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ISSUE 03

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the **REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE**

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The Reykjavík Grapevine crew

The Reykjavík Grapevine
Faxaskála, Faxaporti, Faxagötu 2
www.grapevine.is
grapevine@grapevine.is
Published by: Fröken ehf.

Editor: 540-3602 / editor@grapevine.is
Advertising: 540-3605 / 868-8187 / ads@grapevine.is
Marketing: 540-3603 / 869-7796 / jontrausti@grapevine.is
Distribution: 540-3601 / 694-2538 / dist@grapevine.is
Production: 540-3608 / 849-5611 / production@grapevine.is
Listings: 540-3600 / 847-7335 / listings@grapevine.is
Subscription: 540-3601 / 694-2538 / subscribe@grapevine.is

Publisher: Hilmar Steinn Grétarsson / publisher@grapevine.is
Editor: Bart Cameron / editor@grapevine.is
Marketing Director: Jón Trausti Sigurðarson / jontrausti@grapevine.is
Production Manager: Oddur Óskar Kjartansson / production@grapevine.is
Staff Journalists: Paul Fontaine-Nikolov / paul@grapevine.is
Gunnar Hrafn Jónsson / gunnarh@grapevine.is
Þórdís Elva Þorvaldsdóttir Bachmann / tbordis@grapevine.is
Editorial Interns: Sveinn Birkir Björnsson / birkir@grapevine.is
Advertising Sales: Aðalsteinn Jörundsson / adalsteinn@grapevine.is
Helgi Þór Harðarson / helgi@grapevine.is
Director of Photography: Guðmundur Freyr Vigfússon / gundi@grapevine.is
Photographer: Óskar Hallgrímsson / padre@internet.is
Art Direction: Gunnar Þorvaldsson / gunni@grapevine.is

Proofreader: Erika Wolfe
Distribution: Jóhann Páll Hreinsson

Cover Photo by: Gúndi
On Cover: Mía
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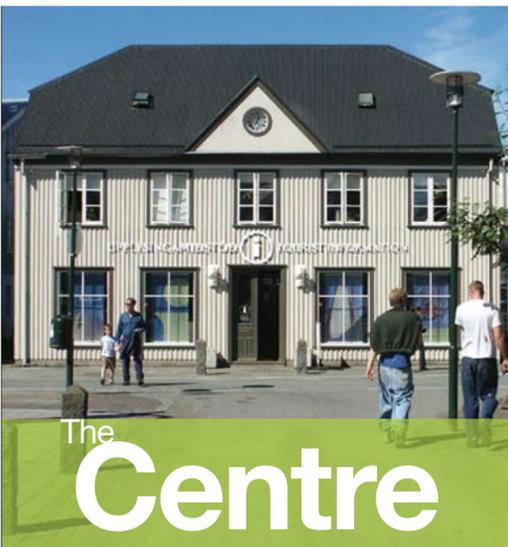
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www.visitreykjavik.is

Need information on what to do in Reykjavik? Where to stay, what to eat, culture, events, nightlife? Look no further. Check out www.visitreykjavik.is, the information is all there along with a detailed events calendar.



SOUR GRAPES

Complaints, criticism, suggestions, praise, money, anything at all. Contact letters@grapevine.is or send your mail to: The Reykjavik Grapevine, Faxagata 2, Faxaskála við Faxaport, 101 Reykjavik.

Letter to the Editor, Comic books, cartoons can be powerful. Words are powerful. Drawings are powerful. Why? Look at the hoopla that some Danish political cartoons has caused among the Muslim population. To the Muslims, this was a powerful message. A message that dishonours their beloved Prophet Muhammad. It stirs up dissent, hatred, violence, murder and mayhem. I am speaking in behalf of the comic book industry, since I am part of that industry. Comic books can be just as powerful. Like their counterpart the cartoon, the comic book is made up of words and drawings. We saw the power of the comic book series by DC on the Death of Superman.

Comic book fans all know that comic book characters never die, they merely go to limbo and at some point of time, they can return. People who were familiar with Superman became interested in the Death of Superman series. Everyone knows who Superman is. Baby boomers remember George Reeves who played Superman on TV. Not to mention the Superman movies and the many Superman based TV series that were spawned by Hollywood. If you weren't a collector, you found yourself in a comic book shop. This is utilizing the power of writing and drawing.

Non collectors were attracted to the idea that a great icon was being killed off. Superman is a symbol of America and the power was that a piece of America was being killed and like a magnet, this idea attracted many. Comic books and cartoons can be fun, but they can also be dangerous too, especially when the message is hate. The Danish cartoons and caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad is not the way to use the power of writing and art. Violence to retaliate against those cartoons is wrong also. Two wrongs do not make it right.

Sincerely yours,
Paul Dale Roberts, Publisher
www.jazmaonline.com

Dude, I think I agree with you, but somehow bringing up Superman in the Muhammad cartoon discussion feels genuinely blasphemous. Our position at the Grapevine was simple: we felt Jyllands-Posten was promoting hatred and stereotyping. We chose not to even think about the religious aspects of their bigoted cartoons.

Also, are you saying... Superman's dead? No. No. Why him? He was so good. Why? Why?

Dear Bart--
My partner and I just returned to Boston from Iceland yesterday (a vacation to celebrate signing a new book contract!) and we wanted to let you know how helpful and entertaining we found your website and

paper. We trolled your site for all our restaurant picks prior to arrival and picked up a fresh edition of the paper while we were there. It was entertaining, informative, provocative, and attitude-rich. Thanks for the great work.

If we had a suggestion, it would be that you provide a subsection that focuses on gay Iceland -- where to go, what to see. We did stumble on the Cozy Cafe, but would have loved to have had more guidance. Please give it some thought. In the meantime, keep up with what you're doing. We look forward to reading the Grapevine again next time we head back. All the best,
Scott Pomfret

We'll try to expand our coverage. Being "straight" and "unattractive", we have had a hard time covering the night-life—straight and gay. We know we're lacking in this coverage, and we'll do our best to improve it, either in the paper, or at least on the website. If anybody has recommendations, please drop a line to letters@grapevine.is.

Dear Paul and Bart
I'd simply like to thank you for your good work and for allowing fresh journalistic-winds to blow through the streets of Reykjavik. I just saw you guys on Silfur Egils (www.visir.is) and must say that I agreed with you 100%. Icelanders must certainly wake up, smell the coffee and read their history books if things are not going to get ugly. Keep up the good work gentlemen.

Regards from Boston,
Kristján Þór

The support from you and from many other readers regarding our attack on Jyllands-Posten, and on DV for publishing the Muhammad cartoons, was greatly appreciated. We believe the decision to publish the Muhammad cartoons was irresponsible at best, however, Egill Helgason, with whom we thoroughly disagree on this topic, was extremely generous in welcoming us to his show. I also think it's safe to say that most Icelanders disagree with Egill Helgason on this particular topic—either that, or we at the Grapevine were so incredibly obnoxious that Icelanders have just been telling us what we want to hear regarding diversity. Either way, I like what I've been hearing.

All that said, having seen myself on TV, I can safely say that I have a face for radio—we print a photo in the paper solely so people will know whom to swing at when they disagree. If we're on TV again, I'm hoping to get one of those LazyTown muppets as a stand-in.

Suggest your staff google "alcoa" and "enron"

John Doe Smith

Done. Apparently they turn rocks into flowers and frowns into happy faces. John Doe Smith, what a coincidence that your name sounds so anonymous. Wait a second, is this Kenneth Lay? Kenneth? Finally, we've found this generation's Deep Throat, and what a coincidence that Google, the same search engine likely used to view countless video clips of porn, would also be the modern Deep Throat's key weapon.

Dear Bart,
If you think that you won't be sexually/racially harassed in Reykjavik during a weekday afternoon, think again.

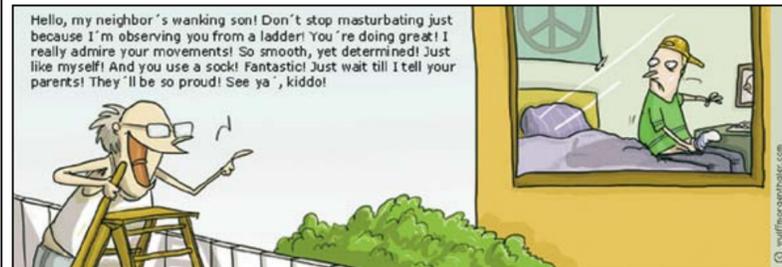
I am an American citizen married to an Icelandic and a resident of Reykjavik. I am 44-year-old half Asian female. I was harassed because of my race and sex. This incident occurred on January 26th between the hours of 13:30-15:00. I had my back turned when I heard shouts of 'Nigger'. I turned around and was cornered by six, 12-13-year-old boys. One of them made a sexual obscene gesture at me. He thrust his pelvis at me while holding his crotch. They laughed, and then ran the direction I came from. In other words, I was followed, cornered and harassed.

The fear of being followed, cornered and harassed has affected me both physically and mentally. When I filed a police report the day it happened, the police officer told me they know of problems with this area. So why isn't anything being done? After this incident, the harassment continued.

People who live in certain areas deserve protection but other people don't? It seems the state is well aware of such problems and nothing is being done (more police presence). The police officer suggested I contact Halldora Gunnarsdottir (City Hall). I met with Halldora Gunnarsdottir at the City Hall on Wednesday February 15th to discuss this incident. She was very sympathetic and wanted to help. She planned on having a meeting with various people (she thinks might be able to do something about this problem). This is what I received in my email February 24th from her. It states 'The meeting has not yet been held as some key-persons have not been able to meet but I hope it will be scheduled soon.' I don't believe anything will be done. Seeing is believing.

I'm sorry you had to go through this. The recent V-Day event by local parliamentarians was a step in the right direction, but there's obviously a long way to go here. We must look up to Stígamót, www.stigamot.is, a local counselling service that has been active in educating the general public, and we are doing our best to report what comes our way, but the authorities need to step up on this one.

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Hello, my neighbor's wanking son! Don't stop masturbating just because I'm observing you from a ladder! You're doing great! I really admire your movements! So smooth, yet determined! Just like myself! And you use a sock! Fantastic! Just wait till I tell your parents! They'll be so proud! See ya', kiddo!

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EDITORIALS

Welcome to the Economic Model, Friend



Bart Cameron, Editor

Pissed that you just paid ten dollars for a beer? Thirty dollars for a CD? So are the people who have to charge you that much, or watch the smile turn to consternation and eventually cranky 12-year-old-style angst over the exchange rate. This is a country of 300,000 that has become too expensive for anyone to visit, a country with a vital culture that has become too expensive to export. If the cost of the króna keeps on rising, this island in the middle of the Atlantic will become that much more isolated.

And yet, if the economy starts to right itself, as it did under speculations from the Fitch Report, two weeks before publication of this issue, then everyone on this island will lose millions of dollars. I know full well about this, as I had a badly timed travel article to New York that hit exactly during this fluctuation—I would have felt less victimised handing over the \$80 I lost in a spike in exchange rates to a standard-issue mugger. Instead, it simply disappeared, reminding me that I am an American working for Icelandic krónur and hoping to return home, and that if I do not transfer at the right times, I am likely to lose thousands of dollars if a correction hits.

In a sense I connect with the wealthy service-oriented businesses in Iceland. While a correction in the economy would allow my friends in the

music and arts communities to do their job better, while it would allow our advertisers to have more money to throw our way, my family could visit, and, as Sveinn Birgir Björnsson points out in this issue's feature, the country would have a much better chance at long-term prosperity, the part of me that wants to retire before the age of 75 hopes, just a little, that something keeps the króna up. I'm not quite sociopathic enough to believe a dam should be built, scarring the world's most beautiful habitat, to help me prop my savings up, but then my savings aren't that significant.

According to Bloomberg and other major financial advisors watching, Iceland is a stunning case study in economic models. Rushed through privatisation, undergoing outstanding growth, yet building up a colossal trade deficit and prone to fall victim to speculation. So congratulations, if you came over to have a good time, you and the ten dollar beer in your stomach are now a part of a very wacky case study.

That still doesn't help with the damage done to the bank account, I imagine.

Well, until the króna drops, annihilating my savings and not a few dreams of retirement in warmer climes from the locals, the Grapevine can

at least offer you some respite. First, we're free. Even with the exchange rate. Second, we have the best listings section in the country. Turn to the centre of the paper, and you'll find a giant map, and in the pages around there you'll get picks on art galleries, rock shows, even TV, for those two or three hours of downtime. Third, we're full of honest articles about Iceland, so if you have a conversation or want to try a product, you at least have heard from someone who has engaged in the conversation or tried the product first. And finally, we'll stay in touch. Not in a friendly kind of way... we're not sick. But if now that you have the Grapevine, you can log on to our website and read more about any articles in the paper, or even find other resources. If you miss the sounds you heard in Iceland, the Grapevine now has podcasts. Miss the view, we have extensive photos. And if you want to just call and talk to someone, get some reassurance and feel better... no, we don't do that. Again, we're not friendly, just really informative.

So read Sveinn Birgir's feature, then peruse the rest of this paper, then log on to www.grapevine.is. And then get a hobby or something, because you're getting kind of clingy. I didn't want to say anything before. But it's really creeping me out. Serious.

\$portacu\$! – Leave my kids alone



Sveinn Birgir Björnsson, Editorial Intern

(This opinion piece starts in media res. For visitors, you should know that LazyTown is a children's television program produced in Iceland by fitness guru Magnús Scheving. It was originally exported to the US last year, and has since become popular worldwide, finally being broadcast in its home, Iceland, in 2005. Mr. Scheving plays the hero of the show, Sportacus. Our opinion writer compares Sportacus to Gillzennegger, a character loosely based on Arnold Schwarzenegger, circa 1978, without the pesky id or IQ.)

As it turns out, the real menace of LazyTown is not Robbie Rotten (is he related to Johnny, by the way?). The character most dangerous to the moulding of young children is the character they call Sportacus. The most obvious complaint against him is the blatant commercialisation of his popular TV program. Following the show's popularity he's started to push products with the LazyTown trademark in a manner that would make Ronald McDonald envious. There is the LazyTown shoe line, the LazyTown dolls, LazyTown bottled water and, curiously enough, the LazyTown vitamin supplements, available from any official LazyTown merchandise dealer.

There is even a special LazyTown economy working in Iceland. According to the LazyTown website, the idea is to help educate children about the true value of money and the importance of a healthy and nutritious diet, coupled with regular and consistent exercise. Lofty goals indeed. In practice the economy is based on children taking

money to their bank, and receiving 'LazyTown money' in exchange, which can be used to 'buy' certain products from selected companies sponsoring the project. In other words, it is a business model that facilitates consumption by using young pre-school children as pegs to move a product. Son, you must understand what capitalism is all about...

Another blatant form of pushing products to the extremely young is the LazyTown Energy Book, which is basically a dietary journal, where kids from 5-9 are asked to keep a record of what they eat. Again, according to the LazyTown website, the inspired goals behind this nifty idea are to educate children about how to stay energised all day and the importance of eating right. In reality it is another scheme to reach an easily influenced group of young children with subliminal messages of the quality of selected products sponsoring the project.

And I have yet to say anything about the morality of asking a five year old to keep a dietary journal. Is it really healthy for a five year old, or even a nine year old, to be consumed with worries about their caloric intake? Is this something we want to encourage? Can you spell anorexic? If Magnús Scheving is concerned with improving the diet of our children, he should educate the parents and the employees responsible for school and pre-school lunches. They are the ones who are responsible for the children's diet. Kids this age do not prepare their own meals, or do the grocery shopping.

Furthermore, I've become increasingly worried over the content of LazyTown, which revolves around prejudice and stereotyping. We should all be more like the spunky little Stephanie, full of energy and joy, always up for another somersault. She is what all girls should aspire to be. Boys should mould their persona in the image of the over-energetic Sportacus, who has an aversion to walking, apparently because that does not burn enough calories, opting for the under-rated flip-flopping travelling style instead.

Being like the other children, that is just plain bad. Especially if you are like Ziggy, he is fat and (therefore) stupid, or Stingy, who is kind of moody and therefore boring. And don't get stuck on computer games like Pixel. He's so far down that rabbit hole that he has trouble with everyday communication. Instead you should just exercise and be happy.

There is another character on Icelandic TV, touting a similar, if not the same message, except that his show is not directed at children. They call him Gillzennegger. He is the mindless git who maintains that the only thing of importance in life is being beautiful. Exercise, tan and get a haircut every two weeks and you are guaranteed to find happiness. This is the adult version of Sportacus. I've come to believe that they might even be one and the same man. The difference is that while Gillzennegger is held out for ridicule and laughter, Sportacus is celebrated as a role model for young children.

Is that really a positive development?

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Out and About

An interview with filmmaker Róbert Douglas

By GUNNAR HRAFN JÓNSSON

At 32 years of age, young director Róbert Douglas has already made three feature films. His debut in that field was the 2000 film *The Icelandic Dream* – a football comedy with a serious streak. Two years later he followed up with *A Man Like Me*, again mixing comedy with drama and getting two Edda award nominations in the process. Despite such early success, he probably raised a few eyebrows when he first started pitching the idea for his latest feature; dubbed *11 Men Out* (Strákarnir Okkar in Icelandic). After all, it's not every day you meet somebody who thinks he can make a commercially viable film about homosexual, Icelandic footballers.

Now that the film is in the can, it has begun travelling the world alongside its creators, who have high hopes for its potential performance in overseas markets. The Grapevine caught up with director Róbert Douglas soon after he got back home from his latest festival appearance. We asked him a few questions about the unique premise of his latest work, its reception at home and abroad, and his future in the Icelandic film industry.

/// You've just gotten back from the Euro-premier of 11 Men Out at the Berlin Film Festival. What was the reception like, and did you secure any distribution deals?

– The reception was quite good. We secured deals with several companies to distribute the film in various countries around the world. That includes the United States, which is obviously always the hardest market to break into.

/// Do you know if distributors generally plan to show the film with the original Icelandic dialogue, or will the voices be dubbed for the foreign market?

– It depends on the market. In places like France and Germany you basically have to dub foreign films. In the English-speaking world, however, films like this attract the kind of art house crowd who have come to expect subtitles and dialogue in weird languages.

/// Have you noticed any marked difference between the way Icelanders and foreigners respond to the film?

I think most people realise that in a country the size of Iceland there isn't much of a chance of finding a dozen gay actors who can also play a decent game of football.

– Not much, although Icelanders have a tendency to take issue with the way the movie highlights certain prejudices – we do like to think of ourselves as a tolerant society. Maybe they don't have the same distance; it's more personal.

/// Following the trials and tribulations of gay footballers seems like a rather unique premise for a movie – did it surprise you to learn that another film along the same lines was made quite recently in Germany?

– Everyone kept telling me about that 'other gay football movie' when I was in Berlin, and in fact I was already aware of it. However, the truth is that production of *11 Men Out* was already well under way before we got wind of the German project – I think they were made more or less in the same time period. In any case, I haven't seen this other movie, but I'm told it's got a far campier feel. A totally different take on the concept, really.

/// How, then, did you decide to make a movie about homosexual football players?

– I had long felt there was a need for an Icelandic movie that tackled some of the issues surrounding homosexuality and homophobia in our society. Add to that my own lifelong obsession with football and you have the basic concept.

/// Indeed, the beautiful game has featured rather prominently in your work before. Is this going to be an ongoing theme for you in the future, a sort of signature plot element?

– I'm not sure, really. It might be time to go in a different direction, you never know.

/// Your film portrays two very different subcultures. What has the reaction been from gays and football enthusiasts respectively?

– The reaction has been positive from both groups. All the gays I've asked so far have told me it was a realistic but fresh approach to making a 'gay movie' – and I did make a conscious effort to avoid common stereotypes. The football lovers haven't had any complaints either, although the focus of the film is not much on the actual sport.

/// How compatible are the two communities? One gets the impression that homosexuality is still largely frowned upon in the sports world.

– I don't think it's much of an issue for the players themselves, actually. There is prejudice everywhere, but I don't think it's necessarily more pronounced in the sporting world.

/// Do people tend to assume the actors in 11 Men Out are themselves gay?

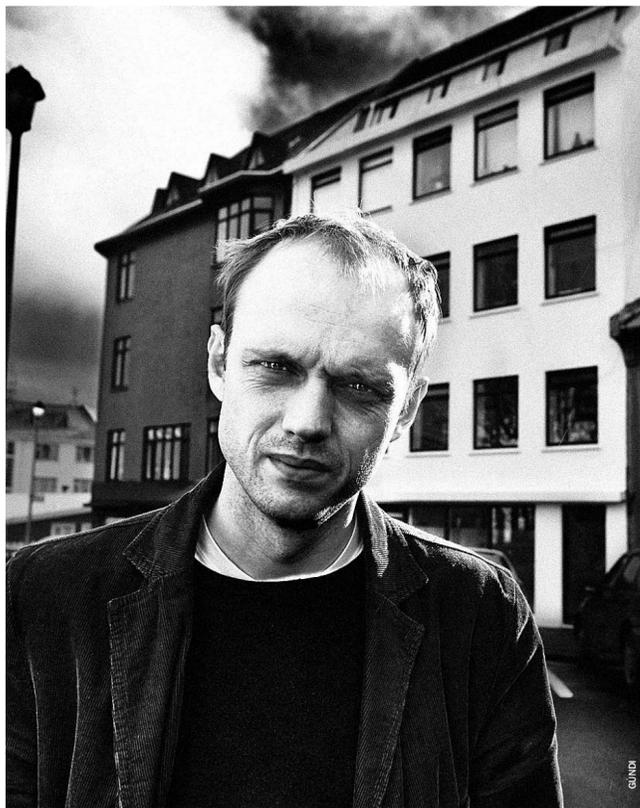
– I think most people realise that in a country the size of Iceland there isn't much of a chance of finding a dozen gay actors who can also play a decent game of football. That being said, some of the festival attendees have been curious about the orientation of individual actors. I also think a lot of people had no idea what to expect from the film – some said that initially they hadn't even been sure if the guys were actors or real footballers.

/// What are your personal plans for the future? Do you think you will keep making movies in Iceland/Icelandic?

– I definitely hope so. I'm really enjoying myself and hope to get the chance to continue making Icelandic films.

/// Lastly, what are the main obstacles you face as an Icelandic filmmaker?

– I think the situation facing Icelandic filmmakers is decent, but could be better. We're all working on a very tight budget and that can at times limit the potential scope of one's vision. What the Icelandic film industry needs most of all is more money, but that goes without saying.



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Program March - June 2006

March

Fri / 10 March / 11am
New German rock and pop music for German teaching
Further education for teachers
Goethe Zentrum

Tue / 14 March / 8pm
'Kurz & Gut'
Filmlets from Germany
Cinema [English subtitles, Admission free]
Academy of the Arts / Department of Theatre

Tue / 28 March / 8pm
Theaterkino [1]
Frank Castorf - provocation qua principle
Introduction of the director of Berlin's leading stage 'Volksbühne at Rosa Luxemburg Square'
Expert talk & film [Admission free]
Academy of the Arts / Department of Theatre

April

Tue / 4 April / 8pm
Made in Germany [1]
'Status Yo'
Directed by Till Hastreiter, 2003, 118 min
How to set up Berlin's biggest Hip Hop Jam in just 24 hours?
Cinema [English subtitles, Admission free]
Academy of the Arts / Department of Theatre

Sat / 8 April / 9.30am
Anti-Semitism and Europe's identity
Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Benz
Head of 'Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung, Technische Universität Berlin'.
Opening lecture of the conference 'Anti-Semitism in Iceland' by the 'Faculty of Social Science and Law'
University of Akureyri

Tue / 11 April / 8pm
Made in Germany [2]
'Alles auf Zucker'
Directed by Dani Levy, 2004, 95 min
A pitiless and self-deprecating 'Jewish comedy'
Cinema [English subtitles, Admission free]
Academy of the Arts / Department of Theatre

Tue / 25 April / 8pm
Theaterkino [2]
Christoph Schlingensiefel - The aesthetic of loss
Introduction of the so-called 'enfant terrible' of German stages and cinema
Expert talk & film [Admission free]
Academy of the Arts / Department of Theatre

May

Tue / 9 May / 8pm
Das Runde im Eckigen [1]
Shoot Goals! Shoot Movies!
Short films and cartoons from around the world tackling some of the game's marginal issues
Cinema [English subtitles, Admission free]
Academy of the Arts / Department of Theatre

Goethe Zentrum

National Library - University Library

Theatre Department of the Iceland Academy of the Arts
Sólhvölgata 13

Citytheatre

Tue / 23 May / 8pm
Theaterkino [3]
René Pollesch - Pop and discourse analysis
Introduction of the author, director and artistic director of the 'Prater' / 'Volksbühne' in Berlin
Expert talk & film [Admission free]
Academy of the Arts / Department of Theatre

Sat / 27 May / 1.30pm
Jan-Christoph Hauschild: 'Das Wunder Heine'
In 2006 is the 150th anniversary of the death of Heinrich Heine – one of the most famous poets
Lecture & reception [Admission free]
National Library of Iceland - University Library

June

Tue / 6 June / 8pm
Das Runde im Eckigen [2]
Das Wunder von Bern
Directed by Sönke Wortmann, 2003, 118 min
A 'feel good' film about the legendary World Cup Final Germany : Hungary in 1954
Cinema [English subtitles, Admission free]
Academy of the Arts / Department of Theatre

Fri / 9 June / 3.30pm
Be on the ball - with Germany
Fifa World Cup 2006 Opening Party
Transmission of the opening game Germany : Costa Rica. Exhibition 'Planet Football' by leading photographers of 'Magnum Photos' agency [Admission free]
Citytheatre

www.goethe.de/island



News in Brief

BY PAUL F. NIKOLOV, GUNNAR HRAFN JÓNSSON AND SVEINN BIRKIR BJÖRNSSON

(A note on the news: This is our news. Effective February 14th, the Grapevine officially has a staff, and all the news stories below are based on our research, our reporters out on the street, getting the beat, often with soggy coats and liquorice. If you're used to the Icelandic take, check out what happens when we talk to the sources. If you don't tala the íslensku yet, then at least you're reading solid reporting on the big stories.)

Steam Halts Traffic Through Key Transport Vein

Traffic through an important transport vein was brought to a standstill just after seven on the morning of the 28th of February, after a thick cloud of mist enveloped Reykjanesbraut and Ártúnsbrekka. The cause of the disruption turned out to be a ruptured pipe, resulting in a large amount of geothermally heated water escaping onto the road and into the sewer system. One commuter told the Grapevine: "You could see the traffic backed up quite a long way before you even got to the steam. Most people had just stopped their cars as they approached. No one wanted to drive blind into some unknown cloud."

The 40cm large rupture in one of only two main hot water pipelines in the area was most likely caused by erosion. The incident caused some areas to be temporarily cut off from the water supply, but back-up lines were activated and normal service restored within the hour. Less than three hours after the initial incident traffic was flowing more or less normally through the affected area. There are no reports of accidents or injuries, although the settling and freezing of the water vapours reportedly made large sections of road extremely slippery and therefore potentially hazardous.

Immigrant Population Booming

As of late December, 4.6% of people with residence in Iceland are non-citizens. According to an annual report issued by The National Statistics Institute of Iceland, the number of foreign nationals at that point numbered approximately 14,000 individuals – nearly three times as many as one decade earlier. Around 25% of that group were Polish citizens, 6% held Danish passports and Germans and Filipinos each made up around 5% of the total.

The highest percentage of foreign nationals was recorded in the soon to be industry-heavy eastern part of the country. There, roughly one in every four males holds a foreign passport. According to Ólöf Garðarsdóttir, head of the population department of Statistics Iceland, the overall increase across the country can't be entirely explained by the temporary influx of foreign construction workers to that area. "Clearly, the most dramatic increase is evident in the east – certainly if we look at it per capita. However, there is also a definite trend upwards in most other areas."

A very small percentage of non-citizens live in the suburbs around Reykjavik proper, only 2.8% according to the report. Garðarsdóttir confirms that this has been the case in past years as well, and speculates that the reasons are largely econom-

ic: "It can take time to set yourself up financially when you first arrive in Iceland. Most non-citizens have probably not been here long enough to consider investing in one of the detached or semi-detached houses that are so typical of those areas."

The report also noted that 15,000 Icelandic citizens are currently living abroad, up from 9,000 in 1990. The sharpest rise in the Icelandic expat population was in Denmark. In 2005, there were more than 7,500 Icelanders residing in Denmark, compared to only 3,000 a decade and a half earlier.

Progress Wildly Exaggerated as Proposals for Construction of Orthodox Church Still Mired in Red Tape

Despite recent reports by Fré-



tablaðið and DV, there are currently no active plans or building proposals for the construction of an Orthodox church in the Landakot area of western Reykjavik. Those two newspapers, and their online equivalent in visir.is, have recently printed stories suggesting the project is moving ahead and that the only obstacle remaining is to acquire the approval of the nearby Catholic church. Furthermore, it was suggested that city planning authorities had more or less given their blessing to alleged proposals made by representatives of the Orthodox Church.

Contrary to these reports, the Grapevine today learned that the Reykjavik Environmental Health and Protection Office (or REHPO, for convenience) has yet to make any definitive recommendations regarding the proposed placement of the church. Örn Sigurðsson, lawyer and REHPO representative, told the Grapevine that the Environmental and Health Protection Committee had in fact recently postponed a meeting on the subject of the proposed allotment. "There aren't even any actual building proposals on the table. People have been discussing some ideas, but there is a long process of review ahead. That process has barely even begun."

The involvement of the REHPO – and its related committee – is required because the church is expected to eventually be built within one of Reykjavik's specially designated "green areas". Sigurðsson says that once the committee makes its determination about the likely environmental impact of erecting a new church in Landakot, their recommendations for the future development of the area will be sent to the Planning and Building Department.

"The Planning and Building Department are the ones who then

look over any and all applications for building permits in that area, as well as our environmental recommendations. Depending on what they determine, a final proposal for construction may be made," said Sigurðsson. "That would then require some changes to be made to district planning," he added.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time Visir has made errors in its reporting on this issue. As the Grapevine previously reported, Visir has in the recent past run a misleading story that gave the distinct impression that building plots for houses of worship had already been allotted to the Russian Orthodox, Muslim and Ásatrúar communities.

Impregilo Optimistic About Kárahnjúkar

Impregilo has said that they expect to complete the Kárahnjúkar dam project this summer, but others are not so certain. Actress Margrét Vilhjálmisdóttir, a member of environmental group Hætta Hópurinn, feels that Impregilo's hopes are slightly unrealistic. "I don't believe they're going to finish construction this summer," she told the Grapevine. "We've received information that things haven't been going very well for them up there."

Vilhjálmisdóttir told the Grapevine that her group and others are planning a lot of events in the area this summer, including a festival. When asked if, with construction as far along as it is at Kárahnjúkar, the group intended to focus instead on a proposed smelter in the north of Iceland, Vilhjálmisdóttir said, "With construction in Kárahnjúkar as far along as it is, it will take a much greater effort to stop the project. Of course we need to focus on the smelter in the north a lot more, and we intend to do so."

Smelter's Effect on Economy Uncertain

The Icelandic króna rose by 1.2% yesterday, which has been attributed to the expectation that Alcoa will build another aluminium smelter in Iceland, only this time in the north of the country. Paul Rawkins, the senior director of the sovereign team for market analyst Fitch Ratings, told the Grapevine that the building of such a smelter could have a positive impact on Iceland's economy.

"When most people think of Iceland, they think of fish," he told us. "This project adds another string to the bow." Among the advantages to the economy that the building of the

>>> CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

ONE STOP SHOP



Hákon psychologist
Rungnat home service
Þorsteinn social counsellor
Emilía day care consultant
Þráinn recreational consultant
Hrúnd special education consultant
Samuel support aide
Eva home service
Bryndis education consultant
María service representative
Haraldur manager of Stígur, youth reach centre

SERVICE CENTRE IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Reykjavik has 6 Service Centres:

Service Centre for the residents of Vesturbær, Vesturgarður
Hjarðarhagi 45-47, tel. 411 1700, e-mail vesturgardur@reykjavik.is

Service Centre for the residents of the city centre and Hlíðar,
Skúlagata 21, tel. 411 1600, e-mail midborg.hlidar@reykjavik.is

Service Centre for the residents of Laugardalur and Háaleiti,
Síðumúli 39, tel. 411 1500, e-mail laugardalur.haaleiti@reykjavik.is

Service Centre for the residents of Breiðholt,
Álfabakki 12, tel. 411 1300, e-mail breidholt@reykjavik.is

Service Centre for the residents of Árbær,
Bæjarháls 1, tel. 411 1200, e-mail arbaer@reykjavik.is

Service Centre for the residents of Grafarvogur and Kjalarnes, Miðgarður
Langirimi 21, tel. 411 1400, e-mail midgardur@reykjavik.is



Reykjavíkurborg

www.reykjavik.is

The Reykjavik City Call Centre, tel. 4 11 11 11, will provide you with all information on municipal services and operations and connect you to required personnel.



Laugavegi 176 105 Reykjavík www.hljodfaerahusid.is Sími 591 5340



smelter could bring, Rawkins cited a boost of foreign exchange and a more sustainable foreign debt. At the same time, Rawkins emphasised that the smelter is no guarantee that it will help the economy.

"The current situation in Iceland now is that there's a strain on the balance of payments," he told The Grapevine, "and that could make things hard to manage, especially in as small an economy as Iceland's. I think Iceland is still learning how to manage the balance of payments."

New Political Party Formed in Akureyri

A new political party, called Framfylkingarflokkurinn, is currently gearing up to run for municipal elections in Akureyri this spring. The Grapevine spoke to the party's founder, Hólmur Örn Finnsson, who says that the party's main platform is, "...addressing the needs of young people. This includes building more apartments, creating more job opportunities and providing more recreational activities for people between the ages of 18 and 35."

While the idea was hatched last fall, Framfylkingarflokkurinn is still in the process of fully working out its agenda, yet Finnsson told us they already have ten people prepared to run for city council, and expect to have the maximum number of candidates, 22, shortly. Akureyri city council has 11 seats.

Finnsson told the Grapevine that the party doesn't have a firm opinion on the creation of an aluminium smelter in Húsavík, but said, "If there were a smelter, it should be built here," adding that the Technical College in Akureyri could train people to work in the smelter. "But the main industry in Akureyri is educating people, and it should continue to be," said Finnsson.

The party is currently gathering support around the town. For more information on the party and its ideas, Finnsson can be contacted at 663-5848.

Icelanders Charged in Internet Child Abduction Page

A 23-year-old Icelandic man was charged with child abduction when officers from the Lancashire Police Constabulary apprehended him in a Burnley hotel room he was sharing with a 14-year-old girl. After being reported missing by her mother three days earlier, the girl was discovered in an early morning raid just after five a.m. on the 22nd of February and the man has been held in custody since.

Inspector Damian Darcy told the Grapevine that the man, who is a resident of Reykjavík, had probably arrived in England shortly before he met with the girl. "We believe the man flew over exclusively for the purpose of seeing this girl. She was reported missing from her home on the 19th, and her mother had reason

to believe she had gone to see an individual she met on the Internet. We tracked this man to a hotel in Burnley, where the girl was recovered," said Darcy. He added that the police had known the full identity of the man they were looking for in advance.

While the girl is not believed to have been physically abducted or held against her will, Darcy said the fact that she is under sixteen years of age means the Icelandic has to be charged with the crime of child abduction. "Legally speaking, she can't consent to being taken out of parental custody. However, she is co-operating fully with the investigation."

Inspector Darcy also told the Grapevine that while such incidents have occurred in Lancashire before, this was certainly the first time a foreign national was involved in such a case in Burnley.

Despite the circumstances under which the pair were discovered, no additional charges are expected to be filed. The case goes before a magistrate on the 2nd of March, but foreign nationals are considered an inherent flight risk in the United Kingdom and therefore the Icelandic has practically no chance of being released on bail.

Left-Greens in No Mood to Celebrate

A representative of the Leftist Green Party in Skagafjörður has denied reports by Morgunblaðið that a party resolution, passed yesterday, essentially celebrated the fact that an aluminium smelter is now more likely to be built in Húsavík rather than Skagafjörður. Jón Bjarnason, MP from the northwest of Iceland, told the Grapevine that his neighbours in Húsavík are "still caught in the hangman's noose of the Progressive Party's fanatical aluminium policies."

He added that it was still unclear where the energy would come from and the people of his constituency "still have no guarantee that this move won't lead to the construction of environmentally destructive hydro-electric dams that would block the flow of their beautiful glacial rivers."

"No one is celebrating," said Bjarnason. "In Skagafjörður we certainly hope this means we can expect to see a more diverse approach to the creation of jobs and industry in our community, but it would be more appropriate to send the people of Húsavík our condolences. No one has any idea what kind of environmental impact this could have."

When asked what kind of industry he and his party thought would be more appropriate for the north of Iceland, Bjarnason cited various options from information technology to tourism. "On the tourism front, for example, we have these spectacular lakes and rivers that come from glacial run-off. There is already a business there offering boat excursions out onto the lakes. Building a dam in that area would destroy both

the ecology and the economy around the lake system."

University Trusted Most, Parliament Trusted Least

According to the latest results of an ongoing poll from IMG Gallup, both parliament and the Ministry of Justice remain the least trusted institutions in Iceland, while the University of Iceland continues to be trusted most.

One thousand two hundred and thirty-nine people between the ages of 18 and 75 were asked, "How much or little trust do you have for the following institutions?" with 61% responding. Of those, 86% said they trusted the university the most. Coming in second were the police, with 79%, up from 67% in February of last year. Trust in the health system saw a modest rise during the same period, from 70% to 73%, while trust in the Church of Iceland continues a gradual decline from 58% in March 2004 to 55% today.

The two least trusted institutions in Iceland - the parliament and the Ministry of Justice - are both at 43%, but this is an improvement from February 2005, when they were at 35%. **Prisoners Stealing from Within Prison**

Four or five different inmates of Litla Hraun prison are believed to have made fraudulent withdrawals totalling a combined 600,000 ISK, most of which has now been recovered. The identity of the alleged culprits was discovered during the course of an investigation into the whereabouts of some funds that had gone missing from the bank account of a company in Reykjavík.

The police investigation, which is now said to be nearing comple-

tion, indicated that a series of phone calls were made from the prison by inmates who apparently had all the personal identification and PIN numbers required to access the company's accounts. Erlendur Baldursson, a criminologist with the Department of Prison Services, told the Grapevine that such calls could have been made from literally anywhere and the fact of the suspects' incarceration was incidental to the crime.

"They all get access to a telephone at certain times. Most of them use that opportunity to talk to their family and loved ones, but if they are caught abusing telephone privileges for the purpose of committing a criminal act then that is a matter for the police," said Baldursson.

The Litla Hraun telephone system operates on a system of passwords, with each prisoner holding a unique four-digit code needed to activate the phones. Despite this, Baldursson believes it may prove difficult to ascertain exactly who made what call, as "the numbers can be traded or stolen."

Asked whether the guilty parties could expect to have their sentences extended, he replied: "That's not for us to decide, this is a separate case from whatever they were initially convicted for. It's the job of the courts to mete out punishment; we just enforce their judgements."

Prosecution Unlikely Following Child Molester Expose

Despite several apparent child molesters having been lured in by an online ad posted by reporters for NFS newsmagazine Kompás, prosecution currently remains unlikely due to lack of evidence. Over 80 different men responded to the ad,

in which journalists claimed to be a 13-year-old girl seeking to lose her virginity with an older man. When the men showed up to a pre-arranged meeting, they instead found reporters waiting with cameras and microphones. All faces and license plates were, however, blurred out before broadcast.

Reykjavík's Chief of Police, Hörður Jóhannesson, told the Grapevine that accepting any and all information relating to the sexual molestation of minors was a matter of policy.

"We would never outright refuse to listen to information just because it was gathered by private citizens. Whether and how we act on that information is obviously our prerogative, but so far no one has brought us evidence of any specific wrongdoing. We very rarely see these cases land on our desks."

Asked whether he was afraid that private citizens acting on their own to track down sex offenders could interfere with official police investigations, Jóhannesson didn't seem unduly concerned: "Mistakes are always possible, but generally speaking this is the kind of thing you want as much out in the open as much as possible."

Jóhannesson added that the most important tool for combating Internet molesters was to make kids aware of their existence and methods.

"In these cases we're not talking about toddlers but older and more self-aware children. By visiting schools and distributing pamphlets like Öruggt Spjall (Safe Chat) we are working with the kids to teach them some basic ground rules for safety online."

Concerts in March

ICELAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
www.sinfonia.is
Tel: 545 2500

March 9th · Composer Jón Nordals 80th Anniversary

Háskólabíó, Thursday at 7:30 pm
Price in ISK: 3600 / 3300
Conductor: **Petri Sakari**
Soloists: **Víkingur Ólafsson, Guðný Guðmundsdóttir, Ásdís Valdimarsdóttir, Einar Jóhannesson & Erling Blöndal Bengtsson**
Jón Nordal: Chorals
Jón Nordal: Concerto for Piano & Orchestra
Jón Nordal: Doubleconcerto for Violin, Viola & Orchestra
Jón Nordal: Concerto for Clarinet & Orchestra
Jón Nordal: Concerto for Cello & Orchestra

March 16th

Háskólabíó, Thursday at 7:30 pm
Price in ISK: 2900 / 2500
Conductor: **David Charles Abell**
Soloist: **Stephen Hough**
Gabriel Fauré: Pelleas et Melisande
Camille Saint-Saëns: Concerto for Piano & Orchestra no. 4
Aron Copland: Symphony no. 3

March 23th

Háskólabíó, Thursday at 7:30 pm
Price in ISK: 2900 / 2500
Conductor: **Rumon Gamba**
Soloist: **Peter Jablonski**
Dimitri Shostakovich: Symphony no. 9
Dimitri Shostakovich: Concerto for Piano & Orchestra no. 2
Dimitri Shostakovich: Symphony no. 10

March 30th

Háskólabíó, Thursday at 7:30 pm
Price in ISK: 2900 / 2500
Conductor: **Christian Lindberg**
Soloists: **Ole Edvard Antonsen**
Christian Lindberg: Akbank Bunka
Jan Sandström: Era
Jan Sandström: En herrgårdssagen

car

The leading British magazine Car came in the January 2006 to the same conclusion as so many other judging panels:

THE COMPETITORS FOR THE 2005 CAR OF THE YEAR:

ALFA ROMEO 159 LEXUS RX 400H JAGUAR XJD
RANGE ROVER SPORT HONDA CIVIC
BMW 3-SERIES SUZUKI SWIFT RENAULT CLIO
TOYOTA AYGO MERCEDES BENZ S-CLASS

THE
WINNER:
2005
CAR OF
THE YEAR



Suzuki Swift er bill sem hefur sett ný viðmið í hönnun, útliti og aksturseiginleikum fólksbíla og hefur fengið fádæma góðar viðtökur um allan heim. Suzuki Swift var valinn bill ársins á Íslandi 2006 af BIBB samtökum íslenskra bílalaðamanna. Suzuki Swift var einnig valinn „Car of the Year“ 2005 af virtasta bílblaði Bretlands „Car magazine“.

Hann var valinn bill ársins á Írlandi, Nýja-Sjálandi, Astralíu, Kína, Malasíu og Japan. Í Japan fékk Suzuki Swift líka „most fun special special achievement award“ og „Design award of the year“.



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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: All five Left-Green MPs are firmly against heavy industry.

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: Within the Social Democratic party, Einar Már Sigurðsson and Kristján Möller are among the strongest supporters of the development of heavy industry.

Website: www.samfylking.is

E-mail: samfylking@samfylking.is

Phone: 414-2200

Address: Hallveigarstigur 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 Jón Kristjánsson, Minister of Agriculture Guðni Ágústsson, Minister of Health Siv Fríðleifsdóttir, Minister of Industry Valgerður Sverrisdóttir

Strange but true: While the party as a whole is heavily in favour of the development of heavy industry, Minister of Industry Valgerður Sverrisdóttir is widely seen as the biggest proponent of that policy.

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, emphasising 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:

While the party is ostensibly pro-heavy industry, Sigurjón Þórðarson in particular has expressed reservations about the policy's implementation by the government.

Website: www.frlalslyndir.is

E-mail: xf@xf.is

Phone: 552-2600

Address: Aðalstræti 9, 101 Reykjavík



The Independence Party (Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn)

Guiding principles: Right wing, mouthpiece for privatisation in all areas of society.

Party Chairman: Geir H. Haarde

Number of seats: 23

Registered members: about 34,000

Ministers: members: about 34,000

Ministers: **Strange but true:** Arni Matthiessen and Halldór Blöndal are among the strongest supporters of heavy industry within the Independence Party.

Website: www.xd.is

E-mail: xd@xd.is

Phone: 515-1700

Address: Háaleitisbraut 1, 105 Reykjavík

So where do they stand on . . .

The Church of Iceland has made it clear that it does not wish for the state to impose on it legislation relating to practices such as gay marriage. Is this insistence compatible with the fact that they are state funded and Iceland has no separation of church and state? Should that separation be made?

Leftist-Green Party:

"It raises the question of whether you can have your cake and eat it, too. However, I have actually had my doubts in the past about some of the legislation that has been proposed to regulate the church's activities. I believe they should be allowed to maintain a degree of autonomy over their own affairs. More worrying is the fact that it seems to me as the church is increasingly failing to adapt to changing times and attitudes in our society."

MP Ógmundur Jónsson

Social Democratic Party:

"It's quite astounding to see the church so vehemently opposed to giving other religious groups new opportunities and rights. They are free to formulate their own policy on gay marriage, which they are in fact doing right now, but the pro-

posed gay rights legislation would only open up possibilities for those religious groups that do want the opportunity to perform gay marriages. I'm actually not a member of the Church of Iceland, but I think separation of church and state is another issue entirely."

MP Guðrún Ógmundsdóttir

Progressive Party:

"This particular issue, in isolation, doesn't change anything about the state's relationship with the church. In accordance with our policies, we in the Progressive Party are trying to ensure that everyone has the same rights regardless of their sexuality. I also believe the Church of Iceland is having an internal debate about these matters."

MP Siv Fríðleifsdóttir

Liberal Party:

"As long as the church is funded by

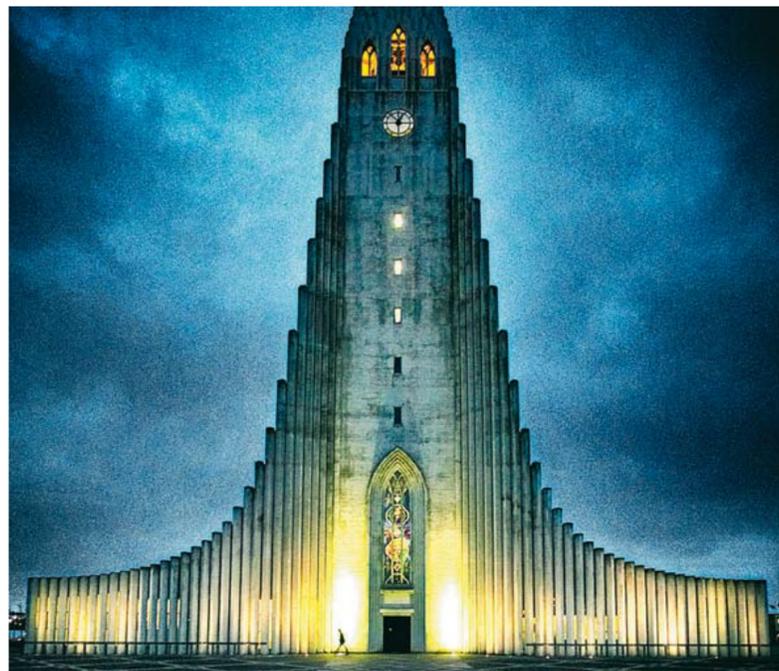
the state, parliament should have a say in its affairs. We wholeheartedly support the separation of church and state; this particular issue just highlights the need for that to happen. I'm a member of the national church myself and have no plans to leave, so this is not about being for or against religion. Most Icelanders want their church separate from the state, and I don't think it's ever right to discriminate against people - whether it is on religious grounds or not."

MP Magnús Þór Hafsteinnsson

Independence Party:

"The debate over the separation of church and state is an important one, and it's always deserving of attention. We're not committing ourselves one way or the other at this point, but it's an issue that should be looked at."

MP Kjartan Ólafsson



Grapevine's Government Guide Bonus: Witness Democracy in Action!

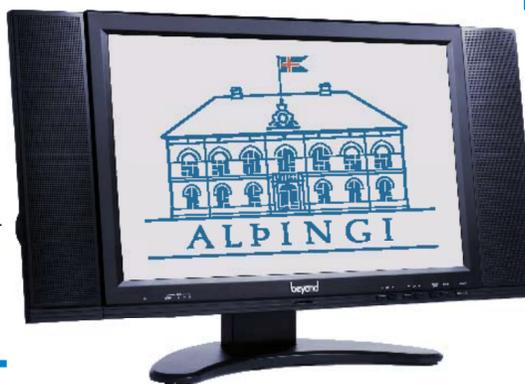
It's possible to watch parliamentary sessions live, and you don't need cable - or even a television, for that matter.

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 Austurvöllir, 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.



**Reykjavik
Excursions**
KYNNISFERÐIR

NORTHERN LIGHTS TOUR



What are the Northern Lights?

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,

When can they be seen?

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.

Departure: From BSI Bus Terminal at 20:30
Pick-up at hotels and guesthouses
30 minutes before departure

Duration: 2,5 - 3 hours

Includes: Light refreshments (hot chocolate and the Icelandic "kleina")

When: Daily
Tour Code: RE62

ISK 3.300

BLUE LAGOON EXPRESS



Departures from Reykjavik

RE-710	10:00
RE-711	11:00
RE-712	12:00
RE-714	14:00
RE-716	16:00
RE-718	18:00

Flexible departures from The Blue Lagoon

11:15
13:15
14:10*
15:15
17:15
18:45
21:00

* bus going from the Blue Lagoon to Keflavik International Airport

Includes: Bus fare and admission to the Blue Lagoon.

Meals and refreshments are not included. Special rates are offered for Reykjavik Excursions passengers.

Pick up from hotels and guesthouses 30 minutes before departure.

ISK 3.400



PMs Take to the Stage to Fight Sexual Violence

Iceland embraces the Vagina Monologues

BY ÞÓRDÍS ELVA ÞORVALDSDÓTTIR BACHMANN

The backstage at the City Theatre on March 1st, 2006 wasn't filled with actresses as usual, but Icelandic parliamentarians performing in the Vagina Monologues. Like other actresses, the MPs sat and rehearsed their lines, some smoked cigarettes, some tried to figure out how the coffee machine worked and the rest worried about whether or not they'd have to go to the bathroom during their performance. When asked whether or not they were nervous, one of them replied: "No. Not until I see the President in the audience."

The world's first Vagina-friendly President and Honorary Vagina Warrior, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, was in fact among the audience, as always on V-day since it became an annual

event in Iceland. The "congratresses," as they were called backstage, were greeted with warmth and applause when they walked onstage. Dressed in white and red, they delivered stories of women who love other women, women who refuse to shave "down there", women who have been raped and women who discovered their vaginas when they were well into their thirties.

All the performers did well, resting comfortably in their text and delivering it with sincerity under the guidance of María Ellingsen, director. But this performance wasn't about Oscar-winning acting skills. It was about the issue at hand, about violence against women and how to make it stop.

Afterwards, the V-day organisation in Iceland premiered a television commercial from their upcoming campaign attacking misconceptions about rape.

In today's political landscape, women are still vastly outnumbered by men—even the word for minister in Icelandic, *ráðherra*, contains the word *herra*, which means gentleman or sir. Iceland has twelve ministries, only three of which are headed by women, or 25%. For some reason, none of these three women could participate in V-day 2006. The Minister of Education, the Minister of Trade and Industry, and the Minister of Environmental Affairs were all said to be abroad and unable to participate, which was a

disappointment.

Apart from the absence of female ministers, V-day 2006 was a unique success. Parliamentarians have likely never before shouted out the word 'cunt' and faked multiple orgasms in front of a full auditorium, including the president, anywhere else in the world. It was a powerful reminder and hopefully a precedent for other countries, where the Vagina Monologues are still frowned upon.

Having seen the former Minister of Environmental Affairs say that she'd like to be licked and the former mayor of Reykjavik describe a gang rape in Bosnia, we might be getting closer to breaking the wall of silence surrounding women's issues.

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A Night at Thai Karaoke

Racial discrimination shows its ugly head

A COLUMN BY
ÞÓRDÍS ELVA ÞORVALDSDÓTTIR BACHMANN

I had an American friend visit me over Christmas. Needless to say, I took him to Geysir, Gullfoss and the Blue Lagoon, which is basically mandatory if you're entertaining foreigners in Iceland. We took touristy pictures of each other with chattering teeth and frozen smiles in the 24-hour dusk, and let out sighs of relief when we got back into the warm car. When my friend had seen enough landscape and I'd taken him to most of the cool places I could think of in Reykjavík, too, I started to run out of ideas. Finally, I did something that had never come to my mind: I actually asked my friend what he wanted to do in Iceland. With a beaming smile, he replied: karaoke.

Now, karaoke isn't a common phenomenon in Iceland. It is considered an outrageously corny activity that can only be excused if those participating are obscenely drunk. In fact, I only know of two places to have regular,

of pink flamingos flying over a pond.

When our turn came around, we were warmly received. I realised that there had been no reason to fear that anybody there would pass judgement on us or be suspicious of us. As a matter of fact, we reaped cheers, smiles and applause from the audience after we tried to harmonise our way through Extreme's More than Words with dubious results. Quality wasn't the point, just getting up and doing it. Suddenly it hit me that I'd sung karaoke completely sober for the first time in my life, and that it was actually fun.

An Icelandic friend of mine and fellow karaoke lover showed up at the scene. She knew some of the people at Kaffisetríð and she stayed behind after my American friend and I had sung our share and gone home. After we left, my friend tagged along with her Thai friends

“We sat like Sunday school children and picked out songs from a large English song list, while a Thai transvestite sang her heart out to a video of pink flamingos flying over a pond.”

advertised karaoke. One of them is the sport bar Ölver, the other one is Kaffisetríð, a Thai restaurant that turns into a karaoke hot spot on weekend nights. Ölver was closed due to the holidays. I had been told by people who have gone there that Kaffisetríð had a substantial Thai song selection. Being typical Icelanders, they were so drunk when they went there that they couldn't tell me if there was an English song selection for my American karaoke enthusiast. The only thing to do was to go there to find out.

Stepping into Kaffisetríð was like stepping into a different culture. The place smelled of exotic spices and the walls were decorated with Thai art and symbolism. We found ourselves in a situation that hardly ever arises in Iceland; we were the Caucasian minority. At the next table sat a large group of people who took turns singing karaoke in their native tongue. It was fascinating to discover how different the Thai karaoke experience is from the Icelandic one. The people at Kaffisetríð weren't staggeringly drunk. They weren't fooling around, singing cheesy hits from the eighties hoping to derive giggles from the audience. They were simply singing. Nobody laughed. Nobody jumped up on a table during the solo. Nobody was faking it.

I had heard stories about Icelanders who were thrown out of Kaffisetríð for making fun of the karaoke and its participants. I had also heard that as a result, the regular Thai customers are a bit suspicious of Icelanders dropping in. Not knowing if any of these stories were true, I still put on my best, most respectful manner and advised my friend to do so too.

We sat like Sunday school children and picked out songs from a large English song list, while a Thai transvestite sang her heart out to a video

to a nearby dance club. Upon their arrival, the doormen let my Icelandic friend in, after which they folded their arms across their chests and refused to let her Thai friends into the club. Seeking an explanation, the doormen told her it was due to dress code. She pointed out the fact that she was in fact wearing jeans like the majority of the group, so that could hardly be the reason. The doormen just shook their heads and refused to budge. Feeling the blood boiling in her veins, my friend confronted one of the doormen, asking if the real reason was because the rest of the group was of Asian descent. “Yes. It's orders from the boss,” the doorman replied and shrugged.

I was blissfully unaware of this incident until my American friend left the country. Truth be told, I am glad he didn't witness it. Apart from the blatant racial discrimination that flourishes in Iceland, what I find the most unjust about the events of that night is the fact that I, as an Icelandic, was warmly welcomed to a place owned, run and frequented by people of Asian origin. When the tables were turned, Icelanders shut their doors.

Unfortunately, this is not a unique story. These kinds of events are taking place all over the country. Occasionally, the media take interest in them, but mostly they are quietly condoned. If we like to call ourselves a civilised country, it's time to stop acting like white plantation owners and start respecting basic human rights. In the meantime, I urge everyone to try the Thai karaoke experience. It's a much-needed lesson in open-mindedness.

(Kaffisetríð is located at Laugavegur 103, 101 Reykjavík)



First They Came for the Knife-Wielding Maniacs...

A COLUMN BY
GUNNAR HRAFN JÓNSSON

Judging by the media coverage these days, downtown Reykjavík is a dangerous place to be after dark. If you don't get smashed in the face with a bottle or stabbed in the back five times, you're still lucky to get home before someone slips you a roofie or steals your cell phone. People from across the increasingly spread-out Reykjavík area are scared to venture anywhere near the pub-lined streets of Laugavegur on weekends. Little old ladies and hardened policemen are unanimous in their horror and condemnation of the apparent lack of discipline and rule of law. What's clearly needed here – they say – are more powers for the police, more funding for the police, more everything for these brave defenders of freedom. Whatever we can spare in the way of civil liberties, I'm sure the police will gladly take off our hands, as well.

Geir Jón Þórisson, Reykjavík's chief of

an end to stabbings, not any more than you can dispute the effect a total elimination of all water would have on drownings. If we double the amount of police officers on the street, triple their budget and give them more or less unrestricted powers to waltz in and out of our homes on a whim – we will see a dramatic drop in crime. The question is not what would solve the alleged problem, but what we are prepared to give up in order to fix it.

To be sure, the world has had enough experience with governments and police forces overstepping their bounds to know that rarely if ever do authorities give back lost civil liberties or relinquish any powers they have managed to wrest from the people and their constitution. In the United States, people opposed to the unervingly wide-ranging powers given to their government by the terror-inspired Patriot Act like to quote Jefferson's famous quip about

“Living and partying in downtown Reykjavík, one could be blissfully unaware of the “reality” of constant stabbings and grotesque violence were it not presented to us in the form of hysterical reporting from the media and ominous pronouncements from the police.”

police and part-time bouncer for Stöð 2, is certainly looking to capitalise on the wave of paranoid hysteria that has followed a recent spate of stabbings. If you can even call two incidents a spate; trickle seems a more appropriate word. In any case, Mr. Þórisson had no problem identifying the cause and potential solution to the problem that he himself told us was getting out of control. The lack of discipline in Icelandic society in general, he said, needed to be counteracted with tougher legislation and more police powers. Oh, and money. You see, Geir Jón has big ideas for the future of our little island, big ideas that would require not just further unfettering of his hands, but more money and more policemen under his command. He has floated ideas such as a total ban on the carrying of knives and making body searches mandatory for bar patrons in downtown Reykjavík. Never mind all the professions (and, in fact, everyday situations) that require some kind of pocket knife. And if something other than a weapon were to be discovered during a routine search, well that person was breaking the law anyway.

That's the thing. You can't argue with the fact that totally outlawing all knives would put

not giving up essential freedoms for temporary security. In the Icelandic context, it might actually be more appropriate to quote Darth Dick Cheney himself: “It is easy to take liberty for granted, when you have never had it taken from you.”

Living and partying in downtown Reykjavík, one could be blissfully unaware of the “reality” of constant stabbings and grotesque violence if it were not presented to us in the form of hysterical reporting from the media and ominous pronouncements from the police. Certainly, these things do happen. Certainly, no one wants to get stabbed and no one approves of stabbings. Curbing violence and lawlessness is something that should be an important concern in any free society – there are few greater freedoms than the freedom to live free from the threat of violence, and in safeguarding that aspect of our liberty the police can potentially be our most valuable allies. What we mustn't do is to allow the interests of the police force itself to shape the discourse over their role in society, nor can we allow ourselves to give in to the fear of the month and start chipping away at our civil liberties every time we're told the sky is falling.

Going the Way of Styx

The Progressive Party runs out of shelf life

BY PAUL F. NIKOLOV

Not too long ago, a movement known as “progressive rock” began. Starting from the margins of music culture, bands such as Genesis, King Crimson and Yes became considered cutting edge, arbiters of musical innovation, attracting legions of fans. But it wasn't long before the inevitable happened – they got cocky, and then absurd, driving more and more people away with every giant inflatable pig and each 15-minute guitar solo, until they eventually became living anachronisms, their once diehard fans now embarrassed and ashamed to admit they ever supported them. Soon, they faded away.

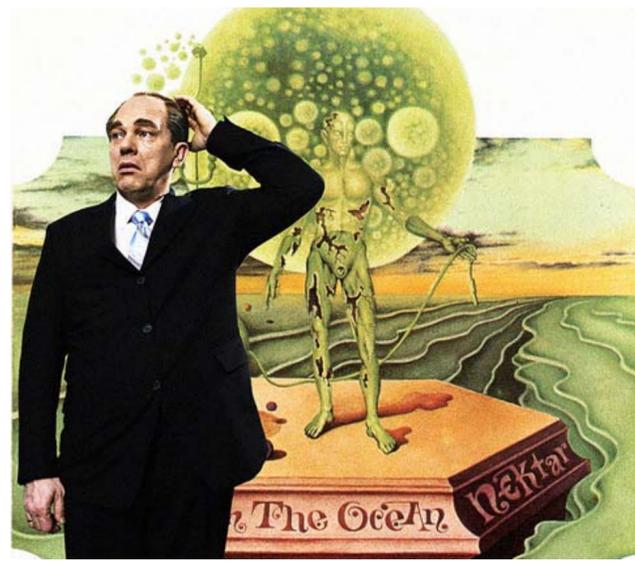
Decades beforehand – on 16 December 1916, to be precise – the Progressive Party was formed in Iceland. Starting out as a minor political group within parliament, it became the most powerful party in the country, offering new ideas regarding the cooperative movement and national welfare, rallying the support of a great deal of the nation behind them. But as more people began to urbanise, and as the country's focus shifted from agriculture to fishing, the Progressives seemed anachronistic, and then downright corrupt. Today, they stand on the brink of extinction, kept alive in parliament only by being in a coalition with the Independence Party. If Reykjavík City Council elections were held today, they wouldn't even earn a seat. In other words, the Progressive Party has become the Styx of Iceland.

It is often inaccurately reported that the Progressive Party is the least popular party in Iceland. Not so. According to the latest results of an ongoing IMG Gallup poll, that honour belongs to the Liberal Party. On the parliamentary front, the Liberals have the support of only 3% of the population, as opposed to the Progressives' 10%. In city council, the Liberals have the support of a little more than 2% of Reykjavík's voters, while the Progressives have 5%. But bear this in mind: the Liberal Party was formed in 1998. They have no legacy to point to, are not a part of any ruling coalition, and there is no family in the country that can trace a lineage of Liberal supporters. The 90-year-old Progressive Party has all of these advantages, and are only doing marginally better than their eight-year-old comrades.

In 1931, the Progressive Party had the support of 35.9% of the voters in the parliamentary elections. This figure is proudly mentioned in the “history and organisation” section of the Progressive Party's website. What it doesn't say is that's the last time the Progressives ever gained that much support. After bouncing between 23% and 27% for a few years, party support peaked at 29.7% in 1959, and has been gradually declining ever since.

The turn of the millennium heralded a parade of bad decisions from the Progressive Party. First there was the Kárahnjúkar dam project – a hydroelectric dam being built in the highlands to provide power for an aluminium smelter in the east of Iceland – initially touted by then Minister for the Environment Siv Friðleifsdóttir in 2002. This project, which has caused dismay to many around the world and sparked not a few protests from within Iceland, continues despite declining support.

Minister of Industry Valgerður Sverrisdóttir has taken the Kárahnjúkar cause to all new levels of cognitive dissonance. When Ms. Sverrisdóttir was presented with the results of two polls earlier this month – one from Icelandic daily Fréttablaðið and another from Gallup – both showing the majority of the nation against the construction of more heavy industry, her reply was, “I'm happy to hear that the people of this country are pleased with the work we've been doing so far,” just before dismissing both polls for not asking the right questions. Sources close to the Grapevine have informed us that even more and bigger protests are being planned for the coming summer. In the face of this, another aluminium smelter has been slated for Húsavík, in the north.



“Just as modern progressive rock bands such as God Speed! You Black Emperor have forsaken the laser-light shows and flower costumes of old for a fresher, more current sound that still holds onto the basic principles of the genre, the Progressive Party would do well to come to terms with Iceland's current political mood...”

Heir Apparent Steps Down

More recently, there's former Minister of Social Affairs Árni Magnússon, who found himself embroiled in a court case last year when Valgerður H. Bjarnadóttir, the former director of the Equal Rights Office, was awarded six million ISK (about 100,000 USD) in damages in the Supreme Court, saying that Magnússon had unfairly pressured her to quit her job. Magnússon announced his resignation on 5 March, to take a position at the Bank of Iceland. Baldur Þórhallsson, docent of political science at the University of Iceland, told the Grapevine that Magnússon's resignation had nothing to do with the trial, but rather, with political workings within the Progressive Party itself.

Þórhallsson believes that there is a division of sorts within the Progressive Party, which he divides between, “those who support [Prime Minister] Halldór Ásgrímsson and those who question his power. This creates a lot of tension within the party, and it causes conflicts that are more personal than conflicts with members of other parties. Magnússon has said in the past that he doesn't take well to negativity and criticism in the public eye, and he's been very much in the middle of this conflict within

the Progressive Party.”

What caused this division? Þórhallsson puts the cause squarely upon 15 September, 2004, when Halldór Ásgrímsson became prime minister of Iceland by switching places with Davíð Oddsson.

“At that time, the Progressives lost a minister post,” he explained. “So someone had to go. Siv Friðleifsdóttir had a lot of supporters, and many people argued that Magnússon should go, as he was the newest minister in the party, having started in 2003, while Friðleifsdóttir had been Minister for the Environment since 1999.”

Invariably, Friðleifsdóttir was let go, with Magnússon – the new PM's groomed successor – allowed to remain. But this decision wasn't the first unpopular move Ásgrímsson has ever made.

While Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ásgrímsson essentially sold himself a newly privatised bank in 2003 through a series of companies owned by him and his family. This, however, wouldn't be brought to light for another two years. In 2003, people were more aware of his and then Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson's move to get Iceland in the “coalition of the willing,” despite at least 78% of the na-

tion being against Iceland's involvement in Iraq and without putting the matter to parliamentary vote.

Today, Ásgrímsson seems more like aging royalty than a prime minister, engaging in such activities as visiting Icelandic Canadians in Winnipeg, announcing the newly-measured height of Iceland's tallest mountain, discussing the Cod Wars with George W. Bush, or having a photo-op with the newborn 300,000th Icelander. Occasionally, he will make predictions, whether it's Iceland entering the European Union by 2015 or the final score of Chelsea vs. Barcelona, none of which are taken seriously. This ineffectual and sometimes absurd image has made him the subject of at least two songs – Ghostigital's Not Clean and Skátar's Halldór Ásgrímsson. For a person who's been prime minister for about a year and a half, it would be quite an honour, if either song had something positive to say about the man.

Reform, Not Reunion Tours

Not to completely slam the Progressives, they do deserve credit for their work with women's rights, having been one of the earliest and more outspoken proponents of closing the wage gap between men and women, along with the Social Democrats. And then there's the smoking ban, a bill likely to pass parliament that would prohibit smoking in restaurants, clubs and cafés in Iceland, which was initially introduced by Siv Friðleifsdóttir – a proposal that 74% of the nation supports, according to a Gallup poll from February. These efforts, however, do not appear to be enough. According to Gallup, parliamentary support has been steadily dropping since last November, and it's unlikely that they will win a seat on city council this spring. Should they be dropped from the ruling coalition, their 12 parliamentary seats would inevitably diminish further.

Árni Magnússon's departure, then, was not a good sign.

“Árni Magnússon was a popular politician, especially with people working with issues dealt with by the Ministry of Social Affairs. He's been very well received,” Þórhallsson told the Grapevine. “And Magnússon was picked to be Halldór Ásgrímsson's successor. It was obvious that he had been chosen for this position and by leaving, Ásgrímsson doesn't have a successor anymore.”

At the same time, Þórhallsson pointed out that the Progressives show room for improvement.

“Right now they're being squeezed between a Social Democratic Party that is getting stronger,” he explained, “and the Independence Party. They have to find a base of support in Reykjavík. Right now, they're seen as a regional party. Their support of aluminium smelters, for example, doesn't sit well with people in Reykjavík.”

And this is where the Progressive Party could maintain its relevance. Just as modern progressive rock bands such as God Speed! You Black Emperor have forsaken the laser-light shows and flower costumes of old for a fresher, more current sound that still holds onto the basic principles of the genre, the Progressive Party would do well to come to terms with Iceland's current political mood and abandon, for example, what former city councilperson Guðrún Pétursdóttir recently described on political roundtable television show Silfur Egils as an “old-fashioned” trust in heavy industry as an economic solution.

This leaves the Progressive Party with one basic choice: come to terms with the whole of Iceland's current political and economic climate and reform their practices accordingly, or not change at all, and continue to emerge every few years, looking as sad and dated as a Genesis reunion concert, until people forget who they are altogether.

DEPORTED

USD 68.6 EUR 89.6 DKK 11.0 "THAT COULD BE VERY HARD FOR EXPORTING COMPANIES. IT WOULD NOT SURPRISE ME TO HEAR THAT COMPANIES PLAN TO RELOCATE." STEINGRIMUR ARNAR FINNSSON, KB BANK. GBP 120.1 JPY 0.6 SEK 114.1

even less, as profits from the aluminium smelters will go to their foreign owners. In other words, the net gain for Iceland, would be less than 1% increase in domestic export value.

Finsson's report concludes that it is impossible to maintain the position that future economic growth is dependent on creating a few hundred jobs in aluminium industry.

"If we build several aluminium smelters in a short span of time, we could be sacrificing bigger interests for a small gain," Finsson insists. "For many companies the thinking has been: OK, we'll take the blow now, but if they are looking at another 3-4 years of the same conditions..." He trails off, and after a momentary hesitation, he continues. "That could be very hard for exporting companies. It would not surprise me to hear that companies plan to relocate."

Runaway Companies

"The government is killing all prospects of further developing high-tech industry in Iceland," Friðrik Skúlason states. His company, FRISK has successfully been developing anti-virus solutions for companies since 1987 and now employs about 50 people in Iceland. "My company has been run with considerable profit every single year since we started, except for last year when we barely broke even. The only reason for that was the currency rate," he continues.

For IT companies like CCP and FRISK, relocation is no longer a rhetorical concept, but an imposed reality that demands attention. "While the exchange rate of the Icelandic króna is so high, it is very expensive to run a company like ours in Iceland. It is not out of the question that we'll relocate. It is something we have looked into. When it is a question of hundreds of millions annually, it becomes a very valid question whether we can justify keeping the operation here in Iceland," says Harðarson of CCP, whose company projects an income of 1.5 billion ISK next year, almost entirely from export.

While some companies may choose to leave entirely, others have suggested that they will not leave, but at the same time, that they don't see a way to expand their companies in Iceland.

"I would not suggest starting an IT company here in Iceland to anyone. If you have an idea, and want to start a company, the first thing you have to do is leave the county," he says. "This industry simply cannot grow here in Iceland under these circumstances."

But although the economic environment is hard, Skúlason does not expect to relocate his company, at least not entirely.

"The basis of the operation will probably still be here in Reykjavík, but we have already relocated one department of the company, and if the currency rate stays as high as it is, we might be forced to relocate other departments. Under the current conditions, any future growth of the company will not be in Iceland, it will be abroad."

Subsidising Power

But it is not only the IT companies that have been hit by the soaring currency rate. Hördur Arnarson is the CEO of Marel hf., a world-leading company in the production and development of fisheries and food processing equipment. The company employs over 360 people and is valued around 16 billion ISK. In a conversation with the Reykjavík Grapevine, Arnarson was very critical of the government's role in bringing heavy industry to Iceland.

"The main point in this case is that these projects are not on grounds of equal competition," says Arnarson. "Companies in heavy industry receive a special treatment from the state in favour of other companies. The state's involvement in these projects is wrong."

While the government does not directly take part in building power plants, or directly subsidise the operation of aluminium smelters in Iceland, the indirect involvement of the government remains considerable.

The state-owned National Power Company does not pay taxes from its operations, the required rate of return from investments is lower than is expected of private companies and the company receives government insurance on all foreign loans, which guarantees lower interests than other companies can get.

"If this was a private investment, we couldn't complain," Arnarson says. "But the playing field is not level. The government is subsidising this branch of industry."

Like other exporting companies in the high-tech industry, Marel is feeling the effects of the currency exchange rate. "Since all our income is in foreign currency, and all our expenditure in Icelandic króna, the development of the exchange rate has reduced our potential profits, which affects the return of our investors, and the compensation of our workers," Arnarson states.

"We are not creating the number of jobs that we could be creating here in Iceland. While the conditions here are what they are, we will continue to expand our company on foreign soil," says Arnarson.

When asked if they would be creating more jobs in Iceland

if the economic landscape were friendlier to exporting industry, he replied, "Without a doubt. We would be growing domestically and creating more jobs if the exchange rate was not so unfavourable."

The Arctic Tiger

Despite boisterous talk of developing more export industries in Iceland, fish remains the nation's lifeline. Last year, fish products were responsible for 60% of Iceland's export income. Like other export industries, the fishing industry has been badly affected by the rise of currency exchange rate. The lesson to draw from this is that the nation is overly dependent on fishing industry and needs to build more exporting industries to support the economy.

The question facing Iceland is whether to choose to follow the path of the Celtic Tiger, and other countries such as Sweden and Finland, where the role of more traditional industries such as steel, paper and wood as the basis of the economy have diminished constantly in favour of more high-tech export commodities such as IT service and telecommunications, making them less vulnerable to international fluctuations. Or should Icelanders rather opt for continued build up of heavy industry in competition with countries from the developing world?

As usual, when economics are concerned, there are no simple answers, but rather differences of opinions. Especially when questions are tied to complex political issues involving employment and living conditions in rural areas. But judging from the reality facing companies of the knowledge economy, there is hardly room to do both simultaneously.

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■ By Sveinn Birkir Björnsson

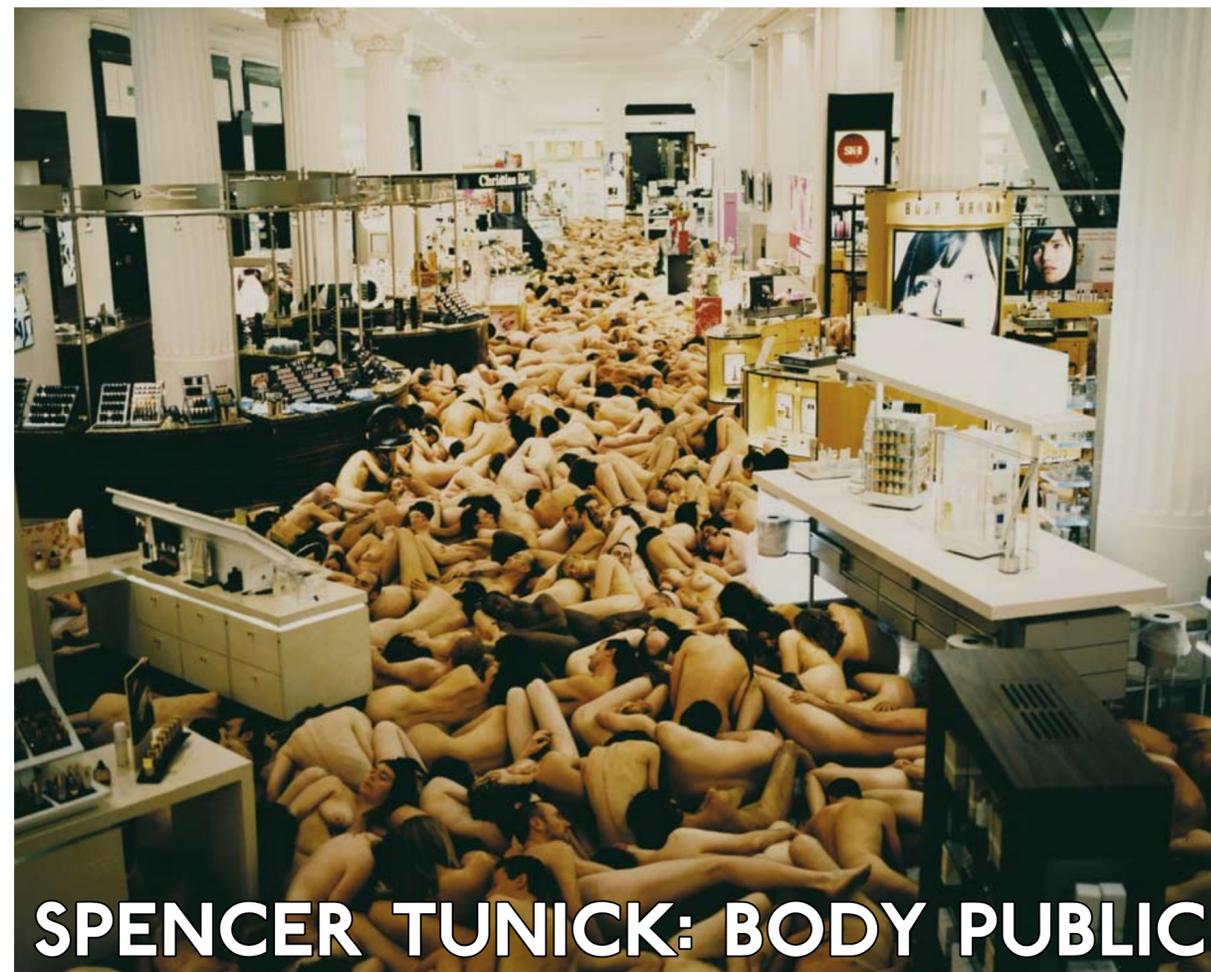
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INFO

Issue 03, 2006

8 Page Listings Section in Your Pocket



SPENCER TUNICK: BODY PUBLIC

Akureyri Art Museum, until 30 April

Spencer Tunick is best known for his treatment of the nude. Or in his case, nudes, often hundreds of them. Since 1994, he has taken numerous photographs of group nudes in Chile, New York, Australia and other locales. Often, his work has landed him in legal trouble – he's been arrested in New York five times since 1992, and has had to take his case all the way to the US Supreme Court, who ruled in his favour. Not that negative reactions bother him much.

"A lot of the negative reactions I ignore, because I think a lot of that is pop media driven," he told the Grapevine. "But negative reactions from governments or other people trying to stop my work are things I pay attention to, because while pornography is a multi-million dollar business, my goal is not fornicating, but to work with the body

as an art object in a public space. That's what I do."

While undaunted by legal challenges, the military can often prove to be a mighty obstacle to overcome.

"One of the more daunting logistical problems that I'll have to deal with is when the military in a Latin American country will say no, and then you have to try to convince the military," he told us, "because sometimes the land I want to work on might be military or near a military facility – and then you have to speak to the military in an unbelievably refreshing way about the human body. And sometimes it's daunting when you want a location, and the permission has to actually come from the president of the country. That's nerve-wracking for me."

Looking at Tunick's works, it's hard to see what prompts people to be shocked by them. The nude has

been the subject of art since ancient times, and Tunick's work carries on the tradition by making the body a part of the background. Melbourne 3, 2001, as one example, shows hundreds of naked bodies covering the banks of a river, looking for all the world as sexy as sunbathing sun lions. The more festive Brügge 4, 2005 might feature 300 women in nine small boats in a Belgian canal, but again, the bodies are massed so close together and shot from such a distance that they resemble something else entirely.

The overall effect of Tunick's photographs is that we become able to see the human body, if not human beings, as fragile, vulnerable, and nearly overwhelmed by the world around them.

■ By Paul F. Nikolov



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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 Paul F. Nikolov.
listings@grapevine.is

FRIDAY - 10 MARCH

DJ Fúsi
Café Amsterdam

Brain Police
Gaukur á Stöng

Vax, DJ Jonni
Hressingarskálinn

DJ Gundi
NASA

El Rodeo and guests, Gullí Ósoma
Bar 11

Icelandic Idol live on big screen, followed by the band Dich Milk, then DJ Stjáni Partýljón
Glaubar

SATURDAY - 11 MARCH

DJ Fúsi
Café Amsterdam

Hip-hop djamm, featuring: Þörupiltar, Ramses, Hoochie, Eftirspurn, and 7berg with DJ Ace and DJ Frigor playing between sets.
Gaukur á Stöng

Dúettin Ari og Gunní, DJ Jonni
Hressingarskálinn

Birgír Curver
Bar 11

Live football all day, then DJ Stjáni Partýljón
Glaubar

Úlpa / Bob
Grand Rokk

SUNDAY - 12 MARCH

The Bad Plus
NASA

MONDAY - 13 MARCH

Jóse González
NASA

THURSDAY - 16 MARCH

Helgi Valur
Hressingarskálinn

Potential and Svarta dauði
Bar 11

Troubadour Hlynur Ben plays live music from Britney Spears to Metallica, then DJ Masz from Radio Flass
Glaubar

FRIDAY - 17 MARCH

DJ Master
Café Amsterdam

Touch, DJ Jonni
Hressingarskálinn

Icelandic Idol live on big screen, followed by the band Dich Milk, then Arni Már from FM957
Glaubar

AMPOP
NASA

Gullí Ósoma
Bar 11

The 9/11s
Grand Rokk

SATURDAY - 18 MARCH

Svizz
Café Amsterdam

Live football from noon, DJ Frigor from midnight
Glaubar

Dúettin Ari og Gunní, DJ Jonni
Hressingarskálinn

Í svörtum fötum
NASA

Palli from Maus
Bar 11

Inge Mandos-Fruedkabd / Zimt / Kolisha
Grand Rokk

TUESDAY - 21 MARCH

Doom Riders (US) / Changer / I Adapt
Grand Rokk

WEDNESDAY - 2 MARCH

Laibach
NASA

THURSDAY - 23 MARCH

Hreimur and Vignir, then DJ Masz from Radio Flass
Glaubar

Helgi Valur
Hressingarskálinn

COD Night - Artists from the Cod record label playing (see www.cod.is)
Grand Rokk

FRIDAY - 24 MARCH

Buff
Café Amsterdam

Live football all day, then DJ Stjáni Partýljón
Glaubar

Touch, DJ Maggi
Hressingarskálinn

DJ Haffi
Bar 11

COD Night - Artists from the Cod record label playing (see www.cod.is)
Grand Rokk

SATURDAY - 25 MARCH

DJ Fúsi
Café Amsterdam

Live football all day, DJ Stjáni Partýljón from midnight
Glaubar

Troubadours Gotti og Eisi, DJ Maggi
Hressingarskálinn

GusGus
NASA

Gullí Ósoma
Bar 11

COD Night - Artists from the Cod record label playing (see www.cod.is)
Grand Rokk

SUNDAY - 26 MARCH

Bórir / Rivulets (US)
Grand Rokk

WEDNESDAY - 29 MARCH

Stand-up comedy, and then a surprise visit from a famous Icelander
Hressingarskálinn

THURSDAY - 30 MARCH

Troubadour Hlynur Ben plays live music from Britney Spears to Metallica, then DJ Masz from Radio Flass
Glaubar

Sváfnir og Halli
Bar 11

FRIDAY - 31 MARCH

Ulrik
Café Amsterdam

Icelandic Idol live on big screen, followed by the band Dich Milk, then Arni Már from FM957
Glaubar

Touch, DJ Jonni
Hressingarskálinn

Gullí Ósoma
Bar 11

Hoffman / Future Future
Grand Rokk



JÓSE GONZÁLEZ

The last time the Latin Swede came to Iceland for the Airwaves festival, he made quite an impression. And rightly so. González's music - mostly just acoustic guitar and voice - is heartfelt and touching without being overly sentimental, and the single guitar track often sounds like several. Catch him now before you'll need to pay half a month's salary to see him.
12 March, NASA

SATURDAY - 1 APRIL

Ulrik
Café Amsterdam

Live football from noon, DJ Árni Már from midnight
Hressingarskálinn

Vax, DJ Jonni
Hressingarskálinn

DJ Páll
Bar 11

TBA
Grand Rokk

WEDNESDAY - 5 APRIL

Mammút CD-Release Party. 1000 ISK.
Iðnó

THURSDAY - 6 APRIL

Kung Fu
Hressingarskálinn

FRIDAY - 7 APRIL

Troubadours Gotti og Eisi, DJ Maggi
Hressingarskálinn

Benefit concert supporting children's hospital Barnaspítali Hringinsins. Visit www.rjominn.is for more information.
Grand Rokk



GUSGUS

Royalty among rock and dance fusion everywhere, Gus Gus at NASA in spring is guaranteed to be a singular high point, something like visiting Studio 54 in 1977 with DeeDee Ramone and Elton John. Remember when you did that? That was great.
25 March, NASA



BRAIN POLICE

The musician's heavy metal band, Brain Police offer precision and rock, with a rhythm section that would make Rush jealous.
March 10, Gaukur á Stöng



LAIBACH

Possibly one of the most misunderstood bands in the world, this Slovenian electro-rock group often employ fascist imagery in their cover art, their stage performance, and their costumes. But don't be fooled - the group belong to an artist's commune known as NSK, which uses such imagery in order to point out the existence of fascist elements in supposedly free societies. The music - especially the singer's booming bass - were predecessors of Rammstein and Icelandic death metal band Ham. Plus they did a hilarious cover of 'The Beatles' Let It Be album in its entirety.
22 March, NASA

MUSIC

The Reykjavík City Theatre

On the main stage:

Carmen

The Bizet opera performed in Icelandic.

Kalli á þakinu

Icelandic version of the "Karlson-on-the-roof" stories by Astrid Lindgren.

Marlene Dietrich

Play about the famed actress.

Ronja Ræningjadóttir

Icelandic version of "Ronja the Robber's Daughter," also by Astrid Lindgren.

Talaðu við mig

Dance piece that examines the traditional roles of men and women.

Woyzeck

Georg Büchner's play, with music from Nick Cave.

Other stage:

Alveg briliant skilnaður

One-woman play from Icelandic actress and playwright Edda Björgvinsdóttir.

Belgíska Kongó

Nominated for two "masks" (Icelandic theatre awards).

Forðist Okkur

Play based on the dark humour comics of Hugleikur Dagsson.

Glæpur gegn diskóinu

Gary Owen's take on club life.

Hungur

Grapevine columnist Þórdís Elva Þórvaldsdóttir Bachmann's play on eating disorders.

National Theatre of Iceland

Virkjunin

Known also as Das Werk, by award-winning playwright Elfriede Jelinek.

Eldhús eftir máli

By Icelandic short-story writer Vala Þórsdóttir.

Pétur Gautur

Icelandic version of the Henrik Ibsen play.

Iðnó

Ég er mín eigin kona

Doug Wright's play on German transvestite Charlotte Von Mahlsdorf, performed by Icelandic great Hilmar Snær Guðnason.

Broadway

Nina og Gerry

Cabaret performance in Icelandic.

Leikfélag Akureyrar

Mariubjallan

Icelandic version of the play Ladybird by Vassily Sigarev.

Litla hryllingsbúðin

Icelandic version of Little Shop of Horrors.

The Icelandic Opera

La Cenerentola

From the libretto by Giacomo Puccini.



MARCH OF LITERATURE

The International Students' Association and the International Office of the University of Iceland have sponsored an event called "Lectures held in English by Icelandic authors," and it looks like a must. Three Icelandic literary giants - Einar Már Guðmundsson, Halgrímur Helgason and Sjón - will be lecturing, in English, on their works and on literature in general, followed by a question and answer period. These three authors have helped shape Icelandic modern literature and should be able to provide some insight for those already familiar with their works, or people who want to know more about today's literary world in Iceland.

At the Lögberg building, University of Iceland

8 March - Einar Már Guðmundsson

15 March - Sjón

22 March - Halgrímur Helgason

MUSIC

THEATRE

CAFÉS

8 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.

15 Café Victor
Hafnarstræti 1-3

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.

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.

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.

28 Kaffibrennslan
Pósthústræti 9

Kaffibrennslan manages to be just a nice, "normal" place to go to, and a place to be seen at, surprisingly enough both at the same time. A wide variety of beverages, both bistro menu and a terrace outside the bar when the weather allows it. The iced coffee beverage is a delight.

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.

34 Argentina
Barónsstígur 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.

37 Tapas
Vesturgata 5b

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.

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.

2 Ráðhúskaffi
City Hall

Ráðhúskaffi inside the Reykjavík City Hall is a comfortable choice for the view over Tjörnina, 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.

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.

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.

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 – talk on Wednesdays starting with free lessons from 20 to 21:00.

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.

29 Glaumbar
Tryggvagata 20

One of the few proper sport bars in Reykjavík, so you can go and watch whatever game happens to be on the TV screens. The establishment is basically based around the bar, so you won't have to go a long way for a drink. Open until five, and has a reputation for late night partying.

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.

35 Vín og Skel
Laugavegur 55

If you like fresh seafood and are in the mood for something a little different, this cosy but ambitious new restaurant just might fit the bill. Shellfish, salmon, squid, lobsters and other creatures of the deep predominate the menu here. There is no smoking in the restaurant, but if you want to have a go at sitting outside there are fleece blankets provided.

38 Sægreifinn
Geirsgata

A place to go for the local touch, even if usually a place recommended with this argument instantly loses 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?

45 Hlöllá Bátar
By Ingólfrögur

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

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.

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 baristas, and even though Iceland is proud of its coffee, nobody quite tops the Segafredo latte.

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.

SPOT THIS

Wool, magazines, olive oil, sushi, Arabic condiments, imported cheese, souvenirs, pastries and more can be had in one stop at IDa on Lækjargata. This odd-sounding combination works surprisingly well, especially if you're a tourist or a gourmet. You are free to browse through any of the wide variety of magazines available while you try a couple of pieces of sushi, served one by one on a traditional conveyor belt. If you've never heard of the highly addictive Egyptian condiment known as "dukkah", ask the staff at the gourmet counter and you might receive a taste-test – they make it themselves.

Ida mall, Lækjargata 2a, 101 Reykjavík



4 Kaffi Hljómaland
Laugavegur 21

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

11 Sólón
Bankastræti 7a

Sólón 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.

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.



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.

46 Nonnabiti
Hafnarstræti 11

The owner is a miser who charges additionally for everything, but this is almost certainly the best junk food in the Greater Reykjavík area. The subs are great, none of that Subway commitment to healthy living, and they probably contribute significantly to the ever-increasing "size" of the nation. They also serve burgers and sandwiches, and have lunchtime offers.

5 Mokka
Skólavörðustígur 3a

Kaffi Mokka is the oldest café in Reykjavík, 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.

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.

19 Grand Rokk
Smíðustígur 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.

24 Prikíð
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.

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 Briny to the Beatles.

30 Litli Ljóti Andarunginn
Lækjargata 6b

They have a fish buffet for 2500ISK every evening, with the magic words "cat-as-much-as-you-can" floating in the air. They also have an Icelandic media person working there every now and then, so watch out for a curly haired, friendly gentleman called Egill.

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.

41 Aktu Taktu
Skólavörðustígur 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 Craffiti, Aktu Taktu will have a central role.

48 First Vegetarian (Á næsta 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.

6 Ömmukaffi
Austurstræti

A coffee house where 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.

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

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.

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.

49 Kebabbúsið
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.

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.

14 Sirkus
Klappargatugata 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.

21 Hressingarskálin
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.

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www.gjafirjarðar.is

RADIO

Rás 1
Government radio station often featuring talk shows, radio soap operas, and traditional music.

Rás 2
More progressive government radio station, featuring a variety of music as well as news discussion programmes.

Bylgjan (98.9 FM)
Light pop music.

Útvarp Saga (99.4 FM)
Iceland's oldest station, featuring both Icelandic and foreign music from decades past.

Talstöðin (90.9 FM)
Talk radio station, in Icelandic.

Létt 96.7 (96.7 FM)
Office pop, easy listening.

FM 957 (95.7 FM)
One of the "hnakkistöðvar," playing pop-rock geared towards urban clubbing youth.

XFM (91.9FM)
Iceland's rock station, often playing cutting-edge releases.

Lindin (102.9 FM)
Christian broadcasting station, available all over the country.

Kántríðar (100.7 FM)
Iceland's country music station, still going strong from Skagafjörður since 1992.

TV

Prison Break
Did you find prison show Oz a little depressing, prone to cliché and maybe a bit too heavy on the ass rape? Then you'd do well to check out Prison Break, where a young engineer gets himself thrown into a prison that he helped design, in order to break his brother out, who awaits execution for a crime he didn't commit. Now that's television!
Tuesdays, 21:35, Stöð 2.

The Simpsons
Iceland doesn't dub television. This will come as a relief to those of you who've tried to enjoy watching The Simpsons in Quebecois, and this is also one of the best ways to learn Icelandic – watching English language shows while reading the subtitles.
Monday-Thursday, 18:05; Friday, 18:05 and 20:00, Stöð 2.

Nip/Tuck
Often billed as a Six Feet Under-type show involving plastic surgeons instead of morticians, Nip/Tuck is pretty thick on the dark comedy. For the diverse nature of those getting plastic surgery today (even John Kerry got botox), a show that satirises the American obsession with physical appearance is definitely welcome.
Thursdays, 21:20; Tuesdays, 23:35, Stöð 2.

Rome
From the people who brought you Wild West swear-a-thon Deadwood, Rome is as faithful to history as possible. Which means you can expect a lot of palace

intrigue, betrayal, violence, sexual violence, and binge eating. Should make you grateful we now live in a civilised world free of any of these things.
Sundays, 22:05, Stöð 2.

Desperate Housewives
While the sing-songy narration that softly moralises in the beginning and end of every show can be excruciating, the characters are difficult to believe, and the plotlines are flat-out unrealistic, would you be watching television if you wanted reality?
Thursdays, 22:25, RÚV.

Sunday night movies on RÚV
Sunday nights on RÚV, usually after 22:00, feature a foreign film. These can come as far afield as Afghanistan, Mexico and Italy, and are often well chosen. The subtitles are in Icelandic, naturally, but visitors and expatriates alike will find the cinematic selections worth watching.

Cheers
During its heyday, this was one of the most popular shows in Iceland. Nearly 15 years after the show's conclusion, the comedy still holds up. Relive the days before Ted Danson donned blackface, Kelsey Grammar went into rehab, and John Ratzenberger dropped off the face of the earth.
Monday-Friday, 17:55, SkjárEinn.

TV in Icelandic

Strákarnir/Stelpurnar
Actually two different shows, but only just barely. They're both sketch comedy – the former "The Boys" and the latter "The Girls" – although the humour of Stelpurnar is slightly more sophisticated. Strákarnir is often rife with blatant Jackass rip-off stunts, but both shows are great examples of modern Icelandic comedy.
Strákarnir: Monday through Thursday, 20:00, Stöð2.
Stelpurnar: Saturdays, 19:40, Stöð 2.

Stundin okkar
Long-running children's show hosted by Birta and Baldur (not their real names), where most of the entertainment is provided by children – kids who sing, play an instrument, or dance take up a large portion of the show. But the best bits of all are the fairy tales re-enacted by a single actor who plays all the roles often hilariously well.
Thursdays and Sundays, 18:00; Saturdays, 10:30, RÚV.

Spaugstofan
The only television show in Iceland ever taken to court for blasphemy, and one of the longest running. Comedians in the classic sense of court jesters, the jokes sometimes miss, often hit, and even those who don't know a word of Icelandic should be able to appreciate Spaugstofan's portrayal of Prime Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson.
Saturdays at 20:15, and repeating on Sundays at 10:50 and Mondays at 23:15, RÚV.

Sambíóin - Kringlan

Bambi 2 (18:00)
Blóðbönd (18:00, 20:00, 22:10)
Derailed (20:15, 22:30)
The Pink Panther (18:00, 20:00, 22:10)
Underworld: Evolution (18:00, 20:15, 10:30)

Sambíóin - Álfabakki

Bambi 2 (16:00, in Icelandic)
Blóðbönd (18:00, 20:00, 22:10; VIP: 16:00, 18:00, 20:00, 22:10)
Casanova (15:30, 17:45, 20:00, 22:20)
Derailed (22:20)
King Kong (16:00)
Munich (21:00)
North Country (17:15, 20:00, 22:30)
Syriana (18:00, 20:00, 22:40)
The Pink Panther (15:45, 17:50, 20:00, 22:10)

Háskólabíó

Blóðbönd (18:00, 20:00, 22:00)
Casanova (17:40, 20:00, 22:20)
Munich (17:50, 21:00)
North Country (20:00)
Pride and Prejudice (17:45, 20:15)

Sambíóin - Akureyri

Bambi 2 (18:00)
Blóðbönd (18:00, 20:00, 22:00)
Casanova (20:00, 22:00).

Sambíóin - Keflavík

Munich (20:00)
Oliver Twist (20:00)

Coming Soon

Aeon Flux
Dir. Karyn Kusama. Stars Charlize Theron, Frances McDormand, Marton Csokas.
Coming 10 March.

Laugarásbíó

Final Destination 3 (18:00, 20:00, 22:00)
Good Night and Good Luck (16:00, 18:00, 20:00, 22:00)
Match Point (17:30, 20:00, 22:15)
Nanny McPhee (16:00, 18:00, 20:00)

Regnboginn

Brokeback Mountain (18:00, 21:00)
Capote (17:50, 20:00, 22:10)
Transamerica (17:45, 20:00, 22:15)
Walk the Line (18:00, 21:00)

Revolver
Dir. Guy Ritchie. Stars Ray Liotta, Jason Statham, Vincent Pastore.
Coming 17 March.

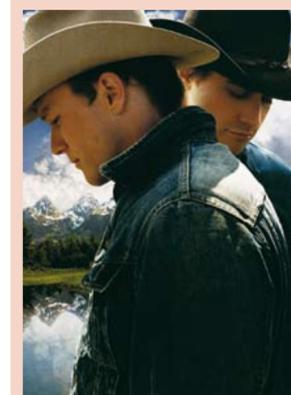
Smárabíó

The Constant Gardener (17:00, 20:00, 22:45)
Fun with Dick and Jane (15:40, 20:00, 22:10)
Nanny McPhee (15:40, 17:50)
Underworld: Evolution (20:00, 22:20)
The Pink Panther (15:45, 17:50, 20:00, 22:10)
Walk the Line (20:00, 22:45; Luxusbíó, 17:00, 20:00, 22:45)
Zathura (3:40, 17:50 in Icelandic; 17:50 in English)

Borgarbíó - Akureyri

The Constant Gardener (20:00, 22:30)
Final Destination 3 (18:00)
Nanny McPhee (18:00, 20:00)
Underworld: Evolution (22:00)

Visit www.kvikmyndir.is for regularly updates on new films and showing times.



RIDE EM COWBOY

"I'm not gonna go see no movie about gay cowboys," a friend scolded, after I asked if he had seen the controversial Brokeback Mountain, a film about two cowboys who fall in love one summer while herding sheep in the mountains of Wyoming – this rural setting being the last place that will tolerate the forbidden love that rages between Jack Twist (Jake Gyllenhaal) and Ennis Del Mar (Heath Ledger).

But there are two words why you should see Brokeback: Ang Lee. Sure, he directed the movie about a giant green monster. (Maybe Eric Bana wasn't the right choice to replace Bill Bixby and Lou Ferrigno.)

Don't forget that Mr. Lee also helmed The Ice Storm and Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.

Despite a rather clumsily paced first act, Lee returns to form not only by delicately handling the emotional tug-of-war taking place between Jack and Ennis, but also in capturing the beauty of the mountain wilderness, as well as the dusty emptiness of the Wyoming badlands, which serve as a metaphor for the harsh void engulfing Ledger's introverted, alienated, suffering Ennis.

If for no other reason, though, buy a

ticket to Brokeback to watch Ledger, who hands down turns in the best performance of the year. Ledger's restrained recounting of how Ennis's parents died (he says with a quiet, muttering drawl, something like: There was only one curve in 42 miles of road. And they missed it), and the way Ledger handles the tragic scene inside the phone booth is nothing short of arresting. Ledger's facial tics and nuanced expressions of loneliness should render moot any reservations you have of witnessing a man drenching his hand with spit to lubricate another man.

By Edward Weimann

Prepared for the Grapevine by the Centre for Icelandic Art. For more information, visit www.CIA.is, or visit their office at Hafnarstræti 16, 101 Reykjavík.

101 GALLERÍ

Hverfisgata 18
03.03.2006 - 09.04.2006
Hulda Hákon
EBITA

ÁSMUNDARSAFN

Sigtún
Open: May - September 10-16, October - April 13-16
Free entrance on Mondays

05.2005 - 05.2006
Ásmundur Sveinsson
The Man and Material
- A retrospective exhibition

BANANANANAS

Laugavegur 80
03.03. - 19.04.2006
Hulda Hákon
Munaskrá

I-8 GALLERÍ

Klappargtúgur 33
09.03. - 29.04.2006
Tumi Magnússon

GALLERÍ 100°

Bæjarháls 1
8:30 - 16:00 weekdays, Saturdays 13:00 - 17:00.
Until 8 April
Brian Griffin
The Water People

GALLERÍ ANIMA

Ingólfsstræti 8
Open Fridays 12 - 17
Sat, sun 13 - 17
Free entrance
03.03.2006 - First opening
Bjarni Sigurbjörnsson
(Contact: Kristinn Már Pálmason, 691-3436)

GALLERÍ DVERGUR

Grundarstígur 21
25.02 - 12.03.2006
Hanna Christel Sigurkarlsdóttir
Innar (Last opening weekend!)
Upcoming exhibition;
Magnús Árnason

KJARVALSSTAÐIR

Flókgata
Open every day 10 - 17
Free entrance on Mondays
15.10.2005 - 19.03.2006
Jóhannes S. Kjarval
ESSENS
- *Sýning í tilefni 120 ára afmælis lista-mannsins*
02.04. - 05.06.2006
Ilia og Amílía Kabakov
Joseph Kosuth
Installations In memory of H.C Andersen

KLING & BANG GALLERÍ

Laugavegur 23
Open Thursdays to Sundays between 14 - 18
Free entrance
Upstairs:
04.03.2006 - 26.03.2006
Huginn Þór Arason and **Jóhannes Atli Hinriksson**
Glory Hole
Downstairs:
04.03.2006 - 26.03.2006
Sara Björnsdóttir

LISTASAFN AÍ

Freyjugata 41
Open every day 13.00 - 17.00 closed on Mondays
Free entrance
11.03. - 02.04.2006
Olga Bergmann
Natural History II.

LISTASAFN ÍSLANDS

Frikirkjuvegur 17
24.02 - 30.04.2006
Snorri Arinbjarnar
Gunnlaugur Blöndal

LISTASAFN REYKJAVÍKUR

Hafnarhús, Tryggvagata 17
Open every day 10 - 17
Free entrance on Mondays
9.09.2005 - 23.04.2006
Ero

- *An exhibition of earlier works*

27.01.-17.04.2006
John Coplans
- *An exhibition of series of self-portraits by the photographer.*

NORDIC HOUSE

Sturlugata 5
Open 12 - 17 closed on Mondays
11.03. - 16.04.2006
West Nordic Design

LIVING ART MUSEUM

Laugavegur 26
Open Wed - Sun 13 - 17
Free entrance
Cold Climate
- *Icelandic, British and Finnish artists*
Information coming up on www.nylo.is

SAFN

Laugavegur 37
25.03.2006 - through April
Kristján Steingrímur Jónsson
Presentation of young German artists

SÆVAR KARL GALLERY

Bankastræti 7
04.04-18.04.2006
Michael Hafsteinn

TURPENTINE

Ingólfsstræti 5
Open Tue - Fri 12 - 18
Sat 11 - 16
17.03 - 02.04.2006
Kristinn Már Pálmason

>>>OUTSIDE RVK

Hafnarfjörður:
HAFNARBORG
Strandgata 34
Open 11 - 17 every day but Tuesdays.
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Pétur Gautur
Still lives of bowls etc.,
- *Painted the last two years*

Kópavogur:

GERDARSAFN
Hamraborg 4
Rúri, Þór Vigfússon, Elina Brotherus
Acute Clarity
18.03 - 13.04.2006

Akureyri:

GALLERÍ +
Brekkgata 36
Hlýnur Háls
Aftur

GALLERÍ BOX

Kaupvangsstræti 10
Arna Valsdóttir
"Kvika"

JÓNAS VIDAR GALLERY

Kaupvangsstræti 12
Open 13 - 18 Fridays and Saturdays
11.02.2006 -
Stefán Jónsson

LISTASAFNIÐ Á AKUREYRI

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Free entrance on Thursdays
04.03. - 30.04.2006
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www.aroma.is

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

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

CLIP
n SAVE

MUSEUMS

The Reykjavík Art MuseumHafnarhúsið
Tryggvagata 17**Kjarvalsstaðir**

Flókagata, 105 Reykjavík

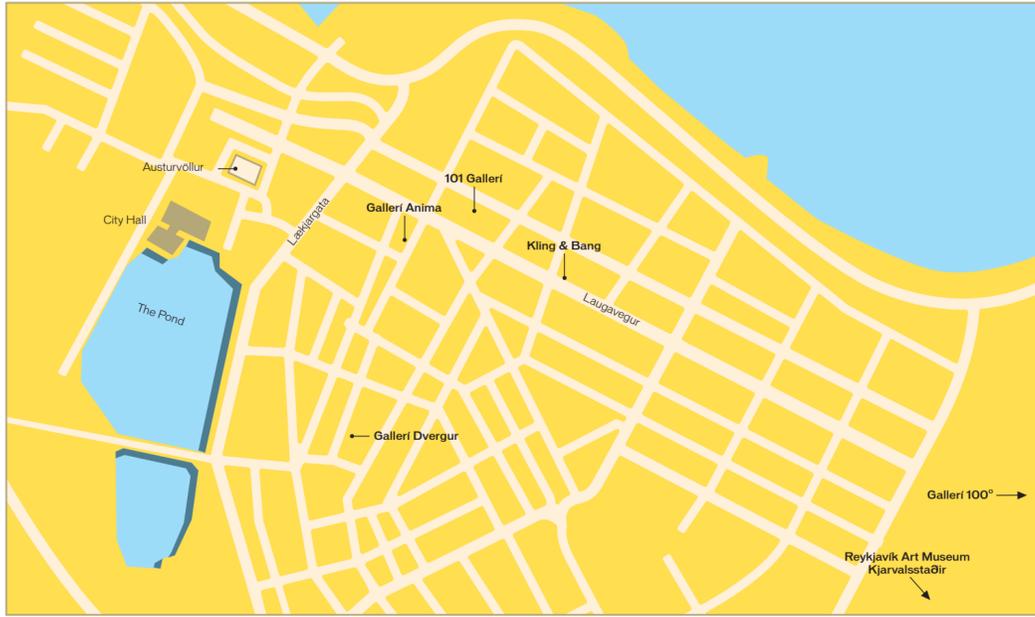
Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum

Sigtún

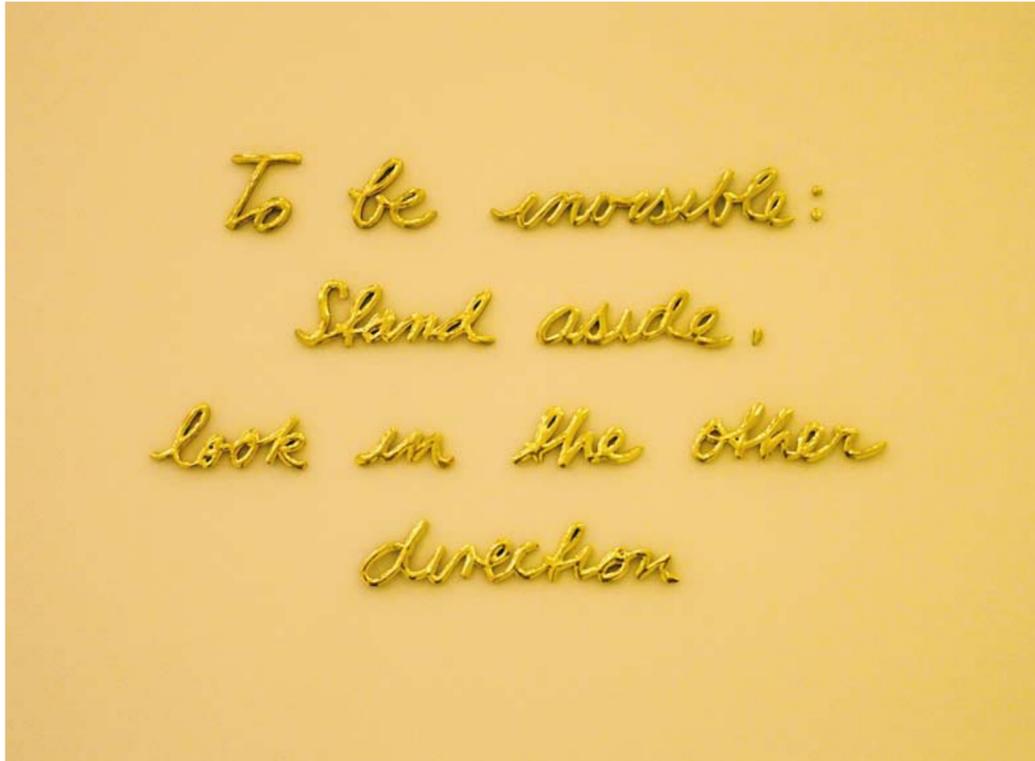
ArbejarsafnArbaer
www.listasafnreykjavikur.is**The Culture House**Hverfisgata 15
www.thjodmenning.is**Reykjavík Museum of Photography**Tryggvagata 15
www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is**Nordic House**Sturlugata 5
www.nordice.is**Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum**Laugarmestangi 70
www.lso.is**Reykjavík Electrical Museum**Refstöðvarvegur
www.rafheimar.is**ASÍ Art Museum**Freyjugata 41
www.asi.is**Einar Jónsson Museum**Eiríksgrata 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

The Pond and Beyond

Grapevine Picks for Museums and Galleries by Paul F. Nikolov

**101 Gallerí**

Hverfisgata 18

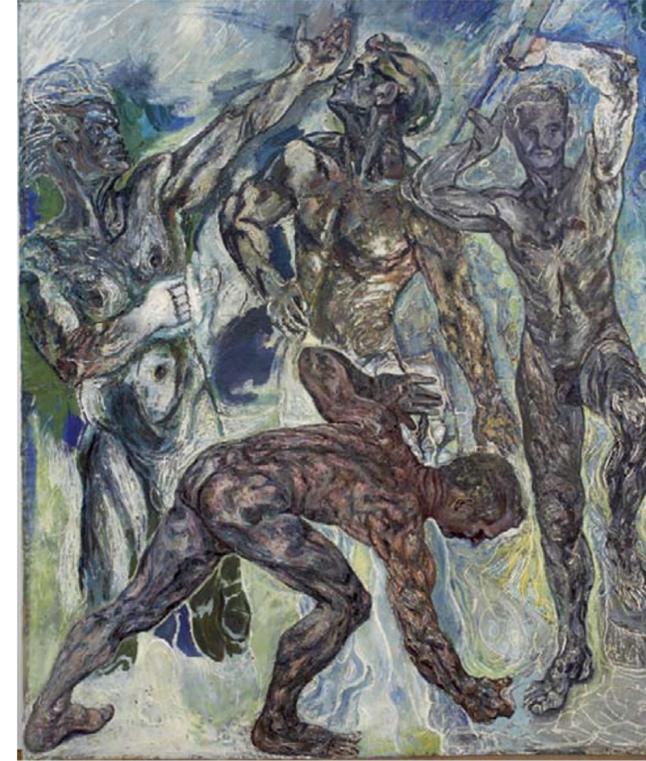
**EBITA - HULDA HÁKON**

Sculpture can be a daunting medium to appreciate. Many times, you find yourself looking at an amorphous red vinyl blob and wondering how long you're to stand staring at it before you can safely move on and not seem like you don't "get it." Fortunately, artist Hulda Hákon's creations are whimsical, sometimes disturbing, but always a joy to look at, repeatedly.
Until 9 April.

www.grapevine.is

Reykjavík Art Museum

Flókagata

**ESSENS - JÓHANNES S. KJARVAL**

Known as one of the most celebrated artists from Iceland, this exhibition began on 25 October in honour of the 120th anniversary of his birthday. This is undoubtedly one of your best chances to see a thorough retrospective of this influential painter.
Until 19 March.

Kling & Bang gallerí

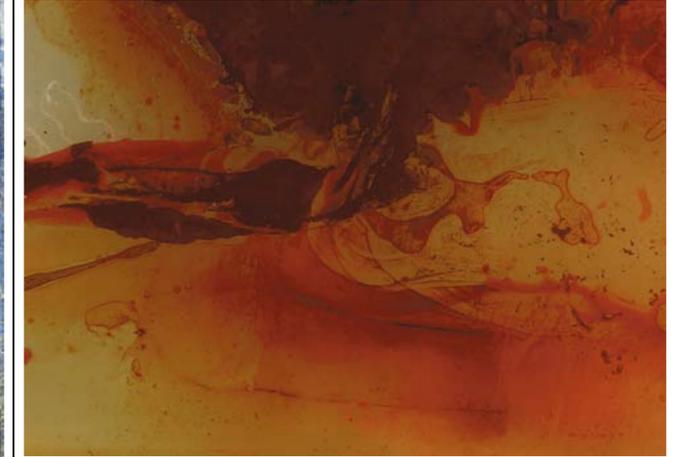
Laugavegur 23

**GLORY HOLE - HUGINN ÞÓR ARASON, JÓHANNES ATLI HENRIKSSON**

We admit it – it was the name that drew us to this exhibition. But we weren't disappointed. This group exhibition features some pretty intriguing and engaging works from some artists that we'll (hopefully) see more from in the future.
Until 26 March.

Gallerí Anima

Ingólfsstræti 8

**SLEMBILUKKA - BJARNI SIGURBJÖRNSSON**

These dynamic and emotive paintings – featured at the newly opened gallery Anima – are worth an extended study.
Until 25 March.

Gallerí 100°

Bæjarháls 1

**WATER PEOPLE - BRIAN GRIFFIN**

Famed photographer Brian Griffin brings his pieces to Iceland. These intriguing black-and-white portraits go beyond standard photograph to create abstract, impressionist pieces that are sometimes whimsical, sometimes disturbing, and always captivating.
Until 8 April.

Gallerí Dvergur

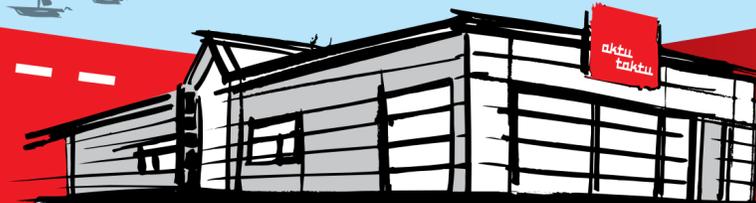
Grundarstígur 21

INNAR - HANNA CHRISTEL SIGURKARLSDÓTTIR

This veteran artist has made a name for herself mostly for her efforts in Iceland's "Paris of the East," Seyðisfjörður. Now she brings a new series to Gallerí Dvergur, one of the more intriguing spaces in town.
Until 12 March.

aktu
taktu

THE DRIVE THRU BY THE SEA



aktu
taktu BY THE SEA

GRAPEVINE'S PURCHASES THAT JUSTIFY EXISTENCE



Japanese teapots

Tasteful but hip, these ceramic teapots come in a variety of colours. Although they don't look remotely Japanese, they were made in Japan, and hold enough tea for two to four cups of your favourite blend. The simple, easy-to-use design might even help tea edge out coffee as the morning drink of choice in Iceland. Or not.
Available at Te og Kaffi, Laugavegur 27.
Tel.: 552-6260.



Swiss Army knives

Even though Switzerland hasn't been to war in over 500 years, they have more soldiers per capita than any other Western democracy - most of whom are designing pocket knives. Mom-and-pop hardware store Brynja offers a vast array of Swiss army knives, and have everything from simple blade-and-nail file knives for 780 ISK to the 12-in-1 "Swiss tool," for 10,800 ISK, while most of the standard Swiss army knives are in the 1,600 ISK to 2,500 ISK range. Be that guy who leaps forward to offer to open bottles and tighten screws at the drop of a hat.
Available at Brynja, Laugavgur 29, Tel.: 552-4320.

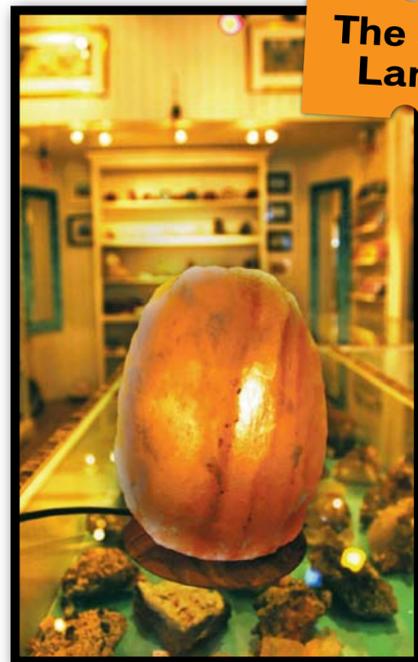


The Venus "Vibrance" Razor

This women's razor, in many ways similar to the men's "M3 Power" razor, comes with a AAA battery powering this razor's stand-out feature: it vibrates. Although the packaging of both the male and female versions attest that a vibrating razor provides a cleaner, closer shave, the bulbous end to the handle of the Venus Vibrance suggests another, far more bizarre razor use. 1,599 ISK, available at most larger grocery stores around the country.

Clothing for infants and toddlers can be jaw-droppingly expensive. The same amount of fabric and stitching used for a dishtowel can cost as much as some name brand jeans. Fortunately, the children's clothing store Bomban is currently having a sale on clothing for children aged up to two years, with tops and bottoms priced at either 500 ISK or 1000 ISK, without your child looking like he was dressed by the Red Cross.
Available at Bomban, Laugavegur 41.
Tel.: 517-5555.

Baby clothes



The Salt Lamp

Himalayan salt, which resembles rose quartz and is usually thousands of years old, apparently has more uses than pretentious cooking. Gjafir Jarðar, a relatively recently opened New Age shop, sells lamps made from Himalayan salt. According to one employee, such lamps are good at improving wireless Internet connections and GSM reception, not to mention just looking pretty cool. If a large, pink crystal that glows from within doesn't fit your décor, what will?
3,900 ISK, available at Gjafir Jarðar, Ingólfsstræti 2.
Tel.: 517-2774.

Available in both apple-cinnamon and berry flavours, Speltkex organic snack bars claim to be 100% organic. A quick scan of the ingredients confirmed this fact. For all we know. In any event, at 287 ISK for a box of ten, they're well worth the risk.
Available at Yggdrasil, Skólavörðustígur 16.
Tel.: 562-4082.

Organic snack bars



Remember when you got a Lego set for your birthday, and it came in some sort of "theme" such as a farm, or a space station, and you'd end up only using half of the pieces to make something completely different? Well, fortunately the new generation won't have to be pained with extraneous Lego pieces. The Lego Bar, at the toy store Leikbær, is set up in exactly the same way as a "nammibar," only with Lego pieces instead of candy, for 695 ISK/kilo. On Saturdays, they're 40% off. Take the kids or build the fortress you were always meant to build.
Available at Leikbær, Laugavegur 25.
Tel.: 551-1135.

The Lego Bar



Silk ties

You know you're upwardly mobile, and that it's only a matter of time before you're shovelling money into your ever-swelling bank account, but does everyone else know it, too? Now you can make sure they do, for less. The men's clothing store Guðsteinn Eyjólfsson sf. is selling silk neckties for a laughable 2,200 ISK a piece. Look the part you were meant to play, even if you're still on a business student budget.
Available at Guðsteinn Eyjólfsson sf, Laugavegur 34, Tel.: 551-4301.

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DINING, EATING & GRUBBING

Paul F. Nikolov on Reykjavík Dining Photos by Héðinn

REYKJAVÍK PIZZA COMPANY



\$ \$

Reykjavík Pizza Company
Laugavegur 81
Tel.: 561-3838

I won't go into a lot of detail about my experience at the Reykjavík Pizza Company. Located in the same building as the former Reykjavík Bagel Company, RPC still sells bagels as a part of their menu, but the main focus is now... pizza. And there are a lot of different pizzas to choose from, priced between 775 ISK (for a small cheese pizza) and 2,100 ISK (for a 16" pizza with loads of toppings). And many of these pizzas have imaginative topping choices, as was the case with my order, the Óði Haninn (the Crazy Rooster) – chicken, grilled pine nuts, Castania mushrooms, sun-dried tomatoes and jalapeno peppers. Even though the walls of RPC are adorned with some truly atrocious animal portraits, and the background music selection, Sparklehorse (would you like to hear the line, "I wanna be a pig/I wanna suck a cock" whilst munching on pizza?), wasn't the best dinner choice, I was optimistic about the meal itself.

Unfortunately, we had been waiting 45 minutes for our food to arrive when a couple that had placed their order 15 minutes after us received their pizzas. Our waitress told us she would check on our order. A few minutes later, she returned with two dry, lukewarm, overcooked pizzas – a sure sign that the pizzas had been left out, gotten cold, and were quickly thrown back in the oven for a brief reheating.

The result was a flavourless, tough excuse for a pizza. To make matters more confusing, the place wasn't even half full at the time, so not even the typical dinner rush explanation could account for this sloppiness. But the kitchen did.

RPC has an open kitchen. This is unfortunate for them, as on this night it was in complete chaos, while a few kitchen workers stood in a circle, talking. Also, two pizza peels – the tool that takes pizzas out of the oven – were resting with their blades on the floor, against the same dirty, rubber mat that people stood on as they put toppings on the pizza. While it's not likely that this would transmit disease to your food, it certainly doesn't look professional.

I would like to believe that this was just a bad night for the Reykjavík Pizza Company, but until some serious changes are made to the staff, the decor, the music choice and the organisation skills of the restaurant, it would be better to avoid dining there altogether. PN

PRÍR FRAKKAR



\$ \$ \$

Prír Frakkar
Baldursgata 14
Tel.: 552-3939

This cosy, mid-range restaurant, in a quiet, residential part of downtown Reykjavík, Prír Frakkar is best known for its seafood, but could also be considered an excellent example of the Icelandic dining experience. The walls of the main dining room are adorned with mounted fish and a ram's head, which actually makes the room feel more relaxed and domestic,

instead of garish, and there are thankfully no fishnets hanging from the ceiling. To the left is a smaller, more intimate dining room with a large brass mirror and some tasteful portrait paintings, giving it a classic, mid-20th century look, while to the right is another small dining room with large windows that open to one of the better views of downtown Reykjavík.

I ordered smoked puffin with mustard sauce as a starter and blue fin tuna for the entrée, and my wife went with French onion soup and the vegetarian dinner. While smoked puffin is a bit salty, the plate is sprinkled with fresh-diced carrots, red onions and parsley. This touch adds a little more life to the puffin and makes the mustard sauce superfluous.

No true Icelandic restaurant plate would be complete without at least one of the following: tiny, peeled, boiled potatoes and/or vegetables, a small portion of salad, and a lot of sauce. It's as much a part of the national character as the flag itself. Prír Frakkar's entrée plate comes with all three. For those tired of pretending to be full after eating a small, pretty, and expensive meal, the dietary frankness will be refreshing.

The blue fin tuna was grilled the way it should be – hot enough to singe the meat and trap all the flavour inside – with just a little bit of black pepper. The mango sauce added a nice tang to the fish. The vegetarian meal was comprised of two main servings: a mixture of rice and chopped vegetables, and fried veggie patties. The rice and vegetables were flavourful, although the veggie patties were slightly overcooked. Both plates were served with the signature potato, carrots, and small iceberg mix. There were three desserts: skýr pie, French chocolate cake, and ice cream, but we were both too full to consider any of them.

Prír Frakkar's domestic and unpretentious atmosphere was enough to make Lionel Richie and Billy Ocean – some of the background music selections – bearable or at least ignorable. The intimacy might make it a better idea to make a workday evening reservation rather than go during the weekend, although I'd say the more upscale decor of the left dining room is a good place to reserve for celebrations with a few friends. Most of all, Prír Frakkar is a quintessential and reasonably priced example of Icelandic dining. PN

VÍN OG SKEL

Vín og Skel
Laugavegur 55
Tel.: 534-4700

Every once in a while, a restaurant will go out of its way to do more on every level, providing the perfect blend of tradition and imagination. Vín og Skel is one such restaurant. Located in a courtyard just off of Laugavegur, merely setting foot in the place gives you the impression that you're in some bistro in Tuscany. Edith Piaf was playing, the classic Belgian beer Leffe was on tap, and best of all, the restaurant is totally smoke-free (although there is a balcony available for people to get their fix).

The menu emphasises seafood, and on weekends they add a theme – a choice of several starters and entrees, all reflecting one type of



\$ \$ \$

seafood (in this case, bacalao), with one dessert for 4,950 ISK. On the table were three little bowls of herb butter, olive oil, and a spice mix reminiscent of sweet Balkan spices. These were to accompany the jalapeno and sun-dried tomato bread we were served.

Owner Kristján Nói explained that most of their menu is locally produced – with a diver up north who provides Vín og Skel with mussels, shrimp and (when available) sea urchins.

The oysters, which were flown in from Brittany, were fresh and flavourful, and we were given a bacalao and clam mousse to sample as well, but the real star of the appetizers was harðfiskur and butter. I'm not making this up. Two small cylinders of butter were rolled in flaked harðfiskur and dill, and topped with a wafer of harðfiskur, giving this Icelandic staple a fresh look and taste. This only stands to reason, as the chef, Kjartan M. Kjartansson, was once given the task of creating a wedding banquet made only from ingredients within a 20-kilometre radius of Akureyri.

Presentation, as they say, is 80% of food service, and Vín og Skel understands this perfectly. Entrees are served in colourful little pots painted with flowers, so you can serve your self a bit at a time and still keep the food hot by having a lid on the pot. The sides came in separate little white bowls, and included lobster sauce, fried red potatoes, a mix of diced fennel root, carrots and celery root cooked in orange juice and saffron, polenta, and onions braised in balsamic vinegar and red wine. These sides we could divide between ourselves, having as much or as little as we pleased.

Overall, Vín og Skel go out of their way to do something new in the Icelandic restaurant scene, and have raised the bar by more than a few notches. Here's hoping other restaurants follow their example. PN

Restaurants in Reykjavík

Hornió Hafnarstræti 15 Phone: 551 3340
Tapas Vesturgata 3B, Phone: 551 2344
Tveir Fiskar Geirsgata 9 Phone: 511 3474
Vagamót Vegamótastígur 4, Phone: 511 3040
La Primavera Austurstræti 9, Phone: 561 8555
Shalimar Austurstræti 4, Phone: 551 0292



SALT

\$ \$ \$ \$

Hotel 1919
Pósthústræti 2
Tel.: 599-1020

As a rule of thumb, it is not so much the taste of the food that is the real criteria for a restaurant in Salt's price range. You don't go into an expensive restaurant hoping to be pleasantly surprised by the quality of the food. You expect it to be good, and you are only surprised when it's not. Therefore, when my companion and I received one delicious course after another we were not surprised. That was to be expected. What did come as a pleasant surprise was the adventurous menu.

For example, the kangaroo and goat cheese salad, which I had for a starter. An excellent choice I might add. Another excellent and inventive dish was the grilled tuna with ginger and capers – highly recommended. And the saffro-spiced seafood soup was another tasty one. As for the rest of our meal, chorizo spiced beef tenderloin and the lemon and thyme spiced lamb fillet, it was excellent if not adventurous.

A word must be reserved for the service. The casual, yet professional approach of the Salt staff made us feel especially welcome. The formal atmosphere that often goes with dining in an upscale restaurant was eased into a very pleasant and relaxed experience. Our sommelier displayed a good knowledge of the restaurant's quite extensive wine

list, making some very good selections for my companion. I made my own selections, and my knowledge of wines was quickly put in its place by comparison.

A reassuring feature of the restaurant's interior is the open window between the dining area and the kitchen, where you can see the chefs preparing your dish. Otherwise, the interior is inspired by a dark and minimalist approach, with a colour arrangement that varies from black to sand and oyster with the occasional warm touch of paprika and saffron. The seating arrangements run alongside a big street-front window. Although the scenery mostly consists of the Reykjavík Grapevine offices and a hot dog stand, this should dramatically improve once the planned music hall has been built across from the restaurant.

Two points worth keeping in mind: First, the restaurant's staff will happily prepare special dishes for both children and vegetarians upon request. Second, in the lounge bar opposite the restaurant, certain dishes from the starters menu, such as the seafood soup, can be ordered at a very reasonable price, which makes it a terrific stop for a light lunch downtown.

■ By Sveinn Birgir Björnsson

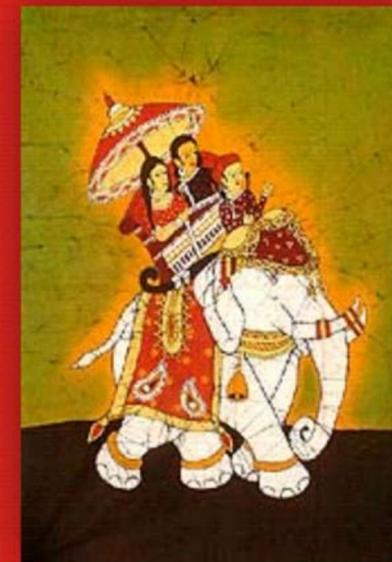


A seafood feast
a delicious secret
in the center of town



vín & skel
restaurant

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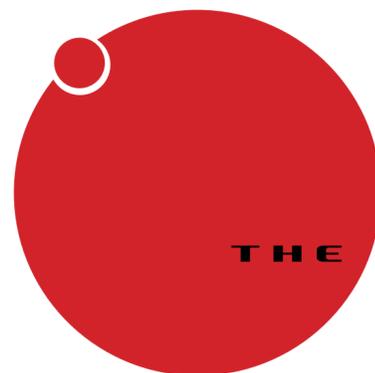
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SUSHI
THE TRAIN

[LÆKJARGATA]

WHO
Goldie Lookin' Chain

WHERE
NASA

WHEN
February 10th
2006



There's One Born Every Minute

By Paul Fin Nikolov | Photos by Skari

Arriving an hour and a half after the doors opened, the photographer and I couldn't help but notice that there were about seven people in the club, the stage already adorned with a giant GLC banner bearing the slogan, "You knows it," a slogan that succinctly sums up Goldie Lookin' Chain's entire persona.

Comprised of nine MCs from Wales, this group has often been accused of promoting "chav" culture - young people with a penchant for track suits, Burberry hats, and giant gold coin rings, often associated with drug use and violence. But while GLC will sport gold ropes and the occasional Adidas visor, it's been pretty obvious from the beginning that the intentions of the band that penned Your Mother Has a Penis should be taken with a grain of salt.

While we waited, the opening DJ spun some decent material, with The Fugees' Oh La La La making more than a few heads bounce. As the club began to fill, I noticed a lot more Puma, Nike and Adidas than I would normally see in Reykjavik. Even the photographer was wearing an Adidas tracksuit top that he had bought specifically for this show. Suddenly, and without warning, television personality and Eurovision hopeful Silvia Nött took to the stage, prompting a mad rush to the front. After a brief and nervous introduction from Ms. Nött, Goldie Lookin' Chain came on stage with guns blazing.

What's the worst part of being a hip-hop act with nine MCs? Unless you know how to work the crowd, you're just nine guys with microphones. Not much to look at. Thankfully, GLC didn't just stand there

bobbing their heads.

They opened up with Shit to Me, a song that trashes a long list of female singers. The crowd numbered about a hundred people at this point. Despite the low attendance, GLC performed with the passion of a vaudeville act on opening night. Even if only two or three MCs were ever rapping at any given time, the silent members of the crew were constantly moving - dancing poorly, prat-falling, and, at one point, demonstrating hilariously incompetent break dancing. I half expected unicycles and seltzer bottles to get involved. Their image and their performance are so clearly satirical that the circus-like feel to the show was fitting: they are, in the end, professional clowns.

Not that everyone got the joke. A scan of the crowd showed most people having a genuinely good time, but there were a few people wearing their thug face - hoodies up, over low-brimmed baseball caps, hands buried deep in their front pockets, and generally trying their best to look like extras from the battle-rap scene in 8 Mile. This, of course, is a testament to GLC's brilliance - even with the hilarity and inanity of titles like To the Five Valleys (a Welsh interpretation of the Beastie Boys' To the Five Boroughs), there are still those that find this humour far too subtle for them. That GLC is often blamed for people taking them seriously is just as stupid as blaming Marilyn Manson for Columbine.

There was almost no between-song chatter, save for brief, clearly well-rehearsed dialogue to set-up a song. These exchanges ("Oi, Eggys, I noticed you didn't bring your missus up here to Iceland with you." "I couldn't. And you know why? Coz she's a nutter." - the set-up for none other than Your Missus Is a Nutter) also added to the vaudevillian feel of the show.

Of the nine, Eggys was the strongest MC of the

bunch that evening. He sounds a lot like Eazy-E, and employs the same staccato, but his delivery was intense. It seemed like every time he began rapping, especially during Roller Disco, a nostalgic piece about the 80s that involved a lot of really bad popping and robbing, the crowd's response ratcheted up a notch.

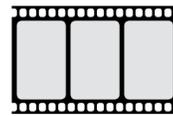
Mystikal looked completely out of place in this group - the baseball cap, longish hair and full beard made him look more like the stand-in percussionist for Phish than a rapper. But when it came time for his solo, he proved an MC with presence and is also, according to the song in question, "the alchemist in Newport." The references to South Wales were many.

And apart from an overly long and frankly painful solo from Maggot, the burlesque continued with great speed. The show reached a climax with 21 Ounces, the whole crowd gleefully singing the chorus, some people more seriously than others.

GLC definitely deserved credit for the enormous amount of energy they put into this show - most bands of their stature would have seen an empty club of barely 100 people and simply played by the numbers. But their boundless, non-stop energy was downright infectious and well appreciated. One Icelandic attendee I spoke to told me it was the best show he'd seen since Snoop Dogg this summer and 50 Cent the summer before.

Set list:

Shit To Me	No Joke
Bad Boy Limp/Robot	Short Term
Midnight	Paranoia
Roller Disco	21 Ounces
Guns	Sister
Mystikal	Your Mother Has a Penis
Your Missus is a Nutter	



Icelandic Cinema Grows Up

Review of Blóðbönd (Thicker Than Water)

Warning! Plot Spoiler - Warning! Plot Spoiler - Warning! Plot Spoiler

A family of three - with another child very soon on the way - is sent into a tailspin when the husband, Pétur (Hilmar Jónsson), learns that he is not the biological father of his son, Örn (Aron Brink Sigurjónsson), who looks to be about ten years old. Örn's mother Ásta (Margrét Vilhjálmsdóttir) initially denies having had an affair, so Pétur moves out at once and goes off on a carnival of booze, self-pity, and starting a live-in relationship with his emotionally imbalanced receptionist. But rather depicting these events with a farcical or sentimental treatment, the characters in this family act and react to each other the way you imagine people would in such a situation - on edge but restrained as much as possible.

Pétur's descent into a Hotel Nordica minibar-fuelled hell is delivered with a relaxed honesty by Jónsson. His behaviour ranges from funny to cad-dish to self-destructive, every bit of it wincingly believable.

It is hard to like Ásta. The self-righteous indignation that she hurls at Pétur for accusing her of having an affair, considering the evidence (it turns out Örn has a different blood type than his parents, who are both Os), not to mention the smug front she tries to maintain when she serves Pétur with divorce papers, make her seem incredibly egocentric. But as unlikeable as she might be at times, she often shows touching vulnerability, just as Pétur can be boorish and immature.

These two central characters sum up where Blóðbönd succeeds - the film avoids the traditional Icelandic cinematic technique of using one-dimensional stock characters that bounce off each other like players in a Benny Hill sketch, and shows us instead real, multidimensional people reacting to a crisis in a highly believable way, warts and all.

Pétur's sister and her fiancé see Pétur through his four-star bender, until he begins to date Anna (Laufey Elíasdóttir), a girl about ten years younger than him who works as a receptionist at his optometry clinic. Pétur's sister, who comes closest to being the most "stable" character in the story, throws Pétur out when she learns of his affair, so he moves in with Anna. Pétur and Anna's relationship is one of the best played of the film, as difficult as it can be to watch sometimes. Friends regard Pétur's almost scary state of denial with disbelief, and Anna proves to be volatile and unpredictable - at one point waking up Pétur's wife at her home, looking for him. Eventually, her erratic behaviour snaps him out of his pity fog.

Örn remains oblivious to the whole story, knowing only that his dad is "away" for the time being, although his friend tells him, "Your mom is acting just like my mom acted when my dad left." From there on out, Örn doesn't get a moment's peace. The movie ends on Örn, too, with all the right questions unanswered. We leave the family in the tense, polite calm of a cease-fire, some compromise reached that no one is happy with, and will surely be the cause of a future catastrophe.

The chaotic behaviour of people in crisis keeps Blóðbönd going, without attempting to neatly wrap it all up at the end, nor to caricaturise it through-out. If anything could have been done differently, it would probably be avoiding the extreme close-ups - we sometimes got a very close look at someone's eye or nostril, likely in an effort to make us sympathise or feel emotional, though this is mostly just distracting and affected. But overall, Blóðbönd might mark a turning point in Icelandic film in its unflinching portrayal of a family in turmoil.

By Paul F. Nikolov



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MISSISSIPPI ALBUM REVIEWS



T-Model Ford *Pee-wee Get My Gun, You Better Keep Still, She Ain't None of Your'n, bad man*

We interviewed T-Model for the last issue, and complained that his comments may be repeated a bit too often, and that his music wasn't appreciated enough. We were amused, then, to hear that the same quotes he told us were even the opening to his latest release, bad man—"Can't read, can't write, ain't never been to school a day in my life."

Bad man is a bad album, pure and simple. As is You Better Keep Still, with the exception of the single To the Left to the Right. She Ain't None of Your'n is a very good blues album—there's less bullshit, and a sincere sorrowful tone throughout. T-Model can do great things, but he is rarely consistent for a whole album, and his instincts seem off.



R.L. Burnside *A Ass Pocket of Whiskey, Too Bad Jim, First Recordings and Sound Machine Groove*

A Ass Pocket, an experiment in which the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion teamed up with one of the most overlooked and respected blues musicians alive, R.L. Burnside, got Mississippi blues back on the map. Ass Pocket itself, though, mostly sounds like ass. For great R.L., grab Too Bad Jim, when the bluesman wields

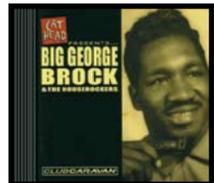
his own guitar. Burnside stretches out the beats, and plays a distorted slide that not only influenced Jon Spencer, but far surpassed him. You can also track down the soul-influenced Sound Machine Groove. Burnside's first recordings, which are mostly acoustic, have integrity, but lack the playfulness and drive of his later recordings.



Honeyboy Edwards *Delta Bluesman*

David Honeyboy Edwards visited Iceland a few months ago and put on a charismatic show. The Earwig Records collection of his work attempts to capture Edwards' storytelling and history, and it falls on its face. You hear Alan Lomax recordings that make Edwards sound like Robert Johnson, and you hear

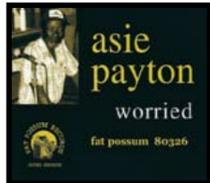
Edwards take on big band Chicago style, but you rarely hear him simply playing and singing. Despite some good tunes, especially songs like the closer, Bad Whiskey and Cocaine, the CD seems to have been put together by someone who thought music should play like a History Channel episode.



Big George Brock and the Houserockers *Club Caravan*

Big George grew up in Mississippi, then, like Muddy Waters, BB King, John Lee Hooker and the rest, moved North for work. He stopped in St. Louis, opened a juke joint to promote Muddy

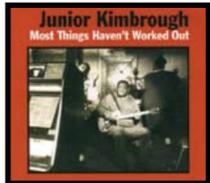
and others, and developed big band electric blues style. This CD is his first, and it is consistent and professional—you hear it and you like it. But the CD isn't a standout.



Asie Payton *Worried*

A CD description claims Payton could only get talked off of his tractor to record twice, once at a Juke Joint, once at an Auto Care facility. You expect to hear low down, brutal blues—instead you get Clarence Carter style love songs, without the ridiculous

over-arrangements. Asie Payton, like his label-mate Junior Kimbrough, had enough integrity that he was allowed to sing sweet. Unlike Kimbrough, he had pipes to make the sweet and personal grand and celebratory.

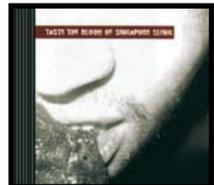


Junior Kimbrough *Most Things Haven't Worked Out*

Here you get the dichotomy. You have to be a very big, very dangerous looking man, to sing songs so sweet and melodic. Kimbrough matches his voice with high-end melody lines and some nice chord work to create a sound similar to John Lee Hooker singing lullabies to a weeping

baby. The occasional missed note, beat, and chord make the fragile subject matter and vocal lines that much more affecting. If you've never heard him, or Skip James, his biggest vocal influence, you'll probably be shocked the blues goes this personal.

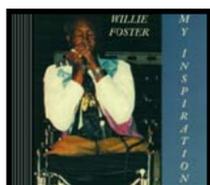
Helvítis Íslendingur



Singapore Sling *Taste the Blood of Singapore Sling*

Listening to countless hours of the blues gave us a little better appreciation of Singapore Sling and their latest effort, Taste the Blood. Ever since the band's music was featured in The OC, they have been placed in a hipster scene that doesn't quite suit them. The Sling are more a local band locking into one particular sound and tone. Taste the Blood gives you driving and droning, without the brief

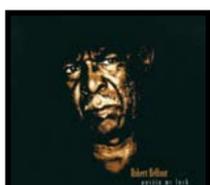
flights of fancy that their last album, Life is Killing My Rock n Roll had. Like a good blues album, when you get in the right mood, you want to play it straight through, and you're glad for the slight variations, but happy that the album is consistent. Originally, we didn't care for the CD. It has since grown on us, and, unlike the previous albums, we don't have to skip the occasional track.



Willie Foster *My Inspiration*

A no-label CD that makes the rounds of the best blues record shops, My Inspiration is a collection of 11 flawless big band blues tracks featuring the harmonica legend Willie Foster. Mr. Foster was so

influential and his band was so precise, that the recording may be too clean for people interested in Burnside-style blues. But if you want a seminal blues album, this is a good choice.



Robert Belfour *Pushin My Luck*

From the opening track, Hill Stomp, Belfour gives you driving, versatile acoustic blues. The tone is so cool and consistent, especially when Belfour's bassy mellow vocals come on, that you can't help

thinking that Belfour's CD will likely get snatched up as a Hollywood soundtrack, assuming something cooler than The Sopranos comes along. The best straight blues album of this millennium.

You can order these Mississippi CDs either through Amazon, the record label Fat Possum, or small record stores like Cat Head Records, or you can work out an order through a local record shop. Consider the VAT tax when you make your order. All reviews by Bart Cameron.



GRAPEVINE SINGLES REVIEWS

WEEZER - BEVERLY HILLS

Weezer's complete indulgence in everything clichéd American has now gone so far over the hill that it has reached the slope of a new hill and begun an effortless ascent, but that's simply because they haven't had any competition since Britney Spears got

through her 'rock' phase. A fairly standard song from an album full of ho-hum mediocrity, it compares well to your standard behind-the-counter gummy bear; unremarkable and sickeningly sweet, and stays in your body a little longer than it should. SE

MUGISON - MURR MURR

Mugison is such a fine guitar player that it's a pity his pre-tentious squeal of voice and sorry lyrics ruin this otherwise fine song, but I can't say I'd be happy to hear the same guitar

riff played repeatedly for three minutes without any change. Akin to eating a Kinder egg while the toy and instructions are still inside. SE

SUPERGRASS - ST. PETERSBURG

Aimless Britpop that astounds in its ability to go absolutely nowhere, sort of like a huge easter egg. Eating it seems like a nice way to spend time at first, but then you either

give up and it just sits on top of your fridge collecting dust, or you eat too much and vomit everywhere; either way, it ain't going nowhere. SE

JAKOBÍNARÍNA *I'VE GOT A DATE WITH MY TELEVISION*

The earthly pleasures of consumerism simply do not compare to the utter, astonishing brilliance of this song, and although the production does bring it down a little, that is easily overpowered by everything else in the song, from the bittersweet cynicism of the lyrics to the thundering powerhouse that is the song's climax. If there is a candy that compares to the goosebump-

inducing experience hearing this song, it would have to be eating an entire bag of Skittles while jumping on a huge bed until the springs go bad and proceeding to jump out of the second-storey bedroom window and onto a trampoline that springs you into the house across the street where there is huge party in a mirror-filled room full of bath bubbles. SE

THE MAGIC NUMBERS - LOVE ME LIKE YOU

What's so fucking original about sounding exactly like The Velvet Underground? If there's a good answer to that, The Magic Numbers definitely don't know it, but their subject matter is hopelessly unfit for the song's melody,

the song sections badly structured, the production tame, leaving the song just predictable enough to bore you, yet just awkward enough to be intensely annoying. Comparable to a fictional candy made out of recycled paper. SE

EMILIANA TORRINI - HEARTSTOPPER

Fashionably witless acoustic pop with surprisingly brisk drumming and insipid lyrics meant to conjure up the feeling of romance in knitwear and oversized headphones. Although not really tangy enough to be candy, it does kind of remind one of a kleina, a piece of Icelandic

malt bread with a mysterious hole in the centre. Often seen in the general vicinity of coffee and hot chocolate, it is a big favorite of children and those wishing they still were. But just like eating a kleina, listening to this song stays with you awhile, too. SE

ROBERT PLANT - ALL THE KINGS HORSES

Although embarrassingly lacklustre in the lyrical department, this pointlessly pleasant little ballad saunters on

through nicely enough, much like a plain milk chocolate bar. Nothing too exciting, but it does the trick. SE

ROLLING STONES - STREETS OF LOVE

Mysteriously chosen over several far superior songs on the Stones' latest effort, this song was seemingly written to remind people how old the gentlemen responsible for it are. With clichéd, corny lyrics and a twelve-string pluck so homegrown it's practically inbred, the song's absolute low mark is the extraordinarily cheap synth that wafts gently

in about three minutes in. Altogether, the song serves as a nice reminder that it was indeed the Stones who invented the clichés they indulge in, but it doesn't mean they can't at least try. It is much like a caramel wafer biscuit; a charming, harmless relic from a bygone era, once novel and robust, but now simply conservative and uninviting. SE

SIGUR RÓS - SÆGLÓPUR

You've heard one, you've heard them all; I guess that's why they once released an album full of untitled tracks. Well-paced and steady, Sæglópur stays true to Sigur Rós' tried and tested formula while opting for a helping of

radio-friendly synthesisism to balance things out. A piece of plain, black liquorice: a taste that, once acquired, is reliable, predictable, slightly boring and just too damn long, but some people just swear by the stuff. SE

22-20s - SHOOT YOUR GUN

Nothing in this song - from the atmosphere-setting Hammond and the steady march of the snare drum to the bluesy squelching guitars and completely vacant lyrics the British music press would undoubtedly call "pointed" and "scathing" - betrays the slight-

est hint of originality, but we can't go around expecting everybody to make original music, can we now? A musical Tic-Tac: aside from making you look social and fashionable, a pointless little snack for pointless little people. SE

RYAN ADAMS AND THE CARDINALS *LET IT RIDE*

Ram your tongue hard enough into your cheek, and this song actually becomes okay, with fine country orchestration, straightforward vocal melodies and a tight but light rhythm keeping the pace. A very

taste-oriented thing, comparable to those insanely sour frog-shaped things you get at the pick-and-mix counters: Painful at first, but if you're into that kind of thing, you can never eat just one. SE

In the age of iTunes and podcasting, the Grapevine would be remiss if we didn't properly cover the singles scene in Iceland and beyond. For albums, we rate by beer, for singles, we equate with candy, another local indulgence. For this issue, all singles are pulled from RÁS 2's compendium of 2005 Rokkland, a collection of the best singles played on state radio. All reviews by Sindri Eldon.



Essens

Jóhannes S. Kjarval

15 October - 19 March, Kjarvalsstaðir, Flókagata



Body Parts

John Coplans

27 January - 17 April, Hafnarhús, Tryggvagata



THE MODERN VIKING

By Ketill the Angry

It starts with the shoes. Carrie Bradshaw has such amazing shoes, and I look at my box set, in its humorous pink and black shoebox, and think of her shoes.

Last night, I sat down on my leather couch, lit a few candles, and watched, for probably the twentieth time, *An American Girl in Paris Part Deux*, the final episode of season six of *Sex and the City*. The romance. The heartbreak. That Versace dress. Oh, I know *Sex and the City* is fantasy, but what a world!

Humidifier on, cucumbers on eyes, TMJ bite guard in place and the gentle musings of Coldplay on my stereo, I felt an anxious twitch in the back of my head. To be sure it wasn't my scalp—that thing has been moisturised five ways to Sunday.

No, it was anxiety about my obsession with *Sex and the City*, and all of Iceland's obsession with *Sex and the City*, and I was suffering about what I see as our inevitable disappointment, the unavoidable dissolution of this ultimately superficial relationship the girls of *SatC* have formed with those people least familiar with the culture they're trying to portray. Is Iceland headed for a Big Apple Hangover? This modern Viking had to ask himself.

Sex and the City, I realise after my twenty-third viewing, was purely a thing of the times—sadly, those times, the beginning of this millennium, were dumb and loaded not only with bad double entendres, but with George Orwell-style double speak and double think.

Hold it, Ketill the Angry, you say. This is a casual advice column, not some kind of literary survey. And you're right. Casual advice columns these days are meant to require only the smallest amount of investment on the part of their readers. I am to assume you have read nothing and thought about nothing before you came upon this column. But who made it this way? When did literature and philosophy fade away, and when did it become all important to be "true to yourself, girl" or something like that? To me, thinking of the coy presentations of sex from four women who looked more like the wives that members of the Long Island Country Club might cheat on than Manhattan socialites, I think the stupid, casual culture came about when sex got reintroduced to the mainstream. When Monica Lewinsky made her first bow.

Monica and President Clinton's childish scandal caught an international audience, but it was ahead of its time. And then HBO gave us four women with less lustiness than Monica, and less of that frightening intelligence of Bill Clinton, to talk about sex for us in a less threatening way, to make us feel better about ourselves for knowing a little about the Naked Ape.

My realization is, in 47 and a half hours of casual sex talk from supposedly forward thinking socialites during 94 and a half episodes of *Sex and the City* I learned nothing about New York, sex, women or even shoes.

Go back to the shoes, Carrie's fundamental character trait. In those many episodes, while we saw some nice shoes, we never understood what makes shoes good—something any exposure to another fictional character's interests should have allowed us. Look around: among all these fans of *SatC*, do you see anyone wearing decent shoes? Go to your bookstore: among all the books influenced by *SatC*, do you see any decent writing about sex? Go to the movies, turn on your TV, go to the museum: the age of *Sex and the City* was also the age of Dr. Phil, Oprah Winfrey, Internet porn and Hooters, an age of coy, casual talk about sex in which absolutely nothing was revealed, except that sex is controversial. We weren't talking about sex with the girls of *SatC*, we were talking about them, just as kids who talk about porn more and more aren't using porn

terms to describe what they want, but what they don't want and what is Other.

Carrie Bradshaw, like Monica Lewinsky, and their 19th Century counterparts in Victorian England, were entertaining Others that we watched to remind us why we stay repressed. The Metrosexual movement, with which this Modern Viking is so frequently associated, brought gay culture into the Other category. And now we have Desperate Housewives, putting the Other in Mother. The whole movement made this Modern Viking so uptight, that I could not be settled until I stumbled upon my DVD of Michael Cunningham's rapturous *The Hours*. But that is another story.

The Modern Viking is a syndicated columnist under the employ of the Reykjavik Grapevine. You can email him at Ketilltheangry@grapevine.is

THE MODERN VIKING FASHION TIP

Fashion is ideological, so if you ain't Jackie-O, the fur's gotta go

Sometimes conservatives and Right Wingers get the breaks—they can drive giant SUVs without feeling conflicted, they can wear bow ties and corduroy suits without feeling emasculated, as they can throw around the phrase "just nuke 'em" to make up for looking weak, and they can wear fur. For this reason, Prime Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson can wear seal skin—his political beliefs are in line with clubbing cute animals as long as they improve the economy. Social Democrat Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, however, looks silly in a neck-to-toe fur coat, as do the many left-leaning young women wearing fur at local events in Reykjavik these days. The only person on Earth who could convince people that she cared about the environment while wearing fur was Jackie O, and she's dead. All you other fur people, either go regressive on your politics, or go progressive on your clothes.

THE MODERN VIKING RECIPE

Bludgeoning by Chocolate—When spring comes, many of us switch to lighter foods. For this reason, March is really the last month a chocolate indulgence can be considered to be in good form. Find your favourite chocolate cake recipe, cut the egg count down, and step up the amount of cocoa powder a notch or two. Cocoa powder and pure chocolate have a number of positive health effects, most relating to mood, which are especially helpful during the March cold snap that typically hits this island.



Lost and Found in the Devil's Country

By Bart Cameron | Photos by Gúndi

PART 3 OF 4
Touring the American Egypt



Losing My Religion

Our spiritual devastation was a long time coming. The three of us who have flown to Mississippi from Iceland are the only people on the road not headed to church. We have spent the last three evenings with blues musicians who have made no attempt to hide their indulgences in women, liquor. Just as the older musicians are unabashed about drinking corn liquor and using knives in fights, there are rumours about crack cocaine and guns among the most talented of the younger generation.

When hearing the stories of manslaughter and house arrest, the outsiders among us, the white music fans who have come to see the best of Mississippi blues, often mutter the words "Jesus" and "Jesus Christ" in response—when you mutter a religious name enough, with so much astonishment, you come to an understanding of the Southern phrase "losing my religion," even when you never had any to begin with.

Our one reprieve is an accidental stop at a tourist destination. The publishers of *Big City Blues*, some of the white people we came across in Clarksdale, tell us that any visit to Mississippi would be incomplete without visiting the famous Shack Up Inn, a blues-themed "beer and breakfast" made up of a row of shotgun shacks and cotton bins set up with modern conveniences.

Visiting a shotgun shack at an old plantation seems, on the surface, about as disrespectful to local history as you could get. But when we pull in and are greeted by the caretaker and co-owner, Bill Talbot, a gritty and enthusiastic local who is ecstatic to see more foreign tourists, our skepticism eases. Difficult as life no doubt was in the shacks, to see them firsthand, and to be told the story of each person the shacks were collected from, is remarkable. Talbot celebrates the best of a difficult situation, and he clings vigorously to the local history and culture: each cabin is a veritable gallery of folk art and local history.

Beaming on a Sunday morning inside a shack he calls "the Cadillac" that had, until the late 1980s, housed a man named Cookie who raised three sons in the shack without water or electricity, Talbot explains his enthusiasm: "We get the best kind of people here. We get cultural tourists who care about history and music. Every day, it's great to see who shows up, and to see the way people react."

For one hour on this Sunday morning, we've seen something positive. Then, while showing us the cotton bin, Bill Talbot lets slip how many people have covered his hotel: CNN, USA Today, and a dozen or so major foreign papers. "When Robert Plant was here a few months ago, he was looking at this stairwell, and do you know what he said? He said it's the Stairway to Nowhere."

It is such a soul-sucking joke, that all the good of the positive tourism Mr. Talbot has done is immediately drained from our bodies. When we take him up on his offer to sample a Moon Pie, a marshmallow concoction popular in the south, we are put into that much more of a funk.

And then there is the radio. On this December in 2005, the radio is full of preachers complaining about an America that is "at war with Christianity," as President Bush has sent a holiday card that doesn't mention Christ. Even Wal-Mart won't put up Christmas decorations!

One talk radio personality is filling our ears with an attack on the residents of New Orleans, whom we have just visited. According to this Christian talk show host, the people of the Ninth Ward in New Orleans, whose homes were destroyed due to faulty construction of locks along the Mississippi, according to reports published while we are in America, "have never done anything but be victims, and they'll just go on being victims and living off of the government somewhere else."

The blues is one thing, but ignorance, hatred and intolerance all on a Sunday with just a Moon Pie and a stinging corn liquor

>>> CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE



hangover in the molars is too much.

So, of course, when we see the JonBenet Ramsey look-alike squad, we have to pull over. If we can't feel better, at least we now know of a few thousand people who must feel worse.

We get through the parking lot, we make it into the event hall itself, our press passes evoking a "you're not really going to write about this, are you?" from an older sister assigned to help sell tickets for the more than 4,000-people event, the Southern Regionals of the National Athletic Cheer and Dance.

We are just in time for the five-to-eight year-old competition. Four thousand people are packed into a massive auditorium to watch hundreds of five-to-eight year olds cheer in heavy make-up.

My initial questions don't work out.

To Dana, a mother wearing a shirt that says "My Job List: Hair stylist, Make-up artist, taxi driver, bank teller. But my favorite job is #1 fan!" I ask, "Can you explain to an international audience what competitive cheer is?"

"Don't you have ESPN?" she says, indignant, and walks off. I catch hold of a young-looking grandmother named Meredith and ask her to fill me in.

"Oh, they've come a long way since cheerleading," she tells me. "You don't hardly know what they're doing anymore. But you still have to be proud."

I nod, and we watch the Elite Squad do a pyramid to contemporary rock music. My gut begins to ache as I realise the song the kids are dancing to.

"Do you realise, Meredith, that these kids are dancing to Michael Jackson's Smooth Criminal?"

Meredith looks at me funny and walks away. A few minutes later, a well-belied moustachioed man from Memphis starts to eye me.

I ask a few children about how they did, but they all speak just like ESPN jocks, saying they were just in it for the experience, with one saying, "I'm just here to have fun" all while keeping a stone-cold game face. Finally, when Jerry Lee Lewis's Great Balls of Fire comes booming through the speakers, my photographer, who is fighting to hold back tears of laughter, announces, "This is just wrong," and begs that we get out quickly.

"One thing you can say is that everybody in there was extremely supportive, and all the parents loved their children," I tell my Icelandic friends, who refusing to speak and have decided we should leave the South immediately.

"I think I've never seen something so wrong in my entire life," says one friend, who spent three minutes at the competition before fleeing for the car and locking himself in.

Rock Bottom at Wal-Mart

If we are to have our souls sucked dry in one day, I decide we should go all out. We drive as fast as we can down the highway, searching for the most celebrated of Southern enterprises: Wal-Mart.

I'm am driving to Wal-Mart in a search for rock bottom. Awkward as the National Cheer and Dance Competition was, we at least found acceptance, familial love and enthusiasm. We expect none of this from Wal-Mart.

Five minutes in Wal-Mart, and we aren't anywhere near rock bottom in American culture – we're at the single best tourist spot in the world, according to my Icelandic friends. The main cause for excitement is the

the riding boots," the Gothic literature student informs me.

Oxford proves entertaining by night, and still more uplifting by day. Rowan Oaks, home to William Faulkner, is just off the centre of town, its grounds making up a popular park, all kept up by the University of Mississippi.

On the day we go to Rowan Oaks, we are the only people to enter the building, whereas a number of people are walking their dogs in the peaceful grounds, and a couple have their wedding photos taken at the gate to the house.

Touring Rowan Oaks, home to America's single most-respected, and, to many, most difficult writer, is a humbling experience. Faulkner, who wrote as big and aggressive as any national author, seems to live haphazardly. His study features a cot and notes for a film adaptation of his Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Fable* pencilled across the wall.

Ole Miss students staff the museum, and they gladly show me a New York Times article claiming the building's importance.

Asked if they spend the day reading Faulkner, they both raise their hands apologetically. One host says he had read some Faulkner, but really just likes graphic design, the other, a graduate student in Gothic literature, claims no interest whatsoever in Faulkner, famous in many circles as the father of Southern Gothic writing.

"What is the most common attraction?" I ask.

"A lot of people really like to see

the riding boots," the Gothic literature student informs me.

Where Authors Are Rock Stars

"Have you been to Rowan Oaks yet?" I am asked politely as I settle down in the Faulkner section of Square Books in downtown Oxford. "You can just go in and see Faulkner's riding boots. Exactly how he left them. It's amazing."

"I don't really enjoy Faulkner," I say, immediately putting an enthusiastic local at ease.

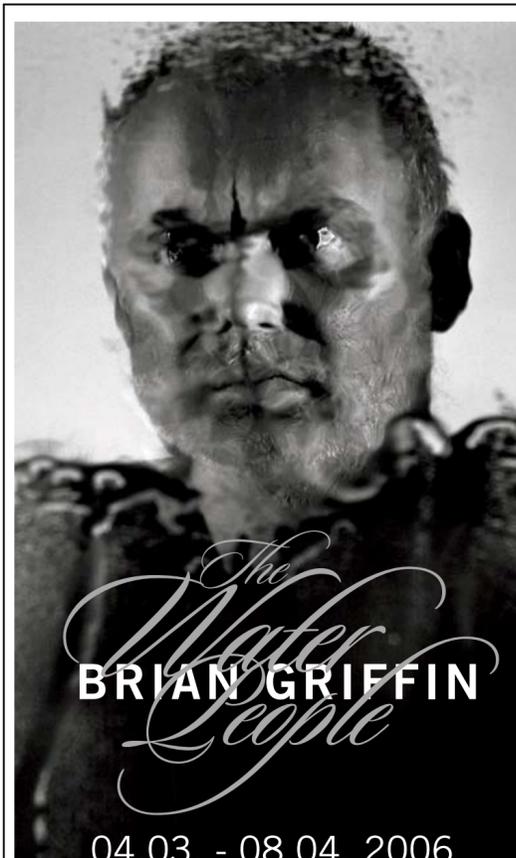
"No. It's hard to like what you're forced to read," he says, before recommending no less than a dozen Mississippi writers that aren't required but that he thoroughly enjoys.

Since Faulkner, Oxford has been the seat of Southern literature, though the welcome addition of the less literary John Grisham, and the endowments he has given to the local university, have allowed for an absolute boom of regional fiction in recent years. The quick run through of great recent writers who have lived in Oxford includes Barry Hannah, Larry Brown, Tom Franklin, Willie Morris and Beth Ann Finley.

During the school year, the largest bookstore in town, Square Books, hosts three readings a week, forming a community that, at least according to the bookstore attendant, "treats authors like rock stars."

To indicate how book crazy Oxford has gone, the owner of Square Books, Richard Howorth, was recently elected mayor.

For the most part, the hyper-literacy of Oxford is a blessing—you can hold a decent conversation on most topics with just about anyone, as long as you hide your love for



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Faulkner, who apparently has been forced down the throats of the locals a little too much.

Sitting down for bagels at a crammed local diner, the Bottle Tree, a curious patron started a lengthy conversation about Björgólf-ur Thor, Iceland's wealthy investment maverick. My travel companions were pleased, and then a little afraid, that casual knowledge stretched so far in Oxford.

Eventually, we were exposed to the dangers of reading too much. The same patron showed us a paperback from his backpack by a Mr. Bill Bryson, travel writer. Bryson, master of clichés and boring stereotypes, had written about three of his favourite Mississippi towns: Oxford, Tupelo and Columbus.

"It's not very good," he told us. "I feel like I'm learning less with every page. I hope you do better."

Mentioned in this article:

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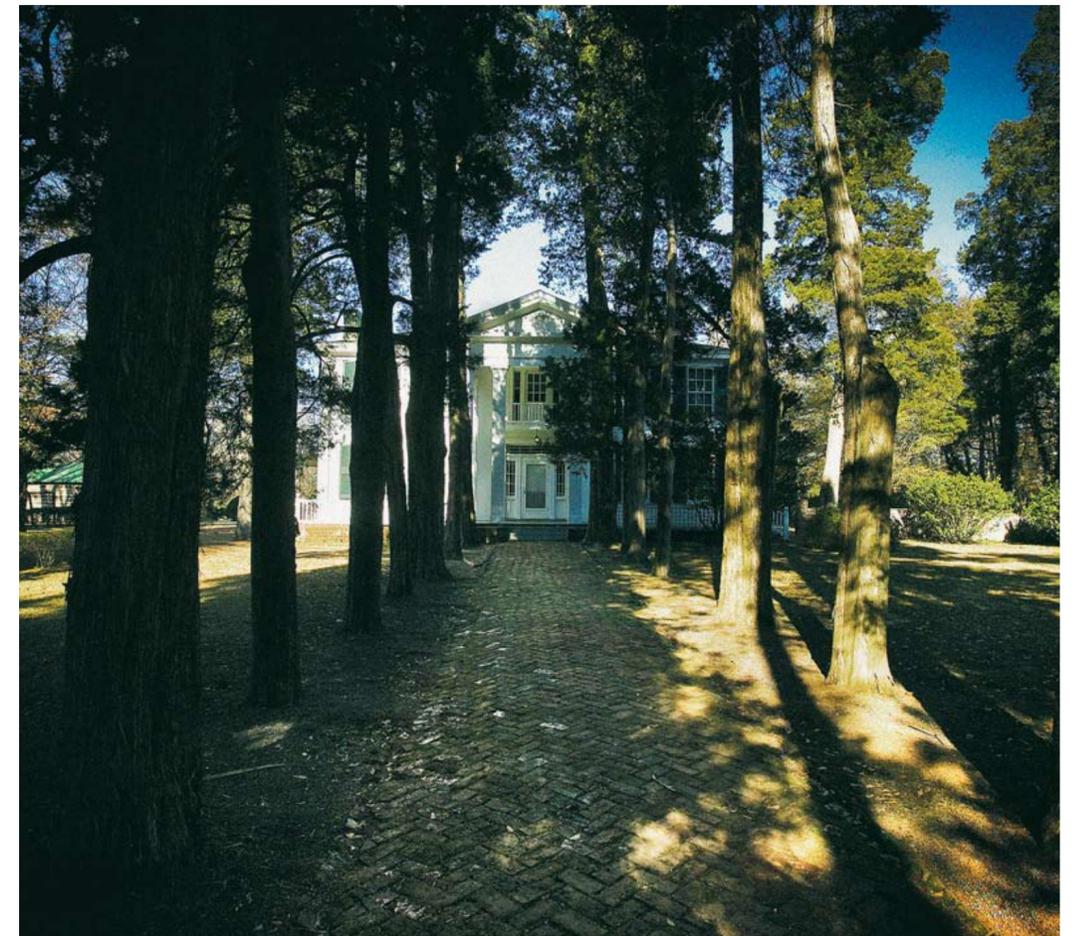
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Eve Online

Outside Reykjavík



A Truly Free Market:

The ultimate in science fiction

BY BART CAMERON

It is 1:34 in the afternoon. I haven't eaten today. As I walk down the alleyway, the small amount of sun almost knocks me over. When I close my eyes, I can see my frigate launching into warp towards a local worm hole. I need to get back to work, wash my face and go through two hours of meetings. A key motivation for going to wash my face is that I might return to my alley.

I have been playing Eve Online, a multiplayer online game created here in Iceland five years ago, launched three years ago. In the week that I've been gaming, the game has held me casually interested—there are the standard Icelandic obsessions with bloodlines and cars, (in this case space cars), and ideal economic environments, and to play a game made by friendly, politically outspoken locals is fun, much the same way buying a local album is.

And then, on a tip, I walk into Ground Zero, the Internet café in downtown Reykjavík, and buy the dream of two hours for 500 ISK, and sit down to experience Eve on a high-end gaming computer. The experience is a cross between driving a Ferrari, seeing a great local band, and being pulled into a good book.

When I sit down at Ground Zero, I am awkward, I am taking notes on the kid across from me, who at first glance looks 12, but on closer examination has the weary look of a late-developing 16 year old, who is screaming "When you turn the corner, shoot" to a friend playing a First Person Shooter with him, likely anywhere in the world.

Most people who go to Ground Zero look somewhat like they've been in the place for weeks, much like arcades used to look when Donkey Kong Jr. took over. And at first I feel self-conscious, trying to load into my Eve game in which I have yet to complete the tutorial.

Two hours later, my time ends, and I wake up, only partially, feeling the bond among the rest of the people at the café that you feel after seeing an especially powerful concert from a band that hardly anyone knows about, and I start planning how I'll get back to this place.

So How Are the Graphics?

The first thing I asked when I was told that everybody and their mother was addicted to Eve was how are the graphics? Approaching video games from a 1990s model, I wanted to know if I could really tell if... well, if the space station had good physics. Or if the Eve girls that I saw in advertising brochures would have the Star Trek vibe. Or if I might buzz by planets with the appropriate sense of flying in space.

As soon as you log on to Eve, you get graphics, and they are impressive enough—as you begin a game, you get to create your character, including morphing the entire face shape and going for a range of tattoo options. As I chose races and bloodlines, a somewhat disturbing task

“With products like Eve, the gaming community has taken over the role that fiction writers held in the 20th century.”

that refers to a frequent obsession with amateur genetics studies in sci-fi literature, I wasn't surprised that the more primitive race referred to the aggressive sexual nature of the females. Getting beyond that little faux pas, the headline talk could sometimes be amusing, and the ultimate lesson seemed to be that any bloodline you chose for your character could be equally successful and/or sexy.

The outstanding graphics, and even better, the sound effects drive you through the tutorial well—as with Star Trek, everything comes with a whoosh, and as with 2001, you get an ultra-creepy talking computer sidekick named Aura. For the first ten hours, all played in my case in 45-minute increments as my three-year-old computer tended to overheat trying to run the program, I was pleasantly amused and proud of the guys at CCP for putting together something

so competent.

Then the actual game play began. There is little to say: you start with a small ship in a safe region of space, and you do your best to make some money doing things like running errands, or mining, or finding space pirates – things that shouldn't be as appealing as they end up being. Shooting around a galaxy at warp speed, past well-drawn planets, buying the larger guns, etc., was pretty much what I thought Eve would be. What I wasn't expecting was an economics lesson – to say nothing of an enjoyable economics lesson.

Almost immediately, though, you realise that in Eve, you are entering the great capitalist experiment with one ultimate hitch – everyone

in Eve enters on an equal playing field. What is more, there are rules, and the rules are enforced, though they could be broken if people wanted to break them. With consistency and patience, anybody can succeed in Eve. If you want to take risks, you can succeed even quicker, and if you take too many risks, you can likely get squashed and have to start over.

In the real-time space community of Eve, you work, get rewards, build a reputation, and get more rewards – it's the world of Huey Long or Eisenhower, the ultimate fantasy.

Overtaking the Novel

To understand how this perfect capitalist world connects to the typical player, or to at least understand how I got so attached to the idea of carrying a memo to a moon of a distant planet for 100,000 that I almost told my girlfriend that

I had to vacation someplace that had a decent Internet café just so that I might carry more memos, I had to refer to the craft of writing fiction. John Gardner, the great American writer and teacher of fiction, the man who discovered and trained Raymond Carver, among others, put down a good deal of the key axioms of great modern fiction in his book *The Art of Fiction*. His key point, and one that I always wanted to disagree with, is that people read fiction to find something stated that matches a deep internal belief.

With products like Eve, the gaming community has taken over the role that fiction writers held in the 20th century. Like Fitzgerald, or even Laxness, they now voice the key thoughts that so many of us are grumbling over but unable to state. These days, with Enron on trial in America, and with concern over a number of corporate scandals coming out in Iceland, somehow the dream is now extremely similar to Laxness's great Icelander, Bjartur: we dream of an equal playing field where following the rules might allow us a chance at success. As of February, 100,000 people worldwide are paying \$20 to experience this. And as of February 14th, I've been one of them. Other than my occasional binges at Ground Zero, I have been able to limit this fantasy to an hour a week.

You can get a free trial of Eve Online through the Reykjavík Grapevine website, www.grapevine.is.

Opin Kerfi ehf. provided the Reykjavík Grapevine with an HP Compaq nws8240 Mobile Workstation so that we could finally test Eve Online properly. For more information log on to www.fartokur.is.



The Geeks of Gotham

Comic conventions return to New York, where they no longer fit in

BY BART CAMERON PHOTOS BY GÚNDI

"I liked acting in *Catch and Release* because they gave me a really big trailer." Kevin Smith, known by his screen name Silent Bob, is bragging. He's entitled. More than 10,000 fans have filled the basement of the Javitz Convention Centre to celebrate him and his colleagues in comics and comic-based film. He has been answering questions for two hours, and will continue until they drag him from the stage so that Todd McFarlane, the man who popularised Spider-Man, and who created Spawn, will tell a disgusted crowd that he only cares about market influences.

"I need a really big trailer because I need a really big bathroom," Smith says, stepping away from the podium to show the size toilet he needs. "I have such fat thighs that if I don't spread 'em wide, when I go to take a shit it streaks all down my legs."

There's a brief silence. Then the crowd erupts. Many of them know exactly what Mr. Smith is talking about—likely more than Mr. Smith, who is not nearly as obese as he claims he is. The rest of us are absolutely stunned that a celebrated director, writer and overall cultural force just created the single most disgusting mental self-portrait likely ever put out there.

Silent Bob, the Likeable Loudmouth Reformed Sociopath from Jersey

A tall black kid with acne, a sports jacket, and a red Flash sweatshirt gets to the mic.

"Kevin, I came here to get my \$18 back. I think we all know that you let us down with the Black Cat and Spider-Man series, and you owe us. It's a disgrace."

Even this won't get Kevin Smith down. He's a man determined to connect with his fans, to break down any wall between artist and fan that might exist, and a man determined, most of all, to entertain. He does it with the energy of a sociopath; and he let's slip that, in fact, he was a sociopath at one point in his life.

In one of his many 20-minute answers to ten-second stupid questions, he tells a person who asks "How do I make a film?" to rack up \$30,000 in credit card debt. He then goes on to explain why he dropped out of college after one semester. The reasons: 1) Kevin Smith grew up in New Jersey, moved to New York for school and got into a high-rise dorm. He promptly took up the habit of throwing things at passers-by from the 8th floor. First water balloons, then other things. He went home to New Jersey one weekend to find a note to his parents explaining that the future director came up with the brilliant idea of filling lawn-sized garbage bags with water and dropping them out of an 8th story window to scare NYU students—Smith attended the New School, temporary institution of another famous dropout, Jack Kerouac. Speaking to thousands of comic nerds, he explains how lame the RA was for sending a note to his parents. 2) Kevin Smith, the future director, went to college to be a writer, and instead of studying, he stood outside the Saturday Night Live offices "waiting to be discovered by Lorne Michaels as the funny quiet fat kid."

There are more heart-breaking confessions suffused with geek logic and a desperate desire to be liked, trusted, and to be honest at all costs. To differentiate the kind of logic and motivation present among Kevin Smith and the best of the crowd at the First Annual New York Comicon, let me refer to Mr. Smith's *Brokeback Mountain* joke. Those of us who have sat through the months of borderline-retarded homophobic *Brokeback* jokes from Jay Leno and other guy-next-door straight white assholes might say it's impossible to even broach the subject of *Brokeback* without coming off dull.

Kevin Smith, though, lunged full on into his *Brokeback* routine. Asked if he, the director of *Chasing Amy*, identified with Ang Lee regarding the criticism *Brokeback Mountain*

got from the conservative right, Smith said "Brokeback Mountain isn't a gay movie. Other than..." and he spit on his hand and imitated Heath Ledger's emblematic scene.

To Smith, *Brokeback* was just a story of longing. He then explained his own interest in gay scenes, as motivated by his brother, who is openly gay and married. Smith wanted to make movies his brother could watch and at least have something he identified with. Smith then pointed out that, genetically and otherwise, he was "one cock in the mouth away from being gay" himself. Not the most insightful comment, but when repeated five times, it begins to get peculiarly amusing.

If They Can Do That in California...

Comic conventions have been growing in appeal over the last decade. Last year, San Diego's famed Comicon brought Peter Jackson and King Kong, David Cronenberg and *A History of Violence*, Bryan Singer and previews from *Superman*, and a massive set piece from *Corpse Bride*. When Catwoman flopped miserably at the box office, it was seen as doing so because it failed to properly court the geeks, whereas *X-Men*, directed by Mr. Singer, succeeded, according to even the director, because it obeyed the geeks.

King Kong did well, Cronenberg's *A History of Violence* was worshipped by critics, and Sin City opened a whole new genre of comics to the mainstream. It seemed only natural that a comic convention would become a massive cultural force in New York, the birthplace of the modern comic book.

A day before flying to New

York, I spoke with Neil Adams, a key innovator in comics who revived *X-Men*, reconceived Batman as the gothic hero that would be interpreted on the big screen, and, coolest of all, had a superhero sidekick get addicted to heroin (an addiction was partially treated with a superhero bitch slap).

Adams told me it was a matter of "civic pride" to have the conventions back in New York City. "The French will say that America is responsible for three things art wise: jazz, the musical comedy, and comic books, and the French know about art," Adams told me.

About the bond between film and art, he couldn't help gloating. He points out that *Star Wars* was created because George Lucas wanted to do *Flash Gordon* but couldn't get the rights, that the Wachowski brothers based the *Matrix* closely on comics. "I met Christopher Columbus one time on a Hollywood back lot, and he ran across the lot to meet Neal Adams the comic book artist...[George] Lucas is a comic book fan. [James] Cameron is a comic book fan. They all are," he tells

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me, leaving me to guess how close he might be with Hollywood royalty.

On the plane over, I am thinking about the mobs of Hollywood stars that will be packing the New York Comicon. X-Men III is just launching, Superman is approaching, Spider-Man 3, set in New York, is approaching completion, the Wachowski Brothers, (ahem, according to comic geeks, they are now just siblings), have just made an enormous Natalie Portman vehicle written by the best comic pen in the business, Alan Moore. A New Yorker, Michael Chabon, recently won a Pulitzer Prize for writing about New York comic culture. The festival will be enormous.

First Two Free, After That \$3

On arrival, though, there are just lines. As far as the eye can see. The New York State Police have been called in to control the geeks, who have arrived en masse for an event that only holds 10,000. In fact, when Kevin Smith is speaking for two and a half hours for thousands of fans, there are thousands more who have waited in a nauseating line the entire time he has been speaking.

The inside of the comic book convention is not a flight of fancy, a celebration of a jazz age art, but a mob of ugly people in a tight space holding out dollar bills.

The energetic and entertaining Neal Adams who held forth at length about the social implications of the festival returning to New York, now sits at the largest booth in the convention signing books next to a sign that says "autographs: first two free, after that \$3," which pretty much says everything.

Wedged between geeks talking about the size of Spider-Girl's tits, I duck out of the crowd and find a table with a balding, blond guy typing away on a Macintosh at a convention table. There is a giant sign next to him: "CHRIS WYATT."

Away from the crowd, I ask Mr. Wyatt how he enjoys the festival. He tells me he's from California, and, love of New York aside, this convention is not very similar to the one he likes to attend.



"In California, the festivals are much larger, and they focus on diversity. People are having fun. Here it seems to be more about..." And he gives the slightly ashamed expression that Californians make in place of the word "money."

Mr. Wyatt turns out to be the Executive Producer of Napoleon Dynamite, a film that he points out I should never have seen, as it was never distributed in Iceland. Like the character he helped bring to the screen, Wyatt presents the most wholesome view possible of geekdom. He is explaining the positive energy of comics and imagination, when a girl of 14

and simply saying that if Icelanders want to watch Napoleon Dynamite or his next movie, Beneath, and they can't get it at theatres, they have his permission to just steal his films.

Wyatt asks.

The 14-year old arches her back, curves her neck slightly, and whispers "Supergirl," holding her mouth open and pouty after speaking, prompting Wyatt to avert eye contact and blush slightly.

He will tell me later that the girl "was a little too old to wear a costume like that" before moving away from comics altogether,

and simply saying that if Icelanders want to watch Napoleon Dynamite or his next movie, Beneath, and they can't get it at theatres, they have his permission to just steal his films.

Spider-Man Doesn't Bring Anyone In

In the press room and the next day in the newspapers and on television, the first New York Comicon is regarded as a sensation. Few reporters care to comment on the frustrated fans, on the lack of quality product, or on the overall ickiness of the event—all indications are this was exactly what they expected. The only limitation is the lack of good images to run in

a newspaper, which is solved with a photo of a guy in Spider-Man pajamas.

Comic book culture has completely flooded New York, but people with only casual knowledge of the genre wouldn't know it. At Barnes and Noble on 14th Street, there is a massive graphic novel section. On every subway car, I see at least one person reading a standard comic book, and one reading manga—comics are more popular than even tabloid newspapers. Natalie Portman and Hugh Jackman posters are everywhere.

I visit the most celebrated comic book shop in Greenwich Village, Forbidden Planet, which had originally coordinated the convention only to pull out a few months ago. Only one person in the store had been to the convention, and he admitted it had not gone well.

"But it doesn't really matter. It has started. Next year it will be bigger. The press are already writing about it, and no publicity is bad publicity. The disappointment won't stay around," he tells me.

He then hints that New Yorkers really aren't impressed with superheroes. "The big draws, the things that bring new readers into the store all the time are the comics you don't see as much at the conventions: A History of Violence, American Splendour and Sin City, that's what people are interested in now. Spider-Man doesn't bring anyone in."

I talk with a bleary-eyed employee at Forbidden Planet, one of the majority of people interested in comics who wouldn't go near the convention.

Why didn't you go? I ask him. "I couldn't think of anything about it that interested me," he says, then looks out over racks of alternative comics. A series of further questions get single word responses. I think about telling him that Kevin Smith was entertaining, but realise the guy really wouldn't care. For him, like most readers in New York, comic books, like literature in general, are pretty much something you keep to yourself. Making an ass of yourself over it all is for people from California, or, worse, Jersey



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Thinking Global, Drinking Local: Iceland's Amber Revolution

BY GUNNAR HRAFN JÓNSSON

If you've been clocked in the head with a bottle recently - as one occasionally is during a proper night out in Reykjavík - chances are the beverage it once contained was of Icelandic origin. On most weekends discarded Viking, Egils and Thule containers litter the moonlit landscape of downtown Reykjavík and sometimes provide us with the hauntingly familiar sound of breaking glass reverberating through our long winter nights. Some foreign brands even have their own production facilities in Iceland. Using sales figures as a map, and our unsavoury reputation for beer-fuelled mayhem as a compass, they navigated their way across the oceans to our thirsty shores as soon as the famous beer-embargo was lifted.

It's not surprising, then, that the sales figures for locally made brews are impressive. Out of the top five best selling beers four are manufactured in Iceland and three are native brands. The reasons are many and varied.

Accolades from Abroad

Sigfríð Arnardóttir, marketing director for Víðfell, believes recognition from outside the country has played an important role in boosting the standing of Icelandic beer locally. "We noticed a massive surge in the popularity of Thule after it came third in a Danish beer tasting competition back in 1998 - establishing the fine reputation it has today. The three medals won by Viking also had a noticeable effect. Icelanders take a certain amount of pride in drinking top quality beers that are locally brewed," Arnardóttir told the Grapevine. "Our market research definitely indicates that most Icelanders prefer to drink beer made from Icelandic water," she added.

By far the biggest seller in the Icelandic beer market is Viking Gylltur, with well over three million half-litre cans selling every year. A somewhat surprising statistic, given the fact that this particular brand is 5.6% alcohol by volume, noticeably stronger than most other big brands and ludicrously potent compared to mainstream beers in the English-speaking world. The cynic might think this explains everything: Icelanders drink brands like Viking for the simple reason that it gets them really messed up really fast - and Icelandic breweries know how to cater to these tastes. Arnardóttir thinks not: "Different people look for different things in a beer. I think the taste of Viking is what has proven to be a big hit amongst Icelandic consumers, the amount of alcohol is almost incidental. Viking Lite, at 4.4%, is now the fourth-best-selling beer in Iceland." It would seem, then, that Iceland's alleged (hard-) drinking culture can't explain all the trends evident in the nation's choices of beverage.

In the heady days after beer's re-legalisation the alcohol market here changed dramatically. Icelanders began switching to beer in droves, with nearly seven million litres sold in the first year alone. But due to the extremely long hiatus there wasn't any local brewing tradition to speak of. The closest we had to a real brewery before the laws were passed was soda-maker Egill Skallagrímsson's malt factory.

Although the country's love affair with beer may only have begun in earnest after the drink was re-legalised in 1989, in truth the amber nectar of the Gods has a longstanding role in Icelandic culture. It was in a large part the lack of beer on our fair shores, as well as our oft-cursed alcohol taxes, that once made Icelanders notorious drunkards around the world. Less than two decades ago

losing control of oneself on foreign soil was a common and entirely acceptable pastime for tourists and serious travellers alike. As a nation we were new to travel but even more unfamiliar with the inevitably dire results that come from substituting beer for all other liquid intake for a fortnight or so. Wherever our countrymen were found unconscious in the eighties, be it on a beach in Benidorm or outside a conference hall in Brussels, the reason was almost always the same: too much beer. Practically everyone bought the maximum allowance of one case of beer from the duty-free store in Keflavík. Those coveted cans and bottles became a form of currency for frequent travellers; if you didn't drink it, someone else damn sure would.

Doing it For Themselves

Now that beer is no longer the valuable commodity that it once was, the residents of Iceland have the chance to imbibe quite a wide variety - and, let's face it, quite a large quantity - of excellent brews from across the world. The fact that local products outsell them is a testament to the fact that Icelanders have thankfully learned to brew some pretty damn passable beers of their own. This is more important than you might think, for as the late prophet Frank Zappa noted: "If you don't have your own airline and at least one brand of beer - you shouldn't count as a real country."

The Grapevine could have left it at that, but being a hard-hitting news organisation we decided some additional in-depth research was in order. A crack-team of taste-testers was put to work tasting Icelandic-made beers one evening. The results are as follows:

-A less than glowing review for the much-hyped Thule. Our tasters found it too watery and bland for their palates, a good accompaniment to a slice of pizza but nothing to write a drunken postcard home about.

-On the opposite end of the scale from Thule, Viking Sterkur has a robust taste and weighs in at 7% by volume. It packed a punch for the liver and tastebuds alike, definitely a bit too much for some people. Which is to say that it was a resounding success with the small band of drunkards we had assembled.

-Tuborg Grön and Carlsberg, both brewed in Iceland, were a predictably average affair that left no particular lasting impression.

-Good old Egils Gull didn't disappoint or thrill anyone. Always a quite drinkable, if somewhat average, lager.

-Top marks for the more ambitious Egils Premium. It's brewed with Icelandic barley and was judged to be a very pleasant lager indeed. A slightly metallic aftertaste might be accounted for by the can, but overall the flavour was full-bodied yet surprisingly soft. Especially considering that it's 5.7% alcohol by volume.

-Two out of three testers confessed themselves quite fond of the taste of Viking Gylltur, while all agreed that it went down incredibly smoothly considering how sinfully drunk a few cans will make you. Additional samples were duly requested and after sampling them dutifully for several hours our testers fell into a deep sleep from which they could not be roused - the Icelandic seal of approval.



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Stuffed with stuff

“That could be very hard for exporting companies. It would not surprise me to hear that companies plan to relocate,”

Steingrímur Arnar Finnsson, KB Bank. Page 18.

“When it is a question of hundreds of millions [of dollars] annually, it becomes a very valid question whether we can justify keeping the operation here in Iceland,”

Reynir Harðarsson, co-founder CCP on the effects of the króna. Page 19.

“The earthly pleasures of consumerism simply do not compare to the utter, astonishing brilliance of this song, and although the production does bring it down a little...”

Sindri Eldon on Jakóbínarína's I've Got a Date with My Television, page 37.

“Carrie Bradshaw, like Monica Lewinsky, and their 19th Century counterparts in Victorian England, were entertaining Others that we watched to remind us why we stay repressed.”

Ketill the Angry on a thought that popped into his head. Page 38.

“In the real-time space community of Eve, you work, get rewards, build a reputation, and get more rewards—it's the world of Huey Long or Eisenhower, the ultimate fantasy.”

From the Grapevine travel piece on Eve Online, page 42.

Tax returns are due on March 21st

Those who file
electronically can
apply for an extension
but they must do so
before March 21st

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