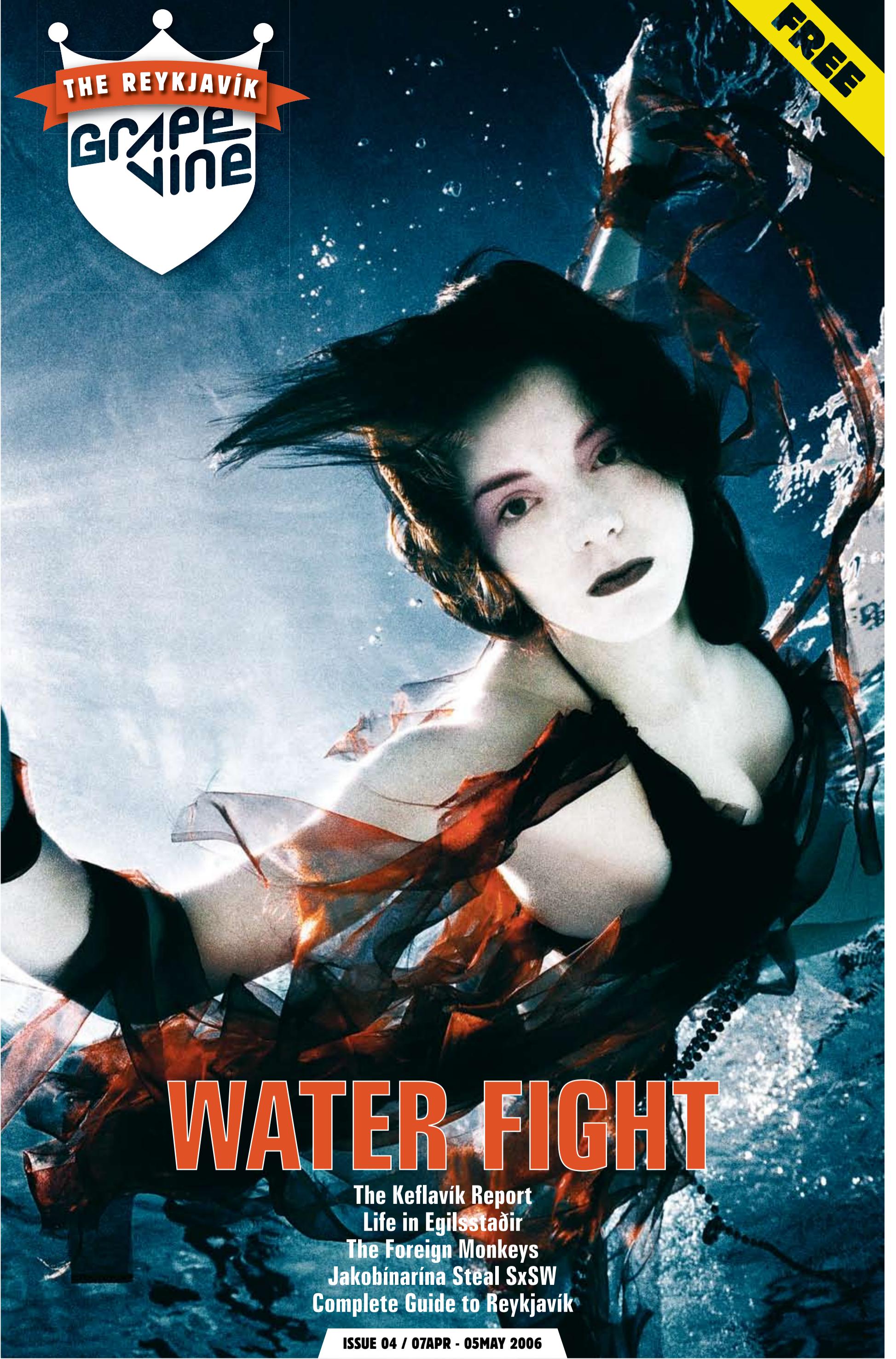




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# WATER FIGHT

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ISSUE 04 / 07APR - 05MAY 2006

# ISSUE THREE: APRIL 7 - MAY 5

## YEAR 4 the REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

### Articles

#### 06 THE UNSPEAKABLE BROUGHT TO THE LIVING ROOM

*Kompás, Iceland's 60 Minutes, on exposing perverts and even hospital management*

#### 08 THE FATTER, THE FUNNIER?

#### 14 NO BLOOD FOR OIL! Now, WHERE DID WE PARK?

*Anti-war protests on March 18th*

### Features

#### 16 SAVE THE WATER!

*How the water debate allowed Iceland's parliament to act, instead of taking action*

#### 18 THE GHOST TOWN ON THE COAST

*Collateral damage from the base's departure*

### Essentials

#### 12 GRAPEVINE'S GOVERNMENT GUIDE

#### 35 PURCHASES THAT JUSTIFY EXISTENCE

#### 36 DINING, EATING AND GRUBBING

### Music & Nightlife

#### 22 HEADY DAYS IN AUSTIN, TEXAS

*Deep thoughts from Jakobínarína on the festival that got record contracts from suits*

#### 31 AN EVENING OF LISTENING AND RESTRAINT

*Live Music Review: José González*

#### 33 GRAPEVINE ALBUM REVIEWS

### Outside Reykjavík

#### 39 AT THE KING'S FEET IN MEMPHIS

*Part 4 of 4 of Touring the American Egypt*

#### 42 JOBS, YES. WOMEN, NO.

*Visiting the Icelandic Klondike*

#### 43 WE LIVE TO BE RADICAL

*Brooklyn Goes A-Type*

### The Reykjavík Grapevine crew

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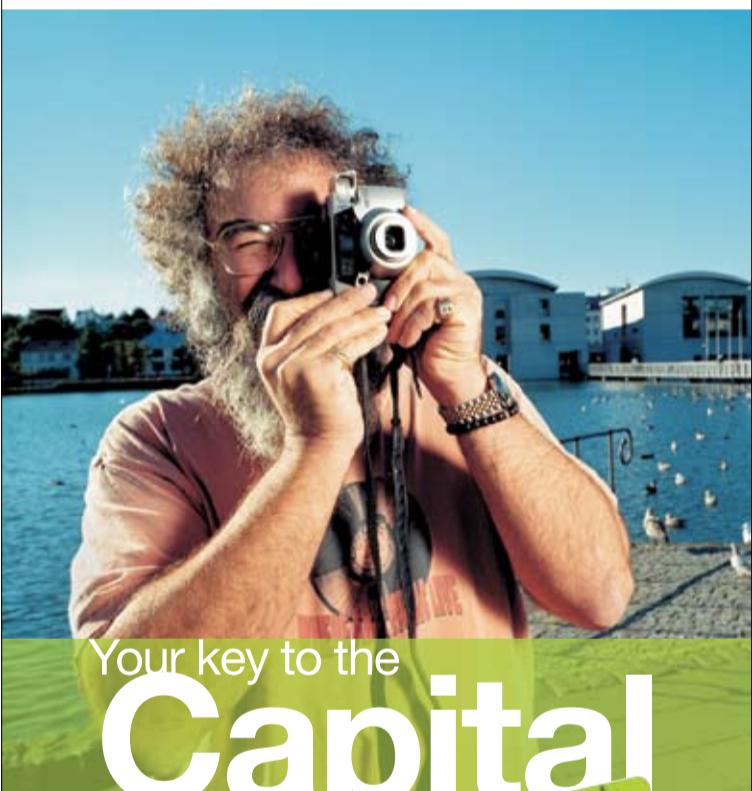
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## SOUR GRAPES

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

### Sportacus

Many thanks for bringing up the subject of the LazyTown invasion. I do realize that there are things out there that may have a more negative influence on my kids, but there are few things as eminent and persuasive for them as this LazyTown craze these days. After each episode, I have to spend hours on playing down expectations about McDonalds hamburgers (ad running just before the show), pink plastic shoes and vitamins with aspartame that no healthy and well fed kid will benefit from. And what's with Stephanie's dress? Pass her a few Lato's to buy a longer one.

Hanna

Hanna,

Birkir's piece in the last issue, Hey Sportacus, Leave My Kids Alone, brought up some key issues of the LazyTown discussion, issues that were echoed in the Icelandic-language media—ahem, without any citation or reference to our own writer, specifically in a lengthy column in Fréttablaðið. This is an excellent service the Grapevine provides Fréttablaðið readers.

But let us return to LazyTown—yes, there are creepy aspects, and it is good to mention them. I guess I really don't understand the argument fully... what television show do you think should raise your children?

### Love Your Online Reykjavík Grapevine

Thank you for a wonderful online publication! Really enjoy it. Will be visiting your neck of the woods for several days come this weekend. Can't wait to experience it. Your articles are doing well to prepare us for what may come.

Best regards to you and your staff on a very professional effort to inform the people.

Warmly,  
Loredana :)

We do our best, which is to say that Paul Nikolov, Gunnar Hrafn Jónsson and Sveinn Birkir Björnsson get the news up by noon, Icelandic time, each day, while I drink coffee and babble incoherently.

I do believe that the Grapevine will prepare you better for all aspects of Reykjavík than any other publication.

### How Dare You!

I was reading your latest copy of (G)rapevine issue and came across a very offensive comment. You said that Brain Police (A very bad band) had a rhythm section that would make RUSH jealous!!! I find that very offensive because Rush are gods among men and shouldn't be put in a sentence with a gay band like Brain Police. I should sue you, but we are not in America so I won't do anything. Except hate your lame magazine for many Aeons to come, you aging hippie liberal douche.

Sincerely:

Your hateful non-friend - Ape Shaw

Dear Ape,

I'm sorry for offending you. I was referring to the fat-ass Canadian Led Zeppelin cover band Rush, not whatever band inspired your devotion. As for my age and political leanings—I think you're confusing me for another Bart. I'm the 29-year-old Democrat who would vote for Bill Clinton for a third term, if possible, putting me in the moderate camp; I am not the aging hippie who did those dirty things to your mom at the Jerry Brown campaign rally and put them on that More Reasons to Hate Bush website. Glad to have you as a reader. Regarding lawsuits, the press is more open to lawsuits in Iceland than they are in America, so sue away. You could be the next Bubbi.

### Letter to the Editor Goodbye Iceland

I am returning to my home, America. I will miss your serene atmosphere. The simplicity I encounter in your small towns. The smell of the ocean which greets me in the early morning. I now understand the awe of Esja. When my life is troubled I will miss the comfort she brings me. The green hills and calming sound of water falling on rocks. This landscape has forever changed me. It will be the place my mind returns to when I need tranquillity. It took some time for my instant gratification personality to accept the type of silent friendship you offered. I eventually learned that you show love by just being. Constant. Strong. Like the old stones that dot the countryside like reminders of the past. I feel connected to something everlasting. My footprints on untouched land. The purity of your spirit.

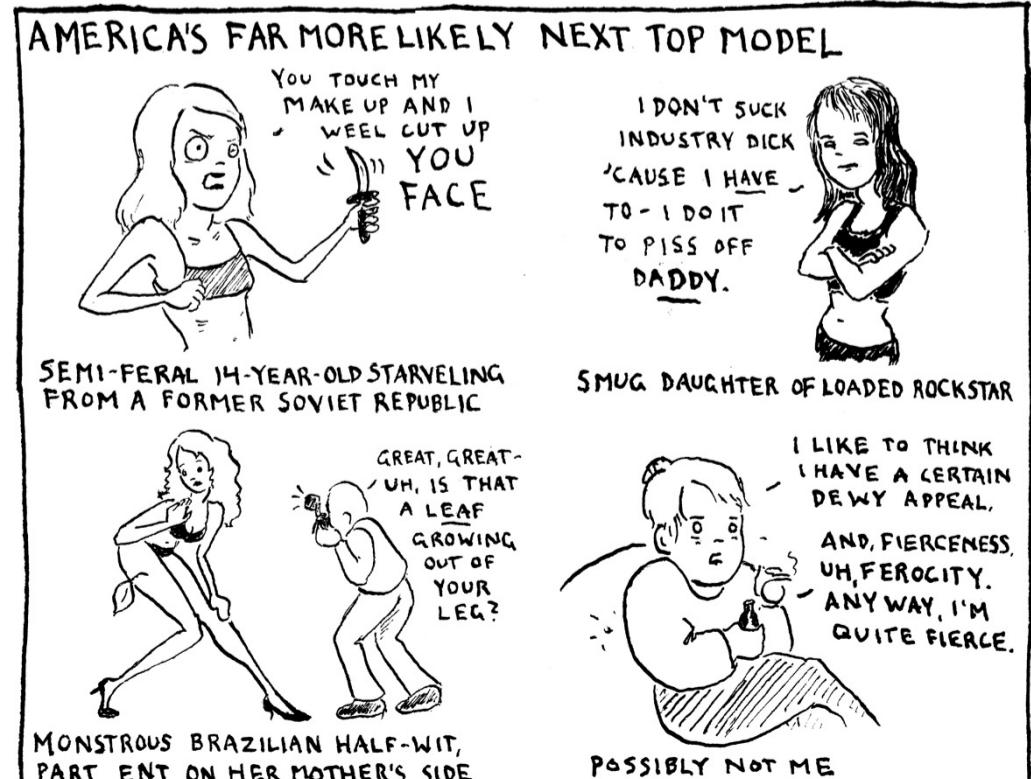
My grandmother once told me it was better to say nothing unless you have nothing of substance to say. I see beauty in the small talk which fills your days. I've learned that the weather talk, the token "áttu kaffi?", and the endless discussions of where the price per kilo on lamb is cheapest, keeps us connected. I once found quite baffling the unwillingness to discuss things of importance like emotions or feelings. Yet with time I realized that life just is. Time passes like water over black stones, polished smooth by eons of small talk.

I am glad I am leaving before the disgusting emptiness of consumerism along with the nauseating smell of capitalism become rampant and run over this land like blood. Like a plague. It's begun. You do see the signs. It is a hard thing to point your finger at, but I would urge you to grind to a screeching halt the progression of your simple life to a life filled with meaningless objects, and the glimmer of a better life of more money hanging over the mouths of hungry, tired, bitter people, with no hope. That is America. You don't want that. Pay attention to your own politics. They are leading you like a herd of sheep. Iceland is unique beauty. Save it. You don't need big buildings to be beautiful or power for that matter. Money doesn't make a nation happy. Be happy that your children enjoy a freedom which a child in America will never know. Be satisfied that when you are sick you can go to the doctor. Be happy that you don't have to become hard and cold to suffering around you. Selfishness and greed are enough to corrupt the innocent. Read this paper. It is the one place you are getting non-slanted journalism. Turn your TV off. Throw your Fréttablaðið out. And start talking about what matters! B.R. Neal

Dear B.R.,  
Oh. Now that's the kind of hippie talk that Rush devotee Ape Shaw loathes. He says aeon, you say eon.

Anyway, we get loads of these Goodbye, Iceland, letters, and the authors of these letters don't call us douche bags. They often give extremely condescending and sanctimonious advice to the noble savages of Iceland, and warn against becoming... whatever the authors are.

## LULU EIGHTBALL



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EDITORIALS

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## No Tears Over These Lost Jobs

I have only been on one military base in my life, and when I tell my war-protesting friends about that experience, I feel I have to give an aside. Visiting Keflavík's NATO base, even when America was at war, wasn't a very militaristic experience.

As Paul Nikolov writes in this issue's feature, the vibe in Keflavík is decidedly laid back. In fact, when I visited, two years ago, the base felt like a community college. Most of the soldiers I talked to were open about having political views that were to the left of the current administration, and it was the norm to hear people describe their stay in Iceland according to how many college credits they could earn while here.

The most amusing documentation of the surreal effect the base had on Icelandic life that I have come across was the recent documentary *Bítlabærinn Keflavík*. In the movie, we see how Keflavík, which had exposure to soldiers and soldiers' record collections, brought rock music to Iceland. In a particularly amusing turn of the film, a soldier explains how he also undertook to bring LSD to Iceland, but decided against it, having seen how fearless the locals were with substances.

One consistently gets the impression that the Keflavík NATO base was essentially the predecessor to the Internet—the place the world came into Iceland. On its departure, one is tempted to look back wistfully.

In fact, coupled with the massive loss of jobs, and the immense new economic responsibilities Iceland has to undertake in the base's absence, I have been silly enough to state, out loud, that allowing the base to leave is not a good thing for Iceland.

For a few days after I made such a comment, I was called everything short of Imperialist American Pig Dog... actually, I was called an Imperialist American Pig Dog. The only person who heard my viewpoint and took it easy on me was someone

who lived in Keflavík, and who had a keen awareness of how many jobs were going to be lost.

Trying to understand how I came into such a conflict, I thumbed my way through the back issues of the Grapevine, back to the bone of contention I have always had with this paper: issue one. Issue one of the Grapevine presented a feature on the base written by the first editor, an intelligent and amusing novelist, journalist and musician named Valur Gunnarsson. Mr. Gunnarsson went to the Keflavík NATO base, and described it as the home of "Jackboots on Ice," or, essentially, home to the modern day Nazis.

Since I took over the Grapevine, I have apologised for the comment a number of times. Yes, I feel President Bush and his administration have committed war crimes and their actions are inexcusable. In fact, I feel the current war is the blackest mark on the difficult history of American international policy, an action that it will take probably a century to attempt to rectify if and when the most powerful country in the world gets a leader with an IQ above room temperature, and a personality set to thoughtful, not rabid.

However, the soldiers I met at the Keflavík base have not been hateful people, nor have I heard or read inflammatory, dehumanising rhetoric from American sources, outside of one American television channel, Fox News, which is watched by a tiny percentage of Americans and a seemingly larger percentage of agast Europeans.

I have always felt Mr. Gunnarsson's comments were inexcusable. Until it came to putting out this issue.

The March 18th protests are covered in detail in this paper, and you can read about the films that were screened, and get some idea of how many members of the intelligentsia spoke up against Icelandic involvement in Iraq. If you are like me, when you read about Ari Alexander's short film,

you will wince and maybe even stop reading. Personally, I got a bit angry to see that Hallgrímur Helgason and Halla Gunnarsdóttir among others were putting their reputations behind a meeting that would show a film that was so propagandist—a film that focused on beheadings, rape and the other horrible faces of war. A short speech that followed the film stated the following: look what Iceland has contributed to.

The typical reaction to a film of beheadings and brutality of war shots is to say "Are your hands really so clean?" You can say any number of things about Icelandic policy in the last thousand years: there has been a tendency towards corruption, and those with power have tended to oppress the masses, there have been hundreds of years of starvation despite rich natural resources. But, for the last thousand years, Iceland did avoid doing any other nation any harm.

Then, in 1941, Iceland started housing the most powerful military in the world. And finally, in 2003, the most powerful military in the world coerced Iceland into signing on to an inexcusable war.

While I believe that the Keflavík base had a number of positive effects on Iceland, and while I believe the soldiers were, for the most part, good people, they were soldiers. Iceland wasn't forced to house the Keflavík Diplomacy Centre, or Keflavík International University, but an installation with the specific job of making war, something Iceland has been opposed to for a thousand years.

In this light, extremist comments from locals and the refusal to shed a tear over the loss of long-time neighbours and employers might be more understandable.

**Bart Cameron, Editor**



## The Phantom Menace

Well, it's official now: the event we predicted last November (The Base Bows Out, on [www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is)) has finally happened. Not that we were the first, of course. The signs had been there for a long time, whether you're talking about the downsizing over the past 15 years, the base's command switch from Joint Force Command (in Virginia) to the European Defence Command (in Germany) in 1999, or the fact that the US told Iceland in 2003 that it was going to withdraw the aircraft. Which makes it pretty peculiar that Prime Minister Halldór Ásgírmsson reacted to the announcement of the base's closing with any degree of surprise, as he did the day after the announcement was made. Perhaps sensing how out of touch this would make him seem, he said about a week later that he'd expected the base to close.

Whether he expected it or not, the most bizarre reaction out of this series of events is the emphasis being placed on what Iceland's going to do for defence now. Ásgírmsson's been putting a

lot of effort into this subject, organising talks with officials from different NATO countries, writing a letter to President Bush and speculating on the cost of buying a helicopter. Many in the Icelandic government are putting together all kinds of different defence scenarios, with the Social Democrats forming a special committee, "Independent Foreign Policy," with the purpose of carving out new defence strategies.

Meanwhile, the real danger of the base's departure is being all but ignored: the economic hit that Keflavík's going to take.

According to Statistics Iceland, the base employs around 640 Icelanders. Add to this outside contractors who do work on the base, and that total reaches over a thousand. These people will be out of work within the next few weeks to months. Add to this the men and women of the US Navy and Air Force who go to town and spend their money, and the economic impact becomes that much greater.

Suspend belief for a moment and assume that the base's departure did, in fact, catch the Icelandic government by surprise. Why is so much effort being put into avoiding a scenario that's not at all likely to happen (Iceland being attacked militarily) while the scenario of a massive economic drought in Keflavík – which is entirely likely to happen with the next few months – gets cursory attention from the Icelandic government in the form of a brief visit from the Prime Minister and some vague notions that people will simply commute to Reykjavík for work?

It's a shame the government won't give the men and women paying their salaries the same attention they're giving to staving off unrealistic and imagined threats. The real threat posed to Iceland by the base's departure comes from within.

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# The Unspeakable Brought to the Living Room

Kompás, Iceland's 60 Minutes, on exposing perverts and even hospital management

BY GUNNAR HRAFN JÓNSSON PHOTO BY GÚNDI

When the news network NFS was founded late last year, it had a lot to prove. Replacing the newsrooms of both Stöð 2 and Bylgjan, it was to become the central hub for the gathering and dissemination of news in the non-print media belonging to the 365 corporation. Arguably the biggest impact the channel has had so far has been through its weekly news magazine Kompás. While not everyone can see NFS programming 24/7, to see Kompás or the daily news you only need a TV and an antenna, and this has no doubt contributed to its success. A controversial program, Kompás's content tends to be hotly debated over the nation's water coolers the morning after it airs. In the wake of a particularly gripping report, in which the lack of an intensive care unit in a children's hospital was exposed and criticised, the Grapevine caught up with Jóhannes Kr. Kristjánsson and Marteinn Pórsson to ask them about Kompás, the nation's reactions and what it's like to be an investigative journalist in a society with such a limited journalistic tradition.

**/// Some of the things you delve into are of an extremely personal nature. Do people respond very differently to you when you contact them about issues that are highly charged with emotion?**

**Jóhannes:** Yes, this story about the hospital, for instance, is obviously an extremely sensitive issue for everyone involved. The couple we talked to, though, did a fantastic job in coming forward and managing to tell such an emotional story in as much detail as they did – twice, if you count the initial interview. And thankfully, they really seemed to get through to people. This story touched a lot of people around the country.

**/// You mention the reactions. Are you generally happy with the response you got following that program? The Baugur family certainly seemed to step up to the plate after this became public knowledge. (Following the airing of the program in question, Jón Ásgeir Jóhannesson and family pledged to pay the 60 million krónur a year needed to run an intensive care unit in the children's hospital – for at least the next five years.)**

**Jóhannes:** Well, we're certainly happy about how things turned out, aren't we, Matti?

**Marteinn:** Yes, of course, but apart from the money it's always good to see a much-needed



we were there to cover an extremely sensitive issue. When he was pressed on some aspects of his hospital's operations, and didn't give what we felt were satisfactory answers, we simply had to keep on asking him. At some point he just gave up on the whole interview, but we persisted and got an answer out of him in the end. Interestingly, Minister for Health and Social Security Siv Friðleifsdóttir has since claimed that we violated some kind of rule or even law by not ceasing the interview and turning off our equipment as soon as we were asked to. Nobody here at NFS has any idea what she's talking about. It has always been customary in our profession for the director and camera operator to decide when and when not to film.

**Marteinn:** People in positions of authority have a duty to provide the people with answers.

we approach do not want to expose themselves to public attention.

**/// It hasn't always been like this, has it? Is investigative journalism finally in vogue in Iceland?**

**Jóhannes:** Kompás is really the only program of its kind currently being shown on Icelandic television. For 46 minutes a week, we get a chance to delve much deeper into the issues than most journalists. It's hard to work as an investigative journalist in Iceland, that's for sure, but we have a chance to do so and thus we're just trying to make the best out of the situation.

**Marteinn:** I think these things have changed, as the society as a whole has changed very quickly over the past few years. People are certainly more receptive to our kind of journalism, open to more in-depth coverage. There has long been this tendency in Icelandic society to want to sweep uncomfortable issues under the carpet, even though everyone knew they were there. For instance, you might have a weird uncle that you think hangs out with kids a little bit too much, but no one wants to say anything.

**/// Along with the positive reactions you have gotten for your work, there must surely have been quite a bit of negativity as well.**

**Marteinn:** Yeah, the pervert episode comes to mind...

**Jóhannes:** Indeed, some people were simply unhappy with the fact that we decided to make a program on this topic, and particularly with the idea of using a fake girl to lure these guys in. Then again, we also got a number of complaints about the fact that we blurred out the faces and identifying features of all the individuals who showed up for a sexual encounter with this underage girl. So it went in both directions, really. On the whole, though, most people seemed to be very happy with the program – and so were we.

**/// Would you have done anything differently after the "pervert program" in which you lured men to meet an extremely underage girl by posting an ad on the Internet, knowing how people reacted? (Despite the blurring of their faces and license plates, some of the men from the program were in fact identified by friends, family and co-workers. Follow-**

**"There has long been this tendency in Icelandic society to want to sweep uncomfortable issues under the carpet, even though everyone knew they were there. For instance, you might have a weird uncle that you think hangs out with kids a little bit too much, but no one wants to say anything."** Marteinn Pórsson, of Kompás news magazine.

debate like this one get going. I think the important thing is for these issues to get followed up by other media, so the public gets to see many angles to the same story. It doesn't matter how much you strive to keep your reporting neutral and objective, you always have a particular approach to the story that is in part subjective.

**/// Speaking of objectivity, when you asked some uncomfortable questions of the director of the children's hospital, he stood up, said some less than complimentary things about your methods and basically tried to end the interview. Did you have any indication that he was upset with you beforehand, or did something go awry during the interview process itself?**

**Jóhannes:** He was fully aware of the fact that

If we, the taxpayers, are paying you wages to manage our affairs, then you have to be accountable to the nation and its people.

**/// The Icelandic media are unfortunately famous for allowing politicians, and others, to walk all over them and get around the most basic questions with doublespeak, or simply by the blacklisting of individual journalists or organisations. Has your hard-hitting approach burned any bridges for you? Is the pool of people willing to talk to you shrinking?**

**Jóhannes:** It seems to have done quite the opposite for us. Practically everyone is willing to speak to us these days. So far, we haven't gotten a single 'no' from a politician. When we're covering more sensitive issues, then naturally some of the more private individuals

ing the example shown in the program, some teenagers also took it upon themselves to seek out and violently attack men who look for sex with young girls on the Internet.)

**Marteinn:** No, I think we would do it the same way.

**Jóhannes:** We were very happy with the way we produced that show. We don't support people going out and trying this for themselves, of course.

**Marteinn:** Yeah, don't try this at home.

**/// Going back to the criticism, briefly, have you ever been accused of skewing the facts to fit your story?**

**Marteinn:** We have been accused of dishonest editing. I remember reading a blog that claimed we had unfairly attacked the hospital director, the one who wanted to end the interview, and that it was only our editing that made him look bad. The truth of the matter is, and anyone can see this by looking at the tape, is that it was all one, long shot. What you saw on your TV screen is exactly what happened.

**Jóhannes:** We also got that after the pervert story aired, accusations that we had somehow twisted everything around in the editing room.

**Marteinn:** I mean, we had three cameras running each time, and the footage was all a bunch of continuous takes!

**Jóhannes:** Well, that's the last defence you have left after the program airs and everything is said and done: "They just edited it to make him/me seem like a pervert." Like I said, sometimes Icelanders know very uncomfortable things about each other, friends and family even, but prefer not to rock the boat. They don't want to know about it.

**/// Since we have been talking about old habits in Icelandic journalism, it seems apt to end this with the traditional and highly patronising final question that closes practically every interview in Iceland: "Any final words or messages to our readers?"**

**Marteinn:** We're always looking for tips on interesting topics.

**Jóhannes:** Yes, you would be surprised what an impact one little idea can have once it starts to snowball. So please, keep them coming.



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## OPINION



A COLUMN BY PÓRDÍS ELVA  
PORVALDSDÓTTIR BACHMANN

Huge Hollywood money-makers like Big Momma's House and The Nutty Professor, both so popular that they had sequels, tell us that fat comedy works. Big Momma's enormous, jiggling bottom covered in cellulite is actually the main focus of the trailer for Big Momma's House 2. Eddie Murphy was considered so hilarious in a fat-suit, he was multiplied in The Klumps (sequel to The Nutty Professor) into many different characters who were grossly obese,

from anorexia, which happens to be the deadliest of all mental illnesses. Imagine a picture of Ronald Reagan, who suffered from Alzheimer's, with a random car in the background. Very few tabloids would sink as low as to print the caption "That's not yours, Ronald. Don't you remember what your car looks like?" For some strange reason, some illnesses, however deadly they may be, are considered safe joking material, while others aren't.

**"The fat lady in my script wasn't written as a comedic role, but a complex, tragic role. Much to my surprise, the audience roared with laughter when the leading lady of my play carried out the simplest of tasks..."**

excluding the granny who got to be very old and horny instead

Obviously, a lot of viewers find fat people screamingly funny. In fact, Fat Actress, a sitcom riddled with fat jokes broke the record on American cable TV channel Showtime for most viewers on the opening episode of a show. The world of cartoons is no different. Homer Simpson of The Simpsons and Peter Griffin of Family Guy are examples of the funny fat guy, and even South Park has its token fat kid. In spite of all this evidence suggesting that the fatter the funnier, it is still considered rude and uncivilised to make fun of people who have a large frame. On a personal basis,

I recently wrote and staged a play in which the leading lady weighs approximately 200 kilos because she suffers from compulsive binge-eating, which is classified as an eating disorder. The fat lady in my script wasn't written as a comedic role, but a complex, tragic role. Much to my surprise, the audience roared with laughter when the leading lady of my play carried out the simplest of tasks, such as walking, eating or carrying on a conversation with her lover. Even in scenes that would have been dramatic and disturbing had they revolved around a thin character, people laughed at the fat lady. One critic even suggested that the play's message is that it's

**"I am still clueless as to why today's audience finds fat hilarious even under tragic circumstances..."**

that is. It is quite all right to laugh at fictional characters, but not real-life fat people. You don't see pictures Queen Latifah in the papers with the caption "What a tub of lard!" That would be plain distasteful.

When it comes to being thin, the tables are turned. Being thin isn't funny in showbiz. You don't see Skinny Momma's House or The Chickenlegs at the movies. On a personal basis, however, it's okay to make fun of skinny people. Paparazzi pictures of waif-like actresses regularly appear in tabloids, followed with a humorous caption like "Eat a sandwich, Lindsay!" or "If she stands sideways, Lara Flynn Boyle disappears!" These very same tabloids also suggest regularly that both of the aforementioned actresses suffer

acceptable to make fun of fat people. I am still clueless as to why today's audience finds fat hilarious even under tragic circumstances, and how anyone could think that I was sending out that message by writing this play.

In my opinion, a sense of humour is one of the most important things in life. We ought to be able to recognise the absurdities of being human, including poking fun at our bodies. Although I don't find body-type jokes funny myself, I understand their importance in taking ourselves less seriously. After all, very few people look like Calvin Klein models. It's the hypocrisy regarding what's funny and what's not that gets me. Out of all the things that make us laughable, is simply being fat reason enough?

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# News in Brief

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

## Foreign Analysts on Iceland's "Stocks Carnage"

'Black Tuesday', 4 April, was the single worst trading day the country has seen in 13 years, and cost the Icelandic economy more than 85 billion krónur. According to reports by analysts from Landsbankinn, the ICEX-15's one-day drop of 4.65 percent hit financial firms the hardest, with KB Banki alone losing nearly 27 billion krónur of its overall worth in the day's trading.

A dramatic downturn in Iceland's stock markets, including a nearly five percent drop in its main index, has sparked fresh concerns over the country's economy. The Financial Times, the International Herald Tribune and Bloomberg News all reported on the market dive and its possible implications for Iceland's economic outlook, with Bloomberg calling the event "Iceland's stocks carnage."

The sudden depreciation of the ICEX-15 index – lead by the banking sector – is believed to be largely due to the latest in a series of recent ratings downgrades by credit agencies. Moody's Investor Services this week warned of "increasing challenges" for Iceland's banking giants.

The ICEX-15 index was praised by the aforementioned media outlets for having far outpaced other European markets in terms of growth and increasing in value nearly fivefold since March 2003. However, last Tuesday saw its worst performance in 13 years when the index fell by nearly five percent on the day and dipped the market into negative territory for the year in dollar terms.

According to the Financial Times, the current crisis is closely tied to Iceland's currency woes and the large influx of foreign capital into the economy. The so-called "carry trade", says the FT, consists of investors borrowing large amounts of capital in countries where interest rates are low and then in turn investing in high-yield markets, such as Iceland's. While promoting quick growth, this has also led to unprecedented corporate debt levels and soaring inflation.

On the positive side, all commentators and analysts have stressed the fact that the liquidity levels of Iceland's largest banks and corpora-

tions remain strong – providing a much needed safety buffer in the event of a recession.

## Morthens Wins Suit Against 365

Veteran musician and Idol judge Bubbi Morthens won a suit he launched against tabloid magazine Hér og nú last year that reported he'd begun smoking again. Former editor Garðar Örn Úlfarsson will have to pay Morthens 1.2 million ISK, far less than the 20 million ISK Morthens sought from the 365 media group that owns Hér og nú.

The case revolved mostly around the use of the word "fállinn" (literally, "down, prostrate") in the headline, which in Icelandic means to relapse, particularly after being clean of alcohol or drugs. The ruling judgement said that the story – which featured photos of Morthens in his car – was a violation of his privacy.

## City Council: Left Gaining, Independence Party Still Holds Majority

According to the latest results of an ongoing Gallup poll, support for both the Social Democrats and the Leftist-Green Party has increased in the past month. At the same time, support for the Independence Party continues to decline, as it has since November, but still holds a clear majority.

Support for the Social Democrats increased marginally in the past month, from 35 percent to 36 percent while support for the Leftist-Green Party has gone from 7 percent to 11 percent. Meanwhile, support for the Independence Party is currently 47 percent down from 52 percent last month.

If elections were held today, this would mean that of the 15 seats in Reykjavík City Council, the Independence Party would have eight, the Social Democrats would have six and the Leftist-Greens would have one. Neither the Progressive Party nor the Liberal Party, who garnered 3 percent and 2 percent respectively, would earn a seat.

Svandís Svavarssdóttir, who holds the first seat for the Leftist-Greens in the city elections, wrote on her website that the upswing in support for her party indicates that, "there is support for [Leftist-Green city



councilman] Árni Þór Sigurðsson and he will bump out the eighth man for the Independence Party, thereby opening the possibility of a Social Democratic-Leftist-Green majority."

## Defendants Cleared of All Remaining Charges in Baugur Trial, New Trial Looming

The District Court of Reykjavík acquitted all six defendants last month in the so-called Baugur trial. The defendants, which included the Baugur son and father team of Jóhannes Jónsson and Jón Ásgeir Jóhannesson, were originally charged with 40 counts of various economic crimes – 32 of which were thrown out of court but might be re-filed at a later date.

In a brief verdict, delivered in a courtroom packed with journalists and photographers, the judge simply declared the six acquitted and announced the duty of the state to

pay various legal costs, which he then listed. None of the defendants were present, and in the mad rush to get comments from the legal representatives for the two sides, the press had to make do with rehearsed statements and a clear lack of willingness to comment on a verdict that had not yet been studied in detail.

"I have not yet read the whole verdict, you will have to allow me to do that before I can comment much further," said an obviously disappointed Sigurður Tómas Magnússon, district attorney. He was then queried on a possible connection between this case and plans to re-file 32 previously dismissed charges. Magnússon said it was clear from a previous Supreme Court verdict that no connection should be made between the two.

On 4 April, Magnússon levied new charges of fraud and embezzlement against Baugur CEO Jón Ásgeir Jóhannesson, former assistant director Tryggvi Jónsson and Norðica Inc director Jón Gerald Sullenberger. The trial is due in Reykjavík District Court 27 April.

## An Abundance of Serious Errors Found in Icelandic Textbooks

In a March article for Morgunblaðið, Ingólfur Shahin pointed out a total of 34 errors in only eight pages of text about Islam, which appear in textbooks widely used by secondary schools in Iceland. Shahin did not examine the other 664 pages of the books for factual errors, but he quotes Dr. Jón Ormur Halldórsdóttir, an expert in Islam and Middle Eastern affairs, as saying the chapters on Islam are "not fit to be used as educational material."

Ingólfur Shahin told the Grapevine that he was very cognizant of the need for keeping his report objective. "There are things in there that aren't exactly factual errors but do feed off stereotypes and give a very

offensive overall picture of Muslims," said Shahin. He added that while he didn't have the time and resources to check every single textbook on every topic, the only way to be certain that this was an aberration was to form a committee to look at Icelandic textbooks.

Amongst the notable errors in those chapters were the false assertion that Shia Muslims believe all caliphs to have been descended from Muhammed, and the claim that there are only 315 million Muslims in the world, when in fact the true figure is believed to be closer to 1.3 billion.

## PM: The People Asked for Smelters

Heated debate continued last month in parliament between Social Democratic chairman Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir and Prime Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson over the issue of the Icelandic economy.

Gísladóttir asked the Prime Minister what his response was to economic reports from both Fitch and Standard & Poor's, which she said have given Iceland "the yellow card."

"There is too little information and too many expectations," said Gísladóttir, "because the government built them up with endless talk about factories and heavy industry."

Ásgrímsson responded by saying that the government isn't responsible for the great expectations that have been placed on heavy industry, and that the government didn't hand over heavy industry on a silver platter but rather that the people pressured the government for it.

"There are people in the north trying to get it," said Ásgrímsson. "There are people in Reykjanes who are trying to get it. There is a company in Hafnarfjörður that wants to expand in size. This isn't because the government is trying to convince anybody of anything."



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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. Sigfusson

**Number of seats:** 5

**Registered members:** about 1,400

**Ministers:** none

**Strange but true:** The sole party that not only believes Iceland should see to its own defence, but should also split from NATO altogether.

**Website:** [www.vg.is](http://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:**

Writing on the party's homepage, MP Össur Skarphéðinsson said that the Leftist-Green Party "has been squealing like a stuck pig over how much other parties spend on [the city council election] campaign."

**Website:** [www.samfylking.is](http://www.samfylking.is)

**E-mail:** samfylking@samfylking.is

**Phone:** 414-2200

**Address:** Halleigarstígur 1 (2<sup>nd</sup> 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 Friðleifsdóttir, Minister of Industry Valgerður Sverrisdóttir

**Strange but true:** Prime Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson initially expressed surprise on hearing that the US NATO base was to close, only to tell reporters a few days later that he long expected the base to close.

**Website:** [www.framsokn.is](http://www.framsokn.is)

**E-mail:** framsokn@framsokn.is

**Phone:** 540-4300

**Address:** Hverfisgata 33 (2<sup>nd</sup> 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:** Despite their similarities to the Independence Party, former party chairman Sverrir Hermannsson, in an article on the party website, sets the tone for the party as a whole in saying that the invasion of Iraq was "illegal."

**Website:** [www.frjalslyndir.is](http://www.frjalslyndir.is)

**E-mail:** xf@xf.is

**Phone:** 552-2600

**Address:** Aðalstræti 9, 101 Reykjavík



The Independence Party (Sjálfstædisflokkurinn)

**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:** Minister of Fisheries Einar K. Guðfinnsson, Minister of Justice Björn Bjarnason, Minister of Foreign Affairs Geir H. Haarde, Minister of the Economy Árni M. Mathiesen, President of Parliament Solveig Pétursdóttir, Minister of the Environment Sigríður A. Þórdardóttir, Minister of Communications Sturla Böðvarsson, Minister of Education Pórgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir.

**Strange but true:** Party chairman Geir H. Haarde has indicated that Iceland could pay the US to keep the base open by covering operating costs.

**Website:** [www.xd.is](http://www.xd.is)

**E-mail:** xd@xd.is

**Phone:** 515-1700

**Address:** Háaleitisbraut 1, 105 Reykjavík

## And this issue's question is . . .

What will you miss most about the NATO base?

### Leftist-Green Party:

"(Laughs for a while) Absolutely nothing. I look forward to the opportunity this gives us, and I'm happy we're free at last from this stain. I just hope they'll take the pollution they've made with them."

MP Kolbrún Halldórsdóttir.

### Social Democratic Party:

"(Laughs) Nothing. I'm not going to

miss it, but my mother worked there, so I have some good memories of the place."

MP Guðrún Ógmundsdóttir.

### Progressive Party:

"I won't miss it at all. I believe the departure of the base is a sign that there's security in our part of the world."

MP Kristinn Gunnarsson.

### Liberal Party:

"Maybe the feeling of security."

MP Magnús Pór Hafsteinsson

### Independence Party:

"They've been taking care of the security of our country for a long time now, so that will be missed, not to mention the services and the jobs they've provided."

MP Guðjón Hjörleifsson.



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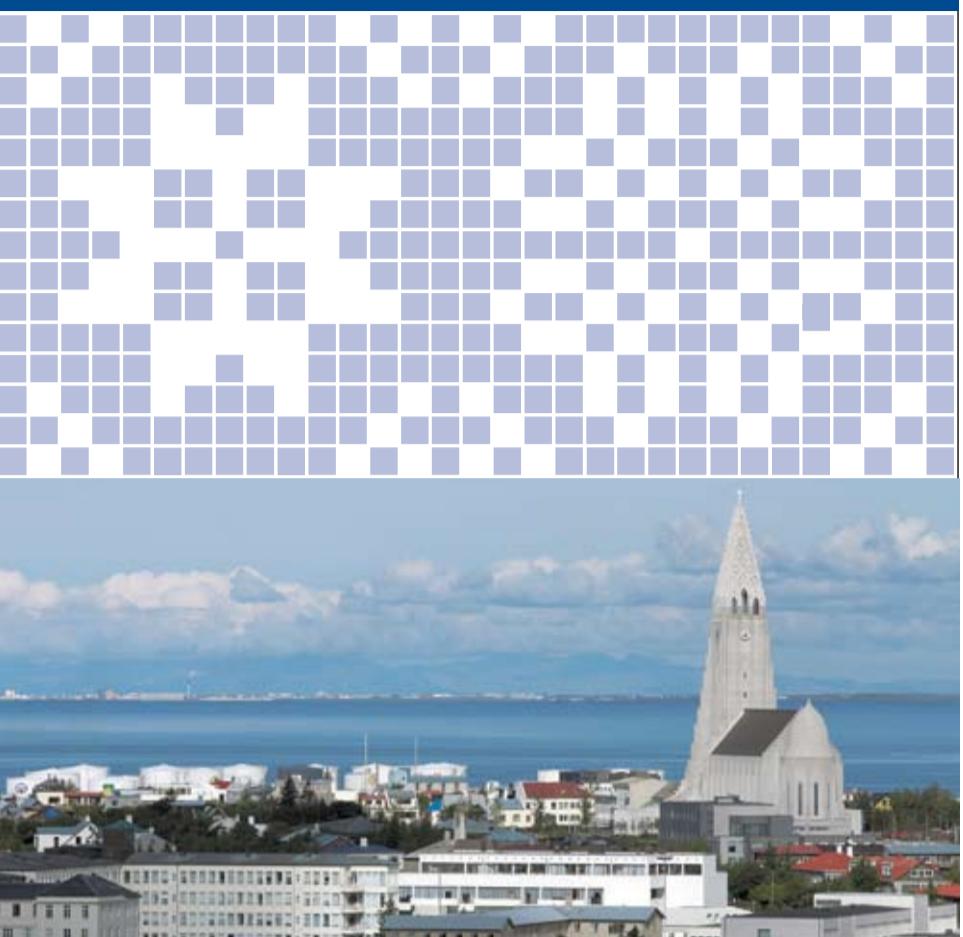


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APRIL



## RE 05 REYKJAVÍK GRAND EXCURSION

**Locations visited:** Reykjavík city centre, the harbour, Hallgrímskirkja church, The Pearl and the National Museum of Iceland.

**Duration:** 2½ hours

**Operation:** English: All year - daily at 09:00

German: All year on Wednesday and Sunday at 09:00

French: All year on Tuesday at 09:00

Guaranteed departures.

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## RE 24 GULLFOSS-GEYSIR DIRECT

**Locations visited:** Gullfoss waterfall, Geysir hot spring area and the Geysir multimedia museum.

**Duration:** 5½ - 6 hours

**Operation:** English: All year - daily at 12:30

Guaranteed departures.

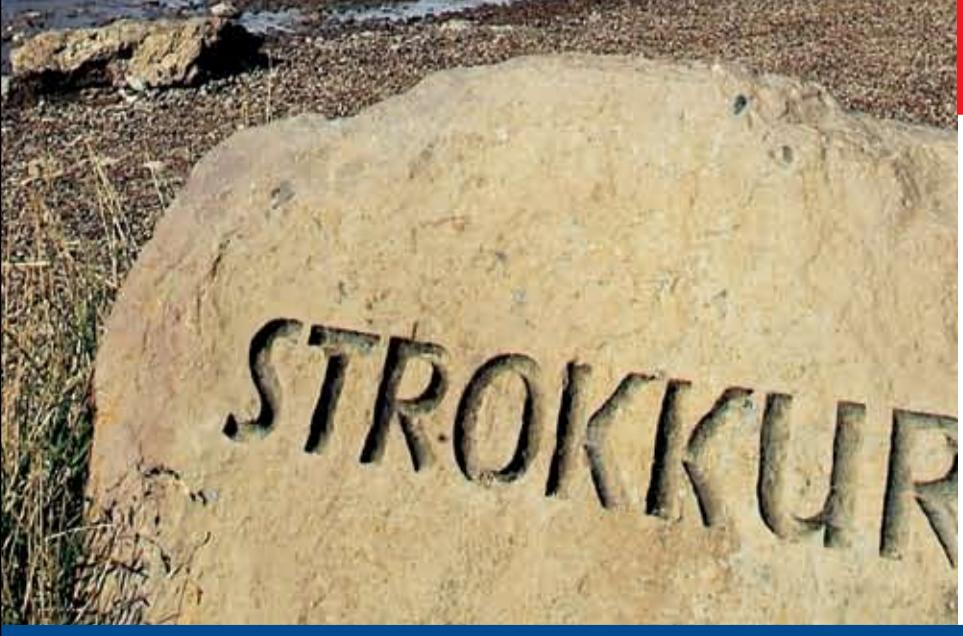
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## No Blood for Oil! Now, Where Did We Park?

Anti-war protests on March 18th

BY GUNNAR HRAFN JÓNSSON PHOTO BY GÚNDI

The 18th of March is the anniversary of Iceland's declaration of support for the 2003 invasion of Iraq. This year, two Icelandic anti-war groups chose to stage events in protest of that decision, and American foreign policy in general. First, there was a noon gathering at Háskólabíó, consisting of a panel debate and the showing of two short films by Ari Alexandersson titled *I Am an Arab* and *1001 Nights*. Immediately following that gathering, there was an outdoor rally at Ingólfstorg. In both cases, those assembled were an eclectic mix of long-time leftists, young activists and students, and various bemused lookers-on. It was hard to gauge what the average age or social status might have been, but bohemians with woolly scarves and left-wing intellectuals in long coats were certainly well-represented.

"Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib are words that have become black stains on humanity's conscience, like Dachau and Auschwitz." – these were amongst the opening words of a speech given by Ólafur Hannibalsson, respected lecturer and long-time protestor, at the start of the gathering at Háskólabíó.

To be fair, he and the rest of the speakers did not let this startling comparison set the tone for the events that would follow. After Hannibalsson had finished speaking, and the not-so-memorable film *I Am an Arab* had been screened, it was time for the panel debate to begin.

The assembled panel of experts was fairly impressive, including former Prime Minister Steingrímur Hermannsson, former foreign minister Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson (who is Ólafur Hannibalsson's brother, incidentally), author Hallgrímur Helgason and several media figures including Halla Gunnarsdóttir from Morgunblaðið. Apart from the general back and forth, Ms. Gunnarsdóttir provided one particularly strongly worded but interesting quote: "You can't report a murder in an objective way."

The questions posed to the panel by the

reverend Órn Bárður Jónsson were basically speaking points, while those emanating from the audience were for the most part completely incomprehensible diatribes that went on for longer than anyone cared to listen and often didn't seem to contain any real questions.

"Seeing as how American military hegemony is destroying the world and our government is directly responsible for being a lapdog to war criminals, don't you think I'm right in saying [insert opinionated conclusion]" – being the typical format. A regrettably painful chapter in what was an otherwise well-executed

is really intense," he said more than once and more than twice about *1001 Nights*. "Please leave if you are under 16 or feel you won't be able to handle the graphic violence."

He wasn't kidding. The short, Alexandersson's second about the Iraq war, is basically just under seven minutes of what hell would be like if George Romero directed the action and Aphex Twin provided the musical score.

Apart from the lengthy close-up of a screaming man having his head sawn off with a rusty machete, it was probably the dead babies and brutal gang rapes that left the most

the famous "no blood for oil" slogan often associated with such events. A few confessed that they weren't at all interested in going to the outdoor rally anyway, and, at first, there were fewer people at Ingólfstorg than at the earlier event.

As time went on, though, passers-by got curious and the crowd sort of snowballed into a fairly impressive mass of spectators, perhaps 800 or so, which was enough to come close to filling Ingólfstorg. Suddenly, a group of 'anarchists', of suspiciously low stature and high pitch, showed up dressed in black and sporting balaclavas. After shouting some slogans, the young revolutionaries struggled to set fire to a NATO flag, but apparently they had managed to procure one made of asbestos and the lighter fluid they began to spray on it in desperation only made it melt away in a decidedly unspectacular fashion.

There are both positive and negative things to be said about the Icelandic peace movement's overall performance on the 18th. The organisations and the people responsible did in fact do a commendable job. Jón Baldvin and Steingrímur Hermannsson were the stars of the evening, trading some memorable jabs about politics and old times, but everyone who rose to speak did so with dignity and conviction. On the negative side, the rally at Ingólfstorg was predictable and no doubt boring for anyone who had been to such an event in Iceland before. It's not that the speeches were bad. Stefán Pálsson, for example, spoke with his trademark passionate eloquence, and given the fact that news of the closure of the military base was still fresh, there was certainly more than enough to talk about. It's just that the depressing weather didn't help the atmosphere, the familiarity of the faces didn't serve to excite, and the raggedness of the banners only underscored the fact that this was not the first or last time we would all be gathering in a vain attempt at having our voices heard.

**"After shouting some slogans, the young revolutionaries struggled to set fire to a NATO flag, but apparently they had managed to procure one made of asbestos and the lighter fluid they began to spray on it in desperation only made it melt away in a decidedly unspectacular fashion."**

debate, but to their credit the panelists did not let the inanity of the questions stop them from expounding, at length, on their own views.

One odd aside came as Steingrímur Hermannsson was asked if he would vote for the Progressive Party, and by extension its chairman Halldór Ásgrímsson, in the next elections. It had nothing to do with what was being discussed, but in ducking the question Hermannsson managed to impart some subtle criticism on the foreign policy of his successor in the Progressive Party.

### Even Describing This Movie Is Intense

After the panel discussion finished, the audience was treated to one last set of dire warnings about the second film's content, and a short speech by the filmmaker himself. "This movie

lasting impression. Pór Eldon's musical score catapulted the already stupefying material into headfuck territory, something he was no doubt aided in by the eerie low-quality look of the footage. A crying baby somewhere in the audience completed the shocking experience, as it coincided with the aforementioned montage of dead and mutilated children.

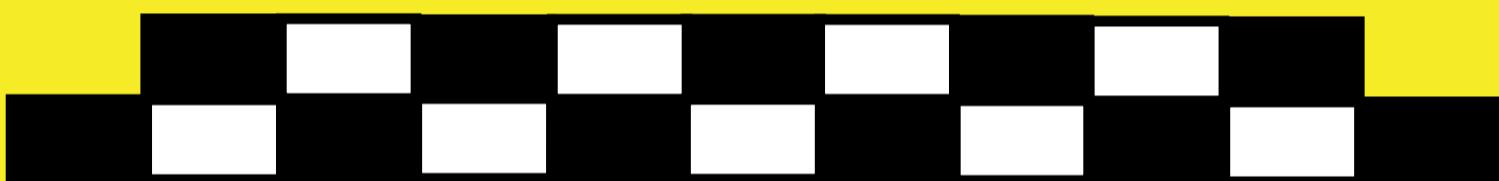
### You Again

Once the horror was over and a few quick words had been spoken, it was off to Ingólfstorg to protest against American hegemony in general, and the military base in Iceland in particular. Rather than marching together in the bleak weather, most of those assembled at Háskólabíó seemed to choose private transportation – something of an irony in light of

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# Save the Water!

How the water debate allowed Iceland's parliament to act, instead of taking action

You may have heard of the new water laws that clogged parliament with filibustering and heated debate for days on end. According to the outraged opposition parties, this controversial new bill is fundamentally altering the relationship between the nation and one of its most important birthrights and natural resources. It's tantamount to treason, they say, to make our water a commodity to be bought and sold by God only knows who in the future. Which side is telling the truth depends entirely on how you vote, it seems.

The issue of who should control Iceland's famously pure and abundant water resources has smouldered away in the background of Icelandic politics for decades, ready to flare up and burn anyone foolhardy enough to touch it. The last time things truly came to a head, back in 1917, it took delicate manoeuvring through a six-year political crisis to resolve the matter, a process that culminated with the passing of the 1923 Water Laws. Now the water controversy is back and bigger than ever. Hydroelectric power has become one of the most highly charged political issues in the country, and is irreversibly tied to such diverse but important topics as job creation, the environment, property rights and the rising fear Icelanders have of a handful of individuals being able to buy their country out from under them.

#### Industry's Enemies

In a time when vociferous political arguments rage over aluminium smelters and the exploitation of natural resources, some opposition figures have found fault with the fact that this new bill would transfer a good deal of authority over the country's water resources from the Ministry of Agriculture to the Ministry of Industry. How much of this was intentional and how much was a result of shoddy workmanship on the part of those writing the proposal, however, is still being debated.

Still, any involvement by the Ministry of Industry is enough to set off alarm bells for some of the most outspoken critics of the government's policy of increasing heavy industry in Iceland. This process has been spearheaded by the Ministry of Industry and closely tied to the development of hydroelectric plants and aluminium smelters.

Ögmundur Jónasson of the Leftist-Greens told the Grapevine that while there had been some initial confusion as to the extent of the restructuring of authority inherent in the bill, the very notion of putting the focus on economic exploitation of water was out of sync with the rest of the world.

"The tendency in recent years has been to come

to view water as a human right, and the keyword in the international debate on water is 'conservation', not 'exploitation,'" said Jónasson.

To understand why the Minister of Industry is such a deeply unpopular figure amongst the opposition, one has to take into account her frontline position in both economic and environmental issues. The Leftist-Greens, for example, oppose her plans for the privatisation of the country's energy providers on both counts; being socialists they are against privatisation and being environmentalists they fear such a move could lead to further dam construction and subsequent environmental damage.

The Social Democrats have also frequently clashed with Valgerður Sverrisdóttir, though their focus may be more on ideological than environmental grounds. Recently, though, they have adopted the eco-friendly language of their fellow leftists.

Sverrisdóttir has also not shied away from heated exchanges with her critics in parliament. Accusations of serious misconduct have flown in both directions in the past – the Minister has repeatedly accused the opposition of quoting statements she never made and the Leftist-Greens in turn called her a liar. Ögmundur Jónasson, for example, wrote a statement in which he said: "I have presented evidence to parliament that makes it clear that the Minister's accusations are based on lies. No minister or member of this parliament, or anyone else for that matter, should be allowed to get away with making up lies about their political opponents."

#### Stage is Set

It was thus in a tense atmosphere that the opposition confronted the government over proposed water laws, particularly the Minister of Industry. In response to the initial government proposals, the opposition requested more time, and ultimately tried to delay the adoption of the laws by filibustering the debate for days on end. Speaker after speaker stood and repeated themselves ad nauseam, with the government's representatives sneaking in the odd proclamation of affected astonishment over the methodology being employed. Shocked. They were truly appalled and astonished.

Guðlaugur Pór Þórðarson of the Independence Party called the delay tactics "violence," while Progressive MP Birkir Jón Jónsson used the opportunity to compare the opposition to Soviet dictators. Apparently, one of the worst things about life under Stalin was the tedium of listening to his long speeches.

Not wanting to lose out in the battle of the sound bites, Magnús Pór Hafsteinsson of the Liberals shot back with the astonishing revelation that he would sooner give his life than allow the bill to pass, though he specified no date or mode of action for this to take place.

All the debate really needed to turn into pure theatre at this point were stage directions, the props already being present in the form of glasses of water and a couple of volumes of poetry. Yes, they actually read poetry, and one MP spoke so long he had to take the first bathroom break in the history of the Icelandic parliament.

The solution our parliamentarians finally found to this deadlock was an interesting one, and in many ways it's surprising that it didn't get more media coverage at the time. The laws were in fact passed at the end, but the catch is that they won't take effect until right after the next election. The opposition has made it abundantly clear that they would under no circumstances allow this bill to be ratified and passed into law, were it up to them. In fact they tried everything they could to stop it getting this far in the first place. If the opposition were to get into government next year, the nation has more or less been promised that the bill will be thrown out and completely re-written. This adds a new dimension to the upcoming election brawl.

In effect, people will get the chance to take part in a referendum on the adoption of the new water laws, and now have some time to reflect on the cold-hard facts relating to them. Unfortunately, the level of obfuscation employed by both sides in this matter has rendered the facts all but invisible under the thick tapestry of political point scoring that now covers anything remotely connected to it.

#### The Water Debate—Water Doesn't Even Enter the Picture

In a vain attempt at making objective sense of the whole mess, the Grapevine tried to canvas the opinion of several MPs regarding the water laws. As always, and for obvious reasons, the response from the opposition was far easier to come by. The government generally views this as a non-issue that was hijacked by the left for political gain. They simply direct people to the text of the old and new laws – effectively challenging opponents to prove the differences are anything other than formalities. The opposition, though, seems more interested in making its case through the media. Leftist-Green MP Kolbrún Halldórsdóttir told us the government's handling of the laws was typical of its general approach

**FOR SALE**

to public debate.

"It has been the government's strategy in this matter as well as others to separate intrinsically linked issues and deny parliament, and the nation as a whole, the right to see the big picture," said Halldórsdóttir.

She added that her party had only wanted to re-examine the water laws in conjunction with an anticipated future debate surrounding two upcoming bills on water purity standards and natural resource management.

"You can't separate these three issues," she said.

Also claiming to look at the bigger picture, Social Democrat Óssur Skarphéðinsson told the Grapevine that the new bill was simply about one aspect of what he called the central issue in Icelandic politics. "All politics for the past couple of decades, and indeed quite a bit longer, have been about the issue of private versus public ownership of resources. As a socialist, I have fought my whole life to protect the country's valuable natural resources from exploitation at the hands of privatised industry," said Skarphéðinsson.

Asked what alternative approach his party would have taken had they been in power, Skarphéðinsson added: "It doesn't matter if we're talking about water, geothermal heat, fish or anything else. The principle is the same, and our policies are consistent: the natural resources of Iceland should belong to everyone in the country and all laws relating to the right of individuals to exploit those resources should be temporary and have a clearly defined sunset clause."

Skarphéðinsson is far from being alone in his concerns. A conference and resolution entitled Water for Everyone was endorsed by 14 different organisations and associations, including the National Church, the Icelandic Teacher's Association, the Icelandic Human Rights Office and major labour unions such as ASÍ, SÍB and BSRB.

Of course, the church is working the environmental angle at a time when few of its other policies are likely to garner widespread support or positive attention. And it's not entirely surprising that a labour union such as BSRB would be opposed to the government on an issue like this, especially because their chairman, Ögmundur Jónasson, also happens to be an MP for the Leftist-Greens.

At the height of the controversy, some felt he and the Leftist-Greens were leading the charge and forcing the issue out into a public debate. Jónasson, though, told the Grapevine he couldn't take credit. "It was the nation that drove this issue forward. It was the people who wouldn't let it slide. People woke up and realised

the seriousness of what was happening; that our water was being put up for sale. We answered the call for action by filibustering the parliamentary debate, but we did it in a fair, factual and rational way," said Jónasson.

According to Jónasson, and in fact quite a number of other vocal opponents of the proposed water bill, the government simply isn't keeping up with the times. While the world around us is abuzz with concepts like conservation and sustainability, they say, exploitation is the order of the day in Iceland.

#### International Perspective

They have a point about the international community. From its 2002 declaration that water was a human right to the more recent establishment of a much-hyped World Water Forum, the United Nations and related NGOs have both adapted to and helped shape a new worldwide discourse on water as a vital resource. We've all heard futuristic speculation about water becoming the new oil, or the ominous prediction that the next world war will be fought over access to water. What not everyone realises is the imminence and inevitability of the water crisis.

According to the United Nations, the availability of clean drinking water will decrease by at least 30 percent in the next two decades. In South America, attempts to privatise water in the face of rising demand and a faltering supply have already resulted in violence and widespread social unrest such as the Cochabamba protests that shook Bolivia for the first four months of the year 2000. There, corrupt officials had effectively sold off the country's water rights to foreign investors for a pittance, resulting in huge price increases for clean drinking water and a dramatic decline in living standards amongst the poor.

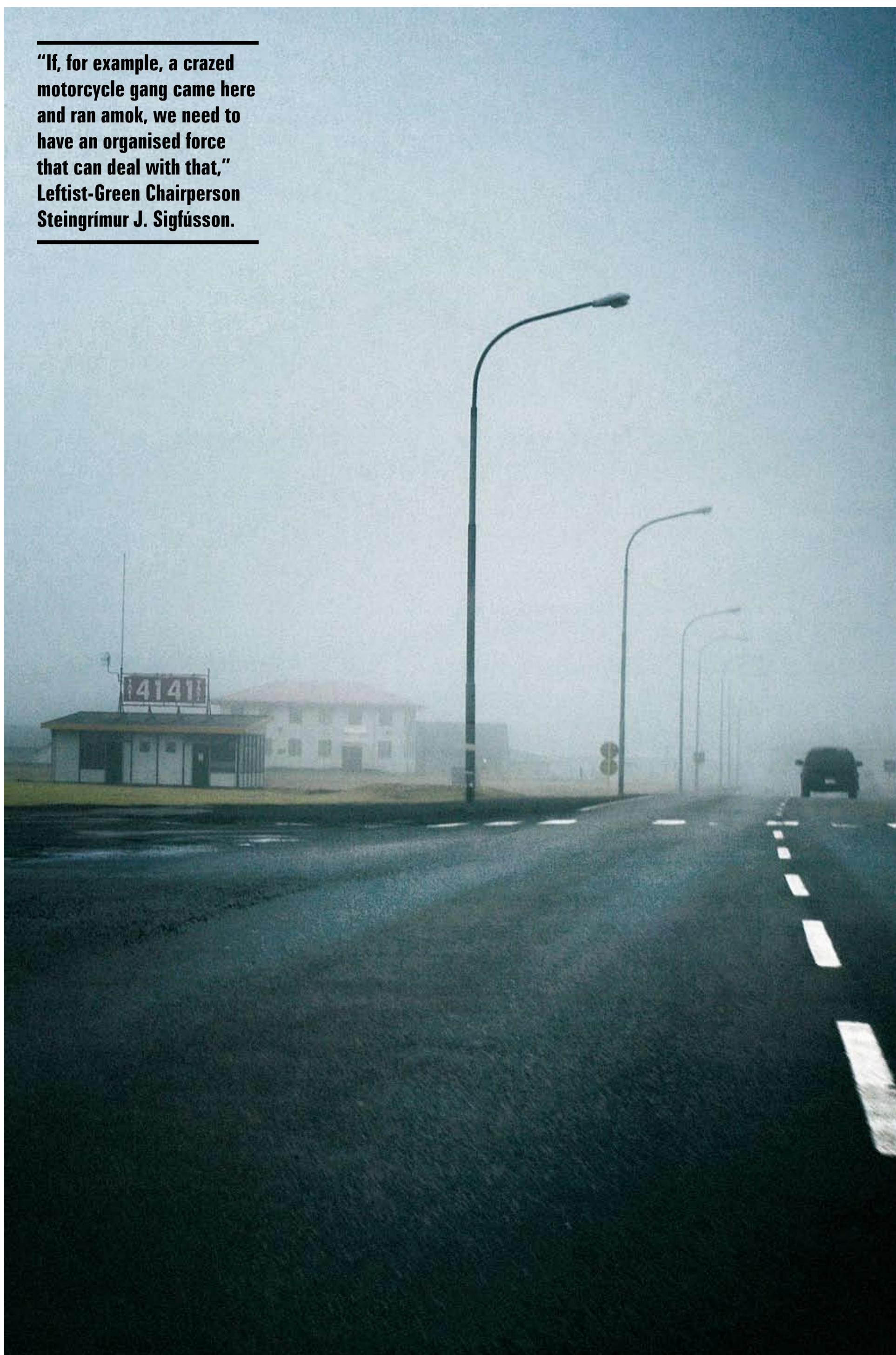
No one is suggesting water prices in Iceland are about to rise to unreasonable levels, or that we as a people wouldn't be able to shoulder the burden of one more outrageous bill at the end of the month. But worldwide, supplies are already running low while the global population booms. When there are already millions of people out there desperate enough for drinking water to risk life and limb in violent street protests against an authoritarian government and a powerful multinational corporation, it should probably make you pause and think twice before permanently handing over the tap to the highest bidder. If you believe the government, though, we already did that in 1923.

BY GUNNAR HRAFN JÓNSSON

**"All politics for the past couple of decades, and indeed quite a bit longer, have been about the issue of private versus public ownership of resources. As a socialist, I have fought my whole life to protect the country's valuable natural resources from exploitation at the hands of privatized industry." Óssur Skarphéðinsson.**

**"If, for example, a crazed motorcycle gang came here and ran amok, we need to have an organised force that can deal with that," Leftist-Green Chairperson Steingrímur J. Sigfússon.**

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## The Ghost Town on the Coast

Collateral damage from the base's departure

BY PAUL F. NIKOLOV PHOTOS BY GÚNDI

On March 15th, the US State Department made an announcement that brought a decades-long chapter in Icelandic history to a close and left its future even more uncertain: effective October 2006, the NATO base in Keflavík will be reduced to little more than a few "submarine talkers," with US forces withdrawing their four F-15s, their helicopter squadron and the vast majority of their personnel.

Response from the Icelandic government was mixed. Prime Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson expressed surprise and disappointment (although he would later state that he expected the close to happen), while chairman of the Leftist-Green Party – which never wanted the base in Iceland to begin with – Steingrímur J. Sigfússon was decidedly jubilant. From all sides, proposals have come of different scenarios for Iceland's defence, whether it be increasing the staffing of Iceland's SWAT team, the Víkingasveit or appealing to other NATO countries for assistance.

But the way in which the base's departure truly makes Iceland vulnerable is economically – over 700 Icelanders work on the base itself. Counting outside contractors, the number approaches 1,000 people in a region of the country sorely lacking in job opportunities. Couple this with all the services the base currently provides for – services that the Icelandic government is now going to have to pay for itself – and the economic burden becomes even greater. And the Icelanders with whom the Grapevine spoke aren't particularly optimistic that their elected officials have a real plan in place.

Iceland joined NATO in 1949 with the understanding that it would not have to develop a military of its own. Built in 1951, the NATO base at Keflavík has provided for the defence of the country and was an important outpost during the Cold War. Since the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of military

conflicts in the Middle East, however, the location has lost a lot of its relevance, and with military spending for the war in Iraq reaching into the hundreds of billions of dollars, it began to appear an unnecessary expense. As Deputy Chief of Mission for the US Embassy in Iceland Philip Kosnett told the Grapevine that by 2003 the US government came to the conclusion that, "airplanes weren't an appropriate defence for Iceland. The Icelandic government disagreed. We analysed the situation and came to our own conclusions."

Just last year, stronger indications that the base would soon close came out. In the summer of 2005, the US government closed 11 bases in Germany alone. In October, discuss-

March 16th that increased staffing of both the police and the Víkingasveit should be defence enough for Iceland, adding, "Who is going to invade us? We're not talking about being defenceless. If, for example, a crazed motorcycle gang came here and ran amok, we need to have an organised force that can deal with that. What we don't need is an air force and a base full of soldiers."

Others, such as former Foreign Minister Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson, have taken a broader approach. Along with other members of the Social Democratic Party, he formed a committee called "Independent Foreign Policy." While none of their proposals have been finalised, Hannibalsson told the Grape-

with the illegal and immoral invasion of Iraq."

Looking towards other NATO countries seems to be precisely what the ruling coalition is driving at, with Ásgrímsson telling the Icelandic media on March 26th, "We're a European people and the decision of the US to withdraw defence from Keflavík encourages Iceland towards Europe and away from North America."

Despite these strong words, the Foreign Minister has demonstrated a considerable amount of denial when it comes defence relations with the United States. After a meeting on 31 March between 26 representatives of the US State Department, Department of Defence and the Icelandic government, the US reiterated what it had said from the time the announcement was made about two weeks previous: the defence agreement will be honoured, but the base is going to be downsized. Undeterred, Minister of Foreign Affairs Geir H. Haarde told the press that, "We will of course continue to have talks with other NATO countries, but I don't consider it realistic that any other country take this [defence] role besides the US." Of course, this statement was made after he'd already exhausted talks with Norway, France, Denmark, Germany and Russia. Haarde even hinted that the Icelandic government would cover the base's costs if it meant keeping them here, telling reporters that the cost of Iceland's defence "isn't that much." The US military currently spends about 250 million USD (nearly 3.6 billion ISK) per year on the base. At the time of this writing, the dismantling of base facilities has already begun.

### "We're a European people and the decision of the US to withdraw defence from Keflavík encourages Iceland towards Europe and away from North America," Prime Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson.

sions regarding the base had been downgraded from the US State Department to Assistant National Security Advisor Steve Hadley. This transition is telling – the State Department, long a staunch ally of the NATO base in Iceland, was handing the matter over to the budget-conscious Department of Defence.

#### **Who Will Save Us From The Crazed Motorcycle Gangs? Europe.**

Despite the fact that NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer announced on March 20th that he was working to resolve the dispute between the US and Iceland, no one seems to be able to agree on what new form Iceland's defence should take.

Leftist-Green Party chairman Stein- grímur Sigfússon told the Grapevine on

vine that Iceland's defence should be based, both at home and abroad, on "analysing our own capacity for ensuring civil security, which includes analysing our weaknesses and our points of contact. But this also means coming into discussions with neighbouring countries such as Denmark, Holland and Norway for assistance with our national defence." In addition, the committee hopes to chart a new foreign policy for Iceland, seemingly independent of American influence.

"We have to look at our own national interests," he told the Grapevine. "And this means supporting solutions based on international laws and treaties, forming closer ties with Nordic countries as well as the rest of Europe and to stop being passengers going along with US foreign policy, such as we did

#### **One-Thousand More Commuters Should Ease the Oil Demand**

While the future of Iceland's defence remains uncertain, the more immediate threat to the country is that many of the nearly 1,000

>>> CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE



Icelanders whose livelihood depends on the base are currently wondering how they'll be making a living this fall.

In addition to jobs, one must also take into account the fact that the maintenance and fire department of Leifur Eiríksson International Airport are provided by the NATO base, and the fact that the 56th Rescue Squadron of the US Navy assists the Icelandic Coast Guard with search and rescue operations.

While Ásgrímsson and Reykjanesbær Mayor Árni Sigfússon are currently negotiating how to deal with the situation, Steinþór Sigfússon remains optimistic.

"I think we will be able to provide jobs for these people," he told the Grapevine. "Some will simply switch employers, some will retire and the labour market in the capital area is growing. Some of them could either move here or commute to work here." Reykjavík, it should be noted, is about half an hour's drive from Keflavík.

The Grapevine went to the base two days after the closure announcement. Morale was not high.

"I heard that the base was going to close the day before yesterday, during lunch," said Rakel, a single mother of three and a kitchen worker for the Three Flags restaurant on the base. "I received no warning whatsoever. I was like, 'Oh my God, am I going to be unemployed? What's happening?' I'm still in a state of shock."

Rakel doesn't consider commuting to Reykjavík for work an option.

"Who's going to take care of my kids?" she asked. "Plus, it's very expensive having to drive to Reykjavík and back."

Rakel believes the Icelandic government should instead invest in the area.

"They're always talking about building up companies out in the country and everything," she said. "They never did anything for this area here because they were always depending on the base. They're going to have to work on job development in this area, because I don't see any other solution about it."

Michaela, who also works at the restaurant, took a similar train of thought.

"For me, it's going to be hard," said Michaela, "because I have kids and I just bought my apartment last November. I've been thinking about moving to Reykjavík, and I'm going to go now. I don't want to be going up there when everyone else starts looking for work at

the same time."

Birgir, the chef at the restaurant, was worried that his staff might have to leave even earlier than the fall.

"There's a lot of military people who'll be leaving in May or June," he told the Grapevine. "There'll be something like 500 people here then, and we can't keep the club open for that few people. There'll be a lot of people working here who'll be leaving a lot earlier than everybody else."

Birgir's own job prospects are unpredictable at best.

home early or serve elsewhere, the decision is ultimately up to the chain of command.

"If I'm sent home early, that screws everything up for me," he told us. "I was planning on paying off my debts and finishing school. I'm going to have a real hard time doing that if they send me home."

We tried our hand at talking to two different Air Force servicemen, but their replies were almost identical to each other: "No one wants to hear my opinion." Unfazed, Barlow got on his phone and called some of his friends to meet us at his room.

"Personally, I was kind of happy," he told us. "Not necessarily that they're closing the base, but I got a year left in the military, so this is kind of an opportunity where they might cut my orders short so I can be out of the military, period. But it sucks for Iceland because a lot of the guys working on the base are going to be out of jobs. I just hope that the military helps them find jobs in Iceland."

Mall wasn't particularly worried about his own situation, either.

"I don't have any kids and I'm debt-free," he said. "Plus I'm a bit too liberal for the military lifestyle, so I'm hoping they'll cut my orders short. They're not going to pay for me to fly somewhere else, take a job where I'm not working most of the time for eight months, and then check out."

"They might try to recruit me to re-enlist," added Garcia. "But they're not going to get very far with that."

"They can actually extend you for three more years than you're signed up to do," corrected Mall. "It's called putting a stop-loss on you. They do it if they feel as though you'd be useful somewhere else."

So the trick to get out of that is to appear as useless and incompetent as possible? "I wish," sighed Mall. "I've been trying that trick for a while. It's hard to get kicked out of the military."

The three were curious about the economic and political situation in Iceland, asking questions about the level of unemployment, what the different political parties are and how they feel about the base. Mostly, they expressed concern for the Icelanders they've come to work with and know.

"I mean, it's not just about the people who work on the base," Mall pointed out. "You also have to think about the people who go off base to spend money in town. Their going could start kind of a depression, couldn't it?"

"I'm going to miss the Icelandic people I work with," added Garcia.

"I know they got families to support," added Mall. "I hope it doesn't affect them too much."

"They're all awesome people," said Garcia. "It sucks that a few months from now they're all going to be jobless."

*Gunnar Hrafn Jónsson contributed reporting to this article.*

## "Some people have worked here for years and years, and have worked up in the pay scale. They'll have to go to Reykjavík and start from scratch," Birgir, chef at the Keflavík base.

"Well, I have this one job that I could take in May," he said. "Although I don't know if it'll pay as much as this one, but that one's only until September, so then I have to go and find another job."

Birgir also had little faith in commuting to Reykjavík.

"People are not going to have houses down here and drive to Reykjavík for a job that pays less than what you would make here," he told us. "Some people have worked here for years and years, and have worked up in the pay scale. They'll have to go to Reykjavík and start from scratch. The guys in parliament in Reykjavík, they're just sitting in Reykjavík and don't have a clue what's going on down here. They haven't come down here."

### A Great Base for Finishing that Novel

Petty Officer 2nd Class James Barlow gave the Grapevine a tour of the base. As we walked and drove around the base, it was hard not to notice the ghost-town feel the place already has.

Barlow, like the vast majority of the men and women serving on the base, finds himself in a sort of limbo – as his orders aren't scheduled to finish until February, he will either have his time cut short early, or it'll be extended in another part of the world. While one can request whether or not to be sent

The barracks that Barlow shares with nine others are the size of an average block apartment building in Reykjavík, with enough to room to house hundreds at a time. Just walking into the building itself you get a Shining vibe – this place is so deserted, your imagination wants to fill the vacuum. Shortly after we showed up, Barlow's friends arrived.

HM3 Clay Garcia, DN Jarret Meyers and HM3 Pattison Mall are all enlisted men in the Navy, and have been in Iceland 7 months, 16 months and 11 months respectively. Like their Icelandic co-workers, they were also taken by surprise with the news of the base's closing, if to a lesser degree.

"I'd been hearing rumours every day for a couple of weeks," said Meyers. "But I just thought someone else would take over, instead of us just packing up and leaving."

"They only told us they're shrinking the base not closing it. That's the official word," said Mall. "Who knows who they're leaving behind? We're all single. And that's the big catch, because if they're going to leave a couple people behind and save some money, it's probably going to be us single people. America likes to have its hand in every cookie jar in the world and that includes here. I don't see them completely shutting us down."

Garcia was upbeat about the news of the base's closure.

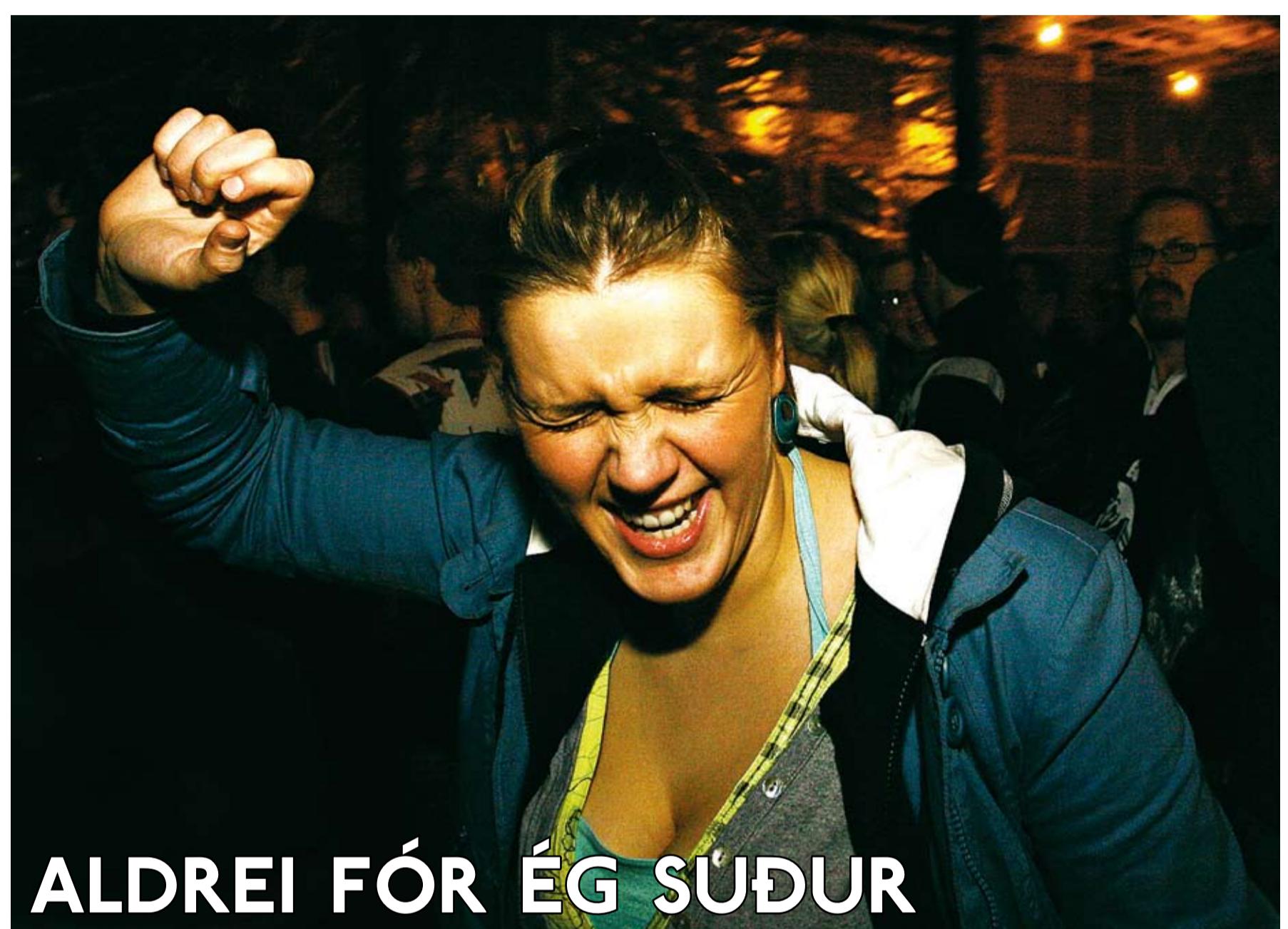
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# INFO

Issue 04, 2006

8 Page Listings Section in Your Pocket



## ALDREI FÓR ÉG SUÐUR

The third annual Aldrei Fór Ég Suður music festival will return to the remote town of Ísafjörður, Saturday the 15th of April. The festival's name, which translates to 'I Never Went South' is borrowed from a song title by Bubbi Morthens, a former migrant worker (however far he might be removed from those days), and refers to the increasing urbanisation of Icelandic society.

A celebration of local talent and rural heritage, the festival is the brainchild of Ísafjörður's own, and one of Iceland's more celebrated artists, Mugison. He claims that the idea behind it was born one night when he and his father were drinking beer and talking about how cool it would be to put together a festival where the stars would take a back seat to local talent, and the real attraction would just be the company of the decent and down-to-earth people of Ísafjörður.

"I started talking to people about it and everybody was really open to the idea. Before we realised it, we had recruited more than 20 bands, and we did not even have a venue, much less the money to pay for flights and ac-

commodations. But we really couldn't back out of it, so we went down on our knees to beg for money and support," he told the Grapevine. "We've always intended for this to be a non-profit event. Everyone is giving their work, and there is no entrance fee. We just try to make it fun and entertain the audience and ourselves."

Much in line with the festival's ideals, special attention is given to lesser-known local artists such as Jón Kr Ólafsson from Bíldudalur and the West Fjords Accordion Society. Mugison says he is especially excited to see the performance by the Accordion Society.

"They have gathered around 25 old geezers who play the accordion from all over the West Fjords and they have been rehearsing an act especially for this event. They will be playing a bunch of Deep Purple songs with the main song being Sweet Child in Time."

Now that's entertainment.

Other notable acts include the reunion of KAN, Herbert Guðmundsson's (a cult figure in Icelandic music) first band. The festival also features several representatives of

the Reykjavík scene, including the punk outfit Rass.

"I am really looking forward to seeing them play Burt Með Kvótann (End the Quota) in Ísafjörður," Mugison says, referring to the Icelandic fishing quota system, which has been wildly unpopular in the West Fjords.

As of publication, the confirmed full line-up includes the following: The Hafðis Bjarna Band, Hermigervill, Mugison with Rassi Prump, Rúnar Þórisson, Baggalútur, Mr. Silla, Benni Hemm Hemm, Rass, 701, Reykjavík!, NineElevens, Kristinn Níelsson, Pröstur Jóhannesson, The West Fjords Accordion Society, KAN, Jón Kr Ólafsson, Borkó, Ísafjörður's Secondary School Boys Choir, Hairdoctor, Ghostigital and Jet Black Joe.

*The Aldrei Fór Ég Suður festival is free, and takes place Saturday, April 15th in Ísafjörður. For more information, log on to [www.skidavikan.is/festival](http://www.skidavikan.is/festival).*

■ By Paul F. Nikolov



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Steak House & bar, Vesturgata 4, Hafnarfjörður, tel: 565 1130

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 - 7 APRIL

**DJ Fúsi**  
Café Amsterdam  
  
**DJ Steinunn, Helgi Valur, Pétur Ben, Weapons, Wulfgang, Úg, Jan Mayen, Ulpa, Jakobínára, Dr. Spock, Jeff Who?**  
Gaukur á Stöng  
  
**Troubadour Gotti and Eisi, DJ Maggi**  
Hressingarskálinn

## SATURDAY - 8 APRIL

**DJ Fúsi**  
Café Amsterdam  
  
**Troubadour Gotti and Eisi, DJ Maggi**  
Hressingarskálinn  
  
**Papar**  
NASA

## TUESDAY - 11 APRIL

**Momentum, guests**  
Gaukur á Stöng

## WEDNESDAY - 12 APRIL

**Blind Faith, Benni Crespo's Gang**  
Gaukur á Stöng  
  
**DJ Johnny from midnight**  
Hressingarskálinn  
  
**Deep Dish (Electronic music and laser show), Grétar G opening**  
NASA  
  
**Benni Hemm Hemm, Bob Justman, DJ Göngutúr**  
Hellirinn  
  
**Mammút**  
Sirkus

## THURSDAY - 13 APRIL

**I'm Being Good, Skátar, Gjöll, plus guests**  
Gaukur á Stöng  
  
**Benni Crespo's Gang, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs**  
Hellirinn

## FRIDAY - 14 APRIL

**Jet Black Joe**  
Gaukur á Stöng  
  
**DJ Johnny from midnight**  
Hressingarskálinn  
  
**I'm Being Good, Skátar, Gjöll**  
Grand Rokk

## SATURDAY - 15 APRIL

**The Aldrei Fór Ég Suður Music Festival in Ísafjörður, featuring:**  
Hljómsveit Hafðisar Bjarna  
Hermigervill  
Prumpison  
Rúnar Þórisson  
Mr. Silla  
Benni Hemm Hemm  
Rass  
701  
Reykjavík!!!  
NineElevens  
Kristinn Nielsson  
Þróstur Jóhannesson  
Harmonikkufélag Vestfjarða  
KAN  
Jón Kr Ólafsson frá Bíldudal  
Borkó  
Drengjakór MÍ  
Hairdoctor  
Sign  
Jet Black Joe  
Lack of Talent  
Óli Popp  
I'm Being Good  
Weapons  
Siggi Björns

**Funks Troop**  
Gaukur á Stöng

**Touch, DJ Maggi**  
Hressingarskálinn

## SUNDAY - 16 APRIL

**DJ Maggi from midnight**  
Hressingarskálinn

## MONDAY - 17 APRIL

**I'm Being Good, Skátar plus guests**  
Gamlabókasafnið, Hafnarfjörður

## TUESDAY - 18 APRIL

**Singapore Sling**  
Grand Rokk

**I'm Being Good, Æla, Skátar, plus guests**  
Frumleikhúsið, Keflavík

## WEDNESDAY - 19 APRIL

**DJ Maggi from midnight**  
Hressingarskálinn

**Roni Size**

NASA

**Wedding Present Night**  
Sirkus

## THURSDAY - 20 APRIL

**Hljómsveitinn Mát**  
Hressingarskálinn

## FRIDAY - 21 APRIL

**Touch, DJ Maggi**  
Hressingarskálinn

## SATURDAY - 22 APRIL

**Troubadour Gotti and Eisi, DJ Maggi**  
Hressingarskálinn

**Faeroese Night**  
NASA

## WEDNESDAY - 26 APRIL

**Bob Justman**  
Sirkus

## THURSDAY - 27 APRIL

**Indigo**  
Grand Rokk

**Menn Ársins**  
Hressingarskálinn

**Wedding Present, Singapore Sling**  
Grand Rokk

**The Rite of Spring Festival presents: Mezzoforte**  
**Ife Tolentino (Brazil)**  
NASA

## FRIDAY - 28 APRIL

**DJ Master**  
Café Amsterdam

**Touch, DJ Johnny**  
Hressingarskálinn

**The Rite of Spring Festival presents: 100% Dynamite (Britain)**  
**Flís with Bogomil Font**  
**Petter (Sweden)**  
NASA

## SATURDAY - 29 APRIL

**Mát, DJ Johnny**  
Hressingarskálinn

**Hviss**  
Café Amsterdam

**The Rite of Spring Festival presents: KAL (Serbia)**  
**Stórsveit Nix Noltes**  
NASA

## SUNDAY - 30 APRIL

**The Rite of Spring Festival presents: Salsa Celтика (Britain)**  
**Blue Truck**  
NASA

## THURSDAY - 4 MAY

**Touch**  
Hressingarskálinn

## FRIDAY - 5 MAY

**Touch, DJ Maggi**  
Hressingarskálinn

## SATURDAY - 6 MAY

**Manchester Concert at Laugardalshöllinn featuring.**

Badly Drawn Boy  
Elbow  
Echo and the Bunnymen  
Andy Rourke (bassaleikari Smiths) peytir skífum  
Trabant  
Benni Hemm Hemm  
And The Foreign Monkeys  
Tickets on sale April 7th at Midi.is.



## THE REYKJAVÍK BLUES FESTIVAL

This festival gets better every year, and this year looks like an exceptionally good one. In addition to some local blues acts, the festival has imported Delta blues artist Fruteland Jackson and Chicago native Deitra Farr. The first day includes a jam session, with entertainment to continue throughout the day.  
Hotel Nordica, 11 – 14 April. For more information, visit [www.blues.is](http://www.blues.is).



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## MANCHESTER

This multi-band concert won't begin until 6 May, but you're going to want to buy your tickets when they start going on sale 7 April. Apart from featuring Badly Drawn Boy, Elbow, Echo and the Bunnymen, Trabant, Benni Hemm Hemm, Músiktilraunir winners The Foreign Monkeys and Smiths bassist Andy Rourke DJing, tickets are going for a laughable 2,600 – 3,700 ISK. You will not, I repeat, not find a better concert deal. Ever.

Tickets go on sale 7 April at 10:00 at Skífan and BT stores around the country. Great. **Laugardalshöll, 6 May.**

## The Reykjavík City Theatre

### **On the main stage:**

#### **Kalli á þakinu.**

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

#### **Ronja Ræningjadóttir.**

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

#### **Woyzeck.**

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

#### **Perfect Wedding.**

Icelandic version of the comedic play by Robin Hawdon.

#### **Við erum öll Marlene Dietrich.**

Play examining work of the actress during World War 2, featuring contributions from Slovenia, France and Belgium.

### **Other stage:**

#### **Alveg brilljant 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 Pórdís Elva Þórvaldsdóttir Bachmann's play on eating disorders.

#### **Naglinn.**

Tragicomedy by legendary comedian Jón Gnarr.

#### **Sönglist.**

Student production featuring singing used in different styles.

## Broadway

### **Nina og Gerry**

Cabaret performance in Icelandic.

## 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 Þórssdóttir.

### **Pétur Gautur.**

Icelandic version of the Henrik Ibsen play.

### **Átta kónur.**

Farcical comedy by Robert Thomas.

## Iðno

### **Ég er míni eigin kona**

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

### **Gestur - Siðasta Maltíðin.**

Comedic opera.

## Leikfélag Akureyrar

### **Maríubjallan**

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 Feretti.

## Dance

### **Spring Exhibition of the Icelandic Dance Academy.**

For two nights only, 11 and 12 April. Reykjavík National Theatre

### **Dance Theatre.**

Combining elements of theatre and dance. Reykjavík National Theatre

Visit [www.id.is](http://www.id.is) for more information.



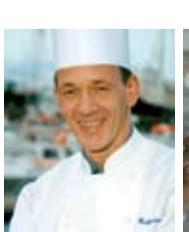
## Thursday Foreplay

Every Thursday at 20:00, Hitt Húsið hosts free gigs featuring local talent. Apart from being a great all-ages place for "the kids" that's been going strong for nearly ten years, a lot of today's big-name bands such as Mínus got their start there. See tomorrow's stars today, for nothing. You can't beat that.

**Hitt Húsið, at the corner of Austurstræti and Bankastræti, Thursdays, 20:00.**

<b>1</b>	<b>CAFÉ</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Tíu Dropar</b> Laugavegur 27	<b>15</b>	<b>Café Victor</b> Hafnarstræti 1-3	<b>22</b>	<b>Pravda</b> Austurstræti 22	<b>25</b>	<b>Ölстofan</b> Vegamótastígur	<b>28</b>	<b>Kaffibrennslan</b> Pósthús		
<b>2</b>	<b>Ráðhúskaffi</b> City Hall	<b>9</b>	<b>Kaffitár</b> Bankastræti 8	<b>16</b>	<b>Vegamót</b> Vegamótastígur 4	<b>23</b>	<b>Café Cultura</b> Hverfisgata 18	<b>26</b>	<b>Thorvaldsen</b> Austurstræti 8	<b>29</b>	<b>Glau...</b> Tryggv...		
<b>3</b>	<b>Gráí Kötturinn</b> Hverfisgata 16a	<b>10</b>	<b>Segafredo</b> By Lækjartorg	<b>17</b>	<b>B5</b> Bankastræti 5	<b>20</b>	<b>Rósenberg</b> Lækjargata 2	<b>27</b>	<b>Ground Zero</b> Vallarstræti 4	<b>30</b>	<b>Hafna...</b> Austu...		
<b>4</b>	<b>Kaffi Hljómalind</b> Laugavegur 21	<b>11</b>	<b>BARS 'N' BISTROS</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Sólón</b> Bankastræti 7a	<b>21</b>	<b>Grand Rokk</b> Smíðjustígur 6	<b>28</b>	<b>Mokka</b> Skólavörðustígur 3a	<b>31</b>	<b>Ömmukaffi</b> Austurstræti		
<b>5</b>	<b>Oliver</b> Laugavegur 20a	<b>12</b>	<b>Kaffibarinn</b> Bergstæðastræti 1	<b>19</b>	<b>Bar 11</b> Laugavegur 11	<b>22</b>	<b>Hressingarskálinn</b> Austurstræti 20	<b>29</b>	<b>Babálú</b> Skólavörðustígur 22a	<b>32</b>	<b>Sirkus</b> Klapparstígur 30		
<b>6</b>	<b>A peaceful café with perfect windows for people-watching and a lot of daylight. Hljómalind is run by a non-profit organisation and it only serves organic &amp; fair trade products.</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Sólón</b> Bankastræti 7a	<b>8</b>	<b>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.</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Grand Rokk</b> Smíðjustígur 6	<b>10</b>	<b>Oliver</b> Laugavegur 20a	<b>11</b>	<b>Kaffibarinn</b> Bergstæðastræti 1		
<b>12</b>	<b>With McDonalds long departed from the centre of Reykjavík, we got Italian chain Segafredo, which isn't a bad trade-off. The staff are expert baristi, and, even though Iceland is proud of its coffee, nobody quite tops the Segafredo latte.</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>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.</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>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.</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Spelled with a C rather than with the more traditional K in order to be more cosmopolitan. This ploy seems to be working, as the bar has become a hangout for foreigners. The Viking ship sitting on top of the building might also add to the appeal. The crowd is very mixed, both in origin and age, and so is the music.</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>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.</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>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.</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>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.</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>The recently expanded Cultura is located in the same building with the Intercultural Centre. A good value menu, friendly service and settings that allow you to either sit down and carry on discussions, or dance the night away – tango on Wednesdays starting with free lessons from 20 to 21:00.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>The chairs are Captain Kirk comfortable, the computers are set up with monster headphones and there's a relaxation lounge for break time. This all makes for a great place to do power emailing, especially during the daytime weekday specials offering two hours for 500 ISK; or you could try out gaming, assuming you're bored with that crack addiction.</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>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.</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>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.</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>Gráí 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.</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>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.</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>There are no tricks to this one. You know what you want and you know what 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.</b>
<b>26</b>	<b>Ráðhúskaffi inside the Reykjavík City Hall is a comfortable choice for the view over Tjörnin, especially recommended on the so-called window weather days – the days that are beautiful, as long as you stay indoors. Also art exhibitions, 80m2s of miniature Iceland and municipal politics, all conveniently under the same roof.</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>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.</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>One of the few proper bars in Reykjavík, so you can go and have a game happens to be on at the same time. A wide variety of food is served around the bar, so you don't have to go far for a drink. It has a reputation for long stays.</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>Segafredo 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.</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>Grand Rokk is the oldest bar in Reykjavík and it's still going strong. It's a mix of a chess bar and a live music venue, with a touch of rock'n'roll thrown in for good measure.</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Ground Zero is a net cafe located in the heart of Reykjavík. It's a great place to work or just hang out with friends. They have a range of computers and software available for use.</b>		
<b>32</b>	<b>Ölстofan is a small bar located in the Vegamótastígur area. It's known for its friendly atmosphere and great selection of beers.</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>Pravda is a large club located in the center of Reykjavík. It's known for its diverse music selection and friendly atmosphere.</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>Thorvaldsen is a small bar located in the center of Reykjavík. It's known for its friendly atmosphere and great selection of beers.</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>Ground Zero is a net cafe located in the heart of Reykjavík. It's a great place to work or just hang out with friends. They have a range of computers and software available for use.</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>Grand Rokk is the oldest bar in Reykjavík and it's still going strong. It's a mix of a chess bar and a live music venue, with a touch of rock'n'roll thrown in for good measure.</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>Segafredo 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.</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>Kaffibrennslan is a small bar located in the center of Reykjavík. It's known for its friendly atmosphere and great selection of beers.</b>
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<b>45</b>	<b>Ground Zero is a net cafe located in the heart of Reykjavík. It's a great place to work or just hang out with friends. They have a range of computers and software available for use.</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>Pravda is a large club located in the center of Reykjavík. It's known for its diverse music selection and friendly atmosphere.</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>Thorvaldsen is a small bar located in the center of Reykjavík. It's known for its friendly atmosphere and great selection of beers.</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>Grand Rokk is the oldest bar in Reykjavík and it's still going strong. It's a mix of a chess bar and a live music venue, with a touch of rock'n'roll thrown in for good measure.</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>Segafredo 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.</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>Kaffibrennslan is a small bar located in the center of Reykjavík. It's known for its friendly atmosphere and great selection of beers.</b>		

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



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## DISCOVER ICELANDIC SEAFOOD

At the Reykjavík harbour

"The most original  
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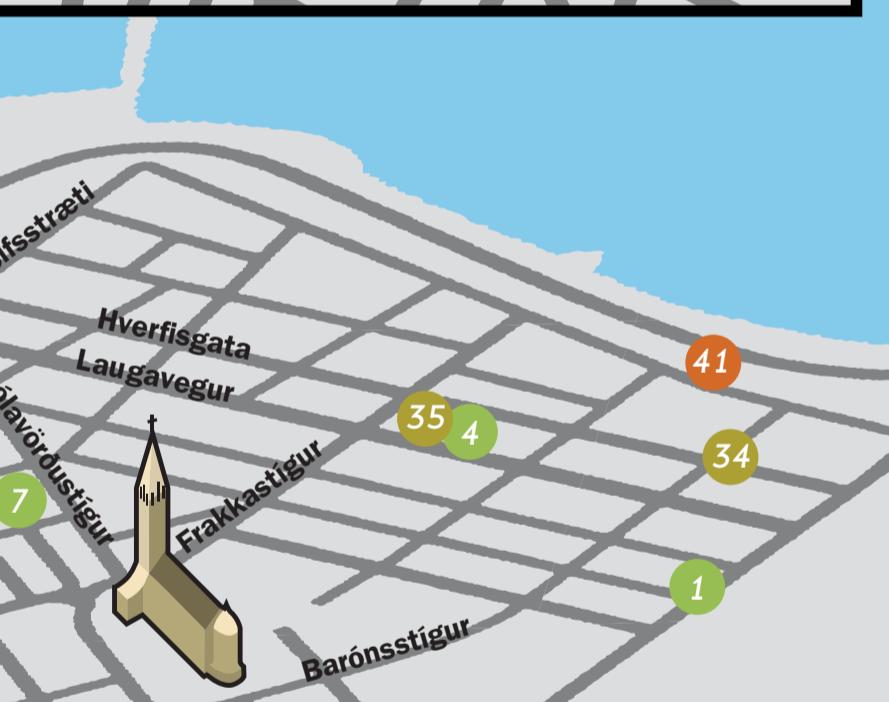
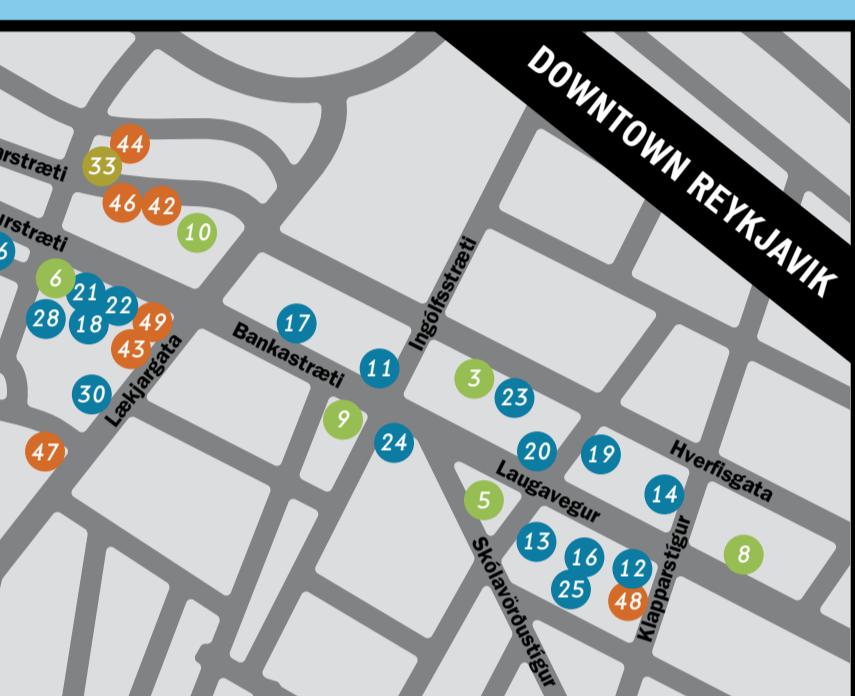
tveir fiskar

At the Reykjavík harbour, Geirsgata 9, 101 Reykjavík  
Tel. +354 511 3474 restaurant@restaurant.is, www.restaurant.is



ges to be just a nice, to, and a place to be enough both at the variety of beverages, and a terrace outside the allows it. The iced

sports bars in Reyk-  
nd watch whatever  
on the TV screens.  
basically based  
you won't have to go a  
Open until five, and  
ate night partying.



for 2,500ISK  
the magic words  
-can" floating in the  
Icelandic media  
every now and then,  
ll.

## 31 RESTAURANTS

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

Argentína  
Barónsstigur 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 3b

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

## 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 hotdog, only somehow it tastes better.

congratulations



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giving  
flavours,

By choosing fair trade products we trade with our good energies and individually help healing the worlds economy

## 32

Tveir Fiskar  
Geirsgata 9

Seafood restaurant, although they also do land-based animals. At lunchtime you can have a three-course meal for 2,300, 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

Vin 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, lobster 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

Hlólla Bátar  
By Ingólfstorg

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

## 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 1,000 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.



Small charming  
seafood restaurant  
which offers the best  
in food and wine.



Templarasund 3, 101 Reykjavík  
Tel: 551 8666  
E-mail: vidtjornina@simnet.is

## 40

Við tjörnina  
Templarasund 3

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

## 47

Quiznos  
Lækjargata

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

## 41

FAST FOOD  
Aktu Taktu  
Skúlagata 15

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

## 48

First Vegetarian  
(Á næstu grósum)  
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.

## 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 15-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

Kebabhúsíð  
Lækjargata 2

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.

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101 Reykjavík  
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gjafirjardar@gjafirjardar.is  
www.gjafirjardar.is

## 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.

## 36

Tjarnarbakkinn  
Vónarstræti 3

Above the Iðnó theatre, so it's good place to go before shows, or during if you prefer a more quiet atmosphere. If you sit by the window you get nice view of the pond. It's not a bad place to try one of Iceland's culinary specialities, the lamb steak, one of those rare traditional treats that does not come as a shock to the uninitiated.

## 43

Bernhöftsbakári  
Bergstaðastræti 13

The oldest bakery in Reykjavík, founded in 1834. If you are particular about your bread this is about the best place in central Reykjavík to stock up on a variety of freshly-baked loaves – they also do a particularly moist and juicy version of the ever popular vínarbrauð pastries.

## 50

Vitabar  
Bergþróðugata 21

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



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INDIAN - PAKISTANI CUISINE

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**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.

**Útvær Saga** (99.4 FM)

Iceland's oldies 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.

**Kántríbær** (100.7 FM)

Iceland's country music station, still going strong from Skagafjörður since 1992.

**TV****Boston Legal**

Esteemed thespians James Spader and William Shatner grace the set of David Kelley's five millionth television show which, like Ally McBeal, takes place in a law firm with some of the most unlawful lawyers you'll ever see. Unlike Ally McBeal, many of these characters are genuinely likeable. And when dialogue is used to grandstand against the Bush administration, it's always funny, intentionally or not.

*Sundays, 21:15; with reruns Monday, 00:05 and Saturday, 1:05. Skjáreinn.*

**Laguna Beach**

Truly the seventh sign of the apocalypse. This "reality" show follows the lives of fabulously wealthy and ridiculously attractive high school teens living in southern California. The intention, I reckon, was to show people that even the beautiful people are real people, too. Guess what? Apparently, they're not. For a look at some of the most vapid, shallow, plastic excuses for humanity, tune in and thank your lucky stars that you're poor.

*Tuesdays, 23:00, with reruns Saturdays, 18:00, Sirkus.*

**My Name Is Earl**

A man who spent his entire life screwing up his life and others decides to make a list of everything he's ever done wrong, and make it up to everyone. Former pro-skater and Kevin Smith leading man Jason Lee stars in the title role. While each episode

usually ends with a warm and fuzzy morale in the spirit of Mork and Mindy, this is a genuinely funny show running on a great vehicle for comedy: redemption.

*Wednesdays, 21:00; with reruns Sundays, 21:00 and Wednesdays, 19:30, Sirkus.*

**Neighbours**

More than a soap opera – it's an institution. This Australian show has been on the air for nearly 20 years, which is quite an accomplishment for a show built simply upon the lives of people living mostly on the same street. Granted, their lives involve car crashes, fights with city hall, and frequent divorce, but what sets Neighbours apart from other soaps is that the characters are believable, middle class folk. And Australians have adorable accents, too.

*Grapevine recommendation: Instead of watching a new show each weekday at 12:25, wait until Sunday and watch five episodes in a row starting at 14:00, Stóð 2.*

**Kim Possible**

Granted, there've been cartoon female superheroes in the past, but seldom have they been given this kind of attention to humour and timing. By day a normal schoolgirl, when danger rears its head, Kim springs into action, running circles around her villains (almost always male) and assistants (ditto). After years of watching Superman tell Wonder Woman to hop in her invisible jet and meet him somewhere for back up, it's refreshing to know that little girls are watching this confident and funny character turn the tables.

*Tuesdays, 18:30, RÚV.*

**TV in Icelandic****Petta Fólk**

A relatively new show that's appeared on NFS, hosted by journalist Halla Gunnarsdóttir. Each episode focuses on a different country, with guests who talk about life, art and general impressions of living in that country. The hostess says her idea behind the show is to go deeper than the current media does regarding what daily life in other countries is really like. Always engaging, and definitely worth checking out.

*Sundays, 11:00, NFS*

**Silfur Egils.**

One of a kind in Iceland, Egill Helgason is a media critic and political analyst who invites people onto his show who often have diametrically opposed opinions on any given topic. Helgason himself admits to being inconsistent and prone to change his mind frequently, which helps make for some entertaining viewing.

*Sundays, 12:00, Stóð 2*

**Kastljós**

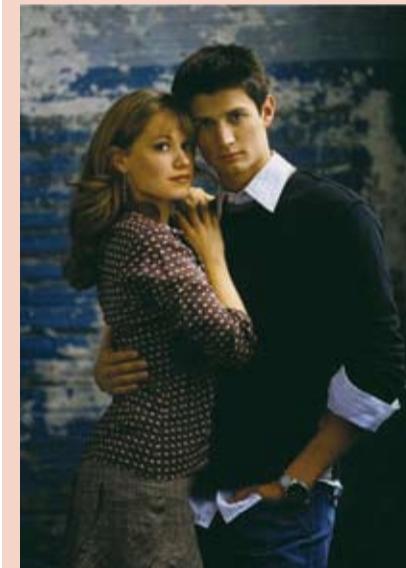
This news program used to be known as Kastljósið, but dropped the definite article recently during an image and content revamping. Often goes into more detail on some of the top stories of the day, while also offering roundtable discussions, slice-of-life pieces and music performances. In many ways, gives competing shows of a similar nature a run for their money.

*Sunday – Friday, RÚV, 19:35*

**American Dad**

From the makers of Family Guy, it's like that show, on crack. It's your typical family of four, with a talking goldfish and an alcoholic alien to boot, and a head of the household who works at the CIA and talks like the narrator from the Super Friends. Perhaps trying to test their limits, the show often veers into territory Family Guy doesn't touch, often with funny results. Although the show still seems to be finding its voice, it should be fun to see how it develops.

*Tuesdays, 21:00, with reruns Sundays, 20:30, Sirkus.*

**One Tree Hill**

Having started to watch this show mid-series, I can honestly tell you I have no idea what's going on here. There's a boy who saved his evil father's life in a fire, a girl with an estranged, drug addict mother with cancer, another girl who became a singer and is hated by her entire school and some other people. But teen dramas are like that – you can jump in at any point and still be entertained.

*Fridays, 20:00, Skjáreinn.*

**Sambíóin - Kringlan****V for Vendetta**

10:30

**Eight Below**

15:00, 17:30, 20:00

**Basic Instinct 2**

17:30, 20:00, 10:30

Lassie

**15:50**

Bambi 2 (in Icelandic)

**15:50**

Failure to Launch (Premieres 11 April)

**20:00****Sambíóin - Álfabakki****Basic Instinct 2**

17:30, 20:00, 22:30

**Eight Below**

17:30, 20:00, 22:30

**Wolf Creek**

15:50, 20:00, 21:10, 22:30

**Wolf Creek (VIP)**

21:10

**V for Vendetta**

17:15, 20:00, 22:45

**V for Vendetta (VIP)**

15:50, 18:30

**Ice Age 2 (in Icelandic)**

17:00, 19:00

**The Matador**

20:15, 22:30

**Lassie**

15:50

**Aeon Flux**

17:50

**Litli Kjúllin**

14:00

**Bambi 2 (in Icelandic)**

15:50

**Háskólabíó****Basic Instinct 2**

17:40, 20:00, 22:20

**V for Vendetta**

17:20, 20:00, 22:45

**The Matador**

20:00, 22:00

**The New World**

17:20

**The World's Fastest Indian**

17:30

**Syriana**

20:00, 22:30

**Sambíóin - Akureyri****Basic Instinct 2**

20:00, 22:15

**Eight Below**

17:45, 20:00

**V for Vendetta**

22:15

**Lassie**

18:00

**Sambíóin - Keflavík****Basic Instinct 2**

20:00, 22:00

**Date Movie**

18:00, 20:00, 22:20

**Big Momma's House 2**

18:00

**Laugarásbíó****Date Movie**

16:00, 18:00, 20:00, 22:00

**Trisan and Isolde**

20:00, 22:20

**Big Momma's House 2**

16:00, 18:00, 20:00, 22:00

**Nanny McPhee**

16:00

**Regnboginn****Date Movie**

18:00, 20:00, 22:00

**The Producers**

17:20, 20:00, 22:45

**Smárábíó**

**Date Movie (in the commoner's theatre and in Luxus)**

16:00, 18:00, 20:00, 22:00

**The Producers**

20:00, 22:45

**Big Momma's House 2**

15:40, 17:45, 20:00, 22:15

**Pink Panther**

15:45, 17:50, 22:10

**Yours Mine and Ours**

16:00, 18:00

**Borgarvíði****Date Movie**

18:00, 20:00, 22:00

**Tristan and Isolde**

17:45, 22:00

**Big Mamma's House 2**

20:00

Visit [www.kvikmyndir.is](http://www.kvikmyndir.is) for regularly updates on new films and showing times.

# ART

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

April 21st- May 9th  
Steingrímur Eyjörð

## 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

## BANANANAS

Closed in April

## I-8 GALLERÍ

Klapparstígur 33

Open Thursdays to Saturdays 13 - 17 and by appointment.

09.03. - 29.04.2006

## Tumi Magnússon

19.05.06-01.07.06

Upstairs;

## Finnbogi Pétursson

Downstairs;

## Roni Horn

## Inga Svala Þórðóttir

## Sara Björnsdóttir

## Guðbjörg Einarsdóttir

## Hildur Bjarnadóttir

## Karin Sander

## Ólöf Nordal

## Margrét Blöndal

## Icelandic Love Corporation

## Gabréla Friðriksdóttir

## Jeanine Cohen

## GALLERÍ ANIMA

Ingólfsstræti 8

Open Fridays 12 - 17  
Saturday and Sunday 13 - 17  
Free entrance

31.03 - 23.04.2006

## Helga Egilsdóttir

## GALLERÍ DVERGUR

Grundarstígur 21

Sigríður Dóra Jóhannsdóttir  
"fram og til baka"

1st,7th,8th April between 18 -19  
Performances

April 28th- May 14th.

Magnús Árnason  
Dark and gloomy installation

## GYLLINHÆÐ

Art academy exhibition space  
(Above Kling og Bang)

Open Thursdays - Sundays 14 -18

## KJARVALSSTAÐIR

Flókagata

Open every day 10 - 17  
Free entrance on Mondays  
[www.listasafnreykjavikur.is](http://www.listasafnreykjavikur.is)

02.04. - 05.06.2006  
Ilia og Amilia Kabakov

Joseph Kosuth

Installations In memory of H.C Andersen

## KLING & BANG GALLERÍ

Laugavegur 23

Open Thursdays to Sundays between 14 - 18.

Free entrance.

[www.this.is/klingandbang](http://www.this.is/klingandbang)

Upstairs and downstairs;  
April 8th- April 30th.

Serge Comte

## LISTASAFN ASÍ

Freyjugata 41

Open every day 13.00 - 17.00; closed on Mondays. Free entrance.

April 8th- April 30th

Anna Jóelsdóttir;

Ásta Ólafsdóttir

## LISTASAFN ÍSLANDS

Fríkirkjuvegur 17

Free entrance.

[www.listasafn.is](http://www.listasafn.is)

24th February - 30th April

Snorri Arinbjarnar

Gunnlaugur Blöndal

May 5th through June 25th.

Birgir Andrésson

Retrospective

Steingrímur Eyjörð

Retrospective

## LISTASAFN REYKJAVÍKUR

Hafnarhús

Tryggvagata 17

Open every day, 10 - 17.

Free entrance on Mondays.

[www.listasafnreykjavikur.is](http://www.listasafnreykjavikur.is)

## Erro

An exhibition of earlier works

January 27th- April 17th.

John Coplans

An exhibition of series of self-portraits by the photographer.



March 18th- April 23rd.

Guðjón Bjarnason.

Exploding MEaning

## NORDIC HOUSE

Sturlugata 5

Open 12 - 17; closed on Mondays

March 11th- April 16th.

West Nordic Design

## LIVING ART MUSEUM

Laugavegur 26

Open Wed - Sun 13 - 17

Free entrance.

[www.nylo.is](http://www.nylo.is)

## Cold Climates

Icelandic, British and Finnish artists

March 24th- April 17th.

Top floor

Rethinking Nordic Colonialisation

## SAFN

Laugavegur 37

25.03.2006 - through April

Kristján Steingrímur Jónsson

25.03.2006 - through April

Presentation of young German artists

## TURPENTINE

Ingólfsstræti 5

Open Tue - Fri 12 - 18, Sat 11 - 16

## Ásdís Spanó

Georg Guðni Hauksson

Húbert Nói Jóhannesson

Sigurður Árni Sigurðsson

Sigtryggur Bjarni Baldvinsson

Kristján Davíðsson

Karlína Lárusdóttir

Jón Laxdal

Eyjólfur Einarsson

Hildur Ásgeirs dóttir Jónsson

Kristín Gunlaugsdóttir

Aron Rey

JBK Ransu

Gunnar Örn

Arngunnur Ýr

Guðrún Vera

Kristinn Már

Hallgrímur Helgason

## REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Tryggvagata 15, 6th Floor

Until 24 May

Friðrik Örn

10,000 days with a camera

## >>>OUTSIDE RVK:

Hafnarfjörður:

## HAFNARBORG

Strandgata 34

Open 11 - 17 every day but Tuesdays.

April 1st – April 24th

Lif í Leir. The Association of Icelandic Ceramic Artists exhibits

Kópavogur:

## LISTASAFN KÓPAVOGS, GERÐARSAFN

Hamraborg 4

March 18th through April 23rd.

Clearness

Elina Brotherus

Rúrí

Pór Vigfússon

Akureyri:

## GALLERÍ +

Brekkugata 36

## GALLERÍ BOX

Kaupvangsstræti 10

## JÓNAS VIÐAR GALLERY

Kaupvangsstræti 12

Open 13 - 18 Fridays and Saturdays

## LISTASAFNIÐ Á AKUREYRI

Kaupvangsstræti 12

Open from 12-17. Closed on Mondays.  
Free entrance on Thursdays.

March 4th until April 19th.

Spencer Tunick

Bersvæði / Body Public

10.000 days with a camera



Friðrik Örn

18 February - 24 May

Play is Art

Sigríður Bachmann

The Shot

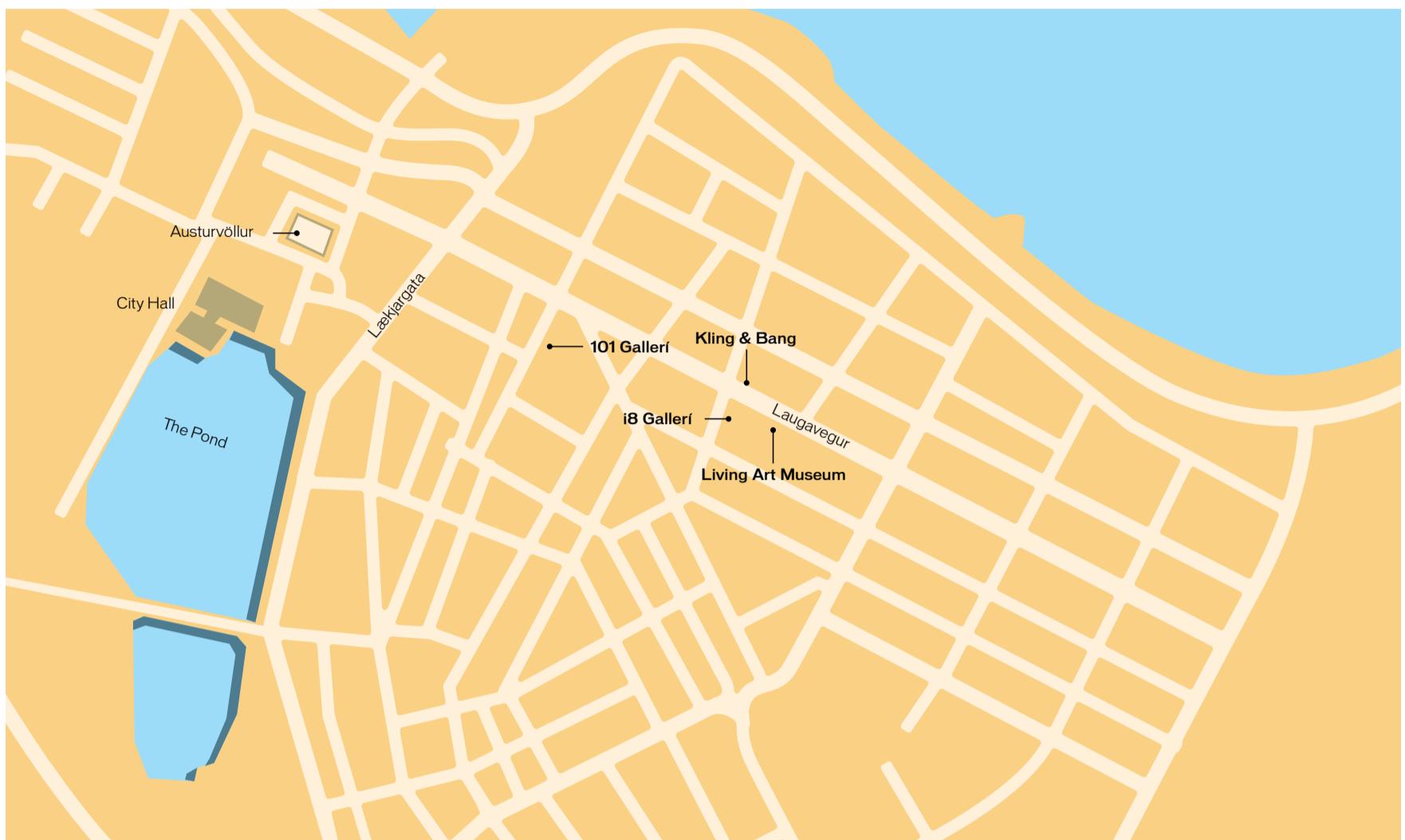
12 April - 7 June

Opening 12 April at 4 pm

LJÓSMYNDARSAFN REYKJAVÍ

# The Pond and Beyond

Grapevine Picks for Museums and Galleries by Paul F. Nikolov



## Living Art Museum

Laugavegur 26



### RETHINKING NORDIC COLONIALISATION

Possibly the most comprehensive study of colonialism featured in Iceland in recent memory, this exhibition features works from artists from as far a field as Greenland, Trinidad and India. The works examine the role of colonialism in shaping societies, and how decades or even centuries after colonialism has passed, its influence can still resonate in modern society.

24.03 – 17.04.2006

aktu  
taktu

THE DRIVE THRU BY THE SEA

## Turpentine

Ingólfssstræti 5



### VARIOUS ARTISTS

Group exhibitions in Iceland usually include two or at the most three artists. This is generally good for both artist and viewer alike. But if you want to examine a fairly wide and high quality cross-section of modern Icelandic art, this current exhibition at Gallerí Turpentine is a great place to start.

### Gallerí i8

Klapparstígur 33



### TUMI MAGNÚSSON

Minimalism is probably one of the most difficult and challenging approaches to take in art, and few people can pull it off well. The collection of prints by Tumi Magnússon currently being shown at Gallerí i8 succeeds in capturing the almost Zen-like beauty of everyday objects that normally don't ever register in our perceptions, and make us look at them differently.

09.03 – 29.04.2006

### Kling & Bang Gallerí

Laugavegur 23



### SERGE COMTE

This French artist is hard to pin down. His works could be seen as frivolous, almost insultingly so, but the emotional impact they make is completely different on closer examination. At once humourous, dream-like and sinister, Comte's work is a wolf in sheep's clothing, superficially light with a confrontational motivation. 08.04 – 30.04.2006

THURSDAY 27TH APRIL, 20:00

**Mezzoforte  
Ife Tolentino (BRA)**

FRIDAY 28TH APRIL, 20:00

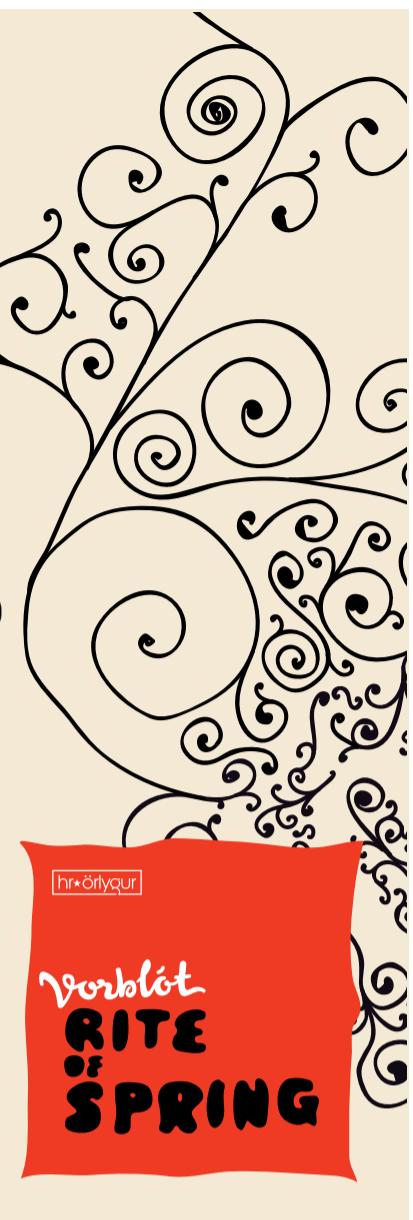
**Soul Jazz Records present:  
100% Dynamite (UK)  
Flís & Bogomil Font  
Petter Winnberg (SE)**

SATURDAY 29TH APRIL, 20:00

**KAL (SER)  
Stórsveit Nix Noltes**

SUNDAY 30TH APRIL, 20:00

**Salsa Celtica (UK)  
Blue Truck**



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## Heady Days in Austin, Texas

Deep thoughts from Jakobínarína on the festival that got record contracts from suits

BY SINDRI ELDON PHOTO BY SIGURJÓN

The South by Southwest music festival in Austin, Texas is now the American music industry hotspot for signing the next media darling. The Yeah Yeah Yeahs, The Shins, Clap Your Hands Say Yeah, any range of four-star pop have broken in at SXSW. This year, six Icelanders under 17 broke in with their second festival-stealing performance of the year. As reported by Rolling Stone magazine, among many others, Jakobínarína had absolute star power. Sindri Eldon met with cold and confused Gunnar Ragnarsson and Sigurður Möller Sívertsen of Jakobínarína days after the festival and found out... very, very little.

(Sigurður's phone rings and he answers. Gunnar audibly rearranges about a pint of phlegm in his throat.)

**/// That was impressive. What have you been doing lately? I heard from someone that you were suffering from exhaustion. Is that just a crazy rumour?**

(Gunnar laughs.) **Gunnar:** Where did you hear that?

**/// Uh...I don't remember. I just heard it from someone the other day. So that's bullshit?**

**Gunnar:** Yeah, probably... I didn't go to school the day after we got back because I stayed up all night watching 24 (popular TV show starring Kiefer Sutherland).

**/// Oh god. That's awesome.**

**Gunnar:** I just slept all day, but it was jet lag, I think.

**/// Okay. So how was Texas? Or should we maybe wait until Siggi's done on the phone?**

**Gunnar:** Uh... (Waits a moment, but Siggi doesn't get off phone.) It was great. Yeah, it was awesome, really cool.

**/// Really? It wasn't weird or anything?**

**Gunnar:** The food was incredibly disgusting, as in absolutely horrifyingly bad. Other than that, everything went really well. We basically just spent a lot of time in the house and shopping and stuff... and then we played and checked out some other bands.

**/// Uh-huh. So you were like total rock stars, hanging out in your hotel room? Or wait, did you even stay at a hotel?**

**Gunnar:** What? No, um, we stayed at some house with like 15 people.

**/// I thought there were only six of you. Did you get like a brass section or something?**

**Gunnar:** No, it was the guys from 12 Tónar (local record label and store), Pórir (musician), Pórir's wife and Pórir's band.

**/// Wow.**

(awkward silence)

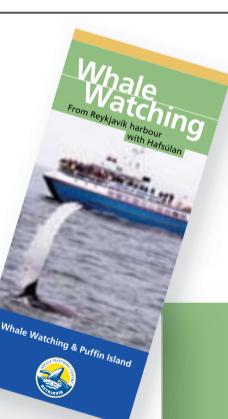
**/// So Texas wasn't weird or anything?**

**Gunnar:** Um, well, Austin is kind of the arty, Democrat town – or no, wait, city – in Texas, so it didn't really feel like we were actually in Texas. Everyone we met was constantly rambling on about how terrible Bush is and stuff. I think Austin is considered the weird town in Texas, but to us it was pretty normal – except for the food. I just can't describe to you in words how insanely bad the food was.



*The Whale Watching Centre offers daily whale watching tours on Faxaflói bay. These tours include a free visit to The Whale Exhibition Room, a sightseeing around Puffin island\* and other natural wonders – all at a convenient distance from Reykjavík!*

\*Puffin season approx. 20.05–15.08



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13:00	13:00	13:00	
		17:00	

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[www.whalewatching.is](http://www.whalewatching.is)

# REVIEWS

## LIVE MUSIC

### WHO

José González

### WHERE

NASA

### WHEN

March 13th  
2006



#### An Evening of Listening and Restraint

By Sveinn Birkir Björnsson | Photo by Skari

José González's reputation may well have preceded him, given that he recently played a show at the Iceland Airwaves festival, which has become an "I was there" sort of moment in Icelandic musical annals. Before the night's show started I caught snippets of conversations in which people described standing in line for over three hours in order to see him play at the Iceland Airwaves festival without getting in.

After opening act Siggi Ármann dragged those in attendance through an uneventful half-hour, José González appeared on stage to a welcoming applause from the audience. His deadpan demeanour firmly

established the subdued mood that would follow, despite the crowd's enthusiasm.

Somewhat surprisingly, the audience immediately reacted to the opening lines of Deadweight on Velveteen – a lesser-known track, having avoided the fate of underscore to dramatic scenes on The OC or bouncing balls on the streets of San Francisco in Sony commercials, which González's more famous songs have undergone. The instant recognition suggested that those in attendance were there to do more than satisfy their curiosity. They were obviously fans.

From then on, González went through a set that was more or less comprised of songs from his debut effort, Veneer (2003). Some of the crowd's favourites included Slow Moves, Lovestain, Crosses and a cover of Heartbeats by Swedish electro pop-duo The Knife. The biggest ovation though was reserved for his cover

of Joy Division's Love Will Tear Us Apart, which brought tears to the faint hearted in attendance. After a few minutes of enthusiastic clapping, González returned to the stage for an encore, including covers of Kylie Minogue's Hand on Your Heart and an inspired rendition of Massive Attack's Teardrop.

During the show, listeners remained listeners, as there was hardly a sound to be heard from those gathered. The barmaid even found time to climb up on top of the bar to take photos during her long breaks between the occasional beer sold. As spectators quietly lined up to exit the building, the mood was still uncommonly subdued. An evening with José González will do that to you, leaving you with a vivid and lasting sensation of quiet restraint.

## The Acoustic Black Flag Disciple (from the land of Abba)

Interview with José González

BY SVEINN BIRKIR BJÖRNSSON

#### /// Your first album (*Veneer*) was released in 2003; when can we expect the next one?

– I am working on it on and off. I have been so busy touring, and it takes me a long time to write so I haven't really had the time for it. Maybe next fall, or next spring.

#### /// But your first album is being re-released now, right?

– Yes, it first came out in Sweden on a small label and they have been looking for deals for me and everything takes such a long time. So it is first now that it is being released, or re-released really, in the US via Mute Records. We will give that some time, before the next one is released. I want the next one to be ready this summer, so it can be released either next fall or in the springtime.

#### /// You are going to play the South by Southwest festival next week. What are your expectations from that?

– Well, it is an industry festival, and there are going to be a lot of agents from the recording companies there, so I hope that will lead to something. I will be playing six or seven shows there in four days, so I will be busy. But I have heard it's something you almost have to do, to play these festivals, in order to break into the US market.

#### /// Swedish music has had a lot of international success in the last few years. Do you have any thoughts on what it is that makes Swedes so successful?

– I don't know exactly. But ever since ABBA, a lot of artists have come out of Sweden. I think Sweden is the third biggest exporter of music in the world. So there is this tradition of making music in English that could function outside of Sweden. I

don't know what it is. Swedes are good at English for one thing.

#### /// What about your other band, Junip? Can you tell us a bit about that project?

– Yes, we are three in the band. We have only released one EP [Black Refuge] although we've been playing together since 1998. We tend to do something together on and off, but it's hard to find the time now. It is a kind of an eternal project that never goes anywhere. Elias, the drummer, and I have been friends since childhood. We have been playing together since we were 14 when we started a hardcore band together. Later we met Tobias, the organ player, and we started playing together in 1998.

#### /// You mentioned hardcore; I intended to ask about your beginning in a hardcore band.

– Well, I always played bass in these bands. The first band was Back Against the Wall, which was very much inspired by Black Flag, the Misfits and the Dead Kennedys. Later Elias and I started a band called Renaissance, which was a little more hardcore. It was functional from maybe 1993-1998.

#### /// Do you still listen to hardcore music?

– Not so much. I still really like Sick of It All and a lot of other stuff. Sometimes when I am in the car I will slip in some Sick of It All, you know? Scratch The Surface. They are such a great live band as well.

#### /// What about hardcore ethics, is that something that is actual for you?

– No, not anymore. But it was, for a few years. I did not drink

and even though I was not a straightedge I did become a vegetarian. There was a period when I was very politically conscious... But no, it is not actual for me, regrettably.

#### /// What about your studies? You were studying towards a PhD in biochemistry were you not?

– Yes, I was a doctoral research student in biochemistry, doing research in DNA replication. I had been doing that for a year and a half before I released the album. Then I did not have the time to do both, so...

#### /// So, did you give it up then?

– Yes, it was too difficult to do both, but I was okay with it because I was not getting too good results in my research anyway.

#### /// Were you happy with the reception last night? You received a very warm welcome and the audience was unusually quiet and focused on listening to the music, instead of just talking to each other like often happens.

– Yes I was very happy. It was wonderful. Maybe it was because it was a Monday night. But people are usually very quiet when I play. I once played in Manchester on a Saturday night, and everybody was drunk and very rowdy, but once I started playing, everybody sat quiet for an hour.

#### /// Siggi Ármann opened your show last night. What did you think of him?

– Siggi was unbelievable. Very simple but yet very delicate melodies. I think it's cool to play such simple harmonies.

# REVIEWS

## LIVE MUSIC

### WHO

Laibach

### WHERE

NASA

### WHEN

March 22th  
2006



#### Flight of the Valkyries

By Paul F. Nikolov | Photo by Gúndi

Without warning or introduction, two young women marched onto the stage and took their positions behind the two standing drums, dressed in semi-military garb. Their faces frozen expressionless, and their movements robotically coordinated, they martially pounded out the rhythm behind *Tanz Mit Laibach*, a song made famous a few years back by a hilarious Shockwave animation featuring dancing kittens dressed as Red Square guards. Middle-aged bohemians and teenage punks alike stood agape, completely enthralled by the Aryan war goddesses, probably less out of lust than fear.

This was the high point for Laibach, the band that once mocked not only Balkan communism but Father Tito himself two decades ago by making a few minor changes to an old Nazi Youth poster, submitting it to a Youth Day poster contest held on Tito's birthday, and winning.

Laibach might employ a great many of the aesthetic qualities of fascism in their costumes, stage shows, and composition styles, but even the most cursory glance at the activities of this band and NSK make it fairly clear that this is high satire.

So high, in fact, that it seemed to pass over the heads of many of the younger crowd, some of whom showed up for the concert in vintage German army helmets, Soviet officer's caps and brought with them more than a couple who felt compelled to give the band

the Nazi salute throughout the show. Whether they were taking the joke too far or didn't get it altogether, they did little to dampen what proved to be an amazing performance.

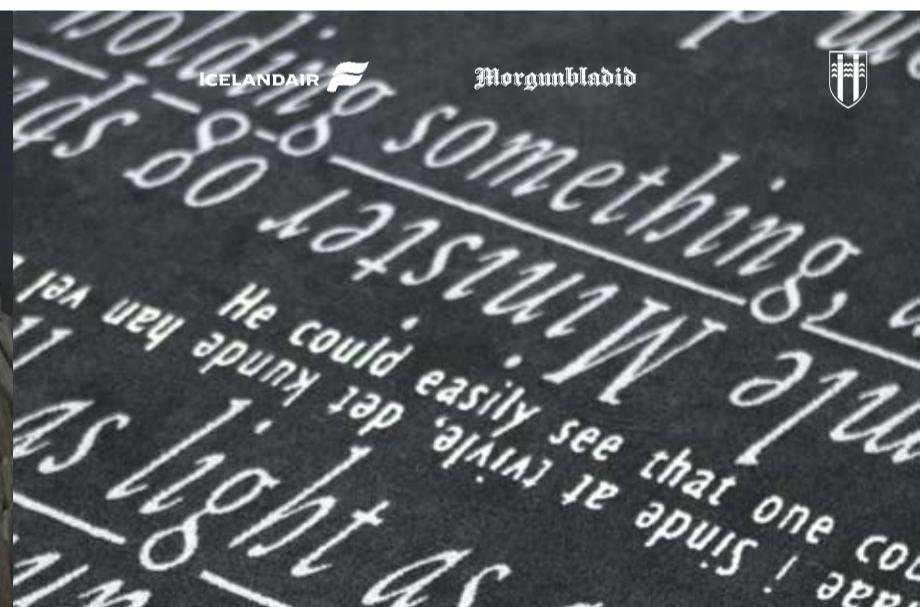
Laibach is well-known for doing thoroughly reconstructed cover versions – including the entirety of the Beatles' *Let It Be* album, with the exception of the title song – and the first cover they performed on this occasion was Pink Floyd's *Dogs of War*, which sounded as entertaining as Floyd's version was flaccid. And whereas most bands who've been continuously touring and recording for over 20 years are sloshing through wincingly pathetic performances, Laibach had a confident, commanding stage presence.



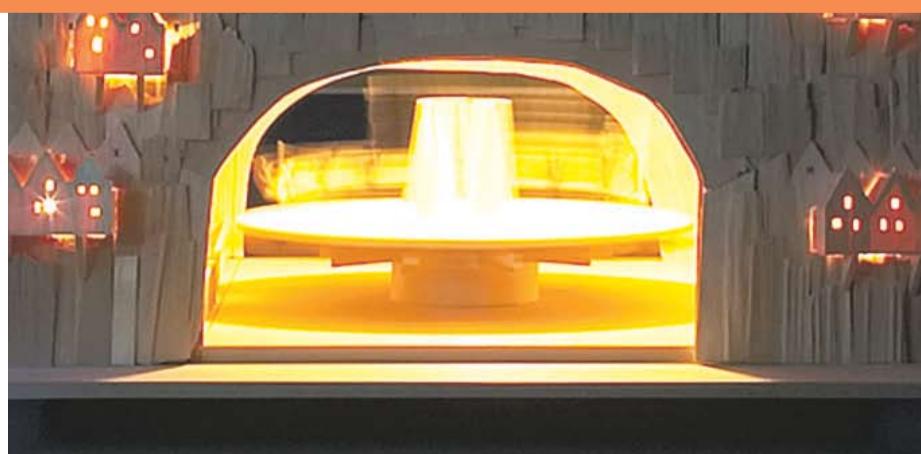
H.C. Andersen / A Life World

Emilia & Ilya Kabakov

April 2 - June 5 Kjarvalsstaðir at Flókagata



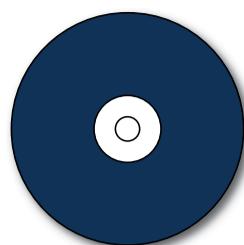
Joseph Kosuth



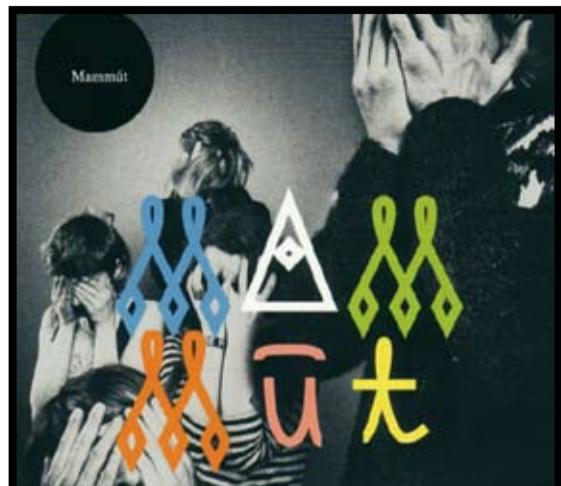
[www.artmuseum.is](http://www.artmuseum.is)



LISTASAFN REYKJAVÍKUR  
REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM



# GRAPEVINE ALBUM REVIEWS



The singular, sharp and stunningly explicit and concentrated voice of Katrína Mogensen drives Mammút's debut so that at first, were it not for the patient, buzzing unpredictability of the bass, it could be mistaken for a solo project. But, upon further listening, this quirky, awkward little trinket is revealed for what it truly is: A tight, powerful album blessed with true emotional quality and depth that belies the youth of its creators.

Only the annoyingly abstract lyrics and occasionally juvenile guitar melodies (Porkell, Gítarlagið) detract from what is otherwise a mournful, stylish and occasion-



## MAMMÚT - MAMMÚT

**Worth four beers.**

ally apocalyptic album, which even comes with its own distinct trajectory and structure. Its shortness almost undermines all this, but the closing title track, a superior and pure song with a plodding drum beat that lives up to its namesake (Mammút roughly translates as mammoth), is easily haunting enough to stay with you long after the CD stops playing. Its cryptic, mesmerising and strangely resigned lyrics echoing dully as images of huge, brown-furred elephants ambling steadily through a blizzard fill the mind.

SE



## HOSTIGITAL - IN COD WE TRUST

**Worth four beers.**

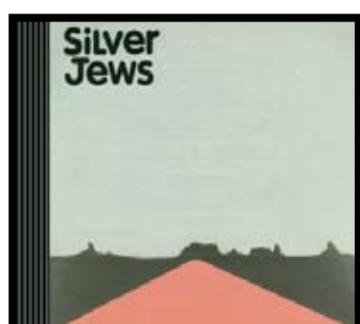
"How abstract can we get"....indeed. While a criminal who confesses is no less guilty, it does make one more inclined to be easy on him. Saying that In Cod We Trust is avant-garde would be an understatement bordering on the comically ludicrous, but being good enough to get away with it is where Ghostigital differ greatly from many of their peers. Tight, focused, racy and experimental without being pretentious and difficult, it pumps through its 11 solid and individualised tracks with explosive and terrifying insanity, perhaps scariest in its borderline conformity. Dream Of Sleep's bleating, blaring samples are transformed into catchy hooks, and instantly

danceable Not Clean veers as close to the mainstream as Ghostigital are likely to get without losing their edge. The entire album exudes tight, minimal professionalism in every respect even as it recklessly indulges in hip-hop, electro, ambient, drum & bass and industrial playfulness, touching so many bases that it's tempting to apply to it the loathsome 'crossover' label.

Aside from its decidedly shallow and gimmicky preference of incomprehensible insanity over emotional depth, it is, simply put, exactly what happens when music that should not be made is made the way it should be.

SE

*Helvítis Útlendingur*



## SILVER JEWS - AMERICAN WATER

**Worth five beers.**

Wait long enough, and things come around. Once known only as Pavement's side project, Silver Jews are now garnering media attention for Tanglewood Numbers and the first-ever tour for the band supporting the album. Tanglewood is a very good album, but some of the wind is out of the sails, most notably in Stephen Malkmus's more derivative, rock-style guitar work. What Tanglewood can do is draw you to American Water, one of the finest combinations of wit, drawl and guitar sprawl of the last 30 years. Likely you want an example of how good the lyrics are: it's hard to quote Dave Berman, though,

cause there isn't an end point. My favourite lines are from, maybe one should call it a stanza, in the opening song on American Water, Random Rules:

I asked a painter why the roads are colored black.  
He said, "Steve, it's because people leave  
and no highway brings them back."  
So if you don't want me I promise not to linger,  
but before I go have to ask you dear about the tan line  
on your ring finger.

BC

### Guide to the rating system:

In prison, you deal in cigarettes. In Iceland, you deal in beers. We don't condone this, we just accept it as fact. One beer = 500 ISK at the seedy bars we frequent. That means a mainstream release costs up to 2,500 ISK... or \$40. Yes, that much. That's why we do the beer thing.

Reviews by Bart Cameron and Sindri Eldon.



## THE VIKING

ICELAND'S LARGEST SOUVENIR SHOP

In the heart of Akureyri and Reykjavík is the store The Viking. The Viking offers the largest selection of products for tourists in the country. Everything you need you can get there. The stores offer a great variety of wool products from different producers. Books, jewelry and a great collection of small souvenirs. Fleece clothes from Icewear and Cintamani have been a success and their quality and fare handmade products. You will find the very best in Icelandic wool in The Viking. The shops also specialize in sheepskins, reindeer skins, horse skins and muskoxen skins. A skin from a polar bear can be specially ordered. There are also a lot of other interesting things in the stores for example whale teeths, carvings, stuffed birds, special bird species can be ordered. Icelandic cosmetics you will find and of course a full collection from the Blue lagoon. The Viking is a family business and has been for 50 years. Don't miss visiting The Viking when you visit Iceland. We offer worldwide shipping service.

Tourists and Icelanders living abroad can get their VAT refunded. That means that 15% from the amount paid in the store is refunded. VAT refunds are made in airports, on ships, on your way home or you can get it transferred to your credit card, which ever you prefer.

### THE VIKING : INFO

Hafnarstræti 3  
101 Reykjavík  
tel: 551 1250

Hafnarstræti 104  
600 Akureyri  
tel: 461 5551

email: [theviking@simnet.is](mailto:theviking@simnet.is)



# REVIEWS

## LIVE MUSIC

**WHAT**  
Músíktíraunir

**WHERE**  
Loftkastalinn

**WHEN**

March 31st  
2006



### The Foreign Monkeys Will Definitely Be the Next Arctic Monkeys

By Sindri Eldon | Photos by Billi

The results are in, the facts are solid and the bands have been consigned to their fates. The Foreign Monkeys, a straightforward, zero-bullshit rock band from the wayward shores of Vestmannaeyjar have been declared the winners of this year's Battle of the Bands, and are now poised to face the demons that come attached to such an honour: jealousy, hype, artistic stagnation and exposure to the steadily dropping average IQ of the Icelandic media and their fickle disciples.

But their fate has hardly been set in stone, nor has their history been written in it. On the contrary, for there is very little to suggest that the result of this contest is definitive. The Battle of the Bands, or Músíktíraunir in its native tongue, is an arduous process, a dissection of musical values that seems deliberately designed to test the patience and altruism of all involved. This year, 51 bands competed (or participated, depending on how you look at it), and the 'best' one out of all these is picked out in two weeks, a ridiculously short period of time. There is a good deal of luck involved, obviously, and timing is, as always, of the essence.

This could not be demonstrated more perfectly than by the process of elimination by which the finalists are chosen: There are five nights of 10-11 bands each, and on each night two to three bands are selected for qualification, one by the crowd and one or two by the judges. The qualifiers then face one to two weeks of the grueling pressure of knowing that in order to impress the panel of judges on the final night, they must deliver a performance that must at least equal, if not outdo the one they were selected for.

#### Now That the Pressure's On, Here's a Reminder of What You Can't Live Up To

With such impossible pressure to bear in mind, it confuses me greatly to consider why the winners of last year's BotB are made to play before the finals begin. Self-assured, relaxed and with absolutely nothing to lose, Jakobínarína were intimidatingly explosive, blasting through 15 minutes of utter chaos before leaving the stage just whole enough for Who Knew? to nervously attempt to outdo a performance that had already won the title they were there to claim; the irony is mind-blowing.

The sextet conducted themselves well, however, but had discarded the affability that won them the crowd's vote in the qualifiers in favour of concentrated professionalism. Although their irresistibly catchy alt-pop was flawlessly performed, their stage presence had all but evaporated, which also made it painfully obvious that without their unique charisma, their music aged about as well as Julian Glover in the final scene of

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade.

They trotted offstage glistening with nervous perspiration to be replaced by Furstaskyttan, a band remarkable in more ways than one. First off, they looked and sounded very respectable, and came across as highly intellectual and intelligent. As bad as this may sound, their music, a cheesy, conservative style of pop music that would not sound out of place as the theme song to a British children's morning show, was so irreverent and blatantly disregarding of modern tastes, so incredibly uncool, that it somehow became more punk than the most sneeringly antagonistic Sex Pistols anthem.

Compared to the music they made, We Made God's name was modest and unassuming. Stunningly clichéd emo riffs, no-holds-barred sound destruction at the hands of the drummer and the guitarist and a singer who broke every rule in the book as far as moderation and constraint were concerned. Insanely pretentious as they were, however, every tortured scream, every pompous drum fill and every squealing noise solo in We Made God's quarter-hour onstage was done with the solemn self-indulgence of true professionals, and in retrospect they seemed to have all the makings of a successful Icelandic band. My deepest sympathies to them.

To say that We Made God and Antík played the same genre of music would be stretching the very definition of rock. Antík plainly and honestly played the simplest, most unabashedly cheesy and hook-driven pop-punk imaginable, and although the two bands musically have much more in common than either of them would be willing to admit, the tongue-in-cheek daring of Antík's first song was a very refreshing change from We Made God's tour through the icy wastes of emo metal.

In fact, to fully grasp the sheer cheesiness of Antík's music, you would have to imagine a ten-pound wad of limburger being consumed by rosy-cheeked lovers while they hold hands and watch the Hallmark channel together. It brings me great joy that somewhere in Iceland there are still musicians who exist solely for one to derive guilty pleasure from listening to.

Tranzlokal were next up, delivering goose bump-inducing rawness with their impossibly simple schoolboy punk. The songs averaged about two minutes and two chords each, with the screamed word "Já!" reappearing frequently. They were flawless, energetic and superior, but their novelty was sadly lost on the crowd, who were by now itching to stretch and freshen up in the 15-minute pause that followed Tranzlokal's set.

The crowd returned to the sight of four young men - two keyboardists, a drummer and a bassist - standing patiently on the stage waiting for something. Eventually, a fifth young man with a seriously deranged gleam in his eye rode in straddling a child's tricycle; together they performed furiously straightforward dancehall electro under the name Ultra Mega Technobandið

Stefán, with the deranged man pausing regularly to either yelp something completely inaudible into a microphone or do the night's second movie impression, the scene in American Psycho where Christian Bale poses in front of a mirror whilst having sex with two women he has paid or cajoled into bed with him. They were impressive, and although the music was fairly standard, it was at least energetic, and the sheer creepy insanity of the lead man was enough to give me the hibbly-jibblies. Scary fun.

The Foreign Monkeys clocked in next, however, and made all the energy of UMTb Stefán seem about as electrifying as a nylon blanket with their jaw-dropping power and stage presence. At first glance, it would seem as if the drummer was by far the best showman onboard, but upon closer inspection I discovered that every member of the band glowed with a livid, fiery passion that surpassed anything else I saw that night. And while it is debatable whether or not they were talented enough to win, there can be little doubt as to whether or not they were cool enough to win.

It should surprise exactly no one that the most pretentious band of them all was the one whose members posed as Frenchmen. Le Poulet De Romance were little more than a very well-executed gimmick in triplicate human form, but damn, did they play well. Capable players as well as overbearingly theatrical performers, they were led by a decidedly deviant-looking young man by the name of Ingi Vifill as they pranced into three incredibly ridiculous tango-folk-rock songs and left the audience hopelessly confused, but so entertained that it hardly mattered.

The rest of the night was unambiguous, really. Modern Day Majesty were a disappointment. The capable modern rock songwriting and fair talent they displayed the night they qualified for the final was gone, replaced by an uncertain, awkward performance and a new song so bad it cannot be put into words, while Sweet Sins blew mouth-watering bubble gum melodies in our faces. Girl power-pop at its delicious best, they were sadly overlooked by a restless crowd that had by now been seated far too long.

Also done in by the luck of the draw were the unassuming trio of boys that constituted the brilliantly named Ministry Of Foreign Affairs, an intelligent, dreamy act with pointed lyrics and an honest, affable goodness to them. They presented the best song of the entire evening: The Death Of A Salesman, an atmospheric and beautiful song played with the kind of earnest care that comes with truly loving what you do, and I am convinced that the Ministry Of Foreign Affairs is a band that has no need to win Músíktíraunir to make a name for themselves.

In order to sign up to play at the Battle of the Bands, it would seem that you would have to have a very specific attitude towards your own work. You can't be so confident that you would consider the contest beneath you and unworthy of your skills, and you can't be so meek that you think it impossible to impress people with your music, and this, I believe, is the key, the reason why Músíktíraunir seems to produce only bands that are almost universally liked, or at least respected in some form. No one is voted the best of 51 bands without being at least slightly humbled by the acts that they 'beat', and the winning bands that eventually become successful are the ones wise enough to realise that in the long run, winning doesn't count for shit. Winning Músíktíraunir is an opportunity, and nothing more; an opportunity to show that the judges and the audience weren't wrong, that they believed in you for a reason, and it is this sense of justice that will continue to make Músíktíraunir the best musical event in Iceland.



# GRAPEVINE'S PURCHASES THAT JUSTIFY EXISTENCE

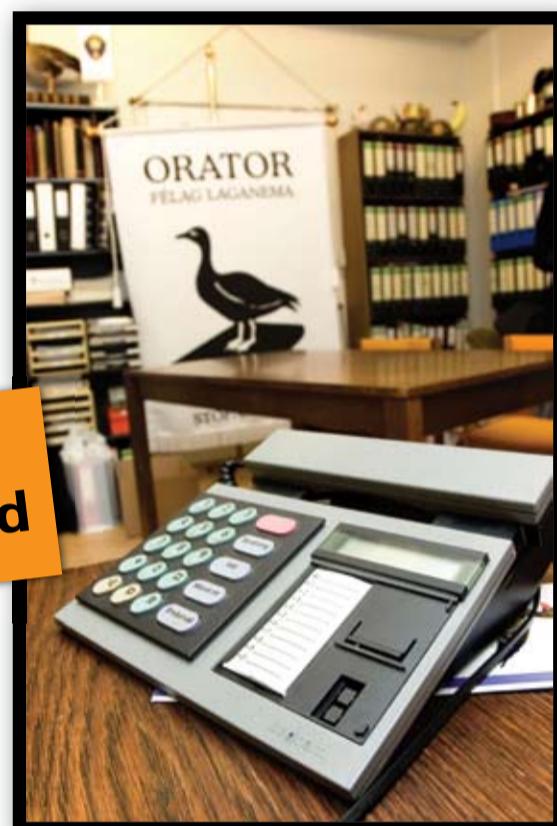
BY SVEINN BIRKIR BJÖRNSSON



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## Free Legal Aid

Orator, the Law Student Society at the University of Iceland offers free legal aid every Thursday night from 19:30-22:00. Call 551-1012 or visit [www.islog.is](http://www.islog.is). Although this is not actually a purchase per se, it is worth pointing out. Goes to show that you don't always need to pay for good stuff (e.g. the Grapevine).



## Drauma-landið

Draumalandið - Self-help Book for a Frightened Nation. Writer Andri Snær Magnason takes a close and critical look at the discourse behind the most discussed issue in Iceland's contemporary history: the heavy industrialisation of Iceland. An important read. Sadly, so far it is only available in Icelandic.

Penninn Eymundsson - 2,990 ISK



## Páska-bjór

If you want variety in domestic Icelandic beer, you have two chances, Christmas and Easter. Christmas beer is nutty and spicy, Easter beer is light and more refreshing; enough to make you want to get out the grill.



## The Culture House

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

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# DINING, EATING & GRUBBING

**Paul F. Nikolov** on Reykjavík Dining **Photos by Héðinn**

## GRILLIÐ

8th floor Radisson SAS Hotel on Hagatorg  
Tel.: 525-9960



Fine dining costs money. Typically, it costs a lot of money. Occasionally, though, you'll find a place that's not only worth dropping a sizeable portion of your salary for; they meet you halfway and don't demand that much of you financially after all. Grillið, located on the 8th floor of the Radisson SAS hotel on Hagatorg, is not only such a restaurant – it also provided what, for me, was the most perfect dining experience of my life.

Guests are first seated in a lounge – leather couches and chairs arranged near a large window overlooking a spectacular view of Reykjavík's southern shore – where they are offered aperitifs. I went with a Rémy Martin. The hostess, noticing that my wife is very pregnant, offered to "make up" a non-alcoholic cocktail for her. The result – a mixture of banana, pine-apple, lime juice and cream – proved far better than it sounds.

We were given our menus with our cocktails. Prices range between the high end, with the Gourmet Game Menu (five courses for 7,900 ISK) to a fish entrée (3,600 ISK). Always up for a surprise, we decided instead to go for the Discovery Menu – five courses for 6,900 ISK, where you only discover what you're going to eat when it's brought to your table.

## RED CHILI

Pósthússtræti 13  
Tel.: 562-7830



Mention the term "American food" and the first thing that normally springs to mind is the holy trinity of hamburgers, hot dogs and pizza. While certainly classic examples, they're not the only ones. American food, like many aspects of American culture, sometimes borrows from abroad to create something modified and/or new, and sometimes invents something outright. And for a good example of American food done right, Red Chili is an excellent place to start.

There's already one Red Chili on Laugavegur 176 (where the restaurant Old West used to be), but we visited the new location at Pósthússtræti 13. For those who remember the spacious environs of Póstbarinn, you won't be disappointed – the changes made to the interior are few. However, the changes that were made give the place a subtle Southwest feel, without

The dining room of Grillið is enormous, with tall windows on three sides providing more of the stunning view seen from the lounge, and classic place settings that reminded me of a hotel dining room from the 1940s. Miles Davis played at an unobtrusive, atmospheric volume. From the moment the first of three starters was brought to us – fresh scallops in a cold orange and chilli soup – one thing became immediately apparent about Grillið: the service. The servers move quickly, quietly and leave enough time between courses for the memory of the previous one to linger while not leaving you wondering if you've been forgotten.

The second starter, grilled langoustines with cauliflower sauce and nut foam, was extraordinary. The freshness and natural flavour of the meal made it clear that the chef had an emphasis on classical French cuisine. This was confirmed when we were brought the grilled turbot with olive purée and aubergine in a passion fruit sauce. Again, the pacing between these courses was impeccable.

We arrived at last at the main event – in this case, tenderloin of beef and veal with half a lobster tail, potatoes and Madeira glaze. The sheer brilliance and spectrum of flavour in this course is off the charts. Suffice it to say we chewed each bite slowly, our faces in goofy ecstasy.

At this point we were both stuffed beyond hope, but when the desserts were brought to the table – a chocolate cylinder over a chocolate-covered strawberry with melted chocolate poured over top of it at the table, alongside a lychee sorbet, as well as a milk chocolate mousse



– we decided it wouldn't hurt to at least try it. In the end, it was all we could do to keep from licking the plates. I had to have a word with the chef.

Bjarni Gunnar Kristinsson, the chef de cuisine, received his certification at Grillið, but told us that he travels "constantly" to France, New York and the UK to keep up with the ever-changing trends in fine cuisine.

"You have to," he said, as if it were a given that a chef should fly overseas several times a year just to visit other kitchens.

When asked about the freshness of the

ingredients, Kristinsson said he considered this a special point of pride for the restaurant.

"Everything is either produced as close by as possible," he said, "or flown in fresh, twice a week." (Insider's tip: book a reservation for a Wednesday evening – that's when the veggies from France arrive.)

After a meal at Grillið, it's hard to take the elevator back down to your slightly less glamorous life, but with the prices as they are, repeat visits are a realistic and well-deserved possibility.



familiar with the dish. As these are the ribs cut closest to the pig's spine, on the top of its back, the meat is generally lean but also greatly under-exercised, and thus tender. However, due to the low fat content (for pork, anyway), it's easy to overcook them to the consistency of leather.

Once again, Red Chili improved on the American standard. The ribs were served with steak-cut fries and a little bowl of extra barbecue sauce, as per tradition, but this wasn't

your run-of-the-mill barbecue sauce – the recipe had been tweaked a bit, successfully. The meat from the ribs practically fell from the bone, as it should. I couldn't help but sample some of the baked potato with sour cream, and wasn't disappointed.

For those looking for reasonably priced American food, classed up a bit and served in a relaxed, open space, you can't do better in Iceland than Red Chili.



# BEZT Í HEIMI

## Mad Cow Free



### Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar

No cocktail sauce, and no mad cow

BY BART CAMERON PHOTO BY GÚNDI

Q: What do you get in your burger to make it worth \$10?

A: Well, I'll tell you what you don't get: MAD COW!!!!!!

That's right, it used to sound fucking crazy to pay \$10 for a hamburger. But with seven cases of mad cow reported among American cows in February of 2006 alone, that \$10 burger is starting to look a whole lot more sane.

Yeah, local products and farming factor into even the most inane and universal of foods – the hamburger. If you're lucky enough to live in a country where your cows aren't fed meat, then you get to eat beef without suffering degenerative diseases. This is something that The Economist might want to think about the next time they come up with something as obnoxious as the Big Mac Index, one of the many ethnocentric measures they have to analyse world economies... and a measure Iceland, with the most expensive Big Mac in the world, has failed badly.

But enough about deadly meat. Let's talk burgers.

Burgers and fast food are an Icelandic obsession.

Likely, you have come across this already – that Bill Clinton visited Iceland and ate fish was not noted locally; that he sampled the local hot dog is an immense point of pride. The burger is just as much an obsession: the Grapevine has received more queries from Icelanders to judge the best local burger than we have to judge the best local poet – ten times as many. As best we can figure, fast food is simply respected as an art form.

The goal with fast food, as with fast music, is to take on American and European influences, and then drop

those influences on their head. Hence the Sugarcubes were able to cite American and British punk, while American and British audiences couldn't hear any such influence, and hence a local chain, American Style, can serve tasty local concoctions to be eaten with knife and fork, which bear almost no resemblance to any hamburger served on American soil.

The burger that tastes most like the American ideal – a good non-frozen, hand-shaped patty of beef, slightly rare, with mayonnaise, lettuce, tomato, must'd, ketchup – is on display at Hamborgarabúllan. You can ask for it less rare, and you can ask for it to be healthier, but neither is going to happen. The burgers are what they say they are: beefy and good.

If you like beef, you'll like this burger. There may be a moment when you think, sitting among the patrons at the always-crowded, celebrated burger stand, that it is just average, nothing that special has been done to the meat, there is no fancy-ass seasoning.

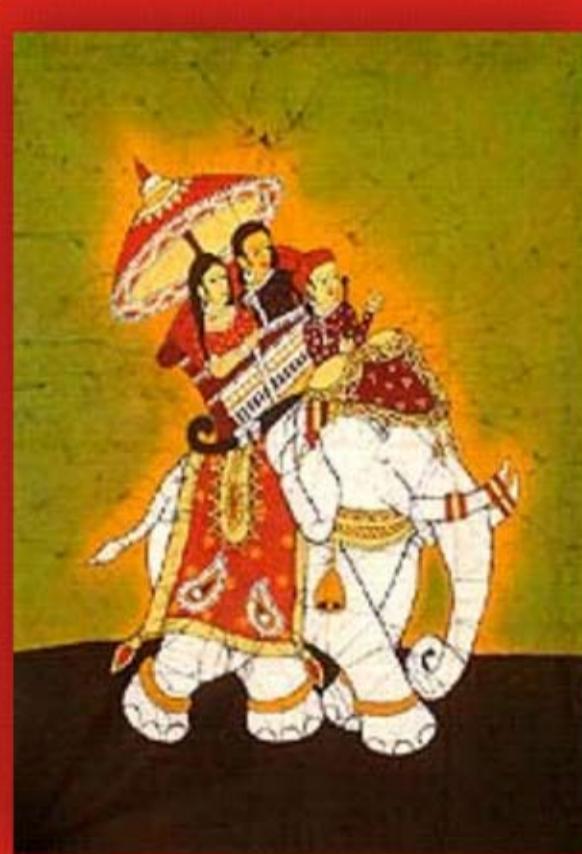
It will be months later that the perfection of the Tommiburger will hit you. You will realise that, on your visit to Iceland, you ate that one ideal American burger, and that to eat another like it you will either have to wait for a new set of environmental policies in the US of A, or you will have to hop a plane back to Iceland.

Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar, Geirsgata 1, 101 Reykjavík,  
Tel.: 511-1888  
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## Hressingarskálinn

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.



# t.A.T.u.

## The Greatest and Most Awesome Band in the World

(NOTE: While no amount of column space could possibly contain all the most pertinent updates about t.A.T.u. – the greatest band in the world – I've tried my best to highlight some of the more pressing news.)

After t.A.T.u. – the greatest band in the world – split with their former manager Ivan Shapovalov and their “teen lesbian” image in 2004, and singer Yulia Volkova gave birth to her daughter Viktorija later on in the same year, many felt this was the end for the duo. Not so! Last October, they released their second album, Dangerous and Moving (Lyudi Invalidy [Invalid People] in Russian), featuring the musical assistance of Dave Stewart, Richard Carpenter and Sting.

### How has it been faring so far?

Dangerous and Moving peaked on the Billboard 500 at #131, but the band is still maintaining a strong following in Poland, where listeners of the wildly popular Polish radio station Eska rated them #2 out of a possible 100 “hot acts” of 2005 – despite having only released Dangerous and Moving in the last two months of that year. Also, the latest single, Friend or Foe, is still in the Top 30 for world rankings of singles, while the first single, All About Us, remains in the Top 20 for the same list. All About Us’ ranking may have something to do with the video, which – true to form – has sparked a great deal of controversy. MTV refused to air it without substantial scene cuts, due to violent content, and the uncensored version has been circulating the Internet in heavy rotation. So Yulia gets beaten nearly to death and ends up shooting her attacker in the face at point-blank range before kicking his headless corpse – is that really any worse than anything Will Smith has made us suffer through?

In other news, the girls have a global tour coming up, and won an Italian TRL award last month for Best Group, an award that is voted for online. Prior to this writing, fans on the message board of t.A.T.u.’s official website were giving each other instructions on how to vote anonymously multiple times to en-

I ❤ tatu

## The Greatest and Most Awesome Band in the World

sure a win for t.A.T.u. – not that they needed the help! – which is a testament to just how devoted t.A.T.u. fans are.

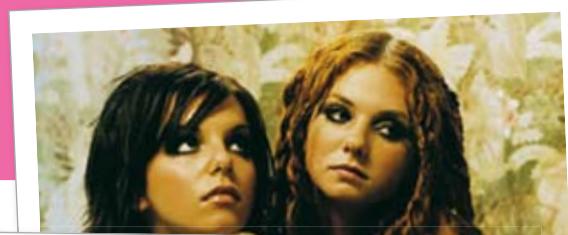
It looks like the girls might be extending their greatness and awesomeness into other genres as well. Yulia wrote in her online diary that she’s pulling together ideas for a movie script. In her own words: “Yes, I started to write a script for the movie I want to shoot. I don’t know how to write scripts at all, I have so many thoughts, how to organise them?... I want to write everything at once. The movie is going to be about young people, about life, about dangerous, extreme moments... But it will not be just about guys and gangs, like Svolochi or Brigada [Russian movies about young people]. A different kind. I have an idea about the opening scene: a girl opens her eyes and realises that she’s alive.” I got chills!

As a testament to t.A.T.u.’s greatness and universality, hip-hop act Flipsyde have sampled the aforementioned Gomensai for their single Happy Birthday, a song about a man who deeply regrets the “murder” of his unborn child. Anti-choice propaganda from the hip-hop world? Possibly. A song vastly improved because there’s a bit of t.A.T.u. in it? Definitely!

The last time this paper reported on t.A.T.u., we told you where you could download their material for free on their official site. As the page we referred to has been updated and no longer features music downloads, I’m sure a number of you have been frustrated and disappointed. Fret no more! You can download nearly their entire back catalogue at <http://eng.tatysite.net/music> and videos can be found at <http://eng.tatysite.net/video>. Documentaries and interviews can still be found at <http://tatu.ru/kino.html>, which may entail having some knowledge in Russian, but learning a few words in a new language is hardly too much to ask in order to get more on the greatest band in the world, t.A.T.u.!

### Stay tuned for more updates!

By Paul F. Nikolov



### t.A.T.u. Fun Fact #347: They're Better than Birgitta - Europe Said So!

At the 2003 Eurovision Song Contest, t.A.T.u. performed the song Ne ver ne boisya, and finished in third place. Iceland was also there, with Birgitta Haukdal performing Open Your Heart. She finished in ninth. Ninth! Ha ha ha! Eat that, suckers!



### t.A.T.u. Quote #512:

“All those political games... Here the Russian album is called “Invalid People”, you know why? Because we are surrounded by many monsters: traitors, envious persons, those who can not love, feel pity, and are not capable of kind feelings. We live in such a world, and everybody is involved in this. But nobody tries to change anything.” – Lena Katina, speaking on the war in Iraq.

**K-292 Kj 42** Vinolakassi "Egyptian Cigarette Manfactory" (avt. 1900) smak: Röra örtuggsnål (spuma). Edet platt i Edet mälm lala lätt t fumma brot hörjan i mat gallo spuma funna

**K-215 Kj 45** Cassi inniheldur blöslit i stora bröckum, la postulinsfärhöninga med blöslitum i vaxslite (10x20 cm, katalitiskt full av vaxslite).

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**PART 4 OF 4**  
Touring the American Egypt

# At the Kings' Feet in Memphis

By Bart Cameron | Photos by Gúndi

In Tupelo, Mississippi, for \$14, you can enter Elvis Aaron Presley's birthplace and get a personal guided tour from a kindly old lady... a very kindly, very old lady... who really doesn't care much about Elvis.

My old lady is called Eleanor, and she is sore and cold from sitting in the famously primitive shotgun shack that Elvis had to suffer for his first 13 years, a space so rough that all his later excesses – overindulgence in food, women, living spaces and prescription drugs – were attributed to this very shack.

Eleanor, rubbing her elbow and stomping her feet, tells me that she thinks Elvis might have been born near the ironing board. "People are so impressed by the ironing board. It reminds them of his surfing movie, Blue Hawaii."

I step over and look at it. Everything in the cabin is five feet from everything else. The whole of the cabin is three rooms, kept tidy but still miserable enough. The outside walls are the only things that are original anymore; even the ironing board I've been asked to admire is a replacement ironing board. Tupelo is the single worst museum I have ever seen – even for a birthplace museum, it is pretty bad.

A matronly guide, Eleanor tells me that I look tired and thin, likely because I have yet to agree that the ironing board is indeed like a surfboard. I say I've been travelling in Mississippi; I'm just arriving from Oxford and Clarksdale.

"Clarksdale?" she says, seemingly warming up.

Yes, the home of Ike Turner, Muddy Waters and Son House, Clarksdale. I realise that the old woman has been playing possum – she's a music junkie. Why else would one sit all day in a clap-trap cabin talking about Elvis

"I've always wanted to go to Clarksdale and see Morgan Freeman. He's such a lovely actor. He was so wonderful in that film Driving Miss Daisy."

I come to the conclusion that I did not enter Elvis's birthplace with the proper reverence and have therefore ruined the dialogue. I decide to stick around in the cabin, talking with Eleanor, until someone else comes in, so I can see their reverence – so I can understand what you do when you're near Elvis history.

Eleanor talks for ten more minutes. I realise she's starting to get creeped out. She tells me the full, virtuous history of Elvis buying back the home he grew up in and donating it to the city to be used as a museum in 1956 when he was 21 years old. She makes some tea in the microwave that is located in her little sitting station. We talk about Iceland. Finally, another person enters.

"You going to the Rotary Christmas show tonight, Eleanor?"

It's Eleanor's relief, an equally amiable old woman.

**"The typical man or woman who thinks he or she is Elvis and visits the Graceland Outlet buys the following..."**

"I don't know that I feel up to it. You'll never guess where this young man is from," Eleanor says, trying to pleasantly brush me off. The new host, who has a more Southern name, Maggie Anne, sits down at her guide station, folds her hands and asks me to tell her all about where I'm from. I get the impression there won't be any visitors any time soon.

## No Wonder You're Lonesome Tonight

Without Elvis, we wouldn't be here. As authentic as we'd like to be, the three of us cruising through blues country were only exposed to blues because of the charismatic white guy who introduced blues and rock to the masses. Still, we openly loathe him and can't stop making jokes about how bloated and stupid the King was before his heart stopped while he was on the toilet. We love what inspired him, we love what was inspired by him, but we just can't get over Elvis himself.



Which explains why we decide against going into Graceland, despite recommendations from a few extremely authentic bluesmen in Clarksdale who said we just had to see Elvis's plane and cars. Instead, we drive straight to the Graceland Outlet Store, just across the street from Graceland, more crowded, if the parking lot is any indication, and \$28 cheaper.

The manager of the Graceland Outlet understands why we're skipping Graceland: it's because of the new management; the people who do American Idol now run Graceland, and Elvis fans are complaining.

"Sure. I love Elvis, but can't stand corporate giants," I tell him.

"Still, you should go. People just pay it. It's Graceland."

I promise that I'll go soon, but first ask for a tour of Elvis merchandise, and a description of Elvis discount fans.

"There are just a lot of nice crazy people," he tells me. "I mean, one woman came in with a tattoo of Elvis on her back – her whole back. I thought that was a little much. And a lot of guys come in and tell me that they're Elvis, but they're nice."

I consider asking which psychology book rates a tattoo as more crazy than multiple personality disorder, but settle on just asking what discount item the typical man who thinks he's Elvis buys at an Elvis outlet store.

The typical man or woman who thinks he or she is Elvis and visits the Graceland Outlet buys the following: 1) Elvis Gold Record 45, in frame, of Are You Lonesome Tonight? for \$49.95, 2) Elvis folding camping chair, 3) Elvis salt and pepper shakers for \$9.95 and 4) Elvis throws, the Love Me Tender series. But by far the most popular item is the Elvis Tour 2003 t-shirt, available in sizes M-XXXL, he tells me.

He points out the XXXL size when he explains the popularity, but refuses to be too much more specific. He leaves to help a customer with Elvis golf balls.

## He Sings, Too

It's easy to hate Elvis, and I realise, as I purchase a handful of postcards of fat, bloated, Las Vegas Elvis just before his death, that more merchandise seems set up for those who mock the man than genuinely admire him. You don't see heart-shaped postcards of John Lennon after a rough night out – I own three of Elvis after a rough night, then week, then year.

In an act of penance, we drive to downtown Memphis and walk to Sun Studios. The greatest appeal of Sun Studios as an Elvis tourist attraction is that Sun is significant with or without the King. The first studio to record rock n roll, a single by Ike Turner called Rocket 88, Sun also put BB King on vinyl, along with Carl Perkins – arguably the Beatles' greatest influence. Johnny Cash was discovered by Sun, as was Jerry Lee Lewis. It is still a functioning studio, remarkably easy to book, if you're interested, though there is one drawback – while you can record in the same booth as so many masters including, more recently, Beck and U2, you must also realise that Maroon 5 has recorded three tracks there, possibly undoing any magic once in the room.

The Sun Studios tour, led by young local Memphis musicians who slip in references to their own music as much as possible, is the polar opposite to Tupelo. (Our guide's band was El Dorado and the Rachets, in the punk blues genre.) If you love music, you'll love the tour. If you like shiny things and are easily bored, you'll still enjoy the tour – it's interactive; you get to do things like grab the microphone Elvis and Johnny Cash sang into, rub the piano Jerry Lee Lewis played on. In fact, you're encouraged to touch things that seem like they'd be impossibly valuable on eBay, if not in the real world, and make a fool of yourself.

What do you learn? That when rock and country were finding their mass audiences, they were being created by a bunch

>>> CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

of oddballs in a simple studio with one or two decent microphones. The average home computer has a couple thousand times the production capabilities of what went behind the better recordings of the 20th century.

Our guide wound a dollar through the strings of a guitar to show how Johnny Cash created a simple percussion instrument that would get people dancing to Ring of Fire, and, a few seconds later, admitted that this was the point in the tour where things got crazy. Older women freak out when they see Elvis's microphone, but recently, young men have been crying, somewhat hysterically, over the recently deceased Johnny Cash.

I ask if he hadn't thought of just saying, "I'll give you something to cry about," and threatening people at random. He smiles politely.

"This is important to people. It's moving to be here, where your favourite song, something you've grown to love, was first put down. It's important to me, too," our guide tells me.

As much as Sun Studios is about bonding with the founders of rock and country, especially lesser-known names, Elvis Presley stands out somewhat head-and-shoulders above the other geniuses. While you get the Horatio Alger story of Elvis coming in dirt broke to record his first single, you also get some myths debunked – Elvis famously claimed that he only recorded his first single to give his mother a birthday present, but the session was in July 1953, and his mother's birthday was in April. Trivia is one thing, but the Sun tour also presents video of Elvis's first television appearance – a flawless but aggressive blues-rock show number that stunned everyone on the tour. Once you see the show, you no longer think Elvis was a cracker with a good voice and full lips... you think Elvis was a cracker with a good voice and full lips who, at one point in his life, invented the rock performance, perfected it, showed the world how to do it, then moved on to invent and perfect cracker kitsch karate, which, to somebody somewhere in the world, was likely another act of genius.

#### The Other King's Street

The locals, including the many hipsters at Sun Studios, recommend we go out in Midtown Memphis, where indie music dominates. The highest recommendations go to a woman playing a double bass and singing, wearing horn-rimmed glasses, to a crowd full of mid-20s thin people drinking whiskey cocktails and beer. Handed a copy of the Memphis Flyer, an excellent weekly street paper, we are also told about rockabilly shows and a post-pop rock show. Beale Street, we are told, is only for tourists.

Nice as it is to see young musicians get credit and recom-



mendations, our quick spin through Midtown reveals somewhat generic music and style – a crowd of temps, computer programmers and art students watching their friends perform is a good night out, but it doesn't quite capture our imaginations.

So we head out to Beale Street. Before the hurricanes, Beale Street was the slightly less sinful little brother to the French Quarter – today, it is likely the best place in the world to see a whole lot of top-tier blues at once. BB King's club dominates Beale Street, sitting atop the seven blocks of neon and blues and jazz music like a castle.

BB's is packed, but the street and the other blues clubs are mostly empty – tourist season is March to October. Now it is

mostly locals and a few wayward Europeans.

We head for the Juke Joint, one of the older clubs on Beale Street, to see harmonica guru Robert Doctor Feelgood Potts. The Dr. Potts band tells you a lot about what goes on in Memphis – the bassist is a young woman from Osaka, Japan, the keyboardist from Janesville, Wisconsin, the drummer from New Orleans, and the guitarist from Nashville, while Potts himself is from Greenwood, Mississippi. Everybody but the bassist has moved to Memphis because this is the only place you can play blues every night and make a good living.

"Except on the down months," the keyboardist tells me, after we've had a moment of Wisconsin bonding talk. "We live

# Get together.



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on those tips, and you just have to convince people that, you know, even though there aren't many people in the winter, we still need those tips."

Dr. Potts, the bandleader, is less worried about the tips. After posing a bit for our photographer, he points out that it is only natural that a group of Icelandic journalists would travel thousands of miles to see him. "What you're talking about, with the blues, is miracle root music, the universal beginning."

When I acknowledge the universality of blues, he moves on to explain the appeal of Robert Doctor Feelgood Potts. Mainly being that "if you go on Google, you'll see hundreds of Dr. Feelgoods. But there's only one Doctor Feelgood Potts."

Dr. Potts asks me if I understand the importance of Mississippi, and I say I guess that I do, as I've just arrived from there. He gives me the broadest of smiles, leaning back so that he almost falls off his chair.

"You ain't been in one of those juke joints down in Mississippi, have you?"

"Sure, yeah."

"I'll tell you, you're talking about home. I'll play you some home-style music, then," and he stands up. Instead of going onstage, he turns to greet the rest of the crowd and sell CDs.

In a few minutes, the band heads back up, the keyboardist stopping by one more time to remind me of the tip bucket, and

to point out that the New Orleans flood has brought a lot of musicians into town, which makes it that much harder to make a living.

Dr. Potts eventually gets back onstage, and while the music is still big band and polished, Memphis style, he begins to stomp and jump on the beat – his eyes half open, a beatific smile on his face, he seems in danger of falling off the stage.

"Yup, that's the juke joint style," our photographer says, recalling our experience at a Clarksdale, Mississippi juke joint, then gets out of the way.

We begin the drive back South at dawn, taking a brief detour to cross the Mississippi and look over the enormous glass pyramid set against the river in order to remind the world of Memphis's namesake.

A few hours later, we stop at our tenth Waffle House, and drop the last of our money on deep-fried chicken sandwich concoctions and bottomless coffee. In eight days, we have driven 2,000 miles, examined the wreckage of one of America's worst natural disasters, interviewed scores of people, done significant body damage to our rental car by running over middle-of-the-highway potholes and been overwhelmed by the culture of the poorest state in the US.

As we cover another 800 miles to get to the Orlando airport, we talk about the life of a cultural and tourism magazine – how much good it might do for an Icelandic publication to point out the diversity of a place on the opposite end of the hip spectrum. Hip, we feel, almost always goes hand-in-hand with income level. Just as rich kids are popular in John Hughes movies, rich cities and nations get the benefit of the doubt in the gossip of tourist and economic publications – first comes the money, then comes the hype.

When we run a feature story on the South with New Orleans, Mississippi and Memphis getting full coverage, we will have done ourselves proud, we say.

The next day, after a marathon of driving to get to the Orlando airport, our ad man will inform us that he misread our contract – we never got full approval from our sponsors. We are supposed to cover Orlando, not the South.

A week later, I will pull the Mississippi feature altogether, opting instead to cover a local political concert that the international phenom Björk has gotten behind. It will be the most popular feature the magazine has run.

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## Outside Reykjavík

## Egilsstaðir



## Jobs, Yes. Women, No.

Visiting the Icelandic Klondike

BY SVEINN BIRKIR BJÖRNSSON PHOTOS BY SKARI

In the past three years, the town of Egilsstaðir has witnessed an unprecedented upswing following the building of the Kárahnjúkar dam, and the Fjarðarál aluminium smelter in Reyðarfjörður. Due to its central location, smack in the middle of Eastern Iceland, the town has always been a service centre for the neighbouring towns. It is home to the district's secondary school, the regional airport, the district court as well as many official institutions and large companies that serve the whole region from Egilsstaðir. Now it has become a service centre for the development of heavy industry.

The results of this upswing were evident when I drove through the town on a sunny morning in February. Although I lived in Egilsstaðir for more than half my life, this was only my second visit back in over five years, and I could hardly recognise it as the same town in which I grew up. Everywhere I looked, I saw new developments. What once used to be a quagmire is now a new residential area. What once was thought to be way out of town is now well within its limits.

Egilsstaðir has traditionally always been a town where people stay for a short period of time. Every year an unusually high number of people moves out of the town, while new people move in. One reason for this development is likely the local job market. The town's bloodline is the service industry, which does not create many high-wage job opportunities. People tend to treat it as a temporary stopover on their way to somewhere else. As a result of this, Egilsstaðir suffers from a lack of identity. The close-knit community feeling that is usually associated with small towns in the countryside is all but non-existent.

### "Work, work, work for the next four years"

Egilsstaðir, and the neighbouring area, is home to roughly 3,500 people. It has grown fast

in the last few years. According to statistics from the National Registry, the population in Eastern Iceland grew by over ten percent in 2005 alone, with the biggest increase coming in Egilsstaðir and the neighbouring areas. The grand-scale building projects that are underway have created an atmosphere of gold rush, where people flock to Eastern Iceland to get theirs, while it lasts.

Contractors, builders and other industrial workers are especially in demand. I ran into an old acquaintance, a house builder, and he told

women in the region are foreign.

The underlying truth is that despite all the work, despite whatever future prospects a large aluminium company like Alcoa may offer in terms of work, people are still leaving Eastern Iceland. The increase in population over the last few years has been created exclusively by a temporary influx of foreign migrant workers, brought to Iceland to finish a temporary project.

There is nothing that suggests this will change once the projects are complete. Heavy

women. "We really need women here. We have been reduced to sharing them," a younger local says jokingly, although his words carry a hint of frustration.

Egilsstaðir is the urban planner's nightmare. It is spread out over a vast area, creating long distances between service areas and residential areas, making it almost impossible for people to buy a carton of milk without the aid of a car. In part, this is an old problem, created years ago. The residents are victims of the town's past. The centre, or more accurately, the commercial district, is located on the edge of town, by the side of the national highway. The residential areas and the schools are located on the other end, and continue to grow in the opposite direction, away from the service area.

The presence of the migrant workers is very evident in Egilsstaðir. The town has become a multicultural society. This is perhaps nowhere as apparent as in the local swimming pool, where instructions are mounted on the walls in several European languages, plus Chinese. In the hot tub, I found one Canadian and two Slovaks discussing their national teams' prospects in ice hockey at the Winter Olympics. Portuguese, Chinese and Polish colleagues joined in. This is a cross section of the current population.

Meanwhile the PR people of Alcoa, the parent company of Fjarðarál, are trying to create public awareness and a good image for the company among the locals. A regional TV-guide publication featured a centrefold ad, describing the production process from the aluminium made in Reyðarfjörður to a finished product, in this case a Ferrari sports car in made in Italy. Strangely, there is no mention of aluminium's other uses, namely in munitions and weapons production.

**"We really need women here. We have been reduced to sharing them," a younger local says jokingly, although his words carry a hint of frustration.**

**"I found one Canadian and two Slovaks discussing their national teams' prospects in ice hockey."**

me that he is "ridiculously" busy with work. "It is work, work, work, at least for the next four years," he said. I asked if he was at all worried about what happens after that, once the big projects are over, and balance is restored. "I have no time for worries, my friend, all I do is work," he answered.

Another local told me he usually gets a phone call every other day, offering him work. "If you speak Icelandic, and you are willing to work, you can ask for almost anything you want in salary." But, he added, you better have a place to stay.

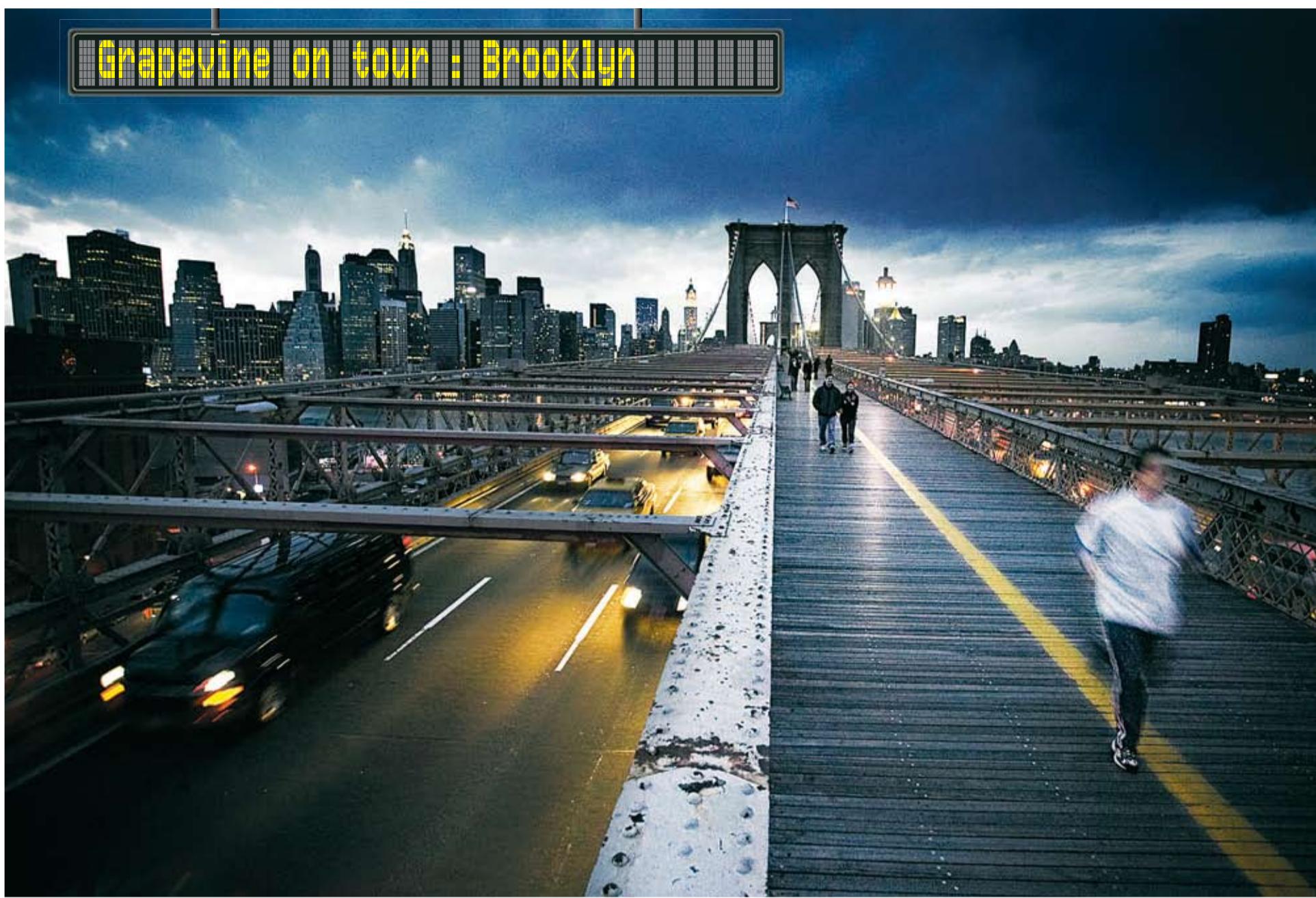
Population statistics reveal a curious truth. While the population in Eastern Iceland has grown, the number of Icelanders living there has actually decreased. Today, nearly 25 percent of all men, and over six percent of all

industry is hardly likely to entice young people, who have left the region to pursue education, to return to Eastern Iceland. A local construction engineer told me that despite all the available work now and in the foreseeable future, finding engineers to come and work in Egilsstaðir is nearly impossible. "We are overloaded with work as it is. But we can't get any good men to come here," he said.

### No Women in the Hot Tubs, Let's Talk Hockey

An even more curious population statistic is the ratio between the genders. In 2005, the increase among males in Eastern Iceland was over 18 percent, while the female population increased by less than three percent. Nowhere in Iceland is the gender ratio as one-sided. In 2005, there were 1,358 men for every 1,000

## Grapevine on tour : Brooklyn



# We Live to Be Radical

Brooklyn Goes A-Type

BY BART CAMERON PHOTOS BY GÚNDI

Four years ago, when I lived in Brooklyn, Williamsburg was losing its cool, which is to say it was cool and everyone knew it. To indicate how mass hip the neighbourhood was, it's best to refer to one incident: In 2001, a graffiti artist from Williamsburg stole a friend's photo from a gallery opening as a joke, and escaped in a getaway car... along with his buddy, Ryan McGinley, the photo editor of Vice and the youngest photographer to ever have a solo show at the Whitney. When the New York Times reported on it, the number of band members, magazines and graffiti crews boggled the mind.

Other signs were things like a tiny blue paperback called *The Hipster Handbook*, describing, in hilarious detail, the tiny style points that everyone in the neighbourhood was pushing on the world when they were doing indie film, indie music or commercials.

Even as the world was noticing Williamsburg, locals realised the neighbourhood was done for. Rent doubled and more, local bars got on national television and then drew clientele that wanted to be on national television. The Williamsburg cultural magazine the Brooklyn Rail, dedicated to the local galleries and deep thought, didn't have a member of staff who lived in Williamsburg by the end of 2003. It was enough to make a body move to Jersey.

### Less Pacino, More Swayze

*Point Break LIVE!*, a stage production of the 1991 Keanu Reeves and Patrick Swayze blockbuster, is exactly the thing that the hipster Williamsburg would have shunned. The play is profoundly entertaining, well-acted (on our night, even by the guest actor, a volunteer pulled from the crowd to recite Keanu Reeves's wooden lines) and it has a fundamental message: mainly, if you think you've grown up and gotten book smarts, realise that you still likely

connect with Keanu Reeves's leading man ideology and come off every bit as much as an ass as he does. Somewhere along the production, as 250 people were laughing hysterically at an indie actor imitating Patrick Swayze and stating, "We live to be radical," more than a few of us in the crowd caught the double-edged irony.

For this reason, *Point Break LIVE!* wouldn't have survived when Williamsburg was full of overly serious artists who were desperate for work. Daily, you had to acknowledge that art and independence were the highest possible callings. Now that money has fully crept into the neighbourhood and the artists have left, the art can ease up on trying to be genuine and start connecting, which is the scary part.

*Point Break LIVE!* connects most strongly with the frat boys in the audience, people that the show's co-creator, Jamie Hook, tells me are "complete dicks who ruin the experience." They don't. But this doesn't stop Mr. Hook, still dressed in drag from the show, from interrupting our interview to approach the group of severely inebriated men on dates and telling them, "You guys are total assholes and you really bothered us." A hurt frat boy responds first by showing money, then with various statements of admiration, all starting with "Dude, listen."

It is not the kind of artist-to-receiver experience Mr. Hook probably dreamed of when he was putting on August Wilson to empty theatres, but it is the kind of interaction that goes on in every other art form – hearing it in live theatre is, in a way, refreshing.

On parting, Hook explains that pulling someone at random from the audience and having them read Keanu Reeves's dialogue is not intended to mock. "Not everyone can be Al Pacino," he says. "And not everybody needs to be. What this play demonstrates is that Keanu Reeves is the most generous actor of his generation."

Williamsburg now has a lot more of the "generous" types, people who don't expect to be called geniuses, and who are in little danger of being labelled as such. Because of the non-geniuses, an independent play is making more money than it ever would have were it playing for artist-friends. The hip neighbourhood is now a place where people can be artists and make a living... and then flee to be around a cooler crowd, one that doesn't open sentences with "dude", or mention money as a primary critical judgement, nor openly display enthusiasm.

### No Rock in Brooklyn

"They advertise you can smoke whatever you want. Don't worry at all," Josh Loar, the sound guy from Galapagos, tells us, a spliff between his teeth and a Macintosh in his lap.

Mr. Loar, a composer from Los Angeles, isn't so down on Williamsburg, Brooklyn – he makes a good living scoring independent films and local commercials, and his band, Electric Light, has a number of clubs to play at. It's not California. There is no chance of getting a place to live and record in, but, with a few concessions – Loar and his wife live in a fourth-floor walk-up in which, with some frequency, dead rats appear – you can get by decently. For \$60, he regularly rents three hours in a large studio, outfitted with amps, drums, PA systems and a bathroom with a shower but no lock, to do Pro Tools magic. On the night we join him, a racket comes from all four rooms.

We tell Loar that we want to hear the next Yeah Yeah Yeahs. A classically trained percussionist, he responds that Brooklyn is not what you'd

expect if you only knew it from record stores and music videos.

"There really isn't any rock coming out of Brooklyn anymore. Ever since the Bravery, people who liked music just had enough of retro-rock. All you see now is experimental jazz or people looking for ultra-traditional, something like The Two Man Gentlemen Band. You hardly ever see a drum set anymore. Even the hip-hop is about retro drum machines."

Pressed to name any rock bands, he admits there's a retro-90s movement out of Montreal, and he's heard that the next Wolf Parade is in the space next to us.

We bring the management of Sweatshop into the discussion. He's never done better business – the studio is looking to buy another floor, as so few people are allowed to make noise in their newly upgraded buildings.

Some musicians are afraid to even store their equipment at home. He waves at himself, displaying jet black hair, piercings, tight pants a little too low. "If you look like I do, you can't rent anywhere. Nobody wants to rent to a musician. You know what I say when I have to

>>> CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

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talk to a landlord? I say, 'I sell guitars to musicians.' That's the only way they'll rent to you, if you tell them you take money from musicians. That's my secret. Don't ever print that," he tells me.

#### Defending from Whom?

"I love Brooklyn, but you just have to grow up and move on," my former roommate, an advertising copywriter who moved from Brooklyn to the Lower East Side of Manhattan tells me. "You can only fight it for so long, but now Brooklyn costs as much as Manhattan, and people have the same kind of jobs, it just takes longer to get home."

Even a friend who broke through her writing slump by publishing City Baby Brooklyn: The Ultimate Guide for Parents has mentioned getting out. That they are moving out is nothing new: one-quarter of all Americans are descended from people who lived in Brooklyn... and moved out. The amazing thing about people who move away from Brooklyn now is how bitter they are over what they're losing by moving.

Our guide for a good portion of our visit was Details magazine's Senior Writer Bart Blasengame – a man every bit as hip as his name. Dodging the sell-out culture of Manhattan, and the overhyped areas like Williamsburg, he settled down in Greenpoint five years ago. A ruggedly handsome Polish neighbourhood stocked with excellent used-clothing stores, camera shops, record shops and Thai restaurants, to say nothing of local bars run by displaced Southerners, to hear Blasengame tell it, Greenpoint was paradise a few months ago. By sheer coincidence, over brunch, the producer of Point Break LIVE! walks into the restaurant, registering only casual surprise that we would be in this neighbourhood, and joins in on the gentrification discussion and tells us he's happy to be away from Williamsburg, safe in the haven that is Greenpoint.

Blasengame splits from us: we walk the Brooklyn Bridge and check in on Williamsburg galleries, he spends the ideal day going



to the Laundromat, then buying used shirts and records. That night we decide to check the difference – if everybody is moving back to Manhattan, especially the Lower East Side, Manhattan must have gotten cooler, surely, by now, as New York Magazine suggested in a cover story back in 2003, "Manhattan is the new Brooklyn."

Following the best advice we can get, that of New York gossip and night life columnists, we charge through the Lower East Side, hop-

ing to come into contact with genius, intelligence or at least cool indifference. We get fitted jeans, sport coats and exposure to the lines, "Excuse me, big guy, I'm gonna scoot by you," and "I wouldn't kick her outta bed for eatin' crackers."

Bitter and drunk, we crash a party of New York journalists. Before we can explain to the hosts why we feel we should have restitution for our crappy night out, our guide, Mr. Blasengame, is accosted for wearing a sweatshirt

with the slogan "Defend Brooklyn." A gossip columnist is bitter to see such a shirt.

"Who are you defending Brooklyn from, exactly?" the columnist asks, his own shirt unbuttoned to expose as much toned chest as possible.

"From people like you!" Blasengame shouts, launching into a lengthy tirade, heavy on the f-bomb.

Mercifully, the loudest man at the party decides that he likes our photographer, and he

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segues all feuding into a discussion of what our photographer would like to drink, and how big our photographer's lens might be.

We are eventually led to a secret bar in the Lower East Side called Milk and Honey – a bar so hip that it has no sign, no line and you must get a secret phone number to gain entrance. The sublime beauty of the staff and patrons is enough to cool down Mr. Blasengame. Sadly, I am unable to consider anything but the waitress's enormous hair for the hour of

our visit, until said fear, combined with retro-cocktail-induced vertigo, forces us all from the building.

#### Brunch without the Agent

"Oh my God am I a douche bag! I am going to tell an entire restaurant about my agent and my acting career!" Blasengame moans the next day at a small café in Greenpoint, Brooklyn.

"It is not acting, it is crafting, the stage and screen are craft and art, as I always tell my

agent," I say, doing my best James Lipton.

The object of our loathing is a big-haired, high-domed, saggy, small-bodied, mid-thirties actor who has been lecturing two equally saggy and small-bodied, mid-thirties women about the way people misunderstand his acting career, his craft and his various gifts – most sentences beginning with, "I was saying this to my agent the other day."

"This is why I wear that sweatshirt, that one I wore last night in Manhattan," Blasen-

game says, again, much louder than he needs to. "Because assholes who come into brunch restaurants and talk about their soap commercials in the hope to get some depressing sex, because these douche bags are moving in from the bridge and tunnels and taking over Brooklyn."

It all seems funny enough, but when we leave, Blasengame actually apologises for the saggy actor. "I'm sorry you had to hear that. This neighbourhood is usually so much nicer. I can't believe it's getting this bad."

He points out a string of ten-storey, slip-shod apartment buildings going up to accommodate the newest wave of Brooklynites. The picturesque, working class Polish neighbourhood with the Russian Orthodox cathedral is losing its charm. "This place will be as bad as Williamsburg soon," he says.

Our photographer, who takes a few seconds to frame a shot of the God Bless deli, and who started ignoring gentrification talk two days ago, shrugs and whispers to me, "I'd kill to live here."

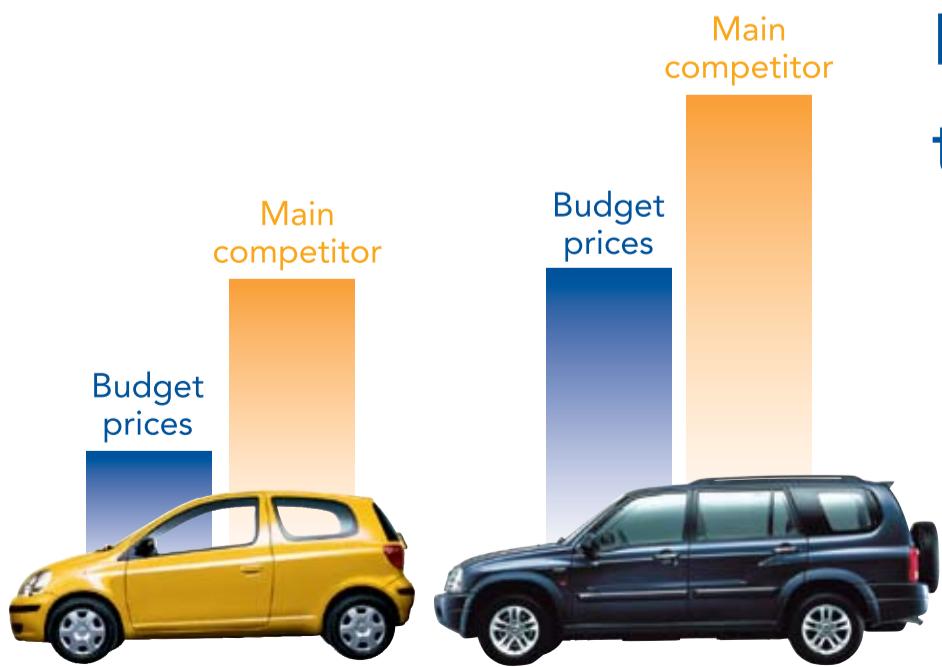
I ask Mr. Blasengame if he and the many other Brooklynites who are complaining about the change aren't overstating the problem – rich people throwing money around, even if they're annoying actors, can't rate that highly in things that ruin your quality of life.

"When you know what's being ruined, it matters," he says. We go back to his apartment and read about Portland, Oregon, which, according to the Willamette Week, doesn't suck yet.

#### Mentioned in this article:

Galapagos, [www.galapagosartspace.com](http://www.galapagosartspace.com)  
Vice Magazine, [www.viceland.com](http://www.viceland.com)  
Brooklyn Rail, [www.brooklynrail.org](http://www.brooklynrail.org)  
Brooklyn Baby, [www.brooklynbaby.com](http://www.brooklynbaby.com)  
Willamette Week, [www.wweek.com](http://www.wweek.com)  
Two Man Gentlemen Band, [www.two-man-gentlemen-band.com](http://www.two-man-gentlemen-band.com)  
Electric Lights, [www.electriclightsmusic.com](http://www.electriclightsmusic.com)

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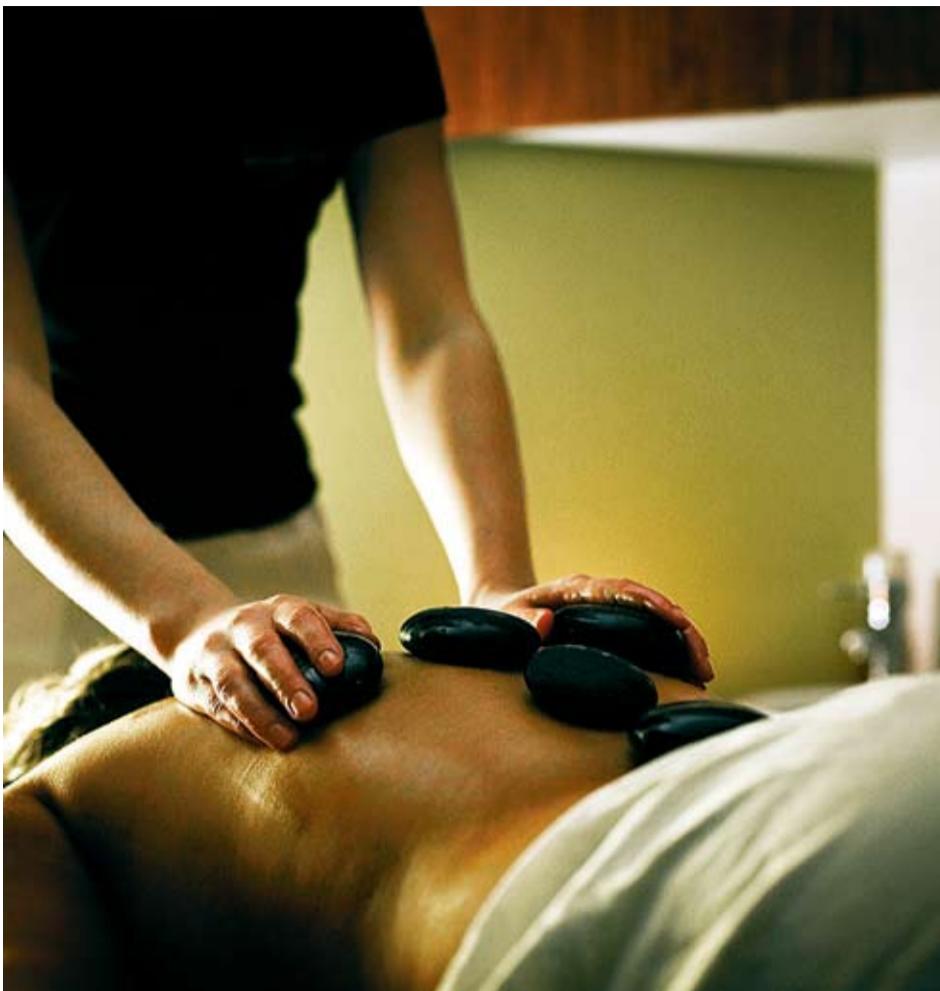


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## Seven Saunas and a La-Z-Boy

Spas are for men

BY SVEINN BIRKIR BJÖRNSSON

"You are going to a spa," my editor said with a sly smirk on his face, obviously enjoying the idea of sending a man for whom the word "bouncer" is included in any verbal description – to a beauty parlour. "Apparently, men now go to spas," he offered up as an excuse. "It's the new squash."

Well, I am happy to report that the joke is on him.

I entered Laugar Spa – Beauty and Massage Clinic, and was greeted by my masseuse, Anna María. Once my shirt was off and I was lying comfortably, face down, on the massage bench, she started describing the therapy for me.

"We try to focus on what we call holistic treatments. We prefer to work the whole body, or several different areas, instead of focusing on one specific area of the body. We combine something like back, shoulders and face, or head and feet," she explained as she began working my lower back. "The most popular treatments are the hot stone treatment, and the chocolate treatment." Chocolate? "Yes, we use a special oil made from chocolate. Chocolate is rich in antioxidants, it is very good for circulation, and it smells good, too."

After about 20 minutes of a back rub, with relaxing music playing at low volume from a speaker somewhere, I was drifting in and out of consciousness. I could distinctly feel the stress and tension of daily life leaving my body: in that sense, a massage is more akin to exorcism than any other bodily treatment.

"More and more men come here to get a facial treatment," Anna María told me when the back massage was over. "It has become a popular gift from wives and girlfriends. The golfer's dream, which is a back and foot massage, is also very popular among men."

She gave me a sniff of two different bottles of massage oils and explained to me that the facial treatment was really an aromatherapy treatment as well as a massage. "We let people choose between different oils. Different smells have different effects on the body."

I am also told it takes about seven to eight minutes for the smell to start working, but you will immediately recognise the scent that is most beneficial to your body at that time. "People always make the right selection; you automatically prefer the smell that gives your body what it needs the most," she said as I selected an oil that smelled vaguely of wood and

jasmine. Its name was impossible to remember under the conditions of extreme relaxation, but I was told that the oil is most beneficial to people who are under a lot of pressure.

Afterwards, I was treated to a facial scrub, which removes the dead skin cells from the face, to reveal the new and fresh skin underneath. Then a moisturising cream, with a distinct smell of hemp, was applied to my face. The smell was to cause me a significant amount of trouble later in the day, but compared to the moisturising and curative abilities of hemp cream, it was probably a small price to pay.

Although massage and facial scrubs are an integral part of the operation, the experience is not complete without a visit to the sauna. Actually, calling it a sauna is a gross understatement. The Laugar Spa offers up a massive relaxation room containing seven different saunas, each with a special theme based on aroma, lighting and sound or differing temperatures. There are ice showers, cold tubs and cold-water buckets to cool you off once the sauna becomes too effective.

Also available is the seawater Jacuzzi, and the six-metre wide waterfall, which is set against softly formed granite sculptures by artist Sigurður Guðmundsson. All this may sound nice, but what really blew me away were two rooms situated on the opposite ends of the much larger sauna room. On one end, there is a special relaxation room filled with La-Z-Boy chairs and a fireplace.

"This is where people can go to relax," Anna María told me. "In here it is forbidden to talk. It is very popular to get massagers in here and give people a shoulder rub before entering the saunas." On the opposite end is the restaurant, where you can get warm meals and cold drinks. "People often come here to spend the whole day. Getting a massage, eating, going to the sauna and taking a swim." I daydreamed, briefly, about being one of those people, then fought the smile and nodded, saying I understood how that might be a pleasant experience. Spending a whole day at the überspa. I then tried to drag out my visit, in the interest of journalism, for as long as possible.

When I eventually left Laugar Spa, I may not have looked any less like a bouncer. But at least I looked like a clean and relaxed bouncer.



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## Grapevine Ad Index

<b>Accomodation</b>	
Grundarfjörður Youth Hostel	46
Kaldbakskot Guesthouse	46
Urðarstekkur Guesthouse	46
<b>Activities</b>	
Aldrei fór ég suður	7
Blue Lagoon	41
Centre	4
City Centre Booking Service	8
Elding Whale Watching	12
Ground Zero	29
Hafssúlan Whale Watching	30
Iceland Symphony Orchestra	8
Reykjavík Excursions	3
<b>Cafes, Bars and Restaurants</b>	
2 Fiskar	24
A.Hansen2	1
Aktu Taktu	28-29
Bernhöftsbakarí	29
Café Aroma	27
Food Taxi	15
Grillid	47
Hressó	37
O-Sushi	36
Roma	5
Segafredo	5
Shalimar	37 & 25
<b>Museums and gallaries</b>	
Gallery i82	7
Listasafn Reykjavíkur	32
Pjóðmenningarhús	35
<b>Shopping</b>	
66 North	3
Carlsberg light4	0
Cintamani	11
Englatár	25
Gjafir Jarðar	25
Húfur sem Hlæja	35
The Viking3	3
<b>Transportation</b>	
Berg4	4
Budget	45
Hertz	47
<b>Other services</b>	
Forex	41
Heimsfrelsí	48
Landbúnaðarháskóli Íslands	8
Netbankinn9	

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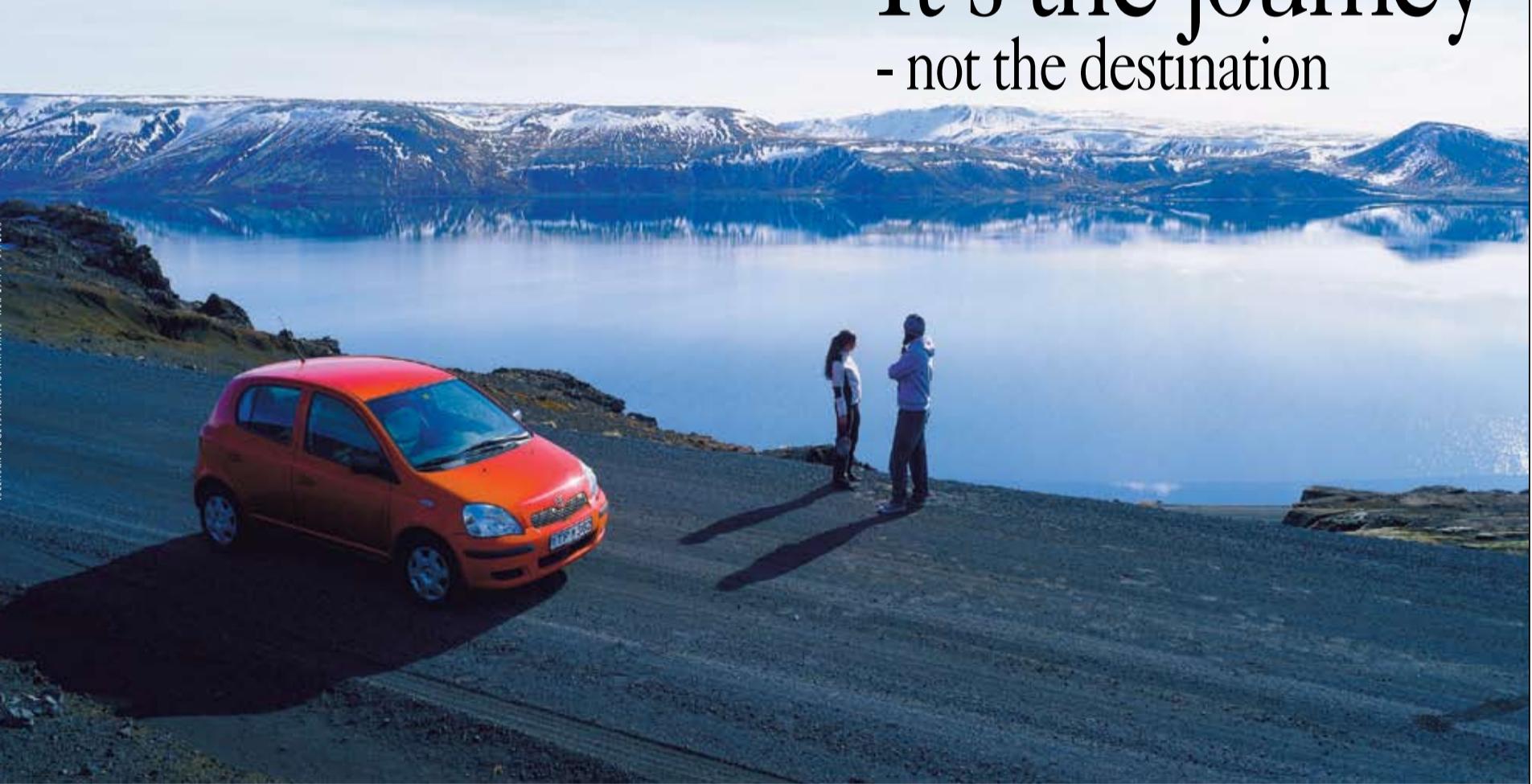
Steingrímur Sigurðsson,  
food critic Morgunblaðið newspaper

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ÍSLÉNSKA AUGLÝSINGASTOFANISÍS HER 2977-4 (9) 2005



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Marteinn Þórsson, of Kompás news magazine.  
Page 6.

**"They've been taking care of the security of our country for a long time now, so that will be missed, not to mention the services and the jobs they've provided."**

Independence Party MP Guðjón Hjörleifsson on what he'll miss about the Keflavík NATO base.  
Page 12.

**"The movie is going to be about young people, about life, about dangerous, extreme moments..."**

**But it will not be just about guys and gangs, like Svolochi or Brigada ... I have an idea about the opening scene: a girl opens her eyes and realises that she's alive."**

Yulia Volkova of t.A.T.u. on the future of Russian cinema.

Page 38.

**"We really need women here. We have been reduced to sharing them,"**

Young man from Egilsstaðir on the effects that importing large numbers of manual labourers have had on the dating scene in Northeastern Iceland.

Page 42.

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