depressing music that's still fun and danceable,



Legend

Fearless

facebook.com/legendband

A solid contribution to the resurgence of darkwave

in the same vein as Dorsetshire or The Tear Garden; the clean production and dramatic effect management taking it just over the top without getting embarrassing, with lyrical storytelling moments of personal revelation, at other times, like the song "Benjamin Bloodline," feeling like a plot to a graphic novel.

However, it's not completely on point. The title track is a near-miss of a power-anthem, and they could manage to expand their key range and mix up the pace of the beats more often. One ballad does not count as variety!

But this is good. This is the kind of thing that I can listen to, close my eyes, and somehow find myself 11 years ago, in a long-gone club in a faraway city, standing off the edge of a dance floor swirling with black latex, velvet and eyeliner, watching people do the this-is-how-we-dance-in-Germany.

✦ - REBECCA LOUDER



Kira Kira

Feathermagnetik

kirakira.is

Animal magnetism (or some other poor reference to the album title)

I tend to vacillate between indifference and enjoyment when it comes to more ambient music and such was my mood that, at first, 'Feathermagnetik' didn't really register. 'Feathermagnetik' supposedly marks a shift towards darker territory for Kira Kira, but at first it just functioned as an aural wash. In truth, it kinda bored me.

But something drew me back. So I turned up the volume. It was then that 'Feathermagnetik' came alive. The ripples became full blown waves, buffeting me from side to side. The brass parts, instead of sounding weak and disconnected as before, now sound like

clarion calls. I peer outside and a small cadre of animals has formed, looking towards my window expectantly. I can do little to help them. They will have to find Kira Kira to receive further instruction.

This all builds to the latent aggression of "Hamar," which serves as the most musical track on 'Feathermagnetik.' It could maybe have amped up the aggression and volume a bit, but I am a sucker for musical resolution, so maybe not.

Either way, it's a thumbs up from me.

✦ - CLYDE BRADFORD

Trivia question answer from page six:

This was a trick question. No one ran against President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson so there was no election. In 2004, however, 62.9% of voters participated in the presidential election with Ólafur winning 85.6% of the vote. The greatest turnout for a presidential election was in 1968, when 92.2% of Icelanders voted, with Kristján Eldjárn winning 65.6% of that vote.

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Arpeggio Ascending

The Rising Star of Víkingur Heiðar Ólafsson and the Midsummer Music Festival



Víkingur Ólafsson sees classical music as having too much high brow and not enough high voltage. That's why he is launching the Reykjavík Midsummer Music Festival at Harpa this month. "This time of year is dynamic in Iceland," the artistic director says. "I think that was the original core idea, to make dynamic and colourful music."

Words

Cory Weinberg

Photography

Alisa Kalyanova

The festival will span three days and mesh modern and classical pieces from international and Icelandic artists. There's Johannes Brahms ("a heavy autumnal German composer," Víkingur says), Joseph-Maurice Ravel ("glittering, like Harpa's glass exterior," he adds), and Icelandic composers Jón Nordal and Þorkell Sigurbjörnsson.

Víkingur, a classically trained pianist, is Iceland's own chamber music savant, but the 28-year-old wants to be more like a rock star, a rock star who organises a chamber music festival to show off the imperfections behind his refined arpeggio.

"Musicians, especially in the classical world, are trying to be perfect, of course. They want to hit the perfect notes and make beautiful music, but people should re-

alise that it's exhausting. People are nervous. People are excited. There's a range of emotions," he says. "That's not projected when you do traditional photographs of people with their fiddles."

"Musicians, especially in the classical world, are trying to be perfect, of course. They want to hit the perfect notes and make beautiful music, but people should realise that it's exhausting."

CLASSICAL GOES 'RADIOACTIVE'

French horn player Stefán Bernharðsson says the horn trio he plays in the final show is so complicated that performing it is "like climbing Everest". "You see these pieces and you're afraid when

you look at them," he says. "It's like you have nitro-glycerine and it's unstable, and it's going to explode. It's radioactive almost. You think, 'Oooh, this is going to be something that can catch fire,'" he says about the piece written by twentieth century Austrian composer György Ligeti.

Víkingur calls that final number "the most diabolical"—a strong superlative in a line-up that also includes a song written in a Nazi prison camp. The piece, by French composer Olivier Messiaen, is called "Quatuor pour la fin du temps," or "Quartet For The End of Time." "It was written with only the instruments available to him in the prison," Víkingur says. "So the piece was written in the worst circumstances."

Megas, a 67-year-old Icelandic folk singer who was once banned on national radio, will also perform with Víkingur, accompanying him on the piano for the festival's grand finale. "This song is so weird because it's all happy and strange. But it's about this rape that took place in a party in Reykjavík. The song is all sweet, and if you didn't know the lyrics, you'd never believe what it was about," Víkingur says. "Megas is a guy doing outrageous, unexpected things. He's a genius I think."

year, he spoke out loudly against further government cuts in funding for the city's music schools. He's also working on a television series for Icelandic National Television on showing all sides of musicians. "I don't want it to be so private," he says. "I want you to have a hidden window into our music so it's always present."

There's also the festival, which he's funding with the first grant from the SUT/Ruth Hermann's Cultural Fund handed down to an Icelandic musician. "I realised that this was the time to do this kind of thing. Now that Harpa is here, we have the greatest facilities around more or less. I decided last year that this has to happen right now, before someone else takes the idea," Víkingur says.

"People are very instinctive in Iceland. They make decisions very fast. If they see something has potential, it can become something special." 🍷

COMING HOME TO HARPA

Víkingur earned the 'Performer of the Year' prize at February's Icelandic Music Awards, and has long had a knack for the limelight. He debuted in the Icelandic Sym-

phony Orchestra when he was 16 before going on to study at Juilliard. He toured the world over after his 2009 album featured works by Brahms and Beethoven, and of course he's also played with Björk.

He lives mostly in Berlin, but his roots remain in Reykjavík. Last

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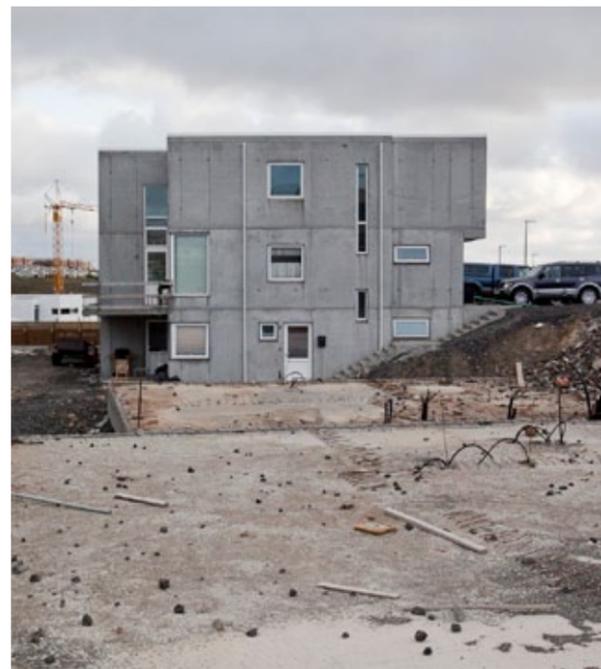
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The Gray Rock, Gold Coffin Bay, And Ghosts

How Reykjavík got to be what it is, part VIII



Reykjavík's newest neighbourhoods, Kjalarnes and Grafarholt-Úlfarsárdalur, probably have the strongest connection to elves and ghosts of the city's ten districts. Grafarholt's Grásteinn ("Gray Rock") is without a doubt the most famous rock in Reykjavík. After the rock was moved in the '70s during the construction of the road Vesturlandsvegur, thousands of salmon parr died at a nearby salmon farm. On top of that, several construction workers sustained injuries in all sorts of inexplicable accidents at the time. The rock was eventually registered at the Archaeological Heritage Agency as a home to an elf family in 1983, and therefore cannot be moved without special permission. This is Iceland's only officially registered elf home.

Elves as well as ghosts have also been spotted in Kjalarnes. For instance Móri, one of Iceland's most famous ghosts, has also been seen there. He is known for leaving big blue marks on a cow-marks that are said to be his finger marks.

KJALARNES: THE FIRST SETTLERS' NEIGHBOURHOOD

Kjalarnes sits below Esja, a mountain that is fairly popular for hiking and is especially nice during the summertime. It is Reykjavík's most spacious and sparsely populated neighbourhood.

The Kjalarnes area is rich with history. Notably, it features in Kjalnesinga saga, and is also said to be the location of the country's first regional parliament, a precursor to the first national one, Alþingi. Kjalarnes may also be home to Iceland's first church, supposedly built in the year 900.

Located about 30 kilometres north of the city centre, Kjalarnes was merged into the City of Reykjavík in June 1998, and is the only neighbourhood that has been adopted by the city. Today, the urban area Grundarhverfi (in development since 1974) has about 850 residents living in 200 homes.

Kjalarnes is also home to the most popular scuba diving spot in Reykjavík. It's called Gullkistuvík ("The Gold Coffin Bay"). Yes, you can be excited. It is so named because there is supposedly

a coffin full of gold inside a rock in the south end of the bay.

GRAFARHOLT: THE MILLENNIUM NEIGHBOURHOOD

Grafarholt was developed much later, in the late '90s, and was proclaimed by city officials to be the "millennium neighbourhood." In the year 2000, a thousand years had passed since we

"Kjalarnes is also home to the most popular scuba diving spot in Reykjavík. It's called Gullkistuvík ("The Gold Coffin Bay")."

officially abandoned the Ásatrú faith and, under considerable pressure, adopted Christianity. Furthermore, a thousand years had passed since the explorer Leifur Eiríksson reached the "New World" from Greenland. All of the street names were thus given names in honour of these milestones. Many have criticised them for being strange sounding neologisms.

As a teenager in the mid '90s, I used to plant trees in Grafarholt, a job offered by the City of Reykjavík. At that time, Grafarholt was part of the countryside. In 2002, a couple of years after my gardening training, I went for a walk in Grafarholt and I felt like I was entering the future: I was in the millen-

nium neighbourhood with millennium houses, characterised by their flat roofs and huge windows. At the time it was a novel style in Reykjavík, but it has since become quite prevalent.

Grafarholt is named after the farm Gröf, which is as old as the first settlement in Iceland. One of the most famous residents of Gröf was the entrepreneur and poet Einar Benediktsson, who bought the farm around 1900. His

set up there. The largest of them, Belvoir, housed 1,100 people. The barracks have since been torn down and almost no evidence of their existence can be found.

The neighbourhood was born out of a design competition between six groups of designers, with the winning blueprint of the neighbourhood drawn up in 2001. It is considered part of Grafarholt, and like Grafarholt it was designed so that the buildings would fit in with the surrounding natural environment. The area was intended to attract people who enjoy outdoor activities just outside their doorstep. However, due to the economic crisis in 2008, the neighbourhood remains half-built to this day. ☹

aim was to make a salmon river in the area with a little help from machinery and manpower. While nothing came of this idea, Einar managed to accomplish a lot of outlandish things in his life, such as selling the Northern Lights to an Italian businessman.

As late as 1950, it took a farmer around 45 minutes to drive from Grafarholt to Reykjavík. Today, the drive takes 15 minutes.

ÚLFARSÁRDALUR: THE HALF-BUILT NEIGHBOURHOOD

Before Úlfarsárdalur was built, the area had mostly been farmland. Then, during World War II, three barracks, Belvoir, Tientsin, and South Belvoir, were

Words

Gerður Jónsdóttir

Photography

Alísa Kalyanova

Reykjavík 871^{±2} Landnámssýningin The Settlement Exhibition

Step into the Viking Age

Experience Viking-Age Reykjavík at the new Settlement Exhibition. The focus of the exhibition is an excavated longhouse site which dates from the 10th century AD. It includes relics of human habitation from about 871, the oldest such site found in Iceland.

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The Political Becomes Personal

Grapevine attends Patreksfjörður's Skjaldborg Documentary Film Festival one more year



An unspoken rule of the Skjaldborg Documentary Film Festival in Patreksfjörður is: What happens at Skjaldborg stays at Skjaldborg. So I won't mention the drunken sailor who ripped three 5000 krónur bills apart before proceeding to burn the fourth; I won't mention people changing identities and flight tickets in the middle of the night; I won't mention the limbo competition, the champagne premieres, the movie deals done at five in the morning, the flower boys selling hot dogs, the sandwich with a skull burned on top of it or the guy who fell into a ditch.

But the films on display will eventually leave Skjaldborg, so I will mention them. Some of them were actually well travelled already, with four foreign films on offer. Those included the best two films of the festival, both of which were an unusual blend of stop-motion animation and regular animation. And they were both very introverted, yet in different ways.

'Max By Chance' was a family portrait made by Skjaldborg's honorary guest Max Kestner, tracing all the different family stories back to how they

made Max the man he is. It's a classic theme, how your grandfather met your grandmother, how different molecules came together and how universes and planets are formed—all ending up in one unique individual. Afterwards, Max admitted he hadn't really researched the stories, they were simply family stories he knew by heart—and if any of them were false it didn't really matter. "Films are always about reality. They are never reality," he said, summing up his thesis of how documentary films are staged and directed, and even scripted, just like the regular ones.

MUCH MORE INTROVERTED

But the very best film of the festival was Romanian film 'Crulic.' It featured a deceased leading character, Claudio Crulic, who died while on hunger strike in a Polish prison. And while that sounds depressing enough, the first half of the film is actually a celebration of life, using old family photos to tell a stop-motion story of a life in a seemingly boring small town in Romania, but told with such wit and heart that it put a grin on everyone's face. The second half, however, focuses on a miscarriage of justice and its effect on the victim. It is therefore certainly sad and depressing, yet offers a clear-sighted view of an inhumane prison system and an unjust justice system. While there is certainly some social commentary involved in 'Crulic,' the film still illustrates the trend of the festival, moving from last year's political and socially conscious films to

introverted human-interest films.

Introverted is not always a great idea, however. It can bring you films like 'Two Years At Sea,' which somehow beat 'Crulic' to the main prize at CPH:DOX, Skjaldborg's Danish sister festival. While this tale of a Scottish hermit is absolutely stunning to look at, it is also one of the slowest films in the known universe. Yet it did feature a few highlights, particularly when

"I won't mention the drunken sailor who ripped three 5000 krónur bills apart before proceeding to burn the fourth; I won't mention people changing identities and flight tickets in the middle of the night; I won't mention the limbo competition, the champagne premieres, the movie deals done at five in the morning"

the sight of a cat made a child in the audience cry out "köttur!" which was mostly amazing when you realised that a six-year-old kid had the patience to sit (mostly) silently through a film like that. And maybe he loved it; for him it probably felt a bit like spying on his grandfather for two hours.

CATS, CHAMPAGNE AND PRIESTS

And a cat stole another film at the festival, a film called 'Filma,' which was about a photographer travelling to Iceland taking pictures of lighthouses. But while the photographer and the lighthouses had their charm, the cat trav-

elling with him in the car all the time had such screen charisma that it totally stole the scene of this lovely film. After the screening, the directors opened up a bottle of champagne outside the cinema, creating a tradition that will hopefully catch on.

Another tradition that seems to be catching on regards the winning film. Because for the second year in a row the opening—and winning—film fea-

FLUTES, INDIE BANDS AND THE MOUNTAIN WOMAN

Tourists travelling Iceland will have noticed that much of the country is really a desert. It may come as a surprise to those tourists that a thousand years ago the land was actually covered in forests, of which only a few are left standing. This is the subject matter for 'Cry For Mercy,' a documentary about actress Herdís Þorvaldsdóttir's battle for the land. And while on the surface it's very much a film about social issues, it really is a fascinating portrait of this 88-year-old actress, who in her old age continues this struggle for a cause that most seem to agree on but few others seem very passionate about. The title is 'Fjallkonan hrópar á vægð' (literally: "The Mountain Woman Cries For Mercy"), but this Mountain Woman is a similar personification of the nation as, say, Mother Russia is for Russians. And in a way Herdís takes this role quite literally herself, following an old tradition where a young actress makes a speech as the Mountain Woman on Iceland's Independence Day (June 17).

However, the most joyous film at the festival was certainly the music film 'A Poetic Documentary.' The title scared a few people away, but while the film varies wildly in style and rhythm it's an absolutely infectious account of the life of an indie rock band, Sudden Weather Change. It's focused less on the music, and more about how those four boys can carry their boyhood into adulthood by staying friends while working

Words

Ásgeir H. Ingólfsson

Photo

Nanna Dís



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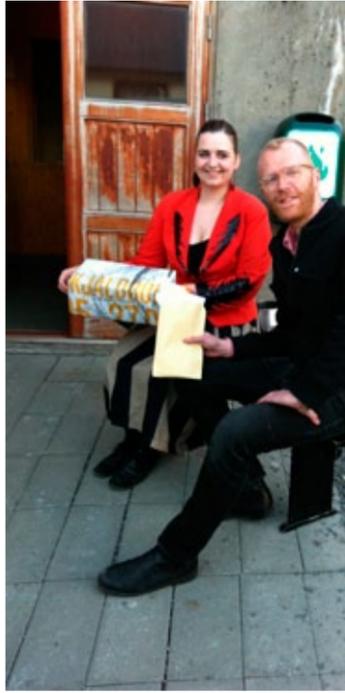
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on their music. It features vignettes of Reykjavík with a poetically rambling voiceover intercut with scenes of the band goofing around, and then the second half gives us some hilarious happenings on a couple of road tours, first around Iceland and then outside of it.

A SUBCULTURE OF MUSCLES

The closing film was the funniest. It's called 'Steve Gym' in English, after the gym it's based on, and 'Hrikalegir' in Icelandic—and I will be disappointed if that will not become the major slang word of summer 2012. It means something like "horrific" and is what the bodybuilders yell at each other after a good lift. And they yell a lot. These are not the average muscle-tanned types you'd find at a yuppie bar; these men are serious about getting really, really HUGE. And they are not necessarily young; one of the main characters is approaching sixty, still setting world records. Those are the long-forgotten heroes of bodybuilding, a sub-culture so deep beneath the surface that when I met Gísli Einarsson, owner of Nexus (a major comic book and gaming store in Reykjavík) he was over the moon about having found a sub-culture that made his own look positively mainstream.

But while the film was lots of fun, I wished director Haukur Valdimar Pálsson had dug deeper, particularly when you heard some of the stories afterwards that were not in the film. There is a much darker and seedier story to this body building world that is waiting to



be told, if there will ever be a director who dares to step on the toes of some of the strongest men in the world.

Despite the move to more personal films, socially conscious films were not wholly absent with 'Life and Funds,' and 'Volatile Sea.' And next year the pendulum seems likely to swing again. There was a special sidebar on the festival where directors showed clips from works in progress and talked to the audience about them—and out of the four shown this year two shared an obvious kinship, both tackling the role of immigrants in Iceland. The first tracks the fortunes of a Thai family in Iceland while the second follows the fate of the inhabitants of Keflavík's infamous Fit Hostel, where refugees are parked while the Icelandic authorities decide their fate. And if enough progress will be made I might be writing about them next year. 🍷

Viðey Island

Viðey is an island situated just few minutes from Reykjavík city by ferry. The island is the perfect place for individuals, friends and families wanting to enjoy a relaxing but also adventurous getaway from the city life.



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From Viðey to Skarfabakki	11:30	12:30	13:30	14:30	15:30	16:30	17:30	18:30
From Reykjavík Old Harbour to Viðey		12:00						
From Viðey to Reykjavík Old Harbour					15:30			
Winter (on Sat. and Sun. from 16 Sept. to 14 May)								
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Unique Sustainable Fashion

Snoop-Around talks to designer Jet Korine

When you walk up Skólavörðustígur you might notice a little shop at 17a. It bears the name of its owner, designer Jet Korine, who makes a conscious effort to leave the smallest possible imprint on the world through her design. From her hand-dyed socks to a versatile 'life coat,' her garments are perfect for the modern nomad, ready for anything. The style is beyond trends and fads, and even though the clothes look light and delicate, they are made to last.

TELL US ABOUT THE SHOP...

It has been open for three years in this location, but the brand is a little bit older. It started like many other brands, in a workshop tucked away on the second floor with no public appearance. We opened the shop on Skólavörðustígur when the crisis loomed over Iceland and to rule out the danger of going bankrupt, we put both the workshop and the shop in one location.

YOU RETAIL A VARIETY OF ACCESSORIES AS WELL?

The golden rule is that we can retail what we can't make ourselves. For example, our socks are made in the USA from recycled materials and when they arrive in Iceland we hand dye and print

them here. We want everything that we retail to have some connection to the policy that we set for our own clothing.

IS THE HANDMADE QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPORTANT TO YOUR OWN WORK AS WELL?

It is. But at the same time it's not the biggest selling point. I want people first and foremost to fall in love with what they see and to feel more beautiful by wearing my clothes. I simply choose to work with organic fabrics and natural dyes because I don't want to feel responsible for putting more crap out into the world. It's already filled up with enough crap.

"So in a way it's the worst business plan ever, promoting buying less!"

However, it has affected the overall look of my clothing. For example, because bright colours are in general made with either synthetic dye or synthetic materials, there is little of that. The pastels that we are known for are the result of our using natural dyes. So these two things together have become the look for the brand.

WHAT IS YOUR NEW COLLECTION BASED ON?

The summer collection, Dans-Dans-Dans, was very much inspired by professional dancers. We have a lot of jersey layering, which is easy to build up and build down. Catsuits make the first layer that covers the whole body, and then the next layer is very open and

would actually show everything if there wasn't a catsuit underneath. We are working with a dance theme this summer and it suits this beautiful weather that we've been having!

IS THERE A SINGLE CONCEPT BEHIND EVERY COLLECTION?

There's not a particular concept behind every single collection; the overall concept is to be natural and to minimise people's consumption. And to make sure of that, we make things that can be used in many different ways so that people might actually buy less. So in a way it's the worst business plan ever, promoting buying less! That would

typically be a suicidal business plan for a store, but it works really well for us. I feel like our customers are aware of what they are buying; it's not a moment of impulse. ♻️

Words

Erla Björk Baldursdóttir

Photo

Nanna Dís

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The Golden Circle is certainly the most popular tourist attraction in Iceland. When begged by their friends to describe some of the things that set the Icelandic landscape apart from that of other countries, foreigners must immediately think of the golden waters crashing from Gullfoss, the mystical feeling of stepping into history when one looks over the land at Þingvellir, or the childish delight that stirs in the stomach when watching Strokkur erupt, 50 metres from Geysir (the inspiration for the English word).

These combined qualities are probably the reason that every tour guiding service in Reykjavík provides a trip to this tremendous trio. But, while other tour providers offer a solely golden experience, Icelandic Mountain Guides take the experience to a platinum level.

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dition sets the tour apart from the other Golden Circle tours available.

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The trip begins at Þingvellir, a geologically and historically important site. Þingvellir is the site of a rift valley that marks the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, separating the Eurasian tectonic plate from the North American one. It's also where the world's oldest democratic parliament first convened (from 930 to 1789). It's an extraordinary place even to just walk around, absorbing the beauty and placing yourself in the time of those initial parliamentary meetings.

We then moved on to Gullfoss (or "Golden Falls" in English), which is one of the many spectacular waterfalls that can be found in Iceland (and you don't seem to get bored of seeing any of them, either). At this stop we were treated to a fun story by our guide, concerning the history of the waterfall. Apparently, the falls were to be harnessed to generate electricity, but Sigríður Tómasdóttir, the daughter of the landowner about to sell the falls, claimed that she would throw herself into Gullfoss if the land were sold. Thus, her father pulled out of the deal, and the falls were turned into a reserve, escaping a lifetime of hydroelectric slavery.

At this point in the trip, we broke from the Golden Circle and drove out to a boat that would take us across a river in twenty minutes, where

we would reach the glacier. On the other side, we put on some crampons and after a quick lesson on how to walk with them, made our way onto the glacier.

"I'M ON A GLACIER"

The glacier has a lot of fascinating features. The most interesting was definitely what our guide referred to as a "cauldron"—a hole where collected sediment and ash is deposited by rainwater and glacial runoff, potentially reaching the bottom of the glacier. He stated that this was one of the most impressive cauldrons he has seen on any glacier. This wasn't hard to believe, as the water was barrelling down into this hole in torrents, compared to those on Sólheimajökull where the water merely trickled down.

After touring this impressive glacier, we reconnected with the circle and took a forty-minute drive back to the Haukadalur valley, where Geysir and Strokkur lie. Geysir is the first geyser recorded in a printed source, thus how it became the nomenclature of the word geyser. The eruptions of Geysir are very rare. It last erupted in the year 2000, when its plume reached 122 metres. In 1981, eruptions were provoked on special occasions by throwing soap into the geyser, which was soon put to an end with the discovery that it was a harmful practice.

The main attraction there is now Strokkur,

which erupts about every ten minutes, give or take. The eruptions can reach 40 metres, but average at about 15–20. Watching these eruptions is always exciting, often eliciting cries of "Again! Again!" from 40-year old men accompanied by clapping of the hands, which can be even more entertaining than the geyser itself.

INTERMITTENT SNORES

Haukadalur valley was the last stop on the tour, after which our guide drove all the passengers on the tour back to their respective places of accommodation. After twelve hours of sightseeing, the only sound in the van was that of the intermittent snore (probably mine).

The Golden Circle tour is a trip worth going on, and you don't have to take my word for it, as any tourist who comes to Iceland will probably recommend it to you, especially the forty year-old men ("...and the water! It just SHOOTs UP EVERYWHERE!"). But, to spice things up a bit, it's worth it to add in the Langjökull portion of the trip to see a masterpiece of nature, as well as one of the biggest cauldrons you'll ever see on a glacier. Not to mention the fact that the water flowing from the glacier is so pure that it would not be safe to drink as your source of water (because it lacks essential minerals found in the water that our bodies rely on, according to our guide). But it does taste delicious! 🍷

Words

Alessio Tummolillo

Photography

Anna Andersen

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Where Elves And Puffins Play Hide And Seek

Exploring Borgarfjörður eystri



Upon arriving in Egilsstaðir, I am greeted by Magnfríður Ólöf Pétursdóttir, better known as Magga, who promises to take me on a tour to discover elves, puffins and perhaps even some reindeer that are hiding in the area. We head east on a scenic road across a vast plain flanked by snow-covered mountain ranges on both sides. Our destination is Bakkagerði—the so-called 'Elf And Puffin Capital'—about 70 km east from Egilsstaðir, in the fjord of Borgarfjörður eystri.

The paved road soon turns into a gravel one as we approach Njarðvík, a small cove with a collection of farms just before Borgarfjörður. This is the only road to Bakkagerði, population 146. The rather narrow gravel road winds its way along the mountain high above the sea. Magga and I agree that we wouldn't drive this road when it is covered in snow, as there are no guardrails.

Words
Melanie Franz

Photography
Melanie Franz

ELVES AND NATURE SPIRITS

Halfway along the road, a wooden cross can be found next to it, on the ocean side. "Once upon a time, there was a monster called Naddi, which looked human on top but like an animal below the waist. It lived in a cave beneath the trail, attacking and killing travellers that came along the way," Magga tells me. "This was in 1306. Eventually, a farmer from Borgarfjörður eystri pushed him into the sea and erected a cross at that point." Many landmarks in the area bear Naddi's name as a reminder.

To this day, locals keep stories about elves alive in the area and rumour has it that elf communities are spread all over the vicinity of Borgarfjörður eystri. When arriving in Bakkagerði it becomes apparent that the village is all about elves. We pass the new 'Álfakaffi' ("Elf café") and have lunch and delicious homemade Bailey's ice cream at the restaurant 'Álfheimar' ("Elf worlds") before we explore the village.

Right next to the village is the legally protected 30 metre high hill of Álfaborg ("Elf city"). An easy trail leads up to the top of the hill, offering an ideal observation point over the fjord. Eyrún, a local girl, leads the way for us. At the top she tells us that Álfaborg is the place of the elves' court in Iceland and home to the queen of elves.

We look down over the blue church built in 1901. "It is facing the fjord, rather than east-west, like every other Icelandic church," Eyrún says. "It

”
To this day, stories about elves are kept alive in the area and rumour has it that elf communities are spread all over the vicinity of Borgarfjörður.

was originally planned to be built on Álfaborg, but one of the town elders had a dream about the elf queen who told him not to do it, so they decided to build the church next to it.”

Jóhannes S. Kjarval, one of Iceland's most beloved painters, created the church's altarpiece painting in 1914. It shows Christ giving the Sermon on the Mount, standing on top of Álfaborg with Dyrfjöll Mountains in the background, and the faces of villagers amongst the crowd. Kjarval grew up in Borgarfjörður and often included elves in his artworks.

A VILLAGE COMES TO LIFE

As peaceful as the village now seems with all its magical elf stories, Eyrún says that this changes when it is time for Bræðslan, the annual local music festival that takes place at the old fish factory at the end of July. During that time, the village's population exceeds more than 2000 people. While 800 tickets are sold each summer for the concert, more people come to visit, camping in and around the village, as the music from the old fish factory can be heard from near and far. Acts like Belle & Sebastian, Emiliana Torrini and Damien Rice have entertained the crowd in previous years, and this year it is Mugison's turn to fill the vicinity with his rhythm.

Then we leave Eyrún behind, driving the short way to the harbour called, Hafnarhólmi. It is the perfect location for bird watching as it has two small observation platforms. At first, all we can see are seagulls, but eventually we see the puffins flying about in safe distance on the water.

Time flies and it is time to head back to Egilsstaðir to catch the evening flight to Reykjavík. On the way to Egilsstaðir I must have been asleep when passing the reindeer. There are supposed to be many of them roaming the area, but they are also quite shy and hard to find. But this leaves a lot more to discover during my next trip to the east of Iceland. 🇮🇸

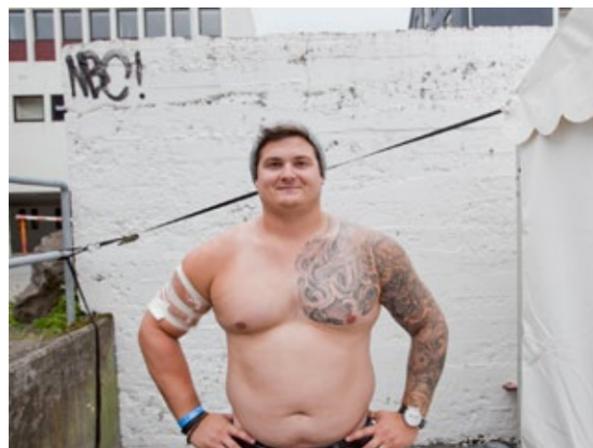
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AIRICELAND.IS



Seven Year Ink

Keeping it cosy at the Icelandic Tattoo Convention



In a country where an opportunity to show off skin at the local swimming pool is as commonplace as a trip to the mall, it's not so surprising to find out that we have the most tattoo artists per capita. In 2005, there were five separate tattoo shops in the 101 area with a total of eight resident artists. To put that into perspective, in Sweden that same year, there was one tattoo artist per 250.000 people. Yeah!

So it's absolutely no surprise that the 7th Annual Icelandic Tattoo Convention was shoulder-to-shoulder packed with everyone from amateurs to aficionados, first-timers and loyal customers, trying to get some of their birthday suit emblazoned with customised designs. Those who managed to get some ink

over the course of the three days were quite lucky as it seemed that all of the nearly two dozen artists, local and international, were almost too busy to even take a bathroom break.

SHOUTING OVER THE NEEDLES

When we stopped by on Saturday afternoon, the buzz of the tattoo machine was cranked up to the max. One had to shout awfully loud to greet people or to get the attention of the very concentrated ink-givers. Most tables were crammed with onlookers, many of them family or significant others. Where yours-truly managed to squeeze through to get a better look, some incredibly impressive work was taking place. First-time international artist Gent Stef, from Italy-via-Denmark, had been working 34-year-old Jón Svanur's forearm for nearly three hours. "It's my kid's Chinese Zodiac sign," Jón Svanur told us, "It means a lot to me."

Getting tattoos for the family while keeping it in the family was a big trend at the festival. At Jason Donahue's booth, another first-timer from San Francisco was preparing to get the

names of her two teenage children tattooed to her wrists, while her eldest was getting ink of her own done by Holly Ellis at the next booth.

INK IS THICKER THAN WATER

Over in the far back corner, American artist Mason Coriell was adding a jukebox to a series of rockabilly portraits he had previously done on 20-year-old student Alexandría. Mason, who splits

"The buzz of the tattoo machine was cranked up to the max"

his time between Iceland and Hawaii, was the kind of sociable artist that regales one with tales of sky-diving and jiu-jitsu training as well as keeping complete focus and precise needlework. "I am very loyal to him," Alexandría said, "He's got me!"

Indeed, much like four hairdressers and other roving service people, establishing a loyal customer base is

paramount in the world of tattooing and many of the international guest artists come to the festival because of their loyal clientele. Artists such as Thomas Asher, Sofia Estrella Olivieri and Jason June have earned high-standings from their frequent guest spots at Reykjavík Ink, the festival's host parlour, and left them in high demand and with little time to spare. Good for them, less good for us poor bastards who didn't pre-book them (full disclosure: Jason June is responsible for 95% of the tattoos on this article's author!)

GOOD VIBES IN A NEW SPACE

Aside from the addition of several new international artists to the roster, the biggest change at this year's convention was its new locale. Whereas in previous years the festival had taken place at the old Bar 11 on Laugavegur and subsequently at Sódóma, prior to that bar turning back into Gaukur á Stöng, it all went down in a huge white tent plunked down in the yard behind Bar 11 this year. "At first I was a little sketched out by hearing it was going to be 'open air'," said Jason June who

has been coming to the festival since its first year, "but it's been really great. It hasn't changed the feel of it."

The feeling of which he spoke is one that many artists echoed: a good sense of closeness, friendly attitudes, intimacy and a chance to be personable. "It's not like one of the big conventions where there might be more people, but I'll do less work," Jason Donahue said. "It's smaller in size, but I've been busy almost the whole time." The intimacy of the festival was probably best reflected in being able to stand within an arms' reach of people getting deeply personal and meaningful artwork carved onto them, in some extremely sensitive spots. Twenty-three year old Bjarni grimaced as Javier Wolf Betancourt tattooed a cassette tape onto his ribs. "It's always painful," he said.

Words
Rebecca Louder

Photography
Alisa Kalyanova



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Iceland's Only Baseball Club Looks For A Rally

Unlikely sport starts to draw larger roster of players



Steindór Steindórsson used to play his home country's most popular sports, football and handball, but the tall and stocky 16-year-old now prefers baseball, one of the more unorthodox sports in Iceland. "I've been playing sports since I was small, and this was different from casual football and handball. I enjoy everything about it—hitting, catching, running," he says.

Steindór is one of about 170 players who stream in and out of Iceland's only official baseball club, a team without a league or competition. He occasionally watches America's Major League

Words

Cory Weinberg

Photography

Alisa Kalyanova

Baseball on television, particularly his favourite team, the Texas Rangers, or their former star pitcher C.J. Wilson.

With some determined Internet searching, it took Steindór about a week to understand rules for base stealing and tagging up. "I was aiming to be a pitcher, but my shoulder was sort of giving out, so I might become a fielder," he says. "It's really fun to me."

AN UNEXPECTED ROSTER OF PLAYERS

In early June, Steindór hits balls to all sides of an uphill, makeshift field where 14 players take part in throwing and hitting drills. The field, tucked next to Reykjavík's main sports complex Laugardalshöll, has no backstop or infield clay, but it does have faint baselines. During the summer, the "troll field" is home to three weekly practices, squeezing in as much baseball as possible in Iceland's short summers.

Players, mostly young teenagers,

are clad in tennis shoes and soccer shorts. Nine-year-old Bjartur Jörfi Ingvason, playing in his first practice, stands his ground firmly on the first base bag. Heiða Arnljótsdóttir, who is 58 years old and sporting bright green socks and a Homer Simpson T-shirt, trots after fly balls in the outfield.

Some players fumble errant throws and miss easy ground balls, but others lace balls off a tee with almost picture-perfect swings, showing a surprising flair for the sport in a country that has never sent a player close to the major leagues.

THE CLUB'S FIRST INNING

Raj Bonifacius, the club's 42-year-old president, says the club has seen steady growth since he started it five years ago. "It's all just starting out, and some kids are curious and inquisitive. They come with bats and balls and gloves to practice and they'll play with their friends in the neighborhood and

see what we have to offer," he says.

A native Californian who has lived in Iceland as a tennis instructor for 20 years, Raj says starting a baseball club was a way to draw kids in to America's national past time. The club began with five members, mostly just Raj's friends who liked to play games of catch, but has now grown to 170 players from a smattering of ages.

"We're still building on the kids we have right now in the programme," Raj says. "Most people like to come out and play just for fun. There's never been any professional or semi-pro level to it. The level isn't as great to what you see in the States."

LOOKING FOR A RALLY

The club receives funding from the Reykjavík Sports Council's lottery system, about 150,000 ISK per year that Raj says goes to making brochures and advertising. Raj and one other coach volunteer to help explain the proper

batting stance and pitching wind-up, and have increased turnout by teaching the sport in local schools.

Raj says maintaining a stable roster of players has been tricky as kids leave the club once practices move indoors and traditional winter sports like handball and soccer lure players away. "Icelandic weather is no good for baseball," he says.

It'd also be nice to have another team too, he admits. The club held the first Icelandic baseball championship in 2009, which was even recognised by the Confederation of European Baseball. The two teams both came from Raj's baseball club, dubbed the "Trolls."

"Competition drives sports in Iceland so we're waiting for that to happen. It's a chicken and egg thing," he says. "It's tough for one club to try to do it all. When there is another club, then there's another competitor. That's what gets everyone going, someone to compete with." 🇮🇸

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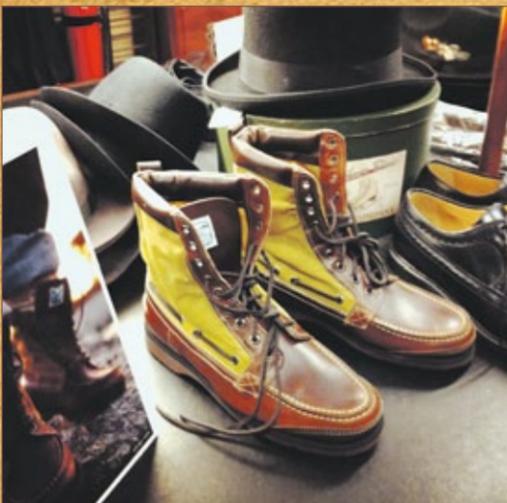
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PAGE 42

“These eruptions are always exciting, often eliciting cries of ‘Again! Again!’ from 40-year-old men accompanied by clapping of the hands, which can be even more entertaining than the geyser itself.”

The Golden Circle is certainly an oldie, but if Paul McCartney's still got it, why not this old geysir?

PAGE 36

“I think I am just too sentimental to write love songs. I could never watch ‘The Little House On The Prairie’ while hung over.”

We visit Bjartmar Guðlaugsson after his 60th birthday to talk about his work, singing songs, drawing glaciers and painting people's houses

PAGE 14

“If you're going to be Icelandic, you must always assert your expertise on any given subject and never admit when you are wrong because Icelanders love to argue.”

This is just one of the many lessons of ‘How To Become Icelandic In 60 Minutes’

PAGE 12

“It's still a long and bumpy road ahead. It's not going to be easy.”

Iceland's chief negotiator to the EU Stefán Haukur Jóhannesson tells us where Iceland stands in the negotiations and what's left...

PAGE 32

“Pouring haterade on Of Monsters And Men is as pointless as hating the wind, or cheese, or Thursday.”

Read what one local and one non-local think about the new Of Monsters And Men album...

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ENTERTAINMENT IN ICELAND

Issue 8 - 2012

www.grapevine.is

Declare Independence!



Iceland's National Day (Þjóðhátíðardagur) is just around the corner on Sunday, June 17! There are activities and parades all day long. Ogle at the cars of Iceland's Antique Automobile Club. Watch Reykjavík's brass band parade down Laugavegur. Or, for a shot of pure testosterone, catch the competition for the title 'Iceland's Strongest Man' as Iceland's toughest attempt to pull trucks with muscle might alone. For places, times and more events can find the full schedule at 17juni.is



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MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN JUNE

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How to use the listings
Venues are listed alphabetically by day.
For complete listings and detailed information
on venues or to add your own listing,
visit www.listings.grapevine.is

15 FRI

- Amsterdam**
23:00 DJ Tommy
- Austur**
23:00 DJ Maggi
- B5**
23:00 DJ Jay-O
- Bakkus**
22:00 DJ KGB
- Bar 11**
22:00 Samaris and Live DJ
- Boston**
22:00 DJ Unnur Andrea
- Café Rósenberg**
21:00 Vigrin Band
- Den Danske Kro**
21:00 Live music
- English Pub**
21:00 Live music
- Esja**
21:00 DJ Hlynur and DJ Bogi
- Faktorý**
22:00 DJ Introbeats and Lockerbie
- Gaukurinn**
21:00 Botnleðja
- Glaumbar**
22:00 Jói Lurkur
- Harpa - Kaldalón**
17:00 Pearls of Icelandic Song
- Hemmi Og Valdi**
22:00 DJ Randomistic
- Hressó**
21:00 Gummi Jóns úr Sálinni with DJ Fúzi
- Kaffibarinn**
23:00 Alfons X
- Prikið**
23:00 DJ Danni Deluxe
- Thorvaldsen**
22:00 Live music
- Vegamót**
23:00 DJ Jónas

16 SAT

- Amsterdam**
23:00 DJ Skúli
- Austur**
23:00 DJ Danni Deluxe
- B5**
24:00 DJ Einar
- Bakkus**
22:00 DJ Kári
- Bar 11**
22:00 Gordon Riots and We Made God
- Boston**
22:00 DJ President Bongo
- Café Rósenberg**
21:00 KK og Maggi Eiríks
- Den Danske Kro**
21:00 Live music
- English Pub**
21:00 Live music
- Esja**
21:00 DJ Hlynur and DJ Bogi
- Faktorý**
22:00 Kviksynði #3
- Glaumbar**
22:00 DJ Atli
- Harpa - Kaldalón**
17:00 Pearls of Icelandic Song
- Háskólabíó**
20:00 Bjartmar Guðlaugsson
- Hemmi Og Valdi**
22:00 DJ Ernir
- Hressó**
21:00 Mars Band with DJ Fúzi
- Kaffibarinn**
23:00 Dansa Meira – Már & Nielsen
- Prikið**
22:00 DJ Benni B Ruff

- Thorvaldsen**
21:00 Live music
- Vegamót**
21:00 DJ Benni

17 SUN

- Den Danske Kro**
21:00 Live music
- English Pub**
21:00 Live music
- Esja**
21:00 DJ Hlynur
- Faktorý**
24:00 Live jazz session
- Harpa - Norðurljós**
20:00 Midsummer Music Festival - Ravel and Brahms

18 MON

- Café Rósenberg**
21:00 KK og Maggi Eiríks
- Gamla Bíó**
21:00 Jussanam and Band
- Harpa - Eldborg**
20:00 Paul McCartney 70th Year Anniversary Tribute
- Harpa - Kaldalón**
17:00 Pearls of Icelandic Song
- Harpa - Norðurljós**
12:15 Midsummer Music Festival - A Breath on a Sleeping String
- Harpa - Norðurljós**
20:00 Midsummer Music Festival - Fin du temps
- Kaffibarinn**
23:00 Atli Kanill
- Prikið**
22:00 DJ Third

19 TUE

- Café Rósenberg**
21:00 Ómar Einars
- Den Danske Kro**
21:00 Live music
- English Pub**
21:00 Live music
- Harpa - Eldborg**
21:00 Midsummer Music Festival - Grand Finale
- Kaffibarinn**
23:00 DBF
- KEX Hostel**
20:00 Live jazz

- Living Art Museum**
20:00 Volumes for Sound - Slátur
- Prikið**
22:00 DJ Anna Brá

20 WED

- Bakkus**
22:00 Peter Parker
- Café Rósenberg**
21:00 Krákan - Guðjón Rúdólf



They Say It's His Birthday

Harpa, Eldborg Hall

June 18

4990 - 6990 ISK

Sir Paul McCartney, renowned for his Beatles days and his solo career, is turning 70 this month, and Iceland is sending him a big "thank you for the music" by way of a birthday tribute concert at Harpa.

On June 18 (an appropriate date as it is, in fact, Paul's birthday) at 20:00, numerous artists will regale guests with sounds from the producer, performer and composer's career. The 16 artists paying tribute are Icelandic legends in their own right, and include Egill Ólafsson, Andrea Gylfadóttir, Jakob Frimann Magnússon, Gunnar Þórðarsson, Pálmi Sigurhjártarson, amongst others. Tickets are 4990 - 6990 ISK and can be bought at the Harpa website. Buy them while they last, and if you have been a fan of the cute Beatle's work at any point in the past 70 years, you most likely won't be disappointed. **BW**



Botnleðja Extravaganza At Gaukur

June 15 23:00 & June 16 21:00

2900 ISK

Botnleðja will be performing at Old Gaukur on June 16 and 17. The band, which won the Icelandic Battle of the Bands in 1994, have become pillars of the Icelandic music scene. Hell, they're so popular that they had to add a second concert for you guys to enjoy! The band's comeback concert - they're back from self-imposed exile - will include songs from all their albums. 'Fólk er Fífl,' 'Douglas Dakota' and 'Iceland National Park' are just a few of these, and, who knows, maybe they'll surprise you with one or two new pieces. UK rock giants Blur were big fans of these guys, Botnleðja even joined them on tour in the late '90s. Enough reason to go? Get your tickets for the Friday show at www.midi.is **SP**

MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN JUNE



Extreeeeeme Chilling On Snæfellsnes

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June 29 - July 1

6500 ISK (includes the camping)

Summer is upon us and we have the perfect opportunity to celebrate it with some stellar electronic music! The Extreme Chill Festival or 'Undir Jökli' ('under the glacier') is going into its third round from June 29 until July 1. It's grown bigger and more popular every year, and the remarkable line-up now includes Krummi, Árni Vector and Stereo Hypnosis. The crème de la crème of Icelandic electronic music scene will be convening for a weekend of debauchery and they'll be joined by visual artists Guðmann Þór Bjargmundsson and Frimann Freyr Kjerúlf Björnsson. For all you techno and electro fans, this is the perfect weekend getaway! You can get your tickets at www.midi.is, at the Brim record store on Laugavegur or in Kringlan. **SP**

Celtic Cross

22:00 Open mic night

Den Danske Kro

21:00 Live music

Dillon

21:00 Dillon's 12-Year-Old

Birthday Party

English Pub

21:00 Live music

Esja

21:00 Positive Vibrations and DJ

Tommi White

Harpa - Kaldalón

20:00 Eivör Duo and Yggdrasil

Hressó

20:00 Djazz

Kaffibarinn

23:00 Extreme Chill

Prikið

22:00 DJ Kolaport with

Magga Legó

Thorvaldsen

23:00 Old School Hip Hop and

R&B night

21 THU

B5

21:00 Live music

Bakkus

22:00 DJ Einar Sonic

Boston

22:00 DJ Andrea Jóns

Café Flora

22:00 Ólöf Arnaldsdóttir

Café Rósenberg

21:00 Einar Lövendal

Den Danske Kro

21:00 Live music

English Pub

21:00 Live music

Esja

21:00 Partyzone Lounge Session

Faktorj

22:00 DJ Atli Kanill

Frikirkjan

21:00 Múgsefjun

Glaumbar

22:00 Trúbator Bjarni

Harpa - Eldborg

20:00 Jethro Tull's Ian Anderson

performs "Thick as a Brick"

Hemmi Og Valdi

21:00 Dorian Gray

Hressó

21:00 Dúettinn Klukk þú ert'ann

með partýstemningu

Kaffibarinn

23:00 DJ Kári

Lebowski Bar

21:00 Lebowski Bar Band

Thorvaldsen

23:00 Salsa night

Vegamót

23:00 DJ Gunni

22 FRI

Amsterdam

22:00 DJ Tommy

Austur

23:00 DJ Danni Deluxe

Bar 5

24:00 DJ Jay-O

Boston

22:00 DJ Kári

Café Rósenberg

21:00 Monterey Album Release

Den Danske Kro

21:00 Live music

English Pub

21:00 Live music

Esja

21:00 DJ Hlynur & DJ Bogi

Faktorj

22:00 Legend release concert

and DJ Stef

Gaukurinn

22:00 Hexis and Muck

Glaumbar

22:00 DJ Einar

Harpa - Eldborg

20:00 Jethro Tull's Ian Anderson

performs "Thick as a Brick"

Hemmi og Valdi

21:00 DJ GFY (Go Fuck Yourself)

Hressó

21:00 Hljómsveitin Silfur with DJ

Atli Már

Kaffibarinn

23:00 B. G. Baaregaard

Prikið

22:00 Karaoke with Óla Hirti

22:00 DJ Egill & Bjöss

Thorvaldsen

23:00 Live music

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14:00	14:00	14:00	14:00	14:00	14:00	
		18:00	18:00	18:00		

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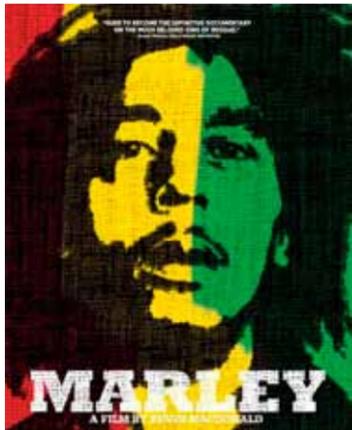


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MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN JUNE



Reggí Sumar AKA "Reggae Summer"

June 21-June 28

Bío Paradís

It's pretty difficult to get more niche than an Icelandic reggae film and music festival, but believe it or not, Iceland's nascent reggae scene has concocted precisely that. The festival takes place for one week from June 21 at Bío Paradís, featuring a new documentary film, 'Marley,' by director Kevin MacDonald (perhaps better known for his feature work, such as 'The Last King of Scotland' and 'State of Play') three times per night.

Another documentary, 'Rise Up,' will also be shown, a work by Argentinian director Luciano Blotta about three Jamaican reggae artists and their clamour for relevance in their home country, one brimming with reggae sound. The movie only shows three times during the festival, so check bioparadis.is closer to the start date for more information. The feature film 'Rockers' will also be shown.

In addition, Icelandic reggae bands (you read that correctly) RVK Soundsystem, Obja Rasta and Amaba Dama will play. **BW**

Vegamót
23:00 DJ Símon

23 SAT

Amsterdam
22:00 DJ Skuli
B5
24:00 DJ Einar
Bakkus
22:00 DJ Benson
Bar 11
22:00 Diamond Thunder
Boston
22:00 Baldur
Café Rósenberg
21:00 Dúkkulísurnar
Den Danske Kro
21:00 Live music
Dillon
23:00 DJ Amma Rock Andrea
Jónsdóttir
English Pub
21:00 Live music
Esja
21:00 DJ Hlynar and DJ Bogi
Faktorý
22:00 DJ Viktor Birgiss
Glaumbar
22:00 DJ Egill og Bjössi
Harpa - Kaldalón
17:00 Pearls of Icelandic Song
Hemmi og Valdi
21:00 Grapevine Grassroots
Hressó
21:00 Hjómveitin Goðsögn and DJ Atli Már
Kaffibarinn
23:00 Beg To Differ
Prikið
22:00 DJ Krúsi
Thorvaldsen
23:00 Live music

24 SUN

Den Danske Kro
21:00 Live music

Dillon
23:00 DJ Amma Rock Andrea
Jónsdóttir
English Pub
21:00 Live music
Esja
21:00 DJ Hlynur
Faktorý
24:00 Live jazz session
Harpa - Kaldalón
17:00 Pearls of Icelandic Song
Prikið
22:00 Movie: "Fire Down Below"

25 MON

Den Danske Kro
21:00 Live Music
English Pub
21:00 Live music
Prikið
22:00 DJ Bob

26 TUE

Café Rósenberg
21:00 Guðmundur Jónsson and band
Den Danske Kro
21:00 Live music
English Pub
21:00 Live music
KEX Hostel
20:00 Live jazz
Living Art Museum
20:00 Trouble (Thorunn Dogg Björnsdóttir) - Volumes for Sound
Kaffibarinn
20:00 These Fists and DJ Pilsner
Prikið
22:00 DJ Óli Hjörtur

27 WED

Bakkus
22:00 DJ Creature Of The Night



Cool Cuts At Bío Paradís

Icelandic films with English subtitles ALL summer long

Ok, so you've seen a few concerts, bought all of Björk's albums and read some of Laxness' novels in translation. Where next to sample Icelandic culture? Starting on June 13 and running until the end of summer, Bío Paradís will be screening selected Icelandic films with—wait for it—English subtitles! The lineup of this mini-festival, called "Cool Cuts," runs as follows:

At 18:00 on Monday through Thursday, you can catch the computer animated 'Legends of Valhalla: Thor.' Billed as Iceland's biggest international cinematic hit, it offers a spin on the Norse god Thor, who sets off after his village is ransacked to introduce a group of giants to his hammer. If you've already seen 'The Avengers' and can't wait for 'How To Tame Your Dragon 2,' this is for you! Starting at 20:00 on Monday through Thursday, you can see the crime thriller 'Jar City,' based on the popular crime novel by Arnaldur Indriðason and directed by Baltasar Kormákur, who recently made it big in America with 'Contraband.' Then at 22:00, you can watch the documentary 'Last Days of the Arctic,' about photographer Ragnar Axelsson (RAX) who aims to capture the true face of the north.

Come the weekend, the party starts at 18:00 with '101 Reykjavík,' the film adaptation of a book that turned a postal number into a way of life. Also directed by Baltasar, it is probably one of the best portrayals of Reykjavík nightlife on the silver screen. You can go to the bar afterward to compare and contrast. The film runs every evening from Friday to Sunday. To really get in the mood for a night out in Iceland, however, you should perhaps also catch the Viking epic 'When the Raven Flies.' It is one of the few attempts to commit the Sagas to celluloid and a quintessential piece of Icelandic cinema history. It also seems to be mandatory viewing in the Swedish public school system, and Icelandic tourists to Stockholm are routinely pestered with the catchphrase 'Þungur hnifur' ("heavy knife"). To round off the weekend, the Sigur Rós documentary 'Heima' is shown at ten, although this might be better left to round off your Sunday rather than begin your Friday night, depending on your plans. **VG**

MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN JUNE

A LIST OF EVERY HAPPY HOUR IN 101

B5
Every day from 11:00 to 22:00, beer and wine for 450 ISK.

Bar 11
Every day from 15:00 to 22:00, 2 for 1 beer for 700 ISK and shots.

Barónspöbb
Every day from 14:00 to 19:00, beer for 500 ISK.

Boston
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00, 2 for 1 beer for 850 ISK.

Celtic Cross
Weekdays from 17:00 to 20:00, 2 for 1 beer for 800 ISK.

Den Danske Krona
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00, 2 for 1 beer for 850 ISK and wine for 950 ISK.

Dillon
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00, 2 for 1 beer for 850 ISK.

Dubliner
Weekdays from 11:30 to 19:00, 2 for 1 beer for 800 ISK.

Esja
Weekdays from 19:00 to 22:00, from 17:00 to 19:00 on Fridays and Saturdays, all drinks half price: beer for 425 ISK, wine for 495 ISK.

Hilton Hotel Bar
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, 2 for 1 beer for 950 ISK and wine for 150 ISK.

Hótel Holt Gallery Bar
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, beer for 475 ISK, wine for 575 ISK, champagne and cocktails half off.

Hressó
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, 2 for 1 beer for 850 ISK and wine for 900 ISK.

Kaffi Zimsen
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00, large beer and shot for 500 ISK.

Kolabrautin
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, Beer for 450 ISK, wine for 525 ISK.

Lebowski Bar
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00, 2 for 1 beer for 850 ISK and wine for 900 ISK.

Obla Di Obla Da
Every day from 12-20, 500 ISK beers, 600 ISK shots and 800 ISK single + mixer.

Prikið
Weekdays from 16:00 to 20:00, 2 for 1 beer for 690 ISK.

Pingholtsbar
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. All drinks are half off, all drinks half off: beer for 400 ISK, wine for 550 ISK

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Music | Interview

Chamber Music For Summer Solstice In Ísafjörður

Artistic Director Dagný Arnalds on this year's Við Djúpið festival

For one week during the summer solstice, the hills around the fjord-side town of Ísafjörður are alive with the sound of the annual Við Djúpið festival. With a programme packed with master classes and classical concerts, Artistic Director Dagný Arnalds tells us what to expect this year, which marks the festival's tenth anniversary...

PUTTING TOGETHER A LINEUP

Hi Dagný, what have you got planned for this year's festival? Well, the master classes are at the centre of the festival and we have outstanding artists teaching this year: Jorja Fleezanis (violin), Vovka Ashkenazy (piano) and Stefán Ragnar Höskuldsson (flute). They also perform in the main concert series along with Sif Tulinius and Anna Guðný Guðmundsdóttir.

Then there are The Declassified [a progressive ensemble from Carnegie Hall], which will premier three new pieces commissioned by the festival as a part of our New Composers Project directed by Daniel Bjarnason. This year's new composers are Árni Freyr Gunnarsson, Ellis Ludwig-Leone and Máté Szigeti. It's our tenth anniversary, so it will be a feast!

Congrats! How are you going to celebrate?

We have a new series of concerts this year, which will see songwriters KK, Skúli Mennski, Helgi Hrafn Jónsson and Jussanam Dejah meet up with musicians ("the festival house band") from the West Fjords for an open rehearsal during the day and a concert in the evening. That starts at 22:30, so it will be a place for people to meet in the evening. I'm sure it will be a lot of fun.

OUT WITH OLD, IN WITH NEW

What will you not miss in this year's programme?

Actually I don't want to miss anything!



We are so happy with the line-up. I am really looking forward to The Declassified; some of them came last year, too, and they were really fantastic. I am also really looking forward to hearing the violinist Jorja Fleezanis play; she is such a beautiful artist. The songwriter project I mentioned will be fun to follow and James McVinnie of course, and Una... I recommend you just get a festival pass and come to all the events.

What is it about Við Djúpið that brings in world-class names like the Declassified, Pekka Kuusisto and Davíð Þór Jónsson, which has some of them returning to Ísafjörður year after year?

I think Við Djúpið offers a different experience; it's a small place where everything is within walking distance. Summer solstice is also an intensely beautiful time in the West Fjords and definitely sets the atmosphere, so it becomes something rather special.

SMALL TOWN, BIG TRADITION

A chamber music festival with an impressive international programme in a remote fishing village, population 2.600—how on Earth did this happen?

Despite its size and small population, Ísafjörður has a strong rooted musical tradition. The facilities are already here to make the festival happen—we

have a good concert hall, Hamrar, and two thriving music schools that we are in co-operation with for the festival.

Plenty of pop and rock musicians hail from Ísafjörður too—what with Mugison, Skúli Mennski and the Reykjavík! gang.

Yes, I think Mugison has done a lot with his Aldrei fór ég Suður festival, and in general I think music has a very positive outlook here. Ísafjörður is home to one of the oldest music schools in the country and nearly every kid in town studies music at some point. The path is laid out for them—they are always welcome to perform and get positive feedback for what they are doing.

Iceland tends to be known for contemporary music. How are things on the classical front?

I think we are entering an interesting time. The classical musicians are doing very well abroad and the number and quality of concerts offered in Iceland is astonishing. Musicians are also looking into less conventional ways of expressing themselves, not just strictly through the concert platform. I hope the categories will start to loosen up a little bit, but in the end it is all music.

Við Djúpið, June 19–24, www.viddjupid.is

Words
Sari Peltonen

Den Danske Kro

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- Tuesdays •
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MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN JUNE

Café Rósenberg
21:00 Elvis tribute – Friðrik Óma

Celtic Cross
22:00 Open mic night

Den Danske Kro
21:00 Live music

Esja
21:00 Positive Vibrations & DJ Tommi White

English Pub
21:00 Live music

Hressó
21:00 Djazz

Kaffibarinn
23:00 Óli Dóri

Kaffitar Café
20:30 Tango Milonga

Prikið
22:00 DJ Kolaport with

Adda Intro Thorvaldsen
23:00 Old School Hip Hop and R&B Night

28 THU

B5
21:00 Live music

Bakkus
22:00 DJ Gauti

Café Haíti
21:00 Michael Pollock & Siggí Sig

Café Rósenberg
21:00 The 1860 Band

Den Danske Kro
21:00 Live music

English Pub
21:00 Live music

Esja
22:00 Partyzone Lounge Session

Faktorý
22:00 DJ Ernir Eyjólfsson

Glaumbar
22:00 Bingo

Harpa - Kaldalón
17:00 Pearls of Icelandic Song

Hressó
21:00 Fm Party

Kaffibarinn
23:00 Maggi Legó

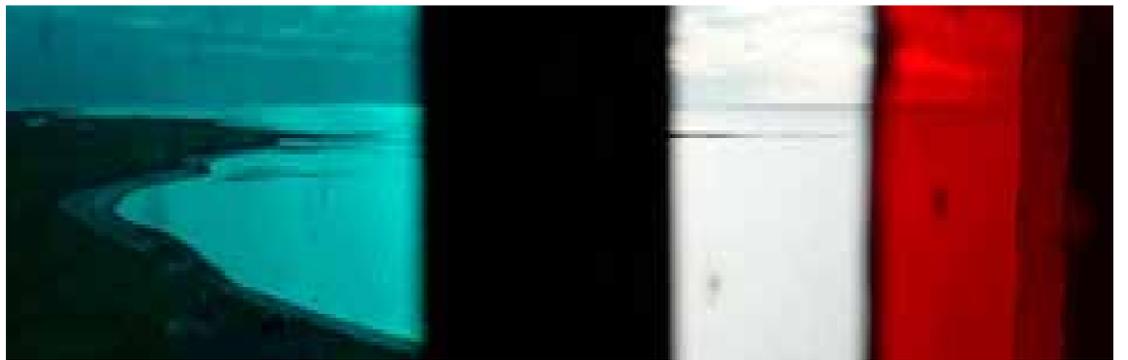
Lebowski Bar
22:00 Lebowski Bar House Band

Thorvaldsen
23:00 Salsa night

Vegamót
23:00 DJ Danni

ART

IN JUNE



Inspired by nature

Garður

Runs through June 24

Free

While Reykjavík's streets drip with creativity—isn't everyone an "artist" here?—sometimes you have to get out of the city to find inspiration. Fresh Winds is a festival that brings together dozens of international visual and performing artists in Garður, a fishing village on the northernmost tip of the Reykjanes Peninsula, near Keflavík. With the backdrop of Garður, home to about 1.500 people, the artists in residence will look to use the five-week festival as an incubator of artistic expression. For the public, the festival hosts lectures, panel discussions, film screenings and performances to show off the work created there.

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How to use the listings: Venues are listed alphabetically by day. For complete listings and detailed information on venues visit www.grapevine.is

Send us your listings: listings@grapevine.is

OPENINGS

Reykjavík Art Museum, Hafnarhús

June 21, 17:00 The Demented Diamond of Kling & Bang's Confectured Video Archive

The Confectured Video Archive comprises video works, performance documentations and films by more than 60 artists. These are woven into a "mild delirium with lucid intervals" – the Demented Diamond and put on display. Artist Kolbeinn Hugi Höskuldsson takes over the Demented Diamond, adding his own solo project to the madness.

June 23, 13:00-17:00 LornaLAB Workshop

Industrial designers, art theorists, computer scientists, new media artists and others come together to investigate the creative uses of technology in Reykjavík's LornaLAB. They host this open, collaborative workshop to continue this dialogue.

Nordic House

June 23 Watercolours by Lars Lerin

Swedish artist Lars Lerin contrasts the sheer grandeur of the natural world against the bleakness of human life on the Norwegian Lofoten Islands in a series of watercolor paintings.

Runs until August 12

Mokka-Kaffi

June 29 Democratic Moment by Katrín Agnes Klar

"Democratic Moment" is an expanding series of hundreds of mobile phone photographs taken by Katrín Agnes Klar, the prints of which show the mirrored sun in various house windows in cities such as Reykjavík, Berlin and St. Petersburg.

Runs until August 9

ONGOING

The Culture House Medieval Manuscripts Eddas and Sagas

It includes principal medieval manuscripts, such as Codices Regii of the Poetic Edda, Prosaic Edda, law codices and Christian works, not forgetting the Icelandic Sagas.

On permanent view

Child of Hope - Youth and Jón Sigurósson

Exploring the life of Icelandic national hero Jón Sigurjónsson, made especially accessible to children, families and school groups.

On permanent view

Millennium - phase one

A selection of pieces from the collection of the National Gallery displaying a variety of works by Icelandic artists in the last two centuries.

On permanent view

The Library Room

The old reading room of the National Library displays books of Icelandic cultural history dating from the 16th century to the present day. Works include the oldest published versions of the Sagas, Edda Poems and more.

On permanent view

Watercolours by Olivier Manoury

Olivier Manoury's watercolours are on display in the Culture House's shop and café. The painter traveled Iceland and captured his impressions in aquarelle paintings. The works are for sale.

Runs until September 1

The Einar Jónsson Museum

Einar Jónsson

The museum contains close to 300 art works spanning a 60-year career: carvings from the artist's youth, sculptures, paintings and drawings. A beautiful tree-clad garden adorned with 26 bronze casts of the artist's works is located behind the museum.

On permanent view

Galleri Ágúst

The current exhibition displays works by David Örn, Helgi Thorsson and Sigtryggur Berg. Internationally renowned, the artists have all exhibited abroad. The focus lies on painting, but the eclectic exhibition also includes drawings and sculptures. The exhibition is vibrant in terms of colour, but also in its use of media and its presentation.

Runs until July 1

ART

IN JUNE

Gerðuberg

Stone, scissors, paper and the keys to heaven

The exhibition Steinn, skæri, pappír og lyklar að himnaríki features Icelandic stones, scissors (of various shapes and sizes), paper (in the form of biblical pictures and bibles) and keys, some of which (who knows?) may unlock the doors of heaven itself.

Runs until June 22

Staðreynd 5

Arna Valsdóttir exhibits the fifth part of her ongoing project Staðreynd. It's composed of video and sound installations.

Runs until June 22

Spaugspeglar

Sverrir Björnsson shows his works in the café of Gerðuberg. His funny pictures depict many aspects of everyday life.

Runs until June 22

Háð og spottar

Folk artist Hermann B. Gudjonsson is exhibiting caricatures at Gerðuberg. No celebrities.

Runs until June 22

Máluð málverk

Hallgrímur Helgason shows a few 'painted paintings' (as the artists himself puts it.)

Runs until June 22



Womanhood, Its Beauty And A Portrait Thereof

Runs through September 2

Reykjavík Museum of Photography, Tryggvagata 15 (6th floor)

Free

They are our mothers, grandmothers, friends, siblings, lovers and even more. There are more women than men in the world, yet throughout much of humankind's history they have too often been deemed inferior by those in power.

These notions may or may not have been on the mind of Berglind Björnsdóttir when she started photographing Icelandic women for a project funded by a 2010 grant from the Magnús Ólafsson Memorial Fund. The images include women of all ages and occupations (including farmers and a past president) at home, work or other significant locations.

The works will be part of a photographic book, but are currently on exhibition at the Reykjavík Museum of Photography until September 2. The museum space is open 12:00-19:00 Monday through Friday and 13:00-17:00 on weekends. **BW**



Art | Venue finder

ART67

Laugavegur 67 | **F7**
Mon - Fri 12 - 18 / Sat
12 - 16

Artótek

Tryggvagata 15 | **D3**
Mon 10-21, Tue-Thu 10-19, Fri 11-19, Sat and
Sun 13-17
www.sim.is/Index/Islenska/Artotek

ASÍ Art Museum

Freygata 41 | **H6**
Tue-Sun 13-17

Árbæjarsafn

Kistuhylur 4

The Culture House

Hverfisgata 15 | **E5**
Open daily 11-17
www.thjodmenning.is

Dwarf Gallery

Grundarstígur 21 | **F4**
Opening Hours: Fri and Sat 18-20

The Einar Jónsson Museum

Eiriksgata | **G6**
Tue-Sun 14-17
www.skulptur.is

Gallerí Ágúst

Baldursgata 12 | **G5**
Wed-Sat 12-17
www.galleriagust.is

Gallerí Fold

Rauðarástígur 14-16 | **G8**
Mon-Fri 10-18 / Sat 11-16 / Sun 14-16
www.myndlist.is

Kaolin

Ingólfsstræti 8 | **F4**

Gallerí Kling & Bang

Hverfisgata 42 | **E6**
Thurs-Sun from 14-18
this.is/klingogbang/

Gerðuberg Cultural Centre

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

Hitt Húsið

- Gallery Tukt
Pósthússtræti 3-5 | **E4**
www.hittusid.is

i8 Gallery

Tryggvagata 16 | **D3**
Tue-Fri 11-17 / Sat 13-17 and by appointment.
www.i8.is

Living Art Museum

Skúlagata 28 | **E7**
Wed, Fri-Sun 13-17 / Thu 13-22. www.nylo.is

Hafnarborg

Strandgötu 34,
Hafnarfjörður

Mokka Kaffi

Skólavörðustíg 3A | **E5**

The National Gallery of Iceland

Frikkirkjuvegur 7 | **F4**
Tue-Sun 11-17
www.listasafn.is

The National Museum

Suðurgata 41 | **G2**
Open daily 10-17
natmus.is

The Nordic House

Sturlugata 5 | **H2**
Tue-Sun 12-17

Núttímalist Galleria

Skólavörðustígur 3a | **E5**

Restaurant Reykjavík

Vesturgata 2 | **D3**

Reykjavík 871+/-2

Aðalstræti 17 | **E3**
Open daily 10-17

Reykjavík Art Gallery

Skúlagata 28 | **E7**
Tuesday through Sunday 14-18

Reykjavík Art Museum

Open daily 10-16
www.listasafnreykjavikur.is

Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum

Sigtún
Hafnarhús
Tryggvagata 17 | **D3**
Kjarvalsstaðir
Flókagata

Reykjavík Maritime Museum

Grandagarður 8 | **B2**

Reykjavík Museum of Photography

Tryggvagata 16 | **D3**
Weekdays 12-19 / Sat-Sun 13-17 - www.ljos-
myndasafnreykjavikur.is

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum

Laugamestangi 70

SÍM, The Association of Icelandic Artists

Mon-Fri 10-16
Hafnarstræti 16 | **E4**

Spark, Design Space

Klapparstíg 33 | **F5**
www.sparkdesignspace.com



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B

Café Loki
in front of
Hallgrímskirkja



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C

MAP

Places We Like

1 Hressó

Austurstræti 20

You know, Hressó is basically the only place I go for coffee. Why? Their coffee is decent to excellent, but their forte is surely their wonderful patio, where you can enjoy the spring breeze in the sun, wrap yourself in a blanket beneath an electric heater in January and at all times: smoke.

2 Laundromat Café

Austurstræti 9

At the Laundromat Cafe you can do laundry, drink a beer and have a grandma read to your children all under one roof. This kid-friendly restaurant opened last spring in Reykjavík and prides itself on its full menu, cool concept, 5,000 books (that you can buy or trade), board games, and up-to-date newspapers and magazines (including a WALL OF GRAPEVINES).

3 Við Tjörmina

Templarasundi 3

Winner of The Grapevine's Best Seafood Restaurant in 2011, Við Tjörmina is the quintessential classic Icelandic dining experience for newcomers to the country. Serving hákarl (putrefied shark) and brennivín as staples on the menu, the restaurant also offers delicacies such as scallops, halibut and other fish for the not so fearless diner.

4 Yummi Yummi

Hverfisgata 123

Yummi Yummi is now firmly anchored in the city's fast-food world. Sister-restaurant to the fancy Ban-Thai, Yummi Yummi provides quick, cheap, fast and delicious Thai noodles with super friendly service. Lots of flavour, lots of spice and they're pretty darn fast, too.

5 Café Babalú

Skólavörðustígur 22a

It's tough to miss the brightly colored Café Babalú walking up Skólavörðustígur. A cosy place for coffee and cake, the well-worn, homey ambience makes it difficult to leave. Check out their rooftop patio on sunny days as well.

6 Hemmi og Valdi

Laugavegur 21

This friendly café/bar is located at the former site of legendary record store Hljómaland. Enjoy excellent coffee and buns during the day, binge on cheap beer and foosball during the night. The brilliant atmosphere makes it a local favourite, and you will enjoy it too.

Useful numbers

Emergency number: **112**

Medical help: **1770**

Dental emergency: **575 0505**

Information: **118**

Taxi: Hreyfill-Bæjarleiðir: **588 5522**

BSR: **561 0000**

Tax Free Refund

Iceland Refund, Aðalstræti 2, tel: 564 6400

Tourist information

Arctic Adventures, Laugavegur 11,

tel: 562 7000

City Centre, Aðalstræti 2, tel: 590 1550

Iceland Excursions - Grayline Iceland,



7 Café Rósenberg

Klapparástígur 25

A cosy, candlelit live music venue that has something to offer every single night, ranging from rock to jazz to poetry. You name it, they got it.

Hafnarstræti 20, tel: 540 1313

The Icelandic Travel Market, Bankastræti 2, tel: 522 4979

Trip, Laugavegur 54, tel: 433 8747

Pharmacies

Lyf og heilsa, Egilsgrata 3, tel: 563 1020

Lyfja, Laugavegur 16, tel: 552 4045 and Lágmúla 5, tel: 533-2300

Coach terminal

BSÍ, Vatnsmýrarvegur 10,

tel: 562 1011, www.bsi.is

Domestic airlines

Air Iceland, Reykjavíkurbúgvöllur,

tel: 570 3030, www.bugfelag.is

Eagle Air, Hótel Loftleiðir, tel: 562-4200

8 Kaffifélagið

Skólavörðustígur 10

There is coffee, and then there is coffee. The kind that makes your mouth foam with delight at the mere thought of it. The kind that can wake you up from a horrible day's slumber, instantaneously drying your snow-wet feet. Kaffifélagið may be small, but it more than makes up for it in quality and atmosphere. Take your coffee to go or drink your espresso at the bar.

Public transport

The only public transport available in Reykjavík is the bus. Most buses run every 20-30 minutes (the wait may be longer on weekends) and the price per fare is 350 ISK for adults and children. Multiple day passes are available for purchase at select locations. Complete route map available at: www.bus.is. Tel: 540 2700. Buses run from 07:00-24:00 on weekdays and 10:00-24:00 on weekends. Main terminals are: Hlemmur and Lækjartorg

Opening Hours

Bars and clubs: According to regulations, bars can stay open until 01:00 on weekdays and 05:30 on weekends.

Shops: Mon.-Fri. 10:00-18:00, Sat.

9 Brynja

Laugavegur 29

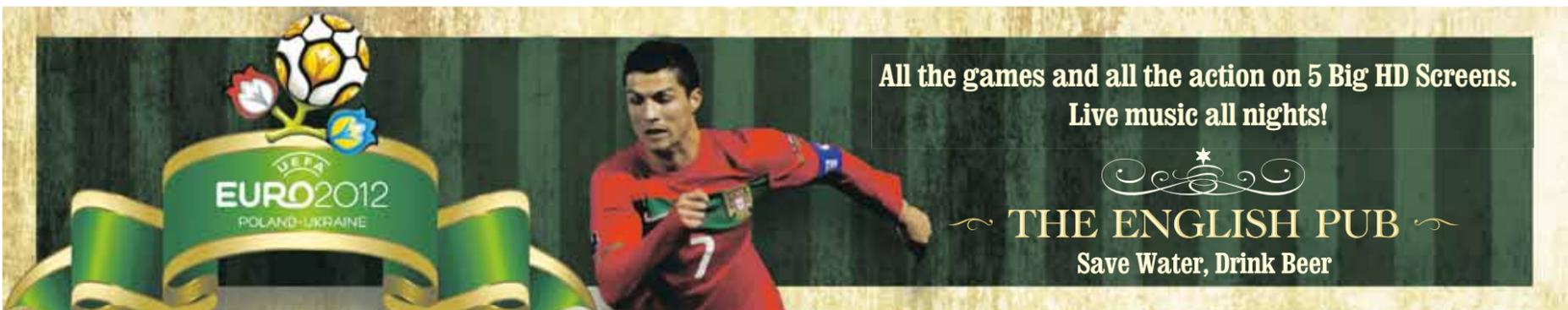
In business for more than 90 years now (and with good reason), this Laugavegur hardware store offers everything you need to fix up your house, and compliments it with some helpful and knowledgeable clerks that can even guide you through simple repairs.

10:00-16:00, Sun. closed. The shopping centres Kringlan and Smáralind as well as most supermarkets and tourist shops have longer opening hours.

Swimming pools: Weekdays 06:30-22:00 and weekends 09:00-17:00, although each pool varies plus or minus a few hours. **Banks** in the centre are open Mon.-Fri. 09:00-16:00.

Post Offices

Post offices are located around the city. The downtown post office is at Pósthússtræti 3-5, open Mon.-Fri. 09:00-18:00. Stamps are also sold at bookstores, gas stations, tourist shops and some grocery stores.



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LEGEND

EATING # DRINKING # SHOPPING # ADS

For a map of outside downtown Reykjavik visit www.grapevine.is or the Icelandic phonebook website www.ja.is

13 NEW IN TOWN

Micro Bar
Austurstræti 6
There's a new bar in town! As the name suggests, Micro Bar specializes in Icelandic micro-brews... and it is also pretty small. It does, however, boast a huge variety of local beers, as well as specialty and rare beers from Denmark, Belgium and Scotland. Local comedian/artist Hugleikur Dagsson's graphics adorn the walls, making this a cosy place for an after-work drink. It opened on June 1 and is located within the lobby of Centre Hotel at Austurstræti 6. If you're a beer aficionado, go there for a taste of one of the most diverse beer selections in Reykjavik. SP



A Day In The Life
Maria Lilja Prastardóttir

What's up, María?
I spend most of my time downtown in 101 Reykjavik, where I live and work. These days I'm organising the second annual Slut Walk rally in Reykjavik. The walk is a protest against excusing rape by referring to any aspect of a woman's appearance. We want to stop victim blaming and focus on stopping rape. Last year thousands joined us; it was quite amazing. The walk starts at Hallgrímskirkja on June 23 at 14:00.

EARLY MORNING >

I walk my kid to preschool so we take a long walk down Laugavegur each morning (which is much nicer early in the morning, before the stores open). We like to take our time and sometimes we stop on our way to get coffee and a bite. I recommend Litli Bóndabærinn, a small organic coffee shop located at Laugavegur 41.

LUNCH >

For something quick and cheap I go to Prikið on Bankastræti. The burger of the day does it. If you are lucky, Sigtryggur, Agla or MC Gauti will greet you and serve you extra strong coffee in a whiskey glass.

MID-DAY >

I love sitting in Hjartagarðurinn (Heart Park). The garden is located between Laugavegur and Hverfisgata. It has been painted by young artists here in Reykjavik and is currently undergoing a renewal by a group of people who live nearby. There is always music there and lots of good people. Sometimes on weekends they have markets.

AFTERNOON >

I like to go swimming with my kid at Sundhöllin. I totally recommend it! We also like to go to the City Library on Tryggvagata or take a walk down by the harbour.

HEAT OF THE NIGHT >

For a night in, I recommend a stop in Aðalvideoleigan (a video store) on Klapparstígur. They have a great variety of films: classic, cult, world, whatever you need. For a night out, I usually start at a friend's house where we wine and dine before hitting the town. The Karaoke bar Live-Pub is a great place to start; they have everything to get you in the mood with all kinds of people and a strange variety of songs to sing along to.

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10 Fríða 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 lamps, pillows, gorgeous 60s sofas, tables, and a selection of vintage jewellery.

11 Red Cross Shop
Laugavegur 12b
Our favourite place to find bargains. They've got a nice selection of Icelandic sweaters, and sell all types of clothes for both men and women. Pretty nice if you're low on cash, especially considering the outrageous prices you can elsewhere in this darn city.

12 Smekkleysa
Laugavegur 35
The legendary Smekkleysa (or: Bad Taste) label has been a key player in the Icelandic music scene since the eighties, releasing milestone records by the Sugarcubes, Sigur Rós and countless others. Their Laugavegur record store is an excellent resource for stocking up on hard to find Icelandic music

Public phones
There aren't many public payphones in the city centre. The tourist information centre at Aðalstræti 2, City Hall, Kolaportíð, entrance at Landsbankinn and in Lækjargata. Prepaid international phone cards are recommended for int'l callers.

Internet Access
Most cafés offer free wireless internet access. Computers with internet connections are available to use at:
Ráðhúskaffi City Hall, Tjarnargata 11
Ground Zero, Frakkastígur 8, near Laugavegur 45
The Reykjavik City Library, Tryggvagata 15

The National and University Library, Arngrímsgata 3
Tourist Information Centre, Aðalstræti 2
Icelandic Travel Market, Bankastræti 2
Reykjavik Backpackers, Laugavegur 28

Swimming Pools
There are several swimming pools in Reykjavik. The one in 101 Reykjavik, Sundhöll Reykjavíkur, is an indoor one, located at Barónsstígur. That pool features a nice sunbathing area and some outdoor hot tubs. Opening hours: Monday to Thursday from 06:30-22:00, Friday from 06:30-20:00, Saturday from 08:00-16:00, and Sunday from 10:00-18:00.

Public Toilets
Public toilets in the centre can be found inside the green poster covered towers located, for example, at Hlemmur, Ingólfs-tortorg, by Hallgrímskirkja, by Reykjavik Art Museum, Lækjargata and by Eymundsson on Skólavörðustígur. Toilets can also be found inside the Reykjavik City Hall and the Reykjavik Library.

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listings.grapevine.is

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Open; Wait
Curated by Chris Fite-Wassilak
19 May – 30 June 2012

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Opening hours: Tuesday - Friday, 11-5pm, Saturday, 1-5pm.
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ART

IN JUNE

Hafnarborg

House Project, Second House and Third House

This exhibition by Icelandic artist Hreinn Friðfinnsson compiles his older and his newer work. The focus is on the history of an old house in the lava fields south of Hafnarfjörður.

Runs until August 19

The Last Abstraction

The exhibition of abstract paintings celebrates the wide-ranging work of one of Iceland's earliest modernists, Eiríkur Smith.

Runs until August 19

Harpa

How to Become Icelandic in 60 Minutes

Join for a comical theatre performance about all kinds of aspects of Icelandic culture. If you're sick of feeling like a tourist everywhere you go, this show is for you. Tickets are 2000 ISK and Harpa hosts two to three shows per week in the Kadalón or Norðurljós halls.

Runs until June 29

i8 Gallery

Silvia Baechli & Margrét H. Blöndal - Open; Wait

Open; Wait is a multi-part conversation that begins between the sculptures of Margrét H. Blöndal and the drawings of Silvia Baechli. Minimal gestures accumulate to form an installation that gently manipulates the territory in front of us.

Runs until the June 30

The Icelandic Printmakers Association

Nálin stingur mann - 'The Needle Stings Man'

Vilborg Bjarkadóttir combines text and textile in this collection of sculptures in which he explores the interactions of needle and fabric.

Runs until June 24

Knitting Iceland

Come and knit at Laugavegur 25, 3rd floor, every Thursday, 14:00 - 18:00

On permanent view

Latin Dance Studio, Faxafen 12

Guided Practica - Argentine tango, Sundays from 17:30-19:30

Register by phone 821 6929 or email tangoadventure@gmail.com, 500 ISK for students, 800 ISK for others. Six-week courses are also available.

On permanent view

Linnamenn Gallerí

Nude and More

Oil paintings by Sævar Karl will be on display.

Runs until June 21

Mokka-Kaffi

Bodies

Oil paintings by Sævar Karl will be on display.

Runs until June 28

Museum of Design - Hönnunarsafn Íslands

Something To Write Home About

The emerging changes in Icelandic design are on display to highlight how product designers are embracing more collaboration.

Runs until October 14

National Gallery of Iceland

Hypnotized by Iceland

Works by artists inspired by Iceland's powerful, dangerous and endangered waterfalls.

Runs until November 4

Inspired by Iceland

This exhibit explores visually the non-verbal, non-narrative beauty of Iceland's natural landscapes.

Runs until November 4

Archive - Endangered Waters

An interactive installation by Icelandic artist Rúri, which features 52 photographs of waterfalls around the country, developed on transparent film, mounted on sliding plates in a large archive. When pulled out from the archive, the particular sound of each waterfall plays, as recorded by Rúri at the location.

Runs until December 31

The National Museum

The Making of a Nation - Heritage and History in Iceland

This exhibition is intended to provide insight into the history of the Icelandic nation from the Settlement to the present day.

On permanent view



Vibrant Colours At Gallerí Ágúst

Gallerí Ágúst

Runs until July 1

Free admission

Artists David Örn Halldorsson, Helgi Thorsson and Sigtryggur Berg Sigmarsson have been exhibiting their work at Gallerí Ágúst since May 26. The exhibition entitled 'Cosmic Patterns of the Spirits' includes many paintings, drawings and sculptures by the three internationally renowned artists who have all previously exhibited them abroad. The three painters form an integral part of the younger generation of painters in Iceland, and this display captures their similarities and differences. The versatile exhibition features paintings, drawings and sculptures. This explosion of colour will surely please your eyes. **SP**

The Nordic House

The Library

The collection centers around new Nordic literature, both fiction and nonfiction. The library lends out novels, academic publications, audio books and more.

On permanent view

Reykjavík Art Museum- Ásmundarsafn

The Fire Within

A collection of sculptures by Ásmundur Sveinsson housed in his former home. The pieces explore three major themes: the woman as lover, the brutality of war and the unknown frontier of outer space.

Runs until April 14

Reykjavík Art Museum- Hafnarhús

Erró- Drawings from 1944-2012

The exhibition consists of more than 200 drawings Erró has done since 1944 until the present day.

Runs until Aug 19

(I)ndependent People - Collaborations and Artists Initiatives

(I)ndependent People asks if and how collaboration can operate in negotiation between contesting ideas and desires, and yet allow for unplanned action. This large-scale collaboration takes place at a cluster of museums, galleries, artist-run spaces and institutions in the capital area. Focusing on visual art from the Nordic region, the exhibitions are conceived as an opportunity to establish and instigate a discussion around the relationships between international and Nordic networks from the perspective of collaborative and artist-initiated processes.

Runs until Sept. 2

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ART

IN JUNE

Reykjavik Art Museum- Kjvalsstaðir

Kjarval - Key Works

Reykjavik Art Museum draws on its extensive collection of works by Jóhannes S. Kjarval for ongoing exhibitions at Kjvalsstaðir. The current exhibition in the Kjarval Gallery features key works of Kjarval's oeuvre and offers a unique and powerful retrospective from Iceland's most beloved painter.

Permanent exhibition

Hangman's Rock - The Delirium of a Vision

Work by painter Jóhannes Kjarval and other artists like Finnur Jónsson look to dissolve borders between external and internal reality, with works that depict lava fields and the paradoxes of visual perception.

Runs through Aug. 26

Reykjavik City Museum

Reykjavik 871 +/- 2

The Settlement Exhibition

Archaeological findings from ruins of one of the first houses in Iceland and other excavations in the city centre, open daily 10:00-17:00, 600 ISK per adult, 300 ISK for children (children under 12, free) and 450 ISK per person in groups (10+).

On permanent view

Reykjavik Maritime Museum

From Poverty to Abundance

Photos documenting Icelandic fishermen at the turn of the 20th century.

On permanent view

The History of Sailing

Iceland's maritime history and the growth of the Reykjavik Harbour.

On permanent view

The Call of Sagas

An exhibition from Finland about an adventurous voyage in an open boat from Finland to Iceland, honoring the old viking shipping routes.

On permanent view

The Watercolours of Ólafur

Thorlacius

Ólafur Þór worked with the Icelandic Coast Guard for many years as a map-maker. He is now retired and paints beautiful watercolors in his free time.

On permanent view

Salur Íslenskrar Grafíkur -

The Icelandic Printmakers

Association

Nálin stingur mann - 'The Needle Stings Man'

Vilborg Bjarkadóttir combines text and textile in this collection of sculptures which considers the contrast between the sharp harshness of needles and the elastic pliability of fabric.

Runs until June 24

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum

Milestones: Sigurjón Ólafsson's Key Sculptures

An exhibition with some of Sigurjón Ólafsson's key works from different periods of his prolific career as a sculptor. The earliest work on the exhibition is a newly acquired relief of two sisters which he made at his first year at the Royal Academy of Art in Copenhagen. This relief has not been exhibited in Iceland before.

Runs until: Oct 1

SÍM

Borrowed View 231

Sculptor Guðrún Nielsen's piece is a sculptural, video and sound installation - a series of 231 repeated sculptural forms hanging from the ceiling, each accompanied with a unique watercolor sketch containing verses from her poem 'Borrowed View 231.'

Runs until June 26

Spark Design Space

A Salon show is being prepared at Spark containing selected projects from the past as well as a few new things we can not resist.

Spark is open during the transformation.



Partípokan Music Festival

Seyðisfjörður

June 22 & 23

3500 ISK

Enjoy camping? Concerts? BonPres? You're in luck, scouts.

Get in touch with your wild side at Partípokan, a music festival that takes place in Seyðisfjörður later this month. Friday night boasts Snorri Helgason, Mr. Silla and Hugleikur Dagsson performing. On Saturday, Jónas Sigurðsson og Ritvélur framtíðarinnar, Prins Póló and Ojba Rasta take the stage. Weekend passes are 3500 ISK for the concert and can be picked up at Aldan in Seyðisfjörður. Camping, however, is not included in the ticket price, and weekend passes cost 1000 ISK. **BW**

Plus, there's this message we received from the bands. Email your responses to letters@grapevine.is.

SUMMER IS HERE AND WE ARE GOING TO A COUNTRY PARTY EXTRAVAGANZA! WILL YOU AND YOUR AWESOME FRIEND JOIN US?

Do you want to win a weekend trip in a band bus, to join some of the most awesome bands of today on a trip to Höfn í Hornafjörður and Seyðisfjörður (and back)? If not, you can stop reading right now because what follows might offend your sensibilities. We are offering a seat in a really cool band bus, free entrance to the concerts Humarþruman and Partípokan ("LobsterThunder" and "PartyFog"), a chance to hang out backstage after the show, two meals sitting next to the bands and a place to stay (one night in Höfn and one in Seyðisfjörður). For you and a friend! If such an adventure tickles your fancy, we ask you to answer the following seven questions. Who knows whether you'll win? Who knows whether you'll get to ride this rockin' rollercoaster of Icelandic rock'n'roll reality COMPLETELY FREE OF CHARGE?

1. Have you tasted a lobster hot dog?
2. Have you gotten drunk with landi?
3. Have you been to a German rave?
4. Which would you prefer, Prinspóló or Hraun?
5. Your in a bus and the driver has passed out from drinking to much Ap-pelsín, what do you do?
6. What would you take with you on the Partyfogbus?
7. Valur or Fram?



The Future Is Now

LornaLAB

June 23 13:00-17:00

Reykjavik Art Museum: Hafnarhús

Free

LornaLAB, Iceland's very own media lab, will host their monthly collaborative workshop at the Hafnarhús branch of the Reykjavik Art Museum on June 23. This team of industrial designers, art theorists, computer scientists, artificial intelligence researchers, music theorists and new media artists aims to create a dialogue between these seemingly disparate fields, joining new technology with creative minds. From instrument construction to digital fabrication, LornaLAB is constantly pushing the limits of what seems possible. In their last workshop, they considered the implications of electromagnetic brain-scanning technology for video gaming.

In this lecture-discussion, they will explain their aims and goals and then invite you to join in the conversation in a hands-on workshop. **EJP**

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Thursdays 12-21

Closed on Tuesdays

www.hafnarborg.is

Eiríkur Smith The Last Abstraction Hreinn Friðfinnsson House



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LEGENDS OF VALHALLA: THOR	Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu at 6pm
JAR CITY	Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu at 8pm
LAST DAYS OF THE ARCTIC	Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu at 10pm

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OUTSIDE

REYKJAVÍK IN JUNE



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Bjórshátíð

16 June

Skeiða-og Gnúpverjahreppur

Free

Tired of the cement and concrete of the city? Missing your sweet Mama Nature? Head to Gnúpverjahreppur by the Bjórsá River, about an hour and a half out of the 101 for Bjórshátíð. There are plans to dam up the river and place hydro-electric powerplants along it. The festival aims to raise awareness of nature's importance and to consider the irreversible consequences of placing our human footprint on it.

The festival kicks off at 13:00 with a seminar on the preservation of Bjórsá, Iceland's longest river. Day activities (from 15:00 to 17:00) include walking tours, horseback riding for children, a farmers market and an open house at the organic farm at Skafholt. Immediately after, kick back on the slope of Flatholt (where you'll find an amazing view of the river and the volcano Hekla behind it) for a series of concerts from favorite Icelandic artists. Valdimar, Boogie Trouble, Pascal Pinon, Vigri, Maggi Kjartans, Múgsefjun, Lockerbie, The Lovely Lion, RetRoBot, Júníus Meyvant, Kristján Hrannar Pálsson, Mannaveiðar, Ylja, Brussel and more are all scheduled to perform. **EJP**

OUTSIDE EVENTS

North Iceland

Akureyri

Biladagar

June 14 - June 17

Akureyri Car events

Burn-out displays, street racing competitions, Icelandic drifting championships - this is for you car lovers out there. There will also be an indoor car exhibition at Boginn Sports Center in Akureyri. www.ba.is for more information

Flugsafn Akureyri

June 23 - June 24

Aviation Festival

The Aviation Festival is going to include many different old and new aircrafts for you to see. Some will also be flown. Refreshments available.

Akureyri Golf Club

June 28 - June 30

The Arctic Open

This northernmost golf course will host this international event, which draws participants from all over the world every year, amongst the North Atlantic cultures of Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Svalbard. *Runs until July 1*

Graenni Hatturinn

June 15, 22:00

Langi Seli og Skuggarnir concert

June 16, 22:00

Rúnar Þór concert

June 21, 21:00

Ferlíki og óperuprakkarinn Jón Svavar concert

June 23, 22:00

Árstíðir concert

Hof Menningarhúsið

June 16, 16:00

Flensborgarkórinn concert

The Flensborg choir will be performing at the Menningarhús auditorium. Recitals from different parts of the world will be performed. 2000 ISK

June 16, 12:00

Mannakorn

Having formed in 1975, Mannakorn truly are one of the pillars of Icelandic folk/pop music. They'll be performing at Menningarhús in Akureyri. 4900 ISK

Akureyri Theatre

June 17, 13:00

Independence Day Festivities

The town will be decorated with flags and a full celebratory program will start at 13.00 and run until midnight. It is suitable for all ages. The main festivities start at 13.00 in the botanical gardens.

Grimsey

June 20

Grimsey Summer Solstice Festival

Experience the midnight sun on Grimsey. The longest day of the year will be celebrated with a festival in town.

South Iceland

Hveragerði

LÁ Art Museum

Horizonic: Unfolding Space through Sound Art

Through a number of multimedia pieces, Horizonic seeks to discover the distinctive, unusual sound art scene amongst the North Atlantic cultures of Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Svalbard. *Runs until July 1*

Vestmannaeyjar

Pompeii of the North, Westman Islands

Excavations project at the site of a 1973 volcanic eruption on the island of Heimaey.

Ongoing

Mosfellsbær

Laxness Museum

June 17, 16:00

Concert

Hanna Björk Guðjónsdóttir, vocals, and Ingunn Hildur Hauksdóttir, piano, perform. 1000 ISK

June 24, 16:00

Concert

Richard Simm performs on piano. 1000 ISK

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OUTSIDE

REYKJAVÍK IN JUNE



Veislufjör

21-27 June

Höfn, Seyðisfjörður, Húsavík, Flateyri, Patreksfjörður, Flatey, Hafnarfjörður
Entry prices vary by date

As the Ring Road begins to fill up with tourists' rental cars this summer season, three Icelandic acts will join the traffic in their tour bus of party-fun! Two musical acts and one stand-up comedian are taking their show on the road, hitting seven towns in seven days. Snorri Helgason, the singer-songwriter from Reykjavík will serenade you with his sweet voice. We're pretty excited about Mr. Silla, an Icelandic supergroup made up of members of múm, Amiina, Seabear, Sin Fang and kimono. We hear they'll be releasing some music later this summer! Then the multi-talented comic book writer, playwright and comedian Hugleikur Dagsson will tickle you senseless. Just check out his naughty drawings on the event's poster for a little laugh. (We can't post it here!) They'll start in Höfn, then head to Seyðisfjörður where they'll join a handful of other artists for the Partíþókan festival. They'll continue their counter-clockwise journey around the isle, playing their Þnal show at Hafnarfjörður. You can catch them there at Bæjarbíó on 27 June. For more information, check out any of the acts' Facebook pages. **EJP**

Veislufjör Dates and Locations

June 21, 22:00

Höfn í Hornafirði - Pakkhúsið

June 22, 21:00

Herðubreið - Seyðisfirði

June 23, 22:00

Húsavík - Gamli Baukur

June 24, 20:00

Flateyri - Vagninn

June 25, 20:00

Patreksfirði - Sjóræningjahúsið

June 26, 20:00

Flatey á Breiðafirði - Hótel Flatey

June 27, 20:00

Hafnarfirði - Bæjarbíó

East Iceland

Skaftafell

Skaftafell, Seyðisfjörður

In collaboration with the Icelandic Centre for Ethnology and Folklore, Skaftafell is showing a collection of short videos. This was to collect narratives from all the inhabitants of Seyðisfjörður in 2011 and 2012 to give a bigger picture of the community.

Ongoing

Egilsstöðir

Sláturhúsið

June 17, 17:00

Summer exhibition

The summer exhibition features artists Thor Vigfusson, Helgi Thorsson, Olof Blöndal and Sveinn Snorri with varying media, including sculptures, paintings and video art.

Runs until August 19

West Iceland

Borgarnes

The Icelandic Settlement Centre

Daily, 10:00-21:00

Settlement & Egils Saga Exhibition

The two exhibitions tell the saga of Icelandic's settlement and most famous viking and first poet: Egill Skallagrímsson. Cost is 2400 ISK for adults, 1800 ISK for children, seniors and students.

Reykholt

Snorrastofa

Daily, 10:00-21:00

Snorri Sturluson and his time

An exhibit at Snorrastofa explores the life and times of famed Icelandic poet, historian and politician Snorri Sturluson. Cost is 1000 ISK for adults, 800 ISK for seniors and students, and children under 16 get in free.



Enjoying The Summer Solstice Yogi-Style

June 20 - June 24

Lýsuhóll, Snæfellsnes peninsula

35.000 ISK for the whole festival

As Reykjavík gets busier and busier and the sunlight makes it increasingly difficult to sleep, making you feel more out of sync by the minute, the Sumarsólstöður Yoga Festival is just what the doctor ordered. The festival takes place on the beautiful Snæfellsnes peninsula from June 20 until June 24 in the Lýsuhóll area. As the name suggests, it celebrates the longest day of the year—and why spend it in town when you can stay in the magnificent Icelandic countryside doing yoga? The festival proposes four days of Kundalini yoga, with early morning and afternoon practice. This type of yoga focuses on awareness and cultivating your spiritual potential. You'll spend the rest of your time going for walks, attending small concerts and lectures on yoga, and going bird watching. Rather than getting wasted on Laugavegur, try aligning your chakras and uniting with the universe at this truly Zen event on Snæfellsnes. The price listed includes tent accommodation, (you need to bring your own tent though) vegetarian food and all the classes and lectures. It's a family friendly festival too, with children under 16 getting in for free. More information on <http://sumarsolstodur.123.is/home/> **SP**

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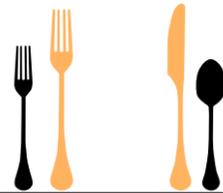
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F   **D**

FOR YOUR MIND, BODY AND SOUL



STEVE HOLT!

Gallery Restaurant at Hótel Holt

Ármúli 21, 108 Reykjavík



What We Think: Old guard French dining with some new twists

Flavour: French, laboured, rich in both senses of the word and unrepentant

Ambiance: Big and not too subtle

Service: Our server was likable but not up to the standard of a place like this. Too casual, forgot bread, water, unfamiliar with menu and wine list

Price (for 2 with drinks): 25–30,000 ISK (à la carte), 15–20,000 (fixed and lunch)

Don't be fooled by the '70s vibe it outwardly projects: Hótel Holt can be surprisingly charming and its restaurant, Gallery, is a prime example of that. While it isn't the most outwardly chic restaurant in Iceland, it is perhaps one of the last true bastions of white tablecloth French cuisine in Iceland.

Gallery's head chef is Friðgeir Ingi Eiríksson, son of the hotel manager. Friðgeir studied under Philippe Girardon at Domaine de Clairfontaine, a chef who visited the Icelandic Food & Fun festival in 2012 and has in his lifetime won a nice stack of those awards and qualifications that the French are so fond of. The cuisine at Gallery could be roughly placed within the nouvelle cuisine tradition with slight Icelandic influences (at least until someone can explain to me what post-nouvelle cuisine means). I wouldn't be surprised if Le Comptoir de l'Odéon provided some inspiration as well, seeing as Gallery offers a surprisingly affordable 3-course fine dining lunch menu.

The main dining space is overcrowded with paintings by the big

names in early 20th century Icelandic impressionism, like the consummate bohemian and Prince-Valiant-coiffed Jóhannes Sveinsson Kjarval. In terms of the combined value and size of the works on display, Gallery can be an overwhelming experience. This is not helped by the 20-page wine list—impressive as it may be. I kept it simple and ordered a glass of the Vaucher Pere et Fils Bourgogne.

The meal kicked off with an amuse-bouche, an amphora of cucumber tuna soup. It would have been well suited as a palate cleanser like a strong vinegary tickle in the back of the throat.

My father had the halibut with pear, watermelon and fennel (3,490 ISK) and I had the foie gras (3,950 ISK). The halibut's Icelandic description said "stór-lúða" (giant halibut) but it was unusually tender despite the size and featured interesting but unexceptional accompaniments. The foie gras came in two forms, fried and terrined with jammed quince—in terms of flavours and raw ingredients you could hardly be further away from Iceland (or closer to France). Both instances were excellent—morbidly obese ducks strike again!

We decided to keep things French and quackalicious and ordered the duck à l'orange for main course (5,900 ISK) while père ordered the premier cru ribeye aged 12 days (5,900 ISK). The duck came with artichokes, "a velvet of carrots" and a mysterious aftertaste. Stone-cold French classics here, the artichokes were cooked barigoule and very much in season and that aftertaste was skunky, almost barnyard.

The ribeye was a marbled slab with a dark crisp, maillard sweet as honey. The beef came with crispy, coated fries that my dad proclaimed were the best he'd had in 37 years. Béarnaise was buttery but light and had a strong tarragon flavour.

My dessert was a milky chocolate milkshake with a very light and eggy banana-rum soufflé and his was a cherry cream on chocolate crumbles with a tart raspberry sorbet (each at 2,290 ISK) The place was so white tablecloth

that both of our desserts came coddled in good linen.

The dinner service is pricey as you would expect but the ridiculous leveling effect of the Icelandic economy is also in full effect. Down at the nanny state liquor store a bottle of corked sewage may be exorbitantly priced but it only costs about 25% more to upgrade to a good bottle of red. The same goes for the restaurants: the difference between the amateurs and the premier league may only set you back an extra 1,500 ISK per plate.

Predominantly French white tablecloth restaurants have become a rare breed. The French kitchen has earned a reputation as snotty, comically codified, sang-froid, ostentatious, frivolous, disconnected, dogmatic and exclusive. It can feel like a trip across Western Europe, where after being bombarded with one bloated cathedral after another your senses dull and the whole spectacle of codes and pompous artifice starts to press in on your sense like white noise. So it feels good to be reminded that it isn't all Catholic ostentatiousness. The classic French kitchen can also be larger than life, mysterious, immersive, confident and protective. So if you like starched linen, Gallery knows how to deck them.

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REVIEWS



SOUTHERN FRIED SWAYZE

Roadhouse

Snorrabraut 56, 105 Reykjavík



What We Think: A place for burgers and ribs and fatty delights with great potential

Flavour: Steakhouse and soul food. Big, bold food with less bold flavours. Smokey, mid-western diner food

Ambiance: Mostly Icelandic friends having a bite and a drink before a night out

Service: Responsive and friendly, but unobtrusive

Price (for 2 with drinks): 6-7000 ISK

My only food allergy is hype and Roadhouse has received a fair bit of it. So it was with trepidation that I arrived to this castle of carnage and overindulgence with a cultish devotion to the diabetic tip of the American food pyramid. It is akin to The Heart Attack Grill and that obese succubus Paula Deen—entities that cater to hedonistic fatsos like myself.

Most of Iceland fits into either one of two food camps—food as assisted suicide and food as medicine. The food-as-medicine crowd counts the raw foodies, the dieticians, the homeopaths and the detoxers. The food-as-assisted-suicide bunch is the reason why you can't open a restaurant in Iceland without serving a burger and why the biggest instant success in Iceland is 'Hamborgarafabrikkan' ("The Hamburger Factory").

I have no problem with burgers whatsoever but it's getting monotonous and Icelanders need to temper their love for American food culture with something else (without swinging all the way into the other loony camp). And for that reason I am fine with places like Roadhouse—a designated, cordoned-off area where you can indulge to your clogged heart's content.

So Roadhouse is firmly based on a Chicago/Kansas style ribs and burgers joint. The design falls between TGI Friday's and the local KEX and Lebowski Bar. Mostly genuine American antiques are mixed with some ready-made memorabilia—a huge '50s roadside sign outside, old timey popcorn machine, pin-up wallpaper in the ladies room and a wall of Jack Daniels bottles.

With a side order of buffalo wings (1.650 ISK), my companion ordered the Captain America burger with pulled pork and mustard sauce and I had the monstrous Empire State burger with two patties, onion rings, eggs, bacon and a whole grilled cheese sandwich in the middle.

The Buffalo wings came with a bland blue cheese sauce, but the real problem was the hot sauce itself; it was far too thick and tasted of little other than ketchup. Not worth the price of admission.

The Captain America burger (1.890 ISK) was juicy, sloppy and full of great slow-cooked pork. But again the sauce was kind of boring and could have done with some more. I'd give it an eight on the Sammy J. tasty burger scale. Oh, and the fries were fantastic.

I'm glad to say that the The Empire State (2.490 ISK) didn't disappoint either. I have heard of the U.S. fast-food chain Friendly's offering a burger with

grilled cheese sandwiches for buns and I'd heard about the toast sandwich that the Royal Society of Chemistry recently determined the cheapest meal in the UK, but The Empire State is a first to the best of my knowledge. A double-patty burger packing 280 grams of beef, a grilled cheese sandwich, a fried egg, bacon, onion rings and jalapenos within its buns.

The main surprises were the patties themselves, which were really great on their own and I must admit that this everything-but-the-kitchen-sink approach to burgers works really well in this case (although it's almost impossible to bite into). But be aware that I'd guesstimate this to pack no fewer than 1500 calories a serving.

We finished up with a shared slice of apple pie (990 ISK) from the dessert cart. This was also a pleasant surprise. With a nice crust and not too sweet, it was the best traditional apple pie I've had in Iceland.

In sum, the sauces need fixing but the burgers at Roadhouse are good, the desserts are very good, the fries are great, the service is excellent, the music is nice and I like the ambition in the kitchen.

As I stood up to leave, I noticed four guys sitting at the next table, staring into their Empire States in silent reverence. I thought I heard a faint groan of approval, but that was all. Ron Swanson would be proud.

✍ RAGNAR EGILSSON
📷 ALÍSA KALYANOVA



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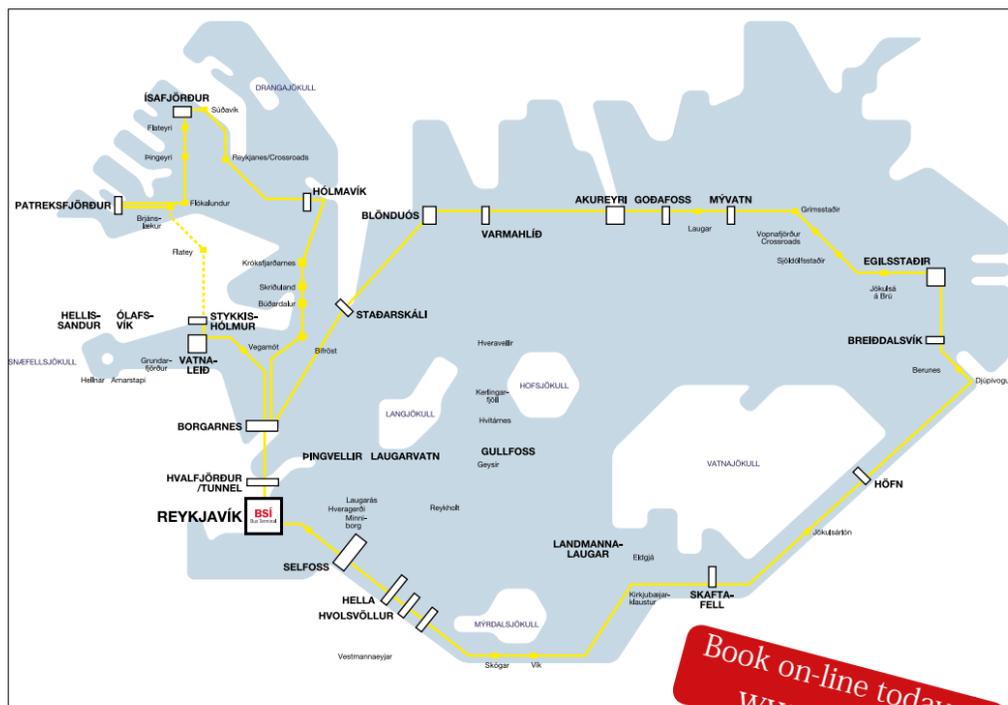
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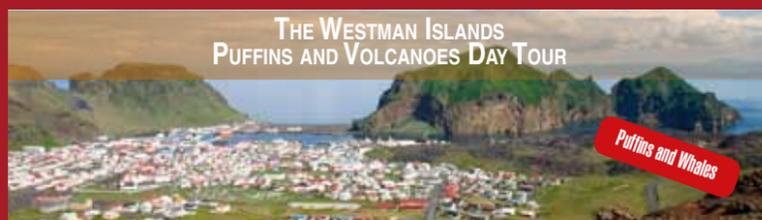
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mountain sides down to the ocean. The population has been dwindling the last decades mostly because of how isolated the area is during the winter. But it is this isolation that makes the area so magical. The calm fjords can make even the most restless of people stoic. This being said, there is no shortage of life and excitement in the villages along the coast of the Westfjords during the summer. Festivals of all sorts, markets and exhibitions take place every week. Last and not least this passport connects with tours to the amazing Hornstrandir; once inhabited by farmers and fishermen but now deserted, a triumph of nature.

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