

The Reykjavík Grapevine



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Best before September 22

Futile And Obsolete

Culture

Music

Travel



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On the Cover

What role does whaling have in Iceland's future? What has it actually contributed to the country in the 48 years since Hvalur hf. began operations? The cover photo shows two retired whaling ships in Hvalfjörður to illustrate an industry that Minister of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Svandís Svavarsdóttir calls "futile and obsolete."

PHOTO BY
Boris Niehaus



Editorial

Everything Is Disappointing. Nothing Is Surprising.

WORDS Catharine Fulton,
Editor in Chief

It's hard sometimes to bear witness to Iceland.

A friend once had the habit of commenting on happenings in Icelandic society or politics that upset him by countering, "in a *real* country, they would..." and go on to explain what [insert country here] would do differently than Iceland was doing about this or that crisis or scandal. The connotation was that Iceland was little more than a small town masquerading as a nation state. A mess of too-close relationships and too-little oversight.

It was an insulting way to put it, I would think and often say aloud.

But the situation playing out right now with whaling, and individual MPs and entire parties putting their own political fortunes and the whims of their buddies ahead of the law, the science and the overwhelming majority of the nation has me seriously considering what another country would do in this situation.

Would another country, faced with a situation where the morals and wishes of the populace are in direct opposition with the blood lust of one man with a couple boats and a chest full of harpoons, prioritise the latter? Would it let its police force strip a peaceful protester of water to expedite the killing of whales in the midst of a climate crisis? Would it let lucrative industries falter in the name of trophy hunting? Would it allow a corrupt and co-dependent to stand?

Read about Iceland's recent decisions about whaling on Pages 12-14. I recommend streaming Sævar Jóhannesson's *Where The Light Enters* while doing so. Read about that beautiful musical offering on Page 27.

Stop whaling. ■

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.



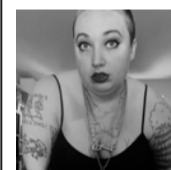
JÓHANNES BJARKI
BJARKASON

Jóhannes Bjarki is a Reykjavík 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 Reykjavík. One day she'll write a non-fiction book.



REX BECKETT

Rex Beckett has been a fixture in the Reykjavík 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 Reykjavík food panel, Shruthi can be found trying to become a Michelin restaurant inspector.

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What The News!?

Ugh, Tourists

The news catching our eye these days

WORDS Catharine Fulton
IMAGE Catharine Fulton

amount differs from respondents ages 18 to 34 and those 35 and older. Just 42% of Icelanders aged 18 to 34 feel there were too many tourists this summer (57% felt the number was reasonable), a whopping 62.75% of respondents 35 and older think there are too many visitors.

By comparison, 19% of Icelanders polled by Gallup in 2019 felt there were too many tourists in the country, while 27% felt that way in 2017 and 29% did in 2014. The Icelandic Tourism Board counted 997,000 total tourists in 2014, compared to Íslandsbanki's estimate of 2.1 million tourists visiting Iceland in 2023.

The poll was conducted between August 18 and 28.

FEELING DEFLATED

The impact of tourism is being felt by the students at the highschool in Akureyri, in the north of Iceland. The parking lot of their campus and dormitories happens to be adjacent to the town's popular botanical gardens, to which the coach company SBA Norðurleið transports several busloads of tourists from docked cruise ships on a daily basis.

Students have complained that the buses park illegally, impede others' use of the parking lot, are a danger to pedestrians and have caused near collisions.

The sentiment toward the large tour buses was made clear September 4 by two students who parked their cars at the front and rear of a bus that had parked across several spaces. The students' vehicles were both parked within the lines of designated parking spaces and, as can be seen in a video recorded by a student and posted online, did not impede the bus from departing once its passengers had all boarded. But the audacity of the students to dare ... park legally? ... was enough to rile up the bus driver, who was filmed taking the air out of a tire on one of the student's cars.

The grown adults employed by SBA Norðurleið also shouted at the students, called them idiots, questioned the future of the country should it be inherited by these youths, and then hit one of them with a sign upon noticing he was being filmed.

The headmaster of the school commented in local media that the students had done nothing and chastised the behaviour of the adults.

This bus beef would indicate that Akureyri is about five years behind Reykjavik, where residents' displeasure with the constant bus traffic saw large buses and shuttles banned from navigating most streets of the city centre. ■

A recent poll has found that a majority of Icelanders believe there were too many tourists in the country this summer.

The poll, conducted by Gallup for tourism website Turisti, surveyed 796 people living all around Iceland. It found that 58% of respondents believed there have been too many tourists, while 40% said there has been a reasonable number of tourists and 2% believe there are too few.

The age breakdown of respondents show the sentiment about the number of visitors to Iceland varies by age. While just 1% to 3% of all age groupings feel there are too few tourists, the divide between thinking there are too many or a reasonable



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Ask An Expert

What's Nibbling On Iceland's Forests?

We sought the truth from the Icelandic Forest Service

WORDS Catherine Magnúsdóttir
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Tree growth in Iceland has risen almost exponentially in the last few decades. In part due rather unfortunately to rising temperatures, but also because of proactive reforestation efforts. Taller trees and thicker forests are good for the environment and create new living spaces for animals that couldn't establish themselves in Iceland before. And yes, that includes bugs. But with the rapid increase in new creepy crawlies, Mother Nature might have some trouble keeping up with the demand. We went to Dr. Brynja Hrafnkelsdóttir of the Icelandic Forest Service Skógræktin to learn more about what's eating the forests.

wasps, makes Icelandic greenery something of an all you can eat buffet for incoming insects.

Recent field research conducted by Brynja and Skógræktin has drawn attention to browning birch tree leaves, as they are being eaten from the inside by two to three newly discovered (in Iceland) species of insects: *Scolioneura betuleti* or sawflies (*birkibéla* in Icelandic), *Heringocrania unimaculella* or British leafminers (*birkikemba* in Icelandic), and *Fenusella Nana*, another sawfly that does not have an Icelandic name yet. All so-called leafminers. Another new pest is the *Phratora vitellinae* aka brassy leaf beetle or *asparglytta* in Icelandic, which can be rather aggressive. One of the new natural enemies that have been found, though, is the *Carabus nemoralis* or bronze carabid (*varmasmiður*), a big beetle that eats snail eggs or even whole snails.

Apart from that, Icelandic forests still have to deal with larvae of many moth species that do a lot of damage, as well as sap-sucking aphids (aka plant louse). Plus, the research shows that not only are new bugs coming faster and having an easier time establishing themselves due to global warming, already native bugs are changing and spreading northward too, which could overwhelm the local flora.

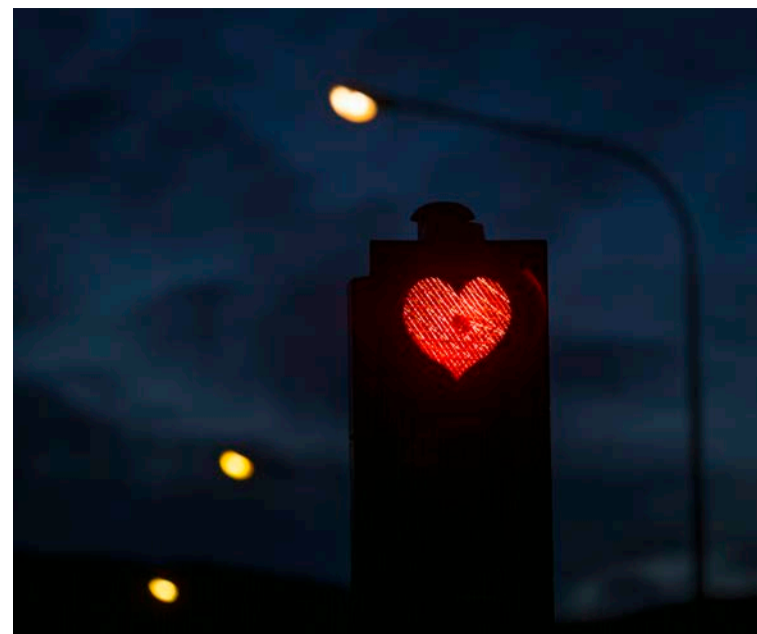
"Birch is the only native tree species that forms forests here," Brynja says. "We don't have many native

tree species, like in other countries, and we are a little bit worried about more and more pests coming in, for example on imported tree species or plants. It's not legal to import tree species in soil but some bugs could come in when they are still in their pupae stage in soil that can come with other plant species that are commonly sold in regular plant shops."

"There's some imbalance here. The trees are also not used to it," Brynja explains. "We're looking into whether we can potentially import some natural enemies of these bugs. We could work with people in Switzerland for instance who have done this before, with biological controls etc. They would maybe collect natural enemies of the same species there but I don't know if that will happen." The importing process is, of course, a lot more complicated than stuffing a bunch of wasps in a box and putting a stamp on it. Though that would also prove difficult and not entirely painless.

"What works quite well is introducing species in greenhouses here, though introducing them to the natural environment is a lot trickier and needs to be handled carefully." Not to mention that Iceland is known for being rather strict when it comes to any animal coming into or leaving the country (except fish, maybe). But it still beats using insecticides, Brynja says, as that would also just kill whatever natural predator might be trying to establish itself. ■

“We have plenty of pests. Maybe not as much as in the south of the world, but a lot of them are coming because of global warming,” Brynja explains. “Some of them are also causing more damage than in other countries because they’re new here and there’s a lack of natural enemies.” The lack of predators, such as certain species birds or



Do Shit

Prepare For Darkness To Fall

The Útlendingur's ongoing guide to getting shit done

WORDS Catharine Fulton
IMAGE Art Bicnick

I feel like I'm the odd one out when discussing the seasons here in Iceland. The seasons, of course, being Dark and Light. In Light season, I'm a ghoul. Sleep deprived and dragging through the days after a restless night. My blackout roller blind cuts some light, and my Manta sleep mask completely sinks my eyeballs into darkness without putting pressure on my eyes, thanks to their cushioned doughnut-shaped eye cups. (It's at times like these I wish the Grapevine allowed affiliate marketing.) But the very cells of my skin can sense the light, keeping my body in a semi-awake state the night through.

And to be clear, that "night" begins at 03:00 after I realised I've already eaten "second dinner," having forgotten the meal consumed at a more reasonable hour when the sun sat at the same point in the sky.

All that is to say, I welcome the darkness and the hours of deep, peaceful, rejuvenating sleep that come with it. I've missed you, Dark season.

But it's not easy for everybody, so

I've put together this helpful guide to adjusting to the darkness.

My number one tip is following the numbers on the clock, rather than the light in the sky. It will be easy to fall asleep, but perhaps harder to get yourself out of bed in pitch dark. Get a sun lamp alarm that will begin mimicking sunrise a half hour before it begins to sound its alarm. It helps (so long as you're not wearing your Manta sleep mask – no light gets through that miracle sleep device).

Another tip is taking your vitamin D. Icelanders have taken Lysi for generations, and they don't all turn into tragic poster children of S.A.D. come October. Take your Lysi, or take another vitamin D supplement. In fact, use these winter months to focus on your nutritional intake in general. It turns out getting fruits and vegetables into your tum tum is good for body and soul.

Finally, stay social and active. Those dark early evenings are a cosy time to meet friends for afterwork drinks or chats. Or put some music or podcast in your earbuds and go for a stroll around the city solo. The darkness makes it that much easier to peep at the decor of houses whose owners have neglected to close their curtains. Can you believe they chose that colour for their living room walls!?

Enjoy the dark. ■



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Money Moves Dumpster Diving By Necessity, Not Choice

As prices in Iceland continue to soar, some turn to garbage bins to avoid starvation

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Supplied

Iceland's reputation as an expensive place to live is hardly a secret. Yet, the growing trend of dumpster diving in the country remains somewhat taboo. Some divers are motivated by a desire to reduce food waste, while others have no alternative in this economy – they need to feed families, but money is always too scarce. We embarked on a quest to learn how dumpster diving can impact food expenses and talked to a regular dumpster diver who chose to remain anonymous.

GV: HOW DID YOU FIRST GET INTO DUMPSTER DIVING AND WHAT INSPIRED YOU?

First of all, it's a lot less of an inspiration than a need. I'm a single mom with a teenage boy who wants to eat a lot. We also have a mortgage, which has tripled in the last two and

a half years. When I took out the loan, it consumed 20% of my income, but now it takes up 75% to 80% of my earnings. This means we're on the brink of either going hungry or finding a smart solution.

We couldn't eat at friends' houses every day, so we had to find something else. I had a friend who did dumpster diving for a long time and he introduced me to this – once he sent me a picture of food, saying, "This was today's hunt." It was 50,000 kronur worth of food. I decided to try.

It wasn't easy at the beginning. Dumpster diving is on the boundary of being legal and I don't want to violate the law. When a dumpster is closed with a lock, that means you can't enter – it's a locked area, regardless of whether it's just garbage, though.

This society is in trouble now. We wouldn't have this many free fridges [Freedge – community fridges aimed at reducing food waste] if there wasn't a need. People should be protesting in front of the Parliament because the pressure on the working

class is not normal. I'm working two jobs so I can stay afloat, keep my car and pay what I need to. But it's outrageous that the capital income tax is 10%, while the working class has to pay 32%, 37%, 44% of their income.

Dumpster diving is a temporary solution for me. Sometimes I enjoy it, sometimes I hate it, but if I had the right amount of income and outgoing balance, I wouldn't do it anymore. But at this point, it's crucial. Otherwise, my flat would be on the market and I would lose the savings that I've invested here.

However, there are dumpster divers who will always need it because they don't have enough money and society should take care of all of these groups. This is a sign of a deeper problem and we should act now. But I can't see any initiative from the government or the social services side. There are people who are paid to sort this problem and they are just scratching their balls – not just scratching their balls; these people are lazy, ignorant, stupid idiots. They are sitting in government offices and filling their pockets.

GV: WHICH FOODS ARE COMMONLY DISCARDED AND WHAT WERE YOUR MOST SURPRISING OR VALUABLE FINDS?

Whenever I go to the dumpster these days, especially during summer, it's always fruits and veggies, rarely something else. But last winter, before Christmas, we found a lot of meat – a very special selection of gourmet food like French duck and other frozen meats. Since it was minus 20 degrees Celsius, everything was intact and labelled. At that time, it was a really rare find! We brought home a minimum of 20–40 kilos of frozen meat that lasted us for about half a year.

We have also found chocolate, coffee, organic and gluten-free items like cookies and pre-baked goods. That's rare, but it happens because it's close to or overdue for the expiry date. I never take prepared food in a plastic bag, and I'm usually very cautious with milk products, cheese, milk, kefir, yoghurt, and so on.

GV: CAN YOU PLAN YOUR WEEKLY MEAL PREP BASED

ON DUMPSTER DIVING?

Not at all. I try dumpster diving every day. Those places that I know, I know the best time to check them. But I consider it lucky every time I find something good. Lately, I only get overdue vegetables, overripe and in bad condition. Whenever I come home with a big basket of vegetables and fruits, I have to spend at least one to three hours prepping them – cutting them out, cooking or drying them so they can be used. Since the beginning of the summer, dumpster diving hasn't been good at all. Many dumpsters got locked or removed. Other dumpsters aren't good anymore.

GV: HAS DUMPSTER DIVING IMPACTED YOUR OVERALL SPENDINGS ON FOOD?

I don't have any money to spend on food, so everything I find is just to help us. Earlier, I had 100,000–150,000 ISK for food a month. I don't pay that now, so it's a minimum saving of 100,000 ISK. When I don't have anything I can consider, I go and buy bread and milk in the store. ■



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Side Hustle Of The Issue

The Receptionist

An introvert's hell, an extrovert's paradise

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Like many other young people, Johanna Gascoin moved to Iceland to work as an au pair. Although her time working with her host family has ended, she continues to live with them while juggling two jobs. Both seem to be temporary – this winter, Johanna plans to turn her dream of finding a job as a dog sled guide into a reality.

Johanna Gascoin, 26, a graphic designer

I got a Master's degree in graphic design in France, and then I moved to Iceland to work and improve my English. That was the plan. I'm still freelancing in graphic design for some French brands while also working as a receptionist in a hotel. These two jobs help me afford the cost of living in Iceland. I work at the hotel almost every afternoon, doing

the afternoon shift from 15:00 to 23:00. This way I have my mornings to work on my other job.

Most of the time, I have meetings in the morning because it's the best time to have them. Sometimes, during the afternoon when it's calm at the hotel, I can also work on design projects, which is good. That's why I decided to stay at the hotel – it's a quiet place and I still have time to work on my projects on the side.

HOMEY VIBES

I love the mood of the hotel. I love the fact that it's small; it's not like a big chain. Customers are always so nice to us. Once, there was this woman from Romania. She gave me her card at the end and told me, 'Anytime you want to come to Romania, just text me, and I'll take care of everything for you.'

I feel at home at the hotel. We have a staff bathroom with a shower, our own lockers and everything. Even when I come to work by bicycle after a 40-minute ride, I can take a shower, relax and have a coffee. There is a big lounge, so even if I'm not working, I can come and sit there to work on my computer. It's a good place and I'm close with my colleagues and my boss. Sometimes, the shifts can be quite long and boring. For

example, between 20:00 and 23:00, there aren't many customers to check-in. But I can use this time for something else.

PATIENCE IS KEY

You need to be patient as a receptionist – patient and smiley. Everybody can have a bad mood and nobody has to be 100% smiling all the time. But when you're at the hotel's reception, customers expect you to be friendly. You cannot be mad, impatient or grumpy. You can't just hand them the keys and be done. You have to talk to them. You have to know your country. You have to provide them with advice. You're getting paid to be nice, so be nice.

I'm an extremely social person. I get strange energy from people. Seeing new people daily, giving them a smile or advice, and being nice to them makes me feel better. As a designer, you often work alone, constantly in front of your computer, and you don't interact with a lot of people. Having this job where you're constantly meeting new people is very nice. ■

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.

The Grapevine Presents:



Everyone knows Hraun. This is dark chocolate Hraun! 'Hraun' means 'Lava,' and this bar is shaped as though a chocolate-spouting volcano erupted over a wafer-field of puffed

rice and maize starch (That's probably how it's advertised, anyway). The texture is rough, and bits and pieces of puffed rice pop out like a bits of a lava field.

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Neighbourhood Watch

Who You Gonna Call? Gum Busters!

Guðjón Óskarsson's sanitation efforts keep Reykjavík gum-free

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGE Art Bicnick

tourists, asking me what the hell I'm doing," he says. What most locals of course know, is that Guðjón is there to wash away chewing gum blobs stuck to the city's promenades.

The contraption strapped to Guðjón's back is a portable battery, powering up his gum-erasing wand, which sprays cleaning solution. "I manage

ing led to him receiving the annual Reykjavík Citizen of the Year award in 2021. According to the numbers, back then he cleaned approximately 56.000 stains over 10 weeks.

A TOWN WITHOUT GUM

To raise awareness of the issue, Guðjón revived the project on July

"I've always had this thing with numbers," Guðjón says. "I used to participate in an amateur theatre group back in the day. Every night, my co-actors would ask me, 'Guðjón, how many guests are here?' They knew I would count the audience members."

GUM-FREE FUTURE

Since starting in 2020, Guðjón has cleaned up approximately 190.000 stains, with 46.300 removed in 2023 alone.

For this season, Guðjón wanted to raise funds for the non-profit Umhyg-

he is positive about the future. In addition to fundraising for a good cause, Guðjón had the goal of hiring additional cleaners to help with the efforts, which unfortunately did not materialise.

The cooling weather doesn't seem to stop Reykjavík's sole gum-buster. Despite Guðjón's contract expiring at the end of October, he's able to work well into the winter. In between his gum-cleaning operations, Guðjón also helps clean graffiti off buildings. "The goal is a gum-free downtown Reykjavík," Guðjón smiles and encourages everyone to dispose of their gum in the bin. ■

I knew there'd come a time when I needed a regular income again.

to work non-stop for four hours," Guðjón explains. "It's sometimes hard to tell the difference between gum and the nicotine pouches. They tend to get stuck in the brush," he laments.

Starting the project in the early days of COVID, Guðjón experienced a bout of unemployment. "I was laid off at the hotel I was working at, like all other hotel employees. I knew there'd come a time when I needed a regular income again," grins Guðjón. "I regularly went on walks when I identified the problem. I was appalled by the amount of gum on the streets."

Guðjón's dedication to gum-bust-

1 under the name "Klessulaus 101 Reykjavík" (Gum-free Reykjavík). The project's inauguration ceremony included a host of notable persons lending their support to the cause, including President Guðni Jóhannesson himself.

Everything went well, except for the weather's lack of cooperation. "It hadn't rained as much in Reykjavík in 30 minutes as it did during the ceremony. It was astonishing," comments Guðjón.

With the project, he set out to clean around 38.000 clumps of gum – all of which he manually counted.

Every night, my co-actors would ask me, "Guðjón, how many guests are here?" They knew I would count the audience members.

gja – an association for chronically ill children. People can pledge funds to the project in exchange for a gum-free street on the project's website.

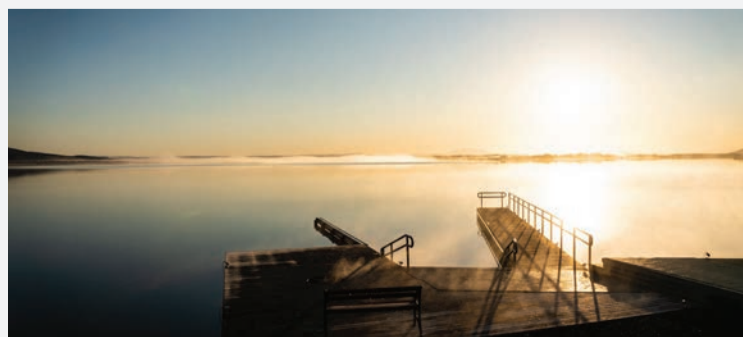
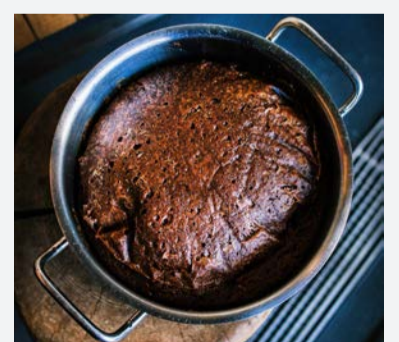
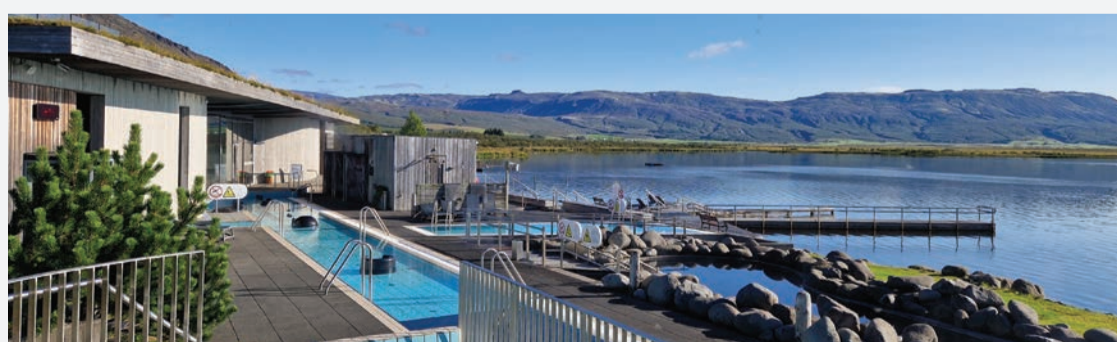
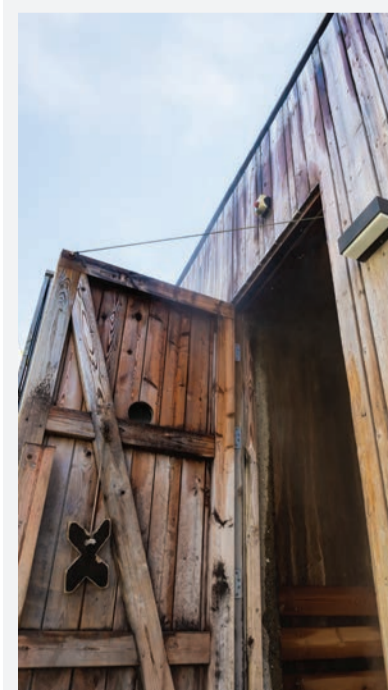
Although Guðjón confesses that things didn't go according to plan,

You can track Guðjón's progress at www.tyggjoidburt.is. You can also help the city become gum-free by donating to the project while raising funds for chronically ill children by way of Umhyggja.

Marching the streets of Reykjavík armed with a contraption reminiscent of the Ghostbusters' proton packs is Guðjón Óskarsson. Known to most people as "The Chewing Gum Guy," Guðjón stands out among the parka-wearing crowd in his neon-green jacket, occupied with his work.

CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Guðjón's presence has reached an almost legendary status in downtown Reykjavík. "I have people come up to me all the time, both locals and



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Feature

The Indefensible Defence C

Examining the past, present and still uncertain future of whaling in Iceland

WORDS Catharine Fulton
IMAGES Boris Niehaus

at the far end of the pier, with prominent red smokestacks each marked with the letter H and equipment on their bow wrapped shrouded by brown tarpaulins. High in the crow's nests, mere specks from this distance, are two women, occupying the masts to prevent the ships from leaving the pier.

THE ESCALATION

My name is Anahita Babaei and I am part of the growing group of people here in Iceland that is against whaling. We are doing what we can to stop these ships from leaving the harbor [sic] and kill up to 209 fin whales.

Right now I am in the mast of Hvalur 9 where I will be staying for as long as I can to stop the ships from going out to sea.

The reason why I am doing this is not to cause trouble for anyone directly apart from the owners of Hvalur hf. I understand though that my actions will affect other groups of people indirectly, and to them I would like to apologize in advance. The actions of the owners of Hvalur hf. affect many people and so action against them will also do the same.

If a law is unjust, one is not only right to disobey it, one is obliged to do so. #stopwhaling

So posted Anahita Babaei to Instagram in the early morning of September 4, the accompanying video filmed from 10 metres above the deck of the old whaling ship pans over a still sleeping Reykjavik illuminated only by street lights.

Filmmaker Anahita and activist Elissa Bijou climbed the masts of Hvalur 8 and Hvalur 9, Iceland's only active

whaling vessels, that morning with the aim of postponing the hunt that Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Svandís Svavarsdóttir announced on August 31 could resume with the start of September. Protesters had positioned themselves on the pier immediately after the news broke, but this was an escalation of that action.

"It's been an emotional day," Vala says, eyes still darting intermittently toward the ships some 50 metres away. The chairperson of the Icelandic Vegan Society and a deputy MP for the Pirate Party, Vala has been stationed at the harbour every day, along with a rotating cast of supporters called to action by the group Hvalavinir, for which Vala acts as a spokesperson. Joining Vala at the harbourside café for a brief

Micah is an American filmmaker who, along with his colleague Anahita, has been coming to Iceland over the past year working on a documentary on whaling in Iceland titled *The Last Whaling Station*.

It was in his capacity as a filmmaker that he first met Hera, a noted Icelandic actress, at the 2022 Reykjavik International Film Festival. He and Anahita approached Hera about doing voice work on their film.

"I was a bit like, 'okay,'" Hera recalls of their request. "I had my opinions on whaling, but I felt – like many Icelanders, and probably more than just Icelanders – I wasn't really sure what is really the truth about it all? Or why are we doing it? Why should we not be doing it?"

She thought about it for a second and said, "You know, I could save two whales." It's just that. There's nothing left at this point but that.

respite, a hot coffee and an outlet to charge their devices are Hvalavinir members Micah Garen and Hera Hilmarsdóttir.

"When I asked Anahita if she really wanted to do this, because it's a huge sacrifice, she sort of..." Micah begins before his voice starts to crack under the weight of his emotion. Composing himself, he continues, "she thought about it for a second and said, 'You know, I could save two whales.' It's just that. There's nothing left at this point but that."

"There are a lot of reasons that are emotional and then there's the science," she continues. "So I said, 'okay, if I'm going to be involved in this in some way, I need to know more.'"

It was at that point that Hera began researching Iceland's whaling history and current practices and asking herself why she – and Icelanders in general – didn't know more or speak more about the practice.

"At first, I was a little bit scared of it in a way, I was scared to be vo-

cal about what I was finding," Hera admits. "Because the feeling is that you are not allowed to talk about this. Because anything that has to do with the sea and is close to the fisheries, you better not comment on at all. And so I felt a little bit apprehensive about it all. But the more I started learning, the more I felt that if I decided to not say anything, or just be neutral, then I'm making a decision to support it."

It was when she began researching whaling and opening up to others about her findings that Hera met more and more people interested in the cause. "And then I started meeting people like Vala and suddenly we were just this big group called Hvalavinir ['Friends of the Whales' in English] – because that's where we are."

Hvalavinir is more than Vala, Hera and Micah, though. It's an umbrella organisation that includes the Icelandic Vegan Society, the Animal Welfare Association of Iceland, the Iceland Nature Conservation Association, the Icelandic Environment Association, and The Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association.

And they've had an eventful summer.

THE BACKSTORY

The history of whaling around Iceland is long and storied. While Icelanders engaged in spear-drift whaling, whereby hunters in open row boats would stab a whale with a marked spear so that it could be identified and claimed when it later drifted ashore, it was whalers from other nations that would engage in more established whaling operations in Icelandic waters.

"It's been a crazy day," Valgerður Árnadóttir says, a clear tone of concern in her voice as she looks out the large picture windows of Röst café toward the long pier of Reykjavik's old harbour. The area is always bustling with activity of tourists shuffling onto the large whale watching ships docked there or, in more recent years, the agile RIB boats that promise to get thrill-seeking nature lovers up close to puffins, harbour porpoises and the massive, majestic whales swimming in the cold seas not far off Iceland's coast.

But Vala isn't taking in the scenery. The point that she is squinting to focus on is the location of two ships



Of An Obsolete Industry

Basque whalers were active in Icelandic waters in the 17th century and established a whaling station in Steingrimsfjörður in the Westfjords region of the country at that time. The Basque were followed in the same century by whalers from Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands, who in turn were followed in the coming centuries by American, French and still more Norwegian whalers, who established stations throughout the Westfjords and along the East coast of the country.

Iceland, however, was too poor a nation to develop its own whaling operations, and so little to no domestic whaling existed.

It was in 1948 with the establishment of the company Hvalur hf. that domestic commercial whaling began to scale up. From its establishment through to 1975, Hvalur killed 250 fin whales, 65 sei whales and 78 sperm whales, plus several blue and humpback whales, on average each year.

The decades that followed morphed into a maze of regulation for a nation finally whaling for itself in a world that was simultaneously waking up to the unsustainability and inhumaneness of the practice. The International Whaling Commission (IWC), of which Iceland was a member since its establishment in 1949, voted in 1982 that a moratorium on commercial whaling would come into effect in 1986.

Iceland was permitted to continue scientific whaling for research purposes from 1986 through 1989, but then withdrew from the IWC in 1991. A lot of back and forth unfolded between Iceland and the IWC from that time through 2003 when Iceland rejoined the commission and made the tie-breaking vote in

favour of being allowed to resume scientific whaling, which it did from 2003 to 2007.

It was during this period, in October 2006, that Independence Party MP

Kristján Loftsson has been the CEO and largest shareholder in Hvalur hf. since 1975 when he took over the company following the death of his father, Loftur Bjarnasson.

Though Hvalur hf. has long maintained that whales die immediately after being harpooned, MAST reported that the median time it took for the whales to die was 11.5 minutes, with some struggling for life for more than two hours.

and then Minister of Fisheries Einar Kristinn Guðfinnsson issued Hvalur a licence for commercial whaling, setting an annual quota of 9 fin whales and 30 minke whales.

That quota remained in place until the government, of which Einar was a member, was being brought down in the midst of the financial collapse and mass protests of 2008 and 2009. Before leaving office, though, Einar increased Hvalur's commercial whaling quota to a massive 150 fin whales and 100 minke whales – figures that incoming Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture and Left-Green Movement MP Steingrímur J. Sigfússon let stand.

Hvalur has been whaling since, save for years when demand waned in Japan – the only major market for its catch – and during the global pandemic. Hvalur's current licence to hunt fin whales expires at the end of 2023.

THE POLITICS

The politics of whaling in Iceland brings us back to what has been playing out this summer.

The 2022 whaling season saw 148 whales killed, which, while upsetting for anti-whaling activist and the health of the oceans, is not out of the ordinary for Iceland. But the season drew significant public attention because of special oversight that had been undertaken of the hunt and a damning report prepared thereafter by the Icelandic Food and Veterinary Association (MAST).

Though Hvalur hf. has long maintained that whales die immediately after being harpooned, MAST reported that the median time it took for the whales to die was 11.5 minutes, with some struggling for life for more than two hours. A total of 36 whales needed to be shot more than

once, with five shot three times and four shot five times. One whale was pursued for more than five hours with a harpoon in its back. It eventually got away, likely fatally injured. Of the whales killed, 73% were female, 11 were pregnant and one was lactating, meaning its young would have died soon after being orphaned.

A panel of animal welfare professionals was tasked by MAST to assess whether Iceland's commercial whaling could meet the objectives of Iceland's law on animal welfare. It concluded that the methods employed in hunting large whales do not comply with the law.

As a result, Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture and Left-Green MP Svandís Svavarsdóttir announced June 20 that the whaling season would not begin as scheduled on June 21 and a committee would be convened to conduct further investigation and determine whether the hunt could resume on Sept. 1.

"We think that the report that was issued by MAST gave plenty of grounds to stop whaling immediately," says Pirate Party MP Þórhildur Sunna Ævarsdóttir. "However, [Svandís] chose to go convene a specialised committee on the welfare of animals and waited for the results of that committee to come in – after the parliament has gone into recess – to come out and say that she was not able to allow them to hunt because of the committee opinion."

"And of course, Parliament has been in recess since she banned whaling and also now that she has permitted it again," Sunna continues, referring to Svandís' announcement on Aug. 31 that the whaling season would

resume from Sept. 1, with certain conditions in place.

Among the conditions placed on the truncated 2023 whaling season are "detailed and stricter requirements for fishing equipment, fishing methods and increased supervision. The requirements concern training, education, fishing equipment and fishing methods," according to a government notice. But Sunna points to a flaw in the arrangement.

"The conditions that the minister claims to be imposing on Hvalur will not actually come into force until September 18," she points out. "So this is some kind of charade to say, on the one hand in the beginning of summer, that [whaling] is contravening the laws on animal welfare and it is unconscionable for the minister to allow ... because of the methods and the lack of conditions for killing them humanely, and then to allow whaling for more than two weeks under the exact same legal conditions as before."

She continues, "the plausible explanation for her re-allowing whaling is simply that she couldn't withstand the political pressure of her colleagues in the government and had to re-allow it despite the legal requirements not being met in any sense of that word."

That alleged political pressure comes down to Hvalur's CEO Kristján Loftsson's significant influence within the Independence Party, which is part of the ruling coalition government with Svandís' Left-Greens and the Progressive Party.

So tight is Kristján's connection with the party that investigative media Heimildin reported in 2019 that it took a mere email from the Hvalur



CEO to then fisheries minister and Independence Party MP Kristján Þór Júlíusson in 2018 to have regulations applicable to his operations changed.

“I think that Kristján Loftsson is a very powerful man within the Independence Party and this is just a clear sign of the corruption in Iceland,” Vala says on Kristján’s sway with the Independence Party. “Even if something is so wrong, in so many ways, as whaling is, they will try to protect *his* right, as an owner of these ships to hunt whales. And it is because he is a very wealthy, powerful man within the Independence Party.”

The Progressive Party, meanwhile, Vala claims to be constantly fear mongering of the slippery slope that if whaling were to be ended, the environmentalists would come for the fisheries next.

For her part, Fisheries Minister Svandís insists that political pressure had no bearing on her decisions. “The decision was not in any way influenced by members of the other parties in government talking about a possible vote of no confidence,” she wrote in an email to the Grapevine. “My decision was based on the recommendations of the expert panel and advice from my ministry. As a minister, I must base all my decisions on the applicable law, which in this instance is for example the law regarding animal welfare, whaling, and the right to pursue one’s occupation of choice, protected by the Icelandic constitution.”

Sunna maintains, however, that Svandís’ colleagues in the Independence and Progressive Parties were making “very public and aggressive threats.”

“The leader of the parliamentary group of the Independence Party, for example, said that if [Svandís] wouldn’t rectify her decision of banning whaling, she would not get any of her bills passed for the rest of the term in office,” she says. “And the leader of the Independence Party claimed that [the delay to the whal-

each year.

“Whaling has been a negligible part of Iceland’s economy for over a hundred years,” Svandís admitted in her email.

In the direct aftermath of the minister’s Aug. 31 announcement, the Association of Icelandic Film Producers called on the government to ban whaling and a growing list of international film directors and actors have vowed not to work in Iceland so long as whaling is permitted. Among

He’s living like he’s Captain Ahab from a century ago and he’s dragging the rest of Iceland down with him.

ing season], had put a sour mood into the cooperation between the parties,” while other Independence Party MPs “accused the Minister of breaking administrative law and even went so far as accusing her of breaking the constitutional rights of this whaling boat owner and the employees of Hvalur with her decision.”

THE ECONOMICS

The politics of fisheries aside, Iceland’s economic cash cows of recent years – tourism and the film industry – are projected to take a direct financial hit from the decision to allow the whaling season to resume. Meanwhile, Hvalur hf. operates at a loss of tens of millions of krónur

them are actors Jason Momoa, Leonardo DiCaprio and Hilary Swank and director James Cameron.

Icelandic film and TV production company Truenorth went a step further and filed for an injunction against Hvalur hf., with attorney Kátrín Oddsdóttir saying that Hvalur’s operations will make it near impossible to secure international collaboration for film projects in Iceland.

“The international film community does about \$150 million worth of business in Iceland every year, as opposed to the millions lost by the whaling company,” Micah points out.

“I am very concerned about it,”

continues Hera, who has starred in a number of Icelandic and international productions, including the Apple TV+ series *See*, in which she starred alongside Jason Momoa. “In terms of what this would mean if this keeps spreading and people decide to not work in Iceland – we’ve done so much work to build up the industry here. And it’s good for all of us, not just the people in this industry. It’s bringing in so much money to the countryside. It’s bringing so much money and work to tiny places.”

Hera points to the small Westfjords village of Djúpavík as an example of the benefits of the growing film industry in Iceland. “*Justice League* filmed there and the Icelandic film *Svar við bréfi Helgu*,” she explains. “There’s not a lot of work there in the winter because it gets so isolated, so they need to get money in the summer. These kinds of productions that go to film in these places, they change the year for these people and make sure that these people don’t go out of business. So it has such a knock on effect, this decision [on whaling]. I think we really need to take this seriously and I think it’s a huge disrespect to the film industry and the tourism industry and the countryside and everyone to not take this seriously and to just brush it off as some kind of Hollywood bullshit. It’s just not okay.”

departed Reykjavík harbour and relocated to Hvalur hf.’s whaling station in Hvalfjörður to prepare for this year’s hunt, which can last as long as conditions permit. Limited daylight and the poor weather that come with Icelandic autumn and winter will likely not allow the hunt to stretch far beyond September. But as Hvalavinir points out, Iceland’s sole whaler killed more whales in September 2022 than in the first three months of that whaling season.

So it’s clear what the coming month holds for Iceland’s whaling operations, but what comes after that?

As mentioned, Hvalur hf.’s whaling licence expires at the end of this year, setting Svandís up to make a major decision about the future of whaling in Iceland.

Svandís told the Grapevine that, considering how “very, very little” whaling brings to Iceland, “this is a completely futile and obsolete industry that ... nobody participates in except for this one man and his staff. I have said before that my belief is that data indicates that whaling is possibly more a thing of the past than the future, and the Left Green Party’s policy on whaling is that it should be banned. According to a recent report, whaling has a

The international film community does about \$150 million worth of business in Iceland every year, as opposed to the millions lost by the whaling company.

Putting the messaging of it being little more than “Hollywood bullshit” ahead of the very real economics of the matter is also something Sunna is concerned about.

“Understandably, it is something that both the tourist industry and the film industry are concerned about, and I think that we will see an economic impact of it,” she says. “But considering how politically charged this issue has been and how chauvinistically it has also been said in the debates that, ‘foreigners will not tell us how to make a living in Iceland,’ and so on and so forth. And ‘we are an independent nation’ – I think that will mean that people will dig down in their trenches and only get more extreme in their opinions on how to torture whales to death.”

“So I don’t think that this government is going to solve this problem whatsoever, I think that they will be stuck like this.”

In working on his documentary, Micah interviewed the head of Iceland’s tourist association this summer to ask about what impact the resumption of whaling would have on the industry. “He said, without a doubt, ‘we’re gonna lose 7,000 to 10,000 visitors at a minimum because of this whaling. That’s about \$20 million dollars,’” Micah shares. “And now I think it’s significantly more, the stakes are way higher.”

THE FUTURE

On September 5, after more than 28 hours spent occupying Hvalur’s ships, Anahita and Elissa descended from their perches. Anahita had been without water or supplies since the early hours of the action, having been forcibly stripped of her belongings by intervening police officers. They were both taken into police custody once back on solid ground. With that, Hvalur 8 and Hvalur 9

negligible effect on Iceland’s economy and therefore it stands to reason it is not of national interest.”

Whether that indicates that Svandís will legislate an end to whaling or simply let the licence lapse without renewal remains to be seen – and many people will be watching.

“I think if she decides to renew it, it will be considered a betrayal of her values, of her party’s values,” Sunna speculates. “And then if she decides not to renew it, it will be considered a betrayal by the Independence Party, who believed that they were going into this governmental coalition with a tacit understanding that whaling would not be part of anything that this government intended to change.”

Sunna points out that the bigger decision will be around legislating the end of whaling, which would make it far more difficult to resume under another government. Her Pirate Party has invited all parties in Alþingi to back a bill to end whaling through legislation. It will be tabled once MPs return from their long summer vacation.

As for what Hvalavinir hopes to see happen, it’s simple: “Stop killing whales,” Micah says succinctly.

“It’s 2023,” he continues. “We’re battling an environmental crisis. You cannot be killing whales. It’s just absurd.”

“And who’s killing whales? One wealthy man who’s doing it because he likes to trophy hunt. He’s living like he’s Captain Ahab from a century ago and he’s dragging the rest of Iceland down with him. It’s a travesty, a tragedy.” ■

The Grapevine reached out to Hvalur hf for comment on this article. They did not respond.

The Grapevine's Top Picks



MIDGARD 2023
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Nerds of the North rejoice! Iceland's first big fan convention is here to let you live out and satisfy all your nerdy needs from cosplay to tabletop, board and video games, books, comics and of course all the stuff you like to play on your screen. Promising to be safe and inclusive, the convention offers exhibits, live shows, workshops, guests and panel discussions – all that classic con stuff. Midgard is an international convention, but also promises a distinct Icelandic (*cough* Viking) touch with activities, a Viking village as well as show fights! **CM**



SKJALDBORG HIGHLIGHTS
September 15 – 16
Bió Paradís
2,190 ISK

Back in May, the remote-yet-lively Westfjords hamlet Patreksfjörður hosted the Skjaldborg film festival, which screens a program exclusively of Icelandic documentaries. The festival was a vibrant, unique community event with top quality films, guests and raging parties. Now, a kind of Skjaldborg-lite edition is set to take place in Bió Paradís, screening the stand-out cinematic offerings. The short films *Super Soldier*, *Hlemmur Mathöll*, *Uppskrift: Lífið eftir dauðann*, *Konni* and full-length documentaries *Skuld* and *Heimaleikurinn* will be shown with English subtitles for everyone to enjoy, while the iconic Bió bar will bring the party vibes. **RX**



VAKA FOLK FESTIVAL
September 15 – 17
Kex Hostel & Edda: The House of Icelandic

Are you a lover of old timey trad music and the folksy roots of Icelandic culture? Whether you're already entrenched in the fandom or an intrepid neophyte, come immerse yourself in the wonders of early traditional Icelandic folk music at the Vaka Folk Festival. Kicking off on the Day of Icelandic Rímur, a unique ancient poetic singing style, the festival marries the cultural traditions of yore with modern expressions and tools. There will be lively lectures, feasts aplenty and musical merriment. **RX**



Sports

Diving In With Ármann

The *fundamentals* of water polo in Iceland

WORDS Mira Haldar
IMAGES Art Bicnick

In a country that boasts 180 pools, there exist only two water polo clubs with just 40 active players. To be fair, the infamously demanding sport isn't for everyone – who wants to spend their free time swimming until their arms and legs are burning while opponents are constantly trying to drown you?

land International Water Polo Tournament in May, which hosted reigning world champs Croatia and heavy hitters from Australia. It is clear that water polo in Iceland is craving exposure and popularity.

Glenn Moyle, the head coach of Ármann, is dedicated to reviving the once prevalent sport through his efforts to gain publicity on both a regional and international level. “The biggest challenge for me is to try and find a balance between having competitions and also keeping it fun, because we were doing a lot of things just for fun back in the day,” Moyle told The Grapevine. “When you're trying to grow a sport as demanding as water polo, it's hard enough to play a competitive match, so we found that it's more important now to keep the fun in the sport.”

His pure talent and devotion to water polo was evident in his youth, as he was a captain of his New Zealand school and junior-age (U16) teams. The sport then carried him to Holland, where he continued to compete and later began his world travels. He then went on to play for the national junior team in New Zealand and competed at the 1995 world U20 championships in France. He finally moved to Iceland in 2006, where he has been ever since.

KEEPING IT FUN

“We realize that we are competing with so many different sports and I can't win against such a minority – water polo is always the little brother to swimming in any country in the world. I think of it like it is in the game, you're constantly trying to keep your head above the water, and the same goes for on the sidelines too. Water polo needs more publicity,” Moyle said.

Welcoming athletes from across the spectrum in terms of skill and age, Moyle emphasizes that anyone who wants to play can and should. All it takes is a simple click of the mouse to send a message to one of the water polo club's many social media accounts (via Instagram, Facebook, or email), and Moyle will gladly invite you to jump in.

That inclusive attitude is exemplified in Ármann's motto: fun first, fun second and fun third. Whether you want to discover an enjoyable new way to keep in shape, or you just think that you'd look good in a Speedo, the Ármann Water Polo team is ready to welcome you with open arms. ■

The Ármann Water Polo Team is back from its summer hiatus and looking for new recruits. Follow them on Instagram @armannwaterpolo or at waterpolo.is

When you're trying to grow a sport as demanding as water polo, it's hard enough to play a competitive match, so we found that it's more important now to keep the fun in the sport.

Despite its more recent hibernation, water polo has had quite a history in Iceland. Although they lost all three of their matches, Iceland sent a team to the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. In fact, it was the first sport the country ever sent to the Olympics. But what's the state of the Icelandic water polo scene today?

Based in Reykjavík, the Ármann Water Polo Team holds the status as the most dominant competition of the area, most recently showcasing their strength at the fifth annual Ice-

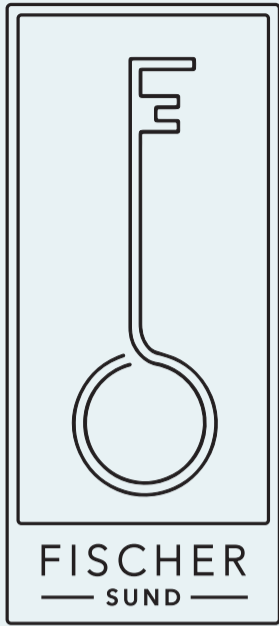
FIRST LOVE

Moyle began his own water polo journey at the age of 10. “I grew up in New Zealand and started off swimming as a kid from the age of 6,” he explained. “In New Zealand we have so many water sports and it is not hard to fall in love with the water there. I was thrown a ball at the age of 10 and asked if I wanted to play for the school's water polo team and that is where my love for the sport started to grow.”



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Dance

Give In To The Conversa

Iceland Dance Company launches the season with The Simple Act of Letting Go

WORDS Rex Beckett
IMAGES Art Bicnick

Tom Weinberger. The piece was commissioned by the Iceland Dance Company and opens their 2023-2024 dance season on Sunday, September 10 at Borgarleikhúsið, the company's home base.

Just the building and the decomposing. I enjoy seeing it. I enjoy sensing it in my body."

WORDS ARE MEANINGLESS

SANDCASTLES OF DRAMA

"I think there's a lot of humour pockets in this piece," says Tom following the general run-through of the piece last spring. "I'm also hoping that with

As the presence of the microphones that the performers stand still behind suggest, the use of voice, in particular speech, are prominent within the performance. The words and sentences uttered feel fragmented and collaged, as does text

I enjoy going into epic, emotional, physical states and then dismantling them, in a way as another manifestation of how everything is temporary.

It begins with simply one person, one man, alone on stage, standing still and staring into space. Suddenly he breaks with a startle of kinetic, stomping dance steps but only for a brief moment. Then stillness returns. The pattern repeats unpredictably, the series of steps replicating and building on itself each time, striking a power-pose at the end. Scattered, apprehensive laughter comes from the audience. The recurrence of action and abandon ends as he turns his back to the audience and walks to the rear of the stage. Eight people then emerge from the wings, each carrying a mic stand.

time and the performances happening more, the dancers experiencing it more, that humour will come out more."

that is intermittently projected on the backdrop.

The show carries a consistent theme of buildup and dissolution, which gradually pulls each of the performers from their backline behind a microphone to the forefront, creating different narratives, timelines and structures.

"I've heard someone say to me that the work is reminding them of post-modern theatre but I've never been into theatre, in classes or anything," he says with a bemused shrug and laugh. "It's hard to testify, as an artist, about the work. In the past couple of years I've been embarking into a more theatrical research kind of thing. I don't think of it as theatre as much as there is an impulse to include language, text and vocal work equally as there is an impulse to generate movement."

"It's like we build these drama sandcastles and then we dissolve them the moment after," says Tom. "I enjoy going into epic, emotional, physical states and then dismantling them in a way, as another manifestation of how everything is temporary.

He says that this direction and gradual progression of incorporat-

Thus completes the opening gambit of The Simple Act of Letting Go, a new show by Israeli choreographer



ation

ng Go

ing words – both written and spoken – into performance was not a conscious choice, but that it was something in his toolbox he’s now learning to use and incorporate.

“I used to show up to the dance studio with socks and sweatpants,” he goes on. “Now in the last couple of years, I show up with my socks, my sweatpants and a microphone. I’m interested in like how the words empower and elevate the direct movement, and vice versa. When you say a sentence and then move right away afterwards, moving right at that instant is the immediate reflection of that sentence on what your body’s doing.”

FINDING GRAVITY

Tom himself originates from a small suburb between Haifa and Tel Aviv that he describes as “nothing to write home about”, but lived an incredibly nomadic existence for a decade. Living literally out of one suitcase and having no fixed address, he travelled all over the world for roughly 340 days of the year, working as a freelance dance artist, only returning to Israel to change clothes and quickly see friends.

“It was a combination of wanting to leave certain things behind, try new things, and the demands of being a freelance artist,” he says. “Also just a curiosity to experience languages, people and landscapes, only to come back home and to understand your DNA, the complexity of it, the beauty of it, what there is to celebrate and understand that there’s other ways of living life.”

However, like the rest of the world, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic forced him to return to his birth land and let go of the life he had grown accustomed to. Stripped of his residency status and unable to work or go on the dole, he went from being a steadily earning artist to having no income.

“It was absolutely not simple,” he laughs as I quip the name of the show’s title being his act of letting

binations of performers inhabiting the “scenes” and the open-ended questions and statements the viewer is confronted with, there is a very palpable tension between a resistance against giving in and the obviousness of detaching.

“I tried very much to kind of minimise the line between audience and the work,” says Tom, as I share how much I internally responded and viscerally reacted to performance.

I’m interested in how the words empower and elevate the direct movement, and vice versa. When you say a sentence and then move right away afterwards, moving right at that instant is the immediate reflection of that sentence on what your body’s doing.

go. “It was a very intense moment. I went from being the cliché idea of a nomadic Jewish wanderer. I couldn’t find rest. The signs of restlessness were already showing in my body. It was telling me to rethink this plan, let gravity have room in my life.”

INVITED INTO THE CHAT

The sense of Tom being forced to give in to this gravity feels very prescient in the work, in retrospect. Through the various physical com-

“I wanted it to be a conversation. Going back to the execution of the dancers, at the beginning and when you are stressed from when it’s still up [on the surface] it becomes more of a performative act, less of a conversations. As feedback, I would say ‘try to see what happens if you’re having a conversation, you’re not performing for someone, you’re inviting them into a conversation.’ I think that with time and running the piece, it can really become a conversation.” ■

Smiðjustigur 10 / Klapparstigur 16, 101 Reykjavík
Artists Björn Roth, Dodda Maggý, Finnbogi Pétursson, Haraldur Jónsson, Hulda Stefánsdóttir, John Zurier, Katrín Elvarsdóttir, Kees Visser, Monika Grzymala, Páll Haukur Björnsson, Rintaro Hara, Rósa Gísladóttir, Sigurður Guðjónsson, Steina, Woody Vasulka, Þórdís Erla Zoëga
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Film Feature **A Celebration Of Film, Food And Dance**

The Latin American Film Festival is bringing a true feast to town

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Art Bicnick, supplied stills

As I stroll toward Bío Paradís, where I'm about to meet Hugo Llanes, the project manager for the Latin American Film Festival, a question lingers in my mind: When was the last time I watched a Latin American film? I find myself grappling with clichéd images, trying to escape the grip of stereotypes perpetuated by shows like *Narcos*. However, the Latin American Film Festival promises to do more than break stereotypes; it's on a mission to introduce newcomers like me to the rich tapestry of contemporary Latin American cinema and more.

It's a Tuesday night, but things are busy at the cinema – there are screenings in all rooms, and a sound check is in progress for the concert starting later today. Just a week from now, Bío Paradís will bring a taste of Latin America to Reykjavik. This is the second year in a row the art house is hosting the Latin American Film Festival in collaboration with the Embassies of Chile, Brazil, Venezuela, Peru, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Mexico.

"This is a free festival – a cultural and diplomatic event because the embassies are involved," shares Hugo. "It's a very interesting platform because not all festivals are offered for free." Bío Paradís is co-funding the festival to make screenings available for all communities – the Icelandic community, the immigrant community, but also the Latin American community. "We see this as a way of inviting our communities or those communities that do

not have the economic capacity to attend," says Hugo.

In addition to seven screenings, one for each country, the festival will offer a truly cultural experience – with food and drink tastings, musical performances and even a dance

that productions coming from Latin America often touch upon politics, conflict, or social issues that might not be suitable for everyone.

"It's important to create a critical and straightforward point of view of Latin America," Hugo says. "To me

ic; we just live here. Of course, you notice differences between heights, colours, races and everything. That's the diversity that we have in the world." The festival is exclusively collaborating with Latin American designers to ensure an accurate portrayal of the cultural narrative.

Another important aspect, according to Hugo, is giving each of the participating countries a chance to showcase their distinct culture. Despite sharing multiple ties – especially following colonisation – each country in Latin America is distinctly different, with its own traditions and cinematic culture. The theme of youth is the common thread that runs through the selected films. Even if the main character is not a child or teenager, "through youth, you can picture or sense what's happening around the context," says Hugo.

The movies that will be screened at the festival include *The Dicaprio of Corozopando* (Venezuela), *Bantú Mama* (Dominican Republic), *My Girlfriend is the Revolution* (Mexico),

We want to bring a more accurate perspective of what Latin America is without falling into exoticising or folklorism.

session. Hugo's role is that of curator, facilitator and seeker of those eager to present after-screening experiences.

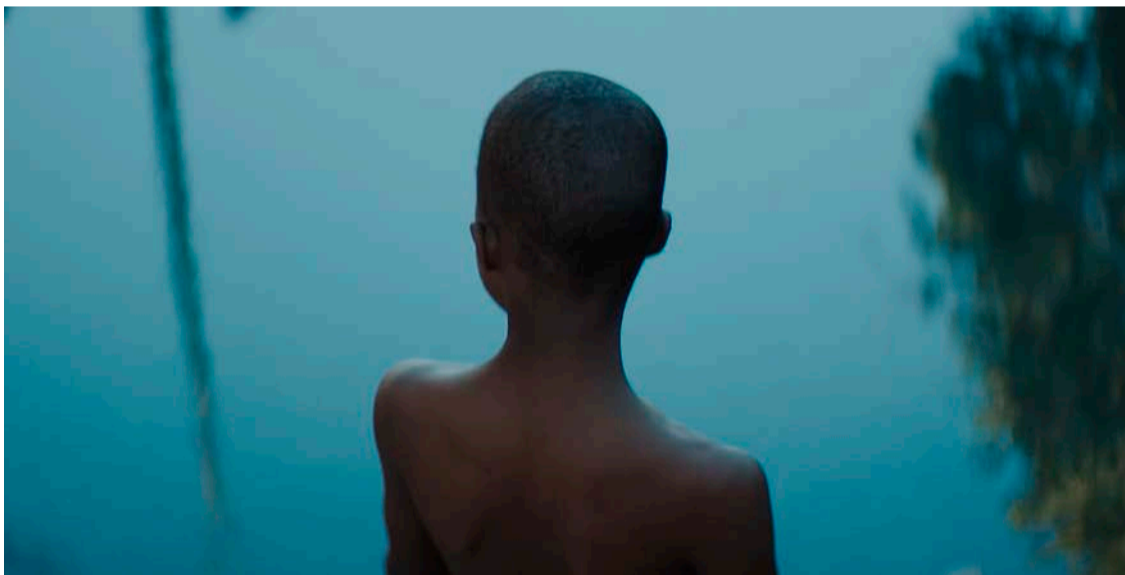
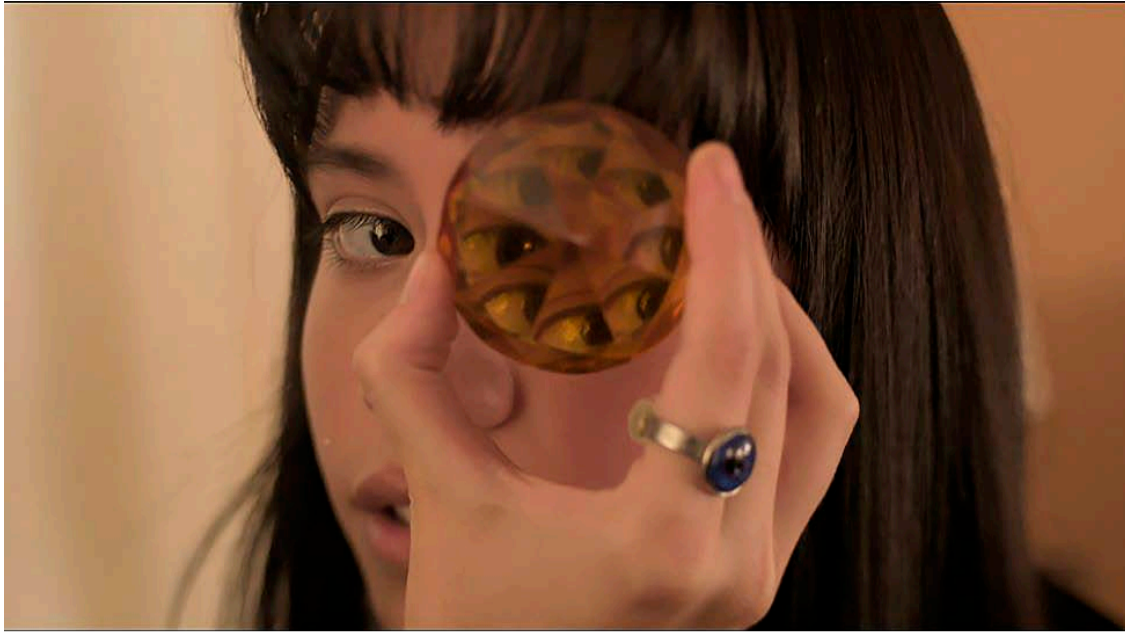
ONE VIBRANT CONTINENT, DIVERSE FILMS

"For us, it's important to have a wide range of films that could cover family screenings, but also adult screenings, with an age limit of 12 years and older," says Hugo, stressing

as a Mexican, it is also very important not to exoticise our culture."

Hugo agrees that the Latin American narrative is pretty famous in Iceland – many Icelanders have travelled to Latin America and enjoy the traditional food, yet misconceptions still exist. "We want to bring a more accurate perspective of what Latin America is without falling into exoticising or folklorism," emphasises Hugo. "Because we are not exot-





Tiempos Futuros (Peru), *The Second Mother* (Brazil), *Innocence* (Cuba) and *Machuca* (Chile). Hugo highlights the sci-fi movie from Peru and emphasises that the Mexican film hasn't had many screenings, even in its country of origin. This underscores the unique opportunity for Reykjavík locals to see it.

FIESTA LATINA

The Latin American Film Festival doesn't stop at films – it's an experience that aims to engage all the senses. "I'm so happy that we have been able to put together a series of events after the screenings that include food, music and dance because, of course, Latin America is about celebration," says Hugo.

The festival collaborates with local chefs from Cocina Rodriguez and beloved downtown taqueria La Poblana to offer food from Mexico and the Dominican Republic. National beers from the participating countries will be served. Screenings will be accompanied by musical performances by Los Bomboneros, Dimension Afrolatina, Vegan No Rice, and DJ Lamp Vader, with an energetic set that includes Brazilian fusion, cumbia from Colombia, Peruvian rock, and other Latin American styles. To close the festival, Bachata Reykjavík dance studio will turn Bió

Paradis into a bachata dominicana dance floor. This cultural exchange enriches the festival experience and offers attendees a taste of Latin America in the heart of Reykjavík.

HOME IS WHERE THE POP-CORN IS

Comparing Latin American and Nordic cinematic traditions, Hugo says, "Aesthetics could be different, such as the way the camera moves, but they touch upon very similar topics."

"We are seeking representation. Seeing a film from your own country when you are so far away truly matters. It kind of changes something. It makes you feel that connection, but also nostalgia, that feeling of being home." He adds, "In that sense, Bió Paradís is the home for a lot of locals. It's a very local thing to go to Bió Paradís. We want to provide that homely feeling to everyone who comes, which is we invite everybody to stay after the screenings." ■

I'm so happy that we have been able to put together a series of events after the screenings that include foods, music, and dance, because, of course, Latin America is about celebration.

According to him, even though Iceland may be far from Latin America, common themes like grief, death, or love can evoke the same emotions in viewers.

Hugo emphasises the importance of cultural representation, saying,

The Latin American Film Festival will take place at Bió Paradís from September 14th to 24th, 2023, free of charge.



TARAMAR

ICELANDIC SKINCARE

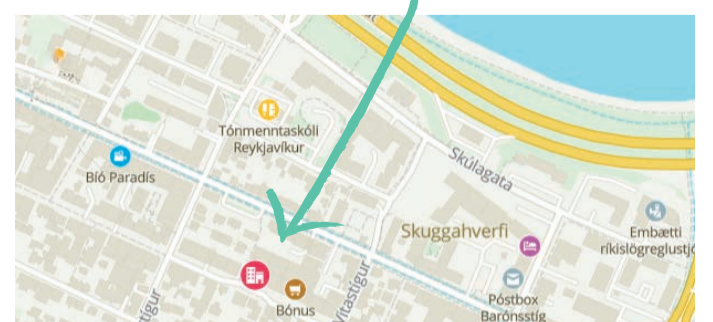
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Centre Map

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 takeaway 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

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 Reykjavík. 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 Reykjavík 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 flatkókur. Flatkókur 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 Reykjavík
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 Reykjavík. 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 Reykjavík 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 Reykjavík 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

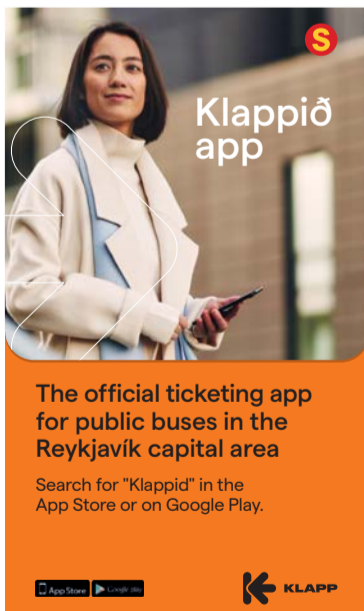
19 SBARRO
Austurstræti 17 & Vatnsmýrarvegur 10
"What is this shit?" is how Greil Marcus famously opened his review of Bob Dylan's 1970 album in Rolling Stone. It is appropriate here. It



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 Reykjavík 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 ■



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11

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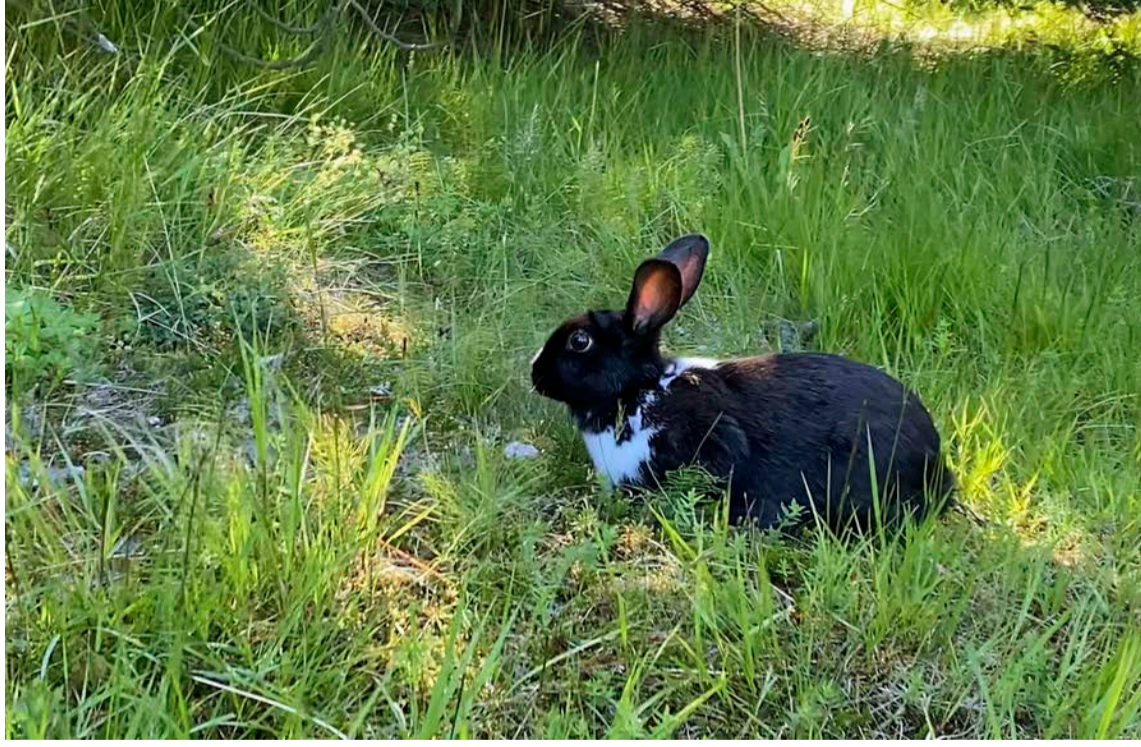
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Spot This **The Wild Rabbits of Reykjavík★**

Öskjuhlíð, Elliðaárdalur & Heiðmörk

When walking around Reykjavík, one can quickly surmise why our little burg partly inspired author Haruki Murakami's story *Town of Cats*. However, our crafty feline friends are not the only imported floofs keeping our town cute – we've got bunnies! Roaming in the nature-filled parts of the general Reykjavík area like Öskjuhlíð, the Elliðaárdalur valley and the Heiðmörk national park, the little leporids can be spotted doing what they do best: munchin' on flowers and makin' babies. If a delightful nature stroll on a crisp autumn day is what you're craving, go meet the elusive and enchanting Icelandic rabbits. ■



B

FOOD HALL & BAR

PÓSTHÚS

POSTHUSSTRÆTI | 101 REYKJAVÍK

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Art Exhibitions

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Opening

- FYRIRBÆRI GALLERÍ**
"Best Friends"
Group exhibition celebrating the 40th birthday of artist Anton Lyngdal, gathering his artist friends instead of a normal birthday party.
Opens September 9
Runs until September 28
- HAFNARBORG CENTER OF CULTURE & FINE ART**
Landscape for the Chosen Ones
Hafnarborg's Autumn Exhibition series will explore different aspects of escapism. Curated by Eva Lín Vilhjálmisdóttir and Odda Júlía Snorradóttir.
Opens September 14
Runs until December 3
- Sindri Ploder – Art Without Borders**
A solo exhibition by Sindri Ploder, who was named Artist of the festival Artists without Borders earlier this year.
Opens September 14
Runs until October 8
- 18 GALLERY**
Between the Window and the Door
Group exhibition of artists who use language as both source and material, and whose varied approaches test the functionalities, capacities and structures that organise, perpetuate and transfigure information.
Opens September 21
Runs until November 4
- ICELANDIC PRINTMAKERS ASSOCIATION**
Sara Björnsdóttir – Whispers of the Abyss: A Dark Tribute to Light
New works spanning the last sev-

- en years of the artists' life, showing collages over watercolours, along with older works where storytelling is strongly expressed.
Opens September 15
Runs until October 22
- NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND**
Some Recent Works – New Acquisitions
A selection of works that have been purchased by the National Gallery of Iceland in the past four years.
Opens September 9
Runs until February 2024
- NORDIC HOUSE**
Under the Polar Ice
The exhibition is based on the Norwegian book *Under Polarisen* by Line Renslebraten, about the plants and animals that live in the Arctic Ocean and now share their homes with countless pieces of plastic.
Opens September 12
Runs until March 2024
- PORTFOLIO GALLERY**
Sirra Sigrún Sigurðardóttir – Almanak
New works of photography by Sirra Sigrún Sigurðardóttir that use the interplay of light and darkness according to nature and the use of the camera.
Opens September 9
Runs until October 2
- THE SCULPTURE ASSOCIATION GARDEN**
Alexander Hugo Gunnarsson & Sölvinn Þórhallsson – What Remains
Exhibition resulting from a one-year collaborative project between two artists, taking form in video works, sculptures and photographs.
Opens September 9
Runs until October 8

Ongoing

- ÁSMUNDARSAFN (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)**
Mentor: Ásmundur Sveinsson and Carl Milles
Sculpture
Runs until January 2024
- ÁSMUNDARSALUR**
Shoplifter, Hrafnkell Sigurdsson & Kurt Uenala – Ping/Thing
Installation, mixed media
Runs until September 25
- Julie Lænkholm – Andvakandi**
Installation, ecological sculpture
Ongoing, permanent
- BERG CONTEMPORARY**
Pablo Jansana – From One Day to the Next
Paintings, mixed media
Runs until September 30
- EINAR JÓNSSON MUSEUM**
Einar Jónsson – Sculpture Works & Garden
Sculpture
Permanent exhibition
- GALLERÍ GÖNG**
Helgi Grímsson – 43 útsaumsmýndir
Embroidery works
Runs until September 30
- GALLERY GRÁSTEINN**
Andrea Ólafs – AndArtica
Paintings
Runs until September 12
- GALLERÍ GRÓTTA**
Unnur Óttarsdóttir – Intertwine
Paintings, photography
Runs until September 16
- GALLERY PORT**
Sigurros G. Björnsdóttir & Árni

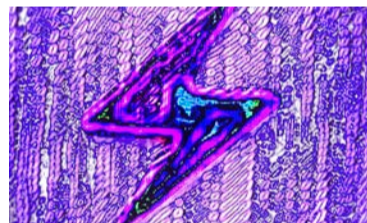
- Jónsson – If it's not on the hanger, it's in the drawer.*
Joint exhibition, mixed media
Runs until September 21
- GALLERY SKILTI**
Lukas Bury – Zigaretten nach Berlin
Installation
Runs until December 15
- Gallery Underpass*
Sigga Björg Sigurðardóttir – Cross The Line
Runs until February 2024
- GERÐARSAFN (KÓPAVOGUR ART MUSEUM)**
Rósa Gísladóttir – FORA
Sculpture
Runs until September 17
- GERÐUR**
Sculpture works of Gerður Helgadóttir from the museum's collection.
Runs until December 31
- GLERHÚSIÐ REYKJAVÍK**
Gunnhildur Hauksdóttir – From Heart to Stone – Circle of Sight
Ink drawings, sculptures, sound installations; open on Sundays only
Runs until September 17
- HAFNARHÚS (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)**
D49 Helena Margrét Jónsdóttir
Paintings
Runs until October 22
- 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

- KLING & BANG**
Eva Ísleifs – The Earth Is My Bed
Sculpture, mixed media
Runs until September 24
- LISTVAL**
Aðalheiður Valgeirsdóttir – Nature draws itself
Paintings
Runs until September 16
- Hallgrímur Árnason – Open Screens*
Paintings
Runs until September 30
- Áslaug Íris Katrín Friðjónsdóttir & Ingunn Fjöla Ingbórsdóttir – In Harmony*
Paintings and textile
Runs until January 2024
- THE LIVING ART MUSEUM**
Goodgonebadwrong
Collaborative exhibition, mixed media
Runs until October 1
- MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ARTS**
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**
Rúf – Glassrain
Installation
Runs until October 1
- The Thought of Drawing*
Drawings by Jóhannes S. Kjarval
Runs until October 1

- Collection Creatures*
Digital & 3D artworks
Runs until January 2024
- 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**
Sævar Karl – Here and There
Paintings
Runs until September 10
- ÞENÓ**
Clizia Macchi – To the Roots
Paintings
Runs until September 24
- KJARVALSSTAÐIR (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)**
Icelandic 20th Century Art
Works from permanent collection
Runs until September 15
- Our Art*
Artworks selected by public
Runs until October 29

- The Private Collection*
Paintings, drawings
Runs until October 1
- NORDIC HOUSE**
GRÍMUR: A Censored Exhibition
Photography, slide show
Runs until September 30
- PORT9**
Logi Marr – EMBEDDED: Drawing From Nature
Drawings
Runs until September 14
- REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY**
Julia Hechtman – Not Once
Video portraits
Runs until October 22
- SIGURJÓN ÓLAFSSON MUSEUM**
The Gift of Children
Portraits and reliefs
Runs until September 24
- From Various Sources*
Sculpture
Runs until September 24
- SÍM GALLERY**
Oddrún Pétursdóttir
Mixed media, paintings
Runs until September 22 ■

Art Picks



Terminal X – Tangibility & Waves
Until September 17
Litla Gallerý

Watch out, folks, there's a new artist collective in town! The recently formed, self-organising group Terminal X comprises 10 diverse artists from different backgrounds – both artistically and culturally – who promote inclusivity and critical discourse. In their inceptive exhibition, the collective look towards encountering topics of sustainability, femininity, nature, memory and relationships. Describing their group as akin to a chain that interlocks ideas, creators and partnerships and the past, present and future, we get the sense that they will soon be making very tangible waves in the art scene. **RX**



SUND
September 9 & 14, 20:30
Tjarnarbíó
5.100–5.500 ISK

Going to the pool is one of the daily activities that is uniquely common – nearly banal – in Iceland, unlike anywhere else in the world. Natives take it for granted and newcomers and visitors are in wonder. The new show SUND not only takes on the very topic of Icelandic pool culture through dance, theatre and music, but it literally transforms the Tjarnarbíó stage into a goddamn pool! No, you can't get into it, but the amazing performers will be fully immersed for the spectacle. Go catch this rare, brilliant show. No shower required. **RX**



Gréta S. Guðjónsdóttir – 19, 24, 29, 34, 39 Fate and Destiny
Opens September 16
Reykjavík Museum of Photography

You know when you're cleaning your home or your hard drive and you land on old photos of yourself and time-travel back into your old thoughts? The new exhibition of photography by artist Gréta S. Guðjónsdóttir is like that, but if someone had been tracking you down over twenty years to take your photos and dig into your thoughts. Since 2002, she has followed the lives of nine of her former students, documenting them every five years from age 19 to 39, through studio and home portraits and personal testimonies. Go travel in time with these images. **RX**

GOOD THURSDAY MONTHLY ART CRAWL. **ON THE LAST THURSDAY OF THE MONTH A NUMBER OF MUSEUMS AND EXHIBITION SPACES OFFER EXTENDED OPENING HOURS AND SPECIAL EVENTS.** **CONTEMPORARY ART IN THE CITY.**



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Concerts, comedy, movies and other happenings that defy categorization

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Friday September 8

DJ Logi Leó
21:00 12 Tónar

KGB
20:00 Bravó

Nirvana In Utero 30th Anniversary Tribute Show
20:00 Gaukurinn

Simon fknhdsm
23:00 Kaffibarinn

HREYFING ER HAFIN: post-dreifing Showcase Concert
19:00 Kex Hostel

KK Live
20:00 Ölver

Saturday September 9

Rock Paper Sisters Album Release Show
20:00 Bæjarbíó

After Eight / Allenheimer
20:00 Bravó

Sindri Eldon & the Ways
21:30 Dillon

Sóðaskapur Album Release Show
21:00 Gaukurinn

Maggi Kjartans – My Friends and I
20:00 Harpa – Eldborg

Sheryn Regis: the Crystal Voice of Asia
16:00 Harpa – Silfurberg

(Promised Land) – Danni Bigroom b2b Björn Salvador
23:00 Kaffibarinn

Spacestation, Sameheads, ICY G & Teitur Magnússon
20:00 Kex Hostel – Gym & Tonic

Heart Attack! Drag Night
21:00 Kiki Queer Bar

Midgard 2023
11:00 Laugardalshöll

SUND
20:30 Tjarnarbíó

Sunday September 10

National Theatre Live: Othello
15:00 Bíó Paradís

The Simple Act of Letting Go
20:00 Borgarleikhúsið

Singer-Songwriter Night
20:00 Gaukurinn

Pieta Fundraiser: gugusar, Kaktus Einarsson, Kvikindí, Systur
21:00 Kex Hostel

Midgard 2023
11:00 Laugardalshöll

Reddingakaffi

13:00 Munasafn RVK Tool Library

Monday September 11

Open Decks
20:00 Bravó

Hrikalegur Kjöhleifur
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Tuesday September 12

Karaoke Night
20:00 Gaukurinn

DJ Ómar E
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Wednesday September 13

Holy Hrafn x Útiköttur
20:00 Bravó

Ballantines Vinyl Wednesday
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Swap Til You Drop: Clothing Swap
14:00 Loft Hostel

Thursday September 14

Love Mountain
20:00 Bravó

Neon Retrolesque: An 80s Music Burlesque Cabaret
21:00 Gaukurinn

Emmanuel Pahud & ISO
19:30 Harpa – Eldborg

DJ Kári
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Lay Low
20:00 Kaffi Flóra

Hipsumhups / Orang Volante
20:00 Kex Hostel

Poney Moon
20:30 Le Kock

Einar Vilberg & Mørøse
21:00 Lemmy

Óreiða, Mondernte, osmé
18:00 R6013

SUND
20:30 Tjarnarbíó

Friday September 15

Ali Demir
20:00 Bravó

HYLUR Album Release Show
21:00 Gaukurinn

Luka Okros Plays Schubert & Chopin
19:30 Harpa – Kaldalón

Skálmöld
20:00 Háskólabíó

KGB
23:00 Kaffibarinn

Vaka Folk Festival / Hipsumhups / Día
20:00 Kex Hostel

Saturday September 16

Á Móti Sól
20:00 Bæjarbíó

DJ_Gulli_DJ b2b ta dj ana

20:00 Bravó

Nýdönsk
18:00 & 21:00 Harpa – Eldborg

Eistnaflug Presents: Contradiction (DE), Krownest & Changer
20:00 Gaukurinn

DJ Óli Dóri
23:00 Kaffibarinn

Vaka Folk Festival / Simon fknhdsm
20:00 Kex Hostel

Go Go Gorgeous
21:00 Kiki Queer Bar

Karaoke Night
20:30 Loft Hostel

Kaveh Akbar
20:00 Mengi

Sunday September 17

Sunday Club
20:00 Bravó

Sophie Augusta
20:00 Gaukurinn

Jónbjörn
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Nordic Affect – New Ground
17:00 Mengi

Monday September 18

Bring The Laughs – Comedy Night
20:00 Gaukurinn

Simon fknhdsm
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Tuesday September 19

Karaoke Night
20:00 Gaukurinn

Fu Kaisha
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Wednesday September 20

Leon S Kemp
20:00 Bravó

TweetFleet Karaoke
20:00 Gaukurinn

Ballantines Vinyl Wednesday: King Lucky & Uncle Sam
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Thursday September 21

Eternal Roots
20:00 Bravó

Extreme Chill Festival: Kali Malone, Patricia Wolf & More
19:00 Gamla Bíó

Tragically Unknown
20:00 Gaukurinn

Extreme Chill Festival: Mixmaster Morris
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Bríet
20:00 Kaffi Flóra

Quiz Night
20:00 Kex Hostel ■

See more at events.grapevine.is



National Gallery of Iceland
Frikirkjuvegur 7
The House of Collections
Hverfisgata 15
Home of an Artist
Bergstaðarstræti 74



Karin Sander (1957). Dyrifjöll 125672. 2023. L112074

Some Recent Works – New acquisitions

listasafn.is

Listasafn Íslands
National Gallery of Iceland

Event Picks



HREYFING ER HAFIN #4
September 8, 18:00
Kex Hostel
1.500 ISK of PWYC

Sweater weather is officially here for the next 8 to 10 months – or forever – which means it's time to throw on your cutest lopapeysa and embrace the cosy Nordic vibes! We are once again happy to partner with our friends at post-dreifing for the fourth edition of their HREYFING ER HAFIN concert series, which is bringing exactly that vibe. With artists K.Óla, Salomé Katrín, Bjarni Daniel, Lea Kampmann, Elinborg, and Most Likely Marlin. The stage will represent Iceland, Denmark, Norway and the Faroes. Come feel the warmth and hear some great tunes! RX



Óreiða, Mondernte, osmé
September 14, 22:00
R6013
Free, donations welcome

Get your leather on and paint your nails black, for it is time to embrace the season of death. Perfect for mid-September, atmospheric black metal artist Óreiða, satanic ethereal metal witch Mondernte and meditative metal band osmé will gather to perform the rites of autumn. It's always a good time for dark music, but it makes it all the more delectable when the darkness is finally descending upon us. Plus, down in the dark pit of the R6013 basement venue, the darkness comes with a big side helping of wholesomeness and vegan food. RX



Neon Retrolesque: An 80s Burlesque Cabaret
September 14, 21:00
Gaukurinn
2.500 ISK

The eighties. They were the best of times, they were the worst of times. Sure, there was incredible music, style and advances in technology, but there was also Reaganomics and the AIDS crisis. At Neon Retrolesque, only the wonderful music and culture of the decade will be represented through burlesque, drag and belly-dance. Hosted by the incomparable Sindri Sparkle and set to an all-eighties soundtrack, the show will be, like, totally tubular! So don't stop believing in the power of love cause it's a mad world and that's what friends are for! RX

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Kjarvalsstaðir
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105 Reykjavík

Open daily
listasafnreykjavikur.is
artmuseum.is

Music News



Björk Wins AIM Prize

The Association of Independent Music hosts its annual awards ceremony on September 26. The ceremony's final nominees were announced in late August, when Björk was revealed as the winner in the category of Best Live Performer. Artists shortlisted in the same category were BABYMETAL, Beebadoobee, MUNA, and Reverend and The Makers. Björk's label,

record company One Little Independent, is nominated on the list of Best Independent Label. Her Cornucopia tour kicked off its European leg in Lisbon on September 1 and is set to finish in France in December.



Laufey On The Cover Of NME

Icelandic-Chinese musician Laufey Lín Jónsdóttir was featured on the August 28 cover of British music magazine NME, which recently announced their return to print. The LA-based artist has propelled to fame with her symphonic sound, evoking images of California sunsets and star-spangled boulevards.

Laufey will release her second studio LP, *Bewitched*, on September 8, following a live album recorded with the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra earlier in 2023. Laufey kicks off her European tour in Dublin in February, 2024, concluding the tour with a show in Reykjavik in March.



Grassroots Platform Upprásin Begins

Starting on Tuesday, September 5, the concert series Upprásin (Uprising) aims to promote Icelandic grassroots artists. The series is a collaboration project between Reykjavik Music City, RÚV National Radio and Harpa. A total of 134 applications were processed for the programme, with only 26 acts

chosen to participate. A monthly show will be hosted in Harpa's Kaldalón, with three artists performing each time. Upprásin's first night saw artists Róshildur, Flaaryr and Virgin Orchestra hit the stage, dazzling the near-capacity auditorium. ■



Slap That Bass

Fusing Sounds

Ingibjörg Turchi's *Stropha* breaks conventions

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGE Art Bicornick

"We swapped roles playing the bass and I tried it this one time," Ingibjörg says of her origin story. "It became my preference. I was around 20 years old, but it's never too late to start."

"I think it's a direct continuation of [*Melíae*]. To some extent, it's slightly heavier," comments Ingibjörg of the offering.

YOU LIKE JAZZ?

Despite primarily playing the bass, Ingibjörg should be perceived as a fully fledged musician and com-

Beyond what could be described as a typical jazz-soundscape, where you have your saxophone and piano and a rhythm section, *Stropha* transcends categorisation. "There's a variety of influences for the album:

I don't exclusively approach music from a bassist perspective. I like playing melodies, ambience, or just some sounds.

In 2020, Ingibjörg Elsa Turchi released her debut solo LP *Melíae*. In the wake of that wondrous catalogue of unassuming minimalist grooves, Ingibjörg has continued to investigate the capabilities of the bass guitar on her newest record, *Stropha*, out on September 1.

"There are so many possibilities [on the bass]. You can play chords, connect it to a pedal board, rock out. All kinds of things," says Ingibjörg of her instrument of choice.

Having studied the flute, piano, guitar and even the accordion from an early age, it was during her time in indie-pop band Rökkurró that her affinity for the bass emerged.

poser. *Stropha* is a testament to her musical abilities, not only demonstrating the various roles of the bass guitar, but her talents in musical composition.

Dabbling within the genre of jazz-fusion, *Stropha* visits all sorts of avenues within its scope. Sometimes, it sounds classically jazzy, like on the deeply groovy "Epta." Other stretches of the record, like the finale "Anemos", evoke minimalist-infused post-rock sounds.

jazz and rock, minimalism and classical music," Ingibjörg says.

Almost everything on the album is recorded live. "It's just that kind of music. It's good when everyone's in the same space playing together," Ingibjörg describes.

THINKING OUT OF THE BASS-SHAPED BOX

Ingibjörg describes her previous record, *Melíae*, being borne out of

A UNIQUE GIFT SHOP IN THE HEART OF REYKJAVÍK
LAUGAVEGUR 12b theheartofreykjavik.com





a stricter writing regimen. When writing *Stropha*, she took on more free-flowing approach, allowing ideas to form out of conversations and motifs. "I would say that my compositions are very open. I perceive writing from a more general perspective, focusing initially on a basic chord structure and a melody," Ingibjörg explains. "I don't exclusively approach music from a bassist perspective. I like playing melodies, ambience, or just some sounds," she continues.

It seems as if *Stropha* was deliberately written with an improvisational aspect in mind. Thinking out of the bass-shaped box seems to be the key to Ingibjörg's interesting musical scenery. "I allow myself to do exactly what I want to do," Ingibjörg confesses.

One aspect contributing to the unique sound is the addition of woodwinds to Ingibjörg's band. Joining her established performing band, comprised of musicians Magnús Trygvason Eliassen, Magnús Jóhann Ragnarsson, Tumi Árnason and Hröðmar Sigurðsson, are woodwind players Sólveig Morávek, Björg Brjánsdóttir and Rósa Guðrún Sveinsdóttir.

"I added a bass flute, clarinet and a baritone saxophone to the ensemble as I had written some arrangements. It all sounded great," Ingibjörg says of the addition. "Maybe my attraction to bass instruments is also the reason why I wrote the woodwind arrangements," she says.

PLAYING BOTH FIELDS

In addition to her flourishing solo career, it's fair to say that Ingibjörg is one of Iceland's more popular bassists. Performing alongside Icelandic heavy-weights Emiliana Torrini,

Bubbi Morthens, and Stuðmenn, her ambitions don't stop her from doing her own thing, as Ingibjörg can even be found performing with the obscurest of acts. "I like doing a lot at the same time," she starts. "Sometimes I get saturated with my music," she says. "It's so fun to play something by other people and be inspired."

Having confidence in her own work took some training, though. Ingibjörg started releasing her own material when she studied composition at the Iceland University of Arts. "I felt I wanted to expand on that line, and I had more courage to do so. I had a vision of what I wanted to create," she explains. Her first solo creation, *Wood/Work*, was a seven-track record released in 2017.

"I made that record and found out that some people liked it. Of course, you always think of how things will be received by other people. But I'm

studied ancient languages in secondary school and went on to finish two university degrees in Latin and Ancient Greek," she explains. "I have a hard time coming up with names for instrumental pieces, so I sometimes reach for a dictionary and find a word that's beautiful."

Stropha, or strophe, is a poetic term referring to a part of a stanza in Ancient Greek tragedies. "Unfortunately, sometimes it's not deeper than that," Ingibjörg confesses.

A similar cover art connects the two albums, both designed by Klara Arnalds.

These days, Ingibjörg is looking forward to playing her material live. A release show has been organised for October 5. Not wanting to repeat the location to her previous release show in Harpa, Ingibjörg opted for the heavenly acoustics of Frikirkjan. *Stropha* will be performed

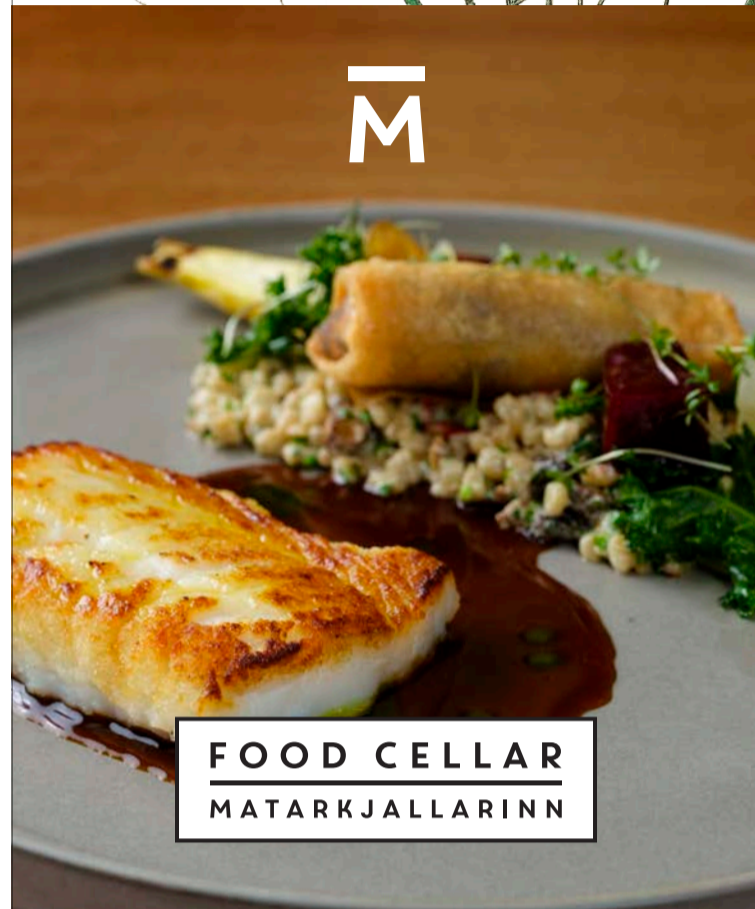
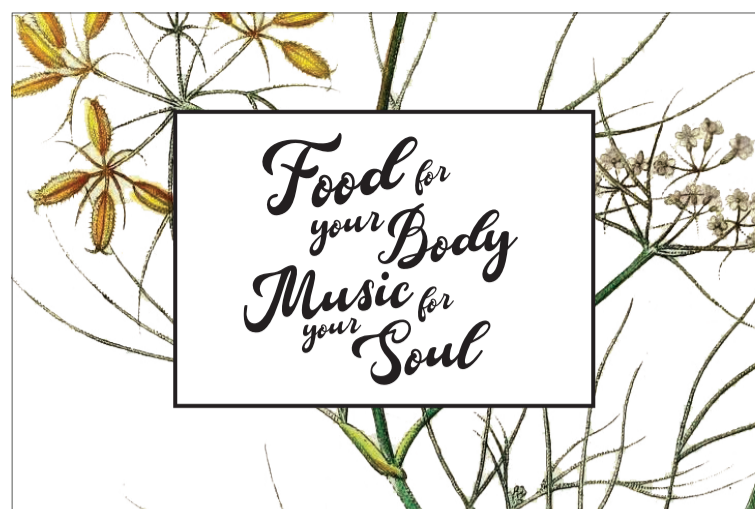
I have a hard time coming up with names for instrumental pieces, so I reach for a dictionary and find a word that's beautiful.

not stuck in that kind of thinking. I try to do things by my conviction. Trusting the project. You need to develop that ability," Ingibjörg says. As the years go by, it's an ability Ingibjörg feels she's getting better at. "I feel like I've managed to present what I wanted through music."

While *Stropha* seems to be *Melíae*'s more mature older sibling, their titles are evocative of Ingibjörg's love for the Greek language. "I


in its entirety, as well as a selection of works from *Melíae*. "People can expect improvisation, too," Ingibjörg promises. "I like having open forms, so that not every concert will sound the same." ■


Don't miss Ingibjörg Turchi's release show for her newest LP *Stropha* happening in Frikirkjan, October 5. Ticket price is 3.900



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NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ICELAND

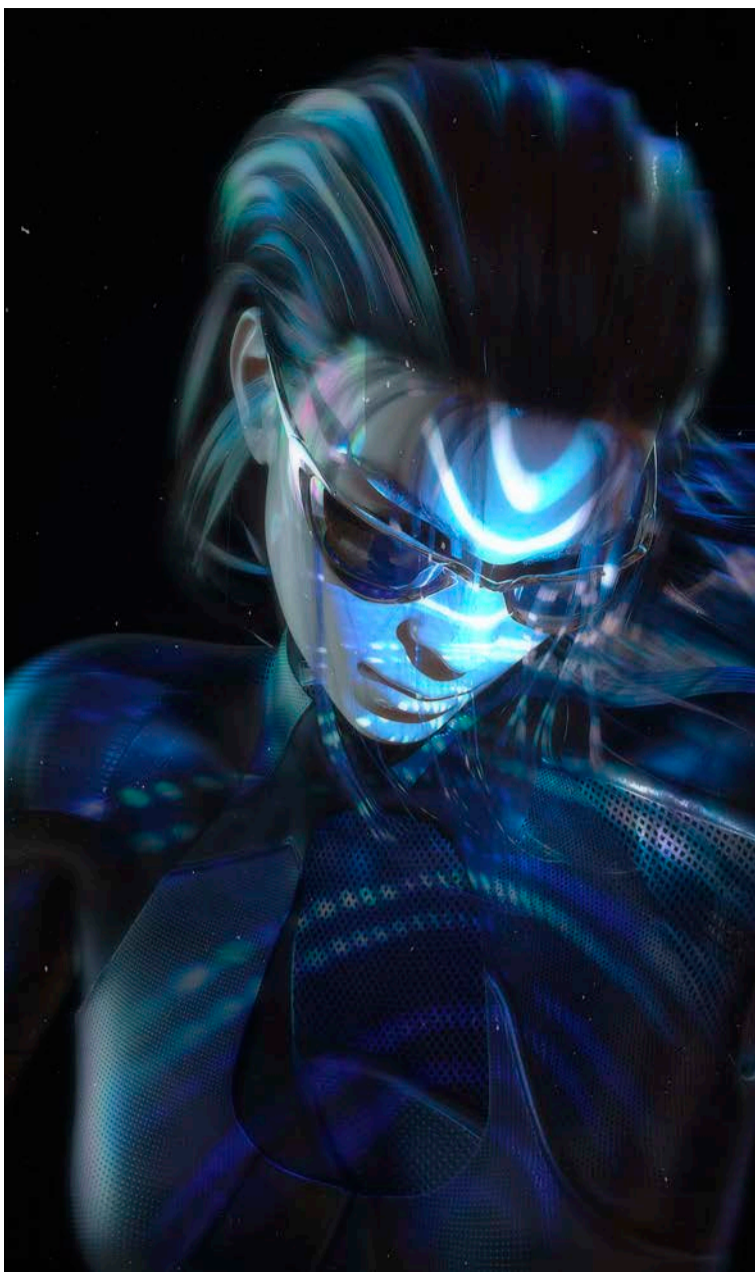




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About
Last Night

It's Getting Hot In Here

jadzia's tale of transcending time through music

WORDS jadzia
IMAGE Arna Beth

support team Lexi Jean and Kosmodod. We landed early at the venue because I wanted to experience the event in all its glory and was excited to hear the other artists who were playing.

The night went on and, after dancing, sweating and taking in every performance, I was bursting with energy and motivation, ready to kick some ass with my live set. At this point, the air inside was hot, steamy and electric. I hear Skrattar announce that they have two tracks left of their set so the nerves start to kick in as I realize that I'm up next. But when I walk towards the stage there is an instant switch in emotion and I'm fully focused and locked in.

The perception of time always amazes me while performing. It feels non-existent and everything else fades away. It felt incredible to share my sounds through a Funktion-One sound system while seeing friendly humans on the dance floor resonating to the music. Everyone is having a great time, enjoying the

After weeks of anticipation, it was finally game time. I put on my sneakers and headed downtown to Kornhlaðan where I did a short but sweet soundcheck. Everything was in sync and I was excited for what was to come after seeing the venue

The perception of time always amazes me while performing. It feels non-existent and everything else fades away.

had been transformed into a proper nightclub.

Right after soundcheck, I went to see Andartak's magical live set at Mengi, which was a perfect mind-body reset for the evening. Afterwards, I went strolling through Laugavegur with my emotional

moment. The atmosphere is fantastic and I go home with sweat dripping out from every pore, very tired ears and a full heart. Went to sleep feeling grateful to be a part of a Reykjavik event of this quality and scale. Thankful for the amazing event curation from the good people of the Skúlagata collective. ■



Chill Out, Brah

The Changing Of The Guard

Extreme Chill Festival favours the up and comers

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGE Art Bicnick

changed locations a few times before ultimately settling in Reykjavik in 2017.

"We'd been pushed into having the festival in Reykjavik, which of course attracts more people as opposed to having it out in the country," Pan comments. "When we started out, people thought of it as the annual gathering of electronic musicians, which was definitely not the case." Although initially perceived as a private party, that rumour finally subsided and the festival gradually garnered larger crowds.

YOUTHFUL EXUBERANCE

This year's version presents a slow transition to Extreme Chill's established, but intensified attention to young, up-and-coming artists. According to Pan, a committed effort has been made to diversify the festival's lineup throughout the years.

to in the '90s, our average festival-goer changed from being in their 30s to a twenty-something, which was sort of the goal."

THE REAL JOURNEY WAS THE FRIENDS WE MADE

This shift of emphasis fits well into Extreme Chill's overall ethos, platforming underground music and keeping things specific. "I don't want this to get any bigger. That's something we decided a long time ago," Pan explains. "It's been curated since day one and, if anything, it'll only get more curated."

Another key component of Extreme Chill is its dedication to connecting Icelandic and foreign musicians through music. This aim was further bolstered by the recent foundation of the North European Resonance and Dissonance Society, NERDS, whose main goal is to encourage

Walking into Space Odyssey, a record shop slash clothing consignment store slash music label on Skólavörðustígur, you're greeted by a warm interior and the cheerful presence of owner Pan Thorarensen. In simple lettering, a well-proportioned sticker labelled "AMBIENCE" is fixed on Pan's laptop. "It's almost like religion," he answers when asked what meaning he derives from the word. "I can even party to ambient music - no, really!"

A prolific driver of Iceland's electronic music scene, Pan is the co-founder and artistic director of the experimental Extreme Chill music festival. Now in its 14th year, Extreme Chill has seen its emphasis shift in recent years.

Preferring to call experimental music "adventurous music," Pan founded the festival in 2009 with his father, Óskar Thorarensen, when the duo organised a release show for their music project Stereo Hypnosis. Starting out in Hellissandur on the Snæfellsnes peninsula, the festival

I don't want this to get any bigger. That's something we decided a long time ago.

"There's a new generation coming up and that's something I needed to learn to mature alongside," Pan says, while mentioning other festivals where organisers still cling to the old guard. "You see these festivals that aren't developing and are still booking the old heroes, which is fine," he shrugs.

In past renditions, Extreme Chill has featured big headliners like Roger Eno and Tangerine Dream. After opening up Space Odyssey, Pan chose to shift the festival's focus. "We wanted to present more of the stuff that I like today. It's perhaps reminiscent of Iceland Airwaves in its early days," Pan clarifies.

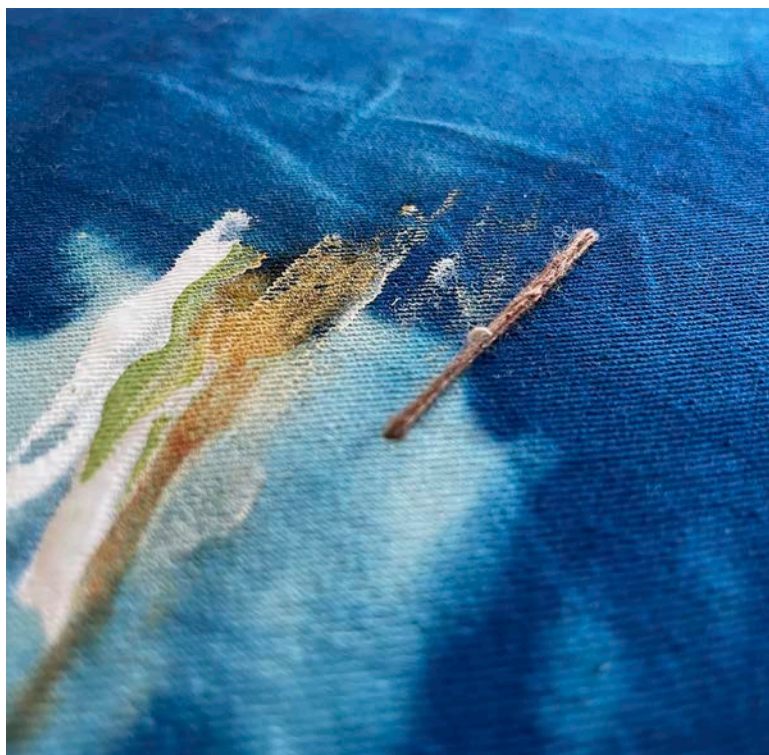
With change in the lineup comes a changing demographic. "As soon as we cut out the bands that I listened

information exchange between the various experimental music scenes in the region.

"The main thing is all the relationships that have been made through the festival. The friendships made throughout the years are an important feature for us," Pan says earnestly.

With the foundation of NERDS, Pan is hopeful for a deeper and broader exchange between Iceland and other participating countries. "It's very exciting and I expect the festival to develop more workshop-based activities and panels in the future," he concludes. ■

Extreme Chill Festival takes place in Reykjavik, September 21-24. Tickets are available at Extremechill.org



Track By Track

Meditating On Hard Times

Composer Sævar Jóhannsson shares his thoughts on *Where The Light Enters*

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason & Sævar Jóhannsson
IMAGE Supplied by Sævar Jóhannsson

Where The Light Enters by composer Sævar Jóhannsson was released August 22. On it, Sævar draws inspiration from meditation and 13th century poet Rumi. Sævar shared the stories and inspiration behind his recent work.

INHALE

This track is inspired by meditation. I was going through a tough period during the recording. One way of dealing with that was meditating. That helped a lot. It's probably the brightest song on the record.

THE WOUND

It's an emotional piece. This is the first record I've made without click-track and I allowed things to be fuzzy at times. I let the counting be imperfect, rather trusting the feeling of whether to speed up or slow down.

EINFARI (LONER)

This track came to me when I was experiencing heartbreak. But it's also a speculation on my story. I moved eight times when I was a kid,

sometimes between countries. I always felt like a guest and constantly had this feeling of, "We're going to leave either way." I had a difficult time connecting with places when I was younger and I was sort of a loner. I think this song captures that.

WHERE THE LIGHT ENTERS

I feel this song is dedicated to a person that's dear to me and has shown extreme perseverance. The first half of the song is meant to signify that struggle and the latter half is the harvesting of those hard times.

NOTING

Noting is a meditation technique based on the premise that the thought is not what hurts us, rather how long we dwell on that thought. This exercise is just letting things come and go. On this record, there are parts that are written and parts that are improvised. I hadn't really finished all of the songs when I started recording, to allow for improvisation. It connects to the idea of not judging yourself for what appears, transferring that mediation to the creation itself.

NON-FACTUAL-TRUTH-TELLER

That's just a nonsensical title I came up with. I always get a Ludovico Einaudi vibe from this track.

CAVEMAN/INNER CRITIC

This is a rumination on the artistic side of the brain and the survival side. I

can't remember which one is which. I always think this track is three songs in one, which represents a sort of overthinking.

IN LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS

Probably one of my favourite songs on the album. In my view, it has two unique parts, representing the absent-minded and the overthinking. The title comes from a dancer, Thea Atladóttir. We were in the same artist residency which had the theme "The Light." So it was sort of perfect.

PASSING BY

The most minimalist song on the record. It's very meditative and simple. It's nothing more than thoughts passing by.

REST SWEET PRINCE OR I'LL BREAK YOUR BONES

This track is inspired by a night out, where I witnessed a stark example of toxic masculinity. There was this guy who acted chivalrous, but became very violent when confronted.

REYKJADALUR

I wrote this song in one day on June 17 (Iceland's Independence Day). I was playing around trying to write the most Icelandic song ever.

EXHALE

This is in direct correlation to the first track. I always try to make the first and last track of my albums talk together. ■



Filthy Interview

CH-CH- Changer

BAND_MEMBERS_V44_FINAL_DRAFT

WORDS Francesca Stoppani
IMAGE Supplied by Changer

tioned from thrash and hardcore to death metal, following a transformative period of allegedly drunken drama. The band's sound, much like its members, evolved organically, driven by the desire to push boundaries and explore what each new member could contribute to Changer's musical style. In 2020, Changer's current lineup emerged as the strongest iteration to date, according to Kristján. "With no disrespect to the past members," he adds.

LONG LIVE EISTNAFLUG

One iconic event that has remained constant in Changer's journey is the Eistnaflug festival. From playing the inaugural edition in 2005 to becoming a consistent presence, Eistnaflug's unique location (a very hard-to-reach village in the fjords of East Iceland) and community make it one of the pillars of Iceland's metal scene. "We accidentally headlined that first Eistnaflug. Our singer had missed his plane and arrived after Sólstafir – the true headliner – played. So, we played after them. He ran up to the stage as we started the first song. It was a great gig," Kristján recalls. Changer is now working on two releases. "You will be hearing from us soon," Kristján teases. "Hopefully by the end of this year." ■

Although Eistnaflug did not happen in 2023, the organisers are busy planning other events. Their next production takes place on September 16, featuring headliners Contradiction from Germany, along with Krownest and Changer. The latter will also make an appearance at Reykjavik Deathfest, happening September 29-30. Both events are going to be held in the legendary venue and bar Gaukurinn. So, see you there or see you in Hell.

The world of music is a dynamic landscape, constantly shifting and evolving, much like the metal band Changer (no pun intended). In this Filthy interview, I talked to Kristján – Changer's drummer and frontman – to revisit some highlights of the band's 25-year career.

THE TIMES, THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'

Founded by Kristján in 1999, Changer has undergone many lineup transformations over the years. With Kristján currently on drums, Óskar on guitar, Hudson on lead guitar, Maddi on bass and Hlynur lending vocals, these band members seem here to stay. But is Kristján responsible for all the changes? "I don't know, I'm just a drummer," he comments. "But this has definitely enriched all of us as musicians and individuals." Ironically and unintentionally, the band's strong suit is to consistently change their trajectory, not only in matters of members, but also of music style. "We change genres, we change members, but the name has nothing deep behind it. Or maybe it's really a self-fulfilling prophecy." Through the years, the band transi-

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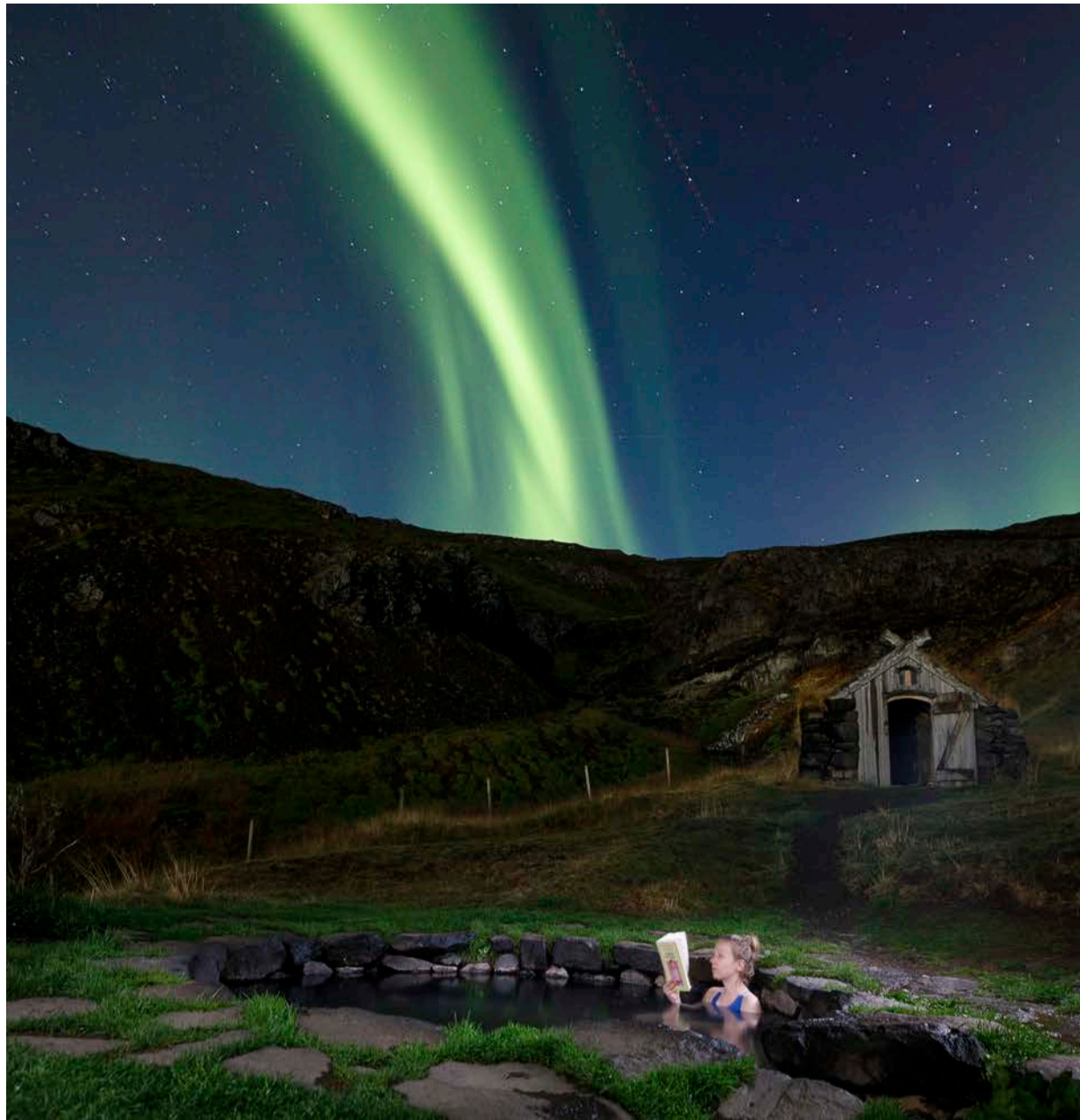
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Travel Diary

In Tune With Nature

Two days of hiking, pooling, horseback riding and more in Dallir

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Art Bicnick

Accommodation provided by Dalahótel
Horse riding tour provided by Dalahestar

friends all say, until one colleague notices, "It looks like inverted Italy on the map," he says. "I'd start from there."

SETTLERS, CRAFTS AND VIEWS

Ironically, the first person we meet in Búðardalur is Italian. However, my quest to find Italy in Hvammsfjörður ends quickly because there's so much else to do. We make a quick coffee stop at the Leif Eiriksson Center, dedicated to the first European to reach America long before Columbus, and peek through the exhibition without the audio guide (we arrived past the opening times). A local recommends checking out Bolli.

Bolli is a local knitting community that runs an Icelandic craft shop selling lopapeysa sweaters, wool socks, collars and mittens. Every member of the community has to volunteer at the shop. Melkorka,

es over Búðardalur, with winds so strong that I'm scared to open the car door. The horses, however, stand completely unbothered by the wind – true Icelandic warriors that have survived hundreds of years of harsh weather conditions. To my surprise, Carolin says the weather is too bad for a horseback riding tour, as the wind can make horses aggressive. The forecast for the following morning seems more promising.

DALAHÓTEL: A CHEST FULL OF SECRETS

One of the things that immediately catches my attention upon arriving in Búðardalur is the absence of a swimming pool. The nearest one is in Sælingsdalur valley, right where our hotel is located.

Dalahótel is a family-owned hotel that has been transformed from a former school – and it's enormous. Finding your way to the restaurant feels like walking through a maze,

Gátta drinks some water and continues with confidence; she's not afraid to lose her balance, which reassures me – so why should I be?

who's working today, jokes that the setup is pretty comfortable and she only had to work for two days this summer. The prices for handmade pieces are much lower than in Reykjavík, and I wish I had more time to try on sweaters.

Based on another recommendation from locals, we decide to visit Dalahestar, a horse farm run by German transplant Carolin, who fell in love with Iceland over 20 years ago. As we drive to the farm, a storm rag-

but there's a certain charm to it. Why would such a sparsely populated area need such a big school? Is this place haunted? Visiting at the end of the tourist season, having the space all to yourself feels truly unique. A swimming pool just for you? A living room the size of three typical Reykjavík apartments where you can unwind with a book? A relaxation room with massage chairs? Or a game area with a ping pong table and darts? You name it.

Every time I spend too long in Reykjavík – whether it's just a few days or a month, I'm in awe when I finally leave the city. Half an hour north of 101, and I have to pinch myself to remind myself that I live here. Storm clouds loom on the horizon, with the wind bending the sparse trees. But if I wait a few minutes, a rainbow appears, overlooking the never-ending fjord. The view may always be the same, but it never fails to amaze me. Accompanied by the Grapevine's photographer, international man of mystery Art Bicnick, I've spent a good dozen hours along this highway over the past two years. And every time, I find myself thinking: "I should get out of town more."

It's the first weekend of September and we're heading to Búðardalur, a village in the northwest of Iceland steeped in history. The first settlers lived here and built temporary camps on the way further north, but what about now? When I asked around about what to do in Búðardalur, I hit a wall. "Why would you go there?" "I only stopped there on the way to the Westfjords." "I don't even know where that is," my Icelandic

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The friendly staff is there to help you and recommend hikes in the area – that’s how we found out about the elf’s church of Tungustapi, the Ránargil canyon, which very few people know about and an unnamed waterfall with a dream picnic spot.

As the weather keeps changing, we only embark on two one-hour hikes, admiring the views. We’re just a few days into September, but autumn’s arrival was unmistakable – the once lush green grass had transitioned to a shade of golden yellow. For some, the view over the valley might be a bit desolate, but I try to focus on the little things. Here’s a narrow river winding like a snake; there is a lake with a little island and a bunch of trees that turns into an ice ring in the winter. The cotton grass, now in its waning days, stretches on for kilometres. A peculiar patch of forest catches my attention. In this otherworldly landscape, it feels oddly out of place. Is all of this real? Or is my imagination playing tricks? This place is nothing but a true oasis far from the city.

AURORA’S SEASONAL PREMIERE

Once we’re back at the hotel, my shoes might be wet from jumping over the river, but my mind calls for more. It’s hard to focus on dinner while planning evening activities. The hotel’s restaurant staff manages to get my attention by offering ice cream with dandelion syrup from a nearby dairy farm. Yes, please!

Just an hour after dinner, nature puts on a show for us. It’s one of the first nights in months when I see a starry sky, but there’s more – the clouds clear up, and the aurora borealis takes the stage with its long green tongues dancing in the sky. I watch the show from Guðrúnarlaug, just a few steps from the hotel. Though this hot pool is a replica of



the original one destroyed by a landslide, one can still feel its rich history. The pool is named after Guðrún Ósvífursdóttir, one of the most well-known female characters in Laxdæla Saga, who is said to have enjoyed its hot waters. It was probably in this pool that her infamous love triangle meetings took place.

GALLOPING THROUGH NATURE

As I wake up the next morning, the sun is shining. We grab a quick bite before heading to Dalahestar for the second try. I haven’t been on a horse for at least 20 years, and as clumsy as I am, I’m a bit nervous. Carolin welcomes us at the stable as

she finishes preparing the horses. Usually, on a tour, you’d have to saddle up your horse yourself, but the weather window is too short today – it’s better to hit the road as soon as we can. My horse’s name is Gátta, which means “riddle” in Icelandic – a beautiful female that is Carolin’s own breed. Gátta always seems hungry – she’s snacking on the grass while I listen to Carolin’s instructions.

Off we go! I hope I’m not too much of a burden for Gátta – who knows if a horse is bothered by a human sitting on her back? Carolin reassures me that we’re all good. The horses haven’t been running for the past two days because of the weather, so they seem as excited to be in nature

as I am. In the summer, beach tours are one of the most popular activities Dalahestar operated, but the tide is too high today. Instead, we ride along the river Laxá, literally “a salmon river.” Carolin talks about the region’s history and the horses chomp on some grass as we make stops. “Look, did you see a salmon jump up the river?” Carolin points toward the water, but unfortunately, I haven’t seen anything, just the sun’s reflection. We follow along a bridge, but on the way back, the time comes to cross the river. Gátta drinks some water and continues with confidence; she’s not afraid to lose her balance, which reassures me – so why should I be? Back on the land, Gátta chang-

es her trot to a gallop – I’m a bit taken aback but also excited. The smile doesn’t leave my face for the duration of the tour. When Carolin talks about her plans to organise a multi-day horse riding trip connected to the Viking history of the region, I’m not thinking of the discomfort of such a tour for a city dweller – I just can’t wait to join.

We end the adventure with hot chocolate and pastries, talking about horses, the tourism industry and being an immigrant in the Icelandic countryside. I say a quick goodbye to my horse and leave for my next adventure – an interview with a raven! (Continued on P. 37) ■



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Review It's All About The Vibes

Mixed first impressions at new small-plates place Skreið

WORDS Ragnar Egilsson
 IMAGE Art Bicnick

Until a few months ago, the house at Laugavegur 4 had been variously empty or housing tourist tripe promising "magic ice" (whatever that is) and now would play home to a pintxo restaurant no less.

but having dipped their beaks into the restaurant scene before, as well as managing downtown festivals like Innipúkinn and Sónar, so there was good reason to expect them to deliver on atmosphere and bonhomie.

Making your way up the spiral staircase to the second floor, home to the restaurant proper, you are met with bursts of crocheted cushions, displaying either startled horses or less-startled naked ladies.

I was ecstatic when I heard that this building, at the middle point of Reykjavik's shopping strip, would finally be home to an honest-to-god business that can be visited by the people who actually live in Reykjavik.

The new owners, Steinþór and Ásgeir have successfully woven their Basque-ish restaurant into the existing architecture. Until now, they have been best known as the owners of downtown club Röntgen,

The ground floor of Skreið greets you with a small boutique, encased in old newspapers and glass product displays selling take-home wine and sardines, familiar to any of a generation of trendy Icelandic





downtowners, who will have squatted for stints in Berlin or Barcelona before settling back in Iceland to procreate and debate city planning in the hot tub of Vesturbæjarlaug.

Making your way up the spiral staircase to the second floor, home to the restaurant proper, you are met with bursts of crocheted cushions, displaying either startled horses or less-startled naked ladies. Out of

Húsafell and as the head chef at CO in Paris, but I simply hadn't pictured him delving into Spanish cuisine, as his background is resolutely on the Nordic cuisine spectrum.

The good thing about small plate restaurants is that a critic can gobble their way through the whole menu with ease, so you get a good overview of the whole thing.

The good thing about small plate restaurants is that a critic can gobble their way through the whole menu with ease, so you get a good overview of the whole thing.

the two euphemisms for "small", commonly used by restaurant critics, Skreið definitely leans more "intimate" than "cosy". This, along with the marriage of second-hand kitsch and casual Barcelona cool, makes for an altogether welcoming atmosphere.

As punters have gotten a peek into the gruelling restaurant world on TV, reality and otherwise, they have begun to shy away from celebrating the singular vision of the "great man" in the kitchen. This is probably for the best if you've seen how they let off steam (favourite: Chef Slowik, least favourite: Mario Batali). It's not clear to me what has taken the place of that great vision, but we seem to be operating along the line of "vibes" now.

This has gotten to the point where I routinely forget to check who is running the back of house. I was quite surprised to see Davíð Örn Hákonarson helping the kitchen. Davíð is a talented chef, coming from a short (but excellent) stint at Hótel

The peppery catalan olive oil which we were introduced to as a side with the bread ended up taking a prominent role in most of the dishes and overwhelmed some. The splash of oil worked well enough with the eggplant with agave, but overstayed its welcome with the crispy octopus

The range of vegetarian dishes worked best at the table, like the manchego with honey and a dusting of walnuts or the flavoursome sautéed mushrooms with a velvety egg yolk for dipping.

slices and sardines in pil pil sauce (sauce that is oil emulsified with salted cod gelatin).

The range of vegetarian dishes worked best at the table, like the

manchego with honey and a dusting of walnuts or the flavoursome sautéed mushrooms with a velvety egg yolk for dipping. The meat dishes were more hit-and-miss. The chorizo was served with little fanfare – three ladyfinger-sized sausages lined up on a white plate with a bit of chunky herb salsa on top - and felt closer to Chinese lap chong in flavour and appearance. The salted cod croquette had a gooey and overly-sweet centre (sweetness was an issue with several dishes). Finally, there was the Basque beef sirloin, which was well-seasoned but served rare enough to have been able to lead the charge in Pamplona.

Skreið makes a strong first impression, with a look and atmosphere that evokes a Barcelona restaurante (that's Spanish for "restaurant") but the dishes have a tendency to overcommit to simplicity or attempt a spin on the ingredients that veer off course.

The late night, small plate vibe is welcome in the current restaurant climate and the jovial atmosphere reflects that. While this hasn't translated yet to the dishes yet, which would benefit from more balancing

and vitality, you could do worse than stop for a small veggie plate, some gentle music and a glass of natural wine, before spilling into the streets for some mild-mannered mid-30s mayhem. ■



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Food Feature

Bomba-stic Paellas Arrive

La Barceloneta is a slice of Barcelona in the heart of Reykjavík

WORDS Shruthi Basappa
IMAGES Zoe Sarsanedas

serve Icelandified “tapas” such as lamb in liquorice sauce. There was Tapashúsið for a brief moment. Garður based El Faro is closing its doors after only just a few years. Lof, closer to the Grandi harbour, remained open for even fewer days and, more recently, Skreið is attempting Basque cuisine.

Newest entrant La Barceloneta is all set to shake things up and offer us a true taste of Spain right here in Reykjavík. “We are very focused on having the classics done in the traditional way – we are just humbly presenting what we know best and miss the most, paellas y tapas.”

PAELLA AT YOUR DOORSTEP

La Barceloneta has managed to remain one of those elusive successful concepts built around authentic Spanish traditions. Born just as the pandemic waned, La Barceloneta started as a paella delivery concept in 2020. Started by a team of

Curiously, restaurants attempting to remain closer to Spanish culinary traditions have come and gone in a blink of an eye compared to their heavily Icelandified counterparts. This isn't entirely surprising as a bulk of the travels to Alicante and Tenerife are steeped in White Lotus like

If there has been one destination sought after by Icelanders for decades now and sees no sign of that popularity abating, it is Spain. The desire for sun and sand is such that, in the summer of 2022, Icelanders broke their own travel records by flying to Alicante and Tenerife in whopping numbers.

Despite the popularity of Spain as a holiday destination, representation of Spanish food here has often been attempted in misguided ways. Tapas has become synonymous with small plates rather than being small bites to go with your pre-supper victuals – a misnomer that works very well to Iceland's advantage given its steep pricing. Tapas Barinn continues to

Despite the popularity of Spain as a holiday destination, representation of Spanish food here has often been attempted in misguided ways.

“adventuring” within the confines of the many water park resorts or hotels catering to older Icelanders seeking familiarity, but on a sandy beach.

Spanish-Icelanders, Spaniards and Icelanders, Elma Backman, Pedro López (chef), Albert Muñoz, Dagur Pétursson (chef) and Zoe Sarsanedas are the heart of La Barceloneta. A passionate bunch with a back-



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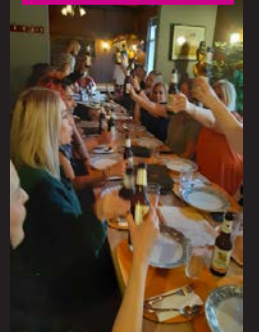
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ground in food and design, their idea to deliver piping hot paellas to people's doorsteps proved so popular that they were recognised by the Grapevine's Best of Dining panel on multiple occasions.

A brick and mortar restaurant now on Templarasund, the slightly sunken space is fitting for the Barcelona vibe the team was going for. Building on the strong connection shared

meaning 'rice with X' (arroz de marisco, arroz de pollo, arroz negro, etc.) but it has been mis-called paella through the years." Sorry Jamie Oliver, that's arroz con chorizo, not paella you've been peddling.

Paella is at the root of La Barceloneta – the paella counter and bar stand right in the heart of the space, further underlining their importance. You can even watch from the street-

station, cooking six paellas at once!

At 4000 ISK per person, and a minimum order of two, it is best to order a paella as a group, as "it is best when made for more." The seemingly simple dish belies the intensely rich seafood stock the grains are plump with. Local nods like the use of salted cod is delicately done so as not to overpower the rice itself. After all, the sofrito-stock-cooked rice is the star of the dish. The vegetarian and chicken paella boast similar attention to detail. My one pet peeve is that the accompanying alioli has to be ordered as an extra add-on and isn't served with the paella itself.

Reception since opening has been promising. "It has been a long journey. Trying to bring everything we could from Spain was really challenging," smiles Dagur, "but it makes us really happy when we hear from both Spanish people and people who've been to Barcelona, that there is finally a place like this that feels like being there."

While tapas fever may have gripped the global dining industry with its price sensitive appeal of "small plates" and "plates to share" communal dining vibe, Spanish cuisine remains largely misunderstood in Iceland.

by Iceland and Spain, they wanted to bring a true Spanish culinary experience they felt was lacking in Reykjavík. The business is named after an iconic neighbourhood in the Ciutat Vella district, with a history of being a working class district. "La Barceloneta is a sailor's neighbourhood," shares Dagur. "It was also a neighbourhood where all the immigrants from many Spanish regions converged, which made it a unique niche for different cultures throughout Spain to blend."

PAELLA VS ARROZ

While tapas fever may have gripped the global dining industry with its price sensitive appeal of "small plates" and "plates to share" communal dining vibe, Spanish cuisine remains largely misunderstood in Iceland. Boasting a rich variety of regional cuisines, the country's varied landscape contributes to nuanced local flavours that, much like Italian food, can be hard to replicate once removed from their terroir.

"Technically, there is only one paella: the Valencian," Dagur clarifies. "In Spain, we call the rest 'Arroz con'

side windows that peek directly over the paella bar: gas burners with several paelleras the size of a large SUV wheel, different kinds of paellas at varying stages of cooking bubbling away.

Chef Pedro López has over 40 years of experience and has owned restaurants in Torrevieja, and was the chef at Lof, before joining the Barceloneta team. A lively person-

BOMBASTIC BOMBAS

Call a place La Barceloneta and offer no bombas? Surely not! The neighbourhood may be known for their long sandy beaches (incidentally imported from Egypt), but insiders know that bombas are the real legacy of the area. Dagur describes bomba as, "a spicy meatball wrapped with mashed potato, breaded and deep fried and served

The seemingly simple dish belies the intensely rich seafood stock the grains are plump with. Local nods like the use of salted cod is delicately done so as not to overpower the rice itself.

ality, his passion for Spanish food is evident from the moment you meet him. Dressed in a matching set of leek print chef's whites, he is a treat to watch as he expertly mans the

with alioli and our special "salsa Brava."

Sorry Dagur, I beg to differ – he is criminally underselling their bomba.

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Having eaten my fair share of bombas whilst living in Barcelona, it was somewhat of a personal mission of mine to try and eat as many as pos-

sible wherever I found them. A mission I proudly carry on to this day. Based on my very scientific anecdotal experience, I have to say that Pedro's bombas surpass even my most favourite ones at La Bombetta (an iconic Catalan restaurant in La Barceloneta, Barcelona).

Based on my very scientific anecdotal experience, I have to say that Pedro's bombas surpass even my most favourite ones at La Bombetta.

The size of a tennis ball, somewhat larger than an average bomba, the bomba here is expertly fried, leaving barely a trace of oil on your fin-

moniously. I have to admit being so overwhelmed with joy, I had to thank Pedro in person for such a superlative execution of what is so often a hardened puck of barely seasoned meat, stuffed inside gummy spuds. This is not a scotch egg, folks, nor is it a meat stuffed croqueta; this is a bomba, and it is a grand thing.

The croqueta here are wonderful, too, made the curiously Spanish way with bechamel roux as the binder that, once fried, turns to gloriously custardy insides of a crispy shell.

VAMOS A TOMAR EL VERMUT

Italians have aperitivo, the Spaniards have their "la hora del vermut." Dagur and Zoe are very clear they wanted to share this quintessential Spanish hour. Typically the hour

before lunch, it is common to have a little tapa, a little canned seafood with a vermut. And unlike Italian vermouths, and bar staples like Martini, Spanish vermut are rarely seen on international menus, although brands like Yzaguirre and Espinaler are slowly being recognised. Vermuterias almost always only serve their own house brewed vermut, something I hope to see here one day.

At the restaurant, the menu boasts a small but selective choice of Barca favourites, a welcome relief from the natural wine sameness that has otherwise consumed the city.

"As everyone knows, wine and liquor are key components in Spanish gastronomy. We try to work only with Spanish brands, and we are working on importing what we think are key Spanish liqueurs, such as ratafia,

orujo, anís, and the likes," shares Dagur, when asked about the near future plans for La Barceloneta. "Our goal is to establish things that are not present in the city, not only in terms of product, but experience, such as 'la hora del vermut' (specially on weekends) and 'la sobremesa' (staying at the table after lunch/dinner and have some liqueur, carajillos, digestive)," he says enthusiastically.

Ongoing research at the University of Iceland once summarised the deep relationship between Spain and Iceland as "More than sea, sand and salted cod" – a poetic alliteration. Dagur sums it up best for the restaurant as he says, "we cannot bring you the sun, but we can bring you the food." ■

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Folklore

Not Seeing Is Believing

The past, present and future of Icelanders' belief in the huldufólk

WORDS **Gitte Van der Meersch**
IMAGE **Art Bicnick**

ple had to be satisfied with offerings of food and drink – depriving them could lead to misfortune or even disaster befalling your farmstead.

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE BELIEF IN HIDDEN PEOPLE

To gain a better understanding of the psychology behind Icelanders' belief in elves, we spoke to Terry Gunnell, professor of Folkloristics at

imaginary friend, in that it provides a sense of camaraderie and comfort. For children, for example, believing in hidden people can be a way to cope with loneliness and feel less isolated. For adults, it can be a way of feeling less alone in the world and believing that there are benevolent forces looking after them.

Belief in hidden people can also be a way of dealing with the unpredictability of life. For example, the weath-

belief in hidden people. According to Terry, Christianity did not completely eliminate Icelanders' belief in hidden people, but rather transformed it. Instead of being seen as supernatural beings, hidden people were reinterpreted as fallen angels or demons.

Moreover, Terry noted that belief in hidden people is not a static or fixed belief, but one that evolves and adapts to changing times and social contexts. For example, the current popularity of belief in hidden people among tourists reflects a broader cultural trend of nostalgia and longing for a magical and mystical world, as evidenced by the popularity of fantasy literature and films such as *Lord of the Rings* and *Game of Thrones*.

THE FUTURE OF BELIEF IN HIDDEN PEOPLE

As Iceland is now more connected to the rest of the world and younger generations are more exposed to Western culture, it remains to be seen how belief in hidden people will develop in the future. Will it remain a strong cultural force or will it fade over time? According to Terry, the future of belief in hidden people depends on several factors.

First, he believes that the belief in hidden people will persist as long as there are people who feel connected to the land and nature. As long as people feel the need to connect with something bigger than themselves, there will always be a place for belief in hidden people.

Secondly, it depends on whether the belief will continue to be passed down from generation to generation. If parents continue to tell their children stories about hidden people and teach them to respect the land and the natural world, then faith will continue to thrive. However, if younger generations become disconnected from their cultural heritage and lose interest in the stories and traditions of their ancestors, belief in hidden people may fade.

Finally, it also depends on the role of tourism. While the belief in hidden people has become a popular attraction for tourists in Iceland, there is a danger that it could be exploited and commercialised to the point where it loses cultural significance. "It is important for Icelanders to keep telling their own stories about hidden people and maintain their connection to the land and the natural world, rather than letting external forces determine the story," Terry says.

The belief in hidden people is a fascinating aspect of Icelandic culture that captures the imagination of people around the world. While it may seem strange or even silly to some, it is a deeply rooted cultural tradition that has helped Icelanders connect with their natural environment and with each other. Whether it will continue to flourish remains to be seen, but for now it remains an important part of Icelandic identity and a reminder of the power of human imagination and connection to the natural world. ■

Hidden people, also known as elves or Huldufólk, are a part of Icelandic folklore and culture. They are believed to be supernatural beings who live in the natural environment, hidden from human sight. While some people might dismiss the idea of hidden people as fanciful or even absurd, the belief is deeply ingrained in Icelandic culture and has been for centuries.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The belief in hidden people is deeply rooted in the country's history and culture. According to Icelandic folklore, the hidden people were the original inhabitants of Iceland, driven underground by the arrival of human settlers. The hidden people are said to have retreated to the mountains and remote areas of the country, where they live to this day.

The belief in hidden people is also linked to the idea of sacrifice. People used to believe that the hidden peo-

Belief in hidden people is not a static or fixed belief, but one that evolves and adapts to changing times and social contexts.

ple had to be satisfied with offerings of food and drink – depriving them could lead to misfortune or even disaster befalling your farmstead.

According to Terry, the belief in hidden people is not just a quirky and outdated tradition; it still holds psychological significance for many Icelanders. "For some, the belief in hidden people is a way of maintaining a connection to the past and their cultural heritage," Terry explains. "For others, it is a way of coping with the stresses and uncertainties of modern life."

So it is similar to the concept of an

er in Iceland can change rapidly, and natural disasters like volcanic eruptions and earthquakes pose a constant threat. Believing in invisible people can actually provide a sense of control in a world that is often beyond human control. "For example, if a farmer believes that hidden men have blessed their crops, they may have more confidence in the future and be more resilient in times of adversity," Terry explains.

THE ROLE OF RELIGION

Religion has played an important role in Icelandic culture, and the Christianisation of Iceland in the 11th century had a major impact on the

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“Ha? Ha? Ha?” – What Is This Raven Trying To Tell Us?

When I heard about a talking raven in Iceland, I knew I had to meet him; no other options were considered

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Art Bicnick

FROM RESCUE TO FAMILY

“Mamma” is Rebecca Cathrine Kaad Ostenfeld, who runs this petting farm and rescue centre. She’s known for taking injured animals from the wild, caring for them and bringing them back to their natural habitat. This is precisely how Krummi found his way to this farm seven years ago. “Krummi came here when he was a baby,” shares Rebecca, while Krummi plays with his toys nearby. “Someone called me and said, ‘We have a raven here who’s been in an accident. Can you take it?’ I replied, ‘Of course.’ When I got him, he was just lying on the ground, he couldn’t fly and his feet were not really straight. I thought, ‘Oh my God, what shall I do?’ and I decided to bring it home.”

“The first two to three weeks, I fed him every second hour,” Rebecca continues. “I made small boxes with all kinds of food – beef, pork, even reindeer.” In a few weeks, Rebecca started taking Krummi outside to lie in the grass and cuddle, and slowly, he began to jump around. “Krummi never flew and will never fly,” says Rebecca, adding, “I have no idea if it’s a boy or a girl, and I don’t want to know! I don’t care. I just love Krummi.” [Rebecca does believe Krummi is male, so he’ll be referred to as one in this article.]

From the very beginning, Rebecca saw that Krummi was extremely intelligent. “When he came here, I could see that in his eyes – he wanted to live. Sometimes when animals, or even humans, are saying goodbye to life, you can see they have this look of ‘I’m ready,’” she says. “Krummi never had that. He was always like,

ing in captivity. “He would never have survived in the wild,” says Rebecca, emphasising that it was never her intention to keep him. Krummi listens to the conversation attentively, takes a few steps, and utters, “Mamma.” Similarly to other injured wild animals that end up at Hólar, Rebecca hoped

Ha?

Krummi would be able to return to nature. “The moment I took him, I realised that he would never fly. I knew that for the next 25 years or so, Krummi would be a part of the family,” she says.

THE RAVEN’S FIRST WORDS

When he was about two years old, Krummi started to talk. “Every time my children went down to the stable – and I’m talking about many times a day – they would always call ‘mamma,’” Rebecca explains. “I always responded, hugged them or gave them a kiss. Krummi had been sitting here and seeing that whenever they called ‘mamma,’ I came. One day, out of the blue, he just started to say ‘mamma.’”

Rebecca admits that hearing Krummi talk for the first time was shocking. She thought she was going crazy. “My daughter and I were home alone on a winter day. Suddenly, somebody said, ‘Mamma.’ I thought it was my daughter, so I asked, ‘Honey, what’s up?’ She said, ‘Mom, I didn’t say a word. Could it be the raven?’”

These days, “mamma” is one of Krummi’s favourite words. “He always says it when he sees me, hears my voice, or if I leave him and he wants me to return. He also says, ‘Krummi.’ We’ve been calling him Krummi from the second he came. It’s a nickname for a raven in Icelandic,” says Rebecca. Krummi has also learned to say ‘hæ’ (hi), and according to Rebecca, he can even put together ‘Hæ, Krummi!’ and ‘Hæ, mamma!’ “He also says ‘ha?’ and I think that’s one of the most used phrases in Iceland. If you say something to an Icelandic person, they’re always like, “Ha?” (huh?),”

she adds. Over the years, Krummi’s vocabulary has expanded to sometimes include ‘heyðu’ (listen), ‘hættu’ (stop), ‘komdu’ (come), ‘já’ (yes), ‘nei’ (no), as well as a few names of people he knows, including Baltasar (yes, the film director Baltasar Kormákur).

Rebecca blushes and adds, “I’m so sorry, I didn’t teach him this one, but he can also say ‘typpi’ (penis).”

Krummi isn’t a raven of many words, but he certainly chooses them wisely. Rebecca recalls a man named Gunnar who spent the whole winter trying to teach Krummi his name. Krummi certainly had enough of that – one day, he looked Gunnar in the eye and said, “Hættu!”

NETFLIX HOWLS

A talking raven would have easily satisfied your daily need for animal cuteness, but brace yourself for more. Krummi is also an aspiring actor known for his appearance in

Once Rebecca and her husband agreed to accept Netflix’s offer, a long road trip awaited Krummi – the *Katla* shoot took place in Vík, at least 350 km from Hólar farm. The family took some days off work and hit the road. “We stopped many times – we visited Seljalandsfoss, Skógafoss, Dyrhólaey, and went down to the fjord with Krummi. We stopped a lot, sat outside in the grass, played, had some fun, and then continued again,” recalls Rebecca.

During the filming, Rebecca didn’t leave Krummi alone even once. “He’s my soulmate. If I left, he would have been stressed, sad and wouldn’t have felt comfortable. I was always less than a half metre from him.”

As we talk, Krummi is a bit shy about discussing his acting career. He’s more interested in a duck’s egg – one of his favourite things to eat.

THE STAR OF THE FARM

Krummi’s acting days might be over, but all eyes remain on him. Every day in the summer, he greets visitors at Hólar farm, welcoming them to his

“Hi! Could you briefly introduce yourself?”

“Krummi.”

“How are you today, Krummi?”

“Ha?”

“What do you for work?”

“Ha?”

As I arrive at Hólar farm in Búðardalur, six dogs greet me at the driveway, which means we’re off to a good start. Soon after, I realise my interviewee isn’t very interested in me

Ha?

and doesn’t seem to understand my questions. Maybe it’s because I don’t speak Icelandic, or because he’s a raven? Let me try one more time. “Krummi, how are you today?”

A blank look, followed by an enthusiastic: “Mamma!”

“Yes, give me a chance. Come on, let’s fight it together. I love you. Do you love me?” and I say, “Yeah, I love you to pieces, Krummi.”

It’s illegal to take ravens from nature and keep them as pets. Krummi is one of the only ravens in Iceland liv-

Ha?

the Netflix series *Katla*. Even though he didn’t have to say a word on the show, Rebecca admits she hesitated for a long time when Netflix approached her.

“Many people have contacted me about making videos with him, music videos, and so on,” says Rebecca. “I have always said ‘no’ because that was not the idea. If you involve him in something, it can be very stressful for him. His feet aren’t okay, and I’m very protective of him.”

She admits that she refused the offer from Netflix a few times before one of the team members visited Krummi. “He came, and he was just the most wonderful person. The respect he had for Krummi and other animals is the respect I want when people are around them.”

stable. “Our doors are never closed for anybody. We always have people coming. He loves the attention,” says Rebecca. “Sometimes he doesn’t speak, but maybe just because he doesn’t want to.”

Krummi is afraid of the wild ravens that fly over the farm, but otherwise, he’s the heart and soul of the farm. One moment, he’s chatting with a pair of ducks; the next, he’s howling at a serious-looking turkey. Meanwhile, dogs try to steal food from him, and he cracks some inside jokes with Rebecca. As for me, this time, I’ll settle for ‘Ha?’ ■

Follow Hólar farm minizoo in Iceland on Facebook for updates from Krummi and other animals

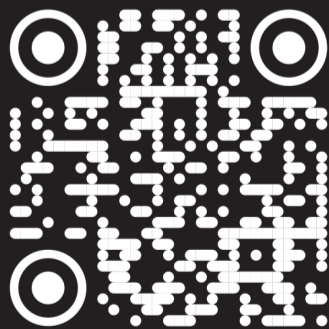
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Musings

Vampires! They're Back!

Time to stock up on garlic and stakes

WORDS Charlie Winters
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Makt Myrkanna, or Power of Darkness. An Icelandic translation of Bram Stoker's Dracula, but this time Lord Dracula doesn't like democracy or Christianity. Similarly, in the tabletop roleplaying game Vampire: The Masquerade, there is mention of Wulfgar the Reaver who reigns as dark lord of Iceland. Delving into various online communities there seems to be a heated discussion about the classification of Draugr (a form of undead) as ghost, ghoul or vampire. Thus, there is a plethora of material to gather from.

According to the texts, the way to detect a vampire is simple: they tend to be tall, pale-skinned, anti-social and wear dark clothing. You may think that this makes them impossible to separate from ordinary

Count Viktor Blóðson, who resides in a refurbished burial mound, told me all about his own experiences with these dark beings and gave me some helpful tips for vampire hunting. "Produce is expensive and fried onions are just as scary as garlic," he said. "And I know meat is pricey, but Iceland is having a massive deforestation issue so it's more eco-friendly to steak a vampire as opposed to stake a vampire," he laughed for quite some time at his own joke as lightning cracked in the distance.

There was only one thing left to do. Using all my newfound knowledge, I would hunt a vampire! I planned my approach and went to the nicest cemetery in town, Hólavallagarður. I crouched behind that one bench

Dear reader, you are in danger. For they have returned. Ready your garlic, your stakes, your pitchforks, your torches. They gather outside the Landspítali blood bank, they hide in the dark alleys of Laugavegur and they shop at Rokk & Rómantik. I speak of course, of the vampires of Reykjavík!

During the summer months, the eternal sun protected us from their fangs; but no longer. With the return of the northern lights and October (the spookiest month) on the horizon, vampires are free once more to roam the streets. But not to worry! I have dedicated my life to researching the occult and I shall not let them have this fair city. Harken the words of this modern-day Van Helsing, lest ye fall to the vampyr's bite.

To fight the bloodsuckers, we must first learn of their traits. The first clue we have that vampires are in fact on this island is through the codex

And I know meat is pricey, but Iceland is having a massive deforestation issue so it's more eco-friendly to steak a vampire as opposed to stake a vampire.

Icelanders... and you would be 100% right. My 3rd grade reading level failing me once more, the only thing I could do was hit the streets.

I decided to ask people I came across about vampirism and its sightings within the greater Reykjavík area to see what secrets I could draw out. I agreed with many of the locals' sentiments that these creatures should "Please leave me and my family alone, I don't know anything about vampires," and "What are you doing on my property?" After much digging, I was able to find an expert on the subject.

where all the couples get real frisky (don't pretend like you don't know which one). My breath reeked of fried onions. My hands clutched wooden stakes I had stolen from some poor tourists who were out camping. And I waited... I waited...

I'm currently waiting in line at Landspítali to see a GP. All I was able to catch on that bench was chlamydia. I've been here for hours; it's starting to get dark. The one other person in the waiting room keeps looking at me and smiling. Can people's teeth naturally be that sharp? ■



Well, You Asked

This Town Ain't Big Enough

The Grapevine answers your most pressing questions

WORDS Catherine Magnúsdóttir
IMAGE Art Bicnick

hot as hell, eggy smell. Cold as ice, tastes real nice! Now get in the hot tub with Beelzebub!

WHY DO ICELANDERS (NAME-
LY ISAVIA) HATE TREES?

WHY IS SOME PUBLIC WATER IN REYKJAVIK SO FULL OF A SULPHURIC SMELL AND TASTE? WHILE WATER JUST ACROSS THE STREET IS DELICIOUS?

Obviously it has to do with your proximity to hell and the occasional demon that's doing its job in the public sphere getting in contact with the nearest tap. It's not like they can help it, though, so be nice. Temperature is also a good indicator. Remember:

WHEN WILL THE SHOPS PROVIDE PARKING SPOTS FOR HORSES?

Weeeeell, Ah reckon it's haaigh time that them fellas make room for our mighty steeds again so Ah can ride in all classy with mah boots and mah hat on. Just about had it with all o' them hopps and zolos lyin round like a bunch o' no good crow bait while them big bugs and whippersnappers ride their frigginn jeeps into town, big as bulldozers and slow as molasses in January. S'ppose you'd have ta fight like Kilkenny Cats to fix that flint without too much fiddle faddle, though.

Shit long-term urban planning, in my opinion. If you take a closer look at the city layout of Reykjavik and how it's developed over the last century, you see a throughline of not-accounting for an almost exponential growth in population and what looks like an attitude of just building wherever there's space left. Add to that the urge to keep military leftovers and that it wasn't expected that the trees would grow as high as they did (*my forehead hurts) and you get more short-term approaches to long-term problems. Hence, an airport downtown and a grab for the chain-saws. *Sigh* Has Dr. Seuss taught you nothing? Do I need to get Danny DeVito??!! ■



Last Look IMAGE Art Bicnick

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Potent Quotables

There are dumpster divers who will always need it because they don't have enough money.

An anonymous source turns to dumpster diving to survive in Iceland on page 8

And who's killing whales? One wealthy man who's doing it because he likes to trophy hunt.

As whaling resumes, we explore the past, present and future of this obsolete industry on pages 12-14

It's important to create a critical and straightforward point of view of Latin America.

The Latin American Film Festival promises to challenge stereotypes and introduce regional cuisine. Read about the festival on page 18

I have a hard time coming up with names for instrumental pieces, so I reach for a dictionary and find a word that's beautiful.

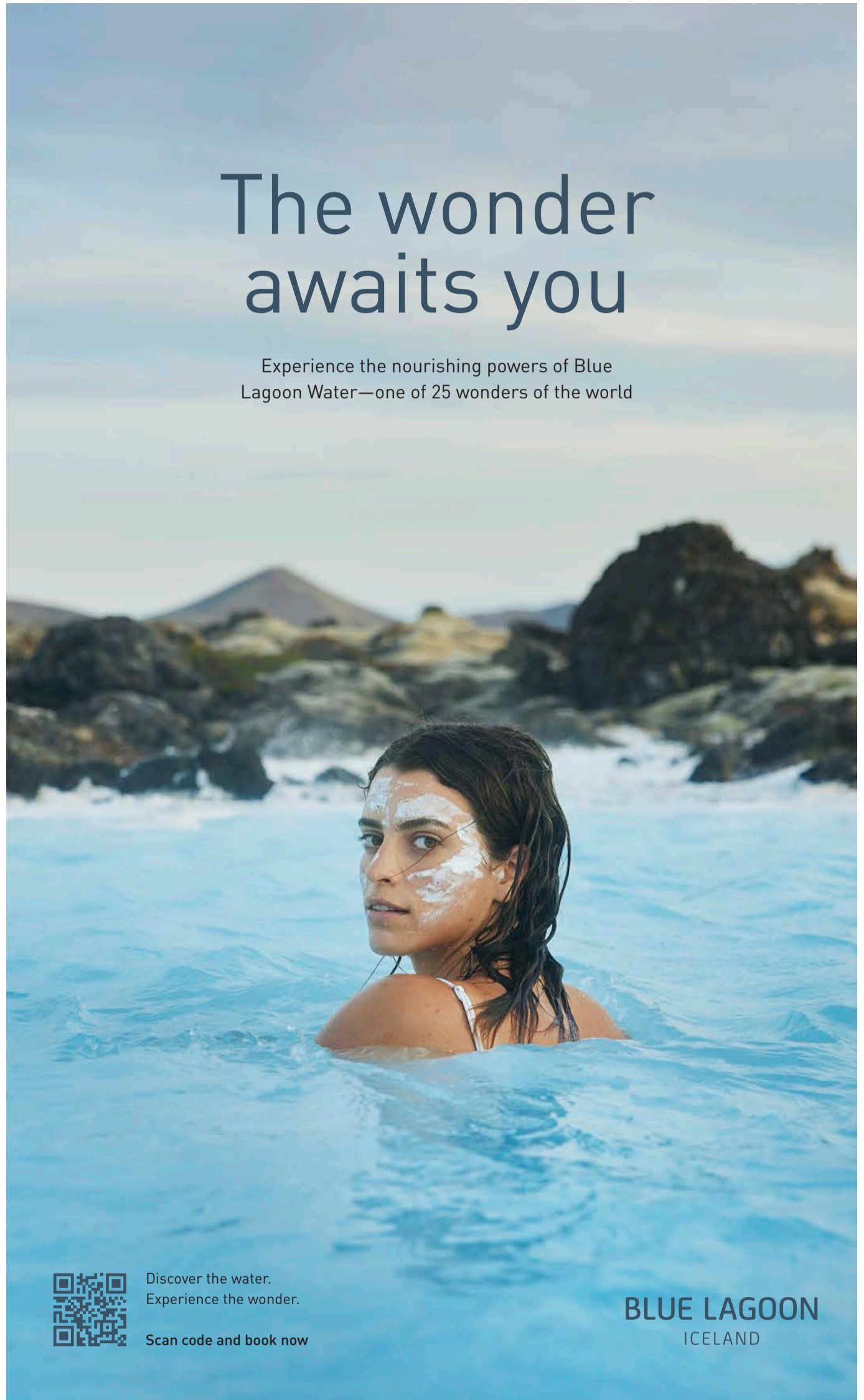
Ingibjörg Elsa Turchi discusses her new record on pages 24-25

Spanish cuisine remains largely misunderstood in Iceland.

Shruthi Basappa is confident that La Barceloneta can provide an authentic Spanish experience in Reykjavík, as featured on pages 32-34

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The Grapevine Presents: 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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