

# The Reykjavík Grapevine



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Volume 20

Issue 15 2023

Best before October 13

## A Star Is Formed

Culture

Music

Travel

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## On the Cover

Laufey's star has been on a meteoric rise over the past years since she first found fame sharing her silky smooth voice with TikTok. Not the Icelandic songstress is touring the word and introducing a new generation to the beauty of jazz and classical music. Jóhannes Bjarkason caught up with the pop sensation while she's on tour in Hong Kong.

PHOTO SUPPLIED BY Foundations Music



## Editorial The Next Big Thing

WORDS Catharine Fulton, Editor in Chief

It's been a trip watching Laufey's rise to international stardom. From rumblings of a young Icelander gaining notoriety on social media during the darkest days of the pandemic, to the front-page news (in Iceland) that she would be on Jimmy Kimmel Live at the start of 2022, to today when the Grapevine's music editor had to go through *her people* to arrange a moment to chat with the velvety-voiced songstress during a brief moment of downtime while touring in Hong Kong.

I can only imagine it's been an even bigger trip for Laufey. Jóhannes Bjarkason caught up with the rising star for this issue's cover feature, discussing everything from her new release to the difficulty of growing up as a person of mixed heritage in a homogenous Iceland. Give it a read on pages 12 to 14.

The theme of otherness and trying to fit within Icelandic society permeates this issue, with our culture feature on pages 16 to 17 exploring the importance of supporting women working in Iceland's tech field.

The truth is, it can be very hard to be something other than a blonde-haired, blue-eyed, born and raised Icelander in this country. So it's inspiring to see a young woman who is half-Icelandic and half-Chinese representing as Iceland's latest international music export. ■

## Contributors



CATHERINE MAGNÚSDÓTTIR

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



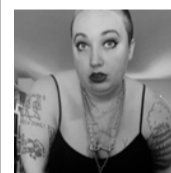
JÓHANNES BJARKI BJARKASON

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



IRYNA ZUBENKO

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



REX BECKETT

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



SHRUTHI BASAPPA

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

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What The News!?

# My, What A Unique Ashtray You Have

The stories making headlines in Iceland in recent weeks

WORDS The Reykjavik Grapevine  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

**U**ndertaking home renovation projects can be a massive headache. Surprises lurking behind the drywall inevitably expand the scope of the project and drive up costs. But unlike other contractors who maybe stumble across some wiring in need of an upgrade, workers removing floorboards and insulation from the attic of the Prime Minister's Residence on Tjarnargata found fragments of a human skull.

The skull fragments were handed over to the police and subsequently to the National Museum, where they await age analysis. Kári Stefánsson, CEO of Decode Genetics, has also stepped forward and offered to

trace the fragments' DNA in order to find a match within the company's records.

A representative of the National museum told *Visir.is* that the skull appears to have belonged to a small woman. They also said that the skull may have been used as an ashtray, as has been documented by the museum in the past.

## A LAW TO END WHALING

The Pirate Party tabled a bill upon the start of *Alþingi's* fall sitting that would legislate the end of whaling in Iceland. The bill would bring whales under the protection of Iceland's wildlife laws. The bill proposes making whaling illegal by repealing the Act on whaling, no. 26/1949, and bringing whales under the law on the protection, preservation and hunting of wild birds and wild mammals, no. 64/1994.

A new article is proposed to the law on wildlife protection stating, "Whaling is prohibited according to this law. It is prohibited to export, offer for sale or sell game or other products of whales that have been killed or killed in nets."

Pirate Party MP Þórhildur Sunna Ævarsdóttir spoke with the Grapevine earlier in September, expressing concern that Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries Svandís Svavarsdóttir would allow Hvalur hf's whaling licence to lapse at the end of the year rather than attempt-

ing to legislate an end to whaling. "We have drafted a bill that we have offered all members of parliament to be co-signatories on that focuses on banning all whaling and doing it the right way through parliament," she said. "We expect to at least get it through the first reading and that there will be some debate because we are offering MPs to do the right thing in the legal way so Iceland can take a legislative decision to ban whaling, just as has the rest of the world has aside from very few outlier countries. We want to join the rest of the world in outlawing these barbaric practices once and for all."

Hvalur 8, one of two operational whaling ships belonging to Hvalur hf., is currently docked following a severe breach of animal welfare regulations. According to regulations placed on this year's whale hunt, whales must be shot and killed immediately. However, on September 7 the crew of Hvalur 8 harpooned a whale outside the designated target and instead of firing another harpoon immediately, they let it suffer for a half hour before firing again.

## PERLAN FOR SALE

How's this for a palate cleanser: Perlan is for sale! For a cool 3,942,440,000 ISK, the glass dome and hot water tanks upon which it sits could be all yours. So, what are you going to do with your soon to be acquired 5,800 m<sup>2</sup>? We'd put in a roller disco. ■



The Reykjavik Grapevine

PUBLISHED BY  
Fröken ehf.  
Aðalstræti 2, 101 Reykjavík  
[www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is)  
[grapevine@grapevine.is](mailto:grapevine@grapevine.is)

Member of the Icelandic  
Travel Industry Association  
[www.saf.is](http://www.saf.is)

PRINTED BY  
Landsprent ehf.

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published every month by  
Fröken Ltd.

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The Reykjavik Grapevine  
is distributed in and

around Reykjavik and  
at key locations along  
Iceland's route 1.

It is also available at all  
major tourist attractions  
and information centres  
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# Ask An Expert What's The Deal With Icelandic Poetry?

We turned to a literature professor for answers

WORDS Catherine Magnúsdóttir  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Icelandic poetry is alive and well – as a quick glance at the current cultural scene will tell you – and frankly, it is rather impressive how it has remained as vibrant and culturally relevant over the centuries. But how did poetry become such a leading art in Iceland and how has it stayed that way? What makes it so significant? We went to Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson, a professor of Icelandic literature at the University of Iceland, for some insight.

as an expression of feeling, I think that the Eddic poems are certainly like some of the things done today. You get a kind of prolonged echo of the Eddic poems nowadays, I think, whether or not the young poets are reading Eddic poetry or not, it's not so dissimilar."

Learning and reciting poetry has been a very long and well established custom in Iceland even before people were able to record much of anything in written form. Sveinn points out that, "Eddic poetry was definitely an oral tradition, it was not written down until approximately the 13th century. We don't know exactly how old the oldest Eddic poems are, but they might precede the 13th century by a few hundred years. People had been memorising these poems and reciting them, regardless of literacy." And even when reading and writing began to establish itself, first among chieftains and clerics (aka those who had the means), the oral tradition continued on in the meantime, aiding the resilience of the art form.

Apart from expressing oneself emotionally in verse, another strand of Icelandic poetry also served as public proclamation in ye olden days via so called dróttkvæði (skaldic "court poetry" for a basic translation). "An Icelandic poet at a Norwegian king's court praises the king in poetry," Sveinn explains. "It's kind of like a eulogy. It's not so private and has more to do with prestige and what the king did and things like that."

One of the key aspects of Icelandic poetry is thus connection on both personal and functional levels. Not to mention the role it played in reaffirming a cultural identity when it became time to declare independence.

"Poetry is a vehicle for many things," Sveinn explains. "In the 19th century you get very patriotic poems where the country is described in certain terms, so it's almost like an official declaration instead of a personal one. You get: Okay, this is what Iceland is like, this is what we should feel as Icelanders when we go around the country, so you have this other aspect where the poem is almost like a news hour." Or perhaps the rhyming TedTalks of the time, combining social movements with personal impressions. And that aspect is still going strong today, taking in worldly and linguistic developments.

"I'm just so happy that young people are writing poetry in their mother tongue," Sveinn says. "They are very adept at writing verses and lyrics, both in Icelandic and English, of course. I think it's important not only to look upon poetry itself as this great vehicle but also on the creative use of words in various other forms, say in popular music or something like that. Obviously it's not only the outpouring of emotions but they're also very much concerned with environmental matters and the state of the world. Icelandic poetry is alive and kicking." ■

**“W**e can trace the beginnings to the Eddic poems, of course,” Sveinn says. “It’s not that far removed from today’s verse, really. The Eddic poems are quite simple, their diction is simple, they’re image rich, they don’t have complicated poetic forms. We’re not in the same spot, historically or culturally speaking, but if you think of poetry



# Do Shit Save Money

The Útlendingur's ongoing guide to getting shit done

WORDS Catharine Fulton  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

For the love of god, stop eating so many meals out. It's killing your bank account. Be an adult and do some meal prep so you can bring lunches with you to work. Come on, Catharine (erm, I mean, dear reader), have some discipline.

Sure, it's payday, but this stacked bank account is an illusion. Back away from the Boozt. Sleep on it and see if you can still afford that [insert highly coveted, but inessential] item at the end of the month.

Automate small monthly transfers to a savings account and have it locked in for a certain stretch of time. Transferring to another account is futile if you're just going to dip into those "savings" a few days later after eating lunch in restaurants all week and ordering a big box of god knows what online.

How long have you been paying a \$5.99 monthly subscription to a Strawberry Shortcake iPad baking app? And you're paying for how many streaming services? Check your subscriptions and recurring payments and scale back, friend. Pro tip: splurging for Max one month of the year gives you a delightful season of binge-watching.

Et voila! You're rich.

Now, excuse me, my Wolt order just arrived and I have some high quality content to watch. ■

**C**an we be real for a second. Times are tough. Inflation has risen in lock step with the number of times in a day you can righteously exclaim, "not in this economy!" The rent is too damn high, just like the price of basically everything else.

So how is a young (at heart) útlendingur meant to build savings in this extortionate country? Here is some advice entirely of the "do as I say and not as I do" variety, because god knows my savings account is running on empty.

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Money Moves **Debt Deconstructed**

Debt isn't fun, but filing for bankruptcy also costs money. It's a trap!

WORDS Iryna Zubenko  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

"We could do a lot better with financial education in Iceland," says Sara Jasonardóttir, project manager for education and promotion at the Office of Debtors' Ombudsman (Umboðsmaður skuldara). Since its foundation in 2010, the Office has been assisting individuals who find themselves in financial difficulties, providing its services free of charge. We asked Sara what one should know about debt and when to seek help.

**GV: WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON REASONS PEOPLE IN ICELAND END UP IN DEBT?**

Most people who seek assistance from the Debtors' Ombudsman have a variety of debts. People come to us when the banks can no longer assist them. In recent years, we have seen more and more consumer debt like payday loans. Expensive loans often snowball into a big problem. Sometimes, these loans have been taken to not default on other obliga-

tions. For example, people have lost income and had to compensate by taking loans to pay off housing debt or housing costs, and then it just piles up.

I don't know if there is one reason for everyone. But usually, when people need help, they have lost control and are taking loans to pay loans. Sometimes, it's because people have not had enough financial education that they don't realise what they're doing with money.

**GV: DO YOU SHARE YOUR SPOUSE'S DEBT?**

In Iceland, your debts are your debts. They are connected to your kennitala if you don't co-sign or put a joint property up for collateral.

There's an exception when it comes to taxes. If you are jointly taxed or married, and your spouse does not pay certain public and municipal taxes, you are liable for it.

**GV: WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU ARE BLACKLISTED DUE TO DEBT?**

There is no blacklist; there is a default registry. If you default on a loan or payments, you go on the default registry and anyone you are seeking some loan from or want to rent an

apartment from, for example, can look you up on that list. That's the equivalent of a "blacklist," but you can get off the list by making agreements and paying your debt.

The banks have their assessment of their customers, so if you have been in default with your bank or have been a poor payer, they will most likely have their record of you – staying on top and showing that you are a feasible customer is the way to go.

The default registry is handled by CreditInfo, a private company that sources information on people and calculates a credit score.

**GV: WHAT ARE THE FIRST STEPS TO TAKE IF YOU ARE IN DEBT?**

The first big step is to face the situation and gain an overview of your finances – your income, living expenses and what is left after the basic household cost of living. If you don't have the financial capacity to pay all of your debts on time, it might be necessary to prioritise them with top priority given to expenses related to the household: loan instalments (housing loans if you own the property you live in), property taxes, utilities, and/or rent. You could prioritise the others by paying the smallest claims first or making partial payments on

the debts with the highest interest and expense.

When you realise that you won't be able to make payments on time, it's crucial to take immediate action because correcting the situation can become challenging and costly if your arrears start accumulating.

If your debt burden exceeds your income, negotiate immediately with your creditors. For instance, check if it's possible to negotiate deferred loan payments, pay only the interest on your loans, or modify the loan terms and conditions. For you to pay your debts on time, your expenses must be lower than your debt service capacity.

Under certain conditions, you can apply for a payment moratorium due to financial difficulties, such as through the Icelandic Student Loan Fund or the Housing Financing Fund.

Sometimes, figuring things out and getting things in perspective can be much easier with some help, whether from an expert or the people closest to you. If financial difficulties persist or default seems likely, you can seek advice and potential solutions by contacting the Office of the Debtors' Ombudsman. After undergoing a financial distress assessment, you can receive assistance in negotiating

with your creditors.

There are many possibilities through debt mitigation before people even think about filing for bankruptcy. We can even give financial aid to individuals who want to file for bankruptcy – you have to pay a 250,000 ISK insurance fee for the bankruptcy proceeding. Also, if you have payments that are way too much per month, but you still have some payment ability, let's say you have 50,000 ISK to pay per month, but your loan payments are 150,000 ISK, we can assist you through mitigation to make an agreement to pay 40,000 or 50,000 ISK per month, and possibly have the remaining amount written off or completed over time.

The Office of the Debtors' Ombudsman shouldn't be the last resort. People feel ashamed and think they should have control over this. It's not something that people speak about with others. People should approach us before they feel hopeless, but in reality, they often come too late. If you see that you don't have enough money to pay off your debt, seek help. There is help out there, and we can help people find solutions. ■

Check out the Office of the Debtors' Ombudsman's website at [ums.is](https://ums.is) for details on the assistance they provide



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Side Hustle  
Of The Issue

## The Background Actor

Do extras make the credits?

WORDS Iryna Zubenko  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

A party guest, a pedestrian with a dog, or a hospital patient? If you're an extra, you never know what your next acting gig will be. Background actor Eypór Eysteinnsson says it's a lot of fun, but be prepared for long hours, often spent patiently waiting.

Eypór Eysteinnsson, 24, a student and lifeguard

During the summer, I work as a lifeguard at the Sundhöllin swimming pool or at the beach in Nauthólsvík. In wintertime, I study anthropology and also work a bit at the pool. My side hustle is being a background actor or an extra for movies or TV shows.

I first learned about this side hustle through a colleague who does modelling gigs. I thought, maybe I could do that too; it would be fun to try. I came across a casting agency asking people to create a profile with them. That's what I did. At first, I thought it was a modelling agency, but it turned out it was a background actor agency. I started applying to try it out and that's how things started rolling.

### GIG CHRONICLES

I was a background actor in *Afturelding*, an Icelandic TV show on RÚV, and another TV series coming out

soon. One of the first gigs I did was a funeral scene. It was all quiet and you had to be grieving. One thing about background acting is that many older people are doing the job. I think that's one of the few ways they can earn some extra money. I noticed that at the very first gig I did. So, everything had to be really quiet in that funeral scene, with an accordion playing in the background. But all the elders had so much fun. They started to sing and play the accordion. I thought, "Wow. How are these people having this much fun at 7:00 in the morning?"

Sometimes, I have to say no to acting jobs. Once, I was offered a job – they needed someone like me, with fairly long red hair and a red beard. They were offering to pay extra. But the thing was, I shaved my head just the day before. I was completely bald. One missed opportunity.

### THE WAITING GAME

This side hustle is practical for me because, when you're a background actor, you're usually just waiting to get the call. That's really nice for me because I can study while I'm waiting. It's also fun to look at everything through the lens of anthropology. You're always like a fly on the wall – learning how different actors or directors work is intriguing.

Because it's not an exact science, things get delayed or moved – when something is supposed to be done on Wednesday and it's postponed

until next week. That's the downside of the work.

Sometimes, when you're an extra, your only job is just to be there. To be a part of some atmosphere the crew is trying to create so that the real actors can feel like somebody's watching, or they can act to, but you're not going to be on screen alone or sometimes even at all.

### LIGHTS, CAMERA, LANDING A JOB

Around the same time I started to do these kinds of jobs, I started to take improv classes. Now I'm in Improv Ísland, an improv show at Þjóðleikhúsið Kjallarinn. I'm in the B team of that group. We have around three shows a month. Improv has been going well for me – my confidence in performing has definitely gone up.

There are many Facebook groups where casting agencies, independent filmmakers and students of Kvímyndaskóli are looking for people for projects. There are a lot of opportunities in these groups. I didn't know about them at first; I learned about them just by talking with other background actors and extras, but at least for me, that's where the ball really started rolling. ■

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

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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.



Neighbourhood Watch

# Pepping Up The Poor

Pepp Iceland helps people in poverty through peer support

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

However, the group ultimately lost its housing, reducing the limits of the operations. Led by activists Laufey Líndal Ólafsdóttir, chairman, and Ásta Þórdís Skjalddal Guðjónsdóttir, treasurer, the duo aim to get back on their feet as soon as possible with the opening of a new base, as the work they did brought much-needed support to people in poverty.

bles of municipal and governmental agencies.

During Pepp's time with functioning housing, they operated a centre for their clientele, which they aim to re-open. "We want to have a place where people can come and feel safe. Where you can be among your peers and not feel bad because you don't

Laufey says the people visiting the Pepp centre were a cross-section of people in Iceland experiencing poverty. "There were single parents, immigrants, refugees, low-income people and homeless people. It was a space where everyone came together," she reminisces.

square, it sometimes forms gaps in between. If you fall in one of those gaps, there's nothing that catches you," says Ásta.

"I've sometimes described the welfare system as a patchwork quilt. Maybe you can apply for some benefits with your union, maybe you have some rights at your pension fund, which you need to puzzle together yourself," Laufey states.

For Pepp, the sole aim is to put a roof over their operations. "We want to create a society where people feel well. We're also excited about building up a new group of grassroots

## NO POVERTY PARADISE

In Pepp's view, the Icelandic welfare system is riddled with hurdles. Among their criticisms is the multiplicity of support networks, ranging from local and governmental to civil society schemes, where disparate information is given. "The fact that

## We all have strengths, even though attempts have been made to diminish them.

Statistics released by Save the Children in March 2023 illustrate the stark reality of poverty in Iceland. According to their report, 13.1% of all children in Iceland live in poverty – about 10,000 young people.

One of the groups fighting for better conditions for Iceland's poor is Pepp Iceland. Pepp originates from the umbrella organisation European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), an association of people in poverty and marginalisation, and derives its name from the English acronym People Experiencing Poverty. The group only recently split from the European parent, going independent in favour of increased flexibility.

"In order to be from the grassroots, we needed to be independent," Ásta states. Both former representatives to EAPN and with experience of being poor in Iceland, the duo sought to found Pepp Iceland.

## SEARCHING FOR HOUSING

"First and foremost, we established [Pepp Iceland] so marginalised groups can have a voice. Nobody listens to individuals in the public discourse unless united," explains Ásta, referencing the bargaining power behind a formal organisation. With this authority, Pepp Iceland are given a seat at the policy-making ta-

have money for a slice of cake with your coffee," Ásta says.

Volunteer-driven by people experiencing poverty, Pepp's approach is in peer support. Ásta recounts their time in the centre. "The atmosphere was so positive. The volunteers sang while brewing coffee and joked around. It was fun, which made it all the harder to lose it," she confesses.

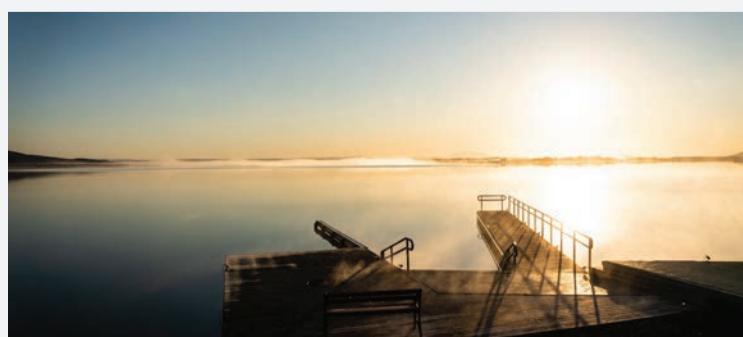
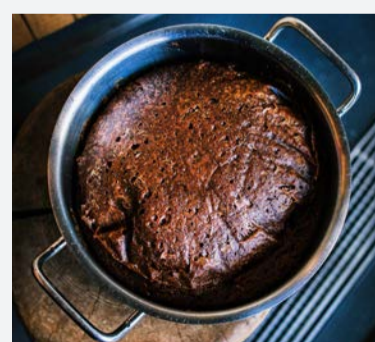
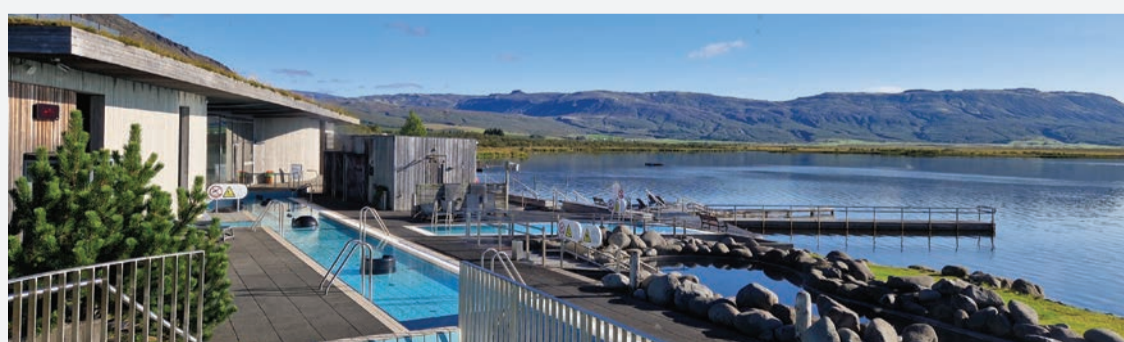
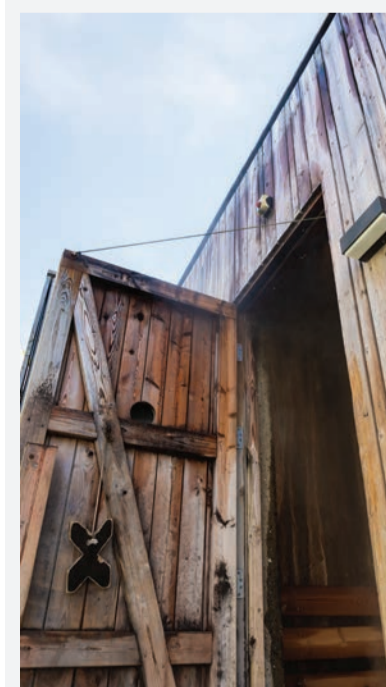
At the centre, an air of solidarity was established between people who sought support from each other, whether with translations, printing necessary documents, or applying for support schemes.

## As the system is so square, it sometimes forms gaps in between. If you fall in one of those gaps, there's nothing that catches you.

people need to visit these different institutions is very time-consuming," Laufey laments.

In the women's experience, this systemic inaccessibility breeds unnecessary barriers. "As the system is so

members. To help them help themselves," Ásta says. "We always try to lift them up and help people find their own potential. We all have strengths, even though attempts have been made to diminish them," Laufey concludes. ■



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Feature

# Under Laufey's Spell

The world's most popular jazz artist hasn't finished her story

WORDS  
IMAGES

Jóhannes Bjarkason  
Foundation Music  
& Gemma Warren

wonder fuelled by unspoiled nature. In recent years, the international success of Icelandic artists like Kaleo and Of Monsters and Men demonstrates to a new generation of music lovers that Iceland's creative output is a quantifiable force. Now, there's yet another generation being introduced to Icelandic music, as Laufey Lín Jónsdóttir is reaching global superstardom with the September 8 release of her latest album, *Bewitched*.

seem to successfully pull both genres into the present, to be delivered to an eager new and younger audience. Whether due to her remarkable songwriting, an intuitive social media strategy – or a mix of both – Laufey's efforts are nothing but huge.

Laufey is now on tour, following up on her sophomore album. The album sounds a bit like Ella Fitzgerald went to Disneyworld and fell

time of day by Icelanders. Out of Björk's multiple Cornucopia international tour dates, Reykjavik was the only city to be hit with a cancellation of performances.

Starting her career in 2020 with the hit single "Street by Street," Laufey's popularity in Iceland was cemented with a grand concert with the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra in 2022. In the wake of the album release, Laufey sold out two shows in Iceland in a matter of days. But to the artist, the interest of Icelandic fans seems newfound.

"I started releasing and becoming an artist outside of Iceland to prove that I was something, and then I brought it back to Iceland," Laufey comments from a café in a Hong Kong mall, where she's currently on tour. "Whereas, I think the usual trajectory is that artists become big in Iceland and then they break out, I was kind of the opposite where I broke outside and then Icelanders started noticing," she continues, "and that definitely feels quite recent."

artist's personal life.

Born into a musical household to an Icelandic father and a Chinese mother, Laufey also lived with her family in Washington, D.C., as a child and spent summers with her maternal family in China.

"Growing up in Iceland and going to school in America, but then also being half Chinese, I've just always had a very global outlook," Laufey remarks. "And then of course, the music I write is in English, which immediately opens up a whole world."

"I don't think people really connect me with [being Icelandic]. I mean, people usually say, 'Laufey, the Icelandic artist,' but it doesn't feel like I'm one thing or the other – both as a person and also musically," she clarifies.

In addition, building on jazz and classical music – genres that trace their roots to African-American communities and Europe, respectively – Laufey's prospects are as a global superstar, crossing cultural boundaries.

## It doesn't feel like I'm one thing or the other. Both as a person and also musically.

Initially appealing to the public through social media channels TikTok and Instagram, Laufey's global fan base now counts in the millions. With *Bewitched*, Laufey broke Spotify's all-time jazz streaming record, garnering 5.7 million streams in one day. It made the previous record held by Lady Gaga and Tony Bennett – a meagre 1.1 million – look paltry by comparison. This accomplishment comes as no surprise for anyone paying attention. After all, Laufey was Spotify's most-streamed jazz artist of the year in 2022.

Presenting a revival of jazz and classical, Laufey's music is a lush mix of post-war era jazz, modest classical music and a dreamy sense of romantic pop. She counts Chet Baker, Norah Jones and Amy Winehouse among her inspirations.

One would think that jazz and classical music were remnants of a bygone era, but Laufey's efforts

hopelessly in love. Exhibiting a more stripped-down approach compared to her previous album, *Everything I Know About Love*, *Bewitched* is a more mature representation of the artist's thoughts and feelings on love and self-awareness, under wittingly brilliant instrumentation.

### A GLOBAL BACKGROUND

In a globalised world, popular media is still fixated on nationalities. In Iceland, that is especially true, given the country's reputation for supplying world-class creative efforts. It's become a brand in its own right. Being an Icelandic artist in the global pop landscape is often regarded as a seal of quality.

Building on the international success of aforementioned artists like Björk and Sigur Rós, Icelanders are quick to boast ownership of famous musicians – even though, in between bouts of global interest, the artists in question are not given the

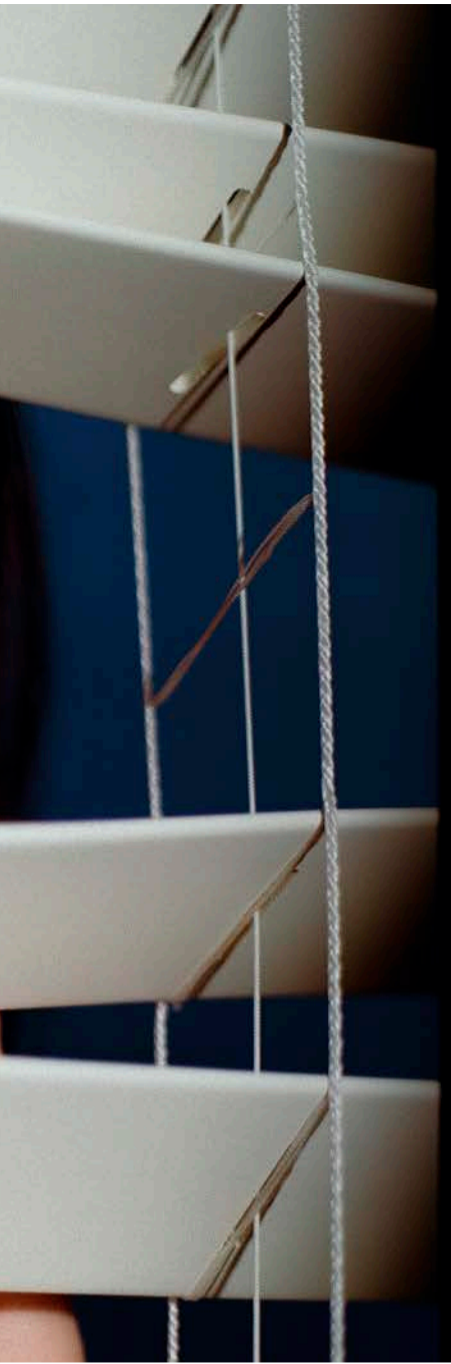
## I don't sound Icelandic. Even though people ask me often about the Björk accent, which I obviously can do.

Laufey's rapid rise in popularity and success demonstrates a challenge to Iceland's traditional concepts of nationalities. Although growing up in Iceland and speaking the language, everything about Laufey's artistry feels global – from her music to the

### AN ALIEN IN REYKJAVÍK

Moving between continents at a young age, Laufey lived in the United States from the age of six to nine. There, she learned to speak Eng-

For decades, Iceland has boasted about its remarkable creative output – per capita, of course. A common theme in the world's perception of Iceland is the recognition of artistic talent coming from the sparsely populated and homogeneous island. One is quick to draw the cognitive line between Björk, Sigur Rós, Iceland and a sense of creative



lish with an American accent. “I don’t sound Icelandic. Even though people ask me often about the Björk accent, which I obviously can do,” Laufey jokes, switching between American and Icelandic accents rapidly.

Seeing as Iceland has a homogenous population, people with non-Icelandic backgrounds are quick to stick out. The track, “A Letter To My 13 Year Old Self” off *Bewitched*, is dedicated to her childhood experiences. “Around that age, I felt very different. I felt very foreign and very loud,” Laufey confess-

## Around that age, I felt very different. I felt very foreign and very loud.

es. “You have a room of 99 people that look the same and you walk in and you look different and you just feel different.” In the song, Laufey tactfully sings, “I’m so sorry that they pick you last / Try to say your foreign name and laugh,” while a muted piano joins the song’s structural mellow guitar.

As racial identities keep intertwining and evolving in a globalised world, a new generation of Icelandic artists is coming up in an environment not made for them. Expanding on her childhood experiences as a person of mixed heritage, Laufey shares: “I remember when I was in elementary school, people would ask me, ‘Where are you from?’ That was like an immediate way of just feeling like an outsider. When this kid who’s completely unfiltered is asking you, ‘Where are you from?’ And I say,

‘Well, I’m from Iceland.’ And the kids would be like, ‘Oh, no. Like, where are you from?’”

As the number of immigrants in Iceland has steadily increased throughout the years, Laufey feels there is a shift in the conversation about race and nationality. “I think people didn’t talk about it at all before, and now it’s an increasing conversation. And I do see more diversity every single time and go back to Iceland. So I think and hope that it continues to grow in a positive direction,” comments Laufey.

### OLD SOUL

In 2023, one might think gravitating toward both jazz and classical music would be an unpopular choice for an aspiring superstar. Laufey disagrees, growing up with classical music always playing in her home and watching Golden Age Hollywood films like *Singin’ in the Rain*.

“I think there’s a timeless quality to the music that I really love. I think growing up in Iceland with, for example, the financial crash in 2008 and growing up with all these bleak realities, my brain yearned for this timeless and simple beauty of Golden Age films and the romance,” Laufey explains. A big influence on the artist’s musical upbringing is her mother, who is a violinist at the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra. Despite

her mother’s choice of instrument, Laufey wanted nothing to do with violins, preferring to play the cello.

“Both my twin sister and I started on the piano. We were given violins at seven and I refused to play. I don’t like violins. But my sister ended up playing. I wanted to do something different,” says Laufey, who eventually studied the cello as a child. Her sister, Júnía Lín Jónsdóttir, works as the artist’s creative director and recently won the Nordic Music Export’s Nordic Music Biz 20 Under 30 award, given to young music industry professionals excelling in their work.

Júnía has been at Laufey’s side from the get-go – quite literally, since they’re twins – helping out on the business side of things. “At first it was just for fun,” Laufey says about her sister’s involvement, having taken her on full-time as a creative director in 2022. “She is just so important to the project. Having somebody who understands my vision so well and can translate it to business partners,” Laufey remarks.

Since releasing her first single independently in 2020, Laufey’s career has raced swiftly towards the top – with ensuing logistical requirements. “The project has expanded so fast. I am finding that I can’t do everything anymore. It’s just not possible. So having another person that understands the project so well and that I trust and who will always give me an honest opinion, helping me with those decisions and vision is so crucial. And obviously, my life is changing so fast. And having her as a constant with me is really important.”

Laufey has demonstrated a tremendous feat. In only three years – and during a pandemic that burned out a great number of musicians – Laufey is now living her lifelong dream. “I never thought it was possible. It was just a really fortunate wave of events.”

How is the feeling of living one’s dream? Is it as good as people say it is? According to Laufey – yes. “It feels,” Laufey starts before hesitating for a moment. “I feel like the luckiest girl in the world. It’s very beyond me, especially coming from Iceland. Things like this don’t happen very often,” Laufey describes.

Which is true. Icelandic artists reaching global fame is a rare occurrence. Despite Laufey’s positive outlook, pop stardom isn’t for every-

### STRIPPING IT BACK

Although having always been very musical from an early age – even participating in the Icelandic version of *The Voice* at the age of 16 – Laufey’s songwriting efforts didn’t begin until her studies at the Berklee College of Music in Boston (not to be confused with the University of Berkeley in California). Before starting her studies in Boston, Laufey was a student at the Icelandic Menntaskóli í Tónlist.

“I was very much in the classical side of MIT. And classical teaches you technique. It teaches you discipline. It teaches you the sound and beauty of music, but it doesn’t necessarily teach you to create music yourself,” Laufey explains.

## Growing up with all these bleak realities, my brain yearned for this timeless and simple beauty of Golden Age films and romance.

one. Laufey even admits her current lifestyle is mad. “My life is just so crazy right now with the amount of touring, promotion and recording I’m doing. I’m in a different city literally every week,” she says.

Through it all, Iceland remains home to Laufey and she expresses gratitude for being able to return every once in a while. “It’s good to have Iceland as a tether to go back to. I’m happy I have such a strong sense of home.”

When it was time for university, for a moment it looked like Laufey might not continue her music studies. “I wanted to go to university to study economics, which is funny. I was too scared of becoming a musician. I thought it was so unrealistic,” Laufey admits.

It wasn’t until Laufey was offered a Presidential Scholarship from Berklee, covering everything from tuition to accommodation, that she decided to pursue further education



in music. At Berklee, Laufey started her songwriting efforts, which are anchored in her storytelling. “I write from personal stories. I always have a concept ready before I go and always know what I’m going to write about before I start,” explains Laufey.

“Especially when I play solo, I always talk about the songs before I play them. My songs are like my journals,” Laufey concludes.

There are a host of factors that make *Bewitched* an outstanding record. The storytelling, creative direc-

tion, songwriting and production all contribute to a truly consistent effort in everything it wants to portray. With 14 tracks on the album, the dispa-

rate songs all bring their special flavour. Each is a unique component of Laufey’s marvellous curation.

“I knew exactly what I wanted,” Laufey says about the album. “It came together quickly because of that.”

1950s, as Laufey sings. “Let me be a dreamer, let me float / I can see the whole world from my own little cloud.”

Another song, “California and Me,” evokes images of driving in sunny California with the wind in your hair – imagine Lana Del Rey minus the WASPy condescension. The song is certainly a tribute to Laufey’s admiration of Hollywood’s Golden Age.

Tying all the tracks together is the motif of the hopeless romantic. “From the Start” has Laufey pining over a person, experiencing unrequited love. “Oh, the burning pain / Listening to you harp on ‘bout some new soulmate / ‘She’s so perfect,’ blah, blah, blah,” Laufey mockingly sings.

“I wanted it to be a love album,” says Laufey when asked about the concepts behind the record. “I wanted it to be more mature than my last

to introduce the beauty of jazz and classical music to a new audience. “My goal as a musician is to keep jazz and classical alive by breathing new life into it and introducing it to new listeners,” she states.

According to the numbers, that seems to be working. Most of Laufey’s fans (called Lau-vers) belong to the late millennial and Z generations – people born approximately between the 90s and early 00s.

“It’s funny, though,” Laufey starts. “I find in Iceland, I have an older audience. Because in the [United] States, Asia, and Europe, it’s a very Gen Z audience,” she wonders.

Without a solid reason as to why, Laufey attributes this to her Icelandic promotion being geared towards an older audience. “I think I get a lot of radio play in Iceland, which is an older audience. My first two

**I remember when I was in elementary school, people would ask me, “Where are you from?” That was like an immediate way of just feeling like an outsider.**

album. I’ve grown a lot in the past year and I’ve learned a lot. I wanted this album to kind of reflect that,” she comments. Entrenched in this album is the magical aspect of being spellbound by someone.

Layered over the physical record itself is Laufey’s photograph, where she is depicted as a mid-century witch, in a silver dress and a star placed on her shoulder. Even the picture is made to look slightly dreamy, like a glamorous Fata Morgana.

“[Bewitched] is the perfect word for that kind of feeling. It’s being in love, but almost something a little ominous,” Laufey explains. “It’s like you have no control over it.”

Like the music itself being a callback to post-war era jazz standards, the album’s production methods are rooted in simplicity. “I think it was just stripping it back,” Laufey says about the difference between *Bewitched* and 2022’s *Everything I Know About Love*. “There’s no processing on the vocal, no reverb or auto-tune. Every instrument you hear is being performed, which I thought was really important to me,” Laufey clarifies.

concerts in Iceland were with the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra. It’s interesting,” Laufey hypothesises.

An important part of Laufey’s strategy for world domination is her connection with fans and social media followers – of which there are nearly 3 million on TikTok alone. Laufey even hosts regular book clubs with her fans, who recently finished reading *Girl, Interrupted* by Susanna Kaysen. “I just wanted to create a community within the community,” Laufey says. “To find a reason to just turn on a live stream at the end of each month and talk about a book, talk about life. It’s a way to tie us all together,” she concludes.

For Laufey, who is celebrating her biggest accomplishment yet, the aim is to, “continue writing my story. For me, this music is meant to bring generations together,” Laufey says.

That is the essence of Laufey’s artistry. Spanning borders, generations and cultures, Laufey’s charm is universal, sparking hope within her listeners for a magical romance of their own. ■

Listen to Laufey’s stellar sophomore album on all streaming platforms. The artist will tour North America throughout 2023, with European dates in the spring of 2024. We’d tell you to get tickets, but it looks like everything is sold out.

## My songs are like my journals.

The storytelling aspect is an important part of not only Laufey’s writing but her performances as well.

Implementing the common soundscapes of jazz, pop and classical, Laufey’s particular talent is in imbuing the music with a sense of romance, wonder and hopeful dreams. In “Dreamer,” the album opens up with a vocal harmony straight from the

### DIVERSE AUDIENCE

With the release of *Bewitched* and the subsequent tours, Laufey hopes

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# The Grapevine's Top Picks



**EXTREME CHILL FESTIVAL**  
 Until September 24  
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 5.900 – 14.900 ISK

Are you getting chills from the chilly weather and needing to chill out a bit? Now is the chilliest time there is, as the Extreme Chill Festival is in full swing this weekend! Bringing the ultimate quality in all things ambient, electronic and experimental, it does not get any chiller than this. With headliners Kali Malone, Gigi Masin, Puce Mary and Patricia Wolf performing along with local names like Íris Thorarins, Ronja, Sideproject, Þorsteinn Eyfjörð and way more, this year's edition is going to go to all the extremes of chilling. Check out [www.extremechill.org](http://www.extremechill.org) for the full programme. **RX**



**RIFF 2023**  
 September 28 – October 8  
 Multiple locations  
 2.090 – 20.790 ISK

It's the highlight of the Icelandic film industry calendar as RIFF kicks off on September 28th for 12 jam-packed days of silver screen goodness. With a programme full of feature length and shorts of all kinds, the festival is set to be as riveting as ever for both industry pros and amateur film lovers. Honorary guests this year include Isabelle Huppert, Nicholas Philibert, Luc Jacquet, Vicky Krieps and Luca Guadagnino, while many special events will be happening under the RIFF banner. Grab your tickets and place your bets for the Golden Puffin award. **RX**



**ALOK LIVE**  
 Sunday October 1, 20:00  
 Harpa – Silfurberg  
 9.900 ISK

From small-town Texas to international media star, the singularly named ALOK has become a leading voice in queer art activism. Calling for the freedom of gender non-conforming people and embracing bodily diversity, their live performances span political comedy, poetic stream of consciousness, soundscape and direct speech to unpack themes of trauma, transmisogyny, belonging and the human condition. In the current global climate of regression of queer rights and transphobia from which Iceland is not exempt, there's no better time than now for ALOK to spread their love. **RX**



## Happening Having Fun And Making Tattoos

IsTattFest returns in honour of a local legend

**WORDS** Catharine Fulton  
**IMAGES** Supplied by IsTattFest

spent in a dark room welding them – knowledge I had absolutely no use for in my later years.”

But spending days at the tattoo shop was following in the footsteps of his father, the legendary tattoo artist Fjölur Geir Bragason, perhaps better known as Fjölur Tattoo. Fjölur was the face of Reykjavik tattoo culture from the time he began tattooing in 1995 through to his death in late 2021.

Now, in honour of the local legend, tattoo artists and musicians are coming together at Iðno September 31 and October 1 for IsTattFest. This year's celebration of tattoo culture is a reincarnation of a festival that Fjölur Tattoo held at Iðno the year before his death, which was itself an Icelandic take on the annual Faroe Islands-based FoTattFest that he co-founded in 2012.

nudsson, a coordinator of this year's IsTattFest. “So we brought together a bunch of tattoo artists, and we have six rock bands on the Friday and full on rave on the Saturday.”

will spend time during the festival finishing up projects to be in the running for awards in various categories – Best of The Day, Best Old School, Best Black and Grey, and so

### The sound of tattoo guns will add to the soundtrack of the weekend, with more than 20 Reykjavik-based artists coming together to make their mark on local bodies.

Sóðaskapur, Boob Sweat Gang, Kristo & Co, Grunge Rokkmessa, and Krummi will take the stage on the Friday, followed by Sbeenaround, Þorkell Máni, Samwise, and Sleazy keeping the party going on Saturday.

on – while catering to the requests of walk-ins. So if you have some new ink in mind, you know where to be at the end of the month.

“Fjölur was a great man,” Rúnar says. “So this is in respect to him and remembering him, but it's also going to be a lot of fun.” ■

IsTattFest happens at Iðno September 31 (doors open at 11:00) and October 1 (doors open at noon). Tickets are available at the door for 1.500 ISK, with each ticket pulling double duty as a raffle entry to win prizes throughout the festival. Learn more about participating tattoo artists on Instagram at @tattfest or at [facebook.com/istattfest](http://facebook.com/istattfest).

### The old man loved two things very much: having fun and making tattoos.

TATTOOS AND FUN

“The old man loved two things very much: having fun and making tattoos,” says Rúnar Hróði Geirm-

The sound of tattoo guns will add to the soundtrack of the weekend, with more than 20 Reykjavik-based artists coming together to make their mark on local bodies. The artists

**A**tli Fjölursson remembers spending his summers differently than other teens. When they were getting jobs with the municipalities, sentenced to long days spent pulling weeds in public gardens, he was working the front desk at a tattoo parlour and welding homemade tattoo guns in the back room.

“If you wanted to be a tattoo artist, you had to know how to make needles,” he explains. “Today, nobody makes their own needles and I often think about the days and weeks I

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Tech Talk

## Women Making Waves Tech Landscape

The Nordic Women in Tech Awards shine a well-deserved spotlight on diverse

WORDS Catharine Fulton  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Paula has since founded Float and Gather, a go-to-market and growth strategy consultancy.

women in the tech sector – but also connecting them externally. So our initiative this year is more focused abroad.”

### FROM ICELAND TO THE NORDICS

“That was really, really successful,” Paula recalls of Konur í Tækni. “But when my co-founder and I left the company, nothing more happened with it. And the community expressed to me that they were sad that it had disappeared, because it was a really great initiative – thousands of people were in it, all of the big companies were stakeholders, we would have different events every month. We really missed that community.”

That international focus and push to connect women working in Iceland’s booming tech sector with their cohorts abroad will culminate in November with WTI’s organisation of the Nordic Women in Tech Awards. The awards are held in a different Nordic nation each year and Iceland’s turn to play host is a big deal for the local tech ecosystem, bringing together leaders from across the entirety of the Nordic Women in Tech community to see and celebrate the women in Iceland’s inno-

THANKS, ZUCK

WTI began, like so many initiatives in Iceland do, as a Facebook group.

**W**hat are the benefits of increased gender diversity in a traditionally male industry? They’re immeasurable, really, with increased inclusion bringing fresh perspectives to projects and novel solutions to problems. Still, diversity in male-dominated industries like tech remains relatively low. Then there’s the matter of increasing diversity in general in a small, tight-knit community like Iceland.

Advocating for greater diversity, equality and inclusion in the tech industry is WomenTechIceland (WTI). Founded by Paula Gould and Valentina Griffin, the organisation was started on the back of Konur í Tækni, an in-house group Paula created in 2013 while working as the chief marketing officer at Greencloud, a software company that has since been acquired by NetApp. After successful turns at some of Iceland’s most notable tech firms, U.S.-transplant

**I would say that the best opportunities for foreigners who live here, particularly those who come to the country with specific skill sets, are in the tech sector.**

That was in 2017, but as member numbers, the scope of projects and the need for partnerships grew, Paula and Valentina officially registered as a non-profit organisation in 2021.

“We’ve been going strong ever since,” Paula says excitedly of the productive years the organisation has enjoyed to date. “We did a women innovators incubator between 2021 and 2022. And the focus this year is not only on deepening the community here and amplifying local voices and people – the leaders and emerging leaders and other

vation sector alongside women in tech from across the Nordics.

It’s also a big deal for the handful of women working in Iceland’s tech sector who have been nominated for this year’s awards – whose profiles also highlight the diversity of women working in tech in Iceland.

“The names aren’t all *dóttir*,” Paula laughs while pointing out the nominees representing Iceland this year have a range of international names rather than the standard Icelandic patronymic. Indeed, four of the nine individuals nominated in catego-



# s In Iceland's

## iversity in the industry

ries like Digital Leader Of The Year, Developer Of The Year, Rising Star Of The Year and Innovator Of The Year are women of foreign origin who have been making waves in Iceland's tech landscape.

Asked whether the diversity on display on the nominees list is representative of the true diversity of women working in tech in Iceland, Paula admits that's not the case "I wouldn't say that there is a lot of diversity," she says, "but I would say that the best opportunities for foreigners who live here, particularly those who come to the country with specific skill sets, are in the tech sector."

And while she wasn't involved with the judging panel for the national level of nominees this year, Paula was excited to see the diversity represented in WTI – a group started by women of foreign origin that has become *the* group for all Icelandic women in tech – being reflected among the women nominated. "For us, it's kind of a small bit of activism to make sure that the cross section of Icelandic society is always represented," she says.

### BEYOND THE TALKING POINTS

"I think that in Iceland, even though it's the number one country for gender equality, [that statistic] disguises the experiences of women in various other settings," Paula says of WTI's activist approach, explaining that the oft-touted gender equality data point doesn't take intersectionality into account. Immigrants often make significantly less than their Icelandic peers working the exact same job. "It doesn't take into account the foreign population, it doesn't take into account Icelanders born to folks of foreign origin – I just wonder if it also doesn't take into

account the LGBTQIA community. So there's a lot of different areas that kind of get left out of all of these top listings that Iceland has."

As for creating environments where women and women of foreign origin can excel, Paula recalls a talk she gave in 2022 on upskilling. While many expected her to focus on the importance of upskilling, reeducating and networking to get ahead, she turned the spotlight on Iceland and the fact that sometimes, no matter how much an immigrant upskills and networks, their lack of lifelong network and community will hold them back.

"So my take and WTI's position was, it's not so much that we have to upskill as it is that we need lead-

ber to see how far that cohort has already come.

"We're really excited about the Nordic Women In Tech gala event that's happening Nov. 9," Paula says of the awards ceremony and gala happening at Harpa. "It's going to be just a really fun festive party with lots of folks from the entirety of the sector coming in and showing support."

Among the Icelandic supporters lined up behind the event are Business Iceland, Play, Origo and Strawberry Capital. Each country represented in the awards is also bringing in supporters and sponsors to the Reykjavik festivities.

"The support just really reinforces to us that we're on the right track and

**The support just really reinforces to us that we're on the right track and that there is this kind of intentional movement towards inclusivity and change and removal of biases.**

ership, boards, stakeholders and shareholders to take a closer look and upskill themselves out of their biases and out of their networks that they've had since they were in kindergarten to be more welcoming to the folks that they need in their companies."

### LOOKING TOWARD NOVEMBER

While Paula and the rest of the WTI board work on the long term success of women working in Iceland's tech ecosphere, the rest of the Nordics will have a chance in Novem-

ber to see how far that cohort has already come. "The support just really reinforces to us that we're on the right track and that there is this kind of intentional movement towards inclusivity and change and removal of biases and highlighting all of the people who are making waves in the tech community," Paula concludes. "It seems to be working, so let's just keep doing it." ■

The Nordic Women in Tech Awards are being held at Harpa on Nov. 9. More information about the awards and this year's nominees can be found at [NordicWomenInTechAwards.com](https://NordicWomenInTechAwards.com). Learn more about WomenTechIceland at [WomenTechIceland.com](https://WomenTechIceland.com)

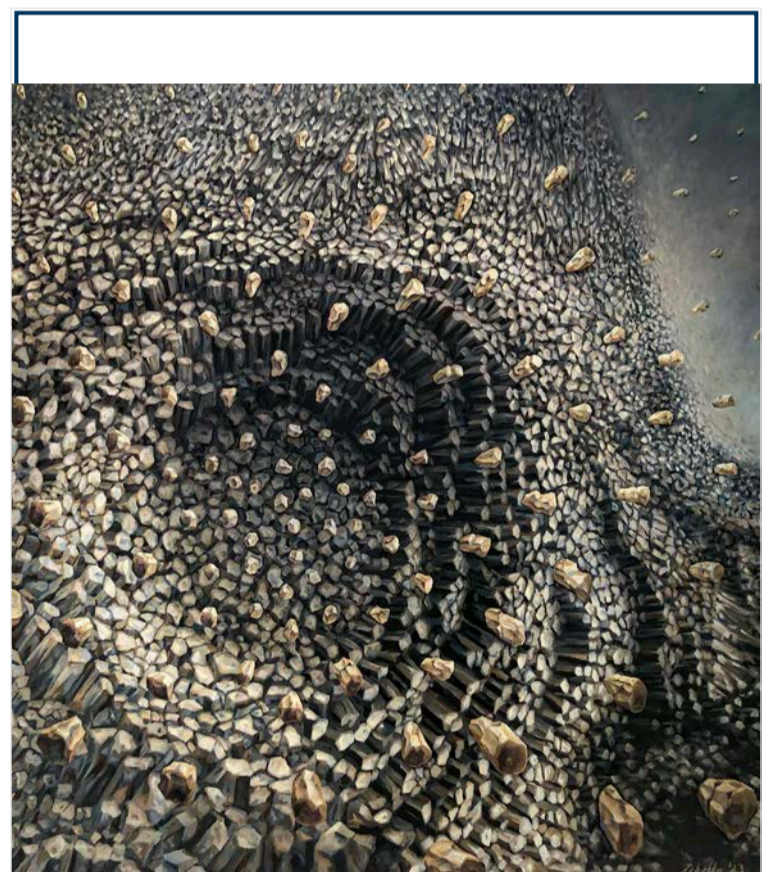
Smiðjustigur 10 / Klapparstigur 16, 101 Reykjavík  
Artists Björn Roth, Dodda Maggý, Finnbogi Pétursson, Haraldur Jónsson, Hulda Stefánsdóttir, John Zurier, Katrín Elvarsdóttir, Kees Visser, Monika Grzymala, Páll Haukur Björnsson, Rintaro Hara, Rósa Gísladóttir, Sigurður Guðjónsson, Steina, Woody Vasulka,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

# Northern Comfort: A Turbulent Ride Of

Fasten your seatbelts and get ready for an uncomfortable laughter

WORDS Iryna Zubenko  
IMAGES Art Bicnick, supplied stills

one of the main characters realises he's about to take a flight to Iceland. "The lump of volcanic rock in the North Atlantic?" he says and the room bursts into laughter.

### HORIZON SHIFT

"It's always fun to show the film to the crowd you know," says Hafsteinn a few days later as I meet him at the office of Netop Films, the production company housed just one floor below Grapevine HQ. He's much more relaxed when there's no line of people eager to shake his hand or pat him on the shoulder. "It's nice to come home and show it to the cast, the crew, friends and everybody here."

While the local audience welcomed *Northern Comfort*, it wasn't filmed in Icelandic. The decision to produce the film entirely in English was primarily driven by financial considerations. The film had a complex production with the need to shoot in multiple countries and build elaborate sets. "We realised that this

would be hard to finance in Icelandic, because Icelandic films can only cost a certain amount," Hafsteinn explains. This decision has already proved successful. Following the film's global premiere at the SXSW film festival in March, *Northern Comfort* has been sold to a number of key territories, including Benelux, Australia and New Zealand, the Baltics, Germany, France, Spain,

Italy and Poland, to name a few. In the UK, the film will be available on Netflix in January.

turns into a humorous examination of human behaviour under pressure. Interestingly, in the original version of the script, a group of Icelanders got stuck in Germany. "It made the story stronger in a way," Hafsteinn speaks of the change in the script. "It made the circumstances more intense, somehow, for this group to get stuck in Iceland rather than getting stuck in Germany."

this would make a great premise for film – to sort of expose human behaviour and fears and pose some existential questions in a funny way."

The idea stayed with Hafsteinn until he brought co-writers Halldór and Tobias on board. Despite not being aerophobic himself, Hafsteinn admits that anxiety has been present in his life. "I have gone through it, but it's something I didn't really have very much until I had children," he admits. "I had to learn to adapt, but I think anxiety can be helpful in a way because it makes us want to do better." According to the director, the fear of failing can be so strong, it keeps you alert, "You can use it as an important force to do better."

Even though *Northern Comfort* centres on the fear of flying, Hafsteinn reassures that the message is universal. "It's about our fears. The fear of flying is only one representation of that," he says. "It's about letting go and accepting that we can't be in full control of things. We live in stressful times with many things to

It's about our fears. The fear of flying is only one of representation of that.

### AN ODE TO SURRENDERING CONTROL

Hafsteinn explains that the idea for the film goes back 15 years, when he was a student at Columbia University and heard about fear of flying courses. "There's someone in my family who is terrified of flying," he says. "I immediately thought that

**"N**ever underestimate the power of anxiety," says director Hafsteinn Gunnar Sigurðsson from the stage of Háskólabíó on the premiere night of *Northern Comfort*, his latest dark comedy, co-written by Halldór Laxness Halldórsson and Tobias Munthe. It feels like half of Reykjavik is here today, particularly the creme de la creme of the local film industry. The lights dim and, soon enough,



# Comedy

be anxious about or worry about, but when it comes to it, we need to try to be in the moment – let go and enjoy.”

## NAVIGATING CHALLENGES

*Northern Comfort* was filmed from January to March 2022, starting in Myvatn, Iceland. Hafsteinn shares, “We were shooting at the end of COVID and when we began two out of five main actors were in quarantine in different countries.” This posed challenges and reduced rehearsal time before shooting. An actress fell ill and had to be replaced after the first day, which Hafsteinn manages to say with a smile – a bit ironic given the film’s theme of anxiety over lack of control. “Luckily, it all turned out well.”

The production of *Northern Comfort* faced complications due to many scenes set in airports, requiring numerous extras. COVID somewhat aided the crew; for instance, Gatwick Airport had half its facilities shut down due to the pandemic. “What’s fun about filmmaking is that you’re always confronted with a new problem that maybe people haven’t solved before,” Hafsteinn says.

However, a more unfortunate incident occurred involving Hafsteinn’s wife, who’s a dancer and choreographer and played one of the flight attendants. She dislocated her elbow after performing a stunt. This happened just before the crew was set to travel to London for three weeks of shooting. Hafsteinn had to leave her with their two children, which he recalls as a dreadful experience for him, “She recovered. We have a great family who stepped in to help with the kids. But the feeling of guilt was terrible.”

## ICELANDIC TAKE ON “EATING THE RICH”

Hafsteinn admits that *Northern Comfort* aimed to critique “first world” problems in its own way. The

film’s cast, which includes Lydia Leonard, Timothy Spall, Ella Rumpf, Sverrir Gudnason, Simon Manyonda, Björn Hlynur Haraldsson and Rob Delaney, successfully brought this vision to life.

“What’s exciting for me as a director is to access a wider selection of actors,” says Hafsteinn, reflecting on working with this diverse group, “You have to love your children the same. But they’re different; I love them for different reasons.” He mentions that none of the actors knew each other before the film. “Luckily, we all really clicked and I thought they all have their individual strengths. I’m very happy with it; with this ensemble.”

With its narrative involving a group of well-off travellers whose trip takes an unexpected turn, *Northern Comfort* reminded me of *Triangle of Sadness* and *The White Lotus*.

“A lot of people mentioned *Triangle of Sadness*. I, of course, hadn’t seen

resemblances to Östlund films; I like his work very much. But then again, you’re just making your film, believing in your characters and your story, and hoping that it will turn into something original in a way.”

## LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

As Hafsteinn looks ahead, he expresses a desire to avoid becoming confined to a particular style or genre. “I want to keep exploring. I just finished a TV show called *Afturelding* that was very popular here in the spring. I’m writing a sequel to that and developing another TV series and a couple of movies,” he says. “You never know what’s gonna get financed and picked up so it’s hard to tell at the moment. Hopefully I’ll be shooting something in 2025.”

While Hafsteinn agrees that it hasn’t always been easy to persuade Icelanders to go to the cinema, especially for a film in English, he encourages people to experience *Northern Comfort* in a theatre setting. He

**Some people find some resemblances to Östlund films; I like his work very much. But then again, you’re just making your film, believing in your characters and your story, and hoping that it will turn into something original in a way.**

it [at the time],” remarks Hafsteinn when asked about the inspiration for the film. “Often ideas are just sort of in the air. One film that I often thought about was an 80s comedy by Martin Scorsese called *After Hours*, about a guy who gets stuck downtown Manhattan, experiencing a night of events that go really wrong. Some people find some

says, “It’s a film that doesn’t take itself too seriously, but it raises some questions about being a human. You should see it on a big screen with people.” ■

*Northern Comfort* is screening at Bió Paradís, Laugarásbíó, Sambíó and Smárabíó



# TARAMAR

## ICELANDIC SKINCARE

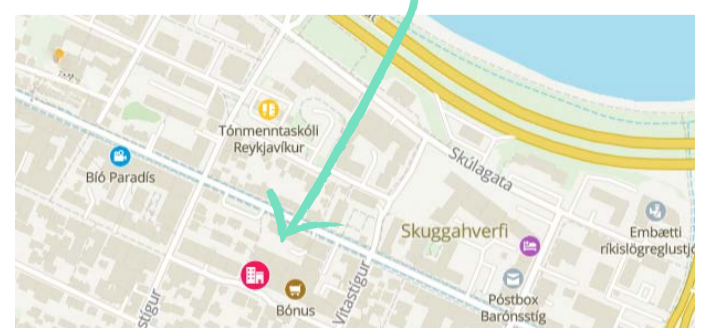
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# Centre Map

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

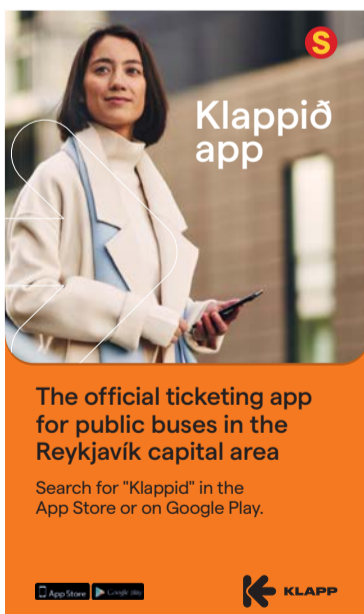
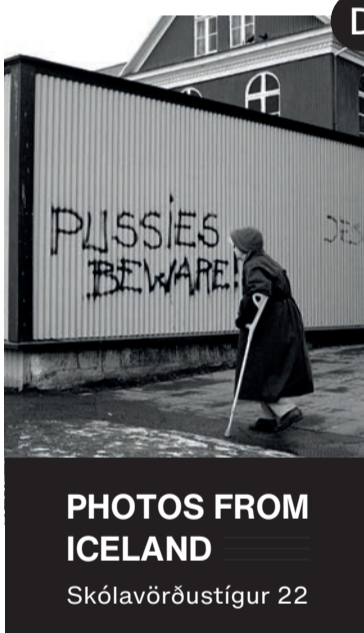
**19 SBARRO**  
Austurstræti 17 & Vatnsmýrarvegur 10  
"What is this shit?" is how Greil Marcus famously opened his review of Bob Dylan's 1970 album in Rolling Stone. It is appropriate here. It



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 ■





**E**

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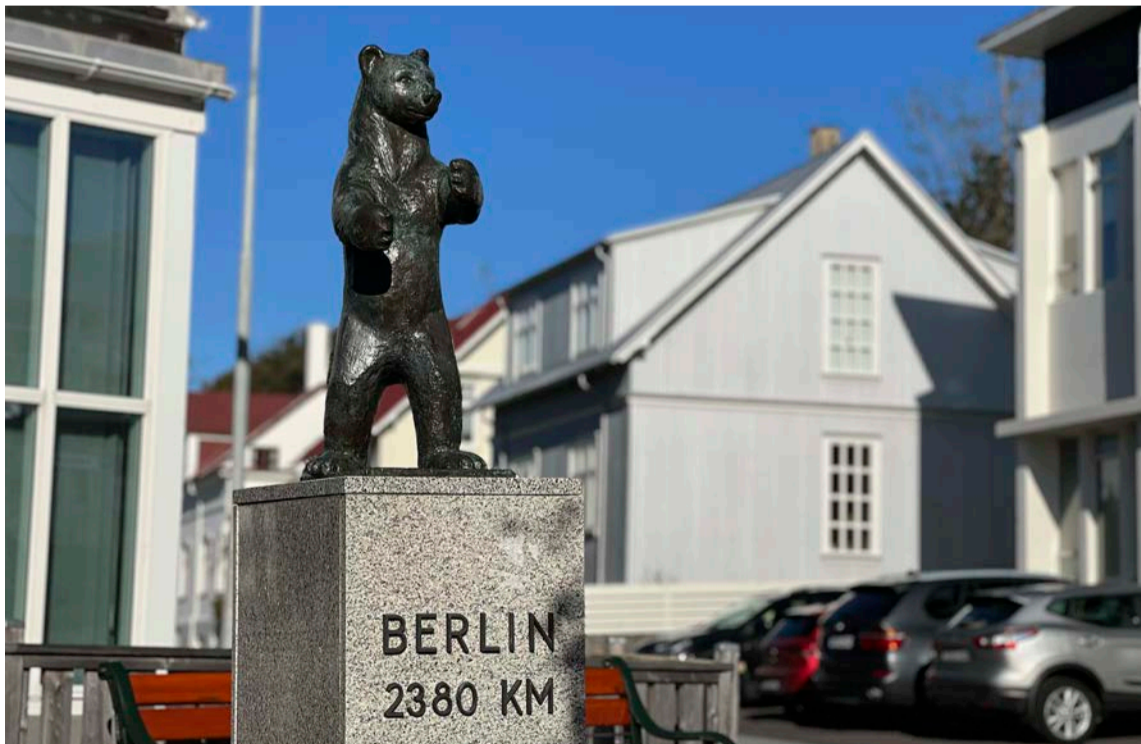
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Spot This **The Berlin Bear**★

Laufásvegur & Hellusund

Ever found yourself strolling along peacefully and then suddenly stopped in your tracks, asking yourself, “how far am I from Berlin?” Well, should that very common dilemma strike you on your jaunts through downtown Reykjavík, the Berlin Bear has got you covered! Poised adjacent to what is possibly Reykjavík’s tiniest roundabout, just across the street from the German embassy, the iconic and adorable statue by Renée Sintenis was gifted to Iceland in 1967 as a symbol of friendship and goodwill. Thanks to it, we are always aware of our proximity to not getting into Berghain. ■



**B**

# FOOD HALL & BAR

## PÓSTHÚS

POSTHUSSTRÆTI | 101 REYKJAVÍK

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023 BEST NEWCOMER FOODHALL

HAPPY HOUR 16:00 - 18:00 FOOD HALL & BAR

# Art Exhibitions

# 22.09–12.10

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

## Opening

### ÁSMUNDARSALUR

*Hans Jóhannsson – Echoes of the Ages*

A festival commemorating luthier Hans Jóhannsson's more than 40 years of violin making. On display will be dozens of musical instruments.

Opens October 1  
Runs until October 15

### GALLERÍ GRÓTTA

*Ragnheiður Gestsdóttir – Sjónskekkjur*

Works created during Ragnheiður's residency at the European Ceramic Work Centre in the Netherlands will be on display. They utilise experiments with shapes, colours and textures.

Opens September 23  
Runs until October 14

### GALLERY KANNSKI

*Jasa Baka & Petra Hjartardóttir – Behind the Sky*

An exhibition creating the sense of other realms and animistic realities for audiences to be transported into an alternate dimension.

Opens September 23  
Runs until October 1

### GALLERÍ ÓFEIGS

*Þrándur Arnþórsson – Life's Turbulent Sea*

Exhibition of paintings giving insight into the mysterious world of the sea and life itself. A world teeming with power, danger and beauty.

Opens September 23  
Runs until October 11

### GALLERY PORT

*Þórður Hans Baldursson – Turf to Tarmac to Turf*

In the exhibition "Turf to Tarmac to Turf" we find ourselves back where we started, far from the city, with little sense of familiarity and sneakers on our feet.

Opens September 23  
Runs until October 7

### GERÐARSAFN (KÓPAVOGUR ART MUSEUM)

*Sculpture / sculpture*

Fifth exhibition in a series that Gerðarsafn has held since 2015, examining the position of sculpture as a medium in Icelandic contemporary art.

Opens September 30  
Runs until December 31

### HAFNAR.HAUS

*Hafnar.fest: Open haus*

Celebration marking the first anniversary of Hafnar.haus studios, home to over 250 artists, designers, musicians, programmers, innovators, filmmakers and more.

Saturday September 23, 15:00, Free

### KORPÚLFSSTAÐIR (SÍM GALLERY)

*TORG Art Fair*

Taking place for the fifth time, TORG is one of the largest exhibitions and sales platforms for art in Iceland.

Opens October 6  
Runs until October 15

### LITLA GALLERÝ

*Telma Haraldsdóttir – My Book of Secrets*

Photographs displaying how the medium is a platform for self-exploration, self-reflection, research, and redefinition of the self.

Opens October 5  
Runs until October 8

### MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ARTS

*Lily Erla Adamsdóttir – Artist in Residence*

Over the course of her opening residency, Lily Erla Adamsdóttir will focus on textile based wall drawings using tufting techniques.

Opens September 22  
Runs until December 30

### NORDIC HOUSE

*Krzysztof Honowski & Laura Sundermann – Black Kryptonite Mountain*

Film screening by artist duo Laura Sundermann (GER) & Krzysztof Honowski (PL/GB), presenting their work in Iceland for the first time.

Held in collaboration with Y Gallery. Tuesday September 16, 17:00, Free

### SIGURJÓN ÓLAFSSON MUSEUM

*Puríður Sigurðardóttir – Home & Away*

Collection of new oil paintings by

Puríður Sigurðardóttir using techniques imitating hammer-and-chisel sculpture work.

Opens September 30  
Runs until Spring 2024

## Ongoing

### ÁSMUNDARSALUR (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

*Mentor: Ásmundur Sveinsson and Carl Milles*

Sculpture

Runs until January 2024

### ÁSMUNDARSALUR

*Shoplifter, Hrafnkell Sigurdsson & Kurt Uenala – Þing/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

### FYRIRBÆRI GALLERÍ

*"Best Friends"*

Mixed media

Runs until September 28

### GALLERY 1300°

*Kalli Stállborn – Kalt Stálbarn*

Paintings, mixed media

Runs until September 30

### GALLERÍ GÖNG

*Helgi Grímsson – 43 útsaumsmyndir*

Embroidery works

Runs until September 30

### GALLERY GRÁSTEINN

*Pálmi Bjarnason – Faces of Autumn*

Photography

Runs until October 10

### GALLERY SKILTÍ

*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)

*Art Without Borders: Hlutverkasetur*

Textile works, mixed media

Runs until October 28

### GERÐUR

Sculpture works of Gerður Helgadóttir from the museum's collection.

Runs until December 31

### HAFNARBORG CENTER OF CULTURE & FINE ART

*Sindri Ploder – Art Without Borders*

Paintings, drawing, mixed media

Runs until October 8

*Landscape for the Chosen Ones*

Mixed media, group exhibition

Runs until December 3

### 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

*Collection Creatures*

Digital & 3D artworks

Runs until January 2024

### HÖFUÐSTÖÐIN

*Shoplifter/Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir – Chromo Sapiens*

Installation, colourful whole body experience

Permanent exhibition

### I8 GALLERY

*Between the Window and the Door*

Language-based mixed media

Runs until November 4

### I8 GRANDI

*B. Ingrid Olson – Cast of Mind*

Installation, mixed media

Runs until December 20

*Sara Björnsdóttir – Whispers of the Abyss: A Dark Tribute to Light*

Collages, watercolours

Runs until October 22

### ICELANDIC PRINTMAKERS ASSOCIATION

*Kjarval and the 20th Century: When Modernity Anchored*

Paintings, drawings

Runs until December 31

### OUR ART

Artworks selected by public

Runs until October 29

### KLING & BANG

*Eva Ísleifs – The Earth Is My Bed*

Sculpture, mixed media

Runs until September 24

### LISTVAL

*Hallgrímur Árnason – Open Screens*

Paintings

Runs until September 30

*Áslaug Íris Katrín Friðjónsdóttir & Ingunn Fjóra Ingbórsdóttir – In Harmony*

Paintings and textile

Runs until January 2024

### THE LIVING ART MUSEUM

*Goodgonebadwrong*

Collaborative exhibition, mixed media

Runs until October 1

### LITLA GALLERÝ

*Ana Parrodi – Correlation/Fylgni*

Paintings

Runs until September 24

### MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ARTS

*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

*Rúrí – Glassrain*

Installation

Runs until October 1

*The Thought of Drawing*

Drawings by Jóhannes S. Kjarval

Runs until October 1

*The Private Collection*

Paintings, drawings

Runs until October 1

*Some Recent Works – New Acquisitions*

New works in the museum's permanent collection

Runs until February 2024

### NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ICELAND

*If Garden Gnomes Could Talk*

Photography

Runs until February 2024

### NORDIC HOUSE

*GRÍMUR: A Censored Exhibition*

Photography, slide show

Runs until September 24

*Under the Polar Ice*

Mixed media, interactivity, workshops

Runs until March 2024

### PORTFOLIO GALLERY

*Sirra Sigrún Sigurðardóttir – Almanak*

Photography

Runs until October 2

### REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY

*Julia Hechtman – Not Once*

Video portraits

Runs until October 22

*Gréta S. Guðjónsdóttir – 19, 24, 29, 34, 39 Fate and Destiny*

Photography, testimonials

Runs until December 10

### THE SCULPTURE ASSOCIATION GARDEN

*Alexander Hugo Gunnarsson & Sölvi Steinn Þórhallsson – What Remains*

Video works, sculptures and photographs

Runs until October 8

### SIGURJÓN ÓLAFSSON MUSEUM

*From Various Sources*

Sculpture

Permanent exhibition

### SÍM GALLERY

CHECK

### Y GALLERY

*Helga Páley Friðþjófsdóttir – LIKE &*

Paintings, sculptures

Runs until September 30

### PULA

*Auður Ómarsdóttir – KASBOMM*

Paintings, mixed media

Runs until October 15

## Art Picks



*Hafnar.haus Anniversary Open House*

September 23, 15:00  
Hafnar.haus  
Free

Last year, the upper floors of the Reykjavik Art Museum's iconic Hafnarhús branch were converted into a series of studio spaces and workshops under the umbrella name Hafnar.haus. Far from the average studio space, Hafnar.haus has become a bustling community filled with over 250 artists, designers, musicians, programmers, innovators, filmmakers and more, along with housing the gallery Flæði and the RVK Tool Library. This wonderful community will throw their otherwise keycard-access-only doors open for an afternoon of discovery, sharing and celebration. RX



*Kalli Stállborn – Kalt Stálbarn*

Until October 1  
Gallery 1300°

What cold steel child is this, who brings us these harsh yet soft drawings? It's visual artist Kalli Stállborn (aka Karl Torsten Stállborn), whose current exhibition's title plays on his own given name and makes things personal. Known in the local music scene prominently for his bands Skrattar and Muck (rip), his art is equally intense and dark, but also humorous and cheeky. In this show, he displays his works from the past year all made with only white pencil on black paper. Extremely cool. RX



*Auður Ómarsdóttir – KASBOMM*

Until October 15  
Pula

When you're already someone who creates things out of thin air for a living, creating a human life inside you at the same time will really do a number on you. Accomplished visual artist Auður Ómarsdóttir's new exhibition reflects on that state of being and her process of creating art while growing a baby for the first time. The word *kasbomm* is Icelandic slang for being extremely pregnant, and that's the narrative being navigated in her works as she discovered new ways to her process and to simply be. RX ■

# Events 22.09–12.10

Concerts, comedy, movies and other happenings that defy categorization

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

<p><b>Friday September 22</b></p> <p><b>Gum-Pops DJ Set</b> 21:00 12 Tónar</p> <p><b>Friday Night Party Screening: Boyz 'N The Hood</b> 21:00 Bíó Paradís</p> <p><b>Tomashevsky b2b A:Wide</b> 20:00 Bravó</p> <p><b>Karaoke Party</b> 20:00 Gaukurinn</p> <p><b>Kjörk</b> 23:00 Kaffibarinn</p> <p><b>Extreme Chill: Puce Mary, Hüma Utku &amp; More</b> 20:00 Kex Hostel</p> <p><b>Glowlís</b> 21:00 Röntgen</p> <p><b>Saturday September 23</b></p> <p><b>DJ tót</b> 21:00 12 Tónar</p> <p><b>Jamesen</b> 21:00 Bravó</p> <p><b>Aftermath, Beebee &amp; the Bluebirds</b> 20:00 Gaukurinn</p> <p><b>Atli James</b> 23:00 Kaffibarinn</p> <p><b>Glassrain Sessions: Una Sveinbjarnardóttir</b> 16:00 National Gallery of Iceland</p> <p><b>Sonur Sæll</b> 21:00 Röntgen</p> <p><b>Extreme Chill: Íris Thorarins, Rauður &amp; Álfbeat</b> 14:00 SKY Bar</p> <p><b>Sunday September 24</b></p> <p><b>BDSM Play Party</b> 20:00 Gaukurinn</p> <p><b>Iceland Symphony Youth Orchestra</b> 17:00 Harpa – Eldborg</p> <p><b>QuartetES – Transcending Barriers</b> 16:00 Harpa – Norðurljós</p> <p><b>Extreme Chill Afterparty: Mixmaster</b></p>	<p><b>Monday September 25</b></p> <p><b>lúpína Music Video Screening</b> 18:30 Bíó Paradís</p> <p><b>Cosy Vibes</b> 20:00 Gaukurinn</p> <p><b>Andri Björgvins</b> 22:00 Kaffibarinn</p> <p><b>Tuesday September 26</b></p> <p><b>Karaoke Night</b> 20:00 Gaukurinn</p> <p><b>Gudny Jóns</b> 22:00 Kaffibarinn</p> <p><b>Wednesday September 27</b></p> <p><b>The Calendars (US), Mairead Dambrouch (US), K.Óla &amp; Stírnir Guitar Sextet</b> 19:00 12 Krónur (above 12 Tónar)</p> <p><b>Día</b> 20:00 Bravó</p> <p><b>Ya-Ha-Hass Queen! Drag Comedy Night</b> 20:00 Gaukurinn</p> <p><b>Ballantines Vinyl Wednesday: Dj Kari</b> 22:00 Kaffibarinn</p> <p><b>ACT IN_OUT: Tsvey</b> 18:00 Mengi</p> <p><b>DJ Milljón</b> 21:00 Röntgen</p> <p><b>Thursday September 28</b></p> <p><b>Ljósvaki</b> 20:00 Bravó</p> <p><b>Reykjavík Deathfest 2023</b> 18:30 Gaukurinn</p> <p><b>ISO Plays Jóhann Jóhannsson &amp; Philip Glass</b> 19:30 Harpa – Eldborg</p> <p><b>JWP/BC (PL)</b> 17:00 IDNÓ</p> <p><b>Leon S. Kemp (Nordic Voyage)</b> 22:00 Kaffibarinn</p> <p><b>Elif Yalvaç, Rikhardur H. Fridriksson &amp; Daniele Moog Girolamo</b> 20:00 Mengi</p> <p><b>KAKKALAKK</b> 21:00 Röntgen</p> <p><b>Friday September 29</b></p> <p><b>Friday Night Party Screening: Flashdance</b> 21:00 Bíó Paradís</p>	<p><b>Transition Psytrance</b> 20:00 Bravó</p> <p><b>Reykjavík Deathfest 2023</b> 18:30 Gaukurinn</p> <p><b>Stjórnin Anniversary Show</b> 21:00 Háskólabíó</p> <p><b>DJ Hristo</b> 23:00 Kaffibarinn</p> <p><b>Jelena Čirić, Karl Pestka &amp; Margrét Arnardóttir</b> 20:00 Mengi</p> <p><b>DJ Sóley Bjarna</b> 21:00 Röntgen</p> <p><b>Una Torfa</b> 20:00 Salurinn</p> <p><b>Saturday September 30</b></p> <p><b>Halldóra Hermans</b> 20:00 Bravó</p> <p><b>Herra Hnetusmjör &amp; Friðrik Dór</b> 20:00 Gamla Bíó</p> <p><b>Reykjavík Deathfest 2023</b> 18:30 Gaukurinn</p> <p><b>Astor Piazzolla for Two Pianos</b> 16:00 Harpa – Norðurljós</p> <p><b>80s &amp; 90s Nostalgia with Guðrún Árný</b> 20:00 Harpa – Silfurberg</p> <p><b>Stjórnin Anniversary Show</b> 21:00 Háskólabíó</p> <p><b>BenSöl</b> 23:00 Kaffibarinn</p> <p><b>Hipsumhaps</b> 21:00 Kex Hostel</p> <p><b>Teitur Magnússon</b> 21:00 Lebowski Bar</p> <p><b>Ásgeir</b> 21:00 Mengi</p> <p><b>Glassrain Sessions: Skúli Sverrisson</b> 16:00 National Gallery of Iceland</p> <p><b>Benni B-Ruff</b> 21:00 Röntgen</p> <p><b>Sunday October 1</b></p> <p><b>Eric Whitacre – Song Festival</b> 17:00 Harpa – Eldborg</p> <p><b>Sunday Classics: Piano Trios by Smetana &amp; Brahms</b> 16:00 Harpa – Norðurljós</p> <p><b>ALOK</b> 20:00 Harpa – Silfurberg</p> <p><b>TBA</b> 22:00 Kaffibarinn</p> <p><b>Monday October 2</b></p> <p><b>Bring The Laughs: Comedy Night</b> 20:00 Gaukurinn</p> <p><b>Fu Kaisha</b> 22:00 Kaffibarinn</p>
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## Event Picks



**Virgin Orchestra Album Release Concert**  
Tuesday October 3, 20:00  
Harpa – Kaldalón  
3.500 ISK

After wowing us over the past year with their breakout singles “Rewind” and “Off Guard”, gloomy post-punk trio Virgin Orchestra finally released their much awaited debut album *Fragments* back in May. Now they will give their first record the honour it deserves with a proper album release show, bringing all their gothy goodness and experimental wall-of-sound antics. They are teasing that another orchestra will join them on the bill, but who exactly remains a mystery. Go enjoy the dark vibes and uncover the secrets. **RX**



**Iceland Symphony Orchestra: ARCHORA**  
October 6, 18:00  
Hallgrímskirkja  
4.900 ISK

Earlier this year, superstar Icelandic composer Anna Þorvaldsdóttir's works ARCHORA and AIÓN received their definitive portrait album, recorded by the Iceland Symphony Orchestra led by conductor Eva Ollikainen. Now the ISO and its chief conductor will step out of their home base at Harpa and run up the hill to Hallgrímskirkja, where they will fill the hallowed halls with a full programme of Anna's works, culminating with the truly epic ARCHORA. The stunning Klais organ will accompany the work, and three other of Anna's pieces will be performed with choir and soprano. It will be a uniquely powerful experience of Anna's remarkable music. **RX**



**Eivør**  
October 6, 20:00  
Harpa – Eldborg  
7.990 – 14.990 ISK

Faroese singer-songwriter Eivør will forever be claimed by Iceland as one of our own, really. Having moved here to study music in 2002, competing in the local Eurovision preliminaries a year later, and winning Icelandic Music Awards for her second solo album, she is truly an adoptee. Having gained massive international success, it's always a delight when she comes to pay us a visit and we know she's gonna give us her all. Warming up the show for Eivør is Reykjavík's own JFDR, whose own career path isn't so unlike the headliner. A truly stellar night, guaranteed. **RX**



National Gallery of Iceland  
Fríkirkjuvegur 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](http://listasafn.is)

**Listasafn Íslands**  
National Gallery of Iceland

## Reykjavík Art Museum

One museum  
Three locations



**Hafnarhús**  
Tryggvagata 17  
101 Reykjavík

**Kjarvalsstaðir**  
Flókagata 24  
105 Reykjavík

**Ásmundarsafn**  
Sigtún  
105 Reykjavík

**Open daily**  
[listasafnreykjavikur.is](http://listasafnreykjavikur.is)  
[artmuseum.is](http://artmuseum.is)



# Events 22.09-12.10

Concerts, comedy, movies and other happenings that defy categorization

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**Two Jazz Duets**  
20:00 Múlinn Jazz Club  
**DJ Alfred Drexler**  
21:00 Röntgen  
**SUND**  
20:30 Tjarnarbíó

**Thursday October 5**  
**Fleetwood Mac Tribute Show**  
20:00 Bæjarbíó  
**Hausar**  
20:00 Bravó  
**Ingibjörg Turchi Album Release Show**  
20:00 Frikirkjan  
**Mighty Bear & Birgir Hansen**  
20:00 Gaukurinn  
**Árni Sveinsson's Pizzaparty Diskotek**  
22:00 Kaffibarinn  
**Krummi Björgvinsson**  
20:00 Kaffi Flóra  
**Post Performance Blues Band: Film & Concert**  
19:00 Kex Hostel  
**SÚPER SOAKER 3: BABii, Lil Data, BART & More**  
19:00 Prikið  
**DJ Valdi**  
21:00 Röntgen

**Friday October 6**  
**Friday Night Party Screening: Pitch Perfect**  
21:00 Bíó Paradís  
**Halldóra b2b Carla Rose**  
20:00 Bravó  
**Maideniced: Iron Maiden Tribute**  
18:00 & 22:00 Gaukurinn  
**ISO Plays Anna Þorvaldsdóttir**  
18:00 Hallgrímskirkja  
**Kyrrð Album Release Show**  
20:00 Hannesarholt  
**Ljótu Hálfvitarnir**  
21:00 ÍDNÓ

**Árni Thaison & Elísabet**  
23:00 Kaffibarinn  
**DJ Ívar Pétur**  
21:00 Röntgen

**Saturday October 7**  
**Ásgeir**  
20:00 Bæjarbíó  
**Eternal Roots**  
20:00 Bravó  
**Hellidamba 10th Anniversary Show**  
21:00 Bryggjan Brughús  
**Svartþoka, Guðir Hins Nýja Tíma & Gubba Hori**  
21:00 Gaukurinn  
**Matinée Organ Concert**  
12:00 Hallgrímskirkja  
**Vök 10th Anniversary Show**  
20:00 Harpa - Eldborg  
**Ljótu Hálfvitarnir**  
21:00 ÍDNÓ  
**Már & Nielsen**  
23:00 Kaffibarinn  
**Benni B-Ruff**  
21:00 Röntgen  
**Dögnfluer: Three AI Musicals**  
19:30 Tjarnarbíó

**Sunday October 8**  
**Singer-Songwriter Night**  
20:00 Gaukurinn  
**Eivör**  
20:00 Harpa - Eldborg  
**The Reykjavik Big Band Performs Woody Shaw**  
20:00 Harpa - Silfurberg  
**TBA**  
22:00 Kaffibarinn  
**Super Special Sunday Show: Laura Secord, Ingibjörg Turchi & More**  
19:30 Kex Hostel  
**TEDxReykjavik**  
14:00 Tjarnarbíó  
**SUND**

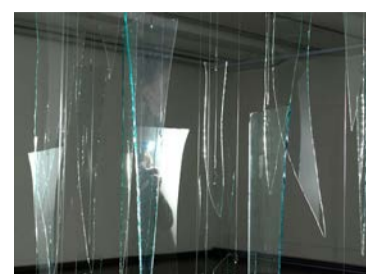
20:30 Tjarnarbíó

**Monday October 9**  
**Hrikalegur Kjöttleifur**  
22:00 Kaffibarinn

**Tuesday October 10**  
**Karaoke Night**  
20:00 Gaukurinn  
**Upprásin - Drengurinn fengurinn, Krownest & MSEA**  
20:00 Harpa - Kaldalón  
**DJ Júlala**  
22:00 Kaffibarinn

**Wednesday October 11**  
**Tomashevsky**  
20:00 Bravó  
**Leon S. Kemp (Nordic Voyage)**  
22:00 Kaffibarinn  
**GDRN, Celebs, Lón & Kári**  
19:00 ÍDNÓ  
**Swap Til You Drop**  
14:00 Loft Hostel  
**Jerry Bergonzi Quartet**  
20:00 Múlinn Jazz Club  
**DJ Snazzy**  
21:00 Röntgen

**Thursday October 12**  
**Flying Elbows**  
20:00 Gaukurinn  
**ISO With Eldbjörg and Tortelier**  
20:00 Harpa - Eldborg  
**DJ Hendrik**  
22:00 Kaffibarinn  
**Soffía**  
20:00 Kaffi Flóra  
**Stjörnuljós**  
21:00 Röntgen  
**Virginia Gillard: Stroke**  
19:30 Tjarnarbíó



**Glassrain Sessions**  
September 23 and 30  
National Gallery of Iceland

Rúri's phenomenal Glassrain installation at the National Gallery of Iceland is getting a soundtrack. On exhibit since March and showing until October 1, Glassrain is an installation of 500 razor sharp fragments of glass hung at varying heights from floor to ceiling, taking on the appearance of a menacing shower. On Sept. 16, Davíð Þór Jónsson improvised a piece on the percussion harp to express his feelings of the installation. Now, on September 23, renowned violinist Una Sveinbjarnardóttir will put her feelings into music, with Skúli Sverrisson taking a spin through the glass rain on Sept. 30 with his box bass guitar in hand.

The two remaining performances run from 16:00 to 17:00 and are not to be missed. Rúri's exhibition is moving in and of itself, but experiencing the birth of music within the exhibition is something else entirely. CF ■

See more at [events.grapevine.is](http://events.grapevine.is)



ICELANDIC GASTROPUB

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15-18

HAPPIEST  
HAPPY HOUR  
IN REYKJAVÍK



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[jomfruin.is](http://jomfruin.is)



Appy Listings

# Some Of The Happiest Hours In Town

If your bar has a happy hour, email us on [events@grapevine.is](mailto:events@grapevine.is) with the details.

## 101 HOTEL

Wednesday to Saturday from 16:00 to 19:00

Beer 1.390 ISK, Wine 1.590 ISK

## 12 TÓNAR

Every day from 14:00 to 19:00

Beer 1.100 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

## AMERICAN BAR

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00

Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

## APÉRO

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00

Beer 950 ISK, Wine 1.100 ISK

## BÍÓ PARADÍS

Every day from 17:00 to 19:00

Beer 850 ISK, Wine 850 ISK

## BJÖRGARÐURINN

Every day from 15:00 to 19:00

Beer 900 ISK, Wine 900 ISK

## BODEGA

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00

Beer 900 ISK, Wine 900 ISK

## BRAVÓ

Every day from 12:00 to 20:00

Beer 750 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

## BREWDOG

Every day from 15:00 to 17:00 & 22:00 to 00:00

Beer 1.290 ISK, Wine 1.290 ISK

## BRÚT BAR

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00

Beer 700 ISK, Wine 750 ISK, 2F1 on wine and beer on tap

## DEN DANSKE KRO

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00

Beer 750 ISK, Wine 750 ISK

## FJALLKONAN

Every day from 15:00 to 18:00

Beer 990 ISK, Wine 1.190 ISK

## FORRÉTTABARINN

Every day from 16:00 to 18:00

Beer 800 ISK, Wine 900 ISK

## FORSETINN

Every day from 15:00 to 18:00

Beer 990 ISK, Wine 990 ISK

## FRÖKEN REYKJAVÍK

Every day from 16:00 to 18:00

Beer 990 ISK, Wine 1.100 ISK

## GAUKURINN

Every day from 16:00 to 21:00

Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.100 ISK

## HOTEL HOLT BAR

Wednesday to Saturday from 16:00 to 18:00

Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.350 ISK

## THE IRISHMAN

Every day from 12:00 to 19:00

Beer 850 ISK, Wine 850 ISK

## JÖRGENSEN KITCHEN & BAR

Every day except Thurs. 16:00 to 18:00, Thursday 16:00 to 20:00

Beer 890 ISK, Wine 1.100 ISK

## JUNGLE COCKTAIL BAR

Every day from 16:00 to 18:00

Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.100 ISK

## KAFFI LÆKUR

Every day from 16:00 to 18:00

Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

## KAFFIBARINN

Every day from 15:00 to 19:00

Beer 800 ISK, Wine 900 ISK

## KAFFIBRENNSLAN

Every day from 16:00 to 20:00

Beer 850 ISK, Wine 900 ISK

## KALDI BAR

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00

Beer 950 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

## LOFT HOSTEL

Every day from 16:00 to 20:00

Beer 990 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

## LÓLA FLORENS

Every day from 15:00 to 18:00

Beer 1.200 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

## ÖLSTOFAN

Every day from 15:00 to 20:00

Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

## PETERSEN SVÍTAN

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00

Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

## PRIKIÐ

Every day from 16:00 to 20:00

Beer 700 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

## PUNK

Every day from 16:00 to 18:00

Beer 850 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

## RÖNTGEN

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00

Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

## SÆTA SVINIÐ

Every day from 15:00 to 18:00

Beer 1.090 ISK, Wine 1.390 ISK

## SATT RESTAURANT

Every day from 15:00 to 18:00

Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

## SKÚLI CRAFT BAR

Every day from 12:00 to 19:00

Beer 900 ISK, Wine 900 ISK

## SLIPPBARINN

Every day from 15:00 to 18:00

Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

## SPIKAKAFFI

Every day from 17:00 to 19:00

Beer 1.000 ISK, no wine or cocktails

## STÚDENTAKJALLARINN

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00

Beer 710 ISK, Wine 850 ISK

## TIPSÝ

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00

50% off select cocktails

## UPPSALIR BAR

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00

Beer 750 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

## VEÐUR

Every day from 12:00 to 19:35

Beer 800 ISK, Wine 800 ISK

## VÍNSTÚKAN TÍU SÓPAR

Every day from 17:00 to 19:00

Beer 1.300 ISK, Wine 1.600 ISK

## VOX BRASSERIE & BAR

Every day from 16:00 to 18:00

Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK



Featured

## Lóla Florens

Garðastræti 6

With the cool autumn weather setting in, we have firmly entered both cosy and spooky seasons. And what better way to enjoy them than to combine the vibes for happy hour? That's exactly what the enigmatic, wistful café and drinkery Lóla Florens serves up, with a perfect melange of vintage rococo chic and esoteric witchy energies. Sip some prosecco or sparkling tea out of ornate crystalware while lounging on their intricately patterned antique furniture, or even while browsing some of the cool retro duds in the basement. That's some truly practical magic.

### Happy hours

Every day from 15:00 to 18:00

Beer 1.200 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK ■

\* We do our best to keep these prices current, but prices are constantly changing. Inflation, amirite!?

## Cheap Eats

Here are some sweet meal deals that'll fill your tummy and without draining your bank account.

### APÓTEK

Soup of the Day

1.990 ISK all day, every day

### ARABIAN TASTE

Falafel Roll

1.590 all day, every day

### BÆJARINS BEZTU

Hotdog and soda

990 ISK all day, every day

### BRÚT

Bottomless Brunch, including selected drinks

6.900 ISK on Saturday & Sunday

### DEIG

Poor Man's Offer: filled bagel, doughnut & drink

1.850 ISK weekdays after 10:00

### DOMINO'S

Tuesday Special: medium pizza with three toppings

1.200 ISK all day on Tuesday, pick-up only

### DRAGON DIM SUM

Lunch Offer: choice of any two dumpling baskets

2.190 ISK every day except Sunday, from 11:30 - 14:30

### GLÓ

Bowl of the Month

2.290 ISK all day, every day

### HAMBORGARABÚLLA TÓMASAR

Tuesday Special: burger, fries & soda

1.890 ISK all day on Tuesday

### HLÖLLABÁTAR

Lunch Offer: Choice of any sub and soda

2.195 ISK every day until 14:00

### ISLENSKI BARINN

Soup of the Day

1.850 ISK all day, every day

### LEMON

Combo of the Month: large sandwich & juice

2.195 ISK all day, every day

### MAI THAI BISTRO

Lunch Offer: daily curry meal

2.090 ISK weekdays between 11:00 - 14:00

### NAPOLI PIZZA

Lunch Offer: choice of menu pizza or sandwich

1.690 ISK every day from 11:30 - 15:00

### NOODLE STATION

Vegetarian noodle soup

1.290 ISK all day, every day

### PÍTUBARINN

Veggie pita sandwich

1.990 ISK all day, every day

### PIZZAN

50% Combo: choice of menu pizza & breadsticks

Half-off all day, every day

### PHO VIETNAMESE

Pho & wonton soups

1.990 ISK all day, every day

### REYKJAVÍK ROASTERS

Breakfast menu & sourdough toasts

580 ISK - 1.800 ISK, all day, every day

### SHALIMAR

Curry in a Hurry Lunch Special

1.590 ISK weekdays from 12:00 - 15:00

### SHANGHAI

Choice of 3-dish combo

2.290 ISK for one all day, every day

4.390 ISK for two all day, every day

### SUBWAY

Sub of the Day

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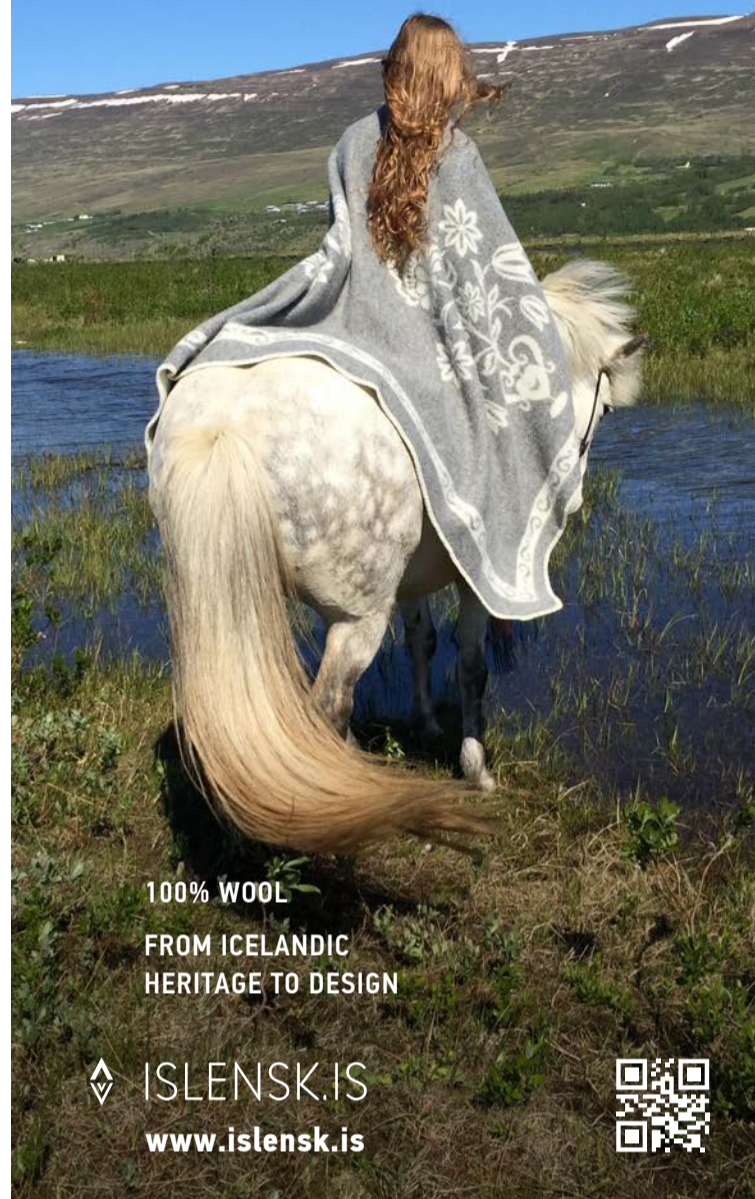
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# Music News



## Nanna Announces Iceland Shows

Following her US tour last summer, solo artist Nanna recently announced additional dates in Iceland and Europe for the autumn and winter of 2023. Nanna, who released her debut solo album *How To Start A Garden* in May, is set to play three shows in Iceland this November

as well as three separate shows in Amsterdam, Brussels and London in the same month. Nanna kicks off her tour in Reykjavik at Iceland Airwaves November 2-4, plays in Akureyri November 10, and in Neskaupstaður November 11.



## Controversy Among IceGuys Name

The boy band IceGuys made a big splash in Iceland earlier this year with their hit single "Krumla." Fronted by pop icon Jón Jónsson and his brother Friðrik Dór, the band also features rappers Aron Can and Herra Hnetusmjör, plus former footballer Rúrik Gíslason. Following their rise in popularity, a separate music

group with the same name – formed in 2004 – has contested the name's copyright. The original group, who are in the midst of organising a comeback show next year, are now exploring legal actions against the imitators.



## DJ Collective Drif Takes Over Lækjartorg Kiosk

Every weekend, DJ collective Drif streams live DJ sets from their space at Prikíð nightclub with the goal of showcasing Icelandic electronic music. The group, who started their ventures in the summer of 2023, is now in the process of moving their performance venue to the old sales kiosk at Lækjartorg.

Starting on Friday, September 22, Drif broadcasts their performances from Lækjartorg. The tower, already an iconic emblem of Reykjavik, has served a multitude of roles in its 116-year history, but it was originally intended as a place selling various types of entertainment. ■



Music

# Dreaming The Apocalypse

MSEA's *Our Daily Apocalypse Walk* is an otherworldly achievement

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

With a slew of releases already to her credit, MSEA is now celebrating the September 15 release of her latest album, *Our Daily Apocalypse Walk*.

### BUSY DREAMING

Inspired by MSEA's dream journaling, which she conducted over a two-year period, *Our Daily Apocalypse Walk* invites the listener into Maria's fantastical dreams, which exude an almost nightmarish quality. Exacerbating the album's dark tones

from the last track composed for the record, which Kælan Mikla's own Laufey Soffía co-wrote the lyrics to. It wasn't until that last composition came into being that the album title was conceived.

"Before it got its title, it was called *Wake Up, We're Disappearing*," MSEA says "Before we started recordings, a lot of what was coming to me was this idea of disappearing. After going through the pandemic, just kind of feeling like, 'I'm not totally here anymore,'" MSEA explains.

## I really wanted the body to not look completely human.

is its cover art, depicting disfigured representations of the artist in digital render, spectacularly created by artist María Guðjohnsen.

"I really wanted the body to not look completely human," MSEA says nonchalantly from her studio/office in the Hafnarhaus creative space. "And also to not look like Barbie," she continues. These days, MSEA is busy being a full-time mom while also promoting her latest creation.

With some of the songs back to early 2020, the album title is derived

### EXPLORING THE INTANGIBLE

This feeling of fading permeates the album. Sweeping synths and off-kilter melodies draw you into MSEA's dream world. In a previous conversation with *The Grapevine*, the artist had mentioned the album feeling like, "a misty night. Taking a drive surrounded by fog."

MSEA's expression of fogginess and ethereal feelings is ever-present. In "Mouth of the face of the sea,"

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# ose

MSEA contrasts the natural with the unnatural, as a vocoder parallels her laid-back slam, "How do we remove all of the dirt from our past?"

Although not distinctly depicted on *Our Daily Apocalypse Walk*, a common theme in MSEA's work is the past – it influences her escapist album *Hiding Under Things* and the retrospective *I Turned Into A Familiar Shape*, released in 2019 and 2020, respectively.

In *Apocalypse Walk*, MSEA's treatment of the past is somewhat liminal. "I think this album is maybe a little bit less focused on the past," she starts. "I think it kind of sneaks in whether I want it to or not."

The album feels like a soundtrack to a scene of someone going out for a pack of smokes, only to vanish into the night – perhaps with a forged passport in their pocket.

## THE STUFF OF NIGHTMARES

Unsurprisingly, the album sounds otherworldly, as MSEA found inspiration for the record in her dreams. "During the pandemic, I started having vivid dreams. I started telling my partner about them. And so I bought this little black book and every day if I remembered my dream, I would write it down. It started very casually, but then eventually they just kept getting more and more vivid, almost lucid," MSEA explains.

Filling three notebooks over the course of two years, the nightly visions became Maria's source material. "It's also really fun going back and reading them. There are some crazy things in there."

The album feels like a culmination of MSEA's work throughout the years,

resulting in a true representation of the artist's soundscape and music. Every decision and every sound on the album makes sense in MSEA's twisted world. "It's the first album I'm happy with," confesses MSEA, regretting the fact that her previous albums could have done with more work.

"I've listened to this album a bunch of times and I'm not sick of it. I think that's a good sign," she remarks. "I wonder if that's partially just because I've gotten better at making music."

Although heavily based on electronica, MSEA used analogue instruments to replace her usual electronic sounds. The album features guitarist Úlfur Alexander Einarsson, violinist Ana Luisa Diaz de Cossio, cellist Rún Árnadóttir, clarinet player Bergþóra Kristbergadóttir, plus additional personnel Árni Arnason

a practical approach to doing the music justice live. Joining MSEA in her new live iteration are musicians Sigurlaug Thorarensen of BSÍ fame, Halla Kristjánsdóttir and drummer Ægir Sindri Bjarnason. "And then there's the computer, which is also a band member," jokes MSEA.

"It was a bit of a struggle to figure out how to play it live. I think we have found the balance. There's very little playback now," she says, referring to her previous experience as a solo performer. Having almost perfected her live set, MSEA now favours the organic approach, minimising the predictability of computer playback.

"There's more energy in playing live. I think we all feel more connected when things can slip through our fingers. [Playing live] started feeling really repetitive and almost like karaoke," MSEA confesses.

## I bought this little black book, and every day if I remembered my dream, I would write it down.

and Julius Rothlaender, and MSEA's supporting band invoking a myriad of organic sounds.

"I work alone for so long before bringing anyone in. The recording process is really the first time I'm sharing the music and getting feedback and ideas from other people," comments MSEA on the album process.

### ORGANIC SOUNDS

In addition to promoting her latest album, MSEA is also developing

MSEA puts her newest performance set to the test on October 10, when she will be playing at the Harpa concert series Upprásin. "We'll be playing a bunch of shows. I really want to start writing again, whether as MSEA or not is the question," says Maria and leaves her future plans open-ended. ■

Catch MSEA perform in Harpa's Kaldalón as part of Upprásin. More information and tickets can be found at [www.harpa.is](http://www.harpa.is)

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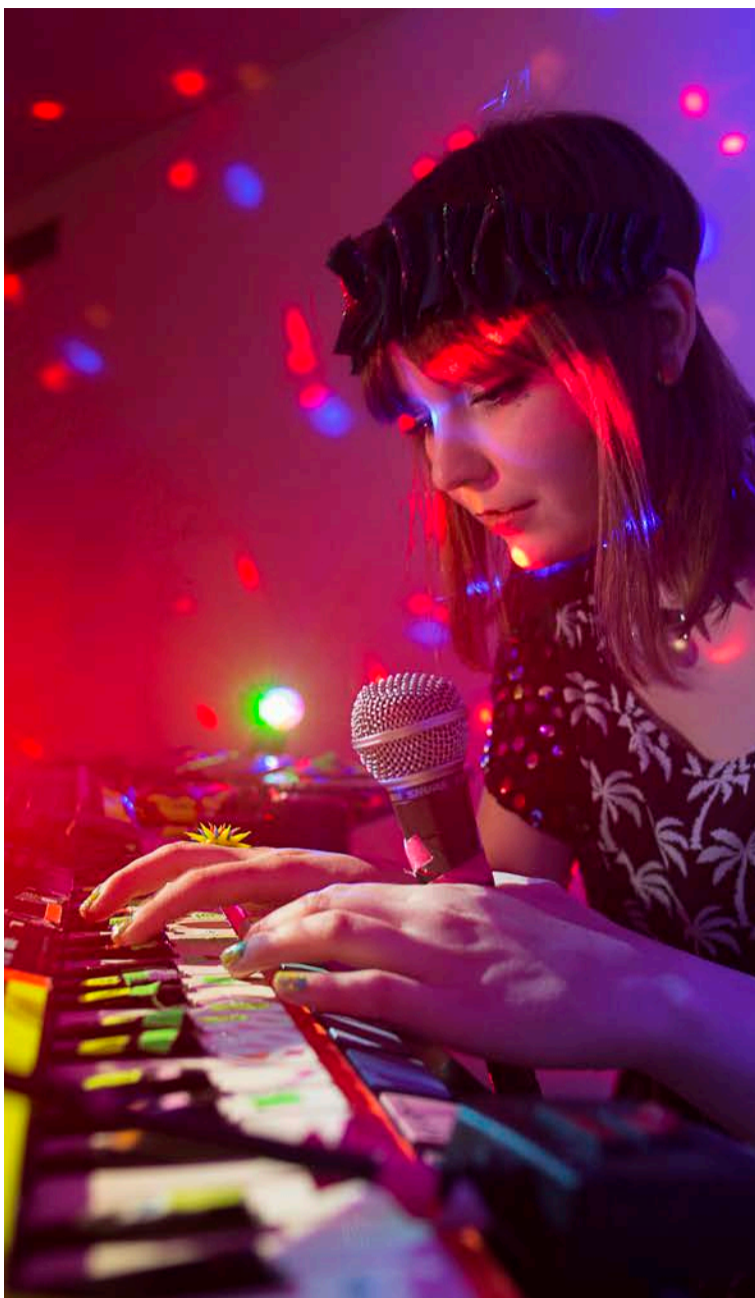
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About  
Last Night

## Waking Up To Russian Bombs

Dj. Flugvél og Geimskip's account of performing in Ukraine

WORDS Steinunn Eldflaug  
Harðardóttir  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

We came to Kyiv in the warm sunshine. The festival was held outside an old factory with a lot of big old trees around. There was artwork everywhere and soon the night came with stars and the guests arrived. A big alien (made by a friend's grandmother) greeted everyone. The Loonies (guests) looked like 90s rave pirate hippies.

Beautiful and happy and thankful to listen to music and dance and think about something else than the terrible war that is going on. Russians send bombs over the country every day and kill innocent people and children. Not many bands come to Ukraine to play. I was really thankful to be invited. I felt that we were doing something important. We travelled to outer space and back.

In the night, we woke up when Russia attacked Kyiv. Sirens sounded and loud bombs exploded like fireworks in the sky when air defence destroyed drones or rockets flying

**L**oonyfest is a charity festival and I was invited. The first night of the festival was in Lviv, Ukraine. There, I met my friends from the band Chillera, who come from Odesa, and Japanese band Heav-enphetamine. We played outside an abandoned factory that artists had

### I felt that we were doing something important. We travelled to outer space and back.

taken over. We could feel the energy of music and art and excitement.

Ukrainians are really warm and funny, helpful and cool people. The art scene and music is very much alive. From Lviv to Kyiv we were lulled to sleep in a 70s train with bunk beds.

over the city. White flashes behind the curtains. We could hear neighbours wake up. Strange sounds in the night.

This all happened in the same night. War, music, dance, horror, life and death, friendship, love and hope. ■

Filthy  
Interview

## Abduction Phase Initia

Epidermal Veil talks human carnage and Reykjavík Deathfest

WORDS Francesca Stoppani  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

We are back with another Filthy Interview and believe me, this one is the filthiest. This time, I spoke with members of Epidermal Veil, who also organise the appropriately named Reykjavík Deathfest, happening September 29 to 30 at Gaukurinn. Our topics of conversation spanned from unintentional vegan propaganda to goofy Hawaiian shirts – as many so often do.

**E**pidermal Veil is Arnar 1.0 on bass, Arnar 2.0 on guitar, Stebbi on drums, Soggi on lead guitar and Ingó on vocals. The band's formation in late 2021 was quite spontaneous, as Stebbi recalls a drunken, almost-Christmas evening that led to their inception. Soggi chimes in, remembering how Stebbi messaged him on Facebook with a simple question: "Do you want to form a band?"

It was a decision that took them in another direction from their previous musical projects, particularly Devine Defilement. "I wanted to do

something not involving any of the Devine Defilement guys, which is pretty ironic," says Ingó. Ironic, as three of five members of Epidermal Veil are also in Devine Defilement. For reference, Devine Defilement is hands down the biggest death metal band in Iceland these days.

"I am sure most local bands say they are inspired by the grimness and darkness of Icelandic nature," comments Ingó. "But with Epidermal Veil we'd rather be somewhere sweaty and hot. It's our way to say 'fuck you all, with the all-black dress code and the dead-serious attitude. Just put on some goofy Hawaiian shirts and have fun, you assholes!'"

SPACE: THE FINAL FRONTIER

Epidermal Veil's concept is as unique as its name. It revolves around an alien force that abducts humans, taking their skin and turning them into cattle.

"I like Star Trek, and there is one episode where an alien takes the face of a beautiful woman. The name Epidermal Veil comes from that, although it was originally a demo title," explains Soggi. Ingó remarks: "Is there anything more death metal than skinning a person?"

The band is currently working on a full-length album, with Soggi, Stebbi and Ingó penning the lyrics and developing the storyline. "We are basically writing vegan propaganda," laughs Stebbi, emphasising the theme of cruelty and the substitution of humans for animals to highlight the horror. A fun fact about the whole skinning and domestication process is that, in their storyline, only men are targeted.

When asked to distinguish Epidermal Veil from Devine Defilement,

Soggi explains that while the latter leans towards groove and heavy slams, Epidermal Veil is more technical and melodic. Stebbi adds, "It's like [Swedish death-metal band] At The Gates with blast beats," all about speed and crescendos.

"FROM DEATH COMES AWESOME DEATH METAL"

The Reykjavík Deathfest, founded in 2016 by Ingó, is a slamming celebration of death metal. He mentions that this idea initially started at the Norðanpaunk festival when he and co-conspirator Aðalsteinn from Auðn decided that there was not enough death metal around at that time. Over the years, it has developed into an event for both Icelandic and international bands. Ingó and the other organisers seem to have a clear mission, and as he takes a sip of his beer he exclaims: "More death metal in Iceland, now!"

Choosing the festival's lineup is a collaborative process. The organisers meet regularly to discuss bands, practice and enjoy some drinks. "They have been working so hard, having so many meetings. They were preparing before preparing," comments Unnur from Svartþoka who tagged along to Epidermal Veil's chat with the Grapevine, just to hang out. Stebbi emphasises that the selection process prioritises talent over personal taste. They receive numerous submissions and aim to provide an opportunity for international bands. Some are even willing to perform for close to no compensation, in order to come experience Iceland. This inclusivity of international bands is reflected in their commitment to connecting emerging Icelandic bands with big names from the global death metal scene.

As for the Icelandic death metal



# ted

scene, it's thriving with new bands like False Majesty and Epidermal Veil breathing fresh life into the genre. Stebbi notes that the nature of death metal is cyclical, with bands evolving and emerging. "When a death band dies, another one is born." Ingó aptly summarises: "From death comes awesome death metal. The scene is changing, and gate-keeping is a thing of the past."

#### TWO STRIKES AND YOU'RE OUT

There are ambitious plans for the future of the Deathfest, including two editions of the festival each year, following the model of some other international festivals. According to Stebbi, "It's going to be insane, with one big event in the fall and one in the spring. Along with all the warm-up shows in between, of course." They are even looking into involving other Scandinavian organisers,

fostering the Nordic death metal network. "We are going to Oslo to a warm-up event for the Oslo Deathfest. We are looking forward to collaborating with other death festival organisers," says Ingó.

Epidermal Veil performs alongside Icelandic and international acts. Ones to watch are locals Duft and Kookaveen, as well as Ruun (NO), Mulciber (US), and Spawned from Hate (UK). Additionally, festival tickets for next year will go on sale on September 30, so be sure to grab your tickets early! As Stebbi puts it, "See you in the pit, and remember: two strikes and you're out!" ■

Rendezvous at Gaukurinn on 29-30 September for this year's Deathfest, it's gonna be a slamming good time, where Epidermal Veil will turn us all (or almost) into cattle. Follow @epidermalveil on social media and stay up to date with future abductions.



Track By Track

## The Perfect Night Out

Smells And Sounds Make Up Fischersund's *Sounds Of Summer*

**WORDS** Kjartan Holm & Sindri Már Sigfússon  
**IMAGE** Supplied

A soundtrack to a night out is the concept behind Sindri Már Sigfússon and Kjartan Holm's recent album *Sounds of Summer*. Produced in collaboration with perfumery Fischersund, who manufactured a scent in tangent with the album, the soundtrack evokes the dreamy feeling of a typical night out during the Icelandic summer. Sindri and Kjartan told us all about their latest offering.

#### LEITANDI AUGU

The beat in this song is mainly made with a sample of a zippo lighter and field recordings from Venice Beach. I found some driftwood that I used to beat up some rocks with and you can hear the waves in the background. The vocals are samples from old songs of mine and a recording I did with Inga and Lilja for a song they were working on circa 2011 that was never released. — Sindri

#### I FEEL SO ALIVE

This was the first song I did out of old stems from Sindri. I think Loreen had just won Eurovision for the

second time and I wanted to make a very low-budget version of a Loreen/Eurovision song. Just fun og ekkert vesen. — Kjartan

#### MINNISLEYSI

This song is centered around the vocal sample and the kalimba riff and just seeing how long I could make different variations on it without it becoming repetitive. The vocals are from an old unreleased song of mine. — Sindri

#### BREATHE

I wanted to try to make a very simple and tribal song that I imagined being played very late at some huge warehouse rave. If someone could play this at some late-night rave and send me a video of it, I could watch it in the morning when I wake up. — Sindri

#### LJÓSIN KVEIKT

Originally this was a cue in a film I was working on. Then somehow it just turned into a laid-back electro song. There was something about the overall mood that just felt more techno-y rather than yet another sad piano cue for a film. — Kjartan

#### RINGULREIÐ

Ringulreið (as the name suggests) is just utter chaos. It had one goal of including all the singers in the Fischer family (Sindri, Jónsi, Lilja, Inga and Rósa). I started by sampling them from old recordings, jammed for 15 minutes and then recorded a bunch of modular synths over it.

This was supposed to be a 15-minute long opus but I was forced to cut it down to 5 minutes. — Kjartan

#### OFBIRTA

Like "Ljósinn kveikt," this was a cue for a film. I liked the repetitive 5/4 motif which was originally composed for strings. If I recall correctly this was a really dramatic and epic moment in the film and worked very well. Then for some reason, I jokingly recorded the MIDI through my modular synths and showed it to my girlfriend who then took ownership of it and said it had to be on the album. So I had to write a new cue for that particular film. — Kjartan

#### VON

I made this in a hotel room in Tenerife. Probably the most unhinged song on the album. I think maybe I'd been drinking a bit of grappa with my dad before I made this. — Sindri

#### FUGLASÖNGUR Á LEIÐINNI HEIM

The story arc of the album is supposed to soundtrack a night out. This song was written with the idea in mind of people walking home from the bar with the sun still out and birds singing. — Sindri

#### MISSED CALL

Just a bunch of strings, field recordings and a Moog DFAM chaos. Sindri and I did a bunch of field recordings in the highlands a couple of years ago for a project and this is the result of that trip. — Kjartan ■

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Travel Feature

# A Rather Unsuccessful

Lessons learned on the first foraging trip of the year

WORDS Iryna Zubenko  
IMAGES Art Bicnick

Wild mushroom risotto, oyster mushroom tacos, chanterelle pie, porcini soup, stuffed portobello mushrooms... As the air turns more crisp and I spy a yellow leaf here and there, I know mushroom season has arrived. Whether you love them or hate them, you absolutely can't deny the thrill of foraging for free food in the wild – the closest a modern city dweller will ever be to a hunter-gatherer. Who needs a grocery store when nature offers its own treasures at your fingertips?

Inspired by posts from seemingly every member of the “Funga Islands - sveppir ætir eður ei” Facebook group and equipped with not one but two rattan baskets, a Swiss Army knife, a couple of books borrowed from the library the night before and two equally clueless colleagues, I decided it was time to go mushroom picking. For a dash of extra luck, I wore my mushroom socks.

I had foraged for mushrooms before. But the last time resulted in me getting bitten by a forest tick, ending up at an emergency room where three surgeons marvelled at the tick's size before removing it using a gigantic syringe. That was followed by a round of antibiotics and being tested for Lyme disease. That said, I did find one mushroom on that venture.

Still, the idea of foraging for mushrooms had long been romanticised in my mind. When I lived in Finland, you didn't have to go far to find my favourite chanterelles. I wouldn't even call it foraging; all you had to do was bend over and pick them up – the yellow carpet, scattered with the freshest produce. I remember going to work and picking blueberries during the day and chanterelles in the evening. On such days, dinner and dessert were sorted with ease – of course, I'd go for a mushroom pasta and blueberry pie.

## INTO THE FOREST

I wanted to recreate this experience in Iceland, but when you say “forest,” there aren't many options here. What's more, I wanted to visit a genuine forest, not just a park. Luckily, convincing my colleagues to take a Thursday afternoon off and head to Skorradalshreppur, south of Borgarfjörður, just an hour's drive from Reykjavik, wasn't difficult. Located on Lake Skorradalvatn, in a narrow valley between Hvalfjörður and Reykholtssalur, the area looks like it's been plucked from the landscapes of the Finnish or Swedish countryside – rows of neat cottages, a crystal-clear lake and, unusual for Iceland, a lush forest.

I dedicated multiple hours to trying to persuade local foragers to join us to quickly learn that the wild mushroom community is relatively closed, similar to the world of dumpster diving. If you know the locations of these precious fungi, you often don't want to share them with strangers, let alone a journalist.

The forest welcomes us with open arms and even those sceptical of the adventure succumb. We're happy just to be in the forest – the moss is as bouncy as I remember, the

any pre-existing conditions you may have. With no intention to bring this one home, we can't help but marvel at it for a while. How can nature create something so stunning and simultaneously harmful?

As we go deeper into the forest, I realise that bringing along Helgi Hallgrímsson's 600-page *Sveppabókin* might not have been the best idea. My basket doesn't drag me down because of the mushrooms I've collected; it's the weight of this book. Soon, I will learn that for more tech-savvy people, there are plenty of mushroom identification apps – think of them as similar to Shazam or Vivino, but for fungi. They will scan your find in just one click, providing you with those desired words: edible or poisonous.

## LOSERS MEET WINNERS

As two hours pass by, we're almost ready to give up. But just as we're walking towards the car, we run into a group of five women, and somehow, they look like they know what they're doing. “Have you been foraging?” I ask. “Yes, yes, yes,” the group answers almost in unison. “King mushrooms!” says one of them and opens the trunk of their car to boast what they've found – a whole basket of *Boletus edulis*, commonly known

**It doesn't take long before we find our first catch – a beautiful mushroom with a red, white-spotted cap.**

trees are far more appealing than the city's glass structures and the sky is my favourite colour: September blue.

It doesn't take long before we find our first catch – a beautiful mushroom with a red, white-spotted cap – a toadstool, known in professional circles as *Amanita muscaria* or ‘berserkjasveppur’ in Icelandic. We're no fools and are well aware that this one is dangerous. While it might not be deadly, it can certainly make you sick, and its effects are amplified by

as porcini. The Icelandic name is “kóngssveppur,” literally translating to “king mushroom,” so it's no wonder that's what the women called it. The group, originally from Thailand, has lived in Iceland for up to 30 years, and they often go on mushroom-picking trips together. They're already making plans for their mushroom stir-fry dinner and recommend that we go up the mountain.

And so we try, saying goodbye to the group of women and venturing deeper into the woods. We stay



# Fungi Foray

off the path and try to step into untouched areas, in the hope of at least something. And yet all we see are more *Amanita muscaria*, or toadstools (poisonous), *Musena pura*, or lilac bonnets (poisonous), *Russula delica*, or milk-white brittle-gills and *Russula chloroides*, or blue band brittlegills (only edible when young).

## ASK AN EXPERT

Looking for answers as to why we failed, I turn to a mycologist from the Icelandic Institute of Natural History. Guðríður Gyða Eyjólfsdóttir, PhD, joins me on the call from Akureyri. Along with her geologist friend Höskuldur Búi Jónsson, Guðríður manages the above-mentioned group of mushroom enthusiasts on Facebook. One of the things I'm most curious about is, of course, where to find porcini mushrooms and chanterelles.

"They are below the ground kind of things," Guðríður confidently answers about chanterelles. "They hide underneath the vegetation," she adds, confirming that they do grow in the Borgarfjörður area. However, expert foragers often prefer to keep the locations a secret. "When it comes to *Boletus edulis* and chanterelles, people get really secretive. Because the fungus is still there. It might be attached to a particular tree or a bush, so it means that it will still be there next year when you show up."

The Icelandic climate is too cold for many of the fungi that grow in other parts of Europe, but "there are still plenty of them," says Guðríður as she shows me the exact same *Sveppabókin* that lies on the desk next to me. She quickly dispels my belief that mushrooms can only be found in forests. "There are some mushrooms that grow in fields. They've always done that; they like to eat that way," she says. Unfertilised grasslands that have either been mowed or used as grazing pastures for cows or horses are often a home for these mushrooms.

Unlike the forest, rain seems necessary for a successful foraging catch.

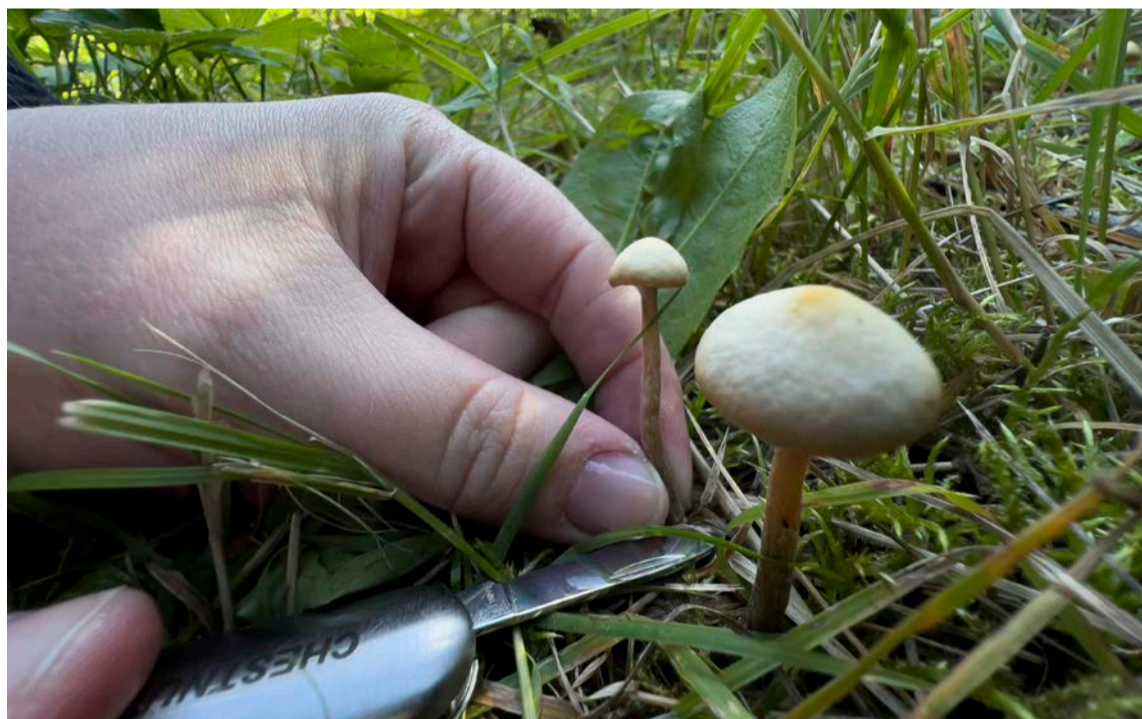
"Usually, they are triggered to start producing a new flush of fruiting bodies when it rains," Guðríður explains. "You have to give the fungus a little time – maybe three or four days. You don't want to pick the very small ones, and you don't want to pick the too old ones," she says. The latter are usually full of larvae and bacteria.

Once mushrooms are picked, it's better to process them on the same day – whether for drying, freezing, or eating. "Remember that fungus is a material that spoils rather quickly," Guðríður stresses. She adds that the baskets foragers usually use, despite their beauty, serve a practical purpose – they are firm and allow mushrooms to be evenly distributed on the bottom without turning into a mash.

Are there any highly poisonous mushrooms in Iceland? Guðríður nods affirmatively, "We have one called *Galerina marginata*, or "viðarkveif" in Icelandic. It's a little brown mushroom. Not pretty." As Guðríður says this, I google it to find that its name in English is a funeral bell or deadly marginata. It sounds scary but resembles many other mushrooms I saw in the forest. "It usually grows in wood chips, for example, in forest paths. This little brown mushroom contains the poison that kills people in about a week or so by blocking their cells from producing proteins and multiplying."

According to Guðríður, foraging for mushrooms wasn't a common practice in Iceland until the 1980s. Around that time, a Finnish woman gave lectures and taught locals how to pick fungi. (of course, it took a Finn for Icelanders to appreciate nature!) "It's a very good raw material for food," says Guðríður. "You just have to recognise the edible species."

If you're unsure about a particular mushroom, it's always better to consult an expert. "Funga Íslands - sveppir ætir eður ei" is one option. And no, Guðríður is usually not annoyed by questions from beginner foragers. I asked. ■



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Museum Visit

# Bombs And Guns And

Entering a WWII time capsule at the War & Peace Museum

WORDS Rex Beckett  
IMAGES Art Bicnick

already an avid collector of historical items, but began collecting in earnest for the museum 13 years ago.

“This house was totally empty when I came, so I thought maybe I should collect stuff that is related to whaling because it’s the whale fjord,” says Gaudi. “My grandmother was with me when we came and drove [around] the fjord. She was talking about the British occupation and she thought we had cheated the Danish when we got independence in 1944 during the war, because the Danish were [occupied by] Germany. Then I thought maybe I should tell that story.”

the building and work their way back to the front through twists and turns leading to present day.

“We talk more about peace than war and we mix daily things in between the war items to get a more cozy relaxed feel,” says Gaudi. “People that visit war museums all over the world say it’s a very nice place because you’re up close with the things that are on display. You can even touch the uniforms and stuff like that.”

A WALK THROUGH TIME

Some of the museum’s exhibition displays scenes of a barbershop, a grocery store, a child’s collection of toys and a dance hall, however all of these are still within the frame-

We should talk about these things and put it on display because people need to understand that peace is more important than war.

The story told in the museum is one that spans the arrival of British military forces in 1940 to the dissolution of the war in 1945, through a chronological maze-like journey of distinct scenarios. Upon arrival at the museum, one is recommended to start their visit in the far corner of

work and context of wartime. One can indeed get very personal with the display, even leafing through old soldiers’ journals, reading combat maps and sitting in the old furniture.

Gaudi’s experience in set design has made it so that the details really

The recent resumption of fin whale hunting has drawn attention onto Hvalfjörður, the fjord near Reykjavik where the whaling station is located. The fjord is not, however, only known for this industry, but also for its role in Iceland’s involvement in World War II. In a former community centre on the north shore of the fjord, the War & Peace Museum commemorates this chapter of Iceland’s history in a sort of cinematic time capsule.

Owner and curator Guðjón Sigurdsson (Gaudi Litli) moved to Hvalfjörður in 2010 after the country’s economic collapse and began renting the building that now houses his museum. Having worked in the film industry for 35 years as a set dresser and props person, he was



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## Stuff

stand out. A harmonium plays every ten minutes with a loop of old Icelandic songs he pre-recorded, an old army Jeep in the main hall starts its engine (in sound only) every fifteen minutes, and the main hall has a jukebox continuously playing old big-band standards. One can also listen to original recordings of radio communications through military headsets from the era.

Uncomfortable and questionable. However, the considerable amount of Nazi memorabilia and propaganda – despite German forces never arriving in Iceland – versus the negligible memorial to the Holocaust is slightly jarring. A prop of an emaciated corpse – a remnant of a Hollywood production, says Gaudi – in a coffin with its face covered by a shroud lies beneath a small plaque noting the death toll of the genocide.

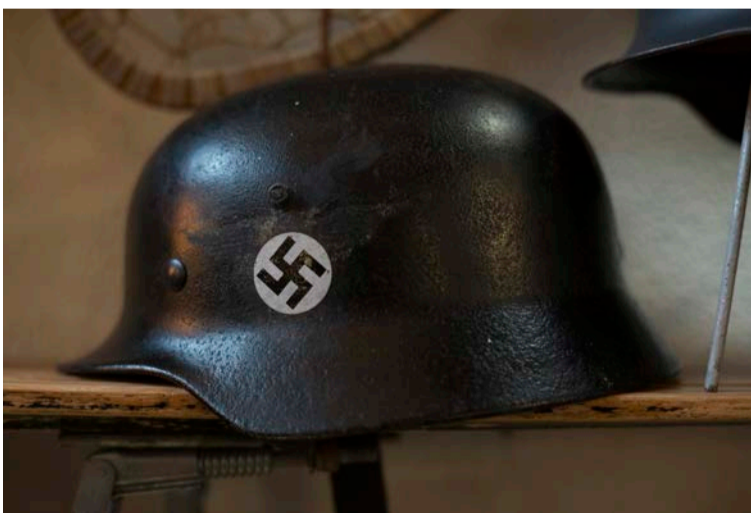
“I have been asking older Germans if it would be difficult for them to see all that and they say no,” says Gaudi in regards to these artefacts. “The younger generation totally understand that we should talk about these things. Jewish visitors particularly react to that, because it is a very different representation from a lot of displays that they’ve seen.”

### THE IMPORTANCE OF PEACE

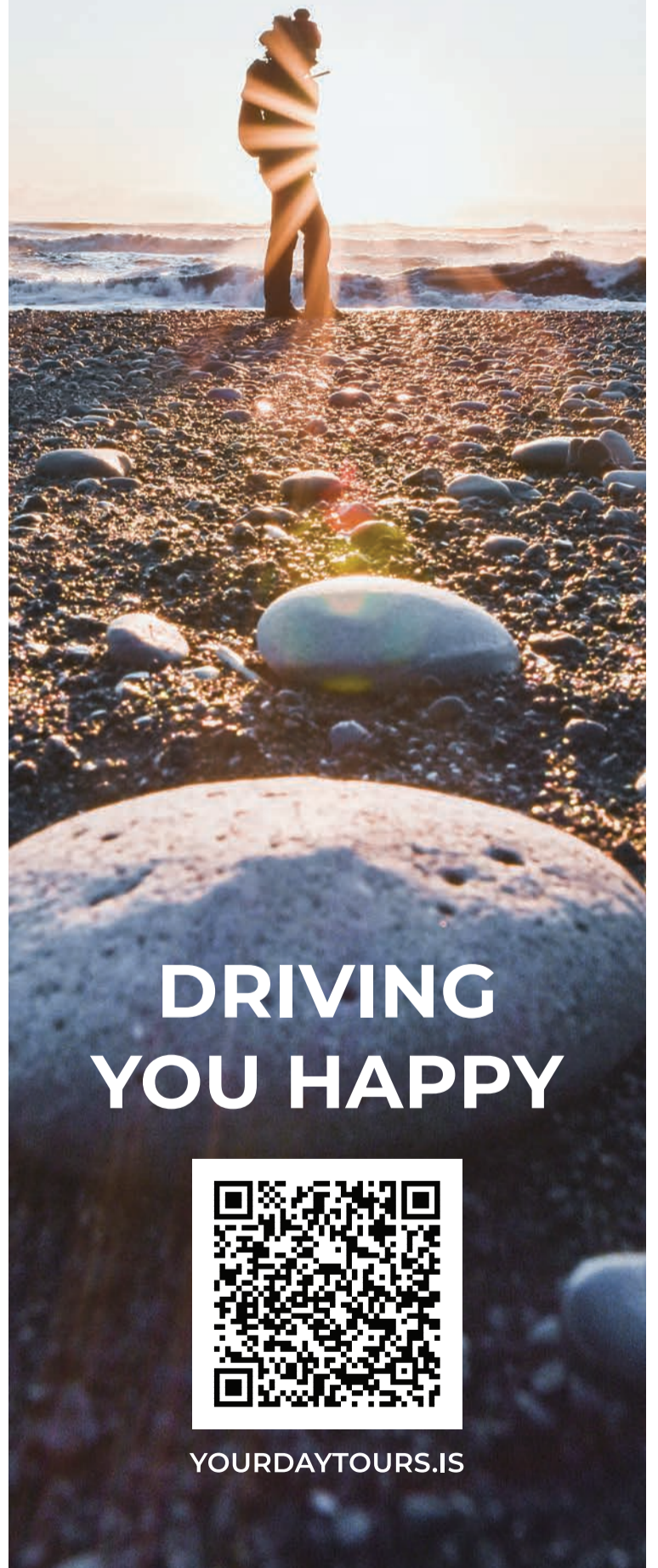
The main messaging for peace exists on the exterior of the building, in the art that adorns the outside walls, and a statue named Hope for Peace that was gifted by a Russian artist with some connection to the military activity in Hvalfjörður. While Gaudi’s own feelings about war and military presence in Iceland seem somewhat mixed, he does hope for peace.

“I’m just here to tell the story of the Second World War,” he says. “We should talk about these things and put it on display because people need to understand that peace is more important than war. No one is gaining of war. Just the guys that are selling bombs and guns and stuff.” ■

The War & Peace Museum is currently closed for the winter, but open for groups of five or more on demand. Visit [warandpeace.is](http://warandpeace.is) for more information.



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Food Feature

# Globetrotting Menus

Icelandic nonchalance and delicious chaos ensues at this weekly-menu dr

WORDS Shruthi Basappa  
IMAGE Aðalsteinn R. Benediktsson

chefs, Númi Porkell Thomasson, Atli Ottesen and Aðalsteinn Ragnar Benediktsson, in the space that used to be Dill. The interiors are the only remnant of its hallowed past. With a fitting name like Hosiló – in Icelandic it means a small room, generally entered from another room, for example, a kitchen – the barn-like space is pretty much run like a home kitchen, too. Shying away from a mainstay menu, Hosiló offers a weekly menu instead, a rotation of three appetizers, mains and desserts.

In the three years they've been open, Hosiló has charmed a loyal clientele; they were even Best

## GLOBETROTTING MENUS

In an interview when they first opened, the owners prided themselves on their "fresh produce and good, honest food," a commitment I am happy to report still shines through. If you are one of those who seek comfort in predictability, Hosiló may not be for you. But if you were to approach it with the knowledge that the weekly rotational menu has something for vegans, vegetarian and carnivores, and will showcase flavours and dishes from around the world, then rest assured that you'd be rewarded with big, bold plates that don't quite reveal that they've only been at this a week.

It is often said that adversity breeds creativity. Creative arcs across the globe showed what research has also borne to be true – difficult times call for inventive solutions that would otherwise have been considered preposterous. For the restaurant industry it meant testing formats like home delivery of fine dining kits going beyond discounted fare. For some others, it meant an opportunity to experiment with the premise of restaurants and restaurant menus.

Enter Hosiló. In true "make the most of what you've got" fashion, the pandemic venture saw the coming together of three friends and

In the three years they've been open, Hosiló has charmed a loyal clientele.

Goddamn Restaurant runner's up in the Grapevine's Best of Reykjavik 2022. Despite their notoriety with their reservations (hard to reach via phone, unresponsive to messages, not on any online booking platform) and (sometimes) service, Hosiló continues to garner attention for their food.

Every Thursday, this eccentric-adjacent restaurant shares a menu on their Instagram page, a carousel of their new plates, then printed menu outtakes. So for those who'd like advance notice, this is perhaps a feeble nod to that. Some of my favourite meals at Hosiló have



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## At Hosiló

iven restaurant

been their lunches. Ideal for midday escapades, the regularly vegetable-forward menu is often light, and given the weekly rotation, a fun way to embrace surprises. One day, they might take you to Italy or Denmark, on another, they render a sublime Icelandic dish in a contemporary cloak. Clever details, like massaging ribboned celeriac with saffron, hint at a maturity I'd like to see more of.

It is often the case however, that landing there with no inkling of what the week brings is precisely when you end up with fireworks. At a recent lunch, emboldened by my untested theory that the kitchen was so engrossed in perfecting dishes

red, white and sparkling are available for wine lovers, at a fairly decent price of 1.700 ISK per glass. Bottles for the table are, too, but you'd have to attract the attention of the waiters to see if one of them would deign to walk you through what's available.

### ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Despite the changing menu, chances are you will encounter some variation on a dish you know. While Reykjavik suffers from an overtly bad case of the "Asian" syndrome (naming any and every dish with the prefix Asian whether the dish uses ginger, or something as "exotic" as soy sauce), Hosiló regularly displays a

At these price points and their intention to serve high quality comfort food, the absence of arborio rice seemingly cooked in water and watered down saffron (this from saffron loving Hosiló!) is avoidable. Like the waiter sagely surmised, when I pointed this out to them, "rice isn't just rice," is an observation they'd take up I hope.

Hosiló is most successful when they riff on dishes while preserving the spirit of the original. Like the lovely paratha-like flatbread they once served with a hearty soup. Or their many Southeast Asian inspired plates. Less successful are attempts when they try to overcomplicate dishes, like the Agnolotti all'agnelo (2.900 ISK), whose pulled lamb filling recalled gyoza with its unnecessary pan frying and not the silky pasta it is meant to be. A shame really, as one could see how beautifully the pasta was rolled and shaped.

### ICELANDIC NONCHALANCE

Hosiló embodies Icelandic nonchalance in everything but their food. Yet the ritual of dining is seldom anchored by food alone. Very much an owner-driven enterprise, there is a big sense of "character" to being here.

The flipside of personality-driven service is that it runs the risk of alienating potential customers. On perfect evenings, you are greeted warmly, seated almost instantly (it is a small restaurant) and the courses arrive in well paced succession. On others, however, there is an inexcusable amount of arm flapping to draw attention to your table, or dishes arrive excruciatingly slow. What I find indefensible is the condescension that seems to be baked into their service ethos, an ingratiating tone that seems to scoff at how little you know of them, or their format. Arresting this would see me return there more often, a sentiment I have heard echoed from those around me.

The phone lines and messages might be left unanswered, but the food delivers big, bold punches of flavour at Hosiló. ■

It is often the case however, that landing there with no inkling of what the week brings is precisely when you end up with fireworks.

they forgot to post on IG, a girlfriend and I were treated to a lunch so delicious, we have been talking about it since. Simply called "Noodle soup," what we received was a deep dish with islands of thin rice vermicelli rising out of a pool of zippy fish sauce slicked broth that was tangy and earthy. Charred wheels of leeks and wedges of fresh tomatoes lend heft, while barely seared tiger shrimp hid all the above underneath.

You might get lucky with the Skagen toast, as it regularly makes an appearance if you keep your eyes peeled for it. There may be some element of the toast that might appear refashioned, as a paprika dusted devilled egg, with carelessly scattered hand-peeled shrimp. Lately I have noticed a resurgence of Indian dishes on their menu, but I have to admit being too shy to try it.

Hosiló's cocktails are boozy, perfect for folk like me, who often complain about the lack of alcohol in the (frankly) overpriced drinks elsewhere – your concerns are unfounded here. Like the food, the beverage menu leans towards the compact. House

maturity in this regard. A few weeks ago they had a faux pho, and leaving aside the word play, it instantly tells you what to expect. These are the occasions where dining here makes you feel content and comfortable all around.

But the pitfalls of a changing menu is also that the kitchen perhaps never has time to perfect any one dish. Which can be an exhilarating experience when they get it right or a comedy of errors when they don't. Which would be funnier if we also weren't paying steep Reykjavik prices.

At dinner last week I paid 7.900 ISK for a saffron risotto that would have led Milanese Italians to riot en masse if they'd been served the mushy slop I was. As if the chefs were aware of this ghastly grjóna-graut masquerading as risotto, the feeble attempt to mask it with role-model cooking of assorted seafood (meaty scallops, grilled langoustine, seared shrimp) only heightened the poor handling of the risotto (the pop and bite of the trout eggs adding further insult to injury).



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# Islanders Torbjörn's Sweet Affair

A day out with a local beekeeper

WORDS Iryna Zubenko  
IMAGES Art Bicnick

"Hold your ear next to the beehive," says Torbjörn Andersen as we arrive at his beeyard, hidden behind the trees just outside the Skaftholt farm in south Iceland. "You can hear them buzzing. It tells me they're okay." Unlike me, Torbjörn is not afraid of the bees – he knows how to soothe them, senses when they're aggressive and can spot the queen bee immediately. Despite devoting his professional career to medicine and healthcare, it's here at the hives that he feels most at home. "In my next life, I'll be a dairy farmer," he jokes and invites us for an impromptu honey tasting.

keeper? He has a swarm for sale." I was always interested in ants and insects, so, of course, I jumped at the opportunity. The beekeeper gave me a book on beekeeping in Norway – the so-called "beekeeper's Bible" – to study, and I've read it cover to cover many times. Ever since bees have been a part of my life.

When you are a teenager, most guys start running after girls, but I started beekeeping instead. I guess I was a very shy teenager. The bees I had in Norway were so ferocious that I got stung so much I developed an allergy to bee venom. But I couldn't give up beekeeping, so I went through five years of a so-called desensitisation treatment.

#### ICELANDIC LIQUID GOLD

Iceland is the last country on Earth that honeybees colonised. The climate here is on the verge of what is possible for them. I used to say that it's as close to being impossible as you can imagine without being impossible.

If you're a beekeeper in Norway, you are a small fish in a big pond. But here in Iceland, you all of a sudden, are a big fish in the small pond – there are maybe 100 active beekeepers.

I have 12 colonies of bees, with about 40,000 bees in each colony. I have been trying to increase the numbers, but it's incredibly challenging because of the weather.

## Iceland is the last country on Earth that honeybees colonised.

We are not allowed to import bees unless they have certification from a veterinarian confirming that they are disease-free. The bees in the Åland Islands in Finland don't have diseases, unlike those in the rest of Europe and the Americas, so that's one option. But I don't want to buy colonies from Åland; I want to be sustainable. That's the fun part! I want to breed

queens and bees from the colonies that have survived the winters so that in a few generations, they'll quickly adapt to new situations.

The fact that we don't have to deal with diseases, such as the Varroa mite, certainly makes beekeeping here much easier. The Varroa mite lives on the bees and sucks their blood out, weakening their bodies and making them more susceptible

to other viral infections and diseases. It usually kills a colony over a few years if it's not treated with medication. One of the good things about our bees is that we don't need to treat them with any kind of medicine. All the medicine you use in beekeeping can end up in the honey. It's safe to say Icelandic honey is very clean from pollutants and drugs.

#### BEE BASICS

What surprises you when you start beekeeping here is the variety of vegetation in the heath. The pollinators need something in their radius that flowers throughout the summer, so there is no stop in nectar or pollen flow. In most places in Iceland, there are various flowers through the seasons – from the end of March until the end of September or even into October – willow, red and white clover, geranium, arctic thyme, angelica and dandelion, to name a few. Iceland has this kind of wilderness, but you don't notice it until you start looking into it and following what the bees are doing.

The queen bee is dedicated to her role from the moment she hatches. She needs to be fed with special care so that the larva will develop into a queen. Every bee colony has only one queen, and she's like the ovaries of this organism, producing all the female hormones that the organism needs. She can lay more than 1000 eggs in a day. That's a hell of a job to be a queen bee.

**W**hen I was 13-years old, my father came home one day and asked, "Would you like to visit a bee-

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The queen bee will live for two to three years, while a worker bee's lifespan is five to six weeks during the summer. At the end of the season, I insulate my polystyrene beehives with double bubble foil. The winter bees will stay inside the hive for about five months, clustering closely together, and they will live until May. Then, the queen will start laying eggs again, and the colony will begin producing new bees.

honey – you can use it for a sore throat, when you have a cold, to help you calm and relax for sleeping, and with herbal teas to enhance their effects.

When you have a sore throat, take half a spoon three times a day. It calms down the mucous membranes and helps with your cough. For me, honey is medicine. My regular use is half a teaspoon a day.

autumn, I take a few weekends off to pick wild blueberries. I need a full fridge of frozen blueberries to survive the winter, just like the bees need a full box of sugar. They would surely survive from their own honey if I didn't take any out. But we have a deal – they give me some honey, and in return, they get to live in this country. ■

Follow Torbjörn's beekeeping journey on Facebook: Beekeeping in Iceland.

## Time is relative when you're doing something you love.

On the first day of summer, in April, when the willow starts to bud, the bees are all awake and ready to work immediately. It's just beautiful.

### HONEY REMEDIES

Honey has been used throughout the ages as a medicine. It has antibacterial properties because of all the sugar concentration that kills the bacteria – I have sometimes used it on patients for wound infections, for example. But there are other vitamins and minerals in

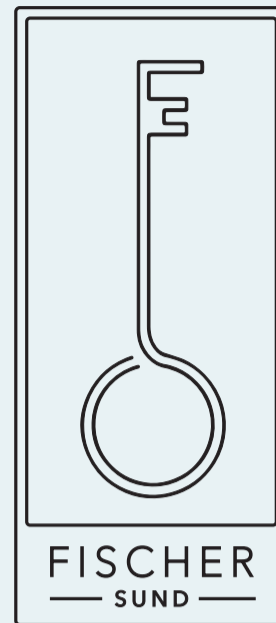
I love taking it with my yoghurt in the morning.

This year, I extracted almost 90 litres of honey. I use a honey extractor, a centrifugal machine into which you place honey frames; it spins at a fast speed, and the honey comes out of the honeycombs. It's a lot of work, but time is relative when you're doing something you love.

### SWEET FEVER

Blueberry picking is another hobby that I take really seriously. Every

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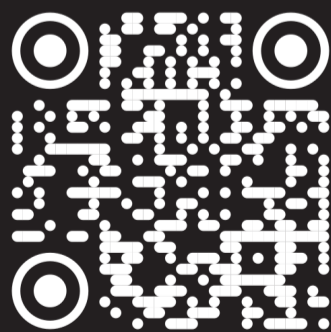
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## Musings At The Route Of The Problem

Uncovering the physics and intrigue of Reykjavík's transit system

WORDS Charlie Winters  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

despite my friend's and family's insistence that "this is a stupid idea" and despite the many strangers who warned me not to go down this path lest I face the consequences, I will get to the bottom of this. To the internet!

What the hell is a Borgarlínan? Many Icelanders have heard whispers within the upper echelons of society of a bus rapid transit system, or BRT. This proposed system would create sleek designated bus lanes, high-tech bus stops and perhaps even an eventually upgrade to \*gasp\* light rail. The plans, which have been floating around since 2015, employ a language that gives me relatable tech CEO vibes. Though the "seamless" integration and the "clean" design are appealing, I wonder wheth-

threw up once. The Strætó, which I illegally boarded with a child pass, took me 01:12:24 and I only threw up thrice. I decided not to walk as I wanted to keep the meatballs down this time. But this is an incredibly large difference in time. It was a discrepancy that I couldn't account for. In theory, neither method of transport should have been able to get there through the dogshit traffic, yet both reached the destination. It's impossible, but here it was. Time...

I believe I have an explanation and I am 100% convinced that the many physicists I've contacted would agree if only they'd stop ghosting me. You know in those sci-fi movies they take a piece of paper and slam it down, fold it, and then stab a pencil through it. It's like that but

### The buses travel through designated wormholes that make the travel time longer than the actual distance covered.

**T**ime doesn't seem to pass as you hold your phone to the scanner. You slam against the steps as the underpaid driver floors it before you can sit down. The bus has stopped eight times and you've already been aboard for 40 minutes - 40 more and you'll be halfway there. Is time passing slower? If this feels woefully familiar, I'm sorry, because it means you too have been subjected to the horrors of Strætó, Reykjavík's public transit system.

Long has Reykjavíkurborg tormented the people of the capital area with its horrendous buses. The city grew, the population grew, yet the infrastructure seems archaic at times. I believe that is by design. So, despite Strætó's false claims,

er it will truly give me a "feeling that something big has arrived." Well, I am not one to be an armchair transportation critic. If I want to judge this plan, I'll have to do my own tests.

I decided on a simple experiment. I would use a stopwatch while traveling between two set destinations. Once with a car, once with a bus, and once on foot. I decided to travel from The Grapevine offices to IKEA - a scientific choice as, 1. It is a large distance to cover 2. The path has multiple routes I can test. 3. I was craving meatballs.

In a car with a busted axle, it took me 00:25:37 to get there and I only

in reverse. The buses travel through designated wormholes that make the travel time longer than the actual distance covered. This is the truth Reykjavíkurborg does not want us to know! They've had bus-slowness technology for years!

How else could they even think of fitting a Borgarlínan in the streets of Reykjavík? How else could they maintain such bad service for so long? Why else would there be cars all over this tiny island? How else could they - What was that? They've come for me! Don't believe Strætó, don't believe Ráðhús or Dagur B. TRUST NO ONE. ■



Well, You  
Asked

# Out Of This World

The Grapevine answers your most pressing questions

WORDS Catherine Magnúsdóttir  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

and magical as possible. What else are we going to build our reputation on?

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IS THE HOKEY POKEY REALLY WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT?

I think you're missing some essential parts here about shaking it all about and turning yourself around, but if you can build your own philosophy on what seemingly originated as a novelty British folk song and ended up as a chart hit in the 80s (twice!), then by all means, get your friends and all their limbs in a circle and go nuts. The most important part is that you do the Hokey Pokey *together*.

Given that the prices are quite astronomical for, well, everything and the sun might be a white dwarf by the time they come down, you may as well invest your star bucks into new business ventures out of this world even if they seem a little nebulous at first. If you need space, don't settle for a constellation price! Stardust off your snazzy spacesuit and jet off into the sky before the realtors and landlords set their laser focus on the other moons and planets! You might have to vacuum when you get there, but this is your chance to create some more atmosphere among the stars, crater to your own needs and really shine! ■

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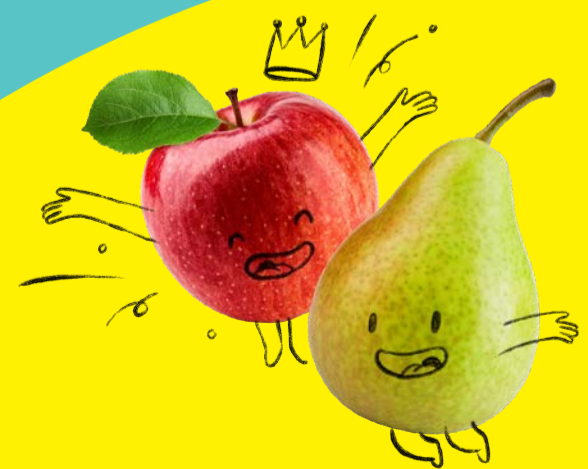
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Last Look IMAGE Art Bicnick

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## Potent Quotables

I'm just so happy that young people are writing poetry in their mother tongue

According to the specialists, Icelandic poetry is alive and kicking. Become an expert on Eddic prose on page 6

I remember when I was in elementary school, people would ask me, "Where are you from?" That was like an immediate way of just feeling like an outsider.

Artist Laufey Lín Jónsdóttir talks growing up in Iceland and her swift ascent to fame on pages 12-14

I bought this little black book and every day if I remembered my dream, I would write it down.

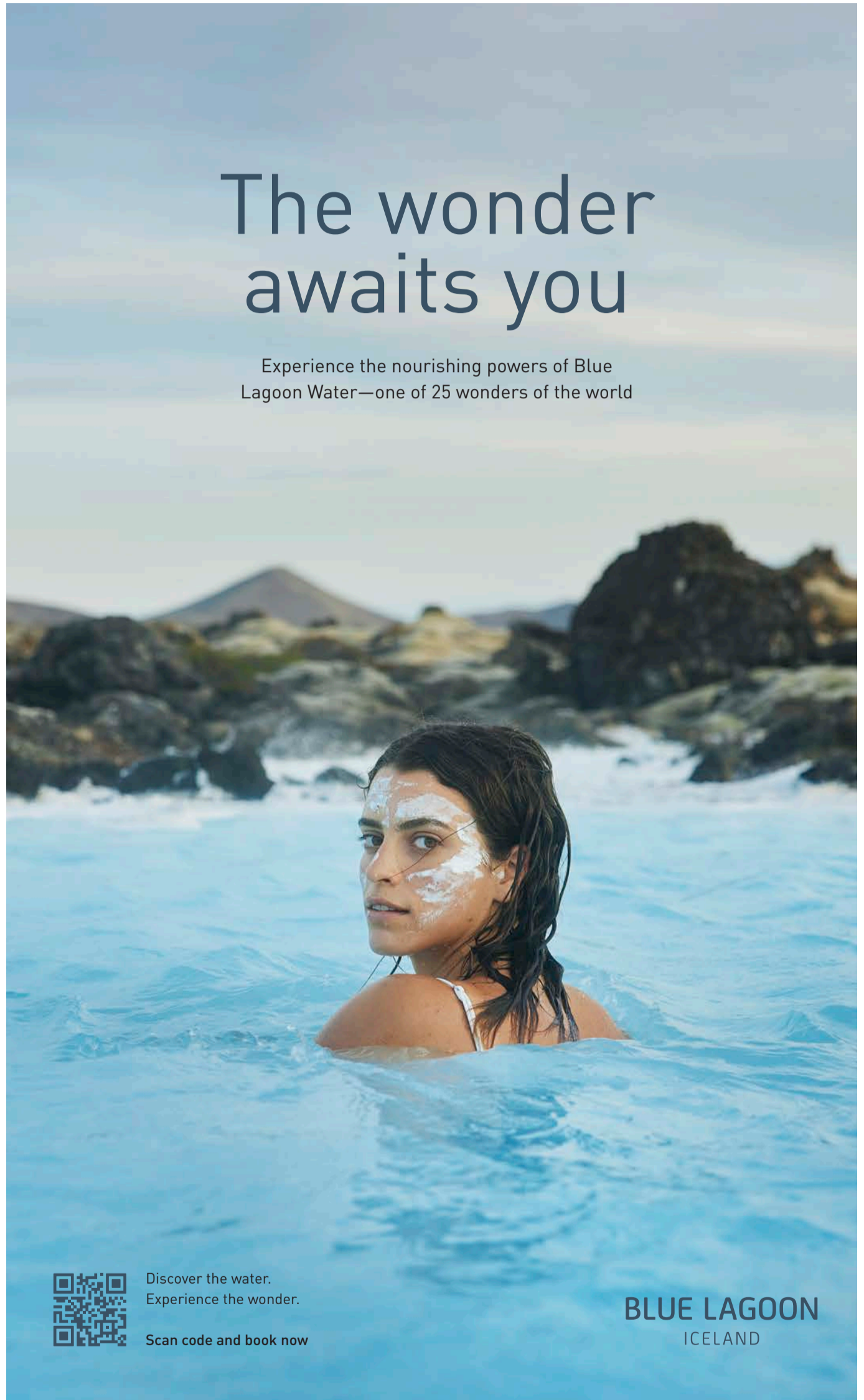
Dive into MSEA's latest record *Our Daily Apocalypse Walk*, which she wrote with oneiric inspiration on pages 24-25

Iceland is the last country on Earth that honeybees colonised. The climate here is on the verge of what is possible for them.

Beekeeper Torbjörn Andersen discusses his fascination with bees and reveals some of their secrets in this issue's *Islanders* on page 36

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