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From the Editor's Chair

Welcome, dear reader, to the 54th issue of the Reykjavík Grapevine. This might be our lightest issue to date. Sometimes it just cannot be helped: things fall apart at the last minute, and all of a sudden you have a completely different paper on your hands. That is not to say that this issue is any worse than what had been planned. On the contrary. I am extremely proud of no. 54 and the people who put in the extra effort to make it come together.

On to other subjects. I would like to direct your attention to a photo on page 30. It is a photo of a historic house on the corner of Austurstræti and Pósthússtræti, one of the hallmarks of Reykjavík Centrum. Designed by Guðjón Samúelsson (1887-1950), Iceland's most celebrated architect, the house was the first "big" building to rise in Iceland,

constructed between 1916 and 1917 after a 1915 fire destroyed many wooden houses in the surrounding area. Influenced by Art Nouveau and Danish Nationalist Romanticism, with curved lines, poles and marble stairs, the house is also decorated with statues by the sculptor Einar Jónsson, one of Iceland's most respected artists. It is, in every way, a fine testimony to our cultural heritage.

If you still haven't looked at the photo, you might think that I am simply describing a building. You would be wrong. On the corner, just above the entrance to the restaurant Apótekið is a statue, one of the many Einar Jónsson designed for the building. It shows the figure of an angel looking up towards the sky. But the angel's view is obstructed. Some genius decided that just above its head would be the perfect place for a CCTV cam-

era. From its metal foundation, rust drips constantly on to the angel's face, down its chin and throat, as if it had been chewing tobacco but lacked the proper skills to spit it out properly.

The audacity to treat our cultural heritage with such little respect! This is nothing short of cultural terrorism. While city officials have been on a rampage, following kids with spray cans around the city, no one seems to have given a second thought to ruining one of the few truly historic landmarks in Reykjavík. This is beyond belief and borders on the ridiculous.



The Reykjavík Grapevine crew

The Reykjavík Grapevine
Vesturgata 5, 101 Reykjavík
www.grapevine.is
grapevine@grapevine.is
Published by: Fróken ehf.

Editorial Office
+354 540-3600 / editor@grapevine.is
for inquiries regarding editorial content.

Marketing Office
+354 540-3605 / ads@grapevine.is
for inquiries regarding advertising, marketing, distribution and subscriptions.

Publisher's Office
+354 540-3601 / froken@grapevine.is
for inquiries regarding this publication.

The Reykjavík Grapevine Staff
Publisher: Hilmar Steinn Grétarsson / publisher@grapevine.is
Editor: Sveinn Birgir Björnsson / birkir@grapevine.is
Assistant Editor: Steinunn Jakobsdóttir / steinunn@grapevine.is
Marketing Director: Jón Trausti Sigurðarson / ads@grapevine.is
Support Manager: Oddur Óskar Kjartansson / oddur@grapevine.is
Art Director: Gunnar Þorvaldsson / gunni@grapevine.is
Photographer: Óskar Hallgrímsson / skari@grapevine.is
Contributing writers: Haukur Magnússon / haukur@grapevine.is
Ian Watson

Sales staff: Aðalsteinn Jörundsson / adalsteinn@grapevine.is
Jón Trausti Sigurðarson / jontrausti@grapevine.is

Distribution: Sæmundur Þ. Helgason / saemi@grapevine.is
Proofreader: Jane Victoria Appleton

On cover: GusGus
Photo: Atli / www.dund.is
Make-up: Sóley / emm
Style & hair: Jón Atli 'Hairdoctor' Helgason
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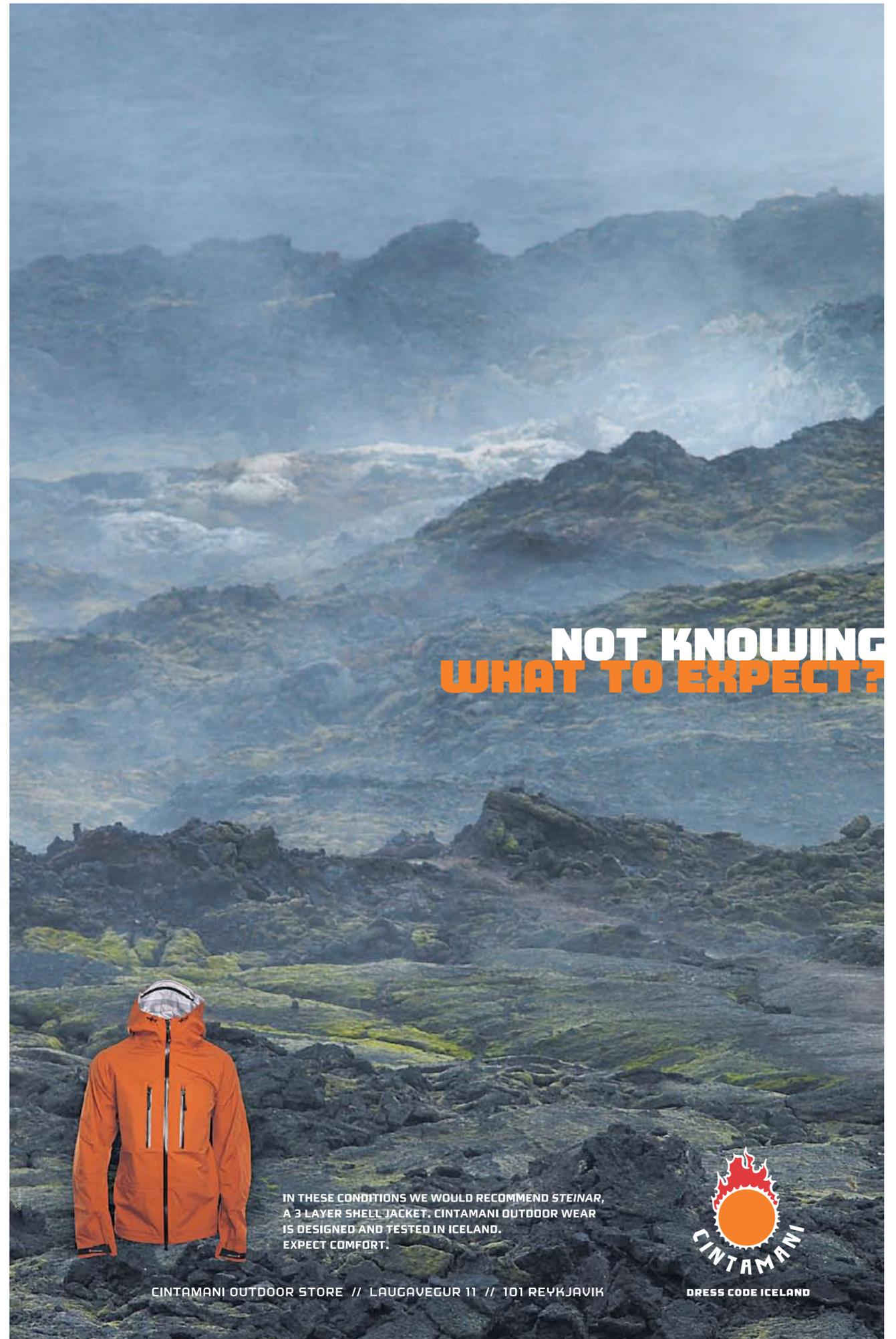
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Sour Grapes

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

An open letter to Páll Hilmarrsson

Dear sir,
how dare you state that mighty BLACK-METAL is bad?

You obviously have no taste in - nor knowledge of - music. Either that or you are the world's biggest sissypants square/lame excuse for an anarchist. I demand that you resign from your post reviewing records for the Grapevine.

And what the hell is wrong with songs about Church burnings anyway?

Thank you,
-Haukur Sigurbjörn Magnússon

Dear Haukur,

I believe you are referring to a line in a CD review by the Grapevine's distinguished CD reviewer, Páll Hilmarrsson, where he says: "Metal can be great. We all know that. Almost any kind of metal is great, with the exception of black-metal, which is not great." I would have granted Páll an opportunity to answer your ridiculous accusations, but he is currently unavailable, somewhere deep in the Cambodian jungle, on an assignment to find Colonel Kurtz, the original portrayer of Black Metal.

Obviously, that last statement is only half truth, but I guess it is too much to ask of you to see beyond the thinly veiled sarcasm, much as with Páll's statement. Obviously, you have no sense of the finer tools of the journalistic trade, used for comic effect and the general amusement of the reader. Páll is not a person who is known for making grand and sweeping generalisations, let alone secluding a whole genre of music on the basis of a comparative analysis. He would, however, and indeed he has, made such statements for the purposes of amusement and general shock.

As for your even more dumbfounding question regarding songs about church burnings. Nobody said anything to the effect that singing about church burnings was wrong, but since you asked... Obviously, singing about church burnings is pretty much on par with singing about white supremacy or violence against women. It is a message of hate, glorifying the discrimination of a group of people on the basis of their religion. Obviously, I will defend your right to talk out of your ass, ad infinitum, etc, but being loud doesn't make you right. If all you intend to use your freedom of speech for is to prove your own ignorance, then perhaps you are one of those people who would be better off living in a country where the government takes an active role in silencing the voices of dissent.

Ed.

Dear Editor,
I am from New York City working here temporarily in Iceland. I've been coming here for years for both fun and work. I arrived here in November. About a month later I was violently assaulted and landed in the hospital.

Unfortunately, no bones were broken (...or so I was told because my case apparently would have received attention). Here it is 2.5 months later and the attacker (my Icelandic ex-boyfriend) has not been served with the court summons.

The officers who I filed the complaint with don't return my "checking in" SMS's or phone calls. They're very busy with the investigations of actual violent crimes, they told me two months ago. (Gee, I thought NYC was tough.)

If I must be held hostage by IS red tape, I at least want to warn other foreigners what they can expect if they are attacked here.

No wonder so many people drop these kinds of charges --too much time to reconsider and sever one guess the emotional and physical impact of the violation.

PS, I'm so happy to have the Grapevine to read!

Best,
Xxxxxx (name withheld by ed.)

Dear Xxxxxx,
Your story is really heartbreaking, but sadly, not unique. Charges against violent offenders are indeed often dropped, since criminal investigators, overworked and underpaid as they are, don't have the manpower to follow up on investigations. I suspect their inadequacy to do their job sadly results in them lashing out at those who least deserve it, the victims themselves. Obviously, this is inexcusable in every way. But there is only one way to deal with this problem: to keep applying pressure on police authorities, following up on your case, and let them know that burying cases won't make them go away. That is the only way to force changes. I realise it can be draining, but I urge you to stay strong and see to it that your case is seen through. I wish you luck.

Ed.

Hi:
I'm visiting Iceland soon and found and subscribed to The Grapevine online just today.

I enjoyed the article A Staple of Downtown Shopping, but I think you mean visitors from North America are "prudish," not prudent. Speaking for myself, I know I am prudish and rarely appear nude even to myself -- however, I, like many of my fellows Americans, am not always prudent. I carry a lot of credit card debt and yet I'm going on

an England + Iceland trip; I've been married too many times; and I just moved back to Minnesota (which is just digging out of the worst snowstorms of the past five years or so) from California.

Yes, prudish; prudent, no.

I'm enjoying the articles very much, Sue Cross

Dear Susan,
The ideal blend of course, is a person that is neither prudish nor prudent. Even more preferably that person would be tall and handsome, and loaded... Yes, I think we are on to something here.

Ed.

In my book Daniel Pollock is a savior/hero for having the balls and energy to create and run a pro-rehearsal facility to accommodate a blooming music scene that has brought forth artists that have brought international attention to Iceland and bolstered the economy considerably in numerous ways. Lay Low is a recent example of an artist coming from the ranks of TPM to rise to considerable national success and poised to make her mark world wide. It is no accident Bjök will be rehearsing for her upcoming world tour at TPM. The facilities of TPM are on par with any other professional rehearsal facilities in the western world. Considering music being one of Iceland's greatest exports since 1987 when The Sugarcubes charmed the pants off the world popular music community it is quite puzzling that the Icelandic political community, movers & shakers, money holders and makers have had such a severe lack of vision and interest in taking this local and international industry seriously. 12 million kronur a year to keep TPM running is adrop in the bucket to those in power in Iceland and as to the return on such an investment its a no-brainer for any 1st year economy student who is not stifled by a age old business ailment called Greed - Fast Turnover/Fast returns - Tunnel Vision. A clear symptom of the Tunnel Vision- Blindfold Ailment is : Spend 500 kronur and lose 5,000 kronur. Its very contagious. I've witnessed a lot of companies and individuals rise , fall and die from taht disease. I hope all Grapevine readers near and far will urge the Icelandic government , the economic power holders on and behind the scene's to move NOW to contribute the support TPM needs to survive & thrive...VIVA TPM!!!

M.D. Pollock
World Citizen

Right on brother!
Ed.

News in Brief

Text by Haukur Magnússon, Steinunn Jakobsdóttir and Sveinn Birkir Björnsson

Pornographers To Convene In Reykjavík

Uncovering a story that has already enraged Iceland's feminist collective to an off-reached boiling point, RÚV reported on February 15th that up to 150 veterans of the international pornography industry were planning to convene for a week of networking and fun in Iceland in March. The annual convention was referred to as Snowgathering and is apparently one of the largest aggregations of web-based porn-merchants in the world.

Accompanied by renowned artists such as "Dutch hotty Sandy Cage" and "UK Party Animal Daisy Rock", the pornographers were planning to meet up in Reykjavík's Radisson SAS hotel on Wednesday March 7th for some cocktails before partaking in such conventional activities as snowboarding in Akureyri, visiting strip-clubs and touring the Golden Circle, according to the convention's web-site. The site goes on to claim that a scantily clad woman called Eve Angel wants to meet YOU in Iceland.

Browsing through on-line pictures from last year's Snowgathering, which took place in Austria, one can ascertain that some of the visiting pornographers use the trip to manufacture some more of their controversial products. When asked by RÚV's reporter if there were plans afoot to produce pornography in Iceland, convention organizer Christina Ponga stated that that would likely happen, although neither time nor place for such activities had been planned. She added that any such productions would take place in secluded areas, and that the convention's guests weren't planning on shedding any of their clothes in public.

Ponga furthermore said that no Icelandic travel agency or group had anything to do with organizing the convention; she herself had visited Iceland in November and chosen the appropriate venues and activities.

The group Stígarnót (which runs a counselling and information centre for survivors of sexual abuse and violence) sent out an open letter to Icelandic authorities urging them to take action to prevent the convention from taking place. The letter states that "[p]ornography is simply documented prostitution, and prostitution is a premise for human trafficking to thrive. In 2005, 19 women sought out Stígarnót because of the consequences of prostitution. [...] Pornography is prohibited in Iceland, and so is arranging prostitution. Human trafficking is also prohibited."

The foundation closed its plea for action by stating that "In Iceland, we have shown that if we don't want representatives of organised crime coalitions, we can stop them. That was for instance revealed when representatives of Hell's Angels tried to gain ground here. We don't believe that this convention will be tolerated."

'Liberals' Reveal Link Between Terrorism, Drug Trafficking

The Icelandic Parliament saw some action in February, as representatives of the Progressive and Liberal parties argued heavily over the nature of terrorism. Spurred by MP (and recent liberal addition) Valdimar Leó Friðriksson's claims that infamous terrorists had at times been apprehended at the Keflavik International Airport, Keflavik police authorities stated that no known terrorists had thus far been captured at the airport. In response to the statement, Progressive MP Guðjón Ólafur Jónsson called for Liberal MPs to enlighten the parliament of exactly which terrorists had been apprehended to their knowledge.

Responding to Jónsson's enquiries, the Liberal Party's vice-president Magnús Þór Hafsteinsson pointed out that passengers were frequently caught with materials to produce "massive" amounts of narcotics. This, claimed Hafsteinsson, is what Friðriksson (who was on sick-leave from parliament that day) was referring to.

To irrefutably establish the link between terrorism and drug-trafficking, Hafsteinsson then quoted the Icelandic dictionary's definition of terrorism ("sabotage, manslaughter, wounding"), adding: "What is the mass-production and distribution of narcotics in this country other than sabotage, wounding and even manslaughter?" Jónsson responded to Hafsteinsson's explanations, saying they were a pitiful attempt to justify his fellow MP's outrageous claims through free word-association, adding that Liberal MPs should see fit to apologise to Icelanders and their parliament. As of today, no such apologies have surfaced.

Oil Company Sentenced To Pay Customer Reparations

In what may prove to be a pivotal ruling, Reykjavik district court recently sentenced Ker, former owners of the Esso oil company, to pay a former customer, Sigurður Hreinnsson, damages to the sum of 15,000 ISK for his losses on account of the company's illegal co-operation with other Icelandic oil distributors. Ker was also sentenced to pay Hreinnsson 500,000 ISK in court costs. The company has already stated its intentions to appeal the ruling to the Supreme Court.

Hreinnsson filed his claim on Ker in the aftermath of an Icelandic competition authorities ruling, which deemed that the country's major oil companies had illegally co-operated from 1993-2001. He provided evidence showing that he bought gasoline from Esso to the amount of 1.2 million ISK during a six-year period from 1995-2001, and his main claim was for reparations of 180,000 ISK.

Hreinnsson suit was firmly backed up by The Consumers' Association of Iceland.

Given that the supreme court does not reverse the ruling, it may be assumed that Ker and the other illegally co-operating com-

panies, Oluverzlun Íslands and Skeljungur, will face countless charges from customers wishing to recoup some of the money they lost during the companies' reign of corruption in the 90s.

73% Favour More Environmental Protection

According to a recent Gallup Capacent poll, conducted for the Iceland Nature Conservation Association, roughly 73% of Icelanders believe that political parties should place more focus on environmental protection.

When asked if political parties should give more attention to environmental protection, 37,2% answered that the parties should give a lot more attention to environmental protection, while 35,6% answered that the parties should give more attention to the topic.

22,6% Answered that they believed that environmental protection was receiving adequate attention, while 4,6% believed that environmental protection was receiving too much attention.

There was a noticeable difference in opinion between the sexes, with around 78% of women in favour of more environmental protection, while 67% of men answering the same way. Of 1350 people polled, 800 answered.

Pornographers' Convention CANCELLED!

The SnowGathering 2007 pornographers' convention, set to take place in Reykjavik was cancelled. The convention's organizers, FreeOnes.com, announced their decision after receiving word from Hótel Saga – where they had booked several rooms – that their reservations were being cancelled. In an earlier statement from the Icelandic Farmers' Association, owners of Hótel Saga, they announced that they would not be hosting the convention due to announcements from various politicians, feminist groups and the Mayor of Reykjavik. The statement also said that the decision was backed up by Reizidor Hotel Group, the proprietors of Radisson SAS hotels. A later announcement stated that the hotel planned to stop showing lite-porn on their Pay Per View channels.

According to a press release, FreeOnes.com are currently seeking legal advice as to how they can recoup the resulting financial damages, which are reportedly high.

Air Pollution Reaches Critical Levels

Reykjavik air pollution exceeded recommended health care levels on February 26th, and reached high levels again the day after. City officials issued a warning, advising old people, children and people with respiratory diseases to stay indoors.

The combination of frost, snowless streets and still wind create conditions in Reykjavik

that generate high pollution levels caused by airborne micro dust particles stirred up by traffic.

Health care limits in Reykjavik are set at 50 micrograms per cubicmeter (ug/m3) in 24-hours. On February 26th, pollution was measured at 66,1 ug/m3. This was the fifth time this year that pollution exceeded health care limits. Reykjavik city is taking measures to reduce the number of days when pollution exceeds health care limits, with the target being no more than 23 days this year.

Hagur Hafnarfjarðar Accused Of Fear Propaganda

Sól í Straumi, an interest group in Hafnarfjörður opposing plans to enlarge the Straumsvík aluminium plant, have harshly criticised the organisation Hagur Hafnarfjarðar, a group of people and companies that have vested interests in the smelter, and accused them of being biased and using fear propaganda to influence the people of Hafnarfjörður to vote in favour of the enlargement.

The smelter (it's the one you pass when driving to or from the Keflavik Airport) is owned by the industrial giant Alcan Iceland Ltd., which is now planning to increase the smelter's annual capacity from 170,000 tons to 460,000 tons. The inhabitants of Hafnarfjörður will get the chance to vote on the subject on March 31st.

The newly established organisation Hagur Hafnarfjarðar has one main goal, to support a bigger smelter so as to maintain a flourishing economy in Hafnarfjörður, as they put it. In reaching that goal, their spokesmen have been encouraging Hafnarfjörður inhabitants to vote in favour of the enlargement, arguing that if they reject these plans the smelter will close down in the near future. That will have dramatic effects on the smelter's employees as well as all the companies doing business with Alcan, which are, according to Hagur Hafnarfjarðar, approximately 1,500 people and more than one hundred companies.

Sól í Straumi, refute these predictions altogether. In a statement they accuse Hagur Hafnarfjarðar of using misleading information and fear propaganda to influence the townspeople. According to the statement, Sól í Straumi challenge Hagur Hafnarfjarðar to be more responsible in the debate and stop trying to persuade Hafnarfjörður inhabitants by arguing that their jobs are in danger. They also reject the statement made by Hagur Hafnarfjarðar that 5-7% of the municipality's income can be traced to the smelter. The number is closer to 1-2% of the town's total income, they argue.

These debates aren't expected to conclude before the big day.

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If No One Dares to Try, We Would Never Get Anything New.

Text by Sveinn Birkir Björnsson Photo by Skari

Journalist Sigríður Dögg Auðunsdóttir has started a new weekly news magazine. Being a woman, she has had to work hard to keep the competition from labelling it as a 'women's mag'.

Sigríður Dögg Auðunsdóttir has a stellar reputation as a journalist. In 2006, she was awarded for investigative journalism by the Icelandic Journalists Association for her series of articles on the privatization of formerly publicly owned Icelandic banks, Búnaðarbanki (now Kaupþing) and Landsbanki Íslands) which revealed suspicious dealings between government officials and private investors. She also caused quite a stir when she uncovered suspicious e-mail correspondence between several higher-ups in Icelandic society regarding the Baugur-case, the largest court trial in Iceland to date.

Her most recent foray in journalism was to found – along with her husband Valdimar Birgisson, former sales manager for 365 Media – and edit a new weekly news magazine in Iceland, named Krónikan. The idea was to put together a magazine that would focus on news related content and put it in context, filling readers in on not only what was on the news but also what it means.

Several experienced and well-regarded journalists accepted her offer to join the magazine, leaving hard-earned positions to try their hand at something new and fresh in the Icelandic media market. There was much anticipation regarding the publication. Last month, the magazine hit the streets to mixed reviews. Sigríður Dögg sat down with a Grapevine journalist to talk about her new magazine, and the challenges of being a female editor for a news magazine.

Tell me a little bit about how this magazine started.

My husband and I had always wanted to

work together on our own business. We started to think about what we wanted to do in the future, and we asked ourselves: if there were no obstacles in our path, what would we want to do? We wanted to do something that was our own, to produce a magazine that we could be proud of being associated with, a magazine that we would want to read ourselves.

We began to think about this in September/October and started to work on it in December. We were lucky to get our art director, Bergdís Sigurðardóttir, on board very early. She has been in the business of designing magazines for 12 years, and our ideas on how the magazine should look came together well, so she deserves at least half the credit for the magazine. I think together we managed to make the kind of magazine we wanted to make: a quality product that is both entertaining and full of material with a minimalist and approachable design.

But my emphasis can be seen very clearly in this magazine. When you start a project like this, you have to rely on your own instincts, and not be too worried about what others are going to think. We decided from the start to follow our convictions, and I think that the readers will see that this is done with integrity and ambition.

This magazine had built up some hype by word of mouth before its actual publication, and when it hit the streets, it looked very different from what I had imagined. I had imagined a very hard-hitting news magazine.

It was never our intention to start a magazine that would only feature news related material. The Icelandic market is simply too small for that. But we did try to maintain that perception on purpose, for business reasons. Two new newspapers were being established at around the same time, and we were simply afraid that they would try to follow our

of women who left other papers to try to establish something new, which is a statement in itself. We feel that there are certain things that could be done better and we intend to do things the way we want them done. The attention I received personally in relation to the series of articles I have written about the privatization of the banks, and the whole e-mails issue (see intro). After that, I went on maternity leave, and founding this magazine was almost the first thing I did after returning. I think people were maybe expecting me to continue to uncover issues like that.

Was it easy, getting this experienced group together? Some people left good positions to follow you to found a new paper.

It was no problem. I think almost everyone I asked came onboard, with maybe one exception. I think that primarily shows what a good concept this is. All these people, with all this experience, believed this would work. People have pointed out that the magazine is a little on the serious side, and we take ourselves seriously, but we are writing for the public, and there is only a section of the public that is interested in news related material, and those are the people we are focusing on. We know that this concept has been successful in other countries. Look at the Economist, for example: While sales figures for most magazines in the world are on the decline, sales figures for the Economist have tripled in just a few years.

There is an enormous supply of information in our society, not least perhaps with the addition of blogs, and that is why I think we need a magazine that is selective. The idea is that this magazine should be the only thing you need to read to follow the weekly news and to know what is going on in society. But we also have everything else that matters. Cultural material, you should only have to read the Krónika to know what is going on in culture, sports, news, etc. We are betting on this formula, and I think it will prove to be successful, especially with the group of journalists we managed to put together. People who have years of experience in preparing information for the public and put it in context, and now they have an opportunity to do the news in their own way. What we want to do is to have journalists cover issues that they are experts on.

When we, as journalists, are covering issues that we know inside out, like Arna Schram, who has written about politics for (Iceland's biggest daily newspaper) Morgunblaðið for ten years, she should not have to seek an expert's opinion of what happens in case of this or that, she knows this herself. She knows as well as anyone how the political game is played, because she has been covering it for so long. Aðalheiður Inga, with her years of experience in covering foreign politics, can tell us as well as anyone what there is to know about the US presidential elections this spring. She does not have to seek an expert's opinion to put things in context. This is what we want to do, and I hope the public will realise this.

What about the business model itself? What sort of ratio are you aiming for in regards to advertisements against editorial content, and subscription versus single sales copies?

Most of our revenue should come from subscriptions and single sales, only a small portion from advertisements. I think advertisement ratio should be around 20%. We are betting on people being prepared to buy our product. There are 5000 people who buy (Icelandic version of Se og Hér or Hello, if you will) Seð og Heyrt, so why should people not want to buy the Krónika? We actually need more readers than Seð og Heyrt, but I think we can get that, and I think others believe that as well, otherwise I could not have gotten all these qualified journalists onboard.

Of course this is a very competitive field, but I am sometimes reminded of a friend of my husband, who was asked if there would be room for the fourth bar in Reykjavík: after going through the calculations, he said there was no way a fourth bar in Reykjavík could carry itself. We all know how that turned out. If no one dares to try, we would never get anything new.

lead if they knew what we were up to. This is a cutthroat business and the competition is hard, so we did our best to keep the concept behind the paper as a business secret. Instead, perhaps we managed to surprise a few people.

But there was something else as well. When we were starting off, with me as the Editor, Arna Schram as the Assistant Editor, and another woman on the editorial staff, while there was only one man, right from the beginning we started to hear middle aged men in the media business describing us as a women's magazine. So this was our way to put a stop to that.

This was never intended to be a women's magazine, it is a weekly magazine for both men and women, and it would have been very damaging for us if it had been labelled as a women's magazine from the start, so we decided to emphasise the news aspect and we managed to put a stop to that discussion.

It just seems as if there are a few individuals in this business, of a certain age and gender, who seem to be more eager to talk negatively about our paper. I cannot state for sure that it is because there are women at the helm, but it certainly looks like it to us.

I mentioned how a lot of hype had built up around the magazine before it was published, what do think contributed to that?

I think... no, I am certain that a part of the reason was because there are women responsible for the magazine. This has never happened before in Icelandic media, with the exception of Herdís Þorgeirsdóttir, who founded the magazine Heimsmynd. But since then, women have not been very prominent in executive positions in Icelandic media, especially among owners and founding partners.

Also, this was such an experienced group



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Honesty Doesn't Pay

Text by Ian Watson Photos by Ashkan Sahihi*

Rejoice, it's tax time once again. Many foreign residents in Iceland find the rules here a bit baffling at first and, to be fair, Icelandic tax forms have gotten more complicated in the last few years. To reassure you that things could always be worse, I offer up a true story of taxpayer woe.

The story starts in 2002, the first full year that I lived in Iceland. My only income that year, from working as a tour guide in Europe for an American travel agency, amounted to a little under \$37,000. When I moved to Iceland, I had conscientiously made an appointment with RSK (the Icelandic tax authorities), where a nice man (whom I will call Elvar) explained how the Icelandic tax system worked. He confirmed that I would need to pay Icelandic tax on my non-Icelandic income, but I could do so during the calendar year after receiving it. So I set aside a good chunk of my 2002 income for taxes, and I filed my 2002 tax return in early 2003.

When I got my tax assessment from RSK and my tax payment slip from Tollstjórnin in August 2003, something looked wrong. I had set aside a million ISK, but the first bill from Tollstjórnin was for only 8,000 ISK. At that point I did something which many people say was my big mistake. I called Elvar and told him that my tax assessment was wrong. "You are totally crazy," say friends. "The government forgets to charge you a million ISK and you call them up and tell them about it?" But I wanted to establish my good name in this country, and didn't want to start off by becoming a tax cheat.

Elvar and I figured out that I had reported my American income on line 2.8 of the tax form, in accordance with the instruction booklet. In order to have it properly taxed though, I should have put it on line 2.1, even if there was nothing in the instructions to tell me this. Elvar agreed with me that the instruction booklet was misleading. (Later, he told me that the person who edits the instruction booklet disagreed with him, and the booklet has never been corrected.) As a result, my taxes needed to be reassessed. No big problem, and there wouldn't be any penalties in my case, because it was

really RSK's mistake. Elvar took all the details he needed and explained how I would get two letters, first a notice of reassessment and then the final reassessment. Early December 2003, I received the final reassessment notice from RSK. The letter gave the amount of the reassessment (just short of a million ISK), but didn't give me any information about how to pay it except to say that Tollstjórnin had been notified of the reassessment.

My Troubles Begin

The regular assessment notice that one receives from RSK at the end of July each year is followed by a bill from Tollstjórnin with which one actually pays one's taxes. So in my naivety, I assumed that I would soon get a bill from Tollstjórnin, listing the account number where I should pay, the amount, and the payment deadline.

Instead, several weeks later, a letter arrived from Tollstjórnin telling me that my payment was overdue. The letter demanded not only my million ISK of tax, but more than 50,000 ISK in "costs" and penalty interest, which was increasing every day.

I sent an e-mail to Elvar, who knew I'd acted in good conscience. I hoped he would step in and clear up the mess for me. He wrote right back saying that Ríkisskattstjórnin just assessed taxes, it didn't collect them. Sorry.

I went to the office of Tollstjórnin the next morning and paid. But I had received an overdue notice without anyone ever telling me where to pay, how to pay, when to pay, what kind of interest would be charged if I didn't pay, or even that my debt was due. I was sure there had been some mistake. I managed to meet to some higher-ups at Tollstjórnin, particularly a woman whom I'll call Harpa. I explained the story to her and told her I thought it was wrong that I was being charged interest on a bill when I had had no notice that the bill was due. At first, Harpa spoke sternly and spelled out the party line. I should have come and paid on my own. No exceptions could be made. She printed out a report which showed that interest had been accumulating on my account since December 20th.

Then, her expression and tone of voice abruptly changed and she became confidential. She told me that it was common for people not to understand that their payments were due, especially for reassessed taxes. But the rules didn't allow her to send bills, and she couldn't change the rules. She implied that she was kind of fed up with such cases herself, but nothing would happen unless the public complained. She said she would appreciate it if I would appeal as far as possible up the chain of command, especially because, in this case, the reassessment had taken place because of RSK's mistake. The first step would be to send a formal appeal to her, which, she explained, she would deny. I could then appeal to the Ministry of Finance.

I sent her the letter of appeal, which she promptly denied. In the meantime, I called up two people I know who are retired from responsible positions in government finance. Let's call them Björn and Örn. Örn made some inquiries on my behalf. "I talked to the head guy at Tollstjórnin," he said, "and he thought what happened to you was totally ridiculous. But he can't do anything about it, because it would set a dangerous precedent." Björn grilled me for a whole afternoon in his living room before satisfying himself that I really hadn't tried to cheat on my taxes and writing up a letter of support in Icelandic.

Appeal Process

Following Harpa's advice, I sent a letter of complaint to the Ministry of Finance, attaching a copy of Björn's letter. In short order I received a letter back telling me that paper bills were never sent in cases of reassessed taxes and that the government did not have the legal authority to refund my overdue penalties.

Now I decided to complain to the office of the parliamentary ombudsman. The ombudsman's primary purpose is to determine whether government agencies have acted according to the law. His response, though flawed in several respects, pointed out something important: It is written into Icelandic law (para. 6, Art. 112, Act no. 90/2003) that reassessed taxes must be paid within ten

days from the date of the reassessment. And indeed, looking back at the printout I had gotten from Tollstjórnin, I had been charged interest starting exactly ten days from the date of the reassessment. But absent from this law is any kind of requirement that taxpayers undergoing reassessment be told anything about this ten-day deadline, or told where to send their payment.

Now at least I knew. I had been treated – or rather mistreated – exactly in accordance with the law. I felt this law needed to be changed. And who changes laws? Parliament. They are always tweaking small details like this. Iceland is a small country. Plenty of people seemed to agree with me. Maybe I could push to get it changed.

I soon learned the name of the chairman of the parliamentary committee that oversees tax law. He represents the Independence Party and is reported to be passionately interested in tax issues. I wrote him an e-mail, and spoke to his secretary by phone, outlining the issue briefly and politely. When I got no response, I wrote another e-mail, and still got no response. Some months later, I had a chance to talk to him at a conference, and mentioned the issue, again briefly and politely. He said that he sympathised very much, and had once had a similar problem himself, and that I should definitely get in touch – after the primary election. After the primary election, I sent him another brief and polite e-mail. I haven't heard back. In fairness, I understand that members of parliament get a lot of e-mail, and maybe I should just try harder.

Icelandic Deficiencies

By law, Canadian taxpayers may receive a refund of overdue penalties from Revenue Canada if they have not received proper notice of taxes due (source: GST Memorandum 500-3-2-1). And in the United States, the Fair Credit Reporting Act requires private-sector creditors to disclose payment terms fully and prominently. Should the same common-sense principles not apply to the public sector in Iceland? Of course I think they should, and so clearly did Harpa, and Örn, and Björn, and others as well. So why was it so hard to get people interested in changing the rules?

Perhaps they just had more important things to do. Or perhaps there is a lingering sense in Iceland (maybe dating back to the trade monopoly days?) that customers are always wrong, and customers who owe money are even more wrong – so there's no reason to care about their "user experience." Or perhaps it's just hard to fight government officials.

I've since learned that many other issues surrounding notice of payments due are controversial in Iceland. I have a small file of newspaper clippings on questions such as whether Icelandic merchants may charge for billing their customers, and whether overdue charges should be regulated by law. More broadly, I've learned that Iceland missed out on enacting a lot of the consumer protection legislation that came into being in America and Europe during the 1970s (there are no class-action lawsuits or small-claims courts in Iceland). What is interesting in Iceland is that government is just as big an offender as the private sector.

Change is long overdue. In the meantime: Readers beware. You too could be assessed a debt by the Icelandic government without being given any information about where to pay, how to pay, when to pay, or what kind of interest will accrue if you don't pay. And you won't get any meaningful sympathy, even if the whole thing was the tax department's mistake to begin with. Hah.

For information on how to fill out your tax forms, turn to the Internal Revenue Directorate (www.rsk.is), where further information is available in the following languages: English, Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, Swedish, French, Spanish, German, Polish, Russian and Chinese. The Directorate of Customs collects taxes for the Icelandic Government, and the City of Reykjavik. For more info, visit www.tollur.is.

* Photos by Ashkan Sahihi in relation to his exhibition of 100 million ISK at Akureyri Art Gallery in January 2005. Cash provided by Kaupþing Bank.

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No Love for Porn!

By Marvin Lee Dupree

One of Iceland's main selling points has always been "purity", a trait on which Icelandair has capitalized with the tantalizing phrase, "Come and take a break from the world". Maybe I have read too much literature, but when I see Geysir "erupting" I cannot help but wonder if foreigners consider us a sex-crazed country. Furthermore, every advertisement from Iceland seems to stress how alluring our women are; beautiful, yet easy (in their heads meaning sleazy and good looking). It is not a stretch, considering that some of Icelandair's more recent ads are pictures of scantily clad ladies, frolicking in the Blue Lagoon inviting, one assumes, the male population of other countries over for some manic and wild nights in Reykjavik.

Put these things together, and it seems as if it were only a matter of time before the porn industry came to sink its teeth into "pure Iceland", i.e. at least the enticing escapism of the country. Most people are aware of the group of porn moguls, including the "almost Icelandic" (Western Icelanders) brothers who, in their quixotic quest to provide the world with porn, denounced their Icelandic ancestry. Harsh words indeed. Now it seems that Iceland has been branded the antithesis of The Netherlands, or rather the culture of Amsterdam. I consider this to be a good thing because most foreign male visitors are not exactly going there for the windmills, Edam cheese, wooden clogs and Dutch cuisine.

I think the same thing can be said of the so-called porn conference. These people were not coming here to witness or partake in any Icelandic culture. They wanted to talk about porn, introduce porn, and maybe, let us not delude ourselves, make contacts here in this country. A porn conference by its nature is not like any other convention, neither is a KKK convention. Not that racism and gender degradation are the same thing, they just seem to stem from the same root: A total lack of empathy for a fellow human being.

Sadly, many Icelanders deemed it appropriate to take part in some mass hysteria of apologies by writing semantically horrendous written comments on the homepage of the conference, with more spelling errors than sense. Are we actually apologising to purveyors of smut? What next? Will we apologise to Holocaust deniers if they are not allowed to hold a conference here? Have we apologised for denying Jews to come here and seek refuge, or apologised for trying to ban African American GIs from coming onshore or leaving the base?

Certain phrases and comments written by these people on the net strike me as amazingly simplistic and childish, including statements that Hotel Radisson's decision was "a black day in the history of Iceland," thus putting it in the same category as dates such as 1918, 1783 and 1262. The history books in the next decades will be an in-

teresting read if we ascribe to their logic. Our grandchildren will read about when we lost our independence, "Möðuharöndin" or when volcanic ash suffocated livestock and humans, The Spanish Flu and the winter when almost everybody froze to death – and then the day a hotel decided to uphold a moral stance, at least under pressure. A Black Day indeed.

Most of those commenting also concurred that they were ashamed of our government or that the horrible witches of feminism have brought this curse of Puritanism to our country. Some even went so far as to be ashamed of being Icelandic. To them I say, why not exchange nationalities? We could get some people here from Sudan, and you can leave for Sudan. The hypocrisy of these people is appalling.

When Falun Gong practitioners came here to demonstrate against Li Peng, there were nowhere as many voices of dissent protesting about the rights of the Falun Gong being trounced on. Their right to denounce him as a mass murderer was annulled and made void by our government. Or when the police here in Reykjavik took pictures of Icelandic protesters and actually manhandled some of us to the ground. That is just fine and dandy, but God forbid there be a porn conference cancelled. The horror! It's as though the Internet itself were being closed by the reactions.

From what I can gather, the individuals of snowgathering.com seem to have taken offence to our allegedly puritan society – a society that seems to be too pure to handle porn. And somehow in their minds, with twisted logic, we have become sexually repressed whale killers. Imagine the headlines around the world: "Keiko hates kill off innocent porn conference." I highly doubt that I speak only for myself when I say that "I love sex and prefer that to whale meat any day". Hell, I don't even consume any flesh. So, how I can support Radisson's decision despite their obvious hypocrisy? Simple. You can agree with freedom of speech, as an undeniable right, it just does not mean you have to be the one that is helping them out. Porn is a fact of life, you cannot tell people what to do; and Radisson does provide porn at an affordable price in the privacy of the consumer's room. To decide to cease doing that is purely image control. But they have a right not to host guests they deem inappropriate.

I hate generalizations but it seems like there is a generation of men that have grown up and consider it absurd for women to be opposed to being depicted as money-shot recipients. Imagine growing up with your Barbie doll to aspire to, along with your pretty pink sheets and with a rosy dream of becoming a beauty pageant queen and then when you have the nerve to question these things, being told off for the audacity of being a radical feminist. It sort of reminds one

of the sombre tone that was taken in the Civil Rights movement:

"How dare they?"
It seems as if a whole bunch of males in our country have forgotten the Icelandic Sagas, and in the process have become snivelling little bureaucrats, chanting in unison chorus of spite against the evil and manipulative feminists, those "kerringar" that dare to oppose a decent conference and free speech. Are some men too afraid of having female equals? Because there sure were enough of them in the Sagas, like Auður, back to whom almost everybody can trace their roots.

Unfortunately, this whole discussion has become a farce, reminding one of an absurd theatre with meaningless chatter in the media, for example the chairman of the Left-Green party, Steingrímur Sigfússon, has proposed setting up "net-police" to surf the Internet, with the emphasis on curbing distribution of porn on the Internet. This kind of careless talk reminds one of a totalitarian state. What next? Are we going to burn the Marquis De Sade's works, cast the smutty Classics into the sea and say good riddance to literature in general? Goodbye disgustingly rude Catullus.

Is there a difference between visual eroticism and what is considered porn on the net? Defining porn is not as simple as some people seem to think. The line between eroticism, satire, porn, literature and art is pretty thin sometimes, but I am reminded of a great little anecdote: If the Swedish plumber comes over, gets laid and does not fix the sink, well you were probably just watching some porn. All sex, no plot. Although that does not mean I want the government telling me what to watch, eat and do. That is not their role and should never be. It was not only feminists, the Left Green Party, the Mayor (Independence Party) and the Church that opposed this conference, there were many other individuals who thought it had nothing good to bring to our country. Bygones. Let's get over it. They will host their conference elsewhere and Iceland will still be hip if that is what you people are worried about.

However, enough is enough. Some of us are not huge supporters of porn, that doesn't mean we can try to get rid of it with censorship and Draconian laws. Knowledge and education are better tools. I think we should give the feminists a little more credit and a lot more respect, but that does not mean we will agree with this newest approach of trying to phase out porn on the net and in shops. I myself prefer a more direct approach in my sex life rather than the passive approach of viewing porn on-screen. Sadly, that does not ring true for all, a fact I was reminded of when reading Silfur Egils on visir.net: "What about all us men that don't get love, what are we supposed to do?" How about watching less porn and trying to get out some more?



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Paul Dukas :: The Sorcerer's Apprentice

Atli Heimir Sveinsson :: Intermezzo from

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Ludwig van Beethoven :: Piano trio 1 & 2

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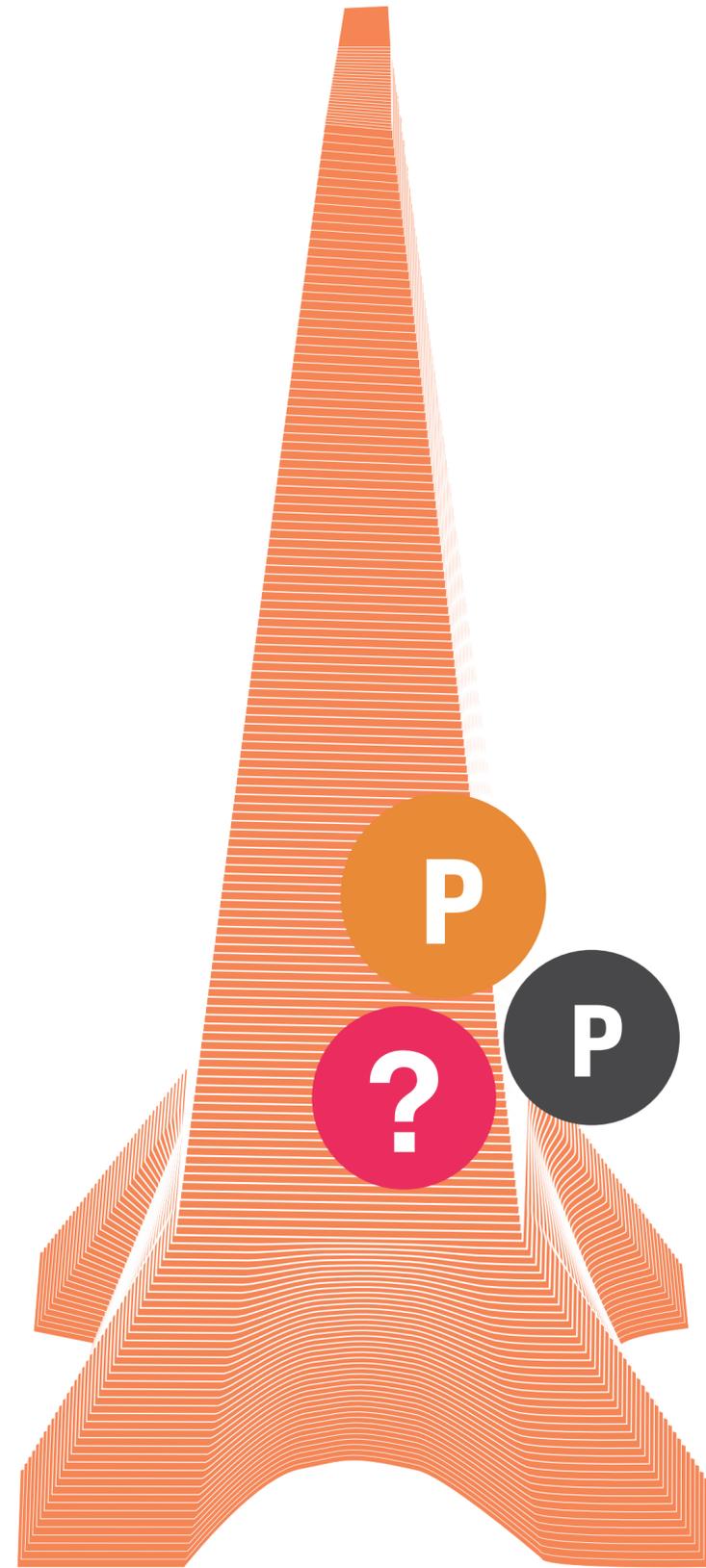
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Nothing but the Word

By Gabriele R. Gudbjartsson



The first time I heard it used by a child I was quite shocked and a bit disturbed. Did that third grader just yell the f-word? After the initial shock was over, I then began to analyse the way he said the word. There was not the occasional follow-up of "oops, sorry." He said it like a grown man witnessing his favourite sports team losing the championship in the final four seconds of the game. It possessed a level of maturity that you could only get from watching another person do it: that is, a professional.

It's unusual and frankly a little scary to find a country where so many of its citizens pick up their colloquial English skills solely from watching American-made films and television programmes. The media's influence on the English language in Iceland penetrates quite deeply into the voices of the younger generation. In my opinion it stands as the most dominant English instructor in the country and has given many Icelanders an advantage over many other countries that struggle with appropriating second languages. However, as convenient and accessible as this language teacher may be, there are a few side effects that need to be addressed.

First and foremost, when an actor or actress says something offensive on a television show or movie, the screen does not flash a warning sign that reads, "Not suitable for everyday conversation." An obvious backlash from allowing the media to be your English teacher is that it makes inappropriate words seem fitting for casual conversation. Since television and film have neglected their standards in censoring expletives altogether, many Icelanders do not understand the correct etiquette when utilising some of their English-speaking skills. Most native English speakers would find it quite offensive to openly curse in the course of a chat. It sends a message that you do not respect the other person and their comfort level with swearing. Openly cursing also reveals a lack of sophistication on the part of the speaker and gives the impression that curse words are a mask for an inadequate vocabulary and therefore are being used to con-

vey a variety of unknown words or phrases.

In addition, the American entertainment industry also gives culturally offensive words a pathway into the vocabulary of a non-English speaker without any rhyme or reason. Last month one of my students used the word "nigger" out loud in a way that showed an eerie level of comfort in its delivery. Through this incident I saw an opportunity to speak with well over one hundred students about the history and sheer abhorrence of using the "n-word" in any way, shape or form. "Nigger" is a derogatory racial slur used mostly for insulting people of colour. Many students stood clueless about the long historical past this one word contained. It is regarded as one of the most offensive words in the English language and is currently a hot topic on many U.S. political agendas in this time just after Black History Month. Political figures such as Jesse Jackson are fighting for it to be taken out of the entertainment industry all together, while New York City has recently passed a symbolic law on banning the word from its usage in films, music and everyday conversation. As one of few African-Americans living and teaching in Iceland, I am blessed to be in a position that enables me to educate as many people as I can about the weight and cultural license of verbalising certain words of power.

As there are two sides to every coin, there are of course positives in utilising television shows and films as teaching tools for English. The benefits of acquiring English skills through entertainment are two-fold. One, individuals develop a firm grasp of how to communicate with confidence and at a sufficient level. In my English classes it is crystal clear which students have spent a large amount of time in front of the television versus those who have not. Although expressing oneself thoroughly cannot be attained, students who have been exposed to this visual and audio component of learning over an immense amount of time tend to be the most proficient out of everyone in the group. Another benefit that television offers is that it provides an adequate comprehension level of popular culture and cultural norms that also flow into understanding the language. Based on the fact that a language is not just words, but facial expressions, body language, humour, sarcasm and the like, many of these idiosyncrasies are critical when communicating in any circumstance.

So, did I write this piece to encourage more TV time or discourage it? The answer is neither. The purpose is to inform those using the media as a teaching tool to also be cautious as to what they are not learning. At the end of the day we must remember that the mission of the big screen is not to educate, but to simply entertain.

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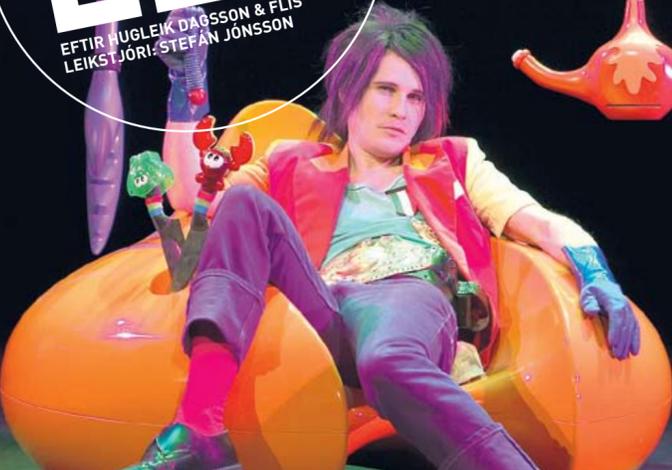
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Kaupthings kunder kan få service på nettet og ordne deres bankforretninger på fire sprog: islandsk, engelsk, dansk og polsk.

Adgangen til Kaupthings Netbank er gratis. Det eneste du skal gøre, er at kigge ind i den nærmeste filial af Kaupthing og få lavet et password. Derefter kan du ordne dine bankforretninger i Netbanken i fred og ro på det sprog du ønsker.

Kaupthings Netbank er en simpel og nem måde at ordne bankforretninger på — hvor og hvornår det skal være.

Bankowość internetowa
 w czterech językach

Klienci Kaupthing mogą korzystać z usług internetowych w czterech językach. Operacje w Kaupthings Netbank przeprowadzać można w języku islandzkim, angielskim, duńskim oraz polskim.

Dostęp do Kaupthings Netbank nie wymaga opłat. Wystarczy odwiedzić swój oddział Kaupthing i wystąpić o indywidualne hasło. Można wtedy prowadzić wszystkie operacje w ramach Kaupthing Netbank w wybranym przez siebie języku.

Kaupthings Netbank jest prosty i wygodny – zawsze i wszędzie.

KAUPPING

Hugsum lengra

What Kind of Tourist are You?

Text by Haukur Magnússon Photos by Skari

It is sometimes said that the final and most telltale sign of a formerly ambitious and radical magazine's complete and utter journalistic bankruptcy, is when its pages start filling with mind-numbing personality quizzes. Keeping in with that spirit, the Reykjavik Grapevine

would now like to present to you, loyal reader, with our contribution to reinforcing the use-less, b/w mode of thought which claims that people can easily be categorised and divided into small groups of stereotypes. Enjoy!

1. Which of the following lyric-snippets do you most identify with?

- a) 'Tschíúúúú, wúúú, tsjíúhíu, sæææææ-ljóóóón'
- b) 'Coca-locá dancing líke a maníca. Coca-locá dancing in the dance-room.'
- c) 'Emotional landscapes, they puzzle me – confuse.'
- d) I identify with mountains, not lyrics.

2. What is your favourite nature reserve?

- a) The Hornstrandir Nature Reserve.
- b) The Human Nature Reserve.
- c) Will there be girls there?
- d) I never reserve. I just show up and get a table.

3. Whilst travelling the Ring Road, you happen to hit one of those infamous jaywalking sheep. Your next step would be to...

- a) Drag the carcass into nature and perform a small ritual before respectfully burying it.
- b) B-B-Q!
- c) String it upside down in a small gallery.
- d) Hitchhikers don't hit sheep, and neither do mountain-bikers.

4. Which of the following entities would you prefer to blow up?

- a) The Kárahnjúkar Dam. And those Alcoa Bastards.
- b) The remaining copies of my pre-fame B-class porn movie.
- c) Fireworks!
- d) I would like to blow up a balloon and bounce it around somewhere in nature, preferably while naked.

5. Pick a hair-care product:

- a) Shockwaves Xtrovert Styling Steel
- b) ZIRH Crisp Powder Sticking Agent.
- c) Those miniature packets of shampoo and conditioner you get at a hotel. They're free, you know.
- d) Some honey.

6. Pick an event:

- a) Iceland Airwaves.
- b) The 'SnowGathering 2007' int'l Pornographers Conference.
- c) The Hafnarfjörður Viking Festival.
- d) International Food and Fun.

7. Which of the following 'Icelandic icons' are you most familiar with?

- a) Björk Guðmundsdóttir, pop singer/composer.
- b) Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, the president of Iceland.
- c) Hófi Karlsdóttir, Miss World 1985.
- d) Those retarded kids from the Sigur Rós videos.

8. Your stance on whaling?

- a) Whales are for watching. And petting.
- b) Reinstating whaling is typical for these capitalist bastards who are intent on spoiling Iceland's niche as an unspoiled nature, the last bastion of unspoiled nature in Europe, etc., etc.
- c) Do whales make for good sushi?
- d) Hehe... Free Willy! Hehehe.

9. You feel most at home:

- a) I do not subscribe to the capitalist-enforced/endorsed concept of 'home'.
- b) When surrounded by mirrors, girls and shiny metal poles.
- c) Amidst majestic mountains, glacial landscapes, rivers, trees, elves, etc.
- d) Jumping the queue at some trendmaster bar or club. People know me, you know.

10. Whilst browsing the Mál & Menning bookstore, you realize you need something to read on your way home. Which of the following books is most likely to wind up in your carry-on bag:

- a) Nonni Und Manni: Die Nächste Generation.
- b) Carry-on bags are so mid-90s.
- c) The FHM Guide To Semi-Nude Girls, Electronic Gadgets And Shit That Explodes.
- d) Exploring Vegan Cooking With Sigur Rós & Friends.

11. Pick a drink:

- a) Organic Cruelty-Free Fair Trade Whey Chai Soy Latte.
- b) Beer!
- c) Pure, glacier-strained, Icelandic Wasser.
- d) My favourite drink hasn't been invented.

12. Your preferred daytrip out of Reykjavik:

- a) The Golden Circle.
- b) A spray-paint and explosive-laced trip to the Alcan aluminium factory in Hafnarfjörður. That'll show those nature-killing bastards.
- c) The Goldfinger Strip Club. That's in Kópa-

vogur, right?

- d) Do I absolutely have to? I'd really rather not leave the 101 area.

13. Icelandic women are...

- a) Allowed to vote since 1915.
- b) The most beautiful in the world.
- c) The most beautiful sluts in the world.
- d) Elfín.

14. Your preferred wardrobe:

- a) Anything Gore-Tex, some wool, fleece, etc.
- b) A baseball cap. Some jeans. My leather jacket.
- c) Baggy hand-knit woollen sweaters and pantaloons.
- d) A weird hoodie and some skinny-jeans. 'Till May, at least.

15. Finally, why are you here?

- a) To experience the unspoiled nature and landscapes that inspired the ethereal sounds of múm, Amiina and Sigur Rós. I might also try and stalk the latter's studio for a couple of weeks.
- b) To get laid. Don't tell anyone I said that.
- c) I've heard it's a place to be. I also have some real edgy art/ music/ fashion accessories/ writing/ etc. that would really benefit from less competition with my peers. There are only 300,000 of you, right?
- d) To bathe naked in natural hot springs. And steal some butter.

15-24



The Classic Tourist/ Nature Fetishist
You fall into the 'classic' category of Iceland's tourist friends. Here since long before Björk sang her first notes and Reykjavik was any kind of attraction (or even had a café), your kind has been cavorting in Iceland's hills, small towns and public pools longer than most. Often operating on a budget, you may often be found hitch-hiking your way around the country, climbing mountains, sleeping in emergency shelters or sneaking single-serve packets of butter into your pockets at breakfast buffets. You are most easily recognised by your brightly coloured all-weather apparel.

25-36



The Eurohippie!
A somewhat modernised version of the nature fetishist, the Eurohippie started rearing his dreadlocked head in Iceland sometime during the mid-nineties. The recent Kárahnjúkar Dam dispute / Sigur Rós free concert series accounts for a massive surge in their numbers lately, along with increased tofusales. If the numbers place you in this group (and magazine lifestyle quizzes never lie), chances are that you've studied liberal arts, experimented with various mind-altering substances and ideologies, and enjoy conspiracy theories and acting as a conscience for the rest of us. You are most often recognised by a weird hairstyle, earth-tone clothing and some facial hair.

37-50



The Trendy Tourist!
Congratulations! You are the trendy tourist type traveller, and thus probably the latest addition to Iceland's foreigner fauna. And a true pioneer! You may have some ties to Iceland's music, fashion or arts scenes, and were most likely inspired to come here by someone you met in Berlin or New York (or an article in one of those magazines that have almost no words in them). You count Björk among your icons, but you also enjoy several obscure things that are guaranteed to be all the rage shortly (at which point you will abandon them). Your feelings about Reykjavik (101 Reykjavik) will be mixed, although you will most likely enjoy the opportunities for social climbing and to be instantly notorious in the 300-person scene (which may even prompt you to immigrate). You are easily recognised, as you look, talk, sound and smell like next month is already here.

50+



The Dirty Weekender!
God. Then there's you. You are likely a decent, hard working fellow lured to Iceland by Reykjavik's party-hard notoriety and some Tarantino/tourist board fuelled misconceptions about the nature of Icelandic nightlife and its female participants. Most often seen in groups, you will be drunk by 7pm, walking down Laugavegur wearing a Viking helmet by 9pm, kinda let down by constant refusals by midnight and a patron of one of the city's strip-clubs by 2am (at which point you will be too intoxicated to notice that the Icelandic females you're supposedly associating with all have thick Eastern-European accents). If not staggering through downtown Reykjavik with a Viking helmet on, you can be recognised by an expensive watch and baseball-cap combo that nicely accents your leather-jacketed mid-life crisis.

Key to calculating your score: 1. a) 2) b) 4) c) 3) d) 1 2. a) 1) b) 2) c) 4) d) 3 3. a) 2) b) 4) c) 3) d) 1 4. a) 2) b) 3) c) 4) d) 1 5. a) 4) b) 3) c) 1) d) 2 6. a) 3) b) 4) c) 1) d) 2 7. a) 3) b) 1) c) 4) d) 2 8. a) 1) b) 2) c) 3) d) 4 9. a) 2) b) 4) c) 1) d) 3 10. a) 1) b) 3) c) 4) d) 2 11. a) 2) b) 4) c) 1) d) 3 12. a) 1) b) 2) c) 4) d) 3 13. a) 1) b) 3) c) 4) d) 2 14. a) 1) b) 4) c) 2) d) 3 15. a) 2) b) 4) c) 3) d) 1

Thanks to Elvis, Klapparstigur 25; Spúútnik, Laugavegur 20b; Cintamani, Laugavegur 11; Naked Ape, Bankastræti 14; for supplying clothes.

KVIKMYNDAKLÚBBURINN FJALAKÖTTURINN HEFUR SÝNINGAR Í TJARNARBIÓÍ Á SUNNUDÖGUM & MÁNUDÖGUM

KVIKMYNDAKLÚBBURINN
FJALA
KÖTTURINN
SKRÁNING HAFIN Á
FILMFEST.IS

VORDAGSKRÁ FJALAKATTARINS

JAMES DEAN

Allar myndir James Dean verða sýndar ásamt heimildarmyndinni Eilíf æska sem fjallar um ævi hans og störf.

ÞRIGGJA GLJÚFRA STÍFLAN

Systurmyndirnar Kyrrmynd og Dong gerast á áhrifasvæði einnar stærstu stíflu heims í Yangtze ánni í Kína. Sú fyrrnefnda hefur farið sigurför um heiminn og vann m.a. aðalverðlaunin á kvikmyndahátíðinni í Feneýjum.

RÚSSLAND FYRR OG NÚ

Örsmátt yfirlit yfir rússneska kvikmyndasögu. Tvær myndar Andrei Tarkovsky verða sýndar í bland við myndina Trönurnar fljúga frá 1957 og myndarinnar Dauðinn á ferð sem er frá árinu 2004.

ASTRID LINDGREN

Sænski barnabókahöfundurinn Astrid Lindgren er Íslendingum að góðu kunn. Í lok apríl býður Fjalakötturinn upp á nokkrar myndar hennar.

JAPÖNSK ERÓTÍK

Úrval ljósblárra japanskra myndar frá áttunda áratugnum, en myndir af þessu tagi voru einkennandi á ákveðnu tímabili í japanskri kvikmyndasögu og hafa síðan orðið að hálfgerðu „költ“-fyrirbæri. Helsti leikstjóri „bleiku myndanna“ var Tatsumi Kumashiro og því verða þrjár myndar hans sýndar.

POURQUOI PAS? FRÖNSK KVIKMYNDAGERÐ

Franski kvikmyndagerðarmaðurinn Raymond Depardon er einn sá fremsti á sviði heimildarmyndar. Í samstarfi við menningarháttöðina „Pourquoi Pas?“ sýnir klúbburinn átta myndar hans í þrem dagskrárhlutum sem nefnast Le Reporter, Le Justice og Le Monde Paysan. Auk þeirra verða franskar stutt- og heimildarmyndir teknar til sýninga.

NÝJAR ÞÝSKAR

Þýsk kvikmyndagerð er í mikilli uppsveiflu nú um stundir. Á næstu misserum stendur til að sýna brot áhugaverðra myndar þaðan.

Gianni Schicchi og Suor Angelica eftir Giacomo Puccini

WWW.OPERA.IS

Suor Angelica Schicchi

Sýningardagar:
21. mars kl. 20 – frumsýning
25. mars kl. 17 – 2. sýning
27. mars kl. 20 – 3. sýning
29. mars kl. 20 – 4. sýning

Miðaverð 1.000 kr.

Einsöngvarar og hljóðfæraleikarar eru nemendur í tónlistarskólum á höfuðborgarsvæðinu

Hljómsveitarstjóri: Daniel Bjarnason
Leikstjóri: Ingólfur Níels Arnason
Leikmynd og búningar: Hlin Gunnarsdóttir
Ljósahönnuður: Jóhann Bjarni Pálmason

GLITNIR

GLITNIR ER BAKHJALD OPERUSTÚDÍOS ÍSLENSKU ÓPERUNNAR

ÍSLENSKA ÓPERAN
ÓPERUSTÚDÍÓ

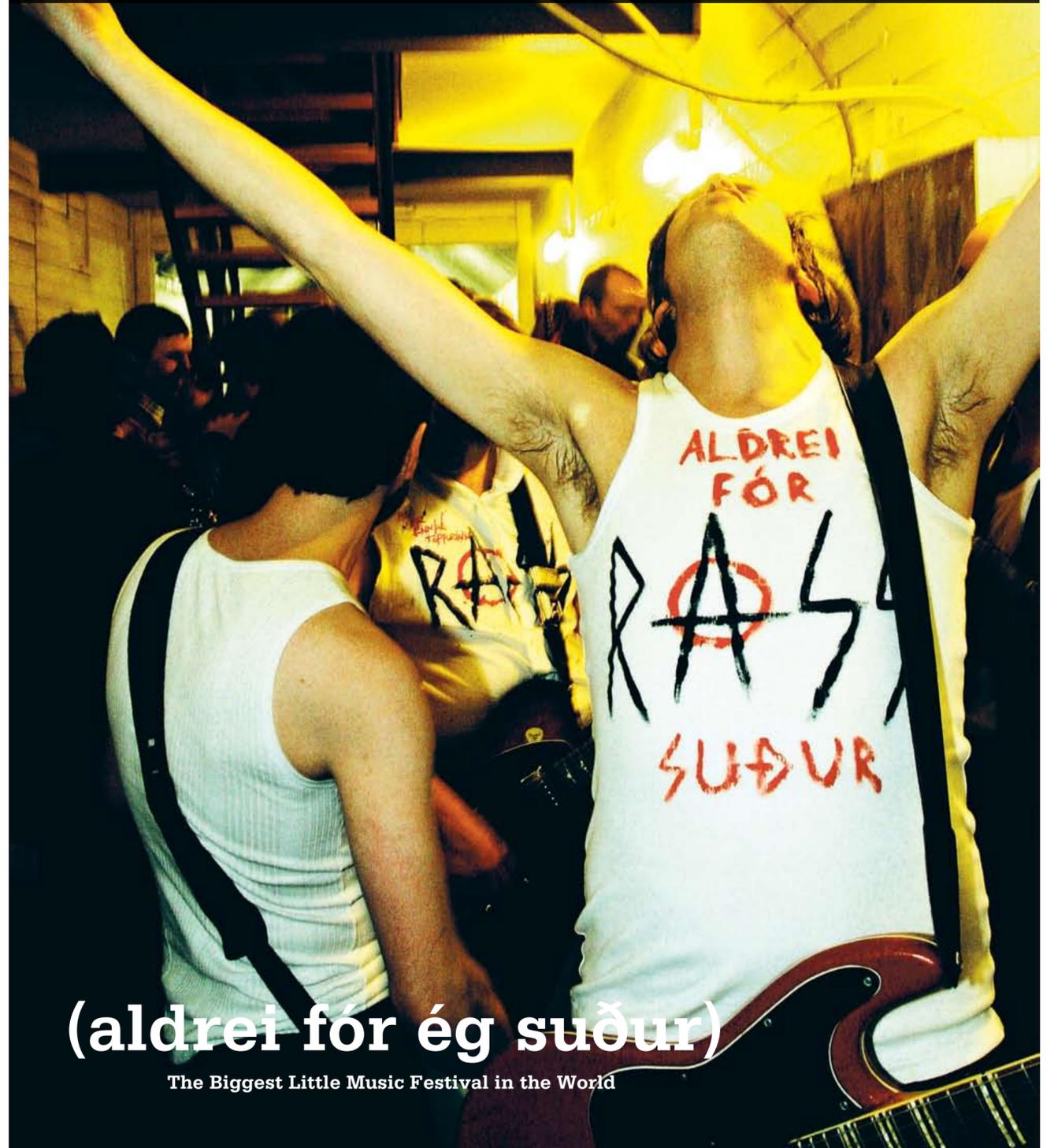
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OTTORONTO A TPE TFOU TETZ TTEP

info.

▲ Embassy Opening – NSK GusGus Release Gig There Were No Nightclubs
Reykjavík FM 105 Kitchen Motors Nights Chaotic Brutality in Kling & Bang
Gallery Dwarf Film Club Fjalakötturinn Pourquoi Pas? The Advanced Way to
Experience Art Complete Programme: French Film Festival Aldrei Fór Ég Suður
Music, Art, Films and Events Listings ▲



(aldrei fór ég suður)

The Biggest Little Music Festival in the World



Reykjavik Academi – 22 March at 14:00

Embassy Opening – NSK

March 22, the Icelandic embassy of the NSK State will be formally opened with a lecture and ceremony at the Reykjavik Akademy. Dr. Alexei Monroe, Phd in cultural theory studies from the University of Kent, will introduce the essence and artistic energy of the NSK State.

NSK (Neue Slowenische Kunst), was formed in Ljubljana, Slovenia in 1984, when the experimental music group Laibach and their artistic collaborators declared NSK an independent state - "The first Global state of the universe" - not of territory, but rather a "virtual state in time". Laibach later became a subdivision of their own creation as the musical arm of NSK. The State Machine began issuing stamps and

passports and soon consulates and embassies started appearing across the world, from Belgium to Beijing. Today NSK has more citizens than the Vatican. Everyone can apply for a passport, regardless of race or religion.

NSK's five departements have a long history of mixing art, totalitarian ideology and propaganda. The core of the collective, which makes up this virtual state, has its own "constitution of membership and basic duties of NSK members" - something that is deliberately reminiscent of the charters of medieval guilds, cults and fraternities, and also evokes totalitarian depersonalization.

NSK has always been especially

interested in the impossibility of originality, as can be seen for example in how laibach recycles and transforms classic pop songs or how Irwin, the painting division, blends Slovenian national landscape images into catholic iconography and Stalinist propaganda imagery.

On March 22, the national holiday of NSK.is, citizens welcome to witness the most consistently challenging artistic force in Eastern Europe today. Ambassade d'NSK in Iceland operates as an individual unit, and utilizes and recycles the energy pumping out the "Eastern Barbarian" art scene.

For more details, visit: www.akademi.is

NASA – 24 March

GusGus Release Gig

Party-group GusGus is now celebrating the release of its fifth studio album, Forever, inviting everyone interested to join in on the rush with a grand show at NASA, Saturday March 24th. It will be the band's first concert in Iceland for a year.

This event happens to be a double celebration party, as the opening act of the night, Petter Winnberg (also known as Hjalmar's groovin' bass player),

is also seeing the release of his first album, Easily Ticked, released with GusGus's record company Pineapplerecords. There will only be a limited amount of tickets, so hurry, you won't want to miss out on this extravaganza!

Tickets can be bought at Skifan record store, BT and at www.midi.is. The concerts start at 23:00.

NASA, Thorvaldsenstræti 2.



The Reykjavik Museum of Photography

There Were No Nightclubs

Is this your father smoking a pipe at the age of three? The above picture is taken by Karl Christian Nielsen in 1949 and is one of four million photographs at the Reykjavik Museum of Photography. The archives consist of photographs from the period 1870 until 2002 in Iceland operated as an individual unit, and utilizes and recycles the energy pumping out the "Eastern Barbarian" art scene.

Interested in knowing what Reykjavik looked like hundred years ago, and missed the outdoor exhibition last summer? Want to find old family portraits?

If the museum has a portrait of your great grandfather they'll make you a copy. It is located at the top floor of the City Library in Reykjavik, and is goldmine for people interested in the history of photography, featuring pictures, glassplates, negatives and slides, and articles and documents relating to photography. **EMF**

The Reykjavik Museum of Photography, Tryggvagata 15, 6th floor, 101 Reykjavik.

Music Art Films Events

On the Radio – 10 March

Reykjavík FM 105

March 10, a new progressive rock station will hit the airwaves, with the addition of Reykjavik FM 105. Former employees of the recently closed XFM 91.9 radio station, a successful radio venture that was bought and quickly liquefied by the 365 Media conglomerate in order to make room for their own competing X-ID 97.7 rock station, are responsible for the venture.

Not happy with being put off the air, the staff, obviously entre-

preneurs at heart, started their own station, which will return to the airwaves some of Iceland's most popular DJs, such as Ómar Bonham, Dr. Gunni and Stjáni Stuð; and popular shows, such as the Capone Brothers, the hardcore show Dordingull, the indie show Threads, plus a new football show, hosted by fotbolti.net.



National Theatre Basement – Mar 28 and 29

Kitchen Motors Nights

Art group, music collective and record label Kitchen Motors has organized three different music nights during the Pourquoi Pas? festival. Kitchen Motors has always emphasised exceptional artist collaborations with the aim of mixing together artists from diverse backgrounds to create experimental productions breaking all boundaries.

This project's first event features a collaboration of the French group Monade playing with French singer and writer Angil and the

Icelandic artists and Kitchen Motors founders Kira Kira and Jóhann Jóhannsson. Monade is the project of former Stereolab singer Laetitia Sadier.

For the second part of this interesting collaboration, Órvar from múm, Alex Somers and Kira Kira will perform the Helvitis Plinki Plonk Symphony on March 29th along with the French-Icelandic Symphony.

National Theatre Basement, Hverfisgata 19. Concerts start at 22:00.



Gallery Kling & Bang – 17 March - 15 May

Chaotic Brutality in Kling & Bang

Gallery Kling & Bang presents the opening of two exhibitions on March 17th with an opening party starting at 17:00 inside its premises. These are the works of the highly respected German multi-media artist John Bock and Spanish artist Alejandro Vidal. In their projects, although very different in form and presentation, they both deal with the topic of violence in some very gory and demonstrative ways.

In the gallery's basement, Bock's film Lütte mit Rucola (Li'l One with Arugula) will be screened. Bock is known for being unpredictable, presenting works that are a mix of pseudo-scientific, aesthetic, social and political commentary when telling stories

about the world and reinterpreting common understandings about our surroundings. This newest project of his, a very artistic horror movie where Bock finds himself under the influence of little girl, Lütte, who is practising para-voodoo, is no exception. The press release reads that in the film; "John Bock is being remote-controlled by the paranormal powers of the Lütte and driven towards his victim. In the film, Bock is being deconstructed and diagrams installed on it, and he conducts various tests and analyses. Decision-modules are being positioned on the body for determination of analytic truths. Brutally, but ended with technical

skill, body parts are being cut-off and placed into modules in order to determine the Optimal Formula."

Alejandro Vidal's exhibition features a selection of video and photographic works where he leads us through the streets of Hong Kong, explores how violent deaths turn into rituals and questions the relationship between policies of security and the culture of fear in three different projects that unite in the groundfloor showroom under the banner Blackout For Death. Both exhibitions will be on display until May 15th.

Gallery Kling & Bang, Laugavegur 23, www.this.is/klingsgang.

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

Music

Bar 11

Laugavegur 11
A popular hangout for Reykjavik's rockers and their young idolaters with DJ's playing classic rock'n'roll hitters.

Fri 09.03 Atómstöðin and South Coast Killing Company in concert. Followed by DJ Óli Dóri

Sat 10.03 Ten Steps Away + guests followed by DJ Gulli Ósóma

Fri 16.03 Who Knew + guests followed by DJ Palli Maus

Sat 17.03 DJ Gulli Ósóma

Fri 23.03 DJ Gulli Ósóma

Sat 24.03 DJ Óli Dóri

Fri 30.03 DJ Palli Maus

Sat 31.03 DJ Gulli Ósóma

■ **Café Amsterdam**

Hafnarstræti 5

Wed 04.04 Reykjavik Grapevine

presents: Take me Down to Reykjavik City concert series. Aldrei fór ég suður

City concert series. Aldrei fór ég suður sneak peak featuring Minus, Pétur Ben, FM Belfast,

Skýli Þórðarson & Sökudólgarnir and Lay Low. Starts at 21:00.

■ **Café Cultura**

Hverfisgata 18

Music from the world's four corners

Fri 09.03 DJ Playmobile

Sat 10.03 DJ Kristin

■ **Café Rósenberg**

Lækjargata 2

A true jazz club featuring live gigs with some of Iceland's finest jazzists almost every night of the week.

Fri 09.03 Hrafnaspark play Django-jazz

Sat 10.03 Hrafnaspark play Django-jazz

Wed 14.03 Andrés Þór jazz trio

Thu 15.03 Fabúla in concert

Fri 16.03 Theatre performance: Remba. Starts at 21:00

Sat 17.03 Theatre performance: Remba. Starts at 21:00

Thu 22.03 Rósin Okkar play Irish and Icelandic folk music

Fri 23.03 James Lowe + Gunnar Valur, followed by Misery Loves Company

Sat 24.03 James Lowe + Gunnar Valur, followed by Misery Loves Company

Thu 29.03 Sváfnir + Halli

Fri 30.03 Rúnar Þór + band

Sat 31.03 Rúnar Þór + band

Wed 04.04 B3 Trio in concert

Thu 05.04 Sökudólgarnir in concert

Fri 06.04 Helgi Valur in concert

Sat 07.04 Helgi Valur in concert

■ **Christ's Church**

Hávallagata 16

Sat 17.03 Victoria Requiem: Carmina Chamber Choir. Tickets at the 12 Tónar shop, Skólavörðustíg 15.

Sun 18.03 Victoria Requiem: Carmina Chamber Choir. Tickets at the 12 Tónar shop, Skólavörðustíg 15.

■ **Dillon**

Laugavegur 30

Legendary rock pub featuring live

concerts every Wednesday night and rock DJ's every weekend.

Fri 09.03 Noise + DJ Andri Freyr

for at the moment.

Fri 09.03 Touch followed by DJ Maggi

Sat 10.03 Helgi Valur followed by DJ Maggi

Wed 14.03 Reykjavik Grapevine presents: Take me Down to Reykjavik City concert series. Sprengjuhöllin + guests. Starts at 21:00

Fri 16.03 Gotti and Eisi followed by DJ Johnny

Sat 17.03 Public followed by DJ Jón Gestur

Fri 23.03 Touch followed by DJ Maggi

Sat 24.03 Glódis and bluesband followed by DJ Maggi

Fri 30.03 Touch followed by DJ Johnny

Sat 31.03 Menn ársins followed by DJ Johnny

Wed 04.04 Touch followed by DJ Jón Gestur

Fri 06.04 DJ Maggi

Sat 07.04 DJ Maggi

■ **Kaffibarinn**

Bergstaðastræti 1

With a mixture of techno, reggae, hip-hop and classic dance hitters, the DJs are usually capable of crowding the dance floor each weekend and getting the regulars frisky at weekends.

Fri 09.03 DJ Alfons X

Sat 10.03 DJ Árni Sveins

Wed 14.03 DJ Maggi Legó

Thu 14.03 DJ Pétur

Fri 16.03 Don Balli Funk

Sat 17.03 DJ Benni B-Ruff

Wed 21.03 DJ Maggi Legó

Thu 22.03 DJ Árni Sveins

Fri 23.03 DJ Alfons X

Sat 24.03 Kaffibarinn

Wed 28.03 DJ Pétur

Fri 30.03 Don Balli Funk

Sat 31.03 DJ Árni Sveins

■ **Laugardalshöll**

Seljavegur 2

Sir Cliff Richard in concert

■ **Lofkastalinn**

Sat 31.03 Iceland's Battle of the Bands: Finals

■ **Nasa**

Thorvaldsenstræti 2

Sat 17.03 Hjalmar in concert

Thu 22.03 Lay Low + guests

Sat 24.03 GusGus release concert

Wed 04.04 Blonde Redhead + Reykjavík! + Kristin Hersh

■ **Nordica Hotel**

Suðurlandsbraut 2

Tue 03.04 Reykjavik Blues Festival: KK + Andrea + Jolly Jumper + Big Moe

Wed 04.04 Reykjavik Blues Festival: Ronnie Baker Brooks + Kentár

Thu 05.04 Reykjavik Blues Festival: Zora Young & Blue Ice Band + Lay Low

■ **Prikjó**

Bankastræti 12

This old coffeehouse turns into a hip-hop mania at weekends where not only DJs but also drummers and bassists create a crazy pit at the dancefloor.

Fri 09.03 Franz and Kristó followed by DJ Benni B-Ruff

Sat 10.03 DJ Andri + DJ Kári

Thu 15.03 DJ Kvikindi

Thu 15.03 DJ Palli Maus

Fri 16.03 Blautt Malbik

Sat 17.03 DJ's KGB, Kári and Árni Sveins

Wed 21.03 DJ Kvikindi

Thu 22.03 DJ Kacoön

Fri 23.03 DJ Danni Deluxe

Sat 24.03 DJ Andi + DJ Benni B-Ruff

Thu 29.03 DJ Palli Maus

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Wed 21.03 DJ Kvikindi

Tryggvagata 15

Mon.-Fri. 8:30-16

www.or.is/Forsida/Gallery100

Artwork owned by Reykjavik Energy.

■ **Gallery Föld**

Rauðarárstígur 14-16

Mon.-Fri. 10-18

Sat. 11-16

Sun. 14-16

www.myndlist.is

Selling a large selection of Icelandic and international art and hosting exhibitions on a regular basis.

■ **Galleri Sævars Karls**

Bankastræti 7

Mon.-Fri. 10-18

Sat. 10-16

www.saevarkar.is/gsm/

■ **Gallery Tukt**

Pósthússtræti 3-5

www.hitthisid.is

From 24 Feb

Margrét Agnes Iversen and Ásta Fanney Sigurðardóttir exhibition

■ **Gallery Turpentine**

Ingólfsstræti 5

Tue.-Fri. 12-18

Sat. 11-16

www.turpentine.is

From 16 Feb



Gallery Dwarf



Watch your Head, the Exhibition is in the Basement

Artist Birta Guðjónsdóttir saw her basement as an opportunity to contribute to the Reykjavík art scene and started the Dwarf Gallery.

For the past five years Guðjónsdóttir has been renting a small flat at Grundarstígur 21 in 101 Reykjavík. Included in the rent is a 12m² basement, which turns into an exhibition space, the Dwarf Gallery, for a few months a year. The name explains itself when you visit, so watch your head.

When asked how the idea of starting a gallery in her basement came about, she refers to Iceland being a creative nation where things like that tend to happen: "In 2002 a group of artists and myself started a project we called 'open gallery'; organizing monthly exhibitions, which lasted for one day, wherever we could find some free space in the centre. At that time many shops

in Laugavegur went bankrupt or relocated, so we would ask the owners of these empty spaces if we could borrow one for half a Saturday. We would then invite as many artists as possible, by any means, to put up their works two hours before the exhibition would open. We did this one day a month for almost a year and paid out of our own pockets to make flyers, bake pancakes and make coffee for the guests. One of these shows was called We bid Farewell, consisting of works from Icelandic artists living abroad. Dwarf Gallery contributes to the art life of Reykjavík. This is always needed, everywhere, and a good cause I think. When I organise some Dwarf activity, I don't do it because I feel that something is missing here, it is more because of having the space to do it and with that, an idea about starting the

Dwarf Gallery came along."

The gallery seems to only be open a few months a year. How will the public know when there is an exhibition going on?

"I send out emails and distribute small photocopied posters and flyers in cooperation with the exhibiting artists. It also helps that word of mouth spreads fast in a small community like Reykjavík. Those who might be interested will notice it, I think. The good part about the location is that a lot of people just wander by and check it out. It is located in a pedestrian area in the centre, so many of the visitors wander in by chance, which is very nice. People have asked me if or when I will expand into a bigger, commercial gallery. It will not happen, because with the current situation, I can invite artists of my own choice and work with them

without any dependence on, or claim of, a third party of any kind. That's a situation which creates a different artistic atmosphere to the commercial one."

Guðjónsdóttir invites artists to display their works without charging for the exhibition space, energy bills or such and assists them with getting the materials and equipment needed. The artists then do what ever they want with the space, without her creative input.

"None of us earn money from this activity, but I get a lot out of it, because I invite artists whose works I am interested in, I learn from the collaboration and it involves a level of creative work," she explains.

Right now the Dwarf gallery is showing videowork by Unnur Andrea Einarsdóttir. The Icelandic performance and video artist says she gets her inspiration from so-

called misfits, bums, drag queens, the mentally disturbed, gypsies and those who have been wrongly named freaks. Siamese twins, dwarfs (I will not ask the obvious question: if we will be seeing dwarfs at the Dwarf Gallery, go and see for yourself), albinos, midgets, or people that are somehow physically deformed are common characters in her works. She is also a musician and a member of the band Dr. Disco Shrimp. The exhibition will be open until the 17th of March or by appointment (write to galleridværgur@hotmail.com). **Ellen Marie Fodstad**

Birta Guðjónsdóttir's own artwork can be seen at Listasafn Reykjavíkur at the moment.

The Dwarf Gallery, Grundarstígur 21, 101 Reykjavík. www.this.is/birta.

Coulpier, François Curlet, Gérald, Philippe Meste, Hugues Reip and Jean-Michel Wicker. (Pourquoi Pas? Festival) **■ The National Gallery** *Frikirkjuvegur* Tue.-Sun. 11-17 Free Entrance listasafn.is

9 Mar – 29 Apr Exhibition of selected paintings by Jóhann Briem and Jón Engilberts **■ The National Museum** *Suðurgata 41* Open daily 10-17 natmus.is/

17 Mar – 29 Apr Why Not Africa? Dominique Darbois photo exhibit. Photos of sculptures from the African artistic heritage will also be on display as well as original artwork. (Pourquoi Pas? Festival)

17 Mar – 29 Apr Sporlaust / Without A Trace Katrín Elvarsdóttir photo exhibition. **Until 29 Apr** With a Silverneedle Elsa E. Guðjónsson textile designer **Until 12 Mar** Guðni Þórðarson photo exhibition Ingimundur Magnússon and Kristján Magnússon photo exhibit

Permanent Exhibitions: The Making of a Nation **■ The Nordic House** *Sturlugata 5* Tue.-Sun. 12-17 www.nordice.is/

17 Mar – 22 Apr Parallell Jewellers Jewellery-design exhibition **■ Reykjavík 871 +/- 2 : The Settlement Exhibition** *Aðalstræti 16* Open daily 10-17

■ 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.listasafnreykjavikur.is

Until 18 Mar Ásmundur Sveinsson – Man and Material Selected works from Ásmundur Sveinsson, illustrating his use of materials such as wood, clay, plaster, bronze and other metals.

2 Apr – 31 Dec Ásmundur Sveinsson A new retrospective of the works of Ásmundur Sveinsson.

■ Reykjavík Art Museum – **Hafnarhús** *Tryggvagata 17* Open daily 10-17 **2 Feb – 29 Apr** Erró - Gleymd framtíð / Erró – Forgotten Future

100 watercolour paintings by Erró from the period 1981-2005. **2 Feb – 18 Mar** Installation and photographs by Birta Guðjónsdóttir in the D Gallery

23 Feb – 29 Apr Fagnaðargárðurinn / Celebration Park French artist Pierre Huyghe displays his recent works. (Pourquoi Pas? Festival)

23 Mar – 29 Apr Geirþrúður Hjörvar exhibition. In her exhibition she makes use of diverse media mixing literature, music and visual arts in her installations.

■ Reykjavík Art Museum – **Kjarvalstaðir** *Flókagata* Open daily 10-17 **10 Feb – 29 Apr** Foss / Falling Water The exhibition explores the relationship between art and nature through the work of Hekla Dögg Jónsdóttir, Ólafur Eliasson, Pat Steir and Rúri.

10 Feb – 2 Sep K-bátturinn / The K-Factor Jóhannes S. Kjarval retrospective. **4 Feb – 6 May** Kjarval og bernskan / Kjarval and childhood Jóhannes S. Kjarval exhibition especially for the young ones. A program for children every Sunday at 14:00.

■ Reykjavík Museum *Kistuhylur 4* www.arbaejarsafn.is

■ The Reykjavík Museum of Photography *Grófarhús, Tryggvagata 15, 6th floor* Weekdays 12-19 Sat.-Sun. 13-17 Free Entrance www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is

23 Feb – 26 May Swim and Steam Damien Peyret photo exhibit displaying both polaroids of people relaxing in Kópavogur swimmingpool and screens his shortfilm A Taxi for Raykjavík.

8 Mar – 9 Apr Works of Faroese Painter Zacharías Heinesen **■ Gljúfrasteinn / Halldór Laxness museum** *270 Mosfellsbær* Open daily except Mondays from 10-17.

■ Hafnarfjörður institution of continuing education Skólabraut 1, Hafnarfjörður Paintings by Sigurður Örylgsson, Árni Rúnar Sveinsson, Inga Dóra Guðmundsdóttir, Ester Jóhannesdóttir, Helga Sigurðardóttir, Kristín Pálmadóttir, Svandís Egilsdóttir, Charlotta S. Sveinisdóttir, Agust Bjarnason and Kristbergur Pétursson

■ Kópavogur Art Museum – **Gerðarsafn** *Hamraborg, Kópavogur* Open daily 11:00-17:00 except Mondays www.gerdarsafn.is

Until 18 Mar Pictures of the year 2006 An exhibition displaying the best press

Austurmörk 2, Hveragerði Mon.-Fri. 15-19 **■ Skaffell** *Austurvegur 42, Seyðisfjörður* www.skaffell.is

17 Mar – 10 May A unique collaboration between the Dieter Roth Academy and students from the Iceland Academy of the Arts. Participating students are: Christelle Concho, Harpa Dögg Kjartansdóttir, Inga Martel, Irene Ósk Bermudez, James Greenway, Nika Kupyrova, Sigurós Svava Ólafsdóttir, Vilborg Bjarkadóttir, Þórunn Maggý Kristjánsdóttir and Arild Tveito.

■ Suðsuðvestur *Hafnargata 22, Keflavík* Thu.-Fri. 16-18 Sat.-Sun. 14-17 www.sudsudvestur.is

■ Sandgerði Museum *Gerðavegur 1, Sandgerði.* **Until February 7th 2008** Polar Adventures Exhibition on the life and work of the French polar explorer, scientist and doctor Jean-Baptiste Charcot.

■ Akureyri Art Museum *Kaupvangsstræti 12, Akureyri* Tue.-Sun. 12-17 www.listasafn.akureyri.is

From 13 Jan Les yeux de l'ombre jaune Jón Óskars exhibition **From 13 Jan** Tyrffingar Adam Bateman installation

■ GalleriBOX *Kaupvangstræti 10, Akureyri* www.galleribox.blogspot.com

10 Feb – 17 Mar Kristín Helga Káradóttir exhibition

photos from last year. **Until 18 Mar** Pictures from Kárahnjúkar Collaborative exhibition on the ground floor featuring pictures from photographers

Ragnar Axelsson, Páll Stefánsson, Þorvaldur Örn Kristmundsson, Kristinn Ingvarsson, Brynjar Gauti Sveinsson and Vilhelm Gunnarsson all shot at the Kárahnjúkar area.

■ Sandgerði Museum *Gerðavegur 1, Sandgerði.* **Until February 7th 2008** Polar Adventures Exhibition on the life and work of the French polar explorer, scientist and doctor Jean-Baptiste Charcot.

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Films **■ The Last King of Scotland** Set in Uganda, this movie is



Tjarnarbió

Film Club Fjalakötturinn

"The selection of films in Icelandic cinemas is poor to say the least. Sure, we get all the blockbusters a week or two ahead of Europe, but that hardly counts as an important contribution to film culture," says Atli Bollason, one of the founders of the Fjalakötturinn Film Club, established by the Reykjavík International Film Festival. The club will be screening movie classics at the historical Tjarnarbió cinema every Sunday and Monday evening until May.

"Films made outside of Fjalakötturinn hardly ever make it to the silver screen in the mainstream cinemas so we decided to widen the range of the Reykjavík International Film Festival by offering such movies regularly. Tjarnarbió seemed a great venue, the house has character, the screening room is quite big - but not too big - and it's completely independent of the distributors," Atli continues.

The idea is to present Icelanders with quality films from all over the world, to improve the variety of films on offer. "We see ourselves partly as educators, so we try to present classics both from American and European cinema, but we're also highlighting little known facets of film history, such as the Nikku Roman Porno films - Japanese erotic films from the 70s. When it comes to new films which make up just as much of our selection we try to go for films that touch on hot topics. For example we'll screen a pair of Chinese films that take place in a part of China heavily influenced by the building of the Three Gorges Dam in the Yangtze river - Still Life and Dong. Hopefully, these two films can help us see the Kárahnjúkar Dam in a new light and help us deal with what's to come. We also have quite a lot of documentaries on our schedule, cho-

sen in cooperation with local academics," Atli says. Nearly 30 films will constitute the club's spring program and all screenings are without intermission and lengthy trailers. To enlist, visit www.filmfest.is. Membership cost is 4000 krónur and gives access for one person to all the films shown on the spring schedule, as well as discount charges for the Reykjavík International Film Festival in September and October. The restaurant Fjalakötturinn in Aðalstræti will offer special discounts for members, including two beers for the price of one on club screening days. Individual tickets for the club's screenings are available for the regular movie price of 900 krónur at the ticket office in Tjarnarbió. **SBB**

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For more info and a full programme, visit: www.filmfest.is.

Next Months Program:

Sunday, March 11
15.00 The Rider Named Death
17.00 The Cranes Are Flying
19.00 Rebel Without a Cause
21.15 Solaris

Monday, March 12
17.00 Andrei Rublev
20.00 Reykjavík Documentary Workshop: I for India
22.00 East of Eden

Sunday, March 18
15.00 East of Eden
17.15 Forever Young
19.00 The Cranes Are Flying
21.00 East of Eden

Monday, March 19
19.00 Forever Young
21.00 Rebel Without a Cause

Sunday, March 25
17.00 Twisted Path of Love
19.00 The Woman With Red Hair
21.00 World of Geisha

Monday, March 26
19.00 World of Geisha
21.00 The Woman With Red Hair

Sunday, April 1
15.00 The Woman With Red Hair
17.00 Kvíksaga Introduces: Narrative Culture and Opposition in Modern Cities
19.00 Still Life
21.15 Dong

Monday, April 2
17.00 World of Geisha
19.00 Twisted Path of Love
21.00 Muslims and Christians

Monday, April 9
15.00 Astrid Lindgren
17.00 Twisted Path of Love
19.00 Still Life
21.15 Dong

before when meeting an impulsive teenage girl. O'Toole has received top reviews for his performance. (March 9)

■ The Good Shepherd Directed by Robert De Niro and starring him, Matt Damon, Angelina Jolie and Patrick Wilson, this political flick is described as the untold story of the birth of the CIA, where misdeeds and corruption unfolds and lives have to be sacrificed to protect the agents' secrets. (March 9)

■ Everyone's Hero Young Irving is a kid with big dreams. He has always wanted to play for the New York Yankees. The only problem is that he sucks at baseball. When Babe Ruth's legendary bat gets stolen he, with the help from a talking baseball named Screwie, takes on a mission to find the thief and return the bat and will soon become the hero he always dreamt of being. (March 9)

■ Epic Movie From the writers of the Scary Movie series, this movie has one plot. Mixing together blockbusters such as Snakes on a Plane, Narnia, Harry Potter, Willy Wonka, Pirates of the Caribbean, and even Borat and Superman with the hope of being remotely funny. Very likely to be torture to watch. (16 March)

■ Wild Hogs Middle-aged friends who need to spice up their lives decide to go on a motorcycle trip and regain the long lost youth. Starring Tim Allen, John Travolta, Martin Lawrence and William Macy, as can be expected, the road-trip doesn't end up being as comfortable as planned. (March 16)

■ The Hitcher It's spring break and a young

couple decides to hit the road and enjoy the pleasure of school vacation. When coming across a mysterious hitchhiker the trip turns out to be a total nightmare. From the Producers of Texas Chainsaw Massacre and the Amityville Horrors. (March 23)

■ 300 Based on the epic novel by Frank Miller, this movie retells the story of the famous battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC where 300 Spartan soldiers fought the much stronger Persian army to protect Sparta. This visually stimulating and historic thriller has received top reviews by critics around the world and no true movie fan should pass up on. (March 23)

■ School for Scoundrels From the directors of Old School this comedy, starring Billy Bob Thornton as the confedence-building teacher Dr. P and Napoleon Dynamite's star Jon Heder as a young man suffering from anxiety attacks and low self-esteem is a hilarious entertainment. Heder, who enrolls in Mr. P's class has to learn to be confident the hard way when he ends up fighting with the twisted teacher over the same girl. (March 30)

■ Regnboginn, Hverfisgata 54 101 Reykjavík, Tel. 551-9000 **■ Háskólabíó, Hagatorg** 107 Reykjavík, Tel. 525-5400 **■ Laugarásbío, Laugarás** 104 Reykjavík, Tel. 565-0118 **■ Smárabíó, Smáralind** 201 Kópavogur, Tel. 564-0000

■ Sambíóinn, Álfabakki 8 109 Reykjavík, Tel. 575-8900 **■ Sambíóinn, Kringlan 4-12** 103 Reykjavík, Tel. 575-8900 **■ Sambíóinn Akureyri, Ráðhústorg** 600 Akureyri, Tel. 461-4666

■ Njya-Bío, Hafnargata 33 230 Reykjanæsbær, Tel. 421-1170 **■ Selfossbío, Eyranvegur 2** 800 Selfoss, Tel. 482-3007

Events

■ Slovenian art collective opens an embassy in Iceland 22.03 Official opening of the Icelandic embassy of the Slovenian NSK State. Lecture and ceremony at the Reykjavík Academy.

Reykjavík Academy, Hringbraut 121. **■ 700IS Film fiesta** 24 -31.03 Held for the second time the Experimental Film and Video Festival Reindeerland will take place at Egilsstaðir in the East of Iceland by the end of March. Local and foreign artists and filmmakers will present their works in the form of documentaries, short-films, video-art and everything between creating a one week culture-party. The festival is open for all free of charge.

For a full program and venues see www.700.is

■ To Other Horizons 04.04 April 4th will see the premiere of an original contemporary dance piece in Reykjavík City Theatre. Entitled To Other Horizons, this is a collaboration project between the Icelandic Dance Company, French choreographer Serge Ricci and visual artist Fabien Almekiewicz who together created the piece specifically for the Dance Company. The description reads that in To Other Horizons "Ricci approaches the subject matter in a logical manner, revealing his intention of articulating dance as the progression from obscurity towards the light."

This performance is part of the French Pourquoi Pas? festival. For tickets visit www.id.is.

Reykjavík City Theatre, Listabraut 3.

Alliance Française French Film Festival



Alliance Française in cooperation with Peugeot & Bernhard presents the seventh annual French Film Festival 2007 in Háskólabíó.

From March 3rd until April 1st, you will be able to enjoy the finest in French Cinema at Háskólabíó. This event is included in the "POURQUOI PAS?" Festival. Alliance Française has carefully selected for your enjoyment 40 films in a variety of styles, from the drama, "Lady Chatterley" (César - best movie of the year 2007) to the murder suspense thriller "Tell No One" (César- best actor, best director) not forgetting French "film noir" and classic comedies.

We have dedicated this year to the legendary actress *Isabelle Huppert* featured in eight of our films. There is also a photographic exhibition of her at the entrance to the theatre.

We invite you to take the time to explore alternative films on "Short Film Day" (March 24th) and don't miss out on *Pierre Coulibeuf's* artfilms.

We look forward to seeing you there and enjoy yourself.



9. March
17:40 Ne le dis à personne
17:45 Mon petit doigt m'a dit
20:00 Le Poulpe
20:00 Ne le dis à personne
22:15 La Dentellière
22:20 Paris, je t'aime

12. March
17:40 Ne le dis à personne
17:45 Les Bronzés
20:00 Le Poulpe
20:00 Ne le dis à personne
22:15 La Séparation
22:20 Paris, je t'aime

15. March
17:40 Paris, je t'aime
17:45 Mon petit doigt m'a dit
20:00 Garde à vue
20:00 Ne le dis à personne
22:15 La Cérémonie
22:20 Ne le dis à personne

18. March
15:20 Ne le dis à personne
15:45 Asterix et Obelix
17:40 Hors de Prix
17:45 Asterix et Obelix
20:00 Le petit lieutenant
20:00 Hors de Prix
22:15 Sauve qui peut (la vie)
22:20 Paris, je t'aime

24 March Short film day

Short films, meetings,
discussions
from 15:00 to 23:00
AT 18:00, Let's have a drink!

10. March
15:20 Paris, je t'aime
15:45 Mon petit doigt m'a dit
17:40 Ne le dis à personne
17:45 La Chèvre
20:00 Le petit lieutenant
20:00 Ne le dis à personne
22:15 Les soeurs fâchées
22:20 Paris, je t'aime

13. March
17:40 Ne le dis à personne
17:45 Le Père Noël est une ordure
20:00 La Petite Jérusalem
20:00 Paris, je t'aime
22:15 La Vie promise
22:20 Ne le dis à personne

16. March
17:40 Ne le dis à personne
17:45 Travaux
20:00 La Cérémonie
20:00 Hors de Prix
22:15 Les Amants réguliers
22:20 Hors de Prix

19. March
17:40 Paris, je t'aime
20:00 Hors de Prix
22:20 Ne le dis à personne

21. March
17:40 Hors de Prix
20:00 Ne le dis à personne
22:20 Hors de Prix

From 25. march

Art cinema: **Pierre Coulibeuf**
films every day at 22.15

La science des rêve
28 march - 1.april

11. March
15:20 Ne le dis à personne
15:45 Garde à vue
17:40 Paris, je t'aime
17:45 Les Visiteurs
20:00 Les marchands de sable
20:00 Ne le dis à personne
22:15 Les soeurs fâchées
22:20 Paris, je t'aime

14. March
17:40 Ne le dis à personne
17:45 Bernie
20:00 Le Poulpe
20:00 Paris, je t'aime
22:15 La Séparation
22:20 Ne le dis à personne

17. Mars
15:20 Paris, je t'aime
15:45 Mon petit doigt m'a dit
17:40 Hors de Prix
17:45 Mon petit doigt m'a dit
20:00 Les Amants réguliers
20:00 Hors de Prix
22:20 Ne le dis à personne

20. March
17:40 Paris, je t'aime
20:00 Hors de Prix
22:20 Hors de Prix

22. March
17:40 Hors de Prix
20:00 Hors de Prix
22:20 Hors de Prix

Lady Chatterley

Césars 2007:
Best Film, Best Actress for Marina Hands, Best Adaptation of a Novel to the Screen, Best Cinematography, and Best Costumes.



If you need help making a selection, visit our website for a translation and description as well as prices of each film: www.af.is
50% discount for AF members on selected films

1 CAFÉS
Kaffi Hljómaland
 Laugavegur 21

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.

8 Tíu Dropar
 Laugavegur 27

A very nice, old-fashioned café. It's subterranean, as all traditional coffee shops should be, and this place makes you feel warm, both with its atmosphere and the generosity of the coffee refills.

15 Næsti Bar
 Ingólfrstræti 1a

Næsti Bar can be a godsend on those nights when queues seem to snake all the way down Laugavegur, no seats are available anywhere and you just want to chat with some friends over a beer. Frequenting by the literary and acting elite, those folk usually don't mind if you pop in for a quick beer and make use of some of the (usually) available tables, so long as you don't sing.

22 Boston
 Laugavegur 28b

Located above the second-hand fashion store Sputnik, with its roomy 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 Ölstofan
 Vegamótastígur 4

Ölstofan has been attracting a clientele of late twenties and up who come for the drink and stay for the company, as blasting DJs here have been replaced by current background music to go with the drink. Better show up early on weekends before the regular clientele rushes in as its popularity makes it hard to find a table.

28 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.

31 RESTAURANTS
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 emphasises 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.

34 Argentina Steakhouse
 Barónstígur 11

True to its name, restaurant Argentina specialises in Argentinian steaks and southern decorations where dancing flames in the fireplace welcome every guest that walks inside. The tender meat, excellent wines, generous portions and a selection of quality cognac, whiskey, liqueurs and cigars all helped in making it a recommended place for fine dining.

37 Indian Mango
 Frakkastígur 12

Located on a quiet Laugavegur side street, Indian Mango has infused the Reykjavík restaurant scene with incredible delicacies originating in the rich food traditions from the Goa region in India, honed to perfection at the Four Seasons, during the owner's period as head chef. A local favourite, Indian Mango is known both for the quality of the food as well as the service.

44 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 localised 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.

2 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.

9 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.

16 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.vegamat.is. If you like Oliver, try Vegamót and vice versa.

23 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 Deco
 Austurstræti 12

Located in a former drugstore, Deco is an upper-middle priced bar/bistro catering to those who prefer elegant surroundings. A good choice for a light lunch or an afternoon glass of red wine. Features an above average whiskey selection.

29 Q-Bar
 Ingólfrstræti 3

A spacious designer bar specially suited for an evening drink, 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, making it a popular pre-club destination.

32 Maru
 Aðalstræti 12

Last time we checked, Maru manages to shell out some near-perfect sushi at very reasonable prices. Their downtown location makes it an excellent place for take-away, a fact that's emphasised (and suggested) by the menu. When dining in, however, make sure to compliment your spicy tuna maki with a nice glass of Asahi 'Super Dry' and a chaser of sake.

35 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.

38 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 and the Sea Baron himself can often be seen. The good food and welcoming service make this place a must-try.

45 Quiznos
 Lækjargata 8

A chain of sandwich outlets specialising in tasty 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.

3 Mokka
 Skólavörðustígur 3a

Mokka has been attracting coffee-thirsty regulars since 1958, making it the oldest café in the city centre and the founder of a very rich coffee culture in the country. Its old interiors full of character make the stay both relaxing and comfortable and a great place to linger on a Sunday afternoon. Mokka's regular art exhibits are always worth a look.

10 Svarta Kaffi
 Laugavegur 54

A cosy second floor café offering lunch snacks and cappuccinos to Laugavegur pedestrians every day of the week. The appeal lies partly in their famous Súpa í brauði, (translates Soup in bread), but also in the romantic atmosphere created by candlelight on every table and easy-listening music. A nice hideaway in the early evening for a drink or two.

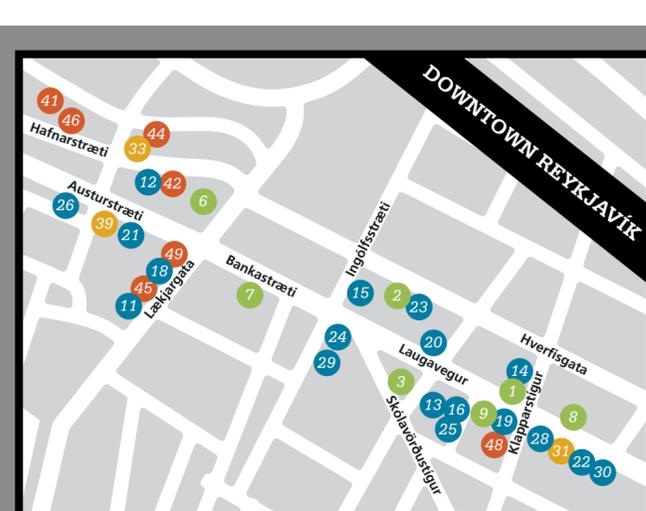
17 Café Cozy
 Austurstræti 3

Reykjavík's only gay-bar at the time of writing, Café Cozy is indeed very cosy, and especially so if you happen to be same-sex oriented. During weekends, this small café usually turns into a full-fledged discotheque with bouts of table dancing and general hedonism while weeknights find the clientele discussing current-affairs over pints and cups of coffee.



SPOT THIS: Barinn
 Laugavegur 22, 101 Reykjavík

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.



4 Ráðhúskaffi
 Tjarnargata 11

Located inside the City Hall with a great view over the pond, this coffee house has a good selection of cakes and pastries for pedestrians who like to relax after a stroll in the centre. A large topographic model of Iceland and regular art exhibits add to the pleasure.

11 BARS 'N' BISTROS
 Litli Ljótí Andarunginn
 Lækjargata 6b

Known for its all you can eat fish buffet, this restaurant/guesthouse is also a fine place to sit down and relax with a latte or some beer when suffering from a case of severe hipster-burn.

18 Rósenberg
 Lækjargata 2

Café Rósenberg features a venue for easy going troubadours, jazz bands and blues groups, providing a relaxed atmosphere almost every day of the week and making Rósenberg one of a very few jazz clubs living up to its name in Reykjavík. The live gigs, which are almost guaranteed on weekends, attract a very mixed crowd, all looking for that chilled-out feel.

5 Babalú
 Skólavörðustígur 22a

Walking up Skólavörðustígur, you can't miss café Babalú, a pleasant destination in its own right, as it has to be ranked as one of the cosiest places for a coffee and cake. With nice old sofas and books lining the shelves, you can't help feeling you are at your grandma's place. We could sit there every day, all day, if our daily duties wouldn't pull us out again.

12 Belly's
 Hafnarstræti 18a

A spacious pub, although the complete opposite of bright and airy, Belly's deserves praise for having the cheapest bar-price around, selling a large beer for only 350 ISK. Attracting a mixture of students, sailors and all those who don't want to drain the wallet, there are enough tables for everyone and TVs on every wall for all you sports enthusiasts out there.

19 Óliver
 Laugavegur 20a

If you like trendy party-types who dance like crazy to a lively mix of music where glamour is all that counts on the spacious dance floor, the stylish Óliver is the nightclub for you. For all the others who hate that kind of party, the good air-conditioning, fine food and excellent brunch served during the day makes Óliver a recommended choice for mid-priced meals.

6 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 the way to work or want to enjoy your drink on the spot.

13 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 souls. With DJs playing live sets from Wednesday to Saturday, the party doesn't start winding down until early morning.

20 Bar 11
 Laugavegur 11

Featuring occasional concerts on Friday nights and DJs calling the tunes every weekend, Bar 11 is a popular late-night haunt on two floors. Emphasizing old rock'n'roll classics and chart-toppers, the crammed dance floor tends to turn into a war zone at weekends when it's impossible to have a private chat. That whole fiasco can be an interesting experience, especially if you join in the fun.

7 Kaffitár
 Bankastræti 8

At Kaffitár, making coffee is a way of celebrating life. Offering all sorts of delicacies to go with your morning fuel and a nice selection for those with a sweeter tooth, it's an excellent choice for eat in or take away. Their special coffee-blends are a tad pricey, but well worth that little extra change. If you like your coffee, buy a bag of beans to take home.

14 Sirkus
 Klapparstígur 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.

21 Hressó
 Austurstræti 20

A spacious neutral place with no particular type of clientele, Hressó is a place where the menu spans a variety of lunch dishes during the day and troubadours and tap-beer are the order of the night. A somewhat basic club during weekends, notable for its size and amount of seats.

24 Prikið
 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, Prikið 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 Kaffi Amsterdam
 Hafnarstræti 5

One of 101's more established taverns, Kaffi Amsterdam seems to have been in business forever, really, as some of their decorations bear witness. Recently re-invented as a live venue, weekends see some of Reykjavík's most rockin' bands strap on their guitars for some... rockin'. The beer's also cheap and you will get exposed to some 'colourful' characters.

30 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.

33 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 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.

36 Sjávarkjallarinn
 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.

43 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 vinarbräu to go with the afternoon coffee.

50 Austurlanda-hraðlestin
 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.



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The Advanced Way to Experience Art

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir

Grapevine meets Rafskinna, Iceland's First DVD Magazine.

With the existence of YouTube and other internet video sites – where people can distribute as well as download a never-ending amount of movies and video clips onto their computers – it's never been easier to access entertainment. The only problem is, quantity doesn't necessarily equal quality and, as users are growing in numbers by the minute, it can take hours to find the good stuff, a time-consuming shortcoming to an otherwise excellent amusement.

For the past few years, publishers of so called DVD magazines have developed a way to meet the growing interest for easily accessible and high-quality visual entertainment by introducing a new medium where, instead of written material, the magazines contain full-screen videos and top quality live footage. It's a fairly new phenomenon, but for the past couple of years there has been a small revolution in the business and with new publications the popularity is steadily rising. Some of you readers have perhaps stumbled across an issue or two when travelling abroad, but those who are not familiar with the concept, DVD magazines are, as the name indicates, magazines in a DVD format, covering multiform subjects as music videos, fashion shows, documentaries and interviews.

Up until now these kinds of visual publications have been non-existent in Iceland, but that is about to change on March 30th, when the first issue of Rafskinna, a new Icelandic DVD magazine, will be released. Published by Rasskinn EHF – a company owned by artist Pétur Már Gunnarsson, director Ragnheiður Gestsdóttir, producer Sigurður

Magnús Finnsson and director Þórunn Hafstað – it's a quarterly magazine containing a two hour DVD disc featuring a compilation of music videos, exclusive interviews, live performances, animation, documentaries, short-films and video-art. The magazine's concept is culture and art in its widest context, placing special emphasis on music related material.

"If we could point out some resemblance to our magazine it would be the British DVD Magazine Spécialten. That particular magazine [founded by two guys in 2002] started off as a small project but is now sold in all the major record stores in Britain and distributed in the US as well," Sigurður explains.

Focusing on the extensive art and music culture in Iceland, the four founders, who also serve as the magazine's editors, have for the past few months been tracking down interesting artists, shooting live music performances and collecting material from film-makers, cartoonists and composers so the soon-to-be viewer will be provided with endless entertainment combined in one small package.

"The magazine is supposed to mirror the contemporary art scene in Iceland and follow up on happenings. We'll be interviewing artists visiting the country as well as talking to local artists and musicians and mixing new stuff with old and rare material", Sigurður explains. "The first issue will, for example, contain new music videos from múm, GusGus, Rass and Ghostigital as well as a Jimi Tenor interview." Tenor, a Finnish musician and composer, visited Iceland in December and played a gig at 12 Tónar and Sirkus. "These are videos that would be hard to see elsewhere," he adds.

The unique feature of DVD magazines,

and a large reason why they've become so popular in recent years, is that the viewer will be able to see the interviewee and witness the actual conversation, hear the music played and experience the performances visually as they happened when performed on stage. With a simple click of the mouse they can move on to the next story, interview, video or whatever the disc might contain that they're interested in viewing. DVD magazines can cover topics in an essentially different way than could ever be possible in the printed media.

This must be a welcoming opportunity for all the artists, designers and film-makers who need better promotion for their works than they have been getting so far. How have the responses been?

"We have gotten great responses from the people we've talked with and they like what we are doing," Þórunn says. "This is a completely different platform for them to present their works and reach out to the public. Everyone has been more than ready to do endless work to help us out and contribute to the project. We've gotten some juicy stuff out of it," she adds.

Witnessing the explosion of net-surfers in recent years who would rather push a play button than open up a newspaper, makes you wonder if DVD magazines will replace the print medium in the future.

"I wouldn't go as far as to say that DVD magazines will replace the printed magazines. This is rather a much needed addition to the written format, a new approach, so to say," Þórunn says.

Bringing together artists from different disciplines, Rafskinna's first issue is stuffed with intriguing material. In addition to the aforementioned music videos the issue will

feature art works by Inga Birgisdóttir and Finnur Arnar, a Jimi Tenor short-film, unplugged performance by Skakkamanage, animation by Hugleikur Dagsson, a ten minute Nýtt Líf remix by Kristján Loðmfjörð and, last but not least, a cooking show where the celebrity chefs are members of the band Ghostigital.

The magazine's format is a cardboard box that includes the DVD disc, a print edition with articles, interviews and written material as well as some other artistic and theme related accessories. In the first issue, the printed edition features an interview with Jimi Tenor, a fiction serial written by Örvar Þóreyjarsón Smáráson from múm and comics by Tony Millionaire and Dr. Gunni. The cover, reflecting the first issue's fish theme, was designed by Gunnar Þór Vilhjálmsson and Sigurður Eggertsson who are also responsible for the overall look.

"The package is an important part of the whole concept and we're going to try to get different designers to design the look of each issue," Þórunn explains. "We want to do so much more than just publish one DVD disc. We want the magazine to be a valuable package, worth preserving for a long time."

Representing an impressive collection of creativity, only 500 to 1000 copies will be published per edition to begin with and the magazine will be sold in record stores, book-stores and some galleries and fashion shops in the city centre for the price of 1.990 ISK. It's worth noting that the DVD will have English subtitles so all the non-Icelandic speakers fascinated with the country's art and music scene can enjoy its contents as well.

For subscription visit www.this.is/rafskinna.

Visual Art

- 17 Feb – 18 Mar
- » Presque Rein – Contemporary art exhibition, *Living Art Museum; Laugavegur 26*
- 23 Feb – 25 Mar
- » Etienne de France, *Icelandic Labour Union's Art Gallery; Freyjugata 41*
- 23 Feb – 22 Apr
- » Celebration Park - Pierre Huyghe design exhibition, *Reykjavik Art Museum; Tryggvagata 17*
- 24 Feb – 25 Mar
- » Jo Duchene and Damien Peyret photo exhibitions, *Reykjavik Museum of Photography; Tryggvagata 15*
- 25 Feb – 12 May
- » M/M & Gabriela sculpture exhibition, *Museum of Design and Applied Art; Lyngás 7-9, Garðabær*
- 25 Feb – 7 Feb 2008
- » Pourquoi Pas? – Charcot exhibition, *Sandgerði Museum; Garðavegur 1, Sandgerði*
- 10 Mar – 29 Apr
- » Face à Faces – Photo exhibition, *Akureyri Art Museum; Kaupvangsstræti 12, Akureyri*
- 17 Mar – 21 Apr
- » African Art – Photo exhibition, *National Museum of Iceland; Suðurgata 41*
- 17 Mar – 15 May
- » Emotional Landscapes – Mathieu Copeland exhibition, *Safn; Laugavegur 37*
- 24 Mar – 29 Apr
- » Design Reference, *Kópavogur Art Museum / Gerðasafn; Hamraborg, Kópavogur*
- 24 Mar – 29 Apr
- » Traits Très Mode – Design exhibition, *Sævar Karl Gallery; Bankastræti 7, Reykjavik*
- 31 Mar – 29 Apr
- » WA – Wall paintings by 15 artists, *Reykjavik Energy; Bæjarháls 1*

Audiovisual

- 3 Mar – 1 Apr
- » French Film Festival, *Háskólabíó Movie Theatre; Hagatorg*
- 4 Apr – 30 Apr
- » Performing art by Ketill Larsen, *Tjarnarbíó Theatre; Tjarnargata 12*

Theatre

- 12 Mar – 18 Mar
- » Le Muséé de la Mer – Written by Marie Darrieussecq and directed by Arthur Nauzyciel *The National Theatre of Iceland; Hverfisgata 19*
- 22 Mar – 23 Mar
- » The Imaginary Patient or the Silence of Molière – Directed by Arthur Nauzyciel *The National Theatre of Iceland; Hverfisgata 19*
- 28 Mar – 29 Mar
- » L'Image – Directed by Arthur Nauzyciel, Ó. Johnson & Kaaber, *Sætún 8*
- 29 Mar – 31 Mar
- » The Chronicles of Whole Days and Whole Nights, *Reykjavik City Theatre; Listabraut 3*
- 5 Apr
- » Between Worlds by playwright Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt, *Reykjavik Art Museum; Tryggvagata 17*

Dance

- 4 Apr
- » To Other Horizons – Serge Ricci and The Icelandic Dance Company, *Reykjavik City Theatre; Listabraut 3*

Literature

- 29 Mar – 19 May
- » Bernard Alligand book exhibition, *National Library; Arngrimsgata 3, Reykjavik*

Music

- 28 Mar
- » Kitchen Motors Night – Monade and Jóhann Jóhannsson *National Theatre Basement; Hverfisgata 19, Reykjavik*
- 29 Mar
- » Kitchen Motors Night – Plinki Plonk Symphony, *National Theatre Basement; Hverfisgata 19, Reykjavik*
- 7 Apr
- » Turtle Cuts and Nosfell at Aldrei fór ég suður Festival, *Ásgeirsbakki; Isafjörður*

Science

- 1 Mar – 31 Mar
- » Airbus – Scientific exhibition, *Askja / University of Iceland; Sturlugata 7*
- 10 Apr
- » Scientific Conference – Sylvie Joussaume, Jean Jouzel and guests *Hátiðarsalur / University of Iceland; Suðurgata*

Business and Tourism

- 6 Mar – 13 Mar
- » Wine Seminar, *Hótel Reykjavik Centrum; Aðalstræti 16*
- 8 Mar – 18 Mar
- » The French Commercial Days, *Reykjavik Streets*
- 15 Mar – 18 Mar
- » Michelin Star Chef: Jean-Yves Johany, *Hótel Holt; Bergstaðastræti 37*
- 12 Apr
- » Invest in France – Business Forum, *Nordica Hotel; Suðurlandsbraut 2*

Theatre: *Reykjavik City Theatre – Mar 29 – 31*

Durringer's Chronicles

The production *The Chronicles of Whole Days and Whole Nights* consists of translated texts by the writer and director Xavier Durringer. Born in Paris in 1963 he has directed theatre, written several plays and worked for television and cinema. This piece is a one-hour show starring six Icelandic actors. Focusing on two men and two women feeling lost, happy, frustrated and lonely, it's a play rich with emotions where the sounds of words play a big role.



Theatre: *Reykjavik City Theatre, Mar 29 – 31*



The Imaginary Invalid or The Silence Of Molière

Directed by Arthur Nauzyciel, *The Imaginary Invalid or The Silence Of Molière* will be presented at the National Theatre of Iceland as a special guest performance in March. Premiering in 1999, this production features two different plays combined into one, *The Imaginary Invalid* and *The Silence Of Molière*. *The Imaginary Invalid*, written by actor and playwright Molière, centres on a hypochondriac and his daughter. This comedy was Molière's last play and he died after its fourth performance. *The Silence Of Molière*, a play written by Giovanni Macchia, focuses on Molière's daughter who rejects the theatre, her father and family. Nauzyciel has mixed these two plays into one piece that "represents the intimacy of life, the renunciation of death, the memory and its transmission, bringing together our everyday life and theatre". Actress Brynhildur Guðjónsdóttir will play *Esprit-Madeleine Poquelin*, the daughter of Molière, who tells the story of her father and their fragile relationship.

Theatre: *Ó. Johnson & Kaaber, Mar 28 and 29*



One Sentence, One Play

Based on the story *L'Image* by Irish writer Samuel Beckett this piece is a nine-page sentence written in May 1988. Thanks to the *Pourquoi Pas?* festival, Icelanders will get the chance to witness its reading in a very unusual setting at the old Ó. Johnson & Kaaber building on March 28th and 29th. Directed by Arthur Nauzyciel, French actress Anne Brochet will read the text, backed up by dancer Damien Jalet and musicians David Lacey and Paul Vogel.

Business and Tourism: *Reykjavik Streets, Mar 8 – Mar 18*

The French Commercial Days

Within the framework of the French Culture Festival, the French-Icelandic Chamber of Commerce presents the fifth annual French Commercial Days. From March 8th to 18th, French products will be promoted in more than twenty shops around Reykjavik's centre – including L'Occitane, Kisan, and Du Pareil Au

Même – and a series of events will take place around the city. At the same time, the French Book Week will take place at Mál og Menning bookshop where book lovers can get acquainted with French literature and chat with some of France's renowned authors.

For a full programme, visit www.pourquoipas.is.



Austur-Indía Félagið Geysir

Hverfisgata 56, 101 Reykjavík, Tel.: 552 1630

Once again, a Grapevine food critic faces the almost insurmountable task of reviewing a meal that was damn near perfect, and doing it without sounding like a thinly veiled advertisement or a love letter. This doesn't happen a lot, mind you. In fact, it mostly seems to happen at one place. The above analogy is even stolen from a previous glowing review of the restaurant in question, and that is the very restaurant you are reading about right now – Indian restaurant Austur-Indía Félagið. And I can tell you that they've still got it. In fact, they may have gotten even better. Seriously, when your only complaint at a restaurant is that you get too full to finish all of the delights at hand, you know they're on to something.

Let me tell you about the chicken course we enjoyed. Reshimi Kebab, it was called, and the only comment I wrote about it in my notebook was 'wow!' Rarely have I tasted a piece of chicken that was grilled to such perfection; its tender and juicy meat would have held its own quite well, but the addition of some nicely thought-out spices and a minty aftertaste pushed it well beyond the 'awesome' category.

And then there was the Vindaloo lamb in all its spicy glory. It is always telling when you feel compelled to keep shovelling food in your mouth even though it is basically burning holes in your cheeks and tongue. But a taste of the vindaloo invited another one, and so on until the heat got so scalding that not even the plentiful Rajita could soothe the pain. But it was worth it.

In fact, everything my companion and I consumed during our two-hour stay at Austur-Indía Félagið, from the naan bread and tomato rice right down to the Cobra beer was worthy of praise. The service was also excellent, and befitting of the restaurant's pricing policy (although the staff probably knew we were there for reviewing purposes, everyone else eating there seemed to get the same amount of attention, too).

Reviewed by Haukur Magnússon

Aðalstræti 2, 101 Reykjavík, Tel.: 517 4300

Bistro-bar and restaurant Geysir is located in the old and dignified Geysir building by the corner of Aðalstræti and Vesturgata. A relatively new eating destination, open since last summer, its bright and stylishly decorated dining hall offers plenty of seating for couples up to large groups who can enjoy the meal and the nice downtown view from lunch to dinner hours.

After a couple of lunchtime visits, arriving at Geysir on a Friday evening was a completely different experience. The place was almost packed and every table seated with customers enjoying their dinner while in deep conversation. The lively casual vibe was welcoming and although the tables are lined in close proximity to one another the closeness to other dining guests never gets annoying. The sound of other people chatting rather adds a lively twist to the whole experience.

Geysir's new menu features a diverse yet consistent selection of bistro-style dishes for a very reasonable price. When seated right by the window our waitress offered us a nice bottle of white wine and recommended some of the restaurant's tastiest dishes. As starters we were served two separate courses, one containing a rather bland tomato-soup, the other a plate of large shrimps on a stick and a small vegetable stuffed and crusty quiche served with a bowl of sour cream. The quiche was especially flavourful and the shrimps, when dipped in the sauce, an excellent and light starter.

We weren't let down with our plates of lamb and salted cod as main dishes nor the bottle of red wine that our waitress brought to the table. The fillet of lamb served with potatoes, grilled vegetables and bearnaise sauce was spot-on and cooked to perfection. Likewise, the salted cod, served on top of an Italian-style olive and tomato sauce was tasty and filling.

Although a little short of stomach space there's always some room for dessert. The creamy chocolate mousse and an exceptionally rich portion of crème brûlée both made a fine conclusion to an excellent meal. If looking for a fun spot to go with friends for a fine meal before a night out, a drop in at Geysir can be recommended. A fine way to start your evening. Also, as the prices are fair, there should still be a little something left in the wallet to spend at the nearest bar.

Reviewed by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir

Tivoli

Laugavegur 3, 101 Reykjavík, Tel.: 552 0077

Located on the shopping street Laugavegur, Tivoli is a cosy café during the day offering light snacks and lunch meals such as pizza, burgers, and tapas dishes. Downtown pedestrians have already caught on to this new dining opportunity, and the place, open since November, has developed a regular customer base of shoppers and locals alike.

Around dinner hours, Tivoli turns into a nice restaurant where the homely decor adds character and extra charm to the place. At this time, light refreshments are replaced by gourmet cuisine, although small dishes are still offered to those who only want something to go with the wine. The restaurant's menu is very tasteful in both prices and combination of inviting dishes influenced by Italian and Spanish cuisine.

While we carefully examined the menu, our friendly waitress offered us a sample of whale sashimi as an appetizer. The meat was supremely tender and when dipped into the soy sauce and wasabi, much to my surprise, it tasted rather good.

As a starter I decided on the all-Icelandic hangikjöt, a dish of smoked lamb traditionally served with potatoes, white sauce and green peas. Tivoli's owners decided not to prepare the lamb old-style though. Cut in thin slices and served with rucola, fresh melon and horseradish sauce, this experimental dish turned out to be the best hangikjöt I've ever tasted. My dining partner decided on a more classic course, a beef carpaccio with oil and parmesan and wasn't let down by her choice.

For the main course, our waitress recommended the Roco – a pasta dish with lobster, mushrooms, spinach, garlic and cheese sauce – and the Mohjito lamb. The generous portion of lamb fillet with mint sauce was satisfying, although they could have added a bit more mint to supplement the flavour. The pasta dish on the other hand was just perfect. A blend of tasty sauce, large chunks of lobster and generously stuffed tortellini topped with fresh rucola was more than enough to satisfy the taste buds.

For dessert, we ordered the sweet chocolate mousse served with cream and berries and the Panna Cotta served with cream and raspberry sauce. In line with previous dishes, these proved to be excellent, confirming that Tivoli is a restaurant boasting high class but reasonably priced meals.

Reviewed by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir



BEZT Í HEIMI: Filippseyjar Grocery Store

Hverfisgata 98, 101 Reykjavík, Tel.: 551 2400

Fewer things are more frustrating than when you've decided to be a little experimental in the kitchen and your stomach is aching for a flavourful Asian meal, to drive to the next supermarket chain only to find out that they only sell a third of the ingredients needed to prepare the meal. Wouldn't it be easier, not to mention much more enjoyable, to shop from someone who actually knows the ingredients and has used them in the kitchen? We would think so. If you tend to find yourself in this annoying situation, stop by at the shop Filippseyjar, a small Asian grocery store located on the corner of Hverfisgata and Barónstígur, and you won't need to swear anymore.

Specializing in oriental supplies, the store imports groceries not only from the Philippines but numerous other Asian countries, particularly Thailand, China, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam. Every week, the store stocks up on fresh fruit and vegetables from Thailand and provides customers with various choices of Asian giftware as well.

When walking inside the store you'll be greeted by the cheerful owner standing behind the counter. Maria Priscilla Zanolita, a Philippine native, opened up the store ten years ago and has run the shop at the same location ever since. The business is steadily reaching out to new customers and today it can pride itself on being a true treasure chest full of exotic products for customers to stuff in their baskets.

Shops like this one are an example of the many great things about a multicultural society. All the individuals immigrating to the country bring with them different culinary traditions from their homelands and, to meet the growing demand for fine ingredients, grocery stores dedicated to oriental cuisine have been opening up in the city for the past decade.

When you wind through the grocery aisles at Filippseyjar, you'll find brightly coloured cans and bottles of coconut milk, bamboo shoots, dried mushrooms, bean sprouts, soy sauce, packs of noodles with numerous flavours, tea, coffee and large sacks of rice, ready to be boiled, fried or braised. Spices you'll have no clue on how to use line the shelves and sauces that will make your taste buds jump for joy. If your head is spinning with confusion, Maria will most likely be more than willing to guide you through the store and help you pick out the things you need, and give you a tip or two on how to use them in the kitchen. You might even walk out not only with both hands full of products, but a secret recipe in the pocket.

Opening hours: Monday to Friday 12-19, Saturdays 12-18. Closed on Sundays.

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir



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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

Úáfoss, Vitastígur 13,

Tel: 551 2301, www.udafoss.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, Viðimelur 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, Arngrímsgata 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 super-

markets 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

Busses run from 07:00-24:00 on weekdays and 10:00-24:00 on week-

ends

■ 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,** Tangarhöfði 8-12,

Tel: 587 5544

Atlas Car Rental, Dalshraun 9,

Tel: 565 3800

Berg Car Rental, Tangarhöfða 8,

Tel: 577 6050

Hertz, Flugvallavegur, Tel: 505 0600**■ Airlines****Air Iceland,** Reykjavikflugvöllur,

Tel: 570 3030, www.flugfelag.is

Air Vestmannaeyjar, Tel: 481 3255,

www.eyjflug.is

■ Bus Terminal**BSÍ,** Vatnsmýrarvegur 10,

Tel: 562 1011, www.bsi.is

■ Samferða.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

Túngata 14, Tel: 561 5921,

www.goethe.de/island

All information 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

Námshöfundar Reykjavíkur,

Frikirkjuvegur 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

lðnskólinn 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

Asatrá Association, Grandagarði 8

Bahá'í, Álfbakka 12

The Church of Evangelism,

Hlíðasmári 9

The Icelandic Buddhist Movement,

Víghólastígur 21

Reykjavik Free Lutheran Church,

Frikirkjuvegur 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,**

Suðurlíhúð 36

Zen Buddhism in Iceland,

Reykjavíkurborg 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.bsr.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****www.vinnumalastofnun.is** (Icelandic telephone directory)**■ Where to get ...****Work and residence permit:** The Directorate of Immigration, Skogarhlíð 6, Tel: 510 5400, www.utl.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 un-

restricted 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**■ Weather:** Average temperature during summer is around 10°C and winter citizens have to have had an un-

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GUÐGUS AKER HUKEL V EKK

Text by Haukur Magnússon Photos by Atli Már Hafsteinsson

“You try and take the show as well as the music to the edge of reason. And people fuckin’ dig that. Understand?”

Icelandic dance music pioneers GusGus recently released their long-awaited fourth full-length album. Entitled *GusGus Forever*, many of its tracks have been driving Reykjavík clubs wild for a long time, building up anticipation with the city’s dance-crazed kids. Now, they rejoice. *The Grapevine* sat down one of them to discuss *Forever*, their music, their live shows and to take part in the imminent hype-fest.

The end was near and the heat had already been turned off by the time I visited the GusGus studio in the now-defunct Klink & Bank art factory, the place where most of their new LP, *GusGus Forever*, was conceived. It was autumn of 2005 and Klink & Bank was to close down in a matter of weeks. There were quiet streams of people all over; musicians, artists and architects gathering and packing the products of their labour and the tools of their trade to be moved to strange new locations.

Programmer Birgir Þórarinnsson (usually referred to as Biggi Veira in GusGus paraphernalia) welcomed me to GusGus’ part of Klink and Bank and told me about their recently finished album, the sounds that inspired it and the tools used to make it. He did this for well over two hours, regardless of the cold, and of the fact that he was very busy and could only squeeze me in for half an hour. That particular rant started, like most good monologues, with a stupid question. “What does this thing do?” I asked and pointed at a strange looking deck of some sorts that had a seemingly infinite number of brightly coloured cords coming out of it. He proceeded to tell me and didn’t really stop after that.

Playing me songs, humming melodies, explaining the workings of various transistors, oscillators, filters and gates, he just kept on going. I remember thinking that any musical outfit that has him aboard need not worry about their creative side. His sheer interest and involvement – his passion for the music, if you pardon the cliché – struck me then, as would it strike me when I next sat down for an interview with him nearly two years later. The album that was reportedly completed two years ago was just seeing a release. This fact invites the amazingly bad pun of asking if it’s called *Forever* because it took that long to come out.

After a polite laugh, he answers; “No, the studio with the name is that Stebbi [Stephensen, AKA

President Bongol) was DJ-ing in Russia at some point. We’ve had a fair amount of success there and in the eastern bloc – too bad that the profit from album sales there rarely finds its way back to us – so people knew who he was and were lining up outside the club he was playing. As he was passing the line, someone from there shouted ‘GusGus forever!’ Hence the name. I take it as a compliment to our music, the thought that it has its place in eternity.”

Rhythms that Tear Bodies Apart

As for the delayed release, Veira explains that band members’ pregnancies are mostly to blame. “And I have a full-time job. I have an expensive lifestyle now, and a family to support. No use playing bohemian any more.” He adds that the band actually had an album ready for release in the summer of 2004. “It was ready and we were intent on putting it out, but I ultimately felt it wasn’t... enough. It was a good album. My wife says it was great and all. But the material hadn’t advanced enough from what we did on [2002’s] *Attention*, more like a spin-off of that album. I wanted to go further. I had a very strong concept in mind, which was ‘degeneration’, and I felt we hadn’t gotten that tone just right by then. But then we did, and *Forever* is exactly the way it was supposed to be.”

He tells me that many of the songs off the 2004 version show up on *Forever* unchanged. However, as the forum GusGus have been affiliated with since evolving from the nine-person art troupe it began as is ever changing and, well, fickle, this begs the question if those songs are still relevant today. Are GusGus simply so ahead of the times that they defy trends, or make them, rather than follow? Veira has thought about this too.

“Well, it’s true that things get dated very fast in this scene. Those who put something out that’s reminiscent of last year’s sound get dismissed immediately. You can divide those who make our kind of music into two groups, what you may call pioneers and followers. The line between the two is vague, but for the purpose of the topic, we could say that some people working within the field are exploring and creating in their music, just as any artist would. And then there are the producers, whose aim is rather to make a cool song for the club, what’s in right now at the cost of their own voice. They feel no need to

search for the boundaries of creation, rather opting to manoeuvre their beats so they’ll work in the club. You’ll usually get a hit that sounds like the others and is catchy for a few plays, but has no real longevity, because nothing special was put into it. Even if it is a great song.

“With those that keep searching, the music seems to have more ingredients; their music always has a longer lifespan. Last year saw a sort-of revolution in German minimal-techno that’s really influenced the sound that’s in vogue right now. And that sound is in the vein of some of our songs from 2004, for no particular reason, except maybe that we never chase trends or make music using the sound or rhythm that’s ‘hip’ right now. We use the same instruments that we used in ‘92, we do things on our own terms, and it is pure coincidence that what comes out is suitable for clubs. It’s because I am a sucker for rhythms that tear your body apart.”

More Kiss than Kraftwerk?

GusGus seems a very trendy and fashionable band. Just witness the accompanying pictures. In fact, they are in all likelihood the trendiest bunch of hipster thirtysomethings in Reykjavík, nay all of Iceland (Björk has turned 40, and she is more of an institution than a person). GusGus make hipster music, which in turn gets played at hipster clubs. They wear hipster clothing. They have hipster names. They have hipster haircuts, and those of them that grow facial hair grow it in a hipster fashion. Of course, this says nothing about the band or its music. If it did, then there would be little more to say. But this fact accentuates that GusGus has an evolved and seemingly thought-out image appeal, unusual for their brand of techno, which has throughout the years been decidedly anti-celebrity. More Kiss than Kraftwerk in terms of presenting themselves, as is evident on the cover of *Forever*, where each member is presented in an iconic fashion.

Veira tells me that while it has always been a part of dance music dogma that fans should experience and celebrate the music rather than its makers, the band has always had fun playing around with their image on album covers, etc. “Trying to personify the music, characterise it. The idea with the icons is not exactly a claim to be worshipped. It’s more like an attempt to personify us in this way, and to convey the

idea that every person is a saint...”

Every member of GusGus, or just people in general?

“Every person, of course [laughs]. We are all a part of God, you know. Not made by him, but we have a part in him, in the divine. We all keep a part of the divine within ourselves. And this is why we are all saints, and we need to see ourselves as such, to respect each other and ourselves.”

The Edge of Reason

Our talk somehow shifts to GusGus’ notoriety as a live act. Their hometown shows, which usually take place at downtown club NASA, are infamous for their party hearty atmosphere and have long since surpassed any cult status bestowed upon the band (that sells around 1,000 copies of its each release domestically), selling out every single time. Veira tells me that the band always puts a lot of effort into each concert, it throws, and that they differentiate from many techno bands’ live sets by keeping it organic, so to speak. “I usually have each part of a given song available while on stage, that way I can mix and extend the track in accordance with the vibe of the room, so I can interact with the crowd.

“You try and create something new while on stage that way, not going by a set timeline. The interaction between [GusGus singer] Earth, Stebbi, myself and the crowd along with that freedom means that every show is a bit different and there’s invariably something new going on. Therefore, it’s always very exciting to play the songs, like ‘what’ll come out of it now?’ every single night. And sometimes, when you manage to ride a successful combo to new peaks, you wind up stepping back and going: ‘Yes! Something awesome just happened.’”

I turn the talk to our Klink & Bank interview, where he told me that their live show shared influences with sleaze-rockers Trabant. “A certain atmosphere came to be through the Klink & Bank wing we shared with the likes of Trabant and Ghostigital, one that defined a live show as the best place to explore the limits of the music you’re creating. Everything’s at your fingertips at a live show: you have the powerful sound system, the pulsating crowd and sweaty performers – the moment is now. And that creates a need to do something unique, to blossom, more than fiddling in the studio ever will. You try and take the show as

well as the music to the edge of reason. And people fuckin’ dig that. Understand?”

Degeneration

Earlier in our talk, Veira spoke of degeneration as an underlying theme or concept he had wanted for the album. When pressed on the subject, he relays his vision of the state of the western world today, that it has reached its peak and is slowly but surely deteriorating and degenerating right now. “We’ve seen this happen with every great culture,” he says. “Our grip on the world is declining. Something will replace it, but we don’t know what. That’s causing a lot of anxiety in society. People are afraid of the idea of anarchy, of the unknown and of each other, and that causes countries like the US to react violently to ensure their place in this faltering world. People are naturally scared, that’s a normal phase.

One of the clearest signs of degeneration is when societies lose their value systems; we don’t even know what our values are anymore. 150 years ago it was very clear what we stood for and would fight for, but the lines have blurred and a lack of direction has taken their place. This makes people scared, as I said, but it also invites for new ways of doing things. What’s happening is the degeneration of the old, an invitation and a chance to try something new. Really, the parties in Rome were probably never as fun as during the last days of the empire. One of the things we’re saying in our music is: anything goes. Listen to your heart.”

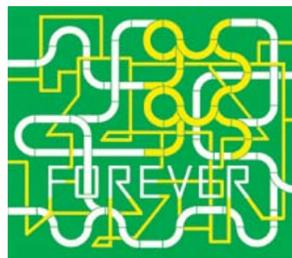
Is the ultimate message of GusGus then that of escapism, of dancing while the city burns?

“Well, I guess you could call it that. Liberation from the fear of change. Even though there are a lot of scary things going on in the world as it is today you can’t be afraid of finding your own ways, of being true to yourself and independent of reigning forces and values. There’s nothing more to be found there, we need something new, and in order to do that we need to be liberated from the old and degenerated.”

GusGus will celebrate the release of *Forever* with a live show at Nasa on March 24.

www.gusgus.com

www.myspace.com/gusgus



GusGus
Forever

"THERE IS A LIGHT THAT NEVER GOES OUT. SHINING, ILLUMINANT, GLORIOUS GUSGUS." ...or so proclaim the opening words on the promotional package for this, GusGus' fifth studio album, and they might just be right. Bastard spawn of a long-dead movement, GusGus have managed to outlive their acid & house contemporaries by far, and time has only aged them to perfection. The beats are more biting and minimal than ever, the hooks more shamelessly poppastic and infectiously catchy and the Ecstasy just as dominant in the bloodstream as it was twelve years ago. It's always satisfying when a band reaches the age where it becomes capable of filtering all the bullshit out of their music and stick to what matters most. While Forever hardly treads new ground for GusGus (or anyone at all, for that matter), it's not like anyone ever asked them or expected them to do anything new. More of the same is only a bad thing if the same sucks. *SE*

www.myspace.com/gusgus



Hafdis Huld
Dirty Paper Cup

Although its cuteness occasionally sinks to unforgivable stupidity, Dirty Paper Cup is a triumph as far as original songwriting goes, and brilliantly showcases the fact that no matter how much fashionable gimmickry is strewn over a song, it doesn't count for shit unless it has the bones to support its own weight, and this album certainly has bones aplenty. Hafdis bares her soul on almost every track, making even the ditsyest lines ring with such bittersweet honesty that the hum production is rendered irrelevant; even the banjo hooks sound heartfelt. The end result is an album so personal and well-intentioned that you feel like you've made a new friend after listening to it. Granted, your new friend might be a hopeless fashion victim and a bit of a drama queen, but a good one nonetheless. *SE*

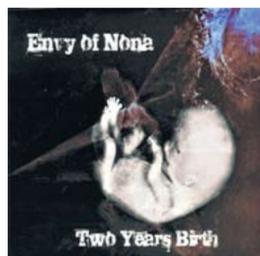
www.myspace.com/hafdishuld



SIC
Pandemonium

Faroese fivesome SIC never stray far away from their nu-metal/post-trash roots on debut album Pandemonium. Although they are not exactly breaking new ground for originality, it is hard to fault them, for what they do, they do well and what they lack in consistency, they make up for with energy. Influenced by bands such as genre favorites Slipknot and Meshuggah, they sound tight behind bass-driven and riff heavy string section, while singer Mikkjall, evokes memories of a young Phil Anselmo. 13 tracks in all, the first two songs, Reach Inside and Done Pretending, are early highlights, while Keep it to Yourself is an easy favorite. The experimental Number 6 misses the mark completely though. SIC's chief fault, youth, is at the same time their biggest upside. This is a highly enjoyable and strong debut, full of promise, and it will be exciting to see how they manage to build upon it. *SBB*

www.myspace.com/sic6



Envy of Nona
Two Years Birth

There's some fair songcraft on this very adolescent debut release from the Reykjavik fivesome, but boy, does it drag on forever. Still, despite being cliché-ridden and unoriginal to say the very least, it doesn't try to be anything other than what it is: five guys playing guitars and rockin' out. The production is adequate, and the very competent instrumentation more than makes up for the singer's nasal whine. *SE*

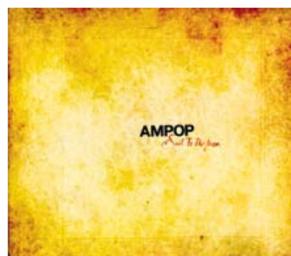
www.myspace.com/envyofnona



Petter & The Pix
Easily Tricked

This album is kind of like eating roast mutton off plastic tupperware. The ingredients are all there, you know it's good stuff and it certainly tastes expensive, but something's just not quite right; something is flat, sterile and too watered down, too squared away and plasticky. It's not quite reggae and not quite pop, but doesn't really manage to be a little bit of both either. Highlights that rise above their formulas include the pacing title track and the mellow, straightforward So Easy, but the rest seems kind of half-assed. *SE*

www.myspace.com/petterwinnberg



Ampop
Sail To The Moon

Grandiose and epic in scale, Sail To The Moon is still hardly more than a tired rehash of songs we've been listening to on indie radio stations for ten years, only more pretentious and self-involved, with some very unwelcome showtunes and blues influences thrown in to make it even less listenable. Bedecked in the vast amount of trinkets one has come to expect from Ampop (string orchestrations, wurlitzers, trumpets, theremins, mellotrons, etc.), Sail To The Moon barely makes it off the floor, never mind the moon, as hard as You Could Be Lovely, Two Directions and Carry On try to keep the whole thing afloat. Shallow and dull. *SE*

www.myspace.com/ampopband

Reviews by Sindri Eldon and Sveinn Birkir Björnsson

Prejudice or Paranoia?

By Toshiki Toma

"It was the worst experience!" said a young man who came to talk to me the other day. "I have never seen such disrespect. I wouldn't have been able to stand it if my wife and kids had been with me." He is from one of the countries that joined the EU a couple years ago. It was the first time that I had met him, and so far he was very polite, friendly, and lively. I asked him what had happened. He said he was in a home electronics shop and was looking at a product he intended to buy. The sales attendant was kind in the beginning, but after this young man mentioned where he was from, the friendly manner evaporated and the sales clerk was no longer willing to answer questions or spend time with the young man. Why? Nobody knows except the sales clerk himself.

One of the privileges of being a pastor is getting to hear peoples' stories, and it is also my privilege as pastor for the foreign community to be able to talk about prejudice in Iceland. Of course, many different groups of people can be targets of prejudice, but here I am going to talk only about prejudice towards immigrants and foreigners. Now March 21st is the International Day for the Elimination of Racism and it is a good occasion to reflect on this matter.

Prejudices manifest themselves in different ways. The kind of prejudice that the young man from the new EU member state experienced is called "hidden" prejudice. Hidden prejudice is expressed in a non-verbal, somewhat indirect way. Examples might be ignoring or failing to greet someone, giving substandard service, or treating someone like a small child. Hidden prejudice is very common in Iceland (probably every single immigrant has experienced it at some time), as well as probably in every other society on earth. Nevertheless, it is rather hard to point it out or to discuss it in a public forum, unlike the vivid, aggressive, and blatant prejudice expressed in racially discriminating statements or speeches. Why is this?

First of all, hidden prejudice shows up in people's behaviour during routine, everyday encounters. When it happens, we do not usually have our video camera running. So we cannot rewind the scene and examine it later on.

Secondly, it is not so easy, even for us immigrants ourselves, to recognize hidden prejudice as prejudice right away when it happens. This was not prejudice, we think, just some misunderstanding or accident. Let me give an example that really happened to me. I bought a TV set for my children. It was a small one, but still cost some money. After I paid, with my Visa card, the sales clerk literally threw the card back to me, not even saying "gjörðu svo vel." Afterwards, I asked myself how I should understand this gesture. It seemed to me there were at least four possible answers: 1. The sales clerk does this to every customer. He is just rude. 2. He happened to be in a bad mood. 3. He knew me personally and he didn't like me. 4. He is prejudiced towards immigrants, at least Asians. Probably the only way to know for sure would be to ask him on the spot. But this is difficult in practice. It is already almost a declaration of war to ask someone such a question: "Excuse me, but did you do that

because you are prejudiced against me?" Most of us avoid this kind of conflict as much as we can.

And even if I had asked the sales clerk this question, there is no guarantee that he would have answered honestly. He might say: "What are you talking about?" Others around us often join in a kind of denial that acts of prejudice actually happen. I know that in many cases, when an immigrant complains about experiencing discrimination, people around her/him say: "I think you must have misunderstood something." "Oh, no, that couldn't have happened!" or "You are too sensitive, don't be paranoid!"

So where is the way out? Is there any way to engage the problem of "hidden" prejudice? Or do we have to be just quiet and endure it?

Of course I think we can do something, and we need to do something. Here "we" means both native Icelanders and immigrants. In my view, our main goal should be to develop our sense of what kind of words and attitudes can hurt other peoples' feelings. This is a much larger project than I have time to describe in this article, so now I would like to return to the experience of those people who are experiencing prejudice. Here are some suggestions for how to react:

1. Let us encourage those who experience prejudice to speak up. As with sexual crimes, silence serves mostly just those who cause hurt. Silence helps neither the victims nor the community.
2. Let us not hesitate to speak about apparent incidents of prejudice just because we cannot prove what was in the other person's mind. It is important to express feelings of hurt or disrespect even while we allow for the possibility of having misunderstood the situation.
3. Let us not repress or block out our experiences of prejudice in daily life, nor deny automatically that such attitudes exist, nor call those who experience prejudice oversensitive, unless we have truly good reasons to doubt what they say.
4. Let us acknowledge that each of us bears prejudices, and that those who carry prejudices may be wealthy, or not; well educated, or not; highly respected, or not.
5. Let us remember that those who are in weaker positions in society find it more difficult to speak up about prejudice than those who are in more powerful positions.
6. If you want to talk about your experience of prejudice but cannot find anybody to listen, please contact me. I am honoured to listen to you. I may not be able to act in your case, but I can and do act on the understanding I gain from listening to many people like yourselves.

Dear readers, especially Icelandic readers, I understand it must be tedious to hear somebody talk about prejudice in this country. But those of us who are forced to speak about prejudice also find it difficult and burdensome. I wish that we could just say "Allt í lagi," smile, and see things improve on their own. But it doesn't work like that.

I believe that most of us immigrants want to join with native Icelanders in improving our society and our understanding of each other. To do this, we need to talk about our difficulties as well as our successes.

Toshiki Toma, pastor for immigrants: toshiki@toma.is.

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Good Show, Unfortunate Venue

Text by Sveinn Birkir Björnsson Photo by Skari

Who: Lisa Ekdahl
Where: NASA
When: March 1, 2007

There was an unusually subdued and quiet atmosphere at NASA for Lisa Ekdahl's concert. This was her third show in Iceland in two years and, much like on previous occasions, she had sold out the venue. This particular venue, however, proved to be ill-fitting for the performance. NASA, usually associated with the rowdier type of concerts, simply does not have the allure to do justice to a low-key, sit-down event. In certain parts of the auditorium you could hear the quiet hum of the A/C over Ekdahl's delicate delivery; a sound that added nothing positive to the whole production.

The bartenders were rude and hardly up to the task of tending to an audience that was at least 20 years older than their usual clientele, and with a troublesome penchant for a glass of wine instead of the rock crowd's all-round demand for beer. While these transgressions would hardly be noticeable at a rock show, they were blatantly evident under these circumstances. But there was more to this show than the unfortunate venue selection which, in all fairness, can probably be blamed on the lack of a better alternative in Reykjavík.

Lisa Ekdahl is a charismatic performer. Her unusual, soft, but somehow gnarly voice and her ability to write quirky little folk-pop tunes about lost love and broken hearts, had the audience captivated for the duration of the show. She has a very intimate stage persona, and obviously takes great joy in giving back to the audience. Between songs, she

carried on conversations with the audience in Swedish with a thick Stockholm accent, which fortunately is easily intelligible for Icelanders; and she did her best to make everyone feel welcome at her show, although at times she took her act of innocence a bit too far, coming off as naïve, rather than sincere. Joined on stage by a talented and multi-dimensional sidekick, whom she introduced as Blomdahl (has there ever been a more Swedish name?), the pair managed to play about eight different instruments between them. This compact line-up created a feeling of attachment that is not easily replicated with a bigger band.

Before taking a short intermission about eight songs into the show, Ekdahl mostly played material from her two latest albums, Olyckssystem and Pärlov av Glas, with the exception of Du Sälde Våran Hjärta. After returning to the stage, she delivered some of her more popular material from her self-titled debut album, with Benen I Kors and Öppna Upp Ditt Fönster receiving enthusiastic applause from the audience.

The loudest ovation was kept for her biggest hit, Vem Vet, which Ekdahl admitted was the only one of her songs she has ever heard people whistle in the streets. Blomdahl was quick to seize the opportunity and changed the arrangement of the song to include his own whistling solo, a performance that received a hearty laugh from both audience and Ekdahl alike.

It is easy to like Lisa Ekdahl, as a performer and as a person, and I really hope she finds the time to play in Iceland again soon, but hopefully not at NASA.

www.myspace.com/ekdahlisa



Saint Simon

Text by Helgi Valur Photo by Skari

Who: Emilie Simone
Where: Háskólabíó
When: March 4, 2007

Emilie Simone is perhaps most famous for being the descendant of famous French philosopher Saint Simon. No, that's a lie. Emilie Simone is most famous for the beautiful soundtrack to "The March of the Penguins." But I'd like to think there is a chance that Emilie and Saint Simon are somehow connected. Saint Simon, one of Europe's greatest thinkers, proposed a utopian meritocracy where all men would be judged by their merit and not their family history or wealth. On this night meritocracy came to mind for I was wondering if Emilie was here on account of her musical talents or simply her sexy French look.

The concert started and everybody gazed at a blue screen (not the kind that makes dogs fly in bad American movies) which created a very French atmosphere. A strange techno guy with a hat appeared on stage followed by a percussionist. This was Emilie's band. The percussionist had wild moves, like Justin Timberlake on PCP. This was an artistic event 'cause the techno guy had a hollow square he played and a lot of futuristic gadgets seldom seen in music. They even dragged Kira Kira on stage, who had a bucket of sea shells she played with all night. The final member was a cello player who played solos. Then Simon appeared and

said "Gott kvöld" with a sexy French accent. Her music can be compared to the music of great bands such as "Nouvelle Vague" and "Portishead".

There was nothing I didn't like about Simon, her melodies were catchy and different from each other. Her lyrics (the ones I understood) were cute and honest like "Roses Never Fall in Love" and "I Want be Your Dog." At that point, I realised how much I needed a dog. The band was also great and the percussionist was into it like a diabetic at a marshmallow convention. When he used water and a concert piano to form beats I realised he was not somebody's weirdo brother but a great musician. He was so cool beating everything on stage for rhythm. This was becoming what a concert should be: "an experience". Some people thought it was pretentious. Well, too bad for them.

The highpoint of the night was Simone's cover version of Nirvana's "Come as You Are." At that moment life felt perfect and time stood still. I think I even saw Saint Simon bobbing his head to the merit of Emilie Simone's music. If Iceland were a meritocracy, Emilie Simone would have played for five thousand people in Laugardalshöllin and Incubus would have played in the gutter and then be assassinated while singing "Whatever Tomorrow Brings, I'll be There, With Open Arms and Open Eyes, Yeah."

www.emiliesimon.artistes.universalmusic.fr



Uninspired

Text by Birkir Fjalur Viðarsson Photo by Skari

Who: Incubus and Minus
Where: Laugardalshöllin
When: March 3, 2007

Through the years, I have been quite vocal about my admiration for Incubus and, despite my left-field tendencies and preferences, I have been able to enjoy the music of these well-dressed Californians for many years. Musically and lyrically the band has shown an impressive growth in a better and more mature direction and I invariably enjoy their most recent albums more than older releases.

As this show approached its date, fellow humans who share my interest in Incubus were shocked to hear that I had little interest in buying a ticket and attending the show. Why? Let's rewind a little bit. Back in '96, when I was a fresh faced exchange student in Germany, I went to see Korn at the top of their game in Berlin, supporting their most

recent release at the time, Life Is Peachy. Needless to say, Korn rocked my world 'cause back then, they were young, horny and out for the kill. Incubus were one of the opening bands for that show, sent by their label, Epic, to promote their upcoming release. Epic had people hand out a two-song promo tape featuring music of their first major breakthrough album, S.C.I.E.N.C.E.

They played well, they had a musical edge and a front man with an amazing voice but they didn't kill it. Fast forward to the present. I have since then watched Incubus DVDs as well as live performances on the internet, which has done little to change my perception. It was with some resentment that I went to this show, steadfast in my belief that Incubus did not have much to offer in the live environment, let alone playing a huge arena rock show in front of few thousand Icelandic teenagers. But I had an assignment, which is what you are reading right now. Walking to Iceland's most legendary

to events this size. These rockers opened when Metallica filled a giant sports hall to its 18,000 heads capacity, so working up a restless crowd has never been a problem for these lads.

Minus played long awaited songs from their yet to be released full length album, which kept me on my toes since playing mostly hits of the wildly successful Halldór Laxness would have been a little too safe. The new material sounded heavier and more precise than the horny-party-rock music from their last album, although the poor sound in Laugardalshöll kept them from delivering it properly. Still, the crowd was having it, but for some reason, Minus was not. Drummer Bjóssi was obviously on top of his game, bringing his beats with uncanny precision. The term "into it" is an understatement when it comes to this wielder of sticks. Bass thug Þróstur dwarfed his instrument and threatened to strike thunder on the youngsters in the front but the rest of the band seemed uninterested. Even Krummi, the smooth talking but persuasive trickster of a front man seemed to hold back.

Incubus have never been more interesting musically than they are these days, but live on stage these clean cut fellows seem uninspired and businesslike. Yes, they can play and they are tighter than the anus of a young honey bee, but with a front man that comes off as being rather shy, while the rest of the band has little or no presence – aside from the bass player who pulled his weight but to no avail – Incubus was unmemorable. In short, Incubus added little to my at-home listening experience.

Brandon Boyd's vocal performance that night was something to write home about though. It's as if his throat has a built-in autotune. My friend and I waited for him to choke on a note but it was just like it had been lifted from one of their studio recordings... I shit you not. Incredible singer with perfect control over his voice. That being said, this eye candy of a singer is not quite the communicator between songs. Of the few words he actually spoke, most of what he said was rather clumsy and did little to contradict my theory that Mr. Boyd is indeed shy and a little reserved.

To Incubus' credit they played a lot of material from their bold yet solid latest record, Light Grenades, and as if to underline their passion for that record, they left out obvious super smash hits like Stellar and Pardon Me and instead included a jam session as well as alternative versions of another old hit, Redline.

The crowd was receptive and warm throughout their set but never in the palm of Incubus' hand.

My earlier suspicion had proved to be spot on. The whole thing was indifferent, even bland, and judging from the shockingly silent punters (who normally raise their voices and even scream to express their stokedness after seeing their beloved bands) streaming out of the venue and into the parking lot, many of them were probably surprised to feel the same way I did.

www.myspace.com/incubus
www.myspace.com/minus

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Trilogia, Laugavegur 7, 101 Reykjavik



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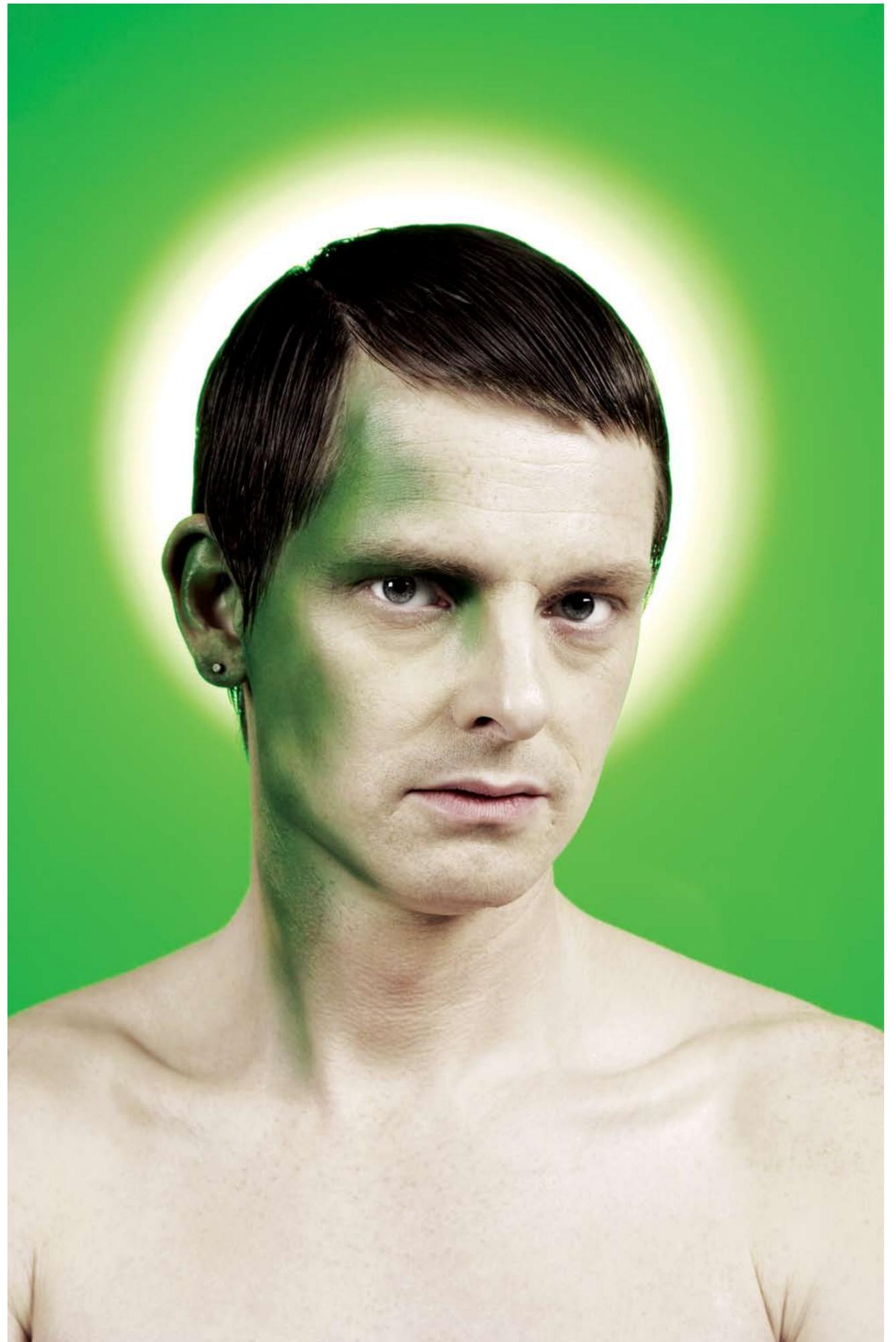
Pay Attention!

Trilogia

Laugavegur 7, 101 Reykjavik

Trendy fashion shop Trilogia on Laugavegur shopping street is a candy store for all fashion-conscious girls with a thing for stylish designer wear. Since 2005, the store has been a favourite shopping destination among those longing for edgy designer clothing that stands out in the crowd and, with anticipation, wait for the new stock to arrive. After emptying out all the winter clothing last month, Trilogia is in a sunny mood, presenting a stacked store of new spring collections from designers such as Alexander McQueen, Chloe, Preen, Erotokritos, Orion, Pepa Delight, Robert Cary Williams and Antipodium, as well as their own designer brand: Trilogia.

"It's romantic and feminine clothing. Very moving and comfortable," store manager Elsa María Blöndal says to describe what's characteristic about the spring collection this year. Placing special emphasis on colourful clothing, the shop has a wide selection of unique and up-to-date summer dresses, skirts, shirts and sweaters so you're bound to find something special. Whether you're looking for something to complete your laid back, casual chic look or appeal to your more adventurous side, it should be no problem to update your wardrobe. Prices range from 5.000 to 50.000 ISK. SJ





Esja, a New Peak in the Musical Landscape

Text by Sveinn Birkir Björnsson Photos by Skari

In many ways, this is an unlikely union. The coalition of former GusGus frontman and now a successful solo artist, Daniel Ágúst, known for his enchanting and delicate melodies and experimental pop-electronica; and the prince of Icelandic metal, the rough and rugged Minus frontman, Krummi.

Who brought them together? Merle Haggard, that's who. They both share the love for country and western music and for a few months the pair of them has been collaborating under the monicker Esja making music that could best be described as alternative-country. Their live shows – where they are joined by drummer Frosti Runólfsson formerly of the deathmetal group Klink, and piano player Halldór Ágúst Björnsson – have been well attended. And, after releasing a few demos on their myspace.com site, the duo has slowly been building quite a following.

A Grapevine reporter sat down with Esja for their first ever interview and learned a little about their friendship, passion for music and their longing for the road.

You guys are in some ways an odd couple, how did this collaboration begin?

Krummi: Well, I don't think we are such an odd couple.

Daniel: We are both the same Zodiac sign...

Krummi: Yes, we are both the same Zodiac sign, there is exactly ten years between us, he is born in 1969, and I am born in 1979. He was considered to be, and is still considered to be, one of the most prominent singers in Iceland, so I don't see much of a difference between us, except for those ten years. But I can tell you why we started working together. Unless you want to do it Daniel?

Daniel: No, you go ahead.
Krummi: We had been running into each other through the years, and there was this strange attraction between us. We really enjoyed talking to each other; we have similar humour and got to know each other

quickly. We had a similar taste in music and shared many interests, so we became good friends. Then we started to talk about how we wanted to make music together. Some roots music, country music, so we ended up in Daniel's Studio one night. It was raining outside and we had been drinking a little and the mood was right, so I just nailed down some basic guitar tracks in the studio. Then we went home to get some sleep, but when I returned the following day, Daniel had laid some vocals over the guitars I had recorded. After that, there was no turning back. We immediately saw we had something special on our hands, so we decided to try it.

Daniel: Yes, we felt there was a special chemistry at work.

Krummi: We fit together like peanut butter and jelly, like sugar and Cool Aid.

You both come from very different musical directions, and together you head off in a third direction, so to speak.

Krummi: That's right. This is common among musicians; we don't necessarily always listen to the kind of music we are usually playing. At least that has been my experience. Behind closed doors, I might be playing Merle Haggard or the Eagles. Some people think I sit at home and listen to death metal all day, or that Daniel is at home, dressed in his tight neon-green pants, listening to dance music. That is not the case. So, we just decided to follow our passion for this kind of music, master it, and make each other happy.

Where does this interest in country and blues music come from?

Krummi: This is the original music. Pop and rock music comes from this music.

Daniel: I don't look at our music as following any genre. Of course, we draw inspiration from what we are listening to, but this is not really a country band.

Krummi: Precisely, the music has actually been developing more in the direction of blues if anything.

Daniel: It was more of "joke," so to speak, to start making country music.

Krummi: Exactly, it was more about just writing music, you know, just do what we like. We just want to make good music, regardless of any genres.

So, there was no intention to follow any particular musical direction?

Krummi: No we just wanted to make good music.

Daniel: Our lyrics are mostly about being on a journey, taking a road trip, being in motion. That is what happened when we started working together. Things were set in motion. That was my inspiration, that is what I wanted to sing about, setting things in motion and starting over.

Krummi: Yes, and that was one of the first ideas we had, to go on a road trip. We wanted to go to the Southern States in the US and make music there, in the right environment.

But first, we had to find out if we could make music together, so we started to write, and that went so well, that we managed to write eight or nine songs in a few months. We managed to create our very own distinctive sound from the beginning and that is not something that happens every day. Some people spend years trying to find their own sound. It has been a very successful collaboration.

So, it was love at first sight, so to speak?

Krummi: Well, yeah, in a musical way, but we are best friends today also.

Daniel: There was something magical in the air.

I wanted to ask you about the names you have been using for yourselves in relation to this project, Spike Raven and Dapper Dan?

Daniel: Sometimes, you have to be able to make jokes at your own expense. This was just another way to spice it up a bit with some humour.

Krummi: Like, Spike Raven, my name is Oddur (lit: spike) Hrafn (lit: raven), and you know, Daniel is just always so dapper, the

artful dodger, so Dapper Dan came easy. This was mostly just an inside joke for us. And it's cool. But we will not be called that in the future.

You mentioned that there are ten years between the two of you, and you have been working on almost opposite ends of the musical spectrum, have you learned a lot from each other?

Krummi: Yes, a whole lot.

Daniel: Working with this guy inspires me in so many different ways.

Krummi: The feeling is mutual; to be working with Daniel is magical, good things just happen. To be working with someone who just comes up with a melody from thin air, from nothing, writes lyrics, and just approaches this like a professional, not because he has to, but because he enjoys it. That is in his nature, and it is very inspiring. And just the person he is. How he thinks, talks, and is in general. It has changed my life in certain ways to know that there is such a beautiful human being in this world.

Daniel: Of course I had a little more experience, I mean, ten years is always ten years, but the interest and the passion for music; that is the fundamental issue. He has his way of approaching music, I have my way of approaching music, and together, it is perfect.

How different is that approach?

Krummi: It is a bit different, but still, we haven't been playing together long enough to really be able to define it properly. This is for instance our first interview, and we don't really know how to behave. But that is all going to change. We don't really want to define how we work all too much. We just do it.

Daniel: Krummi mentioned the improvisational element. I am used to working with a lot of improvisation, using something that comes to mind on the spot and just throw it in there, and then keep working on it. Krummi had a large collection of guitar lines and phrases that he had been collecting for years, without having the opportunity to really do anything with it in the environment he has

been working in, with his band that is.

Krummi: I was never able to develop songs from these snippets I had, because I had never found the right melody or lyrics I was looking for, so I would just file it for storage. When I dragged it from the storage and played it for Daniel...

Daniel: ...I started getting ideas from that directly

Krummi: Exactly. He would get ideas, and it became something. It was like we had both been waiting for someone to come along who would allow us to convey something that we had always wanted to express.

Daniel: Was it a coincidence or fate?

Krummi: I would say fate, for sure.

Had you been listening to each other's music before?

Daniel: Yes.

Krummi: Yes, I had been following Daniel for a long time. I have always admired him as a singer and a performer.

Daniel: The same here.

Krummi: Some of the stuff he did in the old days is stuff that I like to listen to by myself at home and we have been coming to each other's shows for years, where he is playing both as a solo performer and while he was playing with Gus Gus, I was there, and Daniel is always at Minus' shows.

Daniel: Yes, it is refreshing. Expanding the horizon, to try new things, see different landscapes, that's something every good road trip should include.

Is it a humbling experience for you to hear how kindly you describe each other?

Krummi: Well, I am not exactly saying that we are running around naked with the hair dryer all night...

Daniel: No... but this is of course a confession of love through friendship and music.

You are both busy with other projects, Daniel as a solo artist, and Krummi with Minus, who are just about to release a new album, is it difficult to find time for this?

Krummi: Yes, sometimes. We had decided to go on a road trip that we had intended to



be on now, but you can't just abandon your other projects.

Daniel: No, you have to follow through on the commitments you have made. But when that is over, we will focus on this project.

Krummi: We just try to find the time in between. That has been working for us so far. We don't look at this as something we have to do; this is something that we want to do.

So when is the road trip planned?

Krummi: We can't really say for sure. But it will take place. We just want to rent a car, drive on desolate roads and stay in obscure motels and meet people that we would otherwise never meet, under any other circumstances. Go to Memphis and pay our respect to the King. Just to be on the road, soak it up and get inspired. The idea is that we can reflect those encounters in the final product,

which will be the album.

Krummi, you are somewhat showing a new side of yourself as a guitar player in this project. This was something of a surprise to some people.

Daniel: Obviously, he has been in a band with two guitarists, so it would have been ridiculous if he would have been playing guitar as well.

Krummi: Exactly, I never had an opportunity to express my inner guitar player. I have played many different instruments since I was a kid, just being around my father (Icelandic musician Björgvin Halldórsson). I have always loved playing the guitar, and always wanted to be a guitarist, I am not really a great guitarist, but I can play enough. I can deliver the effects I am looking to deliver, and I am always learning, especially after we started

playing together, and it is just such a unique opportunity to be able to play in a band with such a great singer, and let my dream to be a guitar player come through.

Daniel: Yes, and I just get to sing. I have learned to focus on just the singing when I am performing, I can play a little guitar, and a little piano, but if I am doing that while I am performing, it just sucks the energy out of my performance, and I just want to focus on really delivering the words.

Last words?

Krummi: Just follow your own passion; that is where you will find true happiness.

Wow, are you able to top that Daniel?

Daniel: I don't think I can.

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The Faroe Islands: Remote and Isolated, yet Oddly Familiar

Text by Sveinn Birkir Björnsson Photos by Skari

Two days before our Friday departure to the Faroe Islands, my photographer asked, "Did you book a room yet?"

"It is January," I replied. "And we are going to the Faroe Islands man, I don't think we will have trouble finding a place to stay in the Faroe Islands in January." Of course I did not realise it at the time, but that cocky attitude would come back to haunt me, much like it usually does.

Vágar Airport

From Reykjavík Airport it takes about an hour and 15 minutes to fly to the Faroe Islands International Airport, on the island Vágar, which is next to the island Streymoy where the capital town of Tórshavn is located.

After collecting our bags inside the terminal we discover that the next bus for Tórshavn will not be leaving for an hour. After short deliberation, we decide that renting a car is our best option, allowing us easy access to Tórshavn and means to travel around the islands.

As we prepare to leave, another pas-

senger from the flight asks us if the bus is leaving. Not wanting to leave a fellow countryman stranded on foreign ground, we promptly offer him a ride into town. Fitting the luggage and the three of us in a tiny Suzuki Alto proves to be a small logistical problem, considering that the passenger we have picked up is actually a former prize-fighter from the light-heavyweight division.

The 25-minute drive into Tórshavn is a scenic route. We drive through a few small towns, but it is the view of the distinctive cliffs that mostly catches the eye. The land steeply slopes upwards towards the ocean, until all of a sudden it just stops and there is a menacing cliff that goes straight down. It looks very much like the Enron profit chart must have looked.

Our passenger turns out to be an agreeable fellow. This is not his first visit to the islands, so he is able to explain a few of the oddities to us. In Tórshavn, his friend welcomes us. He turns out to be another nice fellow and offers to help us find a place to stay for the weekend.

All in the Family

Icelanders often refer to their neighbouring countries in terms of relatives. Particularly other Nordic Countries, such as Sweden, Norway or Denmark; which are usually referred to as our cousin nations. This is perhaps understandable, given the historical relations, a common cultural background and similar values between the Nordic Countries.

In line with this terminology, the Faroe Islands are more akin to a kid brother. There is a relationship between these two countries that stretches beyond whatever kinship we may have with our other neighbouring countries.

Norse Vikings settled both countries around AD 900. The two languages have developed in isolation from Old Norse but remain very similar. Both countries were under Danish rule since 1380 with the origin of the Kalmar Union. Iceland received independence in 1944, while the Faroe Islands are now working towards that goal. There is the commonality of surviving on cold, desolate islands in the North Atlantic by whatever

means necessary, through hardship and cold winters, and having to rely on the sea for livelihood.

In some ways, coming from Iceland to the Faroe Islands is not so much like travelling between countries: it is more like travelling to an alternate reality. There is an uncanny feeling of familiarity, whether it is the nature, the people, the towns, or the way of life, and yet, it is so different.

No Vacancy

Hans Beck, the local connection we meet through our pick-up passenger, has been dialling different hotels on his mobile phone for about 15-minutes. It seems as if there is not a single bed available for rent in town. We follow him to Hótel Tórshavn, the biggest hotel in town, but it is undergoing renovations and will not accept guests for another month. It seems every hotel or guesthouse is booked up.

After making a few more calls, he jumps in his car and tells us to follow him to a guesthouse at the other end of town. It turns out

to be a dead end as well. In the parking lot, he makes a few more calls. Meanwhile, he offers us beer from a case in his trunk. A few calls later, he tells us that he has probably found a room. We follow him to the offices of the Smyril Line company, where we are told we can get a room in an elderly couple's home that the company uses as a summer bed and breakfast, located on the outskirts of town. It has taken the better part of two hours and probably close to 15 phone calls, but we finally have a place to stay for the night.

We all decide to go out to dinner together, heading to the Rio Bravo, a local steakhouse where we are served with fine steaks at a good price. Meanwhile, Hans Beck explains some of the local rituals to us: "The Faroese People drink like swine," he says, "12-15 years ago, there was no alcohol sold in the islands. It had to be ordered from Denmark and this had to happen before Wednesday if you wanted it to be here for the weekend. It was very expensive to order just one bottle, so everyone would order a 12-bottle box. Then people would have 12 bottles of booze lying around, and they would just keep on drinking. So there is always this box-mentality when we are drinking. The Faroese people drink like swine."

Black Gold

But rigorous drinking habits are not all the Faroes are known for. They have a reputation for a strong work ethic, and, as the old saying goes, they work hard and they play hard. Beck, a carpenter by trade, tells us that there is much demand for work force in the islands, especially in the building industry. At the moment, there are about 850 new apartments and houses being built in Tórshavn, a very high number for a town of less than 20,000. As Hans Beck puts it, "Every carpenter in town has projects lined up for the next three years."

After suffering a severe economic depression in the 1990s, the last few years have been prosperous in the islands and the unemployment rate is now below 3%, one of the lowest figures in Europe. According to Terji Nielsen, editor of the weekly *Vikublaðið*,

the private sector is screaming for employees, and there are plans to loosen regulations regarding foreign workforce, which should take effect this April.

Around 90% of the Faroes' export revenue is tied to the fishing industry, although that figure is decreasing with the addition of high-tech companies and a growing tourist industry. In the last few years, the Faroese people have collectively been waiting for positive results from experimental oil drillings in the Faroese Continental Shelf. If the results are positive, it will most likely put even more strain on both the expanding real estate market and the employment market, with even more demand for foreign workforce.

Tórshavn

Tórshavn is the biggest town in the Faroe Islands, home to nearly 20,000 of the islands' 50,000 inhabitants. Like most fishing towns, it was originally built around the harbour and



expanded outwards, away from the waterfront and up to the hills.

The old town is a beautiful place. From the harbour stretches *Tinghúsvegur* and above that, *Niels Finsens Gøta*, the two main streets in town, one being the shopping street and the parliamentary building standing by the other. The houses are small, mostly made of wood, but encased in corrugated iron, much like the old town in Reykjavík. The distinctive difference is the common grass roof, an old Viking heritage that is really only kept alive in the Faroe Islands today.

A beautiful example of the grass-roof tradition is the Nordic House, a cultural centre for Faroese and Nordic culture in Tórshavn. Designed by Norwegian and Icelandic architects, the building is inspired by folklore and intended to resemble an "enchanted hill of elves." Made from natural wood, grass and stone, with large windows that let in the daylight, it is a beautiful building, and well worth the visit.

There is a very friendly atmosphere in Tórshavn. Even if it is a rather small town, where everyone knows everyone else, the locals are open and friendly towards guests. By the end of our three-day stay, we had gotten to know an incredible amount of locals, and people invariably waved to us on the streets or came up to us for a friendly hello.

There is a wide variety of bars in Tórshavn's centre. There is the Café Natur, a cosy coffee-house/bar by the harbour where young people congregate over a cup of coffee or, more likely, beer, before heading out to other bars, such as Manhattan or Cleopatra. There is also Eclipse, a place that has generated a small reputation for its lively atmosphere and wild nights. Right next to it is Rex, a club that is mostly for members of the older generations. Sadly, there was not time to sample the rest.

The Language Barrier

Icelandic and Faroese are two of the three insular Scandinavian languages descended from Old Norse, spoken in Scandinavia dur-

ing the Viking Age.

There are great similarities between the two languages, to the point where they sometimes sound like different dialects of the same language (which they are in a sense) although the differences are often more than subtle. To an Icelander, the words invariably tend to start off in good Icelandic, before they end up completely different. At times, it is more like you are trying to decipher the drunken ramblings of an Icelander, rather than listening to a foreign language.

This resemblance makes it possible for us to talk to the locals in our own tongue, but it does not necessarily make conversations easier between us. The same words are often used with a different meaning, and the time it usually takes to figure what the other one is saying slows every conversation down to the pace of a conversation with your deaf grandmother. We usually end up talking in English, a more efficient mode of communication under the circumstances, however shameful that may be.

Rapid Changes

The Faroe Islands are rapidly changing from a simple society revolving around the fishing industry and the availability of fish, to a more modern society revolving around trade and technology. In the last 10-15 years, the Faroes have built one of the best transportation systems in Northern Europe, with all the islands now interconnected, either through sub-sea tunnels, bridges or ferries.

The financial sector has been deregulated to allow banks and investment companies more freedom, while publicly owned companies, such as banks, insurance and energy companies have been, or are in the process of being, privatised. The fishing industry is also being deregulated to allow foreign investors, which has spurred much interest from Icelandic companies that have become very apparent in the Faroese fishing industry lately.

Recently, a fishing quota system was introduced in the Faroe Islands, similar to the

one employed in Iceland. As a result, fishing quotas are being bought and sold like other commodities, and in the process, for the first time in Faroese history, creating a class of super wealthy individuals.

The Faroe Islands are divided on the issue of independence from Denmark. The population is almost evenly split between those who favour independence and those who prefer to continue as a part of the Kingdom of Denmark. There are different opinions among both camps: those who favour independence are split between those in favour of an immediate unilateral declaration and those who see it as something to be attained gradually and with the full consent of the Danish government and the Danish nation. In the unionist camp, many foresee and welcome a gradual increase in autonomy even as strong ties to Denmark are maintained.

My host at the guesthouse, an older and considerate gentleman puts it well when we discuss the issue over breakfast one morning. "When you move away from home, you don't stop talking to your parents," he says. "After you move out, you still want to be able to have a good relationship with your parents, and maybe come by for dinner once in a while." Like much else in the islands, the answer to this question is inevitably tied to oil.

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Distance from Reykjavík

ca. 190 km



Snæfellsjökull Glacier

Snæfellsjökull glacier, a 1,446-metre high volcano on the western part of the Snæfellsnes peninsula, is among Iceland's most famous landmarks. The glacier has been the topic of endless speculations over hundreds of years as some think it to possess some mystical powers. It has even been considered to be one of Earth's seven energy sources. In addition, the glacier has inspired authors such as Jules Verne – who used it as the doorway to a passage leading into Earth's interior in his sci-fi novel Journey to the Centre of Earth – and a couple of years ago it captured the attention of the media when alien watchers from around the world flocked to the volcano to welcome extraterrestrials who were supposed to land on its top. Sadly, the guests of honour never showed up.

The glacier and its spectacular national

park offer plenty of interesting stuff to see and do aside from alien hunting or energy searching. Covering an area of 170 square kilometres, the national park was established in 2001 with the goal of protecting the area as well as making it easily accessible to all the many visitors planning a hiking tour around its wilderness.

For those looking for different excitement there are numerous possibilities to experience the glacier in an extreme way. During spring and summer months one can for example go skiing and snowboarding down the glacier or go on a snowmobile excursion with a guide. Riding down its slopes in clear weather gives you the adrenaline rush of a lifetime. It truly is an amazing experience as the remarkable scenery adds tremendous pleasure to this outdoor activity.

Distance from Reykjavík

ca. 180 km



From Arnarstapi to Dritvík

The countryside landscape of the western part of the peninsula is both dramatic and contrasting where one will come across some of the country's extraordinary natural wonders.

After a short drive from Búðir, the road leads you to Arnarstapi, an old fishing village rich with history and interesting sights to explore. Its beautiful harbour with a magnificent view over the gulf of Faxaflói and all the unusual cliffs and surreal rock formations rising up from the unfriendly ocean have made the place a popular hiking destination.

A short walk along the coast leads to Hellnar, another old fishing village, renowned for its magical beach and the small and homely café Fjóruhúsið. From here one can either walk or drive to Djúpalónssandur beach (driving would be recommended if the time is

limited). A short walk down from the parking lot leads to the black sand beach, most famous for the four large rocks lying in the shore. These boulders have an interesting history. Named Fullsterkur (Fullstrong), Hálfsterkur (Halfstrong), Hálfdrættingur (Half-a-man) and Arnlóði (Lazybones) they were used to test how strong the fishermen living in the area were before they could go out to sea.

There are also numerous curious sites to explore around the Djúpalónssandur area. Roughly only a 15-minute walk north is Dritvík, a small creek that used to be a bustling fishing community. The path is both easy and rewarding and the scenic coastline where one will pass caves, cliffs and unusual rock formations, explains why the peninsula is supposed to provide a sample of all that Icelandic nature has to offer.

Distance from Reykjavík

ca. 180 km



Búðir

Surrounded by unparalleled natural beauty, Búðir, on the southern part of the Snæfellsnes peninsula, is known for its rugged landscape, adventurous hiking tracks and incredible scenery. Here, the activities include hiking trips through the Búðahraun lava field, horse riding around the grassy meadows, and quiet relaxation down by the yellow sand beach, all depending on one's interests.

The tiny black wooden chapel, only minutes from the main road, has become a symbol for the area. Traced back to the 17th century, the chapel has been a popular setting for fashion photo shoots, and it's no wonder why. With a view over the rocky shore the chapel stands on a small hill with the beach on one side and lava fields and the snow-capped Snæfellsjökull glacier on the other. For most travellers, this is where a journey around the

area begins as there are numerous walking paths and opportunities to explore the untouched nature. The most popular of them is walking the old path through the Búðahraun lava field that leads to the volcano Búðaklettur and Búðahellir cave, both part of a nature reserve. The trail, named Klettgata, is well marked and mapped, with interesting sights and attractions pointed out along the way.

After a day of sightseeing, visitors should not miss out on a nice dinner at Hótel Búðir. The hotel is among the country's more popular destinations for an overnight stay due not only to its location but classy interiors and a gourmet restaurant famous for its tasty fish dishes. With the glacier hovering in the background, a more romantic and memorable dining experience in the country is hard to find.

Distance from Reykjavík

ca. 170 km



Stykkishólmur

Often called the capital of Snæfellsnes peninsula, the small village of Stykkishólmur is considered one of the more magical municipalities in the country. Surrounded by historical sites and natural beauty, the town is located on the north shore of the peninsula. Characteristic of the town are all its small and colourful houses, built around the harbour where fishing boats are docked alongside cruise ships and ferries.

Activities for travellers visiting Stykkishólmur are numerous. To name a couple, the Snæfellsnes Folk Museum, located inside a 19th-century wooden house, features an informative exhibition worth checking out, and in the nearby area majestic mountains boast many scenic hiking trips.

The town is also the gateway to the Breiðarfjörður islands and several companies organise daily boat trips from the harbour

during summer months. A trip to Flatey, the largest island on the Breiðarfjörður bay, is a worthwhile journey, as is a sight-seeing cruise among the thousands of small islands where one can spot puffins, eagles and other wild birds flying around the boat while tasting freshly caught scallops.

After exploring everything the town and its surroundings have to offer, restaurant and café Narfeyrarstofa, located in the heart of Stykkishólmur, is an ideal destination where one can enjoy a picturesque view over the harbour before heading back home again.



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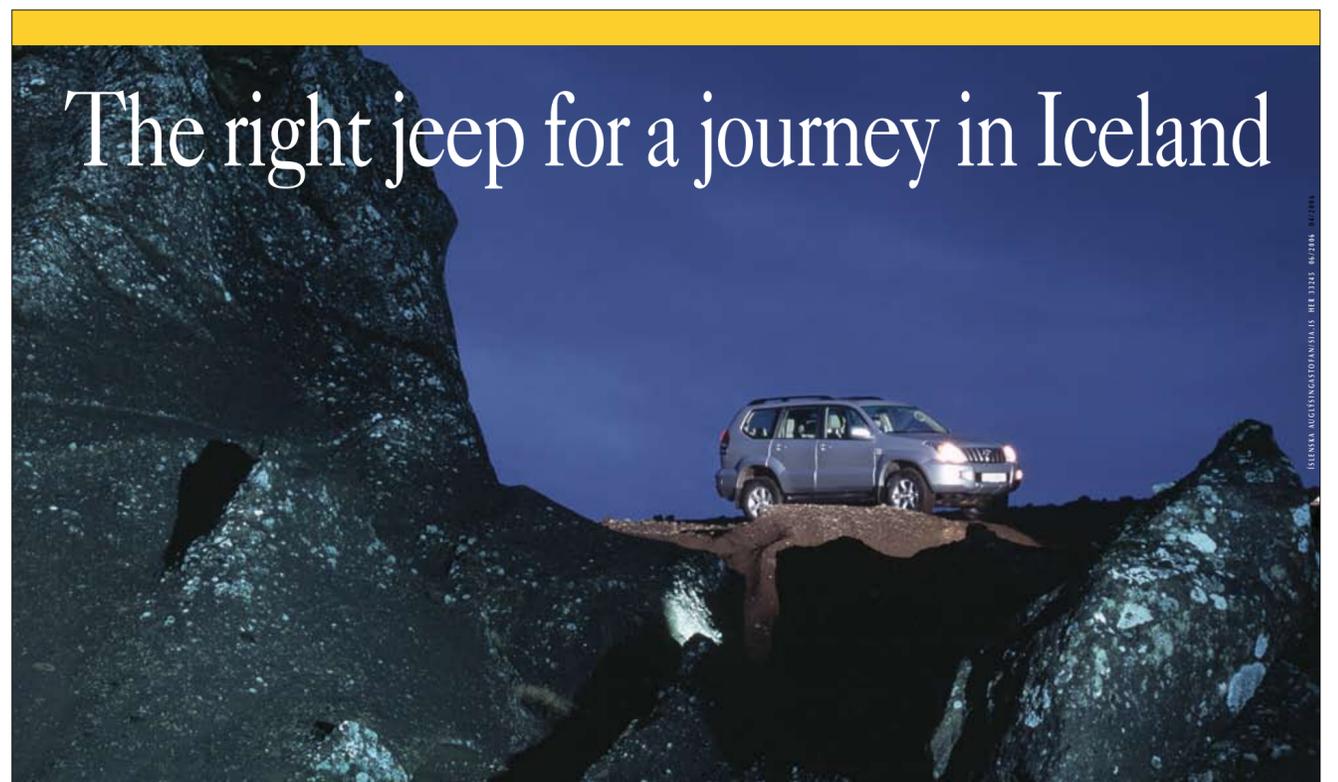
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Stuffed with stuff

It is easy to like Lisa Ekdahl, as a performer and as a person, and I really hope she finds the time to play in Iceland again soon, but hopefully, not at NASA.

Sveinn Birkir Björnsson reviews a Lisa Ekdahl concert.

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It has changed my life in certain ways to know that there is such a beautiful human being in this world.

Esja do their first ever interview.

Page 24

Once again, a Grapevine food critic faces the almost insurmountable task of reviewing a meal that was damn near perfect, and doing it without sounding like at thinly veiled advertisement or a love letter.

Haukur Magnússon dines at Austur-Indía Fjélagið

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I hate generalizations but it seems like there is a generation of men that have grown up and consider it absurd for women to be opposed to being depicted as money-shot recipients.

Marvin Lee Dupree reflects on the cancellation of the Snowgathering conference.

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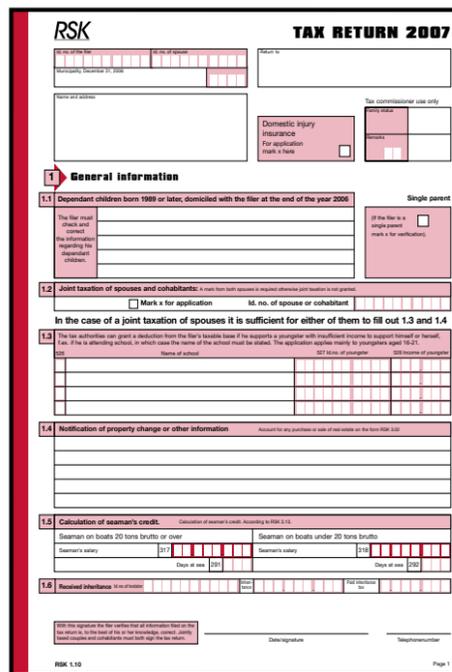
Incubus have never been more interesting musically than they are these days, but live on stage these clean cut fellows seem uninspired and businesslike.

Birkir Fjaljar Viðarsson attends an Incubus concert.

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Tax returns are due on March 21st

You can file your tax return on the website **skattur.is** using a password that has been mailed to you.



If you have created a permanent password or if your tax return was filed by an accountant or a bookkeeper last year you will not receive a new password this year.

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