

The Reykjavík Grapevine



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Best before July 14

The Return Of Sigur Rós

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On the Cover

Sigur Rós is back as a trio of Jón Þór Birgisson, Georg Hólm and Kjartan Sveinsson and they're touring a new album, *Átta*.

Árni Hjörvar sat down with Kjartan and Goggi before they hit the road to meet up with Jónsi and a full orchestra. Read all about their reunion and new work on page 10-12.

PHOTOGRAPHY:
Chloé Kritharas
Devienne



Editorial Changing with the times

WORDS Catharine Fulton,
Editor in Chief

It's often said that history repeats itself. As an elder Millennial, it only takes a quick glimpse at the Gen Zs around me to confirm that fashion trends are, indeed, cyclical.

We don't seem to learn from our mistakes, fashion or otherwise. We don't seem to hold the institutional makers of mistakes to high enough account to ward off others (or even the very same people) from making the same mistakes over and over again. Of course, at some point you can only assume that an infinitely repeated "mistake" is intentional. Corruption and the mutual back scratching of the wealthy and well-connected at the expense of the common Jói is a feature of the system, not a bug, so of course it keeps happening.

The feature of apparent incompetence within the Icelandic banking sector is on full display once again as more details emerge about the sale of the government's shares in Íslandsbanki to private investors. It doesn't come as a shock that the entire ordeal appears to have been a mismanaged, figure-it-out-as-we-go, rich getting richer clusterfuck. It's just a fresh wave of disappointment.

Not sure what I'm rambling on about? Read Jón Trausti Sigurðarson's Q&A about the sale of Íslandsbanki on page 16-17.

But hey, sometimes a blast from the past is a positive thing. A reminder that, like bike shorts and baggy tops, we should celebrate some reemergences. Like that of Sigur Rós. The beloved band is back with an ambitious new album, *Átta*, and touring the world as a trio of Jónsi, Goggi and Kjartan. Oh, plus a full orchestra.

Árni Hjörvar sat down with prodigal son Kjartan Sveinsson for our cover feature on the band's hiatus and reunion. Turn to pages 10-14 for the full story and images from their recent tour dates in Hamburg.

Hey, there's nothing disappointing about Sigur Rós. ■

Contributors



CATHERINE
MAGNÚSDÓTTIR

Catherine 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.



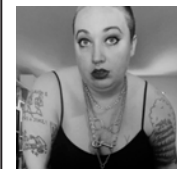
JÓHANNES BJARKI
BJARKASON

Jóhannes Bjarki is a Reykjavik local, straight out of Grafarvogur. Having been active as the frontman of the post-punk band Skoffin and in the post-dreifing art collective, Jóhannes is fascinated by the Icelandic music scene. Among his interests are politics, history and pop culture.



IRYNA ZUBENKO

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



REX BECKETT

Rex Beckett has been a fixture in the Reykjavik culture scene for over a decade as a longtime music/art writer and as former synthpunk diva Rex Pistols. They are currently working on a series delving into the influence of Garfield on queer millennials.



SHRUTHI BASAPPA

Shruthi Basappa traded the warmth of Indian summers for Arctic winds of Iceland. She's a food enthusiast masquerading as an architect at Sei Studio and loves obsessive attention to detail. When not leading our Best of Reykjavik food panel, Shruthi can be found trying to become a Michelin restaurant inspector.

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What The News!?

Not Everybody On The Bus

And other news making headlines in recent weeks

WORDS The Reykjavik Grapevine
IMAGE Art Bicnick

retain riders, Bus4U, which operates public transportation in Reykjanesbær, wants fewer people to use their services. OK, not fewer of all people, just fewer refugees.

Morgunblaðið reported June 20 that the owner of Bus4U, Sævar Baldursson, appeared at a Reykjanesbær town council meeting in May requesting that bus cards be cancelled for refugees and asylum seekers being housed in Reykjanesbær. In his address to the municipality, Sævar alleged that he cannot retain drivers and that other passengers are avoiding the buses because of "certain groups."

Sævar further proposed a segregated bus system, one for locals and another for refugees and asylum seekers being housed at the Ásbrú refugee camp.

Still in the Reykjanesbær region, a young man in Keflavík is making the news for having his home sold out from under him in a forced auction. In fact, if nothing is done – and fast – he and his family are slated to be evicted June 30 as this issue of the Grapevine hits the streets.

Jakub Polkowski purchased a detached home in Keflavík for him and his parents to live in after being awarded tens of millions of ISK following a serious medical error that left him disabled. He purchased the home in cash without taking a

mortgage. Jakub paid 44 million ISK for the 155 square metre home in 2018, but it is estimated to be worth at least 57 million ISK today.

Admittedly unaware of the additional expenses that come with home ownership, including property taxes, utilities payments and insurance, Jakub accrued 2.5 million in debt over the past five years.

That's when the district commissioner in Keflavík stepped in to force an auction of the home to recoup the money they're owed. Only one offer was made – for a mere 3 million ISK – and, shockingly, the district commissioner accepted it. So the district commissioner got its 2.5 million debt payment, the owner of a local shipping company got a home for one twentieth of its market value and Jakub is left homeless and without the tens of millions he received in his disability settlement.

To be clear, the district commissioner did not have to accept such a low offer and lawyers that have spoken in the news about the matter have expressed surprise that the sale has gone through.

Is this legal? Well, that's questionable. Is this decent human behaviour? Absolutely not. But it's Iceland (Keflavík, no less), so an Icelandic shipping company owner will very likely prevail over a young disabled man. ■

Public transit provider Strætó announced in late June that it is raising its fares again on July 1. A single fare will now set riders back 570 ISK, a 3.6% or 20 ISK increase, while the cost of monthly and annual passes will rise by 3.3%.

The proposed increase was passed by the company's board on May 19. According to protocol, bus fares are reviewed twice annually. Bus fares were last increased on October 1, 2022. Since then, the consumer price index is up 5.2%, and the public transit index by 3.5%.

Strætó isn't the only bus company looking to change things up. While Strætó is, presumably, hoping to



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Ask An Expert

Why are there more Conspiracies than Murders?

We asked an expert about Iceland's big black birds

WORDS Catherine Magnúsdóttir
IMAGE Art Bicnick

One of the joys of re-searching birds is the group names one comes across. So, while we are able to observe many conspiracies of ravens in Iceland, murders of crows are comparatively few despite the feathered fiends nesting in the same corvid family tree. Why is that? Apart from their place in Nordic folklore and mythology, what links ravens more closely to Iceland than their little cousins? We turned to wildlife ecologist Kristinn Haukur Skarphedinsson from the Icelandic Institute of Natural History for answers.

The main reason that crows are not breeding in Iceland is that we did not have the habitat for them until recently," Kristinn explains. "Crows are usually associated with trees – they tend to nest in trees – and they also have a strong association with agriculture, mainly corn production." While crows are not frequent here, the birds have been seen and recorded in Iceland before.

"One of the species, the smallest one, is the Jackdaw, or Dvergkráka in Icelandic," Kristinn elaborates. "They came here in about 1977 and sometime in the early 90s I believe, but didn't raise young and establish themselves here. They come here almost every year now, but the ravens have probably been here since the end of the last glaciation. Ravens are one of the most widespread crow species in the world, they breed from the high arctic to central America and Africa. They are an extremely adaptable species. It's no wonder that they actually found Iceland eventually and started breeding here."

So, crows visit Iceland but don't find suitable habitats to breed. Why do they come here in the first place then? Kristinn explains that that can be part of a frequent occurrence.

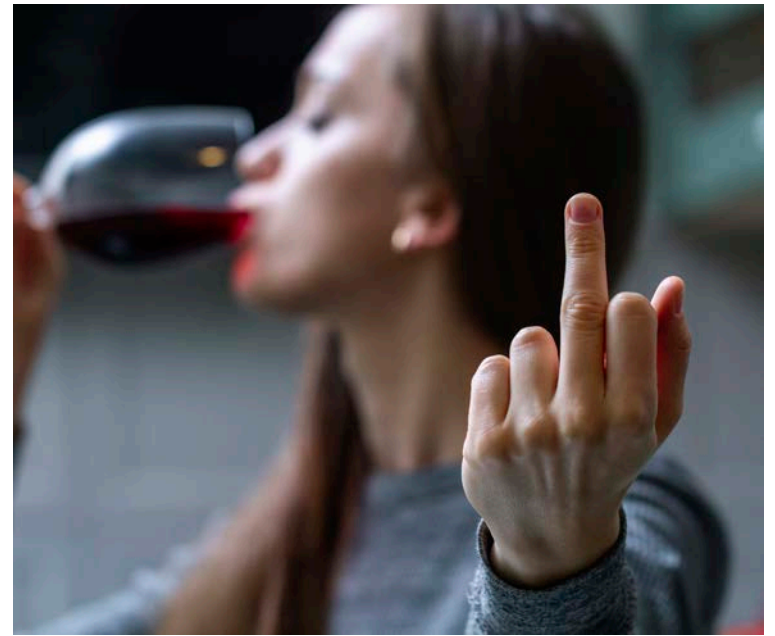
"There are many birds – we call them vagrants – that don't go to the right places. Sometimes during migration periods there are wind drifts that lead to migration drift. Birds flying from Scandinavia to Southern or Western Europe fly astray because of heavy winds, so that's the main reason we get some accidental vagrants. Sometimes these birds end up breeding here anyway, like one of the now most common birds in Reykjavik, the blackbird, or svartþróstur in Icelandic. That one only started to

breed here en mass around the year 2000, when there was a large influx of the species in the spring of that year. Also, by then we had suitable habitats for them with the trees that have been growing here."

Kristinn predicts that with the increase of trees and rising temperatures we'll see other bird species breeding in Iceland, while others will disappear.

"Ravens are extremely adaptable and won't be affected by those changes as much as many other species," Kristinn explains. "They have also taken advantage of the trees that have been growing and we now have 15 or 20 pairs that nest in large trees in Reykjavik that were planted about 10 or 15 years ago. I bet their numbers will increase in the years to come."

Being as sturdy and as clever as they are, the ravens aren't dependent on trees. "Cliffs or rocky outcrops are also their nesting habitats," Kristinn continues. "They nest on every continent except Antarctica. They also tend to be very brainy. Ravens and parrots tend to be the most intelligent species of birds. They can both memorize and solve problems, so that just tells you that they will be the ones to survive whatever happens." ■



Do Shit

The Útle-ndingur's Guide To Getting Shit Done

Consciously uncoupling in Iceland

WORDS The Reykjavik Grapevine
IMAGE Adobe Stock

present. Both parties will eventually have to sign the petition for divorce, though, so catching a dumpee by surprise could slow the process down.

Once the application is filed, both divorcing parties will be invited for an exit interview of sorts with the district commissioner (these can be done separately if you can't fathom being in the same room as your formerly beloved).

Unless a prenuptial agreement was in place ahead of joining in matrimonial bliss, all marital assets are, by default, divided evenly between the separating spouses. If children are involved, mediation will have to take place to determine a custodial agreement and support payments to be made.

All in all, you can expect to be consciously uncoupled from your spouse approximately six months after filing for divorce.

Of course, the scenario outlined above is only applicable in the most cut and dry of cases. You know the ins and outs of your situation best and may want to contact a lawyer to usher you through the experience, especially if you're a person of foreign origin and a parent divorcing an Icelandic spouse. ■

Are you longing for your significant other to hold a less significant place in your life? Then getting a divorce may just be for you!

Here in Iceland, either party in a marriage is legally allowed to apply for divorce and can mosey down to their local district commissioner's office to file the paperwork. Heck, you can even get the party started online at island.is/skilnadur. Your soon to be ex doesn't have to be

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Money Moves **Love, Death & Joint Bank Accounts**

A pure practicality or a recipe for disaster?

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Talking about money is not easy. In fact, according to psycho-therapist and couples therapist Wieslaw Kaminski, money is one of the most common topics his clients fight about. Can having a joint bank account contribute to happy dynamics within a couple? How can you make sure your partner doesn't abuse you financially? And should you always have a separate account just in case? These are some questions we reached out to Wieslaw with.

GV: AS A THERAPIST, WHAT'S YOUR TAKE ON JOINT BANK ACCOUNTS IN A ROMANTIC PARTNER-SHIP?

For some couples, having a joint account might work pretty well. For others, it simply doesn't. As couples therapists, we never advise one

way of doing things. It's more about looking at what would work for this particular couple and understanding what is behind their conflict with money. As you can imagine, it is very often way deeper than just money. My stance on this is very much about communicating before couples decide to do it – discussing it together, being honest and thinking about the goal of having a joint account. There is no right or wrong, but if one partner feels it's wrong, it is probably wrong. Or it's wrong at the moment. It's hard to imagine that if one of the partners feels they are made to do it, it could serve the couple.

GV: WHEN WOULD HAVING A JOINT BANK ACCOUNT BE PARTICULARLY BENEFICIAL?

In many ways, it could be practical. If you think of one of the partners getting sick or dying, you would have an easy access to the money. Also, it is easier in everyday situations if you both have access to money. When I think of joint accounts, both partners are equal owners of all the money in the account, so both parties are empowered. Sometimes having a joint account adds to the feeling of 'we're in it together.' It adds to the idea of a shared future. It clearly might give some people a sense of security in the couple.

GV: HOW CAN DIFFERENT FINANCIAL HABITS WITHIN A JOINT BANK ACCOUNT IMPACT THE RELATIONSHIP?

The way I think about it, the joint account is meant to actually help the couple. People differ – what if one of the partners smokes and spends a lot of money on smoking? And the other one doesn't? In such a case, they clearly differ in terms of spending habits. A lot of couples will fight over differences. But if you decide to have joint accounts and spend the money specifically on the goals or the type of bills that you talked through – and you agree that other things are on separate accounts –

one disapproves of? What if you want to buy a surprise gift for your partner or someone else? What if one of you loses work? What will happen if you decide to have a kid and one of you will have no income for some time? If you just have a joint account, period, there's more topics to discuss before you do it.

GV: DO YOU THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO KEEP A PRIVATE ACCOUNT AS A SAFETY MEASURE?

Money is a symbol, but it is very often associated with power. When couples start talking about money, some deeper power issues often pop up. If you're saying, 'Should I do it for

that your partner might steal from you, that means there is some anxiety or lack of trust, or maybe there have been some difficult experiences in the couple's history that need to be taken care of first.

When you decide to have joint accounts, or joint accounts and also separate accounts, you need to decide on the rules of how you do it. It's not necessarily that you contribute the same amount. Both partners need to feel like this is fair. And fair doesn't necessarily mean it's equal. Some couples chip in a proportionate share of their income, others – the same amount, and others – something else.

GV: HOW EARLY IN THE RELATIONSHIP SHOULD YOU COMMUNICATE YOUR FINANCE MANAGEMENT PREFERENCES?

There is no rule. You can discuss it even on the first date if you want to. But if we're talking about acting on it, like thinking of a joint account, it makes sense that you start discussing that when the couple has some common future and when partners agree to have some common goals. They might aim to save up for a house or have fun and eat out weekly. Whatever the goal, if it's easier this way, why not? ■

There is no right or wrong, but if one partner feels it's wrong, it is probably wrong.

it could help a couple not escalate conflict. If there are very big differences, it makes sense that couple also has separate accounts, so that individuality is respected too. If you have just one joint account, before you do it, you need to discuss a lot of different kinds of issues that will definitely pop up. What if one of you wants to do things that the other

myself to feel safe? What if they steal from me?' I would say that needs to be discussed directly and honestly. I would come up with all your possible worries and discuss all the things that are so problematic that you usually don't talk about. For example, what if you break up? Such issues need to be taken care of before you put money into this. If you're worried



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Side Hustle Of The Issue

The Full-Time Hustler

How does he do it all?!

WORDS Iryna Zubenko,
Laurent Somers
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Whatever you do, Laurent Somers will make you feel you're not productive enough. By day, he works a regular job, but when the sun sets, he transforms into a taxi driver, a tour guide, or one of his many other ventures. Does Laurent have extra hours in a day? Is he a time management guru? We tried to find out.

Laurent Somers, 51, an IT administrator at an Icelandic food producer

I have many side hustles! Taxi driving for City Taxi, guiding, bus driving, tech support and being a landlord. I also used to teach and translate. It all started from being half Belgian and knowing French when there was

considerable demand for French (and English) speaking guides. That recently led me to get my taxi and bus licenses to work as a driver guide and a bus driver.

THE ART OF HUSTLING

Though my side hustles are not entirely driven by financial aspects, I do take into consideration the remuneration for each individual one. I like variety, too, as it helps keep things interesting. My motto is "work smarter, not harder." What could be smarter than a side hustle that feels like work *AND* leisure at the same time?

First and foremost, I make sure that my hustles don't interfere with my day job, where I am one of three IT admins. It also helps that these are quite different from my day job. They don't involve the same mental concentration. It's more fun than playing golf.

I dedicate time to my physical fitness and then use my spare time at my discretion to work on side hustles. I don't need to do any of these side hustles, I am well off without them, so it's not a drag on my mind, and I never feel like I have to do them. I do them because I enjoy them.

I also rent out part of my home, which is a separate apartment. Tip: Pension funds are the friendliest when it comes to financing such arrangements.

THRIVING IN VARIETY

Northern lights guiding is seasonal, while other hustles, like guiding in general and taxi driving, are less so, so they go well together. I can focus my time where it is needed.

I get to meet many people and share my love of Iceland and its nature. That's what makes it so appealing to

me to work as a guide. The only bad thing that comes to mind is last January's freezing temperatures when I was outside looking for Northern Lights. Fortunately, over 99% of my taxi rides have been pleasant.

HUSTLE LIKE A PRO

Subject knowledge, language and people skills can get you into guiding, even if you don't have a license. For taxi driving, you can either go all-in or start working in another taxi driver's car, with the revenue being split. You'll first need the B/Far license on your driver's license, which includes a course with theoretical and practical components. Then, on top of that, the "harkarar" license to qualify to drive for another taxi driver. And finally, a third license designated for taxi drivers with their own taxis. Although the law changed last April, you still need to pass these courses.

An irregular side hustle, where you're stand-by if your employer needs an extra pair of hands, can also be mutually beneficial – there's no firm commitment on your side, but an opportunity for the employer to call in an extra when someone is suddenly sick or there is a surge in the workload.

Find a side hustle that you enjoy. It'll be less like work and more like leisure.

MONEY HACKS

I have two saving hacks in Reykjavík: year-round swimming pool passes and always double-checking prices at the store checkout. ■

Want to share how you're making ends meet? Email us at grapevine@grapevine.is with the subject line "Side Hustle." We'll happily keep your identity anonymous.



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Islanders The Cheese Queen Of Iceland

Eirný Sigurðardóttir asserts her dominion on home turf

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Eirný Sigurðardóttir is fondly known as the Iceland Cheese Queen. Believe it or not, she's built a career out of cheese! Eirný is obsessed with milk, knows all the Icelandic artisanal producers by name, brought Icelandic skyr to the pages of "Oxford Companion to Cheese," teaches cheese classes and even travels for cheese. She's lived all over the world, but returned home, because Iceland needed a queen to reign over its cultured dairy.

When I was five or six months old, my family lived in a basement in Kópavogur. My mum was not happy. She saw a job advertised in Tanzania for a Danish company doing retail development. She told my father she'd divorce him if he didn't apply for the job. A couple of months later, we moved to Africa. I was raised in Tanzania, Kenya and Nigeria. I came home to Iceland for a couple of years for school, and then we left again when I was 16. I went to Scotland, and I lived in Edinburgh for 17 years.

I had a bar for nearly seven years in the middle of Edinburgh, as well as a catering company. I taught at the Edinburgh School of Food and Wine and ran a wholesale company dealing in imported marinated olives, which we sold at farmers' markets.

CHEESE, PLEASE

When we lived in Africa, my parents got divorced. My mother married my stepfather, who is English. He would order boxes of cheese from the UK to be sent to us in Kenya and then Nigeria a couple of times a year. For us kids, every time we got one of these big boxes – Stilton, Cheddar, Wensleydale, Lancashire – it was like Christmas. Early on, I became very enamoured with cheese.

Everywhere I worked, cheese was very important – the restaurant industry always had amazing cheese boards. I worked in French restaurants, so we had amazing cheeses from France. In my catering, I became famous for my cheese boards. My life became very cheese oriented.

EMBRACING THE TITLE

When I came home to Iceland, I spent the first couple of months acclimating because I really felt like an outsider. Iceland changed so much. I spoke Icelandic like a teenager. I sounded Icelandic but felt like an idiot because I didn't know half of the grown-up words. Obvi-

ously, I checked out where I could buy cheese in Iceland, and found a cheese shop up in Höfði called Ostabúðin, which was run at the time by MS Iceland Dairies. My first job in Iceland was taking over that shop from a woman named Dómhildur, who had been the manager for 28 years.

The shop closed after a while, so I opened my own cheese shop. I imported artisan cheeses from the UK and tried to find products made in Iceland, which was difficult. I had the shop for 10 years – five years in Nóatún and then Grandí for another five years. In those ten years, we started a production kitchen making jams, chutneys, condiments and pâtés. I also founded the largest farmers market in Iceland. In 2019, I had to close the shop.

It took a while before I got the title of 'Cheese Queen' and there's a reason. If you search cheese queens, there are a few across the globe. But there's only one in Iceland. Nobody does what I do. I studied dairy culture and history, consulted for the Dairy Association over the years and taught their staff. Every time you go into a supermarket and buy a pack of cheese, there's a little text on the front in Icelandic. I wrote that. I'm in every household, pretty much.

ICELANDIC CHEESE

We have the greatest milk in the world. The Icelandic cow is a her-

itage settlement breed. It's been isolated and landlocked on this island since the 870s when people moved here. The actual Icelandic milk composition is unique. There are links to Icelandic milk and why there's such low type two diabetes in Iceland. We are a small country, but our Dairy Association is doing things that usually ten times larger companies are doing in other countries with a ten times larger marketplace.

I can keep on going on about Icelandic dairy culture, but the bottom line is: We have amazing milk. We have amazing cattle. We have good cheese makers. We make good solid, well-made cheeses. Could we mature more? Yes. Does it need to improve? Yes. Currently, the Dairy Association is maturing large blocks that are going straight to the restaurant sector. It's not going directly to the consumer and that is still a problem. There are seven artisanal producers in Iceland now. When I opened my shop, there was not one.

IT'S NOT YOGHURT!

There are three things you need to know about skyr. If it's not made with Icelandic milk, whether cow, sheep or goat, then it's not skyr. Why? These are settlement breeds. Any other milk on the planet will not be the same product. Secondly, it's cheese. It's fresh lactic cheese. Yes, it has lactic bacteria like yoghurt, but it also has a family of yeasts, and that's the classification of cheese.

Thirdly, you need to drain the whey from the curd. It's like saying an orange and an apple. They're both fruits, but God, they're different. It's the same case with skyr and yoghurt.

SAVOURING CHEESE

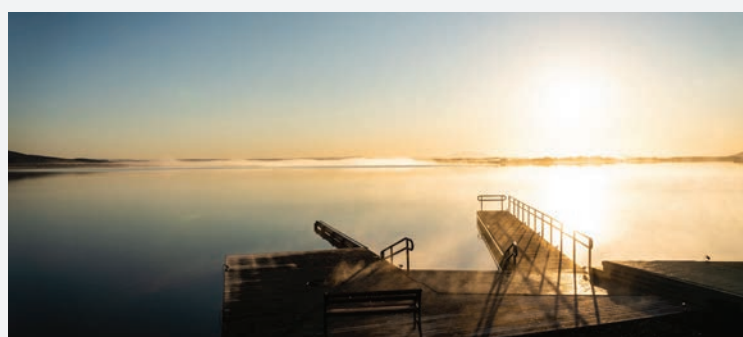
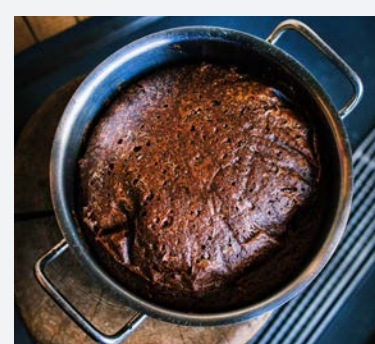
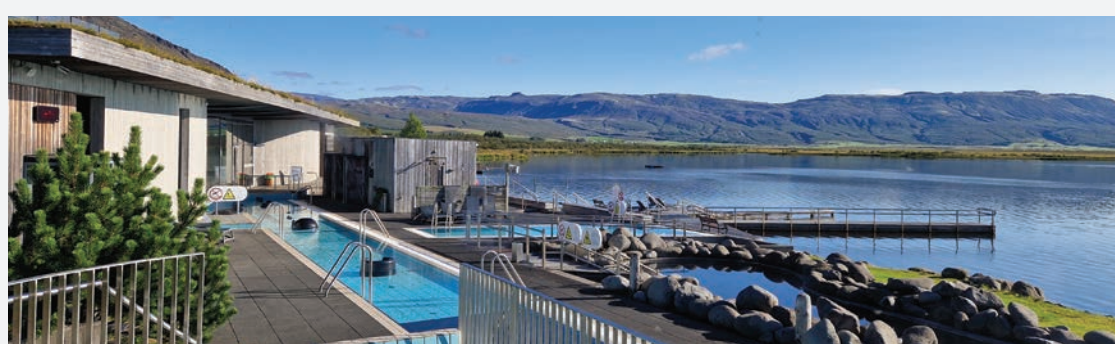
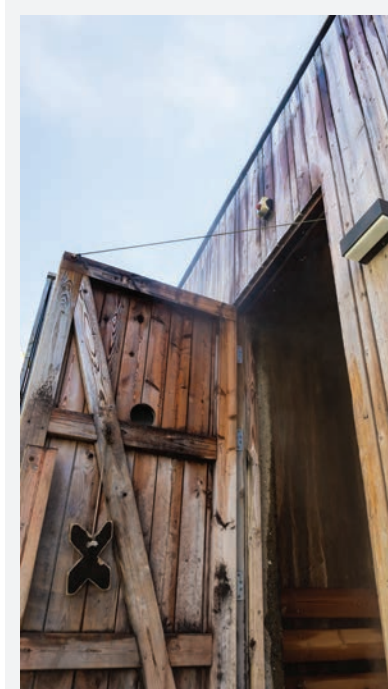
Cheese is a feeling. It's one of the greatest foods in the world. It's one of the foodstuffs that stayed untouched – Arctic cheese making hasn't changed for centuries.

It's important to remember that cheese is seasonal. This is what we've forgotten. Now you can buy mangoes all year round, the same with cheese.

People try to eat fresh goat's cheese in December – then it's made with dried milk powder. I don't want fresh goat cheese in December. It's cold outside. I want to eat a cheese that's been made specifically with spring-summer milk, like a blue. I want to get excited when the first Mont d'Or comes on the market in March/April. I eat cheese seasonally. I eat cheese that is of the time and my mood.

The excitement for cheese sparks me still. When I travel this autumn, I can't wait for cheese. I never get bored. If anything, it becomes more complex. ■

Follow Eirný on Instagram for some cheese-fuelled adventures: [@icelandcheesequeen](https://www.instagram.com/icelandcheesequeen)



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Norður, Niður And Back Again

A conversation with Sigur Rós in eight parts

WORDS
IMAGES
Árni Hjörvar
Daniel Dittus & Victor
Frankowski (courtesy of
Southbank Centre)

their most ambitious project to date. “Norður og Niður” (colloquial directions to hell) was a four day festival at Harpa that boasted an incredibly impressive line up of the band’s friends and favourite artists. The spectacle took place at the very end of December, channelling the dark, grim and apocalyptic atmosphere typical that period on the Icelandic calendar.

It also took place in the shadow of a bizarre scandal wherein Kári Sturluson, the band’s longtime right hand man and a part of Norður og Niður’s promotional team, had taken 35 million Icelandic krónur of ticket buyers’ money and snuck out the back door. Still, the show went on and Sigur Rós had a triumphant homecoming, playing four sold out shows at Harpa’s Eldborg, the last of which I had the honour of attending.

It was an emotionally exhausting event to attend and, as I joined my peers in a procession out of the grand hall, I had an ominous feeling that this had been a four-day memorial service disguised as a festival – an opportunity to eulogise, lay wreaths on the band’s grave and celebrate an end of an era. I was certain we’d seen Sigur Rós for the last time.

“Yeah, I kind of agree with you” Kjartan tells me when I explain to him how that night felt. “There was that feeling in the air, like the adventure

was over.” Kjartan was in attendance that night, though not on stage. Georg Hólm, however, was most certainly on stage and so I posed the same question to him, eliciting a slightly more pragmatic answer.

“You’re probably not far off from the truth. However, we never decided anything was over but a lot of stuff was accumulating there at the end of 2017,” the band’s bassist, known colloquially as Goggi, admits. “That surreal Kári case, which was simply a daylight robbery, two years of exhausting tours, and this was our fourth Harpa show in as many days, the pressure of playing in front of friends and family. Plus, the last

continues. “but whether we were ever going to play again was never discussed. Not that that’s ever really discussed. It’s all pretty loose. We’ll just keep going until it stops being fun.”

II. TO HELL AND BACK

It’s hard to imagine it’s been much fun over the last few years, either. Since 2017 the band has had to weather a constant barrage of storms. Shortly after the aforementioned corrupt promoter case, the band faced a tax evasion lawsuit that was litigated to hell and back, and only closed earlier this year with all members finally acquitted.

As I joined my peers in a procession out of the grand hall, I had an ominous feeling that this had been a four-day memorial service disguised as a festival.

show was nationally televised and happened to be our least favourite of the four. So yeah, when we walked off stage we were kinda like ‘jæja, ok...’”

“We knew at least we wouldn’t be back on stage for a long time,” he

Amidst all the fiduciary drama, drummer Orri Páll Dýrason was accused of sexual assault in 2018, catalysing in his departure from the band.

Yet here we are, against all odds, it seems Sigur Rós are back to hav-

ing fun. They’ve just released their eighth studio album, fittingly named *Átta* (Icelandic for “eight”) and at the time we spoke were preparing to travel the world with a 41-piece orchestra. It may sound like a mad idea, but there’s no other way to do this album justice.

It’s a grown up’s middle finger of an album. A grandiose and expansive orchestral piece, a soundscape the band have often dabbled in, but never to this extent. It’s almost entirely void of rhythm and the orchestra does it’s best to drown out the signature bowed guitars and verbed out electric pianos, but leaves just enough space so that *Átta* still feels unquestionably like a Sigur Rós record. It’s endless.

III. A SUNDRENCHED RETURN

“It became obvious to us pretty early in the writing process that we wanted to take this orchestral route. Make it gigantic,” Kjartan tells me. “The music just kinda begged for it. The band has only ever written with everyone present in the same room but this time around Jónsi and I started writing just the two of us. So the room was obviously lacking a rhythmic element and the songwriting just had a different flavour to it. There was clearly space for another element there which ended up being the orchestra.

I. THE EULOGY

A genuinely palpable sigh of relief could be heard echoing through circles of Icelandic music fans when news broke in 2022 that multi-instrumentalist Kjartan Sveinsson had returned to Sigur Rós after a 10 year absence.

The band had laid dormant since 2017, when a gruelling two-year-long world tour culminated in arguably



“In fact,” he continues, “the palate we started from consisted of Jónsi’s massive guitar tones and my [Yamaha] CP sound and the plan was to replace that entirely with the orchestra, but it didn’t quite pan out that way”.

Árni: So when did you start working on the material?

Kjartan: Jónsi and I started meeting up in 2018. At the time there was so much uncertainty surrounding the band. Orri had obviously left and there were just the two of them left. It was barely a band. But we wanted to try and work together. Even though we never meant for this to be a Sigur Rós project, it quite quickly became obvious that’s what it was meant to be.

Á: Was this at Sundlaugin (Sigur Rós’s legendary recording studio that Kjartan now owns and operates)?

K: No, I had to go to Jónsi, who had then relocated to Los Angeles, my favourite place, [he says with the most casually ironic tone one could muster.] I went there twice in 2018 and we wrote the whole thing on those two trips. It was incredible how quickly it all clicked into place. When you’ve been in a marriage with someone for so long everything comes so naturally. We just wrote a song a day and we were done. Then when we had realised this was a

Sigur Rós album and Goggi agreed he brought a ton of great elements to the mix.

IV. POEMS FOR THE APOCALYPSE

Átta is, therefore, based on sunbaked Los Angeles demos, which

violent image is from a 1983 performance art piece by Icelandic artist Rurí, who was later commissioned to create the monolithic and industrial-looking rainbow sculpture that greets everyone coming or going through the international airport in Keflavík.

Átta is, therefore, based on sunbaked Los Angeles demos, which were then brought to life by the London Contemporary Orchestra but somehow sound unfathomably Icelandic.

were then brought to life by the London Contemporary Orchestra but somehow sound unfathomably Icelandic. Sure, Sigur Rós employ a dash of English here, in the track “Gold” – an exceedingly rare occurrence, as anyone familiar with their repertoire would know – but the bulk of the lyrics, on tracks like “Blóðberg,” “Mór” and “Andrá,” pay homage to romantic era poetry, making the entire thing feel like a long lost ode to nature.

This vivid imagery is further reflected on the album’s cover, which boasts an image of a rainbow that’s been set on fire. The remarkably

“The music dictates and instills its own meaning, and in this case we felt the album had an apocalyptic quality to it,” Goggi says when asked about the significance of the album cover.

“The album is centred around a series of big questions with no clear answers; impending apocalypse, how we’re treating the earth and each other and so on. The rainbow seemed fitting as it’s the purest expression of nature and can’t be touched or altered in any way. So, setting it on fire is obviously excessively brutal but somehow so beautiful. I think it reflects the album

well,” he continues. “The album is introspective in the sense that it’s an attempt to express an emotion and as such it looks outwards. But it’s all just a big question mark with so many questions being asked at the same time. So open for interpretation.”

V. A LONG TIME COMING

As work on the album got underway six years ago, it shouldn’t come as a surprise that rumours of its existence have been circulating for some time. There’s the obvious delay caused by the pandemic, but even with that leeway, Átta took longer to finish than one might have expected.

“Yeah, we actually mixed it twice,” Kjartan says about the additional time it took to bring the album over the finish line. “The first mix was made in March 2022, but that was abandoned and we went back to the drawing board. The idea was to release it before the tour we went on last year, but that obviously didn’t work out.”

Á: So wasn’t it a bit of a bummer to go on the tour?

K: Yeah, it kinda sucked. I’ve always found it a little bit lame to tour without any new material. We never considered postponing the tour though. We’ve had to do it once and that’s just horrible.

The band then went on an extensive tour, reunited with an old member but without any new music to showcase.

This year, however, they’re planning an all out tour for Átta, where for the majority of stops they will be accompanied by a gigantic orchestra to help them translate this material to the stage. Kjartan maintains that some of Átta’s material is simply too big to be done justice live – even with an orchestra – so the band will also lean on older material, including a few things they haven’t played in a long time such as megahit “Starálfur” off *Ágætis byrjun* and a couple of songs from the band’s sixth album, the last with Kjartan, *Valtari*.

VI. THE ABSENCE

Speaking of *Valtari*, Átta actually feels like *Valtari*’s older, more mature sibling.

“You think so?” Kjartan questions when I make the connection. “Yeah, the thing is *Valtari* is a bit of a strange one. I had technically left the band in 2008, after the Suð tour [referring to the band’s fifth studio album, *Með suð í eyrunum við spilum endalaust*]. The thing was we had one album left of our EMI deal and we were obliged to deliver that. We had all this leftover ambient material from the *Takk* sessions, which we had originally intended to be a



are constantly distracted by their phones. It's wild.

Á: I reckon touring is quite an institutionalising lifestyle, did you miss it during your hiatus?

K: Yeah, I missed playing so much. I'd only ever played with the guys in the band and I am super uncomfortable and shy about playing with other people. I had crippling impostor syndrome. I didn't want anyone to find out I wasn't as good as they thought I was. I was simply scared to death about working with anyone but the band. I'd been in the band since I was a teenager and we all understand each other. We're all equally shit.

Á: So, does it feel like coming back home?

K: Yeah, it's obviously such a comfort zone. When we started rehearsing for the last tour I found that all this music was just in my fingers. I didn't need to think at all. There was such a depth of understanding and everything was so comfortable.

VIII. WELCOME HOME

In a world as fickle and unforgiving as the music industry, a 14-year absence may sound like an actual lifetime, but in Sigur Rós's case it's nothing. Átta arrives a year before they celebrate their 30th anniversary and, considering the headwind and the obstacles they've had to overcome over the last few years, there's no reason to assume they won't go for another 30. This isn't actually such an anomaly in 2023, though. A quick glance over this summer's festival headliners makes this abundantly clear as the vast majority of artists considered worthy of a headline spot released their seminal albums sometime last century. Bands just don't seem to quit.

"Not anymore they don't" Kjartan says. "Bands had basically zero lifespan back in the day. If you hadn't released an album for three years you were just old news. Nobody got the opportunity to age in music but nowadays it's different. I'm not sure why but it might just be a byproduct of pop culture being so young."

It's certainly young. By most estimates, it's just over 70 years old. That means Sigur Rós have been around for roughly 40% of pop's history and well over half of Iceland's pop lifespan. They've thankfully aged gracefully as they've never stopped challenging themselves. They've raised the bar and set new standards with every successive release and Átta is no exception.

Welcome back Sigur Rós, we've missed you. ■

double album. So *Valtari* mainly consists of that stuff. Ambient outtakes and the like."

"I kind of always saw it as a byproduct rather than an actual album," he continues. "It was just something we had to do to fulfil our obligations to EMI and free me from the record contract. I was very surprised when the guys decided to tour that record. I did, however, listen to it again last summer and today I think it's justified as an album. I was just so out at the time."

Kjartan explains that he departed among what he calls a "total burn-out" amid a period of years where

the band was touring massively while individual band members had young children and other obligations in their personal lives as well. "When you think back you just realise how insane it all was," he admits. "The option to stop just simply wasn't there. The Sigur Rós mission was just so important that it took priority over everything else."

VII. THE RETURN

Á: Were you hesitant to return to the stage?

K: No, I was just burnt out at the time, but now it's just so fun to come back to this. Everyone's older and

more mature. There's less madness and people just have respect for each other. We have become accustomed to talking about our feelings and taking care of ourselves and each other.

Á: So, 14 years between tours. Has anything changed drastically?

K: No, not really. The venues are the same, the process is the same and it's more or less the same technology.

We've certainly upgraded our old AKAI sampler and run samples of computers now, but I actually kinda miss the samplers. They were much

more reliable. But essentially it's just cables.

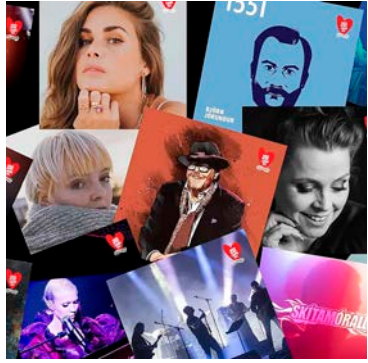
I guess the main difference is the audience. Back in the day the occasional audience member would pick up their phone and call their friends to brag they were at a Sigur Rós gig. You'd get this super loud interference noise in the monitor and I'd be furious. Same thing when someone would pick up their camera. I'd be incensed. But now nobody's actually watching the gig. People have way less attention span and patience. It's only the real die hard fans that show up and actually listen whilst a large portion of the audience just can't seem to immerse themselves and

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The Grapevine's Top Picks



HJARTA HAFNARFJARÐAR
June 29 – August 3
Bæjarbíó & downtown Hafnarfjörður

When you ask Reykjavickers what their favourite suburb is, chances are they will say Hafnarfjörður. The beloved enclave has a rich history, a tight community, charming old houses and a beautiful harbour. The HJARTA Hafnarfjarðar (Heart of Hafnarfjörður) summer festival is a celebration of all the great things in the area, with food, free music and fun for the whole family. The crown jewel of the festival is the concert series in Bæjarbíó (ticket prices vary) with performances from local treasures like Nanna, Briet and Björgvin Halldórsson. Come celebrate this old and wonderful town all summer long. **RX**



HÁTÍÐNI 2023
June 30 – July 2, Borðeyri

Have you ever been to a music festival where you are able to listen to a wide range of bangers while also feeling a strong sense of fellowship and personal contribution? Well, it's your lucky day! Put on by the Post-dreifing collective, the non-profit HÁTÍÐNI experiments with a do-it-together ideology, expecting all who attend to share the responsibilities required to successfully execute the festival. Featuring over 25 artists of all styles and backgrounds, including Einakróna, Krill Noise and Virgin Orchestra, HÁTÍÐNI truly is an event for all tastes and is open for all ages. Don't forget to bring your own drinks! **SE**



LUNGA BLISS
July 2 – 16, Seyðisfjörður

It's July once again and that can only mean one thing – it's time to pack your tent, grab a few friends and head east (or maybe even hitch a ride if that's still a thing). LungA is an arts festival that originated in Seyðisfjörður over 20 years ago and has since been attracting arts and music lovers from all over the world. Every year, LungA chooses a topic as the main theme of the festival and in 2023 it's BLISS, all about love, healing, friendship and collaboration. LungA will offer lots of creative workshops and an amazing lineup: Countess Malaise, Dream Wife, GRÓA, Kælan Mikla, Pussy Riot and much more. It's a long ride, but we hope to be there! **IZ**



Happening

A Basket Full of Music

The Nordic House's PIKKNIKK concert series highlights diversity

WORDS Rex Beckett
IMAGES Art Bicnick

albeit with music and performance art instead of sandwiches and strawberries.

Back for its third year, the series ramped back up at the end of June and will happen every Sunday afternoon until the end of July. With the concerts taking place in the Nordic House's greenhouse, located right in front of it in the wilds of Vatnsmyri, guests can watch the shows from outside the glass and enjoy the fresh air.

"The idea this year was just to be open and to try to give as much space to international artists based

five years ago to pursue a Masters degree in music at the Iceland Academy of the Arts. Subsequently – having been trapped here by the pandemic – they went into the new media composition program at the same institution and recently graduated.

José performed at the PIKKNIKK series in 2022 and got involved with working with the Nordic House through connecting with director Sabina Westerholm and curator Elham Fakouri. They were invited to be part of various projects, including a lullaby workshop for children, with kids in attendance hailing from 13

is a mostly musical event, but I tried to also give space to the performative aspect to perhaps go out a little bit of the traditional setting of the concert. There are a couple of acts in this series that are more of a concert-installation."

The first PIKKNIKK concert took place on June 25 with Faroese-born synthpop artists SAKARIS kicking things off. Upcoming acts include Danish-born Sara Flindt, who recently released a stunningly produced art-pop EP; Canadian-Icelandic artist A. Rawlings along with German poet/musician Rike Scheffler, who together will perform an ecologically-engaged poetry performance; experimental-electronic iconoclasts MC MYASNOI, who hail from Russia and Iceland and do some mind-blowingly weird stuff; and the ultra-cool pairing of uber-producer Kurt Uenala (google his credits, trust us) and PC Music-signed artist and music researcher Jack Armitage.

"I'm really excited," José gushes about the lineup they've built. "I'm just really happy that all these people came together and had the interest to collaborate in this, and also with the Nordic House. They just opened their doors and basically just told me to do what I want."

I'm really happy that all these people came together and had the interest to collaborate in this, and also with the Nordic House – they just opened their doors and basically just told me to do what I want.

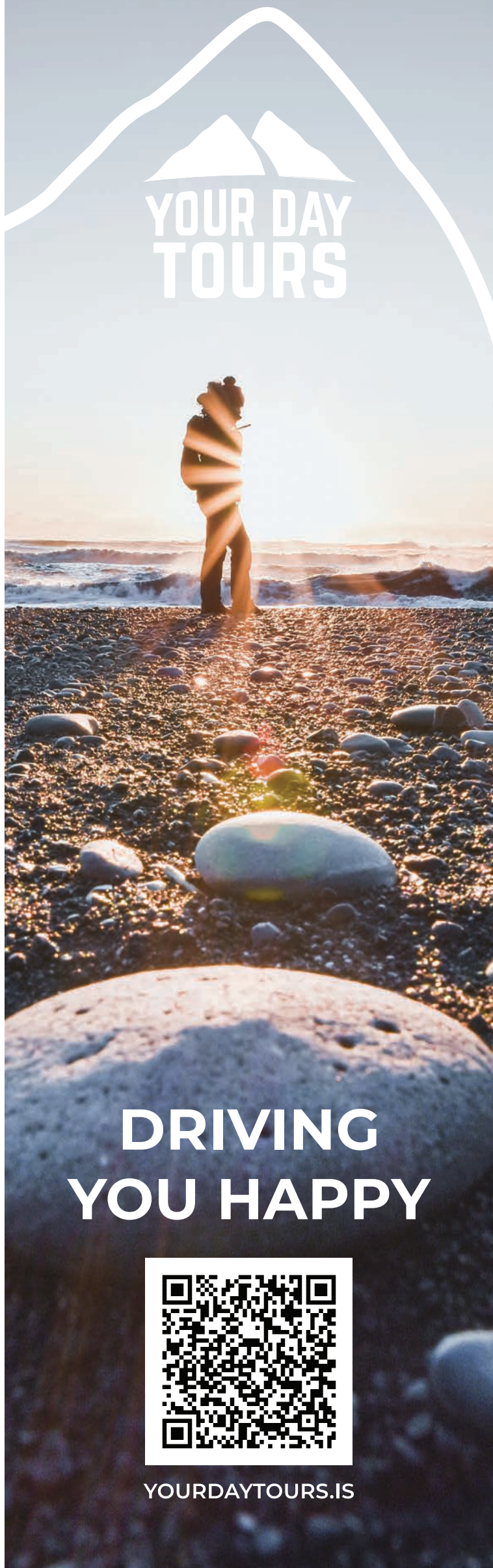
in Iceland, as well as Icelandic artists," says series curator José Luis Anderson, describing their vision for this year's lineup. "We really wanted to be balanced when it comes to gender, welcoming all genders and all international communities."

José, a Mexican-born musician and composer who goes by the artist name Andervel, relocated to Iceland

different countries. This emphasis on diversity naturally carried over into José's curation of the summer concerts.

"It's very diverse, not only in nationalities and embracing all genders, but also when it comes to musical acts," says José. "Almost all the artists are challenging the idea of performance. The PIKKNIKK series

This freedom of the program will truly make each PIKKNIKK a unique event that diverges from the norm of what we know concerts to be, turning a lazy Sunday snack into a feast of art. Bring your own wild and diversely-packed picnic basket. **■**



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How Not To Sell A Bank

Politics

Explaining the storm swirling around the sale of Íslandsbanki

WORDS Jón Trausti Sigurðarson
IMAGES Íslandsbanki, Wikimedia Commons

The saga of Icelanders and banking is a tale that feels as old as time at this point. After taking over control of Íslandsbanki in the wake of the 2008 financial collapse, the Icelandic State Treasury began selling off its shares in the bank in 2021. That year, the state sold a 35% share in Íslandsbanki to private investors, with another 22.5% sold in March 2022.

As turned out to be a surprise to absolutely nobody, the sale was rife with controversy and saw shares sold off at bargain basement prices to hand-picked investors.

What's actually going on? Grapevine publisher Jón Trausti Sigurðarson engages in a Q & A with himself to make sense of it all.

Q: So tell me what's happening with this bank scandal I keep hearing about?

A: Oh, you mean that thing that has been the only thing on the Icelandic news in the past week? Íslandsbanki?

Q: What else?

A: Well, so back in 2008 the Icelandic Government took over then bankrupt Glitnir. You remember THE CRASH™?

Q: Yeah. Sort of. I'm still trying to forget that thing. It hurts to think about. But Glitnir, that isn't Íslandsbanki, is it?

A: Not entirely. But it was first called Íslandsbanki, then rebranded itself as Glitnir in 2006. Then Glitnir went bust. So the state didn't really keep Glitnir bank; it went bankrupt and a new Íslandsbanki was formed on the remnants of the old one, rebranded with the old name.

Q: OK.

A: Anyway, That new Íslandsbanki was owned 100% by the state. During the summer of 2021, the state sold 35% of the bank. Then it sold 22.5% in March 2022.

Q: Alright, so they sold the bank, got cash, everybody's happy, right?

A: Well. The first 35% of the government's stake in the bank was sold in June 2021. Around 24,000 individuals and companies bought those shares, mostly domestic parties. This received quite a lot of criticism, because just a couple of months later those shares had increased in value by 56%, indicating that the government – read: the Icelandic people – got way too little cash for the shares. But nothing “illegal” was reported.

Then, in March 2022, another 22.5% of the bank was put on the market, this time with the goal of selling it to a more limited group of investors. That is, “professional investors”; pension funds and larger owners of capital. This is when problems started piling up.

Q: How so?

A: First and foremost, the governmental body responsible for selling the bank, called Icelandic State Financial Investments sold the 22.5%, but somewhere, somehow it was decided to do so with a discount, so the shares were sold for 4.2% less than their market rate on the day of the sale. Subsequently, the bank's

shares, as most predicted, did nothing but increase in value, yet again.

So once again the price was too low, prompting many to start tossing round the word “corrupt”. And that word only came up more and more as more information about the sale came to light – and details emerged slowly, because the sale was far from transparent.

That's when the public learned that some of the people that got to buy the shares were not, in fact, “professional investors,” but individuals with either political connections or connections to the bank itself. It was at this point we found out that the Finance Minister's father had been one of those buyers, which just looks bad.

Q: Alright. The bank got sold at a discount to well connected people. That does look bad. And yet again, the taxpayers got screwed and all of this seems stupid or corrupt or both. But why is this sale back in the news now?

A: That's because the Icelandic Financial Authority just released its decision to fine Íslandsbanki by 1.2 billion ISK because of the sale.

Q: Wait. Íslandsbanki? Why them? It was their shares that got sold for too little money, how is that their fault?

A: Well, funnily enough, the Bank Authority that should have been responsible for selling the state's shares in Íslandsbanki didn't actually know how to go about doing it, so they got Íslandsbanki to conduct the sale themselves, with some specific conditions in place, like shares being sold only to “professional investors.”

Q: Get a bank to sell it self? Who comes up with this shit?

A: Not only that, but Íslandsbanki got



hundreds of millions of ISK from Icelandic State Financial Investments for managing the sale of themselves. We also found out that members of that authority had received gifts from Íslandsbanki before that deal was hatched.

Q: Get out of town, man. This is some tragicomic shit. But alright, back to that fine of 1.2. billion ISK...

A: Yes. That whole thing hinges on the definition of "professional investors." It refers to legal entities who have legal merits to conduct business in financial markets, along with larger companies, insurance companies, pension funds, municipalities and, in some cases, individuals whose main occupation is investment. It's a term defined in more detail by law, but that's the gist of it.

Q: Errr. Boring. Alright. So how did Íslandsbanki end up with a 1.2 billion ISK fine.

A: We're getting there, soon. So Íslandsbanki, in selling itself, decided to not care too much about who qualifies as "professional investors" and thus allowed at least eight persons/legal entities that did not qualify, to purchase shares. In some cases, those individuals were personally called by the bank to convince them to participate in the sale.

Some of these people were members of the bank's own staff or spouses of staff (they didn't need any convincing, of course). With regards to their staff, they failed to follow their own internal rules about conflict of interest, etc.

Íslandsbanki then gave misleading information about these non-professional investors to Icelandic State Financial Investments. They also failed to follow legal requirements with regards to recording the interactions between the bank and

potential investors and gave the potential investors misleading and sometimes inaccurate information. For this reason they were fined the aforementioned 1.2. billion ISK. It's the highest fine ever to be levied against an Icelandic company.

Q: Shit. So the bank gets what they deserve. And its shareholders indirectly suffer the fine. Cool. But wait, tell me again, who owns Íslandsbanki?

A: Well, a bunch of companies, pension funds and individuals. But the biggest shareholder is the Icelandic State, with 42.5%.

Q: Ah, damn. So the taxpayers are on the hook?

A: Well. Technically of course the bank pays it, but as 42.5% of the bank is owned by the state, that portion ultimately is money that the Icelandic Treasury is not going to get through its ownership of the bank. And, of course, the Icelandic Treasury is the Icelandic public, so ultimately, they - we - are the butt of the joke in this entire mess.

On the upside, the fine is payable directly into the state's coffers, so it's just like shifting money from the left pocket to the right.

Q: So, will anybody be held accountable for this mess?

A: In the past days most of the coalition ministers have expressed their desire to see Birna Einarsson, the head of Íslandsbanki resign. She resisted until 4 a.m. on June 28 when Íslandsbanki distributed a press release stating that Einarsson had decided to quit, depriving those same politicians of the pleasure of sacking her through the state's stake in the bank.

This will be treated as the end of the

matter by the same coalition ministers, as the alternative could mean that some responsibility lies with the government and its ministers, and they aren't interested in shouldering that blame.

Ultimately, Icelandic State Financial Investments apparatus and Minister of Finance Bjarni Benediktsson, at whose pleasure the Banking Authority operates, share the responsibility. However, forcing Bjarni to shoulder any responsibility would likely mean the end of the coalition government, and the coalition has gone to some lengths to do nothing in circumstances when they should have been doing something, all in the name of self-preservation.

So don't hold your breath for any Icelandic politician to take responsibility for this.

Q: Is there anything we can learn from this situation?

A: That it's hard to tell whether Icelandic scandals are the result of incompetence or corruption. Or both.

The takeaway seems to be to never trust Icelandic banks. But we knew that already. Icelandic banks have had a very low trust rating among the Icelandic public since THE CRASH™, although to be fair, the Icelandic parliament's rating hasn't been that great either. Maybe the lesson we can draw from this is that next time we should try to sell our banks to people competent to run them and have banks sold by people competent enough to sell them.

Q: Who might that be?

A: I don't know. But by now, I know who it shouldn't be.

Q: Who shouldn't it be?

A: Icelanders. ■

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Film Feature

Fár: Short And Powerful

Gunnur Martinsdóttir Schlüter's short film *Fár* wins a Special Mention in Cannes

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Art Bicnick,
Stills from the movie

transparent cubicles and observe the world through the screens on our phones, yet we often remain disconnected from the realities beyond the glass. Within this context, Gunnur Martinsdóttir Schlüter's thought-provoking short film *Fár* dares to challenge our collective apathy and human disconnection from nature.

GROWING UP ON A FILM SET

Half Icelandic and half German, Gunnur Martinsdóttir Schlüter was born into a family of filmmakers. "My mother is a director, and my father is a producer who has also been working for the Icelandic Film Fund. They got to know each other in Berlin in the 1980s in film school," Gunnur says as we meet in a cosy coffee house on a rainy day in Reykjavík. Gunnur's upbringing and the films the family watched together at home played an essential role in shaping and inspiring her. "I visited sets

when I was younger, worked as a set runner," she says. "Where you come from definitely shapes you. You can't deny that."

"Directing came later. I wanted to act," Gunnur admits. In 1996, Gunnur made an appearance in the film *Draumadísir*, directed by her mother

University of the Arts. "I wanted to go away from Reykjavík when I was 19. You get claustrophobic being in downtown Reykjavík all the time," she laughs. "I ended up spending 12 years in Germany." Gunnur's bi-cultural and bi-lingual background played a significant role in her journey. "I like different kinds of cultures,

rupted once a seagull crashes into the window. The film was inspired by an actual incident from Gunnur's life. "I immediately thought that one day I would like to put this into a short movie. Even if I wasn't thinking about becoming a film director or filmmaker," she shares that the idea of making this short film has been with her for almost ten years. "I started to analyse how the event mirrors our society and how it could be told." When the actual work started, Gunnur brought in Anní Ólafsdóttir to help sharpen the script.

All in all, the work on *Fár*, which runs for only five minutes, took about four years. During this time, Gunnur and producers Rúnar Ingi Einarsson and Sara Nassim also worked on other projects. "A short movie takes a lot of time and little steps," Gunnur admits. "I was always testing the ground, thinking where to go next."

Gunnur not only wrote and directed *Fár*, she also stars in the lead role.

Glass is this construct we made for us to keep us warm. It's transparent but dangerous. For this bird, at least.

Ásdís Thoroddsen. Then, in 2007, she had her true acting debut in *Veðramót*, directed by Guðný Halldórsdóttir.

Gunnur studied theatre directing in Germany before coming home to Iceland four years ago to pursue a degree in acting at the Iceland

being in between and bringing stuff together," she explains. "I think it has something to do with being part of two worlds."

BRIEF, BUT DEEP

Fár tells a story of a business meeting in Reykjavík's coffee house inter-

In a world where glass structures dominate urban landscapes and society strives to be individualistic, empathy often becomes a casualty of modern life. We pass through glass doors, work within cramped

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"I'm an actress and I have a big interest in acting, so I wanted to play this woman on my own. Since I also wrote it, I knew what I wanted. It was easier to act myself in that sense," she admits.

character holds the bird, deciding its further fate, while her colleagues from the business meeting observe her through a glass window, emotionless. The portrayal of modern society's detachment from each other and the natural world couldn't

imal was the most difficult part. "But also editing was a big challenge because a big part of the movie is just atmospheric," she says. "In the first half of the movie, there isn't a lot of action. Trying to capture the atmosphere of the coffee house that the bird breaks and telling a story through non-action was a bit challenging."

case their work. Gunnur's film not only premiered at the festival, it also competed alongside 11 other films in the short film competition, receiving the festival's Special Mention. "I did not expect to get the recognition," Gunnur admits. "For me, it was just like an encounter with all other filmmakers. It was so nice. It didn't feel like a competition."

just to do a feature? Why is producing the next and bigger thing so important?" she shrugs. "I want to tell stories, direct and act. But after I found the theme, it could fit more into a short movie, and then I would do a short movie again. Or if it could fit more into a longer movie, I would do that."

A short movie takes a lot of time and little steps.

While Gunnur's acting came naturally in the film, she acknowledges that juggling multiple roles was not an easy task. "It was very hard to direct and act on the set. I felt I could give just 80% in acting and 80% in directing," she says, adding that with the support of the crew, she is pleased with how the final product turned out.

have been stronger. Gunnur emphasises that working with the glass element was important for her. "Glass is this construct we made for us to keep us warm. It's transparent but dangerous. For this bird, at least."

The director hopes that the film prompts viewers to ask themselves questions. "I hope it touches on many themes, but it's primarily about the connection between nature and humans, cities, glass buildings and architecture – unnatural architecture humans have built versus nature and the nonlinear, which kind of crashes into the linear," says Gunnur.

"When are you gonna do a feature?" Somebody had warned me I would just get this question a lot.

"When are you gonna do a feature?" Somebody had warned me I would just get this question a lot," Gunnur laughs when I ask her if there are feature plans in the making. "While I was in Cannes, I started asking myself, why should I do a feature

While *Fár* will be travelling the world, enjoying a festival run for a year or two, Gunnur is writing again. "It looks longer than shorter, but you never know," she smiles. ■

THE GLASS DIVIDE

One of the film's most beautiful and powerful scenes is when the lead

"No animal was harmed in this film," she says. The crew was explicitly looking for a seagull that was already dead. "It was found dead by a taxidermist."

A HAVEN FOR FILMMAKERS

The Cannes Film Festival stands unrivalled as the most prestigious platform for film directors to show-



Map posters available at www.mapsofice.land.shop and **Kofi gallerí** in Reykjavík centre

Centre Map

We're here to fill you in on our personal favourite places around town – and a few to consider avoiding.

Dining

1 NAPOLI

Tryggvagata 24

We love places that do one thing and do them damn well. This take-away place is a case in point. Napoli offers sourdough Neapolitan-style pizzas with a menu to match – think margherita, quattro formaggi, parma, calzone – plus vegan options and magnificent sandwiches. Look out for their lunch offer, every day from 11:30 to 15:00. JT

2 GAETA GELATO

Aðalstræti 6 & Hlemmur Mathöll

Gaeta Gelato is at the centre of a heated ongoing debate at the Grapevine office about who makes the best ice cream in the country. For those keen on the deep tastiness of Italian gelato, this place is IT. They are also located right smack downtown, so you can take that icecream for a stroll – we suggest a stroll to their other location for another scoop. JT

3 PLANTAN

Njálsgata 64

This cute little neighborhood cafe is 100% vegan and does a few things right: their soup of the day menu updates every week and uses seasonal produce, they mastered the plant-based cheese bun recipe to perfection, and this might be the most hearty vegan brunches in town. Look out for the daily bun and coffee deal, it truly is like a warm hug. IZ

4 BRAUÐ & CO.

Frakkastígur 16 (and other locations)

If you're dying to have some of the finest pastry, look no further than Brauð & Co. Although the bakery has several locations around town, our hearts are devoted to the Frakkastígur one. You have to try their pretzel croissants, vegan cinnamon rolls, and weekend specials. There's nothing quite like sitting on a bench at the intersection of Njálsgata, Frakkastígur, and Kárástígur, sipping coffee and enjoying the sun. A true weekend essential! (Beware of windy weather, as some of our team members may or may not have had their pastry stolen by the wind at that exact spot.) IZ

5 CAFÉ BABALÚ

Skólavörðustígur 22

This quirky café hangout is a great choice when you're looking for a cozy, chill experience. Decked with kitschy decor and plush chairs, the café is perfect for a refuge from an instant shower of rain. If you're looking to snuggle up with a book and a good cup of coffee, look no further. JB

6 BAN THAI

Laugavegur 130

The absolute GOAT – as they say – in Thai cuisine in Reykjavik. Ban Thai's menu is dotted with little symbols of chili, denoting the spice level of each course. You're welcome to order a level-5 chili course, but do so at your own risk. JB

7 GRÁI KÖTTURINN

Hverfisgata 16a

This no-nonsense downtown staple has been serving Reykjavik dwellers quality breakfast food since 1997. Tucked away in a cute cellar, the diner boasts retro Icelandic design charm, while its menu is far from outdated. Pancakes, bagels and frying oil all have their special place at Grái Kötturinn. As Grái Kötturinn closes at 14:30 every day, it's not a place for nighthawks, but early-birds. JB

8 CHICKPEA

Hallveigarstígur 1

This Mediterranean-inspired restaurant is a great place for a quick bite. Servings are generous and the food nutritious, meaning you'll go full well into the day. They do wraps, falafels, and all kinds of salads exceptionally well. Prices aren't extremely steep, but nothing to write home about either. JB

9 KRÓNAN

Hallveigarstígur 1 & more locations

If you're ever in a pinch while looking for something cheap to eat if you're downtown just go to Krónan and pick out some flatkökur. Flatkökur goes great with everything. Be it the Mediterranean/Icelandic fusion of lathering some with hummus, or turn it into a poor-man's pizza with pizza sauce and cheese. Honestly, the flatkaka is an empty canvas for you to paint your wildest dreams on. JB

10 JÓMFRÚIN

Lækjargata 4, 101 Reykjavik

Icelanders may have a love-hate relationship with the Danes, but let's be honest, who can resist craving a delicious smørrebrød every now and then? If you get what we are talking about, there's no better place in town for an authentic Danish smørrebrød than Jómfrúin. This family-run restaurant specializes in serving Danish and Scandinavian dishes, and to top it off, it boasts a fantastic outdoor terrace where you can relax, sip a beer and complain about politics overlooking the Icelandic parliament. IZ

Drinking

11 APERÓ VÍNBAR

Laugavegur 20b

A wine bar that is both opulent and accessible? Yes please. The small team at Aperó remember the orders of regulars and make first-timers feel like regulars. If you know what you like, Aperó will tick your boxes; and if you're new to wine, the sommelier will soon unite you with your ideal glass. CF

12 KEX HOSTEL

Skúlagata 28

The former biscuit factory now serves as a trendy hostel, with a bar, restaurant and a live concert space. There's always something going on, and if not, it's a great spot to grab those after-work drinks. With a rotation of foreign tourists who stumble onto a heavy metal show happening in the restaurant, you're always bound for an enjoyable experience. JB

13 KAFFIBARINN

Bergstaðastræti 1

No words are needed for Kaffibarinn. The hangout spot for the who's who of Reykjavik. Frequented by Blur members in the 90s, drug dealers, and middle-managers, Kaffibarinn is an establishment in itself. JB

14 VITABAR

Bergþórugata 21, Iceland

If you're staying in Reykjavik more than a few days, you ought to find your own dive bar – this is ours. It seems like the time froze at Vitabar, but we love it that way. People come for their famous blue cheese burger, but stay for a few pints and delicious fries. Sometimes I wish Vitabar discovered craft beer, but I go back nevertheless – for a late night bite and Thule on draft. IZ

15 VÍNSTÚKAN TÍU SOPAR

Laugavegur 27

There are a few bars in Reykjavik that have learned how to do wine right, and Vínstúkan Tíu sopar, although located in the middle of the chaos and tourist buzz of Laugavegur, is one of them. Craving Pét-nat? In the mood for orange wine? Ready to explore small Slovenian wineries? You name it – the bar's staff will be ready to come up with suggestions that will suit any pocket. Don't get me started on their small bites to pair with wine – I'm already dreaming about their grilled peppers and torched broccoli with salted lemon. IZ

Shopping & Activities

16 BÍÓ PARADÍS

Hverfisgata 54

Sometimes the smell of popcorn fills the air of Hverfisgata, as if beckoning you to come inside. You succumb and find yourself in the cutest art house cinema with colourful posters on the walls and vintage-looking bar straight outta Wes Anderson movie. There's always a film screening and you rarely need to book tickets in advance, so enjoy the old school walk-in experience and one of the best Happy Hours in town. IZ

Random Spots

17 EINARSGARÐUR

Laufásvegur 79

This little green space nestled into the curving juncture of Laufásvegur and Gamla Hringbraut is an oasis



in the city. Exposed to full sun seemingly all the time, it's a peaceful spot to stroll through, climb trees, luxuriate on the grass or toss the ball for your four-legged friend. Don't do that last thing, though. It's not allowed. CF

Be Warned

18 101 BISTRO

Austurstræti 3

The bistro on the corner of Ingólfs-torg and Austurstræti that has a plaque outside saying, "Come in and try the worst [insert popular food item] that one guy on Tripadvisor said we had", or something like that. It's a trap, do not go there. That plaque has been in the same spot ever since Hrunið. RG

19 SBARRO

Austurstræti 17 & Vatnsmýrarvegur 10

"What is this shit?" is how Greil Marcus famously opened his review of Bob Dylan's 1970 album in Rolling Stone. It is appropriate here. It looks

like pizza, it is sold as pizza, it's priced like foie gras, but it tastes like salted shit. Avoid. RG

20 REYKJAVÍK FISH RESTAURANT

Tryggvagata 8

Our beef with this place has to do with their "plokkaði" (Traditional Icelandic Fish Stew). The fish stew is what you make out of fish leftovers and potatoes, adding bechamel sauce, topped with cheese and then baked. It's generally a good dish, a great way to avoid wasting food and it costs next to nothing to make. Taste wise, there is nothing wrong with how Reykjavik Fish makes their "plokkaði", the problem is that the volume you get for the price is unacceptable; a tiny cast iron pan of fish stew for 2.690 ISK. An outrage. RG

21 LEBOWSKI BAR

Laugavegur 20a

A joke that's gone too far. The longest lasting theme bar that sprung up during a theme-bar craze many years ago. The Dude does not abide. RG ■

A

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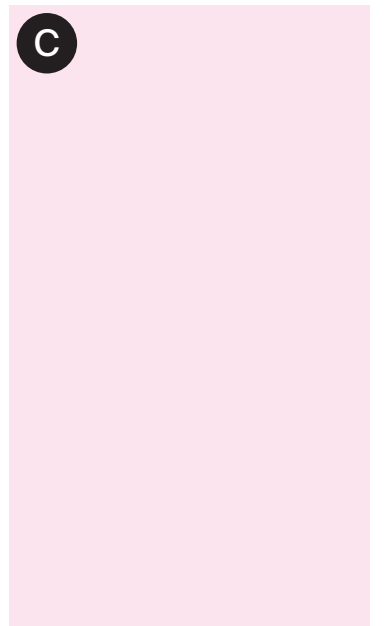
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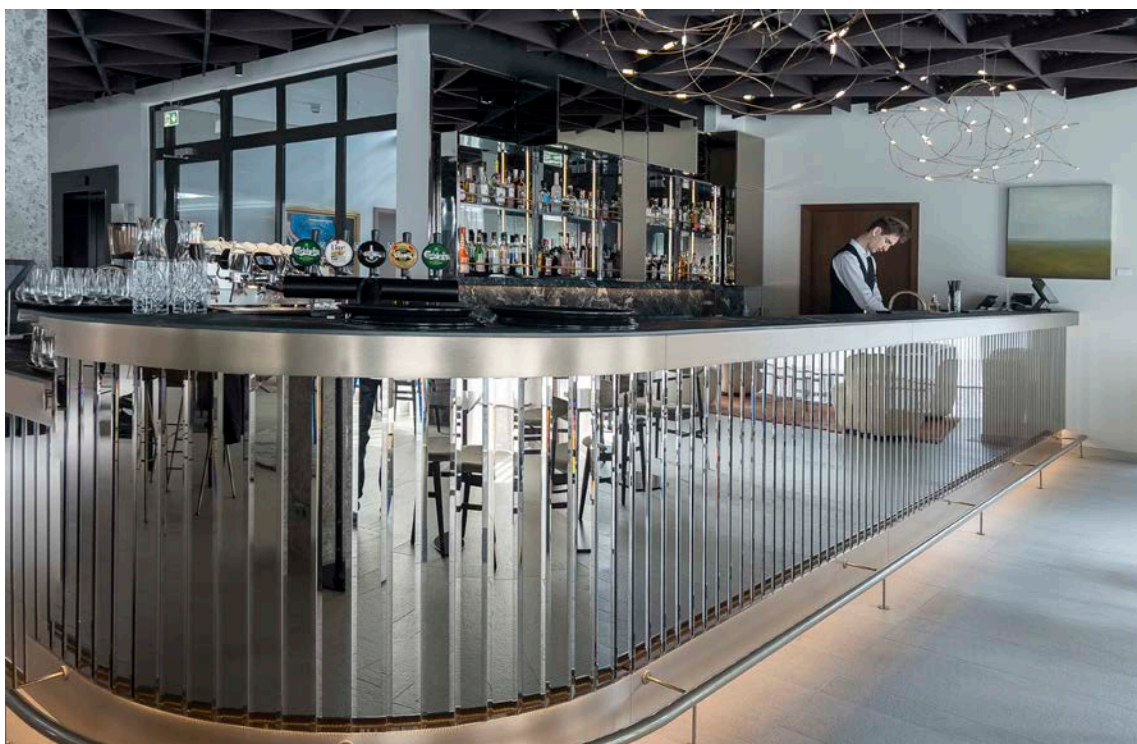
Skólavörðustígur 22

New In Town **Telebar** ★

Thorvaldsensstræti 2

The name Telebar reminds us of that Mad Men episode where Joan goes to a restaurant in which each table has a phone for patrons to call one another and flirt. That's not what Telebar is, though. Rather, it's named in tribute of being in the former location of the Iceland Telecommunication Company. This fine cocktail bar in the lobby of the Iceland Parliament Hotel serves up classy drinks and lovely light fare that you can enjoy surrounded by local contemporary art or watching the antics out on Austurvöllur. With both a happy hour and a proper cocktail hour, it's a great spot for starting or closing out the night. Get your bell rung at Telebar.

Opening hours:
Fri & Sat from 15:00 - Midnight,
Sun to Thu 15:00 - 23:00,
Happy Hour every day 16:00 - 18:00,
Cocktail Hour every day 20:00 - 22:00 ■



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Art Exhibitions

30.06–13.07

Gallery openings, happenings, showings and pop-up exhibitions all around the capital region

Opening

CAFÉ PYSJA

Skúlpúrveizla

The neighbourhood of Grafarvogur is the stage for this group exhibition of works from members of the Sculptors Association, taking place both inside Café Pysja and on the pavement outside. With works of more than 10 artists on display they are without a doubt writing a new story of the neighbourhood.

OPENS JULY 1
RUNS UNTIL SEPTEMBER 3

GALLERY PORT

Peter Jeppson – Wake Up and Smell the Coffee

Peter Jeppson's (b.1985, USA) subject matter is purely figurative, paintings of various unrelated objects that have taken on a human form. A lot of vegetables or fruits, maybe wearing a big cowboy hat and a stuffed expression, or a pumpkin, wading up to his knees on a bathing beach admiring some visitor in the distance.

OPENS JULY 1
RUNS UNTIL JULY 20

GLERHÚSIÐ REYKJAVÍK

Gunnhildur Hauksdóttir – From Heart to Stone - Circle of Sight

The exhibition showcases ink drawings, sculptures and musical compositions for choir. Gunnhildur transforms the environment into song for voices so the exhibition moves sensory experiences onto a different note than usual.

OPENS JULY 1
RUNS UNTIL SEPTEMBER 17
LISTHÚS ÓFEIGS

Guðný M Magnúsdóttir – ÚR HRING
Guðný works from the round shape, either filled or hollow, and shapes it

into a form that tends to show the appearance and characteristics of living beings or landscapes.

OPENS JULY 1
RUNS UNTIL JULY 26

MOSFELLSBÆR ART GALLERY

Habby Osk – Components

Sculptures and photographs where the works rely on each part performing. The connections they form become part of a whole and a larger system, but are also separable. The relationship between the parties can be fragile and often little can be done to cause changes and the whole to collapse or the system to collapse.

OPENS JUNE 30
RUNS UNTIL JULY 28

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ARTS

Nina Gautadóttir – Weaver in Residency

Nina's woven pieces are usually big and bold made from mix of materials. She has developed her own weaving method over the years. Nina has lived in Paris for most of her life but spends summers in Iceland. She will be working in the museum from Tuesday of Friday until the 27th of August.

OPENS JULY 7
RUNS UNTIL AUGUST 27

Ongoing

ÁSMUNDARSAFN (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

Mentor: Ásmundur Sveinsson and Carl Milles Sculpture.

RUNS UNTIL SEPTEMBER 9

ÁSMUNDARSALUR

Veronika Geiger & Hallgerður

Hallgrímsdóttir

Photography workshop
RUNS UNTIL JULY 17

GEIRPRÚÐUR FINNBOG-ADÓTTIR HJÖRVAR

Design works
RUNS UNTIL JULY 16

BERG CONTEMPORARY

Katrín Elvarsdóttir – Fifty Plants for Peace

Photography
RUNS UNTIL JULY 8

EINAR JÓNSSON MUSEUM

Einar Jónsson – Sculpture Works & Garden

Sculpture
PERMANENT EXHIBITION

GALLERY FOLD

Birgit Kirke – Við havið

Paintings
RUNS UNTIL JULY 15

GALLERÍ GÖNG

Kristín Tryggvadóttir – SUMARSMELLUR

Paintings
RUNS UNTIL JULY 15

GALLERÍ GRÓTTA

Björg Eiríksdóttir – FJÖLRÖDDUN

Paintings, drawings, video and textile works
RUNS UNTIL AUGUST 18

GALLERY UNDERPASS

Helgi Hjaltalín & Pétur Örn – Markmið XVI

Photography
RUNS UNTIL JULY 15

GERÐARSAFN (KÓPAVOGUR ART MUSEUM)

ÞYKJÓ

Design works
RUNS UNTIL JULY 31

Rósa Gísladóttir – FORA

Sculpture
RUNS UNTIL SEPTEMBER 17

Gerður Helgadóttir – GERÐUR

Sculpture works from the museum's collection
RUNS UNTIL DECEMBER 31

GERÐUBERG CULTURE HOUSE

Art Without Borders – All Roads Open

Multidisciplinary group exhibition
RUNS UNTIL AUGUST 31

HAFNARBORG CENTER OF CULTURE AND FINE ART

Hildur Ásgeirsdóttir Jónsson – On a Sea of Tranquillity

Textile works
RUNS UNTIL SEPTEMBER 3

Elísabet Brynhildardóttir – Hesitant Line

Drawings
RUNS UNTIL SEPTEMBER 3

HAFNARHÚS (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

D48: Dýrfinna Benita Basalan – Chronic Pain

Mixed media
RUNS UNTIL AUGUST 20

Kaleidoscope: Icelandic 21st Century Art

Multidisciplinary group exhibition
RUNS UNTIL DECEMBER 31

Erró – Cunning Scissors

Works spanning the entirety of Erró's vibrant art career
RUNS UNTIL DECEMBER 31

HARPA

Circuleight
Mixed media installation
Permanent exhibition

HÖFUÐSTÖÐIN

Shoplifter / Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir – Chromo Sapiens

Installation, colourful whole body experience
PERMANENT EXHIBITION

18 GRANDI

B. Ingrid Olson – Cast of Mind

Installation, mixed media
RUNS UNTIL DECEMBER 20

ICELANDIC PRINTMAKERS ASSOCIATION

Alistair MacIntyre – Mirrors With Long Memories

Processed photography
RUNS UNTIL JULY 9

KJARVALSSTAÐIR (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

Kaleidoscope: Icelandic 20th Century Art

Paintings, sketches, drafts, and more
RUNS UNTIL AUGUST 7

KLING & BANG

certain technicalities of being

Multidisciplinary group exhibition
RUNS UNTIL AUGUST 31

THE LIVING ART MUSEUM

Leftovers – Performance Series

Performance art
RUNS UNTIL AUGUST 3

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ARTS

Ýrurari – Presence

Textile works, installation
RUNS UNTIL AUGUST 27

Habitations

An exhibition of miniature apartments created by 4th graders from Garðabær
RUNS UNTIL SEPTEMBER 10TH

AT HOME IN THE DESIGN MUSEUM

Over 200 examples of Icelandic design from 1900 to the present
RUNS UNTIL MARCH 2026

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND

Sigtryggur Bjarni Baldvinsson – Into the Valley in Late Autumn

Watercolour paintings
RUNS UNTIL AUGUST 27

Rúf – Glassrain

Installation
RUNS UNTIL SEPTEMBER 17

The Thought of Drawing

Drawings by Jóhannes S. Kjarval
RUNS UNTIL OCTOBER 1

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ICELAND

Rúnar Gunnarsson – An eternity in a moment

Photography
RUNS UNTIL SEPTEMBER 9

NORDIC HOUSE

For Those Who Couldn't Cross the Sea

Multidisciplinary group exhibition
RUNS UNTIL SEPTEMBER 3

NÜLLIÐ

Karla Dögg Karlsdóttir – Embroidery & Scrap Iron

Textile and metal works
RUNS UNTIL JULY 2

PHENOMENON GALLERY

Katrín Inga Jónsdóttir Hjördísardóttir – Real Dream 3-6-9

Installation, mixed media
RUNS UNTIL JULY 30

REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Giita Hammond – View From The Sea

Photography and video work
RUNS UNTIL AUGUST 13

And Now In Full Colour!

Colour photo from Iceland 1950-1970
RUNS UNTIL SEPTEMBER 10

THE SCULPTURE ASSOCIATION GARDEN

Katrín Inga Jónsdóttir Hjördísardóttir – A Complete dream 3 – 6 – 9

Sculpture and installation
RUNS UNTIL JULY 11

SIGURJÓN ÓLAFSSON MUSEUM

The Gift of Children

Portraits and reliefs
RUNS UNTIL AUTUMN 2023

From Various Sources

Sculpture
RUNS UNTIL AUTUMN 2023

PULA

Kristín Morthens – Air Under Water

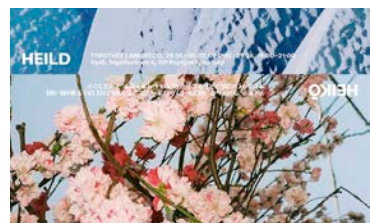
Paintings
RUNS UNTIL JULY 2

Art Picks



Leftovers – Performance Series
until August 3
Nýló

Leftovers is a series of performances taking place over the summer, featuring artists Kamile Pikelyte, Wiola Ujazdowska, Katrín Inga Jónsdóttir Hjördísardóttir, Kolbeinn Hugi, Unnur Andrea Einarsdóttir and Clare Aimée. The performances will leave behind archival material, documented through photo, video, sound recording and creative writing. Collective meaning-making and the creation of culture lies behind the concept of Leftovers. Despite sounding a little abstract, the curators of the Living Art Museum never disappoint, so we'll be sure to check this one out. IZ



Timothée Lambrecq – Heikō / Heild
until July 7
Opið (Ingólfsstræti 6)

Former Grapevine staff photographer Timothée Lambrecq is holding his very first solo exhibition in Reykjavík and we couldn't be more proud. Tim shot some of our iconic covers, including JFDR, Bjarki and the Highlands, and filled our pages with his beautiful images. In 2019, he moved to Japan so this exhibition marks his grand return. Originally shown in Japan, Heikō / Heild is a collection of his work that studies parallels between Iceland and Japan, in terms of nature, culture and inhabitants, all with his unique sensitivity and excellence at capturing moments in time. Go see it. RX



Habby Osk – Components
June 30 – July 28
Mosfellsbær Art Gallery

Feeling ready to step up your conceptual art game and delve into the world of the profound? The highly decorated Habby Osk has just the thing for you. The exhibition Components, consisting of sculptures and photographs, provides a commentary on the fragile relationships that can exist between parties and the small changes that can cause an entire system to collapse. The works rely on every part of the exhibition performing. It's deep, we know. Bring those thinking caps and your best pondering stance. SE

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Concerts, comedy, movies and other happenings that defy categorization

If you're putting something on for the general public, send us a line to: events@grapevine.is

Friday June 30

DJ Geiri Goodshit
21:00 12 Tónar
RVK Fringe Festival
16:00 Gaukurinn
Kraftgalli DJ set
23:00 Kaffibarinn
RVK Fringe Festival
11:00 Mengi
RVK Fringe Festival
12:00 Tjarnarbíó

Saturday July 1

Margrét Eir
19:00 Bæjarbíó
Elisabet í Pluto Landi
21:00 Bravó
RVK Fringe Festival
16:00 Gaukurinn
Mighty Bear
23:00 Gaukurinn
I Never Saw Another Butterfly
16:00 Harpa – Hörpuhorn
KGB
23:00 Kaffibarinn
Joy Anonymous
16:00 Kex Hostel
DJ Gina Manic
20:00 Kex Hostel
RVK Fringe Festival
11:00 Mengi
RVK Fringe Festival
12:00 Tjarnarbíó

Sunday July 2

RVK Fringe Festival
16:00 Gaukurinn
Organ Summer Concert
17:00 Hallgrímskirkja
Welcome Home: Bryndís Guðjónsdóttir
16:00 Harpa – Hörpuhorn
DJ De La Rosa
22:00 Kaffibarinn
RVK Fringe Festival
11:00 Mengi
PIKKNÍKK #2: Sara Flindt
15:00 Nordic House
RVK Fringe Festival
12:00 Tjarnarbíó

Monday July 3

Open Decks with Bensin
20:00 Bravó
Comedy Night
20:00 Gaukurinn
DJ Ómar E
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Tuesday July 4

Karaoke Night
20:00 Gaukurinn
DJ André
22:00 Kaffibarinn
Summer Concert Series: French & German Song Cycles
20:30 Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum

Wednesday July 5

Matthías Löve
20:00 Bravó
Marvara (BE)
21:00 Gaukurinn
Vinyl Wednesday: Döbbskúrin
22:00 Kaffibarinn
Bjarni Sveinbjörnsson & Band
20:00 Múlinn Jazz Club
K.óla
17:15 Reykjavík City Library – Kringlan

Thursday July 6

Jón Jónsson
19:00 Bæjarbíó
Hausar
20:00 Bravó
Dauðnafn
20:00 Gaukurinn
Jónbjörn (Lagaffe Tales)
22:00 Kaffibarinn
DJ TBA
20:00 Kex Hostel
Tryggvi Þór Pétursson & Flesh Machine
20:00 Iðnó

Friday July 7

Stuðmenn
19:00 Bæjarbíó
\$leazy
21:00 Bravó
Chase Murphy
20:00 Gaukurinn
DJ Óli Dóri
23:00 Kaffibarinn
Babies Ball
21:00 Kex Hostel

Saturday July 8

Ljótu Hálfvitarnir
19:00 Bæjarbíó
Nordur Music presents: Skarby (Bar25)
20:00 Bravó
Apocalypstick: 2nd Anniversary Show
21:00 Gaukurinn
Már & Nielsen Sömmer Festival
23:00 Kaffibarinn
KEX Port Block Party
14:00 Kex Hostel

Kennitala Club: Flaaryr, Xiupill feat. Final Boss Type Zero & More
21:00 Prikíð

Sunday July 9

Sunday Club
20:00 Bravó
Tuð & Hemúllin
21:00 Gaukurinn
Organ Summer Concert
17:00 Hallgrímskirkja
Welcome Home: Tumi Torfason
16:00 Harpa – Hörpuhorn
Simon fknhdsm
22:00 Kaffibarinn
PIKKNÍKK #3: MC MYASNOI
15:00 Nordic House

Monday July 10

Minimal Monday
20:00 Bravó
Fat Concubine (UK)
21:00 Gaukurinn
Silja Glömmi
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Tuesday July 11

Karaoke Night
20:00 Gaukurinn
Girls Gang
22:00 Kaffibarinn
Summer Concert Series: Premonition
20:30 Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum

Wednesday July 12

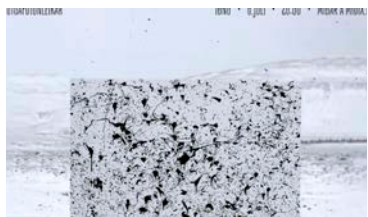
Nanna
19:00 Bæjarbíó
Luna
20:00 Bravó
Skúmaskot
20:00 Gaukurinn
Vinyl Wednesday: DJ GrillHelgi
22:00 Kaffibarinn
Sara Magnúsdóttir Hammond Quartet
20:00 Múlinn Jazz Club

Thursday July 13

Briet
19:00 Bæjarbíó
We Are Eternal
20:00 Bravó
Brain Police
20:00 Gaukurinn
DJ Kári
22:00 Kaffibarinn
DJ Retronaut
20:00 Kex Hostel

See more at events.grapevine.is

Event Picks



Tryggvi Þór Pétursson – OTL Release Concert

Thursday July 6, 20:00
IÐNÓ
3.000 ISK

Music possesses the remarkable ability to evoke an intense emotional reaction, bringing a little light to this so-called “summer” for some or hitting listeners right in sentimental weak-spot even on the sunniest of days. Interested in the opportunity to listen to great music while also getting in touch with your emotional side? Join Tryggvi Þór Pétursson and his band are performing his album OTL at IÐNÓ, bringing listeners on the journey of being an individual feeling helpless during difficult times. Up-and-comers Flesh Machine will open the show, for extra moody times. SE



KEXPort Block Party
Saturday July 8 15:00
Kex Hostel
Free

Get out your grilling shorts and lawn chairs because it's time for a block party! Actually, it might not be shorts weather and Kex Hostel has their own chairs, but their block party will bring the same vibes! Started in 2012 in collaboration with Seattle radio station KEXP, the annual event is a full day and night of free shows out on Kex's back deck, which has been expanded in the last couple of years and is better than ever. This year is shaping up to be a blast, with Gróa, JóiPé, Kælan Mikla, Lottó and new kids on the block Spacestation amongst the confirmed acts. It's a guaranteed good time. RX



Kennitala Club: Tour Fundraiser
Saturday July 8 21:00
Prikíð
2.000 ISK or pwyc

What's a Kennitala Club, you may ask? We're asking ourselves the same thing. You might say it's everyone with a kennitala, which isn't everyone in Iceland, but it's everyone on the lineup of this fundraising show! With artists from the Post-dreifing collective, Spectral Assault records and the Skúlagata label, including Flaaryr, Knackered, Xiupill, Pellegrina and more, the event will preview the full-scale club atmosphere they plan to bring to mainland Europe this summer. Go help them raise some cash to go clubbing through the continent. RX

Safnahúsið The House of Collections

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Music News



Norðanpaunk Announces Festival Lineup

The self-titled “biggest Icelandic DIY festival in the world” Norðanpaunk announced its full festival lineup earlier in June. Taking place every year in Laugarbakki in North Iceland, Norðanpaunk has amassed a loyal following of punks, metalheads and indie-rockers alike. Based entirely around DIY ethics, the festival

practises safe-space and safe-consumption principles. This year, bands Dödsrit, Ghostigital, Graveslime, Dauðýflin, DJ Flugvél & Geimskip, Sordide and many more are set to perform. Absolutely no viking metal is allowed. Bring your own booze and bring your own tent while you’re at it.



Alsæla Compilation Album To Be Reissued

News broke that the influential 1992 compilation album Icerave is to be reissued as a triple vinyl. The record, now being issued under its original title Alsæla, was dedicated to the bustling rave music scene happening in Iceland at the time. The music was mainly broadcast off the radio show “B-Hliðin,” whose hosts

joined forces with the label Skífan to release the album. Though originally known as Alsæla (ecstasy), the title was deemed too provocative and thus received the name Icerave. The album will drop September 3, but pre-orders are live now on Thule Records’ Bandcamp page.



Kælan Mikla and Barði Jóhannsson Sell Out TIFF

No, not the Toronto one. On June 16, Icelandic goth band Kælan Mikla teamed up with Barði Jóhannsson of Bang Gang fame for a cine-concert – that’s a cinema screening and a live concert. The Icelanders composed and performed an original score to the 1921 Swedish film *The Phantom Carriage* for the Transilvania International Film Festival. The

magic happened at the Evangelical Lutheran church in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. According to Barði’s Facebook post, the screening was sold out and might just be performed again in the future. This is Barði’s second time composing and performing a cine-concert at the film festival, as he did so in 2016 for the film *Häxan*.



Feature This Is Going To Be Good

Dream Wife continue their political journey on their third album

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGES Sophie Webster

suring access to the facilities.

The leisure centre in question serves as the backdrop for Dream Wife’s music video to the single “Who Do You Wanna Be?” – the fourth track off the band’s latest release *Social Lubrication*, out June 9 via Lucky Number Music. Filmed

er Raket Mjöll Leifsdóttir’s words, the band experienced a “full circle moment,” when legendary Riot Grrrl band Le Tigre announced their first tour in 18 years and asked Dream Wife to come along as a support act. “We wouldn’t exist if not for Le Tigre,” Raket confesses.

It’s a political act to be able to express yourself while still having the freedom to dance.

playing live in the drained pool, the band dedicates the track to anti-capitalism, faux-activism, greenwashing and other ailments of our current economic system.

GOING FULL CIRCLE

This is by no means a left-field move for Dream Wife, who have always straddled the line between a social activist group and a band, never being afraid to convey their political views through music.

The band is a long way from their unassuming origins, having recorded their debut with DIY methods in guitarist Alice Go’s flat. In sing-

In July, the band embarks on a UK tour, with a detour to Seyðisfjörður in East Iceland for a performance at the LungA Festival. “One of our first shows was actually at LungA. We only had four songs back then,” Raket recalls.

Despite their success, Dream Wife is still occupied with having fun while attempting to smash the patriarchy. While in the process of writing their third studio album, Dream Wife’s members were in a lockdown-stupor. “During that period, we only wrote sad-ass songs. We weren’t really good at writing during the pandemic,” says Raket, attributing

For Those Who Couldn't Cross the Sea

10.06. — 03.09. 2023



their compositional frustration to the band's fame as a live band. "We've built a career out of playing live and most of our songs are tested on an audience so we can better sculpt them," she continues.

A DISAPPOINTING REALITY

This is where the album's influence comes from: being around live music and absorbing the culture surrounding it. Returning to the festival circuit after a lacklustre pandemic period, the band experienced a bitter disappointment. "While some things have changed for the better, there are still players in the scene you'd think wouldn't be there," says Rakel, referencing the unsavoury individuals that are attracted to unequal power dynamics. "This is the topic of [the song] 'Leech,'" says Rakel, who implores the figurative leech preying on people to "have some fucking empathy."

Supporters of the "Girls to the front" maxim, Dream Wife's ideology is firmly rooted in the ideals of the Riot Grrrl movement. Their live gigs have been characterised by the emphasis placed on creating safe spaces for women and marginalised groups, ensuring an opportunity for everyone to enjoy the show. "We drew our inspiration from Kathleen Hanna [Le Tigre and Bikini Kill frontwoman]. It was political, it was critical, but you could still dance. It's a political act to be able to express yourself while still having the freedom to dance," Rakel says.

Advancing this policy through collaboration with non-profits like Girls Against, it still isn't enough to stop offenders at their shows. "There's no space that's fully safe, there's only so much you can do," Rakel says, referencing instances where offenders have actively sought out Dream

Wife's gigs to abuse their power.

Rakel cites one of the band's earliest songs, "Somebody" off their debut album, as a turning point in the band's direction, moving towards a more intersectional approach when hearing fans' reactions to it. Although originally written as a reference to sexual violence and the Slut Walk, the lines "I'm not my body / I'm somebody," started to take on different meanings for different people. "On tour, we noticed how particular groups related to those lines. We had people with blindness come up to us and say, 'Do not see my blindness, see me.' So it was interesting seeing how people with disabilities related to the song." This experience influenced Rakel's lyrical approach on *Social Lubrication*.

SUPPRESSED BY THE ALGORITHM

For Dream Wife, their core still rests on conveying the political messages of feminism, eradication of sexual violence and the dismantling of the patriarchy. Those themes that echoed through their last two albums are still very much at the heart of

a prime example), the band seems aware of their nonchalance, allowing the listener to join in on the fun.


Other tracks express the group's social and political awareness. They appear very on the nose, sometimes lacking nuance. They say what they mean, not much for frills or a poet's ambiguity. "I never want to sound pretentious," Rakel explains when asked about this lyrical tendency. The aforementioned track "Who Do You Wanna Be?" has Rakel singing, "When I see another empty slogan tryna dictate my life / Can't you see my pockets are running dry? / A consumer consumed with the idea of a good time." In "Leech," a song dedicated to the prevailing sexism in the music industry, Rakel moves from a reasonably angry commentary, culminating in a ballistic reaction to the injustice.

In the hyper-industrialised British music scene in which Dream Wife operates, this is dissent. The album's feminist messaging, Rakel explains, has led to a suppression of its virality. "There's a line in 'Who Do You Wanna Be?' that goes, 'the left cuts down the left, while the right

If I'm afraid of releasing a song, I just know it's gonna be good.

this third release. A chock-full collection of explosive tracks all set out to annihilate the patriarchy and empower the marginalised, the album is coloured by an atmosphere of dissent. It's not all doom and gloom, though; the track "Hot (Don't Date A Musician)" has Rakel list a number of professions that are more appropriate to date than a musician. On tracks like these ("Orbit" is also


upholds the crown.' We were informed that because of these words and other actions [Alice appears topless with tape on her nipples in the music video], the algorithm has somehow suppressed the song," Rakel claims. Her feelings towards writing have now reached the point where, "if I'm afraid of releasing a song, I just know it's gonna be good." ■



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John P wrote a review

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Date of visit: May 2023

→→→ PLEASE SCAN TO BOOK A TABLE →→→

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What happened last night?

Inspector Spacetime

Soundchecks and sweat

WORDS Inspector Spacetime
IMAGE Art Bicnick

program starts. We had to stop soon because a parade of thousands of people suddenly appeared from nowhere.

15:15

We play the gig at Hljóm-skálagarðurinn, generate some smiles and even manage to get a good chunk of people jumping. Now we go extremely sweaty into the rest of the day. After the show we get some food and wait for our next soundcheck.

18:00

Being very tired after the previous show we sort of half-ass the soundcheck and hurry home to take a nap and recharge for the next one.

00:00

Prikið is crammed with people and we have a blast in spite of a few sound system issues. People were dancing and singing along. After a very fun show we're even sweati-er than before and begin our final phase of the night – the DJ set.

04:30

A long shift is over and we head home full of joy. ■

10:30

We wake up and there's still no word on the soundcheck, which is odd. We are playing two gigs today, one in the afternoon at the June 17 celebration in Hljóm-skálagarður and the other at midnight at Prikið. We then finish off the night with a DJ set till 04:30. This is a more grueling schedule than usual. We always want a soundcheck before a gig because you never know what might go wrong, and we tend to put on a better show if we're having fun and we have more fun if we can hear ourselves well on stage.

12:00

Still no word on soundcheck so we make our way downtown to see the sound guys. Good thing we did! We get to squeeze in a few minute soundcheck before the official



Music Article

All Roads Lead To Skúlagata

The Skúlagata Collective releases its second compilation

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGE Art Bicnick

"It's not an umbrella association as much as it is a showerhead of artists," meaning that the aim of Skúlagata is to act as a fountain that sprays the music coming out of its collective. Featuring songs by artists Einmitt, Andi, Harry Knuckles, Kraftgalli, Steindór Grétar Kristinsson, dj_gulli_dj, Le Vender, 2 Hands, 000Sven, Volruptus and In3dee, the compilation demonstrates the power of electronic music happening today.

closed location. "There's no use just sitting around and making music. You have to release it somehow and organise some shows," Arnljótur says. In addition to the music releases, which now count two compilation albums, one Kraftgalli album and one from In3dee, Skúlagata Collective also have their own bi-weekly show on 101 Radio. They also host a Soundcloud page for their radio mixes and a Bandcamp site for their releases.

Among their concert endeavours include the live series *Lævi Blandið* and *Plötupeysireið*. These series are each more eccentric than the next:

"My musical taste is shaped by all kinds of music I found on compilations like these, where there's a connection between artists. People

Skúlagata Collective is a group of like-minded artists formed around a bustling creative space. Once housed on Skúlagata, the space was eventually torn down to accommodate Reykjavik's growing hotel economy. "We were still making music until the very end, you could almost say in the ruins," says Arnljótur Sigurðsson, one of seven individuals who make up the electronic, action-focused assemblage.

CROSS-SECTIONING THE SCENE

Borne out of Reykjavik's fluid music scene, one which allows individuals to come together and experiment, Skúlagata Collective presents itself as one of the newest groups energising urban life.

On May 27, the group released their second compilation album, the aptly named *Skúlagata 002*. As Arnljótur (also known as DJ Kraftgalli) says,

To live off something like this you'd have to get by with very few calories a day.

think in a similar way and it's interesting to see this synergy happening," says Arnljótur, while mentioning the independent electronic compilations that shaped those of Skúlagata. Incidentally, one of those – 1992's *Alsæla* – is to receive a reissue later this year.

A PROLIFIC BUNCH

After having been evicted from their base of operations on Skúlagata, the individuals found themselves bouncing from studio to studio, eventually settling down at an undis-

Lævi Blandið is based around the concept of two stages, one dedicated to live music and the other to DJ-mixing. *Plötupeysireið* introduces seven DJs into the same space. "We just want to do something fun," says Arnljótur.

The act of releasing a compilation like *Skúlagata 002* is also coloured by political undertones. "To live off something like this you'd have to get by with very few calories a day," jokes Arnljótur. "I encourage people to buy as much as they can off Bandcamp, as there is a bigger share that goes to us."

Asked whether the group is influenced by collectives operating in and around the Icelandic music scene, Arnljótur replies, "Yes, we even have a manifesto written down somewhere." He cites groups like post-dreifing and the venue R6013 to be major inspirations. "It's an encouragement to get you off your ass and do something yourself," Arnljótur says.

And there's a collective agreement among the group's members. Decisions regarding the whole are discussed thoroughly, such as who would be the best candidate for this interview. Joining Arnljótur in the collective are Andri Björgvins-son, Andri Eyjólfsson, Gylfi Free-land Sigurðsson, Tatjana Dís Al-dísardóttir Rashomenko, Guðlaugur Hörðdal, and Indriði Arnar Ingólfsson. "We aren't tired of each other. At least not yet." ■

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Gerðarsafn



Kópavogur Art Museum

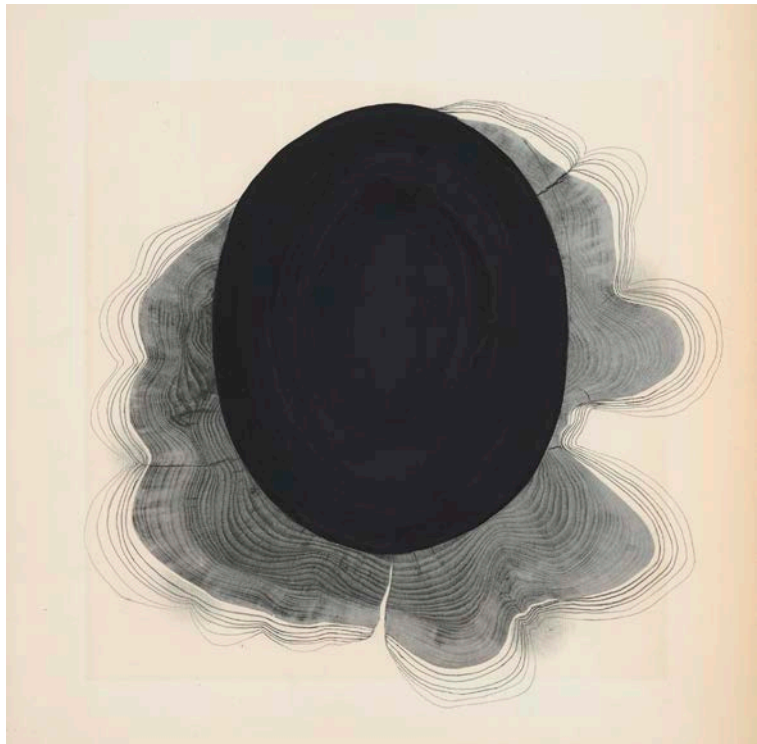
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Track By Track

I Am Weary, Don't Let Me Rest

Snorri Hallgrímsson brings us his newest compositions

WORDS Snorri Hallgrímsson
IMAGE Supplied by Snorri Hallgrímsson

Snorri Hallgrímsson's list of works is long. Here, Snorri invites us to delve deeper into his newest solo release, *I Am Weary, Don't Let Me Rest*, which was re-released June 16.

BEFORE THE STORM

The song that was never meant to exist. We had already started mixing the album and I was waiting for the weather to calm down so I could record the last remaining piano bits on the other tracks. I started doodling on the piano while waiting and this is the result.

BEHIND THE SUN

Eerie atmospheric field recordings and disturbing violin textures team up against the string orchestra,

which slowly creeps in and ultimately takes over.

FOR BETTER WATERS

I like space in music and there's a lot of it in this song. Most of it is intentional, but the piano was improvised in one take so sometimes that space is also just me figuring out on the spot what to do next. I liked it and decided against writing a more "streamlined" version.

WORTH AND KNOWLEDGE

Choir, vocoder, solo voice, field recordings, a viola being massacred and a string orchestra. Why not? It might not be everyone's cup of tea, but at worst it's a nice palette cleanser before the very sweet title track.

I AM WEARY, DON'T LET ME REST

I had struggled all day to write something incredibly original and this is the type of song that follows a day of struggle. A minimal, familiar and comforting chord progression that builds ever so slightly with each repetition. The title is both accepting and forgiving of my failure, but also encourages me to keep trying.

THE BLIND LIFE

The title refers to the afterlife of "the uncommitted" Dante encounters in *The Divine Comedy*: people who

lived a life of blissful ignorance but in death are doomed to a miserable non-existence in neither hell nor heaven. This struggle between painful awareness and ignorant bliss is a constant theme on the album.

THE DARKEST DESCENT

Opposed to the blissfully ignorant "Blind Life," is the painful privilege of knowledge, which is "a descent into the darker areas of the human soul," as phrased by Julio Strassera at the trial of the Juntas. Unnur, the solo cellist on the song, said this is "the ultimate Snorri song." I think she might be right, at least it's possibly my favourite song on the album.

AT LAST WE TOUCHED UPON THE LONELY SHORE

A string quartet variation of "Worth and Knowledge." Recorded as close to the musicians as possible and then run through a Roland Space Echo multiple times. I wanted to feel the hairs of the bow almost brush my ears... but for it to still somehow sound distant.

I AM AT HOME

A journey from vast orchestral and ambient elements to the more intimate setting of myself singing at the living room piano, "I Am at Home" is a love song and refers to the feeling of being at ease in the comforting presence of your loved one. ■



Filthy Interview

And Sausage For All

Tuð find balance between anger and candies

WORDS Francesca Stoppani
IMAGE Supplied by Tuð

Waiting to add up two more sixes and reach the number of the beast, our sixth Filthy interview is with Halldór and Dettifoss – yes, like the waterfall – bassist and vocalist of Icelandic punk band Tuð.

while the sausage-centric sophomore is called Í Bjúgri Bæn. The band organised a fundraiser to fund their second album, with one support tier earning one supporter an invitation to a sausage party in exchange for a 30,000 ISK donation. Funny enough, a priest with no connection to Tuð bought it and they all enjoyed the oblong food in holy spirits.

"Innvortis is no doubt our biggest inspiration, we'd love to play with them but they're not really active anymore," says Halldór, who followed Innvortis' former members (performing now in the viking-metal band Skálmöld) to Scotland.

PUNK MUSIC IN BLOOM

According to Halldór and Dettifoss, punk music in Iceland is experiencing a vibrant renaissance, with bands like Soðaskapur, Gróa and Sucks To Be You, Nigel making waves.

"It seems like we have moved on from mumblecore and that the raw and visceral nature of punk is resurfacing," says Dettifoss. In his opinion, the new punk scene tries to grasp deeper feelings and the needs of new generations. Though a release isn't specifically planned, Tuð is recording new material in the fall.

It's good to know that Tuð occasionally rewards candy to those who shout out "bingo" during their shows. You might want to give it a shot on July 9 at Gaukurinn, where they'll perform alongside Hemúllinn. Tuð is also scheduled to play this summer in Flateyri, up in the Westfjords, in case you want to take a break from Reykjavik's grey allure. ■

For more info on future gigs and releases, follow these punks on Instagram at [@tud_thegidi](https://www.instagram.com/tud_thegidi).

ALMOST CYBERPUNK

Most members of Tuð are professional nerds who work as data specialists. The band came together when some friends who worked in the backend system of a bank approached Dettifoss, proclaiming him the new singer of a punk band around 2015. Fueled by anger and frustration – common emotions among nerds – they decided to release their feelings through Tuð, which can be translated as "nagging."

The band has self-released two albums, one on vinyl. "I don't think we'll do that again, the vinyl process was such a hassle," says Halldór. From designing the cover to taking professional pictures of sausages in the proper ambience, Tuð's approach is usually DIY.

Their first album was called Þegiðu!

The Grapevine Recommends:

66 Degrees of Sound

Welcome to 66 Degrees of Sound by The Reykjavík Grapevine, a weekly podcast for music lovers and Icelandophiles where Grapevine journalists Rex Beckett and Jóhannes Bjarkason discuss and play some of the latest and greatest in Icelandic music releases.

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Guide The Grapevine Guide To Spending A Rainy Day

They're frequent enough, may as well have a plan to get through them

WORDS Catharine Fulton
IMAGE Art Bicnick

— one that may as well come around since jackets are required to guard against the unseasonable cold anyways.

June has felt bleak in Reykjavík. As such, the Grapevine has compiled a list of suggestions for surviving a bad summer.

TAKE A STROLL THROUGH DENIAL

Pretend it's not a bad summer. In fact, pretend it's not summer at all, but just any other day of the year for which you have zero expectations of clear skies or warm temperatures. Once you've thoroughly convinced yourself of your existence outside of time and seasons, button up your waterproof coat and get out in nature for a stroll in the rain. Find a wooded area, like Öskjuhlíð or the area around Álafoss and wander the paths. You may get wet, but the surrounding greenery will serve double duty of blocking much of the wind and providing you with all those good endorphins that supposedly come with being out in nature.

CHANNEL YOUR ANGER

Get all that anger at the weather gods out of your system by doing a wholesome indoor activity like smashing a bunch of stuff with a baseball bat or sledge hammer. Scream curses at the clouds lurking over Reykjavík while destroying

household objects at the Útrásin rage room in Grafarvogur. It might even get your blood pumping a little faster and see you breaking the sweat you most definitely won't be doing on account of the weather.

SOAK IN YOUR REGRET

Whether you've chosen to be in Reykjavík right now or the state of the economy has you stretched too thin to jet off to somewhere the sun reaches, the local pool is a fine place to stew in your feelings. Lay out in the kiddie pool at Sundhólinn to feel the cool rain pattering on your face while your body enjoys the warm embrace of geothermal waters. Or force yourself to spend a couple minutes in the cold pot to fool your body into believing the outside air isn't so cold after all.

DISTRACT YOURSELF WITH CULTURE

When you've tired of your outerwear soaking up the constant rain, there are few better things to do than soaking up some culture at a gallery or museum. Play a rousing game of eye spy at the Erró exhibition at Hafnarhús, or cocoon yourself in the vibrant strands of Shoplifter's Chromo Sapiens installation at Höfuðstöðin. The latter also boasts a café overlooking Elliðaárdalur where you can psych yourself up with warm drinks before bundling up for that aforementioned stroll through denial. ■

Summer. What is summer? After a few bright seasons spent in Iceland one learns that "heat" is a relative concept. Soon enough everyone becomes the sun-starved Icelander venturing outdoors in shorts and a t-shirt as soon as the mercury hits 12° Celcius.

So far even opportunities to delude ourselves into believing summer has arrived are too few and far between. The skies hang low and grey and the rain feels like a constant visitor



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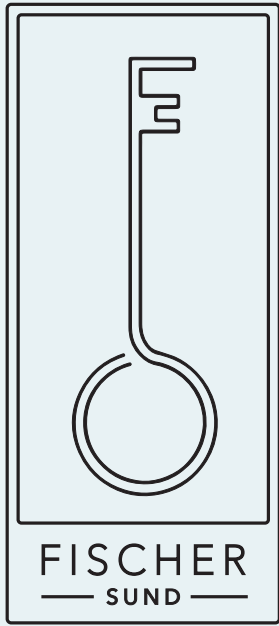
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Travel Feature

Echoes Of Heritage

One of the oldest buildings in the Westfjords continues to thrive as a vibrant cultural hub

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Art Bicnick

With its large rainbow-coloured chimney, Cafe Dunhagi stands out against the grey and foggy landscape of Tálknafjörður, a fishing village in the southern Westfjords nicknamed Tálknó by its 300 inhabitants. As one of only two restaurants in the area, it has become a popular spot for locals and visitors alike seeking a quick bite to eat.

Stepping inside, it immediately becomes clear that Cafe Dunhagi is more than just a place to dine – it is a living testament to the fjord’s vibrant history and culture. Black and white photos on the walls offer glimpses into the hardships faced by the community in days gone by, with adverse conditions and a relentless pursuit of survival. However, the food served at the cafe tells a different story, introducing visitors to the modern face of Iceland.

BACK TO ORIGINS

“This building represents a lot of the cultural affairs that went on in this little town,” says Dagný Alda Steinsdóttir, whose maternal family hails from Tálknafjörður. “I had a company that was pouring concrete tiles, countertops and sinks,” explains Dagný, an architect who lived in the

United States for 24 years before returning to her homeland. “I moved it all back to Iceland, along with a 1961 Cadillac convertible. When I came back, I saw this place and it had seen better days. So I decided to open a cute little cafe.”

The cafe’s season runs May 15 through September 15. “There’s a bird that arrives in spring and departs in fall, the Arctic tern. That’s me. I come in the spring and leave in the fall,” Dagný jokes.

TIMELESS SIGNIFICANCE

Dagný is known for her passion for telling stories. At Cafe Dunhagi, she has collected old photos, some of them from her relatives, that guide visitors through the history of this place and its people. “They’re a story

southern archipelago. “It represents something that created this big cultural affair.”

When the swim laws were introduced in Iceland, the swimming pool in Tálknafjörður, located right across the street from Cafe Dunhagi, was the first and only one in the southern Westfjords. Swimming lessons became obligatory and a space was needed to accommodate the children. Dagný explains that the government invested in the building that is now Cafe Dunhagi, importing timber all the way from Norway. “It was an enormous task and an enormous building for people that were living basically in turf houses,” she says. “In the springtime, it was a huge event where children from all the fjords would come and stay here. The kids would come on their

This building is in every family’s photo album here in the Westfjords. It’s like our Heimaklettur for Westman Islanders.

of the people that lived in this fjord – what they did, how they survived and what the culture was here at that time,” she says, pausing to share a story behind each photo.

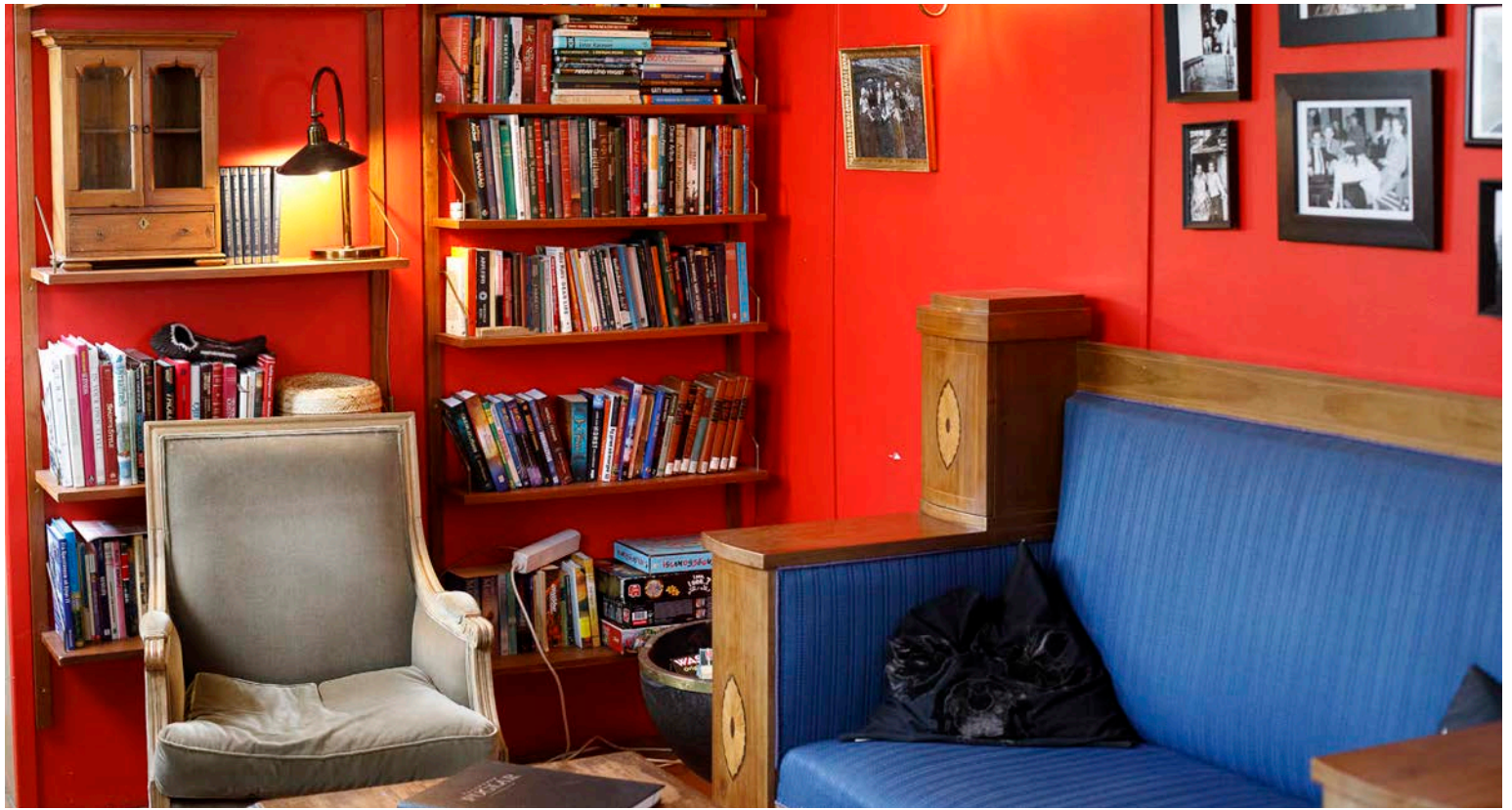
Built in 1933, the building is the oldest “félagshemili” or community centre in the Westfjords. Throughout the years, it has been owned by the town and the women’s association, Kvenfélagið Harpa.

“This building is in every family’s photo album here in the Westfjords. It’s like our Heimaklettur for Westman Islanders,” says Dagný, referencing the highest peak on Iceland’s

boats or riding horses. They were in the pool from six in the morning until they had gotten their swim card.” The building provided rooms and an eating area for the visiting children.

DANCING THROUGH TIME

“When the swim meets were over, this house was changed into a big dance hall,” Dagný continues, adding that the building would shake at times. “This is where I learned how to dance when I was in school here,” she admits. The building holds special memories for many locals who met their partners or got married within its



walls. "It's so nice that buildings like that tell a story and people connect to them. Our goal is to, first and foremost, restore that," says Dagný. Until recently, the women's association was responsible for the house's maintenance. "They would have people over for coffee at certain times like Easter Sundays, but it wasn't getting much use. It was standing pretty empty in the wintertime because it had no heating," she shares.

As an architect, Dagný couldn't help but notice the architectural significance of the building. "Just you look at the chimney outside, it is enormous," she says. Recently, the government granted funds specifically for the restoration of the chimney.

A FRESH BEGINNING

Together with her husband, Dagný bought the building several years ago. "That's when the real work started," she shares. "He is a master builder, so he can do all the work. Otherwise, it would be very expensive." The remoteness from Reykjavík would further complicate logistics and contribute to higher expenses.

"What I had thought in the beginning was just to open up a cute little cafe. Then slowly I realised that there were not a lot of options here for people that wanted to have a taste of Icelandic food," Dagný shares. Her approach is to use as many local ingredients as possible. "I stay away from all deep frying. I just try to use fish that is fished here locally. I even

have some kids picking grass for me that I use for my salad."

In recent years, the Tálknafjörður area has become a popular destination for birdwatchers. "We have about 32-33 different types of birds," says Dagný, pointing at binoculars stacked near the window. "People come here, use the binoculars and watch all this flora and the birds."

fun and exploring. "It's all by memory and trial and error," she says. "That worked well last time, but I'll change it a little bit this time. Nothing is the same."

"I have a menu, but I'm reluctant to put it out because I want to have the option of changing it. If I have cod on it and I don't get fresh cod, then I've got to change it to another fish that I get fresh," Dagný explains, empha-

This building represents a lot of the cultural affairs that went on in this little town.

TASTE OF DUNHAGI

Giving an insight into what Icelandic cuisine represents today is one of Dagný's goals. She runs the restaurant and cooks all the food herself. Three other staff members join her in the kitchen during the peak tourist season. "I would say 50% of the people that come here are Icelanders that have never ventured into the southern Westfjords and always wanted to," she says. "We stay busy. Oh my god, we stay so busy all summer."

Dagný admits that her cafe doesn't use any recipes. "If the music is good, I cook good," she laughs, singing along to Nina Simone while opening one of the freezer drawers. "How can you fail when you have this beautiful fresh fish?" Her cooking style is rooted in having

sizing that despite the limited menu, she always strives to accommodate everyone.

Every summer, Dagný hosts a cultural event at Cafe Dunhagi. "I have artists coming here - writers, performers, actors, musicians. All the people here can come in here for free and enjoy some of those fantastic authors we have in Iceland." She dreams of expanding these events further, such as hosting artist residencies or inviting guest chefs. "I see the future there - this place is perfect for accommodating such events and food is a big part of cultural gatherings."

With Dagný's passion for storytelling, love for good music and dedication to mindful food, it seems that the future of this historic building is finally in the right hands. ■



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Food Feature

A True Gastronomic Destination

Icelandic cuisine is beyond shock value sheep's head

WORDS Shruthi Basappa
IMAGES Grapevine Archives

There has been considerable buzz in local media the past few weeks since the Michelin Guide Nordic Countries revealed that Iceland was adding another name to its roster of one-starred restaurants. Moss, at the Retreat by Blue Lagoon,

is the latest awardee, joining Óx and Dill on the prestigious list.

The number of Michelin-starred restaurants in a place is a new standard of measuring a tourist destination's culinary prowess. But what is a Michelin star, how are they granted, and how does recognition by Michelin – or comparable rankings like World's 50 Best or the Nordic White Guide – impact the dining and tourism industry?

Where does Iceland stand compared to our Nordic neighbours? Do we have what it takes to be a global dining destination?

RANKING THE RANKING SYSTEMS

Contrary to popular belief, Michelin stars are awarded to restaurants and not individual chefs. Another misconception is that Michelin is all about fine-dining. In reality, restaurants

big and small spanning the spectrum of casual to fine-dining – heck, even hard to slot spots, like the hawker stands in Singapore – are all eligible for stars.

The Guide has gained global recognition and acceptance as a yardstick of quality gourmet experiences, while making a tangible impact on tourism and local economies – so much so that researchers and economists have investigated the

“Michelin effect.”

One star is awarded to restaurants worth stopping by, two-star restaurants are worth a detour, and three-star restaurants justify a dedicated trip. Other recognitions awarded are the Green Star designating establishments with strong sustainability practices and the Bib Gourmand given to eateries offering the best value for money establishments.

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Dill has the distinction of holding both a Green Star and their Michelin star. Skál was awarded a Bib in 2019, which they subsequently lost after a couple of years. Dill, too, had lost their lone star, though they were quick to regain it the following year.

While Michelin is considered the gold standard of a place's culinary prowess, the Sweden-based Nordic White Guide has long measured the pulse of the culinary scene in the Nordics, with the Michelin Guide often playing catch up to their recommendations. Heck, the White Guide pegged Óx as a master level restaurant back in 2019!

Elsewhere, global rankings carried out by World's 50 Best have been formidable competition with their "50 Best Discovery" sub-category tagging local cocktail bar Jungle on their coveted "Bar Discovery" list.

Global rankings aside, The Reykjavik Grapevine has become the most comprehensive local restaurant guide with our annual Best of Reykjavik Dining scouring the best the city and country have to offer, making it decidedly the most influential tastemaker in Iceland – and we get it right long before any other listicle.

The impact of earning a Michelin star or being placed on a global best list has an immediate impact on a restaurant's business. Speaking with Food & Wine magazine in 2017, Joel Robuchon, holder of the most Michelin star awarded restaurants in the world, broke it down like this: "With one Michelin star, you get about 20 percent more business. Two stars, you do about 40 percent more business, and with three stars, you'll do about 100 percent more business. So from a business point ... you can see the influence of the Michelin guide."

Local businesses have similarly seen a spike in reservations following Michelin announcements, so global trends prevail here, too.

FOSTERING A FERTILE ENVIRONMENT

With the ongoing influx of tourists, the role of the food and beverage industry cannot be underestimated. A 2022 report by KPMG minces no words in stating that the restaurant industry contributes disproportionately higher wages and employs more people than other tourist-facing industries – a whopping 46.2 billion ISK in restaurant wages vs 38.3 billion in hotel wages.

In my retrospective for this publication on Icelandic dining culture in 2022, I touched upon the lost opportunity of turning Iceland into a global dining destination. This isn't wishful thinking. Research shows that 95% of global travellers today

consider themselves "food travelers," with 70% of them picking a destination based on food and drink choices.

Interestingly, 59% believe food choices are more important now than they were five years ago. A 2022 report by the Nordic Ministers titled "Nordic Food in Future Tourism" highlights the intersection of restaurants, food producers, farmers and animal husbandry as essential to attaining common goals of being an attractive destination where "eating and travelling in harmony with nature and local culture is a desirable lifestyle."

For reasons unknown, however, Iceland's potential as a gastronomic leader has been systematically overlooked.

Íslandsstofa (Business Iceland) focuses on showcasing Icelandic businesses abroad, Ferðamálastofa (The Icelandic Tourism Board) focuses on marketing Iceland as a desirable destination abroad. Neither of these focus on the importance of the restaurant industry on the spending habits of tourists, or on tourists choosing Iceland as a dining destination. PR teams of journalists occasionally arrive here, often sponsored by Icelandair, and sporadic mentions of local restaurants make an appearance in international outlets. But a concerted, committed effort to foster homegrown champions and focus on the creative ways chefs and purveyors are pushing boundaries is sorely amiss.

The impact of earning a Michelin star or being placed on a global best list has an immediate impact on a restaurant's business.

Given the enthusiastic news coverage and tweet-inducing interest when Turku, Finland, played host to the Michelin Guide Nordic Countries announcement on June 12, Reykjavik seems absolutely buoyant about its own potential as a culinary leader. However, it needs to be supported by a clear action plan that doesn't solely rest on an effective PR campaign with no real infrastructural overhaul.

The 2022 Nordic Ministers report outlined the challenges they found – an absence of strategic planning for the role of food in tourism and glaringly limited food tourism service when compared to our Nordic neighbours. The report further elaborated on a possible action plan calling out the rigidity and lack of flexibility by the government, and

a reluctance to adapt to changing expectations of the industry.

Bringing the likes of SVEIT (association of restaurant owners), Business Iceland, the Icelandic Tourism Board, food writers and PR agencies to the same table should be the first order of business in supporting the industry as the power player it is.

OPPORTUNITIES AS A DINING DESTINATION

The culinary history of Iceland may be younger than other countries, but it has long since moved away from survival mode that relied on preservation and boiling as a singular technique to a country building the framework of its cuisine around the unparalleled quality of its land and seas.

Locally grown wasabi, rivalling its Japanese counterparts, is gaining global recognition, as is hand-harvested salt. Icelandic lamb is the first Icelandic product to gain Protected Designation of Origin recognition, giving it the same status as champagne or Greek yoghurt. Nurturing and recognising local talents like Norð Austur in the east, Slippurinn in the south, and Tjörhúsið in the Westfjords as more than just local gems but as regional heroes, will only serve to foster and inspire other talents to spring up.

We know from our Nordic neighbours and other countries abroad that sustained effort, with cross-disciplinary cooperation between ministries, sectors and political

alliances, yields noticeable results. Denmark has launched a public-private partnership, the Gastro 2025 initiative, to attract gastronomic tourists and raise the country's culinary status. Russia was set to host the World's 50 Best on the heels of the first ever Moscow Michelin Guide – initiatives that, if not for the war, would have made it an attractive food travel destination.

Icelandic cuisine is more than its shock value smorgasbord of boiled and pickled sheep heads and ram testicles. We have never eaten better, grown more high quality produce or processed better fish than we do today. Our restaurants are not just local gems to be cherished – they are worthy of global scrutiny and being recognised as attractions in their own right. ■

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Food Love

I'm Thinking Of Buying A Boat

A love letter to HIÖLLI

WORDS Rex Beckett
IMAGE Art Bicnick

One of the last times I went on a djamm night (or party night, if you're not local), I naturally ended up staggering my way to the long and unruly queue snaking out from HIÖLLABÁTAR (aka HIÖLLI) in Ingólfstorg. "What are you having!?" bellowed a flailing, dishevelled oaf as I entered the ranks of the inebriated and hungry. "I'm paying for everyone!" he shouted to the crowd, who roared, laughed and questioned his sanity. I did all three, and ultimately declined his offer. He attempted to insist, but then when the time came to pay came, he turned tail and bolted. Then we all laughed. Really hard.

Another time, years ago, I was working at a nearby café that then shared owners with HIÖLLI. I would grab a half-boat for lunch pretty much daily. I'd usually take it to go, but this time I was sad, in the midst of a divorce and wanted to be alone. I sat inside the little shop, sitting on

one of their classic 50s diner glittery red vinyl stools, looking out at the square while gloomily chomping my sandwich. "Last Kiss" by Pearl Jam was playing over the speakers and it was so perfectly comical that I immediately stopped feeling sorry for myself.

These are just two moments in a 17-year love affair I've had with the legendary good-food-fast restaurant since my first trip to Iceland in 2006.




Opened in 1986, HIÖLLI has been feeding the masses of Reykjavik at central and satellite locations that keep increasing in number over the years. Their official website shows four of their locations, but leaves out the iconic downtown stand, perhaps because its inclusion verges on "no duh."

Serving up a wide selection of submarine-style sandwiches – or, as they're known in Iceland, boats – it's the kind of meal that is both extremely satisfying and also induces self-loathing. But the good kind. That "I just cancelled plans so I can stay in my sweatpants and watch a series I've seen a hundred times" kind of energy. It's a fine line be-

tween self-loving and -loathing, to be honest. And when I get myself a HIÖLLI, I ride that line like Tony Hawk on the half-pipe. I fucking shred.

Their once neighbour and fellow boat-purveyor Nonnabiti sadly shut down their downtown location a couple of years ago, so the "HIÖLLI vs. Nonni" wars have ended, much to the dismay of many. Why has HIÖLLI endured? Perhaps their economic sustainability has come from the bolstering of their parent company, Veitingafélagið, who own numerous popular local restaurants (they recently took over ownership and management of disgraced Mandi). Perhaps it's the hordes of drunks who drop coin every night, especially on weekends, like the place was going out of business. Perhaps it's just the old adage: location, location, location!

Why it endures for me, why I go back for a Stóri Hlunkur time and time again, is that it simply slaps. When you get to the end of the wrapper, where you practically have to drink down your last saucy bite, that's gotta be one of the best decisions you made all day. Or more likely, night. Thank you, HIÖLLI. Keep those boats coming. ■

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101 HOTEL
Wednesday to Saturday from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 1390 ISK, Wine 1590 ISK

12 TÓNAR
Every day from 14:00 to 19:00
Beer 1100 ISK, Wine 1200 ISK

AMERICAN BAR
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK

APÉRO
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 950 ISK, Wine 1100 ISK

BÍÓ PARADÍS
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00
Beer 850 ISK, Wine 850 ISK

BJÓRGARÐURINN
Every day from 15:00 to 19:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 900 ISK

BODEGA
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 900 ISK

BRAVÓ
Every day from 12:00 to 20:00
Beer 750 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK

BREWDOG
Wed-Sun from 14:00 to 17:00
Beer 990 ISK, Wine 990 ISK

BRÚT BAR
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 700 ISK, Wine 750 ISK, 2F1 on wine and beer on tap

DEN DANSKE KRO
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 750 ISK, Wine 750 ISK

FJALLKONAN
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00
Beer 990 ISK, Wine 1190 ISK

FORRETTABARINN
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 800 ISK, Wine 900 ISK

FORSETINN
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00
Beer 990 ISK, Wine 990 ISK

FRÖKEN REYKJAVÍK
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 990 ISK, Wine 1100 ISK

GAUKURINN
Every day from 16:00 to 21:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1100 ISK

HOTEL HOLT BAR
Wednesday to Saturday from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1350 ISK

THE IRISHMAN
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00
Beer 850 ISK, Wine 850 ISK

JÖRGENSEN KITCHEN & BAR
Every day except Thurs. 16:00 to 18:00, Thursday 16:00 to 20:00
Beer 890 ISK, Wine 1100 ISK

JUNGLE COCKTAIL BAR
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1100 ISK

KAFFI LÆKUR
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK

KAFFIBARINN
Every day from 15:00 to 19:00
Beer 800 ISK, Wine 900 ISK

KAFFIBRENNSLAN
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00
Beer 850 ISK, Wine 900 ISK

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

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

LÓLA FLÓRENS
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00
Beer 1200 ISK, Wine 1200 ISK

ÖLSTOFAN
Every day from 15:00 to 20:00
Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK

PETERSEN SVÍTAN
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1200 ISK

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

PUNK
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 850 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

RÖNTGEN
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK

SÆTA SVINIÐ
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00
Beer 990 ISK, Wine 1190 ISK

SATT RESTAURANT
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK

SKÚLI CRAFT BAR
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 900 ISK

SLIPPARINN
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00
Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK

SPILAKAFFI
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00
Beer 1000 ISK, no wine or cocktails

STÚDENTAKJALLARINN
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 710 ISK, Wine 850 ISK

TIPSÝ
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00

50% off select cocktails

UPPSALIR BAR
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 750 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

VEÐUR
Every day from 12:00 to 19:35
Beer 800 ISK, Wine 800 ISK

VÍNSTÚKAN TÍU SÓPAR
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00
Beer 1300 ISK, Wine 1600 ISK

VOX BRASSERIE & BAR
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1200 ISK



Featured Prikio

Bankastræti 12

No matter the weather, summer vibes are in full swing over at Prikio. Reykjavík's oldest café and absolute institution sits at the heart of the downtown and is always full of warmth, from its tight-knit and friendly community atmosphere to its retro cool décor. Known for its hip hop playlists and as the home of the Icelandic rap scene, there's always chill music playing to go along with your very well priced happy hour pint. Prikio's location also makes it the perfect pit-stop after fighting for your life up the Bankastræti hill. Go for the vibes, stay also for the vibes. ■

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Beer 700 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK

Cheap Eats

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All appetizers & main courses: 2.050 ISK.

APÓTEK
All day, every day
Soup of the Day: 1.990 ISK.

BÆJARINS BEZTU
All day, every day
Hotdog and soda: 990 ISK.

BRÚT
On Friday, Saturday & Sunday
Bottomless Brunch, including selected drinks: 6.900 ISK.

DEIG
On weekdays after 10:00
Poor Man's Offer: filled bagel, doughnut & drink: 1.850 ISK.

DOMINO'S
Tuesday, pick-up only
Tuesday Special: medium pizza with three toppings: 1.200 ISK all day on.

DRAGON DIM SUM
Every day, except Sunday, from 11:30-14:30
Choice of any two dumpling baskets: 2.190 ISK.

GLÓ
All day, every day
Bowl of the Month: 2.290 ISK.

HAMBORGARABÚLLA TÓMASAR
All day on Tuesday
Tuesday Special: burger, fries & soda: 1.790 ISK.

HLÖLLABÁTAR
Every day until 14:00
Lunch Offer: Choice of any sub and soda: 1.995 ISK.

ÍSLENSKI BARINN
All day, every day
Soup of the Day: 1.650 ISK.

LEMON
All day, every day
Combo of the Month: large sandwich & juice: 2.195 ISK.

MAI THAI BISTRO
Every day from 11:00-14:00
Lunch of the Day: 1.890 ISK.

NOODLE STATION
All day, every day
Vegetarian noodle soup: 1.290 ISK.

PIZZAN
All day, every day
Combo Pick-up Offer: choice of menu pizza & breadsticks: 50% off.

PHO VIETNAMESE
All day, every day
Pho & wonton soups: 1.890 ISK.

REYKJAVÍK ROASTERS
All day, every day
Breakfast menu & sourdough toasts (various toppings): 580-1.350 ISK.

SHALIMAR
Weekdays from 12:00-15:00
Curry in a Hurry Lunch Special: 1.590 ISK.

SHANGHAI
All day, every day
Choice of 3-dish combo: 2.290 ISK for one; 4.390 ISK for two.

SUBWAY
All day, every day
Sub of the Day: 1.399 ISK for 6"; 1.899 for 12".

ZORBIAN HOT
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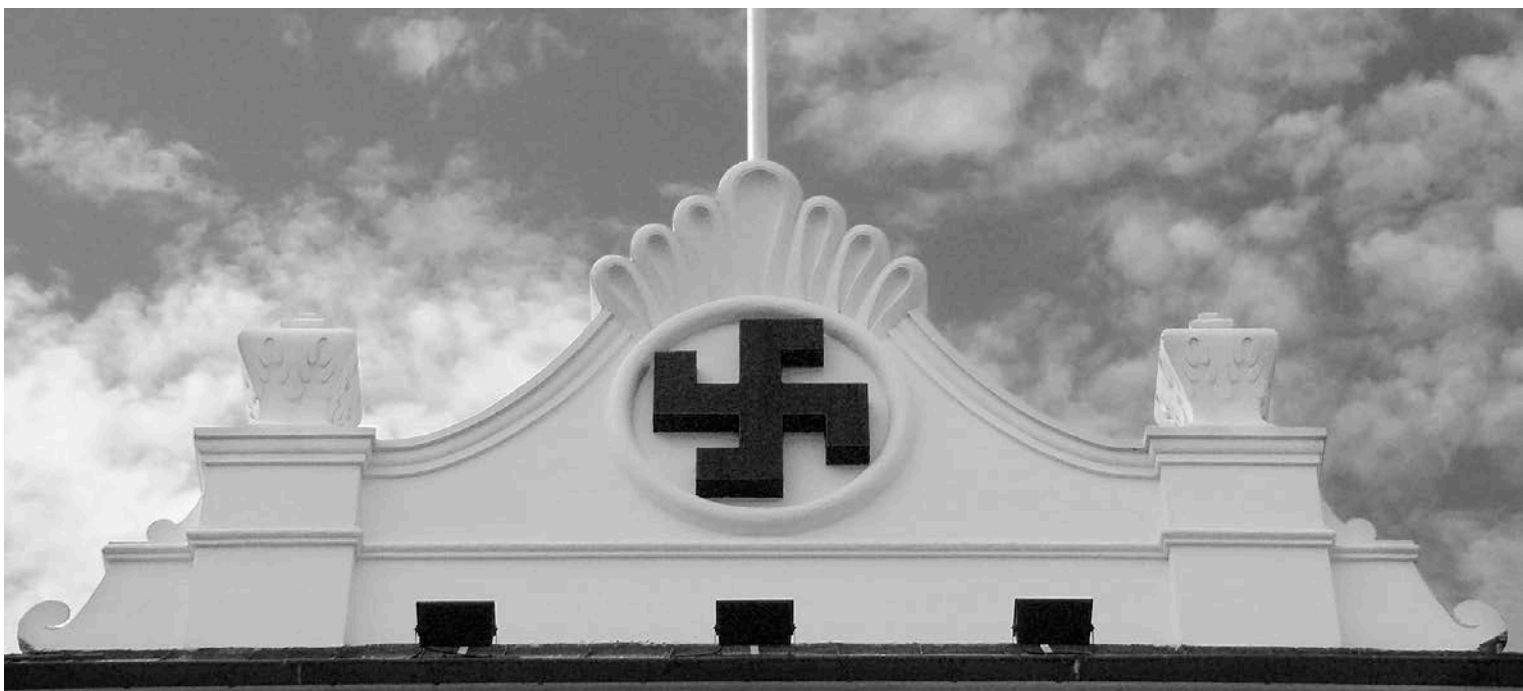
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Alternate Reality

What If The Nazis Had Invaded Iceland?

Another alternative history thought exercise to wrap your head around

WORDS Valur Gunnarsson
IMAGE Reykjavik Grapevine Archives

On a May morning in 1940, the Icelandic people woke to find a foreign fleet docked in Reykjavik harbour. The impossible had happened. For over a thousand years, Icelanders could depend upon geography as their best line of defence against foreign invasion. But by the first half of the 20th century, the outside world was drawing nearer, propelled by oil-run ships with longer range, submarines and the invention of the aeroplane. Iceland's long isolation was about to be broken. But by whom?

Of the major powers, the one that showed the most interest in Iceland in the 1930s was Nazi Germany. In 1938, a German glider squadron visited at the invitation of Icelandic glider enthusiasts. With them the Germans had a single propeller plane which was purchased by the Icelandic government upon their departure. The age of the aeroplane was beginning in Iceland, though an airfield had yet to be built.

In March 1939, the German airline Lufthansa, which was part of Reich Marshal Hermann Göring's portfolio, asked the Icelandic government for permission to start developing a landing area for passenger planes. Having someone else pay for the construction was appealing to many. Yet, Prime Minister Hermann Jónasson dragged his feet and the request was eventually denied. Storm

clouds were gathering and it was becoming clear that the Germans were interested in landing other aircraft than passenger planes.

One can wonder what could have happened if Iceland had acquiesced to the German offer. But this was hardly a realistic option. Iceland was in the British sphere of influence – if there was a German airfield here, one of the first things the Royal Navy would have done at the outbreak of war was to take it over. Iceland would probably have been invaded already in the autumn of 1939. One could wonder if this would really have changed much, except that the occupation of Iceland would have received more than a passing mention in history books, it being one of the first major actions of the allies during the war.

It was the British who arrived on May 10, 1940, a month after the fall of Norway and Denmark. This happened to be the very same day of the German offensive on the Western Front, which would lead to the fall of France. It was also the day Winston Churchill became Prime Minister of Britain. The occupation of Iceland was relegated to a footnote in the annals of World War II, though it changed everything here.

The differences would have been dramatic had the Germans arrived first. How likely was that scenario?

THE BATTLE OF ICELAND

In my novel Örninn og fálkinn (The Eagle and the Falcon), it is the Germans who arrive on that May morning. This, however, is unlikely to have

occurred. The German navy was still busy in Norway and the army and airforce equally occupied on the Western Front. To tweak things closer to the realm of possibility, Örninn og fálkinn sees Norway surrender in two days, much like the Danes who surrendered the first afternoon.

The Germans lost most of their destroyers at Narvik in northern Norway and their capital ships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau were badly damaged. Had the battle of Norway not taken place, they would have been a more formidable naval power early in the war. Not enough to take on the Royal Navy, but still...

A more likely scenario was the plan that was actually drawn up. After the fall of France, Hitler wanted to force the British to the negotiating table without the perils of direct invasion. His armies stood in France to the south and in Norway to the west. With control of Iceland (and ideally Ireland too), Britain would have been surrounded and compelled to come to terms.

To this end, Hitler had the navy draw up a plan to invade Iceland. The admirals did so grudgingly but called the plan "Icarus," perhaps indicating their faith in the whole scheme. The invasion of Norway had been a success but this was flying too close to the sun. The operation was set to take place in July, by which time the British would already have been in possession of Iceland for almost two months. Nevertheless, due to events elsewhere, the country was still ill-defended.

The main British encampments in Iceland were on Öskjuhlíð hill, later

called Howitzer Hill by the Americans, where you can still find military bunkers. This would have been the first target for an airborne assault. German paratroopers would have landed somewhere on the outskirts of Reykjavik in the dead of night. Except there is very little darkness in July in Iceland. Perhaps they would have been spotted and the invasion foiled then and there. But let us assume they would have overpowered the British forces as they did in Crete a year later.

AN ICELANDIC ARMY?

By morning, German ships would have arrived in Reykjavik, in Akureyri in the north and Seyðisfjörður in the east, had they managed to slip past the Royal Navy. Battles would have been fierce but brief, with much destruction wrought, not least in Seyðisfjörður, which was just within reach of German bombers operating out of Norway. It was in fact the only Icelandic town subjected to considerable bombing – the wreckage of a sunk oil tanker is still visible in the harbour.

The British troops in Iceland in 1940 were poorly trained and badly armed and would eventually have surrendered, although some might have taken to the highlands to continue the fight in the manner of outlaws of old. The Germans would have taken over the British positions and waited for the inevitable counterattack. They could have been resupplied with ammunition via plane and U-Boat, although only in small quantities, and would have resorted to requisitioning food from the locals. Worse was to come the longer the occupation would have lasted.

Had the British delayed and placed an embargo on Iceland with the intention of starving the Germans, this would also have affected the population at large and perhaps led to famine.

How the final showdown would go would have been obvious from the beginning. It is rather a question of how much of Reykjavik would be levelled before the Germans gave up against the returning British, supported by warships of every shape and size. What is sure is that the perception of the war in Iceland would be very different. Rather than seeing it as a prosperous time when everyone found work with the army (as did happen), it would instead be remembered as a national disaster when large parts of the country would have been levelled and many would have lost relatives – similar to the experiences of the rest of Europe. But for a country that had never before known war or occupation, bitterness towards the Germans, and probably also the British, would linger to this day.

Would this have led to the creation of an Icelandic army? Very probably. In any case, Iceland would have been eager to join NATO at its founding in 1949, as did happen. NATO membership was the most divisive issue in Icelandic politics for the duration of the Cold War, but with a "hot" World War II on our shores, there would have been more consensus about membership, as was the case in Norway and Denmark. ■

And check out the Grapevine's *Alternate History Of Iceland* podcast for more hypothetical hijinks.

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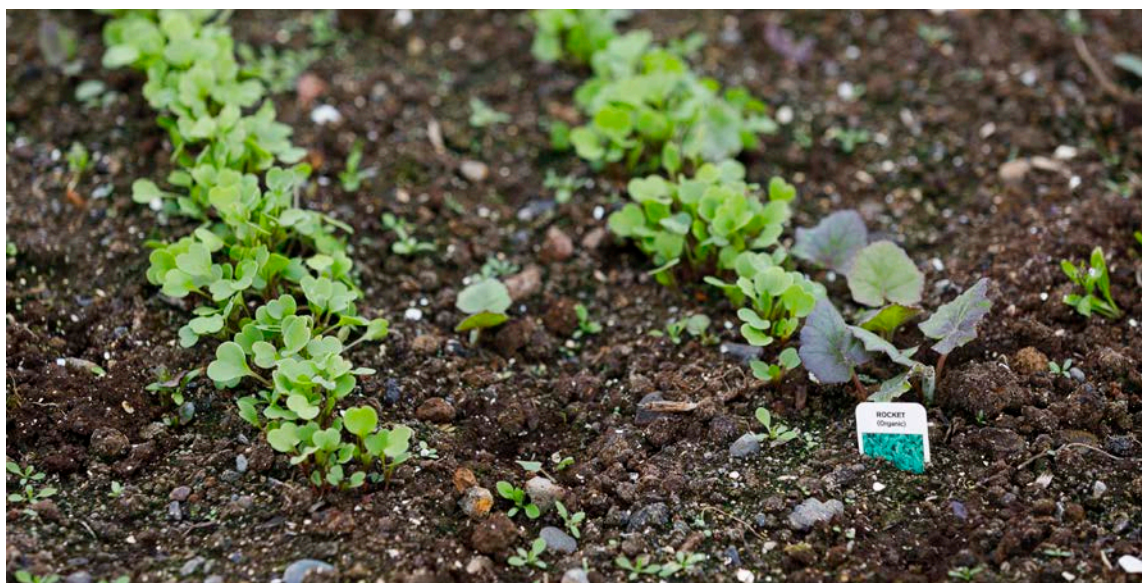
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The Neighbourhood Watch

The Space Of Spades

A glimpse into Reykjavík's community gardens

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGES Art Bicnick

Food security is a serious issue, which feels like an overwhelming task to combat and which will only be exacerbated by the rapidly changing climate. Among other prerequisites, growing food requires land which, like all nice things, is limited in Iceland's capital.

While not the magic solution to a complex issue, Reykjavík's community gardens provide one means of raising local sustainability levels. Available in most municipalities in the Reykjavík metropolitan area – there are approximately 600 community plots spread around eight neighbourhoods – these gardens offer residents opportunities to improve upon their gardening skills while accelerating their farmers' tans.

A GARDEN OF RASCALS

Tending his garden in Fossvogur is Andrés Þór Þorvarðarson. A first-time gardener in Fossvogur, and a second-time renter of a plot, Andrés made a promise to himself to learn

from his past botanical mistakes. "Last year I didn't really harvest anything because I took a really long holiday abroad," he says with a laugh. Because of his occupation, Andrés benefits from a nice summer vacation, which he intends to use this year growing his garden. "Right now, I've only planted the potatoes," he says. But more is yet to come. He picks up his seed packets and displays them proudly; oregano, mint and carrots are among his future endeavours.

According to Guðný Arndís Olgeirsdóttir, Reykjavík's chief gardening manager, the gardens were initially devised to occupy restless children enjoying a summer out of school. This partly explains their proximity to schools and residential neighbourhoods. "There's an element of education as well; letting the kids experience gardening in the summer and harvesting in the fall," she says.

People all have different reasons to apply for the plot of land, but Guðný delivers some insight into the logic behind it. "During hard times, I can tell that people are really trying to make good use of them," Guðný says. Not letting the plots deteriorate, people seem to care more for their gardens. After all, a garden plot, variable in size, only costs about 5.000 ISK for the growing period. An investment that surely pays off, if you show diligence.

A SUMMER IN THE DIRT

These gardens provide accessibility to those without one. "I like being in

nature," Andrés confesses, "And this fulfils that need." Commenting on the community that forms on the patches, Andrés says that "there's a good atmosphere. I guess most people are just there to do their own thing. It's interesting to see what people are growing there. I met some people who grow their own garlic, onion, mint and potatoes. Just unbelievable."

But what's the allure of spending a whole summer crouched in the dirt? "It's therapeutic," Andrés answers. "It's fun to plant a seed and watch it grow, tracking its growth as it blossoms into something edible. While flowers at the store are beautiful, nothing happens to them after you take them home," he says.

As this is Andrés's second time around, he notices a difference between his previous plot in Vesturbær and his current one. Most notably, there seems to be a discrepancy in the facilities and the access to gardening tools, depending on the location. "If I want to get anything done this year, I need to bring my own tools," he says.

Despite the lack of gardening tools in some locations, the project is immensely popular. No plots are currently available to rent and a queue has formed. "We need to increase the number of plots. People must be put on waiting lists," Guðný says. For people interested in acquiring a place next year, applications open in the spring and plots are allotted around May 1. ■

RAMMAGERDIN, ISLAND 1940

- 1 *Eden Blanket*, designed by Anita Hirlekar. Made in Reykjavík from pure Icelandic wool.
- 2 *Arctic Blanket*, designed by Sigrún Halla Unnarsdóttir. Made in Reykjavík from pure Icelandic wool.



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Musings **The Rocks of Tjörnin
Called Tjörnin Rocks**

Unravelling the mysteries of the island in the pond

WORDS Charlie Winters
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Waves crash against mossy stones. Plants sprout from every corner of this lush natural landscape. The squawk of seagulls intermingles with the sounds of morning traffic. A man on a scooter shouts an expletive at a closely-passing car as he rolls along the shore overlooking Iceland's most famous island. This isn't some distant beach, it's central Reykjavik.

The capital region is host to several bodies of water that tourists like to call lakes but locals insist are merely ponds. In fact, you have probably visited Iceland's most famous pond, Tjörnin, which conveniently trans-

lates to – you guessed it – The Pond.

During the winter months, a popular pastime of locals is penguin shuffling or skating along its frozen banks, gliding around tourists who have never in their lives glimpsed water in its frozen state. In the summer, it's time to feed the birds. So much feeding takes place here that Wikipedia claims the pond is referred to as "the biggest bread soup in the world." Yet, sitting in the center of the soup is one oft overlooked island.

The island is small, roughly 12 meters in diameter, and mostly composed of solid mossy stone, decayed plant matter and bird shit piled so high as to form small hills within its vibrant geography. The island, though, is seemingly unnamed. When asked about what the island is called, locals spoke only in hushed tones. Some said it was once a pumping station that failed due to "avian infrastructural difficulties" and others simply said it was cursed. Once again, I must do my own research.

Google Maps, conveniently, has two location markers tied to the island. One is Ostrov, which appears to be a nonexistent museum with an address that leads you to the large church on the banks. The other marker is of a choir called Kliður, which translates to "The Clumps" (somehow a perfect name for this chunk of land). Wikipedia also provides no name for this mysterious pond islet. So, in an exercise of touristy colonialism, I have decided to

name it Tjörnin Rocks. Furthermore, in an act of unending hubris, I have labelled it such on Google Maps. (Icelanders! Please go change its name to something creative and culturally relevant.)

It's only been 24 hours since I put up the marker and the reviews have already been coming in! DefinitelyNot-Björk writes "OMG, Tjörnin Rocks really rock!" xX_ParadiseLost_Xx writes "Help, I've been stuck on this rock since the ice thawed." HitchcockLover writes "THE BIRDS THE BIRDS THE BIRDS AAAAAH!"

One review sticks out to me, though. Mysterious31Stranger writes, "What's that metal box on the island. Makes it look ugly 1/5 stars." Ugly? What on earth were they talking about? I stood on the shores squinting and noticed it. Poking out of the bushes, a small metal box, just like Mysterious31Stranger said. I tried to resist the urge, but curiosity got the better of me. I hired a guide to ferry me to Tjörnin Rocks.

As our dinghy approached the shore the smell of bird shit overwhelmed my nostrils. Geese circled overhead like vultures. I could see it in their eyes. They were warning me not to go, not to step on this hallowed land. Cutting through the bushes, I discovered what that box was. What I saw... what I learned should not be put into words. Some secrets are better left forgotten.

I can only urge other explorers, do not visit the island. The locals were right, it is cursed. ■



Well, You Asked

Pick your Poison

The Grapevine answers your most pressing questions

WORDS Catherine Magnúsdóttir
IMAGE Art Bicnick

THE FIRST TIME THAT I VISITED ICELAND MORE THAN 40 YEARS AGO BEER WAS ILLEGAL, BUT BREN-NIVÍN WAS READILY AVAILABLE, AS WAS VODKA AND WHISKEY. WHAT'S UP WITH THAT?

We know what we're about buddy. Plus, it's harder to find an excuse for keeping the cheap, yellow monk brew around – yeah I said it! – when the cops come sniffing. “What do you have that high percentage-alcohol for?” – “Disinfecting. Cleaning. Medicine.” – “Well, that's alright then, I suppose. But wait, what's that smell of watered down vomit, yeast

and poor decisions? *Gasp!* Do you have b-b-beer??” – “No officer! My dog ate the bread dough and puked it up and I haven't thrown it out yet, I swear!!” – “A likely story! That's it, you're coming with me!” – “No, please, I got tickets to Oktoberfest!” – “You can tell that sin-infested beer and sausage fest auf Wiedersehen!”

(It's okay, I'm German)

WHAT ARE THE TOP USED NAMES THAT ORIGINATED IN ICELAND FOR WOMEN?

We could probably look into official statistics but what would be the fun in that. Personally, I seem to keep running into people named Birna. Nice ones, too. There's also lots of ladies with double name combos and then there's a bunch of short-enings and nicknames and gener-

ational recycling that make these nicknames necessary at family gatherings. When in doubt, Helga.

HAS ANYONE SEEN MY PHONE?

Is there any chance you have lost it among the vast fields of moss, between rifts of volcanic rock, on your way to discover one of the magical waterfalls of this island, where it also could have fallen into a rushing stream? Could one of the local creatures have taken it, either a mighty raven for its nest, or even one of the Hidden People, who were curious about such a quaint human object? Or could it be that you just carelessly shoved it into your butt pocket, sat down on the couch, where it naturally slipped out and fell between the cushions along with the remote? Best to retrace your steps, I'd say. ■



Last Look IMAGE Art Bicnick

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Potent Quotables

If it's not made with Icelandic milk, whether cow, sheep or goat, then it's not skyr.

The Cheese Queen of Iceland discusses her life, career and cheese on page 10

I'd been in the band since I was a teenager and we all understand each other. We're all equally shit.

Kjartan Sveinsson reflects on Átta, Sigur Rós' first album in over a decade, his hiatus and growing up on pages 12-14

The coalition government has gone to some lengths to do nothing in circumstances when they should have been doing something, all in the name of self-preservation.

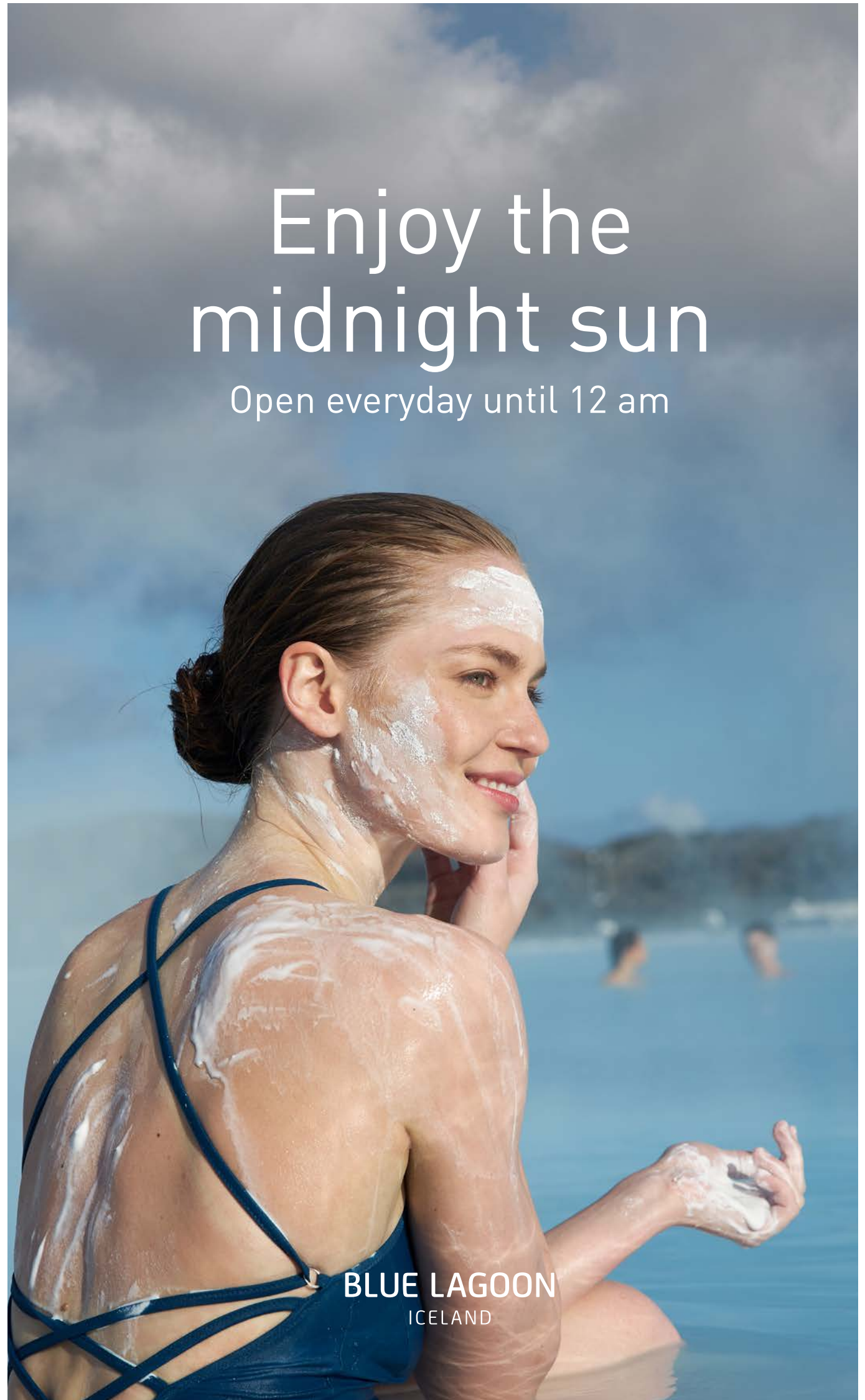
Jón Trausti Sigurðarson explains why the sale of Íslandsbanki has been dominating the headlines (again) on pages 16-17

I never want to sound pretentious.

Music band Dream Wife continues its political exploration on pages 24-25

Icelandic cuisine is more than its shock value smorgasbord of boiled and pickled sheep heads and ram testicles.

Could Iceland be the next big culinary destination? Shruthi Basappa deconstructs the local dining scene on pages 32-33



The Grapevine Recommends:

Food Walk

Food enthusiasts and hungry travellers are given exclusive access to some of Reykjavík's celebrated restaurants and artisan producers, as curated by longtime food columnist Ragnar. He and his team of trusted foodies takes diners away from the usual haunts to celebrate the diversity of modern Icelandic food culture.

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