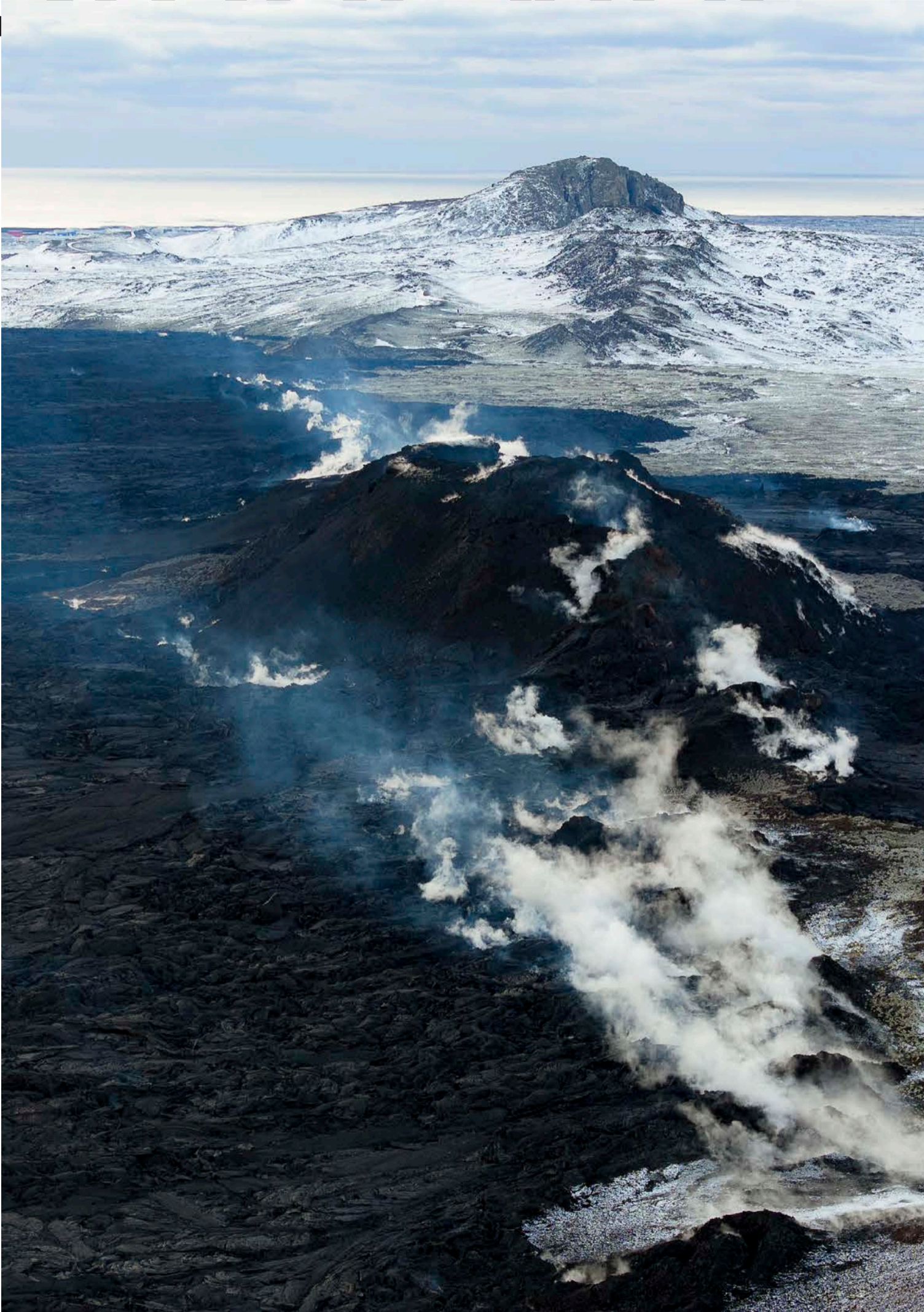


The Reykjavík Granevine



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Volume 21

Issue 01 2024

Best before February 2



So, What Happens Now?

Culture

Music

Travel

In This Issue

6

Learn About The Lords And Ladies Of Klakavirki

8

Góði Hirðirinn Is A National Museum Of Excessive Consumption

10

What's next for the Reykjanes Peninsula? We asked around

14

Smoke Sauna Sisterhood Introduces You To A Smokey Tradition

24-25

Artist Elín Hall Wants To Be Heard

28-29

Iceland's Only Forensic Pathologist Opens Up His Heart

30

Set Yourself Up For A Successful Dry January With These Tips



On the Cover

It's been a wild few years for the Reykjanes Peninsula. Four eruptions have occurred over the span of three years and 2023 saw the evacuation of Grindavík and closure of the Blue Lagoon as seismic and volcanic activity moved in their direction. The cover feature of the issue explores the future of the Reykjanes peninsula, in conversation with a volcanologist, a representative of the Svartsengi Power Plant and the Blue Lagoon.

PHOTO BY:
Art Bicnick



Editorial At Least We're Alive

WORDS Catharine Fulton,
Editor in Chief

So here we are. It's 2024. Having conveniently started this gig with the changing of the year to 2023, I'm neatly marking my one-year anniversary on the job with this first issue of the year. It's been a bit of a learning curve for sure, seeing as I had become more accustomed to putting my head down and working alone at home rather than having to be in an office collaborating with other people. But it's been fun, and the lessons learned in the past year will hopefully materialise into more creative and insightful articles in the coming year.

Looking back, it was a strange year. Life is expensive, the world feels like it's tearing itself apart, stress levels have felt high. Everything has felt slightly difficult. For nobody in Iceland has that rung more true than for the residents of Grindavík, who, after enduring years of seismic activity, were forced to evacuate their homes in November. They remain displaced and a big question mark hangs over the region, where a magma reservoir is keeping everyone on their toes.

What comes next for the peninsula? That's a question we put to a few stakeholders and experts. Read what they had to say over on pages 10-12.

Meanwhile, everyone and their brother is sick right now. A mask mandate has been imposed at the hospital again as staff there work to treat a deluge of patients with various respiratory ailments. One doctor who doesn't have to worry about catching what his patients have, however, is Pétur Guðmann Guðmannsson, Iceland's one and only forensic pathologist. For something completely different, read up on what his average day entails on page 28.

Here's hoping the year ahead is brighter than the one behind us, and that we avoid ending up on Pétur's table a while longer. ■

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.



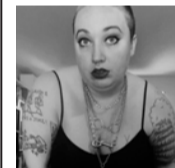
JÓHANNES BJARKI
BJARKASON

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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What The News!?

Get Ready For An Election, Iceland

Happenings making headlines in recent weeks

WORDS The Reykjavik Grapevine
IMAGE Art Bicnick

We'll start this first news roundup of 2024 with the news that has left large swaths of the population in a state of surprise: President Guðni Th. Jóhannesson is not seeking re-election. The beloved president has been serving from his official residence at Bessastaðir since 2016 and has enjoyed comically high approval ratings – because he's wonderful and there's nothing anyone could possibly have to say in the negative about him.

At the time of his election, Guðni said he would serve for 12 years, so the announcement in his national New Year's Eve address that he'll be vacating the position this summer sent a shockwave across the country. Regarding the reason to not seek re-election, the president admits to letting his heart guide the way.

"In a thriving democracy, moreover, no one is irreplaceable," he said in his address. "Devotion to duty based on a misunderstanding of one's own importance should never be the overriding consideration; even less so should one's own vanity or private advantage determine our course of action."

Guðni's service to the presidency will be remembered by his devotion to the Icelandic language, his loveable persona and the great pizza-topping controversy.

The other news is, of course, the ongoing unrest on the Reykjanes peninsula. After weeks of inactivity, an eruption began late on December 18, 2023, at Sundhnúkagígar crater row. The eruption started out strong, illuminating the sky an eerie orange as a 4 km spewed lava high into the air at a rate of 200 cubic metres per second.

That force was short lived, however, and the output had reduced to a quarter of its initial volume within 24 hours as the fissure row consolidated down to five and then just two active eruptive cones.

On the morning of December 21, the Icelandic Met Office reported dwindling volcanic activity in the latest eruption on the Reykjanes Peninsula. No visible magma was recorded flowing from the fissures, except the occasional ember.

In conversation with mbl.is, volcanologist Þorvaldur Þórðarson declared the latest eruption to be over, while volcanologist Ármann Höskuldsson agreed in a conversation with RÚV. The Met Office was more hesitant to rule it dead, stating on its website that magma may still flow in underground chambers.

But, volcano enthusiasts need not give in to the saddest day of the year – Blue Monday falls on Jan. 15

this year – the consensus is that more activity is just around the corner. A magma reservoir has been identified at Svartsengi, and it's predicted it will continue to fill and then find channels through which to empty itself for the foreseeable future.

What a time to be alive.

Finally, renowned international artist Ragnar Kjartansson has found himself up against the evil forces of the Icelandic customs and postal system.

The artist designed a thousand copies of porcelain salt and pepper shakers intended for his recent art installations abroad. The objects were emblazoned with the words "Guilt" and "Fear." However, upon attempting to import 100 of the sets to Iceland with the intention of selling them for USD \$500 a pop. As such, the diligent public servants at the customs office Tollstjóri determined the shakers are not art, but commercial goods and subject to VAT.

Unlike the countless immigrants in Iceland who cannot receive even a modest birthday gift from family abroad without having to shell out arbitrary fees and levies, Ragnar was able to negotiate to pay VAT on the production value of the goods rather than the price he intends to sell them for.

Must be nice. ■



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On The Fringes

For The Love Of All Things Medieval

Sword nerds unite at the Society for Creative Anachronism

WORDS Catherine Magnúsdóttir
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Hear Ye, Hear Ye! I bear thee news of much rejoicing for a new column graces these fine parchment pages, questing for the most notorious of folks and their realms of knowledge and skill, their interests of speciality! And what better way to herald in such a quest than by presenting you, dear reader, with a person that could be found dressing and shooting like Robin Hood and who can wield a rapier blade as well. I have sought the counsel of Paul O'Brien, the senechal of the local Society for Creative Anachronism, to tell you more about applied enthusiasm for medieval practices – sans leeches.

Admittedly, the name of the organisation doesn't give much away, but in essence it is a club for people interested in practical medieval history. Paul tells me that includes revels, big events where people get to dress up in medieval attire, maybe sing and dance, or craft, make things like candles or entire costumes, or even learn how to encrypt messages like old nobles did.

"I joined SCA back in Ireland about 23 years ago," Paul explains, "just for archery at the time and then

once I got more involved and saw how fun fencing was and all the arts and crafts I got involved in pretty much everything. At the time Ireland was one big group, but it split into smaller ones across the country as it was growing and I started running the website. Then I became a local archery marshall and then the local captain of archery, then became a knight marshall and then started taking on bigger and bigger roles, like treasurer for the 'kingdom.'"

There are a lot of medieval terms that are still applied when it comes to functions and titles, like heralds, laurels, knights and masters of defense or fencing, but also for groups. "We're what's called a shire – the Icelandic one is called Klakavirki – which is a local group belonging to a principality spanning the British isles and Iceland," Paul explains. "So, it's England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Iceland. And we have the titular heads for that – a prince and princess – who are part of a larger European kingdom called Drachenwald, which has a king and queen."

Paul moved to Iceland about four years ago, wanting to help boost the local shire. It was initially revitalised by Nik Whitehead, then teaching at the University of Akureyri, after the original group (made up of personnel from the US Naval base in Keflavík) left. Klakavirki 2.0 then started including more locals and has been going ever since. "That's where we got a lot of the people that are still

members to this day," Paul tells me, "so it was her who really restarted it all off. And some of the ones that she trained up have now been queens of Drachenwald as well."

But given that the local group was still quite small, the shire started working with the local Historical European Martial Arts group to train different fencing styles together and share a training hall, eventually creating an overlap in members. After all, if you're already a sword nerd, why not expand your repertoire? You might even make more friends.

"A lot of people join the SCA for the activities but stay for the people," Paul says. "It's a family you choose. Old farts like me get older and start to break down, we can't run everything forever all the time, so fresh blood brings fresh enthusiasm to the rules and hopefully also fresh ideas and stuff they want to do which is then also a way for me to learn and try new things as well. I don't know everything and there are people that are walking encyclopedias on medieval dance for instance or Gregorian chants and stuff like that."

Luckily there are also plans for more events this year, like a troll hunt in spring, the Revel of the Midnight Sun in June and some outdoor archery in the summer with old school medieval bows – if anyone's interested in finding a new special interest. ■



Do Shit

Coming And Going On The Cheap

The Útlendingur's ongoing guide to getting shit done

WORDS Catharine Fulton
IMAGE Art Bicnick

bitrarily decided by the counter staff, like the gruff woman who recently charged me two and a half times the company's rate to transport skis.

There are other ways to get to KEF, though. Those wanting to save a few krónur can take Strætó line 55, which departs BSÍ at 23 minutes past the hour (but it's Strætó, so take that time with a grain of salt) and delivers passengers to KEF some 75 minutes later. A one-way ticket will set you back 2.280 ISK (compared to 3.899 ISK for a one-way ride with Reykjavík Excursions).

A cursory peek at my Hopp app suggests that at least one person has recently cruised on a scooter to the airport's departures hall, which couldn't have been fun in the freezing rain we're experiencing on the day of writing. But it is a sign of the need for less painful travel to and from the airport for those of us who are too disenchanting by the big coach companies: Hopp cars. Hear me out, Hopp – keep a small fleet of cars at BSÍ or some other centrally-located spot in Reykjavík that are exclusively for driving to and from KEF. Hopp users then leave the cars in designated spots at the airport for them to be booked by arriving passengers to drive back to the city centre. The business plan practically writes itself.

For now, fellow Útlendingur, we're stuck with public transport, the big coach conglomerates or taxis (which will set you back an eye-watering 20.000 ISK for a one-way ride). Góða ferð. ■

If you're an Útlendingur like me, one of your favourite things to do in Iceland is leave Iceland. Whether it's the odd trip to the motherland to grace family and friends with your presence or a sojourn to somewhere (anywhere) where temperatures surpass 25° C in the summer months, there's nothing quite like leaving Iceland. Before any haters get to hating, I also enjoy coming back to Iceland. That "velkominn heim" the Icelandic flight crew recites upon landing in Keflavík is oddly comforting.

The one part of the journey to útland that I despise, however, is the trip from Reykjavík to the international airport (and vice versa). Sure, the large coaches operated by Reykjavík Excursions that appear to have a stronghold on Isavia and the prime drop-off and pick-up spots at the airport are comfortable enough, but 7.199 ISK for a round-trip bus ride is extortion. And if you're travelling with baggage other than the standard suitcase, you'll be charged even more – a figure that seems to be ar-



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Neighbourhood Watch

A Museum Of Excess

Second-hand store Góði Hirðirinn expands into bigger territory

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGE Art Bicnick

1200 TONNES OF SECOND-HAND GOODNESS

Góði Hirðirinn now calls the sprawling warehouse that once served as Reykjavík's box factory home, which had been earmarked for demolition. "The most valuable thing in Góði Hirðirinn is the building itself. It's an important environmental issue not to demolish a building, so we're very proud of participating in saving it," explains Góði Hirðirinn project manager Freyr Eyjólfsson.

With more room to maneuver, the market's scope of operations has been able to increase. Since their reopening at Köllunarklettsvegur, 1200 tonnes of resalable items have passed through the facility. "Ten years ago, most of those 1200 tonnes would've been dumped in a landfill," Freyr claims.

"This operation is an environmental project. Think about the environmental effects of burying 1200 tonnes of good product and needing to produce them again somewhere abroad and transport them to the country."

Those 1200 tonnes Góði Hirðirinn receives is only a fraction of the amount that goes through Sorpa's donation containers. "Sorpa receives

about 600 tonnes per day," Freyr explains. "We receive about 7-10 tonnes per day, and manage to sell approximately 70% of what comes in."

A MODERN-DAY NATIONAL MUSEUM

There is a museum-like feeling to entering Góði Hirðirinn, augmented by antique furniture and the kitschy bric-à-bracs placed on numerous shelves. In between lie remnants of whatever fad Icelandic society went through at the time – imagine foot

"That's why Góði is a national museum of excess. It's a reminder of the impenetrable consumerism and purchases that were a fad a certain year and everyone needed to have, and subsequently got rid of two years later."

With the astonishing amount of salvageable materials sent to Góði Hirðirinn, a portion of the items end up broken once they arrive. That doesn't deter the store from selling them.

with peddlers, collectors and haberdashers making use of the available goods. Despite the odd second-hand savant, a core clientele include low-income individuals, displaced people and those simply trying to score a good deal. Recently, residents of Grindavík have been offered items free of charge.

"Although I don't have any data, my feeling is that this group of people is increasing. The inflation and increasing housing cost is really affecting people."

This community-forward thinking led to the designation of a special community zone within the shop, called Kassinn. "[This is] a space where anything can happen," Freyr says. "Concerts, events, happenings, courses, meetings."

"Góði Hirðirinn isn't just people working at Sorpa or in the shop. Góði Hirðirinn is a huge community of people who come in and repair things. We are first and foremost a circular centre. That's the heart of everything we do. Use the resources more efficiently, use the material and items longer, so they're kept within the cycle." ■

We are first and foremost a circular centre. That's the heart of everything we do.

massage machines, sous-vide pots, and, the most recent bandwagon the country leapt on, air-fryers.

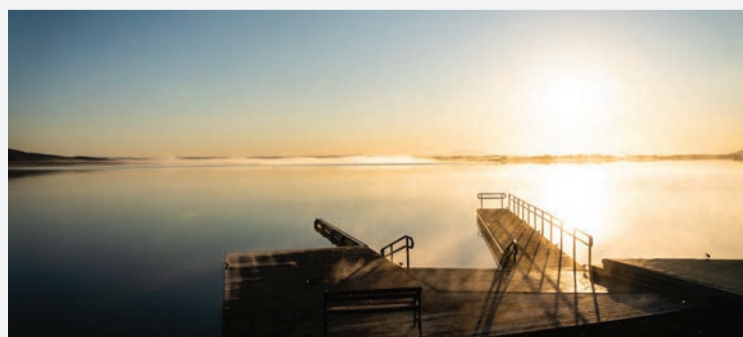
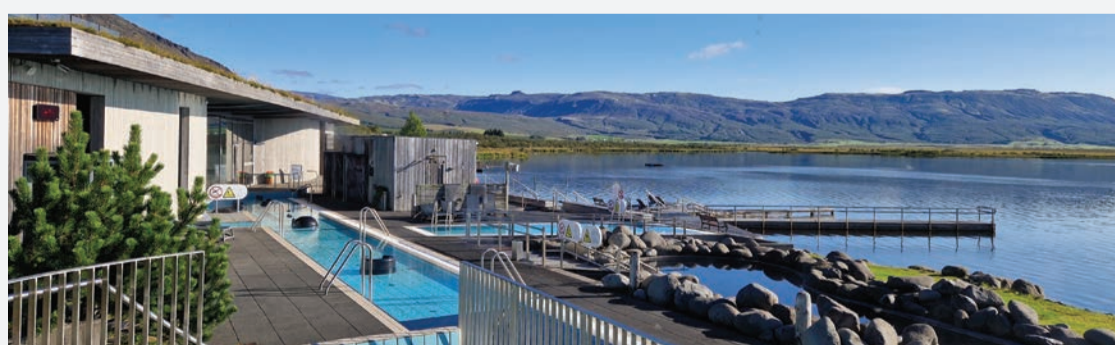
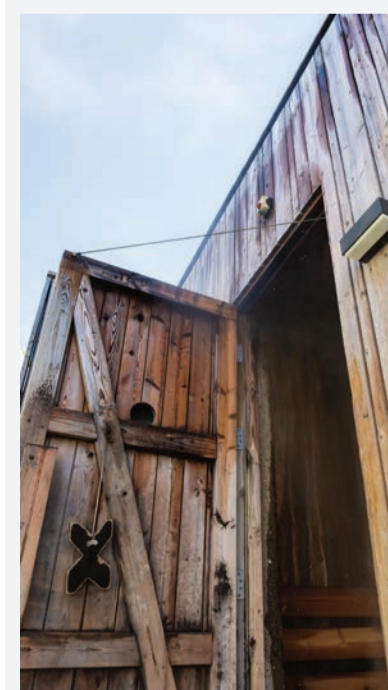
A modest floor section displays DVD. "Take a look at this," says Freyr, turning his attention to shelves of Friends season collections and Blu-Ray discs. "The amount of DVDs. I remember being a student, I spent a lot of my money buying DVDs. And then all of a sudden, it's useless. Junk," he sighs.

"Sometimes, furniture may be slightly broken. We fix it up," says Freyr. "We also receive quite a number of electronics, such as washing machines and fridges. These products sometimes require fixing, which we do in our electrical workshop."

COMMUNITY-FORWARD THINKING

In Freyr's opinion, Góði Hirðirinn acts like a second-hand market square,

For the seasoned thrifter, second-hand store Góði Hirðirinn needs no introduction. Originating in the 1990s, Góði Hirðirinn is the commercial outlet of municipal-owned waste management company Sorpa bs. Having previously operated brick and mortar storefronts on Fellsmúli and Hverfisgata, the trusty reseller relocated to a bigger warehouse in April of 2023.



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Side Hustle

The Anxious Mess

Notes of a chronic overthinker

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Art Bicnick

I do have side hustles myself, of all different shapes and kinds. Once, I was a hand model in a tech app commercial; photos of me riding a snowmobile advertise fun winter activities in Finland; not a trained cook, I baked ten cakes for a national park's birthday celebration. A few years ago, I wrote a student aviation manual for a private college in New Zealand (please don't ask how that came about – you won't believe the

sions of every message I've never sent, followed by the handwritten notes of every time I thought, 'Oh, I probably didn't turn off a [stove, kettle, handsaw]. I did not, in fact, remember to turn off my hair straightener in the summer of 2011. That memory would be framed.

Whenever I'm hustling my hustles, anxiety takes centre stage—a watchful dog, looking, sniffing and

If I could monetise my anxiety, I'd be living in the biggest house in Garðabær.

sorts of things you can get paid to do online). To this day, when I hear about a plane crash, I hope no one was actually using my manual.

But the biggest of my side hustles is thinking too much about things.

If I could monetise my anxiety, I'd be living in the biggest house in Garðabær. Or rather, I'd use my house in Garðabær as a storage unit for everything I've ever owned (because, yes, I don't really know when I would need those things again): any mention of people who are no longer present in my life would take a 10-car garage, there would be a separate room for every rejection letter I've received – job applications, visas, scholarships. Another room would hold the printed ver-

sending doubts my way. Questions echo in my mind: Do I really not know how to spell "accommodation," or is it normal to Google things I know like the back of my hand? Does everyone go through this? The amount of times I've had to convince myself I do know where the brake and gas pedals are in a car is just ridiculous – it's a constant mental refrain of "brake, gas, brake, gas, brake, gas." Or is it "gas, brake?"

If I could turn my anxiety into energy, Teslas would be a thing of the past. Moon landings would happen every fortnight. The perpetual motion machine would finally exist.

For now, "Hustling things. Available for hire." ■

This one is a little weird because I was interviewing a drug dealer for this column (clue: not me), but as it probably goes with most illegal deals, it's been shady and cryptic from the very beginning. I lost contact with them. I hope the actual drug deals with this person run more smoothly than their interviews.

Odee Exhibition

The new exhibition

Cognitive Collage by the digital artist will be open in Gallery Fold from the 2nd to the 20th of December



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Feature

So, What Happens Now?

Gathering perspectives on the future of the Reykjanes Peninsula

WORDS Catharine Fulton
IMAGES Art Bicnick

“Huh, another eruption?” I pondered aloud, nonplussed. “Have we gotten too used to this?” my partner queried in return.

Though we commented on that 4.5 magnitude quake, its epicentre around Trölladyngja, not even our dog batted an eye at the 3.9 magnitude rumble that shook the house a few minutes later.

Earthquakes on the Reykjanes peninsula occasionally being felt here in the capital have been a regular occurrence since December 2019. Those first swarms of seismic activity culminated in an eruption at Fagradalsfjall on March 19, 2021. The next time the Earth really began shaking lava spewed forth at Meradalir on August 1, 2022. The same system started letting off steam again on July 10, 2023.

It is clear that the volcanic systems on the Reykjanes peninsula had awoken. But it was the Fagradalsfjall system pitching the occasional fit for the past three years, conveniently distanced from settlements or infrastructure.

From west to east, the volcanic systems along the Reykjanes peninsula and into the mainland of Iceland are Reykjanes, Eldvörp-Svartsengi, Fagradalsfjall, Krýsuvík, Brennisteinsfjöll and Hengill. The Reykjanes Fires hundreds of years ago saw chains of eruptions occurring in the Reykjanes and Eldvörp-Svartsengi systems. It’s the latter that started quaking in October 2023, dangling a large question mark over the safe-

ty of the nearby town of Grindavík, the Svartsengi Power Plant and the popular tourist destination, the Blue Lagoon.

As earthquakes intensified and ground uplift was measured at Svartsengi, the Blue Lagoon decided on November 9 to temporarily close while the situation was assessed. That ultimate assessment came on Nov. 10 when a violent earthquake swarm centred itself under the town of Grindavík, necessitating the evacuation of its 3,700 residents.

An eruption eventually began at Sundhnúkagígar on December 18, initially spewing out up to 200 cubic metres of lava per second along a 4 km long fissure before petering off over the days that followed. The eruption had ended entirely by December 23.

Though Grindavík residents have been able to return home during designated hours to tend to their property and collect belongings, they remain displaced. As ground inflation continues beneath the Blue Lagoon, it remains closed.

filled up and, when the chamber had become pressurised, it released the magma. The result was 24 magma intrusions in nine years. Nine of those intrusions resulted in eruptions.

So what’s next for the town of Grindavík? What’s next for the Blue Lagoon and the Svartsengi Power Plant and the entire region? Here’s what experts and stakeholders have to say about it:

THE EARTH: ÁRMANN
HÖSKULDSSON, VOLCANOLOGIST

Right now the Reykjanes peninsula is releasing tension. So basically that will take years – decades even – from what we know about its history. But we have, of course, never been able to observe this in such a close detail as we are doing now.

There is a magma *reservoir* under Svartsengi Power Plant. A “magma chamber” is a major reservoir of magma, where magma changes composition, etc. And that is not the case at Svartsengi. But we know that there is a small reservoir, which is inflating and deflating. While it is inflating, it is accepting magma and the magma cannot reach the surface because the pathways are closed. Then eventually, when the pressure is high enough in that reservoir, the roof will break or the site will break and we get magma that will try to flow into the cracks that are already there. In some cases, like on December 18, it comes to the surface.

I think the general consensus is that we are in a similar situation as in Mývatn in 1975 to 1984, when they had a rifting event there – which actually confirmed the plate tectonics, which was a theory that was evolving at the time. Svartsengi is starting to behave very, very similarly.

A magma intrusion estimated at 15 km long had formed from the Sundhnúkagígar crater row, running southwesterly beneath Grindavík and out under the sea floor.

Several volcanologists have recently compared the activity at Svartsengi to the Krafla Fires of 1975 to 1984. During that event, a large magma chamber in the Krafla caldera by Mývatn in North Iceland repeatedly

The Earth rumbled again on the morning of January 3, strong enough to jostle my little home in 101 Reykjavík while I lazily poured water from my kettle over the coffee grounds in my French press.



A magma chamber is a major or big reservoir that is in the crust for hundreds and thousands of years, where magma can evolve from being basalt into more rhyolitic and more explosive compositions. So there is no there is no indication of that. But we have a reservoir. We have a magma injection into the crust. But it's not the major magma chamber.

I think the general consensus is that we are in a similar situation as in Mývatn in 1975 to 1984, when they had a rifting event there – which actually confirmed the plate tectonics, which was a theory that was evolving at the time. Svartsengi is starting to behave very, very similarly – lots of earthquakes, lots of crust breaking and extending – which means the plate boundary is moving. And when the plates go apart, magma comes in. We see that magma is accumulating at shelval level, around four to five kilometres deep, and that is the uplift that we can measure with a GPS.

In the last eruption we got out something like six to seven million cubic metres of dense rock equivalent or dense magma equivalent. That is maybe 10% of the magma that is down there ready to go. So that is not very much.

I think we have done what we can by building these barriers around the power plant and the Blue Lagoon. What we will be seeing in the coming years are small eruptions, like the one on Dec. 18 – it was a very, very small eruption, although it was

very powerful in the beginning, I would guess that we will be seeing more of those. So one, two or three eruptions per year, or something like

been ongoing since the first eruption in 2021, so the entire time since this seismic period started, we have been fully operational.

When it comes to the hot water, the region is dependent on us ...That is our main concern, actually, if we weren't not able to fulfil our duties when it comes to hot water.

that. But while the reservoir is that small they will never be very, very large. Then eventually the main centre of the plate boundary may start to crack and then the eruption will take place there. That would be in the area called Eldvörp, which is just west of the Blue Lagoon.

I think an eruption at Eldvörp could be bigger than what we saw in December. It is now erupting at the plate edge. I don't think we will have any major eruption in that area, but once it comes to the centre [at Eldvörp], we will start to see larger eruptions.

THE POWER PLANT: BIRNA LÁRUSDÓTTIR, HS ORKA COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

The Svartsengi Power Plant is fully operational and it has been so, ever since these seismic activities started in the early fall. This has actually

This has, of course, affected our daily operations. Our headquarters are at Svartsengi, so our staff has been relocated for the most part, aside from our maintenance crews and those on duty at the power plants during the day. So [some office staff are working remotely] in Keflavík, some in Kópavogur and some work from home. Then most of our maintenance crew and technical crew has its base now in Reykjanesvirkjun, which is our other geothermal plant.

We rerouted [operations] around the time of the evacuation [on November 10, 2023]. But we do need to go into the area to check the engines and various parts of the operation on a daily basis to make sure everything – the technical equipment – is all in order. So that's why we need to send people in, but we have been able to control it from a distance all through November and

December, and we are still doing so from Reykjanesvirkjun.

It's very difficult to say [when staff will be able to operate as normal at Svartsengi]. It all depends on the seismic activity and it all depends on what the Department of Civil Protection and Icelandic Met Office advise in terms of reentering the area and we just basically need to take this on a day-to-day basis. It is unfortunately not possible to say when we might be back to normal operations.

Ever since this situation arose we have been in close contact with Almannavarnir and HS Veitur ... and we have been preparing with both bodies for various scenarios. So we've prepared ourselves for the worst case scenario, which would be

up plans to direct cold water from other sources and other wells in the region, so we have plenty in case we would not be able to supply cold water.

If Svartsengi Power Plant were to close down and we would not be able to deliver electricity into the main grid, electricity could come from other sources via Landsnet. So, a potential power shutdown at Svartsengi should not affect anything in the short term, but of course it would lower the amount of electricity on the main grid.

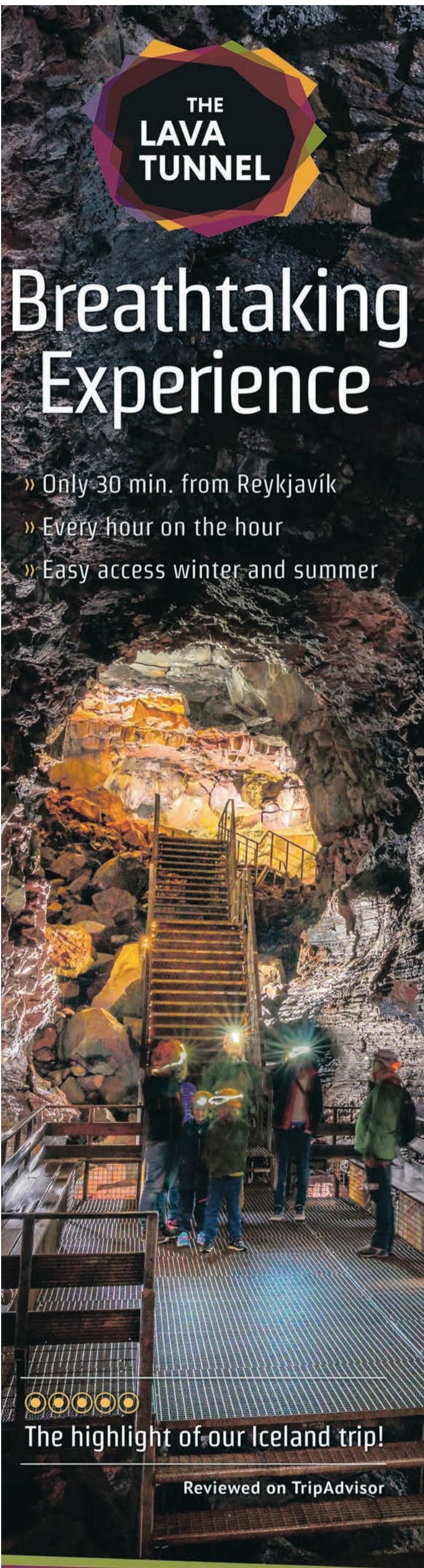
When it comes to the hot water, the region is dependent on us. We provide the entire Reykjanes Peninsula with hot water. That is our main concern, actually, if we weren't not able

The wall around Svartsengi is, of course, one measure that has been taken and a very vital one in order to protect the infrastructure of Svartsengi.

that the power plant would go under lava or be inoperative due to seismic activities.

The wall around Svartsengi is, of course, one measure that has been taken and a very vital one in order to protect the infrastructure of Svartsengi. The banks have risen only in a period of one month, which is quite extraordinary. We've also drawn

to fulfil our duties when it comes to hot water. We have been in close contact with HS Veitur and Almannavarnir drawing up plans for that. We have drawn up plans that would mean that homes would have to make sure they have heating equipment like electrical ovens and such, and there are other measures that could see us bring in big boilers that would heat up water in the region



to provide to homes. But this would mean that the homes would have to ration their use of hot water. That is the main concern when it comes to the possibility of Svartsengi becoming inoperable.

The community on the Reykjanes Peninsula is close to 30,000 people and, of course, we also have vital infrastructure such as the airport, harbours, health institutions, schools and so forth. So it's a big concern. But so far, so good. And we have put in a lot of effort to prepare ourselves for the worst case scenario and we have been doing so in close cooperation with national authorities.

We remain optimistic that we will be able to continue our operations in the region. So far the infrastructure has proven to withstand this enormous power of nature that we are standing against. So, we are quite convinced that it will withstand further stress being laid upon the infrastructure in the area. But it is very difficult to predict what will happen next. All we can do is prepare ourselves for various scenarios in close cooperation with national authorities and that corporation has been successful and is ongoing.

THE BLUE LAGOON: ARNDÍS HULD HÁKONARDÓTTIR, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & PR

Our staff has been eager to welcome guests back to the Blue Lagoon, and were excited to do so

for the two days we were permitted to open. However, the safety and well-being of our guests and staff will always be our first priority and this current closure is necessary to ensure everyone remains safe. We're also very fortunate that the eruption did not impact our infrastructure.

The ground will continue to rumble, the magma reservoir beneath Svartsengi will continue to fill and then empty through magma intrusions, as occurred on Nov. 10, or full-fledged eruptions, as happened Dec. 18. When and where that happens is out of human control.

Although we're disappointed to not be able to welcome guests at this time, our outlook remains positive to being able to open within the next few days.

Although we're disappointed to not be able to welcome guests at this time, our outlook remains positive to being able to open within the next few days. We're looking forward to the day we're able to welcome back our guests and creating moments of joy for each person who walks through our doors.

WATCHING AND WAITING

As the residents and various stakeholders on the Reykjanes Peninsula have experienced over the past few years, and as the rest of Iceland and the world at large has witnessed, the region remains subject to the whims of the Earth.

And so the Reykjanes Peninsula remains in limbo. Hoping for the best, but preparing for the worst. ■

For booking and further information:
thelavatunnel.is or call +(354) 760 1000

The Grapevine's Top Picks



BOOKA SHADE
Saturday, January 27, 20:00
Gamla Bíó
6.900 ISK

They're finally coming back! No strangers to Iceland, legendary German electronica duo Booka Shade are making a grand comeback to our frigid rock and will most definitely be melting it into a sweaty puddle. If you had the chance to see their last show here at Airwaves 2019, you know what we mean. Heck, if you've seen their visually and sonically stunning live shows anywhere, you know what we mean! There are more than a few reasons they're named one of Resident Advisor's Top 5 live acts in the world. We have no doubt that they will be as excited to be back here as we are to have them and it's just gonna be a fun sexy time. See that ticket price? Nice. **RX**



JAPAN FESTIVAL 2024
Saturday, January 27, 13:00
The Vigdís International Centre

Japan and Iceland have a lot in common when you think about it. Both seismic and volcanic hot-spot islands, surrounded by other tiny islands, with a history of feudal ruling families with petty grievances ending in bizarre bloody vengeance. Also, whimsy and cats! But obviously they are totally different. All of this and more has formed a loving bond between the nations, and Japan's culture is celebrated at this annual festival for the 20th year. Organised by the University of Iceland's Japanese Language & Culture BA-program and the Embassy of Japan in Iceland, come for a day of kendama performances, manga drawing workshops, shogi lessons, aikido and karate demonstrations and more. **RX**



Dark Culture

Hello Darkness, My Old Friend

Dark Music Days have come to talk to us again

WORDS Rex Beckett
IMAGE Supplied by
DarkMusicDays.is

28. Music industry veteran Ásmundur Jónsson has served as artistic director since 2020 and is completing his tenure with this edition.

"The festival seeks new ways to create and communicate with the past, present and future," says Ásmundur. "The main point of the festival is to celebrate contemporary music with the aim to give it a spotlight in Icelandic society. Despite the niche society of contemporary music, the repertoire is extensive, diverse, full of insightful messages and interesting imagination."

The festival was established in 1982 by the Composers' Rights Society of Iceland (STEF) who continue to own and operate the festival to this day.

"The main purpose in the beginning was the composers having their own music performed," Ásmundur says regarding the festival's start. "It was, I mean, it's always a fight to get your pieces performed. You have to have a platform. It has developed a lot since the early days of the festival. At that time, the performances were more traditional in that a pianist or orchestra would perform a composer's work and he was in the audience. That was how we experienced

contemporary music through the 20th century."

With shifts in composition techniques, technological possibilities and diversity of composers, he says that the landscape of this scene has shifted into something more innovative and groundbreaking.

"Looking back in recent years the production of many of the events have become more technical and the visual requirements are often demanding," he says. "The interdisciplinary development of different artistic forms like films, music, paintings, mean all of these things are more visible. You have people who are looking into the space to create music within the specific surroundings."

Along with changes in locale and performance format, the festival retains its core principles and key players from its inception. Dark Music Days consistently presents collaborative projects with larger ensembles like the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, Caput Ensemble and the Reykjavík Chamber Orchestra.

Among the more than 20 events in this year's edition, there are sig-

nificant concerts with the younger generation of musicians still in their education, such as the Reykjavík College of Music and the Reykjavík Academy of Singing. The programme also highlights works by the Icelandic Love Corporation in collaboration with the ISO, the R • O • R collaboration between Gyða Valtýsdóttir and Úlfur Hansson, and a focus on the works of Pauline Oliveros.

As Ásmundur wraps up his time as artistic director, despite its early interruption by the COVID-19 pandemic, he reflects both fondly and with ongoing ambition.

"My aim was to open up the festival in a broad sense," he says. "I wanted it to be more international, though never forgetting that the core should always be Icelandic music."

"Then came COVID-19 and the first full festival I directed was almost purely Icelandic. During the time I have worked on Dark Music Days, I have to admit that my vision has not come true but I'm happy nonetheless. There are so many great moments I have experienced during this journey." ■

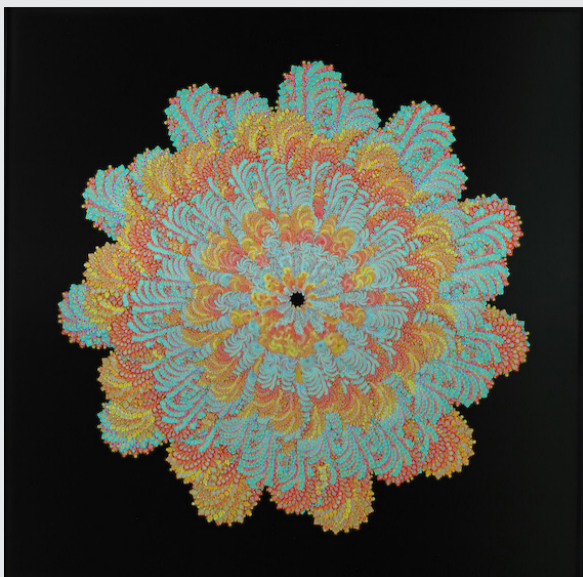
The winter solstice brings on the return of daylight, but at such a glacial pace that by the end of January, the darkness somehow feels more intense. Dark Music Days is a cultural star that shines through, illuminating the doldrums of our deepest winter with the brightest talent in Icelandic contemporary music.

The country's leading contemporary music festival is now back for its 43rd year, taking place January 24 to

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Film Feature

A Soul-Cleansing Ritu

Smoke Sauna Sisterhood reveals untold secrets

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Art Bicnick
& supplied film stills

The air is thick with heat. Wooden walls echo the sounds of people breathing, talking, laughing. The wood is crackling with fire and once the water hits hot stones, a soft hiss is released. Outside, the night is silent. An owl hoots.

Those are my memories of many nights spent in a wooden sauna nestled away in the forest of North Karelia in Finland, but it is very similar to the experiences of the women depicted in the award-winning documentary *Smoke Sauna Sisterhood*, directed by Estonian filmmaker Anna Hints. The director not only introduces the viewer to the UNESCO-protected smoke sauna tradition of the Estonian Võro community but takes a deeper look at the varied human stories of sauna-goers, both happy and sad.

It's been a few months since I watched the film at a festival at Bíó Paradís, but the aftertaste lingers still. It is an intimate and cathartic experience rarely encountered in cinema. The documentary — a co-production of Estonia, France and Iceland, with the latter contributing the original score and sound design — recently won Best European Documentary at the European Film Awards. To learn more

about Iceland's creative input, I met the film's co-producer, Hlín Jóhannesdóttir, at Sundhöllin public swimming pool on a busy morning right before Christmas. With water steaming on the rocks, we sat for a chat in the warmth of the public sauna.

SAUNA TRADITIONS IN MUSIC AND VISION

While I'm worried about whether or not the phone recording will survive the heat, Hlín explains that the documentary captures a unique regional tradition. Smoke saunas don't have chimneys, meaning the smoke from the burning wood fills the sauna. I've heard that the sauna experience is sometimes compared to a religious experience, being referred to as a "church for the soul." Hlín says that the ritual can take the whole day and for the women featured in the documentary, there are no taboos. "They talk about their griefs and worries, but also happy times and they laugh a lot. This goes on for hours and hours," says Hlín.

a spiritual guy. Open-minded, very creative, very good musician. He just jumped on it. That was like a match made in heaven," Hlín smiles.

Eðvarð travelled to Estonia, recording sounds in different saunas to experience the ritual firsthand. Paired with sound designer Huldar Freyr Arnarson and the director's own folk band EETER, Eðvarð managed to create a hauntingly beautiful soundtrack where breaths and the hisses of the sauna blend with music.

THE PRODUCER'S CREATIVE PULSE

Hlín, who started her film career in 2000, explains how producers are essential in making any film. They take on the role of planning the financing, deciding who will be involved in the project and drafting a timeline of how to make it happen. "There are lots of questions that the producer needs to answer and put down in writing before stuff gets financing," she explains, emphasising

This film touches on something that is rarely out in the open. It's a mind-opener.

"Then they go out and bathe in the summertime or dive into the freezing water in the wintertime."

I'm curious to find out how Iceland ended up being involved in the project. "Marianne Ostrat, who's the leading producer of this project and has been relentlessly working on it for years and years, asked me to participate if Iceland could come in with the musical elements and the sound design," Hlín explains. Marianne first introduced Hlín to the project in 2018. Having previously worked with Eðvarð Egilsson on a film called *Skjálfti* (*Quake*), she immediately thought he would be an excellent match. "He's kind of

ing that cooperation between the director and the producer is fundamental. "The filmmaker has the artistic vision, but what the producer does is make the artistic vision happen," she says. "A producer is not only a strategic planner and financier, which they certainly are, but also a creative. It's a very creative occupation."

It wasn't different in the case of *Smoke Sauna Sisterhood*. When director Anna came up with the idea for the documentary, she knew she wanted to tell a story. With the help of producer Marianne, that story first got an outline and things started taking shape. It's been a lengthy



al

process – with some of the first recordings dating back seven years. In documentary filmmaking, editing can take a long time, Hlín says, “It can be very draining because you have to move and shake the material since you don’t have lines and scenes like in scripted films.”

Hlín emphasises that the most challenging thing in making the film was aligning everyone involved with the same dynamics. “I’m not gonna lie. It wasn’t always a walk in the park,” she says, adding that filming in a confined environment, with sauna temperatures often reaching 60-90 degrees, was another challenge. Cinematographer Ants Tammik went through a number of lenses as they would overheat. As the women in the sauna are completely naked, many of the scenes can be considered explicit and required prior consent. However, in the process of editing, the stories and bodies have been purposely mismatched.

“It’s not about the person itself, it is more about this ritual and the com-

mon emotions, feelings that people have been sharing in this closed environment where everything is safe,” Hlín speaks of showing parts of the body not in connection with a person.

EMOTIONAL DEPTHS

With *Smoke Sauna Sisterhood* receiving multiple awards and nominations, starting with the Directing Award at the Sundance Film Festival, Hlín agrees that it’s been a whirlwind year for the film. “To win the European Documentary is amazing,” she beams with pride. Hlín has been observing the audience during festival screenings and confirms that viewers are often quite emotional when leaving the screening room. “This film touches on something that is rarely out in the open. It’s a mind-opener,” she says, adding that overall the audience can relate to the stories, even though some might be more difficult than others. “Every human being has experienced things that are buried inside.” Connecting through these

stories in the sauna is “soul-cleansing,” Hlín explains, saying the experience is an area where the women are letting go of emotional burdens and talking through the harshest experiences, including some as traumatic as rape.

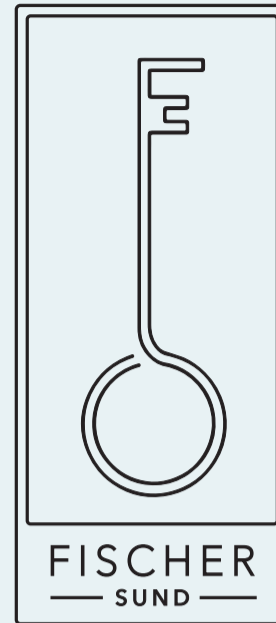
Hlín hopes that people will go to the cinema to watch the film, but maybe first do some research on what they’re going to see. “It’s a simple kind of a concept, but with very complex undertones,” she says. “You’re basically sitting there in the sauna and listening to the stories. This film is about relating and being human.”

Could the Icelandic hot pool culture compare to the sauna rituals? Hlín isn’t positive. “The smoke sauna is like a whole different level. Nothing that is talked about in there goes out anywhere.” ■

Check bioparadis.is for *Smoke Sauna Sisterhood* screening times in January



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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
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

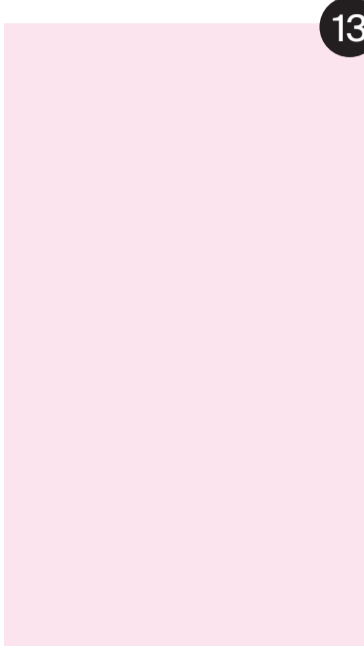
19 SBARRO
Austurstræti 17 & Vatnsmýrarvegur 10
"What is this shit?" is how Greil Marcus famously opened his review of Bob Dylan's 1970 album in Rolling Stone. It is appropriate here. It



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). 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 PHO VIETNAM
Laugavegur 3 (Multiple locations)
If you like rat shit, look no further than Pho Vietnam. Its parent company, Vyprif, was sued by the Reykjavik Health Inspection for the improper storage of food. During the health authority's visit, rat droppings, vermin carcasses, and evidence of human habitation in the storage was found. Eugh. AVOID. RG ■



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New In Town

Gallerí Skuggasund*

Ingólfsstræti 2B

Once upon a time, you couldn't throw a rock in downtown Reykjavik without hitting an independent art gallery. All that changed a while ago, but lucky for us, the tides are turning again with many fresh new artist-run galleries cropping up. Gallerí Skuggasund is the absolute freshest squeezed in town now. Though it just opened at the close of November, they have two exhibitions under their belt. Tucked into the alley of an old building, the vibe truly matches the location in all its gritty cool glory. We can't wait to see what they show next. ■



B

A UNIQUE GIFT SHOP IN THE HEART OF REYKJAVÍK

LAUGAVEGUR 12b theheartofreykjavik.com



Art Exhibitions

05.01–01.02.2024

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

Opening

Á MILLI

Coke Hore – *Tvímælaust*

Interdisciplinary artist Helga Guðrún Þorbjörnsdóttir, aka Coke Hore, draws from personal experiences exploring how the upper class is drawn to the aestheticism of the working class, using humor with political undertones.

Opens January 6
Runs until January 21

GERÐARSAFN (KÓPAVOGUR ART MUSEUM)

Ordinary Places

Exhibition presenting the photographs of Ívars Brynjólfsson in conversation with several other artists who have one thing in common: they pay the utmost attention to certain things and distort everyday life.

Opens January 13
Runs until March 31

Rósa Ómarsdóttir – MOLTA

An immersive interdisciplinary installation and live performance in which artist Rósa Ómarsdóttir creates ecosystems which are transformed through natural processes.

Opens January 25
Runs until February 4

GERÐUBERG (REYKJAVÍK CITY LIBRARY)

Litka Paints Breiðholt

The Litka fellowship of painters

starts the new year by painting the area known as Breiðholt. The outcome is a colourful exhibition that celebrates the neighbourhood.

Opens January 13
Runs until February 10

HAFNARBORG CENTER OF CULTURE & FINE ART

Pór Sigurbórsson – *Pointers*

New works by Pór Sigurbórsson, drawing lines of intersection across time and space. In his practice, the artist has a habit of introducing everyday objects and materials into new contexts.

Opens January 13
Runs until March 24

Jónína Guðnadóttir – *Tidemark*

Jónína Guðnadóttir (b. 1943) has long been one of Iceland's most prominent ceramicists and pioneer of using clay works, who gained attention early on for her artful practical items.

Opens January 13
Runs until April 29

HAFNARHÚS (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

Gambit – *Erró, Chronicler of Current Affairs*

The house's dedicated artist Erró (b. 1932) has continuously documented the turmoil of his own time. He draws rulers, tyrants and warlords into his visual world where they face ridicule, mockery and parody.

Opens January 13
Runs until May 12

MOSFELLSBÆR ART GALLERY

Jakob Veigar Sigurðsson – *I think, therefore I am fucked*

Artist Jakob Veigar gets his inspiration from music, nature, architecture and the society around him. Music comes alive where there is no beginning or end, only the moment matters.

Opens January 6
Runs until February 2

NÚLLIÐ

Úlfur Karlsson – *Depth Measurements*

This exhibition features one large painting, Surface, along with mem-

ories from the artist's stay in Rome during the early days of the Covid-19 epidemic, along with a sound piece by Dána Karlsdóttir.

Opens January 6
Runs until January 7

PORTFOLIO GALLERY

Herdís Hlíf Þorvaldsdóttir – *Á Blápræði*

Herdís primarily works with classic Renaissance-style oil paintings with an emphasis on classic hand gestures and references to the history of art and culture. Her works are often funky, dreamy, vulnerable and emotional.

Opens January 6
Runs until January 27

Ongoing

ANDRÁ REYKJAVÍK

Kristín Johnsen – *Skrúður*

Paintings

Runs until January 8

ÁSMUNDARSAFN (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

Mentor – *Ásmundur Sveinsson and Carl Milles*

Sculpture

Runs until January 28

BERG CONTEMPORARY

'Tis the season...

Interdisciplinary group exhibition

Runs until January 20

GALLERY SKILTI

Sirra Sigrún Sigurðardóttir – *Misseri*

Installation

Runs until Jun 15, 2024

GALLERY UNDERPASS

Sigga Björg Sigurðardóttir – *Cross The Line*

Paintings

Runs until February 2024

GERÐARSAFN (KÓPAVOGUR ART MUSEUM)

GERÐUR

Works of sculptor Gerður Helgadóttir

Permanent exhibition

GLERHÚSIÐ

Þorbjörg Höskuldsdóttir – *New Works*

Paintings

Paintings

Runs until January 14

HAFNARHÚS (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

D50 Klávs Liepiņš & Renāte Feizaka – *Doom Loop*

Mixed media, installation

Runs until January 11

Kaleidoscope: Icelandic 21st Century Art

Interdisciplinary works from the collection

Runs until January 14

THE HOUSE OF COLLECTIONS

Resistance: Interplay of Art and Science

Interdisciplinary group exhibition

Permanent exhibition

HÖFUÐSTÖÐIN

Shoplifter/Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir – *Chromo Sapiens*

Installation, colourful whole body experience

Permanent exhibition

KJARVALSSTAÐIR (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

Hekla Dögg Jónsdóttir – *0° 0° Null Island*

Photography, installation

Runs until February 29

Kjarval and the 20th Century: When Modernity Anchored

Paintings, drawings

Runs until December 2024

KLING & BANG

Jóhanna Kristbjörg Sigurðardóttir – *From Idea to Execution*

Mixed media

Runs until February 4

Vilhjálmur Yngvi Hjálmarsson – *Rate of Rotation*

Mixed media

Runs until February 4

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ARTS

Katla Einarisdóttir & Una María Magnúsdóttir – *Messages*

Graphic design

Runs until November 2024

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

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

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ICELAND

From The Collection: Creative Hands

Historical tapestries, textile works

Runs until May 5

NORDIC HOUSE

Under the Polar Ice

Mixed media, interactivity, workshops

Runs until March 31

REYKJAVÍK MARITIME MUSEUM

Heimir Freyr Hlödversson – *We Are Earth, We Are Water*

Video installation

Runs until February 2

REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY

The School of Photography Graduation Show

Photography, group exhibition

Runs until January 14

Anni Kinnunen – *The Great Escape*

Photography

Runs until January 28

SIGURJÓN ÓLAFSSON MUSEUM

Pura – *Home & Away*

Paintings

Runs until Spring 2024

Y GALLERY

Sigurður Árni Sigurðsson – *Holy Shadows*

Paintings, sculptures

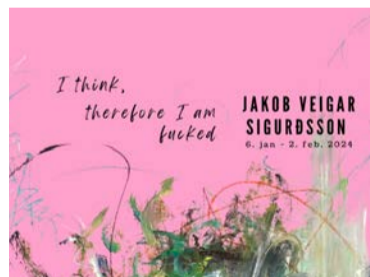
Runs until January 20 ■

Art Picks



Coke Hore – *Tvímælaust*
January 6 – 21
Á Milli

You know that thing where rich kids go to art school and they try to slum it like the poor kids? Or how suburban nepo-babies act like they're from the mean streets? There's a good song about it from the 90s that you might have heard. This is the phenomenon that interdisciplinary artist Coke Hore (the spicy moniker of Helga Guðrún Þorbjörnsdóttir) explores in her new exhibition opening in gallery Á Milli. Using politically tinged humour, she punches up at wealthy poseurs who rip off folks who just dance and drink and screw, because there's nothing else to do. RX



Jakob Veigar Sigurðsson – *I think, therefore I am fucked*
January 6 – February 2
Mosfellsbær Art Gallery

The title of Jakob Veigar Sigurðsson's new exhibition feels especially prescient right now. We are in very uncertain and confusing times with a lot of fucked up things happening and the more we think about it, somehow the more fucked we feel. These times are not what influenced new works, however, with Jakob taking cues from music, nature, architecture and society. He finds that sweet spot where the music is just the moment and those moments become the architecture on the canvas. It's also a bit confusing, and the more you think about it, the more you are fucked. RX



Rósa Ómarsdóttir – MOLTA
January 25 – February 4
Gerðarsafn (Kópavogur Art Museum)
Free exhibition, 8.500 ISK for performances

The Icelandic word "molta" translates to compost. Coming immediately after the year wherein Reykjavík introduced composting bins to the standard city refuse routine, it's quite a propos that artist Rósa Ómarsdóttir uses the term as a metaphor for her new show. The immersive interdisciplinary installation explores the fluidity and morphology of ecosystems, particularly alongside inorganic matter like plastic and tech waste. Four live performances alongside the Iceland Dance Company take place within the show where the audience is invited into the installation to picnic and watch the performers transform. RX



Satanvatnið
January 13 & 21, 20:30
Tjarnarbió
4.500 ISK

Lately I've been telling a lot of friends how I wish I could be a scary fish in the depths of the Mariana Trench. Judging from the poster for Satanvatnið ("Satan Lake"), I sure ain't the only one! Created by some of the brightest talents in Iceland's independent dance scene, this is the first original Icelandic ballet and blends together heavy metal, classical ballet and all their usual tropes under bright sweaty floodlights. The audience is encouraged to howl just like you would at Norðanpaunk. Is it a coincidence then that I, too, am a former ballerina whose favourite ballet was Swan Lake and converted to being a goth metal-loving freak? Yeah, probably. RX



Erró – Gambit
January 13 – May 12
Hafnarhús (Reykjavík Art Museum)

Erró is a national treasure, with a catalogue of works that is dauntingly massive. Seriously, every time we visit Hafnarhús we're treated to a new selection of his colourful and creative paintings and sketches. In gambit, curator Danielle Kvaran compiles a selection of works spanning Erró's 60-year career in which he's incorporated rulers, tyrants and warlords into a visual world where they face ridicule, mockery and parody. At a time when world politics are the people pulling the strings are frustrating (to say the least), it's therapeutic to take in art that puts powerbrokers past in their place. CF

Events 05.01-01.02.2024

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 January 5

Una Torfa
20:00 Bæjarbíó

Singletons
22:00 Dillon

Smegmageddon, Krownest, Duft & Dauðýflin
19:00 Kex Hostel

Power Paladin & Alchemia
20:00 Gaukurinn

Verksmiðjan: 2Peace, Funktion Einar & Kleer
23:00 Radar

SonurSæll x LaFontaine
22:00 Röntgen

Saturday January 6

Ash Walker Vinyl Set
21:00 12 Tónar

Una Torfa
20:00 Bæjarbíó

Flying Elbows
21:00 Dillon

Soft Saturday: Valbjörn Lillendal
16:00 Forsetinncafé

Back To School: University Rock Party
20:00 Kex Hostel

Heart Attack! Drag Night
21:00 Kiki Queer Bar

Nýló's B-Day & New Years Celebration
20:00 The Living Art Museum

Kraftgalli
20:00 Mengi

Neo Agency: Öbstn, PVUG, Día
22:00 Radar

90s Rave with Atli Kanill
22:00 Röntgen

Sunday January 7

RRS í Djúpinu: Daniel Hjálmtýsson & Þórir Georg
20:00 Hornið

Laville, Taloula, Anya Shaddock & Ash Walker
19:00 Kex Hostel

Mikael Máni Quartet
17:00 Mengi

Sunday Club
20:00 Radar

Wednesday January 10

Fógetarnir
21:00 Dillon

BREK
20:30 Loft Hostel

Sinis-Ásgeirsson Duo
20:00 Mengi

Davíð Þór & Skúli Sverrisson
12:15 Salurinn

Thursday January 11

Blues Night: Beggi Smári
21:00 Dillon

Daniel Sloss
19:00 Háskólabíó

ISO: Elgar's Enigma Variations
19:00 Harpa (Eldborg)

Kári Egilsson & Jóel Pálsson
18:00 Hotel Holt

Young G&T
21:00 Radar

Friday January 12

KLAKI & Ljósvaki
21:00 Dillon

Drag Stand-Up Night
21:00 Gaukurinn

BKPM, Overturn, KUSK & Óviti
20:00 Kex Hostel

Thizone, Tæson & Kosmodod
21:00 Radar

Saturday January 13

Soft Saturday: Sigurður Flosason
16:00 Forsetinncafé

Deep serene, Holy Hrafn, Mv Elyahsyn & Flyguy
20:00 Kex Hostel

Unme., LaFontaine x Jamesendir & DJ Deathmetal
21:00 Radar

Satanvatnið
20:30 Tjarnarbió

Sunday January 14

Sigurður Halldórsson: 61+1
16:00 Harpa (Norðurljós)

Wednesday January 17

Gísli Guðmunds
21:00 Dillon

Salsalceland Open Floor Night
20:00 IÐNÓ

Thursday January 18

Blues Night: Beggi Smári
21:00 Dillon

Högni Egilsson
18:00 Hotel Holt

TBA
21:00 Radar

Friday January 19

Pálmi Gunnars
20:00 Bæjarbíó

Hjörtur Stephensen Tríó
21:00 Dillon

\$leazy b2b Skorri b2b MSKR
21:00 Radar

Saturday January 20

Pálmi Gunnars
20:00 Bæjarbíó

Blue Note Mojo
21:00 Dillon

Soft Saturday: Óskar Guðjónsson
16:00 Forsetinncafé

Salsakommúnan
20:00 Kex Hostel

Voluptrus, Halldóra b2b Jamesendir
21:00 Radar

Sunday January 21

Ragga Gísla
21:00 Gamla Bíó

Sunday Club
20:00 Radar

Tuesday January 23

Upprásin: The Post Performance
Blues Band, Emma & Krassoff
20:00 Harpa (Kaldalón)

Wednesday January 24

Fógetarnir
21:00 Dillon

Thursday January 25

Blues Night: Beggi Smári
21:00 Dillon

Eyþór Gunnarsson Tríó
18:00 Hotel Holt

Eternal Roots Soundsystem
21:00 Radar

Friday January 26

Sindri Eldon & The Ways
21:00 Dillon

DJ Flugvél og Geimskip, DJ Gulli DJ, Knackered, IN3DEE & Slummi
21:00 Radar

Saturday January 27

Dan Van Dango
21:00 Dillon

Soft Saturday: Tómas Jónsson
16:00 Forsetinncafé

Booka Shade (DE)
20:00 Gamla Bíó

Reykjavík Social Distortion
21:00 Radar

FLOTT
20:00 Salurinn

Wednesday January 31

Gísli Guðmunds
21:00 Dillon

Thursday February 1

Agnar Már Magnusson & Delirium
Bubonis Band
18:00 Hotel Holt

Reykjavík Grapevine 2024 Music Awards
20:00 Mengi ■

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



Nýló's B-Day & New Years Celebration
Saturday, January 6, 20:00
The Living Art Museum
Free

There's a special type of power that's propelled when combining both a birthday party and a New Year's celebration. What else would you expect from the folks at the Living Art Museum (Nýló)? Doubling as a fundraiser for their steadfast duty to the Reykjavík arts scene, Nýló's Birthday and New Year's Celebration features a roster of exceptional musicians taking turns at the stage. Performances include those by Benni Hemm Hemm, MSEA, Apex Anima and Reykjavík's favourite ball band Bjartar Sveiflur. JB



BKPM, Overturn, KUSK & Óviti
Friday, January 12, 20:00
Kex Hostel
Free

This city's grassroots music scene has never been more fertile. With new artists popping up every other week or so, it kind of makes our job a tad difficult. Not that we're complaining. Check out the kraut-whirring new-wave music of BKPM and the rocking sounds of Overturn. Or, if pop-music's more your thing, stay for the soothing r'n'b of KUSK and Óviti. Centred in Kex Hostel, which incidentally received the Grapevine's official "Best Of" seal as the best bar for live music, there's not much that can go wrong. Except for a volcanic eruption, perhaps. JB



Upprásin - The Post Performance
Blues Band, Emma & Krassoff
Tuesday, January 23, 20:00
Harpa (Kaldalón)
2.000 ISK

The Upprásin concert series kicks off the new year with another great show on its calendar! The initiative by Reykjavík Music City and Rás 2 radio station kicked off last autumn with eclectic concerts that bring wildly different artists onto one stage for an evening. This time the evening brings together electronic pop producer and singer Krassoff, melodic chamber-folk ensemble Emma and wild and crazy art sensations The Post Performance Blues Band. This is a truly delicious curation of artists, each bringing their own unique energy and flavour for your ears and eyes will feast on. RX

Hafnarhús
Tryggvagata 17
101 Reykjavík

Kjarvalsstaðir
Flókagata 24
105 Reykjavík

Ásmundarsafn
Sigtún
105 Reykjavík

Open daily
listasafnreykjavikur.is
artmuseum.is





About Last Night

Diving Into The Satanic Lake

Screenwriter Selma Reynisdóttir Relives *Satanvatnið*'s premiere

WORDS Selma Reynisdóttir
IMAGE Karim Ilya

Tjarnarbíó, *Satanvatnið Premiere*

It's January and it's so dark.

But, then again, there are beings like Vampires who like the dark. They thrive and blossom, like the angler fish Lúsifer, who swims deep in the darkness surrounded by... well, not darkness, but light, since it carries a little headlamp around. Very cosy indeed. For Lúsifer, the light is a symbol of life, but for everything else, it means that once you see the light you will find yourself between

the teeth of dear Lúsí. So it's actually better to keep to the dark side.

The darkness has a few perks. Glitter becomes less ridiculous, it's cold enough for layers of (p)leather and you can experiment with heavy makeup since it's too dark to notice the mishaps – all of which would be the perfect attire to attend Iceland's very first heavy metal ballet at Tjarnarbíó!

The heavy metal ballet *Satanvatnið* takes place deep down at the bottom of the fictional Satanic Lake. There you will find creatures about to start another dark day wearing the finest spikes one can find in such a pond. However, soon they are threatened by terrifying sounds originating from the surface. But these Satanic Lake creatures are lucky, since battling evil with heroic guitar solos and pirouettes is just what they do best.

See you at Tjarnarbíó in January. Wear your darkest lipstick and sharpest spikes. ■

Grapevine Music Awards

It's almost time for the Reykjavík Grapevine Music Awards

Take a look at this year's nominees

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGE Art Bicnick

artists and a general air of things patching up post-pandemic. Notable events included the 2023 edition of Iceland Airwaves, grassroots platform Upprásin, along with a host of other fantastic concerts, shows and festivals.

On February 1, the Reykjavik Grapevine invites you to celebrate the crème de la crème of Icelandic music in 2023. The event will happen at Mengi, with doors opening at 20:00.

panel of highly knowledgeable music experts came together to draft a list of nominees.

The panel of judges include University of Iceland professor Arnar Eggert Thoroddsen, Iceland Music marketing and PR manager Hrefna Helgadóttir, Kraumur Music Awards panellist and DJ Rósa Birgitta Ísfeld, RÚV radio host Snæbjörn Jack, and the Grapevine's music editor Jóhannes Bjarkason.

After an excellent year in music, it's time for us at the Grapevine to select the best of the best. What artist conquered 2023? Who released the best album? What about music videos, are they still a thing? All those questions – and more – will be answered at the 2024 Reykjavík Grapevine Music Awards.

A YEAR OF RECUPERATION

The passing year in music was marked by a number of '90s band comebacks, a resurging grassroots scene, spectacular female solo

After a rigorous selection process, rivalled only by the Nobel Prize, a panel of highly knowledgeable music experts came together to draft a list of nominees.

The winners will be announced at the awards ceremony, as well as in our next issue, which hits the streets February 2.

After a rigorous selection process, rivalled only by the Nobel Prize, a

THE NOMINEES

Without further ado, the following is a list of nominees for the 2024 Reykjavík Grapevine Music Awards.

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KRONAN



Track By Track

Never-ending Drive

Sucks To Be You Nigel talk their latest record *birdnoise*

WORDS Sucks To Be You Nigel
IMAGE Supplied by artist

Punk-rockers Sucks To Be You Nigel released their sophomore album *birdnoise* on November 10. A departure from their 2021 *Tína blóm*, the outfit's latest record draws inspiration from '90s post-hardcore, post-rock and the band's idiosyncratic humour – as demonstrated by their explanations of some of these songs. Bow to The King.

a painful loudness surrounds the whole of your conscience. Almost unserious.

TONNATAK

Written while waiting for a *Terraria* update to install and attempting to capture the essence of the game and 2D life in general. This led to a longing for a simpler state of being; perfectly obtained in a game of "hide and seek".

ÉG VAR SVONA FEITT
AÐ SPÁ Í AÐ HENDA Í
AFSÖKUNARBEIÐNI Á
HÓPINN, ALVEG SVONA
ALVÖRU AFSÖKUNAR-
BEIÐNI Á ALLAN HÓPINN

Translation, "I was really thinking about writing an apology to the group, a real apology to the whole group." This song is very reminiscent of our first album, the messiness and the playfulness of punk music. Includes a miked-up microwave of questionable cleanliness to many a sound-engineer chagrin.

SUSIE TAKES A SOUND-BATH

The mixture of our singer gargling liquid, banging guitars with on-site objects and the train-like rhythmic section creates a noisy and abrasive introduction to the album.

MASKÍN

The song is a mechanical thing. How does it work? How intricate the sludge. A never-ending drive of industrial power to spare, crawling towards the crescendo of your inevitable doom. All hail The Slug.

SPLITTA G-INU

Mmmmm. Riff. Drums. Bass. Voice. What more could you possibly ask for? A simple yet content little melody. Sometimes ignorance truly is bliss.

SPACEMAN

Space-guitars and a forgotten bass groove lain upon space-drums in complete weightlessness. Spatial awareness at its best. The crackling bedside of the astronaut's quarters and a bottle of Côtes du Rhône. Oh, he was so sublime! Stargazing off into the sunset. A man of taste.

WHERE THE SIM CARD IS SOLD

Brace your ears. This song may appear as a quiet and soothing tune, but after a few bars you realise that you were wrong. All of the sudden

STULLI & RÚNAR

Our first monster of a song is an ode to joy. An ode to a thought. An ode to the water. An ode to the entitlement of the crown. An ode to Stulli. An ode to Rúnar. Here's a quarter, go put it in a washing machine.

FROG IS KING

An evil yet mysterious song with an angular melody and a froggy finish. You'd maybe pair this song with a nice creamy pasta dish and an acidic yet simple salad. We recommend you stay your hand with the salt and pepper and enjoy the pure noisy-sombre dynamic of the song. Bow to The King.

CHARLIE-GIBBS

Being one of the oldest songs of the album, this track was a kind of gateway for us into the moodier side of music. This song also marks the start of our time-signature shenanigans and our shift toward a more guitar-heavy sound.

SOUNDBATH

An instrumental discourse with a horse.

KALT Á TÁNUM

We dot the i's of *birdnoise* with a song about losing control and a melancholic hope to fly. Then, a few dangerously hypnotising minutes of feedback close the record and send you off to your first day of school. ■

2024 Awards!

ARTIST OF THE YEAR

Daniil
Daði Freyr
Kári Egilsson
Laufey

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

Elín Hall – *Heyrist í mér?*
Eva808 – *Öðruvísi*
Laufey – *Bewitched*
Neonme – *Premiere*

SONG OF THE YEAR

Björk – "Oral"
Elín Hall – "Bankastræti"
Lúpína – "Ástarbréf"
Spacestation – "Hvít Vín"

MUSIC VIDEO OF THE YEAR

Ice Guys – Krumla
Laufey – From the start
Lúpína – Yfir Skýin
MSEA – Mouth of the face of the sea

BEST LIVE ACT

Celebs
Gugusar
KUSK
Xiupill

YOU SHOULD HAVE HEARD THIS

Katrín Lea – *Mama Do You Hear The Music?*
Kári Kresfelder – *Words*
MSEA – *Our Daily Apocalypse Walk*
Smjörvi – *svo heilagt!!*

ONES TO WATCH

Apex Anima
Róshildur
Sunna Margrét
Torfi

SHOUT OUT

Drengurinn Fengurinn
Pan Thorarensen
Upprásin

Who will come out on top in each category? Come to Mengi Feb. 1 to find out live, or pick up the next issue of The Reykjavík Grapevine. ■



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- GLAZED LAMB FILLET - celeriac, fennel, mashed potatoes, lamb glaze
- RHUBARB PIE - marzipan, vanilla ice cream

FOOD CELLAR

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Acting Out

Can You Hear Elín Hall

How the artist manoeuvres between acting and music

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGE Art Bicnick

concept of discovering one's voice, framed within fantasies, nightmares and semi-biographical accounts.

A TEENAGE CRISIS

Elín Hall's assignment in Borgar-leikhúsið is only a chapter of her lengthy involvement in performance art. She made her first steps into ballet, which ended abruptly. "It was a big decision to quit dance at the time. Because I had gone abroad, starting a professional dancer programme, 14 years old in Canada," Elín reminisces.

"I quit school. Quit 9th grade and went all in," she explains. "I came back home and I sensed the gravity of Listdanskólinn. Suddenly I was overwhelmed with the first crisis in my life, thinking, 'I don't know if I'm on the right track.' I've described it as my first heartbreak."

Through her upbringing, Elín discovered her love of music. It was Elín's mother who taught her the guitar, birthing the artist's initial steps into songwriting.

Reykjavik theatre Borgar-leikhúsið has been centre stage of Elín Hall's life for the past year. When she's not performing as Bubbi Morthens in the hit musical *Njú Líf* — based on the biography of the Icelandic national treasure — Elín spends her days rehearsing for her next stage production, the musical *Eitruð Lítil Pilla (Jagged Little Pill)*, by Alanis Morissette and Glen Ballard, which is set to premiere at Borgar-leikhúsið in February 2024.

Between her rigorous acting itinerary, Elín Hall has cemented herself as one of Iceland's surging pop stars. Among other things, her latest album *heyrist í mér*, explores the

THE EDGE OF BREAKING

The act of discovering one's voice — in this context, Elín's voice — is the core theme of her latest album, as referenced by the title *heyrist í mér* (can you hear me?). "I've always been occupied with the question of whether I'm being heard," Elín explains. "In dance, I thought I was just a body. *heyrist í mér*, you know, it's just a sentence that the musician says before they tap the microphone," she continues.

For Elín, that title also holds alternative meanings — one pertaining to her experience as a woman. "In a feminist context, do the things I'm saying matter? I've experienced that you need to make an effort to be heard. You need to express things more clearly as a woman. Nobody is handing you the microphone. You need to go onstage and say it," Elín opines.

At first glance, *heyrist í mér* assumes the role of an honest singer/songwriter album, opening up on the mellow, acoustic driven tracks "he i m" and "vinir". It may seem like Elín

You need to express things clearly as a woman. Nobody is handing you the microphone.

"I had more of a storyteller within me, which I didn't have the platform to express in dance," Elín states. "I used music to deal with my emotions regarding quitting ballet. I had no life except ballet and school. When I needed to discover myself all over again, [music] saved me."

is wearing her heart on her sleeve, but reality — like great art — is never so convenient.

Stripping back the album's accessible layer of pop music, the listener is exposed to heart-wrenching lyrics, nostalgic reminiscence and multi-



?

tudinal stories. Although the occasional voyeur might feel like they're peeping into Elin's personal life, the album's ingenuity lies in its ability to instead serve as a mirror to the listeners' own lives and emotions.

ON THE VERGE OF SCREAMING

Coloured by the isolation clouding society during covid, Elin says her

I'm always dancing on the line of screaming, to demand that people listen to me.

writing is, "generally personal, not realistically personal." She continues, half-jokingly, "I don't think I'm opening my underwear drawer. But I use my own life as a building block."

"I was examining the boundaries between nightmares and fantasies, trauma and nostalgia, and the edges of these phenomena. And the edge of breaking," Elin says, referencing the recording process of "Júpiter" as an example.

"That's a song that started out as a simple guitar song. Reynir [Snær Magnússon, Elin's collaborator on the album] and I were never happy with the arrangement. The more we worked on it, the more rock-influenced it became," Elin starts.

"Halfway into the song, it ended up with a change, so it got transformed into a rock song where I start screaming. That's very descriptive of the whole album. I'm always dancing on the line of screaming,

to demand that people listen to me. Or demanding to be taken seriously, both as a musician but also in my personal life," she concludes.

In a very Fleetwood Mac-esque moment, Elin and her longtime partner and album collaborator Reynir broke up as work got underway. "When we're starting work on the album, we break up. We'd been together for five years as a couple. That also put

its dent in things, because we decided to continue working together on the record. And I think that we'd hit a sort of spiral," Elin confides.

Ultimately unhappy with the outcome, Elin turned to producer Árni Árnason. "Árni shows up, and I don't know what he's doing in that computer of his. But all of sudden," Elin snaps her fingers, "it started to sound right. Everything became easy."

I don't think I'm opening my underwear drawer. But I use my own life as a building block.

SWAPPING BETWEEN CHARACTERS

Alongside her musical career, which is now firmly cemented with the release of *heyrist í mér*, Elin has devel-

oped a flourishing acting career that includes starring roles in two feature-length films. One of those, the 2023 release *Kuldi*, features Elin's track "rauðir draumar," which was written from the perspective of one of the characters. Considering the opportunities for overlap, does Elin's acting career influence her music?

"[For one] it allows me to step into the role of Elin Hall, the musician. My name isn't Elin Hall. It's an artist name I took up when I was abroad, because Halldórsdóttir was a bit too long," she explains.

"Acting can help me step into a character to follow through with my art. I need to have clear boundaries. And acting gives me the confidence to step in and out of something. I'm in character right now while I'm doing this interview."

Although acting was never on Elin's bingo card in life, she doesn't regret the path she's currently taking. As rehearsals for *Jagged Little Pill* are underway, Elin plans to finally host an album release show for *heyrist í mér* in March before releasing new music further into 2024. ■

TÓST FOR BREAKFAST



VINSTÚKAN
THU SOPAR
by night

**HAPPY HOUR
17:00 - 19:00**

Buy a bottle of wine and get two courses for free!



Catch Elin Hall's next move on her Instagram, @elinsifhall. Listen to *heyrist í mér* on available streaming platforms.

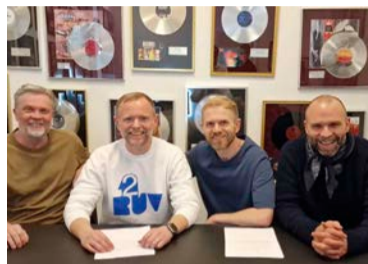


Music News

There's Never A Dull Moment

A roundup of happenings in the Icelandic music industry

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGES Nicholas Grange, RÚV and Art Bicnick



ALDA MUSIC SECURES PUBLISHING DEAL WITH RÚV

A collaborative agreement has recently been inked between national broadcaster RÚV and record label Alda Music. In a report published on their website, RÚV says the institution had signed a contract with Alda regarding the publishing of all of RÚV's material. The record label will be responsible for publishing music recorded by RÚV, a deal that seems to include the release of both retrospective and prospective music. The decision raises multiple questions, the most prominent being, "What the fuck?"



KRAUMUR AWARDS WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The six winners of the prestigious Kraumur award were announced December 14. The awards, supported by Aurora foundation, are given out annually to outstanding Icelandic musicians for their releases in the passing year. The decisions are based on quality, ambition, and originality. Hosted by Kex Hostel, the artists and bands receiving the awards were Apex Anima for *Elf F O*, Elin Hall for *heyrist í mér*, Eva808 for *Öðruvísi*, Neonme for *Premiere*, Spacestation for *Bæbbæ*, and ex.girls for *Verk*. This is Kraumur's 16th prize ceremony.



SKÁLMOELD REVEAL "EVERYTHING" CONCERT SERIES

Iceland's favourite viking-themed metal band Skálmöld recently announced three days of concert performances, where they'll play every single Skálmöld album. From November 1-3, the halls of Harpa will reverberate with Old Norse rímur and guitar licks capable of smiting audience members to Hel. The concert series – aptly named "Allt" (Everything) – will see the band perform two albums per night, starting on November 1 with *Sorgir* and *Börn Loka*. Joining Skálmöld onstage is chamber choir Hymnodia. Tickets are available on Tix.is, with prices ranging from 6.990-15.990 ISK. ■



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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 1000 ISK, Wine & Prosecco 1200 ISK

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

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

BRAVÓ
Every day from 12:00 to 20:00
Beer 750 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

BREWD OG
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

FORSÉTINNCAFÉ
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 SVÍNID
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
SPILAKAFFI
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

VINSTÚKAN TÍU SOPAR
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 Bíó Paradís

Hverfisgata 54

The solstice may have passed, but it's still the depths of the dark season and hibernating is all the rage. And what better way to do that than burrowing down with movies, beverages and snacks at Bíó Paradís? Even if you skip the movie part, their extremely cosy couches and retro-cinema chill bar will feel like a big warm hug where you can daydream your own main-character plotline in the movie of your life. For relaxing times, make it Bíó Paradís times.

Happy hours
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00
Beer 1.000 ISK,
Wine & Prosecco 1.200 ISK ■

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



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HAMBORGARABÚLLA TÓMASAR
Tuesday Special: burger, fries & soda
1.890 ISK all day on Tuesday

HLÖLLABÁTAR
Lunch Offer: Choice of any sub and soda
2.195 ISK every day until 14:00

ISLENSKI BARINN
Soup of the Day
1.850 ISK all day, every day

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

MAI THAI BISTRO
Lunch Offer: daily curry meal
2.090 ISK weekdays between 11:00 - 14:00

APÓTEK
Soup of the Day
1.990 ISK all day, every day

ARABIAN TASTE
Falafel Roll
1.590 all day, every day

BÆJARINS BEZTU
Hotdog and soda
990 ISK all day, every day

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

DRAGON DIM SUM
Lunch Offer: choice of any two dumpling baskets

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

NAPOLI PIZZA
Lunch Offer: choice of menu pizza or sandwich
1.690 ISK every day from 11:30 - 15:00

PÍTUBARINN
Veggie pita sandwich
1.990 ISK all day, every day

REYKJAVÍK ROASTERS
Breakfast menu & sourdough toasts
580 ISK - 1.800 ISK, all day, every day

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

ZORBIAN HOT
Chicken shawarma wraps & falafel wraps
1.490 ISK all day, every day ■

* We do our best to keep these prices current, but shit's outta control. Let us know if you spot a sweet deal: grapevine@grapevine.is

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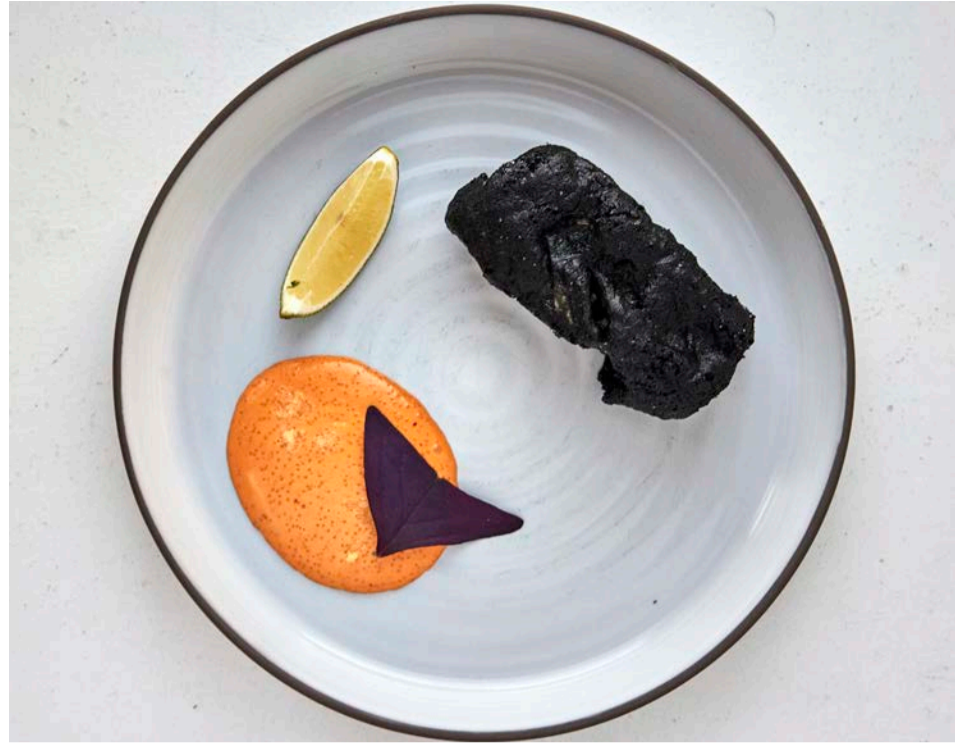
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A Year In Food **The Year That Was In**

The foodscape of 2023 was a veritable mixed bag

WORDS Shruthi Basappa
 IMAGE Grapevine archives

were held onto and awarded, and new Michelin dreams are brewing countrywide.

MICHELIN, MICHELIN, MICHELIN!

Iceland now boasts three one-starred establishments on the Michelin Guide. Moss, the picturesque restaurant at Retreat Blue Lagoon, helmed by chef Aggi Sverisson swooped up a star, much to the surprise of many given their shaky beginnings. The former Texture alum seems keen to rework that same magic here in his homeland.

Óx and Dill continue to enthrall with their exemplary tasting menus and reservations are increasingly challenging to make with short notice. So, aspiring gourmands and connoisseurs, I'd book those tables now if I were you.

THE RETURN OF FOOD FESTIVALS

Food and Fun returned for a low-key 20th year edition that once again saw visiting chefs taking over Reykjavik restaurants for a whole weekend of noshing. This year saw reservations go online via DineOut, signalling that perhaps the reservation-averse local was finally succumbing to the practice.

Matey Seafood festival continues to build bridges between purveyors, restaurants and diners with its celebration of Icelandic seafood and cleverly shifts the focus away from the mainland to the bountiful parts

of the island that are often overlooked, even by locals. This year saw some heavy hitters like Cúán Greene from Ireland's Omos Dublin and Adam Qureshi, formerly of Kól.

The festivals are a taste of the globe and make for memorable merry-making indeed, but I do hope to see a more diverse lineup of chefs with more women and more from both first and third cultures taking centre stage.

CRAFTY COCKTAILS

We are firmly a natural wine loving country now and flirtatiously dipping our toes into cocktail territory. For a food culture greenhorn, this society often seems to embrace trends and specificities more readily when slapped with a steep price tag. Enter the craft cocktail.

Teensy twee cocktails and a side story of careful brewing of their own special tinctures, tonics and bitters by hipster bartenders? Yep, we are there now folks. Tolt at the Edition lowkey attempted a mainstream introduction despite its speakeasy aspirations. But it's Keli Ingi at Skál and the entire team at Jungle that have been slinging some of the best sips in town. Leo Snæfeld has thrown his hat into the mix at Ammadon, the city's newest speakeasy meets Scandi grandma chic replete with lace doilies and 3500ISK+ cocktails.

NEW BEGINNINGS

There was no holding back the flood of new openings in the city.

There is nothing I look forward to more than my annual round up of the past year in culinary happenings, whilst pretending to look into my crystal ball to foresee potential trends and developments of the year ahead. I'm no modern day Nostradamus but how fun it is to play pretend.

2023 was quite the rollercoaster here on our little island. Many in the hospitality industry had warned of the impact of weak pandemic measures that only served in the short term, but would lead to serious financial impact in 2023 and they were right – there were multiple closures. But not everything was grim, the year also saw the opening of several establishments ranging across price points and variety. Internationally renowned listicles and selections by popular bloggers were lapped up by local media and business owners, rightfully basking in the glow of recognition. Michelin stars

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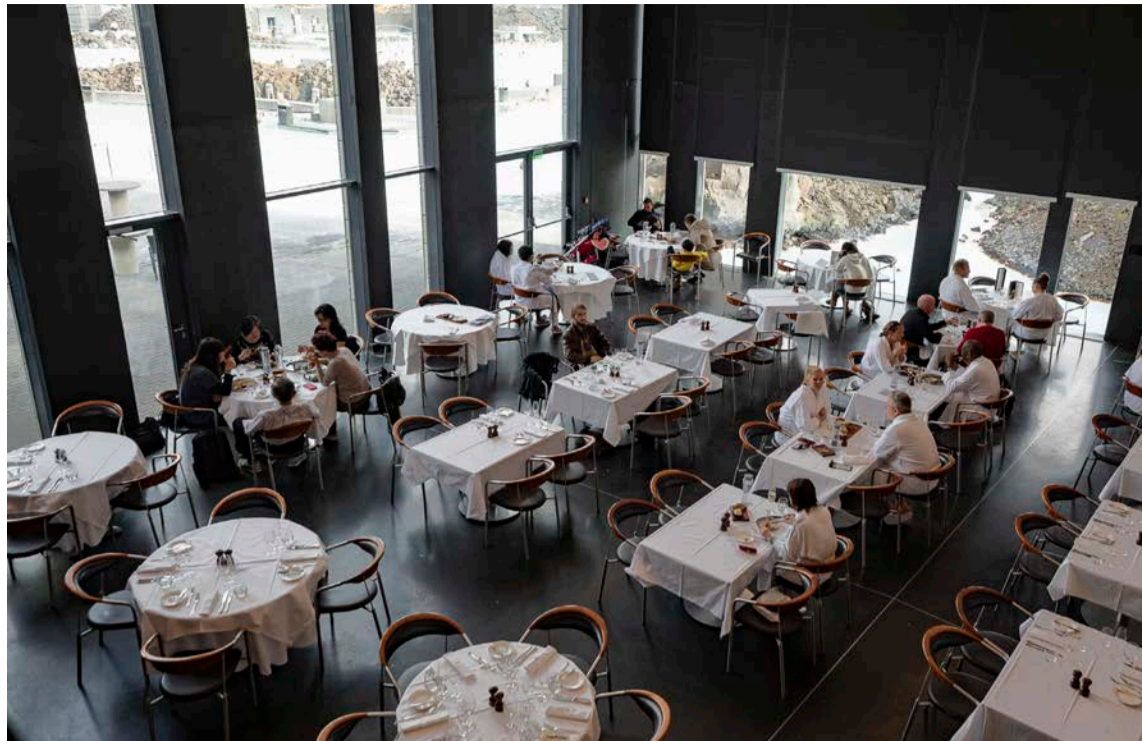
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Icelandic Dining

Much-awaited Oto, by chef Sigurður Laufdal finally opened their doors, exactly where Yuzu once stood. They retained much of the old decor, with a splash of new lighting and table tops and are dishing out beautiful plates of food that are neither Japanese nor Italian, but claim to be both by way of PR.

Chef Fanney Dóra moved on from Hnoss and is now heading operations at Hjá Jóni and it's an exciting time to see where this talented chef will take her creative force now that she has her own canvas to play with.

Kemuri is quickly turning out to be popular with both its Polish patrons and others for their handmade pierogies and warm service. How wonderful to have a Polish restaurant in downtown Reykjavík!

Skreið has Basque ambitions but takes the brusque service far too literally to warrant repeat visits. A shame given their ambitious pricing in this tough market. (Perhaps they are exchanging notes on curt service with BakaBaka down the street?)

La Poblana has birthed La Cantina, and Carlos' vision is to bring the flair and festive atmosphere of Mexican cantinas to downtown, replete with music, drinks and food. Banh Mi too opened up a larger location, thus expanding their original Hlemmur Mathöll menu. The boba teas are especially lovely.

Bragi Skaftason of Tiu Sopar, bitten by another restaurant bug, opened Kronikon at Gerðarsafn, signalling

yet again the draw of the suburbs and the possibilities for quality dining options outside 101. Pop stars and musicians are seldom away from the business and this time it's Pall Óskar with his 107 pizzeria.

SOME CLOSURES

The year was dotted with closures. With the turn of 2023 came the announcement of Coocoo's Nest's closure and many are still nursing a deep longing for the family joint (heard through the grapevine that the old chef from the Coocoo's brunch fame will be playing around with a similar homey, comfort vibe at a popular spot downtown). Now Lóla Florens, the remaining flagship vintage-witchy-cafe is downing its shutters.

Selva Latin Bar, which once served a hella delicious piña colada, is now no more. Mikki Refur, the wine bar cum coffee shop where conversations flowed as easily as their tittle, has also shuttered citing licensing and space issues. Jazz music den Skuggabaldur has ceased operations, even as Akur changes hands of ownership.

To no one's surprise, Vera Mathöll at Gróska halted their entire operations last summer, even as local media desperately tried to get in touch with the owners. I'd last noted the smell of despair and likely faulty HVAC that thrust a mysterious smell over the whole area. It was likely that and the generally insipid choices there that eventually caught up to them.

PEEVES AND HOPES

The food and beverage industry is a fickle business and many have surmised that you don't get into it to make money. The challenges of running a business that conforms to straitjacketed regulations by planning authorities and the health department and making business sense whilst renting premium real estate is a tightrope walk. Which ironically attracts deep pockets, often of the investor mindset that seldom pay attention to – or are interested in – fostering creativity.

A cursory glance over many restaurant menus, especially those of the bottomless variety, throw into sharp relief how commonplace Garri wares and their frozen dumplings have become. You are not being cheeky, we see you.

The price for a "cheap" bite and a dish at a sit down restaurant are so blurred today that you are better off spending a few thousand krona more for a guaranteed good time. Which is why, unlike most other places, you are often getting quite the deal if you choose fine dining spots like Dill, that still somehow make their carefully crafted tasting menus value for money in more ways than one.

Given the importance of food coverage and its impact on local businesses, Icelandic businesses have caught up to the idea of food PR and we will see the rise of the food influencer on social media. That it is content-driven glossy inexperience

that sells for likes rather than expertise is a given in this image saturated businesses. Local bloggers have long filled the vacuum with their *skólastjórásúpa* and weekend outings gushing over truffle carpaccio, but there is room still for nuance and complexity.

Internationally, Eater and Time Out both updated their Reykjavík listings, and Insta-famous Kaitlin Orr and Anders Husa also visited the country. Unsurprisingly, Reykjavík still seems to constitute the whole country and a quality shift in the countryside is still much needed.

A fun poll with my readers revealed a common disdain for anything truffled, beets, battered cauliflower, carpaccios and overpriced mains. Overwhelmingly, however, it was the lack of service at restaurants across town that had diners pulling their hair out in frustration.

It is clear that management seldom, if ever, put thought and time into training their front of house. Staff retention and rising labour wages aside, it is also evident that the industry is in dire need of DEI-guided principles as I, and many I have spoken to, have been curtly turned away from many a doorstep this year with a, "Nei, you can't be here!" dismissal. A Harvard Business School study with interviews with over 6,000 hotels revealed how racial bias taints customer service.

Hospitality businesses thrive or die depending on if they provide exemplary service to their customers.

When it comes down to it, we return to places that make us feel good, that make us feel taken care of. Food is often incidental to a fantastic dining experience, with the ambience, the company we keep and how we are treated making up a bulk of how we view the experience. The simple act of not offering a drink menu first so we can sip while perusing the food menu has shown to result in loss of business.

Which brings me to the other part of the dining experience – us, the customer. We need to show up as invested diners who are free with our appreciation and open with our criticism.

To not turn every saumaklubbur-Thursday outing into a bawling 14-people-strong yodelling band at 21:00 is but the least of the courtesies we can extend to our fellow diners and restaurant staff. To not accept every mayo-covered abomination as a marvel, to be curious about what makes Hokkaido milk bread different from generic milk breads and demand that you be served what the menu sells. To not accept mediocrity masked as enthusiasm. To hold chefs and cooks responsible in the best way possible, instead of everything becoming a deep-fried affair.

So there you have it, folks, all the tidings from 2023 and hope for conscientious, nuanced, joyful dining experiences in the year ahead. ■





WHERE MIDDLE-EASTERN FLAVOURS ELEVATE ICELANDIC INGREDIENTS?

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Islanders **Death's Symphony**

Pétur Guðmann Guðmannsson's one-man-show in the autopsy room

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Art Bicnick

"We have every kind of case here in Iceland – every chapter of the forensics book, everything besides train accidents," Pétur Guðmann Guðmannsson, Iceland's only forensic pathologist, says matter-of-factly as we meet at his office in the old blood bank of the National Hospital on Barónsstígur. Most of his work days start in an autopsy room with a tiny morgue attached. He shows me his tools – scissors, forceps, clamps, knives and even a saw lie in silent readiness. With two autopsies done for the day, there are four bodies waiting for him to unravel their mysteries tomorrow.

If there was an eye-opening moment in my career, it was probably when I decided to give up psychiatry. I started specialising in psychiatry because I was very interested in the

theory behind it, but it wasn't for me. You could say it was a burnout. I had always been interested in anatomy and disease and I knew that forensic pathology is all about that, like autopsy and working with your hands. It's the complete opposite of psychiatry, where you never have anything solid; you can never put your finger on what is happening with a patient. That is my interest in forensic pathology. It's in the process of the work and the method – not in crime or death, per se.

MORGUE'S EMBRACE

I mostly work alone, but for a week every month, my colleague flies in from Denmark to help. It's a lot of work – too much for one person. There are no other similar specialists in Iceland. Only three Icelanders have specialised in this field and the other two are living abroad.

There are enough homicides, violence and crime for one forensic pathologist working with that and every other unexplained death. We do almost 300 autopsies a year for the police.

On a typical day, I come in and see what's new – check if the police have sent requests for autopsies. Most mornings, there are one to five requests. I see if the bodies have

arrived and we start working. [Pétur Guðmann has two assistants who take care of the autopsy room and handle the sewing.] We usually finish the autopsy work during the morning hours and try to do other things, like paperwork, after lunch.

A good number of unexplained deaths are disease-related, such as heart disease that no one knew about or a brain haemorrhage, for example. But not all the cases are suspicious; very few of them are genuinely suspicious. There are a few cases a year where we see there's a good chance it's a homicide, or it's definitely a homicide. Then, it's a much more complicated autopsy procedure.

CRIME SCENE ANALYSIS

The police have experts in blood pattern analysis and fingerprints, among other things, but we, the forensic pathologists, are experts in the body. It's important that forensic pathologists come to the scene and start the time of death investigation. You have to take measurements – body temperature, environmental temperature, tests from the eye fluid and so on. The sooner you do it, the better results you will get.

We do a rudimentary examination of the body to try to understand what's

happened and then plan a proper investigation of the body and order a CT scan as soon as possible. The autopsy would follow, with the police or the CSI technician with the police present.

My team and I also conduct many investigations of living people who have been assaulted. Probably the most common situation is domestic violence, where women have been subjected to an assault by their partner. They involve the police and the police would involve us to examine the outer aspect of the body. We probably handle about 30-50 of these cases each year.

AUTOPSY DIARIES

An autopsy can take as little as an hour to complete or up to days. We do a full examination of all the body cavities, the cranium and all the organs. The brain, the heart and the lungs are the key organs in death and the death process.

My favourite organ is probably the heart. It's a vital and interesting organ. And it's so simple – it's just a pump. You can go to Bauhaus and buy a pump that's as effective as the heart. But it's nonetheless an irreplaceable and very disease-prone organ. It's not the brain – you can't see all the interesting brain condi-

tions. If someone was crazy, or very creative, you wouldn't see it.

In many cases, the cause of death lies just in the heart. It is marked after years of hypertension or eating Domino's for every meal. You see it in the heart if people have not taken good care of themselves.

Functional diseases would be my least favourite to work with. These are diseases you can't see because you have no function in the dead body. Some disease processes like epilepsy can occur without any visible pathology, the same with inborn cardiac arrhythmias and electrolyte disturbances.

A WRITER'S HANDBOOK

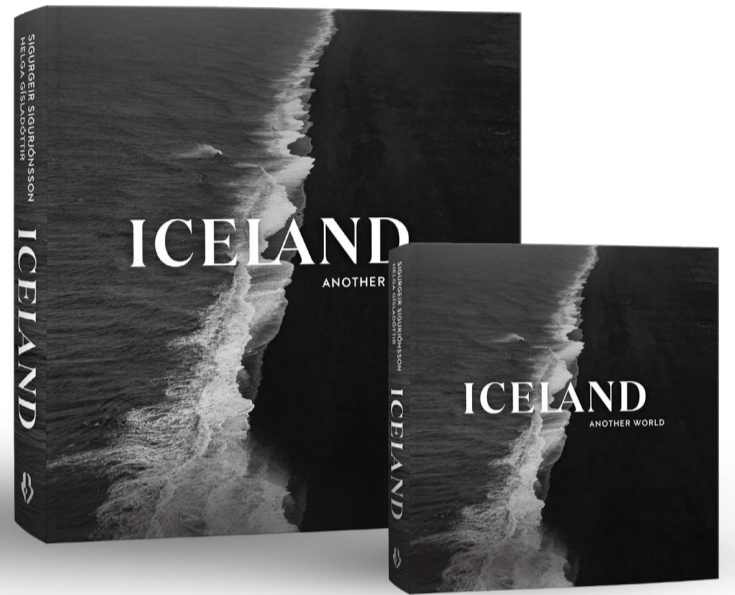
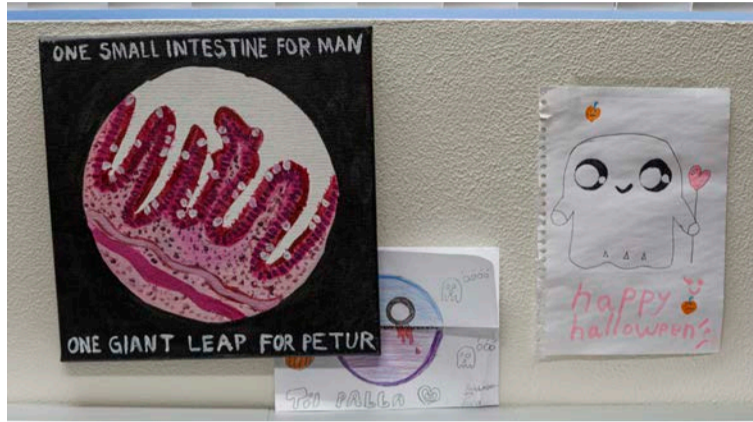
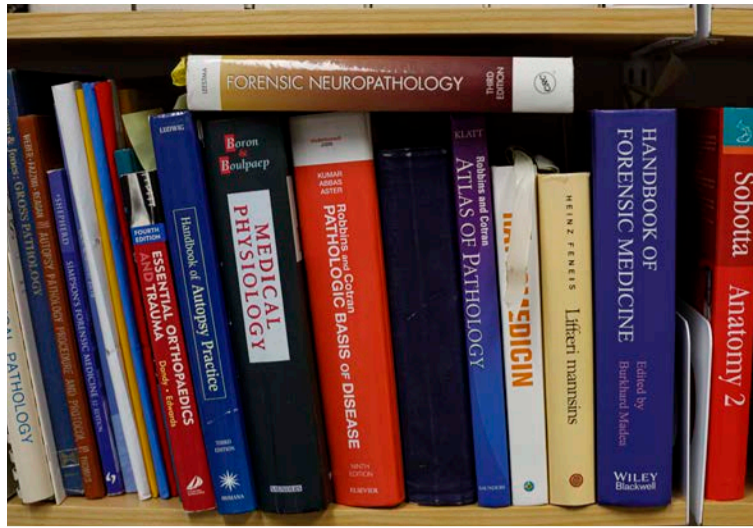
Through the years, writers have been reaching out with questions about different methods of death, murder or putrefaction, for example, "I'm writing a scene where someone is stabbed. How many times does he have to be stabbed?" They want to incorporate real forensic pathology and I'm glad to help. It's always an interesting conversation.

I talked to Endurmenntun [Háskóli Íslands' continuing education department] and said that I want to have a course for professionals in the judicial and healthcare system

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about forensic medicine – emergency doctors, nurses, ICU and police. There is a need for them to understand a little bit about death investigations. We did that course and then, the Endurmenntun said there are probably a lot of writers that would be interested, too, so we decided to do a special course for them. I have had this course now for probably three years, both fall and spring. It's been full most of the time.

It's clear that a student is writing a specific scene and this is why they're there. They're thinking if it is possible to stage a hanging, for instance. In the course, I'm trying to give a realistic picture of the job and of forensic pathology in general. I also talk about the death process and what happens to the body, like putrefaction, mummification and how that works and looks.

OUTSIDE THE AUTOPSY SUITE

I like music. I listen to Bach a lot. I think Bach is like doing an autopsy. It's polyphonic, you have a lot of voices that are intertwined. If you have the nerd gene, like I do, you can just take a very, very short segment, dig into it, take the voices apart and think about each note. What are these two notes doing here together?

What you can do with Bach's music is you can put it back together and it becomes alive. But you can't do that with dead bodies. This is what I think is fascinating in working both intelligently or artistically – this combination of things and analysing them down to the smallest detail.

I read books, but I don't read crime. I mostly read non-fiction – books about Bach, perhaps. I'm a bit of a nerd like that. But then I have the usual things in my life, of course – my kids and my wife. I try to take it easy on the evenings and on the weekends.

We have been having a hard time getting younger doctors into this specialty. So I used to tell them that it's such a good job. We work office hours. You're not in the hospital during the night and your clients are not booked weeks ahead. I'm always so surprised that younger doctors don't tend to commit themselves to this specialty.

NAVIGATING SILENCE

There are two kinds of people I meet – those who are very interested [in forensic pathology] and those who try not to mention it. It's more common that people don't initiate that conversation and I don't do it either. My mother was very happy when I

decided to become a doctor. She was very proud. But I don't think she was hoping that I would be this kind of doctor. She doesn't talk about it as much as she used to.

Of course, this kind of casework can be very overwhelming. It's tragic and tends to be emotional. But if you have that type of mindset, then it's not for you. Most forensic pathologists distance themselves from the emotional and tragic factors of the cases. It's not burdening in that way. It's like any other job; if you're working with something complex or challenging, either you quit and do something else, or you just get used to it. It would be impossible to go home every day and think about all the poor families and so on.

This job is very rewarding as long as you don't have the delusion that you are actually helping the people, because you are not helping them at all. What we are selling is neutrality. If it's a homicide, we are not doing an autopsy for the victim, we are also doing it for the accused. We don't take sides.

Death isn't nice. I don't make the connection between my work and my own death – I think about it the same amount as any other person.

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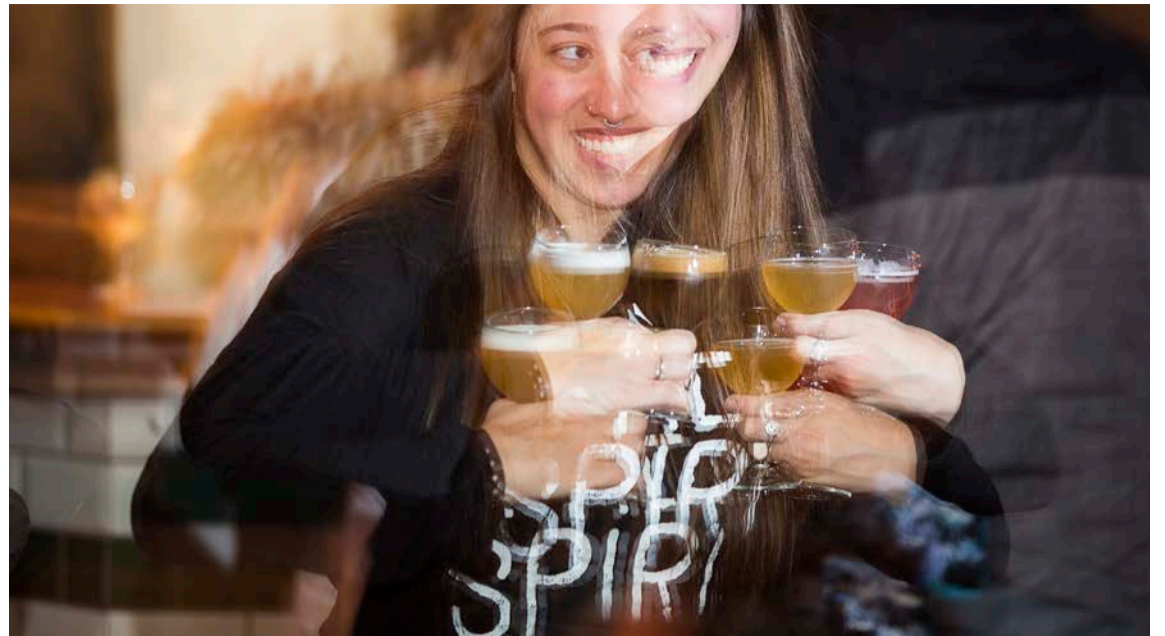
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How To The Grapevine's Guide To Dry January

Here's to feeling good all the time

WORDS Rex Beckett
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Are you stumbling into this new year with that "I'm never drinking again" feeling? Maybe you were hitting the sauce extra hard through the holidays, as one is wont to do, and your pickled liver is begging for mercy. This first month of the year is an international sensation of sobriety that requires no introduction, but getting through it in a bar-centric town such as ours might be daunting. While by no means an exhaustive list, here's our advice on how to get through this month without booze or getting bored.

SEEK SUPPORT

Firstly, whether you're casually drying out or fully getting on the wagon, you gotta have help. Rope a friend (or a few) along for the ride and keep tabs on each other. Buy yourself a fancy new journal at Eymundsson or A4 and air your daily grievances. Find a therapist through Icelandic Mental Health Alliance. If you're dealing with a serious problem, Iceland's Centre for Addiction Medicine (SÁÁ) runs the main alcohol treatment programme and our local AA chapter holds meetings in English and Polish, as well as Icelandic.

START THAT PROJECT

Planning to write a scandalous memoir? Trying to improve your

sewing skills? Ready to launch that true crime podcast? Dreaming of learning to play a new instrument? Now is the time! Sure, the liquid courage might have given you an inflated sense of ego to get you going on that project, but your clear mind and not-hungover body will do it best. Seek out free workshops around town to get you going, from the RVK Tool Library to help you hone your craft skills, to the recording studios at the downtown Reykjavik City Library, to the arty family events at the Nordic House.

SWIM IN THE SEA

Sure, we could recommend one of our favourite city pools, but it's likely you've already found your favourite and you probably need a bit of a rush. The Nauthólsvík geothermal beach is the perfect place to throw yourself into the frigid North Atlantic waters to jolt your whole nervous system back into coherence. Yes, it's a bit nuts but also truly exhilarating. And yes, there is a hot tub you can thaw in after your oceanic dip.

SEE SOME ANIMALS

If you didn't know that we have a zoo here, you are forgiven. You should go because it's incredibly wholesome. The Reykjavik Park & Zoo is not one of those animals-out-of-their-ecosystem-locked-in-cages kind of zoos, but rather an educational petting zoo populated by Iceland's adorable array of wildlife. Reindeer? Check. Arctic foxes? Of course. Goats? You bet your ass. Connecting with non-human friends has been proven to help calm and

regulate the nervous system. Plus they are actually cute, unlike the last rando you hooked up with at the bar.

SKIP THE MEAT

While you're minding your health and cosying up with our animal pals, why not go the extra mile of righteousness and do Veganuary as well! Throughout the month, there will be events hosted by Veganúar boosting up the plant-based and cruelty-free lifestyle, from panel discussions, kids' game gatherings, film screenings and food. You can also chow down on the fine vegan offerings at Plantan, Mama Reykjavík and Kat-takaffihúsið, to name a few.

SPEAK UP!

Have you noticed how messed up the world is? Maybe right now, with your head and body in peak performance, it's your time to get involved with a cause close to your heart to help improve the world and everyone who has to live in it. Be loud about it! If anyone accuses you of virtue signalling, just get louder.

SLEEP IT OFF

If all else fails, just conk the fuck out. This is still hibernation season and you have every right to engage bear-mode at any opportunity. Take advantage of the post-Christmas Ikea sales and make your bed a palace of pillows and soft blankets for maximum leisure time. Better yet, go full George Costanza and fashion yourself a little nap area right under your work desk. ■

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Well, You
Asked

We're Not Very Picky Around Here

The Grapevine's finest answers your most pressing questions

WORDS Catherine Magnúsdóttir
IMAGE Art Bicnick

WHAT IS A FOOD THAT EVEN AN ICELANDER WON'T EAT?

Your Mo...nah. I can do better. So, Icelanders will put a lot in their mouths – perhaps some things they shouldn't. A lot of the "traditional" stuff can probably be traced back to having zero friggin' options and what I can only assume to have started off as a dare. Like, "I'll give you one sheep if you put that rotten, toxic smelling, only vaguely resembling a sea creature thing in your mouth. I forgot that we had buried that." However. American donuts, of all things, have a surprisingly bad survival rate

here. Both Krispy Kreme and Dunkin Donuts were totally ghosted by Icelanders once the novelty wore off. And frankly, while local pastries are good enough, I am still not over it! Oh, I can get a sheep's head for lunch down the street but not a themed sugar hole?? (Unless I call your Mo... dammit!!)

WHICH ONES ARE BETTER, BOXERS OR BRIEFS?

I think we all switch to sheepskin loincloths in the winter. All natural and snuggly. Hand wash only, though.

HI THERE, I AM LOOKING FOR THE RECIPE FOR GUMMI SKIPPERS OLD SOUP RECIPE FROM TENDER PIG IN REYKJAVIK. THE ONE WITHOUT

DAIRY. IT'S FANTASTIC. THEY CHANGED IT BUT THE OLD BROTH WAS AMAZING.

Oh boy this is so not my area of expertise, I am not the food person, I just had a mini rant about donuts two questions earlier. What was your question? Uuuh... maybe they stopped being tender to the pig??

Hi! This is Catherine from half an hour into the future realizing that past-Catherine, the cute little sleep deprived dumb dumb, misread your question about Captain Gummi's Seafood Soup from the Sæta Svinið restaurant. And while this Catherine still doesn't have an answer, she decided to leave this little brainfart in for your entertainment. Bone-apple-teeth. ■



Last Look IMAGE Art Bicnick



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Potent Quotables

The Reykjanes peninsula is releasing tension. So basically that will take years – decades even – from what we know about its history.

Experts and stakeholders discuss what's next for the Reykjanes Peninsula on pages 10-12.

Despite the niche society of contemporary music, the repertoire is extensive, diverse, full of insightful messages and interesting imagination.

Dark Music Days are back. Read about the celebration of music on page 13.

I don't think I'm opening my underwear drawer. But I use my own life as a building block.

Musician and actress Elín Hall discusses her latest record heyríst í mér on pages 24-25.

The price for a “cheap” bite and a dish at a sit down restaurant are so blurred today that you are better off spending a few thousand krona more for a guaranteed good time.

Food writer Shruthi Basappa reviews the gastronomical year of 2023 on page 26.

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