

THE 

REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

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ICELAND: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

The Icelandic film industry emerges on the global stage



GANG WAR IN THE CITY OF FEAR

Not as glamorous as it sounds

QUEENS OF FAILURE

Post Performance Blues Band documentary

SNORRI HALLGRIMSSON

Composer goes raw and creepy in film

gugusar

The young singer-songwriter drops a new album



COVER PHOTO:

Photo: **Art Bicnick**
Chair: **Truenorth**

The photo was taken at Grótta, a beautiful coastal area near Reykjavik and one of the most easily accessible spots in town to watch the Northern Lights. Nature has put

on a show for us, and so has Iceland—for the myriad of filmmakers and creators working here. The empty chair represents the endless opportunities the film industry has to offer. It is also our tribute to Valur Grettisson, who's leaving his Editor-in-Chief's chair.

First



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EDITORIAL



Photo: Art Bicnick

A Thank You Letter

This is perhaps an odd editorial. Writers like to write about themselves, but journalists hate it. I'll admit, I'm a fusion of both.

I'm leaving as the editor-in-chief of the Reykjavik Grapevine, as is news editor Andie Sophia Fontaine. Don't worry, you're in safe hands. With new people come new and fresh ideas.

What stands out in my heart as I pen this final editorial is the fantastic people I have met over the last five years through this magazine. I am genuinely impressed by the vast talent there is to be found in Iceland, and I'm saddened that so few of them get an opportunity to display their talents simply because of linguistic barriers. They have helped us to keep this magazine relevant and at the same time a smart and enjoyable read. This doesn't come effortlessly, it's actually hard work and takes serious commitment. Although, they do make it look easy, don't they?

I also have to say that it's flat-out incredible how lively cultural life in Iceland is. I am pretty confident that there are few nations of just 360,000 people that offer such a variety of culture and events. The Icelandic cultural scene seems to completely ignore its own size. Icelandic culture behaves like we are a nation of two million, not a tiny island in the middle of the North Atlantic.

The Reykjavik Grapevine will be 20 years old next year. Imagine that. It's finally old enough to drink, according to Icelandic laws. It's time to go to university and become seriously good at something. I'm proud of my time being the editor-in-chief in the magazine's teen years—it was definitely wild, creative and playful.

I have never worked at a magazine or a newspaper that had such a strong impact on people, and I have worked in media for almost two decades. And that means that we were doing something right. Our YouTube channel has been an adventure in itself, and I have to say that I was very sad to say goodbye to all these people around the world, who Art Bicnick, Polly and I managed to touch through our travels.

I'm not one to dwell on the past. I'm heading on to a new journey, grateful for the time I had with The Reykjavik Grapevine. The only thing that's left is to say a big thank you to all the readers, the contributors and the staff of the magazine. This has been a ride.

Valur Grettisson
Editor-In-Chief



Publisher's note

As Grapevine readers, watchers and haters have ascertained by now, change is afoot. The magazine is at a turning point; not for the first time and surely not the last. Change is hard, but it's also good, and the good in this instance will come to readers of our flagship publication and online followers in the form of a redesigned magazine, revamped website and new video content and podcasts spotlighting the people and places of Reykjavik that are at the heart of the Grapevine.

Oh, and there will also be concerts, parties and all sorts of shenanigans.

Even before the newness is unleashed, we want you to get in on the ground level and join the Grapevine community for front-of-the-line access to it all. Keep your eyes on our High Five Members Club in the coming days and weeks.

Of course, there's no going forward without acknowledging the hard work that got us to this turning point and the people who gave their time and talents to the Grapevine over the years. Outgoing publisher Hilmar Steinn Grétarsson and I conceived of this rag at a bar in Prague back in 2002. It's a testament of Hilmar's incredible persistence that the Grape-

vine is now heading into its 20th year on the newsstands. Hats off to him.

Likewise, for what counts as a generation Andie Sophia Fontaine has been in one way or another involved with this magazine. Her first article was on the reality of migrating to Iceland with harsh and fair criticism of Iceland, Icelanders and the Icelandic media, striking a tone she has consistently held since, while also demonstrating incredible range in her writing for the magazine. Andie now leaves her post as news editor, but we hope this isn't the last time her important voice graces our pages.

Also moving on is editor-in-chief Valur Grettisson, a true king of tact and amiability, who has been at the helm for over five years—gaining considerable YouTube celebrity with his dog Polly through the pandemic and back-to-back volcanic eruptions. Editorship can be rough, but Valur has persevered with admirable calm.

Onward.
Jón Trausti Sigurðarson

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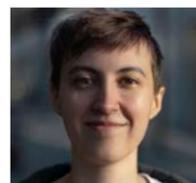
Kim Wagenaar has been here long enough to forget why she even got here in the first place. If she's not busy being a music manager, she's accidentally bumping into things or drinking bubbles somewhere laughing at her own jokes. Someone's gotta do it.



Josie Anne Gaitens is an arts worker, musician and writer from the Scottish Highlands. She was once erroneously referred to as the Queen of Scotland by a Malaysian newspaper and has been falsely using that title ever since. In addition to her Grapevine duties, she is currently on a mission to have a pint in every bar in 101.



Iryna Zubenko is a Ukrainian who has been working on the cross-section of media and technology for the past five years. While she is still figuring out what to do in life, this time her love for traveling, unspoiled nature and Scandi design has brought Iryna to Reykjavik. One day she'll write a non-fiction book.



Catherine Magnúsdóttir studies culture and literature in Iceland and came to the Grapevine for the internship but ended up freelancing for the magazine. When she's not trying to reconnect with her Icelandic roots, she's usually watching video essays or attempting to finally come up with that one good story idea that she can actually finish writing.



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



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' on RÚV. Valur is not to be confused with the dreadful football club that bears the same name.



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The gift that keeps on giving

What Are Icelanders Talking About?

News never sleeps

Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine** Photos: **Press**

NEWS The story most stirring up the discourse these days is what looks like **gang warfare** going on in Reykjavík (more on that on Page 6). Amongst the questions people are asking are: who are these “gangs” anyway? What is their problem? And is Minister of Justice Jón Gunnarsson simply being an opportunist, using this situation to further his efforts to arm police and give them more powers? Either way, he’s under a lot of scrutiny, but being in the ruling coalition, he might just get his way.

The ongoing circus that is **Strætó** continues! If you’re a regular bus rider, you may have been frustrated with Klappið, the payment app that replaced the beloved Strætó app, because it’s unwieldy, overly complicated, and buggy—and have you ever tried to scan a QR code while standing up on a moving bus? Good luck! Well, Strætó announced they were **going to introduce a touch-free system** that will finally let riders pay their bus fare with a debit card or phone. You know, like they should have done years ago. Predict the sudden disappearance of anyone using Klappið when this thing exists now.

A recent **fatal accident downtown involving an electric scooter and a tour bus** has Icelanders talk-

ing about how these incidents are reported. It wasn’t too long ago that a news story about a driver striking a child with their car, sending the child to hospital, decided to point out that the child was not wearing a bike helmet—a point repeated by the police, who urged cyclists to wear helmets, rather than urging drivers to keep their eyes open and drive at reasonable speeds. In the case of the scooter and the bus, the intersection where the collision occurred is poorly lit, and the bus in question may have been either entering or leaving an area where it was not permitted to be (the City of Reykjavík previously banned tour buses from operating in the city centre). Either way,

it’s clear that whenever a vehicle weighing several tonnes crushes a cyclist, pedestrian, or someone on a scooter, the reporting and police statements nearly always put the onus on the victim, rather than the person behind the wheel.

The Icelandic Blood Bank may finally be ready to join the rest of us in the 21st century, as Minister of Health Willum Þór Þórsón revealed in Parliament that **men who have sex with men may be allowed to give blood after the new year**. The Blood Bank, Landspítali hospital, the chief epidemiologist and consultants in the field of blood donations are reviewing the current regulations about giving blood and are likely to come to a conclusion by the end of the year. The change would introduce NAT screening, which scans donated blood for HIV and hepatitis C; a technology that has been around since at least 2015. Baby steps, we guess! 🍷



A bus, yesterday



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Dinner



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Who leaked the video and why?

The videos of the attack were recorded by a phone pointed at a computer screen playing the videos. The recorder, however, didn't fullscreen the videos, so some of the leaker's desktop shortcuts were visible. These included a shortcut to LÖKE, the police's official registration system. Ergo, the leaker was someone within the police.

Jón has been pushing, without success, to expand police powers ever since last September's foiled "terrorist plot." The chilling leaked video is now being used to underline his case.

"War on organised crime"

Jón has sworn that fears of preemptive policing are overblown; that if the law is passed, it would only be used against organised crime and people posing "a threat to the state." But that latter definition has been used by some governments to crack down on activists and other people exercising their democratic right to peaceful dissent.

Sema Erla Serdar, an activist and the chair of the refugee support group Solaris, pointed out on Facebook that, "the war against terrorism lost. The war on drugs lost. The Minister of Justice will also lose the 'war' against organised crime if he intends to target young people, who already experience not belonging to society, by marginalising them further, isolating them, and shunning them from society."

The bill has received ruling coalition approval, but whether Parliament approves it remains to be seen.

Mass Stabbing Prompts Minister To Push For Increased Police Power (Again)

He's really stuck on this idea

Words: On November 17th, a group of masked men barged into Bankastræti Club and proceeded to viciously beat and stab three men before disappearing into the night. News of the attack was accompanied by lurid video footage of the event, followed by Minister of Justice Jón Gunnarsson vowing that he

Andie Sophia Fontaine
Photo: Haukur Már Helgason

would push for a bill giving police the power of "pre-emptive investigation", a controversial tactic wherein the police are allowed to investigate anyone, even those who have not committed a crime, if it is suspected that they may, at some point in the future, break the law.



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Available at: myigloo.is/listings/7090

Finally, An Apartment For Rich Assholes

Please, for the love of god, can we just eat the rich already? At this point it's essentially out of kindness. If we don't do something soon to put them out of their misery they're only going to continue to spend their money on batshit things, like racehorses and "official" blue ticks on Twitter.

But in case you're one of the aforementioned 1%, boy do we have the apartment for you. Right in the heart of downtown Reykjavik, decorated by "one of the best interior design companies in Iceland," and featuring furniture specially flown in from Italy, the one bedroom flat is available to you for the low, low price of 450,000 ISK per month. That's about 3,000 EUR in case anyone was wondering.

While this might seem an awful lot of money for—I must say it again—a one

bedroom apartment, this tiny house does boast other wonderful attributes that might convince you that it's worth the cash: 100% pure silk sheets, a mattress designed for back support, and reflective window coverings, so that the general plebs on the street can't see you laughing at them from inside your (tiny) metropolitan castle.

So there you have it, affluent people, this one's for you. And for those of you who are instead outraged by this crass show of greed and wealth in the middle of the worst housing crisis this country has seen in decades, a few words of advice: Vote. Write. Organise. And if all else fails, grab your knife and fork, and get chomping.

ASK AN EXPERT

Q: Who Were The Yule Lads?

Words: Catherine Magnúsdóttir
Photo: University Of Iceland

With Christmas on the horizon, we can once again look forward to visits from our favourite holiday tricksters. But the thirteen Yule Lads we know and love today were not the only ones lurking in the mountains back in the day. As it turns out, there used to be many more Lads and even Lassies that would relish in terrorizing households all over Iceland. But who were they and what would they do? We went to Dagrún Ósk Jónsdóttir, a folklorist at the University of Iceland, for an answer.

"We have around maybe 80 or 100 names of Yule Lads that used to travel around different areas in Iceland in different sets. In some old sources it says that each farm got one specific yule lad that stayed with them for the whole Christmas season. Some would come from the mountains or on sealskin-boats from abroad," Dagrún explains.

Much like the thirteen Yule Lads visiting kids in modern times, most lads of yore would steal food or make a mess, but they were a lot less friendly than the gift-giving lads we see today.

"They would often attack the things you kind of need most or hold most dear, like light or food or clothes. Some female Yule Lads, like Flotsokka and Flotnös, would steal flot, the boiled down animal fat that was used for food or light, and which was quite valuable. Flotnös would put it up her very big nose and Flotsokka would steal unfinished knitted socks and fill them with the flot, ruining both."

Back in the day, those Yule Lads were a lot more frightful and a little less entertaining, some going from harassment to straight-up horror movie material.

"Skirt-Sweeper used to annoy women specifically, lifting up skirts and blowing their hats off, generally being all up in women's clothing," Dagrún says. "My favourite one is Lungsplatterer, who has his lungs on the outside of his body and he would run after children and try to hit them with his bloody lungs." Not a fellow you'd want to run into at night.

SMASHED BURGERS AND NASHVILLE-STYLE HOT CHICKEN IN DOWNTOWN REYKJAVÍK

HAFNARSTRÆTI 101 REYKJAVÍK





Police Try To Buy Machine Guns From Norway

2014 was a weird time

Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine**

Photo: **Wikimedia Commons**

On October 21st, 2014, Icelanders woke to the news that the Icelandic police had acquired an arsenal of MP5 machine guns and Glock 17 semiautomatics.

While this might not be news in many other countries, Icelandic police are known for not carrying sidearms, let alone machine guns. There is a “Viking squad,” the Icelandic SWAT, but regular officers typically keep pistols in a locked box in their patrol cars rather than on their person.

What followed was a truly Icelandic example of finger-pointing, blame-shifting, and excuses.

Was it a gift or a purchase?

The natural question to this news was: why? Almost immediately, the public received two contradictory explanations.

Jóhannes Þór Skúlason, then an assistant to former Prime Minister Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson, responded to criticisms on Facebook, stating that the guns were a “gift from Norway,” and that the cost to the Icelandic state was none. He added that the guns were a part of the “good teamwork in police matters” between the two countries.

This contention, though, directly contradicted a statement made by then chief of the National Commissioner of

Police, Jón F. Bjartmarz, who told RÚV the police bought 150 machine guns.

Icelanders protest, Norway has receipts

The next day, hundreds of Icelanders turned out in front of Parliament to voice their objections to the police owning these weapons, demanding they be sent back to Norway.

Jón Bjartmarz told reporters that the Icelandic Coast Guard acted as a middleman in the weapons purchase, but when Icelandic Coast Guard director Georg Lárusson was asked he was initially vague on the details, saying he did not exactly have all the information on the matter, only to later contend that they were a gift.

The one time the Customs Office was based

Due to the nature of the dispute—that is, on whether the guns were a gift or a purchase—Iceland’s Customs Office seized the weapons and warehoused them, refusing to hand them over until the Coast Guard could provide proof that they were indeed gifts from Norway.

If they were a purchase, then the Icelandic state would be on the hook to pay VAT on the weapons. Anyone

who has ever had to contend with the mysterious fees imposed by the Customs Office on gifts and purchases from abroad can attest that these can get pretty expensive.

Norway comes forward

With all this back-and-forth and no one providing any clear answers at home, Icelandic media reached out to Norwegian authorities, who turned out to be a lot more forthcoming.

Dag Aamont, a spokesperson for the Norwegian army, confirmed that the Icelandic Coast Guard signed a deal with the Norwegian army on December 17 of the previous year to purchase some 250 MP5 machine guns to the tune of over 11 million ISK.

Bent-Ivan Myhre, a spokesperson for the Norwegian Ministry of Defence, backed this up by telling Icelandic reporters, “We signed an agreement for the sale of 250 MP5 submachine guns for 625,000 [NOK] on December 17, 2013. That is the price of purchase and will be paid. That has always been the plan.”

This befuddled Icelandic reporters, that is, until the Norwegian Army said that the Icelandic Coast Guard had asked that the entire deal be kept a secret. Whoops!

A Farewell To Arms

Amid protests, both within Parliament and amongst the general public, as well as the very public embarrassment over the whole thing, the Icelandic Coast Guard opted to simply return the weapons rather than go ahead with what had proven to be a very unpopular decision that was not at all a secret anymore.

NEW MUSIC PICKS



Hafdis Huld - Jólasveinar Ganga Um Gólf

Jólasveinar ganga um gólf is a classic Icelandic Christmas song with disputed lyrics. And by that I mean no one seems to agree on what the “real” lyrics are. But it’s a very pretty song, typically sung by children’s choirs, that tells a short story about Yule Lads. It is absolutely my favourite Icelandic Christmas song—original, uniquely Icelandic, and charming. You can practically taste the Malt og apelsín as you listen. **ASF**



Björk - Jólakötturinn

What’s more terrifying than Grýla, who hunts naughty children and boils them alive? We’ll tell you: the Dickensian nightmarish creature of the Christmas Cat, Jólakötturinn. It’s a pitch black troll cat owned by Grýla, it’s the size of a small house, and it has a specific sadistic taste for poor and dirty children, which it eats mercilessly. Our wonderful Björk sings about this sadistic neo-capitalistic creature with her unique voice. And my gods, the song is perfect and truly brings Christmas home. **VG**



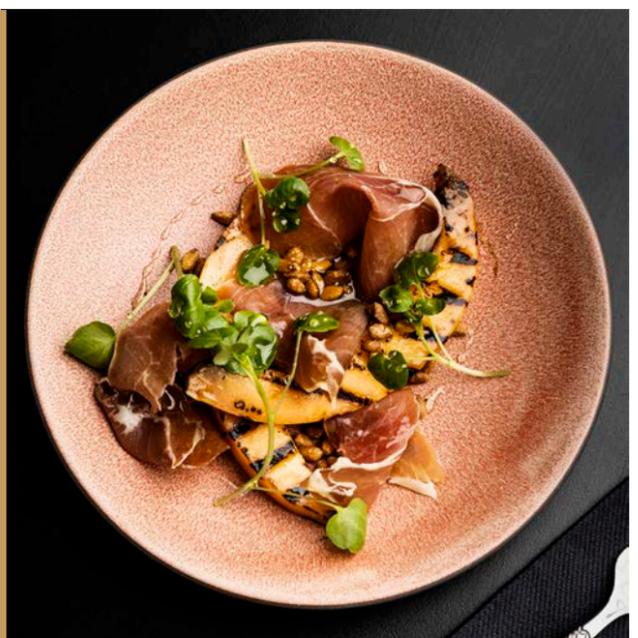
Prins Póló - Falskar Jóláminningar

Like basically anyone with two ears and a soul, we at the Reykjavik Grapevine were devastated by the loss of artist Prins Póló at a tragically young age earlier this year. Luckily though, our dear Prins left us a lot to remember him by, including a whole album of Christmas songs, ‘Falskar Jóláminningar,’ which is full of Prins Póló’s signature warm, tongue-in-cheek observations of daily life. Pop this on and drink a wee toast to our dearly departed while you deck the tree this year. **JG**

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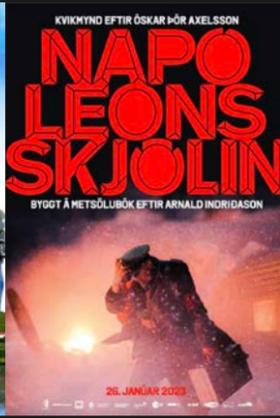
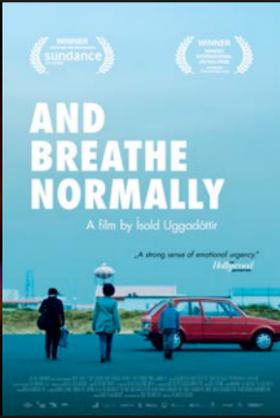
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FROM SAGAS TO THE SILVER SCREEN: ICELANDIC CINEMA COMES OF AGE





[asking,] 'Can we participate in the big festivals?' and very rarely they said 'yes.' But now, it's quite usual to have one or two films playing at big festivals every year."

"The scene is just bigger, there're more people making films and also the TV industry has exploded," adds film director Elsa María Jakobsdóttir. "There's so many people who are making television now. All of a sudden there's a lot of people with relevant experience who are willing and able. That has also to do with the endless platforms and the endless demand for content."

"It's a very Icelandic thing to be self-sufficient," Steve adds. "There's a lot of artists who do a wide variety of things. They're not just shooting films, they're musicians, they're writers, etc. It's a very self-sufficient country in that way—I'm always impressed that people can do that."

What's driving the Icelandic film boom?

WORDS: IRYNA ZUBENKO PHOTO: TRUENORTH

I was walking home through downtown Reykjavík one day in April when I came across a large crowd blocking the road. Asking around, I came to discover the road was closed for filming Netflix's action-thriller 'Heart of Stone' starring Gal Gadot. Lots of cameras, extras, and police—all for one shot of a cyclist going down Klappastigur. I craned my head with curiosity as I waited a few minutes until I was able to continue on my way. Though it may be the norm in London or New York, a film shoot interrupting the daily life of Reykjavík residents is quite odd.

But this may soon change. In the past few years, Iceland serving as the backdrop for Hollywood films has become a more common occurrence. Just a few days ago, I turned on an episode of HBO's, 'The Flight Attendant' to see it was filmed right around the corner from Grapevine's office.

But it's not just international productions shaking things up in Iceland, the local film industry is also thriving. Icelandic movies have been making buzz internationally, with low-budget comedy 'Leynilögga' (Cop Secret) even receiving a nomination for a prestigious European Film Award. Every time I visit Reykjavík's only arthouse cinema, Bíó Paradís, there are several new Icelandic movies on the programme.

What is happening in the Icelandic film industry? Why are so many international productions coming to this tiny island in the North Atlantic? And why are there more and more Icelandic films being released each year?

In an attempt to answer these and many other questions, I embarked on a two-week journey shadowing the people from the industry to learn what the Icelandic film boom is all about.

LANDSCAPE VS. TAX INCENTIVE

"I think the industry is doing exceptionally well," says Leifur B. Dagfinnsson, CEO & Founder of Truenorth, a production and service company. "We are currently working on the biggest show ever done in Iceland—the HBO show 'True Detective.' This is a new milestone in the Icelandic filmmaking industry."

According to Leifur, Iceland is one of the top servicers of large foreign productions. "We are the leaders in Scandinavia, and we are one of the top countries in the world," he says.

One of the most lucrative perks that draws international filmmakers to the island

thing extra to bring these bigger shows or projects here." He recalls that every conversation with an international producer over the past 20 years started with them asking: "Is there a tax incentive in Iceland?"

The government introduced the reimbursement scheme in the early 2000s, steadily increasing the repayment from 12% to 20%. "When it went up to 20%, in 2012, we did four projects—'The Secret Life of Walter Mitty,' 'Oblivion,' 'Thor: The Dark World,' and 'Noah.' That was the first time four major projects filmed one after another in a tight timeframe over the course of five months," shares Leifur.

"For some of these features, Iceland is very specific for aesthetics, an important piece of telling the story," Leifur continues. "There are a few countries in the world that have such a variety of landscapes in such a small area. Huge, epic nature is less than half an hour's drive away outside Reykjavík."

The local mindset is another key ingredient. "No problem is too big to be solved," Leifur smiles. "It's the go-to mentality—we solve things, we fix things, always with a positive attitude. Like one famous filmmaker said, 'it takes a lot for an Icelander to complain.'"

The increased demand from production companies has led to a growth in studio space and other stage infrastructure in Iceland. "In the past, most of the foreign projects have only filmed in Iceland for one or two weeks. But now we're filming a whole TV series ['True Detective'], using the location, landscape, and stages. We have about 8000 square metres of stage availability, which was non-existent two years ago," Leifur shares.

"I can quite honestly say that 2022 has been the biggest year production wise for Truenorth," Leifur admits. "I think that's great news also for the entire industry." He believes that with every new project coming to Iceland, more jobs are created and the infrastructure grows. "In the near future these types of productions can be entirely crewed by Icelanders," he says optimistically.

THE DIY NATION

"The Icelandic film industry has been growing steadily larger, for at least the last fifteen years or so," says Ásgrímur Sverrisson, filmmaker and industry expert. "Back 25 years ago, we used to make maybe four to five films a year."

When the whole world shut down because of the pandemic, Iceland found a

"When I started out in 1978, we had to create everything. Everybody who wanted to go into filmmaking had to join hands to create this industry. I think that gives you a strong sense of purpose," Ásgrímur recounts. "My father was one of the people who founded the public television network RÚV in 1966. Back then, RÚV was the only filming body in Iceland. There was no cinema."

"We grew up with no television on Thursdays and no television in July. It was a holiday for the staff," says Ásgrímur. "A lot of people who worked there [at RÚV] in the 1970s, went

"We grew up with no television on Thursdays and no television in July."

on to start Icelandic cinema around 1980. It was the breeding ground for the Icelandic film industry."

"It's interesting to see how this film world has come closer to us," Ásgrímur continues. "Because, believe me, it felt quite distant when I was a kid. It was like a mythical fairy tale on the screen. That was Hollywood. But now it's here."

FILM EVOLUTION

Steve Gravestock has been a programmer for the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) for 23 years. A large part of his job centres on selecting Nordic films for the festival. He has recently published the book, "A History of Icelandic Film," that documents the development of the industry, stretching back to the silent period.

Steve believes it was the launch of a government-led fund that gave an impetus to the industry: "One of the big things was the establishment of the Icelandic film fund in the late 1970s, which obviously led to the Icelandic spring and a lot of the key filmmakers in the 1980s."

"Increasingly in the last 10 years, there's a lot of attention paid to Icelandic films at film festivals, which I think has allowed them to access markets," says Steve. "In the last two years 'Lamb' and 'Godland' were big successes. 'Godland' was one of the most talked about films in Cannes and certainly one of the most talked about films in Toronto this year."

BEYOND THE FRAME

My quest to better understand the Icelandic film industry was complicated by the sheer number of different people it takes to make a film. Of course to the outside eye, the actors on screen are the most visible element of the final production.

"Being an actress, I have the least insight into the industry," admits Halldóra Geirharðsdóttir, best known for her role in 'Kona fer í stríð' ('Woman at War'), as we

sit down for a chat. However, she agrees that the Icelandic film scene has evolved significantly in the last few years. "The world is changing for us in the sense that we have possibilities to get much more work in TV or film. Back when I graduated 25 years ago, it was an accident if you got a job in a film or a television programme," Halldóra shares.

"We are all getting better at it. Both the industry and the artists," she continues. "We still may be teenagers in some way, compared to European film, but we have some childish happiness that makes us make films that people actually want to see, because we are not stuck in the system."

According to Halldóra, streaming platforms like Netflix are also driving the industry: "They're making series and films where people don't necessarily need to speak perfect English. We [actors with accents] have opportunities to go between countries and continents. The world is getting smaller."

INGREDIENTS FOR A GOOD MOVIE

"I think Iceland is really respected for originality," says Margrét Einarsdóttir, a costume designer who received an Edda Award for her work on 'Dýrið' ('Lamb'). "We are pretty mature about the stories we want to tell. There are not many other countries in the world that would have produced, for example, 'Rams' or 'Lamb.'"

Margrét also acknowledges the recent change in the film landscape. "It is more of a respected art form than it was before," she says. "Also with the foreign films that we are servicing, we learn a lot with every project that comes."

"I think that we as a nation are a creative bunch of people. We have an urge to tell stories," shares Margrét. "That's a main part of our heritage. We publish and read a lot of books, it's in our culture. We preserve our language and our stories more than we preserve buildings. [Film] is a different form of the Sagas—a more modern way of telling our story."

"If we only want to tell popular stories, we're in bad shape."

is its reimbursement scheme—a film or TV project can receive back up to 25% of costs spent on production. For bigger projects, that figure reaches 35%.

"Iceland is an adventurous location that offers a lot," says Leifur. "But it takes some-

way to work with restrictions to ensure as few close interactions on set as possible. "In the first COVID year, we actually did 10 movies and 10 TV series. That's not counting any foreign production," Ásgrímur shares. "This is huge for us."

Ásgrímur agrees that one of the key changes in the last decade is that Icelandic filmmakers started to participate in bigger festivals. "The attention towards Icelandic cinema has increased a lot," he says. "We were always sort of knocking on the door

“We are such a small nation, it's not a given that we create interesting cinema that other people anticipate.”

“I do think it's important that we understand how important it is to have a voice and that this tiny, micro nation has this strong voice, is pretty spectacular and noticeable,” she adds. “I think we should carry on doing well and help this industry flourish and become better.”

EQUALITY IN FILM

Stereotypically, cinematography has always been perceived as a male-driven industry. Iceland often leads charts as the best place to live and work as a woman, so, naturally I'm interested to learn what my interviewees think about gender-distribution and equality in the industry.

“I didn't realise it was a male world until I got older,” says Halldóra. “It wasn't until I was almost 50 I realised the reason I never played a leading part was not because I was a bad actress. It was because there was never a part for me. Because it was never written.”

Things are changing today, Halldóra is confident, but we need to keep an eye open and stay cautious. “We have to make sure that our daughters get the same opportunities as our sons,” she says.

“I feel like there's a more positive outlook on female heads of departments,” says Margrét. “Iceland does have a broader vision of having empowered women. I think it's becoming more common now. We also start to tell different stories from women's perspectives,” she adds.

Elsa agrees that more women are making their steps in the industry. “There are more and more women directing now than when I decided to go into this a few years ago,” she says. “There's a lot of new female talent about to make their first features.”

SCANDINAVIAN PAIN

When imagining an Icelandic movie, chances are one imagines a typical Nordic noir story with bleak landscapes and dry humour. “The Scandinavian pain is very popular,” says Ásgrímur. “We like to make movies about dark aspects of life. Personally, I think we do a little bit too much of it. Some of those films are very good but we could use a little more entertaining films,” he says, adding: “But that's also a European thing. They [Euro-

pean films] tend to be a little bit on the misery porn side.”

But there are signs that this familiar style is set to change. “My film has nothing to do with that,” says Elsa María Jakobsdóttir, who's about to release her first feature film ‘Villibráð’ (‘Wild Game’). “There's no woollen sweater in my film. There are no sheep, there are no mountains, there's no lifrakæfa [a popular liver spread], or the radio station, Rás 1. There's no conventional things or themes that you see in Icelandic films.”

‘Wild Game’ is a comedy based on the concept taken from the Italian film ‘Perfect Strangers.’ The film takes place in contemporary Reykjavík, in a house in Vesturbær. “The film I'm making is not meant for festivals,” shares Elsa. “It's absolutely been made for the local audience. And that is not a very common goal for an Icelandic film. It's a little bit different when you sit down to write a film like that, and you know that you don't have to be understood, accepted, or liked outside of this culture.”

Elsa agrees that she's taken a peculiar approach to making this film but it's a rather rewarding process. “That's a part of the freeing attitude that we had—we don't need to sell this abroad. We are only trying to entertain our people.”

INDUSTRY HURDLES

The film industry in Iceland is still relatively small, and many within it agree that underfinancing is one of the key challenges Icelandic filmmakers face.

“There's a lot of pressure. But there has always been a lot of pressure to try to find money and get a movie made,” says Ásgrímur. “What happens is when we get more money, the pressure also increases. It's always hard to get the project going.”

According to Steve, steady support of the film fund is vital to keep the industry thriving. “When you're a smaller, less

densely populated country, government support is crucial.”

Margrét believes that a lot of challenges are connected to the dramatic increase in visiting productions. “Having these huge machines coming in takes up a lot of the manpower. We need to educate more people. It's hard in these big productions to learn as you go. I think we need to be able to teach our crews ethical ways of working, being able to be patient, and not putting too much responsibility on people.”

Ásgrímur is afraid that big Hollywood productions coming to Iceland might result in the local industry disintegrating a bit. He doesn't want it to happen here: “Foreign productions coming to Iceland, that's the sideshow. The only thing that really matters is the films we make, the art we create.”

“We need more money,” Margrét adds. “We need more money to tell our stories in even more spectacular ways. We have hardly done period movies because it's too expensive. We cannot afford to tell old stories because we just don't have the money.”

“Of course, it's a pity that people don't go and see those arthouse movies,” Margrét agrees. “But I think it's even more important that we make them. It cannot all be about numbers and how many viewers we have. If we only want to tell popular stories, we're in bad shape.”

“I think the challenge is to convince the government to open up,” says Halldóra. “To show them that films are actually creating jobs and films can create peace. You can make films, not war, you can really build bridges between human beings with storytelling.”

“I think there are blooming times ahead,” she continues. “But we need the money. It has to begin with the government deciding they want us to create films in Icelandic or create films that tell Icelandic stories.”

EMBRACING HOMEGROWN SUCCESS

To top off the exciting recent expansions in the Icelandic film, the 2022 European Film Awards will be hosted in Reykjavík in December. Excitingly, some Icelandic films have already been recognized by the European Film Academy this year, making me wonder if Icelandic filmmakers are inspired to aim higher. Could an Icelandic film compete for an Oscar one day?

“Focusing on Oscars is always too little for me,” says Steve. “It narrows things down. If the industry only consisted of Oscar nominees, it would be very small.”

“I think that the film talent and stories are definitely here. But it needs to be a mission, like a national sport,” Elsa believes. “To go after an Oscar takes so much more than a fantastic film.”

For Ásgrímur, the fact that Icelandic film has gone from homegrown effort to being recognised abroad is already a success. “I think it's a real achievement for the Icelandic film industry to go from relative obscurity to something that is known in the film industry. Because we are such a small nation, it's not a given that we create interesting cinema that other people anticipate and ask themselves ‘What's coming from Iceland this year?’ It's not a given at all,” he says.

“Basically my default position is like this—‘An Icelandic movie is coming up? That's fantastic. I'm really looking forward to see it.’ Most of the time, I'm a little bit disappointed. But I'm always hopeful. Probably because this was very ingrained in me from an early age, when every Icelandic film was precious,” he says.

Iceland has a population of only about 360,000—and yet produces more films per capita than any other country in the world. Ásgrímur laughs: “It's very easy for us to win that competition. We make 1 film and it's like 1000 films in America.” He adds: “but sometimes it can be useful, not to boast, but more to tell ourselves, ‘We can do this.’ There used to be a tendency when we looked upon ourselves: we are far away from everybody, we're very few, we used to be quite poor. This all has changed. We saw the world, the world didn't see us. The world has changed. Now the world sees us more and more.”



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European Film Awards Nominees Screenings

Until December 10th - Bio Paradís - 1.990 ISK

Bio Paradís celebrates the Month of the European Film along with multiple other cinemas across Europe. This can only mean one thing—the number of good movies per square metre in this town is close to exceeding its limits. The cinema is screening all films nominated for the European Film Awards that will take place in Reykjavík on December 10th, and much more. We've already gone to the movies way too many times this month, and have no intention to stop. **IZ**



DIY Christmas Sweater

December 17th - Gerðuberg City Library - Free

Opinions on ugly Christmas sweaters differ. Some people can't wait for the festive season to begin to wear them, while others don't miss an opportunity to say how tacky they are. On December 17th, you'll have a unique chance to make up your mind on Christmas sweaters, as well as to make one yourself. Come to Gerðuberg City Library, bring a sweater and make it extra ugly at a DIY workshop with the assistance of Anna Worthington De Matos from Munasafnið RVK Tool Library. **IZ**



Geigengeist

December 2nd, 9th, 16th - Borgarleikhúsið - 4.900 ISK

Techno-violin music and contemporary dance? Sign us the heck up. Iceland Dance Company and techno duo Geigen have paired up for this unique performance where audiences are invited to explore the idea of 'the club' through the use of dance, music, design and art. Not sure exactly what that means? Us neither, but it definitely sounds fun. **JG**

CULTURE NEWS



It really is that cold in Iceland

Velvet Terrorism Will Save The World

Pussy Riot open exhibition in Reykjavík

Words:
Valur Gunnarsson

Photos:
Igor Mukhin / Wikimedia

The opening of the Pussy Riot concert at the National Theatre is almost unbearably sad. When Putin was first appointed Prime Minister in late 1999 he was perceived by many as a breath of fresh air after the misery of the Yeltsin years. By the time he reappeared in the president's seat in 2012, that air had gone from stale to suffocating. Over a million people protested against what was to be the formal death of democracy in Russia. Among those who could clearly see what was coming was feminist punk collective Pussy Riot, which was to achieve worldwide notoriety for an impromptu performance in an Orthodox church that saw them sentenced to jail.

Police harassment

Having since fled Russia, Pussy Riot member Masha Alyokhina was in Reykjavík in late November to wrap the band's world tour. The collective set the stage with this reminder of Russia circa 2011-12 and they didn't let up for the next hour and a half—which shouldn't come as a surprise considering how hard they've been going for the past ten-plus years.

One act of defiance has followed another, and is inevitably followed by police harassment and sometimes jail, all portrayed on screen and in song. There is an element of danger in every art form worth talking about, but rarely have performers put themselves in as much physical danger as these activist performers. And indeed, the point is neither to entertain nor to shock, but to change the world—starting with their home country, which so desperately needs changing.

Smuggled in a suitcase

The music is aggressive, their physicality even more so. An attempt to urinate on a picture of Putin does not go completely to plan. Pussy Riot's history is recollected on stage as they are attacked by Putinists at a McDonalds in Siberia, smuggled in suitcases under the noses of the FSB (successor to the KGB), and stand outside for an entire night as temperatures drop to -25°C to protest the arrest of the brother of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navanly, whose main crime is being related to his sibling.

An overview of the Gulag

Through the performance, we get an overview of the Gulag that they first protest against, and are then imprisoned in. A person in a Russian police uniform sets the scene, but the focus is always on the actions of collective members, rather than on Russian

“There is an element of danger in every art form worth talking about”

politics. That's the point. When a government becomes so terrified of its citizens, every act becomes political, be it submissive or subversive. And Pussy Riot are not taking any shit, not even from goons with batons and guns.

After two years in prison, Masha was released just before the 2014 Sochi Olympics, but she wasted no time attempting to further disrupt Putin's party. After being jailed six times more, she was to be sent back to the penal colony after Putin finally dropped all pretence of civil society with his all-out invasion of Ukraine. The worst did come to pass and the concert ends with a show of solidarity with Ukraine, which would be illegal back home.

Escaped with help from Ragnar Kjartans

Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson assisted Masha in the escape and co-curates an exhibition of the recording of Pussy Riot's live performance for Kling og Bang gallery. But the acts of bravery belong to Masha and her group. Punk rock has long since been commodified in the West, where despite all its problems artists are not usually arrested for their opinions. In Putin's Russia, art can be a matter of life and death and, with the power they emanate from the stage, Pussy Riot make the stakes known. **✎**

If you missed Pussy Riot's live performance, you can relive the event at the exhibition at Kling & Bang at Marshallhúsið until January 15th



More riot less dictatorship



PPBB in their element

Poems In A Glitter Jumpsuit

Or the fine art of failing in a tragi-comical way according to PPBB

Words:
Aron Ingi Guðmundsson

Photos:
Art Bicnick

If there is one thing in Iceland that is certain, it is that word on the street spreads fast. The country is small, so if there is anything interesting happening, you hear about it at the speed of light. And the word on the street these days is about a new Icelandic movie called 'BAND.' Being very curious and a fan of movies about bands, I checked it out on a wet and cold Thursday night, only to be left with a torrent of questions running through my head.

What did I just see? Is it a documentary? A mockumentary?

Luckily, I wasn't left in the dark for too long as, within 12 hours of the screening, I was sitting across the table from the stars of the movie, Álfrún Örnólfsdóttir, Saga Sigurðardóttir and Hrefna Lind Lárusdóttir. Álfrún was also the director.

Are they real?

With the movie very fresh on my mind, I felt like I was meeting up with some fictional characters, as they came across exactly like in the movie. But, as I quickly

learned, I can forget about anything being fictional. 'BAND' is, in fact, about these three friends trying to make it in the music world. Their music is an interesting mix of punk rock, artsy pop—“disaster vibes with glamour effect and poems in a glitter jumpsuit,” to quote the artists themselves. I kick off the conversation by asking them about how Post Performance Blues Band (or PPBB), came about.

Wrote a song about the make-up artist

“We were doing our master studies at the University of Art here in Iceland. We had guest teachers and while talking to them, we tell them that we are together in a band. It was more said as a joke, but they kind of believed us and gave us a chance to put on a performance,” Hrefna enthusiastically explained. “We made some beats and even had a make-up artist named Selma, who we made one song about, and a branding manager.

“The idea we had was to emphasize the anti-climax that comes after you perform when you become all blue, we wanted to use that energy in our music.” I was immediately impressed and on board with their train of thought.

Opening for Hatari

The girls tell me that some people in the audience at their first performance invited PPBB to perform at random parties and then it kind of snowballed from there, getting gigs at bars and other venues.

Álfrún says the band has actually been quite active in those six years since forming on a whim. “We have been the opening act of shows with FM Belfast and Hatari. We have been quite busy, but it has been a challenge to move over the threshold of getting paid at all and becoming more popular. There was always a group of people who came to our shows but not much more than that. We also don't really know anything about the music industry and find it quite boring, to be honest!”

We were failing miserably

So why did they start documenting the process? Saga explains: “Álfrún really hit the nail on the head when she said that we were failing so miserably, that it was just tragically funny. So we had to document it!”

“It was like a self-help move, saying it was actually really OK to fail,” Saga continues. “There is a certain humour involved in that, which you see in the movie. It's like an anti-hero story. We had a mission to make it within a year, which was, to be fair, not very likely. So we kind of expected it to be a failure and had agreed that it would be totally OK if it would be the situation.”

Álfrún emphasizes the importance of

humour and that they have never taken themselves too seriously in this whole process.

Life is still chaotic

“We laugh a lot about what we are doing, even the mistakes we make. We wouldn't want to be in a band if there was not all this positivity and joy of play. Our friendship exists because of the humour.” Saga adds that even though they have been in a band for all this time and made a movie now, their life has not changed much. “It's still as chaotic and we are just struggling and doing the same hustle as before.”

Some serious connections are all you need

The girls agree that, even though the movie shows the reality of their failed mission to really make it, there is a lot they can take away from the experience. “Even though sometimes there were just seven people in the audience, there were always one or two who really connected with what we were trying to get across. So you could sense we were inspiring people and having influence. That makes you want to continue and you never know what the future holds. This friendship is strong and we might move more into other fields. We have, for example, performed in art galleries with good success. We want to continue to build on it and use this as an art form,” Hrefna says.

The dream is still alive

Álfrún, Hrefna and Saga are excited about what the future might hold for PPBB and they are enjoying the ride. They say that the reaction to the movie has been great, and they have been invited to present it at festivals across the world—and perform as well. It's clear that the dream is still alive, which is truly inspiring. ☺

See 'BAND' with English subtitles at *Bío Paradís*.



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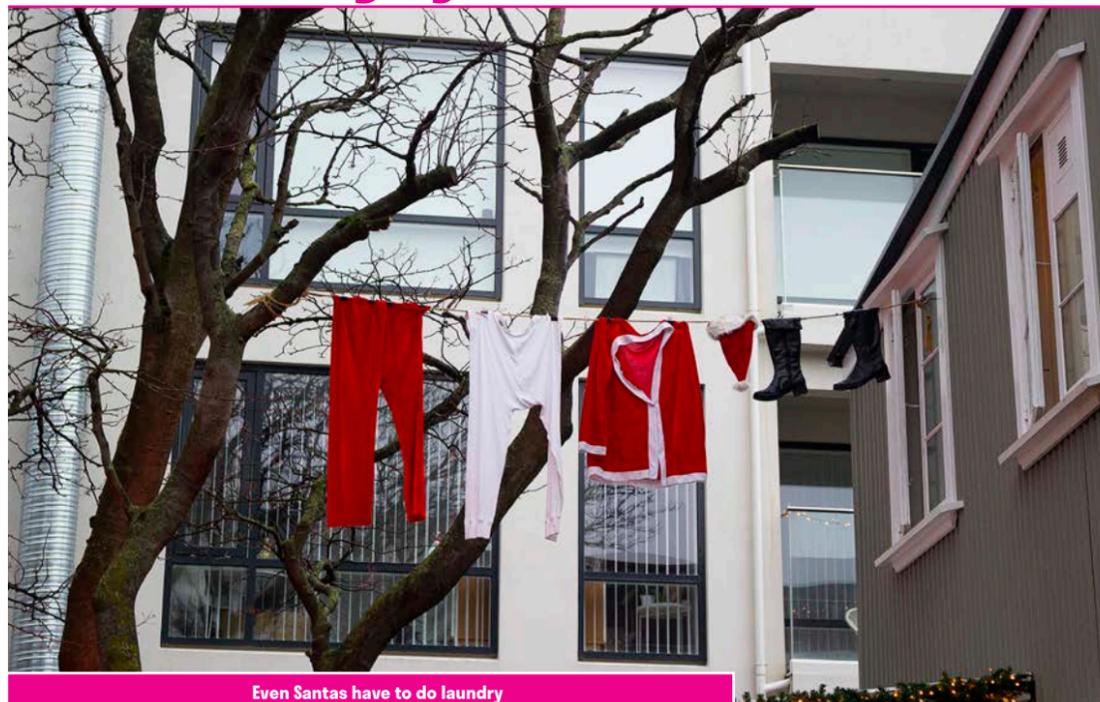
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Even Santas have to do laundry

Getting Ready For Jesus' Birthday Party

Let the Christmas spirit fill
the hollow inside

Words: **Iryna Zubenko** Photos: **Iryna Zubenko & SUNDAY & WHITE STUDIO**

Unless you live in a cave, it's hard to avoid Christmas. Whether you affiliate with any religion or not, at some point you'll find yourself face-to-face with festive window displays, a crazy variety of advent calendars (they even make them for dogs!), endless gift wrapping motifs and, in Iceland's case, Yule Lads. You can try to fight it, but eventually, you'll succumb—if not for anything but the food. We went on a little holiday shopping haul to let you know about the best places in town to get your Christmas cheer on.

Pastel Blómastúdíó

Hverfisgata 50, 101 Reykjavík



Using natural materials as Christmas decorations is always a great budget-friendly idea, but if you aren't much of a DIY-person (let's be frank, putting a rock on a Christmas table will make it earthy, but will it impress your guests?), why not seek help from professionals. Flower studio Pastel will be doing a December pop up with wreaths, festive bouquets and smaller ornaments on offer. Take our word for it, if you put their Christmas wreath up on your door you can consider the unofficial neighbour competition won.

Litla Jólábúðin

Laugavegur 8, 101 Reykjavík



Litla Jólábúðin literally means “The Little Christmas Store”—clearly, the person behind its name didn't intend to reinvent the wheel. It's very festive looking all year round, but don't expect a mini version of Duncan's Toy Chest from “Home Alone 2”. Instead, Litla Jólábúðin offers a wide, but traditional, selection of Christmas decorations, with the exception of some sparkly dinosaur baubles. What's most impressive about this store, though, is its Nutcracker collection. Imagine playing a staring contest with hundreds of wooden Nutcrackers glaring at you with their tiny eyes. I lost, of course.

Góði Hirðirinn

Multiple locations



If, like us, you're drawn to things other people would call trash, this one's for you. Góði Hirðirinn isn't a Christmas store, but their festive range gets larger closer to the holidays. Vintage baubles, Christmas lights, candleholders, wreaths—you might even score a whole Christmas tree. Vintage treasure hunting takes time and a trained eye, but at least your Christmas tree won't look like you got it straight from an IKEA catalogue.

Epal

Multiple locations



Epal has been the place for Icelanders to stock up on local and Scandinavian designers for over 40 years. Though a little bit more pricey than other stores on our list, Epal will make your Christmas dinner table look sleek—minimalistic, yet practical and beautiful. Whether you're looking specifically for Christmas ornaments, scented candles or advent calendars, Epal has it all. Beware: You will definitely find something you love, so if you're on a budget be sure to check those price tags.

Penis Museum

Kalkofnsvegur 2, 101 Reykjavík



Obviously, this one is not a Christmas store. But if traditional Christmas trees bore you and you agree the whole point of decorating a Christmas tree is to make it as extra as possible, stick with us here. The Penis Museum shop sells keychains and bottle openers that would look great on your Christmas tree. Consider it an homage to every dick in your life, or an attempt to make that friend who's been sad and lonely all year smile. We've heard they also sell penis-shaped gingerbread cookies. 🍪

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In Your Pocket



Reykjavík Map

Places We Like

Best Of Reykjavík

Perfect Day

Dance, jive & have the time of your life



Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine** Photo: **Art Bicnick**

Andie Sophia

Andie Sophia Fontaine is a journalist, writer, and Trans Iceland board member living in Reykjavík. Originally from Baltimore, she has lived in Iceland since 1999. She is the only openly trans journalist in Iceland, and has written for the Grapevine since 2003. Here is what her perfect day in Reykjavík would comprise.

First thing in the morning

I wake up when I feel like it, as I never have to set my alarm for anything. Coffee—and by that I mean French press coffee with raw honey and almond/hazelnut milk—and a giant spread of fruits and vegan pastries are already spread out on the kitchen table waiting for me. I enjoy my breakfast at a leisurely pace while scrolling Twitter. Everyone is talking about how **Elon Musk** lost control of the platform, which is now owned by **Beyoncé**. After a good chuckle, I get

dressed and put on my makeup. My outfit is perfect, my body looks great in it, and my face looks fresh and appealing.

Lunch

It's a gorgeous day in the city. Not a cloud in the sky, no wind, and it's a balmy 15°C. My daughter and I head downtown, where every street is car-free; only pedestrians, cyclists, and scooter-riders comprise the traffic of downtown. Shops are open and flourishing. As Iceland's socialist government has abolished money, I walk into a takeaway place and simply ask for a nice steaming hot bowl of tofu and veggie noodles. They are perfect. We hop on the electric tram that traverses downtown and set off for **Austurvöllur**. There, Beyoncé is giving a free concert [editor's note: she must have a lot of free time running Twitter]. Security wave me through so that we might sit in comfortable chairs just off stage right. Beyoncé is

very happy to see us, and I give her an encouraging thumbs up.

Afternoon

At the concert's conclusion, Beyoncé and I say goodbye, and she gifts me a sweet **Louis Vuitton** baseball jacket and tells my daughter that she is the cutest kid ever. I thank her profusely, but with dignity. I then meet up with my wife and my best friend down at the harbour, where cruise ships have been banned. The hotels have all been replaced with a giant expanse of green grass, where the four of us spread out a picnic. We eat, talk, and laugh the day away.

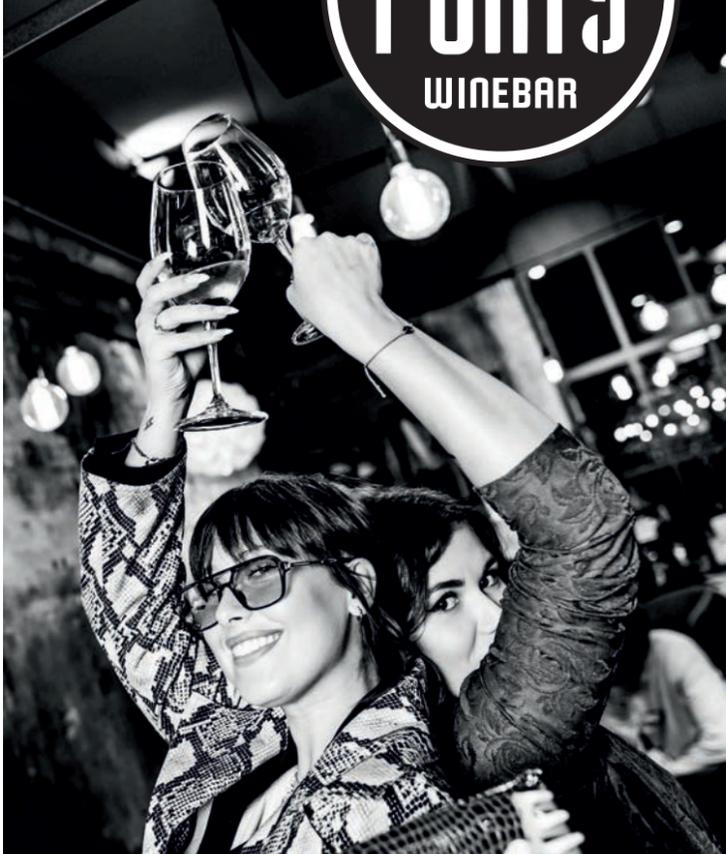
Evening

My daughter heads home to her mom, and then my wife, best friend and I make my way to **Valhöll**. While this used to be the headquarters of the conservative party, the whole building has been converted into the largest queer club in Europe. All the trans greats are there—**MJ Jackson, Jamie Clayton, Mia Mulder, Indiya Moore**—and they are absolutely delighted to see us. We all get a booth in the VIP section, and are immediately attended to by a group of cis men who are deferring and respectful. As we are handed champagne glasses, the DJ interrupts her set to announce a special guest. That's right, it's Beyoncé. The crowd goes wild. She gets in the DJ booth and announces she is about to drop her new single, never heard by anyone before, and it is dedicated to the trans community of Iceland. She points at me and says "You're the best, Andie!" I point back and say "I love you, Beyoncé!"

Night

We all toddle home, with absolutely no worries about being jeered at, barked at, or otherwise hassled. We crawl into bed and are able to sleep right away, content in knowing that we can wake up whenever we like. 🍷





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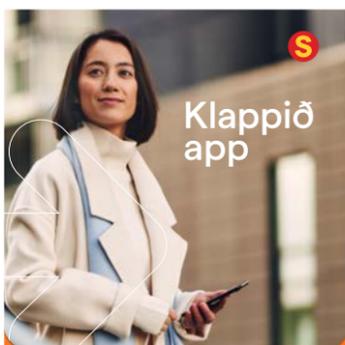


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A

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B

PHOTOS FROM ICELAND

Skólavörðustígur 22



C

Wine bar & food

VÍNSTÚKAN TÍU SOPAR

The Map

The City Map presents a selection of restaurants, bars and shops that received the 2022 "Best Of Reykjavík" award curated by our stringent panellists. Get the bigger, more detailed version of The Reykjavík Grapevine City Map at your nearest hotel or guesthouse.

Dining

1. Le Kock

Tryggvagata 14

The craft burger OG has never been better. No one toasts potato buns to crisp perfection like they do, or cooks patties to such medium rare goodness. Everything is made from scratch, including the condiments! This is gourmet fast food, with all of the attention to detail and none of the sacrifice on fun and flavour.

2. Flatey

Grandagarður 11

Educating a country beyond their diet of pizza-chain pies is no small feat, but that's exactly what Flatey sought to do when they burst onto the scene, and for that we applaud them. The Margherita continues to be a panel favourite; who can argue with milky mozzarella and tomatoes?

3. Fine

Rauðarárstígur 33

A panel favourite, Fine is a no nonsense, no frills, Sichuanese Chinese restaurant that steadfastly opens Reykjavík's mind's and palates to the regional cuisine. The Mala Chicken is a tingling explosion of flavour, literally, thanks to the sichuan peppercorn. For something simple yet exciting, we recommend the Hot and Sour Potatoes.

4. SONO matselíjor

Sæmundargata 11

Sono overlooks a wild-flower meadow and a spectacular view of the Reykjavík skyline. Languorous and idyllic, the menu too is shaped for slow savouring. The chefs look beyond Iceland for inspiration, while still showcasing seasonal, local produce in all its colourful glory. Foraged herbs, berries, fruits, stems, and flowers all feature on the menu, resulting in a fun affair that serves as a reminder that good vegan food goes beyond batter fried cauliflower.

5. Laundromat

Austurstræti 9

Laundromat offers a cool '50's-diner-meets-maximalist-library vibe, decorated with bright furnishings, maps and colour-coded books. It's great for families in general, but teens in particular like the fun decor, burgers and milkshakes. We especially love their vocal support for breastfeeding, as well as the fact that you can actually do laundry here!

6. Deig Workshop

Tryggvagata 14

Deig's 'poor man's offer' is as good as it gets on this abnormally expensive island. For 1100 ISK, you can choose from a handmade bagel with a filling of your choice, any doughnut or pastry from their selection, and a simple drink (coffee, juice or kokomjólk, basically). Even better, they open at 7 a.m., and the offer is valid every weekday, for as long as the bakery is open.

7. Sushi Social

Pinghóltsstræti 5

If you are a group of friends looking for a fun night about town, Sushi Social is the place to be. The menu is ideal for sharing—although, who'd want to share something as delectable as langoustine tempura. Order one—or several—of those colourful drinks with names that recall a tropical holiday to make a fun night even more festive.

8. Sumac Grill + Drinks

Laugavegur 28

Sumac is one of the few places that cooks lamb with none of that sous-vide nonsense. An unpretentious lamb rib, cooked on the grill, kissed with smoke and licked by flame is pretty hard to top. Sumac serves it with blistered grapes, fried almonds, a splash of thinned down muhammara and lentils. It's a dish you can't get enough of, and thankfully the restaurant hasn't dared to take it off the menu.

9. Borg 29

Borgartún 29

This is one of the more comfortable food halls to be at, with a wide variety of choices to please most anyone. "Almost every place makes small plates, which is excellent for sharing," observed one panellist. She's right, one can choose from sushi at Umami, to burgers at Yuzu, to grilled meats at Bál, to healthy skyr bowls at Svala.

10. Fish Company

Vesturgata 2a

For the definitive seafood experience in Reykjavík, you'd be hard pressed to find a better spot than Fiskfélagið. Their tasting menus are a great way to try the best Icelandic waters have to offer, from Atlantic cod served Japanese style, to harissa wolf-fish. The sushi platter makes for a great lunch while their fish of the day is usually a generous pan-fried dish with a luscious sauce.

11. Prir Frakkar

Baldursgata 14

This cosy, tucked-away restaurant has not let anything sway them from tradition—you'll spot everything from foal, to blackbird, to cod throats to plökkfiskur on their menu. Opened in 1989, the restaurant has been run by chef Úlfar Eysteinnsson and his family ever since. A visit to this place underlines that good old-fashioned Icelandic cooking can be all kinds of memorable.

Drinking

12. Röntgen

Hverfisgata 12

This place has it all. "It's crazy how it's continued to dominate the bar scene in Reykjavík," one panellist raved. "But it's just got so many elements. It works for every vibe, which is so rare for a bar." Despite only appearing on the downtown scene a few years ago, the place has already cemented itself among the nightlife legends.

13. Jungle Cocktail Bar

Austurstræti 9

"Jungle's vibe naturally caters to an early night crowd. It's stylish and airy, and, of course, they have the most innovative and delicious cocktails in the city," enthused one panel member. The panel also praised the bar's diversity—noting how attendees spanned all ages and demographics.

14. Kaffibarinn

Bergstaðastræti 1

Let's be real: there's a reason that Kaffibarinn is still here and full of dedicated regulars. At night, you'll find the crowd gets rowdy, the convos get interesting and the dance floor gets sweaty in the most wonderful way. "It's the obvious choice," said a panellist. "Who doesn't have some crazy story from closing time in the smoking area at Kaffibarinn?"

15. Gaukurinn

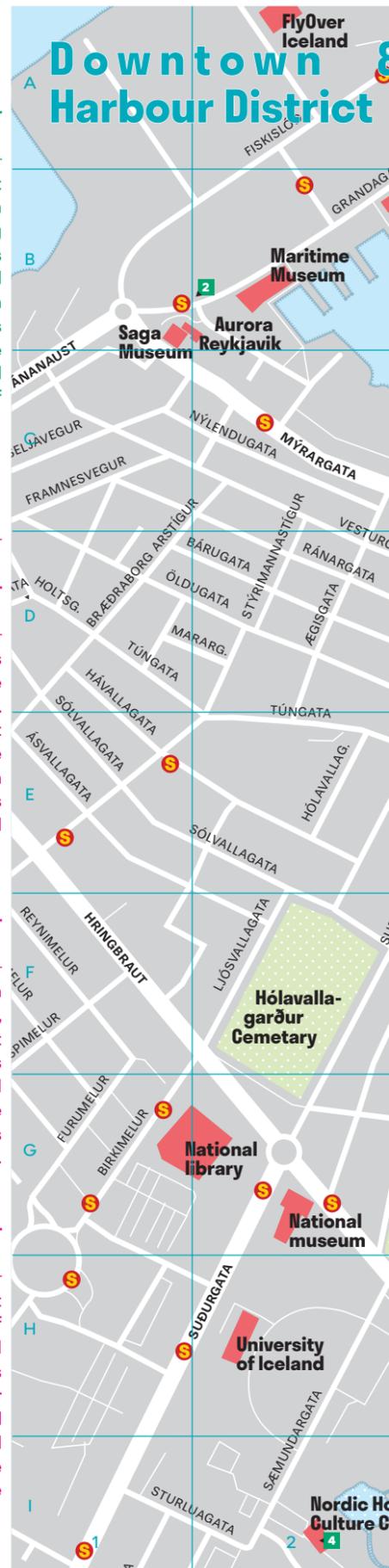
Tryggvagata 22

With dim lights, leather sofas, gender-neutral bathrooms and free tampons, this bar/venue is the preferred hangout for the unorthodox Reykvikingar. So if you're looking for like-minded peeps in the alt and queer scene, there you go. From heavy metal fests to quieter indie shows, this second floor haunt does it all.

16. Bravó

Laugavegur 22

Bravó: a dark room with amber-toned light, simple furniture, and cosy bohemian pillows. Their happy hour—perhaps the most prolific in the city—starts at 12:00 everyday and lasts until 20:00. Located in the



heart of Laugavegur, it's also a prime people-watching spot.

17. Óðinstorg

Óðinstorg

It's decided: Óðinstorg is the best outdoor drinking spot in Reykjavík. The new square was previously a parking area, but is now an open, airy, designed-for-those-lazy-summer-days paradise. You have good sun, good seating, Snaps, and Bodega, and serious mainland European vibes.

18. Session Craft Bar

Bankastræti 14

With its minimal appearance, stainless steel bar backed with dozens of taps and fridges full of beers canned and



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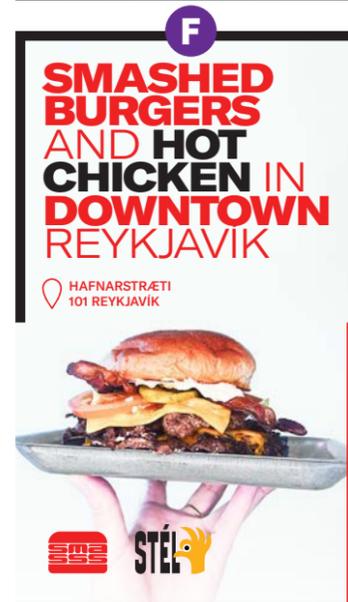
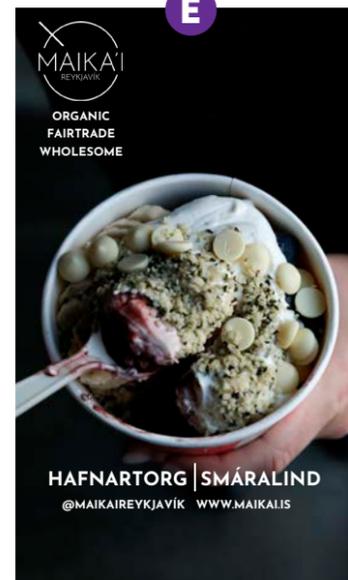
New In Town ☆



Pósthús Mathöll

Pósthússtræti 5, 101 Reykjavík

Joy to the world, there is—yet another—new food hall in town! Iceland truly knows no bounds when it comes to unbridled capitalism! All cynicism aside, Pósthús makes use of one of downtown’s lovely elderly buildings, previously home to (you guessed it) the old post office. Inside, the cosy atmosphere houses the usual mathöll suspects: a sushi joint, Italian, tacos, and an outpost of ‘fusion’ burger joint Yuzu, home of one of the Grapevine’s favourite vegan burgers. Sure, another foodhall might not set the heather alight, but it’s handy, and we’re hungry. **JG**



bottled, Session is a place that, while cosy enough, is made for serious craft heads. Whether you're hankering for a lip-puckering gose, or an IPA packed with more flowers than a funeral, Session has got your back.

19. Skuggabaldur

Pósthússtræti 9

A weekday bar is all about atmosphere. You want something lively but cosy, bustling without being jam packed, and above all else, full of good vibes. Skuggabaldur has perfected this delicate combo, with the best of Reykjavík's jazz scene showing up nightly to entertain patrons and make even a Wednesday memorable. Despite only opening last year, the bar has quickly become

a favourite with everyone from downtown artists to suburban folk.

Shopping

20. Yeoman

Laugavegur 7

2021 saw Yeoman being donned by international celebrities while also continuing her reign as the primary fashion tastemaker for Reykjavík women. "To talk about modern Icelandic style is to talk about Yeoman," one panel member said.

21. Lucky Records

Rauðarástígur 10

Lucky Records is the one-stop-shop for anything Icelandic music. They've got it all; new titles, CDs, rarities, vinyl, cassettes, second hand 12", 7" sections, you name it! Notably, the store is very in touch with the local underground. Basically any Icelandic release—no matter how big or small—will be sold there, and trust and believe, their shopkeepers will know them inside and out.

22. Hringekjan

Pórunnartún 2

Similar to a consignment shop, Hringekjan is a space where people can rent out spaces to sell their own clothes and accessories. It's the most eco-friendly way to keep your closet fresh, which, in light of our current world, is something

we should all be thinking about. "I don't know how they get such chic people to sell their clothes there," laughed one panel member. If you want something groovy this is the place to go."

23. Apótek Atelier

Laugavegur 16

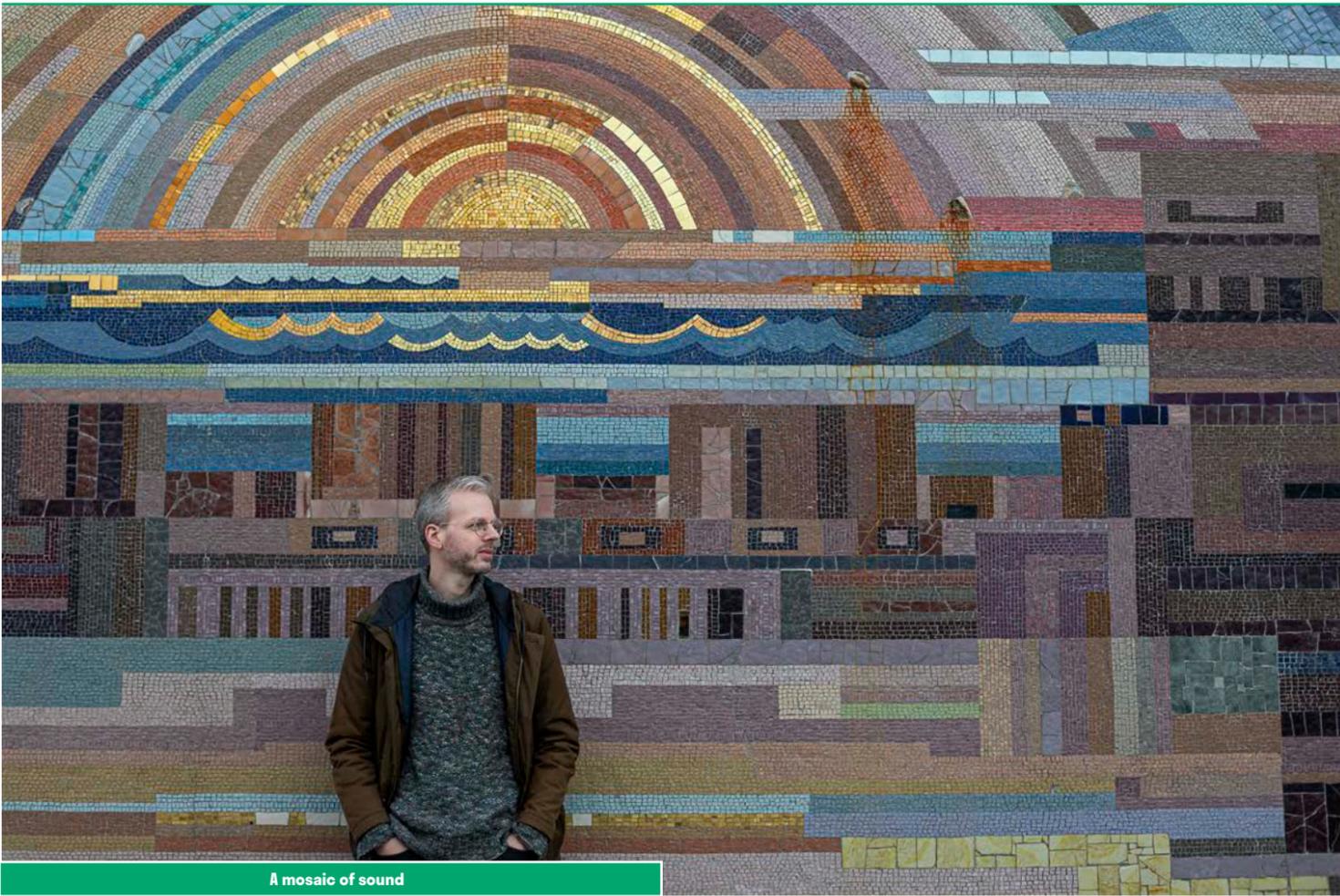
Apótek Atelier is quite new on the scene, but this small boutique has already made quite a splash. Created by designers Ýr Prastardóttir, Halldóra Sif Guðlaugsdóttir and Sævar Markús Óskarsson, Apótek Atelier blurs the line between studio and store, functioning as both the designers' workspace, as well as the place where one can purchase their wares.

24. Húrra Reykjavík

Hverfisgata 50 & 78

Húrra Reykjavík has changed the game of Reykjavík fashion in a matter of years. They offer a la mode streetwear like Stussy, Champion and Adidas, and by doing so they've created a fashion frenzy. Klds have camped in front of the store for new Yezys. Trump might not have "made America great again," but Húrra Reykjavík has made local streetwear great again for sure.





A mosaic of sound

play, because then I get something where I'm forced to go out of my comfort zone and create something that's completely different from what I would normally do." That trip out of his comfort zone then gives Snorri new ideas and tools to use on his personal projects.

Balance

"My friends and teachers that I studied with in Spain would always tell me my music sounds 'so Icelandic, it sounds so cold'. I got sort of fake angry at them at the time, but they're not wrong either," the composer recounts. It's easy to think of the vastness of the Icelandic landscape when listening to Snorri's very atmospheric and cinematic work. But it also reflects Snorri's own preference for space and a balance between sadness and hopefulness.



Hearing The Image

Expanding two areas of music and finding balance

Words: Catherine Magnúsdóttir Photo: Art Bicnick

Eerie and vast sounds set the tone for Netflix's new Spanish-language psychological thriller "Jaula." And the creative mind behind the score is none other than Snorri Hallgrímsson, composer and producer of both his own albums and various film soundtracks. We caught up with the composer and producer about leaving his fingerprint on the "Jaula" score while venturing outside of his comfort zone.

First Impressions

"It's quite a funny story actually," Snorri says of finding himself working on the film. "The director (Ignacio Tatay) wrote to me personally. He had been following my solo music and asked if I wanted to do the music for the film." Snorri elaborates with a story about his studies in Spain and an awkward networking meeting between his class and a film school. "I remember being so hungover during the meeting and having no patience for it but someone from the film school there remembered me and pointed me out to this director years later."

Raw and creepy

The mystery thriller gave Snorri the possibility to expand his repertoire. "I realized I need to rethink how I approach this because I can't just go and cry over my piano like I normally do," he jokes. "I have to do something else."

"It was very challenging because it's very different from the music that I had been doing before and from my solo music, which is very sort of listener-friendly—this

soundtrack is the complete opposite." Combining raw atmospheric sounds with creepy, dissonant and even uncomfortable viola tones allowed Snorri to play puppet-master with the materials and fit it to the film with more uncanny tones than usual for him.

Soundscapes

Having discovered his appreciation for film and music early in life, it was hardly a leap for Snorri to understand and appreciate the interplay between sound and visuals. "The visual element of it is so strong," he says. "I think it brings you to a place. The film music that I discovered and love is sort of slow and atmospheric and it would always enhance my experience of wherever I was, even just looking out the window, always making it more serene, more emotional in a way." Starting out with a MacBook and Garageband, Snorri recalls how he tried to emulate scores he knew and loved with the basic tools he had at the time. "I remember coming home from watching 'Babel' thinking 'Wow, what is this music?' and ordered the CDs. That's my first concrete memory of really getting into film music. Then I just started playing around by myself, creating those kinds of soundscapes from there."

"Minor, Minor, Sad Chords"

Comparing the two avenues of film scores and independent music, Snorri says he likes mixing the two and switching back and forth. "Especially when I do soundtracks

like 'Jaula,' which is so different from the music that I do independently, it just makes me a better composer. It expands my creativity and I can use that to help me in both areas."

Having ended up in the genre of sad piano music for various reasons, Snorri says that on the

one hand he feels some obligation to uphold the expectations he has set, but that it also comes very naturally to him.

"But I also don't want to be just like 'minor, minor, sad chords' all the time. It's always very shallow if it's just at that level. That's where the film music comes into

Sæta Svínid
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EVENT PICKS



★ **Heavy Knife presents: Daniel Ness, Countess Malaise, Smjörvi and Drexler**

December 2nd, 21:00 - Húrra

Heavy Knife—a record label founded by Þórður Ingi Jónsson, better known as Lord Pusswhip—has been amassing some incredible talent, and this show at Húrra will showcase some of it for you. Daniel Ness, whose full name is Daniel Ronald Laxness, is the great-grandson

of Nobel Prize-winning author Halldór Laxness and a DJ, beat maker and musician. Countess Malaise hardly needs an introduction, but has been captivating audiences for years. Smjörvi caught local attention in 2016 with their brand of electric pop, and Drexler will be closing out the evening with electro, breaks and techno. Lord Pusswhip himself is a genius when it comes to songwriting and production, so you know his taste is impeccable in terms of who's been signed to Heavy Knife. Promises to be an epic Friday night for anyone attending. **ASF**

December 2nd—January 5th

Upcoming Events

Send details of your event to: events@grapevine.is

This month is packed with so many great events that we can't possibly fit them all! Check them out on events.grapevine.is and don't hesitate to add yours!

Friday December 2nd

Doomcember
18:00 Gaukurinn
Geigengeist
20:00 Borgarleikhúsið
Skúli Sverrisson & Friends
20:30 Mengi
Christmas Party Screening: Love Actually
21:00 Bio Paradís
DJ Katla
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Saturday December 3rd

Icelandic Language Café
11:00 Reykjavík City Library
Christmas Family Screening: Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone
15:00 Bio Paradís
The Reykjavík Queer Choir's Christmas Concert
16:00 Bústaðakirkja
Doomcember
18:00 Gaukurinn
Radical Kitchen Strikes Back! Friendship Dinners
19:00 Andrými
Christmas Party Screening: Gremlins
19:00 Bio Paradís
Skúli Sverrisson & Friends
20:30 Mengi
Drag: Heart Attack!
21:00 Kiki
DJ Óli Dóri
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Sunday December 4th

Screening: Charlie Chaplin Modern Times
16:00 Bio Paradís
Singer/Songwriter Night
20:00 Gaukurinn

Monday December 4th

Comedy Night: Bring the Laughs
20:30 Gaukurinn

Tuesday December 6th

Karaoke Night
20:00 Gaukurinn

Wednesday December 7th

Sit Down, Shut Up, There'll Be Jokes
20:00 Loft Hostel
Atonement ættartré: release concert
20:00 Harpa
Skerpla
20:30 Mengi
Karaoke With Two Non-Blondes
21:00 Röntgen

Thursday December 8th

KK & Mugison
19:30 Frikirkjan
Cozy Christmas Concerts
20:00 Petersen Svítan
DJ Leon S Kemp (Nordic Voyage)
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Friday December 9th

Geigengeist
20:00 Borgarleikhúsið
Apocalypstick
20:00 Gaukurinn
Bensol B2B & Simon fknhdsm
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Saturday December 10th

Icelandic Language Café
11:00 Reykjavík City Library
Christmas Party Screening: Elf
19:00 Bio Paradís
Christmas Party Screening: The Holiday
21:00 Bio Paradís
Fusion Groove
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Sunday December 11th

Christmas Family Screening: Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets
15:00 Bio Paradís

Monday December 12th

Monday Jazz
21:00 Húrra

Tuesday December 13th

Karaoke Night



★ **Gyða**

December 14th - 3000 ISK - Mengi

Gyða Valtýsdóttir's star is only continuing to rise. Her fourth album, '0x' was released this time last year to widespread acclaim and she was crowned "Producer of the Year" at the 2022 Icelandic music awards as a result. Heck, she even got a track-by-track column in the Reykjavík Grapevine! Now fans can relive the listening experience and experience Gyða's ethereal vocals and transcendent cello playing in the relaxed atmosphere of Mengi. **JG**



★ **Silja Rós Christmas Concert**

December 22nd - FREE - Petersen

In the run up to the winter holidays, everything can feel a little crazy. Shopping, gift exchanges, drunken office parties where you accidentally tell your boss exactly what you think of them... it's all a bit hectic. Take the time to sit down and soothe your frantic mind by being serenaded by the silver-tongued voice of Silja Rós. It's the perfect way to ease yourself into the Christmas spirit. **JG**



MUSIC NEWS

Wise Music Group, a major international publisher that celebrates its 50th birthday this year, has officially launched a full publishing entity in Reykjavík. The new entity will function as a joint venture between Edition Wilhelm Hansen (WEH) and Bosworth Music GmbH, both successful Wise Music businesses, and will be led by Inga Weissappel—who has been working as a music supervisor for Wise Music since the beginning of the year. The Icelandic department will allow them to work more closely with their Icelandic artists, among which are composers Ólafur Arnalds, Anna Thorvaldsdóttir, and Dustin O'Halloran. Together with Inga, they'll be working towards bringing Icelandic talent to a bigger audience. **KW**



On December 1st, 'Dagur íslenskrar tónlistar', aka Iceland Music Day, was celebrated with an awards ceremony at Harpa. This annual event recognises key players in the Icelandic music industry for their achievements and contributions. Among those presented with awards were KÍTÓN, an organisation that seeks to promote women in the Icelandic music industry, the developers of events app Gjúgg, and Laufey Lín Jónsdóttir, who is fast becoming one of Iceland's most successful artists. In addition, our own Grapevine received an honorary award for contributions to the music scene and cultural coverage. A collection of past and present music writers for the paper, including Culture Editor Josie Anne Gaitens, received the award on behalf of the magazine. In her acceptance speech, Josie flagged the importance of continuing to champion the great diversity to be found in the music scene in this little country. **IZ**



Iceland Airwaves 2022 returned in full swing last month—the first edition of Iceland's biggest music festival to take place fully in person since the Covid-19 pandemic. Grapevine's team had so much fun covering the Airwaves, even though we're still recovering from post-festival fatigue. The festival sold out for the first time in more than a decade, which only proves how thirsty music lovers are for live events. And, to further prove this point, early bird tickets for Iceland Airwaves 2023 have already sold out! If you're thinking of visiting next year, our advice—plan early. **IZ**

20:00 Gaukurinn
Brynjar Daðason Graduation Concert
20:30 Mengi

Wednesday December 14th

Icelandic Language Café
11:00 Reykjavík City Library
Comedy Night: The Alternative Assembly
20:00 Gaukurinn
★ **Gyða**
20:30 Mengi
Party Karaoke
21:00 Sæta Svínid

Thursday December 15th

Andkristnihátid Warm-up Show
20:00 Gaukurinn

Friday December 16th

Festival: Andkristnihátid
19:00 Gaukurinn
Geigengeist
20:00 Borgarleikhúsið
Mengi's 9th Birthday Celebration
20:00 Mengi
Christmas Party Screening: Edward Scissorhands
21:00 Bio Paradís
PVBR vs Vocalbooth Christmas Festival
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Saturday December 17th

Icelandic Language Café
11:00 Reykjavík City Library
DIY Christmas Sweaters
12:00 Gerðuberg City Library
Tónaflæði: Christmas Art Market
13:00 Loft Hostel
Christmas at the Symphony
14:00 & 16:00 Harpa
Christmas Family Screening: Home Alone
14:30 Bio Paradís
Christmas Family Screening: Home Alone 2
17:00 Bio Paradís
Festival: Andkristnihátid
19:00 Gaukurinn
Christmas Party Screening: The Nightmare Before Christmas
19:45 Bio Paradís
Nordic Affect & Eyjólfur Eyjólfsson
20:00 Mengi
Volume Invites: Sinistarr, Aqzilla, Hausar, Carla & Rose
21:00 Ægir Brugghús
PVBR vs Vocalbooth Christmas Festival
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Sunday December 18th

Christmas at the Symphony

14:00 & 16:00 Harpa
Christmas Family Screening: Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban
15:00 Bio Paradís

Wednesday December 21st

ZAAR, Rakel, Salome Katrín
20:30 Mengi
Party Karaoke
21:00 Sæta Svínid

Thursday December 22nd

★ **Silja Rós Christmas Concert**
20:00 Petersen Svítan
DJ Spell & Gróa
20:30 Mengi
Ussel (DK), Daniil & JóiPé
21:00 Húrra
Prom Night with Bjartar Sveiflur
21:00 KEX Hostel

Friday December 23rd

Bubbi Morthens
20:00 Harpa
Christmas Party Screening: Die Hard
21:00 Bio Paradís
Jóhanna Guðrún
21:00 Frikirkjan
DJ Katla Óskalagaporiákur
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Saturday December 24th

DJ Santa Claus
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Wednesday December 28th

Eurovision Pubquiz
16:30 Loft Hostel
Party Karaoke
21:00 Sæta Svínid

Thursday December 29th

Gustaf Ljunggren & Skúli Sverrisson
20:30 Mengi
2022 Quiz
20:00 KEX Hostel

Friday December 30th

Christmas Party Screening: Batman Returns
21:00 Bio Paradís

Sunday January 1st

Lord of the Rings Trilogy
11:00 Bio Paradís

Wednesday January 4th

Party Karaoke
21:00 Sæta Svínid



Arna Óttarsdóttir
innan skamms, aftur
20.10.22–26.11.22

Art



Least chaotic visual artist

Visual Arts Are Booming And Christmas Is Coming!

Gallery Port is opening their Christmas market

Words: **Valur Grettilsson** Photos: **Art Bicnick**

“This will be the creme de la creme,” says Árni Már Erlingsson, visual artist and one of the owners of Gallery Port, when asked whose work will be featured in this year’s Christmas market. The gallery has gained a lot of attention over the years for introducing new and upcoming artists to the nation, so it’s yearly Christmas market—opening December 3rd—is not to be missed. The market has been running since 2016, but this year’s event comes after a pandemic-era spree in which Icelanders were buying art in bulk. All of the best artists will have their works on display in the market, and, what’s more, it’s a buyers’ market these days.

Screw Spain, buy art!

We have to start the conversation about the unusual success of visual arts during the pandemic. I mean, what the hell happened?

“Everybody was just at home rearranging their living room,” Árni Már explains and laughs. “The beginning of the pandemic looked awful, but all of a sudden people had much more money because they weren’t going to Spain for summer vacation, and visual artists benefited from this.”

Young people are investing in the future

Árni says that one of the most interesting things he noticed was that younger people are buying art more than before. “And I don’t know why, perhaps some people are doing this as an investment—and

you can make some pretty impressive gains from this—but I think many are just looking for an interesting experience.”

Árni adds that this is a good time for investors and collectors to buy art. There is a new and very active generation of artists coming up and now is the opportunity before the next big hype emerges.

80 artists, but that could be a lie

“I think I’m not lying to you when I state that there are around 80 artists that are participating in the market,” he says. Most of the artists are a new generation of Icelandic visual artists, so it’s safe to say that it will both be affordable, as well as interesting and original.

“We are also so lucky to have an artist with us named Joe Keys from

Newcastle. He will curate a specific show, called Laufbrauð [the name for our traditional Leaf bread],” Árni says, explains that the participants will add even more to the range of visual artists in Iceland.

Could be running four galleries

The market has become a standard stop for Icelanders in past years, because of the interesting range one can find in the gallery, and when asked if the gallery is becoming too small, Árni agrees. “I could probably be running three to four galleries full time, but the problem is, of course, that not all of them would be great, so we focus on this, and try to show the best you can find in the community.”

Baking competition?

Árni Már is unusually festive these days, and he says that they are even thinking about having a leaf bread-baking competition. And when you think about it, it actually makes sense for visual artists, because the bread has beautiful shapes carved out in it, and could be a brilliant canvas for an inventive artist.

“But, however it goes, Skarphéðinn Bergþóruson, Dóra Hrunn Gísladóttir and I will greet anyone that comes between 12:00 and 17:00 on December 3rd,” Árni says in the end. 🍷

The market will open on the 3rd of December and is at Laugavegur 32.



When you left your level at home

Reykjavík Art Museum

One museum
Three locations





★ **Fresh Winds: The International Art Biennale**

Until February 12th - National Gallery of Iceland

It's the seventh edition of this annual art festival taking place in Suðurnesjabær, a small municipal-ity near Keflavík. 40 artists from all over the world have taken up residency to create, inspire, learn

and establish new connections between Icelandic and foreign artists and the local residents. This could be through direct and artistic collaborations, or through other ways of contributing to the festival's mission—to connect with the community and invite them to participate.

Over the course of four weeks, the participating artists and locals will create and exhibit new work and produce a series of diverse events through which they will express their artistic creations. From panels to concerts, film screenings to performances, all of these events will be open to the public.

The role of Protector is fulfilled by none other than the First Lady of Iceland Eliza Reid. **KW**



★ **Velvet Terrorism: Pussy Riot's Russia**

Runs until January 15th - Kling og Bang

Maria Alyokhina, a member of the Russian feminist art collective Pussy riot, created this exhibition to document the activist group's actions carried out since 2011. By giving context to their performances, it sheds light on the oppression and brutality the Russian government has been imposing on its people. **KW**



★ **Unnur Ýrr Helgadóttir - Beautiful Burden**

Until December 10th - Gallerí Fold

Unnur explores her new role as a mother in her new portraits. While acknowledging the immense beauty of motherhood, she also doesn't shy away from expressing the hardships that come with it. From the ego that moves from foreground to background, to ecstasy, despair and unconditional love, Unnur explores both sides of the coin. **KW**



★ **Guðrún Gunnarsdóttir - Lines, Tangles, and all kinds**

Until March 5th - Reykjanesbær Art Museum

A pioneer in thread art since the 1970s, Guðrún's exhibition shows her transformation into three-dimensional images that characterise her art today. Her work is brought to life by its display; from hanging from the ceiling, to climbing up and down the wall, naturally working their way into the field of vision. **KW**

December 2nd—January 5th

Art Exhibitions

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Opening

GALLERY PORT

Christmas guests & Laufbrauð

Seven years ago, the gallery started their annual Christmas Tradition; a joint group exhibition of artists whose work can be purchased upon viewing and taken home on the same day. This way the exhibition constantly changes over time as the Advent progresses. Laufabrauð, a smaller group exhibition, is invited to take up space at the Gallery. It's curated by artist Joe Keys and contains work from over 80 Icelandic and international artists, many of who are exhibiting their works for the first time.

- Opens on December 3rd at 14:00
- Runs until January 7th

Ongoing

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - HAFNARHÚS

Down North: North Atlantic Triennial

This travelling exhibition is made in collaboration with the Portland Museum of Art (USA), Bildmuseet (Sweden), and the Reykjavík Art Museum. Around 30 artists from all over the world show new works that are inspired by the changes society has been going through; covering topics such as climate change and the ecosystem in the arctic.

- Runs until February 5th

GALLERÍ FOLD

Karl Jóhann - Dyrr Upstilling

Realism has always played a central role in Karl Jóhann's career. While he previously focussed on creating portraits of people, he now jumps between animals, the environment, and different painting setups. Throughout "Dýrr Upstilling" he plays with the definitions of tradition, line-ups and poses.

- Runs until December 10th

LÁ ART MUSEUM (HVERAGERÐI)

Gary Hill - Sums & Differences

Works of Gary Hill, Steina and Woody Vasulka are brought together for this exhibition. It aims to present the commonalities and divergence between their earliest works, and

the way the three of them differently interpret the immaterial and the physical. While highlighting their mutual exploration between sound and image, this collaborative exhibition also contains additional new pieces that reflects each of their artistic development, with work spanning several decades.

- Runs until December 18th

GLÉRHÚSIÐ

Haraldur Jónsson - Bráð

The work of Haraldur Jónsson, City Artist of Reykjavík in 2019, covers different sensory fields and echoes the echoes of classical art. His visual world is often aggressive and complicated as he follows paths no one has previously followed, which led to his nomination for the Icelandic Art Prize in 2021.

- Runs until December 12th

REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Elvar Örn Kjartansson - The System

Kjartansson seeks to illuminate the invisible system behind the modern amenities that we tend to take for granted. Since 2016 he's been visiting business and public places in Iceland to take pictures of their various spaces. The system consists of what makes up its infrastructure such as institutions, service companies and anything else that ensures society can run from day to day. His work excludes human beings; they come and go, while the system remains.

- Runs until December 11th

Daniel Bergman - Falcons

Knowing the art is not only in the photos, but also in the work Daniel Bergman put in to photograph these birds of prey, adds another layer to this exhibition. Falcons are naturally camera shy and Bergman had to remain motionless for days at a time to get the perfect shot. The exhibition showcases a selection of these photographs published in his book about this journey, called 'Fálkinn.'

- Runs until January 1st 2023

HAFNARHÚSIÐ

Sigurður Guðjónsson - Leiðni

Known for his video works where image, space, and sound form a

whole, Sigurður focuses on the functionality of all kinds of equipment, luring the viewer in a world of rhythm, order, and repetition where boundaries between humans and the mechanical become blurred. In Leiðni, the artist introduces you to provocative and expressive dimensions of his new creations, encouraging you to think about the world's transformations.

- Runs until February 19th

REYKJANESBÆR ART MUSEUM

Vena Naskrecka & Michael Richardt - You Are Here / Jesteś Tutaj / Du Er Her / Þú Ert Hér

Among interdisciplinary artist Vena's work are sculptures, performances, found objects and video—often inspired by philosophy, technology, and neuroscience, among other topics. Performance artists Michael Richardt's creations are performances limited to time, lasting from fractions to years at a time. Together they bring forward their testimony of their "now" in life, as non-native citizens of Iceland who are making a mark on a country they aren't originally from.

- Runs until March 5th

I8 GRANDI

In Relation To The Sun

i8 Grandi's unique concept is to focus on year-long shows by single artists. The exhibitions will evolve while on view, allowing their creators to reflect how the passage of time alters their work and encourage repeat viewings to observe those changes. This inaugural exhibition by Alicja Kwade encompasses installation, sculpture and work on paper. Its title—initially "In Relation To The Sun"—will change as the nature of the pieces on display evolves.

- Runs until December 22nd

LISTASALUR MOSSFELLSBÆR

Jón Sæmund Auðarson - Litandi, Litandi, Litandi

Jón is known for both his music and art. 12 years ago he developed the habit of painting a spirit on canvas at the beginning of every concert he performed with his band "Dead Skeletons" as a way to overcome his stage fright. 12 years later he is still painting and is inspired by the relationship between life and death, and what comes next.

- Runs until December 16th

GALLERÍ GRÓTTA

Jón Sigurður Thoroddsen - More Work

Jón Sigurður Thoroddsen's art is characterised by stillness. His

refined image structure and colour usage distinguish his work, but what is most remarkable is that his art depicts things that weren't spoken about, aiming to break the taboo around sexuality.

- Runs until December 10th

HVERFISGALLERÍ

Guðmundur Thoroddsen - Kannski, Kannski, Kannski

For his third solo exhibition, Guðmundur has waved goodbye to his usual hidden references and concrete concepts. His newer work is more abstract in both language and image—his suggestive use of colour, texture and horizontal lines make space for imagery, abstract and figurative shapes and a new colour palette. Minimising the emphasis on figurative images and emotional expression, Guðmundur emphasises the structure, forms and layers of his new work.

- Runs until January 7th

HAFNARBORG

Reference to Nature: Works from Hafnarborg's Collection

Hafnarborg's programme hasn't been a stranger to exhibiting art that touches upon nature, changes in the world, and global warming. It's been two years since the museum, based in Hafnafjörður, has been able to share the value of her collection with her visitors. "Reference of Nature" includes both two-dimensional and three-dimensional works, ranging from photographs to ceramics and paintings to textiles. With works spanning from the 1990s to today—with one exception from the 1960s—it could be said that it offers the viewer a human interpretation of nature, or perhaps the nature of

humans?

- Runs until December 23rd

BERG CONTEMPORARY

Sigurður Guðjónsson - Perpetual Motion

By observing forms and objects through light, motion, camera lenses, and perspective in an experimental way, Guðjónsson aims to reveal the energies they hold while they interact with the environment. A responding soundtrack has been created by musician Valgeir Sigurðsson specifically for the exhibition.

- Runs until January 21st, 2023

EINAR JÓNSSON MUSEUM

Einar Jónsson

In 1909 Einar Jónsson—described on the museum's website as "Iceland's first sculptor"—offered all of his works as a gift to the Icelandic people, on the condition that a museum be built to house them. The resulting edifice, constructed just over the road from Hallgrímskirkja, now contains close to 300 artworks. There is also a beautiful garden with 26 bronze casts of the artist's sculptures to enjoy.

- Permanent exhibition

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM

Master Milliners in residency

During their residency at the museum, Anna Gulla and Harper -both master milliners- are working with materials tied to the hat-maker trade; fabrics, leather, felt, and straw. Combining steam and wooden moulds with locally sourced materials, natural furs, fibres, and leather, they experiment with traditional methods in the creation and design of hats and outerwear.

- Runs until December 10th

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- 3 Tarot candle — *Þórunn Árnadóttir*
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His goal is a new film

'Leynilögga' Competes For Best European Comedy

Hannes Þór Halldórsson's first feature is making waves on the worldwide stage

Words: **Iryna Zubenko** Photo: **Baldur Kristjánsson**

It's Tuesday night, but the arthouse cinema Bíó Paradís is packed—mostly with loud teenagers. They're cheering and whistling, and something tells me they're not seeing this movie for the first time. Before the lights dim for the film to begin, a short teaser is shown: "I'm not the best goalkeeper in the world, and fair to say I'm not the world's best director. But I'm the only one who has done both." For better or worse, I'm already hooked.

From saving goals to scoring a debut film

Hannes Þór Halldórsson has mostly made headlines at home and abroad for preventing Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi from scoring at the 2018 World Cup. Yes, you read it right, this Icelandic film director played as a goalkeeper for the Icelandic national football team. "Football gave me unbelievable

adventures and brought me to places that I would never have been without it," says Hannes. "I'm lucky to have two jobs, and both of them are my passion."

Having previously worked on a number of commercials, Hannes released his first feature film 'Leynilögga' ('Cop Secret') last year. "I was still a professional football player while we made the movie," he says. At least half of the filming was done during the football season. Shot in just an incredibly short period of just 20 days, 'Leynilögga' then spent almost a year in post-production.

An Icelandic take on the cop comedy

'Leynilögga' is not your average Icelandic movie. For one, it's an action comedy with dramatic music and Hollywood-style (but still budget) special effects. The satire

that runs through the movie is definitely on point. You don't have to live in Iceland long to appreciate the joke about the rivalry between cops from Reykjavík and Garðabær. "Hot Fuzz" was definitely a movie that I had in mind," says Hannes. "There're lots of movies that we borrow ideas from. I'm not shy about that."

The film also skewers the typical masculinity police are often depicted as embodying—in 'Leynilögga' cops can be emotional, and queer. "We wanted to treat the core elements of the movie with respect and with some seriousness, even though this is a ridiculous or maybe crazy movie, in many ways," shares Hannes.

"It's actually a really cheap movie," he says. "It's a low-budget movie, even by Icelandic standards. Everybody working on it had to give more to the movie than they were getting paid for and really put their heart and soul into it." He continues: "I was trying to make it look as big as possible and have a feel that you wouldn't have seen in an Icelandic movie before."

Best European Comedy

"It is a really big deal. I'm absolutely ecstatic," Hannes says about 'Leynilögga's nomination. "The movie has done things we never expected. It was always meant for the Icelandic market. But we really made it with passion and poured ambition and love into it. We gave it everything we had." He adds: "I think that's giving back now, because the movie has something obviously that goes a bit further than only the Icelandic shores."

Having premiered at Locarno Film Festival 'Leynilögga' has travelled to festivals around the world, receiving international acclaim. "It's been surprising us for two years," Hannes says. "Being nominated [for the European Comedy award] is probably the ultimate surprise. We never expected anything like that."

Other movies nominated in the same category include Fernando León De Aranoa's 'The Good Boss' ('El Buen Patrón') and Catherine Corsini's 'The Divine' ('La Fracture'). "It's a tough competition," says Hannes.

European Film Awards are coming to Reykjavík on December 10, with the Gala Ceremony to take place at Harpa. Whether 'Leynilögga' takes the award home or not, Hannes thinks his first feature has been a success. "I couldn't have asked for anything more. It has done a hundred times more than I expected it to do," he says. 🍷



Watch this movie or the comedian gets it



Arnór Daði with his invisible cat

“This is not a comedy podcast!”

Speaking to serious comedians off stage

Words:
**Catherine
Magnúsdóttir**

Photo:
Art Bionick

“I didn’t want to be like a normal person and just ask my comedian friends to hang out. I want the attention, so I decided I needed cameras and microphones,” David Í Dali says in the intro of his new ‘Serious Comedians Podcast’. He’s sitting in a little corner of the city library across from comedian Arnór Daði, who is already suppressing a smirk. “The point is not to be funny; if we make you laugh or smile it’s purely accidental.” It’s then that the pair, referring to Reykjavík as the “Las Vegas of the North,” succeed at cracking each other up.

Podcasting Couch

Originally from the Faroe Islands, David not only brings “kilk”—a traditionally Faroese mix of Coke and milk that he swears by—to the table, he also offers another perspective on Iceland’s comedy scene.

“I want to talk to the comedians who I feel are underappreciated in the scene. We used to have a comedy club, but we don’t anymore, so it can be really difficult for comedians to [find] any

way of connecting with people,” David says.

After the pandemic claimed Reykjavík’s sole comedy club, Secret Cellar, the stand-up comedy scene in Iceland has become fragmented. “After Covid, a lot of comedians who used to feel at home in the Secret Cellar found themselves homeless, so we started open mics in some other places,” David explains. “It’s not quite the same but it’s still fun and everybody is kind of just waiting for somebody to start the next comedy club.”

Now that open-mic sessions are (thankfully) a thing again, interest in stand-up definitely seems to be growing, judging by the number of comedy programs in downtown Reykjavík. The ‘Serious Comedians Podcast’ aims to provide another piece of the puzzle that makes up this dynamic community.

Outside Influence

Reflecting on how the comedy scene developed, David comments on how performers working in English broadened the appeal: “To me, English is

the language of humour, French is the language of love, and Danish is the language of getting away with cultural genocide.”

While the humour in Iceland might have become a little Americanised, according to David, the benefit is that tourists and travelling comedians can more easily partake, as well as people that have immigrated to Iceland and still want to do comedy. The result is lots of different voices from a variety of backgrounds—all appealing to a broad range of audiences.

Second Nature

Despite what the podcast title suggests, humour has a tendency to creep in, no matter how serious the

comedians try to be. “I just can’t help myself”, David says, admitting that trying to ban comedy from a podcast about comedians talking to each other might be a flawed premise. Both Arnór Daði and Þórhallur Þórhallsson, the guest of the second episode, easily slip into a more comedic tone even as they discuss more serious topics. In fact, the recurring reprimand of “This is not a comedy podcast!” has all the makings of a future running gag. After all, as David points out, “We do it because we enjoy comedy and it’s something you can throw into everything that kind of makes everything better. It becomes like a tick—it’s second nature.”

When David and his guests do talk about their individual paths, overcoming their doubts and anxieties, and finding their voices on stage, it’s still interesting to follow along. The natural sarcasm and anecdotes about accidental self-poisonings with Nesquik and moonshine (in Þórhallur’s case) are a bonus.

Open Mic

Now that in-person performances are possible again, stand-up shows might be on their way to becoming as frequent as karaoke. Events like the Underground Open-Mic at The Dubliner on Tuesdays allow comedians to practise their comedy, while The Mystery Mic at Gaukurinn presents pre-planned sets as part of the evening’s entertainment. Funnily enough, a recorded podcast in comparison can be a lot more chaotic, according to David. “I don’t know what I’m going to say, sometimes not even while I’m saying it. You don’t know what the other person will bring to the table at all, but I have access to a lot of great comedians. I’m completely confident that it’s going to be a good show.”

You can check out David Í Dali’s ‘Serious Comedians Podcast’ on YouTube or follow him on Instagram (@davidavhaha).



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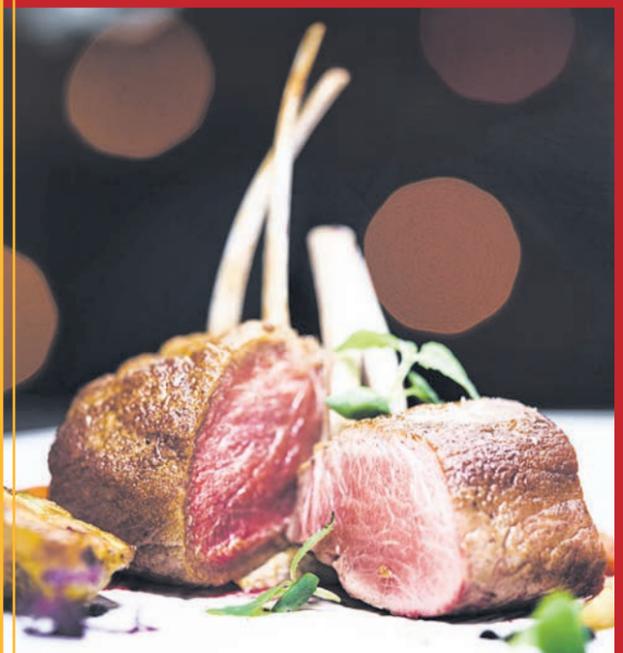
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Track By Track

The Reykjavík Grapevine 24
Issue 12—2022



gugusar is Iceland's emerging star

gugusar, '12:48'

The young singer-songwriter's latest masterpiece

Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine** & **Guðlaug Sóley Höskuldsdóttir**
Photo: **Cat Gundry-Beck**

Info

Guðlaug Sóley Höskuldsdóttir, better known to our readers as gugusar, has just released a new album, '12:48.' The young singer-songwriter has been making a great impression on the local music scene and wowed crowds at Airwaves, so we wanted to get the inside story behind every song on her latest release. Here's what she had to say:



Ekki séns

This is the intro to the album. I recorded myself playing an old piano on my phone and immediately knew this would be the intro.

Annars séns

"Annars séns" is the most danceable song on the album in my opinion. I had such a good time producing this track and it's definitely one of my favourite to perform live.

Glerdúkkan

This song always reminds me of my mom because she would ask me constantly to play it for her before it came out because she liked it so much. I remember her singing and dancing with me while listening to the demo.

Leið á þessu

"Leið á þessu" and "Gaddavír" were actually just one song at first but I decided to split them and make them two because the first and second half were so completely different. I knew some people would enjoy one half better than the other so I decided to split them at the end. If you listen to them back to back you can hear how they glide smoothly together and kind of makes them a one whole experience.

Gaddavír

"Gaddavír" is the second half of "Leið á þessu." I made these songs when I was sixteen years old and so these are some of the oldest songs on the album.

Purfum að batna

This is definitely my favourite song on the album. Not only because I like the final song but mostly

because this was definitely the hardest song I've ever created. I have so many versions and demos of this song it's crazy. I couldn't get this song as I wanted for so long. At one point I was going to remove it from the album and never release it. I had to take a break from working on it for some months because I was so frustrated that I couldn't get it exactly as I wanted but eventually I got there and I'm very thankful and proud to have finished it.

Komdu

This song I started as a little exercise really. I just got into my studio and asked myself if I was capable of making a song in a genre that I've never tried before. So this is the first drum-and-bass song I've made and I absolutely loved the whole experience. I've made many D&B tracks since and I'm very excited to keep them going.

Röddin í klettunum

This is the oldest song on the album. I was around sixteen when I started working on it and it is one of my favourite songs to perform.

Aleinn

This is the most emotional and sad song, I'd say. The lyrics are very much the deepest lyrics in a song that I've released. It's very emotional for me because I really put myself out there lyrically and I'm starting to have so much more interest in lyrics than before.

12:48

This is the final track and closing track to the album. I really enjoyed making this one. I just love how it came out exactly how I envisioned it in my head. I also really like driving and listening to this song for some reason. 🍷

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KOFINN BAR
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00.
Beer 600 ISK,
Wine 1000 ISK.

KALDI
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Beer 950 ISK,
Wine 950 ISK.

LOFT
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
Beer 860 ISK,
Wine 950 ISK.

LÓLA FLORENS
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Beer 1000 ISK,
Wine 1000 ISK.

LUNA FLORENS
Tue-Sat from 15:00 to 18:00.
Beer 1000 ISK,
Wine 1000 ISK.
Discount or a free appetiser.

PETERSEN SVÍTAN
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Beer 850 ISK,
Wine 1100 ISK.

PRÍKID
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
Beer 700 ISK,
Wine 1000 ISK.

PUBLIC HOUSE
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00 then 23:00 to 01:00
Beer 890 ISK,
Wine 890 ISK

PUNK
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
Beer 850 ISK,
Wine 850 ISK.

UPPSALIR BAR
Every day from

16:00 to 19:00.
Beer 750 ISK,
Wine 900 ISK.

RÖNTGEN
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Beer 800 ISK,
Wine 900 ISK.

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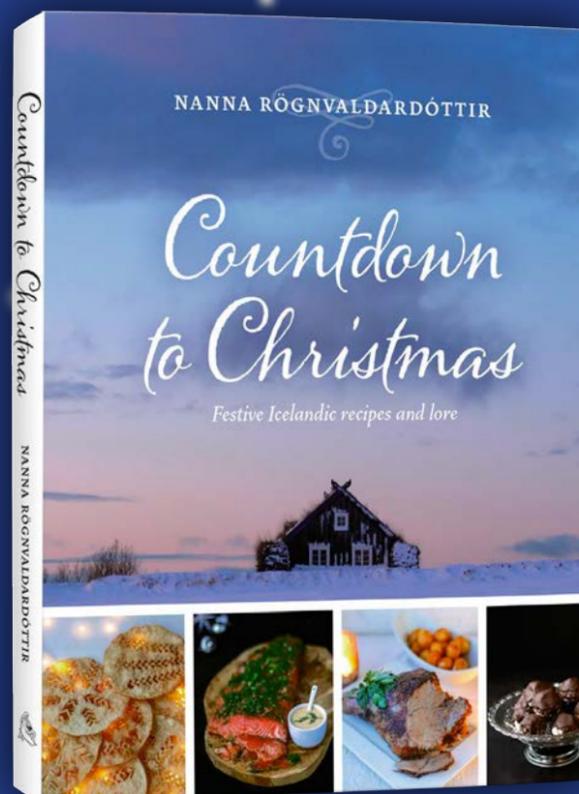
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On top of one of Reykjavík's oldest venues, the former cinema Gamla Bíó, lies Petersen Svítan. Yes that's right, on top, and yes, that makes it a rooftop bar. It used to be the apartment of Peter Petersen who had Gamla Bíó built in 1926. We're not sure how much space

he needed, because the whole floor can be rented for groups of up to 150 people. An outdoor drinking experience during the Icelandic winter might not sound that appealing, but their spacious and comfy outdoor area is complete with heat lamps, and is a great place to hang around on cold nights if you're trying to spot the northern lights. **KW**

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Two-course lunch -3,390 ISK
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Books



The poet between a lighthouse and Esja

Writing Is A Form Of Magic

Natasha S. is the first immigrant poet to receive a literary award in Iceland

Words: **Aron Ingi Guðmundsson** Photos: **Art Bicnick**

Russian journalist Natasha S. studied Icelandic for three years before moving to Iceland in 2012. Though she planned on staying in the country for only a year, plans changed and she has found herself living either in Reykjavik or Sweden for the past decade. Now, Natasha has earned the unprecedented distinction of becoming the first immigrant to receive the Bókmenntaverðlaun Tómasar Guðmundssonar—an annual literary prize named for Reykjavik’s homegrown poet—for her poetry book “Máltaka á stríðstímum,” in which she reflects on the war in Ukraine.

Knitting away

I met Natasha in downtown Reykjavik at Café Babalu on an unusually mild Saturday for this time of year. After wandering around the café’s neon sculptures and comical paintings, I found Natasha sitting on a cozy grandma-vibe sofa, knitting away in her own world. Natasha says she hadn’t written poetry in the past, but she was invited to read a poem at an event at Reykjavik city hall to mark World Poetry Day last year, and she was afterwards encouraged to continue to write.

Tortured poet

Natasha is proud of receiving Reykjavik’s highest literary award—in no small party because its a recognition of immigrants who are now starting to be recognized for their writing—but there’s a layer of sadness and guilt that she was recognized for writing something as sad as the material in her poetry book is.

“It would be different if it was another book, other material, I

would be more happy then,” Natasha explains. “Of course, it’s nice to get prize and recognition. Writing is a form of magic and to be able to tell others how I experienced the situation because people experience it differently.

“And it’s good to try to lessen prejudice against Russian people. I feel like I shouldn’t feel good because of the war. But I’m not sure I have the energy to fight these feelings all the time. A few weeks before I won the prize, there was a man tortured and raped in Russia because he wrote a poem against the war. That is the situation. It has probably helped me to write about the war. People around me kind of pushed me towards it—if not, I probably wouldn’t have done it.”

Wanting something positive

It is important to Natasha to try to enjoy life and what comes with it, and she is aware of the need to also have fun. Despite the somber theme, that is a message she has to put forward in her book and hopes she has accomplished that.

“Máltaka á stríðstímum” wasn’t Natasha’s first foray into publishing in Icelandic. In fact, she wrote and edited a collection last year titled “Póliþónía af erlendum uppruna.”

“I find it better to write poems in Icelandic, instead of a longer text,” she tells me. “I enjoy playing with words and language, and poetry is the perfect playground to do so. And also for the fact Icelandic is not my mother tongue. Next time, though, I would like to write about something more positive and playful, and not so sad!”

More to come

Given the strength of the work she has already produced, it’s a relief to know Natasha has her sights on writing more—and soon. She will edit and co-author another collection of writing set to be published early next year, and there are other projects on the horizon—a few ideas, according to Natasha, but nothing she has firmly decided on just yet. Whatever it will be, it’s simply wonderful that Iceland can look forward to more from Natasha S. 🇮🇸



Reviewing the poetry by the sea



Fresh Perspective Of Immigrant Writers

From jokes for gunmen to autocannibalism

Words: **Valur Grettilsson** Photo: **Patrik Ontkovic**

Tired of the same old established writer telling you the same story in different words again and again? Well, we have something new for you—you ungrateful and ever-demanding bastards. Iceland is chock full of brilliant immigrant writers sharing their fresh perspective of this small, cold, isolated island of depression. Here are some of our favourite writers at the moment.

Jokes For The Gunmen

Author: **Mazen Maarouf**



Palestinian/Icelandic writer and translator Mazen Maarouf has achieved international acclaim with his book "Jokes for gunmen," with The Guardian featuring a review of the publication. The book is a compilation of short stories that, in essence, are jokes about a war in an unnamed city. To be more precise; it's mainly about destruction and misery. It might sound odd, but the book manages to be simultaneously hilarious and depressing as shit. The Guardian's take was: "Maarouf's collection of deeply peculiar short stories set in unnamed cities is brilliantly bizarre." In our opinion, they're spot on. Believe us when we say that this is an extraordinary reading experience.

Pólifónía Of Foreign Descent - Collections of Poems From Iceland

Various poets

PÓLÍFÓNÍA AF ERLENDUM UPPRUNA

This book is an ideal introduction to Iceland's immigrant poetry scene. Fifteen authors with multi-national backgrounds offer a window into their souls and the world they live in. Most of the poems are in English and are also translated into Icelandic, but some have written in their native languages (these are also translated into Icelandic). All of the poems are fantastic, but our personal favourite is 'My North' written by Colombian-born Juan Camilo Roman Estrada. But don't take our word for it, find your own goddamn favourite poem.

Polishing Iceland

Author: **Ewa Marcinek**



Ewa Marcinek moved to Iceland at the beginning of the last decade, shortly after experiencing an assault in Poland. Ewa confronts this experience as well as the

struggle to integrate into a strange new community in the middle of nowhere, where xenophobia and linguistic barriers are very much a reality. The resulting book is a poetic journey that is sincere and emotionally piercing. It is a truly beautiful book, beautifully written with a unique voice.

Autosarcophagy

Author: **Helen Cova**



Let's just admit here and now, that autocannibalism is a thing. If you're gonna eat yourself, you're gonna need to start somewhere—and that's where the Venezuelan/Icelandic writer, Helen Cova, comes in! Now, we know you're no dummy—I mean, you're reading about immigrant writers in Iceland, you're probably a genius if you made it this far. That said, 'Autosarcophagy' is obviously not about literally eating yourself, but rather about Helen's own reckoning with a violent past in war-torn Venezuela, which she frames with magical realism. And a fun fact: eating oneself is not technically illegal in Iceland. Just saying... 🍷

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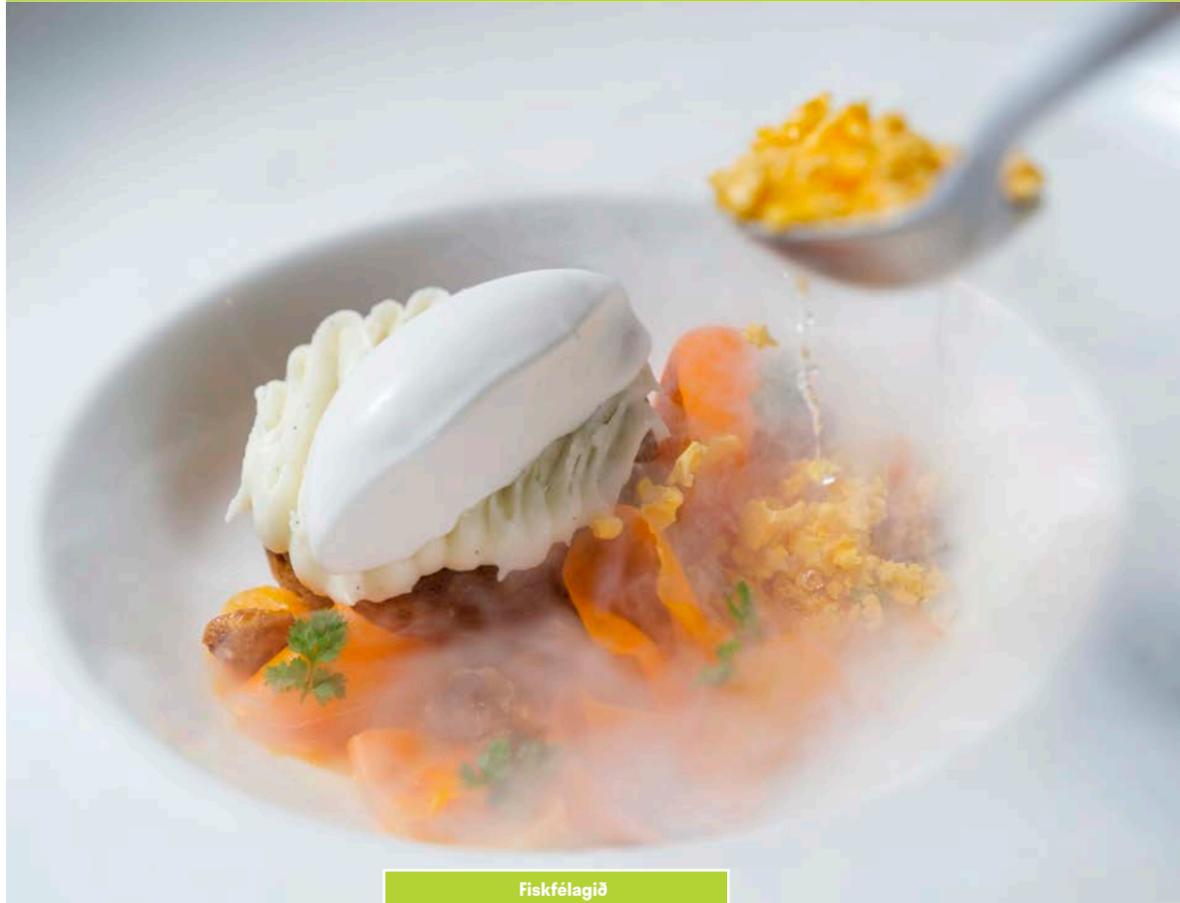


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Food



Fiskfélagið

'Tis The Season To Be Greedy

Countdown to christmas with a Jólhlaðborð or two

Words: **Shruthi Basappa** Photos: **Provided by restaurants**

Grillið at Hotel Saga was the first ever to introduce Icelanders to a holiday buffet in 1980.

Then hotel manager Wilhelm Wessman noticed the stark difference between restaurants in Copenhagen and Reykjavík in how they planned for the weeks leading up to Christmas—where the former was bustling with activity and the latter was, well, not. It prompted him to introduce a very Danish buffet on December 21st, 1980. After two years of concerted effort selling the idea to locals, the idea took off in popularity and has remained a steadfast ritual since.

With so many Christmas buffets laid out across the city, is this a definitive guide by any stretch? Not at all! Rather, in keeping with Grapevine tradition, this is a hand-picked selection of something for everyone.. So put your party hat on and get ready to sing “Bjart er yfir Betlehem!”

Traditional Jólhlaðborð

Hotel Borg

Putting a few rather unremarkable years behind us, Hotel Borg has reopened its doors after extensive renovations. The hlaðborð is a meticulously laid out arrangement of silvered platters heaving with house-made herring—some of the best we tried this year—thin slivers of beef tongue and a delicate hot smoked salmon, amongst other usual suspects. The main courses of roast lamb and roast pork belly with crackling (a Danish staple) are overshadowed by the loveliest rís a lámande I have had in all my years in Iceland. Creamy and served cold, it still holds the consistency of kheer, with nary a stony grain of uncooked rice to be found, which sadly cannot be said of this dish on other menus. Speckled with vanilla bean and barely sweet, it

marries perfectly well with the fresh mandarin sauce. The wine selection and service match the calibre of the space. You'd be hard pressed to find a finer setting for your festivities.

Vox at Hotel Hilton

Vox is one of few places that serves the whole nine yards of a buffet spread for lunch service. While their brunch buffet is legendary, their festive offering has also been a steadfast choice for families and companies alike. I recommend foregoing the starters of herring for their gravlax and smoked trout, terrazzo-like slices of salmon terrine and robustly flavoured seafood salad. Mound your plate high with the refreshing Waldorf salad by way of Iceland—whipped cream and tart apples dotted with candied pecans—as well as succulent roast lamb, an excellent uppstúf (white sauce) and tradi-

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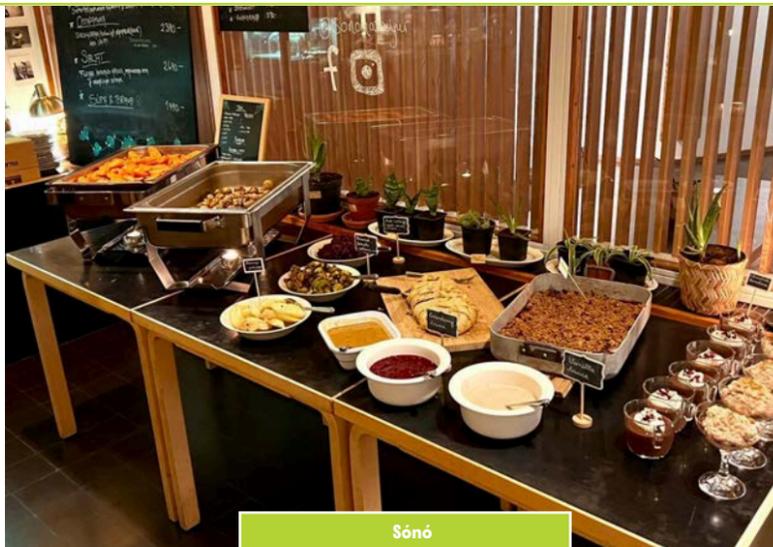
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Sónó

Vegan Jól

Sónó matseljur

Traditionally, Christmas buffets in Icelandic restaurants are brimming with meat and dairy based options, which often leaves plant-based diners very few food choices during these festive times. Thankfully, Sónó restaurant in the Nordic House has given plant-based patrons a reason to rejoice this year by hosting an all-vegan Christmas buffet! Forget the dry nut steak, bland veggies, and bowl of fruit that would normally be offered to vegans at these types of gatherings. Instead, Sónó has curated a delicious buffet that would please any food lover. Some standout dishes include the beet wellington with savoury mushroom sauce, perfectly cooked parsnips with pink pepper, red cabbage with apples, cloves and juniper, and cranberry apple crumble with vanilla sauce.

whole deliriously delicious affair was only made better by David, our jovial waiter for the night—and the bruléed mashed potatoes that we demolished.

Not so Classic

Monkeys

Monkeys is perfect for group outings, with several areas of the restaurant that can be sectioned off for your own private party vibes. And if one is tired of smoked lamb and Ora peas, this menu is a great way to change things up with the variety on offer. The plantain chips arrive piping hot and seasoned to salty perfection—we asked for seconds and thirds immediately. The chefs at Monkeys clearly love their whipping syphon and put it to use every chance they get, a slightly tiresome detail but one you wouldn't mind given the excellent wines on offer—the Poderi dal Nespoli Cabernet Sauvignon that our waiter Dario suggested worked a treat with the reindeer and pork belly that followed.

Hnoss

The festive set menu at Hnoss opens with their star dish, the humble rutabaga, smokey and branded with grill marks. The savoury peanut sauce is lick-your-plate good and the warm mushroom Danish that follows manages to hold its own against the competition with that sprig of sage tempura lending crunch and fragrance. The eggplant is a clever little dish where the nightshade is shmeared with a falafel batter and baked to crunchy perfection. To push each bite to the edge, there are spiced, braised kidney beans with a garlicky thwap of green chilli spiked gremolata alongside. As if that wasn't enough drama, the Omnom chocolate praline to finish is so ridiculously good that we had a hard time believing it could be a vegan concoction. 🍷



VOX

tional hangkjöt. We couldn't help but go back for seconds of everything. And while a crisp glass of champagne would have been ideal, this spread calls for a tall glass of Malt og Appelsín.

The Classics

Jómfrúin

Getting a reservation at Jómfrúin's for their sought after jólamat might be a harrowing experience, but one that rewards your success multifold. Dinner is rightfully a holiday ritual for many but I personally favour lunch and its pleasant midweek mundaneness. While I am a sucker for their crackling pork, cooked long and slow, I want to steer you towards the reindeer meatballs, served in half and full portions. Well-seasoned and only slightly gamey, the accompanying mushroom sauce and home style buttery mashed potatoes are the perfect match, while the dish's crowning glory of fried parsley is a playful textural delight.

Brút

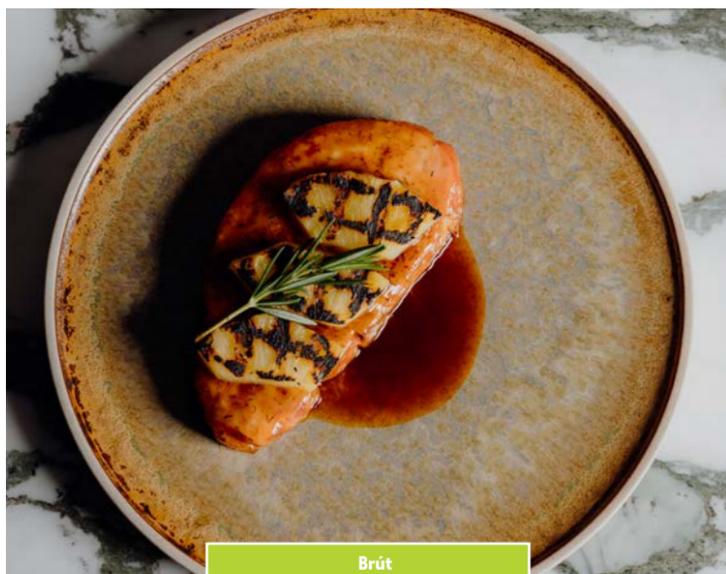
It's not until you make a concerted effort do you realise how challenging it can be to find a traditional jóla menu. Brút rises to that challenge even as it tucks away a few contemporary surprises. Retro details abound, like the crystal coupe in which the prawn cocktail is served, but with contemporary flourishes—hand peeled North Atlantic shrimp, rosy and plump, with jade green avocado and startlingly crunchy 'vegan' caviar, is paired with a briny Albarino. Coral hued sinuous slivers of dung-smoked trout follows, with a very Danish flourish of pickled asier. The roast ham and pineapple is punchy, with the sharp mustardy gastrique jús embracing that retro modern vibe unabashedly. The

Fiskfélagið

This jólamatseðill is likely the best value for money in Reykjavík, and always cooked to perfection regardless of the rambunctious crowds that gather inside. With their many seafood dishes, the menu might recall an Italian feast, but we are still in Northern waters here, so a flaky ling with a honeyed glaze over creamy parsnips precedes their star dish: the reindeer carpaccio with foie gras and hazelnuts that is a nice little repast before an elegant cod with hollandaise. Fiskfélagið always manages to steal the show with their deft handling of protein and the freshness of their fish is palpable. For a Christmas feast that veers off the traditional, you can't do better.



Monkey



Brút



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Travel



Blue Skies and Lumbering Whales

Landlubber finds whale watching heaven

Words: **Valur Gunnarsson** Photos: **Art Bicnick**



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It was a cold, crisp November day. The sea was mostly still and, even rarer for Iceland in autumn, the sky almost completely blue. Hallgrímsskirkja, lording over Reykjavík city, became smaller while the mountains, still largely bereft of snow, grew larger still. The white dome of Snæfellsjökull glacier, the entrance to the centre of the Earth if Jules Verne is to be believed, was sitting as tranquil as a spaceship coming in peace on the far peninsula that bears its name. Even without whales it would be a nice day out but whales are what we have come to see.

Thar she blows!

It takes about an hour to sail from Reykjavik harbour to the usual stomping grounds. The joy of the hunt is half the thrill. There is no guarantee that whales will be spotted but the odds are good. And sure enough, an hour in the first burst of water can be seen erupting, indicating the presence of the giants of the sea. It takes all the self-control one can muster to not shout out “Thar she blows!”

Seagulls roam but puffin hide

One of the best indicators that whales might be in the vicinity is the presence of schools of fish, and these can be identified by scores of birds flying overhead, seagulls mainly. Sadly, puffins are farther out to sea this time of year but the first appearance of a humpback tailfin jutting out of the drink makes the tour live up to its name.

Humpbacks are considerably larger than the more numerous minke whales, although dwarfed by the only occasionally sighted blue whale.

Telling the time by tailfins

Humpbacks are in season now, although, of course, we are not here to hunt but to observe. The ship draws closer and the engines are shut off. The guide calls out times of day so that landlubbers know where to look. “Four o’clock” sends us racing to one side of the boat, “ten o’clock” to the other. A particular highlight is a humpback rolling over like a dog.

Whale enthusiasts work the bar

It’s not seen as polite to disturb any particular group of whales for more than half an hour, but there are plenty more fish (and mammals) in the sea. The guides, who take turns pointing out whales and manning the bar so you can ask your barman any question about the life aquatic, know individual whales by their looks and personalities. For us layfolk it’s all we can do to distinguish species, and as well as the lumbering humpbacks, sprightly white-beaked dolphins put on a show, jumping up from the sea for all to see. This is close to heaven for whale enthusiasts, and birders can also get their kicks from passing fowl whose kind may be known to them but not me.

What time was it?

After about an hour out the ship turns around and the glacier recedes in the distance, Hallgrímsskirkja starts growing taller again, a beacon to home. This writer wishes he could refrain from pronouncing a whale of a time being had by all, but sadly lacks the restraint. 🍷

“An hour’s sail out of Reykjavik one sees marine life at it’s finest”

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So Long, And No Thanks For All The Weird Questions

Words: **Kim Wagenaar**



Since most of us have now been fired, we're really running out of both writers and questions for this column. In a desperate attempt to create content, we cornered Listings and Social Media Coordinator (and oddly jovial human) Kim Wagenaar and interrogated her for your reading enjoyment.

Why are you always happy?!

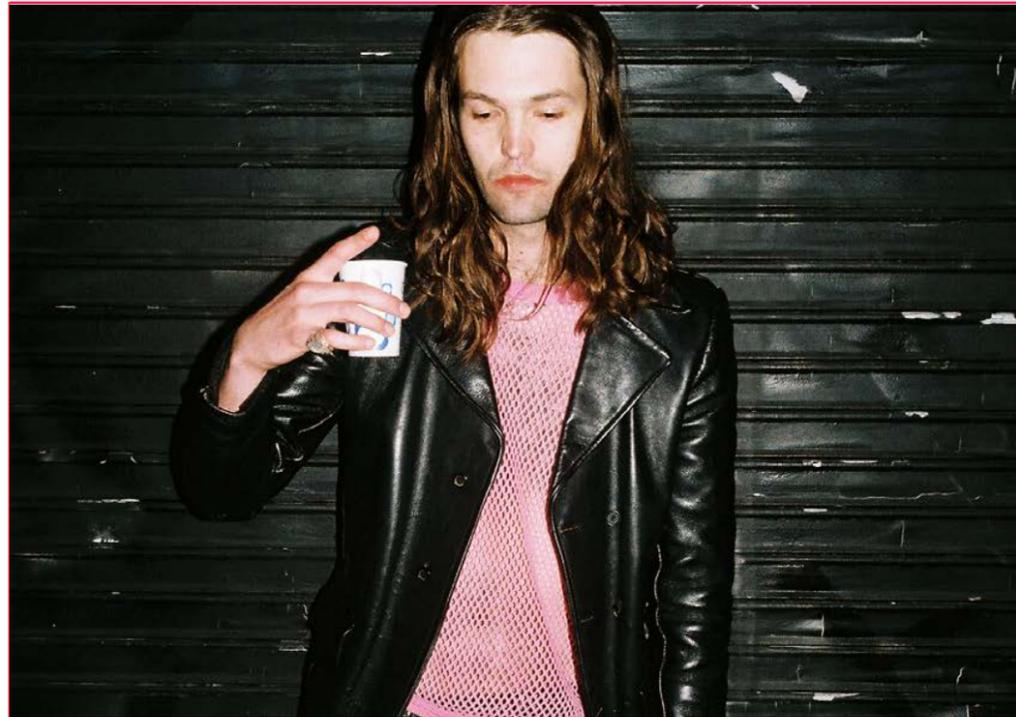
You think I'm happy because I smile a lot? You know what they say about assumptions, right? Smiling is just a technique to keep people from asking questions. I'm fine, move on with your day. I know there are few reasons to smile once you've been living here long enough, but it's either that or turning to alcoholism. As alcohol is expensive and smiling is free, I opt for the latter. You can thank me later (both red and white are fine).

What's better, goat cheese or asparagus?

I can't believe this is even a question, they both suck. I don't understand the appeal of goat cheese. Don't get me wrong, I love goats, but that doesn't mean I want to have their smell in my mouth. You may as well pet a goat and give it a lick while you're at it. As for asparagus, I don't get its existence. It's the only vegetable with an ego bigger than Elon Musk. They pretend to be boujee and exclusive by only showing up when "the season is right." No way I'm putting that in my mouth. It's making me angry (but in a smiley way).

Can you keep house plants in Icelandic winter?

We may live on an isolated Iceland that's behind on many things, but that doesn't mean we're stuck in the Stone Age and live in caves. We live in proper housing with good heating, so yes, anyone can keep a house plant. And with "anyone" I mean those capable of caring (not to be mistaken with "everyone"). I would however recommend a humidifier and some UV-lamps if you'd like to keep your greens green. And as for "keeping your enemies close," I own a beautiful asparagus plant, it's turning 3 this year!



Pórður Ingi Jónsson, aka Lord Pusswhip

A student of the game

Words: Pórður Ingi Jónsson, better known to our readers as Lord Pusswhip, has lived an exceptionally interesting life in the short number of years he's been on the planet. **Andie Sophia Fontaine**
Photo: From Grapevine intern to punk rocker to hip hop artist to label founder and producer, his talents have spanned the globe from Berlin to LA. **Boris Halas**

Ingi established himself as an artist to be reckoned with, and his impact is still present. "Having any sort of effect or influence on people was probably the most fulfilling thing about being in it," he says. "Having kids say that I inspired them. That's really crazy."

Rather than settle for being a big fish in a little pond, however, Pórður Ingi set his sights for Berlin in 2015, and from there, he eventually settled in Los Angeles. But then, he has never seen himself as a purely Icelandic artist.

"I've always been referred to as Icelandic hip hop," he says. "But I just never really felt very like a part of that scene. I just always wanted to be part of an international underground scene. That's where I'm known."

Pórður Ingi has recently started his own label, Heavy Knife, with an incredible show dropping at Húrra on December 2nd, featuring Daniel Ness, Countess Malaise and many more. Could this mean he'll be moving from songwriting to producing?

"I don't even know if I'd even make a distinction there," he counters. "In Iceland, I'm known mostly as a rapper. But internationally, I'm mostly known as a producer for some reason. I remember my parents were super worried. They didn't quite get the label idea. They thought that I wouldn't have time for my own music. And maybe they were right because that's turning out to happen. I'm so busy, but it's going really well!"

The Islanders is our series where we interview interesting people about their unique lives. Know someone we should speak to? E: grapevine@grapevine.is

"Yeah—you could say I come from a creative family," he says, with ironic understatement. "My mom's a sculptress, my dad's a TV personality and journalist" (renowned artist Steinunn Þórarinsdóttir and famed TV host Jón Ársæll Þórðarson).

That being the case, it's probably little surprise that he pursued a career in some creative field. So what was his introduction to music?

"Probably through punk rock music," he says. "I was a young punk kid from like 11 or 12. So I was always into music and art. I studied piano stuff when I was a kid. But punk rock was my own musical awakening... It was an impetus to do stuff. I was on internet forums around that time. I've always been a student of the game, so to speak. I've always just been obsessed with different music."

Getting into hip hop was almost tongue in cheek, but it ended up parlaying into the most flourishing aspect of his musical career.

"I think the first foray into electronic music was just playing with GarageBand, back in the MySpace days," he says. "But then I started rapping and writing lyrics around 2007. It was all just very unserious." From here, he started making own beats around 2013.

This was a golden age for hip hop in Reykjavík, with Prikið as the nerve centre. Through the mid 2000-teens, Pórður



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Patiently waiting



A whale's back



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