

The Reykjavík Grapevine



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Best before September 11

Return To MÚMín Valley

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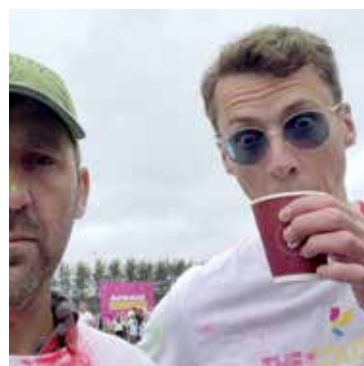
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On The Cover

múm, whose name stylisation of lowercase we defiled on the cover for a pun (sorry), have been a keystone of the Icelandic music and art scene since the late 1990s. After more than a decade of staying rather too silent for our taste, they're finally putting out a new album, *History of Silence*, out on Morr Music September 19. With band members living in Finland, Germany, Greece, and Iceland, both band practices and group photos are hard to organise. The band not only took time for a photo shoot and an interview, they broke down the creative process in a track-by-track discussion of *History of Silence*. See pages 4, 14, and 31.

COVER IMAGE: Hörður Sveinsson



Publisher's Note On The Duty Of A Neighbour

WORDS Jón Trausti Sigurðarson
Publisher

Three years ago this month I moved back to Iceland after seven years in Sweden. Moving to the Nordics and back is a very common Icelandic experience. For work. For studies. It's familiar, just bigger, better weather, and everything works. The pace of life is also more mellow. Things are organised.

Moving back is a disorienting experience. We have – nominally – all the same institutions as our fellow Nordics, but they just don't work as well. They have holes, but those holes are patched up by the community: your neighbours, your kid's grandparents, your cousins, your siblings, your friends. That is also the upside. Out of sheer necessity, you have to reconnect faster to your social circles.

Moving back and forth gives you perspective. But it also gives you the ability to feel empathy for the experience of others who move here from further away. It's hard if you are Icelandic; it is terrifying if you are not. If you have a new neighbour who just moved here, it is your duty to talk to them. Get to know them. Become their community. Become their family. ■

HOW ABOUT WE GET OUT OF HERE AND...
... IGNORE GENOCIDE.



Cartoon Ignoring Genocide

IMAGE Hugleikur Dagsson
dagsson.com

The Human Staff



AÐALSTEINN JÖRUNDSSON
Aðalsteinn was born in the 70s. The 70s in Iceland were bleak, and so is Aðalsteinn. Aside from having a noise music career as AMFJ, running a label, being a father and walking the dog, Aðalsteinn makes sure that this publication stays afloat financially.



BALDUR BJÖRNSSON
Baldur, formerly of Snatan Ultra (no, we won't explain that), is a visual artist, connoisseur of Japanese noise music, musician and music label manager whose towering presence has been a feature of Reykjavík's cultural landscape for the better part of three decades.



BART CAMERON
Bart returned to Iceland so that his children would learn the Icelandic language and culture. He edits the Grapevine in an effort to murder the English language. He is often successful.



IRYNA ZUBENKO
Like most other people working in this office, Iryna is a disappointment to her parents because of her career choices. Feeling obliged to turn every minute of her life into content for this publication, she uses her few spare moments to make fun of her boss.



ISH SVEINSSON HOULE
In an effort to stem the braindrain places on the periphery, such as Iceland, usually have, Ish moved here. Being responsible for this publication's knowledge of what is culturally relevant, they often find themselves enlightening older staffers about how dated their cultural references are.



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. He yearns to increase shareholder value.



JÓN TRAUSTI SIGURÐARSON
Jón grew up in every other small town in Iceland, moved pianos in Michigan in the late 90s and founded this publication in 2003. Has since acquired a few degrees, lived abroad, been a stay-at-home-parent, worked as a lawyer and run numerous ultras.



ÖRN ELVAR ARNARSON
Örn was born in the 90s but is somehow older than all of us. He has done every blue collar shit job you can think of, like painting people's roofs and driving forklifts. He's a published poet and has the friendliest disposition known to man.

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Editorial

On Talking To The Neighbours

Responding to the tap on the shoulder

WORDS Bart Cameron
 IMAGE Jón Trausti Sigurðarson

life, so much I forgot since I moved away from this island 20 years ago.

ing, and he took the time to remind me to talk to my neighbour.

Walking the streets of Reykjavík can be humbling. The street signs contain more syllables than seem possible – I pass Bræðraborgarstigur on my way into work, and it's not the most complicated street name I pass on my 10-minute walk.

This weekend, the locals kicked imposing up a notch. They all ran marathons. Just normal, everyday folk, with a sum total prep work to include a lateral groin stretch, went running past my house. For 42.2 kilometres. Because there's no parking downtown, they walked past my house again when they were done. Nobody looked as dour or exhausted as I do dealing with a walk to the bakery on a Sunday to get my kids their snúður, their weekend staple of plate-sized cinnamon roll covered in chocolate frosting.

There's so much I need to learn about just getting up and tackling

In this, my second issue after moving back, we feature travel writing about the local scramble north during the banker's holiday. We've covered six extraordinary young musicians, the band BKPM, and the rapper Alaska1867. An economist with a resume that includes extensive work at the United Nations has attempted to explain the unique situation Iceland's economy faces under the Trump tariffs. And finally, we detail as much as we can the work of local phenom múm.

It's about 20 years ago that Örvar, part of the triumvirate driving force of múm, tapped me on the shoulder as I crossed the street to my apartment and told me I need to talk to my neighbour – one of the most confounding, and rewarding, discussions of my life.

What you don't quite understand when you follow local musicians, or artists in general, is they sacrifice damn near everything for their art. When I met Örvar, he lived in my neighbour's geymsla, the term for a storage closet in our modest apartment building basement. Örvar, I should point out, is extremely tall for a human, and is a wiry, intense man, whereas I am tall for a jockey. Seeing a very tall man leave the same place we kept luggage, looking like he hadn't slept properly in weeks, felt not unlike something out of a horror movie. But he took the time to introduce himself, when I stopped flinch-

I would later learn that running a band like múm was emotionally and financially draining. That touring the world left little time for a connection at home. Örvar used his small amount of downtime to connect me with people who shared musical and artistic ambitions, and this included the poet, musician, and my until-then utterly ignored neighbour, Svavar Pétur. When Örvar couldn't play harmonica for the band Skakkamanage due to a gig in Paris, he volunteered my name, resulting in my chance to actually work with Svavar Pétur and his band as a collaborator. What I witnessed in the passion and joy and intelligence of that group has stayed with me. (The music itself has also stayed with me, and it was a pleasant surprise to hear the piano triplets I remembered from Berglind Häsler echoed in the current Of Monsters and Men single, also reviewed in this issue).

This is all to say our cover artists run deeper than you probably suspect. As do many of the artists and everyday people in the city. If you have the chance to make a connection, they can change your life. My belief is that our reporters in this issue have given an introduction to the local culture – they've been the metaphorical man who crawled out from the geymsla to tap you on the shoulder. I hope you connect to someone here, or someone on this visit. At the very least, I hope you discover that these connections are possible. ■



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Word Of The Issue

Breathing Arrows

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

WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle
IMAGE Art Bicnick

It'll be with you in just a minute! Hey, can you wait a moment? Oooone second, I'm on my way!

Are you chronically late? Work in customer service? Or sometimes just need a sec?

Lucky for you, this Word Of The Issue focuses on some of the many ways Icelandic has for saying "one moment." Why do they need so many ways of saying this? Maybe it's that *þetta reddast* mentality, maybe it's the constant need to adapt plans due to weather, maybe Icelanders are biologically disposed to running behind schedule – who knows?

We'll start with the most common: *augnablik*. I first learned *augnablik* as a child. I'm ashamed to admit, it was after reading it on the Icelandair

website. With the cutesy incorporation of the Icelandic language into their website, Icelandair has it set up so that whenever their page is loading or buffering, it reads "*Augnablik*: This means 'one moment' in Icelandic, literally 'blink of an eye.'" *Augnablik* is a compound word of *auga* and *blik*, which mean eye and blink, hence "blink of an eye." Icelanders have quickened this word to save time for doing whatever they needed just one more second to do.

Then there's *andartak*. *Að anda* means "to breathe," and *tak* comes from *að taka*, or "to take." Continuing the theme of bodily functions, this next "one moment" phrase means basically "in the time it takes to take one breath."

But then we take a hard left from the body for our next word, *örskotsstund*. *Örskotsstund* is a compound of *ör* + *skots* + *stund*, which means arrow + shot + moment. Essentially, it will be as quick as the firing of an arrow.

So there you have it: three ways to say one moment. Next time you're running late to work, feel free to let your boss know you'll be there in the time it takes to shoot an arrow. ■



Iceland Roundup

Rat Sleepover, ATM Heists & Rallycross Accident

A selection of stories making the headlines this fortnight

WORDS The Reykjavik Grapevine
IMAGE Adobe Stock

WAKING UP WITH A RAT

Sara Bjarney Ólafsdóttir and her partner got a very unwelcome guest in their home early August 18 when a huge rat jumped into their bed. "My partner just woke me in the night, and told me to keep calm, but then the rat was on his leg. He told me to go out with the kids right away, then he went and finished the matter. It's outside in a bag now," Sara told Visir.is.

"He took one of my cutting boards, which will be going in the rubbish along with the rat." Sara lives in a ground-floor apartment in the Laugardalur neighbourhood of Reykjavik. "It was very disgusting. I would have wanted to just set fire to the apartment and move out. That would have been my first reaction. I think it will just be nets on the windows and never airing out again."

"But now we just continue, it is only to keep watch. Hopefully this is a one-off, and, as the pest controller from the city said, it is more likely that one wins the lottery than that one gets a rat into the bed," she continued.

Severe weather may have been part of the cause for the rat. Reykjavik saw heavy rain and thunderstorms on August 15, and mbl.is reported that the basement of Kjarvalsstaðir had flooded. The artworks themselves escaped largely undamaged, although some frames and surroundings sustained minor damage.

RALLYCROSS ACCIDENT IN HAFNARFJÖRÐUR

Two women were run over by a car during a rallycross competition in Hafnarfjörður on August 23. The women, aged 20 and 21, are now recovering from broken bones and sprains. Both have previously worked at the track, and one is a former competitor. The Capital Area Police are investigating the circumstances of the accident.

"They escaped incredibly well from this accident. One was discharged last night and the other remains under observation," reads a statement from Linda Daggar Jóhannsdóttir and Ari Halldór Hjaltason, chairman and vice-chairman of the Hafnarfjörður Motorsport Club (AÍH).

Between three and five competitions are held on the track each year. The statement notes that no staff injuries have ever occurred before. Competition cars do sometimes roll over in certain spots on the track, "but nothing like this." The statement went on to say, "This incident will be thoroughly examined, and every effort made to prevent such or similar accidents involving staff from ever happening again." ■

The Reykjavik Grapevine also does a weekly news podcast called Iceland Roundup. Check it out here:



ATM HEIST

An ATM was stolen in its entirety in Mosfellsbær, just outside of Reykjavik, in the early hours of August 19. The ATM was taken from an Íslandsbanki branch with the help of an excavator. According to visir.is, the ATM was found near Reykjavik on August 26, 22 million ISK in cash still in it. Two people, a man in his 40s – who's also a suspect in the theft of bags of cash from a car in March 2024 – and a woman in her 30s, were held in custody pending the investigation, with the woman released a week after the heist. On August 27, the man in question confessed to the heist. This was not the first attempt to steal an ATM in the capital area this year. In April, someone yet to be identified tried blowing up an ATM in Hafnarfjörður, unsuccessfully. In December last year, another attempt was made to steal the same ATM by pulling it from location with a chain attached to a truck. This also failed. As it turns out, ATM heists inspired by failed ATM heists from movies and TV shows, also fail. Who would have thought?

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In Focus **Surge Of Applicants
Cause Enrolment Diffi-
culties At Universities**

A 40 percent increase in international applications strains the system

WORDS Jón Trausti Sigurðarson
IMAGE Julia Staples

during the same period this year the number was 744 – which equals about a 40 percent increase," Útlendingastofnun told us. While they did not state on the record that this surge caused the delay, it is reasonable to assume it is slowing down the processing of some applica-

institution's role to review each case on an individual basis. Processing time for applications varies and depends primarily on how complete the submitted documents are. In many cases, additional documents must be requested or the documents reviewed in more detail, which extends the processing time."

No changes have been made to the application process for students or to the processing of residence permits on the basis of studies.

This year, applications for student visas in Iceland were up by 40 percent from 2024, according to the Directorate of Immigration (Útlendingastofnun). The Grapevine has been contacted by phone and email regarding difficulties for international students that seemed greater than in past years. The repercussions of this unusual surge may be that some prospective students will not be able to enrol in classes for the autumn semester – an understandably panic-inducing result so close to the start of the year.

According to the Directorate of Immigration, this is not due to any policy changes to the application process for foreign students. A spokesperson for Útlendingastofnun told the Grapevine: "No changes have been made to the application process for students or to the processing of residence permits on the basis of studies."

However, applications for a residence permit on the basis of studies have increased significantly since last year. "Between March 1 and August 1, 2024, 535 applications for a first residence permit for the autumn semester were received, while

Furthermore, according to the Útlendingastofnun website, 283 applications were submitted after June 1 this year, even though June 1 is stated as the application deadlines.

COMPLICATIONS WITH UNIVERSITY ACCEPTANCE

Adding to the difficulties of the surge of applicants, acceptance from the University of Iceland appears to have been delayed. For example, the deadline for applying to the University of Iceland for students outside of the EU/EEA is April 1 for the autumn semester, according to the University's website. However, processing those applications can take up to six weeks according to the same source, with some of this year's applicants claiming that they were not notified of their acceptance until the last week of May, making it difficult and/or impossible for them to meet the Directorate of Immigration's June 1 deadline.

Útlendingastofnun also pointed out: "Applicants for residence permits must submit a variety of documents with their application, and it is the

The combination of delayed acceptance and Útlendingastofnun's individualised review may cause issues with these students' enrolments, based on what courses or programmes they are planning to attend. Many courses and programmes have already started by August 18. In addition, those students who also need a visa to travel to Iceland cannot apply for one until their residence permit has been processed. The visa application process itself takes time, which may cause further delays for some students.

There is no clear-cut solution or villain. Guesses as to the basis of the surge in applicants was not provided on the record, and it would be irresponsible to guess. We know that there has been no surge in funding at the University of Iceland or Útlendingastofnun. So whether this 40 percent increase in applications from students outside of the EU/EEA will result in changes both to application processing at Icelandic universities and/or work processes at the Directorate of Immigration remains to be seen. ■



Opinion Reykjavík Was Burning, Trump Added Gas

Iceland's evolving cost of living crisis, now with US tariffs

WORDS Adam Roy Gordon
IMAGES Gage Skidmore & Halldór Baldursson

to where it all began. Back to a man whose decisions still echo through every Icelandic household's monthly budget.

The root of our current challenges If you had to identify a single person who set the conditions for Iceland's economic predicament, you'd start with Davíð Oddsson. Not because he created every problem Iceland faces today, but because his fingerprints are all over the structural vulnerabilities that turned global pressures into domestic crises.

As Adam Grant notes in *Think Again*, when an economist was asked to name the three people most responsible for Iceland's 2008 bankruptcy, she nominated Davíð Oddsson for all three spots. This wasn't just about Iceland's 2008 collapse. Time magazine included Oddsson among its "25 People to Blame for the Financial Crisis," recognising that Iceland's implosion epitomised the wider global meltdown.

upon which Iceland's current cost-of-living crisis rests. Iceland's own Special Investigation Commission proved this connection explicitly. The SIC's damning 2010 report diagnosed the 2008 crash and warned that the structural vulnerabilities Oddsson created would continue causing problems if left unchanged. Those warnings went unheeded.

Oddsson's decisions to privatise the banks, float the króna, and position Iceland as an experiment in free-market economics created the conditions that still determine how much Icelanders pay for everything. In 2004, his decision to loosen the state housing fund's mortgage rules, over explicit Central Bank warnings, turbocharged housing prices and locked families into inflation-indexed debt that keeps rising with every price spike.

The króna that Oddsson floated, beginning in 2001, remains vulnerable to sharp swings of global sentiment,

What we mean when we say something is Dickensian isn't just poverty or hardship. We mean a system that grinds people down without noticing them. A structure that runs on rules designed by someone else, somewhere else. An economy where ordinary people navigate pressures that feel simultaneously unfair and inevitable. Icelanders aren't facing Victorian factory floors, but they are facing rising costs, shrinking choices, and a growing sense that the squeeze is tightening from all directions.

Now, another layer of pressure has landed, and it comes with a return address. On April 5, 2025, the Trump administration introduced a sweeping 10 percent baseline tariff on all imported goods, including goods from Iceland. Then, on August 1, 2025, Icelandic products specifically were raised to 15 percent. For a small, export-dependent island whose cost of living ranks among the highest in Europe, often second only to Switzerland, this is yet another burden on an already overtaxed system.

But what Iceland is experiencing isn't quite Dickensian. It's more Oddssonian*. To understand where Iceland finds itself today, caught between currency volatility, shocking housing costs, and now international trade wars, we need to go back


The Oddsson effect isn't ancient history. It's the structural foundation upon which Iceland's current cost-of-living crisis rests.

To be fair, Oddsson's policies didn't emerge in a vacuum. They were responses to the hyperinflation chaos of the 1970s and 80s, when Iceland endured price rises above 70 percent and an unworkable monetary system. Many older Icelanders credit his reforms after 1993 with stabilising the economy, and that legacy is real. The problem is that the same policies that solved yesterday's instability also contributed to today's challenges.

The Oddsson effect isn't ancient history. It's the structural foundation


making imports expensive when the economy struggles. The financial system he designed around privatised banks still channels international volatility directly into domestic prices. The small, open economy he championed remains vulnerable to external shocks like sudden tariffs from trading partners.

These aren't abstract vulnerabilities. They show up every month in household budgets across Iceland, determining how much ordinary people pay for rent, groceries, and the basic costs of living. To understand how structural economic



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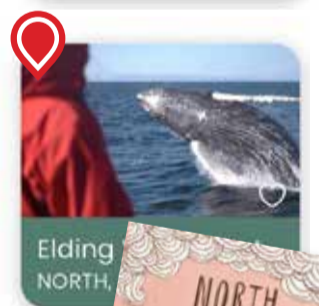
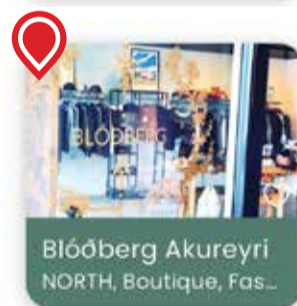
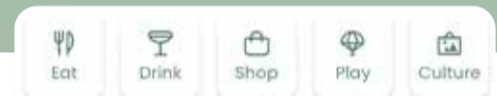


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DECLINING PURCHASING POWER

Meet Ólafur Tvistor. He's not a real person, but he represents thousands of real Icelanders caught in the cost-of-living squeeze.

Ólafur teaches at a primary school in Reykjavik, earns what should be a respectable middle-class salary, and should theoretically be comfortable. Instead, he's trapped in what economists politely call "purchasing power erosion" and what everyone else calls getting poorer while your paycheck stays the same.

His rent in Reykjavik consumes 60 percent of his after-tax income, double what housing experts consider sustainable. When he looks at buying a flat, he discovers prices have roughly doubled since he started saving, and his income has increased much less than that. He's making daily sacrifices to save as much as he possibly can, but at this rate he might be able to afford the deposit for a one-bedroom flat sometime around 2037. Of course, by then, the same flat will likely cost multiples more. He wonders if he might be able to afford a modest flat in time for his retirement.

His grocery bill keeps climbing. Not dramatically in any single month, but steadily, relentlessly. The weak króna makes imports expensive, which is problematic when you live on an

island that imports most of its food. And there's another mechanism that makes Iceland's cost increases particularly systematic.

Iceland is unusual among developed economies in how it uses its Consumer Price Index. While most countries treat CPI as a measurement tool, Iceland builds it directly into the economy's pricing structure. Wages, rents, service contracts, and government fees are indexed to monthly CPI releases from Statistics Iceland. This practice stems from the high-inflation 1970s and 80s, when indexation was seen as protection against rapid price erosion.

The result is a mechanical transmission system that turns temporary price increases into permanent ones. When housing costs or import prices rise, they push up the CPI. The higher CPI then triggers automatic adjustments across the economy: rental contracts, union wage agreements, utility tariffs, insurance premiums, business service contracts, membership fees, and countless other agreements that include indexation clauses. These adjustments feed back into the next month's CPI calculation, creating a self-reinforcing cycle that makes inflation stickier and harder to control than in countries where contracts aren't indexed to price movements.

In advanced economies today, Iceland's comprehensive CPI indexation is fairly unique. The Central Bank of Iceland regularly highlights this feedback loop as a structural challenge in controlling inflation.

For Ólafur, this means that even when external shocks like currency weakness or import disruptions fade, their effects linger in his monthly expenses through the indexation mechanism. Even locally produced items carry the cost of imported inputs: from ingredients, to fuel, to packaging.

The irony isn't lost on poor Ólafur. Iceland generates among the cheapest electricity in the world from renewable sources, yet somehow maintains some of the highest consumer prices in Europe. Energy-intensive industries get the cheap power. Everyone else gets the bill for maintaining an economy built around these exports.

Ólafur's situation was already precarious before the latest external shock arrived. Now Trump's tariffs are about to demonstrate exactly why Iceland's structural vulnerabilities matter, and how quickly external pressures become domestic problems.

TRUMP'S TARIFFS

The 15 percent US levy won't immediately show up in Ólafur's shopping basket, but it illustrates perfectly how Iceland's economic structure amplifies distant problems. These tariffs hit Icelandic exports to America, not American imports to Iceland. But in an economy as interconnected as Iceland's, external pressures have a predictable way of becoming internal problems.

For Ólafur personally, Trump's

broader tariff policies in general may actually hurt more than the specific duties on Iceland. The US administration's sweeping import tariffs will raise prices on American goods that Iceland relies on heavily, from food products to machinery. Those higher costs get passed directly to Icelandic consumers.

The mechanism is straightforward. When the US puts tariffs on imports, American companies pay more for foreign goods and raise their prices accordingly. Since roughly 10 percent of all imports to Iceland are from America, those price increases flow directly through to Icelandic shops and businesses. There's no buffer.

Finance Minister Daði Már Kristófersson acknowledges the challenge, "Of course, we are a small and open economy... tariffs on Icelandic products are never good news."

Iceland's two dominant export industries to the US — seafood and aluminium — together account for roughly 90 percent of exports to America. The seafood industry, which employs thousands in coastal communities, and aluminium production, which consumes the majority of Iceland's renewable energy, both suddenly face higher barriers in what represents about 11.5 percent of Iceland's total export market. While the US isn't Iceland's largest trading partner — the EU takes about 62.5 percent of exports — American trade provides crucial dollar earnings that help stabilise the króna.

If these exports struggle, fewer dollars flow into Iceland. Fewer dollars mean a weaker króna. A weaker króna means more expensive imports. More expensive imports mean higher prices for everything Ólafur buys.

This is how distant trade policies become domestic cost-of-living pressures. It's not immediate, but it's likely inevitable. Economists note that even if tariffs are limited to export sectors, they can weaken the króna and feed through into inflation. For Ólafur, this means the dream of finally being able to afford that avocado toast everyone talks about moves even further out of reach.

The tariff pressure lands on an economy already stretched thin. To understand just how thin, look at where the squeeze hits hardest. Housing is the single expense that defines whether Iceland remains liveable for ordinary families.

HOUSING CRISIS AT THE CENTRE

If there's one issue that crystallises Iceland's cost-of-living crisis, it's housing. Here you can see all of Iceland's structural vulnerabilities working together: high interest rates needed to stabilise the currency, expensive imported construction materials, planning restrictions that limit supply, and increasingly corporate investment competing with locals for finite stock. Investment-

Continues on page 43

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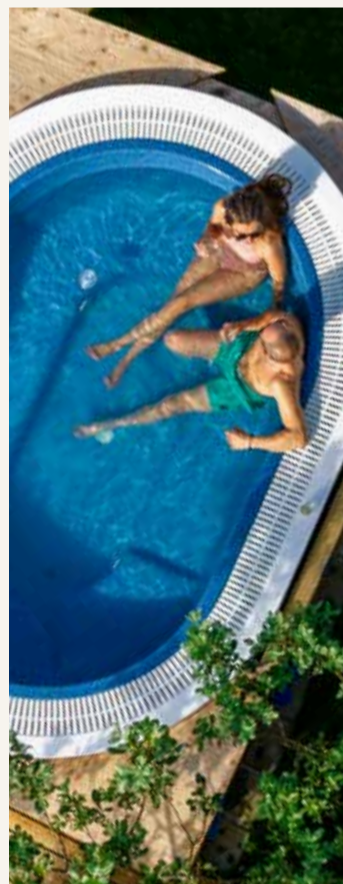
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Feature

Across Borders And Deca

Era-defining experimental group múm release their first LP in 12 years

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGES Hörður Sveinsson

It's been 25 years since múm released their debut album *Yesterday was dramatic, today is ok*. Ushering in a new era of independent electronic music, múm quickly took the world by quiet storm. Now, 12 years since their last album release, the band spills the beans about their forthcoming LP *History of Silence*, out September 19.

Coming out of Iceland's burgeoning music scene in the late 90s, which favoured experimentalism and overt emotional expression, múm's mixture of orthodox electronica and conventional instruments came to define the subsequent era. As the international music press started to pay attention to them, múm was labelled in conjunction with the increased interest in Iceland at the time. Namely, that its music was somehow synonymous with the physical and natural properties of the country – much akin to Sigur Rós's press coverage.

In Iceland, múm was harshly branded by the domestic press as the vanguard of the nascent 'cute generation' (krúttkynslóðin, also translated as the Mild Bunch by author Hallgrímur Helgason).

Perhaps harshly critical – some múm members were still just teenagers at the time – the band's music has always been imbued by a degree of naïveté. Portraying innocence in its purest forms, in terms of music making múm have more or less just done whatever they felt like. Whether for practical or romantic purposes, it has imprinted a sense of wonder and fun onto the soft-spoken group.

Although it's difficult to say if the tabloid-style coverage in the '00s had any meaningful effects on the group's popularity in Iceland, it's a fact that múm enjoys much greater fame outside it.

Cutesy or not, múm has never particularly cared for definitions.

"We are not like a traditional band," Örvar Þóreyjar Smárason emphasises in the basement of 12 Tónar, as the conversation drifts to the cover photography session. "There's been an incredible amount of people that's gone through múm," he continues.

Much like their music, múm's organisational facet has always been up for discussion and interpretation, making it a tricky subject for fans and music pundits to box in.

The history of the band's lineup has consistently been characterised by transience, as seemingly every important Icelandic musician active in the '00s was a member in some

shape or form.

Today, the group consists of founders Örvar Þóreyjar Smárason and Gunnar Tynes; Finnish drummer Samuli Kosminen; Gyða Valtýsdóttir; Róberta Andersen; and Sigurlaug "Silla" Gísladóttir. The three present for the interview – Örvar, Silla, and Róberta (the sextet is seldom in the same place at the same time) – had suggested compiling every past and present member of múm for a group portrait – a logistical nightmare for anyone responsible for organising it.

To this day, múm fiercely denies defining themselves, as they have always done. "The only times we need to mention it is during interviews," Örvar says, only half-jokingly. "There has never been a moment where we discuss how we define ourselves. But there is an interesting point," his face lights up, seemingly trying to find the question's silver lining, "I think this is the first time that we release two consecutive albums with an unchanged lineup, more or less."

The statement kicks up doubts among the three, who quietly count the members until everyone agrees.

"I think it's always important to never stick to a prescribed arrangement," Örvar argues for the band's unorthodox style. "To never cling onto things. Rather allow those who wanted to be a part each time and make that work. Defining ourselves is pointless. I think it's a bit of an uppity thing to do. And then we call ourselves a band when we need to," he smiles.

ROMANTIC PRAGMATISTS

As with every person spending time with the experimental outfit, múm's

members all share an immense sense of prolificness. Much like the common trope about Icelandic musicians in general, all of them divide their time between multiple projects: Örvar has worked intensely with electronica superstars FM Belfast; Silla keeps her solo project Mr. Silla alive and well; and Róberta is one third of the progressive jazz group Hist og – to name a few examples.

"[*History of Silence*] has been a slow-cooker. We've been working on it for a few years," Silla mentions. "Right, two and a half years," Örvar adds. "It's an album that was supposed to be finished quickly. We planned on recording the entirety of it in two weeks," he continues. "But you can never decide how the project pans out," Sigurlaug replies, hinting at the animated independence of creative projects.

There has never been a moment where we discuss how we define ourselves.

This arrangement is nothing but beneficial, the three agree. "It allows you to maintain separate creative outlets," Silla explains. "I think it's necessary when you have this group of super creative people. No one's just an instrumentalist. No one is doing this as a hobby or because it's fun, but because we feel it's a creative calling," Örvar expresses.

Despite it being 12 years since their last LP release (múm released an EP in 2018 following their *Menschen Am Sonntag* silent film score) múm members have never conceived of embarking on a hiatus. However strange a statement that sounds to the local Icelander – múm's Icelandic performances are few and far between – the band has never allowed a year to go by without them playing somewhere.

As the band continued throughout the 2010s and the COVID pandemic, there reached a point where they felt the creative itch to release a new album.

"It was just natural," Örvar starts and then corrects himself. "No, it wasn't natural. We just suddenly wanted to create a record again. We felt a thirst," he states.

With the principal recordings taking place over two weeks in Sudestudio in Southern Italy, the group found precious time to work with each other. "The plan was to just leave. Go somewhere and be away from everyone else. That's always been the main thing. Getting away to have time and space," Örvar admits.

"It was great," Silla comments. "It had a pool. The Italians laughed at us because it was too cold to actually be swimming. And then we played a few shows in Italy. It was lovely," she shares.

"It was just in the middle of nowhere. Nothing but vineyards everywhere around. No towns. Nothing," Örvar describes.

As Örvar demonstrates, running off



les, múm Carries On

to a far-flung place to make music has been an integral part of múm's recording process. Interestingly, this has more pragmatic explanations than romantic ones.

"Of course, what you want it to be is magic and some such," Örvar starts. "But first and foremost, it's about getting to spend time with each other. Being together in the same place and not having to think about anything else. And just give yourself time to be together and... not even focus, but just live into it."

"Just going for it. Executing it," Silla adds.

"That's something we started doing early on. During the second album, we started feeling like we didn't have the time to create a record – that we didn't have the time or space. Still, we were barely into our 20s," Örvar remarks critically. "We can't do it. It's impossible. We're too busy. That's when we started making trips to these lighthouses," he refers to múm's sophomore album, recorded in the Galtarviti lighthouse in the Westfjords.

"It had nothing to do with any symbolism surrounding lighthouses, or Icelandic nature or anything. It was just pragmatic," he says blankly.

"But incredibly romantic," Silla smiles.

SCULPTING THE ALBUM

For anyone involved in a relationship spanning decades, making things work and finding a spark can be an integral part of keeping everything afloat. Like in every undertaking, múm experienced a few hurdles along the way.

"Firstly, for everyone embarking on a creative journey, things never turn out as you imagine them at the start. That's one of the most important things to deal with," Örvar says of the challenges posed to the group.

amounts of components which they then painstakingly edit. "That's probably the most amount of work," Örvar confesses. "It's like Prince removing the bass from 'When Doves Cry,'" jokes Silla.

No one is doing this as a hobby or because it's fun, but because we feel it's a creative calling.

"Generally speaking, you need to put yourself in the position to finish things. It's not as fun, not as easy, to finish a single thing than it is to start it. So of course you need to push yourself. But you can make it work for you," he continues.

"There was a point in time when we thought the album would never be over. 'This can't be finished. It's too much,'" he mimics in exasperation. "The closer you get to the end, the clearer you see what's left. That point is the most difficult."

"As much as you think you have control over what you're doing, most of the time you're just tending to what the subject wants to become," Silla chimes in, explaining the independence creative projects tend to assume. "That takes a varying amount of time, and you need to be humble about it. Some things take longer than others," she continues. "It's just a part of the process. You need to process all of this," Silla highlights.

Similar to a sculptor chiselling away at a piece, slowly removing material than adding, múm works by loading their sonic canvas with immense

However, as strange as it seems, despite over two years of work, *History of Silence's* linchpin came at the last minute.

"Most of what went behind this album happened during the last weekend before we handed it off. There were a bunch of things that we'd thought about – and even conflicts which hadn't been resolved until the last two days, especially the final day. We just recorded a bunch of vocal tracks," Örvar describes.

With Silla in Athens, Gyða in Reykjavík, and Örvar and Gunni mixing the album in Berlin, the two front-women coordinated harmonies and lyrics online in a matter of moments.

"It was a bit exciting," Sigurlaug confesses. "It was so weird because of the distance."

"This album needed to arrive over this period of time, and it had to be put on ice for some periods. And then it needed the attention of fresh ears, with new perspectives to be identified. And then it clicks. That's when you understand it. But until then, you just have to be patient. You

can't hurry it," Sigurlaug says calmly.

Carefully constructed, deconstructed, and recorded over multiple borders, *History of Silence* feels like an incredibly coherent album – something which came as a surprise to múm due to the members' separation.

"It sounds like there's a coherent artistic vision behind it," Örvar says in disbelief. "It *is* coherent," Róberta validates. "That's what's so weird!" Örvar replies.

Building on similar motifs as their previous work – those of innocence and playfulness – the forthcoming LP simultaneously sounds like a brand new approach to the band's characteristic indietronica.

"It has its own voice which differs from the other albums," Silla adds. "And none of us are responsible for that. It just came on its own," Örvar continues.

Known for their quiet, almost wispy songwriting, múm play with opposing extremes of muted instrumentation and dynamic, sharp turns of percussion.

There was a point in time when we thought the album would never be over.

"Miss You Dance" opens the album with a brooding electronic drum beat, slowly giving way to colours of piano, strings and synthesizers which, one by one, seem to peek out of the soundscape. Two minutes in, Örvar's distinctive voice cuts

through, quickly joined by the chorus of Silla and Gyða.

At times, it seems as if múm is consciously playing around with their celebrated brand of soft-spokenness. Reflected in the title, some songs feature its lead singer almost straining to maintain a delicate balance between whispering and carrying the melody, as Gyða demonstrates on "Kill the Light".

"Avignon" starts with a muted piano melody that could have been nicked from an Aldous Harding composition. It plays and pauses, continuously hiding and showing itself through the song.

Compared to their previous work, *History of Silence* feels like a much more well-rounded, structured piece of compositions. It includes múm's signature openness and interplay between members, but songs' integrity is never sacrificed for that liberty. As Örvar explains, some parts were created on the fly.

"All of the surface layer, ideas or lyrics or stuff, that just comes as we go," he says. "The only notion we wanted for the album was to

make a band album. That was a real concept. We tried setting up in the studio and wanted to play all of us at the same time, and it almost never happened," he smiles.

"On this record, as opposed to other albums, there is more distinctive



songwriting going on,” Örvar says of the comparison. “There are fewer songs which just float along. This is probably the first time we do it that way, sharpied on a piece of paper,” he says.

“But it comes across like a band album,” Róberta replies. “Even though it’s not recorded like that.” She reminisces about one of the band’s rehearsals. “Sometimes we cut out the playback, sometimes not. But it worked perfectly in a room together. Something magical happened, even though there wasn’t this big soundscape going on. So I think it stands as [a band album], even though the methodology was different.”

“When you remove any kind of backing tracks, it becomes much more entertaining to perform because the listening within the band becomes better,” Silla explains. “The ears open up and the brain receives it differently,” she finishes.

“That’s an important point,” Róberta adds. “That’s what keeps it alive and keeps people on their toes, resulting in this living phenomenon.”

Despite the condensed nature of the album — where silence is admired — *History of Silence* packs maximalist string arrangements, recorded by the Akureyri-based SinfoNord. “It became something else

entirely,” Silla says.

As the three describe it, the symphonic session unexpectedly fell into múm’s hands, meaning that quick and decisive action was needed. In a very ‘00s Icelandic fashion, they contacted Ingi Garðar Vífilsson — a friend of the band and Reykjavik’s 2025 Citizen of the Year — who happened to be on his way to Akureyri for his son’s football match.

“It’s about doing something with your friends,” Örvar states simply. Róberta speaks up. “I think it’s open music,” she ponders. “Even though it’s in a pop context, there’s always space for creativity — especially during our live sessions. Performances are different with múm. More often than not, we’re never playing the same thing over and over again. I couldn’t be bothered to do this if that wasn’t the case. I couldn’t im-

matic or heavy. [The music] stands independently when the technology is removed, but it’s an element that can be inserted,” she continues.

“Then there’s all kinds of more obscure effects, like the ability to be able to record in separate parts of the world at the same time. Which isn’t really sexy, but still allows us to do stuff which we couldn’t previously do,” she points out.

“That’s a very good point,” Örvar replies. “This album could never have been made without the proximity and the need to be together.”

It’s refreshing to hear the three talk about their mutual love, which endures after decades of collaboration. Múm have never lost sight of their core values, rather turning it into their strength and transcending traditional notions of the band form.

“We’re very lucky to have this,” Silla admits. “It becomes better every time we meet,” she says. “Especially having been together for so long and having experienced numerous things together. It becomes like a family,” Örvar concludes. ■

We purchased a Nord Rack 2 synthesiser together and put it on a two-year instalment plan.

“He was with his kid at this football cup during the day, and he was arranging strings in his RV at night. He didn’t sleep that weekend. Then he conducted the orchestra on that Sunday. It was a risky scene,” Örvar describes.

BFFS

Even though it almost feels like a cliché, múm’s foundation is the close friendship shared by its members. In addition to the spiritual and physical need to create, múm’s existence is based on two primary factors: the close ties between its members and technology.

agine getting onstage and playing a song the same way as I did 20 years ago. *That* would be a challenge,” she stresses.

In terms of múm’s technological aspect, Örvar argues that the band was originally founded around technology. “We decided to purchase a Nord Rack 2 synthesiser together and put it on a two-year instalment plan,” Örvar reminisces. “The band was founded based on that piece of technology,” he states.

“There’s always a light feeling regarding the use of technology,” Róberta ponders. “Sometimes it’s a joke, but it never becomes dog-

Following the release of *History of Silence* on September 19, múm embark on a three-month tour into the band’s new era, including an Iceland Airwaves Partner Event in Reykjavik next November.

“We’re very excited about this next chapter,” Örvar confesses. “We’ve become so good at being together.” Róberta sighs. “I’m terrified yet excited,” she breathes. “I care for the togetherness,” Silla remarks. “Now that we’ve spent this time apart, I’m looking forward to spending time with my favourite people.”

While countless bands are formed of the same friendship múm experience, few are actually able to maintain the amicable relationship.

múm’s seventh LP *History of Silence* is out on September 19 via Morr Music in physical and digital formats. Following the release, múm embark on a three-month tour of North America and Europe. Additionally, they’ll perform at an Iceland Airwaves Partner Event on November 9, 2025. Single-night tickets are available at tix.is. For more information regarding their tour and album, visit mormusic.com.

Editor’s note: The interviews featured in this piece were conducted in Icelandic and translated by the author.

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Hamraborg Festival: Sprawling And Site-Specific

This festival's fifth iteration is its biggest thus far

WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

Hamraborg Festival sprouted from the community around now-closed artist-run space Midpunkt, and the festival carries on the space's penchant for "fun and weird" art (as described by former curator Ragnheiður Sigurðardóttir Bjarnarson) in unlikely spaces (Midpunkt was in

INSTALLATION:
FILLING THE CRACKS

Megan Auður's How do we care for the cracks that remain? is a "sculptural intervention" that will take place in cracks in the pavement around Hamraborg. The artist, activ-

kind of piece that can go unnoticed, but once you notice it, it makes you notice more of the details in your surroundings."

WORKSHOP:
ARCHIVING HAMRABORG

Lu (aka @wetbog.jpg) is known for their work in print media and illustration, often employing silly characters and the vibrant colours that come from risograph printing. Their exhibition Primordial Bouillon Cube – which will consist of "a lot of slime, biological networks, circuit boards, transness and primordial soup" – will sit among canned peas and soup in the coveted gallery space of Euro Market.

She also welcomes all to the Kópavogur Library (Bókasafn Kópavogs) from 14:00-16:00 on Saturday, August 30, for a zine-making workshop. Lu's been involved with the recent zine fairs of both the Nordic House and LHI's RÝMD, specifically encouraging all to share their stories with Hamraborg itself, which will be compiled into a zine after the festival. Here, they hope people will share "collective imaginings about the local area, memories and emotions." Further, she adds, "I

have a strong hope that the output will be something that can be given back to Hamraborg to archive these accounts, however silly they are."

SOUND WORK:
SPATIAL FACILITATION

On August 31, at 15:30, artist Zekarias Musele Thompson will lead a walk through Hamraborg. spatial facilitation (the artist is presence) – Zekarias's event – will see them playing their alto saxophone as they travel Hamraborg. To them, the aim is "seeing what dialogue comes up between myself, the instrument, and the objects/beings in the space that I encounter." Concurrently, the audio of their saxophone will be broadcast to the restaurant and bar Catalína, and anyone can choose to listen from there as opposed to joining the walk. At the end, Zekarias will take the stage – "I will then join myself on stage," as they put it – and play, then welcome a conversation about the experience as a whole. ■

Whether you hope to join a workshop or visit an exhibition (or both!), Hamraborg Festival will run from August 29 to September 5. All events are free, and the programme can be found at hamraborgfestival.is

Many of this year's festival offerings are site-specific, meaning the work is designed exclusively for Hamraborg.

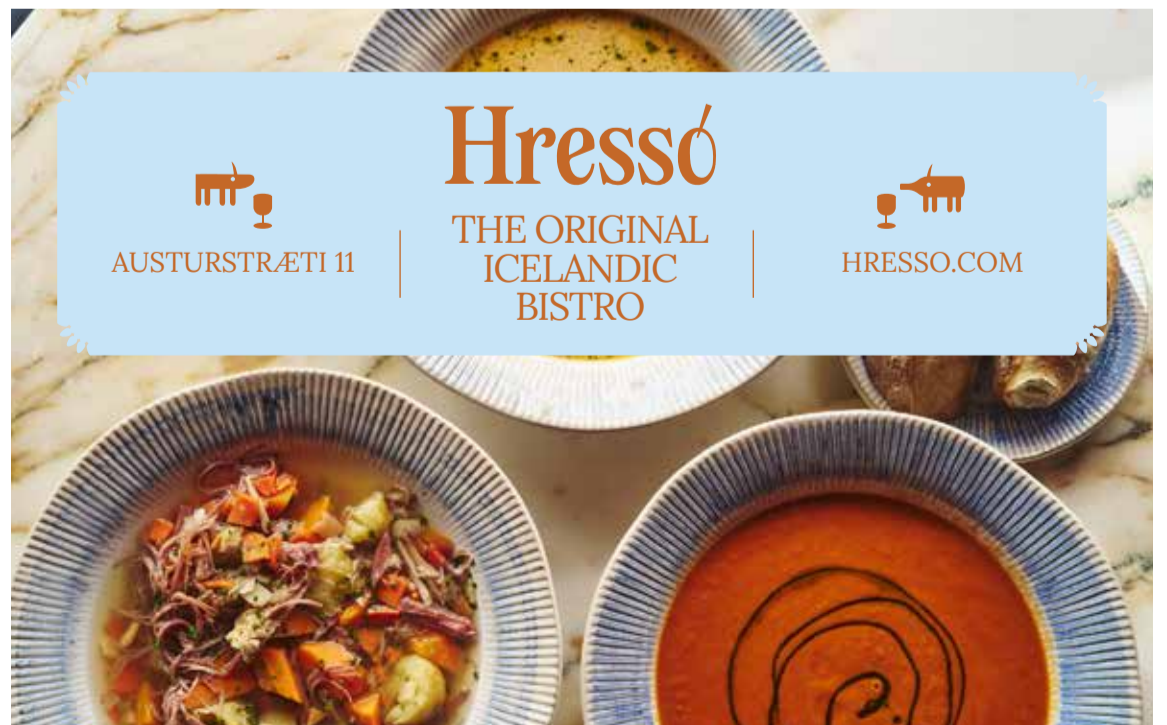
the basement of a former ice cream store). The festival is now curated by Jo Pawłowska, a former curator of Midpunkt, visual artist Agnes Ársælsdóttir, and composer and educator Pétur Eggertsson.

Many of this year's festival offerings are site-specific, meaning the work is designed exclusively for Hamraborg. Before the festival takes over Kópavogur, the Grapevine had the opportunity to hear from artists giving a variety of offerings to this year's festival: an installation, a workshop, and sound work.

ist, and social worker explains that she creates ceramic pieces to fill cracks in pavement, making a work that is "tailored to and created in Hamraborg."

"In the creation of the piece, I often end up in conversations with passersby, curious about what I am doing," Megan explains. When I ask about potential passersby, Megan says, first and foremost, "Well, I'm excited to show my 7-year-old niece, who lives and goes to school in the neighbourhood," then adds, "Apart from her, I am just excited about this minimal intervention. It's the

For the past five summers, Hamraborg Festival has marked the coming of autumn in its celebration of the sprawling hub of Hamraborg in Kópavogur. Starting August 29, boundary-pushing artists will permeate the arterial and eponymous street of Hamraborg; art and performance will materialise in Krónan, Póló Vape Shop, a tunnel, Euro Market, a parking garage, and more. This year is their biggest yet, with over 60 projects making up the week-long schedule.





Schroomwaves Growing Sounds

For his latest docuseries score, Sin Fang experiments with mushrooms

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Art Bicnick

From similar experiments with mushrooms, he composed the score and accompanying soundtrack for the new documentary series *Svepparíkið* (*The Fungal Kingdom* in English).

MUSHROOMS ARE HAVING A MOMENT

It was only a year ago that another Icelandic musician got involved in a mushroom documentary – I’m talking about Björk, who narrated *Fungi Web of Life*, hosted by the eccentric British scientist Merlin Sheldrake. Unlike that film, *Svepparíkið*, directed by Anna Þóra Steinþórsdóttir, focuses entirely on Icelandic fungi. Each of its five episodes explores mushrooms in Iceland through the lenses of science, culture, aesthetics, and sustainability.

Anna’s family are actually mycophiles, or mushroom enthusiasts, themselves. The series is hosted by her daughter, Erna Kanema Mashinkila, who introduces viewers to Iceland’s fungal diversity by visiting local mushroom growers, learning how to cook them with restaurant chefs, and speaking to experts such as Dr. Guðríður Gyða Eyjólfssdóttir, a mycologist from Akureyri, who also

runs the Facebook group called “Funga Íslands - sveppir ætir eður ei” and has been over the years patiently answering questions like, “Is this one edible or not?”

“I would say that I’m a bit of a mushroom hobbyist,” says Sindri when I ask how he got involved in the project. “I’m interested in mushrooms, especially cooking them. I’ve been making these mushroom steaks, particularly when I get large oyster mushrooms. You can’t really buy them here, but whenever I’m in Los Angeles – I’ve been there quite a bit over the years – I’ll buy these big clusters of oyster mushrooms. You can turn them into a steak by pressing them down, putting barbecue sauce on, and baking them. The flavour is incredible,” he continues, and everyone in the room practically drools when he goes on to describe a simple pasta with chanterelles.

JAM SESSIONS WITH FUNGI

Known predominantly as a trailblazing indie musician – whether solo or as part of Seabear – and as a composer for film and TV, Sin Fang’s background is actually in visual arts.

“Somehow, music just took over my life,” he says. “Even when I was in school, I started touring and playing in bands and stuff. But I do have this kind of visual or conceptual way of approaching a lot of projects, which I think can be good when you’re doing scoring.”

Much like the previous film he worked on with Anna, *Just Like A Painting by Eggert Pétursson*, Svepparíkið’s score focuses on small textural things, rather than big, dramatic moments. “I was thinking about mushrooms growing – what does that sound like when something

“Sorry, we’ve been sound-checking,” says musician and composer Sindri Már Sigfússon, perhaps better known as Sin Fang, as he greets me at the door of his studio at the music company INNI. “I’m just gonna take this guy out, and we can start,” he points at the plant he’s holding.

He takes the plant out of the room, grabs a few mushrooms from the bag I brought, and attaches EKG-like sensors to them. An airy, slightly otherworldly sound fills the room. “Wow, this one has a lot to say,” laughs Sindri.

On the soundtrack that came out, the first track and the last track are just kind of unfiltered mushrooms playing, and it's very weird – maybe more a sound piece than music.

Sindri had worked with Anna a few years ago, so when the director reached out asking him to score the series, he said, “Yes, of course.”

As a composer, Sindri likes to truly immerse himself in the story. “It’s not like you come in and just do [a bunch of] piano songs or something, you have to consider everything that’s going on in the story,” he says.

starts small and then becomes bigger? What does it sound like to walk in a dark forest? What does the root sound like growing in the ground? That was an amazing starting point for making music, just to think about these kinds of things.”

While composing the score, Sindri saw the perfect chance to experiment with the SCÍON module with the biofeedback sensors he showed us at the start of the meeting. He’d

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seen the tech used on plants before, but never tried it himself.

“When I mentioned this to the director, she brought me a bunch of mushrooms, like you can see in the first episode,” he recalls. “We tried a bunch of different mushrooms to see what they sounded like. I was basically recording a jam session for hours of just really strange sounds.”

In the studio, he shows us how the technology works and how the sound differs from mushroom to mushroom. Some are spiky and excited, while others are more subtle or quiet. None of us in the room knows whether the type of signal depends on the type of mushroom. “Maybe it’s how much energy is left in the mushroom because I guess they start dying when you take them out of the ground,” Sindri shrugs. “Once, I put the sensors on a plant that I hadn’t watered in a long time, and it just went insane.” He adds, “It could also be funny to just go on stage, sit down, put them on your brain, and just sit still, making music with your brain.” “On the soundtrack that came out, the first track and the last track are just kind of unfiltered mushrooms playing, and it’s very weird

— maybe more a sound piece than music,” Sindri says. For the rest of the tracks, he uses the snippets of mushroom sounds and weaves them into a more cohesive piece.

“I was thinking a lot about cutetronica — a movement from around 2000, mainly in Germany, which had this kind of cute electronic music,

The result is atmospheric, meditative, and strangely magical. “I guess when you’re thinking about things growing, that is magical and kind of like — what does growing sound like? It sounds positive and like, like...,” he pauses looking for the right word. “Sparkling, I guess. That’s what I was going for.”

We tried a bunch of different mushrooms to see what they sounded like. I was basically recording a jam session for hours of just really strange sounds.

[made up of] very small sounds. For the percussion, I used a lot of samples of little textural things, and then I put them in the computer, and played them as a drum kit,” he explains. “It’s all kinds of things that I have sampled. I decided pretty early on that this would be the palette: kind of synths, but not very computer-sounding music. It’s live, but manipulated in the box.”

Sin Fang’s soundtrack album consists of 18 tracks, all of which are named after Icelandic mushrooms — from “Kantarellur” (chanterelles) to “Berserkur” (toadstool) “I just went through the names of Icelandic mushrooms and named the tracks after them,” says Sindri. “They had some very boring names at the beginning, ‘Svepparikið track one,’ ‘Svepparikið track two,’ or

something. When you’re making a soundtrack for media, for TV or film, you want to take it a bit away from there and reimagine it for a listener who’s not watching anything.”

ALL IN, ALWAYS

Speaking of reimagining, Sindri shares that he wrote the music for the series two years ago. But with the long timelines for funding and production in the film industry, he only returned to it and finished the soundtrack just last month. “I think time is actually the best thing when you’re making art. Of course, you work intensely for a long time, but then time gives you a great perspective. When you’re making something, you’re here, up against the thing you’re making, and you can’t really see the big picture,” he says. “Leaving it alone for a few months and coming back, you have fresh eyes, you can kind of look at it more objectively.”

He admits that it was good to let the project sit and brew for a while. In the end, he didn’t have to make many tweaks, but it helped him separate his “creative” and “editor” minds. “I make so much music these days. I’ve updated my Spotify play-

list, and it’s 24 hours and 58 minutes of tracks that I’ve made over the last 20 years. So no, I think it was actually pretty good to leave it.”

Whether it’s his solo music, the soundscapes for exhibitions he does with Fischersund, his family’s perfumery art collective, scores for international films, or a small local documentary, Sindri doesn’t take anything as a side gig. “Obviously, there are different profiles of things, but I put all my 100 percent effort into this. And it’s the same with bigger or smaller projects. You just have to calculate how much of 100 percent effort can I put into this and for how long?,” he says.

With at least two scores for international projects coming out right after or soon after *Svepparikið* — the Norwegian documentary *Fatherhood* and the Swedish TV series *Vaka*, and a new family exhibition in the making, Sin Fang keeps busy. “I’m actually trying to finish some solo Sin Fang albums as well. I haven’t really released one since 2019.” ■

Svepparikið is streaming on RÚV, for now only in Icelandic. English subtitles are coming soon.

POST FLYOVER GLOW

EXPLORE ALL OF ICELAND

📍 Old Harbour & Grandi District | Open Daily

★★★★★

Absolutely loved this!
Worth every penny!

★★★★★

This is a MUST see
for anyone who
visits Iceland.

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Éttu Skít **Djöfulsins! Andskotans Icelander**

Forget language courses – *Eat Frozen Sh*t!* How to curse, swear, and talk trash

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Brynja is a poet, writer, and critic, with a couple of published books to her name, including the most recent novel *Friðsemd* and poetry books *Okfruman* and *Kona lítur við*. Since childhood, she has been fascinated by every aspect of language and has always been drawn to dictionaries. “If I find myself thinking about a dictionary, I will always go straight to the gutter – straight to something of

an extended guide to pronouncing Icelandic letters, followed by useful everyday phrases – the very basics, from thank you to how to say hello at different times of the day. “We wanted to think of a broad audience, both people that are beginners and those that are further along, so we decided to have this no-nonsense, basic phrase chapter for beginners – [so you know how] to order a coffee and

There are so many things in there that I can picture very vividly in my head that maybe wouldn't work for everyone flipping through a book at the bookstore.

They say you're not truly fluent in a foreign language until you crack a joke. Rubbish. You're fluent when you can curse – when you're standing at the bus stop, one minute early, but see the sight of your Strætó driving away and all you do is blurt out, “DJÖFULINN! Ég missti af helvítis strætönum!”

Swear words and curses don't usually make it into the curriculum of a language course, but they're very much part of a living language – and a way to feel like you fit in a group (at least a bit). Until recently, there was nothing out there to help Icelandic learners talk proper trash. Then writer and critic Brynja Hjalmsdóttir had an idea.

FOKK AND OTHER ESSENTIALS

“This could have been something that could have been left as an idea and never executed. But I had some free time, and decided to go ahead, and it was a very fun process,” says Brynja as I meet up with her and the illustrator of the *Eat Frozen Sh*t!* *How to curse, swear, and talk trash in Icelandic*, Elin Elísabet Einarsdóttir.

colour, words or phrases. [*Eat Frozen Sh*t!*] was meant to save people the hassle,” she says.

The idea of the book goes back to when Brynja was working in a bookstore. “I worked at Eymundsson on Skólavörðustígur for a while, so I have a pretty good idea about what is available about the Icelandic language, and I knew that there was nothing like this,” Brynja says, adding, “It's not necessarily a new idea. Phrase books like this and slang dictionaries exist in many languages, but I knew they didn't exist in Icelandic. I thought it might be something that people would be interested in having, both guests and tourists to take as a gift, and, of course, people who are learning Icelandic, both here in Iceland and everywhere in the world, because people are interested in this strange language.”

Even though the book's title makes it clear you're up to no good, *Eat Frozen Sh*t!* is more than just a book about swear words. It starts with

say hello before you start insulting someone,” says Brynja.

“Swearing and using foul language is an important part of expression if you need to let off steam, or if you need to emphasise things very vividly,” she continues, pointing out that while the book is all about teaching you to curse, it's mostly meant for fun. “If people really want to get down and dirty, they would just have to do that themselves,” she laughs. Elin chimes, “It's not meant to be used for evil.”

ILLUSTRATED INSULTS

The Basics of Swearing & Slang chapter in the book is divided into convenient subchapters that will allow everyone to find exactly what they're looking for – from the three absolute essentials of “djöfull,” “andskoti,” “helvíti,” to expressing general frustration and cussing like a child or a grandpa.

Brynja says she first wanted to com-



! Helvítis! Swear Like An

Trash in Icelandic teaches you everything you actually need to know

partmentalise all the knowledge she already had on the topic, and then added swear words she picked up from family and friends. “It is organised into insults and swear words, then it’s sex and relationships, party culture, drugs and alcohol, and then the final chapter is sort of just these sentences and phrases, insults that you can grab and use on the go,” she explains.

There was only one phrase that Brynja thought was too strong for this kind of book, but otherwise, the spectrum of curse words is pretty vivid. The drawings, though, faced heavier censorship.

“It was also a bit of a question with the drawings, how far to go?” says Elin. “There are so many things in there that I can picture very vividly in my head that maybe wouldn’t work for everyone flipping through a book at the bookstore, you know,” she smiles, adding, “A good way around it was including the puffins.”

In the chapter on flirting and sexy phrases, there’s even an illustration of two puffins mid-act. Elin, who a few years back created a project called Nýlundabúðin, in short, a puffin hotel, is well-acquainted with her subjects.

“Puffins are a big part of every project I make, apparently,” she laughs. “They always deserve a spotlight. I feel like they get a bad reputation because of mass tourism and mass souvenirs. But they are actually just a bird trying to survive.”

The illustrations for this book came together pretty easily, Elin admits. Many of the images are quite literal; for example, the phrase in the title of the book, “Éttu það sem úti frýs” (“Eat the stuff that freezes outside”), is depicted as frozen shit served on a plate. “Some books almost illustrate themselves,” says Elin, pointing

to one of her favourite illustrations in the book – a drawing of a happy family with a monkey, a donkey, and a cow, paired with a text teaching you how to say “go fuck your mother, father, grandfather, grandmother, a monkey, a donkey, and a cow.”

“It’s a perfect example of how text and image work together,” smiles Elin.

There was one word Elin didn’t quite know how to illustrate: “beygla,” the Icelandic word for a bagel – and, in this case, a DIY bong made from a plastic bottle. Elin, who at the time was in Austria, asked Brynja for clarification and received a video explaining exactly how to make one. recorded somewhere in a countryside cabin.

SAY IT LIKE A LOCAL

The book also comes with a helpful audio guide, narrated by what the description calls “foul-mouthed Iclander.”

It’s not meant to be used for evil.

Brynja explains, “We got one of our favourite actors and playwrights to read, and he did the perfect performance.”

“He’s one of the most inherently funny people in the country,” adds Elin.

They’re speaking about Friðgeir Einarsson, a member of the Kriðpleir acting troupe and a regular in Áramótaskaup. Friðgeir and his troupe are known for their style, as Brynja explains, “They have this deadpan delivery of everyday situations, and sort of make fun of the normal, boring Iclander.”

Brynja recalls that Friðgeir voiced the book with a completely serious face. “He pulled through without laughing, while the rest of the people in the booth were just falling.”

“This is both for people’s enjoyment to listen to his performance of all this shit, and then it also works as a pronunciation guide for learners,” Brynja smiles.

In the end of the book, you’ll find “the insult express” – a guide to quick and easy phrases for every situation – from stuff like “Are you fucking kidding me?” to “Shut up you racist bitch,” as well as a chapter dedicated to words and sayings that are “strictly Icelandic” – words like “kviðmágur / kviðmággona” to describe a person who has slept with the same person as you.

“The last two chapters or something were perhaps the most creative and fun part,” says Brynja. “The ‘Strictly Icelandic’ chapter has phrases that sort of transcend the basic transla-

tion, something that’s specifically Icelandic and requires longer explanations of cultural context.”

Most words and phrases in the book are something you will hear in daily life. The few that aren’t, Brynja usually marks as such.

“Insults can be so creative,” sums up Elin, and Brynja adds, “We have 150 pages of them!” ■

*Eat Frozen Sh*t! How to curse, swear, and talk trash in Icelandic* is available in bookstores around Iceland and at the Grapevine store: shop.grapevine.is



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Artistic director: Inga Jónsdóttir

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Exhibition

A Collection Of Fleeting

Lilja Birgisdóttir's new exhibition invites you to see the almost unnoticed

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Art Bicnick

BETWEEN PHOTO AND
PAINTING

"This exhibition is about noticing all these small moments of everyday magic that could easily pass," says Lilja as we walk through the exhibition space. On the walls hang eight large-scale black-and-white photos taken by Lilja with a film camera, developed by her, and hand-coloured with transparent oil paints.

get all these dandelions in your hair, and then you just take them out. It's this tiny moment of beauty that I was able to catch," she says, looking at the photo of a girl with colourful dandelion spores spread in hair with a signature yellow, pink, blue, and purple.

"These oil colours are very special," says Lilja. "I've been collecting them since I was studying photography at

I use the colours to create a focus in the image, a focus on the magic.

In addition to her work with Fischersund, Lilja has for years been working across photography, performance, video, sound, and installation. She has long been active with the artist-run gallery Kling & Bang and is now represented by Pula.

The Royal Academy of Arts in The Hague, and I stumbled on an old estate of a photographer, who found these colours. I've been fascinated by them since, developing methods for many years."

The colours Lilja uses have their own colour palette – they seem more artificial than the colours seen in nature, like pastel blues or bright, almost unnatural yellows. "They're very vibrant. I thought that was perfect for this – the colours somehow represent the magic. You have these really vibrant colours against the grey, kind of dull, dusty images."

SEEING BEAUTY IN EVERY
FRAME

"It's kind of a merge of photography and painting. It's an old technique," Lilja speaks of the method she's using. "It was used before colour photography, when you had to hand-colour black-and-white photographs. But I'm using it in a new way – instead of just colouring the photo normally, I use the colours to create a focus in the image, a focus on the magic."

With the frames, each of the images on display is 103 x 148 cm. "This is my biggest body of work ever," Lilja admits. "I've never made prints this size before. It was very physical – normally, you develop the papers in trays, in these liquids. But because the prints are so big, I couldn't use

It's unusual to see Lilja Birgisdóttir outside Fischersund – the dark little house and wonderfully scented perfumery and art collective she runs with her siblings and family, where she's often found greeting customers, offering homemade snaps, or emotionally reciting a poem. Today, she's traded her Wednesday Addams-esque black dress for a blue one, and Fischersund for the white cube of Pula gallery. Her exhibition, *Um leið og þú lítur undan* (*The Moment You Look Away*), lets a flicker of colour seep through otherwise monochrome photographs.

What Lilja means by "magic" are the small, mundane moments we pass by every day – flowers breaking through asphalt on the corner of a house, the sky reflecting in a puddle, or dandelion spores carried by the wind into a passerby's hair. "It was just a small moment. You



g Moments

trays, so I had to find my own method.”

Even with the challenges and makeshift methods it required, Lilja always knew the photos had to be big. “The moments I’m talking about are so little and insignificant – that’s why I wanted to give them this importance,” she smiles.

She stops in front of one of those moments: a photograph of an almost heart-shaped puddle, the sunset reflecting in the water. “This is one of my favourites,” Lilja says. “I was walking downtown by the gas station... it had been raining really heavily the day before, and in the evening, there was this beautiful

dirty, and unnoticed. I always have that in the back of my mind. I’m constantly seeing everything as a frame, noticing everything.”

The state of the world, and how glued we are to our screens, was also something Lilja couldn’t ignore. “I have a teenage daughter, and a lot of young people today are unhappy because we’re just being programmed by our phones and social media that the only way to be truly happy is if we own this, look like that, or get this car. It’s all figured out for us. I wanted this also to be a reminder that if you look out for these hidden moments that happen every day, it can make you happier. You start to be more thankful,” she says.

The moments I’m talking about are so little and insignificant – that’s why I wanted to give them this importance.

sunset. I was just walking and saw the beautiful sunset in the puddles – as soon as I take one step further, it was gone. So I went back [and took the photo].”

As a photographer, Lilja admits it wasn’t an amazing picture, so she was hesitant to give it a big platform. But once she hand-coloured it, the image took on a new life. “Now, I’m a little bit proud of it,” she says.

“Being in art school kind of rewires your brain,” she continues. “When I was studying in The Hague, with all the assignments, you were always going out into the world looking for a beautiful frame – even in the ugly,

PLANNING THE MAGIC

Having some insight into the upcoming projects Lilja and Fischersund’s art collective are working on, I’m curious to know how she manages to stay productive while juggling her career as an artist. “This is the most organised I’ve ever been,” she admits with a smile. “When you run such a tight schedule with running a home, running a business, and having an art career, you really have to be organised.”

Sometimes, being organised just means knowing when to ask for help. “I asked our general manag-

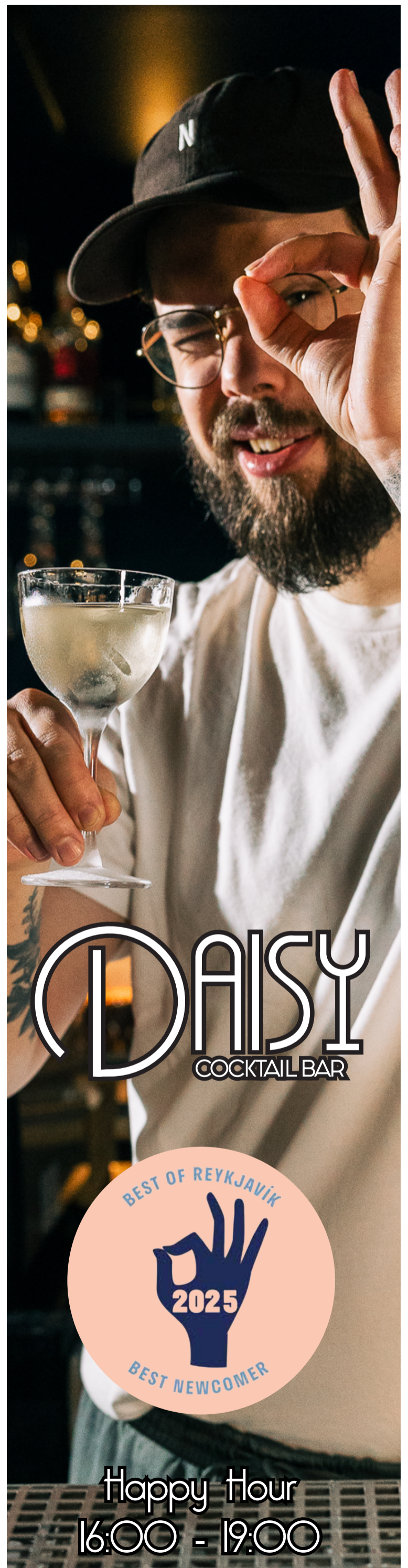
er, ‘Can you just make a schedule for me?’ Everything – when I need photos to be shot, when I need to be done in the darkroom, when I need to be done with painting, when the pictures need to go into framing. She did it, and I just stuck to that.”

“But of course, I have an amazing partner. We are a really good team,” Lilja adds, speaking about musician and composer Kjartan Holm. “He helps me in my art practice and in Fischersund, and he helped me with the soundscape of the exhibition.” For the two rooms, *The Moment You Look Away* is spread throughout, Kjartan created two soundscapes – one more subtle, capturing a person walking in the city, and another, as Lilja puts it, “representing the magic.”

You don’t need a giant sculpture to make people stop and look. Often, the art is hiding in a puddle, a drain grate, or an overgrown garden in town that nobody takes care of. *The Moment You Look Away* makes you notice the things you usually pass right by.

“It was very beautiful at the opening. This grown man came up to me and said, ‘Thank you for reminding me to see the beauty in the everyday.’ You get so distracted in this race of running around, you forget to stop, to look around, notice, and slow down. That made me happy,” she concludes. ■

Lilja Birgisdóttir’s exhibition *The Moment You Look Away* is on view at Pula until September 21. A guided tour with Lilja and the exhibition curator, Jessamyn Fiore, will take place on Saturday, August 30, from 16:00 to 17:00.



DAISY
COCKTAIL BAR



Happy Hour
16:00 - 19:00

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 & Laugavegur 23 & 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 & The Nordic House
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

4 KEMURI
Hverfisgata 82
A good bowl of steaming pierogi is like a warm blanket or a comforting hug. With Polish immigrants comprising the largest diaspora in Iceland, this culinary delight was long overdue. But it was worth the wait – Kemuri offers a few options of handmade dumplings daily (all vegetarian), with a vegan option available too. You can pick and choose your favourites or get a mixed bowl to try everything. IZ

5 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

6 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

7 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

8 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

9 JÓMFRÚIN
Lækjargata 4
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. IZ

10 RAMEN MOMO
Tryggvagata 16 & Bankastræti 8
The first ramen house in Iceland and the first to offer fresh organic noodles, Ramen Momo has been a fixture of the food scene as long as it has been open. In August of 2024, they outgrew their eight-seat ramen station on Tryggvagata and expanded to a location on Bankastræti. We recommend their creamy, flavourful Tantanmen pork ramen (or the vegan version with toful), but truly, you cannot go wrong here. ISH

11 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

Drinking

12 12 TÓNAR
Skólavörðustígur 15
Legendary label and legendary shop, there's always something interesting happening there. Whether you grab a beer or a coffee, whether you sit nose-to-turntable watching the DJ pull from their collection or nestle into the basement couch for a game of chess, there's something for everyone. 12 Tónar is both a great place for a chill weekday afternoon or a rowdy weekend with well-curated tunes. ISH

13 RÖNTGEN
Hverfisgata 12, 101 Reykjavik
Röntgen is renowned for its multifaceted vibe. Not one to back down from a raucous party, Röntgen's tight quarters might have you thinking it's not fit for a party. You couldn't be more wrong. For the adamant partygoer, it's probably best to never leave. Show up early for the best spot in the building and watch a regular Röntgen night morph from polite conversation in the afternoon to sweaty stomping until early morning. JB

14 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

15 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

Shopping & Activities

16 BÓKSALA STÚDENTA
Sæmundargata 4
If you've ever found yourself in need of stationery, a newly released Icelandic book, or fish hooks for hanging paintings in your student apartment, then look no further than Bóksala Stúdentta. This bookstore, nestled in the University of Iceland's student union, is a one-stop shop for students and locals alike. Plus, there's both a cafe and a kids' corner – if you ever want a latte, but you've got the kid this week. ISH

17 BIÓ 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

18 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

19 SKÁLDA BÓKABÚÐ
Vesturgata 10a
Skálda is a brand-new independent bookstore housed in a 120-year-old building on Vesturgata. The one-man project of former teacher Einar Björn Magnússon, Skálda offers an excellent selection of new books, featuring a wide range of contemporary authors in both Icelandic and English, as well as a curated collection of used books – available for as low as 990 ISK. IZ ■



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3

Njálsgata 64 | Símundargata 11

22

22

22

LAUGAVEGUR 22

New In Town **Bakken***

FRAKKASTÍGUR 7
101 REYKJAVÍK

In Reykjavík, we're used to spots sitting unused for months on end (whatever will happen to La Havana Club? 2Guys in Vesturbær?). But sometimes, a new establishment finally rises from a forgotten spot, like a phoenix from a very dusty pile of ashes. This month, we celebrate the opening of Bakken, which opened where Reykjavík Bar used to sit. Bakken's hallmark is that they've inaugurated the return of beloved Mikkeller beer on tap in Reykjavík, but they've also got a wide array of grilled sandwiches and mocktails. What more could you need? ISH ■

Opening hours:
Every day, 16:00-23:00



S

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B

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Art Exhibitions

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

Opening

GALLERY PHENOMENON
Group exhibition – Shoptember
Artists contribute their work to a daily flea market
Opens September 1 at 13:00
Runs until September 12

GRASAGARÐUR REYKJAVÍK
Rósa Sigrún Jónsdóttir – The Invasion Of The Superflowers
Textile work is hung in trees, taking root in Reykjavík's Botanical Garden
Opens September 3 at 18:00
Runs until September 30

LITLA GALLERY
Ágúst B. Eiðsson – Hue Of The Spectrum
Oil paintings of atmospheric and colourful scenes
Opens September 4 at 18:00
Runs until September 7

NÚLLIÐ GALLERY
Wojtek Banski & Marcin Koztowski – Worms & Giants
Paint streaks ebb and flow to resemble worms, and giants
Opens August 29 at 18:00
Runs until August 31

Ongoing

ASSOCIATE GALLERY
Zekarias Musele Thompson – I Paint the Mountain with Myself
Paintings
Runs until September 14

Á MILLI
Úlfur Logason
Paintings
Runs until September 7

ÁSMUNDARSAFN
Tristan Elísabet Birta – The Slippery Twist Of The Tail
Performance-installation in progress
Runs until September 21

Amanda Riffo – Wonderland
Works in progress
Runs until October 29

ÁSMUNDARSALUR
Package to Iceland – Árni Jónsson
Multimedia
Runs until November 29

BERG CONTEMPORARY
Kristján Steingrímur – Beyond Colour and Form
Paintings
Runs until September 27

Woody Vasulka – The Brotherhood
Installation
Runs until December 20

CITY LIBRARY ÁRBÆR
Helga Bogadóttir – Playing with Colors
Paintings
Runs until September 7

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ARTS
At Home in the Design Museum
Over 200 examples of Icelandic design from 1900 to the present
Runs until 2026

DIXON LOUNGE
Elísabet Ásberg – MICRA
Sculpture
Runs until September 2

THE FACTORY IN DJÚPAVÍK
Group exhibition – Sky Dancers
Multimedia
Runs until September 12

FANTASÍA (VINNUSTOFA KJARVALS)
Baldur Helgason & Patty Spyraokos – IN TRANSIT
Multimedia
Runs through December 31

GALLERY FOLD
Tinna Royal – Þarf að vera fullorðins alla daga?
Paintings
Runs until September 6

GERÐARSAFN (KÓPAVOGUR ART MUSEUM)
Group exhibition – Corpus
Multimedia
Runs until November 2

Gerður Helgadóttir – GERÐUR
Abstract sculpture
Permanent exhibition

HAFNARBORG
Group exhibition – You Are Here
Multimedia
Runs until October 5

Group exhibition – Algjörar skvísur / Total Babes
Multimedia
Runs until November 9

HAFNARHÚS (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)
Elsa Jónsdóttir – Lend an Ear
Multimedia installation
Runs until September 21

Group exhibition – Elements
Multimedia
Runs until September 21

Ragnar Kjartansson – World Light
Four-screen cinematic adaptation
Runs until September 21

Erró – Erró: Remix
Multimedia
Runs until May 3, 2026

HALLGRÍMSKIRKJA
Ídris Róbertsdóttir – second window on the right
Textile, installation
Runs until September 14

HANNESARHOLT
Matthías Rúnar Sigurðsson, Hjördís Gréta Guðmundsdóttir – Steinvængur
Paintings, sculptures
Runs until September 27

Art Picks



Amanda Riffo – Wonderland
Runs until October 29
Ásmundarsafn

Artist, set designer, and researcher Amanda Riffo is the next in Ásmundarsafn's ongoing Wonderland series. Exhibiting works in progress, Amanda took to the exhibition on August 23 and will create there until late October. In her first days of the exhibition, she welcomed viewers to "Displacements, a Swapped Dance," where she presented the process of her move from her hafnar.haus studio to Ásmundarsafn. ISH



Rósa Sigrún Jónsdóttir – The Invasion Of The Superflowers
Opens September 3 at 18:00
Grasagarður Reykjavík

This exhibition, which takes root in Reykjavík's Botanical Garden, is the project of textile artist Rósa Sigrún Jónsdóttir. Rósa combines textile art practices with found materials, often working with collected trash and fibres "regurgitated" by the sea. In *The Invasion of the Superflowers*, Rósa subverts expectations and introduces flowers that bloom in the fall. ISH



Úlfur Logason
Runs until September 7
Á milli

The Berlin-based Icelandic artist shows a collection of oil paintings. Heavily inspired by studying the symbolic and allegorical languages within art history, Úlfur's paintings are dramatic and evocative. The artist captures scenes that feel both historical and modern, many portraits, with some of domestic life and others out at sea. ISH



Ágúst B. Eiðsson – Hue Of The Spectrum
Opens September 4 at 18:00
Litla Gallery

Artist Ágúst B. Eiðsson continues upon an exhibition he held in February of this year at the same gallery. Litla Gallery, a hole-in-the-wall nestled in Hafnarfjörður, welcomes the artist's oil painting works. Inspired by the environment around him, the artist paints subjects and scenes somewhat abstractly, evoking calm and subdued moments in nature. ISH



Tinna Royal – Þarf að vera fullorðins alla daga?
Runs until September 6
Gallery Fold

Colourful artist Tinna Rós Þorsteinsdóttir – Tinna Royal – presents the exhibition *Þarf að vera fullorðins alla daga?* or "Do I have to be an adult every day?" Oil paintings of snack wrappers, candy, gum, and cigarette butts come together in this rebellious and fun exhibition, which will close on September 6. When describing the impetus behind this exhibition, Tinna simply said, "I'm 42 years old and I still want to be a kid." ISH



One of 60 Treasures of European Film Culture



Open from 15.00 – Dj all evenings– Happy Hour
15.00-20.00 – Happy Cocktail Hour 15.00-23.00.

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

18 GALLERY
Alicja Kwade – Silent Archibionts
 Installation, sculpture
 Runs until September 6

18 GRANDI
Ragnar Kjartansson – The Brown Period
 Video, works in progress
 Runs until December 18

KLING OG BANG
Relational (Shirley Tse and Dana Berman Duff) – The Universe Breathes Us
 Installation, multimedia
 Runs until September 28

KJARVALSSTAÐIR (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)
Kjarval – Dreamland
 Paintings
 Runs until September 7

Kjarval and the 20th Century: When Modernity Anchored
 Paintings, drawings
 Runs until December 31

LISTASALUR MOSFELLS-BÆJAR
Vera Hilmarsdóttir – Að hluta í sundur
 Drawing
 Runs until September 5

LITLA GALLERY
Dana Engfer – Hnattferðir
 Multimedia
 Runs until August 30

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND
Hildigunnur Birgisdóttir – That's a Very Large Number – A Commerzbau
 Installation
 Runs until September 7

Magnús Helgi Kjartansson – Revisited
 Paintings
 Runs until September 14

Group exhibition – The Mystery of the Lumpfish and Other Stories of Fakes and Forgeries
 Forged art
 Runs until September 14

Inuk Silis Høegh – The Green Land
 Video, sound work
 Runs until September 21

NATAKO
Bára Bjarnadóttir – Heirlooms
 Drawings
 Runs until September 30

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND (HALLARGARÐURINN)
Big Be-Hide – Alicja Kwade
 Sculpture
 Runs until May 2026

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ICELAND
Einar Falur Ingólfsson – Conversing with Sigfús
 Photography
 Runs until December 31

Making of a Nation – Heritage and History in Iceland
 Historic items, photography
 Permanent exhibition

THE NORDIC HOUSE
Hjörleifur Hjartarson and Rán Flygenring – Birds
 Drawings
 Runs until September 1

Group exhibition – Time After Time
 Multimedia, inside and outdoors
 Runs until September 14

NÝLISTASAFNIÐ
Dýrfinna Benita Basalan and Melanie Ubaldo – Through Thick and Thin
 Multimedia
 Runs until September 28

MHR SCULPTURE GARDEN
Steinunn Gunnlaugsdóttir – ONE WAY
 Sculpture
 Runs until September 8

MOKKA KAFFI
Sævar Karl – LANDSLAG
 Paintings
 Runs until October 1

RAF GALLERY
Sigthora Odins and Hrafnkell Elvarsson – Exhibition #1
 Amber jewellery, painting
 Runs until September 14

REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Gunnar V. Andrússon – Companion
 Photography
 Runs until December 7

SIGURJÓN ÓLAFSSON ART MUSEUM
Søren West – Form and Balance
 Sculpture
 Runs until September 14

SÍM GALLERY (HAFNARSTRÆTI)
SAMSPIL – Margrét Reykdal
 Paintings
 Runs until September 7

SMEKKLEÝSA
Arngrímur Sigurðsson – Bombus
 Paintings
 Runs until September 6

GALLERY UNDERPASS
Mala Iqbal and Angela Dufresne – Where I End, We Begin
 Painting
 Runs until September 21

WHALES OF ICELAND
Rebecca Douglas – The Sea Speaks
 Photography, sculpture
 Runs until September 30

Y GALLERY
Group exhibition – Hamraborg Festival
 Multimedia
 Runs until September 5

PULA
Lilja Birgisdóttir – The Moment You Look Away
 Photography, paintings
 Runs until September 21

PULA (HAFNARTORG)
Tolli Morthens – Now
 Ink paintings
 Runs until September 27



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

The Mystery of the Lumpfish and Other Stories of Fakes and Forgeries



Orla Valdemar Borch (1891-1969) (previously attributed to Jóhannes Kjarval), *Rauðmaginn / Lumpfish*, undated, LI-ÞGIG 2.

Listasafn Íslands
 National Gallery of Iceland

+354 515 9600 listasafn.is

**12.4.–
14.9.2025**

Event Picks



Extreme Chill Festival
 September 3-7
 Multiple venues
 Individual and festival tickets for sale on midix.is

Founded as an electronic music festival, the now genre-defying experimental music celebration is back for its 16th edition. Taking over venues such as Bíó Paradís and Kaffibarinn, this festival offers sounds from both cutting-edge Icelandic musicians and an impressive selection of international artists. This year, the eccentric John Maus will be joining a phenomenal lineup at Húrra – yeah, that's not a typo. To see John Maus, and to see Húrra reopen for one night only, attend this year's Extreme Chill. ISH



Icelandic Queer Film Festival
 September 4-7
 Bíó Paradís
 Individual and festival tickets for sale on tix.is

In its first iteration, the Icelandic Queer Film Festival celebrates a diverse collection of international films; movies from the Philippines, Portugal, Denmark, and beyond will take the screens of Bíó Paradís. The festival aims to spotlight queer films, which are often unduly neglected, and create a shared space where these stories can be enjoyed amidst one's community. Both documentaries and feature films are on the bill, and many will be making their Icelandic premiere, so this festival should not be missed. ISH



SVBKVLT Night
 September 6 at 22:00
 MONO (Útópía, 2nd floor)
 Presale for 2.500 ISK,
 Door for 3.500 ISK

Shanghai and Manchester-based label SVBKVLT is back for another showcase in Reykjavík, over a year after their first. Three projects who performed in the inaugural event are back: SVBKVLT-affiliated Icelandic trio sideproject will perform live, and Howell (UK) and Hyph11E (China/UK) return to Reykjavík. New to the event are Swimful (UK) and Nahash (CA), plus Icelandic producer/musician Knackered. Taking over the new venue MONO, this event is sure to be great. ISH



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 #reykjavikartmuseum

Events

29.08.25-11.09.25

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

Friday August 29

DJ Markiv
21:00 12 Tónar

Free Supermarket
17:30 Andrymi

Party Screening: Muriel's Wedding
21:00 Bió Paradís

Karaoke
22:00 Ellý

SAMPL 4: CYBER, Flesh Machine, Hipsumhaps, Straff
20:00 Iðnó

Dans Afríka Barakan Festival
16:30 Ingólfstorg

RAMS & Moskvít
22:00 LEMMY

DJ/Drums: SAS+KGB
23:00 LEMMY

Jack Armitage Strengjaveira Release Party
20:00 Mengi

DJ Karítas
22:00 Röntgen

Laufkvist, Emma, Moogie & The Boogiemén
19:30 Smekkleysa

Saturday August 30

Dans Afríka Barakan Festival
21:00 Bió Paradís

Kælan Mikla, Búdrýgindi, MC Myasnoi, DJ Eldflaug
20:00 Catalína

Rót
21:00 Dillon

Straumur: Flyguy, Álfur og Nonni
21:00 Kaffibarinn

Sexy Lazer Release Party
23:00 Kaffibarinn

Oliver Devaney
20:00 Mengi

Fusion Groove
22:00 Röntgen

Sunday August 31

Chess Tournament
14:00 Árbær Open Air Museum

Jaymz Bee Movie Screenings
17:00 Bió Paradís

Painting With Vegetable Dyes
19:00 Dalur

Total Babes-Electro-Bricolage-Ensemble Workshop
13:00 Hafnarborg

Reykjavík Jazz: Cécile McLorin Salvant
20:00 Harpa (Eldborg)

Andervel, Ingibjörg Elsa Turchi & Björg Brjánsdóttir
17:00 Salurinn

Terrordisco Vinyl Set
21:00 Kaffibarinn

Monday September 1

Mánudjass
19:30 Le Kock

Tuesday September 2

Upprásin: Laglegt, Néfur, Straff
20:00 Harpa (Kaldalón)

LEMMY ask you a QUIZ
20:00 LEMMY

Ari Árelíus DJ Set
21:00 Kaffibarinn

Wednesday September 3

Klaki
22:00 Ellý Bar

Stand Up Comedy In Broken English: Victor Patrascan
20:00 Gamla Bió

Vinyl Wednesday: Cousin's Trouble
21:00 Röntgen

Sigga Eyrún Release Concert
20:00 Salurinn

Erlendur Fashion Week Opening Party
19:00 Port9

Thursday September 4

Volcano: A Science Comedy Show
19:00 Gaukurinn

Grunge: Unplugged
22:00 LEMMY

PCOS Iceland Pub Quiz
20:00 Röntgen

MARIA
21:00 Röntgen

Carpenters Nostalgia
20:00 Salurinn

Flækt (Premiere)
20:00 Tjarnarbió

Icelandic Queer Film Festival
19:00 Bió Paradís

Erlendur Fashion Week Exhibition
18:00 Port9

Friday September 5

Free Supermarket
17:30 Andrymi

Party Screening: To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar
21:00 Bió Paradís

Björg Brjánsdóttir: Works For Flute
20:00 Mengi

Betri Saman
22:00 Röntgen

Belonging?
20:30 Salurinn

Icelandic Queer Film Festival
14:00 Bió Paradís

Erlendur Fashion Week Runway Show
19:00 Whales Of Iceland

Saturday September 6

Þjóð Gegn Þjóðarmorði
14:00 Austurvöllur

Karaoke
22:00 Ellý

Matinée Concert
12:00 Hallgrímskirkja

Cauda Collective Family Concert
11:00 Hannesarholt

Oda Voltersvík: Nordic Unrest
18:00 Harpa (Kaldalón)

Ólöf Arnalds Welcomes Fall
20:00 Mengi

SVBKVLN Night
22:00 MONO (Útópía)

PÖLSE & POESI
17:00 Nordic House

Chat And Play In Icelandic
11:30 Reykjavík City Library (Grófin)

Hauslaus: Krullur
21:00 RVK Brewery

Óli Dóri
22:00 Röntgen

Hildur Vala
20:30 Salurinn

Icelandic Queer Film Festival
19:00 Bió Paradís

Erlendur Fashion Week Runway Show
19:00 Whales Of Iceland

Erlendur Fashion Week: Michael Lombard Show
20:00 Whales Of Iceland

Sunday September 7

Sigríður Thorlacius Trio
18:00 Hotel Holt

20:00 Hotel Holt

Sunday Jazz: Hist og & Kristín Anna
20:00 Iðnó

A Conversation With Hildigunnur Birgisdóttir
14:00 National Gallery Of Iceland

Tíbrá: Að endalokum
13:30 Salurinn

Icelandic Queer Film Festival
19:00 Bió Paradís

Monday September 8

Sigríður Thorlacius Trio
18:00 Hotel Holt

20:00 Hotel Holt

Mánudjass
19:30 Le Kock

Tuesday September 9

Board Game Night
19:00 Dalur Hostel

Silja Glömmi
21:00 Kaffibarinn

Wednesday September 10

Klaki
22:00 Ellý Bar

Mark Fell & Rian Treanor Sound Workshop Day 1
15:00 Mengi

Vinyl Wednesday: DJ Diva De La Rósa
21:00 Röntgen

Thursday September 11

Kaktus Einarsson
20:00 Kaffi Flóra

Mark Fell & Rian Treanor Sound Workshop Day 2
15:00 Mengi

Marsibil Concert
21:00 Röntgen

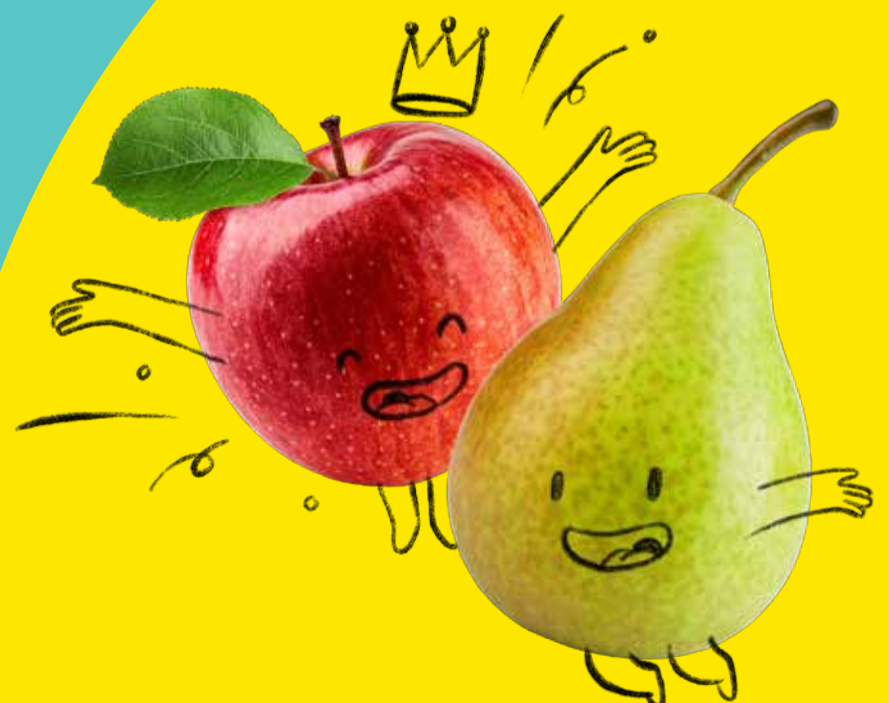
In3DJee
22:00 Röntgen

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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 1.300 ISK

APÉRO

Every day from 16:00 to 1:00
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 1.100 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

BODEGA

Every day from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.200 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 1.050 ISK, Wine 1.800 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 15:00 to 19:00
Beer 1.190 ISK, Wine 1.300 ISK

ÖLSTOFAN

Every day from 15:00 to 20:00
Beer 1.100 ISK, Wine 1.100 ISK

PRÍKIÐ

Every day from 16:00 to 20:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.500 ISK

RÖNTGEN

Every day from open to 19:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

SKÚLI CRAFT BAR

Every day from 12:00 to 19:00
Beer 1.100 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

Kaffibarinn

BERGSTADASTRÆTI 3,
101 REYKJAVÍK

Good ol' KB. A mark of a true establishment is when you get a bird-house made of you, and Kaffibarinn just passed that threshold. As we grasp the remaining days of summer, there's no spot like Kaffibarinn to celebrate the Icelandic summer mania, even as it fades away. Admittedly, I've rarely made it to Kaffibarinn before their 20:00 Beer Happy Hour cut-off (sometimes, not even before their 23:00 Cocktail Happy Hour cut-off), but maybe I should try it out sometime. Hey, early bird gets the happy hour. ISH

HAPPY HOURS:

Beer: 15:00-20:00
Cocktails: 15:00-23:00

Beer for 1.050 ISK
Cocktails for 2.300 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

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

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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Manuscript exhibition

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Edda
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107 Reykjavík



Fantastic Beasts

Ordinary Creature Earns Its Hooks

Of Monsters create a masterful pop tune that feels local

WORDS Bart Cameron
IMAGE Supplied

lines that weren't meant to be sung as a chorus, but that locked into the brain.

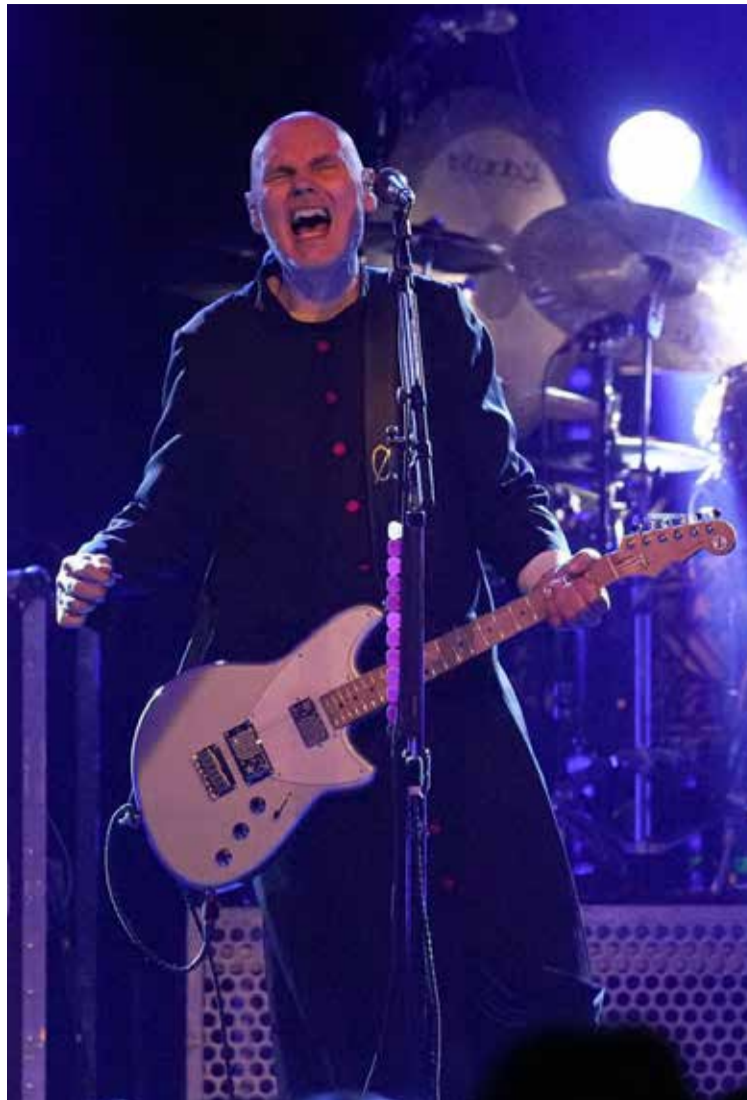
It was Skakkamanage that came to mind almost 30 seconds into "Ordinary Creature," as a good pop tune began to breathe and expand into greatness, with a gentle mash of electric guitars and a perfectly placed refrain. The refrain here, introduced at about a minute, based on the keyboard riff that opens the song, is poignant and direct, but not cloying: "I wish I could run to your house when it gets dark out."

One refrain alone is not enough to create pop perfection, but it can float a song to a higher level. That's what we have here. A driving, surprisingly conventionally instrumented pop song that connects to the feeling of longing in ways that feel deeper than its parts.

Of Monsters and Men have known fame. With their 2013 single "Little Talks," they became the best-selling Icelandic artists since Björk. The band doesn't need a local street magazine's praise, and we have objectively been slow to give it in the past. However, their new single deserves to dominate the pop charts, even in 2025, a year of unusually strong pop songwriters. When it does, it might bring listeners back to the Reykjavik of the 2000s, or it might simply help us get through the oncoming darkness of winter. ■

What does a band do with world fame and 15 years of performing together? In the case of Garðabær indie folkers Of Monsters and Men, they hone their craft. Their new single, "Ordinary Creature," demonstrates pop songwriting at its highest levels, while playing in the sandbox of revered underground Reykjavik songwriters.

Readers of this magazine might remember Skakkamanage, a roughshod, delightful Reykjavik-based band from the 2000s who captured the chaos of the time with crude Wurlitzer electric piano hooks over steady, driving beats, allowing lyricist Svavar Pétur to deliver his perfectly crafted refrains — repeated



Live Music

You Know I'm Not Dead

Smashing Pumpkins play Reykjavik 30 years late, but firing on all cylinders

WORDS John Rogers
IMAGE Mummi Lu

they were always impressive, even as the venues shrank. But since the breakup, Billy has seemed jaded about the band, and his fame, and the music industry in general. A prickly, domineering type, he seems eternally wounded or irked by one little thing or another, when he isn't harping on conspiracy theories, or hopping onto Joe Rogan.

While it was fun to hear the classics, the show really sprang to life when the band showed their teeth. For all the grandeur of their wistful pop songs, the Smashing Pumpkins have always been a searing rock band. "Heavy Metal Machine" — played second, here — was a heartening statement of intent. The savage riffing of "Bodies" shook the walls. The stone-cold classic "Mayonaise" [sic] and the spacious, epic "Porcelina" hit just right, and "Cherub Rock" is a slab of summery, honey-coated noise that still sounds fresh, 30 years on.

"I don't wanna go to the fucking Blue Lagoon," spits Billy Corgan, spikily. "I wanna go to the black lagoon, where all the goths go." He breaks out into his trademark wolfish grin. "I did go to some tourist spa today, and did the seven circles of hell, or whatever." James Iha, the band's guitarist, looks on. "You didn't enjoy it?" he asks, plaintively.

Billy grins again, lurking at the mic like an edgelord Nosferatu. "Fuckin'.... no."

It's fun to see The Smashing Pumpkins — reunited, except for estranged OG bassist D'arcy Wretzky — in such good spirits. The band were, of course, one of the big beasts of the '90s, releasing a string of visionary, widescreen records that helped define the era, and propel alt-rock into the mainstream. But when grunge washed up on the shore of the new millennium, they splintered. Billy used the name, for a while, in various iterations — but The Smashing Pumpkins is more than just Billy. Without the metronomic precision and jaw-dropping flair of drummer Jimmy Chamberlain, and Iha's subtle, silvery, moonlit guitar sound, it just wasn't the Pumpkins.

FELINE WHINE

It was hard to know what to expect from the reformed band, who've been playing on and off since their 2018 reconciliation. I'd seen them before — touring *Mellon Collie*, then *Adore*, and then *Machina* — and

Given all of that *personality*, one imagines this could be a fragile peace. But at their first-ever show in Iceland, the Pumpkins played to the capacity crowd with eye-watering

The Smashing Pumpkins have done the seemingly impossible, and bucked the trend of rusty reunion tours.

volume, virtuosic flourish, and tangible spirit. Billy's voice — from feline whine to sandpaper growl — is impressively intact. It was tight, it was vibey, and they were having fun. If you closed your eyes, it was almost like they were never apart.

HONEY-COATED NOISE

The show opened on an odd off-note, with a deep cut called "Glass" — a track so obscure that many in the crowd thought it was the dreaded New Material. But from that moment on, the set was loaded with hits. We got the breezy crowd pleasers like the eternally youthful "1979" and the tuneful radio smash "Today." We trundled through the acoustic anthems "Tonight Tonight" and "Disarm." We got the effervescent, heart-piercing "Muzzle," its lyrical optimism — "My life has been extraordinary... I know that I am meant for this world" — made all the more touching for being written in the pitch black ink of Billy's nihilistic pen.

PUMPKINS SMASHED

I came to this concert a lifelong Pumpkins fan with low to no expectations for what I'd witness. Billy, I imagined, might be phoning it in, and the band's volatile chemistry might overspill into a fraught atmosphere — like those desolate, miserable Pixies reunion shows of the '00s.

But to my own surprise, I quickly found myself lost in the distortion, swaying, sweating, and staring into the flickering lights as if I could catch a glimpse of this shimmering, immersive sound. The Smashing Pumpkins have done the seemingly impossible, and bucked the trend of rusty reunion tours. They're not a period piece, or a nostalgic grey-vote curiosity, or a late-career cash-grab. They're a thrilling live band with a strong pulse, a snarling edge, and some gas left in the tank. The Smashing Pumpkins are — as Billy insisted on the closing number, "The Everlasting Gaze" — not dead. ■



Track By Track

The History Of Silence Is Written By múm

Experimental outfit múm celebrate their first LP in 12 years

WORDS múm (Örvar Þóreyjar Smárason)
IMAGE múm

Acclaimed experimental band múm (pages 14-16) explore silence, play, and muted sounds. However soft, múm surprise listeners with dynamic shifts in tone and intensity throughout their songwriting. Their first LP since the 2013 *Smilewound*, *History of Silence* came out of the band member's shared creative urgency. Working with old and new ideas, the result is a wonderfully cohesive and innovative piece of music which distinguishes itself from múm's previous body of work. *History of Silence* is out September 19 via Morr Music.

blend of "Albatross" by Fleetwood Mac, "The King of Rock n Roll" by Prefab Sprout and "Voulez-Vous" by Abba, but I doubt anyone will be able to hear it.

KILL THE LIGHT

There is a feeling of unrestrained drama in this song, I feel like parts of it could have worked well in an '80s kids' adventure movie. But even so, this could still possibly be the most múm-song on the album. The video for this track is set to be released in early September, and it adds a whole new layer to it. It reflects the atmosphere of the song, but shifts it into new territory.

cassette beat, mangled guitar, tipsy bass and distorted FX vocals, but keeps a bright disposition throughout.

OUR LOVE IS DISTORTING

I think the strength of the song lies in the way it contrasts between the almost collapsing first half, with its quiet wandering pianos and then the loud motoric drive of the second part. The lyrics are just, "Our love is distorting," repeated over and over with a gradual swell of distortion on Silla's vocals. The song didn't take flight until we ran the vocals through a BOSS Super Overdrive pedal creating that swell. There is even an

The lyrics are about a very fast car ride I had through the tight and narrow streets of Avignon more than 25 years ago

MILD AT HEART

The lyrics were loosely inspired by the book I was reading in the studio at the time, *The Baron in the Trees* by Italo Calvino, but I think they probably only contain traces of nuts. The song is an ode to kind people, those who are often crippled by their own empathy.

AVIGNON

The lyrics are about a very fast car ride I had through the tight and narrow streets of Avignon more than 25 years ago. For such a simple song it still took us more than two years to get the piano sound right; we tried recording it on probably seven or eight different pianos in different places until it was finally right.

ONLY SONGBIRDS HAVE A SWEET TOOTH

Possibly the first and only múm Scandi-reggae song, but maybe it's not a reggae song at all. It starts off with the slowed down sound we recorded from a camera flash going off and is all light from there on. It is quite lo-fi sounding, a four-track

accidental pitch bend on the vocals where I unintentionally stepped on some random pedal next to it while we were recording. Of course we kept it.

A DRY HEART NEEDS NO WINDING

It's the only instrumental track on the album, and again the title was inspired by what I was reading at the time, *The Dry Heart* by the Italian author Natalia Ginzburg... but other than that it bears no resemblance. At the core of this song is Róberta's guitar, beautifully played, textured and full of character.

I LIKE TO SHAKE

This was recorded on cassette in Prague when I was in film school 20 years ago and remained untouched until SinfoniaNord breathed new life into it last summer. It wasn't supposed to be on the album, but when the opportunity arose to drape this beat-up cassette recording in lush strings, we of course jumped at it. Gyða's vocals were added on the very last day of mixing and finally took the song to the place it had been seeking all along. ■

MISS YOU DANCE

It's the perfect opening song for the album, in the sense that it lays out the mood for the rest of it. There are so many different elements in it, but they drift quite effortlessly in and out. Different layers of Samuli's percussion is what keeps the music flowing, but aside from that my favourite bits are the orchestral parts played by Sinfonia Nord in Akureyri that sneak in once in a while and disappear just as quickly. For me personally this song is a strange

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Acronymical

What Does BKPM Stand For?

The quintet discusses their inspirations, debut album, and enigmatic name

WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle
IMAGES Sunna Ben

Meet BKPM in the basement of 12 Tónar, just four days after their release concert that was held in the very same space. “I felt the energy was quite electric,” drummer Rósa Sif Welding Kristinsdóttir reflects, then Jón Logi Pálma, vocalist and bassist, laughs and adds, “For more ways than one.” “Me and Víf both got electrocuted,” explains synth-player Óðal Hjarn Grétu. The electrifying performance in question was a celebration of the release of BKPM’s debut album *Biddu Ha?*, which dropped on August 3.

The group consists of Jón, Óðal, and Rósa, with guitarists Ásgeir Kjartansson and Víf Ásdísar Svansbur completing their quintet. BKPM is difficult to describe quickly; I’d venture to say that they are the poster children for the idea that Icelandic musicians “have no respect for

genre” (words I heard at Sátan Metal Festival), and that’s why Icelandic musicians don’t sound like anyone else.

“All of the different songs on this album have different periods and different genres in them,” Óðal says. “I just think that it’s — like, Jón is so full of influences that it’s a little bit hard to keep up with.” Rósa explains BKPM’s genre affiliations like someone recounting a recipe: “It begins with a base of proto and post-punk, with kraut-rock influence,” she starts, then continues that all band members bring their own influences (ingredients) to the BKPM soup. Óðal and Ásgeir are classically trained, and Rósa has heavy metal, noise, and math rock influences. “It all morphs into some sort of ball of slime,” as Rósa puts it.

All of the different songs on this album have different periods and different genres in them.

BATTLE-TESTED SONGS

The group came together around *Músíktílaunir 2023*, made it to the finals, and started performing live from there. They intended to put out an EP, but, as Jón describes it, “I think it was Víf who specifically pushed me, like, ‘no, no, no, no, no, no, make a full album. Everyone’s doing an EP these days.’” From

there, the group rehearsed, performed live, and doubled their count of five songs to ten.

Taking time before recording the album has allowed them to perfect their repertoire — “when I play ‘Bílalag 1’ live, it feels like putting on a jacket I’ve worn for a while. It’s kind of battle-tested,” Rósa says — except, I learn, for the final song on *Biddu Ha?* “*Rífa Það Niður*” is an epic finale that flirts with the 17-minute mark. “We finally finished writing the last song on the album, like two days before,” Rósa explains. “That was kind of weird to do, because it was still so fresh, but it was still very fun and explosive.” “I read Geordie Greep say that the first time you get the song right, it’s the best the song will ever sound. I think that happened on the last song,” adds Óðal.

An integral part to “*Rífa Það Niður*,” or any BKPM song for that matter, are the lyrics. As the lyricist, Jón effortlessly flits between the satirical and the serious, often even intertwining them. “All except two of the songs are sort of inspired by work and burning out a lot,” Jón says. For instance, their song “*Fyrsti Dagurinn*” is a delirious saga of showing up for your first day of work and

your boss ends up being a vampire, but also uses the vampire trope to say that work sucks you dry. Even in their retelling of the song’s inspiration, Jón shares two muses: “I was working at the pizza place and there

It all morphs into some sort of ball of slime.

was a lot of pizza sauce that was red in my mind at the time,” and how telling their boss they were stressed only led to the boss saying, “Hey, don’t stress. You work worse when you’re stressed.”

“Yeah, you have some crazy lyrics,” Rósa concludes. “But a lot of the time they’re very beautiful.”

WHAT’S IN AN ACRONYM?

A hallmark of BKPM is their donning of neon yellow construction vests for every performance. “Those vests are from my actual job at a warehouse,” Jón says. “I just asked my boss if I could borrow some, and they haven’t asked for them back, so this is just our look now.” Rósa continues, “I also think it adds something to the lyrics because you’re talking about your work, and how work and capitalism make you — yeah, burnt out and sad.”

Ruminating on the effects of capitalism on their music is a theme for BKPM. “I love music to my bones,” Rósa states at one point. “The best I feel is when we’re on stage playing music with other people, especially

in front of other people, and writing music... but the business aspect of that is something that I do not care for.” Jón agrees, sharing, “We haven’t been very good at marketing; we’ve been sort of surviving on

a word-of-mouth basis. But also it feels like [that’s how] the sort of bands that I’m inspired by [do it].” “The work you have to put in to be both good at the music bit and the business bit is as-tro-nomical,” laments Rósa, stressing the last word.

Towards the end of our conversation, I still have a final curiosity. When they perform live, the group often shouts out various meanings behind their “BKPM” acronym, and I want to know if there’s an official one. “The meaning of BKPM is in everyone’s hearts,” Jón answers. Rósa quickly adds, “Well, the correct answer is binary, killed, patriarchy, murder.” Jón counters, “No, it’s bass, klarinett, punk music,” and they descend into listing further possibilities for the title’s meaning.

“I like the idea of just, you know, having an air of mystery to our band,” Jón concludes. “Like, who are we? What do we stand for?” ■

To find out a bit more about what BKPM stands for, listen to *Biddu Ha?*, available now on Bandcamp and other streaming platforms.



Artist Of The Issue

Alaska1867 Purchases 101 Mindshare

Scene surfing on the cutting edge

WORDS John Rogers
IMAGES Art Bicnick

I was overthinking what my stage name should be. My real name is Kolfreyja, and if I used that, it felt like I'd be boxed into making folk music. I wanted something fresh and cool that would give me freedom. I was watching a video about the Alaska Purchase of 1867, and the name just clicked. From then on, it's been Alaska1867 — and I haven't looked back.

You first started self-publishing your stuff on SoundCloud — could you tell us about those early days, and how things went from there?

Back in 2019 I started making music with my ex, in his room — he loved producing, and I'd always wanted to be a musician, so it just clicked. We made tonnes of songs and threw them up on SoundCloud with zero pressure: no rollout, no perfect mix — just casual. Even now, I'll sometimes drop a track on SoundCloud straight from my room when I just feel like sharing.

You have tracks that are lowkey (“Hata Hann”), dreamy electronic (“SMS”), harder 4x4 house (“ChatGPT”), and clean rap (“SOS”). What was your path in developing your style, and how would you describe it today?

I started figuring out my style on SoundCloud, inspired by hyperpop and drain — artists like Charli XCX, Yung Lean, Bladee, Namasenda, and A.G. Cook's production. I love experimenting with different sounds, and I don't want to be boxed into one genre — a good song is a

good song. That hyperpop energy definitely makes me stand out, but I don't try to define it too much. I just know I make really good music, and I want to keep evolving for the rest of my career.

You have a lot of interesting collaborators on your tracks. Could you tell us about working with all the people in your orbit, and what kind of scene and community it is?

The Icelandic music scene is small but powerful — if you make good music, people (especially other artists) will hear about it fast. One of the best things in my career so far has been getting to work with and befriend some of my favourite artists. The scene here really feels like one big family, and that community energy is what makes it so special.

What are some key influences, music or otherwise, that have informed what you do?

Reykjavik culture is a huge influence — from street art to the chaos of 101 nights. 2010s Tumblr shaped my aesthetic, and artists like Alvia Islandia, Sturla Atlas, and 101 Boys were a big part of my teenage years. Musically I look up to Lauryn Hill and Charli XCX, but fashion and labels like Nikita inspire me just as much. I don't just want to reflect the culture in Iceland — I want to be the culture, and build a world Reykjavik youth want to live in.

The video for “SOS” is popping off online. It shows a grimy 101 underground, happening just out of view.

Is the 101 underground an inspiration for you?

Yes — because I'm part of it. The underground is what really carries culture here, and we wanted the video to show that. Bryngeir Vattnes shot and directed it, and he captured it perfectly — me and Birnir couldn't be happier. And it's not just inspiration, it's genuine. Everything about 101 Reykjavik — the fashion, the art, the youth, the parties — it's in my DNA.

Your work has a lot of references to contemporary culture, and a strong party vibe. Do you see it as a snapshot of where things are at, and where you're at?

Yeah, in a way. I think my music naturally reflects the moment I'm in and the culture around me — the parties, the chaos. But I don't try to take a snapshot — I just make music that feels real to me, and if it captures the vibe of now that's because I'm living it.

The outside world has clichéd images of Iceland — fire and ice, feminist paradise, “safest country in the world”, and all that. Is there a “real Iceland” you'd want the world to know about?

I don't really feel like I'm the one to define “the real Iceland.” Reykjavik is just the place I live and create in — it's fun, exciting, and full of good people and really talented artists. It's a small community where most people know each other, and like anywhere else, it has its good and bad sides. I'm just focused on making

music and having fun.

Reykjavik had a couple of big party summers back when homegrown rap first hit the mainstream. What's the temperature of the scene right now?

It's definitely heating up right now. Things felt kind of stale for a few years after COVID, but the energy has shifted — everything's moving again. The scene feels alive — people were hungry for something new, and now you're hearing fresh sounds and new voices breaking through.

We lost a lot of music venues to tourism in recent years. What's your take on where the live music scene is, or where it's going?

Right now the live scene lives mostly in places like Prikið and Auto. I honestly hate how puffin stores and tourism have been eating up downtown — it's killing venues. But art always finds a way. Prikið is up, Auto is up, and people are creating cool new spaces and festivals like RVK X.

What's “the dream” for Alaska1867?

In many ways I already feel like I'm living the dream I wanted — making good music with good people. My dream is just to keep building on that, to sell out shows, and to make this my life forever. I don't need anything more complicated than that. ■

Follow Alaska1867 via @alaska1867 on all platforms, and see her perform live at Iceland Airwaves 2025.

After a few years spent simmering and cooking, bleeding-edge rapper Alaska1867 burst onto the 101 scene with force in 2025. The 222 EP was a statement of intent; hit single “SOS” is one of the sounds of the summer. With an Airwaves performance locked in, we sat down with Alaska to talk about partying, production, and embodying the moment.

My first thought on seeing your stage name was Alaska the drag queen, and then Alaska the state — but “1867” says you're named after something else. What's the story?

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Travel Feature

Following The Weather

How to spend Verslunarmannahelgi in and around Húsavík

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Atli Freyr Steinsson

When Verslunarmannahelgi, aka Merchant's Weekend, aka the last public holiday before Christmas, rolled around in the beginning of August, I did what most Icelanders do that weekend: followed the weather and got the hell out of town. While the capital was drowning in nonstop rain, I spent six hours in the car, accompanied by good music and a double rainbow that followed me from Blönduós north to Húsavík.

This is *the* camping weekend of the year, so no other options were even considered. I packed my tent, an inflatable mat (seriously, if you still don't have one, run to Útillif as fast as you can; it's easily in my top three things that improve quality of life), and a bunch of pillows from the house. If you have space, they make a huge difference for both the sleep quality and the overall tent ambience.

Now, where to camp? There's a campground right in Húsavík, but just by looking at it, I knew I wanted something else. The "official" Húsavík campground sits right next

to the road, and with tents and trailers cramped together, it wasn't clear where the parking lot ended and the campsite began. Luckily, if you drive past Húsavík for about 20 minutes, you'll stumble upon perhaps the most picturesque campsite in Iceland. Type "Camping 66.12 NORTH" into Google Maps and save it for your next trip. I'd like to keep it a secret, but, honestly, it's huge — plenty of space for everyone.

ALL ABOUT THAT HORIZON

Picture this: it's scorching 18°C (If you're reading this from somewhere warmer and just rolled your eyes... just shut up — can you let us enjoy what we have for a minute?!), and you're setting up your tent with a view of the wide, calm ocean, until two tiny, mysterious islands pop up on the horizon. In a bit, you'll be making veggie burgers on your camping stove and watching kids play with a giant bird-shaped kite.

The rule at this campsite is that tents and trailers must be at least four metres apart — a decent distance for privacy, but still close enough for a little people-watch-

ing their cat — I've never seen a cat camping before, and also being so chill about it, like it has done it at least a dozen times this summer only; someone sitting on a bale of hay as their friend takes a photo, the bales spread around the campsite like giant marshmallows; fellow campers lining up their chairs to watch the sunset peeking brightly from the clouds, Reykjavík's former mayor Dagur B. Eggertsson doing the same.

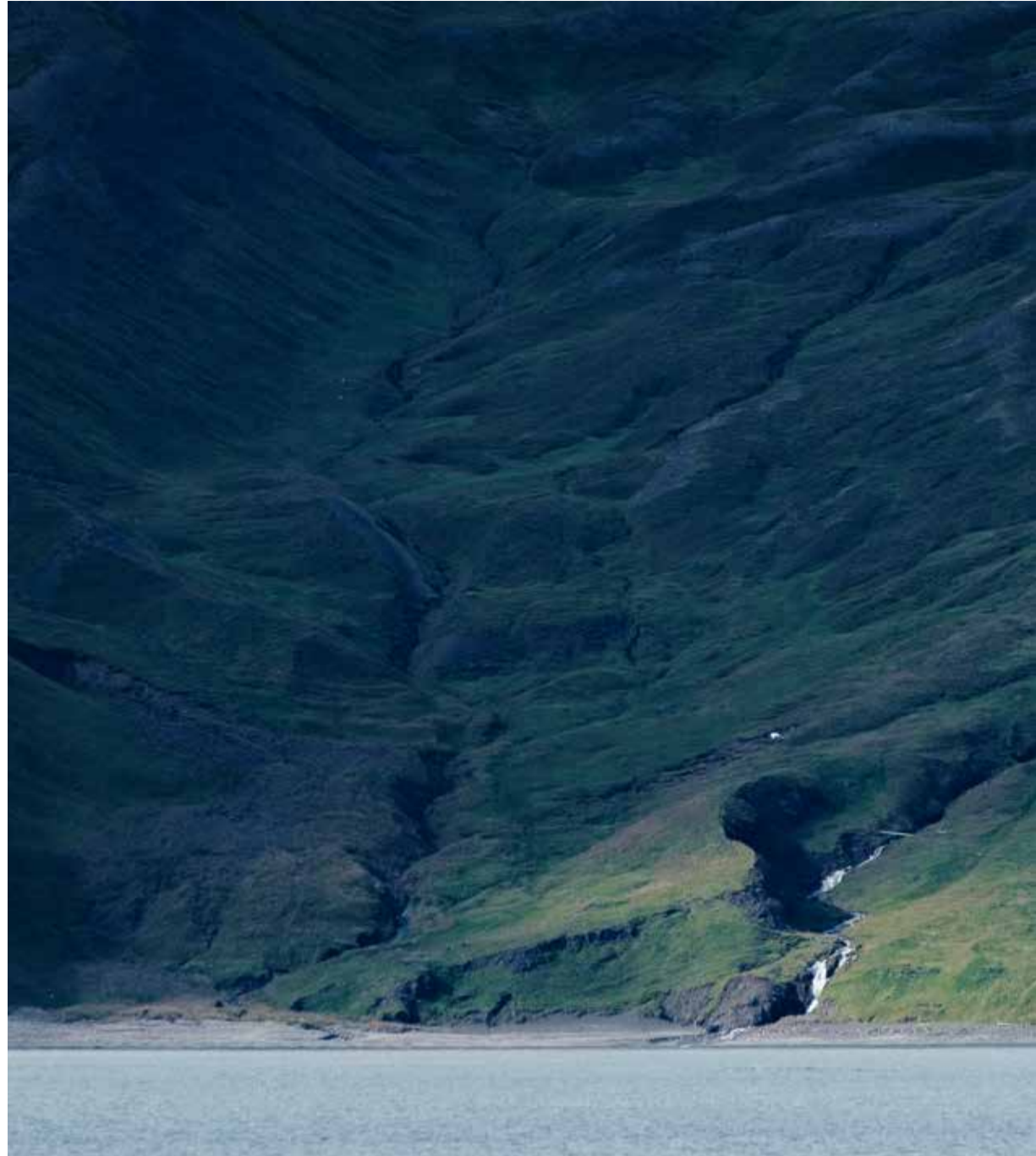
It doesn't matter that in a few hours you'll be awakened by the wind shaking your tent and have to put on extra layers — right now, you're just soaking in the view and the day, almost feeling summer drift away.

While I like to romanticise the view and obsess a little too much about what I eat on my trips, this campsite checks all of the practical boxes, too. There's a fully equipped kitchen with pots, a toaster, a microwave, and other essentials, and a bathroom area with gender-separate toilets and showers, and plenty of plugs to charge your devices. For an extra fee, you can even do laundry

After years of circumnavigating Iceland, I have a confession to make — until this trip, I'd never been to Húsavík.

ing: here's a group of girls trying to pitch a tent, probably for the first time ever, their white Dacia Duster giving them away as newbie tourists; a bunch of senior citizens heading back to their trailer for a quick game of cards before bed; a couple

and dry it on-site. The prices are very reasonable, and even pleasantly surprising: 2.000 ISK per person for the first night, and just 1.000 ISK per person for each additional night. Bjarni, who runs the place, deserves





er North

a separate shout-out. Wearing a neon yellow vest, he seemed to be at the campsite 24/7, greeting cars and helping them navigate the area. When I was heading out for the day after the first night and told him I'd like to stay an extra one, he smiled and said, "Just pay when you come back. Otherwise, I'm likely to charge you twice."

NORTHERN PINTS

After years of circumnavigating Iceland, I have a confession to make — until this trip, I'd never been to Húsavík. Perhaps it's the town's location off the Ring Road that never makes it seem "on the way," or maybe its reputation following the infamous Netflix movie *Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga*, which gave rise to thematic establishments popping up around town — there's a Eurovision exhibition and a Jaja Ding Dong bar. Somehow, it never made it to the top of my list. The town doesn't even have a decent ice cream shop (any), but it is a picturesque little place.

Home to fewer than 3,000 residents, Húsavík is dotted with a few hundred houses overlooking Skjálfandi Bay. Other than the Eurovision-themed attractions, some of the town's most famous landmarks include Húsavíkirkirkja, built at the onset of the last century, the local brewery and taproom Húsavík Öl, and the GeoSea baths.

The taproom welcomes me with a terrace full of beer-sipping locals (and I swear, a sweet grandma-on-holiday lady must have spent her entire weekend there — she was out on the terrace every time I walked or drove by). Inside, the space is tiny, but it feels surprising-

ly metropolitan if you consider that further north is just the ocean, a few uninhabited islands, the Arctic Circle, and, they say, on a bright day, if you're lucky, you can see all the way to the shores of Greenland. I settle for a fruity yet bitter New England IPA, while my companion opts for a non-alcoholic beer. Their 0 percent selection could easily compete with any big brewery or bar in the capital — in fact, have you ever seen a non-drinker offered seven beers to choose from?

HORIZON SLIPS INTO THE WATER

We check the opening times for GeoSea and find out that during summer (until August 31), it doesn't close until midnight, which quickly sorts out our sunset plans. We arrive at the baths around 22:00 only to find out that many other people had exactly the same idea. For more than an hour, I squeeze between an American family, who in addition to having a gazillion of their own kids, try to make friends with all other kids present at the pool.

"How do you say 'nice to meet you' in Icelandic?" asks the mom of the group. The kid patiently teaches her, but when she tries to repeat, the words come out as "Blah-blah-flor!" I hear conversations like this one after another, and the woman's high-pitched laughter still echoes in my ears as I type this today.

Other than the rush-hour chaos of peak tourist season, GeoSea is amazing. The infinity pool looks like an extension of the cliffside — from a distance you can't tell where the pool ends and the horizon begins. The temperature of the heated seawater varies from one end to

the other, there are plenty of sitting places, and even a bar — though you do have to climb out to get a drink. Its only other amenity is a steam room, but honestly, that feels like enough. This is a bath you come to for the view. Sitting in the water, watching the sun sink into the bay, I can't help but think: I'll be back in the dead of winter, when no one else thinks it's even remotely a good idea.

HOT COCOA AND WHALE TAIL

But Húsavík isn't just about soaking in hot water. It proudly calls itself the whale watching capital of Iceland, and it's simply impossible not to notice the number of whale watching tours on offer. The signs invite you on an adventure, and brochures found at a gas station offer you discounts to museums and restaurants if you book a tour. I've seen whales twice in my life — once on a boat between islands in Greenland, where we encountered a pod of humpback whales, and another time when a humpback whale swam into the harbour in Hafnarfjörður, and nothing seemed like a better idea than to go check it out in the middle of the workday. Both were amazing and humbling experiences, but I'd never before thought of going on an organised whale watching tour. I'm not sure whether it was FOMO or the lack of other activities nearby, but this time, I was curious to see what an actual whale watching trip entails.

So, on the Monday of the long weekend, before driving all the way to Reykjavík, I joined the "Húsavík Original Whale Watching" tour by North Sailing. They actually offer a lot of other options — from silent whale watching on an electric boat

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to tours that combine puffin and whale watching, and even sailing expeditions to Greenland. I chose the one that suited me best time-wise, departing at 9:00 and lasting about three hours, but the included hot chocolate and cinnamon rolls served at the end of the trip were equally enticing.

Once I step on board the traditional oak ship *Sæborg*, I'm immediately ordered to change into a waterproof suit handed out by our guides. I'm one of those people who are always cold, so getting an extra layer – even on a beautiful day like this – is much appreciated. In the middle of summer, these tours are very popular, so it's no wonder our boat fills to the brim with fellow whale watchers. As we depart from the harbour, I spot at least four similar boats, tilting under the weight of passengers, all cameras pointed in the same direction.

The guide tells us to imagine the boat as a clock, and whenever we see a whale, he'll say "one o'clock," or "six o'clock" – apparently, it's easier to teach a bunch of mostly confused tourists to read the clock rather than try to explain to them

where north or east is. "Or just look wherever everyone else is looking," he adds, with a tired sigh.

Luckily, the spot I chose, almost at the nose of the ship, was where "one o'clock" had been called out frequently during the trip. First, we saw puffins fishing, literally with their mouths full of small fish. Then a dolphin popped up on the side, and a few minutes later, a whole pod of them appeared, acrobatically jumping out of the water. They chased the ship, circled around it, and continued jumping, playfully interacting with their dolphin buddies.

Then, for a while, nothing happened. We followed another ship that had reportedly spotted a whale, and as we patiently waited for it to reappear, our guide told us stories about the area and the local wildlife – like the fact that blue whales, the largest animals on the planet, swim into the bay during summer. He also showed us the keratin plates that baleen whales (which include humpbacks and blue whales) use to filter food. Eww, not for me. I prefer using teeth.

"A humpback is diving now. They can dive for about 40 minutes, and,

unfortunately, we don't have time to wait," the guide said, as the captain diverted the ship to another spot before we set off back.

We spotted a humpback's tail a few more times, but it wasn't quite enough to count as a success. The dolphins disappeared and reappeared, their tiny black fins breaking the surface – if you didn't know better, you might have imagined they were sharks.

It was a nice day out on the boat. Before we headed back, one thing caught my eye: the textured, velvety mountain in front – with its sculpted ridges and a lone cabin. The guide said a local family owns the cabin and keeps it open in case hikers need shelter. To get there, you either need a boat or a 20-kilometre hike through completely secluded terrain. This hike goes straight onto my wishlist. Maybe next *Verslunarmanahelgi*? ■

The whale watching tour was provided by North Sailing. Check out their tours and expeditions at northsailing.is to book the next adventure.

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In Flames

Changing Tastes At Fönix

A visit to Reykjavík's enduring Sichuan outpost

WORDS John Rogers
IMAGES John Rogers

outside. But over the last 13 years, Fönix has become a bastion of Chinese food in Reykjavík, serving a mixture of takeaway favourites, and a short menu of specials: that is, sizzling Sichuan-style dishes with a hearty, home-cooked feel.

place has changed a lot since then. We had a small budget when we opened, and only bought the absolutely essential kitchen supplies."

Aron remembers that even during this busy time, food was always at

"We're always trying to incorporate more authentic dishes into our menu," says Aron. "That's why we have the speciality section. My grandma is from the Sichuan region, which is that spicy, numbing food."

The restaurant also serves a piping hot mapo tofu, including a popular vegan option. The Sichuan eggplant dish is a treat; the thinly sliced, double cooked pork belly – first boiled, then fried – sizzles with spice. The Sichuan chicken dish gives that welcome, tongue-tingling buzz of 'numbing' Sichuan pepper heat.

"The dumplings are very popular, too," says Aron. "We make both the dough and the mince itself. We buy the chunks of pork, and mince it ourselves to get the just right fat quantity. We make everything from scratch."

SOMETHING NEW

Fönix has seen an evolution in the tastes of its customers in recent times. The takeaway classics remain ever popular, but an increasing number of people are showing interest in Sichuan flavours.

"I have seen a lot of change in the

Icelandic palate in the last ten years," says Aron. "We have been seeing more authentic Chinese restaurants opening all over the world. I think younger people are more open to trying authentic dishes. There's definitely potential there. We'll always keep the classics – but I think we don't have to be afraid to give Icelanders something new."

One of the things Aron has been thinking about is traditional Chinese hotpot, where diners dunk raw ingredients into a bowl of bubbling broth and cook it to their own taste. "I absolutely love hot pot!" he exclaims. "It's so versatile, you can put everything in it. There is definitely a need for a hot pot restaurant in Iceland." He pauses, musing over the idea. "But I don't know how practical it is – you have to cook the raw meat yourself at the table. So I think it might run into trouble with the health authorities, which is probably why nobody has tried it."

But for now, business is good. In 2020, the family opened a second location in Hafnarfjörður, which has proven just as popular. Fönix will keep doing what Fönix does best – but with one eye on the changing times. ■

More authentic Chinese restaurants are opening all over the world.

THE CHEF OF THE FAMILY

The restaurant was opened in 2012 by spouses Símon Xianqing Quan and Wenli Wang, who emigrated to Iceland from the Anhui province of China in the late '90s. Today, their son Aron is the director of operations. He fondly remembers moving to Iceland aged five, and seeing snow for the first time – and the path that led to founding Fönix in 2012.

"My mom and dad had been working in a few Asian-style restaurants in Iceland for years," he says. "But they always wanted to start their own business, doing their own thing. The

centre of the home. "My mom has always been the chef of the family," he says. "There was always home cooking. It didn't matter if she was working 10, 12, 14 hours a day. When she came home, she always prepared some dishes."

SPICY AND NUMBING

This passion for cooking and comfort food is a key factor in why Fönix is so popular. The menu covers all kinds of Western-style takeaway favourites, like simple fried noodles, deep-fried king prawns, and an excellent Kung Pao chicken. But it's with the specials – a short section tucked away at the end of the menu – that Fönix really shines.

Fönix is an unassuming 36-seat Chinese restaurant in the somewhat grey and concrete-heavy locale of Höfðinn. It sits on the middle floor of a three-storey strip mall next to one of Iceland's biggest motorways, between a car workshop and a hunting supplies store. It doesn't stand out much, from the

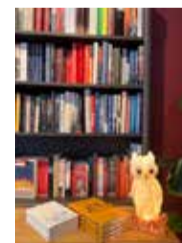


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Glass Houses **That Greenhouse Place**

New Nordic cuisine with a view at Sól

WORDS Ragnar Egilsson
IMAGES Joana Fontinha

certain that this restaurant is called Sól. Yes, let's go with Sól. It's what it says on their website.

made for a wonderfully discordant entrance.

It's a type of service that feels almost mockingly cheerful, which seems like something Gen Zers being forced to serve a graying room of upper-middle class people would develop.

SALAD DAYS

Some restaurants are easier to remember than others. For whatever reason, I kept getting the name of this one wrong and thought it was called Gró, Gló or Gróður at various intervals. Nothing like a restaurant critic discussing a non-existent restaurant. I'm now like 99.9 percent

"Sól" is Icelandic for "sun" and the restaurant happens to be nestled in a glass greenhouse at the edge of the industrial side of the Hafnarfjörður marina, with magnificent views of the ocean and nearby golf course on one side and a slightly less magnificent view of oil tanks and storage lots on the other, which

The restaurant has been very well-received by the Hafnarfjörður locals, and the room was packed on the two occasions I visited. After walking up the stairs past the main growroom, you arrive at the modestly sized dining area. Below your feet are rows of vibrant salad buds and tucked in the corner are kegs and brewing equipment, which the waiter assures me will be put to further use in the near future.

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ce In Hafnarfjörður

With transparent floors, ceilings and walls, every surface gleams like a utopian cube or the set of a mid-budget Marvel movie. In a world (*insert movie trailer voice*) where most restaurants make do with building a home in one of the eye-searingly pricy rental spaces in downtown Reykjavík, the owners Sölvi Steinarr, Guðrún Auður Böðvarsdóttir, Björk Bjarnadóttir and Brjánn Guðjónsson opted for a greenhouse in a Hafnarfjörður shipyard, and it really should be celebrated.

“BUT REALLY, HOW WAS IT!?”

Each table is decorated with an edible chia-pet-looking bush of Greek basil, which was great for a finishing touch on the potato bread with whipped butter. The acoustics were less of a problem than I expected, but still be prepared to dip your tie into the butter as you lean in to speak across the table. The menu selection is a perfectly disciplined five starters, five mains and two desserts, which were surprisingly focused on New Nordic cuisine, as the

clientele seems to consist entirely of locals. The emphasis is on locally sourced fish and seafood, much like the nearby Von mathús, which is the only sane choice in a town built entirely by the fishing industry. Having tried all 12 dishes, I feel confident in saying that it is in the execution of those 12 dishes where Sól falters.

would develop. The servers also inserted themselves multiple times into intimate conversations, despite no changeover in service, with questions of “how was your meal?” delivered like they were speaking to someone in palliative care. But this is an endemic issue and not limited to Sól, so we’ll leave it at that.

I realise it may sound odd to call a caramelised cheese spread with liquorice and blueberries “familiar” but in Iceland, it kind of is.

The service was perfectly reasonable but of a variety that has been gathering steam in Iceland lately, and one that I can’t quite figure out. It’s a type of service that feels almost mockingly cheerful, which seems like something Gen Zers being forced to serve a graying room of upper-middle class people

For starters we went with the smoked haddock and the shellfish soup. The haddock was served on a delicate potato mousse with a sprinkling of beurre noisette crumble. The dish was pleasant, but smoke did overwhelm the other flavours, even the noisette, which is usually more than able to hold its own.

The shellfish soup seemed to be completely unseasoned and unflavoured, but the shrimp and scallops provided bursts of seasoning if you arranged your bites correctly. An unusually fine touch, and I’m not entirely sure it was intentional.

The mains redeemed things somewhat. A fillet of fresh skate had excellent texture but was far too seasoned and needed further flourishes to carry the day. The incredibly crisp and fresh side salad with a skyr dressing went some way to make up for the disappointment.

The beef tenderloin, paired with broccolini, mushrooms and gravy, was a return to safer territory – a dish that at least had the courage of its convictions, even if it didn’t push beyond steakhouse expectations. The meat was slightly undercooked but had a sincere grill texture.

“NICE ENOUGH”

A restaurant can be noteworthy in three ways: by being innovative, excellent, or both. You can make up

for a lack of wow-factor by quietly doing that thing you do at a very high level, even if your menu has stayed the same since the stone age. Then again, you can get away with some messy execution by swinging for the fences in terms of innovation and concept. Finding both is a rare treat, and they rarely stay hidden for long in the world of influencer marketing.

Yes, the design is lively, but the dishes march to a familiar beat if you’re familiar with Nordic restaurant cuisine. I realise it may sound odd to call a caramelised cheese spread with liquorice and blueberries “familiar” but in Iceland, it kind of is. Similarly, the execution is inconsistent in their seasoning and approach, some too delicate and others lean too hard into old world haute cuisine.

Sól is well worth the visit if you’re in the area, just not quite a destination experience. Yet. ■



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Matcha Mania

A Guide For The Matcha

Reykjavík's waking up to a green tea trend

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Art Bicnick

I tried to avoid the matcha trend for as long as I could, seriously. But there was a low point this summer when, from every corner of the internet, I was basically being screamed at: "Matcha! Matcha! Matcha!" I hate to admit it, but TikTok made me believe I love matcha, or at least want to love it. As anyone who drinks a lot of coffee has probably noticed, coffee gives you anxiety. Most of the world's coffee is also apparently moldy these days. It doesn't really have many benefits, except tasting that darn good. The lower-in-caffeine, bright green Japanese tea seemed at least worth a try.

"Icelanders are very wary and don't really have a palate for bitter flavours in general," a colleague told

me. "But like any trend, they want to get behind it while making significant changes."

Matcha-curious, I set out to find the town's best most decent matcha.

KAFFI Ó-LE
Hafnarstræti 11,
101 Reykjavík

Kaffi Ó-le is Grapevine's next-door neighbour and a frequent hangout/interview spot. They have the shortest working hours (closing at 15:00 during summer), but honestly, probably the best work-life balance for their employees – and, most importantly, great coffee. I've been told by many that Kaffi Ó-le also has the best matcha in town, so, of course, I had to try it.

The global matcha shortage affected their imports, and it took me a few return trips to actually get a cup. Unlike what I first thought, they don't use ceremonial matcha, but a powdered variety – though definitely a higher-quality one. At 1.100 ISK (about 8 EUR) a cup, it's a bit on the pricey side. They usually offer sprout milk with their matcha lattes, which, along with coconut milk, is my favourite. Oat milk doesn't foam, so trying to whisk it is about as pointless as expecting a cheap drink in Reykjavík.

I think public opinion lives up to the hype – the Iced Matcha Latte is refreshing and creamy, with a grassy

yet smooth flavour, though our photographer, who usually opts for coffee as black as a winter night in Ísafjörður, asked, "Why does it taste like fish?"

HYGGE
Seljavegur 2 & Barónsstígur 6,
101 Reykjavík

Hygge has been known for its baked goods and coffee, but what most people don't know is that they serve solid matcha too – though, like many things in this town, it depends a lot on the barista and whether today is a petta reddast kind of day. When the second location finally opened in the neighbourhood after months of permit shenanigans, I wasted no time checking it out. The interior hasn't changed much since Nebraska closed, but the current layout of the seating area and counter makes the space feel open and cosy.

When I asked for an Iced Matcha Latte, the person at the counter quickly went, "Green or blue?" I panicked inside: I just wanted a cold drink and had no idea what blue matcha even was. I went for a classic green matcha with coconut milk, and it was delightful – the balance of matcha, milk, and ice was perfect, and the coconut milk added a smooth, subtle sweetness. They've also been advertising summer drinks like "Iced Green Matcha with Fresh Lemonade and Strawberry Syrup," which sound refreshing but



Matcha Curious

a little weird — not sure I'll dare try one.

P.S. I Googled and learned that blue matcha is actually caffeine-free. Note taken.

I counted at least five different matcha drinks, including something borderline exotic like a Blueberry Matcha Macchiato.

TRUNG NGUYEN
E - COFFEE ICELAND
Hallgerðargata 23,
105 Reykjavík

Going to a different area code just for a drink isn't usually something I'm sold on right away. But I've heard so many good things about this Vietnamese café — and its Google reviews look solid — that I've been curious for a while. It also happens to be just steps away from Gallery Port's new location. (Yes, I know it's been over a year (or two already?!)) but I'm still not over the fact that they moved from that perfect little Laugavegur nook, only to be replaced by yet another puffin shop.)

Gallery and matcha — or the other way around — sounds like a perfect afternoon plan.

One thing that really caught my eye is how diverse the menu is. I counted at least five different matcha drinks, including something borderline exotic like a Blueberry Matcha Macchiato. They've also got tradi-

tional Vietnamese coffees like egg coffee and salt coffee, which I'll definitely be back to try. The matchas, both hot and cold, really hit the spot. The matcha cookies, though, felt extremely dry and stale. Hopefully a bad day?

MISCELLANEOUS
Multiple locations

Biang Reykjavík opened its doors less than a month ago, but word about their matchas has been spreading fast. I haven't tried it yet, but there are a few things that pique my interest: they use ceremonial-grade matcha; they promise to get hojicha, a roasted green tea variety lower in caffeine, soon; and they offer exotic combos I haven't seen in Iceland before — like mango, cherry, or peach matcha.

Plantan and Kaktus Espresso are decent matcha spots, with the latter even serving it with pea milk. Further away from downtown, Pallett in Hafnarfjörður is a recommendation I'd easily extend beyond matcha — this is hands-down the best cup of coffee I've had in Iceland. When it comes to matcha, they can make it as strong as you like, and are generally some of the nicest people in this uneasy business. When I was double-checking whether they currently have matcha on offer, the owner replied: "Hey! We do sometimes have it off-menu, but it's run out at the moment. I'm out of the country for a few days, but I'll stock up when I get back ♥" I'll forgive them their sporadic opening hours since this level of attention and care for quality in everything they do has my stamp of approval. Even further out of town, if you're ever in Vík, do check out Skool Beans — they don't do anything halfway either, and they have quality matcha lattes along with a lot of other interesting teas not found elsewhere in Iceland.

To avoid disappointment, stay away from matcha at places like Te & Kafi, Starbucks, and Joe & The Juice. ■

We do not consider this an exhaustive list of the town's best matchas. If you think your matcha deserves attention, send us a line at grapevine@grapevine.is



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Free Money!

Free Business Idea: Paid Parking

The subtle art of getting money for nothing

WORDS Freyr Thorvaldsson
IMAGE The Reykjavik Grapevine Archives

The Reykjavik Grapevine, concerned about the sad financial state of our readership, has magnanimously commissioned a series of free business ideas. Too busy to pursue these ideas ourselves, we scatter them before you, dear reader, like glinting crowns. It is for you to pick them up.

tactical breakthrough. Around the country, plucky landowners have found a scheme which combines technology with their patches of land to get money for nothing. It's an old concept, newly newborn: the paid parking lot.

WATERWORLD

Iceland has a wonderful way with water. It seems to fall down in different and exciting configurations. In the Blue Lagoon you can soak in it, mindfully, sexily. Some water gets so hot it even shoots up after five minutes of bubbling and heaving. Some of it has been frozen for a while and is so big it moves under its own weight, melting into pretty lagoons. Finally, there is the ocean itself, lapping unpredictably against the black sands of Vik.

This trickling water was heard around the world. Soon after, squadrons of passenger jets landed in Keflavik, and out came the GORE-TEXed horde. They climbed into rental cars and drove off, touring the country, stopping at waterfalls and at geysers and at beaches and at yet more waterfalls.

TWO MILLION BLADDERS PER YEAR

Suddenly everyone in Iceland had opinions about roadside infrastructure. Bathrooms were in great demand, as waterfalls have a wonderful way of inspiring the bladder. Railings needed erecting in key spots, to stave off pitiless gravity. Buildings needed favourable financ-

ing, so more money could be extracted via gift shops and canteens; that magical place where every day hundreds are introduced to the plastic-wrapped pepperoni taco sandwich – the unacknowledged height of Icelandic culinary art.

Needless to say, someone had to pay for all this, and who better than the foreigners themselves? Before you could say "hot spring" the parking ticket machines went up.

PROGRESS MARCHES ON

With time this system evolved. In some parking lots there were no ticket machines at all. They had instead been replaced by an app, along with cameras to enforce compliance. In one instance, if you didn't pay up within four hours the parking charge would multiply fourfold.

This automatic enforcement was a stroke of genius. No longer must we reduce profits by paying a loathsome youth to write tickets and argue with tired mothers on day three of the most expensive family vacation of their lives. In comparison to a meatsack, the automatic process can not be intimidated. It shows no mercy. The cameras parse the license plates; tears are only waste data. As long as the cars are parked, the money flows.

DO IT AT HOME

So we are really in business here. These lots rake in the money. The late payment fines ensure people pay quickly, and they raise the aver-

age profit per car in a pleasing way, as many people do not have mobile internet – especially when they travel – and many people are simply forgetful. Nice.

pricing and late fees. Newspapers have even besmirched this elegant system of wealth creation, going as far as to imply that providers of paid parking lack scruples.

Needless to say, someone had to pay for all this, and who better than the foreigners themselves? Before you could say "hot spring" the ticket machines went up.

So, without further ado, here are the steps you must take to set up your own parking lot money printer: (1) Own a piece of land adjacent to natural beauty. (2) Clear a patch for parking. (3) Install cameras and signs. (4) Charge the cars that stop lots of money.

It is sad that we've reached such a low cultural moment that everything must be spelled out. Nothing is left to the imagination. Must companies be so obscenely base as to state the perfectly obvious at every turn? Sadly the answer seems to be yes. Understatement and nuance are no longer valued, as they once were.

Notice that there is no step five. You don't actually need to use the money to fund amenities. That was just the excuse to begin with, an excuse long forgotten: now you just provide the parking and pocket the money.

Keep this sad fact well in mind as you construct your parking lot empire. The signage should be as clear as you can make it. Do that right, and watch the money pile in. ■

LOSERS INTERVENE

Except, lately, all the losers of the land seem to have come out of the woodwork. In June this year, the The Consumer Agency issued fines to four gallant companies in the parking business, stating that their signage was insufficiently clear about

Tired of eating gruel for every breakfast, lunch and dinner, hunched over in your tiny hovel? Tired of avoiding the trusting eyes of your loyal but hungry dachshund, Poppy? Look no further than to Freyr's business newsletter: freyr.substack.com – where the winners make the big bucks.

The process of moving money from the faceless tourist mass into more deserving pockets has proved more elusive than initially thought. Most tourists won't part with their cash for just any reason; it seems that one must give them something in return. This is most vexing to the would-be mogul, seeing all those moneyed people just walking around, unshered.

But lately we've had something of a



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Continued from page 12

funds, backed by pension capital required by regulation to be invested domestically, treat housing as an asset class rather than homes, echoing global trends. Iceland also provides among the weakest tenant protections in Europe, leaving renters vulnerable to sudden rent hikes and evictions.

The numbers tell the story. A typical flat in Reykjavik costs around 80-100 million ISK. A teacher like Ólafur might earn 600.000 ISK monthly before taxes, leaving him with perhaps 400.000 ISK after deductions. With rent consuming 240.000 ISK monthly (already 60 percent of his take-home pay), saving for a 20 percent deposit means accumulating 16 million ISK, or about three years of his entire salary, assuming he spent nothing else. With current interest rates pushed high to combat inflation, monthly mortgage payments can easily exceed rent costs, yet you can't escape the rent trap without the deposit.

The housing crisis shows how Iceland's structural vulnerabilities compound each other. High interest rates, necessary to stabilise the króna and control inflation, make mortgages expensive while reflecting the economy's fundamental instability. Construction costs remain elevated due to expensive imported materials and labour shortages, while planning restrictions limit supply and institutional investment increases demand.

The generational impact is stark. Between 2005 and 2024, homeownership among 25-49 year olds fell from 69 percent to 55 percent, while ownership among those 50+ rose from 74 percent to 77 percent. Today, people over 50 own about

two-thirds of all dwellings held by individual owners, despite being less than half of that population. About 30 percent of men and 25 percent of women aged 18-36 still live with their parents, and this trend has worsened as housing costs have spiked. An entire generation finds itself priced out of a market that works only for those treating homes as financial instruments.

as inflation began to fall, roughly two-fifths of working households remained under financial strain. This represents one of the worst deteriorations in household financial conditions among Nordic countries.

The peculiar cruelty is that Iceland has high nominal wages. Icelanders earn impressive salaries on paper. In practice, after accounting for hous-

which feeds back into import costs and domestic inflation.

Foreign Minister Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir captured Iceland's position with diplomatic precision: "Iceland is not high on the US government's priority list... we are ready and intend to be prepared when that conversation begins."

STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS WITHOUT EASY SOLUTIONS

Iceland has abundant renewable energy, well-managed natural resources, political stability, and sophisticated institutions i.e., hip English-language alt papers. By most measures, Iceland is thriving.

However, structural choices made decades ago have created an economy that transforms every external shock into domestic hardship. The floating currency that was supposed to provide flexibility instead provides volatility. The open economy that was supposed to bring prosperity instead brings vulnerability. The financial liberalisation that was supposed to increase efficiency instead increased instability.

This isn't a design flaw. The Iceland model prioritises adaptation and growth over stability and predictability. It works brilliantly when global conditions are favourable and punishes everyday Icelanders when they're not.

THE PATH FORWARD

For Ólafur Tviðstur and thousands like him, the immediate future holds more of the same. More careful budgeting. More deferred dreams. And the gnawing sense that the system isn't working for ordinary people.

The tariff situation may resolve itself through diplomacy or evolving US priorities. But the underlying structural vulnerabilities will remain. Iceland's currency will continue to fluctuate. Housing will remain expensive. Import costs will vary with global sentiment and exchange rates.

What's needed isn't just policy tweaks but an honest reckoning with the Oddssonian trade-offs built into Iceland's economic model. The country can continue prioritising adaptation and growth over stability and predictability, accepting that external shocks will keep translating into domestic hardship. Or it can acknowledge that an economic model that consistently makes life harder for ordinary families might need fundamental revision.

Ólafur Tviðstur embodies that choice. His story isn't Dickensian melodrama. Those were problems of poverty in a poor country. This is something newer and more complex. It's middle-class precarity in a wealthy nation whose economic structure systematically transfers global volatility to household budgets.

The Oddsson effect continues, written into the foundation of how Iceland works. The question is whether that foundation serves the people living on top of it. ■

Editor's note: This article uses Oddsson, and Oddssonian, in violation of standard practices in Iceland. In general, patronymics, or what are seen as last names, are not used in Iceland. However, because the basis of this piece depends strongly on international dialogue about the former prime minister, we are violating the practice of using the first name only in the interest of clarity.

While the US isn't Iceland's largest trading partner – the EU takes about 62.5 percent of exports – American trade provides crucial dollar earnings that help stabilise the króna.

RELATIVELY HIGH SALARIES THAT BUY RELATIVELY LESS

According to Eurostat data, Iceland consistently ranks among the most expensive countries in Europe for consumer goods. In 2024, Iceland's price level reached approximately 173 percent of the EU average, about 73 percent above the European norm – second only to Switzerland. This represents a worsening from already extreme levels. Iceland's prices were 56 percent above the EU average in 2018 and 59 percent above in 2022.

The impact on households has been severe. According to Varða surveys of wage-earner households, the share reporting difficulty making ends meet surged from just over 23 percent in 2021 to over 44 percent in 2023, nearly doubling in two years. Though the figure eased slightly to around 41 percent by spring 2024

ing costs, import prices, and tax rates, purchasing power often falls below what workers in supposedly "poorer" European countries like Poland enjoy, despite much lower wages.

ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY IN A SMALL NATION

The US tariffs arrive at precisely the wrong moment. Iceland's economy was showing signs of stabilisation after years of high inflation and interest rates. The Central Bank had begun cutting rates as inflation cooled. There was cautious optimism about 2025.

Now that optimism faces a stress test. If seafood exports to the US decline significantly, and early reports suggest companies like Hólmasker are already feeling the pinch, Iceland's trade balance could worsen. A weaker trade position typically means a weaker currency,

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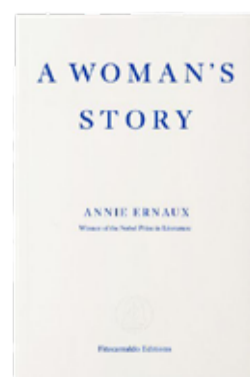
ON THE NATURAL HISTORY OF UNREST BY UNNAR ÖRN

"The author of this book is Unnar Örn, a brilliant artist and a part of Garg's growing community. With this book he is visually researching the history of unrest or riot in Iceland. With that search he is exploring how riots appear in the collective memory of a nation. There is a feeling of unrest in the atmosphere right now and it's a good reminder of standing together against the power structure."



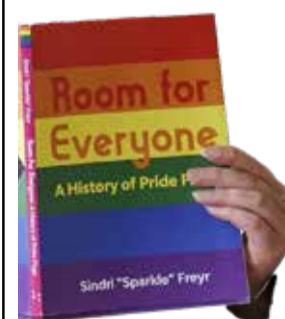
THE FIRE NEXT TIME BY JAMES BALDWIN

"I recommend The Fire Next Time because Baldwin speaks as a witness, testifying to America's racial reality with searing clarity. His voice remains prophetic, urgent, and deeply relevant today. The book is not only literature but moral testimony, reminding us why Baldwin's words continue to matter more than 60 years later."



A WOMAN'S STORY BY ANNIE ERNAUX

"As an archivist Annie Ernaux gives an honest and beautiful insight into a relationship between mother and daughter while also shedding light on class, grief, and women's status in French society. It is a blend of memories, sociology and analysis of history. The book is a perfect read on a calm and dark autumn night."



ROOM FOR EVERYONE BY SINDRI "SPARKLE" FREYR

"Few titles could express better what our bookstore and community space is about. Sindri is a new and important voice in literary society, and they bring a beautiful energy to the scene. The book explores the history of pride flags, and now more than ever, it is important to stand together in queerness." ■

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Now And Then

Schola Reykjavicensis

Educating Iceland's elite since 1057

WORDS Jón Trausti Sigurðarson
IMAGES Árni Thorsteinsson & Jón Trausti Sigurðarson

America, that would be considered normal for a city, on the European continent, ridiculous. And what is our excuse? Mostly without wood and without skill at stonemasonry, we built out of turf. And when we did manage to import some wood and raise a building, that building would either succumb to fire or wind. So sorry about the lack of vintage buildings here.

The most prominent building in the older picture is one of the few older buildings in Reykjavik that, while built for purpose, still retains that purpose. It was built in 1846 as the then almost only higher education institution in Iceland, and while it originally had a different name, it has been known as Menntaskólinn í Reykjavík or MR since 1937. In contrast, just down the road, is the Prime Minister's office. Originally built as a prison.

Menntaskólinn í Reykjavík is not only a building. It is an institution which,

with some mild wishful thinking, can trace its origins back to the first school in Iceland, set up by the first bishop, in the first bishopric, in Skálholt in 1057 or so. Its original purpose was to educate the clergy, but as the centuries progressed, it would also educate Iceland's ruling elite. By the end of the 18th century, the bishopric – and the school – were moved to Reykjavík, and finally into the building pictured above in 1846.

Until more colleges were established in the latter half of the 20th century, everybody who was somebody was educated at MR, and the trend has continued, with the school graduating a disproportionate number of well-known names and faces in politics, business, arts and academia in Iceland. For example, five out of seven presidents of Iceland were educated there, and a majority of Iceland's prime ministers went there too, current Prime Minister Kristrún Frostadóttir included. ■

Pictured is Lækjargata, home to many of the oldest buildings in Reykjavik, which – perhaps surprisingly – only date back to the latter half of the 18th century, at best, while most of the buildings on the street are 20th century vintage. In North

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Well, You Asked

Help? Call The Grapevine!

We try to be helpful

WORDS The Reykjavik Grapevine
IMAGE The Reykjavik Grapevine

for being the only place that punished the white collar criminals who caused the 2008 crash? Well, sort of. Some of them got to spend a few months in a vacation home in Snæfellsnes called “Jail”, while the rest of us tried to pay off our mortgages under far less relaxed conditions, thanks to the post-crash hyper inflation.

motherfucker.
Elizaveta asks: Hi Grapevine! I moved to Iceland in June, one of the reasons for moving was that I like to hike, and it is a perfect place for hiking. But I do not manage to find people to hike with. What is your advice on this matter?

Seeing advice about the future? Problems with lovers? Just have something you need to get off your chest? Call The Grapevine.

Mark asks: When will Iceland develop a bike bell culture? The number of bicycles and electric scooters on sidewalks is significant, and they often make little or no sound. As a pedestrian, more than once I've found myself strolling on a sidewalk or bike/pedestrian lane, seemingly alone, when I'm suddenly passed from behind by a silent, high-speed wheeled vehicle. All good and well, but for that random time when I (often) veer suddenly to the side to look at a rock or flower on the side of the path (after all, I seem to be alone). That's a good recipe for a Landspítali visit that could easily be remedied by a simple, single “ding” from 20 metres behind me.

Yeah. That's a good question. We've thought about starting a Grapevine hiking club, but have not acted on that thought yet. Would you join? Would a monthly hike do, or should we be more ambitious? Separately, we're starting a sidewalk chopper club.

Tammy asks: Is there vegetarian food in Reykjavik, I've heard that there have been dangerous knife attacks & spiked drinks lately, is it safe to visit as a lone female visitor & my last question, when Björk djs at Smekkleysa, is there a way to purchase a ticket ahead of time or how can one be sure to get in if one goes to her events there? Where is a decent place to stay that's central if no car? Sorry so many questions.

C.M. Läspä asks: IF I was to move to Reykjavik, where do I find such banal things as carpet stores, furniture stores, home furnishings like drapes/blinds/lamps, small appliance stores, etc.?(The new stuff—I already know where the used places are.) Is there a printed directory OR directory website—or is the answer IKEA?

We think it is too late to teach Icelanders how to use a bell. They hardly know how to honk a car horn either. The solution is to ban scooters and bikes and make all of those Icelanders who don't want to drive a car, ride a chopper. Those things you can hear from miles away, and thus your problem would be solved. Can you imagine a more appropriate vehicle for the dystopian Mad Max-esque kill-or-be-killed world we're drifting into? And no, it's not a motorcycle baby, it's a chopper. That's a Tarantino reference. He came to Iceland and made fun of minorities. A real charmer.

DJ Björk is a hidden person of the tribe of hidden people. And as we mortals know, hidden people stay hidden, unless they choose not to. Actually Björk tends to do DJ sets on a full moon, when she's a) in the country, and b) in the mood. There are no tickets, you just show up. As for the other questions: vegetarian food, yes; stabbings and spiked drinks, rarities; hotels, yes but expensive.

Have we ever told you how much we love Skeifan? It's basically a giant parking lot, with LA-style traffic jams during rush hour. But it kinda has everything you need. Hence the traffic. Drive there for safety reasons. This place isn't built for pedestrians, and if you do get hit, it is so much more comfortable if the impact is mostly absorbed by a car. Otherwise, there is always Facebook Marketplace and bland.is.

Heather asks: How come criminals get away with their crimes?

Bs asks: How come when you ask in bookstores for materials on the Reykjavik Confessions / Sævar Ciesielski / unsolved murders / wrongful imprisonment case everyone behaves as if no such series of events ever occurred?

Your question about where to stay. You don't mention sleep, which is wise. Our bus system is improving, so as most are priced out of central Reykjavik, just take what you can get and bus it back. Or... consider a chopper.

The answer is go big, or go to jail. If you venture into petty crime, you might find yourself with free lodging in one of the very few incarceration facilities we have in Iceland. Unless the waiting list happens to be too long, which it often is, and you'll simply never have to do time for your crime. If you want to avoid that hassle altogether, being well-connected and/or rich, while engaging in questionable white collar-esque ventures, will usually prove to be both profitable and unlikely to land you in jail. Sure, your reputation will take a hit, if you have one, but you'll be wiping away the tears that it causes you, with sweet, sweet bundles of cash.

We don't walk into bookstores and ask for such materials, and we're offended that you presume we did. We walk into bookstores and ask for books worth fucking reading. We're the home of Arnaldur Indriðason,

Emily asks: Can we start a seasonal depression group chat

Way to ruin the mood, Em! Life of the party! If we're honest, that's a healthy, good idea. Or you can do as the locals do: consume copious amounts of Zoloft and booze and not talk about how they feel while failing to orgasm. ■

Ah, you say, isn't Iceland famous

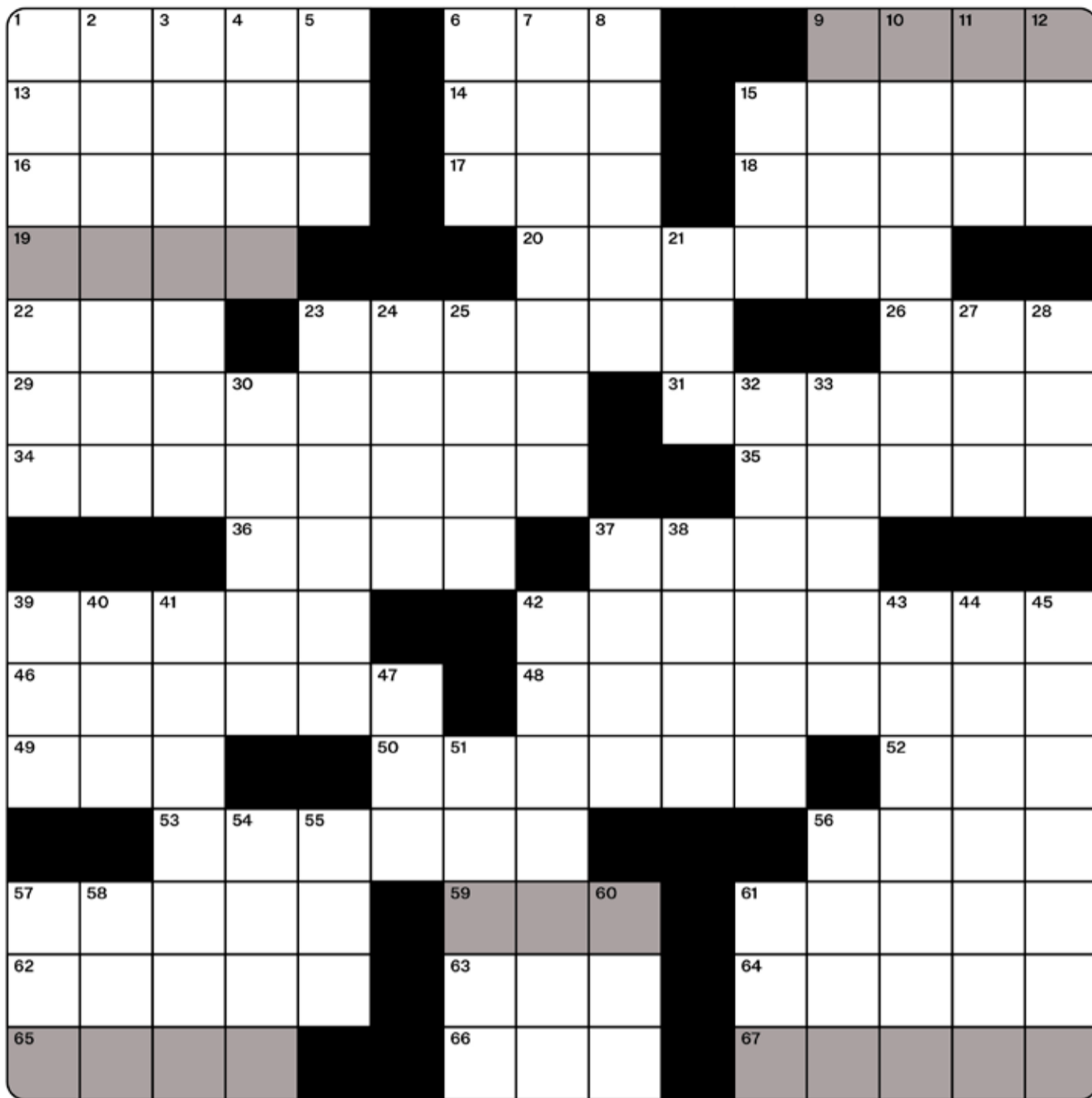
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Woody Vasulka
The Brotherhood – Table 6: The Maiden, 1998
Video still

Woody Vasulka
The Brotherhood
01.11.2024–20.12.2025



Issue 11 solution:



Congratulations to last month's winners: Ragnhildur & Elías!

Crossword

Saved By The Bell

Ish and Agnar school you in their latest crossword

CROSS WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle
Agnar Freyr Stefánsson

Ish and Agnar here, and a reminder that we'll pull a lucky hot dog winner from a pool of those who email a photo of their (correct) completed grid to ish@grapevine.is by September 10. The competition remains fierce for ein pulsa og gos – let's hope you're next! Now is your chance to get ein pulsa og gos!

ACROSS

- 1 "Glow" band ____ Stefson
- 6 Belief suffix
- 9 Alternative to call
- 13 Bolting Bolt
- 14 Pass with flying colours
- 15 Manic ___ dream girl
- 16 "Who's there?" reply
- 17 Soviet space station launched in 1986
- 18 Letter sent online
- 19 Something passed in class
- 20 A set of connected things
- 22 Pasta suffix
- 23 Granola relative
- 26 PC pioneer
- 29 Game Boy company
- 31 Hypnotised state
- 34 Media silencer, handed out by a court
- 35 Vote in
- 36 Father of Vivian and X Æ A-12
- 37 Bubbly tea

- 39 Transmitted sound
- 42 Day when it'll get done, supposedly
- 46 Art market purchases
- 48 Tiny black and white cookie
- 49 Everything
- 50 Sick or ditching, during school hours
- 52 Matching pair
- 53 Dine at a restaurant
- 56 Not the direction of this answer
- 57 Cosy
- 59 ___ & cheese
- 61 One who is being referenced
- 62 Knight's clothing
- 63 Kissing on the street, e.g
- 64 Starts the poker pot
- 65 365 days
- 66 Used a chair
- 67 Suffix to 9A, 19A, 59A, and 65A

DOWN

- 1 Destroying
- 2 Tallinn's country
- 3 Type of menu
- 4 Frosty coating
- 5 "The loneliest number"
- 6 Beginning to personal affirmations
- 7 Cut like a barber
- 8 Actress Streep
- 9 "Person of the Year" magazine
- 10 Study
- 11 Twelve in Latin class
- 12 Phone no.
- 15 What 60D is to some
- 21 Use a chair
- 23 Red wine choice
- 24 Command-Z, on a Mac
- 25 Famous garden
- 27 Secretly include on an email
- 28 Got acquainted with
- 30 Wheel alignment adjustment
- 32 Series revival in Hollywood

- 33 Frighten
- 37 Give a dull lecture
- 38 Sign for the superstitious
- 39 Style alternative to Chicago
- 40 Website link, for short
- 41 The trolley problem, for one
- 42 Deep-fried tortilla dish
- 43 Italian rice dish
- 44 Five school days + the weekend = ___
- 45 Observe
- 47 ___ Paulo, Brazil
- 51 Road annoyances
- 54 "___ effort"
- 55 Norse god (and Tuesday's namesake)
- 56 T. rex, e.g.
- 57 Small, low island
- 58 Miner's find
- 60 Furry friend
- 61 Taxi ■

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Last Thoughts The Reykjavík Grapevine Asks: How Do The Tariffs Affect You?

WORDS Hákon Freyr Hovdenak, Baldrún Kolfinna Jónsdóttir, Sófus Gústavsson & Aðalsteinn Jörundsson

IMAGE The Internet

"Due to recent changes in US tax tariffs, our company has been significantly impacted. Pósturinn, our primary shipping provider, has suspended all shipments to the United States, which directly affects our operations. With approximately 90 percent of our web store sales coming from the US, this disruption has left us unable to fulfil customer orders. As a result, we are currently evaluating the future of our web store and are considering shutting it down entirely. The situation highlights how international policy changes can have serious consequences for small businesses relying on global markets. We hope for a resolution that restores reliable access."

Hákon Freyr Hovdenak,
CEO of Hovdenak Distillery

"This is having an impact now; we are not sending wool sweaters to people who shop with us in the store and have them shipped to their homes in the United States. There has also been a decline in online sales. This is clearly affecting us. The postal service in the United States has also been deteriorating, even before the tariffs were imposed. This summer, we have been receiving more shipments returned from the United States."

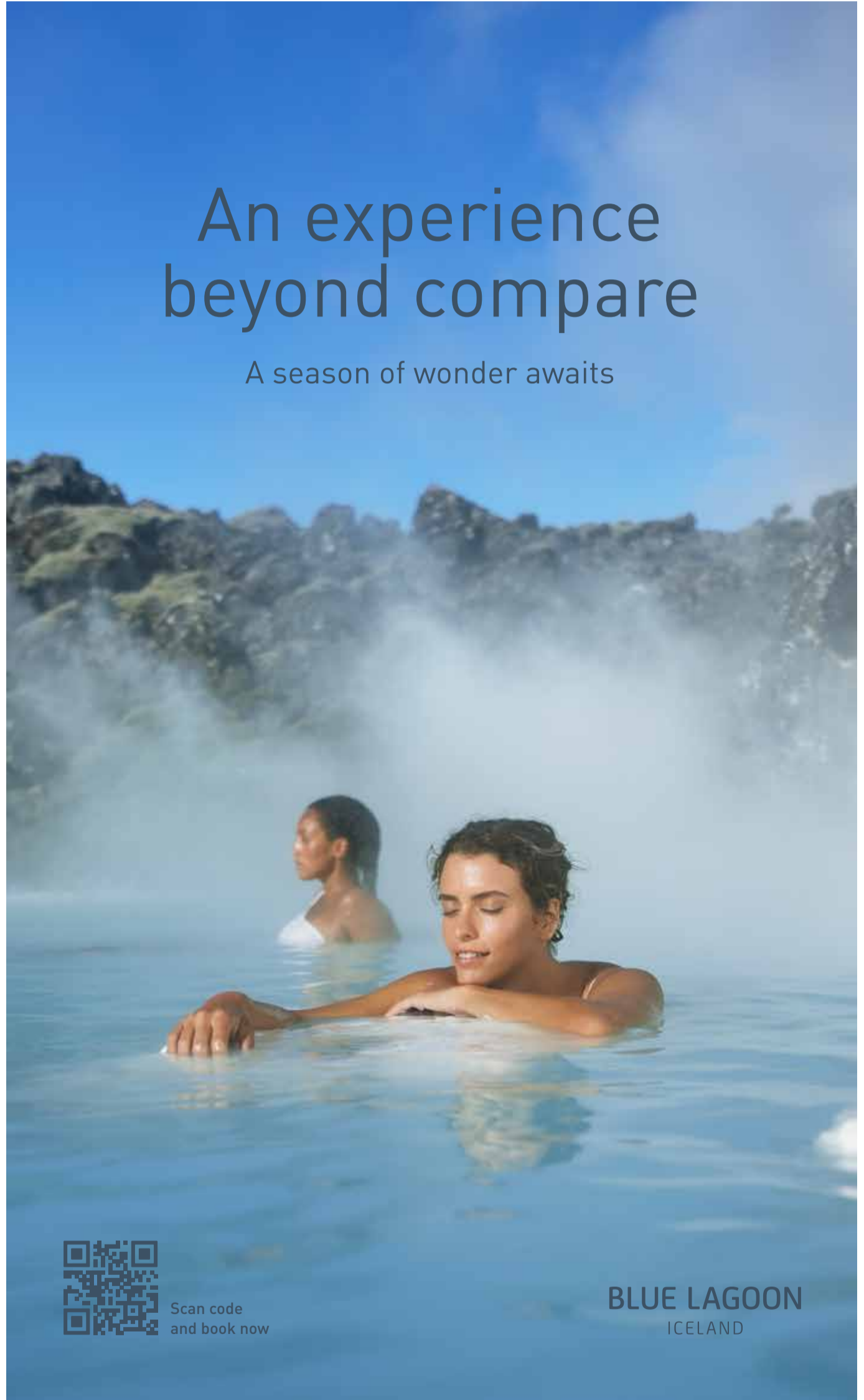
Baldrún Kolfinna Jónsdóttir,
CEO of Handknitting Association of Iceland

"Shipping is now faster with DHL, but costs have nearly doubled. Tariffs add to that, so it does make things tougher – hopefully it eases soon."

Sófus Gústavsson, CEO of nammi.is

"Well. At least our workload with regards to packaging orders to the USA has diminished significantly. Sadly, this means our revenue has also diminished, since sales to the USA have basically dropped off completely, and they were our biggest market. We used that revenue to subsidise The Reykjavík Grapevine's journalism, so that's not great."

Aðalsteinn Jörundsson,
CFO of Grapevine Store ■



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