

# REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

10 years ago, the world watched as Iceland began crowdsourcing a new constitution.

Today, the country still waits.

And waits.

And waits.

And waits.

And waits.

And waits.



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH **ÓLAFUR ARNALDS**, **MAMMÚT** & **RAX**, WE VISIT **SANDVÍK**, EAT **VEGAN CAKE** & MORE



**COVER PHOTO:**  
The cover image is a mashup of a photo of Althingi by Jói Kjartans, shot in 2010, and the

"HVAR ER NYJA STJORNARSKRAIN" mural by Skiltamálun Reykjavíkur. Photocollage by Sveinbjörn Pálsson.

# First



07: Don't F% With Týr

06: Do Icelanders Even Djent Bro?  
06: Hospitals Cost Money



11: Bedroom Burlesque

18: Auðn... :(  
20: Raket Tomas In Black And White



28: Vegan Cakes!

30: Amateur Astrologers Write Haikus  
31: Sandvík Fun



## EDITORIAL

### When Rome Burns, Someone Always Plays The Violin



Iceland—like the rest of the world—is at an interesting crossroads. The pandemic is still going strong, while it's more than clear now that disease prevention measures like gathering bans, enhanced hygiene and wearing masks are working. There are alternative ways to fight the pandemic. Most notable the relaxed approach in Sweden, but even there the government has imposed similar restrictions to other Nordic countries. Of course, I'm not talking about the US in this context. Because it's impossible to battle a pandemic if the tools of infection protection have been politically weaponized. Who could imagine that something as trivial as wearing a mask would be political? It will be an excruciating moment to explain the hundreds of thousands of unnecessary deaths to future generations. Good luck with that.

But back to my original train of thought: we are standing at a crossroad. We have a vaccine on the horizon, but we're languishing in pandemic fatigue. "Carelessness" is probably a better word. Iceland did well during the first wave, although we lost ten people. It was a true shock and it underlined for Icelanders how serious this virus is. It was an admirable united action that the whole nation participated in, when we got the infection rate down to almost nothing. And our reward was a pretty normal summer (that's the 2020 definition of normal). But the third wave was no less of a shock. We lost 16 lives in the span of three months. The most serious turn of events was an outbreak at the Landakot hospital, which has not been fully resolved and will undoubtedly reap more consequences.

But things are getting better. The domestic infection rate is dropping rapidly, and will hopefully have a normal Christmas (again, I'm using the 2020 definition of normal).

Iceland has had its fair share of local COVIDiots, but they've quickly been dealt with, mostly with a good flow of correct information, thanks to the daily briefings with our top scientists that have done an incredible job in protecting the Icelandic population from the pandemic. And in my opinion, this has been the backbone in the battle of the virus, and if we go through something similar again—gods forbid—this is the biggest lesson. Because, it turns out, that there is always someone willing to play the violin, no matter if the whole world is burning.

This pandemic has taken a serious toll. It has affected our lives, our livelihoods, and even taken our loved ones from us. The only way forward is unity. This is how nations overcome obstacles. And it's a healthy reminder about those who choose to polarise societies and groups—the welfare of the whole community is not in their interest.

So hang in there, keep up the good work, ignore the one that tries to divide you, and be patient. Together we will defeat the virus. There is no other simple solution to this problem other than to stand united. 🇮🇸

**Valur Grettisson**  
Editor-in-chief



**Aðalsteinn Jörundsson** or the "Main Stone" like his name literally translates to, is the King of Sales at the Reykjavík Grapevine. He probably has a more professional title, but no one cares. He's the man to contact if you want to give us money in exchange for advertising your booming business.



**Hannah Jane Cohen** is based out of Iceland by way of New York. She's known for her love of Willa Ford, David Foster Wallace, and other such "intellectuals." Her visionary work is known for expanding the definitions of emotion, introspection, and above all else, taste. Hannah is also the current Drag King of Iceland, HANS.



**Polly** is a hard-working journalist by day and an enthusiastic ball-catcher by night. A four-year-old dachshund mix with an IQ of a five-year-old human, Polly has been the official Chief Of Morale at the Grapevine for eight months and is a regular contributor to the Grapevine Newscast on YouTube. Woof.



**Iona Rangeley-Wilson** is an English graduate from the UK. She writes children's books, but has decided to also go into journalism on the absolutely minuscule off-chance that her first book doesn't immediately turn her into a multimillionaire. Her hobbies include getting up late and indulging in illusions of grandeur.



**Sveinbjörn Pálsson** is our Art Director. He's responsible for the design of the magazine and the cover photography. When he's not working here, he DJs as Terrordisco, hosts the Funkþátturinn radio show, or sits at a table in a Laugardalur café, drinking copious amounts of coffee and thinking about fonts.



**Art Bicnick** is an international man of mystery. He moves like a shadow through the subcultures and soirees of Reykjavík, never still, often ghosting the scene in a puff of blue smoke—the exhaust fumes of the elusive, well-travelled Bicnick Mini.



**Andie Sophia Fontaine** has lived in Iceland since 1999 and has been reporting since 2003. They were the first foreign-born member of the Icelandic Parliament, an experience they recommend for anyone who wants to experience a workplace where colleagues work tirelessly to undermine each other.



**Jess Distill** is a musician, artist and wannabe writer from St. Albans, England. As a long time lover of Iceland, and recent copywriting diploma graduate, Jess came to the Grapevine to expand her writing portfolio whilst seeing if she could hack it as an Icelandic resident.



**Valur Grettisson** is an award-winning journalist, author and playwright. He has been writing for Icelandic media since 2005. He was also a theatre critic and one of the hosts of the cultural program, 'Djöflaeyjan' at RÚV. Valur is not to be confused with the dreadful football club that bears the same name.

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7 COURSE

# CHRISTMAS MENU

STARTERS

**Icelandic landscape**

Lamb tartar, pickled red onions, smoked cream cheese, dill oil, vinegar snow

**Cured salmon**

Fennel cream, dill mayo, raspberries, roe and rye bread

**Deer tatakí**

Pickled red onions, enoki mushrooms, crispy Jerusalem artichokes, truffle & yuzu mayo

**Pan-fried giant scallops**

Pine tree, green pea purée, beurre noisette

MAIN COURSES

**Duck breast**

Celery purée, apples, pickled fennel and cherry sauce

**Grilled beef tenderloin**

Roasted carrots with pistachios, artichoke & white chocolate purée and Christmas beer hollandaise

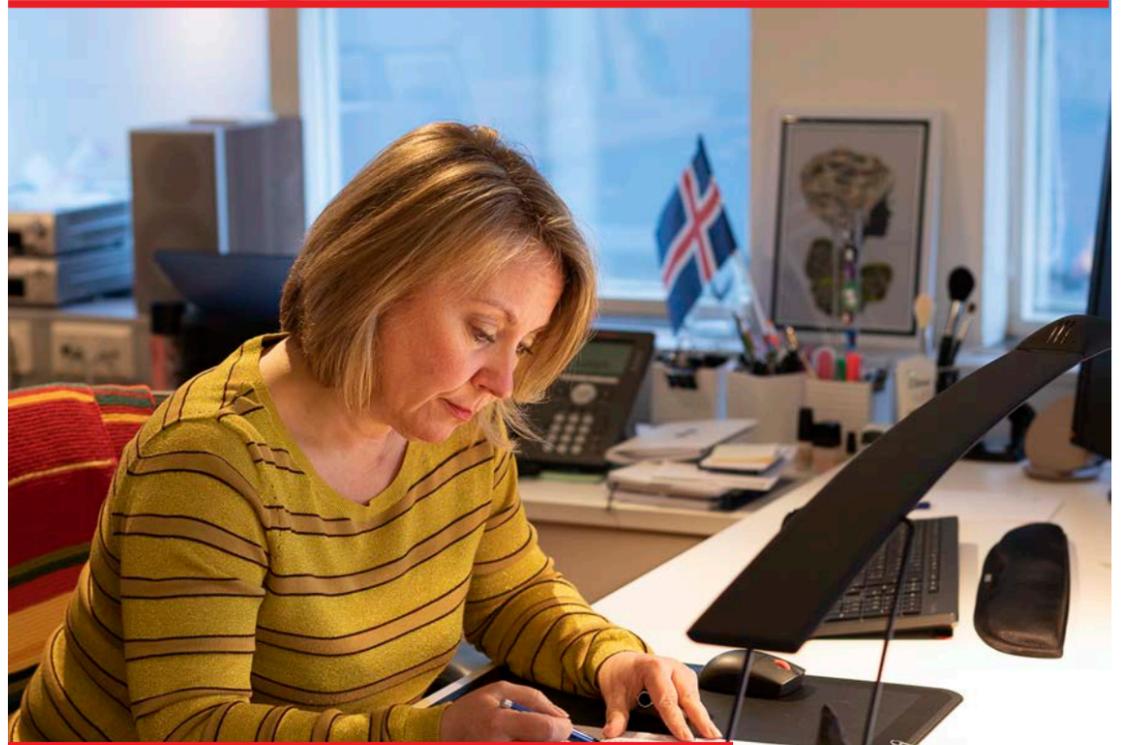
CHRISTMAS DESSERT

**Christmas "ball"**

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Sigríður Andersen, not wearing a mask. Photo from 2019... but still!

## What Are Icelanders Talking About?

The topics that are getting people banned from the comments

Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine** Photos: **Art Bicnick, Ásgeir Bragi Ægisson**

**NEWS** As with most countries, the coronavirus pandemic is at the forefront of Icelanders' minds these days. With plans for a vaccine now shaping up, as well as now being able to boast the **lowest infection rate in Europe**, many Icelanders are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel—and not a moment too soon, as the winter holidays are rapidly approaching. However, two MPs for the Independence Party—**Sigríður Á. Andersen** and **Brynjar Níelsson**—have been **very critical of the pandemic restrictions**, which they see as largely unnecessary. Both of them are members of “Út úr kófinu” (“Out of the hut”), a small but vocal group of Icelanders skeptical of the pandemic restrictions.

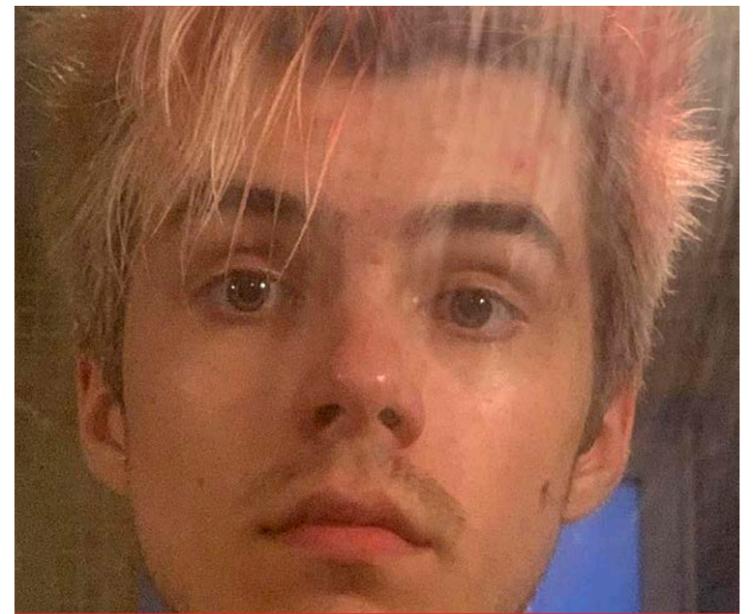
In other news, **Mom Air** has turned out to be an **art project** the whole time. While this was strongly suspected by the Grapevine and others due to some obvious clues left by artist **Oddur Eysteinn Friðriksson** when the “budget airline” first launched, Oddur emphatically denied that this was the case, insisting that it was a real airline with staff, airplanes, airport slots and everything. But then he revealed at a press conference on November 18th that the whole thing was his **final project for the Iceland University of the**

**Arts**. In the meantime, he received many applications for jobs and numerous bookings, which he deliberately frustrated by error messages he put in the site. So, nice job, we guess?

Unemployment has many Icelanders worried these days. **Jobless levels are predicted to reach a whopping 11.3%** this December, exceeding the February and March 2009 peak of 9.3%, which followed the collapse of Iceland's financial sector. As

always, foreigners are hit especially hard: despite comprising about 14% of the total population, 41% of the unemployed are foreigners. **Poles**, who comprise Iceland's largest ethnic minority, **have been hit especially hard**, making up 20% of Iceland's unemployed, even though they comprise just about 5% of the total population.

Ásgeir Bragi Ægisson, or **Ouse**, as he calls himself, is a 19-year-old from the small northwest town of Sauðárkrúkur. He also happens to be one of the top ranking Icelandic artists on Spotify right now, with **his single Dead Eyes exceeding 36 million plays**—about 4 million more than Björk's most played song, “It's Oh So Quiet.” How did he do it? Not even Ásgeir seems sure, but he isn't complaining. He's signed a deal with American label Twelve Tones with a contract worth tens of millions of ISK. A country boy can survive, indeed! 🇮🇸



Ouse with them Bieber vibes



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Next up: get rid of those firestations!

# Hospital Asked To Cut 4.3B ISK

MPs question the wisdom of the move

**NEWS**

Landspítali, Iceland’s national hospital, has often operated at a loss. Last year, they reported a 3.8 billion ISK deficit, and responded by making numerous cuts in management and reducing certain departments.

Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine**

Photo: **Art Bicnick**

However, the hospital is now facing an “optimisation requirement”—essentially, spending cuts—totalling some 4.3 billion ISK, RÚV reports. Ólafur Darri Andrason, the head of Landspítali’s finance department, says this will extend to 2022 and necessitate even more cuts to staff and services in order to close the gap.

**“Parliament needs to change this”**

That a hospital would need to make cuts in the midst of a global pandemic was not greeted warmly by members of Parliament.

“It is dangerous to place strict spending and optimisation requirements on health services in the middle of a global pandemic,” Social Democrat chair Logi Einarson said.

Social Democrat MP and chair of the parliamentary welfare committee Helga Vala Helgadóttir characterised the cuts as “pissing in one’s shoe”, and

offered a simple suggestion of her own: “I want to see that more slack is given, that the government funds the health care system as needed, as is being done in countries around us. It’s all about priorities.”

**Sparing patients**

Ólafur is mindful of these concerns, telling reporters that they are trying their best to ensure the same level of service despite the cuts.

“We’re trying of course to cut and optimise where it will impact patients the least,” he told reporters. “We’re trying to optimise hospital management, in certain projects that don’t concern the daily service of patients. Our main goal is to be able to give patients the same good and secure service despite the need to optimise.”

ASKA  
**Music Historian**  
**Q: When Was The First Icelandic Guitar Solo?**



Iceland has certainly made a name for itself as a seemingly boundless source of great music, starting with its full-armed embrace of the rock revolution of the late 1950s. The early days of Icelandic pop music are sometimes a bit murky, though, so we turned to sociomusicologist Dr. Arnar Eggert Thoroddsen to ask a question that had been burning in our minds for years now: what was the first guitar solo in the history of Icelandic music? Turns out, it’s not as straightforward as you might think: There is an Icelandic wiki-page which states that the first Icelandic guitar solo was performed by guitar virtuoso Óli Gaukur on the track ‘Vegir liggja til allra átta’, which Ellý Vilhjálms sang in 1963. And a great solo it is; drawn out and tasteful, replicating the song’s melody.

If only it was so simple. It’s hard to nail the exact date of the first appearance of a bona fide Icelandic guitar solo, but in rock terms, they came flooding in—naturally—with the advent of rock’n’roll. Icelanders were just a tad behind developments in the U.S. For instance, Erla Þorsteinsdóttir’s polite rocking up of “When The Saints Go Marching In,” released in 1957, does feature a brief, stinging guitar solo, as was the wont with rock’n’roll numbers of the time.

So, dear readers, this is as close as we get to dating the first Icelandic guitar solo and any challenges to these oh-so-scientific results are welcome at the usual address. Next up: The first use of cowbell in Icelandic heavy metal.

**FOOD OF ICELAND**



# Uppstúfur

What’s white, salty, thick and only eaten at Christmas? You guessed right, it’s Uppstúfur—often called Jafningur—or white sauce. You put it on hot potatoes and spray it all over Hangikjöt and you have the most Icelandic dish of them all.

Jafningur is more or less made out of flour, milk, sugar, salt and a lot of butter. It’s fairly easy to make.

And if you are in a really raunchy kind of mood, you can buy some smoked sausage to douse in the white bliss of jafningur, wash it all down with some good old fashioned Malt Extract and contemplate how your life ended up so terribly sad.

Jafningur is surprisingly sweet and is more or less the only reason anyone would eat hangikjöt, or smoked lamb.

The meat is often served cold and tough, reminding you of how it must have been absolutely miserable for the old Icelanders in a turf house in the middle of a December storm with nothing more than dung smoked meat.

Uppstúfur is probably, like all nasty things, Danish. The word comes from the Danish word “opstuvning.”

Icelanders used to use this recipe to make their sauces thicker but somehow it ended up as an unbreakable part of Icelandic Christmas tradition—forcing innocent children to eat smoked lamb, which they drown in the white sauce to avoid the bitter taste. It doesn’t work. But you can’t help trying. VG

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The kind of dude you'd name a boat after

Týr was the God of War and Justice. He made the baddest monsters quake in their boots and great white sharks wet themselves. (Or he would have, if great white sharks were endemic to this part of the world and if sharks urinated, which they don't. But you get the picture.)



Týr is described variously as the son of Odin and the son of Hymir. As with modern politicians, Norse gods liked to sleep around a lot and it wasn't always totally clear whose kid was whose. (Nor did anyone care, they were gods!) But whoever did father Týr certainly passed down a lot of hardcore-muscleman-crazy-tough-guy genes, because that was Týr to a T. The T in this case standing for testosterone.

One time, the gods were having a bit of trouble with this wolf called Fenrir, who used to break every chain they tried to shackle him with. So, logically, they had some dwarves make a special magic ribbon to bind him up for good—but Fenrir was like, "No! You can only tie me up with this ribbon if one of you volunteers to put your hand in my mouth!" Because he was a smart wolf who knew how to bargain.

Unfortunately for Fenrir, Týr wasn't scared of putting his hand into a wolf's mouth—just like how he wasn't in the least bit scared to be mashed into a pulp, or to have his eyes gouged out and his elbows broken. But anyway, wolves aren't exactly known for their honour code, so Týr's hand was bitten clean off. Not that Týr cared. He had two! 🍷

# Týr, The Tough Guy

You can call him Mr. Tuesday

DEITIES OF ICELAND

Words: Iona Rangeley-Wilson

Illustration: Unknown

**Superpowers:** Combat, courage, not even blinking even if you remove his limbs.

**Weaknesses:** Sorry, did you say "weaknesses"?

**Modern Analogue:** Arnold Schwarzenegger beating up aliens in Predator.

## JUST SAYINGS

“Oft hefur vinnulatur viljuga tungu”

What do you call the print version of a subtweet?



Are you really frustrated by that guy who can't stop talking at work but doesn't actually do any work? The one who is just hanging there, beside the cooler, talking to random coworkers? Well, we Icelanders have a saying about them: "Oft hefur vinnulatur viljuga tungu." This translates to, "A lazy person

often has an energetic tongue!"

This, of course, applies to all politicians, scholars in literature and philosophy and self-absorbed journalists (not me, of course), and obviously, that idiot coworker you hate and just keep going on about while not doing actual work 🍷 🍷

## GRAPEVINE PLAYLIST



**Salt Órland - Skýjaborgir**  
Ok, this is so cute. We're smiling, squealing and feeling our best folksy feelings and then—OH MY GOSH! WHAT? Yes, you think this is gonna just be a sweet summer song and then some extremely unexpected chord progressions come out and you're getting those ASMR chills. Seriously, intern Jess and I audibly gasped during the key change at 1:55. **HJC**

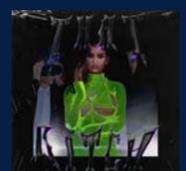
Boys, NKOTB, or the CRIMINALLY-underrated O-Town, it's got the fundamentals down: wistful, loving, designed-to-make-teenage-girls-swoon lyrics, smooth harmonies and a very ~emotional~ ending. **HJC**



**Jelena Ciric - Lines**  
In the midst of this worldwide chaos, turn to singer-songwriter Jelena Ciric to remember the sweetness of ordinary life. "I went to a fortune teller on St. Clair, west of Forest Hill. I know I was curious, had a half-hour to kill," Jelena starts, accompanied by upbeat piano chords and those light, delicate, childlike indie vocals we so need right now. (Btw, the Grapevine unanimously agreed that this could easily be the motivational song in a musical.) **HJC**



**Magnús Jóhann - Waiting**  
Truly stunning. Kind of like if Philip Glass, Ludovico Einaudi and Atticus Ross got drunk and decided to do an experimental improvised collaboration with their conservatory friends, who were under the impression they were doing a minimalist soundtrack album for an indie slow-burn psychological thriller. What a misunderstanding! Thankfully it ended up with this beautiful track. **HJC**



**Countess Malaise - That Bitch**  
"I'm too hard. I'm too bad. I'm too sad... but I've always been that bitch." So starts the latest effort from goth-rapper-monarch Countess Malaise. The Countess is always full of these bad-bitch-confidence-fuck-you moments, but never has it felt so authentic as it does now—seriously, only she could make vulnerability seem hard af. Dear TikTokers: make a dance for this, pls. **HJC**



**boncyan - It's On Me**  
boncyan identifies as a "throwback to the boy bands of yesteryear." While this debut definitely has a jazzier feel than the Backstreet

## BARFLIES REYKJAVÍK 2

As the name of this book suggests, it is a follow-up to an earlier book by the same name. Again, the people portrayed are the Kaffibarinn regulars. Some of the faces you will recognize from the first book, just a quarter of a century older. Others were not born when the bar served its first drink.

Available at Kaffibarinn Bergstaðastræti 1, 101 Rvk





# Where Is The New Constitution? A nation still waits for Iceland 2.0

The collapse of Iceland's economy in late 2008 incited a tremendous amount of anger in the nation's people. While the Special Investigation Commission formed in the aftermath sought to determine who and what was to blame for the collapse, the feeling amongst many Icelanders was that the entire system needed to fundamentally change—including the creation of a new constitution.

Iceland's constitution is more or less borrowed from the Danes, and has changed very little since 1874, when the country was known as the Kingdom of Iceland. Following the collapse, the nation sought an update through democratic processes great and small, resulting in a draft for a new constitution. As it stands today, Iceland remains stuck with the constitution it has had since 1944, when the country first gained independence.

How was the constitutional draft created, what changes does it seek to make and why is Iceland still waiting for its reboot? To understand a decade's worth of questions, we need to start at the impetus—and speak to some of the people who are still fighting for the new constitution, which even the most recent polls show is something that matters a lot to most Icelanders.

## The people's council

Much like the "pots and pans" protests of 2008 and 2009, the creation of the constitutional draft was a grassroots effort, albeit with a more formalised process. It began with then-Prime Minister Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir submitting a bill to Parliament in 2009 for the creation of a Constitutional Assembly, which would be tasked with reviewing the existing constitution. This bill was made law, with the amendment that a National Forum would consult on what constitutional changes should actually be made.

The National Forum drew about 1,000 people to offer their ideas on what the new constitution should focus on. The topics that the everyday Icelanders who participated in the Forum brought up is a reflection of what many saw as recurring problems in Icelandic society: a need for greater transparency in government and a more democratic elections; stronger protections for the environment and natural resources; and clearer codification of human rights.

All great ideas, but formalising them into a constitutional draft would involve a more focused effort—one that was not without its problems.

## Assemble the assembly

The idea behind the Constitutional Assembly was noble. Those who had served in or run for public office were prohibited from running for the Assembly; the idea here was to have 25 people who were not professional politicians, but who were elected by the people, prepare the constitutional draft. Elections were held and the results came in on November 30, 2010.

Two problems soon became apparent. First, turn-out for these elections was very low: only 37% of eligible voters bothered casting ballots. Second, and far more troubling, complaints were lodged with the Supreme Court within days of the election that the election itself should be declared invalid.

These complaints took issue with the procedures of the elections themselves, including the lack of privacy provided by voting booth partitions and the use of ballot boxes that could not be locked. These complaints were

compelling enough to the court for them to rule the elections invalid in January 2011.

Undeterred, Jóhanna simply had these 25 individuals appointed to a Constitutional Council, which was then tasked with writing the constitutional draft.

## "Crowdsourcing" the constitution

At this point, the task of working out the finer points of the constitutional draft was not solely in the hands of the Council. The people were also directly involved through a website where Icelanders were encouraged to offer suggestions on specific articles, clauses and amendments.

It was this aspect that attracted the greatest degree of international attention, often framed in headlines celebrating that "Iceland is crowdsourcing its constitution." During a time when many countries were still recovering from their own financial crises—and questioning the political systems that enabled them—the Icelandic people re-writing their constitution was aspirational.

In July 2011, a draft proposal was submitted to Parliament. Specific articles of this draft, and whether to write a new constitution based on the draft, were put to a national referendum in 2012. 66.3% of voters in the referendum said that they wanted a new constitution based on the draft that was drawn up by the Constitutional Council the year previous. The people also voted on specific changes, such as having natural resources that are not privately owned to be declared national property; giving equal weight to votes cast in all parts of the country; a provision stating that a certain proportion of the electorate is able to demand that issues are put to a referendum; and more.

It looked like Iceland was on the fast track to getting its long-awaited, democratic, modern constitution. But that didn't happen.

## Up on a shelf

Katrín Oddsdóttir, a human rights lawyer and chair of the Constitutional Society in Iceland, has been a part of the fight for the new constitution from the very beginning.

"What we have been doing ever since—for eight years now—is fighting for this result of the national referendum to be honoured," she says. "It is a huge democratic paradox to be fighting your own Parliament to honour a referendum that Parliament called for. I don't think this happens very often in democratic societies, that the legislature calls for a referendum but then ignores it based on the fact that this was a consolatory referendum and not a binding one."

Katrín believes there are systemic forces at work resisting the new constitution, both within Parliament and in the business world.

"Systems reject change," she says. "There [are] articles in the new constitution which say, for example, that natural resources belong to the nation and that the nation should get full price for the usage for its fisheries. Currently, we have a system where maybe 100 people ... in Iceland make most of the money for huge fisheries. According to law, they are owned by the nation, but for some weird reason, the nation only gets about 20% of the actual profit. But it doesn't really matter, because in Iceland, justice finds its way. It's taking time, sure, but in the end it will go well

for Iceland, I'm sure. We're just taking as many steps as we can in this marathon of a run.

"There is a sort of pull within the political parties for slow, or no, changes to the constitution. The system wants to maintain itself. That's what makes it a system. I think that's the reason why we ended up in this cul de sac at the moment."

Helga Baldvins Bjargardóttir, president of the Women's Association for the New Constitution, agrees, and believes business interests are bolstering Parliament's resistance.

"There are always some owners of capital who ensure that they have a say in how policy is being made," Helga says. "I think that's the case with all the old political parties. Currently, it's the Left-Greens who are standing most in the way. They should have every means to pass this, instead we get these terrible excuses for constitutional change. It was really disappointing to see that this is as far as they think they can get when working with the Independence Party. It's quite sad."

"There's also conservatism at work," Katrín says. "There are people who feel it's too much to change the constitution in one step; that we should do it slowly over many steps. There are many reasons for opposition to the new constitution. But I'd like to point out that one of the reasons is the fact that the current system has built-in injustices within it and the new constitution makes an effort to challenge these injustices, but there are people and companies who do not want to see those changes."

Another factor slowing progress, Helga believes, is the smallness of Iceland itself.

"Because we're such a small nation, it's easy to rule by fear," she says. "People know that if they are very vocal about something, they might be ruining their chances of getting a promotion or the jobs that they want. Without a culture of protection and making people accountable, it's easy to rule by fear."

She adds that rural Icelanders—many of them voters for more conservative parties—are being misled by these parties.

"People in the countryside are afraid that changing things to one person equals one vote would mean Parliament would only focus on Reykjavík, that they would be left out," she says. "But they forget that there is an article in the new constitution which says that you cannot discriminate against someone based on where they live. So the constitution would actually transform the way we think about how we provide services all around the country."

## The Prime Minister and the people

Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir recently announced that she will submit a bill to Parliament—interestingly, not as Prime Minister but as a parliamentarian—which would make some amendments to the current constitution. But Katrín Oddsdóttir believes the changes are lacking.

"We personally feel that this isn't good enough, because the referendum asked if the draft of the new constitution should be the basis and that's certainly not what's being done now," she says. "They're trying to amend the old one, a constitution which was always only supposed to be preliminary. The big quest of this nation to own its own social contract is still being ignored. Secondly, the proposals she's putting forward are in many ways just watered-down versions of similar

proposals in the new constitution."

Katrín speculates that one of the reasons why the Prime Minister is taking this route comes from a desire to please everyone in the government.

"This is just my personal theory, but I think what might have happened is that inside [the Left-Greens], there are very conservative people, and they hold a lot of power inside the party," she says. "Basically what they've said to the people, and to [the Prime Minister], is that this will never be done unless it's done with political harmony, where all the parties come together and make a solution. But this is completely incorrect."

"Firstly, we see now that this isn't happening. Even the [Independence Party] are not backing her up. Why is she putting [her bill] forward as a parliamentarian and not a government minister? Secondly, it is just wrong that all constitutional changes in Iceland's history have been done in some kind of Disney moment where everybody agrees. We have had huge disputes, like when we were changing the electoral territories. Parliament was at war over the issue."

Katrín does, however, believe that the Prime Minister is doing what she can with what she has to work with, albeit with reservations about the methodology.

"I think [the Prime Minister] is doing her best," she says. "I think she thought that she would be able to lead the other parties into some kind of unity about certain constitutional changes that would continue after the next election. Even though she has no certainty over who is going to lead the country after the election, so it makes absolutely no sense. We also have to remember that the new constitution was put together by 25 very different people, and we all had very different political opinions. It's a huge compromise—and the compromise already lives inside that document. As soon as you start treating the new constitution as some kind of buffet, where you just pick and choose articles and try shoving them into the old constitution, they have completely and utterly abandoned that big compromise."

## Do the people still want a new constitution?

Public support for the new constitution has not waned. A recent petition—one that requires an official signature from the National Registry—accrued over 43,000 signatures in support of a new constitution based on the draft. This equals somewhere between 15% and 20% of all eligible voters, which in a historic context is a very strong showing of support. In fact, poll after poll over the years has shown that most Icelanders support the initiative, including a poll from Maskína, conducted during the last week of October that showed 53.5% in support of the new constitution, 21.3% opposed, and 25.2% ambivalent.

There have also been other demonstrations of support, ranging from a recent social media campaign employing the hashtag #hvar (#where), to the painting of a giant mural by the Ministry of Fisheries asking, in bold letters, "Where is the new constitution?"

"That happened on a Saturday, and on the Monday they came and cleaned the wall," Katrín points out. "Which is very funny, because this wall had been filled with graffiti for years and nobody ever cleaned it. It was like a symbolic gesture on behalf of the power-holders, sort of trying to silence this big, democratic question for Iceland."

Soon after that mural was erased,



Helga Baldvinsdóttir

**"It is a huge democratic paradox to be fighting your own Parliament to honour a referendum that Parliament called for."**

Words:  
Andie  
Sophia  
Fontaine

Photos:  
Art Bicnick

a new, even bigger mural was painted nearby.

"And that one still stands, because what the power-holders realised is that when they try to silence us, we become stronger," she says. "As soon as they washed this wall, it was all over the media and thousands of people signed the petition. You can say a lot of things about Icelanders—we're very tolerant of the corruption that goes down here, but we don't like to be silenced, that's for sure."

## What does the new constitution change?

There's a great deal that Helga likes about the changes the new constitution would offer, a great deal of them having to do with creating a more just and democratic society.

"One of the most important changes in the new constitution is that natural resources should be the property of the nation," she says. "The biggest mistake that we made in Iceland in terms of inequality is in how the fishing quota system came about. There's just a few families getting all the money from the fisheries in Iceland, when it could be used to build our education, welfare and health care systems. Instead, this money is hidden in some tax havens in Tortola."

"Another important change," Helga continues, "is that if there's a piece of legislation that the people don't want, and they want to have a vote on it, then the people can ask for a referendum and they can vote on it. We've been seeing around the world that there are politicians trying to decrease the rights of women and the queer community. If a politician wanted to try that here, the nation could intervene and stop it from [becoming] law."

Dr. Lawrence Lessig, an academic, attorney and political activist, has been keenly interested in the Icelandic constitutional process for many years. In an interview with the Grapevine in 2016, he offered that the new constitution could have wider implications for the rest of the world.

"I think that the process for drafting this constitution is the most democratic process we've seen in the history of constitutions anywhere," he said. "We've never seen something like this. This process involved an incredibly intelligent mix between grassroots, citizen-driven input, expert-crafting direction and an actual deliberative process for drafting the constitution that wasn't controlled by insiders. The process was representative of the values that the constitution should embrace; it mixes the different elements that a democratic constitution should include: it has expertise, but it also has democratic pedigree. There isn't another constitution that has passed through this mix of democratic accountability in the history of constitutions. That's objectively a very important fact about the nature of the constitution."

Helga agrees, citing the process by which the new constitutional draft was written.

"We elected 'normal people'; not solely politicians [to work on this constitution]," she says. "It's written by the people and for the people. It's right there in the preface. You can see what values it's based upon; it has this long-term thinking, which is not what we're used to. It's a text that's written with the heart and soul in it. It's supposed to be our social covenant that we can base everything else upon. Of course, it's not perfect. It's supposed to be a

living instrument. But if Parliament is going to make any changes to the draft, this is the criteria that they should use: that those changes are for the benefit of everyone; not just the few."

"I think it matters to democratic activists and theorists around the world, because we have so many examples of democracy failing around the world, that we need an example of democracy succeeding," Lawrence said in 2016. "And this would be an example of that because of two parts: one part is basically a grassroots democratic movement to crowdsource a constitution, which is then supported by two-thirds of the voting public, and eventually enacted. That's a kind of reassertion of the vitality in the democratic process. But on the other side, it would also be important to see the elites and the government yield; to see them acknowledge and concede to the authority of the democratic process."

## So how do we get there?

If there's so much resistance to the constitutional draft, how can we affect change? Katrín sees a number of options. There is, for example, the fact that the Social Democrats, the Pirate Party, and the two former Left-Green MPs—Andrés Ingi Jónsson and Rósa Björk Brynjólfsson—recently submitted a bill to Parliament based on the new constitution. While Katrín is not optimistic about its chances of passing, she does believe it could pave the way for more substantial changes.

"At least this is one way of keeping the new constitution alive and keeping it where it belongs: inside Parliament, to be discussed there and hopefully one day voted on there," she says. "One of the horror stories about this case is that just before the 2013 elections, when the [Social Democrat and Left-Green] majority wanted to put this forward to be voted on in Parliament, parties such as the Independence Party used filibustering to prevent the vote from happening."

"I think we need to vote for parties that are actively pushing for the new constitution and push the old parties to tell us exactly where they stand, so that the voters can have a clear idea before going to the polls," Helga says. "This is what we want to press."

Katrín is of much the same mind, with her sights set on 2021, when the next parliamentary elections will be held.

"We really want this to be one of the major issues of the elections," she says. "This is the big picture. Elections tend to revolve around smaller things. We are at the point in time where we need to start thinking about what sort of society we're going to be. Are we this 'New Iceland' that we were promised after the economic crash? Will it ever actually see the light of day? We have really big things to work on as a society and if we don't work from our foundations in deciding how we're going to proceed as a nation, then it's very hard to see how we're going to be able to do this in any kind of beautiful way."

"I think it's very important now because we're going into a recession," Helga says. "We really need people to realise that having this new constitution benefits the people. It's a game changer in terms of how we deal with unemployment, bankruptcy and what's ahead of us."

Ultimately, Helga believes the very future of Iceland—especially in these trying times—hinges upon the creation of a new constitution.

"It's like we have two nations here," she says. "There's the few, who have all

the money, resources and own most of the media, and then just normal people. We have to realise that if we want to try to equalise the balance,

we need this new constitution. It's the basis. It's how you move forward with everything." 🍷



Katrín Jakobsdóttir

# Happening

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## LET THERE BE VIRTUAL LIGHT!

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As is the trend in 2020, the Living Art Museum's annual Light Bazaar is moving online. Brighten the dark winter nights with some beautiful art. View and buy the works of over 40 contemporary artists on [ljosabasar.nylo.is](https://ljosabasar.nylo.is) and help raise funds to support the Living Art Museum. The Marshall House will also be hosting an open storage and pop up home for the Bazaar during opening hours (Wed - Sun from 12:00-18:00). **JD**



## XMas Consumers Yahoo!

Heiðmörk Christmas Market

Weekends until Christmas - 12:00-17:00 - Heiðmörk - Free!

Nearly every Icelandic venue/store has its own version of a holiday market, but the one in the old hunting lodge at Elliðavatn is a not-to-miss experience. On a frozen lake in a gorgeous forest, sit the kids into a beautiful grove for some Christmas stories—most in Icelandic. Afterwards, cut down your own Christmas tree, enjoy some hot chocolate and just be merry. Oh, and don't forget to buy a ton of handmade stuff. What more is Christmas than capitalism wrapped in a bow? **HJC**



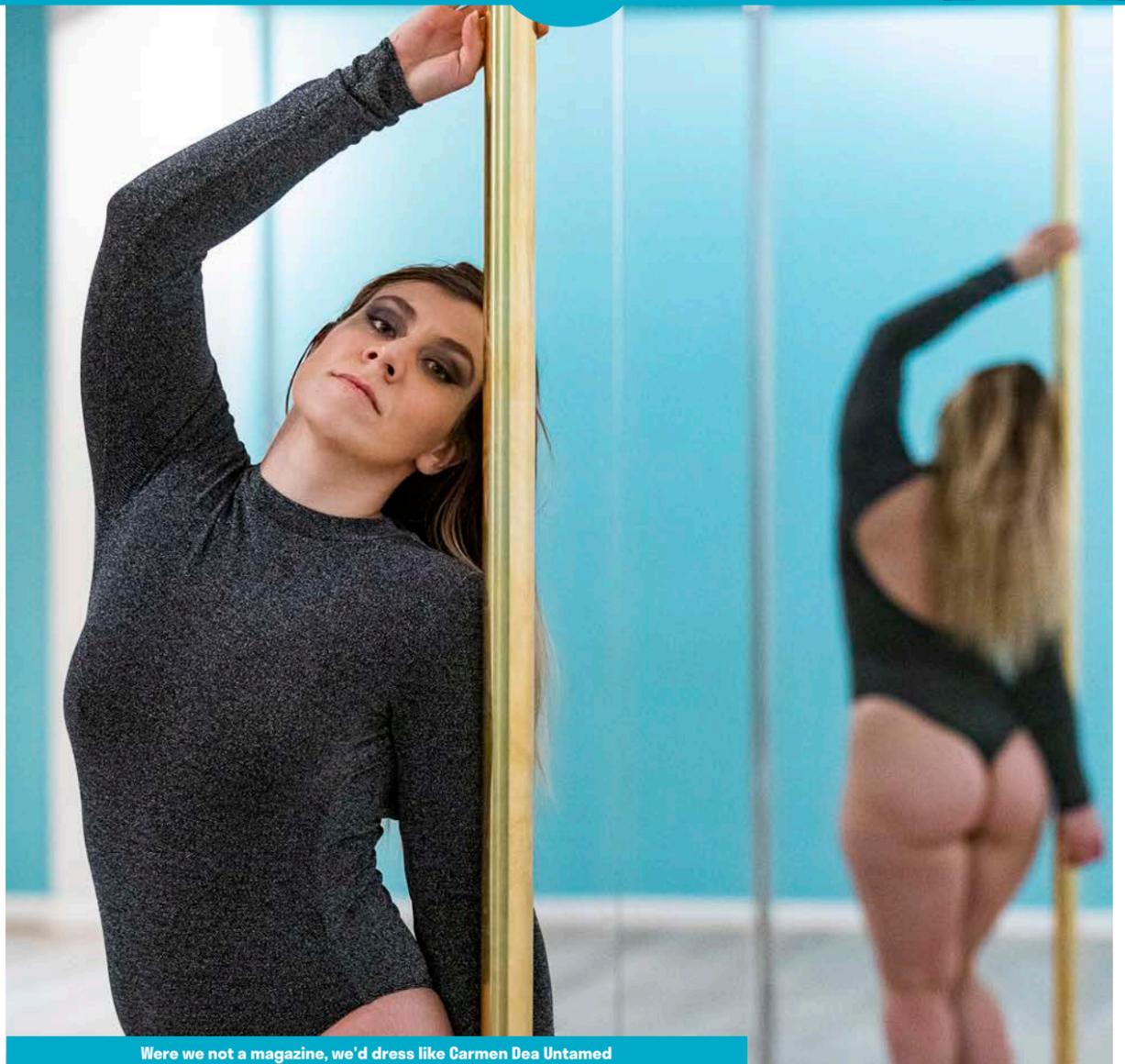
## We, Tonya

Ice Skating at Ingólfstorg

November 28th-January 2nd - Ingólfstorg - 12:00-21:00 - 1,290 ISK

The next Winter Olympics might not be until 2022 but that doesn't mean you can't start practising now. Get on the path to win Iceland's first figure skating medal with a spin around Reykjavik's beloved annual Ingólfstorg skating rink. Bring your kids, lover, or adrenaline-junkie Grandma (in a mask) and take over the city's central square on some razor-sharp shoes. Grab a Hlöll afterwards for a true Reykjavik afternoon. **HJC**

## CULTURE NEWS



Were we not a magazine, we'd dress like Carmen Dea Untamed

## Info

The next Couch Cabaret (18+) will be on December 18th at 21:00. Tickets are 1,200 ISK. Get more information on the [Túttifrúttarnar Facebook page](#).

# Bedroom Burlesque

## Get stunned on your sofa by the Couch Cabaret

Words:  
**Hannah Jane Cohen**

Photo:  
**Art Biecnick**

"So it was just her in a beautiful red dress with red curtains behind her. She had a bathtub and her only mission was to get into the bathtub and it was just so graceful and beautiful," Carmen gushes. "That just really sits in my memory. I just love it."

While you might think this is a description of some sort of romantic painting or art film, it's actually the most recent burlesque performance by Reykjavik sensation Maria Callista, which premiered at burlesque troupe Túttifrúttarnar's last Couch Cabaret online show. The Couch Cabaret is the troupe's COVID-friendly solution to keeping entertainment alive during the pandemic. The virtual extravaganza is streamed online and features the best and brightest of local performers and some stars from abroad; the next occurring on December 18th.

### A true cabaret

Carmen—whose full artist name is Carmen Dea Untamed—also participated in the virtual showcase, both as a performer and organiser. The pole dancer/burlesque extraordinaire is known for her high-energy and sensual acts, which—luckily for socially distanced audiences—translate well to the small screen.

"The Couch Cabaret is a virtual show. We have pre-recorded acts that performers make," Carmen explains. While it's run by a burlesque group,

Carmen emphasises that the show is not only strip-tease. "It's a variety show—a cabaret. Some acts will be burlesque, others circus, drag, pole dancing, acrobatics," she trails off. "We could have jugglers if they apply! Or magicians, comedians, singers—it's a true cabaret."

### The essence of Carmen

While many are lamenting the loss of in-person entertainment, Carmen encourages people to think positively. There are, according to the dancer, some unusual benefits to performing only online.

"I see a lot of opportunities for us here in tiny Iceland to expand. The positive thing about COVID—of course, it's not positive and I'm very sad about COVID—but I've gotten to know a lot of artists around the world, artists that I don't think I would have met [were it not for the pandemic]," she explains. "Virtually, we can expand our connections and work together without having to meet in person, without them having to come here and perform."

"We've even gotten a few applications [for the Couch Cabaret] from artists who are not [in] Iceland. And that's like—ok, this is an opportunity!"

Carmen is mum on what we can expect from her future acts, but if her performance at the last show is anything indication it's safe to say we can expect the unexpected. Carmen filmed

her November routine with a COVID-safe production team at local pole studio Erial Pole—which you can see in the pictures. "It [was] a little bit different than my usual acts. I'm going out of my comfort zone," she smiles. "It's the essence of Carmen."

### Give 'em the ol' razzle-dazzle!

But how should one best view the cabaret? Carmen recommends giving your house a bit of the ol' razzle-dazzle.

"I didn't expect this but it gave me a bit of warmth in my heart when our lovely audience used it as an opportunity to dress up at home," Carmen recalls of the Couch Cabaret's last online audience. "They put on makeup, hair, beautiful dresses and were just in full Cabaret style at their house in a chair with a wine glass," she explains. "So, of course you can watch the show anyway you want. You can be in your pyjamas in your bed with a laptop, but if you want to make the most of your ticket, dress up and make a night of it."

She smiles. "Then you can bring the cabaret home." 🍷



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# Some Kind of Peace In A World Full Of Chaos

Ólafur Arnalds on his most intimate album to date, and the importance of community and ritual in a world gone mad

Words: Jess Distill Photos: Art Bienick

Sometimes an album or a song comes along at a point where it feels like it's exactly what the world needed. Ólafur Arnalds' latest offering, 'Some Kind of Peace', is one of those albums. Described as his most intimate album yet, 'Some Kind of Peace' has been hailed by fans and critics alike as the perfect haven in this time of chaos and uncertainty.

### A serendipitous alignment

Although Ólafur is quick to point out that this is by no means a "COVID album," he appreciates the serendipitous alignment of events that has occurred leading to the album's release and the impact his

music is having as a result.

"The album was really focused on the ideas of community and rituals and doing things that are really pure and from the heart. All of these things became super important to us, or rather, it became obvious to us how important they are, when the pandemic hit," he explains. "Our daily rituals were suddenly taken away from us and we noticed their importance. We started looking more closely for community and really feeling the importance of

that. So, for me, it just reaffirmed the direction I was going in. It wasn't created from the pandemic but it definitely happened to fit right into it. It's lovely."

**"Music, in essence, is a ritual. It's a communal ritual that we take to reach a higher state of consciousness."**

Born from a desire to take himself back to his roots, 'Some Kind Of Peace' strips away the lavish compositions and cinematic sounds that have become synonymous with Ólafur's name, to reveal something a little more raw and vulnerable.

"It's not that my music isn't always personal," he explains. "It's

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just that I tend to create these big ideas or concepts to put in front of me and it's easy to hide behind them. I like to swing right in the other direction sometimes. I wanted to go back to before this was my job, before there was any pressure, and remember why I was making music."

### Telling his own story

Working mostly with friends, the relationship between Ólafur and his collaborators was as intimate as the music they created. "We had the opportunity to take a lot of time and really have a dialogue about the music and what feelings we were trying to evoke. We would play it a few times and then listen back to it and ask 'How do we feel right now when we hear this?'" Ólafur recalls. "We went into that aspect of it in a lot of detail, just listening and talking. Because it was so personal to me, I put even more effort into the tiniest details of performance."

With every listen of 'Some Kind of Peace' something new strikes you: a string part you didn't notice before, or a sound effect barely audible in the background, more a feeling than a sound. As though Ólafur is revealing himself little bit by little bit, the listener learns something new every time they play the album. Soundbites from his life, voice clips from the recording process, or samples taken of people and music that inspire him litter the album.

"How do you place a voice in voiceless music? How do you tell a story in instrumental music?" he asks. "I just have to add storytelling elements to it. It can be voices or the way something sounds. That's how I add my own voice, so to speak, without actually singing, and tell my personal story through the album."

### A higher state of consciousness

One of the more fascinating samples on the album appears in the second track, the hypnotising "Woven Song". Using the voice of an Amazonian medicine woman singing a traditional song of the Shipibo Tribe, the idea of ritual and the importance of storytelling and community is highlighted here. He hesitates before speaking, choosing his words carefully, but when Ólafur talks about the track, with excitement and verve, it's clear that we have reached the soul of his music.

"I can go into some depth about it, but not the full depths," he begins, with a slightly nervous laugh. "The moment I wrote that, the moment I found the combination of that piano with that voice, was the moment I knew the di-

rection this album was taking. That song is really about the importance of rituals—and music, in essence, is a ritual. It's a communal ritual that we take to reach a higher state of consciousness. I have gotten very interested in all sorts of rituals from all over the world in the past few years—taking part in them and researching them—and what we always find in common everywhere is the importance of music in those rituals."

Ólafur holds his cards close to his chest. He wants to discuss the track further, to talk more about these rituals and communities he finds so fascinating. But he stops himself, careful not to give too much away, guarding secrets of experiences past and projects yet to come. He may have opened up to his listeners more than ever before, but he's not quite ready to reveal everything. ♡

**"I wanted to go back to before this was my job, before there was any pressure, and remember why I was making music."**

### Music

'Some Kind Of Peace' is out now, everywhere. You can get a hard copy in the Grapevine Shop.

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## Think Global, Binge Local

The best movies and TV shows vaguely related to Iceland

Words: The Grapevine Film Crew Photos: Various Studios

Last year, we would have jumped for joy were there a mandated reason requiring us to stay home. What would we do? Watch Netflix? Eat a lot? Be lazy without guilt? Awesome!

This year? We're kind of over it, not gonna lie. But the Grapevine staff is here to give their best Iceland-related movie and TV recs for your weekend. Relax and use it as an excuse to not talk to your family.

### Hannah's Picks



I don't expect anyone reading this to be familiar with my personality traits, but trust me, those who know me as more than the Culture Editor of this magazine know unequivocally that my favourite film is and will always be Ridley Scott's **Prometheus**. I think it's a beautiful meditation on the nature of God,

the meaning of our lives, and the innate hubris of humanity. Seriously—what is scarier than asking your creator why you were made only to receive a confusing, aggressive lack-of-answer that just creates even more questions? That said, it's probably not the most realistic scenario. Were we ever to meet our great designers, who are we to assume we'd even be on a level to communicate with them? We'd probably be like ants to their intellect—just try to have a conversation about existence with a fucking ant and then get back to me. Never mind the fact that David, the android, does ask a human why they made him, only to hear the answer, "Because we could." OOOOH! Love it! Anyway, the film is rife with gorgeous Icelandic locations starting with a truly jaw-dropping nightmare-creating bodybuilder-decimation scene at Dettifoss. It's just like being there yourself—albeit terrifying.

You should also check out **Game Of Thrones**, one of the best series of our time which had filming locations all over Iceland. Just kidding—skip it. In fact, there's been a global pandemic where everyone has been forced to stay at home and not one fucking person worldwide used that time to rewatch it. Thanks D&D.

### Valur's Picks



**Hross í Oss** ('Of Horses And Men') is so oddly unique that it feels like drinking from a pure spring while listening to the most beautiful poem ever written—which is "Ferðalok" by Jónas Hallgrímsson, just to be clear. This movie is a compilation of stories about Icelandic people, their struggles and their horses. The movie, directed by Benedikt Erlingsson, won the Nordic Council Prize in 2014—it was the first Icelandic movie to take home the prestigious award.

If you're a horse-hating monster, you can't go wrong with any of Benedikt's other movies. His film **Woman At War** is also a masterpiece and Jodie Foster is actually working on remaking the movie for the US market, which seems to have issues with listening to any language other than English in theatres.

### Andie's Picks



My favourite Icelandic movie of all time is **Djöfleyjan**, which tells the story of a working class Icelandic

family at the tail end of the American occupation of Iceland after World War 2. This story is pretty heartbreaking, albeit with a touch of comedy, and the characters are all well-rounded and sympathetic. But no recommendation of Icelandic films would be complete without mentioning **Með allt á hreinu**, a musical comedy involving two Icelandic bands: Stuðmenn and Grýlurnar. It's hard to say what the plot of this film is beyond "two bands tour Iceland and get up to shenanigans" but pretty much everyone in Iceland has seen this film at least 50 times, so watching it for yourself will give you conversation fodder with the locals.



If you're in the mood for something so bad it's, well, not exactly good but certainly memorable, then definitely check out **Blossi/810551**. I won't ruin the experience of watching this film for the first time by saying anything about the plot; this is a film best watched with a clean slate.

In terms of television, you absolutely cannot go wrong with Jón Gnarr's brilliant series **Næturvaktin**. This series, a cringe comedy that recounts the adventures of night shift gas station workers, is probably the best Icelandic television comedy series ever made.

### Iona's Picks



"A man living a dull life dreams up romantic and action-filled scenarios in order to escape from monotony"—I think that's something we can all relate to in a global pandemic. If there's one thing **The Secret Life of Walter Mitty** was consistently praised for, it was the cinematography, which established every scene like a photograph you'd see in National Geographic or Life magazine, where Walter Mitty actually works in the film. And fortunately for us, loads of it was set in Iceland. Witness Ben Stiller longboarding through Seyðisfjörður and speeding away in the car of a local

Icelander as Eyjafjallajökull erupts behind him. Höfn and Stykkishólmur were also used in the film's Greenland scenes (wait, what?) whilst Vatnajökull National Park made its acting debut as Afghanistan and the Himalayas. We're not sure if disguising Iceland in this manner is a backhanded compliment or an insult, but let's assume the former.

If you feel like bursting a few brain cells, you could also check out **Fast And Furious 8**, hailed by some as "the worst Fast and Furious ever." With a car chase through North Iceland and a Russian submarine bursting through the surface of Lake Mývatn, what could feel more classically Icelandic?

### Jess's Picks



The ultimate origin story, **Joker** tells the tale of Arthur Fleck, a clown and stand up comedian who turns to a life of crime after being shunned by society. Strictly speaking not part of the DC Universe, Joker is a tense psychological thriller that sees the villain become the hero. Descending into insanity, Arthur—played exquisitely by Joaquin Phoenix—becomes something of a revolutionary, inspiring the downtrodden to step up against the wealthy and powerful. It's a clever telling of the Joker's story, that may just have you rewatching Batman films in a different light and with an understanding of why the Joker is how he is, which, dare I say it, may make you actually feel sorry for him...? Winner of multiple awards, including the Academy Award and Golden Globe for our gal Hildur Guðnadóttir for her stunning soundtrack. The film is exceptional but is just as sublime if you sit with your eyes shut for the whole thing because the music is \*chef's kiss\*.

And for the sci-fi fans, **Interstellar** is a must. Set in a future where the Earth has become uninhabitable, a group of explorers are sent out to find a new home for mankind and that new home is, of course, Iceland. Filmed at Svínafellsjökull and Máfabót glacier, Iceland does a beautiful job of looking like a vast and barren alien planet that you definitely would not want to get stuck on. 🍷

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November 27th—December 17th

# In Your Pocket



Reykjavík Map

Places We Like

Best Of Reykjavík

## Perfect Day

Dance, jive & have the time of your life



“Biking and exploring downtown is just the most fun ever.”

Words: **Hannah Jane Cohen**  
Photo: **Art Bicnick**

### gugusar

*Guðlaug Sóley Höskuldsdóttir—perhaps better known as gugusar—is one of the Grapevine’s favourite new artists on the scene. She dropped her debut album ‘Listen To This’ earlier this summer and just recently released a new single with Auður. This is her perfect day in the city.*

### Morning

The moment I woke up, I would start my day by connecting with my Bluetooth speaker and just blasting whatever my favourite song was at that moment. Probably something that has a lot of bass ‘cause I have a bass box under my bed so my bed shakes from the beat. Then I would go and make some breakfast—it’d be scrambled eggs with some avocado and an iced coffee.

I’d spend the rest of the morning painting a picture because I’m always painting right now.

### Afternoon

I love biking. I try to go biking five times a week so I’d call my friend and together we’d go biking downtown. Biking and exploring downtown is just the most fun ever.

We’d get something to eat at **Te og Kaffi**. That’s our go-to. I usually just pick out whatever, maybe a cookie or something, but I’d also get another iced coffee.

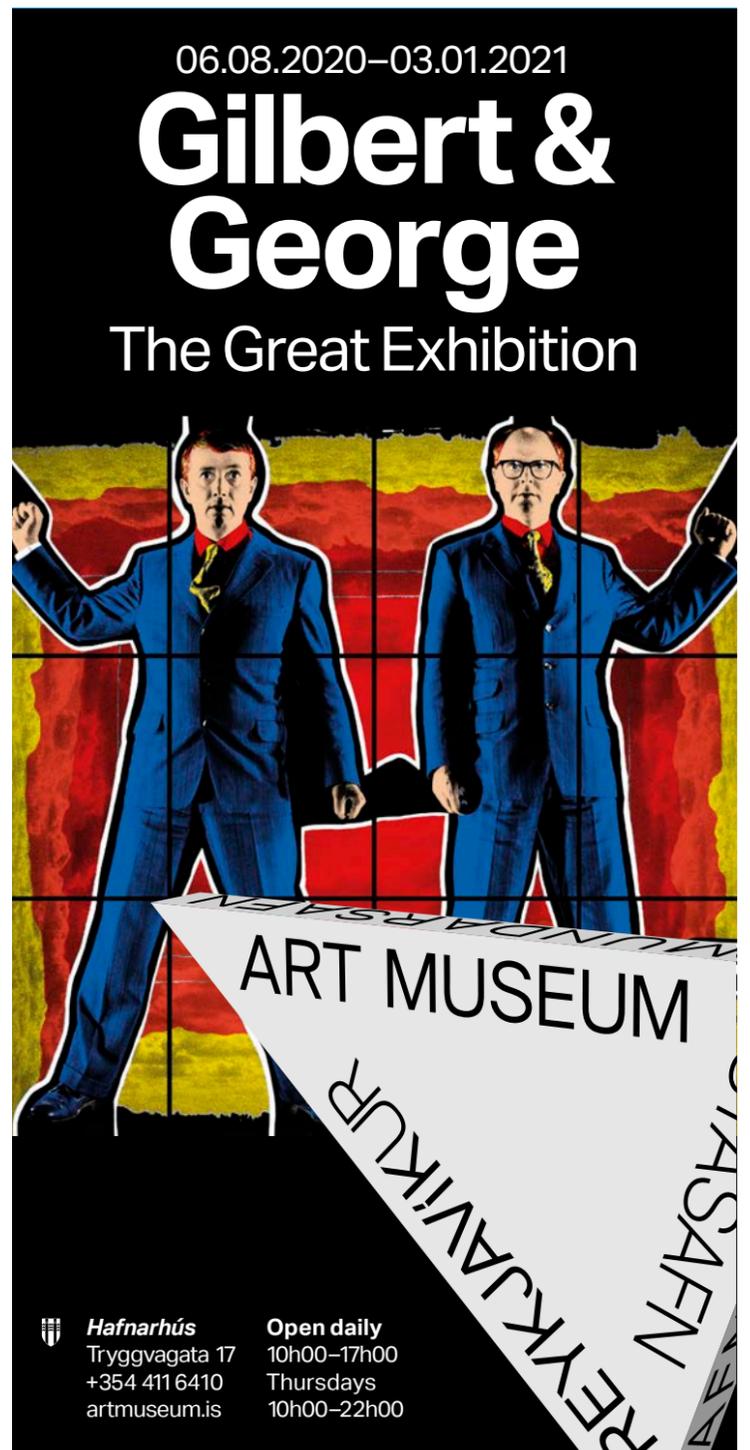
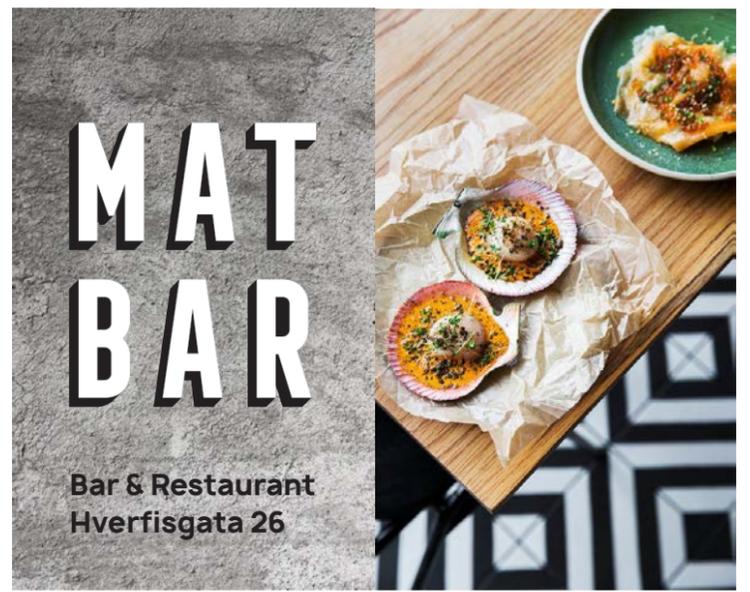
We love record stores, so we always go to **Lucky Records** and **12 Tónar** to look around. I usually buy an album—record stores are where I spend my money! The last album I bought was ‘Flower Boy’ by Tyler, the Creator, which I love. The cover is so pretty.

We also love thrift stores so we’d probably go to **Wasteland** or **Fata-markaðurinn** and look around there as well.

### Evening

After my friend goes home, I’d bike over to my sister’s house in Vesturbær for dinner. We’d have a soup (probably kjötsupa without the meat) and then go to **Ísbúð Vesturbæjar**. There, my favourite is a bragðarefur with Nutella, Oreos and Mars. It’s so crazy good. It’s bonkers.

Then I’d bike home again and spend the rest of the evening on my drum set. I have a drum set in my studio and I’d just play around and go crazy. And then I’d literally just sit here in the studio and try to produce some songs for like four hours before I go to sleep. 🎧



## Venue Finder

Venues	Museums & Galleries
<b>The numbers on the right (i.e. E4) tell you position on the map on the next page</b>	
<b>Austur</b> Austurstræti 7 <b>D3</b>	<b>ART67</b> Laugavegur 67 <b>F7</b> Open daily 9-21
<b>American Bar</b> Austurstræti 8 <b>D3</b>	<b>Ámundarsalur</b> Freyjugata 41 <b>G6</b> Open Tue-Sun 8-17
<b>Andrými</b> Bergþórugata 20 <b>G6</b>	<b>Aurora Reykjavík</b> Grandagarður 2 <b>B1</b> Open 09-21
<b>B5</b> Bankastræti 5 <b>E4</b>	<b>Ásgrímur Jónsson Museum</b> Bergstaðastr. 74 <b>G4</b> July 8-Sep 1, Mon-Fri
<b>Bió Paradís</b> Hverfisgata 54 <b>E5</b>	<b>Berg Contemporary</b> Klappartígur 16 <b>E5</b> Tu-F 11-17, Sat 13-17
<b>Bravó</b> Laugavegur 22 <b>E5</b>	<b>The Culture House</b> Hverfisgata 15 <b>E5</b> Open daily 10-17
<b>Curious</b> Hafnarstræti 4 <b>D3</b>	<b>The Einar Jónsson Museum</b> Eiríksgata <b>G5</b> Open Tue-Sun 10-17
<b>Dillon</b> Laugavegur 30 <b>E5</b>	<b>Exxistenz</b> Bergstaðast. 25b <b>F4</b>
<b>Dubliner</b> Naustin 1-3 <b>D3</b>	<b>Galleri List</b> Skipholt 50A <b>H10</b> M-F 11-18, Sat 11-16
<b>English Pub</b> Austurstræti 12 <b>D3</b>	<b>Hafnarborg</b> Ströngata 34, 220 Open Wed-Mon 12-17
<b>Gaurkurrinn</b> Tryggvagata 22 <b>D3</b>	<b>Hverfisgalleri</b> Hverfisgata 4 <b>D4</b> Tu-Fri 13-17, Sat 14-17
<b>Hard Rock Café</b> Lækjargata 2a <b>D3</b>	<b>i8 Gallery</b> Tryggvagata 16 <b>D3</b> Tu-Fri 11-18, Sat 13-17
<b>Hressó</b> Austurstræti 20 <b>D3</b>	<b>The Penis Museum</b> Laugavegur 116 <b>F8</b> Open daily 10-18
<b>Íðnó</b> Vonarstræti 3 <b>E3</b>	<b>Kírsuberjatréð</b> Vesturgata 4 <b>D3</b> M-F 10-18, Sat-Sun 10-17
<b>Kex Hostel</b> Skúlagata 28 <b>E7</b>	<b>Kling &amp; Bang</b> Grandagarður 20 <b>A4</b> W-Sun 14-18, Th 12-21
	<b>Listastofan</b> Hringbraut 119 Open Wed-Sat 13-17
	<b>Living Art Museum</b> Grandagarður 20 <b>A4</b> Tu-Sun 12-18, Th 12-21
	<b>Mokka Kaffi</b> Skólavörðustig. 3A <b>E5</b> Open daily 9-18:30
	<b>Museum of Design and Applied Art</b> Garðatorg 1 Open Tu-Sun 12-17
	<b>The National Gallery of Iceland</b> Frikirkjuvegur 7 Open daily 10-17
	<b>The National Museum</b> Suðurgata 41 Open daily 10-17
	<b>The Nordic House</b> Sturlugata 5 <b>H2</b> Thu-Tu 11-17, W 11-20
	<b>Hafnarhús</b> Tryggvagata 17 <b>D3</b> Open 10-17, Thu 10-22
	<b>Kjarvalsstaðir</b> Fókagata 24 <b>H8</b> Open daily 10-17
	<b>Ámundarsafn</b> Sigtún Open daily 10-17
	<b>Reykjavík City Library</b> Tryggvagata 15 <b>D3</b> Mon-Thu 10-18, Fri 11-18, Sat-Sun 13-17
	<b>Árbæjarsafn</b> Kistuhylur 4 Open daily 13-17
	<b>The Settlement Exhibition</b> Aðalstræti 16 Open daily 9-18
	<b>Reykjavík Museum of Photography</b> Tryggvagata 15 <b>D3</b> Mon-Thu 10-18, Fri 11-18, Sat-Sun 13-18
	<b>Saga Museum</b> Grandagarður 2 Open daily 10-18
	<b>Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum</b> Laugarnestangi 70 Open Tu-Sun 14-17
	<b>SÍM</b> Hafnarstræti 16 <b>D3</b> Open Mon-Fri 10-16
	<b>Tveir Hrafnar</b> Baldursgata 12 <b>G4</b> Open Fri-Sat 13-16
	<b>Wind &amp; Weather Window Gallery</b> Hverfisgata 37 <b>E5</b>

## Vital Info



### Useful Numbers

Emergency: 112  
On-call doctors: 1770  
Dental emergency: 575 0505  
Taxi: Hreyfill: 588 5522 - BSR: 561 0000

### Post Office

The downtown post office has moved to Hagatorgi 1, open Mon-Fri, 09:00–17:00.

### Pharmacies

Lyf og heilsa, Egilsgata 3, tel: 563 1020  
Lyfja, Laugavegur 16, tel: 552 4045  
and Lágmúli 5, tel: 533 2300

### Opening Hours - Bars & Clubs

Bars can stay open until 23:00 on weekdays and weekends until further notice.

### Opening Hours - Shops & Banks

Most shops: Mon-Fri 10-18, Sat 10-16, Sun closed. Banks: Mon-Fri 09-16

### Swimming Pools

Sundhöllin, the downtown pool at Barónsstígur, is an indoor swimming pool with hot tubs and a diving board. More pools: [gpv.is/swim](http://gpv.is/swim)  
Open: Mon-Thu from 06:30-22. Fri from 06:30-20. Sat from 08-16. Sun from 10-18.

### Public Toilets

Public toilets in the centre can be found inside the green-poster covered towers located at Hlemmur, Ingólfstorg, by Hallgrímskirkja, by Reykjavík Art Museum, Lækjargata and by Eymundsson on Skólavörðustígur. Toilets can also be found inside the Reykjavík City Hall and the Reykjavík Library.

### Public Transport

Most buses run every 20–30 minutes  
Fare: 480 ISK adults, 240 ISK children.  
Buses run from 07-24:00, and 10-04:30 on weekends. More info: [www.bus.is](http://www.bus.is).

**A**



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**B**

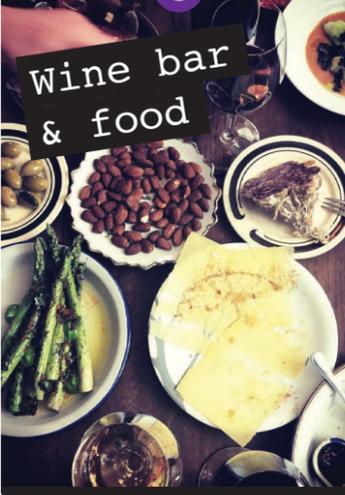
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**C**

Wine bar & food



VÍNSTÚKAN  
**TÍU SOPAR**

# The Map

Get the bigger, more detailed version of The Reykjavík Grapevine City Map at your nearest hotel or guesthouse, with selections from our Best-Of awards, vital info, downtown bus stops and a wider view of the city.

## Dining

### 1. Austur-Indíafjélagið

Hverfisgata 56

Still going strong 20 years on, Austur-Indíafjélagið is an institution. Make a meal out of the delicate salmon pollichathu, kozhi mappas and kulchas and share it family style. Keep your eyes peeled for the vegetarian and vegan dishes as well.

### 2. Gaeta Gelato

Aðalstræti 6 + Hlemmur Mathöll

Gaeta Gelato is owned by recently-arrived Italian transplants with nearly 25 years of experience as gelatai. Their artisanal and authentic flavours, from blueberry to Piedmontese hazelnut, are made with fresh and well-sourced Icelandic ingredients. Though only recently opened, Gaeta Gelato has already won over a crowd of committed regulars.

### 3. Sæta Svinið

Hafnarstræti 1-3

With big portions and a tasty menu, this hip restaurant offers everything you might desire, from crispy broccoli and big bowls of mussels to a great leg of lamb and a taste of lobster. Try and get a seat upstairs: it'll be like dining under a starry sky in the most romantic, dim-lit set-up.

### 4. Valdís

Grandagarður 21 & Frakkastígur 10

This beloved ice cream parlour—which has a Grandi and downtown location—makes everything in-house each morning, and you can tell. If you like liquorice, try Tyrkisk Peber. While it looks like liquid cement, it tastes heavenly. The spot doesn't have a large seating area, so take your cone on a stroll along the harbourside or enjoy it in a parked car, Icelandic style.

### 5. Bastard Brew & Food

Vegamótastígur 4

This downtown drinking hole is something of a beer and bar-food palace. It's an English pub style environment, without the sense of history, but with eleven beers on tap, a great happy hour, and the phenomenally good 'Fat Bastard' burger on offer, it's a firm Grapevine favourite. Their tacos are pretty notable, too.

### 6. Noodle Station

Laugavegur 103

Billowing clouds of coriander scent are a mouth-watering introduction to Noodle Station. Choose beef, vegetable or chicken, and add an extra spice or flaky chilli sauce until your nose runs, your tongue throbs and your gums howl. It's bar-style stool seating and cheaper prices (for Reykjavík) attract prudent solo travellers.

### 7. Grandi Mathöll

Grandagarður 16

Grandi Mathöll has an immediately comfortable feel, with various stools, benches and couches scattered through the space. There are nine concessions and a bustling, social feel as people meander between the vendors, who shout out names as their orders are ready. Our tip: Vegan food from Spes and friend chicken from KÖRE. Everyone's happy!

### 8. Vitabar

Bergþórugata 21

This old-school burger 'n' beer joint is right downtown—near Sundhöllin—but feels like a real neighbourhood bar. Its unassuming exterior hides a cosy, no-frills dining room, where you'll mostly be surrounded by locals. For once.

### 9. Salka Valka

Skólavörðustígur 23

For a piece of good ol' Icelandic fish, there's no better spot than Salka Valka. The restaurant serves up a steamed fillet in their Fish Of The Day meal, with the fish options depending on what is the freshest available. They also have potentially the best plockfiskur in the city, some stellar soups, and—quite recently—a pizza menu.

### 10. Bæjarins Beztu

Tryggvagata 1

Icelanders have a weird obsession with hot dogs—trust us, you won't understand until you've been here. It's universally agreed though that the tiny stand Bæjarins Beztu serves the best one. Pro-Tip: When they ask what toppings you want, say "All." This is the only way to eat it.

### 11. Mama

Laugavegur 2

Nothing tastes better than ethics, which is why we love to try the rainbow salad and "nicecream" bowls at Mama, a plant-based restaurant with big dreams. The company is

proudly environmentalist—they hope to use their profits to invest into land so that the kitchen can become self-sufficient. The restaurant also doubles as a wellness space offering a whole host of yoga sessions and breathing workshops. Have your plant-based prayers been answered?

## Drinking

### 12. Röntgen

Hverfisgata 12

Röntgen is a party bar in the purest sense, with a rowdy dance floor, delicious cocktails and a fanbase that's just growing and growing. Run by the legends behind Húrra (RIP), Röntgen unexpectedly grabbed the runner-up for the Best Goddamn Bar category at the 2020 Best Of Reykjavík awards. We stan.

### 13. Lebowski Bar

Laugavegur 20a

This fully carpeted bar honouring the "Lebowski" Lebowski (not The Dude, man), is a nice place that offers two vibes: start the night nice and cosy with an artisanal White Russian, and end it on one of the rowdiest and most underrated dance floors in the city. Yup, Lebowski is a great place to hang at, but that could just be, like, our opinion man.

### 14. Jungle Cocktail Bar

Austurstræti 9

The verdant Jungle Cocktail Bar came in like a tropical storm last winter. Devoted to the elevation of all things cocktail culture, some of Jungle's stranger offerings over the past months have included a kale cocktail, but there's no shortage of level-headed concoctions like the signature "The Bombshell" (tequila, rhubarb & vermouth) along with any classic you can name.

### 15. Port 9

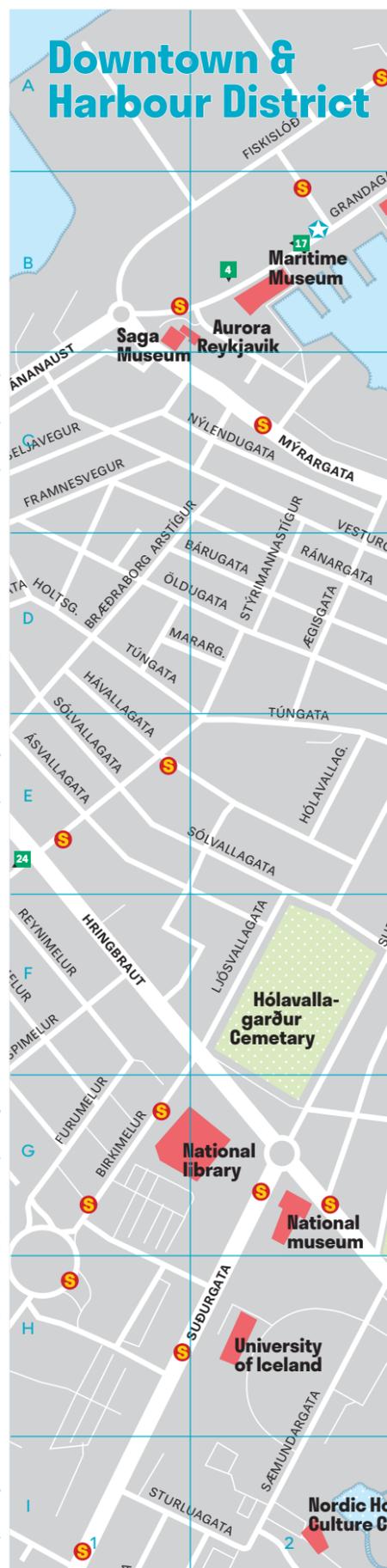
Veghúsastígur 9

Cosy and tucked away with a secretive vibe, Port 9 is a true hidden gem, hosting a delicious wine list as well as potentially the most intimate atmosphere in Reykjavík. It also has a nice balcony—the ideal locale for sipping some Pino in the summer sun.

### 16. Mengi

Óðinsgata 2

Mengi's concert room is more white cube than dive bar. The programme encourages new collaborations and experimental performances, so even if you know and love the work of the musicians you're seeing, you might be treated to something brand new on any given night.



### 17. Luna Flórens

Grandagarður 25

Luna Flórens is Iceland's only "gypsy bar." Part flower-child, part spiritual and with a whole lot of whimsy thrown into the mix, this cosy and hand-crafted bar is so intimate it makes you wanna spend the day musing about geodes, lunar cycles and tarot card readings. You can do all this and more while sipping on their excellent house cocktails and an excellent slice of vegan cake.

### 18. RVK Brewing Company

Skipholt 31

Yes, there is a bar on Skipholt, and yes, it is one that you need to check out. The RVK Brewing Company has slid

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### New In Town ☆

Photo: Subject's FB page



### Kiosk

#### Grandagarður 35

Located in the heart of Grandi—Reykjavik's most newly developing neighbourhood—is Kiosk, a fashion boutique that has been raising heads around the world. As a co-op jointly owned by five Icelandic fashion designers, Kiosk has caught the eye of Vogue, New York Times, Glamour and many more. Paying a visit, it's easy to see why: the clothes are timeless, the accessories pop, and the prices are more than reasonable. Get in on the ground floor and be amongst the first of your friends to say, "Oh, this? Yeah I got it out Kiosk—before it was cool to shop there."

ASF

under the radar since it opened, but now, we're here to bring it out of the shadows. The brewery and beer hall offers a varied list of brews, most of which they make themselves locally. Come and experience your new beer addiction.

#### 19. English Pub

Austurstræti 12

True to its name, the English Pub offers many different kinds of lager on tap and a whiff of that genuine UK feel. Try the famous "wheel of fortune" where one can win up to a metre of beer with a single spin while a steady team of troubadours engage the crowd in classic sing-alongs every night. The only thing missing is the salt & vinegar crisps.

## Shopping

#### 20. Hildur Yeoman

Laugavegur 7

Hildur's got a fresh new boutique on Laugavegur. As well as selling her own designs—womenswear characterised by flowing shapes made from fine fabrics with colourful, distinctive, busy prints—Hildur Yeoman's boutique also features sunglasses by Le Specs, jewellery by Vanessa Mooney, French tea, and other interesting trinkets.

#### 21. nomad.

Frakkastígur 8f

A relative newbie to the Laugavegur scene, nomad. was a surprise runner-up for the Best Design Store at the 2020 Best of Reykjavik awards. They have a fantastically curated selection of books, lamps, candles and more. Plus, the owner is a photographer and often has exhibitions on the lower floor.

#### 22. Wasteland Reykjavik

Ingólfsstræti 5

For super á la mode downtown Reykjavik looks—i.e. cheerleader uniforms, Guy Fieri t-shirts, and astronaut-esque jumpsuits—this second-hand store is the go-to.

#### 23. Lucky Records

Rauðarárstígur 10

Lucky Records is the punky, underground horse of the Reykjavik record scene. It's one of those shops that is easy to get lost in—expect to easily spend an entire afternoon perusing their selection.

#### 24. Melabúðin

Hagamei 39, 107

For foodies looking for artisanal deli meats, fresh figs, rare cheeses and all sorts of unexpected, hard-to-find treats, Vesturbær's beloved Melabúðin should satiate your desires.

#### 25. Pastel Flower Studio

Baldursgata 36

Pastel Flower Studio is only open on

Fridays and Saturdays from 13:00 to 18:00—so plan accordingly. The studio uses cut, dried, and fresh flowers to create unique arrangements that reference classic Icelandic nature in an unexpected and innovative way. Trust us: You won't find a florist in the city that's in any way comparable.

#### 26. Street Rats Tattoo

Hverfisgata 37

Kristófer, a.k.a. Sleepofer Tattoo, has proven himself to be a fresh, experimental artist whose works have become a somewhat coveted symbol in the city. So if you're looking to get your travel tattoo, go there. It's way more interesting than a Vegvisir.



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AUSTURSTRÆTI 8 • REYKJAVÍK

“It’s the memory of that which never was, of nostalgia to a past that may not have or possibly never actually happened.”



Cheer up, guys

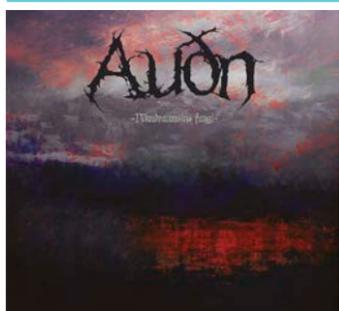
## Soundtrack To The Plague

Become prisoner to Auðn’s waking dream

Words: **Hannah Jane Cohen** Photo: **Daria Endresen**

### Album

‘Vökudraumsins Fangi’ is out now. Pick it up on the Auðn Bandcamp.



Auðn’s newest album ‘Vökudraumsins Fangi’ (‘Prisoner Of A Waking Dream’) ends on the line ‘Minning þess sem aldrei varð.’ It means ‘Memory of what never existed.’

### Eeriness encapsulated

“It’s open to interpretation, but it’s the memory of that which never was, of nostalgia to a past that may not have or possibly never actually happened,” guitarist Andri Björn

Birgisson explains. We’re on a video call; the audio crackles in and out like the wireless itself knows of the eeriness of Andri’s words. “Being nostalgic for something that never was real,” he continues carefully.

“Oh, I thought you were talking about millennials who were nostalgic for the 90s even if they didn’t experience them,” vocalist Hjalti Sveinsson adds. They burst out laughing, the sort of technological dystonic beauty of the last moment immediately gone. Eeriness erased.

Andri, still grinning, doesn’t give in to Hjalti’s shenanigans. “Being nostalgic for something that not only they didn’t experience, but never actually happened,” he concludes, receiving a decisive nod from Hjalti in return. “Or yes, the goddamn millennials.”

It’s a typical exchange for the band. They’re probably one of the most fun to interview, playing off each other so much that you kind of want them to have a TV show along with an album. Perhaps that’s in the works—they’re full of surprises.



Aðalsteinn’s child was unable to be photographed

id “standards” of black metal, which made them uncommon. They were honest, funny, and not afraid to say what they really thought about things. Now, just four years later, they’re signed to Season of Mist, one of the biggest metal labels in the world, and have become one of the country’s most well-known acts. The underdog has become the leader.

Their newest release is a culmination of all this work. It’s no doubt their most sophisticated effort yet—a melange of black metal, death metal, atmospheric doom, with even a touch of rock’n roll at times. Basically a genre-less creation. My first impression when I sat in my room listening to it was that I had to turn the lights out. This was a despondent anthem for loneliness—the perfect soundtrack for plague-life.

The band credits this progression to many things. Maturity, increased confidence in their own ideas, more polished production and a new lineup with previous bassist Hjálmar Gylfason jumping to guitar and Matthías Hlífar Mogensen taking over for him.

“It sounds like I wanted it to sound,” guitarist Aðalsteinn Magnússon states. He’s just joined the call, sitting back on his couch holding his four-month-old baby. “When I got the mix back I felt ‘ok wow, this is basically perfect’. This is the Auðn that we want to continue.”

### The end of the world

In fact, they’re filled with so much creativity they’ve essentially already written a new album, they reveal. All of them, they emphasise, have adapted very well to our new reality.

“If you’re depressed at home, what changes if you go to quarantine?” Andri says, laughing. “No, everyone’s trying to be so positive and hopeful—get rid of that. It’s not so bad. You get to stay at home and watch TV. I don’t think that’s the end of the world.”

“Yes, catch up on thinking,” Aðalsteinn interjects. “Enjoy the slow pace that the world is forced into. Take a deep breath.”

“And imagine if this happened in the 90s, you’d have to wait in line for the video store and then find out nothing was available,” Hjalti laughs, referencing his earlier statement. “I’d be first in there to rent all 20 copies of ‘Titanic’. I’d be that person.”

This causes the conversation—previously about the album—to completely devolve and morph into what ends up being a rather surprisingly divisive and long debate on the merits of James Cameron’s film, which really should be an article in itself. Hey—many other news outlets might have covered this album, but only one knows Aðalsteinn’s feeling on ‘Terminator 2’. Now that’s a scoop. 🍷

### Genre-less

When I first covered Auðn back in 2016, they were the underdogs of the Icelandic black metal scene. Their style was different—more atmospheric than dissonant—and they didn’t hold true to the rig-

[gpv.is/music](http://gpv.is/music)

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Event Picks



Jólagestir Björgvins 2020 ★

December 19th - 20:00 - Online - 3,900 ISK

OH! You thought the COVID-19 pandemic would stop the annual Jólagestir Björgvins?!

YOU FOOL! Nothing could stop this supergroup coming together to celebrate the holidays.

It's some Avengers level shit, we promise. This year? Ágústa Eva, Eyþór Ingi, Briet, Gissur Páll, Högni, Logi Pedro, Margrét Eir and Svala. Unconfirmed but Jeremy Renner might be making an appearance. Ok, that was a joke. He might be a surprise guest though. Anyway, put on your best outfit and get ready to sing along with your favourite Icelandic stars. Your Mom will love this shit. Your Grandma will love this shit. You'll love this shit. We all love Christmas, so stop being a Grinch and eat some fucking mistletoe. Happy Birthday Jesus! **HJC**



Black Sundays: 'Attack the Block' Screening ★

December 6th - 20:00 - Bió Paradís - 1,600 ISK

Watch a South London teen gang defend their housing estate from an alien invasion in this 2011 classic sci-fi/action film. With Jodie Whittaker as their beret-wearing accomplice and Nick Frost the dim-witted drug dealer, what's not to love? One night only! **IRW**



Advent Concert at the Iceland Symphony ★

December 3rd - 20:00 - Harpa - 2,600-8,100 ISK

What is Christmas without orchestral music? Nothing! So head to Harpa for some Baroque festivities and welcome the Christmas season with Vivaldi and Bottesini. Because nothing says 'Christmas' quite like a romantic Italian concerto or two. **JD**



MUSIC NEWS

It's not a yearly event that Icelandic artists get a Grammy nomination, but we're working on that, and three Grammy nominations in total this year is a good start. The outstanding Icelandic Symphony Orchestra has been nominated for its fantastic album, **Concurrence**. Four of Iceland's best composers—Páll Ragnar Pálsson, María Huld Markan, Haukur Tómasson, and Anna Þorvaldsdóttir—have a composition on the album, which was conducted by Daniel Bjarnason and one of the soloists is classical superstar Víkingur Ólafsson. Of course there is no music award celebration without our outstanding Hildur Guðnadóttir, who earned two nominations for her music in the coming of age story about a heart-warming clown desperately trying to reunite with his father while taking care of his sick mother, **Joker**. She won a Grammy (Iceland's first actually) earlier this year for her score of a highly praised mini-series about the unfortunate decisions of a group of disinterested power-plant workers in a small Ukrainian city that affects the environment called **Chernobyl**. **VG**

Our music listings page is on hiatus, because... reasons.



# Death Begets Life

## Krummi on the pandemic, the future of music & his newest single

Words: Jess Distill Photo: Art Bicnick

Single

'Frozen Teardrops' is out and available to stream.

"It's a strange and scary time," Krummi Björgvinsson says—over FaceTime, to be safe—when talk inevitably turns from his newest solo single "Frozen Teardrops," to the pandemic.

"But it's inspiring in a weird way, too. It brings up feelings that maybe you haven't felt before. You never think anything like this will happen, but then it does and you have all this time on your hands," he says. "I managed to release two singles whilst this COVID thing

has been going on. I've been writing a lot of music at home. It's been pretty good in that way. I've been reading books and looking after the plants and the cats."

### An old soul with stories to tell

A household name in Iceland, Krummi is well known for his genre-spanning work with bands like Mínus and LEGEND. Constantly immersed in music, several sideline projects have kept him busy, including country blues band Esja and abstract punk outfit Döpur, a project he worked on with his girlfriend, Linnea Hell-

ström. One might find it hard to pin down exactly what kind of musician Krummi is, but he insists that—in his heart—he's an old-school Americana kinda guy.

"It's the music that I've always been most into. My parents listened to it, so I listened from a very young age," he explains. "It's really in my nervous system. It's what comes out when I sit down with the guitar. It moves me the most emotionally"

And from this passion, a new project was born: a soon-to-be-released solo album, full of the stories, emotion, and old-school Americana sound he loves so much. He released his first single "Stories To Tell" last year, and has since followed it up with three more country-vintage-rock tracks.

But why has it taken this veteran of the Icelandic music scene two decades to go solo? "I feel

like I'm good enough now," he explains, humbly. "I've spent a long time harnessing the craft and getting better at playing guitar, singing and writing. I learned a lot from being in bands. So three years ago I sat down with a guitar and thought, 'Maybe I should start writing something' and I just couldn't stop. I wrote like 40 songs."

### The show must go on

"Frozen Teardrops" is a perfect example of the direction his solo music is taking. Described by Krummi as "a lush outlaw country-style tune with a pinch of gospel," the song is emblematic of the musician's aforementioned passion for Rock 'n Roll and Americana. A raw, unadulterated look at homelessness and street life, the song's heartfelt lyrics tell of what life entails for those on the fringes of society, who spend their days searching for love, care and understanding. "Give you all my frozen teardrops, While I beg on my knees. Here we are alone and starvin' for some remedies." Krummi explains, "With frozen tears on an empty stomach, they ask for a helping hand, often with no success, due to the prejudices of society. They roam with the wind anonymously and invisibly like the outcast angels of the universe."

Once the album is released, hopefully early in 2021, Krummi has two more albums waiting to be worked on, with plans to release one a year for the next three years—COVID permitting. But he's keen to keep going regardless of the pandemic. "I think we, the creatives in fields that demand crowds or exhibitions and concerts, will have to adapt to a new reality. Nothing's going

away but the enthusiasm of people will be different. There's not going to be so many live performances, so we'll have to start right away to adapt to the new reality. It's evolution." He ponders for a moment. "Something has to die for something new to grow." **VG**

"I think we, the creatives in fields that demand crowds or exhibitions and concerts, will have to adapt to a new reality."



Friday the 13th in the year 2020 might seem an auspicious day, but the lovely songstress sóley livened it up with the release of a new 10" entitled **'Harmóník I & II'**—a conglomeration of her two previous sold-out Harmóník releases. The effort shows the artist's journey into the world of experimental accordion drone music, a style she has never before showcased. "The sound of the accordion is so diverse—it has these beautiful and eerie wood sounds like flute and clarinet, but it can also sound like deep strings and the best part is when it sounds like an insane out-of-tune organ," she told the Grapevine. Did you have sóley-accordion-moment on your 2020 bingo card? We didn't, but we're so happy it happened. **HJC**



Up-and-coming British musician Millie Turner has released "Eye of the Storm" and it's none other than our beloved, almost-Eurovision star Daði Freyr that remixes it. And it's brilliant. Daði Freyr, also known as the crooner prince of soulful house music, has been appointed again as Iceland's Eurovision Song Contest contribution ... whenever that will be held again. We are not even sure 2021 will ever happen. Daði has been incredibly successful after he didn't compete in the last Eurovision contest—perhaps because of it. For those that don't know Millie, then it's safe to say that there goes one of the future superstars of British music, even the world. **VG**

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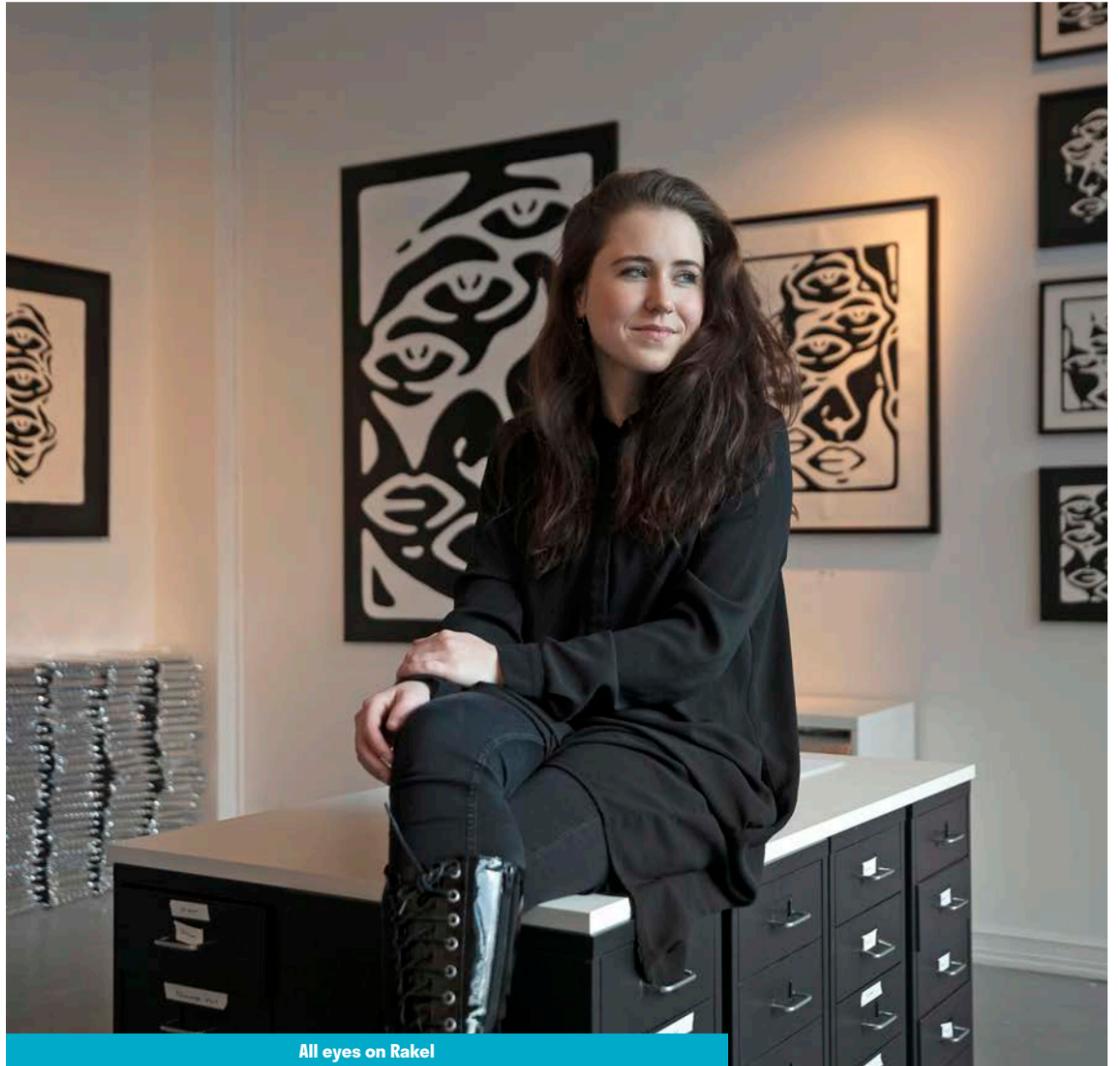
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# Art

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All eyes on Rakel

## Comfort & Contrast

Rakel Tómasdóttir finds peace in black and white

Words: Iona Rangeley-Wilson Photo: Art Bicnick

### Art

Check out Rakel at [rakeltomas.com](http://rakeltomas.com)  
or on Instagram at [@rakeltomas](https://www.instagram.com/rakeltomas)

Rakel Tomas' new studio on Grettisgata feels like an extension of her graphic designs, with black framed pictures arranged on stark white walls. "I just really feel comfortable with black and white," she explains. "I like the contrasts. I find bright, extreme colours kind of irritating. I hate the colour yellow—I don't know why."

Rakel plans on using colour as her next step, but she hasn't got around to it yet. "It's like a whole other dimension and I'm just not that good at it yet. I need to practise more before I can do an exhibition in colour or something. I do practice with it a little bit so it will happen eventually."

### Expression through body language

Though she claims not to have mastered colour, black and white is clearly a dimension that she has dominated—from the abstract paintings that combine eyes, noses and lips, to her more clearly discernible charcoal sketches of faces and figures.

"It's kind of a way for me to express emotions," she says, gesturing at a print of one of her sketches. "I've always been very bad with

words when it comes to describing how I feel; I'm much more comfortable with body language. I find the body very interesting: it's fascinating how people communicate with their bodies. I look at photographs and I try to find pictures that reflect the body language of how I'm feeling in that moment, and I mix them together in Photoshop. So I have a very complete sketch in Photoshop before I start drawing."

Her paintings, however, are more free-flowing. "With those, I start with one eye or something, and then just go where it takes me. I don't have a plan before I begin, which is kind of refreshing compared to the pencil process."

### Making art accessible

Rakel's work is not limited to sketches and paintings: she also creates and sells books and diaries—her 2021 diary arrived fresh from the publisher this week—and has even printed one of her designs onto a scarf. "I think it's a nice way for people who are not yet buying art to get involved in this world

around what I'm doing," she explains. "Especially young people; they might not yet have an apartment to buy art for, so it's more accessible."

One of Rakel's projects, an art book coming out on December 7th, contains all of her pencil drawings from the past three years alongside the stories behind them. "This one has a nice story," she explains, gesturing to a sketch of a figure being embraced. "First, it was about just wanting to be really close to someone, being really close to them physically but still wanting to get closer. This figure that's really light—I was going to fill in the shadows on that face, but then the person the piece was about ghosted me, and I didn't feel like she deserved to be finished. But at the same time it is finished and it's exactly how it's supposed to be."

Her personal favourites are the 'Water' drawings she created following time spent in Bali last year. "That collection is kind of my favourite I guess, because the time I spent there I was surfing and diving and in the water a lot which is a comforting thing for me," she says.

Though some artists might aim to challenge comfort zones, it seems that Rakel's art actually thrives within them. This idea of comfort is one

she keeps coming back to, simplifying the world into black and white and body language. There's a certain calm in Rakel's comfort zone—it's a place that makes sense. ♡

**"I've always been very bad with words when it comes to describing how I feel; I'm much more comfortable with body language."**

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Our Picks



★ **Nocturne**

Until February 1st - Reykjavik Museum Of Photography

Hrafna Jóna Ágústsdóttir's photography exhibition *Nocturne* takes its viewers on a creative fairytale night wander through Icelandic cityscapes. Explore the mixed emotions of the night: secretive and uncanny, but also at times warm and beautiful. Ordinary suburban scenes take on a surreal magic when daylight disappears and is replaced by the cool glow that falls from streetlights and windows: these photos show the eerie alternate universe within the familiar. Hrafna Jóna is continuing to pursue art following her recent graduation. "She seeks to express the darker side of her own thoughts and perceptions through photography and other forms of art media." **IRW**



★ **200+ Countries**

Until December 1st - FLÆÐI

Half-Icelandic, half-Guyanese Katrín Sif has travelled to 222 countries, unrecognised territories and sovereign states.

Come satiate your wanderlust (because you obviously can't leave the country right now) and reflect on the subjective perspective of a traveller/photographer. Pls let us travel. **HJC**



★ **Core Temperature**

Until Christmas - Harbinger

Fritz Hendrik IV's new solo exhibition is locked. By that we mean it's literally locked, as in patrons can't enter the room, only

stare from the windows. Entitled 'Core Temperature,' it deals with the expectations, fate, and disappointment relating to global warming and the pandemic. Serious shit. **HJC**



★ **Erró: Cyborg**

Until February 21st - Hafnarhús

Erró's *Cyborg* exhibition explores the connections and borders between the human and the cyborg. Cogs and lumps of metal cling to

shop dummies and paintings turn faces into eerie mechanical-looking blueprints. Social media, phones, laptops and credit card chips have turned humans cyborg. **IRW**

November 27th-December 17th

Art Listings

Events are listed by venue. For complete listings and detailed information on venues, visit [grapevine.is/happening](http://grapevine.is/happening). Send your listings to: [listings@grapevine.is](mailto:listings@grapevine.is)

Opening

HAFNARBORG

**Hafnarfjörður:**

**Works from the collection**

The exhibition is a selection of works from the Hafnarborg collection that all showcase Hafnarfjörður in a unique way. Few towns in Iceland are as picturesque as Hafnarfjörður and the nature surrounding it also offers spectacular points of view. And we're not just saying that because our editor is from there.

- Opens on November 27th, 2020
- Runs until March 7th, 2021



Ongoing

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND

**Solastalgia**

In this immersive installation, explore a mix of augmented reality with contemporary art, multisensorial effects and cutting edge sound design. Enter a mysterious future in a post-human Earth where only a mysterious digital cloud has survived. Do you still have faith in technology? (No.)

- Runs until January 10th, 2021

**Treasures Of A Nation**

A selection of over 80 works chosen from the national gallery's collection displays the evolution of art since the 19th century.

- Runs until February 14th, 2021

**High Plane VI**

Katrín Sigurðardóttir has for some years been exploring the effects of perception in her installations and works. Here, she dismantles a classic theme of Icelandic paintings: mountains, the blue of distant vistas, and the obsession with Icelandic nature.

- Runs until January 3rd, 2021

**Threads Of Art**

Celebrate the centenary of the birth of textile artist Ásgerður Búadóttir. If you thought there wasn't a rich contemporary textile scene, you have no idea just how experimental

this medium can be.

- Runs until January 24th, 2021

**Electromagnetic Objects**

The "Electromagnetic Objects" are a collection of works by Woody Vasulka and the audio artist Brian O'Reilly. According to O'Reilly, "the works use sources excavated directly from the output of the Electromagnetic Objects, as well as further manipulations using Tom Demeyer's ImX software, developed with input from Steina." Sounds complicated, but we still stan.

- Runs until December 31st, 2020

EINAR JÓNSSON MUSEUM

**Permanent Exhibition**

The museum contains close to 300 artworks including a beautiful garden with 26 bronze casts of the artist's sculptures.

REYKJAVÍK CITY MUSEUM

**Settlement Exhibition**

As Viking ruins meet digital technology, this exhibition provides insight into Reykjavik's farms at the time of the first settlers.

REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY

**Distance and Intimacy. Contemporary Icelandic Photography.**

What happens when you look at a photo for a really long time? How much more do you see? This exhibition invites viewers to find out, with a selection of contemporary photos that walk the line between social media and high art.

- Runs until January 10th, 2021



REYKJAVÍK MARITIME MUSEUM

**Fish & Folk**

Name a better duo than fish and Iceland. You can't. So come learn about the history of Icelandic fisher-

ies from row boats to monstrous trawlers.

**Melckmeyt 1659**

Melckmeyt was a Dutch merchant ship that crashed near Flatey Island in 1659. Explore the wreck here, with two images of different origins against each other.

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART

**Bird Artist In Residence**

Well, really all the info here is in the title. Sigurbjörn Helgason makes birds. Big birds. Small birds. Birds made of wood. Birds made out of reindeer horns. Lots of birds. Now you can watch him do it live in the museum shop at the Design museum.

- Runs until December 30th, 2020

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - HAFNARHÚS

**Erró: Cyborg**

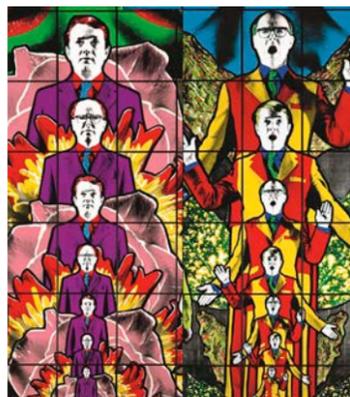
This series of the great Erró was inspired by technology, science and the combination of the human and the mechanic. In particular, it examines how technology invades the body and how the human body adapts to the machine. The images offer questions concerning the borderlines between human beings and technology.

- Runs until December 31st, 2020

**Gilbert & George: The Great Exhibition**

Perhaps two of the most influential contemporary artists of the last five decades, Gilbert & Georg are known for their pioneering performance pieces, bold photo-based graphics and anti-elitist "Art for All" ethos. At this special exhibition, come challenge the prevailing bourgeois ideas of taste and decorum while empowering gays and other minority groups. What else could you want?

- Runs until January 3rd, 2021



KLING & BANG

**CUL-DE-SAC**

Unndór Egill Jónsson's newest exhibition has potentially the most extreme and baffling artist statement we've ever seen. It's a list of seven questions—basically homework—asking everything from our thoughts on George Bataille to

thought exercises on dead cities. Count us in.

- Runs until December 13th, 2020

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM -

**KJARVALSSTADIR**

**Jóhannes S. Kjarval: At Home**

Jóhannes Sveinsson Kjarval (1885-1972) was one of the pioneers of Icelandic art (the museum is literally named after him) and is one of the country's most beloved artists. His connection to, and interpretation of Iceland's natural environment is thought to have taught Icelanders to appreciate it anew, and to have encouraged pride in the country's uniqueness and the world of adventure to be discovered within it.

- Runs until December 31st, 2020

**Sigurður Árni Sigurðsson: Expanse**

In this mid-career retrospective, Sigurður Árni Sigurðsson presents a series of paintings which dissect just how we view the world around us. Sigurður's works are known for exploring the limits of our field of vision and how that forms the basis of our worldview.

- Opens on October 17th, 2020
- Runs until January 24th, 2021

GALLERY PORT

**Formfast**

Árni Már Erlingsson presents a series of paintings and sculptures that play with forms over a graffiti background. Is it fine art? Or is it street art? Or is it both? Are we even in a gallery? Woah. If you like the exhibition, check out the Grapevine's YouTube page for an exclusive interview with the artist.

- Runs until December 3rd, 2020

GERÐARSAFN KÓPAVOGUR ART MUSEUM

**SCULPTURE / SCULPTURE**

Presenting: two solo exhibitions by

artists Ólöf Helga Helgadóttir and Magnús Helgason. The aim of the series is to explore contemporary sculpture and the development within three-dimensional art, not only as an important part of art history, but also as a living visual language within contemporary art. The series is intended to honor the sculptor Gerður Helgadóttir (1928-1975), who Gerðarsafn museum is named after.

- Runs until February 28th, 2021



HAFNARBORG

**What Meets The eye**

A retrospective of works by local goldsmith and artist Gunnar Hjaltason. He painted in oil, acrylics and watercolour, but this exhibition will focus on his prints. The images depict landscapes, town views of Hafnarfjörður and the Icelandic nature

- Until January 31st, 2021

## MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART

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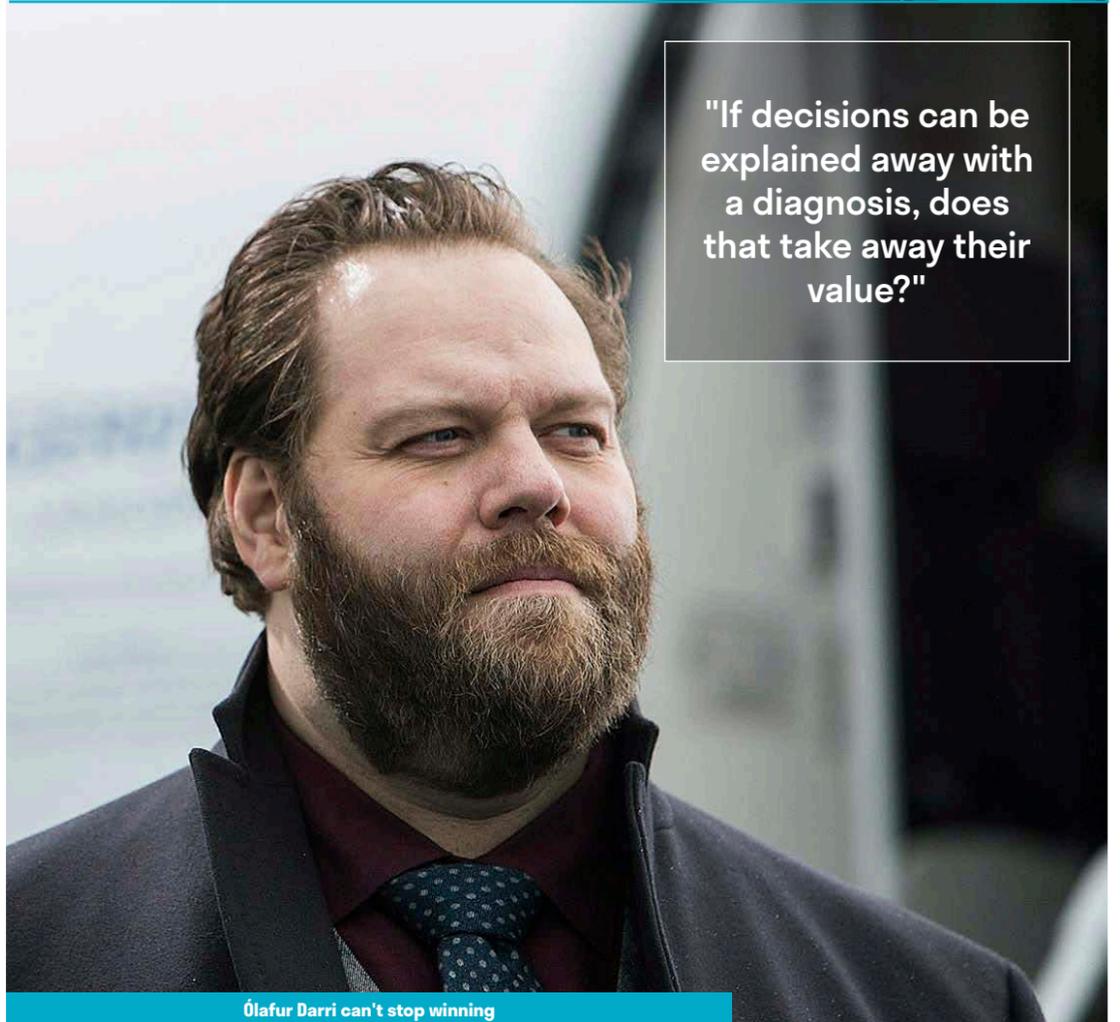
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Ólafur Darri can't stop winning

"If decisions can be explained away with a diagnosis, does that take away their value?"

## Yes Minister

The "surreally entertaining" TV series captures the audience and our interns

Words: Iona Rangeley-Wilson & Jess Distill Photo: RÚV

'Ráðherrann' ('The Minister') tells the story of Benedikt Ríkhartsson, a populist MP who is elected Prime Minister following a radical attempt to re-engage the Icelandic public with democracy. His unconventional approach to politics divides Parliament whilst his bipolar disorder slowly begins to destabilise his personal life and the nation. **The whole eight-episode season is now available to stream (with English subtitles!) on RÚV.is.**

Grapevine interns Iona and Jess—who don't speak Icelandic and have absolutely no understanding of Icelandic politics—took it upon themselves to watch and review the show, with a little help from their good friend, Pinot Grigio.

### Mr. Perfect?

One of our earliest criticisms of 'The Minister' was that Benedikt Ríkhartsson seemed a bit too perfect. Each scene goes something along the lines of this: A politician says something a bit old-fashioned and close-minded and Benedikt replies with whatever a politician would say if he was constructed from the collective imagination of every frustrated Tumblr user and BuzzFeed journalist, i.e. "We politicians spend too much time fighting about insignificant details. We agree on almost everything. We just never show it." As Benedikt urges, ideas of Left and Right are apparently obsolete; we all just want the best for the nation. It's the sort of thing you could photoshop over a pretty sun-

set or print on a tea towel. Pretty difficult stuff to disagree with, but we found it hard to see how a huggable-looking man being "refreshingly genuine" was going to create much drama across eight episodes.

It was, perhaps, a premature judgement—either that, or Pinot Grigio started to help—because 'The Minister' definitely got more gripping as the series unfolded. Benedikt's strengths turn out to be his greatest weaknesses and we start to suspect that the radical and in-the-moment decisions that make him such a political breath of fresh air are intimately tied to the bipolar disorder that can also make him impulsive and, in his most unstable moments, perhaps even dangerous. It's a classic Shakespearean tragic flaw—and it only gets better with every episode.

The series is beautifully shot, with the dark and moody ambience we have come to expect from Nordic television. So strong is the aesthetic, that it is instantly recognisable as one of Iceland's signature gritty dramas.

### Retroactive change

Ólafur Darri Ólafsson, the actor who plays Benedikt, said in an interview with Nordisk Film & TV Fond that "'The Minister' questions the sanity of some people in power." One of the most riveting things about this show is how scenes change retrospectively the more we learn about this particular character. Benedikt's early speeches, which seemed—at least

to us—a little bit unrealistic and maybe even kitsch, change completely when watched a second time. His interruptions during the debate in Episode One stop feeling self-righteous as the viewer learns to see his impulsiveness as potentially symptomatic of a mental illness. This in itself challenges perceptions about people who suffer with bipolar disorder: If decisions can be explained away with a diagnosis, does that take away their value?

Scriptwriter Birkir Blær Ingólfsson explained the idea behind having a bipolar protagonist. "It's such a great embodiment of the Icelandic nation and the national soul," he says, "because we keep going up into a manic episode and down into a depression and back up again."

Certainly from the perspective of two British viewers, the show's dark humour seems to capture this "national soul" well as it swings between the depressing and the surreally entertaining.

### Final thoughts: should we watch it?

**Iona:** I can't say political dramas are usually my thing, but 'The Minister' definitely manages to cross genres in a way that can keep even chick-flick obsessives like me interested. So I think it's probably safe to say that if political dramas are your thing, you will absolutely love it.

**Jess:** Even if you don't have much knowledge of or interest in politics, the mental health storyline is gripping and intriguing. 'The Minister' is a beautiful example of 'Scandi Noir' that kept me enthralled throughout. Definitely one to watch if you're a fan of political dramas, stories about the human condition, or just fantastic cinematography. 🇮🇸

“It’s like a desperate call for light and for the sun—for some light into life. And then with that, the light came and we did this album.”



Pictured: A MySpace success story

# On Human Nature

Mammút talk their new album, the pandemic & the importance of touch

## Album

‘Ride the Fire’ is out now, everywhere. You can get a hard copy in the Grapevine Shop.

Words: Hannah Jane Cohen

Photo: Art Bicnick

“Easy to hide. My mind needs light. I open up my mouth. My mind needs light.”

And so begins Mammút’s recently released fifth effort, ‘Ride The Fire’. The song—entitled “Sun and Me”—is an apt anthem for these times. Not only is sunlight getting scarce in the Icelandic winter, but all of the other lights we’re accustomed to—candles in bars, strobes at concerts, the fashionable lanterns of restaurants—have been replaced by the blinding fluorescents of computer screens, which is where I meet up with vocalist Katrína “Kata” Mogensen and bassist Ása Dýradóttir.

The conversation starts—as most conversations do nowadays—with making sure our microphones work and the cameras aren’t too blurry.

## A different conversation

‘Ride the Fire’, Ása and Kata explain, was written pre-COVID, with everything about the release planned for a world sans social distancing and gathering bans. They had concerts and tours planned—and cancelled, of course—but the album has found new relevance as they’ve spent so many months inside.

“Kata mentioned some days ago, ‘Have you listened to ‘Sound of Centuries’ recently? It’s really speaking to me this time.’” Ása says. “You have a different conversation with some of the songs now.”

Kata nods. “Like ‘Forever On Your Mind’—the first single. We put it out in November, 2019, but I feel like it’s a lot about this situation,” she explains. “The lyrics are about chaos and what’s going on so when I was listening to the album recently for the first time in a few months, I felt like it suits right now very well. When you listen to it with that [mindset], it changes.”

## Trusting your partner

‘Ride The Fire’ also marked a departure from the band’s usual mode of production. As the two explain, they had always written everything together in the same room from scratch, but for this release most of the songs were written solo and collaborated on together from a distance.

“We live in separate countries, so we were juggling ideas back and forth and it was a new method of creating, which we felt was really fun,” Ása says. “We had to trust our partners—band members—more. We talk about ourselves more like partners, not band members.”

Even though the songs were written physically separated from each other, Ása emphasises, there was still a noticeable musical thread.

“In a way, we were in a totally different state of mind and completely different time in our lives than we were while writing ‘Kinder Versions’. It was calmer? More focused?” Kata wonders aloud. “‘Kinder Versions’ was a heavy album and I think we were all coming down from that. In my mind, there was a high around that album—so much going on, both as individuals and as a band. I think this music was a result of ... the calm after the storm.”

The album has an undeniable theatrical tone that their previous efforts lack—much more ethereal, even hopeful, in contrast to the sonic weight of ‘Kinder Versions’. Tonally, it feels like a natural progression for the band—a sweet dessert after the heaviness of their last effort.

“Sun and Me” is emblematic of this shift. The group wrote it in February 2018, in a London studio. “It was rainy and depressing. I was having a huge downer after everything and we did this sketch in the studio,” Kata explains. “It’s like a desperate call for light and for the sun—for some light into life. And then with that, the light came and we did this album.”

## Is dinner ready?

“Solomon” is a particularly personal song for Ása. While Kata normally takes care of the lyrics for Mammút, Ása’s demos for the track included lyrics she wrote, which ended up on the album. “They were really personal—about weird, childhood memories,” Ása explains. “A part of ‘Solomon’ is about waiting for dinner as a child. It’s very bland. And there’s a lyric about how my brother used to lie to me and say that there were dead horses in a cabin outside of the house.”

“But that’s what you remember when you get older,” Kata responds, nodding. Ása shrugs, adding “That’s the stuff that sticks with you.”

“Ása wanted to throw away these demo lyrics and I wanted to keep them, but Ása was always like, ‘You don’t have to keep them!’” Kata says, doing an animated impression of Ása. “I put some layers on top of it, but Ása was always coming around saying, ‘You don’t have to keep the lyrics. You know that?’”

## MySpace memories

Ása and Kata often do this—answering questions for each other and explaining what the other is probably thinking. Spend just five minutes with the two and you’ll find they have a closeness more akin to siblings than bandmates.

“I was a fan of Ása’s MySpace page,” Kata admits, when asked how the two met. The admission sends both into fits of laughter. “We formed Mammút in late 2003 and in 2006, I came into Ása’s store, where she was working and just asked, ‘Do you want to be the bass player of our band?’ And she said yes.”

“I was not a bass player by the way,” Ása interjects, which sends the two into louder fits of laughter. “[Ása] never told us and just showed up to rehearsal and she was extremely bad at playing the bass,” Kata laughs.

“They didn’t feel like telling me that I sucked so I just continued,” Ása continues. “I thought they knew that I wasn’t a bassist and this was just some way of experimenting?”

The laughter continues. “I’m very glad you didn’t tell me because I would have just said, ‘Ok, bye!’” Kata says. “But that’s how we met and we’ve been together ever since. It’s such a long history.”

At that time, Ása explains, they used to play Gaukurinn every other week and were part of the early years of Eistnaflug. Albums were written in summer cabins while the sun was setting. As she tells it, they were idyllic years for the two.

And in this moment in the conversation, I can viscerally feel two retreating back to those early days of MySpace and bass. Back when concerts were permitted and no one worried about staying two metres away from each other.

## Forgetting human nature

These moments of nostalgia are not unique to Mammút. In the midst of this dreadful pandemic, the you-don’t-know-what-you-have-til-it’s-gone feeling is universal. And everyone seems to be using their time stuck indoors looking not towards the future, but wistfully back to the past. For musicians and other artists, the art of live performance might now feel like ancient history.

“You can feel it. Especially when fall came, people are kind of giving up, which is so depressing,” Ása says. “People talk differently. They aren’t good at communicating with words. And ourselves—you need the contact of experiencing music and art together and feeling together. Singing and dancing is such a huge part of social communication—and it always has been since forever. You can’t just swipe it away. People need to socially experience something together. It should be part of public health.”

Kata nods. “That’s something Ása and I have been talking about often. Our human nature has been forgotten in all this. We are mammals. We are herd animals. We need to be around each other and that’s not a theory, that’s just how it is. That’s how we work as animals, as humans,” she explains, softly and delicately. Her solemn tone stands in direct contrast to her normally-jovial one. “And this tech thing—I think it’s very serious that we’re trying to normalise communication like this. It isn’t communication. I don’t even think I would recognise you if I would see you on the street.”

For Ása, this widespread isolation is, as she puts it, inhumane. “People need touch. People dance together and attend events together to be close to each other because it’s a socially acceptable way of touching,” she says. “Dancing, hugging, seeing each other—people have not been touched since February.”

## Ride the fire!

The release of the album seems almost serendipitous. “I think the title serves this year well,” Kata says. “Let’s not just be paralysed by all this. Let’s just ride the waves that are coming and stay true to what we feel is right and not lose sight of creativity and how important human connection is,” she continues. Ása nods slowly. At that moment it’s easy to imagine that—were the two not separated by houses and connected only by a wifi connection—they might have hugged.

And for Kata, the solution is but six words: “Let’s not forget our human nature.”

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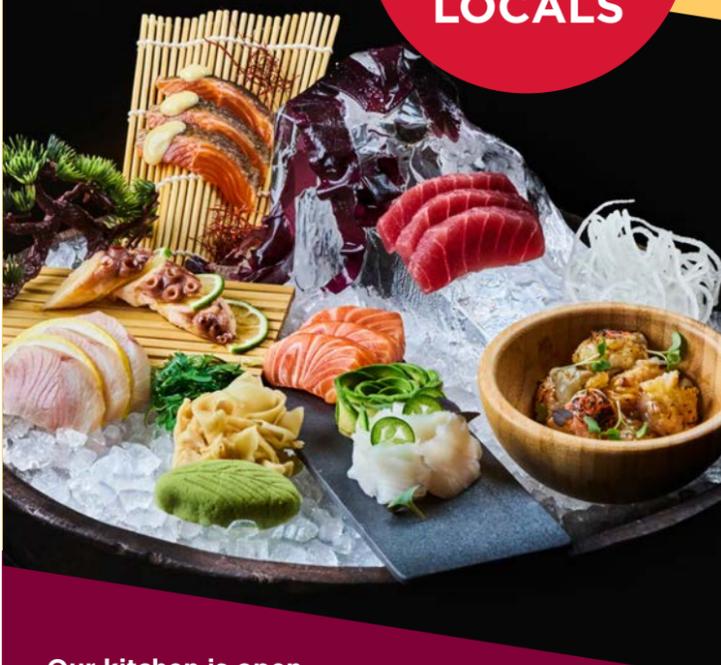
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A Big Band

## 'Phantom Plaza' By RYBA

A supergroup sampling scores of symphonies

Words: **Hannah Jane Cohen** Photos: **Art Bicnick**

### Track By Track

Grab *Phantom Plaza* on RYBA's [Bandcamp page](#).



RYBA's debut release 'Phantom Plaza' was a two-year effort that ended up with a seven person supergroup featuring Heimir Gestur Valdimarsson on guitar, Andri Eyjólfsson on samples, Baldur Hjörleifsson on bass, Elísabet Birta Sveinsdóttir on vocals, Kormákur Jarl Gunnarsson on MOOG synthesiser, Laufey Soffía on vocals and Sigurður Möller Sivertsen on drums—all artists you might recognise from groups like Andi, Kælan Mikla, Grísalappalísa and more. Heimir sat down with the Grapevine to run through 'Phantom Plaza' track by track.

The album 'Phantom Plaza' was written in a transitional time after being in Poland for the past few years and then settling down in Reykjavík again. I had sent my instruments from Poland and they came many months later half-moulded and wet. After drying my guitars and bass, many things started to come together and I saw a way to make an album that I had wanted to make but never had any time for. Colleagues started to gather and my instruments

became dry and sharp—sharper than before.

### Stalker

We took the lyrics to a pretty dark place, leaving out all sense of continuity and linear storytelling. The lyrics are cut-ups from a film script I had written inspired by noir films like 'Night Of The Hunter' (1956). Baldur wrote the song with me and totally got it. He created haunting guitar noises as well as some creepy sounds that I don't even know what they are anymore.

### No Going Back

"No Going Back" is mainly Baldur's creation. We sampled another ghostly song of ours and this one came out of it. It went through our grinder machines of kraut, John Cassavetes film scores and The Cramps.

### Too Bad You Should Know...

This one came after listening to "Liquid Swords" by GZA as well as working in construction work power-washing houses.

### Alltof mikið

"Alltof mikið" was the first song written for this album and the whole album was only supposed to be songs like this—everything done very quickly with short and fast songs that were all under two minutes. It did not go that way and this album became something different. "Alltof mikið" means "Way too much."

### Take You Home

This song is sampled from another RYBA song called "Girls." It's a travel song and Kormákur's work in this one is one of his best performances on the album. He plays on a Moog synthesiser; it reminds me of "The Black Riders & Flight to the Ford" by Bo Hansson.

### Wyglądają Naturalnie

This song was written in one evening. Every recording was the first and final take. We love Poland and connect to Polish people and this song is an echo from the past. It plays with cumbia and popular songs from 30s Polish radio. This creates a sound, which is defined through the album—blending art forms and genres that you don't expect to fit together.

### Standing Man

"Standing Man" was originally a series of photographs and drawings by me and our drummer Sigó, but it became this song and other things. It is a continuing process about a standing man.

### Only 4 You

*Kormákur writes:* This song really came together when some of us were having a night out. Heimir had created the basic loop of the song and late in the night we decided to try to record vocals. I was in a good mood, someone handed me a mic and sang the lyrics in a falsetto, which Elísabet would later go on to sing. The song became a calling for something that was in the past and trying to reach it, but having to accept that everything goes on and nothing will be the same. The symphony is recorded by Heimir in his car listening to Rondo radio and the song ends in a loop which eventually destroys itself like an old tape which has been played many times through the decades. 🎧

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Wine 750 ISK,  
Cocktails 1,200  
ISK

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Every day from  
17:00 to 18:00.  
Beer 645 ISK,  
Wine 745 ISK.

**VEÐUR**  
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"Without the Greenlandic sled dog, there would be no Greenlanders."

# The Backbone Of The Arctic

Ragnar Axelsson celebrates the legacy of the Greenlandic sled dog

Words: **Hannah Jane Cohen** Photo: **Ragnar Axelsson & Art Bienick**

## Photo Book

'Arctic Heroes' will be out the first week in December (in Icelandic). The English language release will be within the coming months.

"I was talking for maybe two hours to this Greenlandic hunter with a translator. There was an elderly Greenlandic woman who didn't say much but in the end, she said to me, 'Without the Greenlandic sled dog, there would be no Greenlanders,'" photographer Ragnar Axelsson, or RAX, explains. He's just weeks away from the release of his latest book 'Arctic Heroes,' an intimate 40-years-in-the-making documentation of the Greenlandic sled dog.

## Lifesavers on the ice

"When you look at a dog, you look at it as a dog. A dog is a dog. But when you hear stories from the [Greenlandic] hunters, they talk about them like they are human," he says, sitting back in his Laugavegur studio. "Those dogs saved these hunters' lives often from bad conditions. They would take you home. They are the forgotten Arctic heroes." He pauses, letting the title of the book sink in. "What's remarkable about these dogs is that they took people to both poles. They tried to go on horses, it didn't work, even bicy-

cles. It was because of [the dogs] that people could reach the poles."

The importance of the dogs as opposed to snowmobiles or other machinery, Ragnar emphasises, is reliability, "You have to hunt on a dogsled because if something happens you are days away walking, but the dogs never fail," he says. The subsequent relationship between dog and owner, therefore, is a serious one.

While Ragnar spent significant time documenting the dogs on their hunts, he also took great care to present a more personal side of the animal. "I tried to capture moments, expressions," he relays, pointing to a picture of two young puppies in the snow. "I was following these two, watching them, and the older brother was teaching his younger brother."

He turns to a later page, proudly showing off a shot of a mother dog cuddling her young pups. "The mother's love for her puppies," he says fondly. "I tried to capture what it would be if the world was just full of dogs. I tried to get into their lives."

## Ole & Qerndu

Ragnar also spent time hearing hunters stories about their personal relationships with their dogs—a select few which were put in the book. One particular story that touched him was that of his friend Ole and dog Qerndu.

Ole was reluctant to tell Qerndu's story to Ragnar—in fact, he said it would go with him to the grave. But Ole later decided to open up to the photographer, first giving him a warning. "He took me to the ice and taught me how to think on the ice," Ragnar remembers.

"If you feel bad or you're angry or frightened, it's not going to be a good trip. But if you have a positive mind, it will be the greatest trip of your life."

Ole had been given Qerndu when the dog was but a pup. They were best friends before Qerndu joined Ole's sled. One day, Qerndu crossed the sled reins of an old man as they were inspecting polar bear tracks. Ole warned the dog, "A polar bear will get you if you behave like that." Immediately, the old man told him to watch his tongue, as Mother Nature listens to you on the ice.

Later, while hunting a polar bear, Qerndu and a few others gave chase to the beast, attacking him as they had been trained to do. The polar bear fought back fiercely, throwing Qerndu off and breaking his spine as Ole shot the bear.

"Qerndu called Ole and they looked into each other's eyes and he licked him and closed his eyes," Ragnar relays. "And the old man said, 'Do you remember what I told you a month ago? Never talk like this.'"

## The next issue

While Ragnar seeks to shine a light on an oft-ignored pillar of Greenlandic history, he emphasises that this is but a small piece of a bigger puzzle about the Arctic.

"I think after this COVID thing is over, life in the Arctic will be the biggest issue on the planet," Ragnar says. "Whether that's because of us or a natural thing—I'll let scientists tell us that—but I'm just documenting the lives that will change because of the melting of

glaciers and the melting of sea ice."

And these changes are drastic, Ragnar relays, referring back to a story he tells in the beginning of the book, that of a text message sent to him by his friend. "He said, 'Hi, there is no ice. What's already frozen is very thin. There's no way to go to the other village. We have to go over the mountains. No hunt for a long time. I miss the old Greenland,'" Ragnar relays. "They are sensing it more than anybody else and they did many years ahead of everybody because they walk on the melting glaciers that we read about."

In fact, Ragnar asked another one of his friends what they would wish for if they had one wish. "He said he'd ask for 25 years back in time to when the ice was safe," Ragnar says softly.

## The chance to continue

"You see so many differences," Ragnar concludes, turning his thoughts to the declining sled dog population "There were 30,000 dogs just 10 years ago but now there are 11,000-12,000."

"But the people living there, they have to have a chance to continue living there. And I think I'm telling the world, just in pictures, that this life is changing fast or passing away and the young generation of Greenland might not have as many hunters as they used to," he explains sadly. "It's a hard life but it's a beautiful life and it's getting worse for them. You show a picture in that puzzle and put more pieces in by making books and [documenting.]" He pauses. "That's what I want to do."



"RAX": Iceland's most celebrated photojournalist

FANCIES is where we talk to Reykjavik's most fashion-forward figures about style

## Ester Olga Mondragon

Words: Hannah Jane Cohen

Photo: Art Bicnick

**Ester Olga Mondragon (22)** is a professional makeup artist.

**Wearing:**

- Two-piece set, net dress & chains by Lovisa Tómas
- Shoes by Hello Kitty
- Lipstick & eyeshadow from NYX

**Describe your style in 5 words:**

Just one word—universal. One day I can be super colourful and cute, another I can be very basic Icelandic and other days are like today, where I look very different. It all depends on my mood, but I love colourful things and two-piece sets like this.

**Favourite stores in Reykjavik:**

Wasteland, Monki, Galleri Sautján and, of course, Lovisa Tómas design.

**Favourite piece:**

I have a vinyl jacket that I bought on ASOS. It's mint green with a little bit of fur. That's one of my favourites, but there's another dress from Lovisa Tómas—who made this outfit—that I love too. It's a custom-made black turtleneck dress with a little mesh, velvet and a slit on the side. Those are my two favourite pieces right now because the dress makes me look so good and it's custom-made by my friend and the jacket because it's very cool and very different.

**Something I would never wear:**

Anything baggy that hides my waist. I don't want to hide my figure!

**Lusting after:**

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# Food



Veganism-inducing imagery

## We <3 Cake

Baunin serves up vegan treats for the ages

Words: Hannah Jane Cohen Photos: Sunna Ben & Provided by Baunin

### Cakes!!

Order cakes at [baunin.com](http://baunin.com)

Covered with delicate, earthy, abstract flowers overlaid in rich jewel tones, you'd be forgiven for wondering if you'd just walked in on some sort of woodland fairy feast when you first see cakes by Baunin, Iceland's premier vegan cake company. Lára, the lady behind the frosting, is a cornucopia of imaginative pairings, consistently serving up flavours that make you say, "Wait, you made a cake of that?" So holidays of 2020, buckle up and get ready for some plant-based magic. Baunin is here.

### Freelance cake artist

Lára officially opened Baunin in 2019, quickly developing a cult following in the local vegan community. "I noticed that the standards for vegan food were very low here in Iceland, as well as in other parts of the world," she explains. "I wanted to raise that and provide something entirely different."

She quickly corrects me, though, when I refer to the bakery as a business. "I certainly don't like the complexity of being a business," she notes. "I could consider myself a freelance cake artist"

You can sense the mirth in her words, but it's nonetheless an apt title. Lára is an artist—both in taste and in presentation. Her wares embody the problem of wanting to have your cake but eat it too, which is natural considering how she got her start as a baker. "I started as an intern in a cake shop in NYC, making these kinds of cakes that look like skyscrapers or animals," she explains. "We used to make cakes for all kinds of famous actors and

businesses in NYC. I thought this was so cool to be able to see people and places I wouldn't have seen if I wasn't given access to that."

### The vegan trick

Lára is, as previously mentioned, a passionate vegan and has been so for many years. The lifestyle change, she explains, was spurred on after seeing videos of animal abuse.

"It's understandable that it causes people difficulty to understand what's really happening. I think we're a bit brainwashed in this," she says. "[But] eventually something does 'click' in your head, if you're open to it. I think animals are not put on this earth for our convenience and if I can do something to help them, I will. Normally I don't even tell people the cakes are vegan. It's a fun trick when they can't tell."

Granted, Lára's cakes gastronomically go so far beyond the norm that focusing on whether or not they include milk and eggs could very well be the last thing

on your mind when taking a bite. While she does serve up conventional cake flavours like vanilla and lemon, Lára also regularly whips up more eccentric ones, including matcha with black sesame, pistachio, and other, well, more off-the-wall offerings.

"I really like using herbs and spices, and things that don't initially sound that great, but that's why I experiment," she says. "My favourite is my Bloody Mary cake. I made it for Luna Flórens. It had tomato and red fruit ganache as well as tomato and horseradish cream. The cake was a vanilla cake with black pepper. I think the one for the weekend had vodka in it too!"

While Lára won't reveal just what she has planned flavour-wise for the holiday season yet, we can only imagine what combination she'll cook up. She says you'll just have to follow the bakery on social media to find out.

Our recommendation? Perhaps a nice grape flavour with an earthy vine-y undertone. Yum. 🍷



Lára (left) and a cake



The happiness we should all aspire to

# Something Honest, Something Fresh

Hosiló, the restaurant that made it through the pandemic

Words: Jess Distill Photos: Art Bicnick

## Restaurant

Hosiló is located at Hverfisgata 12.

You'd be forgiven for thinking that opening a new restaurant in the middle of a global pandemic was a pretty risky thing to do. But the current climate and the air of uncertainty that hangs over us didn't deter Númi Þorkell Thomasson, Atli Ottesen and Aðalsteinn Ragnar Benediktsson, the founders of Hosiló.

The new restaurant, which makes its home at Hverfisgata 12, opened in October and has enjoyed steady business, despite the waning tourism industry in Iceland. "We never had too many concerns about opening during the pandemic, we just threw ourselves into it," Númi says, with a shrug. "We really wanted a small restaurant, so it could just be us three working and doing what we love—this place fitted everything we wanted to do so we just went for it."

## Living the dream

"The good thing about having a small restaurant is the three of us do everything, all the laundry and cleaning, everything," Atli continues. "There's no staff to rely on our income. We're not responsible for anyone feeding their children. It's a nice position to be in at this point. Most days we constantly have ten people inside." At full capacity, and with no restrictions, the restaurant seats around 30 customers. "We have a good clientele, people who knew us before. We're very fortunate."

The three friends started working together back in 2005, and dreamed about running a business together. "We were always talking about doing something together, beyond what we were already doing, which was working for other people. We've always talked about opening our own restaurant," says Númi. After opening a restaurant in the Westfjords, and then working

together again at Café Oliver and Snaps Restaurant, the offer to open Hosiló came to them in the summer of 2020.

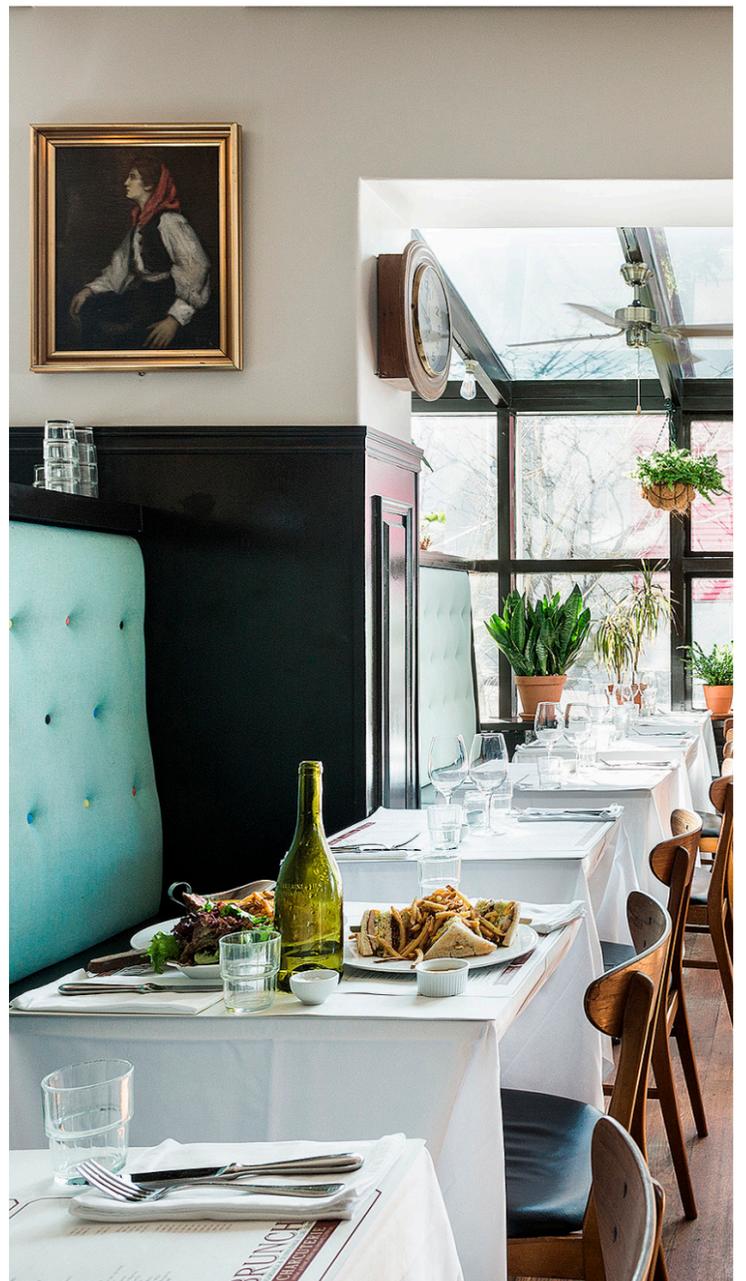
## Honest food from all over

So what does Hosiló bring to a town that already has so many restaurants and bars? With a small, eclectic menu that changes weekly, Númi, Atli and Aðalsteinn pride themselves on their fresh produce and good, honest food. "All of the decisions we make are based on what we would want if we were out eating," says Atli. "The key is to have a small menu. Something honest, something fresh. We serve food from all over the world, France, Italy, Asia, Northern Africa." Working with local vegetable and fish suppliers, the menu—which always consists of a meat dish, a fish dish, a vegetarian dish, ice cream and cheese—is never advertised ahead of time, keeping everything a surprise until the customers sit at their table. "We've been fortunate," says Aðalsteinn. "We haven't had to do any advertising. It's all been just word of mouth. It's been very good."

Clearly what Hosiló thrives on, and what should ensure its popularity and longevity, is the passion that the three friends put into the restaurant and the hands on attitude they have towards running it. They work simply for the love of it, spend time with their customers and involve themselves in every aspect of the process from beginning to end. They are obviously having a lot of fun and their tight friendship makes for an incredibly vibrant, welcoming atmosphere that is sure to attract customers for years to come. 🍷



Stop by every week for a different meal



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WELL, YOU ASKED

# Spend Money 2 Make Money

Questions & Answers:  
**Iona Rangeley-Wilson**

Got a burning question? In desperate need of advice? We at the Grapevine are here to help.



## What does a girl have to do to make money around here?

There's an old phrase kicking around the English language, supposedly first uttered by Plautus, which goes something like this: "you've got to spend money to make money." That's right, Queen! Down with budgeting. Buy every pumpkin spice latte, face mask, glittery iPhone case and "organic health snack" you can fit into your greedy little hands. Plautus made you do it. And if that doesn't work out for you, just sell your used underwear online. It's lucrative...apparently.



## A girl I kind of know's house burned down and everyone is posting about it. How do I grab the attention back to myself, where it belongs?

In July 2020, Demi Lovato labelled herself as queer in a social media statement mourning the death of Glee co-star Naya Rivera. Ten days later, she announced her engagement to her boyfriend of four months Max Ehrich and then quickly called the engagement off. Take inspiration from this. When everyone has drinks to cheer up this attention-seeking-wannabe, start crying hysterically about how your mother never loved you, start a rumour that you're pregnant and get personally offended by it, then flip a table and scream about how literally two of your houses burnt down when you were little and nobody cared about that. Then come out as queer.



## Dangerous prangent sex? will it hurt baby top of his head?

No, you're good. 🍆

For advice, send your quandaries to [grapevine@grapevine.is](mailto:grapevine@grapevine.is)

HORROR-SCOPES

# Haiku Heavens

Words: **Two Sagittarii & A Cancer**

The Grapevine's dedicated team of amateur astrologists recently experienced ego death. In response, we've decided to tell your future through the medium of haiku.



## Aries

Liking Nick Cave is  
Not a substitution for  
Personality



## Taurus

Move on from sorrow  
To the world of tomorrow...  
Kilimanjaro



## Gemini

"MORE!" screamed Kylo Ren  
But do we really need more?  
Or just a sick blade?



## Cancer

Cancer, please slow down  
Enter lockdown like Boris  
With whimsical hair



## Leo

Enjoy sunset from  
An unsafe melting glacier  
Not a vibe, gal pal



## Virgo

The Goo Goo Dolls slam  
Alexa, please play "Iris"  
I know who I am



## Libra

It's legal to speak  
It's legal to pay money  
I am a hitman



## Scorpio

A Master's degree  
Does not make you qualified  
To lead outdoor hikes



## Sagittarius

Ita Reginae  
Verum Manseritis, Bitch  
#benedixitque



## Capricorn

There is ice out there  
Outside the 10/11  
Make sure you don't fall



## Aquarius

Is this insta man  
Really a glacier guide  
Or just a rando?



## Pisces

I'm feeling real rad  
Got myself a real cool bag  
Not tryin' to brag



CITY SNOT by Art Bicnick

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# Travel



## Black Sand Wasteland

Finding Iceland on your doorstep in Reykjanes

Words: Jess Distill and Iona Rangeley-Wilson Photos: Art Bicnick



**Travel distance from Reykjavik:** Sandvík lies 49 kilometres southwest of Reykjavik, on Highway 44

It turns out you don't need to travel as far as Reynisfjara to kick off your shoes and luxuriate on a black sand beach. The Reykjanes Peninsula has its very own: Sandvík, located just 49 kilometres southwest of Reykjavik. And whilst we—the British interns of the Grapevine—might not like interpersonal closeness in the COVID-era, we certainly do appreciate nearby places.

### You're in for a bumpy ride

Sadly, for most of our time spent in Iceland's third wave that appreciation of the nearby has only applied to the neighbourhood Bónus or the local coffee shops that still let you in. COVID restrictions have meant less domestic travel of late, so it was good to get out of the city and finally do some of that sightseeing everyone keeps going on about. We may have been cold, but we were certainly not disappointed.

Off the beaten track, the road that leads to this black beach is more than a little bumpy and it's pretty hard to spot if you're not looking for it specifically. In fact, it's pretty hard to spot even if you are looking for it. Our designated driver, loyal travel companion and personal photographer, Art Bicnick, delivered our first near-death experience of the day by swerving his Mini between rocks as if he were navigating Mario Kart's Koopa Troopa Beach.

### How romantic!

We arrived at Sandvík beach just as the sun was rising, casting a golden glow across the ocean. The beach was absolutely freezing, but we could at least appreciate the sunrise without having to get out of bed any earlier than usual—one perk of the Icelandic winter, perhaps.

We strolled along the black sand beside the waves, delighted to see that ours were the only footprints on the entire beach, naturally inspiring semi-ironic photographs of said footprints and the sunrise in the background. "How romantic!" we thought, as the soundtrack to *Pride and Prejudice* played softly in our heads.

Outlined by grassy dunes and boasting some of the most impressive waves we'd witnessed during our time in Iceland, Sandvík is a favourite place for avid surfers and bikers, who take advantage of the seclusion to practise their sports. Our lonely footprints were therefore quickly destroyed by the addition of several dirt bikers, who spoiled the peace, but added some free entertainment.

### Re-enacting battle scenes

For the film buffs out there, Sandvík has the added excitement of standing in for the beaches of Japan in the two Clint Eastwood movies 'Flags of Our



It's getting steamy in here

Fathers' and 'Letters From Iwo Jima'. Walking the dramatic and surreal landscape, it's easy to see why so many filmmakers are drawn to Iceland. The black sands, bright green grassy dunes and sparkling waves really do create a scene like no other—both beautiful and, dare we say it, a little apocalyptic? No doubt many hours could be spent exploring the one kilometre stretch of beach, re-enacting battle scenes and bravely dipping your toes into the chilly waters.

Reykjanes has far more to offer, however, particularly when your fingers are numb and you've left your supermarket chicken wrap in the car. In fact, just a short drive away from Sandvík is the bridge between continents, a footbridge spanning the fissure between the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates. At this point, we'd moved from Koopa Troopa Beach to DK Jungle Parkway vibes, but without the palm trees.

Iceland is the only place in the world where the Mid Atlantic Ridge is visible above sea level, and the gap between the two plates is growing at a rate of about 2.5 centimetres per year. This spot is particularly good for standing one bridge-walk away from your friend and shouting humorous witticisms like: "How's America?", "How's Europe?", and "Oh my God, how are my shoes so full of sand!?" We also tried running down the sandy slope into the rift itself, which is all fun and games until you want to get out again.

### Devastating steam

Speaking of not being able to climb out of holes, you can also drive over to Gun-

nuhver, Iceland's largest hot spring, a pool of seawater boiling at temperatures of over 300°C. Legend has it that the ghost of the witch Gunna is trapped in this spring—others believe that she hangs onto its edge. Gunna was an unpopular old woman, whose murderous ghost wreaked havoc throughout the peninsula until the locals cunningly tricked her with a ball of wool. It happens to the best of us.

Whatever the truth behind the geothermal attraction, we welcomed the warmth the spring provided and, careful not to lose our footing on the damp walkways, enjoyed frolicking in the thick plumes of steam that wafted from the water. Be warned though, wearers of glasses or heavy make up will walk away half blinded and looking like they just broke up with their significant other, watched 'The Notebook' and then realised they'd run out of Ben and Jerry's. We'd like to suggest that time spent in Iceland's diverse landscapes, exploring with mates is a much healthier way of getting over an ex.

If you need to get out of the city but aren't feeling intrepid enough to brace yourself against the frigid weather in order to explore, there's a lot to be said for enjoying the views from the comfort and warmth of your car. A late afternoon drive back to Reykjavik provided stunning panoramas, the roads lined by snow capped mountains and the sky lit by the winter sunset—ending the day as it started, with Iceland showing off its true colours and awesome nature. 🍷

Support the Grapevine! View this QR code in your phone camera to visit our tour booking site



This got a lot of likes on Instagram (and by a lot I mean seven)

