



The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

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On the cover: **Muck** (Ási Þórðarson, Indriði Arnar Ingólfsson, Karl Torsten Stállborn, Loftur Einarsson.)
Pink Street Boys (Alfred Óskarsson, Axel Björnsson, Einar Björn Þórarinnsson, Jónbjörn Birgisson, Viðir Alexander Jónsson)
 Photographer: Hörður Sveinsson hordursveinsson.com
 Make-up: Ástrós Erla Benediksdóttir

Play The Rehab Card

Anna's editorial



The most-read stories across multiple Icelandic news sites this week are about a Progressive Party MP projectile vomiting all over other passengers on a WOW Air flight. This led to multiple accounts, retracted stories, and, at the very least, the appearance of lying. Even if the MP didn't have a drinking problem, it might have been a better strategy to check into rehab than to feed the media frenzy.

Reading the first DV story about the incident, in which the MP denied being drunk and claimed to have had a stomach bug, my initial thought was, 'wow, that's really gross and terrible for everyone involved, and isn't it in bad taste for the media to be reporting on this?'

The plot quickly thickened though. In story after story, people came out with conflicting versions of what happened. One of the unlucky passengers claimed that he was visibly drunk and that he could barely stand when she saw him going through passport control in the United States. Then, an Independence Party MP who was also on the plane claimed that none of it happened at all. He later retracted that statement and declared that he would never talk to DV again. After that, the chair of the Progressive Party parliamentary group said that the MP was actually quite ill and is now on sick leave. Shortly thereafter, however, the captain of the Pirate Party claimed that he had been at work the day before and looked just fine.

At this point, it's pretty difficult to deny that people are lying. It seems the MP and his colleagues are desperately trying to save face, spinning all kinds of conflicting stories. Unfortunately, in that first DV story, when the MP was asked if he struggled with a drinking problem, he replied, somewhat defensively: "No, what? I have never heard that before. I'm the last member of parliament to have an alcohol problem." That was the golden opportunity to make the story go away.

Admitting to having a drinking problem and deciding to seek treatment for alcohol and drug addiction doesn't carry a stigma here like it does elsewhere in the world. In fact, more than 10% of males over the age of 15 have gone to rehab, and Iceland's Centre for Addiction Medicine, SÁÁ, which runs the nation's drug and alcohol rehab, says its practices have touched every family in Iceland through the years.

A case in point: also on the list of most-read stories on Icelandic news sites this week is one about the editor of Kastljós, a highly rated newsmagazine TV show (Iceland's version of 60 Minutes), announcing that he would be checking into rehab for his alcohol addiction. The editor's announcement, which was made via a Facebook post, has garnered thousands of likes and heaps of supportive comments.

You could argue that the editor didn't vomit all over a bunch of other people like the MP did, but the Icelandic public have been known to forgive other vile acts. Earlier this year, one of our former ministers misappropriated hundreds of thousands of ISK and still seemed to gain public sympathy when he owned up to his problems and checked into rehab.

The facts are simple:

1. The MP boarded a plane and puked over fellow passengers.
2. People on the plane are claiming he was drunk.

Instead of everyone rallying behind him with support, he's been ostracised. There's a hashtag and a litany of internet memes. People love a villain and people love a redemption story. He chose villain.

Comic | Lóa Hjálmtýsdóttir



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TRACKS OF THE ISSUE



Muck

"Blind and Bent" from 'Your Joyous Future'

Pink Street Boys

"Goodkid" from 'Hits #1'

Download the FREE tracks at www.grapevine.is

We have not one but two tracks of the issue this time around—one from Muck and the other from Pink Street Boys, the bands gracing our cover. These bands often attract the same crowd, yet play completely different music, as is demonstrated by these two tracks.

Muck's "Blind and Bent" has the intensity of a full-blown panic attack, suffocating you with its relentlessly tight instrumentals and guttural vocals. Meanwhile, "Goodkid" from Pink Street Boys has a super upbeat vibe reminiscent of beach rock—its gleefully reckless mix of (purposefully) muddled vocals and clanky instrumentals make you want to dance ferociously, or alternatively to break something, all the while not giving a single fuck.

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SOUR GRAPES & STUFF

Most Awesome Letter of the Issue!

Firstly, thanks for sending me your very informative and entertaining online newsletter.

Secondly, I just did the math and calculated that your minimum wage now (300,000 ISK/month) is, at about 2,271 USD, the equivalent of about \$13 USD, or almost twice that of the US. We -US national labor unions and others - are currently fighting for a national raise in the US minimum wage to \$15/hour. The US federal minimum wage is now, since January 2014, \$7.25/hour (about 957 ISK). I realize that islands and island-nations are always more expensive than

mainlands, but I live in New York City and it is, believe me, expensive to live here, although, granted, I have visited Iceland and its prices took my breath away. \$20 for a simple sandwich at lunchtime? Here you can pay less than half for the equivalent. in a downscale coffee shop. Frightening.

My point? Many US workers would love a raise to Iceland's minimum wage, although it, too, is not really liveable. Conclusion: We all need raises.

(Ms.) Marti Copleman
Brooklyn, NY

Hi Marti,
Thank you for your letter, and we totally agree with your conclusion. With prices the way they are in Iceland, it is difficult to imagine people living below the proposed 300,000 ISK minimum wage, yet that is the reality for many people. And NYC? Being poor there is a tough gig.
Yours in solidarity,
The Grapevine

Góðan daginn,
To whom my concern.
This is Estanis, Spanish guy living in Höfn and a hotel manager in Fosshotel Vatnajökull. I would like to explain you the situation I heard from a 22 years old Spanish girl. She is a bit scare and she does not want to say her name. I would like to get some help or support about this case. I don't have any prove about what I am saying but I trust in what the Spanish girl says: She was hire to work in a farm: Egilsstadakot by Cathy Krentel in Selfoss. She never got confirmation about her salary before to arrive in Iceland, but the conditions was to get food and accomodation and salary. Once she arrived to the house the owner told her she will have 50.000 kr a month for her work plus food and accomodation. She was suppose to work 12 hours every single day. Can anyone check on this case and send her a work inspection? Right now there is a babysitter working in the farm I guess similar conditions and probably with no contract. This should not happen today in Iceland or anywhere. Hope someone can check this case and help that this will not happen again. If you

need any more information I am here to help. Takk
Kveðja / Best regards
Estanis Plantada Siurans
Hótelstjóri Vatnajökull | Hotel Manager Vatnajökull

Hi Estanis,
Holy fucking shit, that's a raw deal, and it's a likely bet that it's not legal. We recommend getting in touch with a trade union, such as Báran. Even if there was no talk of salary, if she is hired for a position, her boss cannot give her wages below the union-prescribed salary. If the boss admits fault, she should get paid the wages she is owed, and if not, the unions will have lawyers that can help take the case further. Also see if you can get the babysitter to do the same, that shit is not OK.
Your comrades in arms,
The Grapevine

...YOU GUYS ARE GREAT!
Been following you guys since I got a hold of Reykjavik Grapevine in 2013 when I visited and so far, you're the only ones who've kept me informed AND entertained.
I wanna write for you guys but I don't know if my tropical surroundings is up your alley. I am a writer and editor of a website in MEtro Manila - we do pretty much the same thing. Anyway. I'm going back to Reykjavik in November to catch Bjork. Please if I can visit your office, meet the staff, that would be great.
Cheers ya mate!
Lou E. Albano

Hey Lou
By all means drop us a line when you're here, we'd be happy to have you over.
Best,
The Grapevine



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And guess what: we always give out SICK prizes for each issue's LOVELIEST LETTER, so be sure to send in some fun and/or interesting missives.

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Iceland Strikes Again!

Words by Magnús Sveinn Helgason

Photo by Art Bicnick

The conventional wisdom says that Iceland is a happy, prosperous place with that strong Nordic welfare system. But if things are so great in Iceland, why is everyone so angry about the state of the economy, and why are we in the midst of the bitterest labour disputes in years?

For the past month and a half, thousands of people have been on strike, and barring a major breakthrough, it looks like that number might grow significantly in the next few weeks.

Members of BHM, the Association of Academics, an umbrella organisation of 27 unions representing university-educated professionals, have been on strike since the beginning of April. SGS, the Federation of General and Special Workers, representing 19 unions and workers in various fields, including the fishing and tourism industries, has already begun limited strike action, with a 12-hour work stoppage on Thursday, April 30. It has been announced that it will follow up with further short work stoppages on May 28 and 29 and a full strike on June 6 if no agreement is reached in the interim.

A full strike by the SGS will mean large sections of the tourism industry will be paralysed, as many unskilled workers in hotels and restaurants, as well as bus drivers, are members of unions belonging to the SGS. Other unions have also threatened strikes, among them VR, which represents office and retail workers.

Yes, foreign visitors will be impacted

To date the strikes have had a limited impact, although the targeted strikes of a number of professions belonging to the BHM—including health workers and midwives, veterinarians, and lawyers working for the Reykjavík municipality—are beginning to cause serious disruption.

The strike amongst veterinarians who do health inspections has led to a nationwide shortage of chicken and some processed meat products. The strike amongst lawyers working for the city has meant that documents or contracts cannot be registered, no new permits can be issued and no real estate transactions legally completed as deeds cannot be transferred. This has already caused considerable trouble to realtors and anyone buying or selling a home, as payments are held up. The growing backlog of thousands of documents will take weeks to process once the lawyers return to work.

If agreements are not reached soon, and all the unions move from limited ac-

tion to general strike action, we will see far more serious effects. Over 70,000 workers might be on strike by early summer.

The general secretary of the SGS, Drífa Snædal, notes that foreign visitors will most certainly feel the strike. “The immediate impact on foreign visitors will probably be through air traffic, which will be paralysed as baggage handlers, drivers of oil trucks and retail workers at the Keflavik airport will go on strike,” she says. “Many restaurants will be forced to close their doors, and the cleaning staff of hotels will be on strike as well.”

As Drífa points out, “most daily action will grind to a halt.”

So, why are people going on strike?

Most attention has been paid to the demand to raise the lowest wages to 300,000 ISK per month by 2017, which comes to just about 228,000 ISK per month after taxes (18,600 EUR or 21,000 USD annually).

SA-Business Iceland, a service organisation for Icelandic business, has rejected the demand, arguing that companies will either have to lay people off, or will simply have to go out of business. Wages, they argue, cannot grow much faster than productivity. Any wage increase in excess of 3.5% would lead to inflation that will undermine the economic stability achieved in the past years. Bjarni Benediktsson, the minister of finance, has made the same argument, warning against the inflationary consequences of meeting union demands.

It turns out, though, that not all companies agree that paying a higher minimum wage will spell their ruin. A growing number of smaller businesses, many in the tourism industry, which are not members of SA-Business Iceland have struck deals with the SGS, agreeing to their full demands in order to stave off the threat of strikes later this month. A union leader who spoke to the Iceland’s national public broadcasting service, RÚV, argued that many more companies would like to strike deals with the unions, but are held back by SA-Business Iceland.



Key Players

Icelandic Federation of Labour (ASÍ)

51-member unions representing 100,000 workers

Association of Academics (BHM)

27-member unions representing 11,000 workers

Near-universal support

In fact, unions’ demand for a raise in the minimum wage enjoys near-universal support. According to a recent Gallup poll, 91.6% of Icelanders support the lowest monthly wage being raised to 300,000 ISK. In fact, when asked what the minimum wage should be, the average figure people gave was 10% higher, or just under 330,000 ISK per month. This is not surprising considering that the Debtors Ombudsman estimates that a single parent with two children needs to make 232,282 ISK in order to exist, and that excludes the cost of housing. So even if the minimum wage is raised in accordance with the demands of SGS, the take-home pay of those making minimum wage will not be enough for some to make ends meet.

So, how do people make ends meet? By working overtime or two jobs. According to Drífa Snædal, 60% of the members of SGS, who do not have special sector contracts, are making less than 238,000 ISK per month before taxes. The union’s demand, she argues, is so that its members are able to pay the bills working one job.

This is not just a problem facing the lowest-paid workers. Gylfi Arnþjórnsson, the president of ASÍ, the Icelandic Federation of Labour, argues that a full 30-35% of the nation is struggling to maintain a decent standard of living. Even people earning above median wages have trouble paying basic bills.

It is not just expensive to travel in Iceland

The reason why middle-class professionals are going on strike and demanding a living wage is because Iceland is expensive (as visitors may have noticed). The 2015 Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report of the World Economic Forum ranked Iceland 128th out of 141 countries when it came to price competitiveness. In a recent OECD report on the salaries of teachers in its member countries, Iceland was in 26th place, well behind most Western European countries. The average annual salary of teachers is 48,932 USD in Denmark, but only 28,100 USD in Iceland when adjusted by purchasing power parity.

Whether we are looking at workers with a university education or not, wages are on average 20% lower in Iceland than in the other Nordic countries, according to the Icelandic Federation of Labour.

Wage costs are also relatively low in Iceland compared to other countries. According to the most recent figures from Eurostat in 2012, wage costs in Iceland were well below the other Nordic countries as well as most Western European countries, and slightly below the European average.

To many in the labour movement, the problem is all about inequality. In fact, the only class of people who earn a higher wage in Iceland than in Scandinavia are business managers and chief executives. According to calculations made by ASÍ, executive pay adjusted for purchasing parity is on average 5% higher in Iceland than in Scandinavia.

You can’t make this shit up!

The day before the first half-day strike action of the SGS, KEA, an investment company headquartered in Akureyri, announced that it was giving its CEO a 20% raise, or an extra five million ISK per year. Drífa Snædal, the managing director of SGS, shared the news on her Facebook page, posting: “One day to strikes... You can’t make this shit up!”

Drífa explains that people are going on strike because they have had enough. “It seems as if there is more than enough money when it comes to raising wages for executives and people in the highest income brackets,” she says, “but when workers ask for a living wage, all of a sudden times are really tough and everyone needs to tighten their belts so that we don’t threaten economic stability.”

Yet, she notes, it is the working class that is asked to shoulder the burden of maintaining economic stability. “The working class is asked to ensure that inflation does not take off, and that

SA-Business Iceland: a service organisation for Icelandic businesses, negotiates with unions on wages and working conditions, representing about 2,000 businesses, accounting for 70% of all salaried employees on the Icelandic labour market

Federation of General and Special Workers (SGS) representing 50,000 workers

VR Trade Union: commercial and office workers’ union representing 30,000 workers

economic stability is maintained. But stability which is based on economic injustice is not a stability we can accept.”

Blame the government and the bosses

While Drífa stresses that the main reason for the strikes is that employers have not been willing to accept demands that workers receive something resembling a living wage, she points out that the attitude of employers and the government has enraged many in the labour movement.

It is not just that executive pay has risen significantly in the past few years, Drífa argues, but that the government has lowered taxes on the wealthy and corporations, while raising taxes on food and co-pays in the health services. “The tactlessness of these actions has really angered many people,” she says.

For example, at the same time as fishing giant HB Grandi was offering its workers pay raises of 3.5%, the company announced a 33% raise in compensation to its board members, which amounted to a five- or six-figure raise for them while workers at the company’s freezer plants were offered a raise of five or six thousand. Other companies have announced similar increases in executive compensation. The insurance company VÍS, for instance, announced a whopping 70% raise in compensation to its board members. Faced with public outrage, the company later withdrew the proposal, citing the need to show restraint and take responsibility for maintaining economic stability.

Meanwhile, Minister of Finance Bjarni Benediktsson has not done much to calm the waters, calling the union demands excessive and proposing legislation that would double the legal limits on bank bonuses. Apparently, some people deserve a raise more than others.

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Sheep | Meeeh!



So What're These Lambs On TV I Keep Hearing About?

Words by Kári Tulinius @Kattullus

Illustration by Lóa Hjálmtýsdóttir

Starting at noon on May 14, Icelandic state television RÚV broadcast continuously for almost 24 hours from a farm called Syðri-Hofdalir in the Skagafjörður region in North Iceland. That was because it was lambing season, with 20 to 40 sheep giving birth every day.

Why not the whole 24 hours?

It was supposed to be 24 hours, but the relay transmitter nearest to the farm short-circuited when there were still two and a half hours to go. This was RÚV's experiment in slow television, a genre of broadcasting that has been developed and popularised by NRK, the Norwegian state television, since 2009. In Norway there have been many such programmes, with live broadcasts of entire train journeys, 12-hour knitting marathons and 60 hours of choral hymn singing.

Are governments trying to bore people to death to save on healthcare costs?

These Norwegian programmes, as well as similar shows made in other countries, have been a huge, popular success. In 2011, half the population of Norway, as well as hundreds of thousands of online viewers from all over the world, watched a 134-hour live broadcast of a coastal ferry journey from Bergen in the southwest of the country to Kirkenes, a town north of the Arctic Circle.

Well, it beats watching a hundred old guys drinking beer and listening to oompah music.

You are confusing Norwegian TV with the popular German-language show 'Musikantenstadl'. The Icelandic lambing broadcast was also a hit, with people watching on television as well as online. The producers responded to requests made on Twitter



and Facebook, adjusting cameras and asking questions of farmers.

Poor farmers! What awfulness did the internet hordes unleash?

Actually, they were quite caught up in the event, asking about naming practices and markings. There was even an outpouring of grief when one lamb was stillborn. Not that some trolls did not emerge from under the bridge, despite the lack of goats. Many people made jokes about grilling and cutlets, but the most persistent troll was a vegan Twitter user commenting on the meat industry using the hashtag promoted by RÚV.

I bet that was about as welcome as a coffin-shaped baby crib at a baby shower.

Yes, insofar as some really liked it, but most people either ignored it or reacted with annoyance. Largely, though,

people went on Twitter, Facebook and other social media to talk about how much they enjoyed the programme. As a rule, Icelanders like and respect farmers and farming. Until the end of the 19th century, nearly all Icelanders lived on farms, and until about 1980, most children in Reykjavík spent summers in the countryside.

Hopefully not for the same reason lambs spend their summers in the countryside.

But as the practice has largely died down, most Icelanders under 40 years of age are unfamiliar with rural life. This broadcast was therefore a window onto a world they know little about. As the world has become more urbanised, Icelanders have been moving to Reykjavík. Roughly two-thirds of the population live in the city and the towns which are a part of the same urban sprawl.

Maybe if every third grade class were given a pregnant sheep to take care of, the city kids would get in touch with rural life.

A little bit of trauma builds character. There is something to be said for getting people in touch with different species and ways of living. Farmer Atli Már Traustason of Syðri-Hofdalir was asked by a viewer if seeing a lamb die had become routine. He said that it never stopped being sad.

The whole broadcast was a big bummer, then?

Not at all. The other most discussed moment was when reporter Gísli Einarsson fell on his ass because the piece of wood he was sitting on snapped. This happened off-camera, but farmer Ingibjörg Klara Helgadóttir could not stop laughing during the interview. During the long broadcast the farming couple, their children and various assistants became familiar to the audience, who gained an insight into the working life of farmers.

And a close look at the reproductive systems of sheep.

In the novel 'Höfundur Íslands' ("Iceland's Author"), Hallgrímur Helgason wrote that "spring comes out of a sheep's ass." Up until a few decades ago, the rhythms of Icelandic society were linked to animals. While television is no substitute for experience, it at least allows people to glimpse different ways of life. The sheep, meanwhile, paid the cameras hardly any mind, except for sniffing at them occasionally. Not long after the lambs were born, mothers and children were released to roam around the countryside until winter. Hopefully some of them will avoid the slaughterhouse and bring the next spring forth from their behinds.

NEWS IN BRIEF

By Paul Fontaine



It's that time of year again: time to argue about **whale hunting!** An umbrella organisation of numerous whale-watching companies have criticised whale hunting just outside the Faxaflói Bay area, where a whole lot of whale-watching takes place. Their main argument is that whale hunting scares away other whales and a single whale-watching excursion generates as much revenue as a landed whale. Still, the whale hunt is on for the summer.



In news almost universally embraced by our readership, downtown's main street, Laugavegur, will be **closed to car traffic for four months** this year, up from three months last year and one month in 2011. Although this greatly increases foot traffic, and most merchants express approval of the closure, some shopkeepers worry about the decreased number of parking spaces—17 spaces, that is.



Meanwhile, the ongoing back-and-forth between **Iceland's Minister for Foreign Affairs Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson and the European Union** has yet to conclude, and will likely continue until the heat death of the universe. Recently, the EU released a report in which Iceland was listed as a nation seeking accession despite Gunnar Bragi's repeated insistence that Iceland's accession is now off the table on account of that letter...

Continues Over...

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Opinion | Hmm...

What Can The Recent British Elections Teach Us About Icelandic Politics?

Words by Valur Gunnarsson
Photo by DV/Sigtryggur Ari



Two things of note happened in the United Kingdom on May 7. One of them, as you may have heard, is that the Conservatives were re-elected, and this time with an absolute majority.

Ever since the latest recession began, the general rule in European politics has been this: Whatever you have is what you don't want. Rather than shifting to either the left or the right, voters have tended to vote against whoever was in power. After it all went wrong in 2008, sitting governments lost power in one country after another. Iceland was no exception, with the nation voting against the centre-right ruling parties in 2009 and then voting them back in 2013. In the same manner, the British voted against the centre-left Labour Party in 2010 for the first time in over a decade.

However, the recent Conservative victory in the UK is the latest example of the trend being bucked. The conservatives have managed to hang onto power in Germany, and have been taking over in the Nordic countries too, while the Socialist Hollande must look nervously on from the Champ-Elysees.

Left, right, left...

This brings us to the second noteworthy happening: the complete destruction of the Labour Party in Scotland at the hands of the Scottish Nationalists.

After 2008, people everywhere decided that maybe this whole free market business wasn't such a great idea and

looked hopefully to the left for solutions. None were forthcoming. So while the right has been slowly clawing back its lost ground, the left has been left in complete disarray.

Nowhere has this been evident than in Iceland. After the Pots and Pans Revolution in January 2009 ejected the Independence Party (which held government along with the Social Democrats), elections were held and the country got its first two-party government of the left, starring the Social Democrats and, for the first time ever, the Left-Greens.

Even though this conflagration, headed by Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, arguably managed to stave off the worst effects of the economic collapse, they soon lost credibility with the people who started looking elsewhere for solutions.

The first of these appeared in the municipal elections of 2010. Comedian Jón Gnarr formed The Best Party and, to everyone's surprise, succeeded in becoming mayor of Reykjavík. An off-shoot party, Bright Future, ran nationwide in 2013. They failed to repeat

the runaway success of the Best Party in Reykjavík, but still managed to get six of their members elected to Parliament.

Meet the new boss...

By this time, the party of the future was, surprisingly enough, the oldest political party in the country. As a centrist party that has been around since 1916, the Progressives have usually been happy to work with whoever offered them the most. Having ruled with the conservative Independence Party from 1995 to 2005, they played a major role in the privatisation of the banks that eventually led to the catastrophic financial crisis, but also benefited from not being in government when the actual collapse took place.

Of Iceland's four traditional parties, the Progressives had been out of power the longest by the time the 2013 elections came around, and they had a whiff of freshness about them under their new chairman, Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson. More importantly, they had been vehemently opposed to paying back the British and Dutch who lost money in Icesave accounts after the banking collapse. When the European Court ruled in Iceland's favour in the Icesave dispute in early 2013, the party was proved right (legally, at least), and the road was open to a win in the spring elections.

Sigmundur became the new prime minister, and chose as his co-regents the Independence Party. This seemed to return Iceland back to the pre-collapse status quo, as these are the parties that have usually run the place.

A ship with 50 cannons approaching

However, all is not as it seems. Icelanders in general still feel deeply frustrated after the economic collapse. Real wages have fallen, prices keep rising, people are still moving to Norway in droves and the country is beset by strikes. This is reflected in opinion polls, which suggest that the current government would win just over 30% of votes today, with the Progressive Party taking the heavier hit.

But here comes the kicker. By far the most popular party in Iceland today is the Pirate Party, which by themselves would receive around 30% of the votes, as much as both government parties combined. They currently have three MPs (out of a total of 63), and, if elections were held today, they would probably be heading the next government.

In Iceland as well as Britain, conservative parties hold the reins and the left is in a rut. But voters are much more flexible than they used to be, and it seems that the mantle of opposition is passing from the older, established parties to newer, more dynamic ones. Rather than a return to the status quo, it seems that the post-collapse era in politics just might be entering a new and exciting phase.

However, all is not as it seems. Icelanders in general still feel deeply frustrated after the economic collapse.

NEWS IN BRIEF

By Paul Fontaine

he sent them. While the EU has insisted a simple letter isn't going to cut it, Gunnar Bragi told reporters that it was "not practical" to put the matter up for parliamentary vote. Why? Because last time, he said, the measure didn't pass. So I guess we can take "not practical" to mean "not likely to go my way if put to a vote."



Perhaps more hotly contested than whaling is the idea of Iceland joining the majority of European countries that change their clocks in the winter. A parliamentary proposal to set the clocks back by one hour in late autumn is currently stuck in committee, and committee members have heard testimony from practically every interest group in the country, including sleep researchers, Icelandair, and the Golf Association of Iceland. On the one hand, changing the clocks will mean waking up to daylight later into the winter than usual. On the other hand, it also means coming home from work or school in darkness earlier than usual. Quite the conundrum.



It's not easy being one of the least-trusted politicians in the country, like our Minister of Finance Bjarni Benediktsson, who has repeatedly been flipped off in public, mostly by a long-haired guy who drives bus #12. Bjarni recounted his encounters with the finger-happy bus driver on a recent radio show and said that other members of the general public have also at times been prone to give him the finger "for unknown reasons," or unknown to Bjarni, anyway.

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Iceland | Safe?

A Terrorist Threat In Iceland?!

We investigate...

Words by *Anna Manning*
Photo by *Anna Manning*

In a world of terror and violence it's nice to live in Iceland, where 70% of all crimes committed are traffic offences. Still, last winter's incidents in Paris and Copenhagen hit a little closer to home than we may like. A February report by the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police declared that "uncertainty about the terrorist threat is growing in Iceland and the other Nordic countries," and that here in Iceland, "generally speaking, it is not possible to exclude the risk of terrorism."

We asked a few local security pundits what kind of terrorist threat we could be facing here in Iceland, to help get a better idea of what this means.

Is extremism on the rise?

According to the European Union's law enforcement agency, Europol, the threat level in Europe is growing, and it has not been this high in Europe since the 9/11 attacks in the US. Still, in the age of the 24-hour news cycle, it is important to question how much extremist violence is growing—and how much it seems to be the case due to the media's fixation on tragedy (irony: noted). When asked if they think extremism is becoming more of an issue in Europe and in Iceland specifically, our sources gave mixed responses.

"The fixation of some politicians and media on extremism, especially Islamic extremism, is out of proportion and politically motivated," said Stefán Pálsson, the chairman of Samtök Herraðarandstæðinga, an Icelandic pacifist society. Independence Party MP Ásmundur Friðriksson took an opposing view. "There's certainly a growing threat of terrorism in Europe, as the examples show. It's important that we pay close attention and stay alert regarding our own security," he said.

"It's definitely becoming more of an issue," said Pirate Party MP Helgi Hrafn Gunnarsson, finding the middle ground, "but the reactions to it scare me much more than the terrorism itself." When it comes to terrorism, he said, there's a tendency to panic: "It's not something that we should be panicking over, it's something we should be dealing with like crime."

For former NATO advisor Chris Jagger, whether extremism is on the rise is beside the point. "Those charged with the responsibility of keeping us safe are, unfortunately, overwhelmed with leads of potential terrorists," he said. "The simple fact is that the resources do not match the threat."

Are the police prepared for an act of terrorism in Iceland?

If extremism is in fact on the rise, are the Icelandic police prepared to handle an attack like the ones in Paris or Copenhagen? Ásmundur thinks not, and has been making his opinion on Islamic extremism clear. In fifteen hardly reassuring words @logreglan wrote via Twitter, "the police do everything they can to be prepared for any situation that may arise."

Stefán and Helgi gave very similar answers. Neither one thinks any country can be adequately prepared for random acts of terrorism, and both expressed concerns over moving towards "dystopian fascist societies" or "1984" in a pursuit of total freedom from terrorism. "We will always have some form of terrorism," Helgi said. "I don't know at what time it became reasonable to expect terrorism to just go away forever. I don't remember a time without terrorism. I don't think it ever existed, and I don't think it ever will." The National Commissioner's report expresses a need for increased investigative powers when it comes to matters of terrorism and organised crime, giving Stefán and Helgi's fear a bit more weight.

What are the best steps to prevent terrorist or extremist violence in Iceland?

The National Commissioner's report suggests the following precautions: legislation on increased police investigative powers; legislation on prohibition of travel by foreign terrorist fighters; more officers, experts and equipment; the creation of a special unit to combat terrorism; information sharing between police, social and health workers regarding individuals who may pose a threat; and a social resource for those exposed to radicalisation.

When we asked our experts about the best steps to prevent extremist violence in Iceland, the responses were a bit less STASI. "Perhaps below the radar

of public perception, progress is being made across Europe in leaps and bounds towards reducing the threat from terrorism," Chris said, noting that de-radicalisation of potential terrorists after an early arrest has already proved highly successful in the UK. He also noted the importance of the authorities keeping the public involved. "From my experience prevention almost always starts with good public co-operation," he said.

Somewhat ironically, on this topic, the Independence Party MP looked to Europe for the answer, while the left-leaning pacifist took an isolationist stance. "It seems natural that the police have the tools and legislation that are considered normal in the neighbouring countries that we want to compare ourselves to," Ásmundur said, in contrast to Stefán, who indicated that Iceland is simply too small and insignificant to be a plausible target. "How small and far-flung Iceland is from the rest of Europe almost by definition makes the idea of a major terrorist attack in Iceland highly unlikely," Stefán said.

Helgi said that while serious tools are needed to combat serious crimes there is a tendency to sacrifice civil rights and liberties in the pursuit of security. "If liberal democracies intend to remain liberal democracies, they will have to bloody well live with the fact that we live in an unsafe world. We cannot have both security and liberty at the same time, there never was a time when we did. We shouldn't act as if that's possible because the moment that we do, we will lose one, if not both."

Why aren't Icelanders running away to the Islamic State?

Over the past year there have been reports of Europeans and North Americans leaving their home countries and joining the Islamic State. This does not seem to be happening in Iceland, but Ásmundur and Helgi both questioned whether we would actually know if any Icelanders had sought to join IS. Chris agreed that it is hard to say for certain that no Icelandic has joined IS or has any connections to it. That being said, he believes it's unlikely because there has not been an indication of sympathies towards the cause in Iceland.

Stefán suggested it's because Iceland does not operate a military. "Armies come with glorification of militarism and ill-judged optimism towards warfare," he said. "The bigger the role of the military in society, the more young people will be drawn to that lifestyle—and are thus more likely to pursue a career as mercenaries or radical militants."

Based on their research, the National Commissioner reports that most people who join the Islamic State are young sec-

ond and third generation immigrants who are looking for social recognition. Helgi sees this marginalisation as the fault of Western democracies that force assimilation out of fear that their societies might become less "French" or "German," for example. "We are an international community, multiculturalism is not optional. The only question is how you deal with it. And I submit you should start by acknowledging it. Stop pretending as if we have a choice."

Chris sees all this as a common myth that needs to be corrected. "It is wrong to think that only marginalised young males are joining Islamic State," he said. "It seems that individuals from all walks of life are capable of demonstrating everything from sympathy to the aims and objectives of the Islamic State on one end of the spectrum to giving their lives on the other to the cause on the other."

Should the Icelandic police be armed?

After the police were forced to return their "gifts" to Norway in November, it is clear where most Icelanders stand on police weaponry. When asked if the Icelandic police should be armed, Stefán clearly stated that they are more than sufficiently armed as it is.

In a response to a question posed by Left-Green MP Katrín Jakobsdóttir, the Interior Ministry reported that the police have 590 guns, which seemed more than sufficient until the National Commissioner reported that there are 72,000 registered firearms in the country and "the number of unregistered weapons is unknown."

"They certainly shouldn't be armed in their everyday tasks, absolutely not," Helgi said, "it causes more problems than it solves." Chris was sceptical that more guns would act as a deterrent. "As the event in France demonstrated, protecting vulnerable people and property is not always achieved using weapons," he said. "The ideal position for a security agency is to prevent an attack well before its in-

Our Informants



Chris Jagger
Chris worked at the London Metropolitan Police, New Scotland Yard, and the British National Criminal Intelligence Service, before becoming a United Nations Head of Military Liaison, a NATO Advisor on Organised Crime, Border and Maritime Security and a NATO Director of National Security Vetting.



Stefán Pálsson
Stefán is the chairman of Samtök Herraðarandstæðinga, an Icelandic pacifist society.



Ásmundur Friðriksson
Ásmundur is an Independence Party MP who has become known for taking a hard line against possible Islamist threats.



Helgi Hrafn Gunnarsson
Helgi is a Pirate Party MP, and has been vocal about making sure the Icelandic police remain accountable.

tended date; to do so normally requires sophisticated intelligence gathering operations."

The National Commissioner used similar reasoning in their recommendation for pre-emptive investigative powers for the Icelandic police. Iceland's neighbours have enacted such legislation in the past, but the Icelandic Parliament has repeatedly rejected the idea. The police argue that without such powers, they cannot investigate and prevent terror plots in the making, but can only respond to acts after it's too late. As Helgi and Stefán argue, when the authorities are given the power to investigate individuals who have not yet committed a crime, society walks a fine line between civil liberties and security.

Róbert R. Spanó, an Icelandic-Italian judge at the European Court of Human Rights, has argued that pre-emptive investigative powers may, unfortunately, be necessary to combat terrorism and modern forms of organised crime. However, if they are introduced, it is imperative that they are accompanied by strict regulations and oversight. The Pirate Party believes that oversight is already needed, proposing legislation for an independent police oversight committee to Parliament last month. Perhaps this will lay the groundwork for better and more responsible police investigations.

Are we safe?

The National Commissioner's report places Iceland under a moderate threat level, meaning that however unlikely a terrorist attack may be, it is impossible to exclude the possibility of one. "In my experience," Chris Jagger said, "there is no such thing as total security." So, a moderate threat level may be the best one could hope for. In the mean time, it seems the most conclusive answer is: we are not unsafe. Ásmundur put it simply: he feels safe in his everyday life as an Icelandic, "but nevertheless, we have to have a discussion about the problem."



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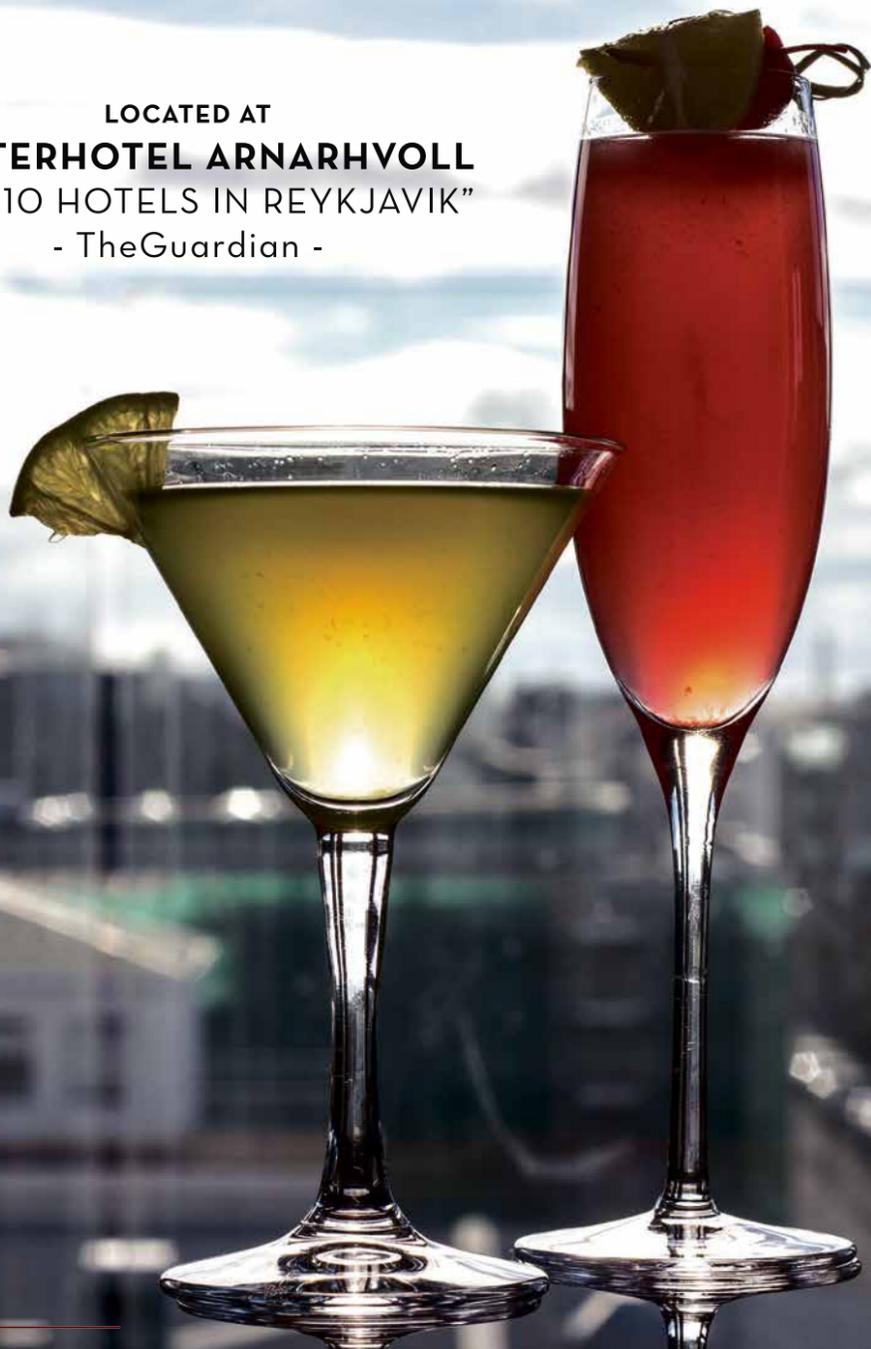
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HERE'S TO YOUR JOYOUS FUTURE



MUCK IS UNRELENTING AND UNCOMPROMISING



Words by *Gabriel Benjamin* Photos by *Hörður Sveinsson*

Karl takes a bite out of his hot dog and laughs at Indriði for bringing vegetables to a barbecue. Loftur frets over there not being enough sauces and procures a beer from somewhere, while Ási and I work out the correct exchange rate between my hot dogs and his hamburgers. It's a relaxed autumn afternoon in Hljómskálagarður park, and I'm sitting with the four members of Muck, a hardcore punk band I have ardently followed for the past two years. At the time they had a killer new album on the way and a shiny new record deal with international heavy metal label Prosthetic Records to their name, which finally gave me an excuse to sit them down for a proper interview.

As we munch on BBQ, I find it hard to fathom that these playful youngsters are the same ones I witnessed whipping the crowd at metal fest Eistnaflug into such a frenzy that it begat a rare vortex mosh pit. But they are, and their live shows just kill me. Their Airwaves set at Harpa music hall was so clean that I felt compelled to sit down and appreciate its instrumental beauty. At a living room concert a couple of weeks prior, they drew such a big crowd that the floor started creaking, as if ready to collapse. At a Gaukurinn outing, I observed a fan faceplant, knocking himself out in the mosh pit, only to wake up a minute later and jump right back into the fray. And I understood. It's why I use every

opportunity I get to see those guys play.

Observing Muck relaxing and drinking beers in the park proves a sharp contrast to the explosive energy the group delivers in concert. In a way, however, the core experience was much the same. On stage, synchronicity is one of Muck's defining traits, each instrument meshing perfectly together in beautiful and deliberate discord—sans instruments, the four members still mesh perfectly. I went on to further confirm this through several encounters that fall and the following winter: together, the four form a well-oiled, highly sophisticated machine far greater than the sum of its parts.

Small wonder, then, that Muck is see-

ing a bit of success. "The year of Muck," they're calling it. Note, however, that none of it happened overnight. Muck is the result of hard work, extensive touring, a genuine love for music, and a very strong bond of friendship.

Arts and crafts

Lead guitarist Indriði Arnar Ingólfsson says that when the band got together at the end of 2007, they did so with the intent of becoming the heaviest band in Iceland. The members all knew one another from going to shows and tagging buildings, and started off playing sludgy drone hymns before making the jump into hardcore punk.

Drummer Ási Þórðarson says the punk scene they came out of was quite different in those days: "It was a bunch of hormonal teenagers that wanted to change the world, but they mostly just went to parties in Breiðholt and made out." Given how the extreme music scene was largely dominated by rock and metal acts, there were relatively few punk bands around. Muck thus often shared a stage with some very different acts, such as thrashers Severed Crotch and progressive doom merchants Momentum.

When Muck released their debut LP 'Slaves' in 2012, they were showered with positive feedback. One notable exception to the chorus of praise was DIY punk stalwart, musician and self-styled music historian Dr. Gunni. "He said we were just pretentious art school students," Ási notes, with singer/guitarist Karl Torsten Stállborn chiming in that that may have had some truth to it—at the time they had started carving a niche for themselves by connecting more to the art scene and sharing the stage more often with indie acts like Mammút. Indeed, Karl and Indriði were both enrolled in the Iceland Academy of the Arts, which Indriði says shaped

their band to a large extent. "When you're playing a guitar, and you're painting, the two art disciplines have a way of influencing one another."

Limitations of labels and the scene

Throughout my many conversations with the band, the four members interchangeably describe their music as punk, hardcore, rock or "heavy." When confronted with this inconsistency, they take a moment to think before answering that they're wary of participating in the elitist culture that punk and hardcore are often associated with. "There's a lot of holier than thou attitude in punk, where you have to dress and act in a certain way, and conform to a certain political point of view," Ási says, "but I want no part in that. Punk, to me, is about the attitude you bring to creating and promoting your music, and about invoking a very primal and destructive urge in the listener. I don't want to push our political views on our audience, in fact if anything, we are decidedly apolitical—I want our performances to be a safe space where things like how dumb our prime minister is don't matter."



shows, they got bogged down with working their day jobs, finishing school and everyday life at the end of 2013.

Things started looking bleak as they played fewer shows, rehearsed less often and got stuck in a rut. Muck's future was uncertain, but that all suddenly changed when they got a message from Prosthetic Records saying they wanted to sign the band (they have since parted ways with the label, citing creative differences).

"We were playing a show with [local punkers] Elin Helena at Bar 11 when we got the email, and we decided we were just going to kill it," Karl says. "We stopped being negative and really started looking forward." The band members

have since really thrown themselves into creating more songs, rehearsing and finessing them. Ási assures me from the edge of his seat that however good 'Your Joyous Future' might be, the next album will be even better.

"We're now working more harmoniously, experimenting more, but at the same time feel unafraid of telling each other when something doesn't work," he says. "And the stuff we've been making lately? It's so great it'll blow the last one out of the water!"

When we move over into the practice space, I try to make myself as comfortable as possible sitting on the floor as they tune their instruments and start rehearsing a few songs. They quickly fall into a groove, playing louder and faster, their rhythms

synching up as they go through their regular repertoire. A familiar wave of aural enjoyment washes over me as they move on to a song I hadn't heard before.

It is a fast grindcore tune, still lacking vocals but clocking in around three minutes, and it holds me completely captivated. Guitar riffs deliberately clash with bass lines and the drum beat alternates between steady and irregular rhythms. It's only once the wild ride is over that I catch my breath. Loftur complains that a bridge is too difficult and Karl jokes that he just needs to learn it better.

When I ask them when they made the song and what its name is, they look almost surprised to find me there. Ási says they just wrote it a few days ago and that it doesn't have a name yet. Loftur, perhaps worried that I'm bored, offers me to grab one of the extra guitars and join in, but I can't, I'm scared to death I'll upset the delicate balance they've created before me. I tell him I don't know how to play. "It doesn't matter," he says, "it's just about having fun."

They launch into that unnamed tune again, and the fan in me is reminded why I'm so captivated by this band. The song is electric. It is dynamic. It's loud. It's fast. It's fun. It's everything I like about the band.

On the way home they tell me they plan to tour extensively abroad later this year. I sincerely hope as many people as possible get to see them.

Honesty and punk

Discussing the subject of authenticity, Karl relays an anecdote from his early teens. He was at a music store with his friend, looking at electric guitars, when the guitarist from pop rock outfit Írafár—then Iceland's most popular band—came up to him and asked him if he was a metalhead. When Karl confirmed this, the guitar hero responded: "I used to be like you, you know, with long hair, but you have to cut it off," implying that this was the only way to succeed in music. "I wanted to tell the guy to shut the fuck up," Karl says laughing, "this guy used to be in proper bands that played their own material, before joining a party band that just makes money. It made me never want to go down that path," he says, "because it's just the road to becoming lame. And twelve years later, here I am, still doing my thing in my own way."

Despite flourishing on the margins of the extreme and art scenes, and earning a solid local following in the process, the boys of Muck have always known the key to their success was touring internationally. Unlike so many other Icelandic bands that dreamt about playing abroad, Muck just went out and did it, if only for the experience of doing so.

As early as 2009, they embarked on their first European tour with nothing but debut EP 'Vultures' to their names. Bassist Loftur Einarsson says they ended up paying for most of that trip themselves, renting an expensive car to play five concerts over a two-week period. "It ended up being like a big holiday for us," he says, "but at the same time it was a real turning point as we saw a lot of really fast bands, which then encouraged us to play our own music even faster."

Things really started picking up in 2012 when the band was invited to tour with glacial rock band Plastic Gods and play a show with American hardcore punk band Ceremony. That outing was marked by its great vibe, and saw Muck play to larger crowds than before.

After appearing at that summer's Eistnaflug metal festival, the band toured through Europe again and played what Loftur calls their weirdest show ever. "At the time we thought we were booked to play Prague in the Czech Republic, but our venue turned out to be located in a small town called Kladno, ten kilometres out of the city. Kladno is an almost archetypal Soviet town, where everything is grey and depressing with this weird green smoke coming from the chimneys, and we were playing in this dingy basement bar that looked about as appetizing as the underside of your grandpa's stove."

Indriði adds that their warm-up band was a Balkan folk band, and that the turnout wasn't much to speak of. It was weird, sure, but Ási says it wasn't

until after the gig that the scene started getting kind of scary. "We were to stay in this old TV studio that had been converted into band practice space, and it was completely unheated. A security guard had to let us into the area, it all felt like a scene from 'Hostel' or something. It was small, cramped, and probably one of the worst moments of my life," he says before Karl humorously adds that Ási's experience may have been coloured by his having forgotten his sleeping bag. "Me, I was pretty comfortable."

Creating the second project

In the creative world, the follow-up to a successful debut is often what makes or breaks the artist. When I asked the guys whether they felt any kind of pressure making their new album, they all laughed and told me that was a dumb question. "I know people talk about how deadly the second album can be," Ási says, "but it's just bullshit. People in the punk world are too busy thinking about other things than that kind of pressure. Besides, nobody's going to get famous or rich playing this kind of music." Karl says that the sophomore record is maybe a problem for mega hit bands like Of Monsters And Men, "but 'Slaves' fucking sucks compared to our new album!"

They all seem to agree on this, that the new one far surpasses 'Slaves'. Even if there were interesting ideas on the previous album, Ási explains, it was much too crowded. This, he says, was a mistake they didn't repeat. "We knew we had to take good ideas and simplify them, delivering them more clearly than before," he says. "'Your Joyous Future' has much better song structures, and the band's chemistry has grown by leaps and bounds. We've learned a lot about what kind of music we want to make and how to make it."

One of the milestones of said evolu-

tion came at the end of 2012 when the band was offered an art residency in New York, where they would record more material. Having written, rehearsed and created enough songs for 'Your Joyous Future', they crammed in a quick session over a weekend where they recorded the whole album in one go before hopping on a plane. When they then got to the US, they were left with nothing to do but create more material, get into a creative zone and rekindle their love of music.

"It was incredibly maturing for me as an individual, and us as a band, to be able to completely disconnect from what was going on at home and just create," Loftur says, the rest soberly nodding along. "I had no money, no chores and no obligations, and it reminded me why I love making music. Now when I'm playing with my band, I just feel like we're hanging out at the playground."

Ási agrees, adding that such an intense experience should either confirm one's conviction to be a musician or convince you to drop out. "Our band practices since then haven't been about playing our songs, but just chatting, interacting with one another and being present," he says, "and that intimacy and chemistry is visible when we play, because we get along so well."

Looking to the future

A few weeks later I catch up with the band at their rehearsal space. Situated in the Laugardalur suburbs, the place is filled with dirty coffee mugs, empty beer cans, and instruments.

To the four of them, this is a second home. As we share a few pints, the guys say that even after getting so filled with inspiration from playing all of those

Muck:

The Fact Sheet



Ási Þórðarson Drummer

- Is a session drummer for beloved indie pop band FM Belfast.
- Studies psychology at the University of Iceland.
- Trains at Mjöllnir martial arts gym and enjoys watching half-naked men knock the living daylights out of one another.
- Has a small black poodle named Atari, who loves to chew things.



Indriði Arnar Ingólfsson Lead guitarist

- Studies fine art at the Iceland Academy of Arts.
- Did an exchange semester in Mexico, and then stayed behind to travel.
- Owns an original GameBoy that's still in working condition (but needs batteries).



Karl Torsten Stållborn Guitarist/singer

- Has the most tattoos of anyone from Muck.
- Is a session guitarist for electro band Fufanu, who share a rehearsal space with Muck.
- Has a stoner/drone side project called The Man.
- His graduation project from the Iceland Academy of Arts was a giant woden hand with a revolving middle finger.



Loftur Einarsson Bassist

- Sports the band's greatest beard, but threatens he'll shave it off one of these days.
- Can often be found serving beers with a smile at Húrra.
- Has by far the cutest Muck tattoo in existence.
- Dressed up as Finn from Adventure Time last Halloween.



DANGEROUS, LOUD, IRREVERENT



PINK STREET BOYS HAVE MADE
A MARK ON ICELAND'S
MUSIC SCENE



Words by *Gabriel Benjamin*
Photos by *Hörður Sveinsson*



During a break between songs, a friend shouts into my ear, “They are too loud!” I try to respond, but my words are lost to Pink Street Boys’ onslaught of guitars, pedals, unintelligible vocals and loud drums. At a time when cultural export is the name of the game, with local bands cashing in on the world’s interest in the dreamy and cute Icelandic sound, Pink Street Boys are unruly, crass, full of attitude, unapologetic, and as my friend previously mentioned, loud. At the end of their song, I turn to my friend only to see that they’ve left. Their loss.

The five-piece band only stepped onto the scene a couple of years ago, shredding through their 60s-style garage rock wherever they could. They’ve been busy, too, releasing a demo cassette, and recently a vinyl through 12 Tónar’s record label. Their boisterous attitude on stage is mirrored off of it, as I discovered when I shared a room with them at last year’s Eistnaflug festival—their drunken antics preventing me from getting much sleep over the weekend.

In 2014 they were on numerous top ten album lists, received a Kraumur music award, and were short-listed for the Nordic Music Prize. Not to mention, this magazine picked them as “Best Live Band” of 2014. Despite all of these accolades, Jónbjörn Birgisson and Víðir Alexander Jónsson look at me in disbelief when I tell them that we’re going to put them on our cover this issue. “Wow, really? That’s crazy!” they say, as we sit down

to chat at a downtown café.

But it’s not. PSB has shaken up Iceland’s rock scene, drawing people’s attention to an often overlooked genre, and delivered a lot of truly face-melting performances. They may not be everyone’s cup of tea, but in the two years they’ve been active they’ve made a big splash.

Third time’s the charm

Jónbjörn and Víðir have the same role in the band, alternating between playing guitar and bass, yet they look and carry themselves very differently. Víðir is the taller and bigger of the two; Jónbjörn is more talkative. In conversation, it’s evident that they are long-time friends, not missing any opportunities to make jokes at each other’s expense, and erupting into laughter every few minutes.



They tell me the band’s roots go back to Foldarskóli primary school in the Grafarvogur suburbs, with Víðir joining the group later on through his kinship with singer-guitarist Axel Björnsson. The band’s five members have since blazed their own trails, with three of them embarking on film or art studies, one working as a professional painter, and one even currently attending business school. Their friendship, however, is still strong, and they meet up and hang at least three or four times a week at their rehearsal space on Skemmuvegur (a.k.a. “pink street”), in addition to going to their Grafarvogur neighbourhood joints to play pool or darts, or just to knock back a few beers. Jónbjörn says even when they practice, they spend the majority of the time hanging out. “We’re there chatting for an hour, then we play for an hour, and we chat for a while after that,” he says. “We don’t have girlfriends, so we’re never in a rush to leave.”

Although to some PSB appear to have achieved overnight success, Jónbjörn says they’ve been at it since 2006 and that the current band is the gang’s third iteration. Their first band was called Kid Twist, which Jónbjörn says was heavily influenced by Singapore Sling. “We all loved them because they were playing loud, rough rock, but they didn’t have to scream. We wanted to make that kind of music—not metal, but something extreme.” They did just that, and

were even on several occasions the opening act for their idols. Although they strived to not copy them, Víðir says the band disbanded because the members felt there wasn’t enough originality in Kid Twist. “You need to do something new,” Jónbjörn emphasizes. “It’s not cool to just repeat what’s already been done.”

In 2009, the gang formed a second band called Dandelion Seeds, which was a mellow 60s psychedelic pop outfit. “That’s the project in which we learned to actually play our instruments properly,” Víðir says, which Jónbjörn says they would later have to unlearn with PSB. They both laugh heartily.

Since the very beginning, the group had been listening to a lot of old garage rock in addition to bands like Darker My Love and The Vandelles, so when Dandelion Seeds faded, they came out with guns blazing as a rock band that took to heart the MC5’s mantra of being the world’s loudest band. And Pink Street Boys was born.

Meeting high expectations

Right off the bat the guys found themselves writing a lot more music as PSB. They have the unspoken goal of always playing at least one new song at each gig they play, which is no small feat given how much they have performed.

This creativity doesn’t come from slashing tires or smashing windows as their daring vibe might suggest, but from hanging out with each other and bands they like. These include Muck, Godchilla, Skelkur í bringu, DJ Flugvél og geimskip, Kælan mikla, or “the artsy people,” as Jónbjörn says: “We play a lot with them and listen to their music, and we all sort of meld together.”

Jónbjörn says laughingly that after about six months of playing people started attending their concerts in respectable numbers, but when asked why, the two take a moment to come up with an answer. Víðir eventually says it’s because they had more attitude. “We started showing up, running our mouth, and being rowdy,” he says, “and that got people’s attention.” Jónbjörn agrees, saying it was the first time the band had an image.

I bring up an interview entitled “GO HOME YOU’RE DRUNK, PINK STREET BOY,” in which inebriated frontman Axel stumbled into the Grapevine office during the Airwaves festival and complained about the media’s role in deciding “who is cool” and “who is not cool.” Jónbjörn and Víðir both dismiss the idea that any one individual was responsible for making the band cool or hyped. “You get the attention you deserve if you work hard,” Jónbjörn says.

Víðir and Jónbjörn propose that what fuelled their meteoric rise is how dangerous they sound. At live



“I want to find fourteen-to-fifteen-year-old boys in a garage playing the same kind of music we do. I’ve scoured the internet, even looking through Myspace, but all I’ve found have been hip-hop or metal bands.”

performances they crank up their guitars loud enough for people to feel it in their bones, and they themselves can be found bouncing all around the stage. “It’s risky going to our concerts,” Jónbjörn says. “You could lose your hearing, so you have to ask yourself if you dare show up.”

The songs themselves are also volatile, with the themes based on the band members’ alter egos, who get into fights and are bitter about not getting the girl they fancy, although they laughingly admit very few of their lyrics make any kind of real sense. “Then when we go to interviews, people tell us, ‘Shit, I thought you were going to trash the place,’ which is funny because we’re the most relaxed bunch of guys in the world,” Jónbjörn says, laughing.

Going with the flow

The album that brought the Pink Street Boys acclaim was ‘Trash From The Boys’, a limited-edition laser-engraved cassette distributed by Lady Boy Records. For all the praise it got, the boys maintain that it wasn’t that big of a deal. “It was just a collection of homemade demos,” Jónbjörn says, “and we’re always recording those.”



Conversely, their newly released ‘Hits #1’ is a studio-recorded album, which they laid down in a single night a year ago at Hljóðriti studio in Hafnarfjörður. “We were well practised so the music flowed very naturally,” Jónbjörn says, “and then we recorded the vocals in our own studio. We mixed the album ourselves, but we took a fucking long time doing it! We had like ten different versions.” Víðir adds that they thought it was very important for their first real album to sound tight.

In the aforementioned drunken interview, Axel expressed frustration at how little interest there had been from labels to release their album, but Víðir says that 12 Tónar immediately wanted to sign them after they played Airwaves. Despite being raised on MP3s and digital music, the band opted to make their first release a vinyl, because they’re all really big music nerds. “We hadn’t released anything real, and we’ve been playing for nine years now,” Jónbjörn says. “We just wanted to have our own vinyl.”

What would make Jónbjörn even prouder would be for PSB to influence a new generation of musicians. “I want to find fourteen-to-fifteen-year-old boys in a garage playing

the same kind of music we do. I’ve scoured the internet, even looking through Myspace, but I’ve only found hip-hop or metal bands.”

On the subject of what the future may hold for PSB, the two communicate enthusiastically that they would love to tour internationally, pausing before admitting that they haven’t been able to because they’re really bad at organising themselves. “The way that we’ve been working, it’s always been a ‘go with the flow’ scenario—we need a manager to deal with plans and that sort of stuff,” Víðir says.

For now, what the boys have planned is an album release concert on May 22 with Seint, Godchilla, russian.girls and Singapore Sling. The gig is at Kaffistofan, which is incidentally the place where they played their very first gig as PSB. They tell me it’s a space that can only realistically fit 50 people, yet 250 have confirmed their attendance on Facebook. “It’ll be rocked out, that’s for sure,” Jónbjörn says.

Info: Pink Street Boys have an album release concert at Kaffistofan on May 22. Their album ‘Hits #1’ is already available in record stores.

DRUMMER VS. DRUMMER



Muck vs. Pink Street Boys: The Loudest Band In Iceland?

When interviewing Muck and Pink Street Boys, we kept thinking, “It would be really interesting to hear the other band’s thoughts on this.” So, rather than engage in lengthy back-and-forths, we invited drummers Ási Þórðarson and Einar Björn Þórarinnsson to just hash it out over a pack of beers. What follows is a short chapter from the lightly edited transcript. You can read the full version online.

You’ve both said that you are the loudest band in Reykjavík. How well do you think the other band measures up to that claim?

Ási: I think the deal with Muck and Pink Street is that they are both the best Icelandic bands around today. What these bands are doing is being real and fuckin’ in your face, and that’s something I don’t think other bands dare to do. Are we the loudest? Yeah, you know, we said we were the loudest, and they said so as well, and we’re both bloody loud. But what really matters is that we’re the best.

Einar: Yeah, what he said [Einar laughs].

Ási, you’ve said in a previous interview that you’re a much better drummer than Einar. Is that true?

[Both laugh loudly]

E: Well, I only started playing drums when Pink Street Boys came around, and that was just two years ago. I’ve been playing bass since I was twelve years old and was in another band with Axel—we had a drummer in that band, but he was always so late to practice so I’d play around on the drums until he arrived and teach myself.

Á: I remember when Elli Bang [one of Ojba Rasta’s drummers, Celestine’s former drummer] was interviewed in the Eistnaflug film, he said, “When I go up on stage, I just think to myself I’m going to fucking demolish the other bands,” and it’s the same for me—I’m simply going to be the best! Much better than the bands that went on before me, and the ones that’ll go after me, and that’s how it is. When I said I was better than Einar on the drums, it was like that, I was talking shit, because when I go on stage, I plan on blowing everyone away.

E: That’s exactly what I think about when I go on the drums, I’m just going to put everything into it.

Á: And that’s fucking it! The music we’re in, it’s not about a competition, but you have to have a competitive mind-set going into it. You have to be fantastic when you’re on stage, and you motivate yourself up by telling yourself you’re much better than everyone else.

Einar, your bandmates talked about how important attitude and alter egos were, and how they set PSB apart from your older bands. Do you also feel that way?

E: Oh yeah. Our old band, Dandelion Seeds, was just a 60s psychedelic pop band. We enjoyed it, but we didn’t have nearly as much fun as PSB, where we can blast away and rock out! PSB allows us to talk trash, and be dicks [Einar laughs]. Our stage presence is much livelier, too.

Á: How long has it been since a band has talked so much trash and been this provocative in the Icelandic music scene? When I first saw PSB live, I thought it was the same fucking shit as Klink or Mínus! It was a fucking dangerous band! It was exactly what was needed, and they gave Muck a real kick in the ass, shifting us into the right gear and away from the neutered Icelandic music scene. To be fucking angry and fucking scream and talk trash, that’s what it’s about, and that’s why people are absolutely eating up everything that PSB is doing, because it’s provoking.

E: It’s funny how everything changes—one year it’s really good to be super sensitive and in touch with your emotions, and then the next being cocky is in, and then now it’s about being angry, but this fashion, it’s all really so trivial.

PSB had numerous names, including Kid Twist and Dandelion Seeds, before settling on their current one, while Muck were Muck from day one. Why do you think the other band went the way they did with their choosing their name?

E: That’s a really good question.

Á: I think fundamentally it’s the wrong question to ask [Both laugh loudly]. It’s because PSB are not Dandelion Seeds, and they’re not Kid Twist. They’re not changing their name, these are completely new bands.

E: Yeah, we changed everything. But Muck, has it always been the same band?

Á: Yeah, we’ve been the same, except, well, we fired our singer Villi [Ási laughs]. There were five of us at one point, and we had another bass player, but we fired him pretty quickly because he played terribly. When we recorded our ‘Vultures’ album, he was so bad that we had to ask Addi from Celestine to record over them.

E: Did you ever tell him about it?

Á: No, we didn’t, and he never found out. **Whoops, sorry, I think he knows now.**

[Both laugh loudly]

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Reykjavík (BSÍ Bus Terminal)	08:00	16:00	19:30
Hveragerði (N1 Gas Station)	08:40	16:40	20:20
Selfoss (Campsite)	08:55	16:55	20:25
Selfoss (N1 Gas Station)	09:00	17:00	20:30
Hella (Campsite)	09:35	17:25	20:55
Hella (Kjarval Supermarket)	09:40	17:30	21:00
Hvolsvöllur (N1 Gas Station)	10:15	18:00	21:10
Seljalandsfoss (Waterfall)	10:45	18:30	21:30
Þórsmörk (Húsadalur)	12:00	12:30	19:40
Stakkholtsgjá Canyon	12:45		22:55
Þórsmörk (Básar)	13:10	15:00	
Þórsmörk (Langidalur)	15:15	15:20	
Stakkholtsgjá Canyon	15:35		
Þórsmörk (Húsadalur)	15:50		

* Morning departure from Básar and Langidalur has to be booked at the mountain hut's supervisor before 21:00 the evening before.

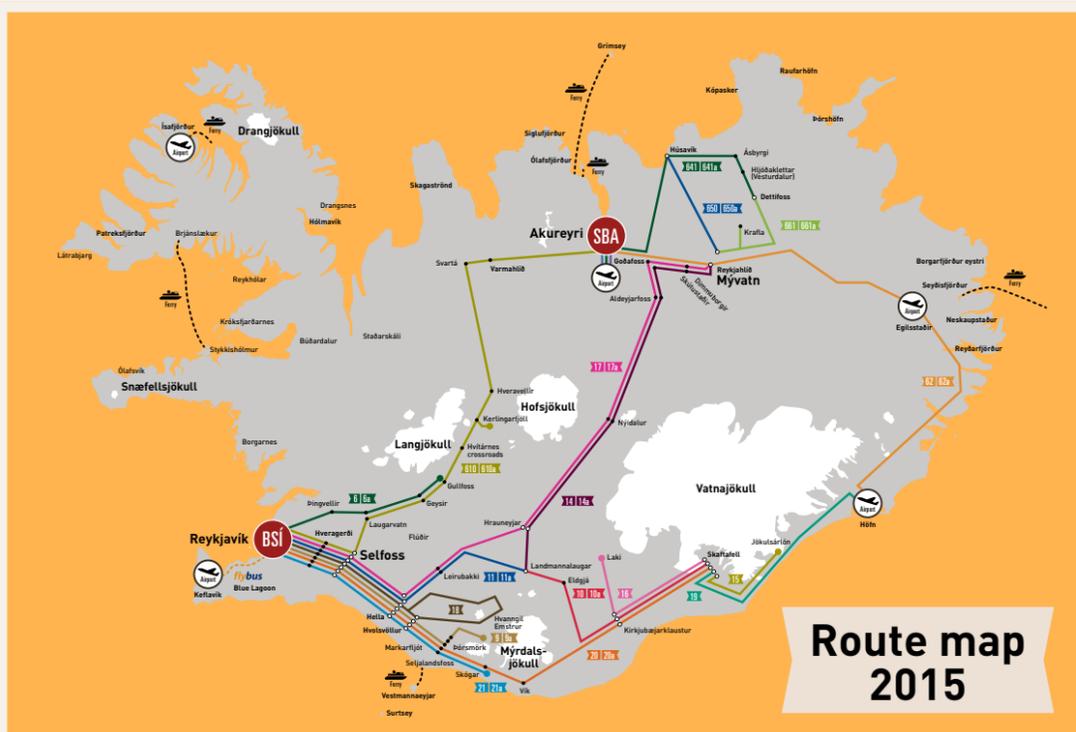
9a - Valid 1 May - 15 October

FROM	DAILY 14/6 - 31/8	DAILY 1/5 - 15/10**	DAILY 13/6 - 31/8
Þórsmörk (Básar)	07:20*	15:00***	20:00
Þórsmörk (Langidalur)	07:30*	15:15	15:20***
Stakkholtsgjá Canyon		15:35***	
Þórsmörk (Húsadalur)	08:00	16:00	20:40
Seljalandsfoss (Waterfall)	09:00	17:15	21:40**
Hvolsvöllur (N1 Gas Station)	09:30	17:45	22:00
Hella (Kjarval Supermarket)	09:35	17:55	22:20
Hella (Campsite)	09:40	18:00	22:25
Selfoss (Campsite)	10:05	18:25	22:50
Selfoss (N1 Gas Station)	10:10	18:30	22:55
Hveragerði (N1 Gas Station)	10:20	18:40	23:05
Reykjavík (BSÍ Bus Terminal)	11:15	19:35	23:45

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Album Reviews



Pinks Street Boys

Hits #1 (2015)

facebook.com/PinkStreetBoys

**KILL! DESTROY!
SCHNELL! AAAARGH!**



+ Boys and girls, we live in dank, dire times. It's bad enough that our lives are dictated to us by a herd of inbred fools, but in music terms, it's becoming intolerable, and scanning the state of the Icelandic "rock and roll" landscape today only brings tears of despair. There's the cartoon hard-rock orthodoxy of the Vintage Caravan and the fetid authenticity fetishism of *Blueshammer* Kaleo. And then there's Bubbi Morthens, a bitter punk turned scenic storyteller turned whiny media whore turned Widow Twanky pantomime dame with his *Dimma wank-bot* backing band. The real nadir has been the fact that *Monotown*, a band that makes *Doves* sound like the end of Western civilisation, won the best rock album at this year's Iceland Music Awards, causing yours truly to spit his homeopathic Icelandic *Skyr* over his artisan beard shouting, "WTF?? Are you fucking kidding me Iceland??" as blobs of creamy cheese splattered the TV screen. Truly, these people are the walking dead.

But as Greil Marcus once said, the sad thing is not that rock and roll is dead, it's that we refuse to let it die. No matter how dull, washed-out or moribund the situation gets, we still cling on in hope for a band to come along, a band that sups from the spring of rock and roll "spirit," an increasingly hidden reservoir of bile, sex, fury and death. Pink Street Boys is one band you can at least say provides us with that vicarious thrill, if but for a moment. On the back of some incendiary performances in bars and venues all over downtown, PSB have developed a reputation for chaotic intensity smothered with hairy chests and squalling feedback. With energy spurting off in all directions, they ooze a sweaty, ugly, thuggish masculinity that's bathed in leather and homoeroticism (Check out their video to "Evel Knivel," where they've been kept captive in Kenneth Anger's art dungeon and fed a diet of booze, poppers and paint thinner). True, bands like *Singapore Sling* may implore to you that they "just wanna rock and roll," but with PSB, you stand there in the crowd thinking that at any moment all it would take is a single spark for it to completely kick off.

Of course it's one thing to have a combustible live sound, but it's another transferring it onto record. And while many have stumbled at this hurdle, I'm pleased to report that PSB's latest album, 'Hits #1', manages to hold on and

contain their live energy. Even before you put the record on the player, the cover throbs with a sleazy aura with the schlock horror pen art of Viðar Alexander Jónsson displaying grotesque flesh, slime, and cartoon violence stained in sickly purples and greens. This is a record that doesn't want to be HEY! nice, chipper, or pleasant. No, this is an album that wants to be as icky, nasty, and dirty (oo-er missus) as possible.

From the opening bars of "Body Language" that come at you like a howitzer before the drums kick in and blow the doors off, PSB don't stop to even think about things like #feelings or crying while masturbating. Life's waay too short for that. It's an album that's a short sharp shock, clocking in at under 25 minutes (It's taken me longer to go to the toilet), where the only purpose is to rock hard with determination, to explode before they blow themselves out.

And in this barrage of noise, a definite hat tip goes to PSB for their work on overall sound of the album (I'm guessing a large amount that there was smoke coming from the mixing desk when Curver Thoroddsen was mastering). Amongst the scuzzy redlining mix of pounding drums, blitzkrieg guitars and springy bass, 'Hits #1' is stuffed with lots of clever little overdubs, overloading delay and reverb effects smearing the vocals until they become nothing more than a series of abstract primal howls and shrieks. So far the only lyrics I can make out are "KICK. THE. FUCK. OUT!" on "Kick the Trash Out." Or at least I think that's what they are shouting.

Now, it's worth noting there's not that much in 'Hits #1' that you can say is different, new or even original within the canon of rock and roll. From Jerry Lee Lewis to the MC5 to Iggy Pop, punk and beyond, music of this form has been played by self-destructive freaks ever since the guitar became electrified. In fact the semi-previous incarnation of PSB, *The Dandelion Seeds*, was very much a cliché-ridden throwback to 1960s psych hippie bullshit. But you cannot deny the violent power of 'Hits #1', and the way that PSB uses it as a blunt, dumb instrument to bludgeon you with. When they sing "This is rock and roll/this is what we got/this is how we do it" on "Anthem," you know that this is the only way they can do it. There is no other option but to go down in a ball of fury and flames.

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Pink Street Boys

Fact Sheet



Alfred Óskarsson
Singer and tambourine player.

- Studies fine art at the Iceland Academy of Arts.
- Fell in love with a stripper in New Orleans.
- Tottenham Hotspur fan.



Axel Björnsson
Lead singer, guitarist and songwriter.

- Started to grow a beard at age of twelve.
- Works as a professional painter.
- Loves deep fried shrimps and lobster.
- Is often misunderstood and thought of as a prick.
- Loooooves cats.



Einar Björn Þórarinnsson
Drummer.

- A.K.A. E.B. King, King Kong, Greek God.
- Spent some time in jail in Thailand.
- Can bench press 140kg.
- Drives a sport car.



Jónbjörn Birgisson
Guitarist & bassist.

- Film school graduate.
- 1/8th Carpatho-Russian.
- Once had his Fender amp catch fire while playing.
- Family lives in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



Víðir Alexander Jónsson
Guitarist & bassist & singer.

- Man of few words.
- Genius.

More Great New Rock-Out Worthy Bands

By RX Beckett

While Muck and Pink Street Boys are out there slaying us day and night, the rock scene in Reykjavík is actually the best it's been in years—notably since the dissolution of bands like Skátar, Reykjavík!, DLX ATX, and so many more (RIP). Here are some more extremely good bands worth checking out right now. You might even catch them playing with Muck/PSB.

Börn

This fast-paced post-punk quartet makes intense and positive music poised to smash oppressive systems. They took the scene by surprise last year when they released a killer LP and blew everyone away at Airwaves. They've just returned from their first US tour and are playing ATP Iceland this July. They also really love pizza and their frontwoman is a roller derby player. So bad-ass.

Kvöl

Another post-punk band, although this husband-wife duo keeps things really minimal with a live setup of bass, vocals, and a tight playback system. The lead singer here is one Þórir Georg, otherwise known for his low-key solo acoustic work, and he unleashes his angry inner goth all over the place. They have a tight self-titled 7" available now.

Kælan Mikla

These three art-punkers are the spirit of riot grrl incarnate here in Iceland. They are doing something truly unique and subversive with their raucous and disarming yet captivating form of poetry goth rock. It's not always as serious as it sounds but it's always beautiful, bolstered by a strong DIY aesthetic and attitude. They have an album due to come out this year.

Döpur

Another set of lovers on this list, this boyfriend noise-punk duo is comprised of Krummi Björgvinsson, of Mínus and Esja fame, and top vegan-chef Linnea Hellström. With his powerful voice and guitar and her stoic intensity on keyboards they deliver reverb-heavy, borderline industrial tracks that are mesmerising and ear puncturing. Catch them live as soon as you can.

russian.girls

When he isn't one of the busiest musicians in Iceland with his band Fufanu, Guðlaugur Halldór Einarsson keeps his guitar-hands stretched with this sexy, distortion laden solo project. His supercool desert blues slow jams sound like they are straight out of a Lynch movie and his first album 'Old Stories' was praised as one of the best albums of 2014. Turn it on, tune in and drop out.

Brött Brekka

Steve Albini devotees will go wild for this atonal bummer rock band that harkens back to early 90s indie. These guys are incredible musicians in terms of technical ability and translate those chops into some of the most unexpected, heavy and fantastically off-putting rock music. This isn't even scowling music, just really intense glaring and head-nodding. There should be an album on the way, or catch them this summer up at Norðanpaunk.

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Going For Gold?

Meet María Ólafsdóttir, Iceland's representative at the Eurovision Song Contest



If you're in Iceland on May 23, you simply must partake in Eurovision festivities. If you don't already have plans, be sure to go to a bar that's celebrating it, such as Húrra, or invite some friends over, because to Icelanders, Eurovision is one of the best events of the year.

Keep in mind when deciding how to dress for the occasion that Eurovision is a bit like New Year's Eve. Think: sequins, glitter and anything over-the-top. After all, there are few things as absurd as Eurovision. Also, don't forget flags! Icelandic, European, Australian, anything you can get your hands on. Flags are important.

Eurovision is basically a national holiday that's not weighed down by traditions, so you can let your imagination run wild and do whatever you want. If you need some inspiration, though, we have a drinking game for you.

The drinking game

First, write the name of each country competing in the finals on a piece of paper. Put those pieces of paper in a hat and have each guest draw one. If there are more countries than people, those who want can draw more than one until all of the countries have been accounted for, as it's more fun that way.

If your friends are fans of betting, everyone could put 1,000 ISK into the hat for each country and the one who ends up with the winning country takes it all. Suggestion: the nicest thing to do with the winnings is to buy everyone some KFC the morning after (assuming Iceland isn't still experiencing a chicken shortage) because believe me, if you're doing this drinking game, you're going to need it.

The rules:

"Your country" refers to the country you drew from the hat. During the show you'll be drinking during performances when...

- You see your country's flag
- There's a dramatic key change (We actually have a word to describe this: "Eurovisionhækkun")
- Someone says "Thank you Europe"
- A wind machine is being used
- Something really gimmicky is used, anything from a violinist on an ice rink (Russia 2008) to a backup dancer in a hamster wheel (Ukraine 2014)
- There's a cliché expression about peace and love
- Someone sings intensely with his or her fists clenched
- There's an outfit change on stage
- When you feel the need to drink to forget (some acts are going to be THAT BAD)

You will also drink during the scoring when...

- Your country gets 8 points or more
- When Iceland gets ANY points (this doesn't usually get you so drunk, but... this year, who knows? GO MARÍA!!!)

Words

Hildur María Friðriksdóttir

Photo

Jónatan Gréttarsson

María Ólafsdóttir is representing Iceland at this year's Eurovision Song Contest with her song "Unbroken." The 22-year-old from a small town in North Iceland was relatively unknown to the nation when she swept them away in the preliminary song contest in Iceland earlier this year. We managed to catch her for a quick chat shortly after she arrived in Vienna, where she is busy preparing for the big night.

Hi, María. What's the atmosphere like over there in Vienna?

It's great. The group landed yesterday and everyone is really excited. We're about to leave for our first rehearsal.

A lot of Icelanders saw you for the first time this winter when you competed to represent Iceland in the Eurovision Song Contest. Can you tell me a bit about yourself and how you got to where you are today?

Well, I come from Blönduós and currently live in Mosfellsbær. I've been singing for as long as I can remember and I've done theatre work, both in Þjóðleikhúsið and Borgarleikhúsið. I met the guys at StopWaitGo Productions in college at Verzló and we worked together on school plays. After that they got me to sing demos—they wrote the songs and I sang them in English so they could market them overseas. Then this winter they asked me if I wanted to compete in Eurovision and I just said... yes.

You seem to have a lot of support in Iceland. I've heard nothing but praise, both for you and the song, but especially for you as a singer. Is this something you're sensing as well?

Yeah, I'm feeling a lot of support from people, which I'm very grateful for.

So what's the song actually about?

The song is about going from a dark place and into the light. You know, just about getting through hard times and staying strong because you have to believe in yourself.

It has very strong and empowering lyrics. Is that why you translated the song from the Icelandic (originally: "Lítil skref") into English?

Yeah, well, we really just wanted everyone to understand what we were singing about and were hoping that the song could help more than just those who know Icelandic. We've received a lot of positive responses from people all over the world—from people who say that the song has helped them. One guy even told us that he came out of the closet after listening to the song because it gave him the strength to tell his parents.

Sizing up the competition

Wow, that's amazing. It's great that the song is already getting attention and helping people. In the actual competition, your position in the semifinals is after Azerbaijan and before Sweden. Both of these countries are very strong contenders. Do you think your position in the lineup is a good or a bad thing?

I'm not worried about our position in the lineup or anything like that. I have a lot of faith in Sweden this year and at first I was a bit intimidated by being the act before them but, honestly, I don't think it matters where in the lineup I am.

Is the Swedish song your favourite this year?

My favourite was Sweden until I saw the Australian entry being performed when I went to Russia and it became my new favourite.

Do you feel like Australia is your biggest competition this year?

I have a feeling that he's going to win, you know, because he's got the best song. It's fun and has a great vibe and there's a lot of excitement around it because Australia is competing for the first time.

What's your opinion on Australia competing?

I think it's fun. It's great that they're joining us and that more countries are being added to the mix.

So do you think this should maybe become a more global competition?

Hmm... well, I don't know. I guess there's a certain charm to it being a European thing, but it's nice to get new participants.

You said that you think Australia is going to win. Don't you think you might have a chance as well?

I haven't really thought that far. It hasn't even crossed my mind, as Iceland has never won. I'm just going to do my best. My first goal is to get through the semifinals and after that I'll set a new goal.

The Eurovision elite

You've become a part of Iceland's Eurovision elite now because, as you know, Iceland never forgets those who participate in Eurovision. You will forever be famous in Iceland after this. What are your feelings about that?

It's naturally really strange to go from being completely unknown to becoming well-known overnight. But I feel like... this is what I want to be doing in the future so Eurovision is a really good platform for me. I actually feel quite lucky that this is happening.

You just released an EP. Are you planning on writing and releasing more material?

I want to release an album as soon as possible but we're going to finish this assignment first and then we'll discuss what happens next. After this, I'm going to continue playing the lead role of Ronja Ræningjadóttir at Þjóðleikhúsið. It starts showing again first weekend of June.

Ok, so you have PLENTY to do. But back to Eurovision—is there someone you look up to from past competitions?

Both Selma Björnsdóttir [Iceland's

representative in 1999 and 2005] and Birgitta Haukdal [Iceland's representative in 2003] were my idols, not just in Eurovision, but as Icelandic singers, so I look up to them a lot. Loreen's act ["Euphoria"], which won the competition in 2012 [for Sweden], has really stuck with me as well.

You've met some of these past competitors. Have they given you any advice or support?

Yeah, a lot. Selma and Hera Björk [Iceland's representative in 2010] are with me here. I've also spoken with Birgitta and Eyþór Ingi [2013]. Everyone's been really helpful.

What advice have they given you?

Just to enjoy the moment and not to lose myself in the stress because this might never happen again. They've told me to focus on the cameras because this is first and foremost a TV show. That's what matters.

You mentioned Birgitta and Selma being your idols. Have you always been a Eurovision fan?

Yeah. The first competition I remember was the one with Selma in 1999 when I was six. My mother and I usually watch it together, or with the whole family actually. We're all really excited for it.

But what on Earth is Eurovision?

Some of our North American readers have probably never heard of Eurovision. How would you describe it to somebody who has never heard of it?

Oh wow... I guess it's European nations coming together and competing for the best song and performance. The performers try to be good representatives of their nations, but it's really a huge festival of unification—nations unite to support their country and the participating countries also unite in a friendly way.

Do you have any advice for people who have never seen the competition before? How can people get the most out of the evening?

To watch it with an open mind—this is naturally first and foremost a show.

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“Let Go, Give Up, Surrender”

We chat with Ámundi Sigurðsson about his life as a graphic designer

Words and Photos by
Hallgrímur Óskarsdóttir

As I walk into the Reykjavík Museum of Design and Applied Art for the first time, I can't help but feel that everything looks very familiar. And, well, that's because it is. The space is currently home to a 30-year design retrospective that's filled with old ads, bank and TV station logos, book covers and CD artwork—a presentation comprising decades of visual ephemera that would make any Icelander feel nostalgic. “I had no idea you did all this,” I say to the man behind the images, graphic designer Ámundi Sigurðsson. He laughs modestly at my exclamation.

Ámundi was born in 1959 and started working as a graphic designer before the age of the personal computer. He's been working in the field for the last 30 years, amassing an impressive legacy along the way. From Icelandic beer brands like Víking Light, Gylltur and Lager to the familiar logos of hangouts like Kaffifélagið, Einar Ben and Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar, his work has been quietly permeating Iceland's visual environment for three decades. Excited by the evocative power of his work, I start chattering about how graphic designers have such a large impact on society, in an almost divine kind of way, with graphic design affecting almost everyone on a daily basis. Ámundi agrees. “I definitely think graphic design has a great influence on how people perceive and sense beauty,” he says.

At the same time, the public doesn't tend to be aware of the people behind the work, which leads me to believe that modesty must be a somewhat necessary trait for graphic designers. Ámundi, at least, doesn't seem to be bothered by the lack of “design star” status that's afforded to similarly prolific figures making, say, furniture or fashion. “I guess it doesn't really bother me because it has always been like that,” he says. “People don't know what you're doing unless they're in the business. That's just how it is. And moreover: sometimes your work is taken and recycled, in a way. That's a typical thing that would generally get on my nerves, but in this context it doesn't. At least not if it's properly done.”

Without skipping a beat, Ámundi is suddenly enlightened: “I think I know why it doesn't bother me,” he says. “It's because I'm constantly doing it myself. You see—I am a graphic sampler.” Although his face is dead serious,

there's a smile behind his words and it's apparent that he doesn't take himself, or his work, too seriously. “You see, I borrow stuff from all over and re-apply it in my work,” he continues, “although I quit straightforward stealing early on.” He points to a record he designed. “The back cover of this one was pure theft from another designer,” he says. “I was so embarrassed about it afterwards that I stopped stealing immediately. I realised that if you're borrowing or sampling you have to fundamentally alter the images.”

I take this speech about stealing only semi-seriously, because if Ámundi is a borrower, he's a very subtle one. His work has strong recognisable characteristics that have adapted to the times. But taking all this into consideration it starts to make sense that he's comfortable with relative anonymity. Ámundi seems to look at graphic design as the art of conversing with the past, present and future—taking from the past, giving to the future and, perhaps most importantly, understanding the current, and swimming with it.

Looking back

This constant evolution means that the older work in the exhibition has visibly dated, but in a way that can be very personal to the viewer. A logo for a TV station that went bankrupt appears now as a cultural artefact of the past, and an Emiliana Torrini CD cover can act as a surprisingly powerful sensory trigger (loved that one, when I was eight). In a way, the viewer is taken for a sentimental roller-coaster ride through visual design.

This kind of retrospective show also means facing up to work that's long since been superseded in quality. And in all honesty: some of the older stuff is...

Ámundi

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“I had always tried to shut this TV influence out—I was embarrassed, in a way. Just like I was embarrassed of my love for sentimental music. But now I just allow myself to listen to Burt Bacharach.”

well, not that great. I politely ask Ámundi how it feels to look back over 30 years of output. He seems to read my mind: “Some of my early stuff is pure horror,” he laughs. “But I decided I wouldn't let myself get away with censorship.” He walks me to a logo for Utangarðsmenn, an 80s punk band. “Take this, for instance,” he says, shaking his head. “It's dreadfully overdone.” He points to a couple of other logos that he thinks are just appalling. “I was so proud of this one,” Ámundi says, pointing to a background for a TV station as we both laugh.

Ámundi's early work was made back when graphic design was closer to handcraftsmanship, with professionals working with typesetters, print plates and photographic reproduction. When the digital revolution arrived, Ámundi was studying in Toronto, and he recalls his teacher telling the students that their prosperity relied on learning to work with a computer. “I'll never forget my first encounter with a computer. I remember asking my professor: ‘Does what I do in here simply come out over here?’” he recalls, tracing an imaginary computer and printer with his hands. “When he said yes, I just went like...” Ámundi then throws himself dramatically down on his knees and raises his hands in the air. “I hadn't prayed for years at this time, but I just felt this was a gift from heaven.”

Joining a cult

Ámundi goes on to tell me he's very interested in everything concerning God. “Fifteen years ago I went to meditate with an American guy,” he tells me. “Well, he was totally crazy. He was eventually fired, a total nut job. But he woke me up. For that I will be forever grateful. It was a multiple-hour meditation, and afterwards, I felt I had entered a place I knew and connected to something true inside myself. Since then I've been constantly searching.” He tells me how this has affected his graphic design and I glance at a huge typographic sign in all caps: LET GO, GIVE UP, SURRENDER. Ámundi tells me it's his motto. “I try to live by these words.”

A few years after meeting the

crazy meditation guy, Ámundi continued his search when he took a meditation course. It affected him even more deeply—his teacher, especially. “She's the most remarkable phenomenon I've ever experienced,” he says. “She's the freest person I've met. When I looked in her eyes for the first time, I just—pffffh—got sent away somewhere. So naturally I got scared and kept away from her for some time.” It's

evident that this topic is important to him, and he takes breaks to think about how to explain. “I joined a cult, you know,” he says, watching for my response. Now his banter is obvious, although he's not making a joke. “I tell people this to shock them. I know most people are scared of cults. I am as well.” The cult Ámundi is referring to is called “The Center of the Golden One” and focuses on surrendering to God. (Feel free to Google it.)

Ámundi's confidence and sincerity is admirable. He's not afraid of being judged or made fun of. He has simply found something that he believes in. “It's hard to explain, it's even hard to talk about,” the graphic designer explains. “I'm trying to find one sentence to make this clear, but it's hard to find. I see God in various places, especially in the eyes of children. They haven't developed the histrionics that we suffer from as grownups.”

His faith in graphic design is a little less stable. “Sometimes I feel like I'm beautifying the world a little bit, but the next day I feel that this is a pathetic job. It's not like I'm a doctor or a teacher, you know.” Keeping the faith can be hard. “This faith at least,” Ámundi laughs. “It's hard to see how it matters, sometimes. But then everything matters.” He laughs again. “Well, now I'm just talking like some lunatic.”

Freedom of inspiration

Keeping an open mind, Ámundi seems to be able to seek inspiration from wherever. But an all-time inspiration for him, he tells me, came from visual arts, namely the conceptual artist Marcel Duchamp. “Especially his ready-mades,” he says, “how he takes things that already exist and puts them in a new context.” This makes perfect sense given our earlier

conversation about sampling. “Dieter Roth was also a great inspiration for me,” Ámundi continues, “even though it doesn't necessarily show in my work. I know how important it was for me to be around him when I was young—his son was a friend of mine.” He pauses, thinking back. “It was like meeting God, you know, he was such a legend.”

Ámundi tells me about an important meeting he had with yet another artist: Þorvaldur Þorsteinsson. “This was during a time when I felt I was stagnant,” he says. “And he told me, ‘Try to find what truly touches you, embrace it and dig into it,’” he says, pausing briefly. “That was my fifties...” He goes on to explain how he came to realise that American television, which was broadcast in Iceland from the US army base, also greatly influenced his sense of beauty. He seems a little bit embarrassed, almost as if he was excusing the time he spent in front of the TV. “I was a movie-freak,” he says. “I would escape into a different world through movies.”

While he tells me about the 50s movies he loved to watch as a young man, I can see how this harmonises with many of his logos, such as the one for Kaffifélagið, a small coffee shop on Skólavörðustígur. “I had always tried to shut this TV influence out—I was embarrassed, in a way. Just like I was embarrassed of my love for sentimental music. But now I just allow myself to listen to Burt Bacharach.”

Fellow passengers

We leave the museum together and Ámundi asks me if he should take a taxi or join me on the bus. Would I mind? Of course not. It's public transport, anyway. So off we go.

This is new for me, walking with a strange, older man, to catch a bus together. But somehow it feels super normal. On the way to the bus he tells me stories about how his son demanded to rent movies every night when he was a kid, clearly inheriting his father's interest in movies. He tells me he's now expecting a “little Ámundi,” getting a little ahead of himself, clearly excited.

We see the bus approaching and have to run to catch it. On the bus journey, we pass at least four of his logos. Neither of us mentions them, and I guess none of the other passengers have any idea.

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Gone Skying

Helicopter tours are a high-flying treat

Words John Rogers

Photos Axel Sigurðarson

There's something about the position of Reykjavík's city centre—perched on a hill, with the sea and mountains on all sides—that invites daydreams about seeing it from above. Standing at the top of Skólavörðustígur, the flat top of Mount Esja seems just a small gravity-defying jump away, over the rippling, steely waters of the Faxaflói bay.



Distance from Reykjavík
The flight takes you approx.
40km east of the city



It's not as much of a fantasy as it might sound. As well as domestic flights, Reykjavík's conveniently situated city airport also acts as a base for helicopter tours, offering people the chance to feel their feet leave the ground, for a while at least. Taking off several times a day, the available routes cover most of Iceland, from the Reykjanes peninsula to the Westfjords, Snæfellsnes, Vatnajökull, Mývatn and beyond. Some routes take hiking-shy travellers up to the top of glaciers, volcanoes or other hard-to-reach wilderness spots, while others offer an aerial version of the Golden Circle, or fast access to remote areas for fishing, skiing, or just relaxing far away from anyone else.

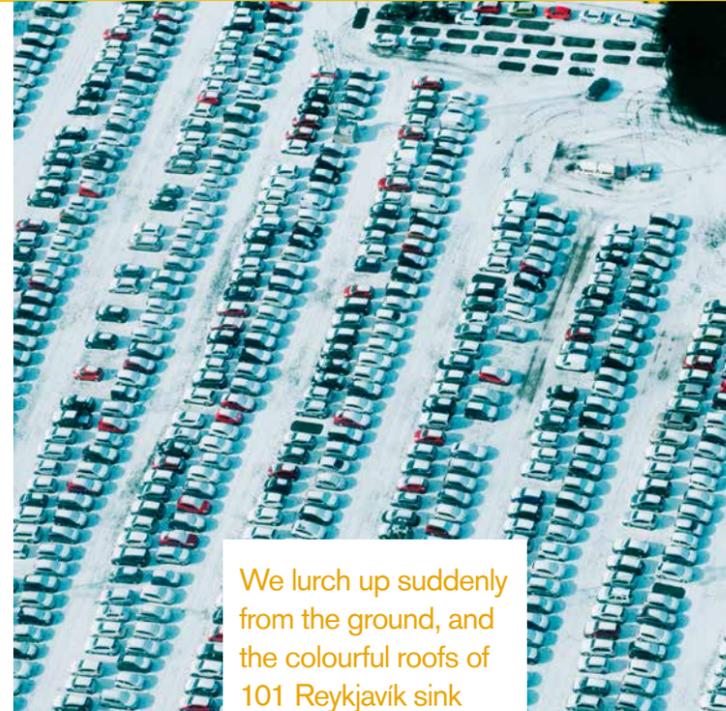
We meet at the Norðurflug office to take the geothermal tour, which will take us over two major geothermal energy plants, and various volcanic craters, lava fields and hot springs. After a cinematic video in the waiting lounge in which Tom Cruise and Ben Stiller extol the virtues of Iceland's nature, a loud roaring sound from outside alerts us that our helicopter has arrived.

Whirlwind, heat and flash

Our pilot for the day is Guðjón, a jovial chap with 20 years of flying experience, who explains our route for the day. First we'll fly due east to the Nesjavellir power plant, before touching down on Hengill, the nearby volcano that powers the station. Next, we'll circle over the Hveragerði area, home of the famous Reykjadalur "hot river," and the Hellisheiði power plant, before doing a flyby of some large volcanic craters, and an aerial look at Reykjavík's cityscape.

After strapping in, we don headsets so we can hear Guðjón speak as he warms up the helicopter. The rotor gets louder for a couple of minutes, until we lurch up suddenly from the ground. Within seconds, the colourful roofs of 101 Reykjavík are sinking away beneath us. It's a freeing feeling, and a broad smile crosses my face as I look out at the unencumbered views to Esja on one side and Reykjanes on the other.

Soon after, we've left the city limits behind entirely, and we're out over the open lava plains of South Iceland. Away from human habitations, the landscape



We lurch up suddenly from the ground, and the colourful roofs of 101 Reykjavík sink away beneath us. Before long, the distant ground is completely white, held under a smooth icing of deep winter snow.

changes dramatically—the temperature at ground level seems to have taken a nosedive, with wide drifts of frozen snow punctuating grey lava and yellowish moss. Before long, the distant ground is completely white, held under a smooth icing of deep winter snow.

Guðjón talks to us along the way, pointing out Iceland's geographical position on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. We're actually flying right along the fault line between the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates, where heat leaks up through the Earth's crust, and before long we can see the resulting steam pouring from the ground.

Secret valley

Guðjón takes us over some mountains and banks steeply towards Nesjavellir, past twin plumes of steam silhouetted dramatically by bright sun. After the



power station, we hover down lower, towards the foothills of the snow-covered mountains. "It's time for a look at our little secret valley," he says, and suddenly we're coming in for landing through a sheet of steam.

It feels surreal, after such a short flight, to step out onto the side of a volcano. The small geothermal hotspot we find has melted the surrounding snow into graceful, undulating natural sculptures, and the ground is tinted amber and green from the minerals seeping into the soil. We take a walk around a bubbling natural cauldron of pearlescent water, and some vents that violently spew out hot sulphurous steam from the earth. There are some short red posts sticking out of the snow nearby, indicating that we're on a hiking route, but there's nobody around—only foolhardy hikers would be here at the tail end of such a bitter winter.

Hold on to your butts

We take off again, and swoop up a deep, dramatic valley as if in some thrilling Hollywood chase. Over the crest of a high ridge, the town of Hveragerði comes into view with its ranks of glowing greenhouses. The road down into the town looks like a tiny scribble in the snow from up here, and there are conspicuous snow-filled volcanic cones on the tops of the mountains.

After a steep, stomach-churning circle of the Hellisheiði power station—apparently the second biggest geothermal power station in the world—we cross Road One and come in low over a field of craggy, broken lava. In the centre of the lava field lie two huge craters. "These craters are probably responsible for much of the landmass you can see around here," says Guðjón, turning the helicopter around so everyone can get a good look. At times we're looking straight down at the ground, pushed back into our seats as Guðjón manoeuvres the 'copter for the best view.

As we start making our way back to the city, everyone falls happily silent. The shadows and colours on the ground change constantly, and the roads and houses look truly tiny from this elevated perspective, immersed in Iceland's vast, wild and rugged landscape. We circle the city centre for landing, taking in amazing aerial views of Harpa, Halgrímskirkja and the 101 area on the way in.

As we walk back over the tarmac, Guðjón says he has one more flight today—that very hop up to Esja's summit that I've so often daydreamed about. I feel a twinge of jealousy—after a wonderful hour spent looking down at Iceland from above, aerial sightseeing seems like it could become an expensive addiction. I leave the airport feeling lighter on my feet, and sure I'll be back for more.

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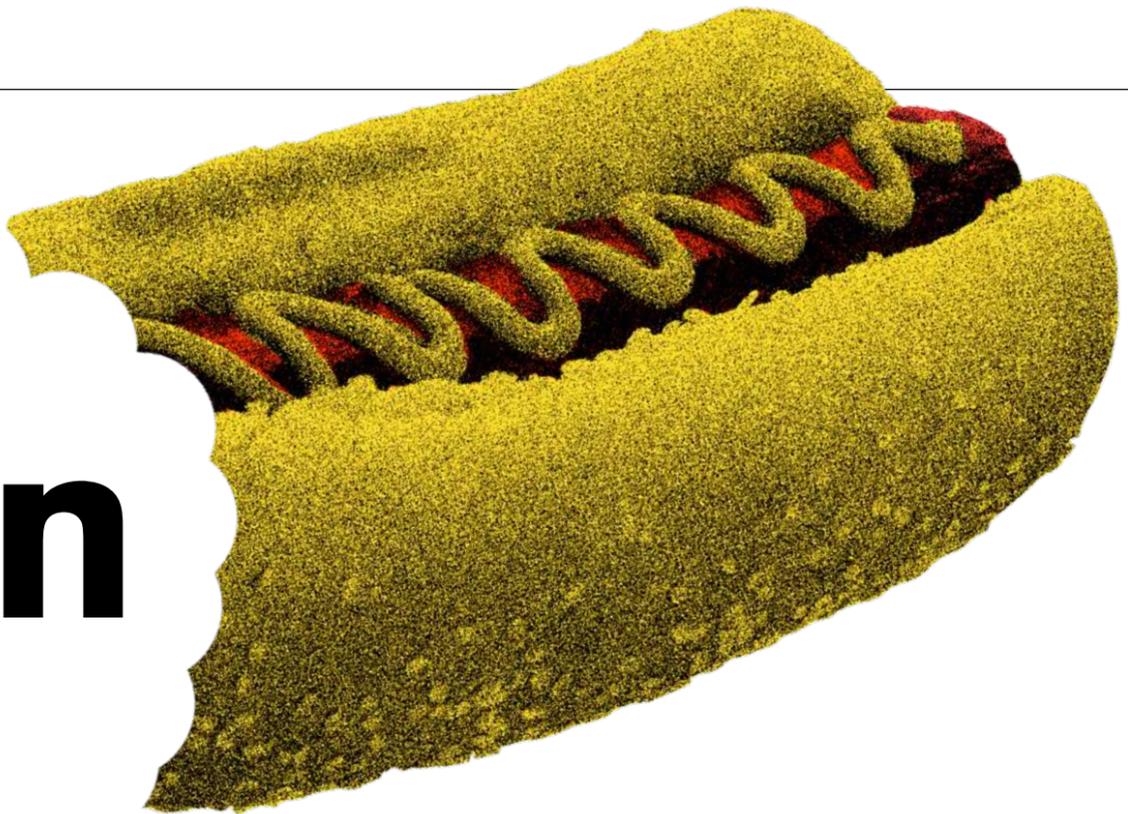
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The Seven

Driving to Akureyri one hot dog at a time



Words
RX Beckett

Photos
Art Bicnick

The people of Akureyri have been keeping a secret from us Capital Region folk. It's called The Seven. For years now, while driving the four-and-a-half-to-six-hour road trip between the North and South, many northerners have made it common practice to eat one hot dog at each of the seven pit stops between Akureyri and Reykjavík, and they didn't tell us about it because they think we're just a bunch of city slicker suckers.

But someone slipped up, let the dog out of the bun and told my friend Hjalti about it right before he went driving up north. He did it. I had my own road trip to the northern capital planned so I figured, what the hell, let's do this thing. I fucking love hot dogs and eating junk food on the road. I told my road trip mates this would be happening—five people squeezed into a sedan need to be aware of the puking risk—and asked if anyone would join me in the attempt. "No way," those wimps said. "When Hjalti did it, he felt terrible after." So what? I'm from North America, a continent covered in all-you-can-eat buffets, unreasonable portions and Guy Fieri. I was born ready.

It's not so bad!

Now I'm not usually a breakfast person, but oddly enough, I woke up the morning of The Seven excursion ravenously hungry. I knew that if I waited the two hours until my first hot dog I would be full-on hangry (hungry + angry) so I had an egg and toast. This may have been a dumb idea, but I was still excited when our car rolled into the lot

at the Ártúnsholt N1 gas station. I was eating my first "eina með öllu" at 9:30 sharp. Within a couple of bites I could already tell this would be the worst one I would have. The bun was overgrilled and dry, the sausage was shriveled and flavourless, and the usually delicious condiments did nothing to compensate for either. Oh well.

At Borganes, the sun was shining, the air was warm, and the N1 was swarming with locals making the Saturday-morning small-talk rounds. I got myself another classic all-dressed hot dog and paired it with some delicious blue Powerade, because of electrolytes and whatnot. I expected this one to be really good, possibly because of the high turnover rate that this station sees, as my backseat-buddy Júlía pointed out. However it was only slightly better than the previous one, but at least the bun and dog were significantly fresher.

What was I thinking?

Peeling out of Borganes, the car kids all started laughing at me because the next stop, Baulan, was supposedly just a few

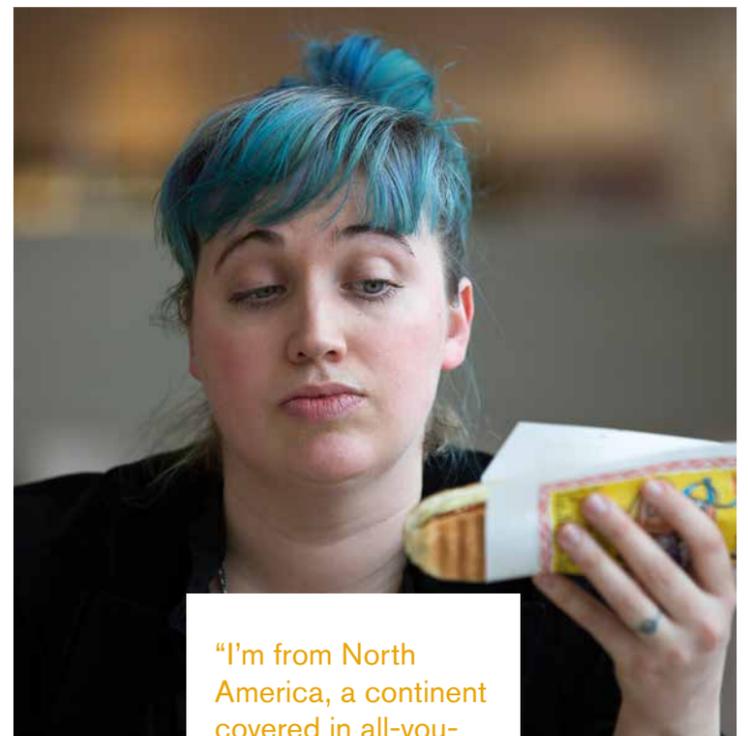
minutes away. They all started taunting me that I'd have to shove another one down in the next three minutes and, caving to peer pressure, I let them make the decision to stop or keep driving. Half an hour later we finally zoomed past the uniquely shaped gas station! "That wasn't as close as I thought it was," said my bandmate Biggi. By that point, my stomach had actually made a bit of room and I could have had one, but it was too late. I'd already failed The Seven.

Despite the setback, I rationalised that I would press on with the next four stops and have my Baulan dog on the return trip. By the time we got to the next hot dog stop, Staðarskáli, I was genuinely craving one and it did not disappoint. The bun was warm and just lightly grilled, the clerk offered me a grilled or steamed dog (steamed, takk) and he was nice and generous with both kinds of onions. While snacking, I pointed out the station's animals-of-Iceland mural and my friend Þórir corrected, "Those are just the animals they put in the hot dogs." Touché.

By the time we got to Blönduós, I was starting to feel the bread and meat byproducts forming a brick in my stomach. I knew it was time to have a coffee with my hot dog—you know why—and eating it was actually feeling like a chore. When I went to throw away my wrapper the wind whipped it right out of the garbage can and away into nature.

I've made a huge mistake

On the way to Varmahlíð, my car-mates reached consensus that this would probably be the best hot dog of all because it isn't a large pre-fab N1 like the other stops and they use Góði instead of SS Pylsur. However, I would not confirm or disprove the theory at this point. As I approached the counter I was



"I'm from North America, a continent covered in all-you-can-eat buffets, unreasonable portions and Guy Fieri. I was born ready."

distracted by the soft serve ice cream machine. Having already failed at The Seven, I decided it was time to give up altogether. I got myself a chocolate-dipped vanilla cone and we skipped the last stop in Akureyri.

When we arrived at our destination I finally met Áki, the one who had spilled the secret to my friend Hjalti in the first place, and told him that I had tried and failed at the mission. Delighted with my efforts, he finally revealed the truth: The Seven was never some big secret. It was just a joke and like the gullible glutton that I am, I fell for it. We had a good laugh, had some beers and I pooped a

whole bunch that night.

Final verdict: my friends were right not to join me. I didn't even have five and I felt terrible. But even if it was all a joke, I would be impressed by anyone who could make it through The Seven. And for the record, I did have hot dogs at Varmahlíð and Baulan on the way back. They were excellent.

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L E M Ú R I N N

An American Nazi In Iceland

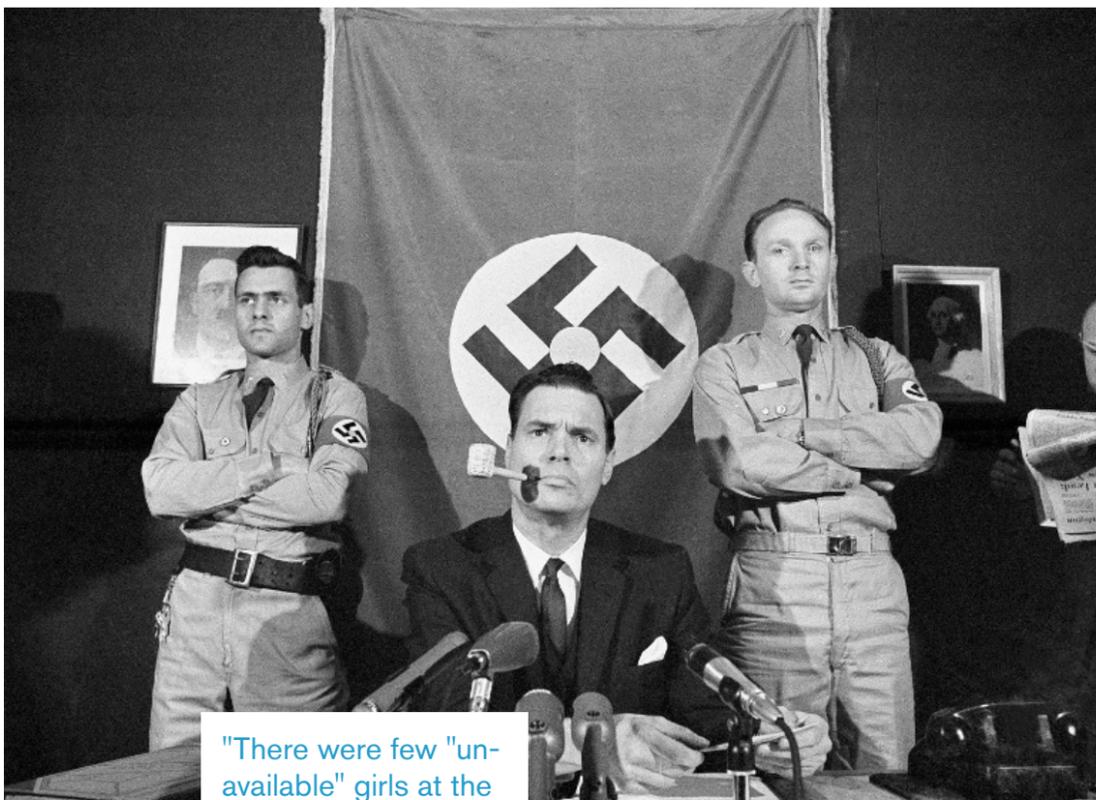
Words

Lemúrin

Photo

Provided by Lemúrin

American soldier George Lincoln Rockwell was one of thousands of people deployed to the US military base in Keflavík, Iceland during the Cold War. His moderately successful career in the military did not make him a famous figure. However, he would make headlines when he moved back to the US some years later as the self-titled American "Führer" and founder of the American Nazi Party.



"There were few "unavailable" girls at the airport. Most of them worked for the administration one way or the other. But none of them ever realized that they could make money other ways. They were having too much fun being generous."

After having served in the Pacific theatre in WWII and being recalled to duty as a Lieutenant Commander in the Korean War, Rockwell was ordered to serve at the base in Iceland in 1952. Families were not allowed to stay with American service personnel stationed there, so his wife and three children remained in America. The following year, while Rockwell was still in Iceland, he and his wife divorced.

In Reykjavík, he met an Icelandic woman, Þóra Hallgrímsson, and they got married shortly thereafter, in October 1953. They honeymooned in the Alps and visited Berchtesgaden in Germany, where Adolf Hitler had his famous retreat. They later moved to the US, where Rockwell started his political career, but the marriage lasted only a few years.

Rockwell founded the American Nazi Party in 1959. He made speeches in which he openly stated his admiration for Hitler. Although his party had few members and supporters, he repeatedly made headlines because of his fanatical and hateful views and childish ways. Amazingly, though, he polled 5,730 votes when he ran for Governor of Virginia in 1965.

In a 1966 interview with Playboy, he said: "I don't believe for one minute that any 6,000,000 Jews were exterminated by Hitler. It never happened." He thought communists and "queers" were taking over America and he was the only man to save the country. How was he going to do that? "Well, I haven't done it yet but one of my ambitions is to rent me a plane and skywrite a big smoke swastika and fly over

New York City—on Hitler's birthday. That sort of thing." The interviewer was the writer Alex Haley, who would later write the bestselling novel 'Roots: The Saga of an American Family' about slavery and racial violence in America. Rockwell was played by Marlon Brando in an episode of the accompanying TV series 'Roots', which became one of the most watched series in television history.

After years of propagating his extremist Nazi politics, making very few steps towards his goal of a leading the United States into an era of "racial purity," Rockwell was murdered by a former member of his party while leaving a shopping center in Arlington, Virginia in August, 1967.

In his autobiography 'This Time the World' (1960), Rockwell writes about his years in Iceland:

When we got to Norfolk, I walked into the Navy assignment office while the wife and kids waited outside in the car to learn our "fate." Where would my next duty be? My "sentence" sounded "fatal": ICELAND!!!

I had hardly heard of the place. I imagined, like most people, that it was a land of polar bears, ice and esquimaux. Worst of all, I knew it would be an impossible strain on our already creaking marriage. Families were not then permitted in Iceland, and the minimum "sentence" to this outpost was ONE YEAR!

When I arrived, I found the base at Keflavik (pronounced "kep-la-veek," in spite of the "f") a little more civilized and a little less icy than I had imagined, but not

much. There are a few dozen stunted trees in the whole of Iceland, but none within thirty miles of the huge and utterly barren US air base. The Gulf Stream runs around one end of the island, and the icy, arctic currents sweep around the other, so that the extreme difference in temperatures regularly produces winds of over a hundred miles an hour. And these gales roar across the volcanic ash and bare ground of Keflavik out of the Atlantic Ocean, unopposed.

I was detailed as Executive Officer of a Fleet Aircraft Service Squadron with patrol bombers. Our working Squadron area consisted of a few Quonset huts and the rudest possible facilities. We had only half of an old World War II hangar, crammed with old jeeps and trucks, to work on our planes. So the men had to work and live in the bitter arctic weather much of the time.

It is dark almost all winter, and the effect of the wild wind, the sweeping, stinging, freezing rain and the eternal darkness is infinitely depressing. It is not cold (actually warmer on the average than Norfolk, because of the Gulf Stream) but the duty up there at Keflavik is as close to a prison sentence as you can get outside the walls.

There were "consolations," however. Liquor was unbelievably cheap—a dollar or two for quarts of the best stuff—and women

were something else altogether. They were, and are, beautiful! They are the purest of Nordics, with perfect, handsome faces, lovely figures, and charming dispositions. The social customs of Iceland are particularly entrancing to visiting males in this respect, as sex is not the sternly regulated affair it is everywhere else. The

attitude in Iceland is pretty much that sex is like hunger or thirst. When you are hungry you eat. When you are thirsty, you drink—and when you feel like sex in Iceland, you satisfy this need too.

There were few "unavailable" girls at the airport. Most of them worked for the administration one way or the other. But none of them ever realized that they could make money other ways. They were having too much fun being generous.

In fact, unbelievable as it may be, one of my officers almost got murdered by a very pretty little girl, for kicking her out of his bed.

She had spent long hours with him before she was turned out into the snow, so he could get some rest for a morning nap. She did not like being sent away. So she went and "borrowed" a .45 from a sergeant, whom she "knew," in another barracks, stuck it in the window of the Lieutenant's room and started shooting. He and the other two officers in the hut scrambled madly, first to get out of the way, and then to

catch and disarm her. The squadron dentist (a Jew, by the way) hid in the closet during this "firefight"—and the boys had endless fun afterwards at the Jew's expense—without justice.

"Parties" at the base were more like orgies, with all the free liquor, and the even "freer" girls. I am sorry to say that many of our top, most senior officers, succumbed to the enormous temptations of all this, and conducted themselves in the most disgraceful and un-officer like manner. The whole atmosphere at Keflavik International Airport was evil and unwholesome, depressing and disgusting.

I became interested in the culture and history of Iceland, and particularly the racial purity of the Icelandic people.

In Reykjavik, I now began to enjoy myself conversing with the Icelanders. Even the most Anti-American were impressed with an American "Ami" Commander who could take the trouble to learn their language—the language of the ancient Vikings, spoken by less than two hundred thousand people in the world today.

But that was not my only reward.

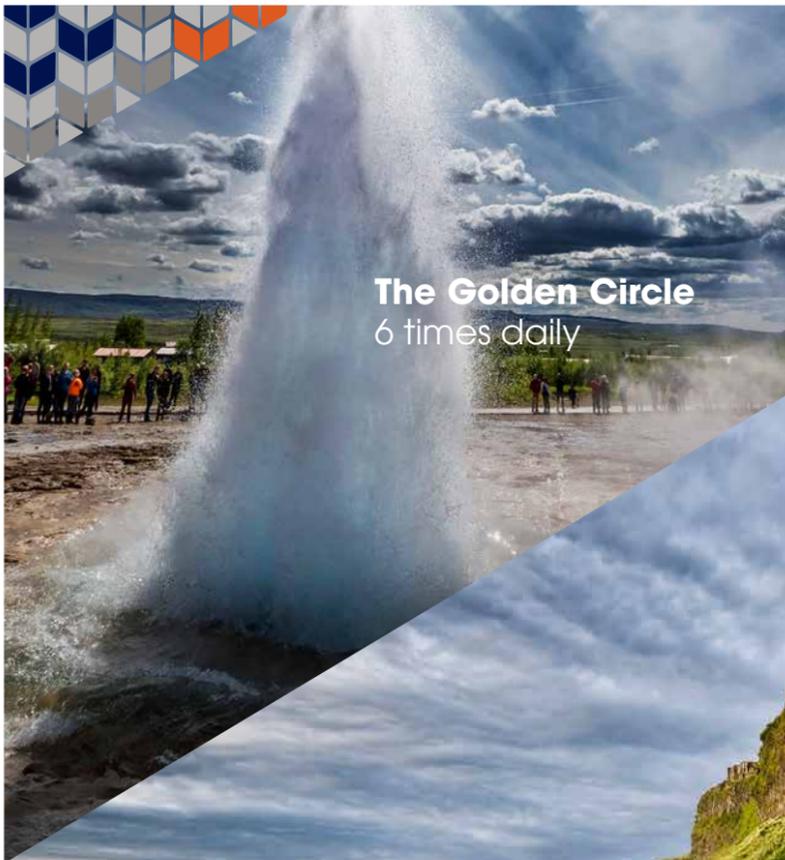
I learned wonderful things about our ancient Nordic heritage from our mighty, bear-skin-clad ancestors of the far north. I learned, for instance that the Icelandic word for a German is "Thodthverdthur"—which means "People's defenders"—the tribal memory of the times when it was the Germans alone who stood between the European White man, and the savage hordes of Genghis Khan for many centuries! (As they stand now between us and the same savage hordes.)

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P.6



"The immediate impact on foreign visitors will probably be through air traffic, which will be paralysed as baggage handlers, drivers of oil trucks and retail workers at the Keflavik airport will go on strike."

If Icelanders are so happy and prosperous, why are we in the midst of one of the bitterest labour disputes in years?

P.22



"One guy even told us that he came out of the closet after listening to the song because it gave him the strength to tell his parents."

If Iceland doesn't win Eurovision this time, at least our entry will have had a positive effect on someone's life.

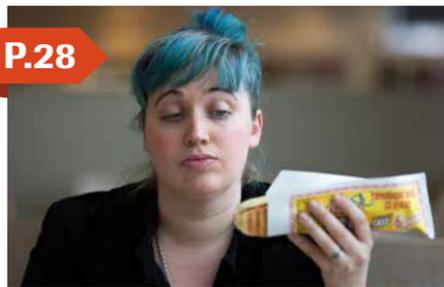
P.26



"It feels surreal, after such a short flight, to step out onto the side of a volcano. The small geothermal hotspot we find has melted the surrounding snow into graceful, undulating natural sculptures, and the ground is tinted amber and green from the minerals seeping into the soil."

We checked out some of our favourite spots via helicopter.

P.28



"For years now, while driving the four-and-a-half-to-six-hour road trip between the north and south, many northerners have made it common practice to eat one hot dog at each of the seven pit stops between Akureyri and Reykjavik, and they didn't tell us about it because they think we're just a bunch of city slicker suckers."

We attempted the Akureyri Seven...



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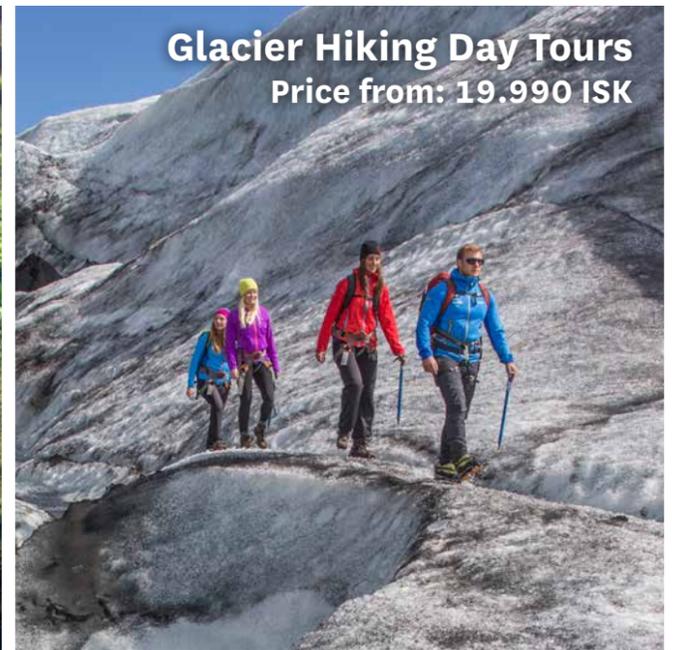
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The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

INFO

 Music, Art, Films and Events Listings
Eating, Drinking and Shopping + Map

Issue 6 - 2015

www.grapevine.is

Your essential guide to life, travel and entertainment in Iceland



15
May

Reykjavík Arts Festival Still Going Strong

This year's festival focuses on the themes of gender, censorship and rights struggle. Take for example Dorothy Iannone's painting exhibit 'The Next Great Moment in History Is Ours' (pictured), which focuses on gender, genitalia and censorship. See inside for more.

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

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

MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE

Music Legend

- Classical, opera.
- Electronic, dance, house, techno.
- Hip-hop, R&B.
- Hardcore, metal, punk, rock.
- Troubadour.
- Experimental.
- Acoustic, folk, jazz, lounge
- Indie, pop, post-rock.

May 22 - June 4

How to use the listings: Venues are listed alphabetically by day. Events listed are all live performances, with troubadours and DJs specifically highlighted. For complete listings and detailed information on venues visit listings.grapevine.is. Send us your listings to: listings@grapevine.is.

Friday May 22

- American Bar**
21:00 Troubadour Siggí Þorbergs / DJ Yngvi
- Bar 11**
22:30 In The Company Of Men
- Bar Ananas**
22:00 Byssukisi DJ Set
- Boston**
22:00 DJ Óli Dóri
- Bravó**
22:00 DJ ThaDarkStranger
- Café Rosenberg**
22:00 Ylja / Teitur Magnússon & band
- Dillon**
22:00 Rythmatik / Casio Fatso
- Dolly**
22:00 LHÍ DJ Night
- Dubliner**
20:00 Troubadour Roland
- English Pub**
22:00 Troubadours Biggi / Alexander & Guðmann
- Frederiksen Ale House**
21:00 Una Stef / DJ Dagbjört
- Gaukurinn**
22:00 Caterpillarmen / DJ Paxton
- Harpa**
17:00 WonderWagon
19:30 Iceland Symphony Orchestra: Peter Grimes
- Húrra**
21:00 Beneath / Misþyrming / Blood Feud / Grit Teeth / Stoic / DJ KGB
- Kaffibarinn**
22:00 DJ Hunk of a Man a.k.a Maggi Legó

★ PICKER OF THE ISSUE ★

Lóa Hjálmtýsdóttir



Our picker of this issue is none other than illustrator and FM Belfast singer Lóa Hjálmtýsdóttir! She says she rarely leaves her house these days, but when she does, she loves seeing things that are hyped up and actually meet that hype. She doesn't limit herself to any one genre of music or art, she just enjoys seeing things that come out well and are interesting.

You can find the events our picker of the issue found to be interesting spread out over the music and art pages, marked with this ★ icon.



29
May

Punk Out
Skerðing / Pungsig / Þegiðu

Gaukurinn

Tryggvagata 22 (D3) | 22:00 | Admission: TBA

In case you're completely spent after all the Eurovision pre-parties, parties and after-parties, with the endless costume changes and copious amounts of alcohol they involve, then this event is for you. There will be no theatrics, no confetti explosions, no witty commentators, and no reason to use your noggin—just grab a beer, wear the same outfit you wore yesterday, and allow the young boys of Skerðing, Pungsig and Þegiðu to revitalise you with their brand of punk rock. You deserve it. **GB**

Photo by Yevgeny Dyer

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MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE

Kaffistofan

22:00 Pink Street Boys Album Release Concert 📺 / Seint 📺 / Godchilla 📺 / russian.girls 📺 / Singapore Sling 📺

Lebowski Bar

22:00 DJ Anna Brá ⚡

Paloma

22:00 Lagaffe Tales DJ Set ⚡

Prikið

22:00 DJ Spegill ⚡ / Jay-O ⚡

Slippbarinn

22:00 DJ Sir Danselot ⚡

Saturday May 23

American Bar

21:00 Troubadour Ellert 📺 / DJ Maggi ⚡

Bar 11

22:30 Hjómssveitt 📺

Bar Ananas

22:00 DJ Hunk of a Man a.k.a Maggi Legó ⚡

Boston

22:00 DJ Rulefinn ⚡

Bravó

22:00 DJ Dramatik ⚡

Café Rosenberg

22:00 KK & Maggi 📺

Dillon

22:00 Knife Fights 📺

Dolly

22:00 DJ Kári ⚡

Dubliner

20:00 Troubadour Andri 📺

English Pub

22:00 Troubadours Alexander & Guðmann 📺 / Hjálmar & Dagur 📺

Frederiksen Ale House

21:00 DJ Eyfjörð ⚡

Gaukurinn

17:00 Radio Iceland Presents Music For Nepal: Meistarar Dauðans 📺 / Daniel Hjálmtýsson 📺 / DJ Smutty Smiff ⚡ / Greyhound 📺 / The 59's 📺 / Q4U 📺 / Dikta 📺 / Kontinuum 📺 / Esja 📺

Húrra

19:00 Eurovision Party: DJ Styrmir Dansson ⚡

Kaffibarinn

22:00 Lagaffe Tales DJ Set ⚡

Lebowski Bar

22:00 DJ Sandala Gústala ⚡ / Rúnar ⚡

Mengi

21:00 Bára Gísladóttir 📺

Paloma

22:00 DJ CasaNova ⚡ / Steindór Jónsson ⚡

Prikið

22:00 Neil Young Cover Band 📺 / DJ Benni B-Ruff ⚡

Slippbarinn

22:00 DJ Sir Danselot ⚡

Stúdentakjallarinn

22:00 Eurovision Song Contest Party ⚡

Sunday May 24

American Bar

22:00 Troubadour Alexander 📺

Boston

21:00 DJ Katnip ⚡

Bravó

21:00 Vinyl Night: DJ Katla ⚡

Dolly

22:00 Local Talk ⚡ / DJ Housekell ⚡ / Ómar E ⚡ / Reginbald ⚡ / Introbeats ⚡ / Viktor Birgiss ⚡ / Jonbjorn ⚡

Dubliner

22:00 Troubadour Garðar 📺

English Pub

21:00 Troubadour Danni 📺

Hjóðberg

20:00 And Then Came The War 📺

Hressó

21:00 Jazz Jam Session 📺

Húrra

21:00 When 'Airy Met Fairy 📺 / DJ Óli Dóri ⚡

Kaffibarinn

21:00 DJ YAMAHO ⚡

Lebowski Bar

21:00 DJ Halli Einarss ⚡

Mengi

21:00 Hilmar Jensson, Jim Black & Jo Berger Myhre 📺

Monday May 25

American Bar

22:00 Troubadour Roland 📺

Dubliner

22:00 Troubadour Andri 📺

English Pub

21:00 Troubadours Ingi Valur & Tryggvi 📺



27
May

Redemption Ain't An Easy Path To Walk
Helgi Valur Album Release Concert

Húrra

Naustin (C3) | 🕒 21:00 | 1,500 ISK

Singer-songwriter **Helgi Valur** has been on the scene for a while, yet his fourth and most recent concept album, 'Notes from the Underground', may very well be his most wholesome work yet. It was recorded in a mental institution and halfway house in Berlin as he recovered from a mental breakdown, and he says over the phone that it spans his entire cycle of self-destruction and mayhem to resurrection and redemption. "This is the first album I wrote sober, and I feel it is the best work I've ever done," he says, "and in it I managed to draw out all of the elements that make me who I am." It features a guitar solo, a rap chapter, and lots of good bits in between. His live show is supported by members of **Muck**, **Grísalappalísa** and **Oyama**. **GB**



22
May

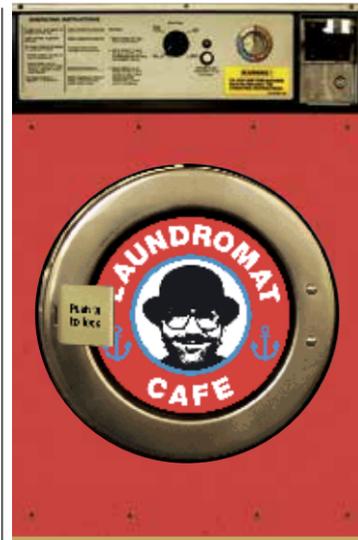
Too Heavy To Handle
Beneath / Misþyrming / Blood Feud / Grit Teeth / Stoic

Húrra

Naustin (D3) | 🕒 20:00 | 1,000 ISK

A massive mélange of metal will shake Húrra to its core, with titans **Beneath** headlining the show. Their newest release 'The Barren Throne' dropped a month ago and features a new singer, Benedikt Natanael Bjarnason, whose meaty growl greatly complements the band's technical style. Black metal mavericks **Misþyrming** (pictured) will also perform, fresh off of their first international gig at Norway's Inferno Fest. Their debut album 'Söngvar elds og óreiðu' came out this year to massive acclaim worldwide. Also on the lineup are the earth-shattering **Blood Feud**, **Grit Teeth**, and **Stoic**. If you're looking for carnage, this night is guaranteed to be truly brutal. **HJC**

Photo by Rakel Erna Skarphéðinsdóttir



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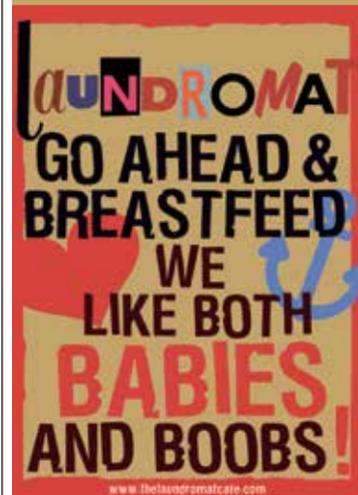
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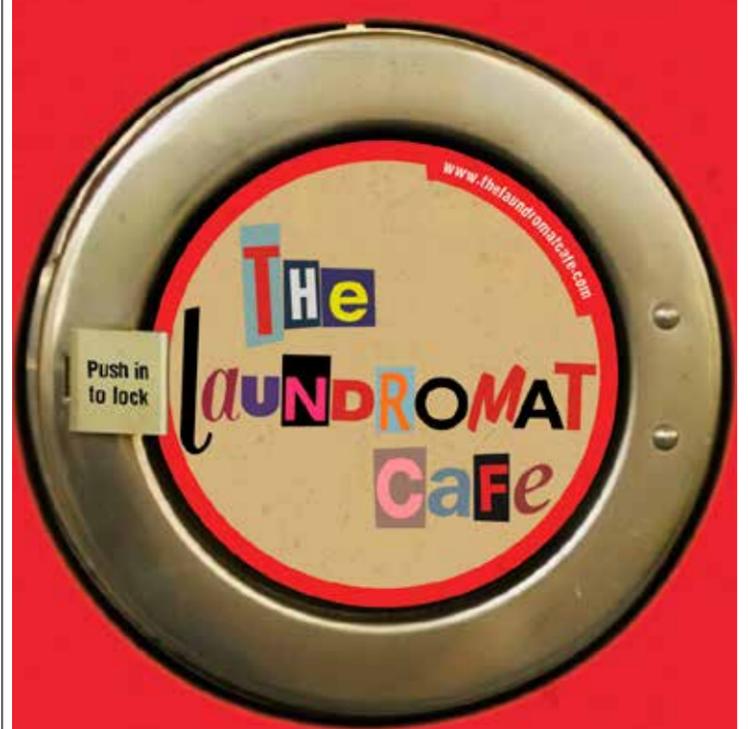
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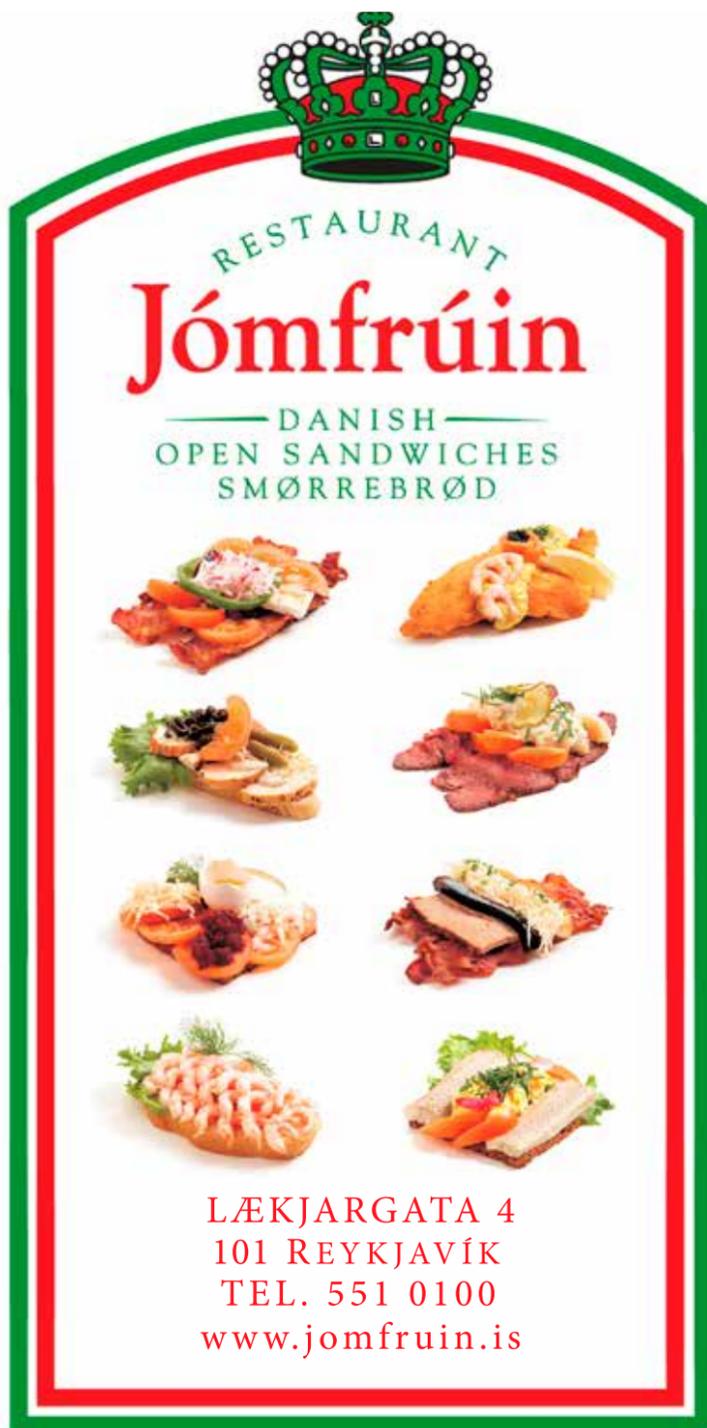


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MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE

Frikirkjan
20:00 Songs of the Soul - five international bands interpret Sri Chinmoy's music 🎵

Gamla Bíó
19:30 Damien Rice 🎸

Gaukurinn
21:00 Open Mic

Húrra
21:00 Monjazz 🎷

Kaffibarinn
21:00 DJ Myth ⚡

Lebowski Bar
21:00 DJ Anna Brá ⚡

Tuesday May 26

American Bar
22:00 Troubadour Ellert 🎸

Café Rosenberg
21:00 Ármann Hálfviti 🎷

Dansverkstæðið
20:00 No Lights No Lycra ⚡★

Dubliner
22:00 Troubadour Garðar 🎸

English Pub
21:00 Troubadours Siggí Þorbergs & Birkir 🎸

Gamla Bíó
20:00 Songs of Discontent by Þorvaldur Þorsteinsson: Megas and Skúli Sverrisson 🎵

Gaukurinn
21:00 Karaoke Night

Harpa
21:00 Múllinn-Jazz Club: K trío & Aurora Quartet 🎷

Húrra
20:00 Sin Fang / Vaginaboys ⚡

Kaffibarinn
21:00 DJ Pilsner ⚡

KEX Hostel
20:30 KEXJazz 🎷

Lebowski Bar
21:00 DJ Halli Dude ⚡

Mengi
21:00 Green Eye Radioclub #4: Tomas Rajnai & Jens Nielsen 🎵

Wednesday May 27

American Bar
22:00 Troubadour Siggí Þorbergs 🎸

Bravó
21:00 DJ Atli Bollason ⚡

Café Rosenberg
21:00 Famina Futura 🎸🎷

Dolly
21:00 Affair DJ Set: DJ Sura 🎷

Dubliner
22:00 Troubadour Roland 🎸

English Pub
21:00 Troubadours Magnús & Ívar 🎸

Frederiksen Ale House
21:00 Aldís Borgfjörð 🎸

Húrra
20:00 Helgi Valur Album Release Party 🎸🎷 / DJ Sunna Ben ⚡

Kaffibarinn
21:00 DJ Alfons X ⚡

Lebowski Bar
21:00 DJ Jesús ⚡

Mengi
21:00 múm improvise live music to 'Menschen Am Sonntag' 🎵🎸🎷★

Prikið
21:00 Vinyl Wednesday: DJ Kári ⚡🎵



2
June

English Invasion alt-J

Vodafonehöllin

Laufásvegur, Hlíðarendi | 🕒 20:00 | 10,500 ISK

While any quartet from the UK is bound to evoke thoughts of lofty predecessors, **alt-J's** sound defies all comparison. Their sophomore effort 'This is All Yours' goes from quoting Alfred de Musset to sampling Miley Cyrus. Our favourite line? "I'm gonna bed into you like a cat beds into a beanbag." That's poetry. alt-J is modern but at the same time timeless, playful but expressive, chill but unexpected—definitely a performance not to miss! **HJC**

Photo by Henry Laurisch

Slippbarinn

21:00 Halli And The Superheroes Jazz Band 🎷

Thursday May 28

American Bar
22:00 Troubadour Hreimur 🎸

Bar Ananas
21:00 DJ Pilsner 2.25% ⚡

Boston
21:00 DJ Styrmir Dansson ⚡

Bravó
21:00 DJ Margrét Erla Maack ⚡

Café Rosenberg
21:00 My Sweet Baklava 🎸

Dillon
21:00 Pink Street Boys 🎸

Dolly
21:00 DJ Myth ⚡

Dubliner
22:00 Troubadour Kjartan 🎸

English Pub
21:00 Troubadours Eiki & Steini 🎸

Harpa
19:30 Iceland Symphony Orchestra: Chopin and Nielsen 🎻

Húrra
20:00 MIRI 🎸

Kaffibarinn
21:00 HúsDJús: DJ Katla ⚡

Lebowski Bar
21:00 DJ Smutty Smiff ⚡

Mengi
21:00 Richard Andersson Solo Concert 🎵

Paloma
21:00 Mogesen Bræður DJ Set ⚡

Prikið
21:00 DJ Árni Skeng B-Day Bash! ⚡

Friday May 29

American Bar
21:00 Troubadours Alexander & Guðmann 🎸 / DJ Pétur ⚡

Austurbær
21:00 Máni Orrason Album Release Concert 🎸🎷

Bar 11
22:00 Kraðak 🎸 / Barr 🎸

Bar Ananas
22:00 DJ Ívar Pétur ⚡★

Boston
22:00 DJ Kári ⚡

Bravó
22:00 DJ Simon FKNHNDMSM 🎷

Café Rosenberg
22:00 Ellen, Eyþór & Co. 🎸

Dillon
22:00 Hemúllinn ⚡ / Brött Brekka 🎸

Dolly
22:00 DJ Árni Kocoon ⚡

Dubliner
20:00 Troubadour Roland 🎸

English Pub
22:00 Troubadours Biggi 🎸 / Eiki & Steini 🎸

Frederiksen Ale House
21:00 Electric Elephant 🎸🎷 / DJ Dagbjört ⚡

Gaukurinn
22:00 Skerðing 🎸 / Pungsig 🎸 / Þegiðu 🎸

Harpa
17:00 WonderWagon 🎻🎷
20:00 Solid Hologram: Þuríður Jónsdóttir, Nicola Lolli & Domenico Codispoti 🎻



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MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE

Húrra
22:00 Boogie Trouble 🎸 / Disco
Owes Me Money DJ-set ⚡

Kaffibarinn
22:00 DJ Intro Beats ⚡

Lebowski Bar
22:00 DJ Anna Brá ⚡ / Rúnar ⚡

The National Gallery
12:10 Icelandic Flute Ensemble 🎷

Paloma
22:00 DJ Kári ⚡ / KGB ⚡

Prikið
22:00 Emmssjé Gauti Inc. 🎧⚡

Slippbarinn
22:00 DJ Sir Danselot ⚡

Saturday May 30

American Bar
21:00 Troubadour Birgir 🎸 / DJ Maggi ⚡

Bar 11
22:00 Premium 🎧

Bar Ananas
22:00 DJ Styrmir Dansson ⚡

Boston
22:00 DJ Herr Gott ⚡

Bravó
22:00 DJ Ísar Logi ⚡

Café Rosenberg
22:00 Skúli Mennski & Live Band 🎸

Dillon
22:00 Rafmagnað 🎷 / Volcanova 🎷

Dolly
22:00 DJ YAMAHO ⚡

Dubliner
20:00 Troubadour Kjartan 🎸

The Einar Jónsson Museum
17:00 OPERAtion ALICE 🎷

English Pub
22:00 Troubadours Magnús & Ívar 🎸 / Ingi Valur & Tryggvi 🎸

Frederiksen Ale House
21:00 Franz 🎷 / DJ Hrönn ⚡

Gaukurinn
22:00 Skálmöld 🎷

Harpa
19:30 Elvis Lives!: Björgvin Halldórsson, Bjarni Arason, Páll Rósinkranz & Reykjavík Gospel Choir 🎸

Háskólabíó
18:00 Hollvinir Grensásdeilar: With A Little Help From My Friends Beatles-themed Concert 🎸

Lebowski Bar
22:00 DJ Smutty Smiiff ⚡ / Raggi ⚡

Mengi
21:00 Maya Dunietz 🎷

Paloma
22:00 DJ Hunk of a Man ⚡ / Api Pabbi ⚡

Prikið
22:00 DJ Árni Kocoon ⚡

Slippbarinn
22:00 DJ Sir Danselot ⚡

Tjarnarbió
20:00 'Both Sitting Duet' & 'Body Not Fit For Purpose' by Jonathan Burrows & Matteo Fargion 🎷

Sunday May 31

American Bar
21:00 Troubadour Siggí Þorbergs 🎸 / DJ Maggi ⚡

Árbær Open Air Museum
14:00 Berglind María Tómasdóttir: Lock 🎸

16:00 Berglind María Tómasdóttir: Lock 🎸

Bravó
21:00 DJ Ómar BORG ⚡

Dubliner
22:00 Troubadour Garðar 🎸

English Pub
21:00 Troubadour Danni 🎸

Harpa
20:00 Kristinn Sigmundsson: And Thanks To Countless Instants, Lit By Morning 🎷

Hressó
21:00 Jazz Jam Session 🎷

Húrra
22:00 Lowercase Nights 🎸

Kaffibarinn
21:00 FKN Sunday ⚡

Lebowski Bar
21:00 DJ Halli Einarss ⚡

Monday June 1

American Bar
22:00 Troubadour Roland 🎸

Café Rosenberg
21:00 Reykjavík Blues Society 🎷



23
May

Women Like SEX Too Hljómsveitt Concert

Bar 11

Hverfisgata 8 (E5) | 🕒 22:30 | Free Admission

This sister duo plays music with very sensual themes and a strong sex-positive feminist message. Sex, sexuality and body politics take centre stage in **Hljómsveitt's** performances, and they usher in the liminal state between comedy and seriousness. Their first megahit, "Næs í rassinn" ("Nice In The Ass") got a lot of attention, as will undoubtedly their most recent release, "Ég elska að fá það" ("I Love Climaxing"). Their preaching of equality and female sexual liberation is positively upbeat. **RÓG**

Dubliner

22:00 Troubadour Andri 🎸

Tuesday June 2

American Bar
22:00 Troubadour Ellert 🎸

Dansverkstaðið
20:00 No Lights No Lycra ★

Dubliner
22:00 Troubadour Garðar 🎸

Gamla Bíó
20:00 Tónar & Trix Album Release Concert 🎸

Gaukurinn
21:00 Karaoke Night

Harpa
12:15 Lunchtime Concert: Icelandic Opera 🎷

KEX Hostel
20:30 KEX Jazz 🎷

Vodafonehöllin
20:00 alt-J 🎸

Wednesday June 3

American Bar
22:00 Troubadour Alexander 🎸

Dubliner
22:00 Troubadour Roland 🎸

Gaukurinn
21:00 Ring of Gyges Album Release Concert 🎷 / Ottoman 🎷

The National Theatre
20:00 MagnusMaria 🎷

Thursday June 4

Dillon
22:00 Adore//Repel 🎷

Dolly
22:00 Bump It Out Vinyl Night Vol.06: DJ Housekell ⚡

Dubliner
22:00 Troubadour Kjartan 🎸

Frikirkjan
20:00 Lára Rúnar's Album Release Party 🎸

Gaukurinn
21:00 Trúboðarnir 🎷

Harpa
19:30 Iceland Symphony Orchestra: Summer Breeze with Dvorák 🎷

20:00 Jan Lundgren Trio 🎷

KEX Hostel
21:00 Markús Bjarnason & Kate Vargas 🎸

Mengi
21:00 A Solo Voice: Archie Carey 🎷

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ART DANCE

A Must See Performance By Iceland Dance Company



'Blæði: obsidian pieces'

May 25 and 28 at 20:00

Borgarleikhúsið

Words Anna Manning

Photo provided by Iceland Dance Company

For this year's Reykjavík Arts Festival, Iceland Dance Company presents 'Blæði: obsidian pieces,' made up of four works by Belgian choreographer Damien Jalet. The premiere met with overwhelmingly positive reviews from dance aficionados and rookies alike. It's an outstanding overall performance, but I'd wager the response is also because Damien's pieces have a clear narrative; a characteristic often lacking from contemporary dance.

'Les Médusées'

The first piece, 'Les Médusées' is a story about the mythical Gorgons, performed by Halla Þórðardóttir, Hjördís Lilja Örnólfsdóttir and Inga Maren Rúnaradóttir. Like Medusa, they cannot look at each other without becoming petrified, forcing them to dance as a synchronised trio without seeing one another. From a technical standpoint, the perfect timing and spacing the dancers used to accomplish this was impressive. But technique aside, this was also a very well-staged piece, with the dancers performing in white stringed costumes - reminiscent of Medusa's snakes - to a rhythmic percussion score.

'Babel(words)'

The second set of two works, entitled 'Sin' and 'The Evocation,' are both taken from a collaboration between Damien and Belgian choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, entitled 'Babel(words)'. 'Sin' is a powerful and beautiful duet about the primordial couple. Diverging from the traditional template for a duet, the man (Einar Nikkerud) danced alone first, then the two danced together, ending with the woman's (Þyri Huld Árnadóttir) solo, signifying a transfer of power. The incredible strength of the dancers was clear, giving the impression of effortlessness in both their lifts and partnering.

But again, one of the most interesting aspects of this piece is the costuming. Both dancers were clad only in a pair of

black trousers. It's not unusual to see the rippling muscles of professional male dancers, but without a top, Þyri's raw strength was visible, adding to the idea of a transfer of power.

'The Evocation' was a fine group piece about ritual and worship, filled with travelling movements across the floor, but didn't hit the impressive peaks of the other works.

'Black Marrow'

'Black Marrow', choreographed jointly by Damien and Iceland Dance Company's artistic director Erna Ómarsdóttir in 2009, was presented as the second act. This piece is unquestionably the best work I've seen by the company, telling the story of the decay of civilisation, and of society's addiction to oil. The dancers worked with a black rubber-like sheet that enveloped the stage. When they were held beneath it, we saw them struggling to break free; when they danced over it, the sheet became an ever-present puddle beneath their feet. The apocalyptic feel of the piece is enhanced by cold, dim lighting and eerie clouds of dry ice.

'Black Marrow' is broken up into roughly six sections, with the performers developing from their primal/animalistic origins to cogs in a societal machine, to the ultimate demise of civilisation. In an interview before the premiere Damien thoughtfully said, "Some people consider oil like the balm of God, and other people consider it like the shit of the devil, and I think it's both." So rather than preaching

about the evils of fossil fuels, the piece gives the impression that people are the real problem onstage, there is something quite beautiful about the glistening rubbery materials and oily black paint.

In stark contrast to certain taboos of modern dance, the choreography has dialogue, is occasionally driven by props, and includes a wonderfully camp dance scene. But these elements are so gracefully woven into the work and the larger narrative that they never feel cheap. The movement quality changes from section to section, which both keeps the piece from feeling repetitive, and highlights the strengths of different dancers. Einar Nikkerud and Elin Signý Weywadt Ragnarsdóttir gave particularly excellent performances. Einar, a Norwegian dancer who joined Iceland Dance Company in 2013, showed such stage presence and versatility that it was difficult to take your eyes off him regardless of whether he did slow, controlled, contemporary technique or lip synced to Danzel. Elin, a guest artist with Iceland Dance Company, delivered a particularly moving and emotional performance as she tried desperately to communicate with the other dancers when the oil began to engulf them, proving her prowess as both dancer and actor.

I really cannot recommend this show enough.

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ART EXHIBITION



'bears; truths...'

May 21 - Oct 18

Reykjavík Art Museum, Hafnarhúsið

The Bearable Lightness Of Being *Kathy Clark's maximalist installation is a step into a dark symbolic world*

Words John Rogers

Photo Art Bicnick

Hafnarhúsið, on Reykjavík's waterfront, is a beautiful building. Once home to the city's harbour offices, it's now the largest of the Reykjavík Art Museum's three sites, dedicated to contemporary art in its manifold forms. Past the large sliding doors and airy lobby and up some stairs, gallery number six is a particular hive of activity. Behind an "installation in progress" sign, Korean-American artist Kathy Clark bobs around busily, leading an industrious crew as they transform the white cube space into another world entirely.

The show is Kathy's first major solo show in Iceland, her adopted homeland of the last ten years. In contrast to the minimalism of Hafnarhúsið's architecture, her installation is an explosion of shapes, textures, colours and sounds. The gallery is teeming with tall heaps of teddy bears, hundreds of which have been individually coated in wax, giving them a pale, spectral appearance. In one corner, lights are being hung behind some hanging gates, creating an enclosed bear heaven; in another, a pot of wax bubbles away beneath a wall-mounted tree sculpture dotted with bear cocoons. Even at the half-built stage, it's already a sensory overload on an ambitious scale.

Teddy bears know things

Kathy started collecting bears three years ago. "I stumbled across a crate of them at the Good Shepherd," she recalls. "I like objects that have a history, when you can see the age and the deterioration. I use my storeroom as my palette, and go out to charity shops looking for things that inspire me."

In particular, the intense connection that children have with their early toys sparked Kathy's interest. "These bears aren't new," she explains. "They're used, once-loved, once-cuddled bears that were a very high priority in a child's life. They were taken to bed, and talked to—they consoled children when they cried. They each have a story. These bears collected the presence of the child. They know things. I thought about what they would tell us if they could. The show sort of became an exploration of that secret life, amongst other things."

Kathy walks me around the resulting world. Against one wall lies a row of emptied furs, each one inverted and stitched with a line of poetry that reveals a glimpse into the story of its former owner. "These are the observations of the bears," explains Kathy. "The stories are perhaps based on people that I know, or have been

a part of my life. These are the bears' secrets. Some are nice, but some are not so nice." She surveys the skins, gesturing to each, and reading them out. "This one says 'My human child never questioned life and was not resistant to influences.' And this one says 'My human child suffered with complete composure.'"

Finding a path

The room is dotted with cairn-forms, of the type found in Iceland's landscape, all made from waxed bears. It's a neat metaphor for finding a path, whether it's the bears finding their way back from charity-shop abandonment, or the viewer finding a path back into their personal childhood experience through Kathy's work. But either way, the endpoint of some bears' journey is in the exhibition's cemetery corner. "These are the carcasses," says Kathy, gesturing to more emptied, crumpled furs. "Each one has a memory marker... I took out their stuffing, and shaped it into these bears up here." She gestures to some clouds of shaped stuffing, suspended amongst lights. "They are the ghost bears, going up, and the carcasses stay below."

The exhibition's different sections reveal a long train of thought about the potential of abandoned toys as both a language and as a medium, with all the permutations connected by the internal logic of the exhibition's world. A larger bear covered in black lines represents a guide, accompanied by recorded bear growls; another piece is a crib that's embroidered with a quote from Shakespeare's 'The Tempest'. The room is lined with bears that have been distorted, dissected, or bound tightly into unrecognisable shapes, offering darkly psychological glimpses into what can befall children on their path into adulthood.

"As an artist, I have many things I want to share," explains Kathy. "A lot of it is deeply psychological and emotional, using this metaphor of the bear. I have

other works I want to make—a plant, an animal—but always the underlying aspect of work about being human, and what it entails to live, to have a day-to-day life and an emotional life."

God damn it you have to be kind

The exhibition is the culmination of three years of work. I ask how it feels to be bringing such a large project, especially one that touches on such tender, personal subjects, to fruition.

"I'm excited," smiles Kathy. "I've been excited the whole time making the work. It's been fun to be so industrious, I love making things. I have so many more things I wanna do. Installation was my passion when I was at the Art Institute in San Francisco. I made some really big works, almost as big as this one, but I started branching into other work, making smaller paintings, and eventually stopped altogether, for financial reasons. I mean, I was always making on the side. But now, I feel like I'm a re-emerging artist."

The effort has paid off: 'bears; truths...' is a simultaneously complex and accessible piece that rewards sustained attention with rich layers of meaning. "It's really all about us humans, how we travel the path of our life and the lessons we all learn," says Kathy, brimming with enthusiasm. "What I'm hoping is that people take the time to not just see the work, but to experience it. Maybe they'll come away having been reminded of something from their own childhood."

As we finish our tour of the show, I realise that by shining a light onto difficult psychological states, perhaps Kathy's work also illuminates the first steps to understanding, and even recovery. It seems suddenly like a generous undertaking. "Well, thank you," she says. "I do so love to give, in every way. Not just in my art, but in life. It's so important to give."

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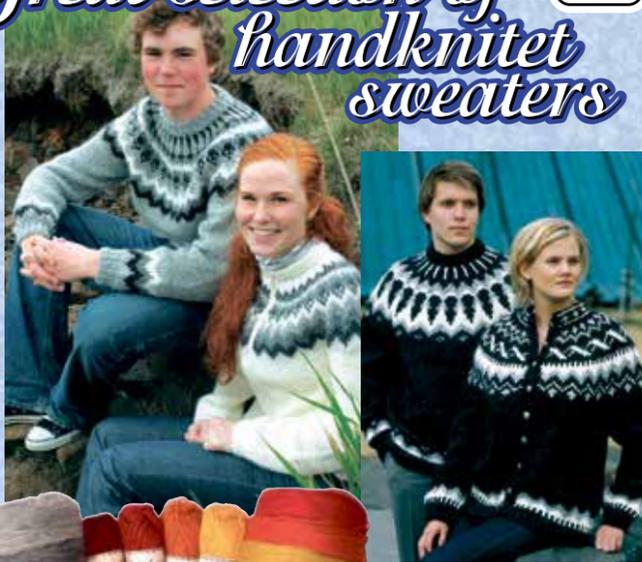


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ART OPENINGS



The Great Castration

'The Next Great Moment in History Is Ours' by Dorothy Iannone

Gallery GAMMA

Garðastræti 37 (D3) | May 13-July 31 🕒 Weekdays 13-17 | Free!

In 1541, Cardinal Carafa and Monsignor Sernini started what came to be known as the 'Fig Leaf Campaign' when they ordered certain key sections of Michelangelo's 'Last Judgment' covered up because merely looking at a phallus was thought sinful in and of itself (oh, the guilt these men must have felt when going for a pee). Since then, artists have been censored and expected to find ways of covering up their subjects. In 1969, works by visual artist **Dorothy Iannone** were removed from an exhibition at Kunsthalle Bern after the museum director demanded she cover the genitals. She built a career around doing just the opposite. **AM**

May 22 - June 4

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

Opening

Hallgrímskirkja

'Engram Audio Walk' by Tomas Rajnai and Jens Nielsen

Since 2013, Tomas Rajnai and Jens Nielsen of The Invisible Theatre have created site-specific audio performances where audience members become both actors and spectators. They are invited to reflect on their own lives as a recording guides them through the landmark.

Runs May 26 & 27 at 12:00

Reykjavík City Theatre

'Akasha' by Shantala Shivalingappa

Shantala Shivalingappa is an acclaimed dancer who is trained in both western contemporary dance and classical Indian dance. Her Kuchipudi (an Indian dance style) piece 'Akasha' is choreographed in collaboration with Vempati Ravi Shankar and consists of five solos that interpret Hindi poems.

Runs June 2 at 20:00

Tjarnarbió

'Roots Unrooted' by Juliette Louste and Mirte Bogear

Juliette Louste and Mirte Bogear present a dancing tribute to the Tjarnarbió theatre, which is about to undergo renovations. Both are professional dancers and choreographers that met in Iceland.

Runs May 22 at 20:00

Týsgallerí

'Swirl' by Kari Ósk Grétudóttir Ege

Kari Ósk Ege graduated from the Icelandic Academy of Art in 2007 and has continued her art education, been in group exhibitions and written articles and a play since then. Her exhibition at Týsgallerí consists of visual artworks that look at the kinesthetics of everyday life.

Opens May 22

Runs until June 7

Ongoing

12 Tónar

'Piece For A Blue Wall' by Lyla Marsol

The Swiss artist Lyla Marsol is exhibiting twenty paintings made on wood and silver in 12 Tónar.

Runs until May 31

Anarkía

'Webs' by Ragnheiður Guðmundsdóttir

Ragnheiður Guðmundsdóttir uses mixed

media on plywood and paper to convey how emotions affect physical state and how art serves as a healing power for the artist and their environment.

Runs until May 24

'Shadows and light of understanding' by Ólöf Björg Björnsdóttir

Ólöf often paints figures on canvas with strong colours in an effort to explore humankind's search for itself. In this exhibition she shows new paintings with a fresh approach, that is lighter and simpler than her usual works but still displaying the strong characteristics of her vivid colour palette.

Runs until May 24

Árbær Open Air Museum

'Between the lines - How stay-at-home women earned a living 1900-1970'

This exhibition looks at how women were able to generate revenue with odd jobs in the twentieth century when many of them stayed at home.

Runs until August 31

ART67

Pálmar Örn Guðmundsson Exhibition

ART67's May artist of the month is Pálmar Örn Guðmundsson who hails from the fishing village of Grindavík in the Reykjanes peninsula. He says he draws inspiration for his figurative acrylics paintings from his surroundings. This is his sixth solo exhibition at ART67.

Runs until May 31

ASÍ Art Gallery

'The Vixen And The Victim'

Throughout the history of Western art, women were nameless models used by men as muses rather than subject matter. In 2015 women (over 40) are celebrating the centennial of the right to vote in Iceland and ASÍ is celebrating by showcasing a gallery that focuses on women. Artist of all ages and methods present works that deal with the idea that women are always seen as either the 'vixen' or 'victim'.

Runs until June 30

Better Weather Window Gallery

'Freedom from Inside' by Lukka Sigurðardóttir

Lukka Sigurðardóttir's new window gallery display is concerned with the concept of freedom, presented as glowing lights erupting from inside of a bridal gown.

Runs until May 29

The Einar Jónsson Museum

The museum contains close to 300 artworks including a beautiful garden with 26 bronze casts of the artist's sculptures.

On permanent view

Frakkastígur 9 Courtyard

'Icelandic Suffragettes Prevailed 100 Years Ago'

Eight artists present an outdoor exhibit inspired by a discourse on gender equality in honour of the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in Iceland. The works are found in the courtyard, on walls, in a tree and on the street. Contributing artists are Hallgrímur Helgason, Helga Þórsdóttir, Hildur Hákonardóttir, Hlynur Hallsson, Jóna Hlíf Halldórsdóttir, Lybia Castro, Ólafur Ólafsson and Ragnheiður Jónsdóttir

Runs until June 7

'Endurlit' by Aðalheiður Valgeirsdóttir

Aðalheiður has been a prolific artist over the past 30 years. In this exhibition she uses water colours to combine her own

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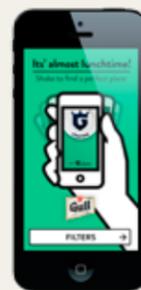
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WHAT'S INSIDE

Reykjavík Map

Happy Hour Guide

Places We Like

Best Of Reykjavík

Practical Info

Reykjavík

May 22 - June 4

Keep it in your pocket

TWO WEEKS

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

2 June

Dance

Kuchipudi Meets Contemporary Dance



'Akasha' by Shantala Shivalingappa

Reykjavík City Theatre | 🕒 20:00 | 4,500 ISK

Shantala Shivalingappa is a French-Indian dancer, trained in both Kuchipudi (traditional South Indian dance) and contemporary styles. She seamlessly combines the two techniques in a way that is both aesthetically pleasing and interesting to watch—an impressive feat for a soloist against a bare stage. She choreographed 'Akasha' in collaboration with Vempati Ravi Shankar as an interpretation of Hindi poetry and an expression of the space around and within us. The piece is accompanied by Indian musicians **B.P. Haribabu, N. Ramakrishnan, D.S. Aiyvelu, J. Ramesh, B.P. Haribabu, N. Ramakrishnan** and **K.S. Jayaram**. **AM**

May 22

PACKED NIGHT OF ROCK Cover stars **Pink Street Boys** are celebrating the release of their album 'Hits #1' by playing a gig at the very first place they performed, **Kaffistofan** on Hverfisgata 42. Be warned, the gig has a fantastic lineup of supporting acts, including **Godchilla, russian.girls** and **Singapore Sling!** And the admission price is a steal at **1,000 ISK!** And the place doesn't have an alcohol licence, so it's **BYOB!** The downside? Only about 50 people can fit in, so **GET THERE ON TIME**, the show starts at 21:00.

May 26

SHAKE IT, SHAKE IT GOOD Winner of 'Album of the Year' and 'Song of the Year', **Sin Fang**, has a concert at **Húrra** at 20:00. This should be cause enough for celebration, but the one-man-act's supporting band is worthy of attention for more than just it's provocative name, **Vaginaboys**. The boys are playing with mighty powerful forces, jamming 80s style with their own bittersweet r'n'b slow jams. Check 'em out.

23 May

Music

Radio Iceland Presents Music For Nepal



Support Earthquake Victims!

Gaukurinn (D3) | 🕒 17:00 - 01:00

In support of the Iceland-Nepal Organisation and the victims of the recent earthquakes in Nepal, Radio Iceland is hosting a benefit concert at Gaukurinn. Participating performers include **Meistarar Dauðans, Daníel Hjálmtýsson, DJ Smutty Smiff, Greyhound, The 59's, Q4U, Dikta, Kontinuum** and **Esja**. In the interval, from 19:00-20:00, Smutty Smiff will host an auction of photos of famous musicians from his personal collection. There's no set admission fee but donations will go towards a relief fund for the Nepalese people. **RÓG**

30 May

Event

A Dandy Good Time



Tweed Ride Reykjavík 2015

Starts from Hallgrímskirkja (G5) | 🕒 14:00 | Free!

It's time to polish your beard, steam your suit, and make sure your bike is in tip-top shape because on May 30 it's the annual **Tweed Ride Reykjavík**. Starting from Hallgrímskirkja church, this jolly ride takes participants around the city for a magical excursion with a lot of class. Attendees will be expected to dress with the highest style of a bygone era—think tweed suits and a tasteful mustache. The ride ends with high tea at Kex Hostel, and the bestowal of awards for the best-dressed man, the best-dressed woman, and the most fabulous bike. No word on whether or not there will be a croquet match to follow. **HJC**
Photo by Stefan Schäfer, Lich



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2. Reykjavík Kringlan shopping mall.
3. Akureyri Hotel Kea ground floor.



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B

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in front of Hallgrímskirkja



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C

MAP

Places We Like

Eating

1 Fish.

Skólavörðustigur 23

Not one, but two Fish restaurants have opened up, one on Ingólfsstræti, the other on Skólavörðustigur. Whether it's the catch of the day or a chicken pesto sandwich you're ordering, you can't go wrong!

2 Gló

Laugavegur 20b

Gló has been introducing Iceland to healthy eating for several years, offering a simple menu of delicious food made from organic ingredients. Patrons have a choice between the raw, vegetarian (occasionally vegan), and chicken meals, each including a healthy portion of tasty salad. There are also numerous chocolate cakes available for pudding.

3 Sushisamba

Pinghóltsstræti 5

Sushisamba fuses South American and Japanese cuisines with the help of Icelandic ingredients. To fully embrace the experience, go omakase (chef's choice), or perhaps the six-course Icelandic feast. Whatever you choose, you'll have a unique and delectable experience.

4 Krua Thai

Tryggvagata 14

For quick, tasty and sizably-portioned Thai food, stop by this family run restaurant for reliably good and invigorating meals. Their cute harbour-adjacent location is both intimate and communal at once. Stay and enjoy the vibe or take your food to go, it will be delicious either way.

5 Snaps

Öðinstorg, Þórsgrata 1

This recent addition to Reykjavík dining has quickly become a popular spot for folks with a fine palate and a modest budget, offering a small menu drawn from local produce and a carefully selected wine list. It's also a cool hangout for artists and musicians. Make sure to get there early—they take reservations until 18:30, but after that it's a free-for-all!

Drinking

6 Bravó

Laugavegur 22

Bravó is your regular run-of-the-mill bar that serves decent drinks and doesn't try to be anything that it's not. The bar plays good music at a comfortable volume that allows for conversation, and provides good seating options even during late nights, when most bars have removed their tables to make room for a dancefloor.

Useful Numbers

Emergency number: **112**

Medical help: **1770**

Dental emergency: **575 0505**

Information: **1818**

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

BSR: **561 0000**

Tax-Free Refund

Iceland Refund, Aðalstræti 2, tel: 564 6400

Tourist Information

Arctic Adventures, Laugavegur 11,

tel: 562 7000

Tourist Info Centre, Aðalstræti 2, tel: 590 1550

Iceland Excursions - Grayline Iceland,

Hafnarstræti 20, tel: 540 1300



7 Bar 11

Hverfisgata 18

The rockabilly crowd knows that when they get bored of the Reykjavík club theme of electro and house they can always come back home to Bar 11 for some hearty classic rock. If you want to hang out in the young and tattooed hipster rock scene, then the booze fueled daze of Bar 11 is the place to be.

8 Prikid

Bankastræti 12

Prikid 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 the daytime for the cheap burgers; enter at night for some OTT hip-hop debauchery, old skool and the latest bangers alike.

9 Kaffi Kigali

Ingólfsstræti 8

This quaint little coffee house, tucked away just off of main shopping street Laugavegur, offers a variety of Rwandan coffee drinks with beans straight from the farmer at very affordable rates, including the must-try Afrikan drink. Whether you plan to lounge around on Facebook or want to take your date somewhere new, we recommend checking out Kaffi Kigali.

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

Trip, Laugavegur 54, tel: 433 8747

Pharmacies

Lyf og heilsa, Egilsgata 3, tel: 563 1020

Lyfja, Laugavegur 16, tel: 552 4045 and Lág-

múla 5, tel: 533 2300

Coach Terminal

BSÍ, Vatnsmýrarvegur 10,

tel: 562 1011, www.bsi.is

Domestic Airlines

Air Iceland, Reykjavíkflugvöllur,

tel: 570 3030, www.flugfelag.is

Eagle Air, Hótel Loftleiðir, tel: 562 4200

Public Transport

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

Opening Hours

Bars and clubs: According to regulations, bars can stay open until 01:00 on weekdays and 04:30 on weekends.

Shops: Mon-Fri 10:00-18:00, Sat 10:00-16:00, Sun closed. The shopping centres Kringlan and Smáralind as well as most supermarkets and tourist shops have longer opening hours.

Swimming pools: Weekdays 06:30-22:00 and weekends 09:00-17:00, although each pool varies plus or minus a few hours.

Banks in the centre are open Mon-Fri 09:00-16:00.

Post Offices

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



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D

New In Town



13 Marbar

Geirsgata 9, 101 Reykjavík

Marbar is a welcome addition to the harbour area, offering a good spot to catch a cheeky drink with a friend before or after a meal. It has a decent selection of beers on tap, including the refreshing summer beer Sif, as well as a decent selection of wines and spirits. The bar has great big windows that offer a bland street view, but the west-facing veranda is sure to be a hit during those bright summer days. Their happy hour runs from 16:00 to 18:00, during which all beers, wines, and cocktails are two-for-one (which is really how a happy hour should be). And going by the one barman who served me, the service deserves top marks, as he was very informative and procured a bowl of nuts free of charge at the opportune moment.

HORNIÐ
Restaurant - Pizzeria

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

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

Restaurant Hornið - Hafnarstræti 15, 101 Reykjavík - t. 551 3340 - www.horni.is

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Shopping

10 Handprjónasambandið

Skólavörðustígur 19

The Hand-knitting Association of Iceland's official store, Handprjónasambandið, sells wool products of uncompromising quality. The store features pullover sweaters, cardigans and other wool accessories.

11 Red Cross

Laugavegur 12

With two locations right in the downtown core, real second-hand pickers and diggers will delight in sifting through the hidden treasures of these goodwill shops. The neighbourly staff and quirky decorations will take you through a little slice of history.

12 Farmers Market

Grandi, Hólmaslóð 2

This design company and fashion line holds the integral values of sustainability, longevity, originality and environmentalism. Their modern take on the traditional Icelandic lopapeysa has struck chords worldwide. These are must-have items for locals and visitors alike.

Public Phones

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

Internet Access

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

The National and University Library, Arngrímsgata 3

Tourist Information Centre, Aðalstræti 2
Icelandic Travel Market, Bankastræti 2
Reykjavík Backpackers, Laugavegur 28

Swimming Pools

There are several swimming pools in Reykjavík. The one in 101 Reykjavík, Sundhöll Reykjavíkur, is an indoor one, located at Barónsstígur. It features a nice sunbathing area and some outdoor hot tubs. Opening hours: Mon-Thu from 06:30-22:00, Fri from 06:30-20:00, Sat from 08:00-16:00 and Sun from 10:00-18:00.

Public Toilets

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

Venue Finder Music & Entertainment

- | | |
|---|--|
| Austur
Austurstræti 7 D3 | Hressó
Austurstræti 20 D3 |
| B5
Bankastræti 5 E4 | Húrra
Naustin D3 |
| Bar 11
Hverfisgata 18 E5 | Kex Hostel
Skúlagata 28 E7 |
| Bíó Paradís
Hverfisgata 54 E5 | Kaffibarinn
Bergstaðastræti 1 E4 |
| Bjarni Fel
Austurstræti 20 E4 | Kaldi Bar
Laugavegur 20b E5 |
| Boston
Laugavegur 28b E5 | Kaffi Kigali
Ingólfsstræti 8 E4 |
| Bunk
Laugavegur 28 E5 | Kofinn
Laugavegur 2 E5 |
| Café Rósenberg
Klapparstígur 25 E5 | Lavabarin
Lækjargata 6 E4 |
| Cococo's Nest
Grandagarður 23 B2 | Loft Hostel
Bankastræti 7 E4 |
| Den Danske Kro
Ingólfsstræti 3 E4 | Paloma
Naustin D3 |
| Dillon
Laugavegur 30 E5 | Prikið
Bankastræti 12 E4 |
| Dolly
Hafnarstræti 4 D3 | Reykjavík Roasters
Kárástígur 1 F5 |
| Dublínar
Hafnarstræti 1-3 D3 | Stofan Café
Vesturgata 3 D3 |
| English Pub
Austurstræti 12 D3 | Thorvaldsen
Austurstræti 8 D3 |
| Frederiksen Ale House
Hafnarstræti 5 D3 | Ölsmiðjan
Lækjargata 10 E3 |
| Gaukurinn
Tryggvagata 22 D3 | Ölstofan
Vegamótastígur 4 E5 |

Museums & Galleries

- | | |
|---|---|
| ART67
Laugavegur 67 F7
Mon-Fri 12-18 / Sat 12-16 | Reykjavík Art Gallery
Skúlagata 30 E7
Tue-Sun 14-18 |
| Ásgrímur Jónsson Museum
Bergstaðastræti 74 G4
Mon-Fri through Sep 1 | Reykjavík Art Museum - Hafnarhús
Tryggvagata 17 D3
Open 10-17
Thursday 10-20
Kjarvalsstaðir
Flókagata 24 H8
Open 10-17
Ásmundarsafn
Sigtún
Open 10-17
www.listsafnreykjavikur.is |
| The Einar Jónsson Museum
Eiríksgata G5
Tue-Sun 14-17
www.skulptur.is | Reykjavík City Library
Tryggvagata 15 D3
www.borgarbokasafn.is |
| Galleri List
Skiptúli 50A H10
M-F 11-18, Sat 11-16
http://www.gallerilist.is/ | Reykjavík City Museum - Árbæjarsafn
Kistuhyllur 4
Daily tours at 13
The Settlement Exhibition
Aðalstræti 17 D3
Open daily 9-20
Reykjavík Maritime Museum
Grandagarður 8 B2
Open daily 10-17
Reykjavík Museum of Photography
Tryggvagata 15 D3
Mon-Thur 12-19 / Fri 12-18 / Sat-Sun 13-17
Víðey Island
Ferry from Skarfabakki Harbour, Sat-Sun only
www.videy.com |
| Hafnarborg
Strandgata 34, Hafnarfjörður
www.hafnarborg.is | Saga Museum
Grandagarður 2 B2
www.sagamuseum.is |
| Hannesarholt
Grundarstígur 10 F4
www.hannesarholt.is | Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum
Laugarnestangi 70
www.iso.is |
| Hitt Húsið
Gallery Tukt
Pósthússtræti 3-5 D4
www.hitthusid.is | SÍM
Hafnarstræti 16 D3
Mon-Fri 10-16
www.sim.is |
| Hverfisingalleri
Hverfisgata 4 D4
www.hverfisingalleri.is | Spark Design Space
Klapparstígur 33 E5
M-Fri 12-18, Sat 12-16
www.sparkdesignspace.com |
| i8 Gallery
Tryggvagata 16 D3
Tue-Fri 11-17 / Sat 13-17 and by appointment. www.i8.is | Tveir Hrafnar
Baldursgata 12 G4
Thu-Fri 12-17, Sat 13-16
www.tveirhrafnar.is |
| The Icelandic Phalological Museum
Laugavegur 116 F8
www.phallus.is | Wind & Weather Gallery
Hverfisgata 37 E5
www.windandweather.is |
| Kirsuberjatréð
Vesturgata 4 D3
www.kirs.is | The National Museum
Suðurgata 41 G2
Open daily 10-17
www.natmus.is |
| Kling & Bang
Hverfisgata 42 E5
Thurs-Sun from 14-18
www.this.is/klingogbang | The Nordic House
Sturlugata 5 H2
Tue-Sun 12-17
www.nordice.is |
| Knitting Iceland
Laugavegur 25 E5
www.knittingiceland.is | |
| Living Art Museum
Skúlagata 28 E7
Tue-Sun 12-17
www.nylo.is | |
| Mengi
Óðinsgata 2 F5 | |
| Mokka Kaffi
Skólavörðustígur 3A E5
www.mokka.is | |
| The National Gallery of Iceland
Frikirkjuvegur 7 F3
Tue-Sun 11-17
www.listsafn.is | |

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Elding Whale Watching schedule - all year round

EL-01 / EL-02 / EL-03										
Jan-Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov-Dec	
	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00		
13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00
			17:00*	14:00	14:00	14:00	17:00	17:00*		
			20:30**	20:30						

* From 15 May to 15 September
** From 15 June to 31 July

Other adventures

Sea Angling daily at 11:00 and 15:30 from 1 May to 31 August
Puffin Watching daily at 9:30, 12:00 and 15:00 from 15 May to 15 August

www.elding.is

Best Of Reykjavík

Every year around the beginning of July, we make a BEST OF REYKJAVÍK ISSUE celebrating some of what makes Reykjavík-life worthwhile, posting some good entries into a hopefully never-ending discussion. The primary purpose of BEST OF REYKJAVÍK is celebration! It's about big-upping stuff, giving mad props to it and patting it on the shoulder. The following are some nice tips we pulled from BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2014 which you can read in full at www.grapevine.is.



BEST KEBAB: MANDI

Veltusund 3b



Last year, Mandi was close to storming in and grabbing Best Kebab in its first year, but barely missed out in favour of kebab mainstays Habibi. This year, the numbers came out in favour of Mandi, and deservingly so. While their lamb kebabs are delicious and their falafels have our vegetarian stamp-of-approval, the real star of the show is the rolled kebab. Offered in chicken, lamb, or mixed, with the help of cheese, corn, green olives, rainbow rice, and dripping with your choice of yoghurt sauce or spicy sauce, the rolled kebab is one of the absolute best one-hand-required meals in town. Tightly enclosed in a warm, pressed-to-golden-perfection wrap, at 1,250 ISK, it never fails to hit the spot.



BEST PLACE TO GO TO A MOVIE: SAMBÍÓIN ÁLFABAKKA

Álfabakki 8



For the record, we know that there are several downtown cinemas that are better for art-house film, or for what one of our panellists terms "proper movies." We know. But sometimes, all you want out of a film-going experience is popcorn. And maybe some explosions. And if that's the place you're in, then there is no better cinema than Sambíó's VIP Theater at Álfabakki. Why, you ask? Well. The VIP cinema—which exclusively screens coma-brain, Blockbuster-type movies, BTW—has only forty seats, all Lazy Boy-style recliners with excellent sightlines. More importantly, there is a serve-yourself bin of fresh popcorn and a soda machine Right. In. The. Theatre. You'll pay 2,000 ISK for a VIP ticket—and there won't be any intermission, so no bathroom break—but if you're strategic, you'll definitely get your money's worth.



BEST PLACE TO GET A TRENDY HAIRCUT: RAUÐHETTA OG ÚLFURINN

Skólavörðustígur 8



It turns out that restaurants and stores in Reykjavík aren't the only businesses benefiting from Iceland's tourism boom. Apparently, we've heard, hairdressers are getting a lot of drop-ins from tourists. "I want Icelandic hair," they say. "Give me Icelandic hair." While many (if not most) people go to the same hairdresser, and our hairdresser admitted that she would never just drop in somewhere random while vacationing in Rome, people apparently have great faith in Icelanders wielding scissors. Now, you don't have to go somewhere completely random though. Go to Rauðhetta og úlfurinn ("Little Red Riding Hood"), a three-time Grapevine winner that has stood the test of time, consistently delivering new and trendy haircuts.

Viðey Island

“Really hidden treasure off Reykjavik. Well worth a visit.”
Biffajk taken from TripAdvisor

Summer Schedule 15 May - 30 September

From Elding (Ægisgarður) to Viðey

11.50	14.50
-------	-------

From Harpa to Viðey

12.00	15.00
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From Skarfabakki to Viðey

10.15	11.15	12.15	13.15	14.15	15.15	16.15	17.15
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

From Viðey to Skarfabakki

12.30	13.30	14.30	15.30	16.30	17.30	18.30
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

From Viðey to Harpa and Elding (Ægisgarður)

11.30	14.30	17.30
-------	-------	-------

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City of Reykjavík
VIDEYJARSTOFA Restaurant
Elding adventure at sea

A GUIDE THAT FUCKS YOU UP

A list of every Happy Hour in 101 Reykjavík

- American Bar**
Fridays and Saturdays from 16:00 to 19:00.
Beer 550 ISK, Wine 750 ISK.
- B5**
Every day from 16:00 to 22:00.
Beer 550 ISK, Cider 700 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.
- Bar 7**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
Beer 350 ISK, Shot 450 ISK
- Bar 11**
Thursday from 21:00 to 01:00. Beer 450 ISK
Friday to Saturday from 21:00 to 00:00.
Beer 500 ISK
- Bjarni Fel**
Monday to Friday from 21:00 to 23:00. 2 for 1 Beer 990 ISK, single with mixer 1,300 ISK.
- Boston**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
Beer 600 ISK, Wine 650 ISK.
- Bravó**
Every day from 17:00 to 21:00.
Beer 500 ISK, Wine 750 ISK.
- Brooklyn Bistro & Bar**
Every day from 14:00 to 19:00.
Beer 600 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.
- Bunk Bar**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
Beer 600 ISK, Wine 750 ISK.
- Cafe Haiti**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Beer 650 ISK, Wine 800 ISK.
- Dillon**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00. Beer 550 ISK, Wine for 700 ISK, Whiskey 550 ISK.
- Dolly**
Wednesday to Thursday from 20:00 to 22:00, Friday to Saturday from 20:00 to 23:00.
Beer 600 ISK, Wine 600 ISK.
- Dubliner**
Every day from 16:00 to 22:00.
Tuborg 800 ISK, 2 for 1 Wine 1,000 ISK.
- Einar Ben**
Every day from 17:30 to 20:00. Small Beer 500 ISK, Big Beer 700 ISK, Wine 800 ISK



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- English Pub**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Beer 650 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.
- Frederiksen Ale House**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
2 for 1 Beer 1,000 ISK and Wine 1,100 ISK
- Gaukurinn**
Sunday to Thursday from 19:00 to 22:00, Friday to Saturday from 21:00 to 22:00.
Beer 600 ISK, Wine 700 ISK, Shots 500 ISK
- Glaumbar**
Thursday to Saturday from 20:00 to 00:00.
Beer 500 ISK, Shot 390 ISK.
- Hótel Plaza Bar**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00.
Beer 600 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.
- Húrra**
Every day from 18:00 to 21:00.
Beer 500 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.

- Íslenski Barinn**
Everyday from 16:00 to 18:00.
Beer 700 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.
- Ísafold Bistro**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00.
Beer 600 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.
- Kaffibarinn**
Every day from 15:00 to 20:00. Beer 650 ISK.
- Klaustur Bar**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Beer 800 ISK, Wine 800 ISK.
- Kolabrautin**
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00. Beer 450 ISK, Wine 500 ISK, Cocktails 1,000 ISK.
- Lebowski Bar**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
2 for 1 Beer and Wine 1,100 ISK.
- Loft Hostel Bar**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
Beer 600 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.
- Matur og Drykkur**
Thursday to Sunday, 21:00-22:00. Beer 500 ISK, Wine 500 ISK, cocktails for half price.
- Micro Bar**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Beer 700 ISK.
- Miðgarður Bistro bar**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Beer 500 ISK, Wine 600 ISK, all drinks half price.
- Mímisbar**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. Beer 500 ISK, Wine 650 ISK, Cocktail of the day 1,100 ISK, Shot + Beer 1,000 ISK.
- Prikið**
Monday to Friday from 16:00 to 20:00.
Beer 500 ISK.
- Rio Sport Bar**
Saturday and Sunday from 12:00 to 20:00.
Beer 750 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.
- SKY Bar & Lounge**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00.
Beer 700 ISK, Wine 1,000 ISK.
- Skúli Craft Bar**
Every day from 14:00 to 19:00.
Beer 600 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.
- Slippbarinn**
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00. Beer 500 ISK, Wine 450 ISK, selected Cocktails 1,000 ISK.
- Sushisamba**
Every day from 17:00 to 18:30.
Beer 645 ISK, Wine 745.
- Thorvaldsen Bar**
Monday to Saturday from 16:00 to 20:00.
Beer 500 ISK, Wine 600 ISK.
- Tíu Dropar**
Every day from 18:00 to 21:00. 2 for 1 Wine for 1,000 ISK and Beer 1,000 ISK.
- Vinsmakkarinn**
Monday to Sunday from 17:00 to 20:00.
Beer 600 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.

ART

OPENINGS & ONGOING

recollection with references from art history. The title 'Endurlit' literally means "Flashback" in Icelandic, and implies that there is something familiar about the works, but also worth revisiting.

Runs until May 30

Gallery GAMMA

'The Next Great Moment in History Is Ours' by Dorothy Iannone

Dorothy Iannone (1933) is a visual artist whose work deals with censorship and women's sexuality. In 1969, some of her work was removed from a Kunsthalle Bern exhibition after the museum director demanded genitals be covered, thus sparking the contrary reaction. Since then, her work has been shown in places such as the New Museum in New York and Berlinische Galerie in Berlin.

Runs until July 31

Gallery Tukt

'Exhibition by Students at Breiðholt College'

This selection of works by students is based on the concepts of autonomy and independence, presented in multiple mediums.

Runs until July 7

Gerðuberg Cultural Centre

'Where are we going?' By Katrín Matthíasdóttir

In her exhibition, Katrín Matthíasdóttir uses oil-paintings, jig-saw puzzles, gouaches, water-colours and sculptures to explore some of the more serious issues that we as humans must tackle, such as conflict, inequality, pollution and climate change. She also uses her sons' faces as representation of the good forces and juxtaposes them next to the darker images to make the viewer think of our common responsibility for the future.

Runs until June 19

Papercraft Exhibition by Juventa and Paulius Mudėnienė

An exhibition of paper art by Lithuanian artist Juventa, and photography by her husband Paulius, is on display at Gerðuberg. In the past, they have exhibited works in Belgium, England, Sweden, Norway, Germany and Egypt.

Runs until August 31

Hafnarborg

'Your place, our environment by the Flensborg harbor.'

A selection of maps, photographs and drawings showcase the long history of the Flensborg harbor, located in Germany.

Runs until June 21

Harbinger

'There Are Two In A Couple' by Barbara Amalie Skovmand Thomsen

An installation that features music, videos, sculptures and photography, in which this Danish artist explores love, lust and relationships.

Runs until June 7

Héðinsvöllur Playground Children's Culture Festival

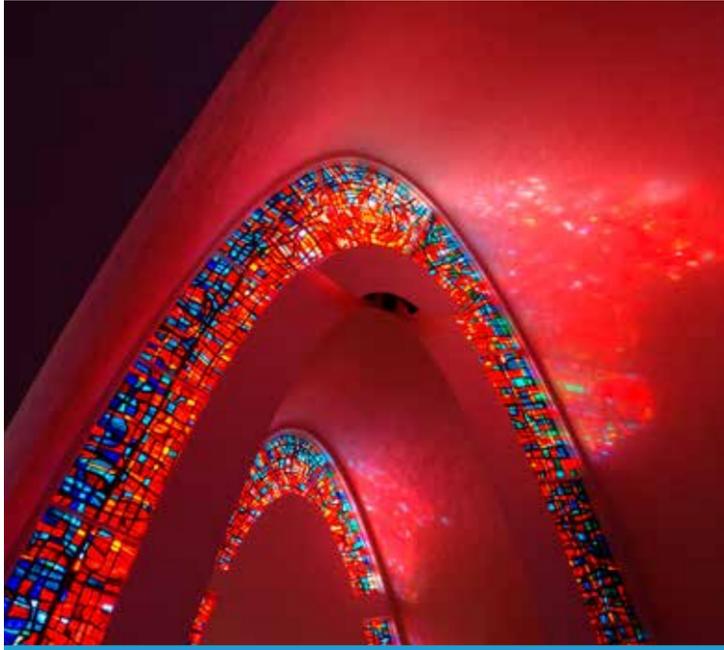
Old toys from days gone by will be on exhibit at Héðinsvöllur Playground on Hringbraut. This piece is a great way to revisit your childhood, and perhaps learn something new while making new memories with your family.

Runs until September 1

Hornid

'Take Two' by Jóhann Vilhjálmsson

Part artist, part musician, and part chef, Jóhann is a true jack-of-all-trades. His



Stained-Glass Inspiration
'Illumination'

Kópavogur Art Museum Gerðarsafn

Hamraborg 4 | May 15-Aug 2 ☺ 11-17 Tue-Sun | 500 ISK

This exhibition features the works of nine contemporary female artists. Although diverse in age and artistic approach, all the artists used the same basis as inspiration for their works: the stained-glass windows designed by **Gerður Helgadóttir** (1928-1975). Her designs can be found, for example, in the Skálholt Cathedral and Kópavogskirkja Church. Characterised by rhythmic forms and colour combinations, the designs focus on personal experience rather than the religious kind. The exhibiting artists are **Guðrún Kristjánsdóttir, Erla Þórarinsdóttir, Guðrún Benónýsdóttir, Hekla Dögg Jónsdóttir, Dodda Maggý, Lilja Birgisdóttir, Katrín Agnes Klar and Ingibjörg Sigurjónsdóttir**. Gerður's designs are also displayed.

RÓG

mediums are pastels and ink, and he gravitates towards bold, bright colours. His subjects range from people, to landscapes, scenes and more, but all have a surrealist quality in common. One could look at these paintings a hundred times and still find something new.

On permanent view

Hverfisgallerí

'Misty Rain' by Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir

Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir presents a piece that is part video installation and part cinema. The video shows the surreal memories of a woman during an interview.

Runs until June 26

i8 Gallery

'Form Regained' by Alexandra Navratil, Erin Shirreff & Lara Viana

The exhibition brings together a selection of works by three artists; Alexandra Navratil, Erin Shirreff and Lara Viana, that build on fragmenting and re-shaping archives and memory. The work investigates issues of reproduction and the layering effects of media from multiple perspectives of personal and public territories. Lapses in time and scale telescope through transposing processes and techniques, and manifest in slide

projections, paintings and video.

Runs until May 30

The Icelandic Phallogical Museum

The museum contains a collection of more than 215 penises and penile parts belonging to almost all the land and sea mammals that can be found in Iceland. There's also a penis sculpture honouring the Icelandic men's handball team.

On permanent view

Icelandic Printmaker's Association

'ÓRÓ' by Magdalena Margrét Kjartansdóttir

Magdalena Margrét's work deals with women and the feminine body with a focus on childhood, maternity, mentality, and sexuality. This exhibition showcases some of her large hand printed paperworks of big, bold and beautiful women.

Runs until May 25

Kópavogur Art Museum Gerðarsafn

'Illumination' ★

An exhibition displaying the works of contemporary female artists who have drawn inspiration from stained-glass windows designed by Gerður Helgadóttir (1928-1975). Her designs can be found in various places, such as Skálholt Cathedral

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Illumination

Exhibition of Works by Contemporary Icelandic Artists

Dorion

Dodda Maggý, Video- & Music Performance by Dodda Maggý with the Katla Women's Choir

Ámundi

Graphic Designer

KEEPERS

Highlights from the Collection, opens on June 12

Your Place our Environment by Flensborg Harbor

Open workshop

MENN

Curver Thoroddsen
Finnur Arnar Arnarson
Hlynur Hallsson
Kristinn G. Harðarson

Gerðarsafn -

Kópavogur Art Museum

Hamraborg 4, Kópavogur
Open 11-17 / Closed on Mondays
www.gerdarsafn.is

Hönnunarsafn Íslands

/ Museum of Design and Applied Art

Garðatorg 1, Garðabær
Open 12-17 / Closed on Mondays
www.honnunarsafn.is

Hafnarborg

/ The Hafnarfjörður Centre of Culture and Fine Art

Strandgata 34, Hafnarfjörður
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www.hafnarborg.is



ÞJÓÐMINJASAFN ÍSLANDS
National Museum of Iceland

OPEN

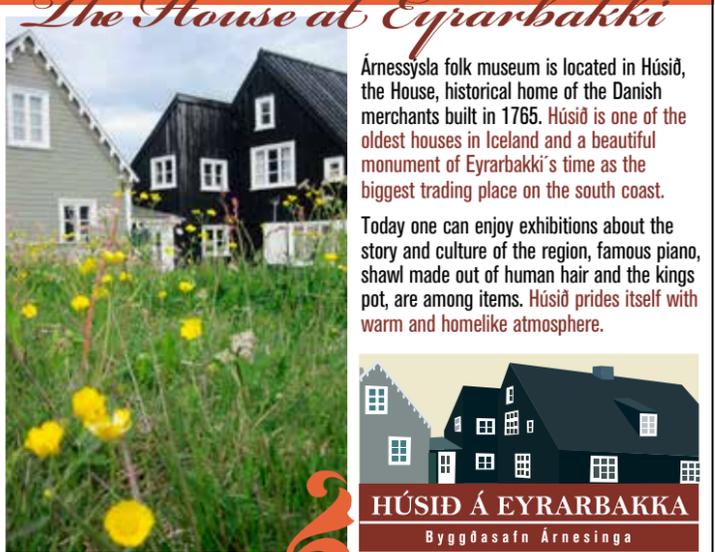
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THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ICELAND

The country's largest museum of cultural history featuring a permanent exhibition on Iceland's history from settlement to present day as well as temporary exhibitions e.g. on photography.

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Árnessýsla folk museum is located in Húsið, the House, historical home of the Danish merchants built in 1765. Húsið is one of the oldest houses in Iceland and a beautiful monument of Eyraðakki's time as the biggest trading place on the south coast.

Today one can enjoy exhibitions about the story and culture of the region, famous piano, shawl made out of human hair and the kings pot, are among items. Húsið prides itself with warm and homelike atmosphere.



HÚSIÐ Á EYRARBAKKA
Byggðasafn Árnesinga

Opening hours: May 1st - September 30th daily 11.00-18.00 or by an agreement
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Árbær Open Air Museum



The Settlement Exhibition



Reykjavik Maritime Museum



Viðey Island



Reykjavik Museum of Photography



More information in the Museums & Galleries section.



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Tel.: (+354) 511 1517 • Open: Daily from 10 to 18
www.sagamuseum.is

ART
ONGOING



June Cleaver Had It Easy
'Between the lines: How stay-at-home women earned a living 1900-1970'

Árbær Open Air Museum

Kistuhyl 4, 110 | May 17-31 ☺13 | Jun 1-Aug 31 ☺10-17 | 1,400 ISK

Between rampant feminist rhetoric and 'Leave it to Beaver' reruns, it's easy to think that women never really worked before the 1980s. But it wasn't until the mid-20th century that women had the luxury of not needing to. Before that, women needed to find ways of generating income from home so they could take care of the children and the home at the same time. A new exhibition at the Árbær Open Air Museum presents photographs from throughout the 20th century which showcase exactly that—and by extension the entrepreneurship, creativity and self-reliance of women. **AM**

and Kópavogur Church. The contemporary artists are Guðrún Kristjánsdóttir (b. 1950), Erla Þórarinsdóttir (b. 1955), Guðrún Benónýsdóttir (b. 1969), Hekla Dögg Jónsdóttir (b. 1969), Dodda Maggý (b. 1981), Lilja Birgisdóttir (b. 1983), Katrin Agnes Klar (b. 1985) and Ingibjörg Sigurjónsdóttir (b. 1985).

Runs until August 2
The Living Art Museum
'Spring Task' by Kristín Helga Káradóttir

Kristín's new art exhibit explores through dreamy-realistic setting the theme of early spring and the longing for better conditions. There is a special artist talk on May 30 at 15:00.

Runs until June 12
'Adorn'

Using the work of all female artists and the curation of Becky Forsythe, 'Adorn' addresses the idea of ornamentation and the question of everyday beauty. The exhibition is part of the series 'Women in Nýló' and presents works by Anna Líndal, Erla Sílfá Þorgrímsdóttir, Hildur Hákonardóttir, Svala Sigurleifsdóttir and Þóra Sigurðardóttir.

Runs until September 15
'AND' by Steinunn Gunnlaugsdóttir

Steinunn is an artist of many hats, working

with sculpture, video, performance, photograph and drawing. Her work looks at the existential struggle of the individual. At this exhibition, you can consider your inner struggle surrounding birthday cakes.

Runs until June 7
Mokka-Kaffi
'Mánagata Lobster Choreography'

This exhibit features a series of paintings surreally depicting a langoustine posed to perform various tasks around the house.

Runs until June 24
Museum of Design and Applied Art

'Ámundi' by Ámundi Sigurðsson
Ámundi Sigurðsson has spent the last 30 years working as a graphic designer and creating work across a wide range of mediums.

Runs until May 31
'UN PEU PLUS' by Helga Björnsson

Fashion designer Helga Björnsson has created couture designs in Paris and costumes for Icelandic theaters. Her original drawings and sketches will be on display.

Runs until May 31
The National Gallery of Iceland
'In The Light Of The Days' by Ásgrímur Jónsson

The works of the late Ásgrímur Jónsson

cover huge swaths of the history of Iceland. The interpretation of the seen and the unseen, landscape and oral tradition were some of his main topics throughout his career which spanned the first half of the twentieth century. His paintings and drawings reflect sincere love for the country and the nation, and the works chosen for this exhibition reflect the scope of the artist's themes.

Runs until September 15
'Saga - Narrative Art'

Curated by Norbert Weber and Halldór Björn Runólfsson, this exhibit questions the use of narrative in Icelandic art and presents works from Björk, Dieter Roth, Erró, Gabriela Friðriksdóttir, Helgi Þorgils Friðjónsson, Hrafnkell Sigurðsson, Hulda Hákon, Jóhannes S. Kjarval, Kristleifur Björnsson, Ólafur Elíasson, Ólöf Nordal, Ósk Vilhjálmssdóttir & Anna Hallin, Ragnar Kjartansson, Sigurður Guðmundsson, Steingrímur Eyfjörð and Þórður Ben Sveinsson. There are guided tours every Tuesday and Friday at 13:10 and a special artist talk with Hulda Hákon on May 24th at 14:00.

Runs until Sept 6
The National Museum of Iceland
'The Making Of A Nation'

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

On permanent view
'Bundled Up In Blue'

This exhibition is centred around new archeological findings from bones believed to belong to a woman from the settlement-era, discovered in 1938 in East Iceland. New research provides answers as to the age of the woman in question, where she came from, together with indications of what she may have looked like and how she would have dressed.

Runs until December 31
The National Theatre of Iceland
'Black Feathers' by Sigríður Soffía Nielsdóttir

Sigríður Soffía Nielsdóttir is a choreographer who has made a system of movements based on the rules of verse, combining dance and poetry. She uses the poetry of Davíð Stefánsson, one of Iceland's most beloved 20th century poets, as a basis for 'Black feathers'—a reference to Davíð's first poetry collection—and has enlisted dancers, actors, musicians and live doves to create a unique dance piece where Icelandic poetry meets modern dance.

Runs until May 31
The Nordic House
'Watercolor exhibition at the Nordic House'

Karin Keane from Norway, Bjorn Bern Ström from Sweden and Marianne Gross from Denmark present a number of watercolour pieces in this exhibition.

Runs until May 31
The Old Harbour
Iceland Expo Pavillion

Every day from 10:00 to 22:00, Saga Films projects a film of Icelandic scenery inside their Iceland Expo Pavillion which provides a unique 360 degree movie experience.
On permanent view
Quest - Hair, Beer & Whisky Saloon
'Hidden Creatures' by Fitore Berisha
Fitore Berisha's use of bold colours and mixed mediums creates visually dynamic experience. Fitore's work aims to express her

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ART

ONGOING

passions, dreams and visions.

Runs until May 31

Reykjavík Art Museum:
Ásmundarsafn
'Artistic Inclination' by Ásmundur Sveinsson

Works that span the entire career of sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson (1893-1982) from when he was a student at the Sate Academy in Sweden to abstract pieces created towards the end of his life. His work is inspired by nature, literature and the Icelandic people.

Runs until October 4

Reykjavík Art Museum:
Hafnarhús
'Áfangar' by Richard Serra

Richard Serra unveiled his environmental art installation on Viðey Island 25 years ago. In honour of the anniversary, Hafnarhús presents an exhibition of Richard's drawings and graphic works as well as film and photographs from 'Áfangar' on Viðey.

Runs until September 20

'bears; truths...' by Kathy Clark

Using teddy bears discarded by Reykjavík children, Kathy develops a narrative about life's journey. Throughout her career, she has shown work in Iceland and the United States, and is the founder of two window galleries in downtown Reykjavík.

Runs until October 18

'Erró and Art History'

The exhibition provides an insight into the work of the Icelandic painter Erró. He maintains a style that fluctuates between surrealism and pop art, integrating elements of comics and science fiction. This exhibition presents works in which he has borrowed images and fragments of pictures by some of the leading artists in history, such as Picasso and Léger.

Runs until September 27

Kunstschlager Chamber

The art initiative Kunstschlager has moved all of its activities into the upper level of Hafnarhús. This offers visitors the opportunity to walk around, pause and experience the ambiance of Kunstschlager. The space is devoted to audio and video works, two- and three-dimensional pieces, as well as specially-designed Kunstschlager furniture, on which guests can comfortably relax. The first exhibition, 'BICATULAMIDE' by Steingrím Eyjférd opens on May 23 at 14:00 and runs until June 4.

Runs until September 30

'Process & Pretense' by Magnús Sigurðarson

Best known for his pop-culture-referencing photographic series and video art, Magnús Sigurðarson addresses in this exhibit the universal human yearning for the sublime. There will be a special artist talk on May 23 at 15:00, and a special performance and book release party on July 23 at 20:00.

Runs until October 18

Reykjavík Art Museum - Kjarvalsstaðir
'Just Painted 2'

Nýmálað 2 (Just Painted 2) is the second instalment of a large art exhibition. The first instalment, Nýmálað 1, opened in Hafnarhúsið last February. This overview of contemporary paintings features the works of 60 artists. Never before has such an extensive showcasing of Icelandic art taken place.

Runs until June 6

Reykjavík City Library, Spöng
Graduate Exhibition from Arts Students in Borgarholtsskóli

The graduating students of Hafðís Ólafsdóttir, Ingibjörg Friðriksdóttir and Guðrún Ragnarsdóttir at Borgarholtsskóli show their graphic design projects.

Runs until May 30

Reykjavík City Museum - The Settlement Exhibition

Reykjavík 871 +/- 2
Archaeological findings from ruins of one of the first houses in Iceland and other excavations in the city centre, open daily 09:00-20:00.

On permanent view

'Settlement Sagas - Accounts from manuscripts'

This special exhibition is held in collaboration with the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies. At the centre of this special exhibition are rarely seen manuscripts that tell the history of the settlement of Reykjavík.

On permanent view

Reykjavík City Theatre
'Blæði: Obsidian Pieces' by Damien Jalet

Iceland Dance Company presents four



The Life of a Photographer
'Traces of Life'

The Reykjavík Museum of Photography

Tryggvagata 15 (C3) | May 16 - Sept 13 🕒 12:00-19:00 | Free!

In the age of showy selfies, where we make sure the world knows all about our Instagram-filtered duckfaces, latest gym class and well-arranged food, six photographers decided to explore their own personal and everyday lives in a subjective, intimate way. They take on the role of models as well as artists through self-portraits and images of their nearest surroundings, reflecting their experiences and memories. The exhibition features works by **Agnieszka Sosnowska, Bára Kristinsdóttir, Daniel Reuter, Hallgerður Hallgrímsdóttir, Kristína Petrošiuć and Skúta. RÓG**

works by Belgian choreographer Damien Jalet. He chose the name 'Obsidian Pieces' because like the stone, each piece is both dark and reflective. Erna Ómarsdóttir created the piece 'Black Marrow' with Damien in Australia in 2009 as the second part of a performance premiered in Iceland at that time. This will be the first time it is performed in Iceland.

Runs until May 28

Reykjavík Maritime Museum
'From Poverty to Abundance'

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

On permanent view

The History of Sailing

Iceland's maritime history that showcases the growth of the Reykjavík Harbour.

On permanent view

The Coast Guard Vessel Óðinn

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

On permanent view

The Reykjavík Museum of Photography

'What I See' by Laura Andrés Esteban

Exploring the difference between what is real and what is seen, Spanish multi-media artist Laura Andrés Esteban uses photography and illustrations to communicate her vision and make people smile.

Runs until June 2

'The Workshop' by Bára Kristinsdóttir

A new display is opening in the Cube in the Reykjavík Museum of Photography. It's a combination of photos and video works in which we get to know two elderly men and their nylon coating business. Theirs is a story about old vs. new and tradition vs. progress and how time changes everything.

Runs until June 26

'Traces of Life: The Subjective and Personal in Photography Today'

The exhibition consists of photographs by Agnieszka Sosnowska, Bára Kristinsdóttir, Daniel Reuter, Hallgerður Hallgrímsdóttir, Kristína Petrošiuć and Skúta. It turns the lens and makes the photographer the subject by looking into their personal lives and emotions.

Runs until September 13

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum
'Interplay' - thinking across sculpture and design

This exhibition focuses on the relationship between the Danish architect Finn Juhl (1912-1989) and the Icelandic sculptor Sigurjón Ólafsson in the years of 1940 to 1945. Both were pioneers, each in his field, and both went unexplored paths in their experiments with form and material.

Runs until August 30

SÍM Gallery

'Wonderland II' by Lóa Björk

Lóa Björk uses abstract paintings to represent the forces of nature. With acrylics and watercolour, she explores the movement and metamorphosis of the ever-changing landscape. Lóa is an important figure in the art scene in East Iceland, both as an artist, art teacher and a board member of SAMfélagið, a grass root organisation centring on the creative arts in East Iceland.

Runs until May 26

Spark Design Space
'One by Eighteen' by Halla Kristín Hannesdóttir and Auður Ösp Guðmundsdóttir

Designers Halla Kristín Hannesdóttir and Auður Ösp Guðmundsdóttir have designed doll houses which will be displayed at Spark Design Space. Doll houses are worlds of their own where anything can happen and imagination is the only real limit.

Runs until May 31

Tveir Hrafnar Gallery
'Cliffs, sunshine, heroes, sky, sea and birds' by Hulda Hákon

With texts, paintings wall reliefs and sculptures, renowned Icelandic artist Hulda Hákon transforms small everyday feats into heroic victories.

Runs until June 20

Týsgalleri
'Physique' by Bryndís Hrönn Ragnarsdóttir

This mixed media exhibition is made up of a hand drawn wall relief, metal sculptures and drawings of fat people. There is an artist's talk on May 22 at 17:00.

Runs until June 7

Wind and Weather Gallery
'Collection/Samansafn' by Ragnhildur Jóhann

Ragnhildur is both a visual artist and a poet, and much of her work shows her love of both art forms through mix media pieces that make use of pages from old books.

Runs until June 29

Volcano House
The exhibition gives a brief overview of Iceland's geological history and volcanic systems with superb photographs of volcanic eruptions and other magnificent aspects of Icelandic nature.

On permanent view



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k-bar

FOOD

FOR THE SOUL



Meeting The Shark Man

Words Ragnar Egilsson

Photo Ragnar Egilsson

I had been stubbornly ploughing through mounds of snow overlaying a sheet of ice one Sunday morning when a blind turn greeted me with a wall of snow the height of my Grand Cherokee. Everything went white and the SUV licked the edge of the sheer 200-foot drop into the portion of the North Atlantic known as Breiðafjörður before it slid back to the rock wall and stranded us in a ditch. I learned that my last words will probably be a protracted “fuck.”

We were eventually dragged out of the ditch by a tow truck semi-trailer that had gotten stranded further up ahead and ended up paying it forward by pulling two other cars out of ditches that weekend. Despite the inauspicious start, my belief that West Iceland should be the nexus of Icelandic food tourism was unshaken. West Iceland (not to be confused with the Westfjords) has been growing into a foodie's paradise. High-end restaurants are in short supply, but the region boasts the only heritage goat farm; several farm-to-table operations with organic mutton and beef; year-round vegetable markets; excellent creameries; and Iceland's most famous fermented shark purveyor, Hildibrandur Bjarnason of Bjarnarhöfn, the man I had risked my life to find. The literal translation of his name and farm is “Battlesword Son of Bears from Bear Harbour.”

Blind seal-eaters from the cold abyss

Being considered the face of rotten shark may not be everyone's idea of a prestigious title, but Hildibrandur wears it with pride. A rosy-cheeked and erudite man with a playful glint in his eyes, Hildibrandur speaks with the breathy and elevated tone you sometimes get with older gents in the rural areas. When we arrived, he was in the midst of discussing local politics with a visiting farmer over milksop biscuits and black coffee. However, he happily got up to give us a private tour of his shark museum.

“The shark we use is caught off the coast of Iceland and Greenland. It seems

the ones caught off the northern coast of Norway can't be processed as well. And processing the fish elsewhere is simply not possible—the Faroe Islands are too dry and Greenland is too wet,” Hildibrandur tells us. “There are a few places that seem to work best for the processing here in Iceland. I will get into trouble if I say that Bjarnarhöfn is the best place to process shark... So I won't say that,” he laughs.

He tells us that the sharks aren't caught near Bjarnarhöfn, as it's too shallow for them. “The Greenland shark is a deep-sea fish, living in cold, dark waters, as deep as 3,000 feet, and has evolved some of the most acute electroreceptors on the planet,” Hildibrandur says with unbridled admiration for his prey. “They don't rely on their eyesight much and many of them suffer from a parasite that eats at their corneal tissue, leaving them almost completely blind. But the upside is that the parasite glows in the dark and the shark's prey is attracted to it.”

Poisoning the magistrate

The traditional Icelandic fermented shark, known locally as “kæstur hákarl” after it has been processed, is made exclusively from the flesh of the Greenland shark. It is one of the largest species of shark, growing up to 2,000 pounds and 24 feet in length. The Greenland shark can live to be 200 years old, meaning that you might have eaten a fish that remembers the battle of Waterloo (there were fighting sharks there, right?). Their mouths contain rows of interlocking teeth, an upper row used to lock into

place and a lower row to saw through the flesh of its prey. This is why Hildibrandur has to bait the shark using chains as opposed to line. “We mostly use chunks of seal,” he says when I ask him how they catch them. “The bait needs to be fat because it leaves an oil slick in the water that attracts the sharks.”

The Greenland shark is a cartilaginous fish and doesn't have kidneys as we'd know them, which causes a build-up of urea and other toxins in the flesh, which can't be extracted using traditional cooking methods. Thus, the method of fermentation.

“The tradition is said to have begun in Asparvík up north in the year 1601,” he says. “It was discovered by accident, as the shark had always been considered poisonous. A shark was pulled to land and left to rot, and then someone thought to hang it up to dry but no one was brave enough to taste it. The story goes that the county magistrate and his cronies would demand food wherever they went, even from peasants unable to feed their kin. So the farmer invited him to the wooden shed to try the shark as no one would care if it turned out to be poisonous. Quite the contrary, the magistrate and his men, who all suffered from scurvy and dysentery, found themselves in robust health after a week of eating fermented shark.”

The fermented Greenland shark has not been fully researched, but there is some evidence to suggest that it is rich in omega-3 fatty acids and Vitamins A and D, and it may also strengthen the immune system by increasing white blood cell and platelet counts. In par-

FOOD

FOR THE SOUL

ticular, Hildibrandur says the liver, a 300-350-pound slab of which is found in each Greenland shark, seems to have the highest concentration of beneficial nutrients, and laments the missed opportunity in health marketing, as it could be a way to restore the shark liver to its glory days of the 19th century, when every European metropolis was lit up with burning shark oil.

Huffing bags of raw shark

The museum doesn't look like much from the outside but it's actually quite a fascinating little place. The space is jam-packed with antique tools and weapons, boats, shark info sheets, shark skeletons, shark stomach contents, and stuffed local fauna.

On the hill above the museum sits a drafty wooden shack where the shark meat hangs. It's the size of a large garage, made of worn-out wooden planks with wide gaps between them. "We pack the meat into boxes for six to eight weeks for fermentation without salt or other preservatives. Temperatures can't go over 5°C but the lower limits are not an issue because of the shark fat's natural resistance to frost. Then we hang it from the rafters of the hut in early spring where it is left exposed to the elements for four to five months. The meat takes on a thick dark crust but underneath you will find the familiar pallid yellow colour."

As mentioned, the ageing and fermenting is essential, as the meat is chockfull of urea and neurotoxins. A little further research tells me that the Greenland shark neurotoxin is trimethylamine oxide, which breaks down into trimethylamine and can cause a feeling of drunkenness. Now, I am not advocating that teenagers start huffing bags of raw shark in alleyways, all I'm asking is that they consider it.

Anthony Bourdain is a big old sissy

So, we have toxic, urine-soaked sea monsters from the freezing abyss. The next logical question is: What does it taste like?

Fermented shark most resembles durian, a ten-pound fruit that looks like a spiked ball and smells like leprosy. It's known to some as the Burzum of the fruit kingdom. When raw, shark has the same texture and creamy colour as durian flesh. It is encased in a similarly spiky exterior—and once it has experienced weeks of controlled rot, it starts to take on a similar smell.

It's hard to describe the flavour of fermented shark, but a tangy cheese comes close. It's far less fishy than you'd expect, although visits to the fermenting shack are not for the weak of stomach. Celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain famously called "hákarl" the worst thing he had ever eaten. This may have been coloured by an overall miserable visit to Iceland or by the fact that Anthony Bourdain is a huge sissy.

Don't listen to Bourdain, go try some hákarl. And if you have the chance, make the trip up to Bjarnarhöfn to visit Hildibrandur and get it straight from the shark's mouth. Just remember to pack some snow chains.

1,000 ISK buys you access to the museum and a free tasting of hákarl and Brennivín. The museum is located about two hours from Reykjavik on the Snæfellsnes peninsula and is easily accessed during the warmer months.

Opening hours: 9:00 – 18:00

Phone number: 438-1581

Website: <http://www.bjarnarhofn.is/>

This Month In Food

May/June 2015

Words Ragnar Egilsson



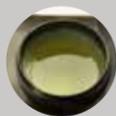
Visir reports that the head of the farm-to-table organisation in Iceland is less than pleased with budget supermarket chain **Bónus** labelling their pork as farm-to-table. The pork is sourced from the farm of one Geir Gunnar Geirsson, who also happens to be the CEO of Stjórnugris, the largest pork producer in the country. We're guessing that factory-farm-to-table just doesn't have the same ring to it.



Grocery stores, supermarkets, and restaurants alike continue to suffer the pangs of **chicken withdrawal** due to the strike of veterinarians and food scientists. They have provided exceptions for cases where the welfare of animals or humans was at stake but that does not extend to slaughtering meat. Cattle, poultry, and pig farmers are struggling and grocery stores are running out of frozen meat. Vegetarians break out that bottle they've been saving for a special occasion.



Two well-established food trends are finally making their way to Iceland's shores. First Fosshótel announced that their hotel behemoth by Höfðatorg will feature **Iceland's first beer garden**, with a 120-person capacity. Then Le Bistro (don't let the name confuse you—it's a French bistro) is **the first restaurant to offer BYOB** with a corking fee of 2,900 ISK. We at the Grapevine just need to figure out where we're going to find that kind of money.



Finally, a pair of Hungarian green tea enthusiasts have opened a **pop-up tea house** serving rare teas from East Asia at art gallery Mengi (Óðinsgata 2). Now you can too can enjoy a cup of Gyokuro Shiun with your ambient-drone concert.

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FOOD

FOR YOUR MIND BODY AND SOUL



Brooklyn Bar, We Need To 718

Brooklyn Bar

Austurstræti 3, 101 Reykjavík

What We Think:

Veggie burger is great, but the rest is a mess and don't expect anything Brooklyn.

Flavour:

Charcoal burgers & fries.

Ambiance:

Chatter and low-volume playlist or ear-splitting troubadour warbling.

Service:

Friendly but need urgent training.

Price for 2 (with drinks):

6-8,000 ISK



Brooklyn is a hodgepodge of a hundred different nationalities, ethnicities and customs and does not present a single unified presence. I won't delude myself into thinking I have any claim to Brooklyn, but after living in three separate parts of the borough (Crown Heights, Greenpoint, and Fort Greene), I feel I do have a half-decent outsider's perspective.

The owners of Brooklyn Bar, on the other hand, seem to have arrived at their concept after having the laundry directions of a Yankees cap shouted at them through the bathroom door of a crowded bar. At first I thought they had just picked a random name because they thought it sounded cool, and that would have been fine—but the exteriors, interiors, the marketing, and menu betray their intention of creating a Brooklyn-themed bar and restaurant. So, where have they gone wrong?

The name says "bar," so let's start with the drinks. There's not a single Brooklyn beverage for sale. No Brooklyn Lager, no Sixpoint, no Brooklyn cocktail, no egg creams, no vodka shots at Tatiana's. It's your basic three beers on tap and a small selection of spirits.

The same goes for the food, which is pretty amazing seeing as they could have picked almost any cuisine and claimed

they were repping Brooklyn—anything from Jamaican to Jewish. Instead it's the same burgers and ribs you'll find all over Reykjavík these days. The one attempt at a New York dish is a decent "New York style" hot dog which does get the caramelised onions spot-on, though the mustard and the dog don't feel right.

It seems they tried to name their menu items after Brooklyn celebrities and landmarks, but quickly ran out of candidates. There's a Jay Z burger and a Spike Lee burger—so far so Brooklyn (the Spike Lee burger is even vegetarian). But then we get an Al Pacino (born in Manhattan, raised in the Bronx), a Lindsay Lohan (Long Island—also wtf), a Yellow Cab sandwich (try taking a yellow cab to Brooklyn and tell me how that goes), a Superman (Metropolis), an Empire Steak (building in Manhattan, not made of meat), King Kong (big fan of that building in Manhattan), and so on. Most egregious of all, the Biggie dish turns out to be a measly cheese nachos with salsa—Biggie would be spinning in his grave if the laws of physics allowed for it.

Also, if you're going to laminate sheets of The New York Times over the walls to celebrate New York culture, try and avoid making the centrepiece out of the planes flying into the towers, halloed by articles about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. You know, on the off chance that a real New Yorker were to stumble inside. The upstairs photo of the Manhattan skyline plastered over a wall didn't exactly scream Brooklyn either.

Concept-wise, the design of Brooklyn Bar does get some things right. The neon sign and Chinese dragon mural emblazoned over the front of the house are more cartoon Chinatown than Brooklyn, but it's a really fun and well-executed design. I only wish they could have gotten that guy to design their logo instead of downloading some hideous generic "urban" font.

Similarly, the exposed brick, spiral staircases and grimy back alley add a lot of charm. Seriously, make sure you grab a smoke in that alley, it's full of stairs to nowhere, graffiti, weird angles and Brooklyn Bar's smokestack, caked with enough tar to sustain a week-long grease fire.

The food also carries them some of the way. The burgers are cooked on a ceramic

charcoal grill and they taste it. My friend had the Jay Z (1,990 ISK) and it was a flavourful burger, a solid medium-rare with a nice char and a deep flavour. They could take it a little easier on the BBQ sauce and the server forgot to have them leave off the tomato and onions as asked. At the table to our left, people were complaining about getting fries instead of the side salad and the table to our right had similar problems.

Their chicken wings (1,490 ISK) and pork ribs (1,590 ISK) are above the Reykjavík average, but not by a mile. They are tender and crispy, well-seasoned, with a good price-to-portion ratio, but they are missing that extra touch to push them over the wall. The waiter forgot the blue cheese sauce with the wings (and forgot to give us a choice between buffalo and BBQ wings).

Our waiter was very friendly and eager to please but was clearly untrained. The place has been open for six months and I would expect a tighter ship. In addition to the aforementioned slip-ups, they forgot to lay and clear the table, and they didn't know the menu.

Surprisingly, it was the veggie burger (2,290 ISK) that stood out. Made with a pâté-like mulch of what I would imagine includes textured soy protein, nuts, carrots, chili, and possibly mushrooms, it's one of the most savoury veggie burgers I've had in Iceland. It had a fantastic texture and the perfect amount of some kind of cream-cheese sauce. In fact, it's probably the best veggie burger in the city. It's served with sweet potato fries (ask for garlic sauce with them), and I recommend washing them down with a Dark 'N' Stormy.

This probably reads like a laundry list of half-assery, but 90% of their problems could be solved in a couple of weeks. With some attention to detail this could be a really solid burger place. They just need to round out their concept, maybe add some Brooklyn-like items to the menu, burn their music collection, and get a fry cook veteran to pull a 'Full Metal Jacket' drill sergeant on the front of the house. Either way, it will be hard to keep me and that veggie burger apart.

RAGNAR EGILSSON
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FOOD

FOR YOUR MIND BODY AND SOUL



A Great Meal That Would Be Better With Acid

Steikhúsið

Tryggvagata 4-6, 101 Reykjavík

What We Think:

The steaks are great, which is good because it's a house for steaks. The starters and sides degrade the quality of the steak and bring the meal down.

Flavour:

Sans vinegar.

Ambiance:

Heat, wood, and leather: a room to be alone in a crowd.

Service:

Great.

Price for 2 (with drinks):

15-25000 ISK.



Not everything is better with acid, but it can certainly make some things more vibrant, beautiful and full. Subtle flavours can be heightened, bringing complex aromas and bouquets to your palette. This meal would have been better with acid.

Steikhúsið has all the ambience of an upscale steakhouse: earth tones and masculine upholstery, lots of wood-grain furniture, and red-capped wine bottles for aesthetic punctuation. It gives you the feeling that the slaughtering of cattle is not only necessary but also elegant—even classy. It's a warm enough atmosphere for a sit-down meal with the family, a third date, or a business dinner. Yet it's private enough for more sombre events—like a funeral or wake.

The service is outstanding, with every server doing his best Johnny Cash

impression with slick hair and all-black clothing (also quite fitting at a funeral, unless it's one of those "Wear bright colours! Let's celebrate his or her life!" funerals, in which case I think black goes with everything—except blue, but I'm not sure if that's a rule or a guideline or true).

My guest and I decide against an apéritif, choosing wine for both before and during the meal. We went with the Montes Limited Selection Cabernet Sauvignon/Carmenere from Chile (2,600 ISK per 25 cl. glass). Unfortunately, the wine was warm—not room temperature, but warm. This made the tannins a bit too potent for the first sip, and left us sipping water until the bread and starters arrived (I'm sure they would have replaced the drinks, but I was too caught up in telling a story to be interrupted by warm red wine). I spoke with a friend who was eating at a table near the kitchen at the same time that I was eating. They asked to move shortly after I left because it was too warm being that close to the oven, so maybe the mystery of the warm wine is merely logistical. They need to store their wine elsewhere.

We chose the "Best Choice" (2,990 ISK), a "mixed starter with all our favourites." This included: deer carpaccio with herb-truffle oil, warm goat's cheese and balsamic glazed blackberries; crispy breaded chicken tenders, tortilla-wrapped with corn and tomato salsa; grilled minke whale "tataki," chilli marmalade and tamarind jalapeno sauce; and spring rolls with smoked guillemot, dates, Japanese mayo and bell pepper jam.

Dinner was beef tenderloin (200 g for 4,190 ISK) with an optional baked potato (490 ISK) and coleslaw (550 ISK).

The steaks are grilled to tender perfection. The flavour of the beef is clean and

full and cooked to medium rare (as ordered). This is a steakhouse and it makes steaks, well. Very well.

However, there was an essential ingredient missing in many of the dishes: vinegar.

The coleslaw was sliced cabbage, carrots, and, possibly, apples? I couldn't tell because the dressing was essentially just mayonnaise. It needed vinegar to bring out the component flavours, rather than just goop. The "Tataki" was also lacking an acidity to give it any real flavour. The dressing with the whale meat became mush. When I think of beef tataki, which would be the closest resemblance to whale tataki, I think of ponzu sauce, a citrus-based vinaigrette that would pickle the accompanying vegetables along with the lightly seared meat. The spring rolls are tasty but hard to enjoy after every appetizer had a similar seasoning and texture: no snap, no crunch, mush. Smoked guillemot is such a beautiful-tasting bird, but the flavours were hidden. It was like a food tray at a funeral, comforting and bland. Nothing to take your attention away from the overwhelming despair the fragility of life creates.

The steak is very good though. The price, however, would make me wary to suggest it over the other options available. It's too bad because the service was spot-on. It's the tiny details in the starters and sides that could really bring the menu here to life. There is nothing more stark but difficult to define than the difference between life and death. If only, like here, it was just a few drops of acid.

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