

FREE

The Hidden Björk Interview • By Sveinn Birkir Björnsson • Björk's new album, *Volta*, will be released this May 7. It is her first studio album since 2001 and the release has generated quite a level of anticipation and excitement. Early reviews have been overwhelmingly positive. In support of her new release, Björk has embarked on a world tour. The *Grand* was caught up with Björk as she was sitting poolside in California, enjoying the sun in preparation for her performance at the Coachella Music Festival the following day, and posed a few questions. • • There is long list of famous guest contributors on this album – Timbaland, Mark Bell from CFO, Konono n°1, Antony Hegarty from Antony and the Johnsons, Toumani Diabate, Min Xiao-Fen, Chris Corsano and Brian Chippendale from Lightning Bolt – did you write the album with that in mind? • **BJÖRK:** No, not exactly. I never plan that far ahead really. It was more just improvised as we went along. • How do you go about preparing for a long tour like this one? • **BJÖRK:** I practiced with the band for about a month beforehand. Then I just threw a few dinner parties and said good-bye. I did try to do some running to prepare the lungs, but there really was not enough time. Usually it is the same old method that always works best: jump off the deep end! • Just before the tour started you added a brass section of ten girls (the Brass Girls) to your live setting. Was this planned long before, and did you need to change many arrangements to make the brass section work? • **BJÖRK:** Well, I first started working with brass on the score for *Drawing Restraint 9*, but that was more kind of abstract, ambient stuff. Then I became very interested in making music that was more kind of pop-music with brass, so I started to sample the brass stuff from the *Drawing Restraint 9* project. Then I wrote brass arrangements for more songs and I recorded it with a brass section, including the Brass Girls. So, it was not really done in a hurry. It has been a slow development since 2005. But we had to re-arrange some of my old songs for a brass section, so the Brass Girls have been madly busy... • Recently, on the first date of your world tour in Laugardalshöll, Reykjavík, you dedicated the song *Declare Independence* to the Faeroe Islands and Greenland. Did you write that lyric with those countries in particular in mind? • **BJÖRK:** Yes and no. I became very interested in writing lyrics that were both very personal and very political at the same time. Me speaking to a friend for example, and saying to her: "declare independence!" I, at least, thought it would be funny. I also think that political lyrics are quite possibly the lamest lyrics you can find, that is why I thought it would be an exciting challenge to do it well. But I can wholeheartedly say that I think it is preposterous that those countries are still colonies. • When did you become interested in the independence struggle in the Faeroe Islands and Greenland? • **BJÖRK:** Do not all Icelanders take interest in how nations fare that are in the same spot that we once were? • Will you dedicate this song to the Faeroe Islands and Greenland in Roskilde (Denmark), and do you expect a strong reaction from Denmark (the ruling nation of the Faeroe Islands and Greenland) if you do? • **BJÖRK:** I don't know. We will just have to see. We have 40 songs rehearsed and ready and we will just have to see what we will think is appropriate then. • There is a competition for your fans to make a video to *Innocence*, one of the new songs on *Volta*. How did the idea come about and are you going to select the best proposal yourself? • **BJÖRK:** I just needed to break out of the usual pattern, to do something a little more unpredictable. But yes, I intend to select the winner myself. • For more info on the Björk tour dates and the video competition, visit: www.myspace.com/bjork • •

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On cover: Björk interview

Illustration: Gunni and Birkir

Printed by: Prentsmiðja Morgunblaðsins printing press
 # of copies: 30.101.

The Reykjavík Grapevine can be found in:

Reykjavík, Akureyri, Egilsstaðir, Selfoss, Keflavík, Ísafjörður, Kárahjúkar and at key locations around road #1 and at all major tourist attractions and tourist information centres.

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From the Editor's Chair

As I watched an historic part of Reykjavík burn down, about two weeks ago at the time of writing, I felt a little sad, both for the people who lost valuables in the fire, and for the history that was lost.

I was even more saddened when I saw Vilhjálmur Vilhjálmsson, Mayor of Reykjavík; announce an hour after the fire started that the burning houses would be rebuilt in their original state. No questions asked. I guess, to some extent, this showed strong leadership qualities on his behalf. There was no fuss, no hesitation, there was just Vilhjálmsson, looking very much like a person of authority in a borrowed uniform from the Reykjavík Fire Department, making a unilateral decision that could affect the city tremendously, especially after it came to light that his quick decision-

making could cost the city 400,000,000 ISK.

Vilhjálmsson's supporters have lauded his ability to make a quick and decisive decision. In their minds, this is the perfect example of what his party, the Independence Party, dubbed 'action politics' as opposed to the 'discourse politics' that were supposedly practiced by the former Mayor, Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir of the Reykjavík Coalition. And, again, I suspect on some level they are right. My understanding of 'discourse politics' is exactly that there is a public discourse, a democratic process that should be followed before making major decisions that will ultimately affect the development of the city. 'Action politics' as practiced by Vilhjálmur Vilhjálmsson, are more akin to dictatorship. Instead of 'one man, one vote' we have 'one

man, one single decision'. That was not the sort of action I was looking for.

Issue six is the first of the summer issues. Regular readers of the Grapevine will notice some changes to the magazine, and more changes will be forthcoming in the next issue. We are moving into a fortnightly cycle of publication and extending the magazine to 56 pages. As you can imagine, this will more than double my workload, but as always, I will gladly suffer through it for your enjoyment, dear readers. But, some help is on the way. Sparky young summer interns will be onboard soon, which will hopefully make my life a little easier, although there are no guarantees – the nimble youngsters might just as well prove to be too unruly to control for a man of my age.





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04_RVK_GV_ISSUE 05_2007_LETTERS

Sour Grapes

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

Dearest Ed & Grapevine,

Allow me to apologize for my previous letter to Grapevine and its suggestion to alter your national treasure of undead 13th century grammatics. If was a disrespectful and misdirected act, brought out mostly of despair, and I will be the first one to point out that nobody forced me to come to Iceland, and I do feel very privileged to be in this enchanting and well functioning land and learn more of its truly poetic language.

You can make this very easy for yourself and put all the responsibility on the foreigners and their perceived lack of effort, and ignore the shortage of good learning materials and ignore the fact that too many people who teach Icelandic to foreigners are not professional teachers and don't really know how to teach an adult a foreign language; not no mention the fact that Icelandic language classes are not even available to all foreigners who want to learn.

But if you choose this attitude, you will eventually end up with a simplified Icelandic grammar, because we immigrants are here already, and widespread grammatical generalizations will come to use if the richer details of the Icelandic language treasure cannot be presented in a more accessible way.

And some of us won't feel so very sorry about it, because we feel that we really tried but were left out in the cold.

I think of it this way: In Sweden, no small part of our cultural heritage is our many well preserved castles, filled with a splendid collection of really good furniture and art we robbed from Germany and its surroundings. In the UK, the cultural heritage is invaluable treasures and Egyptian corpses the British plundered from countries they colonised.

But when it came to Iceland, everything that wouldn't fit in the boat during the long trip would ultimately have to be left behind. Upon what tangible to focus the greatness of the Icelandic culture for the disheartened? By safeguarding the native medieval literature and magically keeping its language alive over centuries, ready-to-use at any time of the history of man, along with this seasons blend of recycled vocabulary. Very goth.

I arrived to Iceland ten weeks ago. I just graduated from medical school, and in order to start working as a physician I need to acquire a patient-safe level of listening comprehension and speaking skills, while I imagine a stoical secretary could do wonders with my written Icelandic.

I started an intensive course at Mimir in March, and the teacher was very sweet and friendly, but did most of the talking during class herself, and most of it in English. We had people coming half an hour earlier to class just to copy the homework from someone else, so that the teacher wouldn't notice that they hadn't understood what homework they were supposed to do, and that they wouldn't have been able to do it had they understood it.

Our teacher was absent a few times, and we were taught by Þorbjörg Halldórsdóttir (one of they who developed the learning material used at Mimir), who was outstandingly good and spoke Icelandic all the time. It felt even worse going to class with the other teacher afterwards.

Since I came here just ten weeks ago, I haven't really had time to shop around in the different language schools, and in that sense I must confess I am making sweeping generalisations. But I've discussed this with immigrants from other countries who have

been in Iceland for years, among them a person who is active in the Red Cross, and the common view appears to be that it is a general problem that many who teach Icelandic to foreigners are not qualified.

It's good that language courses for foreigners have become subsidized. It is good that there is awareness in the Icelandic state that foreigners more help to learn the language.

But only more hours of non-structured good-will is not well invested tax money. The overall quality of teaching must be improved, especially at the beginner level, when oral and written communication is as most limited and other means must be used. And we do need more learning materials. A good beginner grammar, a verb bible, a substantive bible (with all inclinations written out) and a similar adjective bible would be on top of my wish list. Perhaps in a portable electronic media?

If I had my own magazine targeting the foreign community in Iceland, I would have some poorly paid lad invest one hour of his sad life to phone up the language schools for foreigners in Reykjavik and ask them how many of their teachers that actually have a teaching degree. If I had another two hours to spare, I would go and speak to those approaching the end of their beginner course, especially targeting those from former Eastern Europe and more exotic places, and ask them if they find the help they need to develop their Icelandic skills. And if I were Icelandic, I'd speak to my cousin's father-in-law's neighbour's brother's aunt at the Ministry of Education about this and have them come up with an urgent plan to keep a good and readily available educational standard.

Grasp that the Icelandic language has been preserved close to its original form over centuries, by means not only of conscious striving but also through vast amounts of surrounding waters.

Now Iceland Express flies low-fare every day.

Best regards,
Hanna Westesson

In the interest of full disclosure, let it be stated that this is an abbreviated and condensed version of two long letters I received from Hanna Westesson regarding my answer to a previous letter of hers on the same subject that was posted in the Grapevine. I have chosen the most relevant parts for publication. Hanna's first letter was written with a lot of irony, most of which was obviously wasted on me at the time. I suggested she should give up drinking and try to attend the classes she was signed up for. I regret not paying more attention to her complaints at the time, and for dismissing it out of hand.

I think Hanna might be making a very genuine complaint. Language lessons for foreigners are probably far from being of the appropriate standard, and most likely a thorough revision of textbooks, methods, and teacher qualifications are in order. Hanna, consider this my plea to my cousin's father-in-law's neighbour's brother's aunt at the Ministry of Education.

Editor

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or better yet, take the Grapevine readers' survey!*



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So, How Do I Like Iceland? *The Virtues of a Hot Bath*

Text by Gabriele R. Guðbjartsson



It's a popular custom as well as a national joke to ask someone, "How do they like Iceland?" within the first five minutes of their arrival in the country. Upon my first, second, third and fourth trip I too

was asked this infamous question. After living here for almost a year, I no longer see the country as a place I am simply passing through; but a home where I'll be raising my daughter, involving myself in the Christian community and developing knowledge of my family's culture. Iceland for the time being is an investment in the next chapter in my life. So, the answer to your question – I'll borrow a line from William Shakespeare and quote, "it is neither good nor bad. But thinking makes it so."

Now as many might contest, a California girl can get used to the winter darkness, constant rain and undesirable wind chill factor. However, when it comes to bad manners, it's a whole different ball game. At this point I can write a book on the lack of universal manners that exist in the Icelandic society. For example, there are countless times when I have literally been pushed aside for someone to get past me. It has happened so often that I didn't think the words, "excuse me" existed in the Icelandic vocabulary. And although it bothers me when people don't say "God bless you," when a sneeze is heard, it does not quite compare at all to the issue of being stared at. Just in case it has never been taught in school, staring is universally just plain uncouth.

Back in February I had two dear friends come to visit from New York and as we were sitting in a café one afternoon, I noticed an Icelandic couple staring at us as we ordered from the cashier. As we proceeded to sit down and chat they continued to stare for literally an entire hour. It was as if the two had either nothing to talk about or had an incredulous fascination with black people. As expected, my friends were completely

vexed and I was quite embarrassed for the behaviour of these people. If this incident were isolated it wouldn't be so irritating, however, it happens quite often. Maybe Icelandic people are so used to seeing people that look like them that when something new comes along one has to experience the forbidden fruit by way of gawking. If so, let it be known that some bad habits seriously need to be broken.

Of course there are obvious elements to love about Iceland such as the nature, social welfare and non-existent insect problem. When shifting gears from New York to Iceland I knew there would be things that would be difficult to live without. However, as much as I love New York and all it has to offer, I do not miss the congested streets, serious pollution problems or heavy traffic. Last month I was in New York and had to rent a car to drive to the most forgotten borough of the five, Staten Island, to get our taxes done. I have to admit, the drive there was pleasant. It was before rush hour and I made it easily in 24 minutes. However, on the way back, which was around 11:30 am, my trip was quite different. Not only did it take more than two hours to get home, but the traffic was so horrific it changed the appearance of the highway completely. Everything looked so jammed and cluttered with construction that I ended up getting off at the wrong exit and circling around the same industrial looking shady neighborhood for about an hour. The point is, I love how driving around the bare streets of Reykjavik and finding your way home never involves a stress pill and an empty gas tank.

My bittersweet relationship with Iceland has settled me into the position of a critical participant as opposed to the curious on-looker that defined me before. As much as I love the nature and absence of congestion, there are many more things that I want to grow into loving. I feel as if I have a purpose in strengthening my new home and building it to be the best it can be. I want my daughter to have blessed memories of her early years in her birth country and to feel as though it gave her roots of which she can be proud.

Of course there are obvious elements to love about Iceland such as the nature, social welfare and non-existent insect problem.

Text by Haukur Magnússon



Now, I am not a proponent of many things, except maybe some obscure bands that I assume people will think I'm cool for liking. Don't get me wrong, I like plenty of things, and of course I'd like others to get to know them too. I am not keen on keeping things for myself either. In fact, I almost never shut up. It just so happens that I am not one of those people that go around shouting praise for every single thing that takes my fancy or that I favour.

But there is one phenomenon of which I am an avid supporter, and which I would like others to get to know and experience. Actually, it's one of the few experiences that I think could be universally appreciated and endorsed, immune to any religious, financial and moral qualms. And that, dear reader, is taking a long, drawn-out, scalding hot bath.

A too-hot bath is a beautiful thing. The kind that you really have to edge yourself into with the utmost care, so as not to get burned by the hot water. The right temperature should be determined by slowly inching your foot into it (take care now). If it gets too uncomfortable to keep your toes in there for more than five seconds, you probably should add an inch of cold water to the mix – no more – and stir heartily. Then you should try again. Repeat as required.

I think the perfect temperature is one that is slightly uncomfortable, but not exactly painful. One where you, as I said, edge yourself into the tub, sliding your ass along its edges until you reach the bottom, where it's so hot that you prefer not to move so as not to upset the water and maybe get a hot pocket burning your thighs (or other body parts).

You definitely have to bring a book with you, as laying in the tub is a long process best enjoyed slowly. You lie there, completely still until you can take no more, and then you raise your feet above the water. That

ought to cool you down sufficiently to be able to stay there a while longer. If it doesn't work, changing your position so that your back is lying against one side of the tub and your feet are dangling off the other one – i.e. manoeuvring into a sideways position – should suffice. You cool down that way for a short while, until you sense it's time to plunge your entirety back into the scalding heat once more.

The bath will, of course, cool down eventually. And then it's not much of a thrill anymore. What's important to remember when that happens is: never give up. So, you let a little more hot water into the mix, preferably using your feet to handle the tap. When you feel your retreat to the tub is drawing to a close, it isn't. You should rather put away your book, look around, close your eyes and slowly edge your head into the scalding water. Pretend you are dead for a while. Try to float. Roll on your stomach. This should give another fifteen minutes of amusement, at the very least.

Exiting such a sweet endeavour will be less than easy. When you finally manage to stand up, you will feel drowsy and you will even lose your sense of balance. It's important to keep on one's feet when this happens, dry yourself off a little (not too much!) and slowly edge your way into the next available room. Lie on top of your sheets. Let the hot water evaporate off you, much the same way it evaporates off plates in an open dishwasher.

Of course, any manner of things can be used to improve your time with the scalding hot tub of water. Foam can be nice. Some music is essential, if you can procure it, but silence can actually be refreshing too. It is a matter of circumstance. I would recommend a beer, god knows it's nice under these circumstances, but I don't actually feel you should need it. The bath in and of itself is intoxicating enough.

All of the preceding could of course be taken as a metaphor for any manner of things. Life, mainly, but also politics, and science, and art and sex and death and relationships. But that would be missing the point.

The bath will, of course, cool down eventually. And then it's not much of a thrill anymore. What's important to remember when that happens is: never give up.

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I think everybody could work with everyone else, from a personal standpoint, except maybe for Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir and Steingrímur J. Sigfússon.

Elections From the Journalist's Standpoint

Text by Sveinn Birkir Björnsson Photo by Skari

Arna Schram follows politics with more enthusiasm than most people. After finishing a degree in political science at the University of Iceland, she has spent the last ten plus years covering Icelandic politics as a journalist, most of that time spent as a Parliamentary correspondent for the daily newspaper *Morgunblaðið*. Currently, Schram is focusing on her role as the president of the Icelandic Journalist Association after a stint as a political analyst for the short-lived weekly news magazine *Krónikan*. But with the most exciting elections in decades approaching, where the current right-centrist government coalition of the Liberal Party and the Independence Party is hanging by a thread, Schram is rearing to put her considerable experience as a political analyst to use, so the *Grapevine* contacted her to ask a few questions about the political landscape. [Numbers in brackets after party names are the party's approval ratings according to the latest Capacent Gallup Poll at the time of print.]

Do you see any difference in how the political campaigns are being run, as opposed to previous elections?

To some extent, yes. The Independence Party [39.1%] has run a very low-key campaign, like they did last time. [Party chairman and current Prime Minister] Geir H. Haarde seems to be staying out of the spotlight and that seems to be working well for him. The Progressive Party [10.0%] on the other hand is running a more aggressive campaign, like they have done in recent campaigns, although they are not making as many, or as big, campaign promises as they have done before. That also seems to be working for them; their approval numbers always seem to go up when they start campaigning. For the first time, The Left-Green Movement [21.2%] is really threatening the Social-Democratic Alliance [21.2%], which is different. The Social Democrats seem to be in an existential crisis at the moment. The Liberal Party [5.7%] is around the same approval rating they have had in the last few elections. They have often gone below 5% approval rating between elections, but they have managed to get a few people elected in previous elections. Then there is the Iceland Green Movement, [2.3%], which is running for the first time. It will be interesting to see how they

do, and where they will get their support from. It would not surprise me if they get a candidate elected, and I believe they will take that support from the Liberal Party possibly. **You mentioned the Iceland Green Movement; do you believe they will take their support from the Liberal Party, rather than the other green party, the Left-Green Movement?**

Well, the parties on the left have been saying lately that the Iceland Green Movement will destroy their chances of winning the elections. They claim that the votes cast for the Iceland Green Movement are likely to be dead votes if the Iceland Green Movement does not get a person elected. That would benefit the coalition. But I believe they will take most of their support from the Liberal Party, more so than the Left-Greens. The Iceland Green Movement is trying to establish themselves as a right wing party, and a green party, but they do not seem to be taking votes from the Independence Party, they seem to maintain their usual 40% support, and I believe that will be their eventual support. According to the latest polls now, it seems as though the coalition might maintain their majority, although it would be a very slim majority. But according to the same polls, the chairman of the Progressive Party, Jón Sigurðsson, will not be elected. It would be a big blow to the Progressive Party if their leader would not be elected.

Is it justifiable if a party part has little support that its chairman is not elected, and always seems to be shrinking, is always in a pole position after the elections? It seems as if it might be difficult to form a coalition without the Progressive Party.

Well, someone once said that every vote cast is a vote for the Progressive Party. No matter what, it is always in a pole position. But yes, it is very strange, from a democratic standpoint, if the smallest party with the least support is in power. The idea behind elections is to make clear the will of the majority, that the majority elects the party it would most like to see govern, but then it is the smallest party with the fewest votes behind it that is in a pole position to decide what kind of a coalition is formed. But according to the latest polls, it is still possible that the opposition will win the election. And possibly, the

Iceland Green Movement will be in a pole position after the elections, although that remains unlikely.

But would a majority of one in the Parliament for the current coalition be very unstable?

Yes it would be. Perhaps the Independence Party will even feel that it would be impractical to form such a thin majority, or even join a coalition with a party whose chairman is not elected. If the Independence Party maintains around 40% and the coalition is still in the majority, the Independence Party will probably be granted first rights to form a coalition from the President. In that case, they might choose to form a new coalition with either the Left-Green Movement or the Social Democratic Alliance. Some claim that it would be difficult for the Independence Party to work with the Left-Greens because of differences on foreign policy and the nation's defenses, as well as tax issues, but I have always said that parties will do a lot to make it possible to form a coalition.

But might the Independence Party and the Social Democrats also have some difficulties because of different views on the European Union?

Yes, the Left-Greens and the Independence Party agree on being against the European Union. But the remarkable thing about this campaign is that there do not seem to be any issues that stand apart, there is no single issue that people are voting on in particular as opposed to often before. I thought the environment might be that issue, and their stand on the environment has surely helped the Left-Greens, but environmental issues still don't seem to capture the people.

If the current coalition maintains a majority of one, could a minority coalition be possible?

No, I do not see that happening. I do not see how that could happen. I think the Independence Party would rather go with the Social Democrats or the Left-Greens.

Do you have any explanation as to why the gap in support between the Social Democrats and the Left-Greens has been eroded?

It is very difficult to say. Left-Greens have often scored high in polls between elections, even if that has not always carried over to the elections. I think that, even if the envi-

ronmental issues have not been in the spotlight, the Left-Greens have still managed to gain many votes on that issue. For the public, it is obvious that they are more determined about their issues; they speak in plain terms regarding heavy industry and environmental issues. The Social Democrats, in the meantime, despite putting forth a clear agenda on many issues, have failed to establish their agenda for the public in the same manner as the Left-Greens, who are enjoying the ongoing environmental awakening among the public.

If the Left-Green Party finds itself be in a position to enter into a coalition agreement with some other parties, would it be harder for them to negotiate a coalition agreement, exactly because they have been more determined about their issues and have spoken in plainer terms?

I believe that parties can always reach an agreement. The question is what they want to focus on at the moment. The fact is that politicians are fighting for power and influence. To me, it often seems that personal disagreements stand in the way of a political agreement, much more so than ideological differences. I believe that if people want to be in government they can negotiate, and that applies to the Left-Greens as much as to everyone else in my opinion.

You have spent a lot of time in the Parliament Building as a correspondent and know many of these politicians personally and you say that personal differences often get in the way rather than ideological differences, judging from personal interactions between Members of Parliament. What is your feeling on who could work together and who could not, from a personal standpoint?

I think right now, after the regime change in the Independence Party, everyone could work with everyone else. The personal relationship between [Social Democrats Chairman] Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir and [Independence Party Chairman and current Prime Minister] Geir H. Haarde is a lot better than the relationship was between Gísladóttir and [former Independence Party Chairman and Prime Minister] Davíð Oddson. The atmosphere is completely different. In general, I think everybody could work with everyone else, from a personal standpoint, except maybe for Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir and [Left-Green Chairman] Steingrímur J. Sigfússon. They had an interesting spat on TV recently where they disagreed about which of the two parties should receive the Prime Minister's chair if the opposition won the elections. I personally am not sure if either one of them could work in a coalition where the other is Prime Minister.

It seems to me that there is a new generation of politicians taking over, perhaps a generation that is free of the black and white mentality of the Cold War and the ghosts of the political past. Do you agree?

Yes, I think so. With the new regime of the Independence Party, there have been some changes. There are popular young women coming in for the Left-Greens, there are young people coming in for the Social Democrats. Yes, I think we can safely say that there is a new generation taking over that does not have to carry the burden of the past, which might well originate in the Cold War era. I think you are right.

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Why Should I Vote For Your Party?

For the 2007 parliamentary elections, The Reykjavík Grapevine has been asking representatives from each of the political parties to answer questions regarding the most pressing issues.

Guðmundur Steingrímsson

The Social Democratic Alliance



The Social Democratic Alliance is the only political party in Iceland with a policy that is on the one hand aimed at freedom in trading and modern trade practices and on the other hand offers a clear policy regarding welfare issues. That is no coincidence. This is the model our associating parties in the other Nordic countries have always emphasised.

For example, Iceland is faced with countless waiting lists in the public health care system, growing inequality, a regressive education system and poorly maintained welfare benefit system. These examples bare witness to how necessary it is to let the Social Democratic Alliance participate in the government. The Social Democratic Alliance is a welfare and equality party. Our business with the Icelandic nation is therefore obvious. What we can learn from the ruling coalition between the Independence Party and the Progressive Party for the past 12 years is this: The parties who pretend to be welfare and equality parties are not when it comes to practicing what they preach.

It is important that voters figure out this deception. And it is also important that voters don't let established and partly understandable sarcasm mixed with hopelessness control their vote. The government's wrongdoings and betrayed promises might let one think that nothing matters in politics and therefore it's alright to vote for whomever. But that couldn't be more wrong. The Social Democratic Alliance has never been in government. Our task will be this: To show the country's inhabitants that we are a different kind of a party. We mean what we say.

Jakob Frímann Magnússon

The Iceland Green Movement



The Iceland Green Movement – Islandsþryfingin – is the only realistic political alternative to the Socialist Green Party VG. Provided, that is, you fancy the unlikely duet of Mother Nature and Your Wallet.

We are not ashamed to embrace market economy solutions when it comes to funding our welfare system. We suggest lowering our corporate tax to 12% in three steps, which would make us the most competitive in Europe by 2011, ½% below Ireland's legendary but fully legitimate tax environment, which has attracted a lot of foreign companies and investment. Our plan is not only to benefit Icelandic companies but to attract at least 6 new companies of a medium global size before 2011.

To systematically ruin the valuable image of Green Iceland seems highly unwise. To sink valuable untouched highlands on the altar of Soviet-style heavy industry, puts a bold question mark over the business acumen of our current government. Not only is the price of the electricity in question so low that it has to be kept a tight secret, but no price tag whatsoever has been put on the land that was sacrificed in the process.

How about putting at least a temporary stop to the frantic empowerment of aluminium smelters and perhaps, ad interim, empowering green houses and the green values instead? It seems to make a whole lot more sense for our country, our people, our economy, our image, our current & future generations. Hence we confidently claim that green business is good business. If you agree with us, vote X – I on 12 May 2007!

Katrín Jakobsdóttir

The Left-Green Movement



The Left-Greens will emphasise three issues in this election. First, the environment. It has never been more important to vote on environmental issues than now. The current government has placed great importance on building aluminium smelters and giant hydro-power plants, resulting in damage to the environment. Iceland will soon match the US in CO2 emissions per capita

if current proposals for continued aluminium smelting come through, that is, 20 tons per person each year. Let's change the direction. Let's develop an environmental protection plan based on ideas for energy efficiency and create varied employment opportunities around the country.

Secondly, welfare and equality. The current government has greatly increased collection in the welfare system. At the same time, inequality has grown and the gap between rich and poor has increased. The state's tax income should maintain the welfare system and with the current status of the treasury this should be easy. Priorities need to be changed. Let's strengthen the welfare system; it is the foundation of a strong equal society.

Thirdly, gender equality. There is a 16% unexplained wage difference between the sexes, despite laws against discrimination based on gender. This is unacceptable in the 21st century. Men and women should have equal opportunity and sadly the current government has done nothing to change this situation. Let's abolish wage secrecy and let the laws be implemented.

The Independence Party has been in power for 16 years and there is a real danger of a right-wing government for 4 more years. Now we need to change priorities in politics. A vote for the Left-Greens is the clearest way to demand change.

Sæunn Stefánsdóttir

The Progressive Party



The Progressive Party is a social liberal party, which fights for progress in society on the basis of restrained reform. The Progressive Party will continue to advocate the development of a strong economy with improved working conditions and competitiveness. That policy has generated more capital goods, job opportunities and improved living conditions than has ever

been known in the country. At the same time we've seen the state treasury undergo considerable change, the state's debts are insignificant and the economy is stronger than ever before in the republic's history.

The Progressive Party also fights for equality and equal opportunities. We fight for human rights and respect for the individual and the family. We reject discrimination based on race, gender, sexuality, residency or political opinions. We will always respect freedom of speech, expression and religion. Inequality is a human rights' violation which wastes human resources.

Magnús Þór Hafsteinsson

The Liberal Party



The Liberal Party representative chose not to comment on this question.

Ármann Kr. Ólafsson

The Independence Party



The Independence Party representative chose not to comment on this question.



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A Modern Treasure Hunt

By Juho Salminen Photo by Skari

The arctic wind and a nearby waterfall seem to be having a strength competition. They are both doing quite well. The GPS receiver in my hand tells me that there are still 150 metres to go. I feel like I am actually looking for a treasure. This is treasure hunting in the satellite time – this is geocaching. I notice a pile of rocks before me. That must be it!

Geocaching is a hobby where people seek small treasures that other geocachers have hidden. This is done with the help of GPS satellite receiver. One has to go online, check the geocaching Internet page, choose a cache to seek and get the coordinates of that cache. These coordinates are then entered into the GPS device, which leads the way. It tells the seeker in which direction and how far to go, even if the cache is on the other side of the world. Easy, isn't it?

These caches can be found almost all around the world: there are almost 320,000 caches in 222 countries. Iceland has had its share too. Somewhere under the rocks, in the holes in the ground and in other perfect hiding places there are 62 caches waiting to be found. And where exactly? Well, everyone who is interested has to go out and look themselves.

Logbooks, Trading and Challenges

Although geocaching is about finding the caches, the caches themselves are not that important. For some geocachers the main thing is the thrill of the hunt and for some the place where the cache is. The caches are often hidden in such places that by finding them the geocacher also sees something remarkable: a natural monument, nice scenery, a culturally important place or a building, to mention a few. Many of the caches are in the nature, but they can be found in urban areas as well. Big city centres like New York or London have a dense geocache population. It's nothing unusual to see someone staring at the screen of a handheld GPS around Tower Bridge or Brooklyn Bridge – there might be serious geocache hunting going on. And even in the Reykjavik city area there are 20 caches.

The caches are usually small waterproof containers with small items and a logbook inside. The idea is to mark the visit into the logbook and trade items: if you take something, you must put something in as a replacement. These small items are usually pens, batteries, little toys and so on. But not all the caches are these traditional ones: the geocacher might have to solve mysteries or seek many other caches before getting to the final one. The mysteries are usually something to do with words and counting with many variations. In order to get the final coordinates of the cache the seeker might have to count stairs, the handprints in one specific sculpture or answer a question about history. A many-sided hobby indeed.

What do people get out of geocaching? Why do they do it? Most geocachers I know say that the moment of finding the cache is the best one can have. The challenges – both mental and physical – of geocache hunting are important for many. The only thing needed to start geocaching is the ability to use Internet and a GPS receiver, anyone willing to, can do it.

Icelandic Hiding Places

Iceland is a unique country in geocaching as well. It provides the opportunity to hide caches in easy locations or in the most difficult places in Northern Europe. The country has beautiful nature and many interesting and unique sights to visit. City caches can be found around the globe but Vatnajökull glacier, Askja caldera, Dimmuborgir or active volcanic areas are Iceland's own specialities. Some of them already have caches waiting to be found. A thing to keep in mind while hiding a cache is that the land owner has to approve. Also, the cache should not be placed in a way that the people looking for it damage the nature around it. With all this in mind, happy geocaching in Iceland.

The weather-beaten pile of rocks in front of me seems like a perfect place for a geocache. My GPS seems to agree because it is pointing in the same direction. The moment of truth! I walk around the pile with only the wind and the great big wilderness around me. A rock in the bottom of the pile seems to be loose. I move it gently and what do you know – there it is: my first Icelandic geocache.

The Satellites Above Us

GPS stands for Global Positioning System. It is a satellite navigation system created by the USA originally for military use. It consists of 24 satellites whose orbits are 20,200 kilometres above the Earth. With the signal of these satellites, a GPS receiver can determine location, speed and direction anywhere in the world. The signal is one-way; a GPS user cannot be traced unless the user wants to be. The accuracy of a normal handheld GPS receiver is usually 5 to 10 metres. The GPS system is free for everyone to use.

Handheld GPS receivers usually cost around 30,000 – 60,000 ISK. Some of them can have a map shown on the display and there is an accurate topographical map of Iceland available for GPS receivers.

The use of GPS is expanding all the time. First it was used in military operations and navigation at sea. Nowadays GPS can be found in cars, mobile phones and palm computers. The EU is building a satellite navigation system of its own called Galileo. It should be in use by 2010 and it's said to be more accurate than GPS.

More information on the Internet:
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gps>

What do people get out of geocaching? Why do they do it? Most geocachers I know say that the moment of finding the cache is the best one can have.

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The Most Expensive Cigarette I Have Ever Smoked

Text by Páll Hilmarsson

Prior to my life-altering, three-month backpacking trip to Southeast Asia, I was aware of the strict smoking laws in Singapore. But since I was not planning on going there and nothing suggested the situation was similar in other countries I was visiting, I set off a happy smoker, looking forward to many smoke-filled and joyous days in the sun. Upon arrival in Bangkok, Thailand's capital, I was pleased to note that smokers smoked on the streets without much trouble and that most restaurants were also smoke free. After all, that is how I like my restaurants. Soon my partner and I headed off to the tropical paradise island Ko Pha Ngan, famous for being home to the biggest rave parties in the universe, held every full moon. Our goal was of a different kind though, as my partner planned on enrolling in a weeklong detox programme in a hippie place called the Sanctuary. The detox programme consisted of drinking mud shakes, eating nothing, and, to top off the fun times, rinsing your colon with coffee twice a day.

Taking my cue from her healthy lifestyle, I decided in a delirious state of mind that I should quit smoking. Which I did. For the next five weeks I did not smoke a single cigarette. Now I am not a casual smoker, I have smoked close to a pack a day for the last 13 years, so this was no small feat. These were enjoyable five weeks, although I did regret a little not being able to sample the local tobacco in Laos, which included some exotic brands. My travels then took me to Vietnam and five weeks after my decision I found myself in the bustling capital Ho Chi Minh City. Angelina Jolie the humanitarian was in town shopping for a new minion in the Brangelina army and my deluded mind took this as a sure sign that I should take up smoking again. Sitting outside the massive Sheraton hotel, where Angelina was staying, way out of my financial reach – even in Vietnam – I fired up a local cigar and fantasised about Angelina and her surely exciting life.

mobile phones than I am about cigarette brands, but after a few hours I managed to find a phone I both like liked and could afford.

Any smoker can tell you that they would rather be outside smoking than inside shopping so it should come as no surprise that I fired up as soon as I got out. Usually I exited at ground level, but this time I was going to take the futuristic sky-train to my ant-infested guesthouse, so I took the exit on a walkway on the third level where I noticed a few smokers indulging themselves by the door and took that as a clear sign that it would be ok to smoke.

That was my mistake. Soon after I had extinguished my cigarette a surly, young policeman approached me and pointed me to an even surlier looking colleague of his. I was asked to sit down and the interrogation began. "Do you smoke a lot?" Yes, I said, instantly thinking of Sir Mix-A-Lot, snickering at my own wit. "In Thailand it is forbidden to smoke!" he said, instantly setting me straight. I stammered something incomprehensible. "Where are you staying? How long in Thailand?" I instinctively lied about the length of my stay, hoping that the policeman would take pity on the novice traveller. He did not. He explained to me that I would have to pay a 2000 baht fine, roughly equal to 4000 ISK, the same price I had paid for a new mobile phone minutes earlier. I swallowed hard while he shuffled some papers in a manner only people with authority can do. He then explained that there were two ways to handle this. I could go with him to the police station and fill out a report, which would result in my name and picture "being available on the internet", or I could pay him and everyone would live happily ever after, not adding that he could then buy a new mobile phone, but I got the hint. I hesitated for a second and then paid the man. He quickly pocketed the money and shook my hand, smiling and waving as I left for the train.

Newfound Freedom

My new freedom meant that in Cambodia, my next stop, I was able to taste the unexciting brand Liberation, which frankly tastes like dried horse shit. But these were easy places to be in for a smoker. Everybody and their grandmother smoked, so I fitted in rather nicely. My partner frowned upon this, having enjoyed being around a non-smoker for over a month. But life isn't fair, and to her credit she is fully aware of that fact and left the bickering about my habit to a bare minimum.

After some very enjoyable smoking in Cambodia it was time to head back to Thailand for the last days of the journey. I spent twenty days taking in Bangkok, which is an exciting place to be in. There I smoked on the streets with locals and tourists alike, carefree and happy. On my last day I ventured to the city's shopping centres for some last minute purchases. I was hell bent on acquiring a mobile phone and the massive MBK shopping mall was the perfect place to go. MBK must have the biggest selection of mobile phones in the entire universe. I am more fussy about

Angelina Jolie the humanitarian was in town shopping for a new minion in the Brangelina army and my deluded mind took this as a sure sign that I should take up smoking again.

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How to drive in Iceland

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

Gravel roads, blind hills & blind curves

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

opposite direction by moving as far to the right as is safely possible.

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



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Vitality and Relevance

Text by Sveinn Birkir Björnsson Photo by Skari

Last January, Swede Max Dager took over from Norwegian Gro Kraft as the director of the Nordic House in Reykjavík. Since taking over, Dager has left no stone unturned in his quest to restore the house to its former glory.

Dager is a big man who speaks with a lot of conviction. That is because this big man has many big ideas. When asked to summarise his new vision for the Nordic House in one thought, he says his work is based on two keywords, “vitality and relevance.” During our conversation, which lasts over an hour and a half, he explains one idea after another for his new vision of the Nordic House. It can be hard to keep up with him at times, as one idea leads to another, and sometimes, ideas are left unexplained when a new idea seems to be born and take over even in mid-sentence. He speaks with such passion that it is easy to imagine the Nordic House being one of the leading cultural centres in the Nordic countries, if not all of Europe, in four years time.

The Nordic House in Reykjavík, designed by the distinguished Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, opened in 1968. It is a Nordic cultural centre whose main goal is to serve as a link between Iceland and the other Nordic countries and to that end, organises an extensive programme of cultural events and exhibitions besides maintaining a library with a collection of some 30,000 Nordic books.

“The system here is that as a new director of the Nordic House, you are hired for four years at first, and if you do good, your contract can be extended for another four years. Every director before me has been working for the Nordic Council before and they have known all about the Nordic Cooperation. I come from a very different direction. I started a company in Sweden called Cirkus Cirkör, which expanded from being run from a ping-pong table to employing 500 people and having a professor in contemporary circus and branches in South-Africa and other plac-

es,” Dager explains when I ask him about his background.

Cirkus Cirkör is a remarkable success story. Since its inception in 1995, it has become one of the world’s leading contemporary circuses, running a circus school that is considered one of the best in the world and attended by over 30,000 children each year. I comment on it being an interesting change, going from being a circus director, to being a director of an official institution like the Nordic House. Dager replies that naturally, it is somewhat different, but as a circus director, you always need to juggle ten balls in the air at the same time, which can be an asset in this position. He also claims to have “a lot of crazy ideas,” which he also considers an asset.

“I have been working on big projects most of my life. I’ve organised big festivals for the Japanese Ministry for Culture, in Vietnam and South-America, all over the place, the World Exhibition in Nagoya, Japan. This is something I know, although you never really know anything in this line of work, there are always new problems that need to be solved.”

New Vision

Dager is no stranger to Iceland. In fact, his wife is Icelandic, and he has been visiting the country regularly ever since the early 80’s. “When I first came to the Nordic House in the 80s, it was a meeting place for artists and scholars,” Dager says. In the last years, attendance has dropped and apart from students at the nearby university, not a lot of people visit the Nordic House. “In the 70s, when the house first opened, there were two or three cafeterias in Reykjavík. Now there must be between 80 and 100 cafés in Reykjavík, so maybe it is not so strange that the attendance has gone down,” Dager explains. “But it is time to put it up there again.”

In order to boost attendance, Dager is planning to make changes in how the house is operated. He has brought in the Reykjavík Film Festival, which is now run from the

house, and Dager plans to import the first high definition digital theatre in Iceland to the Nordic house, where he plans to screen European films, Nordic films in particular, art films, and documentaries to offset the Hollywood productions flooding the Reykjavík cinemas. The technique also makes it available to stream content directly, allowing him to bring in lecturers from other parts of the world to address audiences gathered in Reykjavík.

Another change Dager is implementing is in the cafeteria, where a new menu, promoting New Nordic Cuisine will be introduced this summer. “The focus will be on Nordic ingredients. We will not serve pizza or olives, but rather Icelandic lamb with Icelandic herbs, and goat cheese from Jamtland in Sweden, or cowberries from Finland,” he explains. He is also bringing in Finnish interior designer Ilkka Supponen to design a lounge room where it will be possible to hold meetings and small gatherings while enjoying the nouveau-Nordic cuisine.

But when our talk turns to the cultural role of the Nordic House, it becomes more clear what sort of changes Dager is planning for: “You should not come to the Nordic House to look at paintings or listen to poetry. I am not going to have exhibitions like the ones that have been here. That is the role of the National Gallery and the Reykjavík Museum of Art. They have the space to do this. I intend to have another kind of discourse on culture through lectures and workshops. In the basement (the main exhibition room) there will be creative workshops, jazz evenings, and I am in negotiations with the Gay Pride festival to do something here.”

The Disneyland Effect

The operation of the house is financed with contributions from the Nordic Council, but to accommodate his ambitious plan, Dager will be seeking added outside support. “I get money from the council in Copenhagen every year. It is a similar amount each time,

but I have a goal to make external financing nearly 50% within one year, so I can double the money. I think when people realise the possibilities that are here; the opportunity for more money will be here. It is like an old train, it takes time building up speed, but once you get it going, it is hard to stop.”

It will be particularly important for the operation to receive additional funds, since plans have been made to change the house extensively to make better use of it. “I contacted the Alvar Aalto Academy, and the project is being carried out in cooperation with the Academy. I believe if Aalto were alive today, he would realise the importance of adapting the house to its modern needs. “I call it the Disneyland effect. It should be so that when you visit Reykjavík, you need have your photo taken standing outside the Nordic House,” Dager explains.

With all his ambitious ideas, I wonder how Dager manages to get the board of an institution that has been run in a conservative manner for nearly 40 years to support his ideas. “When I attended the first board meeting and presented my ideas, I expected people to be skeptical, but they just said, “go for it.” Now we will have to see how it goes. Maybe it will be an absolute catastrophe.”

When asked to summarise his new vision for the Nordic House in one thought, he says his work is based on two keywords, “vitality and relevance.”

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ALL WE ARE SAYING IS
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Tópas FREEDOM FIGHTERS

“It is nostalgic to think that everything was better two hundred years ago. We become completely stagnant if we believe that the best we could do was done two hundred years ago and we cannot possibly do any better.”

Reykjavík Burns

Text by Sveinn Birkir Björnsson Photo by Skari

It was just before two p.m. on the last day of winter, Wednesday, April 18. Hressó – a popular bar & bistro located on Austurstræti 20, in an old wooden house from 1852 – was still buzzing from the lunch hour rush with customers occupying most available seats in the area. Like most days, Eyrún Ýr Hildardóttir managed the early shift at Hressó and now she was quickly pacing between tables, serving hungry patrons the daily specials or delivering café lattés to guests who had come in for a hot cup of coffee.

The next several minutes would pass quickly for Hildardóttir. First, a woman she knew to be working in the kiosk Fröken Reykjavík, located next door to Hressó in Austurstræti, approached her hurriedly and asked to borrow a fire extinguisher, explaining that a small fire had broken out next door. Hildardóttir rushed to the back and located the fire extinguisher, notifying a co-worker on her way. Together they half-walked, half-sprinted next door, Hildardóttir carrying the 12-kilogram fire extinguisher and her co-worker trailing closely behind her, leaving a few customers wondering what the emergency was.

Once inside Fröken Reykjavík, they noticed a small fire stemming from a built-in halogen light in the ceiling. As the Fröken Reykjavík employee operated the fire extinguisher, Hildardóttir dialled the emergency hotline 112 and asked for assistance. She also noticed two police officers walking past the kiosk and asked them for help. Confident that the fire was under control, Hildardóttir soon returned to her post at Hressó, where some of the customers had begun to filter out onto the street to satisfy their curiosity.

The word spread quickly through Hressó that there was a fire next door. The staff tried to maintain order by going about their work in the usual manner. In a matter of minutes, the smell of smoke began to penetrate the air in Hressó. A couple with a young child quickly prepared to leave while more and more customers became restless. Soon, the smoke inside became too much and even the most level-headed occupants vacated Hressó, me being one of them.

Outside, I could see smoke filtering out through a chimney on top of Fröken Reykjavík, but also between the corrugated iron plates on the roof of Austurstræti 22, where the nightclub Pravda was located, as well as the adjoining roof on Lækjargata 2, the house on the corner of Austurstræti and Lækjargata. There was no visible fire at the time, but police officers soon came to the area and started to establish a perimeter, directing people away from the fire zone.

The first fire trucks were there in a matter of minutes after the call was placed to 112. By then, the smoke had already become a thick cloud over the city centre. Nearly 100 fire-fighters spent the next four hours wrestling the fire and by the time they managed to get it under control, both the houses on Lækjargata 2 and Austurstræti 22 were in ruins. This event has raised many questions regarding both fire safety in old houses and spawned a heated debate on how and if the houses that burned should be restored.

Club Hopping in Historical Landmarks

The house on Austurstræti 22 was a preserved building, being both a historical site and one of the oldest houses standing in Reykjavík City. Originally built for Ísleifur Einarsson, the first judge of the Court of Iceland, in 1801, the two-storey building was soon sold to Count Trampe, the Danish governor of Iceland. It was quickly dubbed the Governor's Mansion, and was known by that name to this day.

Reykjavík Meets the Series 01 Modernity

The Reykjavík Grapevine presents the first article in a series of articles on the problems facing the city of Reykjavík as it grows from a small town to a modern capital city.



"It is nostalgic to think that everything was better two hundred years ago. We become completely stagnant if we believe that the best we could do was done two hundred years ago and we cannot possibly do any better."

Reykjavík Burns

Text by Sveinn Birgir Björnsson Photo by Skari

It was just before two p.m. on the last day of winter, Wednesday, April 18. Hressó – a popular bar & bistro located on Austurstræti 20, in an old wooden house from 1852 – was still buzzing from the lunch hour rush with customers occupying most available seats in the area. Like most days, Eyrún Ýr Hildardóttir managed the early shift at Hressó and now she was quickly pacing between tables, serving hungry patrons the daily specials or delivering café lattés to guests who had come in for a hot cup of coffee.

The next several minutes would pass quickly for Hildardóttir. First, a woman she knew to be working in the kiosk Fröken Reykjavík, located next door to Hressó in Austurstræti, approached her hurriedly and asked to borrow a fire extinguisher, explaining that a small fire had broken out next door. Hildardóttir rushed to the back and located the fire extinguisher, notifying a co-worker on her way. Together they half-walked, half-sprinted next door, Hildardóttir carrying the 12-kilogram fire extinguisher and her co-worker trailing closely behind her, leaving a few customers wondering what the emergency was.

Once inside Fröken Reykjavík, they noticed a small fire stemming from a built-in halogen light in the ceiling. As the Fröken Reykjavík employee operated the fire extinguisher, Hildardóttir dialled the emergency hotline 112 and asked for assistance. She also noticed two police officers walking past the kiosk and asked them for help. Confident that the fire was under control, Hildardóttir soon returned to her post at Hressó, where some of the customers had begun to filter out onto the street to satisfy their curiosity.

The word spread quickly through Hressó that there was a fire next door. The staff tried to maintain order by going about their work in the usual manner. In a matter of minutes, the smell of smoke began to penetrate the air in Hressó. A couple with a young child quickly prepared to leave while more and more customers became restless. Soon, the smoke inside became too much and even the most level-headed occupants vacated Hressó, me being one of them.

Outside, I could see smoke filtering out through a chimney on top of Fröken Reykjavík, but also between the corrugated iron plates on the roof of Austurstræti 22, where the nightclub Pravda was located, as well as the adjoining roof on Lækjargata 2, the house on the corner of Austurstræti and Lækjargata. There was no visible fire at the time, but police officers soon came to the area and started to establish a perimeter, directing people away from the fire zone.

The first fire trucks were there in a matter of minutes after the call was placed to 112. By then, the smoke had already become a thick cloud over the city centre. Nearly 100 fire-fighters spent the next four hours wrestling the fire and by the time they managed to get it under control, both the houses on Lækjargata 2 and Austurstræti 22 were in ruins. This event has raised many questions regarding both fire safety in old houses and spawned a heated debate on how and if the houses that burned should be restored.

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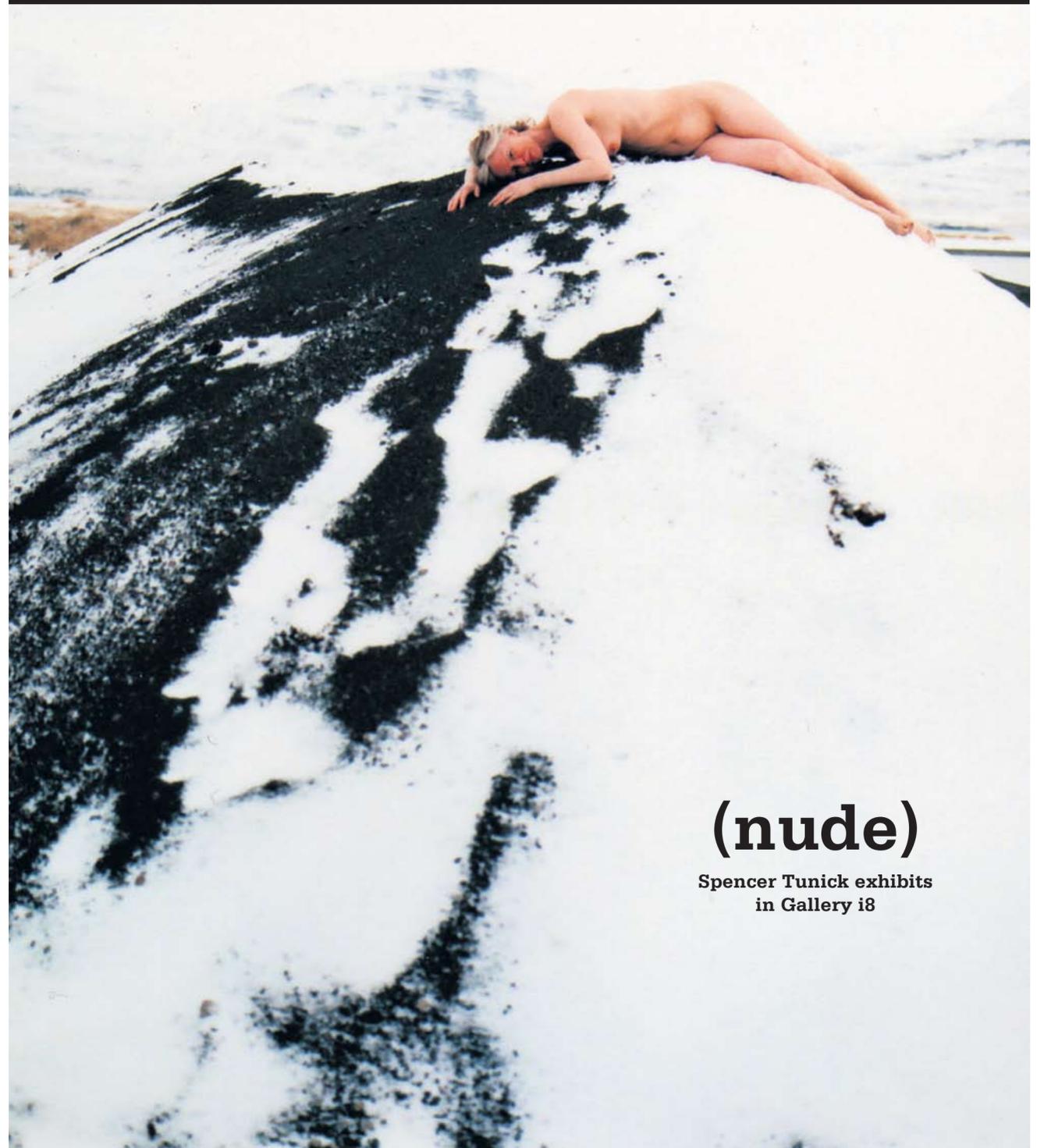


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info.

▲ Konono N°1 Quality Indie Films Art Graduates' Degree Show Giant Puppet Nordic Textile Rite of Spring Eurovision Vesturport Reykjavík Arts Festival Free Legal Counselling The Design Guide to Reykjavík Food Reviews Bezt í Heimi Music, Art, Films and Events Listings ▾



(nude)

Spencer Tunick exhibits in Gallery i8



Reykjavik Art Museum – May 11

Konono N°1 in Concert

You don't have to be a fan of world-music to love the Congolese music group Konono N°1. After the album Congotronics was released in 2005 the group's traditional African trance music and their experimental electro dance mix has made the band a world hit, receiving stunning reviews by top music critics followed by tours in both Europe and North America. Konono N°1 received the BBC award in world music in 2006 and collaborated with Björk on her newest album Volta. Much to the member's surprise, Konono N°1 had swiftly

become universally acclaimed.

The band was founded by Mawangu Mingiedi some 27 years ago. Mingiedi, who is now in his seventies comes from an area located on the boarder between Congo and Angola but soon settled in the country's capital Kinshasa, where Konono N°1 started developing its unusual sound. The line-up includes singers, dancers, percussionists and three electric likembés (traditional African thumb pianos) equipped with hand-made microphones built from magnets salvaged from old car parts, and plugged into am-

plifiers. Even a unique home-made sound system featuring the famous megaphones blasting the band's rhythmical beats so everyone now gathered around the dancing group can't help but start shakin' their hips.

Konono N°1 will perform twice during the Reykjavik Art Festival. First at the opening event on May 10 and in the courtyard at the Reykjavik Art Museum, on May 11. The concert starts at 22:00.

Reykjavik Art Museum, Tryggvagata 17.

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

Music

Barinn

Laugavegur 22

Vibrant late-night party place and a nice roomy bistro during the day.

Fri 04.05 Ghozt & Brunhein / DJ Impulse
Sat 05.05 Maggi Legó and Hólmár / DJ Bjarki

Wed 09.05 US band Iron Lung in concert. Opening acts: I Adapt and Celestine. Starts at 21:00.

Fri 11.05 DJ Óli Hjörtur / Fúsi and Friends

Sat 12.05 Barcode / DJ Mió

Wed 16.05 Peter Parker

Fri 18.05 DJ Maggi Legó / Heineken music and Artic Wave present: Keith, the owner of Baroque Records

Sat 19.05 DJ Yamaha / DJ Impulse

■ Café Amsterdam

Hafnarstræti 5

Fri 04.05 DJ Sesar

Sat 05.05 Live Music

Fri 11.05 Lister, Perfect Disorder and Wreckless in concert. Starts at 23:00.

Sat 12.05 DJ Fúsi

■ Café Cultura

Hverfisgata 18

Music from the world's four corners

Fri 04.05 DJ Lupin

Sat 05.05 DJ Kristin

■ Café Hljómald

Laugavegur 21

Tue 08.05 US band Iron Lung in

concert. Opening acts: Death Metal Supersquad and Plastic Gods. Starts at 19:00.

■ Dillon

Laugavegur 30

Legendary rock pub featuring live concerts every Wednesday night and rock DJs every weekend.

Fri 04.05 DJ Mikkiólfur

Sat 05.05 DJ Andrea Jónsdóttir

Wed 09.05 Dikta

Thu. 10.05 Sværir Bergman with band

Fri 11.05 DJs Rod & Stewart

Sat 12.05 DJ Andrea Jónsdóttir

Wed 16.05 Johnny and the Rest

Fri 18.05 DJ Andrea Jónsdóttir

■ Grand Rokk

Smiðjustigur 6

Fri 04.05 Severed Crotch release concert. Also performing are Svartidaudi, Helshare and Voreastral

■ Gaukurinn

Tryggvagata 22

19.05 Party Zone Night: Trentemøller

■ Háskólabíó

Hagatorg

Fri 04.05 The Iceland Symphony Orchestra: Brahms / Beethoven IV

Fri 11.05 Hélène Grimaud and the Iceland Symphony Orchestra

Tue 15.05 Josh Groban in concert

■ Helliinn

Þorvaldsenstræti 2

Hólmáslóð 2

Sat 05.05 Severed Crotch, Diabolus, Blood Feud and Celestine in concert

■ Hressó

Austurstræti 20

Here, troubadours play sing-alongs until midnight, followed by DJs playing

whatever the crowd is aching for at the time.

Fri 04.05 Gotti and Eisi followed by DJ Maggi

Sat 05.05 Flat Five in concert followed by DJ Maggi

Thu 10.05 Grapevine presents: Take Me Down To Reykjavik City concert series: Singapore Sling and Evil Madness. Starts at 21:30

Fri 11.05 Tryggvi Vilundur followed by DJ Maggi

Sat 12.05 Gotti and Eisi followed by DJ Maggi

Wed 16.05 Touch followed by DJ Johnny

Thu 17.05 Pub-lic

■ Kaffibarinn

Bergstaðastræti 1

With a mixture of techno, reggae, hip-hop and classic dance hits, the DJs are usually capable of crowding this frisky bar every single night of the week.

Fri 04.05 Don Balli Funk

Sat 05.05 DJ Magic

Fri 11.05 DJ Tommi White

Sat 12.05 DJ Andrés and Helgi Már

Thu 17.05 DJ Nuno

Fri 18.05 Special Guests

Sat 19.05 DJ CasaNova

■ Nasa

Thorvaldsenstræti 2

Sat 12.05 Eurovision Party with DJ Páll Óskar

Wed 16.05 Global Underground release party: DJ Deep Dish, Ghozt & Brunhein and Danni Big-Room

Thu 17.05 Rite of Spring: Oumou Sangare from Mali and Tómas R. Einarsson

Music Art Films Events

Regnboginn – Ongoing

Quality Indie Films

Specialising in indie movies from all around the globe, film distributor Green Light Films has transformed the movie selection in the city. Instead of the endless Hollywood action or disaster flicks, the company has brought us Little Miss Sunshine, Little Children, The Science of Sleep and The Illusionist, in the past few months, and all without the annoying breaks in the middle of the movie.

Now screening in Regnboginn movie theatre is David Lynch's newest surreal masterpiece, Inland Empire and May 4 will see the German award-winning movie Das Leben Der Anderen, a film dealing

with the system of observation in the former East Germany in the 1980s. Forthcoming are dozens of interesting films that have excelled at festivals around the globe, including The Painted Veil starring Edward Norton and Naomi Watts, the French recreation of Edith Piaf's life, La Vie En Rose and the comedy For Your Consideration.

For a full list of feature premieres see www.graenljosisid.is.

Regnboginn Movie Theatre, Hverfisgata 54.

TICKETS AT midi.is



Jarðhús – May 12 - 27

Art Graduates' Degree Show

Students graduating from the Iceland Academy of the Arts will display the result of their three years of study in Jarðhús, an old potato storage house at Ártúnsholt, on May 12. This is the first time this unusual setting is used for such a grand scale exhibition and the lodging has been converted into a showroom where the public will get the chance to view the works

of 63 young contemporary artists, and experience innovations in art, design and architecture.

The opening will take place on May 12 at 14:00 and those interested can sit down with the students and learn more about their creations. The show will be open until May 27.

Jarðhús at Ártúnsholt.

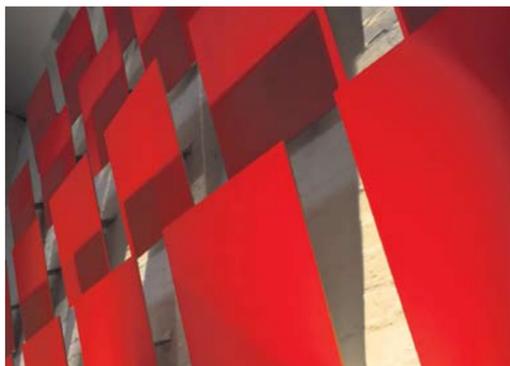
Music Art Films Events

Streets and squares in the city centre – May 10 - 12

Giant Puppet Invasion

Reykjavik will turn into a playground for a giant puppet when the world-renowned French street theatre company Royal de Luxe arrives in the capital. The group was founded in 1979 and has visited countries all over Europe and Africa as well as Korea, China, Vietnam and Chile. It has earned enormous respect wherever it goes for unique performances featuring extraordinary creatures getting into all sorts of adventures. Downtown pedestrians can expect to witness a remarkable performance by the lake, the

harbour and at various other public spaces when the giant puppet or animal wanders around the city and interacts with local spectators while doing day-to-day activities such as eating and sleeping. As the giant figure is usually more than 10 metres high it needs numerous puppet-masters, who use strings to control its every movement. Royal de Luxe has created a unique show especially for Icelanders. You don't have to worry about missing the show, you will stumble upon it when least expected.



ASÍ Art Museum – May 5 - 27

Nordic Textile Exhibiton

On May 5, an exhibition featuring five Nordic textile artists and one composer opens at the ASÍ Art Museum. Entitled From One to Infinity, this is a touring exhibit originally starting at Forum Box in Helsinki. The artists' creations and uses of fabrics are very distinct, ranging from using metal threads and 3D illustrations to draw attention to the way we humans associate with the nature to art-works presenting classic gobelin-tapestry

and Icelandic wool.

Paola Livorsi from Finland composed the music for the exhibition, which she based on the artist's creations and the four prime elements, earth, air, fire and water. The five artists will attend the opening ceremony, starting at 15:00. The exhibition will be on display until May 27.

ASÍ Art Museum, Freyjugata 41, www.asi.is.

Museums & Galleries

101 Gallery

Hverfisgata 18

Thu.-Sat. 14-17 and by appointment www.101hotel.is/101hotel/101gallery/

April 21 – May 13

La Grande Colline

Lóa Hlin Hjalmtýsdóttir exhibition. The show includes portraits of suburban baronesses, small dukes and various aristocrats.

■ Anima Gallery

Ingólfsstræti 8 / Lækjargata 2

Tue.-Sat. 13-17

www.animagallery.is

April 21 – May 19

Kristinn G. Harðarson exhibition at

Ingólfsstræti 8

■ Artótek

Tryggvagata 15

Mon.-Tue. 10-21, Tue.-Thu. 10-19, Fri. 11-19, Sat. and Sun. 13-17

www.sim.is/Index/Islenka/Artotek

■ ASÍ Art Museum

Freyjugata 41

Tue.-Sun. 13-17

Free Entrance

Current Exhibition:

Opnur / Spreads

Borghildur Óskarsdóttir exhibition. Stories from bygone days told through photography.

■ Auga fyrir Auga

Hverfisgata 35

Open Thu.-Fri. 15-19, Sat.-Sun. 14-17

April 21 – May 13

Me, You and other problems

Berglind Jóna Hlynisdóttir photo exhibition

■ The Einar Jónsson Museum

Eiríksgata

Tue.-Sun. 14-17

www.skulptur.is

Permanent exhibition:

The work of sculptor Einar Jónsson

■ The Culture House

Hverfisgata 15

Open daily 11-17

www.thjodmenning.is

Permanent Exhibitions:

Medieval Manuscripts; The National Museum – as it was; The Library Room; The Road to Zion; Berlin

Excursion

■ Dwarf Gallery

Grundarstigur 21

Opening Hours: Fri. and Sat. 18-20

www.this.is/birta

■ Gallery 100 Degrees

Bajarhóls 1

Mon.-Fri. 8:30-16

www.or.is/Forsida/Gallery100

■ ASÍ Art Museum

Freyjugata 41

Tue.-Sun. 13-17

Free Entrance

Current Exhibition:

Opnur / Spreads

www.myndlist.is

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

■ Gallery Sævar Karl

Bankastræti 7

Mon.-Fri. 10-18

Sat. 10-16

www.saevarkarl.is/gsm/

Current Exhibition:

Traits Très Mode

Design exhibition, giving an overview of French fashion illustration.

(Pourquoi Pas? Festival)

■ Gallery Turpentine

Ingólfsstræti 5

Tue.-Fri. 12-18

Sat. 11-16

www.turpentine.is

■ Gel Galleri

Hverfisgata 37

Mon.-Fri. 10-19

Sat. 10-17

■ Gerðuberg Cultural Centre

Gerðuberg 3-5

Mon.-Thu. 11-17

Wed. 11-21

Thu.-Fri. 11-17

Sat-Sun. 13-16

www.gerduberg.is

May 5 – Sep 9

Paintings by Ágúst Jónsson

■ 18 Gallery

Klappartígur 33

Tue.-Fri. 11-17

Sat. and by appointment 13-17

www.i8.is

From May 16

Spencer Tunick photographic



NASA and Laugardalshöll – May 17-19

Cream of the Crop in World Music

Reykjavik Rite of Spring Music Festival will take place from May 17 to May 19. The festival, focusing on Folk, Jazz and World Music, was first held in 2006, and was a well-appreciated event among musicians and followers of this music genre. Mr. Destiny, the company that is best known for organising and promoting the Iceland Airwaves Music Festival, produces the festival.

Among this year's headliners are the female singer Oumou Sangaré from Mali, Scottish salsa band Salsa Celtica and Bosnian musician Goran Bregovic.

Along with his Wedding and Funeral Band and some

local musicians, Bregovic will be performing the concert Tales and Songs for Weddings and Funerals at Laugardalshöll on May 19. The group is described as a gypsy brass band with traditional Bulgarian polyphonies, electric guitar and traditional percussion with a curious rock accent mixed with string orchestra and a male choir creating music that is irresistible to dance to.

Oumou Sangaré will play at Rite of Spring's opening show at NASA on May 17. She is renowned for her fabulous stage presence and incredible voice and her rhythmical music based on the song and dance traditions of Wasulu, the southern

region of Mali. Also performing at NASA that night is Tómas R. Einarsson, one of Iceland's most beloved jazzists. The local lineup also includes Samúel J. Samúelsson along with his Big Band. Samúelsson is currently celebrating the release of his new solo-project, which he will premiere to the public at NASA on May 18. Every night the venue opens at 20.00 and the concert starts at 21.00.

For a full programme see www.riteofspring.is

TICKETS AT midi.is

exhibition

■ Kling & Bang Gallery



On TV
Biggest Party Ever!

Saturday evening May 12 won't be just another weekend party night in the country. This particular Saturday happens to be Election Day when Icelanders will get the chance to vote on which political party will be in government for the next four years.

But that's not all folks. The Eurovision competition takes place at the same time, and if all goes well in the preliminary, Eiríkur "The Viking" Hauksson will be singing his ass off in Helsinki that same night. If Hauksson would happen to win the damn competition, he will be singing the victory song at the exact same time as the first election numbers are announced.

This unique scenario is bound to break some world record in drinking and TV watching, (compared to population of course) as a long local tradition obligates everyone to celebrate like there's no tomorrow.

Both happenings are broadcasted live on National TV, channel 1.

Until May 26
Made in Iceland
Jo Duchene photo exhibition displaying his documentary of private, public, industrial and religious housing in Iceland. (Pourquoi Pas? Festival)

March 15 – May 9
Photographic work by Sari Poijarvi
■ **Safn**
Laugavegur 37
Wed.-Fri. 14-18
Sat.-Sun. 14-17
Free Entrance
www.safn.is

March 17 – May 21
Eden
Hugues Reip presents his installation entitled Eden, featuring images of flowers he has enlarged, printed and mounted on a wooden structure. (Pourquoi Pas? Festival)

March 17 – May 21
Jardin Vilayet
Sigurður Árni Sigurðsson photo exhibition.
■ **Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum**
Laugamestangi 70
Tue.-Sun. 14-17
Permanent exhibition
The work of sculptor Sigurjón Ólafsson

■ **Start Art / Art Shop**
Laugavegur 12b
www.startart.is
A new gallery emphasising contemporary art.

■ **Outside Reykjavik**
■ **Skaftfell**
Austurvegur 42, Seyðisfjörður
www.skaftfell.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, Sigurros Svava Ólafsdóttir, Vilborg Bjarkadóttir, Þórunn Maggy Kristjánsdóttir and Arild Tveit.

Open 13-17 on weekends
■ **Gallery Klettur**
Helliuhraun 16, Hafnarfjörður
Open Sat. 10-14. At other times by arrangement.

■ **Hafnarborg**
Strandgata 34, Hafnarfjörður
Mon.-Sun. 11-17
www.hafnarborg.is

April 12 – May 6
No Particular Order
Gilles Bensimon photo exhibition. Fashion photographs spanning over three decades of his career. (Pourquoi Pas? Festival)

■ **Gljúfrasteinn**
Halldór Laxness museum
270 Mosfellsbær
Open daily except Mondays from 10-17.

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

■ **The Icelandic Museum of Design and Applied Art**
Lyngás 7-9, 121 Garðabær
Opening hours: Tues. -Fri. 14-18; Sat. and Sun. 16-18. www.mudesa.org

March 4 – May 12
M/M & Gabriela
Sculpture by French design duo M/M in collaboration with Gabriela Friðriksdóttir. (Pourquoi Pas? Festival)

■ **The Icelandic Settlement Centre**
Brákarbraut 13-15, Borgarnes
Opening hours: May to September 10-20; September to May 11-17. www.landnam.is

Permanent exhibitions: The Settlement of Iceland; The Saga of Egill Skalla-Grimsson

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

April 28 – May 20
Þuríður Sigurðardóttir exhibition

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

■ **Jónas Viðar Gallery**
Kaupvangsstræti 12, Akureyri
Fri.-Sat. 13-18
www.jvs.is/jvgallery.htm

May 5 – May 27
Þorvaldur Þorsteinsson solo exhibit

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

May 5 – Jun 24
Rhythms of Life
Sculptures by Australian artist Andrew Rogers

■ **DaLi Gallery**
Brekkuvaga 9, Akureyri
Mon.-Sat. 14-18
www.daligallery.blogspot.com

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

April 5 – May 4
In My Garden
Rósa Sigrún Jónsdóttir exhibition



Films
■ **Next**
Smárabíó, Borgarbíó Akureyri, Sambíóin Kringlunni, Háskólalabíó

■ **Pathfinder**
Smárabíó, Regnboginn

■ **Inland Empire**
Regnboginn

■ **The Hills Have Eyes 2**
Smárabíó, Regnboginn

■ **The Science Of Sleep**
Regnboginn

■ **Perfect Stranger**

Smárabíó, Regnboginn, Borgarbíó Akureyri

■ **Blades Of Glory**
Laugarásbíó, Sambíóin Kringlunni, Sambíóin Álfabakka, Sambíóin Akureyri, Sambíóin Keflavík

■ **Shooter**
Laugarásbíó, Borgarbíó Akureyri, Sambíóin Álfabakka, Sambíóin Keflavík

■ **Mr. Bean's Holiday**
Laugarásbíó, Selfossbíó, Sambíóin Álfabakka, Sambíóin Akureyri, Sambíóin Keflavík

■ **Sunshine**
Smárabíó, Háskólalabíó

■ **Breach**
Sambíóin Kringlunni, Sambíóin Álfabakka

■ **Das Leben Der Anderen**
Regnboginn (May 4)

■ **Spiderman 3**
(May 4)

■ **The Condemned**
(May 11)

■ **The Reeping**
(May 11)

■ **It's A Boy Girl Thing**
(May 11)

■ **Goal 2**
(May 11)

■ **Disturbia**
(May 16)

Movie Theatres
■ **Regnboginn**, Hverfisgata 54
101 Reykjavík, Tel. 551-9000

■ **Háskólalabíó**, Hagatorg
107 Reykjavík, Tel. 525-5400

■ **Laugarásbíó**, Laugarás
104 Reykjavík, Tel. 565-0118

■ **Smárabíó**, Smáralind
201 Kópavogur, Tel. 564-0000

■ **Sambíóin**, Álfabakki 8
109 Reykjavík, Tel. 575-8900

■ **Sambíóin**, Kringlan 4-12
103 Reykjavík, Tel. 575-8900

■ **Sambíóin Akureyri**, Ráðhústorg
600 Akureyri, Tel. 461-4666

■ **Nýja-Bíó**, Hafnargata 33
230 Reykjanesbær, Tel. 421-1170

■ **Selfossbíó**, Eyrarvegur 2

800 Selfoss, Tel. 482-3007

Fjalakötturinn
■ **Sunday, May 6**
15.00 The Children of Noisy Village
17.00 Reykjavik Documentary Workshop: Wide Awake
20.00 Moving Story: Works in progress and discussions

■ **Monday, May 7**
17.00 Ronja the Robber's Daughter
20.00 Reykjavik Documentary Workshop: Wide Awake

■ All films shown at Tjarnarbíó Cinema, Tjarnargata 12, 101 Reykjavik

Events
■ **The Pockemon Crew**
08.05 and 09.05 The French break-dancers in the Pockemon Crew are scheduled to perform twice at the Reykjavik City Theatre. The group is highly acclaimed in the hip-hop universe. For tickets see www.midi.is Reykjavik City Theatre, Listabraut 2.

■ **San Francisco Ballet**
16.05 – 20.05 The San Francisco Ballet is the oldest ballet company in the US. Artistic Director Helgi Tómasson has created a show specially designed for an Icelandic audience, based on some of the ballets Tómasson has choreographed for his company. In conjunction with this event, an exhibition of Helgi Tómasson's career and the San Francisco Ballet's history will open in the foyer of the Reykjavik City Theatre on May 16. Reykjavik City Theatre, Listabraut 2.

■ **Opera by Hafliði Hallgrímsson**
18.05 Icelandic Symphony Orchestra and eight solo singers perform Die Wäلت der Zwischenfälle, an opera by Hafliði Hallgrímsson. Described by critics as an absurdist classic, the opera has been staged in Vienna and Lübeck. Its Icelandic premiere will take place at Háskólalabíó on May 18. The concert starts at 19:30. Háskólalabíó Concert Hall, at Hagatorg.



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Budget

Icelandic Art
...
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Vesturport: "A Bunch of Divas"

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir Photo by Skari

Since it was founded in 2001, Reykjavík-based independent theatre company Vesturport has been known for being innovative, unrestrained and provocative, never afraid to take on new challenges and impress the audience with breathtaking stunts and dramatic performances. After starting out in a small workshop at Vesturgata in downtown Reykjavík, the group has moved on to bigger territories and today celebrates an incredible success internationally.

As always, Vesturport is working on new ways to satisfy the demanding theatre audience. The company is creating a new production of the popular rock opera Jesus Christ Superstar, featuring some of Iceland's leading actors and rockstars, a new film in pre-production and plenty of ideas for new plays are in development. When Grapevine sat down with actor and director Björn Hlynur Haraldsson to discuss Vesturport's future projects, the group had just come back from Amsterdam, where they performed four shows of Georg Büchner's Woyzeck at the Het Muziektheater.

Vesturport's production of Woyzeck first premiered in the London Barbican Theatre in 2005, with original music and lyrics by Nick Cave and Warren Ellis. To say the least, the show was a major hit among the audience as well as the critics, and after bringing the

play to Icelandic audiences they returned to London for a rerun.

This young touring ensemble numbers 12 members who, in collaboration, are constantly trying to create something unique and different and finding new ways to do things, taking on the role of actors, directors, writers, producers or all of these at once. They've taken their project to festivals all around Europe and been invited to stage their plays at some of the most established European theatres.

Asked what he thinks is the key factor behind Vesturport's success, Björn Hlynur replies that there is no real trick but that by being determinate, energetic and believing in the projects they've been producing they've managed to get where they are today.

"We are a group consisting of people who all think of themselves as the one who knows best. We are a bunch of divas. Everyone has to have a say. It can make you crazy, but then you realize, that's just the way you want things to be. I think that this mix is a big part of what drives us."

A Group With a Vision

Vesturport is a group with a vision. Their Myspace reads that the aim is to find every project's own voice, style, time and space without forcing a play into a space where

its story and characters will not be fully understood. For that sincere approach, they've triumphed, gained an incredible following and are today renowned for their original and often unusual productions of classic masterpieces such as Franz Kafka's Metamorphosis, and Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. They've also managed to produce two successful independent twin-films, Children and Parents by Ragnar Bragason, which have been screened at film festivals abroad, as well as receiving an international award for the play Surf by Jón Atli Jónasson. By being both inventive and energetic, in only a couple of years Vesturport has managed to appeal to the broad public on both sides of the North Atlantic and, with numerous unconventional adaptations, has transformed the Icelandic theatre landscape.

"We're just trying to create something we would like to go see ourselves. The old cliché, really. Ever since the beginning we were clever enough not to pin down any rules for the company. Our manifesto was to have no manifesto. I think that you have to be allowed to get tired of a certain format. If, for example, I were to produce a show with bungees, acrobatics, lots of smoke and explosions, then I have to be allowed to get bored of that format next year. The more variety

Ever since the beginning we were clever enough not to pin down any rules for the company. Our manifesto was to have no manifesto.

the artist has to show, the more interesting it is. For example, I have often been irritated by how predictable theatre can be."

Hard Rock Hallelujah!

Asked why they decided the next project to be a famous musical, he explains:

"A year ago, we were talking about doing something else, something we had never tried before. We had for example an idea of a children's play and I had also always wanted to produce a musical. Jesus Christ Superstar is in my opinion by far the best musical ever written. The music is great from beginning to end and few people can deny that the story is interesting.

"I gathered people that had the same attitude towards musicals as I do. Börkur Jónsson (Vesturport's stage designer), for example, thought I had lost my mind when I told him about this idea and I was sure that all the singers and musicians I wanted to include in the project would punch me in the face for even considering them," he adds.

The line-up is bound to attract a mixed crowd. Starring Krummi, the singer of hard rock-band Minus, as Jesus himself and Jenni from Brain Police taking on the role of Judas, it also has Bjarni Hall singer of band Jeff Who? as well as actors Ingvar E. Sigurðsson, Ólafur Darri Ólafsson, Ólafur Egill Ólafsson and Lára Sveinsdóttir are in the leading roles. To guarantee a quality, hard-hitting rock show, two other members of Minus, guitarist Bjarni and drummer Bjóssi, were hired to arrange their version of the music.

Jesus Christ Superstar is scheduled to premiere in the middle of July. When asked where the musical will be staged, Björn Hlynur becomes quite mysterious:

"All I can say is that it will be a very unusual setting, and will in all likelihood not be located inside a conventional theatre," he says.

As mentioned before, Vesturport's members have plenty of ideas on how to spend the forthcoming months. In addition to the rock show, Björn Hlynur is writing a new play for The Akureyri Theatre, which he will direct next fall, a movie based on the play Surf by Jón Atli is in the making and further theatre projects are being laid out. This active and uninhibited mix of actors, directors and playwrights has already proven that a small independent company can do whatever-the-hell they feel like it, if the attitude is right. By now, this growing theatre company stops at nothing, having triumphed in Britain, being hyped-up in Iceland and is set to conquer the rest of the world.

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1 EATING
Vor
Laugavegur 24

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

2 Hornið
Hafnarstræti 15

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

3 Argentina Steakhouse
Barónsstígur 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 help make it a recommended place for fine dining.

4 Icelandic Fish Chips
Tryggvagata 8

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

5 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.

6 Indian Mango
Frakkastígur 12

Located on a quiet Laugavegur side street, Indian Mango has infused the Reykjavik 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.

7 Sægreifinn
Verðubúð 8, Geirsgata

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

8 Pizza King
Hafnarstræti 18

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

9 Bernhöftsbakari
Bergstaðastræti 13

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

10 Bæjarins Bestu
Tryggvagata

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

11 Quiznos
Lækjargata 8

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

12 Á næstu grösom
(First Vegetarian)
Laugavegur 20B

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

13 Nonnabiti
Hafnarstræti 9

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

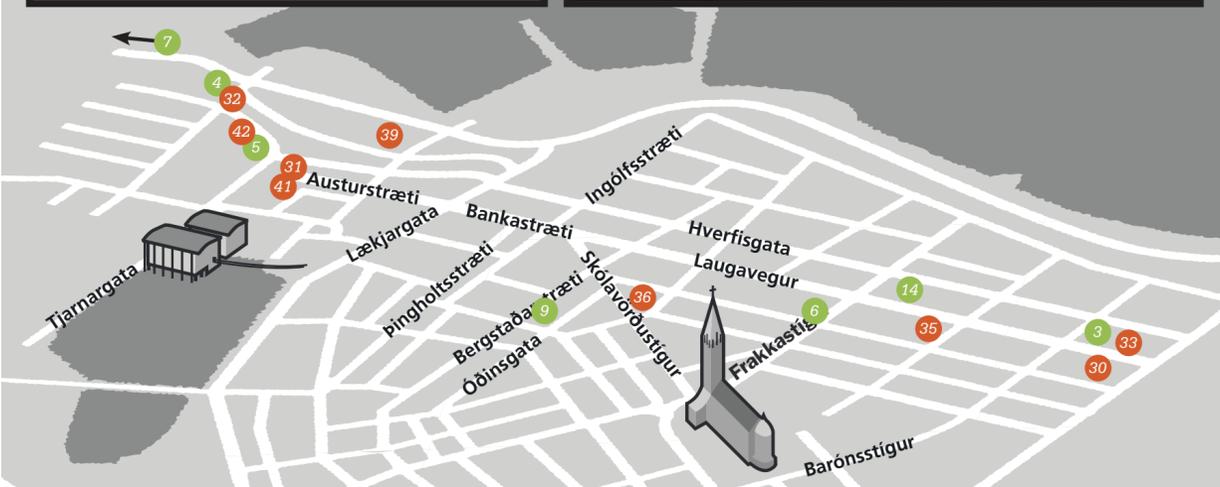
14 Austurlanda-hraðlestin
Hverfisgata 64A

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.



SPOT THIS: Laugavegur 28
Laugavegur 28, 101 Reykjavik

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



15 DRINKING
Grái Kötturinn
Hverfisgata 16a

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

16 Kaffi Hjómaland
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.

17 Segafredo
By Lækjartorg

The Italian coffee-chain found its spot in the heart of Reykjavik, 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.

18 Tíu Dropar
Laugavegur 27

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

19 Súfistinn
Laugavegur 18

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

20 Kaffibarinn
Bergstaðastræti 1

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

21 Sirkus
Klappargistur 30

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

22 Vegamót
Vegamótastígur 4

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

23 Oliver
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 Oliver is the nightclub for you. For all the others who hate that kind of a party, the good air-conditioning, fine food and excellent brunch served during the day makes Oliver a recommended choice for mid-priced meals.

24 Boston
Laugavegur 28b

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

25 Café Cultura
Hverfisgata 18

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

26 Prikíð
Bankastræti 12

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

27 Barinn
Laugavegur 22

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

28 Q-Bar
Ingólfsstræti 3

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

29 Dillon
Laugavegur 30

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

30 SHOPPING
G-Star Raw
Laugavegur 86

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

31 Underground
Veltusund 1

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

32 Kirsuberjatréð
Vesturgata 4

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

33 Galleri Sautján
Laugavegur 91

Stocking many of the hip fashion labels such as Diesel, Kookai, Morgan, Lloyd, 4You and Paul Smith. Galleri Sautján is a unisex store with everything from casual business wear to sporty street wear to evening outfits. On the second floor, you will find the store Eva, stocking fashion labels for women who want to look smart and professional.

34 Laugavegur 28
Laugavegur 28

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

35 Gilbert
Laugavegur 62

Watchmaker Gilbert Guðjónsson has sold watches and clocks on Laugavegur for over 40 years. Recently, Gilbert designed his own line of wristwatches that have been extremely popular, not least among the Hollywood in crowd, and Eli Roth and Quentin Tarantino are both proud owners of Gilbert watches.

36 Börn Náttúrunnar
Skólavörðustígur 17a

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

37 Cintamani
Laugavegur 11

Cintamani centre for adventure stocks Icelandic top quality outdoor-gear and travel equipment for men, women and children, guaranteed to keep the whole family nice and warm in just about any type of weather. Here you'll find almost everything needed for your trip across the country and beyond, and you can book an adventure excursion on the spot.

38 Trilogia
Laugavegur 7

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

39 Kolaportíð
Tryggvagata 19

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

40 Nakti Apinn
Bankastræti 14

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

41 Thorvaldsens Bazar
Austurstræti 4

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

42 Friða Frænka
Vesturgata 3

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

43 Iða
Lækjargata 2a

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

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Reykjavík Arts Festival

Grand scale happenings featuring artists and performers from all over the world are presented at this year's Reykjavík Art Festival, taking place at various venues across the city and the countryside from May 10 to May 26. The festival has been held biannually since 1970 and annually since 2004. Since its early days the festival's organisers have aimed at promoting arts and culture to the public by bringing together a broad spectrum of local and international artists and offering a varied programme of contemporary art exhibitions and world-class events.

This year the festival will open with a ceremony at the National Gallery of Iceland on May 10. Among performances at the opening event are the Hamahlíðarkórinn choir, a co-operative project between Ghostigital and artist Finnþogi Þórisson featuring an unusual composition for concert and radio transmitting and a concert with the music group Kono No° 1 from Congo.

The Art Festival overlaps with the French Pourquoi Pas?

festival, now in its final days, and together the two bring us the world-renowned French street-theatre group Royal de Luxe for a three day extravaganza in the city centre. In cooperation with the music festival Rite of Spring, the extensive programme also includes Goran Bregovic along with forty musicians from the Balkans, performing the Tales and Songs for Weddings and Funerals at Laugardalshöll on May 19.

There sure will be enough to choose from during the three-week period with art exhibitions, concerts and theatre performances scheduled every day. Among the highlights not already mentioned are from the multi award-winning Swedish jazz-trio E.S.T., playing Nasa, performances by the San Francisco Ballet, theatre group Cheek By Jowl staging Shakespeare's Cymbeline, two new Icelandic plays and an exhibition of Icelandic design that will open at Kjarvalsstaðir on May 19.

For a full programme, see www.artfest.is.



Clown-juggler Kunz

The French Kunz family, visiting Iceland for the first time during the Reykjavík Art Festival, is no ordinary theatre group. This strange looking threesome is an amazingly magical circus team starring the philosophical clown-juggler Mr. Kunz, mime-artist Ivika Meister, and composer Olivier Manoury. Mr. Kunz is the alter ego of Nikolaus Maria Holz, who graduated from the French circus school The Centre National des Arts du Cirque. In 1998 he founded his own theatre company Pré-O-C-Coupé and in 2003, he had fully created his fascinating character, which is a cross between a clown and illusionist.

The show Les Kunz has been described as a burlesque cabaret where puppets, acrobats, music, illusions and the art of juggling are combined into an extremely joyful piece where the characters, unable to escape their tragic destiny, face what's coming with great humour and ridiculous acts while mocking the whole absurd seriousness of life. Critics have praised the Kunz family's performance as hilarious, surprising and poetic but most of all top-class entertainment for people of all ages.

The group will not only perform in Reykjavík but also in Egilsstaðir and Akureyri. The shows will take place at the Reykjavík National Theatre on May 11 and 12, The Akureyri Theatre on May 13 and 14 and Valaskjálfi in Egilsstaðir on May 16 and 17.



Spencer Tunick's Nude Installations

New York artist Spencer Tunick is renowned around the world for his remarkable photographs featuring groups of nude people in various public spaces. Since 1992, Tunick has used the human body as the subject in his abstract creations, capturing images of volunteers posing in the nude in the name of art. His most famous installations include more than a thousand models at Ibirapuera Park in Sao Paulo and New York's Grand Central Station, a great mass crowding the escalators at the Selfridges department store in London and a record number of

7000 Spaniards posing in Barcelona.

At the moment, Tunick is organising a photo shoot in Iceland. This time around he's not planning a massive nude-parade, only portraits of Icelanders in different outdoor locations. On May 12, a new exhibition featuring his most recent works opens at Gallery i8. Some of the photos on display have never been viewed before while others were shot in Iceland during his last visit, showing an individual or a small group in rural as well as urban settings.



Roni Horn Retrospective

The retrospective My Oz scheduled to open at the Reykjavík Art Museum on May 11 is the first large-scale exhibition of the works of artist Roni Horn in Scandinavia. Including photographs, sculptures, drawings and books, the exhibition is intended to give a good overview of her works, selected in collaboration with the artist with the aim of reflecting the connection she has with the country. In conjunction with the exhibition, a new book on the artist will be published.

In the small town of Stykkishólmur located on the

Snæfellsnes peninsula another Roni Horn exhibition is in development. The Roni Horn Vatnasafn / Library of Water presents the artist's sculpture installation inside Stykkishólmur's former library building, a project dedicated to weather, water and light in Iceland. Horn has replaced stacks of books with glass columns containing water gathered from Iceland's numerous glaciers and glacial rivers. The opening will be celebrated with a reading with Roni Horn and Guðrún Eva Mínervudóttir on May 12.

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| <p>FRIDAY, MAY 11TH @ 7:30PM REYKJAVÍK ARTS FESTIVAL 2007 Conductor :: David Björkmann Soloist: Heléne Grímaud H. Berlioz :: Roman Carnival, Overture J. Brahms :: Piano Concerto no. 2 C. Debussy :: L'après-midi d'un faune M. Ravel :: La valse</p> | <p>SATURDAY, JUNE 2ND @ 2.00 PM SATURDAY, JUNE 2ND @ 5.00 PM FAMILY CONCERT Conductor :: Bernharður Wilkinson Soloists :: Selma Björnsdóttir, Andrea Sýfalldóttir, Valgarður Guðnadóttir and Björgvin Franz Gíslason Narrator :: Örn Arnason Kristlaug M. Sigurðardóttir & Þorvaldur B. Þorvaldsson :: Fruit Basket</p> |
| <p>FRIDAY, MAY 18TH @ 7:30 REYKJAVÍK ARTS FESTIVAL 2007 Conductor :: Andre de Ridder Soloists :: Hanna Dóra Sturludóttir, Merryn Gamba, Clemens Löschmann, Tom Raskin, Sebastian Noack, Leigh Melrose, Christian Tschelbiew and David Ólafsson H. Hallgrímsson :: Die Wált der Zwischenfälle</p> | <p>THURSDAY, JUNE 7TH @ 7.30 PM CARMEN Conductor :: Nicolae Moldoveanu Soloists :: Guðrún J. Ólafsdóttir, Garðar Thor Cortes G. Bizet :: Carmen (short version)</p> |
| <p>THURSDAY, MAY 31ST @ 7:30PM SHOSTAKOVICH LAST SYMPHONY Conductor :: Rumon Gamba Þ. Magnússon :: Það mótlaði þankinn ber R. Wagner :: The Valkyrie D. Shostakovich :: Symphony no. 15</p> | <p>TUESDAY, JUNE 12TH @ 7.30 PM "THOSE WHERE THE DAYS" Conductor :: Bernharður Wilkinson Soloists :: Ragnheiður Gröndal Eivar Pálsdóttir Icelandic Evergreens</p> |
| | <p>FRIDAY, JUNE 29TH @ 7.30 PM* PINK FLOYD THE WALL Soloists :: Dúndurfréttir Roger Waters :: The Wall</p> |

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All concerts take place in Háskólabíó unless otherwise noted.
*Concert in Laugardalshöll Sports Arena

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Barinn

Laugavegur 22, 101 Reykjavík, tel.: 578 7800

The vibrant three-floor bar, somewhat confusingly named Barinn (The Bar), located on the corner of Laugavegur and Klappartígur is one of the city's ultimate weekend party destinations. With DJs playing five nights of the week, bartenders on every floor and boasting plenty of seats, this place is usually a safe bet for a good time out no matter if it's a Wednesday evening or a Saturday night.

But the attitude at Barinn isn't all about drinking and dancing until the crack of dawn. During the day, the place turns into a casual downtown coffeehouse where the relaxed vibe and reasonably priced menu attracts hungry pedestrians who like to sit down for a meal and a drink or two during lunch or dinner hours. Although mostly focused on drinks in the past, Barinn recently started serving food again, now featuring a simple bistro menu where several varieties are available, from tomato-soup and nachos, to pasta, salads, sandwiches and, as always, fine coffee and newspapers to read.

Before my friend and I sat down to grab a quick meal after a long workday, several regulars had recommended the Barinn-style hamburger on the menu. On their advice I decided therefore not to order the more healthy broccoli quiche served with salad and yoghurt sauce but instead opted for the ultimate combo: bacon-burger and a large beer on draught while my friend picked the chicken sandwich.

After only waiting for a few minutes, our waitress arrived with our orders. My burger was very basic yet extremely filling, served with a rich portion of French fries. Fresh bread and perfectly grilled meat topped with salad, cheese, sauce and crunchy bacon made for a juicy burger-meal, which, compared to nearby cafés, was well above average. My friend was equally satisfied with her BBQ chicken sandwich, consisting of a huge baguette topped with chicken, ham, bacon, cheese and salad, also served with lots of French fries.

Needless to say, after barely finishing our food, we didn't leave hungry, but instead very satisfied with this new dining option in the centre, which is easy to recommend. At Barinn you'll get large, not too pricy portions, fine service and a nice atmosphere. If in the mood for a quick meal followed by a good party, come in late and stay until the beer-thirsty crowd starts arriving.

Reviewed by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir



Ostabúðin

Skólavörðustígur 8, 101 Reykjavík, tel.: 562 2772

Ostabúðin (The Cheese Store) on Skólavörðustígur is among the most beloved gourmet stores in the city and its popularity is well earned. Specialising in serving those with a discerning palate, the shop has built up a loyal customer base that can always rely on the fine selection of cheeses as well as quality food products including hot-smoked blackbird, salami, smoked sausages, foie gras, oils, sauces, Italian pasta, balsamic vinegars, Belgian chocolate and all sorts of yummy desserts.

Ostabúðin's little hidden secret is its cosy restaurant on the bottom floor, open during lunch hours, (from 11:30 to 14:30). The small space only has a couple of seats and usually fills up quickly every day, but as the service is fast and the customers usually don't have an infinite lunch break, you usually don't have to wait too long for a table. Just use the time to browse the desirably filled shelves while waiting, or grab the food to go if you're really in a hurry.

The menu is simple and straightforward but features the same gourmet experience as the rest of the shop. Reasonably priced healthy and light daily specials include a rich bowl of soup for 580 ISK, salads with irresistible raspberry vinaigrette, bruschetta with parma ham, mozzarella and tomatoes and always some juicy baguettes generously stuffed with vegetables, cheese and slices of meat. The most popular course on the menu is the fish of the day, a hearty dish that will fill your stomach but only set you back 1.090 ISK.

The restaurant only uses the freshest ingredients available so the dishes may vary from day to day. When my companion and I sat down for lunch, fillets of pan-fried tusk with tomato-basil sauce and polenta were on offer. That was just too appetising to even consider ordering anything else. While waiting for the meal the friendly waitress brought us home baked bread served with olive oil and organic tomato seasoning on the side. In only minutes our orders arrived, and they tasted just as yummy as they looked. The tusk was perfectly cooked and the sauce absolutely delicious.

This fantastic place offers not only quality meals but also boasts staff who are passionate about fine food and really know their business. Whether its for dining or shopping, dropping by is always a pleasure.

Reviewed by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir



Kaffi Sólón

Bankastræti 7a, 101 Reykjavík, tel.: 562 3232

Kaffi Sólón is an ideal stop for downtown working bees during the 30-minute lunch break (obviously, hungry pedestrians fit right in as well), featuring a new and extensive bistro menu focusing on quick and healthy dishes, with space for groups available on the upper level. Orders are processed in a timely manner, the selection is plentiful, and best of all, the price is right.

The main menu is based on typical quick bistro offerings, such as tapas, bagels, paninis, sandwiches, pasta or hamburgers, with a solid, if not spectacular, wine selection. The kicker is the special lunch menu, featuring health-conscious selections at a very reasonable price, with most dishes coming in at around 1,500 ISK. According to our waiter, the healthy lunch specials menu is changed every two-weeks. In addition, Kaffi Sólón offers soup de jour, and fish of the day, during this particular day, a vegetable soup, and tusk fish, respectively.

After agonising over my selection, being torn between a tapas selection of deep fried monk fish and dill cured salmon with mustard sauce, I finally decided to live dangerously while selecting from the health menu and opted for the pan-fried seafood mix (scallops, mussels and shrimp) in garlic, basilica, white wine and butter. It was an excellent dish by any standards, rich in taste and the serving was more than plentiful. For the price of 1,350 ISK, I believe you would be hard pressed to find a better lunch offer in town. My companion chose creamy pasta with bacon, chicken, and spinach, not the most adventurous selection, but always reliable. Again, the pasta was good, and the serving could easily accommodate two people. For a little icing on the cake, so to speak, I ordered a café and French chocolate cake from the dessert menu. Despite being served cold, the chocolate cake was a solid eight on a ten-point scale.

The only drawback to Kaffi Sólón is that the non-smoking area is badly separated from the smoking section, although that will probably be fixed by June; and as often happens with busy lunch restaurants, the service can be a little impersonal. Overall, between the plentiful servings, accommodating price and good food, Kaffi Sólón is an excellent choice for lunching out in downtown Reykjavík.

Reviewed by Sveinn Birgir Björnsson



The Reykjavík Zoo and Family Park

Engjavegur, Laugardalur, 104 Reykjavík. www.mu.is

Editor's note: Last weekend, my 8-year-old daughter asked me why the Reykjavík Grapevine had never done a story on the Reykjavík Zoo and Family Park. I didn't really have a good answer to this question and since she felt strongly about this, I made her an offer. If she would visit the Park and report on her visit, I would run it in the magazine. While the following story might not strictly adhere to the rigours of journalism, it was written with all the passion for the job that is only reserved for the profession's finest. So here is the story of the Reykjavík Zoo and Family Park by the youngest practising journalist in Iceland.

Now the summer is coming in Iceland, so it is ideal to go to the Reykjavík Zoo and Family Park, which is in Laugardalur, across from the skating rink. It is very exciting for foreigners and Icelanders, and people of all ages. In the Reykjavík Zoo and Family Park there are many animals, for example seals, rabbits, chickens, roosters, Guinea pigs, goats and newborn baby goats, sheep, pigs, reindeers, fishes, cows, horses, and foxes.

In the Park you can not only look at animals, you can also go to a café and get hot and cold dishes. There are also amusement rides, for example a carousel, a free fall tower, and a train, and actually, you can also barbecue hot dogs.

There is also a Science Tent where you can find all kinds of information and knowledge. In the Science Tent you can wrap yourself in a giant soap bubble, sit on a chair of nails, check your weight on other planets, there you can also look at fishes, look at your self in funny mirrors and scream [into a decibel meter] and see how loud you scream.

Text by Alexandra Diljá Birksdóttir, 8 years old



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■ Useful Numbers
Emergency number: 112
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Medical help: 1770
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Information: 118
Telegrams: 146
■ Tax Free Refund
Iceland Refund, Aðalstræti 2, Tel: 564 6400 www.icelandrefund.com
■ Laundry Service
HI Hostel, Sundlaugarvegur 34, Tel: 553 8110, www.hostel.is
Úðafoss, 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
B5Í Bus Terminal, Vatnsmýrarvegur 10
Ground Zero, Vallarstræti 10
The Reykjavik City Library, Tryggvagata 15
The National and University Library, Arngrimgsgata 3
Tourist Information Centre, Aðalstræti 2
 Icelandic Travel Market: Bankastræti 2
■ Opening hours
Bars and clubs: According to regulations bars may be open until 01:00 on weekdays and 05:30 on weekends.
Shops: Mon-Fri 10-18, Sat 10-16, Sun closed. The shopping centres Kringlan and Smáralind as well as most supermarkets and tourist shops have longer opening hours.
Swimming pools: weekdays 06:30-22:30, weekends 08:00-20:30 although some may be open an hour longer.
The State owned ÁTVR liquor stores: Mon-Thu 11-18, Fri 11-19, Sat 11-18.

Banks in the centre are open Mon-Fri 09-16.
Getting Around
■ Public transport
 The only public transport system in Reykjavik is the bus. Most busses run every 20 minutes and price per fare is 250 ISK for adults and 75 ISK for children. Complete route map at: www.bus.is. Tel: 540 2700
 Busses run from 07:00-24:00 on weekdays and 10:00-24:00 on weekends
■ 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.eyjaflug.is
■ Bus Terminal
B5Í, Vatnsmýrarvegur 10, Tel: 562 1011, www.b5i.is
■ Samferda.net
 A reasonable choice for the budget traveller. You log on to the website www.samferda.net, choose your destination and hopefully find a travel buddy to share the cost.

Cultural centres and Tourist Offices
■ The Intercultural Centre
 The Intercultural Centre throws occasional cultural events and conferences but its main purpose is to be an information and counselling centre and serve as an advocate for the rights of immigrants in Iceland.
 Hverfisgata 18, Tel: 530 9300 www.ahus.is
■ Icelandic Travel Market
 Bankastræti 2, Tel: 510 5700, www.kleif.is
 Information on day tours, accommodations, car rental and everything else you need to know when travelling in Iceland.
■ Icelandic 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
 A cultural institute that offers movie screenings, lectures and German language courses.
■ Nordic House
 Sturlugata 5, Tel: 551 7030, www.nordice.is
 The Nordic cultural centre organises various cultural events, conferences and exhibitions.
 All major tourist spots in Reykjavik also offer brochures, maps and information for travellers.

Service in English is at Hallgrímskirkja every last Saturday each month, starting at 14:00. The Roman Catholic Church also has masses in English and Polish.
 Other religious movements in Reykjavik are for example:
The Muslim Association of Iceland, Ármúli 38
Ásatrú Association, Grandagarði 8
Bahá'í, Álfabakka 12
The Church of Evangelism, Hlíðasmári 9
The Icelandic Buddhist Movement, Víghólastigur 21
Reykjavik Free Lutheran Church, 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, Suðurlíð 36
Zen Buddhism in Iceland, Reykjavíkurgvegur 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, Sætún 1, Tel: 535 5600, www.asi.is
The Federation of State and Municipal employees, Grettisgata 89, Tel: 525 8300, www.bsrb.is
The Association of Academics, Borgartún 6, Tel: 581 2090, www.bhm.is
Efling, Sætún 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.fjölmenningarsetur.is (The Multicultural Centre)
www.hostel.is (Hostel International in Iceland)
www.vinnumalastofnun.is (Public employment services)
www.gulalanan.is (The yellow pages)
www.leigulistinn.is (Rent a flat)
www.simaskra.is (Icelandic telephone directory)
■ Where to get ...
Work and residence permit: The Directorate of Immigration, 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 unrestricted residence permit in Iceland for at least seven years in order to get an

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

Facts on Iceland

■ Iceland is a constitutional republic with slightly more than 300,000 inhabitants. Reykjavik has been the country's capital since 1786 and today almost two-thirds of the population live in the greater capital area.
 ■ The 17th of June 1944 Iceland became an independent republic. That day is the national holiday and is celebrated all around the country.
 ■ Alþingi, the national parliament, is the oldest assembly in the world, established at Þingvellir in 930 but restored in Reykjavik in 1844. The parliament is comprised of 63 members, who are elected by popular vote every four years. Icelandic citizens over 18 years of age have the legal right to vote.
 ■ Parliamentary elections were last held in 2003 with 33.7 percent of votes going to the Independence Party. The Social Democratic Alliance got 31 percent, the Progressive Party 17.7 percent, the Leftist-Greens 8.8 percent and the Liberal Party 7.4 percent. The Independence Party and the Progressive Party formed a coalition and together lead the government.
 ■ Iceland has 12 ministers with the prime minister and head of government being Geir H. Haarde, who is also chairman of the Independence Party. The President of Iceland is Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, who has been in office since 1996. He is the Chief of State although his duties are mostly ceremonial.
 ■ Time Zone: GMT 0
 ■ Currency: Íslensk króna (ISK).
 ■ International Dialling Code: +354
 ■ Weather: Average temperature during summer is around 10°C and winter citizens have to have had an unrestricted residence permit in Iceland for at least seven years in order to get an



Free Legal Counselling

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir Photo by Skari

Lögrétta, the Law Students' Association at the University of Reykjavik, in cooperation with the University's Faculty of Law and the Intercultural Centre, recently started offering legal counselling for immigrants and people of foreign origin living in Iceland. The service is open to all free of charge and is run by law students who volunteer their time and assistance.
 The project was initiated on March 21, after a group of students had been discussing the idea of providing free legal aid to those who might need it the most. By helping immigrants with legal problems, whether they are seeking advice on work permits, need someone to explain their legal rights or are reporting criminal violations, the students want to welcome new residents settling in the country by helping them protect their rights.
 "With this project we want to give back to the society and, in the meantime, we are earning experience in the practice, by communicating with the people and finding ways to assist them," Árni Freyr Arnason, the project's manager, tells the Grapevine.
 The Lögrétta legal service is located on the fifth floor at the Intercultural Centre on Hverfisgata 18 and is open on Wednesdays from 17-21. Five to six students are working each time and treat everyone who might need legal help. The service has operated for six weeks now and during that time they've taken on plenty of cases, both small claims as well as serious problems.
 "We handle all issues, for example those regarding the process of starting a company,

settling conflicts with the landlord or how to get citizenship or work permits," Árni explains. "What we can do varies from client to client. Sometimes we write letters, explaining the clients' legal rights, but on other occasions, the claims have been more complicated and we have had to recommend that the client hire a lawyer to work on the case. We've also been working on one very spiteful human rights violation, in which case we advised that person to go straight to the police and file a report."
 Árni emphasises how urgent it is to provide this kind of free assistance to immigrants as, when moving to a new country, you can be faced with various problems. "Many immigrants don't know their legal rights, don't know where to go to get all the information they need or where to seek help if they've been mistreated. It can be hard to start a new life in a foreign country, especially if you don't speak the language," he adds.
 Asked what is done if the individual who needs help dealing with legal problems doesn't speak Icelandic or English, Árni says they will hire an interpreter to work on the case with them. No one is warned off, and seeing how many claims the students have taken on in such a short period of time, it's clearly an important matter. The legal service will operate every week in the future, and as long as the University's Faculty of Law exists, Árni says the Lögrétta legal service will be run by the students.



The Design Guide to Reykjavik

Text by Sveinn Birgir Björnsson Photo by Skari

Rachel Moloney is a series editor for Wallpaper* City Guides, a travel book series published by the Wallpaper* magazine and Phaidon Press.
 Launched in November 2006, the Wallpaper* City Guide series provides insights and tips for design-conscious travellers on excursions through cities like New York, London or Buenos Aires. This May, ten new Wallpaper* City Guides will be published, bringing the number of cities covered so far to 40. Next October, Reykjavik will be one of ten new cities added to the series.
 "Everything is very confident and full of attitude here in Reykjavik," Moloney said when a Grapevine reporter met her on a recent scouting trip for the guidebook in Reykjavik. "There is a confident café culture and bar culture, except maybe for the design bar culture, people seem to lack a little confidence in that area. It is such a developed scene in London and New York and I guess we are just used to it. But it is a recent phenomenon in Reykjavik and it looks like people are still getting used to the glamour of it. People just seem very self-conscious. There is a little fish-out-of-water-feeling to it."
 Moloney spent a week in Reykjavik and the surrounding area in preparation for the Reykavik guide, getting acquainted with the city and the culture. Among the places that impressed her most was Hótel Búðir, a small country hotel, located on Snæfellsnes, about two-hours out of Reykjavik. "It was absolutely fantastic, I can't recommend it

enough," Moloney describes it. "A lot of people do think that Iceland is this backwater, not so much Reykjavik, but the country, and they don't realise how sophisticated it is. At Búðir, you are literally in the middle of nowhere, but judging from the interior, you could be in the middle of a modern city. It is very, very cool. There is this unique mixture with the design and looking at the [Snæfellsjökull] glacier out the window. There is a very unusual atmosphere or vibe to it."
 While Hótel Búðir was one of the nicest surprises of her trip, she was also duly impressed with the Hótel Home Apartments, a studio apartment hotel that emphasises chic décor and design. "It is very designed, it was probably the high point of my trip."
 When asked for advice for places to visit, Moloney suggested Hallgrímskirkja and the surrounding area, such as the swimming pool Sundhöllin, the ASÍ Museum, and the Einar Jónsson Museum, all located within a hundred metres of each other on Skólavörðuholt. "I met two young kids from Edinburgh by Hallgrímskirkja and I asked them what they most enjoyed about the city. For them it was really just walking around and doing a bit of everything. That is what is so great about this city, you can do a bit of everything right here in the centre. Take a swim, enjoy a coffee, go to the shops and a museum and then go to club. You can do a hell of a lot here in one day and that is what is so enchanting about this city.

b5

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23. February 2007 – 26. May 2007

LIÓSMYNDASAFN REYKJAVÍKUR
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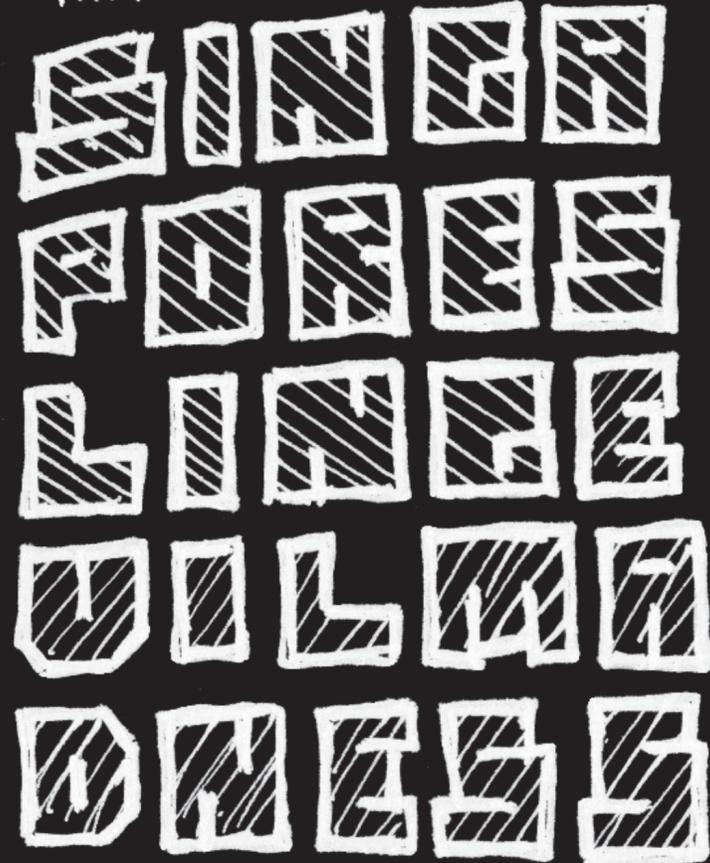
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The Reykjavík Grapevine and Bad Taste in collaboration with Thule and FM Reykjavík present:

Take me down to Reykjavík City { the concert series }

HRESSÓ AUSTURSTRÆTI
THURSDAY MAY 10 21:30



REYKJAVÍK
FM104.5



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At the press conference, Vilhjálmsson stated that he considered it important to rebuild the corner in its original state, saying: "I stress that we attempt to protect this historic corner, this street image and these houses. I stress that we move quickly. This is the heart of the city and we need to show it respect."

Roughly an hour later, he chose his words more carefully while talking to the daily news magazine and TV programme Kastljós, saying: "We need to look into the matter carefully with the owners of these houses. It is my ambition that these historic houses will be maintained. There is a lot that can be done as we have seen in Aðalstræti [where old houses from the same era have been rebuilt]. It is my opinion that we should maintain this historic street image for as long as we can."

And move fast he did. On Saturday, April 21, Vilhjálmsson announced that the city would enter negotiations with the owners to buy the remains and land they stand on. "The aim is to ensure that the restoration will be done as safely and as quickly as possible and to ensure that the street image will be maintained and rebuilt as closely as possible," Vilhjálmur explained to the media.

Only a few hours after the fire started, Vilhjálmur Vilhjálmsson had made a political decision that the houses would be restored in their original state, at that time without so much as consulting the owners. One business day later (Thursday, April 19, was the first day of summer, a national holiday), he had announced that the city would enter negotiations with the owners. At no point during that time was there any sort of political, professional, or public discourse on how to proceed. The decision was made in the Mayor's mind during the emotional period he watched the fire claim historical buildings.

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Despite their recorded past, little respect has been paid to the origin of these houses. For a number of years, they have both served a combination of nightclubs, bars, and restaurants. Several changes have been made to both their external appearance and interior to accommodate those establishments with little or no regard for the origin or cultural heritage of the buildings they were located in. The result is that very little remains of the original houses, except the scale and the shape of buildings.

There is an old Icelandic proverb that states: No one knows what he has had until he has lost it. The fire in Austurstræti seems to be a classic manifestation of this simple truth. Now that the houses are gone, city officials have claimed great interest in preserving the history and heritage of these houses, where there was little or no interest taken in them before.

The public debate that ensued in the first few days after the fire was not nearly as one sided as the Mayor's decision. A good part of those who expressed their opinion of the matter, either in the media, through blogs or on street corners, believed that the houses should be restored to their original state. But there was also a large

part of the population that believed that the houses represented a reminder of a village that became a town that became a city; and that the fire should be regarded as an opportunity to build something in the heart of the city that would better fit a modern Reykjavík.

Architect Gunnlaugur Björn Jónsson holds much interest in old Icelandic houses, and has worked extensively on restoration projects of old buildings. When the Grapevine contacted him for a comment, he expressed views that could be considered to represent the moderate side of this debate. "I can understand and see the arguments from both sides, and I think both sides have a point" Jónsson said. He remains ambivalent about the process that started with the Mayor's announcement on April 18. "It was a heat of the moment decision I believe, and it is difficult to backtrack from that announcement," Jónsson said. "I believe a project of this magnitude should have been discussed professionally, and preferably there should have been a contest for how this corner should be rebuilt."

Jónsson says that the corner on Austurstræti and Lækjargata could be regarded as an opportunity to redesign a vital part of the old city centre to better meet the demands of the modern day. "The restoration of old houses is a good goal in and of itself, and in general I am supportive of all efforts to preserve old buildings. But at this point we are talking about building new houses to replicate the old houses, not preserving the old houses." Jónsson maintains that replicas of old houses could in fact be placed at another location, where they would be better served. "There is a tradition of moving and rebuilding these old houses at new locations, such as in Aðalstræti," Jónsson says, although he does not strongly advocate either side of the debate.

No Revision

Pétur Hrafn Ármannsson teaches architecture at the Iceland Academy of the Arts, and is a curator for architecture at the Reykjavík Museum of Art. Ármannsson says that in 1926, Guðjón Samúelsson, the State Architect of Iceland at the time, made the first detailed city plan for Reykjavík. In the plan, Samúelsson – who designed houses such as Hallgrímskirkja, the National Theatre and The University of Iceland among most other grandiose buildings of the time – envisioned that the small wooden houses in Austurstræti, such as Austurstræti 20 and 22, would give way to six-storey buildings such as Samúelsson's design on the corner of Austurstræti and Pósthússtræti.

"After a fire burned down a large part of the centre in 1915, building wooden houses was banned in the area," Ármannsson explains. People believed there was no future in wood, and that the concrete age was upon us. For a long time, six-storey buildings have been the benchmark used for planning in the city centre." In fact, buildings between four and six storeys surround the row of houses, from Austurstræti 20 - 22 and Lækjargata 2.

But Ármannsson remains convinced that there is no question that the Mayor made the right decision. "These houses have stood there for over 200 hundred years. There are many arguments for restoring them to their original state, as close to their original appearance in the 19th century." He does not support the idea that the houses should be restored at a different location. "The houses are a part of a street image that has been there for a long time. They serve as a setting for the Government Offices [on the opposite corner] at Lækjargata. The site is also on the south side of the street, so building six-storey buildings at that site would block out the sun on Lækjartorg square."

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"The problem is that the city doesn't have a long history, so there is the tendency to preserve everything that can possibly be preserved, just because it is old and we don't have anything else to preserve." In direct opposition to Ármannsson's views, Magnússon believes that ancient history does not by itself justify that the houses that burned down will be built again at the same location.

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Magnússon believes that with modern technology, we should be able to take a step back and look at our options. "People are afraid of changes. That is perhaps natural, but people are afraid that if changes are made [on that corner] it will be a catastrophe. People regard the preservation path as a safe route. If you are afraid of the future, you always choose the most conservative path. With the 3-dimensional technique we have available today, it would be easy enough to build computer models and look at the options. I cannot believe that somewhere, someone has not made a proposal for something different on that corner. This site needs to be planned in relation to the other developments in the area."

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Mímus

The Great Northern Whalekill

This was selected as the most awaited album of 2007 by music critics in the Reykjavík Grapevine's 2006 year end list. Rock band Mímus has evolved a fair bit over the years, exploding from hardcore to stadium like cock-rock. This release continues in that vein, 11 songs in all, featuring the distinctive Mímus tone. That is probably what will define this release in the future: Mímus are creating their own sound and The Great Northern Whalekill is a huge slab of heavy concrete in the foundation of that structure. But the Great Northern Whalekill does not deliver the same punch in the face that Halldór Laxness, their last album, did. It lacks uniformity and to some extent, originality. There are a few songs that stand out, Shoot the Moon and Throw Away Angel come to mind, but I was hoping for a masterpiece and got an album that does not sound very memorable. Maybe time will prove me wrong. *PH*

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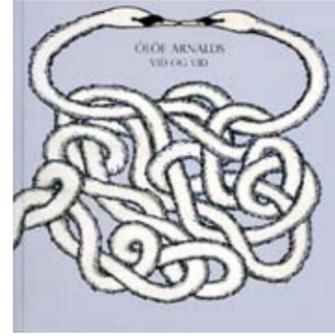


Seabear

The Ghost That Carried Us Away

Seabear is a four piece and this is their first full-length album, but previously they've released the EP Singing Arc. Reykjavík's hipsters seem to like them and talk avidly about their concerts. The world is also taking notice, the influential German label Morr Music handles the release outside Iceland. Not bad for a debut record. The music is easy listening educated pop/country, Beck comes to mind and at times Benni Hemm Hemm. It floats harmlessly in the background, the home production and recording giving it a warm feel. On this album Seabear relies heavily on acoustic guitars, harmonicas and violins to deliver their one slow track after another. Seabear knows how to write songs and the arrangements are at times innovative but the songs melt into one cute, but boring, soup. *PH*

www.myspace.com/seabear



Ólöf Arnalds

Við og við

Ólöf Arnalds has been playing music for a long time (for example with Múm and Stórsveit Nix Noltes) but this is her first solo release. Mostly it's just Ólöf playing guitar and singing in a high-pitched voice that is definitely unique, sometimes a low key violin or bass is added. This is old school folk music, reminiscent of Joan Baez, Bob Dylan and Megas. In fact one song is a Megas cover, the rest original compositions by Ólöf. The lyrics are in Icelandic and are fortunately not so bad. But to me this sounds anachronistic, too much like lost recordings from the seventies. It's certainly well executed and beautiful in its out of date way. Ólöf is a very skilled musician but this is far from being my cup of tea. I still recommend you check this out, it might blow you away or puzzle you, as it did me. *PH*



Wulfgang

Wulfgang

Wulfgang were runners up in 2005 Battle of the Bands. Since then they have been busy recording their self-titled first album, released on Cod Music. This is rock 'n' roll, sometimes with a distinctive prog-rock feel. The song Machinery has received some extensive airplay and built up some anticipation for the release. But unfortunately that song is the only real gem here. The rest of the CD is not very exciting, too much old news and old ideas. But it is apparent that these boys have potential and know how to work their instruments. There are some good elements in place but they get lost with too many ideas being put into each song. The booklet and cover, tough, is masterfully executed. I'm sure Wulfgang will get better and their next release could easily be great. *PH*

www.myspace.com/wulfgangtheband



Mímus

Jesus Christ Bobby

Quite possibly the most abrasive release in Icelandic musical history, JCB is bass heavy, un-compromising and brimming with delectable drum work. This is Mímus at their most unpredictable and angry; a relic of their shaven-headed era. Befitting of the label "Art-Core", or possibly the "Noise-Core" moniker slapped on contemporary equals Botch and Coalesce, JCB pummels in odd meters and unexpected ways while never ceasing to twist and turn. Aided by producer Curver and his constant noise infractions and sporting guest vocals by the Sugarcubes singer Einar Örn this is the album that put Mímus on the pages of Kerrang and laid the groundwork for numerous U.K. tours. All in all, some serious left-field shit that's laudable throughout, with the minor exception of the half-decent track, Arctic Exhibition, where singer Krummi discovers that crooning to the tune of an acoustic guitar is best left to Simon and Garfunkel. *BB*

<http://www.myspace.com/minus>



Megas

Loftmynd

When Megas first appeared in the 70s, he was the first artist to attempt writing intelligent lyrics in Icelandic within the context of rock music, at which he remains unsurpassed. His 1977 collaboration with Spilverkið, Á bleikum náttkjólum, has been named the best Icelandic album of all time. But for me, Loftmynd remains his masterpiece and the definitive Reykjavík album. Megas here writes about the history of Reykjavík, from the tragicomic story of professional pessimist Birkiland, to town founder Skúli fógeti and the true story murder ballad Ástarsaga (Love Story). But the best songs are those that deal with his own period; Reykjavíkurnætur, about growing up in the post war era, and Björt ljós, borgarljós, about immigration from the countryside as seen through the eyes of a drag queen. Some of these songs have been rediscovered on Magga Stína's excellent cover album of Megas songs, but the originals remain the best. And they even boast Björk on backing vocals to boot. *VG*

Reviews by Bogi Bjarnason, Páll Hilmarrson and Valur Gunnarsson

Petta er skartgripur

Poppkorn er ekki bara gott, það er líka fallegt. Ef þú átt náð og tvíanna er lítið mál að búa til flotta perlufesti.



Hjá Námsmannabjónustu Sparisjóðsins gerir þú mikið úr litlu. Gott dæmi um það er **2 fyrir 1 í Sambíóin** alla þriðjudaga. Skráðu þig í Námsmannabjónustu Sparisjóðsins og þú færð **Bíókort - 4 x frítt í bíó** og margt fleira. Nánari upplýsingar á spar.is eða í næsta sparisjóði. Við hlökkum til að heyra frá þér. Gerðu mikið úr litlu!





The Vulcan Dub Squad
The New Designers

The other day, a guy came by and dropped a CD on us that he professed to have recorded in his basement. The Vulcan Dub Squad hail from Ontario, Canada and apparently this is their sixth release. There is neither much Vulcan nor dub here. This is radio friendly alternative rock, layered guitars and addictive melodies. It reminds you of Cure, Ride (anybody who remembers Ride get's a free beer from me) and My Bloody Valentine. Their obligatory Myspace motto is: "Music for the connoisseur – not the consumer". That says a lot. At times this is dreamy and shoegazing and at times it rocks moderately hard – but always melodic and interesting. There are a few tracks that really caught me, the nine minute long I Should Have Been There (I Know) is excellent as is Confidence, Man! This was a surprisingly good find, excellent indie for everyone. *PH*

www.myspace.com/thevulcandubsquad



Das Kapital
Lili Marlene

As is often the case with artists, the worse they fare in their personal lives, the better they sound professionally. In 1984 singer Bubbi was at his nadir, having released two flops the same year and just about to start the first of his many trips to detox. The desperation is most audible on Svartur gítar, about having a conversation with the digital clock on your VCR in the middle of the night. Bubbi, Iceland's first true rock star with all that that entails, sings about the press on 10.000 króna frétt and the trappings of fame on Leyndarmál frægðarinnar, but retains his political side on Bönnunum verkföll and Launaþrællinn. Bubbi tends to work best with Mike Pollock at his side, who gets a solo spot on Fallen Angels, while Bubbi himself attempts Danish on the title track. The album barely lets up the aggression for the classic ballad Blindsker, and is probably the best rock album recorded (mostly) in Icelandic, besting even Bubbi's own debut. *VG*

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The Best Band No One Knows

Text by Sveinn Birkir Björnsson Photo by Skari

Who: **I Adapt, Morðingjarnir, Brat Pack, and the Best Hardcore Band in the World**

Where: **Hljómalind**
When: **April 28, 2007**

The tiny non-profit co-op organic-café shop Hljómalind on Laugavegur has proven to be an incredibly popular concert venue, especially within the Reykjavík punk scene, where the sXe section holds a special affection for the place. Obviously, as a venue, Hljómalind has many drawbacks, size perhaps being the most obvious one, but the cramped closeness and the enthusiastic crowd, and the community feeling always makes a Hljómalind show a positive experience.

Opening the festivities was the confidently named The Best Hardcore Band in the World. xTxBxHxCxBxlXW (probably the longest acronym in the world), submitted their own take on a very punkish trashcore. Known for their raw delivery of PCHC (Paradise City Hardcore, Reykjavík's hardcore scene's semi-serious attempt to label a genre, such as NYHC or CTHC), The Best Hardcore Band in the World opened with a new song: "written at practice yesterday," declared vocalist Fannar. A few more days of practice certainly could not have hurt, as the performance was all over the place, but opening difficulties aside, the band came away unscathed. But that is usually what they do, as the quality of the delivery often seems to take a backseat to their contagious joy of playing anyway.

Apart from a positively cool name, the Brat Pack delivered a more traditional two-chord punk rock. The kind that might have

fitted into the Repo Man score (a cult movie classic featuring original Brat Pack-er Emilio Estevez and 80's punk rock, and actually, tel-evangelists and aliens, but I digress...) They did not particularly blow me away musically, but again, enthusiasm goes a long way.

The schedule called for the punk outfit Morðingjarnir (The Murderers) to appear next. However, the band had not arrived yet, so the headlining act I Adapt took the floor early. Fresh off a two-week tour of the U.S. the band was honed to perfection, performing one of the tightest sets I have seen from them. My five-year old son, whom I brought along for the all-ages show, was standing on a chair behind the crowd when the first instant-mosh-pit-inducing guitar riffs from ax-man Ingi spontaneously set the crowd on fire. He lasted about five seconds standing on that chair before a flying patron knocked him down. Lucky for him (and the patron in question) I was there to catch him. Obviously, an I Adapt show is no place for children.

While blazing through new material such as Ape City and Familiar Ghosts, I Adapt's powerful performance proved that they are the best band in Reykjavík most people do not know about. Hopefully, that will change with an upcoming album scheduled for release later this year.

By the time I Adapt finished, Morðingjarnir was in place, although the crowd immediately got thinner. Despite the apparent discomfort of guitarist/vocalist Haukur, suffering from the dreaded day-after syndrome, the trio maintained the positive vibe with a forceful set of happy punk, highlighted by bass player Atli's singing performance on the last song.



An Ample Dose of Happiness

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir Photo by Skari

Who: **Nouvelle Vague**
Where: **The Reykjavík Art Museum**
When: **April 27, 2007**

After squeezing through an almost impenetrable crowd (receiving pokes and evil eyes as a reward for my aggression) I finally managed to get a good view of the stage at the Reykjavík Art Museum when Nouvelle Vague was performing their second song that evening, Ever Falling in Love, originally recorded by the Manchester punk-rock group Buzzcocks. For me, it was hard not to fall in love with the band at that exact moment.

Founded by the duo Marc Collin and Olivier Libaux, Nouvelle Vague's name, translating as new wave in French and bossa nova in Portuguese, gives a hint on what they set out to do, making bossa nova versions of classic new wave hits from the 80s. With great help from numerous contributing singers they've managed to bring new life to saintly-classics and by doing so, they've gained a huge following among former punks as well as those who've never even heard of the originals.

The show at the Reykjavík Art Museum attracted a mixed crowd, young and middle-aged fans who were all there to enjoy the feel-good music. Two singers wiggled in the spotlight, dressed in black sexy dresses and addressing the audience while the founding members sat quietly in the background, occasionally grinning at the crowd.

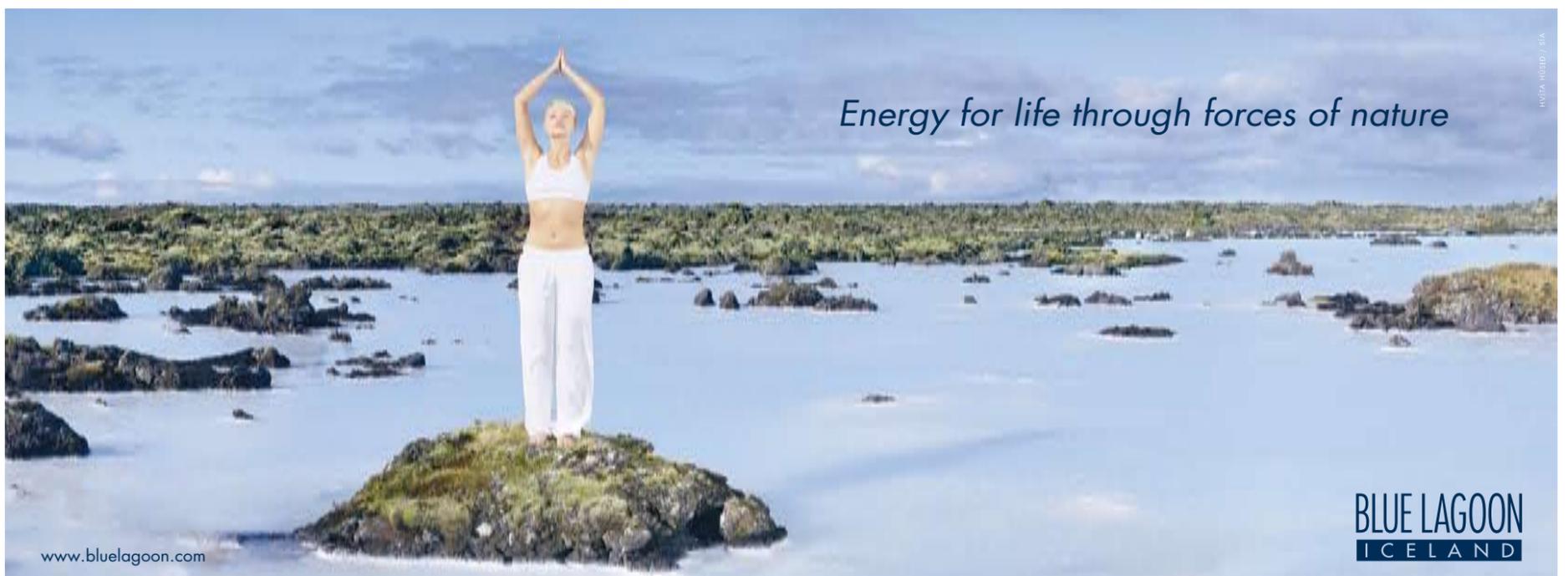
Collin and Libaux are both excellent musicians, and special praise has to be given to the drummer that evening, but the stars of the night were undeniably the two female singers, Melanie Pain and Phoebe Killdeer,

both incredible songbirds, with very distinct voices and stage presence. Pain's innocent, sometimes childlike voice is a total opposite to Killdeer's more masculine and powerful vocals and aggressive attitude. Watching her swing her long dark hair while twitching and turning back and forth she reminded me of an angry beast trying to break loose from bonds. That harmonized surprisingly well with Pain's more polite character.

During the whole show the two divas kept the audience attentive, especially when performing the Dead Kennedy's Too Drunk To Fuck, Joy Division's Love Will Tear Us Apart, and The Specials' Friday Night, Saturday Morning, all leading up to a raucous sing-along. This was clearly a well-rehearsed routine, maybe a little too much so at times.

Melanie Pain's performance of Smith's classic Sweet and Tender Hooligan, supported only by the guitarist, was wonderfully emotional, where she almost whispered the lyrics. Other highlights of the evening included the interpretation of Teenage Kicks backed by the Brazilian bossa nova beats, and the perkier Dance with Me and Blondie's Heart of Glass.

Overall, the show was a relaxed one-and-a-half hour entertainment, featuring two encores and almost all of their most popular covers, songs that the crowd new all so well. Although The Art Museum isn't the greatest venue for this kind of an event, (I would have loved to witness the band performing while sitting in some dark, retro-style Parisian jazz café with a glass of red wine) it was all just so freakin' fabulous and not a dull second passed, leaving me with no choice but to admire the band even more.



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Kisan, Laugavegur 7, 101 Reykjavík.



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The summery vintage Japanese Kimonos come in various colours and different patterns at Glamúr. **Glamúr, Laugavegur 41, 101 Reykjavík.**



2,490 ISK

At the Mál & Menning bookstore, you can find Icelandic movies with English subtitles on DVD. The selection is rather poor at the moment, but includes the Icelandic/French film Stormy Weather by director Sólveig Anspach, which was recently released on DVD. The film premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 2003.

Mál & Menning, Laugavegur 18, 101 Reykjavík.



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Second-hand shop Glamúr sells all types of accessories with which to adorn yourself. The selection carries not only these cool necklaces, but also various costume and designer jewellery including earrings, rings, hairpins, belts and headbands.

Glamúr, Laugavegur 41, 101 Reykjavík.



3,900 ISK

French quality baby clothes are for sale at the shop Du Pareil au même, including this adorable green coat for small girls. The shop offers a wide selection of reasonably priced outfits and accessories for newborns to 14-year-olds.

Du Pareil au Même, Laugavegur 17, 101 Reykjavík.



14,900 ISK

The beautiful warm woolen sweaters from the Icelandic company Farmers Market are available at Kisan. The collection features designer clothing for children and adults, hand-knitted from Icelandic wool.

Kisan, Laugavegur 7, 101 Reykjavík.

Pay Attention!

Kisan

Laugavegur 7, 101 Reykjavík

Concept shop Kisan on Laugavegur is a true paradise for shoppers in desperate need of a last minute birthday gift or in search of some fashionable or nifty new items for the household. Founded by Þórunn Anspach and Olivier Bremond, Kisan is today an essential part of the downtown-shopping district. Over the years the couple has travelled all around the world and, discovered a wide range of quality products and high-street brands from top of the list manufacturers, which can be found in the shop. An almost overwhelming diversity of interesting stuff greets you from the first step inside. The aim is to have a little bit of everything and bring together unusual as well as luxury items that meet the owners'

demanding standards.

Inside you'll find accessories, clothes, shoes, stuffed animals, interior decorations and various indulgence products such as hair and bath goods. A nice selection of photography books, CDs and well-made baby clothes make for perfect gifts as well as the funny lamps in the shape of dinosaurs or penguins. Now also in store are new bags and wallets from the noted Irish designer Orla Kiely and a colourful jewellery line by Nathalie Costes. If you haven't discovered Kisan yet, the shop is worth a look. Whether you like it or not, you're bound to discover something new and exciting you just need to get your hands on.





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*SOURCE: EUROSTAT AND THE STATISTICS ICELAND, 2006



The Best Depressing Music of the 90s

Text by Valur Gunnarsson

The early 90s were not a happy time to be young. In between communism and Al-Qa-eda, with a Clinton in the White House and the apparent End of History, there was little to be passionately for or against. Even the 80s had had a go at saving the world with Live Aid, which almost instantly broke off into many camps for causes closer to home and verging on self parody; Farm Aid, Ferry Aid, and various animal rights groups, rather than the starving millions in Africa.

While they were easily forgotten, the spokespeople for The Generation That Couldn't Find Anything to Say turned to suicide (Kurt Cobain) or Scientology (Beck). Instead of "Feed the World," we had anthems in the vein of:

"I'm a creep, I'm a weirdo
What the hell am I doing here?
I don't belong here"
Radiohead

"I feel stupid and contagious
Here we are now
Entertain us"
Nirvana

or, to put it bluntly:

"I'm a loser baby, so why don't you kill me?"
Beck

While rock laid down its guns or turned them on itself, the cartoon became the most honest art form. Beavis and Butthead, Ren and Stimpy, and later South Park and Family Guy caught the mood. But none more so than the Simpsons, which simultaneously defined and derided the 90s. In their Homerpalooza episode, this brief exchange says it all:
Teen 1: Oh, here comes that cannonball guy. He's cool.
Teen 2: Are you being sarcastic, dude?
Teen 1: I don't even know anymore.

Sex, politics and Rodney King

But who says 90's music was entirely devoid of meaning? The Red Hot Chili Peppers' Bloodsugarsexmagic pointed out that sex

was nice, lest we forget. Ice-T's Body Count wanted a kalashnikov in every home ("try to ban the AK, I got ten of them stashed with a case of handgrenades"), glorification of violence masquerading as social commentary in the wake of Rodney King. Both albums, though, to put it in 90's lingo, rocked.

As did Rage Against the Machine, whom Icelanders got an early taste of, being the only "current" band, it seemed, to perform in Iceland in the early 90s. With their angry but eager political lyrics they sounded like a lone voice crying in the desert. They were not, let's not forget The Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy. But precious few others.

The Last March of the Supergroups

The 90s started with the anticipation of new albums by U2 and Guns n' Roses, the stadium-sized duel of the last of the supergroups, between Bono's Beatles and Axl's Stones.

In the late 80s, the bands had strangely mirrored each other. While Bono still believed that rock and roll could really change the world, Axl celebrated unrestrained hedonism. Both laid claim to global dominance with their 1987 offerings, The Joshua Tree and Appetite for Destruction. They were followed a year later with stopgap albums that recycled some earlier material, Rattle and Hum and GNR Lies. On "God pt. 2," Bono flirted with self awareness and sarcasm: "Don't believe in riches but you should see where I live." Axl also opted for sarcasm, but without the self awareness: "Immigrants and faggots/ They make no sense to me/ They come to our country/ And think they'll do as they please"

Supermodels, cigars and Sellafield

When both bands re-emerged in late '91 after long studio sessions, U2 had changed. They had by now apparently embraced cynicism wholesale, throwing off the messianic complex in favour of supermodels and cigars. But in fact they were still idealists masked as self-indulgent rock stars, as the landing at the Sellafield nuclear power plant proved. While so many self-indulgent rock stars pretended to be idealists, this was as postmodern as it got. As was the Zoo TV tour. Television and

TV preachers, neo-Nazism and the EU, The First Gulf and the Bosnia Wars, remote controls and phone calls to world leaders: the early 90s in a nutshell. The companion album Achtung Baby remains one of the finest albums of the decade.

"Once there was this rock and roll band rolling on the streets..."

Guns n Roses, however, had not changed, barring Steven Adler being fired for his drug addiction and Izzy Stradlin leaving for lack of it. Two double albums may sound like overkill, but as Bono would put it, "Too much is not enough." The mid-section of Use Your Illusion II should silence any voices claiming that Appetite was their only good album. From the country stylings of Breakdown to that rare moment of self-mockery on Pretty Tied Up to the relentless grind of Locomotive, the romance of So Fine and the soaring heights of Estranged, rock n' roll doesn't get much better than this. Until it all fizzles away at the end, as did the band.

In 1993, both bands released planned EP's that grew to full length albums. U2 continued with their Europop experiments on Zooropa, a worthy successor to Achtung Baby, whereas Guns n Roses rehashed old punk songs on The Spaghetti Incident. By now, it was obvious which band would survive the 90s and which would not. The last shots in this supposed duel were in 1995, when U2 released the Batman Forever soundtrack single Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me, Kill Me, and Guns n' Roses the Interview with the Vampire single Sympathy for the Devil. The Rolling Stones cover was to be their last release to date. No one would again lay claim to U2's title of Biggest Band in the World.

King Kurt

While the battle of the supergroups raged, with bands such as REM and Metallica seemingly waiting to pick up the respective crowns of the fallen, Seattle somewhat unexpectedly emerged as the music capital of the world. A young man named Kurt Cobain, despite his apparent inability to find anything worth saying or doing, conquered the world. Nevermind, possibly bettered by

In Utero, is a classic rock album of the sort that hasn't really appeared since, every song anathematic, un-ignorable, life-changing. In his footsteps followed grunge which, apart from the odd Pearl Jam album, I motion be struck from the records.

At around the same time that King Kurt killed himself, the focus shifted to London during one of rock's periodic swings between the US and the UK. With the onset of Britpop, I decided to tune out completely and bury myself in a haze of someone else's nostalgia, working my way back through the Sex Pistols and the Clash, the real Beatles and the Stones, Elvis, Hank Williams, Woody Guthrie. Even if Pulp's Different Class is in retrospect a great album, and Blur are at times worthwhile, genre kings Oasis had precious little new to say, which perhaps makes them the most 90's band of them all.

Sarcasm came to an end on the 11th of September 2001. With the likes of Bush and Bin Laden devouring nations and Blair's turn to the Dark Side, there is now most decidedly something to fight against, if still little to fight for. But, in a couple of years who knows? With another Clinton in the White House, we may be able to return to worrying about nothing much at all. And have a damn miserable time doing it.

In the late 80s, the bands had strangely mirrored each other. While Bono still believed that rock and roll could really change the world, Axl celebrated unrestrained hedonism.

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A Day Trip to the South Coast

Text by Steinunn Jakobsdóttir Photos by Skari

Distance from Reykjavík

ca. 150 km



Seljalandsfoss

When driving along the south coast of the country, admirable sights that will fill your camera's memory card pretty quickly are only minutes apart, making the region a popular day-trip destination. Numerous impressive waterfalls, steep mountains, glacial rivers, hot springs and historic tourist attractions are characteristic of the area, providing the traveller with endless activities and diverse hiking trails.

After passing through small towns and loading your car with some food and beverages, it would be ideal to make a lunch stop-over next to Seljalandsfoss, a spectacular waterfall that drops 60 metres over a large cliff in the Eyjafjöll Mountains.

Seljalandsfoss has a distinctive feature, which makes it among the country's most photographed waterfalls. It is possible to walk behind it without getting soaking wet,

if careful that is, and capture unusual images from the other side. These shots will undoubtedly spruce up the photo album, which by now is probably filled with pictures of Iceland's countless cascades. You don't have to worry about falling in the stream, a marked footpath leads all the way.

After photographing Seljalandsfoss from all sides, it's time to drive to the next interesting spot, Paradísarhellir (Paradise Cave), only minutes away. The cave is one of Iceland's most noted ones, not due to its size (it's only five metres long and three metres wide) but for being a refuge for the outlaw Hjalti Magnússon in the 16th century. You will need to climb eight metres up a rope to reach the cave's entrance, so you'll better not be scared of heights.

Distance from Reykjavík

ca. 155 km



Skógar

If you continue driving east along the ring road, you will soon notice another one of Iceland's remarkable waterfalls, Skógarfoss, which falls down some 60 metres into the river Skógá, and is the main appeal for photo-enthusiasts arriving at Skógar.

Located south of the Eyjafjallajökull glacier, with the Eyjafjöll Mountains hovering in the background, Skógar is a wide grassy stretch boasting incredible natural beauty, a modern hotel, church, several reconstructed turf farmhouses and historic buildings as well as a unique folk museum.

The museum itself is located in a large building across from the farmhouses and features an interesting exhibition all year round. Established by Þórður Tómasson in 1949, the museum's general concept is to introduce Icelandic society to interested visitors. It gives an insight into the way the country slowly de-

veloped into a growing community and educates visitors about the everyday life of farmers and fishermen in the country by displaying artefacts, tools, clothes and household items which Tómasson has collected over the years or which have been donated to the museum. The exhibition is divided into several sections, each emphasising a specific period in the country's history. These priceless items include an 18th-century fishing boat, and a haymaking tool. In 2002 a new exhibition space, dedicated to developments in technology and transportation in the 19th and 20th century, was added to the museum.

Skógar also has a nice camping site, located only metres away from Skógarfoss. The site gets quite crowded during summer, attracting weary travellers who want nothing more than to be lulled to sleep by the calming sound of the waterfall.

Distance from Reykjavík

ca. 180 km



Dyrhólaey and Vík í Mýrdal

Dyrhólaey, a long preserved promontory stretching from the coast and out into the ocean, is the southernmost part of Iceland. Surrounded by black sand beaches and green meadows, this 120 metre high precipice was created by an eruption thousands of years ago.

Walking to the tip of the promontory offers an amazingly scenic view in all directions. On one side there's the North Atlantic and on the other is the Mýrdalsjökull glacier. On a clear day you can even spot the Vestmannaeyjar (Westman Islands) far away. The promontory is also rich with incredible birdlife and attracts bird watching enthusiasts all year round. Various species of seabirds including puffins and seagulls nest in the cliffs as well as in the large rock pillars, named Dyrhóladrangar, a little further out in the ocean.

On the southernmost part of Dyrhólaey, the ocean has shaped a hole in the rock that looks like a gate or a curved door. From this peculiar formation, Dyrhólaey draws its name, literally meaning Door-hill-island (although it isn't really an island). If the ocean is calm, small boats can sail through the door.

If, after exploring Dyrhólaey, you're looking for refreshments or accommodation, the nearest town is Vík í Mýrdal, a small coastal village surrounded by spectacular natural beauty. To name just one option for recreation, a short but bumpy drive leads to Þakgil, or 'roof canyon', a large cave that has been renovated into a fine eating spot, providing long dining tables and even a barbecue grill. Just bring the food and dishes and enjoy your meal out in the wilderness.

Distance from Reykjavík

ca. 110 km



Mt. Hekla

On the way back to the capital a short detour up to Mt. Hekla comes highly recommended. This dignified and scenic 40 km long stratovolcano is one of Iceland's most famous landmarks, towering above the Þjórsárdalur valley.

Hekla is among the world's most active volcanoes. Over the past 1000 years Hekla has had about 15 major eruptions and more than 150 smaller ones. The volcano has erupted five times in the 20th century, most recently in February 2000. Early settlers in Iceland understandably feared this frightening fire-spouting mountain and believed Hekla to be the gateway to Hell.

On May 5 a new geo-historical museum, the Hekla Centre, will be opened at the farm Leirubakki, situated at the foot of the mountain. By using the latest technol-

ogy, the permanent exhibition centres on the volcano's history and the effects it has had on the country's inhabitants for more than 1000 years and will undoubtedly be extremely educational to those interested in volcanism.

The Hekla Centre will also feature art exhibitions, host conferences and meetings and house a nice restaurant with an incredible view. With the star attraction nestling in the background, a better location for such a centre would be hard to find.

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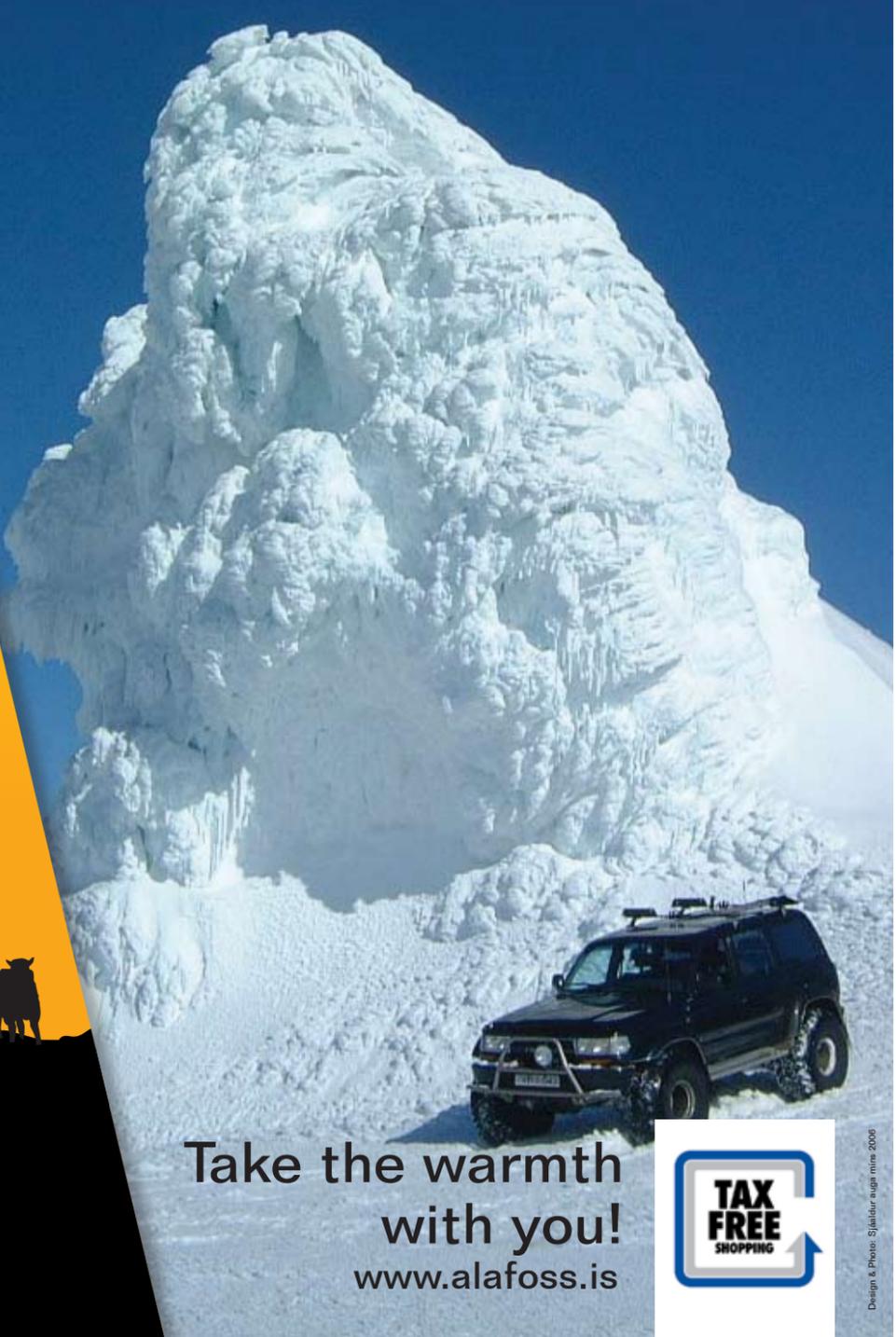
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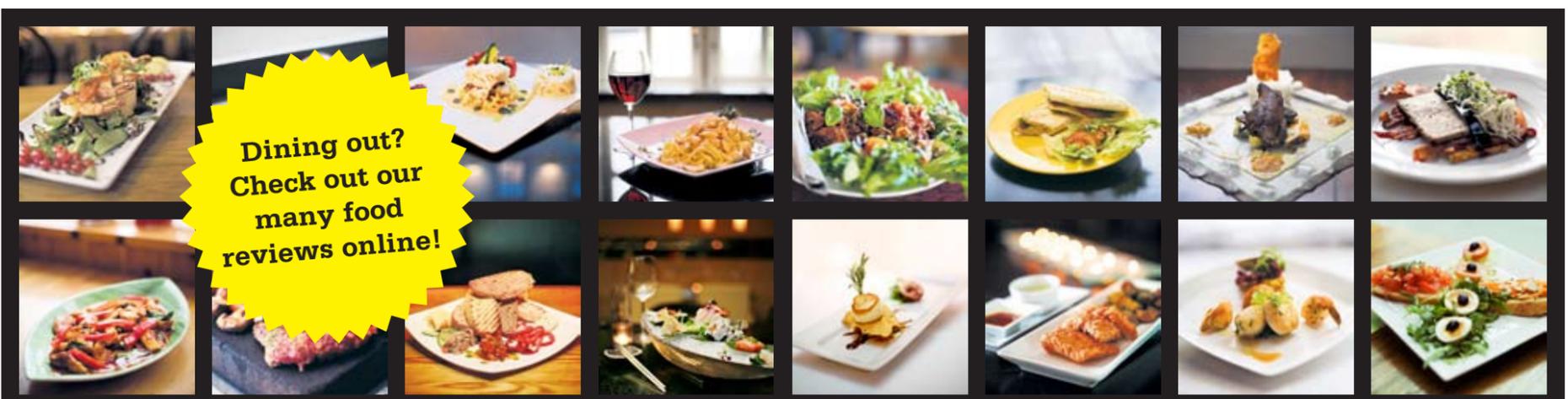


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Full Circle - Low Budget

Text by Hanne Carlsen Photos by Skari

Much like the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, this is not really a guide, rather a whacky story. Hitchhiking in Iceland is not for the impatient, but can nevertheless be a rewarding experience for both the traveller and the unsuspecting locals. With the travel season coming, here's a how to and how not to, from a traveller that wore out her thumbs on the deserted Icelandic "off season" roads.

Even though summer had come and gone we - the Danish writer of this article and her travelling companions, two exchange students from Canada and Germany - thought it would not be too late to go see the countryside. In late September, on a Tuesday, our group set out from the now "old hringbraut" picking the bus stop closest to BSÍ as our starting point.

After 20 minutes we got our first ride, a microscope salesman, who took us all the way out to the gas station after Ártún. Here we met up with some kids who "helped us" get another ride. As a female traveller, you can expect unpleasant rides, and this was to be our worst - even more frightening as it was only the second of the tour. A farmer with very few teeth and the dirtiest truck this writer has yet to see gave us a ride to a junction just past Mosfellsbær. At this point he scared us to death by threatening to feed us to the trolls, before turning the truck around and stopping it to let us out. A geologist took us to the Hvalfjörður tunnel, a radio engineer took us through it, and an older couple took us the rest of the way to Borgarnes. That turned out to be an unhappy place for hitchhikers.

Cherish Your Ride

So we did what we had to do to keep warm; walk down the road and talk. And sing. And see the sights. Like the monument for the sailors at the side of the road. And then we did get a ride with a young man going to Akureyri to visit his parents. We did stupidly enough turn down the ride all the way to Akureyri because we had some freak idea that we would be going to the West Fjords, so he let us out of the car at the road to Búðardalur.

And then we started walking. And then we realised that turning down the ride all the way to Akureyri had been extremely stupid, because it soon became obvious that we would not get a ride on this road. Over half an hour, only three cars passed, of which one was full and one only had two seats. Then

we made the harsh decision to let the West Fjords mind their own business for the time being and to get back on the ring road.

Most people who have travelled the ring road have probably noticed the abandoned building at the junction where the road to Búðardalur meets the ring road. Well we got a very good look at it while waiting there for more than hour and a half for our next ride. Only when one of us lay down and played dead, a couple in a minibus stopped. They had been to Reykjavik to drop off some tourists who had stayed at their farm. The lady was German, and the husband was well known in Denmark, so we had some pleasant conversation.

They took us all the way to Brekkulækur, where their farm was. Then we waited by the road almost until it got dark and then

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we just stepped out in front of a car that was coming from a side road and almost forced him to drive us the last 10 km to Viðigerði, where we spent the evening cooking some food that we had picked up in Bónus in Borgarnes and making plans for the next day. The manager of the place was eager to let us in on some of the good hiking trails in the area, but, as it turned out, the road was more tempting, so the next day we were off again, hitting the road around 9.

In the North Country

Generally the weather was good, which is not necessarily a good thing when you are hitch-hiking. People feel more sorry for you when it is raining. But the long waits for cars to come by are more tolerable without the rain, and we had some good walks along the open road. After hitting the road at Viðigerði we got a ride with a man who sold paint and he took us over the mountain and down into Skagafjörður, where we got postcards and some tooth-breaking Icelandic candy.

In Skagafjörður we waited for so long that we actually went and checked the bus

schedule. But in the end we did get a ride with two Austrians who were heading to Akureyri. Having arrived happily in Akureyri we took time for some sightseeing (the church) and then hit the road again.

Our first ride out of Akureyri was only going to the other side of Eyjafjörður, but there we met our Austrian travelling companions again, got a look at Goðafoss too and arrived at our destination for the night: Skútustaðir on the south shores of Mývatn. We took a walk on the pseudo craters, which were formed when lava flowed over the wetlands, making the water in the soil boil and making the overflowing lava explode to form these moonlike hills, where the sheep now graze like nothing could rock their world in this dusky last light of day.

Appreciate the Toilet

Next morning was quiet on the road between Skútustaðir and Reykjahlíð, but the rock formations next to the road are amazing, the sun was shining, and the hard sticky candy tasted better and better. We hitched a ride the last few kilometres to Reykjahlíð with an older farmer, who insulted our

Canadian by introducing her as American when he made a stop to introduce us to some locals.

Reduced to foot soldiers again, we walked past the now closed silica factory. And then, as we were giving up, another driver actually stopped and offered us a ride. He was a Nigerian/British engineer, who had driven across the highlands alone and was on his way to see Dettifoss. He then planned to turn back and head for Reykjavík the short way on the good road.

Before he got far we urged him to stop and take a look at the geothermal area around Námafjall where bubbling mud pots spew a foul sulphur smell over the area, before driving onto the long and bumpy road to Dettifoss. Driving through this wasteland we were getting closer and closer to the damp cloud coming from the waterfall. Our driver explained his familiarity with dirt roads from his home country and we were not worried, but rather car sick. I was relieved when we arrived at the parking lot and saw a toilet there, only to have my hopes crushed when the hut turned out to be locked. To whom do I talk to get the

keys? No one was there and there were no trees anywhere nearby to hide behind.

Dettifoss is amazing though, the walk from the parking lot to the waterfall took us over these fantastic, huge basalt columns, upwards of one metre in diameter. Truly like being on another planet. The waterfall is gigantic and violent. Stripped of tourist glamour on this cloudy day it was just a massive experience. I just wish that the toilet had been open.

Influencing / Manipulating?

The bumpy ride back to the ring road allowed the Canadian to start influencing our ride properly. Our driver had told us that he had just rented a car for two days and hoped to make it through the highlands and back to Reykjavík in that time. As it turned out there was a lot of things he did not have time to see, and the Canadian was quick to tell him about the wonders of the south coast. So, when we got back into mobile-phone range, he called the car rental to extend his lease another day and we headed east hoping to reach Höfn before sundown. It was almost too easy. We could not believe our luck.

We had some food in Egilsstaðir and enjoyed a postcard view of Berufjörður at sunset, then drove along the steep cliffs around the horn until we, just before it got very very dark, saw the lights of Höfn show up on the plains below us. We got settled in a guest house, and had, for the first time, company at the accommodation. An Irish couple were staying in the same place, but still, there was plenty of room for all.

Next morning we took some time to look around Höfn, especially the harbour and the charming fishing boat turned into a bar. Around 10 we rejoined our ride at the guest house and hit the road. The weather was greyish and foggy, but when we arrived at Jökulsárlón the fog made the icebergs look even more ghostly and gave the scenery an otherworldly feel. Then we drove up to the Sólheimarjökull outlet of Mýrdalsjökull for a little close encounter with a real glacier and had time to see the beautiful waterfalls on the south coast as well. We were back in Reykjavík in the darkness around 8pm Friday.

Big thanks to Tunde for giving us a long ride and thanks to everyone else who picked us up.



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Fire fighters struggle to contain a fire in 200-year-old wooden houses in Austurstæti. For full story turn to page 16. Photo by Skari

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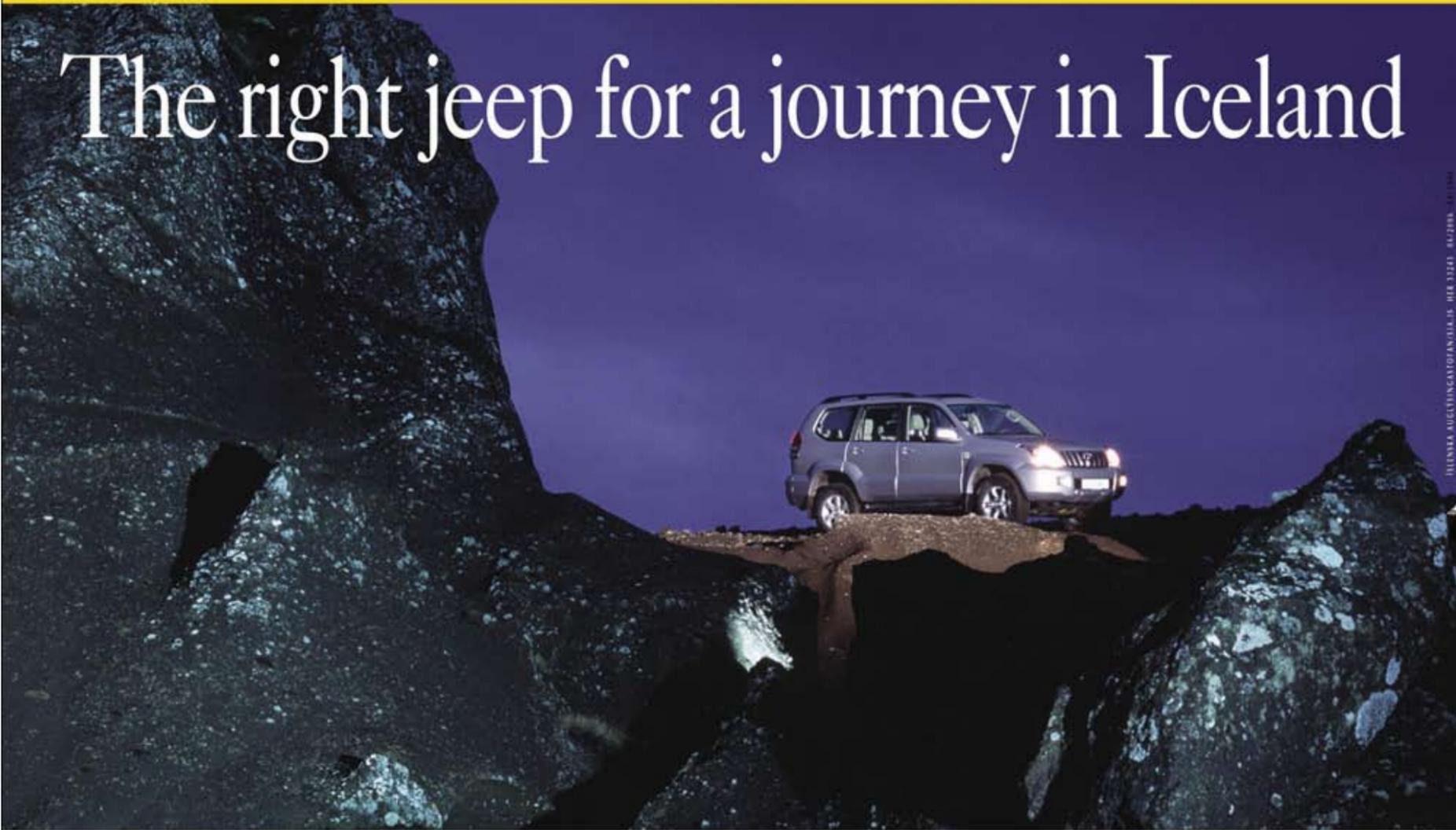
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Stuffed with stuff

Apart from a positively cool name, the Brat Pack delivered a more traditional two-chord punk rock. The kind that might have fitted into the Repo Man score.

Sveinn Birkir Björnsson attended a punk concert.

Page 20

Sitting outside the massive Sheraton hotel, where Angelina was staying, way out of my financial reach – even in Vietnam – I fired up a local cigar and fantasised about Angelina and her surely exciting life.

Páll Hilmarsson travelled to Asia.

Page 12

We are a group consisting of people who all think of themselves as the one who knows best. We are a bunch of divas. Everyone has to have a say.

Actor Björn Hlynur explains the success of Vesturport.

Page B6

After 20 minutes we got our first ride, a microscope salesman, who took us all the way out to the gas station after Ártún.

Hanne Carlsen travelled Iceland on her thumb.

Page 28

The house on Austurstræti 22 was the closest thing Iceland had to a Royal Palace.

Sveinn Birkir Björnsson watched as fire burned down the city center.

Page 16



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