



The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

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THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LIFE, TRAVEL & ENTERTAINMENT IN ICELAND

Issue 07 - June 4 - 17 - 2010

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BACKYARD PARTY

Everyone's Invited!



Icelandic music documentary *Backyard* just took home the audience prize for BEST PICTURE at the annual Skjaldborg documentary film festival. The 70-minute DIY film portrays a loving and lovely DIY scene that is made up of some of the finest bands and musicians currently operating in Reykjavík. We have seen it, and it is awesome.

Learn why in our interview with the two Árnis behind the project.

Your Anger Is Not A Gift, In Fact It Is Getting Very Tiresome Even Though I Myself Am Often Outraged And Upset At What Goes On In Iceland



Haukur's 25th Editorial

I have been wondering about our little community here in Iceland lately. I have been thinking about an aspect of it that seems to be growing and permeating our society like some sorta evil mushroom from a horror movie (or that Ottar M. Norðfjörð book that I can't remember what was called but was a pretty good read nonetheless).

I am talking about an anger or rage that seems blind; a distrust and suspicion that renders us unable to see some of the beauty and magic that is still out there.

I feel so much of our energy these days is going towards tearing down, rather than building up. Into being destructive as opposed to constructive. We might have lost our faith in a lot of things over the last few years, and with good reason some might say. We have been cheated and mistreated – our faith and trust have been raped and robbed by a marauding gang of sociopaths.

But that does not necessarily entail that everyone out there is a marauding sociopath rapist; that everyone is out to get us. Or at least I hope not.

I think it is high time we start focusing our energy on other things than demolishing our rotted structures. At some point we will need to rebuild. I know that we are still entangled in a wholly corrupt and vile system that is in sore need of change and rectification, but I hope there are other ways of doing it than those we have been exploring for the last two years.

There is a lack of good and beautiful and positive and constructive. There are fights and anger and internet and detest and oozing, festering sores. And folks that love poking at them to see the pus spew forth.

We might have needed this at some point, but I fear we've had our fill.

Here at the Grapevine we try our best to service our community by being alert and displaying a healthy distrust. Throughout our seven year history we have many, many times pointed out wrongs that should be righted, underlined things that are negative and wrong and even tried to figure out how they might be improved. We will continue to do so.



I have been trying to make sense of this. How may we as a society continue to rid ourselves of our decaying and corrupt structures without losing sight of all the awesomeness that still prevails?

I think the key might be to distinguish between healthy and sane scepticism, and rabid finger-pointing lynchmobbery. I think that might be useful for us all.

I was happy when Reykjavík mayor-to-be (if all goes well) Jón Gnarr echoed similar sentiments when I interviewed him on our night before press (read the results on page eight). Maybe him and The Best Party are ushering in a new era? That might be wishful thinking, but I sure do hope so.

I hope we can soon start focusing on creating beautiful things, and building solid structures.

That would be cool.



Coverphoto by: Hörður Sveinsson
www.hordursveinsson.com



TRACK OF THE ISSUE

Reykjavík! vs. Mugison

Sumarást

reykjaviktheband / mugison

Download Sumarást at www.grapevine.is

Can y'all feel it? It's summertime already! The time when sunny sun, beery beer and grassy grass all come together to make us humans feel extra special and loved on by the universe. And lucky for us, the good men of Reykjavík! teamed up with the good man of Mugison to record a spliffy track to celebrate all that is summery, jittery, awesome love eruption.

Yep, our track of the issue is fresh off the presses – hell, it ain't even on the presses yet. It is collaboration between Westfjörð-weirdos Reykjavík! and Mugison, and it is featured on Kinni Records' compilation of exclusive, summery tracks by select and excellent Icelandic musicians, to be released on June 17th (some other awesome artists on the compilation: FM Belfast, Snorri Helgason, Sudden Weather Change, Retro Stefson, Hjalmar, Morðingjarnir, Egill Sæbjörnsson...). The track was recorded in Flateyri and Súðavík about a month ago, and all involved drank lots of whiskey and had great fun.

[Full disclosure: Grapevine's editor Haukur S. Magnússon just happens to be a member of Reykjavík! It's all very sinister...]

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You may not like it, but at least it's not sponsored. (No articles in the Reykjavík Grapevine are pay-for articles. The opinions expressed are the writers' own, not the advertisers'!).



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4 Letters

love
cutout in pieces
column-shaped
hanging like icicles
from the edges of my desk and lurking
in secret
between pages, bookmarked
as tasty reminders
of the satiate sweetness,
the reykjavik grapevine.

Thanks for your regular poetry column. That is a rare and precious section in a newspaper. After reading it for two weeks, however, I still have no clue about what's happening in the poetry scene in Reykjavik or the rest of Iceland. While entertaining, Eiríkur Örn Norðdahl's (sorry, my keyboard doesn't have the Icelandic characters) past two poetry pieces, a self-righteous rant and some reflections on sucking, could have been printed in any paper. How about some insight into the poetry of your own place, some verses of your own, even. If poetry merits a column in The Reykjavik Grapevine, I'd like to know why.

Love,
Laura Candler

Dear Laura,

Wow, did all you poets get together and decide to poetry-bomb us this issue? What's the deal? But thanks for the words, Laura.

Turn to our LAST PAGE OF CONTENT for Eiríkur Örn Norðdahl's (see, we've got all those crazy letters on our keyboard – öðæéóúíþð - ha!) reply. He is a far better authority on Icelandic poetry than we could ever hope (or particularly want) to be.

Hello.
I have a link to a norwegian blog about: norway and iceland should be a union. i think you should read it at publish this in your dailypaper. U believe that an union would be great.

<http://tomstaavi.vgb.no/2010/01/06/tilby-island-fusjon-med-norge/>

Petter Rønning

Dear Peter,

Oh really, now? Should we? We went to your blog to find out why but it was all written in Norwegian. We guess you think we should learn Norwegian, eh? No way. So we tried to Google Translate your page, and it came out all 'Translation Failed' on us. Fucking Google Translate.

So we can't really figure it out right now, BUT we're guessing it runs along the same lines as the last missive y'all Norwegians used to TRICK US INTO BEING A COLONY FOR SEVEN HUNDRED FUCKING YEARS, some seven hundred years ago. Except that one probably wasn't posted on a blog. Then again, what do we know – maybe they had blogs back then? We've already forgotten all about the blogs that were written in the early noughties, so it isn't totally ludicrous to imagine that blogs written in the late 13th century would be long forgotten by now.

Anyway, in the immortal words of CSI: Miami – "Won't get fooooooled again!"

MOST AWESOME LETTER

A buncha POLAR BEER for your thoughts

We're not gonna lie to you: we really love us some beers. Some folks would call it a problem, but beer never gave us any problems. In fact, over the years, it's solved most of 'em. A frosty glass of cold, frothy, bubblicious, golden-tinted beer has consistently failed to let us down. In the immortal words of the once-reputable Homer J. Simpson: "Mmm... Beer..."

Now, since we're real pleasant and giving folks here at the Grapevine, we thought we'd share some wonderful POLAR BEER with you, our readers. Not only that, you're also getting the gift of social life with it. So here's the deal: our most awesome letter of each issue (henceforth, or until the good people of POLAR BEER decide they don't want to play along anymore), we will be providing our MOST AWESOME LETTER scribe with twelve frothy POLAR BEERS, to be imbibed at a Reykjavik bar of their choice (so long as that bar is either Bakkus or Venue). If y'all's letter is the one, drop us a line to collect. Give us your worst: letters@grapevine.is



(Light)

MOST AWESOME LETTER:

Hello there,
here are some poems I thought might be of interest for your readers.

Thanks,
Hrafn

ASHLAND – ICELAND I – X were written between 00.24 and 00.54 on May 21st 2010 in Ventpils House, Ventpils, Latvia

ASHLAND I.

There are different types of mountains
That you can choose from:
Blue mountains, red mountains
And white mountains.

The blue ones are distant
And do not deserve attention,
Only admiration.
They are docile.
The white ones are cool
And you can ski on them
They are dormant.
The red ones are furious
And have political attitudes
And sometimes they rage.
They were once white
Or blue
Or non-existent.

ASHLAND II

Who can blame the
Eyja
Fjalla
Jökull its
Fury?

It has been there for hundreds of years
In peace
And then one day
The whole of Iceland
Is gone totally wild
In depts
And its glaciers are
To be
Sold!

(Eight more poems follow...)

So how do you spell Eyesland? Iceland?

Dear Hrafn,

Thanks for the awesome one-man poetry slam!

Sorry we can't print all your poems – they are totally long and many, and we have interviews with bands to run. But seriously, what an awesome way to spend half an hour of your night in Latvia, honouring your homeland's ashhole through poetry. It's certainly a nice change from all the one-sided international news reports and GEOLOGICAL LIES.

I have just finished Bart Cameron's Inside Reykjavik – The Grapevine Guide, it has pointed me to a place I knew only as a distant Island....I lived on Kodiak Island....a bit south in the latitudes but did have an opportunity to walk on and over the Beaufort Sea during December....so I have seen the Moon circle the sky.

Hello to you in Iceland I will say hello to Bart for you...if you ever make to the US and the state of WA...look me up, albeit I will not be able to serve putrefied shark and soured Ram's testicles....I will be able to provide a suitable spread of surf and turf.

Regards,

Phil Yaklich
Duvall, WA

Dear Phil,

Thank you for your letter, and your kind words about Bart Cameron's most excellent Grapevine Guide (which y'all should seek out and read if you haven't already).

This whole seeing the moon circling the sky thing sounds very cool. Very few people on this overpopulated ball-o-mud have gotten to see that natural phenomenon. Hi-five yourself! And thanks for the dinner invite. Trust us, we would just as well gorge on surf and turf as rotten shark and balls. In fact, some surf and turf sounds mighty appetizing right now. Damn it, now we're hungry!

My wife, Alicia Wilson, who played for KR in 2006 and 2007 is back in Iceland to play this season. She travelled with our daughter Kiana Esja who is almost two years old. I know they both will love the experience.

Unfortunately I was unable to travel with them this time, I want to wish KR a great season.

Áfram KR.

Oscar E. Lopez

Dear Oscar,

That is so cool!

For y'all readers who don't know, KR – or Knattspyrnufélag Reykjavíkur – is the oldest, most respected, most fervently hated football club in Iceland. So playing with them is really like being part of an institution. A hated institution, maybe, but an institution all the same (kind of like working at Tollstjóri or Útlendingastofnun). Too bad you couldn't make it over here, but we're sure the boys and girls of KR appreciate your vote of confidence.

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City Elections: Holy Wow What Just Happened?

Words

Paul F. Nikolov

Illustrations

The Reykjavík Grapevine

Not everyone was chugging beer and watching Eurovision during the last Saturday of May, you know. Some of us were following the municipal elections going on all over Iceland. There were a number of interesting things happening in towns and villages across the country, but all eyes were turned to Reykjavík, where The Best Party (Besti flokkurinn)—originally created by comedian Jón Gnarr as a parody of Icelandic politics, but then turned into some kind of serious campaign—were projected to do exceedingly well. And do exceedingly well they did.

Voter turnout in the capital was only marginally better than it had been during the last elections, in 2006—about 56,000 ballots were turned in from about 85,000 eligible voters. When they were all counted, the Best Party managed to win six of Reykjavík city hall's 15 seats.

Every other party took losses. The Independence Party (Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn) went from seven seats to five, the Social Democratic Alliance (Samfylkingin) went from five seats to three, the Left-Green Party (Vinstri grænir) went from two seats to one, and the Progressives (Framsóknarflokkurinn) lost their one and only seat. Ouch!

ARE 'THE BIG FOUR' OVER?

Almost immediately, there were reactions from party chairs, some of them humble, some of them not so humble. The Social Democrat Prime Minister has said that these results indicate the sun setting on 'The Big Four' system, and the Leftist-Green Foreign Affairs committee chair said everyone should be doing some serious reflection of their platforms, one party was having none of that humility and self-examination talk: the Independence Party.

Both former mayor Hanna Birna Kristjánsdóttir and party chair Bjarni Benediktson appeared to be almost delighted that they had lost control of the capital, talking at length about how good their numbers were as a whole across the country.

It's true that the conservatives finished with 37.4% of the vote last Saturday—more than any other party on a national level—and that this figure is up from 23.7% in 2009's parliamentary elections. But we're talking about the Independence Party here. They've been around forever. They're the party of the establishment, and so seeing them plummet to single-digit support within the span of a couple of years after literal decades of control just isn't going to happen.

They are firmly entrenched in a number of municipalities around the country; namely Ísafjörður, Garðabær, Reykjanesbæ and the Westman Islands. They either held or gained their position in all of these towns. However, they also lost Reykjavík, Kópavogur, Akranes, and Akureyri—all large to mid-sized Icelandic towns. Again, within the con-

"Both former mayor Hanna Birna Kristjánsdóttir and party chair Bjarni Benediktson appeared to be almost delighted that they had lost control of the capital, talking at length about how good their numbers were as a whole across the country."

text of history, this is a real punch in the gut to the conservatives, and they'd do well to stop patting themselves on the back and start thinking up a new game plan.

"WE COULD POTENTIALLY ENVISION VOTING FOR YOU"

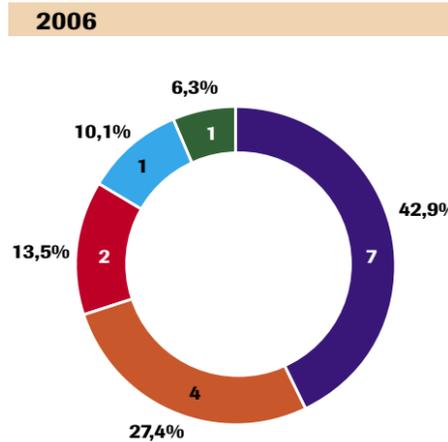
Even more hilarious is how Progressive Party chair Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson responded. He engaged in a combination of mathematical acrobatics and utter denial to point out that a recent Gallup poll showed that 25% of residents of one neighbourhood in Reykjavík, Grafarvogur, said that they could conceivably see themselves voting for the Progressives. You know, when I was in high school, plenty of girls said they could conceivably see themselves going on a date with me. It almost never happened, which depressed me some, but Sigmundur has shown me that I was actually a very popular guy.

WHAT NOW?

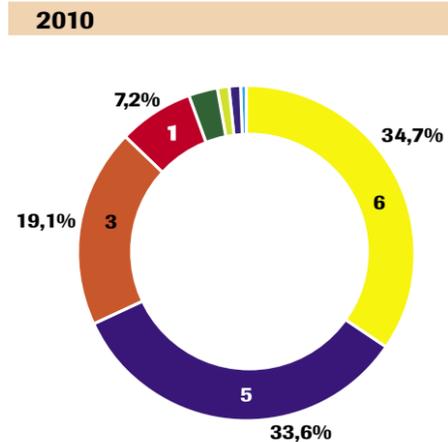
So what now? Well, the Best Party are currently in coalition talks with the Social Democrats. Which makes sense, really; while the Independence Party would give the Best Party a much stronger majority, the two are about as unlike each other as Rush Limbaugh and Lewis Black.

In the meantime, they've set up a website, www.betrirreykjavik.is, where you can go and offer suggestions as to what issues the new majority should address, and how. It's definitely worth a look anyways, even if it's not in English.

So will this mean Reykjavík is going to become a better city? A more fun place to live, as the Best Party has been calling for? Well, Jón Gnarr is a big fan of the HBO television series *The Wire*—a big enough fan that he made it a stipulation for any party they join up with to have watched it, and he gave a copy of it to Social Democrat city councillor Dagur B. Eggertsson. Here's hoping he's a fan of the series because it's a fine example of how not to run a city.



- 1 The Progressive Party
- 1 The Liberal Party
- 2 The Left Greens
- 4 The Social Democratic Alliance
- 7 The Independence Party



- The Liberal Party
- The Reykjavík Campaign
- The Campaign for Honesty
- The Progressive Party
- 1 The Left Greens
- 3 The Social Democratic Alliance
- 5 The Independence Party
- 6 The Best Party

ELECTION NIGHT LIVE BLOG HIGHLIGHTS

Grapevine liveblogged the elections, as well as the Eurovision Song Contest. Visit www.grapevine.is for a full transcript if you will—below are some highlights from the night.

19:16: No election night would be complete without taking advantage of a lull in the ballot counting to call up some academic type and get them to state the glaringly obvious. However, I don't actually know any academic types, but people at Vísir do. They contacted professor of political science Gunnar Helgi Kristinsson who said that this year's municipal election was "historic", and that "The Big Four" cannot continue doing what they've always been doing. He added that the sky is blue, grass is green and fire hot burn bad bad.

21:43: So the different candidates have appeared on television station Stöð 2, were all asked the same questions, and all gave pretty much the same answers. Yes, even Jón Gnarr. You know, "we want to continue doing the good work that we've been doing, create jobs" and so forth. Who's going to say otherwise? It's like these people get their answers by writing phrases on slips of paper, shaking them up inside a brown paper bag, and then drawing them in any particular order. And they pass the bag around. Don't get me wrong—I wouldn't go so far as to say it doesn't matter who you vote for. It certainly does. But you wouldn't be able to tell a difference in platform by the way they talk to the media, that's for sure.

00:09: Speaking of first numbers—if they bear out, and the Best Party ends up finishing as the largest party in the city, we're going to have a Best Party/Social Democrat coalition majority in city council. I just don't see them forming a coalition with the conservatives, and the Leftist-Greens won't be able to give them a comfortable enough majority. And no other parties are getting in. So, that pretty much leaves the Social Dems. In all honesty I'm not exactly recoiling in horror at the idea. But as I said, first numbers can change.

02:16: Well, looks like the final numbers are still going to be some hours away, but there's not likely to be a lot of major changes between now and the final results. And even then, there's a new majority that needs to be formed, which could take days. The Social Dems in Hafnarfjörður are already talking to the Leftist-Greens there, but the courting process in Reykjavík takes a bit longer.

It's been fun covering this election cycle. But fun time's over pretty soon, and then the real work begins. I can only hope there'll be some follow-through to the talk. Jón Gnarr, as I've said, is sincere in his intentions and motives, even if he might not know just how he wants things to materialise. I'd like to be dancing on my living room table about this, but like a lot of people in Iceland, the past two years have really worn down my trust in the administration of power in this country. But you can't help but be optimistic. Night all.

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RE-07 - 18:15

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HE REALLY DID IT!

Jón Gnarr just won himself an election – we called him up to talk about it

We begin by talking about celebrated *The Wire*, which has for some reason become a sort of calling card for his campaign [as you constant readers might remember, Jón told us in the last issue that he would only consider working with politicians that agreed that *The Wire* was the best thing to happen to television]. He tells us that season one is his favourite, his most beloved character is Omar Little, that his favourite *Wire*-quote is “It’s all in the game, baby”, and that he feels television storytelling reached new heights with the series. He feels *The Wire* needs more public acknowledgment.

“Most brilliant accomplishments do not get the recognition they deserve until after the fact. People are busy or caught up in preconceptions that blind them from appreciating them. Like [great Icelandic author] Þórbergur Þórðarson remarked: “You can spot a genius from the fact that he is despised and snubbed by the majority.” Genius is often overlooked or disregarded. I think that is a big waste.

You yourself can hardly be described as “overlooked or disregarded,” having just won the Reykjavík City elections and all. Does this mean you’re not a genius?

Well I haven’t... Ehm. It’s of course an act of genius to form a political party in December that goes on to become the largest one and win an election in May. That’s pretty genius.

How does it feel to win an election?

It’s a good feeling. It’s been very fun; an interplay of certain factors that I feel are very valuable somehow managed to come together harmoniously. It also feels good to have gotten all these good people to join our ranks and to stand by me and believe in this; to be ready to give it a chance and even try and understand what I was all about. To take a risk. It is not a given that people would do that.

Did you have a timed action-plan for winning the election since starting the party in December? Or was it all improvised?

It wasn’t improvised, but I didn’t study Machiavelli or anything. I’ve never read him. But it was focused and rather thought out from the beginning. My plan entailed winning a clear majority with eight seats, which I didn’t accomplish. Perhaps this failure can be ascribed to some mistake I made in the campaign. If everything had gone according to plan, I would have won eight seats.

The environment and public perception of your party changed a lot from the time we conducted our interview three weeks before the election until it was published a week before the election, and then in the week leading up to it. There was almost a sea change in the discourse every week—it went from humouring you, to angrily questioning you, to being sort of panicky...

Lev Tolstoy has been a great influence on me, especially his religious and philosophical writings. There is a famous phrase from Ghandi that is rooted in him: “First they ignore you, then they mock you, then they attack you, and then you win.” And I sort of observed that process and feel it corresponded to how our campaign was received.

Because I felt I was going forward in total honesty and non-violence. I took great care in not speaking ill of any man; I take the non-violent, non-aggressive route very much to heart.

What was your experience of the public’s—and especially the political parties’—changing attitudes towards your campaign over the last month?

I made one discovery. I’ve often wondered about the concept of politics and ideologies. Of living by ideologies, like politics and political parties often entail. I’ve tried most of them on, but never completely identified with any of them.

I agree with parts of every political ideology, except the really nasty ones. I do not agree with racists or fascists or any of that. But in every corner of ‘conventional politics,’ I’ve been able to find a lot of things I can agree with. I can agree that we as a society should protect and take care of those in need, and I can also agree that entrepreneurs and creative people should enjoy the fruits of their

My discovery through this campaign was this: the line between ideals and personal interests is, with many people, often very thin when examined closely. When pushed, people will protect their self interest, but refer to their ideals in justifying themselves

labour. The left and right extremes.

My discovery through this campaign was this: the line between ideals and personal interests is, with many people, often very thin when examined closely. When pushed, people will protect their self interest, but refer to their ideals in justifying themselves. This is dishonest. They do not want to admit to being driven by their own selfish interests, so they attempt to place them on a higher pedestal by calling them ideals.

This is a concept I’ve been interested in for a while, interests versus ideologies, and I’ve played with it a bit. For instance with the [infamous] character Georg Bjarnfreðarson. He is a big idealist, and his every action is motivated by protecting his self-interest. I think that is interesting, and it is revelatory to learn that it indeed goes on to the extent that it does in our society. This dishonesty.

The truth is always a liberating force, even though it may be painful and uncomfortable at times. It is always for the better. As Jesus said: “The truth shall set you free.” It is the greatest threat to any kind of evil—I can attest that from my personal life—while the lie is the queen of evil.

Nazism was all based on a lie. The lie begets irresponsibility, which breeds evil. Everyone is free to act as they will—those that are no longer responsible or accountable can be so evil, and they can always find someone to blame for their misfortunes or their actions.

Righteous rage is the vilest form of anger. Every bit of human wisdom indicates that anger is to be avoided; it is indeed one of the seven deadly sins. Yet all of the sudden we find ourselves living in a society where anger is almost considered a virtue, where it commands a degree of respect, even. In the media, one hears phrases like “peoples’ anger is understandable,” and “of course everyone is burning up with rage”—as if we’ve released this monster and it’s just fine? Everyone keeps on living their lives as if it’s alright that we have a society that is sick with rage and anger. As if that’s just right? It isn’t.

Anger isn’t creative or nourishing. It is like sustaining oneself on junk food or candy. You feel energized and full for a while, but it contains no nutrition or sustenance. And then there is the inevitable sugar-crash.

You say true. How were the party leaders’ reacting to you that last week before the elections?

They didn’t care too much for me... the joke was wearing thin for them. And I sensed that pretty well.

How about after the elections?

That was more... everyone seemed to be in a state of denial and shock. They didn’t fully comprehend what had just happened. At many times, I sincerely felt sorry for them, for having to be stuck with me in this situation.

Immediately after the elections, you launched the ‘Better Reykjavík’ web (www.betireykjavik.is), which is a forum for citizens to suggest what issues the new majority should focus on. It is a very cool initiative. Will it be translated into English and other languages so Reykjavík’s community of immigrants and new Icelanders may contribute?

Yes, we do plan on translating the site as soon as we’re in power and we have the means to do so. We also want do many more things to service this community. Every good thing in Iceland has come from abroad. It’s always been like that—it’s what



Anger isn’t creative or nourishing. It is like sustaining oneself on junk food or candy. You feel energized and full for a while, but it contains no nutrition or sustenance. And then there is the inevitable sugar-crash.

Icelandic culture is made up of, and it’s created a diversity within our society. Ever since the island was settled. Our forefathers most likely came from abroad, you know.

Foreign influence enriches our culture and contributes greatly to creating a harmonious, diverse and multi-layered community. Enriching our culture is a personal ambition of mine, I am a fan of diversity and I abhor uniformity. A diverse community makes for a mature society, which is what we should strive for.

Speaking of diversity...Reykjavík Muslims have been waiting to build a mosque for almost a decade now...

I don’t see the Muslims of Reykjavík building a mosque as being any sort of problems. They should have their mosque—we should enjoy total freedom of religion, and everyone should be free to worship according to their beliefs. I am not familiar with why they’ve had to wait for so long, but they hopefully won’t have to wait any longer. At least not if I have any authority on the matter.

Do you think the people of Reykjavík will start experiencing any change as soon as this summer?

Well, yes. They are already experiencing change,

with the rising atmosphere of hope. And our plans are that people will start noticing tangible change very soon.

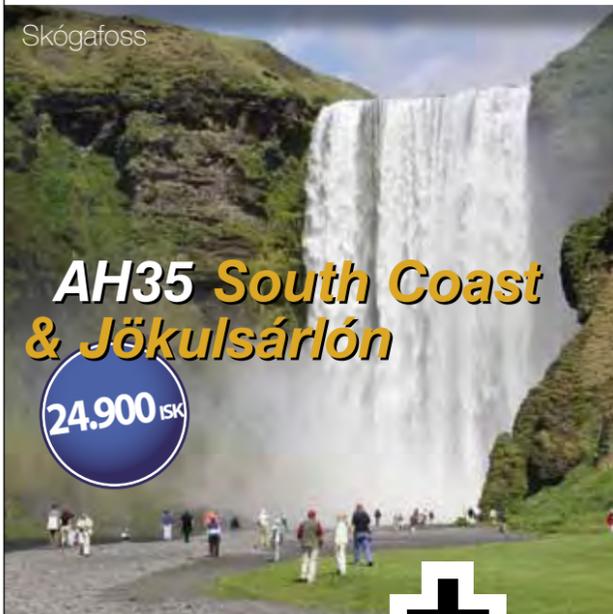
A lot of people are interpreting the election results so that you’ve struck a deathblow to Iceland “four party system”. Was killing “the four party system” an ambition of yours?

I have always thought a lot about politics, and read a lot of political theory. I wanted to try creating something new that could be a viable option for people to get behind. An ideology will never be sounder than the person that’s enforcing it; I therefore think that our political ideologies have been drowned in our politicians’ self-interest. I feel they have been guarding their self interest, and cloaking it with ideology.

If *The Best Party* was an attack on anything, it was an attack on the two-faced duplicity and dishonesty that has been allowed to fester in our culture, and which always inevitably leads to disaster. Because the lie is the root of all evil, and always leads to disaster. ♡

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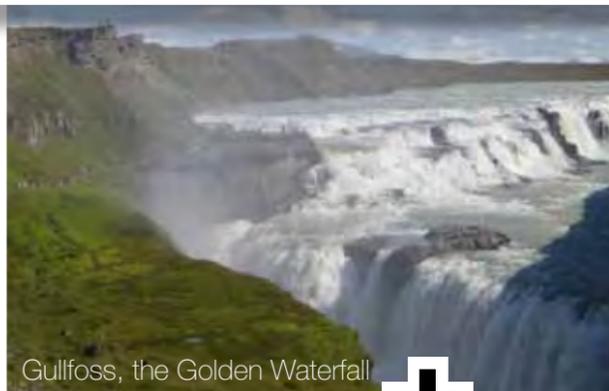
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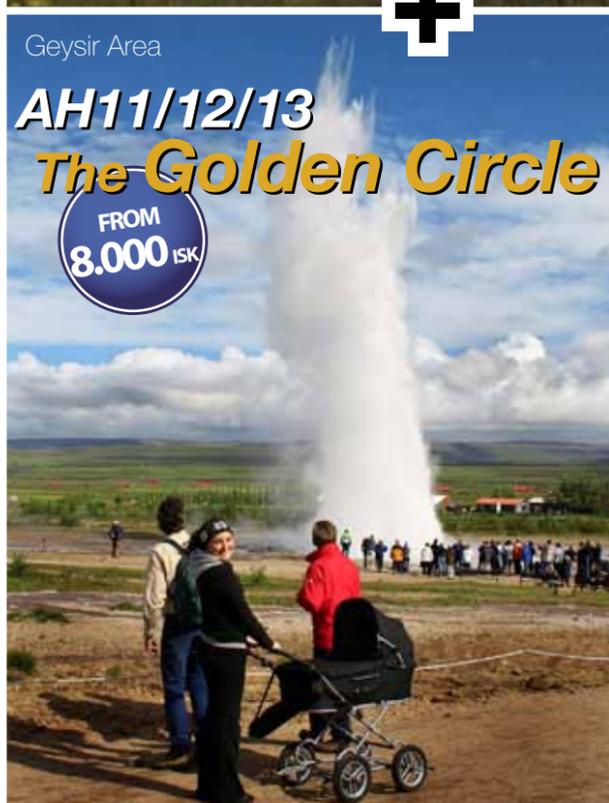


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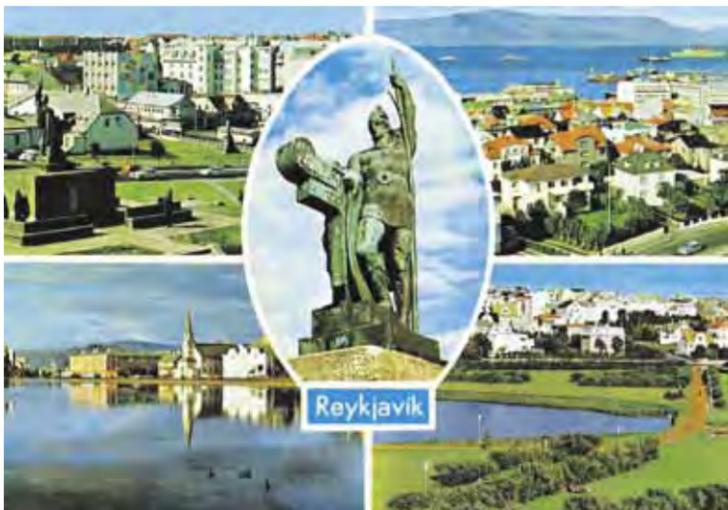
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Delusions Of Financial Grandeur



The dream of Iceland as global finance centre

As the Icelandic financial system came crashing down in the fall of 2008, Icelanders woke up to realise that the much-hyped “Icelandic economic miracle” had only been a mirage. A giant bubble that had popped. The recession that followed in the wake meant the death of the economic dreams of countless ordinary Icelanders, who were all of a sudden saddled under debts that spiralled upwards as the currency plunged downward and inflation took off.

But the crash also represented the death of a different dream—a vision promoted by politicians, the spokesmen of the banks, the Chamber of Commerce and free market ideologues: The dream of Iceland becoming a “global financial centre”.

More than anything, it was this dream that had set the stage for the bubble. And it was this dream that had allowed policy makers and common people to ignore warning signs that a huge bubble had developed in the economy and that banks had grown “too big to save”.

The history of this dream is one of the most interesting parts of the story of the ‘rise and fall’ of the Icelandic economic miracle. Primarily because of how revealing it is—how well it captures the unrealistic ideas and ideological convictions that lay at the heart of the euphoria of the boom years.

But there is another interesting twist to the history of the dream of Iceland as a global financial centre. Namely its origin.

“THE NEXT SWITZERLAND”?

The dust had barely settled after the collapse of the last round of misguided and over-leveraged investments, when the idea of turning Iceland into a global financial centre was first hatched. At the beginning of the ‘90s, Iceland was going

through one of the worst recessions of the post-war years. Large sections of the financial system were virtually bankrupt and Icelanders experienced protracted unemployment for the first time since the 1930s. The mood was gloomy. In a poll taken in 1993, 46% said they feared the nation might actually go bankrupt. It was in this context that the idea of Iceland as a global financial centre first surfaced.

In the summer of 1990, a government committee—established following the 1986 Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Reykjavik to suggest ways for Iceland to cash in on its global image—concluded that Iceland should 1) market its pure and unspoiled nature, and 2) seek to become a global financial centre. The government jumped on the latter idea, and KPMG Management Consulting was hired to evaluate the proposal and figure out how exactly this grand scheme could be realized.

The (very) small Icelandic financial community found the idea appealing. At a conference organised by the ministry of commerce in 1991 to discuss the idea, Gunnar Helgi Hálfánarson, CEO of Landsbréf, the securities subsidiary of Landsbankinn, argued that while Iceland might not be able to become “the next Switzerland or Luxembourg,” there was no reason not to try. The fact that global financial centres were popping up in places like the Caribbean and the Middle East was proof that Iceland might be able to compete. The key, according to Gunnar Helgi, was lower taxes and less regulation.

The foreign experts were not as optimistic. Cutting taxes and red tape was not enough; in their view Iceland simply lacked all requisite preconditions. Among other things, they pointed out the fact that the regulatory authorities and institutional infrastructure were

weak and underdeveloped, and were not ready to handle the complexities of international finance. A second criticism was that Icelanders simply had no experience within the world of global finance.

This conclusion should not have come as a surprise. Describing the state of the Icelandic financial market in 1991 as “developing” would be a gross understatement. Until the mid ‘80s, the few stocks that happened to exchange hands in the country were traded at face value, and looked upon as curiosities rather than investments. There was a more vibrant market for antique books and stamps than for stocks, and people were far more likely to invest their savings in philatelic rarities than corporate securities. In fact, there hardly was a financial market in Iceland at the beginning of the ‘90s.

EXCESS AMBITION AND IDEOLOGY

Still, labelling the idea of turning Iceland into a global financial centre a delusion might be too harsh. It would perhaps be more apt to speak of excessive ambition. Or ideologically infused ambition.

The depression of 1988-1993 marked the bankruptcy of the state controlled financial system that had characterised the country since the great depression. In the late ‘80s, government investment funds had poured money, based on political connections and patronage, into various ill-conceived and mismanaged business adventures, including countless salmon farms that wound up bankrupt. Most experts and commentators believed that the root of the recession was in fact government meddling in the financial markets: If government was scaled back, state owned firms—especially the banks and investment funds—privatized, red tape cut, and the invisible hand of the marketplace allowed to work its magic, who could say what was, and what was not possible?

This ideological component explains why the idea kept popping up during the 1990s despite the fact that it had been flatly rejected as unrealistic by the aforementioned foreign experts. It also explains its spectacular comeback in the fall of 2000. By then the results of the free market reforms and privatisation policies initiated by the Conservative party and Davíð Oddsson, who served as Prime Minister from 1991 until 2004, were well under way. Iceland now had a modern stock market and aggressive investment banks. The state owned investment funds had been merged into a single investment bank, which was then sold to the public along with stakes in the two state owned commercial banks

in 1998 and 1999, sparking an intense stock mania among the public, which helped fuel the millennium bubble.

Perhaps it was fear that the bursting of this bubble would create a backlash against the excesses of the financial markets, or perhaps it was the growth of the Icelandic banks, who were by then taking their first steps in foreign markets, through acquisitions and new subsidiaries, but in the fall of 2000 the Federation of Young Conservatives called upon the government to take every step to make Iceland a global financial centre. The steps to be taken were simple enough: Corporate taxes should be lowered enough for Iceland to be considered a global tax haven—“a tax paradise.”

By this time Hannes Hólmsteinn Gissurarson, the tireless advocate of neoliberal economic principles, chief ideologue of the Conservative movement and a close ally of Davíð Oddsson, had positioned himself as the main proponent of this idea, making it a central argument in his 2001 book “How can Iceland become the richest country in the World?”

“I HAVE A DREAM...”

In September 2004 the dream of turning Iceland into a global financial centre finally became official government policy. At the annual congress of the Chamber of Commerce in February of 2005, Davíð Oddsson's successor in office, Halldór Ásgrímsson, the leader of the Progressive party, declared that “he had a dream”. The dream was—you guessed it—that Iceland become a global financial centre. In November of that same year, Halldór appointed a committee, chaired by then-Kaupthing director Sigurður Einarsson. That same Sigurður is currently a fugitive from the law, wanted by Interpol for a variety of financial crimes and forgery.

The policy recommendations of cutting taxes and red tape were warmly embraced by both the Chamber of Commerce and The Federation of Financial Firms, a lobbying group funded by the finance industry. In 2006 the chamber made the idea a keystone of its policy document, “Iceland 2015,” in which it argued Iceland should brand itself as a “Freedom country”, and by slashing taxes and regulation become “the most competitive economy in the world.” Using the logic of trickle down economics, this was presented as a great boon to the general population.

But even if the foreign banks and financial firms that were supposed to flock to the country if only their demands, as articulated by Hannes Hólmsteinn and the Chamber of Commerce,

In September 2004 the dream of turning Iceland into a global financial centre finally became official government policy.

had been met, never materialized.

But then again, when one reads the arguments for turning Iceland into a global financial centre a bit more carefully, one is immediately struck by their strange hollowness. There is no shortage of people praising the vaunted benefits of turning Iceland into a tax haven for investment banks, some kind of North Atlantic Tortola. But it is almost impossible to find serious discussion of the specifics.

“THE PLAN”

It was never really explained how this would come about. It is equally striking to find that the proponents of the idea don't seem to have been bothered by the fact that there was never any indication that any foreign financial firm ever considered relocating to Iceland. One would have expected that this would have caused some concern. But no. Equally, there is no debate about the possible drawbacks to attracting foreign banks in large numbers to Iceland? For example: How would their deposits be covered?

The closest we can come to a “plan” are the constant calls for lower taxes and lighter regulation. Conservative MP Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson stated in an interview with Morgunblaðið on September 18 2005 that it was in fact quite “easy” to turn Reykjavik into a centre of finance. All that was needed were tax cuts and less red tape.

Perhaps that was all there ever was to this whole idea? If one ascribes to Hannes Hólmsteinn's philosophy of laissez-faire economics, there was absolutely no reason to come up with a more complicated plan: All that needed to be done was to scale back taxation and regulation, and the market would magically take care of the rest. If the foreign firms did not come flocking in, it was only because we hadn't slashed taxes enough or cut enough red tape.

Perhaps the idea of Iceland-as-global financial centre simply served as the justification for pursuing neoliberal economic policies.

Next issue: A nation as hedge fund.

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A Spectre Is Haunting Iceland

Energy privatisation from another angle

The “Magma-Deal” has caused fierce discussion, confusion and perplexion in the last months. Canadian-cum-Swedish company Magma Energy acquired shares in HS Orka, and thus attained exclusive rights to energy resources in the Reykjanes peninsula for the next 65 years (with a renewal clause of another 65). With regard to the fear of the Icelandic population that this deal could mark the beginning of a sell-out of its natural resources, we asked John Perkins, author of the book *Confessions Of An Economic Hitman*, what he thought.

“It is a legitimate fear,” says Perkins. “Energy is the driving force behind economic development. This means that economies are very dependent upon and vulnerable to energy companies. If an energy company defines its goals as being to maximize profits for private investors and individuals who live in another country, it is likely to exploit local populations and resources. The focus goes toward earning profits rather than encouraging economic growth in ways that will benefit the majority of the population.”

“To what extent should Iceland allow the privatisation of its energy business involving one of its most precious resources?”

To be able to assess the impacts of a possible wave of privatisation in Iceland’s energy sector I tried to discern what, in fact, privatisation means and what it entails.

First the basics. “Privatisation” is a term for the transferral of a business or industry from public to private ownership. Thus, all privatised companies have undergone some sort of transition away from public to private ownership. So relieved from all political and economical ballast, “privatisation” could be construed as a neutral term.

Nevertheless, shareholders, energy analysts, companies, policy makers and the general public have observed privatisation thoroughly involved in an everlasting dispute about the rights and wrongs of nationalisation on the one hand and privatisation on the other. Reflecting on the difference of opinions, some states have undergone massive changes back and forth in their energy sector. In Venezuela, for example, the originally private oil sector was nationalised in 1976. In the following decades, it opened up for foreign investors. In 2001, Venezuela then nationalised all oil production and distribution activities.

FROM PRIVATISATION TO NATIONALISATION TO PRIVATISATION TO NATIONALISATION ...

At the beginning of the 20th century, nationalisation represented a post-war European ideal to create large vigorous state-owned businesses, providing jobs and allowing the governments to exercise influence over their economies. Russia was the first to nationalise its petroleum industry following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1918. In Western Europe, the nationalisation process lasted a few decades but essentially took place in the 1930s. In dictatorial Spain and Italy, large state-owned com-

panies were formed through nationalisation.

Nationalisation also involved expropriation of foreign companies. In 1938, Mexico nationalised what was at the time an industry largely owned by U.S., UK, and Dutch companies. Later waves of nationalisations and expropriations followed in the post-war era in Latin America and the Middle East. In the 1970s, the atmosphere changed and a wave of privatisation followed. Between 1988 and 1993, roughly 2.700 state-owned enterprises in over 95 countries were transformed to private ones, raising over US \$270 billion. Although privatisation efforts differ substantially from country to country, there seems to be a strong common economic rationale underlying the decisions to privatise. In general, nations have privatised state-owned energy industries to achieve several objectives, like raising revenue for the state, reducing the government’s role in the economy, increasing efficiency (mainly through the saving of investment costs) and introducing greater competition. For developing countries it is also a major method to raise capital and transfer of technology from industrial countries.

In the vast majority of the cases privatisation goes hand in hand with deregulation. When it comes to regulation, it is in the power of the national government to influence the effects of privatisation by determining the scope of the company’s autonomy in its business activities.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF PRIVATISATION?

Numerous studies and reports have assessed impacts of privatisations on the market. Academic studies in the fields of business administration and economy have shown, for example, that efficiency of labour has increased about 25 percent post-privatisation. A study issued by the FEEM—an association within the field of sustainable development and global governance—showed that price and trade liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation are strongly linked to a rapid economic growth.

On the European level, the numerous privatisation processes have also led to a concentration of businesses with usually negative, yet very different effects on tariffs and prices for the end-consumer. These effects have been examined by the NGO WEED (The World Economy, Ecology & Development) and Attac in the analysis “Pressure of privatization on public services.” It showed, for example, that energy prices in the U.K. went down for about 25 percent on average, whereas in Germany the prices rose over the European average.

Before the privatisation measures a state monopoly existed in the U.K., whereas the German energy market had been in the hands of several public, private and mixed companies before. The analysts in this study came to the conclusion that the rather positive effects on the energy price in the U.K. might be connected to the fact that the privatisation actually led to a wider distribution of energy management than was the case before. In contrast, the number of companies on the German energy market has diminished significantly to a duopoly, a development which has led to higher energy prices.



Another aspect, which shouldn’t be neglected, revolves around the effects of partial privatisation. A study conducted to analyse the costs and benefits of the partial privatisation of Norway’s oil company Statoil concluded that “benefits from partial privatisation can be substantial, particularly, if ownership change is supported by additional restructuring measures”. In 2001 the state of Norway partly privatised Statoil, the biggest oil company in Scandinavia, and managed to capture more than 60% of its total welfare gain ever since. The analysis emphasized the possible positive effects of a privatisation, when it is structured with state involvement at several levels, aiming to maximise the public share of benefits.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ICELAND?

Privatisation has had positive and negative effects depending on the market situation in the countries and the degree of liberalisation accompanying the privatisation process, thus depending on the scope of the market opening.

Now, Iceland finds itself in the unfortunate position of desperately needing foreign capital, any capital at all really, to get itself out of the deep crisis it has slipped into. Letting foreign investors into the country is probably not the worst idea in order to obtain such capital.

But to what extent should Iceland allow the privatisation of its energy business involving one of its most precious resources? The sole participation of Magma in HS Orka does not carry detrimental effects for the whole energy sector imminently, but the question remains to what extent local and national governments are willing to open the sector up to more foreign investors, with the result of not only renting out its energy resources, but actually giving up control over them.

It also remains to be seen in how far the Icelandic government is willing to supervise the market activities of privatised companies.

HAND IN HAND

However, in the past, privatisation and liberalisation have gone hand in hand. Perkins elaborates: “Typically this happens because the company has control of the people running the government—often through “legal” bribes (such as guaranteed jobs with the company or as consultants after the term in government ends, stock options, scholarships for officials’ children, lucrative contracts for family members, etc).”

Moreover, he acknowledges that it is theoretically possible to connect privatisation to de-liberalisation measures, but notes that this has not happened in the past. An alternative seems to be Norway-style partial privatisation, where the state doesn’t give up all control over the company and supervises its activities on the market.

Bottom line: the Icelandic legislative still has the possibility to influence the impact of possible privatisation in the future, for example, by ensuring the government’s right to exercise a certain, control over the energy companies with regard to supply and pricing policies.

In fact, it is amazing how the local Reykjavik government proceeded with the Magma deal last year, ignoring the doubts and fears of the public with regard to this deal in particular and the extent of a possible privatisation processes in Iceland in general.

In a country with a small community like in Iceland, the possibility of taking prevalent public resistance into account is even more feasible than in other countries populated by millions. The politicians in charge of the deal should have addressed the public with concrete information and outlook for the future.

And so should the politicians that will almost inevitably follow in their footsteps. ♡

IRINA DOMURATH



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Joke Party Wins Elections in Reykjavík

A dramatic defeat of an entire political system



In the weeks leading up to the municipal elections, it seemed no one was interested. The media took almost no notice of the elections—candidates had great problems getting attention. As usual, the economic collapse and its aftermath were the main focal points. April saw the publication of a thoroughly researched 2,000 page report by an investigative committee, as well as the Eyjafjallajökull eruption, which disrupted flights all over the Northern hemisphere.

But then the elections came—and suddenly they became very interesting. The result can be likened to a bomb going off right in the middle of the Icelandic political system. The elections in Reykjavík were especially dramatic—the capital has always been the venue of a fierce and quite symbolic contest between the left and the right.

A PARTY OF ARTISTIC TYPES

But now a party that came out of nowhere celebrates a thumping victory. It is simply called The Best Party (Besti flokkurinn), and it is led by Jón Gnarr, a celebrated comedian and actor. Most of other people on the party's list are what might be labelled as artistic, bohemian types—many of them live in the centre of Reykjavík, in the so called 101 area. None of these people had been even remotely involved in politics before.

All the same, The Best Party won 35 percent of the vote. It is now the largest party in Reykjavík, and it can dictate how the city will be run for the next four years. Most likely Jón Gnarr himself will become mayor, something nobody would have thought possible a few weeks ago. The day after the elections, Jón said he had realised that politicians were always interfering with his life. "So why should I not interfere with theirs?" he asked.

The Best Party started out as a joke, a parody of the political game. Jón made all sorts of ridiculous promises about a polar bear in a park dedicated to domestic animals, about an Alþingi 'free of drugs before 2020'. He spoke in stale political phrases in order to underline the vacuity of the political debate. But all the same many insist that, compared to a lot of the things Jón Gnarr has been involved with up until now, the joke was not terribly funny. To parody something you have to know it—and Jón Gnarr didn't seem very knowledgeable about politics.

JÓN GNARR AND HIS COMIC CHARACTERS

Jón Gnarr's most famous creation is a person called Georg Bjarnfreðarson, an overbearing middle-aged bald man who has featured in three television series and a popular film. Georg Bjarnfreðarson, it turns out, is a Swedish educated Marxist, the son of a militant

feminist who destroyed his childhood, a lonely and intolerable man who wreaks havoc wherever he comes. This is brilliant comedy with a dangerous edge, and some part of the left dislikes Jón Gnarr for this—his creation, Georg, even looks like Vladimir Lenin.

But it has not always been easy to distinguish between Jón Gnarr and his comic characters. He also does stand-up comedy where he draws upon his rather unusual life, as a son of elderly parents, a school boy with attention deficiency, a young punk, a taxi driver, a writer, a sometimes-Catholic, a worker at the Swedish Volvo factories, a father of five. He has no formal education, but his intelligence seems extremely alert. He comes through as being rather obsessive: in conversation he often seems to be thinking about something else. The impression is that he is not very interested in others beside himself. So it is quite a riddle how he will perform as mayor.

JÓNSI OF SIGUR RÓS AS PRESIDENT?

But it must be mentioned that in The Best Party we have other people who have been quite successful in their own right—and might not be worse at running a city than career politicians. For example, Einar Örn Benediktsson, Björk's co-frontman in the globally celebrated pop band The Sugarcubes; Óttarr Proppé, a bookseller cum-punk/glam rock singer; and celebrated cartoonist Huggleikur Dagsson, whose work is published worldwide. Even if politicians might find the idea of working with these types quite strange, they are undoubtedly creative people.

After the elections Jón Gnarr seemed both worn out—his mind wandering off—and exuberant. He talked about having done interviews with The Wall Street Journal and the German magazine Stern. He seemed to be flattered by their attention, and even suggested that his way of doing politics—politics with a sense of humour—could be exported. Some party members said their next stop would be the presidency, with Jónsi, the singer from Sigur rós, running for president with his partner Alex Somers by his side.

Of course things have become more serious. At the time of writing, The Best Party is in talks with The Social Democratic Alliance (Samfylkingin) to form a majority in the city council. This would take over from the majority held by the conservative Independence Party and the marginal Progressive Party (Framsóknarflokkurinn). In fact politics in Reykjavík have been very chaotic for the last decade, with a total of seven mayors since 2003 (four since 2006). Samfylkingin, the party of PM Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, suffered heavy losses in the elections, giving a blow to party VP Dagur B. Eggertsson, who headed the

Egill Helgason is a man of many talents, in case you were wondering. Besides running a political talk show on Icelandic State TV, he also runs a literary programme there. And he blogs a lot for web-site Eyan.is. Kudos to you, Egill.



list in Reykjavík. Jóhanna and Dagur are not noted for their sense of humour; so working with a bunch of comedians might frankly make them look awkward.

CLEAN LEFT GREENS ALSO SUFFER

Of course the victory of The Best Party is mainly due to the absolute disarray of politics in Iceland and the lack of trust in politicians after the total crash of the economy. The police are now taking bankers into custody, and politicians that accepted substantial sums of money from now-discredited financiers are under great pressure to resign. One of them did on the eve of the elections, but to no avail. The perception is that the parties have not cleaned their stables; that they are only waiting for the population to forget their dismal performance.

But it has to be noted that The Best Party took a lot of votes from the Left Greens (Vinstri grænir) who are the only party among the 'Big Four' that bears no responsibility for the collapse. The Left Greens, now finally in government after years in opposition, have long been a channel for dissatisfied voters, but this time they abandoned the party in droves, especially young males. It is a bit ironic that the leader of the Left Greens in Reykjavík is a militant feminist who in some ways might be said to resemble Georg Bjarnfreðarson's activist mother in the film.

After the election, PM Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir remarked that this might mark the end of the Icelandic party system. Traditionally we operate a system of four parties, which hasn't changed much through the years. Three of them, especially the conservative Independence Party (Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn)—really the reigning party in the history of the republic—the Social Democrats and the Progressive Party are blamed for the economic collapse and the ir-

diculous exuberance that preceded it. The Left Greens are free of guilt in this sense, but they are blamed for selling out all their left wing ideals in the present government where they share the power with the Social Democrats—but which is really controlled by a strict program from the International Monetary Fund.

VOTERS REVOLT IN AKUREYRI

In other parts of the country the parties also lost heavily. In Akureyri, which really is the second capital of Iceland, a list of independent citizens won a clear majority, almost wiping out the old parties. In towns such as Hafnarfjörður, where there was no challenge to 'The Big Four', voters protested by not showing up or by handing in empty ballots. True the Independence Party held out in some of the towns on the outskirts of Reykjavík where affluent people reside in their villas and the standard of living is very high, but it is said that in these places the support for the party is so strong that it could field a bag of potatoes with the party colours and still win the election.

BOUND TO FAIL?

The question is whether a similar challenge could be mounted in parliamentary elections. Unless the present government falls these are not due for another three years. The traditional parties are very weakened. Their leaders face challenges from outside and within, many of them seem only to be holding their position for the time being. The task of the government is gargantuan. Iceland is one of the most heavily indebted places in the world. The state, companies, municipalities and individuals are riddled with debt—budgets will have to be cut in a way that will surely create disturbances.

Another way is of course for the

country to produce its way out of the crises, but the fishing industry is heavily in debt as well. There is a raging debate on how fishing quotas are allotted. In the present system, seventy people basically "own" seventy percent of the fish that swim in the sea around Iceland. Energy is also a major issue—whether our energy resources, hydroelectric and geothermal, should be used for heavy industry, i.e. aluminium factories, and to what extent foreigners should be allowed to invest in these natural resources.

An application to join the European Union is a further cause of friction. With a majority of the population having turned against the EU, it's difficult to see that this will lead to anything but a resounding NO.

So, unsurprisingly, there are demands that the government resign. But then, the opposition seems anything but eager to take its place. In an atmosphere where trust in politics is at a freezing point, everybody seems bound to fail.

All the same, some relief can be derived from the fact that comedians and musicians seem bound to take over in Reykjavík, and not populists, right wing extremists or other baddies. But then the task that awaits Jón Gnarr and his bevy of artistic types is to run a city that has its fair share of debt and not a lot of money to spend on funny things. To be realistic: they might just as easily fail as the other parties; at least it might be difficult to know what note to strike when you move from a joke into seriousness. ☹

A Mourning Community Of Poles

Reactions to the Smolensk tragedy



“Just because you imagine something cannot happen doesn’t mean that it will not. Early in the morning of April 10, a plane with 96 Polish passengers on board crashed near Smolensk in Russia, as it attempted to land in deep fog. There were no survivors.”

Just because you imagine something cannot happen doesn't mean that it will not. Early in the morning of April 10, a plane with 96 Polish passengers on board crashed near Smolensk in Russia, as it attempted to land in deep fog. There were no survivors.

There were some very influential figures among the 96 Poles who died in the crash. Lech Kaczynski, the President of Poland, was one of them. The plane was also carrying many members of the Polish parliament, senior figures in the Polish army, the head of the national bank of Poland, the ombudsman, deputy ministers and top officials from the church hierarchy. The President and the other dignitaries had been travelling to Russia to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the infamous Katyn massacre.

We wondered how the Polish nation was taking these events, given Iceland now has a sizeable Polish community. So we made some calls. On the phone from Poland, a 28-year-old banker from Warsaw called Malgorzata Wolodzko said: “We can all see a very symbolic meaning in this event. The most appalling fact is that the plane crashed so close to Katyn, where during the Second World War around 22 thousand Poles were massacred by the Soviet Army. The victims of this massacre were mostly members of the intelligentsia and the Polish army that had been taken captive by the Soviets. Russians denied their responsibility for this massacre for over 50 years, placing blame on the Nazis. Now, on the 70th anniversary of the massacre, top Polish officials die on Russian soil again.”

MASS MOURNING

In the aftermath, the media's immediate focus was of course upon the

President. Many Poles' first concern, however, was to find out whether his wife had been with him on the plane. She was actually much more popular than her husband with the Polish people because of her subtlety and her warmth, and she was very well liked. A Dutch tulip company even named a pale yellow tulip after her: “Maria Kaczynska.” It means humble, pale yellow. The deep sadness many felt when it was revealed that she was aboard the plane will always remain.

Poland immediately became a place of mass mourning. Thousands of people spontaneously gathered in front of the Presidential Palace in Warsaw, bringing candles and flowers. They cried together. Those who were abroad watched whatever news reports they could find and searched the internet incessantly for new information. Condolences came from all over the world to Warsaw, where it was finally decided that the president Lech Kaczynski and his wife Maria would be buried in Wawel, where Polish kings were traditionally laid to rest.

REYKJAVIK POLES REACT

About the events, Anna Rechlewska, a 27 year-old psychologist from the Polish School in Reykjavik, tells us: “At first, everybody coped with their emotions in their own way. But after a while, many Poles in Reykjavik started to feel a strong urge to gather together and do something. The Polish consulate organised a meeting. There was also a Catholic mass on Saturday and Sunday. This helped a lot, as the church is something that brings Poles in Iceland together. This was acknowledged by local people and the President and Prime Minister of Iceland, who also attended the ceremonies. It was an important sign

of support and of honouring those who died.”

Many have asked the same two questions, even though Poles themselves have been reluctant to look for answers yet. Why did the plane crash? Who is responsible for the tragedy in Smolensk? Poles are still in a grieving phase. They think that the answer doesn't matter, since answers won't bring back those who have died. But why were they all travelling together? Perhaps when they were on board together, they believed themselves were all too important for something to ever go wrong.

A more practical question for now is how Polish politics will change, especially with the coming presidential election on June 20. Will sympathy for Lech Kaczynski be translated into votes for his party? Will his twin brother Jaroslaw play on people's sentiments at a time of mourning? And if he does so, is that ethical of him?

Says Anna: “It is easier for us in Iceland to cope with this drama and get back to our normal lives. But I can imagine that in Poland the mourning will continue for quite some time. The media just won't let things be normal again.”

Only time will tell how Poles vote and how quickly daily routines return. No matter what the investigation reveals about the causes of the crash, there is one simple conclusion for now. If you can't imagine something happening, that doesn't mean it won't happen. Poles have just learned this to be true. I hope Icelanders won't be next. ✂

✂ KATARZYNA GROWIEC
✂ PIOTR PAWLOWSKI

Oh, The Pressure, The Pressure!



assessment of the economic impact of a sovereign default of these economies [in particular Spain, Greece and Portugal] through trade linkages or GDP size misses the point...The economies are too intertwined...” He suggests that ramifications of a default would run rampant across the global financial system. Estimations of the debt of these three countries run higher than 2 trillion Euros! Really then, how could anyone see an advantage in joining the EU? I'd go for the Best Party's free towels at the swimming pools any day.

To put it mildly, legislators have a tendency to forget or ignore inconvenient truths. It's not even a matter of one eye shut. The earth, our scientists tell us, is an ever-changing, shifting thing. The living mantle which created continents out of the once single Gondwanaland are now defined under a system of nations by delineation: walls, barbed wire fences and imaginary dotted lines. People were gob-smacked at the economic fallout caused by Eyjafjallajökull, but furious at the lack of planning and foresight of their governments. Oh, and

“An impending Euro crash—inevitable according to some economists—will surely elicit sufficient evidence to show that joining the EU will not solve all of Iceland's problems.”

by the way, they don't just erupt in Iceland. Volcanoes in Guatemala, Ecuador and Vanuatu all appear to be saying: Yes, there is more to this than meets the eye. Wink, wink. Cough, cough.

On the 27th, Discovery News revealed that scientists have now uncovered a dark secret lingering in Iceland's volcanic ash clouds. “The ash cloud is its own living, electrifying beast. And, an additional [until now, unknown] hazard to aircraft.” According to BBC News, in the aftermath of Eyjafjallajökull, the European Space Agency is finally pulling its fingers and planning to equip its newest satellite with special volcanic ash detectors. No one thought of that earlier?

It appears to take a hell of a lot of Crisis to get governments to pay attention to anything at all. Now where did I leave that eruption button? ✂

✂ MARC VINCENZ

As was pointed out by the Financial Times this month, Iceland has now been ordered to repay those mythical 3.8 billion Icesave Euros. On May 26, the EFTA Surveillance Authority published a letter to the effect that Iceland is in breach of cross-border bank deposit scheme rules and under obligation to pay the minimum 20,000.00/depositor back to Great Britain and Holland. Iceland has been given two months to reply. Or else.

Not surprisingly, this letter comes on the back of the recent election of Britain's David Cameron. The pressure is on again, and in a big way, especially after it was made clear in last weekend's municipal elections that the Social Democrats are on the way out. Chuckling at the state of Iceland's municipal politics, the Wall Street Journal said, “Voters here blew a loud raspberry at Iceland's political establishment.” You can almost see Jón Gnarr sticking out his tongue. Alabama's Daily Mail commented: “Iceland's economy has been in the toilet and its septic tank is backing up.”

Meanwhile, media across the globe sniggered quietly at Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir's statement on RÚV: “This is a big shock, a crash landing for the four political parties.” As has been recently evidenced by volcanic pressure metaphors, sooner or later something has to give. Honestly, don't tell me she couldn't see that one coming. Perhaps not. A week earlier, in an article penned by Jóhanna herself in Bloomberg, she stated confidently that since Iceland was first into the economic crisis, Iceland would be the first out. I've heard that one before. Talk about counting your bridges.

An impending Euro crash—inevitable according to some economists—will surely elicit sufficient evidence to show that joining the EU will not solve all of Iceland's problems. Tony Barber, Financial Times's Brussels bureau chief, noted that recent EU austerity measures will do little to help the inevitable: “Any

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Some of the Icelandic brochures have been translated in all the languages, others in some of them.

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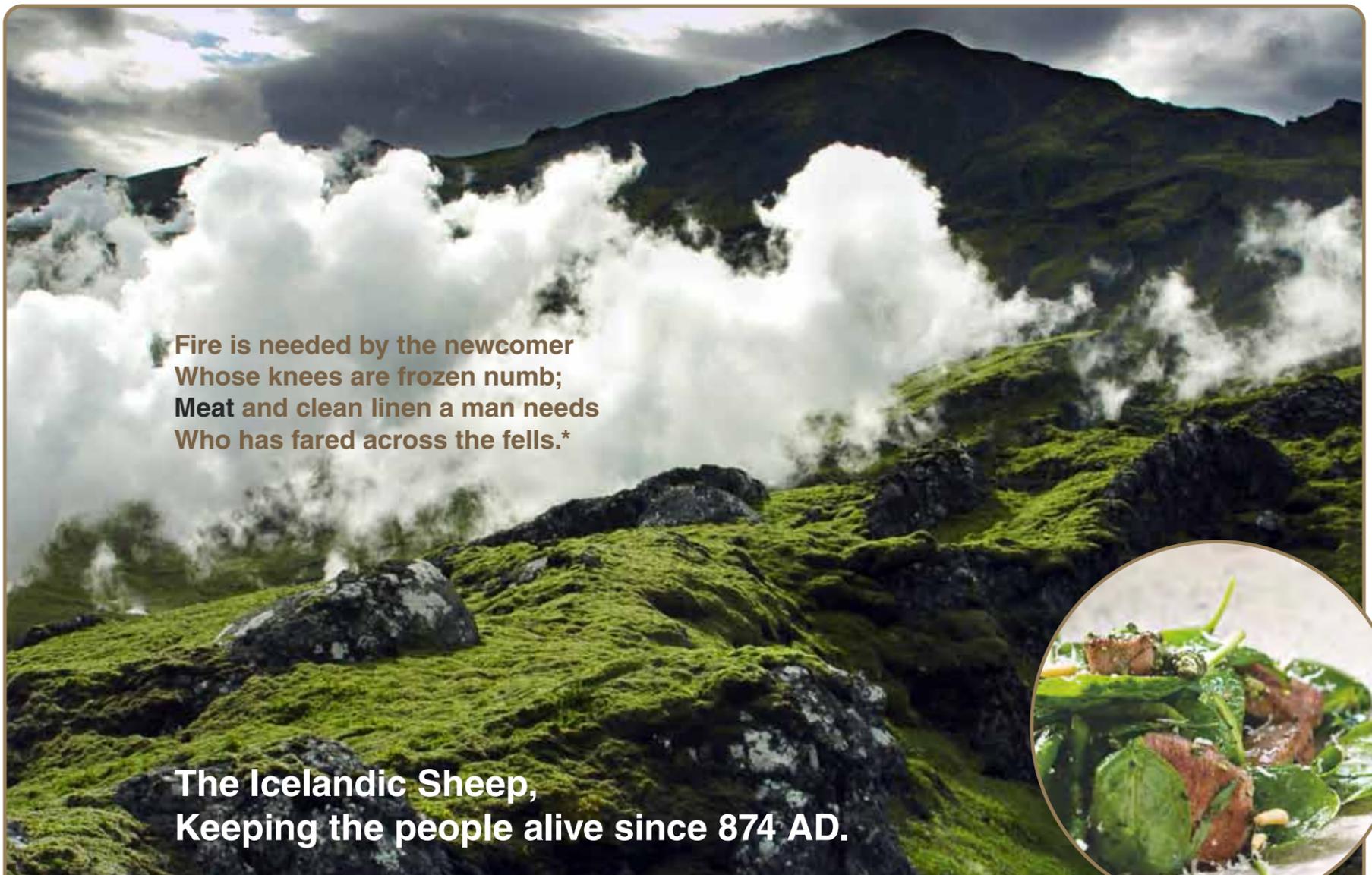
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The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

GOOD NEWS

We are generally inspired by Iceland and the stuff going on here. We wanted to bring y'all the good news happening in our fair country and why we love living here.

GRAPEVINE SHOWS SOME LOVE

A buncha stuff we thought we'd love on



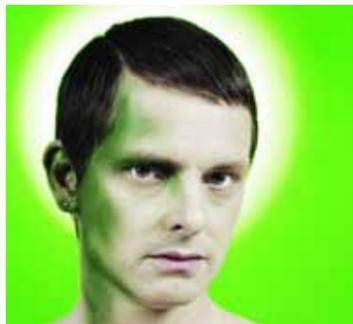
Havarí,
Austurstræti

They regularly host live music, and often serve free wine to go with it. This is very, very commendable behaviour. Furthermore, Útúrdúr's selection of art books is excellent to browse through while listening to the live music and partaking in a plastic glass of box wine.



Noodle Station
Skólavörðustígur

Hell yeah. Two flavours, 850 ISK and a whole lotta awesome.



GUS GUS

While their last album was a tad too depressing for crazy dancefloor spaz-outs, it was still really good. And it lasts remarkably well. If you haven't yet blasted Add This Song in your headphones with your eyes closed, go try it right now.



Kaffibarinn,
Bergstaðastræti

It does what it does, and what it does ain't failed us yet, damnit.



The waterslide at Laugardalslaug swimming pool

It's crazy, that slide. It starts off all intense, with a couple of bendy, swirly parts, before you descend into total and scary darkness. Then some sorta light show starts up. Waterslides are always awesome, this one especially so.



Lucky Records
Hverfisgata

Reykjavík was practically begging for a store that sold used CDs and vinyl and other assorted music paraphernalia. Lucky Records is that store – go get lost in there right now.

Tourists On The Street

We stopped to interview some lucky tourists on the street to see why they chose to visit Iceland. The following people graciously complied to dish out the details of their trip.



Names: Marieke van Buren and Johan de Rooý
Country: Netherlands
We always wanted to go here. Marieke: We've wanted to see Iceland, for years. And now we finally get a chance to go here. We just came back from whale watching. We saw a lot of whales! We were lucky.



Name: Ellen Strømme and Mari Lillejord
Hometown: Oslo
"It was my granddaughter's idea to go to Iceland; it was the only place

wanted to visit. She has heard very much about the Blue Lagoon. We were there yesterday, after our flight. It was wonderful. Today we have seen the city. [Mari speaks to her grandmother in Norwegian.] And the church, she tells me. She has taken many, many pictures of the church.

It's very beautiful, isn't it?

E: Very beautiful. And also some very different architecture from what we have in Norway. The Perlan building was very fantastic. And the view from there. [Asking Mari:] Did you like the view? Yes, she likes the view. Tomorrow we are going on an eight hour trip, the Golden Circle and the continental rift. So she's going to America tomorrow!"

Name: Claudia & Juan Hernandez
Country: Mexico



"We have walked around downtown. I really like the weather, the people. When we took the decision to come to Iceland it was because Iceland is a country

without delinquency problems. There is a ranking around the world about what are they countries with the least problems. My surprise was that Iceland is the 3rd place.

What will you be doing on your trip?

J: We plan to go to Gullfoss, Selfoss, Landmannalaugar. That's the original places we thought about. I'd like to visit the volcano, Eyjafjallajökull. I really like the people. When we made the decision to come here, we were thinking about some other countries to visit as well, but we have the opinion that Nordic people are very interesting. They are very inexpressive people but their heart is with us."



Name: Mark and Laura Pauls
Hometown: Winnipeg
"We really had no idea what to expect at all. We've done a lot of the galleries. The one that

we like best so far was the National Museum. It was tremendous. That was incredible. The building itself was really impressive. And I guess the Icelanders are really into sculpture, because there are so many museums dedicated to sculpture.

Public sculpture too!

M: Yeah, that too. And the cafés here are amazing. We've hardly seen any North American chains, except for Subway."



Name: Spencer & Jennifer Arne
Hometown: Chicago
"We're renting a car tomorrow and driving to Akureyri. We're just going to be up there for the

weekend and driving back here on Monday afternoon and our flight is Tuesday afternoon back to the US. Jennifer: We're on our honeymoon."

What a great place to spend it!

What made you chose Iceland?
S: Kind of a random shot pretty much. J: We booked it before the volcano [laughs].

S: We're actually wishing the volcano is still going, so we can get a good tour of it.

What do you think of Reykjavík?

J: It is SO clean. You come from a lot of the cities in the US where it's really dirty and you just kind of get used to that, but Reykjavík is gorgeous and immaculate.

S: You don't have to worry about crime here either. You feel very safe.

What are you excited to see between here and Akureyri?

J: I want to see the puffins. They are so cute, and you see them in all the stores. I want to see if they are as cute in the wild.

I Am Never Drinking Again!

How to overcome the hangover promise that none of us keep

You've said it. I've said it. We've all fucking said it. But let's face it; we are both drinking a cold one right now. There is nothing worse than a horrible hangover though, and we've all had those nights where we had one or seventeen too many shots of Opal or Brennivín after already too many beers. It was probably an awesome night (what we can remember), but the next day was harsh. Here are a few sure-fire Icelandic-style remedies that will set you straight before tonight's party.

Kristall Plús

Much like ginger ale, this deliciously fizzy drink has marvellous effects on upset tummies after you've done unsightly damage to it with alcohol. Available almost everywhere, it comes in a wide variety of awesome flavours like Mexican lime and blood orange, which of course sound really appetizing when you're recovering from the dry heaves. But seriously, it's magical. It's great with a bit of orange juice and boosted up with Treo, a caffeinated, effervescent pain-killer tablet.

Hot tubbing

This one is a classic. Hitting up the pool after a serious night of destroying oneself is as Icelandic as buttering your dried fish. For some locals, it's the ONLY time they ever go to the pool. Wait wait. I don't mean pool as in going to do laps. I mean go sit in one of those marvellously steaming heated tubs of geothermal water while basking in the sunshine, replenishing your weakened body with vitamin D and hydration. With three awesome pools in Reykjavík proper at 360 ISK per visit, it's also hella convenient.

Sweaty food

English-speaking countries usually refer to this as "greasy food", but Iceland has gone and made up an even grosser sounding term for the life-saving nourishment of the booze-hound—heavy, starchy meals cooked in loads of oil. A few good options: the Forget-Me-Not burger at Vitabar on Vitastígur; Nonnabiti "boats" (subs) on Hafnarstræti; the Truck breakfast and Bruce Willis shake at Prikkið; pylsur, pylsur, pylsur.

Go for a hike

Sometimes it's just good to get in a car and drive a few minutes out of town to a nice, remote hill where you can stretch your legs and move around a bit. A great spot to go is the Reykjadalur valley in Hveragerði, roughly 30 minutes away from Reykjavík. It's a gorgeous area with views onto the south coast and as you hike down further into the valley, you eventually meet a natural hot-stream where a boiling and a freezing river meet. You know what that means? Skinny dipping.

Sleep

Duh. Close the curtains and go back to bed, drunk!

By Rebecca Louder



ICELAND :: FILM – Berlin – Copenhagen – Reykjavík
Icelandic Filmmaking 1904-2008



MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS – EDDAS AND SAGAS
The Ancient Vellums on Display



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LÉTTÖL



Best Backyard Ever

By Rebecca Louder
Photo by Hörður Sveinsson

Seven bands, six cameras and tons of drunken adolescents

“He is Árni Plúseinn and I am Árni Sveins. We made a film together.”

The former, Árni Rúnar Hlökkversson, is an electronics programmer who moonlights as a member of popular electronic musical outfit FM Belfast. The latter, Árni Sveinsson, is an active filmmaker who operates a guesthouse to pay for an apartment beyond his means.

Árni PlúsEinn was struck with the idea to make a live album in his backyard last June, while sharing a studio space with other bands. Not thinking too far beyond that point, he shared this idea with his friend Árni Sveins, who thought the backyard looked so nice they should get in some cameras to film the whole thing in a day.

One thing led to another, and suddenly they were organizing a six-camera crew, scoring permits from the city to throw a concert on Culture Night of last August.

The result is the movie *Backyard*, a 70 minute long documentary that revolves around a on a tight-knit group of local musicians and the simplicity of throwing a really, really great party out of thin air.

The film has yet to be screened in Reykjavík, but you should be anticipating it. The premiere screening won it the audience award for Best Film at the Skjalborg Documentary Film Festival in Patreksfjörður last month, and sensing a lot of public interest the responsible parties (or Arnís, if you will) are planning to screen it – English subtitles and all – in a convenient location in 101 Reykjavík as of mid-July. All they really need is a suitable venue, which might prove complicated due to 101 Reykjavík’s imminent lack of an operating movie theatre. But we’ll hope for the best.

Grapevine has seen the flick, and can attest that it is indeed most-excellent – a much-needed document of a vibrant and joyful scene that has been adding to music loving Icelanders’ quality of life for the last decade or so. We wanted to celebrate it, and tell all y’all about it, so we called up the duo of Arnís and asked them to tell you readers out there about the film – how they made it, and why they made it. They were more than glad to indulge us with a short talk about it. Enjoy the one-liner quotes from the movie peppered throughout the interview!

“Árni had an idea... Árni who? Nobody knows.”

When did you first get the idea for this project?

Árni PlúsEinn: I first thought about it when we shared a rehearsal space with a few bands like Reykjavík!, Retro Stefson and Skakkamanage, and it felt like no one was recording their live shows. They all had albums out, but no one was documenting the live music which is far from the album versions, so that’s mainly what led to this. So when I suggested it to him [Árni Sveins], it was kind of perfect. Me and Gunni [Tynes, from múm] would do

the sound and he would do the video or something. Also, half a year earlier, the national TV station stopped recording as many bands as before, so it was also very worrying that these bands would not get the studio time at RÚV.

Árni Sveinsson: Just because of setbacks and cutbacks.

ÁP: It doesn’t really have to be expensive to do accomplish.

ÁS: I just told you that it has to have really good sound. The picture quality is kind of secondary.

How did you decide what bands to pick for the show? Were they all your friends?

“I was kind of worried right before we played because there were so many drunk teenagers in our backyard. I was worried that this would be a problem, and they kind of were!”

ÁS: We made a quick list.

ÁP: You had, like, a wish list.

ÁS: Yeah, but you were really set on what bands you wanted. I was like “what about this one!” and you were like “No, no! this won’t fit in! No, I don’t like him!” You had a very fixed idea of what would make sense. They are such different bands, but somehow they make sense.

ÁP: Most of them are friends, or they at least know each other, and they have the same ideas about how they make music or why they do it.

“I think that what characterises this scene is a common awareness of not taking ourselves too seriously, but rather having fun in creating something together.”

What are those ideas? What do you think unifies the musicians?

ÁP: First of all, I think these bands all got together to make music to entertain each other and to create something from nothing, without it having to cost millions and millions.

ÁS: I think they have a similar aesthetic and approach to making music, even though their music is very different. Also this spirit of not being afraid of being surrounded by different types of music, instead of something like the metal kids only hang with the metal kids and the rock guys and all that. That is not the mentality of this group, I think.

ÁP: This makes a scene of people that go to concerts that maybe have an open mind...

ÁS: Even though they play totally different music, that is the aesthetic we are talking about.

Was this an investigation into that scene, or an attempt to document it?

Look for a subtitled version of *Backyard* in Reykjavík theatres as of July. For more information on the most-definitely-excellent documentary, you may contact its most-excellent producer Sindri Páll Kjartansson by e-mailing him at spk@simnet.is



The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE **INFO**



Music, Art, Films and Events Listings + Eating, Drinking and Shopping + Map

YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LIFE, TRAVEL AND
ENTERTAINMENT IN ICELAND

Issue 7 - 2010

www.grapevine.is

17
June

**Get loaded!
Eat candyfloss!
Independence
Day
Town centres
all over Iceland**



In 1944, when the Danes were too distracted with their German occupation, Iceland snuck away from under their colonialist noses. Every year since then, Icelanders have celebrated their national identity on the birthday of Jón Sigurðsson, a leader of the independence movement. Crowds flock to town centres all over the country. Word has it that the Woman of the Mountain, the spirit of the Icelandic nation, appears during the Independence Day festivities to recite poetry. Younger kids cram their gullets with candy floss, and older kids stuff their faces with beer, then candy floss. There are a couple stages in downtown Reykjavík with performances throughout the day. You might also stumble upon some informal merrymaking, like the free BBQ happening at Prikið. Just wander around town and see what happens. SO

Photo by GAS

SONGS OF SUMMER



out
june
17th

HITAVEITAN

Compilation of 14 songs about love, hope, heat and fun. Mugison, Reykjavík! Prins Póló, Hjálmar, Hjaltalín, Fm Belfast and more.



out
june
24th

MIRI / okkar

Okkar is Miri's debut album. Great for roadtrips, running and coffee drinking.

www. **KIMI** records .net

MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN JUNE

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EXPERIENCE*

How to use the listings
Venues are listed alphabetically by day.
For complete listings and detailed
information on venues visit
www.grapevine.is

4 FRI

Apótek
21:00 DJ Aki, 0,5L Carlsberg 550 ISK.

Café Óliver
DJ Maggi playing all night. Ladies Night, 3 for 1 on ladies mojito and strawberry daquiri.

Celtic Cross
01:00 Live music.

De Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00.

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Havari
16:30 Alisdair Roberts.

Hemmi & Valdi
22:00 Local DJs.

Hressó
22:00 Dalton (Band). Then DJ Elli takes over.

Jacobsen
18:00 Live DJs.

Kaffibarinn
Lee Douglas & Símon FKNHNSM.

Karamba
23:45 DJ-Ofull.

P
Lounge music.

Prikið
22:00 Jenni & Franz with live acoustic set. Addi Intro into the night.

Rósenberg
22:00 Kristjana Sef & Elvar Örn (blues).

Sódóma
Icelandic Tattoo Festival
Tattoo artists all day.
0:00 The 59'ers, Cliff Clavin & Ultra
Mega Technobandið Stefán. 500 ISK. Entry

5 SAT

Apótek
21:00 DJ Aki, 0,5l Carlsberg 550 ISK.

Café Óliver
Tropical Girls Night
3-for-1 on pina colada and sex on the beach. DJ Maggi.

Celtic Cross
01:00 Live music.

De Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00.

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Hemmi & Valdi
12:00-18:00 Outdoor market with clothes from various Icelandic designers.
22:00 Local DJs.

Hressó
23:00 Juan Cuban and friends perform tropical music, then DJ Elli.

Jacobsen
18:00 Live DJs.

Jómfrúin
15:00 Summerjazz. Tómas R. Einarsson's latin quartet.

Kaffibarinn
DJ CasaNova.

Karamba
23:45 DJ-Kari.

The National Theatre
21:00 Mr. Gay Iceland Contest.
Cheer on or compete in the contest to see who will be the next Mr. Gay Iceland. Sign up at mr.gay_iceland@gmail.com. 2.500 ISK to get in. DJ Glimmer.

P
Lounge music.

Prikið
12:00 Clothes market, DJ Danni D plays into the morning.

Sódóma
Icelandic Tattoo Festival
Tattoo artists all day.
00:00 Rusty Soul, Nögl, Endless Dark & Hoffamn. 500 ISK.

6 SUN

Café Óliver
Summer Sunday, banana split a la Oliver only 900 ISK. Live music.

De Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00. Beer 500 ISK after 19:00.

Dubliner
19:00 Hangover night with Raggi, beer 500 ISK.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Gljúfrasteinn Laxness Museum
16:00 Musical moments at Gljúfrasteinn. Acoustic performance. 1000 ISK.

Jacobsen
18:00 BenSol's Sunday Session
Deep house, lounge, house, disco music and a film.

Prikið
22:00 Hangover movie night, Robocop. Free popcorn.

7 MON

Bakkus
21:00 Movie night: Ticks.

Café Óliver
Margarita Monday, 2-for-1 on margaritas. Live music.

De Danske Kro
Live music. Shots for 400 ISK. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00.

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Prikið
Red wine and cheese for 2, only 1000 ISK. DJ Big Dick.
21:00 Fortune teller.

Rósenberg
21:00 Lame Dudes (Blues).

8 TUE

Café Óliver
Live Karaoke with Raggi Troubadour. Beer/wine 600 ISK.

De Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00.

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Hallgrímskirkja
20:00 The Copenhagen Girls Choir. 2000 ISK ticket.

Prikið
22:00 Playstation football/soccer tournament. DJ G-Man. 350 ISK for beer.

Rósenberg
21:00 Sigurd Barrett.

9 WED

Bakkus
DJ Músikölski

Café Óliver
Live music and kiwi party.

De Danske Kro
Pop music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00, Beer 500 ISK after 19:00.

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Hressó
22:00 Troubadours Böddi & Davíð.

Kaffi Zimsen
Poker night.

Prikið
Old School Wednesdays. Large beer followed by a small beer free for just 700 ISK.

Rósenberg
21:00 Þór Breiðfjörð.

10 THU

Bakkus
DJ Einar Sonic

Café Óliver
Ingo Weathergod performing and beer for 600 ISK.

De Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00.

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Hressó
22:00 Penta (band).

Jacobsen
18:00 Live DJs.

Karamba
22:00 Raggae music.

Prikið
Coxbuter evening. Burger and beer deal 1000 ISK. 5 beers in a bucket for 1500 ISK.

Rósenberg
21:00 Stína Ágústis & Árni Heiðar (Band).

Sódóma
21:00 TOTO Tribute concert.

Thorvaldsen
Free salsa lessons from 20:30-21:30.
21:30 Salsa music.

11 FRI

Apótek
World Cup on the big screen
16:00 South Africa vs. Mexico
20:30 France vs. Uruguay
0:00 DJ Fly.

Bakkus
World Cup at 14:00 & 18:30.
DJ Unnur Andrea.

Café Óliver
Ladies Night, 3-for-1 on ladies Mojito and Strawberry daquiri.
DJ Brynjar Már playing all night.

Celtic Cross
01:00 Live music.

De Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Hemmi & Valdi
22:00 Local DJs.

Hressó
21:00 Grapevine summer concert! TBA. Check www.grapevine.is listings.
23:00 Dalton perform inside.
01:00 DJ Fannar.

Kaffibarinn
22:00 Alfons X

Karamba
22:00 Nammidagur.
23:45 Gísli Galdur.

P
Lounge music.

Prikið
World cup begins today and there are plenty of drink deals to go around. Music from Franz & Jenni, then DJ Danni D.

Music & Entertainment | Venue finder

Amsterdam Hafnarstræti 5 D2	Celtic Cross Hverfisgata 26 E4	Porvaldsenstræti 2 E3
Apótek Austurstræti 16 E3	Dillon Laugavegur 30 F5	Nýlenduvörurverzlun Hemma & Valda Laugavegur 21 E4
Austur Austurstræti 7 E3	Dubliner Hafnarstræti 4 D3	Næsti Bar Ingólfstræti 1A E3
B5 Bankastræti 5 E3	English Pub Austurstræti 12 D2	Óliver Laugavegur 20A F5
Babalú Skólavörðustígur 22 G5	Glaumbar Tryggvagata 20 D2	Ölstofan Vegamótastígur E4
Bar 11 Laugavegur 11 E4	Highlander Lækjargata 10 E3	Prikið Bankastræti E3
Barbara Laugavegur 22 F6	Hressó Austurstræti 20 E3	Rósenberg Klappastígur 25 E4
Bjarni Fel Austurstræti 20 E3	Hverfisbarinn Hverfisgata 20 E4	Sódóma Reykjavík Tryggvagata 22 D3
Boston Laugavegur 28b F5	Jacobsen Austurstræti 9 E3	Sólón Bankastræti 7A E3
Café Cultura Hverfisgata 18 E4	Kaffi Zimsen Hafnarstræti 18 D3	Thorvaldsen Austurstræti 8 D2
Café Paris Austurstræti 14 E3	Kaffibarinn Bergstradastræti 1 E4	Vegamót Vegamótastígur 4 E4
Balthazar Hafnarstræti 1-3 D2	Karamba Laugavegur 22 F4	Venue Tryggvagata 22 D3
	NASA	

Rósenberg
22:00 Pálmi Gunnars.
Sódóma
22:00 Bolywool, Cosmic Call, BOB, Tamaring/(Gunslinger).

12 SAT

Apótek
World Cup on the big screen at 13:30, 16:00 & 20:30
0:00 DJ Fly

Bakkus
World Cup at 14:00 & 18:30.
DJ Ófull.

Bar 11
Árstíðir homecoming concert.

Café Óliver
Tropical girls night, 3 for 1 on pina colada and sex on the beach.
DJ Brynjar Már playing all night.

Celtic Cross
01:00 Live music.

De Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Hemmi & Valdi
22:00 Local DJs.

Hressó
22:00 Silfur take the stage then DJ Fannar takes over.

Jacobsen
18:00 Live DJs

Jómfrúin
15:00 Summerjazz. Stína Ágúst and friends.

Kaffibarinn
22:00 DJ Margeir.

Karamba
23:45 DJ-Maisól.

P
Lounge music.

Prikið
21:00 Gísli Galdur performs a tribute to Pearl Jam outdoors.

Rósenberg
22:00 Concert, TBA.

Sódóma
22:00 Kimono + special guests. 1000 ISK.

13 SUN

Apótek
World Cup on the big screen at 13:30, 16:00 & 20:30.

Bakkus
World Cup at 14:00 & 18:30.

Café Óliver
Summer Sunday, Banana split a la Oliver only 900 ISK. Live music.

De Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00 Beer 500 ISK after 19:00.

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Gljúfrasteinn Laxness Museum
16:00 Musical moments at Gljúfrasteinn. Folk music. 1000 ISK.

Jacobsen
18:00 BenSol's Sunday Session
Deep house, lounge, house, disco music and a film.

Karamba
20:00 Karaoke.

Prikið
22:00 Movie Night: Goonies. Free popcorn and 10 hidden free beer tickets.

Rósenberg
21:00 Stand up

14 MON

Apótek
World Cup on the big screen at 13:30, 16:00 & 20:30

Bakkus
World Cup at 14:00 & 18:30.
22:00 Movie Night

De Danske Kro
Live music. Shots for 400 ISK. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00

Café Óliver
Margarita Monday, 2-for-1 on margaritas. Live music.

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Prikið
Red wine and cheese for 2 only 1000 ISK. DJ Blush.
21:30 Fortune teller.

Rósenberg
21:00 Kristjana Stef (Jazz).

15 TUE

Apótek
World Cup on the big screen at 13:30, 16:00 & 20:30

Bakkus
World Cup at 14:00 & 18:30.

Café Óliver
Live Karaoke with Raggi Troubadour.
Beer/wine 600 ISK.

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Rósenberg
21:00 Memfismafan

Prikið
22:00 Playstation football/soccer tournament. DJ Gauti. 350 ISK beer.

16 WED

Bakkus
World Cup at 14:00 & 18:30.

Café Óliver
Live music and kiwi party.

De Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00 Beer 500 ISK after 19:00.

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Hressó
22:00 The guys from Offsie perform.
DJ Bjarni.

Kaffibarinn
22:00 DJ Kári.

Kaffi Zimsen
Poker night.

Karamba
23:45 Karamba Allstars DJs.

Prikið
Addi Intro until 5:30, and large beer followed by small just 700 ISK.

Rósenberg
21:00 Robin Nolan.

Sódóma
22:00 Bjartmar Guðlaugsson (classic Icelandic rock).

17 THU

Apótek
World Cup on the big screen at 13:30, 16:00 & 20:30

Bakkus
World Cup at 14:00 & 18:30.

Café Óliver
Ingo Weathergod performing and beer for 600 ISK.

De Danske Kro
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00

Dubliner
22:30 Live music.

English Pub
22:00 Live music.

Hressó
21:00 Silfur play in the garden.

23:00 Troubadours Jogvan & Vignir.

Jacobsen
18:00 Live DJs

Karamba
Live music.

Prikið
Independence day. Free BBQ outside during the day.
22:00 Silent movie night with a live accordian player.

Rósenberg
21:00 Robin Nolan.

Sódóma
21:00 Ultra Mega Technobandið Stefán, Rökkorró and guests. 1000 ISK.

Thorvaldsen
Free salsa lessons from 20:30-21:30.
21:30 Salsa music.

REYKJAVIK ARTS FESTIVAL

4

Vortex Temporum
The Icelandic Opera - 20:00
Njúton and the Formalist Quartet perform contemporary pieces and world premieres. 2900 ISK.

5

Kristinn Sigmundsson's Favourite Opera Arias
Háskólabíó Concert Hall
17:00 A concert featuring Kristinn Sigmundsson, the Iceland Symphony Orchestra & The Iceland Opera Choir. Kristinn, a celebrated Icelandic singer, will perform a selection of arias, including Tchaikovsky and Rossini. Tickets: 4900 / 4200 ISK.

Ongoing

Downtown Reykjavik
Reality Check, an outdoor exhibition curated by Æsa Sigurjónsdóttir.

Gerðuberg Cultural Centre Breiðholt - At The Moment
May 16 - June 30

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An exhibition of photographs by Friðgeir Helgason. In collaboration with the Reykjavik Arts Festival

Breiðholt - In The Beginning

May 16 - June 30
An exhibition of photographs by Friðgeir Helgason. In collaboration with the Reykjavik Arts Festival.

Kling & Bang
Maria Dembek & Robin McAulay

Runs until June 13.
Pinhole photography exhibition.

The National Theatre of Iceland
Falling In Love With My Kitchen Aid

Runs until June 5
Part theatre, part circus performance based on the works by visual artist Ilmur Stefánsdóttir. 3400 ISK.

The Living Art Museumw
CharlieHotelEchoSierraEcho

Runs until June 26
German artist duo Rosen & Wojnar exhibit their work.



Musical Moments at Gljúfrasteinn

Every Sunday @ 16:00

Admission 1000 ISK

Have you ever wanted to just chill at your favourite author's house and listen to some tunes? Now is your chance to do exactly that. Laxness' beloved home and workplace, Gljúfrasteinn, will host a series of Sunday 'lounge' concerts throughout the summer in tribute to his love of music. The next installment will be held on June 6th with soprano Hulda Björk Garðarsdóttir, Kjartan Valdemarsson on piano, Ásgeir Ásgeirsson taking it away on the guitar and Ólafur Stolzenwald giving us some funky double-bass. AY

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watch all matches
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and more Gammel Dansk than you will ever need.
(plus sandwiches & snacks)

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* Tuesdays *
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* Wednesdays *
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* Fridays *
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* Saturdays *
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* Sundays *
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Really good prices on drinks

www.dendanske.is Ingólfsstræti 3 - 101



LIVE SCHEDULE:

FRIDAY JUNE 4th @ 4.30pm
: ALASDAIR ROBERTS

SATURDAY JUNE 12th @ 4pm
: SUDDEN WEATHER CHANGE

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RAKEL GUNNARSDÓTTIR

SARA RIEL

SIGGA BJÖRG SIGURÐARDÓTTIR

Haha
haha
haha
varí

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AUSTURSTRÆTI 6 // 101 REYKJAVÍK



June 4th-6th: The Icelandic Tattoo Festival 2010
(more on facebook)

June 4th: The 59'ers (rock-a-billy)
Cliff Clavin (alternative rock)
Ultra Mega Technobandið Stefán (synth rock)
11pm / 500kr

June 5th: Rusty Soul (blues rock)
Nögl (alternative rock)
Endless Dark (screamo)
Hoffman (classic rock)
11pm / 500kr

June 10th: TOTO Tribute Concert
(pop rock) 9pm

June 11th: Bolywool (SE) (psychedelic shoegaze)
Cosmic Call (indie),
BOB (experimental rock)
Tamarin/(Gunslinger) (math rock)
10pm / 1000kr

June 12th: kimono (indie post-punk)
+ special guests
10pm / 1000kr

June 16th: Bjartmar Guðlaugsson
(classic Icelandic rock)
10pm

June 17th: Ultra Mega Technobandið Stefán (synth rock)
Rökkurró (indie folk)
+ guests
9pm / 1000kr

Coming soon to Sódóma: Dikta, Mínus, Moses Hightower and many more.

Sódóma Reykjavík Tryggvagata 22, 101 FVK
www.facebook.com/sodomareykjavik
www.twitter.com/sodomarvk

Magic Thursdays

For concert information see music listings on this spread or visit us at www.sinfonia.is



ICELAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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www.facebook.com/kaffibarinn
Open from 11:00am from the 10th of June

No photographing allowed





Let The Battle Commence!

Chess Tournament @ Lækjargata

Think yourself some sort of chess champion? Feel your bishop has reached an adequate level of training to defeat the king? Put your money where your mouth is (and your bishop's life at risk) at this year's outdoor chess tournament! The Reykjavík Municipal Work School teams up with the Chess Academy to host the game on Lækjargata's famous chessboard. If you win, you will not only be bestowed the title of Chess Master, you will also receive one of the many glorious undisclosed prizes. The competition kick-starts at 12:30 on the 16th of June, but make sure to throw on your chainmail, as it's going to be a bloodbath. Noobs more than welcome. **AY**




Enjoying "Perplexities"

Charlie Hotel Echo Echo
Sierra Echo: Art by Nikolai von Rosen and Florian Wojna

Nýlistasafn

If a tree falls in a forest and nobody's there to hear it, does it still make a sound? Are sacks of cement and half-rolled-up floor linoleum art? Maybe if they're at Nýlistasafn, the Living Art Museum. The museum is hosting a series of exhibits that explore the nature of art, and they've enlisted the help of German artists Nikolai von Rosen and Florian Wojnar. Rosen and Wojnar's cerebral exhibition, mystifyingly called CharlieHotelEchoEchoSierraEcho, blurs the boundary between art and its surroundings. The viewer is essential to making the works what they are. This exhibition is meant for the curious and thoughtful. It teases and asks questions more than it reveals meanings. **SO**






Meet Jóhannes S.

Kjarval

Exhibition And Tours

Reykjavík Art Museum—

Kjarvalsstaðir

Thursdays at 12:00

Want to know more about the Icelandic arts scene? Start with one of its founders, painter Jóhannes S. Kjarval. He was such a strong force in Icelandic art that someone put his face is on the 2.000 krónur bill. Kjarval's loving, colourful impressions of nature brought meaning to the Icelandic landscape and its flora and fauna. His works got Icelanders to reconsider their homeland. The Reykjavík Art Museum—Kjarvalsstaðir has collected more than 3.000 of them, and is currently showing the key pieces in a retrospective of his work. Guided tours in English are available. Inquire at fraedsluideild@rvk.is. **SO**




Harbourtown Art

Hafnarborg, Hafnafjörður

Sites by Friederike von Rauch

It's Hard To Be an Artist in a RockStar Body – Erling T.V.

Klingenberg

Until June 20th

Feel like you've seen all the museums in town? Then why not step out of Reykjavík for a moment to check out Hafnarborg's diverse exhibitions this month. It's Hard To Be an Artist in a RockStar Body is Erling T.V. Klingenberg's latest show which explores identity via art and performances by various musicians. Sites, by Friederike von Rauch, presents a unique vision of the Icelandic countryside through dream-like and tranquil photographs of desolate locations. Her work is also a wealthy addition to the subject of Iceland's environmental issues and a part of the Reykjavík Arts Festival. **AY**

The Buzz Of The Needle, The Roar Of The Autoclave

The Icelandic Tattoo

Festival turns five!

Since 2006, the good folks of Reykjavík Ink have been throwing an annual mass inking party that gets the country's tattoo junkies totally wet. Now they will be taking over Sódóma from June 4–6th to leave their indelible mark on dozens of lucky—and brave—people.

The ever-growing festival will gather together the top Icelandic artists as well as shipping in a whole bunch from abroad, so there is sure to be something for all styles and tastes. On top of that, the festival also host a concert event on the Friday and Saturday nights, when the Sódóma stage will be taken over by the likes of the 59ers, Cliff Clavin, Nögl and Endless Dark.

The festival and concerts cost 650 ISK for a day pass, or 1600 ISK for a weekend pass.

To find out more, visit Reykjavík Ink's website at www.reykjavikink.is or The Icelandic Tattoo Festival 2010 on Facebook. **RL**

Café Loki

in front of Hallgrímskirkja



Enjoy some solid homemade Icelandic food

OUTSIDE REYKJAVÍK

CONCERTS & EVENTS IN JUNE

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How to use the listings
Venues are listed alphabetically by day.
For complete listings and detailed
information on venues visit
www.grapevine.is

MUSIC

4 FRI

Jazz & Blues Festival

Salurinn, Kópavogur
21:00 Jóhann G. Jóhannson and his
band. bassplayer, vocalist & composer
Tickets: 2900 ISK.

Song Competition

Edinborgarhús, Ísafjörður
19:30 14 songs performed by various
singers songs to compete for the top spot.
Tickets: 5900 ISK.

Leonard Cohen - Tribute

Græni Hatturinn
22:00 Esther Jökulsdóttir and friends
perform some of Leonard Cohen's best
known songs.

A Night of Opera

Hafnarborg, Hafnarfjörður
22:00 The Óp group will perform
alongside pianist Antonia Hevesi.
Tickets: 2000/2500 ISK

5 SAT

Stúlka / Tussa

Café Karólína, Akureyri
Runs until July 2
15:00 Hanna Hlíf Bjarnadóttir intro-
duces her new exhibition where she
has stitched words which identify with
women, in both positive and negative
ways.

Clapton Meets Tina - Tribute

Græni Hatturinn
22:00 Bryndís Ásmunds & Rúnar Eff
perform the best of Tina Turner & Eric
Clapton alongside a band.

Dægurflugurnar

Hafnarborg, Hafnarfjörður
22:00 Performing classic Icelandic
songs from the 1950-70s. Tickets: 1000
ISK.

Jazz & Blues Festival

Salurinn, Kópavogur
21:00 Main guest of the night includes
York singer Miles Griffith. Tickets: 2900
ISK.

6 SUN

Afternoon Jazz

Hafnarborg, Hafnarfjörður
15:30 The Björn Thoroddsen Trio
and Richard Gillis trumpet player. Free
admission.

Bright Days Festival

Old Bookshop, Hafnarfjörður
19:00 Ourlives, Cliff Clavin, We Made
God, Endless Dark, Vulgate & Örför. Free.

12 SAT

Wild West Festival

Akranes
13:00-16:00 At Tónberg – Morning
after Youth, Útidúr, Bróðir Svartúlfs,
Of Monsters And Men
15:00 - 18:00 At Skrudgarður – Synir
Syndanna, Blues Willis, Skúli Þórðar,
Tómas, Jimi Hendrix Project, Klassart,
Ferlegheit
19:00 - 23:00 At Bíóhöllin – Klint Biggi-
bix, Weapons, Cliff Clavin, Bolywool
(SE), Ólafur Arnalds, Leaves
23:00 - 4:00 At Gamla Kaupfélagið –
Stjörnuryk, Yoda Remote, Berndsen,
Sykur, Reykjavík!, DJ Benni

Tickets at midi.is.*

ART OPENINGS

June

5

Moso Mongo Memory Mix

Mosfellsbær Gallery
June 5 - July 3
14:00-16:00 Snorri Ásmundsson intro-
duces his surprise exhibition.

Market Day

Akranes Museum Centre
Various arts and crafts on offer – free
entry.

17

Independence Day

Akranes Museum Centre
Festive morning including traditional
wrestling show, face painting and horse
back riding for children – free entry.

ART ONGOING

Akureyri Art Museum

Straumur / Burðarás
Ongoing till 27 June.
Icelandic minimalism and museum
mysteries. Free admissions.

Akranes Museum Centre

June 3 - 5
Blacksmiths will gather and make various
items for the museum.

The Ghost Centre, Stokkseyri

Night at the Ghost Museum
An offer for two to spend a scary night at
the Ghost Centre. 3500 ISK.

Hafnarborg, Hafnarfjörður

Sites - Friederike von Rauch
Ongoing until June 20
The German photographer exhibits her
work.

Erling T.V. Klingenberg

Ongoing until June 20.
A collection of Klingenberg's work,
including self-portraits.

The Icelandic Settlement Centre,

Borgarnes
The Egil Saga/ Settlement Exhibition
In these exhibitions The Settlement Cen-
tre tells the sagas of Iceland's settlement
and Egill Skallagrímsson, Iceland's most
famous viking and first poet.

The Kópavogur Art Museum

Paintings by Baltasar
Runs until June 21
Comparative mythology - The seven last
words of christ on the cross.

Hafsteinn Austmann

Runs until June 20
A retrospective of Austmann's in celebra-
tion of his 75th birthday, and a career
spanning over 50 years.

Skaffell Centre for Visual Art

Ásgeirs Emilsson's Art and Life
Ongoing till June 30.
Shedding light on the extraordinary artist
and opening a window into his unique
mind. Part of the Reykjavík Arts Festival
2010.

Outside Reykjavík | Venue finder

Keflavík
Suðsuðvestur
www.sudsudvestur.is
Hafnargata 22
230 Reykjanesbær
421-2225

Hafnarfjörður
Hafnarborg
www.hafnarborg.is
Strandgata 34
220 Hafnarfjörður
585-5790

Borgarnes
The Icelandic Settlement Centre
www.landnam.is
Brákarbraut 13-15
310 Borgarnes
437-1600

Stykkishólmur
Vatnasafnið / Library of Water
www.libraryofwater.is

Akureyri
Akureyri Art Museum
www listasafn.akureyri.is
Kaupvangsstræti 12
600 Akureyri
461 2610

Populus Tremula
poptrem.blogspot.com/
Kaupvangsstræti 12
600 Akureyri

Kunstraum Wohnraum
Ásabyggð 2
600 Akureyri

Mývatn
Mývatnsstofa
Hraunvegi 8
660 Mývatn
464-4390
www.visitmyvatn.is

Egilsstaðir
Sláturhúsið
Kaupvangi 7
700 Egilsstaðir
470-0692

Seyðisfjörður
Skaffell
www.skaffell.is
Austurvegur 42
710 Seyðisfjörður
472-1632

Hveragerði
LÁ Art
www listasafnarnesinga.is
Austurmörk 21
210 Hveragerði
483-1727

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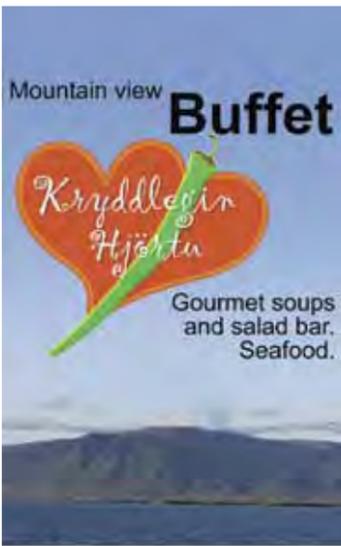
HÚSID Á EYRARBAKKA
The Southcoast Museum

ICELANDIC WONDERS.COM

- 1200 m² Elves, Trolls and Northern Lights Museum
- 1000 m² Ghost Museum
- 24 Icelandic ghost stories in German, English, French, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese and Russian

* visit our souvenir shop in Hafnarstræti 4 Reykjavík and our museums at Stokkseyri *

Icelandic Wonders & Draugasetrið | Stokkseyri, Iceland | Tel. +354 483 1202/895 0020



Mountain view Buffet
Kryddlegin Hjörtu
 Gourmet soups and salad bar. Seafood.

Skúlagata 17
101 Reykjavík
www.kryddleginhjortu.is
Tel: 588-8818

MAP

Places We Like

1 Prikíð

Bankastræti 12

Prikíð is one of those places that shape-shifts. It's a warm café lined with photographs of its senior frequenters on weekdays, a hung-over hangout on weekend afternoons, and during nights it's filled to the brim with what remains of Iceland's hip hop scene. Go there in daytime for the cheap burgers; enter at night for some OTT hip-hop debauchery, old skool and the latest bangers alike. SKK

2 Kaffitár

Bankastræti 8

Kaffitár on Bankastræti is a comfortable little café with a great selection of coffee, tea and baked goods on offer. Since Kaffitár is also a big-name Icelandic roasterie the caffeinated beverages on the menu are quality. The wi-fi makes this a nice place to sit and chill with your laptop as well. CF

3 Karamba

Laugavegur 22

Downtown hotspot Karamba is a colourful and eclectic bar on Laugavegur with a comfortable atmosphere, typically great music and a chill crowd. This is a good place to relax or to do some serious drinking or to relax. Plus, their decors are done strictly by Grapevine-friendly artists, such as Lóa (who does our comics), Huggleikur Dagsson and Bobby Breiðholt (who's done a lot of nice illustrations for us); they are truly a sight to behold. CF

4 Hemmi og Valdi

Laugavegi 21

The "colonial store" Hemmi and Valdi is a cosy hangout that has advanced from being a toasty retreat, where one can score cheap beer and have a quiet chat, into being a chock-full concert venue and an all-night party place. And believe us, the atmosphere is brilliant. SKK

5 Tíu Dropar

Laugavegur 27

If you're sick of all the arty cafés, filled with Sigur Rós wannabes browsing Facebook on their Macs – go to Tíu Dropar. It's a back-to-basics Icelandic café that hasn't changed its interior since the sixties. Really proves the old adage "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Plus, the coffee's great and so are the pancakes. SKK

6 Sódóma Reykjavík

Tryggvagata 22

Newly opened Sódóma on Tryggvagötu is already a hit with party crowds and gig-goers alike. An extensive venue, filled with reasonably priced beverages and reasonably good looking people. Some of Iceland's finest musical ventures have played in recent months, and their schedule looks promising too. Also, make sure to visit their men's room for a glance at the "Pissioir of Absolution". JB



7 Babalú

Skólavörðstíg 22

Located on the second-floor of a quirky little building on Skólavörðustígur, Babalú is an inviting, quaint and cosy café serving up a selection of tea, coffee and hot chocolate along with delicious baked goods and light meals. Food and drink aside, Babalú boasts colourfully decorated and super-comfortable surroundings and a genuinely friendly and likeable staff. CF

8 Boston

Laugavegur 28b

Like an older sibling to the fabled (now deceased) Sirkús, Boston is a warm and mellow second-floor bar on Laugavegur that plays host to the arty party crowd. The baroque wall dressings and deep, rich coloured décor make this bar feel pretty swank, but the mood of the place can go from great to legendary within a heartbeat. CF

9 Grái Kötturinn

Hverfisgata 16a

Super relaxed and cozy diner/café below street level. This place makes the best hangover breakfast ever (the truck!) and any-other-day breakfast as well. It's a nice and relaxing place to eat and increase your caffeine intake and chill with friends or with some reading material. CF

Restaurante Sankta Maria
 Laugavegur 22
 Tel : 552-7775
 Brunch 11:00 to 15:00
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 over 30 dishes+ soup and hot new bread

750 kr = 4 EURO =
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 pisa@pisa.is
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 Austurvöllur



For a map of outside downtown Reykjavik check out links on www.grapevine.is or the Icelandic phonebook website www.ja.is

10 Nonnabiti

Hafnarstræti 9

Delicious and relatively cheap considering how massive and filling their sandwiches are. The Luxury Sub, with salty pork, veggies, sauce and pineapple is a brilliant combination of flavours for late-night munchies. It's just as satisfying and filling during more civilized hours as well. And the service is fast if you're in a rush. CF

11 Bakkus

Tryggvagata 22 - Naustarmegin

A new and welcome addition to Reykjavik's bar scene, Bakkus serves up reasonably priced beer, a really impressive selection of international vodkas and an atmosphere unlike any other in town. An eclectic mix of patrons, regular live music and movie nights keep this place interesting and always inviting. Expect dancing on tables and to-the-death foosball battles. CF

12 Á Næstu Grösum

Laugavegur 20b

Á Næstu Grösum is an all vegetarian restaurant right in the city centre that features a friendly atmosphere and fair prices. There is always at least one vegan soup on offer and the daily special portions are big and always satisfying. They even serve organic wine, if that's your bag.

13 Sægreifinn

Geirsgata 8

Down by the Reykjavik harbour, Sægreifinn fish shop and restaurant is a pretty unique establishment. The menu features various fish dishes (including most of the "crazy Icelandic food" you'll want to tell your friends you had) and a rich portion of some pretty good lobster soup tasted. Good food and welcoming service make this place a must-try.

14 Kolaportið

Tryggvagata 19

Reykjavik's massive indoor flea market is a wonderful place to get lost for a few hours, rummaging through stall upon stall of potential treasures. There are heaps of used clothing, knitwear and other yard-sale type goods from decades of yore, and a large food section with fish, meats and baked goods. Check out the vintage post cards and prints at the table near the army surplus. CF

15 Hressó

Austurstræti 20

You know, Hressó is basically the only place I go for coffee. Why? Their coffee is decent to excellent, but their forte is surely their wonderful patio, where you can enjoy the spring breeze in the sun, wrap yourself in a blanket beneath an electric heater in January and at all times: smoke. They boast of quite the prolific menu, and they've finally removed Nickelback from their playlist. Thank you, Hressó! SKK

16 Grænn Kostur

Skólavörðustíg 8b

Serving healthy organic vegan and vegetarian food for well over a decade, Grænn Kostur is the perfect downtown choice for enjoying light, wholesome and inexpensive meals. Try any of their courses of the day, or go for the ever-pleasing spinach lasagne.

17 Kaffifélagið

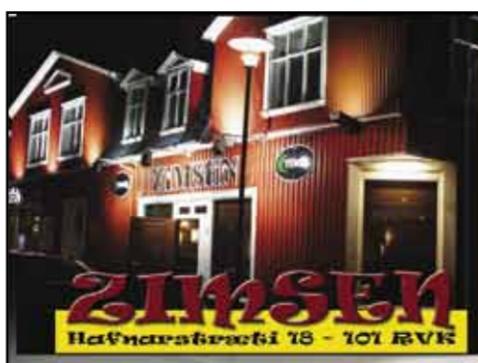
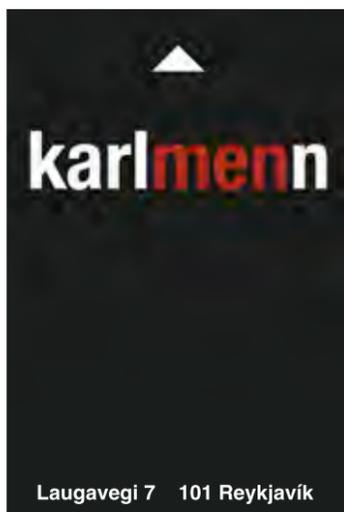
Skólavörðustígur 10

Kaffifélagið has been a Grapevine favourite since they opened on Skólavörðustígur a couple of years back. The small coffeehouse always delivers an excellent cup of Italian-style coffee, and downtown regulars can spring for a clip-off coffee card to save on each purchase.

18 Havarí

Austurstræti 8

Even before it opened, Havarí was everybody's favourite new music and design store. Headed by Svavar Pétur and Berglind of Skakkamanage, the shop shills the musical goods of Kimi Records, Borgin Hljómplötur, gogoyoko and Skakkapopp as well as posters, art, design products and clothing. CF



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ART

GALLERIES & MUSEUMS IN JUNE

COCKTAIL PLEASURES AND VISUAL STIMULATION

How to use the listings: Venues are listed alphabetically by day. For complete listings and detailed information on venues visit www.grapevine.is

OPENING

June

4

In A New Light

Árbæjarsafn

Photographic exhibition by the students of the School of Technology.

5

It's The Wool That Gives

Árbæjarsafn

Work by artist Eva Vilhelmsdóttir.

AK Remix

Hafnarhús (Icelandic Printmaker's Association)

June 5 - 20.

Maja Siska's exhibition, showing work on 100-year-old corrugated metals.

Exhibition Opening

Gallery Tukt, Hitt Húsið

16:00-18:00

Artists Birna María Styff & Sigrún Erna Sigurðardóttir portray acrylic, watercolour and oil paintings which will be for sale.

8

Flea Market

Hitt Húsið

18:00-21:00

Everyone welcome!

ONGOING

Árbæjarsafn / Reykjavík City Museum

Summer Program

June 1 to August 31

Outdoor heritage museum.

Art Gallery Fold

Photography exhibition of the volcanic eruptions in Iceland this year, which brought photographers from all over the world. Ongoing all summer.

The Culture House

Permanent Exhibition:

Medieval Manuscripts

February 3 - ongoing

Icelanders

Ongoing until September.

Exhibit featuring a selection of photographs from the book "Icelanders" by Unnur Jökulsdóttir and Sigurgeir Sigurjónsson.

ICELAND :: FILM

Ongoing exhibition.

Traces the evolution of Icelandic filmmaking, exploring myths versus modernity.

The Nation and Nature

Thirty-minute film about the relationship between humans and nature. Film plays continuously during open hours.

Ási Art Museum

Ólöf Nordal

Ongoing until June 6.

Models, a series of photographs inspired by the story of a man preserved in a glacier, and his son who discovers him.

The Library Room

Ongoing exhibition

National Archives of Iceland - 90 years in the museum building. Commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Culture House.

The Dwarf Gallery

Ongoing exhibition.

An independent art gallery with ongoing exhibitions. It's located in an old basement. Do you really need to know any more than that?

The Einar Jónsson Museum

Permanent exhibition:

The work of sculptor Einar Jónsson.

Gallery Ágúst

Equivocal the Sequel

Runs until June 26.

Contemporary photography by Katrín Elvarsdóttir.

Gljúfrasteinn Laxness Museum

Ongoing exhibition.

Gljúfrasteinn was the home and workplace of Halldór Laxness (winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1955).

Havari

Runs until August 31.

Exhibiting work from The Icelandic Love Corporation. Sigga Björg, Hugleik Dagsón, Lindu Loeskow and Sara Riel.

18

Sigurður Guðmundsson

Runs till June 19.

Situations and other photo works from 1970-1982.

Kling & Bang

Maria Dembek & Robin McAulay

May 15 - June 13

Pinhole photography exhibition.

National Gallery of Iceland

Cindy Sherman - Untitled Film Stills

Runs until September 5.

American photographer Sherman plays with female film fantasies in self-portraits.

Edvard Munch

Runs until September 5.

Prints in the collection of the National Gallery.

Strides

Runs until December 31, 2012.

A selection of the Gallery's collection from the 20th and 21st century.

The National Museum

Permanent exhibitions:

The Making of a Nation

Heritage and History in Iceland is intended to provide insight into the history of the Icelandic nation from the Settlement to the present day.

Ása Wright - From Iceland to Trinidad

Collection of objects that belonged to the adventuress Ása Guðmundsdóttir.

Embroidery of Life

Embroidery by Guðrún Guðmundsdóttir, inspired by old manuscripts

The Nordic House

Ongoing until September 30

Land Of Experiments

Interactive exhibit based on scientific contraptions from Tom Tits Experimentarium in Sweden. Play!

Ráðhús Reykjavíkur

Dulin Himintungl

Kim Linnet exhibits her 360° panorama photos of Iceland.

Reykjavík 871 +/- 2

The Settlement Exhibition

Permanent exhibition:

Reykjavík Art Museum

Hafnarhús

Runs until August 29.

Erró - Portrett - Dolls

Collection of Erró's paintings and collages of pre-war era dolls.

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Listasafn Reykjavíkur
Reykjavík Art Museum



Alternative Eye



Key works



Nudes



Portraits



I choose women
who thrive . . .



In the Collection
of Imperfection

Reykjavík Art Museum

Hafnarhús

28 May 2009 - 12 Sep 2010

Erró - Portraits

18 Mar - 23 May

Erró - Portraits

Women from North Africa

20 May - 29 Aug

Vanitas - Still-life in Contemporary Icelandic Art

28 May - 12 Sep

Erró - Portraits

Dolls

Hafnarhús
Tryggvagata 17
Open daily
10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Thursdays 10 a.m. - 10 p.m.

www.artmuseum.is

14 May - 29 Aug

Nudes - Gary Schneider

20 May - 29 Aug

In the Collection of Imperfection - Unnar Örn J. Auðarson

12 May - 22 Aug

Alternative Eye - Selected photographic works from the collection of Pétur Arason and Ragna Róbertsdóttir

12 May - 22 Aug

Photo&graph - An educational workshop for the family

10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Kjarvalsstaðir
Flókagötu
Open daily
10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

artmuseum@reykjavik.is

Kjarvalsstaðir

3 May - 31 Dec

Kjarval - Key works

12 May - 22 Aug

Alternative Eye - Selected photographic works from the collection of Pétur Arason and Ragna Róbertsdóttir

12 May - 22 Aug

Photo&graph - An educational workshop for the family

10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Ásmundarsafn
Sigtún
Open daily
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

T +354 590 1200

Ásmundarsafn

1 May 2010 - 18 Apr 2011

"I choose blossoming women . . ." - Woman as Symbol in the Art of Ásmundur Sveinsson

20 May 2010 - 18 Apr 2011

Sleep Light - An installation by Ráðhildur Ingadóttir

Free admission

Free admission



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ART

GALLERIES & MUSEUMS IN JUNE

Vanitas
Runs until August 29.
Still-life in contemporary Icelandic art. Curator's talk with Hafþór Yngvason on June 6 at 15:00.
In the Collection of Imperfection
Runs til August 29.
Pieces from city archives and other collections, gathered by Unnar Örn J. Auðarson. Explores the nature of museums and archiving.
Nudes - Gary Schneider
Runs until August 29.
South African born photographer presents 30 life-size portraits of nude men and women.

Reykjavík Art Museum Kjarvalsstaðir
Photo & Graph family workshop
Runs until August 22.
An ongoing workshop on what's behind a photo.
Alternative Eye
14 May to 22 August.
Selected photographic works from the collection of Pétur Arason and Ragna Róbertsdóttir.
Kjarval - Key Works
Runs until August 29.
Retrospective on Iceland's most beloved painter.

Reykjavík Art Museum Ásmundarsafn
Sleep Light
Runs until April 17, 2011.
Multimedia installation by Ráðhildur Ingadóttir.
Thoughts In Forms
Runs until April 17, 2011.
The workshop of sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson, recreated.
"I choose blossoming women ..."
Runs until April 17, 2011
Woman as Symbol in the Art of Ásmundur Sveinsson.

Reykjavík Maritime Museum
The Coast Guard vessel Óðinn
Permanent exhibition
The Óðinn took part in all three Cod Wars and is open for exhibition.
Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum
Who is who?
Ongoing
A Moment with Sigurjón Ólafsson
Ongoing
Reykjavík Museum of Photography Thomsen & Thomsen
Runs until August 29
An exhibition of portrait photographs and views from Reykjavík, from two different times and two photographers.

Art | Venue finder

101 Gallery
Hverfisgata 18A | E3
Thu-Sat 14-17 and by appointment
www.101hotel.com
www.101hotel.com/101gallery/

Artótek
Tryggvagata 15 | D2
Mon 10-21, Tue-Thu 10-19, Fri 11-19, Sat and Sun 13-17
www.sim.is/Index/Islenka/Artotek

ASÍ Art Museum
Freygata 41 | G4
Tue-Sun 13-17

Árbæjarsafn
Kistuhylur 4

The Culture House
Hverfisgata 15 | E4
Open daily 11-17
www.thjodmenning.is

Dwarf Gallery
Grundarstigur 21 | H6
Opening Hours: Fri and Sat 18-20
www.this.is/birta/dwarfgallery/dwarfgallery1.html

The Einar Jónsson
Eiríksgrata | G4
Tue-Sun 14-17
www.skulptur.is

Fótógrafi
Skólavörðustígur 4a | F4
www.fotografis.is

Gallery 100°
Bæjarháls 1
www.or.is/Forsida/Gallery100/
Open weekdays from 08:30-16:00

Gallery Auga fyrir Auga
Hverfisgata 35 | E4

Gallery StartArt
Laugavegur 12B | E4
Tue-Sat 1-17
www.startart.is

Gallery Ágúst
Baldursgata 12 | F4
Wed-Sat 12-17
www.galleriagust.is

Gallery Fold
Rauðarástígur 14-16 | G7
Mon-Fri 10-18 / Sat 11-16 / Sun 14-16
www.myndlist.is

Gallery Kling & Bang
Hverfisgata 42 | E5
Thurs-Sun from 14-18
this.is/klingogbang/

Gallery Turpentine
Ingólfstræti 5 | E3
Tue-Fri 12-18 / Sat 11-16
www.turpentine.is

Gerðuberg Cultural Centre
Gerðuberg 3-5
Mon-Thu 11-17 / Wed 11-21 / Thu-Fri 11-17 / Sat-Sun 13-16
www.gerduberg.is

Havari
Austurstræti 6 | E3

Hitt Húsið - Gallery Tukt
Pósthússtræti 3-5 | E3
www.hitthusid.is

i8 Gallery
Tryggvagata 16 | D2
Tue-Fri 11-17 / Sat 13-17 and by appointment. www.i8.is

Living Art Museum
Skúlagata 28 | F6
Wed, Fri-Sun 13-17 / Thu 13-22. www.lyto.is

Lost Horse Gallery
Vitastígur 9a | E3
Weekends from 13-19 and by appointment on weekdays.

Hafnarborg
Strandgötu 34,
Hafnarfjörður

The National Gallery of Iceland
Frikirkjuvegur 7 | F3
Tue-Sun 11-17
www.listasafn.is

The National Museum
Suðurgata 41 | G1
Open daily 10-17
natmus.is

The Nordic House
Sturlugata 5 | H1
Tue-Sun 12-17
www.nordice.is/

The Numismatic Museum
Einholt 4 | G7
Open Mon-Fri 13:30-15:30.

Reykjavík 871+/-2
Aðalstræti 17 | D2
Open daily 10-17

Reykjavík Art Gallery
Skúlagata 28 | F6
Tuesday through Sunday 14-18

Reykjavík Art Museum
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www.listasafnreykjavikur.is

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REVIEWS

Lighthouses And Crossroads

Stígurs and the Restaurants named for them

If somebody were to name a restaurant after me, I’d expect nothing short of perfection. The service would always be friendly and professional, the décor would be timeless chic, the chefs would all be world-renowned and it would be the first restaurant in history to be granted five Michelin stars. I’d have to be proud to see my name on said restaurant. See, you can’t name an entire establishment after somebody or something without really striving to do that somebody or something justice. If your restaurant is shitty you’re implying that so too is that for which it has been named after. And if the person or thing you are borrowing the name of is a dirt bag or piece of garbage, then it is similarly your duty to class up the joint and do good by your moniker’s inspiration. This week the Grapevine checked out two Reykjavík eateries that borrow their names from the very streets on which they operate – have they done their stígurs proud?



See You At The Crossroads

Vegamótastígur is a pretty decent stígur. Forming a T-intersection with Laugavegur just two blocks east of Skólavörðustígur, it’s got Reykjavík’s best place to buy books (according to this here publication) at one end, another book store at the other end and its very own name-sake restaurant—Vegamót—right in the middle. Vegamót means ‘crossroads’ or ‘junction’, though the street crosses no other roads and the restaurant doesn’t sit at any junction. Ah well.

Vegamót is a nice looking little place from the outside, and the inside follows suit, with amber coloured walls, a rusted out metal chandelier and a second level that overlooks the first. When my date and I took a stroll over to Vegamótastígur it was characteristically bustling and we were lucky to secure a first-floor table by one of the long, thin windows that line the southern wall of the building.

After making some default comments along the lines of “oh man, this place is always packed!” my date and I perused the menu and settled on the Masaman Curry Chicken (1690 ISK) from the daily specials menu for him and the Wrap á la Vegamót (1690 ISK)—a meal named after a restaurant named after a street!?!—for me.

(obviously), peppers, mushrooms and broccoli served over rice, came streaming hot and fragrant. It was a vibrant orange, the serving was plentiful, and once it cooled down enough to take a bite my date’s reaction was decidedly positive. It was a tasty and sweet curry and nicely presented; he scarfed it down happily. But when I took a bite something about it was reminiscent of a jar of Uncle Ben’s sauce.

Personally, I was much more pleased with my Wrap á la Vegamót, stuffed full of chicken, cucumber, tomato, onion, peppers, lettuce, shredded mozzarella and garlic sauce and served with a side of fries. I’m a fan of most things wrapped in a tortilla, but this was particularly nice. The garlic sauce was more subtle than overwhelming, so the components of the wrap were individually decipherable and didn’t just taste like garlic. The combination of raw vegetables, cooked chicken and a cool, light sauce added up to a really fresh and tasty bite. The fries on the side were also delish—thick-cut and crisp, but not too crisp.

CATHARINE FULTON
JULIA STAPLES

The Masaman Curry Chicken, with chicken

Vegamót

Vegamótastígur 4

What we think: Does its street proud

Flavour: Mixed bag, but overall pretty good

Ambiance: Chic and cosy

Service: Patient and bubbly



Food & Drink | Venue finder

3 Frakkar Baldursgata 14 | G4

Aktu Taktu Skúlagata 15 | E6

Alibaba Veltusund 3b | D2

American Style Tryggvagata 26 | D2

Argentína Steak-house Barónstígur | F6

Austurlanda-hraðlestin Hverfisgata 64A | F5

Á Næstu Grósum Laugavegur 20B | E4

B5 Bankastræti 5 | E3

Bakkus Tryggvagata 22 | D2

Ban Thai Laugavegur 130 | G7

Basil & Lime Klapparstíg 38 | E4

Babalú Skólavörðustígur 22A | G5

Balthazar Hafnarstræti 1-3 | D2

Bæjarins Beztu Tryggvagata | D3

Brons Pósthússtræti 9 | E3

Café Cultura Hverfisgata 18 | E4

Café d’Haiti Tryggvagata 12 | D2

Café Loki Lokastígur 28 | G4

Café Paris Austurstræti 14 | E3

Café Roma Lokaðarárstígur 8 | G7

Deli Bankastræti 14 | E5

Domo Þinghóltsstræti 5 | E3

Einar Ben Veltusundi | E2

Eldsmíðjan Bragagata 38A | G4

Fiskmarkaðurinn Aðalstræti 12 | D2

Geysir Bar/Bistro Aðalstræti 2 | D2

Garðurinn Frakkastígur 37 | F4

Glaetan book café Laugavegur 19 | F5

Grái Kötturinn Hverfisgata 16A | E4

Grillhúsið Tryggvagata 20 | D2

Habibi Hafnarstræti 20 | E3

Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar (“Bullán”) Geirsgata 1 | B2

Hlolla Batar Ingólfstorg | D2

Hornið Hafnarstræti 15 | D3

Hótel Holt Bergstaðarstræti 37 | G3

Humarhúsið Amtmanstígur 1 | E3

Hressó Austurstræti 20 | E4

Icelandic Fish & Chips Tryggvagata 8 | B2

Indian Mango Frakkastígur 12 | F5

Jómfrúin Lækjargata 4 | E3

Kaffi Hljómalind Laugavegur 21 | E4

Kaffifélagið Skólavörðustígur 10 | F5

Kaffitár Bankastræti 8 | E4

Kaffivagninn Grandagarður 10 | A1

Kofi Tómasar Frænda Laugavegur 2 | E4

Kornið Lækjargata 4 | E3

Krua Thai Tryggvagata 14 | D2

La Primavera Austurstræti 9 | D2

Lystin Laugavegur 73 | F6

Mokka Skólavörðustígur 3A | E4

Nonnabiti Hafnarstræti 9 | D3

O Sushi Lækjargata 2A | E3

Pisa Lækjargötu 6b | E3

Pizza King Hafnarstræti 18 | D3

Pizza Pronto Vallarstræti 4 | E2

Pizzaverksmiðjan Lækjargötu 8 | E3

Prikið Bankastræti 12 | E3

Ráðhúskaffi | E2

Santa María Laugavegur 22A | F5

Serrano Hringbraut 12 | H3

Shalimar Austurstræti 4 | D2

Sifur Pósthússtræti 11 | E3

Sjávarkjallarinn Aðalstræti 2 | D2

Sólón Bankastræti 7a | E3

Sushibarinn Laugavegur 2 | E4

Sushismiðjan Geirsgötu 3 | B2

Svarta Kaffi Laugavegur 54 | F5

Sægreifinn Verubúð 8, Geirsgata | B2

Tapas Vesturgata 3B | D2

Thorvaldsen Austurstræti 8 | D2

Tíu Dropar Laugavegur 27 | E5

Tívoli Laugavegur 3 | E4

Vegamót Vegamótastígur 4 | E4

Við Tjómína Templarasund 3 | E2

Vítabar Bergþórugata 21 | G5



The Guiding Light

Slightly off the beaten path, or at least off the path that I tend to beat, at the corner of Vitastígur and Bergþórugata (not near anything resembling a light house, as its grammatical root would imply) is local burger joint/watering hole Vitabar, a greasy-spoon that is out of the way enough to go for a possibly frowned-upon midday drink but not so far that you wouldn't haul your cookies there for one of their infamous 'forget-me-not' burgers.

Sitting in the decidedly no-frills, wood-paneled little bar, it didn't take much time for my date and me to decide what to order. He didn't even have to open the menu before ordering up a forget-me-not blue cheese burger (800 ISK) and, forcing myself not to order the same thing (it was very difficult), I opted for the bacon cheeseburger (850 ISK). Both are served with a side of fries.

As one would expect from the Grapevine-declared best blue cheese burger in Reykjavik of 2009, the forget-me-not burger my date devoured was sweaty and sloppy and covered in enough blue-cheese and garlic to taint his breath for a week. My bacon cheeseburger was really no comparison to my date's

Vitabar

Bergþórugötu 21

What we think: Vitastígur is the place for burgers

Flavour: Sweaty, greasy, good

Ambiance: Dive bar

Service: Friendly



dish (but nothing in the burger world really can compare, to be fair) but if I were comparing it to anything but the famed geym-mér-ey I'd rightly declare 'goddamn this is a good burger!' It really is! Just as sweaty, just as juicy, just as drool inducing. Topped with a hearty slice of bacon and melty, gooey cheese, this thing may not be the king of burgers, but it sure could wear the prince's crown. The fries accompanying both burgers were a little on the soggy side, though, and didn't do either of the burgers any real justice. 🍴

✍️ CATHARINE FULTON
📷 JULIA STAPLES

GRAPEVINE FOOD REVIEW KEY

- 0 God-awful
- 🍴 Awful
- 🍴🍴 Passable. Much room for improvement
- 🍴🍴🍴 Good, but not great.
- 🍴🍴🍴🍴 Really rather good
- 🍴🍴🍴🍴🍴 Extraordinary

The food is rated in three categories:
Fast food: Pizza, pylsa and kebab, food on the go (0-2000 ISK)
Mid-range: Everyday eateries, sit-in. (mains 2000-4000 ISK)
Fine dining: Fancy, expensive-type food. (3-course dinners 6000 and up)

To best judge the restaurant experience, the Grapevine conducts its reviews anonymously. The sole exception is the payment

method: When the bill arrives, the reviewer presents a written statement, previously signed by the restaurant management, allowing the reviewer and one companion a meal on the house for review purposes.

Using this approach, we aim to best preserve the reviewer's objectivity (and the restaurants' consistency), within the humble means of a free newspaper.

The Grapevine does not favour foie gras over fast food. Restaurants are reviewed for what they are; both burger and beluga can be extraordinary in their own right. In all evaluations, the food is key: Does it taste good? Is it properly prepared? Are the ingredients fresh and of high quality? Secondary considerations include setting, service and value for money.

All opinions expressed are the critic's own. **SP**

EAT AND DRINK:

3 X RECIPES

1 MATARGATID

A quarterly little food mag that you can pick up free around the city, it's chocked full of recipes and cooking ideas and fun little additions that you need in your kitchen right now!

2 COOL CUISINE

The newest offering from Icelandic cookbook shining star Nanna Rögnvaldsdóttir, Cool Cuisine will have you whipping up traditional fare like a real, live Icelander.

3 ICECOOK

A pretty basic blog that is an anything but basic consortium of Icelandic food and food culture. Interested in salting your own meat? Icecook will tell you how! Fancy some homemade flatbrauð? Icecook's got the recipe for you! (icecook.blogspot.com)

3 X ICE COFFEE

1 HRESSÓ

Served in a brandy snifter, flavoured with chocolate or caramel and topped with whipped cream and espresso beans, Hressó's ice coffee is a refreshingly indulgent summertime treat.

2 TE OG KAFFI

The ice coffee at Te og Kaffi upstairs in Eymundsson are more like frappuccinos than just straight up ice coffee. They're whipped and creamy and delicious. Buy a magazine and an ice coffee and hit the patio.

Austurstræti 20

3 KAFFITÁR

Walking down Laugavegur/Bankastræti/Austurstræti on these hot summer days (hey, heat is relative) almost screams for a cold caffeinated beverage. The ice coffee at Kaffitár is a straight up creamy, flavoured ice-cold cup'o'joe. Nice.

Bankastræti 8

3 X CAKE

1 SANDHOLT

It's no secret that Sandholt is a pretty fabulous bakery—but they've got a chocolate lava cake that will knock your socks off. It actually tastes like rich dark chocolate, and maintains its natural bitterness and melts in the centre and ohmygawd.

Laugavegur 36

2 GRÆNN KOSTUR

Next time you swing by Grænn kostur for some delicious vegetarian fare make sure to save space for dessert—they've got some cakes that are so moist and delicious and it's easy to imagine that they're not so bad for you since it's kinda a healthy restaurant.

Skólavörðustígur 8b

3 IKEA

Alright, so people don't exactly think IKEA when they have a hankering for cake, but the next time you're shopping for some reasonably priced Swedish house wares check out the shockingly sweet and spicy carrot cake in their cafeteria. No assembly required... oh, that's lame.

Kauptúni 4

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Skólavörðustígur 21A

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Feature | Backyard

ÁP: Well, it's just a document. We didn't really have an idea of what the scene was, I just knew who they were and what they were about.

ÁS: It wasn't really deliberate.

ÁP: No, it wasn't conscious.

ÁS: But it made sense. We put together a list, and everybody except Björk was able to come. We asked her, seriously. We asked her because we had this idea that we were going to do this lo-fi production and blah blah blah. We saw her one night in Karamba and we thought, what the hell! We kind of know her. We asked her if she was interested. She wasn't able to come, but she was very positive. But I think in hindsight...

ÁP: It's a good thing. It wouldn't have fit the idea.

ÁS: Now we know what it is, but at the time we didn't really know. We didn't even know if it would work! That is also a very important thing, that we were playing it so low-key to the people, because I think no one was expecting anything. So I think that keeps the human feeling. No one was gearing up to be in this film.

ÁP: I think it was also a good approach. It was not very deliberate, but it seems to have worked.

ÁP: Also the story of 'The Making Of The Concert' that's in the film, he kind of fooled me into it. He just said "Oh, this will just be the extra material, it won't be important," and I was like OK! It will just be a concert movie! And then he edited the movie and I was all like, "Shit! Huh, uhm, what!?"

"I will just film you tidying the place."

So that was just his sneaky manoeuvres? Because a good part of the film is about you organizing the concert and setting it up.

ÁP: I didn't know!

ÁS: I had to downplay it! Otherwise you would have maybe been like, [makes fake smile and awkward pose], but if it was just me and you...

ÁP: I would have just been walking around in a suit! With a briefcase.

That is a nice thing about the movie is the casualness of it, especially when talking to people and the little interviews with the artists. They were so charming. How did you make that happen?

ÁS: I have a lot of experience. I've done a lot of promos for bands. There's always this approach in Iceland where you ask: "What's your name, how long have you been playing, have you played abroad, and how's that working out for you?" All of these bands have been playing abroad but that's so beside the point. Here is a band, they probably have a good story about how they got started, so that was our main focus. I think we got that. Also just throwing stuff in of them talking amongst themselves.

ÁS: Everybody had a good story. The múm story is very nice.

ÁP: Was it "Trallalavoffvoff"? [Árni Sveins nods and they laugh.]

"Maybe one day I can form a band called Trallalavoffvoff."

múm seems to be kind of a unifier with these bands. How do they bring all these groups together?

ÁS: They are the grandparents. They are the oldest band in the scene.

ÁP: They made music that all of these other bands were interested in, from the beginning, I think. They influenced them a lot.

ÁS: Not only the music, but also the aesthetic, the idea. They did it very much themselves. I think these younger bands, they look at múm and think, "Wow, how they did it, that's how I want to do it."

ÁP: I don't want to raise my mark really, really high. I'd rather just be permanent, like they have been.

ÁS: Just do what you do, and continue doing it.

ÁP: Right. And maybe not go too far into the money side of music.

ÁS: A lot of these rock guys now, and through the years, have been set on making it outside of Iceland. They are always looking at record labels like some great

saviour. They're like, "Oh, all these labels are coming to our show blah blah blah," and it's like, yeah what? They're gonna throw money at you? They're gonna save you? They're gonna take you from here and bring you somewhere else great? You don't think you have to pay them back, you don't think you have to work really hard? This attitude has been very apparent in the Icelandic music scene for the last decade.

ÁP: For us, múm have taught FM Belfast a lot on how to deal with the business side of things and what to avoid. This is a reason that a lot of the bands don't have really bad contracts, because múm tried and failed or avoided something. We learn from each other also. They helped our band out a lot.

ÁS: This is very important.

ÁP: It's very, very important, because if a band is signed somewhere and it's horrible, they are more likely to quit and not be a band anymore because they're not having fun. They might just go and work at something else that they don't enjoy. If you're doing music you should enjoy it, otherwise there are other jobs.

"There are a lot of people here in Iceland that struggle with being sociopaths. It is kind of common here in Iceland where people go and do some stuff and they have people working for them, and they don't pay them."

So is this do-it-yourself, helpful attitude a defining point of this community of musicians?

ÁP: Yeah. There is one guy in the film named Robbi. He's in Borko, múm and Sin Fang Bous. He's played with us as well.

ÁS: You don't notice him unless you watch the movie maybe twice. People don't notice because he's a guitar player and he's in the back. But this is just one scene in Iceland. This is a movie we did about this one scene.

ÁP: There are probably ten more scenes in Iceland.

ÁS: Yeah, and they do things similarly, or maybe more traditionally.

Was this kind of about sticking with your clique?

ÁP: Most of these people got to know each other through music, so they became friends because they were doing music or the same things.

ÁS: It's a chain. These people know these people know these people. And there are possibly ten more bands that could be affiliated with us, or more. But this group just kind of made sense.

These bands have been around for a while. Do you think they will fade out and something new will take over soon, or is there lasting power?

ÁP: Some bands are going to fade out and some are going to continue, but there's no way of knowing, because múm has been running for what, like...

ÁS: Ten years? It's what they say in the film.

ÁP: And Retro Stefson is pretty young, they've just made one album. We've just made one album. Seabear is on their second album. They're young in records, mostly. Maybe they're on the way out for listeners, I don't know.

ÁS: I think the majority of the people in this scene we have here will be around for a while. Maybe not the exact bands, but these members, these people will be around for the next twenty years making music. I think so.

ÁP: I think these people are just serious about their stuff and I think they will keep on doing it. They will probably make other bands, but this core of people could be around for a very long time.

As the article mentions, there are many, many cool music scenes happening in Reykjavík these days, and many many great bands and musicians working in many many different feels. The bands featured in Backyard represent one aspect - you should try your best to acquaint yourself with all the others. It is well worth your time, we promise!

ÁS: There have been many scenes like this. It was documented in Rokk í Reykjavík, this film from the early '80s. That scene is not as defined. There are a lot of different kinds of music. Those bands weren't interacting as much with each other. It was shot over a month or something all over Reykjavík. But the people that came forth from that were a lot of the people that made up the scene around the Sugarcubes.

ÁP: That group ended up being the ruler of the time.

ÁS: This do-it-yourself attitude has been around in various forms in different scenes in Iceland for a very long time, probably since the '60s.

"But this happens tomorrow." "Yeah, we'll manage somehow."

As for the show itself, what was the process of setting it all up?

ÁP: No sleep, because I was so stressed about the whole thing. Even though I had contacted the city, the police, got everything necessary and then brought letters explaining what was going to all the houses in the neighbourhood, I was so worried that someone would show up and be like "Turn it off!" No one did.

ÁS: I remember I was getting really stressed because you were so laid back.

ÁP: No, that's my front! Laid back front, but stressed inside.

And the neighbours never complained?

ÁP: No. I talked to one neighbour, and she was worried that it would be a bit too loud, so she made arrangements to just stay elsewhere during the day, which was really nice of her. The other neighbours just came to the show instead.

ÁS: Because it was Culture Night. So you can see in the film, there were parties next door.

So it ended up being a neighbourhood block party?

ÁP: Kind of.

ÁS: I mean, we didn't advertise or anything.

ÁP: The only advertisement there was was the paper we passed out to the neighbours saying we were having a concert and sorry about the noise, but they were invited to the concert and it said the lineup.

ÁS: But the thing is, the people in the bands told people about it so it was kind of funny how it constantly grew.

"There are teenagers drinking in our backyard!"

ÁP: I was kind of worried right before we played because there were so many drunken teenagers in our backyard. I was worried that this would be a problem, and they kind of were! He was trying to film and they were pushing him.

ÁS: That was the hardest show to film, because they were basically just crowding the front of the stage.

ÁP: But I don't really know who told them.

ÁS: It must be the bands that are this young, so it must be Retro Stefson [laughs, and Árni Plúseinn mutters denials]. No, I know who it is! It was these young kids who came specially to see múm. They were big múm fans, and they started to call their friends to tell them there was a party here. I know this because my little cousin was one of these kids.

ÁP: It just teaches us not to have a big party.

As for the filming, who all was involved?

ÁS: I just got these guys together, these people I know. Some were experienced, some were not that experienced. I kind of liked that though. We also didn't want to have it really produced. I just needed a couple of cameras that I could trust, and of course my own. Two of them were shooting for the first time, but they are photographers, so I taught them the day before. I just gave them the cameras and gave them a crash course on how to work it. For most of them it worked. When we were editing it, we had so much material because some bands even played

four songs, but I think of the whole live performances we have five or six shots, because we wanted to have the feeling of being really live.

ÁP: And it was just to save for when you had really nothing to work with.

ÁS: No, it was more because the shots were so nice, that I didn't want to waste them!

The filming style of the performances is also pretty interesting. Every performance felt like the shooting was tailored to fit the music. Was that a product of editing or the way it was intended to be shot?

ÁS: It was a little bit of editing but I think the feeling in shooting it was also very difficult, especially for all the cameras that I couldn't really control. After the first song we talked together and realized we all had that feeling. It also goes with the type of music it was. There were two cameras in the front that were dominant and static, then the other ones were kind of random because they are not that used to it. Maybe in some places you use those cameras a little bit more, like for Reykjavík! for instance, because they're that kind of a band. And then you have the much more subtle and easy stuff like múm.

"We wouldn't need much overhead to make it work, and then this idea somehow grew."

Have you done any other of these kind of impromptu, spur of the moment happenings?

ÁP: Kind of. It made the idea of doing it a little bit easier. If that show was possible in under twenty-four hours, then my side of it would be possible with two weeks preparation. I could manage it from my side.

I don't like the idea that everything has to cost money. I don't like the idea that something nice like this has to make money for someone.

ÁS: But we still need one and a half million to release it! [Both laugh.]

ÁP: That was not my idea!

ÁS: I'll go to the bank tomorrow.

ÁP: But the idea of doing something like this doesn't necessarily have to involve any money. Like the concert at Karamba... well, actually that wound up making Karamba some money.

ÁS: There's always money involved.

ÁP: But the people did it because they knew it would be fun and people would come and listen to their music, and it would be a great party.

ÁS: He's a hippie, and I'm a Satanist. So we weigh each other out like this. [Árni Plúseinn nods in comical agreement.]

Do you think Iceland is just too small a place to have that kind of system of managers and booking agents and everything?

ÁP: It would be weird if I would meet someone here who wanted to book a concert in the next hour, and I can't say anything because I have to contact someone who is two houses away. I could just say yes or no. It's not that big of a production to do things here.

ÁS: Also in the film business. You can basically walk around in Reykjavík, filming everything without a permit. This would never fly in any other city. I know that. I was shooting for a German TV station the other day with some Germans and they thought this was amazing. This of course is amazing, and it can be really positive. But it also creates an environment with maybe a lack of professionalism in other senses. Like paying the bills, maybe? There are a lot of people here in Iceland that struggle with being socio-

paths. It is kind of common here in Iceland where people go and do some stuff, and they have people working for them, and they don't pay them. They don't feel bad about it. They just keep on truckin' and just jump to the next group and just stop talking to the people they don't pay.

ÁP: And this might be a problem because there are no middlemen who are just there to collect the money, in any way necessary [jokes about thumb-breaking ensue].

ÁS: You would of course be on much

Borko

Björn Kristjánsson, the one-man brains and bones of Borko, is an enigma who keeps his back-story under lock and key. He plays quirky little ditties with a variety of musicians helping him out live. He released his latest album, Celebrating Life, in March 2008.

www.myspace.com/borkoborko

Hjaltalín

Hjaltalín began gaining local attention in 2006, and their career was greatly boosted in 2008 as their reinterpretation of Páll Óskar's 'Þú komst við hjartað í mér' became a huge hit. Their first full-length garnered international success, and they recently released their second album, Terminal, soon to be available throughout Europe.

www.myspace.com/hjaltalinband

Reykjavík!

Reykjavík was formed in the mid-noughties by a group of philosophy students, booksellers and longshoremen from Ísafjörður and their singer friend from Reyðarfjörður. The group has released two albums and is currently working on new material. Be on the lookout for cool Reykjavík! stuff in the not too distant future.

www.reykjaviktheband.com

múm

Since founding in 1998, múm have cemented their reputation as one of the island's most influential Icelandic bands, both locally and abroad. They have recorded six full-length albums, their last one, Sing Along to Songs You Don't Know, was released last summer. They tour constantly, and are consistently awesome.

www.mum.is/

Retro Stefson

This group of Reykjavík youngsters came together in 2006, when their frontman Unnsteinn Manúel was encouraged by Árni of FM Belfast and Bóas of Reykjavík! (who worked in the kids' community centre) to publish song he wrote. Unnsteinn gathered his best friends together to perform the track, and the rest is history. Their debut album, Montaña, was released in 2008, and their frequent live shows usually turn into massive dance parties.

www.facebook.com/retrostefson

FM Belfast

Started by a couple making an Xmas present song for their friends in 2005, FM Belfast slowly gained recognition as being one of the most notable electro-pop outfits in the 101 music scene. They released their first full-length album, How To Make Friends, in October of 2008, and are currently working on the follow up in-between treks of touring Europe.

<http://www.fmbelfast.com/>

stronger ground with a contract, because there would be something written maybe. This method of doing things involves a lot of trust.

ÁP: There's no legal document about your job that you did for maybe two or three months. This is the problem with how it's all loose. But I'd rather live with this than everything being stiff and it being almost impossible to have concerts.

"Are you done?"

If that were the case here, would your film have been a lot more difficult to produce?

ÁP: I don't think we would have done it. I just think the idea would have been too difficult.

ÁS: Maybe it would have been a foreign idea to us to begin with if we were in that kind of environment. Maybe it would have never occurred to us.

So is the movie a product of the environment of the artistic community here?

ÁP: It's the ideas of all these people that were involved in the movie. Haukur [Magnússon, of Reykjavík! and the Grapevine's editor] pointed it out in the movie, which was kind of cool.

ÁS: Everything we are talking about is in the movie. You'll see. Stop reading now and go see the movie! ☺

Music | Live Review



A Good, Long Nap

Ólafur Arnalds Album Release Concert
Icelandic Opera, May 27th 2010

The Icelandic Opera is a strange little room. It's a stripped-down, baroque-style hall with creaky seats and clattering doors. Every tiny sound—from the worst coughing fit to someone folding their concert ticket into origami—is as naturally amplified as the five musicians sitting onstage. Doing their best to set a serene atmosphere. The gentle sounds of Ólafur Arnalds' piano and his string quartet are mostly overshadowed by every movement of every person in the hall.

As for Ólafur himself, he looks rather tired. He seems somewhat apprehensive and appears to be approaching the songs with an air of trepidation. As he greets the audience, thanking them and making humorous banter, he retains an air of constraint and shyness. His string players as well, while performing with demure gracefulness, seem to be feeling some leftover exhaustion from the two-week album launch tour they have just returned from. They all look like they could use a good long nap.

“As for Ólafur himself, he looks rather tired. He seems somewhat apprehensive and appears to be approaching the songs with an air of trepidation.”

Nevertheless, the music itself does sound lovely. The songs from the new album ‘... and they have escaped the weight of darkness’ flow beautifully together, weaving from one to the other seamlessly. The only dividing indicators are the crafty use of spotlighting on each musician as they join the melody. The lighting is also a strong manipulator to the listener's senses, leading one between various moods and emotional states as they listen to the music being played. Along with the very subtle set decoration of two giant bird mobiles hovering over the musicians, it is easy to find oneself staring off into the beams of light and forgetting the band entirely. ♡

REBECCA LOUDER
HÖSKULDUR HÖSKULDSSON

Music | Interview



Reykjavík Needs Henrik Björnsson And His Music

And so do the rest of y'all

Singapore Sling are one of the finer constants of Icelandic music. Throughout the last decade, the band has consistently released stunning music and played jaw-dropping, death-affirming shows while maintaining a pure and icy cool exterior of the sort that's been inspiring young kids to start rock bands since way before those were even invented. Icelandic music owes a large debt to Sling, their leader Henrik Björnsson and his patented brand of nihilistic deathgaze—without them the last decade (and our current scene) would be a lot different. And it would suck a lot harder.

You maybe won't know this if you've just arrived in Iceland. In fact, these days Iceland is sorely missing some Singapore Sling in it, some Henrik in it. Oh, we've got our Seabears and our FM Belfasts and our Diktas and whatnot, they are all fine and unique bands that enrich our community. But none of them are Singapore Sling. None of them have that unique Slingness, the one that can make you feel at once invincible, invisible and tall as a mountain. All due respect, no other local band is as stubborn, uncompromising and full of righteous attitude as the Sling.

Nothing was heard from the Singapore Sling camp for a long while, and we started getting all sad and wistful. Imagine our surprise, then, when out of the blue, Henrik pops up at the Grapevine offices early last December, bearing two CDs packed with new, excellent music. One of them featured a project he made with his spouse, Elsa María Blöndal, called Go-Go Darkness. The other one was the long-awaited Hank & Tank long-player, an album that has been eagerly anticipated for

the last seven years or so.

Both albums kick ass, and you should get them. Since Henrik was at our office, we used the opportunity to ask him a few questions about what's going on with him and within the Singapore Sling camp. The below is a transcript of our conversation, which happened six months ago.

You have been noticeably absent from the Reykjavík music scene as of late. What gives?

Last September I had a serious accident. After the hospital I spent a long time in rehabilitation. It's been a long and anti-social road to recovery since.

Then you out of the blue popped up with two decidedly awesome releases to your name, Go-Go Darkness and Hank & Tank. Again: What gives?

The Go-Go Darkness was ready last summer. We were going to release it in the fall, but we obviously had to wait a bit. Hank & Tank was recorded years ago but mixed and mastered last summer. Both these records were ready, and having them manufactured didn't take much effort.

Tell us about Hank & Tank... we hear it's been a loooooong time in the making...

Well, it was mostly written before the first Singapore Sling record was released, and recorded shortly before the second one (as I recall), so I guess it was recorded in 2004. One of them strange years. Tank left Singapore Sling and we didn't communicate for some time. Of course we wanted to put these songs out, so after an-

other long time of wondering how and where to mix the record and how to release it, we decided to do everything ourselves. For some reason we did this last year.

Now tell us about Go-Go Darkness. This is a collaboration with your spouse, right? It's a lot less sonically removed from Singapore Sling than H&T are—why the side-project? Wouldn't these have been perfectly good Sling songs?

No they wouldn't. This is my and Elsa's project and never meant to be anything else. I have used drum machine and organ in Singapore Sling, as well as Elsa's voice, but not in this measure... if there's other sonic similarities between The Go-Go Darkness and Singapore Sling I guess it's because both are very close to my heart and soul, and I am the producer. Also I am a person who makes music and I like doing different projects. I don't consider them side-projects, just projects. Dead Skeletons is yet another one...

How is collaborating with your spouse working out for you?

It's been mostly Heaven.

The creative arguments must be that much more weighty...

There are no creative arguments.

You have been a fixture of the Reykjavík music scene for a long time. Would you care to reflect on how it has changed or evolved since you first started making your voice and jagged guitar heard? Are any of these changes positive or negative in your opinion, and if so, how so?

Hell I don't know... I don't pay much attention. But it seems like there's always some crap that people just love to swallow. But that's universal. The majority is awful, the minority is great. The same as it was in the beginning of the millennium. The same as it's always been.

What are some of your favourite local acts operating at this point, and why?

Kid Twist are my absolute favourite band. They have an awesome noisy surfy sound. They don't belong to any scene. I also enjoyed the one show I saw with Skelkur í Bringu. I like seeing and hearing new bands who are in their own world doing their own thing. Then there's all-time favourites like Evil Madness and The Bang Gang...

What is missing from Reykjavík music, if anything?

Reykjavík music is a little busy being Reykjavík music. Either it wants to be very serious or it wants to be a joke. It needs more guts maybe... more rock'n'roll.

Looking back upon your entire career—which is full of accomplishments, great albums and excellent concerts—do you have any regrets? Anything you wish you would have done differently?

Well, yes, of course there are things. Like awful contracts. Well... mainly that. I am happy with all the records. And a lot of the gigs have been great.

Why are all of your songs so sad and/or detached?

Most things I do not care about, but the things I care about tend to make me sad. But sadness is very important and underrated. Beauty doesn't exist without sadness. As for detached... The world can be such a horrible FM place and can really get me down, so I like to detach myself from it every chance I get.

A word of advice?

Don't trust white people. ♡

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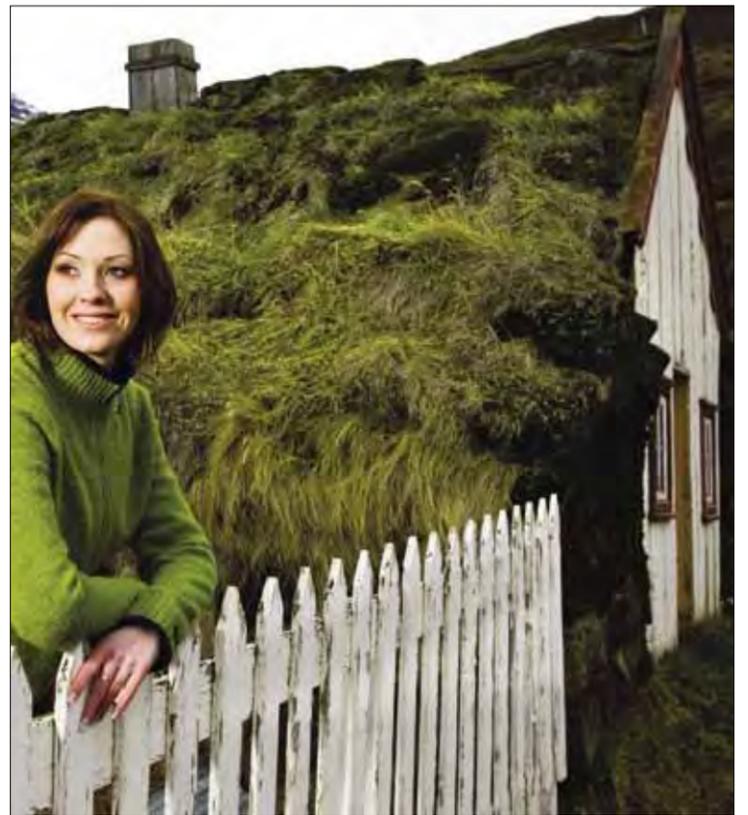
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Shopping | Second-hand

Red Cross Revolution

Second-hand clothing shops reinvent Reykjavík style



"I can go crazy over an old coat," laughs Helga Pálsdóttir. "If they fit and they're of a nice fabric, I can go nuts," she says, then pauses. "I will go nuts!"

At Red Cross stores, where Helga works, going nuts for clothes pretty much comes with the territory. "It's a little bit of this and that," says Helga. The charity organisation's four shops in Reykjavík are a dangerously addictive intermittent reward system—you never know when you'll make your next thrilling find, so you're compelled to keep searching.

TOP QUALITY TRASH

The Red Cross is bursting at the seams with Iceland's best quality refuse. Siguringi Sigurjónsson dropped by after work and put together a dapper golf outfit. Inexpensive, yet classic, is what Siguringi was looking for, and he found it in spades.

Helga attributes the Red Cross stores abundance of good quality clothing to Iceland's former buying power. "This has been a very affluent society for many years, despite the banks' collapse," Helga says. Even if designer labels are your thing, Red Cross has something for you—Helga name-drops the labels Versace, Armani, and Dolce & Gabbana.

CLOTHING GEOLOGY

A great thing about wearing used garments—designer and otherwise—is that you probably won't run into your style doppelgänger on the street (unless you're some sort of 'hipster'), because your clothes have already been through the used clothing cycle.

Can we uncover past Icelandic trends by looking at the strata of goods deposited over time in Red Cross stores, just like geologists look at the strata of ash in soil to determine when a volcano has been active? Most clothing on Red Cross racks, for example, was made somewhere else, often Norway or the UK. Within the past few decades, at least, Iceland has relied substantially on imported clothes.

A welcome exception to that rule is the bountiful knitwear on offer: cheap socks, caps, gloves and, of course, the Icelandic pattern sweater. Helga says the Red Cross corrals its sweater population into the small store at Laugavegur 12, because the sweaters are popular with tourists who frequent the shop.

Many visitors to Iceland are unimpressed about buying second-hand. "You see a lot of foreign people coming in here, people that are more used to this where they come from. They're not shy," Helga says.

Icelanders, on the other hand, can be a little more cagey about sporting used attire. "This type of second-hand store is not something we are brought up with," Helga says. "This is new for us. People aren't really used to second-hand," Helga says.

Indeed, it seems second-hand clothes are a relatively new thing for Icelanders. The Red Cross's first shop, the small space at Laugavegur 12, has only been around for ten years, and the Hlemmur location at Laugavegur 116 has only been around for two.

Anna María Ingvaldur Larsen, a young mother shopping with her daughter at the Red Cross, agrees. "Some people think it's weird," she says of buying there. "They think it's just for poor people." She remembers when she was new to Red Cross shopping, not long ago. "I thought it was just crap here, but it's not."

BOHEMIAN REVOLUTION

Siguringi finds that feelings toward second-hand clothing vary depending on where you're from. People who live around downtown Reykjavík "are more citizens of the world," he says, "but if you go outside of this area, you might run into people who don't do this kind of shopping."

"They're quaint," Helga says of a certain species of Red-Cross-shopping downtowners. To stereotype for a moment, these people "prefer to walk. They may have a more healthy lifestyle," and they're "arty," environmentally conscious people. Not such a bad reputation to have.

But the second-hand trend seems to be catching on more broadly. Red Cross's revenues have been increasing steadily, Helga says. The people of Reykjavík are gaining respect for old things, especially after the economic crash. Fittingly, the newest Red Cross store in Reykjavík is based in an old Kaupthing bank building.

A PENNY SAVED IS A PENNY EARNED

The money the Red Cross earns goes to causes around the world. Helga tells me that four Reykjavík Red Cross stores, alone, provide aid to 6,000 orphans in Malawi, many of whose parents have died of AIDS.

The charity also helps local people. The clothes that aren't bought up go into the back room, where every Wednesday between 10:00 and 14:00 people can pick up two full bags for free.

"Not only are you doing a good deed, because you know the money is going to be spent on some well-worth-it cause, but you're also preventing this huge consumption. This is like recycling. We're preserving energy, which should be so Icelandic," says Helga.

Right now, Helga is helping give the Red Cross a bit of a makeover. "We want to look more like a regular shop," she says—a regular shop that just happens to get amazing, good quality clothes in all the time, and sells them really cheap. "We're just hoping that by fixing the place up we'll get more people to come in and buy." ☘



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Weirdin' Up Iceland

Words

Rebecca Louder and
Haukur S. Magnússon

Photography

Julia Staples

Feeling that the Icelandic electronic scene was not all it should be, Tanya Pollock and Sigurbjörn Þorgrímsson fired up the Weirdcore collective two years ago. Rounding up a bunch of artists who previously had less exposure and opportunities to play live—folks such as Yagya, Biogen, Futuregrapher and Tonik—they began throwing monthly events to showcase a different side of the local talent. They also release yearly compilations that folks can download for free and are working on releasing some of their acts internationally. The Grapevine had a chat with Tanya about her exciting collective and what they are up to.

“For us weird means interesting. Core means a melting pot of all genres of electronic music and its surrounding culture.”



What is Weirdcore?

A couple of years back we felt that the Icelandic electronic music scene was lacking. There was a low point in both concerts and album releases. It lacked a centralised entity to hold it together. That's why we started doing the concert series, focusing on various types of electronica. Everything from ambient to hardcore; basically all the artists we liked and wanted to promote.

Our goal was to make this scene more active, approachable and provide it with a live venue with a good sound system. In the future we hope to gain international recognition for our little scene and the fantastic music it produces.

What are some of the people associated with Weirdcore? What makes a band or artist eligible for Weirdcore status?

Sigurbjörn and I handle most of the organisation, Tomio Newmilk, of Quadruplos, handles most of the artwork and then there are the artists that share our passion for the scene that have worked with us on getting this off the ground, such as Marlon Pollock, Futuregrapher, DJ Vector and all the artists. To be eligible to play a Weirdcore night you have to have an interesting electronic sound

That dude on the photo with Tanya Pollock is none other than fabled electronic artist Biogen. Check out his music ASAP.

and be able to perform that live. That's pretty much it.

What's with the name? Is it meant to scare away outsiders? "Weird" music doesn't usually have a broad appeal.

For us weird means interesting. Core means a melting pot of all genres of electronic music and its surrounding culture. We hope that our efforts will eventually result in a broader appeal.

What's your stance on the state of electronic music in Iceland?

In our opinion the state of the scene has never been better. There seem to be more people making music and the growing interest fuels further creation and better parties. There are a lot of young producers coming out of the woodwork with new and interesting styles. Artists check out each other's shows and gain inspiration amongst themselves. We see that as developing an "Icelandic electronic sound" which we hope to market extensively internationally.

There seems to be a big audience, at least according to all the kids that buy tickets to see

foreign DJs at Broadway and stuff. Has Iceland's community of electro-artists not been able to reach these people (with the possible exception of GusGus)?

Most of the artists we are working with are still working on establishing their name, although some have considerable fame in their respective genres, for instance Ruxpin and Yagya. ATG's dubstep/breakbeat nights have sold out at NASA, playing music very similar to our own. So there seems to be a lot of potential for this brand of music in the foreseeable future. We are still working on gaining mainstream appeal, but the potential is definitely there.

Are the artists making music that's more experimental or weird?

From a mainstream perspective, perhaps, yes. But a lot of it is very sophisticated, cutting edge and danceable. So if people don't jump on the bandwagon now, in five years they will.

What are some things you have planned for 2010, the weird-year?

More concerts, more club nights, more web activity. We plan to release albums by Futuregrapher, Anonymous, Biogen and more. We are also working on setting up our shows internationally.

Who is the weirdest weirdcore-er? How about the normalest one?

The normalest one is probably Yagya, because he works in a bank, but he's still weird. As for the weirdest one, we're still looking.

The state of Icelandic electro now vs. ten years ago? Or twenty?

Now that we have the internet, self-promotion is more accessible for artists and finding new music is a lot easier. For the electronic musician, playing live is easier since the advent of powerful laptops and other music gear. Also, people are much more receptive to electronic music now than they were some time ago. Everyone has had nights out listening to techno and other kinds of electronic music. 🍷

Art | Craft



Melting Iceland Since 2005



To celebrate the five-year anniversary of me up and moving my ceramics workshop to Iceland from Ireland, I am curating a retrospective of some of my favourite pieces. The mission of my work is to explore aesthetic properties latent within natural materials readily available from the world around me, and to transform these materials into useful totems of everyday life: invariably, tea bowls. I love tea!

For example: volcanic ash from various eruptions (Veiðivatn 1477, Hekla 1875, Eyjafjallajökull 2010!) can be excavated and then melted in the ceramic kiln at very high temperatures to create a beautiful glaze on the pottery (a glaze is not like paint: it's more like creating glass via a kind of alchemy). In fact, ash from all kinds of incinerated stuff: cigarettes, banana skins—even corpses—can reveal amazing results at various tempera-

tures! I shall be exhibiting a wide variety of these experiments at the show.

I come from a background of Critical Theory and Architecture but many years ago—dismayed and frustrated by the bureaucracy and the bullshit—I chucked all that over my shoulder and headed off in pursuit of something unmediated and authentic: something REAL. Around this time, an archaeological dig was taking place near my home, so I got down on my knees and asked for an opportunity to dig. The work was hard, but led to an epiphany, which changed the course of my life. Finding a shard of local prehistoric pottery in my neighbourhood revitalised my understanding of everyday life and the Earth on which it happens.

It's a shame that "craft" or "Hönnun" is generally dismissed as being necessarily of less value than more conceptual artwork. I reckon it is precisely because of their position of origin and usability within everyday life that so called 'traditional crafts' are disqualified from the sphere of modern art and therefore considered less meaningful. Personally, I couldn't give a toss about the modernism debate anymore, but this status coupled with the reality of insanely inexpensive imports of cheap-ass mass-produced stuff means that those of us in the local craft business can barely give our stuff away for free, let alone make a living maintaining what are often vital, indigenous industries, i.e. not just for the tourists.

It seems that for a variety of reasons, in the circumstances in which we find ourselves via globalization, technology and advertising, people are rather confused or, dare I say, misled about the valuation of "The Object" as it occurs in many facets of daily life.

The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction

I have never liked using moulds to reproduce my bowls. I find both the process and results to be

monotonous uninspired and sterile. However I constantly find my work unfavourably compared to the "perfection" of mass produced stuff of the big household stores. As if I should hide any trace of the human hand from my work. On the contrary: I accentuate it. The moulding technique was originally developed as a means of copying and reproducing the works of the artist. Now, apparently, the "craft artist" must copy the uniformity and homogeneity of the machine in order to be considered good.

Is the photocopy of a person's signature to be considered more accurate/authentic than another signature by that person? Why should the quality of the work of a realist painter be judged according to "how much it looks like a photograph"? In short, a humanist reality is surpassed by a mechanical reality. This is plain fucked up.

I hope the reader will not consider this to be a self-indulgent rant about the under appreciation of one man's awesome skills, but rather a highlighting of the evolving crisis of indigenous vernacular skills unfolding right now, right across the board. (Sigh.) Anyway, as someone once said "you don't find the passions that you seek, but other ones will find you". I'm sticking with mud and I'll be enjoying this journey, this upward spiral, wobbles and all, till I return to the earth from whence I came.

Fuck you IKEA. 🍷

Show opens Saturday, June 5 at 17:00. It runs for a week in a basement space beneath Einar Ben Restaurant, Ingolfstorg, 101 Reykjavík.

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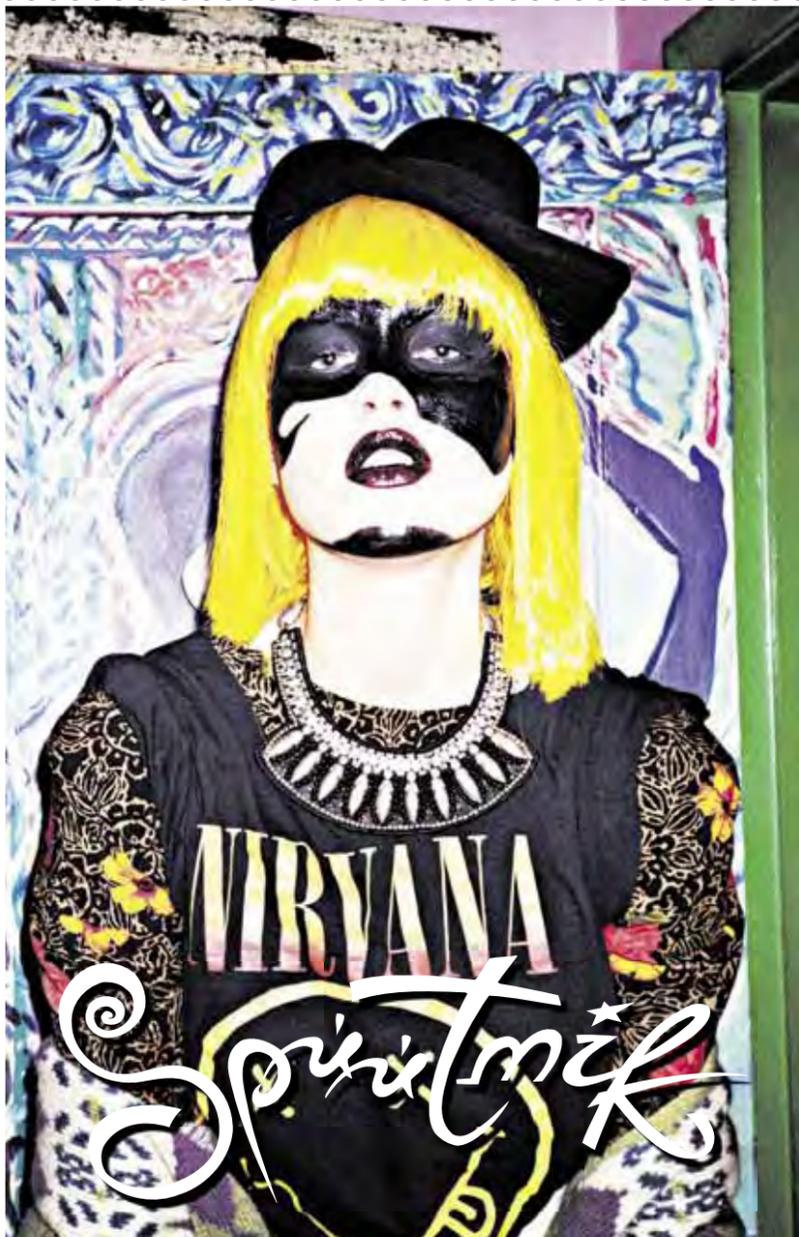


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Literature | Short story

God Returns To Iceland pt. 3



Four Spirits

The Lord thought of Pompeii, and wondered why he had let it go at that. In no longer a time than it took to imagine it, he was transported to Italy. He walked around in the shadow of Vesuvius, among the ruins of the ancient city. Its inhabitants were long gone, but their thoughts could still be heard, scribbled here and there among the remnants of their world.

“Profit is happiness,” read an inscription on one of the water fountains. “Welcome to profit” read another on a marble floor not far from the famous brothels which he too had sometimes visited in earthly form when he tired of holy virgins. He had felt young and vigorous then, full of hope for the future, for the destiny of man who still had so much to learn. The future had come. Nothing had been learnt.

In old Pompeii, every house had a statue dedicated to Mercury, the god of commerce and lies. He had preserved many of the statues, just as he had preserved much of the once glittering city. He had wanted to prove this was not wanton destruction, that there was some point to it all.

When he watched the city under the burning blanket, he decided to keep it as a reminder. He had let it rain, the cold drizzle beating on the hot ashes rendering everything within encased and eternal. Surely, the complete destruction of a city renowned for its

greed could only be taken as divine intervention by a vengeful god. There was a moral here to be learnt. It was not learnt.

Vesuvius became Katla, the Lord as he was constrained by time, not space. He looked down on that ridiculous little cluster of houses that the inhabitants called a capital city. How so few had managed to cause so much grief was out of all proportion. Like all good sculptors, God was greatly concerned with proportion.

With no more effort than the clapping of hands, the land would be restored to its natural spirits. Its dams and high rises would remain for a while as testament to human folly, before disappearing into dust as everything must. Perhaps, he thought to himself, it was time to do the same to all mankind. It was, after all, unfair to blame all the world’s problems on the Icelanders. He should open up the earth and let the fires engulf every living thing, once he was at it.

Before the Lord could put his hands together and cleanse the world of mortal stupidity, he saw four beings approaching. This surprised him. He had heard demented prophets warn of four horsemen at the end of days, but he had never really taken them seriously. God was more of a chaos theorist when it came to outlook. Any event could unfold in a million different ways, all in

turn spawning a myriad of possibilities. That’s what made mankind so interesting to observe. And yet, out of all these options, they almost always settled on the worst. They could create Paradise, but instead opted for Hell. Now he was in an Apocalyptic vein. And four riders were approaching. Perhaps he would prove the demented prophets right after all. But their elation would be short lived. When it came to the afterlife, they would be sorely disappointed.

The Lord was about to return to work when a thought struck him. If the prophets had been right about the End, had they not also been right about other aspects of existence? Such as in their fear of the Devil. And if he himself, the Destroyer of Worlds, represented the Good, he did not very much want to meet the Bad.

A shudder went through him as the creatures came into closer view. Then relief, as he saw that instead of a rider on a white horse, the first was a man bereft of equestrian assistance. Instead of a conquerors’ bow, he carried a simple walking stick. He wore no crown upon his head, only the simple garb the inhabitants once utilised and yet believed every man to be king. His stature was large, but his manner humble.

The second apparition had horns, it was true. This struck fear into the celestial heart, as horned creatures were generally to be avoided during an Apoc-

alypse. But this was no Man-Devil, no Daemon from the depths. No, this was simply a bull which, it had to be said, would have looked rather foolish without them.

The coming of the third creature was heralded by a piercing scream, which sent a shiver down the divine spine that God had not felt since he had first discovered the terrible loneliness of his existence. Again he was relieved, for the scream, though inhuman enough, belonged to an eagle and not the Anti-Christ.

It was the fourth being that did the most to unnerve the Almighty. The fourth had claws and breathed fire and the Lord, who was an avid reader of Dante and a great admirer of the Florentine imagination, began to believe in the truth behind fiction. His appearance here and now, through the flames of a volcano at the End of Days, made him even more ominous.

It was only when the Dragon began to speak that the image was shattered. This was not the Evil One come to claim the world as his throne. Rather, he seemed a timid creature, stuttering and coughing flames with every attempt he made to form a word.

The Lord soon realised that the creatures were more in awe of him than he was of them. It had been long since he had shown himself publicly; he had quite forgotten the effect he had on lesser beings who beheld him. He decided to play his advantage.

“What is it you want?” he said, in a stern voice that could bring entire nations to heel.

“We have come to plead clemency,” coughed the Dragon in a sickly voice.

“We come to Iceland’s aid in the hour of its need,” boomed the Giant in a tone that echoed throughout the mountains. “Be it the King of Norway or the Almighty itself, we will not let Iceland go down without a fight.”

A walking stick against the Word of God did little to encourage his companions, nor did it impress the Almighty. Eagle interjected in order to calm things down. “Perhaps we can make a wager,” it shrieked.

The Lord knew that Icelanders could not be trusted in a game of dice. They would only play tricks with the numbers. Nevertheless, the longer he stayed on the island, the more he had come to admire it. The shoreline here was coloured in darker hues than his beloved Amalfi Coast but it was, in its own way, just as spectacular. It was among his latest works, a mere 20 million years old, and proved that he still had it. He had written it off as a side project at the time, but perhaps it should be re-evaluated as a major piece, a spontaneous

flight of fancy that worked as well for what it was as the quirkiness of Australia or the endless depths of Brazil did in other parts?

Truly, if would be a pity if there was no one left but him to behold it. And yet, was its beauty not lost on a people who understood nothing but cold hard cash, a people without imagination? Was there anyone on the island at all who could appreciate beauty for its own sake? True beauty could only be appreciated through honest eyes, and this reminded him of a bet he had once made in circumstances similar to these.

“Show me 50 honest people, and I will spare the country,” he said to the foursome.

The four beings looked worryingly at one another.

“Very well then, 40?” offered the Lord.

Still, there was no reply.

“30?” God attempted. For one used to having everything as he wanted, haggling was not one of his strong sides.

“20,” he found himself saying.

Still nothing.

“Surely, you must be able to find me 10 honest Icelanders?”

“Perhaps we should just move to Norway,” said the Giant. “I’ve heard there is work to be had there for Guardian Spirits up in the North.”

As the four Guardians were about to leave, and the Lord was getting ready to resume his terrible work, a thought occurred to him. Some innocents still believed in the fairness of his intentions, and it now seemed unfair of him to kill everyone who had been led astray by a few. Should a country not be judged by the essence of its spirit as seen in the fruit of its greatest minds, rather than by the folly of its financial captains? If he could find something worth saving even here, then the same would surely apply everywhere.

He was not a God of Good or Evil—both were merely the consequences of the actions of men. He was the God of Creation, and it was according to men’s creations that they would be judged.

“Very well then,” the Lord said. Name me one single contribution that the Icelanders have made to mankind, and I will spare both them, and it.”

VALUR GUNNARSSON
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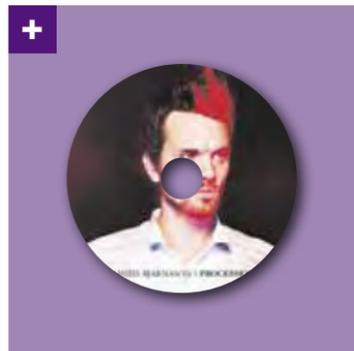
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Music | Album Reviews



Daniel Bjarnason

Processions

[danielbjarnason](#)

Classical Apocalypse anyone?

It would be nigh on impossible to describe the complexities of Daniel Bjarnason's debut album in 150 words, but suffice it to say it's pretty powerful stuff. Processions may be a classical composition, but there also seems to be some rock and electronica DNA running through its sinews. From the layered tracks and dubbing on Bow to String to the use of rock's quiet, Loud, quiet, LOUD! song structure that is prevalent throughout the album.

The manifesto of Processions is that of restless danger. The brutal cello attacks of the first section, Sorrow Conquers Happiness, evoke the impression of being chased by unknown creatures of the night (and alas being caught). Red-Handed, with its thundering rhythm and stabbing piano percussion, could easily portray the bloody climax of a horror movie, while Skelja surveys the aftermath of said climax.

That's not to say that this album is nasty and vicious. The quiet sections of the compositions are contemplative. But in going straight for the jugular, Danfel has shown more power and daring than what you expect to see from more popular genres of music.

✚ - BOB CLUNESS



Wormlust

Seven Paths

Download demo from www.wormlust.com

Get this demo and watch this space. Something enigmatically wicked is burrowing to the surface here

Everybody and their mother are talking about atmospheric black metal these days. Sure enough, there's a tidal wave of bands trying to get their piece of the pie, by throwing in some ambient keyboard noises and dragging their otherwise uneventful songs out.

WORMLUST is Hafsteinn Lyngdal's latest outburst within the realm of extreme music. It's also a project he seems to be most involved in and content with these days. And it shows on Seven Paths. Lyngdal effortlessly knits together a soundscape, a journey if you will, that has an engaging beginning, and a natural and fulfilling conclusion. Its haunting and atmospheric qualities jump at you at first and hook in you but repeated listens will reveal successful layering that makes this such a powerful piece.

Seven Paths is remarkably cohesive considering its progressive nature. Presenting it as one track connected by fluent transitions was a wise decision indeed. Sporadic it's not.

✚ - BIRKIR FJALAR VIDARSSON



The Flaming Banshees

Satan is a Farmer

[theflamingbanshees](#)

Much cooler influences than the other acoustic albums out there

A lot of the acoustic based releases making the rounds this year seem to be following the same tired 60s and 70s template of Neil Young/Nick Drake/Van Morrison..

At least The Flaming Banshees are trying a something different with their Satan is a Farmer EP, by ransacking 80s new wave and psych rock for its influences instead. Don't believe me? Then you'll understand when you listen to tracks such as 1000 Days of Sleep (Echo & the Bunnymen) Morning Makeup (REM) or If You Love Somebody (err... the Travelling Wilburys?).

The EP also puts a lot more effort into the production by adding transient sounds (songbirds, clinking bottles, and rattling keys) that help to flesh out the atmospherics, making it sound more sparkly and retro-fresh than a lot of other things.

✚ - BOB CLUNESS

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13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00
			14:00	14:00			
		17:00	17:00	17:00			

*10:00 and 14:00 departures from July 1st to August 10th

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Reykjavík Landnámssýningin
The Settlement Exhibition

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Experience Viking-Age Reykjavík at the new Settlement Exhibition. The focus of the exhibition is an excavated longhouse site which dates from the 10th century AD. It includes relics of human habitation from about 871, the oldest such site found in Iceland.

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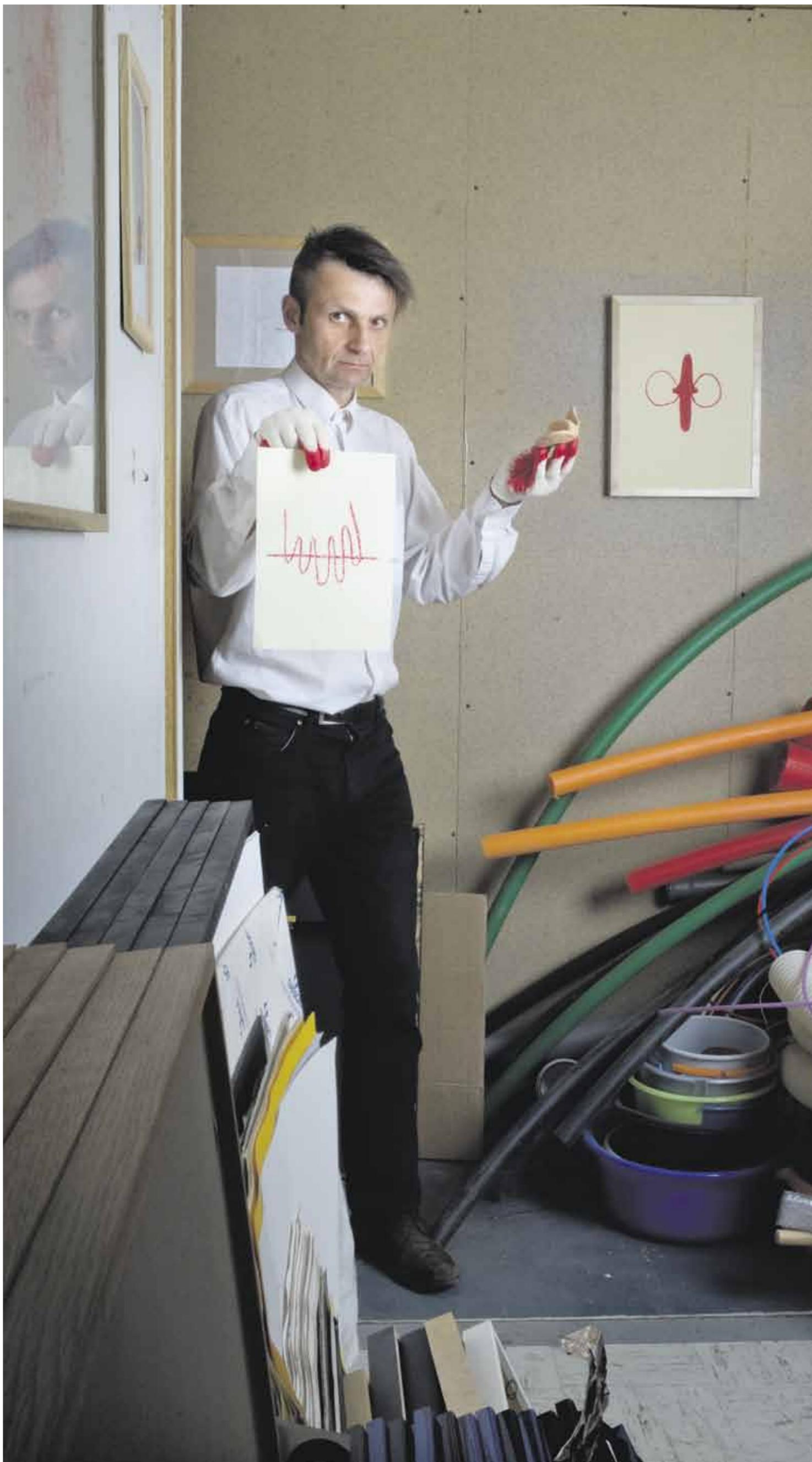
Haraldur Jónsson

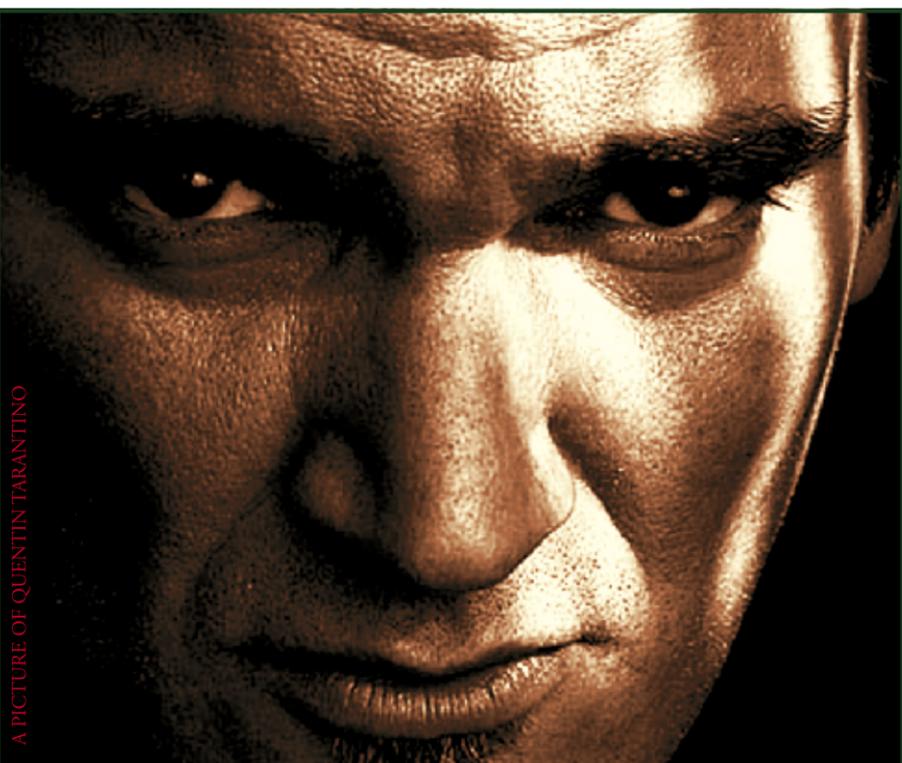
"I have been exploring the space between the senses," artist Haraldur Jónsson says when asked what his current work is focused on. He is without doubt one of Grapevine's favourite local artists; elusive, divisive, thoughtful and interrogative, Haraldur's body of work exemplifies a certain type of playful curiosity mixed with immense ambition and skill. He is one of what makes Reykjavík bearable.

As a favourite of ours, it was only natural we'd pay him a visit to kick off our series of articles wherein we depict local artists in their working environment, and get the skinny on what's going on with them.

Haraldur has just released a most excellent book of art. It is called TSOYL, which features "photographs of the subconscious" that he has been documenting over the last quarter century. "I am not documenting my own subconscious, specifically, rather the 'collective unconsciousness' – nonverbal moments that I spot from time to time."

You may purchase the book at the Útúrdúr bookstore, located in Havarí on Austurstræti. You can also view Haraldur's artwork on display in various places around town. The show 'Reality Check' features his piece, 'Surveillance,' on the corner of Mýrargata and Ægisdaga. 'Containers,' is featured at the show Vanitas, currently running at Reykjavík Art Museum – Hafnarhús. Lastly you may observe a piece entitled '37°C' at 'Alternative Eye' in Kjarvalsstaðir.





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Hörður Áskelsson
Hallgrímskirkja
Iceland

June 19 at 12 noon
Guðrún Birgisdóttir
flute
Iceland

June 26 at 12 noon
June 27 at 5 pm
Jessica Buzbee
trombone
Sweden

July 3 at 12 noon
July 4 at 5 pm
Christian Præstholm
Denmark



June 5 - August 15

July 10 at 12 noon
July 11 at 5 pm
Dame Gillian Weir
England

July 17 at 12 noon
July 18 at 5 pm
Winfried Böning
Cologne Cathedral
Germany

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Guðný Einarsdóttir
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Kristín Sigurjónsdóttir (violin)

July 29: Kári Allansson - Grindavíkurkirkja

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The Westman Islands—ashy but awesome



“This has been a very closed society for generations,” Heimaey’s Mayor Elliði Vignisson explained. “We have to be independent for everything. It makes a very strong identity.”

Three weeks ago on the Westman Islands there was one day when Eyjafjallajökull’s ash fell so thick that everything outdoors was covered. Everything. But the Grapevine arrived in Heimaey on a sunny morning that belied the long stretch of ash fall the town had braved until just a few days earlier.

We could still observe the evidence—black ash in neatly swept piles along the town’s roadsides, a man mowing up a cloud from his lawn, smudged sheep, but today there was a whole day of adventure ahead of us, and the sky was clear.

On a morning boat tour of the archipelago with Simmi Einarsson, of Viking Tours, we saw no sign of the ash that would blow over the town later, forcing us to postpone our flight home, and even go to the police station to pick up plastic goggles and

face masks.

Simmi sailed us out of the narrow mouth of the harbour past a boat digging out the new rock that had been deposited from the island’s eruption in 1973, out to the sea-carved cliffs of tuff and basalt that constitute the fifteen Westman Islands. Before lunch we had seen towering cliffs crowned with green grass and grazing sheep, and more birds than I’ve ever seen in my life—puffins, fulmars, kittiwakes, razorbills, and eider ducks. Oh, and a pod of four killer whales right beside the boat. “They know me,” Simmi said. No big deal.

SPRANGA

Later, Unnur Ólafsdóttir started our car tour of the island with a little spranga, the traditional cliff rappelling the islanders use to gather birds’ eggs from the cliffs. ‘Cliff rappelling’ makes the experience sound more gadgety than it is. There’s no harness and no helmet, just one old rope with knots tied in it to make it easier to hold on. We practiced low on a cliff face that local kids frequent. One islander, José, demonstrated spranga for us with the elegance of a dancer, floating from one perch to another with ease. Alas, the Grapevine was not so graceful.

Further along the island tour, Unnur had sto-

ries for every point of interest we passed: the site of the first settler in Heimaey, the windiest point in Iceland, a newly formed mountain and the homes it destroyed, the scene of a pirate invasion. Then the ash began to roll in from the mainland, blanketing the island.

Since the mainland volcano, Eyjafjallajökull, had officially stopped a few days earlier, we thought we were in the clear. We were wrong. But the people of Vestmannaeyjar seemed impervious. Masked and begoggled tweens ran past us as we trudged, perhaps a little dramatically, around town, holding our coats to our faces. Perhaps it’s because the town knows it can survive the worst, as it did with the 1973 eruption of Eldfell.

THE ELDFELL ERUPTION

That eruption was a blessing and a curse, Unnur told us. The lava and ash covered 400 homes and other buildings, most of which will never be recovered.

But it was also a boon to the community, increasing the Heimaey’s size by 2.2 square kilometres and shielding the town and its harbour from the elements. After the eruption, the warm lava was even used to heat the town, and the pebbly ash worked well as building foundation. One of the

airport runways is built over an old church and cemetery, filled in with ash, Unnur said. The tourism hasn’t been hurt, either, by the eruption story, the new mountain, Eldfell, and the excavation of covered homes, cheesily called the “Pompeii of the north”. You can still see remains of some of the houses that were crushed by the lava flow.

Heimaey’s deluxe swimming pool, a gift from Norway to replace the one the eruption destroyed, is one of the less obvious benefits of Eldfell. I am not exaggerating when I say that the pool’s slide where you coast down a steep drop onto a trampoline is the best slide I’ve ever been on. The swimming pool is open until nine at night, so it was a perfect way to relax and rinse the volcanic dust from our ears at the end of the day.

LOCAL CULTURE

After the requisite swim, evenings in the summer are a great time to get a beer and walk around town. When the sun sets, the young people come out and drive around, ash or no. There seems to be a strong youth culture in Heimaey. Several young people told us that the kids here start drinking in their teens, usually at friends’ houses. It’s unusual for a teen over 16 not to drink. At the same time, we got a sense that Heimaey is a close communi-

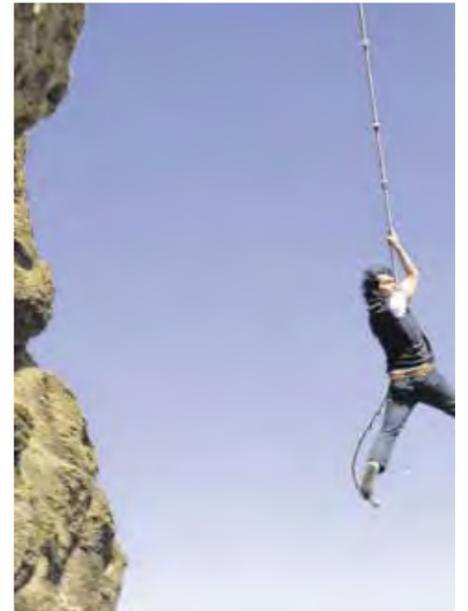
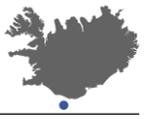


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“One islander, José, demonstrated spranga for us with the elegance of a dancer, floating from one perch to another with ease. Alas, the Grapevine was not so graceful.”

ty, and that people here look out for one another. The young people we spoke to were proud of their Vestmannaeyjar identity. Some leave the island for school and for a change, but many return.

Not just anyone is considered a local, however. You pretty much have to be born there. Maybe if you're a foreigner who's been there for 40 years you might be able to call yourself “from Heimaey,” one local told the Grapevine. “This has been a very closed society for generations,” Heimaey's Mayor Elliði Vignisson explained. “We have to be independent for everything. It makes a very strong identity.” But from a tourist's perspective, everyone is very friendly in Heimaey.

THE FISHING INDUSTRY

If you really want to get an understanding of what it's like to live in the Westman Islands, ask a local about the fishing industry. Fishing is Heimaey's

bread and butter, a fact you won't necessarily notice if you're on a two-day vacation there taking boat tours and climbing volcanoes. Nevertheless, it employs a large proportion of islanders and shapes attitudes and daily life in Heimaey, as it has for centuries.

You can check out the product of the industry in the flesh at the Museum of Natural History—lumpfish, plaice, and the hideous wolffish, to name a few of the usual suspects. Get the cod in “Champagnesauce” at Café María, then head over to the aquarium to visit your meal's more fortunate brethren. The museum is also crammed with beautiful rock and mineral specimens, and its taxidermy collection gave us a rare up-close encounter with local animals.

LAVA AND LUPINES

After we acquired the masks and goggles, we were ash invincible. Walking and hiking around Heimaey is like exploring a mini all-in-one Iceland: idyllic green hills dotted with sheep, black sand beaches and their striking flat volcanic rocks, lava fields, accessible paths to Helgafell and the newly erupted Eldfell with its sharp red scree. Much of the terrain around the town is lava, with paths winding through it and, when we were there, lu-

pine.

Getting around the island is easy on foot, by bus, or by hitchhiking. We Grapevine ladies wanted to head to the uninhabited south to the bird lookout point, a large wooden box balancing on the side of a cliff overlooking the sea. We were picked up within seconds of putting out a thumb at around 9:30 at night on a Wednesday. Since it takes moments to drive anywhere on the island, locals are often more than happy to go a little out of their way to help you get there.

Thanks to Air Iceland for the flights, Gistiheimilið Hvíld for accommodations, and Viking Tours for their wonderful bus and boat tours. 🇮🇸

✍️ STEPHANIE ORFORD
📷 JULIA STAPLES

Seven Miscellaneous Westmann Islands Tips

When you practice your ‘spranging’ on a cliff bordering the West side of the town, don't try to pull yourself up with your arms, just hang limp by them and move your legs to manoeuvre.

Stock up on your gummy candy and chocolate-covered liquorice at the corner store. You're going to need energy for all that leisurely strolling. We recommend the chocolate covered liquorice-and-marzipan nubbins.

Try hitchhiking. People are very friendly and happy to help you explore their island.

If you want to do something or talk to someone on the island, just ask.

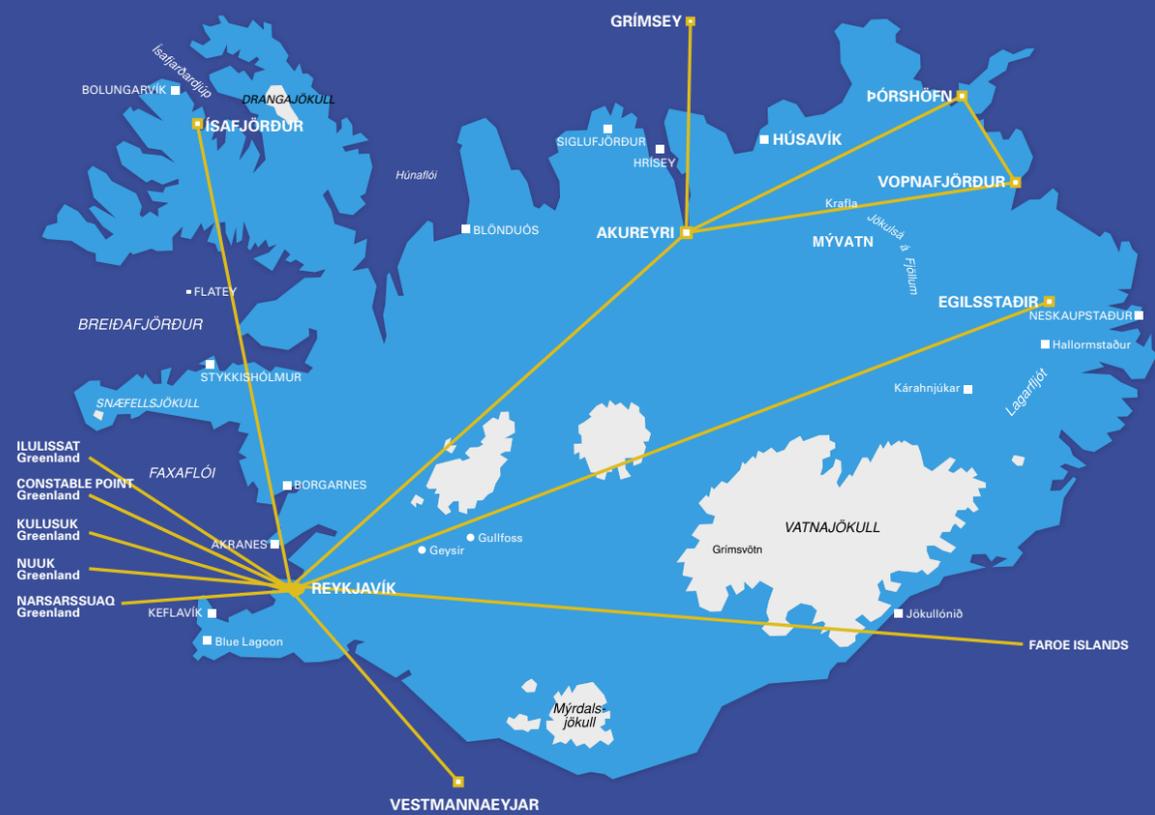
Check out the inexplicable ‘giant football’ monument at the west end of Hásteinsvegur. The people we asked could not tell us what it was for.

Volcano Café is the new bar in town. Beer and a burger ain't bad, and it's open late.

The big thing to do at the swimming pool, according to our observations and confirmed by our discussion with the mayor, is to try to stand up on the way down the trampoline slide.

www.airiceland.is

destinations.



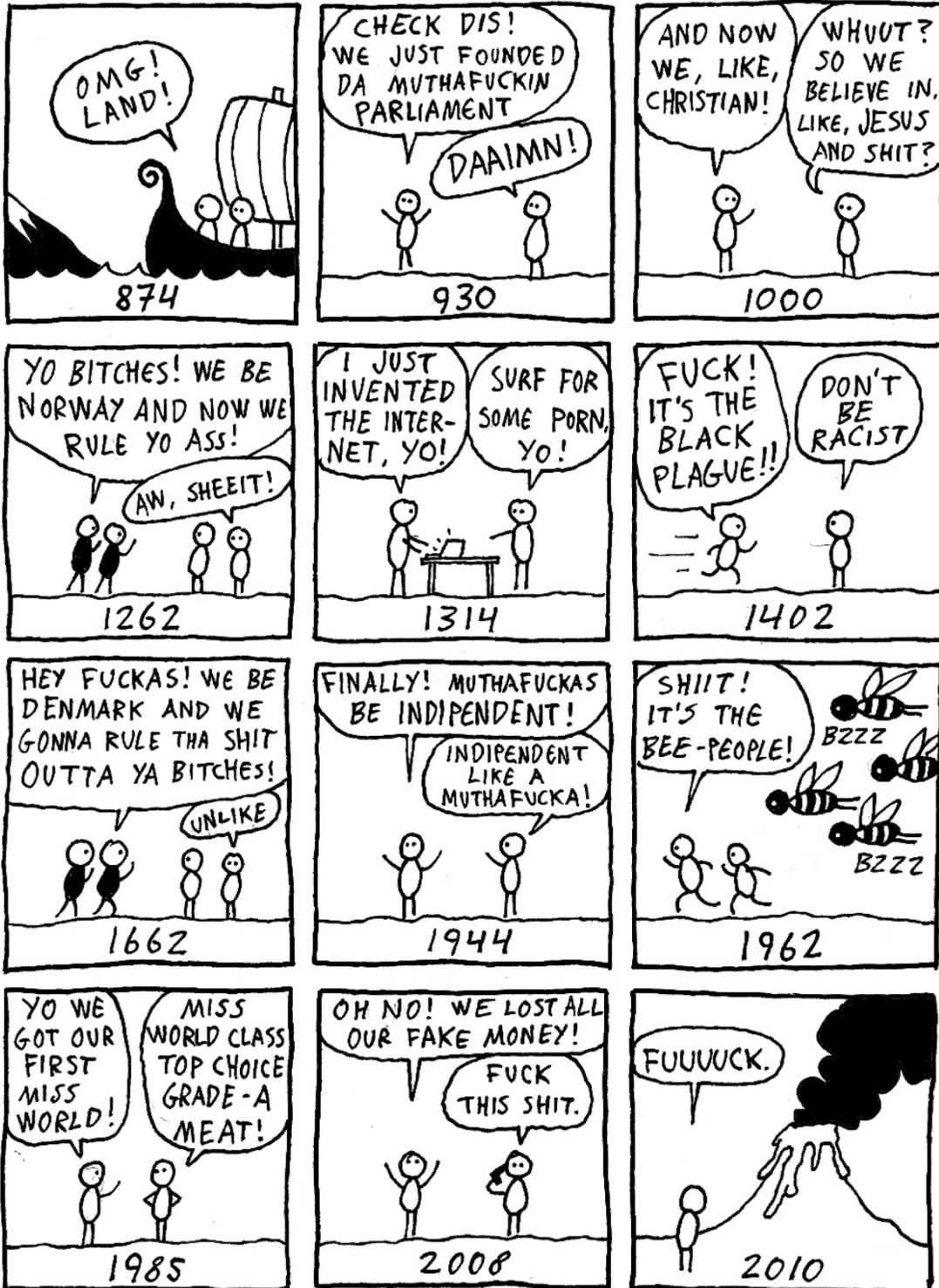
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Contact Air Iceland or travel agent for reservation.



HISTORY OF ICELAND.



Travel | Mývatn

On A Hill By A Lake In The North

Taking a trip to the Mývatn Nature Baths



Fair enough, the Blue Lagoon is about two minutes away from the city and the airport and it's much easier to get to for a quickie, but let's be honest: it's totally mainstream. Go there, but go other places, too.

If you're heading up to the North-East, for instance, there is quite a fine alternative to be experienced. Perched atop a colourful mountain ridge, the natural geothermal pool overlooks all of Lake Mývatn in all its glory. The modestly sized welcome centre is neatly designed, following the simplicity and modern elegance that most of Iceland's pools share. The main floor houses the changing rooms, massage centre, a small souvenir corner and a café. Upstairs there is a lovely dining space overlooking the area. The friendly one-man staff assists at both the café and admission desk. We forked over our 2000 ISK entrance fee and went to get our swim on.

After going through the small but tidy locker rooms, one has to face the elements for a few moments between the changing house and the man-made lagoon. It wasn't so bad, considering we went on a spectacularly sunny day. But with the lagoon being open year-round, going in January might require a mad-dash. The first thing one notices going into the Mývatn Nature Baths is the texture of the ground. It's covered in tiny, smooth pebbles that simultaneously massage and buffer your feet. Careful not to go overboard with the free pumice scrub or you'll end up with tiny cuts under your pinky toe that really suck. The other thing that stands out strongly is the colour of the water. While similar

in creepiness to the Blue Lagoon, the water here is a bluer, less milky hue that one can see clearly through. It still sort of feels like standing in alien guts or something.

The bathing experience itself is simply lovely. The water, which runs in directly from the National Power Company's bore hole in Bjarnarflag, is rich in minerals and silicates that are good for the skin. Its chemical composition permits it to remain chlorine-free and perfectly clean. The man-made lagoon itself is made up of several different smaller pools, interconnected with passageways and bridges. It's not huge, but it's quite a lot bigger than first meets the eye. Perhaps one of the nicest features of the lagoon is the rocks sporadically emerging from the water that are perfectly formed for seating. There are additional hot pots, a steam room and outdoor relaxation areas for one to enjoy on their visit.

After the swim, a light snack and drink can be had back at the Magma Café inside. My friend and I did not partake, but the soup smelled delicious. Local handmade products can be purchased as souvenirs, as well as trademark creams and body products from the Mývatn Nature Baths. Overall, it makes for a rejuvenating and delightful day in one of Iceland's most beautiful and geothermally active areas. ☺

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es, The Reykjavik Grapevine finally has a T-shirt all of its own. Pick up a copy of this sweet, limited edition item at **Havari** on Austurstræti or **Dogma** on Laugavegur - 101 Reykjavik. And do it now. For the children.



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Music | Rockabilly



Reykjavík Needs Rockabilly! ...and I am here to help

One thing that has always puzzled me about the music scene in Reykjavík is the unfortunate lack of rockabilly. I know there are a handful of crusaders carrying the rebel torch over here, but they alas only hold a small candle to the other Scandinavian countries and the rest of Europe. I believe this to be a great musical and cultural tragedy, especially considering all the great things this music and fashion scene has to offer the youth of today.

Rockabilly had humble beginnings in the south of the United States. Sam Phillips—who owned and operated Sun Records—was solely responsible for signing the likes of Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash and Roy Orbison to name a few. However, the real music was fairly short lived before it was commercialised into what became known as rock 'n roll. The wild, raw, crude and plain exciting rockabilly records that remain from that time are no different from the early punk rock of the UK. It's about feel and attitude, not perfection and production values. So since those early days of glory when Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran could be heard on the radio, it's never really gone away and is always resurfaced coming back stronger in fashion and culture.

Ducks arses on Teddy Boys

The Teddy Boys, as they were sometimes called, really emerged in the early 1950s in a post-war Great Britain. Teenage gangs were formed and could be seen hanging out on the streets and alleys of East London.

For the first time since WW2, the economy was revitalised, providing opportunities to the youth of the nation. They were now able to purchase clothes and records. Most of these youths were working class men, newly discharged from their draft in the army. Many of them were considered to be dropouts and troublemakers, not to be messed with.

Looking for an identity of their own, not wanting to be like their parents, they adopted a style they could call their own. It was a cross between Edwardian upper class gentlemen attire, circa 1901-1910, and that of the early Western steamboat gamblers from America. Their jackets were hand-tailored fit to measure four to six inches below fingertip length. They had velvet collars and cuffs and the lining was normally a bright red or other shocking colour. The trousers, often referred to as drainpipes, were tight fitting on the bottoms, accompanied with day glow socks. Other accessories included the slim Jim tie and bootlace tie, as well as the Chantilly lace tie wore by early American Gamblers.

The term 'Teddy Boy' actually came from a newspaper article published in The Daily Express on Sept 23rd 1953, where the word "Teddy" was used as an acronym for Edward. The funny thing is what was once worn by upper class gentlemen was now the uniform for razor-carrying, cosh-wielding East End menaces to society! The early Teds also had a super greasy hairstyle nicknamed 'the Quiff' or 'duck's ass.' It was also known as the 'Tony Curtis'. A metal comb was

always used for hair maintenance.

Plug plug plug my shop

So now I've filled you in on some of the historical background behind the music and how it relates to style and fashion. It's just a matter of time until you'll need this info, as these trends always go full circle and reappear.

I'm not expecting drape-clad youths wearing blue suede shoes hanging out in gangs on Laugarvegur though! Still, that would actually be kinda cool. I do, however, suspect some new styles showing up in the very near future.

You can sample the music on Reykjavík's one and only rockabilly show, on X-97.7 on Sunday afternoons. This show is conveniently sponsored by my shop, Wildcat, which aims to promote rock'n'roll culture and fashion. Wildcat also caters for men's and women's vintage hairstyles, just so you know.

Lastly, with the huge success of the whole fifties pin-up style, ala Dita Von Teese and Bernie Dexter promoting the whole Betty Page appeal in the US, it's only a matter of time before the trend reaches Icelandic shores! So get your poppin' shoes on, slick back that hair and join the rockabilly party. My motto has always been "No flairs! No Squares! No Hippies!"

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Literature | Analysis

Breaking Into The Mainstream

Literary Iceland

Outside of the Sagas and Nobel Prize winner Halldór Laxness there is little known about Icelandic literature in the English-language literary world. For example, few of you non-natives will be aware of Gunnar Gunnarson (1889-1975), an Icelander whose oeuvre spans over 40 works of fiction, poetry and non-fiction, who wrote predominantly in Danish and was thrice nominated for a Nobel Prize.

Although Iceland's two major publishers, Forlagið and Bjartur, boast a joint-list of close to 80 contemporary authors, only a smidgeon have made the breakthrough in the UK or US mainstream. And yet there are many superb works among the two publishers catalogues. Notable gems include Bragi Ólafsson's *The Pets*, Hallgrímur Helgason's *101 Reykjavík*, Sjón's *The Blue Fox*, Vigdís Grímsdóttir's *Z – A Love Story*, and Einar Kárason's *Devil's Island* trilogy. All of these authors are brilliant writers in their own right, and all are—or have been—published in English, yet they still aren't known nearly as widely as they should be.

SURFING THE CRIMEWAVE

I met with Sjón, winner of the 2005 Nordic Literature Prize for his novel *The Blue Fox*, to debate this very issue. "The first major breakthrough came when *Mál og Menning* [now part of Forlagið] managed to sell the rights to

Arnaldur Indriðason's crime novels," he said.

Riding on the wave of Scandinavian crime fiction alongside Henning Mankell and Stieg Larsson, Arnaldur's international sales figures now exceed 5 million. Great crime fiction this may be, but what about literary fiction? Where are the Ian McEwans, Paul Austers, and Margaret Atwoods of modern Icelandic literature? "It has come to the stage where writing a decent Icelandic crime novel can almost guarantee you a publishing deal in Germany," says Sjón. "All this exposure is great, but perhaps it has made the case more difficult for the literary novel."

A SORELY MISSED TRANSLATOR

In 2004, McSweeney's *Quarterly Concern* (a high-profile US literary journal) dedicated its 15th issue to contemporary Icelandic literature, featuring an excerpt of Einar Már Guðmundsson's excellent novel, *Angels Of The Universe*, translated by Bernard Scudder.

Bernard Scudder, an Englishman, but long-time resident of Reykjavík, translated countless works of Icelandic literature from full-length novels to poetry collections. Sjón notes that Scudder was one of the few translators who was quite comfortable in both fiction and poetry. American writer Jeff Sipeck said in 2007, shortly after Bernard's death: "Bernard Scudder

was one of the rare souls who helped share Icelandic literature with the English-speaking world, and yet his passing was hardly noticed—there was no mention in the *Icelandic Review* and not a single obituary in any English newspaper." Months later, in a post-humous blog, the *Guardian* finally did him a little justice, saying: "[Bernard's translations] sang in a rhythm mixing the original Icelandic language with a lyrical English style."

Scudder translated many of Iceland's award-winning writers into English, but possibly his greatest work was his five-volume compilation of Icelandic skaldic poetry, which was eventually published by Penguin. Scudder translated Guðbergur Bergsson, Einar Már Guðmundsson, Thor Vilhjálmsson and Þórarinn Eldjárn. More recently he had translated the works of best-selling crime authors Arnaldur Indriðason and Yrsa Sigurðardóttir. He is and will be sorely missed.

SOMETHING NEW MAY BE HAPPENING

"I don't necessarily think it's the translators that are the problem," Sjón postulates. "Mostly it's a problem of the rich offering in the English language, the grave difficulty in breaking into an established literary clique. Did you realise that translations only represent around 3% of the work on offer

in the English language? Traditionally those Icelandic authors that have made it onto the wider English language circles have had to take the long route: through Denmark, Norway and Sweden, then into Germany, perhaps Holland, Italy or France. English only comes at the very end. What we are really waiting for is for one of us to make the great literary breakthrough into the UK or US."

In 2007, Ólafur Jóhann Ólafsson's short story collection *Valentines* was released to critical acclaim. One of the stories in his collection won him a 2008 O'Henry Prize. Bragi Ólafsson's novel *The Pets* was highly praised in the American press, and his newest novel, *The Ambassador*, is anticipated from Open Letter Books any day now.

"I feel something new is happening," says Sjón. "My latest novel *The Twilight Of Marvels* is being released in the UK by Telegram Press, who also released *The Blue Fox*. Rights to Jón Kalman Stefánsson's novel *Heaven And Hell* recently sold to Quecus Press. Gyrðir Eliasson's short story collection *Stone Tree* was released by the emerging UK publisher Comma Press. We just have to keep working hard and getting our stuff out there."

✂ - MARC VINCENZ

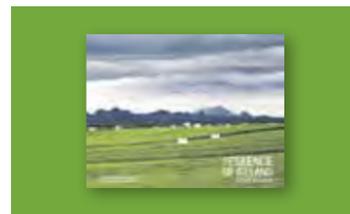
Books | Review

The Essence Of Iceland

Photos by Kristján Ingi Einarsson

Text by Ari Trausti Guðmundsson

Salka, 2009



There is certainly no lack for photographic coffee table books in the spectrum of Icelandic publications. Generally aimed at tourists and Icelandophile types, these books tend to show the usual suspects: majestic shots of glaciers, aurora borealis, Jökulsárlón and waterfalls. Although this book does show all these things and more—and even though Iceland is such an impressive country that making it look boring is damn near impossible—somehow *The Essence Of Iceland* doesn't really do justice to the land.

Part of the problem is the layout of the book. The images are laid out in a varying series of double-page, full-page and half-page spreads that drag the viewer's eye all over the place and easily lose focus. The sizes of the photos are also highly variable and often leave more white space on the page than photography. Having a more consistent form of presentation, and much less blank space on the page, would be more conducive to appreciating these images.

The images themselves, however, could be better. Kristján Ingi Einarsson is by no-means a bad photographer. If you have spent any time nerding it up on an Icelandic photo blog or Google Image, you have probably dropped your jaw at one of his fantastic landscape shots of fjords, mountains and shorelines. Maybe it's due to the overexposure, but very little is offered by way of new material. It feels rather repetitive and seen-it-already. Then again, maybe I only feel this way because I have seen it already. There is also something downright snapshot-like about several images, which reduces their overall impact.

What reduces the impact of the images the most though is the poetic text by Ari Trausti Guðmundsson. On nearly every page, accompanying each photo is a small blurb of rather trite, sentimental poetry. Some of it reads like an overly priced greeting card, while others sound like saccharine teenage prose. Posing cheesy rhetorical questions or stating overly simple wisdom—the kind used by stoners in their yearbook quotes—just doesn't add anything powerful to the photos or properly convey the way seeing these things for yourself could feel. In any case, whether in print or in person, it's best to let Iceland's images speak for themselves.

✂ - REBECCA LOUDER

Poetry | Eiríkur Örn Norðdahl

The Icelandic Poetry Community



A reader recently asked, by way of my editor, that I share a few words on the Icelandic poetry community. My first response was a long-winded, athletic "booooooring" while I rolled my eyes and pretended to gag.

For a while I was very outspoken in my criticism of Icelandic poetry. I found it self-centred, heavily established, living in isolation from foreign poetry (as well as younger poetry), over-emphasizing metaphor, homogenous, amazingly critical of variation (or fun) and having a snotty superiority complex justified that it justified with its so-called "modesty".

"The sheer power of my quietude will crush the world", the poets seemed to say, while reciting their poetry to nearly no one in a suburban library somewhere off the map. "That'll show'em!"

But eventually I more or less gave up on commenting on Icelandic poetry. It didn't seem to be doing anyone any good. They got mad (in their own quiet way) and I got madder (in my a little less quiet way) and we all would give each other the evil eye when passing on Laugavegur. I didn't learn, they didn't learn and almost everything remained the same. So I started focusing on things that did interest me rather than trying to play a draconian pedagogue to the Icelandic poetry community.

The fact is most Icelandic poetry doesn't interest me. But then most Danish poetry doesn't interest me either. What I've read of contemporary Arab poetry I find horribly sentimental. Most American poetry (that I've read) is emotional drivel. Come to think of it I like "scenes of poetries" much more than I like "nationalities

of poetries". I like language-inspired poetry—from Gertrude Stein and Kurt Schwitters to illuminated manuscripts, flarf, langpo, cut-ups, sound poetry, visual poetry, generative poetry. I like poetry that's simultaneously intelligent, amusing and athletic. And I like poetry communities that feel like communities and not sectarian dogmas—be it the dogma of one ruling class (as in Iceland) or the multiple dogmas in a dog-eat-dog world of a thousand genres (as in the USA).

Of course there's loads of interesting poetry happening in Iceland—though it doesn't surface much or generate interest with the bigger publishing houses who only publish poetry written by people who have already made a name for themselves, either as poets publishing with smaller publishing houses or as something else entirely.

Take Jón Örn Loðmfjörð, for instance, who's been writing poetry machines on the internet for some years now. He's publishing his first book in a few days—*Gengismunur*—a generated mash-up of the infamous nine volume *Report* (on the crisis/collapse). Or Ragnhildur Jóhannsdóttir, who recently published one of the most beautiful books of visual poetry to be published in Iceland, ever—called *Semse*. This year the *Nýhil International Poetry Festival* will be held for the sixth consecutive year. Anton Helgi Jónsson has started publishing again, after a lengthy break. Ísak Harðarson's last book was wonderful. And so on and so forth.

But none of this changes the fact that a good poem—let alone a good book of poems—is still an exception in Iceland. As it is in all the other countries of the world. ✂



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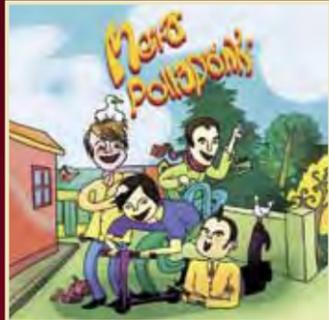
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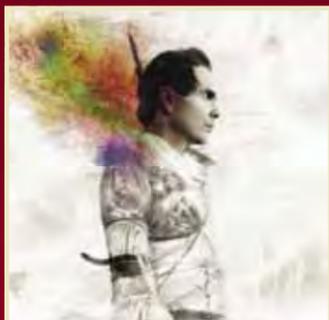
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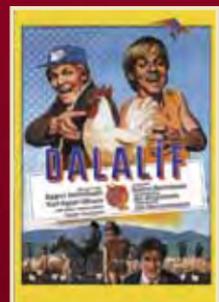
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PAGE 30

“This has been a very closed society for generations. We have to be independent for everything. It makes a very strong identity.”

Elliði Vignisson, mayor of Heimaey

PAGE 8

Every bit of human wisdom indicates that anger is to be avoided; it is indeed one of the seven deadly sins. Yet all of the sudden we find ourselves living in a society where anger is almost considered a virtue, where it commands a degree of respect, even.

Reykjavík's mayor-to-be doesn't really sound like a politician, huh?

PAGE 10

At a conference organized by the ministry of commerce in 1991 to discuss the idea, Gunnar Helgi Hálfðanarson, CEO of Landsbréf, the securities subsidiary of Landsbankinn, argued that while Iceland might not be able to become “the next Switzerland or Luxembourg,” there was no reason not to try.

HAHAHA! Iceland's dead dream of being an international business centre examined.

PAGE 6

“If we don't believe in ourselves, no one else will.”

Progressive chairman Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson attempts to cheer up his remaining supporters.

PAGE 20

“Reykjavík music is a little busy being Reykjavík music. Either it wants to be very serious or it wants to be a joke. It needs more guts maybe... more rock'n'roll.”

Henrik Björnsson of Singapore Sling, The Go-Go Darkness and Hank & Tank likes to rock

PAGE 34

“Traditionally those Icelandic authors that have made it onto the wider English language circles have had to take the long route: through Denmark, Norway and Sweden, then into Germany, perhaps Holland, Italy or France. English only comes at the very end. What we are really waiting for is for one of us to make the great literary breakthrough into the UK or US.”

Sjón, winner of the 2005 Nordic Literature Prize for his novel The Blue Fox

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