

The Reykjavík Grapevine



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Volume 21

Issue 18 2024

Best before January 9

Unpacking The Election

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Travel



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On The Cover

Icelanders headed to their local polling stations on November 30 to cast ballots and elect their next government. While the outcome of any election is always uncertain on the day of the event, one thing that's been all but guaranteed for over 40 years is Icelanders seeing the faces of Ólafur Þ. Harðarson and Bogi Águstsson on their television screens, commenting on and interpreting the polling data as it arrives at their desk at RÚV. After unpacking what may be the last election for the retired academic and broadcaster, we snapped them celebrating the season.

COVER IMAGE:
Axel Sigurðarson

Editorial Can We Start Again, Please?

WORDS Catharine Fulton
Editor in Chief

2024 has been a year. Residing in the privilege and comfort of Iceland while watching a genocide unfold in real time on our personal devices has been a mind fuck. Coupled with the slap-across-the-face realisation that western governments simply do not give a shit about stopping human suffering, and it's enough to make a person want to simply crawl into a hole.

But there has been beauty this year, too.

There has been beauty in watching the resilience of the people of Grindavik rebuild their lives after being evacuated from their homes at the close of 2023. Likewise, in seeing the Icelandic community rally around their displaced countrymen to offer support and assistance.

There is beauty in witnessing the strength and spirit of a young man watching the suffering of his people 5,200 km away and still finding the mental and physical fortitude to push the government into action in a country where he is a refugee. His actions should be a lesson to all Icelanders that those in Alþingi work for us and must serve us in accordance with our rights under the law.

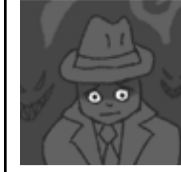
There is beauty in hearing the majestic talent of an Icelander who gives his musical gifts to the world while managing to top himself from one project to the next. And there is beauty in the minds of people who look to the future and innovate, dreaming up ways to transform the substances that are currently harbingers of destruction and trauma into tools for creation.

To celebrate some of the good around us, we've named our People of the Year on pages 14 - 17, along with some honourable and dishonourable mentions.

The depravity of the world and the incapacity of many of our leaders to take action has been laid bare this year. All we can do is have hope for better days ahead. Hope for a better government, for an end to genocide, for some glimmer of positive change.

Free Palestine. ■

Contributors



CHARLIE WINTERS

Ever since escaping his enclosure in the U.K., Charlie has been on the loose in Reykjavík. Idea spouter, drag queen, comedian, retail worker, English teacher and short story writer, he is single handedly ruining the job market. In his free time he skitters along the fine line between delusion and fantasy through tabletop roleplaying games.



ISH SVEINSSON HOULE

Ish is a former radio station manager and DJ, mainly focusing on music writing with a side of other cultural happenings. Ish moved to Reykjavík to get more in touch with half-Icelandic genes, also writes poetry, and has unfortunately only ever been in a cover band.



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.



JOANA FONTINHA

Joana is an Aries baby expressing her soul through photography. She's been obsessed with Icelandic culture since her teens, so much that at 20 she threw herself headfirst on a plane to her long-time dream country, Iceland. Driven, energetic and unable to be still, she clumsily moves like a flash and suffers from a serious fast-talking condition.



JÓHANNES BJARKI BJARKASON

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



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!?

Politics, Pussies And Pernicious Volcanoes

A look at some of the headlines making Icelandic news

WORDS The Reykjavik Grapevine
 IMAGE Micah Garen

There's not much else Iceland has kept its eyes peeled for than the latest Alþingi election. On November 30, minds were made up, votes were cast and hopes had never been lower.

With weeks of polling trying to predict the future, nobody was particularly surprised that the Social Democratic Alliance (Samfylkingin) led by Kristrún Mjöll Frostadóttir won across the board. Their victory garnered the party 20.8% of the total vote and 15 MPs.

The Independence Party (Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn) won a defensive victory, exceeding the expectations of recent polls. The party is the second-largest, with 19.4% of total votes, resulting in 14 MPs. The party's 2024 performance was its lowest showing in an election since its establishment in 1929. 32 MPs are needed for a majority in Alþingi.

Election night results saw the remaining left-leaning parties – Socialists, Pirates and Left-Greens –

obliterated, with none reaching the 5% electoral threshold needed to gain an MP. The Pirate Party and Left Greens lost all their parliamentary seats, 14 combined.

On December 2, President Halla Tómasdóttir met with every party leader to discuss government mandates. Unsurprisingly, Kristrún got the green light and conferred a preliminary meeting with People's party (Flokkur fólksins) leader Inga Sæland and Liberal Reform Party (Viðreisn) leader Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir. In a press conference, Kristrún stated being optimistic that the three parties can work together.

The meeting's preliminary emphases were achieving economic stability and the reduction of inflation, interest rates and the number of cabinets. Pleased with the conference, Inga Sæland promptly claimed to press that, "The valkyries have come to see and conquer."

So it went that Kristrún officially started talks of forming a government with the other two, leading political pundits to dub the incoming collaboration "the Valkyrie government."

As of December 6, the trio are still pursuing negotiations.

THE NEWEST VOLCANO ADDITION

As if the volcano gods wanted to not be overshadowed by politics in the

news cycle, a new eruption began along the Sundhnúkur crater row should just about do it. On November 20, the ground near Grindavík opened up once again, flowing over nearby infrastructure. Among the casualties was the Blue Lagoon car park, although the lagoon itself is safe (for now). Lava streamed over the Njarðvíkuræð pipeline – which supplies hot water to the inhabitants of Reykjanes – but the 1000 degree substance seemed to have limited effects on it. Score 1 for the pipeline!

First responders sprung into action, hosing the lava down. In a brilliant showcase of, "If it looks stupid and it works – it ain't stupid," people with the coolest job title ever, lava-cooling experts, staved off the volcano's incursion. The latest updates show the volcano ongoing, albeit with decreased activity.

CATNAPPING

Iceland's own Parks & Recreation moment came to life when news reported that the nationally beloved feline Diegó had gone missing.

It was later announced that Diegó had been taken by a person who intended to give him away as an early Christmas present. Fortunately, Diegó was found less than 48 hours after his disappearance by police who were tipped off by local animal-rescue organisation Dýrfirna. He was subsequently reunited with his true owner, safe and sound. Diegó continues to roam the various businesses of Skeifan to this day. ■



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Word On The Street

Election Reflection

The Grapevine took to the streets in search of political hot takes

WORDS Svanhildur & Harry
IMAGES Joana Fontinha

SVANHILDUR, 23

I think the results were good and it's obvious that the country is ready for a change – that's the most obvious thing. I think [Kristrún Frostadóttir's mandate] gives us the best possibility to make a change.



HARRY, 48

I spoke with my mom about who I should vote for. She used to be in politics with the Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn (Independence Party) when it was the conservative party, the party of small government – not so much just about taking care of the rich.

Now there's the party Viðreisn (the Liberal Reform Party), which is more pro-EU. She believes that since the crisis it would be good for Iceland to have more regulatory authority rather than under these five or six families that own everything. That's who she told me to vote for, which I didn't.

But I think a party that wants to join the EU would be good for us. I mean, look at the króna always going up and down, being manipulated.

On the Social Democratic Alliance's mandate: Give them a chance!



THE 30 OTHER PEOPLE WE ASKED

No comment. ■



Word Of The Issue

Welcome to Our Reputation Era

The Grapevine's guide to sounding Icelandic, one word at a time

WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle
IMAGE Adobe Stock

will, too, be simple, but that's not the case here.

Man-word, one's mannorð, is the Icelandic word for reputation – one's name, their honour, their character.

In Iceland in particular, mannorð is everything. In a country as small and interwoven as Iceland, reputation is more tangible and graspable; you have effortless access to everyone's reputation.

Have you ever heard of the Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon? Six degrees of separation? Did you spend the 2010s under a rock? It's the concept that two humans can be connected (to Kevin Bacon, natch) by way of six people or less.

Icelandic society is like a game of Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon, but everyone is just one or two degrees away. So if you're applying for a job, your interviewer can just turn to their immediate circle, say "does anyone know this Jón Jónsson guy?" and it's almost guaranteed that someone went to school with you, is close with your brother, or is your cousin.

If that's not enough motivation to build a good mannorð, I don't know what is. ■

It's been an interesting month. With the holiday season upon us and elections just last week, reflections on a personal and national level are occurring all around (just as holiday spirit, icy slush and tourists are all around as well). I've chosen the Icelandic word "mannorð" as our Word Of The Issue, to explore a word with simple construction and complex significance.

The compound word "mannorð" comes from two common words: mann, meaning man as in person, and orð, which is the word for word. Compounding this toddler-level vocabulary allows for the easy misconception that the constructed word

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Do Shit

Survive Icelandic Winter

The Grapevine's ongoing guide to getting shit done

WORDS Catharine Fulton
IMAGE The Reykjavik Grapevine Archives

Being seasoned survivors of Icelandic winter, we're here to give you some tips for getting through it relatively unscathed.

BE THE PENGUIN

That line was repeating in my head as I shuffled down Óðinsgata en route to the Grapevine offices in the first week of December, determined to conquer the expanse of sheer ice stretched out ahead of me. It was my mantra. My fight song. With "be the penguin" as my guiding light, no harm would befall me.

Then I wiped out on a patch of ice on Ingólfsstræti, bruising my knee. My ego took the brunt of it, though. But (and this is key) I didn't fall until I stopped *penguining*.

So, when faced with an icy sidewalk or road — and it will happen, since Reykjavíkurborg is notoriously bad at mitigating the effects of winter on the city's sidewalks and streets — you're going to want to switch up your stride. Shift your centre of gravity over your feet. Keep your arms slightly extended from your body for balance. Think penguin thoughts. When walking on ice, you're not taking a heel-toe approach, you're

opting to land on the ball of your foot or shuffle. You can honk and bray like a penguin, too, guaranteeing that everyone around will give you wide berth.

An alternative to the penguin shuffle is to stretch a set of *mannbroddar* over your shoes or boots. These rubber webs embedded with metal studs turn your standard footwear into crampons on the fly. Do they actually work? That's questionable, in my experience. Do they make you sound like Fred Astaire tippity-tapping down the sidewalk? Yes.

GET SOME GOOD OUTERWEAR

Iceland is a windy place. That should be news to absolutely nobody. It's also wet (also, not news). So that handsome wool overcoat isn't going to cut it when the winter really starts wintering.

Get yourself a winter coat that is wind-proof and water-repellent. Finding one that has enforced seams is also wise, lest you may find yourself with weird wet splotches on your shoulders when removing your outer layers. Not a good look.

66 North claims to have been keeping Icelanders warm since God was a boy, but there are a lot of good options out there at varying price points. Check out the second-hand stores like Verzlanahöllin for a deal, or find something from an international designer on Boozt.

I personally recommend opting for length. Then the wind starts blowing and the sleet is whipping around, you don't want to end up with frosty buns. Nobody wants frosty buns.

SOAK UP (AND SUPPLEMENT) THE LIMITED DAYLIGHT

Daylight is sparse in these winter months. By the time the winter solstice rolls around on December 21, Reykjavíkingar will experience just over four hours of daylight — from 11:22 to 15:29. "Daylight" in this case should come with an asterisk, because those peak hours still feel like golden hour, with long shadows being cast by the low-hanging sun.

With such a short window to get out and enjoy the sunlight, it's easy to miss it. You'll likely commute to school or work before the sun rises and head back home after it sets.

Make a point of getting out for a midday stroll or just to stand in the sun to break up your day a little.

It's also a good idea to supplement with vitamin D to keep your mood up when the light is low. Icelanders have started their day with a spoonful of cod liver oil since time immemorial and they're the collective picture of health. Vitamin D is also available in pill, spray and fizzy tablet form, if straight up fish oil isn't your thing.

REMEMBER THIS WILL PASS

If the cold, wind, wet and darkness really has you down, try to remember that this season will pass. After the solstice, we can expect five more minutes of daylight every day until hitting the summer solstice in late June. Of course, then the trend reverses and we'll have to grapple with the annual descent into the frigid dark once again. The circle of life, amirite?

But, hey! Don't think about that! Keep your eye on the prize. Winter is here but soon it will be gone and we can all go back to complaining about Iceland's lacklustre summers. ■

Winter is officially upon us. While the news is trying to gaslight us all into believing that November was unseasonably warm — either that or it was written by someone who spent the month in Tenerife — there's no denying that the mercury has plummeted of late. And with freezing temperatures has come the usual winter challenges to overcome.

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22.12 | 11.00

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18.00 | Vespers

23.30 | Midnight Service on Christmas Eve

25. 12 | Christmas Day

(No sightseeing and tower is closed)

14.00 | Hátiðarmessa / Festive Service on Christmas Day

26. 12 | Second Day of Christmas

11.00 | Service

14.00 | Christmas Service in English

29. 12 | Sunday

11.00 | Sunday Service

31. 12 | New Year's Eve

18.00 | Evensong on New Year's Eve

1. janúar | New Year's Day

14.00 | Festive Service on New Year's Day

(No sightseeing and tower is closed)

WHAT CAN BE MORE PERFECT?

/ HVAD VERÐUR FEGRA FUNDIÐ?

A bilingual edition with a selection of the diverse poetry left by rev. Hallgrímur Pétursson, a leading poet of the 17th century in Iceland. He is best known for his Hymns of Passion, but he wrote poetry of all kinds. Here you can find, for example, prayer verses, satire and descriptions of nature, in addition to well-known passages from the Passion Psalms.



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On The Fringes

Beating The Blank Page

Creative writers can find community at the University of Iceland's writing salon

WORDS Catherine Magnúsdóttir
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

Breaking the fourth wall for a moment here, I can tell you, dear reader, that the blank page is the enemy. If you have ever felt the desire to put pen to paper — metaphorically speaking of course, the machines have long taken over — more likely than not you were hit with the realisation that this writing shit is hard! Luckily, you are not the only despairing soul longing to release your demons via the written word. Help (or enablement) is available.

Diving deep into the dreams of dazzling deeds to be done down in this town I sought out Dr. Jessica Murphy and Assistant Professor Beth Cortese to talk about their writing salon at the University of Iceland.

“We both teach English literature and creative writing,” Jessica says, “but we are also both writers who have our own projects and are interested in the written and spoken word. I used to read my poetry in different venues in Montreal when I was in my 20s, so that was something I was part of — a circuit of writers and like-minded individuals.”

Taking a step away from the image of the lone writer hunched over their desk and trapped in a manic vortex of words, the writing salon provides a more social setting for one's creative process. Based on her own experiences at Lancaster University, Beth originally started the writing salon with some of her former students, with the attendee list soon expanding to include some of Jessica's students.

“We wanted to be available to the university community at large,” she says. The focus of the salon is on receiving feedback and varying insights from peers, regardless of their academic background. “We like to see our salon almost as a bit of a halfway house,” Jessica explains. “Meeting people halfway so they don't have to go all the way up on stage to read their work, but at the same time encouraging them to get it out there.”

“I'm a bit of a social writer,” Beth says. “I like being around a group of writers, it's inspiring.” Not to mention that the reading-your-work-out-loud-aspect is great for feedback —

as terrifying as it can be. Seeing and hearing the differences between the words on the page and in the room as people absorb them and potentially reinterpret them in spite of authorial intent can be quite impactful and may change a work in progress. But watching the progress and evolution of a creative work is at least half the fun of a writing salon. The other half is forming a community.

“That's what we're trying to do,” Jessica says. “Bring people of similar interests together, bring writers together, even just people who have an appreciation for creative writing, because we always need audience members and often many of those people write themselves but they haven't necessarily worked up their courage to share it yet. We want to show them that this is a safe and inclusive and accepting space so once they get a feel for that they are more likely to say ‘I'll go next, be brave and read my work.’ There are no consequences, just feedback that you can benefit from.”

When it comes to creative writing, a routine like participating in a group can be rather helpful, giving consistency to the process and the deadlines kicking you in the backside to at least get something down on the page. As fickle as the muses might be, Jessica points out that, “You don't have to go at it alone. At least at different stages there are points where you can connect with people and that can be immensely gratifying.” ■

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Side Hustle

The Election Worker

Sverrir Páll Sverrisson on his fun side gig that comes around every so often

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

When Bjarni Benediktsson announced snap elections this October, half of the nation thought, “God. Why now?” For the other half, including Sverrir Páll Sverrisson, it was an immediate reminder to sign up to work as a poll worker – a sweet deal by all accounts. “It’s fun to work on this day, but it’s also nice to get paid, and in a way, it’s a service – you want to help everything go as it should,” explains Sverrir. Here’s why he’s been waking up extra early on every election day in recent years.

Sverrir Páll Sverrisson, 32, freelancer in event production

I mostly do events for a living. Right now, I’m freelancing, producing a variety of events – concerts, theatre, all kinds of stuff. I’ve been working with events for a while. I used to work for the University of the Arts organising events. Currently, I don’t have a steady job or steady income – I’m just doing whatever projects come my way. My first time working at the election was in 2017. I found out because a friend of mine had been doing it. They told me that it was quite an interesting experience. It was fun and you get paid for a whole day, which is also kind of nice. So, I just sent an email to the city and asked if I could be a part of it. That was it.

I have since then done it eight or nine times. This [the Nov. 30 election] will be the ninth, I think. Even when I have a job that I go to every

day, I still do these election days. I really like it.

ELECTION DAY BASICS

There’s always a meeting beforehand where the Electoral Commission goes over the rules, how the election day goes, your responsibilities and how to tackle different situations. Then, you get a PDF document that you should read beforehand so you can answer any questions voters might ask. At least for Reykjavík, I always feel this is super well-prepared. Even when I went there for the first time, I felt like I could do my job well because they took the time and energy to explain everything well.

The first few times, I worked in “undirkjörstjórn,” a subdivision of the Electoral Commission. Usually, I work at Ráðhúsið, and they have maybe eight or nine subdivisions there. Your job is to greet the voters, ask for ID, mark their names and count how many voters come in. Most people who work on election day are doing that. But for the past two or three years, I’ve been doing one level up, working at the district election board. We make sure everything goes smoothly for all the subdivisions – if someone shows up and they’re not registered at your polling station, you can try to help them out and tell them where they should vote, or maybe even help them vote at your station.

I started doing this mainly because it’s nice to get a little bit of extra cash. But I’ve been doing it every time since, and there’s something magical about every election day. It’s always fun to see people excited when they come to the polling station. And there’s a wide range – the young people who maybe are going there for the first time, a little

bit nervous, don’t really know how it works, which is kind of funny, but we’ve all been there, and then you have the older people who dress up in their fanciest clothes because for them it’s a tradition, which is also really cool. You see the whole range of different people, all coming to do the same thing – just to vote. I wouldn’t say I would do this for free, but I really like doing it – this day differs from everything else.

SWEET SWEET DEAL

[As of 2024, an election worker for a subdivision of the Electoral Commission earns approximately 82,000 ISK for a day of work.] You get a bit more if you’re higher up. There are four of us running our polling station, with eight different subdivisions that have maybe three or four workers in each – in total, it’s about 30-40 people that we’re taking care of. There’s a lot more responsibility – we have to show up earlier and stay a bit longer. We have to seal the boxes containing the votes and go with the driver taking the boxes to Laugardalshöll for counting.

We get three meals a day. Before we start, we get breakfast, and then we go over all the rules, reminding people of how the day goes, what you can and cannot do. Later, we have lunch and dinner with some coffee breaks in between. They always have some extra staff, so we tell them to rotate and take breaks once in a while.

BALLOT BUZZ

My favourite thing about this job is the atmosphere on this day. For most people who come here and also the staff, there’s just some excitement in the air. Even though people have different opinions on

who to vote for, everyone’s there to do their thing. Some people are always at the door at nine o’clock when the polling station opens, which is funny – the first voters who just want to get it over with.

The busiest time is from around noon until about five, and then it gets busy again after dinner. It’s always a really good feeling when you finish the day, especially when you’re on the district election committee. As the subdivisions come to you, you can see the excitement in their eyes, just trying to finish so they can go home or to a party.

It’s such a good feeling when you close the last book, deliver the votes to the counting station, or hand the last thing over and you’re free for the day. Or when you can help people who are a bit lost, don’t have their IDs, or are trying to figure out where to vote. Once in a while, you get the question, “Who should I vote for?” which is always funny because that’s one of the rules – you can’t tell anyone who to vote for, of course.

It’s rare, but sometimes we get people who are irritated or have come to the wrong polling station and don’t understand why they can’t vote here. Probably my least favourite thing is the low period between the last two hours of the day when there are only two voters every 10 minutes and nothing much to do. It can get slow, but overall, I just find this such an amazing day.

ELECTIONS OR EUROVISION?

I don’t think the city advertises this job because they don’t have to – many people want to do it, so they never need to advertise. Except for one time a few years ago when the

election was on the same day as the Eurovision Song Contest. That was the first time I got the chance to be one level higher because there was a lack of people – nobody wanted to miss Eurovision. That’s the only time I remember they asked around and reached out to people who might want to do this job. It was a bit funny – every time they sent us an email, they would say, “We just want to remind you that this is on the same night as the Eurovision Song Contest, so please let us know if you’re not going to come to work.”

You don’t have to send a CV or anything when you apply for this job. At least in Reykjavík, you just send an email to kosningar@reykjavik.is to be a part of it. My tip for anyone who wants to do it would be to apply early. I was telling my friend about this yesterday, and she emailed them, but they told her that every position is filled and put her name on a waiting list. If someone cancels or is sick, she might be able to join. For me, I just saw the news where the Prime Minister was announcing they were going to break up the government, and on the same day, I sent an email to work at the election. You don’t have to be that early, but I just do it when I know elections are coming. I put my name in there. I definitely recommend trying it out if you’re interested. It’s a long day, but it’s fun – you get to know different people and are taken care of. If you’re not working, you should at least go and vote. ■

Note: You must be at least 18 years old and hold citizenship to work in parliamentary elections.

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Feature The Reykjavík Grapevine's People Of The Year

Recognising a few of the people who made their mark on Iceland in 2024

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason & Catharine Fulton
IMAGES Joana Fontinha & Ingibergur Þór Jónasson & Supplied

THE PEOPLE OF GRINDAVÍK, RESILIENCE PERSONIFIED

Losing their homes and community in the series of eruptions near the Sundhnúksíggar crater row, the people of Grindavík deserve acknowledgement for their determination and perseverance through hard times.

As has been widely reported, the entire town of Grindavík was evacuated on November 10, 2023, as a magma intrusion burrowed beneath the town, causing a violent earthquake swarm and widespread damage. After weeks of seismic activity, an eruption finally began on December 18, 2023.

It was during one of these eruptions, in January, 2024, that a fissure opened up so close to Grindavík that the molten lava claimed three houses on the edge of town. The blazing orange mass creeping toward and eventually overtaking the structures was livestreamed on several webcams recording the eruption.

In the face of such an extreme natural disaster, one wouldn't be remiss to feel a sense of hopelessness. There are few which exhibit the spirit of serenity in the face of this natural disaster as much as Morten Szmiedowicz, a 40-year old athlete and amateur dart player, whose home was one of the lava's casualties.

Morten, who lived at Efrahóp 18 with his wife and two children before the evacuation, was at a darts tournament in Reykjavík when lava reached his home.

"We didn't sleep a wink that night. I ended up not playing but instead joined my son. We didn't know it would end this way. But then we noticed people watching the news at the tournament," Morten says. "You could see the fissure opening right

above our house and by the end, everything caught fire."

At that pivotal moment, Morten says the darts community embraced him with open arms. "It's not like we're spectacularly good at darts – it's just about the community."

To his own surprise, Morten claims he wasn't glued to the TV during the event. "I think the tournament helped me there. I walked past the TV and had a look, but I was more focused on how my son and wife were doing. But it's all a big blur," he describes.

We didn't sleep a wink that night. We didn't know it would end this way. You could see the fissure opening right above our house and by the end, everything caught fire.

Morten Szmiedowicz

Following their loss, the family purchased a property in Þorlákshöfn. Morten still keeps in touch with his former neighbours, sometimes visiting Grindavík as part of their "hobby farmer" group.

Although Morten concurs with the many inhabitants of the town who have voiced their grievances concerning how the authorities tackled the crisis and the subsequent state acquisition of Grindavík properties, he doesn't spend time ruminating on his inconveniences.

"If I'd focus on the things that annoy me, I'd be frustrated every day. We can do ours to meet our demands on what we think is fair, and we can

continue trying to enjoy life. We're taking one day at a time. We're happy and grateful for what we have," he says.

Looking forward to the new year, Morten's outlook is nothing but positive. "At least it couldn't get worse," he laughs. "We have our own place in Þorlákshöfn. The kids are thriving. Although it would be best to be in our own home, we're getting to know people at the new place."

Morten's mantra is simple: "I can't be bothered to let things out of my control annoy me. There's always a solution to anything."

NAJI ASAR, PALESTINIAN ACTIVIST

For his fight for the freedom of Palestine and for peacefully protesting to hold the Icelandic government to account, Naji Asar is deserving of immense respect.

It has been five years since 29-year-old Naji left his home in Gaza, fleeing with two young nephews and a cousin – who were then just one-, five- and nine-years old – to seek safety and peace elsewhere. After two years in Greece, Naji and his young family members sought refugee status in Iceland. After a year in Reykjavík, Naji could legally apply

to bring his family – including the parents of the children he had been caring for – to join him here.

When Hamas launched an incursion into Israel on October 7, 2023, and Israel responded with a massive military invasion that has since displaced 90% of Gaza residents, reducing their homes, schools and medical centres to rubble, Naji turned to the Icelandic government for help bringing his family and other Palestinians to safety. Met with silence and inaction, Naji, along with other Palestinians and their supporters, erected tents in Austurvöllur to draw attention to their cause. They camped in the freezing cold from Dec. 27, 2023, to Jan. 24, 2024.

"It's very hard. It's very cold," he told the Grapevine as the tents were being dismantled in January. "But we sit here to feel what my family feels and what Mohammed's family feels. We sit here for justice, for peace, for a response. We will sit here forever."

On March 9, in no small part due to the efforts of Naji and others, Iceland welcomed 73 Palestinian refugees, including the parents of the children in Naji's care.

Nearly a year after first setting up camp in front of Alþingi, Israel's military onslaught on Gaza has only intensified, while settler violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank has followed suit. At least 44,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israel, including hundreds of journalists, medical professionals, academics and humanitarian aid workers.

"My people have been for a year under genocide and are still fighting for freedom," Naji said upon being informed he was named as one of the Grapevine's People Of The Year. "I think the ones who are the best of the year, it's the Palestinian

It has been a year of transformation in Iceland. The land on Reykjanes has continued to renew itself with an ongoing series of eruptions, while necessitating the evacuation of an entire town. Icelandic politicians took a turn to the nationalist, ramping up anti-immigrant sentiment as protestors occupied the central square on which Alþingi sits. And all the while, Icelanders made their mark on the creative spheres of the world, further cementing the country's reputation as an artistic powerhouse and cradle of innovation.

While much has transpired in 2024, the Reykjavík Grapevine identified four individuals who have made an indelible mark on Iceland. These are the Reykjavík Grapevine's People Of The Year:



People Of The Year

people fighting after a year, sleeping in tents, – [they] don't have water, don't have food, don't have medicine, don't have hospitals."

Though he has not occupied Austurvöllur since last winter, Naji has continued to raise awareness in Iceland about the genocide in Gaza, recently taking to the streets to politely ask passers by to say two simple words: "Free Palestine."

"There's a genocide now and it's live and you can watch it. You can watch someone die live, if you open TikTok and there is a bombing and there is press there – it is live on TikTok. The genocide is 24 hours, seven days. It's not just Saturday or Sunday or an hour a day or a few hours in a week. This is everyday and this is happening now for a year and two months.

"I'm trying to remind people that people like you – a human being – are dying. It's children that don't have food, don't have water. I'm trying to remind people, don't forget the children. Don't forget the blood. Don't forget the war. Don't forget the bombing. Don't forget the people in the Middle East, especially in Gaza, because it's a terrible, terrible, terrible, terrible life. I'm born there. I grew up there. I see war in my life three times the same as the genocide. But this one, everyone can watch it. Everyone can watch it."

"We have to do something not just posting, sharing, talking on Instagram or Facebook or TikTok," Naji implores. "Talk in the street, in fresh air, scream. Scream it."

ARNHILDUR PÁLMAÐÓTTIR,
INNOVATIVE ARCHITECT

For her efforts in minimising carbon emissions in the construction industry as well as her visionary practises and outlook towards climate change mitigation, architect Arnhildur Pálmadóttir is one of the Grapevine's people of the year.

In October, 2024, Arnhildur won the 2024 Nordic Council Environment Prize for her progressive work in finding sustainable solutions in the field of construction. Re-using material and opting for locally sourced supplies, Arnhildur works to

I'm trying to remind people that people like you – a human being – are dying. I'm trying to remind people, don't forget the children. Don't forget the blood. Don't forget the war. Don't forget the bombing. Don't forget the people in Gaza.

Naji Asar

drive down the pollution caused by a sector responsible for about 40% of global CO2 emissions.

One of Arnhildur's current projects is a unit of social housing on Háteigsvegur, opening in December. The environmental impact derived from the building's construction materials is 44% lower compared to similar projects, due to Arnhildur's emphasis on circular resources.

In addition to her practical applications as a versatile architect, Arnhildur is also actively researching the possibilities of Lavaforming – utilising molten lava as construction material – whose key findings she will display in the 2025 Venice Biennale of Architecture – the first Icelandic person to do so.

"I work in two sectors. On one hand within systems – in construction projects where I design buildings for construction," Arnhildur says, explaining her profession's duality. "And on the other hand, I work in this sci-fi, conceptual-driven project where we imagine the construction materials of the future," she continues.

"As an architect in this period we live in, I think it's important we do that [balance the practical and the conceptual]. Exclusively working inside systems has tangible effects. The projects I work on have several hundred tonnes less carbon footprint," she says. "But I think it's also important to be able to tell the stories of the future, how the world will look like, so we can possibly work towards these worlds."

Introducing the concept of Lavaforming through a visual storytelling medium at the Biennale, with additional story development by Andri Snær Magnason, Arnhildur's tale takes place in the year 2150 when humans have harnessed the lava flow.

"It's an interesting time now because we're practically watching this development live," she says, referencing the recent volcanic events at Reykjanes. In their own version of lavaforming, first responders have manipulated the flow of lava by cooling it down with water. "Of course, it's a reaction. It's a trauma and this is a response to that," Arnhildur says. "What we want to do is zoom out and envision where we would be – of course after some time – where this would be more manageable and technology would be helping us," she notes, drawing up comparisons with steam power, "Which people treated with fear at first and nobody used."

For next year, Arnhildur anticipates putting her head down to continue working. "I think I'll focus on actually producing something," she jokes. Switching moods, Arnhildur has a serious message about the recent Alþingi election. "In the run-up to the election, environmental topics seemed to be regarded as pedantics – as opposed to being intricately woven within society. I think candidates should rather be asked how they'll react when the Gulf stream dissipates or when wind strengths reach a certain point. We need to start tackling the real transformations these things will bring," she concludes.

VÍKINGUR HEIÐAR
ÓLAFSSON,
WORLD RENOWNED
PIANIST

2024 was a big year for pianist Víkingur Heiðar Ólafsson. Starting the year on the tail end of touring J.S. Bach's Goldberg Variations, Víkingur received multiple accolades seemingly non-stop throughout the year.

Víkingur appeared in NPR's Tiny Desk series; embarked on a critically acclaimed concert tour with fellow

pianist Yuja Wang; released his EP Continuum; was awarded the classical magazine Musical America's 'Instrumentalist Of The Year'; scored a Grammy nomination for his take on the Goldberg Variations; amassed a total of one billion streams; and he moved houses in December. Whew, what a guy! It's no wonder he ends up on the Grapevine's People of the Year list.

"The first half of the year I was just following up on the Goldberg Variations. Both in the West, but also in places like Australia, Japan, Singapore," Víkingur says across the phone in the midst of his renovations.

"The latter part has been extremely varied and fun with more big tours. It's best not to think too much about it. When I do, it becomes too much," he ponders on his exuberant lifestyle. "And I'm grateful for being healthy. I think my wife experiences more pressure, being at home with two small children. That can be a challenge," Víkingur points out.

Víkingur has always been ambitious, with five-year-old Víkingur confidently asserting to anyone that he was a pianist. Looking back, Víkingur is unsure whether he expected his career to gain this much success.

"I've always been a bit cocky," he laughs. "I haven't lacked the confidence. I've always looked at myself in two ways: being both modest and immodest," he sneers. "Ten years ago, I couldn't fathom that I'd be doing these things today. The opportunities have changed in the last 20 years, and rapidly so in the last eight."

Víkingur has plenty of highlights from the last year. A few sticking out are select performances. "My big debuts: playing in the Sydney Opera House five nights in a row, Carneg-



ie Hall, and playing the BBC Proms with my favourite orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic," he reminisces.

His streaming numbers were also a special capstone. "To know that people are getting something by listening to me every hour of the day, that's an incredible feeling," he remarks.

Dedicating much of the last season to Bach, *Víkingur* has formed a special relationship with the long-deceased composer. "Playing Bach is like journaling," he admits. "You mirror yourself with his music. It's open and structural. It's not personal in the way that you're peering into his life. He opens up your own psyche. That's why I love playing him. He gives us the freedom to be ourselves, with music which is, in my opinion, the greatest music ever written," he advocates.

Víkingur kicks off the new year with San Francisco performances in January, playing the world premiere of John Adam's concerto *After The Fall*, exclusively written for him. He'll continue working on a new album, focusing on Beethoven, but most of all, *Víkingur* wants to record.

"I'll be preparing my home and studio. I was inspired to know how many people listen to me so I want to record much more. Do it faster and release more singles, freeing myself

from this album format," he asserts. "I want my next decade to focus on studio recordings."

rescue group *Dýrfinna*, less than 48 hours after his initial disappearance. Upon arriving, they discovered that *Diegó* had been given a new name,

Ten years ago, I couldn't fathom that I'd be doing these things today. The opportunities have changed in the last 20 years, and so rapidly in the last eight.

Víkingur Heiðar Ólafsson

HONOURABLE MENTION

DIEGÓ THE CAT

There's nothing that unites people more than a common enemy. Overnight, fans of the Skeifan residential feline *Diegó* transformed into internet sleuths as reports surged about the kidnapping (catnapping?) of Iceland's most famous cat. On November 24, *Diegó* was reported missing by his owner on the cat's Facebook fan group, which almost counts 18,000 members. Some people sighted a dubious person taking him onboard bus number 14. Police were on the perps' tail and located *Diegó* after a tip from local animal

Spori, and was being kept by a person who'd received him as a Christmas gift. *Diegó* was returned to his rightful owner and continues to spend his time between the various businesses in Skeifan.

THE BLUE LAGOON CARPARK

Fortunately, the series of volcanic eruptions near Grindavík have not claimed any human lives. The mitigation of the volcanos' effects has proven highly successful, with limited disturbances to the region's infrastructure. Funnily enough, one of the main pipelines supplying hot water to people throughout Reykjanes *actually* went under lava and

prevailed. We could probably write a whole cover feature celebrating the marvels of modern engineering. However, in the most recent volcanic events last November, Iceland bid a sombre farewell to an integral part of our tourism industry: The Blue Lagoon carpark. Flooded with lava in a few minutes, the empty tarmac became the newest addition to Reykjanes' geological splendour. Iceland's unsung hero was gone too soon.

DISHONOURABLE MENTION

BJARNI BENEDIKTSSON

Nobody's prime minister, Bjarni Ben can only claim the seat as a last resort to be replaced as swiftly as the electorate has an actual say. Over his 20-plus years in politics and 15 years as leader of the Independence Party, Bjarni has earned a reputation as a teflon man, with the stink of his too-many-to-name scandals never permeating deeply enough to end his political career. Instead, he has perfected the art of waiting out voters' memory spans, redirection and blowing his dog whistle to distract from his often despicable wheelings and dealings.

Bjarni began the year as foreign minister in a three-party coalition with the Left-Green Movement and the Progressive Party. In that role, he

actively fanned the flames of nationalism, rallying against refugees and making Iceland a worse place for immigrants of all stripes. When he crept through the back door into the prime ministership upon former prime minister *Katrín Jakobsdóttir's* departure to run for president over the summer, it wasn't long before the government fell. But not one to have a shred of decency or seemingly any regard for the dignity of public office, Bjarni used his time heading up a pre-election caretaker government to flirt with issuing a new whaling license to one of his cronies, only to deny it when secret recordings emerged and scandal ensued.

On December 5, with elections now behind us, the Independence Party out of the running for the next coalition government and his time squatting in the prime minister's office drawing to a close, Bjarni issued a five-year licence for *Hvalur hf.* to hunt fin whales and *Tjaldtangi ehf.* to hunt minke whales. Bjarni's involvement in the whaling debate while overseeing a temporary caretaker government was panned by critics as "an abuse of power and legally questionable." But that's about what the people can expect from Mr. IceHot1. ■

SJÁVARGRILLIÐ
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AUSTURVÖLLUR

Smack-dab in the heart of the capital, Austurvöllur's Christmas market offers another reason to take a quaint stroll through the historic square. This is the go-to spot for public demonstration, but the only thing people will be protesting here is Grýla and her abominable cat. Austurvöllur will be filled with holiday cheer, delicious snacks, and clever crafts every weekend until December 24. Visit jolamarkadur.is for opening hours. JB



HEIÐMÖRK
EVERY WEEKEND UNTIL DECEMBER 24, 12:00-15:00
FREE ENTRY
ELLIÐAVATNSBÆR, HEIÐMÖRK

A nature reserve tucked away in the outskirts of Reykjavik, Heiðmörk transforms into a winter wonderland during the holidays. Among the spruce trees, you'll find gorgeous walking paths throughout the area dotted with icy ponds. Centred near Elliðavatnsbær on the eastern bank of Lake Elliðavatn, the Heiðmörk Christmas market offers an assortment of handcrafted items, children's book readings and roasted almonds. JB



HAFNARFJÖRÐUR
EVERY WEEKEND UNTIL DECEMBER 24, HOURS VARY
FREE ENTRY
THORSPLAN, HAFNARFJÖRÐUR

If you're adventurous enough to leave the city limits, you should keep Hafnarfjörður in mind. Though the town prides itself on being simultaneously the town of vikings and elves (pick one!), it's coming in strong as a Yule town. Every weekend, the Hafnarfjörður Christmas Village opens its concession huts to visitors in the city centre. Multi-coloured string lights adorn the square, where you can get your hands on designer items, churros and food from Deig. Visit hafnarfjordur.is for opening hours. JB



Books

The Topsy Tittle-Tattle Of Hallgrímur

Delving into the assorted works of one of Iceland's most important poets

WORDS Catharine Fulton
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

WHAT'S THE BUZZ?

Not a one trick pony, old Hallgrímur has a slew of other poetic works to his name, both religious and secular. To mark the 350th year since his passing, a selection of poems have now been compiled for the first time in English.

What Can Be More Perfect? / Hvað verður fegra fundið? gives readers insight into Hallgrímur's life and work, along with more than 50 poems on travel, death, vanity, hanging meat, eating fish and tossing back a few cold ones.

"He is one of the most important Icelandic poets and his poetry has lived with the nation for decades — it still does," says Hallgrímskirkja administrator Grétar Einarsson, underscoring the relatability of the poet's secular works. "Drinking verses among them! We tend to forget that even Martin Luther liked beer. You know, it's not like they were all pious and didn't do anything else."

A STRANGE THING,
MYSTIFYING

The new collection was compiled by four women, each an expert on Hallgrímur in one way or another. They are Irma Sjöfn Óskarsdóttir, who serves as the vicar of Hallgrímskirkja; Margrét Eggertsdóttir, who wrote her doctoral dissertation on Hallgrímur and has edited other volumes of his work; Steinunn Jóhannesdóttir, who has written at length about the poet and his wife; and Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, who contributed to the variorum of Hallgrímur's work.

But it's not solely their impressive resumé that dictated the women's

participation in *What Can Be More Perfect?*

"Interestingly, when Hallgrímur was writing the Passion Hymns, he consulted with four women that he knew," Grétar says of the lore surrounding the poet's most famed work. "So when he had written one hymn, he gave it to these four women for them to read them and give him a response."

"And we thought it should be the same thing with this book; to have four women and to keep with what he had done: he consulted women. Plus, Margrét, who also edits the book, is Iceland's foremost specialist on Hallgrímur Pétursson, so it was also just a logical choice."

SOMETHING MORE
REWARDING

Though it includes excerpts from Hallgrímur's Passion Hymns — you can't have the greatest hits without including the biggest crowd-pleasers — *What Can Be More Perfect?* provides an entertaining and often amusing look into life in the poet's time. "On eating fish," for one, is so absurdly Icelandic, it's endearing.

"This book is for anyone interested in Icelandic poetry or literature," Grétar asserts, "but it's also a fantastic starting point because of [Hallgrímur's] importance and his influence on later poets as well. He's like our Bach or Beethoven — a composer that young composers look to even today. His poetry was, in many ways, groundbreaking." ■

What Can Be More Perfect? is available from Hallgrímskirkja's shop and in all good book stores.

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Film Feature

Laufey's Dream For All

The Icelandic-Chinese jazz sensation takes her act from the Hollywood Bowl

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Supplied Still

it into a dreamy cinematic journey and an intimate fan experience.

much before."

Of course, Laufey doesn't do it alone. She's backed by a powerhouse team, including her creative director and twin sister Júnía, production partner Veeps, IMAX and

Sam admits that while he didn't know Laufey before the collaboration began, he knew her songs. "I'd always been fairly drawn to them. She writes quite a lot about Los Angeles and I live here," he says. "It

She's someone that has such a genuine connection with her audience and is so great at just speaking, that it comes across as really authentic, because *it is*.

director Sam Wrench, who just last year brought *Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour* to cinemas worldwide. I called the director in sunny LA to understand why he wanted to document Laufey at this moment in time.

was great to understand more about her art history and the way she had structured the set starting with a band and then a little break, and then LA Phil. I thought that was a really interesting way of doing it — and really interesting for the audience."

A NIGHT OF FIRSTS

"One of the things that interested me was that most of the time people get in touch, or the concerts I film are very late in a tour — maybe the artist has been on tour for 50 dates already," shares Sam, a predominantly live multicam director whose portfolio also includes concert films of Blur, Lizzo, Billie Eilish and Andrea Bocelli, as well as other major live events.

Despite playing at the Hollywood Bowl for the first time, Laufey appears remarkably at ease on stage. Before introducing her solo set, she glides through her solo set, offering brief song introductions and candid commentary. "You're going to know me a little bit better tonight, maybe a little bit better than you bargained for."

"The idea that this was the first time Laufey was playing the Hollywood Bowl, and with the LA Phil as well, I felt this was a really unique moment to capture. I liked the idea of capturing something that hadn't happened

These honest, sometimes punchy remarks were not scripted, according to Sam. "No, it's very natural," he says. "It's a very natural portrayal of the concert. She's someone that has such a genuine connection with her audience and is so great at just speaking, that it comes across as

“Welcome to the Hollywood Bowl! Thank you for selling this show out," says 25-year old Laufey Lín Jónsdóttir in the trailer for her upcoming concert film *Laufey's A Night At The Symphony: Hollywood Bowl* — a documentation of her August performance at the storied venue, which has previously hosted legends like Ella Fitzgerald. Joined by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, led by the Principal Conductor Thomas Wilkins, the 2024 Grammy winner for Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album for *Bewitched* not only confronts the anxiety and fear of the unknown by playing in a new (and iconic) venue, but manages to wrap



How To See

How to see it on the silver screen

really authentic, because *it is*.”

INTIMATE NOTES

Laufey rose to fame quickly, yet she presents herself to the audience like an old friend. A classically trained musician, she sings intimate songs about her own life and coming-of-age struggles, like not fitting in or life moving too quickly, while demonstrating her musical versatility, switching between cello, guitar and piano for different songs.

Her banter with the audience elevates the cinematic experience, leaving viewers to wonder what moments didn't make the cut. When her twin sister Júnía comes on stage to play viola for one song, Laufey can't resist a cheeky comment for her sister, asking, “Are you wearing my dress?”

ments that would help form the film.”

The concert performance is complemented by a few non-live moments, but they interconnect very smoothly, allowing the audience to get to know a bit more about the artist as she drives through the hills of her new home base of Los Angeles in a black Cadillac. “We talked a lot about those [scenes] and how they might appear, but the stuff within the concert is very much her ... raw experience.”

These off-stage moments are rendered in black and white, contrasting with the colourful stage performance — a subtle nod to Laufey's stage personality that feels both classic and modern. “We tried it both ways,” Sam explains, “and I think in the edit, the black and white felt more classic. Laufey's music is so classic, and the way she talks

When Júnía comes on stage playing viola for one of the songs, Laufey can't resist a cheeky comment for her sister, asking, “Are you wearing my dress?”

“Laufey's sister coming out was a real moment,” says Sam. “I hadn't anticipated it being so great. It felt so personal and playful.” He adds, “Laufey talks so authentically during the songs that we definitely didn't know that would be that strong. When we walked away from the gig, it was clear that there was something really special about those mo-

ments that would help form the film.”

CAPTURING THE MOMENT

“The Hollywood Bowl is such a unique venue. It has such a visual identity,” says Sam. “Like with any venue, there's always lots of chal-

lenges with how you capture that and how you show it.” Speaking of technical logistics of producing a film like this, Sam's team placed about 16 cameras in different parts of the venue to help tell a story — “a mix of kind of close up, intimate stuff, wide scale stuff, and then orchestra coverage and a variety of artist coverage.”

The one-night-only aspect of the performance is what initially drew Sam to the project, as he admits it requires a different, more flexible approach. “You don't want cameras to be looking at other cameras. And you also don't get a chance to go back and fine tune the performance. There's a real authenticity to the moment where you feel like it's one night — it's just that moment captured in time,” he says, “In hindsight, I'm really glad it was only one night.”

Leaning into moments that felt authentic was the primary approach of the filming crew. “We were really keen that we weren't making a documentary. It wasn't there to tell her life story,” says Sam.

SPEAKING OF TAYLOR

“I was incredibly fortunate to be able to capture *The Eras Tour* and work with Taylor,” Sam says, blushing at the mention of Taylor Swift — an experience that most definitely shaped his year and potentially future career. “I think anyone that does anything with Taylor, it's a fairly pivotal moment in your career. But it was an amazing experience and I was so happy that so many people got to see it in the cinema.”

A known Swiftie, Laufey's deeply personal lyrical approach is often

compared to Taylor's, but her jazzy pop music and orchestral show are a completely different vibe. When asked about the contrast between filming dynamic and subtle performances, Sam says, “It's a very different approach if there's more choreo happening and there's more kind of kinetic movement versus an orchestra on stage. But I often find that you focus on movement, just in different ways, whether that's a dance, or whether that's a harp or a viola — there's still movement there. It just translates itself in different ways.”

THE BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE

Sam sees great promise in cinemas supporting live music. “It's so humbling and exciting to see that audiences are so interested in music in cinemas. Obviously, the Taylor film really helped kick start that again,” he says. Reflecting on the ticket sales and interest from the cinemas worldwide in *Laufey's A Night At The Symphony*, he continues, “It kind of proves that people really do want to view these one-off moments in cinemas; there's a real demand for it. I'm really excited that everyone will get the chance to see it, but also that the cinemas and IMAX are supporting music in cinemas. It's such a great place to view live music if you can't make it to the gig.”

The cinema experience may lack the noise and sweat of attending a live concert, but that's not its purpose, according to Sam. “A live cinema capture of a concert isn't there to replace the in-person experience. It should feel different, but it should feel faithful to the in-person experience. Watching a live cinema

experience, being closer to the artist, having the best seat in the house and being able to share that with friends and family is just a different experience, rather than replacing the other one.”

Laufey's A Night At The Symphony is primarily made for the fan base and the people who couldn't make it to the show. It's also accompanied by an interactive website and limited edition merch. But you don't have to be a “Lauver” to enjoy it. “It's a chance for that fan base to introduce other people to Laufey and her music — to take your family, take your kids, take your partners, take the person that maybe doesn't know her music and introduce them to it,” says Sam.

The film isn't Laufey's only gift to her audience this holiday season. She also released a festive EP, *A Very Laufey Christmas*. With several Christmas shows in the works and a Sabrina Carpenter Christmas special debuting on Netflix the same week as Laufey's film, director Sam is keeping busy too.

He's not the type to revisit a project and dwell on what could have been done differently — or maybe he simply doesn't have the time. “I watched it the other day with Laufey in LA at the premiere, and it was just as enjoyable with people in the room as it was in the edit suite. I'm so glad that she took the risk to do it — filming a concert when it's the first time you've played somewhere is always scary. I'm really proud of it.” ■

Laufey's A Night At The Symphony: Hollywood Bowl is coming to the cinemas on Dec. 6. Catch it at Bió Paradís or Smárabíó.



What's On?

From Hygge To Body Horror

Soaking up the Nordic cinematic culture and more at Bíó Paradís

WORDS Valur Gunnarsson
IMAGE The Reykjavik Grapevine Archives

into the psyche of the protagonist. The result is one of the year's best films. Norwegians, with their oil fund and no real problems, have an ability these days to observe the human condition under optimal circumstances and yet find the inner struggle.

which has been remade in 28 languages – including in Icelandic as *Villibráð*.

The set up is always the same: Guests at a dinner party play a game wherein they share each other's text messages and phone calls with predictably catastrophic results.

a strong showing with *The Girl with the Needle*, a dark fairy tale which sadly seems based on a true story. Set in the aftermath of World War I, a young and destitute woman gets involved with an illegal adoption agency when she gives away her only child and things go from bad to worse.

The scene in which the older Demi Moore is going on a date but failing to measure up to a poster of her younger self is heartbreaking, and more successful than the over-the-top ending. Nevertheless, the film stays true to itself to the very end, offering no easy way out.

So far this century, Denmark has been the pre-eminent cinematic nation of the Nordics. Norway has been throwing money at the industry and Norwegian films have certainly become more visually impressive, but are they any good?

Norwegians, with their oil fund and no real problems, have an ability these days to observe the human condition under optimal circumstances and yet find the inner struggle.

Directed by Swede Magnus von Horn, it seems intent on putting your very soul through the wringer for the duration before remarkably pulling off a happy ending – of sorts. You'll have to see it.

Another film that aims to shock is *The Apprentice*, about the young Donald Trump. It even has its own swing at body-horror when Trump has cosmetic surgery. But even this very nasty version doesn't come close to the real thing. Plus, the far more engaging character of Roy Cohn ends up being under-utilised.

WHAT ABOUT EVERYONE ELSE?

Another film that tries hard to elicit emotion is *The Substance*. It's been hyped as literally making its audience throw up, but is it any good? The answer, perhaps surprisingly, is yes.

Finally, we must mention *L'Empire*, a French stab at lowbrow culture. It's sci-fi with spaceships in the shape of Notre Dame. One Icelandic reviewer called it "the film for you if Jar-Jar is your favourite Star Wars character." Although honestly, I don't think it's all that bad. ■

The evidence can be weighed at local arthouse cinema Bíó Paradís, where new offerings from both countries are currently on display. What's more – and to be on the safe-side – Icelandic directors have been drafted on both counts.

SCORE 1 FOR NORWAY

Lilja Ingólfsdóttir directs *Elskling*, a divorce drama which instead of focusing on arguments, delves deep

This is sort of celluloid Knausgård, but with an Icelandic slant. The Norwegians may have tried to appropriate Leif Ericsson, but Leif is ours. And so is Lilja.

And so is Dagur Kári. His last film was the wonderful *Fúsi*, but at Bíó Paradís you can find him back in Denmark as he was with his second film, *Voksne Mennesker*. The theme is not entirely original. It is based on the Italian *Perfetti Sconosciuti*,

Dagur's take has the not entirely original title *Hygge*. It is funny in the first half but fails to locate its heart in the second. Posh Danes, it seems, are hard to sympathise with. *Hygge* is a competent enough cover version, but I am looking forward to his next original.

So Iceland-Norway trumps Iceland-Denmark in this particular Nordic film-off. But the Danes put in

While occasionally calling to mind *The Fly* or even *The Elephant Man*, it really is like nothing else you'll have seen on the big screen. And rather than just taking cheap shots at obsession with beauty and youth (although it does that, too), it also manages to contemplate the inevitability of aging.

Get yourself to Bíó Paradís to screen all these so you can debate with Valur at the lobby bar. Find show-times and buy tickets at bioparadis.is



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Greenland Ho!

The Lucky Guy Who Lost America

Tracing the Viking exploits from Greenland to Vinland and back again

WORDS Valur Gunnarsson
IMAGE Finnur Matteo Bettaglio

You know the Sagas. They're about Icelanders, right? Well, there's also the *Grænlendinga saga* (the *Saga of the Greenlanders*), which tells the tales of the Viking settlement of — you guessed it — Greenland. Let's see what that's all about.

The likeness of Leifur Eriksson in front of Hallgrímskirkja is probably the most photographed statue in the most photographed spot in all of Iceland. The statue was a gift from the United States on the 1000-year anniversary of Alþingi in 1930 — an extended middle finger to any Norwegian who might want to claim him.

And yet Leifur's appearance in the Sagas is somewhat underwhelming. In the *Saga of the Greenlanders*, he's not even the man who discovers North America for the Vikings. Instead, the story goes that one Bjarni Herjólfsson accidentally stumbled across the continent upon getting lost en route to visiting Erik

the Red (Leifur's dad) in Greenland.

Bjarni, however, does not go ashore and is mocked by the residents in Erik's household for his "lack of curiosity." That wouldn't be the case for Leifur, who decides to buy a ship and set out for himself. There he sets up camp in a place he calls Vinland. This may have been in L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland, Canada, where remains of a Viking settlement were unearthed in 1961. Still, the Sagas tell us little about his exploits there and he doesn't even seem to have come into contact with the natives.

Instead, it is Leifur's half-brother Þorvaldur — the Buzz Aldrin to Leifur's Neil Armstrong — to whom the honour falls of being the first European to make contact with the Indigenous people of North America. This is done in a very Viking manner, whereby Þorvaldur came across nine of them sleeping under their canoes and proceeded to murder the lot, with one getting away. Why they choose this course of action is not explained in the *Saga of the Greenlanders*, the narrator seemingly finding it all an entirely natural chain of events.

But they soon get their just deserts. As Þorvaldur and co. attempt to sail away, they find themselves surrounded by the locals in history's first documented canoe vs. longship

battle. The Vikings escape, but in the best Hollywood manner, Þorvaldur soon finds he has been mortally wounded by an arrow underneath his armpit. He is buried on a hill they come to call Krossnes, or Cross Peninsula, after the cross they erect over his grave.

A HANDSOME MAN BOARDS A BOAT

But the family is not yet done with North America. On his way back from the new world, Leifur found the survivors of a shipwreck, thus acquiring the nick-name Leifur the Lucky. His brother Þorsteinn was even luckier, for among the rescued was a beautiful young woman named Guðríður, who he married. Þorstein's luck didn't last though. He soon died of a plague. Enter Þorfinnur.

It's worth noting at this point that nearly everyone in this Saga — bar Leifur himself — has a name starting with Þor-, a reference to the god of thunder. This is despite Leifur having converted everyone to Christianity by now. Perhaps in order to tell them apart, Þorfinnur goes by the nick-name "Karlsefni," which could translate as "manly" or even "handsome." The widowed Guðríður can't help but notice and the pair are soon married. In lieu of a honeymoon, they set off to colonise America, with Leifur's half-sister Freydis along for the ride.

The newlyweds find Leifur's camp and make contact with the natives, and, exhibiting more sense than Þorvaldur before them, opt for trade over murder. The natives get milk from a cow (an animal they hadn't seen before), while the Vikings get pelts and seem to come off better.

Things soon turn sour anyhow. Þorfinnur had forbidden the trading of weapons but when the natives took an axe anyway, fighting broke out.

The Vikings take flight and the pregnant Freydis is left behind. Unimpressed by the men's prowess, Freydis grabs a sword from a fallen warrior and slaps it on her bare breast. This, understandably, results in the likely weirded out natives to retreat.

AXE-MURDERER AND A NUN

But Freydis has more in store. She later returns to Vinland with her husband and two boatloads of followers. She refuses to allow the crew of the second boat to stay at Leifsbúðir, so they set up camp elsewhere. Later, she goads her husband into murdering the residents of the other settlement, ostensibly to steal the stuff they collected, vines and wood. Her husband relents, and along with his men proceeds to kill off the neigh-

bours. However, the men refuse to murder the five women in the other camp. Realising that if she wanted something done right, she had better do it herself, Freydis kills them all with an axe.

Back in Greenland, Freydis claims the crew of the other boat decided to stay behind, but the truth will come out. Leifur, by now a chieftain after his father's death, decides not to punish his little sister, but it is said that her actions sullied the reputation of her descendants.

This is in stark contrast to the descendants of Guðríður and Þorfinnur. They had a baby in North America and eventually moved to the farm of Glaumbær in northern Iceland. The descendants of their son, Snorri, eventually became the bishop of Iceland. After Þorfinnur's death, Guðríður walked all the way to Rome. Having travelled to southern Europe and North America, she was undoubtedly the best travelled woman of her day. The Norse Greenlanders continued travelling to North America for over 300 years, until they mysteriously disappeared. ■



Check out the podcast:

The saga continues in our January 10 issue.

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Inoffensive
Old Men

Calling The Election, A

Ólafur Þ. Harðarson and Bogi Águstsson reflect on a career of calling electi

WORDS Catharine Fulton
IMAGES Axel Sigurðarson

dates, and Bogi missing the 1987 election when he was working a stint in PR for Icelandair.

Even when accounting for those minor pauses, the election night duo has enjoyed significant longevity. “Icelanders have very good taste,” Ólafur quips when asked what it is about them that resonates with television viewers year after year. The more pragmatic Bogi notes that it likely boils down to the fact that he had been on television for some years already and was a familiar face, while Ólafur is Iceland’s foremost academic and researcher on elections, as well as the founder of The Icelandic National Election Study at the University of Iceland.

“We’re kind of inoffensive old men,” Bogi smiles. “Though we weren’t old when we started.”

WHAT HAPPENED?

I’m meeting with Ólafur and Bogi to unpack the weekend’s elections and better understand why the chips fell the way they did.

The election saw the Social Democratic Alliance come out on top with 20.8% of the vote to claim 15 seats in Alþingi — nine more than they won in 2021. That party’s leader, Kristrún Frostadóttir, has since been given the mandate to form government and is currently ironing out the details with the leaders of Flokkur fólksins (the People’s Party) and Viðreisn (the Liberal Reform Party).

Most interestingly about the outcome, Ólafur notes, is the near obliterations of the Left-Green Movement — something he largely chalks up to the voters wanting to punish the party.

“Voters who actually would agree with a lot of the party’s policies were saying to themselves, ‘the Left-Greens betrayed us when they formed this coalition with Independence Party,’ and in particular, when [former prime minister] Katrín Jakobsdóttir left and decided to run for president and the Left-Greens made the leader of the Independence Party Bjarni Benediktsson the prime minister — those voters wanted revenge!”

THE BIGGER ISSUE

The Left-Greens managed to secure just 2.3% of the vote this time around, falling short of Iceland’s 5% threshold to secure a supplementary seat in parliament. Also failing to hit that mark were the Socialist Party, the Pirate Party, the Democratic Party, and Responsible Future. Those parties combined won 22,064 votes — roughly 10.4% of the vote — but they don’t get a single member into parliament.

“That’s 10% of the voters that have been disenfranchised,” Bogi exclaims.

“Some are saying that those furthest to the left are bankrupt in Icelandic politics,” Ólafur explains. “Voters of the Socialist Party, the Pirate Party and the Left-Greens, they share similar views on many of the most important issues. They’re all socially liberal and they’re more environmentally friendly than others. They’re also more positive toward the European Economic Area and toward Icelandic membership in the European Union, and in agreement on economic points.”

“So in that sense, if they were united in one party, most of the voters

What were you doing on the evening of November 30? After casting ballots in the parliamentary election, many Icelanders retreated to their homes and switched on their television, where two familiar faces would serve as their guides as the ballots were tallied and the results trickled in.

Ólafur Þ. Harðarson and Bogi Águstsson have been the trusted faces of election night broadcasting in Iceland for decades, with the former getting his start on radio in 1983 before transitioning to television to cover the 1986 municipal elections, and the latter being an election night mainstay consistently since 1978. Well, each admits to a brief pause, with Ólafur not covering the 1996 presidential elections since he had endorsed one of the candi-



Again And Again

ions

could vote for such a party," Ólafur posits. "They could also make an electoral alliance, which is allowed by electoral law in Iceland."

An electoral alliance would permit multiple parties to declare their alignment prior to election day, essentially making them a single party with separate candidate lists.

"So, for example, the first list could be xV, the second would be xVV and the third would be xVVV," Ólafur explains. "And if any of those lists get members elected in the constituencies, then, of course, they will keep those members, but their votes will be joined. So in such an electoral alliance, these left parties would not have gotten zero members for 9.3% of the vote [the percentage won by the Left-Greens, Socialists and Pirates on Nov. 30], they would instead have six members in parliament."

"So actually the system is depriving the voters of those three parties from obtaining six members in Parliament out of 63 — it is a serious issue."

SIZE MATTERS

Aside from the issue of disenfranchisement, there is another aspect of the Icelandic electoral system that these two veteran election broadcasters agree on: Iceland's weighted voting system.

"I find it wrong with our system that how much weight your vote has depends on in which constituency you live," Bogi notes. "People in the northwest constituency have almost double the amount of votes that we have in Reykjavík, which, of course, we would never accept in a presidential election. So why do

we accept that in the parliamentary elections? It means that the rural constituencies have a weight in Parliament which is greater than the number of people that voted."

While political parties have argued that the proportion of MPs for each party wouldn't change significantly should all votes be equal, Bogi and Ólafur point out that the bigger issue is representation of differing values between rural candidates and those running in the capital region.

"The number of conservative nationalists in rural areas is over 40%. In Reykjavík and in the southwest, the conservative nationalists are just around 30%," Ólafur explains. "So concerning those issues, it makes a hell of a lot of difference if MPs come from a rural constituency or the capital area — it makes a hell of a lot of difference, even within the same party. Policy wise, people that are socially liberal do not get their views fairly represented in parliament."

Prior to these most recent elections, Ólafur said there was some will within parliament to at least think about considering equal weighting of votes, but the topic didn't make it to committee before the government dissolved in October and the snap election was called.

"But my guess — because I'm always an optimist — would be that in the next term we will see some really important changes to the Icelandic electoral system," Ólafur says.

THE DREAM TEAM

Speaking with them in the bar at Hotel Holt, it is understandable why these "inoffensive old men" have

enjoyed such success broadcasting into the homes of Icelanders on election nights. Their chemistry and banter is magnetic, with each bringing something unique to the dynamic.

"We don't try to upstage each other," Bogi says. "And we roughly know what the other person is going to say. He knows what I'm going to ask about and I know his answers, but it's mainly that he's the expert and I'm the reporter."

The duo has been through many memorable election nights — from one year when the computer system crashed shortly before going on air, to the 2007 election when the government and opposition were neck and neck the entire night — but their career highlight, Ólafur says, was commenting on an entirely fictional election.

"We got to play ourselves in the TV series *Ráðherra*," he recalls, clearly excited about the memory. "And Benedikt, the main character said, 'we are not going to form a government unless we win handsomely and only if the voter turnout will be over 90%' — I mean, that was a stupid claim!" He let out another bellowing laugh at the absurdity of the fictitious politician, played by Ólafur Dari Ólafsson.

"I was actually in Paris on holiday and said I can't go," Ólafur continues, "but my daughters and my wife said, 'Ólafur, when you were offered to play in a TV series with Ólafur Dari, you don't say no!'"

And while both men are past retirement age, it's unlikely that either would say no if asked to lead another election broadcast. ■

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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 flatkökur. Flatkökur goes great with everything. Be it the Mediterranean/Icelandic fusion of lathering some with hummus, or turn it into a poor-man's pizza with pizza sauce and cheese. Honestly, the flatkaka is an empty canvas for you to paint your wildest dreams on. JB

10 JÓMFRÚIN
Lækjargata 4, 101 Reykjavik
Icelanders may have a love-hate relationship with the Danes, but let's be honest, who can resist craving a delicious smørrebrød every now and then? If you get what we are talking about, there's no better place in town for an authentic Danish smørrebrød than Jómfrúin. This family-run restaurant specialises 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 BINGO DRINKERY
Skólavörðustígur 8
Admit it, sometimes you just feel like travelling back in time to your grandma's house, full of weird memorabilia one should have gotten rid of at least three decades ago. Luckily, Reykjavik now has a place like this – Bingo Drinkery. Tucked away from the crowds of tourists just off Skólavörðustígur, it offers a selection of beers and cocktails, all on happy hour 16:00-18:00. IZ

13 KAFFIBARINN
Bergstaðastræti 1
There are no correct words to explain just how iconic Kaffibarinn is in the local bar scene. It's the perennial hangout for the who's who of Reykjavik, welcoming everyone from members of Blur to curious passers by and everyone in between. Kaffibarinn is an establishment in and of 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 Vinstúkan 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

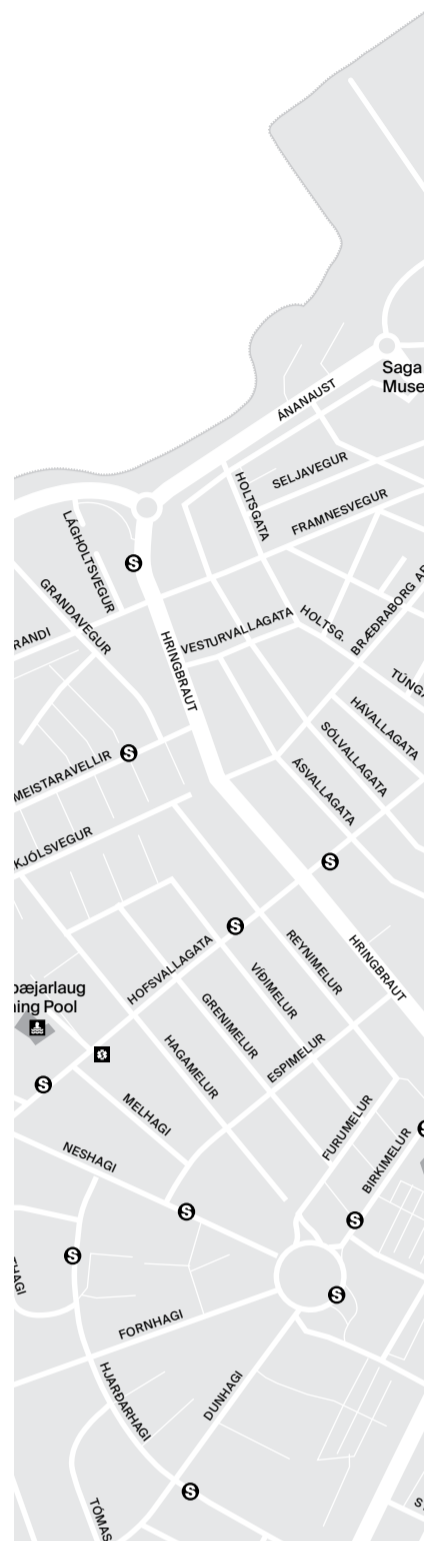
17 LAVA SHOW
Fiskislóð 74
I didn't know I had a primal urge to see a person clad in a Homer Simpson nuclear suit replicate the natural flow of molten lava until I paid the Lava Show a visit. Nothing will prepare you for sitting in an enclosed space while literal magma flows out of a chute through the wall. And then you just stare at the colours as the host explains the geological properties of lava. JB

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 10-11
Austurstræti 17
If you're shopping here, I hope it's because you consider this an absolute last-minute resort. Like, you're down-and-out after a night of partying and you need some form of carbohydrates (or for that matter, protection). Don't make this a frequent pitstop in your grocery-shopping because: a) their prices are gouged to compensate for the fact they're always open, and b) their product variety is shit – even by Icelandic standards. Check out Krónan instead, a stone's throw away. RG

20 LEBOWSKI BAR
Laugavegur 20a
A joke that's gone too far. The longest lasting theme bar that sprung up during a theme-bar craze many years ago. We'd list off a bunch of reasons to avoid this place, but the owner has our phone numbers and we're over the after-hours calls. So just take our word for it. The Dude does not abide. RG ■





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Fiskislóð 39 | Reykjavík | www.forlagid.is

BY THE POND - OPEN DAILY

IDNÓ

FREYJA
BISTRO PUB
SUN - THU 11AM TO 1AM | FRI - SAT 11AM TO 3AM

Cocktails - Beers - Food - Dance - Live Music - Private Parties

ÆGIR BAR

ET, DREKK, OG VER GLAÐR

LAUGARVEGUR 12 - 101 REYKJAVÍK

New In Town **Fríbúðin**

GERÐUBERG LIBRARY,
GERÐUBERG 3-5

Let's face it. Our relentless consumerism is driving the world off a cliff toward obliteration. But we get it. It's nice to have things. Especially for Christmas. Luckily, the recently opened Fríbúðin quenches our thirst for shopping while staying within the circular economy. As the name implies, Fríbúðin offers free stuff. You can pitch in by giving away some of your items, making the shop go round and round and round, with limited impact on the planet. **JB**

OPENING HOURS:
Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays:
08:00-18:00;
Wednesdays 08:00-20:00;
Saturdays 10:00-17:00.



Download Klappid app

The official Icelandic public transport app for the capital area.

Google Play App Store

KLAPP

FOOD HALL & BAR

PÓSTHÚS

PÓSTHÚSSTRÆTI | 101 REYKJAVÍK

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2024 BEST FOODHALL

HAPPY HOUR 16:00 - 18:00

Art Exhibitions

06.12.24–09.01.25

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

Opening

GALLERY KANNSKI
Francesca Hummler & Victoria Björk – Nest

Part photography, part installation exploring personal potential and memory

Opens December 7
Runs until December 15

GALLERY PORT
Group exhibition – Jólagestir

Various art for sale from grassroots and established artists

Opens December 7
Runs until January 11, 2025

KLING&BANG
Joe Keys – Else

Sculptures made of found material forming a composite

Ongoing

ÁSMUNDARSALUR
Ólafur K. Magnússon – Fragments Of Our History

Legacy exhibition, photography

Runs until February 20

Christmas Exhibition
Various media

Runs until December 23

BERG CONTEMPORARY
Woody Vasulka – The Brotherhood

Installation

Runs until December 20, 2025

Christmas Exhibition
Various media

Runs until December 21

GALLERY SIGN
Anna Hrund Másdóttir – Water Lilies

Mixed media, silicone works

Runs until December 15

GERÐARSAFN (KÓPAVOGUR ART MUSEUM)

Finnbogi Pétursson – Parabóla

Mixed media

Runs until January 19

Gunnþís Ýr Finnbogadóttir & Þorgerður Ólafsdóttir – Unstable Ground

Sound and video installation, mixed media

Runs until January 19

Glerhúsið
Unnar Örn – Museum of Amnesia

Mixed media

Runs until January 19

HAFNARBORG CENTER OF CULTURE & FINE ART

Arngunnur Ýr – Kahalí

Paintings

Runs until January 19

Pétur Thomsen – Settlement

Photography

Runs until February 16

HAFNARHÚS (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

Jónsi – FLÓÐ (Flood)

Installation, mixed media

Runs until January 26

Hreinn Friðfinnsson – From Time – To Time

Works from the collection

Runs until January 12

Erró – 1001 Nights

Paintings

Runs until March 23

THE HOUSE OF COLLECTIONS

Resistance: Interplay of Art and Science

Interdisciplinary group exhibition

Permanent exhibition

Stay and turn to stone! Folklore in Icelandic Art

Group exhibition, paintings

Runs until May 25, 2025

HÖFUÐSTÖÐIN
Shoplifter/Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir – Chromo Sapiens

Installation, colourful whole body experience

Permanent exhibition

18 GRANDI
Andreas Eriksson – Real Time

Paintings, progressive exhibition

Runs until December 18

KJARVALSSTAÐIR (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

Hallgrímur Helgason – Havoc

Paintings, illustrations

Runs until February 9

Kjarval and the 20th Century: When Modernity Anchored

Paintings, drawings

Runs until December 31 2024

KORPÚLFSSTAÐIR
It's getting out of hand

Group exhibition

Runs until December 8

THE LIVING ART MUSEUM
Advent calendar

Group exhibition, sculptures

Runs until December 24

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ARTS

100years100items

Works from the collection

Permanent exhibition

Home Textiles

Textiles

Runs until December 29

At Home in the Design Museum

Over 200 examples of Icelandic design from 1900 to the present

Permanent exhibition

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND

Looking Inward, Looking Outward: 140 years of the National Gallery of Iceland

Group exhibition, works from the collection

Runs until March 30

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ICELAND

The Lögrétta Valences

Historical textile works

Runs until June 2025

Picturing a Nation: Capturing the Founding of the Republic in 1944

Historical photography

Runs until January 5

Making of a Nation – Heritage and History in Iceland

Historic items, photography

Permanent exhibition

PHENOMENON

Peace of art

Group Exhibition

Runs until December 23

PORTFOLIO

Kristín Gunnlaugsdóttir – Kveðja

Textile, illustration

Runs until December 7

THE NORDIC HOUSE

Open house

Group exhibition

Runs until December 15

The Tree

Children's exhibition, interactivity

Runs until May 1

REYKJAVÍK MARITIME MUSEUM

Heimir Freyr Hlöðversson – We are Earth, We are Water

Video installation

Runs until December 2024

REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Laimonas Dom Baranauskas – Years In Between

Photography

Runs until January 12

Agnieszka Sosnowska & Ingunn Snædal – RASK(en)

Photography, text works

Runs until December 8

SÍM GALLERY

Christmas Exhibition

Group exhibition

Runs until December 21

PULA

Auður Lóa Guðnadóttir – In Watermelon Sugar

Paper mache sculptures

Runs until December 23

Art Picks



RVK Zine Fair
Friday, December 13 - Saturday, December 14.
The Nordic House
Free Entry

Zines are still cool, right? RIGHT?! Regardless of your opinion on the medium's validity, the local zine scene is organising a celebration in its honour. During this two-day festival at the Nordic House, guests are invited to celebrate zines through workshops, talks and live performances. If you've been brimming with ideas for a zine of your own, don't let analysis be your paralysis. Show up and get things moving. JB



Gallery Port – Jólagestir
Saturday, December 7 - Saturday, January 11
Gallery Port,
Hallgerðargata 19-23
Free Entry

December is absolutely the best time to buy art. Artists who've had their applications for the artist salary denied are busy getting their work out there. With multiple art markets happening over town, the annual fair at Gallery Port is always worth checking out. Opening on December 7, Port's exhibition features both grassroots artists and seasoned veterans. New works are added regularly until Christmas and the show keeps going into the new year. JB



Nest – Francesca Hummler & Victoria Björk
Saturday, December 7 - Sunday, December 15
Gallery Kannski,
Lindargata 66
Free entry

Iceland can be cruel to newcomers. Apart from the inhospitable environment and chronic inflation, Iceland's insider mentality often leads to people quickly judging foreigners. Although not exclusively tied to Iceland, the upcoming exhibition Nest tackles the subject of belonging. Produced in a collaboration between Francesca Hummler and Victoria Björk, the duo evoke an almost three-dimensional aspect from their work where organic material seems to flow from images. JB

07.12.2024
11.01.2025

Gallery Port

Jólagestir

Hallgerðargata 19-23
105, Reykjavík

Events 06.12.24–09.01.25

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

Friday December 6

Hjörtur Stephensen
21:00 Dillon

ApocalypticK: Drag Kabarett
21:00 Gaukurinn

DJ Atli Kanill
22:00 Röntgen

Að standa á haus: SAKANA (DJ Set)
20:00 RVK Bruggfélag
Tónabíó

Silva & Steini, Jól í IDNÓ
20:00 Iðnó

hOFFMAN & Magnús Leifur
21:00 Bird

Young G&T
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Rót
21:00 Dillon

Saturday December 7

ReykjaBeat
22:00 Gaukurinn

Sonur sæll
22:00 Röntgen

We'll BACH you up for Christmas
12:00 Hallgrímskirkja

Að standa á haus: Anya Shaddock & Krassoff
20:00 RVK Bruggfélag

Markús Bjarnason & Band + Bjarni Daníel (DJ Set)
19:30 12 Tónar

Jólagleði Ólafar og Evu
20:00 Mengi

Straumur: Teitur Magnússon
21:00 Kaffibarinn

SAKANA & GhostOrchid
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Lame Dudes
21:00 Dillon

Sunday December 8

Litlu jól Tvihöfða
20:00 Gamla Bíó

Sigur Rós & Elja Ensemble
20:00 Harpa (Eldborg)

DJ Silja Glömmi
21:00 Kaffibarinn

Monday December 9

Nerd Party Night
20:00 Gaukurinn

Sigur Rós & Elja Ensemble
20:00 Harpa (Eldborg)

DJ Vala
21:00 Kaffibarinn

Tuesday December 10

Karaoke
21:00 Gaukurinn

Pub Quiz
20:00 Röntgen

Radiókarlsson
18:00 Space Odyssey

Sigur Rós & Elja Ensemble
20:00 Harpa (Eldborg)

Upprásin: Juno Paul, AfterpartyAngel, sameheads
20:00 Harpa (Kaldalón)

Fu Kaisha
21:00 Kaffibarinn

MC Myasnoi, Þórir Georg, Dreymandi hundur, symfaux
18:30 R6013

Wednesday December 11

LO-FI CINEMA
20:00 Kaktus Espresso Bar in Listasafn Íslands

Bring the Laughs
21:00 Gaukurinn

Vinyl Wednesday: DJ Andre
21:00 Röntgen

Jólabingó
20:00 Röntgen

Navidad Nuestra: Los Bomboneros
20:00 Salurinn

Guðný Jóns
21:00 Kaffibarinn

Thursday December 12

Bartenders' Club of Iceland's Christmas Punch Competition (Pieta Fundraiser)
17:00 Gaukurinn

Ingólfsvaka: White Nephews
19:30 Gaukurinn

Pub Quiz
20:00 Bingo

DJ Coco Channel
21:00 Röntgen

Melkorka Rós & Fannar Pálsson
20:00 RVK Bruggfélag
Tónabíó

E-Major
21:00 LEMMY

Blússveit bollýar Christmas Concert
20:00 Iðnó

John McCowen's Mundanas VII-XI
20:00 Mengi

Olga's Winter Show
20:00 Frikirkjan

DJ Andrés
21:00 Kaffibarinn

Friday December 13

Reykjavík Zine Fair
14:00 Nordic House

Kárahátíð
17:00 Radar Basement

Mánakvöld
17:00 Smekkleysa

Marvaða Moment #3: CYBER release concert for SAD :'(
19:00 Marvaða

DJ Óli Dóri
22:00 Röntgen

DJ Frimann
22:00 Kaffibarinn

GG Blús
21:00 LEMMY

Að standa á haus: snny (DJ Set)
20:00 RVK Bruggfélag

Saturday December 14

Reykjavík Zine Fair
14:00 Nordic House

Marína Ósk
17:30 SKÝ Lounge & Bar

After Party Karaoke
21:00 Gaukurinn

DakhaBrakha
20:00 Gamla Bíó

Jólagagapartí Örvars & Ívars
22:00 Röntgen

Álfbeat (DJ Set)
14:00 Space Odyssey

Að standa á haus: Rauður & Sakaris
20:00 RVK Bruggfélag
Tónabíó

Una Torfa
20:00 Salurinn

I ADAPT, KIMONO, DUFT, CXVIII
19:00 Iðnó

Óli Dóri
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Sunday December 15

Korsilettunnar
20:00 Djúpið (Hornið)

Teitur Magnússon
21:00 Kaffibarinn

Monday December 16

Stóraa Nammiland: Video Preview
20:00 Gaukurinn

DJ Pabbi
21:00 Kaffibarinn

Tuesday December 17

Karaoke: Diva Battle
21:00 Gaukurinn

Pub Quiz
20:00 Röntgen

Stefanos Skjalivas
18:00 Space Odyssey

Valdi
21:00 Kaffibarinn

Event Picks



Navidad Nuestra
Wednesday, December 11 & Wednesday, December 18
Salurinn
5.900 ISK

Latin band Los Bomboneros are hosting two concerts to ring in the holiday season. Specialising in a variety of South American music, Los Bomboneros are sure to put an equatorial spin on this year's advent. On December 11, Los Bomboneros will highlight Latin American string music with harps and lutes for an acoustic ambience, while on December 18, the band turns it up to eleven for a swinging Christmas ball. JB



Kárahátíð
Friday, December 13,
17:00–04:30
Radar
4000 ISK / pay what you want

Kárahátíð is all about celebrating Kári and noise music. Who is Kári? I guess you'll have to show up to find out. Self-described as a "C4 charge," Kárahátíð is not limited to any genres, inviting artists of any creed to embrace the gospel of noise, which may result in wonderfully bizarre combinations. Lining up 20 artists, the roster includes the names Supersport!, Gróa, Lord Pussswhip, Masaya Ozaki, Lil Data, Ronja, MC MYASNOI and many more. Scheduled for Friday the 13th, be prepared for spooky occurrences and haunting sets. JB



Marvaða Moment #3 – CYBER Release Show
Friday, December 13, 19:00
Marvaða, Fiskislóð 31D
3.500 ISK

Electronic duo CYBER's latest album SAD :'(is all about the pair's coming-of-age years and accompanying teenage angst. Though the album was released in October, CYBER is just now teaming up with the label Marvaða for a release concert. Located in the newly opened marvaða space, the event also marks the first public opening of the creative nucleus. Decorated in conjunction with the album's themes, guests can explore the interactive exhibition during the show. Special guests include Jónsi and tatjana, while artists Amor Vincit Omnia and DJ Mellí will warm up the stage. JB



National Gallery of Iceland
Fríkirkjuvegur 7
The House of Collections
Hverfisgata 15

Unwrap Treasures of Icelandic Art from the National Gallery Museum Store



Silver bracelet by Finnur Jónsson recreated for the National Gallery of Iceland Museum Store.

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Reykjavík Art Museum

One museum
Three locations



Hafnarhús
Tryggvagata 17
101 Reykjavík

Kjarvalsstaðir
Flókagata 24
105 Reykjavík

Ásmundarsafn
Sigtún
105 Reykjavík

Open daily
listasafnreykjavikur.is
artmuseum.is



Events

06.12.24-09.01.25

Concerts, comedy, movies and other happenings that defy categorisation

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

- Wednesday December 18**
 - Bingo** 20:00 Bingo
 - Vinyl Wednesday: Johnny Blaze** 21:00 Röntgen
 - Jólatónleikar: Prince of the City** 19:30 Röntgen (efri hæð)
 - Navidad Nuestra: Los Bomboneros** 20:00 Salurinn
 - Gingerbread Decorating** 16:00 Loft Hostel
 - Kraftgalli DJ Set** 21:00 Kaffibarinn
- Thursday December 19**
 - Night of Improvised Music** 20:00 Mengi
 - Simon fknhdsm** 21:00 Röntgen
 - Stand-up: Guðmundur Einar og Stefán Ingvar** Röntgen (efri hæð)
 - Richter** 21:00 Gaukurinn
 - Daði Freyr: Þegar Daði Stal Jólunum?** 22:00 Gamla Bió
 - Jóhann Eiríksson & SIN ALMA** 18:00 Space Odyssey
 - ANDKRISTNI MMXXIV** 20:00 Iðnó
 - HOFFMAN** 21:00 LEMMY
 - Drink & Draw** 19:00 Loft Hostel
 - Maggi Legó** 21:00 Kaffibarinn
 - Að standa á haus: LHJAM Session** 20:00 RVK Bruggfélag

- Friday December 20**
 - Ekkert & The Gender Benders: Christmas Concert** 21:00 Gaukurinn
 - Glókollur** 22:00 Röntgen
 - Daði Freyr: Þegar Daði Stal Jólunum?** 22:00 Gamla Bió
 - ANDKRISTNI MMXXIV** 20:00 Iðnó
 - Music Bingo** 20:00 Loft Hostel
 - Heilög Hjóð: Amor Vincit Omnia, Smjörvi, Mio, MARI GETI & more** 20:00 Mengi
 - Steindór Jónsson** 22:00 Kaffibarinn
 - Að standa á haus: DJ vinur minn** 20:00 RVK Bruggfélag
- Saturday December 21**
 - In Goth We Trust: Winter Solstices Celebration (DJ & Market)** 17:00 Gaukurinn
 - Benni B-Ruff** 22:00 Röntgen
 - Jólagjafainnpökkun with Magga Maack** 19:00 Röntgen
 - Daði Freyr: Þegar Daði Stal Jólunum?** 22:00 Gamla Bió
 - ANDKRISTNI MMXXIV** 19:30 Iðnó
 - María & Sjonni** 17:00 Center Hotels Plaza
 - Christmas Market** 14:00 Loft Hostel
 - Símon (FKNHNDSM)** 22:00 Kaffibarinn
 - Að standa á haus: Iðunn Einars, KUSK & Óviti** 20:00 RVK Bruggfélag

- Sunday December 22**
 - Alltaf sami Lui: Luigi Release Concert** 21:00 Gamla Bió
 - Lessons and Carols: Syngjum Jólin Inn!** 17:00 Hallgrímskirkja
 - Jesper Lemke (DE)** 21:00 Kaffibarinn
- Monday December 23**
 - elysium b2b DJÓTTAR** 21:00 Röntgen
 - LoFi Monday** 17:00 Gaukurinn
 - Klaus Krampus Jólaveim vol. 1 Release Party** 15:00 Space Odyssey
 - earport** 21:00 Space Odyssey
 - Jólagestir Fu Kaisha** 21:00 Kaffibarinn
- Tuesday December 24**
 - Yule Night** 20:00 Gaukurinn
 - Christmas Movie Marathon** 15:00 Loft Hostel
 - Staff Xmas Selection** 21:00 Kaffibarinn
- Wednesday December 25**
 - Mary Jane from UA** 21:00 Kaffibarinn
- Thursday December 26**
 - DJ Margeir** 21:00 Kaffibarinn
 - Steindór Jónsson** 21:00 Röntgen
 - Organ Concert: Olivier Messiaen - La Nativité du Seigneur** 17:00 Hallgrímskirkja

- Friday December 27**
 - KGB** 22:00 Röntgen
 - Hlyur** 21:00 Gaukurinn
 - Fish Don't Like Milk** 18:00 Space Odyssey
 - Már & Nielsen** 22:00 Kaffibarinn
 - Að standa á haus: Spectral Dominance (DJ Set)** 20:00 RVK Bruggfélag
- Saturday December 28**
 - DJ Mellí** 22:00 Röntgen
 - Grín Dieg (Green Day Tribute)** 21:00 Gaukurinn
 - Choosing Your Path 2025: 5Rhythms Dance Workshop** 11:00 Dansverkstæðið
 - MÚR Release Concert** 20:00 Iðnó
 - DJ Station Helgi** 22:00 Kaffibarinn
 - Að standa á haus: Jónfrí & Indris** 20:00 RVK Bruggfélag
- Sunday December 29**
 - Sunday Funday** 20:00 Gaukurinn
 - J.S. Bach Christmas Oratorio** 17:00 Harpa (Eldborg)
 - Döbbskúrinn** 21:00 Kaffibarinn
- Monday December 30**
 - Elísabet** 21:00 Röntgen
 - Sindri Sparkle: New Years News Flash** 21:00 Gaukurinn
 - DJ Júllala** 21:00 Kaffibarinn

- Tuesday December 31**
 - Festive Brass & Organ** 16:00 Hallgrímskirkja
 - Gender Benders & ReykjaBeat** 20:00 Gaukurinn
 - Karaoke** 20:00 Loft Hostel
 - Óli Dóri & Símon** 21:00 Kaffibarinn
- Wednesday January 1**
 - Bring the Laughs** 21:00 Gaukurinn
- Thursday January 2**
 - Mr. Silla (DJ Set)** 21:00 Röntgen
- Friday January 3**
 - Faye Knús Drag Show** 21:30 Kiki
- Saturday January 4**
 - Flying Elbows** 21:00 Dillon
- Monday January 6**
 - Ragnheiður Gröndal** 17:00 Kópavogur Library
- Tuesday January 7**
 - Karaoke: The New Year Sucks** 21:00 Gaukurinn
- Wednesday January 8**
 - Queer Open Mic** 21:00 Gaukurinn
- Thursday January 9**
 - Iceland Symphony Vienna**

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HAPPIEST HAPPY HOUR IN REYKJAVÍK

Happy HOUR
15-18

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Appy Listings

Some Of The Happiest Hours In Town

If your bar has a happy hour, email us on events@grapevine.is with the details.

12 TÓNAR
Every day from 14:00 to 19:00
Beer 1.100 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

APÉRO
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

BINGO DRINKERY
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK,
Cocktails 1.500 ISK

BÍÓ PARADÍS
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

BODEGA
Every day from 14:00 to 18:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

DEN DANSKE KRO
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer & Wine 1.550 ISK 2-for-1 offer

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

FRÖKEN REYKJAVÍK
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.100 ISK

GAUKURINN
Every day from 17:00 to 21:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

**HAFNARHÚS
LADY BREWERY POPUP BAR**
Every thursday 17:00 to 22:00
Beer 1.100 ISK, Wine 1.300 ISK

THE IRISHMAN
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00
Beer 950 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

JUNGLE COCKTAIL BAR
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK,
Cocktails 1.900 ISK

KAFFIBARINN
Every day from 15:00 to 19:00
Beer 950 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

KAFFIBRENNSLAN
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

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

LOFT
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00
Beer 990 ISK, Wine 1.400 ISK

ÖLSTOFAN
Every day from 15:00 to 20:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

PRÍKIÐ
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00
Beer 800 ISK, Wine 1.500 ISK

RÖNTGEN
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 950 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

SKÚLI CRAFT BAR
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

STÚDENTAKJALLARINN
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00, until
21:00 on weekends
Beer 850 ISK, Wine 1.090 ISK

TIPSÝ
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
50% off select cocktails

VEÐUR
Every day from 14:00 to 19:35
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 900 ISK

VÍNSTÚKAN TÍU SOPAR
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00
Buy one wine bottle, get two courses
(any price)

* We do our best to keep these prices current, but still they change.

Featured
Happy Hour

Daisy

INGÓLFSSTRÆTI 8

In the span of, like, 18 months, Reykjavík's bar scene has welcomed three separate locations ending in a Y. Opened last May, Daisy is the newest bar by the same people who brought us Jungle and Bingó. Located in what used to be Spánski barinn, Daisy's cellar atmosphere will almost make you feel like you're at a speakeasy. Offering a rotational menu, Daisy will always keep you on your toes. JB

HAPPY HOURS:
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00

Beer 1.000 ISK,
Wine from 1.200 ISK,
Cocktails 1.900 ISK

Cocktails of the week 2.000 ISK



Cheap Eats

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

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

ARABIAN TASTE
Falafel Roll
1.790 all day, every day

BIRD
Deathmetal sandwich and beer
3.500 ISK 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

**HAMBORGARABÚLLA
TÓMASAR**
Tuesday Special: burger, fries &
soda
1.990 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
1.950 ISK all day, every day

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

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

NAPOLI PIZZA
Lunch Offer: choice of menu pizza

or sandwich
1.890 ISK every day from 11:30 -
15:00

PÍTUBARINN
Veggie pita sandwich
2.090 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
1.790 ISK weekdays from 12:00 -
15:00

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

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Music News



Fred Again In Iceland

The English producer and musician Fred Again was spotted in Reykjavik in early November, photographed with Social Democratic Alliance candidate Ragna Sigurðardóttir near Melabúðin in west Reykjavik. The artist was rumoured to be in town for a secret performance, appearing as a guest with the British electronica duo Joy Anonymous at the Whale Museum on November 15. However, the scheduled concert ended up postponed due to unprecedented

demand, among other reasons. The show was rescheduled for the next day and Fred Again's rumoured cameo turned out to be nothing but gossip. The event promoters told local media the Fred Again pandemic "was a rumour we couldn't control" — but sources claim it was the promoters who were pushing the story. Ultimately, the show went on, with Fred Again being spotted in the crowd, not onstage. JB



Víkingur Heiðar Ólafsson Nominated For A Grammy

Pianist Víkingur Heiðar Ólafsson has been nominated for the 2025 Grammy Awards for his rendition of the Goldberg Variations by Johann Sebastian Bach. Víkingur is nominated in the Best Classical Instrumental Solo category. This is the artist's first Grammy nomination. It's been a big year for Víkingur, meriting him the Grapevine's People Of The Year acknowledgement (pages 14-16). In March, Víkingur performed

NPR's acclaimed Tiny Desk concert series; in October, Víkingur finished a unique two-piano recital with world-renowned musician Yuja Wang; and in November, he reached the impressive milestone of having his music streamed one billion times. Víkingur is hitting the tour circuit in January, 2025, premiering the piano concerto After The Fall by American composer John Adams. JB



Daði Freyr Moving To Iceland, Announces Christmas Show

Celebrated electronic musician Daði Freyr is setting his sights on Iceland, having spent 10 years living in Berlin. This was reported in an interview with Vísir. Daði released his first Christmas-themed album on November 8, titled How Daði Stole Christmas. It features covers of holiday classics such as "Last

Christmas" and "I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday." On the back of his record, Daði will play special Christmas concerts at Gamla Bíó December 20 and 21. In addition to his holiday release, the artist is working on another album, aiming to finish it next year and following it up with a European tour. JB



Whaling

A Duet Of Dancers

Milkywhale on music, mirrors and making a comeback

WORDS Grayson Del Faro
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

hometown of Salt Lake City, Utah. Then, after playing their last few shows in Germany in 2019, Milkywhale mysteriously vanished. This is their story.

A MILKYWHALE IS BORN

Okay, that's a lie. Nobody vanished, but we'll come back to that later.

interested in working with original music.

"So I wrote to Árni," she says. "I basically sent him a cold email, introducing myself and asking if he wanted to work with me on a dance performance. We got a grant from the art fund to do it and then when we met, I said, 'I have no interest in doing a dance performance. I just

It all started with a lie.

"It all started with a lie," Árni Rúnar Hlöðversson says with a sly grin. I'm sitting with the band in their temporary studio, which I immediately dubbed The Milkywhale Mansion. It's actually a small movie theatre with plush seats and glitzy details across the ceiling.

Milkywhale comprises singer, dancer and choreographer Melkorka Sigríður Magnúsdóttir and producer Árni Rúnar, best known as the musical mastermind behind the beats of iconic Icelandic party band FM Belfast.

Melkorka says she was a total "FM Belfast groupie" and, inspired by their legendary live shows, was

want to make music with you.' So it was kind of like luring him into it."

And that's the lie that started it all.

The rest came naturally to the pair. "We enter a room with nothing," Árni explains. "Maybe some lyrics, but no pieces of songs ready or anything. It's very different from most other collaborations. Working with some people, I wouldn't feel comfortable entering a room with nothing because that's just not the process we have. But the way we do it makes it so easy."

WORKING (2019 TO (202)5

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just in Árni's living room with a nice cup of coffee," Melkorka says. The band name comes from the way that Melkorka would explain her own name to people while studying dance in the Netherlands: "melk," the Dutch word for milk, and "orca."

Inspired by the story of a single mysterious whale that sings at the abnormal frequency of 52Hz – meaning that it is unable to communicate with other whales – the first iteration of "Milkywhale" was a one-woman show at Tjarnarbió.

The performance introduced the persona of Milkywhale, a lonely being desperate to find connection, featuring interspersed monologues of movement in absolute silence with upbeat pop songs. The show was a critical success and quickly evolved into an equally successful touring music project known for its high-energy live shows. Things were going great; Milkywhale had finally found her tribe.

Duets are really my form of collaborating.

"It was very intense and we played at so many places," Melkorka explains. "We travelled quite a lot. And we always liked to kind of not do the normal things... And then we kind of both got nine to five jobs," she concludes.

Melkorka founded the Iceland Innovation Week, which she describes as being like Airwaves, but for innovation, while Árni opened a web agency. "Music used to be my hobby," he says. "That turned into my job. And then programming was

my hobby. And then programming became my job and music became my hobby!"

Although Milkywhale had sunk to the depths for a well-deserved rest, the pair continued to collaborate over the past years with "Ok, bye," an annual show as part of Iceland Innovation Week.

"We bring together climate enthusiasts and artists in a big theatre spectacle," Melkorka elaborates. "So it's like a conference meets theatre. It's all founders, investors, policymakers, academics and politicians, but then we crack it up with all kinds of music pieces."

MILKYWHALE RESURFACES

Despite the duo's other projects, Milkywhale has surfaced again. "It started with a lie and it returned with a lie," Árni says. "Because Melkorka said, 'All right, we're going to do a dance [performance] and we need

music for that.' So I start to think about how we can approach that. And then she's like, 'But we're making pop music again.'"

Their new collaboration, Hverfa, was produced for the 2024 Reykjavík Dance Festival. "The approach was actually some of the most fun I've ever had," Árni admits.

"We just made pop songs. Then we basically ripped them apart to make the music for the dance piece, just parts of the songs and slowed them down." Melkorka adds, "And then we

took some elements of the dance performance songs and we placed them back into the pop songs."

That's how a new Milkywhale album was written. "I feel like the pop album is mirroring the dance performance," she says. "And the music that we are doing is mirroring the music that's on stage." Hverfa means to disappear, but also forms part of samhverfa, the Icelandic word for symmetry or mirroring.

This element of duality is important to their process. "Duets are really my form of collaborating," Melkorka clarifies. "Me and Árni, we are a duet. This is a duet on stage, a duet of two dancers. My favourite collaborations have always been duets."

While the duo have already wrapped up their first run of Hverfa, it will be performed again in January – and that's only the beginning for Milkywhale's comeback. Their new single "Breathe In" has just dropped and there's at least an EP in the works.

"It could even become an art museum installation," Melkorka teases, "Like it's a whole Milkywhale world. I don't know where it's going to lead, but I think we are a live band and we love to do live things."

Though what forms the duet will take in the coming months remains up in the air, Melkorka notes there's one thing she does know for sure: "I need to get my party stamina up!" ■

Listen to Milkywhale's latest track "Breathe In" on available streaming platforms and keep your eyes peeled for more music via their Instagram @milkywhalemusic

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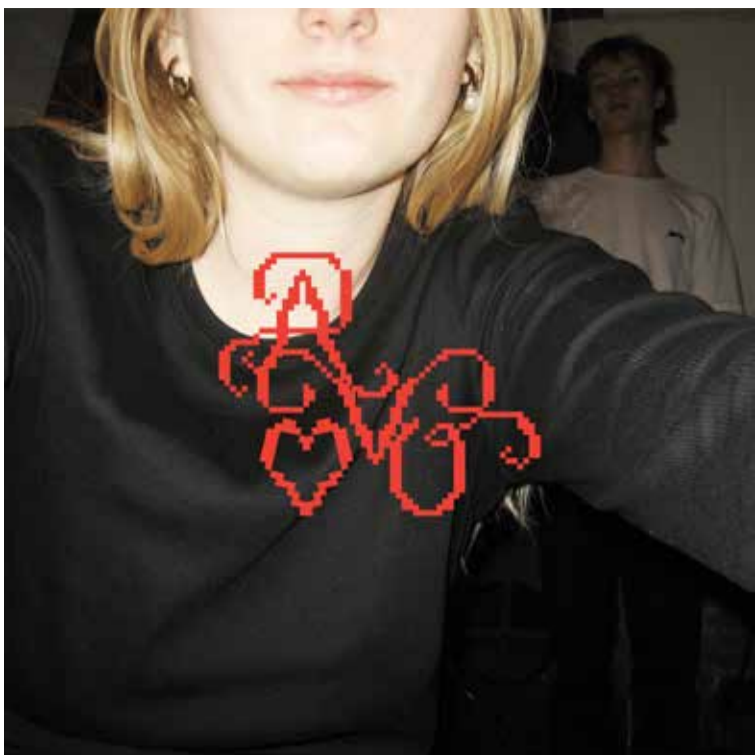
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Track By
Track

Love Prevails

Amor Vincit Omnia's debut EP *brb babe* revives the ancient art of Eurodance

WORDS Amor Vincit Omnia
IMAGE Supplied by artist

The Latin-titled experimental dance duo Amor Vincit Omnia haven't been kicking around for long. Their recently released EP *brb babe* mixes elements of hip-hop, house and Italian dance music, resulting in an eclectic collection of party-appropriate tunes to pick out the next time you get handed the aux. They guided us through the release track by track.

remade the lyrics. Then we remade them completely again so there are three other versions of "Do You" in existence. But finally it became the sleepy utopia it is. Baldur just really wanted to make a very poppy song, so we did.

EINA

"Eina" was created in only one day in Jamhouse (RIP), our former studio in Grandi. The song was made from a bunch of vocal chops, then Erla improvised lyrics and melody over them in one take, and that's the first and only take you hear in the song. Then Baldur laid down the drums and the bass... the rest is history.

100.000 KM/KLST

Imagine being in space, all alone in the void with no one but your spaceship. But then, all of a sudden, you see a purple-italo-disco-planet. You land, step outside your vessel, BOOM, 100 dancing space monkeys greet you with a pounding kick drum and bass and 50 congas forcing you to dance. "100.000 km/klst" is a really fun and groovy dance banger inspired by the Italians, and perfected by Amor Vincit Omnia for you. But behind all the disco, this song is in reality about finding peace in loneliness, not about monkeys and not even space travel.

AMOR VINCIT OMNIA

You are standing at the club, alone in your bridal dress. Then in steps the love of your life, with his skinny jeans and puffer jacket. It's love at first sight – that's amore. The title track was actually the first song we made as a duo, before we even chose the band name. The lyrics are inspired by an interesting encounter when Baldur met an old crush at a club in Reykjavík, which reminded him of his desire to marry her. The beat is pretty straightforward, with some two-step in the verse with a Jersey twist in the chorus. This is rather sexy and also danceable. We fell in love with the phrase Amor Vincit Omnia after we made the song and made it our band name. It's very cliché but also difficult to pronounce and hard to spell; which we all know are the criteria for a good band name. ■

Listen to *brb babe* on available streaming platforms and look out for the band's live shows on their Instagram @amor_vincitomnia

LOUNGE MUSIC

The first song of the EP is a failed attempt to make elevator music. The vocals are just improvisation, recorded in two minutes, and the drums are actually an older recording of Baldur playing the drums himself in another project. With an addition of a sample from the bestest song of all time ever, we love how simple this song is; and it is many listeners' favourite song although it was intended as an intro. Sweet lounging music.

DO YOU

Sleepy, horny crocodiles, with fries on the side. This '80s inspired sonic paradise was made in Baldur's kitchen, with some curry, and gin and tonics on the side. Originally, this song was in Italian. Then we



On A Date

Scoring A Second Date With Retro Stefson

The eccentric band reunites with the Grapevine – and for a reunion concert

WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle
IMAGE Patrik Ontkovic

It's 11 years too long of a wait between a first and second date? Some might say yes, but I'd venture that if anyone's worth waiting that long for, it's Unnsteinn Manuel Stefánsson, Logi Pedro Stefánsson and Hermigervill. They represented Retro Stefson on the Grapevine's first date with the band back in 2013, so when the funky, animated group announced they'd be playing a one-night-only reunion concert in December – their first in eight years – it felt like the right time to rekindle the spark.

We took the talented trio back to the site of our first rendezvous to see what's changed, what hasn't and what to expect when they hit the stage at N1 Höllin on December 28.

TESTING THE WATERS

As we eased into the picturesque hot tub at Laugarvatn Fontana, Hermigervill and I were both wondering how to stop our hair from freezing before diving into some first date pleasantries. So, what music are you listening to at the moment? Each musician's answer ends up paralleling what they're doing at the moment. Logi Pedro names *Petrichor* by 070 Shake and artist Mk.gee, both of which he celebrates for their technical prowess. He's also leaning heavily into design and technical thinking, with everything from shoes to lamps coming out of his workshop.

Unnsteinn Manuel agrees with the Mk.gee pick, adding that he's listening to a lot of 60s and 70s

Icelandic-Italian music; he specifically enjoys that Italian pop songs morphed into Icelandic Christmas songs as they crossed the world on their way to us. He's currently scoring a play that is set in 1960s Italy, while also singing a lot of Christmas songs as the season of Jólatónleikar is upon us.

Hermigervill says humbly, "I don't listen to a lot of new music, I go into my safe space." As I learned earlier this year, he has a formidable library of synth music from the 60s and 70s that he's working through. As he describes it, the music is "Kind of cheesy, with live drums but Moog synthesizers. I just go there and live in that sphere."

ONE CONCERT OR TWO?

We've completely warmed up (con conversationally and physically) by the time we veer into discussing Retro Stefson's reunion. This will be the first concert the group has played in eight years, and they're both excited and thoughtful about it.

Spurred by the band's work on VIRK's "Kombakk" campaign, where they evoke 2010s Retro Stefson absurdity while performing and dancing in an office building, the band began talks of a reunion concert. They were also influenced by the likes of Minus and XXX Rottweiler hundar, who pulled off successful reunion concerts recently.

"The main part was there are a lot of people, a lot of people *your* age," Unnsteinn says, referencing people in their early twenties, "that have listened to us a lot but have never seen us play live."

It's at this point in the date that a new piece of information comes to light: Retro Stefson is actually playing a show *before* their big reunion show, a rust-buster at Græni hattu-

inn in Akureyri, which they collectively champion as "Iceland's best concert venue."

"That's not to say the good people of Akureyri get the short end of the stick," Unnsteinn clarifies. "They get the real raw material, it's like having the DVD and all the commentary."

Logi Pedro adds: "We're not skilled musicians – well, we have people in the band that are skilled musicians – but the thing is, when we play together (because we've been playing together since 2006), we have this blood harmony thing going on."

VIBES AND INSPIRATION

Asked what vibe they envision for the reunion show(s), Unnsteinn and Hermigervill paint a singular image: it's 17. júní or Menningarnótt, the band has just come home from touring so they're a "well-oiled machine" and every spot in the crowd feels like you're in the front row of a festival.

Logi Pedro strays slightly from this outline, asking: "have you seen *The Matrix*? Number two? Where they're doing the rave in Zion? *The Matrix Reloaded* – that's the vibe."

As for which of their many songs they're particularly excited to play live again, they share that they'll be playing a "teenage medley" of songs for "the day ones in the crowd."

Knowing that's the best note to end on, we slink out of the hot tub at Fontana, down some delicious reindeer burgers from the neighbouring Lindin and drive westward home. ■

Watch "On A Date With: Retro Stefson" on The Reykjavik Grapevine YouTube Channel. Grab your tickets for Retro Stefson's shows are on tix.is.



Foxy punk

Getting Mauled By Tófa

Punk band Tófa's latest album is a whirlpool of destruction

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

Andri Freyr Þorgeirsson, Tófa instead decided to prioritise the joy of playing together.

"We're just best friends that meet up and have fun," explains the U.S.-born Allie. "Everything else is a bonus."

RIDICULOUS AMBITION

In spite of the band's laid-back approach, Tófa's dedication to their craft is clear on *Mauled*. Produced in collaboration with contemporary virtuoso Ólafur Arnalds, the album was recorded over an intense two-day session, underscoring the band's drive and technical capabilities.

Despite the "fuck it" attitude Tófa maintains through their music and live performances, nothing about the band – not their artwork, songwriting or personal communication – denotes anything short of very high standards. A key factor explaining their easy-going independence and sharp precision is Tófa's operational capacity, resembling more like a small creative factory than a four-piece rock band.

"I think it helps that we're self-sufficient," claims Allie. "Árni has managerial experience. I'm an artist and I curate the aesthetics to present material that looks nice."

"Jói is a radio host, and writes copy and press releases," Árni adds.

"Andri is a tech nut and oversees the whole live show," he continues. "Although we didn't have big dreams of becoming admired, it doesn't mean that we aren't ridiculously ambitious," Árni finishes.

What some might identify as borderline perfectionism, Tófa worked from material stretching back five years, constantly iterating their songs towards completion.

"And we're proud of what we do," Allie smiles. "Tófa is our favourite band. That being said, we are total goofballs," Árni grins.

FLOWING PATTERNS

In the interim between the 2016 *Teeth Richards* and *Mauled*, Tófa saw the departure of guitarist Kjartan Holm from their ranks. In Árni and Allie's words, Kjartan went to become a "real musician", focusing on his career in composition, scoring TV and film projects.

With one foundational and influential member short, the remaining band needed to figure out their new dynamic. "It took us time to discover our sound as a 4-piece," admits Allie. "Kjartan is the person who had the most experimental, avant-garde ideas," Árni explains.

But just like the adage goes, Tófa's transformation into a quartet resulted in newfound methods. "Kjartan

was very much into adding noise – which is amazing – but Tófa has taken a slight turn away from that," describes Allie.

The resulting album is a stark contrast to the sound of their previous LPs, swapping atonal guitar riffs for decisive ferocity, utilising the subtle importance of incorporating more space in their arrangements.

Everything sounds crisper and more deliberate, while keeping Tófa's layer

individual, you lack the power," he philosophises.

"It revolves around being the only person that wants to change what's going on around us, but realising it's more or less pointless," adds Allie.

Ironically, *Mauled*'s themes of repeating patterns of destruction were conceived during U.S. President Donald Trump's first term – just as the new album came to be released in the same week he got re-elected.

Tófa is our favourite band.

of hardcore "fuck it" attitude prevalent. One of *Mauled*'s most impressive feats however, is the ability to flow effortlessly between unconventional beat patterns and emphases without any notion of it feeling forced. Everything flows.

THE TRUMP ZEMBLANITY

Lyrical, the album represent a cyclic movement of destruction, as Árni and Allie put it, with lyricists Allie and Jóhannes being influenced by societal events.

"I think the lyrics and the music reflect a certain frustration, irritation and disappointment with what's going on in the world," explains Árni. "To feel like you're stuck in this vortex from which you never have a chance to escape because, as an

"Very interesting timing," quips Allie.

Whatever Tófa's new album and label connections bring, – Allie and Árni are unfazed for the next chapter.

"For us, meeting to play is very important. It's something we can't imagine life without," says Árni. "It's an outlet, expressing the frustration we experience in life. So it's healing for us and hopefully people listening to the record will think, 'Ok, I'm not the only one feeling this way,'" Allie concludes. ■

Listen to *Mauled* on available streaming services and purchase the physical album on tofa.band-camp.com

A long-standing act in Reykjavík's live music scene, punk group Tófa has released their first album in eight years. Out on November 8, *Mauled* represents a turning point in the band's career, having recently signed with London-based label Damnably.

"Our dream was for someone to make a vinyl record – something we could feel and touch," guitarist Árni Þór Árnason remarks on the band's goal a decade in the making. "That's everything we wanted. And [Damnably] wanted to make that happen."

Formed out of the aftermath of several successful groups in the early 2010s, Tófa's members set aside further attempts at professional glory. Consisting of close friends Árni, singer Allie Doersch, drummer Jóhannes Ólafsson and bassist

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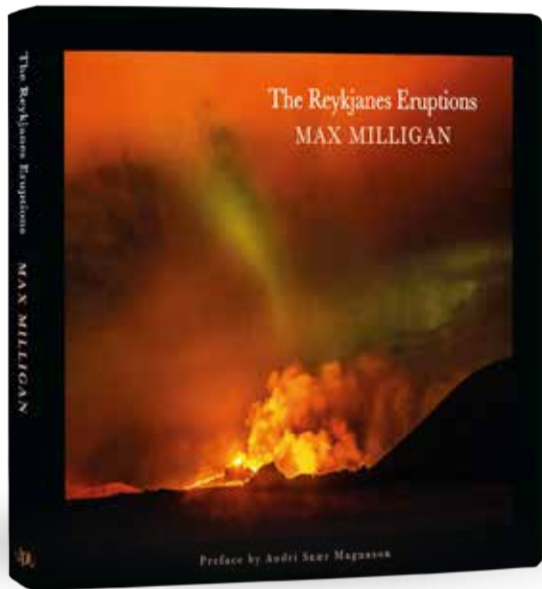
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Not Iceland

A First-Timer's Journey

Weird, windy and wonderful – the Faroes are perfect for exploring without a

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

There's way more to the Faroe Islands than my initial, mostly ignorant impressions. On the plus side, the country is so small that, even as someone who came primarily for a music festival, I managed to set foot on a few of its islands in just under three days. Here's how I did it.

EVERYTHING IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

With a population of about 14,000, Tórshavn is one of the smallest

not abandoned – people still live in them – with most black-tarred homes adorned with brightly painted letterboxes and potted plants. I imagine this area buzzes with tourists during the summer and I'm not envious of the locals, many of whom having put up signs requesting privacy.

At the end of the Reyn neighbourhood stands Tinganes, one of the oldest parliaments in the world – possibly older than Iceland's own Alþingi.

No matter how hard you try not to compare a country you're visiting to what you already know, it's inevitable that comparisons creep up. When I spontaneously ended up in the Faroe Islands one weekend in October, Iceland was my unavoidable reference point.

So, how do the Faroes measure up to Iceland? Let me break it down:

Landscape: Greener than Iceland.

Views: At times more epic, similar to Iceland's East Fjords.

Weather: Notably warmer. Case in point: you can have a beer outside at midnight in October.

Infrastructure: Impressive tunnel roundabouts connecting to different islands. Free buses in Tórshavn for both locals and visitors. Good roads even high in the mountains. Accessible helicopter travel.

Food: Limited plant-based main courses, but restaurants are generally accommodating.

Pools: No geothermal water (Iceland wins here).

Bónus: A surprisingly better selection than their Icelandic counterparts. Why is there a Bónus in the Faroes? And how can a Bónus in a place like Klaksvík have the latest Lego sets, while my local Bónus on Laugavegur struggles to stock fresh (if any) vegetables?

How can a Bónus in a place like Klaksvík have the latest Lego sets, while my closest Bónus on Laugavegur struggles to stock fresh (if any) vegetables?

capitals in the world. Everything is remarkably compact: the Skript festival's venue was conveniently located across the street from Hotel Tórshavn, where the Grapevine's photographer and I stayed. Good coffee was quickly sourced from Brell Café and Roastery, just a three-minute walk from the hotel, and freshly baked local goods could be found at Breyðvirkið, a bakery just nine minutes away. The legendary bar and music venue Sirkus, along with the picturesque harbour and old town, was only a five-minute walk from our temporary home base.

The weather was mostly gloomy and rainy during our time in the Faroes, but one morning, as the sky cleared and the sun peeked through fast-moving clouds, I took a stroll through the old town neighborhood of Reyn. The wooden houses appeared smaller than average, as if they were intentionally shrunk to fit the scale of this miniature capital. Their grass roofs rippled in the wind, reminding me of horses' manes. These 14th-century houses are

But what would a trip to the Faroe Islands be without exploring its natural wonders? Given the spontaneous nature of this trip, I had very little time to research what to do and see on this far-flung archipelago. While packing for the flight, I revisited a YouTube video about the islands that I had watched a few years earlier. One place from that video stuck in my mind – the village of Gjógv, described by the narrator as "the introvert's paradise." Fortunately, Gjógv, like most things in the Faroes, was just an hour away from the capital. Off we went!

UP AND DOWN WE GO

The village was something else. To get there, we drove up and down winding roads, with visibility so poor at times that we hoped we weren't getting too close to the unfenced edge or about to bump into one of the countless sheep roaming free. The road was a single lane, but the occasional car would speed toward us – a local, no doubt. It felt



Way To The Faroe Islands

a plan

simultaneously like we had just left Tórshavn and like we had been driving through these hills and clouds forever.

After one final turn, we were looking down on the village of Gjógv. Taken straight out of a still-life painting, it feels almost surreal that people actually live in a place like this. From the stunning beauty of the landscape to harsh, don't-even-want-to-think-about winter conditions, Gjógv – which translates to “gorge” – sits nestled in one, with a view towards the sea and the mountains.

Suddenly, the traffic slowed and a fabulous goose appeared in front of our car. Plodding across the street at the speed of a turtle, as if to say, “This is where I live. No rush here.”

Descending into Gjógv offered a completely different perspective. Just a few minutes ago, we had been looking down at the rows of colourful houses, and then we were

hoisted up and down. I imagine this town might be completely inaccessible in winter, with the local helipad used for emergencies.

Many hiking trails start from Gjógv, but with the thick October mist and Google reviews warning, “if it's a bit foggy and you don't know the trail, don't do it,” I decided to save hiking for a summertime return.

A COSY MUSEUM MOMENT

The downside of visiting the Faroe Islands during the off-season is a very limited window of daylight. My approach was to maximise the few hours of light available, venturing out on road trips without a particular destination in mind and getting back indoors to acclimate before the festival kicked off each evening. The Listasavn Føroya, or The National Gallery of the Faroe Islands, checked all the boxes for what I was looking for.

Although there was no snow outside at present, these works immediately transported me to the Faroese winter.

Undoubtedly, one of the museum's signature pieces is Whale War – a life-size sculpture of a pilot whale made of 32,000 toy soldiers. The piece by Edward Fuglø combines mixed media, and if you lean in, you can hear voices of different people – both internationally renowned environmentalists and Faroese locals supporting their long-standing tradition of grindadráp, or whale hunting.

The museum also houses the largest collection of Sámal Joensen-Mikines paintings, one of them, Home from Funeral – depicting a group of eight men who have just returned home from a funeral – made a lasting impression on me. Both the men and the background are rendered in dark tones, yet it's an incredibly powerful depiction of the life in the Faroes, conveying both sadness and the resilience of the people to carry on.

TO BE CONTINUED

Galloping through a country for barely 72 hours while also attending a music festival makes forming a comprehensive impression difficult. Yet, this brief sojourn gave me an enticing first taste of the Faroes – its epic cliffside settlements, the green that was simply greener than any other I've seen before and a people who seem to look at the world with a rare positivity.

The Faroes proved that you don't always need a plan; you can experience a lot just by driving until the road ends. With barely any tourists and few people about, the whole country truly felt like an introvert's paradise. ■

Trip provided by Skript Festival via Visit Faroe Islands. Visit visitfaroeislands.com for expert tips and inspiration on exploring the Faroe Islands.

The wooden houses appeared smaller than average, as if they were intentionally shrunk to fit the scale of this miniature capital.

driving the length of unbelievably short streets among them.

“What is she doing?” my companion asked, pointing towards a woman who, despite the weather, was standing in her yard wearing just a t-shirt, hose in hand. She was cleaning a sheep's head.

It's moments like these when Faroese reality strikes – with the closest grocery store kilometres away, this tiny village of just 23 residents (according to 2023 municipal data) had to toughen up, with many residents relying on fishing and farming. Gjógv's harbour lies down the cliff, so boats must use a ramp to be

The museum's collection features works – paintings, sculptures, textiles and more – by Faroese artists from the 1830s to the present. I loved how the rooms were thematically divided into sections such as “rocks and stones,” “animals,” “landscape” and “the ocean,” the latter combining all my favourite colours, with standalone blues and deep greens.

Jóannis Kristiansen's snowy, hazy landscapes of Leirvík, a harbour town on the east coast of the Faroes' second-largest island, Eysturoy, caught my attention. The impressionist, who hailed from Leirvík, skillfully captured the blue hour.

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Wild Food

The Bounty Of The Sea

Fine Foods Íslandica is leading the way in sustainable seaweed farming

WORDS Shruthi Basappa
IMAGES Sina Opalka

could finally take up Jamie on her invitation to see exactly what she has been up to at Fine Foods.

SEAWEED SHEPHERD

The first thing that strikes you about Jamie is her stillness. Her voice and demeanour exude calm, a quality that I imagine comes in handy while being out at the sea. The San Francisco transplant has called Iceland home for more than six years now and has, like many immigrants who move for the love of Iceland, never really lived in Reykjavik.

“As a graphic designer, it was hard for me in the States to study anything science related. But this program is so unique,” Jamie shares of the University of Westfjords pro-

remarkable relationship between seaweed and the communities it supports, was her thesis exploring local ecological knowledge that seaweed harvesters have honed over time. In the process, she learned more about klopáang (also known as knotted wrack or Norwegian kelp), the most common brown algae in Iceland. She went on to layer that with studies on the industrial and socio-economic impact it has on communities in Reykhólar.

It was “Plastic,” a completely biodegradable water bottle made from red algae created as the graduation project of product design student Ari Jónsson that led Jamie further “down the rabbit hole,” she confesses, “of how seaweed is an important basis of marine habitat. It is a food

It's not everyday that you get to meet Iceland's first (and only) seaweed farmer. But it's exactly this that is often overlooked about life in Iceland: the sheer breadth and diversity of people living here. Jamie Lee is a pioneering farmer and innovator, who has the envious claim of being the founder and owner of Iceland's first seaweed farm, Fine Foods Íslandica.

I have known Jamie through her Instagram account @finefoods.is, where her seaweed posts caught my attention a few years ago. Being closer to Hólmavík while living in Ísafjörður this year meant that I

No one really has figured out what growing seaweed in Iceland means.

gramme that had a cross-section of students, from teachers to bureaucrats to “even a surfer dude” she recalls.

Having nursed a lifelong love for seaweed, Jamie gravitated towards it as part of her studies. What sparked her interest in the

source for many organisms. So I asked myself, if we continued to use seaweed and use much more of it, then what would that future look like? What is the impact of overharvesting seaweed on communities? On industries?”

Considering that 98% of all sea-

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weed used in Europe is wild harvested, Jamie was convinced of the urgency to balance industry needs with sustainability. Seaweed farming was the way to go.

SUSTAINABILITY & COMMUNITY

Soon after graduating, Jamie founded Fine Foods Íslandica. What is in equal measures impressive and fascinating is how Jamie has combined her idealism and environmental concerns with a deeper love for community.

“No one really has figured out what growing seaweed in Iceland means. Being such a new thing, I think people try to understand what it is *supposed* to be or look like. So there were questions like, ‘what do you think about salmon farms?’ And ‘do you think you can grow seaweed and salmon together?’ In the perspective of whether it’s an additive or extractive industry, we’re both extractive – but with seaweed, it is mostly extracting nutrients out of the water.”

On scale, Jamie is clear, “I think, if we were to do it on a really large scale like salmon farming, like Scotland or elsewhere, then seaweed farming can extract too much nutrients, or if we do it like China, we could be blocking a whole bay

and that’s where we do not want to go to.”

“Also, with a smaller scale, we can understand and take care of our seaweed better. You can notice what’s going on, what is happening now versus if you have 10 kilometres of line, you’re just busy processing it as an industry rather than carefully cultivating it.”

Seaweed lovers are hardcore, they are all in for anything seaweed.

I think a lot of investment is being poured into making it as large as possible, mechanizing it, making it high tech both within and outside of Iceland. That’s how Europe is trying to compete with Asian stock. So there is focus on scale, but I haven’t seen someone actually doing the work of, you know, working on the farm,” Jamie adds wryly.

“Potentially, I think growing seaweed like our aquaculture will be more regulated than wild harvesting. There is a general perception that we have a lot of this abundance, but it’s not looking at diversity. And I see a lot of outside interest to come in because Iceland is so easy to let

people harvest wild. It’s so easy. It’s seen almost like mowing the lawn, but it’s more like deforestation. I know that a lot of pharmaceuticals and companies are interested in this type of seaweed. So there is pressure building up.”

COOKING WITH FINE FOODS

of seaweed in Iceland has steadily declined, much has sadly been lost in the last century – recipes for breads using red algae or dulse ground to a flour, in lieu of wheat have all but disappeared.

In the spirit of reaching a wider audience, Jamie has been experimenting in the kitchen with recipes and products that spotlight seaweed in a refreshing new avatar. Her “sjavarblanda” is a blend of various seaweed flakes, glistening emerald and moss shards that pack quite a umami punch. Stirred into cream cheese it turns a bland spread to something memorable. Her Icelandic furikake riffs on a traditional Japanese rice seasoning blend of dried fish, toasted sesame seeds, and aonori and nori seaweed, using local harðfiskur instead.

My personal favourite however, is her mussel stock powder, which came about in an effort to use mussels that were too small for the open market. Intensely savoury and balanced, it is a breeze to whip up a steaming cup of soup, or elevate mundane dishes simply by whisking in some mussel stock.

You can buy Fine Food products at several stores in Reykjavík or order them on the company website. They make for the perfect Icelandic souvenir.

FUTURE FACTORY

“This community has accepted me with open arms,” Jamie says. “We hope that we will find enough of a market so that we can actually have seaweed as a side stream income for seasonal fishermen or farmers in the area who are interested. The dream would be that Fine Foods will support enough livelihoods so that young people want to join and maybe it gives them an incentive to stay in the area.”

Like many founders, Jamie juggles several roles, from boat woman – “no really, it is Beggi who is the boatsman,” she chuckles – to sea swimmer (often swimming out to check on her lines), strategist, publicist and recipe developer. She is hoping for further grants and increased interest in seaweed to further her dreams of opening a seaweed processing factory.

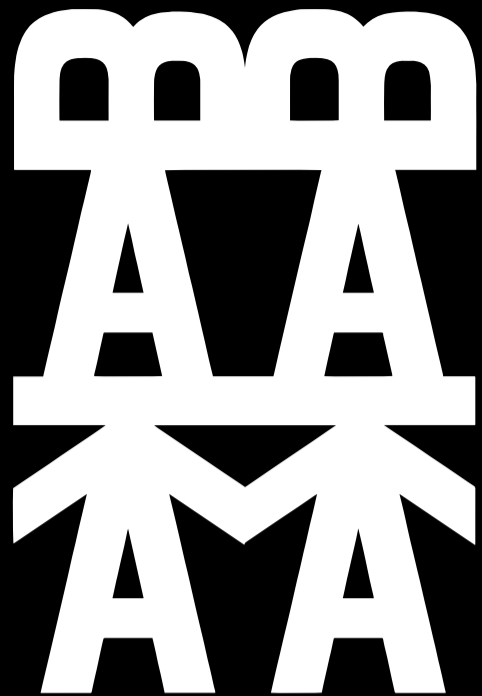
“Seaweed lovers are hardcore, they are all in for anything seaweed,” she smiles. For now, Jamie has set up a co-working processing space, further underscoring her deep commitment to coastal communities, in an effort to invite and nurture like-minded people. The space is open for anyone interested in learning more, or doing more in Hólmavík. ■

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Yule Be Full

Feast Like An Icelandic

Taking a look at Icelandic holiday staples

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

But enough of history talk. Let's see how an Icelandic household eats during Christmas.

DRINKING Jólaöl

Some time, somewhere, someone married the sweetness of Appelsín with the bitterness of Malt (the non-alcoholic, yeasty soft drink, not the booze). It was the 1950s, and the Egils brewery had just debuted their orange fizzy Appelsín. Just like the advert goes, it was love at first sight, resulting in the happiest matrimony since the German Radler. If you're a hardcore traditionalist, you'll mix the two by yourself. If you want to skip the hassle, you could just grab a pre-mixed can off the nearest Bónus shelf. Some heretics swear by improving the concoction by splashing in a dash of Coca-Cola. I, for one, am not a fan.

Alcohol (?)

Drinking alcohol at the Christmas dinner table is generally not a thing in Iceland. That being said, unless you're in the company of strict teetotalers, you'll likely get away with a glass of wine or two. Still, be prepared for judgy comments.

APPETISER & SIDES

Graflax or herring on rúgbrauð

Gravlox, lox, cured salmon, whatever you wanna call it. Put that shit on a piece of rye bread with a thin bed of delicious mustard dill sauce and you're this close to landing on ÚTL's Nice List. Start the night by preparing your cardiovascular system for heavy traffic. If you don't have salmon, you could always try herring. Cured in salt, sugar and various spices, it's no wonder our only war was fought over fish.

Laufabrauð

Possibly the exclusive holiday contender which counts as a home-grown staple. Intricately designed with leaf-like cut-outs, this piece of flatbread is a must for an authentic Christmas experience. It resembles a biscuit more than bread, being extremely thin, and becomes extremely brittle once fried. Traditionally baked in tallow, modern recipes usually substitute the fat with vegetable oils. Once ready for consumption, now begins the delicate act of smearing it with butter without breaking it. Good luck with that!

So, you wanna feast like an Icelander? I hope those pants you're wearing are loose fit because after this, you'll be so sad that you'll spring. A traditional Icelandic Christmas meal, eaten and celebrated on December 24th under the live broadcast of church bells tolling in the festivities, brings joy to the natives and terror to the uninitiated. Historically, Icelandic food tradition stems mostly from two things: the self-preservation instinct needed to survive the barren conditions of the country, and Danish influence. The former is exhibited in foods such as the salty, smoky hangikjöt, while the latter brought lavish courses to a destitute people.



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er, Holiday Edition

Ora tinned veggies

Nothing cranks up the Icelandic Christmas spirit better than the sight of an Ora tin. Its ubiquity at the Christmas dinner table is unrivalled. The holy trinity everyone's thinking of – no, not the one we're celebrating – are the tinned corn, peas and pickled red cabbage adding some colour to their dinner plate. If you want to double down, there's even a Christmas beer dedicated to the side dish, featuring the tin's iconic yellow and red colour scheme.

Caramelised potatoes

Instead of relying on the sugars naturally occurring in the vegetable itself – think caramelised onions – this side dish shamelessly incorporates heaps of sugar and butter to form a delicious, calorie-heavy coating. Both sweet and savoury, we all put our morals aside when celebrating JC's birthday.

MAIN DISH

Hangikjöt, hamborgarhryggur, ptarmigan

When it comes to the main dish, there are several options for proteins. The most widespread and

popular choices in Icelandic households are hangikjöt and hamborgarhryggur. Hangikjöt is a piece of lamb that's hung and smoked with sheep dung. Yes, you read that correctly. Although most commonly eaten around Christmas time, you can buy cold cuts of the meat year-round (we won't judge).

Hamborgarhryggur is derived from the Danes, which they in turn picked up from Germany. Don't let the name fool you – there are no hamburgers involved. Pink, glazed, tender pork, who can resist? For a more tropical vibe to the party, it's topped with pineapple slices. Hamborgarhryggur has become increasingly popular in recent years.

Finally, in the meat department, there's the poultry alternative. Historically regarded as poor people's food (now low-income individuals), is the rock ptarmigan. The sale and distribution of the bird is now illegal, so you'll have to source yours covertly.

VEGAN OPTIONS

If you abhor the thought of killing animals for your consumption, there are two options for you: a nut roast

or a variation of a vegan Wellington. Pair that with the cornucopia of sides, sauces and Jólaöl, and you may just convince yourself that you're not missing out.

DESSERT

Last, but by no means the least, is the dessert. An established holiday custom in Icelandic households is ris a la mande. It's not necessarily defined as a dessert, in the sense that it's sometimes served in the morning or eaten as an appetizer.

In most cases, the ris a la mande is more than just a meal – it's also a very serious game. During the porridge's preparation, a single almond is dropped into the slurry. Whoever finds it when served wins. It's almost always rigged, but sore losers can find solace in the heaping serving of cream, cinnamon sugar and cherry compote in their own bowl.

If that's not your fancy, you could always grab some ice cream. ■



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WORDS Catharine Fulton
IMAGES The Internet

Oof, what a month. November will see us prepping for, experiencing and recovering from Iceland Airwaves and bracing for the elections on Nov. 30. It's time to gear up and get ready. Here's what's in our shopping bag. ■

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- 2. *Advent Calendar* – Isn't the best part of getting an advent calendar opening a few days at once, a few days late? – 4.290 ISK, available from Sweet Aurora Reykjavík, Bergstaðastræti 14
- 6. *Ouroboros earrings* – Because they're beautiful and we love shiny things – 26.800 ISK, available from Orrifinn, Skólavörðustígur 43
- 7. *Gleðileg jól Mountain Soap from Urð* – The beautiful scents of the season are some of the best things about Christmas. Now you can smell just as good – 2.764 ISK, available from Shop.Grapevine.is



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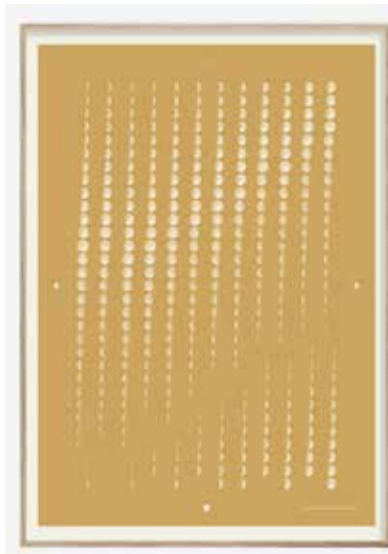
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8

3. *Jól Holiday Incense Sticks* – Imagine your home filled with birch tar, clementine, frankincense, pine, cinnamon, and vanilla crystals – 4.200 ISK, available from Fischer, Fischersund 3

4. *The Mark by Frída Ísberg* – What would happen if the nation had to take an empathy test? Sounds like a chill Christmas read to us – 4.769 ISK, available from Penninn Ey-mundsson, multiple locations

5. *Einar Guðmundsson's 2025 Moon Calendar* – So we can follow along with the phases, plus it's just pretty and it's nice to have pretty stuff on the walls – 10.990 ISK, available from Mikado, Kolagata, Hafnartorg

8. *Airmail Shirt from Helicopter* – This shirt just looks so effortlessly fabulous, plus we love everything that Helicopter does – 46.500 ISK, available from KIOSK, Grandagarður 35

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Islanders

A Life In The Trees

Meet Christmas tree farmer Guðmundur Sigurðsson

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Atli Freyr Steinsson

For some, Christmas isn't complete without snow, but for me there's no festive season without a Christmas tree. In my quest to find an authentic, Iceland-grown Christmas tree, I reached out to Guðmundur Sigurðsson, a farmer who cultivates a pine forest in Lundarreykjadalur. A humble and honest man, Guðmundur may have retired a few years ago, but instead of lounging around, he's zipping around the forest hills on his ATV. I went along for the ride.

wanted to go to a farmers' school and become a farmer. That's what I did! I am educated as an agricultural specialist. I taught agriculture for five years at Bændaskólinn (the farmer's school) here in Hvanneyri. Then, I worked for 20 years as an advisor for the ministry, working with farmers in the western part of the country, followed by 15 years with the forestry organisation. I've always had a deep interest in agriculture. It's been my life and joy!

My wife, Sigrún, is from here and she owns the land we're going to

country, mostly for farmers starting their own forests. I was doing this full-time but quit five years ago – I retired when I was 70.

I've lived in Hvanneyri since 1975 and have never considered moving away. I first came in 1968 for school, but I've had my legal address here since 1975. Life here has always been quiet, but the people are good. I have four kids, 11 grandkids and two great-grandkids. My kids are all here, close by. They all left to study elsewhere but eventually returned to this area.

trees specifically, but I grow pine trees. When they're planted too closely together, I have to trim them. I may start selecting certain trees to use as Christmas trees and trim the others. On average, it takes six to 10 years to grow a Christmas tree. I cut down the ones that aren't suitable or that don't grow well and use them for firewood or shred them into chips to make paths. I usually trim trees in the winter when there's frost.

Every year, I sell about 100 trees from my forest. Additionally, a buddy of mine and I visit other farms and take around 200 more trees. We often go to forests where the owners may not feel confident in handling the felling themselves. Roughly 100 trees will go to the Search and Rescue team, sold to them at a discount.

I've sometimes invited people to come to my forest to choose and cut the tree they like. Now, it's a bit more difficult, since we have a house on the property, which we rent out. But we did this last year – we even had some Santa Clauses that came to the forest and everyone got hot chocolate.

I've often ended up selling the best tree that I'd set aside for myself. I pick one and then someone would come along and say, "Oh, this is beautiful. I'm gonna take it." In the end, I always have to go find another tree for myself.

A LONE CARETAKER

You do need to take care of the trees – trimming the branches and such. I'll admit, I've been a bit lazy with it, but it needs to be done. There's a type of tree in my forest called *lerki* (larch in English), which sheds its needles in the winter. I've been trimming them a lot, especially the bottom branches.

You can tell early on if a tree is going to grow into a nice one. The most important thing is that it doesn't grow too fast; otherwise, there's too much space between the branches. Sometimes, I have a tree that's beautiful on top and at the bottom but very sparse in the middle. You wouldn't want a tree like that.

I don't go to the forest every day. It happens more in sessions – there might be some weeks that I'm just

Sometimes, I have a tree that's beautiful on top and at the bottom but very sparse in the middle. You wouldn't want a tree like that.

visit. Twenty years ago, I started growing a forest. At that time, I was working for the forestry organisation and was in charge of planting trees across the entire western part of the

THE TREE THAT GOT AWAY

My interest lies in forest growing. I don't have the land for Christmas

I have been interested in agriculture since I was a kid. I grew up in the north, in Þingeyjarsýsla, where my dad, a priest, had sheep and cows. I grew up farming and always

working in the forest, but then I might be doing something else for a while. In the summers, we mostly live in the house on the farm and spend time maintaining paths and doing other work. In winter, I go to the forest once in a while. I mostly work alone in the forest,

We would know of each other's stock and could help in times of need. For example, if someone called me asking for 20 trees and I didn't have enough, I could refer them to someone else. We haven't done anything yet, but that is the idea.

I want to leave the land in a better shape than it was when I took over.

chopping trees, but if there's a lot to do, like dragging them out, someone might help. I enjoy working alone. None of my kids are interested in taking over the farm – they all have other careers. But I'm getting older and need to start thinking about it. Something has to happen in the next five years.

TREE FARMERS UNITE

I don't know if people are buying fewer real trees these days, but it feels like artificial trees are becoming more popular. My sales aren't dropping because of that. I have a fixed market here, a contract with the Search and Rescue in Borgarnes, and a wholesaler in Reykjavík that buys from me and is selling to IKEA.

All the profit goes directly back into the land – the forest, the house there and any equipment we might need for work. I'm not doing this to live off it, I have my pension for that.

I want to leave the land in a better shape than it was when I took over.

My dream is for the forest farmers in this area – there are maybe 10 of us – to form some sort of working group. We could sell together and register how many trees each of us has. It's good to have some kind of cooperation. I've just started talking about this idea, but it would be good for us not to work in isolation, each in their own corner, but to connect and support one another.

The Christmas tree market here is still very new. Most of us have only been selling trees for about 10 years or even less. It isn't fully developed yet, but there's so much potential. According to some statistics, imported trees have been the majority up until now, but I feel that Icelandic trees make up almost half of the trees sold now. We could be producing and selling much, much more than we currently do. We just need more people.

HYDRATE AND DECORATE

The valleys here in Borgarfjörður are good areas for growing trees. Being inland, we don't get the harsh, salty weather that comes from the sea. The winters are cold, but we get decent temperatures in the summer. The conditions here are similar to those in Skorradalur, but there is much more farmland here. It's much more challenging to grow trees in areas like Snæfellsnes, which is much closer to the sea.

We have 70 hectares of land, about 30 of which are forest, with around 150,000 trees. Most of my trees are around two metres high, but I've grown trees as tall as three metres. Some companies bought the larger ones to put outside.

I cut the trees around a month before they're sold and store them outside. I've had unsold trees remain in good condition as late as January or even March. Once brought inside, the trees typically last about

a month, maybe a month and a half. I've often put my Christmas tree up in early December, and they've remained in great condition through Prettándinn [Epiphany].

It's a good idea to add water to the base of the Christmas tree stand, especially during the first week. After that, they usually manage well without much additional water. Some people recommend putting the tree in boiling hot water, but that applies more to the European spruce because they shed their needles more. I have myself just kept them in water and that has gone well.

AT 75, GUÐMUNDUR IS JUST GETTING STARTED

When I'm not in the forest, I wood-turn, making candleholders and small wooden Christmas trees. It's just a hobby, but I sell some of them at markets and give the rest to the kids.

I also have five horses that I ride in the summer. Every Sunday morning, I play Ringo – a game very similar to volleyball. There's a net, but instead of a ball, you throw rings across it. We always play as a group, mostly people aged 50 or maybe 60 plus. This morning, though, I didn't go because I also take care of the cemetery and I had to go dig a grave.

I try to be socially active – I am foreman of the parish council and also the treasurer of the Vintage Car Association of Borgarfjörður. There's always plenty to keep me busy.

I can't say I'm busier now than I was before, it's just different and you work slower. I've always worked quite a lot. I've always enjoyed working. ■

Contact the Search and Rescue team in Borgarnes to buy a Christmas tree from Guðmundur, or ask around for him if you're in Hvanneyri



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Musings **Charlie's Lukewarm Election Takes**

Who runs the Alþingi? (Girls)

WORDS Charlie Winters
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

Is anyone else still hungover from the absolute banger that was the election last week? I know I am. I am also so, so very confused.

Hello everyone, Charlie here, and just like much of Iceland, I sat down and got absolutely hammered drunk watching the election results trickle in. It was truly a thrilling race! Drama, tension, alcohol and, most importantly, drastic weather events nearly preventing the transport of ballots.

More than 80% of the country participated in voting and seemingly everyone is just as confused as I am about the results. So, let's sit down and go through it. Fair warning, I actually can't vote (on account of not being a citizen and being a flight risk), and I also don't speak Icelandic so I don't really know what the fuck is going on. Let's do this anyway!

How do elections in Iceland work? Everyone chooses which party they

want to vote for, but the votes in some parts of the country count more than others – like a smaller scale version of an American swing state. Then the party with the most votes by weight gets to try and form a government by teaming up with whoever they hate the least. If they can do that, then their leader gets to hang out with President Halla.

So, who actually got into parliament?

Everyone's favorite Panama paper cover boy, Síggi Sæti. Best known for eating raw beef in mossy fields and avoiding taxes, Síggi clinched eight seats for his Miðflokkurinn. Inga Sæland, my drunk racist aunt from Ólafsfjörður, got 10 MPs through the door for Flokkur fólksins. The only thing I know about Þorgerður and Viðreisn is that if you write Við Reisn it becomes an Icelandic election into an Icelandic erection (they got 11 seats).

Bjarni Ben – or, as he's better known in some circles, IceHot1 – came in second place to the relief of a large(ly delusional) portion of the country. The Pirates, The Socialists and The Left Greens all fell short of winning a single seat. Framsóknarflokkurinn held on to five seats, so good for them?

But the big winner of the weekend was Samfylkingin (The Social Dem-

ocratic Alliance). Led by Krístrún Mjöll Frostadóttir, a.k.a. K Frost (no, really), it became the country's largest party, claiming a whopping 15 seats in parliament – good, but still less than half of what's needed to form a government. She's gone ahead and formed a dream team with Flokkur fólksins and Við Reisn. And because those parties are led by women, people are dubbing them "The Valkyrie Coalition." People on this island haven't experienced a girl power like this since Nylon.

Back to K Frost, I don't really have anything interesting to say about her. She hasn't been involved in any major scandals. She worked at banks most of her life. I can't even make fun of what she wears cause it's really good, she's serving. Girl you're basic, come back when you're in the Panama papers or do a Klausturmálið.

The only mildly scandalous thing I was able to dig up is from her TikTok, where I sleuthed out that she does karaoke at Pablo Discobar, the bar known amongst youngsters as the boomer bar.

But seriously, K Frost, being prime minister seems tough and you will probably age 40 years in the weeks to come, but you'll get the hang of it. Also, you seem fun, we should get tea. ■



Now And Then

Is A Church More Than Just A Building?

The evolution of Reykjavík's most prominent structure

WORDS Jón Trausti Sigurðsson
IMAGES Joana Fontinha & Ari Káráson

kjavík, be it tourist or local, THE church is that colossus atop Skólavörðuholt: Hallgrímskirkja. No competition.

One of many buildings in Iceland designed by 20th-century State Architect of Iceland Guðjón Samúelsson, the church stands at 74.5 metres and covers 1,676 square metres, making it the largest church in the country. The construction of the church was first commissioned in 1937, with earth finally broken in 1945. But it wasn't until 1986 that the church was finally ready, just in time to celebrate Reykjavík's 200th birthday.

The church is named after 17th-century Icelandic poet and pastor Hallgrímur Pétursson (1614-1674), whose Passion Hymns (50 in total) are recited aloud in this church every Lenten season (read more about

Hallgrímur and his poetry on page 17). Most of these have subsequently been put to music by the likes of Megas, who is kind of like Iceland's Bob Dylan.

On an average day, the road leading up to the church and the plaza extending from the front of the church is crowded with tourists. If they are not there to take selfies with the church itself, they're taking selfies with the imposing statue out front. And that statue is of whom, you might ask? Well, Leifur Eiríksson, er Leif the Lucky, the man who allegedly found America, christened it Vinland (Land of Wine) and then never went there again, thus contributing to the "loss" of that continent for another half millennia until it was "found" again by another sailor; Christopher Columbus. Read more about Leifur on page 22, or just go get a selfie and be done with it. ■

If you drop that question to a devout Catholic or anybody serious about scripture, the answer is no. They will tell you that it's not the building itself that is the Church, but the flock or the people who make up the congregation. Then they'll cite scripture, say Romans 12:4-5, Corinthians 12:12-27 or Acts 20:28-29.

But to the average person in Rey-

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Horotropes

Ho-Ho-Horotropes

Happy Christmas to all and good luck with your fate

WORDS Charlie Winters
IMAGE The Reykjavik Grapevine Archives

A cozy living room, an ostentatious fireplace, a Christmas tree that would make a set decorator wet. This month we underpaid some elves, turned some reindeers into glue, a deforested even more of Iceland to bring you a Holiday Special. Welcome, to the Christmas Ho-Ho-Horotropes!



Aries
(March 21 – April 19)

Aries, if you notice that in the coming month you've developed a love for the season and a sense of empathy, please, get yourself checked. These symptoms tend to indicate a growth in the heart of at least three sizes. Contact your GP.



Virgo
(August 23 – September 22)

Ah fuck, I'm so sorry Virgo. You're going to spend most of Christmas having to learn what it is by watching a VeggieTales Christian Nativity Play movie adaptation. Maybe you shouldn't have enrolled the kid in that Christian private school.



Taurus
(April 20 – May 20)

As you rush to Keflavik, you'll find yourself at gate 12 completely snowed in. You'll have to make do with the other stranded travellers, and gather in front of the Duty Free and sing Christmas songs while the camera pans out.



Libra
(September 23 – October 22)
Enjoying your Hallmark Christmas experience Libra? By all means, abandon your spouse and fall in love with your childhood crush who's grown up to be a sexy lumberjack [editor's note: there are no trees in Iceland].



Capricorn
(December 22 – January 19)

Stoic, hardworking, unionized. This month, instead of Christmas cheer, you will channel the energy of overworked Elf #4 in Santa's workshop.



Gemini
(May 21 – June 20)

Someone (probably a Taurus) is going to forget you at home and go to Tenerife. It's up to you now Gemini, you'll have to construct increasingly elaborate booby traps to stop the Yule Lads from breaking and entering into your home.



Scorpio
(October 23 – November 21)
You drew the short straw this month, Scorpio. You're getting a proper Icelandic Christmas experience. We're not even sure there are Icelandic Christmas movies and we're not checking. Grylla scares us... in like a MILF kind of way.



Aquarius
(January 20 – February 18)

Aquarius, it's a pleasure to have you around and, though you might not yet feel it, this month an Angel™ is gonna drag you into an alternate timeline to prove to you that your existence is necessary for the functioning of international shipping lines.



Cancer
(June 21 – July 22)

Cancer, you're gonna leave all the Christmas shopping till the last possible second and you're gonna find that all the stores have already closed! But one small corner shop run by an elderly man who's just about to close will take pity on you and let you in. Be better Cancer, this is the 8th person he's had to do this for.



Sagittarius
(November 22 – December 21)
You've suffered all year. In every other Horotropes™ you have died horribly... or worse. But – it's a Christmas miracle – this month you get to live. In fact, we've asked Santa to put you on the Nice List. Happy Holidays Sagittarius. XOXO Kisses -Charlie and Catharine



Pisces
(February 19 – March 20)

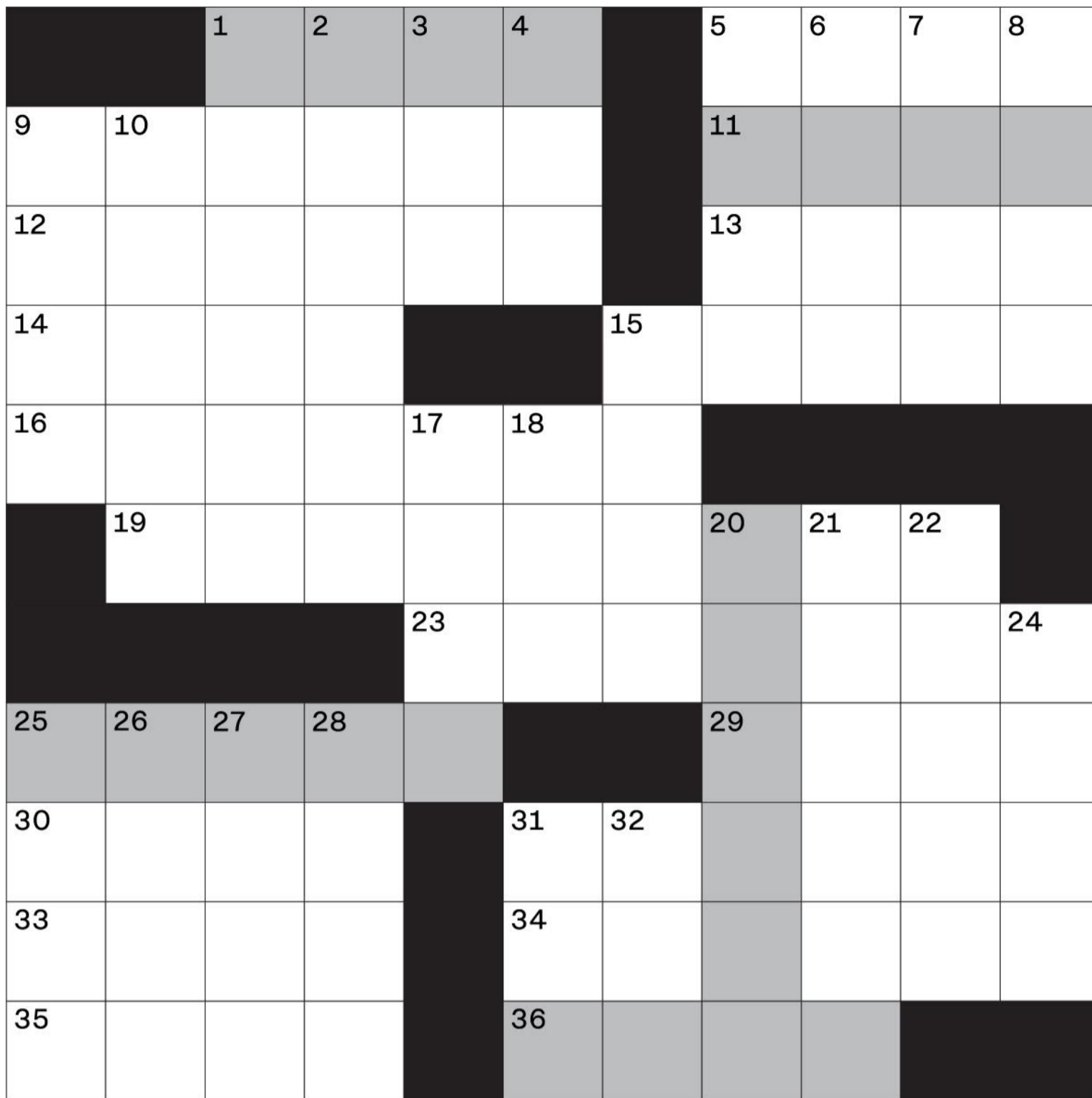
Watch your fuckin' back. The Christmas Spirits of Past, Present and Future are lookin' to not just deck the halls but to deck you in the face. Nah mate, learning about the joys of Christmas ain't gonna save ya. You're fucked.



Leo
(July 23 – August 22)

No Leo, you don't need new glasses, it is early 2000's cgi, it's meant to look as uncanny as possible. You've got a ticket for the Polar express, Leo. All aboard!

We spring to our sleigh, and give you a wink, and away we'll fly, to put this in ink. You'll hear us exclaim, as we munch down on skate, "Happy Christmas to all, and good luck with your fate." ■



Crossword

We Made A Crossword

Hey, have fun doing our crossword!

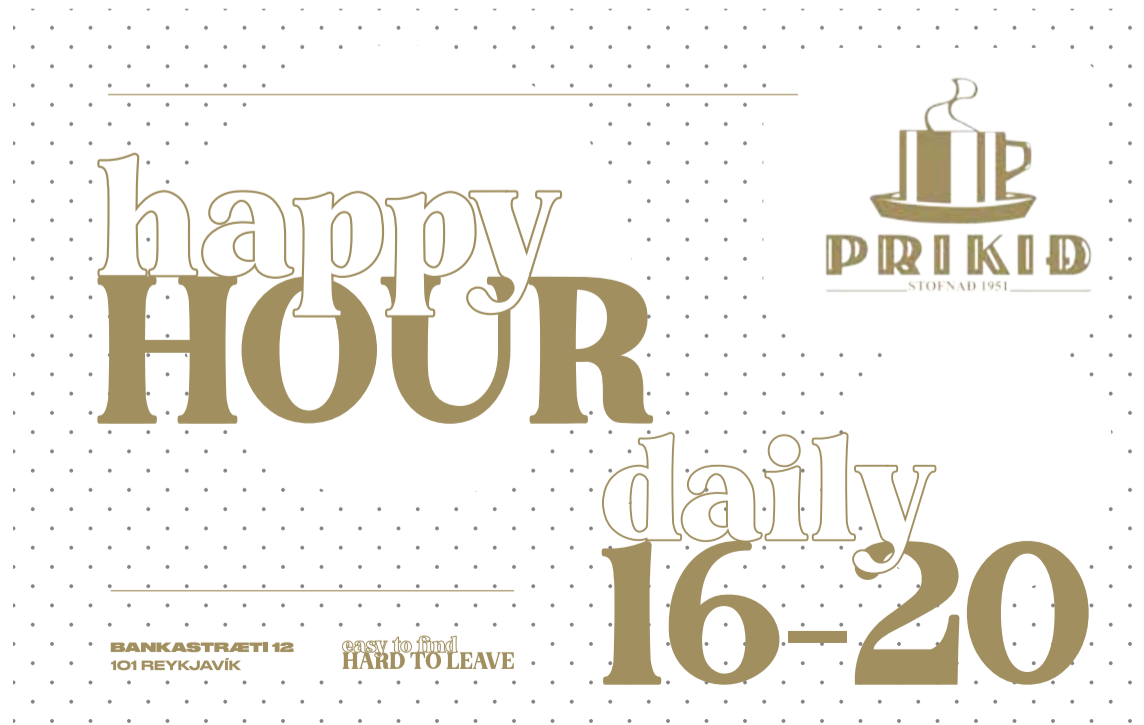
CROSS WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle
Arnar Freyr Stefánsson

ACROSS:
 1 Downtown hostel with a great view
 5 Capture the attention of
 9 2000s American Presidential family
 11 Concert venue revived during Airwaves
 12 Zealous volunteer's cry
 13 Gelatin substitute
 14 Give an ____ effort
 15 Spew like Sundhnúksgígar
 16 Highway warning
 19 Where you're doing this crossword
 23 A worker's worst nightmare
 25 Formerly, now Bar 22
 29 Schooling: Abbr.

30 Flying start?
 31 Screw driver?
 33 ____ of Reykjavík;
 34 How winter tires are sold
 35 -Ball, arcade game
 36 Left, at sea

DOWN:
 1 Writer Louis or actress Dorothy
 2 Mafia code of silence
 3 Kin, slangily
 4 J.A. Prufrock's poet
 5 Jón's lost an R!
 6 Italian meat sauce
 7 "Stat!"
 8 Young Simpson
 9 Neighbor of Yemen
 10 Make misty
 15 A deadly sin
 17 Unclaimed Property Professionals Org.
 18 Stephen of "V for Vendetta"
 20 Magic ____; spot for a cold one
 21 Subject of a fully exposed image?

22 Chopin work
 24 Get off ____ free
 25 Barbara, to friends
 26 To stink
 27 British bum
 28 You might have on November 30th
 31 Once around the track
 32 Film sensitivity ■





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Potent Quotables

There's something magical about every election day.

Is working the ballot every few years easy cash or hard work? Freelancer Sverrir Páll Sverrisson sees it as the perfect side gig on page 12

We tend to forget that even Martin Luther liked beer. You know, it's not like they were all pious and didn't do anything else.

17th-century poet Hallgrímur Pétursson has his first English-language translation to mark 350 years since his passing. Hallgrímur's poems give sage advice on page 17

I can't be bothered to let things out of my control annoy me. There's always a solution to anything.

Inhabitants of Grindavík are among the Grapevine's People of the Year. Check out the full list of the individuals shaping the year on pages 14-16

I find it wrong with our system that how much weight your vote has depends on in which constituency you live.

Election night veterans Bogi Ágústsson and Ólafur Þ. Harðarson weigh in on the recent Alþingi elections on page 21

It all started with a lie.

Electronica-dance duo Milkywhale are back with a splash, explaining its deceitful origins on pages 30-31

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