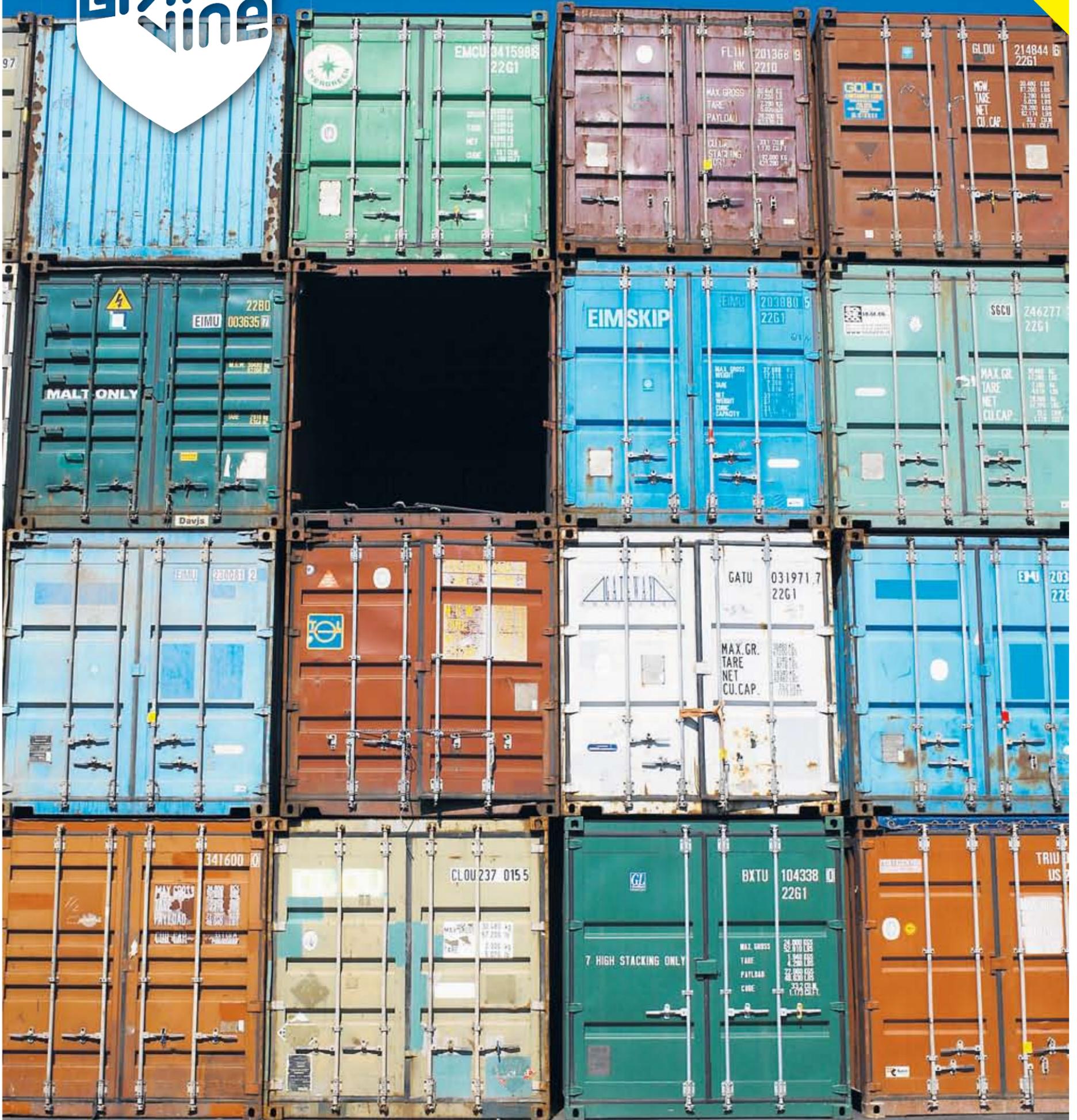


FREE



EXPORTING MUSIC

GusGus Does Glastonbury • Gavin Portland Does Ipswich
The Lonesome Traveller Does Lónsöræfi • Another Dude Does the Ring Road

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From the Editor's Chair

Issue number 61 is done, and I am off for a summer vacation. I will be back, hopefully, but at this stage it is probably too early to make any guarantees, since my assistant editor, Steinunn Jakobsdóttir, will be running the ops while I am away. She might never relinquish the chair again. So, good times all around I guess. You readers can enjoy Steinunn's work while I can enjoy summer. That is a pretty sweet deal. I am also pleased that Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir has returned to our writing staff. That is a great mid-season pick-up. I will spare you the rest of the Grapevine's in-house staff issues. Employer – employee confidentiality is at risk.

This issue, we dive into the tricky business that is the export of Icelandic music. Icelandic media regularly carries news of great conquests of local acts on foreign grounds. But that is only

half the story. Although it is great for Icelandic musicians to receive attention from outside our tiny island, we should not be so blinded by the light afar that we forget to foster the grassroots. The fact is that valuable breeding grounds, such as the music development centre TPM, which makes practice facilities available for young musicians at a reasonable price, is still struggling financially due to poor funding. The Iceland Airwaves music festival is still the least publicly funded showcase festival in Europe. This needs to change if we intend to sustain Icelandic music export.

We also look in-depth at Iceland's poor record in the matters of international asylum seekers. In recent years, Iceland has granted one single asylum seeker refugee status, while turning down between 30 and 40 applicants

each year. For a nation that prides itself of being one of the richest in the world, that record is not so much poor as it is shameful. Saving Iceland's International Summer of Dissent protest camp is up and running. In Iceland, there exists an incredible fear and suspicion when it comes to activists. I'm just going to come out and say this, since no other media outlet is likely to do that: activists do not equal terrorists. When you come across one you should engage him in a conversation. It might be a learning experience for both of you.

Now, I should probably say something worthwhile and thought provoking, but I think I will rather just go and start my vacation while you go and figure out the rest.

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Published by Fróken ehf.

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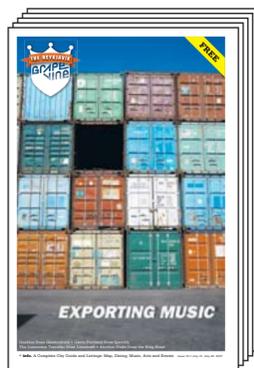
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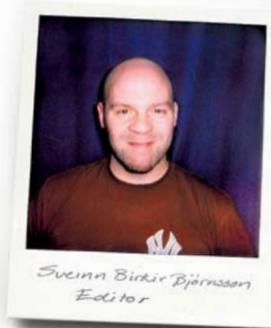
The Reykjavík Grapevine is published 18 times a year by Fróken Ltd. Monthly from November through April, and fortnightly from May til October. Nothing in this magazine may be reproduced in whole or in part without the written permission of the publishers. Although the magazine has endeavoured to ensure that all information inside the magazine is correct, prices and details may be subject to change. The Reykjavík Grapevine can be found in Reykjavík, Akureyri, Egilsstaðir, Selfoss, Keflavík, Ísafjörður, Kárahnjúkar and at key locations around road #1 and at all major tourist attractions and tourist information centres.

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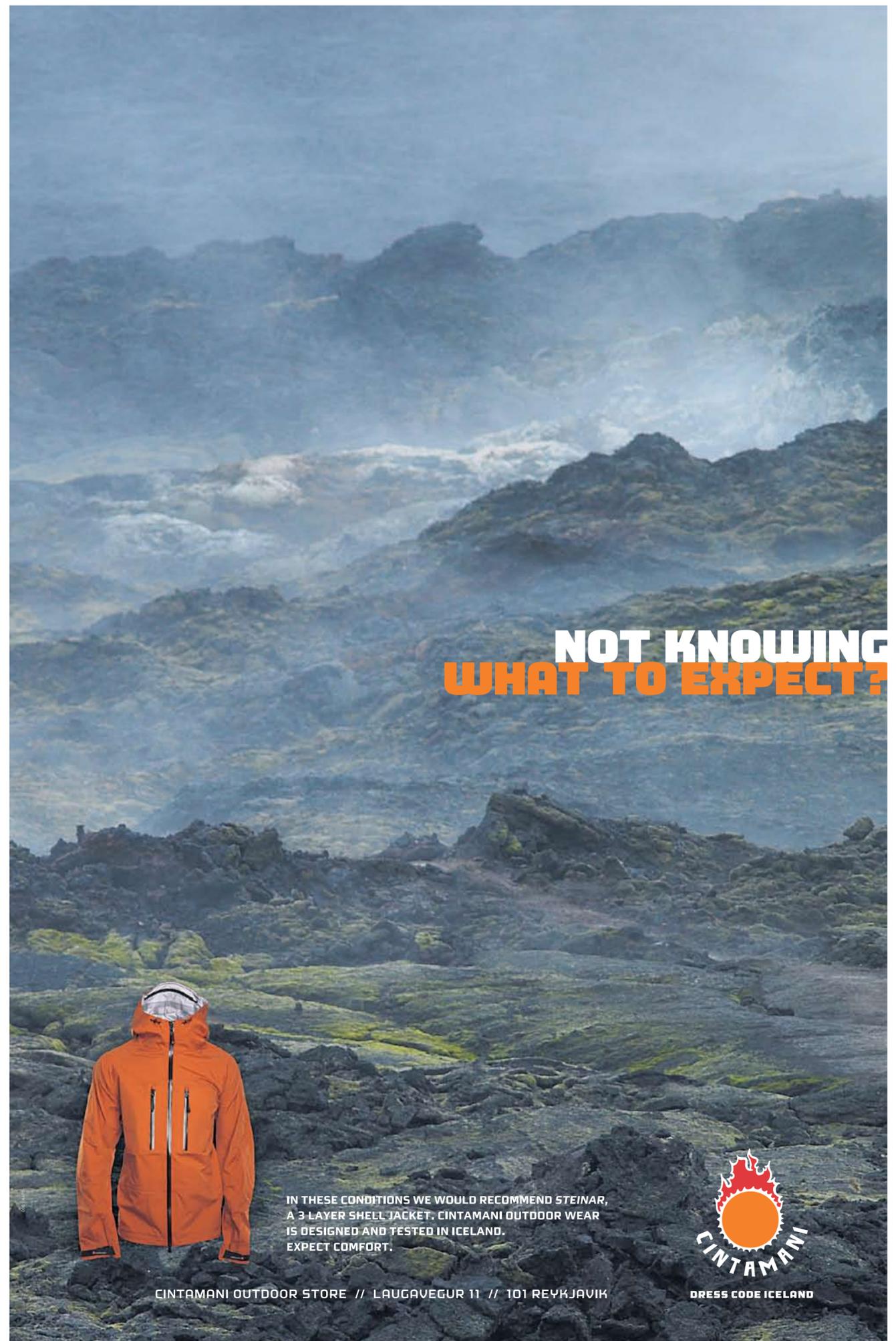
Printed by Prentsmiðja Morgunblaðsins printing press in 30.000 copies.



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Sour Grapes

Say your piece, voice your opinion, send your letters to letters@grapevine.is.

Dear Editor,

As the genealogical consultant in summer residence here at the Icelandic Emigration Center at Hofs s, I was very impressed with the article on genealogy that appeared recently in The Grapevine. It was especially well researched and balanced, and acknowledged the limitations of any database - which is something few people understand. My compliments to the writer. Further to that, it occurred to me that readers of The Grapevine might be interested in a new exhibit we have here at the Emigration Center, which turns the usual story of emigration on its head and challenges many of the long accepted clichés about the emigrants and their experiences in North America. In short, it's an example of how photography, as an historical resource, can afford many insights that are not found in books or scholarly papers, let alone sensationalist documentaries.

Regards,

Nelson Gerrard (genealogical consultant, Icelandic Emigration Center, Hofs s)

Dear Nelson,

Thank you for your encouraging words. I agree that Ian Watson did an excellent job with a complex subject. But I don't know what clichés you are talking about. Veni, vidi, vici; that's it. We came to America and we conquered. You probably have the photos to prove it, right? And, I am not sure how this relates to anything else, but it probably does, or not. Today, I received a phone call from a man who lives in Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts, and he told me a remarkable story about a stone that supposedly has Leif Eiriksson's inscription on it. True story. OK, so this probably bears no relation to the Icelandic Emigration Center, but I thought it was important.

Editor

Dear Editor,

I have just spent 4 days in Iceland and, quite frankly, your country blew me away. Iceland is, quite simply, as different as you could get to our own country of South Africa. Needless to say, we have become full-on brand ambassadors for Iceland since we returned home.

Now, this is a long shot, but we lost our Sony Cyber-shot digital camera somewhere between Eden in Hveragerdi and the Gullfoss & Geysir Express bus (Iceland Excursions). Neither Eden nor the bus company have found anything so I thought I'd see if you could help. Perhaps you could mention it in your letters page and, who knows ??? Maybe some kind soul found the camera and handed it in somewhere.

We lost all our pics of our trip to Iceland so am pretty desperate to get it back.

Thanks for your time... and I really enjoyed your publication. It's very unique in that you cater for the tourist without making us feel like tourists (if that makes any sense.)

Regards,

John Walls
Cape Town, South Africa

Dear John,

I hope someone found your camera. If someone did, please drop me a line. In the meantime, you always have the option to subscribe to The Grapevine. We have a lot of photos each issue. I have never lost a camera, but I once lost a mobile phone with a camera device. It turns out it was in a parking lot and somebody drove their car over it. That was pretty hard to take. The phone was ruined. I know how you feel. Obviously, it is not comparable to your situation. I was not on vacation and most of the photos located on the phone were of me, and some of them might even have been jeopardizing, so perhaps it was just as well. But, you know, I'm just saying... If anybody found a camera somewhere around Eden, let us know. We will get it back to John.

Editor's note: Last issue, we made two unfortunate mistakes. (We probably made a lot more mistakes, but these are the only two I am ready to cop to.) In our letters section, we accidentally cut out the name of the person who wrote the open letter to City Council member Gíslí Marteinn Baldursson in regards to his answers in a previous article in the Grapevine on public transport. That was my mistake entirely. The letter was not anonymous like it appeared to be. The writer of the letter was Ben Frost, a resident of Reykjavik and frequent (or formerly frequent anyway) user of Reykjavik's public transportation system. I would like to apologise to Ben for that.

The other mistake also regards an artist. I did a little write up on Hrafn Gunnlaugsson's Viking movie The Raven Flies. I used the name the Revenge of the Barbarians for the film. Apparently, that name was only used to market the film in the US. Everywhere else, here included, it goes by the name The Raven Flies in English. So, if you have been walking around Reykjavik in search of a copy of the Revenge of the Barbarians, you probably did not find it. But maybe you should now try again, and this time you could even use the correct name. Again, I apologise to Gunnlaugsson for that unfortunate error.

Now, this is a long shot, but we lost our Sony Cyber-shot digital camera somewhere between Eden in Hveragerdi and the Gullfoss & Geysir Express bus (Iceland Excursions). Neither Eden nor the bus company have found anything so I thought I'd see if you could help.

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On Arrogant Writers (us included)

Text by Magnús Björn Ólafsson and Jamie Burton

We maintain: Originality is the refusal to borrow anything you can remember as stolen.

No being is more pitiable than the arrogant writer who claims 'he only creates for himself' while lacking the necessary means which should enable him to spot the narcissism encapsulated in this very remark. As if all writers are not mongers who pimp their own perspective. What is the value of a perspective which no one perceives, a fire that does not burn, or a prostitute abstaining from sexual relations? As if you could write in a void, pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps. Does anyone truly believe that Münchhausen escaped the deadly depths of the swamp by pulling himself out by his hair?

In an attempt to engage your interest... We have a few mates who we quite like to get pissed with, but ultimately some disappoint. They profess to write 'for themselves' but eventually you get into dreary discussions about the very basics and feel like giving them an evil dressing down or chuck Fight Club quotes at them: 'You are not special!', 'You are not a unique snowflake!'. None of us are; your attraction to originality comes from people reading your work and pointing out other people who have had similar sentiments and abstractions – as if this somehow is an insult to your work and points scored; these people are idiots for god's sake, reactive shitwits!

You suddenly realise that these mates of yours have the kind of faces you just want to punch and that time is running out to get one in: Smartness is just a petty form of power; presence has so much more force than clever arguments; character is the source of belief. It did not spring from nothing that the Greek mythology made the goddess of wisdom burst from her father's forehead dressed in divine armour: One will always have to fight for one's 'truth'.

Writing is only about one's ego and arrogance... Arrogance, arrogance, arrogance! First comes the suspicion, then psychosis, then understanding and finally that epitome of sanity: arrogance! Love struck with the obvious: I never forget to shit. It slowly dawns on you: If you want to be a writer you have to stick to your own. Give us an 'and' over a 'but' anytime of the day, though of course you can never exclude yourself from the game of

exclusion. Why do we worship such automated parsimony? Efficiently retrieved answers that beg no questions? Occam's razor as deadly as its sharpness is sharp, the lack of plurality that is its edge – that bleatingly whispered echo: one...

Wondering about fictional ethics – what fictions should we allow people to entertain, and which should we censor? We can't stand people 'correcting' other people's dreams. There is a distasteful bitterness in the sentiment; how, and more to the point, why, do people take pleasure in others' misfortune. We are glad that we suffer, it allows us to be more human, which is to say, more sympathetic. And what gives us the right to present further fictions as the 'truth'? Wittgenstein put it elegantly and with characteristic brevity when he cited "I must not cut off the branch on which I am sitting". Indeed. Perhaps we should build a swing.

Here is a productive operative that could possibly be of use for our aforementioned mates: Instead of engaging in dull, dull arguments, try to keep your will to publish the texts alive by peppering them with wit and a sullen, dejected and wounded but eloquently sarcastic tone – a tone meant for 'others'. Convergent Evolution, though instead of involving genetics you could cross breed fictions, explore metaphors, analogies, syntactic metonymic semantic disparities that give birth to moments, raping and pillaging language to conquer grammar in all its static glory while paving the way to a new and dynamic Rome. Have no mercy. Tear it down brothers. Tear it down! Beyond left and right, beyond up and down... Beyond beyond to beyond itself. "Oh the wonders never cease when you have eyes for this marvel!"

Arrogance, arrogance, arrogance! Sorry about our arrogance. Not that you'd be bothered anyway. Columns – probably due to most of them being invented in business environments where social niceties are as disgustingly ubiquitous as the average office slaves' stupidity – seem to demand such pleasantries, so we feel compelled to say something of the sort. So apologies for the apology.

Kind regards,
"Two men so miserable that they have lost their faith and have nothing left but the cross".

Writing is only about one's ego and arrogance... Arrogance, arrogance, arrogance! First comes the suspicion, then psychosis, then understanding and finally that epitome of sanity: arrogance!

My Opinion

Text by Marvin Lee Dupree

A French poet once wrote "A gray city, sad as a tombstone with chrysanthemums". To be honest, these words might only seem like some sort of morbid allusion, especially seeing how nice the weather has been here in Iceland these past few weeks. Perhaps, perhaps. Or maybe it has been sitting inside sick, fighting windmills with my Thinkpad and pen as a sword. Or maybe you just need an acute eye. However, I decided to quote this line in connection to a conversation I had the other day. This conversation also got me thinking about the recent fishing quota debate, which I am not going to write about, or am I?

Because almost everybody has an opinion on something, you bump into stupid opinions everyday. For example, the Westman Islands' most famous resident, and their elected representative in Alþingi, wrote in Morgunblaðið that fishermen know the ocean better than ocean biologists with their fancy smancy PhDs. Slam dunk there, Air Johnsen. The papyrus fragment "Thought is common to all" has just been proven wrong. Johnsen is a classical case of a stupid opinion from an even stupider person. Yes, I said stupid. Just ask any rational person. He, like everybody in Iceland, has an opinion on something, or what some call "this and that", which can become quite annoying in the long run. Sure democracy and freedom of speech are great, they just seem sometimes to become eroded when you hear opinions that forego the process of rational thinking. Although I prefer that to the other option "In the end we shall make thought-crime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed will be expressed by exactly one word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten."

So after this aforementioned conversation I got to thinking, and this came to mind: "Go home and write a page tonight. And let that page come out of you – then, it will be true". Yes, the other day I was at the swimming pool and the conversation led to literature and philosophy. In what seemed a nano second, I was asked to name a favourite literary quote and book. How can you utter one verbatim account, like some floozy posing as the Sibyll, from countless hours of reading? My learning was shamed into a condensed form of trivial

small chat. So, here is my opinion. I hate it when "semi famous" Icelanders are asked about their favourite movie or what movie they saw recently. It annoys me for many reasons: few people second guess a doctor, lawyer or say a financial broker. But when it comes to literature, everybody wants to be a tour guide like Virgil in the murky domains of the humanities.

Although with the onslaught of blogs online, things have just gotten worse. Now it seems like almost everybody in Iceland is digitalizing their sublime thoughts on the online blog of our famous newspaper, Morgunblaðið. Before you only had to cringe at the readers' letters about the dangers of communism, immigration and numerous other threats. Now technology has made it possible in one short click for you to find right wing theologians, illiterate housewives, various schmucks, Islam bashers and others at mbl.is. Everybody there just loves to voice their opinion. However, in my opinion, not only do you have to emulate Descartes but you should always doubt your own opinion like clockwork, every day if possible. I have an opinion too. But, I am not going to rationalise it just so I can fit in with the fringe of the blogging community on mbl.is: Legalise drugs.

Interestingly enough, there has been a lot of "talk" (opinions) suggesting there should be a shopping mall in downtown Reykjavik. During this weekend I actually did read an opinion in Fréttablaðið that did make sense regarding the matter. In the article the author managed to point out the absurdities of the matter, e.g. putting a shopping mall downtown or on the Laugavegur is like putting a shopping mall inside a shopping mall. She even asks the authors of the supposed plan whether or not they would rather see the old distinguished parts of European cities, or rather just go to the Mall of America.

The thing that frightens me the most is the fact that there are actually plenty of people here in Iceland who prefer the experience of shopping indoors to culture. People with more soft-boiled opinions than sense. If they get to decide, the city would not only become grey – it would become a victim of 'base values'. A city draped in grey, decked out for its burial in downtown Reykjavik. A fitting end.

Oh yeah, in my opinion the fishing quota should be reduced to ten tonnes, because that is my opinion.

Sure democracy and freedom of speech are great, they just seem sometimes to become eroded when you hear opinions that forego the process of rational thinking. Although I prefer that to the other option.

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The Age of Global Protest

Text by Sveinn Birgir Björnsson Photo by Gulli

Attilah Springer is a journalist and an activist. She is a part of the Rights Action Group in Trinidad and Tobago, which has fought a long battle against Alcoa over aluminium smelters in Trinidad and Tobago. She recently spoke at a conference for Saving Iceland where she documented the progress of the struggle against the aluminium industry in her country. She is currently staying at the International Summer of Dissent protest camp, organised by Saving Iceland. A Grapevine journalist sat down to speak with Attilah at their beautiful campsite in Mosfellsdalur, joined by Lerato Maria Maregele, an activist from South Africa who has been organising protests against Alcan in her own country.

What brought you to Iceland?

Springer: Well for the past two years, several communities in Trinidad and Tobago have been in confrontation with the state and corporations against the introduction of aluminium smelting in Trinidad and I have been working quite closely with those communities, as an activist and as a journalist, and just documenting their struggle. Just because we weren't given any information about smelting, we had to find it out ourselves and we saw it on the Internet and discovered, "hey the same thing is happening in Iceland, the same thing is going on in South Africa." From there we started building links, e-mailing, texting, just constant contact, exchanging information about our struggles, and the similarities of what was happening over here and in Trinidad and other parts of the world. When we were approached by Saving Iceland to be a part of this year's international summer of dissent, we said: yes, absolutely. We had a couple of victories and a couple of losses in the past year, so we thought it was very important to come here and share those things, and re-energise ourselves. Connect in a personal way, not just over the Internet. Just to see the place in 3-dimensions makes what is happening even more resonant.

Maregele: As Attilah has said, this issue of globalisation, I think that is something that has linked us together, and also this monster that is the aluminium smelters and is tearing up our countries and getting so much benefits and cheap electricity. When I heard about this conference I thought it was a good cause, and maybe I should come here and hear what other people have to say and see what is happening

here in Iceland. So far, I have found out that things are just the same. What is happening in South Africa is also happening in Trinidad, and that is why we are here.

Tell me a bit about the struggle in Trinidad and Tobago.

Springer: Basically, what happened was that there were plans for two smelters in Trinidad. One of them was in a place called Union Village, on an industrial site that had been cleared two years ago. That land was cleared with the knowledge or consent of the villagers who surrounded it. Around the same time, there was talk about another smelter in Chatham, which is ten miles south of Union Village. The people of Chatham decided that this was not the way that they wanted to go. The struggle was initiated by elder women of the village, mothers and housewives, with the support of the younger men in the village. They started a petition, a call for help to the rest of the country. From there it grew, there were protests, there were demonstrations, marches, carnival bands, calypsos, anything that was possible. Whether it was Labour Day or the Environmental Day, we were there, involved in everything. And having such presence, really just getting people interested in the debate, because Trinidad is so small, we just kept pressuring and pressuring and pressuring. Until in September, when the Prime Minister said they would not go ahead with the smelter in Chatham anymore. The first smelter recently got environmental clearance, but that is being challenged in court. The EIA (environmental impact assessment) was a joke. It was done in such a way that you never get the whole picture of the real impact of the smelter. They are now going to do EIA for the port through which they will have to export the aluminium. In midst of an industrial state, in a peninsula that is sinking because all of the intense heavy industry in that area, there has been no accumulative assessment of the impact of all of those things on that community and its surroundings. For those reasons we continue to fight it.

What do you see as some of the similarities between what is happening here and in Trinidad and Tobago?

Springer: Certainly the lack of consultation with the communities, the absolute dishonesty

of the companies carrying out their plans. They come in with a lot of lies, talking about: "Yes, we will give you jobs, and we will give you this, and we will give you that," and when you really break it down, the benefits that the country, or the benefits that the communities are supposed to be getting, are minute in comparison to what the companies are getting. And the other thing that is going on with companies like Alcoa is that they can't build smelters in the US anymore because, for one, it takes too long for them to get environmental clearance, because they have done so much damage in their own land, and two, the amount of liberal guilt in these countries does not match the level of consumption. So they feel guilty about smelting, but they do not feel guilty enough to stop consuming all the goods they want to consume. So basically, what Alcoa is doing is that they are moving those plants out of their own backyard and taking them to countries where the environmental laws are lax, where they have cheap natural gas, like in the case of Trinidad, where natural gas is very cheap, on top of which, they are getting it at such sweet deals that the government of Trinidad and Tobago cannot tell the citizens for how much they are getting it.

So all of those things seem to be similar things to what is happening here. Speaking to the farmers, you hear about the same kind of lies, the same kind of deceit, the same kind of massaging of the truth that happened in Trinidad and Tobago and we continue to fight against. All we are saying is 'just tell us the truth,' and I think that is what the people of Iceland want to know as well, what is the real story? Stop trying to convince us that it is anything other than profits you are after. You are not after a greener form of energy, you are after profits, so let's just say that. And of course, the major concern is that the aluminium that is being used as means to, not just to the excessive consumption of states in the so called first world, but also to fuel the American war machine. It does not sit well with me that we will be contributing to that. I have no interest in being a part of that any further, because already our oil and natural gas goes to fuel the American war machine. I don't want to have more blood on my hands.

Is it different in South Africa?

Maregele: In South Africa, the power for the

"We had a couple of victories and a couple of losses in the past year, so we thought it was very important to come here and share those things, and re-energise ourselves."

smelters will be produced from coals, and they will be getting it very cheaply. Thirty percent of the poor communities of South Africa don't have electricity, and now that will be going straight to Alcan.

Springer: But the differences are the similarities. People in Iceland don't need extra electricity, people in South Africa need electricity, but in both places the concern is that the source of electricity is renewable and green, and not damaging to the environment. At the bottom of all this struggle is clean sustainable development, that includes communities, that empowers communities, and that does not destroy what is inherently ours. Those are the important things.

You mentioned communities without power in South Africa and the excessive power here in Iceland. Is it not better then, to build smelters here, as opposed to in South Africa?

Maregele: Firstly, why is it that Iceland has to have more power than the people need? Is it to satisfy companies like Alcan at the end of the day? I don't see the need. That is why I am saying that in Iceland you don't need the smelter.

Springer: In Iceland, the environmental impact far outweighs the economic value this could have for the country. Just look around here. I can't imagine how anyone in their right mind could see this beauty and want to put a smelter here. It just doesn't make any sense to me. I guess I am trying to understand that whole evil global capitalistic swine to see how they see this, and I really can't get my head around it. I guess in the same way, they cannot understand how I cannot see the potential of this. They see every waterfall as wasted energy. But I see every waterfall as a waterfall, as beauty, as something that is there to energise me, but in a different way. I guess this is a kind of a conquistador, testosterone... I don't mean to bash men, but this is a very masculine way of looking at the world. The world is the dominion of man, and there to do with it what we want. I would rather take my ancestors' view, that we take from it what we need, and give back in ways that we can. In Trinidad we have a saying: don't shit where you eat. That is essentially what we are doing. We are shitting where we are eating. All over the planet. I guess in the end, they will take some kind of aluminium space ship, and take them to another planet and leave all the poor people behind here, but at this point I only have one planet. This is the only planet I know.

Maregele: Yes, and good planets are hard to find.

Springer: Exactly, have you people never seen Star Trek?

This camp here is a part of that then? International Summer of Dissent, is this a way of globalising the opposition to the multinational corporations or what?

Springer: Absolutely. I think that is the lesson for the activists, especially when you are coming from a point of disadvantage, to take the tools that are being used to oppress you and turn them on their head. What else are you going to do? That is the lesson of my history. I think at this point, I have no other alternative other than to use these tools to fight back. If globalisation is what is destroying the world, globalisation is what has to save it as well.

Maregele: I think what Attilah is saying is that if globalisation has planned to divide us, eventually, globalisation will unite us.

Springer: Exactly

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Laws on Stripping Laid Bare

Text by Zoë Robert Photo by Gulli

In March, Parliament accepted new licensing laws making strip shows illegal in Iceland. According to the new laws which took effect on July 1, the promotion of nudity to attract customers to a particular venue or event, private dancing and the fraternisation of clients is also now illegal.

There is, however, an interesting exception to this law: if a strip club acquires a good report from local authorities such as the health and safety authorities, and the police, it can be given exemption from the ban. While stripping has been made illegal, prostitution was recently legalised. So, what is the motive behind these new laws?

"The main purpose of the act was to simplify the procedures in order to obtain licenses for restaurants and hotels and to reduce the number of licenses applicants must obtain," says Ragna Árnadóttir, Deputy Permanent Secretary of Legal Affairs at the Ministry of Justice. Katrín Jakobsdóttir, vice-chair of The Left Greens, expressed her support for the ban on stripping: "It's a very good step that private dancing has been banned." However, Jakobsdóttir has some reservations about the legalisation of prostitution. "We've fought against prostitution and we would have liked to see the law go a step further towards the Swedish model where the buying of these services [prostitution] is illegal because the women who are in this business are usually not there by choice. Members from all parties apart from the conservatives have favoured a law put forth by [MP] Kolbrún [Halldórsdóttir] to move towards the Swedish model. So we can say that this is the diplomatic solution," she adds.

Árnadóttir explains that one of the reasons for making prostitution legal is that individuals who have been forced into prostitution will be more likely to come forward and lead police to those responsible, knowing that they cannot be punished by law. According to Árnadóttir, it is illegal for a third party, or pimp, to organise the prostitution of others or make money from the prostitution of others as well as the renting of facilities for prostitution.

Waiting for an Explanation

During the first week under the new laws some of the strip clubs the Grapevine visited were still open. At one of the clubs visited, admittedly on a weekday evening, the music was still blaring but the club and stages were virtually empty. A lone stripper sat quietly with the bartender at one end of the bar, while the two body guards stood hunched over at the other. Surely, this is not what a strip club is supposed to look like. "We don't know what will happen yet," they say when asked how the new laws will impact the running of their business. Reykjavik Chief of Police Stéfán Eiríksson explained the reason for this.

"Nothing has really changed [...] they can offer the same services as the wording hasn't really changed. The strip clubs in Reykjavik can stay open as they are operating on their old licenses," he says. According to lawyers at Reykjavik Police and the Ministry of Justice,

those clubs which were already legally offering stripping can continue to operate until July 1, 2009.

Eiríksson says that while there have been no major changes as far as the role of the police as a supervisory authority is concerned, the laws will make their job easier. "The laws are much clearer so if something is not in accordance with the law the possibility of closing down a club, if it is not properly licensed or not acting accordingly, is clearer," he explains.

Asgeir Davíðsson, owner of the strip bars Goldfinger and Böhem (Iceland's first erotic club), doesn't seem to think that the new laws will have an impact on his businesses. "No one understands how it works. We are waiting to hear. We'll find out from the police – they will tell us what we can and can't do. But I think everyone will be happy," he says. The finance manager of Club Óðal in downtown Reykjavik says that they have received legal advice that the new laws are unlikely to affect their business.

Davíðsson has also been quite vocal about the new laws which legalise prostitution but ban stripping. "I think this is very very stupid," he says. "It is impossible for me to understand. I don't think that the members of Parliament that are making these decisions have much in their heads. It's very confusing. At the end of the day we will have to be fully clothed at the swimming pool."

The new law reaffirms that private strip shows are illegal. Prior to the new laws taking effect, private shows were also banned, but Goldfinger has and at the time of writing still does offer private shows on the legal technicality that the law stipulated that private shows could not take place behind closed doors, but mentioned nothing about curtains. "I know that I have been working in a grey area and why, [but] I'm not working illegally as far as my lawyers tell me," Davíðsson says.

Eiríksson rejects rumours that there may be a loophole in the new law that could allow strip clubs to continue to offer stripping in the form of private shows: "There is no problem with the interpretation of the law. In such places strippers can not walk around guests. There can be no private dancing – it states that clearly," Eiríksson says.

Davíðsson is awaiting a verdict from the court in relation to whether he will be able to continue to offer private dancing on this basis. The verdict is being decided at the time of writing.

While stripping has been made illegal, prostitution was recently legalised. So, what is the motive behind these new laws?



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A Story of Asylum

Text by Zoë Robert

According to Red Cross Project Manager for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Atli Thorstensen, there are currently 20 to 25 asylum seekers in Iceland, some of whom have been waiting for a response on their status since 2005.

Icelandic law states that the police cannot deny individuals who maintain that they have been forced to seek asylum as a political refugee entry into Iceland. Upon arrival in Iceland, the authorities conduct an interview with the individual and if their statement is considered credible their application for asylum is forwarded to the Directorate of Immigration. If not, the police may refuse them entry into Iceland and request that the applicant leave the country immediately.

The Numbers

In theory this sounds fine, but records show that the vast majority of applications for asylum in Iceland are rejected. To date, only one asylum seeker has received refugee status and around 45 have received permission to stay on humanitarian grounds.

According to the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, there were 45 applications for asylum and 19 applications were accepted on humanitarian grounds between 1996–1999. During the period 2000–2005, there were 437 applications for asylum and 26 successful applications granted on humanitarian grounds. In 2000, Iceland granted its first refugee status under the 1951 Convention. Seven years later, this case remains the sole application to receive successful refugee status. The UNHCR has not yet released its most recent figures for 2006, but according to Thorstensen there were 38 or 39 applications for asylum – none of which have yet been accepted.

Katrín Theodórsdóttir is a lawyer who has dealt with some of the recent applications for asylum in Iceland: "There have been some tremendous changes on the acceptance of permanent residency for humanitarian basis," she says. The changes Theodórsdóttir refers to is the reduction in recent years in the percentage of asylum seekers being granted asylum on humanitarian grounds, as illustrated in the aforementioned UNHCR and Red Cross statistics. "I have been working with four serious applications and they have recently all been rejected. The applications were considered neither to meet the requirements of the Geneva Convention nor did the authority find them entitled to stay in Iceland on humanitarian grounds, even though we hear about severe violations of human rights in the countries they are coming from. We need to speak about this openly," she insists.

Hildur Dungal, Director of the Directorate of Immigration, explains that "the number of asylum seekers in Iceland has fluctuated quite a bit in the last few years." "What has also been a big factor is the Dublin Convention which came into effect in 2003 and since Iceland is not a country which can be travelled to quite easily, quite a lot of cases are not processed here but in other countries," she explains. "Each case can be very different and therefore the number of permits is also different from year to year."

The Dublin Convention states that the first country that an asylum seeker applies for asylum is responsible for dealing with that application. The purpose of the convention is to ensure that every asylum seeker's application will be examined by a member state, thus avoiding situations of refugees being shuttled from one member state to another, with none accepting responsibility. The convention also prevents asylum seekers from "shopping around" by submitting multiple applications.

The Laws

The first decision of the asylum determination procedure is made by the Asylum Department of the Directorate of Immigration. If the Directorate of Immigration rejects an application for asylum, the applicant can appeal to the Ministry of Justice. If the application is also rejected at that point it can be reviewed by the civil courts usually on the basis of procedure rather than merit.

An appeal must be lodged with the Ministry of Justice within 15 days following notification of the decision. The general principle is that the decision ordering asylum seekers to leave Iceland cannot be implemented until the decision on the appeal has been made. However, there have been accusations by some lawyers and refugee advocates of asylum seekers being deported within these 15 days before the final ruling has been completed.

Theodórsdóttir has been working on several such cases. "In recent years we have had asylum seekers that are part of minority groups in Russia maintaining that

they are not granted protection by the police [in Russia] against persecution by violent groups. Even though we learn every day of the corruption within the police in Russia, the Directorate of Immigration is applying the speed procedure. This procedure can only be used to order deportation of the asylum seeker when it is obvious that their case lacks merit," Theodórsdóttir says.

So, is the government failing in its moral obligations towards international refugee law, namely the 1951 Convention on Refugees?

Theodórsdóttir says that when cases are rejected over and over again that she can only assume that the conditions for humanitarian grounds must be incredibly strict: "When is the situation serious enough to give the person a permit to stay on humanitarian grounds? How can you measure humanitarian needs?" she questions. "It can come down to interpretation. There are [only] a few people working on cases at the Ministry of Justice, so it comes down to them. [...] Many more were accepted in the late 90s than now. Is it a coincidence that they [asylum seekers] are [supposedly] not in need now? [...] The administration is political not independent like many people think. I think we need to have this reviewed."

The Waiting

Theodórsdóttir mentions the issue of the effect that this lengthy process can have on asylum seekers who are coming from very distressful situations. One such person is Hassan Abboud (not his real name) who fled the conflict torn region of western Darfur, Sudan, and arrived in Iceland via Sweden in late 2005. During a routine interview with police for asylum seeking arrivals at Keflavik, he told them that he was on his way to Canada to apply for asylum and that his European passport was in fact fake. Abboud was subsequently sent to prison on the basis of having false documents. According to Theodórsdóttir, Abboud applied for asylum in Iceland after the Red Cross intervened and informed the police of his situation. Nevertheless, Abboud spent three weeks in jail before being transferred to the Fit hostel in Reykjanesbær where asylum seekers usually stay while they wait for their applications to be processed.

Abboud's application for asylum with the Directorate of Immigration and subsequently with the Ministry of Justice was denied on the basis of lacking verity. According to Abboud, Immigration believes that he is from Ghana. While he has a Ghanaian girlfriend, who he met since arriving in Iceland and now has a young child with, he vehemently denies being from Ghana himself. The Directorate of Immigration also questions why Abboud did not seek asylum in Sweden rather than travelling on to Iceland.

"I don't have a passport, no papers, they don't trust me. I say if you want to help me, help me. If not, take me to Sudan [but] you can't change where I am from," he says. "I have a girlfriend from Ghana – does that make me from Ghana? If I have a girlfriend from Iceland they will say, 'oh, so now I'm from Iceland?'" he challenges.

Abboud has been waiting to be granted asylum for around 18 months now. At this point, he is simply asking for a work permit so that he can support his child. "I've been here for almost two years and there is no change. I always hear some story. I can't see if they can help me," he confides. Although Abboud gave us permission to use his real name, on the advice of his lawyer it has been removed for fear of his case being affected and persecution in his home country.

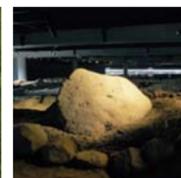
"People say it will affect my case [but] I'm not afraid to tell my story – it's the truth."

In theory this sounds fine, but records show that the vast majority of applications for asylum in Iceland are rejected. To date, only one asylum seeker has received refugee status.

HISTORICAL REYKJAVÍK



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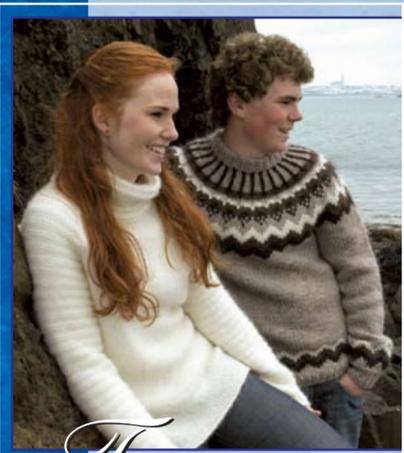
Árbær Museum is an open-air museum, established in 1957. The aim of the museum is to give an idea of Icelandic architecture and the lifestyle of the past.

The exhibition Reykjavik 871±2 is based on the archaeological excavation of the ruin of one of the first houses in Iceland and findings from other excavations in the Reykjavik city centre.

Árbær Museum and The Settlement Exhibition Reykjavik 871±2 are parts of Reykjavik City Museum. Both are open daily in June, July and August from 10am to 17pm. Detailed information at our website at www.reykjavikmuseum.is



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Outside and Off the Grid

Text by Páll Hilmarrson Painting by Stefán frá Möðrudal (Stórval)

"In the incessant, obtrusive drone of our technological age, we sometimes begin to yearn for whatever is original, simple, and sincere in existence – for anything that is genuine." So begins the introduction to Aðalsteinn Ingólfsson's book "Naive and Fantastic Art in Iceland," published by Iceland Review in 1989. If Aðalsteinn was feeling alienated from technology in 1989, I can only imagine how he's coping now. I'm guessing that Myspace, mobile phones and the whole technological grid is leaving him yearning for a simpler life – much like it has done to Miss Hilton and Richie. But he was right, of course. We seem to want simple and original things, a break from the mass-produced uniform culture that surrounds us. Why mass produced culture even exists is a paradox I won't even try to explain – mainly because I do not know the answer, and also because it would make me look more foolish than I already do.

Aðalsteinn's book focuses on Icelandic naive or 'outside' painters, profiling 11 artists. Most of them are fairly unknown to the average Icelander who never steps into a gallery or a museum. That is, of course, part of their "outsideness" – they are outside the conventional art scene. Then again it could be argued that the whole art scene is outside of almost everything except itself, at least it does not seem to be a part of the mainstream discourse in Icelandic society. So naive or outside artists truly are outside. They are outside a cultural niche, that is, outside of the common culture.

But how does one recognise this type of art? To define it is almost as hard as defining beauty – it is in the eye of the beholder and all that. The simplest explanation is that naive art is created by untrained artists: it is simple and it lacks the quality found in the works of formally trained artists. Trying to define quality is equal to finding a towel for sale in downtown Reykjavik – next to impossible so let's leave the definition like this: you'll recognize it when you come across it.

The biggest name in the naive Icelandic painting world is, or more accurately was, Stefán from Möðrudalur. Stefán was an eccentric farmer from one of the most remote farms in Iceland, Möðrudalur, approximately midway between Egilsstaðir and Akureyri. He was a colourful character, often seen riding around on a bike with his paintings, stopping here and there and putting up a show and selling his pieces. He mostly painted the same motives over and over again, the mountain Herðubreið (often called the queen of Icelandic mountains) or other

landscapes from his home tracts in Möðrudalur. Horses were prominent in his paintings – often specific horses that Stefán owned, like the stallion Burstafells-Blesi which was the motive for a controversial painting which got Stefán arrested. The painting, named Vorleikur or "Spring Play", shows the stallion mating with a mare. Stefán put the painting up on Lækjartorg on one of his shows and the police promptly showed up and arrested him. Reykjavik in the sixties was a crude town.

Iceland has produced some naive musicians as well as painters. The king of outsiders music in Iceland is the country artist Hallbjörn Hjartarson who lives in the small northern town Skagaströnd. Since he released his first album in 1981, aptly named Kántrí 1 or "Country 1", he has been relentless in trying to introduce country and western music and culture to Iceland. He runs a Texas style restaurant called Kántríbær (Country-Town), complete with swinging doors and wagon wheels. In the restaurant there is also a miniscule country museum. Hallbjörn's country music is simple in form and style. Many songs sound the same with only the lyrics, which he writes himself, changed. The lyrics are truly naive, one song details the comic book character Lucky Luke and another Hallbjörn's dog, Hugo.

It is a surreal experience stepping into Kántríbær. Equally surreal is meeting Hallbjörn, all dressed in cowboy clothes with a big brimmed hat in the middle of nowhere Iceland. He is original and sincere in his quest to bring the Wild West to rural Iceland. So are his songs and his albums. Hallbjörn felt that he was so outside the musical culture that he was forced to open up his own radio station in 1992, which played only country music, often his own. For 16 years he endured, losing money every year. Last year he gave up and moved it entirely online and, according to its web site, it receives about 500 hits a day. It is fitting that the technological grid that, according to Aðalsteinn Ingólfsson, fuels our want for simple artists like Hallbjörn, is providing the same artists with a creative outlet. Maybe we need the mass-produced cultural hegemony to allow us to spot the simple and original things in contrast. What do I know? Go ask Paris...

Check out Aðalsteinn Ingólfsson's book at the local library. Browse Hallbjörn Hjartarson's web and listen to Radio Country-Town online at: www.kantriy.is

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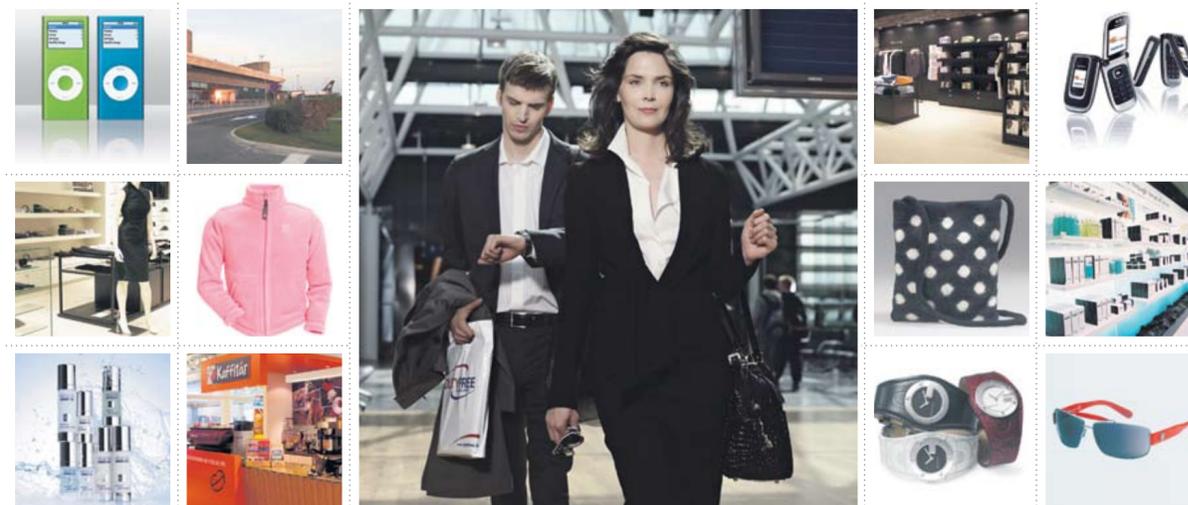
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Are We Ever Going to Find the Next Björk?

Text by Helga Þórey Jónsdóttir

In the late eighties, The Sugarcubes became closer to what can be called international stardom than any Icelandic band before them. The band wasn't famous in the same way as U2 or Michael Jackson, but they gained respect from the major players in the industry as well as music enthusiasts.

For years Icelandic bands had tried and failed. The extremely popular sixties-band Hljómur called themselves Thor's Hammer in their failed search of international fame. The late-seventies saw the much talked about disco installation, Change, but they never found the success they were looking for. Many others tried but most didn't even get close. The ones who did, notably the fusion band Mezzoforte, didn't get close enough.

After the breakthrough of Björk in the early nineties, Icelandic musicians realised that being from Iceland did not necessarily mean that it was harder to gain recognition. The mid- and late-nineties saw an innovative landscape of talented young men and women reaching out for the stars that had eluded them for so long. With Sigur Rós, the music scene of Iceland broke even further into the sphere of underground music and finally it was safe to say that Iceland was on the map. Others had some success; Múm and Bang Gang found their place in international markets and the same can be said of the popular techno band Gus Gus.

Looking to further the country's reputation abroad in the new millennium, the music festival Iceland Airwaves became an important meeting point for everyone interested in the music the country has to offer. But what has happened since the early '00s? Is Icelandic music getting ahead the same way as it did before? Is the drive the same now as it was only a few years ago?

The Professionals: In It for the Long Haul

Some bands have found a small market and chosen to stick to it. They are not looking to conquer the world in the same way a newcomer would. But if it happens – it'd be a great bonus. Nevertheless, they are not serious contenders to Björk's throne – at least not for now. But all of them have something that has granted them longevity.

Gus Gus have been around for more than ten years. They've found their scene and therefore know where they can find their fans. They've toured religiously and have a strong fan base throughout Europe, even if they started out as a pop band – not a dance act. Gus Gus is a band that understands its limitations and doesn't try to be anything other than a disco oriented techno band. That way they can survive as long as they care to cater to their fans as well as they do. Musically they are good, their sound is impeccable and most certainly their own despite a shift in style.

Bang Gang is another example of a band that knows its audience. Playing easy going chamber pop without letting current flavours interrupt the sound is working for the band. The same can be said about Singapore Sling and other bands that have embraced a strong but particular sound. They are not out for world domination; they'd rather play for their crowd without having to be something they are not.

Múm is one of the bands that has found the most success abroad, but they have changed a lot since their critically acclaimed *Finally We Are No One* (2002). Their sound has evolved with new members and their long awaited fourth studio album will be released this fall. What the new line-up has to offer is an unanswered question.

Where is the Original Sound?

While watching a newcomer on stage or listening to new music at home, I can't help wondering where and when I get to hear a new original sound. An original sound was what Björk and Sigur Rós brought to the scene a few years back. The main reason for their notoriety is their originality. Björk's success resulted in a period of blooming creative freedom and for a short while a window opened for bands that had just that. We saw artists like Emilianna Torrini, Sigur Rós, Gus Gus and Múm flourish because originality became popular.

The music business of today has become so money driven that only a few executives are connected to what should be an artistic exploration of sound. Many prefer to sell their certain 5000 copies and call it a day. Originality is not celebrated in the same way it was ten years ago. This is evident when looking at decent but unoriginal bands like Nylon, who are being groomed for international success, without any luck as of yet.

Thankfully, I'm convinced the cultural climate will change again, as it always does. One day some artist or a band will struggle against all odds and then burst on to the scene sounding like no one else before them. And we will give them the standing ovation they deserve – that is, if we're keen enough to realise they've arrived.

An original sound was what Björk and Sigur Rós brought to the scene a few years back. The main reason for their notoriety is their originality.

Iceland Airwaves: Serving Their Purpose

When taking part in a music festival like Iceland Airwaves, as someone who's a part of the music industry, you realise that there are international journalists waiting for the next Björk to happen. Magazine writers, record executives and television crews are scouting the venues in their search for the next big thing. The city sizzles with people running between different locations, listening to music and interviewing anyone who they feel might be it. Many of the international artists that play at the festival have been successful. Some have played here as relatively unknown bands in October but by spring have become international stars. A good example is the band Hot Chip, but they enjoyed considerable popularity in Iceland before the rest of the world acknowledged them. Whether it's because of Iceland Airwaves is not clear, but I feel confident that bands like Hot Chip would never have been picked to play here if there wasn't a certain something to them.

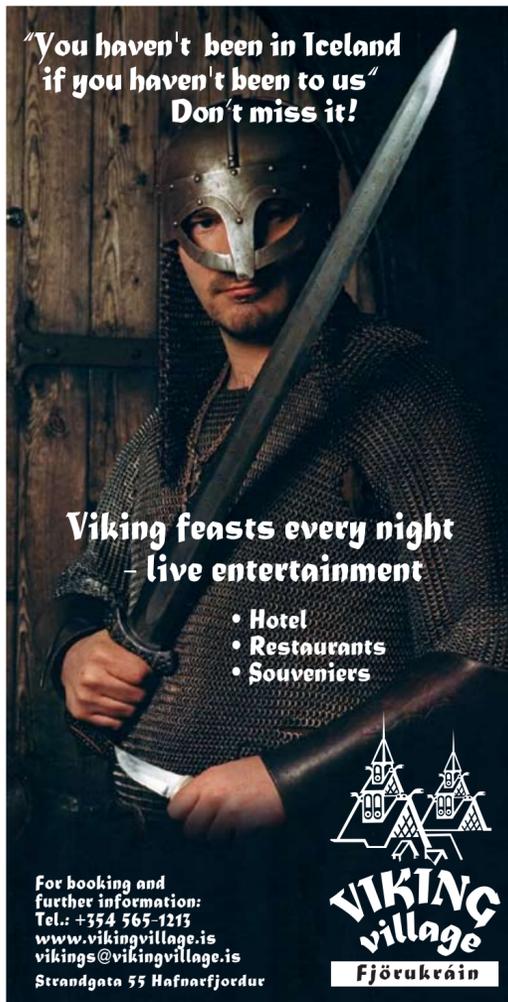
The Icelandic bands are, however, not making particularly big waves now. Many of them are very skilled musicians, others have the look and the attitude, but it doesn't seem to matter. Yes, I know, some of them get gigs in other countries, but let's face it – they aren't becoming the next Björk or anything close to her widespread popularity.

One of the bands that has gotten serious attention is Jakobínarína. They play fun rock and roll, not too complicated and never boring. They are certainly no innovators in music but they're not trying to be. Many others have generated a buzz but their music never seems to reach the ears of the crowd that might embrace them properly. Mínus is a good example of this. A fantastic band with a strong presence but they never found the right market for their music – at least not the market that would buy their albums in the serious amounts I believe they are capable of selling.

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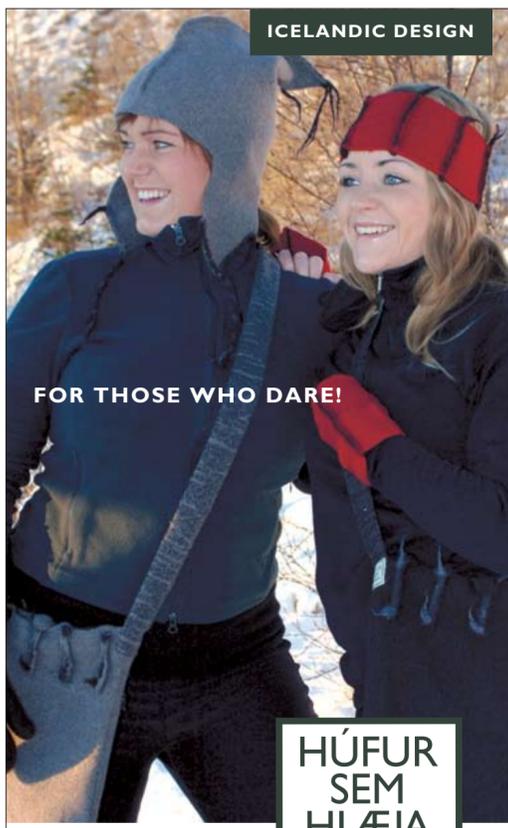
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“We have done something different, and started taking our guests to walk on glacial tongues, among caves and crevasses, making them touch and feel the ice not where it is clad in snow, but blue and hard – quite a unique experience.”

Mountain Pioneers

Text by Fabrizio Frascaroli

When I first scheduled an interview with Icelandic Mountain Guides (IMG), my intention was simply to direct the spotlight on one of the most active and innovative operators in the local travel and outdoor industries. Little did I expect that the conversation would insistently turn to dams, power plants, sustainable development and industrialisation, which could easily have resulted in another piece about environmental issues in Iceland.

And yet, in retrospect, this was perhaps an inevitable development, since pairing keen ecologic sensibility with the economic fruition of the country's natural resources has been one of the cornerstones of IMG's operation since the beginning. "It is pretty fulfilling when we can use our interest and concern for the surroundings as a way to promote our activities: quite surprisingly, a rigorous environmental policy and marketing go very well together," says Hjörleifur Finnsson, one of the founders and current owners of the company, with a smile on his weathered face.

To my surprise, the history of IMG is a fairly long one, dating as far back as the 1990s: "We began our adventure fourteen years ago" he tells me as I hide my curiosity (and ignorance) behind a cup of coffee. "At first, we were just four guides. We already had ten years of experience in the field behind us. We thought that it would be interesting to offer more challenging activities than what was available on

the market. We introduced new destinations, and put more focus on pure mountaineering." Through the years, this has led to a highly diversified range of options, including multi-day backpacking tours, training courses (both for guides and ordinary clients), and mountaineering operations.

"The day-tours and our glacier walks are the fields where we expect to grow most in the near future. They are already becoming increasingly popular, not least thanks to mouth-to-mouth reputation" says Elin Sigurðardóttir, General Manager of IMG who is equally enthusiastic when it comes to talking of outdoors and guiding. Last April IMG hit the news for winning the first ever Pioneer Award, a recognition conferred by Icelandair on companies particularly deserving for their accomplishments in the tourism industry.

When I ask for further details on such a prestigious achievement, Hjörleifur explains that the praise was assigned precisely in virtue of their efforts to take people onto the country's glaciers: "You see, there are already plenty of operators offering snowmobile tours on snow-covered glaciers. We have done something different, and started taking our guests to walk on glacial tongues, among caves and crevasses, making them touch and feel the ice not where it is clad in snow, but blue and hard – quite a unique experience. In the long term, our choice for innovation is paying off.

And considering all the glaciers and the endless opportunities we have here in Iceland, this is something that should be done more and more in the coming times."

Tourists as an Industry

As a well-established and award-winning enterprise, the future might appear bright for a company like IMG. Iceland is still going through an unprecedented tourist boom, figures indicate a steady increase. This summer alone, I am told, IMG expect to offer services to nearly 10,000 people, with around 70 guides located in various places. And yet, the atmosphere becomes heavier and tenser as we touch on the subject of the times ahead. It is Elin who finally breaks the silence.

"What we are facing now is a generalized environmental issue, forcing us to daily confront ourselves with the world of politics. A number of new dams and geothermal power plants are scheduled to be erected within the next years. One, for example, will be in the Laki region, in the south of the country: an area that has historically been vital for us, as we have employed it for some of our best tours, as well as for educational purposes. Now we don't know what will become of it. It is quite a serious situation." Hjörleifur puts it down even more dramatically: "Yes, these are life-threatening policies for a company like ours, not to mention for tourism in Iceland as

a whole, as the country's image abroad will come out heavily spoilt because of all this."

The conversation has suddenly become passionate and grave – much more so than I had anticipated, anyways. I cannot help feeling sympathetic, although some scepticism keeps bothering me underneath. The thought of seeing economic development in Iceland relying mostly on "green" and environmental-friendly tourism is clearly appealing. I wonder, however, whether in the long run the overcrowding of the island and an excessive commoditisation of its wildernesses would not equally lead to some kind of ecological havoc – the very outcome it was intended to avert.

Hjörleifur promptly stands to counter my doubts. "It is true that the tourist population has risen exponentially, up to 300.000 per year, which is more than the permanent inhabitants of the country, but we are still extremely far from saturation. Other resorts, such as the ones in Nepal or New Zealand, have been growing much more quickly than us... or take the mountainous region of Chamonix in France, which is hosting 700.000 visitors at any time of the year. What we need to do is actually to make Iceland a bit larger, to establish more names. We have so many pearls around us, so many magnificent areas still undiscovered by the main tourist flow. We should try to bring more and more people there, rather than to keep concentrating them in Landmannalaugar or the Golden Circle. If we do that, then we can still have sustainable growth in the tourism industry for many years to come.

Hjörleifur may well be right, but a political majority in the country still does not seem to agree, and remains inclined to rely on harnessing projects and forced industrialisation in order to maintain the high consumption standards that characterise Icelandic society. The debate is left open, the future uncertain. For the meantime, the guiding principle for the adventure- and outdoor-minded should be precaution: go out there and enjoy the wild and unscathed landscapes of Iceland, as long as they are as such.

For further information, visit www.mountain-guide.is

Icelandic Folk Legends

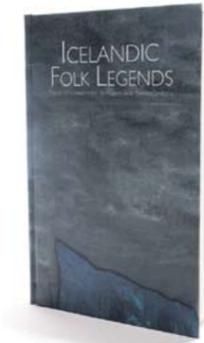
Text by Tobias Munthe

If the recent reprinting of Alda Sigmundsdóttir's Icelandic Folk Legends is anything to go by, Jarvis Cocker has started something. Much like the Pulp frontman's recordings of Icelandic stories on his 'Jarvspace' page last year, this short collection of folk tales is a fascinating introduction to Icelandic myth for the uninitiated anglophone. Fascinating and confounding in equal measure.

The most common response to Jarvis' readings was disbelief (that he should be reading Icelandic stories at all) and then confusion (at the lack of coherent 'lesson' or 'moral' in the stories he chose). As a non-Icelander, reading Icelandic Folk Legends for the first time – of trolls kidnapping humans, of pastors haunting their wives-to-be, of witches flying to Satanic gatherings, of sheep-rustling and flying bulls – is a sometimes mystifying experience and raises many questions, as much because of form as content. Beyond the unfamiliarity of humans living inside hills or witches flying on jaw-bones instead of broomsticks, rare are the happy endings, frequent are the shifts in focus, and it often feels as though vital story elements are missing, or unexplained. These are essentially accounts of strange happenings, in specific (usually real) places – fantastical anecdotes, rather than structured parables or fairytales. And the feel is very much of tales plucked straight from the oral folkloric tradition that have been passed on, embellished, revised and developed through many generations.

Icelandic Folk Legends is a vivid portrait of pre-20th century Iceland – as much in terms of living conditions and landscape as of imagination, values and belief. Part of its appeal is that the tales spring from the magical imagination that Iceland's varied and unforgiving landscape inspires. Beyond that, however, the questions they raise offer a fascinating window onto the values espoused by close-knit, rural communities as they struggle with the natural and supernatural forces that threaten their everyday lives. Each tale speaks to deep psychological issues – whether it be the lust for power (in Þorgeir's Bull), loss and humiliation (The Vanished Bride), betrayal (Hagríðen), the trickeries of the Devil (Satan Takes a Wife), fear of ghosts (The Deacon of Myrká Church), or the benevolence of the supernatural (The Outlaw on Kiduvallafjall Mountain) – but at the heart of each of these adventures lie the human choices that dictate outcomes.

Among the many functions of myth/legend/folk tale is the impulse to educate: Whether this be factual, ethical or both. Of course, the desire to entertain is paramount too but if we are to assume that legend finds its principal audience in children, then story is often the sugar-coating that surrounds the trickier moral imperative. Stories teach us (children and adults alike) about choice. From Aesop through La Fontaine to Zen koans and the Brothers Grimm, we find fantastical tales that suggest modes of behaviour in response to particular situations/circumstances. We are called upon, as children and later as adults, to puzzle out their ethical scope, their meaning, and in so doing to make these stories our own. The stories collected here offer information – how places came to be formed or named – as well as a rich trove of human experience in the face of often astonishing adversity. There is much to be enchanted by here and there is much to be learned. Perhaps Jarvis's fans should look a little closer.



Icelandic Folk Legends: Tales of Apparitions, Outlaws and Things Unseen

Translated by Alda Sigmundsdóttir, (Bjartur – Reykjavík, 2007)

Nesjavellir: Experience Nature at Reykjavik's Doorstep

The area surrounding the geothermal power plant at Nesjavellir is a region of spectacular nature within easy reach of Reykjavik, accessible to hikers and other nature lovers. A visit to the power plant itself is also a revealing experience.

Reykjavik Energy has put much effort into making the area accessible to visitors by providing marked paths, information signs, cabins, and maps. The visitor centre is open this summer on Mondays through Saturdays from 9:00 to 17:00 and on Sundays from 13:00 to 18:00.



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"I have never been in the business of exporting Icelandic music. I have made music and I have performed in other countries. It has always been a basic element in Icelandic music that you need to go abroad to play to reach new audiences."

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir Photo by Gulli

The Icelandic music industry may be small, but the local scene is vibrant. Icelandic artists have repeatedly proven that worldwide success is possible, the Sugarcubes, Björk, Sigur Rós, GusGus, Quarashi and múm are good examples.

The scene has grown steadily since the eighties, and an increasing number of bands play at international festivals and tour extensively around the world. Local music events are gaining worldwide attention. The environment is more favourable now than ever before and efforts have been made in recent years to strengthen the music trade. The Reykjavík Loftbrú travel fund, sponsored by the City of Reykjavík and Icelandair, and the establishment of the Icelandic State Music Fund in 2005 can be named as relatively new projects aimed at supporting the scene, locally as well as internationally. The Trade Counsel of Iceland has also increased its cooperation, most recently by establishing the Icelandic Music Export Agency.

But, is there something still missing? If the goal is to create a thriving industry that can be profitable for the artists and the country's economy, should we perhaps look inwards, instead of outwards? The Grapevine contacted several insiders to see what conditions need to be met to boost the industry and make Iceland a serious music exporter, and found out that while steps have been taken to help artists reach larger audience, less has been done to foster the grassroots.

Icelandic Music Export

"I think that there are plenty of opportunities in exporting Icelandic music. The Sugarcubes, Björk, Sigur Rós and Emiliana Torrini have all proved that in the past. We also have many fine producers that are quite successful and today there are about 20 to 30 bands and musicians that are succeeding in some way or another and are moving on to bigger territories. Here I can for example mention Trabant, Jakobinarína, Lay Low, Garðar Cortes, Sign, Amiina and Reykjavík!. The scene seems to be pretty strong and its fan base is steadily growing, which can be seen by how many individuals want to work with us and help promote Icelandic music," says Anna Hildur Hildibrandsdóttir, the managing director of the Icelandic Music Export.

Established in November 2006, The Icelandic Music Export (IMX) is a newly founded partly governmentally funded body initiated by Samtönn (a joint copyright organisation for authors, performers and producers), the Trade Counsel of Iceland, privately sponsored by Landsbankinn Bank. Its goal is to be a service centre for musicians and industry members by providing investors and media personalities with access and information on the music scene. The office supports musicians with connections and resources and collaborates with event organisers, attends and hosts conferences and organises artist participation at international showcase festivals – all with the aim of promoting Icelandic music, festivals and music labels abroad.

Hildibrandsdóttir has copious experience working within the industry. She started as a manager for Bellatrix in 1998 and later became a PR representative for the Iceland Airwaves festival in Europe, set up and managed the UK branch of record label Smekkleysa (Bad Taste) as well as managing various music related projects in Reykjavík and London.

"When I started in the business, The Sugarcubes and Björk had been so popular that I was certain that the hype would soon decline, but the interest is massive and has only been increasing. [...] Compared to ten years ago, there are more investors supporting musicians today, the private companies have increased its funding and artists today are provided with more information and contacts. The Reykjavík Loftbrú project has been successful and the State Music Fund has in many ways worked out well, but certain aspects could be scoped for development. No one said it would be easy. It all comes down to getting the right support at the right time, use the opportunities and strengthening the network."

Here comes Iceland!

As a former Sugarcubes member, co-founder of record label Smekkleysa and one-half of the experimental electro band Ghostigital, Einar Örn Benediktsson has been a leading figure in the local music scene for much longer than most of his peers. When asked about the export of Icelandic music he replies:

"I have never been in the business of exporting Icelandic music. I have made music and I have performed in other countries. It has always been a basic element in Icelandic music that you need to go abroad to play to reach new audiences. I have nothing to say about the Icelandic Music Export in particular, but it is probably good to have an office that distributes information."

He goes on to say that the environment today is completely different than when the Sugarcubes were branching out:

"A lot of pioneering work has been done to make it easier to play in foreign countries. It no longer requires the difficulties that it used to entail. Also, transportation is easier, people are not afraid to try to break new ground. It is a different culture; Icelandic musicians know they are on par with what is going on in other countries."

Although newly established, the Icelandic Music Export has arranged trips and presentations at large showcase festivals and music markets in two continents, such as MIDEM in Cannes, Great Escape in Britain, SXSW in Austin, Texas, SPOT in Denmark, Eurosonic in Holland and ByLarm in Norway where Reykjavík!, Lay Low, Pétur Ben, Amiina, Jakobinarína and Benni Hemm Hemm have been among the performers. The next project is organising a country stand and an extensive promotion at the PopKomm industry fair taking place in Berlin in September, where Lay Low is already scheduled to play.

The purpose of these fairs is to present new talent with the hope of being discovered by promoters, distributors or booking agencies. Icelandic acts are well received, Hildibrandsdóttir tells me, but turning that into something fruitful requires patience and takes years of hard work.

"Of course it won't happen with one showcase. But what I can say is that the bands are being noticed and we see a good turnout at the concerts most of the time. Afterwards, it's a question of continuity, and that's what this office is trying to do, to support the bands to move on and make one thing lead to another."

Kári Sturluson, manager for Lay Low, Ampop and Mínus, has attended several of these trade festivals, in particular with Lay Low. He agrees that these showcases can be a good start for those reaching out for new opportunities. After Lay Low released her debut, Please Don't Hate Me, last October, she played at the Iceland Airwaves festival. That led to an invite to MIDEM and from there to ByLarm and Great Escape, after which she played in the U.S. and was offered to tour Britain at the end of the year, fully sponsored by the Contemporary Music Network (CMN) in the UK.

"Opportunities like these come along because the artist has played on a regular basis. It isn't enough to perform just once in a while. What is fortunate [with Lay Low] is that things have been going well in Iceland, not only in radio programs and record sales but also in ticket sales. The profits of sold concert tickets the artists use to invest in themselves and pay the expenses of touring abroad and keep the ball rolling. Usually there are no actual salaries to talk about though," he explains.

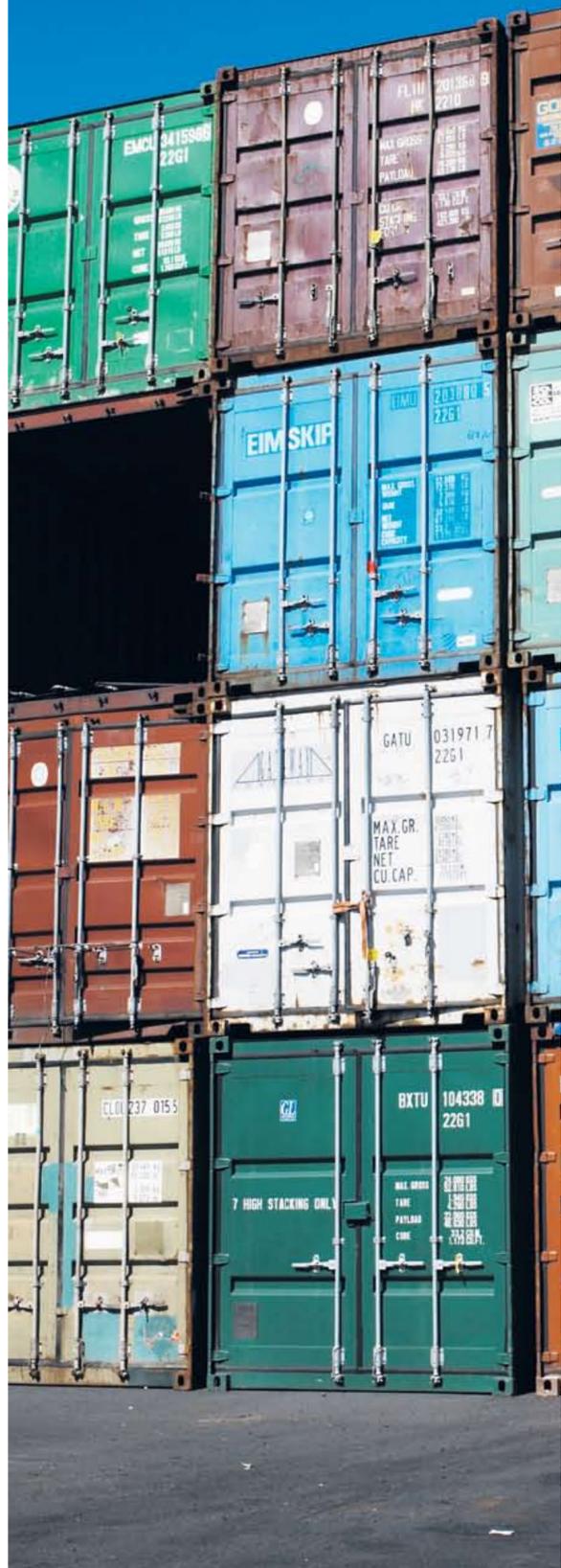
Investing in Music

Few musicians can earn their living simply by creating music. Going abroad can be tough if you don't have someone to back you up to begin with. Reykjavík Loftbrú and the State Music Fund aim to make that process easier. Established in 2005, the Music Fund has a yearly budget of 50 million ISK to support several projects. Jónatan Garðarsson, the Fund's chairman, says that the counsel evaluates each project thoroughly before deciding who should get funding and how big the amount should be. He also explains that there are two application deadlines per year and the largest grant so far, 5 million ISK, was used to establish the Icelandic Music Export.

Sturluson, who has years of experience in the business both as a concert producer and manager, is still not satisfied with the environment musicians have to settle for today.

"In my opinion, the Reykjavík Loftbrú is a fine project. Musicians can apply for tickets on a monthly basis and the process is both fast and efficient. The same can't be said about the State Music Fund though. There are only two deadlines each year and the maximum amount you can get is usually only about a million ISK. The Fund doesn't make it much easier to pursue opportunities, which can sometimes happen almost unexpectedly. Personally, if we are thinking about exporting music, the State Music Fund is in my view totally

Iceland's Music Ready to Erupt



info.

▲ Magnús Pálsson *Friday Butterflies* Outdoor Concert at Ingólfstorg *Sigríður Niels* Family-inspired Installations *Mínus* Reviews the Past Snapshot Photography *LungA* Young Artists' Festival Classic Toys Return *Food* Reviews Shopping *Music, Art, Films and Events Listings* ▲



(retro stefson) ^{B6}

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants



Gallery i8 – July 12 - August 18

In Memory of Þórarinn Nefjólsson

Magnús Pálsson is deeply sensitive to aesthetics. He sees all branches of art, music, the written word, performance and visual, as equal in their artistic purpose and in their support for his own artistic ambition, one which he has once again tried to capture in his new exhibition at gallery i8.

Pálsson's most recent exhibit is comprised of what he calls visual poems, made up of sculptures and multiples hung on walls, as well as

videos, all made as a commemoration of a figure in the Icelandic sagas, Þórarinn Nefjólsson, and his dealings with the king of Norway. "This so called heritage is such an important part of my being, my presence and consciousness that it often forces its way into my works and activity totally uninvited," Pálsson has said.

Pálsson has collaborated with artists such as Dieter Roth as well as alternative theatre groups and the short-lived Icelandic art movement

SUM in the late '60s and early '70s. Pálsson is perhaps best known for a piece of work he made in 1976 which was displayed in Venice in 1980 when he represented Iceland at Biennale wherein he cast the space between the wheels of a helicopter and its landing space moments before it touched down on the tarp.

Gallery i8, Klapparstígur 33, www.i8.is

Across downtown Reykjavík – July 13

Friday Butterflies at Hitt Húsið

Every other Friday this summer between 12:00 – 14:00, the creative summer groups from Hitt Húsið, the cultural and information centre for youth between the ages of 16 and 25 in Reykjavík, have been flitting about town sharing their various artistic creations with passers-by. During the summer, kids involved with Hitt Húsið are given the opportunity to develop and work on their creative ideas and projects for six to eight weeks. Some projects include out-

door theatre, music, fashion design, song, photography, and film making among others. This Friday July 13, thirteen groups will be performing around the city in various locations including up and down Laugavegur, on Lækjatorg and on Ingólfstorg. At the end of the summer and of the program, all the groups will gather in front of the town hall in downtown Reykjavík for a best-of show to display their work from throughout the summer.



Ingólfstorg square – July 19

Outdoor Concert at Ingólfstorg

This Thursday, July 19, a two-hour outdoor music concert will be held at Ingólfstorg Main Square in downtown Reykjavík. Six Icelandic acts, in an as yet-undetermined order, will squeeze in sets between 17:00 – 19:00 on the massive concrete square largely utilized by skateboarders and ice-cream eating tourists.

Mainstream pop favourite Jeff Who?, who have been getting enthusiastic radio play ever since the release of their first album in 2006,

will be making an appearance as well as Æla, another Reykjavík favourite, though of a different sort, who turned heads at last year's Iceland Airwaves festival with their extremely cathartic and even manic sound, a must-see. Indie rock bands Jan Mayen and Skátar will be playing songs of their newly released full-length records, along with long time players Bacon and Kimono. Surely a short and sweet taste of some of the city's favourites.

12 Tónar – July 6 - September 1

Artwork by Sigríður Niels

A collection of artwork by Reykjavík's coolest grandmother, Sigríður Nielsdóttir, is currently on show at 12 Tónar record store on Skólavörðustígur. According to the staff at 12 Tónar, more than half of the 31 collages sold on the opening night on July 6. Nielsdóttir is also known in Iceland for her music. In 2001, she released her first album at the age of 71. Since then, she has recorded 58 albums making her the most productive artist in Iceland. She records her work from her kitchen

using a cassette player and makes all of the artwork for the album covers by hand. Nielsdóttir, who was born in Denmark, sings in Danish, German, Icelandic and English. She has received praise from within the Icelandic independent music scene from musicians such as Björk, Sigur Rós and múm and had her music used by Slowbow in the Icelandic film Nói Albinói.

12 Tónar, Skólavörðustígur 15, www.12tonar.is



Safn – July 14 - August 26

Family-inspired Installations

Safn gallery will open a new exhibition on July 14, featuring the work of Icelandic artist Tumi Magnússon and Amsterdam-based Jennifer Tee.

In recent years Magnússon, who is professor of the Painting department at the Royal Art Academy in Copenhagen, has used digital technology to stretch photographs so that they fit the entire wall of the exhibition space. Magnússon's untitled exhibition includes several photographs – two of which are mounted on aluminium and the third directly onto the wall. Magnússon's trade-

mark shots involve photographing mundane household objects using a micro lens, which leaves the object of his work almost unrecognisable. Down the Chimney by Tee consists of video based stories that were told to her by her family. Tee sent her family a tape recorder and asked them to record the stories they usually kept to themselves. She later used the biographical material for the script of the video featured in this exhibition.

Safn, Laugavegur 37, www.safn.is



Grand Rokk – July 14

Mínus Reviews the Past

Iceland's favourite rock-band, Mínus, which recently downsized to a four-piece, is planning a basic ram-pageous rock party at bar Grand Rokk on Saturday, July 14. The band presented a new bassist, Sigurður Oddsson, when opening up for Cannibal Corpse earlier this month and the impressed crowd of hard-core concertgoers said they had never sounded as tight. Those rockers, and all the other ones who missed the last show, should prepare for even more action this weekend. At the

Saturday concert, the plan is to play a set that spans the band's nine-year history.

"We just love the new line-up and everything has worked out so well that we decided to organise a grand gig. The band's spirit has changed for the better, we've enjoyed playing together and the feedback has been positive" drummer Bjóssi explains adding: "The Saturday concert will be a pure rock-party. We will play loads of songs, old ones mixed with some new." Mínus released its fourth

album, The Great Northern Whalekill, in May.

DJ Frosti Gringo will warm up the crowd before the rock'n'roll legends hit the stage. Bring cash, as T-Shirts, CD's and some rare collector's items will be for sale at the bar.

The party starts at 22:00 and the entrance fee is 1,000 ISK. The concerts are organised in collaboration with radio X-ið.

Grand Rokk, Smiðjustígur 6.

If you would like to be included in the Grapevine listings, free of charge, contact the Grapevine by email at listings@grapevine.is.

Music

■ **12 Tónar record shop**
Skólavörðustígur 15
Fri 13.07 Kira Kira in concert. Starts at 17:00.
■ **Bar 11**
Laugavegur 11
A popular hangout spot for Reykjavík's rockers and their young idolaters with DJs playing classic rock'n'roll hits.
Fri 13.07 DJ Biggi Maus
Sat 14.07 Ten Steps Away + guests / DJ Óli Dóri
Fri 20.07 DJ Óli Dóri Weapons
Sat 21.07 DJ Biggi Maus
Fri 27.07 DJ Aron
Sat 28.07 DJ Óli Dóri Weapons
■ **Barinn**
Laugavegur 22
Vibrant late-night party place and a nice roomy bistro during the day.
Fri 13.07 Party Zone Night: DJ Helgi Már and DJ Maggi Legó
Sat 14.07 DJ Barcode / DJ's Þorbjörn and Gussi
Tue 17.07 DJ Trúba
Fri 20.07 Jack Schidt, Sexy Lazer and DJ Mehdi from Ed Banger records / DJ Drulla. Admission fee: 1000 ISK
Sat 21.07 Flex Music Night: DJ Brunheim and DJ Ghoszt / DJ Árne Japan
Wed 25.07 DJ Trúba
Thu 26.07 DJ Fróði
Fri 27.07 DJ Maggi Legó / DJ Kvikindi

Sat 28.07 DJ Hjalti / DJ Drulla
■ **Café Cultura**
Hverfisgata 18
Music from the world's four corners
Fri 13.07 DJ's Steinunn and Silja
Sat 14.07 DJ Baldvin
Fri 20.07 DJ Bollywood
Sat 21.07 DJ Kristín
Fri 27.07 DJ Baldvin
Sat 28.07 DJ Lupin
■ **Café Hljómalið**
Laugavegur 21
Sat 14.07 Alternative jazz group The Story of Modern Farming from Holland in concert. Special guest is Hilmar Jenson,
■ **Café Paris**
Austurstræti 14
Fri 13.07 DJ Lucky plays soul, funk, reggae and hip-hop
Sat 14.07 DJ Börkur plays soul, funk, reggae and hip-hop
Fri 20.07 DJ Lucky plays soul, funk, reggae and hip-hop
Sat 21.07 DJ Börkur plays soul, funk, reggae and hip-hop
Fri 27.07 DJ Lucky plays soul, funk, reggae and hip-hop
■ **Dillon**
Laugavegur 30
Legendary rock pub featuring live concerts every Wednesday night and rock DJs every weekend.
Fri 13.07 Lights on the Highway / DJ Andrea Jóns
Sat 14.07 DJ Doddi Ilti
Wed 18.07 Dr. Spock in concert
Thu 19.07 Grasrætur in concert

Fri 20.07 DJ Óli Palli
Sat 21.07 DJ Andrea Jóns
Wed 25.07 Dust Cap & I Adapt in concert
Thu 26.07 Noise in concert
Fri 27.07 DJ Óli dóri
Sat 29.07 DJ Andrea Jóns
■ **Grand Rokk**
Smiðjustíg 6
Sat 14.07 Mínus in concert
Fri 20.07 Wulfgang in concert
Sat 21.07 Johnny and the Rest in concert
■ **Gaukurinn**
Tryggvagata 22
Hosts mostly cover bands on weekends, playing anything from Britney to the Beatles. On weekdays, odds are you'll find local bands playing their original material.
Fri 13.07 Wulfgang, Touch and Shadow Parade in concert
Wed 18.07 Cover band Dúndurfréttir
Fri 20.07 Perfect Disorder release gig. Opening acts: Dimma and Dalton. Starts at 21:00.
■ **Gljúfrasteinn**
Halldór Laxness Museum
270 Mosfellsbær
Sun 15.07 Kristján Orrí Sigurleifsson and Guðrún Dalia Salómonsdóttir
Sun 22.07 Guitarist Arnaldur Arnarson
■ **Hressó**
Austurstræti 20
Here, troubadours play sing-alongs until midnight, followed by DJs playing whatever the crowd is aching for at the time.
Fri 13.07 Gotti and Eisi followed by DJ

Maggi
Sat 14.07 Johnny and the Rest followed by DJ Bjarni
Thu 19.07 Böddi and co.
Fri 20.07 Gotti and Eisi followed by DJ Maggi
Sat 21.07 Böddi and co. followed by DJ Maggi
Thu 26.07 Tepokarnir jazzband
Sat 28.07 Lady and the Sea followed by DJ Maggi
■ **Ingólfstorg Square**
Thu 19.09 Jeff Who?, Jan Mayen, Æla, Kimono, Skátar and Bacon in concert. From 17:00-19:00.
■ **Jómfrúin**
Lækjargata 4
Sat 14.04 Summerjazz series: Egill B. Hreinnson quartet
Sat 21.07 Summerjazz series: Snorri Sigurðarson quartet
Sat 28.07 Summerjazz series: Sunna and Scott quartet
■ **Kaffibarinn**
Bergstaðastræti 1
With a mixture of techno, reggae, hip-hop and classic dance hits, the DJs are usually capable of crowding this frisky bar every single night of the week.
Fri 13.07 DJ Lazer
Sat 14.07 DJ Gisli Galdur
Thu 10.07 DJ Biggö
Fri 20.07 DJ Terrordisco
Sat 21.07 Don Balli Funk
Fri 27.07 DJ Benni B-Ruff
Sat 28.07 DJ Nuno
■ **Nasa**
Thorvaldsenstræti 2
Sat 14.07 Breakbeat.is presents: Goldie

and MC Lowqui. Opening acts: DJ Agzilla and Kalli & Ewok. Starts at 23:00.
■ **Prikið**
Bankastræti 12
Fri 13.07 Frizkó followed by DJ Gisli Galdur
Sat 14.07 DJ Rósa
Wed 18.07 DJ Daði
Thu 19.07 DJ Biggi
Thu 19.07 Elin Eyþórs in concert / DJ Maggi Legó
Sat 21.07 DJ Óli Hjörtur
Wed 25.07 DJ Danni Deluxe
Thu 26.07 DJ Maggi Legó
Fri 27.07 Búðarbandið in concert / DJ Rósa
Sat 29.07 Street-art competition / DJ Gisli Galdur
■ **Q-bar**
Ingólfstærati 3
Stylish and vibrant gay / straight-friendly bar and party venue. Cosy on weekdays and full of surprises on weekends.
Fri 13.07 DJ Peter Parker
Sat 14.07 DJ Yamaho
Wed 18.07 DJ Gay Thug
Thu 19.07 DJ Diva de la Rosa
Fri 20.07 DJ Shaft
Sat 21.07 DJ Maggi Legó
Wed 25.07 DJ Gay Thug
Sat 14.07 DJ Diva de la Rosa
Fri 27.07 Elli and Maggi DJ set
Sat 28.07 DJ Peter Parker
■ **Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum**
Laugarnestangi 70
Tue 17.07 Pianist Sunna Gunnlaugsdóttir, drummer Scott McLemore and bassist Þorgrímur Jónsson play European jazz. Starts at 20:30

Tue 24.07 Trio Varioso. Starts at 20:30
■ **Sirkus**
Klapparstígur 30
Playing reggae, country and occasionally hosting live gigs on weekdays, Sirkus's veteran DJs keep the party going till late on weekends.
Fri 13.07 Tommy White
Sat 14.07 DJ Skeletor
Thu 19.07 DJ Maggi Leagó
Fri 20.07 DJ Árne Sveins and DJ Roesbert
Sat 21.07 DJ Jón Atli
Thu 26.07 DJ Roesbert
Fri 27.07 DJ Casanova
Sat 29.07 DJ Maggi Legó

Museums & Galleries

■ **101 Gallery**
Hverfisgata 18
Thu.–Sat. 14–17 and by appointment
www.101hotel.is/101hotel/101/gallery/
Jun 14-Jul 19
Ice Cream Land
Paintings by Guðmundur Thoroddsen
■ **12 Tónar**
Skólavörðustígur 15
Mon.–Fri. 10–18, Sat. 11–16
Jul 6–Sep 1
Collage by artist and musician Sigríður Nielsdóttir
■ **Anima Gallery**
Ingólfstærati 8 / Lækjargata 2
Tue.–Sat. 13–17
www.animagalleri.is
Current exhibition:
O+
Erla Þórarinsdóttir exhibition
■ **Artótek**

Tryggvagata 15
Mon. 10–21, Tue.–Thu. 10–19, Fri. 11–19, Sat. and Sun. 13–17
www.sim.is/Index/Islenzka/Artotek
■ **ASÍ Art Museum**
Freyjugata 41
Tue.–Sun. 13–17
Free Entrance
Jun 30–Aug 26
Summer exhibition from the museum collection
■ **Auga fyrir Auga**
Hverfisgata 35
Open Thu.–Fri. 15–19, Sat.–Sun. 14–17
■ **The Einar Jónsson Museum**
Eiríksgata
Tue.–Sun. 14–17
www.skulptur.is
Permanent exhibition:
The work of sculptor Einar Jónsson
■ **The Culture House**
Hverfisgata 15
Open daily 11–17
www.thjodmenning.is
Permanent exhibitions:
Medieval Manuscripts; The National Museum – as it was; The Library Room; The Road to Zion; Berlin Excursion
Current exhibition:
Surtsey – Genesis
The exhibition traces the emergence and evolution of the island Surtsey until the present day and predicts its geographical and ecological development over the next 120 years.
■ **Dwarf Gallery**
Grundarstígur 21
Opening Hours: Fri. and Sat. 18–20
www.this.is/birta

Jun 30–Jul 15
Dórófórn
Halldór Arnar Úlfarsson exhibition
■ **Gallery 100 Degrees**
Bæjarháls 1
Mon.–Fri. 8:30–16
www.or.is/Forsida/Gallery100
Jul 7–Aug 3
Ásdís Spanós exhibition
■ **Gallery Fold**
Rauðarárstígur 14–16
Mon.–Fri. 10–18
Sat. 11–16
Sun. 14–16
www.myndlist.is
Sells a large selection of Icelandic and international art and hosts exhibitions on a regular basis.
■ **Gallery Sævar Karl**
Bankastræti 7
Mon.–Fri. 10–18
Sat. 10–16
www.saevarkarl.is/
■ **Gallery Tukt**
Pósthússtræti 3–5
www.hittusid.is
May 30–Jul 14
Sculptures and photographs by Catherine Ness
■ **Gallery Turpentine**
Ingólfstærati 5
Tue.–Fri. 12–18
Sat. 11–16
www.turpentine.is
Current exhibition:
Happy Days
Guðrún Vera Hjartardóttir exhibition
■ **Gel Galleri**
Hverfisgata 37

Mon.–Fri. 10–19
Sat. 10–17
■ **Gerðuberg Cultural Centre**
Gerðuberg 3–5
Mon.–Thu. 11–17
Wed. 11–21
Thu.–Fri. 11–17
Sat.–Sun. 13–16
www.gerduberg.is
May 5–Sep 9
Paintings by Ágúst Jónsson
May 12–Sep 9
Kvenfólk / Women
Erró exhibition
■ **i8 Gallery**
Klapparstígur 33
Tue.–Fri. 11–17
Sat. 13–17 and by appointment
www.i8.is
Jul 12–Aug 28
Magnús Pálsson exhibition
■ **The Naked Ape**
Bankastræti 14
www.dontbenaked.com
Jul 7–Jul 31
ÚT / VIL / EK
Jói Kjartansson photo exhibition
■ **Kling & Bang Gallery**
Laugavegur 23
Thu.–Sun. 14–18
Free Entrance
www.this.is/klingandbang
Current exhibition:
Ryan Parteka, Sigríður Dóra Jóhannsdóttir and Björk Guðnadóttir group exhibition
■ **Living Art Museum**
Laugavegur 26
Wed., Fri.–Sun. 13–17

Thu. 13–22
www.nylo.is/
May 26–Jul 8
Bread and Animals
Installation by Anna Sigmund Guðmundsdóttir
■ **Living Art Museum**
Laugavegur 26
Wed., Fri.–Sun. 13–17
Thu. 13–22
www.nylo.is/
Jul 21–Aug 8
Hekla Dögg Jónsdóttir exhibition
■ **The National Gallery of Iceland**
Frikirkjuvegur
Tue.–Sun. 11–17
Free Entrance
listasafn.is
Jul 21–Oct 10
Alas-Nature!
The National Gallery of Iceland's summer exhibition featuring High Plane by Katrín Sigurðardóttir. Her work is a widely acclaimed installation for its revolutionary viewpoint in which the landscape is laid out horizontally on a table.
■ **The National Museum**
Suðurgata 41
Open daily 10–17
natmus.is/
Permanent exhibition:
The Making of a Nation
May 5–Aug 24
As seen by the visitor
Happy Days
Guðrún Vera Hjartardóttir photo exhibition
■ **Living Art Museum**
Laugavegur 26
Wed., Fri.–Sun. 13–17

May 19-Sep 30
The Road Between
Andrá exhibition: Installations by Guðbjörg Lind Jónsdóttir, Guðrún Kristjánssdóttir and Kristín Jónsdóttir.
■ **The Nordic House**
Sturlugata 5
Tue.–Sun. 12–17
www.nordice.is/
■ **The Numismatic Museum**
Kalkofnsvegur 1
Open Mon.–Fri. 13:30–15:30.
Free admittance.
Permanent exhibition:
The Central Bank of Iceland and the National Museum of Iceland jointly operate a numismatic collection consisting of Icelandic notes and coins.
■ **Reykjavík 871 +/- 2**
Aðalstræti 16
Open daily 10–17
Permanent exhibition:
The Settlement Exhibition
■ **Reykjavík Art Museum**
– **Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum**
Sigtún
Open daily 10–16
Admission ticket is valid for three days in all three museums.
Free entrance every Thursday.
www.listsafnreykjavikur.is
Mar 31-Dec 31
Folk Tales
An exhibition of works by Icelandic draughtsmen who took on the task of illustrating folk tales from the oral tradition.
Apr 2-Dec 31
The Shape of Life
A new retrospective of the works by Ásmundur Sveinsson. The exhibition focuses on abstract works from 1945 onwards.
■ **Reykjavík Art Museum**
– **Hafnarhús**
Tryggvagata 17
Open daily 10–17
May 11-Aug 19
My Oz
Roni Horn retrospective
Jun 21-Aug 12
Installation by Daníel Björnsson at the D Gallery.
May 10-Aug 17
The Erró Collection
Works from the museum's Erró collection: A further examination of the diverse subjects and stages of Erró's artistic oeuvre.
■ **Reykjavík Art Museum**
– **Kjarvalsstaðir**
Flókagata
Open Daily 10–17
Feb 10-Sep 2
K-pátturinn / The K-Factor
Jóhannes S. Kjarval retrospective.
May 19-Aug 26
Kvíka / Magna
Icelandic contemporary design
May 19-Aug 26
The Spark – Design for Everyone

Design exhibition, with special educational programming
■ **Reykjavík City Hall**
Vonarstræti
www.rvk.is
Jul 7-Jul 22
Monsters and Licut Works
Ólafur Þórðarson exhibition
■ **Reykjavík Museum**
Kistuhylur 4
Open daily from 10–17
www.arbaejaafn.is
Free admittance.
Permanent exhibition:
Objects from Reykjavík cultural history.
■ **The Reykjavík Museum of Photography**
Grófarhús, Tryggvagata 15, 6th floor
Weekdays 12–19
Sat.–Sun. 13–17
Free Entrance
www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is
Jun 1-Sep 9
Automatos
Ólaf Otto Becker, Páll Stefánsson and RAX
May 15-Jul 4
The Resistance Collection
Unnar Örn exhibition
■ **Safn**
Laugavegur 37
Wed.–Fri. 14–18
Sat.–Sun. 14–17
Free Entrance
www.safn.is
May 19-Oct 20
Museum of the Surface / Desire Archive / Decay Complex
Unnar Örn J. Auðarson exhibition
Jul 14-Aug 26
Tumi Magnússon exhibition
Jul 14-Aug 26
Down the Chimney
Jennifer Tee exhibition
■ **Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum**
Laugarnestangi 70
Open Tue.–Sun. 14–17
Permanent exhibition:
Works of sculptor Sigurjón Ólafsson
■ **Start Art / Art Shop**
Laugavegur 12b
www.startart.is
Jul 7-Jul 29
Friða Gylfadóttir exhibition
Jul 7-Jul 29
Hulda Vilhjálmssdóttir exhibition
Outside Reykjavík
■ **Skaftfell**
Austurvegur 42, Seyðisfjörður
www.skaftfell.is
Jul 7-Aug 4
Tumi Magnússon summer-exhibition featuring video installations
■ **Hornafjörður Cultural Centre**
Nýheimum, 780 Hornafjörður
www.hornafjordur.is/
menningarmidstod
Jun 28-Aug 7
Svarar Guðnason summer exhibition
Jun 29-Jul 30
Digital / Film / Oil
Hlynur Pálmason exhibition

■ **Gallery Klettur**
Helluhraun 16, Hafnarfjörður
Open Sat. 10–14. At other times by arrangement.
■ **Hafnarborg**
Strandgata 34, Hafnarfjörður
Mon.–Sun. 11–17
www.hafnarborg.is
Jun 28-Aug 5
Paintings
Work of the Norse artist Kjell Nupen
■ **Eden**
Austurmörk 21, 810 Hveragerði
Open daily from 8:30–21:30
Permanent exhibition:
Elf Incubator in Eden
Works by Anna Hallín, Margrét Hlín Sveinsdóttir, Olga Bergmann and Steinunn Guðríður Helgadóttir.
■ **LÁ Art Museum**
Austurmörk 21, Hveragerði
Open daily from 12:00–18:00
Current exhibition:
Moving Mountains
Summer exhibition
■ **Gljúfrasteinn**
– **Halldór Laxness museum**
270 Mosfellsbær
Open daily except Mondays from 10–17.
■ **Kópavogur Art Museum**
– **Gerðarsafn**
Hamraborg, Kópavogur
Open daily 11:00–17:00 except Mondays
www.gerdarsafn.is
■ **The Icelandic Museum of Design and Applied Art**
Lyngás 7–9, 121 Garðabær
Opening hours: Tues.–Fri. 14–18; Sat. and Sun. 16–18.
www.mudesa.org
Exhibitions devoted to Icelandic design.
■ **The Icelandic Settlement Centre**
Brákarbraut 1–15, Borgarnes
Opening hours: May to Sep 10–20; Sep to May 11–17. www.landnam.is
Permanent exhibitions:
The Settlement of Iceland: The Saga of Egill Skallagrímsson
■ **Suðsuðvestur**
Hafnargata 22, Keflavík
Thu.–Fri. 16–18
Sat.–Sun. 14–17
www.sudsuvestur.is
Jun 30-Aug 12
Birgir Snaebjörn and J.B.K. Ransu exhibition
■ **Vatnasafn – Library of Water**
Bösklóðustígur 17, 340 Stykkishólmur
www.libraryofwater.is
Open daily from 11–17.
Permanent exhibition:
Roni Horn installation. She has replaced stacks of books with glass columns containing water gathered from Iceland's glaciers and glacial rivers.
■ **Sandgerði Museum**
Gerðavegur 1, Sandgerði.
Until Feb 7, 2008
Polar Adventures
Exhibition on the life and work of the

French polar explorer, scientist and doctor Jean-Baptiste Charcot.
■ **Jónas Viðar Gallery**
Kaupvangsstræti 12, Akureyri
Fri.–Sat. 13–18
www.jvs.is/vjvgallery.htm
Jun 30-Jul 19
Paintings by Kristján Steingrímur
■ **Akureyri Art Museum**
Kaupvangsstræti 12, Akureyri
Tue.–Sun. 12–17
www.listsafn.akureyri.is
Jun 30-Aug 19
Fjallið / The Mountain
Georg Guðni retrospective
■ **DaLí Gallery**
Brekkgata 9, Akureyri
Mon.–Sat. 14–18
www.daligallery.blogspot.com
Current exhibition:
Birta Guðjónsdóttir exhibition



Films

■ **Die Hard 4.0**
Háskólabíó, Laugarásbíó, Regnboginn, Sambíóin Keflavík, Smárabíó
■ **Evan Almighty**
Háskólabíó, Laugarásbíó, Sambíóin Álfabakka, Sambíóin Keflavík, Smárabíó
■ **Fantastic Four 2**
Háskólabíó, Regnboginn, Smárabíó
■ **Harry Potter 5**
Regnboginn, Sambíóin Akureyri, Sambíóin Álfabakka, Sambíóin Keflavík, Sambíóin Kringlunni, Smárabíó
■ **Blind Dating**
Sambíóin Álfabakka
■ **Ocean's 13**
Sambíóin Álfabakka, Sambíóin Kringlunni
■ **Pirates of the Caribbean 3**
Sambíóin Álfabakka, Sambíóin Kringlunni
■ **Shrek 3**
Laugarásbíó, Sambíóin Álfabakka, Sambíóin akureyri, Sambíóin Keflavík, Sambíóin Kringlunni
■ **Premonition**
Háskólabíó, Regnboginn
■ **The Lookout**
Regnboginn
■ **Death Proof (July 20)**
■ **Georgia Rule (July 25)**
■ **The Simpsons (July 27)**

Movie Theatres

■ **Regnboginn**, Hverfisgata 54
101 Reykjavík, Tel. 551-9000
■ **Háskólabíó**, Hagatorg

Music Art Films Events

TICKETS AT **midi.is**

Events

■ **Concert Festival at Skálholt**
12.07–06.08 The Skálholt Summer Concerts Festival has been held annually since 1975. The festival features 40 events over a six week period, each with contrasting programs, three to five concerts each week, including early baroque and contemporary music, the former usually played on period instruments. During the years the festival has attracted internationally acclaimed artists as well as talented young Icelandic musicians and composers.
Concerts are held on Saturdays at 15:00 and 17:00, Sundays at 15:00 and on Wednesdays or Thursdays at 20:00. All concerts are free of charge. For more info see: www.sumartonleikar.is
■ **Creative Youngsters**
13.07 Hitt Húsið's Friday-Butterflies will be flying around the city centre between 12 and 14 on July 13 to surprise as well as entertain downtown pedestrians with various happenings. The programme includes street-theatre at Laugavegurinn, photography exhibition by Slafberi at Lækjartorg and electro-group Rafhans at Skólavörðustígur.
For a full list of performers see: www.hitthusid.is.
■ **Rave Against the Machine**
14.07 The environmentalist resistance group Saving Iceland has organised a street rave as part of their protests against heavy industry in the country. The party starts at 16:00 on July 14 and takes place next to the artificially created geyssir in Öskjuhlíð. To celebrate the summer and unite the group of protestors, DJ's Eyvi, Kiddi Ghout and Arnar will keep the party rockin'.
■ **Reykholt Music Festival**
26.07 – 29.07 The international music festival will be held at Reykholt in Borgarfjörður for the eleventh time this year where musicians from seven countries will perform. Among performers are The Moscow Male Choir of St. Basil's Cathedral and the Christopher Orchestra of Lithuania accompanied by Icelandic soprano Diddú.
Tickets are sold at midi.is and at www.reykholtshatid.is



The Naked Ape – Until July 31

Snapshot Photography

Graphic designer and photographer Jóhannes Kjartansson recently opened his first solo exhibition at the Naked Ape Gallery (located inside the designer street-clothing shop The Naked Ape), at Bankastræti 14. Entitled ÚT / VIL / EK, the exhibition space features twenty snapshots Kjartansson has been taking for the past three years as well as two hidden ones in the shop's fitting room.
The exhibition's title, which could be translated as 'I want to get out', refers to Snorri Sturluson's saying when

he wanted to go back to Iceland from Norway in the 12th century, detailing his desire to travel overseas with these now famous words.
Kjartansson's exhibition describes the photographer's three-year journey, from short wanderings around the city of Reykjavík and small fishing town Ísafjörður to longer trips to foreign communities as London, Barcelona and Berlin.
He almost never leaves his home without his old Yasika camera, and can frequently be spotted running

around town taking pictures of everyday life on the streets. Whether it is the wafflecar at Lækjartorg square, a storage room full of cleansers or a hyperactive elderly man partying hard, he finds a way to make the subject interesting.
The photos are for sale for the ridiculous price of 5,000 ISK and when the Grapevine went to print, Kjartansson had already sold eight of the twenty pieces, so you better hurry. The photos can also be viewed at his new website, www.joi.is.

HAUNTED ICELAND
EVERY DAY AT 20.00

■ The Haunted Walk is Reykjavík's most popular walking tour. All of our stories are thoroughly researched and will delight even the skeptics in the group! The tours are offered in the evening, when the atmosphere is just right for a good ghost story.
Starting Point. The Tourist information Aðalstræti 2.
Duration. Two hour walk. 2.5 kilometer / 1.24 miles.
When. Every day at 20.00. From 1st. of May to 15th. of Sept.
Price. Adults, 2.000 ISK. / Super adults, 60+ and students, 1.500 ISK.

HIDDEN WORLD REYKJAVIK
EVERY DAY AT 15.00

■ The inner City of Reykjavík is famous for having one of Iceland's largest settlements of elves, dwarves and other mystical beings, which (translating from the Icelandic) are collectively called "Hidden Folk." Centuries-old folklore has it that whole clans of such beings reside in rocks and areas around the pound.
Starting Point. The Tourist information Aðalstræti 2.
Duration. 90 min. walk. 2.4 kilometer / 1.20 miles.
When. Every day at 15.00. From 1st. of May to 15th. of Sept.
Price. Adults, 2.000 ISK. / Super adults, 60+ and students, 1.500 ISK.

WELCOME WALKS REYKJAVIK
EVERY DAY AT 18.00

■ Easy walk through Reykjavík center, focusing on Icelandic culture, history, dining, shopping and entertaining. History of Reykjavík from the perspective of local people. Get the Reykjavík insider information and save both time and money. Q&A on the tour. Where to eat? What to see? Local happenings?
Starting Point. Hallgrímskirkja, by the statue of Leif Eriksson.
Duration. 90 min. walk. 2.4 kilometer / 1.20 miles.
When. Every day at 18.00. From 1st. of May to 15th. of Sept.
Price. Adults, 1.500 ISK. / Super adults, 60+ and students, 1.500 ISK.

Tickets can be bought at all tourist information centers, booking offices and most hotels in Reykjavík. Tickets can also be bought from the guides (cash only). Reservations recommended.
Please call +354 843 6666 or e-mail: walk@hauntediceland.com
www.hauntediceland.com



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Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

Text by Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir Photo by Gulli

The next big thing to casually walk all over the Reykjavik music scene is undoubtedly bright-eyed Retro Stefson. Fresh from middle school and already two years into their game, the eight-piece is being nursed to stardom by some of the Reykjavik music scene's biggest names. Grapevine sat down with Unnsteinn, Þórður, and Þorbjörg after their gig at Herrafataverzlun Kormáks & Skjaldar to discuss their climb up the under-aged ladder to success.

What were your intentions when you were starting out?

Unnsteinn: First it was to win the Samfés (the national youth club organisation of Iceland) singing competition.

Þórður: Yeah we started with that. We didn't make it to anything in the competition but we were allowed to play at the dance. And then naturally we needed to practice.

Þorbjörg: We put together a few songs and it went pretty well.

Were there all eight of you then?

Unnsteinn: There was a completely different line-up on the instruments. Þórður played the drums then and now he plays guitar, and all kinds of stuff like that.

How does that change, are you always moving around the instruments or?

Unnsteinn: No, not anymore. Now everyone plays his or her own instrument.

That they know best.

Unnsteinn: Yes, exactly. Þórður: It was only last summer that the band formed with the line-up we have now.

Þorbjörg: We got Gylfi also as our drummer.

Unnsteinn: Then we were invited to play at Airwaves and we decided to change things around a bit. We buffed up the band and then everyone was able to play his or her desired instrument.

What is the process like with such a large group as far as writing music and lyrics? Are you all involved or are there a select few who do most of the composing?

Unnsteinn: I'll maybe come up with like a base, and then the first person who gets to hear it is maybe Þórður. Then Logi, who's my little brother, gets to say his piece. He's been learning music theory for the past year so he always comes up with something that's really logical but that doesn't necessarily end up working. He has strong opinions about how the music should be. But we don't really end up following what he says.

What do you think most affects you when you're writing lyrics?

Unnsteinn: We just write something, whatever occurs to us. We write in many different languages. Maybe if we want to create a sort of southern atmosphere we'll speak a southern language in the song, I think it's more like that. And if we want to have sort of a cool song

then maybe we'll write it in English. Then of course we have a lot of influences in the music itself. Like for example just what we've been listening to, what me and Logi's parents had us listen to when we were little, which is this sort of world-music, like Brazilian jazz.

How has the reception been from others in the Reykjavik music scene? You are playing music that is quite different from what other people your age are doing. How much influence does that scene have on you and how you make music?

Þórður: Quite a bit I think.

Unnsteinn: We've been very well received, maybe because this is sort of new or maybe different from what has been going on here before.

Þórður: It depends. Some people don't really get it, but then there are others who are steady supporters. Like Steinþór who was back here screaming earlier. He's supported us a lot, like many others, which is great. I think that's what drives us most, this kind of strong support from individuals.

In other bands then?

Þórður: Yeah and then just people in the music world in general.

Unnsteinn: Like for example Benni Hemm Hemm loaned us his guitar for our first concert. And Bóas, the singer in Reykjavik!, encouraged us to form an official band to play these songs we had been writing.

"Like at NASA the bouncers are always grabbing us. They're completely insane."

What do you think about the exportation of Icelandic music? That music is becoming a product whose purpose is mainly to be sold?

Unnsteinn: I feel it kind of splits in two. You have for example Iceland Airwaves and Mr. Destiny. They're holding these nights abroad, these Iceland Airwaves Nights at some music festivals, where young bands just like us, although we haven't yet gone to one, get a chance to go abroad and play. But then on the other side there's Garðar Cortes and Nylon for example. I think that music has become a product. These methods are similar, but as far as the music goes, there's more ambition in a lot of what the first sort is producing. Like you take Nessun dorma, which is a very famous opera song, and then all of a sudden you're hearing it with Garðar Cortes and a drum machine and a symphony. It's a little bit strange.

Are you guys recording at all?

Unnsteinn: Yeah we've been trying to record little by little but it's not going too well.

Why not?

Unnsteinn: I think it might just be laziness. Then we've been trying to record it ourselves, and then of course there are so many of us.

Þórður: It's better to wait about putting out an album. You don't really get much out of it financially speaking. It's a lot of work and you need to prepare well for it, and we're not completely ready for that now.

Unnsteinn: Plus we think it's the most fun to play concerts.

It will probably help you just as much to put it on the net, because that's where most people will hear it.

Þórður: It seems that no one buys CD's anyway.

No exactly.

Unnsteinn: Yeah, it's just download.

Do you ever have trouble playing at bars?

Unnsteinn: It depends.

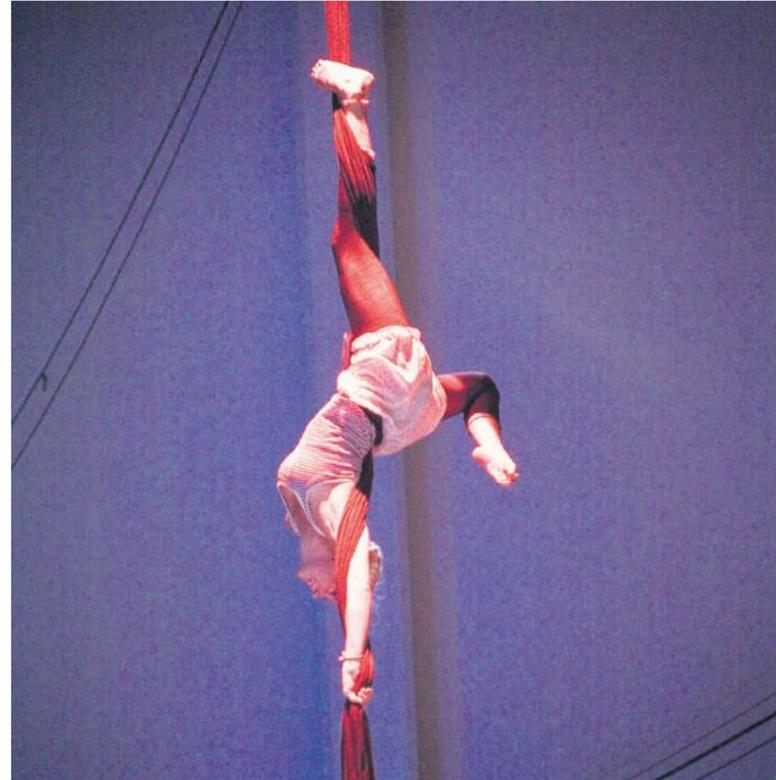
Þorbjörg: At Grand Rokk when we were playing Airwaves last year Gunni wasn't going to let us in.

Unnsteinn: Yeah and then when he had let most of us in we noticed that Logi my brother was missing. It turned out he was still downstairs.

He's a little too small.

Unnsteinn: Yeah. So that was a huge problem and we had to call the festival organisers. But like at NASA the bouncers are always grabbing us. They're completely insane. But I think they are just really into hassling people in general, not just us.

For more on Retro Stefson, visit www.myspace.com/retrostefsonmusic



LungA Young Artists' Festival

Text by Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir Photo by Skari

682 kilometres from the capital city in the eastern fjords, the quaint town of Seyðisfjörður plays host to a high dose of art and culture during its 8th annual LungA, or young artists' festival on July 15-22.

This year more than 70 foreign participants from six countries will take part in the festival that director Aðalheiður Borgþórsdóttir says she hopes will be "a melting pot of cultures from all the kids participating." The festival's art program stretches throughout the week with daily workshops from 9-17, ending in a celebration with all the festival participants on Friday.

The workshops are tailored to young people between the ages of 16-25, hoping to attract artistic youth from throughout Iceland and abroad, and will instruct in circus performance, urban funk, jazz, & infusion dance, STOMP (led by Minus drummer Björn Stefánsson), DJ-Sound infusion (led by Gísli Galdur of Trabant and Curver of Ghostigital), animation, clothing design, and visual arts. In the past, additional activities have included clothing design competitions, belly dancing for all ages, a song competition and afro for everybody.

The week will conclude with a huge music event beginning on Friday, July 20 with a warm-up concert

featuring Without the Balls, Miri, Tony the Pony, Foreign Monkeys and Lada Sport and concluding on Saturday with a concert featuring Trabant, Minus, Jeff Who?, Bloodgroup and Skátar. This year's line-up is considerably shorter than last year's, which included a hefty eight bands. Ívar Pétur Kjartansson, one of the festival organisers, says that this year's concert has been shortened by an hour and each band allowed a longer set to feature them more prominently.

Youth In Action will sponsor the festival this year, making the workshops completely free. However, tickets to the giant music fest cost ISK 2,800. The concert is expected to be the biggest single musical event ever to be held in eastern Iceland. LungA sets a new record every year.

For more information visit www.lunga.is or www.myspace.com/lungafest. To register for the festival workshop call 861-5859 or email lunga@lunga.is. Tickets for the concert are on sale in all Skifan stores in Reykjavik, in Bt stores around the country and online at www.midi.is.



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1 EATING

Vor
Laugavegur 24

Vor's refreshing take on café-style eating is marked by its use of fresh ingredients and a health-conscious menu that emphasizes French and Mediterranean cuisine. The fresh spring salad and the excellent carrot-ginger soup are excellent pick-me-ups on rainy days, and the coffee served is of the highest quality.

2 Hornið
Hafnarstræti 15

The casual family-friendly Italian-style corner restaurant has operated at the same spot since 1979 when it became a loyal member of the Icelandic dining-out tradition. Most famous for its pizzas and the generously stuffed calzone, the wholesome menu prides itself on all sorts of high-standard pasta dishes, vegetarian and meat courses, all very affordable.

3 Deco
Austurstræti 12

Deco, a café and wine bar that has everything you need for a quality lunch café, right in the city center. Its modern and stylish interiors, varied menu and impressive selection of whiskey, draw me back again soon. Deco usually gets quite crowded during the evening, when it turns into more of a wine bar than a coffeehouse.

4 Icelandic Fish Chips
Tryggvagata 8

Not the regular fish'n'chips diner but a healthy restaurant using only organic vegetables, quality fish products and no wheat or white sugar in its kitchen. Deep-fried catch of the day served with oven baked potatoes and Skyronnes, a sauce made out of the fat-free milk product Skyr and flavoured with all sorts of spices, on the side for 1350 ISK. They also offer take-away at all times.

5 Sjávarkallarinn
Aðalstræti 2

In an elegant setting, Seafood Cellar chefs serve gourmet fusion style dishes, where the emphasis is not only on ocean delights, but also on all sorts of tempting Asia-inspired dishes. The most fun is to order the exotic menu, a range of courses carefully selected by the chef, and share it with your dining partners.

6 Shalimar
Austurstræti 4

Few places in Reykjavík match the great combination of good price, excellent food, and fast service available at Shalimar. On the menu are assorted Indian-Pakistan dishes and the lunch special is always a great bet for a good meal during a busy day. Grapevine staffers are frequently spotted in the locale, which should be recommendation enough.

7 Sægreifinn
Verubúð 8, Geirsgata

Located right next to the Reykjavík harbour, Sægreifinn fish shop and restaurant is truly like no other you'll witness in the country. The menu features various fish dishes and a rich portion of the best lobster soup we've ever tasted. It also caters to groups upstairs where the room looks more like a cabin than a diner. The good food and welcoming service make this place a must-try.

8 Pizza King
Hafnarstræti 18

This small pizza place is not only cheap but offers the largest slices of pizza you'll get downtown. Charging only 350 ISK per slice, not to mention the special lunch offer where a 10" pizza with three toppings of your choice and a can of Coke costs only 800 ISK, Pizza King is a local favourite. The fact it's open until 6 on Friday and Saturday nights doesn't hurt either.

9 Bernhöftsbakari
Bergstaðastræti 13

It's a bakery, the oldest one in the city in fact, selling all sorts of bakery goods, snacks and an extensive selection of the sweet stuff from early dawn. We particularly love the spelt bread in the morning, and some snúður, kleina and vínarbrauð to go with the afternoon coffee.

10 Bæjarins bestu
Tryggvagata

There's a good reason why there's always a line in front of Bæjarins Bestu, regardless of the weather or time of day. Selected the best hot-dog stand in Europe by The Guardian, a fact locals realized decades ago, it has been serving "ein með öllu" ("one with the lot") to downtown pedestrians since 1935, making it the oldest fast food restaurant in the country. Grabbing a bite couldn't be easier.

11 Quiznos
Lækjargata 8

A chain of sandwich outlets specializing in toasty baguette-style subs, but also serving soups and salads. Choose your toppings and variety of sauces and you'll get a fresh sandwich to suit your taste. Ask for the lamb sub, an Icelandic speciality. Then put a double chocolate chunk brownie in your take-away box and you're good to go.

12 Á næstu grösum (First Vegetarian)
Laugavegur 20B

Many locals claim this to be the best vegetarian restaurant in town offering a menu with plenty of vegan and vegetarian options, both healthy and tasty. Ask for the daily special or try the selection of three different courses. The Indian theme on Fridays is usually a hit and the sugar free banana cake just one of the highly tempting desserts.

13 Nonnabiti
Hafnarstræti 9

Renowned for its greasy sandwiches, Nonnabiti, or Nonni as the locals call it, is one of the more popular junk food places around, offering a large selection of take-away or dine in subs, sandwiches and burgers with a nice dash of the unique Nonni-sauce. If you have a late night craving there's no need to worry, Nonni is open longer than most other places.

14 Austurlandahraðlestin
Hverfisgata 64A

Although a little pricey for a take-away, charging around 1600 ISK for a main course, the food is well worth that extra spending once in a while. Serving typical Indian dishes, the menu is a treasure chest for those with a penchant for a spicy bite. There are also a few tables inside for those who choose to dine in.



SPOT THIS: Austurlandahraðlestin

Hverfisgata 64A, 101 Reykjavík

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15 DRINKING

Grái Kötturinn
Hverfisgata 16a

A small antique-style non-smoking coffee house in a Hverfisgata basement, legendary for its early opening hours, amazing breakfast and strong coffee that will easily wake you up in the morning. We especially recommend The Truck, American style breakfast consisting of eggs, bacon, pancakes, fried potatoes, tomatoes, syrup and toast. The bagels are also excellent.

16 Kaffi Hjómaland

This organic, free-trade café prides itself on being a non-profit company and a dedicated venue for the hardcore and cultural scene by hosting concerts, lectures and poetry nights. Serving delicious soups and vegetarian dishes as well as organic tea, coffee and cake, this is the place to visit for a reasonably priced healthy lunch.

17 Segafredo
By Lækjartorg

The Italian coffee-chain found its spot in the heart of Reykjavík, with its windows facing the Lækjartorg Square. Serving lunch snacks like paninis and strong espressos for coffee lovers whether you need to grab a cup and sandwich on your way to work or want to enjoy your drink on the spot.

18 Glaumbar
Tryggvagata 20

Here is a bit of trivial information: In Icelandic, "glauumur" means the sound of a party. I don't know what more you need to know about Glaumbar, except perhaps that it is the premier sports bar in town. After the final whistle, the action on the dance floor becomes feverish as local DJs take central role.

19 Súfistinn
Laugavegur 18

On the top floor of the giant bookstore Mál og Menning, you'll find the casual booklover coffee house Súfistinn. What we love about this place is the selection of books and magazines you can take from the store and read while enjoying a breakfast, light lunch or afternoon coffee. Browse the shelves and grab a table.

20 Kaffibarinn
Bergstaðastræti 1

A popular coffee place on weekdays, especially among students and downtown workers who like to enjoy a bottle of beer after a busy day. At weekends, Kaffibarinn becomes the opposite of a quiet destination, as its two floors fill up with the late-night soups. With DJs playing live sets from Wednesday to Saturday, the party doesn't start winding down until early morning.

21 Sirkus
Klappargatur 30

Attracting a mixed crowd of party-people, the small bar Sirkus has always been popular among musicians and the creative crowd who get along well although the breathing space can be limited on weekends. While Sirkus's DJs provide for the greatest party possible every weekend, the bar occasionally hosts concerts on weeknights.

22 Vegamót
Vegamótastígur 4

Vegamót (crossroads) has an appealing lunch menu, they serve brunch during the weekends, and the kitchen is open until 22:00 daily. After that the beat goes on, and you can check the end results in photos published the day after on their website www.vegamot.is. If you like Oliver, try Vegamót and vice versa.

23 Gaukurinn
Tryggvagata 22

Reykjavík's version of CBGB's, Gaukurinn has been a mainstay in the Icelandic music scene since the days of Ingólfur Arnarson. A popular live venue, this is the place to find young and upcoming bands, as well as older and more established bands. Anyone who is anything in Icelandic music has passed through Gaukurinn at one point or another.

24 Boston
Laugavegur 28b

Located above the second-hand fashion store Spótník, this's rooony bar floor and nice sofas in the lounge room upstairs, Boston is a fresh addition to the Reykjavík bar scene. Old-school yet stylish interiors, and enough tables to create a good vibe, make the place a comfy café as well as a laid-back tavern where the music is good but never intrusive.

25 Café Cultura
Hverfisgata 18

Located inside the Intercultural Centre, Cultura is a restaurant/bar with a cosmopolitan feel, hosting an array of events and various theme nights like Salsa teaching, tango nights and fusion parties. The menu features all sorts of international dishes like Thai soup, Spanish tapas, fajitas and falafel mixed with bistro regulars such as sandwiches and salads.

26 Prikíð
Bankastræti 12

This two-floor café/pub has been a part of Reykjavík's bar scene for decades. With a large and fairly cheap bistro menu, Prikíð attracts a mix of university students with their laptops and elderly devoted regulars during the day while the younger clientele fills up the space during the evening and especially at weekends when the music is mostly dedicated to hip-hop and R&B.

27 Barinn
Laugavegur 22

Up-and-coming Barinn is becoming quite popular among Reykjavík party scenesters. Its three floors and equally numerous bars get quite crowded during weekends where a mix of dancing downstairs and chatting upstairs make for a good night out. Though mostly a DJ bar, Barinn occasionally hosts live gigs and is always a fun party venue.

28 Q-Bar
Ingólfsstræti 3

A spacious gay/straight friendly bar, the newly renovated Q-Bar is a welcome addition to the nightlife downtown. In stylish and comfortable surroundings, with a lounge-like atmosphere, a good vibe and plenty of seats, the place never gets uncomfortably crowded nor too noisy for conversation.

29 Dillon
Laugavegur 30

The quintessential rock-pub, Dillon features moderately priced drinks, a dark and cosy mood and some pretty good music (especially when local favourite DJ Andrea Jóns mans the decks). The tattooed, beer-lovin' types who hang out there on school nights are joined by legions of parka-clad students during weekends, creating a party atmosphere that's always fun to partake in.

30 SHOPPING

G-Star Raw
Laugavegur 86

Buying jeans used to be a simple task. With the ever-growing selection, successful jeans hunting can take days. The task did not get any easier with the recent addition of a store from the industry powerhouse G-Star Raw. This Dutch brand features an edgy collection, authentic details and innovative washings.

31 Underground
Veltusund 1

Located in a basement by Ingólfstorg, former pro skater, Mike Carroll's skateboard shop Underground is aptly named. The shop offers all the relevant skating gear, be it clothing or boards, from industry leading brand names such as DC, Circa and others. A wide array of T-shirts, shoes, and other skating necessities available.

32 Kirsuberjatréð
Vesturgata 4

Kirsuberjatréð is the perfect little gift shop. A co-op gallery/gift shop owned and operated by ten women artists and designers. Kirsuberjatréð is the commercial outlet where they sell their products. The selections range from clothes, baskets, ceramics, copper sculptures, fish skin items, paper crafts, contemporary jewelry, felt items, and various other designs.

33 Vinberíð
Laugavegur 43

This small boutique sells all kinds of sweets. From chocolate fondue mix, to handmade chocolates, to lollypops and Belgian chocolate with such flavours as lavender and ginger. Vinberíð also sells Icelandic sweets, including the popular licorice products. A must stop for the sweet toothed.

34 Laugavegur 28
Laugavegur 28

A fresh addition to the Laugavegur fashion scene, four separate stores under one roof, second-hand clothing and accessories stores Elvis and Rokk og rósi, and CD experts Smekkleysa, all staples of the Laugavegur shopping experience. In addition, the new store, Pop, supplying neat stuff for the home. The collective will offer unique clothing and ornaments and supply the score to your life.

35 Gullkúnnst Helgu
Laugavegur 13

This spacious and classy store sells jewellery made from lava and other stone. Gullkúnnst Helgu, which is housed in the 1924 built shop on Laugavegur 13, has been selling unique jewellery such as necklaces, bracelets and watches for 15 years.

36 Börn Náttúrunnar
Skólavörðustígur 17a

The children's toy store Börn Náttúrunnar, located in a Skólavörðustígur basement, sells clothes and toys made only of organic products as well as books about childcare and parenthood. Here you can buy creative wooden playthings and woolen products for the young ones carefully selected by the parents who own the shop.

37 Cintamani
Laugavegur 11

If there is one thing you need in Iceland it is warm clothing. In a country known for rapid weather changes, you either come prepared, or buy the appropriate gear. Designed and developed in Iceland to meet rugged weather conditions, Cintamani clothing has been worn on both the North and the South Poles, as well as on the top of Mount Everest.

38 Trilogía
Laugavegur 7

A collection of trendy designer wear fills the space at fashion shop Trilogía, including amazing designs by Alexander McQueen and Chloe alongside Robert Cary Williams, Erotrotkits and many, many more. Summer dresses, sweaters and skirts for all the fashion conscious girls out there as well as cool accessories to complete the look.

39 Kolaportíð
Tryggvagata 19

A trip to the downtown indoor flea market Kolaportíð down by the harbour is always a fun way to spend a Saturday afternoon. Endless stalls offering all kinds of second-hand goods, candy and even fermented shark and Icelandic liquorice. If ready to spend some time thoroughly examining the selection you can find some great bargains. Only open on weekends.

40 Nakti Apinn
Bankastræti 14

Nakti Apinn, located on the second floor at Bankastræti 14, offers an amazing variety of colourful street-clothing, including hooded sweatshirts, T-shirts and leggings designed by the owners and hand-printed with different patterns, graphics and figures. Inside you'll also find a good selection of Icelandic music, books on art and design, accessories, baby clothes and international designer wear.

41 Thorvaldsens Bazar
Austurstræti 4

Located inside a dignified wooden building, Thorvaldsens Bazar is among the oldest shops in Reykjavík, opening in 1901 and run by the women's charity organization the Thorvaldsen Society. Selling souvenirs, handicrafts, woolen underclothes and sweaters as well as Icelandic jewellery, the friendly saleswomen work as volunteers and all profits are donated to charity work.

42 Friða Frænka
Vesturgata 3

This small boutique is a jam-packed treasure chest overflowing with antique furniture and items to perk up your apartment. In every corner of the shop, you'll find some unique items, including candle holders, lamps, pillows, gorgeous 60's sofas, tables, vases and a selection of clothes and vintage jewellery.

43 Iða
Lækjargata 2a

The spacious Iða bookstore is a great source for all kinds of reading material offering an excellent range of books, travel guides, magazines, post-cards and great gift items. The first-class service will help you search for what you need. On the second floor you'll find restaurants serving sushi, soups and sandwiches.



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HANNA design shop
Laugavegur 20B



DEAD
LAUGAVEGUR 29 - BAKHÚS



101 Goldsmith
Laugavegur 82

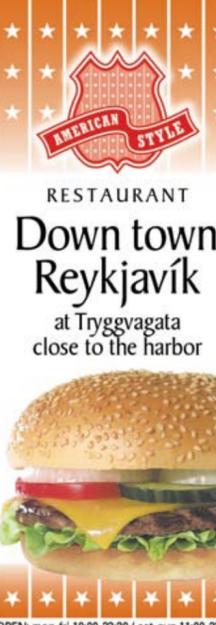


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Angelo

Laugavegur 22a, 101 Reykjavík, tel.: 562 0022

Located on downtown Reykjavík's main street, Laugavegur, Angelo is a bistro and bar with a relaxed and intimate feel. The fusion style restaurant offers bar and dining areas as well as a secluded terrace with outdoor seating. On Friday and Saturday nights, Angelo is transformed into a lounge bar offering house music by DJ Pepe late into the night.

The Grapevine was invited to check out Angelo's new menu one early Sunday evening. The chilled out sounds of Icelandic reggae band Hjalmar combined with the candle lit dining room decorated in rich purple helped to create Angelo's warm atmosphere.

The Entrée menu features a variety of deep fried seafood including octopus, lobster and prawns averaging out at 1,200 ISK per dish. I selected the Green Salad and Club Sandwich from the Light Dishes menu which also includes a soup of the day and a variety of burgers and sandwiches. At 900 ISK, the huge Green Salad consisting of a mesclun lettuce, feta, green and black olives, tomato, bell peppers and croutons is a tasty meal in itself. The Club Sandwich (minus the ham at my request) comes in at around 1,200 ISK and, as is usually the case, consists of juicy mushrooms, cheese, tomato, lettuce, mayonnaise and plenty of pepper between a "double decker" of toasted bread accompanied by a large serving of crunchy-to-perfection French fries.

As a vegetarian I always tend to be a little critical of places that do not offer options for those who do not eat meat. The Green Salad was the only such offering on Angelo's menu. Taking this into consideration (and although I definitely enjoyed my meal) I probably can not do this restaurant's culinary offerings full justice.

For those desiring more than a salad and a sandwich, the Main Dishes menu should have you covered. The menu includes some interesting and no doubt satisfying meals including whale meat with pepper sauce (a real favourite with tourists according to the restaurant staff) at 2,300 ISK, "Speer of Seafood" at 2,700 ISK, lobster and salad at 3,850 ISK, and a variety of lamb and beef dishes averaging out at 3,400 ISK.

While this place may fail in pleasing the vegetarian crowd, the restaurant's new menu certainly satisfies its aim of offering an affordable variety of both light and main dishes.

Reviewed by Zoë Robert



Fhjótt og Gott

BSÍ, Vatnsmýravegur 10, 101 Reykjavík, tel.:552-1288

The journey down to the BSÍ bus terminal for my first bite of boiled Icelandic sheep's head was not a cakewalk. I wanted to be a man, but I wasn't sure about this particular rite of passage. How could I possibly devour the head of the cutest animal in the book? I asked myself what kind of pervert does this stuff just for a restaurant review? As a non-Icelander, I knew that finishing the sheep's head and all its meat would put me into an irreversible category of carnivore – and I wasn't sure if I was ready to be placed there at age 21.

Things got worse when I actually saw Svið for the first time. I simply had not realised that I would be eating a face with eyelids, ear holes and a mouth. For the first time in my life, my food was looking back at me. Until my fork had utterly ravaged the features of the poor sheep I couldn't help but picture a girl named Mary posting "lost sheep" flyers around 101.

But the difficulty with stomaching Svið was mainly conceptual, as most of the flesh was quite edible. It wasn't great, but it wasn't rotten shark either. The meat of the cheeks was stringy (like beef pot roast) and certainly the easiest part to digest. At times it was a little salty, but not too different from eating Swiss steak. The cheek meat disappeared to reveal the hideous gum meat, which looked and felt like the inside of a bell pepper, but my formula of four parts ground turnip for every one part Svið helped me to manage it. It also helped to look away from the plate while I chewed the gums, as the sheep's flat little chompers were fully exposed at this point.

Once I got over the bizarre reflexive complex of tasting another creature's tongue, I found that this meat was the best. Ultimately, the only parts I avoided were the fatty underside of the animal's mouth and the thin layer of skin above the nostrils.

While I won't be one of the hundreds of customers who buys Svið at BSÍ every week, I can understand where the Icelander's Svið tradition comes from. Yeah, it's a sheep's face, but it's probably one of the cleanest pieces of meat you'll ever have. Much cleaner than that hot dog you just ate, anyway.

Reviewed by Chandler Fredrick



Café Flóra

Reykjavík Botanical Garden, tel.: 553 8872

The Reykjavík Botanical Garden (Grasagarðurinn), located in the Laugardalur valley, is truly a hidden oasis in the city. Established in 1961, it contains a large collection of various plants and trees from all over the world, nice footpaths and a charming eatery – Café Flóra – nestled in the middle of the garden, making it not only an educational but a pleasantly relaxing destination, especially on a sunny day.

The café, which recently celebrated its ten-year anniversary, has been a huge boost for the garden, attracting a growing number of hungry diners who have caught on to this tasty option. Open daily during summer from 10 to 22, here you can enjoy great meals both inside a roomy greenhouse or seated in the large outdoor area, offering plenty of tables.

Manager and chef Marentza Poulsen tells me that because the café is only open during summer months, the menu has a summery theme, focusing on light healthy dishes, which are mixed with the traditional Danish cuisine. Refreshments include Parma ham with melons, soups, sandwiches, Danish smørrebrød, warm liver paté served with crunchy bacon, mushrooms and rye bread and a generous brunch on weekends. For the afternoon arrival, a selection of cakes and coffee is offered. It's also worth mentioning that the salads as well as the herbs used in the kitchen are organically grown in the garden, so fresh ingredients are guaranteed.

My dining companion and I grabbed a table outside. Poulsen had told us that Café Flóra's speciality is the veggie-fruit chicken salad and which, judging from the stuffed plates served to those sitting at nearby tables, is an immensely popular order. Without hesitation, we therefore opted for two portions. We were served a rich dish of salad and chunks of marinated chicken topped with roasted pine nuts and sesame seeds, and fresh fruits such as melons, mango and strawberries served with newly baked bread with butter. The salad was spot-on and especially flavoursome for such a simple dish (I would love to get the recipe for the dressing). Frankly, it's among the best salad dishes we had eaten for months and left us way too satisfied to even consider a dessert.

By boasting a combination of a quiet family-friendly setting, flowery surroundings and fine food, on a fair-weather day, this dining environment is hard to top.

Reviewed by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir



Classic Toys Return

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir

Back in the old days, Icelandic children couldn't run out to the next over-stuffed toyshop to stock up on plastic dolls, action figures or computer games, if they happened to be bored. They had to use the imagination to entertain themselves in between daily housework chores. As a large part of the population consisted of farmers, these children grew up in the countryside among cows and sheep and other farm animals and used whatever they could find to make toys and amusing games. What was usually easiest to come across were bones, especially sheep bones, which they collected, played with and stored in homemade boxes hidden under their beds. These small boxes were called Völuskín.

Now, these old classic playthings have been reborn in an up-to-date way. Named after the traditional treasure chest, this new box set consists of 13 pieces of plastic replicas of bones that resemble farm animals (sheep, cows, horses, dogs and foxes) as well as two farmers. The wooden box, painted with a picture of traditional Icelandic farmhouse in a mountainous surrounding, can also be used in the game.

Created by product designer Lóa Auðunsdóttir and business administrator Þórey Vilhjálmssdóttir, the product is "intended to promote and re-establish the original Icelandic toys for generations to come and introduce this heritage to children all over the world."

The modern Völuskín serves the same purpose as its prototype but the product is not only a creative toy for Icelandic youngsters but marketed for tourists as well. The set, which includes information on Völuskín and its history in Icelandic, German, Danish, English and French, can surely be a different and unique souvenir to take back home. All the supplementary items can be used in the game and every tiny little piece you can think of can be used to create your own tiny farm. All you need is a bit of imagination.

The toy caskets are sold at the shops Kisan, Leikbær and Rammagerðin as well as at the National Museum and various hotels in the city.

For more information see: www.voluskirin.is

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Services

Useful Numbers
Emergency number: 112
Police: 569 9000
Medical help: 1770
Dental emergency: 575 0505
AA: 551 2010
Information: 118
Telegrams: 146
Tax Free Refund
Iceland Refund,
 Aðalstræti 2, Tel: 564 6400
 www.icelandrefund.com
Laundry Service
HI Hostel, Sundlaugarvegur 34,
 Tel: 553 8110, www.hostel.is
Úðafoss, Vítastígur 13,
 Tel: 551 2301, www.udadfoss.is
Post Office

Post offices are located around the city as well as in the countryside. The downtown post office is at Pósthússtræti 3-5. For a full list and info on opening hours visit www.posturinn.is.
 Stamps are also sold in bookstores, gas stations, some grocery stores and tourist shops.
Embassies and Consulates in Iceland
United States, Laufásvegur 21, Tel: 562 9100
United Kingdom, Laufásvegur 31, Tel: 550 5100
Russia, Garðastræti 33, Tel: 551 5156
China, Víðimelur 29, Tel: 552 6751
 For a full list visit Ministry for Foreign Affairs: www.mfa.is/diplomatic-missions/icelandic-missions/

Internet Access
 Most coffeehouses have wireless Internet access.
 Computers with Internet connections are available at:
Ráðhúskaffi City Hall, Tjarnargata 11
BSÍ Bus Terminal,
 Vatnsmýrarvegur 10
Ground Zero, Vallarstræti 10
The Reykjavik City Library, Tryggvagata 15
The National and University Library, Armgrimgata 3
Tourist Information Centre, Aðalstræti 2
 Icelandic Travel Market: Bankastræti 2

Opening hours
Bars and clubs: According to regulations bars may be open until 01:00 on weekdays and 05:30 on weekends.
Shops: Mon-Fri 10-18, Sat 10-16, Sun closed. The shopping centres Kringlan and Smáralind as well as most supermarkets and tourist shops have longer opening hours.
Swimming pools: weekdays 06:30-22:30, weekends 08:00-20:30 although some may be open an hour longer.
The State owned ÁTVR liquor stores: Mon-Thu 11-18, Fri 11-19, Sat

11-18.
 Banks in the centre are open Mon-Fri 09-16.

Getting Around

Public transport
 The only public transport system in Reykjavik is the bus. Most busses run every 20 minutes and price per fare is 250 ISK for adults and 75 ISK for children. Complete route map at: www.bus.is. Tel: 540 2700
 www.icelandrefund.com
HI Hostel, Sundlaugarvegur 34, Tel: 553 8110, www.hostel.is
Úðafoss, Vítastígur 13, Tel: 551 2301, www.udadfoss.is
Post Office

Rent a bike
Borgarhjól, Hverfisgata 50, Tel: 551 5653, www.borgarhjol.net
HI Hostel, Sundlaugarvegur 34, Tel: 553 8110, www.hostel.is
Tourist Information Centre, Aðalstræti 2, Tel: 590 1550, www.visitreykjavik.is
Taxi
Hreyfill-Bæjarleiðir, Tel: 553 3500 or 588 5522
BSR, Tel: 561 0000

For disabled travellers
Reykjavik Group Travel Service, Brunastaðir 3, Tel: 587 8030, www.randburg.com/is/reykjavik_group_travel_service/
 A useful brochure, Accessible Reykjavik, can be found at tourist offices.
Car rentals
Átak Car Rental, Smiðjuvegur 1, Tel: 554 6040
ALP, Dugguvogur 10, Tel: 562 6060
Avis, Knarravogi 2, Tel: 591 4000
Eurocar, Hjallahraun 9, Tel: 565 3800
A.G Car Rental, Tangarhófi 8-12, Tel: 587 5544
Atlas Car Rental, Dalshraun 9, Tel: 565 3800
Berg Car Rental, Tangarhófi 8, Tel: 577 6050
Hertz, Flugvallavegur, Tel: 522 4400

Airlines
Air Iceland, Reykjavikflugvöllur, Tel: 570 3030, www.flugfelag.is
Air Vestmannaeyjar, Tel: 481 3255, www.eyjaflug.is
Bus Terminal
BSÍ, Vatnsmýrarvegur 10, Tel: 562 1011, www.bsi.is
Samferda.net
 A reasonable choice for the budget traveller. You log on to the website www.samferda.net, choose your destination and hopefully find a travel buddy to share the cost.

Cultural Centres and Tourist Offices
The Intercultural Centre
 The Intercultural Centre throws occasional cultural events and conferences but its main purpose is to be an information and counselling centre and serve as an advocate for the rights of immigrants in Iceland.
 Hverfisgata 18, Tel: 530 9300

www.ahus.is
Icelandic Travel Market
 Bankastræti 2, Tel: 510 5700, www.kleif.is
 Information on day tours, accommodations, car rental and everything else you need to know when travelling in Iceland.

Iceland Visitor
 Lækjargata 2, Tel: 511 2442, www.icelandvisitor.com
 A travel agency offering travelling package trips and custom-made tours as well as car rental, day tours and accommodations for visitors.
Tourist Information Centre
 Aðalstræti 2, Tel: 590 1550, www.visitreykjavik.is
 Offers information for tourists as well as providing internet access, booking service, a phone centre, money exchange service, tax refund and selling the Reykjavik Tourist Card. The Reykjavik Tourist Card gives admission to city busses, various museums, Reykjavik swimming pools, The Family Park and Reykjavik Zoo, The Culture House and the National and University Library.

The Icelandic Tourist Board
 Lækjargata 3, Tel: 535 5500, www.visiticeland.com
 All information needed before travelling in Iceland.
Goethe Institute
 Tungata 14, Tel: 561 5921, www.goethe.de/island
 A cultural institute that offers movie screenings, lectures and German language courses.

Nordic House
 Sturlugata 5, Tel: 551 7030, www.nordice.is
 The Nordic cultural centre organises various cultural events, conferences and exhibitions.
 All major tourist spots in Reykjavik also offer brochures, maps and information for travellers.

Useful Information
Where to learn Icelandic as a foreign language
Icelandic on the Internet, www.vefskoli.is
Mimir Continuing Education, Skeifán 8, Tel: 580 1800, www.mimir.is
Námshólfur Reykjavíkur, Frikkirkjuvegur 1, Tel: 551 2992
Fjölmenning, Laugavegur 59, Tel: 511 1319, www.fjolmenning.is
The Icelandic College of Engineering and Technology, Höfðabakki 9, Tel: 577 1400, www.thi.is
Iðnskólinn í Reykjavík, Skólavörðuholti, Tel: 552 6240, www.ir.is
The University of Iceland – Department of Continuing Education, Dunhagi 7, Tel: 525 4924, www.endurmenntun.is
Religious movements
 The national church in Iceland is the

Evangelical Lutheran Church. Masses are generally held on Sundays at 11:00 in churches all around the capital. Service in English is at Hallgrímskirkja every last Saturday each month, starting at 14:00. The Roman Catholic Church also has masses in English and Polish.
 Other religious movements in Reykjavik are for example:
The Muslim Association of Iceland, Ármúli 38
Ásatrú Association, Grandagarði 8
Bahá'í, Álfabakka 12
The Church of Evangelism, Hlíðasmári 9
The Icelandic Buddhist Movement, Víghólastigur 21
Reykjavik Free Lutheran Church, Frikkirkjuvegur 5
Pentecostal Assembly, Hátún 2
Roman Catholic Church, Hávallagata 14
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Ásabraut 2
Jehovah's Witnesses, Sogavegur 71
Seventh-Day Adventists, Suðurhlíð 36
Zen Buddhism in Iceland, Reykjavíkurvegur 31

Independent Church, Háteigsvegur 101
The Russian Orthodox Church in Iceland, Sólvallagata 10
The Cross, Hlíðasmári 5-7
Trade Unions
The Icelandic Federation of Labour, Sættún 1, Tel: 535 5600, www.asi.is
The Federation of State and Municipal employees, Grettisgata 89, Tel: 525 8300, www.bsrb.is
The Association of Academics, Borgartún 6, Tel: 581 2090, www.bhm.is
Efling, Sættún 1, Tel: 510 7500, www.efling.is
The Commercial Workers' Union, Kringlan 7, Tel: 510 1700, www.vr.is
Union of Public Servants, Grettisgata 89, Tel: 525 8340, www.sfr.is

Useful Websites
www.visitreykjavik.is (The official tourist website of Reykjavik)
www.gayice.is (Information about the gay scene in Iceland)
www.fjolmenningarsetur.is (The Multicultural Centre)
www.hostel.is (Hostel International in Iceland)
www.vinnumalastofnun.is (Public employment services)
www.gulalanan.is (The yellow pages)
www.leigulistinn.is (Rent a flat)
www.simaskra.is (Icelandic telephone directory)
Where to get ...
Work and residence permit: The Directorate of Immigration, Skógarhlíð 6, Tel: 510 5400, www.utli.is
Insurance and benefits: The State Social Security Institute, Laugavegur 114-116, Tel: 560 4400, www.tr.is
Icelandic citizenship: Unless you

come from a Nordic country, foreign citizens have to have had an unrestricted residence permit in Iceland for at least seven years in order to get an Icelandic citizenship although some exceptions exist to that general rule.
 Applications are at the Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs, Skuggasund, Tel: 545 9000, www.domsmlaraduneyti.is
Unemployment benefits: Directorate of Labour, Public Employment Service, Tryggvagata 17, Tel: 515 4800, www.vinnumalastofnun.is
Icelandic social security number (kennitala): National Register, Borgartún 30, Tel: 560 9800, www.hagstofa.is
Driver's license: Those who have a foreign license don't need an Icelandic one for the first six months. After that time you have one month to apply for an Icelandic driver's license. Applications are at police stations.
Tax card: Tax office, Laugavegur 166, Tel: 563 1100, www.rsk.is
Rent subsidies: Social Service Office, Tryggvagata 17, Tel: 411 9000 www.felagstjonustan.is

Facts on Iceland
 ■ Iceland is a constitutional republic with slightly more than 300,000 inhabitants. Reykjavik has been the country's capital since 1786 and today almost two-thirds of the population live in the greater capital area.
 ■ The 17th of June 1944 Iceland became an independent republic. That day is the national holiday and is celebrated all around the country.
 ■ Alþingi, the national parliament, is the oldest assembly in the world, established at Þingvellir in 930 but restored in Reykjavik in 1844. The parliament is comprised of 63 members, who are elected by popular vote every four years. Icelandic citizens over 18 years of age have the legal right to vote.
 ■ Parliamentary elections were last held in 2003 with 33.7 percent of votes going to the Independence Party. The Social Democratic Alliance got 31 percent, the Progressive Party 17.7 percent, the Leftist-Greens 8.8 percent and the Liberal Party 7.4 percent. The Independence Party and the Progressive Party formed a coalition and together lead the government.
 ■ Iceland has 12 ministers with the prime minister and head of government being Geir H. Haarde, who is also chairman of the Independence Party. The President of Iceland is Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, who has been in office since 1996. He is the Chief of State although his duties are mostly ceremonial.
 ■ Time Zone: GMT 0
 ■ Currency: Íslensk króna (ISK)
 ■ International Dialling Code: +354

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Bertie Wooster, the company whose name is taken from the works of the quintessentially English author P.G. Wodehouse, specialises in gentlemen's formal wear. Herrafataverzlun Kormáks & Skjaldar features various B.W. items and accessories (like this grey top hat) that help complete the wardrobe of the aspiring chap. The delicate English Pewter flask is a perfectly hipster and iconoclastic accessory to the Reykjavik pubcrawl. **Herrafataverzlun Kormáks & Skjaldar, Laugavegur 59**



1,995 ISK

With summer at its peak, it's no wonder that the newly released Nerf N-Strike Maverick is one of the most popular items at Nexus, the comic book and gaming store on Hverfisgata. The ooze of Nerf guns, The 'Maverick' has a rotating 6-dart barrel and comes with an advisory label calling for protective eyewear. **Nexus, Hverfisgata 103**



3,400 ISK

Not many people think to look at the feet around them in Reykjavik, but if they did they'd probably notice that men care about their shoes in the capitol. The Sophos shoe shining kit (from Herrafataverzlun Kormáks & Skjaldar), comes with two polishes, three brushes and a shine cloth for the involved and careful process of shining expensive shoes. **Herrafataverzlun Kormáks & Skjaldar, Laugavegur 59**



1,495 ISK

At Nexus there is a display case full of small figurines intended for fantasy gaming. Still the figurines are artistic and kitschy enough to be popular decoration for flats and office desks. This 'Warhawk Riders' figurine from Games Workshop is just one of many intricate fantasy game pieces available at Nexus. **Nexus, Hverfisgata 103**

19,900 ISK

If Ingolfstorg square on a mid-summer's day is any indication: skateboarding is a very big part of Iceland's youth culture. While most skaters use the shorter boards for difficult skating, many use the longboard (like this Black Label Longboard from Brim) as a perfect way to peacefully cruise around the smooth streets and long hills of downtown Reykjavik. **Brim, Laugavegur 71**



Pay Attention!

Brim

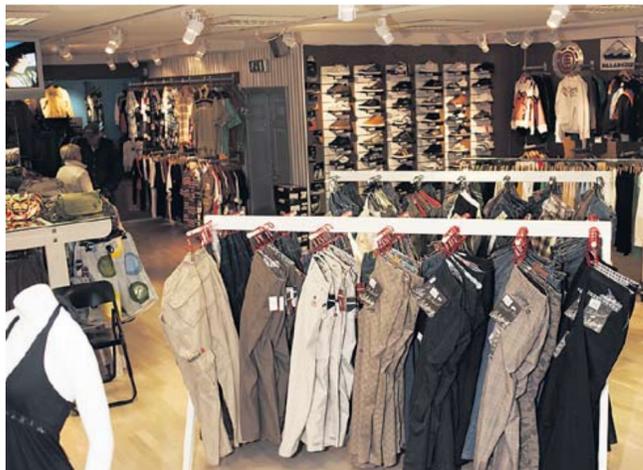
Laugavegur 71, 101 Reykjavik

As many comparisons as Iceland gets with Hawaii, it certainly seems to lag behind its Pacific counterpart in the way of Surf and Skate apparel stores. Brim, an enormous surfwear, skatewear, and snowboard shop on upper Laugavegur seems to compensate for downtown Reykjavik's noticeable drought of Xtreme sports stores. A recent move in late April saw the shop open up two full levels of men and women's beachwear and surf and skate accessories.

The upper level of Brim features backpacks from major skateboard companies, ranging from 3,900 ISK to 6,900 ISK, and other skate and streetwear accessories such as hats, belts, wallets, necklaces and sunglasses. In the summertime, most of the items found on the top floor of Brim can be spotted on the wrists,

necks, heads and backs of Icelandic teens in nearly every part of town.

Downstairs, Brim is loaded with colourful women's bathing suits and men's board shorts. Once can find streetwear from all the major surf and skate companies (Billabong, Element, Nikita et al.) on the bottom level, with volumes of men's skate shoes on the closest wall. In the back of Brim is a skateboard shop where anyone can come in and assemble their own custom board from a wide selection of decks, trucks, wheels and bearings. While decks generally start at 6,900 ISK, Brim features a make-your-own skateboard deal ranging from 14,900 ISK to about 20,000 ISK (making it one of the cheapest in town.)

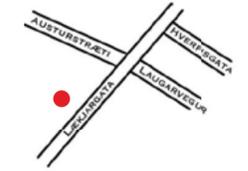


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Gabriel Garcia Marquez (b. 1928)
The Guardian Newspaper, 1999



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Music Scene: Worldwide



useless. The 50 million ISK budget is ridiculous and small amounts are being offered to artists only so the government can pretend to be supporting the music scene. The budget also includes all parts of the scene, regardless of music style or the type of the projects. A small part of the budget is used in real music export and promotion of musicians abroad. What I would like to see is a new model similar to the Icelandic Film Centre, which provides decent financial support to finance film projects and promote Icelandic films internationally. The Film Centre, [which has around 400 million ISK budget to fund various projects] is an independent government sponsored body while the Music Fund is a small committee. The difference between the support given to the film industry and the music industry is simply outrageous."

He adds: "I also see it as a certain anachronism that the fund is a part of the Ministry of Education and not a part of the Ministry of Industry. Music is simply an industry and should be respected as such. It is an investment and nothing less and has proved to be a profitable export. That can clearly be seen by the success of our national pride, Björk. Supporting music as culture but not as an industry isn't inspirational for the artists. There needs to be a good institutional support if we are to go full force in exporting music and create a growing industry."

Sturluson goes on to say how profitable it is for the economy to have a thriving music scene in the country:

"The scene has such great snowball effects. It's quite embarrassing how obvious it is and easy to calculate how profitable it would be to invest greatly in the music industry. That investment will multiply itself and have great effects on other trades, most obviously, the tourism industry."

Hyperactive Tourist Attraction

Many musicians and industry moguls share Sturluson's view and point out that when local acts set out to play internationally, exposure in global media hasn't been lacking. The attention isn't only an encouragement for the music scene but has proven to be a boost for the tourism industry.

It's no overstatement that Icelandic musicians are drawing more positive attention to the country than most other industries nowadays and few deny that its cultural importance is significant. That can be seen by the turnout for recent festivals such as Aldrei fór ég suður (an annual music festival in small Westfjords town Ísafjörður) where IMX took ten international journalists to experience the two-day extravaganza, who returned to their homes with positive reviews, interviews and articles. Even greater publicity surrounds the annual Iceland Airwaves music festival, which always sees good coverage in international media. The growing number of tourists attending the festival as well as promoters and industry representatives, who arrive with the sole purpose of discovering new talent, is just one example. In 2006, 1700 of the party-thirsty audience were foreign attendees. This year's festival is bound to be bigger than ever.

Svanhildur Konráðsdóttir, director of Culture and Tourism at Visit Reykjavík, says that it is hard to measure the effects of the music scene on the tourist industry in the country but adds that they know they are immense.

"In 2005, we participated in a Nordic survey where we examined the economic benefits and impacts certain events have on the economy. We chose to study the Airwaves festival, which is an event that attracts plenty of visitors who are active, go to museums, on excursions and visit the swimming pools, shops and restaurants for example. The result of the survey was that the festival alone injects about 300 million into the city's economy," Konráðsdóttir says, adding how important these concertgoers are for the tourism industry, especially as the festival is held off-season in one weekend in October.

The Constant Lack of Facilities

"The connection between Icelandic culture getting attention abroad and the increase in tourism is enormous," says Viddi, bass player for the electronic-punk-dance group Trabant, which recently returned home after touring Britain extensively. "Our tour will probably end up in 50 to 100 media reviews and interviews. And that's just one band. Add Minus, GusGus, múm, Björk, Sigur Rós and all the other ones on the road and you will have great publicity," he adds.

When asked how he sees the musical environment today, he points to the fact that before talking about any government intervention in music export, there needs to be a strong domestic infrastructure and favourable working conditions for the artists to develop their sound.

"Today, musicians are creating their own music without being supported by a big body, but of course it would be good to have some sort of a system that would be encouraging, but that would have to be

thoroughly thought through. What I would most like to see change is the possibility of getting good practice facilities. I'm getting tired of seeing only temporary solutions but no long term plans. It shouldn't be a question about supporting that part of the process," he says, and points out that many bands that have been touring immensely in recent years have to settle for a lack of housing today.

"I would like to see the prices go down so bands will actually have a reasonable option to rent a practice space instead of having to pay the ridiculous amount Kaupping Bank and Glitnir Bank have decided on. Today, I see Reykjavík moving in a totally different direction, heading towards becoming a business city instead of a cultural city. In 10 years, I can't see many teenage bands renting a small practice space for 80,000 ISK. I will not be seeing any growth in the scene. [...] If we are talking about building a music industry, we should start by creating a good environment for that industry to evolve."

Benediktsson shares a similar view on the government intervention:

"I am not sure that people should necessarily be supported to make music. But the trend in tourism has been that culture sells vacation trips. Icelandair has noticed this, that is why it established Loftbrú. These parties know that there is a correlation between the music industry and the tourism industry. If there are people with fresh ideas, creating fresh music, there are many out there who are willing to support that. The image-industry and the money-industry go hand in hand. There are so many people who come to Iceland today because they heard the Sugarcubes as teenagers all those years ago. Today, these people have money and they want to travel.

He adds: "It is most important to take care of the infrastructure, and focus on what we are doing here. You can't really just decide to export music like any other commodity. All you can really do is make information available. The main thing is that the music is good. Where there is good music being made, where there is a creative scene, I think people will always take notice."

New Marketing Opportunities

When asked how she sees the future of the music industry, Hildibrandsdóttir is positive that things will turn out in favour of the scene.

"I think that the opportunities are plenty but they are also very sparse. The number of musicians making record deals is growing and the record companies have strengthened their position. Smekkleysa now has a worldwide distribution and 12 Tónar has expanded to Europe. Individual musicians have also succeeded in assigning contracts" she says.

"The opportunities also consist in understanding the breakthrough in technology we have witnessed, for example, distribution on the web and through mobile phones and how the digital world will change opportunities in an exciting way. As the situation is today, if you have the technical understanding and knowledge, you can reach out to an incredible number of listeners without having millions to back you up," Hildibrandsdóttir adds.

The Iceland Music Export has several plans to tackle this new technology. "We are organising a conference where we will look into the possibility of Iceland becoming a test-market for a new business model in digital distribution. One of our biggest projects this year is also to establish a good web page for musicians and those working in the music sector" she explains, but the site already features Podcasts, downloads, music videos, information on musicians, producers and studios and a list of music events and festivals.

"All in all, I have expectations for the future," Hildibrandsdóttir says. "But we shouldn't forget that the industry is small in Iceland and we have less money than the neighbouring countries. [...] There doesn't necessarily have to be so much financial support to move the grassroots to a professional level, just the right support at the right time."

The Iceland Airwaves festival attracts plenty of visitors who go to museums, on excursions and visit the swimming pools, shops and restaurants for example. The festival alone injects about 300 million into the city's economy.



GusGus at Glastonbury

Text by Ben H. Murray Photo by Juli Davis

How do you explain an Icelandic dance band playing Glastonbury's Jazz Stage? If you're GusGus's President, President Bongo to be precise, you simply redefine musical genres to suit, bending a few rules along the way: "Techno is the new jazz and jazz is the new techno." To which Daniel Ágúst, the black-clad vocalist sipping a gin and tonic in the backstage tent after their mid-afternoon set, adds "I had a pre-judged idea about jazz but I think we broke all the boundaries."

Few would disagree that GusGus's performance at the world's most famous festival, held on a remote but sizeable farm in the West of England, was far removed from the eclectic mix of jazz-influenced artists billed to play the same stage as four dance disciples from Iceland. Amy Winehouse, Corinne Bailey-Rae and other similarly popular brass-voiced warblers all trod the same boards over the weekend, but GusGus made them look like a they were from the 1930s (rather than just being influenced by the distant past) with a display of technical dance music and vocalisation that quite literally made the sun shine and hundreds of people dance in a muddy field just for fun.

After an entertaining stint at the front of the stage, Bongo handed the vocal duties to Earth (Urður Hákonardóttir) and Daniel Ágúst, whilst he retreated to help Biggi Veira make the music towards the back of the stage. After all, Bongo was one of the founding members of GusGus in 1995, so he's had 12 years of singing at the front of the stage to rabid masses and this mud-splattered crowd probably looked particularly feral from his vantage point. Having played the Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts in 1999 – "We had the honour of opening the Pyramid Stage

on Friday, at 11.30 a.m." reckons Bongo. "No, no, no, no that was another one...we played in a tent at Glastonbury in 1999." Bongo stands corrected by Biggi – GusGus know what performing at this typically English festival involves. The crowd demands enthusiasm and a performance to buoy their mud-drenched spirits. GusGus certainly provided the sort of mid-afternoon injection of energy that made a lot of the other bands booked to play seem extremely dull and self-important.

The previous day's journey to the festival site, and all the weird and wonderful sights and sounds contained within, was not an easy mission, with narrow roads leading to the area and 177,500 people converging on the site. Sadly, President Bongo, Earth, Biggi and Daniel Ágúst had a journey that made other marathon pilgrimages to Glastonbury look like a quick stroll to the bar tent. Before they even left Iceland, their England-bound plane ground to a halt at Keflavik Airport, causing them to cancel a London gig the day before Glastonbury. Even when they did arrive in London the next day, their Glastonbury appearance was still in doubt. But a quick dash on a bus ("We travel light so it was OK..." assures Biggi) and a stay in particularly downmarket hotel solved the problem and they made their stage time.

After hearing about their transport issues and debating which festival they opened at 11.30 a.m. in the summer of 1999 ("It was shit anyway..." recalls Bongo), we move onto their attitudes to performing live to a European audience – something GusGus have years of experience of doing to great success. "We recently had what we call a Millennium Makeover so now, when we play live, we only play tracks

from our current albums like Forever and our last album before that, Attention. Attention was like a slap in the face – 'wake up' – because we had changes, everything was different and we had to create a new direction."

By that President Bongo refers to the band's continually evolving line-up. With members joining and departing on a fairly regular basis, their music goes through a regular metamorphosis depending on who's adding their influence and ideas to the GusGus collective. This, you could speculate, is why they continue to be such a draw across Europe after so many years of playing festivals and gigs – the fans know that every time they see GusGus it will be entirely different to their last gig in that country. Familiarity breeds contempt and something unexpected, such as President Bongo's fetching white pin strip jodhpurs or Earth's spectacular green seaweed outfit at Glastonbury, will be memorable rather than forgettable or repetitive.

Add some classy dance music and Bongo's charisma to the visual mix and you have the reason why they sell out gigs all over Europe, with London, Poland, France and Germany being particularly enthusiastic about the band. Sadly, the band's second appearance at the festival was cancelled so Glastonbury only got one dose of the foursome at work, much to the disappointment of anyone who saw their first set. GusGus were also disappointed as the event is truly unique to them. "It's impossible to compare this (Glastonbury) to anything we have in Iceland. We don't have many people. All of the people in our biggest cities would be able to fit in here."

After being around for so long and playing almost every major festival in Europe and

beyond (they've played sold out shows in LA as well), they freely admit they intend to leave a politician-style legacy with their fans. "On our last album we created the concept of Forever, like being an icon, and we've touched on other things as well, like religion, sin and all that...purely philosophical but when you wish hard for a thing it'll come to you – that's the idea of Forever." Sadly not many things are forever but GusGus did have the power to summon something with a shelf life even longer than theirs: "My trousers brought the sun out!" declares Bongo, "actually I think it was your behind that did it..." corrects Ágúst. If only they'd stayed all weekend, then maybe GusGus could have repeated the sun trick and saved us all from another very English summer festival soaking.

"We had the honour of opening the Pyramid Stage on Friday, at 11.30 a.m." reckons Bongo. "No, no, no, no that was another one...we played in a tent at Glastonbury in 1999." Bongo stands corrected by Biggi



Ipswich vs. Gavin Portland

Text by Ben H. Murray Photo by Jonathan Fisher

In one corner we have the residents of Ipswich – one of Britain's oldest and most historic towns – who number about 117,986. Their town is built beside an estuary in the East of Britain and is known for its fish, football and ale but definitely not the quality of its music.

And in the other corner we have the disaffected youth of Ipswich, totalling 14 tattooed people. There should be at least one more but the promoter has skipped the country and left some of the disaffected 14 in charge of matters. We're sitting in the attic bar of a garishly decorated pub where downstairs, every Saturday night, badly dressed men probably drink too much Stella and girls fall over in their high heels after too many alcopops. Aside from the 14 black-clad metal kids, there is also hardcore punk band Gavin Portland and their one-man entourage, but they don't count as they're from Iceland.

The battle is set as the landlady, a woman who looks like she sees enough misbehaviour during the weekend to make her clamp down on any inappropriate activity fairly quickly at other times, tells the stand-in promoter to turn the sound down or she'll throw them out. A swagger of youthful rebellion sweeps the room and then, when everyone has thought about how bad it would be if Gavin Portland were sent on their way before playing a note, a moment of hesitation; the volume is reduced slightly. Round one to the Ipswich majority.

The first band raise themselves from their seats and wander to the front of the room without encountering any crowd trouble on the way. They sound a little like an unpolished version of Gavin Portland and half way through the singer announces: "I would tell

you our name but as this is embarrassing so I won't...this is probably our last ever gig anyway." Two nil to the Ipswich masses and one less 'bleeding racket' for them to worry about.

A similar band follows, albeit one with a bit more confidence about their future plans, before Gavin Portland stand up and walk the two metres from their plastic table to the stage. There are now only nine people in the venue, five left after the first band, to absorb Kolli's ear-busting screams, Sindri's Jurassic drumming and the blasts of punk that emanate from the strings of Addi and Þórir's guitars. All nine crowd members give it their all from the first cry of blue murder to the final flourish of drums – they set several records for the smallest mosh pit, the smallest crowd surf and for the fact that you hardly ever say that 100% of the audience, myself included, really enjoyed their performance.

Their short songs, in true hardcore style, were harder and faster than the other bands, who were really just filling the time before Gavin Portland came on, and the instrumentation was tighter than a duck's backside in a full-scale flood. Thankfully, the landlady found something better to do downstairs and the volume did creep up to a level that just about did the band justice, but without it being impressively loud.

This gig was the penultimate in Gavin Portland's UK tour, which has seen them play some of the most well respected new music venues in the land under the Kerrang magazine tour banner. Luckily, the rest of the tour was more of a success than their Ipswich date, as Addi confirms when we escape the pub for a windy beer garden before their set:

"It's actually been pretty good until tonight! We've done seven dates with Hell Is For Heroes, those weren't shows we'd normally play – we're a punk band, we normally play places like this – but some of the shows were really good, Birmingham and London..." To which Sindri adds, "That venue (Birmingham) was probably five times bigger than the biggest venue we've ever played before." So, with a well-received overseas tour on their CV and a recent four-out-of-five review in Kerrang, is this the big break they've all been hoping for?

Addi's answer isn't as straightforward as it might be with a more commercially conscious band: "We're just a punk band, we like to do things independently. I'd rather play ten gigs for 50 people each than one gig for 500 people. When we tour we're a no-name Icelandic punk band but everyone is there for the punk show. When we play with Hell Is For Heroes in-front of 200 people not a single one is there to see a punk band. But we're very grateful for the opportunity, we did it because we thought it'd be interesting playing to different people – it was fun. The guys from Hell Is For Heroes are really great, they lent us loads of their equipment too."

Playing second fiddle to Hell Is For Heroes clearly isn't something Gavin Portland relish – their punk sensibilities seem slightly at odds with playing support on a magazine-sponsored national tour – but all four members clearly love the experience and process of playing a gig, much more than the adulation or praise they might receive from others for doing so. The reason for this rather unique viewpoint? "We're very confident in what we do, maybe we're a bit arrogant. We take

what we do very seriously and we're very serious about creating something that matters to us. We don't use the amount of people who came to a concert as a measure of how good the band is. If we're satisfied with what we're creating, then that's what matters." If Gavin Portland had measured the success of their Ipswich gig purely on attendance, then it would have been a catastrophe. But, as they packed up their own equipment and set off for Newport in Wales, you can be certain that the other 117,986 people in Ipswich were the real losers and the nine people in that attic room had the time of their lives, as did the four hardcore kids from Iceland.

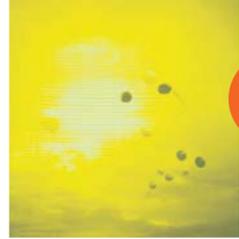
Their short songs, in true hardcore style, were harder and faster than the other bands, who were really just filling the time before Gavin Portland came on, and the instrumentation was tighter than a duck's backside in a full-scale flood.



NEW

B.Sig
Good Morning Mr. Evening

OK, the title sounds incredibly lame, but this is actually a very good album. Although B.Sig is really a group of quality veteran musicians, this is solely the project of newcomer Bjarki Sigurdsson, who wrote all songs and lyrics on the album, (he shares writing credits on two songs) besides co-producing and co-engineering the whole thing as well. Eleven songs of blues-rock tunes that range from almost jazzy, easy-listening ballads, to a more rocking rhythm that never betrays the blues roots. As a singer, Bjarki is equally at home singing the slower ballads as he is on the more craftier songs. What most surprised me is Bjarki's matured song-writing skills. This sounds like the work of a mid-career musician, rather than a debut album. I am already preparing myself to be disappointed by his next release, since the only direction that seems possible from here is down. **SBB**



NEW

Lada Sport
Time and Time Again

The first time I rolled this through the CD-player, it completely failed to engage me. But, after listening (time and time) again, this thing is starting to grow on me a bit. After coming in second in the Battle of the Bands three years ago, I somehow remember Lada Sport as having been a more rocking band than this indie-pop offering suggests, but recent member change seems to have popped them up some. This is not quite the world conqueror, but still a very adroit offering. It sounds hopelessly artistic at times, but that is easy to forgive, for when they hit their stride, they kind of take off. The rap-rock (with an indie-pop twist) diddly Gene Pacman breaks things up nicely by taking the band in a completely different direction, which is good, since my biggest complaint about this album is that it sounds all too monotonous. **SBB**



NEW

Hvanndalsbræður
Skást af

Hvanndalsbræður is a trio of the least funny threesome that ever had the marvellous idea to express their humour through singing wacky tunes with country beats. The only way this can be put into any sort of rational context is if this was written for children. Otherwise, it is a sad testimony to Icelandic music industry, nay, music in a general and global context. But sadly, it is not written for children. And this makes me eternally depressed, violent even, since I felt like breaking the CD cover in my agony when suffering through this. Skást af is a 'greatest hit' collection (I cringed writing those words) from their previous three albums, none of which should have come out in the first place in a fair and just world. This is a good gift idea for the boss who fired you, that x-girlfriend you hate, and others you have an axe to grind with, but probably just best left alone. **SBB**



2006

Æla
Sýnið tillitsemi, ég er frávik

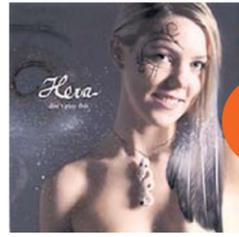
Keflavík punk prima donnas Æla's debut release is a serious sufferer of Garage Band Syndrome, an illness that manifests itself by having a lead singer that drags the rest of the band down by being lame. The rest of the album is decent enough, with roaring, yet poignantly catchy bass riffs and airtight drumming, and although the guitars aren't terribly inspired, they don't really need to be, either. It's Halli Valli's unconvincing and forcefully yelped vocals that leave one aching for more, especially in light of the fact that everything else is so tight and heartfelt. Only the primal, unbridled fury of Halli Valli's screams on Fuglinn í Fjörunni and Rockville/Birgið betrays any hint of the greatness Æla could achieve, once their singer gets his act together. **SE**



2006

Ampop
My Delusions

Why does everyone whose band can do a half-way-passable impression of Radiohead suddenly think they're qualified musicians? I don't propose to answer that, but I will tell you that Ampop's latest album, while hackneyed and commonplace in the extreme, is a pleasant listening experience, within which you can find - aside from the obligatory modern rock - attempts at folk, surf-rock, lo-fi and other similarly stagnant musical genres. It might make for an interesting album if listened to whilst skydiving nude out of an exploding zeppelin while simultaneously solving a Rubik's Cube and drinking an entire bottle of cherry wine, but is otherwise best avoided. **SE**



2005

Hera
Don't Play This

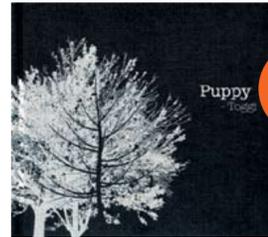
Not since Spinal Tap's Shark Sandwich has someone lobbed a softball like this to a reviewer—the abysmal cover featuring a smiling, topless girl, (the picture cuts just at the top of the breasts to be playful), does not help the tag line "Don't Play This" at all. But Hera and the performers on her album don't deserve the bile that the cover raises. True, she has a song about chocolate, "Chocolate, it melts the pain away," that won't win her any songwriting competitions. But she seems earnest enough, and she has a crystal clear voice. And a lot of people don't listen to words anyway. And maybe twelve year olds need a topless role model. **BC**



2005

Hermigervill
Sleepwork

There really aren't that many clubs with good dance music in Reykjavík. One wonders where Hermigervill honed his craft. In any case, he's got good beats and nice melodies—more raw and aggressive than Beatmakin Troopa's (also mentioned in these reviews.) Hermigervill also has an ear for haunting refrains that he balances throughout this album, for example, in the form of a triad of piano chords on track fourteen, Murdock's Records. **BC**



2006

Toggi
Puppy

Toggi has spent the last three years honing his début album and it shows. The first single, Heart in Line, is a polished melancholy acoustic pop tune – complete with a full-blown string chorus. These 12 songs are well-written, well-executed and well... not that memorable. It's a great modern mystery how Coldplay have become the world's biggest band but it's not a great mystery where Toggi gets his inspiration from – although Travis would be a better comparison. But he has a knack for writing good pop tunes and the lyrics have the necessary ingredients of sadness, sorrow and regret. Toggi's voice is perfectly suited for these songs and the production – including the pretty booklet – is excellent. It's just that all this feels so harmless somehow. I'm sure a fair number of songs will become big radio hits and a fair number of lonely people will sing along – but that's as far as it will go. **PH**

Reviews by Bart Cameron, Sindri Eldon and Sveinn Birkir Björnsson

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How to drive in Iceland

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.

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.

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.

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Saving Iceland Mega Concert

Text by Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir Photo by Gulli

Who: **Various artists**
Where: **NASA**
When: **July 2, 2007**

A barefoot girl with long blonde hair reaching down to her lower back was dancing enthusiastically to the deserving catchy beats of Retro Stefson when I entered NASA on a slow Monday night. In front of and around her people were leisurely sprawled across the floor, many sitting Indian style, patiently watching as the Stefson teens effortlessly spun out their unpretentious, soulful and enchanting pop.

Organised by the campaign group Saving Iceland as a protest and fundraiser against large-scale industrial projects in Iceland, the concert had drawn a crowd and an atmosphere certainly unfamiliar to the nightclub. Giant banners on each side of the dance floor protested Landsvirkjun, the national electric company, and their funding of the Kárahnjúkar hydro-power plant under construction in eastern Iceland, a plant that will power an enormous aluminium smelter in Reyðarfjörður.

Bogomil Font and friends took the stage, led by former Sugarcubes member Sigtryggur Baldursson dressed in a white suit and hat that completed his look and sound, as a member of the audience accurately put it, as "that lounge singer." Yet people remained enthused, staring up pensively at the stage where in the background a slideshow of pictures grounded them, quite literally, to the point of the show. Photographs of beautiful and massive Icelandic landscape flashed across the screen, areas that are being destroyed in the eastern highlands by heavy industrialisation and areas targeted for further development in the near future.

Rúnar Júl, Skátar, Mr. Silla og Mongoose and Ólöf Arnalds followed. Skátar packed a much-needed punch, and the crowd began to mosh, in a friendly kind of way. In the back a little blonde kid holding on to his mother's hand was head banging. Mr. Silla og Mongoose brought a change of pace that felt surprisingly natural and as Ólöf Arnalds plucked a sombre song on a ukulele the atmosphere had become so delicate that the people felt compelled to tiptoe, if they moved at all.

Andri Snær Magnason, author of best-selling book Draumalandið, a criticism of the government's policy on heavy industry, took the stage after Arnalds and encouraged people to visit a handful of spots in the wilderness that are destined for industrialisation within the next two years. As an English-speaking Saving Iceland coordinator took the mic, the mood became tense. His accurate, though not terribly articulate, description of the goals of the evening was cheered by most but drew various drunken protests from some Icelanders in the crowd.

Evil Madness and Dimma were a low point. Strakovsky Horó, Reykjavík! and Múm followed as the clear highlights of the show, deserving every bit of the by-then-commonplace enthusiasm of the crowd. The anticlimax following the headlining Múm consisted of superficial electro-pop from Velvet Ego and slightly denser synthesized pop from Bloodgroup.

A little past 1 a.m., the young kids involved with the Saving Iceland project watched the random assortment of patrons leave. They seemed triumphant, full of idealism and eager to pass it on. Perhaps it was a little contagious.



Thrash Revival

Text by Sveinn Birgir Björnsson Photo by Gulli

Who: **Trassar, I Adapt, Bootlegs, Changer**
Where: **Gaukurinn**
When: **July 6, 2007**

There's still hope my friend," bellowed I Adapt's singer Birgir. The second band on stage, these hardcore mainstays pounded through Future in You, from their recent 7" release, From Town to Town. Misplaced optimism? Perhaps. Their set was ravaged by poor sound quality and technical problems that affected band and audience alike.

Ploughing through material from their 7" as well as their upcoming album – which will sound notably heavier than previous offerings – the band did its best to overcome early difficulties. But despite an energetic effort from these notorious live performers, it was likely their poorest performance in quite some time.

Fortunately, I Adapt's sub-standard delivery was sandwiched by solid sets by two bands that made their name nearly twenty years ago. Opening the night's proceedings was the recently reincarnated thrash metal mob Trassar. Originally founded in 1987, it is the second oldest metal act in Iceland. The modern-day version features two founding members, guitarists Rúnar and Bjóssi, aided by a competent rhythm section, most notably Ampop drummer Jón Geir, who showed a new side to himself as a top notch metal drummer. The band is fronted by Ólafur Bjarnason, a 15-year veteran of European opera houses.

Bjarnason is a powerful vocalist, although he does sound a pitch too high on occasion, his vibrant voice prompting memories of Hel-

loween's Michael Kiske at times. With riffs written in straight-up thrash metal fashion and an opera-style vocalist (an unusual concoction for sure), Trassar's passionate and theatrical show is likely to have converted a few sceptical minds in the audience.

Following I Adapt was the oldest operational metal band in Iceland, Bootlegs. Formed in 1986, the band was on hiatus from 1991 until it was reformed in 2005. If memory serves me right, this was quite the legendary band in the early '90s. Although they hardly look the part anymore, except for drummer Kristján, they play aggressive thrash, with a dash of speed and an have an infectiously spry attitude, for their age. Although some of their songs sound a little dated, the vehement Thrash Attack could serve as a dictionary definition of thrash metal as it epitomises everything that was good and decent about the genre in the '80s.

Bringing the show to an end were extreme-metallers Changer. The fivesome brought their usual chaos-inducing brutality and showed they are still the kings of the Icelandic metal scene. Behind the abrasive grunts of vocalist Egill and back-up vocalist Gísli, Changer put on a gruesome set. Sadly, they were interrupted repeatedly by the general drunkenness of the few patrons still left in the house by the time they started playing. The band deserved better.

This problem was in part due to the delay of the show. Opening act, Trassar, stepped on stage at midnight, an hour after the announced time. The delay did little to enliven the relatively scarce audience that showed up. I suggest a mandatory 10 pm. riff-off for all future dates. Perhaps I am getting old.



A DVD Guide

Text by Chandler Fredrick

It should be a requirement for entry into Iceland that tourists know more than the fact that there is something called the Golden Circle. One would think that the growing popularity of the country would spawn a new generation of tourists who actually knew something about the beautiful landmarks outside of Reykjavik, if only from overblown airline advertising campaigns. That's why it's so surprising to meet legions of camera-wielders who seem to have no idea that there is, in fact, something beyond the Golden Circle. What those tourists – and, actually, every tourist – should do is watch "Iceland's Favourite Places," a 145 minute-long DVD that spotlights a whopping 60 features in the Icelandic wilderness.

Iceland's Favourite Places covers the nation's most magnificent landmarks in short 3-5 minute clips. The DVD is conveniently divided up into six different sections with several featured places of interest in each section. But IFP doesn't cheat you: for every chosen destination, at least one minute of the clip is dedicated to the area surrounding the centerpiece of that particular clip. Its website claims that IFP was filmed with the highest quality equipment available, and incredible aerial views and angles of each feature seem to confirm this claim. While the music is atrocious (cheesy, repetitive, and electronically over-percussive), it's actually kind of a relief that they didn't try to get the rights to Sigur Rós, Amiina, or god forbid – Björk.

Of course, this visual tour guide to Iceland plays it safe in terms of subject matter, so expect a glacier-load of trivial commentary (one particularly dull section details an old woman's rock collection in Stöðvarfjörður). But for all its corny majesty, this 7-language DVD has pretty unbeatable shots of some of the nation's most important natural wonders.

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The Einar Jónsson Museum

Text by Sveinn Birkir Björnsson
Photo by Gulli

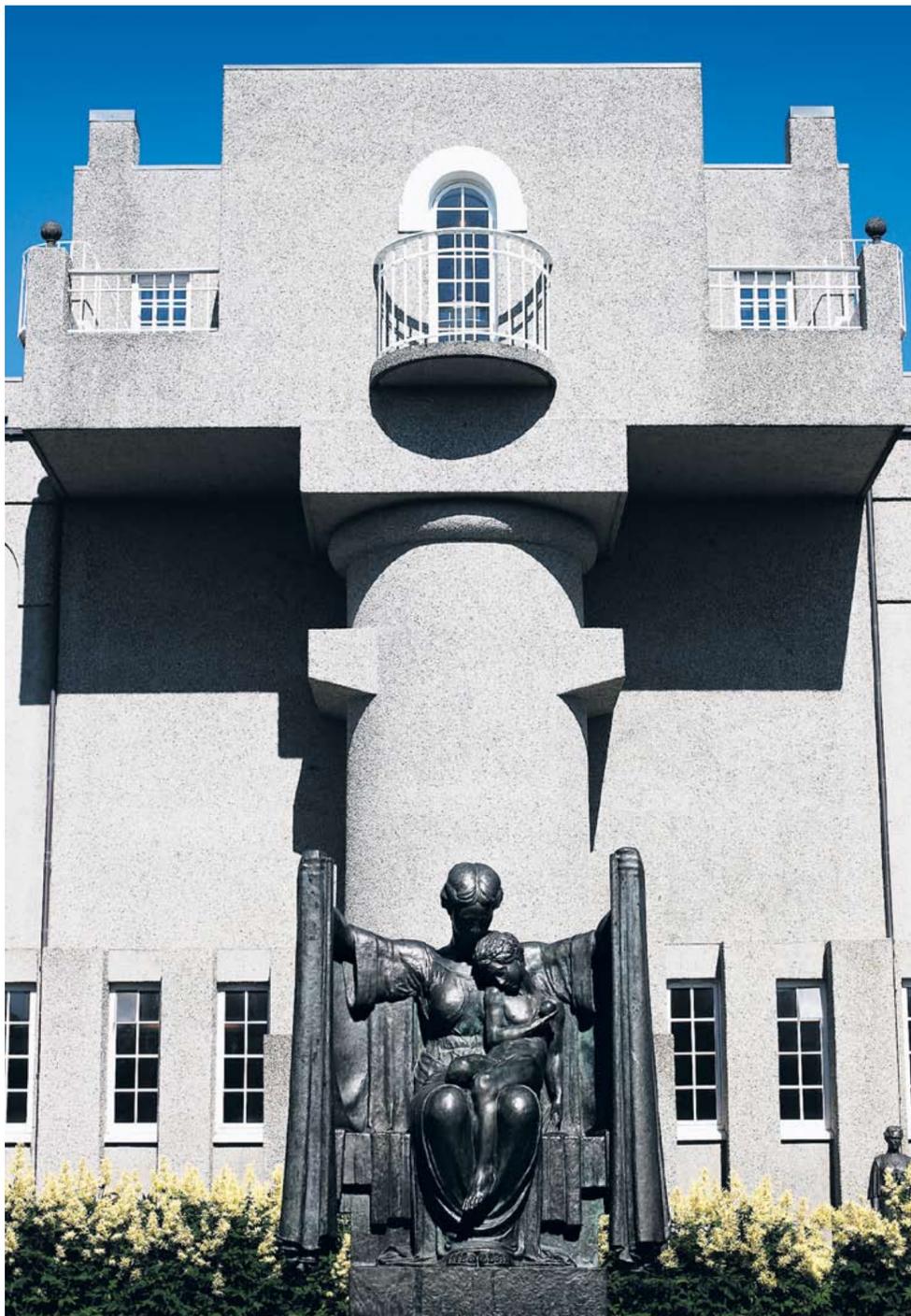
The first art museum in Reykjavík, the Einar Jónsson museum, opened in 1923. The history of this beautiful building goes back to 1909 when the beloved artist offered to give his whole collection to the Icelandic people under the condition that a museum would be built to house his works. The Icelandic Parliament originally rejected the idea, but in 1914 the Parliament contributed one third of the building costs and the rest was gathered through private donations.

Einar Jónsson was Iceland's first sculptor. He attended the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen from 1896 to 1899. His early works were inspired by Icelandic folklore, but he later rejected naturalistic depiction in classical art in favour of added religious symbolism following the artist's spiritual awakening.

Jónsson's public monuments can be seen around the city. Opposite the museum, in front of Hallgrímskirkja church, stands the monument of Ingólfur Arnarson, the first Icelandic settler. In Austurvöllur, you will find his monument of the independence hero Jón Sigurðsson, and in front of the Government Offices of Iceland stand statues of Iceland's governor Hannes Hafsteinn and Danish King Christian IX, commemorating the Act of Union of 1918 – Iceland's first step towards becoming an independent nation. That same year, Jónsson was commissioned to build a memorial of Þorfinnur Karlsefni, which stands along Kelly Drive in the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The museum houses over 300 art works, spanning the artist's 60-year career. It was more or less designed by the artist himself, with the assistance of Einar Erlendsson, State Architect at the time. The building served both as the artist's studio and home, which is now a part of the museum. Several of the artist's works are on display in the museum garden, which is open to the public admission-free. Entrance through Freyjugata.

The Einar Jónsson Museum
Eiríksgrata, 101 Reykjavík
Tel.: 551 3797. www.skulptur.is
Open Tuesday-Sunday 14.00-17.00.
Closed on Mondays.
Admission: 400 ISK.



Arnarstapi

Text by Haukur Magnússon
Photo by Julia Staples

One of the benefits of living in the greater-Reykjavík area is a convenient closeness to nature. It essentially means that no matter how involved in business, barhopping or Nu-Rave culture you get, you are never more than a stone's throw away from somewhere pure and idyllic. Case in point: Friday night, after work, after dinner, after an hour of TV, it was still feasible to pack a tent, an instant BBQ and some lamb chops in my 1992 Subaru for a quick trip to some of Iceland's most attractive sites. Most cities do not allow for this. In a mere 20 hours (including a full 11 hours of sleep), my companion and I managed to experience a vacation's worth of unique natural phenomena, postcard-ready scenery and pretty good waffles.

There are many destinations within reasonable driving distance of Reykjavík that allow for quick, satisfying sojourns into nature. On short-notice, we decided to venture to Arnarstapi, a beautiful fishing hamlet on Snæfellsnes. Within walking distance of one of Iceland's most fabled glaciers, Snæfellsjökull, Arnarstapi often has visitors spouting inane tourist brochure babble in tepid attempts to describe its extraordinary atmosphere. In true capitalistic fashion, the locals have caught on and now offer accommodation, midnight snow-mobile rides and pýlsur for a reasonable price, so there's no reason to grow hungry or bored while there.

Our first stop (save for a police mandated one, which resulted in a 30.000 ISK speeding ticket) was at one of Iceland's many "secret" natural hot pots. These are essentially undocumented, unmarked and, most importantly (as in – enter at your own risk!), un-regulated pools of hot water where a weary traveller can rest his bones and wash his privates in the company of wild birds and unkempt nature. This particular one is located by the stretch of road between Borgarnes and Arnarstapi and is probably kept secret for a good reason, as it comfortably fits no more than three persons at a time.

An excessive mix of hot water and beer will slow anyone down, so driving became less of an option as the night progressed. Arnarstapi proved no less of an attraction the day after, following a hefty brunch of waffles and buttered scones we took a walk around the area. Arnarstapi offers a plethora of marked hiking trails of varying lengths, but the nature of our trip limited our options to its immediate surroundings. After a few rough encounters with Arctic Terns, we found ourselves at the beautiful, semi-natural Arnarstapi harbour and its surrounding Fulmar-filled cliffs. This is a place to sit down and gaze at the ocean, after a while the intense Fulmar whine will fade to the back of your mind and you will remember why you leave cities over weekends.



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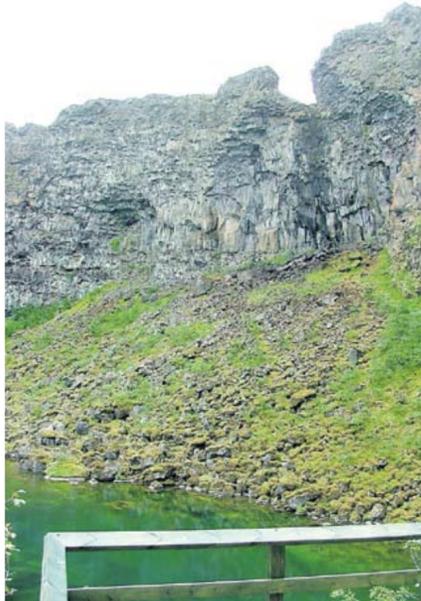
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Clockwise from top left: Skógarfoss, Ásbyrgi, Jökulsárlón, Mývatn, Dimmuborgir. Opposite page: Viti, Vík, Oraefajökull, Dimmuborgir, Svartfoss.



Round and Round Around Route 1

Text and photos by Chandler Fredrick

The last time I came to Iceland, in 2006, I drove the 1,339 km Ring Road in 27 hours. My best friend and I came flying out of Reykjavik in our Toyota Yaris at twice the speed limit, so used to Los Angeles highway speeds and habits that we took the roads like we were fighting our way to the Valley at rush hour. We blasted ACDC's Back in Black the entire way, shouting the lyrics and riding just as much on our high testosterone levels as on the expensive petrol. We flew through the low fog on the cliff roads on the east fjords, hypnotised by the road into the wee hours of the morning. I remember snapping awake at the wheel on the rocky ledges of mountain road 939, on one of the windiest and most dangerous passages in the country.

We slept only once, for 2 hours, in an Egilsstaðir parking lot.

We had truly believed that our return to Reykjavik would mark us as heroes. We anticipated that American appreciation of getting 'er-done and getting 'er-done quick. Instead we were received as the most amateurish tourists in town. "But didn't you look at anything?" the Icelanders asked us. "Didn't you stop anywhere?" We looked at one another, dumbfounded. "Well, sometimes. When we needed gas?"

One man went so far as to open up a photo album from his last trip around the Ring Road, pointing out all of the beautiful places we'd missed. Oops.

So I proposed, nearly a year later, that I reconcile my stupidity with another trip. This time, I'd give my senses all the things I'd denied them that obnoxious day-and-three-hours last July.

Reykjavik - Akureyri

My girlfriend arrived in Keflavik Airport from Baltimore at approximately 6 in the morning on July 2. She had been in transit for nearly 30 hours, and was now battling what seemed

to be an oncoming fever. I took her back to my flat and tucked her in, and hoped to God we could do this.

Even with my background in collegiate procrastination, the situation seemed out of control: I wasn't packed, I had very little idea of where I would be going, and any lodgings I might find once I'd arrived were even more uncertain. My arrival at Hertz was clouded by thoughts of high fevers, hypothermia, and rental car catastrophes on dirt roads so Podunk it'd be a miracle if your telephone could even reach the 112 emergency line.

The 2007 Toyota Yaris is by no means a spectacular vehicle. In fact, it looks more like a colossal cell phone than a vehicle safe for use on barely-maintained Icelandic mountain roads. Still, rental car companies consistently choose this car as the one most suitable and reliable for ambitious foreign travellers, and it is the typical "Tourist!" harbinger throughout rural Iceland. A strong Yaris presence in any carefully surveyed parking lot gives an oft-helpful warning of one national hazard, the fanny-pack brigade.

By the time I got back to my flat, my girlfriend was on her feet, armed with my external frame backpack, our flannel sleeping bag, and the utensils and necessities for three days of semi-legitimate "roughing it." We picked up a tent for about 4,000 ISK at the cheap appliance store Rúmfatalagerinn and grabbed a few "BBQ Life" disposable instant grills, which would prove most indispensable to our stomachs, wallets, and minds.

An unimpressive stretch of road led us out of Reykjavik and into the western farmlands. There was something about moving clockwise that felt natural: my last trip had moved counter clockwise – it had been intense and dangerous, so masculine it bordered on irrational. But the drive through the mild, green countryside seemed settling. I felt safe, and the contrast was great enough with my original circuit to

dispel my fears of laughing Icelanders and let me refocus on the land.

The road went from dull to unbelievable as we came into a mountain pass called Öxnadalshéiði. Green slopes rose dramatically on either side of us and the sun lit up every nook on the mountain face. In utter disbelief of the ubiquitous rolling green, we stopped the car to immerse ourselves in sunlight and explore a meadow that lay at the foot of the slopes. In retrospect, it was one of the least impressive panoramas we would see, but it was also the harbinger for every kid-at-Disneyland sensation we would have in the coming days.

We got to Akureyri around dinnertime and paid way too much (even by Icelandic standards) for a pathetic burger and some skinny fries. After finding a guesthouse just outside of the town centre, we crashed, just hard enough to overcome the lopsided box springs of our three Goldilocks cots.

Dimmuborgir

There is a sign in Akureyri, Iceland's second largest city, that reads "Akureyri: The Cultural Capital of Iceland." Somehow this appeared to be an inflated self-concept. After strolling the "Capital's" only two commercial streets in search of a reasonable cafe, we were nothing short of forced to forage for our breakfast in the brightly lit aisles of the town's single 10-11. So much for culture.

The ring road took us to the other side of the enormous coastal hill of "Vaðlaheiði," that stands off against Akureyri, winding into yet another perpetually green and unexciting stretch. It seemed that throughout the drive, the wake of dramatic landmarks nearly always delivered bits of repose, in boring sections of road that acted like the stasis after a massive earthquake. Goðafoss ("The Waterfall of the Gods"), falling for 12 meters on the river Skjálfandafliót, ordered us out of our ring-road hypnosis. We scrambled up a wet cliff and

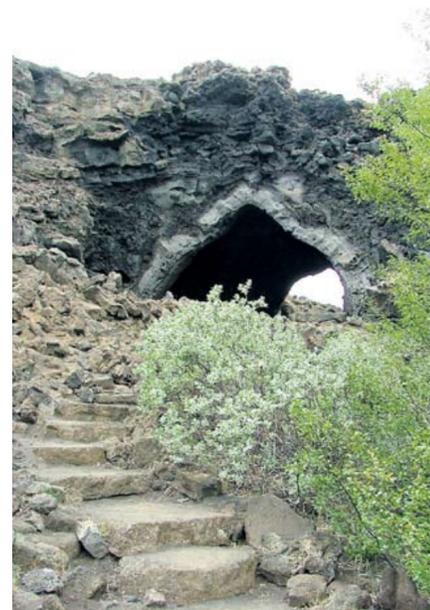
witnessed the wide falls, a full thirty meters of churning water.

The road took us onward to Mývatn, the "fly lake" in Northern Iceland I had been reading about since my middle school Geology class. An unmissable series of craters and grassy miniature volcanoes caught our attention. It was impossible to be disappointed by the sheer bizarreness of these landforms, and a walk around this area (we had to trespass a little) took me back to that "elf country" feeling I had forgotten about a week after moving to Iceland.

Our next scene was Dimmuborgir, on the eastern shore of Mývatn. When you search the internet for this Icelandic "Dark Fortress," you mostly end up with entries and websites about the Norwegian metal band of the same name, which is sad, because Dimmuborgir offers an enormous playground of dark and towering lavaforms, humbling remnants of awesome volcanic activity. The path through Dimmuborgir unravelled like a tour of an abandoned city, many of the crusty forms themselves (like "Kirkja," or "Church") eerie replicas of iconic Baroque architecture.

After a quick grocery shopping excursion, we rolled out of the Mývatn basin. Just after the Green Lagoon (North Iceland's alternative to the internationally renowned "Blue Lagoon"), we

Botnstjörn, the pond at the end of Ásbyrgi's bottom trails, is the most beautiful piece of earth I have ever witnessed.



happened upon a cluster of bubbling sulphur pits, which we decided to approach, olfactory assault be damned. While I would have hoped for some swimmable hot spots after some long hours with my Yaris felt interior, the gurgling, smoking wells of grey stink just outside of Mývatn illustrated just how warm the earth is in Iceland – even if it's not conventionally inviting.

Krafla

Our original plan would have kept us to the Ring Road until we got to road 863, a 10 kilometre dirt road that continues on to Jökulsárgljúfur national park, a protected area which includes Dettifoss and Ásbyrgi. However, just as we pulled out of the splattering mud pit area, we came upon a well designed pillar reading "Krafla," the marker for a thin paved road to the North. Without much justification for this stop besides a notably sexy sign font, our visit to the Krafla complex was, in part, a mistake: When I read that the crater "Viti" was one of the sites at Krafla, I had actually mistaken it for the crater at Askja by the same name. At Askja, the crater boasts a geothermal swimming pool inside the crater. I hadn't remembered that Askja was several hundred kilometres away, in the highlands.

But the 10 minute drive out to Krafla proved to be a mistake worth making. We passed a pristine and strangely quiet geothermal power plant, seemingly undisturbed by workers or official vehicles, and soon found ourselves on the rim of a large crater, staring down into a calm reflecting pool at the bottom. Though Krafla didn't have any new geophysical bells or whistles to offer us, its size and beauty seemed to compensate. Miraculously, the vast amounts of water and steam made our trip to Krafla seem like a trip to Laugurdalslaug swimming pool, though we heeded the warning signs and avoided getting our feet wet.

The drive on the 862 road out to Ásbyrgi was miserable compared to every other road during the trip. Football sized rocks in the middle of the road made it nearly impossible to navigate the road with any speed, and what should have taken only an hour instead took two or three. When we took the alternative route, the gravel road 864 on the way down, we seriously regretted ever having taken the "government-maintained" 862.

Dettifoss, Europe's largest waterfall, was our final stop before the campground at Ásbyrgi. From the west side, it was difficult to ascertain the magnitude of the falls, but the roar of the water was enough not to second guess it. Standing on the slippery rocks adjacent to the falls and looking down toward the misty bottom was absolutely terrifying. I couldn't stop doing it.

A short drive through the green and expansive Jökulsárgljúfur fields took us straight to the campground at Ásbyrgi. Though we considered finishing the day off with a short hike through the canyon, we had to recognise our limits. Obviously, it had been a long day. Despite a screaming French baby or two in the neighbouring campsite, we slept like logs, embracing the food-coma aftermath of our late-night BBQ Life banquet.

Ásbyrgi

The next morning, we cleaned up our tent equipment after using the excellent facilities at the Ásbyrgi campground, which did not quite feel like cheating. A short drive into the canyon itself gave me a full-on authenticity complex as a hiker ("Drive? But where are the trails?"), but a short hike to the walls of the canyon shut me up quick.

I'm just going to give my best flat-out declaration: Botnstjörn, the pond at the end of Ásbyrgi's bottom trails, is the most beautiful piece of earth I have ever witnessed. A speckled U-shaped rock cliff towers above the pond and the surrounding mossy rocks. The pond itself has two observation decks: one platform on the pond itself, and another Ewok-like outpost with a view from higher ground. Throughout the short hike, I found myself breathless at nearly every turn. There was always some fresh gorgeous view awaiting me. Ásbyrgi seemed at points to be out of place, like some South American cliff, rainforest and all, had been accidentally dropped near the Arctic while the Earth was forming. Though we were tempted to spend the rest of the day taking the hike along the tops of the cliff, we made a pact to come back one day and explore.

Day three gave us our Nordic Hawaii. Though the drive from Ásbyrgi to the painstaking town of Egilsstaðir was even more boring than the stretch from Reykjavik to Akureyri,

the drive from Egilsstaðir to the east Fjords showed us the tectonic plates in all their glory: mountains turned on their side, expanses of land where one plate was jutting out of the earth, waterfalls tricking down from heights immeasurable.

Though I have heard Icelanders say nothing complimentary about the East Fjords, this stretch was probably my favourite. A view of the high peak Búlandstindur inspired us to violate some trespassing laws and witness one brief act of the natural theatre from a small rock peninsula, high above the beaches. The thought that these gorgeous pieces of land actually belong to somebody astounds me.

We stopped in Höfn í Hornafirði at the end of the day in forfeit, convinced at long last that we didn't possess the energy to continue on to Skaftafell after all. Höfn was a tidy little town with a quaint harbour, and it would have been nice to stay there for the night if the campsite wasn't a packed downtown lawn full of tents and loud people in just-as-loudly-coloured windbreakers. We jumped the gun and headed back north about 15 kilometres to the next-nearest, more secluded campsite on our map: Stafafell. It turned out that Stafafell was, indeed, quite satisfactorily peaceful, as the official campground premise seems to have been abandoned long ago, leaving a neat plateau and some very out-of-commission toilets in the midst of some sprawling sheep farm. We didn't really need facilities that night – just a calm stretch of land – and with its close proximity to the beach, Stafafell was warm and serene, the perfect place to camp for our second night.

Skaftafell

An unmemorable but brief drive down the east coast took us from our campsite to Jökulsárlón, the world-famous "glacial lagoon." Every day, humongous sea-bound chunks of the glacier Breiðamerkurjökull break off into the relatively small lagoon. The scene was absolutely surreal: frosty shades of light blue I had only seen before in Gatorade bottles, and towers of ice hanging out in what must have been freezing seawater. Beached glacial splinters just southwest of the bridge spawned a playground of eager visitors. Though the tourists were more apparent here than anywhere else,

nothing could possibly have degraded this experience.

Before finally heading home, we stopped for several hours at Skaftafell National Park, which features a ton of flowered hiking trails and a vantage point for the pokey Skaftafell-sjökull glacier. A view of the organ-like Svartifoss, named after the chunks of black rock the waterfall has carved from its banks, was well worth the hour-long hike. Surprised to see elderly travellers showing their sprightly side on this relatively steep hike, we decided to one-up our (much) older counterparts and ambitiously choose the 6-hour path around Morsárdalur. After an exhausting couple of hours, two French hikers coming the other direction explained that "the ice cream was having its third birthday," an interpretation taken with a grain of salt through my girlfriend's questionable skills in translation. To more fluent speakers, their helpful advice seemed to signal that the glacier we sought lay at least another three hours away. Exhausted and entirely satisfied with the wonders we'd taken in thus far, we turned back and followed the markers to our dear Yaris.

The drive back to Reykjavik was surprisingly quick, and after many odd road snacks, we were too weary to enjoy the Friday nightlife.

When you search the internet for Dimmuborgir you mostly end up with entries and websites about the Norwegian metal band of the same name, which is sad.

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The Lonesome Traveller – Lónsöræfi

Text by Fabrizio Frascaroli Photo by Halldór Kjartansson

On the second morning of my early-season trek from Stafafell to Snæfell, voices woke me up from sleep. I looked around the room, confused. The voices were growing clearer and more distinct and there was no mistaking that I was not alone. And there was also no mistaking that it was well past 6 a.m. – the time I had set my alarm on: I must have overslept, and probably for long.

The previous day I pushed some thirty kilometres in haste. I was forced to take a painful detour after I realised that I had left my Windstopper jacket somewhere at the starting point, after more than an hour's walk. Now, I seemed to be paying toll for the effort and the high mileage: I would even have stayed in my sleeping bag, if not for the fact that the door to the hut was flung open. Before I had time to react, I found myself face to face with a curious visitor wishing me a good morning. I tried to respond, but only a strained mumble seemed to come out of my mouth: My unexpected guest sent me a pitying smile and left me alone again.

Finally on my feet, it was already past eleven in the lovely mountain hut of Múlaškáli in Lónsöræfi, the celebrated nature reserve in South-East Iceland. I was finally back to my faculties, which enabled me to understand what was going on. Nothing particularly dramatic – two

Swiss men were being shown around by an Icelandic guide, the same who paid me a visit just a few minutes earlier. I tried again to establish an interaction, while munching my breakfast. It is the sort of conversation one would think doomed from the very beginning. I am an embarrassing example of poor linguistic integration, speaking little or no Icelandic even after years of residence in the country; the guide, on the other hand, could barely introduce himself in English. In spite of the premises, however, things surprisingly moved pretty smoothly, and before long we were caught in a stimulating discussion about the (relatively scarce) popularity of the outdoors in Iceland.

How is it possible – my interlocutor wondered – that a cabin like Múlaškáli, located in such a unique spot, remains half empty all through July? How could things be changed? Maybe by building new huts, provided with more facilities and perhaps a basic restaurant, as you see in the Alps? Not an easy matter to cope with – and especially not right after waking up. Personally, I do not disdain sausages and alcoholic beverages, but if I may advance an opinion, I am not sure that the problem lies uniquely in the services made available in the mountain huts. Better marked trails, for example, could also contribute to increase the popularity of some walks, such as the one

between Stafafell and Snæfell – this, at least, has been remarked upon by several foreign hikers I interviewed, who drew comparisons with continental Europe.

Whatever reasons and explanations can be found, it is a fact that once you have seen Lónsöræfi it is difficult to resist its charm, and not to wonder why it does not represent a primary destination on more travellers' and trekkers' agendas.

Lónsöræfi

Set right on the Eastern border to the Vatnajökull Glacier, Lónsöræfi is a vast volcanic area of colourful hills, broad rivers, gashing waterfalls, and lush vegetation, encircled by sharp and snow-clad peaks, and often threaded by herds of reindeers. I may have been particularly lucky to be there in warm and mostly bright weather, and in the peace and stillness of the early season, but it is not an overstatement to say that the Stafafell-Snæfell trek has immediately become one of my favourites.

Most travellers skip the initial part of the walk, exploiting the jeep track that leads all the way to Múlaškáli – a big mistake, at least if you have enough days at hand. The scenarios offered on this first leg are terrific enough to deserve their good share of time. After skirting some crimson-red rhyolitic formations, the trail

stretches along the deep gorge ploughed by the river Jökulsá, winding among fragrant thickets, large patches of moss, and sheer cliffs towering above the roaring waters underneath. This is the only chance for cover on the trail, before the growing altitude in the next stages of the journey expose you to the blowing winds and the naked immensity of the surroundings.

The farm at Stafafell, hosting both a youth hostel and campsite in the summertime, makes for an ideal starting point, as long as you do not demand the highest hygienic standards imaginable. Ideally located by the main road, the hostel is run by Bergsveinn, who proudly considers himself to "still [be] a communist, or rather a hippie," and his brother. A short conversation with them confirms that the uniqueness of the Icelandic countryside does not dwell only in its geography, but also in its people. In the early hours of the night, our chat hit disparate subjects such as the world emergency for water, insurance policies, Kurt Vonnegut and his views of Hungarians, and Reykjavík's gas stations – as well as a few packets of cigarettes: It was well worth the detour for picking up a forgotten sweater the day after.

Kollumúli

It is late when I am finally ready to leave Múlaškáli and set out for the second leg of

the journey. This is the first long walk of the year, sort of a preparation for the summer's harder endeavours. A smell of hangover and thoughts of the city still follow me as a permanent hindrance – this is what I put forward, anyhow, as a comfortable self-justification for today's five-hour delay.

Time, however, does not really have to be a major concern for the day: it is quite a short way to the next hut, the one at Egilsel, and a mere eight kilometres on marked trails. After running for a while along the riverbank, the path starts climbing up to almost 900 metres above the sea. The verdant and overgrown slopes that conferred a unique flavour on yesterday's landscapes become just a memory. The surroundings suddenly turn utterly barren. The glacier's easternmost tongues are drawing nearer, a threatening presence under today's sullen sky. When I reach the volcanic plateau of Kollumúli, a chilling wind is blowing from the south. Patches of snow since last winter make their appearance. From here, it is possible to distinguish the small but equally welcoming shape of the Egilsel hut, finally looming in the distance: only a few kilometres separate me from today's destination.

I had been warned that so early in the season (it is still mid June, whereas the Stafafell-Snæfell trek is usually thread only from the second half of July) it might prove difficult to go further than Egilsel. Snowmelt could turn the terrain into a nearly impassable mud. My feet sometimes sink deep into the wet soil, that is true, but the mud is far from impassable. On the contrary, there is still an abundance of snowfields left up here: some are progressively breached by flowing waters; others treacherously conceal gorges and streams underneath their coat.

In these conditions, route-finding skills are required in order to avoid potentially dangerous passages, and even more so now, since no trace of a trail heading to Snæfell can be seen. The weather is warm but slightly windy: the sun covered behind a veil of haze but the visibility good enough to guarantee an easy orientation. The route I find myself on is a very spectacular one, between stretches of nude rocks, frozen lakes, and ever-deeper gorges carved by glacial rivers. Set in a magnificent spot, sufficiently elevated to dominate a vast horizon and just besides quick waters jumping downstream towards Eyjabakkar, the solitary cabin of Geldingafell offers another neat and cosy shelter for the night.

Eyjabakkar

It is not that I expect to be seen by anyone – nevertheless, coming half naked out of the hut in the chill early next morning, wearing only sandals and boxers, does feel quite awkward. An important river has to be waded as a first obstacle of the day, and that explains the bizarre outfit. It is the last stage of the trek, some long 33 kilometres leading all the way to the root of Snæfell, the highest non-glacial summit in the country, by definition the "King" of Icelandic mountains. Like the day before, the weather appears warm, although it is hazy and grey – by noon, however, the veil of clouds is eventually torn away, and the burning sun comes out to irradiate a vivid light on the surrounding landscape.

This is one of the most interesting portions of the whole journey, traversing the immense spaces created by the retreat of the glaciers. The vastness of the plain is encircled by walls of imposing moraines, with sporadic oases of moss and flowing waters to break the monotonous greyness of the gravel that is all around. And there, where the stony ground gives way to the green, is the Icelandic reindeer country par excellence. I see none, however, only a few tracks and a number of wild geese.

Eyjabakkar is a broad stripe of wetlands ploughed

by impassable, deep waters. Two options are available for the crossing: either a bridge, lying a bit farther in the North, or the nearby glacial tongue Eyjabakkarjökull. Despite advices received to the contrary, I opt for the latter. It is a walk of only three kilometres on ice, not excessively difficult. The real problem turns out to be in the phase of approach. The ice is disappearing at a very swift rate, feeding fast streams and especially creating dangerous quicksand among the moraines, just before the glacier.

I proceed with extra care, cautiously selecting the route and frequently probing the ground. Nonetheless, a couple of times my legs happened to sink deep into the muddy silt. I am forced to take long detours before being able at last to step onto solid icy ground. In such warm weather, the glacier appears extremely wet, criss-crossed by endless rivulets. The first two kilometres easily pass by, in an almost straight trajectory. It is the increasing number of crevasses – a few of them still hidden in snow – that makes the last part of the crossing more problematic, requiring several deviations and a few leaps.

Snæfell

Quite ironically, I get to feel the most painful effects of the traverse of Eyjabakkarjökull once the glacier itself is already a few kilometres behind me. The reflection of the strong sunlight on the white mantle must have hit my skin quite badly, and for the rest of the day – it is still a good 15 kilometres walk before reaching my destination – I feel miserable, broiling under the sun like a roasted chicken. Despite the terrific and inspiring surroundings, the remnant of the walk gets reduced to a mere exercise in tolerance and endurance, counting the steps one after the other. Until, finally, the hut of Snæfell draws within range of sight.

There is nobody there to welcome me: the hut is still deserted and closed to visitors, even if things should be different by now. In fair weather, however, the option of tenting also has its own appeal – including, for example, the opportunity to enjoy an essential dinner while the glorious midnight sunset unfolds before my eyes. Before I go to sleep, a mirror hanging besides the outdoor toilets gives me the opportunity to check out what colour has been painted on my face. It looks fluorescent like a purple neon light, precisely what I feared.

Tomorrow I will walk some additional 15 kilometres on the jeep track – on top of the 80 I have already covered during the last four days – to reach a more trafficked road, and hopefully get a quick lift to the nearby town of Egilsstaðir. Perhaps some form of regular public transportation could also bring some benefits to the popularity of the remarkable Stafafell-Snæfell trek.

Transport provided by Þingvallaleið ehf.
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It is not that I expect to be seen by anyone – nevertheless, coming half naked out of the hut in the chill early next morning, wearing only sandals and boxers, does feel quite awkward.



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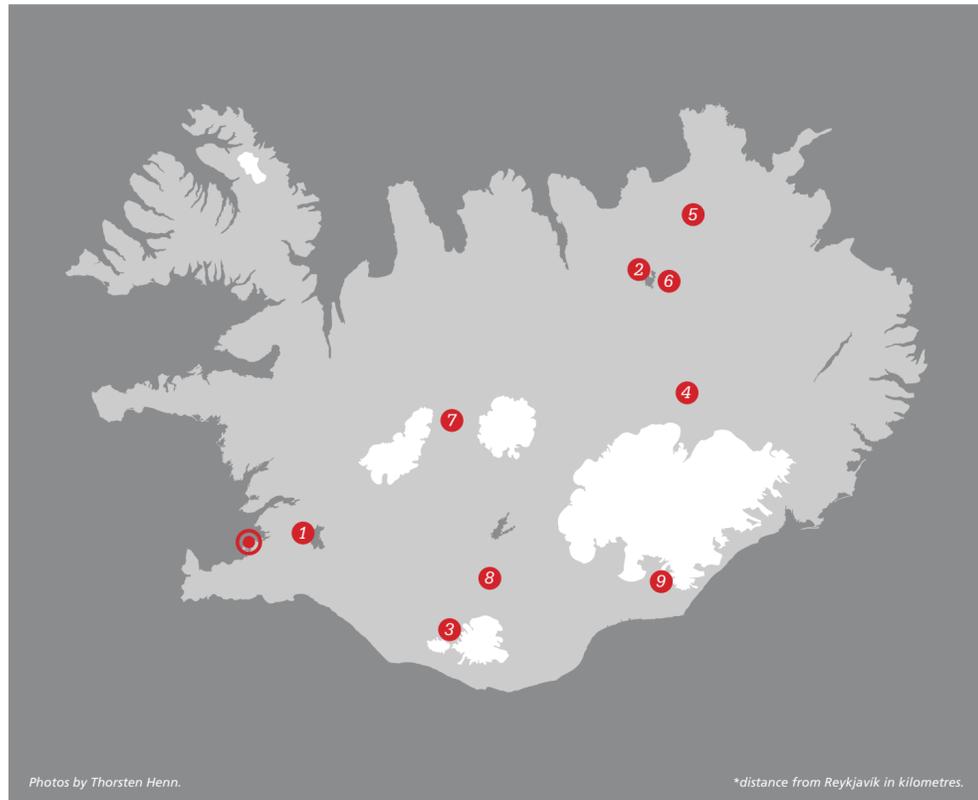
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Photos by Thorsten Henn.

*distance from Reykjavik in kilometres.

one *ca. 50 km

Pingvellir

If this is not your first-time in Iceland you've probably made a trip to the Pingvellir National Park already. If not, you should definitely take a day tour to this oldest national park in the country, founded in 1928. A place of great significance to Icelanders due to its role in the country's history, the park is a protected national heritage and is on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In 930, Alþingi, the oldest parliament in the world, was established at Pingvellir. Other historically important events took place here as well, for example the adoption of Christianity in 1000 and the celebration of Iceland's independence in 1944. Understandably, there are numerous historical sites and buildings to explore and marked paths will lead the way. You will be able to explore old ruins, an ancient drowning pool (Drekkingarhylur) where women who had children out of wedlock were drowned for their crime, and the Pingvellir church. The park, with the country's largest lake, Þingvallavatn, as its centrepiece, is renowned for its natural attractions such as Almannagjá fissure and Óxarárfoss waterfall.

two ca. 490 km



Mývatn

Lake Mývatn, created by an eruption more than 2000 years ago, is one of the largest lakes in the country, covering about 37 square kilometres and surrounded by unique landscape. One of the most popular tourist spots in the country, the vast volcanic area is rich with a striking scenery, diverse fauna, varied birdlife, numerous small islets and herds of extremely annoying midges, which the lake draws its name from. The lake and its surrounding wetlands and lava fields are a nature reserve. The area boasts endless sight-seeing options as well as good services and facilities for travellers.

three ca. 155 km



Þórsníkur

For anyone eager to experience the country's natural beauty, the Þórsníkur Natural Park, situated in the south, is definitely a must-see. Hidden between two glaciers, Eyafjallajökull and Tindafjallajökull, the grassy valley is surrounded by mountains, lagoons, and glacial rivers and numerous scenic hiking trails can be enjoyed. Þórsníkur is among the country's most touristic spots during the summer, but nevertheless worth at least a weekend stay. Several tourist companies organise guided excursions around the area.

four ca. 620 km



Askja

One of the country's majestic volcanoes, the caldera Askja has erupted several times over the last centuries. Surrounded by the Dyngjufjöll Mountains, Askja is an active volcano, which was declared a natural monument in 1978. A powerful eruption in 1875 changed the scenery immensely, forming the large blue lake Óskjuvatn, right in the middle of the caldera. The 220 metre deep lake is the deepest one in Iceland. The same explosion created the volcanic crater Víti containing a geothermal warm lake where bathing is quite popular. Just beware of the slippery slopes leading down to the 'pool'.

five ca. 545 km



Ásbyrgi

Noted as one of the most picturesque places in Iceland, Ásbyrgi canyon is truly a magical site and a popular getaway for hikers and campers. Less than a two-hour drive East from Akureyri, the canyon is 3,5 kilometres long and 1 kilometre wide. Steep cliffs rising up to 100 metres surround the horseshoe shaped and wooded canyon, formed by two glacial floods thousands of years ago. The whole area offers spectacular scenery, especially if you take the short hike up the large rock Eyjan (The Island) in the middle of this peaceful oasis.

six ca. 500 km



Dimmuborgir

The natural wonder Dimmuborgir (Dark Fortress) is a small, preserved area east of Lake Mývatn. What used to be an ancient lava pond now features very bizarre volcanic creations that are hardly found anywhere else in the world. Several walking paths will lead you around the breathtaking landscape where interesting lava formations, rock pillars and small caves are among the many attractions. The most famous cave is known as Kirkjan (The Church), a large walk-through vault that resembles an ancient cathedral. Visitors are advised not to leave the marked paths.

seven ca. 200 km



Hveravellir

In the centre of the Icelandic highlands, at the northern part of the road Kjölur, you will find the area Hveravellir, a large high-temperature geothermal spot located between two large glaciers Langjökull and Hofsjökull. Rich in colour, unspoiled nature, steep mountains and a variety of steam and water hot springs with the glaciers towering in the background, the area offers many diverse and scenic hiking trails and provides good accommodations for travellers. After exploring the area, bathing in the natural hot pool positioned right next to one of the sleeping huts guarantees an amazing relaxation.

eight ca. 195 km



Landmannalaugar

The highland area Landmannalaugar is only reachable by car during the summer months. This stunningly beautiful and colourful place is an area of high contrasts where red craters, blue lakes and yellow mountains meet rugged lava fields, warm springs, green valleys and unbridged rivers. Activities for travellers are numerous, and horse riding around the area comes recommended. For those into some cross-country travelling, hiking the four-day trail between Landmannalaugar and Þórsníkur (called Laugavegurinn) is an extremely popular trek where the amazing view one will experience along the way is almost indescribable.

nine ca. 330 km



Skaftafell

Skaftafell is Iceland's second largest National Park, covering about 4,800 square kilometres of a highly diverse area in the south of Iceland. Comprising some of Iceland's most renowned natural pearls, including two-thirds of the Vatnajökull glacier, the Lakagígur craters, the sandy wasteland Skeiðarársandur and the impressive Svartifoss waterfall, the park is truly an outstanding treasure. Travellers can easily spend days exploring the area and all the panoramic views of the unique rugged landscape and majestic glaciers it has to offer. A nice campsite with good facilities is located in close proximity to the Skaftafellsjökull glacier.

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Surtsey Exhibition

Text by Zoë Robert

A continuous (and unsettling) loud rumbling sound and flickering yellow-orange light greet you as you approach the entrance to the Surtsey exhibition on the fourth floor of the Culture House in downtown Reykjavik. The projection of the lava flow and volcanic eruption that created Surtsey Island is the perfect introduction to the Surtsey – Genesis exhibition.

Representing Iceland's southernmost tip, Surtsey emerged during the almost four year volcanic eruption which began in 1963. The force from the eruption was so strong that volcanic ash was ejected 9 km into the sky.

The informative and fascinating exhibition, produced by the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, traces the emergence and evolution of the island as well as predicting its geographical and ecological development over the next 120 years.

What is unique about Surtsey as a volcanic site is that it has been under strict environmental protection since its beginning and has had its entire 44 year history carefully documented. The Icelandic Government has even nominated the island for inclusion in UNESCO's World Heritage List and the exhibition explains the grounds for that decision.

Surtsey's pristine conditions with limited influence from humans have served as a living laboratory for the ongoing research program. You'll find a display of photos of the researchers in action in a separate exhibition space.

The display also includes detailed diagrams, aerial photos, slides, multimedia presentations, preserved animals, dried plants and volcanic lava which show the forces behind the creation of the island as well as the changes (both historic and predicted) in its size, shape and variety of animal life. The most interesting part of this exhibition is the interactive multimedia display which allows you to choose a time between 1963 and 2130 and see the state of the island in that select year.

The Culture House
Hverfisgata 15, 101 Reykjavik
Entrance fee: 300 ISK



My favorite place in Reykjavik is Laugardalur valley. I grew up in that neighbourhood and I still live there close by. I like to take walks around the valley. When I am writing I often take my Ipod with me and listen to what I am doing.

Lovisa Elísabet Sigrúnardóttir is known as the country-blues singstress Lay Low. She is also a member of the indie rock quartet Benny Crespo's Gang.



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Stuffed with stuff

Behind the abrasive grunts of vocalist Egill and back-up vocalist Gísli, Changer put on a gruesome set.

Sveinn Birkir Björnsson witnessed Changer.
Page 27

For the first time in my life, my food was looking back at me.

Chandler Fredrick tasted a sheep head, gums and all.
Page B10

"I think that the opportunities are plenty but they are also very sparse."

Anna Hildur Hildibrandsdóttir on the tricky business of exporting Icelandic music.
Page 20

There was no mistaking that it was well past 6 a.m. – the time I had set my alarm on: I must have overslept, and probably for long.

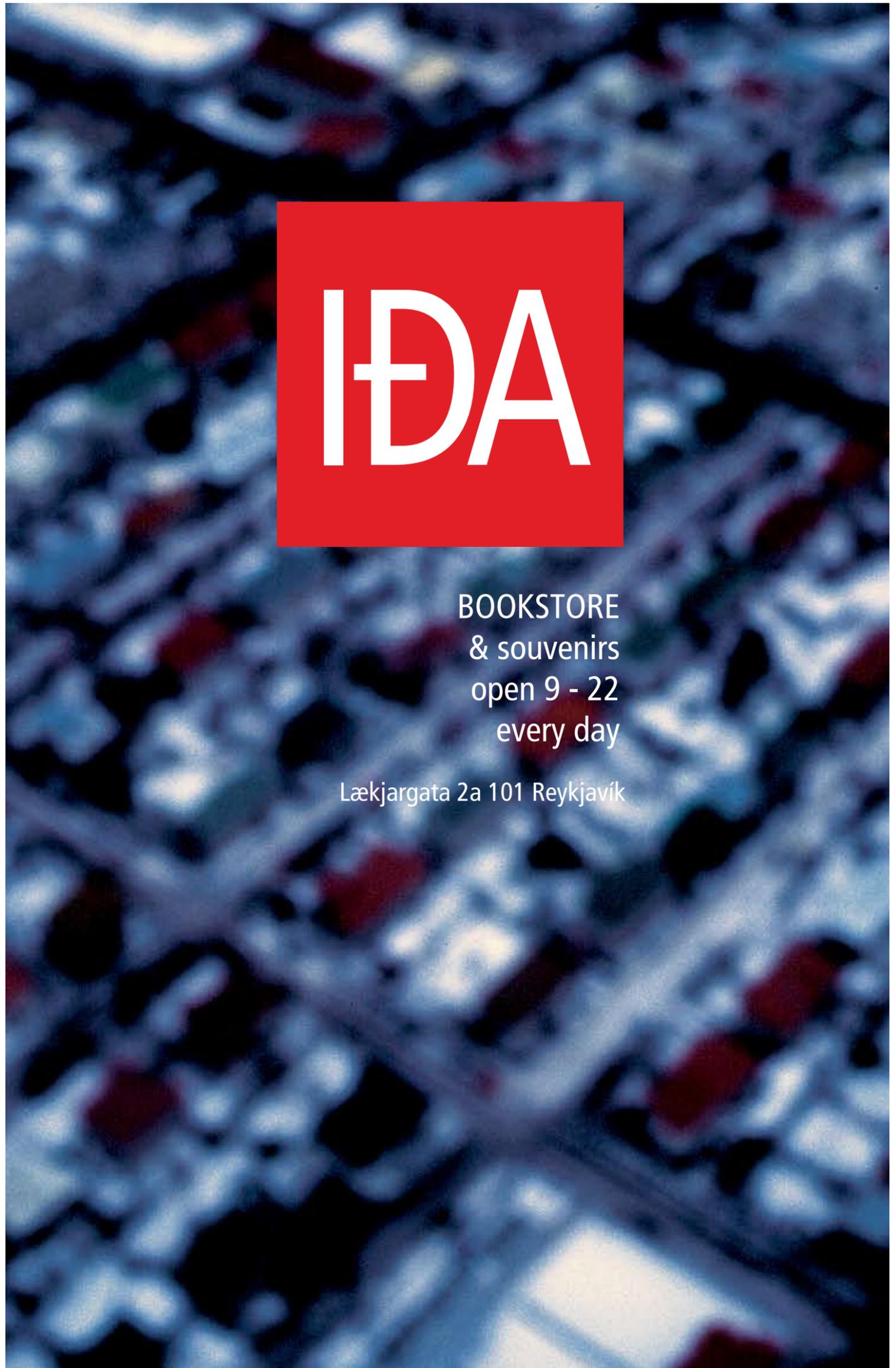
The Lonesome Traveller again battles the hard conditions of the Icelandic nature.
Page 32

In one corner we have the residents of Ipswich – one of Britain's oldest and most historic towns – who number about 117,986.

Gavin Portland took on the population of Ipswich, and won.
Page 23

During the first week under the new laws some of the strip clubs the Grapevine visited were still open.

Zoë Robert explores Reykjavik's strip clubs
Page 10



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