

The Reykjavík Grapevine



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Volume 20

Issue 17 2023

Best before December 1

Next Stop: Iceland Airwaves

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On the Cover

Twenty years after Iceland Airwaves began in an old airplane hangar, the festival is the biggest event on Iceland's cultural calendar, showcasing local and international talents over one raucous long weekend. For our cover feature, Jóhannes Bjarkason caught up with four acts making their Airwaves debut this year. Oh, and if you're interested in owning a piece of music history, the 1994 Ford Bronco featured on the cover is for sale

for a cool 2.950.000 ISK at Höfðabílar. Call 577 4747 for details.

PHOTO BY:
Axel Sigurðarson



Editorial Party Time, Excellent?

WORDS Catharine Fulton,
Editor in Chief

Iceland Airwaves has erected its big top in town once again for a long weekend of venue-hopping, musical discoveries and parties galore. In fact, if you're reading this magazine freshly baked and hot off the printing press, you're literally in the thick of Airwaves madness right now! How does it feel, the party power coursing through your veins?

We in Grapevine HQ were admittedly of two minds about the festival this year.

We were split between the older cohort who popped into a few Airwaves gigs last year and were discouraged to see a whole lot of people their own age (gasp! middle aged!) Had Airwaves gone stale? Is it over the hill?

The doubters were balanced out by the rest of our admittedly pocket-sized crew, who was brimming with excitement for the weekend and all the musicians they would be checking out. "It's the biggest festival in Reykjavík!" they rightly exclaimed with incredulity at the middle-aged nay-sayers among them.

Hoping to woo the crowds during the big event are a number of local acts playing Airwaves for the first time. Jóhannes Bjarkason sat down with a few of them to discuss their music and their stress levels as their moments in the spotlight approached. Get to know Kári, Fókus, Celebs and Kónguló in our cover feature on Pages 12-14.

Keeping the Airwaves theme running through the issue, we also spoke with performer musician KUSK about her day job (page 9) and profiled Björk's sound engineer (page 36). There's also a look at the wild world of music royalties (page 8) and a think piece on the connection between Icelandic music and nature (page 26).

Yep, this issue has it all – just like Iceland Airwaves ... or not, if the haters turn out to be right. What's your verdict? ■

Contributors



CATHERINE
MAGNÚSDÓTTIR

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



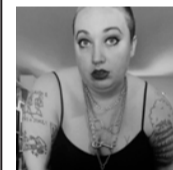
JÓHANNES BJARKI
BJARKASON

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



IRYNA ZUBENKO

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



REX BECKETT

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



SHRUTHI BASAPPA

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

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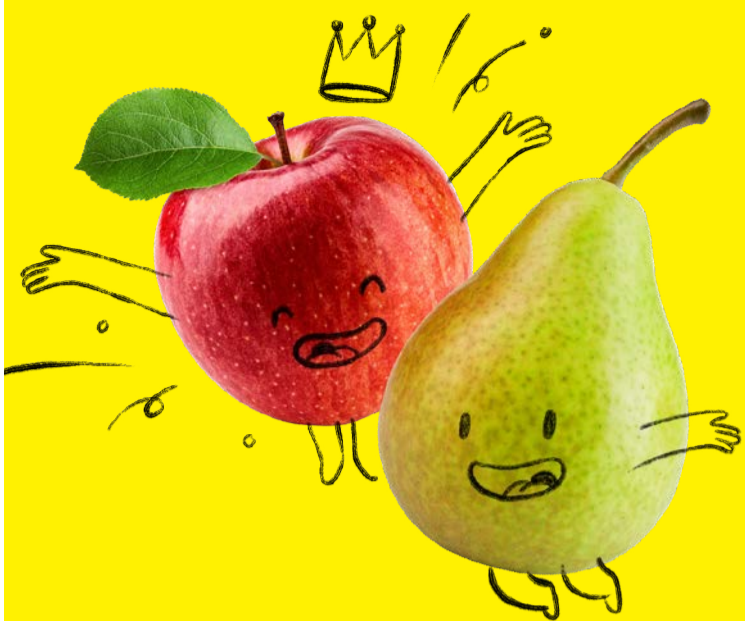
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What The News!? Things Are Heating Up Around The Blue Lagoon

That and other happenings making the headlines in recent weeks

WORDS The Reykjavik Grapevine
IMAGE Art Bicnick

IT'S GETTING HOT IN HERE

As earthquakes continue to rock the Reykjanes peninsula, new GPS data and satellite readings confirm that magma is collecting west of Þorbjörn at a depth of three to four kilometres.

According to the Icelandic Met Office, there are clear signs of ground uplift centred around the Svartsengi power plant near the Blue Lagoon. The Civil Defense has declared a level of uncertainty due to the earthquake swarm – more than 10,000 quakes have been recorded in the area since October 25.

In addition to throwing a major wrench into the relaxation of would-be visitors to the Blue Lagoon, an eruption in the area where magma is accumulating could cause disruptions to the Reykjanes peninsula at large. In addition to providing that silica-rich water in the Blue Lagoon,

the Svartsengi power plant provides hot water and electricity to much of the peninsula, including the town of Grindavík and Keflavík, where the international airport is located.

HS Orka CEO Tómas Már Sigurðsson told MBL.is that while power can continue to be generated by the Reykjanesvirkjun power plant further to the west, the Reykjanes peninsula would be left without hot water and heat. There is no backup plan in place.

As the Grapevine reported in June when there was last an eruption in the Fagradalsfjall region, the peninsula is in a period of volcanic activity that could last hundreds of years. Eruptions occurred in 2021, 2022 and 2023 in Fagradalsfjall.

GPS data has been indicating that the entirety of the Reykjanes peninsula has been inflating since April 2023, not only the area associated with the Fagradalsfjall volcanic system. This could indicate that the entire peninsula is actually a singular system, fed by a single magma storage chamber – one large volcano that is now in an eruptive cycle. Exciting!

WOMEN UNITE!

It was a historic day in Iceland on October 24, when women and non-binary folks participated in the Kvinnafri, or Women's Strike. The strike was first organised in 1975, when about 90% of working wom-

en left their workplaces and homes to march on Arnarhöll in protest of their unpaid labour.

This year's strike was the seventh such happening, but the first full-day event since the 1975. Not only were women and non-binary persons encouraged to stop paid work – but unpaid work as well, focusing on the domestic labour women are responsible for.

Tens of thousands of people marched on Arnarhöll in Reykjavík, with hundreds participating in events in other towns throughout the country.

While Iceland is oft-cited as a bastion of gender equality, the gender wage gap sits around 10.2% across all industries, with the biggest discrepancy – a whopping 29% – being in the banking and financial services sector.

WILL THE GOAT MAKE IT TO CHRISTMAS?

IKEA's beloved Christmas goat has been erected once more, taunting Iceland's amateur arsonists with its highly flammable construction.

The goat has long been a special target for arsonists and there was a period when people put significant efforts into setting it on fire, finding success on three occasions – most recently in 2016. The beast has been undisturbed and heavily guarded ever since. ■



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Ask An Expert

What Makes Traditional Icelandic Music?

We asked a folk musician for answers

WORDS Catherine Magnúsdóttir
IMAGE Art Bicnick

With Iceland Airwaves in full swing and musicians in Iceland coming to a fro to bang out some tunes, it is nice to take a moment to contemplate and appreciate the role music has long played on this island. But what do Iceland's musical roots look like? Or rather, sound like? What makes Icelandic music traditional? For more insight on the subject we spoke to Bára Grímsdóttir, composer, folk musician, music teacher and chairwoman of the Íðunn Poets Association.

“I’ve always had this folk music background, growing up with the rímur style of music,” Bára begins. “Rímur are these long ballads, one story that can fill an entire book – the rímur based on Njáll Saga for instance. The longest one, “Rímur af Olgeiri Danska” (Rímur of Olgeir the Dane) is 6,000 verses. They are divided into chapters, which each have their own metres, and people used to sing these.”

While the rímur texts were written down eventually, the tunes weren't, leading to some variations between singer. “Over time, melodies do change as they are passed along via oral tradition, it will always change a little bit. You might not remember exactly how your mother or grandmother sang it, but it was kept in the families, even if people ended up

singing different melodies in different areas, changing it and making it their own but keeping the core.” Though traditionally, the last tone in particular would be carried for a long time.

Bára explains there is a very strong history of song in Iceland, with stories and descriptions of, for example, one person in the baðstofa (living room) of an old turf house taking on the role of the singer. They wouldn't necessarily sing long rímur ballads, but rather simpler rhymes and melodies that don't necessarily require much vocal range – though they would require stamina. After all, the singer would have to carry those tunes for a while and over all the household noise of people working.

Bára also talks about the Icelandic tvísöngur, a specific style of singing that incorporates two voices singing in parallel fifths, creating a unique polyphonic sound of blending and crossing over voices. Quite a few tvísöngur melodies started out as church music, but secular texts later replaced the original religious verses.

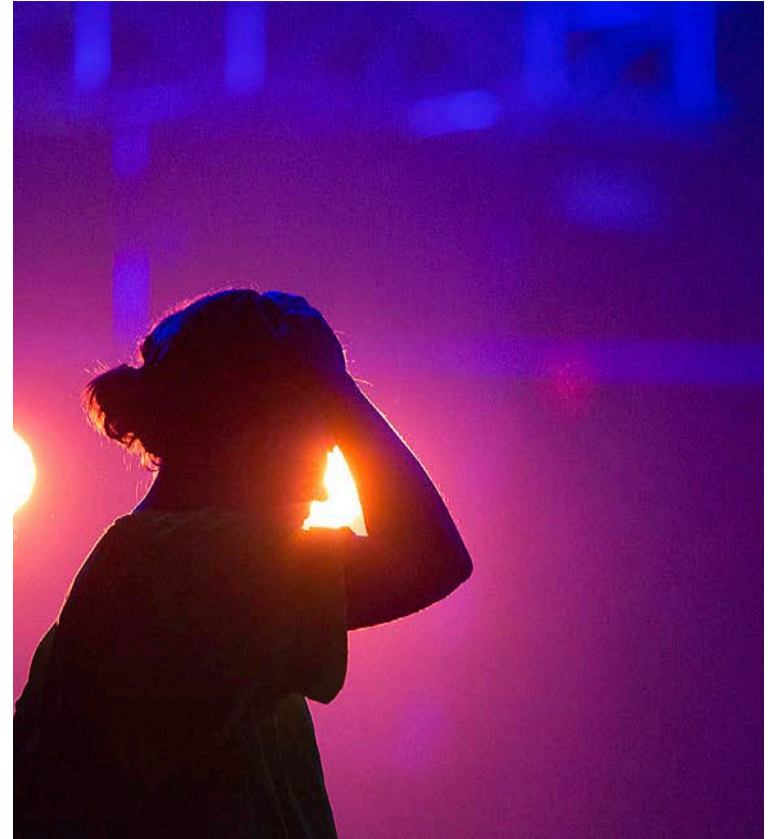
“As a composer and when performing, I use things that would connect to Icelandic folk music,” Bára says, referring not only to song elements but also traditional instruments like the Icelandic fiddle and the langspil, which looks like a simple oblong box with a few strings, holes and tuning pegs, at which point her co-performer and life partner Chris Foster chimes in:

“Langspil belongs to a family of instruments called the fretted zither fiddles,” he explains. “They all share this characteristic of having one or two melody strings with frets under and then two or three drones. There are very close relatives you find particularly in northern Germany, southern Sweden, Denmark, northern Europe generally and then they got carried across with settlers to the United States and then that evolved into the Appalachian Mountain dulcimer – which is kind of an iconic instrument in Appalachia.”

“The first description of langspil is in a manuscript from 1705,” Bára says. “There are verses about people travelling with them, stories of travellers performing rímur for food and shelter. It was quite popular in the 18th and 19th century, but in the 19th century other instruments gradually came into the country like organs, guitars, etc.”

An important record of the history of Icelandic folk music is the collection compiled by the priest and composer Bjarni Þorsteinsson in the early 20th century. This collection includes all kinds of music, from lullabies to game songs to drinking songs, dance ballads, church music and songs about folk characters like Gryla.

“The church wasn't a big fan of rímur because it was too crude so they asked poets to write holy rímur and stories from the bible,” Bára adds. “Some just did both.” ■



Do Shit

Prepare For Iceland Airwaves 2024

The Útlendingur's ongoing guide to getting shit done

WORDS Catharine Fulton
IMAGE Art Bicnick

I know what you're thinking. “Airwaves 2024!?” That's a whole year away!” And you're correct. But trust me, for I am about to impart two alternative pieces of information to ensure you get the absolute most out of next year's festival.

There are two ways to go about preparing for Iceland Airwaves. Firstly, you could start right now by religiously following the Grapevine's music pages, reading our weekly new music roundup every Friday and subscribing to our 66 Degrees of Sound podcast to stay unequivocally in-the-know about the newest releases and latest development in the local music scene. That way, when Airwaves rolls around next year, you'll be intimately familiar with every local act on the lineup. Hell,

you'll be able to sing along to their entire set list.

Or there's the second option: tune out. Cancel your Spotify account, set fire to every issue of the Grapevine you come across lest your eyes inadvertently rest upon some titillating new music news and wear earplugs absolutely everywhere you go. Better yet, just don't go anywhere where music might be playing. That way, when Airwaves 2024 is upon us, it'll be one surprise after another for you. So many previously unheard of bands for you to discover! So many fresh sounds! What a monumental deluge of new and innovative music!

I've given this some real thought and there is absolutely no other way to go about this. It's one way or the other. There is no middle ground. You have to choose.

Obviously, I'd implore you to choose the first option since boosting our readership is important to the livelihood of myself and the rest of us at Grapevine HQ (yay for local journalism!), but if you instead choose a year of silence and solitude, I will respect it. Oh, to be your virginal ears next November. ■

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Money Moves

The Money Behind The Music

Understanding how royalties work

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Art Bicnick

How do musicians make money? It's a tough question. As we engage in the annual revelry that is Iceland Airwaves and a bunch of just-starting-out musicians are taking the stage, we reached out to Sindri Magnússon, Member Service Manager at the Composers' Rights Society of Iceland (STEF), to delve deeper into this subject. With a database boasting over 70,000 registered works and a membership of about 10,000, STEF provides insights into how musicians can monetise their craft while managing music copyrights for Icelandic and international performances in Iceland.

GV: WHAT IS THE ROLE OF STEF?

At STEF, we collect royalties from music played publicly in Iceland and redistribute them to the composers of the music. This includes Icelandic composers who are members of STEF and those who are not members under our licensing agreement with the Ministry of Culture. We are obligated to distribute royalties to all Icelanders, as far as we have enough information, regardless of their STEF membership status.

We also have reciprocal agreements with sister societies worldwide and compensate composers from around the world. If foreign artists' music is played in Iceland, whether

on the radio or in live performances, we pay them royalties, along with our members, for the use of their music. Similarly, if the music of Icelandic musicians who are STEF members is played abroad, we receive royalties that are then distributed to our members.

STEF is neither a government nor a private entity; it is an organisation owned by its members. This structure is similar to comparable societies worldwide. STEF is also a part of the international umbrella society known as SESAC.

GV: WHAT SHOULD BEGINNER ARTISTS IN ICELAND KNOW ABOUT LICENSING AND SELLING MUSIC?

For general usage on radio, on Spotify and for live performances, STEF covers the licensing part to simplify the various roles a composer may have. Typically, artists in Iceland take on multiple roles – they are performers, composers and writers, while often handling their own PR, band management or record label responsibilities. STEF holds the royalties for the writers, making it easy. As long as you are signed with STEF, the money should flow whenever your works are being played, provided we receive setlists for live performances, for example. When it comes to filming, commercials or writing for stage performances, you must obtain a license directly.

STEF also assists musicians with advice on various aspects. We recommend that our members contact us for any assistance with contracts or

other general inquiries. Often, getting a second opinion is useful – whether from STEF, the union or the Iceland Music Export agency. It's always good to get different perspectives, for example, when registering your work.

We have seen that people often write songs in their bedrooms, on an acoustic guitar, and then go into the studio. Sometimes, they give the performers half of the song's royalties on a specific recording. For example, take the song "I Will Always Love You," made famous by Whitney Houston. Dolly Parton originally wrote the song. Dolly Parton recorded it in a studio and shared half of the royalties with her band members. Some years later, Whitney Houston made that song one of the biggest hits in the world. The performers who played on Dolly Parton's record have nothing to do with that song. It's Whitney Houston's version that's generating royalties. It wouldn't be fair to Dolly Parton if the drummer from the original version would get royalties from that.

We recommend thinking about these things when registering a song – who wrote it, who contributed to the songwriting and how should the royalties be split when the song is played elsewhere?

GV: DO MEMBERS NEED TO PAY A MEMBERSHIP FEE?

STEF is funded through a commission from everything we collect. We collect royalties for all performances around Iceland. For foreign or online collections, we collect between 1.5%

to 3%. For live performances, there is a 10% collection fee; it's a bit higher for radio and TV due to the additional work involved. In general, this fee structure is very similar to other societies worldwide. Membership is free, but we deduct a percentage just to run the office. There are no monthly or annual sign-up fees.

Whether you are a member or not, STEF is obliged to pay out to Icelanders and foreigners. We do our best to get the money to you. If you do not want to become a member, we would ask you to provide your kennitala and bank details so we can at least pay you. If that's a no, we cannot do anything. The funds we've collected will remain with STEF for the retention period, and after two years, the money will be thrown into something else if no claims are made.

GV: WHAT ROLE DOES STEF PLAY IN ADVOCATING FOR FAIR COMPENSATION OF MUSICIANS?

Our role is to collect royalties. We set up tariffs. STEF is owned by musicians and musicians are on the board. In general, it's musicians who decide how a tariff should be structured, determining how much should be paid for royalties. Additionally, there is FÍH, a musicians' union, which decides the compensation for live performances and other aspects. Our primary goal is to ensure that composers and music writers receive fair compensation.

GV: THERE'S A RUMOUR THAT ICELANDIC MUSICIANS PLAYING AT ICE-

LAND AIRWAVES ARE NOT GETTING PAID. DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THAT AND DOES STEF INFLUENCE MUSICIANS' PAYMENT AT THE EVENT?

If someone plays music publicly and doesn't pay for the writers' side, STEF should collect the money. Iceland Airwaves has been in great cooperation with STEF throughout the years, and to my knowledge, they have always had a deal with STEF regarding payments. Based on what I've heard and my recent experiences, mainly since SENA took over Iceland Airwaves, they have been paying the musicians to perform. This is outside of STEF's job, though.

About a decade ago, when I was playing IA myself, there was a discussion that the off-venue gigs were not being paid for and artists were trying to encourage other artists not to do unpaid gigs. From everything that I know, artists have been getting paid for performing at Iceland Airwaves in recent years.

FÍH has been debating musician payments with the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra and the Icelandic Opera. This is precisely the platform for musicians to voice their concerns. In my opinion, people should be getting paid for their jobs. This issue extends to the entire creative industry, where individuals are often told, "It's great exposure," and so on. I completely disagree with that; People should get paid for their work. ■

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Musician
By Night

The Youth Worker

"I got this job kind of because of music."

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Art Bicnick

KUSK burst onto the Icelandic music scene after winning the local battle of the bands, Músíktilraunir, in 2022. She's been steadily dropping new tracks following her debut album release, all while juggling her studies and a day job.

Kolbrún Óskarsdóttir, aka KUSK, 20, musician and student of theatre and performance

Since the University of the Arts is more expensive than other universities in Iceland, I feel like I have to support myself with a day job. I don't make enough money and don't want to view music and gigs solely through a financial lens. Alongside school and music, I work at Hitt Húsið, a youth centre for people aged 16 to 25.

A DAY AT HITT HÚSIÐ

I start work at 17:00 and finish at 22:00. I welcome people, chat with them, assist people who come to book our studio and I'm partly in charge of tidying up the studio. I also plan and host events such as concerts and clubs. It varies a lot, depending on how many people come to the centre each day. Sometimes, I just guard the place – the centre is open to everyone, so there needs to be someone at all times until it closes.

I do love this job. Sometimes I spend time at the centre even when I'm not working. Hitt Húsið is far from everything – it's hard to get there by

bus, so it's challenging to get people to realise that it's there. My favourite part of the job is when people come and say, "We saw a poster and we wanted to come see what it is." Then, I show them around and present the centre's possibilities. The hardest days are when few people come, and you're mostly chilling. But it's a very nice job in that aspect because I can do my homework and I can also just open Logic on my computer and make some new songs or finish other songs.

I love hosting concerts. We reach out mainly to up-and-coming bands who have just started or perhaps participated in Músíktilraunir and are growing their fan base. As a musician, it's so much fun to offer other musicians and people in the same boat as I am a platform to come and perform their music.

WORKPLACE DUETS

This job wasn't a thing until last year, because the centre would always close at 17:00. But then my co-worker Hrannar (stage name Óviti) and I, were asked to work this later shift.

Hrannar and I started making music together over a year before we got this job. We were always coming to the studio at Hitt Húsið. We got to know everyone working there. So, when the idea to have the centre open in the evenings came up, we were the first people they talked to.

We can relate to almost everything in each other's lives because we're together a lot doing music, and then we're working at the same place. We work different shifts, but sometimes, the other one just comes to the cen-

tre and we brainstorm new ideas.

KUSK-TOMISING SAVINGS

I limit the things I use the money for. It depends on how much I'm working and what my income is. Right now, I'm trying to be more mindful of where I spend my money. I'm very lucky to still live at home, so I don't have to pay rent, and I can always have a meal at home or eat with my family, which is very nice for me as a young musician. But I would say the trick I use most is having two separate bank accounts. When I get paid, I transfer all the money into one account. So, each time I use my card, I have to transfer money from the other account. This way, I'm much more conscious about my spending.

AIRWAVES ANTICIPATION

Both Hrannar and I are releasing singles a day before our gig, which is fun because we get to elevate our programme by incorporating new songs. We're also playing an off-venue gig at 12 Tónar, and we'll play there with a live band, which is exciting because we mostly play with playback and vocals. I'm also excited to see all the artists playing this year. I've already made a list of all the artists I want to see and when and where they're playing. ■

Catch KUSK and Óviti at KEX on Nov. 4. They hit the stage at 21:20 as part of the Iceland Airwaves official program.

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



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Neighbourhood Watch

Bridging The Gap

Tónhylur connects novice musicians with chart-toppers

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGE Art Bicnick

A DAM GOOD IDEA

In essence, Tónhylur is a not-for-profit cluster of music studios and rehearsal spaces catering to aspiring and established musicians alike. Spearheaded by musicians Kristján Sturla Bjarnason and Brynjar Unnsteinsson, the duo – and the larger team to which they belong –

the Árbær Dam in 2018. Due to the success of the events, they saw an opportunity to augment the neighbourhood's music life. A year later, the building lease was signed.

ARTS AND SPORTS

Tónhylur's organisational structure is not unlike a sports club, Kristján explains. "We have the champion-

smaller studios. "We collaborate with schools to bring students here. We offer them the studios and some guidance, but it turns out that people mostly want space to..." Kristján says, looking for the word. "... To be," Brynjar finishes the thought.

MUSICAL DENTISTRY

Situated in Reykjavik's East side – harbouring approximately 45% of the city's population – few spaces like Tónhylur exist. Despite the fabled musical output of Iceland, facilities for music creation have often lacked support – save for institutions offering formal education, like traditional music schools.

fill a few of these buildings. There's a huge demand. Especially from young people."

Starting out in only a small loft, Tónhylur now encompasses multiple units clustered under one roof. Although they emphasise music production, Kristján and Brynjar are positive about incorporating more creative sectors into their cluster. A case in point is artist Briet's efforts in fashion design. Her studio is also located in Tónhylur. There's even a luthier in the house.

As we conclude the house tour, I catch a glimpse into a room at the end of the corridor, entirely detached from Tónhylur's operations. "That's the dentist," the duo say, as we silently acknowledge the importance of good oral hygiene. ■

Starting out your musical pursuits may feel like a daunting task. There are band members to recruit and gear to buy – and then you have to find space to keep it all. Generally speaking, those lacking access to a recording studio, practice space, or a network of like-minded musicians may have a challenge finding the proper encouragement to drive their ambitions.

In Reykjavik, music rehearsal spaces are scattered around town, commonly located in industrial parks with limited accessibility. Information about these spaces is usually word of mouth, making it difficult for beginners to start out without appropriate connections.

Luckily, Tónhylur has got that covered.

We offer them the studios and some guidance, but it turns out that people mostly want space to be

have worked hard to turn a former industrial space into an epicentre of Icelandic pop music.

Providing about twenty recording studios and 650 square metres of rehearsal space, Tónhylur's mission is twofold: creating a community of like-minded creators and mentoring fledgling artists. Through educational programs and masterclasses, Tónhylur helps young individuals pave their way in music production.

The duo states the idea for Tónhylur started out of a concert held near

ship team – the professionals – and then you have the youth team," he says. Their youth program – appropriately named the Academy – aims to connect interested groups with the necessary facilities, support and skills to start making music.

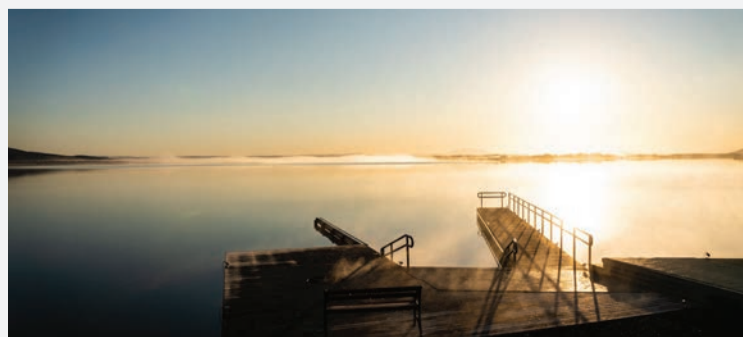
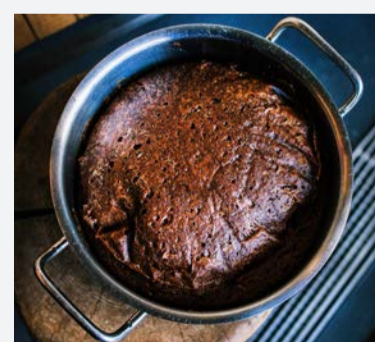
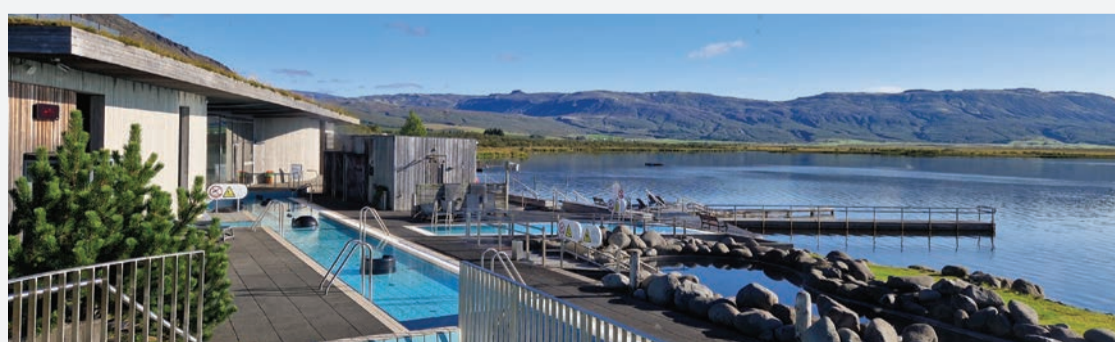
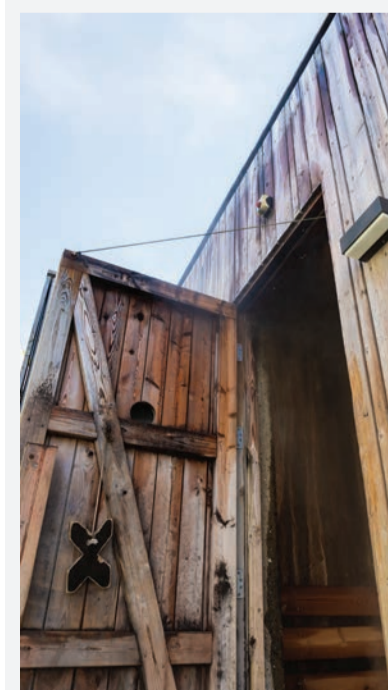
"It all starts in the Academy," Brynjar points out. "People sign up to programs and subsequently start renting out studios," he says, explaining the usual pathway of Tónhylur's participants. The Academy is almost a separate unit of the building itself, with its own lounge area and five

In Kristján's view, the issue of facilities isn't talked about enough. "If we look at sports – the reason why people talk about success is because of

More thought needs to be put into places for people to rehearse and record music

the fact that we have good [sports] facilities. More thought needs to be put into places for people to rehearse and record music," he argues. "In our experience, we could

Tónhylur offers music programmes for various age groups. Visit their website, www.tonhylur.is, for more information.



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FESTIVAL FEATURE

Making Waves

Meet The Four Most Exciting Airwaves Debuts

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGES Axel Sigurðarson

Every year, up-and-coming artists surface for a showcase spot at the festival. While more than 100 artists will be performing over five days across several Reykjavik venues, we sought out the four most exciting newcomers debuting at Iceland Airwaves 2023.

CELEBS

By way of nothing less than the Icelandic Eurovision National Finals, this synth-pop trio rocked the nation with their boppy dystopian anthem “Doomsday Dancing.” Did we mention they’re siblings?

Hailing from Suðureyri, trio Valgeir Orri, Katla Vigdís and Hrafnkell Hugi – all children of Vernharður – bring considerable musical experience to the band. Both brothers were members of the indie-pop band Rythmatik; Katla started in the folk-pop duo Between Mountains. On separate occasions, both outfits demonstrated their talents in Músíktilraunir, charming the jury panel and subsequently landing on top. Their victories led both acts to considerable success.

focusing on amusement and entertainment,” Valgeir says, lamenting the fact that “fun bands” were hard to come by at the time.

“I had noticed there was a shortage of what you’d call ‘party bands,’ focused on the live element. There had been this wave of...,” he pauses, choosing his words carefully. “Everybody needed to be so extremely cool all the time and keep up this try-hard attitude,” he continues. “You never could be a bit silly. There hadn’t been anything considerable come up – in my opinion – since Retro Stefson or FM Belfast.”

Raising the topic of FM Belfast, I needed to address the apparent similarities between that beloved veteran band and newcomers Celebs. With both artists emphasizing dance music, glitter and confetti, was it a conscious decision to emulate the group? “Well, it was sort of a blueprint I guess,” states Hrafnkell, with Valgeir agreeing. “They’re definitely an influence, but we bring more of a rock aspect into the music,” he comments, joking: “I heard the other day that we sound like punk FM Belfast,” Valgeir jokes.

addition to the drums, there are certain elements within Celebs’ ethos, songwriting and overall style that only further support the argument of them being FM Belfast’s punk cousin.

hearts and minds of the Icelandic audience. Through the combination of the infectiously catchy “Doomsday Dancing,” a mysterious onstage dancer dubbed “The Party Monster” and Hrafnkell’s hilarious stage

Everybody needed to be so extremely cool all the time and keep up this try-hard attitude.

WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS

And then there’s Eurovision. Although they didn’t make it to the European, Celebs were chosen as wild card finalists following the national qualifying rounds. The decision to enter the national competition was a straightforward one.

“So, Hrafnkell suggested this to us, expecting a huge fight,” Valgeir starts explaining. Hrafnkell interjects: “It’s a funny contradiction, since you’re talking about these bands that take themselves too seriously,” he says, referring to an earlier point in our conversation, “But I was definitely expecting both of you to be too cool to participate in [Eurovision].”

“I thought it was a no-brainer. We were playing at Innipúkinn when somebody from RÚV (Icelandic National Radio) spotted us.”

“Not just anyone,” Valgeir interrupts, “It was RÚV’s Head of TV. Anyway, he starts chatting and encouraged us to participate in the Eurovision qualifiers.”

Though Diljá brought her “Power” to Liverpool, Celebs certainly won the

antics, Celebs became a household name.

“It was exactly what we intended to do. To firmly place ourselves into the national consciousness,” Valgeir adds. Consider that mission accomplished.

As for their upcoming Airwaves gig, Hrafnkell says the trio is “way more excited than nervous. This is a harvest festival for Icelandic musicians.”

“But there’s one thing,” Valgeir adds. “We never know what Hrafnkell is going to say onstage.” Hrafnkell replies assuringly, “I just catch the spirit when it comes to me. I usually try to say something strange that people can’t read too much into. There’s nothing to read into, really.”

Catch Celebs perform at the Iceland Airwaves Center, Friday Nov 3, at 22:50.

KÁRI

Kári Egilsson burst onto the Icelandic music scene seemingly out of nowhere in late October 2022. His first single “Something Better / Moonbeams” was released to the acclaim of Icelandic media. The son of illustrious TV show host and cul-

It’s time once again for Iceland Airwaves – the country’s biggest and most ambitious music festival. Also known as “the busiest week to be a musician” or “the musician’s holiday,” the festival has been an essential part of Icelandic music ever since a bunch of bands came together to party in an airplane hangar 20 years ago. It’s a week to discover promising acts, make new friends and bathe in the beauty of early Icelandic winter.

I have terrible stage fright and I find it a particularly mad idea to be singing these songs since I’ve never looked at myself as a singer.

The idea behind Celebs came to Valgeir Orri – a drummer and the eldest of the three – during a Christmas break before the onset of the pandemic. “I wanted to start a project

Katla chimes in: “What shapes us is your live drumming,” she says to Valgeir. “Starting out, that influenced the music a lot, being live music and not computer programmed.” In



tural potentate Egill Helgason, Kári is the spitting image of his father.

At the young age of 20, Kári delivers articulate, concise and confident lyricism and composition on his debut record *Palm Trees In The Snow*. In-person, Kári's manner is nonchalant; he speaks with the certainty of a seasoned performer. This demeanour shouldn't come as a surprise, as Kári's musical journey actually started way back in primary school.

"I started playing the piano at seven. It wasn't this one, though," he says pointing towards the grand piano in his living room. "It was my mother's upright piano, which she got as a confirmation gift. After starting my lessons, I soon began to write my own songs," Kári explains.

Kári's music is imbued with groovy blue-eyed soul with obvious derivations from jazz. His songs sound like something I've heard before, perhaps in a past life. Maybe onboard a yacht somewhere in the Mediterra-

Keeping his head in the books and his fingers on the ivory, the young artist's songwriting prowess attracted the interest of the ASCAP Foundation – the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. In 2018, Kári was invited to receive the Desmond Child Anthem Award, bestowed upon young and promising composers.

"I got to play a jazz piece at the Lincoln Center in New York City," Kári says, unclear of what effects it had on the aspiring artist. "I guess it was a good encouragement to keep on going."

COOKING UP SOMETHING GOOD

Like many other artists from Iceland, Kári isn't stuck exclusively working on a single musical project. Aside from his eponymous project KÁRI, the group Kári Egilsson Band released their debut album in September 2023. There, Kári pushes pop to the side to focus on more traditional jazz music. Asked how he came to

has enjoyed the spontaneity of the off-venue scene.

Despite this lack of contact with the festival in previous years, Kári is all confidence and nonchalance – just like his music. Playing four brand-new songs, one of which has never been performed live before, Kári mentions that he's working on a new record. "I'm very happy with the first one. But there'll be a lot of development on the next," he says, with a hint of mystery in his voice.

Supported by equally talented instrumentalists as he is, Kári performed at Gamla Bíó on Nov 2.

FÓKUS

Walking onto the stage in Harpa's Silfurberg, clad in leather jackets, is the five-piece alternative rock band Fókus. It's the final night of the seminal Músiktilraunir – Iceland's annual music competition known to further the careers of hopeful artists. The group gets ready to play and, although this is only their second time performing, they're confident in their talents. They've come too far to lose.

More accurately, they've come from Höfn í Hornafjörður – a fishing town in East Iceland with a population of about 1,800 people. It's a six-hour drive from Reykjavík in clear conditions. That's not all, Fókus' drummer Arnbjörg Yr Sigurðardóttir – Abba – lives in Selfoss, five hours from the rest of the band.

Despite logistical challenges that would drive even the seasoned project manager up the wall, Fókus triumphed at Músiktilraunir on April 1. "I'm not gonna lie, I thought it was an April fools' joke," exclaims pianist Anna Lára Grétarsdóttir, about

Fókus landing first place. Moving forward onto the finals as a wild card contender, the results came as a surprise to the band. "I was so proud of us. We put a lot of effort into it," states singer and guitarist Amylee Trindade.

Amylee says that she only first heard about Músiktilraunir a year before entering. Joined by her songwriting partner, bassist and singer Alexandra Hernandez, the duo decided to form the band and subsequently searched for additional members – a simple task when you're in Höfn. "It's a very small town and everybody knows each other. There weren't a lot of options when we were looking for members," Anna says, half-jokingly.

Alexandra and Amylee met Anna in their music school, while meeting drummer Abba in the South Iceland Symphony Band. A fifth member, Pia Wrede, participated with the band

NOT ENOUGH HOURS IN THE DAY

The aspiring musicians speak fondly of their hometown – though the local music scene is lacking. "There aren't a lot of bands our age. But there are bands that the teachers put together," replies Alexandra when asked about other artists in Höfn. "There are groups with old men that play jazz and some cover bands. But not artists that write and record on their own music," says Anna.

Although some people would consider it a deal-breaker having one band member living 400 kilometres away, Fókus makes things work with diligent organising and time management. "Initially it wasn't that difficult," says Alexandra, before confessing, "As time goes on, it becomes harder."

Anna interjects, "We've travelled a lot in just this year. We rehearsed for

We're way more excited than nervous. This is a harvest festival for Icelandic musicians.

nean. His debut album title certainly indicates that Kári wants to transport the listener to a warmer climate. Despite his age, his songwriting conveys a great deal of maturity.

The artist's pursuit towards composition led Kári to develop an interest in the border between pop music and jazz. "I've always been interested in pop music and remember having played with some garage bands when I was 10," Kári reminisces.

found a second band, Kári replies, "It just sort of came naturally."

Performing as KÁRI for the first time at Iceland Airwaves, nerves are nowhere to be found. "I'm mostly excited. Maybe a bit of stress, but nothing that will kill me," he jokes. Having experienced the pandemic during his late adolescent years – the prime age for Airwaves festivalgoers – Kári has only managed to attend the official festival once before, but he

I've always thought that performing live is the deepest, most beautiful and most real connection with people. And it's been so long since I've done it.

at Músiktilraunir and performed on their latest EP. However, the group tells me that Pia is no longer a member of the band, as she was a German exchange student and moved back home. There's no drama, though.

Músiktilraunir. We recorded an EP [in Mosfellsbær]. We played a music festival in The Netherlands. These are intense periods. Sure, we get tired. But it's all worth it."

Perhaps things would be easier if there wasn't also secondary school to juggle. "I'm very behind in school," confesses Amylee. "We're mindful



of stress and we manage things by prioritising. When we're rehearsing, we don't think about school. When we're in school, we don't think about music. Life goes on," says Anna, sharing her wisdom.

As part of Músiktilraunir, the winning band receives 20 hours of studio time in Sundlaugin – more frequently known as Sigur Rós' studio. The girls used those hours in collaboration with producer Albert Finnbogason to work on their first EP, *Obsessed*, out October 31.

"They write most of the songs," Anna says pointing to Alexandra and Am-

ylee. "We all have different tastes in music and it includes elements from each of us. For example, I like listening to 17th century baroque," she continues, interrupted by Amylee – "I don't!"

Amylee. "I also listened to a lot of Evanescence when I was younger. My mom named me after Evanescence's singer, Amy Lee, so there's slight inspiration there too," she concludes.

I got to play a jazz piece at the Lincoln Center in New York City

"I was inspired by a lot of 80s, 90s, and early 2000s music," continues

Regarding their Airwaves set, Fókus says audience members can expect great music, vibe, and outfits. With

enough on their plate as it is, Fókus hope to take a break over Christmas. They return to Reykjavík in the spring to play Upprásin.

Oh man! Fókus performed at Gaukurinn on Thursday, November 2. Good news! You can still catch them performing off-venue at Hitt Húsið and Jörgensen on Saturday, Nov 4.

tirelessly in front of her digital workstation, Herdís reversed her creative process. Instead of writing, she played.

"Working as a composer, where I sit at a program the whole day, I'd started to miss just sitting down and playing an instrument. So, after exploring all these different sound ideas and notions of boundary-push-

There are groups with old men that play jazz and some cover bands. But not artists that write and record on their own.

KÓNGULÓ

Belonging to Iceland's contemporary wave of composers, Herdís Stefánsdóttir divides her time scoring Hollywood films and writing grandiose electronic compositions. The moniker Kónguló (Spider) is a fitting one for Herdís, as she possesses great versatility in her craft, weaving together intricate rhythms and melodies.

Herdís is no stranger to the Airwaves' limelight, having previously served as one-half of the now-defunct duo East Of My Youth. However, Kónguló is debuting this year.

Before the young composer turned her focus to scoring films, Herdís' solo material had already been taking shape. "I'd started writing my solo record before I went full-on into the movie business," she says.

"Somehow, I got sucked into the job at full force, with three or four years passing by where I scored movie after movie, always tending to my own material on the side," she explains. Having finished her latest feature film earlier in 2023 – *Knock at the Cabin* by director M. Night Shyamalan – Herdís decided it was time to take a well-deserved break and focus on her own projects.

Serendipitously, that decision coincided with the Hollywood screenwriters strike, so there were no films to be scored anyhow. "Suddenly, I had the whole year to work on my record. It was a blessing in disguise," Herdís confesses. With newfound time on her hands, Herdís slowly realised that the album she'd been working on was turning into a completely different entity. She states that the two singles Kónguló has now released – "Be Human" and "The Water In Me" – contrast her newer music creations.

JUMPING INTO THE DEEP END

Previously occupied with grand electronic compositions, working

ing, I found myself at the start," she contemplates.

"I'd bought a mellotron in LA, which I found a bit funny. I don't play the guitar – I'm a pianist – but there was a super tacky vintage guitar preset in the mellotron. So I started playing way different music. I don't know if it's because I'm a film composer, but I can't get married to one idea," she concludes about her upcoming record.

Despite being a relatively seasoned Airwaves performer, Herdís finds it a big step to debut her material in front of a live audience. "Because there are so few individuals that have heard it. Most of this album was written in the last few months," she explains. "It would be much more difficult if there'd been many years since I wrote these songs. You keep distancing yourself from the stuff you did in the past, that's why it's important to not wait, and just release it," Herdís concludes.

With her new material leaning towards psychedelia, Herdís expects to move the audience from one emotion to the next.

"I look forward to performing," she says. "Being a musician today, social media has taken over how you approach and engage with people. I've always thought that performing live is the deepest, most beautiful and most real connection with people. And it's been so long since I've done it, the most important step is just to start playing."

Featured on her upcoming record – release date to be announced – are artists neonme and Rake! Sigurðardóttir. "And then it's me for the rest of the songs, which is very scary," Herdís says. "I have terrible stage fright and I find it a particularly mad idea to be singing these songs since I've never looked at myself as a singer. This is very much the deep end," she confesses. ■

See Kónguló spin her web in Fríkirkjan on Saturday, Nov 4 at 19:50.

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The Grapevine's Top Picks



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The trick to creating a good artist is to get them started young, when they are still bold and unself-conscious and full of risky non-clichéd ideas. Thanks to the amazing organisation Hitt Húsið, the youth of Reykjavík are given the platform to step into their rightful artist's way through the Unglist Art Festival for Young People. Running for a week of free events and exhibitions all over the city, it's a chance to glimpse the impressive talents of young artists of all types - musicians, dancers, visual artists, designers, LARPer, actors... the list goes on and on. Go marvel at how cool these kids are, and then go make some art. **RX**



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If you have the desire to dance yourself down then pay attention to GusGus, Iceland's premiere club-pop legends, who are ready for you. Throwing four mega-shows over two nights in Harpa's big room, the iconic ensemble will serve up their shimmery sexy synth-grooves in a bombastic spectacle. With some guest stars sure to be showing up to heed the call of the wild. We just don't get as many GusGus shows as we used to, so you really should go add their songs to your heart. And if you still have last night in your body after the shows, head over to the official afterparties at Auto hosted by their friend DJ Margeir. **RX**



THE NUTCRACKER: KYIV GRAND BALLET LIVE
November 23 - 25
Harpa - Eldborg
3.950 - 14.900 ISK

Whether you're casually familiar with the Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy or a real-one who gets the bouncy strings of the Overture in their head the instant you read the title, going to see The Nutcracker ballet live is just indescribably delightful. I must break the fourth-wall and admit my deep bias - having danced in one of the largest Canadian productions of it for many years - that seeing this ballet live at least once is a must. Really, it is. Since we have no actual Icelandic ballet company, being graced by the remarkable Kyiv Grand Ballet is a true gift. Kick off your advent season with this absolute banger of a Christmas classic. **RX**



Culture Article

The Questions Of Dance

The Reykjavík Dance Festival envisions their future

WORDS Rex Beckett
IMAGE Kaja Sigvaldadóttir

seen significant change and growth over the past decade, solidifying its standing in the global dance scene.

"The festival has really grown and blossomed over the past decade," says Pétur. "It's really taken off from being a festival for the local dance scene into an international dance festival that is recognised and sought out by cultural delegates who are already professionals from all over the world. They want to come here to see what Icelandic dance has to offer."

SUSTAINING MOVEMENT

Despite its reputation, the festival is facing new challenges as their ongoing funding contract from the Ministry of Culture and Business Affairs expires at the end of the year. They are currently negotiating funding opportunities in order to ensure their future.

"It's a lot of workload for the staff, which has been voluntary until now - which itself is not really sustainable," says Pétur. "We're kind of victims of our own success. So now is [our] opportunity to secure the operation with future long-term vision."

"A lot of artists have made work with very little or no funding but still been really successful," says Brogan. "But now the scene is starting to get fed up. Things need to change. We need more stability."

"From the outside it might look like we're doing really well but it's just not sustainable," continues Pétur. "We need to ensure the sustainability of professional independent dance in Iceland."

JUST ASKING QUESTIONS

This year's festival has a sub-festival within it called Feminist Futures that forms the theme of the event. This initiative has travelled between 11 countries over four years within a network called the Advancing Performing Arts Project (APAP), of which the Reykjavík Dance Festival is a member. The root of the sub-festival is to raise questions on the issues of sustainability, inclusivity and care.

"It's a provocation for each festival to think about their curation through this lens," says Brogan. "What could feminist futures look like? Who is represented in the program? How would we function as a feminist or-

ganisation? How would we communicate and who would have power? Which bodies do we see and not see?"

With many questions raised, the co-directors are taking a close look in the mirror and holding their feet to the fire of accountability.

"In the context of being underfunded; can we call it a feminist festival when people are exploiting themselves to make it happen?" says Pétur. "There is also the exclusivity of contemporary arts in general. Is that feminist? I don't know if our festival is as much of an answer to what we believe feminist futures are going to look like, as it is a question."

Whether performances will cause audiences to reflect or have epiphanies, the event as a whole will leave no guest unprovoked. ■

The Reykjavík Dance Festival takes place November 15-19 with a diverse schedule of events happening throughout the city. Schedule and festival pass information can be found at ReykjavikDanceFestival.com

The time has come once again for Iceland's most ambitious and subversive dance event. This year's edition of the Reykjavík Dance Festival is subtitled "Feminist Futures" and it comes at a time when they are confronting their own future.

Brogan Davison and Pétur Ármannsson have served as co-artistic directors of Reykjavík Dance Festival since 2021, as well as being partners in life. Both have been involved with the festival for the past decade and have not only watched its growth, they have played an active part in its cultivation.

ON THE MAP

"The dance scene in Iceland is on the map globally," says Brogan. "People come from all over the world to see what's going on here. We have such good artists."

The Reykjavík Dance Festival has been running for 20 years, but it has

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Gnarly News

The Battle To Save The

Iceland's unique gem is in danger: who benefits from this?

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
 IMAGE Art Bicnick

It seems like Iceland's reputation as a quiet island with beautiful untouched nature is being overshadowed by yet another case where authorities turn a blind eye to environmental laws in pursuit of personal interests, trying to fill their pockets with as much money as they can get away with. Astonishingly, the extent to which they can act with impunity exceeds all expectations for a country like Iceland. Whether we look at the Kárahnjúkar case or new construction projects in Landmannalaugar, the interests of the communities in the vicinity or the long-term effects on the flora and fauna are seldom given the consideration they deserve.

In one such case, Þorlákshöfn – the heart of Icelandic surfing and home to the sport's most consistent wave – now faces a threat from a controversial construction project. The project aims to transform the town with a population of about 1,600 inhabitants, less than an hour's drive south from Reykjavík, into a major shipping hub for both cargo and tourist vessels travelling between Iceland, the UK, Denmark and cen-

tral Europe. If the project is completed, ships would save time that they would otherwise spend travelling to southwest Reykjavík or Keflavík. Need we repeat that Reykjavík is less than an hour away?

While the economic advantages of the project may be apparent, what's less evident is whether there has been a thorough evaluation of the potential repercussions of a project of this magnitude on such a close-knit community, the surrounding natural environment, and Iceland's cherished surfing culture. In short, the answer is no.

THE PROJECT IN QUESTION

The expansion project involves dredging the harbour's southern edge to create a deepwater turning area for large ships. However, the disposal of the dredged sediment would harm the naturally-occurring surf break, while the planned harbour wall extension would alter the wave dynamics. Additionally, there are allegations of law abuse, corruption and conflicts of interest associated with the project.

The harbour expansion project was developed after German construction giant Heidelberg announced its plans to build a factory near Þorlákshöfn. According to the results of the survey conducted by investigative journalists at Heimildin newspaper, 44.7% of residents in the municipality were somewhat or strongly opposed to the project, while 19.3% were somewhat or strongly in favour of the construction. If completed, the project would also involve mining the whole mountain of Sandfell by Heidelberg Cement for export to Europe. Heidelberg, along with Ölfus mayor Elliði Vignisson and partner companies Elliði seems to have a suspiciously close relationship with, have been accused of bribing local companies by offering them grants to win their support. Ölfus is a municipality that houses Þorlákshöfn. Moreover, the mayor seems to live

rent-free while receiving housing benefits from the government, in a house owned by Jarðefnainiðnaður ehf. – the company engaged in mining in Ölfus.

In an effort to understand what's going on and what makes the surf break so unique, we took a trip to Þorlákshöfn with Steinarr Lár Steinarrsson, the chairman of Brimbrettafélag Íslands, the Icelandic surfing association.

LEGAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

One of the first things Steinarr Lár brings to my attention is the fact that no environmental assessment of the project has been completed. "You cannot change the coastline of Iceland without the approval of Umhverfisstofnun, the Environment Agency of Iceland," he says. "He [the mayor] cannot change it by himself. Even if the town agrees to the change of the development plan in Ölfus, he will have to apply for approval at Umhverfisstofnun. They did not do this when they changed the harbour jetty two years ago."

Regarding whether the town faced any charges for breaking the law back then, Steinarr Lár answers, "No, nothing happened."

He also points out that, in accordance with Article 9 of Act No. 33 of 2004 on the Protection of the Sea and Coastal Areas, it is illegal to dispose of materials or objects in the sea without the approval of the Environmental Agency.

On October 8, construction works began in Þorlákshöfn without the necessary permits. Surfers who were at the break at the time contacted journalists and, as a result, the construction was halted. The mayor of Ölfus stated that if any construction was underway, it was not initiated at the municipality's request.



e Wave

“We, as the Surfing Association, are now asking the Environmental Agency and the National Planning Agency to conduct an environmental assessment that would take into consideration all aspects of the project, not only financial [benefit] for the local town,” says Steinarr Lár. He further explains that board members of the Surfing Association met with the harbour designer for the project, noting, “While he has an understanding of harbour rules, he has no understanding of surfing.”

To work out a solution that would fit the needs of the town and protect the wave, the board of Brimbrettafélag Íslands reached out to Simon Brandi Mortensen, an architect for the Australian company DHI Group and “the world’s leading expert on surf waves and harbour design,” according to Steinarr Lár, who personally financed the alternative design. The proposed compromise would make the wave unsurfable for 30 days a year. It’s yet unclear whether the municipality will accept the alternative harbour design.

THE BIRTH OF SURF CULTURE IN ICELAND

Steinarr Lár, a five-time Icelandic snowboarding champion and former World Cup competitor, says that surfing is an integral part of the boarding culture. He and his friends were pioneers of surfing in Iceland.

“Back in the late 1990s, nobody was surfing in Iceland. But we had heard that there were some guys on the navy base in Keflavík that surfed on the Reykjanes peninsula, in Sandvík,” shares Steinarr Lár, adding that this sparked the interest among his friends.

“My two friends and I started driving the coastline when the weather was bad trying to find some waves. We were able to find some waves, but we did not have any clue about surfing,” he laughs, admitting that progress was very slow in the begin-

ning. “We had no understanding of how waves are generated and what type of conditions are suitable. We didn’t know that you need the wind to come from land to create glassy waves, which is a very basic thing,” he says.

A few years later, Steinarr Lár got introduced to a group of Icelandic guys raised in Australia and Namibia, who knew how to surf. “In 2001, we took a big leap forward.” It was Steinarr Lár and his friends who discovered the wave in Þorlákshöfn. There is no record of people surfing there before them. Steinarr Lár reminisces, “When we hiked over the harbour wall and saw this perfect wave, we could not believe that it was so close to us – we had been driving all over Iceland trying to find something like this.” He fondly recalls, “Standing there with my best friends and discovering an appealing perfect right-hander that runs down 300 meters is one of the greatest moments of my life.”

Since that day Þorlákshöfn, or “Þorli” as surfers refer to it, has been the cradle of Icelandic surfing. “It’s the only wave that works on low tide, mid tide and high tide,” explains Steinarr Lár, adding that since we are so far North, the tides here can reach four to five meters (for reference, at the equator, the tides are only 30 centimeters). “The wave at Þorlákshöfn breaks 24/7. We have built our surf culture here. Without Þorli, it would not exist.”

TIDES OF CHANGE

I wait on the coast while Steinarr Lár and two fellow surfers give today’s waves a try. It’s an average day for surfing; the wind is blowing in the opposite direction we would want it too. Yet, watching a trio of men tame the ocean is a meditative experience, something inexplicably profound, yet grounding about it.

“The North is the final frontier of surfing,” says Steinarr Lár once he’s

out of the water. “We need infrastructure, we need income for our country, but we also have to attend to our health. There’s a lot of stress in the world right now and the ocean is a place where you can really neutralise it.”

In his opinion, guarding this location is in the town’s best interest. He is confident that if the municipality looks beyond their personal and political interests, they would recognise the economic advantages of preserving the surfing spot in Þorlákshöfn. Some of his surf buddies have already relocated to the area to be closer to the beach. This could just be the beginning.

“When you’re the first generation of something in a country, people don’t see the value in it,” he says, recalling a case from his teenage years when he was denied entry to ski lifts at the popular Bláfjöll resort with a snowboard because snowboarding was completely unknown in Iceland at that time. Thirty years later, no one would frown at the sight of a snowboard and if Þorli is preserved, surfing in Iceland would only continue to develop. According to Steinarr Lár, having Þorlákshöfn in your backyard is like having a ski resort in your backyard – it could lead to infrastructure development and new jobs.

For now, the future of the unique Þorli wave remains uncertain. But members of the Surfing Association take shifts to be at the spot every day, ensuring that the illegal construction doesn’t continue. “We are trying to be respectful and have a good dialogue with the municipality because we’re going to have a future here,” he concludes, emphasising that should the municipality proceed with the project illegally, the Surfing Association will file charges. ■

Sign the petition to save the wave in Þorlákshöfn bit.ly/save-the-wave

BERG Contemporary

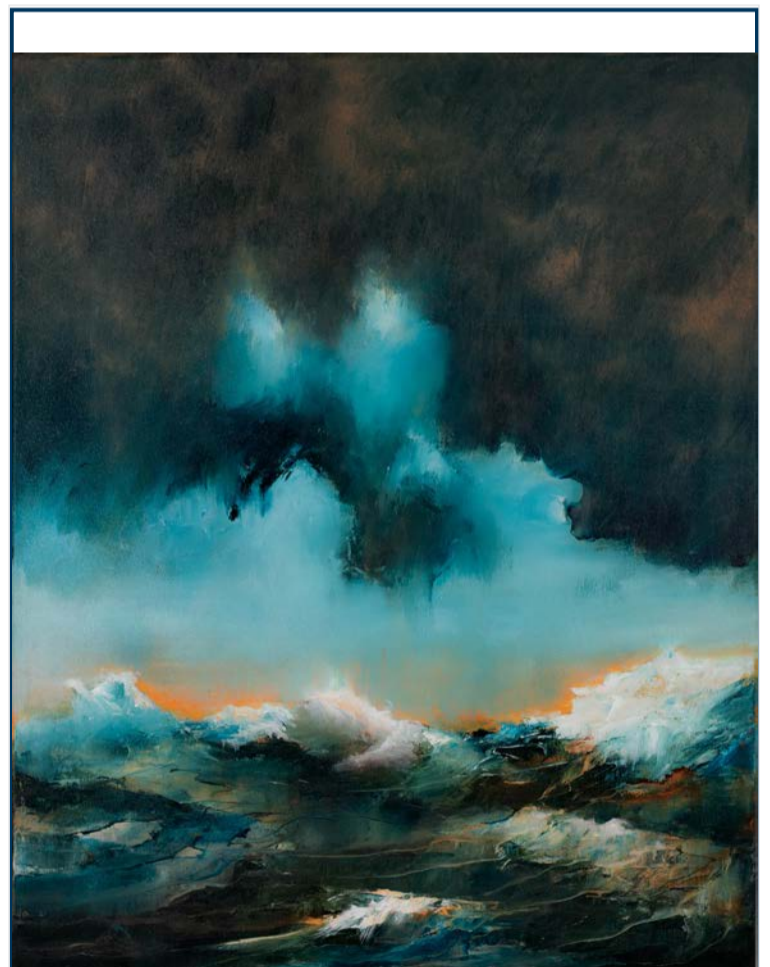


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Film Feature

Of Dreams And Metaphors

In *Our Happiest Days*, Sol Berruezo Pichon-Rivière explores ageing and references her own Iceland obsession

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Art Bicnick, supplied stills

“Every time I land in Iceland, I cry,” says director and script-writer Sol Berruezo Pichon-Rivière as we meet during the off-peak hours at a local art house cinema to discuss her second feature film, *Our Happiest Days* (*Nuestros días más felices*). At 27, Sol has already made waves in her homeland and worldwide, with *Our Happiest Days* embarking on a festival circuit and receiving awards since 2021. Ahead of the film’s Icelandic premiere, Sol opens up about her deep connection to Iceland, the exploration of happiness and sadness and the intriguing role rabbits play in her storytelling.

Born in Argentina, Sol Berruezo Pichon-Rivière fell in love with Iceland at the age of eight when she

stumbled on a picture of the country in an English class textbook. From that moment on, Iceland became a dream Sol was determined to chase. “Iceland is my favourite country in the world, even if it’s the complete opposite of my native country,” she says. After first visiting Iceland, the obsession only grew – Sol started learning Icelandic and got interested in Scandinavian cinema and literature. In particular, the 2003 film *Nói Albinói* by Dagur Kári fuelled Sol’s fascination. She explains, “I found the idea of this isolated island in the middle of nowhere to be a symbol of something I wanted to reach.”

“I always felt like I was like a darker person compared to my country. I didn’t like the sun,” shares Sol. “It depressed me.” In contrast, she had a deep appreciation for snow, which she first saw in Iceland. Sol kicked off her directing career in Argentina with her first feature film *Mum, Mum, Mum* (*Mamá, mamá, mamá*), shot with an entirely female crew and cast. About a year ago, Sol made the move to Iceland. She first took on

a role within the Reykjavik Feminist Film Festival, worked as a producer on the latest edition of the Reykjavik International Film Festival and is currently involved in several ongoing film projects while teaching at the Icelandic Film School.

daughter to help her navigate the situation and confront family dynamics, the fear of dying alone and lost opportunities for happiness. “It shows how the relationship with her daughter and son completely changes,” Sol explains, “how they

when Sol wanted to work again with actress Matilde Creimer Chiabrando, who had previously starred in her debut feature. “I wanted to create a character that showed what an old soul she is,” Sol says of the young actress. She also admits that her own family dynamics with her grandparents inspired the film. “I felt there was a dynamic in the family that nobody was addressing, like how they [her grandparents] became more needy,” she says, explaining how this observation turned into a central metaphor in the film.

It’s an essay on what happiness is and what sadness is. Aren’t they the same?

INTERTWINING HAPPINESS AND SADNESS

Sol describes *Our Happiest Days* as a film that delves into the theme of old age, emphasising that both old age and childhood are moments in life when people reveal their true selves without wearing masks. The story revolves around a 74-year-old woman who suddenly finds herself in the body of her 7-year-old self. She grapples with the challenges of ageing in reverse, relying on her

start to parent their parent and how they kind of help her to go from this life.”

“It’s an essay on what happiness is and what sadness is. Aren’t they the same?” she ponders. “Sadness is underestimated. It’s a very honest and enlightening feeling that we’re usually afraid of,” she says. “[The film] is a metaphor for speaking about something very natural – our parents growing old and dying.”

The idea for the film took shape

FOLLOWING THE RABBITS

The making of *Our Happiest Days* took an unusually short time – the film was written, shot, post-produced and released in a span of one year. Sol agrees that the programme supporting emerging filmmakers played an important part in the process. “It was done with a special programme that I advise filmmakers making their first or second feature to check out. It’s called Biennale College Cinema, which is a fund

NÓ 4. NÓV | ARCTIC WAVES | NORDIC HOUSE 1.-3. NÓV | IÐNÓ 4. NÓV | ARCTIC WAVES |

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from La Biennale di Venezia that gives you mentorship and follows you throughout the process. Then they screen your film at the festival," Sol explains.

In addition to the magic realism event in the form of age transformation, Sol also introduces fantasy elements through the presence of rabbits, representing destiny and the journey into an enchanting world, much like in *Alice in Wonderland*. Symbolism involving rabbits first appeared in Sol's debut film and the director is determined to incorporate them in her future work as well.

"Rabbits follow destiny and instincts, not something that is very logical," she explains. "For me, being in Iceland, it's like a big rabbit that I've been chasing for many years." She emphasises that rabbits don't necessarily need to be understood in any specific way. "It's nice to dress your work with little symbolic things and details," she says.

Sol drew inspiration from 1960s magic realism writers from Argentina and the film *Happy as Lazzaro* by Alice Rohrwacher, which also incorporates elements of magic realism.

ICELANDIC INFLUENCES

"One of the film's characters is kind of an alter ego of myself and is

obsessed with Iceland," Sol shares. "For me, Iceland was always like a paradise. A paradise is usually a place you don't own yet; it's a place that is far and somehow unreachable. This is what Iceland represents for that character, a place that is very far away, a dream – and our dreams sometimes don't come true." Sol reflects on her journey, saying, "My biggest accomplishment in life has been moving here because it seemed like the most random thing I could have done,

It's nice to dress your work with little symbolic things and details.

to continue my career in Iceland?" Given the connection to Iceland in the film, it feels very symbolic for Sol to show it here.

The influence of the Icelandic band múm on Sol's personal and creative life is undeniable. She admits, "It's my favourite band. The atmosphere and the music were mainly inspired by múm." The band's song "Slow Down" was generously provided for use in the film for free by múm's founding member Örvar Þóreyjarsón Smárason. Former band member Kristín Anna Valtýsdóttir even agreed to perform before the Icelandic premiere.

Sol also speaks about her desire to replicate the light she saw in Iceland in the film, a challenge given the warm light in Argentina. She explains, "It's always been very difficult for me to find the light that I like." Sol aimed to orient the film to cyan hues, cold tones and a pale, ocean-like wash in terms of visual texture. She admits that only recently while shooting a short film in Iceland, she finally saw the light she had been chasing for many years.

Sol confesses that it's more about life in the city than the oft-touted otherworldly landscapes that ignites her affection for Iceland. "There's a place I like to go and think – a bench next to The Unknown Bureaucrat statue by the lake." It's also the welcoming atmosphere of Bíó Paradís, musical programmes at Mengi and 12 Tónar, and even routine supermarket visits that she still romanticises. "I feel at home even though it's completely different from my home." ■

Our Happiest Days premieres at Bíó Paradís on November 1



TARAMAR

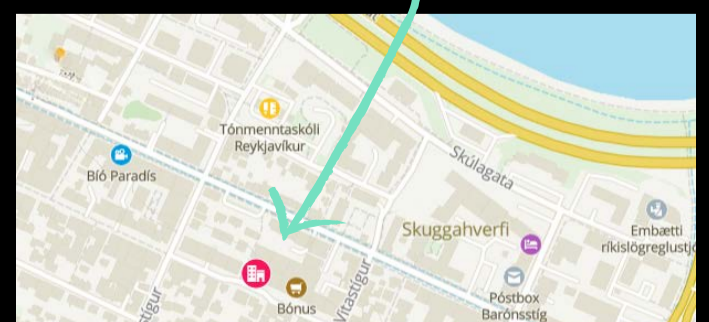
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Centre Map

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

7 GRÁI KÖTTURINN
Hverfisgata 16a
This no-nonsense downtown staple has been serving Reykjavik dwellers quality breakfast food since 1997. Tucked away in a cute cellar, the diner boasts retro Icelandic design charm, while its menu is far from outdated. Pancakes, bagels and frying oil all have their special place at Grái Kötturinn. As Grái Kötturinn closes at 14:30 every day, it's not a place for nighthawks, but early-birds. JB

8 CHICKPEA
Hallveigarstígur 1
This Mediterranean-inspired restaurant is a great place for a quick bite. Servings are generous and the

food nutritious, meaning you'll go full well into the day. They do wraps, falafels, and all kinds of salads exceptionally well. Prices aren't extremely steep, but nothing to write home about either. JB

9 KRÓNAN
Hallveigarstígur 1 & more locations
If you're ever in a pinch while looking for something cheap to eat if you're downtown just go to Krónan and pick out some 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 Reykjavik
Icelanders may have a love-hate relationship with the Danes, but let's be honest, who can resist craving a delicious smørrebrød every now and then? If you get what we are talking about, there's no better place in town for an authentic Danish smørrebrød than Jómfrúin. This family-run restaurant specializes in serving Danish and Scandinavian dishes, and to top it off, it boasts a fantastic outdoor terrace where you can relax, sip a beer and complain about politics overlooking the Icelandic parliament. IZ

Drinking

11 APERÓ VÍNBAR
Laugavegur 20b
A wine bar that is both opulent and accessible? Yes please. The small team at Aperó remember the orders of regulars and make first-timers feel like regulars. If you know what you like, Aperó will tick your boxes; and if you're new to wine, the sommelier will soon unite you with your ideal glass. CF

12 KEX HOSTEL
Skúlagata 28
The former biscuit factory now serves as a trendy hostel, with a bar, restaurant and a live concert space. There's always something going on, and if not, it's a great spot to grab those after-work drinks. With a rotation of foreign tourists who stumble onto a heavy metal show happening in the restaurant, you're always bound for an enjoyable experience. JB

13 KAFFIBARINN
Bergstaðastræti 1
No words are needed for Kaffibarinn. The hangout spot for the who's who of Reykjavik. Frequented by Blur members in the 90s, drug dealers, and middle-managers, Kaffibarinn is an establishment in itself. JB

14 VITABAR
Bergþórugata 21, Iceland
If you're staying in Reykjavik more than a few days, you ought to find your own dive bar – this is ours. It seems like the time froze at Vitabar,

but we love it that way. People come for their famous blue cheese burger, but stay for a few pints and delicious fries. Sometimes I wish Vitabar discovered craft beer, but I go back nevertheless – for a late night bite and Thule on draft. IZ

15 VÍNSTÚKAN TÍU SOPAR
Laugavegur 27
There are a few bars in Reykjavik that have learned how to do wine right, and Vínstúkan Tíu sopar, although located in the middle of the chaos and tourist buzz of Laugavegur, is one of them. Craving Pét-nat? In the mood for orange wine? Ready to explore small Slovenian wineries? You name it – the bar's staff will be ready to come up with suggestions that will suit any pocket. Don't get me started on their small bites to pair with wine – I'm already dreaming about their grilled peppers and torched broccoli with salted lemon. IZ

Shopping & Activities

16 BÍÓ PARADÍS
Hverfisgata 54
Sometimes the smell of popcorn fills the air of Hverfisgata, as if beckoning you to come inside. You succumb and find yourself in the cutest art house cinema with colourful posters on the walls and vintage-looking bar straight outta Wes Anderson movie. There's always a film screening and you rarely need to book tickets in advance, so enjoy the old school walk-in experience and one of the best Happy Hours in town. IZ

Random Spots

17 EINARSGARÐUR
Laufásvegur 79
This little green space nestled into the curving juncture of Laufásvegur and Gamla Hringbraut is an oasis in the city. Exposed to full sun seemingly all the time, it's a peaceful spot to stroll through, climb trees, luxuriate on the grass or toss the ball for your four-legged friend. Don't do that last thing, though. It's not allowed. CF

Be Warned

18 101 BISTRO
Austurstræti 3
The bistro on the corner of Ingólfs-torg and Austurstræti that has a plaque outside saying, "Come in and try the worst [insert popular food item] that one guy on Tripadvisor said we had", or something like that. It's a trap, do not go there. That plaque has been in the same spot ever since Hrunið. RG

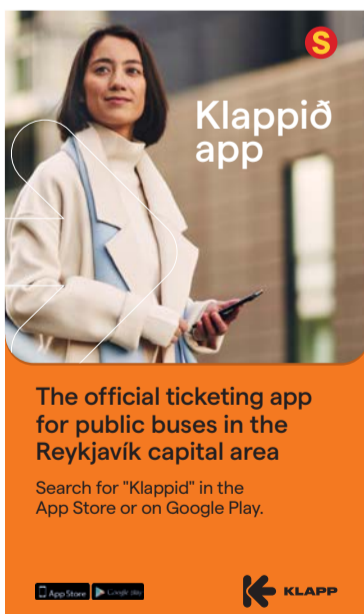
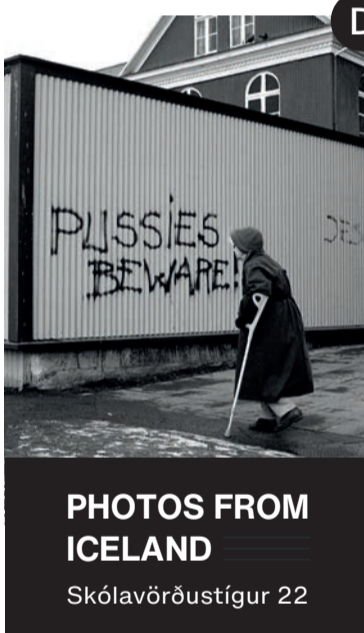
19 SBARRO
Austurstræti 17 & Vatnsmýrarvegur 10
"What is this shit?" is how Greil Marcus famously opened his review of Bob Dylan's 1970 album in Rolling Stone. It is appropriate here. It



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

20 REYKJAVÍK FISH RESTAURANT
Tryggvagata 8
Our beef with this place has to do with their "plokari" (Traditional Icelandic Fish Stew). The fish stew is what you make out of fish leftovers and potatoes, adding bechamel sauce, topped with cheese and then baked. It's generally a good dish, a great way to avoid wasting food and it costs next to nothing to make. Taste wise, there is nothing wrong with how Reykjavik Fish makes their "plokari", 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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New In Town **Kemuri***

Hverfisgata 82

Have you been walking through Reykjavík for over a decade craving a pierogi on the go, lamenting that no place can make your dumpling dreams come true? Weep no longer, my friends, for the fine folks at Kemuri heed the call of the dough-pocket! Also serving coffees and sweet treats, the new café owned by young Polish musicians and artists blends traditional flavours with modern twists in a super cute and cool environment. These ain't your bubbe's pierogies!

Opening hours:
Every day except Monday from 11:00 - 20:00 ■



B

FOOD HALL & BAR

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Opening

GALLERY KVERK

Kristín Gunnlaugsdóttir – Selfie
New collection of works by Kristín that explore the preoccupation with creating external images of ourselves and how it shapes our identity and reality.

Opens November 4
Runs until December 9

GALLERY PORT

Stephan Stephensen – SUBMISSION
Stephan Stephensen, AKA President Bongo, invites you to embark on a journey across the entire universe, from the peaks of Mt. Kilimanjaro to the innermost core of your being.

Opens November 4
Runs until November 23

ÍÐNÓ

Refraction
Multidisciplinary artists Antonía Berg, Íris María Leifsdóttir and Vikram Pradhan have worked together on an exhibition focusing on the hidden world of crystals, using different methods to get closer to them.

Opens November 12
Runs until December 12

KJARVALSSTAÐIR (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

Our Art: Installation by Ívar Valgarðsson
Extra viewing of large scale installation first shown at Kjarvalsstaðir in 1991 that attracted attention from both visitors and critics. The works were selected in a public vote.

Opens November 3
Runs until November 5

Hekla Dögg Jónsdóttir – 0° 0° Null Island

Hekla Dögg Jónsdóttir's works examine positioning systems and draw the viewers' attention to the notions of place and time and the "here and now."

Opens November 18
Runs until February 2024

LOFT HOSTEL

November Art Market
Third art market of the season hosted by the gallery and ceramics workshop FLÆÐI in collaboration with Loft Hostel, featuring versatile works by grassroots artists.

Saturday November 4, 14:00

(single event)

NORDIC HOUSE

SHOPTALK#3: Varna
Monthly talk by a creative practitioner offering a glimpse into their practice. This month features musician, drum dancer and performance artist Varna.

Tuesday November 7, 17:00
(single event)

Uneathed: Exhibition in the Greenhouse

An investigation of the area Rauðhólar, located in the Heiðmörk recreational area, presented by both artistic practice and geological research.

Opens November 18
Runs until November 26

REYKJAVÍK CATHOLIC CHURCH

Sid Chidiac – The Chocolate Painter
Using chocolate as a medium, multidisciplinary artist and philanthropist Sid Chidiac's works show portraits of well known figures using the colour palette range of the beloved confection.

Opens November 4
Runs until November 5

THE SCULPTURE ASSOCIATION GARDEN

Bryndís Björnsdóttir – origin
A common toy found in institutional waiting rooms takes on new meaning, as a metaphor for the colonial era's exploitation of natural resources that has pushed ecosystems to the brink.

Opens November 4
Runs until December 31

SÍM KÖRPUÍFSSTAÐIR

Jean Antoine Posocco – 40 Years Later
Celebrating his long career and 40th year living in Iceland, French-born artist Jean Antoine Posocco shows a retrospective of his comic-style art.

Opens November 4
Runs until November 19

Ongoing

ÁSMUNDARSAFN (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

Mentor – Ásmundur Sveinsson and Carl Milles
Sculpture

Runs until January 2024

ÁSMUNDARSAFN

Eygló Harðardóttir – It's Your Move
Paper-based works

Runs until November 19

Julie Lænkholm – Andvakandi
Installation, ecological sculpture
Ongoing, permanent

BERG CONTEMPORARY
Ian McKeever – Henge Paintings
Paintings

Runs until December 2

EINAR JÓNSSON MUSEUM

Hildur Henrýsdóttir – Hamskipti / Change of Heart
Mixed media, autobiographical works

Runs until January 2

Einar Jónsson – Sculpture Works & Garden
Sculpture

Permanent exhibition

GALLERY GRÓTTA
Ása K. Jónsdóttir – Unseen Energies
Paintings

Runs until November 11

GALLERY SKILTI
Lukas Bury – Zigaretten nach Berlin
Installation

Runs until December 15

GALLERY UNDERPASS
Sigga Björg Sigurðardóttir – Cross The Line

Runs until February 2024

GERÐARSAFN (KÓPAVOGUR ART MUSEUM)

Sculpture/Sculpture
Group exhibition, sculpture
Opens September 30
July 2024

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

Runs until December 31

GLERHÚSIÐ
Anne Carson & Ásta Fanney – Hesitation
Drawings and text-based works

Runs until November 12

HAFNARBORG CENTER OF CULTURE & FINE ART
Landscape for the Chosen Ones

Mixed media, group exhibition

Runs until December 3

VALUE: 40 Years Since the Founding of Hafnarborg
Exhibition featuring works acquired by the museum over the last fifteen years, some of which have not been previously shown at Hafnarborg.

Runs until December 30

HAFNARHÚS (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)
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

D50 Klävs Liepiņš & Renāte Feizaka – Doom Loop
Mixed media, installation

Runs until January 11

Collection Creatures
Digital & 3D artworks

Runs until January 2024

HÖFUÐSTÖÐIN
Shoplifter/Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir – Chromo Sapiens
Installation, colourful whole body experience

Permanent exhibition

18 GALLERY
Between the Window and the Door
Language-based mixed media

Runs until November 4

18 GRANDI
B. Ingrid Olson – Cast of Mind
Installation, mixed media

Runs until December 20

ICELANDIC PRINTMAKERS ASSOCIATION
Gunnhildur Þórðardóttir – Sticks
Mixed media

Runs until November 12

ÍÐNÓ
Maggi Gnúsari – Man of the People
Photography

Runs until November 5

KJARVALSSTAÐIR (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)
Kjarval and the 20th Century: When Modernity Anchored
Paintings, drawings

Runs until December 31

Our Art
Artworks selected by public

Runs until October 29

KAFFI LAUGALÆKUR
Eydís Rose Vilmundardóttir – Moments on a Dancefloor
Photography

Runs until November 3

KLING & BANG
Sequences XI: Can't See – Soil
Group exhibition, mixed media

Runs until November 26

LISTVAL
Ragnhildur Þóra Ágústsdóttir – Fögur Fyrirheit / Beautiful Promises
Watercolour paintings

Runs until November 25

Áslaug Íris Katrín Friðjónsdóttir & Ingunn Fjóra Ingbórsdóttir – In Harmony
Paintings and textile

Runs until January 2024

THE LIVING ART MUSEUM
Sequences XI: Can't See – Subterrain
Group exhibition, mixed media

Runs until November 26

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND

APPLIED ARTS

Lily Erla Adamsdóttir – Artist in Residence
Textile works

Runs until December 30

Dolinda Tanner
Ceramic, textile works

Runs until December 30

Lothar Grund – Archiving Drawings
Drafts, drawings and design

Runs until December 30

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

Sequences XI: Can't See – The Metaphysical Realm
Group exhibition, mixed media

Runs until November 26

Ásgrímur Jónsson – A Window in Reykjavík
Paintings

Runs until December 31

Egill Sæbjörnsson and Infinite Friends of the Universe
Mixed media, installation

Runs until February 25

Some Recent Works – New Acquisitions
New works in the museum's permanent collection

Runs until February 25

Resistance
Interdisciplinary works

Permanent exhibition

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ICELAND

If Garden Gnomes Could Talk
Photography

Runs until February 14

NORDIC HOUSE
Sequences XI: Can't See – Water
Group exhibition, mixed media

Runs until November 26

Under the Polar Ice
Mixed media, interactivity, workshops

Runs until March 31

PORTFOLIO GALLERY
Erla Þórarinsdóttir – 107.000 km/klst
Paintings

Runs until November 4

REYKJAVÍK MARITIME MUSEUM

Heimir Freyr Hlööversson – We Are Earth, We Are Water
Video installation

Runs until February 2

REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Gréta S. Guðjónsdóttir – 19, 24, 29, 34, 39 Fate and Destiny
Photography, testimonials

Runs until December 10

Anni Kinnunen – The Great Escape
Photography

Runs until January 28

SIGURJÓN ÓLAFSSON MUSEUM

Þuríður Sigurðardóttir – Home & Away
Paintings

Runs until Spring 2024

From Various Sources
Sculpture

Permanent exhibition

PULA
María Guðjohnsen – Digital Resurrection
3D animated art

Runs until November 19

Art Picks



FLÆÐI x Loft – November Art Market
Saturday November 4, 14:00
Loft Hostel
Free

You know that feeling when you go to an art exhibition and you really like a piece and then you look at the price tag and immediately do the Homer-Simpson-receding-into-the-bushes move? So do the fine folks behind FLÆÐI, who are throwing their third art market of the season where the wallet range is far more reasonable. With many local independent artists selling their own wares at their own booths, ready to talk your ear off about their work and haggle for deals, you won't have to deal with gallery prices or attitudes. It's the perfect place to get your holiday gift shopping done early for that art-lover in your life while knocking back some cold ones. RX



Bryndís Björnsdóttir – origin
Opens November 4
The Sculpture Association Garden
Free

Remember having to go to the doctor's office as a kid, which sucked, but it meant you got to go nuts on that wood-blocks-on-metal-wires toy? Did you know it's called a bead maze? We were today years old when we learned that. Bryndís Björnsdóttir must have learned that while crafting her new exhibition *origin*, which repurposes the epochal toy as a representation of the way humans have exploited our planet's natural resources and decimated ecosystems. Instead of the colourful wood blocks we loved to slide around, these ones are made of industrially produced salt stone intended as livestock feed. Childhood ruined? Yes. Yes, it is. RX



SHOPTALK#3: Varna
Tuesday November 7, 17:00
Nordic House
Free

When it comes to knowing the process behind an artist's work, there are those who prefer the ephemeral mystery and those who want every tiny detail. For the latter, the Nordic House's amazing SHOPTALK series puts cutting edge artists in the hot seat to go full process-dork. The third instalment features the incredible Greenlandic artist Varna, whose sudden burst onto the music scene backed by the new label Marvaða has been as refreshing as getting smacked in the face by the arctic wind. Go learn how she weaves traditional musical heritage with futuristic electronic production to create her spellbinding sounds. RX ■

Events 03.11–30.11

Concerts, comedy, movies and other happenings that defy categorization

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

Friday November 3

FM Belfast (DJ Set)

23:00 Auto Nightclub

Daníel Hjálmtýsson & Guests

20:00 Dillon

Sounds of Sleep Album Release Party

17:00 Fischersund

Benni Hemm Hemm & Óháði

17:00 Hotel Holt

DJ Óli Dóri

23:00 Kaffibarinn

Jazz Night

20:00 Kaffi Laugalækur

Iceland Airwaves Off-Venue

15:00 Lucky Records

Marí Album Release Show

18:00 Mengi

Arctic Waves

20:00 Nordic House

Hist og Album Release Show

16:00 Reykjavík Record Shop

Matthew Dear (DJ set)

22:00 Röntgen

Iceland Airwaves Off-Venue

15:45 Slippbarinn

Saturday November 4

Haunted Paradise: Halloween Party

20:00 Bíó Paradís

Síkkikettirnir, Jónfrí & Sveinn G

20:00 Dillon

Rebekka Blöndal

16:00 Forsetinncafé

The Reykjavík Punk Walk

14:00 Gröndalshús

Gabriel Ólafs x Reykjavík Orchestra

17:00 Harpa – Norðurljós

Iceland Airwaves Matinée: Arngerður & Una

12:00 Hallgrímskirkja

Center Hotels x Iceland Airwaves

Off-Venue

16:00 Jörgensen Kitchen & Bar

Vinny Vilbass & Simon fknhdsm

23:00 Kaffibarinn

Heart Attack! Drag Night

21:00 Kiki Queer Bar

Ári Árelíus & Dopamine Machine

20:00 Le Kock

Q's Fundraising Bingo Night

19:30 Loft Hostel

Iceland Airwaves Off-Venue

14:00 Lucky Records

SPOR | Nordic Affect + Lilja María

Ásmundsdóttir

21:00 Mengi

Letter From Iceland: Johanna

Sjunnesson & Mikael Lind

19:00 Nordic House

MC Myasnoi, MSEA, Freddie Lewis

& Andervel

18:00 R6013

Benni B-Ruff

22:00 Röntgen

Sunday November 5

Singer-Songwriter Night: Queer/Girl

Power

17:00 Gaukurinn

Iceland Airwaves Partner Event:

Durufélé Requiem

17:00 Hallgrímskirkja

Sunday Classics: Furie Terribile

16:00 Harpa – Norðurljós

Tumi Árnason & Magnús Trygvason

Eliassen

20:00 Hornið

King Lucky & Uncle Sam

22:00 Kaffibarinn

Iceland Airwaves Off-Venue

13:00 Lucky Records

Monday November 6

Bring The Laughs: Comedy Night

20:30 Gaukurinn

Silja Glömmi

22:00 Kaffibarinn

Tuesday November 7

Karaoke Night

20:00 Gaukurinn

Hrikalegur Kjöhleifur

22:00 Kaffibarinn

Lindy Hop Dance Night

20:00 Kex Hostel

Unglist

20:00 Tjarnarbió

Wednesday November 8

Fógetarnir

21:00 Dillon

Gísli Gunnarsson Album Listening

Party

20:00 Gaukurinn

Iceland Symphony Orchestra: Bartók

& Beethoven

19:30 Harpa – Eldborg

Sigurður Flosason Quintet

20:00 Harpa – Kaldalón

DJ Brynja (Girls Gang)

22:00 Kaffibarinn

Sunna Margrét, Serguei Spoutnik &

Róshildur

20:00 Kex Hostel

Karaoke with Two Non Blondes

21:00 Röntgen

International Days' Karaoke Night

20:00 Stúdentakjallarinn

Thursday November 9

Blues Night: Beggi Smári

21:00 Dillon

El Royalé & Morose

21:00 Gaukurinn

Gérard Lemarquis & Les Métèques

20:00 Hannesarholt

Iceland Symphony Orchestra Open

Rehearsal

10:00 Harpa – Eldborg

Kári Eglisson, Matthías Heimstock &

Nico Moreaux

20:00 Hotel Holt

DJ Guðný Jóns

22:00 Kaffibarinn

Korsilettarnar

20:00 Kex Hostel

Joni Mitchell Tribute Concert

20:00 Salurinn

Friday November 10

Flying Elbows

21:00 Dillon

ISTÁRN (NO), Fretmiden (NO) &

Forsmán

20:00 Gaukurinn

Crazy Kinky Coney Iceland

19:30 IÐNÓ

DJ Hendrik

23:00 Kaffibarinn

DJ KGB

20:00 Kex Hostel

Hausar

22:00 Stúdentakjallarinn

Saturday November 11

GG Blús

22:00 Dillon

Steinar Sigurðarson

16:00 Forsetinncafé

Apocalypsestick: November Noir

21:00 Gaukurinn

Tina Turner Tribute Show

20:00 Harpa – Eldborg

Roller Derby Triple Header

11:00 Hertz Sports Hall

Þorgerður Jóhanna

23:00 Kaffibarinn

Sucks To Be You, Nigel Album

Release Show

20:30 Kex Hostel – Gym &

Tonic

Snjófest 2024 Festival Warm Up

20:00 Kex Hostel

Korean Culture Festival

14:00 Reykjavík City Hall

Sunday November 12

Fathers' Day

20:00 Gaukurinn

Sunday Classics: Siggí String Quar-

ter

listasafn.is

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

Egill Sæbjörnsson and Infinite friends of the Universe



Egill Sæbjörnsson (1973). From the book When Egill met the Trolls and took them to Venice, 2017. Property of the artist.



Listasafn Íslands
National Gallery of Iceland

Event Picks



Haunted Paradise
November 4, 20:00
Bíó Paradís
Free

Are you not quite ready to let go of that Halloween spirit? If you're a true freak, every day is Halloween so why not keep it going over at Bíó Paradís! Organised by the insider team of spooky staff, the cinema will be transformed into a veritable Hieronymus Bosch tableau of a party, from the sublime music of Ronja, Madonna + Child, DJ Talk Nice 2 Me and Lottó to the tomfoolery of face-painting and costume contests, to the downright debauchery of homemade horror films and freaky art. Enter like a fresh baby seal emerging from a pond, leave getting spat out ass-first by a bird. This Haunted Paradise will be a freaky delight. RX



Hardcore All-Stars: Gaddavír,
Dauðýflin & ROHT
November 18, 20:00
Gaukurinn
1.500 ISK

Are you rock hard to the core? Do you think you're tough enough to handle some real punk rock from the mean streets of Reykjavík? And Akranes, too, actually... Well, then maybe you should put your money where your mouth is, put yourself to the test and go see the Hardcore All-Stars of Iceland! Coming in a triple-tie for number one most hardcore band, Gaddavír, Dauðýflin and ROHT will rip up the Gaukurinn stage for a mid-month reminder to stay tough out there in the cold and dark. If they can do it, so can you. So start practicing your windmills and kick-flips and harden up that core. RX



Kaffibarinn 30th Birthday Party
Weekend
November 24 & 25
Kaffibarinn
Free

Oh, Kaffibarinn. It's somehow strange to believe that you're turning 30 already, yet it also feels like that's too young. Like you've been around forever and you'll never go away. Like despite the renovations and paint jobs and addition of a cocktail menu – that still freaks out the old timers, but is actually quite nice – you have always been there and yet you're still so young. Like so many of your DJs and regulars who are like the furniture. If your 30th bash is anything like your 25th bash in 2018, then we are in for some extremely fun times which we may or may not remember. Most likely not. Happy birthday, KB! RX

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
artmuseum.is



Events 03.11-30.11

Concerts, comedy, movies and other happenings that defy categorization

16:00 Harpa - Norðurljós
Júlía & Ninja
 22:00 Kaffibarinn
Stroke
 20:30 Tjarnarbíó

Monday November 13
Language Café
 20:00 Gaukurinn
DJ TBA
 22:00 Kaffibarinn

Tuesday November 14
Karaoke Night
 20:00 Gaukurinn
Fu Kasiha
 22:00 Kaffibarinn

Wednesday November 15
Fógetarnir
 21:00 Dillon
Ya-Ha-Hass Queen! Drag Comedy
 20:00 Gaukurinn
Reykjavík Dance Festival
 17:30 IÐNÓ
 19:00 Tjarnarbíó
Leon S Kemp (Nordic Voyage)
 22:00 Kaffibarinn
Music of Kurt Weill
 20:00 Múlinn Jazz Club

Thursday November 16
Blues Night: Beggi Smári
 21:00 Dillon
Blúsbrot
 21:00 Gaukurinn
Poney Moon
 20:00 Hotel Holt
Þorsteinn Eyfjörð
 22:00 Kaffibarinn
DJ Ruby Francis
 20:00 Kex Hostel
Reykjavík Dance Festival
 14:00 IÐNÓ
 18:00 The National Theatre

19:30 Tjarnarbíó

Friday November 17
GusGus Afterparty
 21:30 Auto Nightclub
Stella Hauksdóttir Tribute
 18:00 Dillon
inZeros & Space Völvö
 21:00 Gaukurinn
GusGus
 19:30 & 22:00 Harpa - Eldborg
Iceland Symphony Orchestra: Philip Glass
 18:00 Harpa - Norðurljós
Jazz Night: Vegan No Rice
 20:00 Hornið
Duvtales & Kim Young iLL (NO)
 23:00 Kaffibarinn
Boy
 21:00 Kex Hostel
PAKK Collective | Non Mutually Inclusive #1
 20:00 Mengi
Reykjavík Dance Festival
 18:00 The National Theatre
 19:30 Tjarnarbíó

Saturday November 18
GusGus Afterparty
 21:30 Auto Nightclub
Edgar Rugais
 16:00 Forsetinncafé
Hardcore All-Stars: Gaddavir, Dauðýflin & ROHT
 20:00 Gaukurinn
GusGus
 19:30 & 22:00 Harpa - Eldborg
Reykjavík Women's Choir's 30th Anniversary
 16:00 Harpa - Norðurljós
Baby Rave With DJ Ívar
 11:00 IÐNÓ
Reykjavík Dance Festival

18:00 IÐNÓ
 19:00 Tjarnarbíó
Danni & Björn Salvador (Nordic Voyage)
 23:00 Kaffibarinn
DJ Ingvar Lucky
 20:00 Kex Hostel

Sunday November 19
When The Bleeding Stops
 21:00 Borgarleikhús
Sunday Classics: Works for Violin & Piano
 16:00 Harpa - Norðurljós
DJ Cyprie
 22:00 Kaffibarinn
Reykjavík Dance Festival
 17:00 & 19:00 Tjarnarbíó

Monday November 20
Bring The Laughs: Comedy Night
 20:30 Gaukurinn
Hrikalegur Kjóthleifur
 22:00 Kaffibarinn

Tuesday November 21
Karaoke Night
 20:00 Gaukurinn
DJ Júlala
 22:00 Kaffibarinn

Wednesday November 22
Fógetarnir
 21:00 Dillon
Sasquatch (US)
 21:00 Gaukurinn
Harry Knuckles
 22:00 Kaffibarinn
Brecker Brother's Tribute Band
 20:00 Múlinn Jazz Club
Benni Hemm Hemm
 12:15 Salurinn

Thursday November 23
Blues Night: Beggi Smári

21:00 Dillon
Kyiv Grand Ballet: The Nutcracker
 19:30 Harpa - Eldborg
Hilmar Jenson & Nico Moreaux
 20:00 Hotel Holt
Eva Lúna
 22:00 Kaffibarinn
DJ Teitur Magnússon Thanksgiving Special
 20:00 Kex Hostel

Friday November 24
Bee Bee & the Bluebirds
 21:00 Dillon
Smashing Pumpkins Tribute Show
 21:00 Gaukurinn
Kyiv Grand Ballet: The Nutcracker
 19:30 Harpa - Eldborg
Jazz Night: Rebekka Blöndal
 20:00 Hornið
DJ Óli Dóri
 20:00 Kex Hostel

Saturday November 25
Singletons
 21:00 Dillon
Faroese Jazz Combo
 16:00 Forsetinncafé
Kul & More
 20:00 Gaukurinn
Kyiv Grand Ballet: The Nutcracker
 19:30 Harpa - Eldborg
Diamond Dolls Album Release Show
 20:00 Kex Hostel - Gym & Tonic

Sunday November 26
Klío
 20:00 Gaukurinn
Sunday Classics: Romantic From A to Z
 16:00 Harpa - Norðurljós
DJ Lamp Vader
 22:00 Kaffibarinn

Monday November 27
Language Café
 20:00 Gaukurinn
KIMI Ensemble
 20:00 Harpa - Norðurljós
DJ Ómar E
 22:00 Kaffibarinn

Tuesday November 28
Karaoke Night
 20:00 Gaukurinn
Upprásin: Trailer Todd, Iðunn Einars & BKPM
 20:00 Harpa - Kaldalón
DJ Vala
 22:00 Kaffibarinn

Wednesday November 29
Fógetarnir
 21:00 Dillon
The King's Singers & Iceland Symphony Orchestra
 19:30 Harpa - Eldborg
DJ TBA
 22:00 Kaffibarinn
Havana 20th Anniversary Show
 20:00 Múlinn Jazz Club

Thursday November 30
Blues Night: Beggi Smári
 21:00 Dillon
Árstíðir
 20:00 Gaukurinn
The King's Singers & Iceland Symphony Orchestra
 19:30 Harpa - Eldborg
Sigríður Thorlacius
 20:00 Hotel Holt
Árni Sveinsson Disco Party
 22:00 Kaffibarinn
DJ Retronaut
 20:00 Kex Hostel ■

See more at events.grapevine.is

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Appy Listings

Some Of The Happiest Hours In Town

If your bar has a happy hour, email us on 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

BJÓRGARDURINN

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

SPLAKAFFI

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

Bravó

Laugavegur 22

With the weather getting worse and the days getting shorter, folks are naturally looking for every good excuse to stay inside somewhere cosy. And if you're gonna stay inside knocking back some cold ones, you want to do it as cheaply as you can for as long as possible. Nowhere downtown has you covered better than Bravó, with its eight-hour-long discounted shift, its cosy dive bar atmosphere and location smack-dab-downtown. Whether you park yourself for hours or stop in for a quick sip, you'll enjoy the reprieve.

Happy hours

Every day from 12:00 to 20:00

Beer for 750 ISK,

Wine for 1.000 ISK ■

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

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Discover Iceland menu

SLOW-COOKED COD - smoked lamb, almonds, truffles

SMOKED ARCTIC CHAR - horseradish, skyr, fried bread

GLAZED LAMB FILLET - celeriac, fennel, mashed potatoes, lamb glaze

RHUBARB PIE - marzipan, vanilla ice cream

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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

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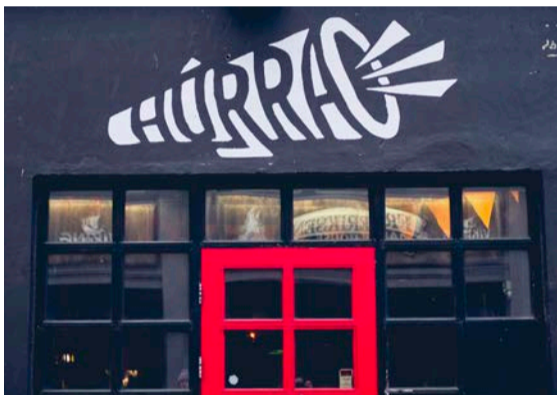
Music News



Benni Hemm Hemm Opens Up Radio Station

Contributing to the art project *Five Radio Stations*, presented by French endowment fund Lab'Bel, is multidisciplinary artist and musician Benni Hemm Hemm. As the name suggests, content for five radio stations is carefully crafted by diverse artists from around the world. Benni Hemm Hemm's station, *24 Hours at the End of the World*, consists of original material recorded by the artist during his

travels around Iceland. Ranging from music to conversations, the material is exactly 24 hours long, which is repeated on the station every day. The radio station was opened on October 21 and will be available until March 21, 2024. Listen to *Five Radio Stations* online at www.fiveradiostations.com or in record store Space Odyssey at Skólavörðustræti 22b.



Club Húrra Transformed Into Radar

The closure of club and venue Húrra came as a blow to Iceland's live music scene. With Húrra having been closed for the majority of 2023, the managers of beloved pub Bravó announced they'd be taking over the space, with an eye on transforming it into a hub of electronic music in Reykjavik. The new club, dubbed

Radar, is set to open the first weekend of November. Bravó's sound system will be moved to Radar, shifting the focus of live events over to Radar. Meanwhile, Bravó will receive a much needed TLC and a slight rebranding, emphasizing a more relaxed atmosphere than before.



Zara Larsson To Perform In Iceland

Swedish pop star Zara Larsson is scheduled to perform in Reykjavik next year. The Scandi songstress will take the stage at Laugardalshöll on March 16m 2024, as part of her upcoming Venus Tour. This isn't Larsson's first time in Iceland, as she performed a sold-out concert at the same venue back in 2017. In 2019,

she supported artist Ed Sheeran at his show at Laugardalsvöllur. Ticket sales start on November 9, with ticket prices ranging from 15.990 to 24.990 ISK. ■



Otherworldly Music

Naturally Connected

Tore Størvold's *Dissonant Landscapes* presents thoughtful reflections on

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGE Art Bicnick

AN INTRICATE RELATIONSHIP

I started exploring the relationships between music, nature and national identity," he continues.

This is one of the subjects in Tore Størvold's latest book, *Dissonant Landscapes*, which seeks to challenge the notions that Icelandic nature is inherently connected with Icelandic cultural phenomena. Associate professor of music at the University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, Størvold based the book on his PhD research at

Dissonant Landscapes' primary argument is that music has been the most imperative art form for presenting Iceland to the international society. "Along with music, these ideas about nature and landscape have become so important for maintaining an attractive image of the nation," he says.

Icelandic music is a lot more than that and most music is made here in the city – not on a glacier.

the University of Oslo. Having been a frequent visitor to Iceland since 2011, it's clear he has a good understanding of Icelandic society, as well as great respect for the music that's made here.

Whether these connections with nature are manufactured by parties with vested interests, or they're a true manifestation of Icelandic music making is still an interesting notion to consider: Is Icelandic music inextricably linked with nature?

There exists a widespread narrative about Icelandic music's connection with nature. Ever since the early days of Björk and The Sugarcubes, when Icelandic artists started receiving international attention, the story goes that music emanating from island is somehow innately linked to the geology of the place.

"So to begin with," starts Tore, "I actually wanted to avoid talking about the nature and landscape because I didn't want to play into the touristic, sensationalist narrative about Icelandic music. But then later on, I figured out that it's possible to do it in a kind of critical way. So for my PhD,

"I think in some ways, of course it is. Music takes place in a place, so by definition, it needs to be somehow influenced by your natural surroundings. But that link between music and nature is also a very cultural thing. It's not a natural thing. It's

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Icelandic nature, music and national identity

something that people have recognised and then propped up and celebrated and used as a branding tool to kind of market Icelandic music internationally,” answers Tore.

MUSIC AS A POLLUTER

An interesting point is that Icelandic music isn't exclusively used as a tool of the state or tourist industry to further their interests. It's also utilised by Icelandic musicians. Creating music that plays into the exoticist narrative of Iceland is a sensible decision for artists accustomed to working for peanuts.

“[Some] musicians are happy to kind of play along, play the part because it's a really effective way to get international attention,” Tore says. In the book's introductory chapter, the author presents the example of Kaleo's music video to their song “Save Yourself,” which presents the four-piece performing their song in the middle of a glacial lagoon.

In the chapter, the author points out that “the video presents several reflections, the most important one being that [...] Kaleo's video capitalises on the fact that Iceland [...] is defined by two entities: nature and music.”

“This is because there's so much economic incentive, because the commercial tourism industry is eager to promote Icelandic music abroad. So if you play the part, you get more money,” Tore elaborates.

Tore offers an interesting glimpse into both the musical and sociological aspects of Icelandic culture. In fact it is Tore's skillful writing that manages to capture the essential musical features of the artists he discusses. Expanding on Icelandic music's indivisible link with nature, Tore mentions Sigur Rós' 2013 album *Kveikur*.

“Where you look at the actual connections between music and landscape, I talk about *Kveikur*, and how it relates to living in a volcanic landscape with earthquakes, seismic activity, and how this has turned into a kind of musical style. [It's] full of explosive, fracturing sounds, dynamics, dissonance, feedback. There are some connections to nature, but that shouldn't be the whole story. Icelandic music is a lot more than that and most music is made here in the city – not on a glacier,” he says smiling.

LOCAL UNDERSTANDING VERSUS FOREIGN EXPECTATIONS

Then there's the question of the chicken and the egg. Does Icelandic music influence the country's external perception, driving up tourism numbers – or does increased tourism affect the output of Icelandic musicians, whose interests become

“There's so much promotion happening – so much marketing that's built into the festival, that it's kind of like a tourism event as much as a music festival,” Tore continues. “It's both.”

Resulting from the marketing of opportune music and the erroneous narratives spun around Icelandic culture, Tore points out the domestic effects it has. “This has effects on locals. They learn to see themselves as special because of all of this attention from the outside world. People walk around with a kind of dissonance, meeting the expectations of the foreigner versus just doing stuff for the locals,” he argues.

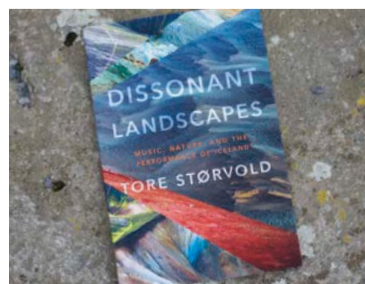
This dissonance takes on a wider meaning presented in the title. It refers to the dissonance between domestic comprehension of Iceland and, in Tore's words, “the story that's being sold to the outside world.” ■

There's so much promotion happening – so much marketing that's built into the festival, that it's kind of like a tourism event.

vested in conjuring up a more exotic image of Iceland?

“I think it's a kind of circular process. Over the past decade, especially after the crash, when you have this explosive buildup of mass tourism, the government and private companies like Icelandair realise the value of music for promoting an attractive image of the nation. So you have this gradual entwinement of music and tourism, where certain parts of the music industry are fused to the tourism industry,” he says – as is the case with the Iceland Airwaves festival.

Dissonant Landscapes is available for purchase online at the Wesleyan University Press and other book retailers.



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About Last Night

One Last Húrra

Eulogising an icon of Reykjavík nightlife

WORDS Rex Beckett
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

Was it somehow different in Húrra? Didn't this happen at every bar? Was it the ghost in the basement – the one I encountered weekly while opening the happy hour shift in 2018, lighting candles downstairs and seeing the shadow pass me in the mirror – whose chaotic presence fed the joyful misrule and oft questionable mayhem in that space? Was it the bookers who knew exactly how to curate a perfect calendar of concerts and DJs? Was it all just the hipsters and booze and drugs?

After it was closed by geniuses who attempted to turn it into a high-end sports bar, Húrra's post-lockdown redux was not anything like it was before. That appealing greasy sheen it once had, like the iridescence of water and oil pooling together in a gutter, was gone.

It's all a blur, but I remember it all. Every night that started and ended there. Every trú nó with a stranger, every pre-gig backstage panic attack, every concussion I sustained, every circle of friends I danced in, every lime I chopped, every Air-

It was twelve years ago tonight (Halloween) that I sat alone by the bar – then known as Bakkus – dressed up as Catwoman and met my now ex-husband. Five years later, we would be a few metres away – now known as Húrra – standing in the doorway leading to the dance floor, where that relationship would crumble beyond repair.

Falling in love and losing it all. That's all that happened in that place, in multitudes of iterations, while we danced and drank and smashed into the smoking area and bruised our

It's all a blur, but I remember it all. Every night that started and ended there.

legs on the stage and cut the line by knowing "someone" and stayed way after "allir út!" had been cried too many times. Where we spilled into Naustin and the sunlight at 05:00, where we would stay sipping our to-go beers until the last straggler not getting invited to the afterparty would concede and stumble home.

waves show I saw, every bucketful of toilet sludge I scooped up, every shot, every bump, every kiss, every fuck.

I miss it all yet I don't want it back.

We just never know when it will be our last hurrah. ■



Musical Connections

No Man Is An Island

Faroese artist Elinborg Pálsdóttir on the creative bond between Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

WORDS Irina Shtreis
IMAGE Lea Kampmann

upcoming shows at Iðnó and Kex Hostel.

"I stayed in Iceland for a few months earlier this year," she recalls. "Everyone was so nice to me so I felt as if I was home. I had never felt it anywhere abroad. I don't why, but even when Icelanders come to the Faroe Islands they have a homey feeling somehow. It makes you want to come back."

From the start, Iceland felt welcoming. One of Elinborg memories of visiting Iceland for the first time is of a TV show on RÚV that was featuring her big sister Eivør. For Elinborg, those ventures were a chance to hone her skills as a performer. "Every time Eivør played

"Iceland has played such a big role. Airwaves, for example, opened doors to many Faroese artists. The Faroese scene wouldn't be as diverse as it is now without the support of the music industry there and collaboration with Icelandic artists."

That said, it is the support of the Faroe Music Export that really made things happen for the artists of the archipelago. Elinborg admits that the launch of the Faroese export office in 2019 was game-changing. Although somewhat younger than Iceland Music Export, a vanguard of local talent since 2006, the FMX reshapes the artistic landscape of the archipelago.

"The Faroese music industry has blossomed since the Faroe Islands music export was founded four years ago. It's such a gift for us Faroese artists to have a platform such as FMX to turn to. It gives us more opportunities for collaboration and helps us get our music out to a broader audience. [Founder of FMX] Glenn Larsen has such a fiery soul and has done a tremendous amount of work for the Faroese music industry."

Still, Iceland casts a spell. "I recently played with Lea Kampmann and Icelandic artist K.óla, and that was a really beautiful experience. We went to a summer house together, wrote a few songs and then performed there at Kex a few days later. We were standing on stage together and it felt very safe. That's the memory I'll always treasure." ■

Each year the connection between the artistic communities of Iceland and the Faroe Islands grows stronger. Through personal and

Iceland has played such a big role. Airwaves [...] opened doors to many Faroese artists.

professional connections between the two countries, the confluence of both places seems increasingly prevalent. Some even go as far to make Reykjavík their home, like Faroese musicians Janus Rasmussen, Sakaris, Guðrið Hansdóttir and Eivør Pálsdóttir. Although those last two later returned to the native islands, both Guðrið and Eivør have maintained a spiritual and creative bond with the Icelandic capital.

LONG-TIME VISITOR, FIRST TIME PERFORMER

With its inception in 2019, the Faroe Music Export ensures the islands' presence at Iceland Airwaves. This year's edition features four artists revealing different facets of the archipelago's contemporary music. Among these acts is Elinborg Pálsdóttir, a songwriter who travelled to Iceland for the first time at the age of eight and has long dreamt about performing at Airwaves. Now, on a visit to her mother's house in Syðrugøta (also the home of Faroese open-air G! Festival), Elinborg brims with excitement about her

a show there, I would go along. I was also performing with her in the early days. We played together at Harpa which was an unforgettable experience. As I got older, I decided to go on my own and eventually got my own gigs."

STALWART PATRON OF FAROESE MUSIC

Collaboration with Icelandic music industry professionals became essential for Elinborg, who has been working with FOH engineer Hallur Jónsson. As her debut album grad-

We were standing on stage together and it felt very safe. That's the memory I'll always treasure.

ually takes shape, the artist hopes to get more Icelanders involved. Talking about the artistic community here, Elinborg exudes gratitude.

Catch Faroese artists Aggrasoppar, Marianna Winter, Jazzygold, and Elinborg perform at IA 2023. More details are available on icelandairwaves.is



Track By Track Broken Hearts And Broken Cars

Hipsumhaps tackles life's hardships

WORDS Hipsumhaps
IMAGE Supplied by Hipsumhaps

If you've been following Icelandic music in the last few years, there's a good chance you are familiar with the artist Hipsumhaps. The brainchild of musician Fannar Ingi Friðbjólfsson, Hipsumhaps' music epitomises everyday bliss. Their latest album, *Ást & Praktík*, was released on October 1. Oh and by the way, we'll definitely steal that song title.

saxophone solo. My heart disease is an inspiration for the drum progression. A bit of a squirly hi-hat sound from the drum machine mixed with live drums.

Á ÉG AÐ HAFA ÁHYGGJUR?
I love the vibe on this one. The demo was called "Age of Content," which is an awesome song title, by the way. If you're reading this you have no rights to use it. Kidding. You can use it.

ful. Feels lost. This song became something else when we recorded it at Sundlaugin.

ÁSTIÐ
An ode to this day's youth. Their love and other struggles. A non-binary waltz.

SKATTEMUS
Skattemus felt relevant as a song title for my fiancée's tune since we lived in Denmark for a year. The

This is a song about my old car. My first car.

GÓÐIR HLUTIR GERAST HÆÆÆGT
This is a song about my old car. My first car. I've been avoiding translating my song titles to English but this one says something about good things happening slowly. Which is pretty on point for the recording process. It took us over 10 attempts to land this one. Worth it.

SMS
The lyrics probably sound like bullshit binary unless you had an old Nokia cellphone. The letters I shout out in the opening verse are the ones that appear on the screen when you hit the keypad while texting on these phones. What does it say? That's for you to find out, buddy.

HUGMYNDIN UM ÞIG
We started recording a love song. But then I didn't agree with the idea of it. It sounded too naive. So I rewrote the lyrics thinking about the idea of myself making me want to become a better person. Even more naive, but hey.

ANNAN HEIM
It started off with an 808 and guitar melody. I was listening to a lot of Moby and Fred Again and their soundscape is so sad and beauti-

album was mostly written during our stay in Aarhus. I love this song.

ÁST & PRAKTÍK
The ultimate pillow-talk. Title track. The mood was inspired by a song on an album I found in my dad's old vinyl collection, "Total Control" by The Motels.

1, 31
I bought a small AKAI MIDI controller that I could keep in my lap and play around with while watching TV. I'm no piano player, but the arpeggiator on this one is all me. I just turned 31 when I started writing this song and I connected with that number. It's a prime number so nothing adds up but 1 and the number itself. This one is for my obsessions.

ÞRJÚ ORÐ
Last but not least. This was one of the first song ideas I had for this album. I always called it "Bowie" because of the chord progression at the end. If you're reading this then thank you for listening to our album. ■

GLEÐITÍÐINDI
I wanted to kick off the album with a happy jam. This is the first song that had me and Kiddi feeling like we were on to something. My little cousins reassured me that it's good.

HJARTA
This one follows the story of a hopeless romantic. That screams for a



Filthy Interview

Jazzists With A Dark Soul

Forsmán's brave new world

WORDS Francesca Stoppani
IMAGE Art Bicnick

In this Filthy Interview, I sat down with two members of the black metal band Forsmán – Haukur and Viktor. These young Icelanders came into the black metal scene fists first with their interesting blend of influences and dark, nihilistic lyrics.

Forsmán's music is black metal at its core but they've added elements to their upcoming release that make the sound distinctly theirs. Viktor describes it as if jazz musicians decided to sprinkle a bit of death and grindcore into the mix, resulting in a sound that's atmospheric, heavy, highly technical, almost psychedelic and doom adjacent. With three of the band members having studied jazz music at the local music high school, it's no surprise that their music would incorporate unconventional (for metal) elements.

HERE COME THE NORWEGIANS

Forsmán has an exciting gig lined up on November 10 at Gaukurinn with Norwegian bands Istárn and Fremtiden. The opportunity came up when they received an email from these Norwegian bands, who knew Forsmán's music thanks to a friend.

After months of performing at the same venues in Iceland, Forsmán is eager to break free from the monotony. "We had always had the goal of going out of the country to play," says Haukur, going on to speak of the band's growth. "Even if you saw us last year, it's not going to be the same. We just have a better idea of who we are and what we want," Viktor points out – another reason not to miss this all-Nordic gig at Iceland's most popular venue.

Forsmán also wants to draw attention to the upcoming Andkristni Festival, scheduled for December 21-22 at Gaukurinn bar. This festival, rooted in the black metal tradition,

Forsmán was formed towards the end of 2018 and now comprises guitarist Haukur, bassist and singer Viktor, drummer Kári, and guitarist, singer, and lyricist Oddur – but it took them a few years to solidify their line-up. They didn't play their first gig until January 2020 and released their first EP, *Dönsum í Logans Ljóma*, in 2021. The goal of the production was to adhere to the formula and create a proper Icelandic black metal soundscape.

Forsmán's lyrics are deeply nihilistic, often exploring the subject of religion, particularly organised religion and the disillusionment people experience when their faith is shaken. One of their approaches is to take old texts and poems, piecing them together in a way that reveals the contradictions and illusions inherent in these belief systems.

Even if you saw us last year, it's not going to be the same. We have a better idea of who we are and what we want.

"There is a lot of irony and hypocrisy in humanity in general. Not only in religion," says Haukur, emphasising the rage-fuelled sentiments that prevail in their music and their inclination to draw inspiration from old Icelandic poets such as Matthías Jochumsson, the author of the Icelandic national anthem.

has a history spanning over two decades and promises to be a dark and immersive experience for all. ■

Make sure to keep an eye on Forsmán on Instagram at @forsman-iceland and don't miss their upcoming performance with Istárn and Fremtiden on November 10 and the Andkristni Festival in December.

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Food Guide **Festival Fuel For Body And Soul**

The Grapevine's picks for staying fed while running around town

WORDS The Reykjavik Grapevine
IMAGES Art Bicnick

town serving up these scrumptious dumplings to the masses – or the handful of people able to fit at any one time within its dichroic glass walls. Lest you fear that loading up on carbs will drag you down, Kemuri also serves up sick beats, so you'll keep the party going while you nosh.

THE HUMBLE HOTDOG AT BÆJARINS BEZTU TRYGGVAGATA 1

There is a reason there is always – and we mean always – a line at the hotdog stand. It's consistent. You know what you're going to get and you know it's not going to set you back too much money. It also won't take a long time to chow down if you're pressed for time between

eh. We strongly recommend getting a side of pickles, and some extra spicy sauce alongside your falafel wrap. Late nights don't translate to a grift here; the family is all smiles no matter the time of day.

DEVITOS LAUGAVEGUR 126

Even bad pizza is good pizza and Devitos is better than bad, it's good. Another staple of the Icelandic late night bites for over 25 years, this place is sure to sort you out at the end of a long shift at the hotel or a long line at the bar bathroom. Now stop your yapping and grab a slice with pepperoni, pineapple and cream cheese like a real native.

When stamina is the name of the game, the last thing you want is a grumbling tummy distracting you from enjoying the spectacle on stage.

Unless this is your first Iceland Airwaves, you know the drill and you're likely reading this during a quick respite before running off to the next off-venue or official gig. It's the busiest weekend of the year in Reykjavik! When stamina is the name of the game, the last thing you want is a grumbling tummy distracting you from enjoying the spectacle on stage.

We put together this definitive guide to staying fed and fuelled as the festival rages.

PIEROGI POWER AT KEMURI HVERFISGATA 82

It's cold out and you want something hearty. Nothing fits the bill better than the humble pierogi. Luckily, there's a brand new spot in

concerts. Bonus points for its location smack dab between Grapevine HQ and the IA Centre.

LEGITIMATELY GOOD FOOD AT ARABIAN TASTE LAUGAVEGUR 87

"The service is so friendly!" seems to be the common refrain one hears about Arabian Taste. The Syrian family-run restaurant has been serving joy to hungry Reykjavikings through plates of torpedo lookalike kibbeh – pounded bulghur wheat stuffed with spiced minced meat, deep fried to crusty goodness – smokey lamb kebabs, chopped baba ghanoush and fresh tabbouleh.

CATCHING THE TRAIN AT OSUSHI TRYGGVAGATA 13

One of the reasons this sushi joint is consistently named one of the best family-friendly joints in town is also a good reason to consider it good festival food: you don't have to wait to be served. Walk in, take a seat (it's polite to acknowledge the staff and be told to take a seat), and take your pick of the plates of sushi making their way around the moving track. Just a little peckish? A couple plates will do ya. Monstrously hungry? Stack those plates as high as the eye can see! And do it all on your time. Huzzah. ■

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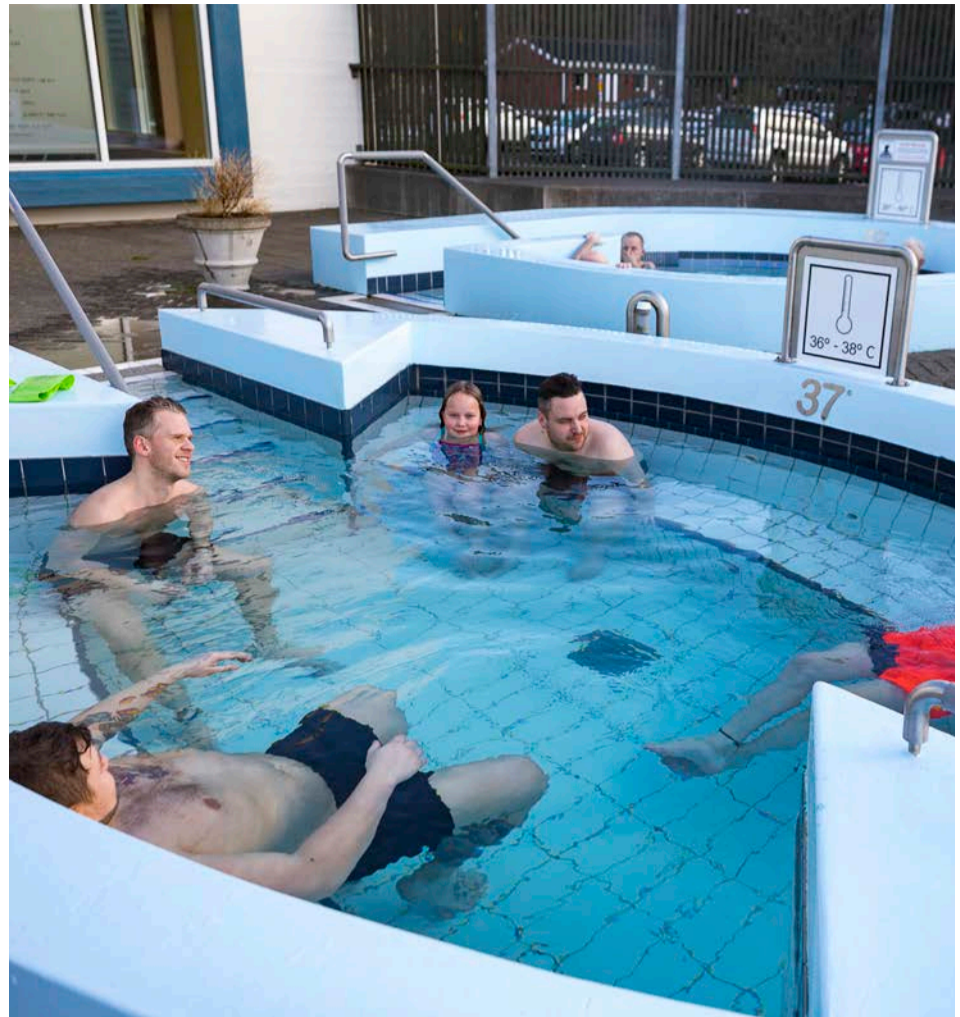
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From The Archives

Where To Cure Your Fe

A handy survival for post-Airwaves or any other time you've imbibed one to

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Art Bicnick, Ugo Carmeni

body with at least a bit of dignity as you're getting ready for another night of rounds and rounds of pints? Here're some of our tips to help out:

THE POOL

Everybody knows that when you're hungover, your body is dehydrated and you need to drink loads of water. What about soaking in loads of water? We think it works. Iceland might be the best country in the world to test this theory. With the abundance of swimming pools in Reykjavik, you don't have to go far. Even better, you don't have to splurge on experiences like the Blue Lagoon, as there's a myriad of pools available within walking distance from your flat, hotel, or even gig venue. Check out the website for public swimming pools in Iceland at sundlaugar.is. Pro tip: sitting for hours in a hot tub might make things even worse, try going for an actual swim or at least change it up between hot and cold tubs.

THE FOOD

It's better to start preparing early. The food you eat the night before can seriously affect whether you're feeling well the next morning. But assuming it's too late and your hangover is here, we got you cov-

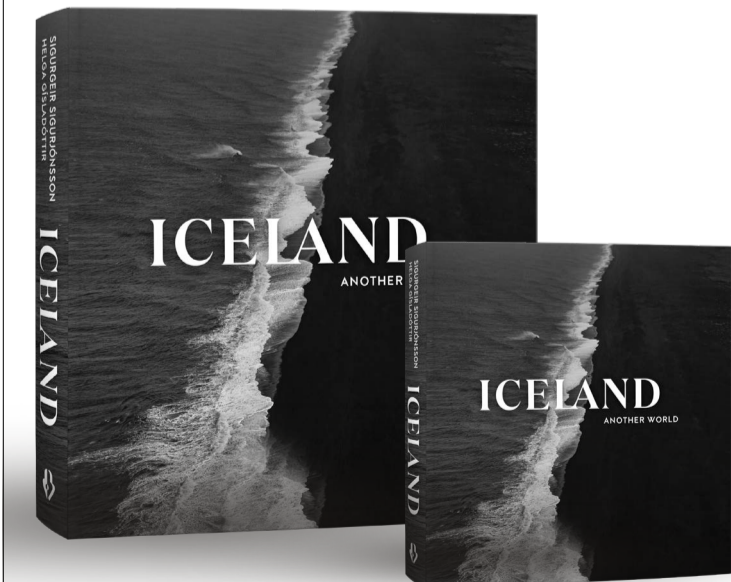
ered. Scientifically, it's best to eat potassium-rich foods to cure a hangover, but we all know that once you're there the only thing you're craving is some junk food. Suggestions from our team differed, but there are tons of restaurants and food stalls in town to put you back on your feet. Consider trying Arabian Taste, Hlöllabátur or Hraðlestinn.

THE JUICE

Speaking of potassium again, we've heard spinach has it all. Oftentimes when hungover you can't even think of eating anything ever again. Our advice: drink it. Local juicery Joe & the Juice even has a name for it - 'Green Shield'. This green juice will not only cure your hangover, but will also make your body stronger and less susceptible to any outside dangers the next festival night might bring. Those pesky germs don't stand a chance against your newly boosted immune system.

THE NAP

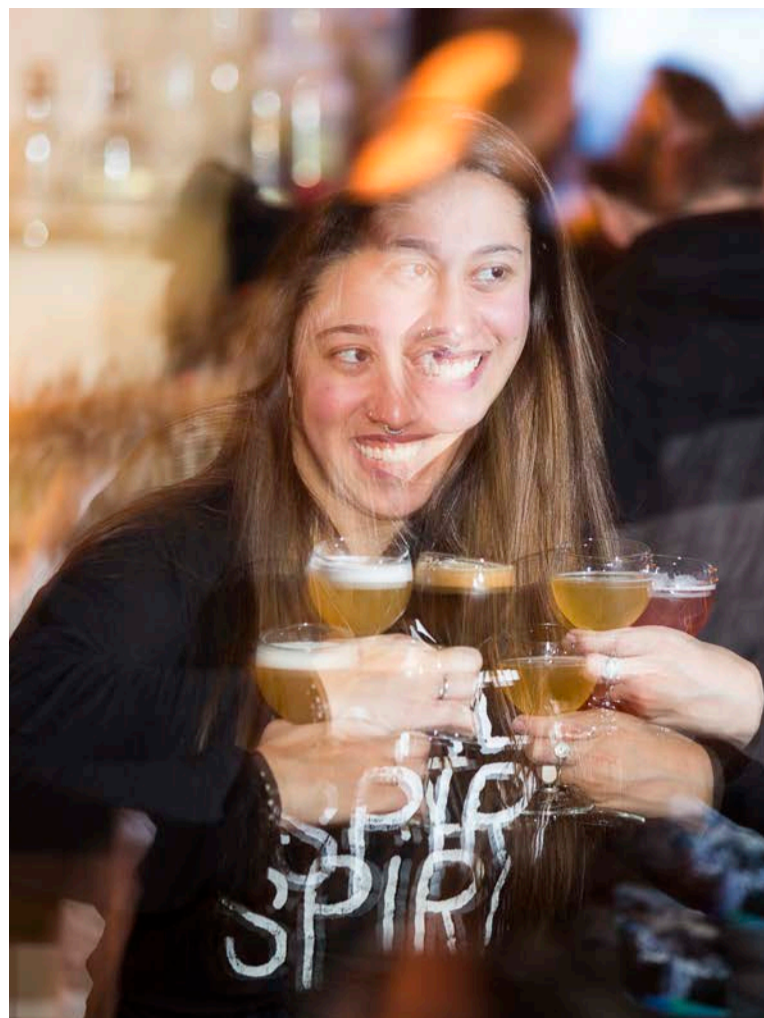
This one is the most budget-friendly advice on our list. If you've feeling unwell, just take a nap. The next concert doesn't start until well into the evening, so you do have the luxury of sleeping in. Yes, we know



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stival Hangover

o many

it might be harder to fall asleep, and yes, we're also aware of FOMO, but take our word – it's better to oversleep a concert than show up there feeling like you'd rather be dead. If curing a hangover at home sounds boring for you, maybe check out a museum? We don't know what the

consequences of taking a nap in one of those might be though. Our best suggestion – Höfuðstöðin, with its fluffy walls and colourful installations. It might not take your headache away, but can certainly bring some peace of mind.

THE STRAIGHT BACK AT IT

Some people say that the best way to cure a hangover is... to just keep drinking. We agree that a cold beer tastes better than coffee on a festival morning after, but beware: drink responsibly. Avoid mixing

drinks, order smaller quantities and take breaks. Experience shows that sometimes swapping a gin and tonic for just tonic won't make a difference on how much fun you're having, but you will thank yourself later. That being said, if you throw all of our advice together and have a

bloody mary after a morning swim, a nap and a good meal, then god, you'll be unstoppable. See you at the party, baby, you're golden. ■

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Restaurant Review

Sup, Sip and Skál!

From foraged craft cocktails to shrimp heads, this Icelandic gastro-pub ex

WORDS Shruthi Basappa
IMAGE Art Bicnick

If one were to say that the success of Hlemmur Mathöll has centred on Skál!, they wouldn't be wrong. From day one of their operations, Skál! has managed to exceed expectations and defy easy categorisation, with the food and drinks maintaining an enviously high standard in terms of sheer deliciousness and affordability.

concocted dishes – the gastropub moniker comes naturally.

Things are slightly different today at Skál!. Gísli has moved on to focus on his Vestmannaeyjar-based projects and Danish chef Thomas Lorentzen has ably taken over the reins at the beloved spot.

Truth be told, despite its steadfastness, Skál! did suffer from bouts of inconsistency that peaked during the departures or absences of head chefs. In the past couple of years since Thomas' arrival, that consistency long associated with this restaurant, has resurfaced. Even from his early days, one could sense that the legacy dishes of Skál! would prove to be limiting for a chef of his calibre. Boasting head chef stints at a smattering of respected Danish establishments, including Restau-

ICELANDIC GASTRO FARE

While we are often late to global trends here, a group of ingenious entrepreneurs expanded the definition of a gastropub while redefining casual dining in an extremely challenging market. Björn Steinar and Gísli Grímsson from Saltverk, Iceland's best known sea salt, and chef Gísli Matthías Auðunsson from Slippurinn were the stellar team behind Skál! that started it all.

When I first wrote about Hlemmur Mathöll's opening, I simply called it Mathöll, ending the article wondering if the concept would be a paradigm shift in the local culinary scene. Six years later, food halls have become so commonplace, they seem to mushroom all over the country, offering sameness in different locations. Rarely do any make the cut that renders each distinct.

Not so with the OG, however. Hlemmur Mathöll continues to be the heavyweight, showing others how it's done. Here, the recipe for a successful food hall is in plain sight: choose ambitious ventures with originality and quality, and a good mix of big name brands and spunky newcomers. A more recent addition to the recipe for success I simply must add having experienced disastrous dining experiences in other mathölls: cutlery offered by individual stalls.

Did Skál! set out to be a gastropub, or has it ever called itself one? Not at all.

Did Skál! set out to be a gastropub, or has it ever called itself one? Not at all. But given the equal focus on brews and braises – you could pop in for a glass of minerally natural wine, craft cocktails, or beers from local and guest breweries, and pair it with plate after plate of carefully

rant Kadeau, Thomas has been bold with his additions to the Skál! menu.

It isn't always easy to step into the shoes of someone like Gísli. It is here at Skál! that we had our first taste of cod wings. It is also here that we saw the humble beet elevated to more than its earthy roots,



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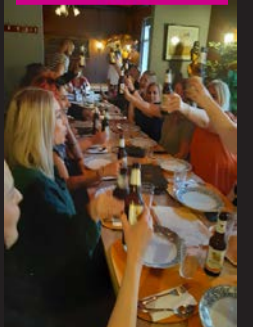


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emplifies joy in brevity

prompting repeat orders through the evening. It is also where Fanney Dóra, when she was the head chef, debuted her smoked carrot dish, silken ribbons of carrots cured in soy and söl, at once smoky, salty and reminiscent of smoked fish, prompting fall-short copycats across town.

OF SESAME OIL COCKTAILS AND SHRIMP HEADS

Skál! has always redefined trends. Before anyone had heard about natural wines, barring the handful of Copenhagen transplants (who'd proudly point out the lack of availability), Skál! introduced us to that zippy, bubbly, sometimes fickle world. They experimented with and executed a cocktail with soy and sesame oil (a damn good one at that!) before craft cocktails became commonplace. Small plates found

(medium rare cooked lamb fillet dusted in leek ash), one pristinely creamy quenelle of sunchokes spaced slightly apart from its darker black garlic counterpart, the respite of green in the pureed parsley. It is a beautifully composed dish both on the plate and the palate, proving once again that small plates aren't simply code for lazy tapa portions.

BEYOND SEASONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Buying local (veljum íslenskt) has been championed for so long in Iceland that it is easy to forget that quality often doesn't configure in that equation. Restaurants, however, have long been the silent champions of local, seasonal, high quality produce one doesn't always see on store shelves. Skál! has been persistent in this regard. Be it the

is, is really the reason many continue to return to Skál!

Vegetarians and vegans need not fret. Sure the beet dish has been struck off this new menu (gasp and horror!), but I admire that Thomas has eased us into the transition with a smoky, charred zucchini (2150 ISK) that really is a delight.

The beverage flight is as dedicated to its craft as the food. Natural wines are plentiful by the glass, and chances are they will have your favourite open by the bottle, like the very affordable and pleasing Succes cuca de llum. Mæja Sif Danielsdóttir will happily walk you through this exciting landscape if you are a newcomer. I recently had a glass of expressive zippy, floral leaning Gruner Veltliner from Claus Presinger that made for a great night-cap.

Turning foraging for the masses into a whole new experience are the cocktails and drinks. Urban and rural lines blur with ingredients like pineapple weed, angelica and lovage central to the libations. Helmed by acclaimed bartender Keli Ingi, whose work I have been earnestly following since his Nostra days. Here he marries the Skál! principle of local with his chef-like approach to ingredients. He also mixes mocktails with as much care and complexity as he does his cocktails. Instead of too-sweet ginger beer tumblers, expect herby, bitter, fruity and smoky. The three citrus gimlet (2950 ISK) is seemingly simple but, like many of his drinks, hides a depth of technique and time working with ingredients. The seasonal lemonades are homages to summers past with rhubarb beating others in popularity.

What Skál! does with aplomb is deliver on that sweet spot of creative fine dining that doesn't break the bank. It doesn't preach its principles about food; instead, it is a lively, joyous celebration of flavour. Their continued ambition and dedication to technique and quality puts Skál! notches above stand-alone restaurants professing to do the same, but delivering none of the chutzpah or originality seen here. Whether it is for a simple snack with wine, an intimate dinner with a friend, or a rambunctious group seeking something electric, Skál! has you covered. ■

Skál! has always redefined trends. Before anyone had heard about natural wines, Skál! introduced us to that zippy, bubbly, sometimes fickle world.

new meaning and expression here, then with their cauliflower a la buffalo wings, with the nicest pickled celery, and now with their deep-fried spot prawn heads that are a crackling delight of texture and heady flavours, one whose return I fervently await.

It has been heartening to see a dedicated test kitchen at Skál! The kitchen regularly posts its exploits on Instagram, prompting loyal diners to grab a bite of whatever it is the kitchen is working out. Quite popular in Europe, but rarely seen on menus here, a dish of retired dairy cow was on a recent lunch menu, which I regretfully missed. The skirt steak (3550 ISK), despite its popularity, has never been my favourite; the meat is too often too stringy and remains nondescript despite the tasty accompaniments.

The lamb (2950 ISK) however, consistently delivers big flavours on what otherwise looks like a very simple composition: here is a pink roundel with a thin black ring around

goat meat "shepherd's pie," foraged pineapple weed and angelica, or the hand-dived scallops, dining here has that rooted-in-Iceland feeling to it. The menu rotates often and reflects the seasons in a thought-provoking fashion, moving beyond fads.

Take those aforementioned scallops for instance. Around their debut they used to be Faroese, with little squirts of rhubarb studded through. Then Thomas' duet with the Westfjörd scallops, with slices of the meat, layered between paper thin discs of turnip, and a milky cucumber sauce, served alongside an open toast of smoked scallop roe is now in its most pristine avatar — served ice-cold, in the shell, with a tinglingly refreshing red currant granita and hazelnut oil (2750 ISK). The horseradish provides the kick necessary to jolt through the creamy bites and all the temperatures and textures elevate it to a memorable spoonful. This dedication to work and rework ingredients and dishes into versions that keep getting better when you thought they simply were perfect as

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Islanders **Passions In Progress**

Bergur Þórisson talks trombones, Björk and vintage espresso machines

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Art Bicnick

"This is my Covid project," Bergur Þórisson says as he welcomes me into his Grandi studio on a crisp October morning. Musical director for Björk, Grammy-nominated engineer and a member of the neo-classical post-rock duo Hugar, Bergur also restores and builds recording equipment. But as we meet, building a studio from scratch is the first thing Bergur wants to talk about. Just a few days ago, he recorded the soundtrack to a Star Wars computer game with the Reykjavik Orchestra and today he's already diving into another project. As I apologise for making him wake up early to chat – after all, he must be very busy – Bergur shrugs. "I'm always working on something."

My involvement in music started pretty early. I was studying the trombone. When I was a kid, my friends and I had a band, playing a kind of jazz-style music. We were 12 or 13 years old and played every weekend – at birthday parties, various school events and weddings.

Being a trombone player was the mission of my life. I wanted to study in New York. When I was 18, I went to auditions and I got into three amazing schools. I realised at that moment, "Holy shit, do I really want to be a trombone player for the rest of my life?" I had a nice scholarship offer, but living in New York is extremely expensive. It would mean I'd owe money to the bank for the rest of my life. I decided not to go and thought that maybe the next year I could go to Berlin or somewhere in Europe where education is cheaper or free.

In the meantime, my trombone teacher had a recording studio in his basement, and we made a deal that I would help him as his assistant in the studio and he would teach me trombone while preparing for those auditions in New York. I was there basically every day.

I already had a lot of experience working in recording studios. When I decided not to go to New York, I started getting calls about working in studios with all kinds of music. It was then that I got my first big job with Ólafur Arnalds. So I never ac-

Holy shit, do I really want to be a trombone player for the rest of my life?

tually went to study trombone and I realised that *this* is what I wanted to do the whole time – I wanted to work in music, just not as a trombone player.

BJÖRK'S TRUSTED PARTNER

I believe that you can maximise your chances of being lucky by putting in the work. You can say that I was super lucky to get the call to work with Björk – and I was – but I had already put in a lot of work. I had been working with Ólafur Arnalds, Sigur Rós, Jóhann Jóhannsson and other amazing artists. It was very likely that I would get lucky one way or another – either to work with her or someone else.

the project or anything specific, but I immediately responded, "Yep." I called everybody, rearranged all my plans and I've been working with her since. It's been eight years now.

In the beginning, it was a regular recording engineer job; just sitting down and doing the computer work. Now it's become a more personal relationship. We do all the recordings and make albums together. I also take care of all the concerts and rehearsals for the shows. She trusts me with a lot of things.

When I stopped touring with Ólafur Arnalds, I promised myself I wouldn't tour again unless it was with my own music. But when Björk asked me to come with her on tour and play keyboards, I couldn't really say "no." These days, I mostly play keyboards, a little bit of trombone, bass clarinet and a digital flute.

When we started working together, Björk was living in New York for half a year, so we used to travel quite a lot back and forth. I've become pretty good at setting up a studio in an

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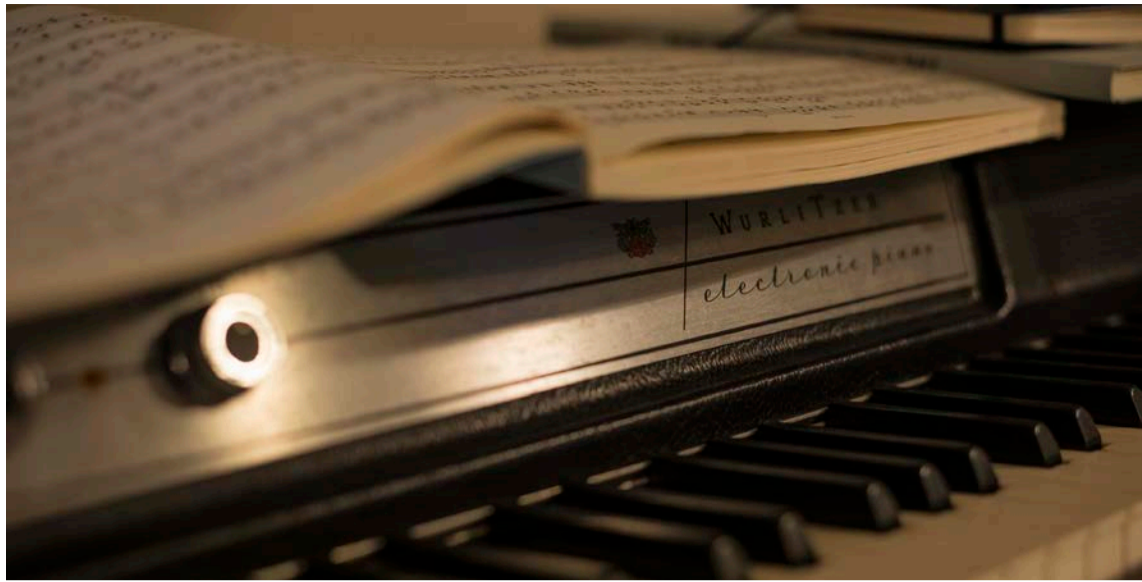
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Airbnb or a hotel room. For example, we recorded a lot of the vocals for the *Utopia* album in the Dominican Republic. I would get a phone call: "Hey, can you get on a flight in four hours?" So I had to make sure I always had everything I might need.

OOPS, WE MADE AN ALBUM

On the side of everything else, I continued making music with the

imental phase, so a large part of the show might be improvised. But Airwaves is such a legendary festival for us in the music business. At least for my generation, it's where everything started – where everybody saw their first big shows and got introduced to all this music. I was 15 when I went to Airwaves for the first time. We would make playlists and share mp3s on a thumb drive. It's a very sentimental thing to

It's really funny to call it a side project because we have a record contract with one of the biggest record companies in the world.

guitar player from the wedding band I played with as a kid. We never really had any plan, but we were making songs under the name Hugar and all of a sudden we had an album and we didn't know what to do with it. This was when Spotify was new in Iceland. We decided to put it on Spotify and we made a website where you could download it for free.

The album blew up on Spotify. I don't even know where it's at now – 50 million streams or something. Suddenly, we got a lot of interest from different people and record companies. We had no idea what we were doing; we were just making music and hanging out in the studio. Then we signed with Sony Music in America and made a few more albums. My band partner, Pétur Jónsson, is an architect. Both of us have a lot of work, so Hugar has always been the side project, but it's really funny to call it a side project because we have a record contract with one of the biggest record companies in the world. Most people would call it a job.

Hugar is playing Iceland Airwaves this year. We've been in an exper-

do Airwaves. There are always some fun opportunities that come out of it. I also just love going to the festival because you can basically walk into any venue and find something exciting going on.

THE JOY OF FIXING

When I was a kid, I really wanted one of these [clip-on instrument mics]. I was very young and I couldn't afford it, but I thought, "How difficult could

Music and sound have fashion just like clothing, visual arts and everything.

it be to make a microphone?" It turned out to be very difficult and much more expensive than if I had just bought one because I had to do so many tries. But it worked really well. I made a few for my friends and colleagues, and then I just slowly started making more complex microphones.

I spent a lot of time reading books about how stuff was made and how electronics work. There was a peri-

od in my life when I was building a lot of fancy recording microphones. I still do it now and then, but it's just very time-consuming. I tend to get obsessed with things and they're different from day to day – music, gear, cameras, cars, books, espresso machines.

The machine in the studio is the mother of all the espresso machines you see today. It's the first espresso machine with a motorised pump. I found it online and it was completely broken when it arrived – as if somebody had thrown it from the top of a building. I just had to fix it. It was a really fun project. Now, the problem is I want to fix more espresso machines, but I don't need more espresso machines.

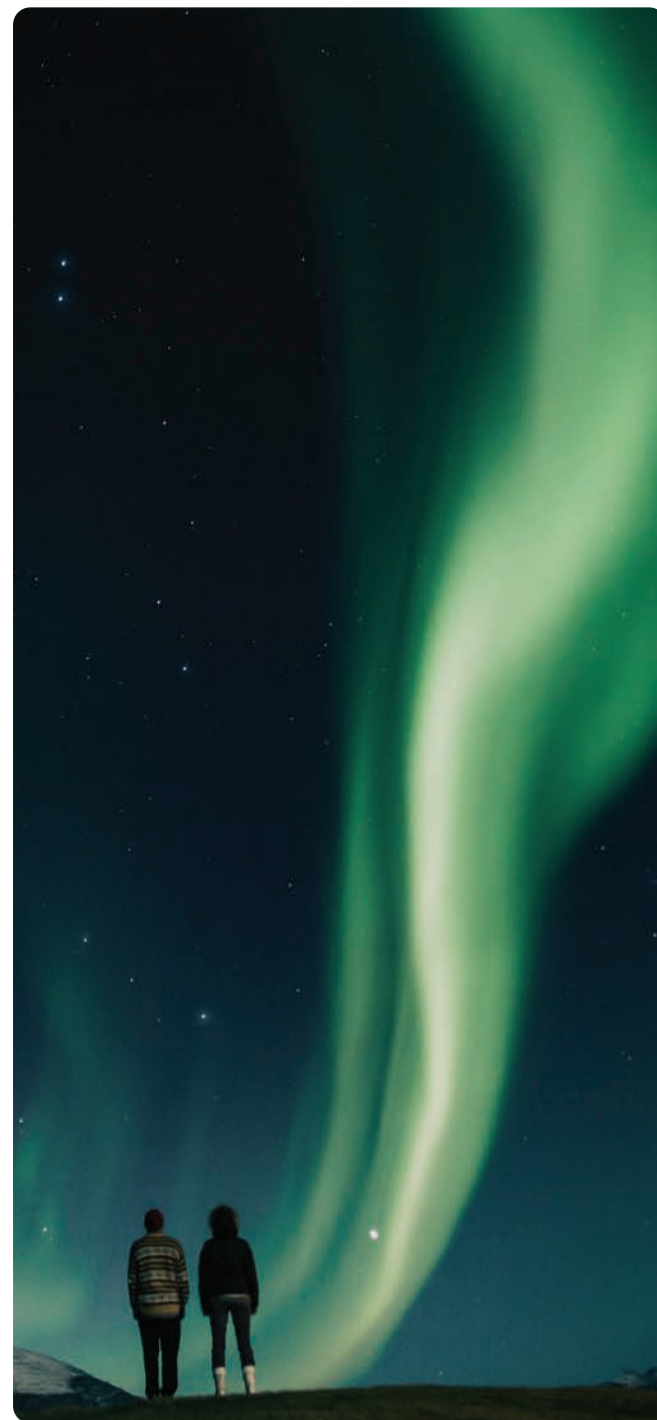
BERGUR'S NEXT BIG THING

The more I travel, the more I just want to be in Iceland. The connection I have to this place is great. Of course, it's family and friends, but now I've built the studio, so there's even less reason for me to go anywhere. A lot of people, myself included, tend to forget how incredible this country is.

It's important for everything I do, including my work with Björk, to stay on top of what's going on every-

where else. Music and sound have fashions just like clothing, visual arts and everything – there's fashion not only in the style of music but also in how the music is made. I really want to stay on top of that, so I always try to keep other projects going on.

When I'm not working on music, I'm constantly thinking, "What's next?"



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Musings **Ready for the Airwaves Shaka Brah**

A helpful guide to concert etiquette

WORDS Charlie Winters
 IMAGE Art Bicnick

little hearts out. But most of the time, you just end up fighting the urge to kill everyone around you. To quell this unifying murderous rage, I shall attempt to remind you of proper concert etiquette. For when the beats are pounding and rending your mortal mind apart, it can be hard to remember how to act.

I myself, am a seasoned attendee of both opera and orchestral music and, as such, consider myself among the crème de la crème of concertgoers. With Airwaves making such a splash, I'm sure lessons from my background in classical music are just what Reykjavík needs to lift itself out of the gutters.

Firstly, darling, rock, metal, blues, gnome-core, acid jazz, it really doesn't matter – you must dress to

been able to resist the pits formed during Vivaldi's concertos, but there are important things to keep in mind. Remember that not everyone consents to the scent. For God's sake, take a fucking bath before you get in the middle of it. And also, a mosh pit is very different from a fight pit. We do not go to concerts to have illegal boxing matches; those are held behind the big Hagkaup on Tuesday nights. Also, if someone falls down, please please pick them up. Yes, I agree, the weak must die, but it's extremely hard on the janitor the coming day to clean up all the remains.

Another problem, much to my dismay, is the trend on the Tiktoks and the Instagrams of either handing or throwing odd artefacts at singers. This barbaric tradition originated

Do you love music but hate going to concerts because of how people act? Me too.

The pounding baseline echoes in your chest. You can catch glimpses of the stage over the shoulders of the guy in front of you. You want to hear the melody, but there's screaming in your ear. You'd jump to the beat, but your feet are stuck to the beer-covered ground. Someone just threw up on you. This fucking sucks.

Do you love music but hate going to concerts because of how people act? Me too.

Concerts are meant to be places to come together and listen to our favourite musicians perform their

impress not depress. Gentleman, suit and tie. Ladies, dress, and heels. Non-binary folks, you'll sadly have to navigate your identity and figure out what "formal" means to you. Now this may seem a tad bit limiting or oppressive, but I assure you, there is nothing more punk than conforming to age-old arbitrary gender norms. Additionally, formal attire is quite practical. It absorbs high amounts of sweat, gives you the right to send the dry-cleaning bill to whoever spills beer on you and further makes you stand out like a royal thumb. You'll be the best-dressed Nord at the Airwaves fest.

Secondly, dearie, you may be tempted to join a mosh pit. I too have not

with the rotten tomato of the Dark Ages and seems to have grown to cheese wheels, bras and live animals. I can assure you that the clout you will garner by doing this is not worth the sheer anxiety and dread that you will fill the performers with. It's probably not worth the absolute beating that the hunky Securitas guards will throw back at you.

Finally, with Airwaves upon you, you may not have time to restock on supplies. Carry water, for it will be precious when you're screaming with the melody. Dress well, for the beat is hot and the air is cold. And don't forget to have fun, for it might be the last thing you ever do. ■



Well, You Asked

Come Home To Roost

The Grapevine's finest answers your most pressing questions

WORDS Catherine Magnúsdóttir
IMAGE Art Bicnick

DO YOU EVER GET BORED OF LIVING IN SUCH A GORGEOUS PLACE?

I was going to be cynical and snarky – and there is something to be said about just getting used to your environment and being regularly in-

convenienced by the weather so high up North that it takes some of the romanticism away – but dammit I have a mountain outside my window and a fresh sea breeze when the wind turns. I think a whale just did a flip under a rainbow behind me as I was writing this and slurping my coffee. The night sky glows sometimes! No! I can't get used to it! I moved here permanently for this! Fuck!

WHERE DO FOREIGNERS WHO LIVE IN ICELAND MEET?

Chances are that the people you approach and actually manage to hold a conversation with for more than a minute have at least some foreign background, so that's always a good start. Most "homegrown" Icelanders are particularly skittish and

have a pronounced RBF that tends to discourage any direct approach without a bribe in your open and outstretched hand. Honestly, just check Facebook for groups and events?

WHEN WILL THE NEW CONSTITUTION BE IMPLEMENTED?

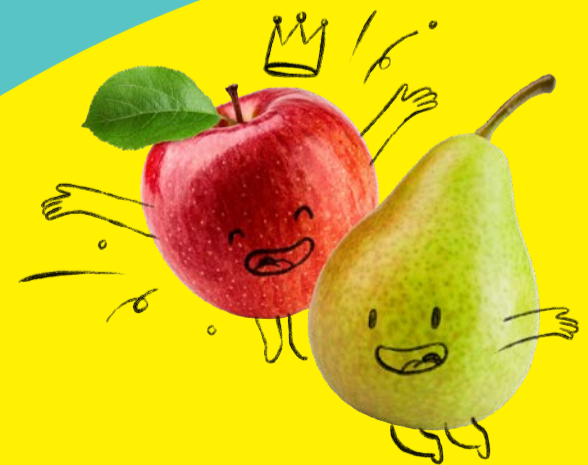
Oh, the new constitution? The constitution that was voted for in a referendum 11 years ago? The one that the Women's Association for a New Constitution created a petition for three years ago? Which cracked over 43,000 signatures? The constitution that inspired the Hashtag #Hvar? (Where?) as well as a giant mural that was erased and then painted again? That new constitution? Golly, wouldn't I like to know. ■



Last Look IMAGE Art Bicnick

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Potent Quotables

The church wasn't a big fan of rímur because it was too crude.

Catherine Magnúsdóttir investigates traditional Icelandic folk music on page 6

I have terrible stage fright and I find it a particularly mad idea to be singing these songs.

We spoke with artists Kónguló, Kári, Celebs, and Fókus about their Iceland Airwaves hopes and dreams on pages 12-14

There's so much promotion happening – so much marketing that's built into the festival, that it's kind of like a tourism event.

Author Tore Størvold talks Airwaves, the Icelandic national identity and its relationship with music and nature on page 26

Some people say that the best way to cure a hangover is... to just keep drinking.

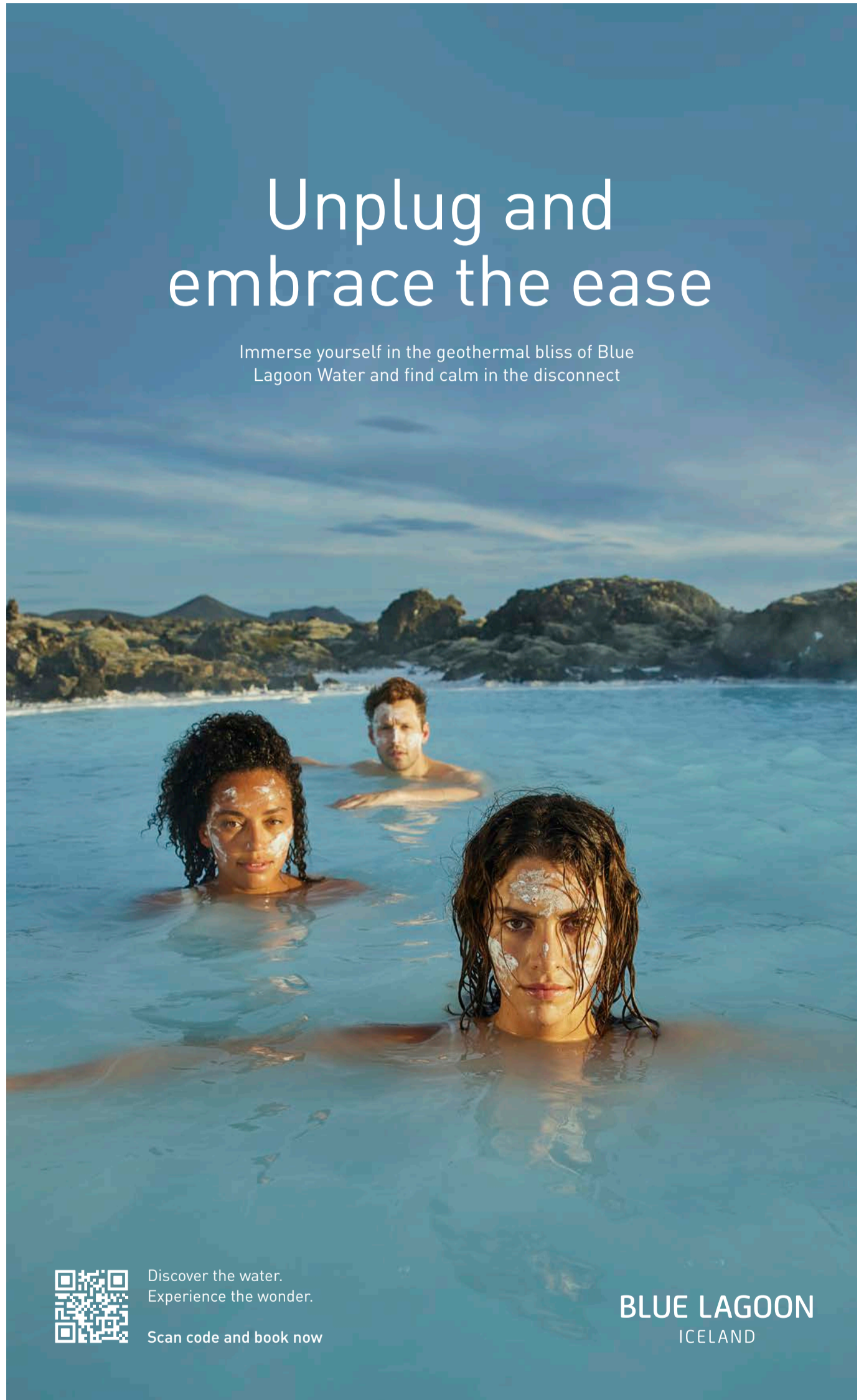
Read the Grapevine's guide to curing your festival hangover on pages 32

I believe that you can maximise your chances of being lucky by putting in the work.

Björk's trusted partner and musician Bergur Þórisson spills the beans on his rise to success on page 36

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