



FREE

# INSIDE REYKJAVÍK

Excerpts from our first book.



Why City Hall Looks that Way  
Rockstar Drags Iceland into Reality TV  
Extremely Disturbing Taxi Cab Interviews  
192 Hours at the Roskilde Music Festival

ISSUE 10 / 14JULY - 28JULY 2006

///COMPLETE CITY GUIDE AND LISTINGS: MAP, INFO, MUSIC, ARTS AND EVENTS///

# ISSUE TEN: JULY 14 - JULY 28

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### The Reykjavík Grapevine crew

The Reykjavík Grapevine  
Faxaskála, Faxaporti, Faxagötu 2  
[www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is)  
grapevine@grapevine.is  
Published by: Fröken ehf.

**EDITORIAL OFFICE**  
+354 540-3600 / [editor@grapevine.is](mailto:editor@grapevine.is)  
for inquiries regarding editorial content.

**MARKETING OFFICE**  
+354 540-3605 / [ads@grapevine.is](mailto:ads@grapevine.is)  
for inquiries regarding advertising, marketing, distribution and subscriptions.

**PUBLISHER'S OFFICE**  
+354 540-3601 / [froken@grapevine.is](mailto:froken@grapevine.is)  
for inquiries regarding this publication.

**THE REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE STAFF**  
Publisher: Hilmar Steinr Grétarsson / [publisher@grapevine.is](mailto:publisher@grapevine.is)  
Editor: Bart Cameron / [editor@grapevine.is](mailto:editor@grapevine.is)  
Co-Editor: Sveinn Birkir Björnsson / [birkir@grapevine.is](mailto:birkir@grapevine.is)  
Marketing Director: Jón Trausti Sigurðarson / [ads@grapevine.is](mailto:ads@grapevine.is)  
Support Manager: Oddur Óskar Kjartansson / [oddur@grapevine.is](mailto:oddur@grapevine.is)  
Art Director: Gunnar Þorvaldsson / [gunni@grapevine.is](mailto:gunni@grapevine.is)  
Photo Director: Guðmundur Freyr Vigfússon / [gudmundur@grapevine.is](mailto:gudmundur@grapevine.is)  
Photographer: Óskar Hallgrímsson / [skari@grapevine.is](mailto:skari@grapevine.is)

**Staff Journalists:**  
Gunnar Hrafn Jónsson / [gunnarh@grapevine.is](mailto:gunnarh@grapevine.is)  
Sindri Eldon / [sindri@grapevine.is](mailto:sindri@grapevine.is)  
Steinunn Jakobsdóttir / [steinunn@grapevine.is](mailto:steinunn@grapevine.is)

**Editorial Intern:** Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir / [vala@grapevine.is](mailto:vala@grapevine.is)

**Columnist:**  
Pórdís Elva Þorvaldsdóttir Bachman / [thordis@grapevine.is](mailto:thordis@grapevine.is)

**Sales staff:**  
Ádalsteinn Jörundsson / [adalsteinn@grapevine.is](mailto:adalsteinn@grapevine.is)  
Helgi Þór Harðarson / [helgi@grapevine.is](mailto:helgi@grapevine.is)  
Jón Trausti Sigurðarson / [jontrausti@grapevine.is](mailto:jontrausti@grapevine.is)

**Proofreader:** Erika Wolfe

**Cover illustration by:** Siggi Eggertsson

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Send your submissions to: [editor@grapevine.is](mailto:editor@grapevine.is)  
Are you interested in working for the Reykjavík Grapevine (or the other way around)? contact: [froken@grapevine.is](mailto:froken@grapevine.is)

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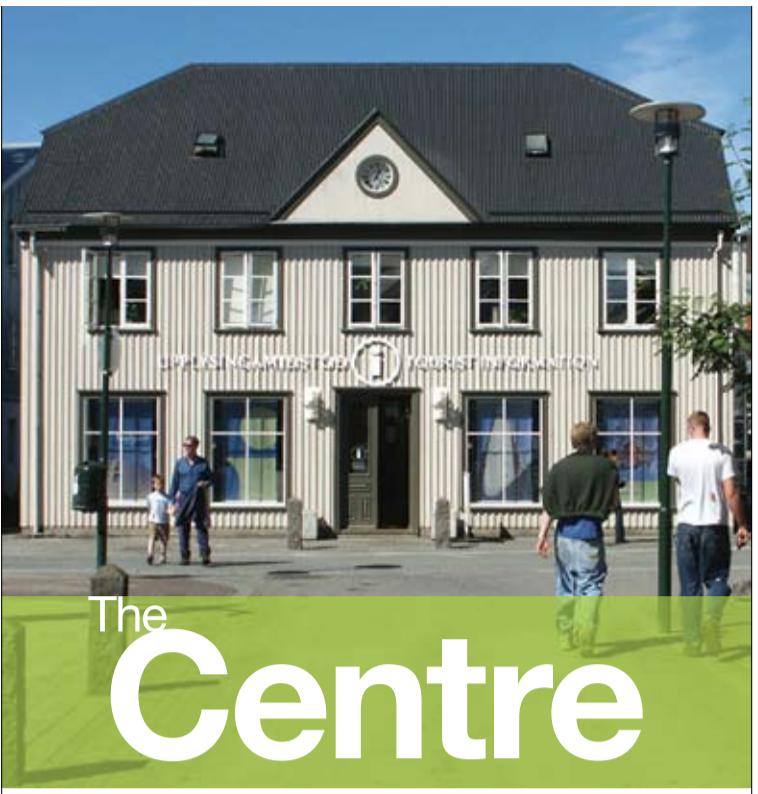
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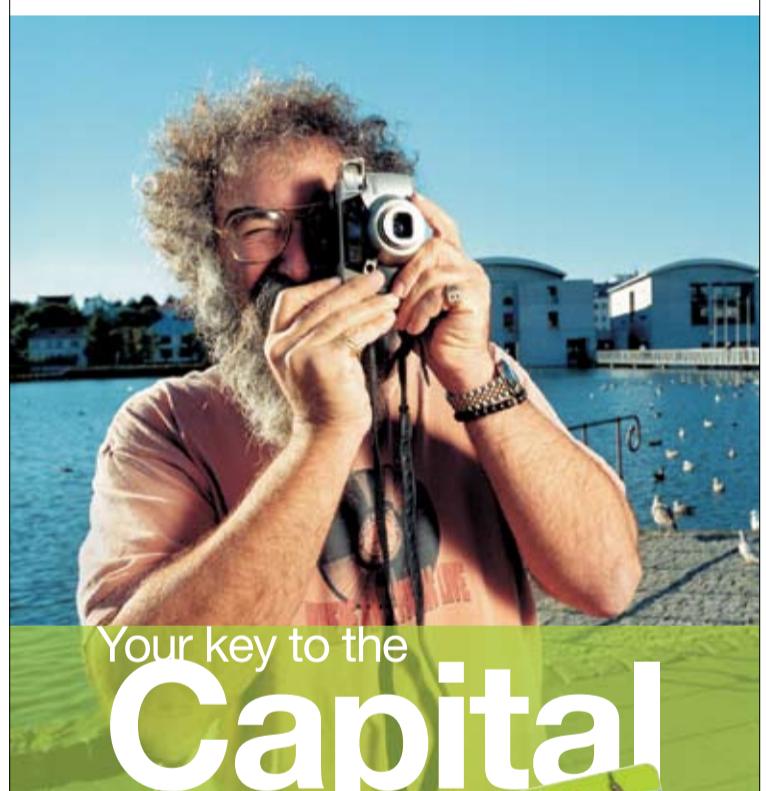
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### [www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is)

Need information on what to do in Reykjavík? Where to stay, what to eat, culture, events, nightlife? Look no further. Check out [www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is), the information is all there along with a detailed events calendar.



## SOUR GRAPES

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

Hi Grapevine

Just wanted to send you few lines to tell you how much me and my husband love your magazine! We moved to Iceland almost two years ago from Cambridge, UK. We live in Keflavík but my husband works in Garðabær at Marel. I am currently working at home as an artist and freelance art administrator, with our lovely two years old boy and expecting another one in August. We would both like to support you in your immigrant campaign as we are unhappy with the immigrant situation in Iceland as well as the refugee issues here in Keflavík.

Keep up the good work.

Gunnhildur, Douglas and Isak Pór Place

*Thank you, but the new political party based on immigrant issues is not a Grapevine party. The Grapevine is not associated with any party, and the various employees here have a wide range of political beliefs. In addition, because our journalist, Paul Nikolov, is a chairperson of the New Icelander Party, he will no longer be allowed to write opinion pieces for our paper, as we have a hard and fast policy against self-promotion. We will still cover immigrant issues, but Mr. Nikolov's party will be treated as all political parties are treated.*

Dear Editor,

In his book *The Ally Who Came from the Cold*, Research Professor at the University of Iceland, Dr. Pór Whitehead, uses the first name of Icelandic characters, since this is customary in Iceland. In Iceland we use first names for Icelandic characters even when speaking a foreign language. This is a fact. Thus, Mr. Dagur B. Eggertsson should be referred to as Mr. Dagur but not as Mr. Eggertsson, since the latter is only his paternal name.

Kind Regards, Kjartan Emil S.

*Kjartan, This is a point we debate frequently in the office. First off, for all readers and newcomers to Iceland, there are not many last names in Iceland, most use patronymics. In conversation, it is never appropriate to refer to someone as Mr. Eggertsson, for example. However, the Grapevine has to make some sacrifices in printing in English. On names, we prefer consistency to local custom, a policy established under the previous, Icelandic, editor of the paper. We refer to every subject by his or her last name or patronymic.*

*If this is insulting, it is not intentional. A similar rule is followed in the local papers towards foreigners - I myself have read various authors refer to me as Bart, an extremely casual gesture in the customs of my native country, and most other countries in the western hemisphere. However, as all local papers are essentially consistent in only using first names, we can at least be consistent with our policies.*

*Finally, we are forced to use last names because we regularly resell our articles to foreign publications who also require consistency. Mr. Whitehead, an excellent historian and writer, was writing for a book, not a newspaper, so his writing only had to obey the rules of his book.*

*Hopefully, this answers your question. We are not trying to be insulting, and we are fully aware of local custom, and we grimace at calling Dagr Mr. Eggertsson a good deal more than our readers do reading it.*

Dear Editor,

Although it's a bit unusual, I feel I have to respond to the review of our play *How Do You Like Iceland*, in your last issue. It's not the diminutive writer's opinion that bothers me; he's perfectly entitled to it. But if he's striving to be a legitimate critic, he'd better learn a thing or two about theatre craft and performance etiquette.

For example, he referred to the actress's performance as "wooden." Anyone familiar with acting styles could tell you her work was nothing close to wooden. It was, instead, leaden, a subtle quality she, with the help of several leading metallurgists, two silversmiths, and a club-footed alchemist, worked quite hard to achieve. To call it wooden is to miss the point entirely and short-change her talent. (This isn't to say, however, that she's incapable of "wooden" work. Theatre-goers may remember fondly her noteworthy portrayals several years ago in *O*, *Yosemite!* and *From Tiny Acorns Grow*.) The New York Times called her Douglas fir "breathtaking!" and her aspen grove "heartrending."

The petite wordsmith also claimed that we choked on scenes where we were called upon to display our own emotions. How can he make such an assumption? I've worked my ass off over the years, in acting classes and on psychologists' couches, to get rid of any emotion. I am emotionless. In fact, thoughtless as well; a cypher. So for this homunculus to wipe out years of hard work by ascribing emotion to me is frankly offensive.

On an up-note, however, I was rather impressed to witness the birth of a ground-breaking new style in theatre criticism: the critic as heckler. Several times during the show, the vertically-challenged penman inserted himself into the proceedings, talking or waving an outstretched hand. We finally brought him onto the stage, in an attempt to make a sort of peace, but he used that opportunity to try and upset us as well. The final insult occurred when forty minutes into an hour show he walked across the playing area on his way to the bathroom. And then returned the same way! (I shouldn't be too harsh with the slight essayist, though, since I well remember the effects of my first beer).

It's a shame the tiny reporter couldn't have looked past his own bid for attention and simply seen the show for what it is: a light, funny little entertainment for foreigners. But after reading this review, perhaps they'll just skip the show. Then they can wander into a local bar, plop down on a stool next to Mr. Eldon, and get a first-hand view of the stereotypical Icelander he refers to.

With emotionless, thoughtless, kindest regards,

Darren Foreman

By funny, do you mean like this letter funny, or ha ha funny? Because that may be the difficulty here. Still, when our reviewers go out on assignment in the future, we'll ask them to 1) not be small, and 2) not body-check key performers.

Dear Editor,

It was interesting to read Sindri Eldon's article on the Adrenalin Park in 09 issue 2006.

I don't know why Sindri showed up at Nesjavellir, but he was welcome

to participate. He seems to have totally missed the fact that we don't run programs for individuals, — we only operate group programs. The whole thing is focused on the combined effort of the group as a whole, and all our marketing is aimed on groups with 6 people as minimum for this particular program.

An article written by someone who is so out of touch with the environment that he shows up in indoor clothing on a windy and rainy day, does not finish the program (because he is to cold and miserable), all his dimensions of structures are utterly wrong and he claims the price to be 6,900 ISK instead of 4,900.

I don't consider this responsible journalism. It's similar to get someone to write book reviews by reading half a book in an uncomfortable, leaking house, without proper heating. In that case it would hardly be a surprise that the unfortunate journalist was not even capable of merely counting the pages. An educated opinion is even further out....

This article is completely out of tune with the feedback we have gained from groups participating in our programs. I suggest that you offer your staff a tour to Adrenalin Park — free of charge. Participating as a group is the only way to get a comprehensive understanding of what it is. You simply give me a call or send an e-mail and we arrange time for you.

ps

I noticed that Alafoss, Vikurþrion, IceWear, Cintamani and 66°North all advertise their outdoor clothing in your paper. Maybe it's a good thing Sindri is not influenced by advertisers. Still a shame he misses the joy of the Icelandic outdoors.

Kveðja,  
Karl Ingólfsson  
[www.adrenalin.is](http://www.adrenalin.is)  
[www.ute.is](http://www.ute.is)  
567 8978 / 894 9595  
karl@ultimathule.is

*Having reviewed books for a living, I can say that few reviewers don't live in cold drafty houses - and by houses I mean studio apartments in "almost gentrified" neighbourhoods with cockroaches and suspicious neighbours. In the age of Dan Brown, James Frey and J.K. Rowling, the only way to preserve sanity is to read no more than five paragraphs of any book popular enough to justify a review. But you are not writing about literature. You're writing about adventures. Correct cost, 4,900 ISK. Correct number of attendees, groups.*

*It's a shame the tiny reporter couldn't have looked past his own bid for attention and simply seen the show for what it is: a light, funny little entertainment for foreigners. But after reading this review, perhaps they'll just skip the show. Then they can wander into a local bar, plop down on a stool next to Mr. Eldon, and get a first-hand view of the stereotypical Icelander he refers to.*

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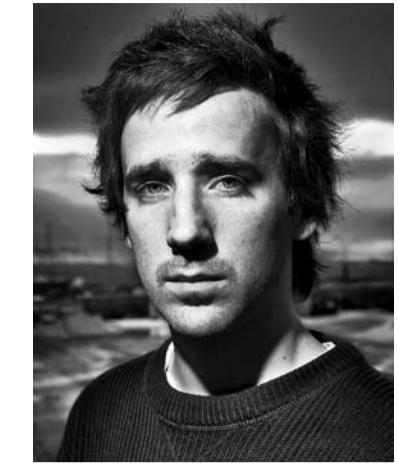
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Bart Cameron,  
Editor

## EDITORIALS

### Deep Political Thoughts. Keanu Reeves Deep.

As we were scanning the listings and PR statements on the atrocious movies being imported to this fair isle from America—the local cinema chain somehow imports only the most embarrassing of American titles—I came across one dumb ass plot synopsis that hit a nerve.

I wish I could be deep here and say the notion of teaching urban kids to dance made me realise that I should sell my possessions, (or possession, a computer), and join the Antonio Banderas effort to teach starving children the Tango. But no, I felt a connection with the plot line for *The Lake House*, the new Keanu Reeves vehicle. In that movie, Keanu has correspondence with someone under similar conditions, only two years ahead. Whoa.

Having left Iceland for a month's vacation, my return has left me in a state of Keanu-like bewilderment. When you factor in general housekeeping, clean up, and business arrangements, I was out of the loop in Iceland for six weeks. In that time, in six weeks, Reykjavík got a new mayor, Iceland got a new prime minister. The issue that went to print as I left focused on the ruling coalition telling protesters that they could tear down their dam "in 40 years, when you get into office." An extremely unpopular party managed to get into city government by parking a Hummer in handicapped spots and pointing out that they didn't know how to golf.

Now, six weeks later, that party is... dare I say it, humble. Their prime minister stepped down. They are changing their platform.

Six weeks ago, the Grapevine offices were quite different as well. We knew that we were losing one of our long-term journalists, Paul Nikolov. We knew we were moving our offices. We had a long, difficult summer to get through, and we had very few foreign writers, and we knew we had burned ourselves out

putting together a guide book to Reykjavík and scheduling a concert series and coordinating our plans for rock festival coverage over the summer, and we knew we all needed to nap.

On returning, I found that Paul Nikolov used his retirement from the Grapevine well, and that he had started a political party. Proud as I was, I also got a few doses of humility handed to me when a senior writer at a major local newspaper, Bláðið, declared Paul the editor of the Grapevine, and the author of the book I had taken months to write. In fact, my first days back in Iceland were full of awkward phone conversations, emails, and confrontations, when people insisted that my name must be Paul Nikolov, and they had seen me on TV discussing my new political party. It would be one thing if Paul resembled me in the slightest. He doesn't. Our only similar characteristic is that we both have all of our limbs, and we are both white.

Still, in that first week when people thought I was Paul, and that I had started a political party, I couldn't believe the questions I fielded. A little more than two years ago, when Paul and I started working at the Grapevine together, Iceland was having an identity crisis, and we at the Grapevine accidentally tapped the well of discontent. We both wrote in an issue in which our friend, a black model who had moved to Iceland with her husband from Kenya, was put on the cover of the paper in the local national costume. At that time, there was a humiliating uproar. The younger Icelanders backed us up, conservatives grumbled, the Bishop of Iceland, to his credit, defended us, and a few people with mobile phones sent out death threats.

In the years since, I hadn't expected change, and so I hadn't seen it. When I took over as editor, web sites filled with chatter about me

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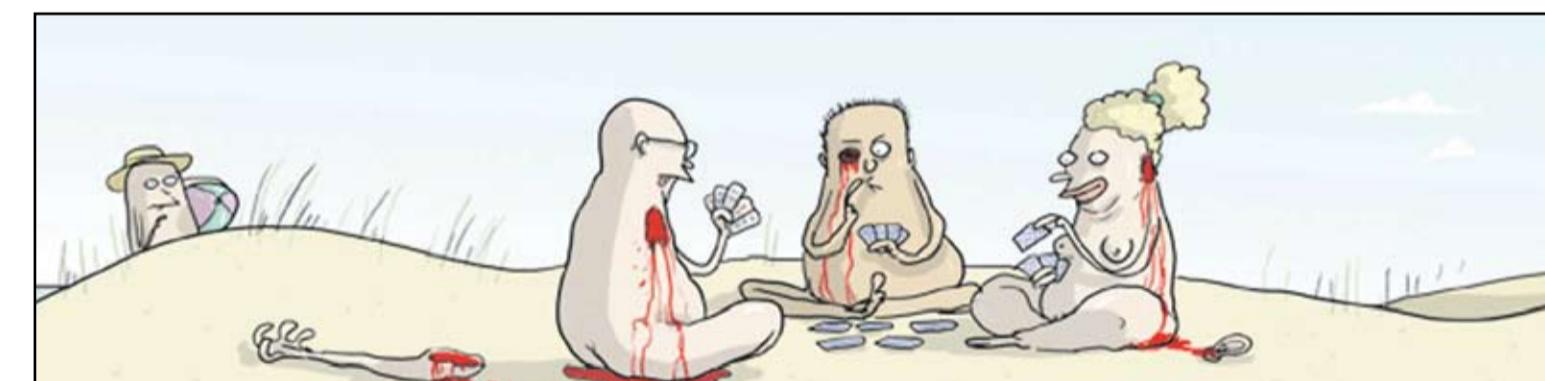
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## An Open House for Politics in Action

An interview with City Hall architect Steve Christer

BY SINDRI ELDON PHOTO BY GÚNDI

One of the most distinct and controversial buildings in Iceland, the Reykjavík City Hall surprised a nation when it was erected in the early 1990s. Sindri Eldon met with Steve Christer of Studio Granda to discuss the impact of one of the city's architectural hallmarks.

**/// In creating the City Hall, what was given priority, function or design?**

– When we took part in the design competition, we were very aware of how city halls usually are. They're very often imposing buildings, with a big portico, and steps up to the front of them. It's usually a bit difficult to get into them, and when you get to the front door you feel very small, and that's exactly what we didn't want to show here.

We wanted to show that Iceland is a very open, a very democratic society, that anyone can go in and get close to the politicians and get close to the people that are ruling the city, so that's why you can enter the city hall from three different directions on the street. You can do that on the level, so you can be in a wheelchair, or be physically handicapped in any other way. It's very easy to get in.

You can drive your car underneath it and pop up into the building, so it's actually accessible from within, too, and you can see into the building everywhere, so the people working in there, they are very visible, and they can see you, and especially the city council chamber that's displayed at the corner pond. That is actually in a way thought that it doesn't have a wall on that side. The wall is the town itself, the back wall of the chamber is the town itself, so when you stand on the pavement outside of there, you're in the room. In that way, we really wanted to build a part of the city. Not any physical part, but part of the way that...everybody in the city is the city. The society of the city is enabled in the city hall...did you get that?

**/// Yes...yes...it made a surprising amount of sense to me, actually. So...when city hall was finished, what was the initial reaction to how the building looked, and do you think the attitude toward the building has changed over the years?**

– Well, I think we should go back a little bit, and think about when we won the competition, which is in '87. We were very happy, we were two very young architects in London, we were only 27 years old. We had no experience, we'd done a one-car garage before. We came here, and everyone clapped and gave us a bunch of flowers and we got the commission. Three months later, we were having death threats, bomb threats, we had articles in the newspaper saying how this was a disastrous project, and that continued for over a year, in fact. All through the four-and-a-half years that we built the project, there was a lot of public opposition to that building. In fact, I think it was probably more public opposition, and certainly the most fierce public opposition that there has been against any building in this country.

After that, the building opened, and in three days we had 45,000 people through that building. 45,000 people is at that time half the population of Reykjavík. One-fifth of the population of the country visited the building in three days. They destroyed all the floors, we had to polish them again, and what happened after that, we didn't hear again negative voices about the city hall. People said 'I was never happy with the location, but it's a beautiful building.' A few people say they don't like it, I think they should, not everyone should say it's a nice building. On the whole, people come to us and say that they're happy about it.

**/// The way I see it, I think you have failed if you make something everyone likes.**

– Absolutely. In fact, we're worried how many people like it...and of course you don't believe them when they say they like it. People are polite. They want to be nice to you, and so



on. And I know myself, that there's loads of...failures in that building. When you're as young as we were when we designed it, you have far, far too many ideas, so the building has five to six hundred more ideas than it needs, and you can see in the later work we do that it's gotten much simpler, much cleaner.

**/// OK. If you could guide visitors through the city hall yourself, what would you point out to them, about the architecture? Maybe these "failures"?**

– Well, I think that what's probably most important about it, is that even though it occupies a lakeside site, we have actually given the lake back to the city by putting a pond on the other side of it, on the town side, so it has water on both sides so you still walk around the pond, with the effect of viewing the building in it. I think you should point people out that it's got a very good cafe that sells great cakes, and they do a great macchiato.

I think most people notice the moss wall, and that sort of changes depending on the seasons, and I think that's just great to see, and so if you came at wintertime, you'd get a very different experience than if you came in

the spring, and that's in a way nature inhabiting the building like people inhabit it, inside of it.

I think you should see the materiality of the building, and see how even though it's fourteen years old it actually looks as though it was built two or three years ago, and that's because it's been made with really, really good materials, and fantastic craftsmen that we have here. We have them to thank. The concrete work is extraordinary, you have to go to Japan to get as good concrete work as that.

We'd just done a really big building, by our standards. Everyone else was doing bathroom interiors, and we do 10,000 square metres. We build it, it gets done, every light switch does what it's supposed to do, and then you have to think very carefully, where do you go? You're not going to do another city hall. Do we give up architecture and run a video store? What are you going to do? So, yeah, it was quite a challenge.

**/// The City Hall was your first large project. After everything was finished and the 45,000 people had come and gone, was there a sense of 'what now'?**

– Well, we were very lucky that my partner was pregnant with our first child, so we had something great to look forward to. The thing that actually happened after we handed over the key at the opening, and all those people started coming in, is that we went to bed. We were in bed for a week, we were ill. We had actually worked for about ten hours a day, seven days a week, for four-and-a-half years. We

were just...completely on our knees. Actually, it was really good that we had this child, because we took a year off and just dealt with him, and talked about what we were going to do next.

We'd just done a really big building, by our standards. Everyone else was doing bathroom interiors, and we do 10,000 square metres. We build it, it gets done, every light switch does what it's supposed to do, and then you have to think very carefully, where do you go? You're not going to do another city hall. Do we give up architecture and run a video store? What are you going to do? So, yeah, it was quite a challenge.

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We'd just done a really big building, by our standards. Everyone else



## News in Brief

BY GUNNAR HRAFN JÓNSSON, PAUL F. NIKOLOV, BART CAMERON, SINDRI ELDON, VALGERDUR PÓRODDSDÓTTIR PHOTOS BY GÚNDI

### Child Molester Promises to Stop - Gets Probation

A man in his sixties has been convicted of sexually molesting two girls, born in 1996 and 1998 respectively, at their home and in his car on several separate occasions. The Reykjanes district court did not see fit to hand down a jail sentence, however, and instead suspended his seven-month jail term for four years. This means that he will remain a free man as long as he is not convicted of another offence in the next four years.

The verdict noted that the leniency of the judgment was in light of the fact that the man 'promised to seek help' and stop molesting children. He was also sentenced to pay his victims compensation of 150,000 ISK and 250,000 ISK respectively.

Looking at the details of the published verdict, it becomes clear that both girls suffered lasting emotional trauma as a result of the abuse and an expert in child psychology testified to the fact that the older girl was still suffering from difficulties that could not be explained by any other past experience in her life.

The fact that the younger girl appeared to have less lasting effects from the event was taken into consideration when establishing the compensation the accused was ordered to pay each of them. The ten year old consequently received 100,000 ISK more than the eight year old.

A psychiatrist was also brought in to assess the accused, but spent only four sessions with him and could come to no conclusion regarding his potential for rehabilitation. Despite this fact the court felt satisfied that his promise to seek help was genuine.

### Intercultural Centre Lawyer Attributed, Misquoted by US Embassy

The Intercultural Centre will file an official complaint with the US State Department for what it calls a "breach of confidentiality" on the part of embassy workers at their diplomatic mission in Iceland.

Margrét Steinarsdóttir, lawyer for the Intercultural Centre and an unwitting contributor to a recent report on human trafficking by the State Department, says sensitive information pertaining to the identities of female victims of human trafficking were leaked in the report.

"I talked to the embassy about certain incidents that female clients had discussed with me," Steinarsdóttir told the Grapevine. "All this was under the condition that I remain anonymous."

Instead, the report cites some of their information as coming from "a lawyer for the Intercultural Centre," when there is only one lawyer working there.

Steinarsdóttir said it could seriously damage her credibility, and that of the Intercultural Centre, if the confidentiality of what takes place between her and her clients is not respected. Steinarsdóttir furthermore claims that there is misinformation and several falsehoods in the embassy's finished report.

Sally Hodgson, Director of Public Affairs for the American Embassy in Iceland, had no comment.

The US embassy has since issued a new report, removing Steinarsdóttir's identity - stated or implied - but has not yet corrected the factual details that Steinarsdóttir alleges were also made.

### Most Happy That Ásgrímsson is Leaving

According to the latest results of a Gallup poll, the majority of the nation is happy that former Prime Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson is leaving politics.

Nearly 1,200 people between the ages of 18 and 75 were polled, with 64% responding. Of those, 55% said they were happy that Ásgrímsson was retiring from politics, while only 10% were unhappy with his decision. 35% had no opinion either way.

The poll also showed that 40% believe that Minister of Agriculture Guðni Ágústsson will be the next chairman of the Progressive Party.

### Number of Hotel Guests Increasing

According to Statistics Iceland, hotel visitors for May 2006 showed a marked increase over the number of visitors in May 2005, with the vast majority of the guests from other countries.

In May 2005, about 87,200 people checked into hotels, as opposed to 102,100 in May 2006. Of these, over 80,000 were visitors from other countries, while only about 20,000 Icelanders stayed in hotels during the same month.

Additionally, the number of Icelanders staying in hotels is decreasing, while the number of foreigners checking in continues to increase.

### Government Discourages Construction to Halt Inflation

As a part of the government's continuing effort to reduce inflation, Finance Minister Árni Mathiesen, Minister of Social Affairs Magnús Stefánsson, and Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance Baldur Guðlaugsson met with representatives from the National Association of Local Authorities on July 3rd to discuss significant cutbacks in spending on new construction projects.

Representing NALA were Chairman, and Reykjavík Mayor, Vilhjálmur P. Vilhjálmsson and Director of Information Gunnlaugur Júlíusson. The preliminary discussion focused on mapping out an overview of the construction projects the country's municipalities hope to undertake in the upcoming quarters, so the necessity of each could be properly assessed.

Júlíusson told Morgunblaðið that the ministers plan to look over the projects that have already been decided to determine which can be said to encourage some kind of growth within their respective communities. Building schools and child-care centres, said Júlíusson, encourages settlement and is therefore worthwhile.



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## THE VIKING

ICELAND'S LARGEST SOUVENIR SHOP

In the heart of Akureyri and Reykjavik 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**  
Hafnarstreið 3 | Hafnarstreið 104  
101 Reykjavík | 600 Akureyri  
tel: 551 1250 | tel: 461 5551  
email: theviking@simnet.is



Júlíusson denied having felt any undue pressure from the government authorities to shut down projects. Mathiesen similarly said that NALA is under no obligation to follow the advice of the ministers, and that they simply thought that this would be a smart move under the current circumstances.

### Record Numbers at "Ultra-Marathon"

One-hundred fifty runners, the largest number yet and 17 more than last year, registered for the 55-kilometre Laugavegur run, which took place on July 5th. Eighty-seven Icelanders are expected to take part along with 63 participants from 12 other countries. Brits take the foreign majority with 30 registrants.

Saturday's run, the so-called "ultra-marathon," is a difficult one. A full 13 kilometres longer than an average marathon the course is steep and uneven. Not to mention

one of Reykjavík's busiest shopping streets.

### Construction Company Responsible for Foreign Workers, Court Rules

An Icelandic court recently ruled against Sóleyjarbyggð ehf. in a case concerning their employment of Lithuanian construction workers at sub-minimum wage.

The case, brought about by Trésmiðafélag Reykjavíkur, declared Icelandic companies in this field of work responsible for ensuring that their non-citizen workers be paid wages and workers' compensation in accordance with Iceland's labour laws for the duration of their employment in this country.

The ruling takes a small step in clarifying the responsibilities of companies that employ foreign workers.

## Daddy Dearest

Icelandic father of Prussian Blue fights for custody - and loses

BY PAUL F. NIKOLOV

In January 2005, the Grapevine published an article on Prussian Blue - 13-year-old white power folk music twins Lynx and Lamb Gaede, based on our shock at the twins' success, and on the revelation, at the time, that the twins had an Icelandic grandparent, and that this played a role in their white power movement. Since that time, the twins' popularity has grown, including segments on ABC news.

This June, the twins were thrust further into the spotlight when their Icelandic connection became clear. It turns out, the new face of white power has an Icelandic grandparent because their dad is an Icelandic, Kris Lingelser. And this June, he sued for custody.

Lingelser and April Gaede were divorced in 1997, with the latter claiming domestic violence and drug abuse was rife in their marriage. Not much was heard from him since then, until last October. At that time, Gaede was receiving so much national coverage that she bragged to GQ magazine, "[National television show] Primetime mainstreamed us! I don't think a white-pride band has ever gotten this kind of media attention before. I mean, these two girls have become some of the most powerful people in white nationalism," and crowed about how Paula Zahn Live and the Dr. Phil Show had left messages on her voice mail. Apparently, this was enough to inspire Lingelser to renounce his drugging, wife-beating, racist ways and fight to regain custody of the girls.

"I would hope that they could see that a white separatist attitude, where whites and blacks and Mexicans and everybody needs to live in their own separate universe, is not healthy," Lingelser told ABC last month. "It's not what this country is about, it's not what I'm about. I would just hope that they could see that."

The custody battle has apparently been hard on Lamb and Lynx, who pined — true to form — a wincingly tuneless cat turd, this one entitled "Daddy,"

which they made available online on 17 June. A sample lyric:

Mine was never there for me  
Yours is always there, you see  
There is a great past you'll find  
I try to leave my past behind  
But it's broken. It's broken.

So please don't take for granted,  
Please don't take for granted  
Your Daddy.

Sure, the girls are being home-schooled through textbooks that Gaede proudly asserts are from the 1950s. Their father figure — Gaede's common-law husband and Bakersfield, California high school teacher Mark Harrington — is husband number three, although she is openly courting a new beau and detailing their adventures on racist websites. And yes, there's that whole business about being raised to believe that whites are the master race. But does this constitute an inadequate environment in which to raise a child?

Apparently not. Last June, a judge ruled in favour of Gaede, although he did allow Lingelser limited visitation rights. ABC also reported that "the attorney representing the girls' father, Kim Aguirre, is the same attorney who claims he was shot and wounded on his way to court in another custody case." This may explain why all of the Grapevine's usually Clancy-esque methods of getting anyone's most personal contact information failed to find so much as Lingelser's last valid address (although we were able to locate him in the placings roster for the 2005 Carlsbad Marathon).

So there you have it: being an alleged drug/wife abuser nearly ten years ago does indeed make you a worse parent than a promiscuous racist who homeschools material from the McCarthy era.

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**Ull og Gjafavörur**, Hótel Sögu, Laekjargötu 2 - **Hitt Hornið**, Laugavegi 100 - **Álafoss Verksmiðjusala**, Áðalstræti 9

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## From Newsman to Man on the News

An interview with Paul Nikolov, Organizer of The New Icelander Party

BY BART CAMERON PHOTO BY GÚNDI

Paul Nikolov has been a writer for the Reykjavík Grapevine for coming up on three years. This July, he finishes his contract with the Grapevine, and seems to be transitioning into politics with his New Icelander Party, focused on immigrant rights and issues.

**/// To begin with, we could file this under funny things that happened while the editor was on vacation. The star journalist formed a political party. The Grapevine has been accused of propaganda once before, but now they may have a point. Are we now a political party mouthpiece, like Viðskiptablaðið or the many papers in Iceland?**

Paul: I had pitched the idea to the acting editor, and he said he loved it, send it on. It was my impression that he thought it was a newsworthy idea. And apparently he was right. Since then, all the television shows and newspapers have contacted me for some sort of follow up.

**/// We should talk about the news coverage, but first, let's get back to party papers. For a year, we attacked papers with a bias towards one political party. Are we an Immigrant's Party paper now? What is the difference between the editorial decisions and the party decisions?**

- The Grapevine has an audience that is comprised pretty evenly between Icelanders, tourists and immigrants. To some extent, we gear content toward our readers. However, the Grapevine has been pretty even-handed to the political parties.

**/// Not too even towards the Progressive Party, maybe.**

- No. No, maybe not. But then again, there was a counterbalance there. We had praised earlier on, and we swung back the other way on that party. So in the long run, we were even there, too.

**/// So we're definitely not a party paper. I'm interviewing you, instead of you writing an opinion column, to demonstrate this, for example.**

- Right.

**/// Okay, so now we should talk about living out a lot of immigrants' dream, in a way. You said you were starting a political party, and the media here responded. We got phone calls and emails constantly regarding your column. How has that experience been, and can you evaluate the different coverage?**

- I've spoken with all the newspapers, the RUV and NFS television stations, and the Útvarp Saga and Ríkisútvarpið radio stations, and the attitude has generally been really positive. By and large people are curious. A lot of people have gone out of their way to give positive coverage to this party.

**/// Outside of the established media, how has the discussion gone? Start with constituents, people who may campaign or work for your party. What is the typical background?**

- I have not done any active recruiting. But just having the word out there. We have a blog now, ([newicelandersparty.blogspot.com](http://newicelandersparty.blogspot.com)), and we'll have a website soon that will hopefully have the domain name FNL.is.

**/// Then who has responded?**

- So far a lot of people have come forward with a positive tone. They cover a lot of ground. As you can imagine, most are immigrants, but many are European, and a lot from Scandinavian countries, which is interesting because they have a lot of rights and privileges that non-Europeans don't have.

**/// One thing that we talk about in this magazine is that, even if Europeans have more rights, we all end up in the same bin, all foreigners have to struggle here. What kind of numbers are we talking about?**

- I've heard from about 40 people within the



past few days, some of whom represent larger groups, and have been in contact with them.

**/// So you're talking 40 co-organisers, 40 people who might form the party, you haven't started a petition or anything.**

- No, not yet.

**/// No Icelanders yet?**

- No, but I've received some interesting comments from Icelanders abroad.

**/// I've heard from Icelanders. Positive reactions, though a little confused as to whether this was our party or yours.**

- The only Icelandic reaction I've received by email has been one gentleman forwarding on anti-Muslim propaganda. But Icelanders on the street have been positive. I ran into Sjón a couple days ago, and he not only expressed his support for the idea, but offered to help.

**/// It might be a good idea to make some room for him. Nordic Prize winning Icelandic novelists are good draws, I think.**

- Yeah, I might want to pencil him in.

**/// That would get a reac-Sjón. Ahem.**

- But anyway, I think this means that the goals are getting out, and they should appeal to Icelanders. We are trying to help with assimilation. I believe Iceland could learn from European countries who were in the same situation decades ago, such as Denmark or the Netherlands, where they looked at immigrants solely as a source of cheap labour. And then they end up becoming marginalised and ghettoized, leading to a degree of social unrest that exists there today.

**/// I see that, that government policy should change, and that there are obvious examples.**

But there is something else, by stepping out and forming a party. That, I think, is symbolically important. What has bothered me since the Red Cross poll in 2003, is the idea that 20% of young Icelanders believe foreigners living here shouldn't have the same rights as them. There is no better indication of what's being talked about in the homes, than to hear the opinions of children. In my opinion, running a party based solely on the idea that these regressive attitudes have to change is as important as, for example, forming a Women's Party was important to put attention on modernizing attitudes towards gender issues. We're talking about

**/// No, to me, I haven't seen anything on the left. You're so far at the beginning. You're**

country that wants to be progressive towards European ideals, as indicated by the gay rights legislation.

- That was successful.

**/// Yeah, but if one of the partners in a gay union was under 24 and foreign, for example, it wouldn't be a real union, because of the anti-immigration laws they passed here in 2003. What I find alarming in the days since you started the party is the blogging and website discussion. As you said, there have been anti-Muslim comments. There has been an argument that an immigration party is anti-assimilation in its very title. In the same way, was the Women's Party anti-women?**

- There is a bit of false logic there. A lot of people are expressing fears and concerns about the party without even reading the platform. A lot of nationalist ideas brought up by our opponents are the same ideas that have been brought up by us: that immigrants need to be further integrated into Icelandic society.

**/// You're proud of having nationalist ideas?**

- No. But one of the largest things we're fighting for is to increase the chances to learn Icelandic language and to learn the history and culture of the country.

**/// Which brings us to the platform. I think this platform is fundamentally conservative.**

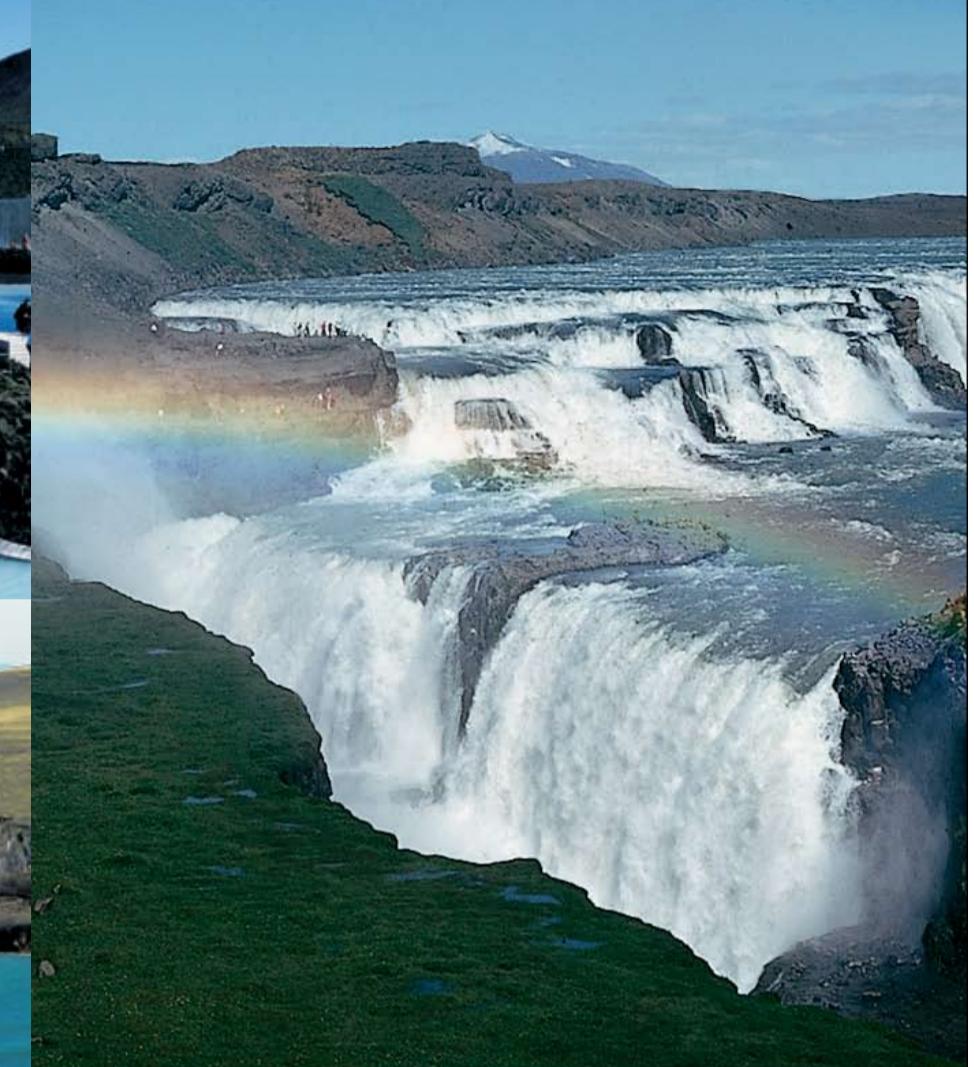
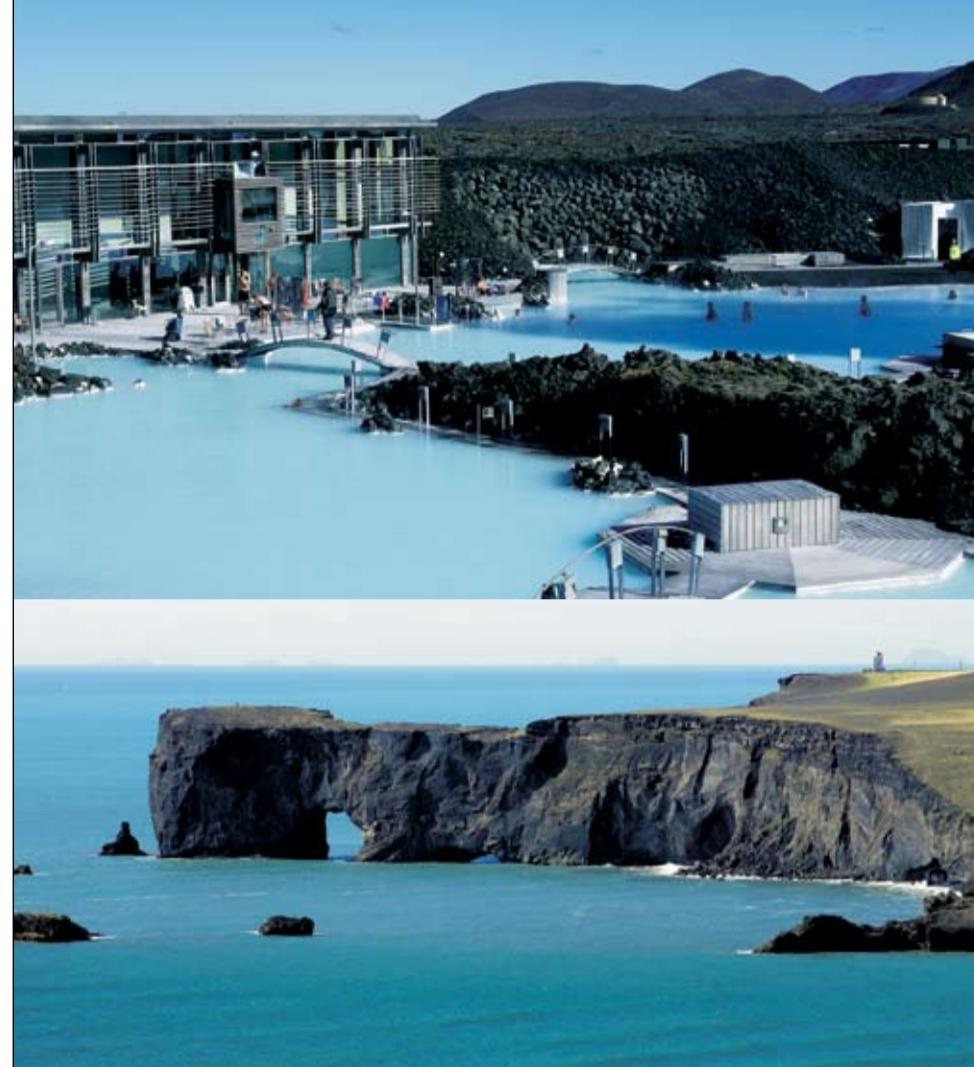
In fact, reading it, I thought it was embarrassing for Iceland that a party would have to form just to allow the government to meet such basic functions. We have a government that requires Icelandic language lessons, then doesn't offer classes, and, when it does, puts exorbitant prices on them. I know this, of course, having followed the rules and taken 145 hours of classes, spending a lot, but learning very little. You aren't asking for groundbreaking stuff. You aren't even asking for the parliament to repeal its racist 2003 immigration law that discounts marriage under the age of 24 if a foreigner is involved.

- What's the most surprising to me is that nobody has brought up the ideas I have before. I was asked by Fréttablaðið, for example, do you think this party could be more appealing to people on the left or on the right. And I don't think we've stated anything that would qualify us as either.

**/// One thing that we talk about in this magazine is that, even if Europeans have more rights, we all end up in the same bin, all foreigners have to struggle here. What kind of numbers are we talking about?**

- I've heard from about 40 people within the

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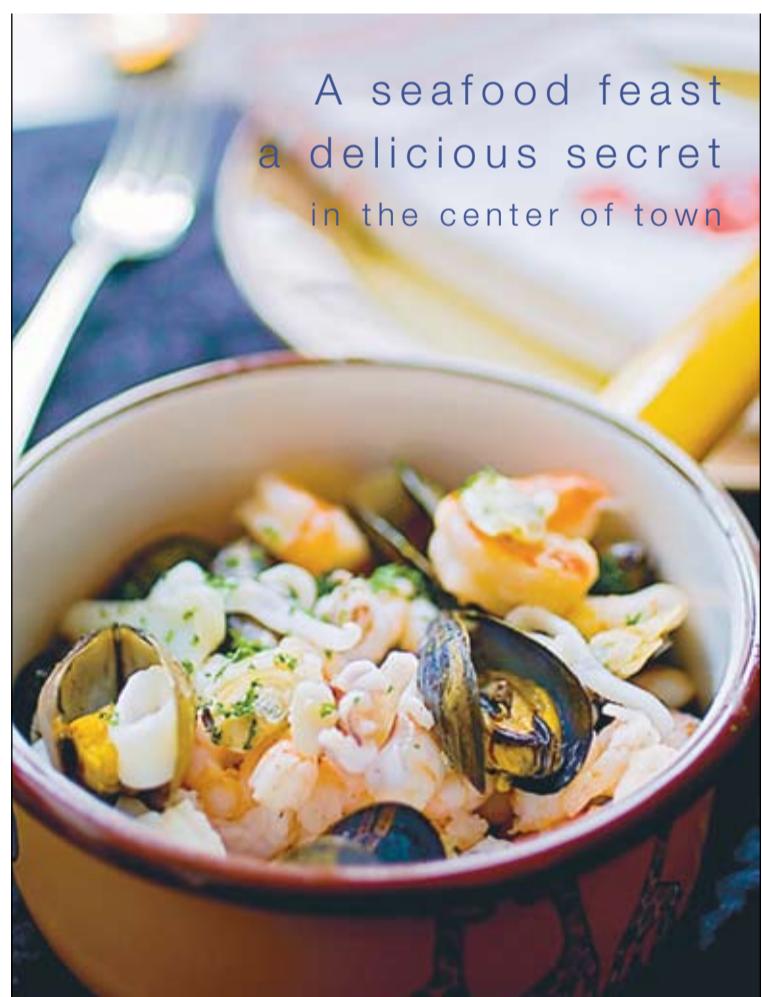
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SUPERSTAR

## "He Was Just Standing There"

Magni pulls Iceland into reality television

BY BART CAMERON

On Wednesday July 5th, the news in Iceland was full of Magni Ásgarsson, who would be competing on the reality television show Rockstar: Supernova on a direct feed from the CBS American broadcast that night. The attitude was a cross between optimism and bewilderment. At one point, in fact, local DJ and fantastically clueless music commentator Óli Palli was brought on the air, where he explained that while Icelanders just shrug at Magni, we do so only because he has been caught in a role, and that no doubt had we had the eyes of the producers who came to Iceland, we would have seen his true talent.

Had I only watched Icelandic news, I would have believed that the producers of Rockstar had vetted out Iceland's greatest talent. This would have been curious, because the goal of the reality television show was to match a singer with a band made up of Tommy Lee, an admirable porn star, but a musician who has never recorded a decent drum track, the man Metallica fans refer to as Cliff Burton's crappy replacement, and the guitarist Guns N' Roses fans refer to as Izzy Stradlin's crappy replacement. By trying out for a C-Class band, an Icelandic B-Class singer was getting more attention than any other artist in the country.

Only one Icelander pointed out what was about to happen, and he told me under his breath as he was leaving work that day: "We watch Rockstar cause it's like karaoke from hell. It's so brutal. But now, you know, it's Iceland up there. It's not going to be funny."

If only these words could have been spoken by a public figure before the broadcast.

At midnight on Wednesday July 5th, I reported to a Gaukurinn a Stóng packed to absolute capacity. About 600 people were crammed into the two stories of the building, jammed together shouting "Ísland! Ísland!", as Rockstar got going.

There were five acts to go until Magni, each remarkable, the strongest of the night we would later find out, and each boozed relentlessly by an obviously hostile crowd. And then we saw Magni's familiar face, and "Ísland! Ísland!" was shouted so loud, that it almost prevented us from laughing when Magni explained that he was "one of the ten most known singers in Iceland," a figure that may have been true within Magni's own family in Egilsstaðir, in the east of Iceland, but hardly true anywhere else. And then he explained, briefly, that he was singing for the whole country, which drew a hefty ovation.

Before I describe the performance, let me point out that Gaukurinn had never been this full before. A live music club, everyone from Björk to the Shins have played the place, and no music has ever packed it as well as the cover song that Magni was to sing on the most brutal of American reality shows.

There were 600 people shouting "Ísland" at a set of TVs early on a Thursday morning. And then it started: "I can't get no, satisfaction." And then, the crowd went silent. Heads went down. A chair scraped.

The song went on, though Magni had, for some curious reason, put the mike to the crowd on the second line of the song for a sing-along, like Mick Jagger might if he had even more of an ego than he does. And Magni kept going, and even though it was quiet, it got quieter.

The camera on Rockstar switched to a close-up of a frowning Dave Navarro, the host, and a bored ugly-guy-who-can't-play-bass-to-save-his-life from Metallica, and the crowd got more quiet.

When Magni had gotten through Satisfaction, Gaukurinn was down to 300 people. A woman, passing me on the way out, held her hand in front of her face as though holding a microphone, limply, and said, "He was just standing there."

The club was one-third full when a wretched singer gave the chance for one of the cast members to deliver a quick second blow to Iceland. Describing a pitchless performance, a producer described a young woman's singing as sounding "like a cross between Björk and Mazzy Star." But nobody in the room really cared anymore. Most were ashamed.

Truthfully, Magni had done decently, considering he was singing English-language material, live, in front of millions of viewers, with a band he didn't know, on a show voted on by people who likely don't care about music. The disappointment of the 600 most loyal fans indicated how much hope they must have had.

The look on the faces of the few remaining patrons was absolute revulsion. As I passed them, on the way out, into the 1:00 am sunrise, I couldn't stop staring at their faces. Outside, the whole street was full of people with the same look.

I decided to put my head down and get home.

Mercifully, a noble Icelander grabbed me by the chest. "Don't go down that street," he said.

Gaukurinn, overrun by more customers than it had seen in 20 years, had lost its sewage system. Or at least had a failure. As a result, gallons and gallons of raw sewage, faecal matter clinging to toilet paper, was flooding Tryggvagata, the large street in front of the Reykjavík Art Museum.

A crowd had formed to stare at piss and shit filling a street. The look on their faces was indistinguishable from the look on the faces of the defeated fans who watched Magni compete on Rockstar: Supernova. This was Iceland on reality television.

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# Why Are They Dancing? Because They're Plugged In

A controversial ad campaign from the city-owned, monopoly power company

BY GUNNAR HRAFN JÓNSSON

If you watched the World Cup, and even if you didn't, you probably have an opinion on a certain commercial that has been played on national television with great regularity recently – particularly in between football matches.

The scene opens with a modern dad doing a spot of vacuuming, which prompts his son to ask where the electricity is coming from. The response is a one-and-a-half minute song and dance routine extolling the virtues of Icelandic water and hydroelectric power, and the main provider of both is Orkuveitn/Reykjavík Energy. "It hails from up in the mountains," the lyrics say. "This is how we want it: No problems, and everything a-OK."

The ad features dozens of actors, singers, dancers and other performers – all jumping around in tight formation and bright colours at a variety of attractive locations around the city. The music and lyrics, titled This Is How We Want It, were written by Benni Hemm Hemm and Hallgrímur Helgason respectively. If there is one thing everyone can agree on it's that the score certainly captures your attention and sticks in your head long after you hear it.

The message the commercial is trying to convey seems quite simple, though: we provide water and electricity, and that's a good thing. It's also sending an eco-friendly message that contrasts with the negative press that power companies have gotten over recent dam projects: "The earth gives us the energy, and we return it back to her, so she can continue to delight us – and keep us happy and green." A reminder of the belief espoused here that hydroelectric energy, even when fed by terrain-destroying dams, is relatively green (note: Reykjavík itself actually runs on geothermal, rather than hydroelectric power).

Besides the sheer spectacle of the ad, and the fact that it ran for a tedious one-and-a-half minutes many times a day, there are the issues of cost and purpose. Reykjavík Energy is a publicly-owned company, one that also provides a necessary public service and has a politically appointed management. Not only do consumers have no choice but to do business with Orkuveitan, they are part owners at the same time. Margrét Sverrisdóttir, city council representative for the Liberal

Party, told the Grapevine that she found the commercials “unintentionally hilarious,” but deeply unethical at the same time. “It’s absolutely surreal to watch this thing. Spending these amounts of money on something so pointless is completely unethical – it’s just not right.”

Steingrímur J. Sigfusson, MP for the Leftist-Greens, had a similar reaction. "Not only is this a publicly-owned company, but it presides over a complete monopoly in the energy market – so I find it peculiar that they would do something like this. Perhaps the higher-ups know that the company's image has taken a hit because of its involvement with the development of heavy industry in this country – which is, after all, energy intensive and deeply unpopular." He added that he expensive ever, and the actual price of making the ad was between 15 and 18 million krónur. Of course, that doesn't include buying airtime, but for large advertisers that is a matter of negotiation and doesn't have to be nearly as costly as the list price." As it happens, our sources in the industry confirmed that 15-18 million was not a high price, believing the average cost of a high-class TV commercial to be around 11. The most expensive ad that has been filmed in Iceland, we were told, cost well over 30 million to produce.

**"This campaign was absolutely not the most expensive ever, and the actual price of making the ad was between 15 and 18 million krónur."** Spokesperson for Orkuveita Reykjavíkur

wouldn't have minded the ads so much if they had conveyed a positive message, such as an encouragement to Icelanders to drink more water. "But this was just a general song and dance routine to fix their image, and I think it's been counter-productive."

The cost of the campaign is probably the most contentious part of the issue. Statements such as “this was the most expensive commercial of all time” have been thrown about with reckless abandon on the Internet, while mainstream media outlets have been slightly more careful and only made mention of it

“My concern is that the energy debate will always be there, whatever coalition or party controls the local government in Reykjavík. We’re also deeply affected by the decisions of politicians without being able to influence them in any way, and energy and the environment are always hot-button issues. I think people are basically using the opportunity to score political points.”

being “allegedly the most expensive commercial in Icelandic history.” So how much did it really cost? The total bill was estimated by one gossip columnist to be upwards of 50 million krónur, a number that most other media outlets subsequently ran with the following day. That number turned out to be taken from an anonymous blog, and even if it had been true it most certainly would not have made that

The ad campaign was designed and implemented by the recently departed Social Democrat-dominated board of directors. Their replacements from the Independence/Progressive alliance, on the other hand, are currently in charge of the operation. Those two parties just happen to be largely responsible for the energy industry’s close association with environmental destruction in the public

mind. Both sides, then, have to carefully weigh their strengths and weaknesses before attacking Orkuveitan and their ad campaign. As a result, quotes may have been easy to come by but the job of actually raising the issue has largely been left to columnists and bloggers on the internet – resulting in a quagmire of speculation and misinformation.

For one thing, the purpose of the ad was clearly defined and laid out. It wasn't a general celebration of water and electricity so much as it was a response to a recent change in Icelandic law, one that has deregulated the energy market and opened the gates for competitors to enter. One only needs to look at the timing for that to become blatantly clear; the beginning of June marked the adoption of the law as well as the start of the controversial campaign. Ms. Guðmundsdóttir told us that Orkuveitan had no intention to sit idly by and allow their market share to be eaten up by newcomers: "We understand that the public feels they own the company – and in fact they do. But people have to realise that the market has changed, and what we need to do in order to make that company thrive in the future. We have never even commissioned a television commercial before, besides the standard seasonal greetings everyone sends out at Christmastime. This is not a standard practise or something cooked up by one or two people on a whim, but a planned and necessary response that was decided upon after much consultation at every level of the company and outside of it," she said.

So it seems that the story is far less sensational than it first appeared. The commercial may not be to everyone's tastes, (frankly we had trouble finding anyone who wasn't somewhat annoyed by it after one or two viewings), but it certainly wasn't extravagant by the standards of the industry that produced it. The artists involved were all happy to get the work, and it's not like there is an overabundance of opportunities for them to actually earn a living from their chosen vocations. No one is going to be able to make a rock-solid case for producing and airing this ad in the way it was done, but the rationale behind it was certainly far more logical than critics would lead you to believe.



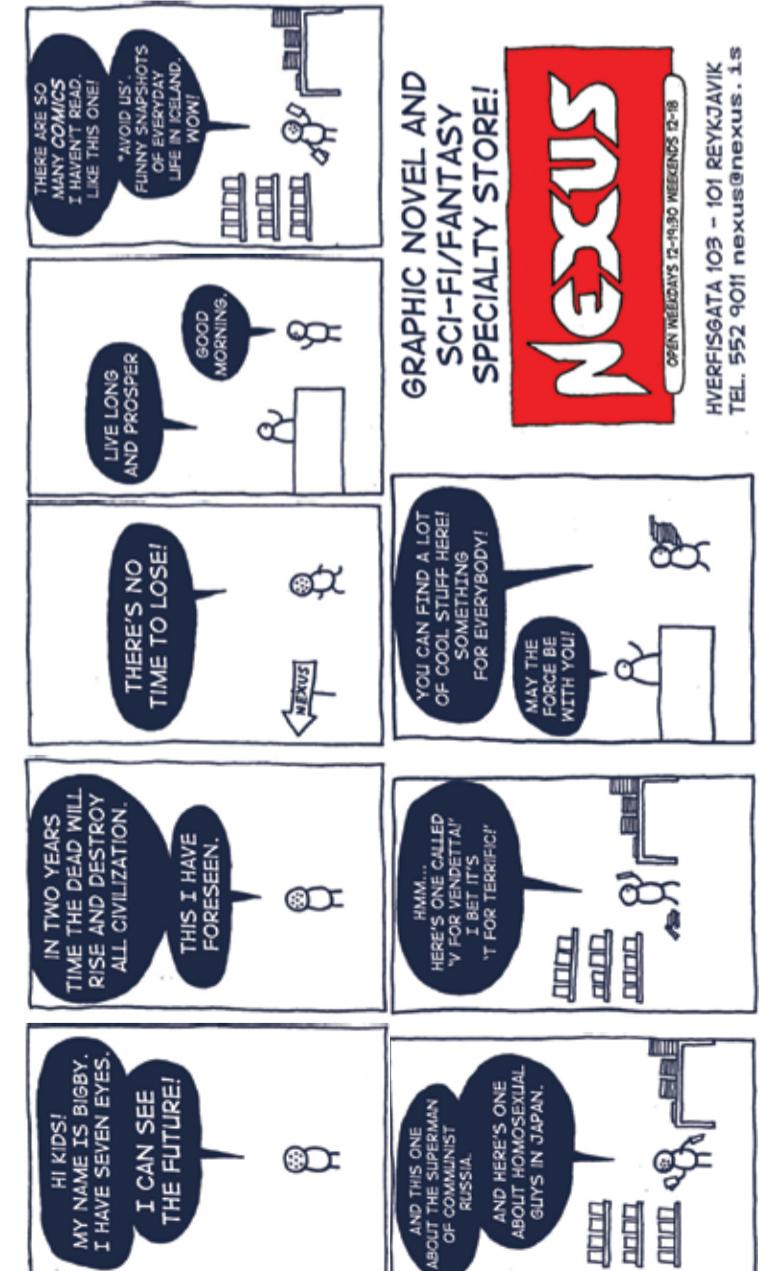


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## GEE WHIZ! A COMIC!



**"It cannot be denied that March 15 was a historic day, and the unilateral decision by the United States while talks were in progress was a great disappointment..." Geir H. Haarde.**

NATO allies. Although supportive of Iceland's position, these allies seem equally unwilling or unable to maintain a permanent presence on the island. In a press conference after a June 12 meeting with Haarde, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the Foreign Minister of Germany, said that although "NATO has a certain joint responsibility regarding Iceland," he was not sure if that responsibility entailed filling the gap that the US would leave.

Similarly, after meeting with French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy in late March, the PM told reporters that Douste-Blazy had not offered assistance regarding a visible defence force in Iceland. France's best offer, still being finalised, is to sell rescue helicopters to Iceland to replace those likely to be removed by the Americans in September.

### "We're Not a Feeble Nation"

The expansion of Icelandic defence capabilities may therefore be the last option available for Iceland to compensate for departing American forces. For a country that has never had its own military and boasts a police force of 671 members, only a small portion of which carries guns, this is a daunting task.

To some, Iceland's move toward self-sufficiency would be welcome news. MP Steingrímur J. Sigfusson, although unreachable for comment at this time, went on record in March claiming "A long and humiliating chapter in our history is over. We're not a feeble nation and we can and should take responsibility for our own security."

Progressive Party spokesperson Helga Sigrún Harðardóttir told the Grapevine that they, "along with the Independence Party, are working on several immediate activities that will replace some of the American ones: rescue helicopters, new coast guard vessels and ideas for a new organisation working on national security."

Minister of Justice Björn Bjarnason, an active leader in discussions on Icelandic security and defence,



## A Nation Defenceless

With the US ditching their agreement, and NATO unwilling to pick up the slack, Iceland must decide how to guard and protect itself.

BY GREG BOCQUET PHOTO BY STEINAR HUGI

Negotiators from Iceland, the United States and NATO-allied countries met on Friday, July 7 in the ninth round of talks regarding the removal of the Iceland Defence Force from the naval base in Keflavik. On the agenda was a discussion of how the United States will meet its commitment to the 1951 Defence Agreement, to ensure some visible military presence in Iceland, the necessity of which, while debatable, is a priority of current Prime Minister Geir H. Haarde.

In a statement to the Alþingi in April, Haarde said, "The atrocious threats and violence that we witnessed following the publication of a series of cartoons in Jyllands-Posten are confirmation of how easily a peaceful democratic state can become the target of extremists. The new world order teaches us, above all, that unpredictable threats are widespread and that it is necessary for us to be on our guard."

Without any physical military presence on the island, Iceland's first line of defence against such threats is hardly readily available, the protection guaranteed by its

negotiator.

Haarde, however, believes the threat is real and that Iceland needs a visible deterrent to potential aggression. Reacting to the coming security vacuum, the PM

expressed his disappointment to the Alþingi saying, "It cannot be denied that March 15 was an historic day, and the unilateral decision by the United States while talks were in progress was a great disappointment and a setback for the defence co-operation."

Without a doubt, the actions of the Bush government have been less than honourable. The March 15 decision to withdraw its forces from Keflavik was a breach of Article VII of the bilateral Defence Agreement signed in 1951, which states that either government's intention to modify the agreement or to reassess its necessity must first be presented to the NATO Council for review, and an understanding between both parties must be reached before any action is taken.

Indeed, this process was followed twice during the Clinton years, first in 1994 and again in 1996. On both occasions, reductions in force were agreed upon, while continuing the commitment of the United States to maintain a visible military presence to guarantee Iceland's security.

The Bush government has effectively leap-frogged that process, leading to negotiations in which the bottom line is non-negotiable: US military personnel, along with its F-15 fighter jets and helicopters, will leave the base for good by September 30 of this year.

On the American side, there seems to be no genuine interest in actual negotiation at all. While Iceland has its prime minister and key cabinet members at the table, the American team consists of representatives without any apparent decision-making ability. Tom Hall, sitting at the table for Iceland's negotiations, is described by the Pentagon as the "principal staff assistant to the Under Secretary of Defence for Personnel and Readiness." Hardly a counterpart to the prime minister of Iceland.

The US is out. NATO uninterested. If Iceland is indeed serious about the threats it faces, then self-defence may be the only option.

Anna Líndal

Bjarni Sigurbjörnsson

Guðrún Kristjánsdóttir

Erling TV Klingenberg

Halldór Ásgeirsson

Haraldur Karlsson

Kristbergur Pétursson

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OPINION



## An Historical Day to Be Gay

A COLUMN BY PÓRDÍS ELVA PORVALDSDÓTTIR BACHMANN

Ten years ago, a law was passed in Iceland that allowed homosexual couples to enter into a civil union. Four years later, in 2000, they were granted the right to adopt the biological children of their partner. On June 27, 2006, a new law was passed in the Icelandic parliament that finally placed homosexual couples on equal footing with heterosexual couples. They are now allowed to register their partnership, and have the same rights as anybody else when it comes to adoption and artificial reproduction procedures. This eliminates almost all discrimination against homosexuals in the system, with the exception of being allowed to register as a couple in religious organisations, which is still not possible. This milestone in the history of gay rights in Iceland was celebrated at the Reykjavík Art Museum on June 30th. The Prime Minister of Iceland and a member of parliament, among others, addressed the crowd. Three people who were more than just proud to attend the

but it's unheard of that all political parties agree on furthering gay rights under a right-wing government. It's proof of good will and understanding.

### How was it to finally register as a couple?

Eysteinsdóttir: I went to the registry office and applied, and the lady behind the counter asked me: "Is he here with you?" I didn't even understand what she meant at first, I thought she was referring to my father or something, but then I realised that she probably thought my partner was male. I replied that my partner is a woman, and the lady instantly apologised. She wasn't prejudiced. She just wasn't used to it.

### What's the next issue for the gay rights movement in Iceland?

Stefánsson: Legislation is one thing, public acceptance is another. A majority of our nation supports

**"I have lesbian friends who had to go to Denmark to get artificially inseminated. It's not exactly easy to drop whatever you're doing and jump on a plane whenever you're ovulating."**

event discussed their thoughts on the legislation, politics and their plans to get married. They are artist Kristín Eysteinsdóttir, Hrafnkell Tjörvi Stefánsson, the managing director of Samtökun '78 (The Icelandic Association for Lesbians and Gay Men) Hrafnkell Tjörvi, and Davíð Jóhannsson, a group leader at Síminn telephone company (Iceland Telecom).

### What does this legislation mean to you? Is it important to you?

Eysteinsdóttir: This means an incredible amount to me. I now have the same options when it comes to my relationships as heterosexuals do. I have lesbian friends who, up until now, had to go to Denmark to get artificially inseminated, which is both expensive and complicated. It's not exactly easy to drop whatever you're doing and jump on a plane whenever you're ovulating. I think this will have an even bigger impact on homosexual men, because they now have the option to adopt children and start a family.

Johannsson: Overall, I think this legislation was long overdue. It is definitely important to me, but not in praxis at this point in my life. Perhaps in the future, if I plan on having kids.

Stefánsson: Personally, I'm very happy that I live in a civilised society that is leading in the world when it comes to human rights. What pleases me most is that there was cross-political solidarity on the issue. It's completely unique. Few other countries have come as far as Iceland has,

gay rights, but passing laws is not enough. For example, men and women are supposed to be equal under the law, but equality has still not been achieved in many cases. The same thing can be said of disabled people and those who are not of Caucasian origin. Homophobia needs to be addressed in various places, for example in sports. We also need to change things in the education system, by including different family types in the curriculum and educating people about them.

Eysteinsdóttir: I think the church is at the centre of the debate. A lot of homosexuals are religious, and everybody should have the same options. Fríkirkjan (The Independent Church) blesses homosexual marriages, setting a good example other churches should follow. A majority of our society supports gay rights, and the church should try to keep up with the people. My partner and I are getting married in August. When we tell people about it, we often get the response, "Good for you, that's such a statement." It makes us feel like we're getting married for political reasons, which is not true. We're getting married because we want to. This is an example of hidden prejudice in our society, which still exists.

Johannsson: I'm very pleased with the recent change in events. It's time to stop and take a deep breath. We need to realise that perhaps we don't always need to be fighting for something. I think we should allow this to settle before we start focusing on the next step. I'm very happy with what just happened.

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## Reykjavík!

The Grapevine proudly presents an excerpt from our first book, Inside Reykjavík

BY BART CAMERON PHOTOS BY GÚNDI

Typically they start with the weather. If you're writing about the northernmost capital in the world, the windiest country on the planet, a country with "Ice" in its name, yeah, it's understandable you'd start with weather. But it's a non-story: Reykjavík is often rainy, and windy, but there is nothing fantastic or extraordinary about being damp. Locals, in fact, lump all disagreeable meteorological phenomena into the group category: you simply say, "We're having weather."

So if weather shapes the lives of the people of Iceland, nobody here wants to talk about it. And if weather shapes the tourist experience, you probably didn't do it right.

The next obvious starting point: latitude. At this height, the sun doesn't work the same way as it does where most people live. In the summer, the sun, or the light from it, bathes the island for 24 glorious hours. In the winter, Reykjavík gets three hours of light a day, the sun never making it much above the horizon.

Now that is a story, right? Seasonal affective disorder. Insomnia. Manic behaviour. Not having mother sun and then suddenly getting it... imagine!

Except that, other than a few weeks in September and February, nobody in Reykjavík gives a crap about the sun. So you don't find UV lamps, therapy sessions, or even much celebration of Solstice, unless a gaggle of visiting Finns put together a decent party.

Next, geology. Iceland is volcanic. It lies on two tectonic plates, Europe and America, as it so happens. Earthquakes are a somewhat regular occasion, volcanic eruptions less frequent but more spectacular. In the 18th century, the country was almost wiped out from a series of massive eruptions that, as a

point of local pride, emitted so much ash that they may have even damaged crop production in France.

Absolutely understandable, then, that writers would focus on the geology of Iceland in attempting to describe what's going on. Yes, that is a story.

Except, again, almost nobody in Reykjavík cares. They'll gladly provide a quote or two to visiting reporters, then adjourn to the local coffee shop or swimming pool and talk not about the volcano, but about who is covering the volcano. And, maybe, about who was flying over the volcano to cover the story - aviation, especially as it relates to journal-

as oppressive, especially to the young on the island. This year, on the nation's Independence Day, June 17th, we casually came upon a dozen teenagers hanging off the enormous Viking statue of Ingólfur Arnarson, the man credited with initially settling Iceland in 874. It is a beautiful statue, especially for an observer who appreciates superheroes and square jaws. The teenagers, who were slightly under the influence, as is the tendency on the national day, laughed at us and asked "Do you even know who this is?"

Realising we had made a slight social faux pas, our reporter remedied the situation immediately.

**"In the 18th century, the country was almost wiped out from a series of massive eruptions that, as a point of local pride, emitted so much ash that they may have even damaged crop production in France."**

ism, is a local obsession.

"Sure, he's a tax cheat and a murderer who had to flee Norway."

He got a quick ovation and an "Exactly right," from the crowd.

Viking history is appreciated and studied, but discussing Vikings on a visit, and describing locals and Vikings, and hence ignoring the difficult 1,000-plus years that came between initial settlement and today, is irksome.

As Vikings and elves are the most offensive topics to locals, they are, of course, the most common topics discussed when Iceland comes up in the foreign media.

Running the popular local independent English-language cultural paper, the Rey-

kjávík Grapevine, we have met most of the foreign reporters that we often mock. In fact, we've introduced a good number of them to their sources. While most Icelanders know English, there are few English-language references for media, and so we get foreigners to buy us our lunches and dinners as we hold forth on whatever we're asked about: elves, sure, there's one behind you; Björk, nicest person in the world, hangs out at the local swimming pool, etc.

The reporters get a full notebook, a half-full belly, and then they go and nap. And then, that night, we set them out experiencing the nightlife that will never make it into print. Offers to take the reporters out to see Reykjavík by day are universally turned down in favour of sleeping off hangovers or hiding from the many people they might have offended after that third Viking lager.

The vast majority of the time, foreign reporters come to Reykjavík and put together the worst article they've ever written, but have the best time of their lives. Hence we have a stack six inches high of business cards from reporters offering to return and write for us in exchange for a flight. Once a year, in fact, we take our favourite reporters up on the deal and use an all foreign staff.

What is it, then, about Reykjavík that so eludes casual guidebook prose, but that so attracts tourists, writers, musicians, and over-the-hill Hollywood actors? Why is Reykjavík turning into the Arctic Riviera?

In the chapters that follow, we will point out the tangibles: the relaxed communal activities that are most loved by locals and visitors, things like the daily visits to swimming pools, the coffee shop conversations taken to a high art, and the burgeoning restaurant and bistro culture. We will give a full, comprehensive account of the nightlife of Reykjavík,



a scene so intense that it could burn out Keith Richards in a weekend. We will introduce you to the weekend downtime activities, the march down the city's main shopping street, the gallery parades, and a visit to the downtown flea market, arguably one of the most influential cultural spots in the country. And, finally, we will give accounts of some of the many day trips that connect locals to the country as a whole, the sites that make you understand why your camera needs that many megapixels.

Reykjavík deserves the hype, it deserves to be on a world stage. But the interactions of everyday people with a small town that is becoming a behemoth, even the frustrations of people who can't find their way, should also be documented.

Perhaps the best case study has to do with one of the Reykjavík Grapevine's favourite bands, a rip-roaring rock band made up of philosophy majors who tend to fall onto their own, and other people's, guitars. Knowing full well why people come to see them, they have given themselves a name that

**"When all else fails, visiting reporters go to the lowest of the low: elves and Vikings. On this, locals can hold forth at length. Bullshitting on elves and Vikings has been a steady source of income for decades and it is extremely low risk subject matter."**

summarises all the crazy enthusiasm and disregard that a special breed of rock, the kind of music you see in a bar and have to either help protect them from the crowd or protect yourself from an over-fragrant, frenzied audience who all feel they are involved in the experience. They call themselves Reykjavík! (The exclamation comes with the name.) And they are from Ísafjörður.

Their experiences in the music and cultural industry in town sum up what is happening here. We met Reykjavík! guitarist Haukur and singer Óða to talk about what the word Reykjavík signifies today.

**// Why did you name the band Reykjavík? What is the appeal? What does Reykjavík mean to Icelanders? None of you are from Reykjavík, of course.**

Óða: I spent every summer in Reyðar-

fjörður. And as a teenager I spent a year there because I screwed up in Mosfellsbær. That was 1994, the year they had Músíktíraunir (Battle of the Bands), and I so eagerly wanted to be in Reykjavík.

I was 14, and I had started a band with friends from school. I wanted to go to compete in Músíktíraunir and be a part of Reykjavík and music making and what teenage nightlife was all about. That was what I wanted to be a part of.

**Haukur:** Ísafjörður is kind of like a suburb of Reykjavík.

**Óða:** But then again it's not that hard to get to know people here. You can infiltrate groups. That year that I'm talking about, I had vivid dreams about meeting with the guys from Botnleðja and Maus, and I just went on and did it, met them, no problem.

**Haukur:** Ísafjörður and Reykjavík keep in // That's an odd comment. Ísafjörður is the furthest point from Reykjavík you can get, located in the northeast section of the West Fjords. You even speak Icelandic differently. It's a nine-hour drive, how can Ísafjörður be a suburb?

**Haukur:** Ísafjörður and Reykjavík keep in

tried having a concert in Reykjavík. From the things we'd been reading, we thought electronic music might go over well. No one came. On two separate occasions. Not a single person. Because we weren't friends with anyone.

It's very cliquish, in a sense. I think you'd expect a scene like this to have an adventurousness, but I don't think it works that way. You have to meet small groups to generate a certain amount of buzz.

**Haukur:** That's true. They will not approach you, but they're very approachable.

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**Haukur:** Airwaves is the exception. That is very big, and that was, in a way, started by Kiddi of Hljómalind as well. Kiddi had so much of an impact - he introduced Sigur Rós to Iceland. Their first record sold very little, then he got on board for their second album.

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**Haukur:** Most of the bands here and scenesters here are from somewhere else.

**Óða:** Yeah, Jónsi of Sigur Rós is from Mosfellsbær. I used to hitchhike in from Mosfellsbær, and he would give me a ride. He drove barefoot. He believed it gave him a better contact with the road. He's always been the way he is.

mostly, we just read about Reykjavík. We knew about what was going on, but we didn't experience the scene. Cause it's really closed to outsiders, to people not really from here. Of course, I'm excepting foreigners and foreign reporters - because everybody's really into self-promotion. Still, as an example, me and my friend Jóh, back in 1998, or 1999, we released a record, founded a label, and we

**// And Sigur Rós brings up the other key thing about the Reykjavík scene. Most of the bands here and scenesters here are from somewhere else.**

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**/// So in just a word or two, what does Reykjavík mean?**

**Haukur:** Awe. A-w-e. Look at all the cool stuff they're doing in Reykjavík.

**Bóas:** From an outsider's point of view, definitely.

**Haukur:** Iceland revolves around Reykjavík. It's our backbone. All the newspapers are published here. If you read Morgunblaðið, in the what's going on this weekend, you won't have anything in Akureyri, even. So if you're from outside, you're bombarded with all this great stuff that's going on in Reykjavík.

**Bóas:** In one word, Reykjavík to me would represent attitude, and not in the negative sense. But everybody in Reykjavík has it.

**/// An attitude you can't have in a smaller town. You might get beaten up.**

**Bóas:** Or made fun of, at least. It's all about building your self-image here. Everybody does it. Even the guy that works behind the counter at the 10-11 convenience store has some kind of image-based attitude.

**Haukur:** Yeah, you know Eiríkur Norðahl, the big Nýhil poet, he's the clearest example of what happens. He's from Ísafjörður, he's a friend of ours. He decided when he was about 16 years old that he was going to be a poet and a novelist and a communist. So he took to wearing a hat and drinking coffee. And people just came on to him really hard. There's no room for self-creation when you're in a small town like that. 'Cause everyone remembers you from when you were 12 or 15 or something like that. So what he had to do in the end was move away to Reykjavík. This is similar to the reason you see a lot of people here.

**/// And now, Eiríkur Norðahl is famous for driving the culture in Ísafjörður, partly for his work in Nýhil, partly for the work he does with his best friend, Mugison.**

**Haukur:** He lives there now. This is something he did when he was 20.

**Bóas:** But he came back to Ísafjörður with that reputation from Reykjavík, and then people started paying attention to him. Looking past his former self.

There is just an attitude here. Even people who don't have an attitude, that's their

attitude, like the krútt kids. [(Cute generation, a label for Sigur Rós, mún and their contemporaries.)]

**Haukur:** That's a very closed group. That's the thing that surprised me most on moving to Reykjavík, because I had been following them closely, listening to mún albums and reading their poetry books. And I could never imagine they had a hierarchy. You would think it would be like in Ísafjörður: sailors drinking with mechanics drinking with musicians drinking with college professors, but my third weekend living in Reykjavík I learned that was not the case.

**/// Egalitarianism is a point of pride, but it doesn't quite happen in Reykjavík. Each to their own bar: Sirkus for krútt. Kaffibarinn**

**Bóas:** Which they would never do here.

**/// Reykjavík has a coalition government, R-Listinn. And when this book comes out, it will likely be Independence Party, which is extremely conservative. The politics are pretty conservative, but not as bad as some villages up north.**

**Bóas:** But are you telling me that you moved to Reykjavík, named your band Reykjavík!, because of the attitude of Hafnarfjörður? **Haukur:** I moved to Reykjavík to study philosophy.

**/// But we don't want people to think this is a campus town. It certainly isn't that. First off, there's a highway keeping students away from town.**

**Bóas:** Dirty weekend being an advertising campaign that has become a mark of shame in Iceland. Years ago, the tourist board showed photos of blond girls in hot tubs promising a dirty weekend in Iceland.

**Bóas:** I actually worked for the only Reykjavík nightclub, Thomsen, a few years ago. And there were a bunch of really big guys. And I ended up talking to them, and they were from the Boston Fire Brigade. They were invited by Boston to go out on a dirty weekend in Reykjavík. And they were so bummed out that they couldn't find any loose girls.

**/// It is a part of this town - something to warn people about, maybe. Icelanders turn out to be human beings. Their sex lives really shouldn't be tourist attractions, and having their private lives used as advertisements may have really, ahem, turned them off foreigners.**

**Haukur:** I think it's okay. They can come and do whatever they want - it's not going to make the women find them attractive... just a lot of disappointed foreigners.

**/// When you thought of Reykjavík and read about it, were you assuming that the nights out you had in Ísafjörður would just be expanded by one-hundred times, bigger population, multiply the energy?**

**Bóas:** That would be the idea. But then the smaller groups really split it up.

**Haukur:** That's where they got the idea for things like Reykjavík Nightlife Friend, where you can get a Reykjavík insider to take you around and show you the other side.

**/// Oh dear god, you had to bring that up.**

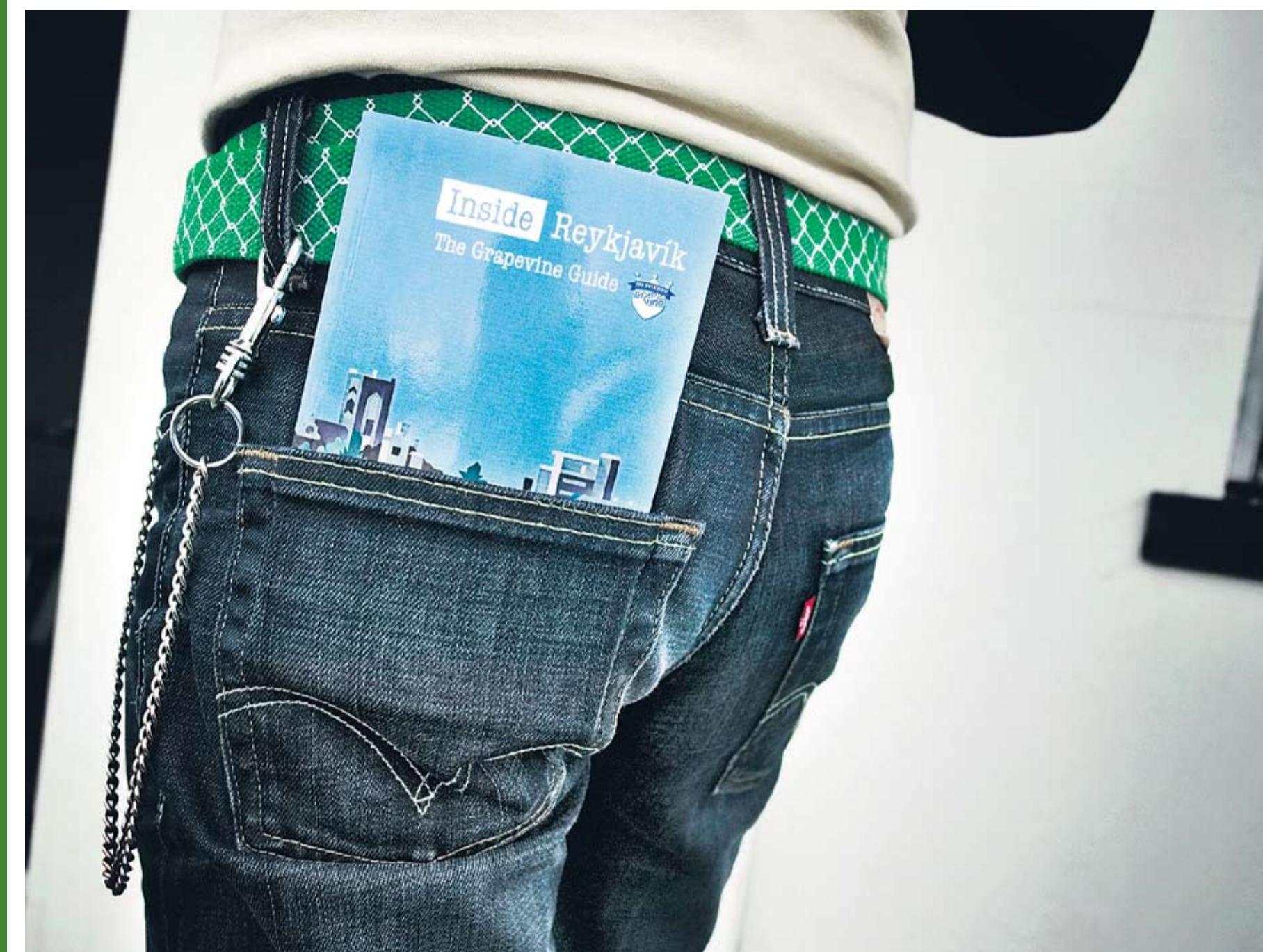
it's free

the REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

# INFO

Issue 10, 2006

8 Page Listings Section in Your Pocket



## The Climax of All Our Hard Work – Inside Reykjavík: The Grapevine Guide

The Grapevine can finally firmly recommend a guidebook for getting around our hometown of Reykjavík - our own guidebook, Inside Reykjavík. Not that other travel books from massive, impersonal conglomerates are evil or inaccurate; we typically consult with them in exchange for free dinner, and we can say the authors of other books are often well mannered and... not evil. But our book is local. True, written by an American jackass, but at least an American with a vested interest in the country, and three years of hard Icelandic living under his belt.

Here's why you need Inside Reykjavík: you can find out about how to relax, how to party, how to start a decent conversation, even how to get out of the city. And we have photos, yes, photographs. Many of them. And handsome maps.

Truthfully, we just can't say enough about how good our own work was. If only we had the linguistic skills to describe how strong our linguistic skills were in writing the book. But we don't. Since we sent the book to our publisher, Edda Press, we have grown tired, dumb and lazy.

Which is one more reason to buy the book. We can state, for the record, that we will never be that good again.

Fellow tourist, expatriate or self-conscious Icelander, imagine the day you pick up our fine book as the day you get married or fall in love. That significant other, which in this case is 170 pages of photos, text, design and passion, is supple, smells good, and, most importantly, all yours, will grant you both your wildest dream and your



A. Hansen Restaurant

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**Lobster offer 2.900,-**  
**Tel.: 565 1130**



# MUSIC

Music and nightife 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 Gunnar Hrafn Jónsson  
listings@grapevine.is

## FRIDAY - 14 JULY

DJ Árni Sveins  
KAFFIBARINN

Helgi Valur troubadour  
RÖSENBERG

Palli Maus  
BAR 11

Sálín in concert  
NASA

Hip-Hop party: Danni Deluxe, Dóri DNA, Don Johnson and guests  
PRIKID

DJ Raggi  
Q-BAR

DJ Natalie  
SIRKUS

Rökkurró, Ekkium, Monnípeningagáls, Le Poulet De Romance, Aota and Sidewalk  
HELLIRINN (Starts at 20:00)

Sweet Sins, Lada Sport, The Telepathics, Múgsefjun and Ultra  
GAUKUR Á STÖNG

Árni Sveins  
KAFFIBARINN

## SATURDAY - 15 JULY

Summerjazz: Ragnheiður Gröndal and Black Coffee Djass  
JÓMFRUIN (starts at 16:00)

DJ Alfons X  
KAFFIBARINN

Helgi Valur troubadour  
RÖSENBERG

DJ Matti  
BAR 11

DJ Andri and DJ Loftur  
PRIKID

Maggi Legó  
SIRKUS

Skítamórrall in concert  
NASA

Alfons X  
KAFFIBARINN

## WEDNESDAY - 19 JULY

**Café Rosenberg**

Live music  
Thu-Sat

Lækjargötu 2, tel. 551-8008

DJ Baldur  
KAFFIBARINN

Hermigervill  
SIRKUS

DJ DV  
PRIKID

## THURSDAY - 20 JULY

Grapevine Bad Taste Summer Series:  
Gavin Portland  
GALLERY LOBSTER OR FAME, starts at 17:00

Grapevine Bad Taste Summer Series:  
Gavin Portland + guests  
AMSTERDAM, starts at 21:00

DJ Einar Sonic  
SIRKUS

Blue Brasil jazz band  
RÖSENBERG

DJ Lucky plays soul, funk and reggae  
CAFÉ PARIS

DJ Kvíkindi  
PRIKID

## FRIDAY - 21 JULY

Mogaton in concert  
RÖSENBERG

Oli Weapons  
BAR 11

Franz and Kristó followed by DJ Benni  
PRIKID

Hardcore bands Andrúm, Anxiety, Envy of Nona and We Made in concert  
CLASSIC ROCK

DJ Gísli Galdur  
SIRKUS

DJ Baldur  
KAFFIBARINN

## SATURDAY - 22 JULY

Summerjazz: Sunna and Scot Quartet  
JÓMFRUIN (starts at 16:00)

Mogaton in concert  
RÖSENBERG

DJ Kári and Gísli Galdur  
PRIKID

DJ Jón Atli  
SIRKUS

Alfons X  
KAFFIBARINN

Spúútnik Summerparty: DJ Dazer and Hairdoctor  
SPÚÚTNIK (starts at 14:00)

DJ Haffi  
BAR 11

La Quiete from Italy accompanied by I Adapt, Myra and Gavin Portland  
DILLON

## SUNDAY - 23 JULY

Andreas Óberg and Hrafnaspark in concert  
RÖSENBERG

## MONDAY - 24 JULY

La Quiete from Italy accompanied by Fighting Shit, Rökkurró and The Oak Society  
KAFFI HLJÓMALIND

## WEDNESDAY - 26 JULY

DJ Baldur  
KAFFIBARINN

Bogomil and Flís followed by DJ KGB  
SIRKUS

## THURSDAY - 27 JULY

Grapevine Bad Taste Summer Series:  
Ela  
GALLERY LOBSTER OR FAME, starts at 17:00

Grapevine Bad Taste Summer Series:  
Ela + guests  
AMSTERDAM, starts at 21:00

Alfons X  
KAFFIBARINN

DJ Krummi  
SIRKUS

DJ Kacoon  
PRIKID

DJ Lucky plays soul, funk and reggae  
CAFÉ PARIS

Belle and Sebastian in concert with  
Emiliana Torrini  
NASA (Sold out)

Fræ release concert

GAUKUR Á STÖNG

RÖSENBERG

## FRIDAY - 28 JULY

Árni Sveins  
KAFFIBARINN

Árni Sveins  
SIRKUS

Spúútnik Summerparty: DJ Ta! Ta! Ta!  
SPÚÚTNIK (starts at 14:00)

Nineties night with DJ Kiki-Ow and DJ Curver  
PRIKID

## SATURDAY - 29 JULY

Summerjazz: Björn Thoroddsen and Andrea Gyldadóttir  
JÓMFRUIN (starts at 16:00)

DJ Curver  
SIRKUS

DJ Nuno  
KAFFIBARINN

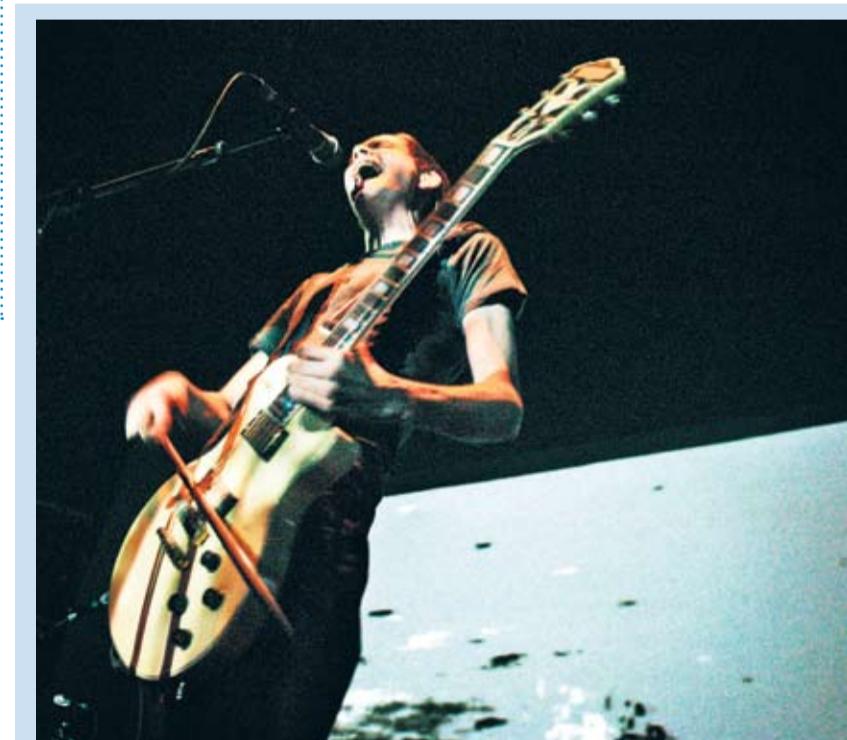
DJ Andri DV followed by DJ Benni B-ruff  
PRIKID

## SUNDAY - 30 JULY

Belle and Sebastian joined by Emiliana Torrini  
BRAEÐSLAN, BORGARFJÖRDUR EYSTRÍ (Sold out)

## Bellys

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**Sigur Rós**

Sigur Rós need no introduction. Together with supporting act Amiina and some experienced concert planners, Sigur Rós is organizing a grand outdoor gig at Miklatún the July 30th. For those not familiar, Miklatún is a large outdoor area only a five-minute walk south of Hlemmur. You're probably thinking it's sold out by now, but not to worry, the concert is open for everyone and the best part is, there's no entrance fee. The more the merrier is the adage for the night, so get ready for one of the most memorable events this year.

Miklatún, July 30th

# THEATRE

# MUSIC

## The Reykjavík City Theatre

On the main stage:

### Footloose

A musical based on the 'classic' film of the same name. No Kevin Bacon this time.

Ronia the Robber's Daughter

Icelandic translation of the children's classic by Astrid Lindgren.

### Who wants to find a million krónur?

Icelandic translation of a comedy by Ray Cooney.

On the other stages:

### Singing and Acting Classes

Teaching children aged 8-13 the basics of theatre.

## Broadway

### Le Sing

A combination of dinner and a show; here the waiters are also the performers.

## The National Theatre of Iceland

Closed until August 28th

### Iðnó

### Dinner and a show!

Starting the 19th of June Iðnó's restaurant will be offering a special Icelandic buffet

## (Borgarnes)

### Mr. Skallagrímsson

Benedikt Erlingsson stars in a funny one-man retelling of the story of Egill Skallagrímsson, the infamous Icelandic Viking.

## The Icelandic Opera

Closed for the summer

## Dance

See www.id.is for an up to date list of events by the Iceland Dance Company.



## LungA Concert

Young artists in the east of Iceland are again planning their annual culture festival LungA, held in the small town of Seyðisfjörður between the 17th and 23rd of July. The town will be crammed with artists from all around the country taking part in various workshops and courses, showing their payoff in a final exhibition on Saturday the 22nd. To put an end to the festival, guests and locals can enjoy a six-hour music show during the evening with performers such as Ampop, Fræ, Ghostigital, Jeff Who?, The Foreign Monkeys, Miri, Tony the Pony, Benny Crespo's Gang, Sometime and Biggi Orchestra. Yes, all that and more for those in the mood for a great party outside of Reykjavík. For info on tickets and how to get there, visit [www.lunga.is](http://www.lunga.is)



## Spúútnik Summerparty

Second-hand shop Spúútnik on Laugavegur doesn't care it's been a rainy summer. To brighten our mood (and maybe get some extra shoppers inside the store) a Summerparty seems appropriate with bands and DJs performing every week surrounded by shoes, dresses and jewellery. The lo-fi pop duo Hairdoctor, joined by DJ Dazer will play the July 22nd and DJ Ta! Ta! Ta! a week later. The party starts at 14:00.

Spúútnik store, July 22nd and July 28th



## La Quiete, Myra, I Adapt and Gavin Portland

The Italian screamo band La Quiete is heading to Iceland this month and will play a couple of gigs before touring in the US. On July 2nd La Quiete will perform at bar Dillon where the local hardcore bands Myra, Gavin Portland and I Adapt will accompany the rockers. With a dedicated fan base like theirs, you can expect the crowd to go crazy as the sweat starts dripping from the ceiling, with the possibility of everything ending in brutal chaos.

Dillon, July 22nd

## The Settlement Centre

for 3800 kr. from 18:00 to 20:00. Starting on the 29th, however, dinner guests arriving on one of three days of the week will have the option of paying 6000 kr. for the buffet and an after dinner show starting at 20:30. On Mondays and Tuesdays that show is 'Best of Light Nights' and on Wednesdays it's 'How do you like Iceland?' The latter is actually slightly cheaper at 5300 for the buffet and show combination.

## The Akureyri Theatrical Company

Closed for the summer

## The Little Shop of Horrors

Icelandic translation of the musical by Alan Menken and Howard Ashman.

## The Settlement Centre

<b>1</b>	<b>CAFÉ</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Tiu Dropar</b> Langavegur 27	<b>15</b>	<b>Café Victor</b> Hafnarstræti 1-3	<b>22</b>	<b>Pravda</b> Austurstræti 22	<b>25</b>	<b>Ölstofan</b> Vegamótastígur	<b>28</b>	<b>Kaffibrennslan</b> Pósturbær 9	<b>31</b>	<b>RESTAURANTS</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>Argentina</b> Bárónsstígur 11a	<b>37</b>	<b>Tapas</b> Vesturgata 3b	<b>44</b>	<b>Bæjarins Bestu</b> Tryggvagata
1	Café Roma Langavegur 118 wireless network	8	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.	15	Spelled with a C rather than with the more traditional K in order to be more cosmopolitan. This play 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.	22	Pravda is one of the larger clubs/bars in downtown Reykjavík. It's divided between two floors and also separately into the Pravda Bar and the Pravda Club. The club section of Pravda is ideal for dancing, while the bar section is somewhat more quiet and chilled out, with occasional live jazz and sometimes reggae.	25	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.	28	Kaffibrennslan manages to be just a nice, "normal" place to go to, and a place to be seen at, surprisingly enough both at the same time. A wide variety of beverages, both bistro menu and a terrace outside the bar when the weather allows it. The iced coffee beverage is a delight.	31	Krua Thai Tryggvagata 14	34	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	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
2	Ráðhúskaflí City Hall	9	Kaffitár Bankastræti 8	16	Vegamót Vegamótastígur 4	23	Café Cultura Hverfisgata 18	26	Thorvaldsen Austurstræti 8	29	Glaumbar Tryggvagata 20	32	Tveir Fiskar Geirsgata 9	35	Vín og Skel Langavegur 55	38	Sægrefinn Geirsgata	45	Hlölla Bátar By Ingólfstorg
2	Ráðhúskaflí inside the Reykjavík City Hall is a comfortable choice for the view over Tjörnin, especially recommended on the so-called winter weather days – the days that are beautiful, as long as you stay indoors. Also art exhibitions, 80m2s of miniature Iceland and municipal politics, all conveniently under the same roof.	9	Expanded and improved, this is the downtown store for one of the country's finest coffee importers. While anything here is good, the specialty coffee drinks are truly remarkable. Also a favourite, the Azteca, an espresso drink with lime and Tabasco.	16	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 beat results in photos published the day after on their website www.vegamot.is. If you like Oliver, try Vegamót and vice versa.	23	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 discussion or dance the night away – tango on Wednesdays starting with free lessons from 20 to 21:00.	26	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 locked down upon. Do not expect to get wearing hiking boots.	29	One of the few proper sports bars in Reykjavík, so you can go and watch whatever game happens to be on the TV screens. The establishment is basically based around the bar, so you won't have to go a long way for a drink. Open until five, and has a reputation for late night partying.	32	Seafood restaurant, although they also do land-based animals. At luncheon time 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	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	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. Sægrefinn (Sea baron) is a combination of a fish store at 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	The first sub sandwich shop in Iceland, opened in 1986. Hlölla Bátar has a large selection of subs filled and named with creativity and imagination. Brave souls might want to try the Gúmiði-Bátur (rubber boat), or go local and choose Syslumannabútur (sheriff sub) with lamb filling.
3	Gráí Kötturinn Hverfisgata 16a	10	Segafredo By Lækjartorg	17	B5 Bankastræti 5	21		26		29		32		35		39		46	
3	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.	10	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.	17	B5 is a newly opened bistro with a Scandinavian focus on the menu. Don't be fooled by the impressive collection of design classics that you see in the window when passing by – it's neither cold nor overly expensive, but rather a cozy place with friendly service.	21		26		29		32		35		39		46	
4	Kaffi Hljómalind Langavegur 21	11	<b>BARS 'N' BISTROS</b>	18	Rosenberg Lækjargata 2	21		26		29		32		35		39		46	
4	A peaceful café with perfect windows for people-watching and a lot of daylight. Hljómalind is run by a non-profit organisation and it only serves organic & fair-trade products.	11	Sólón Bankastræti 7a	18	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.	21		26		29		32		35		39		46	
5	Mokka Skólavörðustígur 3a	12	Oliver Langavegur 20a	19	Grand Rokk Smiðjustígur 6	21		26		29		32		35		39		46	
5	Mokka is the oldest café in Reykjavík, dating back to the 1950s. It's the place with dark, smoky atmosphere and great numbers of loyal customers. Their waffles are best in town. Seriously.	12	Oliver Langavegur 20a	19	Grand Rokk Smiðjustígur 6	21		26		29		32		35		39		46	
6	Ömmukaffi Austurstræti	13	Kaffibarinn Bergstaddirstræti 1	20	Bar 11 Langavegur 11	21		26		29		32		35		39		46	
6	A coffee house where you can find all kinds of people – all ages, all nationalities, with very friendly, down-to-earth feel to it. Affordable prices on coffee, cakes and the lunch menu. Try their speciality, the (South) African latte.	13	Kaffibarinn Bergstaddirstræti 1	20	Bar 11 Langavegur 11	21		26		29		32		35		39		46	
7	Babalu Skólavörðustígur 22a	14	Sirkus Klapparstígur 30	21	Hressingarskálinn Austurstræti 20	24	Prikið Bankastræti 12	27	Gaukur á Stöng Tryggvagata 22	30	Litli Ljóti Andarungin Lækjargata 6b	33	Hornið Hafnarstræti 15	36	Tjarnarbakkinn Vonarsstræti 3	43	Bernhöftshakari Bergstaddirstræti 13	50	Vitarbar Bergþóragata 21
7	The youngest coffee house in Reykjavík is also the homiest. Almost like a living room away from home, Babalu keeps it simple, quiet and cozy with coffee and the occasional crêpe.	14	Welcome to the bar. Elements of the bar and alternative cultural institution also include an upstairs that looks and smells like a bus, a garden, a flea market and a queue on weekend nights that looks never-ending.	21	The celebrated site of one of the more famous coffeehouses in Iceland, this bar/coffeehouse/ restaurant brings a European flair to the city. This is the until about 11, when things get to rockin', and you can see the true character of Reykjavík.	24	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 nightclub on weekends, you can also borrow games there, such as backgammon or chess.	27	Iceland's oldest bar is now in its early twenties. During the day it's a pool pub and on weekday evenings there are live rock concerts by a mix of mainstream and underground bands. On weekends there is usually a lot of action with cover bands playing everything from Britney to the Beatles...	30	They have a fish buffet for 2,500ISK every evening, with the magic words "eat-as-much-as-you-can" floating in the air. They also have an Icelandic media person working there every now and then, so watch out for a curly haired, friendly gentleman called Egill.	33	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	Above the Íþróttateatre, 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 specialties, the lamb steak, one of those rare traditional treats that does not come as a shock to the uninitiated.	43	Bernhöftshakari Bergstaddirstræti 13	50	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.
7	Babalu Skólavörðustígur 22a	14	Sirkus Klapparstígur 30	21	Hressingarskálinn Austurstræti 20	24	Prikið Bankastræti 12	27	Gaukur á Stöng Tryggvagata 22	30	Litli Ljóti Andarungin Lækjargata 6b	33	Hornið Hafnarstræti 15	36	Tjarnarbakkinn Vonarsstræti 3	43	Bernhöftshakari Bergstaddirstræti 13	50	Vitarbar Bergþóragata 21
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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.

## TV

## Grey's Anatomy

Not that many people seem to get the pun, so let's just explain it straight off the bat: Grey's Anatomy is the title of a (then) definitive classic work on human anatomy. Grey's Anatomy, on the other hand, is a TV drama set in a hospital – much in the tradition of ER and other successes in the same genre. Ellen Pompeo stars as Dr. Meredith Grey, a surgical intern struggling with professional and personal issues. While it's not a bad show, don't let anybody tell you it's realistic. In fact, a lot of the criticism levelled against the show when it first aired in the United States had to do with inaccurate portrayals of the intricacies of hospital life. GHJ

Skjár 1 – Tuesdays at 22:30

## 6 til 7

Felix Bergsson and Guðrún Gunnarsdóttir host this daily talk show between (surprise, surprise) six and seven. Expect interviews, cooking, human interest stories and generally tons and tons of fluff. While it's not exactly scintillating entertainment, the hosts are competent and manage to pull the hour off without causing too much embarrassment to anyone. GHJ

RÚV – every weekday from 19:35

## Rockstar: Supernova

When rock stars burn out, they go supernova. Or they make porn. In any case, the most laughable of the reality television shows suddenly got personal this year when they brought on an Icelander, Magni of Á móti sól. The laughter turns to tears.

GHJ

Skjár 1 – every weekday between 18:00 and 19:00

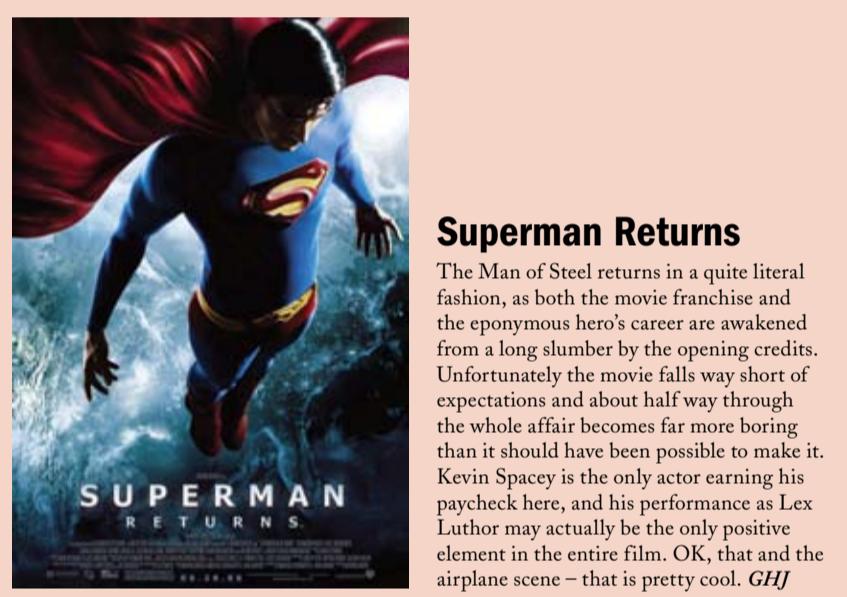
## Kastljós

It's our opinion that this iconic news program has been going from strength to strength lately, and we'd like to encourage people to watch it when they get a chance.



## Stick It

A typically painful teen comedy that will hopefully be in and out of movie theatres before anyone notices it's there. You might think that a movie this bad, sporting a title that suggestive, would make excellent fodder for an angry young journalist with his mind in the gutter. However, we here at the Grapevine rise above such... oh, what the hell, it's irresistible: I have a few suggestions for where the director of this trash could, indeed, 'stick it.' GHJ



## Superman Returns

The Man of Steel returns in a quite literal fashion, as both the movie franchise and the eponymous hero's career are awakened from a long slumber by the opening credits. Unfortunately the movie falls way short of expectations and about half way through the whole affair becomes far more boring than it should have been possible to make it. Kevin Spacey is the only actor earning his paycheck here, and his performance as Lex Luthor may actually be the only positive element in the entire film. OK, that and the airplane scene – that is pretty cool. GHJ

## The Benchwarmers

A buddy comedy, starring Rob Schneider, David Spade and Jon Heder (of Napoleon Dynamite fame).

## Smárbíó, Borgarbió

## The Breakup

Jennifer Aniston and Vince Vaughn star in this romantic comedy.

## Háskólabíó, Sambíóin Álfabakka, Kringlubíó, Sambíóin Akureyri, Sambíóin Keflavík

## Cars

An animated children's film about anthropomorphic automobiles.

## Háskólabíó, Sambíóin Álfabakka, Kringlubíó, Sambíóin Akureyri

## Click

Adam Sandler's latest comedic vehicle, telling the story of a man with a remote control that can affect reality itself.

## Smárbíó, Regnboginn, Laugarásbíó, Borgarbió, Selfossbíó, Sambíóin Keflavík

## The DaVinci Code

A thriller based on the book of the same name and starring Tom Hanks. Smárbíó, Regnboginn

## The Fast and The Furious III: Tokyo Drift

With a new cast, a new setting and a new gimmick: The Fast and The Furious is back.

## Laugardísbíó, Borgarbió, Sambíóin Álfabakka, Kringlubíó, Sambíóin Keflavík

## Just My Luck

A romantic comedy starring Lindsey Lohan and Chris Pine.

## Smárbíó, Regnboginn

## Keeping Mum

A comedy starring Rowan Atkinson as a vicar with marriage problems.

## Háskólabíó

## The Lake House

A romance starring Keanu Reeves and Sandra Bullock - their first on-screen reunion since Speed.

## Háskólabíó, Sambíóin Álfabakka, Sambíóin Akureyri

## Little Red Riding Hood

A cartoon based on the classic children's tale.

## Smárbíó, Regnboginn, Laugarásbíó

## The Omen

A modern remake of the spooky 70's horror drama.

## Regnboginn, Selfossbíó

## Poseidon

It's a ship, it's up-side-down, it's sinking.

## Háskólabíó, Kringlubíó

## RV

A road-trip family-oriented comedy starring Robin Williams and Jeff Daniels.

## Smárbíó, Regnboginn

## She's The Man

Bubblegum teen comedy about young people developing a series of crushes.

## Sambíóin Álfabakka

## Slither

A horror film involving an alien invasion by creepy crawlies.

## Sambíóin Álfabakka

## Stay Alive

A horror movie about a group of teenagers who find themselves trapped in a real-life version of a scary computer game.

## Laugardísbíó

## Take the Lead

Antonia Banderas stars as a dancing instructor teaching young delinquents to overcome their problems through dance.

## Regnboginn, Laugardásbíó

## X-Men 3

The third instalment in the series based on the popular comic book franchise.

## Regnboginn

## Regnboginn

## Regnboginn

## Sambíóin Akureyri

## Nýja-Bíó

## Smárbíó

## Smárbíó

## Smárbíó

## Háskólabíó

Hagatorgi  
107 Reykjavík  
p. 525-5400

## Kringlubíó

Kringlunni 4-12  
103 Reykjavík  
p. 575-8900

## Selfossbíó

Eyrarvegur 2  
800 Selfoss  
p. 482-3007

## Laugarásbíó

Laugarási  
104 Reykjavík  
p. 5650118

## Regnboginn, Laugardásbíó

Ráðhústorgi  
600 Akureyri  
p. 461-4666

## Regnboginn

Hafnarfjörður  
33  
230 Reykjavínsbær  
p. 421-1170

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

The Grapevine lists exhibitions from galleries and museums throughout Iceland. If you would like to be included, free of charge, contact the Grapevine by email at [listings@grapevine.is](mailto:listings@grapevine.is)

## 101 GALLERÍ

Hverfisgata  
Opening hours: Thu.-Sat. 13-17

## Students from the second year of the Academy

## KJARVALSSTAÐIR REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM

Sigtún  
Opening hours: 10-16 every day

## ÁSMUNDARSAÐN

Flökagata  
Permanent exhibition

## THE EINAR JÓNSSON MUSEUM

Eiriksgata  
Opening hours: Sat.-Sun. 14-17

## Permanent exhibition of the sculptor Einar Jónsson

## KLING &amp; BANG GALLERÍ

Laugavegur 23  
Open Thu.-Sun. 13-17  
Free entrance

## THE CULTURE HOUSE

Hverfisgata  
Opening hours: 11-17 every day

## Permanent exhibitions: Medieval Manuscripts, The National Museum – as it was and The Library Room.

## 22.04.06 – into the summer

## An ode dwelt – Snorri Hjartarson 1906-2006

## 29.09.2006-27.02.2007

## 9 Icelandic Fashion Designers

## ASÍ ART MUSEUM

Freyjugata 41  
Open every day 13-17; closed on Mondays

## 29.09.2006-27.02.2007

## 9 Icelandic Fashion Designers

## THE NATIONAL GALLERY

Frikirkjューegur  
Opening hours: Tue.-Sun. 11-17

Free entrance

## 06.05-10.09.2006

## Sculptures by Guðjón Stefán Kristinsson.

Materials include driftwood, rock, glass and turf

## 06.05-10.09.2006

## Acrylic portraits by Jón Ólafsson

## 06.05-10.09.2006

## Paintings by Ketill Larsen

## 09.06.2006-20.08.2006

## Carnegie Art Awards 2006

## 09.06.2006-22.10.2006

## The Erró Collection: Graphic Works

## NOTICE: Currently closed, re-opens on July 26th

## 13.07-26.08. 2006

## Summer exhibition: a rotation of works from the collection

## GALLERÍ ANIMA

Ingólfssstræti 8

Open Fridays 12-17

Sat.-Sun. 13-17

Free entrance

## 21.07-13.08. 2006

## Various art by Múni and Árni Pór

## THE REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Grófarhús, Tryggvagata 15, 6th floor

Weekdays: 12-19

Sat.-Sun. 13-17

Free admission

## From July 15th, five Icelandic artists will be holding an exhibition, most incorporating photography and depicting man's connection to nature, at and around the Grótta lighthouse in Seltjarnarnes. It's titled 'Eiland' – definitely the most unusual 'gallery' you can visit this summer!

## 01.06.06-24.09.06

## Photography by Andrés Kolbeinsson

## DWARF GALLERY

Grundarstígur 21



## Eiland – No Man's Land

Five Icelandic artists are collaborating on a project known as Eiland, or No Man's Land, a kind of imaginary community or country within the context of an art show. The location they have chosen is in and around a lighthouse in Grótta, which ties in nicely with the theme of one of the exhibits: Friðrik Órn Hjaltested's photographic series, which features pictures of a number of lighthouses throughout the country. Eiland literally means "not a country", but sounds exactly like the word eyland, which means an island. This play on words is further underlined by the fact that the area around the lighthouse is periodically submerged and transformed into a pseudo-island, or micro-nation, which the public will now be invited to visit daily from July 15th to August 20th.



## Foreigners in the Fjord

Eyjafjörður has become home to a large number of immigrants in recent years, and at present at least 400 individuals from 40 different nations reside in the area. To celebrate this newfound diversity, and explore the daily lives and different backgrounds of the people themselves, a group of second year media students from the University of Akureyri have put together an exhibit that features numerous portraits of, and



interviews with, new Icelanders.

The exhibition is comprised of photographs, taken by Ragnhildur Adalsteinsdóttir, along with the responses the subjects gave to a series of questions concerning their reasons for coming to Iceland, where they came from, what they left behind and what their relationship is with their adopted home and society. Initially limited to Akureyri, the show is now on the road and can be viewed at Café Cultura until August 19th. GHJ

## >>>OUTSIDE REYKJAVÍK:

Keflavík:  
Seyðisfjörður:

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www.skaffell.is

10.06-10.08.2006  
**Sigurður Guðmundsson and Kristján Guðmundsson**

24.06-16.07.2006  
**Heimir Björgulfsson**

Akureyri:  
**GALLERÍ +**  
Brekkuágata 35  
(Closed for the summer, may re-open in August)

Hafnarfjörður:  
**HAFNARBORG**  
Open 11-17, every day but Tuesdays.  
www.hafnarborg.is

**JÓNAS VIÐAR GALLERY**  
Opening hours: Fri.-Sat. 13-18  
**AKUREYRI ART MUSEUM**  
Open from 12-17. Closed on Mondays.  
http://www.listasafn.akureyri.is/



## Fashion at the Culture House

Three oversized photographs of the rural Icelandic landscape hang from the slanted walls of the loft showroom. The moss-covered rocks and lava fields are flushed with flat bluish tones, bathing it in a cold light different from that around the 30 or so manikins displaying the work of nine Icelandic designers, as a part of the Culture House's exhibition of Icelandic fashion.

While the photographs are without a doubt meant to fall into the background, their larger-than-life and wholly realistic representation of cold hard Icelandic nature have a major presence in the exhibit, and in that presence, seem to be constantly implying something...

This exhibit is really about Iceland.

Indeed, as one of the walls proudly declares, "the shades of white, purple, green and black produced by the changing light on the landscape, the vibrant nightlife of Reykjavík, Icelandic music and literature, art technology and tradition are the sources of inspiration that feed Icelandic fashion."

Entering the showroom with this idea quite literally always in the background, one can't help but begin to view the individual designs through the filtered lens of the natural backdrop. The collections, labelled but not separated by designer, enter into immediate competition with each other; the backdrop seems to imply that the influence of the landscape is key to a design's "Icelandic-ness".

Seeing past this shallow attempt at connecting nine otherwise outstanding collections is crucial towards appreciating this exhibit.

Each collection, in its own right, is outstandingly beautiful and interesting, mostly because reflected in each are the very different ideas and inspirations of the designer, not necessarily the abstract beauty of the landscape.

In one design in particular, that of Steinunn Sigurðadóttir, the influence of Icelandic nature is difficult to see. Sigurðadóttir created a stunning collection working solely with black and white colours. The fabrics of her delicate and feminine designs layer together in a kind of natural harmony, an unplanned mix.

The exhibition, which opened June 29th, will be on view until February next year. VP

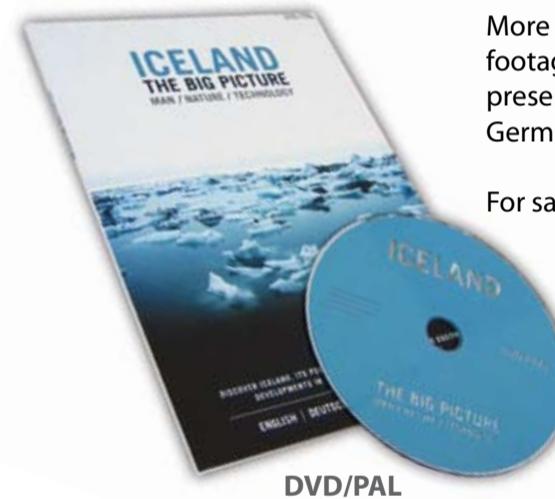
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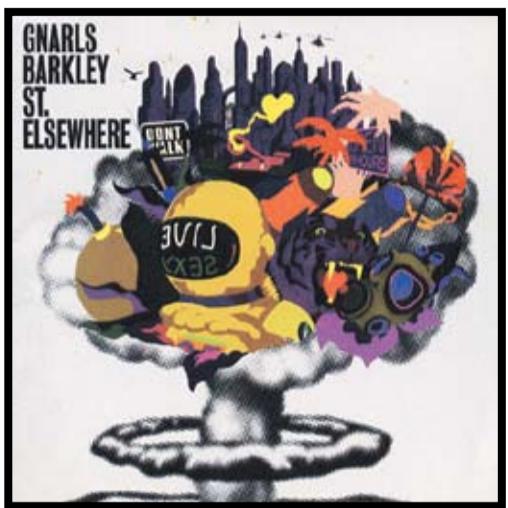
# GRAPEVINE ALBUM REVIEWS



**Flaming Lips  
At War With the Mystics**  
Worthless.

We watched, and listened to, the Flaming Lips drive an Acid Punk movement in the 90s, then they blew the introspective noise rock genre that the more popular Smashing Pumpkins were playing with to bits. And through all of this, they would get a few good reviews, but their concerts were word of mouth. You got postcards from lead singer Wayne Coyne. Then they got into British commercials. Now they're Euro festival gods.

On the bright side, they got paid. On the other hand, they wrote this album, *At War...*, with juvenile, finger-pointing lyrics like: "You haven't got a clue, and you don't know what to do," and, on a different track, "You think that you're radical but you're not you're fanatical. Fanatical. Fanatical." Yes, always repeated. That means it's time to sing along. The best way to explain the overall deterioration of quality with the Lips is to compare treatment of one of their favourite topics, the notion of power and its futility in daily life. BC



**Gnarls Barkley  
St. Elsewhere**  
Worth Two Beers.

The hit single off of *At War with the Mystics* is the Yeah Yeah Yeah Song, which poses the question "If you could blow up the world with a flick of a switch, would you do it?... We can not know ourselves what you would do with all your power." Compare this with Waiting for Superman, a song on Soft Bulletin written just after Coyne lost his father to cancer. Then, the take on power's futility was a bit less aggressive and judgemental. "Is it overwhelming, to use a crane to lift a fly? It's a good time for Superman, to lift the sun into the sky, because it's getting heavy. Well, I thought it was already as heavy as can be..." Tell everybody, waiting for Superman, that they should try to hold on as best they can..." At War with the Mystics is a horrible record, much the same way that the new Neil Young record is horrible. It's not just that the musicians had good history, it's that the music they make now is retreaded, overconfident, and condescending and ultimately as arrogant as a Bush speech on foreign policy. BC



**Bruce Springsteen  
We Shall Overcome: The  
Seeger Sessions**  
Worth three beers.

Doing an album of Pete Seeger classics isn't all that imposing a task. Pete Seeger influenced a lot of people, befriended a lot of people, but as much as Seeger is essential to the life stories of everyone from Leadbelly to Woody Guthrie to Bob Dylan, his performances of folk material have all the spirit and character of a piece of white toast left in the sun four days. With the vaguest of musical interests, and a pulse, you can outdo the man - he's the musical equivalent of the ugly, friendly guy you go to bars with to look better by comparison.

Bruce Springsteen is no stranger to finding ugly people that allow him to look better by comparison. Having released a brilliant first effort with a jazz rock hybrid band for his first release, *Greetings from Asbury Park*, he became a superstar by surrounding himself with less talented, less threatening musicians, and by easing up on the intelligence of his lyrics, switching their focus from artists in New York to Americana burnouts.

For people who've followed his work, this seemed a safe, guaranteed hit. But it isn't. For starters, Springsteen is either un-

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# winners



**Reykjavík!  
Glacial Landscapes, Religion, Oppression & Alcohol**

Worth Four Beers.

For an album bearing Iceland's identifying hallmarks as its title, Reykjavík! is surprisingly un-Icelandic, especially in its frenetic and swerving mood swings and crackling, yet minimal energy, making fast trademarks of alienated, ironic mockery, twangy, harried guitars and the hellish croaks that are Þóðar's vocals. The dizzying and malicious desperation of stunners Blame It On Gray, All Those Beautiful Boys and Dragonsmell are pure irreverent genius, and the album itself has a well-rounded balance of unpredictability and sol-



**Bremen Town Musician  
Silent Arrows**

Worth Four Beers.

Silent Arrows is a secretive work. Forlorn, hypnotic and ethereal, it is blessed with the rare ability to experiment without being pretentious, consisting almost solely of gentle, yet insistent violins playing to random taps of percussion, only occasionally broken up by the wandering, unsure vocals of a woman that sounds almost too hesitant to

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# DINING, EATING & GRUBBING

Gunnar Hrafn Jónsson and Bart Cameron on Reykjavík Dining Photos by Skari

## SUSHI SMIÐJAN

Geirsgata 3  
Tel.: 517-3366



The town of Reykjavík has been waiting for this for years, so there has been a certain amount of giddiness sweeping over reviewers having found a sushi shop where rolls and sashimi are, believe it or not, affordable. How affordable? A modest sushi box costs about 600 ISK, a large box with ten good-sized pieces, about 1,600 ISK - almost half the price of the other sushi in town. Sushi Smiðjan is not only cheap for sushi, it is one of the cheapest restaurants in town. To give some context, a burger and fries at the neigh-

bouring Hamborgarábúllan is 980 ISK. Adding to the joy over the cost, is the fact that the place looks good, it has a great website ([www.sushismidjan.is](http://www.sushismidjan.is)), and the service is quick, a rarity in Iceland. Of course, the location, while close to a couple of other respectable establishments, is just outside the standard thoroughfares for tourists and even downtown employees. Then there's the fact that this isn't really a restaurant per se. It's got four stools, and you're not too likely to see the chef preparing anything. A massive catering operation, most of the work takes place in back or outside of when they're serving stop-ins.

If you don't see someone making the sushi, then you're typically going to taste the difference - sushi starts to suffer immediately upon exposure to air. And here we come to the only reason Sushi Smiðjan hasn't had a

street named in its honour: It really doesn't have very good sushi. While the servings are honest, and the fish won't make you sick, it isn't particularly tasty. Actually, you can't really taste the flavour of the fish. On some of the rolls, a preponderance of sesame seeds overpower the roll, on others, the fish seems a little old.

In other words, good news, bad news: good news, you can now afford sushi in Iceland, bad news, you get what you pay for. Still, for what they're charging, they could cut up their shoes and call it sushi, and I'd still probably stop in now and then. BC



## TVEIR FISKAR

Geirsgata 9  
Tel.: 511-3474



## CAFÉ ÓPERA

Lækjargata 2  
Tel.: 552-9499



When reviewing a restaurant for the first time it's hard to know what to expect. In the case of Café Ópera, which has been a fixture of the downtown dining circuit for years, it felt odd to have never ventured inside before.

Located on Lækjargata, it's a place absolutely everyone and their grandma has walked past at some point. The interior turned out to be a pleasant surprise.

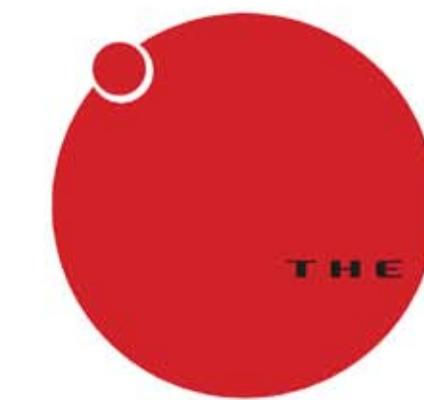
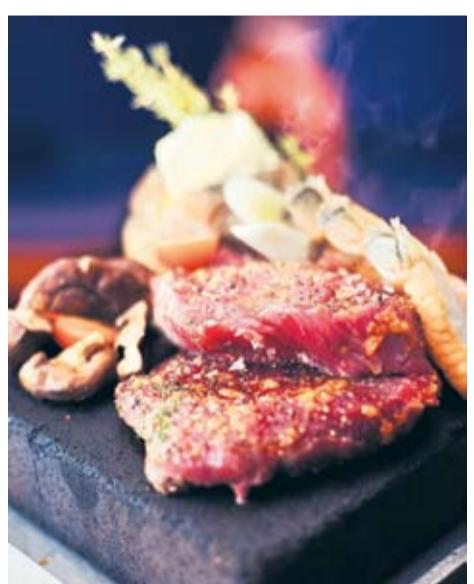
From the kitsch posters and paintings to the piano hanging on the wall, the decor at Café Ópera has a bohemian, early 20th

century feel to it. The staff was friendly and numerous, perhaps owing to our early arrival, and more than eager to please. The chef wanted to personally discuss upcoming changes to the menu, and we were given the opportunity to taste a variety of dishes that he handpicked - both from off and on the current menu. As a result of the bewildering and seemingly never-ending array of foods that was brought before us, recalling specifics is difficult.

There was a great lobster soup: creamy, made with cognac and thankfully not greasy at all. There was shellfish, presented to us looking like a fine artwork - a skill that would be much in evidence for the rest of the evening. There was carpaccio and sorbet, lobster and giant prawn. Basically, there was a lot of really good food, the remains of which we had to tearfully send back in order to be

able to partake in the next treat. Café Ópera is famous for its hot rock steaks, and close to the end of the evening we got to experience that rather unusual culinary phenomenon. Basically, someone sticks a rock into the depths of hell itself until it's hot enough to burn through asbestos. Then the rock is put on a heat-resistant tray, raw meat and a potato are put on top, and a mad dash to the customer's table begins. You actually cook the meat as you eat it, and while that may sound intimidating the experience was as fun as it is delicious. At the very least, it's something different to try.

To top it all off, we had a warm chocolate cake with ice cream for dessert. It was a beautifully presented, fudgy kind of brownie, and not being able to finish it was a real shame. GHJ



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## BEZT Í HEIMI

Nýhil



### Nýhil Poetry Bookstore

BY BART CAMERON

When you come to a nation that prides itself on maintaining almost 100% literacy for centuries, you expect poetry to hold a revered place. Strangely enough, in the last few decades it hasn't. You can't particularly blame Iceland for allowing poetry to fade, it is an international phenomenon.

Besides, as poetry stopped dominating discussion and serving as a source of national(ist) pride, thanks to writers like Einar Már Guðmundsson, it took to the streets and it took up a new set of influences. Bad as it is that Reykjavík had no place to properly exhalt poetry's hauty qualities, at least this was one of the few towns where one could get harassed at a bar at 4 am to buy a book of poetry.

Somehow, out of this street, everyman movement, a group of poets, musicians, and writers with the aura of rock stars got together a few years ago to bring poetry back into the middle-to-higher establishments.

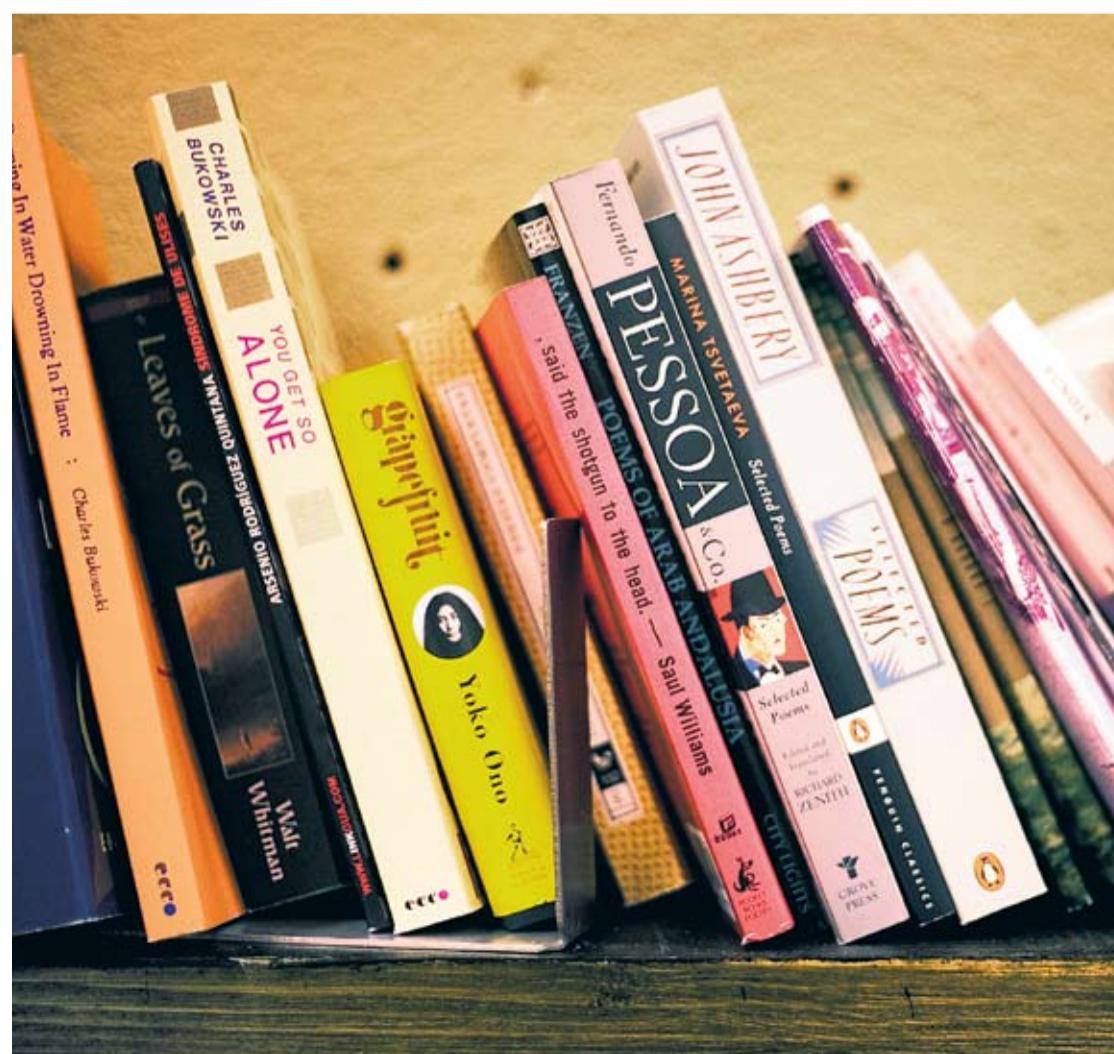
Calling themselves the Nýhil group, they do things like hold international readings, travel the country, publish properly laid out and designed books, and their work is catching on. (In fact, in this issue, the Grapevine presents a translation of the rock star of poetry.)

Now, the Nýhil group has found a home for their work, taking over a sitting room in the Smekkleysa (Bad Taste) Record Shop and turning it into the poet's sweetest dream. Perhaps surprising for people who

have followed the group's more gritty tendencies, the poetry shop is basically high end, featuring tote after tote, set into bookshelves and, in one of the salesperson's own words, "The most expensive display case in the city."

All as it should be. The Nýhil Poetry Bookstore, like the Culture House not too far away, is a place to worship the notion of the book, an activity not that much less fulfilling for not being able to understand what's written in them.

We're just waiting for the group to start hosting some more proper readings like those that earned them their fame. According to their representatives, their next large Reykjavík event will be this October, during their second annual international poetry festival.



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## "I Love Skólavörðustígur"

The most beloved street in downtown Reykjavík

BY STEINUNN JAKOBSDÓTTIR PHOTO BY GÚNDI

Stretching from Laugavegur all the way up to Hallgrímskirkja church, Skólavörðustígur is a street so familiar to locals they often don't notice all it has to offer and can't be bothered to have a look inside Art-Iceland.com, Listaselið and Antikhúsið, to name just a few galleries and craft shops in the area. A walk up and down can be a great way to spend an afternoon.

"I love this street, I walk up and down twice a day while taking my kids to kindergarten," Sara, who has agreed to be my guide for the day, says as we stand in front of her designer shop The Naked Ape.

The shop, selling designer sweaters, t-shirts, dresses and handbags among so many other curious things by vivid colours and various patterns, is located at a crossroad, and it can be considered part of Bankastræti, Laugavegur and Skólavörðustígur.

"Every day, this small corner outside the store is crowded with tourists," Tollie, the co-owner of Naked Ape, says while pointing at the place where the street sign marked

Skólavörðustígur sticks up from the paving stone. At the same instant a large red sight-seeing bus drives down the street with a couple of curious passengers having a look through the window. The three of us set out on a walking tour to explore the street; we hoped to drop into some galleries and designer stores, try on clothes, smell baked-goods and discover shops we had never even noticed before.

During the summer months, tourists fill the street and troop with their cameras at both ends, some standing in front of the statue of Leifur Eriksson taking pictures of Hallgrímskirkja church, others capturing the special street atmosphere, most apparent when the weather is good, as then many of the shops owners put small tables and chairs outside for customers to relax and enjoy the sunshine. As it was a sunny Saturday, all this became apparent when we left the Naked Ape shop.

Named after the Skólavörðuholt, where the church dominates the surrounding, this elegant street, with its old and colourful

houses, is home to many of the more unique shops in the capital. The street is home not only to locals, but to many of Reykjavík's visitors, as many of the city centre's more noted guesthouses are located there. The street also houses some of the city's more infamous inhabitants, in the piled brick building located right next to the bank Spron. This is Hegingarhúsíð, the oldest prison in the country.

Though largely quiet at night, the street is lively during the day and constant traffic up and down gives it a true metropolitan feel. But Skólavörðustígur has not always been this popular shopping street. A lot has changed in past decades and in recent years Skólavörðustígur has been reviving from a slow decline. Many smaller buildings and apartment houses have had to shunt for newer ones and the whole structure is rapidly changing. Things our grandparents once took for granted are mostly gone as the street is being modernised. Where now there is a fashionable designer shop on the corner of Bergstaðastræti and Skólavörðustígur, there used to be a candy

store where kids from all around the neighbourhood came to buy ice cream, for example. Luckily, some things are here to stay. Eggert the Furrier Shop is one of them. His small and quite unobtrusive shop has been on Skólavörðustígur 38 for as long as I can remember, and he sure isn't going anywhere. When standing outside the shop almost at the top of the street we just couldn't help but go inside and try on some expensive fur. Sara, standing in a long coat made out of a bobcat worth one million ISK couldn't believe she would ever come into possession of such a garment.

As I was putting on a green furry jacket and a Russian hat, my guide, Sara, yelled out: "Can you believe I'm holding a leopard?" and wrapped the skin around her shoulders. The saleswomen were nice enough to show us the newest products, letting us try them all on, even if we weren't going to buy anything. We probably didn't look like women wealthy enough to even afford a pair of gloves designed by Eggert, but our little fashion show

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was a lot of fun.

Porsteinn Bergmann, only few doors down, was the next place to grab our attention. I had never been inside this small shop selling all kinds of stuff for the home, but Sara says she is a regular.

"I buy all the colouring for my shop in this place. This store is just amazing and totally vital for the street." Unfortunately it was closed, so I had to settle for looking through the window, seeing a set of china I wouldn't mind buying.

Andrés Clothing Store, a traditional menswear shop, selling trousers and jackets, neckties and shirts, all for a laughably low price, was our next stop.

"The shop will be 100 years old this year," the saleswoman informed us as Sara was trying on a fleece cap. She went on to tell us that with almost everything inside being fairly cheap but sophisticated clothing for men, the shop has its regular costumers who won't be clothing anywhere else.

**"We just couldn't help but go inside and try on some expensive fur. Sara, standing in a long coat made out of a bobcat, worth 1 million ISK, couldn't believe she would ever come into possession of such a garment."**

Across the street is the newly opened children's toy store, Börn Nátturunnar, in the basement of Skólavörðustígur 17a. The remarkable thing about this shop is the fact that everything inside is made of organic products: the clothes, the toys and even the board games. I was getting distracted by a pinball game when Sara pointed out how much more interesting and creative those toys were compared to all the plastic dolls children usually play with nowadays. I had to agree. The next time I'm in a pickle over finding a birthday present for a young niece or nephew, I may stop in.

The street got a second shout of devotion, this time from the record shop 12 Tónar. "I love Skólavörðustígur. I find it the most beautiful street in all of Reykjavík," Jonni of 12 Tónar told Sara and me as we stood outside Skólavörðustígur 15.

12 Tónar was founded eight years ago and since that time the small building, clad with grey corrugated iron, has become a popular hangout spot for music lovers who can sit down on the sofa and relax with a cup of coffee while listening to the various music selections available.

"You should check out the new exhibition inside. There we have collages all made by artist and musician Sigríður Nielsdóttir, and she sold every single piece last week," Jonni added and led the way up the stairs and inside the shop.

Sigríður, a remarkable woman in her eighties, who released her first album at the age of 71 and now, a couple of years later, can take pride in a large stack of records, couldn't have found a better location for her exhibition.

Still, a certain aesthetic started to wear on my

guide.

"I know Skólavörðustígur is considered the best street to stroll if you want to experience Icelandic art, but, in my opinion, the street doesn't give the right picture of the scene at all," Sara said and pointed out that there are a lot of galleries selling Icelandic landscape paintings as well as souvenir shops with supplies of woolen sweaters and ashtrays made out of lava simulations but no young artists showing their works.

"I would like to see a gallery, where only artists younger than 27 may sell their art and design. That would make the street perfect," she added.

Still we kept on. We checked out the Art Form Shop, where I found an exquisite orange-coloured coffee machine; the Hand-knitting Association of Iceland, where you can dress up for the cold winter months; the trendy children's clothing shop Hnokkar og Hnáttur, Gallery Verksmiðjan, run by nine artists and designers who sell their products



There might not be as many coffeehouses and restaurants on Skólavörðustígur as on the neighbouring street Laugavegur, but gourmet stores make up for that. At Ostabúðin you can find all kinds of goodies and during lunch hours they serve soups, salads and a fish of the day. Fylgiskálfar, a shop specialising in fish products next door to Ostabúðin, offers the best crab salad on earth and great sushi as well. Finally, the grocery store Yggdrasil is the healthy eaters paradise, selling all kinds of organic foods, vitamins and cosmetics.

Our last stop this time, appropriately enough, was the newest member of the street, the designer store Xirena at Skólavörðustígur 4a.

"I get inspired by the Icelandic nature," the woman behind the counter told us as



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## Follow This Cab

Political intrigue, marketing exploits and sexual frustration in a hired car

BY GUNNAR HRAFN JÓNSSON PHOTO BY SKARI

"I've seen a lot of things," Haflidi, taxi driver for BSR tells me. "Adultery, drugs, drunkenness, more adultery. People don't seem to care what a taxi driver sees or hears, and if they are well behaved we are generally happy to ignore them."

It's 3:00 am, and we're in a cab parked at the BSR taxi line on Lækjargata. There isn't much going on at the moment, but the plan is to offer people discount rides in exchange for a voyeuristic glimpse into their night out. So far we're seeing a lot of seagulls, and a few other taxis, but customers are few and far between. The driver, Haflidi, isn't unduly concerned: "It only starts to pick up after 3 am. That's when some people start to run out of steam and head home, and others look for private parties."

A few minutes later and it seems like the mission is doomed to end in failure, as no one is keen on getting into a taxi with someone already sitting in the front. "People like to sit up front, especially when they are alone. Sometimes the customers just need someone to tell their troubles to, we're a bit like bartenders in that respect," says Haflidi. Just then I look out the window and see a severely intoxicated man drop his pizza in the gutter. We make eye contact. As if to confirm what I've just been told about the confidentiality of taxis, he gives me a knowing wink as he picks it back up and continues eating – satisfied that no one else saw the deed.

In an effort to get the ball rolling, we decide to turn the taxi concept on its head by flagging down passengers instead of the other way around. The first man we stop looks startled, and repeatedly asks if he is on a hidden camera show.

Once he has been persuaded to enter the vehicle, and told that he won't have to pay a dime for the ride, his attitude turns to one of grateful disbelief. He turns out to be a reasonably sober young salesman for the LazyTown production company, and we get to talking about the future development of the show.

"What most people don't realise is that you can only recoup about 40% of the production cost of a series like this from TV revenue. We're about to start releasing the merchandise, though, and that's where the big bucks are."

Intrigued, and considering some new stock purchases, we bid him farewell and head back downtown to hunt for more customers.

Next to brave the Grapevinemobile is a

tediously sober brother and sister team, on their way to their respective homes after a crazy night of buying sub sandwiches and Diet Coke. "I'm sorry, we're boring," says the brother. "But I offer your readers this piece of advice: go to Nannabiti and order a turkey sub. Here's the trick, though: tell him to hold the pineapple. That's like, the perfect sub."

Driving past Lækjartorg around 4 am, Haflidi points out six giggling blondes playing football in skimpy outfits. "Only in Iceland," he chuckles. The next pair of customers turn out to be of a fairly typical Icelandic variety, as well: a somewhat inebriated worker for the power company and his sober friend who is a college student in Canada. "I put up light posts. I also take them down," says the drunk guy. Asked who got the honour of removing the light post that got in the way of former

**"If you were a real taxi driver, and a real man, you would pick up that radio and tell the other driver to hand over the girl. Or, you know, I could go over to her taxi – whatever works for her."**

local council candidate Eyþór Arnalds and ended his political career, the reply was unexpected. "Oh, we're gonna leave it, at least part of it has to stay. That thing is like a historical monument, a true legend in this business, we talk about the irony of it all the time. You see, that lamp post wasn't even supposed to be there that day."

Haflidi and I look at each other in bewilderment at the apparent Clerks reference, before asking for the story from the beginning. "Well, that thing was a death trap. You wouldn't believe how many people managed to wrap their cars around it without having had a drop to drink. We were supposed to take it down a week before the accident, but some other projects got held up and we fell behind on the schedule. When we finally get around to finishing the job we were doing, we get word that some poor bastard ran into the lamp post of death while under the influence – effectively ending his political career and blowing an entire council election for the Independence Party. Ooops."

On that fascinating note the conversation ends and it's back to the line to offer more

rides. On the way, Haflidi tells me about some of the things he has been asked to transport, instead of people. "Sometimes we pick up groceries for older people, and we deliver a lot of presents, envelopes and flowers, that sort of thing. On the more unusual side, we also bring people quite a few forgotten cell phones and keys, but even if we don't have the keys people ask us to break into their houses when they're locked out. I've had to crawl through windows before. There's also a surprising number of severe alcoholics that can afford to call for a taxi to bring them booze, cigarettes – even rubbing alcohol."

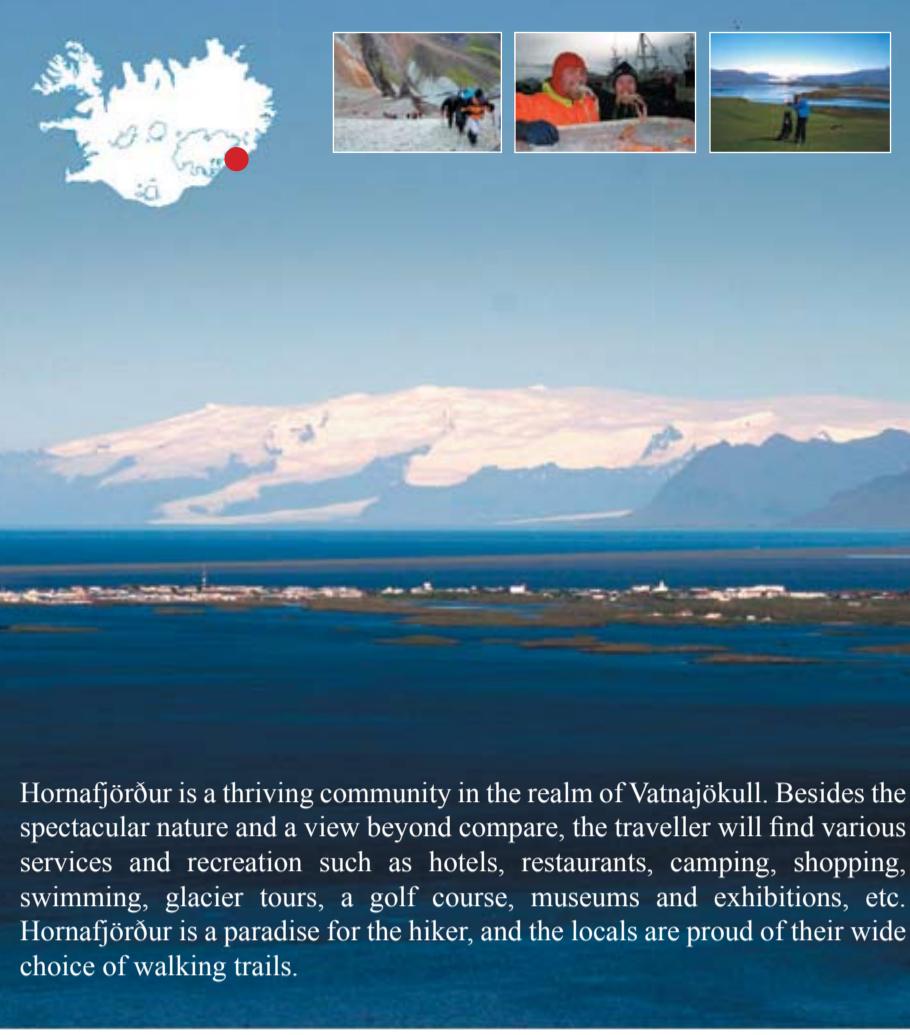
Our next guest isn't a severe alcoholic, but he looks a bit tipsy. He methodically, and thoughtfully, finishes his hot dog before stepping into the car. "All my friends are pusywhipped," he tells us in a dejected tone. "We whom you've never seen at the bars before. I'm telling you man, it's truly something to behold, and to experience."

As we get closer to this lively young man's destination, he suggests we spice up the ride, and my article, by ramming a police car that is in front of us. When we decline, he decides we're boring and staggers towards his house to get some sleep. It's well after 5 am and the Grapevine's taxi budget is rapidly running out, but we have time for one more drunken soul. That soul shows up in the form of a quiet, drunken man in his late twenties. After taking some time to think about the setup he starts to become more vocal, pitching some less than stellar ideas for the article. "See that ambulance? Where is it going? Where has it been? I don't know. That is for the journalist to ponder."

We try to turn the conversation to something a little more productive and a little less tedious by asking if he finds it prohibitively expensive to take taxis from downtown Reykjavík to his home in Hafnarfjörður every weekend. "No more expensive than renting some tiny apartment in 101 Reykjavík," is the curt reply from the proud Gaflari, or Hafnarfjörður native.

Now our time is definitely up, but on the way back to Reykjavík Haflidi shares some thoughts on the nightlife. "This was an average night, and we saw a lot of people looking for the same thing but no one finding it. People generally don't seem to enjoy themselves as much as they expect beforehand, or remember later. But, hey, what else are they going to do?" He tells me that the job of a taxi driver is a demanding one, and finding time for yourself and your family is a constant problem. As he pulls up outside my house, my final question is regarding the abolishment of laws governing maximum rates for taxis. "Nothing has changed, I doubt anything will change. Nobody wants to overcharge people and I don't know anyone that supported this move. In any case, changing a meter to raise your rates is no small technical matter, and who on earth is going to pay the mandatory 150,000 krónur fee for that – just to price themselves out of the market?"

The Grapevine would like to thank the taxi service BSR-5610000 for their help in making this article possible, and Haflidi for being an entertaining and informative guide.



Hornafjörður is a thriving community in the realm of Vatnajökull. Besides the spectacular nature and a view beyond compare, the traveller will find various services and recreation such as hotels, restaurants, camping, shopping, swimming, glacier tours, a golf course, museums and exhibitions, etc. Hornafjörður is a paradise for the hiker, and the locals are proud of their wide choice of walking trails.



Glacier Exhibition in Höfn  
www.joklasynir.is



## Welcome to Akranes

-for a perfect day at a minimum cost!

Akranes is a picturesque town just moments away from the Reykjavík City centre. You can actually take the city bus from Reykjavík to Akranes, using your Reykjavík visitors' card, and step off in Akranes within an hour. It doesn't get easier - or cheaper - and you have a full day of fun ahead of you! Akranes is a beautiful town, sheltered by Mt. Akrafjall, which is actually quite easy to climb, if you are into mountain climbing. All year long Langisandur Beach is an outdoor paradise as there is little that is as good for body and soul as to walk along the shore, soak up the aroma of the sea, and lose all sense of the daily grind in the gentle lapping of the waves or the rhythm of the surf. Then there is the Akranes Museum Area; a collection of four museums and one of the biggest tourist attractions in West Iceland, where you can see and learn all there is to know about Icelandic culture, Icelandic rocks and stones and also the history and highlights of sports in Iceland.

The Akranes Tourist Information Centre  
Tel: 431 5566 - E-mail: museum@museum.is

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

Reykjavík  
871±2

Landnámsýningin  
The Settlement  
Exhibition

# Step into the Viking Age



Experience Viking-Age Reykjavík at the new Settlement Exhibition. The focus of the exhibition is an excavated longhouse site which dates from the 10th century AD. It includes relics of human habitation from about 871, the oldest such site found in Iceland.

Multimedia techniques bring Reykjavík's past to life, providing visitors with insights into how people lived in the Viking Age, and what the Reykjavík environment looked like to the first settlers.

The Settlement Exhibition 871±2 is located at Aðalstræti 16.

Reykjavík City Museum

[www.reykjavik871.is](http://www.reykjavik871.is)

City of Reykjavík

# LIVE MUSIC



## Quantum Leap: We Did It Sam, We Saved Homoerotic Icelandic Rock!!!

By Helgi Valur | Photo by Gundi

I had seen Icelandic rock icons HAM 15 years ago at Fellahellir. I thought they looked like freaks (guess they still do) and I was actually a little bit scared of Ottarr Proppe, who I felt sounded like the devil, or should I say what I thought the devil should sound like. Maybe it's because of my acquired appreciation for the devil, but I have, through the years, grown to like HAM. So I was a little bit excited for their recent sold out gig at NASA.

Opening the night were the Nine Elevens, who were surprisingly good. Somebody called them the Icelandic Motörhead. I'll say one thing, they definitely looked rock, shirts off, etc.

On the subject of fashion, judging by the crowd at the HAM show, it was apparent that the newest fashion tips from New York and Europe hadn't registered in the minds of the people at NASA, newest meaning

anything from the last decade. The uniform was simple: black T-shirt and jeans. I felt like I was at an Iron Maiden tribute concert in Húsavík. The crowd, which could only be described as cattle in tight T-shirts, started chanting for HAM the second the Nine Elevens left the stage. I have seldom seen NASA so fully packed. Crazy fans were screaming and it was obvious that I was watching a comeback of pioneers in a legendary rock band. At the first guitar note, it was on. Glaring rock pounded on peoples' brains. I felt a tingling down my spine. O, what power. O, what mythical presence. Only a short while after HAM started, people started crowd surfing. Those not raised on peoples' shoulders got high in other ways – I bet that if we'd take all the money from cocaine sales that night we could have save a small third world country, which is partly a shame, but partly rock 'n roll.

The hysteria had, for the most part, a demented religious undertone. I can't say that this totemic ritual was contagious, but I liked HAM's force without anger. They mixed the divine with the devilish, the sex with frigidity and masculinity with... not femininity, but that male take on the feminine that we often

just call, for better or worse, gayness.

"Jæja" or "Well" being the only word spoken between songs, HAM seemed heavenly gothic, never missing a beat or a relevant tone. This was a very well delivered performance. Sigurður Kjartansson, dressed in clothes from the discount Norwegian menswear shop Dressmann, not like the flat-out bum which has been his style for many years, was brilliant, and I thought to myself "When he's not trying to be funny, (a sad day job he has at a local paper), he's actually a likeable guy."

This HAM concert was an opera, a theatre and a religious experience. I haven't seen head banging like this since the head bangers ball. I felt like a character from Quantum Leap (maybe Al) travelling back in time to change the future. The year is 1990 and Hard Rock is establishing itself as the reigning genre in music. My mission is to make HAM famous and destroy Rammstein, the retarded cousin of HAM. I provide HAM a warm-up gig with Laibach and they're on their way to fame. I snap back to 2006, I'm at NASA. People are dressed like rockers did in 1990. I call out to Al to figure out if I changed the future.

that are suddenly broken off for restarts, and that are sometimes drowned out by bass and drums? The crowd nodded, and Svavar would move from song to song, but few lyrics were audible, few chords clear, few melodies allowed to survive for long. On the fourth song, (none of the song intros were clear, nor were the lyrics, fully), a fanatical, dazed fan jumped in front of the band and began to dance maniacally. On cue, the band stopped, not to insult the fan, but just... coincidence.

At that point, Jón Atli, frontman for Hairdoctor, whispered back to me, "I love this band, they are so completely random."

I couldn't help but agree. For all the bands I've seen in Reykjavík in the last three years, Skakkamanage are the only band I've seen who are convincingly in their own world, and who are completely oblivious and impervious to judgement. They play what they want, and they stop when it doesn't work, not out of spite, but out of an interest solely in the music.

Add to that the fact that, suddenly, for a final song, they ripped out a driving, blues country number in which Svavar found his voice, his ear, and his inspiration, and screamed so that the whole club got goosebumps, at the very same time the mún instrumentalist ripped off a somewhat shocking harmonica solo, and the drummer from Jeff Who? demonstrated that he could drive old Band-inspired beats as well as anyone, and you have some understanding as to how exciting and local a Skakkamanage is.

age set feels.

It would make for good continuity to say that after seeing my neighbour tear down the house, I saw the local hairdresser do the same, but that would be a little misleading. Jón Atli is more of a superstar hairdresser, which says a lot about Reykjavík. His band, which we all thought was a two-piece forum for blending contagious acoustic hooks with drum and bass by master mix-man Árni Plúseinn, declared at the onset of the night, "We've been to Berlin. We are going to play techno, now. And we've brought our girlfriends to sing."

Dedicating a set to techno while playing for the lo-fi poetry crowd isn't recommended on too many industry books that I've come across. Nor is, of course, singing into a hairdryer. And yet, as much as I wanted to hear the Hairdoctor songs that currently dominate the radio in Iceland, I was impressed to hear a full register techno improv performance.

After the band outperformed Reykjavík! by covering the local band's hit Beautiful Boys, a debate arose among a few of us, flustered by how well Hairdoctor handled their new style – were they just able to play any style they wanted, or was techno the real soul of the band?

The debate faded when people started dancing, smiling, and stopped listening to music. At an early evening show, Hairdoctor got the masses moving, the wool-sweatered masses, no less.

**WHO**  
HAM and  
Nine Elevens

**WHERE**  
NASA

**WHEN**  
June 29th 2006

**WHO**  
Hairdoctor and  
Skakkamanage

**WHERE**  
Café Amsterdam

**WHEN**  
June 29th 2006

## How the Techno and Lo-Fi Show Didn't Disappoint

By Bart Cameron

Reykjavík is the kind of place where, one day, the neighbour that you never realised spoke English will knock on your door and tell you that the rest of your neighbours are in a band, on TV, right now.

My neighbour's band, which I saw for the first time this June, is Skakkamanage – a five-person outfit based mostly on the chord constructions of a somewhat owlish self-styled singer and guitarist named Svavar. Truthfully, I'd been curious about Skakkamanage for years, since Svavar opened, as a one-man band, for Sebadoh. Last year's Skakkamanage 7-inch, one of the few local releases on vinyl in recent memory, had more hype than a Philip Seymour Hoffman performance, and the band's evolving cast includes a member of mún, and a number of other recognisable local stars, including the drummer of Jeff Who?.

Which all goes to set up the expectations, and possibly disappointment, that drive the buzz on Skakkamanage. The band played at playing about five songs during a thirty-minute opening set for Hairdoctor in front of a first worshipful, then embarrassed, then pleasantly surprised full house.

And how does one report on delicate melodies that are sung away from the microphone at times,

## Nýhil Poetry in the Grapevine:

Eiríkur Órn Norðahl

Following the publication of a remarkable nine-volume set of poetry from the Nýhil poetry collective, we decided to attempt to present the works of this group in the original and with translations by the poets themselves into English.

Our first featured poet has been featured in the Grapevine before as a columnist and feature writer. Eiríkur Órn Norðahl (born 1978) is from Ísafjörður in the remote West Fjords of Iceland. Establishing himself with a number of collections and a novel, and with a series of well-received readings, including a stint opening up for rocker Mugison, Norðahl may be the most public face of Nýhil. BC

Tigrar eru töff  
það segja það allir  
siðferðilegur skilningur  
er ekki bjór.  
Bjór er töff,  
það segja það allir.

### ...og orðið var Clint

Öllum að óvörum  
reið haikan um sveitir  
með allt á hornum sér,  
búin beittum eggjum,  
og tók að höggva bragarhætt  
hægrí vinstrí.

Í minni pokann létu  
kynna öll af atómljóðum,  
höfuðstafnir vegnir með veggjum  
blæddu stuðlum um stríjpánn.

Kviðlingur einn um ástína  
laugði hvarma sína,  
einmana á skítugum bedda  
skittur út nætgreyða,  
lygin var megn og  
hann dó þrátt fyrir það.

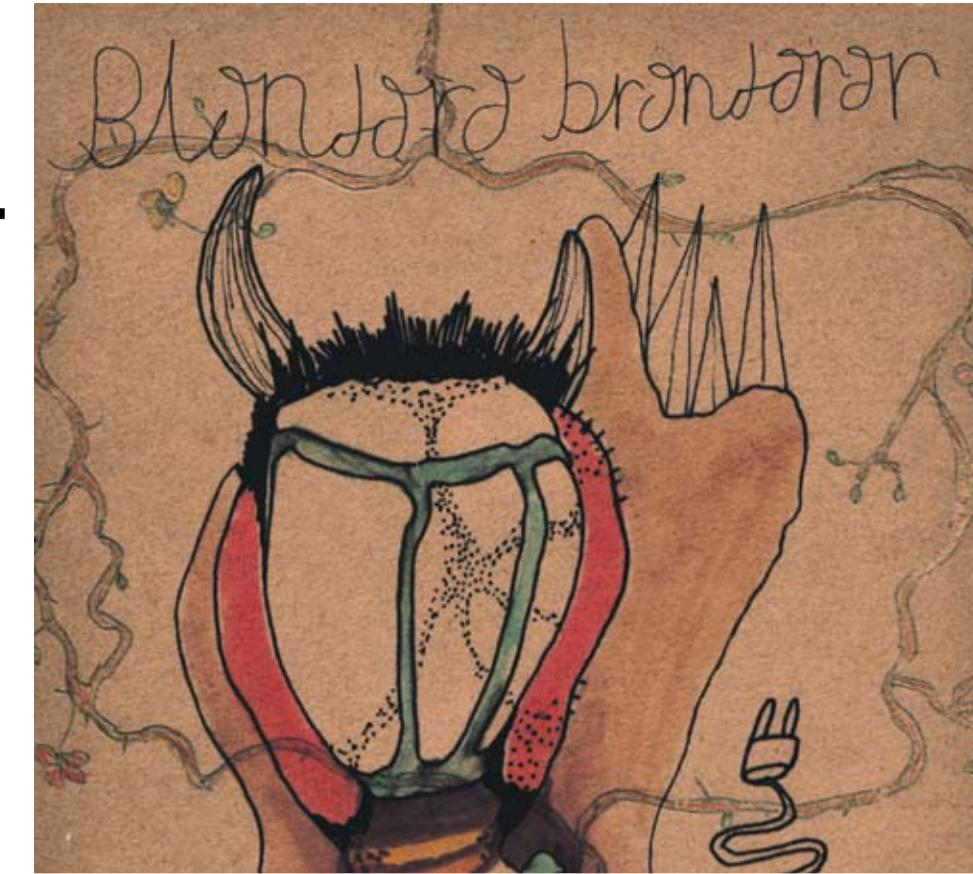
Máttugustu ljóðabálkar  
–jafnvel allriðaðum dellur–  
lágú út úr sér íðraðir,  
augljósir, dreppirnir æ ofan dagins aí,  
jafnvel þeim var ekki eirt lífs.

Hliðstæður, andstæður,  
endurteknigar,  
merkingarleysur, stúfar,  
uppskafningar  
og lágkúrur  
stundu í takt við  
gný daudans  
begar húsum reið  
japanskur bragarháttur  
með krosslagða fætur,  
eitt orð yfir annað  
af allt að því óskammfeilinni  
Ró.

Síðust fell haikan sjálf á hnén,  
rak upp stríðskevin,  
lyfti sveðjunní hátt yfir höfuð sér,  
og rak sig í gegn.

Finally, the haiku itself dropped to its knees  
roared out a cry of war,  
raised the sword high above its head  
and drove the blade through its own abdomen.

**POETRY**



In a theatre (a preliminary bill)

Tjaldið lyftist (maður kveikir á útvarpí) (bók fellur úr hillu á bókasafni) (áhorfendur tryllast stutta stund, en pagna svo skyndilega eins og hóndum hafi verið fórnad).

Ljóshærðar kynþokkagyðjur (eins og úr fifti biómynd) í ljósraðum tálkjóðum petta eru ekki mellum heldur gléðikonur í svörtum sokkabóndum hlæjandi hver að annari en samræminu (og samkvæminu) óhjákvæmilega og algerlega óvænt raskad af miðaldra manni í gráum jakkafötum með .38 kalibra fant milli fingrana.

"Haldið fyrir eyrun dómur, nú verða læti!"  
Það er óskiljanlegt, en skyndilega skellir maðurinn upp úr og slær á hné sér.

Stúlkurnar gapa og hiksta og skelfast en eru af furðu lostnar til að skjálfa. Ekkert af þessu var í handritinu.

"Dómur, ég er ekki að grínast. Haldið fyrir eyrun og gerið það strax!"

Ein af annarri fylla heir eyru sín fingrum svo neglunar (dómur eru alltaf með dulitar neglur) gera far í hljóðhimnumna án þess að skemma hana verulega.

Þegar engin þeirra heyrir lengur til, miðar maðurinn vandlega á svarta leðrtána, skýrt sig í fótinn og haltrar bólvandi út.

Tjaldið fellur. Útvarpíð dettur á gólfíð. Bókin brennar. Áhorfendur ganga gjörsamlega af göflunum, þramma fylktu liði niður í miðbænum henda stjórnarráðinu stein fyrir stein í tjörnina.

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# How to drive in Iceland

This is an advertisement

A relatively large percentage of foreign tourists in Iceland travel around the country by car. Conditions in Iceland are in many ways unusual, and often quite unlike that which foreign drivers are accustomed. It is therefore very important to find out how to drive in this country. We know that the landscapes are beautiful, which naturally draws the attention of driver away from the road. But in order to reach your destination safely, you must keep your full attention on driving.

This article is intended to point out the main dangers when driving in Iceland, especially the unusual ones that may come as a complete surprise to foreign drivers.

## What are the speed limits?

The speed limit in urban areas is usually 50 km/hr. Speed limit signs are usually not posted unless it is other than 50 km/hr. The speed limit is often 60 km/hr on thruways, but in residential areas it is usually only 30 km/hr. The main rule on highways is that gravel roads have a speed limit of 80 km/hr, and paved roads 90 km/hr. Signs indicate if other speed limits apply.

## Gravel roads, blind hills & blind curves

A common place for accidents to occur on urban roads is where a paved road suddenly changes to gravel. The main reason is that drivers do not reduce speed before the changeover to gravel, and consequently lose control. Loose gravel on road shoulders has also caused a great number of accidents. When driving on gravel roads—which are often quite narrow—it is important to show caution when approaching another car coming from the opposite direction by moving as far to the right as is safely possible.



Blind hills—where lanes are not separate—can be very dangerous, and should be approached with caution. There are also many blind curves in Iceland that test a driver's skill.

## Single-lane bridges

There are many single-lane bridges on the Ring Road. The actual rule is that the car closer to the bridge has the right-of-way. However, it is wise to stop and assess the situation, i.e. attempt to see what the other driver plans to do. This sign indicates that a single-lane bridge is ahead.



Livestock on the road

In Iceland, you can expect livestock to be on or alongside the road. It is usually sheep, but sometimes horses and even cows can be in your path. This is common all over the country, and can be very dangerous. Sometimes a sheep is on one side of the road and her lambs

on the other side. Under these conditions—which are common—it is a good rule to expect the lambs or the sheep to run to the other side.

## Seatbelts are required by law

In Iceland, drivers and passengers are required by law to wear seatbelts, regardless of the type of vehicle or where they are seated. Investigations of fatal accidents in recent years have shown that a large majority of those who died did not have their seatbelts fastened. Wearing seatbelts is especially important because of the nature of accidents in Iceland: many of them involve vehicles driving off the road and rolling over. In such accidents, seatbelts often mean the difference between life and death. It should be noted that children must either wear seatbelts, or be in car safety seats, depending on their age and maturity.

Necessary to bear in mind

It is against the law to operate a vehicle in Iceland after having consumed alcohol,

and the punishment for violating this law is rather stiff.

Iceland requires that vehicle headlights be on at all times, day and night, when driving.

It is strictly forbidden to drive off-road. Such driving results in serious damage to sensitive vegetation, which may take nature decades to repair.

Foreign travellers requiring information regarding road and driving conditions should visit the Public Road Administration's website at [www.vegagerdin.is](http://www.vegagerdin.is)

It should be noted that the Road Traffic Directorate has produced a video for foreign drivers, which covers all the points that have been mentioned here. The video can be viewed on the Directorate's website, [www.us.is](http://www.us.is) (under the English version).



ROAD TRAFFIC DIRECTORATE

TRAVEL

## Outside Reykjavík

### Stokkseyri



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## A Great Place for Lobster, Ghosts, Giraffes and Friends of Foo

The Grapevine visits Stokkseyri, the art commune on the shore

BY STEINUNN JAKOBSDÓTTIR PHOTOS BY GÚNDI

"This building used to be a freezing plant," Viddi's mom tells us while pouring us a cup of coffee after we have attended a local art show. Viddi's parents own the building, which now houses a totally different business than filleting fish.

"There is no room for the fish anymore, the art and culture scene takes up all the space. The next plan is to set up an elf museum downstairs."

She keeps explaining while showing us pictures of her son's band with famous rock star Dave Grohl and buddies in the Foo Fighters. "You know, the Foo Fighters came partying here again last year, getting drunk at the Ghost Bar while the Queens of the Stone Age guys were going crazy at the grand piano in the saloon," she continued and guided us to the Ghost Centre, located on the same floor.

A community where one native has a polar bear in the living room, some have horses in their backyard, and almost everyone knows the Foo Fighters on a first name basis, Stokkseyri is located on the south coast only 45 minutes from Reykjavík. This small village of about 500 people is renowned for its natural beauty, but more impressive are the creative inhabitants living there, inspired by the shore and wildlife in the surrounding area.

Honestly, I wasn't expecting anything remarkable to happen as we drove past Eyrarbakki, looking at the Westman Islands from afar and wondering what might possibly go on inside the large white building on our right hand, enclosed by high barbed wire fences. As we later learned, it was the prison Lítla Hraun, the biggest in the country, housing almost two-thirds of the prisoners in Iceland.

The only things I had planned before the trip were going kayaking with the company Kajakferðir, and eating lobster at the restaurant Við fjöruborðið. I didn't know much else about the village. Luckily enough, two members of the local garage rock band NilFisk had agreed to fill in the gap by showing us around the area.

TRAVEL



the Arctic terns flying around.

After my short kayak experience, we drove to the gas station, got some refreshments and waited for the celebrities of NilFisk to show up. Viddi the guitar player and Svenni the drummer arrived just as I received my coffee and after a brief chat where we learned among other things that the whole band is moving to Denmark in the fall, we headed to the Art and Culture House, (Listo- og menningarverstöðin) a large red building, hard to miss, right across from the gas station.

We started our tour by looking at landscape paintings made by artist Elfar G. Pórðarson, a famous resident of Stokkseyri who owns a large showroom and workshop inside the Culture House. Elfar usually spends most of his time down in the shore painting, the guys explained when I asked if he was somewhere to be found. I had heard of Elfar before and read about a famous painting he made containing all the lighthouses in Iceland.

"That's just upstairs. Want to take a look?" Svenni asked. We then walked inside a large room where the

concert stage.

"It is for the annual Dock Festival next weekend," Viddi said. "Then we have concerts and a lot of happenings down at the dock, attracting visitors from all around the country," Svenni added and told us that NilFisk will of course make a contribution to the festival by playing some old Beatles songs.

As we stood there enjoying the scenery, artist Ella Rósinkrans waved to us. Ella has her own workshop and gallery in the Culture House and was happy to show us her place.

"An artist is allowed to have a lot of mess," she told us when we tried to walk through her crowded workshop without breaking anything. The huge gallery, filled with wall sculptures, bowls and vases, all made of glass, were more organized. Afterwards, she invited us to take a look at her apartment, located right above the gallery. "Here I throw the best parties in Stokkseyri, just ask the guys, they should know," Ella said, smiling, and Viddi and Svenni nodded in agreement.

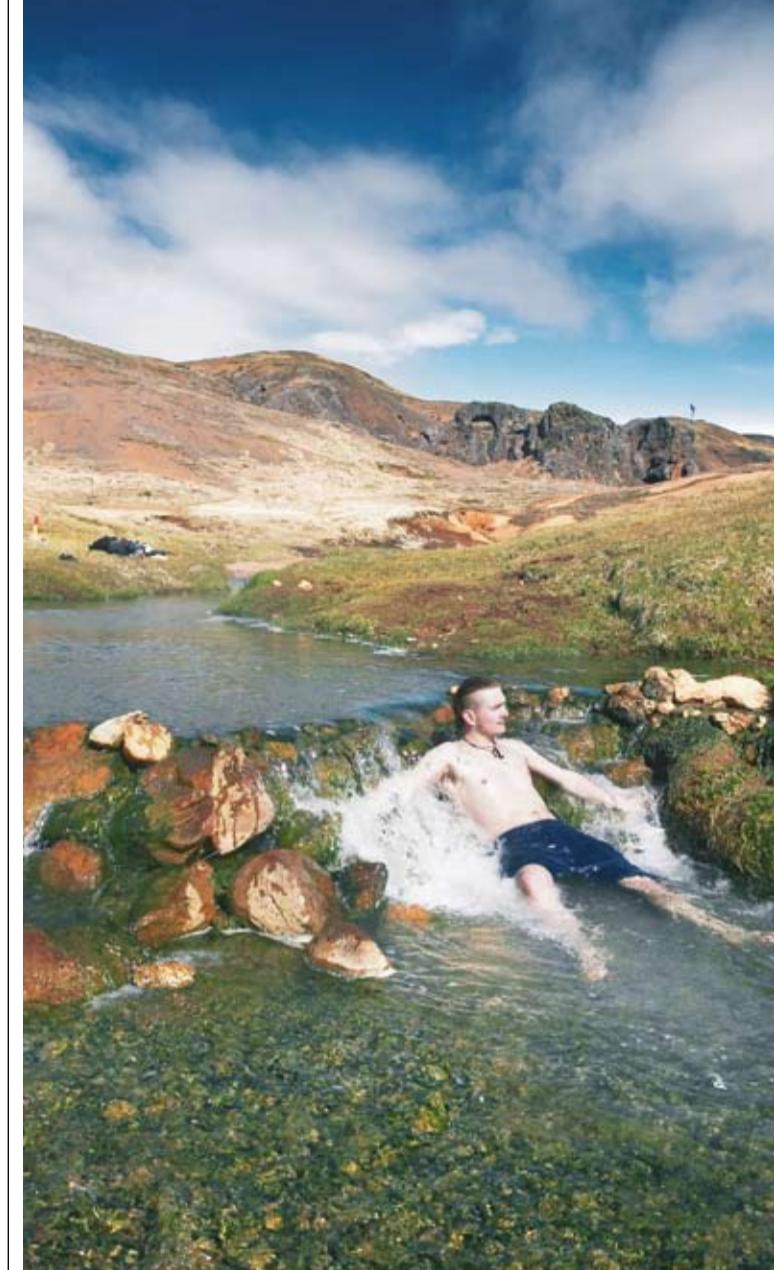
**"Hunting animals has become a lifestyle. The animals basically control everything we do, and now we have to enlarge this place as there is no room for more,' Páll said, then told us the story about when he shot two lions in Africa on his birthday."**

As I had now noticed, everybody seemed to know Viddi and Svenni in this small friendly village, and, therefore, I was not surprised by the warm welcome when we dropped in at the workshop of local pipe organ constructor Björvin Tómasson. I had never considered how all these giant organs in the churches are made and the last thing I expected was the fact that they are all custom-built in Stokkseyri, by one and the same man.

"I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. It is paradise on earth," Björvin said about his hometown, then informed us about his business and pointed to an organ in the corner. Looking very old, I asked him if it is quite valuable. "You can just imagine. It was made in the year 1754," he answered and sat down in front of it. "This organ comes from Vienna. Mozart probably played on it while still alive" he continued with a laugh and played us a Mozart song.

With an incredible view over the shore and the dock I noticed a group of men building, as it seemed, a giant

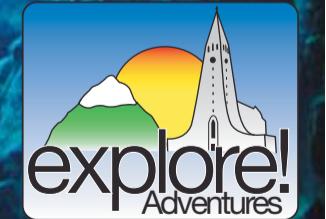
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**Have You Seen a Giraffe Today?**

We had now spent a good portion of the day inside the Art and Culture House, and it was time to move on and visit some other sites. With souvenirs in our pockets, we let Björgvín continue with his work and headed to the Hunting Museum. I had noticed the sign: "Have you seen a giraffe today?" when driving into town but didn't know by then that inside is a whole zoo of mounted animals like mink, antelope, zebra, peacock, a giraffe and a polar bear.

The couple Páll Reynisson and Fríða Magnúsdóttir own the place. The number of animals hanging on the walls is almost overwhelming. I was trying to count them when Páll interrupted my thoughts by pointing to a Ruger Super Redhawk shotgun on the wall. "Here you can see the gun the giraffe was killed with," he explained and told us that he and his wife had shot almost all the animals inside, except the 30 pieces owned by Icelandic Institute of Natural History.

The place, remarkably enough, is also the couple's home. Having decorations like these in the living room is probably not a first choice for many people. As for myself, I would probably get a little annoyed having the giraffe watching over me every

time I decided to have dinner, but it is an impressive museum all the same.

"Hunting animals has become a lifestyle. The animals basically control everything we do, and now we have to enlarge this place as there is no room fore more," Páll said, then told us the story about when he shot two lions in Africa on his birthday. By now, the clock was ticking, and we had to say goodbye to Páll and his furry friends to explore a little more before dinner.

As we drove through town to the lighthouse and walked around the area Sveinn og Viddi told us a little about how it is to grow up in Stokkseyri. "We love it here. There are no cops to annoy us and, well, no actual bars either. You have to go to Selfoss for clubbing and many people do, but we just love sitting down in the shore, lighting up campfire and playing the guitar," Svenni told us. "It is a little bit weird. When I moved over here, at first I couldn't sleep because of the sea noises. Now, I don't hear it anymore," Viddi added.

With that said, the guys had to get ready for work as waiters at Við fjaruborðið, as it happened, our final destination for the evening. The restaurant, with its friendly atmosphere, was the best ending of an eventful day I could have asked for. Every-

thing inside is so simple, the decorations as well as the food. First, you get the traditional soup and then a large pan filled with lobster and all sorts of trimmings, a portion so big the two of us couldn't even finish it.

After stuffing ourselves, we sat down outside, finished our drinks and relaxed while the sea breeze cooled us down. At the same instant, Viddi and Svenni came walking towards us and told us they had to get the restaurant ready for a big corporate dinner later that same evening. Heading back to our car, we said goodbye to the guys and this friendly village, our day in Stokkseyri was now coming to an end, and theirs was just beginning.

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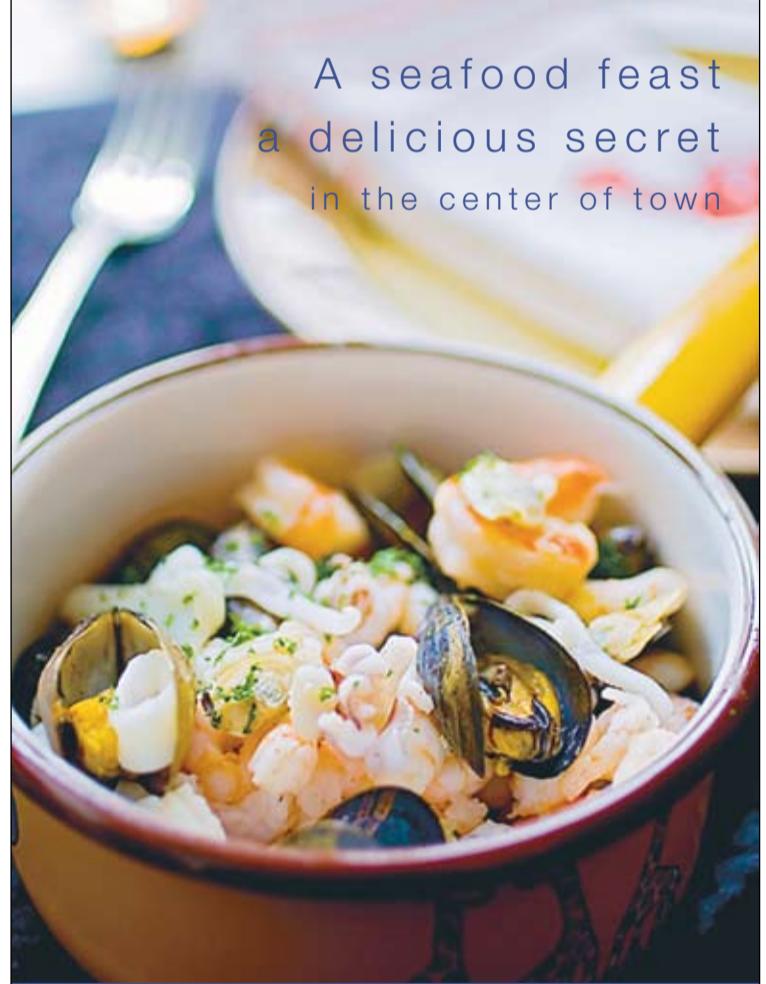
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## Grapevine on tour : Roskilde



### 192-Hour Party People

Roskilde Festival 2006

BY SINDRI ELDON PHOTO BY SKARI

It would take a die-hard stalwart of a Guns 'N' Roses fan to be satisfied with the million-dollar joke the distinctly ungainly Axl Rose pulled on his 60,000 strong audience. Swagging onstage almost an hour after they were scheduled to start, he led a handful of elaborately decorated sessionists through a note-for-note recital of their hits, but disappeared backstage after suffering some sort of fall after their first couple of songs. His helpless band then grooved and improvised incredibly obnoxious solos for well over ten minutes before Axl returned... only to evaporate again after another song or so.

It was something one might have expected to happen at some ridiculously overpriced Guns 'N' Roses revival show in a sold-out stadium in California, with halogen searchlights illuminating advertising zeppelins wafting above the crowd and hundreds of thousands of people flooding the parking lots, offering their bodies to Satan in exchange for one ticket, one chance to catch a glob of Axl's spit on their face.

But no. This was the first night of international headline acts at Roskilde Festival 2006, an outdoor music festival in a township of the same name. It is the largest music festival in Northern Europe, and attracts audiences from all over Europe, including, in great numbers, Icelanders, who thanks to their close relationship with Danes and their country, have been attending diligently since its inception in the early seventies. This year, they hosted over 170 bands performing on six stages and 80,000 guests tended to by 21,000 volunteers.

#### Axl Rose is an Idiot and an Icelander Turns Down a Free Drink

So a lot of people had come for many other reasons than to watch Axl Rose behave like a complete prat. Even though such behaviour should maybe have been expected from someone who willfully inflicts upon

his fellow man atrocities like November Rain, a little professionalism couldn't have hurt.

Disgusted with the disrespect the old man was showing the 60,000 people watching, I decided to go and wait for Sigur Rós in the Arena tent nearby, only to find that they hadn't started yet, and some incredibly terrible band was playing. Now, I hate a lot of music, but this was indescribably bad. It sounded like something college students might accidentally play when not smoking pot or masturbating to pictures of Natalie Portman... good God, they were bad. Haphazard melodies, awkward dancing, smug grins, banal guitars, unnecessary keyboards and general lameness flooded the stage and audience; they were so bad that you could practically smell the shit wafting in the air as they played, a scent so strong it almost overpowered the earthy tang of the enclosed tent.

I checked my schedule to find out who these musical toilet plungers were, only to discover I was at the Odeon tent, not the Arena, and was in fact watching Clap Your Hands Say Yeah! while Sigur Rós were on the other side of the concert area.

When I finally got to the Arena the place was absolutely packed, with the crowd extending far beyond the actual edge of the tent and into the yard surrounding it. My view was perfectly dismal, but from what I heard, Sigur Rós' show was particularly illustrious, and well worthy of the massive crowd they had drawn. Their songs practically beamed with a crisp and vamped-up energy that was well received by the largely Icelandic audience, and I did feel a distinct sense of pride, as well as surprise at just how many Icelanders had come.

The fact that they would travel 1,300 miles to see a band from their own shores seems to offer a glimpse of

huge amounts of respect and devotion Sigur Rós fans show their idols. Another glimpse of this had been offered earlier in the day at one of campsites erected by the sizeable number of Icelandic people at Roskilde. One of their fans, a girl of about 20, actually turned down an offer of free alcohol to have an untainted experience at the concert.

"I'm going to see Sigur Rós tonight, so I'm not going to be, you know, drunk," she said. The solemn silence that followed suggested many in the tent wished they had done the same.

Not many bands I know inspire people to make such sacrifices, especially at the international bingefest that is Roskilde. Everyone, it seems, was there to get immensely wasted. Even the most devoted of music lovers all had grand intentions of observing their band of choice through the bottom of a bottle... or through a gigantic cloud of smoke.

The biggest acts, such as Tool, Bob Dylan, Scissor Sisters, Kanye West, The Strokes and Roger Waters all played shows seen by well over 60,000 people, and all the concerts I saw were well attended, and it's not that

they could entertain 60,000 people. As commercially motivated as the Orange Stage's line-up was, it at least provided variety, as opposed to the pretentious genre-oriented shelf-stacking the festival organisers were pulling as far as the rest of stages were concerned. It seems to go against every principal of an open-air multi-genre festival to encourage people to stick to their music of choice, and many people felt they had done a bad job, anyway. A group of kids I spoke to were agonising over who they would see on Friday night, Bob Dylan, Death Cab For Cutie or The Streets, all of whom performed nearly simultaneously.

There were several acts which were universally

**"I checked my schedule to find out who these musical toilet plungers were, only to discover I was at the Odeon tent, not the Arena, and was in fact watching Clap Your Hands Say Yeah! while Sigur Rós were on the other side of the concert area..."**

people didn't care about the music, it's just that it played second fiddle to the primary purpose of Roskilde. The only people who go there and remember enough of it to tell you about it will no doubt tell you a sad tale of woe and suffering, whereas the people who have the best time will remember next to nothing.

#### Good Clean Fun

The music was all conveniently grouped onto the different stages by genre. The Odeon catered to the wide variety of marginal acts tentatively labelled 'indie', the Metropol was home to the various electro, breakbeat and dance acts, including at least a dozen post-show DJs. The Arena contained the more progressive end of rock, while the Ballroom hosted the various ethnic acts, with anything from tribal drum music to reggae to soul to Latin; Carlos Santana will no doubt have felt

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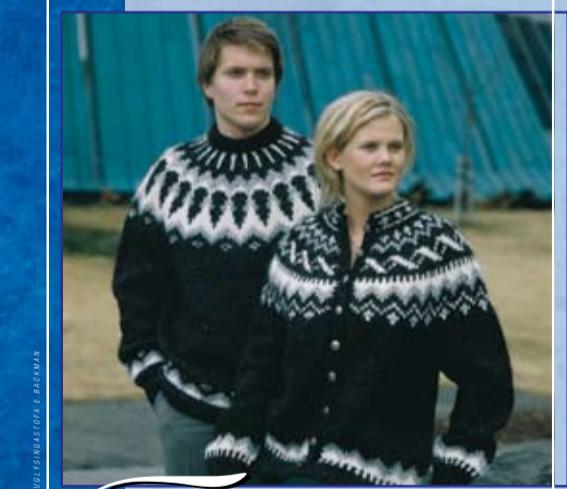


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They positively glowed with intense conviction as they soloed and slammed their way through one of the best half-hours of metal I've ever seen. They easily outdid their fellow Swedes in Opeth, whose noncommittal performance completely lacked in the purity and energy inherent in Evergrey's performance.

And although a lot of people might try to tell you that Deftones and Tool were really great, what they probably don't know is that a little British band called Amplifier did exactly the same thing they did, only much better. The charismatic three-piece and their curving, whiplike hard rock also outdid the more fashionable side of rock appearing at Roskilde 2006, such as Wolfmother and The Raconteurs, but then again, someone beating your face in with a brick could outdo them.

Which, incidentally, there was very little of at Roskilde this year. Most of the emergencies paramedics had to deal with were accidental in nature, and the only physical alteration I heard about the whole time I was there was my friend Tumi getting incredibly drunk and whacking someone upside the head with a bottle when an argument over whether PCs were better than Macs got a little too potent.

Nor was there a single reported instance of rape, a remarkable fact considering that there were well upwards of 90,000 people there. Europe's youth, it seems, found an excellent way to have good, clean fun while still taking in massive amounts of intoxicants. That certainly seemed to be the motto of Iceland's most infamous of colonies on the vast Roskilde campsite, Niceland.

A large festivity tent in the far reaches of the camping grounds, Niceland celebrated its second appearance at Roskilde this year, if celebration is an appropriate term for what I witnessed upon my first visit there. I visited the camp at about three in the afternoon, and most of the people there were still in their tents recovering from last night. The Nicelanders that were awake sat hippie-campfire-style in a circle between the tents, which had been covered by a larger tent, and told stories of varying misdeeds they had committed.

To them, it seemed like Roskilde was some sort of mammoth school dance where all the punch was spiked, another excuse to spend a week in wastoid land, and maybe see a couple of shows while they were there. Another Icelander I spoke to told me as much. "I'd say it was about 70% atmosphere, 30% music... it's just one big party, being here."

#### Getting Along Like a Tent on Fire

I would have liked to talk to that one again on Sunday, the last day of the festival, if only to see if he was as partied out as the rest of us. By then Roskilde had become little more than a shabby mess of sunburned bodies ambling about in the scorching heat, which had been growing steadily day by day, finally hitting the unbearable level at the festival's culmination. I attempted to cool myself off with a 35-ounce juice box of impossibly bad red wine and amused myself by trying to pick out who had been spending the most time in front of the orange stage, a group instantly recognisable by the fact that they had sunburns on the left side of their face only. Most of the shows were, naturally, during the sun's long descent to the western horizon, resulting in some endearingly asymmetric tanlines.

When the sun finally set, Roger Waters was piping out his pompous plethora of overrated bilge, and the ever-present aroma of weed in the air became overpowering, proving once again the exact value of Pink Floyd to a sober individual: Zero.

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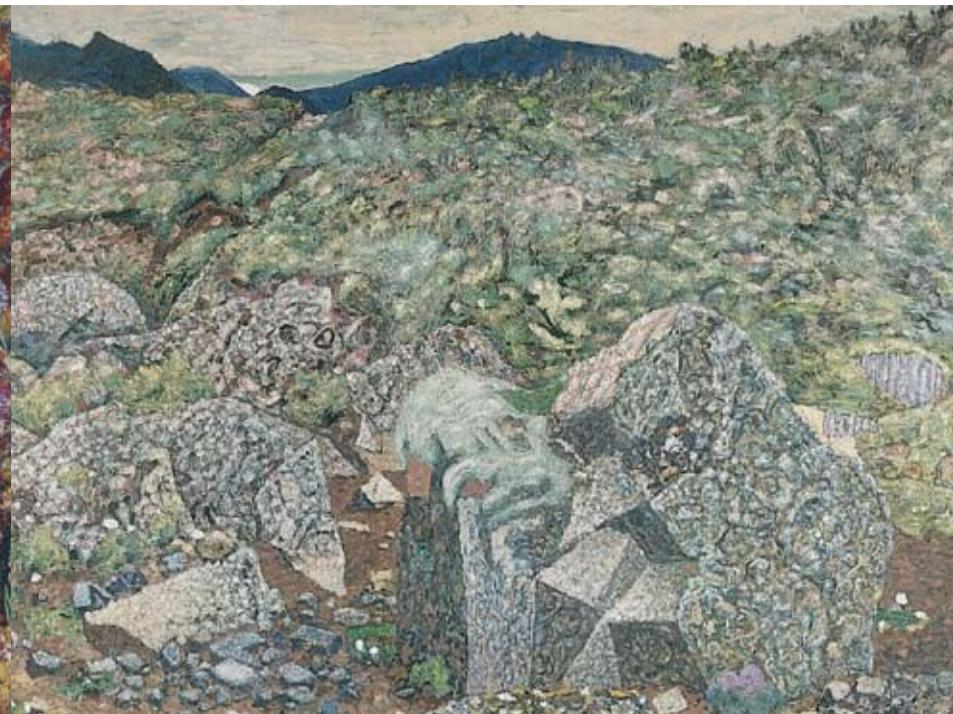
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bearing the skeletal remains of already-gutted tents as weapons and approaching them, only to ask politely "Oi mate, can we wreck your tent?"

This year, people were even more forthright, often simply running up to a tent and getting underway with its demolition without giving so much as a bellow of warning to any inhabitants that might still be inside sleeping. An extremely drunk kid I met was stumbling between two tents brandishing a can of lighter fluid. When I asked him what he planned to do with it, he just stared at me, bewildered and paranoid. A short silence followed, during which he no doubt deduced that my concern for the safety of festivalgoers and my own drunkenness meant I wasn't one of the completely useless volunteers roaming around the campsite. He then proceeded to wander toward a collection of tents a short distance away while I watched soberly, swearing I would interject as soon as he tried something stupid.

However, he never reached the tents. Another guy with a baseball cap jogged up and spoke to him in Danish before leading him away.

"He a friend of yours?" I called and took a swig of my cherry wine.

The second guy turned around and smiled. "Yeah. We just sent him out to get some lighter fluid. We're gonna burn our tent. Want to... come and watch?" he slurred drunkenly.

"Sure. Why not?"

I walked with them, attempting to decipher their speech, only to fail miserably. Like many Icelandic people of my generation, I spent most of my Danish classes doodling band logos and staring out of the window. My limited knowledge of the language does definitely not extend to understanding heavily intoxicated Danish natives discussing the intricacies of setting fire to their tent.

When we finally got there, the Danes introduced me to about five or six of their friends, who were busy pulling sleeping bags and other camping paraphernalia out of a largish, blue-and-white tent. There was a sense of urgency to them, as if they had to burn the whole thing down before they reconsidered their actions, but judging by the drunken guffaws and gleeful lustre in their eyes, reevaluation was the last thing on their minds.

With the tent emptied, there was only one thing to it. The second Dane, who had introduced himself as Åge, staggered in a circle around the tent while hosing down the base of it with the lighter fluid. A friend snatched the can away from him and gave the inside a couple of healthy spurts. Before I could ask how they intended to start the fire, Åge's friend, the very

I was more excited for the events coming up later that night, a ritual that has lived with Roskilde for some time now.

When the festival is over and people have little need for their tents, a great many feel that taking the tent back home would be needlessly complicating things. Add to this the fact that most of the festivalgoers never want to see the inside of a tent again after the freezing nights and sweat-drenched mornings they were forced to spend, and you're left with a whole lot of useless tents. And what better way to put the pointless structures out of their misery than completely destroying them?

Veterans of Roskilde had been intriguing me with tales of the destruction since the second day, recounting how gangs of up to a dozen young men had roamed around the campsite,

drunk one who had bought the fluid, pulled out one of those grill lighters with the trigger and safety on them, wavered around for a second as if about to fall over, and touched the fluid with the flame on the end of the lighter.

The lighter fluid turned out to be a waste of time, as the sudden crackle of incinerated material and swiftly carrying flame revealed the tent to be mostly polyester. Åge's friend took a quick step back as the others laughed and opened beers, while Åge, evidently the leader of the group, produced a joint. The tent needed to be relit several times, as the flame quickly burned out, but once the groundsheets caught fire, the whole thing burned steadily for about twenty minutes or so, although it was impossible to say how long we really sat there, slowly letting the laughter die out as the tent collapsed softly in front of us.

There is no escaping the mesmerising effect of an open fire on the human eye. So enraptured were we that it took us a minute or two to notice the people staring at the burning structure, and I found myself amazed at how unconcerned I was that a safety volunteer might arrive. I just couldn't understand how this was a bad thing.

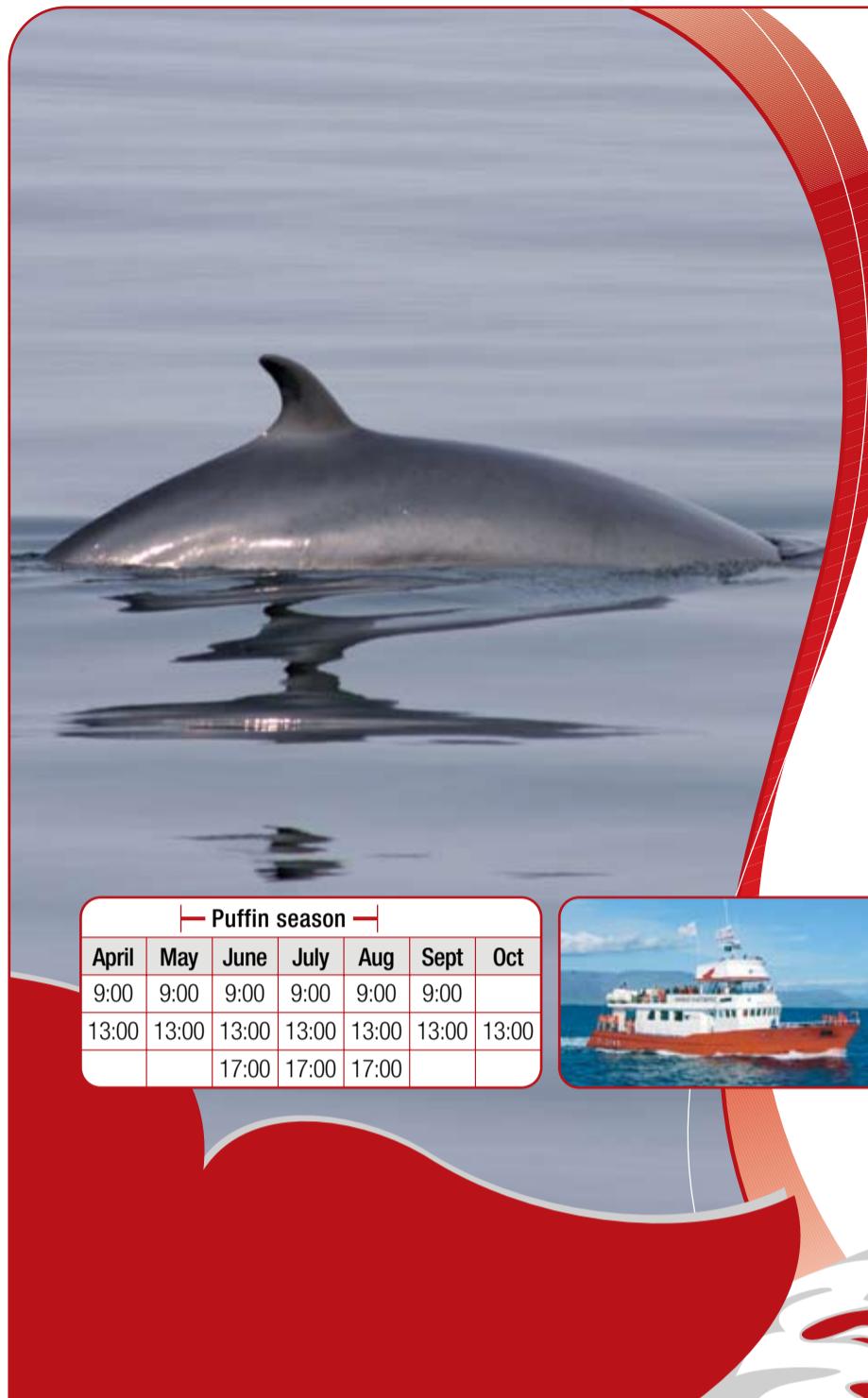
A couple huddled together at the edge of the light, the girl pointing wide-eyed to the air above the fire, where wafting embers of polyester were being tossed into the air, carried upwards by the heat. I looked to my left, where Åge's friend was busy throwing up on the grass. Åge simply watched, smiling calmly before he noticed me watching, and grinned mischievously, showing perfect teeth.

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Steve Christer on designing the Reykjavík City Hall.

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Prime Minister Geir H. Haarde attempts to justify the necessity of an Icelandic defence force.

Page 18.

**"It's not exactly easy to drop whatever you're doing and jump on a plane whenever you're ovulating."**

Kristín Eysteinsdóttir on the difficulties lesbian couples no longer face, thanks to new legislation.

Page 20.

**"The word Viking comes out a little more frequently (than the word elf), though to most Icelanders under 60, or with those holding political views left of Attila the Hun, a reference to these original settlers of the island is used only in the most dismissive of insults."**

The Grapevine's first book, Inside Reykjavík, clears up some popular misconceptions of Icelanders.

Page 22.

**"...gangs of up to a dozen young men had roamed around the campsite, bearing the skeletal remains of already-gutted tents as weapons and approaching them, only to ask politely 'Oi mate, can we wreck your tent?'"**

Sindri Eldon recounts the primal horrors people witnessed at Roskilde

Festival.

Page 50.

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