



The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

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IN THE ISSUE Issue 18 • 2010 • December 3 - January 6 • 2011

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too damn expensive

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Hike Eyjafjallajökull



O, Three Kings

Bearing gifts, they wait at a bar.



gain, Christmas is upon us. And while a lot of things are still pretty wrong in the world, we feel the only sensible thing to do is indulge in some good old-fashioned Holiday indulgence. And who better to indulge with than some of Iceland's most lovable musicians. Happy Holiday!

The Reykjavík Grapevine

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 **The Reykjavík Grapevine**
Issue 18 – 2010

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Editorial | Haukur S. Magnússon

A Long-Ass Note On Our Xmas Covers + Some Bile

Haukur's 34th editorial

What a Christmas party, eh? The legendary Megas hanging out and smoking cigarettes with the likely soon-to-be legendary Bragi Valdimar Skúlason and Logi Pedro Stefánsson. We bet you'd love to be there, exchanging one-liners and Xmas cheer with these merry men. In fact, we were there. And it was awesome.

But why are they gracing our front pages these days? We'll tell you why. Because we love them—and we think you should love them too! That's why.

Besides, who better to instil Christmas cheer and good will to all men than these three? Through their inspiring music, words and attitudes, they have all consistently made Iceland a better place to inhabit. If only the rest of us had some of what they're made of, a lot of unfortunate events might have been avoided.

Now, the mighty Megas needs no introduction (but if you're not familiar, we suggest you read Valur Gunnarsson's piece on page thirteen. Then you can go and purchase any of his albums for your listening pleasures – the new one is quite good). However, Logi and Bragi might be a tad more obscure to some of you. But don't fret. Read on!

Bragi Valdimar Skúlason is probably best known in Iceland for his contributions to beloved web-zine Baggalútur.is (sort of an Icelandic version of The Onion), who manage to be very funny while presenting some sharp social critique. Bragi has furthermore made a name for himself as an excellent songwriter and lyricist through several musical ventures (including Baggalútur – the band), every one of which seems to resonate dearly with the Icelandic nation.

His latest musical project was the intriguing 'Diskóeyjan' ("The Disco Island") is an insanely ambitious concept album about a 'Professor of Disco' (voiced by Óttarr Proppé) who helps square kids turn hip to the beat. While the release notes

claim it is a children's album, most adults we know seem to love it even more than their kids. It is most awesome, as you may read in our review of the thing.

Then there's young Logi Pedró. We've been keeping an eye on him ever since he first stepped into the limelight with his band Retro Stefson. Now, any Grapevine reader will know that we are fans of their patented brand of adventurous, indefinable and fun music. Having just released their sophomore LP, 'Kimbabwe', they seem on top of their game. Yet, with all their success it's easy to forget how out of step this group of youngsters was when they first started performing around Reykjavík in 2005. Other local bands played pop, rock or electro – these guys sang in Latin while jamming bossanova beats.

Bassist Logi was 13-years old when he played his first jittery live shows alongside his brother Unnsteinn Manúel and the other Stefsons. Five years later, he's all grown up, the young man's spirit, vigour and dedication to music deeming him a worthy role model for all you deadbeat teenagers out there.

Megas, Bragi and Logi are all exemplary Icelanders, each in their own way. What they have in common, besides their love and dedication to music, is that they each do their respective thing in a thoughtful, meticulous and modest manner that ensures their work speaks for itself.

And they are great fun at Christmas parties.

And now you know why we feel safe to refer to Bragi, Logi and Megas as 'Three Kings' on our cover.

What else is there to say this month? In my mind, I had readied this big rant about how I don't trust the Icelandic media. How countless examples (as well as some direct experiences of



TRACK OF THE ISSUE

Agent Fresco: A Long Time Listening

Download the FREE track at www.grapevine.is

Good news everyone! This issue's FREE TRACK is by the one and only Agent Fresco. It's safe to say that a lot of people have been waiting a long time for their debut long-player, which was finally released last month. They're calling it 'A Long Time Listening', and every review of the thing we've read (including our own) has been overwhelmingly positive. It's no wonder. The album rocks like we all hoped it would. Local crowds have been singing along to some of the songs on this album for two years now – download this sample of the hour-long affair and join in!

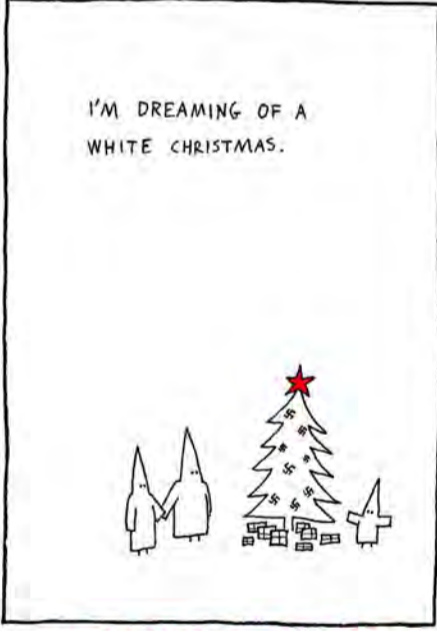
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mine) have left me convinced that our whole media environment actively discourages the seeking of and/or representation of any sort of truth, and that, sadly, this destructive behaviour has more to do with a mixture of carelessness and laziness than any malevolent influence of the media's owners or some unknown evil forces (at least having evil forces to fight would be EXCITING. Fighting apathy is much less involving. Oh yeah, at least one newspaper I know of actively and willingly distorts facts for political purposes).

But then I thought: Hell, the outlook is bleak enough without me adding more bile to the pile of awful we're currently sitting on. Maybe after the Holidays I'll spew some poison out there. For now, I'll be content with wishing y'all readers a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Comic | Hugleikur Dagsson

CHRISTMAS CAROLS



HUGLEIKUR DAGSSON



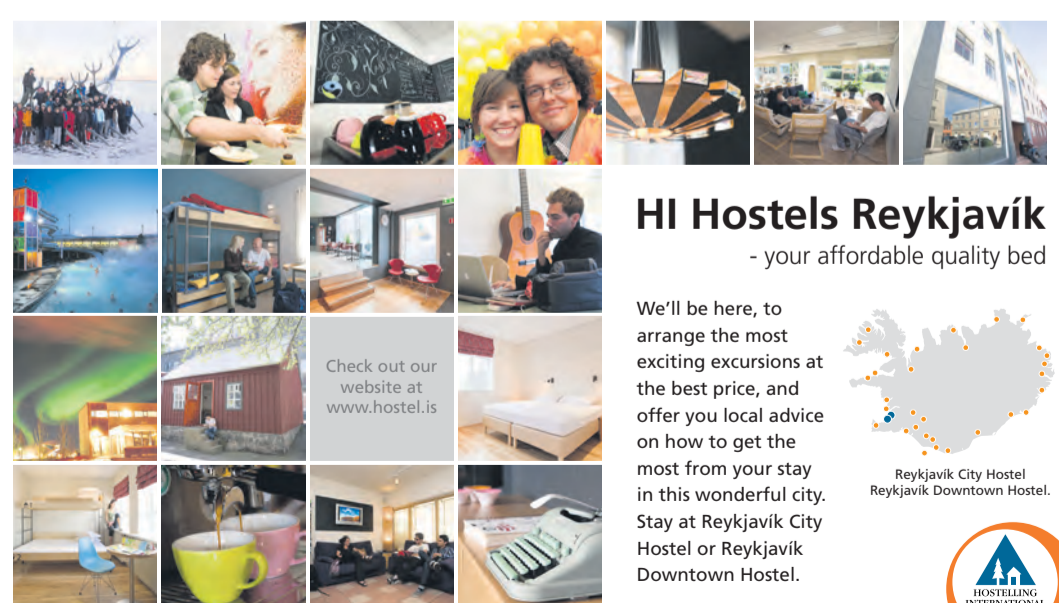
Noodle Station

Noodle soup with chicken **IKR 850**
Noodle soup with beef **IKR 850**



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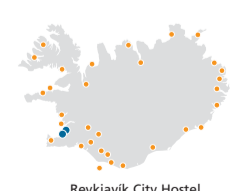
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Sour grapes and stuff

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



4 Letters

MOST AWESOME LETTER:

Giving Blood. Makes My Blood Boil.

Dear Grapevine,

I am somewhat livid. More than slightly confused. Feeling rather upset. Therefore, I need your help. Here is my story.

Yesterday, I read on <http://www.grapevine.is/> a news item regarding an urgent request for blood donations to the Icelandic Blood Bank Service. Now, being a public-spirited soul (as well as an Icelandic resident), this pricked my social conscience. Due to my suffering from a lingering cold, however, I decided to call them first to ask if this was an issue. As I live and work some distance from Reykjavík, I would have to take a couple of hours off work, unpaid, to visit the blood donation center.

When I got through to a nice-sounding lady at the Blood Bank, I did what I always do when discussing health-related matters; I asked if she spoke English. She sounded reluctant, but answered in the affirmative. The conversation went as follows:

Me: I want to give blood, but have a bit of a cold at the moment, so can I come today or do I have to wait until it clears up?

Blood lady: You have to be an Icelandic speaker to be able to give blood. You must be able to speak and read Icelandic or we cannot accept your blood.

Me: What? This is crazy. Why? But, anyway, I speak OK Icelandic, so I am sure it would be fine.

Blood lady: No, you have to be able to speak very

MOST AWESOME LETTER

A nice Xmas decoration for your thoughts

We're not gonna lie to you: we really love us some beers. Some folks would call it a problem, but beer never gave us any problems. In fact, over the years, it's solved most of 'em. A frosty glass of cold, frothy, bubblicious, golden-tinted beer has consistently failed to let us down. In the immortal words of the once-reputable Homer J. Simpson: "Mmm... Beer..." But do you know what's even more wonderful than beer? Yes, you're right! Xmas ornaments for your window, tree or anywhere else you might want to hang Xmas ornaments. The season to be merry is fast approaching, so decorating your apartment, house or place of residence seems in order. And what better to decorate with than this cool Christmas Cat ornament, designed by one Áslaug Saja and graciously donated by the Kraum Design Shop (go check them out at Áðalstræti 10 – it's a really nice store).

Our **MOST AWESOME LETTER** of the issue will be rewarded with this sweet ornament – if you are the one that wrote it you should definitely drop us a line to collect. And if you want one next month, write us some sort of letter. Give us your worst: letters@grapevine.is

wanted?

Kindest regards,
David Kelley

Dear David,

thank you for your letter, and for attempting to donate blood in a country that we hear really needs it.

You can rest assured that you were not our only reader who responded to the Blood Bank's call for fluid (we have such awesome, giving readers), and that you weren't the only one to get turned away for not speaking Icelandic. Nor were you the only one that got appalled as a result.

We got several such letters, so we decided to investigate. Our on-line news editor Paul F. Nikolov wrote some stories. There was a big discussion on our Facebook comments board, and on our website. Three of our readers—all certified medical translators—even contacted the Blood Bank and offered to translate the pertaining forms for free.

And guess what! They Blood Bank folks wrote us and told us they were going to accept their help and get the forms translated next month—subsequently English speaking folk will likely be able to donate blood in Iceland. It was all very lovely.

Check out 'Old news' on <http://www.grapevine.is/> if you want the story, otherwise thanks for writing. Our readers sure are the best.

Dear Haukur!

Iceland Blues

When there is ice at Greenland then it's green at Iceland.
When there is Hollywood we stay in woolly hood.
When there's a summertime blues we are its rainy day.
When there is Disko-Island then we are at Hangover-Iceland.
When there are polar bears in the world we shoot and drink them.
And when it is nine-eleven - then there must have been two red cards.
skál.

kveðja Katharina

Dear Katharina:

When we got your letter then we wondered: Huh?
When we read it a second time we kept right on wondering: Huh?
When we wonder about stuff so much, we think: "What a wonderful world."
Huh?

Dear Grapevine!

I first would like to begin to thank you for this great magazine that has helped me keep up with what is going on in the Icelandic society today, where as I do not speak Icelandic fluently but I am learning as hard as I can.

I came here three months ago for a brief visit to see the country with my own eyes after being a big fan of the Icelandic music scene for couple of years. I fell completely in love with the country and so I decided to stay longer.

The reason why I send this letter to you is because I am searching for a person. About a week ago I stumbled into this bar called Factory, I had never been there before but someone recommended that place for me to go and see bands play. So I went there on a Friday night not sure if there was a band playing or who would be playing. I walked upstairs and noticed quite a lot of people, a girl was standing on the stage talking into the microphone and the whole room listening. I was not sure what was going on (it came to my mind that the girl could be a host for the band who was about to play) so I decided to grab a beer at the bar. The girl kept on talking for a while and then I realised that she must have been a stand up comedian where as most of the people were laughing at what she was saying. For me I could not understand anything what she was saying so I decided to just drink my beer and leave. After the girl finished another girl came on stage. And I swear that my jaw dropped on the floor when I saw this other girl. Never in my life have I seen such a beautiful woman like her, and never in my life have I wished so hard that I could speak Icelandic fluently so I could understand what she was saying. I do not know what it was, but I could feel myself falling in love with her instantly. She had the most incredible smile, and a long wavy

dark hair. After she finished her performance she came to the bar next to me and ordered a beer, I really wanted to talk to her but I felt intimidated and shy. I stood there for a while trying to decide what to do but by the time I had the guts to approach her I saw her put on her jacket and leave. Now for a week I have not been able to stop thinking about her. Maybe I am losing my mind, but I have never felt this way about anyone in my life, and I am sure that there is a reason for why I feel this way. I am sure that this girl is a stand up comedian, but I do not know her name. So dear Grapevine could you help me? She has long dark hair, and does not have the typical Icelandic look, dark skin and eyes. Is it possible that you might know who she is? If I could have her name I would like to contact her.

With best regards:

Crazy in love.

Dear Crazy in love,

here's to you. Dear mystery brunette: if you read this, drop us a line so we can forward you Crazy's contact info.

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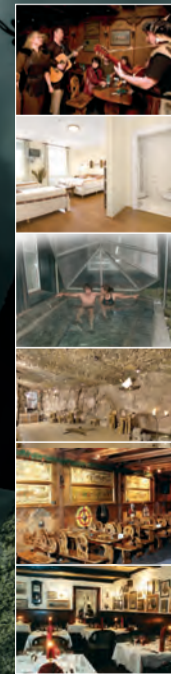
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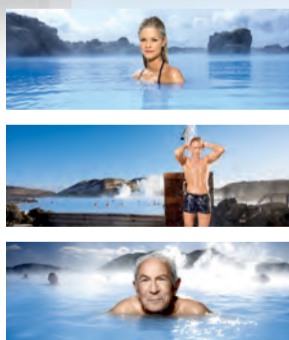
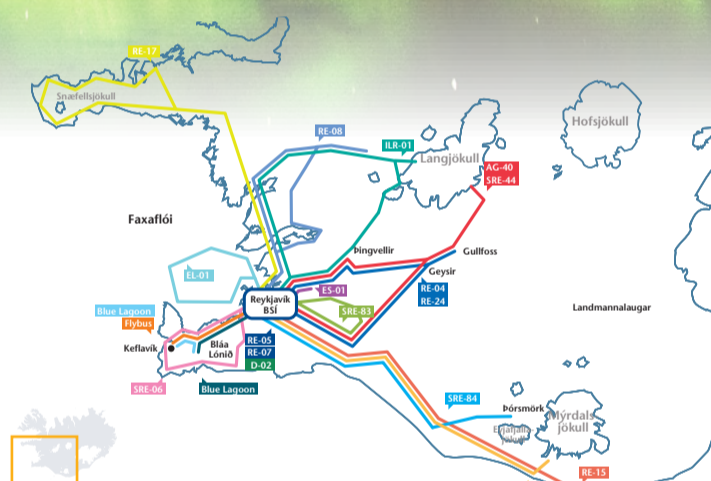
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SEEDS Of Revolution

Iceland’s Secret Army of Volunteers



Words
Eimear Fitzgerald

Photo
SEEDS

They creep so subtly under the radar that it’s easy to miss them. Like invisible elves bustling about, fixing up properties and green spaces in your rural villages, building and maintaining huts and trails in your national parks, organising cultural projects in your community spaces, building playgrounds in your housing estates, and picking up litter on your beaches. Each division spends two weeks at a time on duty, living together and working long days, in all sorts of weather and on various missions. So who are these people? Truth is they aren’t fairies, most of them aren’t Icelandic, and what’s more they do it all for free.

INTRODUCING: SEEDS
Who are we talking about? Time to introduce SEEDS, a non-profit organisation headed by Columbian Oscar-Mauricio Uscategui, which was set

up in 2005 in order to host foreign volunteers on social and environmental projects in Iceland, and also organise a place for Icelanders in similar projects broad.
But why do people come from all over the world to work on a range of social and environmental projects in Iceland? There’s no financial incentive, in fact volunteers have to pay a small fee to cover the cost of the projects they work on.
“Some of our volunteers come because they always had a dream to visit Iceland, some come to meet others and just try something new, others because they’re extremely concerned about the global environment and Iceland’s place in it,” SEEDS coordinator Anna Lúðvíksdóttir tells me. The organisation has hosted over 2.000 volunteers since it started workcamps in 2006, 800 of those volunteers in 2010 alone. The number of workcamps and projects the organisation runs has grown from thir-

“Some of our volunteers come because they always had a dream to visit Iceland, some come to meet others and just try something new, others because they’re extremely concerned about the global environment and Iceland’s place in it”

teen to eighty in just four years.
Proof that getting your hands dirty, seeing the country and living with total strangers for two weeks has growing appeal.

ICELAND’S SILENT ARMY
At the organisation’s recent conference on the environment, guest of honour and award winning journalist-slash-environmentalist Ómar Ragnars-son paid homage to the organisation for it’s vital grassroots environmental work, referring to them as “Iceland’s silent army” and as “warriors for the cause”. Award winning writer and director Andri Snær Magnason who also spoke at the conference said “I only heard about SEEDS when they con- tacted me about the conference. I’m amazed at the work that’s been going on all this time under the radar.”

While SEEDS main focus is on hosting inter- national volunteers and sending young Iceland- ers abroad, the organisation intends to broaden its scope and look more towards ways of encouraging young Icelanders to volunteer within their own communities.

One way in which they are tackling this is by bringing local youths together with international volunteers, so they can judge for themselves the benefits that volunteering can bring. “Some of our projects, particularly those linked with youth centres, require volunteers to come and mix with local Icelanders. To begin with, there can be resistance on the part of local kids and teenagers, they wonder what these people are doing here and it takes time to open up, but the walls always come down in the end.” Anna goes on to say that for Icelanders living in small or isolated communities in particular, this is often an amazing experience.

INTERNING CAN PAY OFF!
Another area of potential interest to Icelanders are the internships that the organisation provides for young people. SEEDS provides intern opportunities both in their office and in the field for up to a year, which, according to Anna, have helped many young people develop valuable organisational, administra-


tive and leadership skills. “We are constantly host- ing people in our office as interns, giving them the opportunity to learn new skills. We have links with many universities abroad, and working with SEEDScan be a great way to find out what you are really interested in and widen your horizons.” She adds that “volunteering can offer people a chance to develop skills and capacities that can lead back into full time employment, as well as providing a gateway into a new sector of employment”.

Another major focus, and challenge, is encour- aging local communities to maintain the projects which SEEDS starts in their areas. “Hosts in our communities engage completely with our volun- teers and it always causes excitement and curiosity in the communities where we work. But as soon as our workcamp is finished, many projects are not kept up.”

CHANGE CAN HAPPEN
While the reality of Icelanders adopting the cul- ture of volunteerism on a wider level will take time to achieve, SEEDS has noticed micro level shifts among smaller communities. “We’re beginning to have some success with our coastal projects in that communities are beginning to see that it’s in their best interests to keep their beaches clean af- ter realising the huge difference our projects have made. We’ve also had really positive response to our environmental education programmes, such as re- cycling programmes, with young children”. Andri Snær sums it up in a story told at the SEEDS conference last week. “As a child playing on the beach I didn’t see the plastics, the old computers, furniture as rubbish. It was my playground and was just what a beach looked like. I wasn’t educated. In fact if someone had come and cleaned away all my playthings I would’ve been really pissed off. But when I saw a beach without all these washed-up plastics, I realised that’s what it should look like.”

Change might happen slowly, but it still happens. 🍷

Liberty And Justice For All

The concepts of liberty and justice are somewhat contradictory. If I am com- pletely free, I should not have to jus- tify myself to any tribunal, or suffer any consequences for any harm I may have inflicted on others. Anyone who gets in my way deserves whatever punishment I dole out.
The idea of justice dampens our most libertar- ian impulses and forces those of us who choose to live in society to conform our behaviour in a manner that punishes us for ignoring the rights of others.
The extreme form of libertarianism adopted by Davíð Oddsson and his followers predictably resulted in the gross inequities we can all now observe in Icelandic society. Unfortunately, how- ever, the results of their extremist views continue to cast a pall over our world.
The system used by the Iceland’s ruling caste to launder their ill-begotten gains is simple to describe: The members of the financial class created a dizzying multitude of limited liability entities which obtained vast loans from the banks controlled by their owners. The owners paid themselves high salaries, large bonuses, and un- justified dividends. When the pretence of sound business practices wore thin, they funnelled the companies’ remaining assets into newly-created shell companies, had the original companies de-

clare bankruptcy, then convinced the banks (still operated by their co-conspirators) to write-off per- sonal guarantees and security interests on prop- erty acquired by the original companies. Result: the rich got richer, the banks lost their invest- ments, and the government (i.e. the rest of us) got stuck with the bill.
Here’s how it works for ordinary citizens: Af- ter taking out a 40 million króna mortgage loan for an overpriced residence at the peak of the real estate market, the borrower gets laid off. The bank forecloses on the property, sells it for a frac- tion of the amount loaned, and obtains a personal judgment against the borrower. Even if the bor- rower declares bankruptcy, she is still personally liable for the remaining debt until the end of her days. So, she has no job, no residence, a judgment against her that she can never pay off, but the bank will be able to maintain the judgment on its books as an asset. Her only escape from a life of indentured servitude is a one-way ticket out of Iceland—which loses all of its investment in her (education, healthcare, etc).
Practically, it is simply not possible for most of us to exploit this system. We don’t have lawyers to draft and file documents, accountants to navigate regulations, or bankers willing to give us loans without collateral.
This is not a failure of the laws. They are not be-

ing misinterpreted by the courts or the regula- tors. This is precisely how the laws enacted by our representatives are intended to function.
This is, however, a failure of justice.
The freedom of the moneyed class to move capi- tal from one pocket to another, regardless of the harm to the nation as a whole, is deemed under our laws to be more important than the provision of life’s necessities to the rest of us.
In a civilised country, one might expect the government to recognise that the needs of the many outweigh the desires of the few, but this has not been the case in Iceland. The laws them- selves are designed to funnel a higher and higher percentage of the nation’s wealth to a select few, while doing little to guarantee a minimal level of economic security for those in greatest need.
An average worker with an underwater mort- gage has no freedom, no future. He’s toiling like Sisyphus, pushing the boulder up the hill, watch- ing it go down the other side, then starting all over again the next day, worrying how he’s going to make it to his next payday.
What is most galling is that the elite, for whom the laws are written and for whom lives are ruined, are utterly clueless. They’re not striving to improve themselves or the world around them.



They’re preoccupied with increasing the size of their pots of gold, impressing one another with their possessions and seeking new thrills. How any rational being could ever believe this state of affairs ought to represent the ultimate goal of our society is beyond me.
John Locke wrote, “The end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom. For in all the states of created beings capable of law, where there is no law, there is no freedom.” Modern Iceland is not the “zero-government” libertarian state that Milton Friedman and his followers idolized, but something more sinister. There are laws, but they are specifically intended to rob the majority of citizens of their liberty. 🍷



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Can you believe that the actual RAINBOW GUY, he of THE INTERNET, was here? In our very own Iceland? That's amazing. Here's hoping he comes back for a series of lectures.

Article | Rainbows

In Rainbow We Trust

‘Double Rainbow Guy’ heeds higher calling and visits Iceland



Paul Vasquez, AKA Double Rainbow Guy, was in Iceland this past month to spread the word of the Rainbow. As readers familiar with YouTube will recall, Paul's video, which he posted on January 8, 2010, created a sensation this past summer after Jimmy Kimmel “tweeted” it on July 3rd. The video has since received over 19 million hits and Paul has been nominated for a new category in the 2011 People's Choice Awards, i.e. 'Favorite Viral Video Star'. The Grapevine had the pleasure of interviewing the famous Double Rainbow Guy before he set off on his tour of southern Iceland, his first trip outside North America. And he picks Iceland. BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

RAGS TO RAINBOWS

In line with the popular narrative so dear to the American entertainment industry, Paul Vasquez' story is one of rags to rainbows. He describes an abusive upbringing in the rough streets of East L.A.: “It was a ghetto...I was born to a woman who beat me so bad that I thought she was going to kill me.” Paul, who is of Mexican and Native American descent, grew up to be a firefighter and it was this that first brought him to Yosemite National Park in 1985. By 1990, after a short-lived marriage that resulted in two children, Paul was living alone, in the same home that features in his YouTube videos, on a remote plot of land about 16 kilometres (“as the crow flies”) from the park's border. For the following two decades, Paul leads a lonely existence: “I drove long-haul trucks in 48 states and Canada for ten years and one day. Meanwhile I was just living alone on that mountain out in the middle of nowhere, and that put me through a big transformation.”

Paul's transformation centered on his relationship with women and what he calls “femininity.” In January 2009, after almost twenty years of isolation, “I called femininity into my life” by joining WWOOF, World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms, and “all these beautiful, young women started coming to me from all over the world.” Incidentally, Paul is interested in local, sustainable farming and in addition to “breeding dogs for cash,” he has an organic farm with “25 fruit trees, gardens and chickens.” After a year of hosting WWOOF volunteers, Paul arrives at a profound realization: “I had owed a debt to femininity. I needed

to learn how to love women without sex because...I was damaged [from childhood].” Paul attaches a lot of importance to his various epiphanies, and claims that they are often accompanied by outward signs, which he then tries to capture on video for YouTube: “My videos are those signs of my spiritual and emotional progression.”

MESSAGES FROM GOD

In this way, Paul interprets the double rainbow as an outward manifestation of a moment of inner clarity. As the WWOOF volunteers' stay was only temporary, their departure cast a dark shadow over rainbow land: “I gave them all a piece of my heart, and at the end of the summer, I was left with a big whole in my chest.” Paul sought help from various sources, “I was going to a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a doctor, a shaman, and I was doing sweats just to try and figure it all out, and then at the beginning of this year, I figured it out and it was like coming out of a cocoon...and that's when the double rainbow came, and it was like: I understand and I caught it all on video!”

Paul further interprets these outward signs as messages from God: “It doesn't show that well on my inexpensive camera, but it was a complete disc of colour. It looked like a giant eye looking at me... that must be God's eye.” Paul eventually came to the conclusion that God chose him to spread a message to humanity, which he has distilled into three decrees: “Love your fellow man, walk gently on Mother Earth and connect to Spirit.” Yet, besides practicing Native American spiritual traditions, Paul is not affiliated to any religious organisation and his idea of God is expansive: “I think all the rainbows are the spirit of the universe saying: “Look, pay attention to Mother Nature!” There is a spirit to the universe that you can connect into; it will make you more successful and happier.” As it happens, Paul is a big fan of both Oprah and Avatar.

RAINBOW WARRIORS

Since his video went viral, Paul has had to adjust to celebrity status. He describes how he can no longer keep track of the number of requests he receives from people wanting to live and work on his farm. “I call them rainbow warriors,” he says laughing. Speaking with Paul at Hressó, where he orders a humble breakfast of porridge, toast and coffee (with an elephant's share of sugar mind

you), I am struck by his sincerity and guru-like charm. Still, he carries more the aura of a harmless, West coast hippie than a zealous cult leader. It may be noteworthy to add that although Paul occasionally uses marijuana for medical reasons (he has a prescription), and admits to having experimented with other hallucinogens, he claims not to have been under the influence of any drugs when he shot the famous Double Rainbow video.

THERE IS A BALANCE

I question whether Paul can use his newfound fame to bring awareness to specific environmental and social causes and thus spread his overall message of peace, love and environmental sustainability in a more direct way. Paul nods his head in agreement and cites some of his political interests, such as Native American rights and his distrust of monoculture in the agricultural industry. And yet, these causes seem overshadowed by such self-aggrandizing measures as his YouTube campaign to get on Oprah and by ingratiating himself to corporations such as Microsoft, Subaru and Sony. But Paul disagrees: “There is a balance. You can't just live in a hole. We're living in reality here...everyone's gotta have some kind of toll. The problem is greed, I mean how much wealth do you need, how many houses and cars? Some people have so much wealth, it doesn't make sense.” But is there any company Paul would refuse to work with? “I don't like McDonalds”.

At the loss of some poetic justice, it was not Iceland's McDonalds-free status that brought Paul here, but rather the student council of a local secondary school, Menntaskólinn Hraðbraut. For the fun of it. Although Paul seems geared up to celebrate with the students, and plans to take lots of videos with his new, underwater camera throughout his stay, he does not like leaving his home on Bear Mountain. “I was called here, I have a job to do, that's why God showed himself to me.” At the time of the interview, Paul had yet to see an Icelandic rainbow, but if he goes bananas over potential rainbows at Gullfoss or the green rains of Aurora Borealis, I'm confident you will be able to check it out on YouTube. 🍷

✍ ALDA KRAVEC
📷 ODDUR EYSTEINN

Article | Katarzyna Growiec



A Crisis Of Trust?

As a stranger, you can understand some things because you don't understand everything. That was a leitmotif of my stay in Iceland and a personal justification for conducting my research there. The aim of my three month long postdoctoral research project at the University of Iceland was to look at how social bonds in Iceland have changed because of the economic crisis. In a way I was prepared for this experience, being sort of an expert on the subject – social capital. On the other hand, I was an outsider, visiting Iceland for the first time and speaking hardly any Icelandic. So I repeated like a mantra: “as a stranger you can...” any time I was faced with a situation where I had no idea what was going on..

Among the results of the project there are some findings I would like to share with you Grapevine readers. The data shows that there has been a recent change in the values and attitudes of people in Iceland. I made comparisons between the results of my own survey conducted in the spring of 2010 and data from before the crisis—the years 2004/5 (European Social Survey), 1999 and 1984 (both World Values Survey). From the ESS and WVS data sets I selected subsamples of students as my survey had been based on a sample of students.

TRUST, LACK THEREOF

Before the economic crisis, Iceland was one of the world's most trusting societies. Only Scandinavian countries like Norway and Denmark were slightly ahead. Today, this is no longer the case. Levels of social trust have dropped significantly in Iceland, increasing the distance between Iceland and Scandinavia. However, Icelanders still display relatively high levels of trust, much higher in fact than in continental Europe, and this is the outcome I want to stress.

What is notable in Iceland is that it is trust in parliament, the legal system, politicians and political parties that has dropped significantly. Only trust in the police remains as high as it was before the crisis. This makes for a disturbing picture, although some people might say that it is obvious that trust toward institutions will decline during an economic crisis. But when the trust between ordinary people drops too, this means that society is undergoing a bigger change.

INDEPENDENT PEOPLE?

An economic crisis can go beyond economics. When Finland went through economic problems in the 1990s, political scientists claimed that there was nothing to worry about, as despite the decrease in trust toward institutions, trust between people remained constant. Social trust—the assumption that other people are willing to cooperate

“Before the economic crisis, Iceland was one of the world's most trusting societies. Only Scandinavian countries like Norway and Denmark were slightly ahead. Today, this is no longer the case.”

and have benevolent intent towards one another—is something that keeps the core of a society together. Finland in the 1990s bounced back and conquered the world, or at least cornered the market in mobile phones with its innovative Nokia products. This is a situation which would not have been possible without social trust, since people need to know that they will be listen to and respected when they come up with new ideas: that is how an innovative economy works.

Icelanders are renowned for being independent people, and not only because of the internationally famous book by Halldór Laxness. It is rather the other way around. The book became famous because of the truth of the values mocked within it. My research may be small in scale but it suggests that during the last 26 years—what we generally refer to as one generation—social embeddedness has become more and more important for Icelanders. Let me explain what I mean. Social embeddedness has many aspects; one of them is the relationship between adult children and their parents. If adult children look up to their parents for help and support, it means that they give up some of their z for the price of this social embeddedness.

The countries wherein adult children are the most independent from their parents are Norway, The Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark. At the other end of this continuum are Poland, India and South Korea. The situation in Iceland has changed gradually over the last 26 years. Nowadays young Icelanders expect parental help to a greater extent compared to their parents when they were young. This is probably due to the unstable economic situation and the difficulty of finding a first job with proper wages.

These findings go along with the idea of Icelanders as brave, well-integrated and independent people at the same time, although this is only scratching the surface of a very deep subject. Ancient philosophers teach us that we can easily be misguided by our senses while modern sociologists know that we can easily be misled by statistics. There are many ways of depicting reality. And the one that appeals to us tends to be the one that appeals to our hearts. 🍷

✍ KATARZYNA GROWIEC



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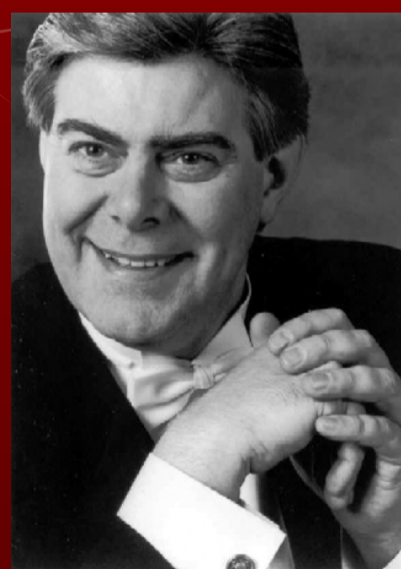
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Let's Talk!

Looking back on Reykjavík's 'Multicultural Conference'

On the morning of November 6th, the entrance to Borgarleikhúsið could have easily been mistaken for a busy New York sidewalk. People from every corner of the world had assembled to converse in several languages about the common bond they share; they each call Iceland home. The coffee was hot and the spirit was communal as the assembly was warmly welcomed to the first Reykjavík Multicultural Conference organized by the city's Mayor, Jón Gnarr.

THE FIRST MULTICULTURAL CONFERENCE
Attendance exceeded expectations with over 160 city residents of foreign origin meeting for two purposes: to elect a five-person panel to advise the city's Human Rights Council and to discuss the how the city can better serve 'new citizens' living in Reykjavík. This is the first meeting of this type to take place in Reykjavík where almost 10,000 city residents are foreign born. The event's announcement was vaguely worded, inviting foreigners to discuss Reykjavík's "efforts to improve its services for

immigrants." Staged as a round table discussion, and divided by language, the question and answer format was well organized and very structured. The format left little time to voice concerns about fundamental issues such as discrimination, specific instances of injustice, and overall bias in our community, causing some—who had been hoping to address them—to leave at the first break.

A CALL FOR INFORMATION
The areas of discussion were education and pre-schools, culture and travel, ÍTR (the Reykjavík sports and recreation authority), social services, service offices and the web division. The questions were somewhat repetitive and the answers to each quite similar. In retrospect, the answers to most questions can be interpreted as a call for information. More information, better information, and information in a language accessible to new citizens is badly needed. For example, questions were asked about what improvements should be made in the area of the city's schools. It was pointed out that most communication to parents from the city's el-

ementary schools is in Icelandic. This means that children of immigrants receive a less positive educational experience during the transition period while their parents are learning Icelandic. Meanwhile, both the University of Iceland and the city's play-schools have changed their policies to make all communication available in both Icelandic and English. In other areas, the questions were designed to assess why participation rates are lower with immigrants than native Icelanders. Simply put, the information delivery structure is lacking. It is assumed that people know what ÍTR is, or that all children receive a scholarship for recreational activities, that most city museums are free, and even where their local social service office is located and what purpose it serves. Often this information fails to reach those who do not read daily newspapers, do not participate in coffee room talks and have no Icelandic relatives. Many simply do not know the what, where, how, and why of navigating life in Reykjavík despite having lived and worked in the city for years. As conference attendee Letitia B. John-

"Many simply do not know the what, where, how, and why of navigating life in Reykjavík despite having lived and worked in the city for years."

son, M.A. student at H.Í., remarked, "Iceland is an assumption culture, which is to say that, it is assumed everyone knows or knows someone who knows."

THE ALWAYS-CONFUSING DIRECTORATE OF IMMIGRATION
The most common complaint heard during the discussion was overwhelmingly against Útlendingastofnun (the Directorate of Immigration). The Directorate of Immigration is a federal institution, not a city service, and was thus not on the list of discussion topics. Therefore, the complaints made against it would have been ignored if not for the fact that their practices are in many cases hindering use of the city's services, especially social services. According to those present, the institution creates a "culture of fear," and its guidelines are "subjective" and "unclear." Due to these factors, foreign-born residents, especially those from outside the EU, are afraid to seek services at risk of complicating or voiding their work and residency permits.

Barbara Kristvinsson, lawyer and counsellor at the Immigrant Information Centre—and long time champion for immigrant rights—stated that some services are exempt and that foreigners should not be afraid to seek help. Barbara refers anyone who has questions about these issues to contact her office at Þjónustumiðstöð Miðborgar og Hlíða.

However, the rules about which social services are OK to use, and which services are off limits, are not stated clearly either at the social services offices, or at utl.is [the Directorate of Immigration's website]. Documentation is required to be included in your annual application for renewal from your local social service office which states that you have not received assistance. This is confusing and many do not wish to complicate the already difficult process of reapplication for work and residency permits.

THE MULTICULTURAL COMMITTEE IS ALREADY AT WORK
One of the assembly's main purposes was to appoint a Multicultural Committee that will assist and advise Reykjavík's Human Rights Council regard-

ing immigrant affairs. After tallying the votes, it was announced that the new committee would be composed of Akeem-Cujo Oppong (Ghana), Shuhui Wang (China), Toshiki Toma (Japan), Juan Camilo Román Estrada (Columbia), Angelique Kelley (United States), Raúl Sáenz (Mexico) and Katelin Marit Parsons (Canada).


These people are already at work. According to the city's website, the newly elected panel had its first meeting on the 23rd of November. Human Rights Officer Anna Kristinsdóttir met with the committee to discuss the future goals and to present the committee with their first tasks. While the transcriptions recorded at the multicultural conference are still in the process of translation, "extracting and condensing the data gathered," is the Multicultural Committee's first project and current challenge.

According to the newspiece on Reykjavík.is, the committee also discussed the importance of using the information gathered in a positive way, and expressed desires that the Multicultural Conference becomes an annual event. One of the recurring topics at the conference pertained to how the city can better deliver information to its new citizens. The committee is already working on this, announcing plans to set up a Facebook page that would mediate information easily, as well as acting as discussion forum for the group. The committee welcomes suggestions and inquiries by email (fjolmenningar-rad@reykjavik.is).

HOME
Overall, it seems the conference was a success. The people who attended the meeting were mostly people who care deeply about Iceland and have a vested stock in creating an environment more welcoming to its new citizens, because this is where they live, work, love, and raise their families. This is home. 🍷

✍️ B.R. NEAL
📍 CITY OF REYKJAVÍK

Iceland To Write New Constitution, Nobody Cares

 Well, it looks like we've once again made history: last weekend, we held elections for representatives comprising a constitutional assembly and ended up with the lowest voter turnout ever. By some counts, just about 37% of eligible voters actually turned in ballots. Why anyone is surprised by this is a mystery to me. There has been decidedly low enthusiasm for the prospect for a long time now, as the Grapevine has reported. Foreign media showed greater interest than domestic media (and admittedly, our own coverage could have been much better), which was itself pretty entertaining—all those mildly condescending articles from US news sources that basically amounted to "look at how quaint those Icelanders are, letting commoners—peasants, if you will—actually write a new constitution,"

when America's constitutional assembly was comprised mostly of tobacco farmers and slave traders. Political scientists are falling over themselves to explain why this election was a failure, and aren't hesitating to blame the media. Poor coverage was definitely a part of this, but ultimately there were two main factors that I believe contributed to this. First of all, there's the system itself. Parliamentary elections have a process of elimination: primaries narrow down the number of available candidates, and districts narrow down the number of available candidates you can vote for. This makes it decidedly easier than wading through the platforms of some 500+ candidates in one go, and trying to narrow that down to 25. This probably had a greater effect than the oft-complained-about and inexplicable decision to assign

each candidate a four-digit number to be entered, instead of just a list of names and checkboxes. In fact, this experiment has important implications for Icelandic democracy as a whole. Many pundits in the past have expressed interest in the idea of "one country, one district", and that primaries themselves should fall to the wayside. Here, we have an election that did those things, that is probably as close to direct democracy as Iceland can get, and it proved to be a dismal failure. The more cynical interpretation would be that people were given too many choices, and that even a country of about 310,000 people isn't ready for direct democracy. Well, maybe not. Maybe next time, instead of saying "anyone who can get X number of signatures by this date will be a candidate", the cap could have been placed on a "top 100 candidates who re-

ceived the most number of signatures" on top of the signature minimum. This would have had the effect of having a pool of candidates that the people as a whole were the most enthusiastic about from the very start, instead of creating an overwhelming pool of candidates who were, for the most part, complete unknowns. The fact that most of the people who won a seat are well-known public figures underlines this point. This leads to the second reason why this failed. We all like the idea of direct democracy, but in the end, it's just not how we're brought up. We naturally gravitate towards well-known figures, and will choose famous people with vague platforms over unknowns with clear ones. Last spring's city elections in Reykjavík are a great example of this: the Best Party wasn't the only alternate party running, but none of these other

parties had a famous comedian topping the list. None of this is to say that we shouldn't do this again, and that direct democracy just can't work. On the contrary, I believe the failure of the elections for the constitutional assembly proves that we need to do this again, and more often. You cannot change a political system without changing the way people think about politics. If we want direct democracy, we're going to have to keep moving towards it, until the idea is considered less a radical experiment and more simple common sense. Maybe then picking from 500 candidates from all over the country, some of them utterly unknown to us, will seem like the way elections should be. 🍷

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The accompanying photo depicts a container filled with PERFECTLY FINE fruits and vegetables that had been thrown away by a certain distributor. Imagine how much waste goes on in our community - it's downright creepy!

Article | Words Eimear Fitzgerald Photography Páll Hilmarsson

From Farm to Fork

Demystifying the cost of Icelandic vegetables.



Rummaging through boxes of vegetables in a local supermarket recently, I noticed something on my quest for the holy trinity of quality and freshness at an affordable price. The level of debate going on amongst shoppers about the quality of vegetables relative to their cost seemed to be greater than for any other food types. Perhaps it's due to the rising popularity in trends for vegetarianism, veganism and more eco-conscious lifestyles? Perhaps the tighter squeeze on everybody's pockets has led us to question what we are prepared to spend? Perhaps people are just feeling more patriotic and want to question their food sources more?

The cost of importing food is rising, particularly in the case of vegetables. Figures from Statistics Iceland show that the consumer price index (the CPI tracks the price consumers pay for a basket of everyday products) for the category of vegetables has risen steadily on average since January of 2008. The index peaked at 150 points in April this year, leading to an overall increase of 50% in the price of vegetables in less than three years.

I set out to investigate why we consumers end up paying the price we do for Icelandic vegetables, and as a consequence came across some curious trends happening within the industry as a whole.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

A stroll through any supermarket will reveal that some Icelandic vegetable varieties are priced fairly competitively with imports (tomatoes, for example) while others cost a good deal more than their foreign equivalent (like zucchinis). So what makes for this variation in price?

Gunnlaugur Karlsson and Kristín Sveinsdóttir of Sölufélag Garðyrkjumanna (SFG – “The Gardener’s Sales Collective”), the company behind the brand Íslenskt.is, explain that the amount consumers end up paying for Icelandic vegetables depends on supply and demand. Here comes the science. “The demand for products depends on the time of year. In summertime we are very competitive in price, as we have greater quantities of vegetables, especially tomatoes and cucumbers. It’s much more difficult to be competitive on price during winter as there’s less quantity and fewer varieties,” Gunnlaugur explains.

He adds that while there are variations, “It’s a myth that Iceland vegetables are vastly more expensive than other countries.” This, he says, is an issue that again comes back to supply and demand. “We’re not exporting, so if farmers can respond to a high demand for produce by producing a lot, prices can then be kept down. For example, we had a situation during the summer, where Icelandic cucumber

“People are increasingly concerned with the environmental impact of importing food, as well as the fact that Icelanders need all the work they can get.”

portions were cheaper in Bónus than their equivalent in Tesco supermarkets in the UK”. That’s a surprising fact to digest but illustrates just how competitive domestic produce can be if enough is produced. It seems that if you want to get value for money when shopping for Icelandic vegetables, there’s a much greater chance if you shop for varieties that are in season and plentiful. If you want strawberries in December, you have to expect to pay a lot more.

SUPPLY CHAIN

Another part of the process where end costs tend to get inflated is with suppliers and middlemen. “The suppliers are few and in a powerful position in relation to the producers. There has been a monopolistic trend,” says Ólafur Dýrmundsson of the local Farmers’ Association (Bændasamtök Íslands).

In view of this SFG’s Gunnlaugur explains that his organisation’s part in the chain is to collect, package, market and resell to suppliers on behalf of farmers. He stresses the fact that because SFG is owned by farmers themselves, the company is not in the business of making a profit. “We run our operations on the basis of a 10% cost to farmers, ensuring they receive 90% of the price of their produce. The supply chain only works as long as it’s a convenient system. If someone in between is taking more than he should, then it’s going to change”.

Bananar (“Bananas”) is Iceland’s main distributor of both imported and Icelandic vegetables. Bananar Manager Kjartan Friðsteinsson argues that the popular notion of distributors exploiting the devaluation of the króna through the application of higher margins is a misconception. “Of course we are running a business, but we are not increasing the margin or anything like that. The fluctuation of the króna means we have to pay the rate of exchange at any particular time. Actually I think the percentage margin has gone down rather than up, relatively speaking, and the margin in vegetables is very low anyway, compared to other items such as electronics.”

Explaining Bananar’s pricing structure, Kjartan tells me “Sometimes we have to buy oranges from South Africa, for example, other times from Argentina or Spain. Prices can fluctuate in different

countries at different times of the year, and you also have to import from further distances when oranges aren’t in season closer to home. This all adds to the costs the consumer pays.”

Kjartan balks at suggestions of suppliers having possible financial motive to support imports over domestic produce. “We’re just here to fill in the gaps, if it comes to a time that domestic production satisfies demand in a particular product, then we’ll happily stop importing it.”

GROWING PAINS

But what about the costs involved in production. Just how expensive is it to produce vegetables in Iceland?

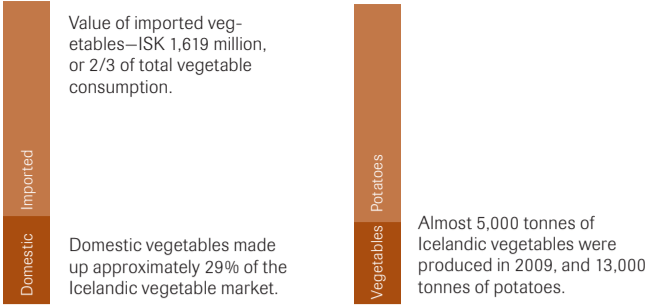
Knútur Ármann, a tomato grower based in Bláskógabyggð, explains that growing vegetables in greenhouses requires a variety of imported materials such as glass, steel and lamps. While these were always costly, the price has soared since 2008. “In the last two years the low value of the króna has made the cost of the materials we need to import, such as fertiliser, very expensive. They are now double the price,” Knútur says.

Knútur cites electricity as his single biggest production cost. “My energy costs equate the salary I have to pay for six people. We understand that most Icelandic people want their food to be fresh and locally produced where possible, and that people have less money in their pockets. But it’s very difficult in the current climate to keep prices fair and affordable, when the price of production is going up all the time.”

SFG’s Gunnlaugur supports these claims: “In this industry the biggest single issue is the price of electricity. It’s not the price of the electricity itself that’s the problem, but the costs associated with its distribution and transportation,” says Gunnlaugur. This sentiment was echoed by the Farmers Association’s Ólafur Dýrmundsson who believes, “the cost of electricity is a major cost item and one of particular concern for greenhouse growers.”

ENERGY EXPLAINED

On the back of these comments the energy issue was put to The National Energy Authority, Orkusstofnun, for comment. Their representative Haukur Eggertson proposes a few suggestions as to why



the industry might be feeling the price pinch now more than ever. Competition was introduced into the market for electricity distribution in 2005, in a move away from a previous monopoly held by national power company Landsvirkjun. Haukur explains the impact this brought about. “For years, Landsvirkjun had run an experimental scheme, selling surplus electricity at lower rates to emerging industries. With greenhouses and vegetable production just emerging as an energy intensive new industry, growers were a main benefactor. However, this practice couldn’t continue within this new energy environment, as selling electricity at lower prices to certain groups over another, for no apparent business reason, would be against competition law”.

He goes on to explain that the initial plan was to have an adjustment period at the end of the scheme, “but this didn’t happen, so the price changes came as a big shock to growers”. He suggests that these previous discounts, and the subsidy system that replaced them, hasn’t forced the industry to be smart about their energy usage. “A weakness of the subsidy system is that it has not been rewarding, or given incentive to farmers to reduce their electricity costs. Farmers haven’t exploited the current tariff system in order to get most value out of rewards that exist for large volumes of usage, for working at off-peak times and using electricity in an even, consistent manner.”

Haukur declines to comment on whether the energy industry is setting its prices too high, but adds, “Orkusstofnun’s job is ensure that energy distributors behave in a correct manner and demand a fair price for their services, and that they must ask the same price of all users. As far as we know, no-one is getting rich from distributing electricity.”

GROWING DEMAND – WEAKENING PRODUCTION

Meanwhile, it seems consumer demand for Icelandic products has grown strongly since the economic collapse of 2008. Bananar’s Kjartan Friðsteinsson notes that the demand for Icelandic produce is actually much higher than current production levels. “At the moment approximately 30% of our business is in Icelandic vegetables, but in fact demand for Icelandic produce is greater than the supply.”

Kristín Sveinsdóttir of SFG believes the demand was strong before. “But it has increased strongly since 2007. Healthier lifestyles are helping us. Farmers use very little fertilisers, and we have very high quality water which is extremely important for production”.

Brynhildur Pétursdóttir, a representative of Neytendasamtökin, the consumer association, also agrees. “It seems evident that Icelandic consumers believe Icelandic vegetables are of good quality, and consequently many are willing to pay that little bit more. People are increasingly concerned with the environmental impact of importing food, as well as the fact that Icelanders need all the work they can get.”

However while consumer demand may be pushing forward, production figures surprisingly appear to be in decline. Figures from Samband Garðyrkjubænda (The Icelandic Horticultural Association) show that while production had been increasing year on year (from c. 7,000 tonnes in 1995 to c. 19,000 in 2006) it has actually decreased since 2007, to just over 15,500 tonnes in 2009. Bananar also supported the notion that production has decreased in the past three years.

It seems the current situation is a paradoxical one. In the context of today’s extremely tough economic climate where every industry is fighting tooth and nail to stimulate demand for their products, here is an industry which, incredibly, is in decline despite growing consumer demand. While the arguments are admittedly complex, the dynamics multifaceted and the stakeholders numerous, it’s nonetheless a difficult logic to grasp.

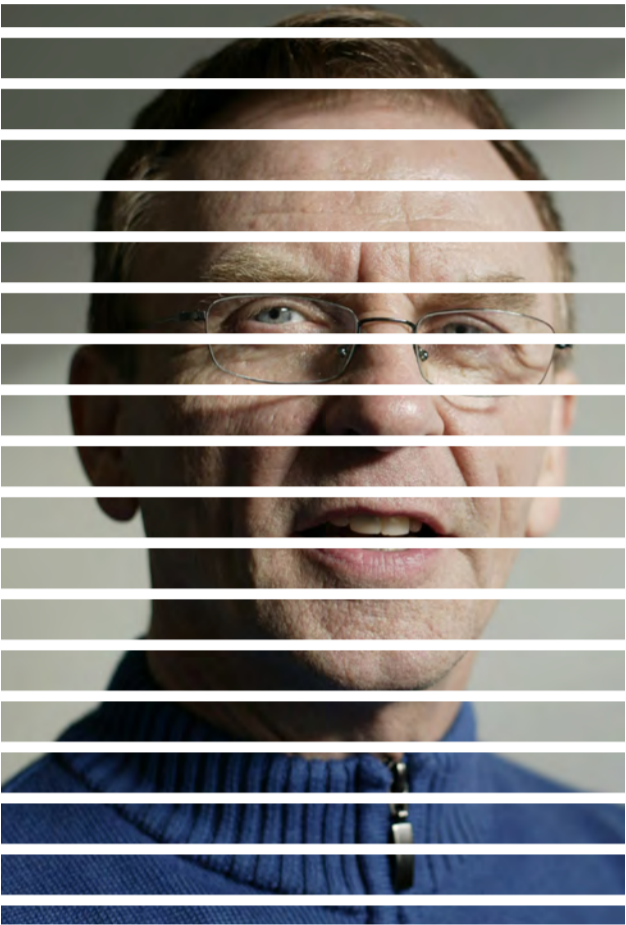
While the domestic horticulture industry is limited in some ways by geography and environment, one is left with the impression that the industry has yet to fully stretch its legs and discover its full potential. Although its future is to a large extent in the hands of farmers, policymakers and industry stakeholders, we consumers also have a role to play through the choices we make. Some food for thought the next time you stroll through those supermarket aisles. 🍆

Music | Valur Gunnarsson

Bringing It All Back Home: *Three Icelandic Dylans*



Megas / Photo by Aldis Pálsdóttir



Hörður Torfa / Photo by Gúndi



Bubbi / Photo by Spessi

IN THE 1960S, POP MUSIC IN ICELAND WAS OFTEN REFERRED TO AS BÍTLATÓN-LIST (“BEATLE MUSIC”) AND TODAY MANY EVEN SPEAK OF BÍTLAÁRIN (“THE BEATLE YEARS”). DESPITE THE PROXIMITY OF THE AMERICAN NAVAL BASE AND US ARMED FORCES RADIO, MUSICAL INFLUENCES HERE MOSTLY CAME FROM THE UK.

Some say that this was because the rough sailor types of Keflavík (known as Bítlabærinn or “Beatletown”) found a kinship with the scene in Liverpool, others that it was because most Icelandic musicians went to London to buy records unavailable here. In any case, Bob Dylan and folk rock made relatively little impact here in the ‘60s. Perhaps the real reason was that Iceland had almost no proper concert venues where people could just go and listen. Rather, rock music was enjoyed at drunken country balls and was decidedly more for the feet than the mind.

FOUNDING FATHERS AND OTHER MISFITS

They say that in Iceland everything happens five years too late. So it was only in the early ‘70s, ironically when Dylan’s influence in the English-speaking world was at a low, that echoes of him could be heard here.

Hörður Torfason was the first major singer-songwriter to emerge in Iceland. On his first album in 1970, he wrote music to other people’s poems. By his second, in 1971, he was finding his own voice as a lyricist.

The next year, a young man who had been working as a night watchman in Norway recorded his debut album. The album, named after its creator, Megas, was iconoclastic in more ways than one, dealing with some of Iceland’s most esteemed heroes. We meet national poet Jónas Hallgrímsson lying around syphilis-infected and drunk, and hear that the settlement of Iceland itself was an unfortunate mistake by the nation’s founder. That album, as well as subsequent ones, established Megas as something of a national poet in his own right. Meanwhile, Hörður came out of the closet and told Icelanders he was gay, one of the first prominent Icelanders to do so. The response was somewhat less than celebratory, and forced him to relocate temporarily to Denmark. He soon returned, and became a strong gay rights advocate.

LAXNESS AND ELVIS

Megas eventually established himself as a master

of the Icelandic language, though initially many disputed his use of slang and English or Danish ‘loan words’ mixed with highly literary Icelandic. In 1979, after a slew of brilliant albums, he retired to go to art school.

In the early 1980s a new troubadour emerged, one influenced by both Megas and Hörður Torfa as well as Dylan. His name was Bubbi Morthens, and he almost instantly eclipsed both of his Icelandic forerunners in terms of sales. Urged on by Bubbi, Megas re-emerged in the mid-’80s to near-respectability and ever greater critical and commercial success. In 1988, master and apprentice Megas and Bubbi teamed up to record the album ‘Bláir draumar’, which was intended to rescue the faltering record label Grammið from bankruptcy. This might have been successful, had the album not included a track called ‘Litlir sætir strákar’ (“Cute little boys”), sung from a paedophile’s viewpoint. Both album and label tanked, and Megas spent roughly a decade and a half in the commercial wilderness, at least partly due to this one song. The album was later re-released on two different CDs—one for each artist—and is currently unavailable in its entirety. Even though usually broke and despite lucrative offers, Megas was the very model of artistic integrity, refusing all offers of using his songs for advertisements. He often had problems getting his music released by record labels, and his house was paid for by a former backing singer of his called Björk [some of you might be familiar...]. Megas, who once said that he grew up with readings of Halldór Laxness’ works in one ear and Elvis singing into the other, was nevertheless in the year 2000 celebrated along with Laxness as one of Iceland’s greatest writers of all time. In early 2008, his career went through a commercial resurgence with a new band and two new albums that outsold previous output. Megas, the rock ‘n’ roll Laxness, was belatedly going through his Elvis phase.

(NOT JUST) TALKING ‘BOUT A REVOLUTION

Even though his financial troubles should have been behind him, it was at this point that Megas sold one of his classic songs to Toyota (perhaps inspired by Dylan, who was by now doing Cadillac commercials). A few months later, the economy collapsed. Coincidence? Probably not.

Re-enter Hörður Torfason. Largely ignored in Iceland by the general public, apart from his annual and usually sold-out autumn concert, it was Hörður who now stepped forth. Trained as a theatre director and hardened by his civil rights struggle on

behalf of the gay community, he began organising the weekly protests that later escalated into the pots and pans revolution. Many troubadours have sung about revolution throughout the years, but Hörður may be the first one to actually make it happen. He has stepped out of the shadow of his contemporaries and surpassed them all, at least in terms of direct political influence. Dylan, surely, never did this.

THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF 1988

1988 did not only see the Megas-Bubbi team up. The Big Three, Bubbi, Megas and Hörður Torfa jointly held a Concert Against Aids (as it was known) in Háskólabíó. Bubbi was then at his peak, Iceland’s biggest selling artist by far, and the other two were also enjoying commercial resurgence. The concert, however, was not a success. Megas later quipped in a Fréttablaðið interview that few had attended as they were afraid of catching the disease, as many had misconceptions about it at the time. The concert was released on VHS, and again Megas joked that a third of the printing had an American thriller with the music to the concert, another third had the visuals with soundtrack to said crime film, while only a third had both correct sound and vision. That same year, a band calling themselves Dýrið gengur laust (“The animal walks freely”) released a spoof called ‘Bláir draumar’ (“Blue Dreams”), after the Bubbi/Megas album. The song graphically detailed a homosexual orgy of the country’s three leading troubadours. It was in poor taste, but legend has it that Bubbi, the most physical of the three, actually paid the songwriter a visit and clocked him for his labours. Perhaps that is why people in general have been reluctant to criticise him (perhaps this writer may be expecting a similar visit?).

THE GOOD...

Again, in 1988, the Big Three of the acoustic scene converged in Háskólabíó. They had been coming from very different places, and were to go on to more different places still.

Ironically, it was Hörður Torfa who started out as the most commercial. In the early ‘70s, he was something of a golden boy with his blonde hair and blue eyes, working as a model as well as a singer before his coming out put a temporary halt to his career. Despite not being overtly political as a songwriter, it was he who was to have the most direct impact on Icelandic society. First he took part in founding Samtökin’78 (called The National Queer Organisation in English) which certainly must be

one of the most successful in history. In the three decades since its founding, gays in Iceland have gone from a closeted existence to more or less complete acceptance. One of the last hurdles was crossed this year, as the National Church has now accepted same-sex marriages. Thirty years later, Hörður started his one-man show outside the Parliament building, which escalated into the biggest protests in Icelandic history and brought down the government.

...THE BAD...

Bubbi first appeared a decade later than Hörður, as an angry young man and part of the then-rising punk movement. He never fit in easily, being some years older (at 24) and a lot more rock and roll than his teenage contemporaries. His politics, clearly left wing and honed by almost a decade working as a labourer in fish factories around the countryside, were in direct opposition to the punks’ urban anarchism. The fact that he became the one to break into the mainstream probably says something about the mood at the time, as well as the power of his performances.

The first side of his seminal debut ‘Ísbjarnarblús’ was electric and the second was acoustic (much like Dylan’s ‘Bringing It All Back Home’), and ever since he has gone between the two formats. Although still popular in the ‘90s, he started dabbling in commercials. In early 2005, he took the final step and sold his entire catalogue to Sjóvá insurance company and Glitnir Bank.

Bubbi again embodied the spirit of the times and when the economy collapsed he went down with it, in financial terms at least, being heavily in debt. He has lately become something of an apologist for disgraced bankers, one of very few Icelanders to do so. No longer the spokesman of the working classes, but perhaps we can still find some of his old punk spirit in going so brazenly against popular opinion?

...AND THE DOWNRIGHT BIZARRE

Megas has always been a wild card. Although he obviously abhors the Conservatives, he seems equally happy to take shots at the left or any group that seems to him to be too self-righteous. He even presented his selling out to Toyota as a practical joke against those who were too dogmatic against

CONTINUES ON PAGE 16



Low Voter Turnout, Mixed Messages

Did the Constitutional Assembly election fail?



On November 27, Icelanders partook in an unprecedented election when the nation voted representatives for a Constitutional Assembly that will convene in February. The assembly's task is to rewrite the Icelandic Constitution, originally handed down to us by the Danish colonial masters in 1874—hence the statue of a Danish monarch with a piece of paper in front of the Prime Minister's office.

This assembly will present its resolutions to the Parliament at the end of its sessions, but it also has the power to force Alþingi's hand by calling for a national referendum on its proposals.

EXPLOSIVE ISSUES

The Constitutional Assembly consists of 25 representatives. The issues it will look most closely into are the system of government itself: the role of the president, the independence of the judiciary system and some aspects that are perceived to have failed before and during the collapse of the Icelandic economy in 2008—aspects such as the checks and balances between the different branches of government.

It will also debate whether the constitution should contain provisions about national resources—that are mainly fish and energy—and whether these should be stipulated as being the basic properties of the nation itself.

There are more subjects that will surely be discussed: The relation between the state and the Lutheran church, which now has the status of national church, whether to decide more things by referendum and whether to change the electoral system, which is seen by many as archaic, where votes in the countryside count for more than votes cast in Reykjavík and the towns in the southwest.

TOTAL SYSTEM FAILURE

The Constitutional Assembly is a direct result of the collapse. After the events of October 2008—when the banks, the stock market and the currency crashed in the course of a week—there was talk of total system failure within the government. This is confirmed in a huge report published in April 2010 by the parliament appointed Special Investigation Commission; politicians and the civil service sector

are seen to have failed through negligence, incompetence and nepotism.

There have even been calls for a second Icelandic republic to be founded on the ruins of the first one—so in a way the Constitutional Assembly is an attempt to take the democratic process out of the hands of the political class.

LOW TURNOUT

But it cannot be claimed that the elections brought out the nation *en masse*. The turnout was quite a disappointment. Only 36 percent of the population bothered to vote, in a country where most voters usually show up for elections.

Several explanations can be mentioned. The large right wing party, Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn, in government before and during the collapse, was opposed to the whole process and talked it down from the outset. Coverage was limited, partly because the media were overwhelmed by the number of candidates, 522 in all.

Some also felt that the process did not go far enough, that the powers of the assembly are too limited: its proposals will eventually have to be ratified—or rejected—by Alþingi. And of course a constitution is an abstraction; it does not immediately affect the lives of people, so perhaps many felt detached from the whole process.

A WEAKENED MANDATE

Admittedly the mandate of the Constitutional Assembly is weakened by the low turnout. Of course it will still carry on, but its proposals can be easily put to doubt. Politicians might even be tempted to try to ignore it. This is also a question of how the assembly itself will fare. Politics are largely discredited in Iceland because of the crash, and because of incessant party bickering. Trust in the Parliament is almost non-existent. Will the Constitutional Assembly manage to rise above this, or will it descend into the same infighting, mirroring the general distrust. Then we might also see the outlines of political parties forming within the assembly, especially around the explosive question of national resources.

International media has described this as a unique experiment, but it might easily fail. All in all, five Parliament-appointed committees have failed

to rewrite the constitution since Iceland became a republic in 1944. The first was convened as early as 1945. Many of them sat for years. The last one, in 2005, stranded on the role of the president. The Icelandic president has traditionally been a symbolic figurehead, but this has changed in the time of President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, who enjoys playing an active role in politics, vetoing important bills and advocating views contrary to government policy. Presently the constitution can read in two ways, in favour of Ólafur Ragnar's view of the active role of the president and of the president being subservient to government ministers.

STILL NO ONE ACCEPTS RESPONSIBILITY

A certain *schadenfreude* can be detected among those who oppose the Constitutional Assembly. There is also a distinct change in tone in the national discourse in the last months. The forces that were behind the collapse have started fighting back with more vigour. Politicians, some of whom were quite subdued after the crash, are much more cocky—back to their old ways. And politicians who most thought would have to leave the stage in shame are still around.

The daily newspaper Morgunblaðið is used by Davíð Oddsson, former Prime Minister and Central Bank governor, to try to restore his tattered reputation and to thrash those who think he might share some blame for the collapse. One of those who practically bankrupted the nation, financier Jón Ásgeir Jóhannesson of Baugur fame, still owns his media empire.

The banksters, thought by most to be the chief culprits, have also started fighting back in a more aggressive manner, immediately answering everything that is said about them, intimidating journalists and threatening them with lawsuits.

As of yet really no one has accepted any responsibility for the crash, be they politicians or bankers. President Ólafur Ragnar, who was a shameless cheerleader for the financiers, has managed to undergo an amazing makeover, emerging as a folk hero who refuses to pay the debts incurred by the banks.

Words

Egill Helgason

Illustration

Inga María Brynjarsdóttir

A ROLLERCOASTER RIDE

There is also a question of the general public and its stamina. After the rollercoaster ride of the last years, one senses a certain tiredness and resignation. The passion for change felt directly after the crash seems to be evaporating. Many people are in dire straits financially; they struggle to make ends meet. Lawyers who collect debts are prospering in this situation. Everybody still loathes the financiers, the banks and even the politicians, but people feel that they can't really do anything about it—that the bad guys will have their debts written off in the end while the common people will have to pay.

The blogs, very lively after the crash, have become more nasty, repetitive and bad tempered. There is little analysis, but much bullying and paranoia. Political parties are back at their usual spinning. While some were voting for the Constitutional Assembly the media were focusing on the exploits of a prostitute from Guinea, now imprisoned in Iceland, and a sex scandal involving a preacher from a congregation in an outlying township of Reykjavík.

AM I RIGHT THIS TIME?

The intensity of the situation and the soul searching has taken its toll. I will again review my prognostication. In September I wrote that there was a chance of people descending into apathy. In October after demonstrations in front of Alþingi I wrote that maybe I was wrong.

Now I will write that maybe I was right the first time. There is not much revolutionary fervour left, the 'Pots and Pans' revolution seems to have run its course. But then I might be wrong. At least later this month we will have Christmas, a huge thing in Iceland, with the lights coming out in the dark of the Nordic winter. It is a time for cosying.

Merry Christmas. 🍷

Five Super-Weird Icelandic records!



Icelandic musicians have produced their share of weird records. Some records aim to be weird, but some are weird by accident, the artist involved even being fully serious about the whole thing. The five below are truly weird, some by design, others by accident.

BROKEN SILENCE, BROKEN GUITAR
Jóhann G. Jóhannsson, who had been part of Óðmenn, a Cream influenced rock trio, hit Weirdsville fast in 1972 when his super weird two track 7" was released. The "songs" were called 'The Silence Broken' and 'Broken Guitar' and they sounded just like that: On side A, a long silence was broken with a violent scream, on side B a guitar was slowly torn apart and broken. This weirdness marked the start of Jóhann's (completely unweird) solo career, and he says the record's release was a sounding board for dare.

"I had written a song called 'Don't Try To Fool Me' (later to become a pop classic) that Ámundi Ámundason (then a record mogul in Iceland) wanted to release as a single, but I said he had to release this single first. He said alright, as long as he didn't have to listen to it. The single was sealed so people had to buy it before they could listen to it. Eventually it made a profit, and then Ámundi laughed out loud. Everybody thought I had lost my marbles when this single came out!"

The broken guitar track was recorded as a form of stress-release at the end of Óðmenn's long sessions for their classic double album in 1970, but the silence track Jóhann recorded at home.

"I had tried to record it several times, but there was always some distraction, once a hail storm even broke out in the middle of the silence. Eventually I got it done in the middle of the night, but my scream woke up the people on the floor above me who came rushing down in a state of shock. I had turned the tape recorder off by then though!"

SQUEAKY BALLOON RECORD
Industrial veterans Reptilicus' first "record" was a very weird one. It is called 'Tat was asi' and came out in 1989.

"We got the idea from Bjarni the Mohawk [singer from teen punk band Sjálfsfrúun]," says Reptilicus singer Guðmundur Ingi Markússon. "I met

him once downtown where he sat with a blown up balloon and made squeaky sounds with it. He was no fan of our band, so he made a joke that this was what his next album would sound like. He meant it as a pot-shot at us."

The band members got some old LPs from their parents and painted them black, both the records and the sleeves. On the back side was a track list—"we considered this a 12" with two tracks," says Guðmundur—and precise instructions on how to perform the songs with the two black balloons that came with the record.

"We meant to make fifty copies but we only got around to making around ten. The record was for sale in [legendary indie and underground record store] Grammið, and we sold one copy. I still don't know who bought it!"

TROUBADOURS DEGRADED
The rudest man-hating record ever to be released in Iceland came out in 1990. It was a 7" by Dýrið gengur laust ("The animal walks freely"), a rock group fronted by singer Jón Filippusson, formerly of punk group Sogblettir ("Love bites"). The uneventful song, called Bláir draumar ("Blue dreams") was performed in ballad and rock style, but the lyrics were pure bile, where three beloved troubadours—Bubbi Morthens, Hörður Torfason and Megas—were accused of being paedophiles and "faggots". Later, the singer had huge regrets about the lyrics.

"The record was sold under the table and it sold quite well, about 1.000 copies. We could drink out of the profits for a long time. Fortunately we never got any complaints from the subjects," Jón later said with deep relief.

THE RECORD THAT WAS PAWNED IN SWEDEN
One of the late eighties rock bands in Iceland was called E-X, originally Professor X. It came from Hafnafjörður and was lead by two guitarists, Davíð Magnússon (later of nineties combo Bublieflyes) and Pétur Hallgrímsson (who would later play with LHOQQ, Kylie Minogue and Emiliana Torrini). The band played R.E.M. influenced rock and sang in English. In the spring of 1988, their first 7" was ready with the songs 'Frontiers' and 'Highway One'. The recordings were done in Studio Mjöt, which also sent the master to their associates, a pressing plant in Sweden.



A year earlier, Mjöt had produced a very ambitious Christmas album called 'Hvít er borg og bær', where people like Björk, Megas and Miss Universe, Hólmfríður "Hófi" Karlsdóttir, performed songs written by Ingibjörg Þorbergs. This had sold much less than expected, so a big debt was due in Sweden. The Swedes took the E-X single in pawn, and as the debt was never paid the single was never delivered and is probably collecting dust on some Ikea shelves somewhere. The E-X boys have never even seen their own record, but they have heard of people who have seen it!

THE BIRTH OF 'CATASTROPHE-POP'
In 1966 at age 16, amazing drummer Gunnar Jökull Hákonarson moved to London, where he landed a job with the band The Syn. This psychedelic pop band made two very good singles on Pye records, which Gunnar drums on. The band would eventually evolve into prog giants Yes—fame and fortune ensued. Unfortunately, Gunnar had left the band by then, but he was for some time known in Iceland as "the drummer who nearly joined Yes". In Iceland, Gunnar drummed on some great records with psych-rock legends Trúbrot before vanishing in early seventies (to live in Sweden).

In 1995 he surprisingly returned in Iceland with his first solo album, 'Hamfarir' ("Catastrophe"), where he did not drum one beat, but preferred to perform his naive pop songs on some kind of a cheap Casio fun machine. His lyrics were crude and straight to the point with titles like 'Kaffið mitt' ("My Coffee"), 'Hundurinn minn' ("My Dog") and 'Bíllinn minn' ("My Car"). Gunnar's weird music and strained vocals horrified his old fans but gained new ones, like Jón Gnarr and Sigurjón Kjartansson who played his stuff regularly on their Tívihöfði radio show.

The album's reception was not as overall welcoming as Gunnar had expected. Unfortunately, nothing was heard from him musically afterwards, and he died in 2001 of Aids related causes.

In honour of Gunnar's sincere album 'Catastrophe-pop' has been the word used to describe similarly eccentric music released later on by people like Gissur Björn Eiríksson and Leoncie.

- 1 The cover of Jóhann G. Jóhannsson's Pögnin rofin / Brotinn gítar 7"
- 2 Reptilicus being cool in downtown Reykjavík, 1991
- 3 The Cover of Gunnar Jökull Hákonarson's 'Hamfarir'

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A Novel, A Translation And Unapologetic Plagiarisms

The Ambassador

(tr. Lytton Smith)

Bragi Ólafsson

Open Letter (2010)



Who's not afraid of the big bad wolf of plagiarism? The poet and central character in Bragi Ólafsson's second novel to come out in English, 'The Ambassador', that's who.

'The Ambassador' is an apt name, not only for the subject matter of the source text ('Sendiherrann', 2006), but for the translated text, the envoy of a minor language within the hegemony of English. The story follows Sturla Jón Jónsson, a middle-aged poet/apartment superintendent/deadbeat father of five as he travels from Reykjavík to attend a poetry festival in Druskininkai, a small town in Lithuania, and almost simultaneously faces charges of plagiarism back home and of petty theft abroad. In Iceland, the newspapers allege that Sturla's latest book of poems is actually the work of his deceased cousin, while certain dignitaries at the poetry festival accuse him of having stolen the expensive overcoat of a major patron of the festival.

When Laurence Sterne wrote 'Tristram Shandy' in mid-eighteenth century England, he incorporated entire passages from the works of others, which would later incite accusations of plagiarism. Yet today, 'Tristram Shandy' is considered a forerunner to stream of consciousness and self-reflexive modes of literary expression. Like 'Tristram Shandy', 'The Ambassador' is primarily concerned with how both poetry and life experiences are formed through what John Locke first termed "the association of ideas." In brief, the relations that ideas (or words or family relations) have with one and other are more telling than the essence of the ideas themselves.

Sturla Jón is a poet who does not apologise for his material and intellectual borrowings. By revealing how the poet's memories and ideas only endlessly beget other associated memories and ideas, the novel questions the notion of original creativity. And Sturla's fancy yet replaceable overcoats underline his inescapable indebtedness. The

overcoat also alludes to the Russian author Nikolai Gogol's short story by the same name. In some way, 'The Ambassador' reads like a narrative re-working of Dostoevsky's famous quote regarding his literary contemporaries and their predecessor Nikolai Gogol: "We all come out from Gogol's 'Overcoat'". Sturla is himself an admirer of Gogol.

Despite these various allusions, 'The Ambassador' remains accessible and funny. It is not necessary to understand every reference in order to appreciate the humour of the novel. Indeed, a large part of the humour lies in poking fun of the idiosyncrasies of the artist figure, a paradox given the commonplaceness of such a figure in Icelandic society. Throughout the novel, Sturla continually encounters dubious characters who claim to be poets and artists—a salesperson in a men's clothing store, a dim-witted neighbour, a fat Russian at a strip club, a taxi driver in Druskininkai. Thus the artist figure is humorously demystified: if everyone's an artist, then nobody is.

Just as Sturla knows that releasing a few CDs "isn't necessarily any indication of success or fame nowadays," he also questions the social merit of prioritising personal creativity: "Is there anywhere in the world where you can't find insignificant men struggling to write some insignificant texts which are of no use to anyone but themselves—in other words, useless products that actually prevent the people who write them from being human beings of any value." It is this deprecating self-awareness of the relative insignificance, even damaging effects, of his selfish obsessions, that endears Sturla to the reader.

The novel's humorous overcoat only thinly shrouds a darker underbelly. There is something evidently both comical and profane about having an apartment super double as a poet, which is reinforced through one of the poet's drinking companions, the "big-bellied" Russian oligarch who proclaims himself a novelist over champagne at a strip-tease show. The gross, gooey stain that Sturla finds on the carpet in the middle of his hotel room in Vilnius underscores this rank ambiance.

It seems no coincidence that the Icelander finds himself among the Lithuanian other, a favourite ethnic scapegoat in the domestic discourse about immigrants in Iceland. However, Sturla's prejudices and feelings of alienation are soon displaced by his affinity for the beast of the east. As one of Sturla's daydreams brings to mind, Icelandic homes also have their history

of "heavy air, saturated with meat fat or potato-and-cabbage stock."

'The Ambassador' lends itself well to translation, not least because it comments on the process of translation itself. Indeed, the novel at times gives the reader the rare pleasure of sensing that the translated text is actually a richer realisation of the source text. For example, with Sterne's 'Tristram Shandy' still in mind, it hardly seems accidental that Lytton Smith should translate Sturla's son's disdain for his father's "interest" (áhugamál) in poetry as "that hobbyhorse, poetry".

Lytton Smith's brave use of foreignising techniques is also refreshing. In addition to preserving the sometimes-cumbersome long sentences of the source text with their attendant dashes and semi-colons, Lytton sometimes goes so far as to translate proverbs and idioms word-for-word, producing brilliant novelties such as when the chapter 'Skúlagata' opens with "[t]he clock shows seven minutes on the way towards 12:00," or when Sturla's father calls his son "Sturla mine" ("Sturla minn"). In this context, a seemingly innocent gesture—when Sturla sips whiskey in his hotel room, imagines the translator of his own poems and offers "Cheers to the unknown translator"—gains both prophetic and ironic significance.

While Bragi Ólafsson's sixth novel has recently been published and now sits among the best-sellers of this year's Christmas book picks, 'The Ambassador' offers the more limited English-language reader a chance to be swept away by the Christmas book flood (jólábókaflóð) that inundates Iceland every year. In this case, it is perhaps to the reader's advantage that there is less to wade through in the translation section of new publications. Although 'The Ambassador' is among the few options, it is among the best, as well as a healthy alternative to the predominance of crime fiction in translation. To be sure, 'The Ambassador' may require the reader to do a little of her own detective work by way of contextualisation, but hardly more than what a little Wikipedia search—that modern-day inheritor of "the association of ideas" theory put into practice—can't handle 🍷

✍ ALDA KRAVEC

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

commercialisation, even though there were few of these left in the country at the time.

Unlike other troubadours, who often may appear as white or dark knights, Megas always plays the part of the joker, pointing out faults but rarely proposing solutions. His songs are often socio-critical but rarely political. His sympathies lie with the freaks, the outsiders and the bums, and he sometimes seems to oppose all groups and organisations equally.

His career is never predictable, except perhaps in its unpredictability. Every time he has some inkling of commercial success, he always takes a step back and goes in a different direction, as he seems to be doing right now. After the comeback success of 2008, who would have thought his next move would be a team up with old friends and

drinking buddies Gylfi and Rúnar, both long out of the limelight?

REVOLUTIONARIES AND CYNICS

Megas largely managed to preserve his sanity through the general craziness of the boom, and his analysis in a Grapevine interview from 2003 (when the gold rush was really taking off), is as sharp as any:

"Poverty is increasing. People are fooled with a carrot called "good times are coming," so they invest heavily and unsoundly. Everyone becomes heavily in debt, and has no choice but to continue being where they are, doing the jobs they do. It was the same in the old farming society when people were literally banned from moving about.

Nero and Caligula were both men who were reasonably sane before they came to power, but then suddenly become raving mad. A bit like Icelanders. In most countries, it takes absolute pow-

er to corrupt absolutely, but here a little power is enough... these men would sell their own grandmother, but not even hand her over once they had gotten the money, and then sell her over and over again."

This, in fact, is more or less exactly what was going on in Iceland, though few at the time could see it.

His solution: "You can try to express your opinions as clearly as possible, and give those who are still struggling ideological weapons... but the good guys are always by nature weaker than the bad. The victory of good is never more than symbolic, and then only in retrospect."

There is a lot to this. Höður, however, would probably disagree. His approach is more direct, and a good thing it is too. We need our white knights as well as our jokers. 🍷

✍ VALUR GUNNARSSON

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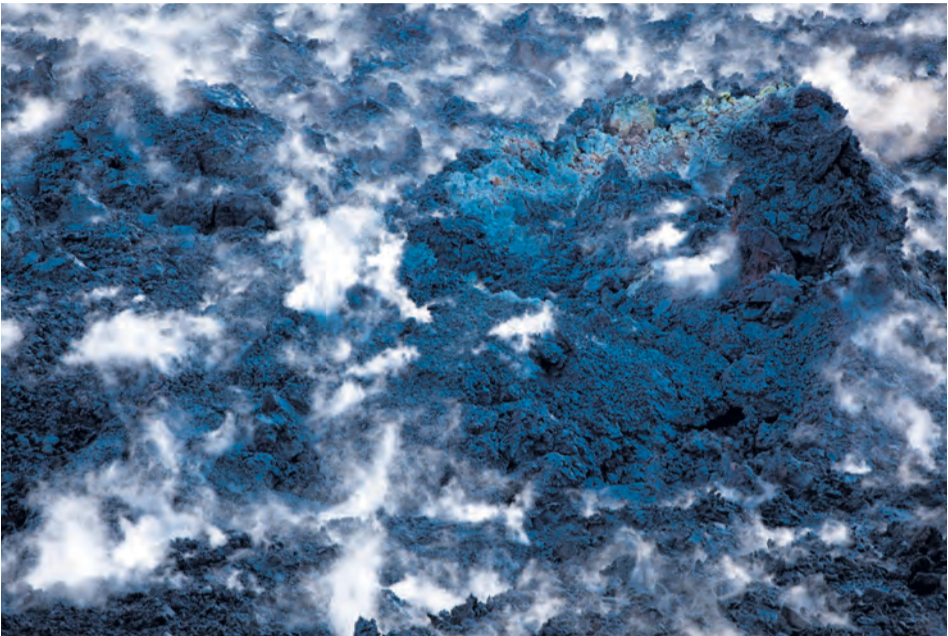
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Beautiful As Hell

Hiking up to the scenery of the latest volcanic eruptions



Words
[Wiebke Wolter](#)

Photography
www.ellithor.com

“One had brought sausages he cooked by holding them over the glowing lava. When someone shouted: 'It smells like burning tire', everyone checked their soles...

Jumping up and down, we cross rivers on our four-wheel drive jeep, the majestic Mýrdalsjökull glacier on the right, the sublime Eyjafjallajökull right in front of us and the sun showing off with perfect autumn morning light. We drove through Þórsmörk on our way to hike the volcano.

Taking the first steps towards the mountaintop, we learned about the two phases of the Eyjafjallajökull eruption last year. The second phase was the one everyone will remember for a long time, the one that produced the huge ash cloud and created the highest level of air travel disruption since World War II. The first eruption on the other hand wasn't that interesting to the rest of the world. It formed a huge fissure with several craters in the middle of the two glaciers Mýrdalsjökull and Eyjafjallajökull. This ridge is called Fimmvörðuháls, and is exactly the place we were heading to.

OUT OF BREATH
Walking the first fifteen minutes, it was already clear that this trip would not be like a stroll in the park. The narrow paths with steep slopes to both sides are

likely to cause vertigo. Having to get over about 1.000 metres of difference in altitude, we were already out of breath after a little while walking up the strong ascent. But after a while, we got in the groove and were able to enjoy the amazing nature around us: glacier to both sides, a river below us, moss covered mountains, caves made of lava from earlier eruptions and shrubs in autumnal colours from yellow to red. After two hours and a lot of sweating and puffing, we arrived at a plateau and had a well-earned lunch looking at the huge cooled-down lava flow meandering down the mountain. The guide pointed up to a black peak up there somewhere in the distance and said this is the crater we need to get to. The next hour of pushing us up the mountain was hard. Our legs felt heavy and we were intimidated by the steep ascent ahead.

When we took the last bend and suddenly stood in front of the crater, the challenging climb was totally worth it, and the tired legs forgotten. I wasn't aware that we were actually allowed to walk ON the lava, but indeed there is a marked trail on the cooled lava flow. We found ourselves in the middle of a devil's

kitchen: steam everywhere and below us in one crack we actually saw red glowing lava. And all of this with the sublime glaciers in the background. It's ice and fire, the two strongest forces of nature combined in one spot. Amazing!

On top of the crater it felt a little bit like being at the Costa Brava in summer: It was quite warm, and quite 'crowded'. Which is to say: we met other people. Until then, it had just been us, five hikers from five different European countries. Up there in the warm Spanish-like breeze, we met some Icelanders. One had brought sausages he cooked by holding them over the glowing lava. When someone shouted: 'It smells like burning tire', everyone checked their soles, but it was the plastic bottom of a photographer's tripod that was melting...

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER
After this sociable intermezzo we summoned enough courage to walk up the next crater, balancing our way across very narrow paths. Then it was time to go down again. The first stage was mostly going down through black sand-like ashes; it felt a little bit



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Your Holiday-Looking-At-Aurora-Borealis Tips



like going down a sand dune by the ocean. And then it was just walking, walking, walking down the same way we went up before. Every one of us was silently enjoying the nature around and watching their steps on our fast way down. After about two hours of descent in the late afternoon sun, we found ourselves at the car again. Tired but happy, after almost seven hours of intense hiking.

This twelve hour trip—about five hours of driving and seven hours of hiking—is provided by Adventures. is. The trip, including guide and a small lunch, costs 30.990 ISK. You can hike up Fimmvörðuháls on your own also, but having to cross rivers with a car and then walk on a dangerous fire spitting volcano we strongly recommend you to go up there with a guide.



Hi everyone! Welcome to your holiday trip to Iceland! We know that you really only came here to avoid your family and watch TV in your hotel room, but surely you must have some trips planned too, right? There's a whole country out there just waiting to be explored and conquered by excited holiday tourists!

Now. We have no idea what sort of trip you're interested in. But if you need ideas you can start by reading about the Eyjafjallajökull hike on your left. Not interested? Well, then we advise you to head on over to <http://www.grapevine.is> and feast on our travel section. There's lots of informative articles about exciting trips there. Also talk to the tourist information centres. They've got info about everything, and they can probably book your trip too.

Now, if you have no idea what to do, might we suggest trying to find some Aurora Borealis to look at? Everybody loves Aurora Borealis (also known as Northern Lights); they look really cool and most of your friends probably haven't seen them. Spotting Aurora can be as easy as tilting your head upwards, but if you've done that repeatedly without any results, we've got some tips. Read on!

Now, the first thing you need to realise when it comes to Aurora Borealis and the viewing of which in Iceland (or anywhere, for that matter) is that there are no guarantees. In fact, you probably won't see

them. Or you might. Who knows! In any case, there is no precise way of predicting where and when Aurora will appear, so it cannot be guaranteed.

However, just like in Dick Cheney's world, there are known unknowns and unknown unknowns—as well as known knowns—to take into consideration when one seeks the viewing of Aurora Borealis in Iceland. Here are some of the known knowns:

You will not see them during summer. Optimal viewing time is between September and March (approximately).

You can indeed observe Aurora Borealis from cities, like Reykjavík, but light pollution will render all but the strongest instances of it damn near invisible. So you can stay in town and hope for the best (an intense case of Aurora), or you can venture outside of Reykjavík and increase your odds of spotting the elusive natural phenomenon.

Anywhere away from intense electric light pollution is suitable, really. A thirty-minute drive away from Reykjavík is often enough.

Cold, crisp, clear nights are the best. If it's cloudy, you won't see a thing (obviously), so check the weather conditions of whatever out-of-town destination you have in mind for Aurora-watching. Keep in mind that it's also nice if the weather is sort of calm-ish. You'll want to stand outside and gaze in amazement

at the Aurora, and it's better if you're not thrown over by a gust of wind whilst you're doing it.

There are organised 'Aurora-spotting' tours that go from Reykjavík. Downside: they can't guarantee your seeing them. Upside: you'll have an experienced driver and guide that takes you around looking for Aurora, and you'll be reimbursed (or get another attempt for free - I forget (or it might depend on the tour provider) if you don't see anything.

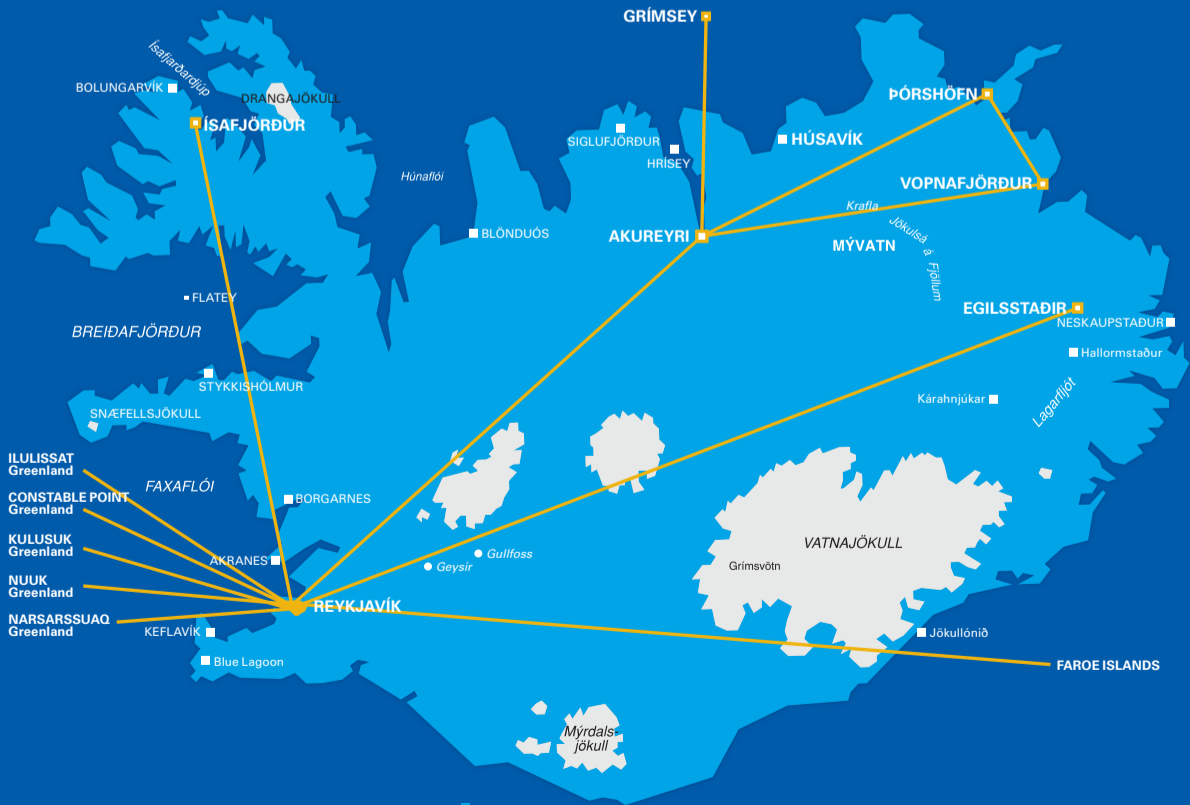
Natural hot pots and geothermal pools line the Icelandic countryside. These are excellent places for Aurora-spotting for obvious reasons, especially since OPTIMAL AURORA VIEWING CONDITIONS will mean that it's really cold out. Get yourself a copy of the excellent 'Thermal Pools In Iceland' (2010, Skrudda. Available at the next bookstore) and plan your trip accordingly.

My personal favourite place for viewing Aurora Borealis is a small resort called Reykjanes, on the West Fjords. If you wish to find out why, try googling "Experiencing Aurora Borealis Underwater" (with the quotation marks). I wrote that article about it way back in 2006, long before Iceland and myself lost our faith and innocence. The pool's since been renovated, but it's still good.

HAUKUR S. MAGNÚSSON
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Christmas and the Lazy Boyfriend

Psychologist Paola Cardenas answers your dilemmas

 Christmas brings to many of us happy childhood memories of time spent with family and friends, Christmas gifts and winter vacation. Winter would probably be difficult to bear if we did not have Christmas to look forward to with all the additional stuff that makes this time of the year extra merry and jolly. Christmas is the perfect time to eat, shop, think about family, remember the past, make New Year's resolutions, share time with those we love, drink Christmas beer, mumble Christmas songs, decorate the home and behave like kids.

Lights and Christmas decorations, classic Christmas songs, gingerbread cookies and the good old Santa dressed in his classic red and white suit are all essential during this time of the year. Here in Iceland, children have a lot to look forward to during the holidays, with the Icelandic Santas bringing them presents for 13 consecutive nights including Christmas night. But let's face it, Christmas is not a jolly time for everyone and for some it can be quite stressful and even dreadful so here are a few tips to make this time of the year a bit more bearable:

- Make it simple,** you don't need a Christmas tree and just a few Christmas lights can be enough to get your home ready for the holidays.
- Enjoy the food;** remember that this is a once a year event and smoked lamb is really not that bad.
- Try all the different Christmas beers;** some of them can be quite good.
- Shop early and avoid the Christmas rush.**
- Don't spend too much;** candles and playing cards are considered traditional Icelandic Christmas presents.
- Be creative;** this is the perfect time to show off how creative you are by making Christmas cards and presents yourself.
- Enjoy the free time from work.**
- And last but not least, **give yourself a present;** and if you don't like presents, you can donate to a charity.

But enough of Christmas, here are your dilemmas and my answers to them.

My boyfriend does not do anything at home and this is really getting on my nerves. We have been together for four years and he has NEVER washed his clothes and has once cleaned the toilet. My dilemma is... Is he just plain lazy, or is this just a guy thing?

Well, you sound upset, and I guess it is understandable considering the time and effort involved in taking care of a home. Very few men are raised to be fully responsible for household chores, and many men consciously or unconsciously look at housework as "women's work". Current research has sadly shown that on average, girls spend more hours each week doing housework than boys and that boys are more likely to be paid for their work than girls. This data are quite upsetting considering the fact that we women work as hard outside the home as men do. So the fact that he does not do housework does not necessarily mean that he is lazy, but just a guy. On the other hand, most men will readily do some garden work, wash and maintain the household car and make repairs around the home. To them, these projects count as much as housework and are more stereotypical "men's work."

As with every couple's dispute, communication is an important step in solving conflict. Firstly, you need to tell your man how you feel; and secondly, he might need encouragement to become more involved at home. You can start by telling him how his inactivity troubles you and how pleased you would be if he did more housework. Next, you can make a schedule together and divide between the two of you the different housework that needs to be done. One important thing to have in mind is to try not to put down or criticise your man for the mistakes he does or for what he fails to do. Rather praise him for what he does well, and build on that.

One last thing, if this advice does not work, stop washing his socks and underwear and see what happens.

Need some help solving your dilemmas? Ask Paola by sending your questions to: askpaolasala@gmail.com

PAOLA CARDENAS

That guy, Bobby Conn, is playing Venue TONIGHT! Hurry and go see him, He'll be giving out hugs!



Not Your Conventional Rock Star...

Bobby Conn Rises Up In Iceland

If there's one word that certainly doesn't describe Bobby Conn, it's ordinary. A collaborator with the likes of Jim O'Rourke and The Crips, the Chicago musician is known for his flamboyant style, manic stage shows and glam rock/disco tinged songs about Jesus Christ on crack, Tom Cruise and the Iraq war. And he's coming to Iceland on his European 'Rise Up' tour. The Grapevine managed to lob some questions at him when he was at a service station somewhere on the Autobahn...

You're currently touring Europe to help promote the re-issue of your first two albums ('Bobby Conn' and 'Rise Up!'). What was the motivation for getting them released again?

It was Fire Records idea, but as I listened to both records again in view of what has happened in the world and in the US over the past ten years I realised, "I was right!" I predicted the economic crash based on unlimited easy credit (my 'Continuous Ca\$h Flow System (TM)'). I predicted the rise of the Christian right in US politics. And I predicted the wars of paranoia we're engaged in as a means to preserve the relevance of our empire. I'm a goddamn Nostradamus and I want some credit for it! So it's nice that the records, even after twelve years, are still lyrically current.

While listening to those first two albums, there are so many '70s influences in there, from glam rock to Philly soul. Is there a specific love for that period, or does other music bore you incessantly?

I'm really interested in the power of nostalgia, especially now that all creative work is understood via reference to the past. It's as if everyone in Western culture suddenly became students of French semiotics without realising it. But leaving the metaphysics aside, yes, I love the '70s. It's a time that balanced experimentalism with big budget ambition and still had a basis in songwriting and musicianship. There's plenty to like nowadays, but in terms of really interesting songwriting that kind of died in the early '80s.

Back in the '90s, you were known for saying some pretty far out shit in press releases and interviews (you were the Antichrist, that you'd been in a federal prison, etc). Were you amazed at how much you could spin about yourself and get away with it? And how do you look back on those times?

To be honest (ha!), I was mainly enjoying

"I write about the dear old US of A because I can't write a love song without getting hideously embarrassed and I've no reason to write many 'she done me wrong' songs. So that leaves politics and religion for me."

the novelty of getting any attention. After the first couple of interviews I really got bored of answering the same questions; I realised that 'music journalism' is a bit of a joke and that writers were not as much interested in the absolute truth as getting entertaining quotes into their feature. I'm not sure why anyone should trust anything I say; my music reveals a higher truth. If that seems bitter and pretentious, just imagine how you'd feel if you turned out not to be the Antichrist after so much hype.

Your albums often contain socially conscious yet paranoid views of the USA. Considering the 'interesting' times the country is experiencing right now, do socially conscious singers need to start making a comeback?

I write about the dear old US of A because I can't write a love song without getting hideously embarrassed and I've no reason to write many 'she done me wrong' songs. So that leaves politics and religion for me. I can't speak for what other folks should sing about; I have no illusions that what I'm doing extends beyond entertainment. If people find inspiration and do some thinking as a result of my work, that's great, but that's just the frosting of a delicious cake of plutonium for all to enjoy.

Your tour takes in the likes of Germany, Italy, France the UK... and Iceland. What possessed you to come and play up here?

I want to eat some really fresh fish and smell a volcano. The kids want to be closer to Santa Claus.

OK, now the hard sell time. People will be reading this and thinking "He sounds cool, but I don't know..." Tell them EXACTLY why they should attend a concert by your good self. Don't be shy now...

If anyone has read this far, I congratulate you. I am a prophet. I have invest-

ment advice encoded into my songs that will make anyone who listens tons of money on the market. You will dance and you will cry. I will rip your head off with my guitar and Monica BouBou will hypnotize you with her violin. I WILL be giving out hugs. You WILL be sweaty. We're all gonna have a really good time. Plus, what else is there to do?

Info & Links

Bobby Conn will be playing at Bakkkus Bar on Dec 3rd and 4th. Tickets cost 1.500 ISK

www.myspace.com/bobbyconn

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This Is Your Brain On Crack Cocaine

Each year, for about eight weeks, Icelandic book culture loses its cool and turns into a crazed media circus. When the clock strikes ‘October’ literature suddenly gets two-handedly drowned, literally strangled, with attention—having been mostly ignored or patronizingly shrugged off for the previous 43 weeks of the year (the final, remaining week, the last week of the year, is kept free for actually reading books). All of a sudden, as if somebody snapped their fingers, literature becomes important enough to warrant a series of author-interviews, book-reviews, the incessant parlour games of ‘best cover’ and ‘best title’, and the motormouthed drivél of ‘the author’s favourite recipe’ and ‘fifteen personal questions’. Automatic for the people, indeed.

All of this is performed in the rising harmony of what has been termed “the inflation of adjectives”, with books being judged as either “a superb piece of unparalleled genius” or “an utterly immoral diatribe which might have been worth reading were it not also death-defyingly boring.” Granted, there are varying degrees of poetic ecstasy and abject dismissal, but what remains is that the only question ever asked—in book reviews or among authors or readers—is: “is it any good?”

Now, given how many books are published in these eight weeks—this year 85 novels were published, 747 titles counting all genres of ‘book’—this approach to literature is hardly surprising. Reading and contemplating 85 books in eight weeks isn’t just impossible, it’s the dumbest thing you could attempt, as you’d probably get none of all of them and gain nothing but lost time. Therefore we try to figure out which books we should try before we approach them—to spare us the marathonian stupidity of trying to gobble up the entire universe in one swallow. But by doing this, notwithstanding all our honourable intentions, we turn literature into a competitive sport and authors into racehorses.

To further simplify the enormous task of sifting through a great body of literature in a manner of no time and no patience, we’ve abandoned the more complicated (and time-consuming) philosophical approach to literature, and replaced it with a culture of grading and gossip. The literati (popular and/or intellectual) seems almost exclusively interested in finding out where a piece of literature belongs on a scale of 1–10, discarding its ideas, its message or even its beauty (evident in the tradition of judging books on a sliding scale according to genre—for instance not putting any stress on the text in a suspense thriller) as irrelevant.

The argument for this ludicrous race is that without it Icelandic literature wouldn’t survive—financially—as people wouldn’t buy enough books to keep the industry afloat if they weren’t culturally required to educate their friends and relatives through the obligatory gift of literature, force-feeding them reading materials in fancy packaging. Intriguingly, it is ritually maintained in political speeches that Icelanders are a reading nation, while the fact that very few people buy books for themselves remains undiscussed.

Some people, of course, enjoy the excitement of the Christmas book-flood. I’m being a bit of a fuddy-duddy, honestly. Irritability towards this phenomenon is hardly news. And I can understand why people enjoy the flood—all of a sudden authors and (at least in a sense) their books are put in the lime-light—with all its glitz and glamour, fun and games, rivalries, beautiful heroes and horrifying foes—and I won’t deny that it can be pleasurable and exhilarating, for writers and readers alike. But evidently, so is crack cocaine. 🍵

Political Persecution: Setting Examples

December 8 marks the two-year anniversary of an event that was later turned into a textbook example of political persecution. Thirty people tried to enter the public benches of Iceland’s Parliament but were stopped by guards and police. For almost a year now, nine of those thirty—myself included—have been threatened with between one and sixteen years in prison for supposedly “attacking” the parliament.

In between the event itself and the start of the court case, the nine of us—often referred to as the Reykjavík 9—were part of a historical resistance movement that, among other things, achieved toppling a government in January 2009. Forced to recognise the legitimacy of these protests, the heads of the current system also need to make sure that bringing down governments or any acts of that kind does not get normalised. To maintain ruling order, every resistance movement, successful or not, has to be punished. An example has to be set.

This is nothing new. Similar cases are happening everywhere around the planet, and have been throughout history. Only a week ago, two women were sentenced in Denmark for “organising and encouraging sabotage and violence against the police” during the UN Climate Summit in Copenhagen in December of last year. Thousands of people took to the streets during the summit and protested against green capitalist solutions, but not a single person has been accused for executing the women’s alleged plans. In the US, one man is facing a prison sentence of up to 21 years for alleged property destruction and concealing his identity during a mass protest against World Bank and the IMF in Washington D.C., April 2009. And soon Greece will see four people—the Thessaloniki 4—showing up in court for their participation in resisting the 2003 EU Summit in Thessaloniki, facing between four and eight years in prison for “distinguished and repeated rebellion”.

Just like the thousands who protested in Copen-

hagen, Washington, Thessaloniki or anywhere else, the movement that filled the streets of Iceland after the 2008 economic collapse was far from being united. Conflicts rose during that winter’s protests, about political aims and ideologies as well as tactics and strategies. But sharing at least one big common goal made the movement strong enough to leave the internal conflicts behind when needed and focus on getting rid of the right wing government in office at that time. What would come after the government’s collapse was a topic for discussion, or more honestly, another fight on a different battlefield. Some wanted a leftist government while others wanted radical system change or better yet, the dismantling of the system.

From those who were a part of this movement, the case against the Reykjavík 9 should be treated like the right wing government. Where one is located on the axis of minimal to radical—or pacifist to militant—does not alter the simple fact that political persecution is unjust. Entering the building where the state’s most powerful people are located and encouraging them to leave their seats of power can rightly be seen as an act of civil disobedience in a democratic society, as well as a living being’s natural reaction towards an oppressing and dominating, globally totalitarian system. Similarly, a prison sentence over people who dare to resist can be opposed from a variety of perspectives. The fact that we don’t all agree on how to categorise acts like this or court cases like aforementioned ones, does not stop us from uniting in resisting the oppression implied in these cases.

The court procedure will finally happen during three days in January, from the 18th to the 20th. The third day will mark another two year anniversary, this time of a series of protests that started with the destruction of a yellow police line distinguishing those who hold institutional power from those who do not, and did not come to an end until a common goal was accomplished.

By remembering these recent events and getting influenced by them, we are able to achieve amazing things. When it came to it, who had thought toppling a government was as easy as it was? 🍵

Baby Steps

Thoughts on the first Multicultural Conference

The first multicultural conference was held recently at the same time and on the same day as the National Assembly, where 1,200 people had been randomly selected to meet and discuss their values and their vision of the future of Iceland. Many attendees to the Multicultural Conference (myself included) were under the impression that this was a parallel event to equal out that “random selector”, which was likely accidentally set to choose those who were someone’s son or dóttir. Oops!

Strangely, the two were not connected. We know the current mayor and his staff are keen on us and perhaps they wanted to give us some hot soup and busy work to distract us from the harsh reality that we are not considered a part of the nation. On the

other hand, maybe they wanted to involve us in city’s affairs because that is what they have to work with. Either way we were grateful.

What are our Values?

Most Nordic countries have long since adopted strong societal positions on immigration which are still absent in Iceland. For example, in 2003, the government of Denmark adopted an action plan to combat racism and promote equal treatment and diversity. The list of services offered is long and comprehensive and can be studied further at www.nyidanmark.dk. They include three years of free Danish classes, a complaints committee to receive allegations of unequal treatment and a counselor to assist new citizens along their integration Denmark’s society. Iceland has none of these. The Danish initiative states: “There is room for diversity in Denmark and that we [should] learn to benefit from it.” Clear and strong objectives such as this are sorely needed here and perhaps developing these core values should be at the top of the “to-do” list for the newly elected counsel to the Human Rights

Committee.

Reciprocity

In attendance was social scientist Michael Schultz, a 30-year veteran of the International Red Cross in the humanitarian field who also worked as a humanitarian diplomat on migration issues, accredited to the U.N. in New York, and Geneva. He pointed out that, “Icelanders are themselves migrants who take ‘hospitality’ for granted when abroad but forget to ask themselves how they receive migrants at home. Aren’t there large diasporas in Canada and in DK and UK? Don’t Icelanders study in large numbers abroad? Don’t Icelanders now, as one result of [the financial crisis] seek jobs abroad by the thousands, in Norway and everywhere else? Wouldn’t it be appropriate to apply—as it were—a categorical imperative whereby one extends full reciprocity in terms of hospitality and even exceeds other countries’ hospitality should they fail as hosts?”

If we look to the Scandinavian model, where immigrants have a certain safety net of services which ease transition and integration, we can avoid a fu-

ture where large groups of people feel marginalised and ignored for long periods of time, which leads to anger and unrest. We want to develop our values now because the current status will not work for much longer.

It has long been the unspoken rule in Iceland that one must assimilate or die trying. It is unrealistic to continue with the attitude that those who can leave their culture, religion, and customs at the border and become Icelandic. We must allow people to maintain aspects of their culture while forming a pluralistic nation state where diversity is looked upon as an asset and not, “the immigrant problem.” Economically, artistically, and culturally Iceland needs its foreign-born citizens. Moreover, those citizens need to now take part in the political arena of Iceland in order to ensure that we have a hand at designing and rebuilding our society. 🍵

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PAGE 22

All of this is performed in the rising harmony of what has been termed “the inflation of adjectives”, with books being judged as either “a superb piece of unparalleled genius” or “an utterly immoral diatribe which might have been worth reading were it not also death-defyingly boring.”

That Christmas flood of books sure is something, eh?

PAGE 12

The suppliers are few and in a powerful position in relation to the producers. There has been a monopolistic trend

Ólafur Dýrmundsson of the Farmers' Association ponders the reasons for Iceland's high vegetable prices

PAGE 8

I was going to a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a doctor, a shaman, and I was doing sweats just to try and figure it all out, and then at the beginning of this year, I figured it out and it was like coming out of a cocoon... and that's when the double rainbow came, and it was like: I understand and I caught it all on video!

The double rainbow guy was here!

PAGE 22

Entering the building where the state's most powerful people are located and encouraging them to leave their seats of power can rightly be seen as an act of civil disobedience in a democratic society.

The Reykjavík 9 are going on trial for our sins

PAGE 13

You can try to express your opinions as clearly as possible, and give those who are still struggling ideological weapons... but the good guys are always by nature weaker than the bad. The victory of good is never more than symbolic, and then only in retrospect.

We sure wish Megas wasn't always right about everything



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Issue 18 - 2010

www.grapevine.is



NASA
Thursday, December 9, 21:00
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Apparat Organ Quartet
Album Release Concert

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CHRISTMAS



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

3 FRI

B5
22:00 DJ Leifur
Bakkus/Venue
22:00 RISE UP! Bobby Conn (USA),
Bárujárn, DJ KGB
Boston
22:00 Gísli Galdur
Café Oliver
22:00 DJ Maggi and Brynar. Girls
night
Café Rosenberg
22:00 Þórunn Pálína. Tóta Jazz
Celtic Cross
22:00 Live music
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music. Sing along night
Dubliner
22:00 Live music
English Pub
17:00 Live music
Esja
22:00 DJ Daddi and DJ Mastermix
Faktorý
22:00 Vax
Gerðuberg
12:15 Classical music for lunch
Hemmi og Valdi
Wicked Weekend Festival
19:00 Elín Ey
20:00 Kidrama
21:00 Reason to believe
22:00 Monsoon Drive
23:00 PORQUESI
24:00 Agent Fresco
01:00 DJ Sexy Lazer
Free. Beer offers until 20:00
Highlander
22:00 Chill out DJ's
Hressó
22:00 Dalton followed by DJFlóvent
Hverfisbarinn
22:00 Funky Friday: Soul, hip hop, funk
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Agent Fresco, Æla and Árni
Sveinsson
Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live
Performance by top Icelandic artists
P Bar
16:30-20:00 Happy Hour
20:00 Lounge Friday
Prikið
21:00 Þórður the accordionist
followed by DJ Addi Intro
Risið
22:00 Positive Vibrations. Reggae, soul,
funk.
Beer 500ISK
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Live DJ
Vegamót
22:00 Live DJ

4 SAT

Austur
22:00 Live DJ
B5
22:00 DJ Símon
Bakkus/Venue

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22:00 RISE UP! Bobby Conn (USA),
Bárujárn, DJ Unnur Andrea
Boston
22:00 Maggi Legó
Café Oliver
22:00 DJ Maggi and Brynar. Girls
night
Café Rosenberg
22:00 Sans
Celtic Cross
22:00 Live music
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music and sing-along night
Dubliner
22:00 Live music
Esja
22:00 DJ Daddi and DJ Mastermix
English Pub
22:00 Live music
Faktorý
22:00 Dr Spock followed by DJ KGB
Hemmi og Valdi
15:00 Concert: Ellen Kristjáns &
Pétur Hallgríms
18:00 Soffía Björg og band
19:00 Ylja
20:00 Original Melody
21:00 The PLX
22:00 The Fist Fokkers
23:00 Forgotten Lores
24:00 Maxe and the crackers
01:00 DJ Moonshine
Free. Beer offers until 20:00

Havará
16:30 Ensími
Highlander
22:00 Chill out DJ's
Hressó
22:00 Heiður Troubadour followed by
DJ Fúsi
Hverfisbarinn
DJs playing hip hop, R&B, house and
funk until the morning
Kaffibarinn
22:00 DJ Kári. Gullfoss & Geysir 10th
Birthday Party
NASA
21:00 Geimsteinn Records night.
Featuring Deep Jimi and the Zep
Creams, Klassart, Selma Bjorn and
more
Nema Forum
16:00 Melchior. Concert and talk with
the band
Nordic House
12:34 Christmas Countdown. Live
Performance by top Icelandic artists
P Bar
21:00 Lounge Saturday
Prikið
22:00 DJ Krúsi
Restaurant Reykjavík
20:00 Let's Talk Christmas. Comedy
Show. 2200ISK
Sódóma
21:00 S.H Draumur
2200ISK
Tjarnarbíó
20:00 The Bad Livers and Broken
Hearts. Tom Waits Tribute
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Live DJ
Vegamót
22:00 Live DJ

5 SUN

Bakkus/Venue
Country and Whiskey!: Select whiskey
and Guinness 600isk
Café Oliver
22:00 Live music
Café Rosenberg

22:00 Poetry and music
Celtic Cross
22:00 Live music
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music
Dubliner
22:00 Live music
English Pub
22:00 Live music
Gerðuberg
13:15 Classical music for lunch
Hemmi og Valdi
19:00 Myrra Rós
20:00 1860
21:00 Karlakór Kaffibarsins (open
rehearsal)
22:00 Lifun
23:00 Beatmakin Troopa
Free. Beer offers until 20:00
Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live Perfor-
mance by top Icelandic artists
Prikið
22:00 Hangover Movie Night: Naked
Gun with Leslie Nilsen. Popcorn
and cola special
Restaurant Reykjavík
20:00 Let's Talk Christmas. Comedy
Show
2200ISK
Salurinn, Kópavogur
13:00 Christmas recital
1500ISK

6 MON

Balthazar
Tango practica
Bakkus/Venue
21:00 Movie Night: Les Religions
Sauvages by Le Dernier Cri
Café Oliver
Live music by Raggi Troubadour.
Margarita Monday: 2 for 1 margaritas
Café Rosenberg
21:00 Blúsfélag Reykjavíkur. Blues
night
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music
Dubliner
22:00 Live music
English Pub
22:00 Live music
Kaffi Zimsen
Best friends day: Beer offer
Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live
Performance by top Icelandic artists
Prikið
21:00 The fortune teller. Red wine &
cheese for 2 at 1000ISK

7 TUE

Café Oliver
Live karaoke night
Café Rosenberg
21:00 Ellen Kristjáns. Release concert
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music & beer bingo
Dubliner
22:00 Live music
English Pub
22:00 Live music
Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live
Performance by top Icelandic artists
Prikið
21:00 Live DJ

8 WED

Austur
Live jazz groove

Music & Entertainment | Venue finder

Amsterdam Hafnarstræti 5 D2	Celtic Cross Þorvaldsenstræti 26 E4	NASA Þorvaldsenstræti 2 E3
Apótek Austurstræti 16 E3	Dillon Laugavegur 30 F5	Nýlenduvörurverzlun Hemma & Valda Laugavegur 21 E4
Austur Austurstræti 7 E3	Dubliner Hafnarstræti 4 D3	Næsti Bar Ingólfstræti 1A E3
B5 Bankastræti 5 E3	English Pub Austurstræti 12 D2	Óliver Laugavegur 20A F5
Babalú Skólavörðustigur 22 G5	Glaumbar Tryggvagata 20 D2	Ölstofan Vegamótastigur E4
Bar 11 Laugavegur 11 E4	Highlander Lækjargata 10 E3	Prikið Bankastræti E3
Barbara Laugavegur 22 F6	Hressó Austurstræti 20 E3	Rósenberg Klapparstígur 25 E4
Bjarni Fel Austurstræti 20 E3	Hverfisbarinn Hverfisgata 20 E4	Sódóma Reykjavík Tryggvagata 22 D3
Boston Laugavegur 28b F5	Jacobsen Austurstræti 9 E3	Sólón Bankastræti 7A E3
Café Cultura Hverfisgata 18 E4	Kaffi Zimsen Hafnarstræti 18 D3	Thorvaldsen Austurstræti 8 D2
Café Paris Austurstræti 14 E3	Kaffibarinn Bergstræðastræti 1 E4	Vegamót Vegamótastigur 4 E4
Balthazar Hafnarstræti 1-3 D2	Karamba Laugavegur 22 F4	Venue Tryggvagata 22 D3

Bakkus/Venue
DJ Frosti
Café Oliver
Live music
Café Rosenberg
21:00 South Riverband. Release concert
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music & pop-quiz
Dubliner
22:00 Live music
English Pub
22:00 Live music
Faktórý
20:00 Classic Pub Quiz
Kaffitár café
20:00 Tango Milonga
Kaffi Zimsen
Playday: Offers at the bar when the bells rings
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Extreme Chill: **Prins Valium, Beatmakin Troopa, DJ Andre, Árni Vector**
Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live Performance by top Icelandic artists
Prikið
21:00 DJ Moonshine and the One-Handed Elves
Restaurant Reykjavík
20:00 Let's Talk Christmas. Comedy Show. 2200ISK

THU

B5
22:00 Sjonni Brink and Vignir Snaer
Bakkus/Venue
22:00 DJ Einar Sonic
Boston
22:00 Frosti Gringó
Café Oliver
Ingo Weathergod
Café Rosenberg
22:00 Rásar 2. Lennon evening
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music
Dubliner
22:00 Live music
English Pub
22:00 Live music
Esja
Cosy Thursday
Faktórý
21:00 Stand Up
Hemmi and Valdi
22:00 Monsoon Drive & Epic Rain. Concert
Havari
21:00 Agent Fresco
Hressó
22:00 Böddi and Davíð
Nasa
21:00 Apparat Organ Quartet. Release concert
Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live Performance by top Icelandic artists
P Bar
18:00 Cocktail Thursday: 600ISK
Cocktails
Prikið
21:00 DJ Anna Brá
Sódóma
21:00 Ég and guests 1000ISK
Thorvaldson
20:30 Salsa Night

FRI

Austur
22:00 Live DJ
B5
22:00 DJ Símon
Bakkus/Venue
22:00 Della Rósa
Boston
22:00 DJ KGB
Café Oliver
22:00 DJ Maggi & Brynar Már. Girls Night
Café Rosenberg
22:00 Memfismafían. Release concert
Celtic Cross
22:00 Live music
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music & sing-along night
Dubliner
22:00 Live music
English Pub
17:00 Live music
Esja
22:00 DJ Daddi and DJ Mastermix
Faktórý
22:00 Record Records showcase followed by DJ Hunk of a Man
Gerðuberg
12:15 Classical music for lunch 20:30 Skyr Lee Bob Performance Trio. 2000ISK
Hemmi and Valdi
23:00 DJ Gaut
Highlander
22:00 Chill out DJs
Hressó
22:00 Penta followed by DJ Fúsi
Hverfisbarinn
22:00 Funky Friday: Old school funk and hip hop
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Alfons X
Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live

Performance by top Icelandic artists
P Bar
16:30 - 20:00 Happy Hour
20:00 Lounge Friday
Prikið
21:00 Þórður the accordionist followed by DJ Árni
Restaurant Reykjavík
20:00 Let's Talk Christmas. Comedy Show. 2200ISK
Salurinn
20:00 Stefán Hilmarsson and Egill Ólafsson sing classic songs by Sigfús'Fúsi' Halldórsson. 3500ISK
Sódóma
22:00 Myrká and guests

SAT

Austur
22:00 Live DJ
B5
22:00 DJ Leifur
Bakkus/Venue
21:00 Benni Hemm Hemm Album Release Concert with Retro Stefson, Prinspóló, Bárujárn and DJ Ófull 1000ISK Havari, 1500ISK at the door
Boston
22:00 Rósa
Café Oliver
22:00 DJ Maggi & Brynar Már. Girls Night
Café Rosenberg
22:00 Baggalútur. Christmas concert
Celtic Cross
22:00 Live music
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music & sing-along night
Dubliner
22:00 Live music
English Pub
22:00 Live music
Esja
22:00 DJ Daddi and DJ Mastermix
Faktórý
22:00 Record Records showcase followed by DJ
Gerðuberg
20:30 Skyr Lee Bob Performance Trio. 2000ISK
Hallgrímskirkja
14:00 Choral performances. Schola Cantorum, Choir Hallgrímskirkja, Motet Choir, The Reykjavík Boys Choir. 1000ISK
Havari
16:00 Benni Hemm Hemm 17:00 Morðingjarnir
Hemmi and Valdi
23:00 DJ Kári
Highlander
22:00 Chill out DJs
Hressó
22:00 Live music
Hverfisbarinn
DJs playing hip hop, R&B, house and funk until the morning
Kaffibarinn
22:00 FKNHNDSM presents My Cousin Roy (Wurst)
Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live Performance by top Icelandic artists
Prikið
22:00 DJ Gisli Galdur
Skífan
14:00 Live bands (TBA)
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Live DJ
Vegamót
22:00 Live DJ

SUN

Bakkus/Venue
Country and Whiskey!: Select whiskey and Guinness 600ISK
Café Oliver
22:00 Live music
Café Rosenberg
21:00 Jól Pálsson. Release concert
Celtic Cross
22:00 Live music
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music
Dubliner
22:00 Live music
English Pub
22:00 Live music
Gerðuberg
13:15 Classical music for lunch
Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live Performance by top Icelandic artists
Prikið
22:00 Hangover Movie Night: Death Becomes Her. Popcorn and cola special

MON

Balthazar
Tango practica
Bakkus/Venue
21:00 Bakkus movie night
Café Oliver
Live music by Raggi Troubadour. Margarita Monday: 2 for 1 margaritas.
Café Rosenberg
21:00 Þrjár Raddir and Beatur
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music
Dubliner
22:00 Live music

English Pub
22:00 Live music
Kaffi Zimsen
Best friends day: Beer offer
Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live Performance by top Icelandic artists
Prikið
21:00 The Fortune Teller followed by Óli Hjörtur. Red wine & cheese special
Sólon
20:00 Salsa Night

TUE

Café Oliver
Live karaoke night
Café Rosenberg
21:00 Borgardætur
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music & beer bingo
Dubliner
22:00 Live music
English Pub
22:00 Live music
Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live Performance by top Icelandic artists
Prikið
21:00 Live DJ

WED

Austur
Live jazz groove
Bakkus/Venue
21:00 Nonni and Manni christmas games delight!
Boston
22:00 Krummi
Café Rosenberg
21:00 Borgardætur
Faktórý
21:00 Stereo Hypnosis release concert
Hverfisbarinn
Live music. Special offers
Kaffitár café
20:00 Tango Milonga
Kaffi Zimsen
Playday: Offers at the bar when the bells rings
Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live Performance by top Icelandic artist
Prikið
21:00 DJ Árni Kacoon
Sódóma
21:00 The Third Sound and guests 1000ISK

THU

B5
22:00 Sjonni Brink and Hreimur
Bakkus/Venue
20:00 Dance of Defiance. DJ Manny plus special guest Daniel Ágúst
Boston
22:00 Andrea Jóns
Café Oliver
Ingo Weathergod
Café Rosenberg
21:00 Borgardætur
Esja
Jazz and funk
Faktórý
21:00 Gylfi Ægis
Havari
21:00 TBA
Hemmi and Valdi
21:00 Stand up Comedy. Ugla, Þórdís
Nadía, Saga and Gunnar
Hressó
22:00 Böddi and Davíð
Kaffitár café
20:00 Tango Milonga
Kaffi Zimsen
Playday: Offers at the bar when the bells rings
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Alfons X
Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live Performance by top Icelandic artists
Prikið
21:00 DJ Anna Rakel & Ýr
Sódóma
21:00 Stephen Brodsky (Cave In)

FRI

Austur
22:00 Live DJ
B5
22:00 DJ Einar and DJ Leifur
Bakkus/Venue
22:00 Kimi Records X-mas extravaganza. Lots of bands, DJ KGB
Boston
22:00 DJ Kári
Café Oliver
22:00 DJ Maggi & Brynar Már. Girls Night
Café Rosenberg
21:00 Borgardætur
Celtic Cross
22:00 Live music
Den Danske Kro

Den Danske Kro

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• Tuesdays •

Live music and Beer Bingo night

• Wednesdays •

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21:00 1000 kr

Dec 10

Myrká + guests

22:00

Dec 15

The Third Sound + guests

21:00 1000 kr

Dec 16

Stephen Brodsky (Cave In)

21:00

Dec 17

X977 - Annual XMAS Concert

20:00

Dec 18

STÓNS (The Rolling Stones Tribute),

22:00

Dec 21

Andkristnihátíð

21:00

Dec 23

Sódóma Acoustic

21:00

Sódóma Reykjavík Tryggvagata 22, 101 RVK

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Magic Thursdays


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Sjónarhorn / A Considered View

Ljósmyndir eftir Wayne Gudmundson / The photographs of Wayne Gudmundson

18 September 2010 – 9 January 2011




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ICELANDAIR



MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN DECEMBER

22:00 Live music. Sing-along night

Dubliner
22:00 Live music

English Pub
17:00 Live music

Esja
22:00 DJ Daddi and DJ Mastermix

Faktorj
22:00 Forgotten Lores and Dj from midnight

Gerðuberg
12:15 Classical music for lunch

Hemmi and Valdi
21:00 Grapevine Grassroots night.
23:00 DJ ákninn á Myrká

Highlander
22:00 Chill out DJs

Hressó
22:00 Jogvan and Vignir. Troubadours followed by DJ Elli

Hverfisbarinn
Funky Friday: Old school funk and hip hop

Kaffibarinn
22:00 Daddy's Weekend #8: Gísli Galdur & DJ Magic

Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live Performance by top Icelandic artists

P Bar
16:30 – 20:00 Happy Hour
20:00 Lounge Friday

Prikið
21:00 Þórður the accordionist followed by DJ Moonshine

Salurinn, Kópavogur
19:00 Final of the F. Chopin music competition. Free

Skífan
14:00 Live bands (TBA)

Sódóma
20:00 X977 – Annual Christmas Concert

Thorvaldsen
22:00 Live DJ

Vegamót
22:00 Live DJ

18 SAT

Austur
22:00 Live DJ

B5
22:00 DJ Jóhann Valur

Bakkus/Venue
22:00 DJ Kári

Boston
22:00 Unnur Andrea

Café Oliver
22:00 DJ Maggi & Brynar Már. Girls Night

Café Rosenberg
21:00 Borgardætur

Celtic Cross
22:00 Live music

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music. Sing-along night

Dubliner
22:00 Live music

English Pub
22:00 Live music

Esja
22:00 DJ Daddi and DJ Mastermix

Faktorj
22:00 Orphic Oxta release concert + Dj from midnight

Havari
16:00 Hudson Wayne
17:00 TBA

Hemmi and Valdi
23:00 Futuregrapher. DJ set

Highlander
22:00 Chill out DJs

Hressó
22:00 Mars

19 SUN

Áskirkja, Vesturbrún 104
17:00 Reykjavík Chamber Orchestra. Christmas concert. 2500ISK

Bakkus/Venue
22:00 Country and Whiskey!: Select whiskey and Guinness 600isk

Café Oliver
Live music

Café Rosenberg
22:00 Anna Mjöll

Celtic Cross
22:00 Live music

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music

Dubliner
22:00 Live music

English Pub
22:00 Live music

Gerðuberg
13:15 Classical music for lunch

Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live Performance by top Icelandic artists

Prikið
22:00 Hangover Movie Night: Scrooge with Bill Murray. Popcorn and cola special

Salurinn
16:00 Christmas Concert
2900ISK

20 MON

Balthazar
Tango practica

Bakkus/Venue
21:00 Bakkus movie night

Café Oliver
Live music by Raggi Troubadour. Margarita Monday: 2 for 1 margaritas

Café Rosenberg
21:00 Rebekku Alwood

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music

Dubliner
22:00 Live music

English Pub
22:00 Live music

Kaffi Zimsen
Best friends day: Beer offer

Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live Performance by top Icelandic artists

Prikið
21:00 DJ Jeff and The fortune teller. Red wine & cheese special

Sólon
20:00 Salsa Night

21 TUE

Bakkus/Venue
21:00 Foosball Championships.

Café Oliver
Live karaoke night

Café Rosenberg
21:00 Bryndís and Kristín Arna and Band. Christmas concert

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music & beer bingo

Dubliner
22:00 Live music

English Pub
22:00 Live music

Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live Performance by top Icelandic artists

Prikið
21:00 Christmas tunes with the house DJ

Sódóma
21:00 Andkristnihátíð

22 WED

Austur
Live jazz groove

Bakkus/Venue
21:00 Óli Dóri

Boston
22:00 Mike from RATATAT

Café Rosenberg
21:00 Silfurberg. Christmas concert

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music & pop-quiz

Dubliner
22:00 Live music

English Pub
22:00 Live music

Faktorj
20:00 Classic Pub Quiz

Hverfisbarinn
Live music and special offers

Hemmi and Valdi
22:00 1860. Concert

Kaffitár café
20:00 Tango Milonga

Kaffi Zimsen
Playday: Offers at the bar when the bells rings

Kaffibarinn
22:00 Extreme Chill Vol. 8 Release Party: Jafet Melge, Beatmakin Troopa, DJ Andre & special guest

Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live Performance by top Icelandic artists

Prikið
21:00 Christmas cheer with Addi the little Santa Clau

Thorvaldsen
Salsa Night

23 THU

B5
22:00 Sjonni Brink and Vignir Snær

Bakkus/Venue
22:00 Einar Sonic

Boston
22:00 DJ Kári

Café Oliver
Ingo Weathergod

Café Rosenberg
21:00 Silfurberg. Christmas concert

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music

Dubliner
22:00 Live music

English Pub
22:00 Live music

Esja
21:30 Helga Möller. Christmas concert

Faktorj
19:00 Christmas chess tournament
21:00 Classic Pub Quiz

Hemmi and Valdi
15:00 Christmas concert

Hressó
22:00 Jogvan and Vignir. Troubadours

Kaffibarinn
22:00 HalliValli

Kaffi Zimsen
Ólafsvaka: Beer offer

Nordic House
12:34 Christmas countdown. Live Performance by top Icelandic artists

Prikið
21:00 Þorláksmessa with DJ Danni Deluxe

P
Cocktail Thursday: Cocktails 600ISK

Sódóma
21:00 Sódóma Acoustic

Thorvaldsen
20:30 Salsa Night

24 FRI

Good luck!

25 SAT

Good luck!

26 SUN

Bakkus/Venue
22:00 DJ Ofull

Boston
22:00 Unnur Andrea

Celtic Cross
22:00 Live music

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music

Dubliner
22:00 Live music

English Pub
Live music. Opens 12:00

Hressó
23:00 Dalton

Prikið
22:00 DJ Gísli Galdur
Open 12:00

27 MON

Balthazar
Tango practica

Bakkus/Venue
21:00 Bakkus movie night

Café Oliver
Live music by Raggi Troubadour. Margarita Monday: 2 for 1 margaritas

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music

Dubliner
22:00 Live music

English Pub
22:00 Live music

Kaffi Zimsen
Best friends day: Beer offer

Prikið
21:00 The fortune teller. Red wine & cheese for 2 at 1000ISK

28 TUE

Café Oliver
Live karaoke night

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live music & beer bingo

Dubliner
22:00 Live music

English Pub
22:00 Live music

Prikið
21:00 Live DJ

Salurinn
20:00 Guðrún Gunnar and Orchestra
3500ISK

29 WED

Austur
Live jazz groove

Bakkus
22:00 DJ Cool in the Pool

Boston
22:00 Paul Weil

Café Rosenberg
21:00 Hreindís Ylva

Hallgrímskirkja
20:00 Rejoice at Christmas. Concert with Motet Choir with special guests. 3000ISK

Hverfisbarinn
Live music and special offers

Kaffi Zimsen
Playday: Offers at the bar when the bells rings

Prikið
21:00 DJ Krúsíðulla

30

THU

B5

22:00 Sjonni Brink and Hreimur Bakkus/Venue

22:00 Djöfullin er Danskur

Boston

22:00 Andrea Jóns

Café Rosenberg

22:00 Varsjárbandalagið (The Warsaw Pact)

Dubliner

22:00 Live music

English Pub

22:00 Live music

Hallgrímskirkja

20:00 Rejoice at Christmas. Concert with Motet hoir with special guests. 3000ISK

Hemmi and Valdi

22:00 Andvari & PORQUESI. Concert

Hressó

22:00 Böddi and Davíð Troubadours

Kaffi Zimsen

Ólafsvaka: Beer offer

P

18:00 Cocktail Thursday: Cocktails 600ISK

Prikið

21:00 Surprise Night

31

FRI

Austur

22:00 Live DJ

B5

22:00 DJ Jóhann Valur

Bakkus/Venue

New Years Eve with DJ KGB

Café Oliver

22:00 DJ Maggi & Brynar Már

Celtic Cross

22:00 Live music

Den Danske Kro

22:00 Live music & sing-along night

Dubliner

22:00 Live music

English Pub

17:00 Live music.Opens from 12:00

Esja

Goodbye 2010 party

Faktorý

DJ Logi Pedro and Retro Stefson DJ set

Gerðuberg

12:15 Classical music for lunch

Hverfisbarinn

New Years Eve Party

Kaffibarinn

New Years Eve Party

Prikið

New Years Eve Party

Thorvaldsen

Live DJ

Vegamót

Live DJ

1

SAT

B5

22:00 DJ Jónas

Bakkus/Venue

DJ Hunk of a Man

Café Oliver

22:00 DJ Maggi & Brynar Már. Girls Night

Celtic Cross

22:00 Live music

Den Danske Kro

22:00 Live music & sing-along night

Dubliner

22:00 Live music

English Pub

Live music. Opens from 12:00

Esja

Hello 2011 party

Highlander

22:00 Chill out DJs

Hressó

01:00 Double Trouble. New Years Eve party

Hverfisbarinn

Funky Friday: Old school funk and hip hop.

P

16:30 - 20:00 Happy Hour

20:00 Lounge Friday

2

SUN

Bakkus/Venue

22:00 Whiskey Sunday: Whiskey and Guinness 600ISK

Café Oliver

Live music

Celtic Cross

22:00 Live music

Den Danske Kro

22:00 Live music

Dubliner

22:00 Live music

English Pub

22:00 Live music

Gerðuberg

13:15 Classical music for lunch

Hressó

00:00 Live DJ

Prikið

22:00 Hangover Movie Night: Free Popcorn

Highlander

22:00 Chill out DJ's

3

MON

Austur

Live jazz groove

Café Oliver

Live music

Den Danske Kro

22:00 Live music & pop-quiz

Dubliner

22:00 Live music

English Pub

22:00 Live music

Kaffitár café

20:00 Tango Milonga

Kaffi Zimsen

Playday: Offers at the bar when the bells rings

4

TUE

Dubliner

22:00 Live music

English Pub

22:00 Live music

Kaffi Zimsen

Playday: Offers at the bar when the bells rings

5

WED

Bakkus/Venue

22:00 Two Step Horror

Café Oliver

Live music

Den Danske Kro

Live music & pop quiz

Dubliner

22:00 Live music

English Pub

22:00 Live music

Hressó

22:00 Troubadour

Kaffi Zimsen

Ólafsvaka: Beer offer

P

18:00 Cocktail Thursday

6

THU

Bakkus/Venue

21:00 Retro Stefson

Hressó

22:00 Troubadour followed by live DJ

Kaffi Zimsen

Playday: Offers at the bar when the bells rings

ONGOING

Restaurant Reykjavík
20:00 Let's Talk Christmas. Comedy Show. Nightly 2200ISK

Dance of Defiance

A public protest against the dying club scene
Bakkus

December 16, 20:00

Chicago-born DJ Manny, who established himself in the US rave and club scene in the mid 90s, has teamed up with Kitty Von-Sometime, creator of The Weird Girls Project and established DJ, to host a truly special event this month at Bakkus. Dance of Defiance is an interactive dance performance aimed at highlighting the decline of the dance floor community since the Kreppa took hold. Special guests will include Gus Gus and Ný Dönsk frontman Daniel Ágúst and more. Everyone's invited, tell your friends or send them to www.facebook.com/confluenceof-sound. Free of charge. **AK**



múm ON FILM!

múm video work exhibition

Kling & Bang gallery, Hverfisgata 42

December 10, 20:00

An exhibition of video work made to accompany the music of múm will be exhibited at Kling & Bang gallery over the weekend of December 12 – 14. The work is a collaboration between sisters Lilja Birgisdóttir and Ingibjörg Birgisdóttir, who have also made music videos and designed album covers for Seabear, and will be premiered with a concert by múm on Friday. The exhibition will be open the following weekend, daily between 14:00-18:00. (Also! Be sure to check out Kling & Bang's Christmas bazaar over the weekend of December 16th-19th. The Christmas spirit is free, apparently, but you have to pay for the art. Open Thu-Fri: 16:00-22:00 and Sat-Sun: 12:00-22:00) **VT**



Gingerbread House Competitions

Smáralind mall in Kópavogur will once again

play host to its annual gingerbread house competition and exhibition this year.

Smáralind, Kópavogur

December 2-20

The houses will be on display throughout the mall until December 20. Smáralind has been hosting this event for over two decades, and the various creations - from tropical to tropical - never fail to impress and amuse. Kringlan mall will also be hosting a gingerbread house competition geared towards young people up to 14 years of age. Entries will be accepted until December 10 and the best houses will be judged by Ríkka and Jói Fel on December 18. This will be followed by a public auction of the top houses, proceeds of which will go to Hringur Children's Hospital. **AK**

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MAP

Places We Like

1 Litla Jólábúðin

Laugavegur 8

Christmas store run year round. Established in a backyard on the little residential street of Grundarstígur in 2002, Litla Jólábúðin moved to Laugavegur a few years ago, but maintains a mom-and-pop store kind of feeling. Akureyri has Jólagarðurinn, Reykjavik has Jólábúðin. AK

2 Havarí

Austurstræti 8

Even before it opened, Havarí was everybody's favourite new music and design store. Headed by Svavar Pétur and Berglind of Skakkamanage, the shop shills the musical goods of Kimi Records, Borgin Hljómplötur, gogoyoko and Skakkapopp as well as posters, art, design products and clothing. CF

3 Barbara

Laugavegur 22

At Laugavegur 22, above Karamba, Barbara serves up a lively atmosphere for Reykjavík's gay community and anybody else who just wants to dance and have a good time. The first level is made for dancing and is often packed with sweaty bodies, while the second level of the bar offers a place to sit, drink and chat and another in which to smoke. CF

4 Vitabar

Bergþórugata 21

Located on the corner of Vitastígur and Bergþórugata, Vitabar (Lighthouse bar) is the place to go when your in the mood for a slightly soppy yet delicious burger served up with thick French fries and a little of that local pub feeling. In addition to their legendary Gleym-mér-ei (Forget-me-not) blue-cheese burger, they do steaks, egg burgers, beer and schnapps. Good service, fair prices. AK

5 Svarta Kaffi

Laugavegur 54

If you're looking for a hearty, warming lunch at good value then head down to this cosy café for a bowl of their yummy soup. Doing away with dishes and bowls, the soup comes served in a hollowed out loaf of wholewheat bread, and the best bit is that it's refillable if you're still hungry. Sweet! And, when you're done you can enjoy some people watching on Laugavegur below. EF

6 Habibi

Hafnarstræti 18

This small restaurant offers up a concise menu of delicious Arabic cuisine, from shawarma to kebabs and falafels. The staff is really friendly and accommodating of requests to kick up the spiciness or tone it down if the customer so desires. Habibi seriously hits the spot after hours of partying (or any other time of day) so it's convenient that the place is allegedly open until 6 a.m. Friday and Saturday (although their advertised opening hours are sometimes not adhered to). CF



7 Eymundsson Bookstore

Skólavörðustígur 11,

Eymundsson is a chain with several outlets but the one on Skólavörðustígur is the best in town. Housed on the ground floor of what was once a Spron Credit Union, the building has a solid institutional feeling—cosy if that's your bag. The premises are equipped with a coffee shop, tables and sofas to lounge in and the all-glass exterior lets in a lot of light, which is good for reading real books, not facebooks. This Eymundsson also regularly hosts book readings, signings and other small events such as concerts and art exhibitions, organized in a pleasantly spontaneous and laid back way. AK

8 Boston

Laugavegur 28

Like an older sibling to the fabled (now deceased) Sirkús, Boston is a warm and mellow second-floor bar on Laugavegur that plays host to the arty party crowd. The baroque wall dressings and deep, rich coloured décor make this bar feel pretty swank, but the mood of the place can go from great to legendary within a heartbeat. CF

9 Grái Kötturinn

Hverfisgata 16a

Super relaxed and cozy 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. CF

Raggi from the band Árstíðir is the unstoppable...

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10 Prikið

Bankastræti 12

Prikið 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. SKK

11 Bakkus

Tryggvagata 22 – Naustarmegin

A new and welcome addition to Reykjavík's bar scene, Bakkus serves up reasonably priced beer, a really impressive selection of international vodkas and an atmosphere unlike any other in town. An eclectic mix of patrons, regular live music and movie nights keep this place interesting and always inviting. Expect dancing on tables and to-the-death Prikið 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. SKK

12 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 fresh coriander, mint, chilies, bean sprouts, exotic fruits such as Durian, Carambola or Coconut, as well as year round products such as frozen spring rolls, various kinds of rice sold in bulk bags, sauces and spices galore, egg and rice noodles, Asian snacks, clothes and other knick-knacks. In short, a wide array of what are still considered rare delicacies in Reykjavík. AK

13 Kaffismiðja Íslands

Káratíg 1

Old fashioned charm is the style of Kaddismiðja, 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. The owners Ingbjörg and Sonja take great pride in the beans they use and the coffee is top notch. You can buy fresh grounds too, in case you just cant get enough. EF

14 Kolaportið

Tryggvata 19

Reykjavík's massive 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. Check out the vintage post cards and prints at the table near the army surplus. CF

15 Sushibarinn

Laugavegur 2

Sushibarinn is reputedly the best bet for sushi in town since it opened in 2007. This little shop is the most authentic option for sushi in town, with the widest selection around. The price per piece ranges from around 140ISK to 600 ISK, and they also have good choice of trays and set menus options. If you can't get a set, you can also order from Kofi Tómasar next door and grab a seat there. EF

16 Grænn Kostur

Skólavörðustíg 8b

Serving healthy organic vegan and vegetarian food for well over a decade, Grænn Kostur is the perfect downtown choice for enjoying light, wholesome and inexpensive meals. Try any of their courses of the day, or go for the ever-pleasing spinach lasagne.

17 Kraum

Aðalstræti 10

The Kraum Iceland Design store features the best from the latest trends in Icelandic design. Kraum sells unique, Icelandic takes on everyday items like stationary, wooden children's toys, plastic zip-lockable handbags and raincoats, and woollen and other clothing and jewellery.

18 Café d'Haiti

Geirsgötu 7b / Verbuð 2

The first time I entered this exotic little joint, meaning to buy myself a take-away espresso, I ended up with two kilos of freshly roasted coffee beans due to some language complications and way too much politeness. Since then I have enjoyed probably way-too-many wonderful cups of Haitian coffee, but they're always as nice, so the two kilos were definitely worth it. SKK

Cinema No2

Icelandic volcano and nature films in the loft at Fisherman's Hut No 2. Just 5 minutes strolling distance from the Reykjavik Museum of Art!

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ART

GALLERIES & MUSEUMS IN DECEMBER

COCKTAIL PLEASURES AND VISUAL STIMULATION

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

OPENINGS

Art Gallery Fold

December 6, 18:00

Art Auction

December 12

Annual Christmas Exhibition

Glúfrasteinn

December 5/12/19, 16:00

Selected readings by various Icelandic authors

Hlutverkasetur Borgatún 1

December 9,10,11,12

Art of Living - Yes+!

Meditation, breathing and yoga.

Contact: artoflivingiceland@gmail.com

Hugmyndahús, Grandagarði 2

Opens December 18, 17:00

Various artists of Hugmyndahús exhibit their work.

Kling and Bang

December 10, 20:00

múm video exhibition. Videos by Ingibjörg Birgisdóttir and Lilja Birgisdóttir. Performance by múm.

December 17

múm video exhibition

December 16 - December 19

Christmas Bazaar

Monday - Friday 16:00 - 22:00, Sat/Sun 12:00 to 22:00

January 6, 21:00

Kling and Bangs celebrate Epiphany.

Núttímalist Galería,

Skólavörðustígur 3a

Opens December 4

Photography Exhibition by Valdís Thor

Kinoklúbbur @ Hafnarhús

20:00 Leighton Pierce shorts on 16mm

Kinoklúbbur @ Bíó Paradís

20:00 Tom Palazzolo 16mm shorts

600ISK

Spark Design Space

December 4, 17:00

'Manifestations' Launch

Book/CD/DVD by collective of Icelandic and Norwegian Artists

ONGOING

ASÍ Art Museum

Áslaug Thorlacius and Finnur Arnar

Runs until December 19

Árbæjarsafn / Reykjavík City Museum

Guided Tours

Runs until May 31, 2011

Guided tours Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 1 pm.

The Culture House

Medieval Manuscripts

Runs until January 2011

Icelanders

Ongoing exhibition

Exhibit featuring a selection of photographs from the book

"Icelanders" by Unnur Jökulsdóttir and Sigurgeir Sigurjónsson.

Iceland::Film

Ongoing exhibition

Traces the evolution of Icelandic film-making, exploring myths versus modernity.

Cinema Nr. 2

The Eruption!

Monday - Friday 16:00 & 16:30

Ongoing all winter

Þorsmörk - The Hidden Valley of Þór

Monday - Friday 17:00

Ongoing all winter

Icelandic nature films.

The Dwarf Gallery

Ongoing Exhibition

An independent art gallery with ongoing exhibitions. It's located in an old basement. Do you really need to know anymore than that?

The Einar Jónsson Museum

The work of sculptor Einar Jónsson.

Gallery Auga Fyrir Auga

Not of this World. Photo exhibition by

Inga Sólveir Friðjónsdóttir

Runs until December 11

Gallery Ágúst

David Örn Halldórsson

Faunalitir

Runs until December 23

Gerðarsafn

Gerðuberg, Kópavogur

There's a flower that grows in the west

Runs until January 16

Watercolours and paintings by Svava Sigríður Gestsdóttir.

Hávamál

Runs until January 16

Exhibition of the illustrations by Kristín Ragna Gunnarsdóttir for Þórarinn Eldjárn's forthcoming children's edition of Hávamál. Hávamál

Gljúfrasteinn Laxness Museum

Gljúfrasteinn was the home and workplace of Halldór Laxness (winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1955).

Hafnarborg

Paintings of Icelandic Flora.

Runs until January 2, 2011

By Eggert Pétursson

Tight

Runs until January 2, 2011

Exhibition by The Icelandic Love Corporation.

Iðnó

Cellophane

20:00 Sundays and Thursdays

Comedy show.

Island Viðey

Imagine Peace Tower

Light sculpture in remembrance of John Lennon. Lit until December 8

The Library Room

National Archives of Iceland - 90 years in the museum building. Commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Culture House.

Museum of Design and Applied Art

Sigríðar Heimisdóttir

Runs until January 30, 2011

The National Gallery of Iceland

Karl Kvaran Retrospective

Runs until February 13, 2011

Strides

Runs until December 31, 2012

A selection of the Gallery's collection from the 20th and 21st century.

The National Museum

The Making of a Nation

Heritage and History in Iceland is intended to provide insight into the history of the Icelandic nation from the Settlement to the present day.

Ása Wright - From Iceland to Trinidad

Collection of objects that belonged to the adventuress Ása Guðmundsdóttir.

Embroidery of Life

Embroidery by Guðrún Guðmundsdóttir, inspired by old manuscripts.

Ráðhús Reykjavíkur

Dulín Himintungl

Kim Linnét exhibits her 360° panorama photos of Iceland.

The Settlement Exhibition

Permanent exhibition.

Reykjavík Art Museum

Ásmundarsafn

Ásmundarsafn

"I choose blossoming women..." Woman as Symbol in the Art of Ásmundur Sveinsson

Runs until April 17 2011

Sleep Light

Runs until April 17, 2011

Multimedia installation by Ráðhildur Ingadóttir.

Thoughts In Forms

Runs until April 17, 2011.

The workshop of sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson, recreated.

"I choose blossoming women ..."

Runs until April 17, 2011

Woman as Symbol in the Art of Ásmundur Sveinsson.

Hafnarhús

Mel Ramos

Erró - Collage

Runs until August 28, 2011

A holistic selection of Erró's collages from Reykjavík Art Museum's Erró collection.

D18 -

Runs until January 9, 2011

Exhibits by Bjarni Massi.

Erró - Collage

Runs until August 28 2011

Power has a Fragrance

Runs until January 9, 2011

Exhibitions by Gardar Eide Einarsson.

Kjarvalsstaðir

Kjarval - Key works

Runs until January 16, 2011

Extensive collection of works by Jóhannes S. Kjarval.

Pastime

3 November 2010 - 9 January 2011

Ágúst Jónsson exhibits abstract paintings in the cafeteria.

The Loooooong Serpent

31 October - 13 March

Exhibition of Norse Mythology

Reykjavík Maritime Museum

The Coast Guard vessel Óðinn

Permanent exhibition

The Óðinn took part in all three Cod Wars and is open for exhibition.

Reykjavík Museum of Photography

A Considered View

Runs until January 9, 2011

Photographs of Wayne Gudmundson.

John Tavener’s Iepo Oneipo

Performed by The Chamber Choir Of Southern Iceland
at Landakotskirkja, November 16

John Tavener’s work represents a duplicate challenge for any performer: it is often highly unorthodox in its rhythm and meter, as well as deeply dependent on an appropriate and receptive venue and atmosphere.

A successful show would therefore have to check both of those boxes; the record-release gig for ‘Iepo Oneipo’ on the sixteenth may have managed that, but not with a steady hand... which is a shame, really, because it started out so well, and its only real failing was in not living up to the stunning two openers.

The amazing ‘Song For Athene’ and ‘The Lamb’ were all the more effective for being performed back-to-back. Choir-only, with no backing orchestra, they perfectly harnessed the anticipation in the room, the verses nearly bursting from restraint, then the gorgeous, humble and resigned refrains adding palettes of wild, deep and impenetrable colour.

The rest of the show had its highlights, to be sure: ‘Iepo Oneipo’ and the ‘Three Holy Sonnets’ were technically impressive in the extreme, and although it was the weakest of the choral numbers, Tavener’s disarming rendition of ‘The Lord’s Prayer’ wrapped things up very nicely. Baritone Hrólfr Sæmundsson especially shone, his voice exuding an unnerving yet charismatic resonance in Schuon Hymnen’s hypnotic “mit der Sonne nur bekleidet” refrains.

But nothing ever really topped those openers, I’m sorry to say. Perhaps it was a lack of confidence in the players, or perhaps too much—an overconfidence that left them without the necessary level of intensity, or maybe there’s just something about the perfect purity of a well-singing, well-conducted choir performing Tavener’s deceptively gentle, yet orgasmically beautiful work that, quite simply, leaves mere instruments lacking.

-Sindri Eldon



SantaCon

Thirteen Santas and counting

All over Reykjavík

Saturday, December 18, 12:00 – 00:00

Yes, it’s that time of year again. Time for strangers to assemble en masse, and stroll around the city in Santa Clause costumes. Doesn’t sound like a familiar Christmas tradition? Well this might just be the next laufabrauðsdagur (don’t know what that is either? don’t worry about it) because SantaCon is coming to town. A mass gathering of Santa Clauses is planned for Saturday, December 18, between 12:00 and 00:00, which means if you feel like strolling around the city, giving out gifts to strangers, singing Christmas songs, and getting drunk dressed as Santa, this is your chance not to do it alone. But wait, with the red suit comes responsibility, and rule #1 is: Santa does not make children cry. That means that although ‘a little alcohol’ is encouraged, “babysitting Santa while he vomits in an alley is not. Don’t be that Santa.”

VT



Clothes off your back

Worn By Worship launch party

Icelandic Design Center, Vonarstræti 4b

December 10, 19:00-21:00

Worn By Worship, an innovative new online boutique that sells Icelandic and international design, celebrates its launch this month. The project, created by Richard P. Foley and Þórey Björk Halldórsdóttir, will provide a platform for designers to sell their products, with a unique addition whereby 10% of each product sold will go to a charity of the customers choice. The launch will be held at the Icelandic Design Centre on December 10. To celebrate the launch, several designers involved with the project, such as Shadow Creatures, Eygló and Mundi Boutique, will be donating 10% of selected sales to charity over the weekend of the 10th. For more information and details of participating designers and charities check out www.wornbyworship.com. EF

Art | Venue finder

ART67
Laugavegur 67 | **F6**
Mon - Fri 12 - 18 / Sat 12 - 16

Artótek
Tryggvagata 15 | **D2**
Mon 10-21, Tue-Thu 10-19, Fri 11-19, Sat and Sun 13-17
www.sim.is/Index/Isenska/Artotek

ASÍ Art Museum
Freygata 41 | **G4**
Tue-Sun 13-17

Árbæjarsafn
Kistuhylur 4

The Culture House
Hverfisgata 15 | **E4**
Open daily 11-17
www.thjodmenning.is

Dwarf Gallery
Grundarstigur 21 | **H6**
Opening Hours: Fri and Sat 18-20
www.this.is/birta/dwarfgallery/
dwarfgallery1.html

The Einar Jónsson
Eiríksgrata | **G4**
Tue-Sun 14-17
www.skulptur.is

Gallery Ágúst
Baldursgrata 12 | **F4**
Wed-Sat 12-17
www.galleriagust.is

Gallery Fold
Rauðarárstigur 14-16 | **G7**
Mon-Fri 10-18 / Sat 11-16 / Sun 14-16
www.myndlist.is

Gallery Kling & Bang
Hverfisgrata 42 | **E5**
Thurs-Sun from 14-18
this.is/klingogbang/

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

Hitt Húsið
– Gallery Tukt
Pósthússtræti 3-5 | **E3**
www.hitthusid.is

i8 Gallery
Tryggvagata 16 | **D2**
Tue-Fri 11-17 / Sat 13-17 and by appointment. www.i8.is

Living Art Museum
Skúlagata 28 | **F6**
Wed, Fri-Sun 13-17 / Thu 13-22. www.nylo.is

Hafnarborg
Strandgötu 34,
Hafnarfjörður

Mokka Kaffi
Skólavörðustíg 3A | **F4**

The National Gallery of Iceland
Fríkirkjuvegur 7 | **F3**
Tue-Sun 11-17
www.listasafn.is

The National Museum
Suðurgata 41 | **G1**
Open daily 10-17
natmus.is

The Nordic House
Sturlugata 5 | **H1**
Tue-Sun 12-17
www.nordice.is/

Restaurant Reykjavík
Vesturgata 2 | **D2**

Reykjavík 871+/-2
Aðalstræti 17 | **D2**
Open daily 10-17

Reykjavík Art Gallery
Skúlagata 28 | **F6**
Tuesday through Sunday 14-18

Reykjavík Art Museum
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www listasafnreykjavikur.is

Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum Sigtún Hafnarhús
Tryggvagata 17 | **D2**
Kjarvalsstaðir
Flókagata | **I7**

Reykjavík Maritime Museum
Grandagarður 8 | **C3**

Reykjavík Museum of Photography
Tryggvagata 16 | **D2**
Weekdays 12-19 / Sat-Sun 13-17 - www.ljosmyndasafn-reykjavikur.is

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum
Laugarnestangi 70

Spark, Design Space
Klapparstíg 33 | **E4**
www.sparkdesignspace.com

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REVIEWS

High-End Treats

Sampling the City's Finest

'Tis the season for treats and festivities and celebration and merriment and the use of clichéd old English contractions better suited for carols than food reviews. 'Tis also the season for treating yourself to a classy celebratory meal and, if you're so inclined, complimenting it with some potentially artfully selected libations.

In the mood for just this type of treat, I ventured to two of the cities reputed finest, namely Vox and Fish Company.



A Very Long Night

The Fish Company (Fiskifélagið) is located in a charmingly dark space underground at Vesturgata 2a. A bustling, cave-like locale, it provides fine sanctuary from the cold winds outside.

My companion and I were seated in a nicely situated table for two nearby a rather large and boisterous party and scanned the menu briefly before notifying the waiter of our joint selection: the 'Around the World' menu with wines (16.500 ISK – 8.900 ISK without wines).

And with our order successfully placed we settled in and waiting for the chefs to present us what they will, which the menu promised would be a culinary delight of Icelandic meat and fish brought to life by spice and herbs from around the world.

Our tour began with a fresh and fruity Blanc de Pacs and fresh bread served with skyr butter, thyme butter and chilli sauce. Shortly thereafter our amuse bouche was served in a twee little jar; Icelandic halibut with beetroot paste, sour scarlet onion, chilli and oat crumble. It was the most complex and satisfying single bite ever to enter my mouth. A wonderful start to the tour.

The first official stops on our world tour were Canada, Malaysia and Iceland, three dishes served family style for my date and I to sample at will. The trio was surprisingly accompanied by a Jacob's Creek Chardonnay, which we thought a rather pedestrian choice.

Canada delighted with servings of langoustine topped with mussel foam, essence of green apple, and mashed potato with almond crumble. It was altogether tart and buttery and delicious. Malaysia was equally enchanting; offering us a taste of thin and delicate minke whale drizzled with a salty and sweet seaweed balsamic soy sauce.

Rounding out the trio, Iceland represented itself in the form of salmon with rye crumble, dill sauce, mustard jelly, salmon tartar and cauliflower couscous—it was just as muddled to look at as the hodgepodge of items would imply. But I, for one, loved every individual component. The dill was not overly strong, the tartar was buttery and the couscous was smoky, almost like bacon, which complimented the salmon nicely.

Between destinations (an in-flight meal?) we were treated to salt cod with tomatoes three ways: foamed, jellied and puréed. The cod was served atop mashed potatoes with kale and broccoli and a hint of apple that harkened back to the Canadian dish we had just enjoyed. This dish, while it didn't blow my socks off, blew my mind with its creativity. The foam, jelly and purée all tasted so much as if I were biting into a fresh tomato; it was fun to eat. The salt cod was, indeed, salty. But that's the point, I guess.

Our glasses were filled with an Emiliana Shiraz and we were off to

The Fish Company

Vesturgata 2a

What we think: Thoughtful and inventive food

Flavour: Complex and interesting

Ambiance: Stark White

Service: Professional & friendly



the United States. If I were to venture a guess we were, more specifically, in Texas, as we were presented with two kinds of steak—dainty fillets of foal peppersteak and miniature medallions of ribeye served directly off a tiny wood-smoke grill. The steak duo was sided by Portobello mushrooms, a delectably rich and fatty polenta, grilled tomatoes and a massive serving of French fries served casually in a paper bag. We were also given a small metal pitcher of a pepper sauce that was more au jus than piquant.

If I were American I would have been pledging an allegiance to my flag at this point, as this was a truly enjoyable stop on the world tour. Aside from all of the meals components being done to (dare I say...) perfection—both meats could be sliced cleanly like butter and melted in the mouth similarly as well—but we also thoroughly enjoyed that a high-end restaurant had taken a

Food & Drink | Venue finder

3 Frakkar Baldursgata 14 G4	Balthazar Hafnarstræti 1-3 D2	Geysir Bar/Bistro Aðalstræti 2 D2	Icelandic Fish & Chips Tryggvagata 8 B2	E4	Sjávarkjallarinn Aðalstræti 2 D2
Aktu Taktu Skúlagata 15 E6	Bæjarins Beztu Tryggvagata D3	Garðurinn Klappastígur 37 F4	Indian Mango Frakkastígur 12 F5	Nonnabíti Hafnarstræti 9 D3	Sólón Bankastræti 7a E3
Alibaba Veltusund 3b D2	Brons Pósthússtræti 9 E3	Glætan book café Laugavegur 19 F5	Jómfrúin Lækjargata 4 E3	O Sushi Lækjargata 2A E3	Sushibarinn Laugavegur 2 E4
American Style Tryggvagata 26 D2	Café Cultura Hverfisgata 18 E4	Grái Kötturinn Hverfisgata 16A E4	Kaffi Hjómaland Laugavegur 21 E4	Pisa Lækjargötu 6b E3	Sushismiðjan Geirsgötu 3 B2
Argentina Steakhouse Barónstígur F6	Café d'Haiti Tryggvagata 12 D2	Grillhúsið Tryggvagata 20 D2	Kaffifélagið Skólavörðustígur 10 F5	Pizza King Hafnarstræti 18 D3	Svarta Kaffi Laugavegur 54 F5
Austurlanda-hraðlestin Hverfisgata 64A F5	Café Loki Lokastígur 28 G4	Habibi Hafnarstræti 20 E3	Kaffitár Bankastræti 8 E4	Pizza Pronto Vallarstræti 4 E2	Sægreifinn Verbúð 8, Geirsgata B2
Á Næstu Grósum Laugavegur 20B E4	Café Paris Austurstræti 14 E3	Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar ("Bullán") Geirsgata 1 B2	Kaffivagninn Grandagarður 10 A1	Pizzaverksmiðjan Lækjargötu 8 E3	Tapas Vesturgata 3B D2
B5 Bankastræti 5 E3	Café Roma Rauðarárstígur 8 G7	Hiðlla Bátar Ingólfstorg D2	Kofi Tómasar Frænda Laugavegur 2 E4	Prikið Bankastræti 12 E3	Thorvaldsen Austurstræti 8 D2
Bakkus Tryggvagata 22 D2	Deli Bankastræti 14 E5	Hornið Hafnarstræti 15 D3	Kornið Lækjargata 4 E3	Ráðhúskaffi E2 Tjamargata 11	Tíu Dropar Laugavegur 27 E5
Ban Thai Laugavegur 130 G7	Domo Pínghóltsstræti 5 E3	Hótel Holt Bergstaðarstræti 37 G3	Krua Thai Tryggvagata 14 D2	Santa Maria Laugavegur 22A, F5	Tívoli Laugavegur 3 E4
Basil & Lime Klapparstíg 38 E4	Einar Ben Veltusundi E2	Humarhúsið Amtmanstígur 1 E3	La Primavera Austurstræti 9 D2	Serrano Hringbraut 12 H3	Vegamót Vegamótastígur 4 E4
Babalú Skólavörðustígur 22A G5	Eldsmiðjan Bragagata 38A G4	Hressó Austurstræti 20 E4	Lystin Laugavegur 73 F6	Shalimar Austurstræti 4 D2	Við Tjörmina Templarasund 3 E2
	Fiskmarkaðurinn Aðalstræti 12 D2		Mokka Skólavörðustígur 3A	Silfur Pósthússtræti 11 E3	Vitabar Berhófnugata 21 G5

F B D

FOR YOUR MIND, BODY AND SOUL

classically accessible food and made it something dazzling, without a hint of pretension.

My date and I discussed the food. We discussed music. We discussed our respective careers and career aspirations. We discussed our childhoods and our adulthoods and our hopes and dreams and a million other things as we waited to depart the United States.

Then we waited some more.

Then we started discussing just how long we were waiting and dwelled on this topic for a lengthy amount of time as we waited longer still.

Maybe the restaurant was understaffed; it was very busy that night. Maybe the chef forgot about us.

Maybe we're just horribly impatient. No, that can't be it.

When fresh glasses and a Saint Clair from New Zealand were poured we saw an end to our wait was nigh. One sip later and we were simultaneously back in Iceland, and in France and Italy.

France offered a large portion of coconut crème brûlée with passion fruit jelly and chocolate ganache, which was good (crème brûlée) and offensive (passion fruit jelly). Seriously, the passion fruit jelly incited pulling of horrendous faces both from myself and my date, it was so horrendously strong and sour that it added a massive imbalance to the dish and did not at all meld with the dainty coconut flavour of the crème brûlée.

Iceland's hazelnut brownie with

skyr ice cream missed the mark and Italy's tiramisu with chocolate chip ice cream, melon and melon foam led my date to liken it to "my mum's dodgy trifle". That's not a good thing. It was confusing and disjointed and poorly executed.

Overall dessert was a letdown, especially after waiting ages for it to arrive.

After spending in excess of four hours at our tiny little table my date and I ventured back out into the cold, with nothing left to talk about but how long a night that was.



In The White Room

Vox. I had heard the name as if it were legend. This mythical place that sends taste buds to heaven and wallets into therapy. To say that I was anxious to discover for myself what all the fuss was about is an understatement; I was downright giddy.

Thus, my date and I procured a taxi to the Hilton Nordica Hotel (Suðurlandsbraut 2) at the hour of our reservation and quickly found ourselves ushered toward a miniscule table for two, butted up against a wall at the far end of the pure white space in which we were the only diners. The combination of the stark design, the lack of other patrons and the isolation of our table made us feel rather isolated. We whispered across the tiny table to one another for fear that our voices would carry all the way out to the reception desk with a complete lack of other bodies to absorb the decibels.

Our waiter came to take our order. We would have the Seasonal Menu with wines (18.400 ISK, or 9.900 ISK without wines).

I love a good surprise, so when the waiter brought out a lopsided set of bowls containing some homemade chips and a skyr-based dip I was thrilled. My date and I happily grazed upon this upscale snack until the amuse bouche arrived—Icelandic shrimp with horseradish granules, apple purée and sugar. This was an interesting bite, with the hottest (flavour wise) item on the plate being presented in the form of icy shavings. Points for creativity.

Next up was a small bite of slow-cooked cod with ceps and cep bullion, a rich little dish and the moistest, most

tender cod I have ever sunk my teeth into. This was followed by a selection of breads to nosh on before the first course presented itself.

While still devouring the breads we were presented with a langoustine doused in too much dill. The miniature crustacean was further flavoured by unique floral notes. The white wine that had tasted quite sour ahead of tasting the langoustine all of a sudden was light and fresh.

The reindeer tartar that was served next was the opposite of what I expected. When I last had reindeer I found it too gamey, but this was so dainty and light that it melted in my mouth; doubly so when followed by a sip of the Spanish Mas Petit with which it was served. The sauce aside, the tartar tasted too much of mayonnaise, however, and did nothing for the dish but weigh it down.

The waitress poured a glass of Abednego from Australia and I enjoyed its smoky flavour while a duo of duck was placed before me. The breast was dry. It just was. It was disappointing. But the slow-cooked thigh meat was delightfully tender. The cabbage purée and beets were a nice combination, adding acidity and sweetness, but the chanterelles were unusually salty, almost offensively so. This would be the low point of the night.

Pre-dessert presented itself to be a refreshing pallet cleanser of bumbleberry and juniper granité atop herbed skyr with crumbled brown sugar. It was a lovely and sweet segue into the real and simple dessert of skyr with blueberries and crispy oats. The Italian sweet wine with which dessert

Vox

Suðurlandsbraut 2

What we think: Sufficiently impressive food

Flavour: Sophisticated and complex

Ambiance: Stark White

Service: Professional



was served was, indeed, very sweet and didn't appeal to me, but my date enjoyed his glass to the last drop.

Dinner at Vox was enjoyable, that much I expected, but it didn't blow my socks off to the extent that I was lead to believe. There were nearly as many misses as there were hits, though to be fair, a miss by Vox standards is still a grand slam in nearly any other establishment. But then again, expectations are high when dining at what has become known as one of Reykjavík's finest dining establishments, so any misstep is a glaring disappointment.

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