



The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

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THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LIFE, TRAVEL & ENTERTAINMENT IN ICELAND

Issue 05 – May 7 – 20 – 2010

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+ COMPLETE CITY LISTINGS – INSIDE!

EVERYTHING IS QUITE ALRIGHT

SUNNY SIDE UP!



OK, our economy totally collapsed a couple of years ago, and our fancy new eruption sorta disrupted European air travel for a while there (sorry, Europe). But it's not all banksters and volcanoes over here – in fact, we're doing pretty damn fine. Summer's 'round the corner, skies are bright and sunny and we've got all these cool events going on all the time. So cheer up, and come pay us a visit if you haven't already (remember to bring lots of Euros and Dollars)!

PLUS

ETHICS

Are We All
To Blame?

POLITICS

The SIC Report
Disseminated

ERUPTIONS

Who's Laughing
Now, Europe?

SHOPPING

Thrift Shopping
For Booze

TRAVEL

Wonderful
Horsies Galore!



It's Time To Act Socially Responsible For A Change

Haukur's 23rd Editorial

Since the Eyjamafjalladjadoodadloekur started spewing its fancy ash all over the place, halting European air traffic and once again putting Iceland in the global spotlight, we have received many letters, messages and phone calls from concerned friends all over the planet. They are worried about the health and well being of Icelanders, they ask what they can do to help, and some of them even insist on praying for us.

Each and every one of those communications is touching, as they are heartfelt and emphatic missives that sorta make one believe there is hope yet. It is indeed a good sign that humans still possess the ability to feel for one another across oceans and continents, even though their lives, religious affiliations and everyday values might differ greatly. Empathy is good and should be encouraged—a global community of care and mutual understanding is what we should strive for (you can call me a fuckin’ hippie if you will, I still stand by this belief of mine).

Now, this doesn't change the fact all this concern and empathy is completely unwarranted—we are all doing pretty-to-goddamn fine over here on our remote rock in the North Atlantic, regardless of what you might have heard.

Of course the Eyjafjallajökull area farmers' plight is a great one; their livelihoods as well as their livestock being put at risk and all (read more about that in Anna Andersen's moving piece on page 22), but even that sorta goes with the territory when you choose to live under an active volcano (not to mention when you choose to settle an island that's pretty much one large active volcano). Not a single human life has been lost, and the daily lives and routines of the majority of Icelanders haven't been affected one bit.

(In fact we all got sorta excited by the eruption, to tell you the truth. It looks really cool, it's generally harmless and it's nice to be in the news for other things than economic collapse and fraud for a change).

We kinda wanted to underline that with our cover for this issue, and send out a message: "WE ARE GENERALLY DOING GREAT, THANK YOU!" Please pass this message along if you can, readers, we need lots of tourists and their fancy currencies to be able to drink next winter into oblivion.

That out of the way, I have one final statement to put out there. Dear Politicians of Iceland: you are all dumb failures, you have no ideals, you stand for absolutely nothing, you make no attempts at acting socially responsible and you do not care about anything except for lining your pockets (and your friends' pockets) and scoring a sweet pension.

This I infer from the way you conduct yourselves, and from what you say. From the way you consistently abuse your position to this effect, and how you do so in the most shame- and ruthless manner imaginable.

Nobody cares whether you broke the law or not, or whether your crimes count as crimes in the strongest technical sense. You have all been caught with your hand lodged firmly in our cookie jar with chocolate smeared all over your faces. You have offended our ideals—YOU WERE VOTED INTO PARLIAMENT TO REPRESENT AN ENTIRE NATION, YOU ARE THERE ON ALL OUR BEHALFS AND YOU SHOULD THEREFORE REPRESENT OUR HIGHEST SHARED VALUES, IDEALS AND GOALS.

And you have consistently failed to do so. Please leave us alone already, go hang out with your campaign contributors somewhere and just leave.



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TRACK OF THE ISSUE

Ólafur Arnalds

Tunglið

olafurarnalds

Download Tunglið
at www.grapevine.is

Ólafur Arnalds certainly has no reasons to complain for himself these days. The Shirley Temple of Icelandic neo-classical music has been up to all sorts of shenanigans since releasing his epic breakthrough album Eulogy for Evolution in 2007. When he's not running all over the world playing shows and climbing Great Walls (yeah, he just came back from touring China!), he has his nose to the grindstone in the studio to bring us new songs. And lucky for us, he has!

The track Tunglið ("the moon") off his newest album "...and they have escaped the weight of darkness" is a slow-blooming bouquet of piano and strings that gradually escalates into a beautiful roar. The instruments quietly play off each other, they build and it climaxes with a sweeping smack in the face that might cause you to tell folks around you it's just something in your eye. Kind of like looking at a big full moon.

Comic | Hugleikur Dagsson



THE REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE
Hafnarstræti 15, 101 Reykjavík
www.grapevine.is
grapevine@grapevine.is
Published by Fröken ehf.
www.froken.is
Member of the Icelandic Travel Industry Association -
www.saf.is

Printed by Landsprent ehf. in 25.000 copies.

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The Reykjavík Grapevine is published 18 times a year by Fröken Ltd. Monthly from November through April, and fortnightly from May til October. Nothing in this magazine may be reproduced in whole or in part without the written permission of the publishers. The Reykjavík Grapevine is distributed around Reykjavík, Akureyri, Egilsstaðir, Seyðisfjörður, Borgarnes, Keflavík, Ísafjörður and at key locations along road #1, and all major tourist attractions and tourist information centres in the country.

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NICO MUHLY – VALGEIR SIGURÐSSON

Daníel Bjarnason – Nadia Sirota – Una Sveinbjarnardóttir

Borgar Magnason – Helgi Hrafn Jónsson



„I couldn't be any more full of my own happiness than witnessing this night. Bravo and oh and oh to Bedroom Community for their righteous curation and stellar performances. This is passionate, necessary music. Blessed, blessed!”
The Reykjavík Grapevine, Oct 2009

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The Times:

“A dazzling bundle of pop smarts and African soul.”



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í Reykjavík 2010
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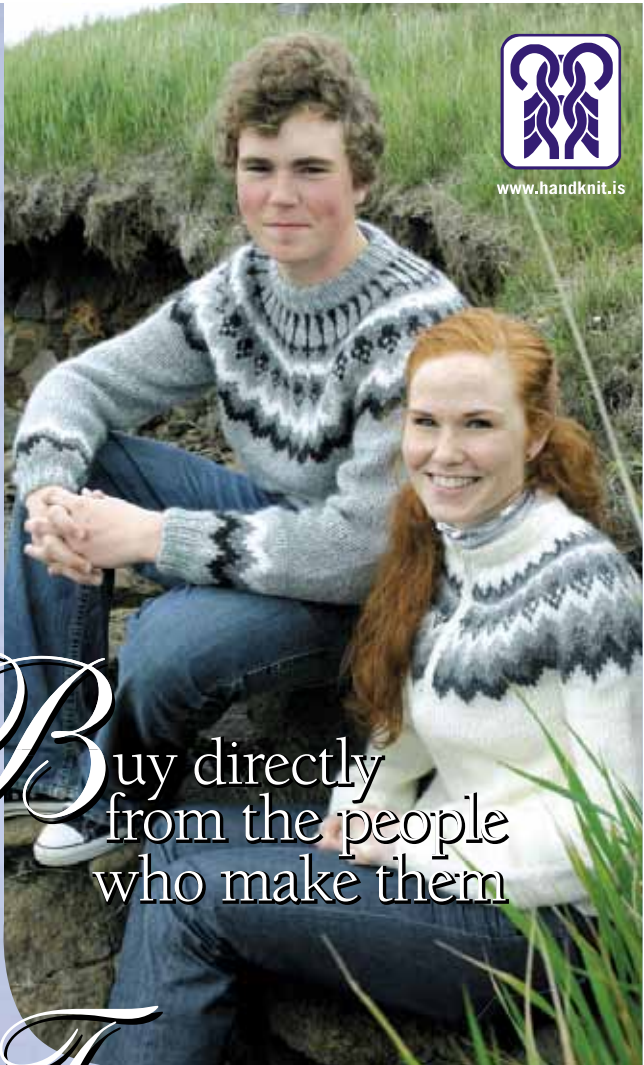


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4 Letters

THE SOONER THE DIRTY PEOPLE OF ICE-
LAND FADE BACK INTO OBSCURITY - THE
BETTER !!! YOUR BANK FAILURES AND
REFUSAL TO PAY WHAT YOU OWE AND
NOW YOUR DIRTY SCUMMY VOLCANO !!!
PIG DIRTY PEOPLE !!!

Andreahotztrot@aol.com

Dear Andrea,

THANK YOU FOR YOUR LETTER! IT IS
MOST AMUSING! WE WILL BE SURE TO
PASS ON YOUR REGARDS TO OUR FEL-
LOW PIG DIRTY PEOPLE AND TO MAKE
SURE OUR VOLCANOES GET CLEANED UP
IN TIME FOR THEIR NEXT ERUPTION

LOVE, LOVE, LOVE.

This letter is regarding the article that was
written about stripping by Rachel Aimee and
Katrin Redfern.

First I want to thank you for showing a
different side on the whole stripping issue.
Sometimes the Icelandic media can be ex-
tremely one-sided and narrow-minded on
many controversial subjects so it was nice to
read a more of an open-minded article. But
there was one thing that bothered me about
the article and that was the use of the word(s)
"Sex industry". I'm surprised it was used so
often by the reporters. People that are against
stripping tend to use words that have a stron-
ger and more of an effect on people (sorta
like how people that are against abortion love
to use the word "murder" or "murderers").
Words like "prostitution", "trafficking" and
"sex industry" are often mentioned when
talking about whether stripping should be
banned or not. This is an incorrect compari-
son. Strippers are no more a part of the "Sex
Industry" than actors, filmmakers, musi-
cians, writers and painters. They sell the im-
age of sex but they don't sell sex itself.

I also want express a little bit about "traf-
ficking" that was mentioned in the article. If
I remember correctly the police investigated
the stripping club Goldfinger a few years ago
and found no evidence of trafficking. I am
surprised that despite the investigation that
senators and police officers are still going in
front of TV claiming that trafficking is very
active in stripping clubs. Even the police of
chief, Stefán Eiríksson, went on TV saying
that "there is a clear connection between
stripping places and orginazed criminal ac-
tivity and human trafficking". All I can say
to that is why haven't there been any arrests
made if the evidence is so clear?

With regards,
Henry

Dear Henry,

We agree that Icelandic discourse can be one
sided and dumb, which is why we strive to poi-
son it with our dirty minds and rambling con-
tent. DISCOURSE is the word of the day, or at
least it should be. Still, have you been in any of
those strip clubs? From what we're told, scoring
a hand-job there is a pretty easy task if you've got
some cash.

ANYWAY, we are engaging in discourse, Ra-
chel and Katrin said their piece, then you said
yours, we happily deliver your thoughts, and
we're sure others will pitch in at some point too.
So good job, everyone.

Hi, my name is Burkni Þór Berglindarson
and I just have to say that I fucking love
Grapevine. The pest part of the paper is ofc.
the sour grapes. well I just wanted to write
and give you my best regards and keep up the
good work:D

Dear Burkni,

Thank you for your awesome fucking letter.
Jeez, are we inspiring this kinda language in
the nation's young? Well, fuck it, you seem like
a smart kid and we're sure you have the com-
mon sense to know when using the word fuck
is appropriate and when it is not (protip: wealthy,
respectable tourists on cruise ships apparently
don't approve of the word fuck. So if you meet
any...). Anyway, keep on rockin', etc.

How to destroy America: Blow up an active
volcano near an ocean to create a megatsu-
nami.

Jan Overbeek

FREE GRAPEVINE TEE HEE HEE!

We've got a new prize for all your MOST AWESOME LETTERS. And it's a scorcher!
From now on, whoever sends in the issue's AWESOME LETTER will receive a cool new
Reykjavík Grapevine T-shirt, featuring the majestic G that adorns our cover. So you
should make sure to keep writing us fun and/or interesting letters. Natch.

This new Grapevine tee surely is the shiznit! It was designed
by our very own art director man, Höður Kristbjörnsson, and
it's good for posing in front of a mirror, impressing folks with
your impeccable taste or picking up men or women of all
ages (no minors). DON'T PANIC if your letter wasn't picked
AWESOME LETTER. You can still get a tee for a low, low
price over at Havarí on Austurstræti.



MOST AWESOME LETTER:

dear editor:

i never saw that movie... that movie about tom hanks living in an airport... but i am living it. i
am hating it. mostly because it is my own doing. good buddy of mine promised me a ride to a
southland airport, so i could fly to seattle so i could fly to reyk. but buddy got too hammered
and was still too drunk by morn to drive me. so i missed the first seattle flight of IcelandAir.
No mercy, just money is what it cost me.

I could swear the iceland hotty that took my money over the phone to reup the flight a
second time, gave me a wednesday departure as sure as i cant rhyme. the only thing that was
sure, is they don't fly from seattle to there on wednesdays. I hate this air-chair I have been
living in here, for i don't care to think for-how-long now. the only other chair that seems to
have as much a part of me is the far stall in the loo. that aint lovely, too.

you ever think that the engineers that design airports should ask the people that sleep on
the floor, 'how can we raise the bar?' Cuz of repeated flight calamities we travellers inevitably
find ourselves pitched out on airport floors. These designers could say, 'hey, what is it you
need in an airport?' I need chairs that don't have armrests so i can stretch out and sleep side-
ways. I need a warm place, as chairs seem to too often be near cold windows on marble floors.
i need free internet (kudos SeaTac on that, Bill Gates must have provided the bandwidth).

but go the next step. lets not beat on the airport. after all, that is brass and glass and it can't
change game so fast. companies, on the other hand can. they are manned, at least airlines are
staffed 50% by women, the smarter of the sexes. and there is no question as to which category
they placed me in during this ash-hashed scenario next to a cold window.

i need an iceland air customer rep that doesn't smirk as i buy another full-price ticket when
my seat just went empty on the flight out last night, and my return seat is going to burn up
empty as well, right next to the outbound seat in some sadistic kind of air purgatory hell, wait-
ing for me to bid it hello.

i don't care if all these dressed-for-success people all around us have nowhere to go but a
small metal tube, and before they do, choose to eschew me contemptuously because of the
four day hair-affair i am having with my temporary home in the air-chair next to the cold-
window well in Seattle airport hell. Actually, i think my 4-day hair-smooo looks rather cool
considering its green, low-flow, shower free simplicity. but as bad as this Ash Thursday be, the
stodgy, rigidity of the airport is nothing compared to the IcelandAir inflexibility.

icelandair don't offer standby...they just let empty seats fly lonely apparently. Efficiency
in fuel usage? why try, when they are the virtual sole play to nice Iceland. icelandair doesn't
rebathe the second half of a flight if a connection is not made to the first half. this supports the
coffers of an airline that skrimps on offering meals on intercontinental flight.

iceland air doesn't give frequent flier miles for a missed flight, but they will keep the entire
ticket price as if you did fly it. icelandair web site seems to increase the prices if you browse
away and come back. in fact, they quoted me a 12,000 dollar one-way ticket for this evening,
owing I assume to the demand for front row viewing of the new volcano. iceland air says they
can not change these policies, when we know what business can change... they can change the
rules of banking if they want to.

this rant is not about how bad icelandair.is is - that is too easy a point to pick. this is rant is
about how i cant seem to get my shit together and past the seat in the loo or past the increduly
in the ashen faces of the air-mosas staffing the IcelandAir desk so they can win a customer
back with good old fashioned business sense. kindness.

'its not fair' ...what i heard from some reykjavik mortgage payers,

sleeplust in seattle

Dear Sleeplust,

thank you for your letter! We really don't know what to say about its contents – except maybe that you
should take a taxi if your friends are too hammered to take you to the airport – but the general tone of
it is just so pleasant and bantering that we can't NOT make you our letter of the month.

Also, maybe that free T-shirt will make up for the millions of dollars all these flight troubles caused
you. Probably not, but maybe.

Drop by for a beer if you ever eventually make it over – if not, then we look forward to seeing Tom
Hanks' interpretation of y'all in a couple years.

Dear Jan,

Why would you want to destroy America? That
seems like a nasty thing to do. In any case,
thanks for your informative letter. Although
when you think of it, it's not really that informa-
tive. How does one blow up active volcanoes?
Will just any active volcano do, or do we need
a specific one? And which ocean are we talking
about? There are many oceans out there (at least
seven, we're told). Dude, if you want to be pass-
ing along instructions and stuff, you should be
more specific. What an anticlimactic missive
this was.

Hello after the strong earthquake that vol-
cano Island tornadoes and tidal black Amer-
ica of the disasters God for non-Muslims
to avoid vengeance GOD by an apocalyptic
catastrophe in May 2010 the application
of Islam and the Koran in all countries the
world and especially the Arab countries and
whether countries not applying Islam No
God punishes them by apocalyptic disasters
thank you

Mehdi Assem

Dear Mehdi,

Huh?

Statement from the Feminist Association on the discussion of the banning of strip-clubs in Iceland

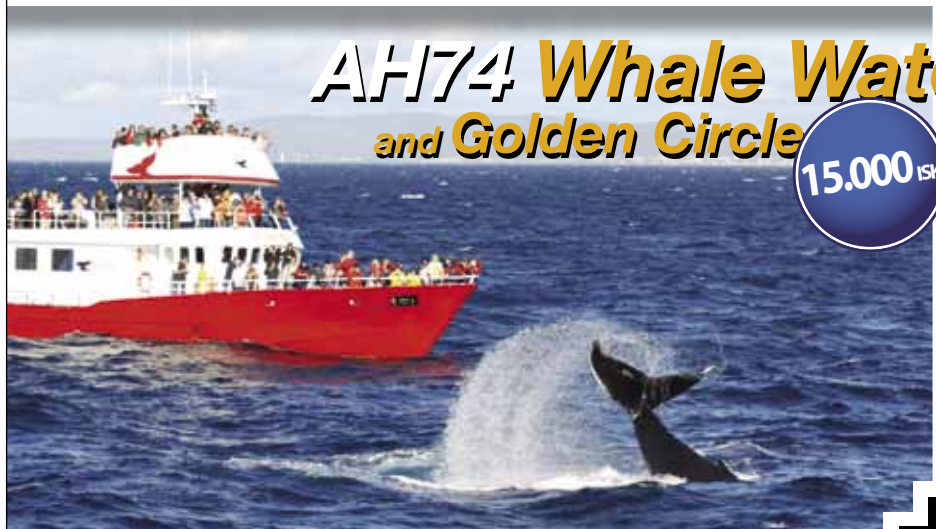
Strip-dancing as other sex work is a manifestation of the gender system our society
relies upon. By definition the gender system includes processes that both define men
and women as different in socially significant ways and justify inequality on that basis.

Most interactions between men and women occur in roles that are unequal. Beliefs
about gender difference lead men and women to recreate the gender system in
everyday interaction. Strip-dancing and other sex work concerns the very core of the
gender system. The strip dancer (woman) being the merchandize and the salesperson
is subject to the power and will of the buyer (man).

The existence of strip-clubs pins down the gender system feminists aim to subvert to
be able to construct a just system for all, men and women. The ban set's an example of
denunciation necessary in the fight against women's subordination, which hopefully
encourages other countries to side with us fighting for equality.

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“We Are Examples”

The Case of The Reykjavík Nine



MARCH 30, 1949: Thousands of Icelanders descend on Austurvöllur in passionate opposition to Alþingi’s movement to militarily align their country with Belgium, France, the United States and others in the fledgling North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

“The NATO protests were horribly violent,” explains Sólveig Jónsdóttir, “but not the protesters. The people who were in power at the time had armed a right-wing militia; there’s footage in which you can see they have batons and just came running out beating people indiscriminately. So the people defended themselves. It was horribly aggressive. The nation was divided, tempers were running hot; people were agitated that things were being decided behind closed doors.”

The ruling Independence Party of the time took certain offence to a mass public display of displeasure over their wheelings and dealings and, three years after the explosive anti-NATO demonstrations, turned to Article 100 of the General Penal Code No. 19 of February 12, 1940, which states:

Anyone assaulting the Alþingi (Legislative Assembly) so as to endanger the Alþingi’s independence, gives a command relating thereto or abides by such command shall be subject to imprisonment for no less than 1 year and the penalty may become life imprisonment in case of gross offence.

One Icelandic person to become most intimately acquainted with the article in its virgin enactment was a young Jón Múli Árnason, who just under a quarter century later would welcome the birth of his daughter, Sólveig. Jón was never subjected to prison time, but, instead, was fully stripped of his citizens’ rights for five years, enjoying them once more in 1957.

History can be a broken record, it seems.

DECEMBER 8, 2008: Thousands of Icelanders descend on Austurvöllur in passionate opposition to Alþingi’s rampant nepotism and corruption, resulting in the complete implosion of Iceland’s economy. A group approximately thirty-strong approached and knocked on the doors of Alþingi. It was opened and they were let in.

“The public is supposed to be able to enter parliament,” explains Sólveig, who was among the group wanting to make their way to the public viewing balcony that day. “I guess when the people working there realised we were so many they decided stop us. We were not armed,

of course, and we did not have our fists raised and we did not have any signs or anything that could be used as a potential weapon; we were not yelling or using abusive language; nothing like that. I think it was the sheer number of us made them decide to try to prevent us, however they could, from going up there.”

The ruling Independence Party of the time took certain offence to a mass public display of displeasure over their wheelings and dealings and, two years after the explosive pots and pans revolution, turned to Article 100 of the General Penal Code No. 19 of February 12, 1940.

Nine Icelanders, including Sólveig, are now becoming intimately acquainted with the article.

PICKING OUT THE NINE

“I think it’s understandable why they do it. They want to protect themselves and their power,” reasons Steinunn Gunnlaugsdóttir, sarcastically empathising with politicians invoking the judiciary to quell public protest. “If I was the asshole they are I would do the same. I would be a total fascist. It’s logical for maintaining power.”

Snapping back to the harsh reality of her situation Steinunn continues, “I just don’t think they have real power so I fight against it, but I know they will fight back and they have more weapons and strength than I do.”

Steinunn, like Sólveig, is one of the Reykjavík Nine, accused under Article 100 of attacking Alþingi and endangering its independence by entering parliament on the 8th of December 2008. While some wanted to read aloud to the politicians a prepared statement, not all of the nine had a motive behind entering the parliament that day, not all of them even made it past the entryway of the building. The entire group was not even acquainted until they were united by Article 100 three months ago. With seemingly little that binds them it’s difficult to reason the most obvious question surrounding their case: why these nine?

“A few of us have been arrested previously for other protests or similar things, but that’s not the case for all of us,” explains Snorri Páll Jónsson Úlfhildarson, another of the accused. “It’s all very random. That’s how I see it. It’s not like we’re famous or the members of [popular musical outfit] múm who were in front of the cameras at the protests. So maybe it’s easier to pick us. It’s a mystery.”

“We are examples,” adds Ragnheiður Esther Briem, one of the accused whose name is not

even included in the indictment and who was never charged for any violent act yet still faces the shared fate of the nine.

The seemingly random selection of persons to accuse became all the more apparent for the nine when, upon reading the indictment, they saw that the other twenty or so who entered Alþingi were listed only as ‘unknown persons.’ Says Steinunn, “I could go through the images and give the names of each and every one of them. It would be easy for [the prosecutors], too, if they wanted to. I’m not asking for others to be accused, but it’s hard to understand why it is just us nine. It’s strange.”

Sólveig’s understanding of the prosecutor’s motivation echoes that of her co-accused. “If you go through the case documents it’s apparent how random it all is,” she says. “You can’t read them and understand why they’re coming after us. You get the feeling more that there’s nothing in here, there’s no substance in the charges. There’s nothing.

“We didn’t use abusive language, we weren’t threatening, we weren’t violent in entering the building. So in the system I think there’s just a prejudice toward so called ‘activists’ and I think that since some of the nine charged have been involved with ‘radical activities’ that’s why they’ve decided to come down so hard. It’s pure prejudice.”

A SHOW OF SOLIDARITY

The accused are not alone in failing to see the logic in their small groups’ composition. Like the NATO protests of generations past, thousands of protestors participated in the winter 2008/2009 demonstrations. The vague wording of Article 100 would imply that all protestors seeking the fall of the Independence Party-led government were to a certain extent launching an assault on Alþingi. That’s much more than nine people.

In light of this, approximately 400 Icelanders who took part in the protest have added their names to a petition requesting that they, too, be charged alongside the nine.

Bryndís Björgvinsdóttir, who organised the petition and penned, among others, an open letter to the state to accompany the signatures, explains “everyone who participated in the protests that winter did the same thing. I don’t know why I wasn’t there in that group entering parliament that day, but I could have been. Anybody could have been one of those nine people,

The Imaginary Anarchist Threat



During its noon news broadcast on Friday, the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service announced that police had been summoned to the Reykjavík

Courthouse, arresting two men after “a brawl” broke out in a courtroom where The Reykjavík Nine were on trial. According to the report, an explosive device—“a smoke bomb”—had also gone off inside the courthouse. Fréttablaðið, the most widely read Icelandic newspaper, gave pretty much the same account of events, complete with brawl and bomb. That following Monday, Fréttablaðið editor Ólafur Þ. Stephensen reflected on the arrests as a teachable moment, venting his frustration at what he claimed was the increasingly “violent extremism” of protesters, wagging his finger at environmentalists who protested government emphasis on heavy industry, truckers who protested rising oil prices, those who participated in the “pots and pans revolution” during the winter of 2008-9, as well as The Reykjavík Nine. Lumping all these protesters together and imagining some links between them, Stephensen concluded “the protesters” had elevated violence and intimidation as a political expression.

Stephensen did concede that perhaps the police had overreacted the previous Friday. Perhaps. But according to his logic, that was irrelevant, since any police overreaction was a logical and necessary response to the supposed wave of radicalised and violent protesters.

Stephensen is correct when he sees the events at the courthouse as a teachable moment. However, he draws the wrong lesson.

I was in the courthouse that Friday morning and witnessed the events unfold. The fact of the matter is that there were no violent confrontations before the police showed up to forcefully clear the courtroom, ejecting members of the public who wished to follow the trial but had not secured one of the 25 available seats, therefore standing in the back of the courtroom. Oh, and the dreadful explosive device, the “smoke bomb”, was a firecracker thrown into Courthouse foyer after the trial was over and nearly everyone had cleared out!

There was no compelling reason to limit the size of the audience or clear the courtroom. There were at most 35 people at the courthouse, and there were no signs this small crowd posed a threat. Sure, there were a handful of anti-authoritarian countercultural characters. But the majority were “ordinary” people: family members of the defendants and members of the public who wanted to show their support, including several nationally known figures. The people in the audience were not some shady “protesters” who posed a threat.

Yet people I spoke to counted upward of 40 police officers in the Courthouse. The only sign of trouble was one gentleman who made loud statements about his constitutionally guaranteed right to stay and watch an open trial, whether he remained seated or standing. The police dragged him and a second man out of the courtroom in a headlock.

With this overreaction the trial was made into an even greater circus than it already was. And the ass-backwards news accounts of a brawl and bombs going off further contributed to the narrative Stephensen and other manicured Brahmin of the cultural and political elite have been peddling.

In a civilised Rechtsstaat the agents of the state should seek to defuse and minimize social unrest and maintain peace. They must recognise the rights of the citizens to protest, or to exercise their constitutional rights, and make every accommodation for the citizens to exercise these rights. Even when it might be inconvenient for the state or its agents. No. Especially when it is inconvenient.

Instead, the Icelandic authorities, the police and some members of the media have decided to approach protest and any signs of public discontent differently — blowing things out of proportion, for example by hysterically describing firecrackers as explosive devices.

The authorities must distinguish common criminals from law-abiding citizens who—while protesting actions of the state—happen to break city ordinances, refuse to follow instructions of authorities or engage in civil disobedience. By refusing to make this distinction the police have been turned into a tool of oppression. And when the state begins to deploy the police as a tool of oppression against its own citizens it has taken a fateful step away from democracy and free society towards tyranny.

Magnús Sveinn Helgason is a historian and political blogger. He most recently authored addendum 5 to the SIC report, and is currently working on a book on financial bubbles. 🍷

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Article | Life of the party



The Moonshine Salesgirl Next Door

Illegally sold landi is more innocent than it seems

If you're like me, the stereotype that comes to mind when you think of a moonshine seller is a red-faced hick from the Deep South, hanging out the back of a pick-up truck parked behind a country hoedown, hawking overproof hooch that might as well be rubbing alcohol, spilling a little on his overalls as he chugs it from a mason jar.

The girl who sits down opposite me embodies none of this. Anna, as she asks to be called to protect her identity, is just a regular Reykjavík gal, born and raised—tall, pretty, 23, and legitimately employed. She just happens to sell moonshine on the side.

LIFE OF THE PARTY

"I'm actually getting a little bit sick of it because I've been drinking it for two, three years," she says. She must be getting creative with the mixing by this time. Of course, she says, but there's a limit on how much you can do with

the stuff, which is usually about 40 percent alcohol. She suggests making screwdrivers. Juice covers up the flavour better than soda does, and that's what she wants when she's making party punch.

"I don't feel it's something bad," she says. "I just feel like I'm helping my friends being able to have a party with a punch and not going broke."

that she's doing something illegal, her voice hushes a little. It's legal to buy and sell brewing equipment, and it's legal to brew for yourself, but it's illegal to sell. "I don't feel it's something bad," she says. "I just feel like I'm helping my friends being able to have a party with some punch and not go broke." Anna's clients are all family and friends. When all is said and done she might have made enough to buy a couple packs of cigarettes.

BUSINESS ETHICS

What she does can hardly be called a business, she says, apologising that her story isn't seedier. She buys a 10-litre case of landi, as moonshine is called in Icelandic, and keeps one or two bottles for herself. Then she sells the remaining bottles with a little mark-up to recoup her costs. She sells one-litre for 2.500 ISK, compared to about 6.500 ISK for one-litre of cheap vodka from your friendly state-run liquor store.

Anna got acquainted with moonshine as a teenager. "I used to drink moonshine because we couldn't get into the liquor store. We started at 14 or 15, and we were getting it delivered by some 17-year-old guys." The bottles were opaque so you couldn't see inside, she remembers. "That was kind of nasty. That's kind of unsafe to be drinking. You know, you've heard stories about people going blind," she says. But Anna isn't that kind of moonshine purveyor. "I never sell to underage kids," she says.

On the dangers of bad moonshine, Anna is emphatic. "If it's done improperly by just some kids who want to make a lot of money, I don't think it's a good idea. You have to know what you're doing." Brewing takes skill and commitment. Plus, moonshine stills stink, she says, so finding a brewing location can be a headache.

But her source is safe, she says. Her family has been buying from the same brewer for years. Even her grandmother drinks the stuff.

ECONOMIC STASH

Everyone is drinking more moonshine these days. The economic crash has increased public thirst for cheap booze and as a result moonshine is rampant. The police largely ignore sellers like Anna, though recently a couple of bigger sellers have been busted. The Icelandic government is much more concerned about marijuana growing and sales.

Anna thinks it's much better to defuse teenage interest in alcohol by allowing kids a glass with dinner every so often. That way young people won't drink so much that they get alcohol poisoning the first time they get access to alcohol. "And they don't go out when they're 17 drinking moonshine," she says.

MOONSHINE PUNCH

- 5 lemons, 8 limes, a bunch of grapes, cut up
- 2 litres landi a.k.a. moonshine, or Vodka (if you're some sort of millionaire)
- 3 litres pineapple juice
- 1 litre grapefruit soda
- 2 litres Sprite
- 2 litres mixed fruit juice (find some pineapple juice)
- 1 litre carrot and lemon juice (or strawberry, grape or whatever else)

Rule of thumb: Use 1 litre booze to 5 litres juice. For something a little fancier, you can add flavour extract. You'll find some at Áman, the brewing equipment store.

✍️ STEPHANIE ORFORD
📷 JULIA STAPLES

Opinion | Íris Erlingsdóttir

Apologies and Justice



Now that the "Black Report" has finally been issued—and criminal, tax, and regulatory investigations appear to finally be nearing fruition—our beloved young plutocrats have suddenly realised how sorry they are for the kreppa. Björgólfur Thor Björgólfsson "cannot help but blame [himself]" for not recognising "the warning signs that were piling up." Jón Ásgeir Jóhannesson tells us that he "cannot describe with words how I feel because of the mistakes I have made and their consequences."

I find it very difficult to take these missives seriously. On the one hand, the apologies are not very heartfelt; they look as if their authors merely filled in the blanks from standard forms taken from a book of public apologies.

I don't even see how Björgólfur Thor's letter even qualifies as an apology, since he doesn't accept responsibility for any particular action or omission. He appears to be saying that he's sorry the whole damn economy was screwed up and fell apart when push came to shove.

At least Jón Ásgeir acknowledges that he made some mistakes (though, of course, he points out, so did everyone else).

I can't help it if I see these letters as the beginning of a Tiger Woods-type of publicity campaign to protect their respective financial empires, rather than to seek personal redemption.

If these two—who were at the middle of every deal of consequence—were sincere in their remorse, why has it taken them so long to go public with it? Why haven't they given us the particulars of every questionable transaction in which they participated? Why have they continued to believe that their presence on boards of directors is necessary? Why did they flee the country?

I believe in second chances. I'd love to see Iceland move beyond the finger pointing that has inundated the media since October 2008. I think that vendettas can damage the person seeking justice as much as the person against whom justice is sought.

Nevertheless, I don't see how we can rebuild a successful society without justice, and justice in this case will necessarily entail taking the levers of financial and political power away from those who proved themselves unworthy to operate them. Both Björgólfur Thor and Jón Ásgeir ascribe the kreppa to easy access to capital and to poor oversight, but this is just an attempt to spread the blame to uncontrollable forces. "The Black Report" is replete with instances in which these two and their cronies aggressively sought to increase their reach through obviously improper—if not illegal—means.

But even if we buy their assertions that they always had the nation's best interests at heart, that the kreppa is a result of simple negligence, we should still bar them from making any decisions in the future that could impact more than their immediate families.

As Peter Parker's Uncle Ben famously told him, "With great power comes great responsibility." Björgólfur Thor, Jón Ásgeir, and the rest did obtain great power, but they failed to exercise it responsibly.

The stakes are too high to give them a second chance.

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*From the Hávamál, 1300 AD



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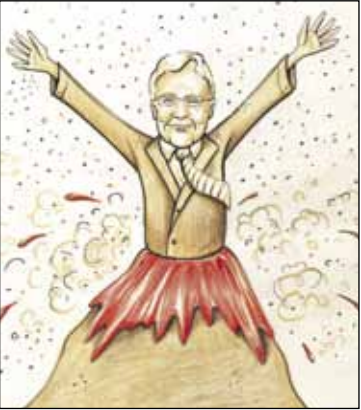


Exporting Our Disasters

The twofold catastrophes of financial collapse and volcanic eruption:

When I was young, Iceland didn't make world news a lot. Sometimes you would stumble upon funny news items about beer being prohibited in Iceland, about there being no dogs in Reykjavík or about the rampant inflation in Iceland (which often surpassed 100%). But in general, Iceland was usually not in the sights of the world media.

All the same this has been described as a period when Iceland was a relatively great power, as great as a densely populated island far in the north can get. This was due to the enormous strategic importance of Iceland in the Cold War, as a place to monitor naval and air traffic in the Northern hemisphere.



A byword for catastrophe
Icelanders soon learned to use this position to their advantage. The running threat was to withdraw from NATO and close down the large US military base in Keflavík. This was even used to pressure our Cold War allies into buying fish that would otherwise have been unsellable. After we engaged in the so-called

Cod Wars with Britain, Henry Kissinger wrote of Iceland: "I sat there in wonderment. Here was an island with a population of 200,000 threatening to go to war with a world power of 50 million over codfish... I thought of a comment by Bismarck over a century earlier, that the weak gain strength through effrontery..."
Nowadays nobody knows what NATO stands for, and the military base in Keflavík is a ghost town.

But Iceland is in the news on a global and most unprecedented scale. It seems we have become extremely good at exporting our disasters. Iceland has become quite famous in the last two years, but this fame is admittedly a dubious one – in a way, the country has become a byword for catastrophe.

"I hate Iceland!"
Last month, images from Iceland were televised all over the world. They seemed to show a devastating volcanic eruption, whole regions enveloped in volcanic ash, people wearing masks to avoid inhaling poisonous fumes, suffering animals. At the same time, ash emitting from the Eyjafjallajökull eruption interrupted flight traffic on an unprecedented scale; airports from Britain to Turkey were forced to close down. Millions of passengers were stranded. A video of a young and angry Scottish man became a hit on YouTube. "I hate Iceland!" was his message.
News reporters, specialists in catastrophes, descended on the country, with their cameras and satellite discs. This was the second time in little less than a year that they had been to Iceland. The first time was when the Icelandic financial system collapsed over the course of a week in October of 2008. It was noted at the time that some of these reporters came directly from Afghanistan and Iraq—thus Iceland became the disaster

area du jour.
Media interest in the "catastrophe" is high; they just don't seem to get enough of this admittedly picturesque story. As a result, I have talked to a lot of foreign media. For example I've been interviewed at least seven times by the Japanese press (big in Japan?). But the most desired interlocutor of the foreign press—our Prime Minister, Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, being media shy, and, admittedly, a bit boring—has been president Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, a consummate political survivor who's career reaches back into the sixties.

"You ain't seen nothing yet"
Just after the eruption Ólafur, a man who relishes the limelight, gave interviews to international media—most notably to the BBC—where he basically said that people outside of Iceland hadn't seen nothing yet in terms of the island's potential to erupt (thus paraphrasing one of his most famous utterings about the Icelandic banksters in their golden days: "You ain't seen nothing yet"). There was another eruption coming, and this one would be much bigger. "Be afraid, be very afraid," was the gist of Grímsson's words.
This caught on with the foreign press, in part because the name of the volcano Grímsson was talking about is so much easier to pronounce: Katla, instead of Eyjafjallajökull. Katla is admittedly an active volcano which is due to erupt sometime in the future, but it is difficult to say when or what the impact will be, and the President certainly is no geologist, just a politician with a love for the spotlight.
In the following weeks, the tourist industry fell into a state of total gloom. Not only were tourists unable to come because flight problems, bookings also fell to an all time low. The centre of Reykjavík, heavily dependent on tourism with

its souvenir shops full of stuffed puffins, suddenly looked quite empty. And this in a year that was supposed to be the best ever for Icelandic tourism.
For the crisis (kreppa, as we call it) has been quite beneficial to the tourist services. Iceland, formerly the most expensive country in Europe, has become—well, not dirt cheap—but relatively inexpensive for those who make an income in Dollars, Pounds and Euros. One can even witness German tourists buying more than one beer at Icelandic restaurants. At the same time, after the collapse of the Króna, it has become impossibly expensive for Icelanders to travel abroad. There are still strict currency restrictions in place.

We are not drowning in ash
What was not reported in the foreign media was that almost no ash from the volcano reached Reykjavík and the most populated area of Iceland in the Southwest. The place of real impact is actually very small, compared to the size of the country. My son and I conducted a small experiment one night, leaving a white dinner plate outside in our garden on a night Iceland's meteorological office had predicted ashfall in Reykjavík.
In the morning there was absolutely no ash on the plate. However, we live in the centre of Reykjavík, and this being a weekend, the town was full of cigarette butts— and ash.

A different kind of tourist has been around since the collapse of the banks. These are people who are owed money by the Icelandic financial institutions. Apparently the amount foreign creditors lost on the Icelandic banking system is about five times the nation's GDP. So there has been a steady stream of lawyers and other interested parties to the country, even a conference of alleged Russian oligarchs and kingpins in 101 Hotel in January of 2009.

But there are also lone individuals such as the Dutchman Gerard Van Vliet, who put the funds he intended to use for relief work in Africa into the infamous IceSave accounts of the now defunct Landsbanki. Gerard has come to Iceland repeatedly, in hope of getting his money back. He probably won't, but he has become a known and well-respected figure in the country and is even considering writing a book about the experience.
Van Vliet will have a lot of material to work with. On April 12th, we saw the publication of a long awaited report on the collapse of the banks—nine volumes totalling at over two thousand pages—written by a special committee, nominated by Alþingi. The report describes gross negligence and incompetence by the political class, regulators and officials, and probably criminal activity by the managers and owners of the banks. It seems the Icelandic legal courts will be totally inundated in the near future.
But so Iceland is again connected with disaster. In October of 2008, our friends in Greece contacted us, asking "Are you OK?", offering to send us some food. This April, after the eruption of Eyjafjallajökull, the Greeks—who now have their fair share of trouble—contacted us again, repeating their message of food and aid. ♡

✂ EGILL HELGASON
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The Eyjafjallajökull-Fimmvörðuháls eruption

You are probably aware of the spectacular (if small) volcanic eruption on Fimmvörðuháls, the ridge next to Eyjafjallajökull glacier. We wrote about it last issue and everything. That eruption sadly ended not long after we went to print, and even most volcanologists generally believed it was over. But shortly after midnight on April 14th, everyone's favourite Icelandic volcano showed us that not only had it not finished, but it was just warming up...

Technically it's the same volcano, just a different eruption. What probably happened is that the pathway to the surface on Fimmvörðuháls blocked itself up, but the pressure beneath needed another way out—this time the weak point was somewhere around the summit caldera (crater) of the mountain. And so unlike the previous fire-fountaining flank eruption, this time we got lava coming up from a fissure near the top, under the Eyjafjallajökull glacier itself.

Eyjafjallajökull goes phreatomagmatic!

Fissure eruptions in open air, like Fimmvörðuháls, tend to produce lava fountains, lava flows and very little ash. Sub-glacial eruptions, on the other hand, are totally different beasts. This eruption began with what's called 'phreatomagmatic' activity—water (in this case from the melting glacier) interacting with the hot magma near the surface. The result was a thick plume of mostly white steam, rising between 6 and 11 kilometres into the air. As the eruption progressed, the plume became much blacker as the glacier melted away it could scrub less ash from the eruption plume, so the ash content of the plume increased over time. By the first Saturday, when Grapevine took a trip out there, the plume was like a dark grey pillar looming over the mountain, being blown by winds and shearing sideways at the top (the so-called 'umbrella' region).

And all that ash had to come down somewhere. The heavier stuff rained down over the surrounding area, blanketing everything in a thick layer of fine grey powder. The air stank of sulphur, and a deathly silence prevailed. Farmers struggled to move livestock out of the ash fall area and some are now claiming they will never return. The lighter stuff caused problems on a much, much larger scale. Taken by high-altitude winds, the fine ash was blown all around the northern hemisphere in a matter of days. With fears of volcanic ash being sucked into jet engines, flights all over Europe and beyond were grounded. Air transport literally shut down for a week or more, leaving people stranded all over

the world (including, ironically, students from my home university in the UK, who were on a Volcanology field course in Italy). And this will surely have a lasting effect on air travel. Investigations currently abound into whether or not the decision to ground air traffic was the right one. On a business and political level, this certainly isn't over.

Eyjafjallajökull goes jökulhlaup!

Aside from the ash cloud, this eruption carried one other major threat—one that we'd been fearing since day one: jökulhlaup. Jökulhlaup are glacial floods, a rush of water generated in this case by the heat of a volcanic eruption. Within 12 hours or so of the eruption beginning, the decision was made to break the ring road in order to let floodwaters pass through to the sea, hopefully without taking the expensive bridges with them. Shortly thereafter the floods began: torrents of dirty water, rocks and icebergs, flowing down from under Gígjökull glacier and washing south towards the sea. The scene was spectacular, if destructive, and repeated itself a number of times over the following days.

Luckily for many, after a week or so the eruption began to change. 'Strombolian' activity, which takes its name from the famous volcano in southern Italy and not the dish akin to a rolled pizza, began in earnest. The ash plume shrank down, and airspace finally began to re-open. Billowing ash and steam was largely replaced by small explosions casting lava bombs hundreds of meters into the air, accompanied by thunderous booming sounds. As I write this, the eruption continues and shows no signs of slowing down. We could be in for more of the same for months to come, perhaps with a lava flow emerging from beneath Gígjökull at some point.

What about Katla, then?

And so, to the question seemingly on everyone's mind—"What about Katla?" The answer, right now, is "Absolutely nothing". There may be signs of a linkage between Eyjafjallajökull and Katla, but at the moment there are no signs of that linkage waking up. Maybe this will change in the future—who knows—but for now you can relax safe in the knowledge that the volcano everyone loves to hate (come on, give poor Katla a break!) is not about to blow up in our faces. Unless it does.

James Ashworth
Julia Staples





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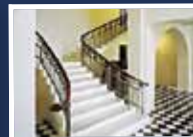
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Food is served from 10 until 22 every day. On Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, after the kitchen closes Hressó heats up with live music. Weekends, DJs keep the party going until morning, with no cover charge.



The SIC Report: What's All This Then?

When the banks collapsed in October 2008, Iceland's bankers, politicians, and financial supervisors sprang into action—and promptly blamed everyone but themselves. As a result, it became apparent that a neutral third-party was going to be needed to investigate what caused this mess. And so, parliament formed the Special Investigative Commission (SIC).

The members, appointed on December 30, 2008, are Supreme Court justice Páll Hreinsson, who acted as chair, along with two others: Parliamentary Ombudsman of Iceland, Mr. Tryggvi Gunnarsson, and Sigríður Benediktsdóttir Ph.D., lecturer and associate Chair at Yale University.

The commission defines its own purpose as “to collect information, find facts and provide an overview of the main events leading to the fall of the Icelandic banks and identify its causes.”

And so with bated breath, the Icelandic people waited. In the fall of 2009, it was announced that the findings would be released, but then that was delayed. It became delayed twice more. On April 12, the commission presented its nine volumes of findings to Parliament and the general public.

So what were those findings? Well, it turns out there was plenty of blame to go around. The banks were in part to blame for essentially committing fraud, with directors loaning to themselves and buying stock in their own companies, artificially inflating the value of the banks. Politicians—in particular, the Independence Party, and especially former Prime Minister Geir H. Haarde—were also to blame for misinforming the public and their

own colleagues, for accepting enormous loans and gifts from corporations and banks, and for not stepping in to increase supervision and regulation when it was most needed. Even the President of Iceland was criticized, for allegedly giving foreign governments and businessmen a cosmetically enhanced image of Iceland's financial situation, and for using his office to assist venture capitalists start businesses abroad.

But the most-mentioned individual in the report is former Central Bank chair and current editor of Morgunblaðið Davíð Oddsson, whose libertarian policies not only shaped the Independence Party during his time as party chairman and Prime Minister, but apparently carried over after he appointed himself in charge of the Central Bank.

Many people predicted that there would be blood in the streets when the findings were released. Instead, the reaction of the average Icelanders was decidedly “Well, no kidding.” No one was surprised nor outraged by the findings, and a recent poll showed that while most Icelanders are happy with the report's findings, the vast majority don't believe anyone is going to do any jail time.

As for the people named in the report—surprise!—they also lay the blame at everyone but themselves. Well, most everybody. Social Democrat MP and former Minister of Business Björgvin Sigurðsson took a temporary leave of absence. Independence Party MP Illugi Gunnarsson followed suit, as did Independence Party vice-chair and former Minister of Education Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir. Social Democrat MP Steinunn Valdis Óskarsdóttir—herself in the spotlight

for accepting very substantial campaign contributions—kicked things up a notch by suggesting that every MP who was in power in the time leading up to the banking collapse should resign (it should be noted that she suggested this while retorting those who had suggested she resign).

But in the end, these gestures are simply that. No one has yet been charged with a crime. That's the special prosecutor's job. Whether anyone is charged, tried and punished remains to be seen, but even that doesn't touch on what the Grapevine sees as the root of the problem: an unwillingness to supervise our country's financial institutions. New laws are needed to prevent this from happening again. New supervisory bodies are needed who are actually willing to enforce these laws. And new judges are needed who are willing to convict those guilty of wrongdoing. Until that happens, it's business as usual in Iceland.

If you're curious, you can read English translations of the SIC's findings online, at sic.althingi.is.

PAUL NIKOLOV
JULIA STAPLES



SIC Report: What The Locals Think



VIGDÍS M. SVEINBJÖRNSDÓTTIR
FARMER, EGILSSTAÐIR

Has the economic crash changed your day-to-day life?

No, no change in my life. Our debts have gone up a bit, but it's not affecting our day-to-day life.

How do you feel about the report's findings?

It was no surprise. I think the findings were things most people knew beforehand. It's been talked about. We knew who those people were who were running the banks and who were wading in all that money.

So you weren't surprised?

It was just a confirmation of the things most people knew. But the things I heard about the conversation the committee was having with those people, what surprised me was how those bankers and those who had access to the money—how they talked. What they said and the language they were speaking. They used poor language and they are not expressing themselves well. That's the only thing that really surprised me.

Do you believe the people named in it should be prosecuted and held accountable?

Yeah, I think so. The bankers, and those who had all the access to all this money in the banks. That was nothing but fraud they were engaging in.

Who is to blame?

Those people, saying that that everyone was to blame, everyone was participating, I don't think that's right. It wasn't everyone. Most people [in Iceland] were just going about their business as usual.

Are there lessons to be learned from the report? Is there one major one?

It's a lesson that people seem to have to learn every once in a while. That greed doesn't pay. I think people have to be reminded over and over about this.

If you could vote anyone off the island, who would it be?

Those who were in the front of this business. I don't want them anywhere near business in Iceland. I don't want to shop in their shops; I don't want to use their telephones. I want to know that when I'm living my life in Iceland I'm not paying money to these men. – SO



HELGI HÁKON JÓNSSON,
EX-REAL ESTATE AGENT

Has the economic crash changed your day-to-day life? If so, how?

It most certainly has. Before the crash I

was an authorised real estate agent and I could easily choose from agencies to work for. Now the real estate market is dead.

Have you read any of the report itself? How do you feel about its findings?

I have not read any of the report myself. Everything in the report has been constantly in the news since October 6, 2008.

Do you think there's a culprit? Do you believe the people named in it should be prosecuted and held accountable?

Yes, there are culprits. There are many of them at that, in both politics and business. Of course they should be prosecuted and held responsible.

Are we all to blame?

We may be responsible for electing unable politicians, but did we have a choice of voting for any more able ones?!!?

What do you feel are the biggest lessons to be learned from the report?

Honesty.

What surprised you most about the report?

As I said, this has all been in the news for the last two years. I didn't find many surprises. Only confirmation.

If you could vote anyone off the island, who would it be?

There are simply just too many people.

– AA



JÓHANNES KJARTANSSON
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Has the economic crash changed your day-to-day life? If so how?

I don't have a house or a car anymore. But I didn't really before either, so I'm OK.

Have you read any of the report itself? How do you feel about its findings?

No, but I've looked at the cover photographs and layout. It's quite pretty. I've been monitoring all the news spawning from it though, from day one up until the volcano eruption. After that I kind of lost the thread. I feel angry and frustrated. It's unbelievable how much corruption was going on under the giant umbrella created by our very own government. It turns out the umbrella was leaking like a sieve. I especially love how all this commotion in Iceland creates new possibilities for metaphors.

Do you think there's a culprit? Do you believe the people named in it should be prosecuted and held accountable?

For sure. Negligence is just as bad as wrongdoings. The people in charge are the ones that created this environment in the first place. I feel that the entrepreneurs and “vikings” shouldn't be getting

so much heat, since many of them were just working within this environment and under the umbrella. The politicians are to blame first and foremost in my opinion.

Are we all to blame?

Partly. The Icelandic “Þetta reddast”-way of thinking (“Þetta reddast” is a common Icelandic expression that translates to ‘Everything will work itself out’) got us into this mess. You can't just “buy” a car for 3 million ISK and a house for 22 million ISK with a foreign loan while living like a king, hoping everything will just work out eventually. I travelled a lot myself, and never really could afford it. So I just took loans. And some more loans. And then loans for my loans. I thought I was behaving irresponsibly but it turned out even my banks were doing the exact same thing! If the emperor is naked, by all means, shout it out loud!

If you could vote anyone off the island, who would it be?

Davíð Oddsson. He's the best and worst thing that has happened to this country. Had he quit in 2002 he'd be a living legend. But now he's a different kind of legend. By being driven by his personal vendetta and being impossible to work with he managed to devastate this country more than any volcano could. – RL

ÞORSTEINN MÁSSON
FISHERMAN AND STUDENT



Has the crash changed your day-to-day life?

No, not really. My company that owns the boat, its loan went up a bit, but it was all manageable. But you know, prices of imported goods have gone up, so it's more expensive to buy food. I think the crash didn't affect us hillbillies as much as it did the city folks.

How do you feel about the report's findings?

Most of the things that are said in the report have come up before as rumours, speculation. It surprised me how much of them turned out to be true. I was kind of worried that the report would not judge anybody or come up with any real conclusions, so I'm really happy with the report. It was more than I expected.

Do you think there's a culprit? Is there more than one person to blame, even society as a whole?

If we could blame somebody, it would be the owners of the bank, and the political people—the people who were in charge at the time. It's sad that now these people who are most to blame, they're pointing at

each other. What I would really like to see is somebody who said, “Yes, I fucked up.” **What do you think is preventing them from doing that?**

I'm not sure, but it's tradition in Iceland that you never admit your mistakes. Looking at how many members of Parliament, you can count it by your left hand how many have resigned when they've fucked something up. They find it so hard to come out and say it. We're always taking sides with this company or this political party. Like, “I'm an Independent Party person.” And people live their whole lives based on that faulty theory.

Why is that a bad thing?

You can't let the political party run almost every aspect of your life. Some people, they defended their party leader to the death. So I think people should just be more, like, think for yourself, make your own decisions. Don't let the party make decisions for you. And I think that's what I'm hoping will happen with this report and this crash. – SO



NANNA ÁRNASDÓTTIR
STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

Has the economic crash changed your day-to-day life? If so how?

When the economy crashed I lived in London. It made me so homesick, and when the riots started I felt like I was missing out on a big part of my nation's history. So I quit my job and moved back home. Since I've spent basically my entire life abroad I feel like I've reconnected with home, and I'm getting a real twisted kick out of being here to observe it all unravel.

Have you read any of the report itself? How do you feel about its findings?

I've read chapters, but not the whole thing. It's the length of a Victor Hugo brain-fart. I watched the press conference on the morning that it came out and I watched the 3-hour live special on TV and of course read about it extensively so I got the Cliff Notes so far. I feel shame. Deep, unabashed embarrassment at those bankers' actions and how it reflects on all of us. Right after the crash everyone at my work back in London called me FT for six months. FT was short for “Financial Terrorist”.

Do you think there's a culprit? Do you believe the people named in it should be prosecuted and held accountable?

I don't think there is one puppet master behind it all. I think a lot of people got a

little greedy and made bad calls to benefit themselves until it all added up. I think everyone who was named should be held accountable. If they aren't I'll be even more humiliated because it means we'll have failed each other by not demanding accountability.

Are we all to blame?

We all bought into it. Everyone binged on that consumer crack pipe like Nasty McMethface. Of course there are limits to how accountable the Icelandic Joe Shmoe can be when our government, our banks and the news media all told there was nothing to worry about.

What do you feel are the biggest lessons to be learned from the report?

Always question authority and embrace moderation.

What surprised you most about the report?

That the commission had the balls to name any names at all.

If you could vote anyone off the island, who would it be?

I always said Davíð Oddsson, but the way Geir Haarde reacted to the report it just put me off. I became so enraged I threw a yoghurt at the TV during his RÚV interview the night of the report – well OK I threatened to hurl the yoghurt, but I was eating it and he wasn't worth the yoghurt. – AA



SIGURBJÖRG JÓHANNESDÓTTIR
SOFTWARE DEVELOPER

How has the economic crash changed your day-to-day life?

Icelanders are required to pay a percentage of their salary into a pension fund. My pension fund was controlled by Landsbanki, and it took a huge dive in the crash. I was a bit worried at first that I could lose my job, as people were doing all over the place, but that hasn't happened, so it has not changed very much for me.

How do you feel about the report's findings?

It did surprise me a bit when they're quoting from the interviews they conducted with the people like the bankers and politicians and ministers and all that. And sometimes they don't sound very bright.

Do you feel that some people acted maliciously and with complete knowledge of the bad things that they were doing?

Yes. It looks like some people did, but it also looks like some people were just trying to control things they didn't understand. I find that in government there is

The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE iNFO



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YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LIFE, TRAVEL AND
ENTERTAINMENT IN ICELAND.

Issue 5 - 2010

www.grapevine.is

16

May

GO WHALE WATCHING

After being seriously set back by some volcano-action, the artists of the Bedroom Community finally embarked on their most elaborate and ambitious project to date a couple of weeks ago – the Whale Watching Tour. The group, comprised of Valgeir Sigurðsson, Nico Muhly, Ben Frost and Sam Amidon, have been travelling all over Europe. Aside from a few volcanic snags here and there, they've been knocking audiences off their asses at every stop. The Grapevine called up Valgeir Sigurðsson five minutes before he hit the stage in Switzerland to chat about the tour and its impending final show at the National Theatre of Iceland in Reykjavík this May.

"The tour's been amazing," says Valgeir. "After finally making it through the clouds of ash – and having to reschedule the first four shows – it's been great."

Oddly enough, the Whale Watching Tour is travelling through Europe on a bus called Moby Dick. "It's a total coincidence, and a pretty funny one at that. It's a big white bus, it's pretty cool, and the name is appropriate."

We hear the concert you are throwing at the National Theatre is one of your most ambitious ones yet. We hear you've got something special planned. Can you tell us about that?

We will have Daniel Bjarnason playing with us, which was only possible in Iceland, so that will be pretty special. We have also re-arranged some of the material and we will try out a lot of new stuff. We never play same programme twice, so this will all come together in this last show. We have been documenting the tour and the process of working together on film – in fact the show we're about to play tonight is being filmed – so it will be interesting to see after.

Has this tour brought on any further plans together or new projects you will do?

We are always working together! One of the exciting things that will happen is that we're going to be working with new artist, Puzzle Muteson. We'll be recording an album with him when we get back."

So get excited people. Reykjavík will be lucky enough to get the final culmination of the living project that's been the Whale Watching Tour and that is nothing to shake a stick at. This bunch of artists command some serious respect, and we get to witness the grand finale – in the freakin' National Theatre of all places...

FOR THE ROAD



OUT SOON!

MIRI
Okkar



OUT NOW!

STAFRÆNN HÁKON
Sanitas



OUT NOW!

10" vinyl & CD EP

BENNI HEMM HEMM
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MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN MAY

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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

7 FRI

Apótek
0:00 DJ Aki. Beer for 550 ISK.
Austur
23:00 Live DJs.
Bar 11
0:00 A good selection of DJs.
B5
21:00 Live DJs.
Celtic Cross
01:00 Live music.
Cultura
22:30 House DJs.
The Culture House
17:00 Chamber Choir of Southern
Iceland perfoms works by Sir John
Tavener. Free.
Den Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-
19:00.
Dubliner
22:30 Live music.
English Pub
22:00 Live music.
Kaffibarinn
Hunk of a Man.
Kaffi Zimsen
21:00 Resident DJs Nino and Dra-
matík.
Karamba
23:45 Dans-Hans.
Prikið
22:00 DJ Gísli Galdur.
Rósenberg
22:00 Rokkabilliband Reykjavíkur.
Salurinn
21:00 Concert: Litla Flugan "Little
Fly". Tickets 3.500 ISK.
Sódóma
22:00 Nokia on Ice Festival: DJ
Mike Sheridan (electro) and DJ
Margeir (house). Free.
Thorvaldsen
0:00 Resident DJs.

8 SAT

Apótek
0:00 DJ Aki. Beer for 550 ISK.
Austur
23:00 Live DJs.
Bakkus
21:00 DJ Glyzgengið.
Bar 11
0:00 A good selection of DJs..
B5
21:00 Live DJs.
Celtic Cross
01:00 Live music.
Cultura
22:30 House DJs.
Den Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-
19:00.
Dubliner
22:30 Live music.
English Pub
22:00 Live music.
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Alfons X.
Kaffi Zimsen
21:00 Resident DJs Nino and Dra-
matík.
Karamba
23:45 DJ Gísli Galdur.
Prikið
16:00 DJ Danni D.
Rósenberg
22:00 Rokkabilliband Reykjavíkur.
Salurinn
17:00 & 21:00 Concert: Litla Flugan
"Little Fly". Tickets 3.500 ISK.
Sódóma
22:00 Nokia on Ice Festival: Samúel
Jón Samúelsson Big Band, Snorri
Helgason, (indie-folk), Cliff Calvin
(alt rock), Who Knew (indie), Of
Monsters and Men (acoustic/
folk), Hoffman (rock), Miri (indie),
and DJ Mike Sheridan (electro).
Tickets 1.000 ISK.
Thorvaldsen
0:00 Resident DJs.

9 SUN

Den Danske Kro
Hangover night. 2-for-1 beer from

16:00-19:00. Beer 500 ISK after
19:00
Dubliner
22:30 Live music.
English Pub
22:00 Live music.
Gerðuberg Cultural Centre
14:00 Let's Sing And Chant: folk
song sessions for all.
Kaffi Zimsen
21:00 Movie Night.
Prikið
22:00 Hangover Cinema features-
Goodfellas.
Rósenberg
21:00 Sigga Eyrún.
Salurinn
13:00 Klassískt Diskótek, classic
disco concert. Tickets 1.500 ISK.
20:00 Vígbór Sjafnar and Jónas
Ingimundarson classical perfor-
mance. Tickets 2.500 ISK.

10 MON

Bakkus
21:00 Movie Night. Documentary:
Big Rigs.
Den Danske Kro
Live music. Shots for 400 ISK. 2-for-1
beer from 16:00-19:00.
Dubliner
22:30 Live music.
English Pub
22:00 Live music.
Kaffi Zimsen
17:00 Best Friends Night: 2-for-1
beer.
Prikið
22:00 Two glasses of red wine and
cheese at 1.000 ISK. DJ Jeffstar.
Rósenberg
21:00 List án landamara.

11 TUE

Den Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-
19:00.
Dubliner
22:30 Live music.
English Pub
22:00 Live music.
Prikið
22:00 Football/soccer Playstation
night. Beer for 350 ISK from 15:00 to
17:00.
Rósenberg
21:00 Live music.

12 WED

Den Danske Kro
Pop music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-
19:00. Beer 500 ISK after 19:00.
Dubliner
22:30 Live music.
English Pub
22:00 Live music.
Íslenska óperan
20:00 Brindisi: Vox Feminae. Tickets
3.500 ISK.
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Sexy Lazer.
Kaffi Zimsen
21:00 Wednesday Playday. Shot and
a beer for 1.000 ISK.
Prikið
22:00 Football/soccer Playstation

night. Beer for 350 ISK from 15:00 to
17:00.
Rósenberg
21:00 Simon and Clover.
Sódóma
21:00 Króna (indie pop).

13 THU

Bakkus
21:00 DJ Músikölski.
B5
21:00 Live music.
Cultura
22:30 House DJs.
Den Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-
19:00. Beer 500 ISK after 19:00.
Dubliner
22:30 Live music.
English Pub
22:00 Live music.
Háskólabíó
20:00 Leif Ove Andsnes, Christian
Tetzlaff, & Tanja Tetzlaff: classical
piano, 4.900 / 4.200 ISK.
Íslenska óperan
16:00 Brindisi: Vox Feminae. Tickets
3.500 ISK.
Kaffi Zimsen
17:00 Ólafsvaka 490 ISK beer night.
P
Multi-instrumentalist Sammi MCs.
Prikið
12:00 to 13:00 25% off sandwich and
burger specials. 950 ISK giant beers..
Music with Krúsa.
Rósenberg
21:00 Maggí Einars and Eggert.
Sódóma
21:00 Hip Hop Vs. Rock: Ástþór
Óðinn, Stjörnuryk, Orri Err, Nögl,
Narfur, and No Matches.
Thorvaldsen
All day. Mojito Night. Mojitos for
1.000 ISK.

14 FRI

Apótek
0:00 DJ Fly. Beer for 550 ISK.
Austur
23:00 Live DJs.
Bakkus
21:00 DJ Unnur Andrea.
Bar 11
0:00 A good selection of DJs..
B5
21:00 Live DJs.
Celtic Cross
01:00 Live music.
Cultura
22:30 House DJs.
Den Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-
19:00.
Dubliner
22:30 Live music.
English Pub
22:00 Live music.
Kaffibarinn
22:00 DJ Kári.
Kaffi Zimsen
21:00 Resident DJs Nino and Dra-
matík, Club Party.
Karamba
23:45 Nonni & Manni.
Nasa
22:30 Próflokadjamm X977: Endless
Dark, Hoffman, Ultra Mega Tech-

Music & Entertainment | Venue finder

Amsterdam Hafnarstræti 5 D2	Dillon Laugavegur 30 F5	NASA Þorvaldsenstræti 2 E3
Apótek Austurstræti 16 E3	Dubliner Hafnarstræti 4 D3	Nýlenduvörðverzlun Hemma & Valda Laugavegur 21 E4
Austur Austurstræti 7 E3	English Pub Austurstræti 12 D2	Næsti Bar Ingólfstræti 1A E3
B5 Bankastræti 5 E3	Glaumbar Tryggvagata 20 D2	Óliver Laugavegur 20A F5
Babalú Skólavörðustígur 22 G5	Grand Rokk Smíðjustígur E5	Ölstofan Vegamótastígur E4
Batteri Hafnarstræti 1-3 D2	Highlander Lækjargata 10 E3	Prikið Bankastræti E3
Bar 11 Laugavegur 11 E4	Hressó Austurstræti 20 E3	Rósenberg Klapparstígur 25 E4
Barbara Laugavegur 22 F6	Hverfisbarinn Hverfisgata 20 E4	Sódóma Reykjavík Tryggvagata 22 D3
Bjarni Fel Austurstræti 20 E3	Jacobsen Austurstræti 9 E3	Sólón Bankastræti 7A E3
Boston Laugavegur 28b F5	Kaffi Hljómalind Laugavegur 23 E4	Thorvaldsen Austurstræti 8 D2
Café Cultura Hverfisgata 18 E4	Kaffi Zimsen Hafnarstræti 18 D3	Vegamót Vegamótastígur 4 E4
Café Paris Austurstræti 14 E3	Kaffibarinn Bergstraðastræti 1 E4	Venue Tryggvagata 22 D3
Balthazar Hafnarstræti 1-3 D2	Karamba Laugavegur 22 F4	
Celtic Cross Hverfisgata 26 E4	London/Reykjavík Tryggvagata 22 D2	

noblandið Stefán, Cliff Calvin,
and **Ensími.** Tickets 1.200 ISK.

Prikið
13:00 to 14:00 Back to the '50s with **Danna Deluxe.**

Rósenberg
22:00 Live music.

Salurinn
21:00 Concert: Litla Flugan "Little Fly". Tickets 3.500 ISK.

Sódóma
22:00 Kimi Records presents **Stafrænn Hákon** (alt/ambient/rock) and **Snorri Helgason** (indie/folk).

Thorvaldsen
0:00 Resident DJs.

15 SAT

Apótek
0:00 **DJ Fly.** Beer for 550 ISK.

Austur
23:00 Live DJs.

Bakkus
21:00 **DJ Kári.**

Bar 11
0:00 A good selection of DJs..

B5
21:00 Live DJs.

Celtic Cross
01:00 Live music.

Cultura
22:30 House DJs.

Den Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00.

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Háskólabíó
19:00 & 22:00 **Mannakorn Concert,** 3.900 ISK.

Kaffibarinn
22:00 **B-Ruff & Gísli Galdur.**

Kaffi Zimsen
21:00 Resident **DJs Nino and Dramatík.**

Karamba
23:45 **Dans-Hans.**

Prikið
16:00 to 17:00 **DJ Addi Intro.**

Rósenberg
22:00 Live music.

Salurinn
17:00 & 21:00 Concert: Litla Flugan, "Little Fly". Tickets 3.500 ISK.

Sódóma
22:00 **Árstíðir** (acoustic folk).

Thorvaldsen
0:00 Resident DJs.

16 SUN

Den Danske Kro
Hangover night. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00. Beer 500 ISK after 19:00.

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Gerðuberg Cultural Centre
14:00 **Beatstalk Tunes:** Music with young composers.

Kaffibarinn
22:00 **Alfons X.**

Kaffi Zimsen
21:00 Movie Night.

Karamba
20:00 **Spilakvöld Máisólar.**

Prikið
22:00 Hangover Cinema presents **Anaconda.**

Rósenberg
21:00 **Uppistand Svava.**

17 MON

Bakkus
21:00 Movie Night, **1984.**

Den Danske Kro
Live music. Shots for 400 ISK. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00.

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Kaffi Zimsen
17:00 Best Friends Night: 2-for-1 beer.

Prikið
22:00 to 23:00 Two glasses red wine and cheese for 1.000 ISK. **DJ Hollywood.**

Rósenberg
21:00 Live music.

18 TUE

Den Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00.

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Prikið
22:00 Playstation football/soccer tournament with **DJ Gauti.** Beer 350 ISK from 15:00 to 16:00.

Rósenberg
21:00 **Memfismaffian.**

19 WED

Den Danske Kro
Pop music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00. Beer 500 ISK after 19:00.

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Rósenberg
21:00 **Fuglabúrið**



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20 THU

Bakkus
21:00 **DJ Ákni.**

B5
21:00 Live music.

Cultura
22:30 House DJs.

Den Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00. Beer 500 ISK after 19:00.

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Kaffi Zimsen
17:00 Ólafsvaka 490 ISK beer night.

Karamba
22:00 **Pedro Pilatus .**

P
Multi-instrumentalist **Sammi** MCs.

Prikið
12:00 to 13:00 **Steindi Jr.** and **Bent,** then stand-up by **Dóri DNA** with **DJ Krúsi Klárar.**

Rósenberg
21:00 Live music.

Sódóma
21:00 **Mikael Lind** (electronic/experimental), **Matthew Collings** (electro-acoustic).

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Visualizing A Universe Of Hope

Amadou & Mariam bring their message across borders

Since conquering the francophone World Music charts over the last decade, Amadou & Mariam from Mali have recently taken the rest of the music world by storm. Often referred to as ‘the blind couple from Africa,’ their latest album, Welcome To Mali, included collaborations from artists such as Damon Albarn and K’Naan. This helped propel them towards a new audience and venture into uncharted territory.

Amadou Bagayoko and Mariam Doumbia met in 1977 at Bamako’s Institute for the Young Blind. Amadou was already a working musician and Mariam was a singer for weddings and traditional festivals. They married and began making music as a duo in the early 1980s, gaining instant recognition in their homeland.

Throughout the course of their career, their music has evolved from traditional Malian songs to incorporating many elements of rock, soul and electro. In the ‘90s they were signed to Universal in France and collaborated with Manu Chao on their breakthrough album Dimanche à Bamako.

Now on the verge of playing All Tomorrow’s Parties in England and the FIFA World-Cup opening ceremonies in South Africa this June, the pair is making their first trip to Iceland to kick off the Reykjavík Arts Festival on May 12th. I had the chance to speak with Amadou about their music, their career and the hidden blessings of being visually impaired.

Are we right in assuming this will be your first time in Iceland?

Yes, we have toured all over the place but we’ve never come to Iceland. But we are very pleased to go there. It’s great to go to a country we’ve never been to before.



With the release of Welcome to Mali, have you found wider recognition from the Anglophone world?

Yes, very much. We have had the opportunity to be on many television programmes in England and in the United-States, which we never thought we would do. It really gave us a whole new media coverage.

Your lyrics cover a wide range of topics, all the way from love songs to political songs for the people. Is this a reflection of your Malian culture?

It’s very reflective, because in Mali we sing about everything. The people really listen to singers and artists because they are at the centre of the culture, and they bring messages to the people.

What is the impact you see your songs as having, and what is the impact you would like them to have?

The impact we would like to have is for people to listen to our songs and try to live as we do through them. We want people to be inspired by our lyrics and for them to become driving elements in everything they do. Especially to bring awareness to people as well. We want to tell them that life can be good today but bad tomorrow, but you have to accept everything because things can always change.

Are you’re ready to take on Iceland?
I think everything will go well and we will have a good crowd. We are always ready to party and make people dance. Our music is meant to make people move. ♡

Rebecca Louder

Sódóma

REYKJAVÍK

7. maí:

Nokia on Ice Festival:
DJ Mike Sheridan (DK, electro)
and DJ Margeir (house)

8. maí:

Nokia on Ice Festival:
Samúel Jón Samúelsson Big Band (big band),
Snorri Helgason (indie/folk),
Cliff Clavin (alt rock), Who Knew (indie),
Of Monsters and Men (acoustic/folk),
Hoffman (rock), Miri (indie)
and DJ Mike Sheridan (electro).

12. maí:

Króna (pop/indie)

13. maí:

Hip Hop vs. Rock: Ástþór Óðinn,
Stjörnuryk, Orri Err, Nögl, Narfur
and No Matches

14. maí:

Kimi Records present:
Stafrænn Hákon (alt/ambient/rock)
and Snorri Helgason (indie/folk)

15. maí:

Árstíðir (acoustic folk)

20. maí:

Mikael Lind (electronic/experimental),
Matthew Collings (electro-acoustic)

21. maí:

The Authorities (USA) (punk/rock/surf),
Bacon Love Support Unit (conservative dubfunk),
The Way Down (alt rock).

22. maí:

Weapons (rock), Nolo (lo-fi indie),
Cosmic Call (indie)

27. maí:

Úlfaldi úr Mýflugu Festival Warm-up

28. maí:

Pestilence (NL) (death metal)

29. maí:

Óli Ofur

4. júní - 6. júní:

Tattoo Festival

Sódóma Reykjavík Tryggvagata 22, 101 RVK

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MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN MAY



Nokia on Ice Festival
with Miri, Hoffman, Who Knew? and more
Sódóma @ 21:00
Admission 1000 ISK

Beatstalk Tunes
Song-Cycle by Haukur Tómasson and Þórarinn Eldjárn
Gerðuberg Cultural Centre @ 14:00

Celebrate Iceland's burgeoning greenery with some spring music. The renowned Caput Ensemble will play music by contemporary Icelandic composer Haukur Tómasson, who is known for the vivacity of his work. Picture the soundtrack to a time-lapse film of grass growing. Haukur won the 2004 Nordic Council Music Prize, the biggest prize for a Scandinavian composition. Some of his pieces are inspired by Icelandic folk music, while the rhythmic patterns of others make use of the Fibonacci sequence, a mathematical pattern found throughout nature. Take in some music that reflects Iceland's austere and magnificent landscape. Free admission. **SO**

Come see some cute indie musicians on stage, and hear their cute indie-folk-rock tunes. A fun way to spend Saturday night, that is, before you go out after the show and get trashed and spilled on at Kaffibarinn until six in the morning (maybe you'll even see some of the bands there later). Friday night of Nokia on Ice is free, and Saturday night is just 1.000 ISK. With nine bands, that's just over 100 ISK per band. Not bad for a night full of great local music. **SO**

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For concert information see music listings on this spread or visit us at www.sinfonia.is

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Numismatic Museum

The Central Bank and National Museum of Iceland jointly operate a numismatic collection that consists of Icelandic notes and coins, foreign money from earlier times, especially if mentioned in Icelandic sources, and more recent currency from Iceland's main trading partner countries. A selection from the numismatic collection is on display in showcases on the ground floor of the Central Bank's main building.

Situated in the Central Bank's main building in Kalkofnsvegur 1, Reykjavík. Open Mon.-Fri. 13:30-15:30. Free admittance.



Falling In Love With My Kitchen Aid
"A Theatre Happening"
The National Theatre of Iceland @ 20:00
Admission 3400 ISK

An exuberant tribute to cooking, Falling in Love With My Kitchen Aid riffs on all things culinary, and for good reason. Have you ever seen those designer Kitchen Aid mixers, available in all colours imaginable? To the dyed-in-the-wool cook, they're the only thing better than licking the spoon. That's worth dancing about, or at least it's a reason to watch this performance. The colourful production is part theatre, part circus, and is based on works by visual artist Ilmur Stefánsdóttir. **SO**



I'm Happy And Angry!
Kimi Records presents: Stafrænn Hákon and Snorri Helgason
Sódóma @ 22:00

Ólafur Josephsson is no lightweight. Recording music since 1999 under the moniker Stafrænn Hákon, he has made a name for himself for his powerful blend of post-rock, experimental electronica and ambient guitars. His freshly released sixth album, Sanítas, retains the wall-of-sound quality of his previous recordings, while adding new dimensions of melody and intricacies. Snorri Helgason is the frontman for Sprengjuhöllin and when his band went on hiatus in 2009 he took the opportunity to hone his singer-songwriter skills into his debut solo album, I'm Gonna Put My Name On Your Door. His light-hearted brand of folky-pop love songs is in complete contrast, but perfect balance, to Stafrænn Hákon's dramatic sound. Get happy, get sad, enjoy. **RL**



12 - 5
May June

Let There Be Art!
Reykjavik Arts Festival
Various Locations

Although it may at times seem as though this city is a constant carnival of arts and entertainment, Reykjavik still finds the time to specially designate a full month of the year to creative endeavours. Since 1970, the Reykjavik Arts Festival has taken over the city in May, every other year until 2004, and annually since. As one of Northern Europe's oldest art festivals, it focuses primarily on Icelandic culture while hosting countless international artists. Past artists and performers include the likes of the Tiger Lillies, the San Francisco Ballet and Spencer Tunick. The festival has hosted some fairly notable performances, too, such as Canadian singer Lhasa de Sela, who performed her last concert before passing away – as well as The Clash and Led Zeppelin (!).

This year's programme is as jam-packed as ever, offering a rich programme full of concerts, exhibitions, theatre, dance, opera and readings. The whole thing kicks off on May 12th at Laugardalshöll where Amadou & Mariam play their ever first show in Iceland, with local funksters Retro Stefson supporting. From there, it's just non-stop action until June 5th. Here are some highlights to keep an eye out for.

Orquestra Chekara Flamenca Icelandic Opera, May 30th, 8pm
Founded over 50 years ago by Abdessadak Chekara, the Arab-Andalusian Orchestra of Tetouan is an institution of Southern Spanish and Moroccan heritage. Brilliantly blending the worlds of flamenco dance with traditional al-ala music, the spectacle is a veritable journey into the Andalusian world.

Bedroom Community Whale Watching Tour National Theatre of Iceland, May 16th, 8pm
Bringing together some of the brightest talents in experimental and neo-classical composition in Iceland, the Bedroom Community is comprised of Valgeir Sigurðsson, Nico Muhly, Ben Frost and Sam Amidon. The Whale Watching Tour brings these four artists together, cohesively composing and performing all together for the first time. They are joined by a string and brass quartet to round out the band. A small orchestra led by Daniel Bjarnason will open the show.

Readings at Writers' Homes Various locations and dates throughout the festival
These intimate and limited events take place in the homes of eight Icelandic writers. Amongst them are Andri Snær Magnason, writer of the acclaimed book Dreamland: A Self-Help Guide for a Frightened Nation, Guðrún Helgadóttir and Sigrún Eldjárn. The readings will cover every style of writing, from poetry to children's stories. This is a chance for the public a chance to have a truly personal experience with local literature.

For the full festival schedule, consult the website at www.listahatid.is. **RL**



20
May

Boys Makin' Noise
Mikael Lind & Matthew Collings
Sódóma @ 21:00

Since the release of his album 'Alltíð' last spring, electronic and classical composer Mikael Lind has been hard at work crafting a new set of songs for his next record. The Swedish-born Reykjavik resident is moving closer towards a neo-classical sound compared to his previous more experimental work. He will hopefully share some of his works-in-progress at this show, which was rescheduled after the unfortunate fire at Batteríð. Sharing the stage for the night will be Ben Frost collaborator Matthew Collings playing his sweeping, Kevin Shields-ian melodic noise. **RL**

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Stefán, Hoffman and
Endless Dark
NASA @ 22:30
Admission 1200 ISK

Galldarn kids these days! Why, in my day, we didn't get none of these fancy end-of-school hootenanies. When we finished our exams, we went out back and plowed the fields until dark, then woke up at dawn and milked the cows. That's not entirely true, but we certainly didn't have a sweet line up of bands like the ones playing at NASA next Friday. Luckily, you don't have to be a graduating student to come to this party. All you need is 1200 ISK to come in and rock out all night with some of Iceland's musical gems. **RL**



14
May

Untitled Film Stills -
Photographs by Cindy Sherman

The National Gallery of Iceland
Have you ever tied a scarf around your head and pretended you were Thelma and/or Louise, fleeing the law like it was nobody's business? Or got caught accidentally on purpose by a blowing street vent, like Marilyn? Acclaimed American photographer Cindy Sherman plays with female film fantasies and stereotypes like these in self-portraits from 1977 to 1980. The series of photographs immediately put Sherman on the art world radar. Put on your dark sunglasses and trench coat (and not much else) and check them out. **SO**

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MAP

Places We Like

1 Prikið

Bankastræti 12

Prikið is one of those places that shape-shifts. It's a warm café lined with photographs of its senior frequenters on weekdays, 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

2 Boston

Laugavegi 28b

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

3 Karamba

Laugavegur 22

Downtown hotspot Karamba is a colourful and eclectic bar on Laugavegur with a comfortable atmosphere, typically great music and a chill crowd. This is a good place to relax or to do some serious drinking or to relax. Plus, their decors are done strictly by Grapevine-friendly artists, such as Lóa (who does our comics), Hugleikur Dagsson and Bobby Breiðholt (who's done a lot of nice illustrations for us); they are truly a sight to behold. CF

4 Hemmi og Valdi

Laugavegi 21

The “colonial store” Hemmi and Valdi is a cosy hangout that has advanced from being a toasty retreat, where one can score cheap beer and have a quiet chat, into being a chock-full concert venue and an all-night party place. And believe us, the atmosphere is brilliant. SKK

5 Tíu Dropar

Laugavegur 27

If you're sick of all the arty cafés, filled with Sigur Rós wannabes browsing Facebook on their Macs – go to Tíu Dropar. It's a back-to-basics Icelandic café that hasn't changed its interior since the sixties. Really proves the old adage “if it ain't broke, don't fix it.” Plus, the coffee's great and so are the pancakes. SKK

6 Sódóma Reykjavík

Tryggvagata 22

Newly opened Sódóma on Tryggvagötu is already a hit with party crowds and gig-goers alike. An extensive venue, filled with reasonably priced beverages and reasonably good looking people. Some of Iceland's finest musical ventures have played in recent months, and their schedule looks promising too. Also, make sure to visit their men's room for a glance at the “Pissoir of Absolution”. JB



7 Babalú

Skólavörðstíg 22

Located on the second-floor of a quirky little building on Skólavörðustígur, Babalú is an inviting, quaint and cosy café serving up a selection of tea, coffee and hot chocolate along with delicious baked goods and light meals. Food and drink aside, Babalú boasts colourfully decorated and super-comfortable surroundings and a genuinely friendly and likeable staff. CF

8 OSUSHI

Lækjargata 2a

Great place to satisfy your craving for raw fish and vinegar rice. The selection on 'the train' is wide and varied and the atmosphere is relaxed. Also, the colour-coded plates make it easy to keep tabs on your budget while scarfing down your maki and nigiri. 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

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10 Ban Thai

Laugavegur 130

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

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 foosball battles. CF

12 Kisan

Laugavegur 7

This store is incredibly cool. It's stocked with really unique and quirky clothes, outerwear, accessories and handbags, plus they have an adorable section of kids clothes, kitschy vintage toys and books and even interior design items. Wicked place; definitely worth a visit. CF

13 Deli

Bankastræti 14

Getting a good slice of pizza on the go can be an utter ordeal. If you're not careful, you'll frequently wind up paying good money for a cardboardy wafer that has been sitting in a heater box for a week. Not at Deli, however. Their slices are consistently awesome and fresh, the topping selection is intriguing and tasteful and, best of all, they're really cheap.

14 Kolaportið

Tryggvagata 19

Reykjavík's massive indoor flea market is a wonderful place to get lost for a few hours, rummaging through stall upon stall of potential treasures. There are heaps of used clothing, knitwear and other yard-sale type goods from decades of yore, and a large food section with fish, meats and baked goods. Check out the vintage post cards and prints at the table near the army surplus. CF

15 Hressó

Austurstræti 20

You know, Hressó is basically the only place I go for coffee. Why? Their coffee is decent to excellent, but their forte is surely their wonderful patio, where you can enjoy the spring breeze in the sun, wrap yourself in a blanket beneath an electric heater in January and at all times: smoke. They boast of quite the prolific menu, but I'd reconsider the playlists to tell you the truth, too much of Nickelback really hurts. SKK

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 Austur

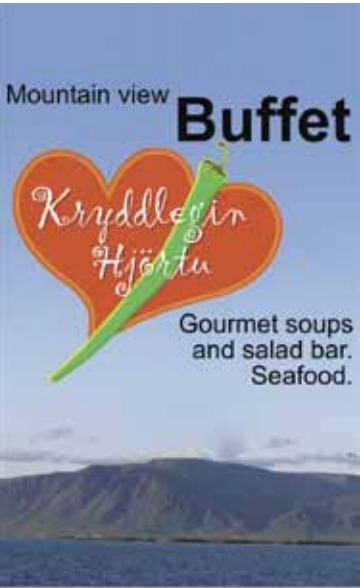
Austurstræti 7

Sleek and shiny, this new restaurant and bar is a straight-up boutique hot spot for stylish kids and trendy professionals alike. Appropriate for formal business meetings but casual enough for the roll-out-bed-at-5pm crowd, they serve up ample, satisfying, modern dishes at reasonable prices. This is also one of the rare places to get a full breakfast all day long! It's really fucking good too. RL

18 Korníð

Lækjargata 4

How about filling your face with cakes at the delightful Korníð. They taste so good, you would gladly push your own mother over for even the slightest of sniffs. Not a sweet tooth? Well, try their delectable sandwiches then; we recommend the egg and bacon ciabatta! At only 590ISK plus all the Píta sauce you could dream of. What more can one ask for on a lunch break? JB



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Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	
9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	
13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00
			10:00	10:00			
			14:00	14:00			
		17:00	17:00	17:00			

*10:00 and 14:00 departures from July 1st to August 10th

November 1st - March 31st

Friday	Saturday	Sunday
13:00	13:00	13:00

Winter schedule

Other adventures at sea

Puffin Tours May 15th - August 15th

Midnight Whale Watching June 15th - July 31st

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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

OPENING

May

14 i8
Sigurður Guðmundsson
Situations and other photo works from 1970-1982. Ongoing until June 19.

14 Hamraborg
Pórgunnur Guðgeirsdóttir/Hogga
Art exhibition in the assemblyroom of the Left Green movement. Ongoing until May 30.

15 Ási Art Museum
Ólöf Nordal
Models, a series of photographs inspired by the story of a man preserved in a glacier, and his son who discovers him. Gallery. Ongoing until May 6.

16 Gerðuberg Cultural Centre
Breiðholt - In the beginning
An exhibition of photographs in collaboration with the Reykjavik Photographic Archive. Ongoing until May 9.

20 Kling & Bang
Erling T.V. Klingenberg
A collection of Klingenberg's work, including self-portraits. Ongoing until June 20.

ONGOING

Arbæjarsafn / Reykjavik City Museum
1 September - 31 May
Winter Program
This open-air historical museum offers guided tours Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 13:00.

The Culture House
Permanent Exhibition:
Medieval Manuscripts
February 3 - ongoing
Icelanders
Exhibit featuring a selection of photographs from the book "Icelanders" by Unnur Jökulsdóttir and Sigurgeir Sigurjónsson.
March 28 2009 - September 2010
ICELAND :: FILM
Traces the evolution of Icelandic filmmaking, exploring myths versus modernity.
March 10 - ongoing
The Nation and Nature
Thirty-minute film about the relationship between humans and nature. Film plays continuously during open hours.

The Library Room
12 August 2009 - ongoing
National Archives of Iceland - 90 years in the museum building.
Commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Culture House.

The Dwarf Gallery
Ongoing
An independent art gallery with ongoing exhibitions. It's located in an old basement. Do you really need to know any more than that?

The Einar Jónsson Museum
Permanent exhibition:
The work of sculptor Einar Jónsson.
Gljúfrasteinn Laxness Museum
Gljúfrasteinn was the home and workplace of Halldór Laxness (winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1955).

i8 Gallery
31 March - 8 May
New works by Lawrence Weiner.

Living Art Museum / Nýló
11 March - 9 May
Intercourse With The Collection

The National Museum
Permanent exhibition:
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.

The Nordic House
10 April - 30 September
Land Of Experiments
Interactive exhibit based on scientific contraptions from Tom Tits Experimentarium in Sweden. Play!

Ráðhús Reykjavíkur
Dulín Himintungl
Kim Linnet exhibits her 360° panorama photos of Iceland.

Reykjavík 871 +/- 2
Permanent exhibition:
The Settlement Exhibition
Reykjavík Art Museum
Hafnarhús
May 28, 2009 - August 29
Erró - Portraits
March 18 - May 23
Erró - Portraits - Women from North Africa

Reykjavik Maritime Museum
Permanent exhibition:
Boats, fishing, and coastal culture. Special exhibition hall hosts short-term exhibitions.

Reykjavik Museum of Photography
January 23 - May 9
Jóna Þorvaldsdóttir - SENSES
Mysterious, often sensual photos made using antiquated techniques.
January 23 - May 9
Jakob Jakobsson - AT WORK
Artist draws on 50 years as a civil engineer. Black and white industrial landscapes and portraits.

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum
February 12 - ongoing
Who is who?
February 15 - ongoing
A Moment with Sigurjón Ólafsson
Hafnarborg
March 13 - May 9
Children's Sizes
Print sized design.

REYKJAVIK ARTS FESTIVAL

May

12 Amadou & Mariam, Laugardalshöll
Concert Hall, 5500 / 4500 ISK
20:30

13 LEIF OVE ANDSNES, Christian Tetzlaff, Tanja Tetzlaff; Haskolabio, Large Hall; Price: ISK 4900 / 4200
20:00

14 ROMEO AND JULIET; The Reykjavik City Theatre; Price: ISK 4500 / 3950
20:00

15 PUNZELLE, Puppetry story-telling; Reykjavik City Centre; Price: Free
13:00, 14:30, 16:00

14 A SOUND EXPERIENCE; The Icelandic Opera; Price: ISK 3500
20:00

15 16 CARMINA VOCAL ENSEMBLE; Krist-skirkja, Christ's Church; Price: ISK 2500
16:00

16 Bedroom Community, the Whale Watching Tour; The National Theatre of Iceland; Price: ISK 3500

16 SUNDAY MORNING CONCERTS; The Free Lutheran Church; Price: ISK 4500 / 2000
Schubert's Three-Song Cycle: a series of concerts, three Sunday mornings in a row. The first Sunday morning, May 16, they perform Die Schöne
11:00

19 SONGS OF LAUGHTER AND LAMENT - Vaasa City Orchestra and Caput soloists perform Icelandic and Finnish compositions; The Icelandic Opera; Price: ISK 2500
20:00

Up to date info at <http://artfest.is>



This River Can Kill You...
Anaconda Hangover Cinema
Free Popcorn
Prikið @ 22:00

Oh man. Okay, remember that part when J.Lo is freaking the eff out because she's stuck on the boat with crazier-than-usual Jon Voight and the river is blocked and she's all "WTF IS THIS" and he's all "LOL RELAX" and Owen Wilson is like "OMG IS THAT REAL DYNAMITE" and the angry guy is like "BLOW DAT SHIT UP" so they do! I don't wanna give away the ending, but suffice it to say, shit gets real. Cinematic genius. Maybe you have to be really hungover to appreciate it though. **RL**



Keep On Truckin'
Big Rig
Bakkus @ 21:00

For anyone who has ever dreamed of the freedom of the open road, the glamour of transporting goods from point A to point B and hanging out at greasy highway diners, you can now live it all vicariously through the eyes of the real American trucker. Big Rig is a 2008 documentary made by Doug Pray, the director of the critically acclaimed documentary Scratch. Filmed over the course of four two-week road trips, it is comprised of many impromptu interviews with truckers that Pray and his two-man crew met at truckstops. Full of simple wisdom and a charming country soundtrack by Buck 65, it ain't too shabby for a Monday night. **RL**

Art | Venue finder

101 Gallery
Hverfisgata 18A | **E3**
Thu-Sat 14-17 and by appointment
www.101hotel.is/101hotel/101gallery/
Artótek
Tryggvagata 15 | **D2**
Mon 10-21, Tue-Thu 10-19, Fri 11-19, Sat and Sun 13-17
www.sim.is/Index/Islenka/Artotek
ASÍ Art Museum
Freyugata 41 | **G4**
Tue-Sun 13-17
Árbæjarsafn
Kistuhýlur 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
The Einar Jónsson Museum
Eiríksgröta 1 | **G4**
Tue-Sun 14-17
www.skulptur.is
Fótógrafi
Skólavörðustigur 4a | **F4**
www.fotografi.is
Gallery 100°
Bæjarháls 1
www.or.is/Forsida/Gallery100/
Open weekdays from 08:30-16:00
Gallery Auga fyrir Auga
Hverfisgata 35 | **E4**
Gallery StartArt
Laugavegur 12B | **E4**
Tue-Sat 1-17
www.startart.is

Gallery Ágúst
Baldursgata 12 | **F4**
Wed-Sat 12-17
www.galleriagust.is
Gallery Fold
Rauðarástigur 14-16 | **G7**
Mon-Fri 10-18 / Sat 11-16 / Sun 14-16
www.myndlist.is
Gallery Kling & Bang
Hverfisgata 42 | **E5**
Thurs-Sun from 14-18
this.is/klingogbang/
Gallery Turpentine
Ingólfrstræti 5 | **E3**
Tue-Fri 11-17 / Sat 13-16
www.turpentine.is
Gerðuberg Cultural Centre
Gerðuberg 3-5
Mon-Thu 11-17 / Wed 11-21 / Thu-Fri 11-17 / Sat-Sun 13-16
www.gerduberg.is
Havari
Austurstræti 6 | **E3**
Hitt Húsið
- **Gallery Tukt**
Pósthússtræti 3-5 | **E3**
www.hittusid.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
Lost Horse Gallery
Vitastigur 9a | **E3**
Weekends from 13-19 and by appointment on weekdays.
Hafnarborg
Strandgötu 34,
Hafnarfjörður

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/
The Numismatic Museum
Einholt 4 | **G7**
Open Mon-Fri 13:30-15:30.
Reykjavík 871+/-2
Aðalstræti 17 | **D2**
Open daily 10-17
Reykjavík Art Gallery
Skúlagata 28 | **F6**
Tuesday through Sunday 14-18
Reykjavík Art Museum
Open daily 10-16
www listasafnreykjavikur.is
Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum
Sigtún
Hafnarhús
Tryggvagata 17 | **D2**
Kjarvalsstaðir
Flókagata | **I7**
Reykjavík City Theatre
Listabraut 3
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

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REVIEWS

Pizza Pizza Everywhere So Let’s All Have a Slice!

The best, worst and in-between of Reykjavík pizzerias

Much like a glowing campfire and a hearty round of Kumbaya, pizza brings people together. Just look at how easily the suffix “-party” is slapped on the end. It truly is the global unifier, calling for a setting aside of petty differences to engage in the delicate compromise of topping selection and further imploring you to put a pin in your typically judgemental tendencies when your fellow pizzapartier enthusiastically shouts out “hey, how about jalapeños, tuna and blue cheese!” and you momentarily think to yourself “who the hell invited this guy?” before remembering that the end outcome is still going to be cheesy, hot, delicious pizza. Yes, pizza makes people happy.

Ever on the hunt for eternal happiness by way of pizza the Grapevine has sampled the goods of six of Reykjavík’s pizzerias. Order wisely, dear readers.

The Rules: The goal was to review every pizza one could get home delivered in the 101 area, so as to help out folks who frequently find themselves hung over in that postal code, and we are pretty sure we’ve done it (if you run a pizzeria that delivers to 101 and we forgot about you, drop us a line). Quality and abundance of toppings; thickness and texture of crust; and flavour and volume of sauce all factored into the reviewers considerations, as did the toppings:sauce:crust ratio of each pie.

 CATHARINE FULTON
 JULIA STAPLES




What We Think: Decent pizza; not the best, not the worst.
Flavour on Arrival: Spicy, tasty, but not mind-blowing.
Flavour once Cold: Better than when hot, actually.
Delivery Time: 43 minutes
Rating: 
Website: www.wilsons.is

GAMLA SMÍÐJAN

This little pizzeria has grown out of the old Pizzuverksmiðjan on Lækjargata. It’s actually right by my home so ordering a pizza to be delivered felt like just about the laziest thing I could be doing. Still, them’s the rules, so happily upon my couch I sat waiting for a pizza to be delivered from perhaps 300 meters down the road. This time around I opted for a selection of seafood toppings. Specifically, I ordered Il Piacere del Mare (shrimp/tuna/onion/artichokes/garlic),

but I nixed the tuna and asked them to toss on some mussels and cream cheese instead.

Thirty-six minutes later I was in foodie heaven! I don’t know how Gamla smiðjan managed it, but I think I can honestly proclaim that theirs is the best pizza I’ve ever tasted. The crust is thin and crisp, but not dry; the sauce is subtle yet flavourful; the toppings taste high quality and there’s just the right amount of them. Delightful!

What We Think: Goddamn, that’s good pizza.
Flavour on Arrival: Delicious.
Flavour once Cold: Still delicious.
Delivery Time: 36 minutes
Rating: 
Address: Lækjargata 8, 101 Reykjavík

Food & Drink | Venue finder

3 Frakkar
Baldursgata 14 | **G4**
Aktu Taktu
Skúlugata 15 | **E6**
Alibaba
Veltusund 3b | **D2**
American Style
Tryggvagata 26 | **D2**
Argentina Steak-house
Barónstígur | **F6**
Austurlanda-hraðlestin
Hverfisgata 64A | **F5**
Á Næstu Grósum
Laugavegur 20B | **E4**
B5
Bankastræti 5 | **E3**
Bakkus
Tryggvagata 22 | **D2**
Ban Thai
Laugavegur 130 | **G7**
Basil & Lime
Klapparstíg 38 | **E4**
Babalú
Skólavörðustígur 22A | **G5**

Balthazar
Hafnarstræti 1-3 | **D2**
Bæjarins Beztu
Tryggvagata | **D3**
Brons
Pósthússtræti 9 | **E3**
Café Cultura
Hverfisgata 18 | **E4**
Café d’Haiti
Tryggvagata 12 | **D2**
Café Loki
Lokastígur 28 | **G4**
Café Paris
Austurstræti 14 | **E3**
Café Roma
Rauðarárstígur 8 | **G7**
Deli
Bankastræti 14 | **E5**
Domo
Þinghóltsstræti 5 | **E3**
Einar Ben
Veltusundi | **E2**
Eldsmiðjan
Bragagata 38A | **G4**
Fiskmarkaðurinn
Aðalstræti 12 | **D2**

Geysir Bar/Bistro
Aðalstræti 2 | **D2**
Garðurinn
Klappastígur 37 | **F4**
Glætan book café
Laugavegur 19 | **F5**
Grái Kötturinn
Hverfisgata 16A | **E4**
Grillhúsið
Tryggvagata 20 | **D2**
Habibi
Hafnarstræti 20 | **E3**
Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar (“Bullan”)
Geirsgata 1 | **B2**
Hillla Batar
Ingólfstorg | **D2**
Hornið
Hafnarstræti 15 | **D3**
Hótel Holt
Bergstaðarstræti 37 | **G3**
Humarhúsið
Amtmanstígur 1 | **E3**
Hressó
Austurstræti 20 | **E4**

Icelandic Fish & Chips
Tryggvagata 8 | **B2**
Indian Mango
Frakkastígur 12 | **F5**
Jómfrúin
Lækjargata 4 | **E3**
Kaffi Hljómalind
Laugavegur 21 | **E4**
Kaffifélagið
Skólavörðustígur 10 | **F5**
Kaffitár
Bankastræti 8 | **E4**
Kaffivagninn
Grandagarður 10 | **A1**
Kofi Tómasar Frænda
Laugavegur 2 | **E4**
Kornið
Lækjargata 4 | **E3**
Krua Thai
Tryggvagata 14 | **D2**
La Primavera
Austurstræti 9 | **D2**
Lystin
Laugavegur 73 | **F6**

Mokka
Skólavörðustígur 3A | **E4**
Nonnabíti
Hafnarstræti 9 | **D3**
O Sushi
Lækjargata 2A | **E3**
Pisa
Lækjargötu 6b | **E3**
Pizza King
Hafnarstræti 18 | **D3**
Pizza Pronto
Vallarstræti 4 | **E2**
Pizzaverksmiðjan
Lækjargötu 8 | **E3**
Prikið
Bankastræti 12 | **E3**
Ráðhúskaffi | **E2**
Tjarnargata 11
Santa Maria
Laugavegur 22A, | **F5**
Serrano
Hringbraut 12 | **H3**
Shalimar
Austurstræti 4 | **D2**
Silfur
Pósthússtræti 11 | **E3**

Sjávarkjallarinn
Aðalstræti 2 | **D2**
Sólón
Bankastræti 7a | **E3**
Sushibarinn
Laugavegur 2 | **E4**
Sushismiðjan
Geirsgötu 3 | **B2**
Svarta Kaffi
Laugavegur 54 | **F5**
Sægreifinn
Verbúð 8, Geirsgata | **B2**
Tapas
Vesturgata 3B | **D2**
Thorvaldsen
Austurstræti 8 | **D2**
Tíu Dropar
Laugavegur 27 | **E5**
Tívoli
Laugavegur 3 | **E4**
Vegamót
Vegamótastígur 4 | **E4**
Við Tjörnina
Templarásund 3 | **E2**
Vítabar
Bergþórugata 21 | **G5**



ELDSMIÐJAN

Three pizzas in I was looking for some competition, so I went with Eldsmiðjan, the loins from whence my (so far) front-runner Gamla smiðjan sprung. I even ordered a similar pizza—trio di mare (shrimp/scallop/mussels/artichokes/garlic/black and green olives/oregano), sans olives. I don't like olives.

Eldsmiðjan's pizza is delicious, the toppings are fresh and bountiful and the sauce is well balanced, sandwiched between the crust and cheese. My sole point of contention where Eldsmiðjan is concerned is the texture of their crust. Maybe it's too thin? Maybe it could use another minute or two in the oven? I don't like when my pizza is so floppy.

Mini-competition verdict: Eldsmiðjan makes a pretty great pizza, there's no arguing that but, this round goes to Gamla smiðjan.

What We Think: Good and tasty pizza, just slightly limp.
Flavour on Arrival: Wonderful.
Flavour once Cold: Still good.
Delivery Time: 47 minutes
Rating: 🍴🍴🍴🍴
Website: www.eldsmidjan.is

HRÓI HÖTTUR

Dear Hrói Höttur,

This is not a love letter. I don't know how you managed to make your pizza sauce taste so oddly sweet and everything else taste like nothing. It really does boggle the mind. What was also boggling was how perfectly round and uniform your pizza was. Do you use pre-fab crust? It kinda tasted that way and it kinda tasted like cardboard.

I made a huge mistake daring to continue my “same toppings as the previous two” challenge on you. Like drinking tap water in Mexico. It didn't taste good and it didn't feel so good either.

Still, I'll give you a point because you steal from the rich and give to the poor or something like that. And maybe I'll give you another shot when my taste buds are intoxicated enough to not know the difference. You're probably okay then.

What We Think: Sweet? Bland? Meh.
Flavour on Arrival: Meh/Blech.
Flavour once Cold: Still bad.
Delivery Time: 35 minutes
Rating: 🍴🍴🍴🍴
Website: www.hroi.is

RIZZO

Rizzo's pizza was a pleasant surprise. Craving variety and wanting to spoil myself I first gravitated to Rizzo's Lúxus menu, deciding upon the Palermo (garlic/marinated lobster/cherry tomatoes/cucumber/leek/lettuce/lime dressing) and then I tossed in a Pavia (ham/mushroom/asparagus/camembert) as well.

When I opened the box and had a look at my 'luxury' pizza I was slightly disappointed. It was iceberg lettuce soggly spread over top of the pizza that had been generously drizzled with the lime dressing. I don't really know what I was expecting, but it wasn't that. Looks can be deceiving, I suppose, because this pizza was actually pretty great. The Pavia could have used some more camembert, but was also rather delicious. If these guys were to thin out their crust a little more I'd consider them a real contender.

What We Think: What a pleasant surprise!
Flavour on Arrival: Quite tasty.
Flavour once Cold: ... it was all eaten while hot.
Delivery Time: 53 minutes
Rating: 🍴🍴🍴🍴
Website: www.rizzo.is

DOMINO'S

Domino's is the kind of place that seems to taste the exact same no matter what continent you are ordering on. Like McDonalds. If the pizza were consistently amazing then I'd applaud their effort at quality control. But the pizza is often average.

I ordered the Crème Mexicano (green pepper/mushrooms/red onion/fajita chicken/cream cheese) and the Domino's Paradís (mushroom/black olives/garlic/grilled pepper/red onion/spinach). Again, I vetoed the olives. I was optimistic when the fellow taking my order asked if I would like normal crust or thin crust; I chose thin. Understandably I was let down when the pizza that arrived at my house a short while later was the thickest crust I had sampled in Reykjavík. Thick and bready.

The toppings on both pies were abundant, making for a hefty slice with that thick crust and all. The chicken on the Mexicano pizza could very well have just been a boiled breast as it lacked any flavour that would hint 'fajita' and, come to think of it, the lack of 'oomph' was my issue with all the toppings, actually. It was tasty, but a little seasoning would go a long way. Turn it up a notch, Domino's!

What We Think: Needs more oomph!
Flavour on Arrival: Average pizza.
Flavour once Cold: Kinda better than when hot.
Delivery Time: 35 minutes
Rating: 🍴🍴🍴🍴

EAT AND DRINK:

3 X ICE CREAM

1 ÍSBÚÐ VESTURBÆJAR
The undisputed master of Icelandic ice cream, Ísbúð vesturbæjar beckons the people of Reykjavík to queue in the wind and rain, cold and less cold for a taste of the old and new soft serve with toppings and sauces of their choosing. Delish!
Hagamel 67, 107 Reykjavík

2 THE KIOSK IN INGÓLFSTORG
It's your ice cream fix in the heart of 101. The bonus feature of this place is that you can order your ice cream to look like a smiley face... y'know, if you're into that kinda thing.
Ingólfstorg

3 10/11
Okay, so it's not nice fresh soft serve, but 10/11 on Austurstræti stocks a rather impressive freezer case of ice cream in more flavours that you'll find at most parlours.
Austurstræti 17.

3 X ETHNIC

1 SHALIMAR
Tasty Indian-Pakistani cuisine! When this place says spicy, they mean spicy and when I tell you it's delicious, I mean it, too! Try the Saag Aloo. You won't be disappointed.
Austurstræti 4

2 THAI REYKJAVÍK
The new Thai place on Lækjargata (yes, another Thai restaurant in Reykjavík) isn't much to look at but the goods are pretty wonderful. Maybe ignore the plain white walls and randomly places ornaments on the windowsill and give it a try.
Lækjargata 8

3 SUSHISMIÐJAN
If you're looking for sushi, it's wise to head toward the harbour. Sushismiðjan is like two restaurants in one, with an entrance to the tiny little take-away counter on one side of the building and a full-service eat-in establishment on the other side. Both sides are tasty.
Geirsgata 3

3 X FISH

1 MELABÚÐIN
Isn't it nice to walk up to a counter at a grocery store and there is somebody on the other side who is there to serve you an assortment of fresh fish. It's reasonably priced, too.
Hagamelur 39

2 KOLAPORTIÐ
Reykjavík's weekly flea market boasts an expansive fish and meat section. Often some of the mongers are offering 2 for 1 on fillets of frozen fish. Sweet deal!
Tryggvagata 19

3 FISKBÚÐIN FREYJUGÖTU
This quintessential Icelandic fish store offers up a fresh catch of the day as well as pre-made fish dishes that just need to be tossed in the oven.
Freyjugata 1



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OUR FAVORITE QUOTES FROM THE SIC REPORT

"Despite the parties and talks with rich and famous people in London, Ármann hasn't gotten any useful contacts within the British government nor achieved any deeper understanding of it." - Hreiðar Már Sigurðsson, on former Singer and Friedlander (Kaupthing's daughter company in the UK) bank director Ármanns Þorvaldsson's cocktail parties.

"There sits the Prime Minister before you, shaking like a leaf in the wind, and cannot make a decision. He listens to you and you're undermining everything. If you don't make this work I will personally see to it that you'll never work in Iceland again." - Davíð Oddsson to Tryggvi Þór Herbertsson, with regards to the nationalizing of Glitnir.

"And then he began to shake and stutter. He said, 'You can't do this to me. I can't go up there and say that to Davíð.'" - Össur Skarphéðinsson describes former PM Geir H. Haarde's reaction to being told the Social Dems wouldn't accept Davíð Oddsson leading an emergency government.

"You have to stand with us. You should not be criticizing or commenting on the banks, you are to stand with us." - Glitnir president Birna Einarsdóttir to Morgunblaðið editor Styrmir Gunnarson.

"But should I tell the Minister of Business? [I asked.] And she said, 'Not right away, so don't talk to anyone. Keep it under wraps.'" Össur Skarphéðinsson quoting former Minister of Foreign Affairs Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir when the banks were falling apart.

lack of protocol. So when they have meetings there's not anything written down. There are no minutes?

No. It says so in the report. Most big decisions are made over the phone or in casual meetings.

[She holds the report, paraphrasing from it.] They're talking about a meeting here in the National Treasury [Seðlabanki]. And there is this meeting, and they're talking about when the government took over the first bank, Glitnir, and the business minister is not there. The Minister of Industry is there instead. He just sat there, blew his nose, and said, "I know nothing about banks." And they are talking about a major decision to take over the bank Glitnir that started the whole process of collapse. It was a huge decision and they made it in what seems like a two-hour meeting, with no plan of action, and there's nothing written down. I find it just ... it's incredible. I'm just shocked.

If you could vote one person off the island, who would it be?

Wow. I think it would be Davíð Oddson. I think he sometimes acted like he was a dictator of this country. He would never admit that. Never. - SO



What Went Wrong?

William Black on Iceland's Financial Collapse

William Black, Associate Professor of Economics and Law at the University of Missouri – Kansas City School of Law and author of The Best Way to Rob a Bank is to Own One: How Corporate Executives and Politicians Looted the S&L Industry. He came to Iceland where he's given a pair of lectures on what led to the banking collapse, and has been very popular with the local media for his frankness. He took the time to talk to Grapevine about the banking collapse, the SIC report, and how Iceland went from boom to bust.

A lot of the press coverage here in Iceland expressed a great deal of surprise when the economy collapsed, while institutions such as Moody's and Standard & Poor's had been issuing warnings in 2005 and 2006 that the economy was overheating, and now was the time to step in and do something. Why do you think these warnings, from these respected institutions, went ignored?

Because the Icelandic government at that time was an almost literal cheerleader for the industry. That included the Prime Minister [Geir H. Haarde], that included the Central Bank chairman [Davíð Oddsson], and that included the regulatory agency. I went back, as part of my research before coming to Iceland, to statements that the [financial supervisory authorities] had made, and if you have that mindset, you can't be an effective regulator.

"The big three banks, with the collapse in 2008, destroyed the entire economy. Had they gone forward another two years, they would have destroyed the entire nation."

That mindset being?

The mindset of just mindless praise. The banks were wonderful; they could do no wrong, et cetera. You have to be more objective. For financial institutions to work well, you need trust, and the paradox is you need somebody who is sceptical. And there was nobody. Nobody in the senior ranks that was sceptical.

You read the English portions of the SIC report. What was your opinion of the work the commission did?

I think the work is extremely impressive. There are very substantial and fairly sophisticated efforts at what underlying facts we need to look at. I'm particularly impressed, for example, that they went and surveyed a sample of loans to look at re-financing. That is dead on. So, as I said today, the irony is it's precisely because they were so good at so many things that we can know that analytically they were very off when it came to blaming bad luck versus deliberate policies.

Where do you see that the investigative process could have been stronger?

It's not even so much the investigative process. The chairman here made the remark that he felt SIC hadn't reached the issue because that wasn't its mandate. My point is they actually did reach the issue.

And that issue is?

And that issue is, they said, "Well, it's bad luck". The perfect storm, all these gambling metaphors, all these luck-type metaphors. See, they didn't just say, "Here are the facts and we're not going to do any analytics on what happened." They said, "Here are the facts, and gosh, it just must've been a perfect storm." In the introduction in English, they say, "This is a story of excessive growth." That's all their emphasis is up front. These institutions grew very rapidly, and that creates lots of

risk. But you have to ask why these institutions grew rapidly, and whether it's risk or is it a sure thing, which is what I've been emphasizing. That the policies they followed made record fictional profits a sure thing, and made real catastrophic losses a sure thing. So for me, it's a bit like coming to the scene of an airplane crash. And you're the investigator, and you say, "The thing that killed these people is that they were going 350 miles per hour when they hit the ground." It is true, but it's not the important part of the story.

One thing that grabbed my interest in the talk you just gave was that if these banks had been allowed to continue doing what they were doing for another two years Iceland would have ceased to exist. Can you elaborate on that?

I say it's an existential threat to Iceland, and the reason is these banks were already approximately ten times the size of the GDP. They were growing roughly 50% per year. That means you're going to double in size extremely quickly. So now take ten times to twenty times the size of the GDP, in about twelve to fourteen months. And now take it another year out. And you're at 40 times the GDP, and you have 60% losses.

Well, then we can just call up the IMF to come rescue us.

Right. And everybody in Iceland has an EU passport. And you say, "We can be part of a nation where I can start out and my kids can start out their lives with about a million dollars per person in debt, or, I can go somewhere else." And in general, who's going to leave? The best educated and often the younger people, because it's a lot easier to leave the country when you're 25 than when you're 85. In Iceland's case, [emigration] would have been fast, with a very high percentage and in many cases your most economically productive members of society. There'd still be some people living in Iceland, but there'd be no more Iceland in Iceland.

And this brings up the "blessing in disguise" of the economic crash happening when it did.

Yeah, well, I don't want to push that too far. The point is the alternative was far worse. The big three banks, with the collapse in 2008, destroyed the entire economy. Had they gone forward another two years, they would have destroyed the entire nation.

Now that we have this tremendous pile of information in front of us from the SIC, where do you think we should start first, in terms of digging deeper?

Well, the first thing is the commission did an excellent job of looking at a sample of the re-financing of the loans. Now you need to look at the universe of all of the cronies, all of the insiders, to see what was done in the re-financing of the loans. And you want to look at not just the dates and the dollar amounts, but you want to look at whether the lenders knew that the borrower was in trouble.

How would you be able to find this out?

What the special prosecutor should want to do next is build on what SIC has done, but get the universe of the re-financing. And they should not just be looking at records, but also talking to people.

If there are these gentlemen's agreements and verbal deals going on among the high-

"That the policies they followed made record fictional profits a sure thing, and made real catastrophic losses a sure thing. So for me, it's a bit like coming to the scene of an airplane crash. And you're the investigator, and you say, "The thing that killed these people is that they were going 350 miles per hour when they hit the ground." It is true, but it's not the important part of the story."

er ups, how are investigators going to find this out?

You have to give orders, of the kind of "Get it done", and when people are confronted with absurdity; they tend to send memos upstairs. In the modern era, e-mails are much more frank. So if you investigate, you will find. And that's what you need to do: investigate comprehensively. All the cronies and the insiders.

A lot of people in this country, as you may have noticed, have been very busy putting responsibility on everyone else but themselves. I won't ask you to lay the blame at the feet of any one institution or person, but in your opinion, what institutions need the most serious re-working?

This was a political decision of the Icelandic government, to privatize [the banks] and to give control of one of them to someone who has a record as a convicted fraudster. What do you think will happen if you put frauds in charge of financial institutions in situations where there are no effective regulations at all? You'll have a disaster. So, certainly the ruling political parties at that time, if you had to start with accountability, that's where you would start.

PAUL NIKOLOV
JULIA STAPLES

TOP FIVE "WHO'S TO BLAME" FINDINGS OF THE SIC

1. The politicians. Former Prime Minister Geir H. Haarde is portrayed as an incompetent bungler who was terrified of former Central Bank chairman Davíð Oddsson. Former Minister of Business Björgvin Sigurðsson is excluded from important meetings about the state of the banks, often with the collusion of members of his own party. Former vice-chair Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir had loans exceed a billion ISK. And all the conservatives ignored warnings from abroad that the shit was going to hit the fan.

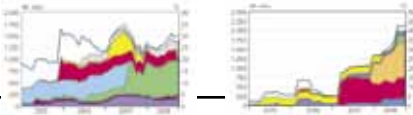
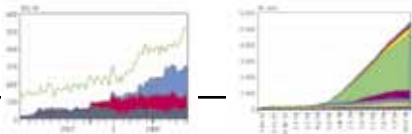
2. The banks. Oh boy, where do you start? You had directors loaning themselves their own banks' money, giving enormous campaign contributions to politicians, and lying about anything untowards going on behind closed doors. At the time of the collapse, they were ten times the GDP. How did that happen? See point number three.

3. The supervisory apparatus. What supervision? The FME essentially sat back and cheered on the banks, touting them to everyone as sound and worthwhile institutions. Sound familiar? It should, because here comes point four.

4. The President of Iceland. While the President is typically an office comprised mostly of welcoming foreign dignitaries and giving awards to citizens of merit, our current President spent a lot of time overseas painting a very pretty picture of Iceland's venture capitalists. He also used his office to influence foreign states to give the green light for his businessman buddies.

5. The media. The Icelandic media under-reported or in some cases completely ignored warnings being given by foreign analysts, and neglected to take a closer look at the country's financial institutions. Instead, they too trumpeted Iceland's economic awesome, thinking they were doing us a favour.





Are Icelanders An Immoral Nation?

Professor Vilhjálmur Árnason discusses the SIC report’s ethics addendum



Vilhjálmur Árnason is a professor of philosophy at the University of Iceland, as well as chair of the board of the Centre for Ethics at the university. He has dedicated his studies especially to moral theory, applied ethics and political philosophy. Vilhjálmur was leader of a special three-person working group on ethics that was mandated in the Special Investigation Commission legislation by Alþingi.

The purpose of the working group was to investigate the ethics and work practices connected to the banking collapse of 2008, and their findings may be read in Volume 8 of the SIC report. The group was comprised of two philosophers (Vilhjálmur and Salvör Nordal) and a historian (Kristín Ástgeirsdóttir), and its report is a stunning and thought-provoking read. As it has not yet been translated from Icelandic, The Grapevine thought it would be a good idea to meet up with Vilhjálmur and discuss it with him, so you English-speakers out there might get an idea of what’s in there.

At the SIC press conference in April, it was evident how many media representatives seemed to misunderstand the point and purpose of your committee, asking who should be charged and for your explicit moral verdict. A lot of people seem to believe your task was passing judgment...

Our committee had its purpose defined in the law. If the law had called for us passing moral judgment we would have done that, but it called for a wide ranging analysis. Our committee’s commission letter from the president of Alþingi explicitly stated that our enquiry into ethics and work practices should not be limited to the business sector. In deliberations in the Parliament it was emphasised that we should place our findings in a wide social context.

We were also convinced from early on that one couldn’t explain actions and events in the political and business sectors without placing them in this context, and we felt it was more important to emphasise what needed improvement in the prevailing work practices, mindset, governance and values than passing judgement on particular persons.

Inevitably, however, we mention lots of names in our report. There are many people involved and most of them are of the stature that even though you avoid stating their name explicitly—for instance by giving their job title—everyone would still know who’s being talked about. But our ambition was to examine the course of events in light of certain key factors and to draw out the common elements.

BLAMING ‘GREED’ WOULD BE SUPERFICIAL
Could you say that your committee’s underlying goal was to pinpoint the ethics and ethical inclinations of our entire community, to learn what sort of society would beget such a system with such built in flaws, and so on?

Yes, you could word it that way. I’ll just take a concrete example: A lot of people want to explain the bankers’ behaviour using the word greed. Greed is a moral concept, a vice, it is one of the seven deadly sins and that in itself makes it a meaningful concept. However, in our opinion it would be a superficial analysis that attempted to explain the bankers’ actions primarily by their greed. Of course, there was greed, there was a lot of greed, but the banks had in place a motivational system that outright encouraged such behaviour. Such systems can be supervised and changed.

This is important to note, because if one connects it to the government, then part of the whole deregulation ideology involved a certain individualism. Individual bankers were blamed, not the ideology or the regulatory framework. When banks went overboard in paying bonuses and absurdly high wages, critics would wag their moralistic finger, saying people weren’t being responsible in how they treated their

freedom, that in reality we had been unfortunate with the people who were in charge of the banks, that they weren’t morally sound enough.

NO BLAMING THE EEA

And surely they weren’t, there were a lot of signs pointing to that, but the authorities had many means of imposing a stricter frame—which was definitely needed. It was absolutely necessary to impose some boundaries on the options and leeway these businessmen and bankers had, but the authorities didn’t, and instead strived to maintain a deregulated environment. That is no coincidence; it was part of the prevailing ideology.

They sometimes like to explain or excuse it by pointing to EEA regulations that we adopted, but those were just a minimal framework legislation and we had full authority to devise and maintain a regulatory environment fitting for this small nation. But the government decided not to, the ideology implied that a mostly unregulated environment would unleash the full powers and potential of these young entrepreneurs.

Then when they turn out to have abused this environment, they are met with moralistic concerns from the authorities. They get scolded and told, “you should behave better!” There was a lack of resolute administrative actions or attempts to regulate the environment and control the frame and context within which the bankers could work.

ARE WE ALL TO BLAME?

A lot of people ponder the responsibility of Icelanders as a collective. Do our collective moral paradigms and what we consider “acceptable behaviour”—not to mention how we cast our vote and behave as citizens, especially considering that many people actively tried to warn us—make us morally responsible for what went on?

This is an interesting question that we address at the end of our report. We ask: Are we all “guilty”? Are we all accessories? Did we all dance along? What is our collective responsibility?

And people respond to those questions very differently. Some will agree that we are all responsible in a way, and that it’s important we now examine and reconsider our values and ourselves. Others will get extremely defensive and say that whether or not they bought a flat screen TV and took loans is beside the point; they certainly aren’t responsible for the banks crashing.

This question demands serious consideration. When discussing the public’s accountability it is, of course, of an entirely different nature than, say, bankers who participated in very specific actions. The bankers are responsible for all the shady business dealings they participated in, and politicians are responsible for creating a free and unregulated space for them in which to conduct that business. The media is responsible for failing to keep the public well informed and giving them better grounds on which to base their beliefs and opinions.

AM I A PASSIVE VESSEL?

I think there are three things we can look to in regards to the public of Iceland. Firstly, we are all participating in a social discourse. There was a prevalent idea or image of Icelanders as smart businessmen. That we were experiencing a time of great prosperity, going full speed ahead. I think many people can see themselves as having participated in and contributed to that discourse. It’s a question philosophers ask themselves a lot of times, how ready are you to carry on a rumour or a common belief without considering whether it is at all substantiated?

I think the aforementioned belief is one that we

know was exaggerated and carried on without merit, and without careful examination or consideration from those that carried it forward. It is at all times important to ask oneself: am I a passive vessel for the stream of the ideas that is moving around in society, or am I as a citizen responsible for examining them and taking a considered stance before passing them along.

The second thing is that we are all consumers. This is especially worthy of consideration given the fact that Icelanders generally are a rather gluttonous and excessive group, frugality and prudence have not been in fashion here for the past decades and one of the reasons for the economic collapse hitting individuals as hard as it did is that they made decisions that they now have to pay for. Consumption grew enormously, and many of us borrowed heavily. This is something worth pondering; even though it did not cause the economic collapse, our mode of thinking and culture of excess certainly set the stage for what was to come and added to how hard we were hit. These values are part of the conditions that frame our ultimate downfall.

Thirdly, we are citizens in a democratic state, and thus responsible for our government. We chose our politicians, and by default the conditions created for our bankers too. Every coalition government of the years leading up to the collapse had declarations that cited—among other things—the stated goals of strengthening the financial sector, of keeping the banks in the country and keeping the burden of regulation and supervision as light as possible. We now know the end results of these goals, but one could say that we were living in a virtual reality—very few were conscious of what was really happening here and their words of warning were not heeded.

A NATIONWIDE DISRESPECT FOR LAW AND ORDER

One could ask whether there is not a difference in degree rather than nature between the gas station attendant that offers his friends and family “questionable” discounts and the bankster that lines the pockets of his friends and associates. Does the former enable the latter—does a society that constantly sells its moral values short not beget crooked bankers and politicians, and the damage they can bring?

Yes, one thing that’s very prevalent through our analysis is a nationwide disrespect for law and order. We often take pride in this, and are even prone to make fun of Scandinavians that are much more orderly, law-abiding and disciplined than we are. It is often the case with nations or large groups of people that their virtues and flaws are intertwined. We like boasting of characteristics such as flexibility and the ability to labour in spurts, ready for everything and not being limited by tradition or rules. But the bad side of this coin is the discount we are willing to give of our principles and laws; this created the position that enabled our financial system to grow out of hand. Then our purported assets became very dangerous to ourselves as a people and as a nation.

Some say our society became shrouded in secrecy...

Yes, there was a permeating secrecy or lack of transparency. The small size of our society is very relevant to this. In an appendix to our report, which investigates the collapse in light of social or political psychology, Hulda Þórisdóttir writes about the small, homogeneous society—we also refer to this in our findings. People are used to sticking together, like a small family, knowingly or unknowingly emphasising unity, solidarity and trust, for example between politicians and the bankers. These are of course good qualities in a proper place, but in that context they became downright harmful.

The level of trust between the political and fi-

nancial sectors was far too great, not to mention between the supervisory authorities and the bankers. It’s striking to note that it was pretty much a stated policy of the Financial Supervisory Authority to trust the banks and their managers. The head of the FSA remarks in the report that he assumed “these were honest men,” which is of course a great attitude for people to have in general, but very unrealistic in the situation that had been created.

When the banks were privatised, the politicians abandoned the sound principles they started out with, those of spread ownership, experienced bankers and foreign lead investors. Two relatively small groups of people, with little banking experience between them, were allotted very large shares in Iceland’s banks. They were granted a lot of leeway and the message from the government was that we should avoid “restrictive” supervision ... it all amounted to a recipe for a lot of temptation; we needed to impose a lot more restraint on these sectors. But they were allowed to grow fast and far beyond our ability to regulate them.

GOALS THAT FAILED TREMENDOUSLY

The banks were meant to supervise themselves, a goal that failed tremendously. For example, the banks employed compliance officers who have the purpose of making sure regulations and proper procedure were being followed. It was made next to impossible for these people to do their jobs properly. Not only were they constantly shorthanded, they were always kept busy with miniscule tasks, which made it impossible for them to attain a proper overview of what was going on. They were in danger of becoming useful innocents within the system.

One tragicomic example is that at one point in time one of the banks had one person acting as compliance officer while the “entertainment department” employed thirteen full time employees. It was that absurd [laughs]!

Part of the bankers’ brilliance was regarded their ability, sometimes with the help of lawyers and accountants, to exploit legal and regulatory loopholes to their maximum benefit.

This reveals a mode of thinking that is definitely part of what got us here today; instead of considering the purpose and spirit of a law or regulation, the bankers as well as the regulatory authorities would focus on the letter and individual articles of the law. One could imagine that the purpose of a given banking regulation was to ensure a robust and healthy financial system, as well as safeguarding our society, protecting it for the common good. Instead of asking themselves whether a certain act went against the spirit and purpose of the law, bankers as well as officials focused on whether it directly breached it. One example is when Landsbanki was in the process of bringing its IceSave to Holland—which never should have happened, because at that late date our authorities should have known what it might entail—Dutch authorities were trying to restrict it. This spurred the FSA to defend the bank by referring to a letter of the law and complain that the Dutch were having macro economic worries. Such worries were certainly of vital importance.

SUBJECT TO MANIPULATION

In regards to the family metaphor, one term that comes to mind is co-dependency...

That is a term some want to use about the way our system works. Styrmir Gunnarsson [former Morgunblaðið editor and Independence Party associate] for instance speaks of an across-the-board co-dependency and I think it is a term that might well be used in analysing our society.

There are Icelandic politicians that seem to have gotten quite far by being aggressively demanding and imposing. And no individual can get far on those terms unless this behaviour is tolerated and allowed by others. The prerequisite for someone getting ahead by being bullish and aggressive is that enough people support that behaviour and grant it room.

I think one of the things our analysis reveals is that our democratic framework is very fragile and subject to manipulation. One of the explanations for this is that politicians in Iceland seem steadfast in the belief that they renew their authority in elections every four years and that is the only time they are accountable, being free to do what they want within the ramifications of the law the rest of the time.

In nations where democracy is more mature, politicians’ power is tempered both by restraint from within the political system—for instance from the legislative power and the media—as well as advice from various educated experts and specialists.

Are Icelanders an immoral nation?

No, I think not. Icelanders are not an immoral nation. In fact I believe that there is probably no such thing as an immoral nation, as a nation can only grow from communities where moral norms are honoured and moral institutions, such as the family, are able to thrive. The family does not need rules or regulation, as a properly functioning family is governed by trust and love and a plethora of virtues that make life therein better. However, some of those virtues and moral axioms can inverse when applied to the public sphere, where various agents may be connected through mutually vested interest. Maybe Iceland has yet to evolve into a civil society... 🍷

Opinion | Wenjing Zhang

Iceland Knows How To Chill



Three years of chasing news stories for my journalism degree left me needing to run away on my own for a bit. I just needed some peace of mind. I thought I'd found the most beautiful and remote place on earth when I actually managed to land myself in the centre of this year's biggest story.

I arrived in Iceland as an au pair, and soon discovered my family to be intolerable. After three excruciating weeks of picking up too many half-eaten bowls of cereal, I took off to the southernmost town of Iceland to work at a hostel. Vík í Mýrdal, pop. 300, sits in a mountain valley on the amazing black sand beach. I was just beginning to find some peace and quiet when I was reminded that Iceland is a volcanic island.

Truthfully, I didn't know much about volcanoes before arriving here. When I first heard of the eruption, my brain immediately started replaying terrifying images from Dante's Peak and recalling the plaster casts of Pompeii. Although by then I had already learned that not all volcanoes are violently explosive and capable of swallowing entire cities within minutes, I couldn't help these thoughts. I never imagined that thousands of people would be rushing to see these fiery fissures.

But I joined them. I stood on warm lava rocks and felt the waves of heat hit my skin as shoots of hot lava burst through earth. I've never felt so small and powerless as I did standing on the edge of an active volcano.

Few days later, the world would understand my sentiments of powerlessness. What's considered

a small volcano in Iceland moved its eruption site a few kilometres west underneath a glacier and the world is put on hold. Towns are covered in ash, hundreds of flights are cancelled, and tiny Iceland with half the population of my hometown of Austin is suddenly on the front page of every newspaper.

The whole world is frantically worried, yet living less than 20 miles away from the craters people here are as calm as ever. During the few hours last week when the road both east and west of my town were closed off—east due to heavy ash dispersion and west due to flooding—no one even skipped their afternoon tea.

And then there was more ash
When the “death cloud” first reached Vík, schools closed down and people spent days locked inside their homes. The strong Icelandic wind coloured the town a new shade of grey each morning, and no one went outside without a facemask. Although the ash wasn't deadly toxic, it's probably about as healthy as breathing in powder cement. A tiny crack in the hostel's front door left the living room covered in a thin layer of black powder. I thought waking up to the smell of ash was bad enough, until I caught a ride with a Reuters photographer to the midst of it all.

Driving into the heavy ash clouds in the evacuated zone was one of the most terrifying things I've ever experienced. It didn't get gradually darker, but there was almost a defined edge between grey and black sky. Once we crossed that line, not only did we lose sight of everything beyond a few meters, we were chilled to our bones. We parked the car for five

Even during this time of misfortune, I haven't witnessed anything more than a sigh. Kids are still having birthday parties and families are still getting together every night. People here seem to understand the unpredictable ways of nature as well as our own limitations, and they are patiently waiting. Perhaps Icelanders have been jaded by the erratic weather of the island, but they are just not ones to panic.

minutes to snap some photos, and the windshield was covered in lines of black ash. We looked at each other and agreed that it was time to go.

It's been snowing for a few days now in Vík, and most of the ash has found its way to the ground. Although the air has cleared up, the effect of the volcano is still felt. The first eruption left the hostel fully booked day after day, but the ash from this one has left it like it's January. The giant mess of cancelled flights has only sent cancellations our way as well.

Even during this time of misfortune, I haven't witnessed anything more than a sigh. Kids are still having birthday parties and families are still getting together every night. People here seem to understand the unpredictable ways of nature as well as our own limitations, and they are patiently waiting. Perhaps Icelanders have been jaded by the erratic weather of the island, but they are just not ones to panic. I guess after you've seen snow in July, nothing can bring you down. 🐉



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Music | CD Reviews



BB & Blake
BB & Blake
bbblakeband
Disco pop that's not original but very danceable...

BB & Blake comprises former GusGus-er Magnús Jónsson along with Vera Sölvadóttir. The band has been going for a while now, but their début album only saw the light of day this winter.

I'm going to get brickbats from my metal loving friends, but this album is not half bad. Using seventies disco soul as a cornerstone, images of sweaty torsos at 3 AM and amyl nitrate in the air instantly spring to mind. Indeed, the falsetto chorus in Mustang practically screams Scissor Sisters, right in my face. The album also manages to bring in elements of eighties proto-house and Europop. The Gallic Paris Je T'aime, for example, has more than a passing resemblance to the likes of Air.

The main driver to all of this is Vera, as she exudes a power that, while not quite reaching Roisin Murphy levels, ensures that most of the songs keep from sounding stale. But even she can't save some of them. On the Rundown sounds trite and annoying, while Lenny just doesn't go anywhere. But when it's 2 AM and you've reached your 15-drink limit, there are a lot worse things to dance to...

✂ - BOB CLUNESS



Hoffman
Your Secrets Are Safe With Us
hoffmanis
A solid slab of alterna-rock. Can't wait till their third album comes out in 2016

Hoffman released their debut EP Bad Seeds in 2003 and it garnered lots of praise, even from that towering bastion of middle-of-the-road rock shit, X-ið. But since then, it has taken them SIX years to produce their follow up. Six years?!? What have they been doing all this time?

So is the new album worth the wait? Yes and no. The album does have very clean production values, more so than most albums out there at the moment. And when it's good, such as tracks Blow and Your Secrets are Safe With Us, there are crashing drums, post punk guitars and plenty of emo style emoting. But some tracks, such as Ride & Right and P.I.R just reminded me of that really awful 90s US college rock that Live, Bush and their ilk used to peddle upon unsuspecting teenagers. And it's this which robs this album of the ability to transcend its peers.

✂ - BOB CLUNESS



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noglmusic
Present but not always correct

Well, yes indeed: why not be proud of what you produce? We were massively proud of a cake we made yesterday. And then proud of the massive turd that the cake produced today. And, hey, wow, guess what? This album's sweet, shit, satisfying, and sounds kinda like Blink-182 when they decided to get a bit serious just before they broke up five years or so back. Nothing inherently wrong with that; there's plenty of musical talent in that band, and also in Nögl.

It's immediately obvious that these are people who know how to write, arrange, produce and get it together even in the occasional po-faced moments where they mess about with Trivium-ish choruses without quite as silly widdly guitar parts—Hit & Run, for example. Nothing to be ashamed of, really: it's a bit metal, a bit rock, a bit meh. Stefán from Buff and Sigurður from UMTBS guest on here too, proudly.

✂ - JOE SHOOMAN



Útidúr
Í Göngutúr
utidur
The musical equivalent of textured soy protein. Avoid.

When it comes to music, beware of bands that give themselves hyperbolic descriptions. Útidúr describe themselves as thus; "Imagine if Beirut and Calexico were stuck in a Mexican standoff – Sam Peckinpah style – fending off the Arcade Fire and hanger-on David Bowie, when all of a sudden Nina Simone and Serge Gainsbourg would show up with a band of gypsies." Wow. That certainly sounds impressive!

Well with their debut EP out, it's safe to say that they are nothing like they describe themselves. Five tracks (two of which are radio performances) consisting of plinky plonky, listless rhythms that are forced onto melodies and vocals that just totally suck the life-force out through your ears. It may be all designed to sound quirky, coy and effervescent, but in the end just makes you want to put on some splittercore and start a riot. Only the track "the mess we've made" threatens to be interesting, barely, but is ruined when it decides to go all reggae halfway through. You know, for a band that boasts up to twelve members, it's pretty impressive to make an EP that sounds so anaemic that you don't want it to stand up too quick, lest it passes out and falls on the floor.

✂ - BOB CLUNESS



Hafðís Huld
Synchronised Swimmers
hafdishuld
Bleugh

Contrary to what the album cover and sleeve would have you believe, Synchronised Swimmers is as straightforward and un-quirky as they come. It is pure acoustic pop, uncomplicated and simple, with not even a semblance of divergence, although some hints at depth appear towards the end (I Almost Know A Criminal, Robot Robot). I can understand the value of upbeat music, but this album is so infuriatingly brainless it's impossible to even attach a mood to it, other than one attained by a Brady Bunch member on Prozac. It is even useless as a remedy to holiday depression, by way of overcompensation; if depression hasn't killed you yet, this album will make you want to kill yourself through its abject, stupefying idiocy.

✂ - SINDRI ELDON



Serðir Monster
Tekið stærst upp í sig
Give it to someone you hate

Not really an 'album' of 'music', unless you think of Weird Al Yankovic as a 'musician' who makes 'albums.' TSUÍS sees Sverrir Stormsker's alter-ego belting out an inane collection of familiar pop songs, with the lyrics altered to themes of political discontent, vague social criticism and sodomy. Perhaps it's better to think of the whole thing as some sort of ironic concept art, or a fundraiser of some sort... in any case, this isn't really music, but a self-humouring ode to tacky mediocrity and cheap wordplay, but without the energy and enthusiasm generally associated with such a project.

✂ - SINDRI ELDON

Smashing The System, One Release At A Time

The PBP Records Collective examined



I would guess that when most people think of the word "collective" they usually think of Stalinist Russia, dirty smelly hippies, or The Borg with their S&M kitchen tools.

But in these post-kreppa days, resources are scarce. It makes more sense now for people to pool together under a shared umbrella, a common purpose. And that's what a group of musicians have decided to do in creating the Paradísarborgaplótur (Paradise City Records) music collective. Their mission is thus: "We believe in D.I.Y. ethics and fully realise the politics behind artistic representation. Our art is a statement against rock star hipster attitudes and elitist bullshit."

And the first fruits of their labour have found their way to Grapevine towers, where they have been placed into my filthy pig-dog capitalist hands to review and digest.

First up is **Dead Zeppelin by Deathmetal Supersquad**. Five tracks of standard meat & potato punk rock. Although there are no new feats of discovery here, it's surprisingly catchy. However the final track "330" does drag on a bit. At least it's good to see that these guys will be able to take up the mantle of Iceland's premier pop punkers when Morðingjarnir decide to hang up their axes and become chartered surveyors. (+/-)

Now, **Dansað við Lík by Tentacles of Doom** is a rather different proposition. They're part of the punk umbrella, but they've wandered off into a corner, started drinking cider and blackcurrant and listening to early Bauhaus and Sex Gang Children. The EP takes these influences and stamps repeatedly on them to force out a harsh, abrasive sound that makes me feel happily belligerent. (+)

But to be shown how it's done, we can look to **Andspyrna by DYS**. This is full-on old-school anarchist class war Punk in the mould of Crass and The Exploited that your dad used to bore you about. Granted it's nigh on impossible to understand the political lyrics when they are screamed in a flailing, torn manner. But it's as brutal as kicking a free-market puppy in the face and they've included the lyrics and a manifesto in the CD inlay. FUCK YEAH! (+/-)

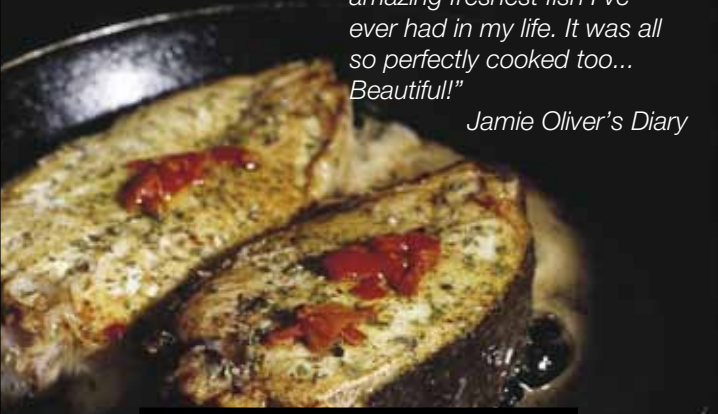
With further releases lined up from Bummer & MVNVMVNTS, it looks like the battle to change continues apace in this one corner of music...

<http://pbppunk.blogspot.com/>

✂ - BOB CLUNESS

"They put on such a beautiful meal for us. We had the most amazing freshest fish I've ever had in my life. It was all so perfectly cooked too... Beautiful!"

Jamie Oliver's Diary



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Music | CD Reviews



Gjöll
Sum of Transformations

gjollproduct8

Ideal background music for the next school trip to those dark caves!

Most people think of nature as cute animals in meadows, set to a Sigur rós song. These people are idiots. Nature is primeval, harsh, and will tear your throat out, while the animals will feast on your corpse... after having sex with it. It's against this backdrop that Gjöll attempt to work their chaos.

The brainchild of Jóhann Eiríksson (Reptilicus) and Sigurður "Siggi Pönk" Harðarson (Forgarður helvítis, DYS), Sum of Transformations is a wallowing chasm of dark ambient sounds that leave you in no doubt of the anarchy of nature (that and political song titles such as At The Hanging Of The Last Of The Career Politicians).

It's not all gloom as Natural Anarchy and The only True Philosophical Problem show a brightness reminiscent of Cocteau Twins & Oren Ambarchi. Contrast that with Unity With the Earthworms which feels more a like a call to arms from a neo-pagan death cult hidden up on Snæfellsjökull. While it may not quite reach the blood tinged visceral-ness of Ben Frost's latest album, this is a fine companion piece in portraying the soundscapes of a feral society.

✂ - BOB CLUNESS



The Coma Cluster
Observation

http://comacluster.net

A space rock epic in all its terrifying glory...



Uni
Enchanted

unnuruni

Downbeat folk that doesn't quite do what it says on the tin

On the cover sleeve of Enchanted, Uni gives the impression of being otherworldly and inhabiting the spheres of artists such as Bat for Lashes, Tori Amos and the Grand Priestess Overlord herself, Björk. Either that or a startled meerkat with some tinfoil stuck on its face; to be honest, there isn't much difference between the two really.

Indeed, the first track, I Miss You, starts off with a ghostly mournful vocal that augurs something profound. However, the album then immediately settles into a downbeat folk sound sprinkled with a country twang that struggles to get out of first gear. And this is a shame, as there are moments of sonic gold trying to break out. Butterfly Garden, for instance, has a wonderful melody and chorus that's crying out for some heavy booms and wails to bring out the inner turmoil. She Knows sees Uni let rip with a chorus that would give PJ Harvey the shivers. But these moments are too few and far between. More forest spirits, less blandness next time...

✂ - BOB CLUNESS

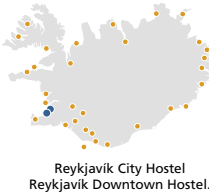
The Coma Cluster is a project consisting of Hallvarður Ásgeirsson (Stórsveit Nix Noltes), composer Sifvilnius, and musicians from Denmark and Japan. They've used the internet to create their debut across 3 continents without meeting in person. Interesting, but is it any good? The answer is a solid yes. The first half of the album sounds as if Godspeed! You Black Emperor and Tangerine Dream decided to compose the soundtrack to a French/Japanese remake of the film Dune: equal parts doom and full-on space rock. The second half has a more intimate mix of shoegaze & dark ambient sounds. Guitars shimmer and crash around you while vocals bubble under the surface with threatening intent. If your fancy the sounds of far away galaxies colliding and stars collapsing, then this is a definite buy.

✂ - BOB CLUNESS



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This is the first section of a four part short story by former Grapevine editor Valur Gunnarsson. We have read the entire thing, and we can tell you right off the bat that it is a pretty damn awesome read. So stay tuned for God's return next issue.

God Returns To Iceland

The Lord looked at the world he had created and saw it was—largely—good. Each continent, though different, had its own charm, and when it came to Europe, it was Italy that stirred the greatest pride. Its golden coasts complemented the Apennine mountain range, the Po valley a perfect contrast to the hills of Sicily. It sometimes seemed to him that the rest of the continent was merely an appendix, an afterthought to this finely crafted piece. The thin strip, a prosciutto of meticulously designed landscape, was cut off from the more vulgar lands to the north by the Alps, shielding his piece-de-resistance from works in progress.

When the man-monkeys, with their unpredictable yet God given free will started settling the area, it came as a pleasant surprise to the Creator of All Things that the fruits of their imagination were almost a match for his own. It was at times like these that he did not regret having allowed the monkey men to crawl over his creation, even though he himself had been partial to giant lizards for a while. He took pleasure in watching the rise and fall and renaissance resurrection of the inhabitants of his favourite peninsula. If lately they took their pleasure in bad television rather than Michaelangelo, they could easily be forgiven. They had done their part, left something behind for others to admire and, like him, they deserved a rest.

His attention spanned the globe. To the north of the Alps there was, at first sight, less to please the eye. Still, he felt he had done quite well with the Norwegian fjords, but this had inspired their inhabitants to no such feats as the Apennines had the Italians. Perhaps the fjords were beautiful enough that no more aesthetics were needed in that part of the world. It was impossible for mere apes to compete with him at his best, or so he liked to believe.

Celestial eyes drifted to the left of his famous fjords. There, sticking out of the sea, was a barren rock that looked like none of the other places he beheld. His peers, had he any, might remark that its appearance seemed somewhat unfinished, an interesting idea but sorely in need of a finishing touch. In fact he had been meaning to do something with it for quite a while, but there were always more pressing concerns. Now and again he returned to it, and wondered what use could be made of it.

Perhaps it could be used to fill up the Baltic, but he had to admit he had gotten quite used to the Baltic as it was. It served its purpose in any case, there had to be some way to tell Swedes and Danes apart. Somewhere between Britain and the mainland, he thought, would probably be a good place for it. It might even keep the sea from chipping away at the Low Countries, which, he had to admit, were something of a flaw in the overall design. The Dutch where an

industrious people, they would no doubt find some use for it. The British, however, who sang so loyally of him saving their Queen, would no doubt complain if they suddenly found themselves a part of the continent.

He had been meaning to do something with that barren and useless island that he had placed temporarily somewhere north of Scotland. But the Mediterranean had occupied him for so long that when he finally turned his attention back north, he saw that the island had already been settled. This was not part of the plan, and he prided himself on having a plan for everything. Even if some decisions were a bit more spontaneous than he would like to admit.

Now, tribes he had intended should move to America from the West, to see how they would interact with those who had moved there from the East, had stopped halfway. Instead of discovering a New World, they had taken to dividing up and quarrelling over tiny fragments of land on this island they now called Iceland. These deathly pale northern monkeys never ceased to amaze him. Why call something Iceland and then fight over it. In any case, he found the name quite fitting, so he let them be for awhile.

He blinked his eye and centuries passed. It was not, of course, the Icelanders who finally got a foothold in America but the Mediterraneans, followed by other tribes: French, British. The man-monkeys of the West had failed to create a golden civilisation by intermingling with the natives. Instead, they exterminated them.

In retrospect, this was obvious. For someone all-knowing, he could sometimes be remarkably naive when it came to bringing people together. Nevertheless, the Americans now claimed to have created a new kind of country. The Lord looked on with interest and even, dare we say it, a glimmer. It was only when events there were at a lull that his gaze again caught its reflection in the glaciers of Iceland. He started counting on his fingers, a hundred on each hand, and found it had been almost a thousand years since the land had been settled. Rome rose and fell in only a slightly longer timespan and still the northern ice monkeys had not created anything that passed for a decent civilization. Instead of building walls to hold out their enemies or coliseums for their amusement, they had simply dug themselves into the ground.

Even the English, who at this point seemed so intent on colonizing everything, ignored it. God initially considered making improvements on this icy land, but decided instead to start over. The island of Iceland was to be drowned in an ocean of fire. Somewhere up above, the stars rearranged themselves into a smile. Perhaps he had learned something from his children after all. Was this not what they liked to refer to, when they encountered something they did not understand, as irony?

Fire erupted from the mountains; the sun was blocked from the sky for those standing down below. It reminded him of Pompeii, and he wondered why he didn't do this more often. A dash of lava here, a pinch of smog there. Just as he was getting ready for the final touch, something started to stir down below. It was the French. They were having a revolution. They were saying there was no god. This he had to see.

He blinked and then blinked again. The world turned briefly pink, and then, red, white and blue. The American experiment, and the French, had turned out just like all the others. Who was next? God gave the ball a twirl. From here it all seemed a foregone conclusion; you only had to know how to count on all your fingers. When he played dice, as he did from time to time, he knew that the Chinese were now the ones to bet on.

But a game of dice is not just about calculating the odds, and history is not just about the numbers. For it was not the crafty Chinese who were planting their flag all over Christendom. It was those unpredictable Icelanders. This, he thought, cannot be good.

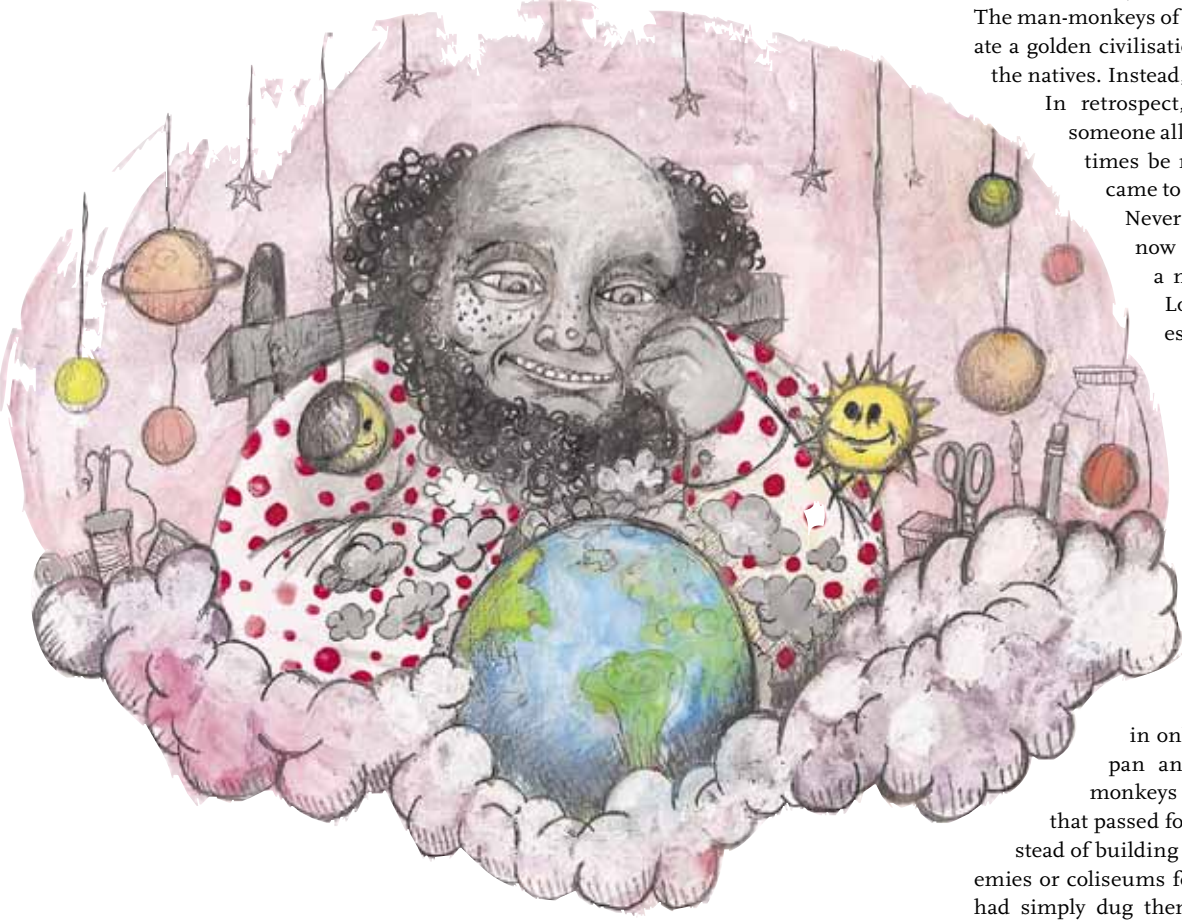
As he had done when Atlantis had its day and when Eldorado outshone all others, he decided to sit back and watch how this would play out. Even if the outcome seemed obvious. God looked down from the heavens and decided to bet against the króna.

And yet, as he saw the expected events unfold, he was nevertheless stunned. More stunned than perhaps he had ever been in the long and at times amusing history of human folly. Sure, the sensible Germans had been out of their minds for a while, but that was after a world war lost and in the midst of a great depression. The Americans had their Civil War, the Chinese their Cultural Revolution, but never before had a country that had it so good decided to so utterly destroy itself.

That was it. This tiny speck was an insult to all creation. The Lord knew that it was time to finish what he had started so many seasons ago. It was time to return to Iceland, and not since the last days of Gomorrah had he been in quite such a mood.

Next issue: God Returns. 🍷

✍ VALUR GUNNARSSON
🎨 ILLUSTRATION BY LÓA HJÁLMTÝSDÓTTIR



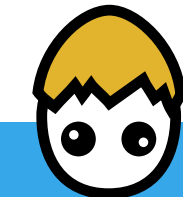
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The farmer on the below picture was having a very sad day when we met with him. He had to put down some of his horses due to the ashfall, and was bidding them farewell.



Eyjafjallajökull Raves On

Iceland's farmers take the heat

As those European airport slumber parties wind down and guests return to the humdrum of sleeping in real beds, taking showers and hopefully changing their socks, the Eyjafjallajökull ash fest is far from over for the farmers living near the base of the hard-to-pronounce-sub-glacial-volcano.

The steaming mad volcano has already flooded farmers with glacial water and then pummelled them with ash. The April 14 initiation has been rough thus far and unfortunately for a group of about twenty farmers, it looks like the hazing has only just begun.

One of those unfortunate farmers, Kristinn Stefánsson from Raufarfell, says that even if the volcano stops spewing ash tomorrow, there is already plenty of it to go around blowing on them all summer, if not longer.

Following the eruption, Stefánsson started making preparations to leave his farm, but his attempt to escape the ash now looks futile. “I have bills to pay,” Stefánsson said. “The banks aren’t going to stop demanding payments because I decided to leave my farm.”

A Hay Scarcity

Hundreds of acres of fields have been smothered by the ash and come summer this will cause problems for farmers who won’t be able to make the hay they need to feed their animals during the winter. Stefánsson has already sent 30 cattle to be slaughtered and he plans to continue downsizing as it becomes necessary.

What’s more, Dairy farmer Sigurður Þór Sigurðsson from Önundarhorn estimates it will take one to three years before the fields recover. Until then, it will cost him 1,700 rolls of hay every summer, which he uses to feed his 230 cattle, including 36 dairy cows.

Ólafur Eggertsson, from neighbouring farm, Þorvaldseyri, also expects he will have to decrease the number of cattle and dairy cows on his farm. His 2,500-acre farm is also one of the largest grain suppliers in south Iceland and Eggertsson said he is not sure whether he will be able to harvest this summer.

Trashed

While the cleanup effort is already underway, Eggertsson anticipates it will continue into the summer. “Fire fighters spent 24 hours clean-

ing ash from the roofs of my farm, a task that required 150,000 litres of water,” Eggertsson told me. “There were also more than 50 people helping shovel ash from my farm grounds, driving away 500 tons, not including my fields,” he added.

There is also an uncomfortable uncertainty about the eruption. “It’s tough to start clearing the ash from the fields when they could be blanketed again tomorrow, Sigurðsson of Önundarhorn said. “Not to mention the money gone down the drain.”

Operations have been thus far been halted once after the wind direction shifted and farmers were once again sprinkled with ash.

Time to go?

While Eggertsson, who has been farming for 35 years, says he plans to keep farming, other farmers weigh the possibility of leaving their farms considering the uncertainty of the eruption’s course and the difficult of work ahead.

The average farmer in Iceland is 52 years old and the average workweek is 92 hours on a farm with 40 dairy cows, according to the Farmers Association of Iceland. Where they

will find the extra hours is beyond me.

Sigurðsson of Önundarhorn was still digesting everything when I stopped by his farm about two weeks after the eruption. He pointed out that the eruption was still quite fresh and it was difficult to predict how long it would last.

It could continue spewing ash for multiple years, and in that case the farmers may have to re-evaluate their situation. But, at the very least, they will take an economic hit and it will probably be time to go for a number of their horses and cattle.

Reykjavík parties on!

Meanwhile, although Reykjavík city and the rest of Iceland haven’t seen a spec of ash, the tourist industry is starting to suffer as presumably misinformed and hysteria-fed travellers are cancelling their trips. So, reporting straight from Reykjavík, I am telling you that life is dancing on and gas masks and goggles are by no means in fashion. 🇮🇸

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Spending The Night
With A Farmer
Farm hopping in the West fjords

It was early evening by the time we descended into Djúpidalur valley after spending a successful day weaving in and out of Iceland’s most spectacular West fjords. We arrived at a cluster of red-roofed houses where a man and a couple of toddlers in a tractor were driving hay to the barn.

This was definitely our destination. Djúpidalur, located at 65° 35,073’N by 22° 16,990’W, is home to an entire population of four: Leifur Samúelsson, his wife Guðrún Samúelsdóttir, and their two kids. Of course, that isn’t counting their sheep, which brings the population up to 454.

Shortly after we parked the car, Guðrún emerged from the barn to greet us and show us to a house between the barn and their house. It was a spacious two-story accommodation, equipped with a kitchen, a dining room and four bedrooms.

Farmhouse lodging is typically either part of a farmer’s house or in a separate annex. Either way, they make for an incredible opportunity to get a taste of countryside life and the idyllic setting without the backbreaking labour.

After unloading our stuff, we walked over to the barn to chat with Leifur and Guðrún who were feeding their sheep. In one week’s time, they were expecting 640 lambs and soon after that the sheep would be off to graze freely in the valley all summer long.

Leifur and Guðrún have lived together in Djúpidalur for five years. Despite its remote location, Guðrún says they can always get to where they want. It didn’t seem to bother her that the nearest grocery store was 45 kilometres away in Reykhólar.

This brings me to another point about farmhouse hopping in the West fjords. Namely, gas and grocery stores are few and far between (especially when you need them). So, fuel up in every way possible when you have the chance. A night on a farmhouse is simply not the same without cooking a big feast. After dinner, an evening is well spent exploring the ins and outs of the fjord or even taking a warm bath in a geothermal pool.

Call in advance, especially during the busy summer months. Expect to pay around 3,000 ISK to 3,500 ISK per bed. This road trip was made possible by Hertz Car Rental, who provided us with a car.

ANNA ANDERSEN

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The Grapevine Takes A Tour
On Icelandic Horseback

You’d think from the looks of these dwarfen beasts that they’d be meek and mild, happy to carry a hobbit off on an adventure into Iceland’s fairytale landscape. At least, this is what I had in mind when I stepped into the Íshestar stables. The reality was somewhat different.

Horse tales

One of my misconceptions was cleared up as soon as I walked out into the paddock full of Icelandic horses (don’t call them ponies). Their stocky bodies and very soft fur might seem cute from afar, but they’re larger than they seem, and powerful. Anna Buhl, one of the Íshestar guides, told me that the bigger animals can hold up to 110 kg. Thanks to their hardiness, Icelandic horses have prospered for over 1000 years since early settlers introduced the breed to Iceland. From then until now, horse import has been virtually unheard of, and was officially

banned in 1882 to prevent disease from entering the country. This has also ensured that other horse breeds haven’t found their way into the genetic stock, so the Icelandic horse has retained its unique traits.

Icelandic horses are also special because they can travel at five different gaits, Anna informed me, including the tölt, a walking-trotting-like gait. Over the two-hour “Lava Tour”, my group did little of the famous tölt, though I had wanted to try it.

On the upside, the ride was still great for beginners and those in the mood for a leisurely ride. The lava-covered landscape and the volcano it surrounded, Mt. Helgafell, were spectacular no matter what the pace.

But the horses themselves were most interesting to me. Just as I had imagined, they are placid with humans, but I was surprised how playful they were with each other. In the pen as our horseback riding group was preparing to disembark,

one was engaging in some sort of ear nibbling, a second was leaning its butt obtrusively into another, and a couple was walking in an endless circle of bum biting. One of the girls at the stable confirmed that the horses were playing, not fighting. If one of them did get hurt in a rare tussle, she told me, you would hear about it from across the farm, and the aggressor would immediately stop.

Anna laughed as she and I watched the horses getting rowdy amongst themselves: “If you have a horse and you’ve been riding, and you take it to the paddock, it can be, like, crazy.”

But Icelandic horses are sweet natured in general, and respond well to humans. “They are very good-hearted,” Anna told me. “A lot of them are very calm. Loyal.”

A bumpy beginning
Unfortunately, my group’s introduction to riding was short and didn’t

include much about horse social signals. I would also have liked to learn more about how to ride. One of the guides gave me a whip, informing me my horse, Skvísa, was sometimes lazy. I should tap her butt to speed her up if digging my heels into her sides didn’t work. This was pretty much all the instruction we received, aside from “hold on”. With this level of horse education I felt a tad ridiculous, like a princess being carried in a litter on the back of an elephant with no knowledge about anything going on below.

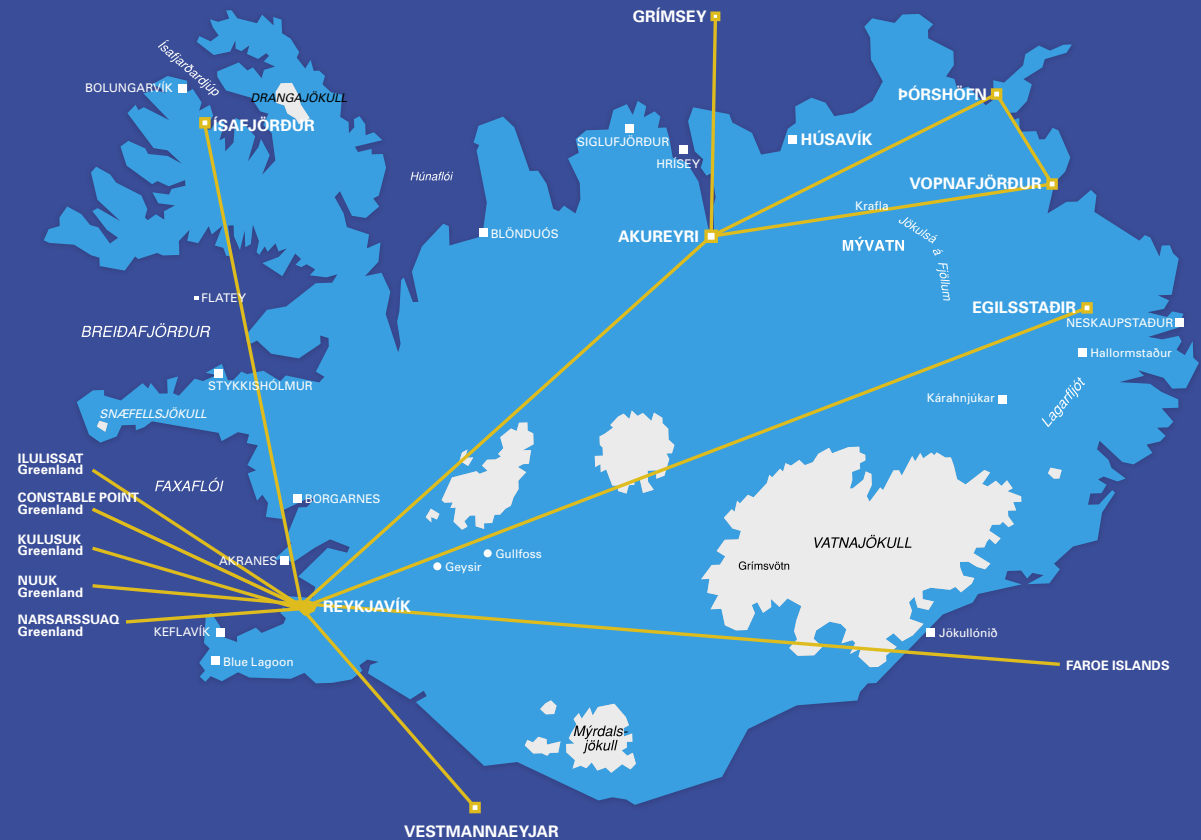
Discomforts to come prepared for
As with most tourist trips in Iceland, to enjoy this trip you should dress warmly. Granted, my hands turn to ice at the slightest wisp of cold air. But two hours of sitting outdoors on a moving Icelandic horse will chill even the warmest-handed.

Thankfully, Íshestar took care of all the other accoutrements. In the stable change room we had our pick of rubber boots, sturdy rain jackets and rain pants and, of course, riding helmets. I completely tricked myself out and was glad I did, even though it didn’t rain. Despite the multiple sweaters and jacket I had wrapped myself in beforehand, these outer layers helped to cut the wind. And the rubber boots allowed me to walk on horse poop with abandon.

But even multiple waterproof layers can’t prevent the ass pain. For the next couple days afterwards be prepared to have bruised bum bones. That being said, I found I was actually kind of proud of my bruises. It’s like having hurting legs after a particularly strenuous run, or like having war scars, except that you do no work to acquire them. You just spend the afternoon and 57 Euro pretending you’re a hobbit riding your trusty steed into the great Icelandic unknown.

STEPHANIE ORFORD
JULIA STAPLES

destinations.



Contact Air Iceland or
travel agent for reservation.

Article | Shopping

Góði Hirðirinn: Treasure From Trash

The biggest used goods store in Reykjavík



A fluorescent-lit warehouse with an ambiance to match, Góði Hirðirinn is an almost-free-for-all of junk. It's not that the goods aren't in decent condition, but there's definitely a fine selection of crap to sort through. Like any scrap heap, gems reveal themselves to the patient magpie.

"This is my favourite thing," Birna Einarsdóttir, a shopper at Góði Hirðirinn, told me. "I'm just fanatic about old stuff." A young graphic designer in Reykjavík, Birna uses second-hand paper to create one-of-a-kind books. "I find it so beautiful," she said, showing off the soft green record sleeve paper she had found.

Others here are looking to fulfil more practical needs. Maria Jónsdóttir, a preschool teacher, was on a coffee table hunt, and found a beautiful circular teak table for about 3.000 ISK.

Good buys, no expectations

Deals like this abound. Frikki Ragnarsson, the manager, told me that sellers at Kolaportið, the Reykjavík flea market, regularly hit up Góði Hirðirinn to purchase their

wares, then mark up the price. So if you want to skip the middleman, the bargain of your dreams is probably waiting for you here.

Árni Ingi Ríkhartsson, another Góði Hirðirinn shopper, told me he shopped there when he was younger and living on the cheap, because its goods are "very good and cost almost nothing." Today he was there looking for a TV, but no such luck.

The store maintains good-quality merchandise because the employees throw out over half the things donated to cull the garbage out, Frikki said. Still, this leaves plenty of wiggle room for weird stuff to creep onto the shop floor. Homemade furniture and paintings are a regular sight, he said.

Whatever you're looking for, going to Góði Hirðirinn is like meditating. It's best to enter without expectations. You might not find everything on your list, but you never know what you'll discover. Ingibjörg Bjarnadóttir had driven from out of town today to visit her family in the city, she said. She stopped by Góði Hirðirinn to find her blind grand nephew a cassette radio. Alas, the store

didn't yield what she was looking for this time around, but Ingibjörg was in good spirits. "You have to keep looking," she said, as she found some pottery she liked.

Win-win thrifting

Góði Hirðirinn, which translates to "the Good Shepherd", is part of the recycling company SORPA, and gives all its profits to charity, though the store isn't religion-affiliated as its name might suggest. "It was a very good idea, that name. People are very positive about what we are doing," said Frikki. Góði Hirðirinn is a win-win shopping experience. You can find unique stuff for cheap and give to charity.

What Frikki likes best about the place, though, is working with the employees and customers. "I know that we're doing a good job. That does make me happy anyway," he said.

I was just beginning to get into the hunt as Frikki uttered the closing shout. I hadn't found anything, so I figure I'll just have to keep looking. 🍀

Góði Hirðirinn Numbers

- '70s fondue set – 1.200 ISK
- Kitchen knives – 250 ISK each
- Wooden desk with drawers – 3.000 ISK
- Weird '70s rope ceiling lamp – 500 ISK
- '70s teak armchair with blue upholstery – SOLD
- Brown leather armchair – 2.000 ISK
- All teddy bears – 50 ISK
- # VHS tapes of Friends – 125
- # creepy Barbie and Little Mermaid busts – 6
- Observed ratio of female to male customers – 3:2ish

✍️ STEPHANIE ORFORD
📷 JULIA STAPLES

Article | Democracy

➡ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

anybody who participated that winter. There is no difference. Those nine were shouting and doing the same thing that everybody else was doing the entire time."

"Nine people cannot take the fall for a movement of thousands of people," adds Anna Þórsdóttir, a friend of Bryndís and the nine accused.

The letter accompanying the petition strongly implores the state to halt proceedings against the Reykjavík Nine, asserting, among other things, that to charge them with attacking Alþingi is absurd as Alþingi was already under attack from the inside, by politicians, bankers and corrupt businessmen.

Thus far the petition has received little response from the Icelandic power structure, but signatures continue to be collected in a show of solidarity for the accused. While Bryndís and Anna are not sure of how seri-

ously the state will take their plea to be charged alongside the Reykjavík Nine, they insist that if the petition were to be heeded and charges were, in fact, brought against them then they and all signatories would follow through with what they requested.

"Everybody who has written their name on this list realises what this means. All the people who were protesting knew what it meant," says Anna, with Bryndís adding "I can honestly say that I would rather be in prison with the signatories than outside the prison with everyone who would want them prosecuted."

OH, THE IRONY

Twice in its relatively short history Article 100 has been dug from the pages of the penal code, both times to punish citizens for exercising their right to protest. The likeliness of a father-daughter connection linking the two instances would seem to be a long shot, when in actuality it is a darkly-comical twist to an all togeth-

er outrageous chain of events that, as police keep watch over the trial and decide who may and may not enter the courtroom, is on its way to becoming a circus.

"I can see that it is, of course, ironic," admits Sólveig of her being made to follow in her father's footsteps. "But to me the irony is overpowered by the sheer ridiculousness of the situation. It should be apparent to everybody how ridiculous this is. But then, I don't think it is apparent to everybody. I don't know how the public feels. Very many people may think it's quite all right to send us to jail."

The Reykjavík Nine will be in court on May 12th. To sign the petition accusing yourself in accordance with Article 100 send your name, address and kennitala to yfirlýsing.reykjavik.9@gmail.com. 🍀

✍️ CATHARINE FULTON
📷 JULIA STAPLES AND SIGURÐUR GUNNARSSON



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Article | Volcanic bliss

Hot Air And Solar Flares

The ash clouds from the edge of the world that changed everything

In a recent New Scientist article, “Get ready for decades of Icelandic fire-works,” volcanologist Þorvaldur Þórðarson speculates this next active volcanic phase could last for another 60 years, reaching its peak before 2040. So far, estimates of Eyjafjallajökull’s costs to airlines and travel companies range between \$1.7 and 4 billion—and that’s just for five days of ash plumes. And while the EU is still squabbling to find a unified “ash-no-ash flying policy,” the days of volcanic-free travel appear to lie in the distant future. EU aid to effected, cash-poor airlines such as FinnAir has also not yet been unilaterally agreed upon. Being stranded at the airport for five days may seem like the end of the world, but it isn’t. Not by a long shot.

Let’s rewind for a minute

Iceland, June 1783. A 25-kilometre fissure spanning 130 craters erupts. Lava fountains spout 1500 metres. Gasses of toxic sulphuric aerosols rise to 15 kilometres and inundate Europe, then sift across the globe. (In comparison Eyjafjallajökull’s plume rose to around 9 km) Over 122 million tonnes of sulphur dioxide are emitted in eight months (that’s more than three times the entire European industrial output today). In the end, the lava covers 600 square kilometres. The Laki eruption and its aftermath kills close to a third of the Icelandic population. Toxic gasses reach as far as Japan. The Alaskan Kauwerak tribe come to call 1783 “the year the summer did not come.”

Events as recounted by Lutheran “Fire Preacher” Rev. Jón Steingrímsson unfold thus: “It began with the earth heaving upwards, with a great screaming...of winds...then spitting asunder, ripping...as if a crazed animal were tearing something apart. The flood of fire flowed like a great river...great cliffs and slabs were swept along, tumbling about like large whales swimming red hot and glowing.” The reverend blames the cataclysm on the loose morality of the Icelandic nation, but delivers his church and congregation from the river of lava through prayer and divine intervention: the wrath and subsequent vindication of a merciful God.

In France, priests conduct exorcisms on Satan’s fog cloud as people fall like flies. Over 5% of the French population died in one 18th Century summer (some claim the aftermath may have precipitated the French Revolution). Across the channel in England, mortality rates double. Scientists have estimated that toxic fumes killed over 20,000 people in Britain (100,000 people by today’s reckoning). Torrential rain, flash floods, hail and lightning storms plague Britain in August and September. In 1783, the naturalist Gilbert White writes: “Unlike anything known within the memory of man.”

By the time Laki stopped erupting in February of 1784, it had emitted over 8



million tonnes of toxic chemical fluorine. The fluorine, mixed with fallen ash, killed 80% of Iceland’s sheep population and over 50% of its cows and horses. Fall-out effects were dramatic and far-flung. The high-pressure weather system carried particles as far as India, where the monsoon was nothing more than a drizzle. In 1784, famine hit Egypt reducing the country by 20% of its population. During the ensuing years extreme cold in Japan decimated crops, leading to the death of over one million people. In short, these volcanic effects ran amok across the globe. A study conducted by Rutgers University in 2006 conclusively proved a direct correlation between high-latitude eruptions and water supply in North Africa during the period. For Europe, possibly the biggest natural catastrophe disaster ever, would be the toxic fog from an Icelandic volcano.

And Laki was not the largest to have shown its wrath.

Fire canyon

Alongside Laki, in the conjoined volcanic system including Katla, Hekla, Grímsvötn, and the now-well-known-yet-still-unpronounceable Eyjafjallajökull, lies the dormant Eldgjá (the “fire canyon”), the largest volcanic canyon in the world. Eight hundred years before the Laki eruption (934-940 AD), not long after the Viking settlers started to get comfortable in their turf houses, Eldgjá, the largest emitter of volcanic gas in recorded history, spewed forth in all its glory. All in all, Eldgjá exhumed over 220 million tonnes of sulphur dioxide—nearly double that of Laki.

Yet there is little mention in the medieval record, and certainly not in the Sagas.

The historian Oren Falk sees the portrayal of Ragnarök in the prophetic poem Völuspá (detailing the creation of the world as recounted by a völva [a seeress] to the god Óðinn) as being influenced by witnesses to Icelandic volcanic activity, yet there is very little that points any particular eruption. Falk only finds a few vague references in Landnámabók and in the later Bishops’ Sagas. In fact,

he says: “the entire corpus of Family Sagas, thirteen thick volumes’-worth... seems to know nothing of lava and ash plumes.”

Folklorist Juliana Magnúsdóttir theorises that the early settlers were cautious of their volcanic tales for fear of halting the influx of new immigrants to Iceland. Nevertheless there are a handful legends speckled within the oral traditions and the Annals. And, as Magnúsdóttir points out, “One of the descriptions of Ragnarök before the end is that of a blood-covered sun. The shape of Iceland was defined by volcanic activity and how it affected the people.” Gilbert White writes: “The sun at noon [over Hampshire] looked as blank as the moon and shed a rust coloured ferruginous light on the ground, but was particularly lurid and blood-coloured at rising and setting.”

Recent catastrophes are a testament to the lack of foresight and the inadequacy of governments: floods, tsunamis, hurricane Katrina, the Haiti and Szechwan earthquakes, the avian and swine flu. The lingering presence of the ever-recurring-greenhouse-gas-driven El Niño sends shivers down most policy-makers’ spines.

With the Mayan cosmic cycle coming to a close in 2012 conspiracy theories abound, New Agers maintain that this is all part of the great cosmic plan. Biophysicist Dieter Broers speculates that the largest solar flare for fifteen years triggered Iceland’s volcanic activity; others maintain these are the beginnings of the European death cloud predicted by Nostradamus. Lord knows. Even UFOs have been spotted hovering over top of Eyjafjallajökull.

Gordon Brown sent the HMS Ark Royal to pick up marooned tourists in France and Spain. With him lagging behind at the voting polls, one wonders if he didn’t seriously consider putting Iceland back on the terrorist list. This, friends, is the ashen-faced reality. ♡

MARC VINCENZ

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Opinion | Marieke Hardy

Sharing Pieces Of Iceland

There is nothing quite so romantic as the notion of reinvention through re-location. Travelling half-way across the planet to assume a new identity, one is able to shed the skin of previous incarnations, personalities and relationships. “When you’re travelling, you are what you are right there and then. People don’t have your past to hold against you. No yesterdays on the road,” once observed writer William Least Heat Moon, sagely tapping into the heart of what drives human beings to escape. Some stay put and simmer in the inevitability—alas, alas—of a torpid suburban destiny. Some run as far as their conscience will take them and begin anew. They studiously reinvent amongst swarthy jungle landscapes and uneven Parisian streets, hidden from view in mountain cottages and hollowed-out caves. They can be whomever they want to be at whatever time they choose. An exhilarating freefall of character renewal, unencumbered by history or responsibility.

Some even throw caution to the wind and begin this process in Iceland.

In early April I arrive in Reykjavík to celebrate the nuptials of a dear expat friend, who has been living here for eighteen months. We visiting Australians are greeted with open arms and raised glasses, enfolded into the wedding party and promised

cake and champagne, illicit kisses with local brutes, the keys to the city during our brief visit, anything our hearts desire. We are taken on beautiful, meandering drives and ushered towards places of interest. This, too, is our place to explore and cherish and sing about to the world.

And then suddenly there is a volcanic eruption, and planes being unceremoniously pulled from the sky, and an absurd and very real chance that our stays will extend beyond the foreseeable future. We joke about moving here, of relocating our lives and setting up shop downtown. At which point the welcoming gestures of our friends grow less warm, their enthusiasm for our presence slightly tempered.

“I want to share this place with you,” their eyes tell us, “but I don’t want you to keep it.”

There is a tiny community of Australians currently residing in the country, though to call them a community is being overly generous. They’re a picnic, a long-table lunch. There are barely enough of them to form a worthy tug-of-war tournament. Some of them meet on occasion and swap wry grins about the life they long-ago left behind, but for the most part they choose to blend seamlessly into the new landscape like shadows.

“I know what it is,” a new friend tells me very seriously over a large beer. “It’s because the Australians

want to feel special here. They’re used to being the only child, feted as something new. When others from their home country come to join their new sandpit, they’re terribly unhappy.”

There’s something in that. Because there is an inevitable cultural cringe attached to one’s homeland, there is. Outside of the chest-beating patriots best avoided at all costs, for the most part travellers downplay their motherland with shy smiles and disparaging comments about complicated political systems and idiotic local delicacies. They feel disconnected to the place, which is why they leave. They’re searching for a reality far from the known environment, the familiar faces. The last thing any Australian wants to see after escaping to the other side of the earth is some flag-waving twit gesturing at them from across the bar and giving them a matey thumbs up. And with those invaders, those keepers of the past, comes an undoing of a precious and sacred construct. They know your history, and your secrets, and your ex-girlfriends. They know your humiliating old jobs and the fact that your name hasn’t always been Sapphire Tangerine. And they are the ones who remind you—with open, cocky smiles, with overly familiar backslaps and grating, parochial anecdotes—of a place you have tried so desperately hard to leave behind.

And so the protective instinct

“The last thing any Australian wants to see after escaping to the other side of the earth is some flag-waving twit gesturing at them from across the bar and giving them a matey thumbs up.”

kicks in. Which is not to be sneered at. “I was here first,” they claim, ramming the flag of ownership into the dirt. They mingle less with those who may at any moment break the equilibrium of their perfect Reykjavík life. And they guard, carefully, their hidden past.

I love them for it, I do. I respect their wishes to keep their space and their art and their new identity away from the prying eyes of their countrymen. They have every right to see a new country with fresh eyes and an unchallenged perspective. So long as they remember those fellow travellers who came before them—and those who will continue to come after them—also seeking solace, seeking comfort in the faces of strangers, seeking a new tomorrow. For no land is yet to be traversed, and no stone yet unturned. If they will share a piece of their Iceland with me, I promise I shall share it with the next man. 🍷

News | Marc Vincenz

Kreppa In The International Eye: April

Fireworks! Fireworks!

A Google news search on April 29 reveals over 22,000 hits on Iceland, 90%, of course, had to do with the eruption of Eyjafjallajökull, followed by the subsequent 100,000 flight cancellations and a never-ending stream of commentary on the ensuing chaos. There is hardly a newspaper, weekly, news blog or TV station that hasn’t bantered the word “Iceland” at least once during April. Even a National Geographic crew managed to slip into the country in between ash dispersions to film a special entitled “Iceland Volcano Disaster”. Natural disasters are always big news, but volcanoes spew fire and look fabulous on colour TV.

Before the middle of the month, coverage focussed on the eagerly-awaited Special Investigation Commission’s “Crisis Report”; this too—possibly a first for any government—garnered significant attention. There can’t be a shadow of a doubt; Iceland’s position on the map has finally been firmly planted in the minds of every air-traveller. Iceland is now world famous for two things: complete and utter economic meltdown and an evil cloud of toxic ash.

As the Grapevine pointed out in mid-April, “Googling ‘I hate Iceland’ already gives 147,000 results, dwarfing ‘I love Iceland’ and its meagre 46,000 hits.” But in the scheme of Hollywood renown, bad press is not necessarily such a bad thing.

Did anyone else notice that Iceland’s biggest borrower was not actually an Icelander? On April 14, Rowena Mason in the Telegraph pointed out that Robert Tchenguiz’s name crops up over 100 times in the Crisis Report and that Kaupthing backed numerous high-profile acquisitions such as Sainsbury’s and Somerfield, bringing Tchenquiz’s debt to over £1.4 billion. Hold on. Doesn’t that mean if Tchenguiz were to pay up, the Icesave debt would already be down to £0.9 billion?

Eiríkur Bergmann in the Guardian contemplated “How Iceland lost its soul” by turning Iceland’s “established democracy into some kind of idiot-crazy”. Rob Davies in the Daily Mail was one of many who had a stab at Davíð Oddsson, the man who paid no heed to warnings from the Bank of England’s governor. The so-called massive emigration wave hitting Iceland—which was foiled, at least temporarily by Eyjafjallajökull—was covered by the AFP news agency, and picked up by press from as far afield as Brunei, quoting Mosfellsbær’s Anna Margrét Björnsdóttir as saying, “There isn’t going to be any future in this country for the next 20 years, everything is going backwards.”

I mean when will all this gloom and doom end? Possibly the only positive news this past month is the minor coverage of Iceland’s move to legalise gay marriage—although that now looks like the Church has foiled it. 🍷

Poetry | Eiríkur Örn Norðdahl

Left, Right And Centre

A self-righteous rant

One of the greatest conservative projects in poetry is called New Formalism. In short, it supports the return to rhymed metrical verse and classical themes. It’s a let’s-write-like-Keats kinda movement, originally associated with the yuppie culture of the 1980s, with that perverted type of pseudo-sophistication that makes most modern day readers think of Patrick Bateman and his cronies—or Gordon Gekko. Lubricious slickers with a peculiar need to associate themselves with a bygone golden age while simultaneously proclaiming themselves as “the true new” of poetry (‘hey, look at me, I’m neo-Keats!’). This is poetry for a Roman master race; this is the right wing of poetry; this is literature for those who seek a moral centre and a sense in poetry, and find both in nostalgic form and subject matter.

Can you tell that I don’t care for it much?

Well, alright, I’ll admit I do get some pleasure out of it. My problem is more with the philosophy behind it than the parlour-game of pentameter per se. I’m no enemy of form or rigorous sportsmanship in poetry—both form and rigour are key traits of most experimental poetry, which is the part of the park I prefer to play in. But New Formalism’s spite towards modernism in particular, and modernity in general—not to

mention its teeth-grinding spite towards experimental poetry—is so violently geriatric in its appeal that it verges on necrophilia.

Now, as in the real world, progressive left wing poetry’s problem tends to be dogmatism on the one hand and maddening factionalism on the other. Everyone has their own precisely constructed theory on what constitutes great post-avant poetry and the rest, however slightly they differ from the party line in question, are a bunch of revisionist nutters—interesting, perhaps, but eventually of no importance (“we must break you”). It’s poetry that praises community but (often) has little sense of community—and most of its communities are comprised of tiny revolutionary factions of mini-Lenins, each of whom can’t wait to drop the others so that they may lead the revolution on their own (“at best, you get to be a Verlaine to my Rimbaud, but that’s as far as I’m willing to go”).

(Can you tell I’m trying to be equally cruel towards my own, as I was towards the evil fascists of New Formalism above, in a perverted democratic tradition?)

Last but not least, oh woe to ye of putrid intentions, is the centre International Free Verse. Like its political representative in real life, the poetic centre is mostly without vision and has no discernible wish for poetry

to be one thing or the other. It is a despicable mish-mash of nothing whose primary goal is to have a nice desk-job in the Poetic Institution—preferably a well-paid official position with a respectable title.

Its philosophy is that no news is good news. While nothing happens, you don’t have to be afraid that perhaps it’s the wrong thing happening. The poetic centre came out of the twentieth century through the indiscriminate bombings of Marinetti, the degenerate hippie logic of Allen Ginsberg and the rabid intellectualism of Language Poetry and feeling like it needed a break, at the very least. It deplores ideology, method, form, discernible content and conversation while idolizing all that which is vague: inspiration, harmless abstractions, cliché-ridden symbolism, simple juxtaposition and simultaneously deals in the perception that not asserting anything is in itself a form of supreme modesty.

Sometimes all of this seems too much for a poor soul—we still haven’t even begun discussing the rampant paranoia and petty hatreds that permeate poetic circles left, right and centre—and I feel this prompts serious questions about my career choice. Questions to which I’ve sadly still not found a satisfactory answer. But it’s totally fucked up, right? 🍷



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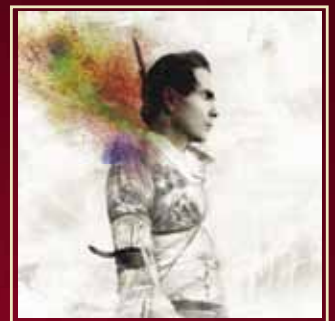
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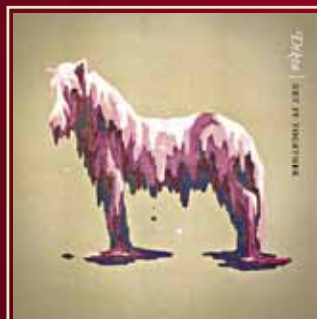
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PAGE 17

One tragicomic example is that at one point in time one of the banks had one person acting as compliance officer while the “entertainment department” employed thirteen full time staff. It was that absurd”

Professor Vilhjálmur Árnason has investigated the ethical implications of THE COLLAPSE

PAGE 15:

I travelled a lot myself, and never really could afford it. So I just took loans. And some more loans. And then loans for my loans. I thought I was behaving irresponsibly, but it turned out even my banks were doing the exact same thing!

Hard partyin’ graphic designers, banks, corporations – it’s all the same.

PAGE 18

If depression hasn’t killed you yet, this album will make you want to kill yourself through its abject, stupefying idiocy.

Sindri Eldon is no fan of Hafðís Huld’s latest album

PAGE 16

It's a bit like coming to the scene of an airplane crash. And you're the investigator, and you say, ‘The thing that killed these people is that they were going 350 miles per hour when they hit the ground.’ It is true, but it's not the important part of the story.

William Black on Iceland's Financial Collapse

PAGE 17

During the few hours last week when the road both east and west of my town were closed off—east due to heavy ash dispersion and west due to flooding—no one even skipped their afternoon tea.

Icelanders know how to chill, according to our new friend Zhang

PAGE 26

Outside of the chest-beating patriots best avoided at all costs, for the most part travellers downplay their motherland with shy smiles and disparaging comments about complicated political systems and idiotic local delicacies.

Marieke Hardy contemplates the paradox of Australians and their foreign identity crisis.

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SCHOOL OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

- PhD in Computer Science
- MSc in Computer Science
- MSc in Software Engineering
- BSc in Software Engineering
- BSc in Computer Science
- Diploma in Applied Computing

SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND EDUCATION

- MSc in Exercise Science and Coaching
- MEd in Sport Education
- MPH - Master of Public Health
- Diploma in Education
- BSc in Sport Science
- BSc in Psychology

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

- PhD in Business Administration
- MSc in International Business*
- MSc in Quantitative Finance*
- MSc in Corporate Finance*
- MSc in Accounting and Auditing
- MSc in Management Accounting
- MBA*
- BSc in Business Administration
- Diploma in Business Administration

SCHOOL OF LAW

- PhD in Law
- ML - Master of Law
- BA in Law

* Programmes offered in English

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