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POLITICS

That old Nazi clause...

ART

The writing's on the wall!

TRAVEL

Some tourism staples!

MUSIC

Get your Airwaves Journal on!

FILM

RIFF-O-RAMA!

All is going swimmingly for

Baltasar Kormákur these days!

Director
Baltasar Kormákur

Emerging From The Deep

It's safe to say that director Baltasar Kormákur is to Icelandic film what Sigur Rós is to Icelandic music. After successfully directing the Hollywood box-office hit 'Contraband', he has returned to Iceland with the docudrama 'The Deep'—which details the extraordinary feat of folk hero Guðlaugur Friðþórsson—already a resounding success. We discuss film, fatherland and the national psyche with the celebrated director in our feature interview. **Page 20**



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Photography by: Baldur Kristjánsson
www.baldurkristjans.is

Lost In Translation Anna's 16th Editorial

This month marks the four-year anniversary of Iceland's economic collapse of October 2008. In that time, as Sigrún Davíðsdóttir recounts on page 14, Iceland has gone from being a "financial basket case" to an "economic miracle." At least that's what the international media reports.

Based on anecdotal evidence, the media has also been keen on reporting that Iceland's creative sectors have flourished. Whether or not the crash has had anything to do with a proliferation in the arts, it has certainly been a subject of inspiration, as director Baltasar Kormákur attests in our feature interview on page 21.

At the premiere of his film 'Djúpið,' which is based on the true and inspiring survival story of an Icelandic fisherman whose ship went down in the dead of winter, Baltasar told the audience that he wanted to make a film that dealt with the crash, but not a film about people losing all of their money, a film that went deeper, reflecting on the national identity.

Still, it somehow caught me off guard when the film began in Icelandic. It wasn't so much because I think of Baltasar as the Hollywood director that he is fast becoming, but because it is just so rare to see films in Icelandic.

Iceland's film industry may be growing, but the majority of films and TV shows shown in Iceland have been and still are imported and subtitled. In fact, Icelanders often credit growing up on American TV for their ability to speak such great English.

When TV came to Iceland, efforts were made to combat the influence of the English language. And one could argue that if something is most central to the national identity, it is the Icelandic language.

Although average Icelanders cannot easily read their Old Sagas, the Icelandic language has changed little from Old Norse when compared to other Scandinavian languages. This is because Iceland was for many years isolated from mainland Europe and there has been a focus on creating

new Icelandic words rather than adopting English words into the Icelandic language.

Despite a preoccupation with preserving the Icelandic language, translators hired to subtitle foreign material for Icelandic films, TV and videos have not always been that great and even today, translations can be creative—sometimes too creative. We are talking about gaffes like "Not on my watch" translated as "Nei, ekki úrið mitt!" ("No, not my wristwatch") or a computer "hard drive" translated as "áköf löngun" ("vehement desire"), to name a few examples collected by author and writer Gísli Ásgeirsson.

It's quite possible that we've made some outlandish translations in the last nine years of printing an English language magazine in Iceland and we could probably dig those up, but why do that when we have fresh example on hand from the Icelandic media.

Said example, which appeared on mbl.is, was based on a story "Jessica Biel: Justin excels at everything" (Belfast Telegraph). In a grave misunderstanding, mbl.is ran with the headline, "Couldn't Live Without Excel Spreadsheets," even elaborating that "Justin Timberlake can't get through the day without making a plan in Excel and following it..."

Well. It's a good thing that we have some professionally trained translators out there. And it just so happens that this month marks the eighth anniversary of The Icelandic Association of Translators and Interpreters, who will celebrate the Day of the Translator on September 30. So Happy Day of the Translator to them!



What's The Deal With Those Crazy Icelandic Letters Yo?

Þ þ Æ æ Ö ö

We thought we'd explain. We're ripping the idea off from the Icelandair magazine. Go read that magazine if you can. It's free.

We like spelling things using Icelandic letters like 'æ' and 'þ' and also those crazy accents over the vowels. Like Icelandair's inflight magazine—IcelandairInfo—says, the Icelandic language can use accents on all of the vowels, making them look all unique, like this: á, é, í, ó, ú, ö, ý (the accent also changes the pronunciation of the letters. The á in "kjáni" sounds quite different from the a in "asni", for instance). We also have an additional three letters. As IcelandairInfo notes:

æ (often written as ae) is pronounced like the i in tide.

ð (often written as d) is pronounced like the th in there

þ (often written as th) is pronounced like the th in think"

Here Is Your Kreisi Æcelandic Frase For Þis Issue!

"Sæl frú mín góð! Hvar er eiginlega þetta Bláa lón sem allir eru að tala um?"

(Saah-iihl froo meen goeth! Quarh ehr ay-yin-legha thett-tah Bl-ow-ah lone sehm ah-dliir eh-ruh aeth tahwla uuhm?)

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Yes, this lovely prize will keep your feet warm and cosy throughout your stay in Iceland and in any subsequent places you might go that sometimes get cold. And these aren't just any old woollen socks either, these are the **colourful, wonderful, extra-long kind from Geysir** (for inspiration, why not go check them out at the Geysir store on Skólavörðustígur before you write your AWESOME LETTER?).

Congratulations to whoever had **MOST AWESOME LETTER** for this issue, you should drop us a line at letters@grapevine.is and enquire how you collect your free socks! And if you're in the market for some socks come next issue, why not write us a wonderful reader letter to that same address. Like Axl Rose said: "It's so easy!"



Most Awesome Letter of the Issue



Hello:

My name is Cindy Voss and I'm from Washington State. My grandmother, Laufey Magnúsdóttir, was born in Reykjavik in 1898. She passed in 1986. I am doing family history research and came across some photos I believe were taken in Iceland when my grandmother went back to visit her brother (Magnus Magnússon) in early 1970's. Is there anyway to post the photos to the paper and enquire if anyone knows the people in the photos? All older family members have since passed and no one is around to verify people in the photos.

Any help you can give me is appreciated. I have attached two of the four photos for your reference. My grandmother Laufey (Louise) is in the red. Thank you.

Cindy
clvoss@mindspring.com

Dear Cindy

We are happy to help! We only had room to print one of them, but print it we did! Since you're all the way over in Washington state and thus likely can't claim your AWESOME LETTER prize, we came up with a great idea to go along with it (because your task is awesome): we will donate this issue's prize (it's probably something nice like a lobster meal or something) to whoever first sends you a great lead on these photos! Just let us know who it is and we'll fix 'em up real good!

Good luck with it all!

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The present email is a directly complaint:

With date 22.06.12 the online edition show the fallow info:
<http://grapevine.is/Home/ReadArticle/Man-Taking-Ex-To-Supreme-Court-For-Cat>

When he and his husband split up in November, they did so with the agreement that Ita live at the ex's place, and that he could visit the cat regularly. When Juan Carlos attempted to move the cat to a new home, his ex refused to give up Ita, and he has not seen the cat since."

Can the journalist provide the agreement?. The ex dont refuse, the ex exchange the locked in the door that he cant take the cat.

The court found that records of ownership at dyraudkenni.is convincingly prove that his ex-husband is the owner of the cat, and that Juan Carlos has not sufficiently proven ownership.

Wrong information!!! The court finish saying that Dyraudkenni it was not prove of ownership!. Totally wrong information. And the court never said the husband it was the owner.

Is just terrible how the journalist use wrong information to post as a show to get some views. Is terrible how poor is the investigation and the professionally in the media showing like this that the amazing profession have no base to give us a real and veridic information.

Take your own conclusion.

Best Regards,
Juan Carlos Suarez L.

Dear Juan,

we love all cats, especially our own cats, and we definitely empathise with you. We apologise for our purported journalistic misdeeds (although to be fair, we were only reporting what the Icelandic media was saying) and we hope you guys can find an acceptable solution to this stressful dilemma.



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

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The Revolution Growing On Iceland's Farms

Turning rapeseed into an environmentally friendly alternative to fossil fuels

Words by Mark O'Brien [@MarkOBrienOI](#)



Iceland's Most Famous Farmer

The story of Ólafur Eggertsson and the Þorvaldseyri farm

Ólafur Eggertsson became world-renowned in 2010 when the Eyjafjallajökull volcano erupted, casting a cloud of ash across his farm at the foot of the glacier—photos of which appeared all over the international press. Long before then, however, he had become a famous face among Icelanders.

His grandfather, Ólafur Pálsson, arrived at Þorvaldseyri in 1906, finding the farm in a poor state—the house in disrepair and the surrounding fields and meadows flooded and all but destroyed. But this didn't discourage Ólafur who bought the farm from Icelandic poet Einar Benediktsson, who had bought the land a year earlier. Ólafur's son Eggert was born in 1913, and took control of Þorvaldseyri in the late 1940s, launching grain cultivation and establishing a local association of grain farmers, before joining the board of the Agricultural Association of South Iceland and becoming a respected figure in the country's agrarian community.

Eggert's son Ólafur then took control of the farm in 1986, after graduating from the Agricultural College at Hvanneyri and learning the business from his father. He immediately set about continuing his parents' work, improving the grass fields and increasing production, as well as pioneering technical innovations. Despite the scepticism of scientists, Ólafur had his land drilled for geothermal water in 1989 and the houses at Þorvaldseyri have since then been heated with geothermal energy. In 1997, the Minister for Agriculture presented Ólafur and his wife Guðný with a special award recognising their achievements in Icelandic agriculture.

In 2009, Ólafur began cultivating whole wheat flour and barley flour, which led to the production of bread made entirely from Icelandic wheat and barley. That year, President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson bestowed him with the Knight's Cross in the country's chivalric Order of the Falcon for his work in agriculture.

Today, visitors can stop by his Þorvaldseyri Visitor Centre, which he opened on April 14, 2011, one year after the start of the Eyjafjallajökull eruption. There he shows footage from the eruption and sells all kinds of stuff, including "hunks of lava, actual ash from the volcano, T-shirts, perfume, chocolate, photos and postcards, as well as products from our farm, like ground barley, whole wheat and our own breakfast cereal made from barley," as his website, www.iceland-erupts.is, states. Admission is 750 ISK.



Sunday morning, 11:00. Þorvaldseyri farm. Autumn has arrived, but this morning is sunny and unseasonably mild. The waves of a golden field of rapeseed flowers undulate in the gentle breeze almost as far as the eye can see. Almost at the southernmost point of mainland Iceland, these fields lie in the shadow of the tumbling, mountainous Núpur ridge, and just a few short kilometres from Eyjafjallajökull and Hekla. On a clear day, you can see the dramatic cliffs of the Westman Islands from this spot.

Jón Bernódsson travels here most weekends, setting off from Reykjavík in the early morning to make the three-hour drive to catch up with Ólafur Eggertsson, whose family has farmed this land for over a hundred years.

Jón takes the flower of one of the stems in his fingers and tears it from its stalk. He opens it up to reveal a line of tiny brownish pips—these are the seeds that will be extracted and then crushed to produce the rapeseed oil which Ólafur is bottling back at his farmhouse. "These need another week or two," Jón says, scattering the seeds back over the earth, casting a hand across the tract of farmland where we stand. "The seeds have to be black before you can harvest them."

Rapeseed revolution

Jón works for the Icelandic Maritime Administration (IMA), which is leading the development of rapeseed as a crop in Iceland, aiming to see the country's fishing fleet use sustainable and environmentally sound biodiesel made from rapeseed oil in place of fossil fuels.

The Icelandic ship fleet has become larger and more powerful in recent years, guzzling approximately 275,000 metric tonnes of diesel fuel in one year, according to 2010 studies. The quantity of rapeseed oil necessary to match

that could be grown on 2,200km²—or roughly just 2% of the total area of Iceland. "Biodiesel," Jón wrote in an official report for the IMA published in 2010, "is the best renewable energy source in Iceland for today's engines."

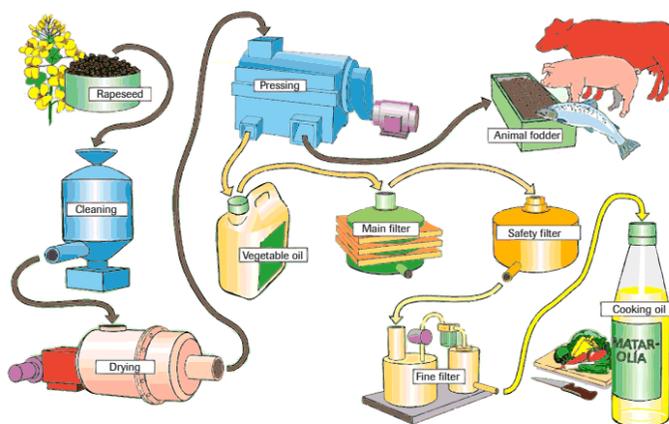
As well as biodiesel, farmers all across the island are harvesting rapeseed to produce cooking oil. Ólafur collects rapeseed oil in tall 500ml bottles, all lined up waiting to be shipped this Sunday morning—each bottle emblazoned with a label portraying the evocative rural setting of Þorvaldseyri. Jón himself swears by the oil's medicinal qualities: "I take a spoonful of it every morning—it's very good for you." By-products from the oil can also be used in animal feed, whilst the straw may be used as bedding for horses.

Rapeseed is by no means a new innovation. "It's been around since the Romans," Jón says. Two varieties of rapeseed are cultivated worldwide: *Brassica campestris* (a field or turnip mustard) and *Brassica rapa* (common rapeseed). In the 1970s, the possibility of cultivating a variation of rapeseed to produce rapeseed oil was discovered, leading to the development of canola oil ("Canadian Oil, Low Acid"). Since then production has grown at a dramatic rate, with a sixfold increase reported worldwide between 1975 and 2007.

Warmer temperatures mean that the rapeseed crop grows well in Iceland today, yielding harvest results similar to Scandinavia and Northern Europe. In Iceland of course rapeseed growth is strongly boosted by long summer days with almost 24-hour sunlight.

"The only support for rapeseed harvesting in Iceland is coming from the IMA," Jón insists. "The research and development division has spent more than 35 million krónur on the project since 2008." Þorvaldseyri is one of ten farms participating in the project, cultivating rapeseed under different conditions.

Ólafur was among the first farmers to take part in the IMA's trial project. "All machinery for the cultivation was already available at the farm, since we



“Around 130,000 hectares across the entire island could be cultivated for rapeseed. The Agricultural University of Iceland says the potential cultivation could be more than four times larger.”

use the same equipment for cultivating corn." At Þorvaldseyri, he and his family buy into Jón's vision. "Since we have a lot of good land for cultivation in Iceland, the prospects for domestic production are promising."

Energy independence

Using biodiesel, the 2010 IMA report states, would boost Iceland's energy independence and cut levels of greenhouse gas emissions, as the rapeseed plants bind at least double the amount of carbon dioxide emitted by biodiesel fuel when burned: one hectare of rapeseed uses 6 tons of CO₂, whilst being burned as biodiesel it emits 3 tonnes.

In addition, Jón insists rapeseed of-

fers food security: "About 85% of the harvest is used directly or indirectly for human consumption. The rapeseed meal can be used as food for animals, and for humans as well—the bakery Reynir bakari in Kópavogur, for example, are selling rapeseed meal bread." In turn, it guarantees farmers a higher income: "They can use the rapeseed meal for their animals, so they don't need to buy food. They can use the oil for their driving equipment and their heating devices." Above all, Jón says, "It makes the farmer independent."

Last spring Fréttablaðið reported that the Icelandic oil company N1 was set to invest in the project, ready to pump tens of millions of krónur into what had previously been the pipe-dream of a handful of farmers.

Yet it remains crucial for Jón that farmers such as Ólafur on his twenty hectares in South Iceland continue to stand as pioneers in the field. Around 130,000 hectares across the entire island could be cultivated for rapeseed. The Agricultural University of Iceland says the potential cultivation could be more than four times larger. As farmers across the island join Jón's cause, the IMA's vision is becoming an increasingly tantalising prospect.





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Small, odd and extremely cold

In a small fishing village called Sandgerði we found this 80 year old freezing room. It is almost as old as 66°NORTH for this year marks our 86th anniversary. According to modern standards of quality the freezing room is too humid to store food in so now it is used to store bait for fishing. The temperature in the room is close to -20° celsius or -4° fahrenheit. We thought it would be an ideal location for a photoshoot featuring our clothing for it reminded us of Iceland, small, cold and dark but with a quirky attraction to it.

magazine.66north.is

So What's This Icelandic Tea Party I Keep Hearing About?

Words

Kári Tulinius

Illustration

Lóa Hjálmtýsdóttir

Borgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir, former education and culture minister, current member of parliament and recent vice-chairman of the right-wing Independence Party, said in a recent interview that "it cannot happen that some individuals in the Independence Party, along with some members of the Progressive Party, make it their project to create a tea party movement in Iceland. The Independence Party must not become the Tea Party of Iceland." As Icelanders are generally not fond of Republicans (in a recent survey 98% said they would vote for Obama over Romney if they were American), invoking the Tea Party is just a shade less harsh than calling someone Kítler, the Kítten Hitler.

I was hoping this was some kind of countryside party with lots of tea and cakes.

Nope, this is politics, whose only resemblance to tea and cakes is that when you have too much of it, you feel like vomiting. Since this whole article is going to be about politics, only the strong of stomach should proceed. Okay, ready? Here we go. Considering how unpopular Republicans are among Icelanders, it has been a bit weird seeing the Independence Party identifying with the American right-wing. Recently its youth wing released an ad calling for an offensive against socialism, featuring—alongside pictures of Icelandic and European political leaders—President Obama. Which has to be the most incongruous political poster since someone put a picture of Bert the Muppet on a pro-Osama Bin Laden poster. To further the ideological link-up, the chairperson of the party,



Bjarni Benediktsson, went to this year's Republican National Conference, along with Ragnheiður Elín Árnadóttir, the party whip. In the political sense of the term, sadly.

Surely they have nothing to learn from a political campaign designed to make charisma-free Mitt Romney seem interesting?

Funny you should say that, because the Independence Party has its own Romney in Bjarni Benediktsson. Like the Republican, he was born wealthy, has a shady business reputation which is offset somewhat by the perfectness of his hair, and has been forced to change his opinions to suit party hardliners. That said, he has nothing like the Bond villain-type riches of Romney. His personal wealth has been estimated at about a hundred million krónur, or just shy of one million dollars, though he stands to inherit a lot more. That still makes him plenty rich by Icelandic standards, and

one of the five richest sitting MPs.

Let me guess, the wealthiest politician is some namby-pamby champagne socialist progressive politician.

The wealthiest MP, ten times richer than his nearest colleague, is the chairperson of the Progressive Party, Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson. His wealth has been estimated at well over eleven hundred million krónur, or a little less than ten million dollars. Which is weird considering that until fairly recently the ideology of the party he leads was agrarian socialism. However, in recent years the Progressive Party has been a party searching for an ideology like a two year old kid looking for Waldo, getting bored after five seconds and running to the nearest adult to ask them to change their diaper because they did a doo doo, which is sort of how they ended up with Sigmundur Davíð as chair.

Didn't the Progressive Party also get accused of being an Icelandic Tea Party?

Yes, and Sigmundur Davíð's assistant responded by saying that he had "zero tolerance for that kind of bullshit." Undercutting his words somewhat was the recent proposal by three Progressive Party MPs that the Icelandic parliament investigates whether its members had anything to do with violence against parliament and the police during the 2009 Pots and Pans Revolution following the financial crash. No one is named in the proposal but it is clear that it is aimed at certain MPs of the Left-Green party, notably its chair, Steingrímur J. Sigfússon, and Álfheiður Ingadóttir who, I should note in the interest of maintaining a semblance of left-right cheap laugh parity in this article, is the party whip.

I was going to ask what a party whip does, but I'm pretty sure it can't possibly live up to the name.

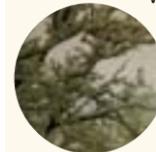
Basically, in the Icelandic parliament their main function is to confer with the Speaker of the... sorry, I think I will erase that particularly boring bit of information from my brain and go back to snickering childishly at the term "party whip." To sober up a bit, however, it is rather uncomfortable to think that members of parliament feel the need to propose launching an investigation into their political adversaries based on nothing more than hearsay and innuendo. While not much that Icelandic politicians do is remotely similar to the kinds of shenanigans Republicans who court with the Tea Party get up to, insinuations of left-wing conspiracy is exactly the kind of thing they do. That kind of politics requires a cup of mint tea to soothe the stomach.



September began weirdly, as the media widely reported on a brutal attack of a six-year-old boy by a group of older boys, which allegedly left the victim hospitalised. The event was so unheard of in Iceland that it naturally gained a lot of traction. However, when police were contacted about the matter, they said that they had only learned about the attacks through the media—nobody had reported to the police that their son had been beaten and hospitalised. The matter got weirder when it came to light that the sole witness of the event was a football coach, who claimed to have stopped the attack and insisted that the parents involved didn't want to go to the police. Right. Further digging revealed that there was no concrete evidence backing up that the attack ever happened in the first place, and police believe the matter was a hoax. What a strange way to get your name in the paper.



It also happened to be an unusually bad month to be a sheep in Iceland. Earlier in the month, several sheep died in a truck accident, ironically, on their way to the slaughterhouse. The other sheep probably thought they got off easy until they got to where they were going. Later on,



many sheep in the north of Iceland found themselves stranded in foul weather and needed to be rescued from being buried alive in the snow. Again, the sheep were saved thanks to the concerted effort of the Rescue Squad and others. They were promptly shipped off to be slaughtered.

In fact, September saw some unseasonably bad weather for much of the country. The aforementioned snow and ice up north was accompanied by winds up to 25 metres per second. Power lines were downed across north Iceland, with Akureyri—the region's largest town—losing electricity for several hours. Surrounding farms and villages found themselves without power for days afterwards.

Continues over

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The Nazi Clause Strikes Again

A very short history of degradations

Words

Snorri Páll Jónsson Úlfhildarson

Photo

German Federal Archive

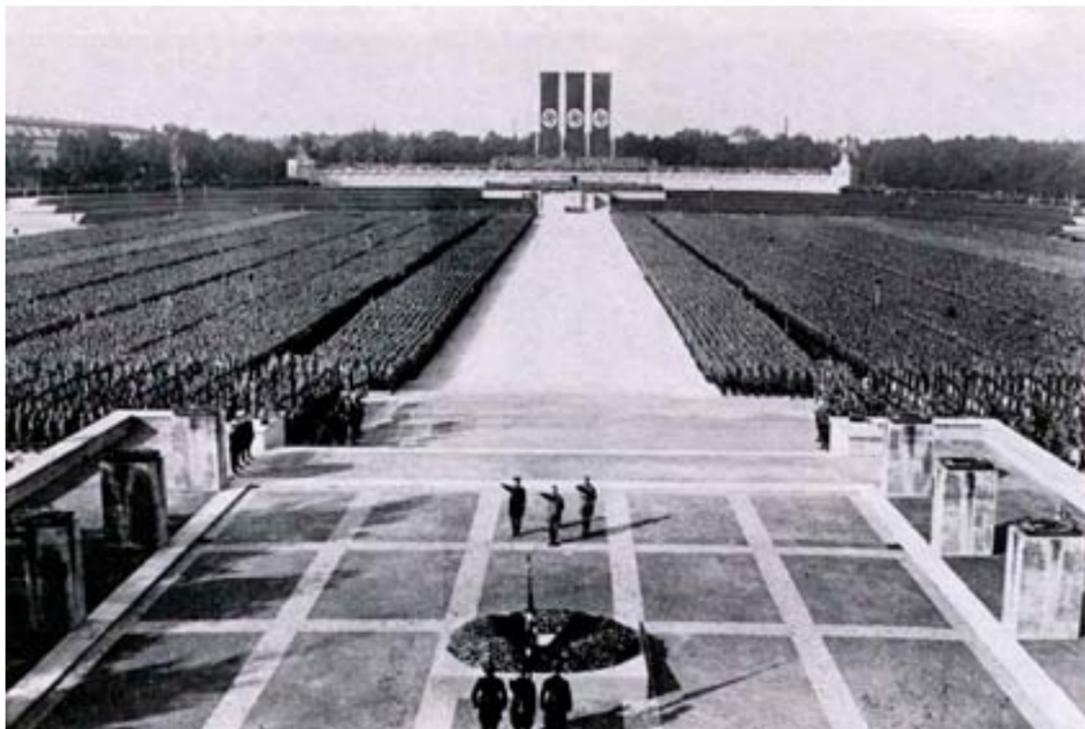
Can an individual degrade a whole nation or nation state? Apparently the answer is “yes” as suggested by the 95th clause of Iceland’s criminal code: “Anyone who publicly degrades a foreign nation or a foreign state, its top official, its head of state, its flag or another authorised national characteristic, the flag of the United Nations or the flag of the Council of Europe, is subjected to penalty or imprisonment up to two years.” Moreover, the law allows for an imprisonment up to six years if the violation is considered that serious.

While this particular clause has not typically been a matter of discussion—as it rarely comes up in courtrooms or public debates—the Left Greens recently put forth a resolution against it, arguing that it is primeval and can be misused to suppress freedom of speech.

The most recent incident

Their resolution comes shortly after the law surfaced in Reykjavík this July. During a relatively big demonstration in protest of the imprisonment of three members of the feminist collective Pussy Riot, the Russian flag was taken down from the Russian Embassy’s flagpole and juggled around by the crowd. In front of that same embassy a month later—more precisely on the day of the Pussy Riot sentence—police made it known that four individuals were under investigation, accused of violating the above-mentioned law.

Prior to this incident, the law was last used in April 2009 when Czech citizen Jan Jiricek was sentenced to pay a 250,000 ISK fine for his act of protest by the Chinese Embassy in Reykjavík. During the trial, Jiricek, who painted the embassy’s stairs with red—an act supported by a written statement sent to most of Iceland’s media—denied having disgraced the Chinese state and nation, admitting only to have physically opposed the Chinese authorities’ treatment of the Tibetan people. Yet his de-



“
The five communists had taken down and trampled on the German Nazi Party’s swastika flag, which was flapping by the German Vice-Consulate in the northern town of Siglufjörður.
”

fence didn’t convince the judge who, in his verdict, stated that Jan had clearly degraded the Chinese state and nation.

The most infamous incident

The most famous—and at the same time infamous—example of this law takes us back to the year 1934 when five men, one of them poet Steinn Steinarr, were punished for degrading the German state. The five communists had taken down and trampled on the German Nazi Party’s swastika flag, which was flapping by the German Vice-Consulate in the northern town of Siglufjörður. For this act they received two and three

months long prison sentences. Since then, the 95th clause has been widely referred to as the Nazi Clause.

Many recalled this story in 2002 when Iceland’s Supreme Court sentenced and fined three men for degrading the United States of America. In opposition to the superpower’s foreign policy, one of them had prepared a Molotov cocktail—a rarely employed tool of resistance in Iceland—that he threw at the US Embassy in Reykjavík during a short pause in the middle of their Friday night pub-crawl. Four of five judges found the three men guilty while the fifth judge issued a special provision of acquittal, maintaining that the men were under influence of alcohol and thus the Molotov’s political message was dismissed.

The most absurd incident

Finally, the most absurd event based on the clause’s existence took place in 1993 when Þorsteinn Pálsson, then Minister of Fisheries accused Bill Clinton—during an argument between Iceland and the US over the former country’s whaling—of having watched too many mafia films. Seen by the latter state’s authorities as a disgrace to the US state and its nation, Þorsteinn was heavily criticised for his words

and some wondered if he had, in fact, violated the Nazi clause. The problem, however, was that it falls under the criminal code’s chapter on treason, a violation which will only be brought to court on the behest of the Minister of Justice. And at this time, the Ministry of Justice was governed by that very same Minister of Fisheries, Þorsteinn Pálsson, who predictably didn’t end up pressing charges against himself.

Now, back to this summer’s events by the Russian Embassy, it will be up to Ögmundur Jónasson, Minister of Interior, to decide if four individuals will be brought to court for treason. Though he certainly is not facing the same situation as Þorsteinn, Ögmundur nevertheless faces the fact that these four people are all members of his very own party, the Left Greens. Additionally, he has officially criticised the sentencing of Pussy Riot, saying to Iceland’s National Broadcasting Service RÚV that despite not wanting to take a stand on the feminists’ conduct, the imprisonment should be discussed within the international human rights debate—and condemned. Whether Ögmundur heeds his party’s warning remains to be seen.

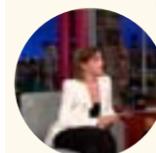


– Continued –

➔ Days later, Icelanders braced themselves for what seemed might turn into a Melancholia-level event, albeit not because a rogue planet was believed to be on its way to collide with the Earth, but because it seemed a tropical storm was headed to Iceland. The storm, Leslie, originated in the Caribbean and swung its way up the east coast of the US and Canada, before veering northeast. All estimates showed that Leslie would be at tropical storm strength by the time it reached Iceland. Fortunately, however, that day came and went with partially cloudy skies and mild winds, and so Iceland was spared destruction ... for now.



➔ Celebrity fever continued in Iceland, although Emma Watson’s visit didn’t seem to garner much media attention—until she returned home. Speaking as a guest on the Letterman show, she said she found it baffling that Icelanders would try to promote



tours to see how adorable whales and puffins are, only to follow that up by serving said animals to tourists for dinner. The remarks caused many to focus on Emma’s perceived snobbery, all the while ignoring David Letterman’s far more offensive remarks about most Icelanders being alcoholics. Maybe people are just used to Letterman being an ass, who knows?

➔ In the tech world, it was reported that internet service providers Vodafone and Síminn—arguably Iceland’s two largest ISPs—were considering blocking access to porn and gambling sites for “computer safety” reasons, as these sites are sometimes rife with malware, with an option for customers to unblock their access after the fact. The story sparked outrage among many Icelanders, in particular those close to issues

Continues over

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What Will Lifting Capital Controls Mean For Iceland's Recovery? *It's complicated*

Words

Jenna Gottlieb

Illustration

Grapevine

If Icelanders want to buy currency, say US dollars, they can only purchase \$2,800 USD, and they must prove to their bank that they are travelling to another country. Icelanders have been operating under this reality for the last four years, when capital controls were put in place to protect the value of Iceland's currency.

With the removal of those capital controls set to take place 2013, Icelanders may soon have an easier time buying foreign currency. At the same time, there is much concern over how this will affect Iceland's economic recovery.

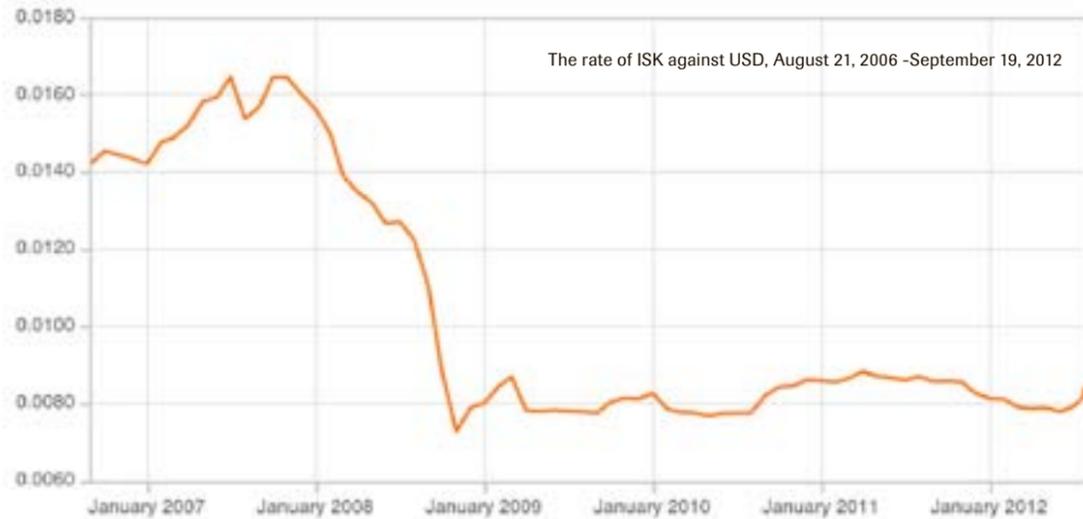
Uh oh, the glacier bonds

To refresh your memory, capital controls were established in late 2008 after the króna plunged as much as 80% against the euro. The controls blocked an estimated \$8 billion in assets from leaving the economy.

The main reason given for establishing capital controls at that time was that without strict controls, there was a risk that the owners of 'Jöklabréf' ("glacier bonds"), equivalent to 50% of GDP, would rush to unload their holdings thereby making the Icelandic króna plunge even further than the 50% depreciation from the króna's peak to bottom.

"Glacier bonds were issued for \$300 billion ISK," says Dr. Sigríður Benediktsdóttir, director of the financial stability department at the Central Bank of Iceland. "To put it simply, there's a John Smith in Canada holding a bond in ISK, payable in ISK, as it has a higher interest rate than his local bond market. The crisis hit in 2008 and to pay out that bond and simultaneously all of them within a few days, it would have resulted in a steep devaluation of the currency, which wouldn't have been very good. This is the reason we had to resort to capital controls and this is the overhang we're working with now."

To reduce the future risk of a currency collapse, the Central Bank of



Iceland has submitted proposals for relaxing capital controls in stages, in an effort to remove the controls as soon as possible without risking economic stability.

"The main thing we're trying to do is prevent what happened before the financial collapse," Sigríður says. "Many things that we're proposing have been in effect in other countries."

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Cutting off life support

In a 2011 Central Bank report, it was stated that before the capital controls would be lifted for Icelandic residents, it would be necessary to adopt rules designed to protect the financial system against the risk that could accompany unrestricted capital flows, including liquidity risk in the financial institutions' balance sheets. Iceland would also have to address the risk entailed in foreign currency lending to residents without income in the borrowed currencies.

The time has come for proposals.

"The first rule deals with liquidity issues," Sigríður says. "Before the collapse we would only look at short-term inflows and outflows and we didn't care if the outflows were in foreign currency. That was a problem."

The proposed rules "should limit foreign exchange risk in the financial system, as well as limiting foreign currency liquidity risk; furthermore, they will, in combination, limit the banks' potential for excessive growth."

“The unilateral adoption of another currency would have significant risks associated with them.”

Will the króna make it?

Meanwhile, others are less optimistic, and talk of adopting an alternative currency continues.

Pórolfur Matthíasson, an economics professor at the University of Iceland, told the New York Times in July: "The capital controls are worse and worse for companies, but the fear is that if we lift them, the value of the króna will collapse." Pórolfur says the solution would be for Iceland to join a larger, more stable currency, such as the euro.

A Central Bank report on Iceland's currency and exchange rate published on September 17, noted that there could be positive outcomes if the euro is adopted including increased international trade.

Still, it's not so straightforward. Már Guðmundsson, governor of the Central Bank, said at a press conference, "The unilateral adoption of another currency would have significant risks associated with them." He went on to say that joining the Eurozone would depend on the debt crisis in Europe, which is in its third year.

Another proposal in the Central Bank's report concerns limiting deposits from abroad. "The issue, deposits from abroad, came to half of our GDP," Sigríður says. "The regulator couldn't stop the deposits. It's the way that governance is. It takes time. We want to limit it, but the aim of this is to not to punish foreign deposit holders. In fact, what we're trying to achieve is to discourage foreigners from putting deposits in our banks."

Sigríður is optimistic about lifting the restriction: "Some are bullish, and I tend to be," she says. "To the extent that the economy has 2-3% growth, we have about 5% unemployment, and strong exporting and tourism, I think lifting capital controls will be positive."

When will the Central Bank's changes be enacted? The timeline for the proposals is complicated. "This is a political decision," she says. "As of now, the rules for capital controls expire at the end of 2013, but we also have elections in April next year and their outcome may affect the liberalisation process."



- Continued -

involving technology and freedom of speech. However, Vodafone spokesperson Hrannar Pétursson wrote to the Grapevine shortly after the story was printed and said that if the company went forward, the idea is that the "filter," while put in place by default, would be completely on the user end and could be easily turned off.

Parliament opened, and this year a temporary security fence was erected around the front of the parliamentary building. This measure was likely put in place after last year's parliamentary opening resulted in Left Green MP Árni Þór Sigurðsson getting decked in the head with an egg. However, there was little to fear, as very few protesters showed up for the opening events and the fence was taken down shortly thereafter.



They say that crime doesn't pay, but whoever said that likely meant "any crime but insider trading." Former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance Baldur Guðlaugsson—who was found guilty of insider trading and is currently serving a two-year prison sentence—now has at least two jobs while behind bars. He is one of the owners of Almenna bókafélagið ("the Public Book Society"), which will be working in close contact with the newly established libertarian "think tank" Research Centre for Innovation and Growth (RNH). And he has also more recently been hired by the law offices of Lex, where a lawyer spoke glowingly of Baldur's experience and how it will contribute to the firm. What sort of "experience" an inside trader could bring that would be beneficial to a law office was not mentioned.



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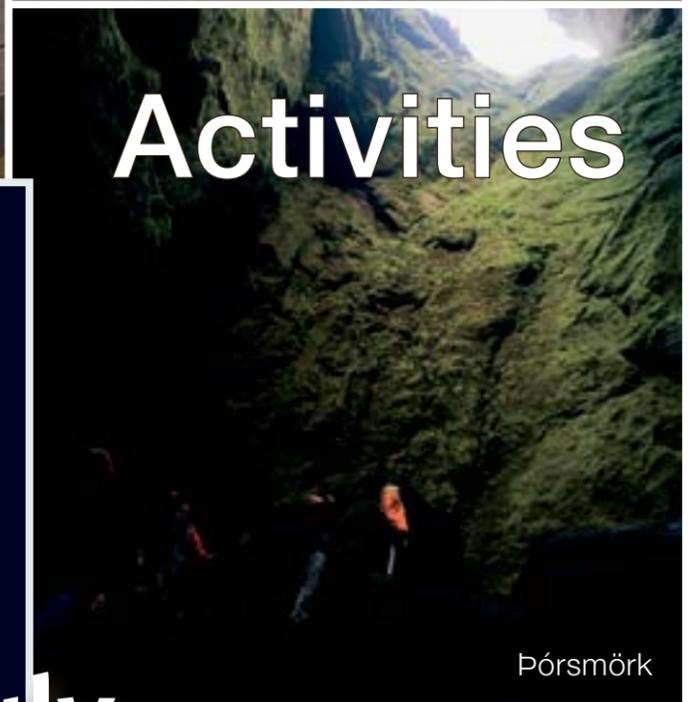
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Keeping Downtown Wild *What does the future hold for Vatnsmýri?*

Words by Arit John Photography by Arit John



Two-dozen little girls in Icelandic sweaters are singing songs inside a small glass building just outside the Nordic House. To the north one can see Vatnsmýri (“water swamp”), the small wetland area and wildlife reserve in downtown Reykjavík. Somewhere behind the plants Mayor of Reykjavík Jón Gnarr is waiting for his cue. He’ll be canoeing through the body of water to the shore where 20 or so eager guests—journalists, university employees and Nordic House staff—will greet him.

A few minutes before this grand event, Nordic House CEO Max Dager takes a moment to address the crowd, huddled together under the shelter of the building. “So why are we holding all these festivities here on a rainy day in Reykjavík? It is because we think that here in Reykjavík we have a unique extra quality which is rather unknown. And that is this wetland area and bird habitat here in the absolute centre of the capital.”

The mayor’s canoe trip is merely a gimmick of the September 13 press conference held to celebrate the opening of the Nordic House’s ‘Life in the Vatnsmýri’ exhibition, as well as to celebrate the first steps taken towards improving biodiversity in the wetlands.

Educating the next generation

Housed on the basement level of the Nordic House, the exhibition covers the wildlife and vegetation in the area and the Nordic House’s future plans for the area. The walls are lined with actual plants cut from the wetlands, as well as feathers and life-like dummies of the birds that nest there.

The second room of the exhibition contains a table with several magnifying glasses, where elementary school students can study samples from Vatnsmýri up close. This, after all, is the goal

of the exhibition, to educate the next generation about the importance of nature in the capital. Max stressed the importance of teaching children about the importance of preserving nature and biodiversity. Instilling this sense of responsibility in the younger generation is a step towards ensuring the longevity of Vatnsmýri.

“Every weekday there will be a nature school for all of the elementary schools in the city and every day until the end of the exhibition in November it’s fully booked even though it hasn’t opened,” Max said. “I’m just sorry that I’m not 9–12 years old because then I could participate in this.”

Man vs. wild

The day isn’t just about the nature school. In collaboration with the University of Iceland, the City of Reykjavík and a team of scientists, landscape artists and engineers, the Nordic House has taken the first step in improving Vatnsmýri, a project that may take several decades. Specifically, they have expanded the ditches near the bird reservation so the area is completely surrounded by water. They have also lowered the level of the water by one metre and taken strides to remove some of the invasive plant species.

Over the years we have forgotten to upkeep the area, Max said during his opening remarks. “Now it’s polluted, we have a lack of birds nesting here and the number is diminishing every year. But now, at least, we have started a change in this development.”

Pollution in Vatnsmýri comes from two locations: Hringbraut, the main road that borders Vatnsmýri to the north, and the domestic airport, Vatnsmýri’s southern neighbour. When it rains, various contaminants—oil and chemicals used to defrost airplane wings, for example—are washed from the offending sites directly into the wetlands.

Katrín Ragnarsdóttir, the Nordic House’s architect, said the next step in

“*It’s really a unique opportunity to have the capital of a country with a very large, green park in the city centre.*”

improving the wetlands would be to prevent pollution by building drainage systems along Hringbraut and the airport. The Nordic House is also investigating methods of cleaning the water in Vatnsmýri naturally, using plants that are able to filter out chemicals and toxins. They have partnered with environmental NGO Landvernd (“Land protection”) to host a series of lectures with experts on the subject.

A call for ideas

In 2007, the Reykjavík City Council called on the international community to come up with suggestions for the development of the Vatnsmýri area. The area under consideration encompassed the Reykjavík Domestic airport, Hljómskálagarður park, the University of Iceland and Reykjavík University, Nauthólsvík thermal beach, Öskjuhlíð hill, the Nordic House and Vatnsmýri wetlands and nature reserve. Participants were allowed to assume that the Reykjavík Domestic Airport (scheduled to be phased out by 2016) was no longer present.

In the introduction to the call for ideas, Hanna Birna Kristjánsdóttir, the chair of the jury and a city councillor at the time, wrote: “Urban planning is always an interesting task, but planning capital cities and their key areas is not only fascinating but also very challenging for all communities which set themselves high standards. And Reykjavík is indeed that kind of community and that kind of city.”



will be relocated. Those opposed to the move cite the need for large city centres to have access to air transportation, especially considering the country’s lack of trains.

Even the Nordic House, which would benefit greatly from the absence of the airport and the pollution it produces, isn’t intent on the airport moving right away. “The airport should move when people are ready,” Katrín said.

“It’s not really a pressing matter, I don’t think it has to be exactly now,” Katrín said. “Iceland doesn’t really have the money to develop the area right now anyway, but in the future I think that this will be one of the areas that will be important and valuable for the city centre.”

This spring the Nordic House launched a call for entries of its own, asking participants to suggest ways to improve Vatnsmýri and connect it to the lake. The winning entry proposed digging a trench, or a “rainbow” passage under Hringbraut, “letting water, people and nature flow freely between the two sites,” as the proposal reads.

Connecting Vatnsmýri to Hljómskálagarður park makes sense. Ecologically, Vatnsmýri and the lake share the same water supply. Water flows underneath Öskjuhlíð hill, down to the airport, through Vatnsmýri, under Hringbraut and into the lake. It continues to the stream underneath Lækjargata (“stream road”).

Manufacturing wild nature

At the end of the day, the Nordic House understands its limitations. Despite the presence of natural water in the area, Vatnsmýri is a man-made wetland. The first generation of ducks to settle in the area were brought in by humans. Their wings were clipped to keep them in Reykjavík and only after several generations did their offspring get in the habit of returning to Vatnsmýri.

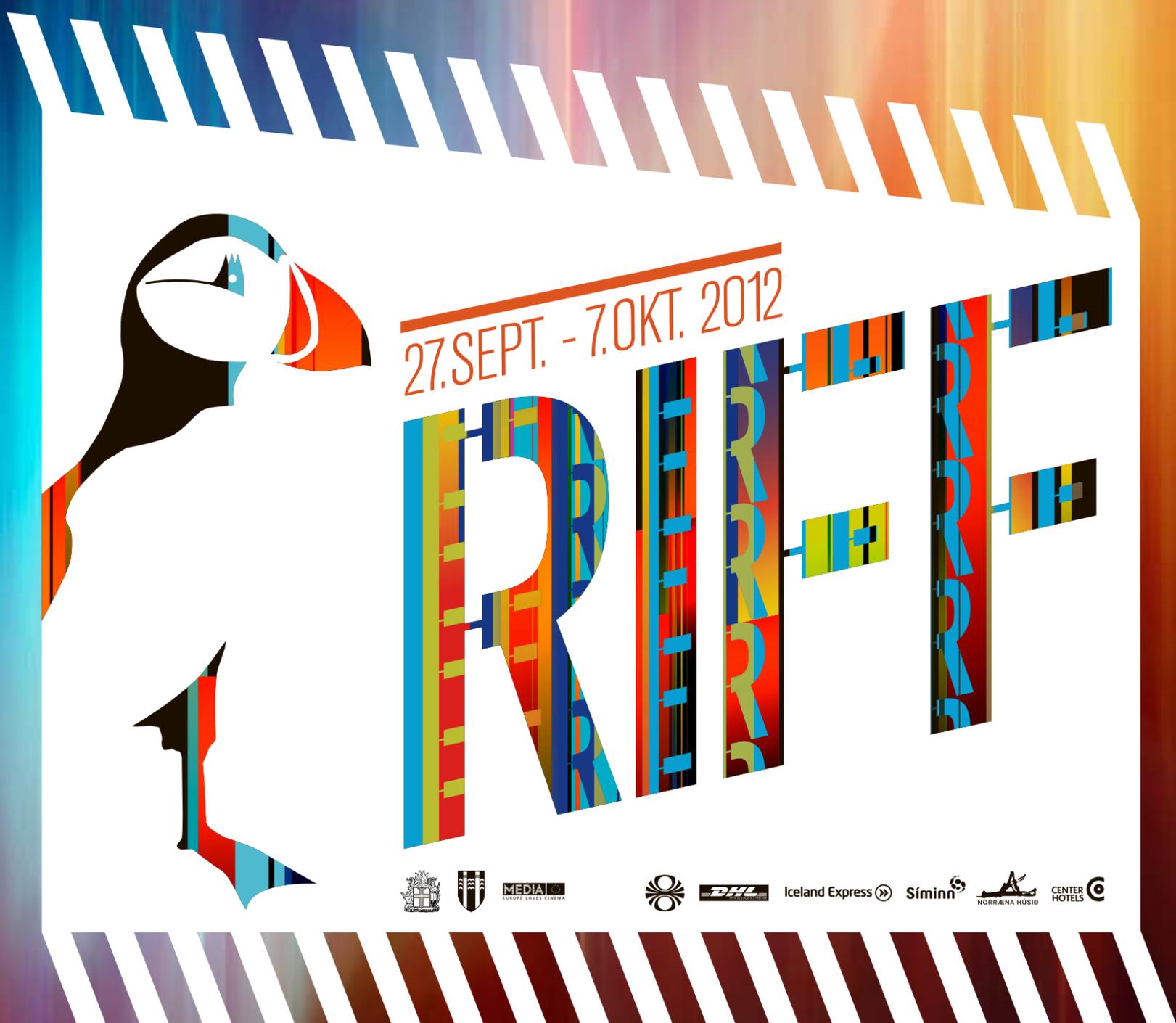
“The birds are there because the Nordic House chooses for them to be there,” Katrín said. The inorganic development of the Vatnsmýri makes humans responsible for the area, but also limits how successful it can become.

“The important thing is to understand that... we call it wild nature in the capital, but it’s man made and it’s really there for the birds to nest,” Katrín said. “You have to take care of it as if it were a garden or a flower bed. It’s really not, and it never will be, the most perfect wetlands area. What’s interesting about this area is it being a showcase to the citizens.”

For the Nordic House, the University of Iceland and ultimately the city of Reykjavík, the key is to not take the development opportunities available to them for granted. Only a handful of capital cities can lay claim to a giant swath of green nature in the centre of their city. So while Vatnsmýri may not be the most impressive wetlands area in Iceland, it serves a specific purpose.

“It’s really a unique opportunity to have the capital of a country with a very large, green park in the city centre,” Katrín said. “And we should take care of that option and not build a little here and a little there until the possibility’s not there anymore because you cut it into pieces.”

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protected designation of origin. Einar concedes that Iceland-made skyr may face the same fate, forced to carry the title 'Icelandic Skyr' if it is to be enjoyed protected designation of origin status.

Consumer choice

At the same time, he says there is a risk that preventing foreign producers from using the name 'skyr' could limit its ability to permeate markets outside Iceland. Although Einar says this might be a concern for producers, he believes exporters benefit by capturing the attention of consumers abroad with recognised specialities.

And ultimately Einar insists that saving our skyr is worth the effort: "Consumers like to buy produce that has a genuine local connection. Today many people tend to prefer original authentic local fare to goods that are mass-produced by big global corporations. And this will benefit farmers back in Iceland too."

Sigurgeir Þorgeirsson of Iceland's Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture says that a working group is being formed to prepare legislation to negotiate terms with the EU. "The working group will first examine the pros and cons. If the outcome is positive as we expect, a bill will be presented to Parliament," he explains. "The working group will propose the form of legislation, but they will look carefully at existing EU regulations in crafting an Icelandic law."

In addition to skyr, Icelandic lamb and butter may also secure protected status as a product of Iceland. The red, white and blue of the Icelandic standard could be a fixture on produce down every aisle in the supermarkets of Reykjavik before long.

Words

Mark O'Brien

Photo

Alisa Kalyanova

Icelandic government to set in motion an agreement with the European Union that could see skyr given "protected geographical indication" status, labelling the product as Iceland-made and preventing foreign imitators from using the "skyr" name.

He cites Parmesan cheese as a key example, which is trademarked in Italy, manufactured in a limited area in the north of the country and therefore labelled with protected designation of origin status in the European Union. "Italian farmers had to fight hard for this," he adds. "Elsewhere, in Canada or the USA for example, imitations can still be made."

"The name 'skyr' could have the same fate as 'Geysir' or other Icelandic names that become generic, general names used falsely for other products"

Increasing exports

The report, authored by Einar Karl Haraldsson, founding editor of Fréttablaðið and current chair of Inspired By Iceland, argues that geographical protected status would strengthen exports whilst boosting domestic production by establishing Iceland-made skyr as the gold standard product.

Skyr is gaining popularity abroad, especially in other Nordic countries, with exports bringing millions of krónur back to producers every year, but Einar says foreign production compromises the integrity of the Icelandic brand name. "The name 'skyr' could have the same fate as 'Geysir' or other Icelandic names that become generic, general names used falsely for other products," he states.

European integration

Brussels insists that an agreement on protected status must be reached as part of Iceland's prospective entry to the European Union; however it is not tied to the country's membership. Norway, like Iceland, is not a member of the EU, but it has nonetheless reached a special agreement, whereby it recognises the geographical status of over a thousand products in return for nineteen of its products being protected across the continent, including Hardanger fruits, stockfish and Norwegian wild sheep.

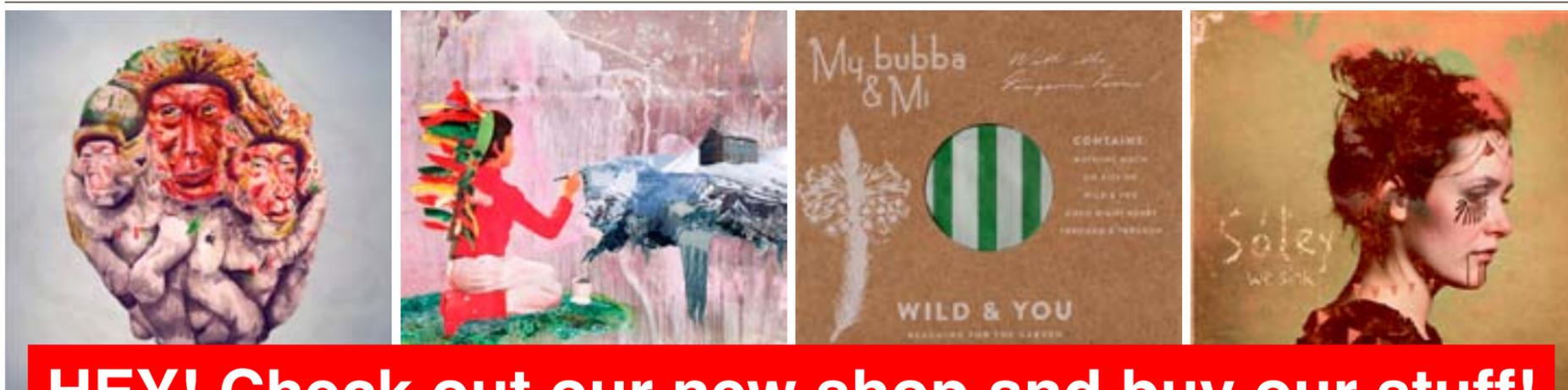
"Norway has a special agreement which means EU products can't be

imitated, and nor can theirs in Europe," Einar says. "A Norwegian firm wouldn't be able to produce a Parma ham imitation and call it the real thing."

Some efforts across Europe to secure protected status have not been met with success. Manufacturers in the English West Country attempted to guarantee the geographical status of Cheddar cheese, which takes its name from a village in Somerset. As the name has long been widely outside the region, only cheddar produced from local milk in the area with the name 'West Country Farmhouse Cheddar' carries

Rows of small circular tubs in an array of colours are a familiar sight to visitors who stop off at an Icelandic supermarket and head straight to the dairy refrigerator. Despite the fact that Iceland's fabled skyr is older than the sagas (in *Grettir's Saga*, Auðunn hurls a bag of skyr at his adversary Grettir the Strong), the fresh acid-set cheese gorged ad nauseam by indulgent new arrivals has no formal status as a "product of Iceland" anywhere in the world. That, however, could soon change, if dairy industry leaders have their way.

A new report commissioned by Iceland's Association of Dairy and Meat Producers ("Samtök mjólkur- og kjötvinnslufyrirtækja," SMK) is urging the



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Iceland: From A “Kreppa” Basket Case To A Miraculous Example

Words by Sigrún Davíðsdóttir

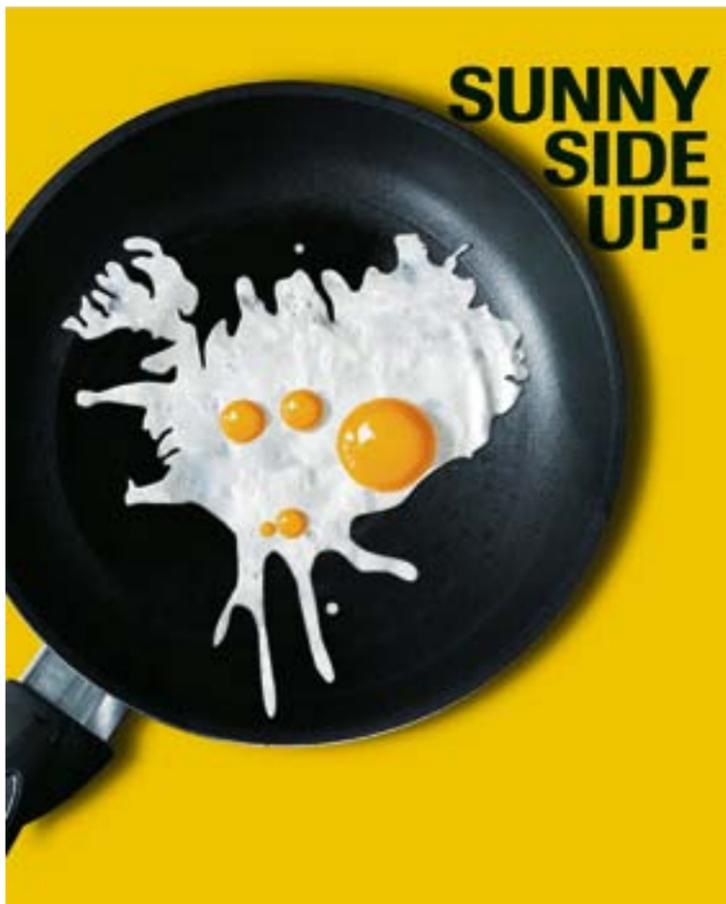
In the autumn of 2008, international media and famous economists descended on Iceland to watch the first European country plunge into crisis and become a financial basket case. Now, they are flocking to Iceland to study how a country could rise up so fast after its deep plunge. Some even talk about a “miracle.” The only people who don’t seem to be in awe of the “miracle” are the Icelanders themselves.

“The ‘Kreppa’ is over,” Gylfi Zoega professor of economics at the University of Iceland stated this summer. After severe contraction of the Icelandic economy following the October 2008 collapse of the country’s three main Icelandic banks—Kauþthing, Landsbanki and Glitnir—years of misery, with rising unemployment and stagnated or diminishing salaries, seemed unavoidable. But the “Kreppa” seems to have ended and the economy is, all things considered, doing remarkably well.

So well that those who descended on Iceland in 2008 to witness the doom and gloom are now returning to study the Icelandic “Kreppa” remedies. Famous economists like Nobel-prize winners Paul Krugman and Joseph Stiglitz debate the Icelandic case and use it to further their theories.

The short answer is that not saving the banks and issuing massive write-downs of loans, both to companies and individuals, has unshackled the economy. Additionally, the devalued króna makes Icelandic goods and services attractive to foreigners. Even nature has come to aid: the tried and tested means of Icelandic survival, fishing, has been good the last few years.

For the national psyche the most important indicator is the unemployment figure. In Iceland, it peaked at 9% in the second quarter of 2009. At the time, Iceland seemed to resemble Ireland with its mass emigration, but that trend has now changed. This year, unemployment might land just under 7%. In the newly presented budget for 2013, the estimated unemployment figure is 5.3%. Last year saw a 2.6% increase in GDP after a contraction of 6.6% in 2009 and 4.4% the following year.



(Almost) no Icelandic banks saved

How did Iceland’s “Kreppa”-beating measures compare to those employed in other European countries in recession? Unlike other badly “Kreppa”-hit countries like Ireland, Greece and now Spain, the Icelandic state didn’t refinance the three failed banks. In other words, Iceland didn’t save its failed banks.

The credo of the European Central Bank and the European Commission has been that no bank must fail in the Eurozone and no bondholders must suffer losses, so as not to undermine the faith in the euro. Consequently, the debt accumulated by private banks has migrated from the private sector to the public sector in countries that refinanced failed banks. Instead of the losses being born by private institutions, which incurred them by reckless lending, they

“*In Iceland, the bank would most likely have written part of the debt off; the truck-owner kept one or two trucks, enabling him to keep some staff. If the plan had worked out, he would have repaid the remaining debt and everyone lived happily ever after.*”

are being born by taxpayers.

Iceland wasn’t burdened with any such lofty ideals. Or mostly not—the Icelandic government did indeed hope to rescue the banks, but faced with the enormity of a triple bank failure in autumn 2008 it was forced to drop the idea. Thus was born the heroic—but not entirely true—saga of the little country that refused to save its banks. The three big banks were well beyond salvation—but the state did recapitalize a swath of smaller banks, at quite a substantial cost to Icelandic taxpayers. However, this doesn’t alter the fact that foreign creditors bore the brunt of the collapse of the banks and the Icelandic economy was not dragged down by the three failed banks.

Write-downs: a force of good—and bad

Another concerted action that set Iceland apart from other European countries in recession is the widespread and extensive write-down of loans, both for companies and individuals. When debt is too high to be repaid, writing it down or off is a classic tool. An economy weighed down by unsustainable debt turns into a zombie state of the living dead. Japan in the ‘90s is still the scariest example of this situation: debt wasn’t written down as necessary, partially because no one wanted to admit the problem.

In Iceland, it was quickly understood that a massive write-down would benefit the economy. The “currency basket” loans—foreign-currency loans in or pegged to more than one currency—had gone from being an escape from high Icelandic interest rates to the road to hell for the borrowers as the króna collapsed with the banks and the terms of the foreign-currency loans shot up. The plight of these borrowers became the most visible and discussed effect of the collapse of the banks—and finding a solution for them became the dominant political issue.

The legality of the foreign-currency loans was tested in courts with the Icelandic High Court ruling that it was legal to lend in króna, but illegal to peg loans to foreign rates. It was a simple verdict, but anything but simple in

practice as the loans varied greatly. Consequently, the loans have turned into a nightmare for the new banks, and are so far only partially resolved.

For private individuals, the “110% way” has become the standard solution: mortgages above the value of the property are written down to 110% of its value. This has more or less solved the problem of private debt overhang and though there will still be people suffering payment difficulties the “110% way” seems to have benefitted the economy as a whole. Similarly, the banks have developed standard debt guidelines for companies.

Other economic lubricators are changes to bankruptcy laws, shortening the period of bankruptcy to two years. Compare this to Spain where the debt period lasts the rest of your life. A recent article in the German magazine Der Spiegel recounted how an owner of several trucks went bankrupt, the bank took all his trucks and now he and those who worked for him are out of work and the truck-owner will remain in this situation for the rest of his life. In Iceland, the bank would most likely have written part of the debt off and the truck-owner keeps one or two trucks, enabling him to keep some staff. If the plan had worked out, he would have repaid the remaining debt and everyone lived happily ever after.

The tricky thing for the Icelandic banks is to convince Icelanders that write-downs aren’t being used to help those who were the banks’ favoured clients before the collapse and who had access to far too favourable lending. Write-downs awake suspicion in Iceland although economists view these means as an important step out of the economic zombie state.

Is all of this as good as it seems?

The greatest challenge to prosperity in Iceland is recession and low growth in the European Union, Iceland’s biggest market. Icesave—this interminable dispute with the Dutch and the British over the Landsbanki internet accounts, called

Continues on page 26



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Would you like to be a candidate in Reykjavík's Multicultural Council?

Reykjavík's Multicultural Congress will be held Saturday November 10th, in Borgarleikhúsið (City Theatre). Elections will be held for seats on Reykjavík's Multicultural Council, which consists of 7 council members and 7 alternates. All immigrants 18 years and older can apply as a candidate. All interested are encouraged to contact Reykjavík's Human Rights Office for more information by email mannrettindi@reykjavik.is or by phone 411 4153.

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Feature | Film



The Impossible Feat

Baltasar Kormákur makes movies and loves the journey

Words by Sveinn Birkir Björnsson • Photo by Baldur Kristjánsson

Director Baltasar Kormákur is to Icelandic film what Sigur Rós is to Icelandic music. After successfully making the Hollywood box-office hit 'Contraband,' starring Mark Wahlberg and Giovanni Ribisi, Baltasar has returned to Iceland with the docudrama 'The Deep,' the story of Guðlaugur Friðþórsson, the lone survivor from the five man crew of the fishing boat Hellisey VE 503 that went down three nautical miles East of Heimaey in March of 1984. Guðlaugur spent five hours in the frigid sea (5°C) before reaching Heimaey island. He then walked barefoot across a lava field for three hours before finding help. Guðlaugur's extraordinary feat is considered nearly impossible.

The film was previewed last night, and it has been met with great praise. It must be a relief for you that it has found such a positive reaction, given that this was not an easy subject to cover.

No, it was not an easy subject, and the conditions for making the film were not really easy either, as it turned out. But I took my time with it. I decided from the get go that I would not give into commercial pressure. I wanted to take all the time I needed. I was working on other projects in the meantime. Two-three weeks ago, I was shooting [the upcoming] '2 Guns' in the New Mexico desert, and I was still using downtime to edit this movie. I made some substantial changes towards the end, and I think the distance and the time I spent away from the film gave me a better perspective of the story. I felt it was

very important to make the film with a certain humbleness towards the subject and I am very pleased that this feeling seems to come across to the audience. I did not want to dramatise the story, or create an antagonist, some bad guy for the main character to go up against. The nature is the antagonist. The enemy he must overcome.

You have said the film is also a reflection on the economic turbulence Iceland has been through.

I see it as reflection on who we are, essentially. Where do we come from? What is the fabric we are made of? I wanted to return to the basics. American heroes wear capes, Icelandic heroes wear sea gear. That is why this is such a powerful story; the narrative drive stands so close the Sagas. Someone performs an inexplicable hu-

man feat, does not really want to talk about it and downplays the whole thing. This is so close the national character and I believe it is what makes the story fascinating. It comes from within us. This is really a story of a nation.

Films and theatre are not toys; they are serious art forms. This is the first time in Icelandic film history that someone deals with a tragedy at sea. This is the biggest scar we bear as a nation. Everyone knows someone who has lost someone at sea in Iceland. This is something that stands so close to us. And we have never dealt with this. It is as if we just consider this the cost of doing business.

Small Towns Are A Microcosm Of Society As A Whole

This is your second film that deals with life in a small fishing village. The first one ('The Sea,' 2002) was a reflection on a time that might be described as the beginning of an era that eventually led the Icelandic economy into a tailspin.

That is an interesting analogy. Whatever people want to say about that film, it was a warning of things to come. The film was based on a play that was written in 1993, and it was a warning of what would happen when we made the fishing quota individually transferable. We turned fish that had not yet been caught into a transferable asset. You can't base a transaction on a greater bubble than uncaught fish in the sea. Eventually,

“

The only way to do the film properly was to give it everything. I could not bear the thought of cheating. We sank the boat and filmed inside while it was sinking. And we swam through the surf and into the cliffs to film the footage when he reached land.

”

the market value of the uncaught fish became higher than the market value of the actual fish. This created enormous wealth for some people, and all this wealth, that was really based on nothing, had to be put to some use, and that was the foundation of the bubble that eventually burst in 2008. We can point fingers at people and events along the way, but this is the system that created the soil for the crash. But now, I am trying to approach this from a completely different direction. I am not saying that people should not be held responsible for their actions, but I don't believe that we can recover as society by shouting and pointing fingers. We will only recover when we move on.

What happened in Iceland is that we went from being a very simple society to a very modern society in only a few years. When I was a kid growing up in Kópavogur, I could never have dreamed of the success that I have enjoyed, making movies in Hollywood with someone like Denzel Washington. It simply did not seem possible. Björk was really the first Icelander to break



'Djúpið' ('The Deep') will be shown everyday at 17:50 with English subtitles at Háskólabíó



Baltasar Kormákur BIO:
Baltasar Kormákur (1966) is an Icelandic actor, theatre and film director, and film producer. He has directed films like 101 Reykjavík, The Sea and Jar City, and won the Crystal

the all boundaries and show that we could make it on the world stage. When we started to enjoy all this success, we became a little megalomaniac. And when the economy crumbled, we lost all our footing. We started to see ourselves through the eyes of foreigners, and based our self-image on how they reflected on us. As if that was something that mattered when we had completely lost everything. When you shit yourself, you clean up, and take a long hard look at yourself in the mirror.

You have to go through a process of self analysis; you can't overcome a crisis by inspecting what everyone else thinks of you. It is not important. You have to find yourself, and build from there. I am not saying that a film can do that, in and of itself, but I want it to be a part of that process. That is why I wanted to tell a story that can bring us together and reflects these values.

Do you think people will view these two films together as a commentary on this era as we move on?

I think it would probably be very interesting. I think it would be interesting to analyse what I was saying then, and what I am saying now, and how I have developed as a filmmaker during this time. I have changed since then. I was lot tougher back then. I think I have more for people today. I have more empathy. I hope that comes across. I am very proud of 'The Sea' and what I was trying to accomplish when I made it. Some people thought the film was making little of life in small towns, which is not at all what I had in mind. It was movie about people. I like to use a small town as a microcosm for society as a whole. This current movie is not just a movie about the Westman Islands, it is a movie about Iceland. A small town can be a great stage to examine a larger society.

Three of your recent films ('The Deep', 'The Sea' and 'White Night Wedding') are based on plays. Your background is in stage acting, do you specifically look towards your background in theatre for stories?

No I don't really pursue it; these stories have just found me. Plays often have a stronger gallery of characters than movie scripts, but I have also made films based on novels and written my own scripts. In this case it had more to do with the way I approach the story. Although it is based on a play, we did a lot of original research on this project and based the script as much on the events that transpired as on the play. There are certain scenes that come directly from the play, but other scenes are recreations of documented events, television interviews and so forth. I tried to stay true to the story, to the extent that it was possible.

The Laughable Hardship Of Ólafur Darri

We should talk about the role of (main actor) Ólafur Darri in this film. He gives an incredible performance.

Yes, I could not have given the part to anyone else. He is a big actor, both figuratively and literally, and he was just right for the part. He went through hell making this movie, and he knew that he would have to when he took the part. But it becomes rather ridiculous to talk about hardship when you are dealing with such an extraordinary

feat. Even if you spend three weeks filming out at sea, and you are wet and cold the whole time, it is just laughable in comparison.

Could you have made this movie in Hollywood, using union actors?

I think that would have been very difficult. I don't think we could even have gotten insurance for the production, the way we did it here, and what I had to do myself on the set, shooting scenes while swimming in the ocean a mile off shore to get the right angle for the shot, and taking shore in the cliffs in the surf like we did. You can't really do that in a Hollywood production. This was a big and complex production. There are underwater scenes, we had to shoot in a sinking boat, and shoot way out in the ocean and there is a volcanic eruption. The budget would probably have been 30–40 million dollars if I were making this movie in Hollywood. And I don't think I would have gotten many actors to sign up for what we had to go through. This was very trying for Ólafur Darri at times, and there were moments when he felt like throwing in the towel, but that was never an option.

He must be proud of his role in the movie?

He is, and he has said as much to me. There came a point when he completely broke down and did not want to go on. It was a very difficult moment to diffuse, because when you have pushed someone as far as they can go, and you keep on pushing, you are responsible for everything that happens after that. We talked then and I told him to think about the premiere, how satisfied he would be knowing that we took this all the way, and did not skip anything. He gave me a look, but



Björk was really the first Icelander to break the all boundaries and show that we could make it on the world stage. When we started to enjoy all this success, we became a little megalomaniac. And when the economy crumbled, we lost all our footing. We started to see ourselves through the eyes of foreigners, and based our self-image on how they reflected on us.



then he kept going. He mentioned this to me after the premiere last night, how good that felt, knowing that we never compromised.

The only way to do the film properly was to give it everything. I could not bear the thought of cheating. We sank the boat and filmed inside while it was sinking. And we swam through the surf and into the cliffs to film the footage when

he reached land. I didn't have the budget to create that in CGI, and I don't think the film would have resonated like it does if we had done that. I looked at the option of shooting certain scenes in a tank, using a green screen, the way 'Titanic' was shot, but it would have been impossible to make it look authentic, and I don't think it would have passed muster with an Icelandic audience if it didn't. So I decided we would just take the equipment and film it in the sea.

We even had to swim with the cameras from the boat to where we shot the scene because there was no place to dock the boat. We had the search and rescue team standing by on the boat, and when we had set up, and it was time to shoot, the guy from the search and rescue team did not want to let us do it, naturally. He simply said it wouldn't be possible to take land in the cliffs in these waves. I thought to myself, we can't lose a whole day of shooting. We have all this equipment, and everything is set up and we don't have the option to do it again. So, I told him I was going to do it anyway, and then I dove in. The waves threw me into the cliffs and out again, but I made it on the second try, and that was the shot we used in the film. At least I didn't put anyone in a situation that I was not willing to take on myself. Let's put it like that.

What are you like as a director? Are you an actor's director?

I might not be the best person to answer that question, but I think that if you asked actors that I've worked with, they might describe me as such. My background is in acting, so I understand actors very well, and I understand what they need from me. Actors need to work from a premise. If the premise is not there, the smallest thing becomes very difficult. But I am also very preoccupied with the frame and the visual aspect. My father is a painter and my mother is a sculptor, and I come from a very visual environment, so the breakdown and the visual part of the shot is very important to me. It is not something that I want to leave it to the cinematographer.

The Beckoning Of Hollywood

Is the disaster genre something that has gotten a grip on you? I hear you are preparing to make a film about the 1996 Everest disaster [which claimed eight lives]?

Well, that is a script that has been bouncing around for a long time. Stephen Daldry was assigned to it, and then David Fincher was going to do it. And now it has ended up with me and the ball is rolling. I am going to meet with an actor next month, who has the star power to get a movie like this into production if he's willing take on the part. If it happens, I want to shoot it here in Iceland on Vatnajökull. You can't really shoot on Everest, so the glacier will mostly have to stand in for Everest.

Some directors would probably rather shoot on the beaches of Brazil, but if someone offers me Everest, I can't say no. Being from Iceland, I enjoy grappling with the elements. I spend my summer vacations riding horses up in the highlands, which is probably the most difficult thing you can do for a summer vacation, riding horses for 12–14 hours. I can't describe what it does to you. I am never as

Globe award at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in 2007 for Jar City, based on a novel by the same name by author Arnaldur Indriðason. Baltasar Kormákur also made the films A Little Trip to Heaven (Julia Stiles, Forest Whitaker), and the box-hit Contraband (Mark Wahlberg, Giovanni Ribisi), and his film 2 Guns (Mark Wahlberg, Denzel Washington) is scheduled for release in 2013. The Deep is his latest movie.

Filmography (as Director)

101 Reykjavík (2000)
The Sea (2002)
A Little Trip to Heaven (2005)
Jar City (2006)
White Night Wedding (2008)
Inhale (2009)
Contraband (2012)
The Deep (2012)

physically tired as when I return, but at the same time, I never feel as rested. You reconnect with yourself. Just man against nature. Maybe I am just that primitive.

But I don't really think about making films in terms of genres. I just choose to tell the stories that appeal to me at that time. I don't want to limit myself or make the same movie over and over again.

There is a certain difference between the movies that you have made here in Iceland and the films you are directing in Hollywood. Your Icelandic productions are a lot more serious. This is a far more serious subject matter than say, 'Contraband.'

Yes, but I am very proud of 'Contraband,' especially because it opened many doors for me. It is a thriller based on an established formula that you try to put your flavour on. But just the fact that it did so well at the box office gave me an opportunity to do other things. And '2 Guns,' although it is a very different film, and a lot more commercial. I will probably leave more of a mark on it, myself. It will be a lot more stylised and we are experimenting with a different form of narrative, and we'll see how that works. Then comes 'Everest,' which is a very big movie, but still closer to the films I have been making here in Iceland. You just have to pay your dues, and hopefully I am moving in a direction where I can select from a range of projects that I really want to do.

If '2 Guns' does well, how established will you be as a director in Hollywood?

I don't really want to make any proclamation as to what I will be. But, if you can deliver a big project like this one on budget and on time, and the movie does good, you are likely to be in a very good place. There are different categories of directors, and the A-list always get their first picks of scripts that they want to do, and obviously this is where everybody wants to be. But just by wrapping up shooting on '2 Guns,' I establish more credibility and move up a niche in the pecking order.

One of my old acting coaches gave me good advice: "don't think about the final destination—but love the journey." That is something I take to heart.

"The Deep" And The State Of The Icelandic Film Industry



Haukur Viðar Alfredsson is a graduate of the Icelandic Film School and a film critic for local newspaper Fréttablaðið. He also plays bass and sings for a lovely band called Morðingjarnir.

Yesterday I went to see Baltasar Kormákur's 'Djúpið' ("The Deep"), an exceptionally well made docudrama based on the true story of a burly fisherman and his miraculous six-hour swim to Heimaey island from a sinking ship in the winter of 1984. The event cost four men their lives, and Icelanders who remember the incident are split in their opinion about this tragic yet incredible story being made into a film.

Icelandic filmmakers have been telling true stories about bad stuff in the past for decades. Most of them took place hundreds of years ago so nobody really cares about how historically accurate they are, as long as they're entertaining or artistically significant.

In comparison to those medieval stories, Baltasar Kormákur's film deals with fairly recent events. The real-life fisherman portrayed in the movie (Guðlaugur Friðþórsson) is still alive and well, now in his early 50s. On top of that, he's made known that he is disgruntled about the making of the film.

He has stated his opinion in the media and probably has many reasons for feeling the way he does. The public, however, isn't emotionally involved with the tragedy, apart from reading about it in newspapers some 26 years ago. I sense that those who are opposed to the project are so either out of respect for Guðlaugur or due to the fact that we're not really used to watching our recent nightmares on the silver screen.

But the Icelandic film industry is constantly growing, and more films are getting made each year. I'm not going to make the dumb argument that screenwriters are facing a "shortage" of stories as a result, but different genres of film are finally being explored and the docudrama is just one of those genres. Of course somebody would want to make a film about what Guðlaugur went through.

And "Djúpið" is a very good film. It's not entirely flawless, but the subject matter is treated with utmost respect and the visuals are stunning. I'm convinced that the film will pave the way for other magnificent true stories we'd all like to see as films. Icelanders are fascinated by the past, and the horror stories are no exception. Can anybody honestly say they didn't like "Sönn íslensk sakamál" (an

Icelandic true-crime show that ran in the early '00s)?

However, while Baltasar Kormákur is raising the bar in an already established genre, others genres are in their infant stage. A few weeks ago Reynir Lyngdal's second feature film, 'Frost' ("Frost"), was premiered. Despite having received mixed-to-negative reviews, the film itself is a small landmark in Icelandic film history, since it is "our" first attempt in the sci-fi thriller genre. Next month we also get an official grand opening of the "low budget ass-kicking martial arts" genre, when first time director Ingó Ingólfs premieres his long awaited Van Damme-esque action movie 'Blóðhefnd' ("Blood Vengeance").

For the last five years a lot of brave Icelandic filmmakers have been taking a lot of chances. Although the resulting films have been varying in quality, the industry will benefit artistically from those chances, and already has.

What excites me the most is the opportunity to witness the birth of so many new genres in Icelandic cinema. On top of that, every month there seems to be a new, locally made film for us to enjoy. Or hate. Now we get a handful of thrillers each year, a few comedies, an animated film, a slasher film, a 3D adventure film, a bunch of interesting documentaries, and of course a few more "serious" films from the major players, just like the ones we all grew up on.

Variety is the key to success and if you won't like 'Djúpið,' maybe you'll love next month's 'Blóðhefnd.'



Lions and Bears and Puffins, Oh My

The Reykjavík International Film Festival finds its world-cinema niche



© Nanna Dís

BRINGING THE WORLD TO ICELAND

The goal of making Reykjavík a relevant destination in world cinema has perhaps taken on a new urgency since the collapse of the Icelandic banking system. Hrönn allows that the festival's international profile has risen parallel to that of Iceland itself in the international imagination. In 2010, for instance, the festival and government brought the New York Magazine film critic David Edelstein over to give a talk, tour the country, and report

back to his readers; he did so in a blog post rhapsodizing the festival and

the country, while also noting that his most-expenses paid trip was "part of a campaign that has also put 'You Could Be in Iceland' [or words to that effect] posters all over New York

subways," as part of the national shift towards emphasis in cultural and heritage tourism.

But if Icelandic culture has led the recovery, it's still living with the consequences of the crash when, Hrönn notes ruefully, "we lost most of our important sponsors." The festival aspirations to do more year-round programming, like a film club in Tjarnarbíó next door to their offices, have been stalled—"you can't do everything when a country goes bankrupt." Still, the foundation and ambitions are there, as is the secure place RIFF has made for itself. Or, rather, places: the place it has made for world cinema in Iceland, and the place it has made for Iceland in world cinema.

✂ - MARK ASCH

“The festival aspirations to do more year-round programming, like a film club in Tjarnarbíó next door to their offices, have been stalled—“you can't do everything when a country goes bankrupt.”

Ah, autumn in Reykjavík when, as Reykjavík International Film Festival Chair Hrönn Marinósdóttir observes, “it starts to rain, the leaves start to fall, it gets dark again, and it's very traditional to go to the movies.” The ninth annual RIFF runs from September 27 to October 7 this year—quick on the heels of late August and early September's prestigious festivals in Venice and Toronto, making Reykjavík a natural part of the roll-out for new titles from the international festival circuit: “We thought it would be clever to be the first festival after those big events to get the new films.”

Offering Icelanders a window to world cinema, Hrönn says, was the goal at the time of the festival's inception. “Like in so many other countries, most of the productions come from just one place in the world: Hollywood. And great films come from Hollywood, but it's not the world,” Hrönn says. “In the beginning, I didn't think about anything else... I wanted to help bring this culture to Iceland.”

Since then, the festival has set its sights outward, hiring experienced programmers and seeking out significant filmmakers: honoured guests have ranged from Abbas Kiarostami, in 2005, to Dario Argento, this year. But then, Hrönn adds, “we of course

realised that this is so important for the Icelandic film industry to have an international event, because we found out, very soon, that the international film world was curious.” Why shouldn't Iceland's film culture be an active player as well as a receptive audience?

LAUNCHING ICELANDIC CINEMA

Why not indeed. Beyond a new awareness of the Icelandic films playing alongside offerings from the global arthouse, there are tangible ways in which the festival has made Iceland a collaborator in the same community. Hrönn likes to tell the story of the woolly Russian mystic Aleksandr Sokurov, a guest of honour at the 2006

festival, who toured the country with a local production company and then returned to film portions of his Faust, which won the Golden Lion at Venice last year (and played at RIFF the month after that).

There's also the festival's unique character, remarked upon by many a foreign guest—RIFF is, as far as anyone knows, the only international film festival with an annual screening in a swimming pool, a tradition continuing this year with 'Back To The Future' playing Laugardalslaug—and exemplified by the fest's major award, the Golden Puffin. (Venice has the Golden Lion, Hrönn reasons, and Berlin the Golden Bear, “so we thought, ok, why not choose the puffin?”).

Only first or second-time feature filmmakers are eligible for the competition, called New Visions: identifying talent early is one function better served by festivals like RIFF than by, say, glamour-crammed Cannes, and indeed the RIFF slate, in and out of competition, is peppered with attention-getting titles from Toronto as well as American indie breakouts from earlier this year.

Also of gratifying interest to the up-to-date viewer is the documentary

lineup. RIFF's evolution has coincided with an explosion in the production of new films—as the means of production have become ever more accessible to an ever wider pool of would-be moviemakers, a proliferation of nonfiction inquiries has been a significant result. This has enlarged the world-cinema pie for festivals such as RIFF, and gives local audiences more points of entry to world culture and politics.

Docs are frequently among RIFF's most sought-after tickets. Hrönn puts it down to the declining space for investigative or research-based television, and the natural inquisitiveness of Icelanders, citizens of a island nation eager for the opportunity to interface with a much larger world. This is especially true, perhaps, in the case of the A Different Tomorrow programme, with its emphasis on ecological documentaries of great interest to local audiences.

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1 iVivan las antipodas! (Dir. Victor Kossakovsky, Germany)



Victor Kossakovsky, acting as his own cameraman and editor, has the whole world in his hands, as this mostly contemplative travelogue moves with liquid ease between sets of locations on opposite sides of the globe: a bridge over a muddy Argentine river and Shanghai's smoggy traffic; big-sky vistas of Patagonia and Lake Baikal; the lava fields of Hawaii and savannas of Botswana; lofty Miraflores, Spain, and Castle Point, New Zealand. Victor indulges in upside-down cameras, but also impossible tracking shots and extreme focal lengths, allowing for fresh-eyed wonder at some seriously breathtaking landscapes, as well as the seriously droll people carving out livings from them. Mixing and mismatching ethnic music, Victor avoids easy dichotomies; everywhere he shoots feels like the very end of the earth.

2 The Ambassador (Dir. Mads Brügger, Denmark)

Mads Brügger is the Sacha Baron Cohen of the investigative documentary, which is as much a compliment as you want it to be. Here, he becomes, via back-channel palm-greasing, Liberia's consul in the Central African Republic. With a diplomatic passport, he can, in theory and perhaps in practice, carry out diamonds. Brügger is more successful at stifling his conscientious self-doubt here than in his North Korean comedy tour 'The Red Chapel,' embracing his colonial affectations—there are many close-ups of his brown leather riding boots, and a subplot concerns his noblesse oblige towards two 'Pygmy' helpers. Though Mads plays up a shadowy atmosphere at the expense of logistical clarity, the broad strokes painted by the characters he meets—Western meddlers, soldiers of fortune, grinning, corrupt and constantly plotting officials—at least add up to a believable picture of the postcolonial mess we're in.



3 Suspiria (Dir. Dario Argento, Italy, 1977)



Though Dario Argento is a guest of honour at this year's RIFF, veneration has hardly tainted his oeuvre, forever may it gush sticky-red, like so much fake blood. In this, his calling-card movie, innocent American abroad Jessica Harper arrives, then inexplicably stays, at a witchy German dance school—you know it's witchy because someone on the soundtrack keeps whispering "Witches!" and because of the frozen menacing grins of the servant grotesques. Argento jazzes up exposition with random pans across

Escher-inspired rococo interior décor; his suspense setpieces are full-throttled with lighting gels and wildly oscillating musical cues going from zero to hysteria and back again, in ways not always matched by the onscreen action. The frankly unbalanced, stilted to freaky tone, makes it seem as though anything might happen; it frequently does.

4 The Queen Of Versailles (Dir. Lauren Greenfield, USA)

Lauren Greenfield set out to make a documentary on septuagenarian time-share magnate David Siegel and his buoy-boobed wife Jackie—as they constructed the largest single-family residential home in America, inspired by a trips to the former palace of Louis XIV and the Paris Las Vegas Hotel & Casino. The financial crisis, though, put an entirely different spin on her metaphor for the American dream of consumption on endless credit. To pick one of very many scenes of well-intentioned yet tone-deaf stabs at humility: Jackie, stalking the carpets of their Florida mc mansion in heels and camouflage hot-shorts, lecturing her son following the starvation death of one of their many exotic pets. He responds, "I didn't even know we had a lizard." Lauren Greenfield offers time and sympathy to the increasingly unhappy couple (her putting on a brave face for kids and camera, him retreating into work and dreams of a return to dominance), but her film nevertheless makes one wish, fervently, for the day in which it might be viewed in a history class about America's decline.



5 Starlet (Dir. Sean Baker, USA)



"Starlet" is the name of the purse-sized yappdog belonging to Jane (Dree Hemingway, great-granddaughter of Papa), an up-and-coming porn star, adrift amid cookie-cutter bungalows with nothing on the walls but slantwise interminable Southern California daylight. Perhaps drawn to a life filled in by something other than someone else's fantasy, she pursues a friendship with peppery senior Sadie (nonprofessional Besedka Johnson, with a batty tobacco-stained voice). The odd-couple setup is an indie convention, sure, but the film's mix of sarcasm and longing feels intuitive and oh-so contemporary.

Three Men And Their Penises

Filmmakers document the Icelandic Phallogical Museum's search for a human specimen

Only a minute into 'The Final Member' and there's already a dismembered set of genitalia on the screen. Sigurður Hjartarson carries a plastic bag filled with the bloody pink specimens: the penises of two types of seals and a porpoise (with both testicles). They're perfect and Sigurður is pleased.

Set to screen at RIFF, this documentary by long-time friends Jonah Bekhor and Zach Math treats its subject matter with a respect most people aren't accustomed to giving phalluses. To the average passerby the Icelandic Phallogical Museum, which recently relocated to Laugavegur 116 from Húsavík, is a curious novelty, something to point out and laugh about. But when Zach Math heard a radio interview on CBC's "As It Happens" featuring the museum's founder Sigurður, he saw a story waiting to be told.

"After I heard this story I called Jonah up and I said 'We gotta go interview Sigg, we gotta go make a movie about this guy, because he's absolutely fascinating,'" Zach says. "What we uncovered is this great tension and competition."

The film centres on Sigurður's collection of mammal penises, a project forty years in the making. What started out as a private collection in his home grew to include over 275 specimens, from the two-millimetre penis bone of a hamster to the seventy-kilogram member of a beached sperm whale. But his collection was missing one key penis, of the Homo sapiens variety until 2011.

MEMBERS ONLY

The film follows two men who vied for the honour of being displayed in Sigurður's collection. On the home front, 95-year-old icon and retired womanizer Páll Arason volunteered to donate his member posthumously. Meanwhile, Tom Mitchell, an eccentric American with a red, white and blue penis, was just as determined for his second head (called Elmo) to hold the honour. This battle constitutes the central conflict of the film and also gives it some heart.

Sigurður, the dry scholar and educator turned curator, is as fascinated by taboos as he is by genitalia and has devoted a large portion of his life to treating a basic, necessary but often ridiculed body part with scholarly attentiveness. Zach would go so far as to call it a social experiment, or an art exhibit.

"If we look at what great art does or... what great museums do, they force us to question things and look at things from slightly different perspectives," Zach says. "And certainly that's Sigurður's objective."

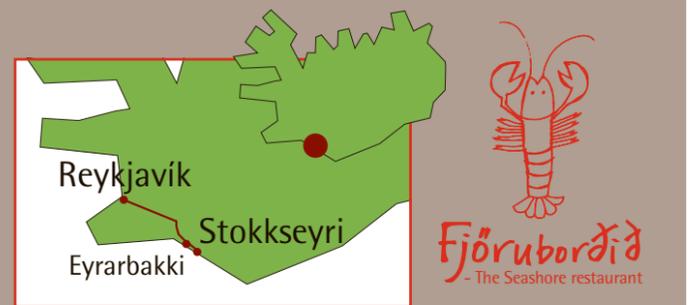
During nearly five years of shooting the two filmmakers developed close relationships with the three subjects of their film as well as with the country itself. With the documentary set to make its European premiere at RIFF, the hope is that Icelanders give this story the same attention the Canadian filmmakers did.

"I don't want people in Iceland to dismiss the movie. Everyone in Reykjavík can walk by the museum everyday and kind of have a laugh, but we don't want them to just dismiss the film because of that superficial little experience," Zach says. "You might think you know this story because you walk by the museum, but it's way more than you think." **✉ - ARIT JOHN**

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Talents In The RIFF Laboratory

The new generation of rising filmmakers learning the trade in Reykjavík

Words
Mark O'Brien

Photo
RIFF



Global icons like Dario Argento and Marjane Satrapi may be leading the billing at RIFF 2012, but a cohort of up-and-coming filmmakers is on its way to Reykjavík this year to join them. RIFF has long had a reputation as a breeding ground for new talent, in no small part thanks to its Talent Lab scheme, organised every year alongside the main festival programme.

Programme Director Marteinn Þórsson knows a thing or two about how to make a movie himself. He is now working on his next feature 'XL,' a dark comedy about an alcoholic heavy-living MP sent into rehab by the Prime Minister. So it's with some authority that he insists: "Ninety percent of filmmaking is about getting to know the right person."

RIFF'S Talent Lab helps young apprentices do just that. "Most filmmakers have to get seen on the festival circuit. It's a world you have to know," Marteinn says. Indeed, Reykjavík's talent scheme is modelled on similar programmes in Toronto, Berlin and beyond. "The festival world is not that big: you can end up meeting someone in Reykjavík who you've already met at Sundance."

The programme offers the opportunity for filmmakers of any age, but specifically those at the start of their movie careers, to come together and learn, network, attend lectures and masterclasses with renowned industry leaders. Talent Lab participants may submit their own short films for the festival's Golden Egg award. Such career-making chances don't come cheap: last year's visitors had to cough up the princely sum of 45,000 ISK for the privilege. Nonetheless, Marteinn maintains, "All you need to have is passion."

Global reputation

This is his second year running the Talent Lab. Last year, 54 people from across the world participated. Originally called the Transatlantic Talent Lab, the name was shortened as the scheme grew. "Last year we had five filmmakers from Iceland, others from the States, Canada, Germany, Poland, Sweden, France, Russia, even Benin."

"Our oldest was a 54-year-old man from India," Marteinn continues. "It doesn't matter how young or old you are. You have to submit a CV when applying and we try to take everyone with the desire to come and learn."

Each year, participants build connections with people that may well last until long after their flight out of Iceland at the end of the festival. Lou McLoughlin had already been singled out as one of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts' 'Brits To Watch' and had received accolades for her short film 'Caring For Calum,' which she produced whilst studying for a film degree at the Edinburgh College of Art and then screened and discussed with last year's Talent Lab-goers.

Icelandic connections

"I instantly bought into the Icelandic creative output and the mythology," she recalls. "Before I arrived I made contact with Icelandic production companies, and met up with Hlín Jóhannesdóttir at ZIK ZAK." Since then they have worked together on transforming Lou's half-hour short into a feature-length film, '16 Years Til Summer,' about a man who returns home to a small village in the Scottish highlands and confronts his past after sixteen years in exile.

Lou is returning to Reykjavík next month to work on the edit for the film, having put together a Scottish-Icelandic co-production partnership. She is in consultation with musician

Jóhann Jóhannsson, and is working with Icelandic writers to complete the project.

"They're big risk-takers," Lou concludes. "They were keen to help me and work with me immediately, and when I went back to Creative Scotland (the organisation which promotes arts projects back home in Scotland) they were keen to work with Iceland."

It is perhaps that oft-spoken risk-taking attitude that has built the entire festival to such international prominence in just eight years, attracting now the kind of crowds and the stars that appear. The 2011 contingent had the chance to meet and hear from Hungarian director Béla Tarr, who came to Reykjavík to receive the festival's Lifetime Achievement Award.

"It was probably my most memorable moment," Lou reflects.

One young filmmaker who agrees with her is Omar Zúñiga Hidalgo, who did his undergraduate film degree in Santiago and then went on to do his graduate studies at NYU. "I was particularly struck by Béla," he remembers. "He was very humble and very emphatic. He had recently announced his retirement, and they were showing his last film, so it was very special to hear him at that moment." A cult favourite for his signature long-take filmmaking technique, Béla retired from making movies to found his own film school in Croatia. "I remember he made a fierce defence of film and pushed us to believe in our project, talking about choosing something to concentrate on, to have a voice as a filmmaker and to say something."

Like Lou, Omar continues to pursue his work, busy today with his production company Cinestación—at the same time as completing his degree. He keeps in touch with many of the participants from last year, and with the friends he made from the Icelandic Film School.

Kick up the arse

"Lots of the people who are coming here now have heard about the Talent Lab from others who have been here before, so word of mouth is always spreading," Marteinn says, before he heads off to prepare for the largest programme yet. As well as a masterclass from Italian horror director Dario Argento, Talent Lab filmmakers this year will hear from the people behind 'Either Way,' Iceland's entry for this year's Nordic Council Film Prize: "That was produced on zero budget," Marteinn says. "That will be a good kick up the arse for anyone who thinks they have to wait for Hollywood to come knocking on the door."

Successful filmmakers are rarely reluctant to offer their time and teach the next generation, Marteinn says. "They're very generous because they know the industry. They remember how they started out too, and the people who shared their knowledge and insight with them."

For the bright lights who will be sharing their work and competing to take home the Golden Egg this autumn, it may not be so long until they're back to tell a future class about how their journey started back at RIFF 2012.

“Last year we had five filmmakers from Iceland, others from the States, Canada, Germany, Poland, Sweden, France, Russia, even Benin.”

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An Oldie But Goodie Go
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There is something about the strange and perverse mind of director Hrafn Gunnlaugsson that makes him ideally suited to deal with the strangeness and perversity of bygone times. Although his 1984 film 'Hrafninn flygur' ("When The Raven Flies") is not as perverse or strange as his arguably undervalued 2000 film 'Myrkráhöfðinginn' ("Lord of Darkness"), it has stood the test of time as his most famous film to date.

It takes place in Iceland at around the time of settlement. Yes, this is the Viking Age, and we get many scenes of big men trotting around the stunning scenery on comically small horses. The plot is deceptively simple. An Irishman with sharp knives, but little in the way of personality, watches his family massacred by Vikings and sets about doing them in one by one. Sure, you've heard this kind of story many times before, but there are a couple of twists here that makes it revisionist, almost revolutionary, historically speaking.

First of all, our hero is an Irishman, and we are supposed to cheer for him while he slaughters our raping, pillaging, slave-holding forefathers. They may have had it coming, but have you ever seen a movie about, say, a runaway slave getting back at abusive founding fathers in the American South? Didn't think so.

The founding fathers here have a healthy distaste for their new foster land and would like nothing more than to return to Norway. This is evident when our hero frees a group of slaves and tells them to go settle the land. Thus, we are descendants of both slaves and chieftains—neither of which really wanted to be here in the first place.

Second, the revenge itself allows no simple solutions. Whereas the Hollywood hero routinely kills everyone who has wronged him and then rides off into the sunset, having restored peace, this hero's revenge only breeds more revenge and the stage is set for the incessant murders that doomed the Icelandic Medieval Commonwealth.

'When The Raven Flies' has aged well and though Hrafn attempted more complex takes on the Viking Age in later epics, he never did it better. Anyone with an interest in Icelandic cinema (or Vikings) needs to go see this. Hrafn himself will present the film at a special screening in his own home on September 30. It costs 1,000 ISK, but even just a visit to his house itself, no less a work of art than his films, is worth the price of admission.

✚ - VALUR GUNNARSSON

Travelin light

Seduced By The Silver Slipper At Selfoss



Ian Bain is a former foreign correspondent and media consultant who has visited 70 countries and lived in six of them.

FISHING was impossible. The river had been running big and brown for a couple of days and as the rain continued to lash down, hope was in short supply. In the lodge, some of the fishermen were getting stir crazy.

You might think that a dozen or more keen salmon anglers could sit in the lounge all night and remain enlivened by stories of ones that got away and some that didn't, even when the tales got largely repetitive or took on a shaggy dog appearance. The older ones maybe, but not the likes of young Hans who hailed from Germany or Holland or somewhere over that way.

Hans was of a different breed of angler—restless, hungry for action, always on the move and oblivious to fine sunsets. "There's not even a decent pub around here," he lamented, and continued in that manner for quite some time.

"Well," I said, eventually tiring of it, "you could always try the Silver Slipper at Selfoss. It's a 45-minute drive but today's Saturday so it should be buzzing." Hans perked up immediately and demanded more information. "Gosh," I said, "it's a year or two since I was there but it was always full of women."

The club was, I recalled, kind of retro disco in outlook and design, Saturday Night Fever all over again, stomping the boards to the Bee Gees, KC and the Sunshine Band, Gloria Gaynor, Donna Summer, even the Village People for God's sake—the whole place awash with liquor and laughter and, as the night wore on, not a little licentiousness—all of it happening just behind the Kentucky Fried Chicken joint on the main drag.

The Bee Gees were the only folk Hans had heard of but farmers' daughters seemed to strike a chord. I regaled him with ancient memories of wild nights, of gorgeous girls and adventures too far out for description in the pages of a decent family newspaper or

even The Reykjavík Grapevine.

Anyway, he was as well hooked as any salmon I've ever reeled in. A look of great earnestness came over him and he was quietly gone, clutching a rough map I'd drawn of the location.

The next morning the sun was breaking through and there was that fresh, crisp smell in the air that often follows rain. The river was in much better shape and over breakfast we faced the day with anticipation.

Hans arrived, disheveled. He looked completely worn out. "I've just got back," he said hoarsely, draining a large glass of water in one go. Guilt hit me like a punch on the jaw. The poor guy must have got lost and slept in his car all night. I felt terrible.

You will, I imagine, have gathered by now that the Silver Slipper at Selfoss is entirely a product of my imagination. It does not exist, but there is a Kentucky Fried Chicken if that's any consolation. Over the years I have directed many people to the doors of this illustrious nightspot although Hans is, to my knowledge, the first to have attempted to find it.

"So what happened?" I asked cautiously. He leaned over the table conspiratorially. "It was," he said, "unbelievable, absolutely fantastic, everything you said it would be and more." I waited for the explosion, but his face was a picture of awe and innocence.

He told a long and elaborate story, full of detail that need not be repeated here and at the end of it he sighed: "What a night." No fishing for him this morning, he said. What he needed was sleep.

I was heading back to Reykjavík that afternoon and didn't see Hans again. When I passed through Selfoss I slowed for a moment, for a very brief moment, at the KFC outlet and shook my head. Impossible.

Continued Iceland: From A "Kreppa" Basket Case To A Miraculous Example

Icesave—is still unsettled.

Lack of foreign direct investment is a great weakness of the Icelandic economy. 'No wonder, in a country with capital controls,' someone might say. But this weakness is much older than the capital controls put in place in November 2008. Foreign investors find Iceland difficult to penetrate if you don't happen to be born and bred in Iceland. It's not necessarily the lack of money per se that poses problems—after all, the Icelandic pension funds can only invest in Iceland for the time being and the country increasingly shows signs of too many krónur chasing too few investment opportunities. Lacking are foreign contacts, inspiration and know-how that good investors bring along.

In any country coming out of a "Kreppa" it takes some time before the national psyche senses the positive change and feels uplifted. Icelanders aren't necessarily convinced, though

foreign pundits are right to talk about a "miracle." The "Kreppa" mentality evaporates only when people sense that family and friends don't need to go abroad for jobs, that companies are hiring and that they and those they know can again travel abroad once in a while. Anecdotal evidence indicates that this might now be happening in Iceland.

So far, the Conservatives in government with the Social Democrats in October 2008 have profited by the perceived lack of coherent government policy. If the voters, however, sense that the "Kreppa" has left Iceland it might strengthen the two parties presently in government, the Social Democrats and the Left Green, in the election next year. But in the global economy, no country is an island, not even an island in the middle of the Atlantic. Iceland isn't entirely dependent only on the fish in Icelandic waters but also on how much fish and other goods foreigners can afford to buy. The dark clouds hanging over the European continent are now the greatest threat to the remarkably sturdy economy of Iceland.

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Rokkjötmar 2012

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A one-day festival event, Rokkjötmar, featured Iceland's "Giants of Rock," as the festival name suggests (...although "jötmar" is also an old word for "troll," so you might alternatively call it "The Trolls of Rock"). In any case, if you missed it or really have no idea who these giants or trolls may be, we've prepared a short primer on the eight bands—the purported highlights of Iceland's rock and metal scene, if you will—who performed on September 8 and are getting up to one interesting thing or the other in the coming months.

Words

Philippe Beck

Photos

Philippe Beck



Endless Dark

This young band from Snæfellsnes has an obvious nu-metal heritage and a solid stage presence. Their yet untitled first full-length album should be out by the end of the year, as the newest band member and singer Rúnar Germundsson was excited to tell us in Hafnarfjörður.

Founded 2005 **From** Grundarfjörður, Ólafsvík, Reykjavík **Style** Post-hardcore **Influences** Pennywise, Rise Against **Discography** 'Made Of Glass' (EP, 2011) **Internet** www.facebook.com/endlessdarkband



Momentum

Certainly one of the most underrated bands on this island, Momentum has roots in the black metal act Afsprengi Satans ("Satans Offspring") from 2003. The offspring of the Dark Lord eventually indulged themselves in psychedelic progressive rock with a good balance between technical and atmospheric aspects of their songs.

Founded 2004 **From** Greater Reykjavík area, Ísafjörður **Style** Progressive psychedelic metal **Influences** Neurosis, Mastodon **Discography** 'Fixation, At Rest' (2010) **Internet** www.facebook.com/momentumiceland



Bootlegs

Along with HAM, Bootlegs are the elder statesmen of Icelandic metal. The band had different periods of inactivity and come-backs. This year they reunited after a break of five years to start a new era and bring their good ol' thrash metal back.

Founded 1986 **From** Reykjavík **Style** Old style thrash metal **Influences** Voivod, Metallica, Slayer **Discography** 'WC Monster' (1989), 'Bootlegs' (1990), 'Live' (2007) **Internet** <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Bootlegs/>



The Vintage Caravan

These talented youngsters (they're barely 18!), who will represent Iceland at the Battle of the Bands in London this December, proudly presented "Voyage," their second full-length album at Rokkjötmar. Feminist activists shouldn't listen too closely to the lyrics (unless they feel like ragin').

Founded: 2010 **From:** Álftanes **Style:** '70s rock **Influences:** Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, Jimi Hendrix **Discography:** 'The Vintage Caravan' (2011), 'Voyage' (2012) **Internet:** www.facebook.com/vintagecaravan



Brain Police

What is there left to say about a band that has shared the stage with Metallica, Alice Cooper and Mastodon? Every concert stonies you to death as singer Jens Ólafsson puts on his freaky smile and drummer Jón Björn Ríkarðsson sets his sticks afire, which of course was the case at Rokkjötmar. They will be causing mayhem in Europe this October. So watch your brain!

Founded: 1998 **From:** Reykjavík **Style:** Stoner rock **Influences:** Kyuss, Fu Manchu, Monster Magnet **Discography:** "Glacier Sun" (2000), "Brain Police" (2003), "Electric Fungus" (2004), "Beyond The Wasteland" (2007) **Internet:** www.facebook.com/BrainPoliceIceland

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Sólstafir

Ever since their latest release 'Svartir Sandir,' Sólstafir's popularity has grown both locally and internationally. After a successful Pagan-Fest-tour (though they don't like to be associated with Viking- and pagan-metal) and some summer festivals in Europe, they will embark on the "Barge to Hell," which is set to cruise the Caribbean in December, with the like of Paradise Lost, Moonspell and others aboard. In the meantime they may go on a European tour. Rumour has it that they might be opening for an established US-metal band.

Founded: 1994 **From:** Reykjavík, Ísafjörður **Style:** They are hard to define so we asked drummer Gummi, who answered modestly, "You have to be a pretty good musician to play black or death metal. We are not that good. We just play rock'n'roll." **Influences:** Ham, Neil Young, Sisters of Mercy **Discography:** 'Til Valhallar' (EP, 1996) / 'Í blóði og anda' (2002) / 'Black Death' (EP, 2002) / 'Masterpiece Of Bitterness' (2005) / 'Köld' (2009) / 'Svartir Sandar' (2011) **Internet:** <https://www.facebook.com/solstafirice>



HAM

HAM is a legend in Iceland. Having started warming up for The Sugarcubes, they were asked in 2001, after a seven-year hiatus, to open for Rammstein. Since then, they've been attracting new fans and put out a new album in 2011. At Rokkjöttnar they got some vocal support from Skálmöld for their final song. On November 1, they will perform with Sólstafir and The Swans at Harpa for Iceland Airwaves.

Founded: 1988 **From:** Kópavogur/Hafnarfjörður **Style:** Musica del la disco? No, musica del la rock'n'roll. **Influences:** Shirley Bassey **Discography:** 'Hold' (1988) / 'Buffalo Virgin' (1998) / 'Saga rokksins 1988-1993' (1993) / 'Lengi lífi' (1994) / 'Dauður hestur' (1995) / 'CBGB's 7. ágúst 1993' (2001) / 'Skert flog' (2001) / 'Svik, harmur og dauði' (2011) **Internet:** www.facebook.com/svikharmurdaudi



Skálmöld

This is not Spinal Tap, though Skálmöld was not a serious project in the beginning. The guys obviously had so much fun that they decided to continue. For their first record deal, they had to go to the Faeroe Islands because nobody wanted them back home. Finally they signed with the Austrian Napalm Records, which will release their second album this coming October.

Founded: 2009 **From:** Reykjavík

Style: Viking metal **Influences:** Anthrax, Amon Amarth, Jón Leifs **Discography:** 'Baldur' (2010), 'Börn Loka' (2012) **Internet:** www.skalmold.is





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			10:00	10:00	10:00				
13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00
			14:00	14:00	14:00				
		17:00*	17:00	17:00	17:00	17:00	17:00*		
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INTERVIEW

Echoes Of The White Ark

Ojba Rasta gives birth to its first album



Reggae/dub big band Ojba Rasta released their debut album last Tuesday and it's quite phenomenal. Sporting eight songs, hair-metal guitar solos, rapping, sci-fi synthesizers, Icelandic poems from the 19th century and a whole lot of echo, it's one of the most adventurous albums to come out of Iceland for a long time. The songwriting is strong, the lyrics stand out and it's loaded with layers of sounds without ever feeling cluttered.

I plan to meet up with Oj Barasta frontrunners Arnljótur and Teitur at reggae home base Hemmi & Valdi for an interview. However, when I get there Teitur isn't diggin' the vibe. He feels it is too noisy and is quite adamant about relocating the interview to his apartment so he can get into his element. When we arrive, Teitur has really slipped into his zone and also something a bit more comfortable—a red silk robe, checker trousers and a cowboy hat.

"Our next album is gonna be a country record!" he declares, getting up to light some incense and placing a Black Uhuru LP on the record player.

BIRTH, UPBRINGING AND LETTING GO

When the mood had been established I turn on the recorder and ask how they felt about the album being released.

"Like we have given birth to child," Arnljótur responds.

"I think it's more like watching your kid leave home when it's grown up," Teitur says. "The forming of the band was the birth and the recording session was the upbringing and now our child has been released into the world and has to stand on its own."

Arnljótur disagrees. "I'm not on the same metaphorical page as you. For me it was like a birth. Period. It was in my system. Now it's out."

The band recorded the album in spurts over a period of two years with producer Gnúsi Yones, the singer of reggae band Amaba Dama and former rapper/producer of pioneer Icelandic hip hop group Subterranean. His studio, History, is located in his garage.

"I sometimes like to call it his 'White Ark' to contrast Lee 'Scratch' Perry's 'Black Ark'." Arnljótur says. "Gnúsi has this amazing ability to create huge and expansive sound in this tiny garage," Teitur adds. They both agree that working with Gnúsi was very rewarding and it often seemed as if he was reading their minds.

"If I said 'you should delete this...' he was already in motion doing exactly that before I had even finished the sentence," Arnljótur tells me.

Bringing the studio to live performances

With eleven musicians in the group the process was quite chaotic and time-consuming. Up to 90 tracks were recorded for some songs before Gnúsi and dub master Hjalli, who mixed the album, went at the takes with razor blades. "We wanted it to be a proper studio album. Dub music was created in the studio and there are certain things you can achieve on a recorded album that are not possible in a live setting," Arnljótur says.

Some bands try to catch a live feeling on their albums, but Ojba Rasta takes the opposite route, bringing a studio feel to their live shows with a special dub master. His instrument is the mixer and his job is to cut out instruments at certain points and manipulate sounds, often piling on loads of echo.

"It's a lot of work, we always have to show up extra early for the sound check," Arnljótur says.

"When you book us, you always get the full Ojba Rasta experience," Teitur adds. He then leaves the room

and comes back with two hard-boiled eggs. As he breaks the shells and begins eating them Arnljótur asks "You don't want salt to go with it?"

"No," Teitur replies. "I like them pure."

A DUB CONVERSATION

Ojba Rasta was formed a little over three years ago. In the beginning, the band mostly performed cover songs, slowly writing more songs, adding musicians and finally morphing into the eleven-member monstrosity that it is today.

Recently, several of their instrumental pieces have gained vocals. "For some reason I stopped singing when I was nine years old," Arnljótur tells me. "Then just recently I started secretly singing a backing vocal here and there until I finally found my voice, which had been muted for 15 years, through Ojba Rasta."

But are they the next Hjálmar? "We're not the next anything," they both agree. "Not at all. I don't look at it as a competition but rather as a conversation," Arnljótur says. "And we want to encourage Icelanders who are making dub or reggae music to step up and join this conversation."

✪ - DAVÍÐ ROACH GUNNARSSON

"we want to encourage Icelanders who are making dub or reggae music to step up and join this conversation"

WHAT THE EFF IS GOING ON???

September

★ RIFF US A NEW ONE

RIFF—The Reykjavík International Film Festival—is looking super interesting this year. Commencing on September 27, the fest will as usual screen lots of nice flicks and offer novel surprises (and hopefully none of the "technical difficulties" that plagued last year's affair). One of the most interesting things on the horizon is the scheduled appearance of one-time CAN singer Damo Suzuki, who'll perform music to a screening of Fritz Lang's 'Metropolis.' Wow. Oh and check this out: he sought out a local drummer and bassist to perform alongside him and join "Damo Suzuki's Network." The legend hand-picked none other than Magnús Trygvason Elíassen (of **Moses Hightower** and several thousand other bands) and Gunnar Jónsson (of **1860** and **Coral**) for the job. Congrats, guys! Read more about RIFF and its schedule all over this issue.



★ NEW MUSIC ALERT!

As per usual for this time of year there are lots of exciting new releases around the corner, all the local artists working hard to have something fresh and clean to present at the upcoming Airwaves festival. Ojba Rasta's

self-titled debut is surely among this year's more anticipated records, as the dubsters have been steadily conquering the hearts and ears of local audiences all year with hit single upon hit single. Check out Davíð Roach's informative interview with bandleaders Arnljótur and Teitur, then head to their record release gig at Faktörý on October 4.

Lovable troubadour conspirator Svavar Knútur also dropped a new one the other day, and it's reportedly a scorcher (one of his many collaborators is lovely Czech singer Marketa Irglová). It's called 'Ölduslóð' and you can sample it at www.svavarknutur.com.

Everyone's favourite noisegirl is Kíra Kíra, and her new record 'Feathermagnetik' definitely lives up to her reputation as Reykjavík Noise Royalty. Her release show is held in conjunction with RIFF and sports visuals from animator Sara Gunnarsdóttir, a backing band featuring Skúli Sverrisson and Pétur Hallgrímsson, and an opening set from Úlfur. Make sure to be at Harpa on September 29 at 21:00 to catch the the event.



SCHEDULE

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The tour includes a stop by Puffin Island 15th May - 20th August							
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	12:55	12:55	12:55	12:55	12:55	12:55	12:55
		16:55	16:55	16:55			
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Puffin Island Tours							
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ADULTS: 3.800 ISK • CHILDREN: 1.900 ISK • CHILDREN: 0-6 FREE							
Sea Angling and Grill		Duration: 3 hours					
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Album Reviews

Cheek Mountain Thief

Cheek Mountain Thief

2012

www.facebook.com/cheekmountainthief

Mountains, country-folk, hot springs, ghosts, and all things quaint and tinkly.



+ Mike Lindsay—also the frontman of UK folktronica band Tunng—has built up a mythology for this album in which he falls in love with an Icelander, drawing him to Húsavík and Reykjavík, where he writes and records an album with a cast of small town characters and a who's-who of Icelandic krútt. That's precisely how it sounds—it has elements of the "Icelandic sound," while retaining Lindsay's smooth British accent and the idiosyncrasies of style that made you love or hate Tunng.

The album cover's depiction of a headdress-donned child painting a mountain gives a first impression that this album operates in a whimsical wonderland located somewhere between naiveté and insensitivity. That this image is then juxtaposed against the word "thief" I can only hope is purely incidental. Native American cultural appropriation and racial stereotyping has become a trend with "now-generation alternative music+fashion culture" (or what is popularly referred to as "hipsters"), and is as unfortunate as it is racist.

At first I feared this would be totally toothless MOR indie-folk, but it has its interesting moments. Its whimsical, naive portrait of Iceland however gets a bit queasy and at times verges on disingenuous (though if he does spend the winter building a mountaintop house I'll swallow my words). Lindsay is still a tourist. I look forward to hearing how his impressions of Iceland mature on the next album. In the meantime, don't be surprised if one of these tracks turns up on the soundtrack to the next Inspired By Iceland promotional video.

☞ - ÞÓRIR BOGASON

Beatmakin Troopa

If You Fall You Fly

2012

facebook.com/beatmakintroopa

Not really falling, yet flying chillfully



+ I must admit my ineptitude: I didn't know until relatively recently that "chill" was an actual genre name. Seemingly it is, and it implies something that I would've termed downtempo or lounge before, or lumped somewhere close to trip-hop. Extreme Chill, an Icelandic collective of chill enthusiasts, have done a great job of promoting these relaxed, groovy sounds with regular nights and a successful summer festival.

Beatmakin Troopa (the pseudonym of Pan Thorarensen) is a key member of the collective and his Beatmakin releases are revered within the group, as are the collaborations he's done with his father under the name Stereo Hypnosis. On the five-track EP 'If You Fall You Fly,' he teams up with composer Porkell Atlason. The result? Very chill.

Electric and acoustic guitars are quite prominent on this release, giving it an organic feel that may or may not remind you of something like The Album Leaf. The guitars are usually pattern-based or provide the basic chord progression, thus interlocking with straightforward drum grooves and smooth bass licks. On top, Troopa has layered dreamy synths and more screechy guitars. Various "ethnic" elements pop up here and there, most notably in the title track, a suite of sorts that goes around the world and back in less than seven minutes. A surprise visit from the saxophone player makes for a beautiful and unexpected moment in "The First Touch," as does an electric freak-out near the end of the recording.

The whole EP is remarkably consistent, providing the listener with a nice and well-contained 25-minute journey through his own mind and the Troopa's.

☞ - ATLI BOLLASON

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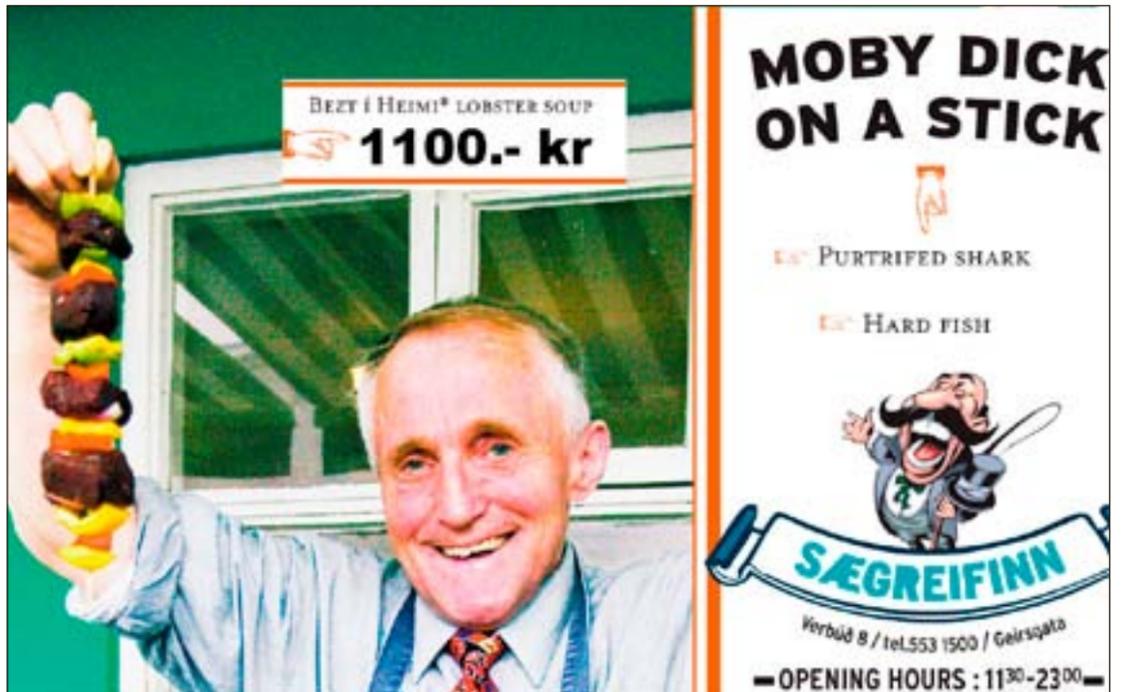
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INTERVIEW

Drawing On The Walls

Dan Perjovschi presents his satirical cartoons on the walls of the world's museums



Ceausescu's regime fall on December 22, 1989.

For Dan, this was an "essential change" to his development as an artist.

"I'd been studying oil painting in a communist regime and I switched to graphic art because I thought painting was too slow. And then this revolution came and for the first time in the recent history of my country they could print what they thought. There was no censorship."

This new freedom, to print without censorship and travel without restrictions, led to Dan's transition from an artist concerned with purely visceral art to an artist drawing with a political message in mind. He began drawing political cartoons for 22 Magazine, a Romanian publication named for the day the regime fell.

"Because it was a political and social magazine I had to deal with real life," he says. "Not my idea of beauty or whatever—not the contemplative society but being in the society."

NEWS FROM THE ISLAND

All that's not to say that Dan's drawings aren't funny. You can laugh. He expects you to. He might even be a little upset if you don't. But when you laugh, he wants you to "get it"—he wants you to understand both the joke and its bigger political and social context.

"You can laugh, it's okay, but if that kind of laugh can make you think, that's even better," he says. "These here are very simple drawings that are meant to make people laugh, but laugh intelligently."

With three days until the exhibit opens to the public, he gives me a tour of his work so far. So far each wall seems to have a unifying theme: society's addiction to technology, the economy or recent global events. He has a wall devoted to Iceland—the exhibit is called "News From The Island," after all. There's a cartoon about the debate over joining the European Union and one on the bank bailouts. Higher on the wall he's drawn a volcano (labelled tragedy) erupting lava (souvenirs). And there's the mandatory comment on Icelandic weather, a drawing about the intense winds the week of Dan's arrival.

"It's always first about the politics

of the moment, both globally and locally, then it's about the society, how it looks, how it behaves," Dan says of his themes. "Then it's about the cultural aspect."

There is also a good amount of wordplay on the walls. For Dan, who says he considers himself to be a part of the Dadaist tradition of destroying order in literature and art, images and texts are the same thing. Breaking apart the English language, then, is just as much of a drawing as a picture.

Not being a native English speaker, he says, also gives him a more distant and less reverent view of the language.

"English is not my native language, so I can maybe break it in way that maybe a native speaker wouldn't. I don't have this attachment. I can look at it from afar and play," he says.

CONTEMPORARY ART FOR EVERYONE

Perhaps one of the subtler goals of Dan's work, however, is to create a type of contemporary art that's accessible to everyone, which leads us back to MoMA.

The MoMA exhibit began while the walls were still empty. Museum goes could walk through the lobby where Dan worked, and talk to him, watch him work and see how the art came together. His conversations could contribute to his work, or give him a sense of who his audience was. When a group of eight-year-olds walked by, he was able to ask them which drawing they thought was most interesting. They chose one on immigration.

There are benefits to being on display, Dan says, but still, it was weird, and not something he'd prefer to do again.

"I had to be the monkey on the wall, but I did it with pleasure because I think it's fantastic when people see how the work is done," he says. "Contemporary art sometimes is very scary for normal people because they don't understand it. But a bond is created when they see it, how it's made. For a lot of people there it was probably a very interesting experience."

Even if Reykjavík won't get to see the pictures drawn, the hope is that the mutual understanding between the artist and the audience will still be there. ✦ - ARIT JOHN

“And then this revolution came and for the first time in the recent history of my country they could print what they thought. There was no censorship.”

Simon Steel

It was 2007 and Dan Perjovschi had just finished drawing on a wall in the lobby of the Museum of Modern Art in New York when a security guard approached him.

Dan, I was just about to lose my job because of you, she said.

He asked what he had done.

I was watching you draw and I was laughing, she explained. My supervisor came and said 'You're here to protect the art, not laugh.'

Dan laughs as he tells me the story days before opening his new exhibit. It's five years later and he's in Reykjavík, drawing on the walls of the D Gallery on the second floor of Reykjavík Art Museum's Hafnarhús building. The walls are a pristine white, save for the drawings he's already completed spread out across the room. On the table he has a few possessions—a black leather notebook full of sketch ideas, several black markers as thick as broom handles, his jacket, other supplies and a cup of coffee, no cream, no sugar.

For over a decade the Romanian born artist has been travelling the world drawing his simple, yet thematically complex cartoons on the walls of museums. While visiting a gallery in Germany, Dan says a Reykjavík Art Museum curator saw his and instantly thought of the room on the second floor of Hafnarhús. After completing this exhibition "News From The Island," he will head off to Milan, where

he'll have another week or so to turn four white walls into an art exhibit.

A TEN-YEAR WORLD TOUR

The thing about painting on the walls is that, at some point, someone from the museum is going to come in and paint over everything. With a few exceptions—the walls of the National Technology Library in Prague, his published books and digital images of his work—all of Dan's works are short lived.

For Dan this has slowly become part of his practice. He likens the experience to a musician playing a concert. "When the concert is over you go and play in the next one. So I'm on a world tour, it's just taking 10 years," he says.

There is also freedom to his short-lived works. Dan has a number of drawings he recycles, changes and adapts to another era. If he doesn't like the version he drew in 2009, he can try it again in another museum in another

country. If the politics surrounding a certain drawing change, he feels free to address those changes.

"When I know that these are not meant to stay forever then I'm more free to draw. I'm not scared that maybe ten years from now people will not understand this statement," he says. "I'm very free to express myself and maybe next time when I'm drawing the same drawing in another city on another wall maybe I can do it better."

UNREST IN BUCHAREST

Dan was born in Romania in 1961, twenty-eight years before Romania's communist regime was overthrown. Under the regime, Dan was put through a series of art schools for talented children, from the age of 10 until he graduated from the George Enescu University of Arts of Iasi in 1985. After four years of working in Romania's underground art scene and avoiding censorship, Dan and the rest of the world watched Nicolae

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“
My costume design for this film is pretty unique as it is for a married, middle-aged man whose story is told through clothing.
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We met with Sonja Bent, a fashion and knitwear designer for LazyTown, a wildly popular children television program in America that's produced both in Iceland and overseas. In the production room, Sonja took a break from making some rather tacky red and green Christmas sweaters for LazyTown's closing show this season to tell us about her various design projects, both independent and collaborative.

How did you wind up at LazyTown?

I started out as an intern here, when I was studying fashion design at the Iceland Academy of the Arts, and I was offered a project of making knitwear for the winter show. Now I am a costume design assistant to María Ólafsdóttir, who is the main costume designer for the show. I love working in this kind of an action driven environment, where creativity levels are very high. All the characters have their own colour palette, which is a great challenge.

Is it difficult to design for puppets?

Well their proportions are so different from humans and for instance, one puppet on the show is quite the challenge because of its big belly.

Have you worked in other mediums, in the Icelandic film industry perhaps?

Yes, my first film project was to work on the wedding scene in the film 'Brúðguminn' ("White Night Wedding," 2008), which takes place in the beautiful island of Flatey. The environment is fast-paced, and it can be very artistically exciting. It's a huge change to go from doodling to working with a challenging team of filmmakers, which need things done on the spot. My biggest project in film was when I was the costume

designer for the film 'Kóngavegur' ("King's Road," 2010), portraying Icelandic trailer trash characters in a trailer park.

What was that like, given that we don't have real trailer trash culture in Iceland?

Well, we had influences from America of course, but the director, Valdís Óskarsdóttir, had a strong vision for the characters so that was very helpful in the process. The costumes were reality-based worn out eccentric pieces that we put thoughtfully together for each character. We thought of the Icelandic eccentric, in fact, which is what made the creation of the costumes come to life.

Do you borrow most of the clothing for these kinds of projects?

No, we have many fantastic second-hand shops here in Iceland. The Salvation Army and Red Cross, for instance, are very important for the film industry.

They aren't too smelly?

No, not at all. I use a magical chemical that eliminates odours and germs. This has made life much easier for us, using used clothing as costumes in general.

Are you working on any new film projects now?

Yes as a matter of fact, I am working on a short film called 'Stúlkan

á rauða hjólinu' ("The Girl On The Red Bicycle"), which is in production now. My husband directs it and one of our friends, a filmmaker, coproduces it with us. My costume design for this film is pretty unique, as it is for a married, middle-aged man whose story is told through clothing. The man is always waiting to win the lottery, and the audience understands his emotions based on how he is dressed. If he feels like a clown, he is dressed as a clown, and if he feels like a million dollars, he is very sleekly dressed. This concept is very interesting to me.

You are a fashion designer and knitwear specialist on top of all this, how is that going?

Yes, I don't think you can just be a fashion designer all the time, especially in Iceland. Sometimes you have to work on projects, but for me it's a great mix. It's not as if I'm working at a café alongside being a designer. I am a knitwear designer, and I sell my pieces at Kirsuberjatréd at Vesturgata 4. I think my projects—working for LazyTown, Icelandic films, theatre and commercials—go well with my personal freedom of being an independent designer. That's what makes me happy, and I will probably want to do more of it in the future!

✆ - ÁSA BALDURSDÓTTIR

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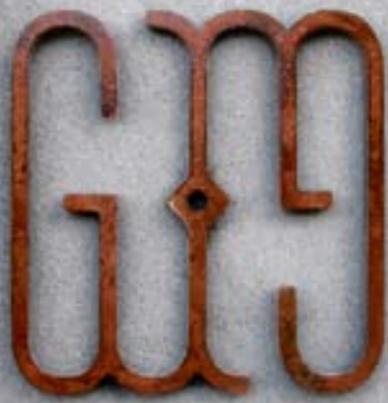
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“If I had to say,” Harpa Þórsdóttir says, “the identity of Icelandic product design is in the materials: fish bone, fish skin, knitted wool. And it’s in the handicrafts we do.”

Harpa, who is the director of the Icelandic Museum of Design and Applied Art, points to the twined rope on “Húsgagn Nr. 2,” a storage piece by Brynjar Sigurðarson at the front of the museum’s gallery space. The rope wrapping its wooden coat hooks was made by hand with net-needles and nylon string, using a process Brynjar learned from a 70-year-old Icelandic shark hunter.

“Iceland is a country without much industry,” Harpa says, but one that has a “can-do attitude.” Just a decade ago, a question about ‘Icelandic product design’ would have only returned blank stares. Since then, international breakthroughs like Sigga Heimis and Katrín Ólína have paved the way for the growing number of young Icelandic designers, many of them graduates from the Iceland Academy of Arts product design department, which opened in 2001.

The museum’s latest exhibit, “Saga til næsta bæjar,” is an exploration of the unique materials, processes, and approach Icelanders take in a field that, in most other places, is wedded to a long tradition of product manufacturing.

WE CAN DO MORE WITH THAT

These days, the bones, hides, horns and other by-products of animal processing in Iceland are considered offal next to fish and meat. But it wasn’t always that way. Before the advent of plastics and imports, animal products were used in design on almost every level of daily life: eating, cooking, farming, playing—even building. What’s unique about Iceland is that this history is not distinct from living memory. When designers and artists reflect on their roots, they start driving.

Enter Brynjar Sigurðarson. The story of “Húsgagn Nr. 2” lies in the village of Vopnaffjörður in north-eastern Iceland. After driving there from Reykjavík in 2008, Brynjar found himself awed by the functional forms of shark houses, fishing factories, and netting needles. For a designer, the question posed is one of synthesis: ‘What more can we do with this?’ Sketches and prototypes eventually led to wood planks fanned out as coat hooks, reminiscent of hooks used for rubber gloves in fish factories. The planks are tied with ropes handmade, and functionality is stacked with a mounted white storage bin. Taking in the coarse combination of materials used to assemble “Húsgagn Nr. 2,” you can almost smell the fish oil.

As Harpa explains, Brynjar is not alone. Icelandic product designers of the past decade have tapped into regular Icelandic life processes, tinkering with raw materials as diverse as fish bones, moss and chocolate to make jewellery, slick fish bone model-making kits, and volcano-

shaped candies that don’t feel manufactured so much as created. Product designers are repurposing and refreshing handicrafts, and adding value. The sheer quantity of product innovations in 10 years’ time reflects what Harpa calls Icelanders’ unique willingness to “just dive in.”

FROM THE EARTH, FOR THE EARTH

The gradual emergence of Icelandic design has been shaped by an international awakening to “responsible design” that began roughly a decade ago. Recycling materials, setting conventional materials aside and finding ways to use other ones—these are all features of the concept.

At the same time, the ethics of responsible design have served as a reminder that art can be close to nature and close to the Earth. The museum’s exhibit includes Guðrún Lilja Gunnlaugsdóttir’s “Inner Beauty”—a furniture piece made from layers of plywood flowers randomly assorted to evoke the depth of humans’ connection to nature. Cased with round-edged wood, the piece works variously as a low table, bench or stool.

Guðrún has also worked on “Birch,” a set of small birch branches dipped in silver. Pieces like these seek to enter spaces uncommonly reserved for art—the wall beneath a staircase, the centre of a table. Reminders of an earlier time before Iceland’s settlement, when birches were the only trees on the island; manifestations of the question: where else can product design get a foot in the door here?

THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT A WOOL BLANKET

Rough, warm Icelandic wool fuelled the trade for Russian oil and enjoyed high prices internationally through the 1980s. After cheaper synthetic fleece crashed the market, the soul-searching began: How can raw wool and simple blankets be turned into true artisanal products? Brands like Vík Þrjónsdóttir emerged later to answer the question with ingenuity, stretching the boundaries of Icelandic wool and mapping them with pieces like “The Landscape Blanket,” a woolly take on volcanic topography in three dimensions.

Wool is the weave for Vík Þrjónsdóttir’s designers, but the mythic ideas from which they source their work are lodged in the rich narrative lore of the North. Another piece included in the exhibit is “Hidden World,” a medley of blanket, cape, and “healing hands” that neatly folds magic into the world of product design.

Wool is being used now not just for haute production but for experimental repurposing. “Knitted couch” demonstrates the possibilities in stripping down older imitation furniture models and weaving a new story through



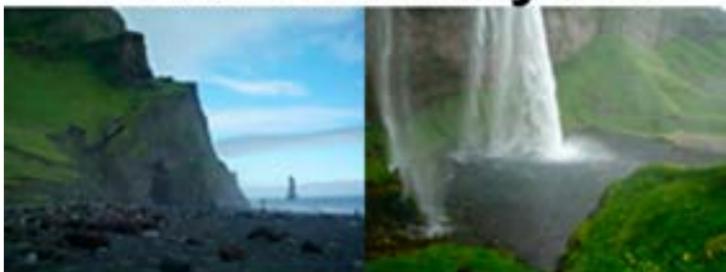
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“
Icelandic design has
always existed, but
designers and furniture
makers have never had
the same recognition as
other artists.
”



their frames. Using Icelandic wool, Guðrún Gunnlaugsdóttir has knitted a new narrative for product design within Iceland.

“SAGA TIL NÆSTA BÆJAR”

The exhibit’s Icelandic title roughly translates to “something to tell at the next farm,” a phrase that harkens to a period of greater isolation in Iceland. When people went out, they would travel from farm to farm. If they heard a story or came upon something of fascination, it would be something “worth telling at the next farm.”

For Harpa, who named the exhibit, the idea is simply that the nascent identity of product design in Iceland is something worth talking about. “This is a phrase that everyone’s heard before, but nobody has thought of in this context. Icelandic design has always existed, but designers and furniture makers have never had the same recognition as other artists,” she says.

Harpa references product design in a country like Denmark, where people know their designers by name and might pass down furniture heirlooms the same way Icelanders would jewellery. She hopes the exhibit will familiarise Icelanders with the resourcefulness and individualism of their own designers, their own materials, their own handicrafts. When the circuit completes and Icelanders’ faces light up with pride, she feels one step closer to reminding them of the old methods and capabilities stowed in cultural memory.

Harpa’s profession is multitasking: exhibiting, researching, collecting. She thinks that people are only beginning to be aware of this, the only design museum in Iceland, and too, the wave of great product design washing up on native soil. Describing her take on the museum’s progress, Harpa takes the same attitude of rough capability as the product designers she’s so fluent discussing.

“I told my friend before that I was working in a start-up,” she jokes. “My friend, who does not work in product design, said back to me: ‘No Harpa, what you’re working in is a green field.’ Nobody has done this before.”

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Volcanic Heart Of Darkness

A day-long safari through the deserts of the southern highlands

Words by Eli Petzold  Juli Vol

People often set aside the interior of Iceland as “other” from the rest of the country: it's a barren, uninhabitable desert, accessible only by certain vehicles at certain times of the year. Before going on my jeep tour, the only thing I knew about Iceland's interior was the vast and silent unknown that people talk about so often.

I head to the Arctic Adventures office on Laugavegur on a day with nasty, biting winds. Siggí, our tour guide, takes us—a group of seven—to the car, a Ford Excursion with tires more than half my height. As we leave Reykjavík, Siggí gives us the run-down of the day's trek: we'll explore the area around the volcano Hekla and then head to Landmannalaugar where we'll be able to hike or explore on our own.

Gates of hell

The group is sleepy and quiet as we soar through the southern lowlands while Siggí re-lays stories about the scenery. My attention wavers. Hekla appears to the right, its head hidden under clouds. I've only ever seen it shrouded like that. When we turn off Route 1 and head north, I start to wake up with excitement. It's

not long before we reach the beginning of the F-road. The signs warn travellers: “Don't even think about it if you ain't in a 4x4.” The landscape has changed drastically since we left the farmland of the south coast—a hilly desert of black ash and pumice on all sides.

We weave our way towards Hekla as Siggí tells us about its history. It is one of the most active volcanoes in Iceland, erupting as recently as 2000. But the deadliest eruptions were earlier, such as the 1104 blast that buried nearby settlements in ash. In medieval Europe, Hekla was believed to be an entrance to Hell—people dared not go near because they feared the voices of the damned escaping from beneath.

The road towards Hekla is sinuous and steep. Desert turns to lava field, rigid and reef-like. I notice that the field is lacking the

Icelandic moss that so often accompanies this common geological formation. That's because, as Siggí explains, these lava fields are from a 1970 eruption. The poetry of newly-born earth is not lost on me.

We reach a crater, coloured red by oxidation, and go outside to find a powerful, freezing wind. I close my eyes and listen and think about the voices of the damned. After exploring the Hekla region, we pass through another black desert—this one of craggy obsidian—on our way to Landmannalaugar.

Gates of Eden

The high winds are blowing lots of dust and ash in the air, hampering visibility. When we reach Landmannalaugar, the famous colourful rhyolite hills are nothing more than hills in the distance. Siggí explains that we're supposed to spend three or so hours here, exploring on our own, but because of the harsh, cold winds, we could spend less time outside and more time in the

car looking at other things.

Still, I'm hell-bent on at least dipping in the hot stream that gives Landmannalaugar its name. I strip my four layers off, pull on my swimsuit and run into the water as fast as possible. It's warm, hot in some places. I relax completely. I'm sad that the conditions are too severe to allow for a pleasant day of exploring, but I admire the beauty from the warmth of the stream.

When I get back to the car, the whole group is waiting for me and they think I'm crazy for swimming. But if anything, I feel warmer, despite the seconds of being wet in the cold wind. Siggí fills in our extra time with a tour of the area's waterfalls and features, where the real treat is Gjáin—literally “the canyon”—a small gorge filled with vibrant green life nestled beneath a harsh desert landscape like a miniature Eden. I sleep through the ride home. Reykjavík is still windy and frigid, but after my trip to the interior, it's nothing to complain about.

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Réttir Went Smooth As Beer

Grapevine's annual visit to the annual sheep roundup

Words and photos by Melanie Franz

Fall means it's time for the annual gathering of sheep, the "réttir"—an important event for rural Icelanders that has been growing in popularity with tourists as of late. That's no wonder—it is a unique and interesting ritual.

The round-up goes like this: after sheep have spent the summer grazing in the mountains they are rounded up and guided down to the valley. The actual event called "réttir" takes place the following day, when the sheep are driven into a large sheepfold—a round inner circle with small gates leading to a number of partitioned off areas around it that allows farmers to sort the sheep according to their markings.

Get those sheep down

On a crisp Saturday evening, some friends and I head to 'Tungnaréttir' near Geysir. The arrival of the sheep had been delayed for a day due to bad weather conditions. For the past week, fifteen to twenty people on horseback had been busy looking for sheep, collecting them in the surrounding mountain area. The evening before they chased the roughly 6,000 sheep down to the valley where they were greeted by farmers, families, friends and others who want to be part of the spectacle.

The air is filled with the sound of sheep bucking, bleating and making noise. They run in a seemingly endless trail along the river, followed by a large number of horses and riders. While the field is slowly being taken over by sheep that are grazing eagerly after their long march, my friends and I are surrounded by horses and Icelanders in lopapeysur (the traditional Icelandic woollen jumper that seems to be de rigueur at a round up).

Lopapeysur and beer

The mood at the sheep roundup is cheerful, as the arrival of the sheep is accompanied by a decent amount of beer, much deserved after all of the hard work. Once the sheep are securely fenced off in the field, the farmers call it a night and head home or to the local bar for a bowl of traditional meat soup and further beer consumption.

We spend the night at a nearby summer cottage. After a delicious meal of lamb-leg we head

down for a couple of pints at the local bar for a couple of pints, where a group of elderly Icelanders have gathered around a guitar to sing the night away.

Sheep, sheep, sheep

Réttir is already in full swing when we finally make it down to the sheepfold around ten the next morning. Parked cars block roads and fields everywhere, the atmosphere is lively and the rescue team seems ready and alert with their quads standing nearby—just in case.

The sheep had been chased into the middle of the sheepfold where people await to grab them by their horns and shove them into the designated partitions. The sheep's ears are marked, but we get told that many farmers know their sheep without these aids

By noon it seems that the end is in sight, as people start singing and more and more cans of beer make the rounds. Horses stand very relaxed in their partitions, while children run around trying to catch or mount the sheep, which in turn run rather frantically from one end of the enclosure to the other.

We stand among the sheep, listening to the singing that grows gradually louder. All we see is a sea of wool—sheep and lopapeysur in various patterns. While the atmosphere is full of bleating, talking and an increasingly intoxicated mood, some of the sheep are already being loaded into small trailers. They are to be taken to their home farms where they will await their fate—contributing to the ever-growing demand for lopapeysur and delicious legs of lamb.

Unlike the unfortunate sheep in the northeast Iceland that were pummelled by early snow this year, this réttir turned out to be a smooth affair. Joining in on the sheep action was fun, the day was bright and sunny and the cold beer kept us running.



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**INTER
NET**

Introducing The Reykjavík Grapevine's Airwaves Journal airwaves.grapevine.is

Compiled by **Haukur S Magnússon**



Good news everyone! We've gone and made a special website dedicated to talking about the upcoming Iceland Airwaves festival in all sorts of ways. Yup, it's the internet, so there will be no limit to what we can do save for our imagination. We can use all the fucking cuss words we want. We can post videos. Super long interviews. Or super short interviews. Or YouTube clips of kitties being all cute (THERE'S an idea!).

And we've already begun! Harnessing the untamed forces of two of our favourite Constant Contributors, the mighty Rebecca 'Louder' Louder and Bob 'Bobarella' Clunness, we've posted interviews with some mighty fine bands, some pretty rad tips & trix and not a few YouTube clips. And this is just the beginning! There will be contests! Free beer! News! Performances! More interviews!

Make sure to go to www.airwaves.grapevine.is right now. Bookmark that shit. And keep coming back. We promise to make it worth y'all's while!

**INTER
VIEWS**

by **Bob Clunness**

We talk to a select and lovely bunch of Airwaves artists, discussing everything from their upcoming performances and albums to bathroom sex, Russian literature, Romneycare and everything in-between.

From:
War And Uneasy Peace: Legend Interviewed



The undeniable truth is... Iceland needs more bands like Legend. And so do you.

Legend frontman Krummi Björgvinsson pauses and contemplates, before sipping his beer and continuing our conversation: "War, hate, and all these things we end up talking about. I see it on TV and the media everywhere. I know people around the world who are touched by this and it affects me. I can't really sit down and be all happy, happy, joy, joy cheery when I don't think that the world is cheery at all."

We're meeting at Krummi's favourite local haunt, Boston, to discuss his band, Legend, their recent album and the environment whence it sprang. Why it sounds the way it sounds. And why we need its kind of pessimistic honesty. But let's start at the beginning.

We meet in the evening. Krummi takes a seat, and I start recording. I ask him about the state of the Legend camp these days.

"They've been really good," he says. "We've just been really busy setting with Artofact, a Canadian indie label who contacted us about wanting to distribute the album. They're going to distribute the album in Canada, the US and Europe, and we've been working with them on things, such as changing the album artwork and packaging. So we've been at our computers doing all these changes and making sure everything's in place before it goes into production."

➔ Go to airwaves.grapevine.is and read the full interviews

From:
Enter The Court Of The Caterpillarmen
Sonic space monkeys Caterpillarmen are looking to get all prunky in your face!



Ever since the release of their debut album 'Adopt A Monkey' in 2009, Caterpillarmen have been one of the quiet playmakers in the Icelandic music scene, slowly bubbling under the radar. 2011 saw the band crank up a gear, releasing two albums (the self-titled 'Caterpillarmen', and 'Babycum'), while 2012 has seen their profile rise as they supported acts like Ceremony and tUnEzArDs (they toured through Europe with the latter).

We got the lowdown from bass player Zakarías Herman Gunnarsson on what's been happening in the world of Caterpillarmen.

One term often pinned to you is "prog" as in "progressive rock." What does that mean to you guys, if at all? In musical terms, what do Caterpillarmen represent?

Zakarías Hermann Gunnarsson: Yup, the "Ye olde prog." Um... we started out wanting to play prog, but it's sort of old now for us. We're expanding our limits, diversifying. On our new album, you have a ballad, and we also have a sort of single, so we're chilling on the prog. But by that, I mean chilling on fucking playing that genre card, you know? I still think of us as a progressive phenomenon. A punky, whatever thing.

Does that make sense?

➔ Go to airwaves.grapevine.is and read the full interviews

AIRWAVES JOURNAL

**VIP
SHIT**

THE INSIDER

Of course you'll have fun at Iceland Airwaves no matter what (so long as you can afford to buy beer and generally like the idea of a multi-venue music festival slash party (with an emphasis on party)). However, a great experience can always be enhanced with a bit of foresight, planning and listening to your elders. In 'THE INSIDER,' we get some veteran Airwaves-goers to divulge their tips 'n' trix for getting the most out of IA2K12 and answer your very own questions (send 'em to rebecca@grapevine.is).

From:
The Insider's Guide To Iceland Airwaves: Nick Knowles Edition

We got UK music management maestro, magazine maven (and not at all scary dude judging by his photo), **NICK KNOWLES** to tell y'all all about Airwaves

On what to get at Keflavík Airport: I'm not saying you need to have alcohol to have a good time, BUT it would be a very good idea to stock up on an assortment of alcoholic beverages. Although drinks prices are not as much as they were pre-2007, the Duty Free will definitely help save some krónur.

Do you go fast or go slow?: Normal weekends in Reykjavík are legendary. Airwaves weekends are ridiculous. If you're getting to Airwaves on Wednesday, you'll definitely need to pace yourself. The first couple of days are perfect for acquainting yourself with this fine city, its wonderful musical produce, restaurants and hip fashion boutiques. In the evening watch some awesome new music, hang out, meet new people and get your head down before two AM. If you've followed my advice, by Friday you'll still have the energy to don your party hat for the greatest weekend of your life.

**ARTIST
GUIDE**

A GLIMPSE

Every year we listen to a bunch of the scheduled artists and write up short and (hopefully) informative descriptions of why people should see them and what to expect. You can read 'em all in the forthcoming Iceland Airwaves programme pamphlet—or you can sneak a peek at 'em all on airwaves.grapevine.is.



BÁRÚJÁRN
Sunday, Gamli Gaukurinn, 21:00

A rag-tag band of hippie ne'er-do-wells doling out gothy surf-punk tunes from even further beyond the valley of the dolls.



DANÍEL BJARNASON
Friday, Iðnó, 20:00 / Saturday, Fríkirkjan, 20:00

(Solaris special performance) – From conducting to composition, this classical avant-gardist's work transcends the canon and his contemporaries alike.



PRINS PÓLÓ
Wednesday, Iðnó, 22:30 / Saturday, Reykjavík Art Museum, 20:00

As quirky and cutesy-buttons as they come, this local indie-pop supergroup of indie-pop is all frills and fun and paper crowns



GUGSUG
Saturday, Harpa Silfurberg, 01:00

One of Iceland's most enduring bands, who defined much of the local electronic scene. Their Airwaves shows have become hard-to-get-into spectacles of delight



MOMENTUM
Saturday, Gamli Gaukurinn, 02:00 / Sunday, Amsterdam, 00:00

Like a fire-breathing, redbearded dragon soaring through the sky, this bowel-shattering metal band will delight and terrify.

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P.6 “ Sunday morning, 11:00. Þorvaldseyri farm. Autumn has arrived, but this morning is sunny and unseasonably mild. The waves of a golden field of rapeseed flowers undulate in the gentle breeze almost as far as the eye can see ”



Mark O'Brien visits the South Iceland farms pioneering the revolutionary rapeseed crop, which experts hope will save the environment.

P.16 “ Einar insists that saving our skyr is worth the effort: ‘Consumers like to buy produce that has a genuine local connection. Today many people tend to prefer original authentic local fare to goods that are mass-produced by big global corporations. And this will benefit farmers back in Iceland too.’ ”

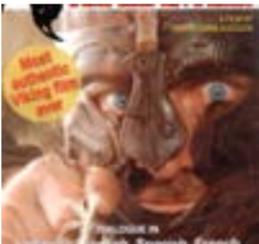


Does skyr need official status as a “product of Iceland”? Industry leaders say yes.

P.32 “ It’s five years later and he’s in Reykjavík, drawing on the walls of the D Gallery on the second floor of Reykjavík Art Museum’s Hafnarhús building. ”

Someone’s been drawing on the walls at the RVK Art Museum! But don’t worry, we’ve been to check it out—it’s all for art, guys.

P.26 “ ‘When The Raven Flies’ has aged well and though Hrafn attempted more complex takes on the Viking Age in later epics, he never did it better. Anyone with an interest in Icelandic cinema (or Vikings) needs to go see this . ”



As RIFF 2012 storms into town, we pick out some of the programme highlights—including Hrafn Gunnlaugsson’s quintessentially Icelandic ‘When The Raven Flies’.

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SEPTEMBER

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

Friday September 21

Amsterdam

• 22:00 **DJ Tommi**
No shoes, no shirt, you'll probably be
serviced anyway.

Bakkus

• 22:00 **DJ Kári**
DJ Kári has been DJ-ing up a storm since
sometime in the '90s. The man knows
what he's doing and can pack a dance-
floor in no time.

Café Rosenberg

• 22:00 **La serva padrona** (performed
by The Folk Opera Iceland)

Den Danske Kro

• 19:00 "The Danish Guy"
• 00:00 **Hjálmar & Dagur**
TROUBADOUR ALERT!

Faktóry

• 22:00 **Sing For Me Sandra, Ultra
Mega Technobandið Stefán and
Hide Your Kids**
• 22:00 **Dj Logi Pedro**
UMTS always put on a crazy show, and
Retro Stefson's Logi Pedro is a growing
DJ. Probably a good night.

Gamli Gaukurinn

• 22:00 **JAN (US), Dorian Gray,
Retrobot**
We don't know much about JAN, but
they did come from far away, so do check
out their show if you're up for it.

Gay 46

• 22:00 **Dj Dramatík**
A bear of a man, DJ Dramatík knows his
chops!

Glaumbar

• 22:00 **DJ Seth**

Hressó

• 22:00 **Stuðkvarteret Gunna Óla** from
Skimó
• 22:00 **DJ Fannar**
Go there to sample the type of Icelandic
nightlife the tourist brochures aren't try-
ing to sell you.

Kaffi Zimsen

• 22:00 **DJ Árni**
Zimsen has cheap beer!

Prikið

• 22:00 **Elín Ey & rap quiz**
• 00:00 **DJ Danni Deluxe**
A night of female troubadour fun, a rap
quiz and Iceland's hipsterest hip-hopper!
Schizoid and fun!

Vegamót

• 22:00 **Jónas**
All the Jónas fans are sure to congregate.
Who knows, he might even bring his
brothers?

Saturday September 22

Amsterdam

• 22:00 **DJ Tommi**

Bakkus

• 22:00 **DJ Pilsner**

Café Rosenberg

• 22:00 **Komum heiminum í lag**

Den Danske Kro

• 21:00 "The Danish Guy"
• 00:00 **Biggi Olgeirs**
Biggi Olgeirs is a journalist by day, a Led
Zeppelin covering crooner by night.

Faktóry

• 23:00 **RVK Soundsystem reggae
party**
• 23:00 **DJ Housekell**
These RVK Soundsystem parties are the
stuff of local legend.

Gamli Gaukurinn

• 22:00 **B. Dolan (US)**
B. Dolan played Gaukurinn last year,
opening up for Sage Francis. Now he's
back by himself.

Gay 46

• 22:00 **Dj Bluescreen**

Glaumbar

• 22:00 **DJ Yngvi Eysteins**

Hressó

• 22:00 **Hljómsveitin Menn Ársins**

• 22:00 **DJ Fannar**

Kaffi Zimsen

• 22:00 **DJ Árni**

Kjallarinn

• 22:00 **Dj Manny**

Prikið

• 00:00 **DJ Pedro**

Vegamót

• 22:00 **Gunni**

22
Sep



B Dolan - Rhyme And Reason

Gamli Gaukurinn,

Tryggvagata 22 (D4) | 🕒 22:30 | ISK 1.500

With a long, crazy looking beard and a head as bald as a baby's bottom, B. Dolan looks like a missing member of Lynard Skynard. But rap is the name of his game, and spitting clever, socially conscious rhymes is his game. A veteran of New York's spoken word and poetry scene, B. Dolan spent years building his chops in before releasing an album, 'The Failure,' in 2003. He then disappeared from the poetry scene altogether to concentrate on his music career. The result was a series of well-received hip-hop albums, a site that tells you what your product purchases support (knowmore.org) and that killer beard.

Sunday September 23

Culture House

• 20:00 **Summer Concerts - pre-
ludes for piano**

Faktóry

• 21:30 **Live Jazz**

Prikið

• 22:00 **Hangover Cinema - Billy
Madison**

Is Rob Schneider in this? Man, fuck
that guy.

Monday September 24

Den Danske Kro

• 22:00 **Hjálmar & Dagur**

Prikið

• 22:00 **DJ Bob and the Monday
Club**
The hardest of in-denial alcoholics
grouped together to extend the week-
end by one day. The Monday Club is
what happened.

Tuesday September 25

Bakkus

• 22:00 **DJ Katla - Britpop Bakkus**
Hey! Remember when Cast were the
next big thing?

Café Rosenberg

• 21:00 **Korka**

Den Danske Kro

22:00 **Gunni**

Prikið

• 22:00 **DJ Gay Latino Man**
DJ GAY LATINO MAN FOR EL PRESI-
DENTE!

Wednesday September 26

Bakkus

• 22:00 **Einar Sonic**
Einar Sonic is a local legend and he will
most definitely rock your Wednesday
night with choice garage, shoegaze and
skronk sounds.

Café Rosenberg

• 21:00 **Vigri - farewell concert**
Ekki fara!

Prikið

• 22:00 **Dungeon Massive**

Thorvaldsen

• 21:00 **Live Music**

Thursday September 27

Café Rosenberg

• 21:00 **La serva padrona** (per-
formed by The Folk Opera Iceland)

Den Danske Kro

• 22:00 **Magni**

Faktóry

• 22:00 **Dj Danni Deluxe**

Glaumbar

• 22:00 **Bingó & DJ Atli**

Hressó

• 22:00 **Flass 104,5 charity concert**

Prikið

• 22:00 **Surprise Night**

Thorvaldsen

• 20:00 **Salsa**

Vegamót

• 22:00 **Benni**

Friday September 28

Bakkus

• 22:00 **It is Magic**

Licensing and registration of travel- related services

The Icelandic Tourist Board issues licences to tour operators and travel agents, as well as issuing registration to booking services and information centres.

Tour operators and travel agents are required to use a special logo approved by the Icelandic Tourist Board on all their advertisements and on their Internet website.

Booking services and information centres are entitled to use a Tourist Board logo on all their material. The logos below are recognised by the Icelandic Tourist Board.



List of licenced Tour
Operators and Travel
Agencies on:
visiticeland.com



Ný Dönsk - Twenty-Fifth anniversary concert

Harpa - Eldborg,

Harpa Reykjavík Concert Hall (C5) | 🕒 20:00 | **ISK** 3.900 - 6.990

Nýdönsk was formed 25 years ago by bassist Björn Jörundur Friðbjörnsson and singer Daníel Ágúst Haraldsson—and if there's any truth to their photos, they've aged into a pretty distinguished looking group of guys. To celebrate their quarter century of Icelandic pop/rock music the band will be performing at Harpa with a slew of musical guests, including members from the bands Hjaltalín and Gus Gus. The band promises to play a selection of their most popular songs from over the years.



➡ **Find all event listings online**
listings.grapevine.is

Café Rosenberg

• 22:00 Tilbury
Everyone loves the sweet indie pop of Tilbury! Go find out why!

Den Danske Kro

• 19:00 Tryggvi
• 00:00 Hreimur

Faktorý

• 20:00 **Bjúddarinn** Fun Night courtesy of minor league hipster football team **KF Mjöðm (FC Hip)**. Loads of bands. Prinspóli reveals the team's new official rally song, art auction AND MORE!
• 22:00 **Live Concert TBA**
• 22:00 **Dj Óli Dóri**
DJ Óli Dóri hosts a radio show and operates a popular music blog (www.straum.is) when he's not spinning the hottest tracks. He's in the empire business.

Gamli Gaukurinn

• 22:00 Jack Live

Gay 46

• 22:00 Dj Veloci

Hressó

• 22:00 Una Stef, Robert The Roomate and Poka

Kaffi Zimsen

• 22:00 DJ Seth

Kjallarinn

• 22:00 Dj Kidda Rokk

Prikið

• 22:00 Thorunn Antonía & Berndsen / DJ Maggi Lego

Vegamót

• 22:00 Jónas

Saturday September 29

Amsterdam

• 22:00 DJ Skuli

Bakkus

• 22:00 DJ KGB

Café Rosenberg

• 22:00 Kristjana Arngríms and band

Den Danske Kro

• 21:00 Tryggvi

• 00:00 Hjálmar & Dagur

Faktorý

• 23:00 Valdimar and guests

• 23:00 Dj Logi Pedro

• 00:00 Borg002

Gay 46

• 22:00 Dj Kidda Rokk

Glaubar

• 22:00 DJ Seth

Hressó

• 22:00 Where's Snow White

• 22:00 VJ Fúzi

Kaffi Zimsen

• 22:00 DJ Seth

Kjallarinn

• 22:00 Dj Dramatík

Prikið

• 22:00 Benni B Ruff

Vegamót

• 22:00 Símon

Sunday September 30

Den Danske Kro

• 22:00 Hjálmar & Dagur

Prikið

• 22:00 Hangover Cinema - Ponyo

Monday October 1

Den Danske Kro

• 22:00 Live Music

Prikið

• 22:00 Weirdcore

Tuesday October 2

Bakkus

• 22:00 DJ Katla

Den Danske Kro

• 22:00 Tryggvi

Wednesday October 3

Bakkus

• 22:00 DJ Creature of the Night

Den Danske Kro

• 22:00 Pop Quiz with Hreimur

Faktorý

• 22:00 Iceland Airwaves warm-up

Thorvaldsen

• 21:00 Live Music

Thursday October 4

Bakkus

• 22:00 DJ Harry Knuckles

Den Danske Kro

• 22:00 Magni

Kjallarinn

• 22:00 Dj Kidda

Thorvaldsen

• 20:00 Salsa

Vegamót

• 22:00 Danni

Den Danske Kro

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i8

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101 Reykjavík
Iceland
www.i8.is



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The Infinite Day

20 September - 20 October 2012

i8 was founded in 1995 and represents an eclectic mix of Icelandic and international contemporary artists.

BIRGIR ANDRÉSSON	FINNBOGI PÉTURSSON
ÓLAFUR ELÍASSON	RAGNA RÓBERTSDÓTTIR
HREINN FRÍÐFINNSSON	EGILL SÆBJÖRNSSON
KRISTJÁN GUÐMUNDSSON	KARIN SANDER
SIGURÐUR GUÐMUNDSSON	HRAFNKELL SIGURÐSSON
ELÍN HANSDÓTTIR	IGNACIO URIARTE
RONI HORN	ÍVAR VALGARÐSSON
RAGNAR KJARTANSSON	ÞÓR VALGARÐSSON
EGGERT PÉTURSSON	LAWRENCE WEINER

Opening hours: Tuesday - Friday, 11-5pm, Saturday, 1-5pm.
Join our mailing list on www.i8.is or join us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/i8gallery).

ART

OPENINGS AND ONGOING

SEPTEMBER

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

Opening

i8 Gallery

September 20

The Infinite Day

Birgir Andriesson's work (1955-2007) explores the relationships between visual perception and spoken language, thought, and Icelandic cultural identity.

Runs until October 20

Gallerí Kling & Bang

September 29

Home in Basel and Bar

Five hundred years in the making, this exhibit is an homage to a printing business first set up in 1500.

Runs until October 28

Ongoing

ASÍ Art Museum

Remembering Art: The Outdoor Exhibitions at Skólavörðuholt 1967 - 1972

A look back at the works of Icelandic artists who presented their works in the Outdoor Exhibitions at Skólavörðuholt from 1967 - 1972.

Runs until September 30

The Culture House

Medieval Manuscripts Eddas and Sagas

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

On permanent view

Child of Hope - Youth and Jón Sigurðsson

Exploring the life of Icelandic national hero Jón Sigurðsson, 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

The Einar Jónsson Museum

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

Gallerí Agúst

Transfiguration

This unusual exhibition celebrates the gallery's 5th anniversary, presenting three artists creating unique artwork directly onto the gallery's walls.

Runs until September 23

Gerðuberg Cultural Centre

Twilight Poems and Stories

American book artist Rebecca Goodale showcases her works in this exhibition. She extends the conventional ideas about books' shape, size and function.

Runs until October 28

Hafnarborg

Shadow2012

Gudni Tomasson's 'Shadow' exhibition headlines this autumn's set-piece showcase, looking at Icelandic art through a historical lens to present a culturally relevant exhibit.

Runs until October 28

Harpa

How to Become Icelandic in 60 Minutes

Join us for a comical theatre performance about all kinds of



Cartoon graffiti

News From the Island - Dan Perjovschi

Reykjavík Art Museum - Hafnarhús,

Tryggvagata 17 (D3) | ☎ 10:00 - 17:00 | ISK 1.100

Romanian art legend Dan Perjovschi's "indoor graffiti" is on show at Hafnarhús this month all the way through to January. But this is not any run-of-the-mill installation: Dan has taken his black marker pen and drawn onto the white walls of the second floor of the Reykjavík Art Museum. For years, Dan has been setting up shop in galleries worldwide and casting his cartoon shapes onto museum walls. His exhibition here 'News From The Island' plays upon some of the hot topics in modern Iceland, such as joining the EU and bailing out the banks; one cheeky sketch is a volcano spewing ash labelled 'souvenirs'. A teasing, provocative, witty exhibition well worth dropping by. Read more on page 32.

aspects of Icelandic culture. If you're sick of feeling like a tourist everywhere you go, this show is for you. Tickets are 3,900 ISK and Harpa hosts two to three shows per week in the Kaldalón or Norðurljós halls.

Runs until September 22

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

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

Icelandic Printmakers Association

Light Units - Ásdís Kalman

This exhibit reflects the artist's memory of lights and how she experiences it.

Runs until September 30

Inspired by Iceland

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

Runs until November 4

The National Museum

Advent in the Highlands -

Photographs by Sigurjón Pétursson

Photographs by Sigurjón Pétursson and Þóra Hrönn Njálssóttir, inspired by the book 'The Good Shepherd' by Gunnar Gunnarsson.

Runs until October 28

Cliffhanger Rescue at Látrabjarg

In December 1947 a British trawler, the Dhoon, ran aground in a storm in the northwest of Iceland. The photographs in the exhibit show the re-enactment of the rescue of the crew.

Runs until October 28

Drawing Across Time and Space

See sketches of Iceland from as far back as 1789, when Scottish scientist John Baine took part in an expedition to Iceland, up to the present.

Runs until January 27, 2013

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

Tvær í Einni/Two in One

Sverris Björnsson's photos capture Iceland during its two most extreme seasons, summer and winter.

Runs until January 27, 2013

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

Life in the Vatnsmýri

An exhibition on birds, plants and people in the Vatnsmýri moor, the role of nature in the city and the importance of reclaiming wetlands.

Runs until November 4

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, 2013

Reykjavík Art Museum-

Hafnarhús

Erró - Graphic Art, 1949-2009

For the first time the general public are able to view Erró's graphic art spanning half a century. The exhibition is the result of three years' work researching and collating the artist's entire collection of graphic pieces undertaken by curator Danielle Kvaran.

Runs until August 25, 2013

HA - Sara Björnsdóttir

In this high concept installation, Sara Björnsdóttir fills the exhibition room with images of the room itself.

Runs until January 6, 2013

News from the Island - Dan

Perjovschi Dan Perjovschi draws directly on walls and floors at different locations. His "indoor graffiti" criticizes all manner of popular opposites that flood the mass media.

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The
REYKJAVÍK
GRAPEVINE

IN YOUR POCKET

WHATS
INSIDE

Reykjavík Map

Happy Hour Guide

Places we like

Best of Reykjavík

Practical Info

Reykjavík Area

September 21 - October 4

Keep it in your pocket

Two Weeks

The Grapevine picks the events, places and what to experience the next two weeks

GO

ART
LIVING IMAGES

26 WED FILM **Magical Mystery Tour.** Háskólabíó presents The Beatles 'Magical Mystery Tour,' the band's experimental film set on a bus in Cornwall.

28 FRI MUSIC **Thorunn Antonía & Berndsen.** The duo perform at Prikid at 22:00.

30 THEATRE **Stones in his Pockets.** The National Theatre puts on this Icelandic translation of Marie Jones' 1996 play. A Hollywood production in a small Irish town goes awry.

29
SAT

COMEDY
Scandinavian World Tour



Johan Glans stand-up
2.990 ISK

The National Theatre, Hverfisgata 19 @ 20:00
It's no small feat to be considered by many to be the funniest man in a country of just over nine million people, but Johan Glans is one of Sweden's comedy kings. He's also a fairly decent actor, if his appearance in a Swedish language version of Monty Python's 'Spamalot' counts for anything (which it should). But Johan's home is on the stage, with a microphone and an audience that may or may not laugh at his jokes. He'll return to his stand-up roots with a "world tour" of the Scandinavian countries before returning home to Sweden. And just in case Swedish humor doesn't translate well, Icelandic comedian Ari Eldjárn will open. **AJ**

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Fridays 12–18, Weekends 13–17
www.photomuseum.is



HA – Sara Björnsdóttir
1.100 ISK

Reykjavik Art Museum - Hafnarhús, Tryggvagata 17
The walls will literally come to life in this three-dimensional exhibit from Sara Björnsdóttir. Her HA installation will fill the exhibition room with images of the space itself. Sara studied at the Chelsea College of Art and Design in London and at the Icelandic College of Art and Crafts. Over time Sara has attempted to move away from material art towards more conceptual works. This will be her sixth work of this nature, in which she will try to make the viewer more aware of his surroundings. **AJ**

23
SUN

MUSIC
Culture House Concerts



Summer Concerts – preludes for piano
1.000-2.000 ISK

The Culture House, Hverfisgata 15 @ 20:00
It's Sunday, also known as that point in the weekend when it's time to start winding and get ready for the week. And what better way to relax, and get your weekly dose of culture in, than with a classical music recital at the Culture House? Icelandic-American pianist Dr. Kristín Jónína Taylor will finish off the Summer Concerts series with preludes by the following composers: Claude Debussy, Sergei Rachmaninoff, César Franck, Gorge Gershwin and Hjálmar H. Ragnarsson. If the concert is particularly moving, guests are free to meet Taylor after the performance. **AJ**



HORNIÐ
Annar - Pílsa

Hornið opened in 1979 was the first restaurant of its kind in Iceland, a restaurant with a true Italian atmosphere. Hornið is known for good food made out of fresh raw materials, good pizzas baked in front of the guests, good coffee and comfortable service.

Lunch offers every day.
Open every day from 11.00 to 23.30
For reservations call 551-3340

A

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B

Café Loki
in front of
Hallgrímskirkja



Enjoy some solid
homemade
Icelandic food
Open 10 - 21

C

MAP

Places We Like

Food

1 Grillmarket

Lækjargata 2a

Grillmarkaðurinn (Grillmarket) is renowned chef Hrefna Rósa Sætran's latest culinary venture. With a specially crafted grill made to withstand extreme heat, Hrefna and her team serve up juicy Icelandic dishes to the carnivore's delight (they scored BEST BURGER in our annual BEST OF REYKJAVÍK issue this year).

2 Ban Thai

Laugarvegur 130

Even though the service at Ban Thai may get a little flaky, the food is always to die for and the place also offers a very pleasant dining atmosphere that puts you right in a comfortable Thai sorta mood. It's really Reykjavík's only "fancy" Thai restaurant. Ban Thai has remained a true Reykjavík treasure for the longest time, and is truly one that should be celebrated.

3 Kaffifélagið

Skólavörðustígur 10

Kaffifélagið has been a Grapevine favourite since they opened on Skólavörðustígur a couple of years back. The small coffeehouse always delivers an excellent cup of Italian-style coffee, and downtown regulars can spring for a clip-off coffee card to save on each purchase.

4 Grái Kötturinn

Hverfisgata 16a

Super relaxed and cosy diner/café below street level. This place makes the best hangover breakfast ever (the truck!) and any-other-day breakfast as well. It's a nice and relaxing place to eat and increase your caffeine intake and chill with friends or with some reading material.

5 Kaffismiðja Íslands

Kárástígur 1

Old fashioned charm is the style of Kaffismiðja, in everything from the decor to the coffee grinders. Off the beaten track, this popular coffee shop is a great spot to sit and read or have a chat with friends. They also serve the best coffee in town—we keep picking 'em "BEST DAMN COFFEESHOP" in our annual BEST OF REYKJAVÍK issues.

Drinking

6 Dolly

Hafnarstræti 4

Just-open-for-business Dolly is the haven all the hipsters were waiting for (since the last hip place in town got fifteen minutes old), and it's actually proving to be a pretty great place to stare vacantly onto your iPhone screen and check your Instagram while waiting for that cute guy you were waiting for to show up (and also dancing, drinking and mugging for photos). Go there RIGHT NOW before the lamestreamers find out about it and defile the place.

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

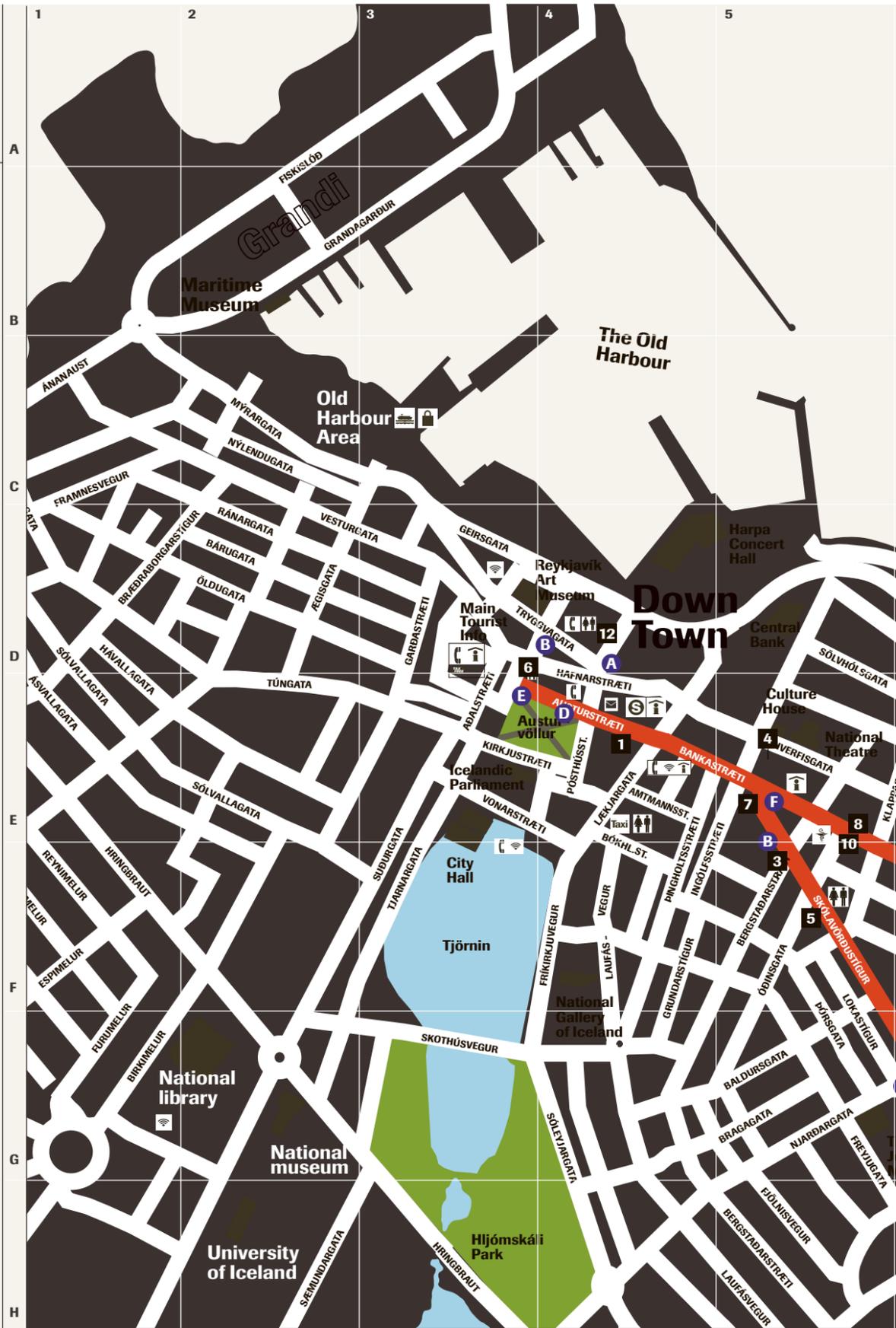
Tourist information

Arctic Adventures, Laugavegur 11,

tel: 562 7000

City Centre, Aðalstræti 2, tel: 590 1550

Iceland Excursions - Grayline Iceland,



7 Prikíð

Bankastræti 12

Prikíð is one of those places that shape-shifts. It's a warm café with photographs of their senior frequenters on weekday mornings, a hung-over hangout on weekend afternoons, and during nights it's filled to the brim with what remains of Iceland's hip hop scene. Go there in daytime for the cheap burgers; enter at night for some OTT hip-hop debauchery, old skool and the latest bangers alike.

Hafnarstræti 20, tel: 540 1313

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

Trip, Laugavegur 54, tel: 433 8747

Pharmacies

Lyf og heilsa, Egilsgata 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, Reykjavíkflugvöllur,

tel: 570 3030, www.flugfelag.is

Eagle Air, Hótel Loftleiðir, tel: 562-4200

8 Hemmi og Valdi

Laugavegur 21

The "colonial store" Hemmi and Valdi is cosy hangout that has advanced from being a toasty retreat, where you could get cheap beer and have a quiet chat, into being a chock-full concert venue and an all-night party place. The atmosphere is at times brilliant.

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 KEX

Skúlagata 28

Located literally steps away from Reykjavík harbour, with a gorgeous view of Esja, KEX Hostel is a popular hangout amongst Icelanders who go there to enjoy the restaurant and bar as well as tourists who go there to sleep (and enjoy the restaurant and bar). Close enough to the main drag downtown, but far enough away from weekend festivities, we recommend KEX Hostel as a nice hangout spot.

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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D

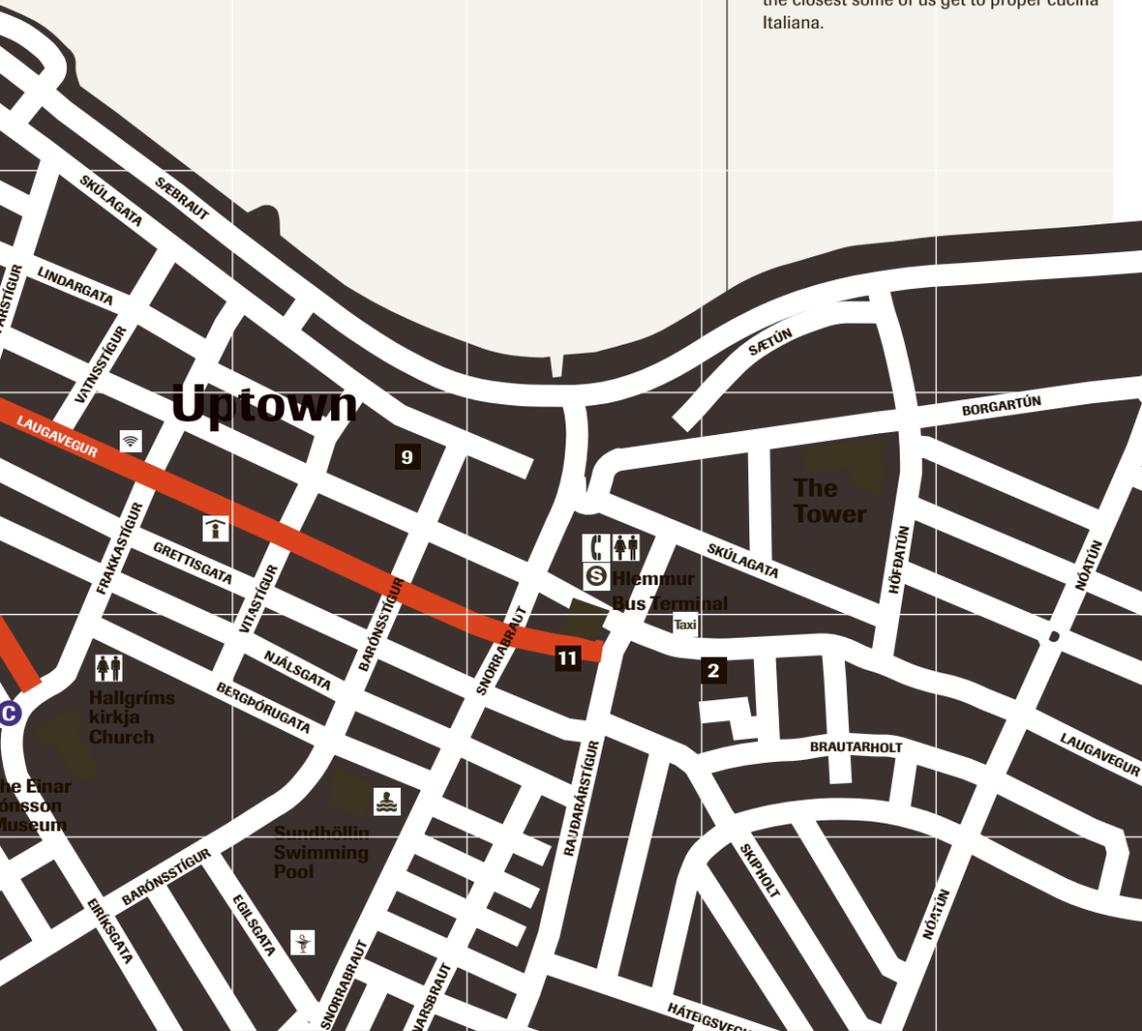
New In Town



13 Massimo og Katia

Laugarásvegi 1

If you find yourself outside downtown and craving some parmigiana and tiramisu, then Massimo og Katia might be the place for you. Claiming to serve genuine Italian food (made by actual Italians), it may be the closest some of us get to proper cucina Italiana.



Uptown

The Tower

Hlemmur Bus Terminal

Shopping

10 Mál og Menning

Laugavegur 18

Mál og Menning bookstore is a Reykjavik essential if there ever was one. It occupies three levels at Laugavegur, and sells stationary, children's games, foreign newspapers, Icelandic books, CDs, postcards and souvenirs. You'll find the always-buzzing café and the foreign book section on the top floor.

11 Mai Thai

Laugavegur 118

Located across from Hlemmur Bus Station, Mai Thai imports and sells all sorts of products from South East Asia, particularly Thailand and the Philippines. Depending on the day, you might find bean sprouts, exotic fruits, frozen spring rolls, various kinds of rice, sauces, spices galore, egg and rice noodles, Asian snacks, clothes and other knick-knacks. In short, a wide array of what are still considered rare and exotic treats in Reykjavik.

12 Kolaportið

Tryggvagata 19

Reykjavik's massive indoor flea market is a wonderful place to get lost for a few hours, rummaging through stall upon stall of potential treasures. There are heaps of used clothing, knitwear and other yard-sale type goods from decades of yore, and a large food section with fish, meats and baked goods.

Public phones

There aren't many public payphones in the city centre. The tourist information centre at Aðalstræti 2, City Hall, Kolaportið, 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, Ingólfstortorg, 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.

Venue Finder Music & Entertainment

- Amsterdam**
Hafnarstræti 5 | D4
- Austur**
Austurstræti 7 | E4
- B5**
Bankastræti 5 | E4
- Babalú**
Skólavörðustígur 22 | F5
- Bar 11**
Hverfisgötu 18 | E5
- Bjarni Fel**
Austurstræti 20 | E4
- Boston**
Laugavegur 28b | F6
- Café Paris**
Austurstræti 14 | E4
- Celtic Cross**
Hverfisgata 26 | E5
- Den Danske Kro**
Ingólfstræti 3 | F5
- Dillon**
Laugavegur 30 | F7
- Dolly**
Hafnarstræti 4 | D4
- Dubliner**
Hafnarstræti 1-3 | D4
- Esja**
Austurstræti 16 | E4
- English Pub**
Austurstræti 12 | E4
- Faktory**
Smiðjustígur 6 | E5
- Gamli Gaukurinn**
Tryggvagata 22 | D4
- Gay 46**
Hverfisgata 46 | E4
- Ölsmiðjan**
Lækjargata 10 | E6
- Hressó**
Austurstræti 20 | E4
- Mánabar**
Hverfisgata 20 | E5
- Kaffi Zimsen**
Hafnarstræti 18 | D4
- Kaffibarinn**
Bergstraðastræti 1 | E5
- Nýlenduvöruverzlun Hemma & Valda**
Laugavegur 21 | F5
- Næsti Bar**
Ingólfstræti 1A | E5
- Ölstofan**
Vegamótastígur | F5
- Prikið**
Bankastræti | E5
- Rósenberg**
Klappastígur 25 | E6
- Sólón**
Bankastræti 7A | E5
- Thorvaldsen**
Austurstræti 8 | E4
- Vegamót**
Vegamótastígur 4 | F6

Museums & Galleries

- ART67**
Laugavegur 67 | F7
Mon - Fri 12 - 18 / Sat 12 - 16
- ASÍ Art Museum**
Freygata 41 | H6
Tue-Sun 13-17
www.listasafnasi.is
- Árbæjarsafn**
Kistuhylur 4
- The Culture House**
Hverfisgata 15 | E5
Open daily 11-17
www.thjodmenning.is
- The Einar Jónsson Museum**
Eiríksgrata | G6
Tue-Sun 14-17
www.skulptur.is
- Galleri Ágúst**
Baldursgrata 12 | G5
Wed-Sat 12-17
www.galleriagust.is
- Galleri Fold**
Rauðarástígur 14-16 | G8
Mon-Fri 10-18 / Sat 11-16 / Sun 14-16
www.myndlist.is
- Kaolin**
Skólavörðustígur 22 | E5
www.kaolingallery.com
- Galleri Kling & Bang**
Hverfisgata 42 | E6
Thurs-Sun from 14-18
this.is/klingogbang/
- Ásgrímur Jónsson Museum**
Bergstaðastræti 74
Mon-Fri through Sept. 1
- 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.hitthusid.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**
Strandgata 34, Hafnarfjörður
www.hafnarborg.is
- Mokka Kaffi**
Skólavörðustígur 3A | E5
www.mokka.is
- 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
Tue-Sun 12-17
www.nordice.is
- Restaurant Reykjavík**
Vesturgata 2 | D3
www.restaurantreykjavik.is
- Reykjavík 871+/-2**
Aðalstræti 17 | E3
Open daily 10-17
- Reykjavík Art Gallery**
Skúlagata 30 | F9
Tuesday through Sunday 14-18
- Reykjavík Art Museum composed of Hafnarhús**
Tryggvagata 17 | D3
Open 10-17
Thursday 10 - 20
- Kjarvalsstaðir**
Flókagata 24
Open 10 - 17
- Ásmundarsafn**
Sigtún
Open 10 - 17
More info on www.listasafnreykjavikur.is
- Reykjavík City Library**
Tryggvagata 15 | D3
Mon 10-21, Tue-Thu 10-19, Fri 11-19, Sat and Sun 13-17
www.sim.is/Index/Islenkska/Artotek
- Reykjavík Maritime Museum**
Grandagarður 8 | B2
www.maritimemuseum.is
- Reykjavík Museum of Photography**
Tryggvagata 16 | D3
Weekdays 12-19 / Sat-Sun 13-17 - www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is
- Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum**
Laugarnestangi 70
www.iso.is
- SÍM**
Hafnarstræti 16 | E4
Mon-Fri 10-16
- Skörin**
Aðalstræti 10
- Spark Design Space**
Klappastígur 33 | F5
www.sparkdesignspace.com

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Best Of Reykjavík

Every year around the beginning of July, we make a BEST OF REYKJAVÍK ISSUE celebrating some of what makes Reykjavík-life worthwhile, posting some good entries into a hopefully never-ending discussion. The primary purpose of BEST OF REYKJAVÍK is celebration! It's about big-upping stuff, giving mad props to it and patting it on the shoulder. The following are some nice tips we culled from BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2012, which you can find in full at www.grapevine.is



BEST INDIAN FOOD: GHANDI



Judging by reader response, Austur-Índíafjelagið still has it, still retaining status as an INSTITUTION. Beyond that, Reykjavík's fledgling Indian food scene seems lacking a major force to challenge AI's dominance of the field. Last year's winner Austurlandahraðles-tin is still popular "basically serving food from Austur-Índíafjelagið's kitchen at a slightly reduced price," and Shalimar still serve "a proper curry" to many readers' delight. Relative newcomer Ghandi with its emphasis on cuisine from India's Kerala region takes the cake this year, with the restaurant's fish dishes coming especially recommended. As our food critic noted in his review of the place earlier this year, Ghandi adds a "delicious and welcome variety to the Icelandic restaurant flora," and for that we are thankful.



BEST HABERDASHERY: HERRAFATAVERZLUN KOR-MÁKS & SKJALDAR

Located directly under Laugavegur's Bónus outlet, Herrafataverzlun Kor-máks & Skjaldar is an enduring hipster mall of a store, where discerning Reykjavík gentlemen go to get decked out in proper Don Draper gear or disguised as English lords out for a fox hunt. Selling everything from shoes and undergarments to suits and overcoats, HK&S even host a proper barber in the corner who gives a mean shave and/or a haircut.



BEST PLACE TO SPEND OUTDOOR TIME WITH KIDS: THE LYNGHAGARÓLÓ PLAYGROUND

There are many public playgrounds ("róló") in Reykjavík—especially in the older, more established neighbourhoods—and all of them bear a distinct charm that reflects their surrounding areas and inhabitants (save for a couple of really run down ones). They usually feature any number of swing sets, seesaws, slides and sandboxes along with anything else the caretakers can think of that will entertain the local children. One such playground is Lynghagaróló by Lynghagi in vesturbær. More than one of our advisors insisted we mention them in this new-fangled category, as it is "impeccably maintained by a group of passionate neighbours," and is "the perfect place to spend a sunny day with your kids and other parents."

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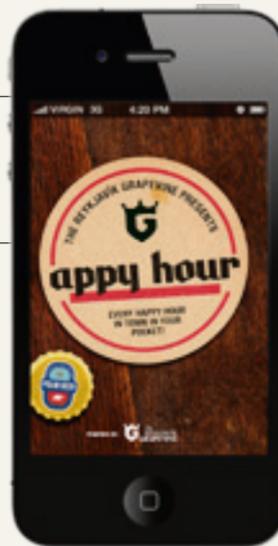
laUNDROMAT

life's too short for bad burgers!

www.thelaundromatcafe.com

A GUIDE THAT FUCKS YOU UP

A list of every Happy Hour in 101 Reykjavík



Download the FREE Grapevine Appy Hour app! Every happy hour in town in your pocket. Available in the App store and on the Android Market.

- 101 Hótel**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, 50 percent off all drinks.
- Austur**
Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 18:00 to 00:00. Beer 495 ISK and wine 550 ISK.
- B5**
Every day from 16:00 to 22:00, beer and wine for 550 ISK.
- Bakkus**
Every day from 19:00 to 21:00. Beer 500 ISK and wine 600 ISK.
- Bjarni Fel**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, 2 for 1 beer for 890 ISK.
- Boston**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00, Beer 500 ISK and wine 500 ISK.
- Celtic Cross**
Weekdays from 17:00 to 20:00, 2 for 1 beer for 800 ISK.
- Den Danske Kro**
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.
- Dolly**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00. Beer 500 ISK and wine 700 ISK.
- Dubliner**
Weekdays from 11:30 to 19:00, 2 for 1 beer for 800 ISK.
- Esja**
Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 17:00 to 19:00, all drinks 50% off, beer for 600 ISK and wine for 40% off
- Faktorý**
Every day from 15:00 to 20:00. Beer 500 ISK.

- Hemmi og Valdi**
Every day from 12:00 to 20:00 draft beer for 550 ISK.
- Hilton Hotel Bar**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, 2 for 1 beer for 950 ISK and wine for 1150 ISK.
- Hótel 1919**
Every day from 17:00 to 20:00, 2 for 1 beer for 850 ISK and wine for 1290 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.
- Hótel Plaza Bar**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, beer for 500 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.
- Micro Bar**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, 500 ISK for a draft beer.
- Miðgarður Bistro bar**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. 50 percent off all drinks.
- Obladi Oblada**
Beer 500 ISK, Jakob Steiner Schnapps 500 ISK
- Prikið**
Weekdays from 16:00 to 20:00, 2 for 1 beer for 690 ISK.
- Slippbarinn**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00, 50% off beer and wine.
- Stofan**
Every day from 17:00 to 20:00, beer for 500 ISK and wine for 600 ISK.
- Uppsalar - Bar & Café**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. 50% off all drinks.
- Pingholtsbar**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. All drinks are half off: beer for 400 ISK, wine for 550 ISK.

ART ONGOING

— continued —

Runs until January 6, 2013

The Power of Passage

The passing of time is the subject of this collaborative installation.

Runs until January 6, 2013

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

The Lyric Vision - Abstract- Expressionism in Icelandic Art, 1957-1970

As the first retrospective exhibition of Icelandic abstract expressionism, this exhibition marks a watershed in the history of exhibitions of Icelandic artists in this country.

Runs until November 4

Please Touch Workshop

The "Please Touch Workshop" for families at Kjvalsstaðir focuses on a collection of different textures that resemble the works of Jóhannes S. Kjarval, the master of texture through pattern.

Runs until January 3, 2013

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, 1.100 ISK per adult, 650 ISK per person in groups (10+) and free for children 18 and under.

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 Coast Guard Vessel Óðinn

This vessel sailed through all three Cod Wars and also served as a rescue ship to over 200 ships.

On permanent view

From the Fishing Grounds to the Market Stalls

Photographs of salt fish production, from when the fish is caught to when it's sold in the market.

Ongoing until December

Rúri

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.

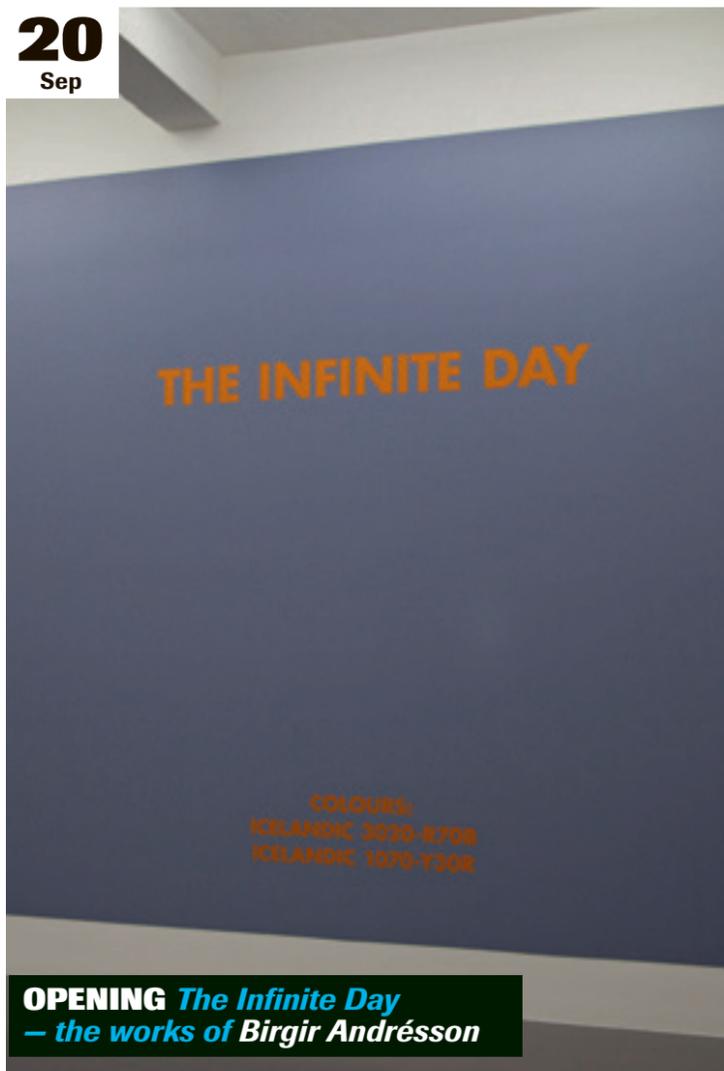
Runs until December 31

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum

Milestones: Sigurjón Ólafsson's Key Sculptures

An exhibition with some of Sigurjón

20
Sep



OPENING *The Infinite Day*
— the works of Birgir Andrésón

i8 Gallery,

Tryggvagata 16 (C3) | Runs until October 20

This posthumous exhibition of Birgir Andrésón's work will feature pieces not previously exhibited. As one of Iceland's most prolific artists, Birgir created several pieces that commented on the relationship between visual and spoken language, as well as vision and thought. Some of his most well known works include his "Icelandic Colour" system, his still lifes and a series of paintings based on Icelandic postage stamps. Birgir represented Iceland in the 1995 Venice Biennale and presented a retrospective of his work in the National Gallery of Iceland a year before his death in 2005.



Find all art listings
online
listings.grapevine.is

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 November 25

Spark Design Space

PRIK - Brynjar Sigurðarson

Brynjar Sigurðarson has revisited his previous project making furniture objects inspired by the tools of daily working life in a small rural community in north-east Iceland - now adding to his work with this collection of sticks as weapons, tools, and toys.

Runs until October 10

Vikingakráin

Let's Talk Iceland

A comedy show about Iceland's Viking history in English, performed in a pub mocked up as a Viking longhouse.

Every day at 20:00 at Vikingakráin

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Helgi Gíslason Sculptures
**Sigrún Ó. Einarssdóttir and
Sören S. Larsen 30 Years Of**
Hot Glass
Torfi Jónsson
Watercolors & Living Letters

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Viðey is an island situated just few minutes from Reykjavik 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.

Ferry schedule

Summer (daily from 15 May to 15 Sept.)

From Skarfabakki to Viðey	11:15	12:15	13:15	14:15	15:15	16:15	17:15	
From Viðey to Skarfabakki	11:30	12:30	13:30	14:30	15:30	16:30	17:30	18:30
From Reykjavik Old Harbour to Viðey		12:00						
From Viðey to Reykjavik Old Harbour				15:30				

Winter (on Sat. and Sun. from 16 Sept. to 14 May)

From Skarfabakki to Viðey			13:15	14:15	15:15			
From Viðey to Skarfabakki			13:30	14:30	15:30	16:30		

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www.yummy.is

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F   D

FOR YOUR MIND, BODY AND SOUL

by Ragnar Egilsson

REVIEW



Fish Company! (Not The Fish Market)

Fish Company

Vesturgata 2a (C3)
Tel: +354 552 5300
www.fiskfelagid.is
info@fiskfelagid.is
Mon-Sun: 11am-11.30pm

What we think

Love it! Big old wine list.

Flavour:

All over the place but with a (mostly) helpful country guide

Ambiance:

We could only get a table at 18:00 so it was empty. Nice '70s ambiance.

Service:

Casual, explained everything in detail.

Price for 2 (with drinks):
20-26,000 ISK



Fish Company (Fiskfélagið) is that really good seafood place you've heard so much about that is not Fish Market (Fiskmarkaðurinn). Everyone has gotten the two mixed up at some point so here's a quick primer. Both restaurants share a liking for fish and a disliking for definite articles in the English language. Fish Market is on two floors, with an Asian-inspired menu and is the tropical sister restaurant to Grill Market (Hrefna Sætran helms both). Fish Company is below ground level, with that nice little pond thing in front and has a mostly Icelandic-themed cuisine, but likes to divide the menu by the main ingredient's country of origin. I hope that clears things up.

If you are an Icelander born before the 1980s, then prepare to be subtly prodded into a k-hole of nostalgia when you enter Fish Company. The brushed copper, the perfectly pitched '60s and '70s mood music that would have been perfectly at home in a Wes Anderson movie, the mustard-coloured seats and vintage commemorative plates celebrating Icelandic municipalities to hold your bread. But I can't say it ever feels too ornate or unwelcoming—the kitchen is open and has a window facing the street (they also have a live webcam of their kitchen on their website) and the rough stone walls are covered with a rainbow of post-its that guests are encouraged to write on. Although they probably should have left it at that—I'm not sure it was necessary to include another wall with multilingual writing done in a marker pen or a third wall layered with instant photos.

We decided on three starters to share: the sushi plate (2,800 ISK), the tuna with vanilla, parsnip purée and pineapple (3,300 ISK), and the whale with peaches, jalapeno and crispy oatmeal (2,700 ISK).

The whale was ultra rare and flash seared. The watermelon was lightly marinated and the peaches were fresh and played off nicely with the meat. It was excellent and even my wife, who normally doesn't like whale, thought so.

The tuna was another savoury plate with fruit for balance. This was an impressive original dish but didn't work quite as well—the pineapple blanketed the other flavours and the vanilla was barely noticeable. The tuna was excellent.

The sushi was the biggest let-down. The cuts were torn, uneven and wafer-thin, the rice was off the mark and the maki was so dull I barely noticed it. But the tuna and salmon sashimi were impressively fresh despite the visual appearance. Overall, I'd say skip the sushi.

My main course was the beer-rolled and lobster-filled arctic char, fried scallop, apple butter and turnip spaghetti (4,700 ISK). I didn't really notice the lobster filling and the scallop didn't take up a lot of space. But the char collapsed

under the fork like butter on laxatives (sous-vide?). Freaking masterful. The Guinness jelly was a great idea and I could have used a little more of it.

Her main course was the "Hawaiian" one, a fried monkfish with rum and grilled langoustine with pumpkin purée, bacon-wrapped date, shellfish foam and orange glaze (4,800 ISK). First of all, not sure where they're getting Hawaii from as none of these ingredients is particularly Hawaiian. Secondly, although I have nothing but praise for how they handled the fish, these people clearly know their way around the protein, I must say there was too much puree on that plate for such a modern restaurant. Thirdly, I couldn't locate that date and I could have done without the foam. Fish Company isn't the worst offender, but I'd love to see this aging foam trend disappear.

The dessert options are awesome at Fish Company. Very few places in Iceland pay much attention to it but here we have six dessert choices—almost as many as the starters. And they all look inventive and cool. Considering that and all the fruity ingredients in the main courses, I wouldn't be surprised if the head chef's background was in pastry.

I picked the sponge cake and liquorice brulée with anise milk foam, banana ganache and dulce de leche ice cream (1,590 ISK). Don't be scared off by the liquorice, it takes up about 1% of the plate. I loved this dish, recalled bread pudding, tres leches and bonbons. But watch out as it's really filling.

She had the tiramisu with raspberry and caramel chocolate cream, crunchy butter almond and ice coffee (1,790 ISK). Excellent dessert as well, although the ice coffee was too creamy and thick for my tastes.

The servers were more casual than, for example, at Lækjarbrekka, but they carefully explained the theme and ingredients of each dish and the service was fast and unobtrusive.

If you were a fan of The Seafood Cellar (RIP) then you will continue to find a lot to like at Fish Company.

Eat Your Way Through Iceland's Fauna



Lækjarbrekka

Bankastræti 2 (E4)
Tel: +354 551 4430
www.laekjarbrekka.is
info@laekjarbrekka.is
Mon-Sun: 11:00-23:00

What we think

Whip off that anorak and have that whale and shark like the guy at the hotel said you should.

Flavour:

French-Icelandic. Classic, but not boring.

Ambiance:

Foreign, 35-75, very calm.

Service:

Fast, friendly, well informed, professional.

Price for 2 (with drinks):
17-22,000 ISK



Lækjarbrekka is in that black tar hut at the end of Bankastræti, next to the Ellis Island of tourist info kiosks.

The building has been part of downtown Reykjavik since before Icelanders knew how to spell "indoor plumbing" and a generous man would date it back to the 1830s. And it all began with the preservation of what a decade later would be known as the restaurant Lækjarbrekka.

What with all retro swagger, a certain amount of old school glamour is to be expected. The wait staff are suitably suited up, the interiors are bedecked with references to our farming and maritime history. It's quite charming and the service was as good as it gets.

Icelanders are more likely to seek Lækjarbrekka out for its group menus and banquet halls. Lækjarbrekka is one of the default recommendations at the city hotels, so foreign visitors are more likely to drop in unannounced after a day of excursions keeping the rescue squads busy in the highlands.

When we arrived at Lækjarbrekka, our server was helpfully illustrating what a puffin was to a couple in their late thirties using a taxidermy puffin. They seemed equally concerned about whether the lambs had led a rich, full life in the wild before being butchered. The place was warm and sedated, with a rose on every table.

As a taster we chose the puffin with blueberry chutney (950 ISK). Puffin is not for everyone. My granddad on my mother's side would hunt the things but otherwise wouldn't touch the stuff. Lækjarbrekka get their puffin from Grímsey, up north, as puffin hunting has been outlawed in the south. The blueberries are wild Icelandic bilberries (the season just ended). Regrettably, the puffin was too dry for my tastes and the chutney was much closer to a jam, sweet and lacking in acid or spice.

My starter was a very lightly smoked piece of lamb and a dark brown blueberry cured lamb rolled up like a papyrus, with horseradish and spruce sauce and bits of ginger bread so packed with cloves that it numbed the mouth (2,200 ISK). My wife picked what turned out to be a surprisingly large portion of buttery perfect-broiled langoustine, which has been a fixed part of the menu for 20 years (3,650 ISK). Quite pricey for a starter, though.

Lækjarbrekka have two moderately interesting vegetarian choices on the menu, which is more than I can say for many non-vegetarian places in Reykjavik. I chose the orange-marinated yellow beet (tasted like rutabaga), roasted red beets, asparagus and smoked cherry tomatoes (3,300 ISK). The red beets were nice but so salty and intense that they overpowered the flavour of individual vegetable. Asparagus is never great in Iceland, so give that a miss. Still better on the whole than I'd expected and they get points for going the extra mile. My wife had the arctic char with fennel and hollandaise (3,990 ISK). The skin on the char was perfect and fat like pork crackling but the fish was overdone and the fennel not as crisp as it should have been. Good job on the hollandaise.

Lækjarbrekka, more innovative than I'd thought but dishes were lacking that finishing touch. Old school charm and professional service make up the difference. Lækjarbrekka isn't going anywhere.

Just don't ask them what a minke whale is—I'd hate to see the poor waiter have to roll a stuffed whale out of the kitchen.

WHAT'S THE (LUNCH) DEAL, YO?



Compiled by **Ragnar Egilsson**

Sweet lunch deals that aren't total junk food in the city that never sleeps (except for those nine months when it totally hibernates and we get super depressed and stuff)

Fancy

1 Hótel Holt Bergstaðastræti 37 (F5)



The mother of all deals. Seriously. A three-course meal of French fine cuisine for what you paid in the parking meter outside. Veal and porcini, duck confit, arctic char with vanilla glaze.

Duration: **11:45 - 14:00**
Damage: **3,500 ISK** (three courses)

Budget

2 Shalimar (Indian) Austurstræti 4 (E4)



Meat, kebab or vegetarian dish of the day or smash it all together.
Duration: **11.30-15.00**
Damage: **1,490 ISK**

Healthy

3 Maður Lifandi Borgartún 24 (F5)



Hilariously detailed description of ingredients on the website. Haven't tried this but the deal looks pretty decent. All organic of course, healthy and an all day deal.
Duration: **9:00 - 20:00**
Damage: **1,690-1,890 ISK**



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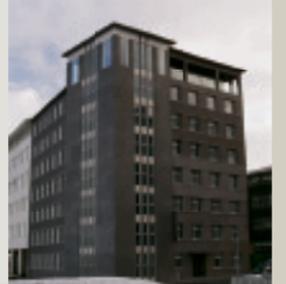
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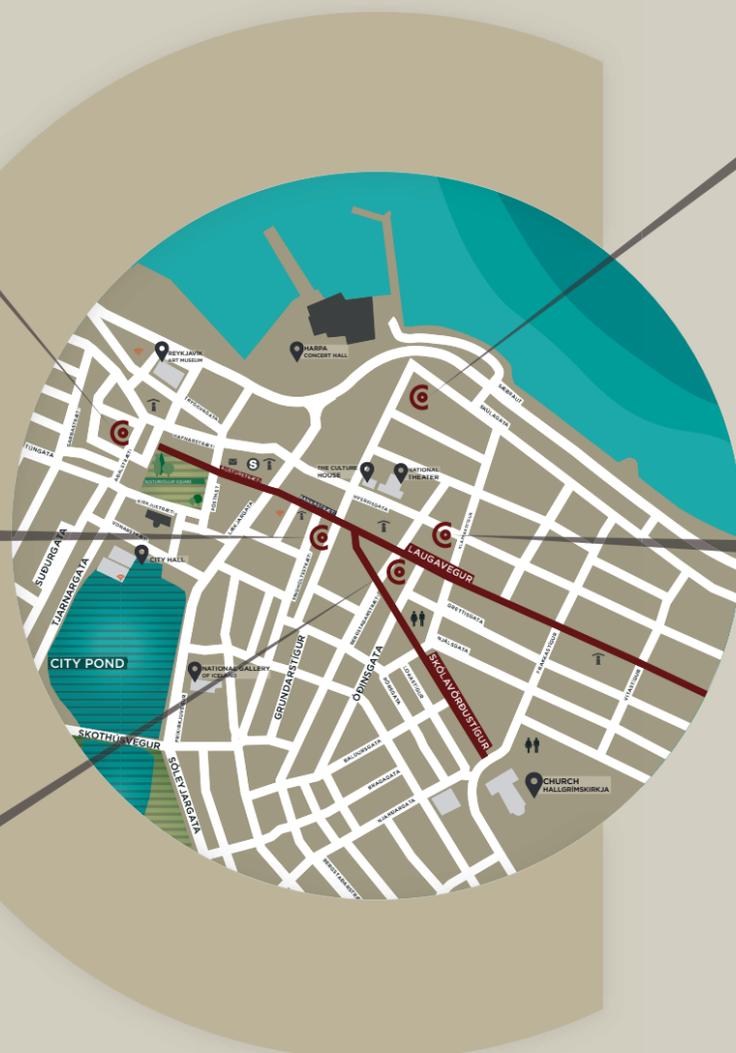
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