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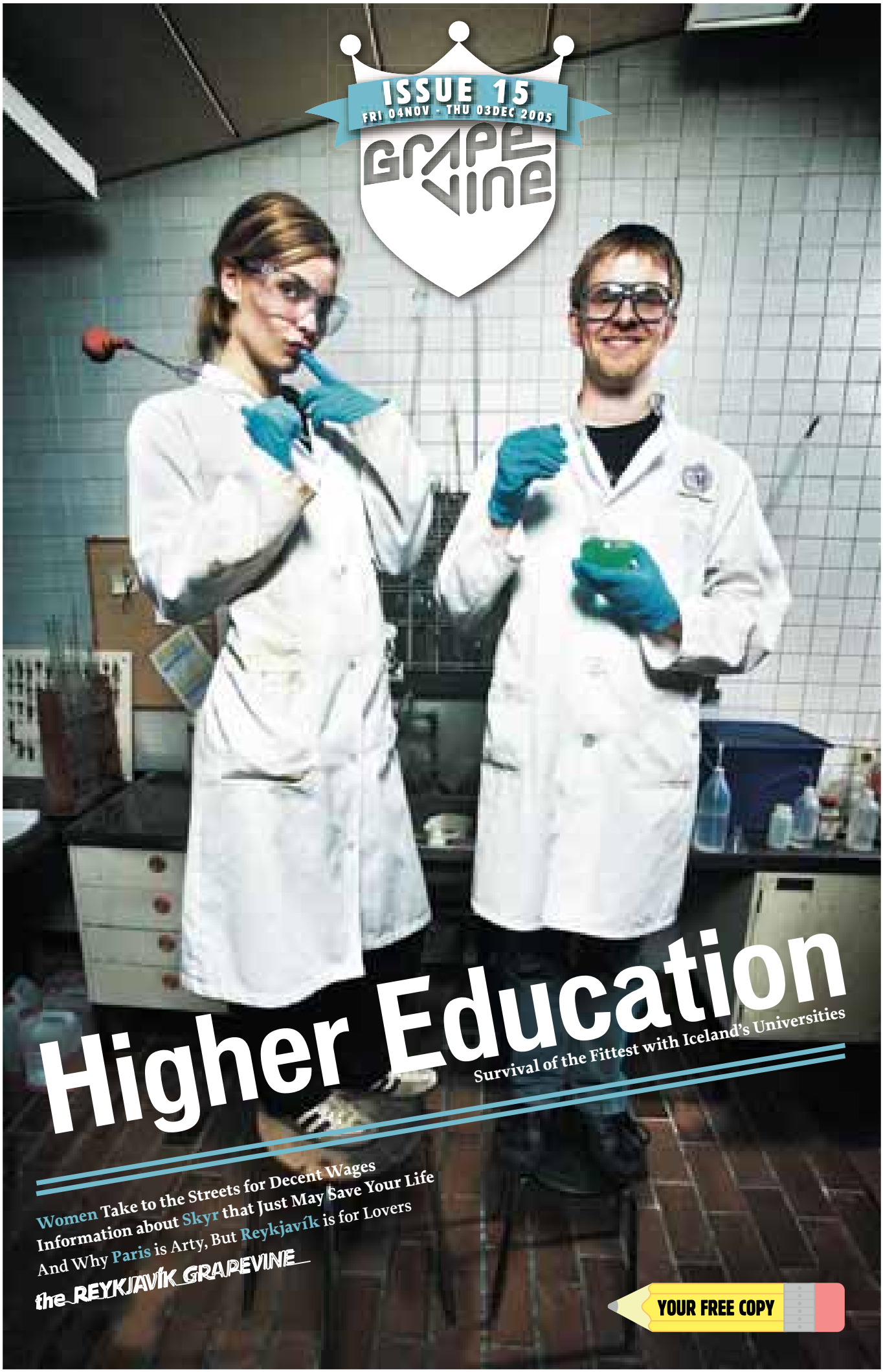

Higher Education

Survival of the Fittest with Iceland's Universities

Women Take to the Streets for Decent Wages
Information about **Skyr** that Just May Save Your Life
And Why **Paris** is Arty, But **Reykjavík** is for Lovers

the REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

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ISSUE FIFTEEN: NOVEMBER 4 - DECEMBER 2
YEAR 3 the REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

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Dear Bart,

At the risk of sounding like every other reader writing in to The Grapevine, I'd like to begin by congratulating you and the rest of the Grapevine team for producing a fun, varied and opinionated newspaper. It's just one of the opinions in Issue 14 (7 Oct – 3 Nov) that irritated me to the point where I felt the need to e-mail you. At this point, I'd like to take a peremptory strike: I usually love the sarcastic feedback you deign to give us mortal readers but I get the feeling that if it's aimed at me, I won't love it quite so much!

As a Londoner living in Reykjavík since August, I was particularly interested to see the article 'Forget What You Know: Enjoy London' and read it, intrigued, as it's always fascinating to see your native city through someone else's eyes. What disappointed me, however, was ending your piece with a sinister quote and providing no other Londoner's opinion on the particular topic of inter-racial relations since the 7 July attacks to counterbalance it. Of course, everyone's opinion deserves to be voiced. I just wish you hadn't used such a negative one to conclude a piece that was supposed to be about enjoying London and has only served to cast a shadow over your presentation of that flawed but ultimately beautiful city.

Thanks again for an otherwise brilliant paper,
M Longueira

PS: Before you compose your cutting response, think of this e-mail as a contribution to "the sweet sweet sounds of the exchange of ideas." Takk!

Martina,
There can't be a cutting response to this email. You make a key point. I closed the article on the taxi cab driver's comment because it completely shaped my experience as a visitor, and it is a key aspect of London right now, unfortunately. I thought about it a lot, using that quote. Would I have liked that quote used in a New York piece when I was living there in 2001, for example? Honestly, I would have been disappointed to see it.

But that's what was there. To me, it had to be written. Did it hinder the piece–especially for the travel market? Probably.

I decided to publish what I experienced. But I'm glad someone from London complained, if that makes sense.

To whom it may concern,

First, I would like to thank you, for giving us an English newspaper. You all are brilliant! More power to your company. And you all should get promoted. Anyway. I would like to know why the bus system had change in the wrong direction, ill tell you why. First the bus stop now is so far, compared to the old system, people like us that don't have a car have to walk very far to get to work or even buy groceries.

It is bad enough with 9 months of winter, strong winds, and slippery roads. I feel for the senior citizen people that live here. Walking in summer time is fine, but winter is cruel to the people of Iceland. What is this transportation authority thinking? Life is depressing enough, when you have 9 months of darkness. And they wonder why there's an increase of cars in this country? Well I thank you in advance for giving people a voice to publish this issue. Have a nice day. You all are the best. Keep up the great job. MJ

MJ,
The new bus system is extremely problematic—at times comically so. We are working on a story for the December issue, the slight delay coming because our journalists are having trouble meeting deadlines as they are often exhausted at work due to public transportation.

Þórdís E. Þorvaldsdóttir Bachmannn continues to write fantastic pieces concerning Iceland's many issues involving the government, etc. If only this article about "Are we a nation of inactivists" could reach the front pages of the nation's large newspapers. This would get the nation going.

In fact, it makes me want to smack the average Icelander across the face and tell them to wake up... it's called PEOPLE POWER. People shouldn't have to pay outrageous prices for food and the simple necessities of life anymore...it is pure robbery if you ask me. In many ways I see the Iceland government as a little sibling to the United State's government...very corrupted and sneaky.

Why the fuck people vote for the idiot David Oddson I cannot understand?! He is manipulative, sly and a total liar...no wonder he resigned. I must say, I am a bit worried as far as Iceland's government is concerned... and I am more disconcerted as to why nobody is stepping up to this behavior from the Government...it's like the people are being silenced, but they aren't! They have the full right to protest, boycott and say whatever they want but nobody is. WAKE UP PEOPLE!

Thank you Þórdís for such a great piece and a wake up call to the average Sigurdur.

Dear Reader,
I agree with the sentiment that Þórdís does excellent work for the Grapevine. On all other statements in this letter, especially the use of punctuation, I disagree. Why use the exclamation mark? Is it because your words don't convey enough meaning, so you want us to simply imagine somebody gesticulating with them? Or is it because you want them screamed? Is this people power… excuse me, is this PEOPLE POWER? Screaming "I cannot understand?!" and lobbing expletives? How does PEOPLE POWER advance discussion and understanding?

I believe there are many things to fault Davíð Oddsson for, but one should recognize the man's qualities—he is certainly not an idiot. You refer to "the prices of food and simple necessities of life" and follow with the comment that "it's like people are being silenced." If your concern is purchasing power, it is a fact that under Oddsson purchasing power increased.

Oddsson's conduct relating to Iraq is dubious, and he has made other not-so-palatable decisions, including getting himself appointed director of the central bank. If we're running around screaming things, we should try to scream things that are accurate.

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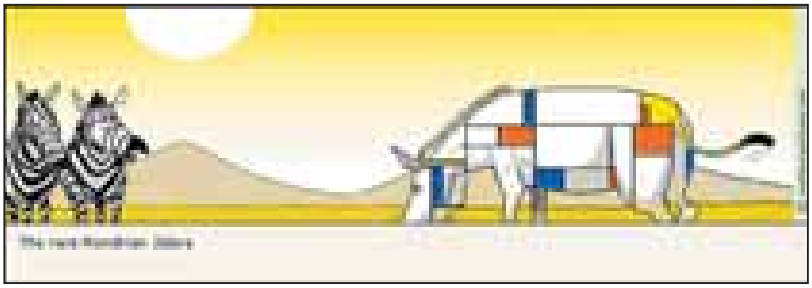

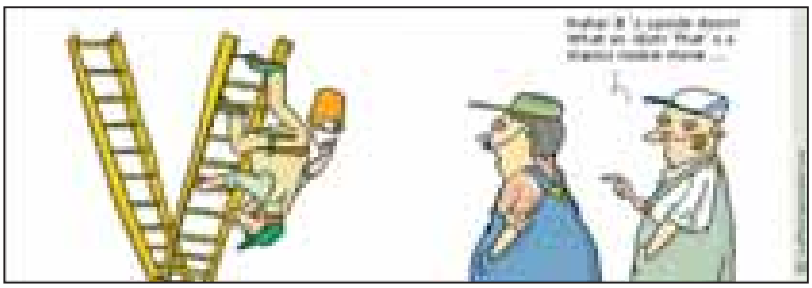

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Bart Cameron, Editor

Don't Do the Math

In our feature article, Julika Huether presents the faults of the country's universities—among them an extremely high student to full-time faculty ratio. Her feature is not an exposé and not meant to be a scathing critique, though. As she points out, the eight universities in Iceland are facing a simple problem of math: with only 300,000 people in the country, it is extremely difficult to fund and staff a research university; eight is flat out ridiculous.

The education feature goes well with Þórdís Elva Þorvaldsdóttir Bachmann's article on independent theatre in Iceland and Sindri Eldon's review of an all-ages non-profit concert held at the Cave immediately after Iceland Airwaves. Independent theatre and the local music scene are directly apposed to mathematical possibilities—just as there is no way eight universities could succeed in Iceland, there is no way that a vibrant independent theatre scene, with decent wages for actors, could be formed in such a small country that doesn't even have one independent stage for the actors to use. And regarding the music scene, given the sheer amount of money and international coverage during Airwaves, it is an interesting twist on numbers that local musicians put their best feet forward for a locals-only, all-ages show at The Cave instead of for the international journalists amassed in downtown Reykjavík.

All of this is to say that this issue hints at something I've learned a great deal about recently: numbers and percentages alone don't have all that much bearing on reality.

My most immediate reference point is a recent daily paper that the Grapevine put out to celebrate Iceland Airwaves. When my publisher, Hilmar, asked me what budget it would take to put out the Airwaves magazine, I told him that the only budget I would require would be plane tickets and hotel rooms.

We could never have afforded anything near the calibre of writers we used for that issue, but we got them because we didn't talk numbers: we talked possibilities, freedom, and philosophy. And the notion of a free paper made up of major music writers from around the world covering a festival that had never been adequately covered before took a number of writers' fancy, and we ended up with our special issues. During a brief retreat after the festival, the journalists and I discussed salaries: it turned out that the salary of one visiting journalist for a year was roughly equal to the total salaries at this magazine for the year.

Asked if the Grapevine would travel to America to put out something like what we just did for a major festival in the States, I couldn't begin to calculate a budget.

After two years in Iceland, I knew that the surest way, locally, to put out a one-event great magazine was to take away all the money; just as Sindri Eldon knew that the surest way to find a great concert was to get as far away from the media as possible. The conflict that you probably notice is that paying journalists nothing and trying to discover new bands all the time is not a good idea in the long term. In the long term, we must find ways to appropriately fund magazines, and we must find ways to give artists coverage commensurate with their contribution, and there is no doubt that the government, taxpayers, and local businesses must begin contributing more to the universities of Iceland. But the odd Icelandic truth is that, in the near future, despite all logic, a few of the universities Ms. Huether discusses in this issue will most likely attract worldwide attention. People here tend to succeed despite the numbers. We should probably just stop making such a habit of it.

Sveinn Birkir Björnsson, Editorial Intern

Unfinished Business for Parliament

Last month, Thelma Ásdísardóttir appeared in interviews with Morgunblaðið and Kastljós respectively. Her interview put the issues of domestic violence and sexual abuse firmly in the media spotlight. Ásdísardóttir, a victim of domestic sexual abuse at the hands of her father, openly shared her story with the nation in hope of giving others who share her experience the courage to come forward and seek help.

Her hopes may have materialized, as assistant state prosecutor Ragnheiður Harðardóttir claimed there had been a noticeable increase in sexual offense charges made following the interviews with Ásdísardóttir and the public discussion they generated. But an increase in charges made against sexual offenders should really provoke some questions regarding the Icelandic justice system and its handling of sexual abuse cases.

Statistics from Icelandic police authorities show that out of 65 rape cases reported in 2003, only 16 resulted in actual charges. Only four out of these 65 cases ended with a conviction, a mere 6.2% conviction rate. More than half of 60 cases involving child abuse never resulted in charges. But police statistics only reveal half the story. A vast majority of sexual abuse cases never gets reported to the police. Perhaps a more accurate picture can be drawn by looking at statistics from the University Hospital Rape Emergency Center, where 119 rape cases were reported in 2003. Less than half of these resulted in formal charges.

According to Stígamót's (a counselling centre for victims of sexual abuse) annual report for the year 2003, a total 331 separate cases were reported from 251 individuals. Only around 10% of these cases were reported to police authorities. Among the reasons given by victims for not reporting sexual abuse is that they do not want to go through the interrogation process or do not have faith in the justice system, according to research by Stígamót. This distrust in the justice system was made particularly evident in a recent case where the Icelandic Supreme Court awarded an Icelandic woman 1.1 million Icelandic kronur in damages following a private lawsuit against three defendants in a rape case after state prosecutor had decided not to press charges.

These statistics have caught the eye of more than just Icelanders. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recently criticized Icelandic authorities for the small percentage of cases reported that actually result in charges being made and tried before court, as well as the poor conviction rate. The OHCHR recommends that special training for dealing with sexual abuse cases be implemented for police and court officials.

These facts raise the question of how Icelandic authorities and justice officials view sexual abuse. Interestingly enough, Icelandic laws allow for two separate degrees of rape charges. The definition of rape depends on whether violence, or the threat of violence, is involved or not. It is hard to fathom the idea that non-violent rape actually exists, let alone that it should have a special status within the justice system. The non-violent variation, termed as abuse rather than rape, is designated when the victim is unable to refuse or fight off the attacker or does not fully comprehend the situation due to intoxication, for example. Maximum sentence for abuse is six years, while rape carries a maximum sentence of 16 years.

This difference reflects the old myth that rape victims are responsible for being attacked, or somehow bring it on themselves by careless behaviour, such as dressing provocatively, flirting or talking in sexual terms. It implies that under certain conditions, the attacker is safe to assume consent. This cuts at the heart of a person's sexual freedom, the person's right to decide on his or her own who he or she chooses to engage in sexual intercourse with. The onus of the act is not placed on the violation of the victim's sexual freedom, but becomes a question of procedural technicalities where the victim's state of consciousness becomes an issue.

Minister of Justice and Independence Party MP, Björn Bjarnason and Minister of Social Affairs and Progressive Party MP Árni Magnússon have both recently announced that changes are about to be made. Bjarnason has appointed a committee for revising the laws on sexual offences and Magnússon has appointed a committee that is supposed to come up with a plan of action for the government against domestic and sexual abuse before March 2006. So all around, committees are being formed, and everybody sounds optimistic that revisions will be made. After all, 2006 is just around the corner, and the inherent double standard in sexual and domestic abuse laws should be history by now.

All of which makes it even harder to forget what happened last spring, when Social Democrat MP Ágúst Ólafur Ágústsson proposed a bill for legislation that would rescind the statue of limitation on sexual abuse crimes against minors. The proposal was never brought before vote in the Parliament, and ended up as one of many unfinished bills from last years Parliament. Let us hope that this time the pressure will prove enough for parliament to actually take action.

No More Party Papers

An Interview with Fréttablaðið editor Kári Jónasson

BY PAUL NIKOLOV

After ten years at the now solely online Progressive party newspaper Tíminn and 31 years at govenment radio, Kári Jónasson took on the position of editor of Fréttablaðið, Iceland's most popular daily, just last year. The past year has been a turbulent one for Fréttablaðið, with a media bill introduced to parliament in 2004 that would have broken up the ownership corporate giant Baugur Group has over its media outlets – which includes Fréttablaðið – and a criminal investigation of Baugur making its way to the Supreme Court this year. Recently, local police even raided the Fréttablaðið news offices regarding a printed email leak related to the Baugur case. Paul Nikolov spoke with Jónasson about what might account for that popularity, and how long a way the Icelandic media has come, and where it can still improve.

After being in radio for such a long time, what inspired the change to go into the printed media?
I was just offered this job, and in this house there are many things going on. I felt I had done my job at the radio, having been head of the news department for the radio for 19 years and working at the radio altogether for 31 years. I thought that I wouldn't go further up, so when I was offered this job I jumped on board the ship. There are a lot of possibilities here – radio, television, magazines and newspapers. I felt it was also time to get re-acquainted with the printed word. I've been around from Gutenberg to computers (chuckles).

What are some of the most memorable changes you've seen in the Icelandic media?
In 1962, the newspapers were connected with political parties, either directly or indirectly. In some cases, the parties themselves published the paper. The Progressive Party, for example, published Tíminn, where I worked for ten years. Morgunblaðið was owned by figures close to the Independence Party. If the chairman of the Independence Party said something, it was printed on the front page.

Do you think that's changed?
That has changed a lot. It used to be that on election, the front page of Morgunblaðið would have a message from the chairman of the Independence Party. Then in 1991, when Davíð Oddsson was chairman of the party, on that election day, his statement didn't appear on the front page. His message was inside the paper, under the heading, "Letter to the Newspaper." That was something we all noticed.
When I started at the radio in 1973, we had to be very careful about what we said. I was parliamentary correspondent for a couple of years, and we always had to write in the style of, "So-and-so put forth a measure about this-and-that and so on," and if we didn't, we'd get a call from someone saying, "Why didn't you mention me?" But I think the turning point was in the spring of 1974, when the leftist government was going away, we were allowed to broadcast from parliament, which we asked for. Then we started to get more and more critical; not just saying, "This and that were put forward today." It took time to make this change, and in some cases it was difficult.

Did journalists just wake up one day and say, "Instead of just reciting statistics, let's start asking critical questions?" What inspired the change?
We just realised that we had to do something. There were journalists at Tíminn who wanted to write news, and not just the party line. It wasn't me alone at the radio. We all talked about it, and we all decided that we had to break out from our political prison. It took time, but we succeeded in doing it. For a while I was a police correspondent, and it was around that time that we started doing our own research, instead of just taking whatever the police said. Sometimes now when I'm telling young reporters about it, they say, "Wow, only 30 years ago it was like that?"

Even though the media doesn't seem to be under the direct control of political parties anymore, do you think the media is as diverse as it was in the past?
We have many, many good journalists in Iceland now, who aren't just taking their lines from the political parties or their owners. I think that the journalists in Iceland work very hard, they produce a lot, and they work by the unwritten journalistic rules – taking both sides or all sides of a story, but not taking any line from their owners. I think that the voices of the different newspapers, radio and television stations in Iceland are different enough. My view is that we must have at least three strong newspapers and more than one radio and television station.

How do you account for Fréttablaðið being as popular as it is now after being around for a little over four years?
Well, we're a free newspaper, and we're distributed free through most of the country. But we're a very different free paper than other metro papers you'll see in Europe or the US. Like the Danish paper Metro, most of their stories are taken from the Danish news bureau Ritzaus. There's not very much individual reporting; it's more or less just copy-paste. But our paper, there are something like 40 journalists working here, where we have a mixture of people who've been in the media for years and young people who've just come out of university. We have the business paper Markaðurinn, the magazine Birta, and most of our material is written here in the editorial office.

What would you say is Fréttablaðið's guiding philosophy?
I'd say the guiding philosophy is that in the morning, people can see what's going on in Iceland and the world, not in long articles but in short, easy to read articles. Then we have background material, and more in-depth features. This should be a media where you can find everything.

SKARI

Why do you think the 2004 media bill was a bad idea?
I think it was very closed, very narrow. I think what we need in Iceland is a sensible law about the whole media, about ownership and editorialship and all sorts of things, not just about who owns the media. Now, the latest talk about a new media bill has proposed putting any company's maximum ownership of a media outlet at 25%. This has never annoyed me, how much this or that company owns. It's never been an issue in Iceland over who actually owned Morgunblaðið. It just became an issue when Fréttablaðið came, and Davíð Oddsson was very angry about the owners of Fréttablaðið. We know that [Baugur Group CEO] Jón Ásgeir Jóhannesson owns about 28%, but ownership changes from day to day and week to week because we're on the market now. We don't follow who owns this paper and they don't interfere.

So you've never had Jón Ásgeir come down here and say, "I want you guys to do a story on this"?
No, no (laughing). I have met Jón Ásgeir once in my life. But it just so happens that [Jóhannesson's father] Jóhannes Jónsson and I grew up on the same street, and we've known each other for many years.

If you were to co-author a new media bill, what would you focus on?
I haven't really thought about that, but I think that laws about the media should be similar to laws about other companies. We have an obligation to get our information right, so I think there's more responsibility on us to be truthful and transparent than there is on some business company for example.

What changes would you like to see in the Icelandic media itself?
I think we need to do more critical research. Icelandic papers don't have a lot of money, but I would like to have the budget to have people go more in depth in individual stories, for many days and weeks, to do more investigative pieces. I think the Icelandic media needs that a little bit.

The Grapevine asked questions relating to the police raid on Fréttablaðið, but due to current legal actions, Kári Jónasson was not allowed to comment.

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Skífan Laugavegi 26

An Interview with Arna Schram, President of the Icelandic Journalists Union

What is the position of the Icelandic Journalists Union regarding the gag order on Fréttablaðið [regarding e-mails from Jónína Benediktsdóttir related to the Baugur case]?
Jónína Benediktsdóttir had a private affair against Fréttablaðið. The union does not want the police commissioner or any authorities coming into the editorial office of a newspaper, as we believe this could jeopardize freedom of the press in this country. This also ties in with the safekeeping of news sources.

Do you believe, as some have contended, that Icelandic authorities are on a "crusade" against the media?
Sometimes it looks like it. Politicians from the governmental parties have, for example, criticized the media, implying that it needs to be reviewed or regulated better, without giving specific examples of what needs changing. This gives the impression that journalists here are writing for some other reason than to report the news. At the same time, I'm not saying that the media is above criticism. But if the criticism is not founded then it must be regarded as insinuation.

There's been some talk of re-introducing a media bill. Do you think this would be a good idea?
The union was against the media bill of 2004, because we thought that the bill included much stricter rules than one can find in many other European countries. And we thought that the government was going to push it through Alþingi without wide and open discussion in this country. [The bill was passed in parliament but was not made into law because the president didn't sign it.] We, in a large meeting in 2004, encouraged an open discussion in the community about media ownership, with a possible media law in mind. But a media law may not be so strict that it could for example hinder new media from coming into the market.

GÚNDI

What was your overall impression of the conference on journalist ethics earlier this month?
I was happy that we could come together with different opinions and talk openly. There were of course those with very different ideas regarding ethical rules. I think we should have rules, and an ethics committee, but I want to try to reconsider the rules and find some resolution that all of us can agree on. I certainly believe that we should guard free speech, but that also means taking responsibility for what you write and print.

Are there any changes that you would personally like to make to the ethics guidelines?
No, not really. I don't want to go into the review with my mind already made up about what I do and don't want to see. I want to review all of it. I'd like to have an open discussion on the possible changes we can make.

What do you think the Icelandic media is doing right, and where do you think it can improve?
I have to admit that we have quite a diverse media in this country, and I think it's good how different the media outlets are from each other, but I sometimes feel as though we keep following the same stories. One thing I would like to see changes in is in the relationship between advertisers and the editorial office. I think we should know if the media is paid to talk about something.

■ By Paul F Nikolov

66° North Opens in SoHo

Famed outdoorwear company 66° North has been known to Icelanders for nearly 90 years, but has only recently began selling its wares to retailers in the US. On 1 November, the company managed to gain a stronger foothold in American markets by opening a store in New York's SoHo district (on 158 Mercer St, to be precise), a neighbourhood better known for high-end fashion. The store will only be open until the end of December, and for those who've had to endure New York winters – where temperatures often plunge far lower than Icelandic winters do – a store selling clothing tried and tested by Arctic rescue teams will probably be warmly welcomed. "We're already selling products to something like 80 shops in the US as it is," explained managing director Marinó Guðmundsson, "but we felt that this move would give our products much greater brand recognition." The hope, says Guðmundsson, is to eventually open a permanent store in the US.

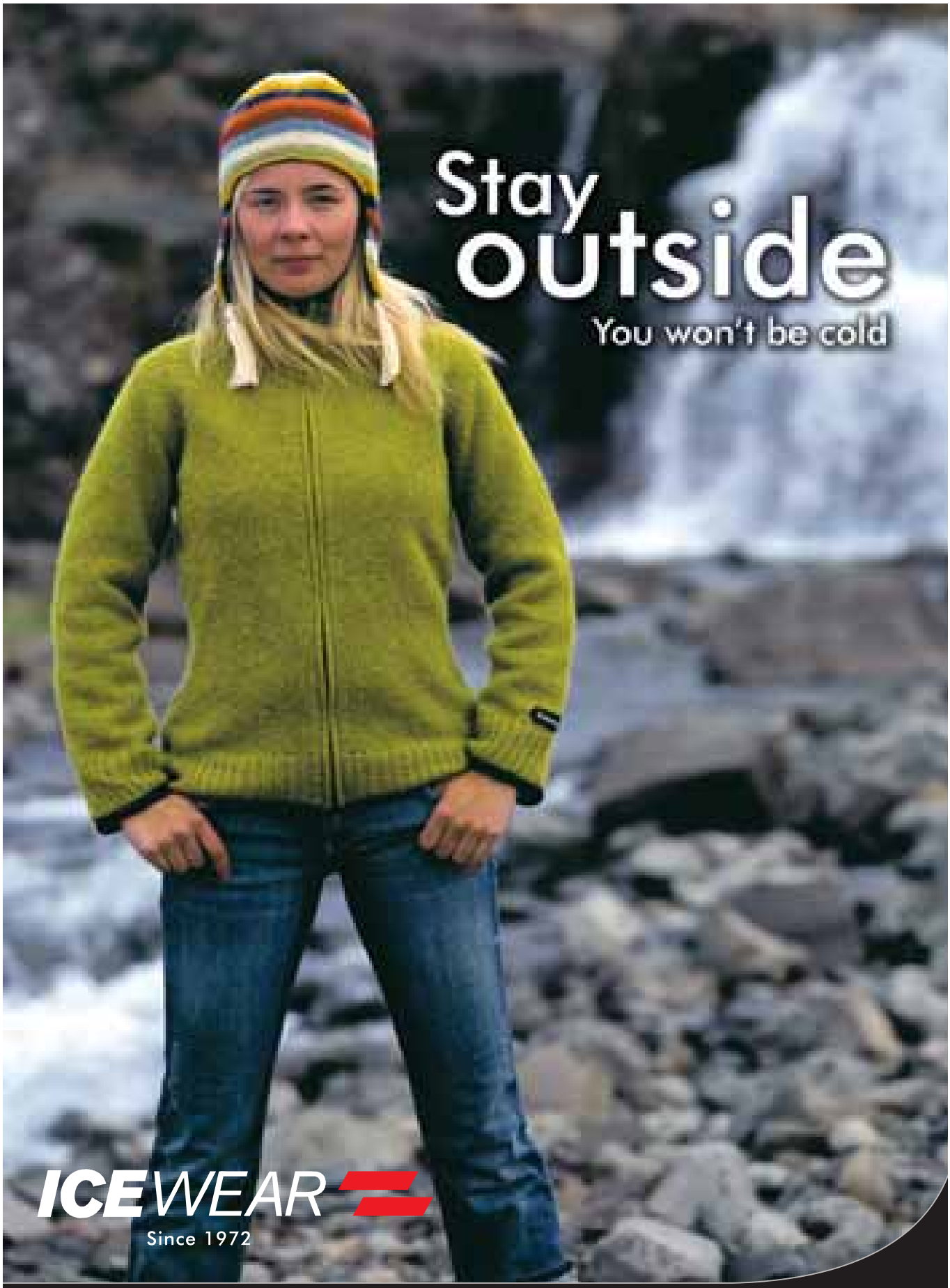
But the store isn't stopping at clothing. 66° North in SoHo also plans to bring other aspects of the Icelandic experience to New York. CDs by Icelandic musicians will be available for purchase, as well as a lounge area replete with moss-covered shelves, gravel floors and reclining chairs. The store is also planning on offering tastings of Iceland's own Reyka Vodka, an after party for the film Screaming Masterpiece with a performance by Mugison, and acts such as Sigur Rós and Emiliana Torrini may also perform there over the next two months.

When asked why 66° North chose a fashion street for a store selling outdoor wear, Guðmundsson said he didn't see a conflict in clientele. "It's a great location," he told the Grapevine, "and outdoor wear and fasion go great together. A lot of fashion-oriented people shop there."

For more information, go to http://www.66northus.com/default.asp?news_id=1458

■ By Paul F Nikolov

GÚNDI



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News in Brief

BY PAUL F. NIKOLOV AND SVEINN BIRKIR BJÖRNSSON

Stem Cell Legislation Pending
According to the Icelandic Medical Journal, Minister for Health and Social Security and Progressive Party MP Jón Kristjánsson has appointed a committee with the task of forming a proposal for legislation on stem cell research in Iceland. Currently, Icelandic legislation only allows for stem cell research in relation to technical insemination or in search of genetic diseases during pregnancy, although blood stem cells have been gathered from umbilical cords by Icelandic health authorities for scientific research since 1996.

Studies indicate that the use of stem cells may be helpful in curing various diseases, such as Parkinson's disease and diabetes, due to the stem cells' ability to differentiate into other types of cells. Despite growing interest in stem cell research among scientists, the issue has been debated on ethical grounds, especially regarding the harvesting of stem cells from human embryos.

In Europe, the debate on stem cell research has been lively. Sweden and Britain have already passed legislation that allows stem cell research, while in Denmark the issue has been discussed widely. In Germany, Austria, Ireland and Portugal the issue has met some resistance.

The US on the other hand has taken a firm stand against stem cell research. On President Bush's initiative, all public funding for stem cell research was cut in August 2001. The issue became a hot topic for the presidential elections in 2004, when John Kerry pledged that he would revoke Bush's decision if elected. The Icelandic committee will include doctors, lawyers, theologists and philosophers. It will announce its recommendations by March 2006. A recent Icelandic opinion poll among doctors, lawyers and ministers on the practical applications of stem cells showed that a vast majority believed the use of embryonic stem cells for therapeutic purposes to be justifiable. Given the make up of the committee, it's reasonable to assume that the recommendation will follow that of our neighbours in Sweden.

Many Confess to Crimes They Didn't Commit
According to a new study conducted by the University of Reykjavík and the Institute of Psychiatry in London, a large percentage of Icelanders charged with crimes they didn't commit confess to them anyway. Morgunblaðið reports that fully 7% of the nearly 2,000 Icelanders falsely accused of crimes gave confessions. Gísli Guðjónsson, a professor in legal psychology at the Institute of Psychiatry in London, called the results, "just the tip of the iceberg." Among the participants who helped conduct the survey was former US Attorney General Janet Reno.

Gallup: Vilhjálmur Leading Gísli Marteinn
According to the results of the latest IMG Gallup poll, Reykjavík city councilman for the Independence Party Vilhjálmur Þ. Vilhjálmsson has taken the lead over former television personality Gísli Marteinn Baldursson as that party's mayoral choice. When asked whom they would most like to see as the next mayor of Reykjavík, 62.2% of respondents chose Vilhhjálmsson while 37.8% chose Baldursson. Among those who said they would vote for the Independence Party, 53% said they would vote for Vilhjálmsson while 47% chose Baldursson. Among those who said they would vote for a party other than the Independence Party, 71% said they would rather see Vilhhjálmsson as mayor, while only 29% said the same about Baldursson. Among those who were undecided on which party they would vote for, 67% said they would rather see Vilhhjálmsson as mayor, as opposed to 33% who chose Baldursson.

The survey was conducted from 5 and 11 October, polling 370 Reykjavík residents between the ages of 16 and 75, with 62% of those polled responding.

Police Wake Man from Nightmare
Police were called to an apartment in Árbær last month after neighbours reported they heard cries for help coming from within the apartment. Upon arriving, the police discovered that the man was actually just having a bad dream. The man said he was grateful that the police woke him up. The incident was the second time in the month that police had been called to his apartment to wake him from a nightmare.

PM Halldór Ásgrímsson: I Would Have Thought Differently on Iraq
Prime Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson, in an interview with Icelandic daily Blaðið, said that if he had known there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq beforehand, he would have had a different position on the invasion of Iraq.

Ásgrímsson, who was Foreign Minister at the time of the 2003 invasion, along with then Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson agreed to let Iceland join the coalition of countries helping the invasion of Iraq, despite a Gallup poll from earlier that year showing at least 78% of the population against such an action, and without putting the matter to a vote.

Ásgrímsson has defended his decision not to put the matter to a vote, saying that many measures pass through parliament, but that it doesn't change the fact that "ministers need to take actions that they feel are best for the people."

Opposition Coalition Possible
During the party convention of the Leftist-Greens held last month, party chairman Steingrímur J. Sigfússon expressed his desire to form a coalition with the Social Democratic Party. According to Vísir, Sigfússon likened this "red-green alliance" to a similar coalition in Norway, claiming it has been successful. However, Social Democratic vice chairman Ágúst Ólafur Ágústsson was less than enthusiastic about the idea, saying that a voting alliance has never existed in Iceland; that it's every party for itself.

On the other hand, Guðjón Arnar Kristjánsson, the chairman of the Liberal Party, said that an alliance between his party and the Leftist-Greens should be taken into consideration.

Landsvirkjun to Sponsor Grade School Material
The national power company Landsvirkjun will be sponsoring course work for grade school students in Iceland. According to Morgunblaðið, Minister of Education Þorgerður K. Gunnarsdóttir approved the decision, saying that she trusts teachers to choose what course work they choose to teach.

Leftist-Green MP Kolbrún Halldórsdóttir expressed outrage at the decision, saying that Landsvirkjun is one of the major contributors to the Kárahnjúkar dam project, and that a company such as this cannot be trusted to provide children with unbiased course work. Minister Gunnarsdóttir said that she would not reverse her decision.

Smoking Ban to Take Effect in 2007
A formal ban on smoking in restaurants will take effect in 2007. According to Vísir, the Minister of Health has approved the bill that parliament passed calling for the ban. Many restaurant owners are unhappy with the decision, including Guðfinnur Sölvi Karlsson, the owner of Prikið, who quipped last February, "If first and foremost they have to ban smoking because of the effect it can have on employees, why can't I just make my employees wear oxygen masks?"

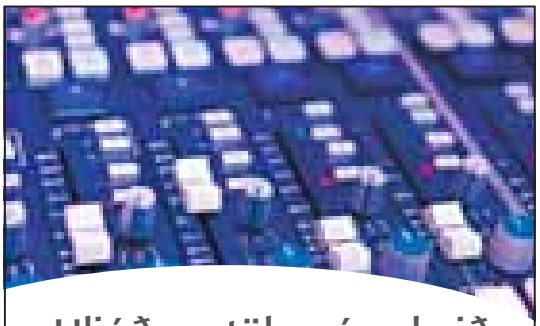
Only East Iceland Votes to Combine Voting Districts
Last month, 61 different voting districts in Iceland voted on whether or not they wanted to combine into larger districts. Only east Iceland agreed to combining their districts - Austurbyggð, Fáskrúðsfjarðarhreppur, Fjarðabyggð and Mjóafjarðarhreppur - into one voting district for the local elections to be held on 9 June 2006. All other districts either voted against combining or will need to vote again. According to RÚV, Minister of Social Affairs Árni Magnússon said that the results took him by surprise.

Sandwich Monopoly Possible
The sandwich company Sóma is considering buying another sandwich company, Júmbó. If this happens, the new company will have 95% of Iceland's sandwich market. According to Vísir, this will not draw the attention of anti-trust authorities, as the new sandwich company will only be worth about 700 million ISK (a little over 11 million USD). By Icelandic law, monopolies are only illegal when the company is worth at least one billion ISK.

Raid on Strip Club Reveals Nothing
Twelve policemen raided the strip club Goldfinger in Kópavogur in mid-October. According to Vísir, the search revealed nothing except for the suspicion that private dances, which are illegal, may be happening in one room. Police also wanted to see if the work and residence permits of the dancers were valid, and if there were any drugs in the establishment, again finding everything in order.

Authorities were alerted after complaints came in from men who claimed their credit card spending at the club was higher than they remembered it being.

Liberals Propose Ban on Rabbits
The Liberal Party intends to propose a measure in parliament that would ban all rabbits from bird nesting islands. According to the website of Liberal MP Magnús Þór Hafsteinsson, the proposal is being made in response to what has been considered by many to be a plague of rabbits in the Westman Islands. However, Icelandic law categorizes rabbits as livestock and pets, and it is forbidden to hunt them. Nonetheless, close to a thousand rabbits have been hunted in the Westman Islands this year.



Hljóðupptökunámskeið í Stúdíó Sýrlandi

Hið árlega hljóðupptökunámskeið í Stúdíó Sýrlandi hefst í byrjun janúar 2006. Námskeiðið er ætlað þeim sem hafa einhverja reynslu af hljóðupptökum og vilja bæta þekkingu sína enn frekar. Á námskeiðinu, sem haldið er í einu fullkomnasta hljóðveri landsins, verður lögð áhersla á vönduð vinnubrögð þar sem nútímatækni í hljóðvinnslu er nýtt til hins ítrasta. Námskeiðið stendur yfir í 8 vikur en fjöldi þátttakenda er takmarkaður.
Innritun er hafin.

Allar nánari upplýsingar eru veittar í Stúdíó Sýrlandi, Skúlatúni 4 og í síma 591 5250 eða 591 5280

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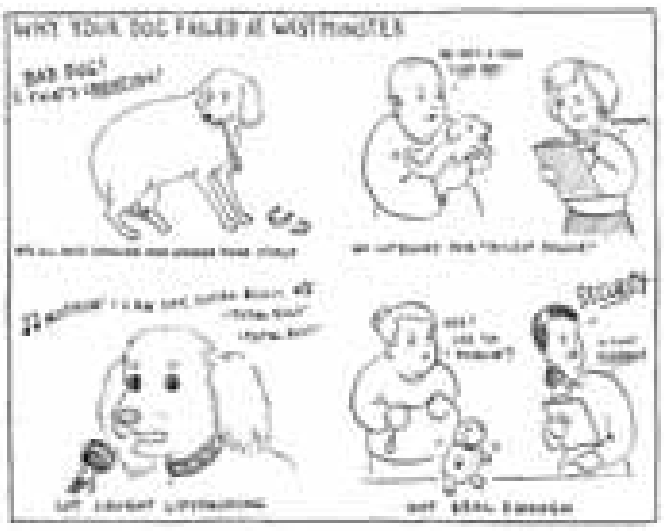

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Grapevine's Government Guide

Who They Are and How They Vote (and how you can watch it)

The Leftist-Green Party (Vinstrihreyfingin-Grænt Framboð)

Guiding principles: Far-left, pro-environmental, anti-NATO, feminist.
Party Chairperson: Steingrímur J. Sigfússon
Number of seats: 5
Registered members: about 1,400
Ministers: none
Strange but true: The Leftist-Green Party makes all their MPs' financial information available through their web page, including stock ownership.
Website: www.vg.is
E-mail: vg@vg.is
Phone: 552-8872
Address: Pósthólf 175, 121 Reykjavík

The Social Democratic Party (Samfylkingin)

Guiding principles: Left-centrist, social-democratic.
Party Chairman: Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir
Number of seats: 20
Registered members: about 20,000
Ministers: none
Strange but true: The party's women's movement has a web page with yellow text on a white background. It's not as stylish as it sounds, and even less pragmatic.
Website: www.samfylking.is
E-mail: samfylking@samfylking.is
Phone: 414-2200
Address: Hallveigarstígur 1 (2nd Floor), Box 160, 101 Reykjavík

The Progressive Party (Framsóknarflokkurinn)

Guiding principles: Right-centrist; believes in fewer economic and environmental regulations while strengthening the social system.
Party Chairman: Halldór Ásgrímsson
Number of seats: 12
Registered members: about 10,000
Ministers: Prime Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson, Minister of Social Affairs Árni Magnússon, Minister of Agriculture Guðni Ágústsson, Minister of Health Jón Kristjánsson, Minister of Industry Valgerður Sverrisdóttir
Strange but true: According to the latest Gallup poll, The Progressive Party, from which Prime Minister Ásgrímsson comes, only enjoys the support of 9.4% ot the population.
Website: www.framsokn.is
E-mail: framsokn@framsokn.is
Phone: 540-4300
Address: Hverfisgata 33 (2nd Floor), 101 Reykjavík

The Liberal Party (Frjálslyndir)

Guiding principles: Right-centrist, emphasizing the rights of fishermen and increasing government transparency.
Party Chairman: Guðjón Kristjánsson
Number of seats: 3
Registered members: about 2,000
Ministers: none
Strange but true: According to a survey by Viðskiptablaðið, Liberal Party MPs have the best web pages of all Icelandic MPs.
Website: www.frjalslyndir.is
E-mail: xf@xf.is
Phone: 552-2600
Address: Aðalstræti 9, 101 Reykjavík

The Independence Party (Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn)

Guiding principles: Right wing, believes in further privatization in all areas of society.
Party Chairman: Geir H. Haarde
Number of seats: 23
Registered members: about 34,000
Ministers: Minister of Fisheries Árni M. Mathiesen, Minister of Justice Björn Bjarnason, Minister of Foreign Affairs Davíð Oddsson, Minister of the Economy Geir H. Haarde, President of Parliament Solveig Pétursdóttir, Minister of the Environment Sigríður A. Þórðardóttir, Minister of Communications Sturla Böðvarsson, Minister of Education Þórgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir
Strange but true: Among the party's goals stated before last parliamentary elections (2003) was: "to move Iceland from seventh to first place on the United Nations' list of countries in the world where it is most desirable to live." According to 2005 rankings, Iceland is number seven.
Website: www.xd.is
E-mail: xd@xd.is
Phone: 515-1700
Address: Háaleitisbraut 1, 105 Reykjavík

So where do they stand on . . .

Would your party support changes in gender equality laws that would require a "gender quota" stipulating that a certain percentage of board members of private companies must be female, as Norway has done?

Leftist-Green Party:
"Yes, my party is ready to discuss all progressive proposals on this matter. I believe that a more pragmatic tool would be to give the Centre for Gender Equality the rights to investigate company's financial records and if there is evidence of gender based wage inequality the Centre for Gender Equality should have the means to force companies to correct those inequalities." *MP Kolbrún Halldórsdóttir.*

Social Democratic Party:
"Yes, it is strong possibility. A plan of action on many levels is needed to achieve real equality." *MP Guðrún Ögmundsdóttir.*

Progressive Party:
"The party has not discussed the issue directly, but I would not rule out the possibility. This is not on our agenda, but if we do not reach better results with gender equality issues we will have to look at more progressive methods." *MP Siv Friðleifsdóttir*

Liberal Party:
"I cannot answer that question as the subject has not been discussed within the party. I personally believe that the individual's skill should be the deciding factor, regardless of gender. It would be a shame if we had to pass laws in order to enforce such self evident truths." *MP Magnús Þór Hafsteinsson*

Independence Party:
"No, personally I don't think that is an option. Private companies should be able to decide this issue for themselves. It is not an option to enforce laws that would constrain companies like that." *MP Kjartan Ólafsson*

Gúndi

Grapevine s Government Guide Bonus:

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It's possible to watch parliamentary sessions live, and you don't need cable – or even a television, for that matter.

The government television station RÚV, attainable by even the poorest TV aerials, regularly broadcasts live from the halls of parliament. Check RÚV's listings in any of the country's newspapers, look for "Alþingi" and tune in.

If you prefer, you can also watch the action in person – from a gallery within the halls of parliament themselves. Simply go to the parliament's web page, www.althingi.is, to see the dates and times of the next parliamentary session. Then make your way to the parliament building, which faces Austurvellir, and use the entrance opposite the church Dómkirkjan. Admission is free, although you might be asked to check large bags with security and remove your hat. From there, you can go up to the gallery and witness democracy in action. Popcorn currently unavailable.

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The Northern Lights, also known as the Aurora Borealis, are a spectacular natural phenomenon, often seen dancing around in fantastic colours across the Arctic sky. The Northern lights originate from the sun, where large explosions and electronic storms throw flares and solar particles deep into space. These clouds of solar particles are caught by the Earth's magnetic field on the south and north poles. The solar particles collide with the atmospheric gases and create this wonderful light effect, known as the Aurora Borealis.

Northern Lights can be seen when certain weather conditions are fulfilled, usually during crispy cold and very still evenings. Subject to the correct weather conditions for sightings, this tour will operate.

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More Reproduction Needed in Iceland

Looking at the formulae above what do you see? I guess if you aren't a major in advanced maths or statistics it won't mean much but the answer to this set of calculations actually proves that Iceland is one of the best countries in the world to live in, at the moment.

The jumble of numbers and algebra is in fact the equation used by the United Nations in determining which countries are the least and most liveable places on earth. It is called the Human Development Index or the HDI and this year it says that Iceland is officially the second best place to be a citizen.

The HDI was developed in 1990 by the Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq and has been used by the UN since 1993 to compile its yearly Development Report. HDI is a comparative measure of poverty, literacy, education, life expectancy and other factors throughout all the countries worldwide. It is the UN's standard measurement of "well-being" and reflects greatly on areas such as child welfare. The HDI uses three basic dimensions to measure all of this: Life expectancy at birth, knowledge (i.e. literacy and educational achievements), living standards (i.e. gross domestic product (GDP) and purchasing power parity (PPP)). Using these three points a world ranking is made and Iceland's straight in at number two.

The report is produced by an independent team of experts under an advisory network of leaders in academia, government and civil society. Norway tops the table this year. At the bottom is the drought-ridden and locust-beset country of Niger; officially, the worst place on earth to be alive. This year's report, though, shows that in general the world is improving.

Over the past year, Iceland has moved up the rankings overtaking countries such as Sweden and Canada, with continuous growth in GDP, and an outstanding ranking in education being the impetus for this. The report also highlights the fact that Iceland has one of the best gender equality ratings in the world, with women playing a bigger part in the structure of its society and business, accounting for an equal proportion to men in contributing to the percentage of workers within the family unit. Even though the gap is small between the genders, there is still clear daylight between the two, with men making considerably more income compared to that of their female counterparts, with an average $11,000 divide between the two sexes. In addition, although women make up 30.2% of the seats in the Alþingi (lower parliamentary house) only a small minority make up the higher positions at ministerial levels.

Iceland may be one of the "great states" and success stories at the moment but worryingly it is following trends similar to those of most Western countries. With a dropping birth rate, the community patterns are starting to change. The population of those in the demographic of the age 65 and above are starting to increase, largely due to the fact that healthcare and living standards have risen significantly allowing for people to live longer. By 2015 14% of the Icelandic population will be over 65; in contrast, the demographic of the population under the age of 15 is going in the opposite direction. By 2015 this demographic will have fallen to 19% of the total population from 22%, at which it currently stands.

The forecasted annual population growth rate for Iceland shows that this gulf will only get bigger. As any economist will tell you, this is bad news. What will start to happen is that the younger, diminishing working sector will have to shoulder the burden of the ballooning older retired generation. Currently in Iceland the retired are supported by generous pension contributions subsidized from the coffers of the government treasury, i.e. the taxpayer. The government has realized that this older top-heavy society will prevail and that one day there will be a deficit in pensions that will be unsustainable by the tax payer, which is why workers are now contributing to their own state run pension schemes. The question is this: when Iceland has a multitude of old people, who is going to pay the tax to sustain the services that this demographic will keep using when they are retired. People don't walk into a room when they retire and wait 20 years to die. No, they still use the roads, healthcare, sanitation and all the other services that the taxpayer must be burdened with. In effect, the youngest generation and more so the one after will be under dramatically more pressure as individuals to keep the country running. Taxes are at massive peaks already. Is it possible to keep raising them to pay for the retired population?

Welcome the immigrants or the third children

Iceland thus finds itself at the peak of living standards at the moment. How can it keep this up? One obvious way is to kick start the birth rate; this means various things, more candlelight suppers, perhaps, but as we all know more children equals more cost and people find it hard to afford this. One country in a similar position to Iceland is France. France has the second highest birth-rate in Europe, at 1.9, high compared to Europe's average of 1.4 and way higher than Iceland's 1.0. The government there is still trembling at the prospect of a future population diminishing and an older top-heavy society evolving. To combat this, a plan unveiled by the Prime Minister of France, Dominique de Villepin will double cash incentives for big families. Women in France are being offered up to 1000 euros a month to stop work for a year and have a third child (this being attached to the parent's salary). The underlying problem in Iceland and France is that middle-class, working women are postponing the age at which they reproduce, due to the fact that they are enjoying a new empowerment and equality that wasn't available in the past.

France hopes that their measures, combined with new government initiatives for cheap childcare, will encourage more parents to have that third child, thus giving the population that needed boost for future growth and stability.

Barring the third child reward, a more controversial way of achieving this is by increasing significantly the levels of immigrants allowed into the country. It has been proven that countries that are higher on the HDI attract the more talented immigrants (economic value and individual capital) and discourage potential emigrants from leaving. Britain has one such policy, inviting all levels of workers to the country, ranging from menial employees to highly educated doctors and has done so for many decades. These immigrants provide valuable revenue from tax and are helping to boost the economy and the birth rate.

A new place to wave the flag

In the meantime Iceland's youth must get in touch with their paternal sides and build a new generation to sustain themselves. In a recent BBC survey, the largest of its kind, with 51,000 people questioned in over 160 countries, it was found that Icelanders were one of the most nationalistic people in the world and had more pride in their state than most other citizens.

If this is the case then every Icelander should think of it as his/her duty to go out and reproduce (responsibly) and make their great nation greater by having more babies. If my neighbours are anything to go by, it seems that people could have already worked out the equation and the flag waving may well have already begun.

■ By Stephen Taylor-Matthews

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in good time

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Christmas parcels within Europe is Tuesday **13.12.**

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Using Empowerment to Objectify

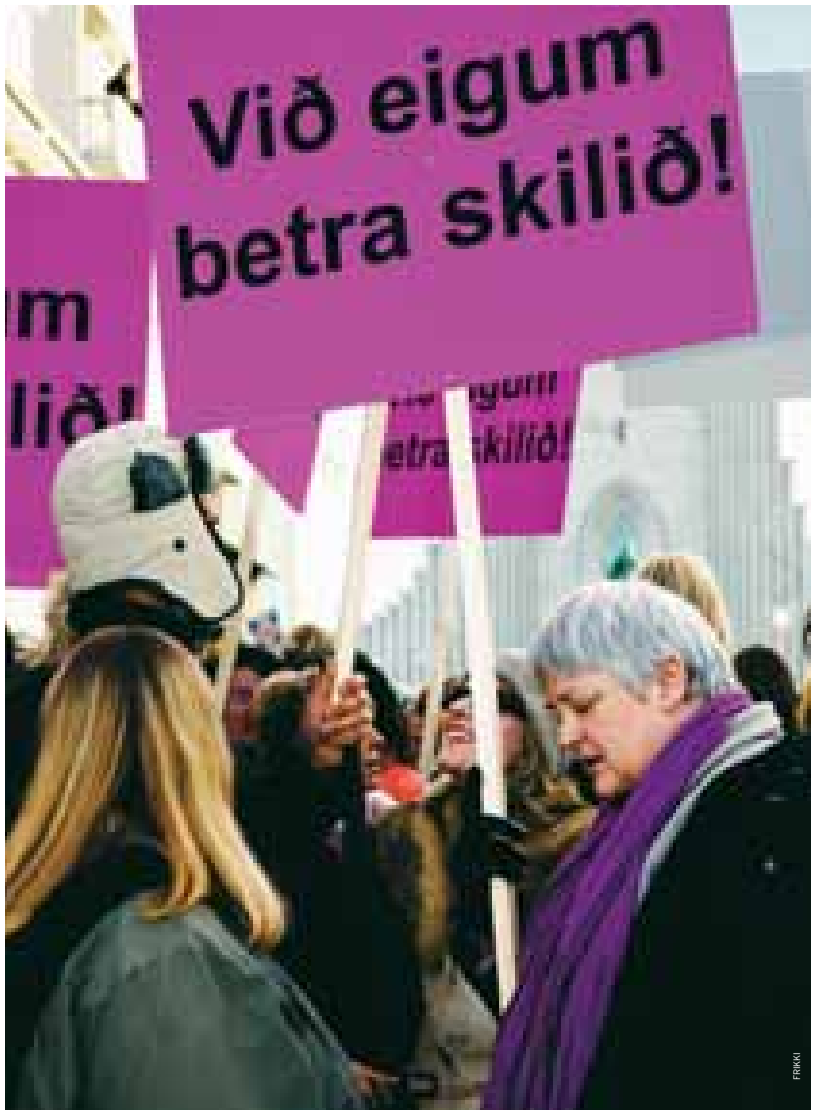
A COLUMN BY
ÞÓRDÍS ELVA ÞORVALDSDÓTTIR BACHMANN

I remember first hearing about sexual empowerment in correlation with Madonna (when I was way too young to understand what it was about). Her message was that women could derive power from being sexual, as opposed to viewing sex as something "proper" women didn't flaunt. As a result, Madonna reveled in it. She slithered across the stage in sensual live performances, wearing corsets and fishnets. She released songs such as Erotic and Justify My Love, accompanied by videos MTV refused to play. To top it all, Madonna released the controversial book Sex, which became one of the great buzzes of its time. Whether or not we agree with her message, she pulled it off and became an international megastar and multi millionaire. Madonna set a trend, and since her Like a Virgin performance in the early eighties, countless artists and performers have tried to employ her method of overt sexuality to get recognition. People started to believe that being sexually liberated and baring it all was a successful way to state their empowerment.

However, something went terribly wrong along the way. Today's popular culture has skewed the notion of sexual empowerment, with saddening results. The music channels and programs are packed with young artists, men and women alike, writhing spread-legged across the floor and humping their backup singers like it's going out of style. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to be going out of style at all. Madonna didn't behave like a Girl Scout either, but she was arguably a pioneer with a vision. Today's performers don't seem to have any sort of message, and as a result pop culture has become uncomfortably reminiscent of a mindless, glossy porn flick. With backup singers.

The main misunderstanding lies in the notion that sexual empowerment is synonymous with behaving like a sex worker. There's nothing powerful about being a sex worker. Therefore, the sexual empowerment in pop has turned into its very opposite, and instead of empowering the performers, it ends up making them look like a bunch of hookers and pimps. Not to say that people can't be sexy, or flaunt their sexuality. Sex is a vital part of life, and can be used to please, inspire and procreate, as well as degrade, harm and humiliate. It's all a matter of how it's used.

So what is sexual empowerment really about, then? According to quick, Internet research, it's about knowing your own body, as well as having a sense of control and autonomy. Sexual liberation doesn't mean tearing your clothes off or fingering yourself on camera. It's about finding an authentic voice that includes your sexuality. It's about feeling good about yourself as a sexual being, whether you're sexually active or completely abstinent. It's about making choices you're happy with. And who knows, maybe artists like Christina Milian feel excellent about groping their half-naked-half-latex-clad body while covered in black paint. Maybe 50 Cent's dancers feel extremely empowered by being sprayed with champagne while stripping and having his posse grab their naked butts. Or maybe it's purely an attempt to make money, in which case it's not empowerment. It's objectification.



FRIKKI

It would be hard to fund and staff one university for a country of 300.000 people. Right now, the country has eight, and they are fiercely competitive. Are there any benfits to the struggle?

University Darwinism

By Julika Huether Photos by Gúndi

Survival has always been a tough task in the history of Icelanders – from infertile land to the black death to volcanic eruptions, they had it all. The establishment of the welfare state in the twentieth century suggested that the survival-of-the-few-fittest concept had finally worn out. Instead, it has made its way into Icelandic universities, where joining the battle for funding has become the only chance to survive.

Until 1970, the state-run University of Iceland (Háskóli Íslands), founded in 1911, was the only Icelandic institution at university level. Today, there are five public and three private universities, four of which obtained university status in the last decade. The sense of competition that was kindled by this rapid change of scene has since been fuelled by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (menntamálaráðuneytið), the universities' first and supposedly foremost source of financial support for both teaching and research.

You Cut Our Funding, We Raise the Tuition

All universities have a separate contract with the Ministry for each of these tasks, which are stated in the Universities Act of 1997 as their primary fields of operation. The budget for teaching is distributed according to the number of full-time students enrolled and differs among subjects, taking into account the cost of certain fields—the notion that "teaching dentists is more expensive than teaching law," as Þórður Kristinsson, Director of Academic Affairs at the University of Iceland, explains it.

The Universities Act had some surprising ramifications. Magnús Árni Magnússon, Co-Rector of the privately run Bifröst School of Business (Viðskiptaháskólinn á Bifröst), said when this system was created that it was exclusively serving the benefit of the largest public institution of higher education, the University of Iceland. While the subject of business may require less equipment than a hard science, the former system also recognized that maintaining a small university away from the capital required more cost per student. "Before that date, Bifröst was receiving a much higher grant per student than most other universities in Iceland. So in one night, our income was halved. We had two ways to go from there: either to close our doors, or to take up tuition fees," he told the Grapevine.

And this decision to raise tuition fees significantly upset the balance of the major universities in Iceland. Suddenly, the smaller private schools that were receiving so much less funding can now raise tuition, and tap into an enormous resource. Public universities, by law, may not. In effect, every student who has passed the stúdentspróf, an exam comparable to A-level exams, has the chance to enrol at a public university—tuition fees are believed to present too great an obstacle to a few students.

The private universities are obviously using this advantage well. A large number of teachers have been reported to have flocked from the University of Iceland to the privately run Reykjavík University (Háskólinn í Reykjavík) at the end of last term. For most of them, low wages and the university's reputation going downhill, both connected to a lack of funding at the University of Iceland, will have facilitated their decision to leave.

Path to Privatization

At the time of this writing, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has not given a statement as to whether the policies set out in the Universities Act of 1997 were meant to encourage privatization among Icelandic universities. Though the merger between the Reykjavík University and the formerly public Icelandic College of Engineering and Technology into one private institution, realized just before the beginning of the fall semester, and suggested by the Ministry merely a year ago, gives a hint.

Magnússon from the Bifröst School of Business believes privatization is coming and he believes it is a good thing. "It pays to go to university and get an education: you get a higher salary, and you get a better life. And I think it is not unfair that people pay a part of it," he told us.

After all, he pointed out, even if Icelandic citizens have the possibility to receive a loan from the Icelandic Student Loan Fund (Lánasjóður islenskra námsmanna) for both tuition fees and living costs, the loan doesn't offset the actual cost of attending university. "By far the largest part of studying at university is the sacrificial cost - you cannot work while you are studying. With people who are studying at Bifröst, that is approximately five million Icelandic kronur per year per student, roughly fifteen million for the whole period of three years of study, and tuition fees are not that large a part."

True, the Loan Fund never held any possibility of making up what a student could make at work in the booming Icelandic economy. But the added tuition of a school like Bifröst does smart. The Loan Fund only covers tuition fees of up to 45,000 ISK per year, and at Bifröst the fees can rise up to ISK 308,000 per semester.

Big School Blues

Another disadvantage the University of Iceland finds itself at is its size, housing eleven faculties and teaching over 9000 students. This number has increased dramatically during the last decade from 5364 students in 1994 to 8225 in 2003, thus exceeding a limit specified in the contract between the University and the Ministry, meaning that the University is teaching a number of students for whom it receives no state funding.

Due to these problems, the student/staff ratio has soared in the same period from 16 to 22, though the university has hired more part-time teachers to slow down this development, currently employing 450 permanent academic staff and 1800 part-timers. On paper, the University of Iceland's student to full-time staff ratio is appalling. Compare the full-time student/full-time staff ratio of 4.1 at public universities in the US in 2001 to the ratio of 13.8 at the University of Iceland in the year 2003 and you get the idea.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that students, especially those who have either studied abroad or come from abroad to study at the University of Iceland, consider the teaching at this institution a low-quality experience. Aðalsteinn Jörundsson went to a university in Montpellier as an exchange student.

"When I was told that it was one of the worst universities in France, I realized how bad the University of Iceland actually is when it comes to teaching."

Quality control has thus been an important task at Icelandic universities, with the Ministry in charge of external quality control. According to Halldór Jónsson, Director of the Office of Research at the University of Iceland, this has not been conducted properly: "The Ministry has a special department for quality assessments, but they have very few people there and probably not all the resources they need. However, from the University's point of view these external evaluations should be more frequent."

In addition, external quality assessments often rely heavily on self-evaluation reports which the universities draw up themselves. Though these facts should be reliable, such a means can not be regarded as objective.

Internal quality control, on the other hand, is at least performed once a semester at all universities. Student surveys are usually the central tool for self-evaluation. They might be conducted as a discussion in the classroom, as at the Reykjavík University, where the two main questions are what makes students come to university and what hinders them. Or as a detailed online survey with a set of questions for each particular course and teacher.

But as different as the way a survey is conducted is its outcome: While Guðfinna Bjarnadóttir, Rector of the Reykjavík University, says complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible, the examples given mainly refer to minor problems like the disappearance of the chess boards in the cafeteria, or technical problems. Lecturers getting negative feedback are a more serious problem, and one that needs more time to be solved. Though Kristinsson is generally in favour of the democratic system at the University of Iceland, a system "built on trust, and the teacher has the freedom and responsibility that goes with it to plan and operate his course within certain limits," he admits that the University of Iceland's quality control might not be effective enough.

At private universities teachers can be hired and fired with short notice, the state-run universities employ a number of tenured teachers. Though they merely require three months notice for termination, bad performance is not a sufficient reason to fire them, as Jónsson explains: "The University has a lot of exceptionally able teachers but then again there are some that need to be motivated and encouraged to do better. If those teachers are permanently employed, it may prove difficult to fundamentally change how they do their work. As civil servants they have good job security, so that it is a bit far fetched to fire them, but the university can and will use other means. We can direct them, and the department can get other people to teach the courses."

Another indication that Icelandic universities cannot yet live up to international standards is that in the Academic Ranking of World Universities, published August 12, 2005, no Icelandic university made it into the top 500. University officials hold different opinions as to the reasons. Magnússon suggested that the survey referred to was conducted in China, and that Icelandic universities would get a seat on the list if they put more effort into getting international students, especially students from China. "I actually think that they just forgot Iceland and don't know it exists. I believe that is probably the reason."

International Demands, Local Resources

At a certain point, especially looking over the list of 500 top universities and examining how much greater their resources are than Iceland's, one begins to wonder why Iceland even believes it can compete. And Iceland isn't competing with only one university, but with eight universities for a population of 300,000.

The greatest difficulty Icelandic universities face is competing on the research fronts. Research, as a main part of a university's output, has not had a long history in Iceland. In fact, research has only been focused on since the 1990s, and separate contracts with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science on the funding of research have only recently been realized. However, with an incentive scheme at its core, giving researchers the possibility of increasing their budget through increasing their output, the University of Iceland's research centres now make up a quarter of all the research conducted in Iceland.

And whereas private universities seem to be favoured by the Ministry as to the teaching budget, they are at a disadvantage when it comes to research. Bjarnadóttir of the Reykjavík University claims the University of Iceland is rewarded a huge prize: "The research tradition in Iceland has been slow in building. The University of Iceland is very keen, and I hope to see us there also in the future. We have a 20-year agenda, and developing research is part of it."

Part of the problem for young universities in building research centres is the lack of non-governmental funding. Where the University of Iceland manages to draw one third of its total income from those sources due to its already existing research infrastructure, Bjarnadóttir said for the Reykjavík University there is no such thing as non-governmental funding. "There is not much philanthropy in Iceland. Neither from individuals nor from companies. If you look at the English-Icelandic dictionary, there is no word for philanthropy in Icelandic."

However, other private universities, like the Bifröst School of Business, have managed to get sponsoring for research. As Magnússon pointed out. "Of all our research income, between 30 and 40% comes from the state. The rest is money coming from the business life or from social partners: the labour unions, the employers, and such."

However, Magnússon agrees with Bjarnadóttir that the government should increase the funding for research, as there have not been any revenues from research projects that could help finance further programmes. "We have been running our research at a huge loss. We have to divert income from some other revenue-making operation to finance it."

At the University of Iceland, part of the sponsoring from research funds is redistributed into the Central Research Fund of the University of Iceland, which allocates about ISK 130 million per year. Compared to other Icelandic universities, the University of Iceland is very successful at allocating money from foreign and Icelandic research funds, as Jónsson explained: "The Research Council of Iceland (Rannis) operates competitive research project based funds, which every academic member of the Icelandic community can apply for. The University of Iceland receives about 65 to 70% of the money from this fund."

> "If you look at the English-Icelandic dictionary, there is no word for philanthropy in Icelandic," Guðfinna Bjarnadóttir, Rector of University of Reykjavík.

> "It pays to go to university and get an education: you get a higher salary, and you get a better life. And I think it is not unfair that people pay a part of it," Magnus Árí Magnusson, Co-Rector, University of Bifröst.

Nevertheless, being the guiding light in research among Icelandic universities doesn't mean as much as it should. Compared to other European and American universities, research here is still in its infancy, and both students and teachers complain about a lack in transparency. Students do not know who to turn to with their master's thesis, because many lecturers keep their research programmes behind locked doors. And teachers like Gauti Kristmannsson, who teaches translation at the University of Iceland, agree that "the dated structure of departments and a financing system which often blocks interdisciplinary approaches" are problems that have to be addressed sooner than later.

One Sign of Success, Less Brain Drain

The struggle looks as though it will continue. Iceland, at present, spends a good deal less per capita than most European countries on higher education, and the US outspends all of them. But Iceland has made strides, and as much as the eight universities are fighting with each other, they are still accomplishing one key goal: Icelanders are staying in Iceland for an education.

The Student Loan Fund states that 12 to 15% of all students who have studied abroad stay there for good. This rate is not particularly high, and there is little that can be done to keep people from staying abroad once they have established a life studying. The key seems to be to present resources within Iceland. And in the last ten years, the number of Icelandic students exclusively studying abroad has decreased. Obviously, the new universities have played a significant role. Until recently, it was impossible to study architecture in Iceland, and people studying veterinary sciences still have to study abroad. But the diversity brought on by competition is meeting more and more needs.

Reykjavík University

University of Iceland

Bifröst School of Business

United in Vision: Women Go On Strike

The weather was beautiful-- sunny yet chilly-- on October 24, 2005. Women went on a memorable strike on this day in 1975, rounding up 25,000 sisters who refused to work, cook or clean and demanded to be heard.

This year, women in Iceland were encouraged to quit their work at 2:08 pm and rally downtown, where the plan was to gather in front of Hallgrímskirkja church, march down Skólavörðustígur, Laugavegur and Austurstræti to end up on Ingólfstorg square to listen to political speeches and view various acts on a packed agenda. At 2 pm, a few dozen women, seniors and toddlers alike, had gathered in front of the church. A group of bubbly teenage girls carried a banner that read "Women of the Future" and their giggles provided a hopeful soundscape as the crowd grew gradually larger. At 2:08, the bell of Hallgrímskirkja rang. A few men were present, supporting the cause, but they were notably few. A little girl, aged five or six, spoke into a megaphone carried by her mother, announcing that she'd like to become a bank manager when she grows up, adding that all women are fantastic and congratulating them on the occasion.
Margrét Pálmadóttir, leader of the Vox Feminae choir, led a mass singing, encouraging everybody to join in. A song circle soon formed, chanting "Go girls!" in between songs as the crowd grew to several hundred.

Interesting signs could soon be spotted in the crowd. Iceland has the largest female workforce (by percentage) in the world, but women in Iceland only make approximately 65% of men's wages. The signs criticizing the wage gap read: "Is my daughter worth less than my son?" and "Woman = 64.15 man?" In the sexual violence category were signs saying "Is rape not a crime?" and "Rape – so what?!?" General discrimination was also addressed, an example made by a young woman carrying a sign saying: "A 21st century woman asks herself: Would I be better a penis?"

In the next hour, tens of thousands of women joined the crowd, lining the entire Skólavörðustígur and filling up the nearby streets. Those who arrived late described a congestion from downtown Reykjavík to nearby township Garðabær. The authorities later claimed that close to 50,000 people had rallied. This historical number (doubling the protest in 1975,) made it nearly impossible for the march to take place, as the line of people filled up the planned route almost completely. Therefore, the crowd started branching off and smaller marches took place down nearby streets, such as Lokastígur and Spítalastígur, where thousands of women headed towards the square.

Steingrímur J. Sigfússon, party chairman of the Leftist-Greens, made sure his presence was known amongst the crowd, as women's liberation is the main political agenda for his party. However, as 30% of Iceland's females (a proportionate rally in the States would've been 46 million women) scurried towards the stage at Ingólfstorg, it became apparent that the square was a hopeless venue for a mass of this size. Not only does Ingólfstorg merely accommodate 10% of the people who rallied, it's also enclosed by tall buildings on all sides, making it impossible for the other 90% of the mass to see a thing. Some, including the Grapevine journalist who has heard about the historical assembly of 1975 since she was a little girl, tried to elbow themselves in the direction of the square, but got nowhere close.

Thirty years ago, this event was held at another, larger venue, Lækjartorg square, only 200 meters up the road from Ingólfstorg. Slightly further up the road from there is Arnarhóll, a grassy hill which hosts tens of thousands of people each June 17th, the Independence Day of Iceland. Arnarhóll is an even larger, more open area, which many argued would've served better to accommodate the 50,000 people who rallied. A rumour spread that the smaller venue was decided because the police refused to issue a permit for the larger venue. Popular as it was, the rumour was unfounded. Edda Jónsdóttir, the project leader of Women's Day Off, admitted that quite frankly she had not expected a crowd this large. Weatherwise, Ingólfstorg with its tall buildings on all sides is more sheltered from the wind that whips Arnarhóll mercilessly. Moreover, when the people behind the event started suspecting the turnout of women might be greater than they anticipated, it was already too late to re-route the bus system and close roads. Last but not least, there was the question of money, and the organization, based on volunteers, couldn't afford to rent a bigger sound system and pay the additional cost of a change in venues.

The inability to adequately hold all the protestors will not be remembered, most likely. Jónsdóttir pointed out the successes of the protests: "I think we should focus on the fact that the turnout exceeded everybody's expectations, and that we should be proud of the fact that so many women protested."

How much Women's Day Off 2005 will affect women's issues in Iceland remains to be seen. The impressive amount of women who stood up for themselves and fought back suggests that things may be changing.

■ By Þórdís Elva Þorvaldsdóttir Bachmann

KEA-skyr er frábær hollustuvara, einstaklega prótein- og næringaríkt og nánast fitulaust. Í því eru hvorki sætuefni né önnur hjálparefni. KEA-skyr er góður kostur fyrir alla þá sem hafa hollustuna í fyrirrúmi og vilja lifa á heilsusamlegan hátt.

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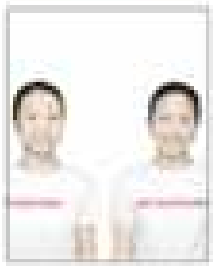


NJÓTTU LÍFSINS MEÐ HEILBRIGÐUM LÍFSSTÍL

FEGURÐ · HREYSTI · HOLLUSTA

Hönnun Hafsign

ARTS AND CULTURE

Bloody Brilliant

For decades, the movie industry has been fascinated with making films based on comic books. The most recent examples are Sin City, X-men, Fantastic Four, Batman and Spiderman. Some of these films do justice to the comics they're attempting to capture, others fail miserably. The world of theatre has been less active in adapting comics for the stage. In Iceland, it has been almost unheard of. However, two performances in Reykjavík this fall were based on comic books. Most people don't know this, but the American musical Annie actually started off as a comic. The other performance was based on the work of the edgiest comic book artist our nation has ever produced. The play, Forðist okkur (Avoid Us), is an adaptation of the comics by Hugleikur Dagsson. It has been a refreshing breeze in the Icelandic theatre landscape. Or a refreshing punch in the gut, rather.

Forðist okkur was a project by theatre company CommonNonsense and Nemendaleikhúsið. The latter is a group of senior acting students in the Iceland Academy of the Arts. In their last year at the academy, the graduating seniors stage three plays, Forðist okkur being this class's first play.

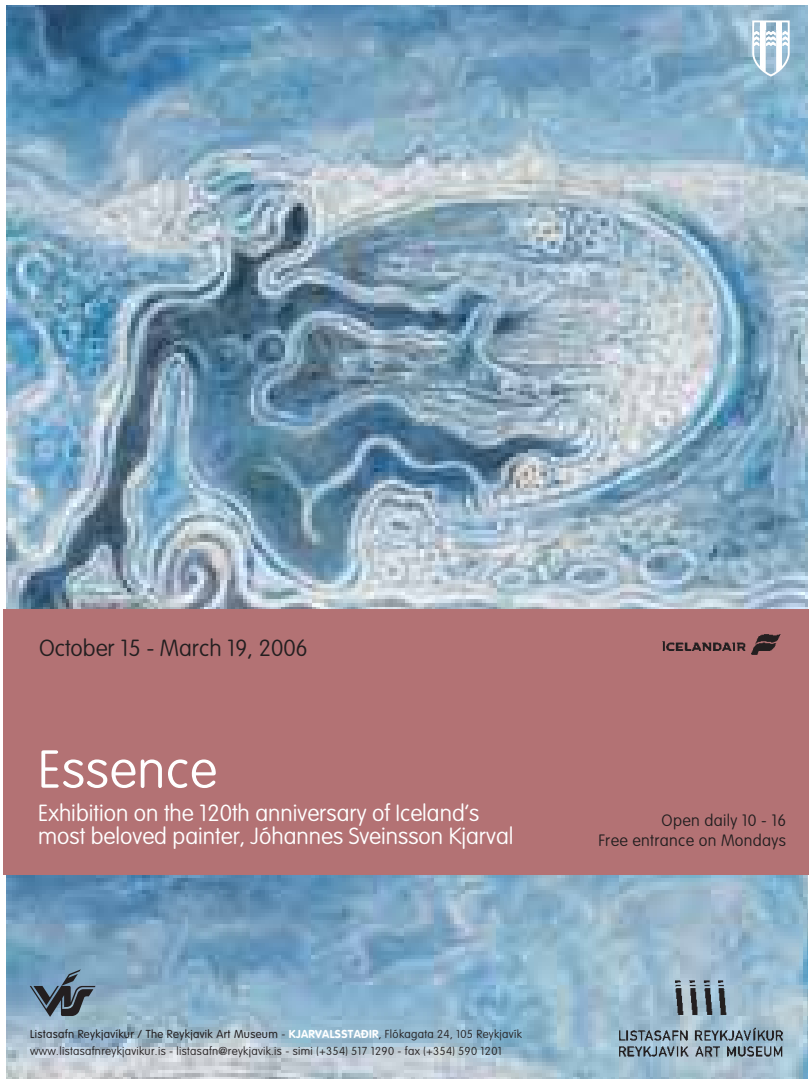
Having been a fan of Dagsson's work for years, I have to admit that I was a bit sceptical prior to seeing the piece. How were they going to build a whole play based on one-liner jokes delivered by stick figures? The answer: Instead of enacting bunch of haphazard wisecracks, the group managed to put together a well-structured play with a beginning, a middle and an end, along with larger-than-life characters who were plausible in their absurdity. The actors thoroughly enjoyed themselves in their roles, drawing the audience into their twisted reality. Last but not least, the performance was very unconventional, no less so than Dagsson's comics.

To begin with, the play actually started outside of the auditorium in the City Theater, where the audience waited to be let in. After a brief introduction, the audience was invited to attend a young girl's confirmation, and they were led inside by the actors to be seated on rotating desk chairs, complete with wheels. It was a brilliant solution, considering that the play was set in an arena theatre, so the audience had to be able to turn around to look at different scenes in a 360° circle.

Dagsson's twisted sense of humour had the audience roaring with laughter, as the characters got messed up on cocaine, had crazy elevator sex and staged rituals to evoke the devil, amongst other things. Some members of the audience were shocked, others were amused, but nobody was left unaffected by the play. Dagsson and the crew behind Forðist okkur managed to draw a picture of today's alienated society in a tragicomic way. Serious matters such as incest, murder, neglected children, beastiality and drug abuse were all addressed through means that often made the audience laugh, but also left them pondering in silence, and, in some cases, weeping.

Forðist okkur effectively criticized the way we live and behave towards one another. The characters did outrageous, sometimes revolting things, but none of it was implausible. The overt grotesqueness of Forðist okkur served as a poignant reminder that the world is far from being a pretty place, but we can choose how we spend our time in it. Unfortunately, the play will no longer be running when this article is printed, but it was too good of a show not to write about it. Hugleikur's comics, many of which originally appeared in the Grapevine, are available throughout Iceland, in English and Icelandic.

By Þórdís Elva Þorvaldsdóttir Bachmann



GRAPEVINE
IN YOUR POCKET

4 PAGES TO THIS SECTION

It's free! | Grapevine in Your Pocket, issue №15, 2005 | Your Inside Guide to Reykjavík

SIGUR RÓS COME HOME NOVEMBER 27

GÚNDI

After five months of outlandishly positive reviews and sold out shows, and after having avoided playing their home country for three years, Sigur Rós will play a homecoming show on 27 November. As of press time, their show with the amina orchestra at Laugardalshöll has not yet sold out.

November, which in the past offered a break from live music, looks to be another busy month in Reykjavík, with three must-see concerts. First, Michael Pollock has imported the most authentic octogenarian bluesman alive, David "Honeyboy" Edwards—originally recorded by Alan Lomax on the trip that would document both Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters. Edwards will perform at NASA on 12 November.

On 20 November, the White Stripes come to Laugardalshöll, as part of what looks to be their final tour.

Edwards and the White Stripes would likely be the concerts of the year, were it not for Sigur Rós performing from their new album. In any case, concert tickets will be cutting significantly into the Christmas budget.

Tickets for all three events are available at www.midi.is.

■ By Bart Cameron

CAFÉS

wireless network

Café Roma
Laugavegur 118

Roma, at the far end of the main street Laugavegur, is a deli-type coffee house, and one of the best take away places in town. It almost feels unnatural that all the tempting cookies, cakes and other sweet things that are calling your name on the shelves are actually quite reasonably priced.

2 Ráðhúskaffi
City Hall

Ráðhúskaffi inside the Reykjavík City Hall is a comfortable choice for the view over Tjörnin, especially recommended on the so-called window weather days – the days that are beautiful, as long as you stay indoors. Also art exhibitions, 80m2s of miniature Iceland and municipal politics, all conveniently under the same roof.

3 Grái Kötturinn
Hverfisgata 16a

Grái Kötturinn (The grey cat) is a cosy place, and that's why it's a shame that it's quite often closed when we knock on their door and peer through the window later in the evening. Don't follow our example and go during the daylight, it's especially popular during the morning hours.

4 Kaffi Hljómalind
Laugavegur 21

A peaceful café with perfect windows for people-watching and a lot of daylight. Hljómalind is run by a non-profit organisation and it only serves organic & fair trade products.

5 Mokka
Skólavörðustígur 3a

Kaffi Mokka is the oldest café in Reykjavik, dating back to the 1950s. It's the place with dark, smoky atmosphere and great numbers of loyal customers. Their waffles are best in town. Seriously.

6 Ömmukaffi
Austurstræti

A coffee house there you can find all kinds of people - all ages, all nationalities, with very friendly, down-to-earth feel to it. Affordable prices on coffee, cakes and the lunch menu. Try their speciality, the (South) African latte.

7 Babalú
Skólavörðustígur 22a

The youngest coffee house in Reykjavík is also the homiest. Almost like a living room away from home, Babalú keeps it simple, quiet and cozy with coffee and the occasional crêpe.

8 Tíu Dropar
Laugavegur 27

A very nice "grandma" style café. Subterranean, as all traditional coffee shops should be. This place makes you feel warm, both with its atmosphere and the generosity of the coffee refills.

9 Kaffitár
Bankastræti 8

Expanded and improved, this is the downtown store for one of the country's finest coffee importers. While anything here is good, the speciality coffee drinks are truly remarkable: our favourite, the Azteca, an espresso drink with lime and Tabasco.

10 Segafredo
By Lækjartorg

With McDonalds long departed from the centre of Reykjavík, we got Italian chain Segafredo, which isn't a bad trade-off. The staff are expert baristi, and, even though Iceland is proud of its coffee, nobody quite tops the Segafredo latte.

BARS 'n' BISTRO

11 Sólon
Bankastræti 7a

Sólon is a nightclub on Friday and Saturday nights, but it seems to have more lives than one, since in the day it's a coffeehouse and in the evening (weeknights) they have a decent menu, as well, and an art exhibition on the walls to finish the package with an artsy touch.

12 Oliver
Laugavegur 20a

Oliver is one of the biggest hits in town at the moment. Good news for the early birds: they open at 8 in the morning with an extensive brunch menu, staying chic all day long, until late - always crowded, with an everlasting queue outside especially towards weekend nights. Their Mediterranean menu, served in huge portions, is guaranteed to make you smile.

13 Kaffibarinn
Bergstaðastræti 1

Kaffibarinn is Cool Hip Reykjavík. Blur's Damon Albarn owns a share of the bar, probably figuring it was cheaper than buying drinks all the time. This place has managed to serve as a 101 living room for quite a while already, with DJs often playing on the weeknights, with volumes rising towards the weekend. Friday and Saturday nights serve as the weekly peaks of claustrophobia.

14 Sirkus
Klapparstígur 30

"Welcome to the Jungle/ We got fun and games," quote the bard. Elements of this odd and alternative cultural institution also include an upstairs that looks and smells like a bus, a garden, a flea market and a queue on weekend nights that looks never-ending.

15 Vitabar
Bergþórugata 21

Actually a bar, but best known for its hamburgers. A burger with fries for 500 is one of the best meal deals in town, but special mention must go to the Forget-Me-Not blue cheese and garlic extravaganza. The Viking beer always feels particularly cold and refreshing here.

16 Vegamót
Vegamótastígur 4

Vegamót (crossroads) has an appealing lunch menu, they serve brunch during the weekends, and the kitchen is open until 22 daily. After that the beat goes on, and you can check the end results in photos published the day after on their website www.vegamot.is. If you like Oliver, try Vegamót and vice versa.

17 B5
Bankastræti 5

B5 is a newly opened bistro with a Scandinavian focus on the menu. Don't be fooled by the impressive collection of design classics that you see in the window when passing by – it's neither cold nor overly expensive, but rather a cozy place with friendly service.

18 Rósenberg
Lækjargata 2

Perhaps the closest thing to a jazz club in town, with old instruments lining the walls. People go there for conversation and listening to music rather than dancing. The place tends to have jazz or blues- type music, and is developing a bluegrass scene.

19 Grand Rokk
Smiðjustígur 6

As the Viking style garden and logo accurately signal, this is no place for the weak– yes, chess bars are that tough. Even if the downstairs atmosphere can feel a bit ominous at times, it's one of the best venues for live music in town. Chess, beer and rock'n'roll.

20 Bar 11
Laugavegur 11

The rock bar on Laugavegur is one of the late night party venues in town. You'll feel the floor jumping every Friday and Saturday, and it's neither you nor an earthquake. Live concerts and a nice foosball table upstairs.

21 Hressingarskálinn
Austurstræti 20

The celebrated site of one of the more famous coffeehouses in Iceland, this bar/ coffeehouse/ restaurant brings a European flair to the city. That is until about 11, when things get to rockin', and you can see the true character of Reykjavík.

22 Pravda
Austurstræti 22

Pravda is one of the larger clubs/bars in downtown Reykjavík. It's divided between two floors and also separately into the Pravda Bar and the Pravda Club. The club section of Pravda is ideal for dancing, while the Bar section is somewhat more quiet and chilled out, with occasional live jazz and sometimes reggae.

23 Café Cultura
Hverfisgata 18

The recently expanded Cultura is located in the same building with the Intercultural centre. A good value menu, friendly service and settings that allow you to either sit down and carry on discussions, or dance the night away – tango on Wednesdays starting with free lessons from 20 to 21:00.

24 Prikið
Bankastræti 12

Used to be the oldest continuously running traditional coffeehouse on the street, but, after a change of clientele, they now cater to a younger crowd. A diner during the day and a nightclub on weekends, you can also borrow games there, such as backgammon or chess.

25 Ölstofan
Vegamótastígur

There are no tricks to this one. You know what you want and you know that you'll get when you enter this simple, straightforward pub. We are talking about drinking beer. Known as the hangout for the intellectual circles of Reykjavík.

26 Thorvaldsen
Austurstræti 8

Posh as the fifth circle of hell. DJs on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Arrive before 12 if you want to avoid the queue. Civilian attire is looked down upon. Do not expect to get in wearing hiking boots.

27 Gaukur á Stöng
Tryggvagata 22

Iceland's oldest bar is now in its early twenties. During the day it's a pool pub and on weekday evenings there are live rock concerts by a mix of mainstream and underground bands. On weekends there is usually a lot of action with cover bands playing everything from Britney to the Beatles. .

28 Kaf
P

Kaffibrennslan manag "normal" place to go seen at, surprisingly same time. A wide va both bistro menu and the bar when the wea iced coffee beverage

29 C
Ty

One of the few prope Reykjavík, so you car whatever game happe screens. The establis based around the ba to go a long way for five, and has a reputa partying.

30 I
An L

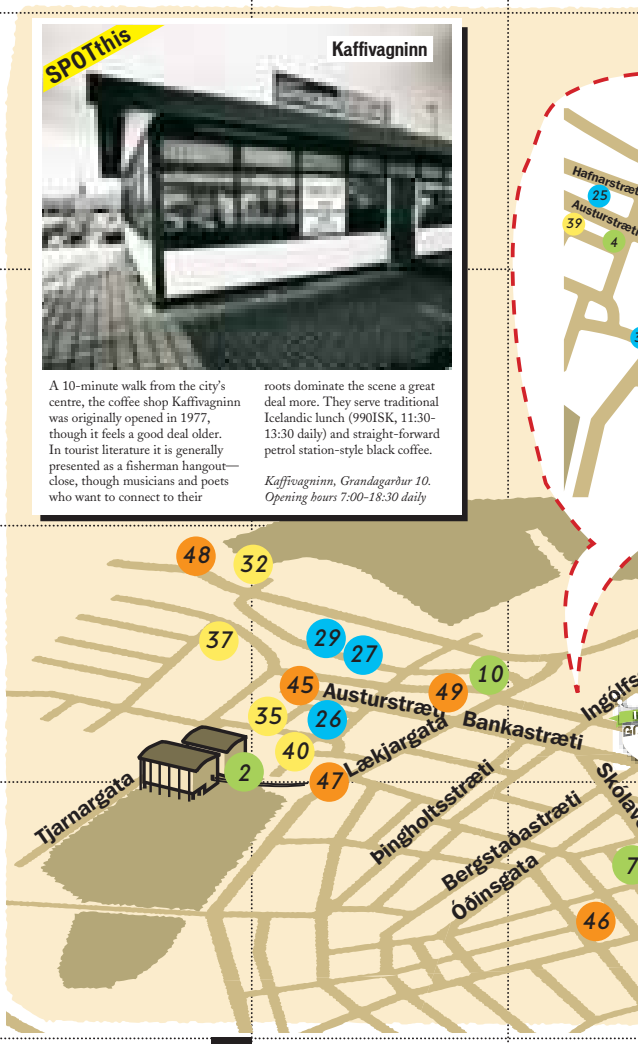
They have a fish buffe evening, with the ma much-as-you-can" flo also have an Icelandi working there every watch out for a curly gentleman called Egi

SPOTthis

Kaffivagninn

A 10-minute walk from the city's centre, the coffee shop Kaffivagninn was originally opened in 1977, though it feels a good deal older. In tourist literature it is generally presented as a fisherman hangout—close, though musicians and poets who want to connect to their roots dominate the scene a great deal more. They serve traditional Icelandic lunch (990ISK, 11:30-13:30 daily) and straight-forward petrol station-style black coffee.

Kaffivagninn, Grandagarður 10.
Opening hours 7:00-18:30 daily

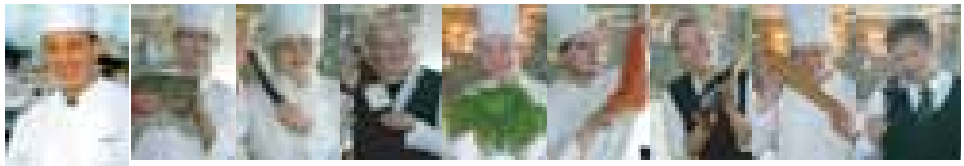


tveir fiskar

DISCOVER ICELANDIC
SEAFOOD

At the Reykjavik harbour

Gissur Gudmundsson
Owner of Tveir Fiskar
President of the Nordic and Icelandic Chefs Association
European Continental Director for World Association of Cooks Societies



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tveir fiskar
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Tel. +354 511 3474 restaurant@restaurant.is, www.restaurant.is

RESTAURANTS

31 Krua Thai
Tryggvagata 14

It's easy when you know what you're doing: good food for a reasonable price. To make it easier for the rest of us, they have their menu outside with images in colour and numbers. Just say the number and eat the food.

32 Tveir Fiskar
Geirsgata 9

Seafood restaurant, although they also do land-based animals. At lunchtime you can have a three-course meal for 2300, which isn't too bad, all things considered. The chef has been awarded the Medal of the Order of the White Rose by the President of Finland.

33 Hornið
Hafnarstræti 15

Means "the corner" and the place lives up to its name. This is actually the oldest Italian restaurant in town, celebrating its 25th year, which says something about the scene here before then. Excellent quality pizza, pasta and salads—all priced affordably.

34 Argentína
Baronstígur 11a

Argentina is something in the direction of South-American-steakhouse-goes-fine-dining-in-Reykjavík. It was the first restaurant around to offer steaks by weight, and it focuses on the beef – but they know their whale, sheep and reindeer as well.

35 Póstbarinn
Pósthússtræti 13

Situated by Austurvöllur, Póstbarinn is a bistro-priced restaurant, a rare treat. It is also one of few restaurants in Reykjavík with decent outdoor service, a must in the winter months. Live jazz once a week and check out the reasonably priced fish menu they have, only 1490ISK.

36 Pasta Basta
Klapparstígur 38

An affordable Italian place, the pasta is in generous portions and the salad with grilled chicken is a good light option. The garden is nice, with a glass ceiling protecting punters from the wind and the rain at all times of year. Upstairs, the Blue Bar offers a more bar type atmosphere.

37 Tapas
Vesturgata 3b

For those with a bit of money and time on their hands, the evening is well spent at Tapas, where you can while away the evening having course after course of wonderful miniature dishes served. If you don't feel like getting up right away afterwards, there's also a lounge

38 Sægreifinn
Geirsgata

A place to go for the local touch, even if usually a place recommended with this argument instantly looses the exotic. Still, I'd try this one. Sægreifinn (Sea baron) is a combination of a fish store and a... well, not exactly a restaurant but a place that serves prepared food, located in a harbour warehouse. Smell of fish, view over the harbour, old man that looks exactly like an Icelandic fisherman should. What's not to love?

39 Shalimar
Austurstræti 4

Prides itself on being the northernmost Indian restaurant in the world. The daily special, comprised of two dishes on your plate, goes for roughly 1000 ISK. But we recommend the Chicken Tikka Masala, known to be highly addictive.

40 Við tjörnina
Templarasund 3

One of the best-known fish restaurants in Iceland, it also kind of rocks. The cook is Súkkat member and Megas sidekick Gunni. Foodwise, they're known for innovative fish dishes made from a variety of rare fish and shellfish and related raw materials.

FAST FOOD

41 Aktu Taktu
Skúlagata 15

The drive-in destination in 101 Reykjavík, Aktu Taktu is busy all day and all night. The burgers never disappoint, and the caramel shakes are a local favourite. If George Lucas ever makes his proposed Icelandic Graffiti, Aktu Taktu will have a central role.

42 Pizza King
Hafnarstræti 18

Yes, you can go here late at night and grab the best pizza in town, but it is also home to the best lunch specials, and food so good you'd eat it sober, something you can't say for most food in Reykjavík. Plan on a fifteen- minute wait during lunch, so it's best to call or stop at a local bookstore or souvenir shop while your pizza is cooked.

43 Bagel House
Laugavegur

Like most of the fast food in Reykjavík and in the rest of the universe, it's about bread and something in the middle/inside/on top of it. The Bagel House don't seem to realize that they have good bagels, as they cover them with conventional sandwich ingredients Subway-style, but we forgive them this faux pas. Just tell them to put the sauce down, and hand over the bagel. .

44 Bæjarins Bestu
Tryggvagata

Their menu is simple: It consists of coke and hotdog. And nothing else. Ask for one with everything, and you'll get a dog in a bun with ketchup, mustard, remoulade (don't ask), fried and raw onion. The standard Icelandic hot dog, only somehow it tastes better.

45 Hlölla Bátar
By Ingólfstorg

The first sub sandwich shop in Iceland, opened in 1986, Hlölla Bátar has a large selection of subs filled and named with creativity and imagination. Brave souls might want to try the Gúmmí-Bátur (rubber boat), or go local and choose Sýslumannabátur (sheriff sub) with lamb filling.

46 Eldsmiðjan
Bragagata 38a

Oven-baked pizzas simply don't get much better than this. It is slightly more expensive than other pizzerias, but well worth it. A wide selection of toppings, including that sorely missed pizza delight, snails. Take away, order delivery, or eat in at the cosy restaurant upstairs. The paintings are worth a peek as well.

47 Quiznos
Lækjargata

A new branch of the American Quiznos has entered the thriving downtown sub market, and it's you, our dear, hungry reader that gains from it. A good selection of tasty subs, but also sandwiches, salads, soup of the day. This is Quiznos first European restaurant, your response will decide how many more will come East.

48 First Vegetarian (Á næstu grösum)
Laugavegur 20b

Used to be called One Woman Restaurant, as there was always the same woman working there. Has new owners and a larger staff, but the theme is still vegetarian, with one vegan and one wheat-free dish always on offer. The only vegetarian restaurant licensed to carry beer and wine.

49 Kebabhúsið
Lækjargata 2, Kringlan shopping mall

Apart from the multicultural experience that comes with eating the Icelandic version of Kebab, which comes with beef and lamb, or Falafel, which comes with marinara sauce and pickled cucumber, this eatery has the best fish and chips in town and a menu that would satisfy the United Nations.

50 Vitabar
Bergþórugata 21

Actually a bar, but best known for its hamburgers. A burger with fries for 500 is one of the best meal deals in town, but special mention must go to the Forget-Me-Not blue cheese and garlic extravaganza.

CLIP n´SAVE — PRACTICAL INFORMATION

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Reykjavík has no trams, trains nor subways - only buses. The price of a single fare is 220ISK for an adult (60ISK for children under 12). If you are in town for more than a few days, the nine ticket package for 1500ISK would be a better deal. Bus cards valid for two weeks, a month or three months are also available. You have to pay as you step on board and it has to be the exact amount, as the driver cannot give you change. You can ask the driver for a free, time-limited transfer ticket if you need two buses to complete your journey. The bus system is closed at night, between 24:00 and 6:40 approximately.
For more information and bus rides, go to Hlemmur and Lækjartorg, the main bus stops in town.

TAXIS

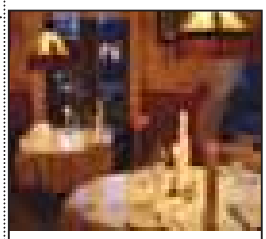
The main taxi companies in Reykjavík are Hreyfill 588 5522, BSR 561 0000, Borgarbilastöðin 552 2440 and BSH 555 0888.

INTERNET

There's excellent wireless internet network coverage in Reykjavík, which means that you only need a network card on your laptop to log on almost anywhere. Wireless network hot spots are marked in listings.
If you're not travelling with a laptop in your bag, there are computers for internet use, e.g. at following places:
Ráðhúskaffi, the City Hall.
Tourist information, Aðalstræti, also see ad. On page 4.
City library, Tryggvagata 15.

FOR WIRELESS NETWORKS, TRY:

Kaffibarinn, Bergstaðastræti 1.
Hressingarskálinn, Austurstræti 20.
Kaffi Hljómalind, Laugavegur 21.



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CLIP n SAVE

MUSEUMS

The Reykjavík Art Museum
Hafnarhús
Tryggvagata 17

Kjarvalsstaðir
Flókagata, 105 Reykjavík

Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum
Sigtún

Árbæjarsafn
Árbær
www.listasafnreykjavikur.is

The Culture House
Hverfisgata 15
www.thjodmenning.is

Reykjavík Museum of Photography
Tryggvagata 15
www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is

Nordic House
Sturlugata 5
www.nordice.is

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum
Laugarnestangi 70
www.lso.is

Reykjavík Electrical Museum
Rafstöðvarvegur
www.rafheimar.is

ASÍ Art Museum
Freyjugata 41
www.asi.is

Einar Jónsson Museum
Eiríksgata and the sculpture garden,
Freyjugata
www.skulptur.is

National Gallery of Iceland
Frikirkjuvegur 7
Ásgrímur Jónsson collection
Bergstaðastræti 74
www.nationalgallery.is

National Museum of Iceland
Suðurgata 41
www.natmus.is

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Answer honestly and win prices.
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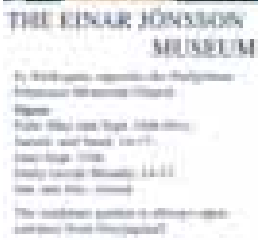


The Pond and Beyond

Grapevine Picks for Museums and Galleries

Reykjavík Art Museum

Tryggvagata 17

MAKING OF AN ARTIST: FERRO

This massive and engaging exhibit traces the early career of Mr. Guðmundur Guðmundsson, who would later go on to take the name Ferro, and then shorten it to Erro. The energy and dedication in the works of Erro's early development are astounding, especially when supplemented with translations of Ferro's early letters and biography.

Perhaps the closest parallel for this exhibit might be the display of Van Gogh in Amsterdam. But whereas the Van Gogh Museum shows, essentially, a frustrated genius, with the Erro exhibit you rarely see genius so much as impassioned, dedicated student. The distance Erro had to come from his beginnings as a young artist in Kirkjabæjarklaustur, and the enthusiasm he shows as he wanders to Reykjavík, then Oslo, Florence and Ravenna, are documented here in both text and paintings. What makes the exhibit so provocative is that it stops before the signature works by Erro. You leave essentially thinking you have seen the complete works of a very talented student who was always on the verge.

Kling & Bang Laugavegur 23

UNNAR ÖRN

Word of mouth is strong with this one. Unnar Örn is loved by the newly homeless artists of Klink og Bank, the monumental studio that was recently vacated.

aktu taktu
THE DRIVE THRU BY THE SEA

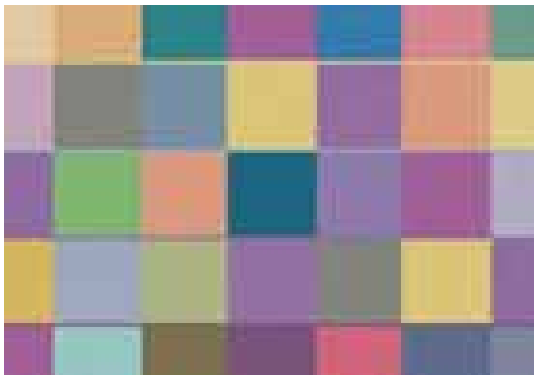
CIA

Hafnarstræti 16

Located in the heart of all the action—two blocks from Pizza King at Hafnarstræti 16—the Center for Icelandic Art is both an information center and a functional display area. Open from 10 to 4 am, the CIA also has one of the more impressive collections of locally-produced video art in the country.

National Gallery of Iceland

Fríkirkjuvegur 7



The New Icelandic Art II. The most austere of the local museums lends its space to the "youngest generation" of Icelandic artists. This is a continuation of an extremely popular project the Gallery began in 2004. If last year's exhibit was any indication, this exhibit will drive the discussion of local art until next year's Art Academy graduation. Through February 16, 2006.

101 Gallery

Hverfisgata 18

HARALDUR JÓNSSON

Tucked behind Café Cultura, 101 Gallery is the closest thing to an up-market Chelsea gallery Reykjavík has. For this reason, the current installation by Haraldur Jónsson, a laid-back, minimalistic exhibit, is especially interesting, as it makes you reconsider the space, and the local scene.

What do you think?
Answer honestly and win prices.
Grapevine's Reader Survey at
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online GRAPEVINE

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Sjöfn Har.
Skólavörðustígur 25 a 101 Reykjavík
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Restaurants

DINING, EATING & GRUBBING

Eliza Reid on Reykjavík Dining Photos by **Gúndi**

AMERICAN STYLE

Gúndi

$

American Style, several locations, including Skipholt 70, Tel. 568 6838 Open Daily. www.americanstyle.is

The world's richest country is imitated and emulated a lot. At American Style, it's burgers that face the test. With diner-style seating and huge black and white prints of rock stars new and old, the place feels like it could be in Wichita or Wyoming. But are American Style's burgers bigger and better than their counterparts in the US of A?

My companion on this visit hailed from the nation in question, so I was in good company to assess the authenticity of this establishment. When we showed up, American Style was packed with diners devouring their hamburgers in traditional Icelandic style – with a knife and fork. You place your order at a till, and the food is brought to your table a few minutes later. Not quite full-service, but at ISK 895 for a cheeseburger combo, I'm not complaining. The menu has an assortment of burgers (beef and chicken), a children's menu, and a couple of salad options. Why someone would go to a hamburger restaurant and order the latter is, however, beyond me. Icelandic frankness is also apparent on the menu: the larger hamburger combo is billed as the "heavy special," something that would have been euphemistically re-phrased in the States.

The hamburger itself was pretty good, although it was a small patty and the bun wasn't very toasted. My chicken burger was also satisfying, but suffered from the same under-toasted ailment as the burger. The French fries, clearly an integral component of the experience, were good grubbin' fries, with lots of crispy bits.

American style with an Icelandic accent is probably a more appropriate way of describing the food overall. Hveragerði's famous greenhouse produce– cucumbers and red peppers – were much more prominent here than they would be inside a sesame seed bun in a California diner. My American companion insisted that burgers in the US are never served with spiced mayonnaise and shredded lettuce either. Still, we were both satisfied with our meals and were very impressed by the fact that, five minutes after finishing, neither of us was afflicted with that dreaded heavy-lump-in-the-stomach result of eating at a greasy food joint – the "hamburger hangover". This is truly an achievement of which American Style should be proud.

BANTHAI

Gúndi

$$

Banthai, Laugavegur 130, Tel. 552 2444, Open Daily 18:00 – 22:00 Take Away menu available. www.simnet.is/banthai

Before Banthai, "world cuisine" used to mean ordering a pizza. It's been serving authentic Thai food to curious Icelanders for 14 years. Hopefully it is no longer the curiosity to try something "exotic" that brings people here, but simply the desire to enjoy a flavourful dinner out.

Thai food in Iceland is generally of a high quality, and Banthai is no exception. You will be able to find all the Thai favourites here – Tom Yam soup, Pad Thai noodles, and spicy curries, as well as more unusual dishes, like the highly-recommended Lobster Pad Som Ma-Kham-Piak (lobster in tamarind sauce, ISK 2800). There's a good selection of Thai lagers on the menu, admittedly at a much higher price than you would find on Ko Phi Phi, but nevertheless a valuable addition to the dining experience. For oenophiles, there is even a selection of Thai wines.

Sharing is the best way to partake of this food, and therefore the more of you eating together the better (there's an unlimited supply of rice with the dishes). We shared Kra Pao Kai Banthai (spicy chicken with basil and coconut milk), which was good but not memorable, and the aforementioned lobster in tamarind, which was delicious. The "Tiger Cry" starter (ISK 1990), very tender beef strips with mint and coriander, and the fried banana with ice cream dessert (ISK 690) were also both good if uninspiring.

While the prices are entirely fair and the food is somewhere between pleasant and great, what makes Banthai so enjoyable is the environment. Located in a row of colourful houses along Laugavegur by Hlemmur, it's not much to look at from the outside, and the signage on the front is not very attractive, but the interior represents what is so great about all small family-run restaurants: character. The warm yellow walls are decorated with bric-a-brac from Thailand and elsewhere, including ornately carved mirrors, and giant painted accordion fans. The tables have Icelandic and Thai flags and bamboo placemats. The sentimental side of me always admires people who put their heart and soul into their own business and you get that feeling here.

That's why this dining experience is fun: Banthai is a restaurant with personality.

SKÓLABRÚ

Gúndi

$$$$

Skólabrú, Skólabrú 1, Tel. 562 4455, Open for lunch Tues – Fri and dinner Tues – Sat Open on Sundays during the Christmas period. www.skolabru.is.

It was snowing when we arrived at Skólabrú. Once we climbed up the stairs and were nestled snugly inside this old schoolhouse from 1906, it was cosy and comforting to gaze out of the windows to the winter wonderland below. Rose petals were strewn across each table (the effect was not as corny as it sounds) and live music was provided by the talented Harpa Þorvaldsdóttir. The lighting and candles suggested a quiet, intimate atmosphere, but the tables full of chatting patrons made the environment dynamic. The stage was set for a great dinner out.

Skólabrú is in the top tier of Reykjavík restaurants. The service is impeccable. Several well-dressed waiters glided around the smallish dining area throughout the evening and were attentive, yet not intrusive. This high standard of service alone sets Skólabrú apart from most other fine-dining establishments in the city, where service is often blasé at best.

The atmosphere and the service were vital accompaniments to what is surely the star of any evening – the food. Skólabrú emphasizes French-influenced Icelandic cuisine, so you can expect the usual lamb, salt cod and skyr offerings, as well as slightly more creative fare like foie gras and crêpes. We had a "gourmet" menu (8500 ISK without wine) – a selection of courses chosen by the chef. There seems to be a trend in Reykjavík restaurants at the moment to serve everything with artistically arranged "foam." In this case, the seafood foam was presented over the langoustine and duck liver starter. This course also included a small sausage with mashed potato, the only slightly disconcerting note in the meal, purely for its connotations of English pub fare, which seemed out of place. Everything else was fantastic, from the delicate lemon sole with lemon butter sauce to the stuffed wild goose to the flambéed black-forest style baked Alaska at dessert. The wines were well-matched to each course.

Many of the restaurants in this city are very good, but not great. If you visit them, you'll enjoy yourself, but there is little that distinguishes them from each other. Happily, Skólabrú is an exception: it is now on my list of restaurants to specifically recommend to visitors and locals alike. Don't balk at the price. This is somewhere you get what you pay for. And they get bonus points for the snow.

Restaurants in Reykjavík

3 Frakkar Baldursgata 14 Phone: 552 3939
Hornið Hafnarstræti 15 Phone: 551 3340
Jómfrúin Lækjargata 4 Phone: 551 0100
Maru, Aðalstræti 12 Phone: 511 4440
Pasta Basta, Klapparstígur 38 Phone: 511 2238
Tapas, Vesturgata 3B, Phone: 551 2344
Tveir Fiskar, Geirsgata 9 Phone: 511 3474
Vox Nordica Hotel Suðurlandsbraut 2, 444 5050
Cafe Victor Hafnarstræti 1-3, Phone: 561 9555
Cafe Sólon, Bankastræti 7a, Phone: 562 3232
Vegamót, Vegamótastígur 4, Phone: 511 3040
La Primavera, Austurstræti 9, Phone: 561 8555
Shalimar, Austurstræti 4, Phone: 551 0292
Á næstu grösum, Laugavegur 20a, Phone: 552 8410
Tilveran, Linnetstígur 1, Hafnarfjörður Phone: 5655250

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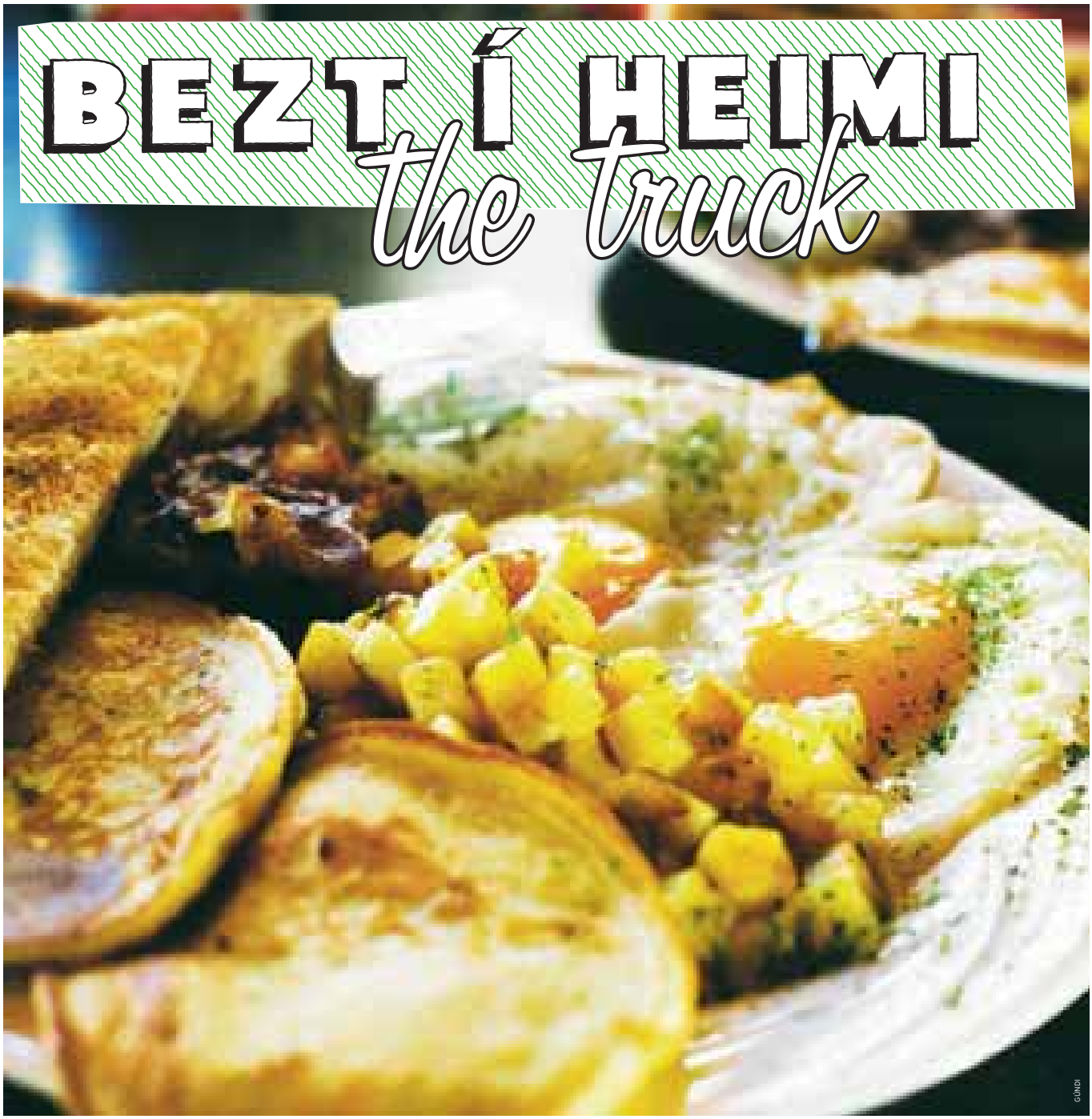
SUSHI THE TRAIN
[LÆKJARGATA]

BEZT Í HEIMI *the truck*



Bezt í Heimi: The Truck at Prikið
You can use the Icelandic "vörubíll" if you want, but everyone will look at you funny. No, when you enter Prikið at the hour of the grimace, 2 pm on a Saturday, you should wander upstairs, wait for your server, and announce that you want "The Truck."

The Truck, called by some "the American breakfast," includes two sunnyside eggs, fried potatoes, a half a pig of bacon, toast and, inexplicably, two pancakes. If this is an American breakfast, it is the American breakfast of 1952.

If you want to, you can think about how happy people in America were in 1952, as you chomp on your bacon and look around at musicians and poets who are just getting their day going. And you can even get starry-eyed and think, Hey, Iceland in 2005 is similar to America in the 50s. The economy is picking up, not too many people are being left behind… all these poets and musicians may build the country.

But don't think about this too much: Americans in 1952 were eating breakfasts like The Truck at 6 am, before going to work, where they would put in hours under stressful conditions that would give Magnús Scheving a heart attack—pounds and pounds of bacon and eggs balanced off with workload and debt in the great American generation to form a double negative. If you're spoiled enough to live in Reykjavík in 2005, and you can afford the 1100 ISK for the Truck, the only negative is your slacker ass chompin on cholesterol when you should be off building the

Icelandic identity.
All of these thoughts may go through your head in the 30 minutes it takes to eat a Truck. Luckily, the meal is so heavy that it will throw you into a sweaty stupor, and, unless you are superhuman, you will most likely go home and nap and wake at 6 pm to start the day right.

By Bart Cameron

WIN A TRIP
FROM REYKJAVIK EXCURSIONS
AND AIR ICELAND

What do you think?
Answer honestly and win prizes from Air Iceland and Reykjavík Excursions.

Grapevine's Reader Survey at
WWW.GRAPEVINE.IS

THE REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE
Reykjavik Excursions
AIR ICELAND

Shopping

The Timeless Fashion of ELM:

Where a woman's personality completes her outfit

By Þórdís Elva Þorvaldsdóttir Bachmann

A group of multi-functional sweaters caught our attention recently. One could be worn in two ways: turning it upside down changed the look dramatically. Another sweater could be worn long or hitched up for a shorter length. Moreover, it could also be turned around, wrapped in imaginative ways and finally fastened with a piece of bone stuck through the fabric.

The shop was, of course, ELM, favourite of American talk show host Oprah Winfrey, who has worn the clothing on her show, and winner of the 2004 Reykjavík City Council and Icelandic Chamber of Commerce Tourist Shop of the Year.

Their clothes are known for the amount of interaction they have with their owners.

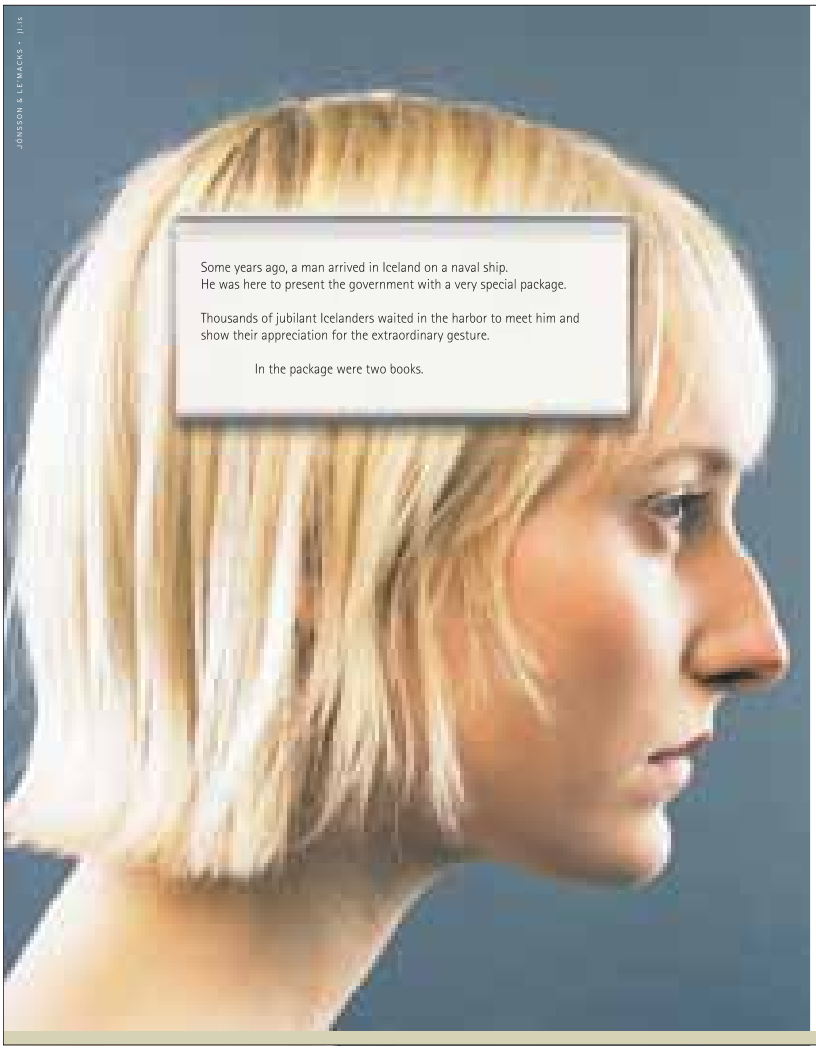
"We think it's fun to make clothes that can be worn in many different ways," says Erna Steina Guðmundsdóttir, one of the founders. (The other two founders are Lisbet Sveinsdóttir and Matthildur Halldórsdóttir: the name ELM is from the first letter of each of their first names.)

The garments are all designed in Iceland, but assembled in Lima, Peru, where co-founder Halldórsdóttir oversees production.

Our favourite sweater had an intimidating price: 28,000 ISK. But another shopper was quick to point out that the garment was really "many garments in one."

Guðmundsdóttir pointed out the timelessness of her designs, which perhaps explains how she has had so much international success, and why her clothes are accepted as a good investment: "We find it important to be timeless. We don't limit ourselves to one, specific age group, but try to make clothes that suit women of all ages."

ELM, Laugavegur 1, 101 Reykjavík
Tel: 511 0991 elm@elm.is



Where does it come from?

THE Origins TOUR

The Culture House

Medieval manuscripts - Eddas and Sagas and other exhibitions cast light on Iceland's cultural contributions and relations with the world at large.

www.thjodmenning.is

National Gallery of Iceland

19th and 20th century Icelandic art. The museum owns the most valuable collection of works by Icelandic artists in the country.

www.listasafn.is

National Museum of Iceland

The country's largest museum of cultural history featuring a permanent exhibition on Iceland's extraordinary history from settlement to present day.

www.natmus.is

A journey through a nation´s heritage.

GRAPEVINE'S PURCHASES THAT JUSTIFY EXISTENCE

Pocket knives
at Friða Frænka

450 ISK.
Pocket knives for healthy young boys. Available at Friða Frænka. If you don't know Friða Frænka, the antique store Vesturgata with a collection so absurd that it often looks like a large, post-modern gallery, you need to get acquainted. The highlight this month, a bucket of pocket knives. All created from bone-like plastic, the two-inch blades feature young healthy men, often shirtless, smiling at their own exuberance.

Self-powered flashlight
at Tiger

400 ISK.
This Danish store really has the goods for all season. And now that daylight has begun to flee, a flashlight that helps you exercise really is a no-brainer. While you should be warned that the 400 ISK model does not come with a lifetime warranty, the Tigers in Iceland are known for standing behind their merchandise, whatever the price.

Puzzles
at Hjá Magna

500 ISK and up.
Curious thing about this home of rock bands and leather-wearing, shaved head, rock band member-looking people: when the rain starts, everybody takes out jig-saw puzzles. Everybody. They love 'em. If you want to fit in, you better love them too.

Icelandic Voodoo Dolls
at Nornabúðin.

While my studies of Icelandic folk lore never mentioned an interest in Voodoo Dolls per se, there has been a vigorous history of spell-making, so the curious stuffed things at Nornabúðin, the witch shop, that you poke holes into may be vaguely authentic. In any case, they are amusing. A better deal may be the coffee and cookie for 500 ISK, which you can consume while watching visitors poke at the doll.

unnar örn j. auðarsson

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this.is/klingandbang

FRESH AND NATURAL

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Nobody Should Have to Work for Free:

Independent theatre in Iceland

In 2004, the independent theatre scene in Iceland attracted approximately 175,000 viewers-- more than the National Theatre, the City Theatre, the Iceland Dance Company and the Icelandic Opera all put together. The government funding for independent theatre was only 5% of what was poured into the other institutions. At least 60 independent theatre groups exist in Iceland, involving more members than any of the institutional theatres. ***Þórdís Elva Þorvaldsdóttir Bachmann*** *digs into the reasons behind this huge financial discrepancy, and other theater politics.*

Last year, the independent theatre scene in Iceland had something for everyone to enjoy. Shows like Fame and Grease catered to the musical fans, while shows like Brim by Vesturport and Faðir Vor by Sokkabandið catered to those who thirst after original, Icelandic dramas. The puppet show Brúðubíllinn toured the country and entertained children everywhere. The independent theatre groups attracted, as usual, far more viewers than any of the institutional theatres in Iceland, with only a fraction of the funding. "We may actually have gotten more than 180,000 viewers," says Kristín Eysteinsdóttir, the manager of Sjálfstæðu Leikhúsin (SL), the organized interest group for independent theatre groups in Iceland. "We're modest about our figures, so in all likelihood, they're higher."

In the colourful, ever changing landscape of independent theatre, SL provides support, advice and protection to independent groups. "We're almost like a union in the way that we guard the rights and interests of the groups and make sure that they're treated fairly," says Eysteinsdóttir. "We don't interfere with them, or the way they chose to run things. We're just here for them in case they need us."

The independent theatre groups got 52 million ISK this spring in the form of government grants to stage plays, of which 15 million went to a theatre in the township of Hafnarfjörður, leaving 37 million ISK to divide between 13 different projects. "It's nowhere near enough", says Eysteinsdóttir. To put things in perspective, the National Theatre alone got 500 million ISK in working capital for the year 2005. Still, things have improved dramatically. A few years ago, the grants given to independent groups were so low that it was really a disservice to get them. SL has been guarding the so-called 50% minimum rule, making sure that the grants independent theatre groups receive are never less than half of the production cost. The group then has to find a way to finance the remaining 50%. "Prior to this, groups would sometimes be granted 10% of the production cost. Financing the remaining 90% was in many cases impossible. The 50% rule gives the independent groups a chance of making ends meet," Eysteinsdóttir says.

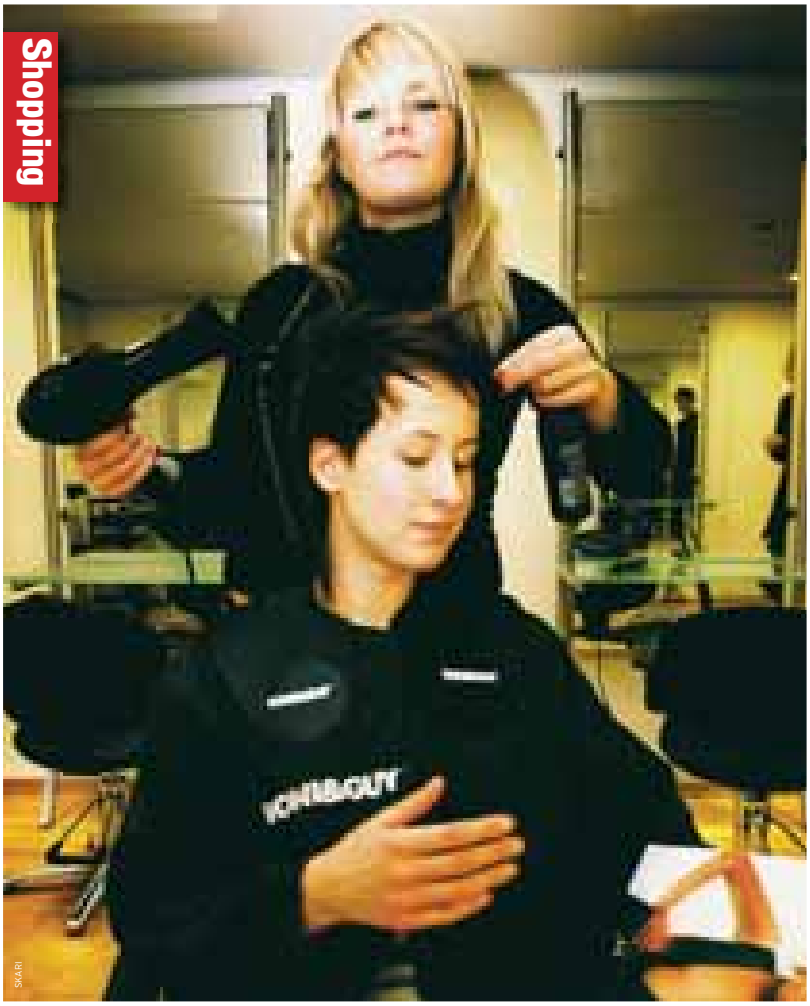
Housing dilemmas

Money aside, another issue independent theatre groups constantly face is problems regarding housing. There is no theatre in Reykjavík that caters especially to this field of art. Renovating a locale is costly, and therefore not an option. As a result, many groups cooperate with the institutional theatres in order to stage their plays within them. "We're a bit worried about the fact that most of the independent stuff is disappearing into the institutional theatres", says Eysteinsdóttir. "It's serves as proof that the grants to independent groups are too low, which forces them into cooperation with the big theatres."

SL owns and operates a theatre called Tjarnarbíó, providing money to run an office and keep an employee. Tjarnabíó could be used by independent groups, thereby solving the ever-present housing dilemma. However, since the building has a reputation for being an amateur theatre used mostly by college students, many professional groups find it unappealing. Eysteinsdóttir is well aware of the problem. "Our dream is to renovate Tjarnarbíó and make it exclusive to the independent theatre groups, thereby ridding it of its amateur reputation. It would also be home to our office, a little café and serve as a centre for performance art." A city commission is currently reviewing the plans.

When asked what she'd do if she had unlimited power, Eysteinsdóttir says she'd triple the money that goes into the independent theatre scene. "When the issue of money is brought up in correlation with arts, a lot of taxpayers get upset. What they don't realize is that every penny that goes into the independent theatre scene goes back into society tenfold." Eysteinsdóttir explains that before a play is staged, materials need to be bought, workers need to be hired, costumes need to be made, the performance needs to be promoted, etc. Because the grants are so low, many independent theatre artists are underpaid, and some even donate their work. Combine that with the fact that theatre groups often make crafty deals in exchange for building materials and costumes, and the result is a production that's worth twice the money it was granted. "Of course I find it wonderful that people make theatre out of passion, regardless of money," Eysteinsdóttir says. "But it's a double edged sword. Politicians who want to cut our funding look to the groups who are making theatre for free, exemplifying them, which is unfair to other theatre artists. We're professionals. Nobody should have to work for free."

Shopping



SKÁRI

The Blue Lagoon of Reykjavík Hair Salons:

Toni & Guy

By Julika Huether

"When you enter a Toni & Guy in the US, it's just another trendy hairdresser," a friend told me before I left for my appointment at the franchise in Reykjavík. "When you enter the Toni & Guy on Laugavegur, you see the Bang & Olufsen stereo and think, they are going to charge me a lot!"

Indeed, the first and only franchised hairdresser in Iceland is not all that similar to its cousins in other countries. Starting from the pre-service: Instead of the usual filter coffee, you will be served cappuccino or latte. Instead of a regular gossip magazine, you will get the full gloss and weight of a Vogue book.

The main procedure, which is often reduced to the oversimplified phrase "getting a haircut," starts with a style analysis at Toni & Guy. The customer is scanned from head to toe in the blink of an eye and accordingly guided towards choosing a suitable haircut. "It is not easy guessing the customer's style or even character within two minutes, but it is absolutely essential," says Hildur Arnadóttir, manager of the store in Reykjavík. "After all, if we did not try to adapt the haircut to each individual, not only the customer would be unhappy. It would be dead boring for the hairdresser as well."

But the headquarters of Toni & Guy ensure their staff are more than just bored service people: Every employee has to attend an introductory training at the Toni & Guy Academy in London before starting to work for one of the franchises, and all franchises regularly send a couple of employees to the academy to get updated on new trends in hairdressing and fashion.

With around 400 shops from Australia to Russia, from Alaska to Hong Kong, globalization is also an important aspect for the Reykjavík branch: Managers from different parts of the world hold a share in it, and during busy times, the headquarters send staff from other franchises to Iceland to support the team.

"At the moment, we have a colleague from London here. Even with 24 employees, peak times can be extremely hectic," says Arnadóttir.

At the moment, though, there is no need to hurry. After a relaxing wash and head massage, Hildur keeps me up to date on what is happening to my hair - without the patronizing blames disguised as haircare tips that many hairdressers excel in. Instead, she hums happily to a Wham tune the Bang & Olufsen sends through its high-quality speakers.

The spacious 300m² shop with its minimalistic interior design tops off this high-quality notion of a clean, well-organized professional business with the ambition to be more than just a common hairdresser's – the Blue Lagoon among Reykjavík's salons, if you like. Only the tourists are missing.

A final look in the mirror shows the procedure formerly called "getting a haircut," all-inclusive with head massage and style analysis, is a success. The Bang & Olufsen is indeed no bluff.

Toni & Guy, Laugavegur 96, 101 Reykjavík, Tel: 511 6660 www.toniandguy.com

IN MY OPINION
THE VERY BEST VEGETARIAN RESTAURANT IN THE WORLD
Annetta Hágstrom

OK, Juliette Lewis did not eat at our place the last time she came to Iceland but we are pretty sure that she will visit us very soon. Join the many very famous people who like Robert Plant and Gwyneth Paltrow and become one of our regular customers. Where the stars eat you are very safe!

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Reykjavik Excursions
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Culture Club

The Grapevine Celebrates Capitalism

Your Guide to Skyr
The dairy product we can't get enough of

The marketing folks in Iceland may enjoy painting the nation's cuisine as replete with pickled ram's testicles, sheep's heads, putrefied shark, and spiced innards, but there is food originating from this little island that is delicious, flavour-packed, and cheap. And no, I don't just mean hot dogs.

Skyr is the quintessential Icelandic dairy product. Some describe it as thick yogurt, others as sour curds. It is high in protein and calcium and very low in fat – a fitness fan's dream. Skyr is heavily marketed as one of the best fast-food health products in the country, and while this is most definitely true of pure skyr, the popular fruit varieties are full of sugar and less healthy than the tourist department would wish you to believe.

SKARI

Finally, a use for the rennet on the shelf

For those with ingredients like rennet on hand, skyr can even be made at home: heat some skim milk to 90-95° C and leave for 30-40 minutes, then cool to 40-43° C. Add some fresh skyr and cheese rennet to a cooled skim milk or water mixture. Pour this new mix into the warm skimmed milk and keep at a temperature of 40-43° C for several hours, at which point you separate the curd and the whey that have formed, and hey presto – you have skyr. For amateur skyr-chefs, 22 pounds of skimmed milk at the beginning will give you about 4.4 pounds of skyr in the end. Or you could just pop round to the store and buy some.

The sidekick to heroes and villains

There are records of skyr being prepared and eaten as early as the 11th century in the Sagas. The Saga of Grettir the Strong recounts a fight Grettir has with Auðunn, who throws a bag of skyr at Grettir. The strong man "thought this a greater insult than if Auðunn had given him a bad wound."

A more graphic skyr story appears in Egil's Saga. Our hero Egill spends an evening eating skyr and drinking with his enemy Ármóður. When he tires of his adversary, Egill gracefully thrusts him up against a wall and "spewed up a great torrent of vomit which gushed all over Ármóð's face, filling his eyes and nostrils and mouth and pouring down his chest." Whether this was the skyr or the ale is not specified, but Egill does break into verse later in the chapter, extolling the virtues of his vomit.

One of the biggest fans of skyr in Iceland is known for his addiction. His name, "Skyrgámur," means "Skyr Gobbler" and he is the eighth of 13 Icelandic "Santa Clauses" to visit children in the days leading up to Christmas. Skyrgámur will eat any skyr that is in the house and, with the super-powers befitting a Santa, can even open any locked container of skyr. Skyr has found its uses into the 20th century. The last death sentence ever handed down by the Icelandic courts was in 1914 to a woman who was convicted of killing her brother by feeding him poisoned skyr.

In 1972, Helgi Hóseasson famously threw skyr at the bishop of Iceland and MPs to protest the fact that he could not have his baptism annulled. This method of protest was used again a few months ago against those involved in the Kárahnjúkar dam project during a meeting at Hotel Nordica.

Modern skyr

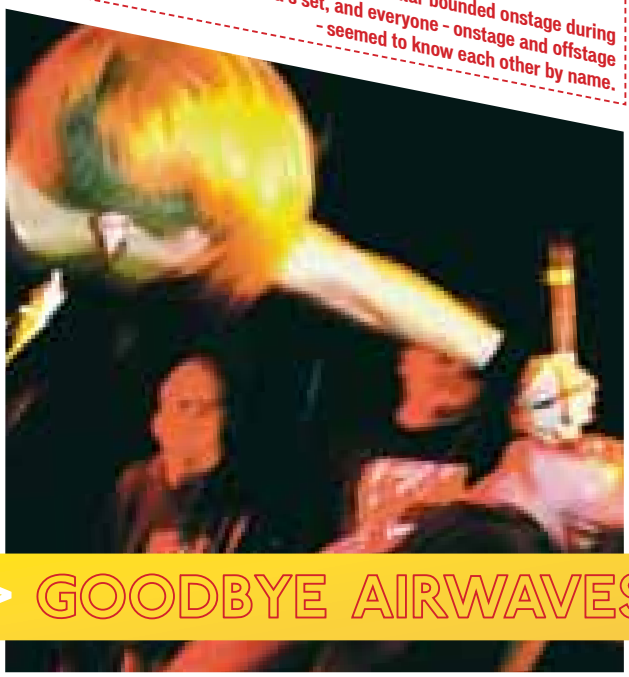
Of course the primary reason for skyr's enduring popularity is the taste. Manufacturers have exploited this and the two main producers of skyr for the Icelandic market, MS and Norðumjólk, have created a variety of flavours beyond traditional fruit varieties, including cappuccino, banana split, and even aloe vera (apparently it is as good for your insides as it is for softening your skin). Skyr drykkur swept into the market this year – it's a more liquid version of skyr, still heavily loaded with sugar (or aspartame) and created for those on-the-go. You can buy skyr desserts, which is actually cream and cream cheese with a bit of skyr added to allow the consumer to feel virtuous. And 10-11 recently introduced skyr bars at some of their locations. A variety of skyr flavours and toppings are available to create your very own skyr sundae - genius.

Still, maybe the best way to enjoy this treat is the traditional way: plain skyr with sugar and milk added on top to taste and possibly spiced up with some fresh fruit or jam.

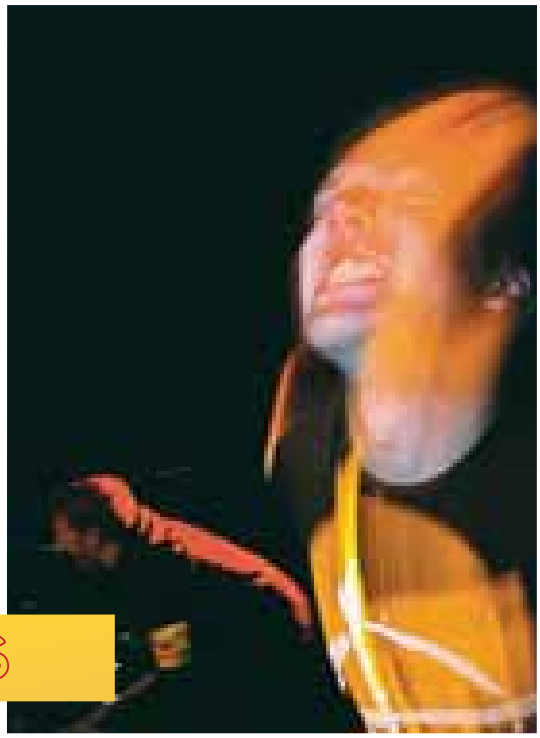
If you're reading this over a tub of apricot-vanilla and despairing that you're about to leave this beautiful island without its perfect dairy products, fear not. Skyr is finally being exported abroad. Residents of the US will be the first lucky ones to be able to taste this product off Iceland's shores, but those in the UK and Denmark might very well be following soon.

There's an old Icelandic proverb "Þeir sletta skyrinu sem eiga það" (literally "they throw around the skyr who own it"), which means that those who can afford to waste usually do so. Skyr has been a valuable commodity over the years; we residents need to make the most of living in the country that invented it. And for visitors – dig in! Those who can afford to buy skyr should do so.

By Eliza Reid



Two members of Skátar bounded onstage during Jakobínarína's set, and everyone - onstage and offstage - seemed to know each other by name.



> GOODBYE AIRWAVES

WHO
Deathmetal-Supersquad Skátar
Fighting Shit
Jakobínarína

WHERE
The Cave

WHEN
October 29th 2005

A Return to the Cave

By Sindri Eldon | Photos by Skari

The Cave is a largish room in TPM (Tilraunarþróunarmiðstöðin – a mouthful in any language), an old fish-processing plant on the unattractive side of town that has evolved into a remarkable institution: A haven for teenage bands and concertgoers that not only features rehearsal space adequate for 200 musicians and a stage for them to perform on, but is mercifully free of the teenage abstinence prattle that plagues most underage venues. They have a decent smoking room and the only reason they give to ban alcohol is to minimize the amounts of damaged and vomited-on equipment. At least once a week, it hosts the most respected all-ages shows in the country. Friday, October 28th, was no exception, but it was all that much more remarkable for what it followed.

Deathmetal Supersquad have to be seen to be believed. A singer/guitarist backed by an agile and capable drummer and a chorus of fans who looked ready to die for them, they thundered through the tightest punk set I have seen in a long time. Even the poor sound quality only added to the purity and honesty of their performance.

The audience didn't move an inch, but not out of boredom. There was a kind of silent reverence in their eyes that no amount of hype or record sales could ever supplant. The awestruck teenage angst welling out of the crowd was almost as bittersweet as the heartfelt agony in frontman Þórir's voice.

The squealing cacophony of noise at the start of Skátar's show set the tone for the total randomness of their chaotic, all-over-the-place sound, and it was a fairly run-of-the-mill Skátar concert, to be honest. The white overalls, the quirky sense of humour, the maniacal cackling and the mesmerizing hypnosis of their sustained riffs were all present and accounted for, and there were all-around salutes to their fellow bands of the evening.

Although it took them a while to get into it, their sheer originality combined with the earnest care they put into their live show won through, but the sound system could have done with a bit of vamping – I noticed some extremely bored-looking people sleeping in the couches at the back.

I spoke briefly with Óli, Fighting Shit's drummer, before the show, and he gingerly confessed to me that they hadn't practiced in about three months or so. It didn't show in the slightest. Fighting Shit were a tightly wound thrashcore machine, a perfectly hellish blast of unrestrained noise. They were as awe-inspiring a live band as one could possibly wish for.

Jakobínarína are becoming the N*Sync of Iceland. The two bands have many things in common: Teenaged followings, an ear for catchy music, sharp dance routines and an onstage attitude that suggests utter stupidity to the nth degree. And I know it's been said before (even Fighting Shit vocalist Kolli couldn't stop jabbering on about them between songs), but here's one more person saying it, just to make sure you get it: You have to see these guys play.

The general feeling in the crowd at their shows is that you are truly bearing witness to the start of something incredible, that a surgical knife is cutting with microscopic precision into the very heart of great music. They are one of those bands that don't even need songwriting to deliver. They are possessed of such a unique and untainted clarity of vision that it borders on zealotism; they could never, ever write music that didn't sound like this.

All in all, their perfectly silly pop-punk suffered only from the technical difficulties that by necessity plague a six-man band. Other than that, they were a force, a bright shining sword, a religious experience, too good for drugs and better than sex. They made me wish the night would never end.

I sometimes felt like something of an outsider there, however. The bands and the audience were just such a tightly wound community, gathered so snugly around a place so infinitely theirs that the sense of belonging could have been used as a doorstop. Two members of Skátar bounded onstage during Jakobínarína's set, and everyone – onstage and offstage – seemed to know each other by name. It was such an intimate and marked change from the crass, vain showmanship of Airwaves a week earlier that watching it all moved me to tears.

MUSIC AND NIGHTLIFE LISTINGS

Music and nightlife events usually start around 21:00, unless otherwise stated. Pubs close at 01.00 on weekdays and much, much later on weekends. For those just wanting to party, the pubs and clubs don't get crowded until after midnight on weekends, although Thursday is a semi-official night out.

Compiled by Karl Ingi Karlsson.
listings@grapevine.is

FRIDAY
NOVEMBER 4

80s retro band Hollí plays some of your favorite 80s tracks.
Café Victor
A concert combining poems, punk and rap.
Grand Rokk
Dance music galore on the top floor.
Prikid
Death metal mania with the most evil looking band in Iceland, Dimma.
Gaukur á Stöng
DJ Brynjar Már plays some dancy pop songs.
Sólon
DJ Maggi Lego from Gus Gus.
Sirkus
DJ Magic.
Kaffibarinn
DJs Blue Lagoon and Alfons X play some trendy dance music
Prikid
DJs Hlynur Mastermix and Daddi Diskó play dancy pop music.
Thorvaldsen
Misstress Barbara from Italy / Canada brings the best techno from around the world and makes sure everybody goes crazy. Supporting DJs Exos and DJ Richard Cuellar will make sure everybody is warm when the Misstress steps on stage. The show starts at 23:00 and goes on until early morning. Tickets available in Þruman, Laugavegur 69 for 1200kr.
Nasa
Troubadours Gotti and Eisi followed by DJ Maggi.
Hressó

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 5

Acoustic music with Franz and Kristó followed by hiphop DJ B-Ruff.
Prikid
DJ Brynjar Már plays some dancy pop songs.
Sólon
DJ Kári.
Kaffibarinn
DJ Magic. Iceland's favorite dj.
Sirkus
DJs Hlynur Mastermix and Daddi Diskó play dancy pop music.
Thorvaldsen
Hip hop / Breakbeat galore with one of the world's finest DJs, Dj. Craze and his loyal companion MC Armanni Reign. Icelandic DJs Kalli, Lelli, Gunni Ewok and DJ Paranoya start the night off.
Gaukur á Stöng
Light Jazz Evening at 20:00. Sweet live jazz and if you can play jazz you are welcome to join in on the jam session later in the evening.
Póstbarinn
Rnb and disco going on downstairs. Dance mania going on upstairs.
Prava Club
Rock concert with SIC, 48Pages, Vonbrigði, MDM and Bulldozer. Show starts at 20:00 and admission is 500ISK.
TPM Tónlistarþróunarmiðstöð
Stjórnin, an Icelandic early 90's pop band, perform after years of, well, not performing. Doors open at 23:00 and admission is 1500ISK.
Nasa
The band Mát plays soft rock music.
Hressó
Viking metal galore as swedish vikings Amon Amarth play heavy metal along with Icelandic bands Sólstafir, Nevolution and Dark Harvest. Show starts at 23:00. Admission is 1200ISK.
Grand Rokk
Yggrasil, a jazz band from the Faroe Islands, will perform beautiful live jazz. The band is lead by the amazing singer Eivör Pálsdóttir.
Kaffi Reykjavík

SUNDAY
NOVEMBER 6

Faroe Island's jazz heros Yggrasil, lead by the beautiful Eivör Pálsdóttir, perform live jazz music. The show starts at 16:00 and admission is 2000ISK.
Nordic House
Swedish viking metal heros Amon Amarth play really loud metal. Support acts include Momentum, Severed Crotch and Masters of Darkness. Show starts at 18:00. Admission is 1200ISK.
TPM Tónlistarþróunarmiðstöð

WEDNESDAY
NOVEMBER 9

De la Rosa and Tanya. Beautiful girls at the turntables.
Prikid
Sheptone Records night. Tonight is dedicated to the film DIG!, which is being shown at the October film festival.
Sirkus

THURSDAY
NOVEMBER 10

Mastermind and the Rick Swing Orchestra.
Sirkus
The Nine Elevens play their amazing rock music with no respect to anyone.
Grand Rokk
Troubadour Justin followed by a DJ.
Hressó

FRIDAY
NOVEMBER 11

DJ Andri makes people dance.
Sirkus
DJ Brynjar Már plays some dancy pop songs.
Sólon
DJ Carl Lavia.
Kaffibarinn
DJ Teddy plays and plays
Prikid
DJs Hlynur Mastermix and Daddi Diskó play dancy pop music.
Thorvaldsen
Indie rock band Úlpa.
Grand Rokk
To celebrate the day that WW1 ended god knows how many years ago, 80s retro band Hollí will play some serious 80s music.
Café Victor
Troubadours Halli and Fáfnir followed by DJ Maggi.
Hressó

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 12

Delta blues legend David "Honeyboy" Edwards will play us some beautiful blues with his 90 year old hands. Local blues heros Michael Pollock and Siggi Sig will perform as well and Daniel Pollock will appear as a special guest. The house opens at 20:00 and admission is 2200ISK. Tickets available on www.midi.is and in Tónastöðin, Skipholt 50d
Nasa
DJ Brynjar Már plays some dancy pop songs.
Sólon
DJs Erna and Ellen
Prikid
DJs Hlynur Mastermix and Daddi Diskó play dancy pop music.
Thorvaldsen
Í Svörtum Fötum, one of Iceland's most popular local pop bands, do their thing, whatever that is.

Doors open at 23:00. Admission is 1500ISK.
Nasa
Light Jazz Evening at 20:00. Live jazz trio that welcomes jam partners later on in the evening.
Póstbarinn

Grand Rokk. November 5th.
Doors open at 22:00
Admission 1200ISK

AMON AMARATH, SÓLSTAFIR, NEVOLUTION, DARK HARVEST

Amon Amarath are Swedes who play heavy metal the way that our heathen gods would have. These 3 support bands are Iceland's biggest hopes in beating those Swedish gits at being Viking, and at being metal.

Live troubadours followed by DJ Maggi.
Hressó
Megasukk. This is a project combining Iceland's folk hero Megas with indie folk band Súkkat.
Grand Rokk

WEDNESDAY
NOVEMBER 16

Sheptone Records night. There might be some live music; there might be something else. They won't tell us.
Sirkus

THURSDAY
NOVEMBER 17

Crimejazz. Local crime novelists read from their books to the music of a live jazz band. This should be interesting, especially if you don't understand Icelandic.
Grand Rokk
DJ B-Ruff. Hip hop at its finest.
Prikid
DJ KGB plays dancy tunes.
Sirkus
Troubadours Böddi and Danni.
Hressó

FRIDAY
NOVEMBER 18

DJ Brynjar Már plays some dancy pop songs.
Sólon
DJ Kári.
Kaffibarinn
DJ Kári. Hip-hop and dancy stuff.
Prikid
DJ Margeir plays some of the freshest electro around.
Sirkus
DJs Hlynur Mastermix and Daddi Diskó play dancy pop music.
Thorvaldsen
Live music by 80s retro band Hollí.
Café Victor
Troubadours Gotti and Víðir followed by DJ Johnny.
Hressó

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 19

Acoustic music with Franz and Kristó. Followed by DJs Erna and Ellen.
Prikid
Deep Jimi and the Zep Cream's record release concert.
Grand Rokk
DJ Brynjar Már plays some dancy pop songs.
Sólon
DJ Lazer plays cool music that makes pretty girls dance on top of chairs.
Sirkus
DJ Magic.
Kaffibarinn
DJs Hlynur Mastermix and Daddi Diskó play dancy pop music.
Thorvaldsen
Light Jazz Evening at 20:00. Weekly jazz evening with a local trio. Jam session later in the evening. You are welcome to join in on it.
Póstbarinn
Papar, one of Icelands pop bands, please their fans by playing music.

Doors open at 23:00. Admission is 1000ISK.
Nasa
Troubadours Gotti and Víðir followed by DJ Johnny.
Hressó

SUNDAY
NOVEMBER 20

The White Stripes finally play in Iceland. We've been waiting for this moment forever. Tickets are 5500kr seated and 4500kr standing. Tickets available at Skífan record shops (Laugavegur, Kringlan, Smáralind) and online at www.midi.is.
Laugardalshöll

WEDNESDAY
NOVEMBER 23

Sheptone Records night. What goes on there is a mystery.
Sirkus

THURSDAY
NOVEMBER 24

Troubadour Hermann
Hressó

FRIDAY
NOVEMBER 25

Balli.
Kaffibarinn
DJ Árni Sveins
Sirkus
DJ Brynjar Már plays some dancy pop songs.
Sólon
DJs Hlynur Mastermix and Daddi Diskó play dancy pop music.
Thorvaldsen
Live band Mát plays some soft rock music followed by DJ Stjáni.
Hressó

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 26

DJ Brynjar Már plays some dancy pop songs.
Sólon

Stúdentakjallarinn. November 11th.

HERMIGERVILL

The Mr. Wizard of dance and rock, Hermigervill is coming of a festival-stealing performance at this year's Airwaves. This looks to be one of the last chances to see him in a smaller, more intimate venue.

DJ KGB
Sirkus
DJs Hlynur Mastermix and Daddi Diskó play dancy pop music.
Thorvaldsen
Light Jazz Evening at 20:00. Bass, two guitars and all that jazz followed by a jam session that you should participate in.
Póstbarinn
Old school Icelandic pop / rock band Grafík perform some interesting stuff. Those people were quite influential back in the day.

Doors open at 23:00. Admission is 1000ISK.
Nasa
Troubadour Böddi and Danni followed by DJ Stjáni.
Hressó

SUNDAY
NOVEMBER 27

Sigur Rós concert. It's been three years since their last show here. If your dream has always been to see Sigur Rós perform in their home country, you just got lucky. They are supported by Amina, a string quartet. Doors open at 19:00. Tickets available online at www.midi.is. Tickets also available in almost every record store in the country.
Laugardalshöll

WEDNESDAY
NOVEMBER 30

Sheptone Records night. There is something going on here. Nobody knows what it is.
Sirkus

THURSDAY
DECEMBER 1

Troubadour Þorvaldur.
Hressó

MUSIC HIGHLIGHTS
November 12th
David "Honeyboy" Edwards, Nasa.
November 20th
THE WHITE STRIPES, Laugardalshöll.
November 27th
SIGUR RÓS, AMINA, Laugardalshöll.

See "In Your Pocket" for details.

NASA. November 4th. Doors open at 23:00.

MISSTRESS BARBARA, EXOS, DJ RICHARD CUELLAR

Born in Italy, reared in Canada, this queen of techno has travelled around the world countless times to play some of the danciest techno known to man. *Tickets 1200ISK. at Þruman, Laugavegur 69, 1700ISK. at the door.*

ARTS AND CULTURE LISTINGS

Want to be seen in the listings? Send us a mail to listings@grapevine.is and your event will be announced in the next issue, and the best thing is that being in the listings is free!

EVENTS
Compiled by Karl Ingi Karlsson.
listings@grapevine.is

101 Gallery
Thu -Sat 14:00 - 17:00 or by an arrangement
Exhibition by Icelandic concept/installation artist Haraldur Jónsson. Ends November 26

ASÍ museum
Daily except Mondays 13:00 - 17:00
Exhibition by Þorbjörg Þorvaldsdóttir and Karen Ósk Sigurðardóttir. Ends December 4

Gallerí Lana Matusa Art Ceramic Studio
Unique souvenirs, lava ceramic, oil paintings ends November 11

Gallery i8
Wed-Fri 11:00-17:00, 13:00-17:00 Sat
Exhibition by icelandic painter / sculptor Þór Vigfússon ends December 23

Gallery Kogga Ceramic-Studio
Mon. - Fri. 09:00 - 18:00 & Sat. 10:00 - 14:00.
Unique ceramic design by the well known ceramic-artist Kogga and painter Magnús Kjartansson. ends November 11

Gallery Listvinahúsið
Hand-made ceramics, Icelandic clay and lava. ends December 12

Gallery of the Icelandic Printmakers Association
Tue-Sun 14:00-18:00
Svanhvít Sigurlinnadóttir, ends November 13

Gerðarsafn, Kópavogur Art Museum
Tue-Sun 11:00-17:00
Exhibits from Tsarskoje Selo, the Russian national museum, will be on display as part of the Russian theme taking place in Kópavogur. ends December 4

Hafnarborg - Institute of Culture and Fine Art
Wed-Sun 11:00-17:00
Jón Laxdal has exhibited in many galleries and museums in and out of Iceland. The works in Hafarborg are mostly made of texts, characters and letters together with ornaments and pictures, their presentation mainly based on typographic values. Ends November 28th

Hafnarfjörður Folk Museum
Pakkhúsið, open: May – Sept, Weekends 13:00 – 17:00, Sivertsens-House, May – Sept, Weekends 13:00 – 17:00
At Smiðjan, Strandgata 50 you will find the headquarters of the Folk Museum. In the main exhibitions room you can see the ongoing exhibition 'Thus it was…' where the history of Hafnarfjörður and its neighbourhood is shown from the settlement of the Vikings until modern times through historical texts and photos. Ends May 6

Harbour House
Daily 10:00 -17:00
Various pieces of art on display. World of Mankind by Gudrún Vera Hjartardóttir. Overview of the works of Erro. An exhibition of a selection of the works that the Reykjavík Art Museum has acquired, through purchases or gifts, from 2002.

Kirsuberjatréð
Mon. - Fri. 10:00 – 18:00, Sat. 11:00 – 15:00
A gallery with Icelandic design run by ten female artists. In the gallery you can find various unusual gift items such as handbags from fishskin, felt, pigs bladders, copper weaving, baskets.

Numismatic Collection of the Central Bank
Mon-Fri 9:00-17:00, Closed 12:00-13:00
Icelandic coin & banknote exhibition.

Reykjavík City Library
Mon-Thur 10:00-20:00, Fri. 11:00 – 19:00 Weekends 13:00 - 17:00
Books and periodicals in Icelandic as well as English, Scandinavian and other languages. It has children books and a great comic book section in English, CDs and videos.

Reykjavík Electricity Museum
Sun 13:00-17:00
Museum on the history and development of hydroelectric power production in Iceland and the electrification of Reykjavík.

Reykjavík Museum of Photography
Mon-Fri 12:00-19:00, Sat&Sun 13:00-17:00
Exhibition of Swedish photographer Lars Tunbjörk's work. Tunbjörk's work is renowned for it's portrayal of the evolution of society in the last two decades.

Saga Museum
12:00-17:00 every day.
For the first time you can see historical figures and major events in Icelandic history from the time of the earliest settlers right up to that of the Reformation, rought to life in a unique and exciting way. CD guidance. Ends December 2

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum
Sat and Sun 14:00-17:00
An exhibition of works by Danish painters Carl-Henning Pedersen and Else Alfelt and Icelandic painter Svavar Guðnason, who were all members of the COBRA group. Also sculptures by their friend and collegue, Sigurjón Ólafsson. Ends November 27

Telecommunications Museum
Tue,Thu & Sun 13:00-17:00
The Museum displays old telephones and telegraph equipment and the history of telephony in Iceland. The house was built as a coast radio station.

FRIDAY
NOVEMBER 4

Icelandic opera
The Turn of the Screw by Benjamin Britten

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 5

Nýlistasafnið, The Living Art Museum
Ísland Þjórkum Skorið / Terraformer. We have no idea what this is except that it's some sort of concert / party / book release thing with artists and rockstars. I for one am too curious not to go.

Starts at 19:00.

SUNDAY
NOVEMBER 6

Icelandic opera
The Turn of the Screw by Benjamin Britten

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 12

Gallery Fold
Opening of an exhibition by icelandic artist Kolbrá Bragadóttir.

Icelandic opera
The Turn of the Screw by Benjamin Britten. Final performance.

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 19

Icelandic opera
Pars Pro Toto; Hope & Borealis Ensemble; Áróra Bórealis

SUNDAY
NOVEMBER 20

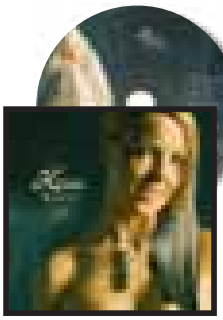
Icelandic opera
Pars Pro Toto; Hope & Borealis Ensemble; Áróra Bórealis

TUESDAY
NOVEMBER 29

Icelandic opera
Lunch Time Concert with Hlín Pétursdóttir, soprano and Kurt Kopecky, piano.

MUSIC AND NIGHTLIFE

Grapevine Album Reviews



Hera
Don't Play This

Worth two beers. Costs four.

Not since Spinal Tap's Shark Sandwich has someone lobbed a softball like this to a reviewer—the abysmal cover featuring a smiling, topless girl, (the picture cuts just at the top of the breasts to be playful), does not help the tag line "Don't Play This" at all. But Hera and the performers on her album don't deserve the bile that the cover raises.

True, she has a song about chocolate, "Chocolate, it melts the pain away," that won't win her any songwriting competitions. But she seems earnest enough, and she has a crystal clear voice. And a lot of people don't listen to words anyway. And maybe twelve year olds need a topless role model.

Guide to the ratings system:
In prison, you deal in cigarettes. In Iceland, you deal in beers. We don't condone this, we just accept it as fact. One beer=500 ISK at the seedy bars we frequent. That means a mainstream release costs up to 2500 ISK... or $40. Yes, that much. That's why we do the beer thing.

My Summer as a Salvation Soldier
Anarchists Are Hopeless Romantics

Worth five beers. Costs three. Winner

From the first harmonized chorus: "After all that we've been through/ these are the memories that I will have of you/ when the years are dead and gone, not a single conversation just this song," singer Þórir G. Jónsson, going now by a more pronounceable My Summer as a Salvation Soldier, indicates a more palatable understanding of song and songwriting than he did on his debut record, I Believe In This. Gone are the wavering vocals and inconsistencies. In fact, any lack of confidence has evaporated.

If you don't know Þórir's music, he might be described as a blend of American-style singer songwriter in the style of Bright Eyes, with a small amount of The Cure influence. This album demonstrates Þórir's songwriting skills – while stripped down, there is a polish to the guitar work that belies Þórir's 21 years of age. One thing missing from Anarchists are the true zinger lines – instead of "Your laughter's like a tumour," we get a little more swearing, and an unfortunately conventional reference to quitting medicine and talking to himself.

Truthfully, the absence of zingers allows the songs on Anarchists to play a little more clean – there is a clean blend here of early British pop and American folk. Þórir continues to impress.

Helvítis Útlendingur

James Apollo
Good Grief

Worth four beers. Costs three.

When members of Kimono imported this Minnesota band to Iceland last spring, we thought they were a little cracked. James Apollo play a mix of Texas waltz and a two-step folk that, on first listen, feels thirty years old. The golden voiced, fresh-faced singer gave us particular difficulty when we reviewed their show, as he crooned heart-breakers with a bravado that suggested the broken heart was never his. What we've found is that if you play the CD once, you will repeat it. Good Grief has legs, and James Apollo's perfect tone on lines like "Dead men weigh more than broken hearts" give a timeless quality to the music. Many of the tracks sound more and more like a favourite jukebox tune in a dive bar.

Daníel Ágúst
Someone Who Swallowed a Star

Worth two beers. Costs four.

The opening violin chords of Daníel Águst's CD are extremely promising—somewhere between melodic and hypnotic. These strings come in throughout the album, but rarely do they do more than promise a good song… rarely do they deliver as they do on the single If You Leave Me Now. A curious disappointment.

The Five Impact Moments of Iceland Airwaves on a Visiting Journalist

Taking a week off from his day job as a writer at Rolling Stone, Christian Hoard spent six solid days as a Grapevine journalist. Here he recounts the moments that made the strongest impression on him.

5 Grand Rokk, Saturday, Oct. 22. Watching tight, barburning bands like Tommygun and Perfect Disorder, I was amazed at how much metal culture and cheeseball stage moves these guys have absorbed, and how enthusiastically they spit it all back, complete with native quirks – namely the vocalist's near-comic yawps, which I happily misidentified as a Viking thing. Of course, the first four bands were only setting things up for Iceland's Minutemen. Though I couldn't make out a word, Æla's very short songs felt like Dadaist anthems – but between their nuanced arthouse stomp and the singer's cracked declamation, they were a hoot.

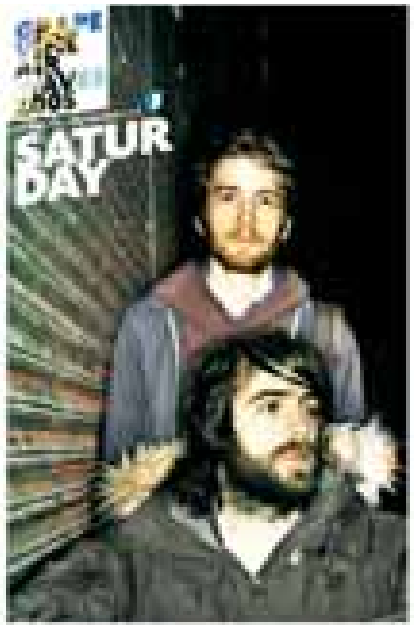
4 Architecture in Helsinki at NASA, Friday night. Surrounded by a sea of expensive cocktails, weird haircuts, and about a hundred more bodies than NASA could comfortably hold, eight Aussies made joyful noise out of guitars, keyboards, trombones, a trumpet, a tuba and an army of percussion. Warped, gleeful hooks, collectivist mayhem and a horde of fire code violations combined for perhaps "the" highlight – memories-qua-music, at least – of Airwaves '05.

3 Pravda, 5:30 AM Saturday. This club proved just sleazetastic as I'd heard: In the ten minutes I spent inside, I paid 1000 Kr. for a beer, was hit on by two orange-skinned women who were convinced I spoke Icelandic, and saw two fistfights. An illuminating contrast to just how dead downtown Reykjavík is on weeknights, and definitive proof that I-town knows how to party, sort of. Long may you run, spray-tanned warriors.

2 Þórir at Þjóðleikhúskjallarinn, Saturday night. After some swooning Britpop and all kinds of stylized eletronic hoo-hah, this kid – whom I'd blithely interviewed while he was manning a merch table at Hafnarhúsið on Thursday – came onstage at 2 AM, ignoring all the departing hipsters. I wound up a little teary-eyed. It may have been my exhaustion or deadline anxiety, but it's a fair bet his heartbroken, hopeful confessionals had something to do with it.

1 Fjölnir Tattoo Parlour, Monday night. On Sunday Night, the Grapevine held a barbecue at their offices for all the staff and visiting journos. I bet a fellow American that if she ate eight hot dogs – *love* those fried onions you guys put on 'em, by the way – I'd get a tattoo. She did. I did. Six of us – two Americans, a Brit, and three natives – are forever branded "Blaðamaður," in case you couldn't already i.d. us. Kudos, Iceland: I've got you under my skin.

■ By Christian Hoard



Icelandic Documentaries on the Festival Circuit

Screaming Masterpiece
2005, Dir: Ari Alexander Ergis Magnússon.

Nominated for the Nordic Council Film Prize 2005.
Played at the Edinburgh Film Festival, Cardiff Screen Festival, Melbourne International Film Festival, Palm Springs International Film Festival, Dubrovnik Film Festival, AFI Film Festival, Northern Lights Film Festival, Göteborg Film Festival, Bergen International Film Festival, Cannes Film Festival, Chicago International Film Festival, Norwegian International Film Festival, Reykjavík International Film Festival, and probably countless others.

To those completely unfamiliar with Iceland and modern Icelandic music, Screaming Masterpiece is an adequate introduction: about 80% of the film consists of band interviews and concert footage interspersed with montage sequences of the Icelandic landscape. To those familiar enough, the play on stereotypes about elves, trolls, and nature influencing the music will wear thin quick. But the real flaw in Screaming Masterpiece is its organization.

After being introduced to Múm, Mugison, Sigur Rós and other "cute generation" favourites for the first two thirds of the movie, we're suddenly sent back 25 years to Reykjavík's punk rock scene in 1980. The effect is jarring, and the brief history lesson doesn't make much of a case in establishing a musical lineage from this point to the modern musicians we've witnessed earlier. There's not a lot of time to think about it, though, as we're only in 1980 for a few minutes before being snapped back to the present - where the film then gives a cursory nod to Icelandic hip-hop. And by Icelandic hip-hop I mean the only two acts in the country, apparently: Quarashi and Blaz Roca. From here, we return to the cuties, although brief attention is given to rock, in the form of Vinyl and Mínus.

On the other hand, the choppy time travel and the disproportional attention given to one facet of modern Icelandic music can almost be forgiven for the stunning performances of musicians like Björk and Eivör Pálsdóttir (who is actually Faroese and sings in her native language in her sole clip), the animation sequence shown during a Múm performance, and the sight of Dorrit Moussaieff, wife of Icelandic president Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, dancing to Trabant. The movie's best moment, however, is when Björk explains how all national anthems are variations of one song, and we identify these variations as sounding, for example, "very Icelandic," only because we know that the variation came from that country. Almost seeming like it was trying to prove her point, this statement is followed by a clip of Icelandic ancient rhymes expert Steindór

Andersen performing with Sigur Rós, a small orchestra and a choir, sounding so bombastically characterless that it could have come from anywhere.

As far as musical documentaries go, the organization could be a lot cleaner and the coverage a bit more even-handed, not to mention more in-depth, but Screaming Masterpiece does provide a fair introduction to at least one part of modern Icelandic music.

By Paul F Nikolov

Africa United
2005, Dir: Ólaf "DeFleur" Jóhannesson.

Played at the Hawaii International Film Festival, Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, and the Yamagata International Film Festival.

The word "documentary" doesn't usually bring comedy to mind, but Ólaf Jóhannesson manages to make these two worlds combine beautifully in this story of Iceland's first all-foreigner football team to make it to the third division. Despite being completely unscripted, stock characters still emerge in the movie: there's Zakaria, the frustrated but determined coach, his unruly players who squabble with each other as much as they do with referees, and a Zen-like trainer - assuredly the only "Einar Xavier" in the world - acting as a voice of reason. Most of the players are from Africa, as the name suggests, but there's also a Colombian, a Portuguese, a Serb and others on the team. What keeps this film moving along at a brisk pace through pre-season training and their struggles on the field is the one constant dual dynamic running through the whole film: the characters are all likeable, but the team appears to be veering constantly towards the brink of disintegration. This tension keeps us engaged through this well-paced movie. Their objective - to win at least three games in the season to remain in the division - puts a more humourous spin on the sports movie formula as well.

Not that Africa United stays within the bounds of any formula: the film takes us out of the country, to Morocco (to relocate the Zakaria), to Serbia (to attend Zlatko's wedding) and to the UK (where Zakaria wants to meet Charlton manager Alan Curbishley for advice). The film is also probably one of the most realistic depictions of foreigners living in Iceland ever put on the screen, especially in capturing the ambiguity of their feelings about Iceland - Zlatko, at different times, will declare that Iceland has become his home but also complain that, "When an Icelander hears I'm from Serbia, the first question they ask is about the war." These elements open the film up, bring us closer to the characters and make us care about them.

Jóhannesson might be self-effacing when it comes to this movie (having jokingly compared it to The Mighty Ducks), but make no mistake: this is a movie that dares combine sports, comedy and the documentary format, and does so innovatively and entertainingly.

Africa United is currently playing in local theatres.

By Paul F Nikolov

MOVIES AND THEATRE

Not a Standard Night at the Movies: the Októberbíó Iceland Film Festival

The Danish film Solkongen, directed by Academy Award Nominee Thomas Villum Jensen, is a bittersweet comedy about a young, hopeless nerd (think Napoleon Dynamite with dyslexia) who starts working for a rich, aging beauty queen. In spite of troubles such as suspected impotence, a complete lack of flirtation skills and friends who're incapable of giving good advice, the nerd somehow steals the heart of the aging trophy wife, and falls in love with her as well. The movie, which may suffer from imperfect editing, is a good way to pass time, and the acting of Nikolas Lie Kaas, Birthe Neumann and Thomas Bo Larsen is outstanding. The movie isn't subtitled though, so brush up on your Danish before the film.

Tim Burton's Corpse Bride was in some ways a disappointment. The movie is delightfully macabre, telling the story of a young, timid man who marries a corpse by mistake. The musical score and the juicy visuals are quite breathtaking and succeed in creating a rich atmosphere reminiscent of Burton's film The Nightmare Before Christmas. However, Corpse Bride suffers from a predictable script and one-dimensional characters. If it weren't for the wonderful visuals and catchy tunes, this movie wouldn't charm anybody but die-hard Burton fans.

In the documentary category, David LaChapelle's Rize is a movie Icelanders should see. Seeing the African American youngsters from the ghettos of LA break it down in their "krump" style of dancing should teach Icelanders a thing or two about interaction and how to let go.

The movie follows Tommy the Clown, founder of the "krump" wave of hip-hop dancing, and his efforts to keep kids out of crime by teaching them a healthy outlet for their emotions. Noble as the cause may be, Rize reinforces the Hollywood notion that young African Americans, unless they have a hobby to immerse themselves in, will end up dealing drugs and shooting someone.

Quotes such as "You're either in a gang or a clown" underlined this matter. However, seeing the birth of a movement that is owned and judged by the people was delightful. The dance battle scenes in Rize proved that it doesn't matter how old or what size you are, you can still get down and dance like it's nobody's business.

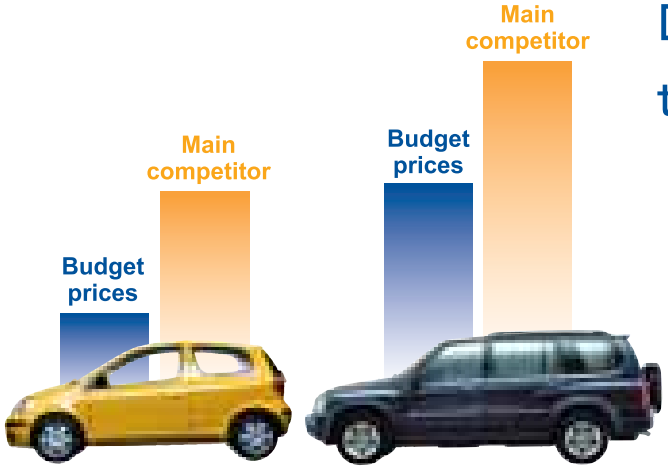
Tommy the Clown himself had a Q&A session with an appreciative crowd at Háskólabíó movie theater. He explained in a relaxed, humorous way what clowning and krumping are about, which is positive energy. "The music we dance to has no cussing, no downgrading women, no disrespecting," he said. "And you Icelanders could use some hot dance to melt some of this ice!" (Because it is icy in Iceland, you see.)

After begging the audience to ask him more questions because he had "nothin' better to do" in Iceland, Tommy challenged a member of the audience to battle one of his posse. Local break-dancer Natasha took the challenge and the audience clapped and cheered as a live dance battle took place on the stage of Háskólabíó. A refreshingly unconventional night at the movies.

The IFF is the second major international film festival in as many months, and it brings a slew of critically-acclaimed, unconventional films to Reykjavík's downtown theatres. Many screenings include Q&A sessions with directors and actors. The IFF runs from October 26 to November 12. For more information, log on to www.icelandfilmfestival.is.

By Þórdís Elva Þorvaldsdóttir Bachmann

Money is important



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Reykjavík Is For Lovers

An Interview with Andy Saur

Here is an excerpt from a curious letter **The Grapevine** received this summer.

"In October 2002, my girlfriend and I embarked on an adventure to Iceland, and I had romantic intentions in mind. After our over night flight from Minneapolis, we toured through Reykjavik and the first photo we took was in front of Leifur Eiríksson. During the trip we drove up the west coast to a mountain top near Snæfellsjökull. When we hiked to the summit, I set up a camera to take a timed photo of us the instant I proposed to my wife. A year later, we were married in Leif Erickson Park here in Duluth. For our honeymoon, we hopped on a flight back to where it all started, Reykjavik and the Leifur Eiríksson statue..."

We contacted the author, an artist from Duluth Minnesota, to get more perspective on what makes **Reykjavík** so romantic.

Grapevine: **Is there Nordic Culture in Duluth?**
Andy Saur: Yes, there is a quite the Nordic community here in Duluth. I would have to say that it is at least more than half the population are descendants from Norway, Sweden and Finland. It was mainly in the early 1900's or so when the immigrants arrived from Scandinavia, looking for work and starting a new life. My great-grandfather emigrated from Norway, my wife's great-grandparents emigrated from Finland, so that was the movement at that time. The landscape and climate is fairly similar to what they were used to, so that is why I think they chose Northern Minnesota as one of their destinations. The Nordic heritage is still reflected in today's society here from everything from festivals, Sons of Norway community groups, Scandinavian influenced Lutheran churches, cuisine and other events in everyday life.

Grapevine: **When did you first hear about Iceland?**
Andy: I have always been interested in my Nordic heritage, so I first came across Iceland in books I read as a youngster. I was, and still am, fascinated by Viking explorers and Iceland. From the photos and descriptions that I read when I was little, I knew it was a place that I had to see for myself.

Grapevine: **Few people in Iceland feel the city or the Leif Eiriksson statue is romantic. Can you explain the attraction?**
Andy: I am not sure what the attraction of the Leif Eiriksson statue is, but it must have some mystical qualities. My wife and I designed and created our wedding bands. On our rings, we have an infinity symbol and a Viking ship. It symbolizes our never-ending journey together and our everlastingly love. Maybe that is the connection there, from where we were engaged and the time in Iceland and the Leif Eiriksson statue to the Leif Erickson Park we were married at in Duluth. Leif Erickson was an explorer and adventurer, and my wife and I feel that we have the same heart for exploration.

Grapevine: **If Leifur Eiriksson didn't land in America, would you still like Iceland?**
Andy: Yes, if Leifur Eiriksson did not land in North America, I would still love Iceland. In grade school, we were taught that Christopher Columbus was the first European to land in North America. It wasn't until a few years later that I started reading about the Vikings, Iceland and Leif Erickson, that I discovered the truth. Iceland is such a magical place to my wife and I that we stop in our tracks when we see the word 'Iceland' or hear 'Iceland' on the news. It is a place that we would love to stay for a longer period of time.

Grapevine: **What would Icelanders think of Duluth?**
Andy: Icelanders would think of Duluth as a familiar place. Duluth is on the tip of Lake Superior and has a feel of being on the ocean. The lake is so vast, one can not see the other side. Duluth has a harbour, and built on a hillside. The population is about half of Reykjavik, around 80,000 or so. We also experience long, dark winters and much daylight in the summer. The weather changes very quickly here, it just depends which way the wind is blowing! We have local cafes where local artist display their art and musicians play. It is a charming city that isn't too big, or too little.

Andy Saur maintains regular correspondence with the Grapevine. He last wrote to us to remind us of Leif Eriksson Day, on October 9th, as dedicated by Lyndon Johnson in 1964.

By Bart Cameron

Outside Reykjavík

Mývatn

The Local Specialities of Mývatn

Last spring, the Grapevine attempted to pass through Mývatn. We ended up staying for a weekend, visiting Dimmuborgir, Krafla, the beautiful Mývatn Lake, and the Mývatn Nature Baths—a tasteful Northern approach to the Blue Lagoon. The parting words of our host and guide, Pétur Gíslason of the Hotel Reykjahlíð, were "You haven't seen anything. You have to see Mývatn in the fall."

We returned this October, expecting… honestly, expecting nothing. We brought a guitar, some wine, some cheese, and hiking clothes. There are miles and miles of hiking paths throughout the Mývatn area—without any organized activities or sites, the area offers the kind of relaxation that would be an attraction in and of itself in most parts of the world. Beyond the out-of-this-world moonscape, (no joke: the astronauts of the Apollo missions actually trained in Mývatn to familiarize themselves with the geography of the moon), Mývatn offers extremely relaxed sites like the Cowshed Café, a café built into a working, family-owned dairy.

As it happened, though the tourists had left Mývatn, and though we had no intention of going to the familiar sites, there was still a good deal more to see than our three days allowed for. We still believe that Mývatn, with its massive lake containing the most diversity of waterfowl in the world, would make for a perfect do-nothing-but-observe holiday—we just can't say that we've tried it.

Lofthellur Cave, Ptarmigan Murder

Arriving at noon after a five-hour drive from Reykjavík, we set off immediately on a tour organized by Hotel Reykjahlíð to the newly discovered Lofthellur Cave. The cave is exactly 23 km from Reykjahlíð, a somewhat raucous one-hour journey by superjeep—our tour guide Illugi, whose family actually discovered the cave we're going to, points out the spot where Mick Jagger decided, during his 1999 visit to Mývatn, that the road was too rough for him.

Preparations for descending into the cave involve some serious warnings: ice formations inside are extremely fragile, and unlike the more famous sites in the area, the cave is extremely limited in the number of tourists it can handle per year.

We descend, are given a set of specially outfitted rubber boots with small winter tire-style spikes, helmets and headlamps. After an initial tight squeeze, we find ourselves in a blood red chamber, the first of five large chambers in the 370-metre cave.

The ice formations inside the cave prove remarkable. The ice is constantly growing and moving, as an attempt to lift an ill-placed rope demonstrates—left on the ice a week ago, it is now under a clean centimetre of ice.

When the ice combines with the iron ore tempered by volcanic eruption, the colours are overwhelming. Overall, the impression is like wandering around the gem collection of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago—assuming the gems were set out, with glass cases removed, and a constant reminder from the local guards that if you bump the gems, you'll break them.

We spend longer than might be recommended staring at ice, and when we eventually come out of the cave it is past sunset. Our drive back, in borderline darkness, is a little more harrowing than the journey that turned Mick Jagger's stomach. Just as we are getting fully used to the roller coaster-off-the-track that is super jeeping, I point out an odd creature flopping beside the truck. It is, it turns out, a mortally wounded ptarmigan, the celebrated Christmas bird of Iceland. Mývatn is full of ptarmigan, and our guide has explained his trepidation at the return of ptarmigan hunting—as he explains it, there is a history of over-hunting the vulnerable species. As Illugi discusses the local hunting controversy, the ptarmigan is bleeding in front of the headlights and attempting to walk on its broken wing. We decide to capture the bird and put it out of its misery—a deed both humane and inherently masculine, and one that we totally and completely muck up, first by diving to catch the bird in a lava field, then by… twisting incorrectly.

Selja Hallageir and Rotten Eggs

Though we spent a good portion of the night watching Illugi take a mocking from the locals for his inability to wring bird neck, we set out early the next day for another little-known local attraction, the basalt columns of Selja Hallageir.

A more difficult drive than the cave, the basalt columns demand an extremely experienced super jeep driver—even for passengers the journey can be gut-wrenching.

On arrival, we are not that impressed. We look over a small ledge of horizontal basalt formations and listen to Illugi explain the geology behind the oddity we were witnessing.

"My real hope though, is to be able to drive around directly to the cliffs, but that is a much rougher ride," he tells us.

We then realize that we have a moderate hike ahead of us. The scenery, Illugi tells us, is remarkable in the canyon, but because snow has already fallen, he decides to make up for the lack of scenery by explaining local gastronomical habits.

The celebrated Mývatn rotten duck egg is mentioned. Yes, Illugi partakes in the local speciality, buried and rotted duck eggs. But, unlike his father and grandfather, Illugi is not a fan of duck eggs that have embryos inside them. He prefers to simply throw those eggs away.

From rotten duck eggs, we move on to discuss Icelandic moss, another speciality in Mývatn best prepared, we are told, with milk salt and sugar. As we are discussing the best way to dry sheep dung for a good smoked lamb, we come upon the basalt cliffs.

Ranging from forty to fifty metres, the cliffs, in tight, twisting hexagonal columns are stunning.

I ask him how many people come out to see it.

"Not too many. Some photographers and filmmakers. There's a real limit because it's hard to get to," he tells me, shrugs, and tells me about the peacefulness of the valley in midsummer, when it heats up a great deal more than the rest of the area—up to the high 20s Celsius.

"You are so warm, and there's sun everywhere, and you have such beautiful scenery all to yourself that it's quite relaxing," he says.

You're Standing On It

Our last day, we head out to visit a celebrated maker of hangikjöt, (smoked lamb), local farmer Heiðinn Sverrison. Snow is falling again, and we see the sheep huddled together in their pens—Pétur, the owner of the hotel that has fed and sheltered us and a couple of honeymooners, has decided to drive us out. He points to the most photogenic of the sheep: "That's going to be your hangikjöt," he says, laughing, as we pull in to the smokehouse.

Héðinn laughs at the idea that I could purchase hangikjöt in October. He nods out to the sheep that we've just been joking about: "We have to slaughter them first. Then it's at least a month for decent hangikjöt."

He briefly mentions his clientele, members of Alþingi and Björk among them, then guides me through his smoke house. "Half a month in the smoke house is just smoked meat," he says. "For real hangikjöt, it needs to hang afterwards."

He mentions a few Althingi members then tells me that the new fad is to eat hangikjöt double-smoked. Some, he says, are asking for it three times smoked.

"What distinguishes Mývatn is the strong flavour of the smoke," he says.

"What accounts for that strong taste?" I ask, then look down. "What am I standing on?"

"20 centimetres of sheep dung," he says with the broadest smile I've ever seen.

The key to the Mývatn hangikjöt is the care taken with sheep dung, the traditional fuel of Iceland. Sheep dung must be dried for two years, which means bringing it indoors at times, stacking it 20 centimetres thick. After two years, the ammonia and toxins are stripped from the dung, and all that remains are the herbs and grass that the sheep fed on.

He seems convinced and amused, and by the smell of the smoke—he has a number of Arctic Char smoking as we speak—I have to admit that excrement is the last odour I would identify.

We go in for coffee, and I fill out the order form to receive my hangikjöt in time for Christmas, just as the Alþingi members do.

His farm, which also serves as a guesthouse, has a magnificent view of the lake.

"You can look for hours at the sex life of birds," he says in English. "To see which guy gets which girl and how much they fight."

I nod and ask him about rotten duck eggs.

"There is no tradition of eating ducks," he points out. "They were so valuable for the eggs." Then he smiles. Yes, he eats rotten duck eggs. He likes them. With ducklings in them, I ask.

"Oh no, that's for old people. My mother likes that a lot," he says.

There are three ducks left on the lake as a heavy snow begins to fall, and we decide to begin our drive back to Reykjavík.

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Mentioned in this article:
–Hotel Reykjahlið, 660 Mývatn. Tel.: 464-4142. www.reykjahlid.is.
–Mountain View Tours, booking done at Hotel Reykjahlið.
–Smoke-house and guesthouse – Reykhúsið Geir Eyjarströnd, Tel.: 464-4210.
–Mývatn Nature Baths www.jardbodin.is.

By Bart Cameron

THE REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE *on tour* PARIS

The Art of Visiting ' aris

Art is something you can find in abundance in Paris. Not only in museums and galleries, but in restaurants, lifestyle, architecture and, believe it or not, in getting ripped off.

The bohemian art and the corporate

As a city renowned for being the home, residence and inspiration of many great artists, it is surprising to see that the Parisian authorities treat contemporary and modern art in a somewhat contradictory way. One example are squarts (art-squats) like Chez Robert, which formerly attracted 40,000 visitors a year, making it the third biggest location for contemporary art in Paris. In March 2005, Chez Robert, like many other squarts, was closed due to the introduction of a new law, though its artists are to return once they set up a legal contract with the local authorities.

Whether such a contract will be drawn up any time soon is unsure, and not necessarily the end of all troubles, as the history of Les Frigos demonstrates. The old building, which originally served as a huge refrigerator (hence the name "the Fridges"), and is often mistakenly labelled a squart, houses 87 studios and rehearsal rooms, rented legally by 250 people of 17 different professions. What unites sculptors, painters, photographers, musicians, producers, editors, comedians and others is not only their obligation to produce something, but their fight against authorities.

"The problem with big cities is that land is expensive, which means that, naturally, artists are not really welcome," says Jean-Paul Reti, artist and "Mayor of Les Frigos" as his colleagues call him.

As one of the founders of the APLD, the association pour le développement, Reti has played an important role in saving the building from being destroyed. "If you don't have a very strong opinion on politics, you will be eaten," he told me.

In fact, it seems a miracle how the building defies the odds of modern city planning: All around the graffiti-covered walls of Les Frigos, new office buildings have been raised or are now being built. Save les Frigos, not a single other warehouse in the proximity has survived.

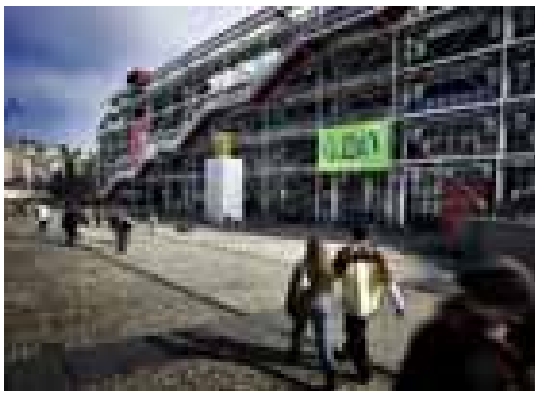
Aldridge Hansberry, artistic director of the New Music Association, which is renting a studio in les Frigos, is the secretary of APLD. "When Chirac was the major of Paris, he kept proposing to move us to different places to be able to tear les Frigos down and build another office building. We refused, collected 60,000 signatures and had the media from Japan, America and from all over Europe here, plus the support of the socialist, communist and green parties," she says. "So when the right government finally decided to let us stay, the left took over and the trouble started all over again. Today, we still don't have a lease contract, although we have been paying rent ever since we moved in."

In effect this means that the local government can force the tenants to move out from one day to the next. However, things look different for arts centres that adjust to the rules of city planning and present some sort of a corporate image, thus attracting tourists who actually spend money. The Palais de Tokyo, open since 2002, is a gallery for "experimentation and innovation," 50% of which is financed by the Ministry of Culture, the other half through ticket sales and private partners.

Apart from the gallery, the 3000 m² space houses a restaurant, cafeteria, bookshop and boutique where instead of the usual posters and postcards that normally come with exhibitions, the visitor can buy all sorts of trendy and not-yet-trendy accessories and designer clothes. The Palais de Tokyo stays true to its agenda of being "cross-disciplinary, sensitive to current trends, international, experimental, richly diversified," and simply outstanding in most aspects. It is the first Parisian gallery to open from noon to midnight, and apart from featuring young, mainly controversial artists, it is unmatched in the way it presents pieces of art. Every exhibition is set up in a very individual way, using different backgrounds, unconventional arrangements of exhibits and lighting to complement or underline the message it conveys.

The Mecca of modern art in Paris is the Centre Georges Pompidou, because this is where "the destiny of modern art" is – at least according to an ad in the airport. The building itself has gained fame because of its architecture, futuristic at the time of its construction in the early 1970s, and still holding surprises on every one of its seven floors, from stream-like waterbasins surrounding one floor to a 360° view of the city on the top floor. Due to its size – the floor area is 103,305 m² – the amount of exhibits is rather overwhelming.

Besides groups of arts students sent out to copy Warhol's electric chairs or brainstorm on McCarthy's short films, tourists populate the Centre Pompidou. The perfect target group for what could be called the souvenir infrastructure: Not only is there a souvenir shop excellently equipped with memorabilia of the current top exhibition, but there is a general souvenir "warehouse," next to which the post office has placed



machines that sell stamped envelopes and parcels. Everything is ready so that you can send your freshly bought souvenirs while they are still hot and trendy to those who failed to experience this supernova of an arts centre.

The art of getting ripped off

Sleeping might be more of an inherent necessity than a form of art, but finding the right accommodation in Paris surely requires an artistic skill. As usual, one should not rely on personal recommendations, especially if they involve a youth hostel. Rooms smell like feet that haven't been washed for a year, beds are simple wooden boxes, and the lockers in which you are supposed to keep your valuables have a sign saying "don't keep any valuables in the lockers." In short: it will make you want to leave the moment you have paid.

The accommodation service of the tourist office is similarly deceiving. Once you have dialled the number and noticed that staying on the line costs you 37 cents per minute, you may decide that this must be good help, if it is so dear. However, after you have listened to the answering machine for ten minutes and made a million choices ("dial two for English... a for accommodation... b for Paris... x for arrondissement, y for middle priced accommodation, z for room or suite...") and realize, in the end, that you don't understand the streetnames of the hotels chosen for you by the answering machine, you have spent four euros and will finally turn to the guidebook, your only friend in Paris.

Ripping people off is a great sport in Paris, though if you ask locals, they might tell you it's an art form. The Metro, a randomly spread net of underground stations and a mixture of ancient and brand new trains has a homely charm, which its service-people lack. Considering the number of tourists they have to deal with each day, either unwilling or unable to speak French, or even find a translation for "Eiffel Tower," the ticket rip-off may qualify as a highlight. Nobody will explain to the typical tourist that the ticket you receive goes with a pass, and you will be charged up to 50 euros if you get checked without being able to show it.

If you choose to get ripped off properly, visit the main tourist attractions like the Eiffel tower, which charges ten Euros for a trip to the top platform. Make sure you take the elevator along with people that speak a language you understand, so that you can follow their conversation from "how long would it take to fall all the way down from here and shred to pieces" to the self-assured answer: "depending on whether you go straight down or in circles, you would go at 120 miles per hour and it would take approximately four seconds."

The art of eating

Though a three-course dinner and drinks before and after are the epicentre of a good night out, in Paris you would be a fool not to start in the morning, at least concerning eating. Known for its gay bars and clubs and for being the historic Jewish Quarter of the city, you can find the best of multicultural eating in le Marais: Japanese restaurants with customers sporting a scullcap, the famous falafel place in the Rue des Rosiers, and, on the opposite side, the Jewish bakery.

This is a place where you can come in in the morning and eat your freshly baked pastry, oversized bagels or croissants and drink a coffee, and the curious entertainment of the odd orthodox Jewish-American tourists clad in black hats and traditional locks storming in to shout "we've only come back for you, babes" to the unimpressed ladies behind the counter.

After a night out drinking a good place to cure your hangover is La Flèche d'Or, an old train station converted into a restaurant/bar, where you can sit in a winter garden while munching away on the best brunch in town. The only thing that might put you off is realizing that once again you have fallen into the rip-off trap, paying 18.50 euros instead of the advertised 12 and failing to hear the live jazz music that was supposed to make it a jazz-brunch. In our case, this was somewhat tempered by the curious sense of humour of our waitress, who told us her best recommendation is not to eat in this place. If you feel optimistic enough to follow another recommendation and have a fancy French dinner, beware that what begins as a local's insider tip might turn into a tourist's insider tip the next day, especially when Sharon Stone is expected to dine there the same night. Mon Vieil Ami on the Ile de la Cité was such a place. It is also a place where you should bring a dictionary, if that helps at all, for the menu includes some extraordinary ingredients that might not even be known to you in your native tongue. And your tongue might feel a bit confused as to the taste of those ingredients, if unaccustomed to such luxuries as different sorts of roots. While the average dining person might think their starter tasted like dirt, in the end everything is washed away with a sip of good wine. The art of French food might not be internationally understood, but the art of French wine certainly is.

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–Les Frigos, 19, Rue des Frigos, 75013 Paris, www.lesfrigos.com
–Palais de Tokyo, 13, Avenue du Président Wilson, 75116 Paris, www.palaisdetokyo.com
–Centre Georges Pompidou, Place Georges Pompidou, 75004 Paris, www.centrepompidou.fr
–Jewish Bakery, Rue des Rosiers, 75004 Paris
–La Flèche d'Or, 102 Rue de Bagnolet, 75020 Paris, www.flechedor.com
–Mon Vieil Ami, 69 St Louis en l'Ile, 75004 Paris

By Julika Huether
Photos by Gúndi

Blue Ice Doesn't Say the Half of It: Hiking Sólheimajökull

"We're sorry, your flight has been cancelled. We're going to hike a glacier," we told a visiting reporter on the Monday after Airwaves.

He didn't take it quite as well as I expected.

I knew that the day was sunny, the visibility was great, and that the day trips to Sólheimajökull offered one of the best vacations from city life that Reykjavík had during the winter months. At least, I'd read about it on the Arctic Rafting website, and I'd been waiting for months for a good day to get out of the city.

The Monday after Airwaves, we got such a day, I called the number on the website, and I had us all set to be picked up at noon that very day.

Sólheimajökull is essentially on part of the fourth largest glacier in Iceland, Mýrdalsjökull, in the south of Iceland, set among the more lush vegetation on the island. Our drive out took about two hours, including a brief stop at Skógafoss, a 62-metre waterfall just off of the Ring Road that I'd never before paid proper attention to.

I'd never really focused on Sólheimajökull, except that I remembered it being a little closer to the road. As we pulled in, our guide, Freysi, began explaining exactly how much the glacier had retreated.

Aiming his hand into the distance, Freysi explained that during his first visit to the glacier, eight years ago, Sólheimajökull was 300 yards closer to the road. The damage from Arctic warming got almost stomach-turning as he tried to point out how much erosion had occurred in the last 20 years.

Luckily, a group of German tourists interrupted our discussion. We had been attaching crampons and choosing ice-picks and getting harnesses fit: the Germans had simply jumped onto the glacier and started walking up in street shoes. We interrupted ruminations on the doom caused by fossil fuels to contemplate the humour of watching tourists slip down a glacier. When a large, elderly woman began to lose her footing, we realized that injuries on glaciers weren't as amusing as we thought they'd be. It is a credit to our guide, Freysi, that he somehow managed to avert our attention and get us up the glacier without considering the German carnage below.

At first, there was joy in simply being able to walk on ice comfortably. And then, looking over mounds of formations brought on by 1000 years of geological activity, with sudden caves and chunks of gem-like blue ice, we were bewildered. Our movements on the glacier, and the look in our eyes, looked almost exactly like those of my niece the first time we showed her a beach and a large body of water—a glacier is, of course, an entirely different environment than most of us have ever experienced.

All on the trip were convinced that an hour-long hike on the glacier was one of the best attractions in the world. It was then that we were reminded that we had chosen a "Challenging" activity.

We came upon a massive wall of blue ice. Ropes were pulled from a pack and laced through our harnesses. More pick axes came out.

There is little I remember about the experience of scaling ice-cliffs, except that it was enjoyable, and that every time I tried to picture myself digging the axe into the ice with the rope strung up to catch me if I fell, I could only imagine big-budget iMax films. Our visiting reporter announced, after scaling an ice cliff, that he was afraid of heights, and we waited a good 15 minutes for him to come back down with the help of the rope. He later conquered his fear and out-climbed us all. The three of us climbed ice cliffs for an hour, never in danger, though often frightened. Then we returned, jelly-legged and exhausted. In three hours on the glacier, we hadn't thought about time passing, but back in the jeep on the way back, we felt as though we'd spent days there.

The Blue Ice Hiking Trip is available through Arctic Rafting. It is challenging, and you need to have waterproof, heavyweight clothing, though the company can help if you give advance notice. For bookings, call +354 898 0410. Or log on to www.articrafting.com.

By Bart Cameron

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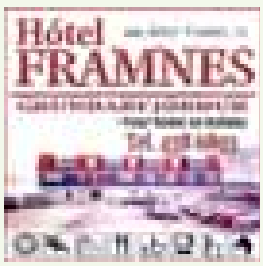

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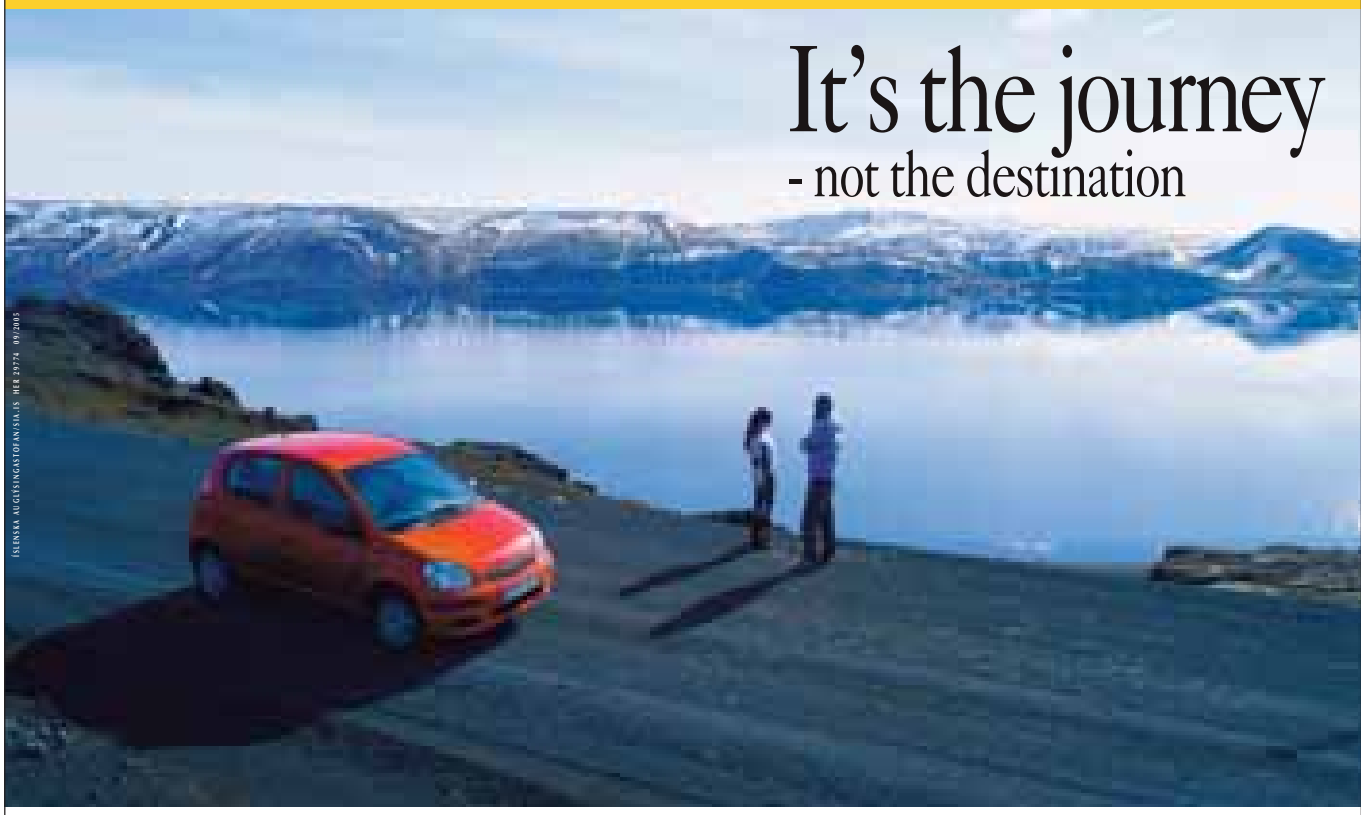

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Stuffed with stuff

"2006 is just around the corner, and the inherent double standard in sexual and domestic abuse laws should be history by now."
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