

The Reykjavík Grapevine



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Volume 23

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Best before March 5

Overflowing With Talent

Culture

Music

Travel



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On The Cover



Since 2013, this magazine has convened panels of music know-it-alls to figure out what were the best Icelandic musical outputs of the past year and to hand out awards across a swath of categories. Flip to pages 12-15 to see what our panel selected as the best 2025 had to offer. However, for the cover, we crashed a live show at Prikíð in January, where two of this year's music awards winners, Alaska1867 and digital island, were headlining a live show. Unannounced, rapper Birnir made a cameo appearance that night, making it possible for photographer Anna Maggý to capture three of the acts taking away an award this year, just as they descended the ramshackle stage at Prikíð.

Cover image: Anna Maggý

Publisher's Note

Bravely Stating The Obvious

WORDS Jón Trausti Sigurdarson
Publisher

In 1939, reviewing a book by Bertrand Russell, George Orwell wrote, "We have now sunk to a depth at which restatement of the obvious is the first duty of intelligent men."

January saw international leaders meet in Davos, Switzerland. The most awaited speech was Trump's, after weeks of demanding sovereignty over Greenland. The most surprising speech came from Canadian PM Carney. Lincolnian in its brevity and straightforwardness, it was shocking because it stated the obvious. That the law-based, liberal world order was over. It then went on to encourage the so-called middle-powers to team up, in an attempt to save what is left, and thus to move away from their reliance on the USA.

The obvious has now been stated. Its first effect, along with Trump's for-now rebuffed efforts to acquire Greenland, is to have many of Europe's right-wing politicians try to distance themselves from Trump.

But what remains to be seen is the more important aspect of Carney's speech. Will Europe's (and Iceland's) politicians now heed his call, and start working towards maintaining what we can, by hanging together with other "middle-powers?" If not, there is a famous quote attributed to Benjamin Franklin: "We will all hang separately." ■

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Cartoon Ignoring Genocide

IMAGE Hugleikur Dagsson
dagsson.com

The Human Staff



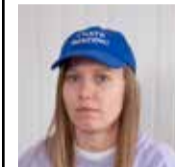
AÐALSTEINN JÖRUNDSSON
Aðalsteinn was born in the 70s. The 70s in Iceland were bleak, and so is Aðalsteinn. Aside from having a noise music career as AMFJ, running a label, being a father and walking the dog, Aðalsteinn makes sure that this publication stays afloat financially.



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 SIGURDARSON
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

Following A Game Without Understanding The Rules

And knowing when the game is over

WORDS Bart Cameron
 IMAGE The Reykjavik Grapevine

The locals here had another amazing athletic run this month, this time at the EHF European Men's Handball Championships. Usually, I would not describe this nation as sports-crazed. There aren't massive crowds outside Laugardalshöll for handball. Despite launching the careers of more than a few football players internationally, you can grab a ticket and attend a local football match without spending or planning. However, when there's a big run, as the football team had at the Euro in 2016, and as the handball team had this year, it is a joy.

I personally gathered with a few

other foreigners and just took it all in, without even understanding the rules. There are few better places to watch a sporting event than Iceland. As it happens, I spent a large amount of time this month as a spectator at sporting competitions. Our city just hosted a remarkable event, the Reykjavik International Games, where I sat at our home pool next to a swim team from Nuuk. This small international event highlighted what is great about sport, and what is no longer possible in other areas: respect, international cooperation, and fair play.

As noted by our publisher, there were two speeches at Davos that dominated local discussion. One speech cited Iceland four times. That speech, by President Donald Trump, resulted in an honest, well-meaning Japanese journalist contacting our office (we cover Icelandic politics in English, so international press call us and keep us on our toes) to ask if the country felt threatened.

For our purposes, as an Iceland-focused magazine, we should discuss the Trump speech at length, as Iceland was reprimanded by the leader of the largest military on Earth. However, the words spoken by Trump were clearly accidental.

For this reason, Donald Trump's confusion at Davos did not specifically threaten Iceland. It was also not

the speech we quoted in our office debates. For three days, we were astounded by Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's 16-minute speech. And Trump's addled, vitriolic ramble only served as a signpost, pointing straight up – Canada is clearly now the leader of the free world.

When Carney made his speech, it appeared he was playing chess, where Trump was playing checkers. When Trump spoke 24 hours later, it appeared Trump was playing tic-tac-toe, poorly, where Carney was playing chess.

If the U.S. was clearly losing the game of international politics, the public execution of 37-year-old nurse Alex Pretti ended the game aspect. It's one thing to play tic-tac-toe with an angry toddler, but when the toddler switches to murder, the engagement should end. We have noted before that public opinion was changing. The one, two, three, of Mark Carney's speech, to Trump's ramble, to the Pretti execution took the U.S. from outdated, to a source of disgust, to pariah.

Judging by public discussion here, though, Iceland is doing fine. We did great at handball. The days are getting longer. Politically, Mark Carney, who demonstrated a strong working relationship with Prime Minister Kristrún Frostadóttir this autumn at the Global Progress Action Summit, is the leader of the free world. ■



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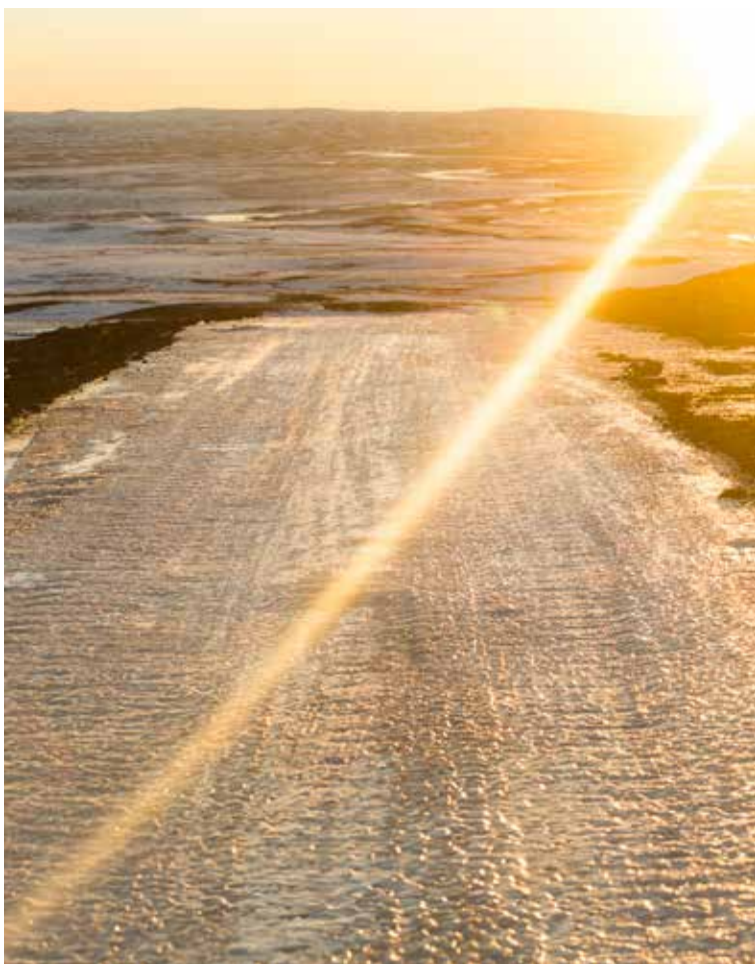
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Word Of The Issue

Flying Ice

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

WORDS Jón Trausti Sigurðarson
IMAGE The Reykjavik Grapevine Archives

marked red are *ófært*, meaning impassable. Weather conditions that will get Icelandic roads closed are numerous. Just wind can do that on this island. Cut to blown-up caravans on the side of Icelandic roads, every year. Snow volume or blizzard conditions can obviously do the same. However, for the word of the issue, let us get to the fun part.

It is the height of the Icelandic winter, which means that if you are planning to drive anywhere, you will do well to look up the road conditions on umferdin.is. And if you're planning on a long road trip outside of the Capital Area in winter, also check if you have decent tires on your vehicle, warm clothes in case of emergency, and even a rope and a shovel. All things that might come in handy.

But back to checking the road conditions. On umferdin.is you'll see the various categories of road conditions given out by the Icelandic Road and Coastal Administration or IRCA. These are colour coded, and the colour codes have definitions. Some are straightforward; roads marked green are *greiddfært*, meaning easily passable and roads

In freezing conditions, it is common to see roads marked either light blue for *hálkublettir* (i.e., patches of ice) or dark blue for *hált* (i.e., slippery). Neither of which is very interesting. However, roads colour coded in purple are marked as *flughált* in Icelandic. That word translates directly to flying slippery or flying ice. And don't tell us that isn't a strange word. What on God's earth is flying ice? Well, of course, it isn't the ice in question that is flying, but it is slippery enough to send you, or whatever vehicle you're driving, flying off the road. The word is not some modern tongue-in-cheek invention, instead its use dates back to the 18th century, seemingly having always meant that something is so slippery that it sends you flying.

So, be diligent, check the road conditions before your Icelandic roadtrip, and avoid at all costs being sent flying off the road. ■

Iceland Roundup

American Jokes, America Broke, And Laufey

A selection of stories making the headlines this month

WORDS The Reykjavik Grapevine
IMAGE Art Bicnick

respond with glee. Instead, close to 5,500 people petitioned that Foreign Minister Þorgerður Katrín should deny Billy's appointment as ambassador. According to mbl.is, a high-level foreign ministry official met with the U.S. embassy's chargé d'affaires Erin Sawyer demanding an apology. Ultimately, Billy apologised if anyone became offended by his remarks.

TRUMP CONFUSES ICELAND AND GREENLAND

In another incident of Iceland getting caught up in the international January debacle, U.S. President Donald Trump confused Greenland with Iceland. During a long, rambling speech made by the president at Davos, where he continued his claims for territorial sovereignty over Greenland, he mentioned Iceland four times instead of Greenland. Among other things, the president said, "Our stock market took the first dip yesterday because of Iceland. So Iceland has already cost us a lot of money." The Icelandic foreign ministry cleared up the misunderstanding, receiving a confirmation from U.S. officials that Trump was, indeed, not speaking about Iceland.

52ND U.S. STATE JOKE FLOPS

Among the maelstrom of news surrounding U.S. threats to annex Greenland, U.S. ambassadorial nominee to Iceland Billy Long stated that Iceland should become the 52nd state. In January, Billy was overheard joking that he was going to become Iceland's first governor, instead of ambassador. Safe to say, the Icelandic population did not

LAUFHEY BAGS
SECOND GRAMMY

In another tale of U.S.-Iceland relations, Icelandic-Chinese artist Laufey Lín Þing Jónsdóttir won her second Grammy award at the recent ceremony, celebrated in Los Angeles on February 1.

Her 2025 album *A Matter Of Time* won Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album, triumphing over entries such as Lady Gaga's *Harlequin*, Elton John and Brandi Carlisle's *Who Believes in Angels?* and Barbra Streisand's *The Secret Life of Partners: Volume 2*. Laufey's win makes her a two-time Grammy winner, as her 2023 album *Bewitched* received the award in 2024, the same year she won the much more distinguished Reykjavik Grapevine Music Awards' Artist of the Year. ■

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



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Big Buns **Bolla, Bolla, Bolla!**

Of cream puffs and customs new and old; you no longer have to smack an adult to get a cream bun

WORDS Shruithi Basappa
IMAGE The Reykjavik Grapevine Archives

buns for festive revellers.' The short piece ends with an apologetic 'each bolla costs three aurar' warning to readers.

FISH BALLS OR SWEET BUNS

Records from the 1870s to 1910 show that Bolludagur wasn't always about sugar and dairy. In fact, all round-shaped foods were encouraged, with fiskibollur, or fish balls, being just as popular, if not more, than the sweet treats. The custom of sweet buns arrived with Danish bakers setting up shop in Reykjavik around 1900, bringing with them the early proponents of the bolla called 'Langaföstusnúðar'.

These early bolls were likely similar to the Danish fastelavn, an enriched dough with ground cardamom, perhaps simply filled with cream. In 1924, half a dozen ads were taken out in local papers by bakeries proclaiming their buns to be the freshest, best, or as one put it, warmest.

While bakeries enticed people, it was really the children that drove the parents there. A lost tradition seemingly kept alive by kindergartners and festive spirited teachers today, is the 'bolluvöndur' or the bun wand — a colourful long stick papered with crepe, glitter, ribbons and other crafty flourishes, it's the cries of children smacking their parents with the bolluvönd, accompanied by

cries of 'bolla, bolla, bolla!' that have given rise to the emojis and memes around the day.

EVOLUTION OF THE BOLLA

Simply put, a bolla is a cream bun sandwich, with a split bun stuffed with stiff whipped cream. I wrongly presumed that everyone was making cream buns at home, but clearly bakeries have always been part of the festive tradition, with few recipes for home bakers making an appearance. It also turns out that the practice of varied fillings, doughs, and decorations aren't a new-fangled trend at all!

By 1935, bolla variety split into two kinds, the commonplace-at-the-time yeasted bun and the trendier vinarbollur made with a laminated dough. Popularity of the vinarbollur was actually pretty strong even up to the 80s when it was upended by the undefeated champion of the bolla base, the choux pastry bolla, like a gussied-up profiterole, or as its called vatnsdeigsbolla in Iceland which continues to be the most popular bolla to this day. It's interesting that this is also around the time when homemade bollur seemed to take off with many families making their own from scratch.

Einar Hlíer, an architect, shares that he grew up with a platter of fresh choux puffs ready to be split at the table. A choice of tart redcurrant

jelly or rhubarb jam and melted milk chocolate for drizzling made up the rest. Multimedia artist Ari Logn Blómdal, shares their childhood bolla filled with Royal Pudding, cream and strawberry jam, the "caramel pudding is especially scrumptious", they say. Writer Nanna Arnadóttir however says that "our bolls were always store-bought."

QUEST FOR THE BEST BOLLA

The very original cruller bolla at Deig — swirls of deep-fried cruller filled with rich whipped vanilla cream, sultry dulce de leche or dark chocolate ganache, is a top contender not just with us but with thousands of locals, triggering a slew of copy-cat fried bolls at other bakeries as well.

Bakeries like Sandholt, Brauð & co and Hygge are consistently whipping up too-beautiful-to-eat creations with house-made buns, high-quality fillings made from fresh cream, flavoured with a gamut of add-ins like pistachio butter, tiramisu to matcha, to refreshed takes on Icelandic classics like blueberry compote and simple chantilly cream. Gulli Arnar, Sandholt, and Reynir bakari make Swedish semlas as well — these distant cousins are a cardamom-scented bun stuffed with marzipan, crowned with a final flourish of whipped cream.

Eleanora, or Bakara Nora as she

is popularly known, is a bolla-obsessed fiend, offering up a mix of nostalgia and contemporary flavours at her Bolla Pop-Up. This year she has thought up seven combinations built around "my own childhood nostalgia." Be sure to pop by Höfuðstöðin on February 8. I'm keen on her Swedish-Danish take, Hygge, with a risalamande filling in a yeasted bun. Sweet Aurora Reykjavik combines Icelandic ingredients with French pastry techniques. "Design-wise we are going full-on French choux pastry as it is our particular identity, and it takes a long time to make them, but they're absolutely worth it — we want them tasty and pretty," Aurore Pélier Cady, the owner of Sweet Aurora, explains.

Sweet Aurora Reykjavik offers gluten-free bollur, and a buy six, get one free deal. Plantan Kaffihús offers six different vegan bollur. Restaurants have jumped on the bandwagon too, with Sumac teaming up with well-known patissiere Vigdís My Diem Vo for a Bolla Brunch in February. Be warned that due to demands on the day of, pre-orders are recommended for almost all bakeries if you want to guarantee the availability of your favourite bolla.

At a time when global news may have you believe the world is falling apart, is there a better way to find joy than to stir up that inner child, bolluvönd in hand, and seek out a bolla? ■



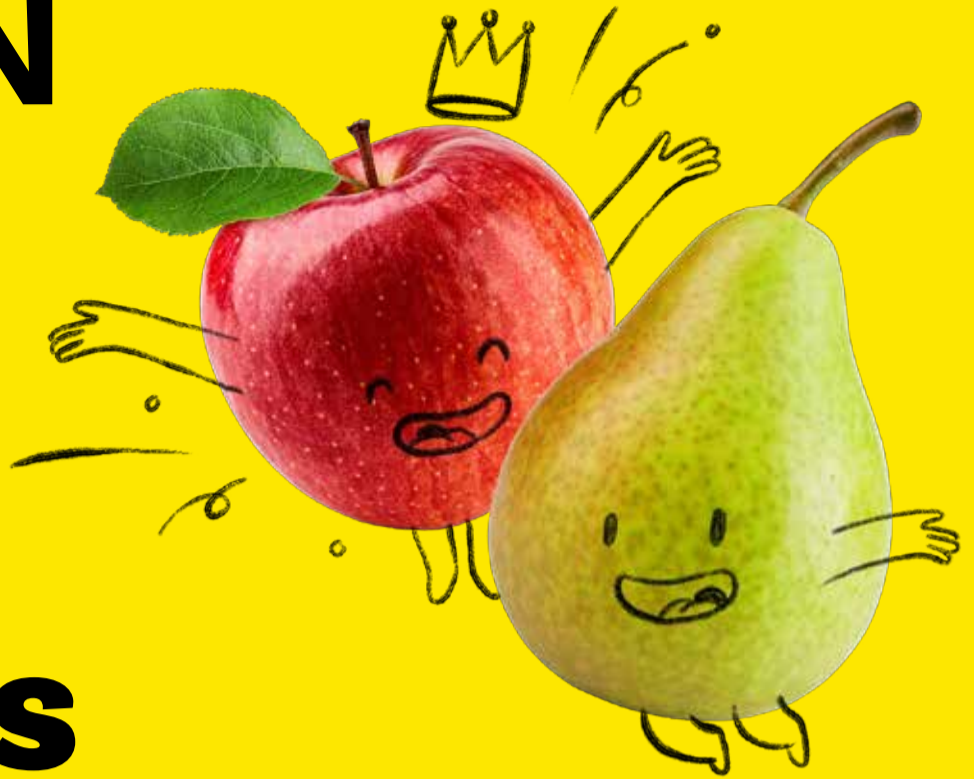
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In Focus “We Don’t Want To Be Just A Piece Of I

Greenlanders in Reykjavík react to Trump’s fantasies of a “large real estate deal”

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Simon King & Art Bicnick

idea of a major world power invading a neighbour, joking about buying it, punishing dissent with tariffs, or inviting authoritarian regimes to sit on the so-called “Board of Peace” – suddenly felt uncomfortably real. And at the centre of it all was one line: “All the United States is asking for is a place called Greenland.”

The tensions surrounding the idea of the U.S. taking over Greenland have been dragging on for over a year, but it wasn’t until January 2026 that Greenlanders themselves finally had a seat at the table (though just for a day). Speaking at a recent panel discussion on governance and geopolitics in Greenland and the Arctic at the University of Iceland, Karsten Peter Jensen, Head of the Greenlandic Representation in Reykjavík, said, “We want to be in the conversation. We don’t want to be just the subject, we don’t want to be just a piece of ice.”

Greenlanders living in Iceland, a small community of an estimated 40 to 50 people, have been following

events at home with growing anxiety. Many haven’t slept well in recent weeks, worrying about family, and hoping Greenland could be left in peace. We spoke to a few of them to ask what it feels like to watch the news from afar.

JULIA KRISTINE ISAKSEN

Julia Kristine Isaksen, 45, has been living and working in Iceland since the early 2000s. She works as a receptionist at Röntgen Domus and provides translation and interpreting services from and to Icelandic, Greenlandic, and English.

First coming to Iceland for a temporary job, she kept extending her stay, and eventually settled here long term.

Among the reasons she enjoys living in Iceland, Julia highlights being close to her children. “I want to be near my kids, my children, my girls,” she says. “And the easier transportation – you don’t have to be so dependent on the weather like in

Greenland. Things go a little bit faster in Iceland, you know.” She takes a moment to think and adds, “That’s also the part I like about Greenland – things go a bit slower, there’s less stress.”

The last few weeks, however, haven’t been stress-free for Greenlanders, including those who live abroad like Julia, who have felt everything from disbelief and confusion to serious worry.

Julia comes from Qassiarsuk, a tiny settlement in southern Greenland with a population of 39 as of 2020. Her mother, two brothers, and many cousins live in Greenland, and she stays in constant touch with them while checking the news regularly. “I look at Danish, Greenlandic, Icelandic, Norwegian news – every news [source] I can get – New York Times... It looks like it’s calming down a little, but I don’t think it is,” she says.

It’s been rough days, even weeks, never really knowing what will happen and what news you will wake up to.

“It’s been rough days, even weeks, when it was most intense, never really knowing what will happen and what news you will wake up to,” she shares.

Julia’s mother still lives in Qassiarsuk. They have discussed the worst-case scenarios, and Julia’s offered to have her come to Iceland, should things escalate. She feels she has to be “on call, and ready for all kinds of

There was a charged tension in the air in mid-January. First in Nuuk, then Copenhagen, later in Davos, and finally in Reykjavík – a sense that the world order was shifting. What once seemed absurd – the

SJÁVARGRILLIÐ
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situations.”

“I’m afraid about my mom,” she says. “My brothers are not as worried as me. Of course, they are aware of it, but they both live in Nuuk, and they’re pretty calm about it.”

but you cannot just be angry all the time,” she says. “Denmark will have to pay for what they have done. Greenland just has to be quite smart with what they want because so many doors will open for them if they use it wisely.”

A few years back, nobody really knew about Greenland. Everyone knows about Greenland now and why he wants us.

According to a recent survey by Verian, commissioned by the Danish daily newspaper Berlingske, only six percent of Greenlanders support the idea of Greenland becoming a part of the U.S.

“I don’t want Greenland to be part of America,” Julia says firmly. “Most of my friends are against it, of course. Actually, I don’t know anyone who would like to become part of America.”

Despite the tension and uncertainty, Julia believes that this newfound attention to Greenland could benefit Greenlanders in the long run.

“I don’t think we need an introduction anymore,” she says. “A few years back, nobody really knew about Greenland. Everyone knows about Greenland now and why he wants us. He wants Greenland so much. All [Greenlanders] have to do is use this kind of platform wisely.”

Julia supports Greenland remaining part of Denmark – for now. “I know that sooner than later, they’re striving to become independent,” she adds.

Even given the painful history and decades of collective trauma, Julia sees potential in continued cooperation with Denmark. “Of course, it’s hard to recover from everything,

Donald Trump’s repeated mentions of Iceland, accidental or not, make Julia wonder if the U.S. might set its sights on Iceland next. “It’s a possibility,” she says. “Personally, I think it’s just to get the attention a little bit from him because he’s very unpopular with that. It’s kind of strategic for him as well. It’s been like that the last time, during World War Two.”

As for the Greenlandic community in Iceland, Julia says there used to be more Greenlanders in Reykjavik. She still knows a few people and attended a demonstration in support of Greenland a week ago. “The message was clear: Greenland shouldn’t be bought, and Greenlanders shouldn’t be under any other country again.”

ANE GUDMUNDSSON

Ane Gudmundsson, 70, shares similar sentiments to Julia. Ane spent 21 years in Kangerlussuaq in western Greenland before moving to Iceland in 2019. She’s been married to an Icelander for 19 years.

She loves Icelandic nature and the kindness of people around her, but stays connected to Greenland and visits her family every year. The current situation has made her check the local news more often – she’s mainly been relying on the news programme KNR TV Qanorooq.

“The situation in Greenland has been very emotional lately, and I hope it will soon be over,” says Ane. “It’s hard to be far away when things are like this in beautiful Greenland. I am worried about my family and, of course, about the people of Greenland.”

When asked whether she supports Greenland staying with Denmark, or being bought by the U.S., Ane’s answer is definitive. “Denmark.”

IVALO NUKA KRISTIANSEN

The matter isn’t so straightforward for a 41-year-old Ivalo Nuka Kristiansen, originally from Narsaq in the south of Greenland.

Ivalo came to Iceland through Nordjobb, a programme offering seasonal work to young people in the Nordics, planning to stay just three months. Nineteen years later, she’s still here, now working at Hjä Höllu, a restaurant in the new food hall in Smáralind.

The message was clear: Greenland shouldn’t be bought, and Greenlanders shouldn’t be under any other country again.

While she agrees she ended up in Iceland mostly by accident – the programme was full everywhere else – perhaps the real reason she decided to stay is simpler. “Hot tubs, I must say hot tubs,” she laughs. “I moved here because I like hot tubs. I could go there every day.”

She has a big family in Greenland, but when asked whether she misses home, Ivalo pauses, “Not really. My father is gone, so I don’t know what I’m missing there. Now I like it here in Iceland.”

“Last time I was there was when my father was dying in 2020, in Covid time. I was there for like three months because they closed the airport. I came in March, and then Greenland shut down all the planes, and I was back there almost till June, so I was there for a long time,” she shares.

Iceland has been the centre of her life for so long Ivalo barely follows what’s happening in Greenland anymore.

“I’ve been trying to call my mother this morning because I don’t know anything about what’s going on in Greenland,” she says. “I don’t usually watch the news, so I’ve been trying to call my mother. She didn’t answer, I think she’s working. I’ve been trying to ask her what’s going on in Greenland because there’s so much going on Facebook. I don’t know what people are talking about, because I don’t follow the news. I don’t have time for that.”

She did see posts on Facebook about Donald Trump floating the idea of buying Greenland.

“And you know what, I like it,” says Ivalo. “I like it a lot. I want Trump to buy it. A lot of Greenlanders hate it, but for me, Trump is a smart guy, and he’s a good businessman. He could do a lot of things to Greenland. I want them to be with Americans, not Denmark. I think it’s a very good idea. I have a very good feeling about that.”

Ivalo explains her support as a

chance for Greenland to open up economically. She hopes the country could adopt American-style franchising and bring in more businesses.

“We can be more open to the world. You can always do something, and then we won’t be more isolated, like Denmark made us isolated. We can be very open,” she says.

Having never really considered moving back to Greenland before, Ivalo might be of a different opinion now. “If Trump buys it, I think I will go back. I’m very optimistic about Trump. People hate Trump, but I love Trump. He’s not crazy. He’s just very smart.”

Ivalo’s feelings towards Denmark appear to be rooted in personal experience of discrimination and prejudice. “I’m very loved in Iceland. Everybody I tell I’m from Greenland is very nice to me. When I go to Denmark, if I say I’m from Greenland, they will spit on me. They will fucking hate me,” she says. “They fucking hate us. That’s why I don’t mean to go to Denmark, and I hate Denmark. My cousin was beaten up the other day because he’s Greenlandic.”

KRISTÍNA DAHL

At first, 34-year-old Kristína Dahl wasn’t sure she was the right person to speak on the topic. With a Greenlandic mother and an Icelandic father, Kristína lived in Qaqortoq, Greenland, until she was 11, and today considers herself more Icelandic.

“I agree with most Greenlandic people,” she says. “They just want to be left alone and just live in peace.”

Her older brother and his family still live in her hometown. “I really hope that Trump can just move on to something else,” Kristína adds. “He can maybe find a hobby that doesn’t involve Greenland.” ■



Cover Feature

Alaska1867 And digital ísla

Four Grapevine Music Awards winners take the scene's temperature

WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle
IMAGES Anna Maggý

we'll all — Alaska, digital ísla, their plus-ones, myself, and my publisher — be led through a throng of sweaty 20-somethings up onto the Prikid stage — which is just a table of one of their coveted front-window booths. But, before all that, I'm here to hear from some of our Grapevine Music Award winners about their successful past year, their take on the current scene, and what it's like to be a musician in Iceland right now.

ARTIST OF THE YEAR:
ALASKA1867

"Alaska is fresh, honest, and sexy," Tatjana says. "Alaska is the brightest hope of Icelandic urban music," Þórir declares, employing a catch-all descriptor often used to blur the lines between pop and rap — Alaska herself blends together sounds from hyperpop, drain, rap, trap, electronic, house, and more in her tracks. "Alaska is the shit," Arnar adds, excitedly.

At the beginning of this year, unless you were deep into the rap scene, you probably hadn't heard of Alaska1867; by the end of it, we had heard her songs on the radio all summer, seen her name on every big lineup the country has (namely Iceland Airwaves, Innipúkinn, Þjóðhátíð), and listened to her singles collaborating the biggest names in Icelandic rap (Aron Can, Birnir, Joey Christ).

Unanimously voted our Artist Of The Year, this was Alaska's year (we could've just called it 1867). Despite

the usual fallacy that something just 'clicks' before a big success — along with a lot of luck — Alaska's accomplishments this year were not a series of accidents.

If I'm locked into something, I'll do it 100 percent.

"I wasn't 100 percent locked in when I was making music before, and now it was just: either I'm gonna do it 100 percent or I'm not gonna do it. It was like, 'Will I lose my opportunity?' If I have an opportunity in my hands, I won't be, after 20 years, still talking about 'this one song that was really good and everybody loved,' like, drinking at Dillon or something. I know people like that, who just lost their momentum," Alaska shares.

She focused, working every day to finish her debut mixtape, 222. Alaska explains that there were only two options: succeed, or burn out trying.

Alaska remembers her dad looking out for her. "He said, 'Don't you want to have a plan B?' He wanted to believe in me so bad, but if your child says, 'I'm gonna be really famous!' you're gonna be worried."

Despite the mild cautioning, Alaska wasn't deterred. "If I'm locked into something, I'll do it 100 percent," she says. 222 quickly gained traction after its release in February, with many gravitating towards the gritty honesty in her tracks. Despite com-

parisons of her success to 2017's rap boom, Alaska strikes a new and refreshing tone. With 222, Alaska invokes personal experiences, both as a female rapper in Reykjavík's

male-dominated hip-hop scene and past struggles with drug use, to forge a unique balance between sharpness and candour.

As the scene quickly took notice, she followed 222's success with a rush of singles that rolled out into the summer. "I just took every opportunity I could," she laughs. "And it worked!"

So, how is her dad feeling now? "Proud, he's so proud! It's really cute."

SONG OF THE YEAR: "EH PLAN?" BY DIGITAL ÍSLAND

digital ísla is somewhat of a supertrio: Tatjana is well-known for fronting the electronic trio ex.girls, along with her solo techno work; Arnar works extensively as a producer in Iceland under the moniker Young Nazareth (notably, he's a frequent collaborator of Alaska1867's); Þórir, under the name mistersir, is a lauded producer who saw big success in Germany before he moved back to Iceland recently. "We all have such different backgrounds in music, and, when you bring that together, it

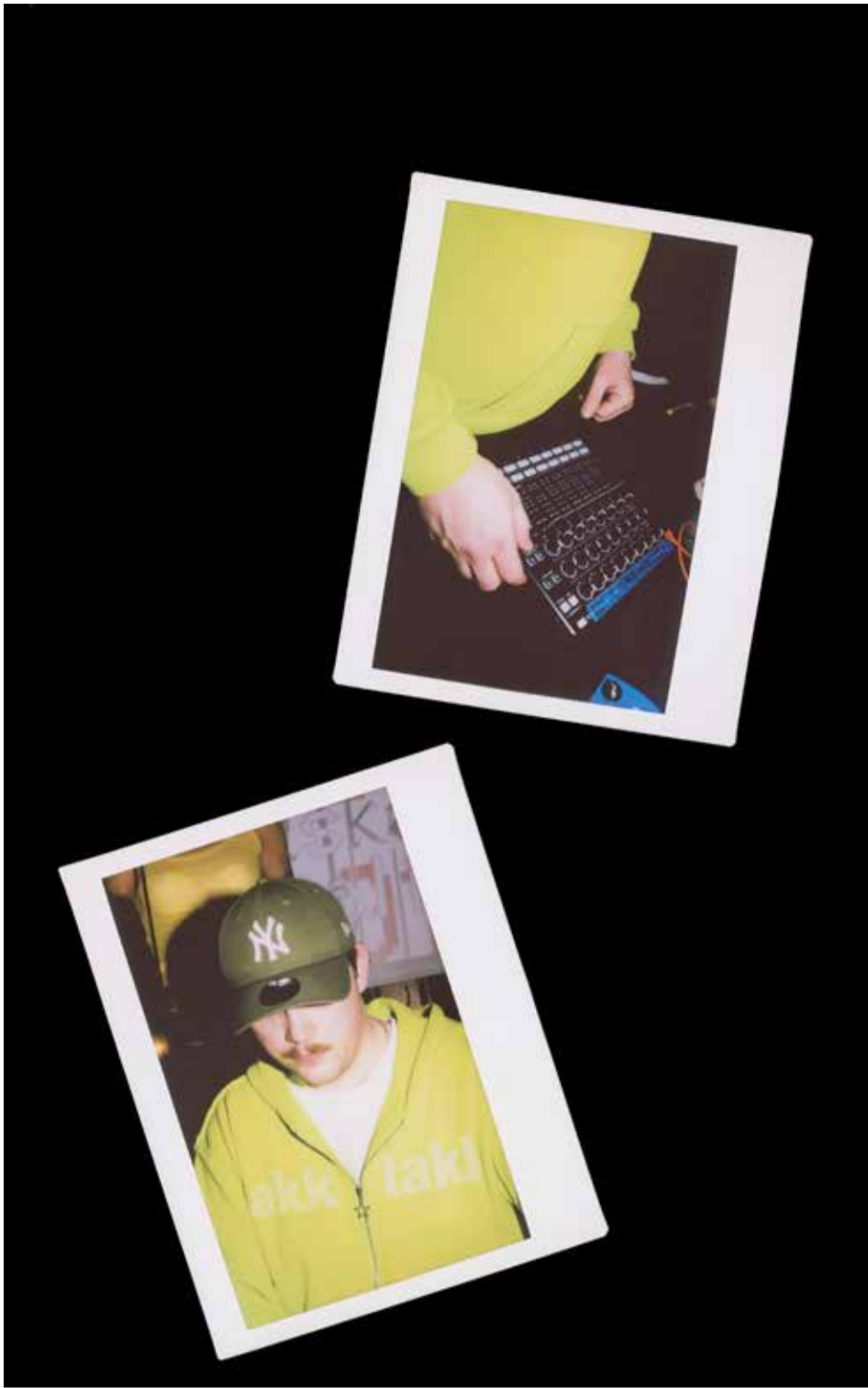
luckily harmonised," Þórir explains of digital ísla's origin story.

"Everything was telling us not to," Arnar laughs, describing the group's formation — Tatjana later adds that the group's astrological signs are as incompatible as you can get. "I feel like, still, everything is telling us not to make music, that the universe is trying to hold us down. Like, we're never at the same spot. This is a rare occurrence," Þórir adds.

Despite everything, digital ísla has grabbed attention, and fast. It'll be one year this February since debuting their project; to date, digital ísla has only released three singles. And yet, two of digital ísla's songs came up in our Song Of The Year conversation. They're just that good.

After ruminating on which song to pick, the panel decided that their second release — "eh plan?" — should take home the prize. It's a three-minute-long earworm, a bubbly, poppy song with outstanding production, a tipsy dance-floor hit. The lyrics are fresh and catchy; the song begins with "Ég elska hlaupa, lyfta, skrolla síma / Ég elska keyra um" ("I love to run, lift, scroll a phone / I love to drive around"). Tatjana takes a phone call over autotune around the two-minute mark to make plans for the evening (hence the title, "eh plan?," shorthand for "any plans?"). In the music video — which, of course, features both Alaska and Prikid — the trio drives around Reykjavík. Tatjana smokes

Piling into Prikid's backstage loft, Alaska1867 (Kolfreyja Sól Bogadóttir) — simply Alaska to her friends — and the trio forming digital ísla (Arnar Ingi Ingason, Tatjana Dís Aldísar Razoumeenko, Þórir Már Davíðsson) exchange hugs, discuss set lists, joke, and plan upcoming studio sessions. As they all settle onto the couch, it's just past 23:00 on Saturday night. The floor begins to quake as, downstairs, Tæson heats up the crowd. In two hours,



and On Hard-Won Success

a cigarette standing through the moonroof. They get gas, pick up friends. It's a portrait of a cool kid's day in Reykjavik.

"It's catching eyes, this project and this band, because it's so unique in Iceland. It hasn't been done before, this PC-dance-music," Alaska explains of her couch-mates.

Compared to each member's other work — whether it be lyricless techno or production on gritty rap — digital island is a departure. In Tatjana's description, it's more like a vacation.. She explains that the project is a chance to allow herself "to be cliché."

It's catching eyes, this project and this band because it's so unique in Iceland. It hasn't been done before.

"I think that's the essence of this group," Arnar says. "Just to let go of trying to be clever or [having] a deeper meaning," Tatjana adds, "just simple and fun."

"digital island was my introduction to pop music. I never thought of the structure of pop music before," Tatjana explains. "Even though it's not pop, really. It's funny — Arnar says sometimes, 'This is not accessible enough.' And I'm like, 'This is the most accessible thing I can im-

agine.' Like, if this is not accessible to you, that's really your problem."

TALKIN' 'BOUT MY GENERATION

The four definitely lean into a noughties vibe in some of their work: digital island's name is a nostalgic reference to a cable descrambler. They've used a late-night infomercial aesthetic in a series of videos. Alaska has a song named "SMS," the cover of which has her donning headphones, music notes swirling around her — it looks like she could be Britney Spears or Kelly Clarkson. Everyone's made grainy camcorder-esque videos.

But, despite the Y2K aesthetics, Alaska1867 and digital island are, at their core, artists of today's generation.

Sure, one of Alaska's most-streamed songs is her April single "ChatGPT"; digital island announced their project through Instagram and TikTok videos; they throw around words like "manifesting" and "type shit" throughout the conversation. But savvy usage of technology and modern slang aren't

the point. digital island and Alaska are immediately realistic and articulate about the music scene — its constraints and advantages — as it stands in Reykjavik today. And, maybe most importantly, they're speaking to and resonating with this generation.

THE SCENE, TODAY

"I feel like the scene in general is good right now," Arnar states. "We're in a renaissance, but we have such a lack of concert spaces...You can't do anything under 300 [capacity]. I think that's what's missing most from the scene: a venue that you can do a small capacity gig and also not be afraid of it losing money. It's only, like, here, at Prikið..." he trails off.

"That's it," Alaska punctuates.

"We're not lacking talent. We're overflowing with talented people," Tatjana emphasises.

Tatjana comes in with perspective from the techno/electronic scene, sharing, "There's the techno scene — which is non-existent, homeless — but still so many talented people doing crazy shit. But there's no platform for it."

Arnar deadpans, "It's pretty ironic to be making electronic music in a country without a club."

"When it comes to electronic music, I think you just need to move out of the country," Tatjana says. She

admits that she's always dreamed of focusing on non-vocal music, but had to be realistic. "It won't go far here because we don't have any venues for it," she says. "Maybe I can just do that in my 40s. Because I have to make a living [now], you know."

have to really claw there to get attention and do, like, weird TikToks and stuff."

On the other hand, she also notes, "the disadvantages we have: it's hard to make money in Iceland creating music. Because we're so few,

It's pretty ironic to be making electronic music in a country without a club.

Arnar continues, "It's almost like, to have a successful — in terms of living a comfortable life — career, you have to completely sell out and just give the people what they want. It just sucks so much ass."

"And maybe have Christmas shows," Alaska adds.

"No disrespect to the people that do, I respect the hustle 100 percent. But it's not for everybody," Arnar concludes.

NOT ENOUGH PEOPLE

As they ponder how to straddle the line between creative independence and financial viability, they consistently compare music-economy politics in Iceland with the rest of the world.

"If you make good shit, you're gonna get noticed easier," Alaska says of Iceland. "If you're in the U.S., you

you can't hold these huge raves. You just can't do it. There's not enough people."

"The dream of being a big star in Iceland is very small — you won't reach high, but it's very accessible," Þórir says. "But not as accessible as people might think," Tatjana volleys.

Then, quickly, they return to the positives of Iceland. "Personally, I think it's really fun that we can play here, with people just coming here for free," Arnar says. "It's like an ecosystem that shouldn't exist," Þórir concludes.

THE VISION

They all note the necessity of having a committed vibe — a vision — as a throughline for your project. As Alaska explains the appeal behind digital island, she says, "It has a specific vision, everything about the name of the band and all the visuals. It's a whole thing. Because if you have a



vision for something, and it all talks together, then it makes it easy for people to understand it.”

Later, as Tatjana is talking about the group’s successful year, she starts to say she “was also very lucky, like...” but Alaska jumps in to coun-

ter.

A HUGE OPPORTUNITY

As the group reflects on what differentiates Alaska as a musician, Arnar immediately states, “We haven’t had this perspective in Icelandic rap before.”

accessible, like on TikTok these days. But in my day, it was like, ‘I really want to put out music, how do I start?’”

“I think it’s all about the way you see things,” Alaska states her vision again. “Because I could look at something and be like, ‘Oh, everything sucks. Everything’s so bad for me, and me and Tatjana are the only girls doing stuff.’ But you can also look at it as a huge opportunity, and a huge opportunity for so many girls.”

She continues, “I was judging this high school rap competition (Rimnaflæði), and there was this girl competing, such a cool girl. And she said she started because she saw

thentic rap music,” Alaska notes of her early role model. “It’s just scary. And, if I didn’t have Alvia, I probably would have been like, ‘Shit. This is cooked.’”

“I’m excited to see because it’s really odd that there aren’t more girls. But I think they’re on the way. They must be,” Tatjana adds.

ON STAGE

And, as Tatjana was saying that, a new generation of girls in rap were on the way – to the concert at Prikíð. Throughout Alaska and Tatjana’s time on the table top, the first four rows were almost all just early-20s girls, singing and rapping along to every word.

spent the year reporting on: Kraumur Award winners, visual artists, girls in Takk Takk tank tops, DJs with leanings towards all genres.

Throughout both Alaska and digital island’s sets, the artists (and even their plus ones) sang along to each other’s unreleased work – proving how commonplace it is that works-in-progress are not drafts to hide away, but to be shared and worked on together.

As digital island worked towards the end of the night, in an only-in-Reykjavík, only-in-this-scene twist, famed rapper and musician behind our Album Of The Year, Birnir, shuffled to the stage, hood up, ready to perform his and Tatjana’s recent hit “Efsti hæð.” As the crowd cheered, Birnir leaned towards Alaska. “SOS?” he asked, seeing if she’d want to perform their song together, and it was settled.

It almost looks pre-planned: our top category winners – Artist Of The Year, Album Of The Year, Song Of The Year – atop a Prikíð table together on a Saturday night at 02:00. But that’s just how the scene is at this moment in time: excited to create, ready to collaborate, and hungry to perform. ■

We’re not lacking talent. We’re overflowing with talented people.

ter, “I don’t think you were lucky, though. I think you discredit yourself.” Alaska continues, “Everything about you, it’s really good. It’s not just the music – it’s the image also.” “You got the vision, bro,” Arnar adds.

I’m reminded of a lyric from Alaska’s “Mellusport,” where she raps: “tvö augu með puttann á púlsinum” (“two eyes with their finger on the pulse”). One thing that shines through while talking to these four artists: so much of what they do is done with intention. It could all look effortless to the naked eye, but their moves are precise, calculated. Alaska says, of releasing more music with the momentum of 222, “You have to play it right – of course, you have to do

“I make music about my perspective,” Alaska states simply. “I don’t hide anything [in] my music, and I have some lines in my songs from a female’s perspective,” she shares, contrasting herself with “the guys who rap about ‘fucking bitches and getting money.’” She shares that she often chooses to “say things that are controversial,” while switching the traditional gender roles of rap. In her “Mellusport,” for one, she raps, “I want an abuser that’s good to me / That’s good at loving, that has a good dick.”

“Back in my day, girls didn’t make music,” Tatjana adds. She’s five years Alaska’s senior. “It’s way more

You have to completely sell out and just give the people what they want. It just sucks so much ass.

me doing this, and she was like, ‘Oh, this is so cool. I want to do this.’”

“I remember Alvia [Islandia] was the only one who was doing au-

As always at Prikíð, the crowd packed into the bar was a well-distributed slice of Reykjavík, a smattering of the sub-scenes we’ve



LAVA SHOW



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Music Awards

Introducing (The Rest Of) The Winners

Roll out the red carpet, please

WORDS The Reykjavík Grapevine
IMAGE Sunna Ben

The Reykjavík Grapevine Music Awards are doled out each year in the beginning of February. Having covered the winners of Artist Of The Year and Song Of The Year (Alaska1867 and “eh plan” by digital island, respectively) on pages 12-14, here come the winners of each category of the 2026 Reykjavík Grapevine Music Awards.

Album Of The Year
DYRNAR
By Birnir

If you've glimpsed into Icelandic music in the last few years, you're undoubtedly no stranger to Birnir. Beginning his hip-hop career in 2017, Birnir has been a household name in recent years, especially with the release of his 2021 *Bushido*. With *Dyrnar*, Birnir seems to push his art even further. “I am of the opinion that this is the best Birnir album he has ever released. It's cool, it's cohesive, and it's the album of the year,” a panellist deliberated. “Ambitious, put together, and abrasive, *Dyrnar* is a top highlight of 2025 in music,” said another. And you can't speak about *Dyrnar* without mentioning the album art, which features a real-life bronze-cast bust of Birnir himself – giving new meaning to the word ‘bling’.

Nominees:
a place to be by RAKEL
History of Silence by múm
Reykjavík Syndrome by Spacestation

Best Visual Representation
“TAKING MY TIME”
by Flesh Machine,
directed by Snæfriður Sól
Gunnarsdóttir

In 2025, the category Best Music Video underwent the transformation into Best Visual Representation. Every once in a while, a music video shows up whose concept is so perplexing that it manages to become unexpectedly memorable. Such was the case with Flesh Machine's “Taking My Time,” whose simple premise is centred on the protagonist – portrayed by local TikTok creator Kjartan Logi Sigurjónsson – hurling himself down the various staircases around town. The panel noted that, “the video has criminally low watch numbers,” not necessarily a fact to bear in mind when you've sacrificed your bones for the artistic process. “Having someone fall down an indeterminate amount of stairs is equally creative as it is baffling when you first hear about it,” the panel stated.

Nominees:
Dyrnar album artwork, creative direction by Doddi Digital
“SAGES” by Ólafur Arnalds and Loreen, directed by Thora Hilmarsdóttir
“Midnight Sky” by Kári Egils, directed by Didda Flygenring

Best Live Act
KNACKERED

When contemplating the winner for Best Live Act, the panel voiced their opinion unanimously. “All I heard this year was buzz about Knackered,” a panellist remarked. A nominee for the Ones To Watch category last year, it looks as if Knackered rose up to the expectations. The solo project

of local musician Ida Juhl, Knackered was borne out of the remnants of Ida's previous work as IDK IDA. Working within a similar repertoire, Knackered turns her techno-adjacent music up to 11. “This sound is unlike anything else we've heard in town. It's almost as if she doesn't live in Reykjavík,” one panel member said in exasperation.

Nominees:
Flesh Machine
Symfaux
Unfiled

Best Kept Secret
HALIDOME
by Emma

Participating in the 2023 rendition of Músiktilraunir, avant-folk group Emma brewed their material for a while before finally coming out with their debut *Halidome* in mid-2025. According to the panel, the four-piece's release did not receive the attention it needed. “Emma's debut album sprang forth with vision and energy, bringing an immensely thoughtful and fresh take on Icelandic folk-rock,” one panellist noted. “*Halidome* deserved way more praise than it was granted,” another noted.

Nominees:
Í hringi by Woolly Kind
Oh Mama by Dagskrá
Psionic Dreams by Godchilla

Ones To Watch
BKPM

Swimming on the periphery of the music scene since 2023, BKPM is one of the growing number of guitar-focused groups hustling the Reykjavík scene. Their debut LP *Bíddu Ha?* brought forth a resurgence

of post-punk and experimental rock into the city, maintaining an air of playfulness to their performances, like dressing up in matching hi-vis vests. “BKPM has great promise,” said a panel member. “I can't wait to see what they do next, I'm sure it will be even better,” another remarked. “The album and the band's live performances demonstrate that BKPM are a group on the rise, with way more power to punch than they let on,” the panel agreed.

Nominees:
digital island
Fríd
Julian Civilian

Best Music Event
QUEAN : KVEN : QUEEN
by Samantha Shay and Sóley
Stefánsdóttir

Introducing a new category this year, Best Music Event honours the multitude of ambitious programming musicians set out to actualise. In spite of financial and personal risks, artists leap from the cliffs of uncertainty to pursue an idea worth exploring.

After time-consuming deliberation, the panel decided to award Samantha Shay and Sóley Stefánsdóttir's quean : kven : queen performance in Salurinn. Staged on the 50th anniversary of the Icelandic Women's Strike, queen confronted the ongoing struggle for gender equality, turning collective resistance into an immersive artistic experience. Combining numerous different art disciplines, such as music, dance, text, and visuals, the final outcome painted “a powerful image,” described one panellist.

Nominees:
Norðanpaunk DIY Festival
Sátan Metal Festival
Spider Network for Kárahátið

Shout Out
ÓLÁTAGARÐUR

Every organic music scene cannot exist without the hangers-on and the supporters: the ones who spread the word of the bustling creativity happening in the city. In honour of its five year anniversary the panel agreed to acknowledge the RÚV radio show Ólátagarður, whose bread and butter is showcasing unknown, grassroots artists.

Since its inception, Ólátagarður has been sharing the undiscovered talent of Icelandic music, “playing something new and fresh on the radio,” as one panellist described them. Despite being hosted on the National Broadcasting Service, the programme was conceived by outside players as a concept submission for the institution during their annual “Idea Days.” “I can't recall a time where I recognised an artist they played,” noted a panel member, referring to the program's obscurity.

Nominees
marvaða
Óli Dóri
Reykjavík Record Shop ■

The 2026 panel comprised:

Alexander Le Sage de Fontenay
Ish Sveinsson Houle
Jóhannes Bjarkason
Kristján Guðjónsson
María-Carmela Raso

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Dancing Garden

The Garden Blooms

Italian choreographers Antonio de Rosa and Mattia Russo reimagine their

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Björgvin Sigurðarson

and collaborations with other companies, theatres, and opera houses around the world behind them. On February 7, their emotionally moving and rigorously physical dance show *The Garden* premieres on the main stage of Borgarleikhúsið (Reykjavik City Theatre), marking their first collaboration with the Iceland Dance Company.

through a blurry video call. Busy indeed – I catch a few minutes with the choreographers between rehearsals somewhere in France. “So we decided to take a piece already made but to remake it in a way.”

“We give it another life with different dancers,” Mattia chimes in. “It’s also about finding a way to take some-

The stage will be completely covered in grass, but it is the only scenographic element. The rest is just the bodies of the dancers.

NEW BODIES, NEW GARDEN

The Garden began as an original production for VERVE, a young dance collective from Leeds, UK in 2023.

“We were quite busy in the period that Lovísa, the director [Lovísa Ósk Gunnarsdóttir, Artistic Director of the Iceland Dance Company], told us that she wanted to start some sort of collaboration,” says Antonio, sitting next to Mattia, as we talk

thing that already exists but bring a new life into it.”

In the project, Antonio and Mattia serve as choreographers, while the show comes to life through 12 dancers from the Iceland Dance Company, including Andrean Sigurgeirsson, Elín Signý W. Ragnarsdóttir and Shota Inoue among others.

“It’s a completely new version, with more people,” Antonio explains. “When you start to retake an old piece and put it on stage, you have

Antonio de Rosa and Mattia Russo – choreographers and directors of the Madrid-based arts collective Kor’sia – have been making waves in the European dance scene and far beyond. Originally from Naples, Italy, they each built separate careers before reconnecting in the Spanish capital and founding Kor’sia in 2015. Guided by the belief that nothing can convey the human experience better than the art of movement, they now have a string of successful productions, awards,



In Reykjavík

bold work together with the Iceland Dance Company

completely different bodies, different personalities. This is not a restage, we really renew the piece completely. We can say that it's a new piece from the Iceland Dance Company. We really work with them."

THE STAGE GROWS GREEN

Working from the same starting point – the garden as a symbol, "a place of perception, where you can mix sensation, emotion, and dialogue," the choreographers created a new immersive 40-minute work.

"In this case, all the dance material, the movement, are completely new, because we really create on their body, their personalities," Antonio explains. "It was a sort of collaboration with dancers."

The garden will emerge on the Reykjavík City Theatre's stage not just as an abstract symbol, but as a tangible element of the stage design – the stage will be covered in grass, which the choreographers say is meant "to give a sensation of infinity garden."

"The stage will be completely covered in grass, but it is the only scenographic element," says Mattia. "The rest is just the bodies of the dancers." Antonio adds that the

lighting will also help to create an atmosphere, but otherwise, the scenography is limited to that.

The minimalist approach extends to what the dancers wear – sleeveless maroon jerseys with numbers on the back and retro-style track shorts, similar to any sports uniform. Antonio nods, "It's a sort of team. That's also a part of the concept of the piece – as a community, as a team, we work together, we're going in one direction together." He adds, "I love this piece because it's a group piece with 12 people, but we have time to see all of them because we construct the piece in a form that you can really see..."

Mattia jumps in to finish the sentence, "Individuality of them."

Antonio agrees, "Individuality of the people in this community, in this group. This is the interesting thing about this choreography."

While dance is the show's only medium, individual stories blur together into something collective. Pondering themes of connection, closeness, and vulnerability, love and memory, *The Garden* becomes "a landscape of perception."

"It's not just a dance," says Antonio.

"It's a balance of more things. We really take care of every detail of the choreography. It's a sort of plastic and visual – visual poetry, in a way."

A COLLAGE OF INFLUENCES

Symbolically, gardens are often used in popular culture and literature to represent abundance and growth. Speaking about the inspiration for this particular "garden," the choreographers agree it was a combination of things.

"We travel a lot and when we started to think about this garden, this idea of a garden, we thought about all the art and gardens that we usually see in different parts of the world," Antonio says. "It was a sort of collage, in a way, to put this together. We are also [often] in Asia, we travel a lot in China, Japan with tours, so there are many, many different kinds of gardens. Every part of this show, every scene, is something that came from things that we saw, or we just lived."

"Informally, we get inspired a lot by the society we are in, by the art, the photography. We pay a lot of attention to what we have around political things," concurs Mattia. "When we are in a creative process – for example, now we're starting another

creative process – we are really aware of all the information that can be an inspiration for the work."

The Garden was developed in stages, with the last one taking place during the week leading up to the

have a really nice friend in the company Emilía [Benedikta Gísladóttir], who worked with us in the National Dance Company of Spain. So, for us to come there and have Emilía in the company, it was like having a person that you already know."

We really take care of every detail of the choreography. It's a sort of plastic and visual – visual poetry, in a way.

premiere. First, assistant choreographer Matteo Marfaglia came for two weeks to work with the dancers on the sections they wanted to keep. Later, Antonio and Mattia visited to finesse the structure and "stretch the piece a bit" which resulted in its complete reimaging.

Despite the cultural and geographical distance between Spain and Iceland, Antonio and Mattia found the people in Iceland "warm and welcoming."

"We enjoyed it a lot," Mattia says. "It's so different – everything: the landscape, the temperature, and, of course, the light. But it was really, really nice, and, of course, we also

"It was really, really special," adds Antonio.

As the choreographers are getting ready to return to Reykjavík for final preparations before the premiere, the Iceland Dance Company is already looking beyond the opening night – with plans to take *The Garden* on an international tour. ■

The Garden premieres on the main stage of the Reykjavík City Theatre on February 7, as a double bill with a dance film *Birds of Paradise* by Reykjavík-based photographer, visual artist, and speculative designer Vikram Pradhan. Additional shows are scheduled on February 15 & 20.



Hair We Go

In Pursuit Of Absolute Smoothness

Kristín Helga Ríkharrsdóttir's new work is a playful take on leg hair and perfection

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Art Bicnick

cushion. Rows of pink chairs, giving off either weird grandma vibes or a Barbie dream house, face a large screen. A pop-culture thriller begins.

LASER-FOCUSED CONCEPT

The Smooth Operator (*Silkimjúk*) is a new video installation of visual artist Kristín Helga Ríkharrsdóttir, and her first solo exhibition in a public museum. The nine-and-a-half-minute film follows a woman obsessed with leg hair — or, as the artist statement puts it, “in pursuit of absolute smoothness of her legs.”

The artwork is simultaneously fun and absurd, with elements of foot fetishism and mild horror — enough to make me close my eyes at least once. At the same time, it certainly skewers a society still ruled by what we see on the pages of glossy magazines — or, more aptly in 2026, by what we scroll past online — including the lingering taboo around unshaved legs that persists in many places. As the character on the screen battles unwanted dark hairs, the audience is casually fed an advertisement for the very device she’s using.

“I kind of got the idea for this work from a device you can use to laser your legs at home,” says Kristín Hel-

ga when we meet a few days after the exhibition opening. “The idea came from that object, and then it grew and went past the point of being necessarily about that object. The work is more about the woman, the actress.”

“Often I get ideas from objects, and very often it’s objects that I see advertised on Instagram, or wherever I’m scrolling,” Kristín Helga continues. “I’ll see something weird being advertised, and I’ll think, ‘This is a really funny device, what if I order it?’ But in this case, I did buy it for myself.”

Following friends’ recommendations, Kristín Helga ordered the device, which she admits was quite expensive. “My first thought when I was buying it for myself was, ‘Can I put this in my tax return?’” she laughs. She didn’t. The idea for *The Smooth Operator* came along much later.

SILK SMOOTH PRODUCTIONS

The project started with a particular image Kristín Helga had in mind: a person lasering her legs while wearing sunglasses. The laser device acquired a few years ago instantly came in handy. From there, Kristín Helga developed a script, sketched

a storyboard, and got together a small crew of friends to bring her vision to life. Over three days, she filmed the video together with actress and choreographer Selma Reynisdóttir, whose dance piece also appears in the work, director of photography Matt Cianfrani, and production assistant Katrín Helga Andrésdóttir.

The premise of the video is very simple: a woman is using the laser device to get rid of unwanted hair. Despite the name, things don’t go exactly smoothly.

translates as “silk smooth.” “When the time came to translate it to Icelandic, it felt weird to translate it. I felt like it was like trying to translate like a brand name or something, like trying to translate iPhone,” she says.

The relatability of the work to a bigger crowd is something that surprised Kristín Helga. “One feedback that I necessarily didn’t expect to get is I feel like a lot of people were like, ‘it’s very relatable,’” she says. “They relate to my hair obsession and to how it feels to suddenly see one hair in a weird place or something.”

People relate to my hair obsession and to how it feels to suddenly see one hair in a weird place.

Unlike the obvious reference, the name of the piece wasn’t inspired by the famous song by Sade. “I was not thinking about the song,” Kristín Helga stresses. “It was just a name that came to me when I was like, ‘Oh, this device is gonna need a name, a fictional name, and then I came up with *The Smooth Operator*.’” The Icelandic name of the project is completely different: *Silkimjúk* which

But whether there’s more she wants the audience to take away, Kristín Helga says, “I don’t want to tell people how to think about it or something, but I definitely want it to be kind of inhale [internalise] this need for smoothness. But not in like ‘the world is bad, everything sucks, and we have to smooth it’ [way]. I want to leave it open for interpretation.”

Enter the D-Gallery of the Reykjavik Art Museum through a narrow tunnel draped in shimmering, powder-pink fabric. Plastic flowers hang along the tunnel on transparent strings. A curious eye on the wall follows my every move. Someone beside me murmurs, “Careful, you almost stepped on the feet.” Her feet, I assume — until I look down and realise the floor is scattered with pairs of disembodied plastic ones. A white cat rests on a pink



FAKE ROCKS AND FACE PAINT

Kristín Helga's art practice extends beyond working with video. She mixes media – from photography,

she noticed tourists being fascinated by rare obsidian, which is illegal to be removed from nature. So she created fake stones, or “obsidian,” as part of the work *If You Can't Beat Them, Join Them*.

on film. The result is a series that plays with contrasts – young and old, real and imagined. It's not the first time Bogi, Kristín Helga's grandfather, has appeared in her work. “He is a very jolly and funny person,” she says. “He laughs a lot and thinks everything's funny. So it was not hard at all [to convince him] – he was just excited to participate. He's up for doing something weird.”

COMPLICATING THINGS

With so many projects across different formats, Kristín Helga admits that sticking to a single medium would make life easier. “I feel like my ideas are always bringing me to different mediums and places,” she says. “I'm trusting my gut, or the process, but I wish I had just one medium.”

“If you're a painter, you can make a new painting and it's kind of similar to the one you did before. When you're like me, doing different things every time, it just takes a bit more... I don't know,” she ponders, then adds with a smile, “I think I'm making things more complicated for myself.” ■

The Smooth Operator is on view at the Reykjavik Art Museum (Hafnarhús) until March 8.

It's good to scroll with an open mind for ideas.

sculpture, painting to sound – but at its core, her work pokes fun at things she finds in everyday life, or online.

Like *The Smooth Operator* work, she admits online research has become an integral part of her thought process. “It's good to scroll with an open mind for ideas,” Kristín says. “It has happened that I see ads or some weird videos that somehow I'm fond of and stop and look at them and think about them as something I could use. I'm just trying to pull things from the everyday, and in this day and age these everyday things can just be scrolling and being sent these weird ads,” she pauses, and quickly adds, “Which I think I get more of because I spend time on them.”

But plenty of her work draws directly from personal experience too. Years ago, working as a park ranger in one of Iceland's nature reserves,

The past year alone has been particularly productive for the artist. Last spring, her solo exhibition *Data Craters*, consisting of tapestry paintings inspired by the eruptions on Reykjanes Peninsula, was shown at Pula Hafnartorg. More recently, a group exhibition, *Sculpture Sculpture Performance*, at Gerðarsafn Art Museum wrapped up. There, Kristín Helga showed the previously unseen video work *IN IT – to win it* and a brand new photography series, *Bogi*, featuring her grandfather.

“I've been photographing my grandfather in different face paints – animals, flowers, colourful creatures that feel childlike, similar to children getting their faces painted on special holidays,” Kristín Helga explains the concept of the series. Over several months, she met with her grandpa, painted his face differently each time, and photographed him

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Centre Map

We're here to fill you in on our personal favourite places around town.

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 tofu!), 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 THE VOLCANO EXPRESS
Austurbakki 2
With an eruption every other month, the locals have gotten quite acclimated to "yet another eruption" happening on the very same peninsula Reykjavik sits on. But what does all of this mean? This show will, in a fast and furious way, get those eruptions and the volcanic systems in and around Reykjavik into spatial context for anyone brave enough to buckle up for the virtual flyover experience that is *The Volcano Express*. Not bad. Not bad at all. JT

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

18 LAVA SHOW
Fiskislióð 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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Best Newcomer

H,A,K,K Gallery*

ÓÐINSGATA 1
101 REYKJAVÍK

It's been just over a year since H,A,K,K opened, and what a solid start. With both founders coming from design backgrounds, the gallery emphasises craft, material, and design more than most existing spaces in the town. The exhibitions held in 2025 reflect this: from Johanna Seelemann's incredible glass work to group exhibitions where artists ponder on simple things like hooks or candleholders, H,A,K,K is onto something refreshingly different. IZ ■

H,A,K,K Gallery won Best Newcomer in the Culture section of our Best of Reykjavik magazine, which you can find all over Reykjavik now!



B

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HAPPY HOUR
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Art Exhibitions

06.02.26–05.03.26

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

Opening

ÁSMUNDARSALUR (GRYFJAN)

Helga Ósk Hlynsdóttir & Karen Briem – Monster Factory
A workshop-based project where visitors are invited to create sculptural monsters
Opens March 2 at 18:00
Runs until March 13

GALLERY FOLD

Ómar Þór Einarsson Arason – Echoes of Entropy
In his first solo exhibition at Gallery Fold, the artist presents his work influenced by time in the United States
Opens February 7 at 14:00
Runs until February 28

HAFNAR.SPACE

Marta Domachowska, Doro Sora & مورا – Ex.Sapiens
The artists continue to craft a space to connect themselves, each other, and the Earth over the five days
Opens February 5 at 18:00
Runs until February 9

Jonathan Swerdlow – Another Iceland
The photographer captures different landscapes of Iceland
Opens February 19 at 17:00
Runs until February 23

HERMA

Salóme Hollanders – MÓSKA
Here, the artist takes an abstract approach to landscape painting
Opens February 6 at 17:00
Runs until February 15

HANNESARHOLT

Erla Halldórsdóttir – LANDSLAG
The artist paints landscapes from her memories
Opens February 7 at 14:00
Runs until February 25

KJARVALSSTAÐIR (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

Guðrún Kristjánsdóttir – Traces
The artist works with natural materials to capture geological histories
Opens February 21
Runs until June 7

LITLA GALLERY

Emil J. Sig – The Ocean
In his fourth exhibition, the artist focuses on inspiration from the shores of Spain
Opens February 5 at 18:00
Runs until February 8

LÁ ART MUSEUM

Alberte Parnuuna & Antonia Bergþórsdóttir, Íris María Leifsdóttir & Vikram Pradhan – Augnablik jökuls
In the video corner, these visual artists come together to present their 2024 work
Opens February 7 at 15:00
Runs until May 31

Hlynur Hallsson – Enn og aftur - schon wieder - once again
The text-based artist explores Hegel's Aufhebung
Opens February 7 at 15:00
Runs until August 23

Jeannette Castioni – Only Data
Analysing birdsong and converting it into animations, this exhibition explores data and uncertainty
Opens February 7 at 15:00
Runs until August 23

Bernard Khoury – Toxic Grounds
The artist's first exhibition in Iceland explores Beirut's BO18 nightclub, bringing its story here
Opens February 7 at 15:00
Runs until August 23

The Field in Between – Styrmir Örn Guðmundsson & Agata Mickiewicz
Exploring the ambiguity of "threshold people" and liminal spaces, the artists use their respective mediums to capture the same energy
Opens February 7 at 15:00
Runs until August 23

Rebekka Kühnis – Transient
The Swiss-born artist captures scenes from her travels in Iceland over the past decade
Opens February 7 at 15:00
Runs until August 23

THE NORDIC HOUSE (CHILDREN'S LIBRARY)

Group exhibition – The North
Children from Höfn in Hornarfjörður and Snæfellsbær draw glaciers, along with a "fairytale world" created by children at Hagaskóli
Opens February 7 at 11:00
Runs until April 26

THE NORDIC HOUSE (HVELFING)

Group exhibition – Ripples: Shifting Realities In The Arctic
A group of Arctic artists explore the rapid changes in the landscape of the Arctic due to climate change
Opens February 6 at 15:00
Runs until April 26

NÚLLIÐ GALLERY

slop.is – Resonance
A multiday celebration of the internet, zzz.ch, and analogue work
Opens February 17
Runs until February 22

PORT9

ARON BARON – late nights
The artist works with photographs of men who have died from alcohol-related causes
Opens February 6 at 19:30

SIND GALLERY

Marzieh Amiri – Life as Disobedience
Exploring her upbringing under the Islamic Republic of Iran, the artist take a multimedia approach to explore resistance
Opens February 26
Runs until March 28

ÞULA (GRANDI)

Tolli – Marks Of Seasons
The renowned artist presents works inspired by his hike across Landmannalaugar and Hrafninnusker
Opens February 21
Runs until April 4

Ongoing

Á MILLI

Agnes Freyja – Milli hæða
Multimedia
Runs until February 7

ÁRNASTOFNUN

World In Words
Manuscript
Permanent exhibition

ÁSMUNDARSAFN

Finnur Arnar Arnarson – Wonderland
Works in progress
Runs until March 15

ÁSMUNDARSALUR

Kristín Karólína Helgadóttir & Sigurður Guðmundsson – Blind Date
Installation
Runs until February 22

ÁSMUNDARSALUR (GRYFJA)

Sara Björnsdóttir – Skíma
Photography
Runs until February 15

BERG CONTEMPORARY

Á. Birna Björnsdóttir – When I looked up, the moon had changed shape
Multimedia installation
Runs until March 21

CITY LIBRARY (GERÐUBERG)

Sóley Þorvaldsdóttir & Tinna Þorvalds Ónnudóttir – Viltu vera memm?
Illustration, photography
Runs until February 7
MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ARTS
The Einar Þorstein Ásgeirsson Collection
Archival works
Runs until February 28

THE EINAR JÓNSSON MUSEUM

Einar Jónsson – Spirit and Materiality
Sculpture
Runs until 2028

GERÐARSAFN (KÓPAVOGUR ART MUSEUM)

Hörður Ágústsson – Hörður
Retrospective, abstract art
Runs until May 3

GLERHÚSIÐ

Gyrðir Eliasson – Í morgunbirtu
Paintings
Runs until February 22

HAFNARBORG

Eggert Pétursson – Redden
Paintings and prints
Runs until March 1

Una Björg Magnúsdóttir – Filling
Installation
Runs until March 1

HAFNARHÚS (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

Kristín Helga Ríkharrósdóttir – D53
Video work, installation
Runs until March 8

Group Exhibition – Lavaforming
Multimedia
Runs until April 26

Katrín Elvarsdóttir – A Botanical Future
Photography
Runs until April 26

Erró – Erró: Remix
Multimedia
Runs until May 3

THE HOUSE OF COLLECTIONS

Group exhibition – Stay and turn to stone!
Folk art
Runs until December 31

HÖFUÐSTÖÐIN

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

I8 GRANDI

Ingólfur Arnarsson – ... just a shell.
Architecture
Runs until January 2027

IÐNÓ (SUNNUSALUR)

Stella – Art By A 10-year Old
Painting
Runs until February 28

THE LIVING ART MUSEUM

Þórdís Alda Sigurðardóttir – Life Patterns – All These Years
Multimedia
Runs until March 8

LA BOUTIQUE DESIGN
Lily Erla Adamsdóttir – Gróðurþel
Tufting, embroidery
Runs until March 7

LISTVAL GALLERY
KORKIMON – Prótótypur 01
Drawing
Runs until February 21

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND
Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir & Mark Wilson – Seas' Blue Yonder
Multimedia
Runs until May 10

Agnieszka Polska – Innocent Bodies
Video work
Runs until May 17

Group Exhibition – Affinities of Form
Multimedia
Runs until May 10

Donald Judd & Hörður Ágústsson – Architecture of Place
Architecture
Runs until May 17

Big Be-Hide – Alicja Kwade
Sculpture
Runs until May 2026

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

NESSKIRKJA
Styrmir Örn Guðmundsson – Ókomin slóði
Drawing
Runs until March 2

REYKJANES ART MUSEUM
Tumi Magnússon – Herefrom Thereto Therefrom Hereto
Painting, photography, soundwork
Runs until April 19

REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Kristján Maack – Sleeping Giants
Photography
Runs until April 5

REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY (SKOTIÐ)
Fókus – Movement
Photography
Runs until February 22

THE SCULPTURE GARDEN
Eygló Harðardóttir – Bring Me Colors
Sculpture
Runs until March 8

GALLERY SIGN
Kristinn E. Hrafnsson – Wander the World
Multimedia
Runs until December 15

SIGURJÓN ÓLAFSSON MUSEUM
Sigurjón Ólafsson – Face to Face
Sculpture
Runs until May 17

SIND GALLERY
Katrín Inga – Photon sensations in linear empty space = vacuum
Sculpture
Runs until February 21

WHALES OF ICELAND
Karim Iliya – Giants of the Sea
Photography
Runs until May 31

Y GALLERY
Sæmundur Þór Helgason – DRIP
Sculpture
Runs until February 8

Art Picks



Á. Birna Björnsdóttir – When I looked up, the moon had changed shape
BERG Contemporary
Runs until March 21

"Emotional scientist" Birna juxtaposes the scientific with the spiritual in this multimedia, sprawling exhibition. Two metallic eyes rotate – orbit – to mimic the sun and moon, and the poignance of tears is explored. Compellingly, artist Helena Sólveigar Aðalsteinsbur's text for the exhibition reads: "Birna's installations feel like language slowed down until it becomes matter (mountain, river, ocean, rain, puddle – tear, snot, slime, goo)." ISH



Group exhibition – Ripples: Shifting Realities in the Arctic
The Nordic House (Hvelving)
Opens February 6 at 15:00

Four Arctic artists and scientists unite to present an exhibition reflecting on the significant transformations occurring in the Arctic right now, collecting Indigenous perspectives, art, and scientific acumen. Documenting changes to glaciers stands out in the exhibition, and these creatives employ a mix of textile art, data, video work, and futuristic imagery to represent the changes happening in their communities right now. ISH



Helga Ósk Hlynsdóttir & Karen Briem – Monster Factory
Ásmundarsalur (Gryfjan)
Opens March 2 at 18:00

Monster-makers Helga and Karen welcome – for the first time – adults to a series of creative workshops in Ásmundarsalur's Gryfja space. Offering three different groups, the artists put on two sessions per group for you, titled "birth" and "becoming." Discarded paper, old clothes, bits and bobs, and more can all be added to your monster, which will be celebrated in a final party (with a DJ and tequila). ISH

Events 06.02.–05.03.26

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

Friday February 6

miXED spICE DFND: DJ Set

21:00 12 Tónar

Free Supermarket

17:30 Andrymi

Party Screening: Blossi

21:00 Bíó Paradís

DIMMA

20:00 Bæjarbíó

It Is Magic

23:00 Kaffibarinn

Curro Rodríguez: Flamencosomía

20:00 Mengi

Historjá – Stitches for Sápmi

Screening

17:00 The Nordic House

Ís í brauðformi: Örvar, Baby Frank, Ungur Orri, Saint Pete

23:00 Prikið

Mellí

22:00 Röntgen

Saturday February 7

Garðurinn

20:00 Borgarleikhúsið

Read & Chat: Icelandic Practice

11:30 City Library (Grófin)

HyperOrgan

12:00 Hallgrímskirkja

Let's Sing Together

14:00 Hannesarholt

China Coal Mine Art Troupe

19:00 Háskólabíó

Porrabakkí Silver Foxy: Burlesque

21:00 Kabarett

Straumur: Klaki

21:00 Kaffibarinn

Óli Dóri

23:00 Kaffibarinn

Heart Attack Sweethearts Drag Night

21:00 Kiki Queer Bar

Andravel

20:00 Mengi

Smirnoff Season: LiteFun (Live)

23:00 Prikið

Torfi (DJ Set)

22:00 Röntgen

Family Musical Concert

14:00 Salurinn

Á milli mála: Book Launch

14:30 Skálda

House of Revolution x Belonging?: TEMPTED

21:00 Þjóðleikhúsiðkjallarinn

Hide And Seek: Ióa b2b lípstikkboy

21:00 12 Tónar

Sunday February 8

Black Sunday: Freaks

21:00 Bíó Paradís

Sunday Jazz: Rubin Pollock

20:00 Iðnó

Ruby Francis (DJ Set)

21:00 Kaffibarinn

Monday February 9

Pub Quiz

20:00 Bodega

Mánudjass

19:30 Le Kock

Þorsteinn Eyfjörð

21:00 Kaffibarinn

Painting

20:00 Röntgen

Tuesday February 10

Sunna Margrét: Two Beats Ahead

Podcast

18:00 Huldunótur

Kraftgalli (DJ Set)

21:00 Kaffibarinn

Star Wars Pub Quiz In English

20:00 Röntgen

Double Decker Swing Dance & Classes

20:00 Tunglið

Reykjavík Trad Music Session

20:00 Ægir 101

Wednesday February 11

Fu Kaisha

21:00 Kaffibarinn

Witchcraft Wine Wednesday

19:30 Port9

Vinyl Wednesday: Sjötomma

Reykjavík - Örvar Smáráson

21:00 Röntgen

Thursday February 12

Jónbjörn (Lagaffe Tales)

21:00 Kaffibarinn

Drink & Draw

20:00 Loft Hostel

Salóme Katrín

20:00 Mengi

Ása Kolla

21:00 Röntgen

Virgin Orchestra, Juno Paul, Masaya

Ozaki

18:00 Smekkleysa

Friday February 13

Free Supermarket

17:30 Andrymi

Party Screening: Rocky Horror

Picture Show

21:00 Bíó Paradís

Madame Tourette and Squeak

21:00 Kabarett

IntrObeatz

23:00 Kaffibarinn

TURCHII/EGGERTSSON/ÁRNASON/

PETALS/TRYGVASON ELIASSEN

20:00 Mengi

Glysgirnd #5: Allenheimer &

Steindór Jónsson

22:00 Röntgen

Saturday February 14

Read & Chat: Icelandic Practice

11:30 City Library (Grófin)

On Desire: Queer Love Poems

18:00 Garg Bookstore

Cupid's Carnival: Costume Party &

Show

16:00 Kabarett

Straumur: Rauður

21:00 Kaffibarinn

BenSöl

23:00 Kaffibarinn

DJ Sóley Bjarna

22:00 Röntgen

Iúpína, Knackered, Sunna Margrét

18:00 Smekkleysa

Sunday February 15

Garðurinn

20:00 Borgarleikhúsið

Sunday Jazz: Spouses

20:00 Iðnó

Echo & Aura

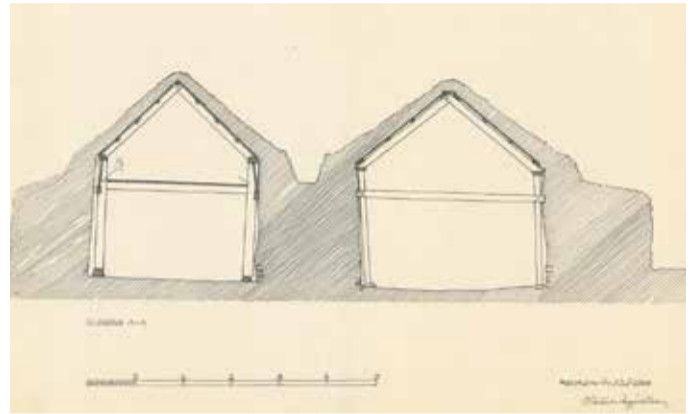
21:00 Kaffibarinn



31.1.–
10.5.2026

Ragna Róbertsdóttir,
Untitled, 1993, LI-7295

**Affinities of Form –
Artistic Convergences
in Iceland Since 1970**



31.1.–
17.5.2026

Hörður Ágústsson,
Stóru-Akrar, 1966,
National Archives

**Donald Judd
& Hörður Ágústsson
The Architecture
of Place**



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listasafn.is

Event Picks



Winter Festival: Museum Night, Pool Night, Light Installations

February 5-8

All over town!

Free

Free museum visits, free pool visits, free performances, oh my! This annual festival brings light – literally and figuratively – into the Capital Area. Installations of light sculptures are taking over Ráðhúsið, the tower on Lækjartorg, and about twenty other locations; there's free entry to most museums on February 6 and free entry to most pools on February 7. To check out the extensive bill of programming, check out reykjavik.is/vetrarhatid and enjoy! ISH



Ljós í Myrkri

February 11-14

Space Odyssey

Pay what you can/want

The Extreme Chill Festival presents: Ljós í Myrkri, or Light in the Dark! Continuing the trend of bringing light to this dark time of the year, the people behind the cornerstone ambient festival present a fresh line-up of experimental electronic music, including RM Hendrix & Nico Guerro, Knackered, Ægir, and more! Shake off those winter blues in Space Odyssey alongside some exciting, adventurous music. ISH



Baroque For A Shilling: On The Trail Of The Nordic Baroque

February 27

Dómkirkjan
3.000 ISK / 2.000 ISK for students

Bislet Barokk, an Oslo-based early-music trio, combine their talents with Icelandic musician Aurora Rósudóttir Luciano to perform forgotten Nordic broadside ballads, promising historical instruments, zithers, improvisation, and storytelling. Here, the group teams together to revive ballads that used to be presented on a sheet of paper and sold for just a shilling, which they will present to the audience at Dómkirkjan. ISH



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Events

06.02.26-05.03.26

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

Duology For Two Harps
13:30 Salurinn

Monday February 16

Pub Quiz
20:00 Bodega
DJ Pabbi
21:00 Kaffibarinn
Mánudjass
19:30 Le KocK
Painting
20:00 Röntgen

Tuesday February 17

Orang Volante
21:00 Kaffibarinn
Pub Quiz
20:00 Röntgen

Wednesday February 18

Andri Björgvinsson
21:00 Kaffibarinn
Concert: Dirt Talent Extract
20:00 Röntgen
Vinyl Wednesday: Einar Sonic
21:00 Röntgen
Double Decker Swing Dance & Classes
20:00 Tunglið

Thursday February 19

Nerd Party Night
20:00 Kabarett
UOON
21:00 Kaffibarinn
Drink & Draw
20:00 Loft Hostel
Lindy Lin
20:00 Mengi

Úr Óvæntri Átt #1: DJ Vesen
21:00 Röntgen

Friday February 20

Free Supermarket
17:30 Andrymi
Party Screening: Pulp Fiction
21:00 Bíó Paradís
Garðurinn
20:00 Borgarleikhúsið
Ása Kolla b2b Mellí
23:00 Kaffibarinn
Simon Mawhinney
20:00 Mengi
Young G&T
22:00 Röntgen

Saturday February 21

Play & Chat: Icelandic Practice
11:30 City Library (Grófin)
Swap Market
16:00 Dalur Hostel
Karaoke
22:00 Elli
Let's Sing Together
14:00 Hannesarholt
Agla
20:00 Hannesarholt
Drink Jukebox: 80s Music Party
20:00 Kabarett
Straumur: Juno Paul
21:00 Kaffibarinn
Simon (fknhdsm)
23:00 Kaffibarinn
Einakróna: Release Concert
20:00 Mengi
Mama Gunz
22:00 Röntgen

Sunday February 22

Black Sunday: Ghost in the Shell
21:00 Bíó Paradís
Sunday Jazz: Bjarmi
20:00 Iðnó
DJ Vala

21:00 Kaffibarinn

Monday February 23

Pub Quiz
20:00 Bodega
DJ Vinur Minn
21:00 Kaffibarinn
Mánudjass
19:30 Le KocK
Painting
20:00 Röntgen

Tuesday February 24

Upprásin: Laufkvist, glupsk, Anya Shaddock
20:00 Harpa
DFND
21:00 Kaffibarinn
Pub Quiz
20:00 Röntgen
Reykjavik Trad Music Session
20:00 Ægir 101

Wednesday February 25

Fu Kaisha
21:00 Kaffibarinn
Vinyl Wednesday: Giovanna Del Dio
21:00 Röntgen
Midwinter Warmth: Free Lunchtime Concert With Eva
12:15 Salurinn

Thursday February 26

Einar Bjartur: Solo Recital
20:00 Hannesarholt
Viktor Birgiss (Lagaffe Tales)
21:00 Kaffibarinn
Drink & Draw
20:00 Loft Hostel
Sölvi Kolbeins Trio
20:00 Mengi
Silja Glømmi
21:00 Röntgen
Gímaldin (Live)

18:00 Space Odyssey

Friday February 27

Free Supermarket
17:30 Andrymi
Party Screening: Good Bye, Lenin!
21:00 Bíó Paradís
Baroque For A Shilling
20:00 Dómkirkjan
Allenheimer & Steinberger
21:00 Kaffibarinn
Ásta Fanney
20:00 Mengi
DJ Karítas
22:00 Röntgen

Saturday February 28

Read & Chat: Icelandic Practice
11:30 City Library (Grófin)
Straumur: Skellkur í bringu
21:00 Kaffibarinn
Gunni Ewok b2b DJ Inri
23:00 Kaffibarinn
Amor Vincit Omnia: Extended Babe Album Release
20:00 Mengi
DJ Myth
22:00 Röntgen
GDRN & Tómas R. Release Concert
20:00 Salurinn

Sunday March 1

Black Sunday: Herz aus Glas
21:00 Bíó Paradís
Sunday Jazz: Hróðmar Sigurðsson Tríó
20:00 Iðnó
Tíbrá: Meditations On Glacial Water And Love
13:30 Salurinn

Monday March 2

Pub Quiz
20:00 Bodega
Mánudjass
19:30 Le KocK
Painting
20:00 Röntgen

Wednesday March 4

Dead Air: A Tragicomedy and Q&A
20:00 Tjarnarbíó
Double Decker Swing Dance & Classes
20:00 Tunglið

Thursday March 5

Drink & Draw
20:00 Loft Hostel
DJÁSS: 15th Anniversary Concert
20:00 Salurinn
Dead Air: A Tragicomedy and Q&A
20:00 Tjarnarbíó

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Appy Listings

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Cocktails 1.500 ISK

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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

DAISY

Every day from 17:00 to 19:00
Beer 1.100 ISK, Wine 1.300 ISK

DEN DANSKE KRO

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

ELLÝ

Every day from 12:00 to 20:00
Beer 1.200 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

FORRÉTTABARINN

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

THE IRISHMAN

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

JUNGLE COCKTAIL BAR

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 1.100 ISK, Wine 1.400 ISK,
Cocktails 2.200 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

LITLI BARINN

Every day from 15:00 to 18:00
Beer 990 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

NÍNA

Monday to Friday, 17:00-19:00
Beer 1.090 ISK, Wine 1.390 ISK,
Spritzes 1.790 ISK

PRIKID

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 950 ISK, Wine 1.190 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 1.200 ISK

VÍNSTÚKAN TÍU SOPAR

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

ÖLSTOFAN

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

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

Best Goddamn Bar

Röntgen

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Unanimous choice for best goddamn bar. Again. "Röntgen is a no brainer," is the simplest explanation, as a panellist stated, "You can do everything there. They've got pub quizzes, good DJs, karaoke, great selection of drinks, nice vibe, ample seating, you can have a date there. I am still captivated by Röntgen." This bar is consistently on our best-of list, so expect queues as the night drags on. BC

Röntgen won Best Goddamn Bar in the Drinking & Nightlife section of our Best of Reykjavik magazine, which you can find all over Reykjavik now!



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Living In Darkness

Dark Music Days: From Teenage Bedroom To Vibrating Metal Plates

Live concert review from the cutting edge

WORDS Eva Yuki Mik
IMAGE Sunna Ben

with suspense. Slowly the ensemble comes to life: snoring, whispering and stretching as if an organism is growing and pulsating in the room. The light switches to cold white and for the first time in the piece, the brass instruments fully utilise their sound. Sound continues to resonate through the metal sheets, even when the instruments are not playing. It is as if there is always something lurking behind the ensemble, a composition that happens in the margins.

the soloist, one can hear every detail, and it is the intimate relationship between performer and instrument that matters. In contrast, the composition of Masaya Ozaki and ronja for Caput ensemble feels more like the teenager's bedroom in which the ensemble and audience alike are caught in their own web (mess?), only to be completely destroyed as the music progresses into a full-scale noise concert.

As almost every concert is a world premiere, the audience at Dark Music Days goes in with open ears and listens with curiosity. It is rare to have such an attentive audience, perhaps stimulated by the gravity of the Harpa concert halls and such experimental music. Although the program could have been even more diverse, as the majority of concerts remained close to classical tradition, the festival never felt pretentious – the festival organisers even rescheduled two performances to make space for the Iceland-Denmark handball match, which we watched with a bunch of composers and members of the orchestra in Harpa. The overall feeling, despite the result of that game, was one of joyful discovery. ■

Eva Yuki Mik is a poet and performer from the Netherlands, based in Reykjavik, Iceland. For the past two years, she has been active in the grassroots music scene in Reykjavik, organising events and performing with her own music projects. She is currently doing her master's degree in New Audiences and Innovative Practices (NAIP) at the music department of the Iceland University of the Arts.

As the days are still awfully short, this past weekend Dark Music Days embraced the darkness outside and celebrated contemporary music with a four-day festival. It is one of the oldest music festivals in Iceland, yet continues to be the festival that brings new sounds and experimental music to the big stage of Harpa.

One piece that keeps on reverberating long after its final note, is Bergún Snæbjörnsdóttir's *Intraloper*, premiered by brass ensemble APPARAT. Behind the musicians hang vibrating metal plates, illuminated by ominous red light. Before APPARAT even starts playing, the sound of vibrating metal already fills the space

Another two memorable concerts for completely opposite reasons are SOLO and Caput ensemble. In the hyper-intimate concert SOLO, the audience takes their seats on the stage itself, looking out on the empty Eldborg hall and one solo performer. It feels like being in the bedroom of

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Mountain Funk

Following The Hidden Hand

Ari Árelíus continues to explore his groove on the hypnotic *Hulin Hönd*

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Sandra P.

peror *Nothing*, to the rich, funky textures of his Kraumur Awards-nominated 2022 debut album *Hiatus Terræ*, Ari continues to explore this psychedelic soundworld on *Hulin Hönd*.

"I'm a kind of investigator of various genres and an experimentalist," he says. "I like taking elements from different genres and fusing them together. I use my intuition to create something that I like, kind of like a painting."

CONTAINING MULTITUDES

Speaking about his artist name, Ari says that, despite some corners of the internet claiming he took it from the Roman emperor and philosopher Marcus Aurelius, it's just a coincidence. He had initially wanted to release music under his own name, Ari Frank, but it was already taken. Árelíus was one of the names his mother had considered, so he just went with it. Though he's not particularly fond of Stoicism, Ari holds a BA

lyrics, a darker side opens up. "It's about when things that you believed in change without being necessarily a negative thing," says Ari. "It's just a shift of perspectives, I suppose. 'Draumur dó' means 'death of a dream' – kind of like a revolving door, or one door closing and a new one opening."

Ari continues his philosophical exploration on the very next track, "Lifi drauminn," Icelandic for "living the dream." "This is the question that I like to ask my friends and myself," he says. "Am I living the dream? It's hard to answer, right?"

CREATIVE OVERDRIVE

In *Hulin Hönd*, Ari wears yet another creative hat. He drew and designed the album cover – a hypnotic swirl surrounded by primitive drawings of silhouetted human figures dancing.

drawing, just chilling like that when I have the time, and listening to music," he says. "I realised that all my visual artist friends listen to so much music. I was like, 'Where do you find the time?' Then I realised, *I'm* always working on music – I'm practising or mixing something, when they are working on something and listening to albums. So I thought, 'I'm just gonna start drawing and painting myself.' I was trying to really listen very well."

Hulin Hönd is certainly a very personal, introspective work. Yet despite Ari being the mastermind of the album, he calls on a group of local musicians to bring it to life: Hreiðar Már Árnason and Magnús Eliassen Trygvason playing drums, Moritz Christiansen and Sölvi Kolbeinsson sax and Rashelle Francés Reyneveld harp. "I borrow my friend's talents," Ari says. "I have

I like music that tends to maybe be ill-definable in some ways.

In this release, Ari blends elements of Ethiopian music, including influences from Mulatu Astatke, the "father of Ethio-jazz," with Afrobeat and Fela Kuti, and combines these with inspiration from one of his favourite albums, the 1968 proto-krautrock record *Silver Apples*, resulting in a velvety, mesmerising sound.

"I like music that tends to maybe be ill-definable in some ways," he shares. "I try to channel that in my music. I try to create something that is hypnotic, a bit psychedelic. Often, there's an element of Iceland I also try to put in there somewhere. Which is always a challenge."

Ari started working on *Hulin Hönd* in 2024, while he was doing an internship in London, experimenting with analogue gear and mixing techniques to create this hazy, immersive feel. "This album was also an investigation of various mixing techniques – and just getting better at that. I mixed it all myself," he says.

in philosophy, and themes of fundamental questions of existence are often present in his work, including in the cryptic title he chose for this album – *Hulin Hönd*, which translates as "hidden hand."

"It ties into the concept of how something other than free will often guides you through life and creates, maybe, your life story," Ari explains. "I'm reflecting on those various forms of existence you kind of go through..." he pauses for a moment and adds, "As a kid, I moved a lot. I've lived in many places. I suppose, without overexplaining it, it's about containing multitudes – this phrase of contextual personality and contextual forms of existence, and free will – if it exists or not."

The idea of outside forces shaping you comes through clearly in "Draumur dó," a track that, with its "gory synths, groovy saxophone," and palpable African influences, feels like basking in the sun somewhere far away. But as you start to listen to the

This is the question that I like to ask my friends and myself. Am I living the dream?

"I guess I was aiming for something that is kind of pre-Enlightenment, kind of pre-Realism – and also, I'm just not a great painter," he smiles. "I just like doing these doodles, and I felt that was genuine and a reflection of who I am, you know. The album is an attempt to be sincere and genuine about me and who I am, kind of like that quote by, was it David Bowie? Who said something along the lines of you need to be selfish when you make music."

Ari enjoyed the process so much that he says he might want to always handle the design himself. "I like

an idea, then I try to let go of it and invite people in. I might have written the core of it, but then I try to heighten it by different voices."

With *Hulin Hönd* released on the day we speak, Ari's already itching to work on his next projects. "I have another album ready, then I'm recording another one in April," he says. "I don't know what's wrong with me. I like doing stuff." ■

Hulin Hönd is out now on streaming platforms and available for purchase at ariarelius.bandcamp.com. Want to catch Ari live? He plays Hörmungadagur in Hólmavík on February 7.

"I book these concerts every Sunday, and tonight I decided to book myself. You can do this," says Ari Frank Inguson, known as Ari Árelíus, speaking from the stage of IDNÓ during the release concert of his latest album *Hulin Hönd* on January 25, and the audience bursts into laughter.

A poet of grooves and vibes, Ari Árelíus is a familiar face in the local music scene. He not only books concerts for the weekly Jazz Sunday at IDNÓ (every Sunday at 20:00), he's also a mixing engineer (including for the Straumur concert series at Kaffibarinn), teaches guitar and music production, produces for other artists, and performs with others, too.

When, a few days before the concert, I catch him for a coffee, he smiles, "It's a whole mixed bag of stuff that keeps me occupied."

A SONIC INVESTIGATOR

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Music Feature

Daniél Bjarnason Captures Darkness

The composer and conductor previews his upcoming album, *The Grottesque & The Sublime*.

WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle
IMAGE Anna Maggý

Daniél Bjarnason joins our Zoom call from Bologna; he's already bounced between Iceland and abroad multiple times in the past few weeks. The established composer and conductor has been at the forefront of new Icelandic orchestral work, sitting as the artist-in-residence of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra from 2015 to 2018. Now, working once again with Iceland's symphony, his latest album — *The Grottesque & The Sublime* — will be released on February 27.

"I think it's a good title for the album in general, because it does deal with the interplay between light and darkness, moving from the living into the underworld, and reflecting on that journey," Daniel explains of the evocative, diptych title. The title of *The Grottesque & The Sublime*, along with titles of movements in the concerto "FEAST," are pulled from the language of Edgar Allan Poe; it's all "from that world, this sort of 'goth horror,'" as Daniel puts it. The middle work — "Fragile Hope"

— is perhaps the most gripping of the three on *The Grottesque & The Sublime*. "Fragile Hope" is a 14-minute homage to the late composer Jóhann Jóhannsson, a collaborator and friend of Daniel's, which reprises melodies from Jóhann's acclaimed 2002 album, *Englabörn*. "I do write, in the notes for that, it is a reflection on the beauty that he brought to the world through light and darkness," Daniel says, evoking the juxtapositional nature of the album's title.

HOME TEAM

Daniel recorded *The Grottesque & The Sublime* with his "home team," the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra. "As a composer and also conductor, to have that kind of connection with a group like an orchestra is really important because it means that you feel confident in performing with them, trying out new things with them, recording. It's like a long-term relationship, you know, it adds layers," he says.

Having worked with the orchestra for many years, Daniel notes that he's forged a strong connection with the group. "I know the musicians personally, many of them are actually good friends. So I think that just builds a level of trust and understanding between us — a lot of things become easier, you don't have to explain as much."

"Fragile Hope" sits in between two larger concertos: "FEAST" and "Inferno." These are written for soloists with an orchestra, each sitting close to half an hour with multiple movements. Daniel's been working on these pieces for a while, sharing, "FEAST" was actually written for Víkingur [Heiðar Ólafsson, the Grammy Award-winning pianist],

he's an old friend of mine, and he premiered it in Los Angeles, I think maybe in 2019." In the recording of *The Grottesque & The Sublime*, however, pianist Frank Dupree took the piece.

The latter work, 'Inferno,' was also written for a different person than the one on the recording: Austrian percussionist Martin Grubinger. "He decided to retire at the old age of 40," Daniel laughs. "So he stopped performing, and this was actually the last piece he played with an orchestra, in Paris." But, as life goes, the piece was given to Vivi Vassileva, Martin's student and protégé. Daniel explains that Vivi "has something of the same incredible energy that [Martin] does, on stage and as a performer."

Daniel notes that, despite each work having its own defining aspects, the three pieces form a cohesive whole in *The Grottesque & The Sublime*. "Their subject matter is connected, in a way. They were actually written during Covid or finalised around there... Two of the pieces may be categorised as 'Dances of Death': 'FEAST' and 'Inferno.' And then, the third piece is a reflection on the untimely death of Jóhann, and a testament to his life."

CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL

Throughout the pieces, Daniel experiments with the traditional orchestra; at some points, brass instrumentalists are instructed to just blow air through their instruments without playing notes, for instance. This continues a hallmark of Daniel's work, where he straddles traditional orchestral styles and more innovative aesthetics — a contemporary



Portraits Both Light And

...e & The Sublime

musician who conducts an orchestra classically.

hopefully there will be a lot more Icelandic conductors."

You don't have to listen to it any specific way. There's not any hidden message that you are supposed to decipher.

"I try to pick up whatever I feel serves the music that I'm writing — and that includes using extended techniques as part of my palette, to create the sound world that I want — without the technical aspect necessarily being my main focus," he explains, then contrasts it with, "I also employ the orchestra in a more traditional way, and love to tap into the way of playing they have been optimized to do for hundreds of years."

"It's all a part of the orchestral palette that I feel free to draw from," he states. "I feel like it is a part of the whole tapestry."

CREATIVITY AND ALIVENESS

Daniél stands out, being a composer from Iceland. "In general, there's not a tradition or culture for understanding conductors in Iceland, but I think there are more and more young people starting to be interested in conducting," he explains. "That is definitely a shift, and that's how it happens: it becomes an increasing part of the fabric of the music life; whereas, for a long time, it was only me and a handful of others who were doing it." Looking to the future, he says, "I'm happy that there are more conductors coming up, and

In addition to keeping an eye on Iceland, Daniél is working around the world as a composer. He attracted significant attention a few months ago when it was revealed that he conducted the London Symphony Orchestra on Spanish pop artist Rosalía's recent sensational album, *LUX*.

"That album was a long process, of course, and I'm just a cog in the machine. I love being a part of these different kinds of projects — new experiences with different kinds of artists," he explains. After a phone call with producer Noah Goldstein — whom Daniél learned had a connection to Iceland himself, having interned at Greenhouse Studios at the beginning of his career — Daniél worked a few "long and intense days" conducting for the album. Then, it was a wait of a year until the album came out; Daniél explains he "signed an NDA to not breathe a word about this to anyone," so his credit being on the album hit Iceland by surprise.

Being tapped to conduct for international projects, alongside having a significant upcoming personal work, I ask him if he's able to pinpoint what defines and differentiates him as a conductor. "It's not something I think about that much," he admits. "I gen-

erally see myself as a conducting composer, in a way. I have that sort of sensibility as being a composer, conducting fellow composers' music."

He also points out that what works for him is "just a sense of creativity and aliveness about the music being created in the moment. It's like a living thing," he emphasises. "It's not something that is this immutable object of notes that you have to, like, worship the altar of the old composers, which is an approach that I've always found a bit turgid somehow."

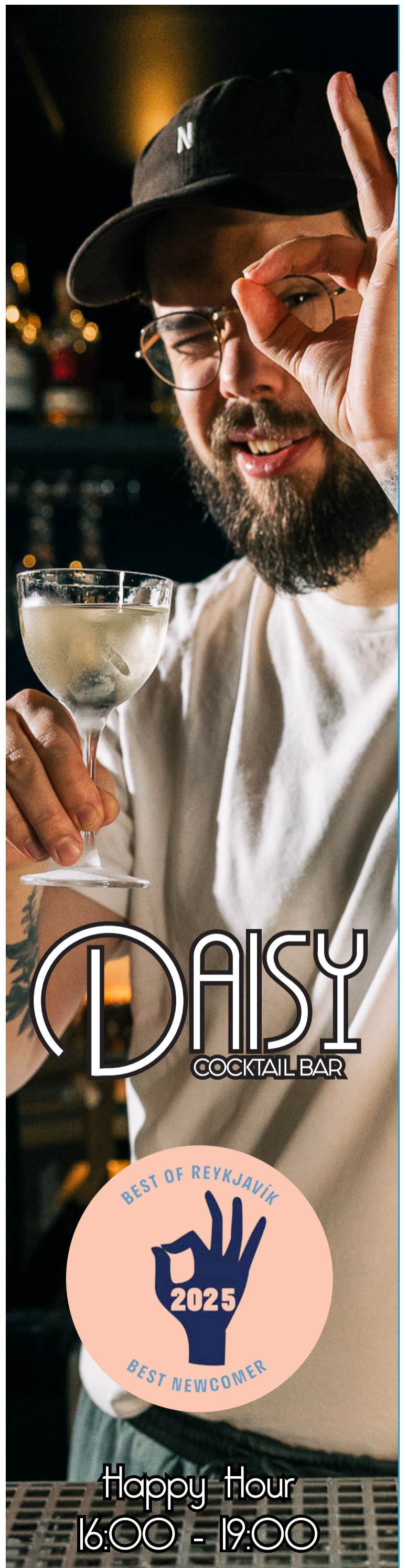
STORYTELLING

Daniél explains that, compared to his previous work, his sense of storytelling is more prominent. "It's quite theatrical music, in a way, and I allow myself to follow that dramatic arc of storytelling, rather than thinking too abstract," he notes.

"I would say to anyone, to be open to experiencing it, and let it take you wherever it does in your mind. You don't have to listen to it any specific way. There's not any hidden message that you are supposed to decipher, or [you are] not supposed to feel a certain way. It's all in the listener's mind, and that is when the music comes alive," he says, then emphasises, "I hope it can inspire some ears to open up."

Concluding, he suggests, "All people need to do is listen, actually listen. Just let it take you on a journey." ■

Daniél Bjarnason's *The Grotesque & The Sublime* will be released on February 27. You can listen on most streaming platforms, or buy the record on sonoluminus.com



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Vegan Option

After The Vegan Gold

Who's left when the prospectors go home

WORDS Adam Roy Gordon
IMAGES Art Bicnick

logic. They have long time horizons, ritual discipline, and recipes loaded with meaning. Sometimes you endure recruitment pamphlets or strange videos while you eat. But the food is affordable, good, and consistent.

largest vegan market. Junkyard, Jömm, SÓNÓ Matseljur appeared. Every supermarket scrambled to stock shelves. You could get vegan premade sandwiches at gas stations. Reykjavik topped international lists of most vegan-friendly cities.

When I asked about a particular ingredient, the answer I got was "Google it." Fair enough.

This framework turns out to be surprisingly useful for understanding who survived Iceland's vegan gold rush. Because that's exactly what happened here: a boom, a bust, and now we get to see who was actually committed versus who was just panning for clout.

Then the trend passed. Vegan búðin closed. Supermarkets drastically scaled down their selections. The gas station sandwiches mostly vanished.

BOOM, THEN BUST

The timeline is absurdly compressed. In the early 00s, veganism was completely unknown. Icelandic didn't even have a word for it. My father-in-law proudly told me about "grænkeri" when they finally coined the word.

But options remain. Nearly all restaurants now have at least one option and sometimes it's very good. Plantan offers reliable vegan café culture. Domino's still offers vegan cheese. Pizzan kept the faux meat toppings. Some Víki Vaki locations have vegan dogs. Asian restaurants and Middle Eastern spots never stopped being reliable.

VEGAN WORLD PEACE

Then came the gold rush. Like trampolines, pizza ovens, and financial manipulation before it, veganism got swept up in Iceland's trend cycle. Vegan búðin opened as the world's

Part of the global Loving Hut empire with multiple Reykjavik locations, Vegan World Peace operates with the true believer energy that makes these places work.

The best vegetarian and vegan restaurants are run by cults. I learned this growing up in Los Angeles where spiritual movements compete through their kitchens. Govinda locations run by the Hare Krishna feeding backpackers with affordable curries. Reliable Loving Hut locations led by Supreme Master Ching Hai. Yellow Deli cafés run by members who sacrificed all income and property to the community. It's spiritual outreach with spring rolls.

True believers operate on different







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Rush

Expansive and bright with exposed wood beams, conveniently located right downtown in Ingólfstorg. There's a small shrine to the Supreme Leader that's unobtrusive enough that you might miss it. The visually aggressive posters are harder to ignore: vegan athletes, vegan doctors, vegan celebrities dotting the otherwise attractive space. These guys are out to proselytise. The staff is efficient but don't expect much hand-holding. When I asked about a particular ingredient, the answer I got was "Google it." Fair enough.

The monthly buffets run 2.990 ISK per adult and are one of the best deals in the city. About two dozen different dishes, all-you-can-eat. It's a great opportunity to try things you might not otherwise order, particularly the Asian faux meats and pan-Asian dishes you might not recognise.

The menu variety can be intimidating if you aren't familiar with Asian dishes. The "recommended" label helps. The Thai Salad is a fresh and bright green papaya salad with veggie meat skewers that makes a great main despite being listed as an appetiser. The banh mi sandwich is solid and the restaurant draws regulars for that alone, some of whom aren't even vegetarian. The Bun Bo Hue, a Vietnamese (vegan) beef stew, is a standout, as is the

Rice Vermicelli, which arrives covered in veggie meats, vegetables, a spring roll, and tasty broth. The vegan deep-fried shrimp seems intimidating, as do most faux fish dishes, but they're good and even kid-approved when I went with my nine-year-old son. The Thai Iced Coffee is excellent.

This is food built for abundance, not finesse. Accessible pan-Asian food with lots of flavour that's nice enough to take your non-vegan friends and family to. Centuries of Buddhist monk innovation in Asian vegan techniques, franchised globally.

MAMA REYKJAVÍK

The vibe here is completely different. No faux meats. In fact, no soy at all. Since they moved to their newer location next to BakaBaka, they've stepped up the class. The place is a bit hidden downtown but feels like a cosy hideaway.

Mama describes herself as a "sanctuary," the kind of earnest hippie wellness language that usually makes you roll your eyes. And yet they deliver it in spades. If you've been to hippie restaurants that may or may not have been co-located with a yoga studio, you know the vibe, except these guys make it elegant enough for a date night. The waitstaff is genuinely attentive and enthusiastic,

walking you through the menu with the kind of patient guidance that heightens the anticipation.

The restaurant came into being through cacao ceremonies, which explains the spiritual framing and why it actually holds. This isn't wellness aesthetic. It's spiritual practice that evolved into a restaurant.

cake is a vegan cheesecake you'd be hard-pressed to believe is vegan.

They use ingredients like tahini instead of soy, leveraging its protein and calcium. The tahini smoothie is creamy and rich in a way that sounds odd but absolutely works. I'm still thinking about it. I will be going back for it.

earned.

TRUE BELIEVERS

Vegan World Peace draws on centuries of Asian tradition and operates within a global spiritual movement's structure. Institutional belief and scale. Mama represents something else: intimacy, ritual, constraint-as-identity. The granola café grown up, cacao ceremony made dinner-worthy.

Both survived the gold rush because both actually meant it. One believes in Supreme Master Ching Hai's teachings. The other believes in the power of really good guacamole and ceremonial cacao. Turns out both commitments work.

Iceland's vegan scene isn't back to zero, but it's not the boom times either. The survivors offer better quality than the peak quantity ever did. You can get vegan options at most restaurants now, which is impressive for a place that didn't have a word for it 20 years ago.

But when you win mainstreaming, you trade dedicated spaces for accessibility. Vegan World Peace and Mama Reykjavík matter because they refuse that bargain. They're not just restaurants with vegan options. They're spaces that refuse to be just another spot with a Beyond Burger on the menu. ■

If you've been to hippie restaurants that may or may not have been co-located with a yoga studio, you know the vibe, except these guys make it elegant enough for a date night.

The menu centres on stews: rice and dal, rice and curry, rice and chilli, rice and African peanut stew. The dal with its unique lemongrass profile is simple but incredibly flavourful. Where the restaurant really stands out are its starters, salads, and desserts. The nachos are phenomenal, making up for what they miss in cheese with well-spiced beans and plentiful guacamole. The guac may very well be the best in Iceland. The salads are shockingly good, beautifully presented, and perfectly balanced. The "orgasm"

The cacao beverages tie back to the restaurant's ceremonial origins. These guys take their cacao seriously. The grilled naan bread is chewy and flavourful, perfect for soaking up the stews. They have a small alcohol selection, reasonably priced.

This isn't a cult restaurant in the traditional sense. Just lifestyle commitment so deep you wouldn't be surprised if it were. But they actually create the sanctuary they promise, which makes the earnestness feel

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Folk Yeah

Wedding Bells And Wretched Smells

Three folktales on courtship, marriage, and beyond

WORDS Grayson Del Faro
IMAGES Joana Fontinha

So the endless onslaught of toxic positivity and shameless materialism that defines the Christmas season has long since ended but spring is still quite a way off – and further off in Iceland than anywhere else. Even in Scandinavia the crocuses can begin to sprout in February, but we won't see a single leaf until May. And you can fucking forget about flowers. Perhaps this is why the United States commercialised the hell out of Valentine's Day, quite

love because tales of that type are few and far between. Stories about marriage, however, are endless. Some are comic, some are clever, and others are downright tragic. As the news is already rife with genocide, fascism and the looming threat of World War III, I'll spare you any more tragedy. Since you could probably use a laugh right about now, I've picked out three tales of absurd arrangements, witty women, and a healthy helping of farts. IYKYK: nothing rings truer of the experience of marriage than farts. So many farts.

to ask her on his brother's behalf. Sigríður tells him that she is unable to marry because she is cursed. She explains that one day while she was home alone sewing, a mysterious woman entered her home and began to sew with her in silence. Rather than ask her, "Hey lady, the fuck you doing in my house?" Sigríður just let her stay. This happened repeatedly over the course of three years until one day, when the mysterious woman got up to leave, she farted.

themselves, this story is recorded with a cutesy title that rhymes in Icelandic: "It is not a sin(d), that the body passes wind."

TO LOVE AND TO CHERISH

The next story starts a little Cinderella-esque. There are three sisters. Two of them are vain and self-absorbed but beloved by their parents while the youngest is hated and forced to do all the shittiest housework. One day, a three-headed giant transforms himself into a man and successfully woos the oldest sister and later comes back as a different man for the second. When he returns a third time to ask for the youngest, Helga, her parents refuse at first. They cannot trust any man with bad enough taste to want to marry their daughter who is not only hideous but the most disgusting pig on earth. (Their words, not mine!) But he insists, and they relent. When he asks if she'd rather be carried or dragged to the cave, she chooses to be dragged! Girl, what are you even doing?

Once at his cave, she is forced to be his servant. Even so, he seems to treat her better than her own parents, which is pretty fucking sad if you ask me. She discovers her

"If you marry my brother and fart at the wedding, I'll just say it was me." She agrees.

literally just to have something to do in February. And while we can all agree that it's just another capitalist crock of shit that probably makes more people feel worse than better, there's nothing else to do!

With that in mind, I thought to wax poetic with some romantic tales from Icelandic folklore. Turns out that Icelanders through the ages were likely too concerned with daily survival to dally with the frivolity of

IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH

This first little ditty starts with two brothers. One is solemn and respectable while the other is a slapstick buffoon. There is a woman at a nearby farm named Sigríður and all the dudes in the area want to marry her, but she rejects them all. Mr Serious wants to marry her but fears he has no hope, so Mr Silly rides off

Sigríður laughed, and the woman, who turned out to be an elf, was furious. She cursed Sigríður to fart on her wedding day and that was why Sigríður was afraid to get married.

"That's no problem," Mr Silly assures her. "If you marry my brother and fart at the wedding, I'll just say it was me." She agrees. When the time comes and she does absolutely rip one at the feast, Mr Silly takes the blame. As she continues to stink up her own wedding, he continues to laugh it off and even offers to leave. "No, no," the guests insist to the loveable yet fraudulently flatulent rapsSCALLION. So the curse is broken and these were surely just the first farts of many in a long, happy marriage. Because the jokes write



sisters locked up in the cave and hatches a plan to help them escape even though they clearly don't deserve her. She tricks the giant into giving her the keys by agreeing to marry him, wraps the sisters in a bag and asks him a favour. She says she's worried about her parents starving without her and says that if he'll take this bag of food scraps to them, she'll prepare the wedding feast for his return. While he's

safe distance as the brutes find the feast ready but realise that the bride is just a log in a dress. Believing themselves to have been pranked by the giant, the guests fly into a rage and everyone kills each other. She steals all the giant's stuff, builds herself a mansion, marries a nice guy, and lives happily ever after. It doesn't say, but I hope her god-awful parents and her harpy sisters live in misery.

it on the loom, and then cutting and sewing clothes from this material so elegant he can't even see it. When it's "ready," she says she needs to put it on him because it's so delicate he would ruin it. So she "dresses" him in his finest "clothes" and he walks out the door bare-ass naked.

Meanwhile, the other woman acts shocked when her husband returns home. He asks why and she tells him, "You're so sick, you should be in bed." He thinks she must be right, so he goes to lie down. The next day, she arranges for his last rites and when he asks why, she asks, "Are you really so fucking dumb that you don't even realise that you died?" He believes her and waits patiently as she makes arrangements, even ordering a custom coffin with a window so he can watch his own funeral. His naked friend arrives at the funeral with all his bits blowing in the breeze and every one howls with laughter. From inside the coffin, they hear the man say, "I would laugh, too, but I'm dead!" The wives' pranks are revealed, and as far as I'm concerned they both win. I can't help but imagine them exchanging smirks even as they're publicly whipped for their transgressions, mouthing to each other, "Worth it!" ■

She watches from a safe distance as the brutes find the feast ready but realise that the bride is just a log in a dress.

gone, she sets up the wedding feast, disguises herself by rubbing ash all over her body and runs out the cave with the fire-poker between her legs like a witch on a broomstick.

She runs into the giant on his way back with an entourage of wedding-crazed giants, trolls, and ogres. She introduces herself as Coal-Face Poker-Rider and says, "Bro! Looks like one hell of a party and a super hot wife are waiting for you!" He eagerly rushes off. She watches from a

UNTIL DEATH DO YOU PART

Speaking of pranks, this last one really sets a high standard. There are two women who make a bet to see which of their husbands is dumber. The first pretends to be spinning yarn when her husband gets home. He asks what she's doing and she tells him she's spinning a yarn so fine, he can't even see it and he believes her. She goes through all the motions of making the yarn, weaving

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Now And Then

Hotelification In Reverse

Buildings can become hotels; hotels can become something else

WORDS Jón Trausti Sigurðarson
IMAGES Hermann Þorsteinsson, Ingibjörg Magnúsdóttir & Jón Trausti Sigurðarson

stranded in Iceland in January that year after their cargo ship, Bahia Blanca, hit an iceberg west of Iceland and sank. Many of the Germans stayed at the centrally located Hótel Hekla, currently one of downtown Reykjavik's main squares.

council without running, a seat he refused on the basis of not knowing any Icelandic. The refusal was ignored, and he had to at least nominally serve.

At first light, guests of Hótel Hekla were rudely awakened by a group of men, dragged naked out of bed and all lined up against a wall at the point of a bayonet. This incident, which, if it happened today, would mark doom for Iceland's PR standing as a tourism destination, actually took place on May 10th, 1940, as 746 ill-equipped British soldiers occupied Iceland. One of their first orders of business was to arrest German merchant seamen, who'd become

On the older image, dating back to the 1950s, you can see what used to be Hótel Hekla, a three-storey rather large wooden structure, whose foundations date back to the 1840s. It is now gone, torn down in 1961 and eventually replaced by a concrete office building and public transport hub.

After Ditlev drowned at sea, his son took over the building, using it to sell traded goods, mostly from Germany. With the onset of the First World War and the blockade of Germany by the Royal Navy, that business dried up, and the building was sold and turned into a hotel under the name Hótel Hekla.

The building that would eventually serve as a refuge for German sailors was built by an immigrant, one Ditlev Thomsen from Schleswig, who became so prominent a citizen that he was voted into the municipality

So in a city that has seen numerous hotels pop up in many prime downtown locations, often to the resentment of locals, history teaches us that this trend can sometimes be reversed— an office building now stands where once there was a hotel. ■



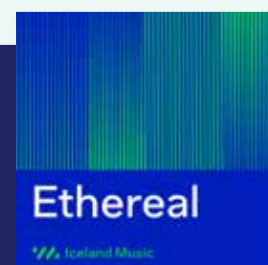
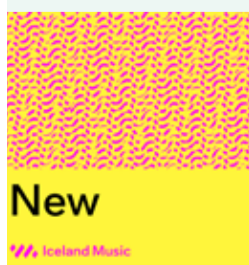
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Hunger Games

Free Money

Make big money from hot water

WORDS Freyr Thorvaldsson
IMAGE Art Bicnick

ed a lot of waste water, which was let drip into the surrounding lava field, on the assumption that it would simply seep into the ground. The water pooled instead. That humble waste slurry is all grown up and is now known as the Blue Lagoon.

The most important thing you need to know about the Blue Lagoon is that it turns relaxing tourists into money. Stand on its bank and count the silica-faced foreigners – each bobbing head represents a transaction sloshing about the data pipelines and financial reports of the Blue Lagoon business empire. When they're not putting splotches of silica on each other's faces, the travellers float towards the strategically placed bars – helpfully placed in the water – to buy plastic glasses of rosé. They buy various mixtures of face masks. They upgrade to private changing rooms.

I'll be the first to say what we're all thinking: these days you're looking terrible. I know it's hard to hear, but it's not your fault. You simply don't have enough money to keep up. The good news is you can sort this out. I'll give you the number to my teeth guy, my nose guy, my skin girl, my private chef, my personal trainer and my personal stylist. They will take you in hand and fix you up good; get you back on your feet, turning heads and thirst-trapping with the best of them (whatever that means).

But first, you need money to pay these good people. A lot of money. The best way to get it is through business: the greatest art. Like a lot of art it's also a way of seeing. Business is all around you. It's streaming through the air. There's money flying all about the place. You just need to get in front of it and take your cut. So, strap in, and allow me to open your eyes.

LEARNING FROM THE BLUE LAGOON

In 1976, Svartsengi power station began tapping the superheated water that lay deep underground under the Reykjanes peninsula. It used the water to make hot water and generate electricity. This process generat-

The most important thing you need to know about the Blue Lagoon is that it turns relaxing tourists into money.

What you don't see is just as important. Out of sight of the common rabble, the moneyed are pampered in style. Their hotel rooms have private lagoons. Their brochures tastefully avoid mentioning the power station right next door. Polite waiters bring them large plates with very little food on them, sauces sprinkled in graceful abstract shapes. It is here, and in the spa, and in their line of skincare products where the margins grow healthy and fat.

Icelanders know a moneymaker when they see one. Every other year another lagoon is dug and filled with hot water. I'm not going to list the names of the various lagoons that have opened in the past two decades because when I called their owners they would simply not agree to send me a kickback, but I will say that there are a lot of them dotted around the country, and there are more being built.

STARTING YOUR OWN LAGOON

Experts estimate that one day Iceland will simply be a series of lagoons, luxury hotels and food halls linked by a complex system of underground tunnels. So you need to move fast on opening your own lagoon. The first step is to find a suitably beautiful site, dig a hole and fill it with water. Your guests will, in all likelihood, be sick of the people they're travelling with and will want to have something else – anything else – to look at. A good view is vital to ensure a steady stream of positive online reviews.

But how will you get those first customers? With advertising, of course. Taking our cue from the Blue Lagoon, you should hire models that look otherworldly and delicate, slim and aerodynamic. They should look

like beings that have lived in the lagoon waters all their lives. When the lagoon closes to the public they stay overnight, moving around with exquisite breaststrokes, eating silica and moss for sustenance. This is a little something called aspirational advertising, it's highly effective.

Anyway, once you have your first customers enjoying the womb-like comfort of semi-aquatic life, you'll want to ply them with alcohol. In their benumbed state they will temporarily forget about the constant wind, the expense, their dwindling holiday days. Their troubles and cares will wash away. They will become agreeable to spending money at the gift shop. They will help pay for your expensive dental work; they'll pay for those movie-star teeth you deserve. ■

Freyr Thorvaldsson writes a newsletter at freyr.substack.com



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The Haul

Bring Back The Single Hangers!

Didda Flygenring on corn cakes, sketchbooks, and her plea to Góði Hirðirinn

WORDS Didda Flygenring

IMAGES Didda Flygenring & The Internet



Welcome to The Haul, where we give you a peek into our shopping bag (or the shopping bag of someone far more interesting than us) and an idea of what's worth browsing and buying in Reykjavík these days. This issue's haul comes from illustrator and graphic designer Didda Flygenring, who self-describes as being "not a big shopper," but as all of us mortals, needs to buy stuff every now and then. Didda beautifully animated the music video for "Midnight Sky" by Kári Egils, which earned her a nomination for Best Visual Representation in the 2026 Reykjavík Grapevine Music Awards. ■



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1. *Maískökur með dökku súkkulaði frá MUNA* – I have had an obsession with these corn cakes with dark chocolate from MUNA for ages. There was a period where I ate one pack a day. My consumption has severely lowered recently though, as Krónan has taken them off the shelves and replaced them with their own brand of maískökur. I think that's a bit of a shitty move. – 633 ISK, available at Lyfjaver, multiple locations

2. *Hangers from Góði Hirðirinn* – I like to buy most of my things second-hand, so I make a lot of trips to Góði Hirðirinn. I don't always find things so my method of minimising the disappointment of an unsuccessful trip is to buy a single wooden hanger to add to my collection. However, they've stopped the sale of single hangers and only sell bundles now... So this is my public plea to Góði Hirðirinn to put single hangers back for sale!!! – 50 ISK, NOT available at Góði Hirðirinn, Köllunarklettsvegur 1

3. *Bath Brush* – There's just something about standing in a bathtub and scrubbing my body with a wooden brush that makes me feel more connected to my ancestors. Or someone's ancestors anyway. (The Vikings were actually very hygienic people, but I doubt they used beech brushes with tampico fibre bristles to exfoliate their bodies...) – 1.790 ISK, available at Ekohúsið, Síðumúli 37 or via ekohusid.is

4. *Escape room experience* – For a long time I've been dreaming of being locked in a room with my friends, the only way out being to become the most annoying version of myself. – 6.500 ISK, available at Reykjavik Escape, Borgartún 6

5. *Second-hand clothes* – There are so many treasures in second-hand shops. I once found a Domino's receipt (820 ISK) from 1997 in the pocket of a denim jacket I bought in the Red Cross on Laugavegur 12b. Great pieces with great stories! – prices vary, Iceland Red Cross shop on Laugavegur 12b & 116

6. *Vegan buffet from Loving Vegan* – I once stumbled into a buffet at Loving Vegan in Hafnarfjörður and have never looked back. It might be some sort of a cult, but the food and vibes are great. – 2.990 ISK from Loving Vegan, Reykjavíkurvegur 68, 220 Hafnarfjörður

7. *MD Notebook* – The most beautiful sketchbooks... – 2.890 ISK, available at Nakano, Grensásvegur 16, or via nakano.is

8. *A flight* – What can I say? It might not be very eco-friendly but it's (basically) the only way out of here! And I love travelling! – prices vary

You can learn more about Didda's work at diddaflygenring.com and on Instagram at [@diddaflygenring](https://www.instagram.com/diddaflygenring)



Birding Running An Errand With A Winter Resident, The Punk Of The Sea

How to twitch Grandi's White-winged Scoter

WORDS Björn Penk
IMAGE Björn Penk

With only a few exceptions, Grandi's White-winged Scoter has returned to Reykjavík every winter since 2014. Known as Kolönd in Icelandic, the scoter is a North American diving duck that normally breeds from Western Canada north to Alaska, wintering along the southern coasts of the continent.

Males are uniformly black but sport two crisp white details: a stylish comma trailing the eye and white flight feathers visible as a streak when the wings are folded. Females are more brown than black and lack the white accents. The male's bi-coloured bill adds a splash of colour to an otherwise monochrome look — a level of restrained edge that would make even the most dedicated punks jealous.

Visitor, resident, or early adopter Rumour among local eiders has it that the scoter was first spotted by Kópavogur-based birder Edward Rickson in Seltjarnarnes a few years before his Grandi debut. Since then, he seems to have chosen Grandi as his permanent winter residence.

Rumour also has it that he might be more of an acclimated expat than strictly a winter visitor, as there have been reports of a male white-winged scoter as far north as Ísafjörður during recent summers.

Perhaps our bird got an early sense of where things were heading back home — and took matters into his own wings. At this point, citizenship doesn't feel like too much to ask — he probably knows Iceland better than most of us.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

All birding adventures start at home. Check the weather and aim for a bright, calm window. Pack warm clothes and a snack — but avoid sweet rewards that might jinx the trip. Check the bus schedule if you don't have a car.

Bring binoculars if you can. Borrow them from a friend, rent a pair, or, if rent has eaten all your funds, resort to holding your hands up to your face like makeshift binoculars. It won't help much, but it will demonstrate devotion.

Finally, learn the bird's appearance and habits before heading out. As a trick up your sleeve — or pocket — cut out the instruction map accompanying this article and bring it along. (Apologies in advance to the opposing article.)

Travelling to Grandi just for a bird can feel a bit hardcore, and that's fair. The solution is errands. Recycle those aluminium cans before the search. Stock the freezer with discounted groceries afterwards. Experience the famously psychedelic car wash or get that Field Guide about birds at Bókabúðin. Try FlyOver Iceland — after meeting someone who does it daily.

STARTING THE SEARCH

Begin at the seafront by Ánanaust (or Sorpa) (Á), the westernmost point of the walk, and close to bus stops (B). From here, scan the inner bay for rafts of common eiders. At this time of year, eider males are mostly white

and females mostly brown.

Our familiar scoter will likely be among them, standing out as a darker, slightly larger bird with the neat white details described above. Remember: eiders and scoters are diving ducks. The bird you're watching will disappear. This is frustrating and fascinating in equal measure. Be patient — it will resurface.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

If he's not at Ánanaust, continue east along the paved seafront, stopping regularly to scan (>) nearby flocks. Along the way you might see Long-tailed Ducks, Great Cormorants, Razorbills, or Harlequin Ducks.

You may also encounter other birders. Shared body language — scanning, pacing, confused expressions after sudden dives — creates an instant bond. Build up the courage and ask to join forces as the search continues. Start at opposite ends, exchange phone numbers, maybe develop a lifelong friendship. Teamwork helps, in birding and in life.

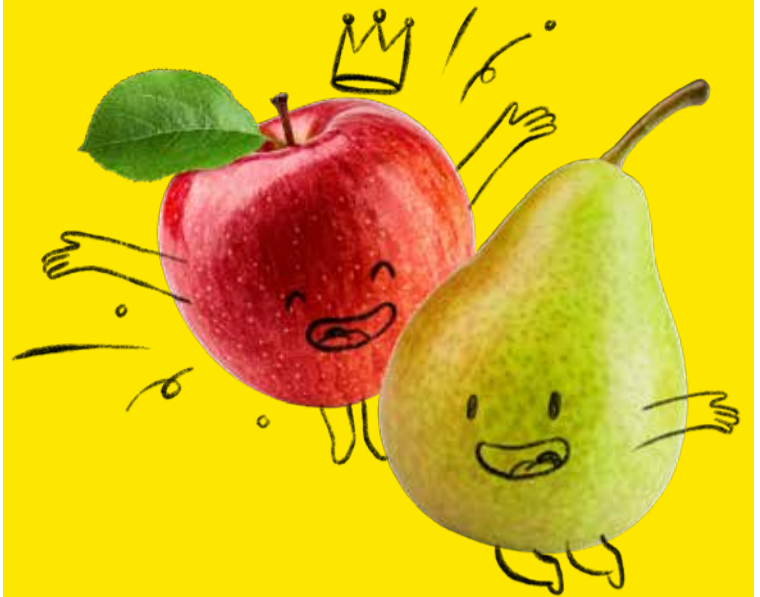
WHEN YOU REACH ÖRFIRISEY

Reaching the white silos of Örfrisey (Ö) marks a familiar birder's crossroads. Maybe you're ecstatic. Maybe you're cold, snackless, and annoyed that the bird you celebrated was a female common eider.

Either way, something has happened. Whether you dipped, listed, or are muttering about Á's and Ö's (and Ó's, the sound eiders make), you're officially a twitcher now.

And if you'd like company: I'll be on site at noon on the first Sunday after this issue is published, happy to help guide anyone who wants to meet Grandi's most reliable winter resident. ■

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Well, You Asked

Help? Call Charlie!

Answering even your most private questions in public

WORDS Charlie Winters
IMAGE The Reykjavik Grapevine

You have asked for nothing, and I assure you: you shall receive it in abundance!

Seeking advice about the future? Problems with lovers? Just have something you need to get off your chest? Call Charlie!

Tara asks: What are some cultural events you wish got more love?

Tara, I'm going to be honest, I don't leave my house much, nobody showed up to my birthday party, and I've decided to "take a break" from social media. So, I genuinely have no idea what is going on in this city. I like to break into public pools at night and piss in the hot tub. Is... is that a cultural event? You can come!

Maria asks: I'm curious how people in Iceland generally reacted to Donald Trump's (outrageous) comments about buying Greenland. How's the vibe across the Island, since?

I think we're still a little on edge about it, even after Trump pussied out. But I mean, you did hear about that guy who joked about Iceland being the 52nd state? Billy Long, they call him – Ambassador to Iceland, and the most American man alive. Did you know he's a certified auctioneer, and not just any, he's the goddamn best auctioneer in the Ozarks seven years in a row. I'll be damned that man could sell hogwash to a hog, and beeswax to a bee. And I betcha a couple smack-aroonies, the second he drags his ass over to our little island, he'll be selling ice to Icelanders.

Charlie's note: Billy Long actually owns Billy Long Auctions and was named Best Auctioneer seven years in a row. Also, I hate this man.

C.M. asks: Why is there so much graffiti in Reykjavik?

Graffiti? Would you call the works of da Vinci, Rembrandt, and Picasso mere graffiti? Does art become less so because it is transferred from the artist's tormented mind straight to the wall of a public bathroom? I fully believe the graffiti on the streets of Reykjavik makes it absolutely beautiful, unique, and colourful. But as to why there is so much, the answer is simple. There isn't that much graffiti.

Downtown is just tiny, and so the graffiti becomes condensed into one area. It looks like there's a lot when in actuality, I think, we could use more street art. #BanksyReykjavikToiletArtPlease

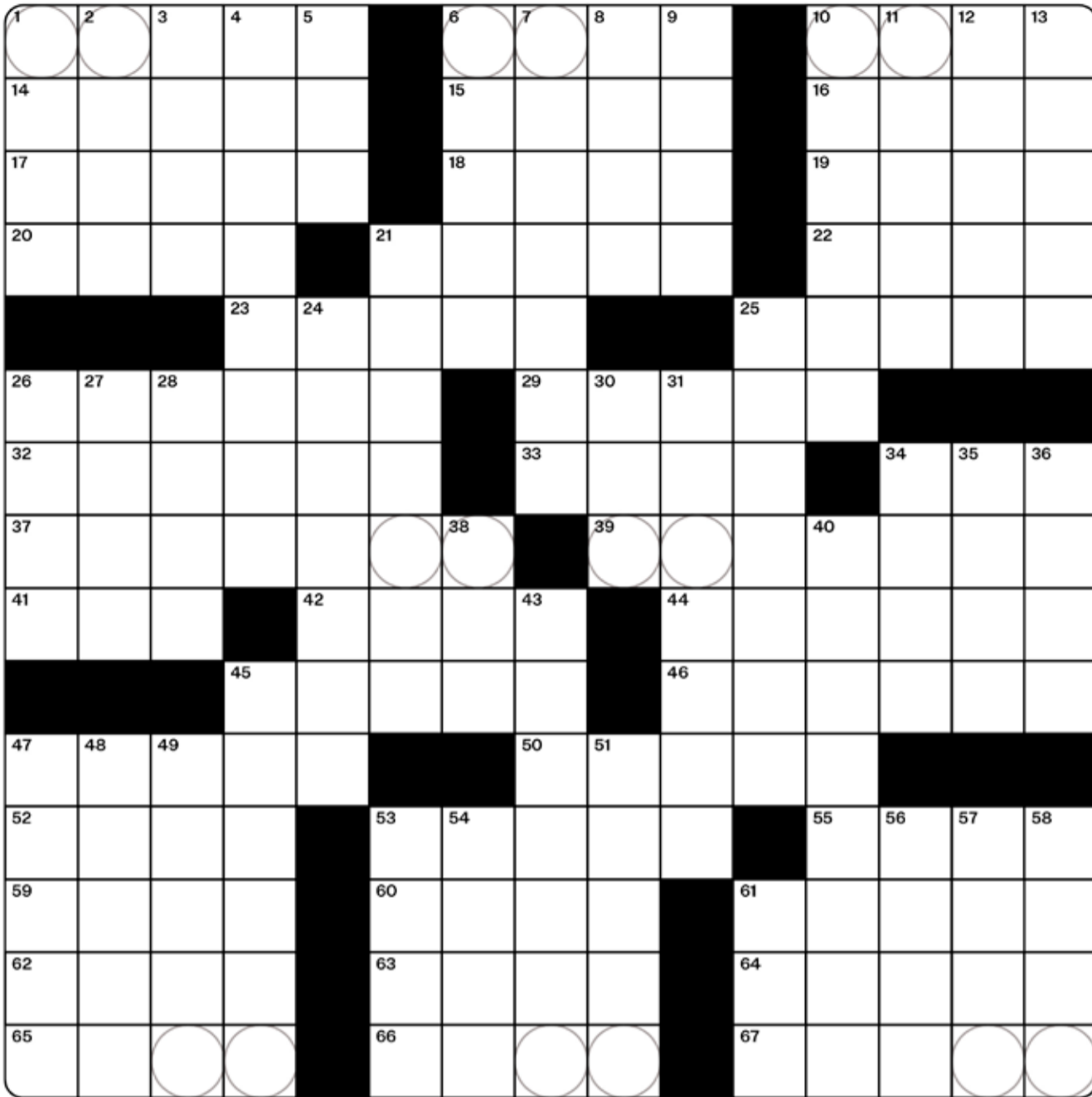
David asks: Is Iceland accepting USA refugees yet?

No, it isn't... As America slides into fascism, it becomes tempting for those with enough money, contacts, and opportunities to flee. Remember that your less fortunate siblings don't have such privileges, and if those who have the opportunity will not fight, who will? I wanted to say something funny... I want to interpret this as just another cheeky question and give it the ol' comedy special. But ya' boy Charlie is a trans immigrant in Iceland and doesn't want to find anything to joke about on this topic. These fascist losers even seemed to have crossed the ocean. I see more and more "Make Iceland Great Again" hats here...

What a depressing note to end on. The questions have been a little more political this month, so it's a little hard to kick off from. I've been sat staring at a handsome picture of Billy Long for a little too long, if you catch my drift. So, I'll end this Help Charlie on a classic mantra.

Fuck Ice
Fuck Trump

Bless Bless
-Charlie ■



06/02/2026

Last issue's solution:



Congratulations to last issue's winner: Zuzanna!

Crossword

Sing Along Everybody!

Hurrah for the 14th Grapevine Music Awards

CROSS WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle
Agnar Freyr Stefánsson

Somehere in this crossword you will find the name of a play – and this month's raffle prize is two tickets to that very play, on *March 7!* Because of this, you will have to send in your (correctly) completed crossword grid to ish@grapevine.is by *February 27*. You have one week less to solve this issue, but we think you can still make this happen! Good luck!

ACROSS

- 1 Cash
- 6 Short-form video on Instagram
- 10 Mononymic singer of "I could be brown, I could be blue / I could be violet sky" fame
- 14 Like a big sister
- 15 Member of Alþingi Sæland
- 16 Historical periods
- 17 Fluorescent colours
- 18 Feb. 14
- 19 Sour, as a citrus fruit
- 20 Designer Mode of "The Incredibles"
- 21 Wards (off)
- 22 Airy prefix
- 23 "Would I ___ you?!"
- 25 Tidy up
- 26 Pass, as time
- 29 Errors in an essay
- 32 Artist Andy
- 33 ___ Grey tea
- 34 Jazz instrument, for short
- 37 Type of sprout
- 39 Featured performer

- 41 Rapper Lil ___ X
- 42 Choice with two options
- 44 Grapevine's Album Of The Year artist
- 45 Heart chambers
- 46 Marty Supreme actress A'zion
- 47 "Cheese!"
- 50 Some Copenhagen residents
- 52 Concluding passage of a composition
- 53 What you tune into tunes with
- 55 Standing ski lift
- 59 Lemon and lime drinks
- 60 Ploughing animals
- 61 40-40 tie in tennis
- 62 (Data) breach
- 63 The "M" in MVP
- 64 Got the job
- 65 She, in Seville
- 66 Not in favour
- 67 Formula One World Champion Norris

DOWN

- 1 All squared away
- 2 TV display type
- 3 Japanese noodle
- 4 Kids these days
- 5 A few hundred mins
- 6 Type of bolt
- 7 Postscript
- 8 Expression of surprise
- 9 Potato chip brand
- 10 Silver and gold, but not diamond
- 11 Furious
- 12 Cosmic payback
- 13 ___ Martin: British sports car
- 21 Sympathise with
- 24 Quarantine
- 25 Clash (with)
- 26 Actor McGregor
- 27 In ___ land
- 28 Dog barks
- 30 "Slay!"
- 31 Free, as legal work
- 34 Greed, gluttony, and lust, to some

- 35 Facebook Marketplace sale policy
- 36 More, in adspeak
- 38 Comedian Eldjárn
- 40 Title character in the Greek tragedy showing at Þjóðleikhúsið
- 43 Best or worst, depending on who's asking
- 45 Grapevine's Artist Of The Year ___1867
- 47 With 48D, a diorama
- 48 See 47D
- 49 Perfect
- 51 "___ a stinker?": Bugs Bunny line
- 53 Capital of Italia
- 54 Neural transmitter
- 56 Effective insult, slangly
- 57 Got 10/10
- 58 Start from the top
- 61 Major shipping company ■



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Last Thoughts **What Is The Perfect Reykjavík Valentine's Day Date?**

WORDS The Reykjavík Grapevine
IMAGE Art Bicnick

"My ideal Reykjavík Valentine's Day is the perfect mix of reservations and spontaneity, with an excuse to dress up! Start with a glass of Prosecco at a tucked-away spot like 10 Sopar or Gilligogg, followed by dinner indulgent enough for the occasion – Grillmarkaðurinn, KOL, or Monkeys. I'd personally love to catch a show where we'd hopefully run into some friends, before heading home for the best part: kicking off my heels."

Hrefna Helgadóttir, Talent Manager

"Plan the perfect date like a novel with a three-act structure: Set the scene with a blood orange and espresso. Romantic action builds as you go cross-country skiing around Hólmsheiði, or ice skating on Tjörmin. Tension arises when one of you falls and is not graceful about it (the conflict). That's when you bring out the thermos and two love balls from Geirabakari. The climax hits as you enjoy those balls, bathed in the golden winter sun. For the falling action, visit the sexy silent sauna at Vesturbæjarlaug. The final resolution is a glass of wine and dinner at Eldofninn."

Rán Flygenring, Artist

"Ok so I think I've only been on maybe two dates my whole life and I'm not even sure I realised that they were dates. Just the thought of dating freaks me out!!!!!!

But what I really like to do is have cute hangs with my besties, you know, watch a movie in bíó, go to karaoke, work side-by-side at a café without talking. Or playing shows with my friends ofc. Like on Valentine's Day I'm playing an epic gig with lúpína and Sunna Margrét at Smekkleysa! Crying on the dance floor is allowed."

Ida Juhl, Musician

"For me, the perfect Valentine's Day date has to include a trip to the swimming pool. It might not seem romantic; showering with strangers and then holding hands in the hot tub while old men talk about politics and children splash in the distance. However, the combination of unwritten swimming pool etiquette (no kissing) and minimal clothing (while not kissing), provides the perfect amount of tension to a date. Random snippets of conversation overheard in the pool will then produce ample material for discussion during dinner. 10/10, comes recommended."

Þorbjörg Þorvaldsdóttir, Politician, Activist

"For me, the perfect Valentine's Day would begin by sleeping in with your partner and cuddling for a while. Then you'd pop out to a bakery, 280 Bakery on Njálsgata to be precise, take it home, and enjoy it with coffee. Next would be a trip to Sky Lagoon in Kópavogur for some relaxation and one ritual round, and then straight from there to Matur og Drykkur, the best restaurant in Reykjavík. After dinner, you might stop by Bingo for one or two drinks, and then head home for a cozy evening."

Þjörgúlfur Jes Einarsson, Musician

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