



The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE



Issue 12 × 2013

August 16 - 29

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SCHEDULE EXCERPTS INSIDE



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CRIME

Grapevine gets an illegal strip dance :-/

DANCE

Your fucking face off! It's a festival!

POLITICS

Invade Afghanistan (via feminist PsyOps)

FOOD

Enjoy Prins Póló's sausage

TRAVEL

Eyjafjallajökull done two ways

Hotel Reykjavík!

Is this what we want? And if not, why not?

A tension is building. Reykjavík's illustrious 101 arts scene is feeling pushed out by the forces of CAPITAL, cornered and marginalized by the wealthy, who want to "fill downtown Reykjavík with hotels" so they can "capitalize on TOURISM FRENZY," and city officials, who seem to be letting them "do whatever they feel like" in the name of progress/profit. But is this the case? What's the story here? Your Friends At The Grapevine investigate. **Page 24**



Complete Reykjavík Listings

Lots of cool events

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Editorial | Anna Andersen

COME SEE OUR NEW HOTELS!

Anna's 29th Editorial



Five thousand metres somewhere above Colorado, I was sitting on an Icelandair plane called Askja and it struck me that there was perhaps something strange about naming a fleet of airplanes after a bunch of volcanoes.

I probably would have chuckled had I been on the Eyjafjallajökull plane, but I wasn't on that one and I couldn't help thinking that it was somehow a bit gimmicky. I tried to imagine if The Volcanoes were some kind of Icelandic

sports team and how ridiculous their mascot would look running around and cheering, "Áfram Ísland!" But I digress.

Icelandair's decision was of course a deliberate one: "The names of Iceland's volcanoes have close ties with the country's heritage and history and inform foreign conceptions of it as the ever-volcanically active island in the North Atlantic," their website states. "The names reflect Icelandair's branding strategy to highlight what is distinctly Icelandic in an increasingly homogenised world."

The number of foreign tourists visiting every year now outnumber locals two to one and as this number continues to grow it's inevitable that our surroundings will change. The face of Reykjavík is certainly changing—not only temporarily each summer in the form of Gore-Tex clad visitors colouring our streets, but also more permanently as hotels and hostels move in to occupy places where cultural venues, for instance, once stood.

While this change is hard to swallow, it doesn't have to be a bad thing. There's nothing wrong with hotels per se. I'm probably not the only local who now spends a fair amount of time hanging out at newly opened hotels and hostels like Marína, KEX and Loft, but the key is that these places appeal to locals as much as they appeal to tourists.

How many people want to live in a city that caters exclusively to tourists? The answer is probably the same number of people who want to visit a city that caters exclusively to tourists. A city that appeals to the local population is a city that appeals to tourists, too.

As a tourism magazine, we write stories about places we imagine tourists might like to visit, foods they might like to eat, and culture they might like to experience. But these aren't special tourist things. These are the same places that we like to visit, the foods we like to eat, and the culture that we like to experience.

Do you really want to visit a city centre

that has cleared out all of its culture to make room for your existence? Do you want to have Viking trinkets and stuffed animal puffins shoved down your throat as you walk down Reykjavík's main drag? What are you going to do with "a bit of volcano" or "a piece of mountain" in a can?

As the number of tourists continues to grow, we have to be careful that we do not cater exclusively to them. You don't need a wild imagination to picture what kind of damage Iceland's tourism industry could do to our country if it expanded too quickly and recklessly, if it grew even remotely close to how Iceland's financial sector grew before the bubble burst. As I reached for that grey Icelandair blanket embroidered with the words "Missing the hot springs? Warm yourself with this instead," a chill ran down my spine.

Turn to page 24 to read this issue's feature, "Hotels, Motels, Holiday Inns." Also, turn to page 46 to read about volcanoes.

TRACK OF THE ISSUE



Jóhann Kristinnsson – "Typewriter"

Download NOW at www.grapevine.is

Earlier this year, Mr. Kristinnsson put out his third independent album 'Headphones' which he recorded in the quaintness of his basement, the professional style of Studio Syrland, and the haunting magic of the Engelsholm Slot medieval castle in Denmark. It's hard to tell which one of those this floating track was recorded in (or which part was recorded where!) since it has all the natural creakiness of an old, creepy place but the vast sweeping reverberation of a great stone hall. Either way, it's got a good melody! Download this great indie-folk tune and decide for yourself.

TOURIST OF THE YEAR?



As all of you surely know by now, we're running a pretty amazing contest to find the TOURIST OF THE YEAR where one lucky person will win a trip to Iceland courtesy of Icelandair, Inspired by Iceland and yours truly! Now that the summer has hit its peak and tourism is at critical mass, we've gotten some really cool submissions in from readers who may be our contest winner.

Like Sophia Both from Germany: "Iceland was the country where I first fell in love at the age of 16. Iceland was the country where I first got my heart broken at the age of 17. But, Iceland was also the country that taught me to always stand up and follow your dreams. Iceland was the country I fell and in love with. It taught me to enjoy life, no matter what. So, that's what I did. At the age of 19, Iceland was the country that I spent a year working as an au-pair in, it was the country that taught me how to be a family. Iceland was the country that I missed really badly at the age of 20, when I came back to Germany. Iceland is the country that I am now teaching about at the age of 23."

But don't stress! The contest is far from over! If you think you should be our lucky winner, head on over to touristoftheyear.is and submit your tale! GOOD LUCK!



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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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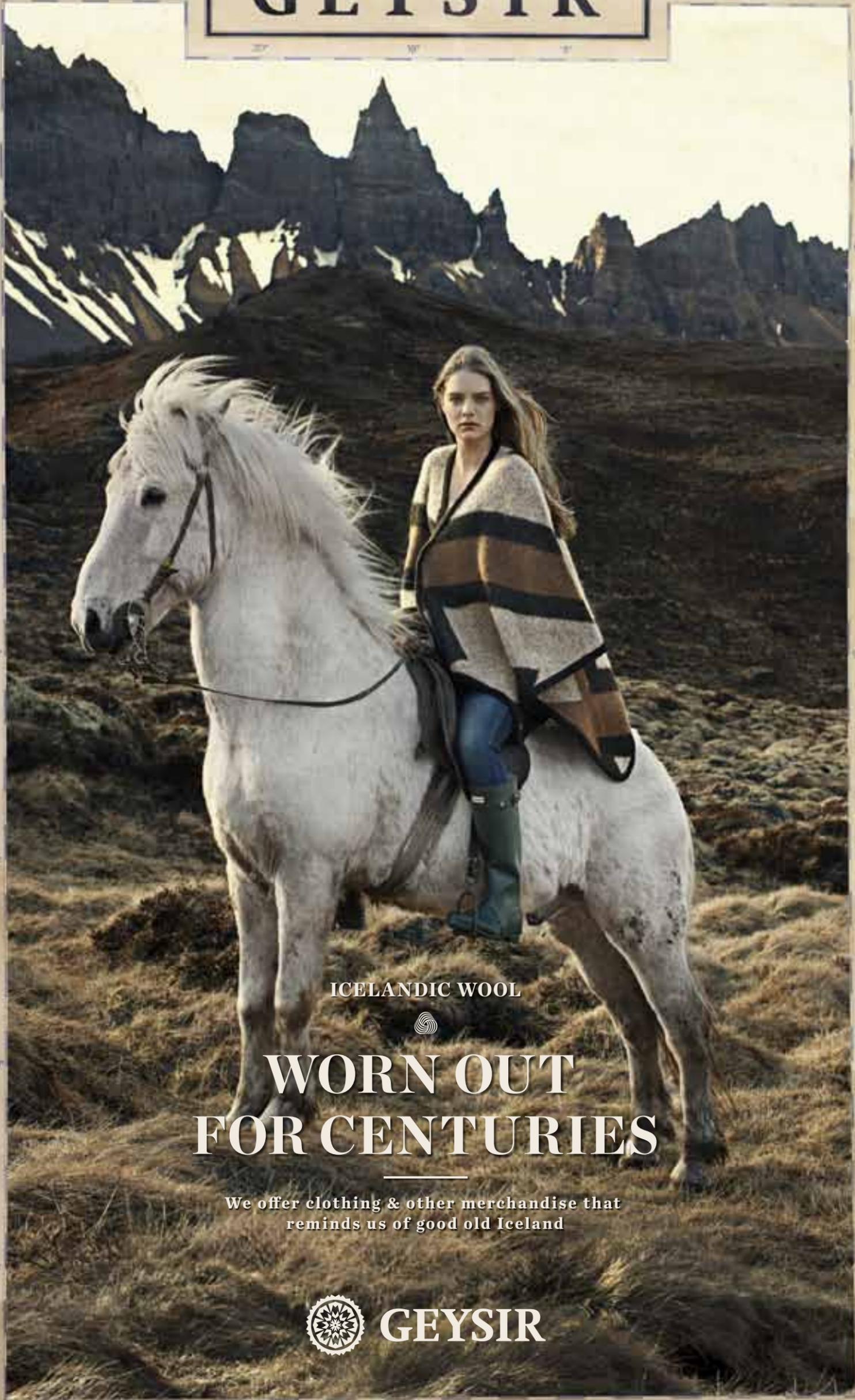
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Gullfoss and Geysir are surely a must-see in Iceland, but neither is something you eat. That's why we have 15 brilliant and creative hamburgers at the Hamburger Factory.

Located on the groundfloor of the highest tower of Reykjavík, and on the groundfloor of the historic Hotel Kea in Akureyri, the Hamburger Factory has been packed with burger-craving customers since it's opening in april 2010. Among the regulars is Iceland's best known fisherman, Eric Clapton.

Attention: Our hamburger buns are not round. They are square. Does it taste better? You tell us.

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The Hamburger Factory Reykjavík Höfðatorg Tower. Groundfloor.



The Hamburger Factory Akureyri Kea Hotel. Groundfloor.

HOW TO GET THERE

SOME TIPS ON HOW TO GET TO US WHILE LOOKING COOL AND LOCAL

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(„The Icelandic Hamburger Factory, please“)

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“Sælar! Hvað er að fréttu”
(Hello! What's up)

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(I'm quite hungry, can I get a hamburger)

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Sour grapes & stuff

MOST AWESOME LETTER

Dear Grapevine,

I have visited Reykjavik every year for the past 4 years. I love this city, but there is one thing that I despise. Every time I walk by Svarta Kaffið, I get a sharp pain in my stomach. Their signage, depicting a minstrel-esque character as their mascot, is pretty damn offensive. How can people feel OK about patronizing this establishment? Not cool, Reykjavik, not cool.

Peace,
Lizanne
USA



Dear Lizanne,

Ugh. Dude... we know. It's rough, yeah? Yours is not the first letter we get about it! This place reminds us of that part in Ghost World where Enid finds the old racist Cook's Chicken poster and brings it into her art class as a statement that the world is just as racist but it's more white-washed and hidden away now.

This place basically never bothered to cover up their bigotry. It's so blatantly stupid that it makes one wonder if they don't even realise how fucked up their "mascot" is. Are they trying to be post-racial? What is even going on? On the plus side, it's right out there in the open for people to see and make the choice about whether or not to patronise such an establishment. Like with the Ghost World premise, other places might harbour the same (or worse) attitudes but have maybe just learned to cover it up and be "politically correct" to the naked eye. It is complicated and maddening.

Maybe next time you come back you should go in there and take them to task about it, since you feel very strongly. Then you can swing by our offices and get your prize. Come back soon!

Love,
The Grapevine

Good morning or afternoon

we are Rick and Sally, live in Atlanta Ga., USA. 3 weeks ago we attended an estate sale.

The estate sale was for 2 sisters that passed away and they were from New York City. The entire contents of the estate sale had been in storage for over 45 years.

We purchased several items and one of the items, thru some google research are commemorative spoons made in 1926 by a gold smith from Iceland named Ari B. Bjornsson.

These spoon were commissioned by the Icelandic government for the 1000th Anniversary of the Icelandic Alþingi from 930 to 1930.

We are not sure of the historic value

nor the value in general of these spoons.

We have reach a dead end in trying to get information about the commemorative spoons which appear to be historic.

Can you provide a contact of anyone who can help us, any information would be helpful. we are really trying to find out the historic value, and would like for someone at the national museum to get in touch with us. You are more that welcome to print the story and we would entertain any inquiries.

Thanks for your time
Rick and Sally

Rick and Sally, you lucky devils you!

Sounds like you are sitting on a goldmine, probably. We aren't

much of the commemorative spoon experts around our offices – our staffers are into thimbles, teacups, bottled sailships and Elvis-on-velvet paintings, but not spoons! But those sound really great and probably have a cool story attached.

Unfortunately we couldn't find any info about this Ari B. Bjornsson character, probably because he's has his estate sold off too if you know what we mean, but hopefully someone reading this has some helpful information. If anyone does, they should write us at grapevine@grapevine.is and we will send them your way!

**Take care,
The Grapevine**

hello! your magazine is awesome! Coming to Iceland at the end of September and wanted some more hints and tips on bars and clubs in reykjavik? Any info would be great!
Vikram Khagram

Check out our Bar Guide. It's in our back issues and on the front page of our website. Also, download our Appy Hour app. It'll help you get super shitfaced when you're here.

**Sjáumst!
The Grapevine**

MOST AWESOME LETTER

TWO FREE PAIRS OF WOOLLEN SOCKS!

Yes, this lovely prize will keep your feet warm and cosy throughout your stay in Iceland and in any subsequent places you might go that sometimes get cold. And these aren't just any old woollen socks either, these are the colourful, wonderful, extra-long kind from Geysir.

Congratulations to this issue's MOST AWESOME LETTER. Drop us a line at letters@grapevine.is to find out how to collect those free socks! And if you're in the market for some socks come next issue, why not write us a wonderful reader letter to that same address. Like Axl Rose said: "It's so easy!"



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**BE
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Iceland | Stripping

Twenty Thousand ISK Gets You An Illegal Strip Dance

by Tómas Gabriel Benjamin

A thickly set man sitting by the stairs leading to the VIP Club nods as I pass him on my way up from the ground floor sports club called Home. Once upstairs, I pass a man in his forties who is on his way out as I go inside, through the heavy blinds, which serve as a door to the club. Six scantily clad women sit around the bar table, and a seventh serves as bar maid and presumably matron of the establishment. The dark wood and black leather interiors are illuminated by a series of tacky red lights. The women greet me with warm, but contrived, smiles. Rhythmic pop and RnB tunes play softly in the background.



Stefán Einarson

This image is from Stígamót's campaign against sexual exploitation and human trafficking. "The idea came from designer Stefán Einarson, and we felt it was the strongest move to print with as little text as possible," spokesperson Guðrún Jónsdóttir said. "We have given several groups permission to use it, including for a book cover in Bulgaria, posters for organisations all over Eastern Europe, and the Nest in Denmark which is a home for victims of trafficking. It has become so well-known worldwide that occasionally we get foreigners accusing us of trying to appropriate it." Stígamót kicked off their own "champagne club" nights on Thursday, August 15 to raise awareness about sex crimes worldwide and to raise money for the centre, which counsels hundreds of sexual assault and rape survivors each year.

I had spent the afternoon preparing so as to not reveal myself as a journalist on a quest to discover whether or not illegal stripping was taking place at the club. I had watched episodes of 'The Thick Of It,' re-enacting the mannerism and accent of some of the actors. I trimmed my beard, donned the suit I had worn daily to work in London, spit shined my shoes and ironed my shirt. Finally, I had drunk a smooth double Glenlivet whisky as I rehearsed my cover story, calmed my nerves and stopped my hands from shaking.

Meeting Lisa

I step forward to the girl closest to me, a blonde woman who looks to be in her late twenties, and we have a quick chat. She seems eager to please, giggling at what I say and responding in a flirty voice. I ask to see the menu, and the matron hands over a single laminated A4 sheet. There are six or so drinks on the menu, and the lower half simply says "private time," with times ranging from 15 minutes for 20,000 to 1 hour for 60,000 ISK. I ask for 15 minutes, and the matron asks me "with who?" I ask the blonde woman what her name is, and she says Lisa, from [eastern European country].

I pay the matron in cash and she asks me where I'm from. I tell her England, and she tells me they get a lot of English guys. They also have English girls, she tells me, but they weren't working that evening.

Lisa leads me upstairs to the top floor. A small dance floor is beaming with disco lights, but six curtained-off booths that look to be 2x5 metres in dimensions occupy the majority of the space. She takes me into one of the booths and I sit down in a leather sofa. As soon as the curtains are drawn, she starts dancing.

The clothes start coming off...

She has long hair that hangs down past her shoulder blades, and is wearing a black top that almost meets her stockings and knee-high leather boots. It takes all of my acting prowess to smile back at her as she starts rubbing up against me, climbing over the couch like a cat begging to be petted. I ask her what

we can do together tonight. "We can have a lot of fun tonight... if you want," she responds. "You can stay hours, we can drink champagne. What do you think about that?" "I think I would like to see you naked," I reply. "Yeah, really?" she says. "I would," I say.

“

Lisa asks me what I'm thinking, and I tell her I want to touch her pussy, asking how much that would cost. She answers: "If you pay one hour, one champagne, and some tips."

”

She straddles me, and puts my hands on her. If there was a look but don't touch rule in play, then Lisa wasn't playing by the rules. She then stands up and takes her dress off slowly, revealing matching black lingerie. Every question I have is met with either a flirty giggling answer or a confused look as she takes a moment to understand what I'm asking. She then takes off her bra, but only after stating that she's the boss and dictates what happens.

I ask her if she gets this naked for everyone or if I'm just lucky, and she says with tongue in cheek "no, usually I don't do topless." But she assures me her boss doesn't have a problem with her doing it, and I that I wouldn't get into trouble. She keeps dancing, rubbing her breasts in my face, and climbing over

me. I ask her if she has a shaved pussy. She tells me it's shaved. She tells me teasingly that I won't get to see for myself, but then takes off her panties. I look at my watch; we are five minutes into our proposed fifteen and she's already naked in front of me.

Paying to access her body

Lisa asks me what I'm thinking, and I tell her I want to touch her pussy, asking how much that would cost. She answers "if you pay one hour, one champagne, and some tips," and that we can do that in the club. She asks me if I want to buy more time since our fifteen minutes are up. I check my watch and protest it has only been seven minutes. She assures me that she knows the time is up as she starts getting dressed.

I ask how much sex would cost, and she says, "we cannot have sex here, but we can have a lot of fun here, and make me want you, then maybe I will meet you after. Let's start to drink a little, we can talk a bit, then come back here if you like, for a while. I think it works good like that." She's put on her clothes at this point, and we start walking out.

She asks me what I want to do, and I tell her I need to go get more money to keep going. She assures me they take all kinds of cards, as well as pounds and euro notes, but I tell her I'd rather go get more cash. She tells me they are open until 1:00 AM, and until 5:00 AM on weekends. I ask again how much one-hour is as we walk down the stairs, and she says 60,000 ISK, asking if it sounds good in a coquettish manner. When we get to the bar, she asks me if I want to buy her a drink, and I tell her I'll first get more money.

I pull back the black blinds serving as a door, walk down the stairs and through the ground floor sports bar. People cheer as a goal is scored, and I slip out. I get flooded with a range of emotions from disgust, anger and shame, but they settle at simply feeling sullied.

* Lisa's name and a few other details have been changed to protect her identity.

Reykjavík's Champagne Clubs

Today there are three champagne clubs operating in Reykjavík: Strawberries, Crystal and VIP club (the latter two opened this year).

In July, Fréttablaðið sent two informants to interview the women working at these champagne clubs who found that they were all foreigners who had been in Iceland for a week, spoke little English, and lived together in a small apartment. The reporters were told that they could do "what they wanted" with the women for 10 minutes in privacy for 20,000 ISK, without any further explanation.

When Björk Vilhelsmóttir, a city councilperson, and Steinunn Gyðu- and Guðjónsdóttir, the director of Kristínarhús, a shelter for women exiting trafficking and prostitution, spoke out against the champagne clubs, they were threatened with lawsuits for slander. Vilhjálmur H. Vilhjálmsón, the lawyer representing Crystal and VIP club, demanded that they withdraw their remarks suggesting that there were signs of human trafficking and prostitution taking place at the champagne clubs.

Vilhjálmur further attacked the character and credentials of María Lilja Prastardóttir, the journalist who reported on the champagne clubs. Vilhjálmur said María "is a hardcore feminist and spokesperson for the Slutwalk, who is not capable of reporting anything other than her personal views, which makes it impossible for her to approach any subject with objectivity."

Chair of Reykjavík City Council Dagur B. Eggertson said during a speech at the Slutwalk that "we will not let lawsuits discourage us." The City Council is currently looking into the legality of champagne clubs.

**"It is not permissible for restaurants [which include bars] to offer nude shows, promote or profit in any way from the nudity of staff or others present."
- Article 4, section 4 of Icelandic law 85/2007, amended on March 23 2010**

Is VIP Club Breaking The Law?

The owners say:

Mikael Nikkulásson, the most well known of the owners, claimed that another person whose name he couldn't remember was completely responsible for running the club. Mikael said customers could buy expensive drinks and take it easy in the VIP Club. He denied knowing what purchasing 'private time' with ladies entailed, and refused to comment further. Another of the owners did not want to speak about the club, stating that he was trying to get out of the business as quickly as possible.

The lawyer says:

Vilhjálmur H. Vilhjálmsón, the club's lawyer, immediately asked whether the article would be a journalistic one, or "politically correct femi-communist propaganda." He answered my questions with questions of his own about the contents of the article. He stated that he was not a PR person for the club, and suggested I visit it myself before writing anything about it. The lawyer also suggested that somebody other than the building owner is responsible for running the club.

The operational manager says:

The person in question is Kristján Georg Josteinson, the operational manager of the company Almitra ehf, which runs the club. He described the place as a nightclub with a well-stocked bar. He stated clearly that stripping and prostitution were illegal in Iceland, and that these services were not being offered at the club. He said that buying 'private time' with the ladies involved a friendly, secluded chat and nothing more. He then got defensive, asked about what political party I voted for, and wanted to retract his statements.

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 Smáralind

by Parker Yamasaki

Word on the street is, Jesus was probably gay. And it's Reykjavík Mayor Jón Gnarr's word, so it's probably true. At a conference in Belgium in connection with the World Outgames, Jón gave a speech on international human rights, emphasising the responsibility of the politician to ensure equal rights. In the process, he scorned religions which condemn individuals for their sexuality, quipping that perhaps the reason Jesus was crucified was because he may have been gay himself.

Somebody ought to alert Franklin Graham, a notorious anti-gay preacher who is coming to give a speech at a festival in Iceland in September. The national church started promoting the festival the same week Pride was being held. That raised a pretty interesting conflict of interest.



It's kind of like the opening of a "champagne club" at Stígamót, the sexual assault crisis centre in Reykjavík. On Thursday August 15, Stígamót opened its all-sexes Champagne Club which included private shows, free-flowing champagne, the reciting of traditional Icelandic rhymes, a demonstration on how to knit a wool poncho in ten minutes, and short talks on the history and importance of Stígamót for just 20,000 ISK. All of your traditional champagne club services, with a couple "added bonuses." The club will serve both as a fundraiser for the centre and as a proper demonstration of ironic Icelandic humour.

Maybe it was that same sense of humour that financial journalist Cyrus Sanati was trying to tap into when he declared that Iceland was well on its way to another financial meltdown. Except he forgot to add the quintessential "djók" at the end of the statement, so nobody found it very funny. In his article for Fortune magazine, Sanati states that the measures employed by the Icelandic banks and government following the crash were only temporary solutions, and the supports currently steadying the Icelandic economy are beginning to crumble.

Now before you go running outside for that nervous cigarette, you may want to think about how much it

Continues over

So What's This Icelandic Horse Competition I've Been Hearing About?

by Kári Tulinius



Illustration: Lóa Hjálmtýsdóttir

Since 1991 there have been world championships of the Icelandic horse. In case that sentence makes absolutely no sense, and I should explain that there is a breed of horse that originated in Iceland. And that there is a worldwide association, called FEIF that, among other things, keeps track of breeding standards, does outreach and organises competitions, including a biannual world championship. And 1991 was a year in the last century so long ago that U2 was still relevant.

Hey, lay off U2, Bono's such a good man that it's in his name, and The Edge will cut you.

Coincidentally or not, in 1991, U2 recorded 'Achtung Baby' in Berlin, and this year the Icelandic Horse World Championships are also in Berlin. That location makes a certain amount of sense. This breed has a certain hipster cachet. It has five gaits, one more than most horses, including an ambling one called tölt, which is found only in a few other breeds, such as northern Norwegian

breeds and Mongolian horses. It also grows a hipster-y beard, and has released a split seven-inch vinyl single with The Knife.

Oh pish, the hippest horse is a horse you've never heard of.

FEIF has been doing its best to make people aware of the Icelandic horse and its world championship. The opening ceremony involved four hundred horses being ridden to the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, with one of the riders being Dorrit Moussaieff, the first lady of Iceland. The association has done its best to drum up interest in the week-long event, which has the slogan "One World, Five Gaits."

We get to carry each other, carry each other...

That is not even in the right place in the song! Also, please refrain from getting U2 songs stuck in my head. The Icelandic Equestrian Association sent a team of horses and riders to compete, and by all accounts they have done very well, coming first in many events,

both in riding competitions and breeding contests.

So do the horses return in triumph to Iceland?

No. Once an Icelandic horse leaves the country it is never allowed to return. Due to Iceland's geographic isolation on the far northern edge of the North Atlantic, the country's equine population has not been exposed to many common diseases, such as horse influenza, equine herpes and strangles. And because you would not wish a disease with the horrifying name of strangles on your worst enemy, you definitely do not want your beloved horse to contract it, let alone an island full of them. So once a horse leaves the country, it cannot return.

In my mind's eye I see Icelandic horses standing on a hill, staring back home to Iceland, with sadness in their eyes, love in their heart, eating a carrot.

As far as anyone can tell, horses generally have no opinion in which country they exist. They want food, shelter and companionship from other horses, and the opportunity to run about. Icelandic horses do not even seem to mind if the other equines in the vicinity are abnormally large.

I wasn't going to bring this up but, uh... aren't Icelandic horses really ponies?

No. I mean, technically yes, but emotionally no. Though most Icelandic horses are smaller than the height usually thought to connote a pony, traditionally they have been referred to as horses. This goes for other breeds as well. Mongolian horses are about the same size as Icelandic ones, but you would not

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Once an Icelandic horse leaves the country it is never allowed to return.

”

call Genghis Khan's horse a pretty pony. Not twice, anyway. So the proper way to refer to an Icelandic horse, for instance if you would like to alert your travelling companions to its presence, is to point with an out-stretched hand and shout: "Majestic horse!" Try it out, it feels pretty good.

MAJESTIC HORSE! You're right, that does feel good.

Icelandic horses are one of the draws for tourists in Iceland. For a while now the Icelandic horse population outside of the country, around a hundred thousand, half being in Germany, exceeds the total horse population of Iceland, which is around eighty thousand. So there are a lot of people out there in the world who like Icelandic horses. Many of them travel to this isolated island on the far northern edge of the North Atlantic, point at visible equines and alert their companions with a hearty: "Majestic horse!" They are hip enough to not say pony.

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Iceland | Whaling

The Wrong Kind Of Whale Watching

By Rebecca Louder



© Rebecca Louder

“How mentally prepared for this should we be?” I asked our driver, Marvin Lee Dupree, as we approached the turn-off to Hvalfjörður. Marvin paused, made a pensive sneer and replied. “It’s pretty gnarly.”

On Friday, August 2, we received a call to our office from known activist Sigursteinn Mátsson inviting us along to an anti-whale hunting protest set up by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). The whaling ships Hvalur 8 and Hvalur 9 had reportedly caught two fin whales, despite having no current buyer for the meat or any means of shipping it through other countries, and were dragging them into the fjord to the whaling station. A few of us at Grapevine decided to go along.

Into the fjord

Approaching the mouth of the fjord, we noticed two boats tailing each other towards the whaling station, and Marvin sped up the car. “I want us to be ready for them when they get there,” he said, referring to the protestors. Finally he pulled off the road and parked in front of a chain link fence, next to several other vehicles. “This is kind of a community event. People in the area come out to see this.”

A few steps past the other cars I looked down to the right at what appeared to be the lower-half of a fin whale laid out on an open concrete dock, sawed clean through at the midsection and splayed open lengthwise, exposing muscle, entrails and the spine. About a dozen male workers in waterproof coveralls walked around and on the carcass using chainsaws and large straight hooks to cut off pieces of flesh, meat and bone, and then drag them over to various areas of the work-dock, seemingly dependent on where the parts were headed to next.

Mechanical animals

Large automatic pulleys were installed on the work-dock and a hook-line was drawn from the back-end pulley, attached to the skin of the whale—which had already been loosened by the workers—and then stripped off the carcass in one mechanical motion. As the workers finished removing the skin and dragged it into a container full of (presumably) water at the back of the

dock, a second whale was being dragged through the open water up to the dock.

One worker walked around with a large mop pushing waves of blood back towards the sea, which was already full of crimson pools. The work was done quickly to the point of appearing sloppy, with seemingly little attention paid to hygiene. The work-dock and carcass were not hosed off during the carving and workers wantonly switched between walking on the ground and on the spine. The place emanated an acrid smell, similar to the

“

Marvin walked down from the hillside and pointed my attention towards a worker heading towards the far back end of the dock, dragging away with him the titular fin.

”

metallic salty taste of putting an old key in your mouth.

Masses of birds flocked onto the whale as it was dragged through the open water, pecking at it and getting their fill. Once the second whale reached the edge of the dock, it stayed bobbing in the water for several minutes while a group of about eight people stood down at the edge looking at it from up close. Marvin later said that these were most likely people invested in whale hunting in some way, be it monetarily, politi-

cally or personally.

Pointless

Meanwhile, the protestors had gathered on the side of the hill overlooking the dock, holding up cardboard hands pointing towards the ocean that read, “What’s the point?” along with a large cloth banner that reiterated the question. While implicitly peaceful, the protestors were almost passive, spending the time quietly observing the activity of the whaling workers, or chit-chatting amongst themselves. The lines between interested onlooker, horrified visitor and outraged protester were almost impossible to distinguish, save for those cardboard hands.

The workers finished butchering up the first whale and dragged the remaining chunks off, dropping them into holes in the dock that possibly led to further processing or simply a refuse pile. Marvin walked down from the hillside and pointed my attention toward a worker heading to the far back end of the dock, dragging away with him the titular fin. It was taken somewhere out of sight but not discarded, most likely to be kept as a trophy.

The second whale was now attached by its tail to the hook-line of one of the pulleys and gradually brought up onto the dock in the same place the first whale had been. The workers stood around it, dwarfed by the mass of the second largest cetacean in the ocean. At this point, there didn’t seem to be much need to watch the slow-motion replay.

The protest broke up and people began heading back to their vehicles, save for a few onlookers there for neutral observation (or perhaps genuine entertainment? Who’s to say). On the drive back, through the warm, sun-filled fjord, our intern spoke up. “It’s weird because I’d never seen a whale before,” she said. “And now the first time I saw one, it was dead.”

Continued

is going to cost, as many tobacco smokers around Iceland have been doing. Following the 15% increase of the tax on tobacco at the start of the year, tobacco sales have dropped by 10.4% since January. Plus, smoking conditions are probably unfavourable with the recent trend of “gloomiest weather since...” headlines. This past month Reykjavik was subject to the coldest July since 2002, with an average temperature of 10,6°C.



Furthermore, the former Minister of Finance Gylfi Magnússon assures Iceland that Santani’s claims are presumptuous and wrong. Santani’s charge against Iceland’s “zombie banks” would not even apply to the old banking system, Gylfi remarks, let alone the new one which Santani doesn’t seem to know anything about. Basically, according to Gylfi, Santani is just being a drama queen.

But being a drama queen isn’t always a bad thing, especially if you were competing in Reykjavik’s second annual drag contest held in Harpa’s Eldborg concert hall over Pride week. Congratulations to the ‘Foxy Ladies’ duo Márky Cántalejo and Chris Mercado and to Brjann Hróðmarsson for being crowned this year’s Drag Queens and King. And thanks for contributing to Iceland’s growing reputation as great entertainers.



That reputation, by the way, was given a pretty hefty boost when Rolling Stone magazine named Sigur Rós one of the Top 50 Greatest Live Acts Right Now. The article likened the band’s trippy stage presence to Pink Floyd, and praised Jónsi for his crowd-destroying union of bow and guitar.

Speaking of harmonious unions, Director Baltasar Kormákur and CCP Games are joining forces to create a TV series based on the wildly popular game, EVE Online. He admits that his personal interest in gaming never really evolved beyond a brief Pac-Man affinity as a child, but he uses this as an asset to make the series appealing to a wider range of people, and hopefully bring in some new fans. You got this, Kormákur.

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All That's Changing Is The Building

The story of the new mosque in Reykjavík

by Tómas Gabriel Benjamin



© Axel Sigurðarson

The Association of Muslims in Iceland has been cramped in the first floor of a building in the industrial neighbourhood of Skeifan for the last decade. Their 170-square-metre mosque is fitted with a kitchen, a toilet, and a small prayer room, which barely accommodates the congregation. And when it comes to special functions such as weddings or funerals, they must relocate to a chapel in Fossvogur. With 475 members, the Association is desperately in need of more space.

Recently, the Planning Committee of Reykjavík City Council approved a plot of land for the building of a mosque large enough for the Association in Sogamýri. The new mosque is expected to be 800 square metres, capable of hosting a range of functions, and with a library attached. The congregation will soon hold an architectural competition in association with the City Council to design the mosque. We met with Sverrir Agnarson, an Icelandic Muslim and the Association's chair for the last two years, to discuss these developments.

How long has it taken the association to get the plot for the new mosque?

The first application was submitted in 1999, and the fact that it has taken 13 years to be approved tells you that some-

thing is not right.

Do you know why it's taken this long?

No, but I suppose they do not like Muslims.

And who are they?

The Independence Party, but they are no longer in power [The Best Party governs Reykjavík City Council today], and they have also changed over these years.

First successful application

When did you submit your newest application?

For the past two years we've worked with the City to find a place for us. Two or three weeks ago they accepted the plan, so now we have submitted our applica-

tion, and we will get a formal answer in two weeks' time, although everybody says it has been granted. In 2006, the religious communities that did not have buildings were promised plots for them, as religious communities are entitled to one piece of land for free. The promise was made in 2006 to the pagan society, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Buddhists. The three of them have their land, and now we will get ours.

During this process, has the Council been trying to accommodate your needs?

Yes. It maybe has something to do with ECRI [the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance], which put this application on their watch list four years ago. ECRI visits European countries every four years and asks very simple questions: what's the situation with the Jews, women, and Muslims? If they don't like the situation, they make a complaint, which would label Iceland as being racist and intolerant. And Reykjavík doesn't want this, so that probably helped the application.

Pan-European problems

What kind of feedback has the Association received regarding the mosque?

I think it's actually been positive. Most people were happy, but there is a small group protesting the mosque, and they have more than two thousand members on their Facebook page. But all the people I know are very positive, and I haven't had people come up to me with negative criticism. I do see what the opponents write though, and I think the guys fighting against this are not very high class.

Has your congregation run into discrimination?

Not so much, actually. It's the same reality as in most of Europe, where it is more difficult for dark skinned people to get work. But the Muslims who live here are pleased with Iceland as Icelanders are very nice to them. It has been a little bit difficult being Muslim in the last few years, and some of the more hateful speech involves distorting what Islam actually is.

Female leadership

Muslims have been accused of not supporting gender equality. How do you respond to that accusation?

I just recommend people read the Quran, where I don't see any sexism. I know the verses people like to interpret that way, but that interpretation is not common

in Islam. You find that interpretation repeated within small extremist groups, and from Islamophobists. One of our five board members is a woman, and we abide by Icelandic equality laws. If it's the law in Iceland, then it's our law.

Is there then a possibility of getting a female to lead prayer?

If I speak for myself, I would remind people that there have been sessions in New York for example, where a woman has led prayers. It created a lot of fuss, and discussion, but several of the learned scholars supported it. I personally have nothing against it, but I don't speak for the community, some of whom would have difficulty with that.

And are there other members that would support it?

Yes, some. There is currently a big movement of Islamist Feminism emerging, and they are making a lot of progress. It is very debated, but of course the women will win, as they always do. It's an inevitable change, and there is nothing in the tenets of Islam that would not allow it. If a female guest speaker were to come

An Icelandic mosque with Icelandic values

Where will you be getting the funds to raise the mosque?

We haven't started raising money, but we will be very careful not to risk our independence with strict conditions of accepting donations. We want to be an Icelandic mosque for Icelandic Muslims. We would prefer to get the money from individuals who give in the name of Allah and not for themselves or their ideology. We have to raise somewhere between 250–350 million ISK, and we'd like to finish building the mosque in two years, and given the process we can probably start building next spring.

Former Mayor Ólafur F. Magnússon said that the new mosque endangered the culture and safety of Iceland, and others have gone so far as to say that it will be a breeding ground for terrorism in Iceland. How do you respond to these accusations?

We have been running a mosque in Iceland for ten years now, and nobody is complaining about it. We have not bred any terrorism or made any problems for anybody, so I don't think that will change. The only thing that will change is the building. This mosque is now too small for us. We would also like to have more space for a library and a place to host lectures, introducing people to Islam in a better and more efficient way.

Raising The Mosque

Former chair of the Association of Muslims Salmann Tamimi tells us about the application process, which they reiterated and chased on a yearly basis. The City Planning Committee has always been eager to help, but the application was stalled year and year.

1999

The first application for a plot of land is handed to then Mayor of Reykjavík Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir. Originally, the Association looked at Öskjuhlíð as a possible site.

2004

The Association receives no answer about their suggested plot in Öskjuhlíð and suggests a plot near Elliðaárdalur.

2006

The Independence and Progressive parties form a coalition government. Three religious communities are given vacant plots. The Association of Muslims in Iceland is not given one. Mayor Vilhjálmur Þ. Vilhjálmsson says the plot in Elliðaárdalur is unsuited for a mosque and would be a nature reserve.

2008

Ólafur F. Magnússon becomes mayor of Reykjavík for the Liberal Party. Five members are kicked out of the Association of Muslims for negative and racist attitudes. They form their own congregation, called the Islamic Cultural Centre of Iceland.

2010

A new coalition of the Best Party and Social Democratic Alliance forms City Council.

2011

Reykjavík City Council reaches out to the Association of Muslims and starts looking for suitable land.

2013

The Planning Committee of Reykjavík City Council approve plot of land for the building of a Mosque. Ólafur F. Magnússon and others condemn the plans.

2015

Expected completion of the mosque.

Converting To Islam

Sverrir converted to Islam when he was in his twenties. In 1972, Sverrir was working as a horse herder in Spain, and decided to visit the Himalayas. Whilst in Pakistan he was introduced to Islam, and was fascinated with the idea of having no image of god, but worshipping something you didn't quite understand. After discussions with mystics, he was convinced and has remained a practicing Muslim since.



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			10:00	10:00	10:00				
13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00
			14:00	14:00	14:00				
		17:00*	17:00	17:00	17:00	17:00*			
			20:30**	20:30					

* From 15 May to 15 September

** From 15 June to 31 July



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Going Postal In Reykjavík

A day in the life of a summer mail carrier

by Adrienne Blaine



© Axel Sigurðarson

Each summer, Reykjavík goes on holiday; residents vacate their residences and the post marks their mail with a pink return sticker with the “gone away” box ticked. Even the postal workers who normally sort this mail take time off. So who delivers the mail from May to September? This is where 29-year-old Maren Winkler from Germany comes in.

Maren is just one of many young foreigners who took up mail carrying for Pósturinn as a summer job. You may recognise them by the cherry-red sweatshirts, ear-warmers and rain trousers. For many of these university-age substitutes, carrying mail represents a romantic return to the days of the envelope in an email age. And although the job requires little Icelandic language proficiency, it offers carriers the chance to integrate themselves into Icelandic society.

Guðmundur? Gunnar? Guðbrandur?

At first Maren had a hard time distinguishing between Icelandic names, but now she is a regular pro. We discussed the prevalence of the name Guðmundur in particular. She also quickly learned the Icelandic phrases for, “Does this person still live here?” and “Sorry, I accidentally put the mail into the wrong slot.”

“It makes me feel a part of society and Reykjavík because you keep everything going in your own small way,” Maren said. Delivering the mail on foot also means learning neighbourhoods and becoming attached to them and their inhabitants.

As I walked with Maren on her route in the 105 district, I discovered she had actually been delivering mail to a flat I’ve been subletting in the 101 district. Even though it was no longer her route, she still remembered the exact location, and had even snapped a picture of a gnome in my yard on her last day as a memento. Although she was sad to leave her favourite neighbourhood in Reykjavík, she was pleased to finally spot Reykjavík Mayor Jón Gnarr, on her last day in 101.

As we walked around her new neighbourhood, I kept forgetting to go up to the door with her. I am not accustomed to walking up to strangers’ doors; I was reminded of childhood games of ding-dong-ditch, but instead of ringing the door bell and running away, we were pushing mail through slots hoping territorial dogs wouldn’t bite our fingers off. Luckily we only ran into one aggressive Pomeranian, who laughably overcompensated for its small stature and ridiculous coif.

The neighbourhood cats on the other hand, couldn’t be friendlier. There are also other perks to mail carrying, the exercise and the chance to listen to your own soundtrack. Maren’s varies depending on the weather: Nick Drake when it’s sunny and Melodica when it’s cloudy, but most days she finds herself listening to the German rapper, Casper. As a singer/songwriter herself this time to listen to music is particularly important to Maren.

Unlike America, where no one gives a flying fuck

At each address we reached, she checked the name on the envelope against the name on the door, which puzzled me at first. Unlike my native America, where no one gives a flying fuck whether you get the correct mail, Iceland will not deliver letters to addresses that aren’t correctly marked. In fact, nearly every day, Maren has letters and catalogues she cannot in good conscience deliver. Each morning, she thus uses Pósturinn’s database to determine whether an address is incorrect, the recipient has moved, is away or in some unfortunate cases, has passed away.

In the morning I helped her sort the mail into shelves of mint green, black and red plastic dividers. Seeing each Icelandic postmark peeking out from their little cubbies made me feel so orderly and accomplished, but the task was far from done. Next we had to bundle each group of letters according to residence and street and place them in her mail trolley in the correct order: first houses’ mail on top, last houses’ mail at the bottom.

“Rubber bands are VERY important,” Maren said as she snapped two around a thick stack of envelopes. As she delivers each bundle

she removes the rubber bands and pushes them up her wrist—by the end of the day you can tell how many houses she has visited by the bands stacked on her arms. And with anywhere between five and twelve hours of deliveries, Maren could have her own shot at the world’s largest rubber band ball by the end of the summer.

Junk mail day

As you may already know, Thursday is junk mail day, and therefore the bane of any Icelandic mail carrier. Last week Maren had 100 kg of Ikea kitchen catalogues to deliver to nearly every house on her route. Do everyone a favour and put the red, “no junk mail” sticker on your mail slot. Also while you’re at it, make sure your name is above the slot and notify the post office when you move. It’s the right thing to do.

“

I think it’s something special to say I have been a mail carrier in Reykjavík, Iceland.

”

While Maren curses junk mail she takes delight in postcards, (especially those written in German—not that she reads them or anything), handwritten letters (bonus points for drawings on the envelopes), children’s books or quirky items like a plank of wood or a single sheet of loose paper.

Maren marvels at how she is expected to fit things through such slim mail slots sometimes. And while this may not have been perfectly legal, she let me deliver some letters and I have to say it was quite satisfying.

All the magic this world has to offer

When I met Maren for the first time, I knew I had to jump on the chance to see what delivering the mail was like. And not surprisingly I am not the only one who has had this excited reaction. One of Maren’s friends from Germany, Matthias, served as her first mail carrying “intern.”

Like me, he has fostered a life-long obsession with mail carrying as a profession. As children of the net generation, we grew up with email. And we are not the only ones who react positively to Maren’s summer job. She often finds people are unexpectedly excited by her work. She admits, “There is a certain excitement with me being the official person putting mail in the slot.”

And while letters delivered instantly as code through electric cables at the speed of light might have dazzled some, I was always convinced it was the physical letter carried by the omnipresent postal worker that contained all the magic this world had to offer. This may have something to do with the fact that Harry Potter did not receive his letter from Hogwarts via Hotmail.

As magical as being a mail carrier may seem to me, it is certainly not as flexible or friendly everywhere as it is in Iceland. Maren said she would not be interested in working for the German postal authority. “I would only want to do it here. I think it’s something special to say I have been a mail carrier in Reykjavík, Iceland.”

A New Neighbourhood Watch In Force

Reporting all lost looking cats to Kattavaktin

by Tómas Gabríel Benjamin



© Sigrún Karlsdóttir

In a warm and quaint little flat in 107 Reykjavík, Friðrik Jónsson and Sólrún Gunnarsdóttir’s faces are illuminated by the blue Facebook hue from their laptops’ screens. Unlike other young married couples, Friðrik and Sólrún are not passing time online because they’ve grown bored with each other. They are working on a group they created called Kattavaktin (“The Cat Watch”), which helps cat owners find their lost pets.

Reykjavík is teeming with an estimated 12,000 felines. They lie lazily on walls and roofs, climb trees, chase

Friðrik and Sólrún harness this sympathy and awareness into a far-reaching information network, focused on keeping eyes open for lost cats.

At present, there are almost 1,200 members in the group, many of whom are active in the community. “Cats are kind of big on the internet,” Sólrún says, explaining the group’s quick growth. And the scores of memes, Youtube videos and blogs dedicated to cats suggest she is right.

Friðrik says they have a lot of success with the group. The first cat returned involved a match made in

“Cats are kind of big on the internet.”

each other, and wait for passers-by to shower them with affection. When they go missing, their owners are thrown into a state of panic. Now, in addition to police, vets and animal shelters, they can turn to Kattavaktin.

Users of the online community post pictures of cats that have gone missing or have been found. Through word of mouth and organised search parties a la neighbourhood watches, owners can be a part of the solution instead of waiting passively for something to happen.

The cat watch assembles

Friðrik and Sólrún believe that cat lovers are very aware of the cats in their neighbourhood, spotting new faces easily. “If you see a cat that looks out of place or lost,” Friðrik says, “you want to help, but you can’t just take the cat; then you’d be stealing it.”

heaven where two people shared a photo of the same cat—one advertising their lost pet and the other looking for its owner. And more recently, Friðrik was out knocking on doors with a search party when a woman produced a kitten that had wandered into her home, believing it to be the one they were looking for. It was not, but Friðrik fortunately recognised the kitten as somebody else’s lost pet and returned it to its owners.

As Kattavaktin has grown, they’ve implemented certain protocols for moderating the site, spending their evenings in front of Facebook, deleting funny memes and cute pictures. The last thing they want is for posts of lost cats to get buried under tangential information and at end of the day, the work is worth it thanks to the army of sympathetic people offering help and support.

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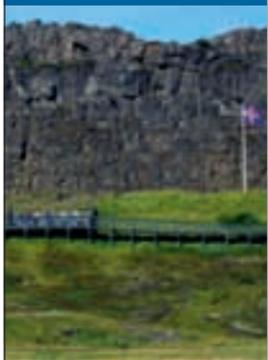
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Pile O'Mail

A closer look at new Reykjavík-based webmail project, Mailpile

by Shea Sweeney



Mailpile's tech lead, Bjarni Einarsson, was in his apartment giving an interview the evening of August 7 when donations reached 40,000 USD, less than one week into its campaign on crowdfunding website, IndieGoGo. A week later, as this issue went to print, Mailpile had raised 74,000 USD nearly reaching its goal of raising 100,000 USD, and there were still 27 days to go.

At the OHM Festival 2013 in the Netherlands—a Burning Man for the tech/intellect inclined—Bjarni Einarsson, Smári McCarthy, and Brennan Novak announced the launch of a new Reykjavík-based project called Mailpile, described on its website as “a modern, fast web-mail client with user-friendly encryption and privacy features. 100% Free and Open Source software.” They have high hopes that Mailpile will be a more secure, efficient, likely intriguing, and empowering improvement on widely used providers like Gmail and Hotmail.

Innovation in the hot tub

“I’ve been working on Mailpile off and on for two years. It started as a hobby project, just experimenting with building a search engine for email because I wanted to figure out how to do that. And once I had something that was running, that was working, I discovered that I just really enjoyed working on it

and it sort of progressed from there,” Bjarni says.

“Sometime around January of this year I became really frustrated and really concerned about privacy issues online. There had been rumours about the stuff that Edward Snowden revealed. These rumours have been in the tech community for a very long time. I was getting frustrated by, in my opinion, a lack of innovation in email in general and I was starting to feel like maybe I should turn this project into more than just a hobby.”

Bjarni was in a hot tub at a Reykjavík pool when he met Brennan Novak, a young American user interface designer who took an interest in Bjarni's then hobby. “He knows how to make things beautiful and easy to understand. And that's exactly the skillset I was lacking to build a product that would be useful to people,” Bjarni explains. In addition to Brennan, developer and activist Smári McCarthy joined the team to provide insight into online privacy and educating people on how to understand

and use encryption. Helping to develop Mailpile seems a natural next step for Smári who was recently notified by Google that a United States court had ordered an extensive classified search of his Gmail account metadata. “This would never happen if his email was on his own computer in his own home, because if they want to access that they have to come knocking on his door, present him with a warrant, and talk to him,” Bjarni says.

The Mailpile team's 100,000 USD goal will go toward the development of the software. Some of the funds will be for testing, hiring extra help, and travelling to conferences, and paying their salary so that they can focus on the project.

A new normal

The reason why Mailpile could be worth paying attention to is not just because it provides encryption, though that is a key feature; it's because Mailpile's aim is to create better email overall which, considering the nature of online communication, should by default include easy to use privacy options that make encrypting more normative. “With Thunderbird or Outlook, the focus was on creating a programme enabling people to read and write email, and organise it into folders, and then they added some search capabilities and maybe they'd get a third party extension to do the encryption,” Bjarni says. “It just really changes things if you do them as an afterthought. They don't work as well. So we're taking a very different approach in that respect.”

Mailpile differs from other webmail providers in that although it looks like a normal website (the interface is akin to familiar Gmail), it's not. It's software. “It's going to be confusing to some people because they expect a website to be something that's somewhere in the cloud or in a data centre somewhere, but actually it doesn't need to be,” he says. Software means that Mailpile is installed on a personal computer rather than accessed remotely. “This allows us to leverage [website] technology but to do so in a way that's still on your own machine where all of the data stays under your control.”

What initially sparked Bjarni's interest in tinkering with email was actually building stronger search engines, so a major feature of Mailpile is a sophisticated internal search engine. “There's no software out there that will make it easy [for people] to generate reports about their email or visualise how you've been communicating with people in a fancy way. Because we're approaching this from a different angle, it will be easy to do things like that,” Bjarni says. Mailpile would allow people to make more directed searches of their email content and perhaps think differently about the way they communicate.

Along with privacy and stronger searches, Mailpile is designed to be fast and responsive, outperforming “the cloud” even on slow computers, as the project's site states. “I do make some significant claims about the performance of Mailpile. It is really fast, and this is surprising to people because we've sort of been trained to believe that things that happen in big data centres far away have more computing power—that shiny data centres must be

better than what we have in our laps, but it turns out that's not really true,” Bjarni says. “And the reason that we then become faster than interacting with something like Gmail is that the computer is right in your lap. It's closer to you.”

“

I was getting frustrated by, in my opinion, a lack of innovation in email in general and I was starting to feel like maybe I should turn this project into more than just a hobby.”

”

Other unique elements of Mailpile are that it is open source software, which means the code is public and anyone can contribute to the project. And, at the moment, Bjarni thinks that Mailpile won't be supplying users with email addresses. Instead people will be able to use addresses they already have. “Mailpile will just download your email and will process it locally instead of it being wherever it was before,” he explains. Thus, if someone were to stick with their Gmail account and download it through Mailpile, they might not get all the security benefits, but they would be able to easily encrypt when they felt they needed to. “This may change,” he said, “but I don't really want to provide people with email addresses, because that would make them dependent on Mailpile in a sense.”

Accessibility

Mailpile has received exceptional financial support and praise in a very short amount of time, but Bjarni recognises that the project needs to be approached in manageable steps. “The real challenge is when we start adding features for secure communications, including encryption and digital signatures. These are things that even skilled computer professionals have to do their homework on and study before they can get it right, he says.

“So we have a very ambitious goal of making this accessible to non-technical people. That's something we're going to figure out in the next few months. A big part of the project is just doing the research, doing some experiments, creating some mock-ups, having people try them, and iterating until we have something that's actually useable.”

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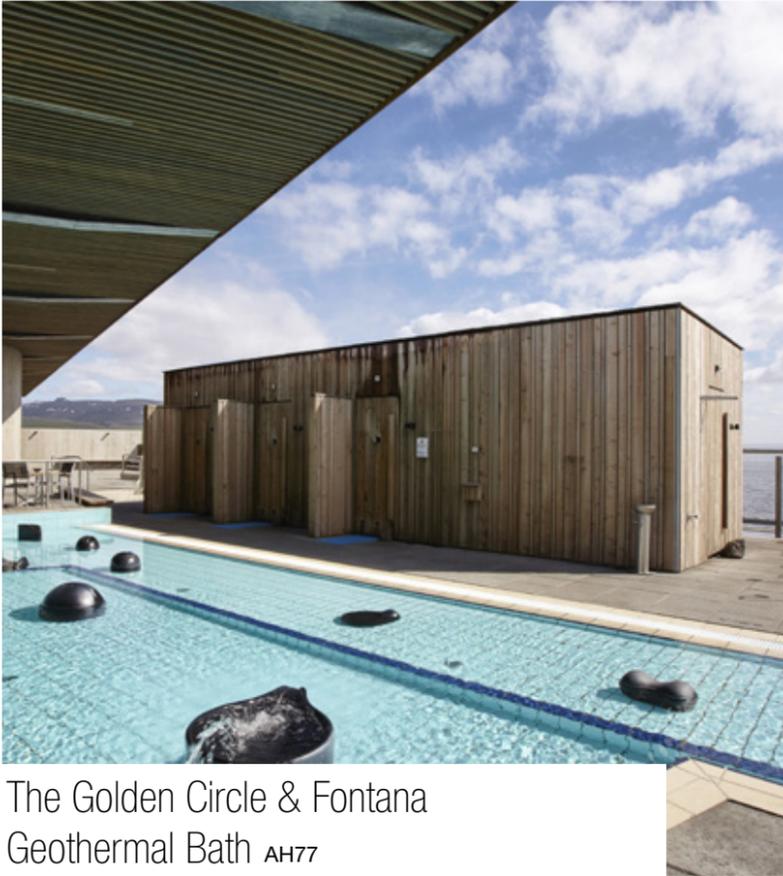
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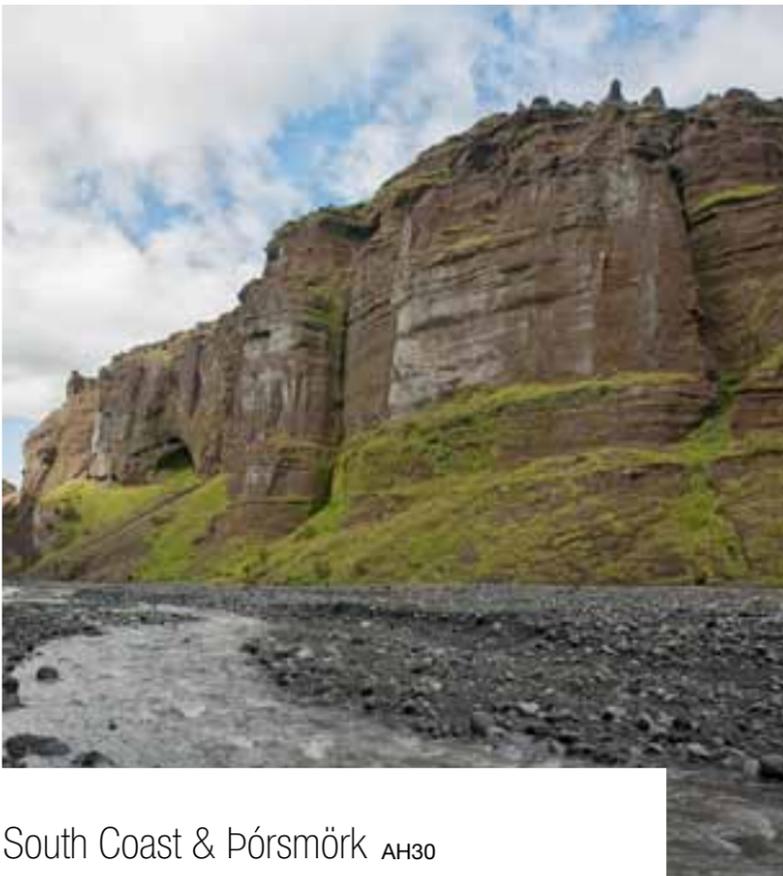
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Iceland | War

Every Thug Needs A Lady

U.S. Ambassador suggested feminist Afghan war propaganda

by Sam Knight



© Helgi Finnbogason

Remember the war in Afghanistan? Of course you do. Not only does it have the distinction of being the longest U.S.-fought war in history (“Vietnam” has finally been defeated! U-S-A!), but Iceland has had a role since the start. Three Icelanders are still a part of the so-called International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), toiling away alongside their freedom-lovin’ allies in the Graveyard of Empires.

Hell, since the 2008 banking collapse, Icelanders have even run off to volunteer for the Norwegian military, citing the lack of economic opportunity at home as a reason to take up arms in Pashtunistan. While Icelanders might no longer be afforded the chance to plunder British savings accounts, they can still be party to other sorts of destruction—through a war that has, in many respects, continued unabated since 1979.

Feminist psyops

But a little-noticed cable published by WikiLeaks reveals that Iceland’s involvement would be even greater if Icelandic diplomats were a tad more gullible. Internal deliberations show that then U.S. Ambassador Carol von Voorst told her superiors at the State Department to push some pretty manipulative pro-war talking points on then Foreign Minister and Social Democratic Alliance head Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir. Before Ingibjörg embarked on a trip to Washington for official business in April

2008, van Voorst wrote:

“We should push the Icelanders to greatly step up their support for police training, which may also allow them to blend in elements relating to the status of women (a heartfelt personal concern of Gísladóttir’s).”

The advice—which described Ingibjörg as “a shrewd politician with an activist streak” that “tackled well” as Foreign Minister, even though she “came in with expectations of being able to take lengthy vacations in the Nordic tradition”—did not lead to any sort of Icelandic surge, however. Iceland had been winding down its involvement in the war before May 2007, when an election resulted in a Social Democrat-Independence Party coalition government. As van Voorst noted in the very same cable, Ingibjörg’s predecessor (former Progressive Party MP Valgerður Sverrisdóttir) had “pulled Iceland’s mobile liaison team out of PRT [Provincial Reconstruction Team] Chaghcharan” the month before the election, and Ingibjörg could not be persuaded to reverse that decision.

A May 2008 “scenesetter” van Voorst sent to then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice a month after the D.C. trip made no mention of increased Icelandic participation in Afghanistan—nor did van Voorst tell Rice that she should try to persuade her Icelandic counterpart to step up intervention. Ingibjörg then presided over even more downsizing in August 2008. In response to a Ministry of Foreign Affairs report about a 2004 suicide attack that wounded four Iceland Crisis Response Unit members, she forbade Icelandic peacekeepers in Afghanistan from carrying weapons, except for “rare circumstances,” and ordered troops to be replaced by “unarmed specialists” at the next opportunity. The “status of women” propaganda tack, if followed by the U.S. State Department in actual discussions, didn’t move Ingibjörg, it seems.

“Activist streak”

Even if Ingibjörg had ramped up Iceland’s official mission to Afghanistan, any escalation would have almost cer-

tainly been quickly reversed after Prime Minister Geir Haarde ordered God to Bless Iceland in October 2008 (this a reference to the financial collapse, kreppa scholar neophytes). In November of that year, van Voorst told Washington that Iceland’s “newly established defense budget will be slashed.” In 2009, after Ingibjörg stepped down from the ministry (and then from politics altogether after falling ill in September 2008), then acting Foreign Minister Óssur Skarphéðinsson informed van Voorst in April that she “should be happy” (van Voorst’s words) that Icelandic troops weren’t called home immediately after the Left-Greens joined the coalition government just after the New Year.

And although she was described as having an “activist streak,” Ingibjörg and the Social Democrats hardly protested all of the excesses of American National Security while in power. In another WikiLeaks cable from 2007, van Voorst wrote that Ingibjörg’s foreign ministry conducted an inquiry into alleged CIA extraordinary renditions that passed through Iceland as “an attempt to take the issue away from the opposition”—“an exercise in transparency,” in the words of one ministry official, with no legal bite. In January 2008, Left-Green leader Steingrímur J. Sigfússon cited a Danish TV documentary on the issue as evidence that an independent investigation was needed. He was rebuffed by Ingibjörg who insisted the matter had been settled, and that the documentary detailed Iceland’s scrutiny of the flights. Either way, the debate shows that the crisis probably did more in 2008 for Iceland’s anti-war activists than any one politician could do.

Afghan women

Whatever the case, Iceland wasn’t alone in facing down the American feminist PsyOps tactics. According to a March 2010 CIA report (also published by WikiLeaks), American officials wanted to exploit the plight of Afghan women in capitals across Western Europe.

“Afghan women could serve as ideal messengers in humanizing the ISAF role in combating the Taliban because of women’s ability to speak personally and credibly about their experiences under the Taliban, their aspirations for the future, and their fears of a Taliban victory. Outreach initiatives that create media opportunities for Afghan women to share their stories with French, German, and other European women could help to overcome pervasive skepticism among women in Western Europe toward the ISAF mission.”

But Icelanders and their continental counterparts, to their credit, have apparently been able to see through the shamelessness and the logical fallacies. The

Pentagon, the State Department, and the CIA haven’t been particularly perturbed by the treatment of women in Saudi Arabia—the oil-gushing U.S. ally home to fifteen out of nineteen 9/11 hijackers and a theocracy suspected by former American Senators of playing a central role orchestrating the attacks. Nor has U.S. intervention improved the lot of Iraqi women, who have seen and continue to

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We should push the Icelanders to greatly step up their support for police training, which may also allow them to blend in elements relating to the status of women (a heartfelt personal concern of Gísladóttir’s).

”

see their personal security, quality of life and legal status diminish since the fall of Saddam Hussein.

Nor does the American military appear particularly concerned about Afghan women themselves, either. A famously outspoken Afghan woman and former Parliamentarian named Malalai Joya said recently that the U.S. and its NATO allies “were not fighting on behalf of women, because they have put into power the reactionary warlords who are sworn enemies of women.”

Women in Afghanistan don’t need to wait for ISAF to withdraw to feel the coercive grip of homegrown patriarchy. U.S. backed officialdom is piling on ingrained cultural attitudes grinding Afghan women down. According to the Afghan Interior Ministry’s own statistics, 600 women were in prison for “moral crimes” in May 2013 – an increase of 50 percent since October 2011. These egregious violations of law, according to Human Rights Watch, include “being victims of forced marriage, domestic violence, and rape.”

And some of these women could have been arrested by men trained by Icelandic “support for police trainers” too, if Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir had swallowed Carol von Voorst’s PR gumdrop.



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Iceland | Ice cream

This Is How We Chill

Ísbíllinn's extreme commitment to satisfying Iceland's sweet tooth

by Adrienne Blaine



Co-owner Sigurður G. Jökulsson with the Ísbíllinn fleet.

It is a grey day. My hair is frizzy with the air's thick moisture when I approach the open garage at Ísbíllinn. Yerzhana Akhmetzhanova, the company's co-owner, walks from the back to the front to greet me, and then keeps walking, preventing me from escaping to the hollow shelter of the headquarters. At least until she has a cigarette. I wait beside a dumpster overflowing with cardboard ice cream boxes while she has her smoke and comments on the amount of garbage lying about.

We are standing in the parking lot surrounded by an army of baby blue Ísbíllinn ice cream trucks—ambitious soldiers of cream and sugar and happiness. Each one is equipped with a ship's bell attached to the driver's side window. The bell serves as a charming alternative to the traditional ice cream truck jingle, and a necessary precaution for sanity when the route takes, say, upwards of seven days to complete.

Neither rain, nor snow, nor...threat of polar bear

Collectively, this ten-truck fleet has seen every nook and cranny of Iceland. Those that are reachable by road, anyways. And occasionally, accidentally, a few that aren't. Since the company's inception in 1994, Ís-

bíllinn has provided for Iceland's ice cream loving population unceasingly. A map of the country that hangs on their office wall displays a colour-coded net of routes and schedules. From a six-day trek weaving through the Westfjords, to a fourteen-day traverse across the North, to a quick four-hour pop over to Mollsfellsbær, Ísbíllinn has Iceland covered—with one (slightly ironic) exception: Reykjavík. But they're working on it.

Yerzhana's cigarette fizzles down to a soggy stub, finally allowing me to escape the elements. As we enter the garage, a man named Sigurður G. Jökulsson—Siggi—emerges from the back with a steaming cup of coffee. He jumps headfirst into the conversation, embellishing Yerzhana's information with his own anecdotes, coun-

tering some points, supplementing others. It is clear by the way they engage with each other that they understand each other a little too well, like a cross-country team. Or a writer's circle. Groups that only have to tell half of a story to elicit a reaction, because they were all there for it. Groups united by a common interest, and simultaneously set apart because of that interest. Ísbíllinn's interest: ice cream.

Between the two of them they stack story upon story of mishaps and malfunctions, tales gathered from nearly two decades of servicing Iceland. They tell me how one of their drivers, Helgi, got his nickname, "Helgi Highland," after he and his truck were stranded in the eastern highlands due to a GPS system that didn't take into account the seasonal restric-

tions of Iceland's roadways. "We weren't too worried about the ice cream, up there in the highlands. And Helgi was fine, he wasn't in polar bear territory" Yerzhana says, giggling.

"The polar bears," she continues, "they are found more up here" and circles a region on the map with a red route snaking through it. "We had a truck tip over there one time because of the extreme winds."

There are plenty more tales like this one, breakdowns in the Westfjords many kilometres from the next village. Icy roads mocking the weak traction of the ice cream truck's tires. More misinformed GPS systems. But they are a persistent bunch, and it's all a part of the job description.

Trading the ship's bell for the door-bell

As I enter the office two potential employees are exiting. They've just gone through an interview with Ásgeir Baldursson, Yerzhana's husband and co-owner of Ísbíllinn. The young girls' inexpressive faces don't give me any information as to how the interviews went. Ásgeir follows them out and introduces himself gleefully. I ask him how the interviews went and he gives me an inconclusive mumble. I wonder if I would make the cut, so I ask him what he looks for in employees.

"You have to be a people person," he answers. Most of the routes include remote farm houses where transactions occur at the doorstep, sometimes even after having been invited in for a cup of coffee. "It's nerve-racking at first," adds Siggi, "but you soon realise that you're not a vacuum salesman, and people are actually very happy to see you." On top of door-to-door service, the company also updates their website regularly to let followers know when they will be embarking for certain neighbourhoods, along with the phone numbers of the drivers, in case you'd like to request a detour or a reserve a box of the best-seller, Hnetu Toppur. How's that for customer service?

Serving smiles is just my side job

It's a great job for students, and people of artistic professions, adds Yerzhana. "It's a very flexible, temporary summer job—you get to see the country and eat ice cream." To demonstrate her point, Ásgeir reaches for a book off of the office bookshelf that was published by a former employee. Simultaneously Yerzhana opens the 'Extreme Chill Festival' line-up on the computer and points out one of the featured artists, Modesart. "He worked for us too" she confirms.

The flexibility of the job doesn't impede the company's reliability. "People assume that we run according to the weather," says Yerzhana, "but if you run a business that way in Iceland, you'd never get anything done!"

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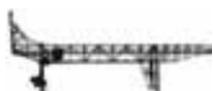
We weren't too worried about the ice cream, up there in the highlands. And Helgi was fine, he wasn't in polar bear territory.

”

Even though the trucks don't run as frequently in the wintertime, Ísbíllinn's popularity remains pretty consistent throughout the year. "Sure, you're like Santa Claus in the summertime," Yerzhana says, "but ice cream tastes good in any weather."

I can vouch for that. Siggi offers me an ice cream bar from the truck. Even though the rain is coming down harder than before, and my impressively absorbent jean jacket is not going to let me forget it, I take him up on the offer. "I'll have one of your specialties," I tell him. "Have you ever had a Tyrkisk Peber?" he asks me, "those are quite special." I haven't, so he props open the back of the truck's cooler, fumbles around with a couple of boxes and hands me one.

At first glance the Tyrkisk Peber is appalling. It's shiny, black, and cold—like a tiny police baton. Siggi grins with the same threatening innocence of a child playing a prank, he warns me of a "spicy surprise" that waits in the middle. But the only surprise was a pleasant one, as it was actually quite tasty. I can now confidently confirm Yerzhana's statement: ice cream really does taste good in any weather.

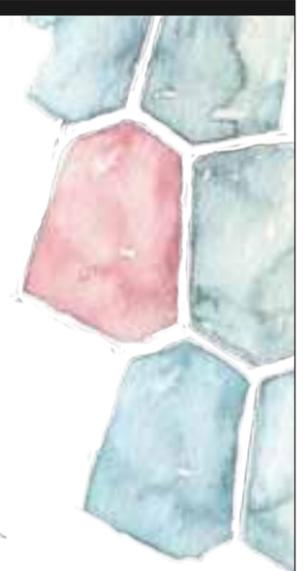


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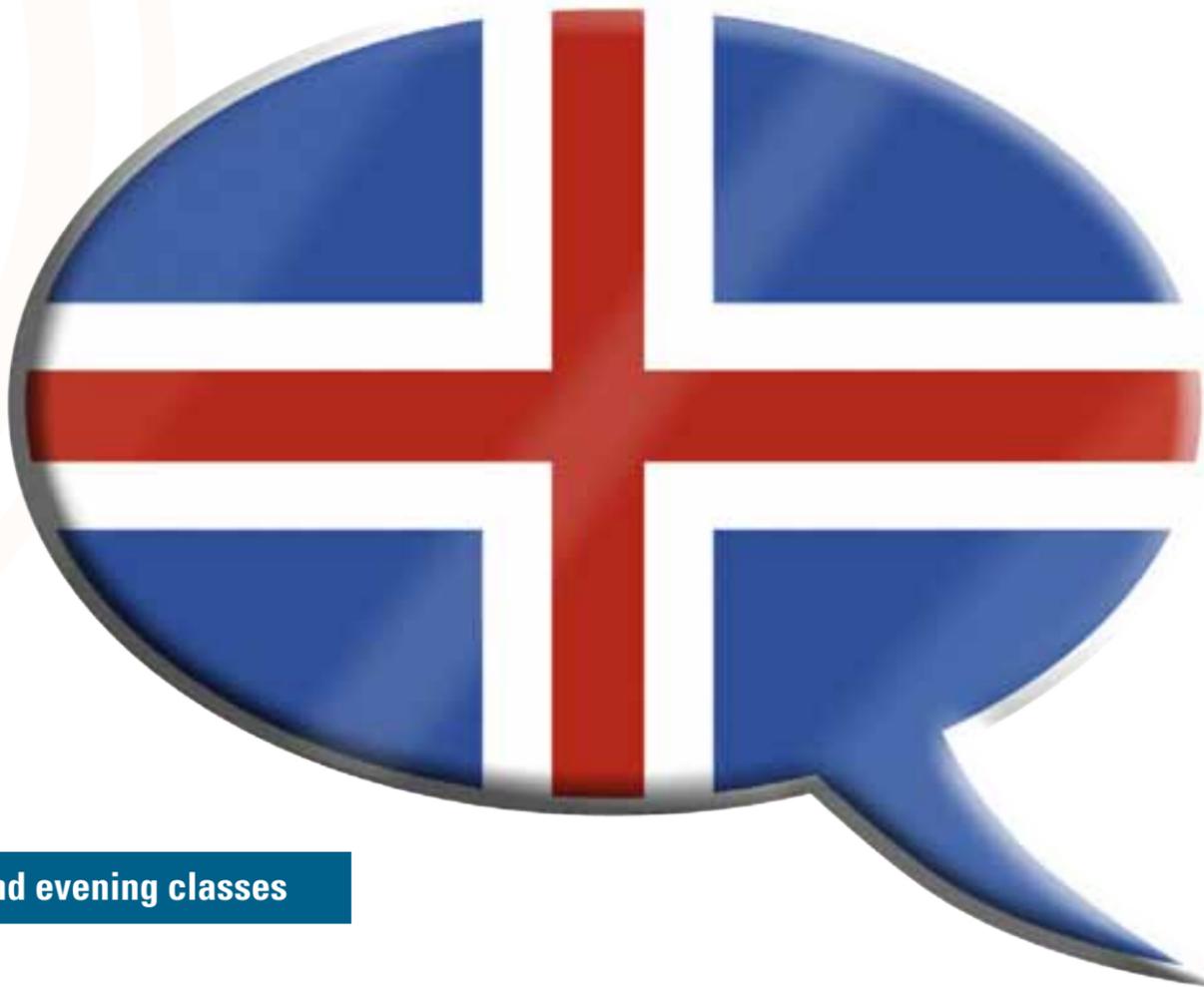
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Five Years Ago

Hooray! We turned ten this year. For a humble street rag like Grapevine, turning ten is a pretty big deal—we barely expected to make it to ten issues (and, indeed, all of our contemporaries from the Reykjavík's street rag market have long since bid farewell... miss u, Undirtónar!).

To celebrate our decade of existence,

we thought we'd get a little introspective and reprint some choice articles from the past that are for some reason significant, accompanied by commentary and even updates. Call it a "blast from the past" or "a look into the dark cauldron of time" if you want to—we call it fun. Thus, for ten issues, expect a page dedicated to a year of

Grapevine's existence, starting one issue ago, with a look back into magical 2003.

This issue is a look at 2008, our sixth year of existence when Steinunn Jakobsdóttir was assistant editor of The Reykjavík Grapevine. Read on for some reflections from Steinunn.



Remembering 2008

By Steinunn Jakobsdóttir (assistant editor of The Reykjavík Grapevine from 2007-2008)



The year 2008 can be remembered for many things. Bobby Fisher died in his Reykjavík apartment, Icelandic peacekeepers got trapped in a life-threatening carpet-shopping trip on Kabul's chicken street and Ólafur F. Magnússon became the capital's fourth mayor in only two years following an unbelievable turn of events that led former Grapevine editor Sveinn Birkir Björnsson to describe city politics as "an absurdist play where Machiavelli waits for Godot."

Iceland Airwaves celebrated its tenth anniversary, Reykjavík was hit by a record-breaking heat wave and Björk and Sigur Rós organised and headlined the 'Náttúra' concert in an attempt to help save Icelandic nature. We at the Grapevine joined the fight with our very own Nature-themed issue, co-edited by some of

Iceland's leading environmentalists.

However, on October 6, all of those events seemed to turn irrelevant, and the year 2008 will go down in history books as the year the Icelandic financial system came crumbling down and our then prime minister Geir H. Haarde asked god to bless the nation. The party was over.

There is no need to remind you readers of the political turmoil that followed. The Grapevine welcomed you to "Icelandistan" and tried to grasp what the fuck had happened. At this time, I had just moved to Dublin to study and experienced the crisis a bit differently. Like the rest of the world, I watched from afar as the banks collapsed one after the other, my meagre savings turned into pennies overnight and a

pint of Guinness became a luxury.

I remember that my professors found our small island highly intriguing and were much more interested in discussing the Icelandic króna than IMF's stronghold in Africa. Suddenly, everyone was an expert in Icelandic economics and not afraid to express their opinion. I was proud to tell the teachers about my fellow countrymen who stood up, and armed with pots and pans, marched down to Austurvöllur square every Saturday to demand change. The birth of this interesting movement was nicely covered in a story by Valur Gunnarsson "The Day We Started Fighting Back." 'Búsáhaldabyltingin,' try to pronounce that, professor!

The nation went through stages of mourning—

denial, anger, depression—but eventually, got back up and accepted that things wouldn't, and probably shouldn't, be the same again. It had been a great party, but now there was time to clean up the mess. At the time, I didn't expect the Grapevine to survive nor did I realise that the credit crunch and the global news coverage of our situation proved to be a massive boost to our tourism industry. Walking down Laugavegur five years later, the city centre has never looked livelier and thanks to the Grapevine Appy Hour, beer is affordable again.

Cheers to life in moderation, cheers to our tourists and all their money and cheers to another ten years of The Reykjavík Grapevine!

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Hotels, Motels, Holiday Inns...

By Parker Yamasaki



© Axel Sigurðarson

Watch the tour bus as a caricature of its passengers. It lugs ungracefully up Eiríksgata, heaves over the speed bumps, and arrives panting against the backside of Hallgrímskirkja. It leans right and spills its camera-clicking innards onto the sidewalk, or into the street, depending on how aware they are of life outside of the viewfinder. As unsightly as the gargantuan busses are, we're happy that they exist—at least to keep the daily commuters on Strætó safe from the REI backpack swinging visitors with no apparent sense of spatial awareness. Welcome to the dichotomy of tourism. Its positives and negatives become more and more intertwined with every need that must be fulfilled. Each visitor to Iceland is not just a self-sustaining entity walking down the street. It's another human to feed, to clothe, to transport, and notably, to shelter.



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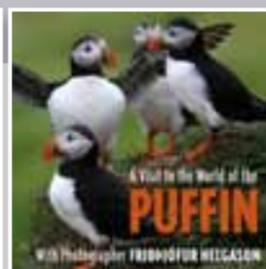
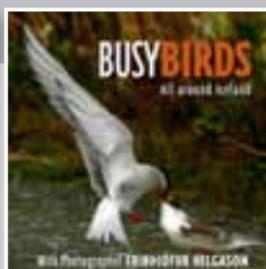


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Enter the hotel industry. With the closure of such popular concert venues as Sirkus, Nasa and most recently Faktorý to make way for hotels, there is a lot of frustration floating around 101.

One popular reaction is to start pointing—blame the city, blame the hotels, blame the tourists themselves. But is collective frustration ever appeased by blame? And is acting out against "hotels" in general any more effective than trying to shut down the annoying little brother in the backseat of the car? So, what is really going on? Where do we look, where do we point? And why is this happening?

PRO-HO(TELS)

On a basic level, it's a story of supply and demand. Páll Hjaltason, the city chair of the Environment and Planning Committee, says it would take an additional 250 new hotel rooms a year to match a steady 3% annual increase in overnight stays in hotels. In the past year, Iceland has witnessed a 15% increase. As of this year, tourism has become the second largest industry in Iceland, surpassed only by fishing. And according to a study by Arion bank, the number of incoming tourists is expected to increase threefold between now and 2015, threefold from the 727,000 visitors predicted to enter the country this year. Compare that to the mere 383,000 reported visitors less than a decade ago, in 2005, and it is clear that Iceland has to do some major adapting. And quickly.

So how did this happen? In the years leading up to the financial crash in 2008, tourism accounted for around 4.4–4.7% of Iceland's total GDP. Iceland was considered a luxury travel destination. High costs and a relatively poor exchange rate deterred most who longed to visit Iceland—Sigur Rós's tour-footage in 'Heima' would have to do. In 2008, when the banks went sliding down the slippery slope of economic collapse, they brought the value of the krona tumbling down with them. By September 2008, the króna had experienced a devastating depreciation by nearly 80%, and not quietly. With exchange rates now heavily favouring incoming foreign currency, the tourism industry began its voracious expansion. A year later, by 2009, tourism accounted for almost 6% of Iceland's total GDP.

“40% of tourists say that they come here for the culture,’ Páll says”

Since then it has only continued to grow at unprecedented rates. Between 2010 and 2011, the number of international visitors to Iceland jumped from 488,600 to 565,600, a 16.6% increase. The following year that increased again, by 18.9%, with 2012 seeing a record 672,000 international visitors.

In order for growth of this magnitude to occur, the hotel industry and tourism in general had to be responsive. "Tourism will continue to grow," says Hildur Ómarsdóttir, the director of marketing for Icelandair

Hotels, "but I will never take it for granted. It will continue to grow if we decide to make it grow by continuing to enhance and improve it. It is through massive marketing efforts that this industry continues to expand."

The expansion isn't just physical, it's fiscal. "Tourism is a vital pillar of the Icelandic economy. In fact, it is probably what saved us from misery after the crash," says Reykjavík Economics Managing Director Magnús Árni Skúlason. Magnús emphasises the benefits of tourism to underdeveloped areas in the downtown region. He notes the potential of tourism to rejuvenate areas like Hverfisgata and upper Laugavegur. "Upper Laugavegur is not in a good state," Magnús says, "we saw great shops like Atmo, a concept store for Icelandic designers, that were not able to survive recently, even on the main street in the main shopping district in Reykjavík." Tourists will help these businesses survive the dark winter days by flooding them with capital during the summer, Magnús argues.

HEALTHY GROWTH

On August 9, the city released its newly updated Reykjavík Municipal Plan, which calls for a concentration of hotel development in the above mentioned Hlemmur area. The plan is a total revision of the former government's Municipal Plan for 2001–2024, shifting the focus from expanding outward into unused peripheral areas around Reykjavík to developing within the city's current limits. In fact, it is the first master plan for the city that does not propose new suburban areas at the outskirts of the city and if it is carried out, more than 90% of all new residential units until 2030 will be built in the current urban centre.

The benefit of this approach, Páll Hjaltason says, is that it allows the city to focus on maintaining infrastructure that already exists within its municipalities rather than on the construction of new areas to maintain. It also cuts down on traffic, as residents and services alike will be more centrally located.

"It is very easy to pick on and see the negative side of change. People tend to do this without necessarily looking at what they are trying to preserve," Hildur Ómarsdóttir, the director of sales and marketing for Icelandair Hotels, says in regard to Icelandair's approved plans to build a 142-room hotel in the block containing beloved cultural gems such as the Heart Park and Faktorý. "To build up the culture we must take what we have and enhance it," she says. "I don't see how we can preserve if we don't invest in the infrastructure to maintain, further develop, enhance, and improve."

The future Icelandair Hotel will refurbish existing structures to house its guests—maintaining, at the least, an aesthetic of old-town charm. "I think it's a beautiful thing that we can open up to cultures from all over the world," Hildur says, "we should welcome the fact the people want to come here, that the streets can be more colourful, and the culture more rich."

That said, there is a dominating concern over the more literal loss of colour, with the closure of vibrant cultural hubs like Heart Park and Faktorý. Granted, destruction is not an evil in itself. More often than not, destruction breeds creation. Like a flower garden, one has to uproot the old grass and weeds, dig the garden, and turn the soil before the new seeds can be planted. But productivity takes space, and it takes time. The problem with the hotel industry is that it digs up places with established creative foundations and replaces them with an industry based on flux, on temporary inhabitants. Without a chance to establish itself, the creative capacity of the space stagnates. It's like somebody is digging a hole for fresh new crop of flowers to bloom, and then filling it with cement.

BEYOND THE BOARD ROOM

Arnar Fells Gunnarsson is one third of the managing team at Faktorý, a staple of Icelandic music venues that was recently shut down because of its location on the Heart Park property. He emphasises that his complaints are not directed against the building of hotels, but at the way the city is going about doing it. "I'm not against changing and building up of a city; that is a normal

thing," Arnar says, "but I don't think it's a good idea to put all of the hotels in dead centre downtown at the cost of culture." Arnar is not the first to point out questionable actions of the city regarding recent hotel approvals.

“In the end, the City sold the property in its entirety, paving the way for Icelandair to plop a hotel on the pristine lot.”

Over the past decade, the Heart Park property has changed hands from private groups, to banks, to individuals. Each unique owner had a unique agenda. Before the 2007 economic crash, proposals to turn the beloved garden into a seven-storey shopping mall in the heart of downtown had been set into motion. When the crash came in 2007, the massive project could no longer be properly funded, and the property itself was turned over to the hands of Landsbanki bank. Last year, the bank decided that it was done sitting on the property; it was time to cash out.

With the skeletons of overly-ambitious development projects like the office towers at Borgatún looming over Reykjavík, the newly elected Best Party was hesitant to hand the large chunk of property over to any single investor. So it seemed, anyway. They announced that the prime property would be divided up amongst a number of individual investors to prevent the development of creating Borgatún-like creatures in the central city. The City even ran an ad in the local paper with the property divided, encouraging investors to start laying their claims.

When the property was in fact turned over, however, the dispersal effort was quietly abandoned. In the end, the City sold the property in its entirety, paving the way for Icelandair to plop a hotel on the pristine lot. When that transaction was announced, Arnar recalls feeling surprised that, well, no-body seemed surprised.

WHO DO YOU WORK FOR

When it comes to private ownership of publicly used lands, the city can only do so much within their own limits. "I am a bit surprised to see this development approved by the current government", Arnar says, "but I

understand that they are caught between a rock and a hard place. This has been sort of an 'ugly spot' here and people have always wanted to fix it up. Of course you can come and fix it up," he says, "but we don't need a five-storey hotel to do it."

Icelandic pop star Páll Óskar is a little less forgiving than Arnar in his reaction to the city's responsiveness to public outcries. Páll is among the sceptics who question whether or not the city has really done all that it can do in regard to preserving these important public areas. "It's like it doesn't matter to the City. If 18,000 people protest the hotel on this very spot, it doesn't matter. If 3,000 people show up in protest at Austurvöllur, if almost 300 Icelandic musicians protest that Nasa going under, it doesn't matter. And even with all of the fierce articles that have been written in the media, it doesn't matter. That to me is what's most devastating, that all of these voices will be swept aside. Hotel it will be."

Advocates against the closure of music venues such as Nasa worry that the city is taking for granted the culture that draws the tourists here in the first place. According to an April 2013 report by the Icelandic Tourist Board, 40% of visitors cited "culture and/or history" as the most influential reason for their visit to Iceland. "That forty percent comes here for the musicians," Páll Óskar elaborates, "not the movies, not the writers, they come for the music. Isn't it peculiar to close down concert venues like Nasa and Faktorý to make room for a hotel for those very same tourists to stay in?"

One of the possible measures within the hands of government is to convince property owners to commit pieces of their land to the National Heritage Homes Association, as was the case with the Nasa building and the yellow house where Café Stofan now sits. But although the structures will be preserved, the culture that occupies them today and in the past cannot.

TARGETING THE ARTS

It would be naive of the economist, the builder, or the city planner, to assume that the entire realm of human experience that these spaces like Nasa and Heart Park have offered can be boiled down to monetary units. Because one private owner made a payment to another private owner, they now control not only the physical land in question, but also everything that the land currently contains. Heart Park and Nasa serve only as two outspoken representatives of a greater collective of artists and creative industries that have been displaced by the "adaptation" of the city.

It is the nomadic characteristic of the arts and music scenes that makes them resilient, and at the same time renders them vulnerable. "I think the attitude toward musicians in Iceland has generally been 'do-it-yourself, take care of your own shit,'" Páll Óskar reflects. "The same discussion comes up again and again—'why don't you get a job'—indicating that being an artist is not a job. As Iceland was originally a fisher's and a farmer's society, anything that was not fishing or farming was not considered a job. So the thinking has deep roots."

Einar Örn, the current chair for the Department of Culture and Tourism of the Best Party, doesn't agree. "I'm not worried about the health of the Icelandic music scene," says Einar, who is also a founding member of The Sugarcubes and one half of the experimental electronic duo Ghostigital. "Musicians are a historically resilient, nomadic lot. Icelandic music will not be crushed by the hotel industry. Nasa has been closed for a year and a half, Sirkus for even longer, but the scene is just as healthy as ever. There will always be somewhere to play."

"To tie inspiration to a certain place is wrong," Einar elaborates, "it's the people, not the buildings, that do the creating. Spaces are to be reused. Find something else," he says, encouraging the artists displaced by the recent closure of Faktorý to be creative. "Be what you claim everybody is saying that we are killing," he says. "Take on the devil, make it better."

In the meantime, artists around Reykjavík are not standing around.

Creative work continues within the confines of 101 Reykjavík, as buildings are emptied in slow anticipation of being turned into hotels. Bands like Reykjavík!, Retro Stefson, FM Belfast, Borko, Agent Fresco,

and Ólöf Arnalds have seized the uncertainty in city planning and of construction as an opportunity to run artist collectives, hold rehearsal spaces, and even throw impromptu concerts while the structures sit in limbo.

RUNNING ON EMPTY

Regardless, whether or not the health of a scene is dependent on the venues that house it, the individuals that operate those venues, the bands who grow mutually with the venues, and the people that generate the scene should not be disregarded as just another cohesive and resilient entity. "Of course he [Einar] is right, nothing lasts forever," Arnar agrees, "places come and go, but that does not justify the hotels coming

in here downtown and wiping us out."

"I'm really going to miss it," Arnar says regretfully from behind the bar of Faktóry on one of its final days. "These three years have been unbelievable. It's been a really crazy ride. We got to know so many good people—the bands, the staff, everybody." Unfortunately, because of approval of the hotel plans, the Faktóry dynamic as we know it becomes a thing of the past. Arnar admits he does not plan on continuing Faktóry without the Faktóry house. "This house is just totally perfect for it. I would never move Faktóry to a lesser house because people would just constantly compare the two," he explains. "It was a shithole when we got it and we have been fixing it for three years—installing the toilets, expanding the stage, opening up the side room for

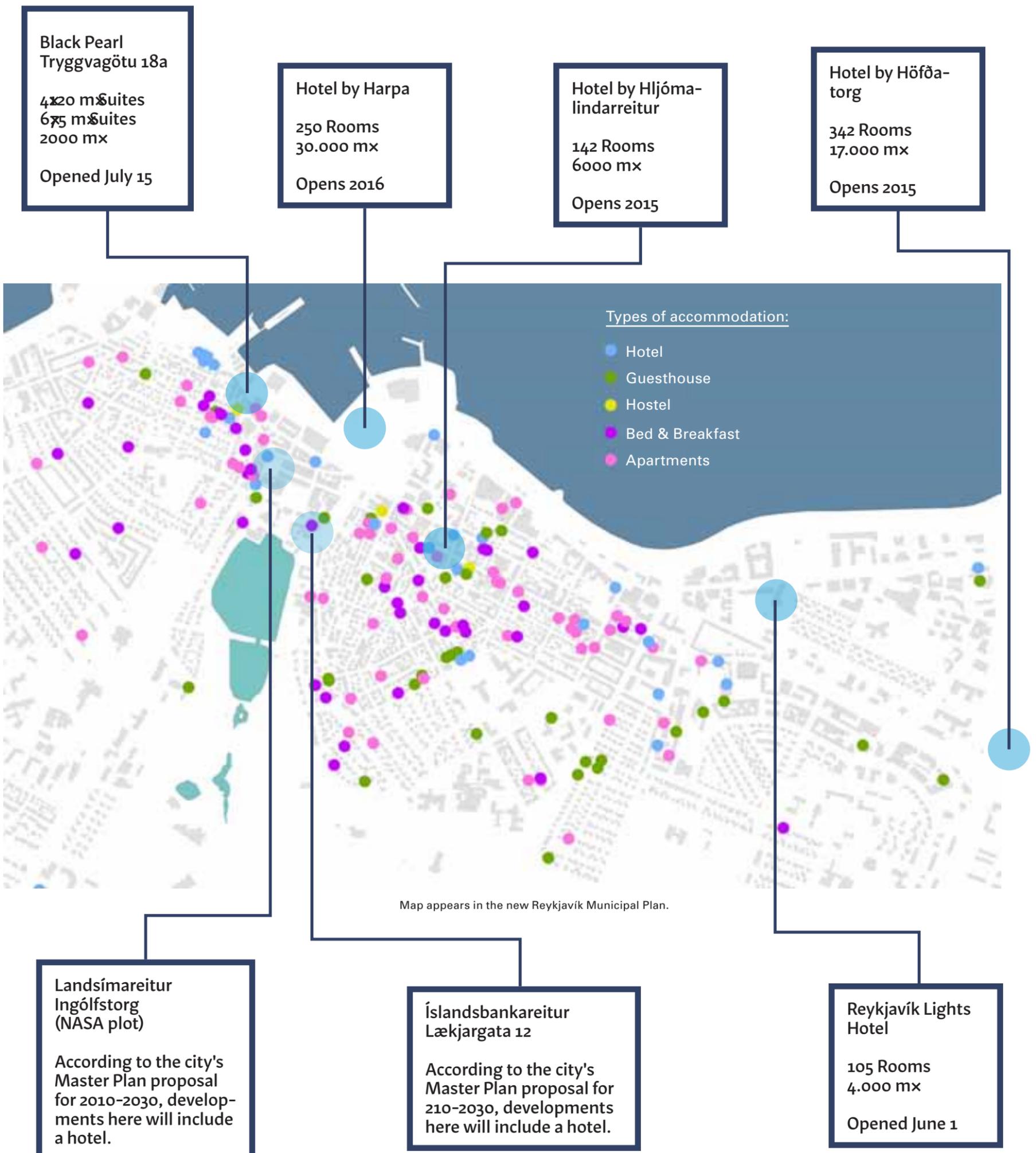
musicians—and it's so weird to think finally when we got the house just as we wanted, finally when it is ready, we have to leave it."

Einar may be right that it would be a mistake to tie creativity to a single, physical space, but one would be just as mistaken to disregard the work of the individuals that goes into making these spaces available. Not to mention, there is a value in having a space to collectivise and thus branch outward from into other creative endeavours.

In the end, it's not a matter of evil hotels versus poor, helpless artists. It's a matter of supply and demand, and the responsive cry for explicit long-term, contextual planning. Musical and youth cultures are historically nomadic. It's part of what makes the scene, the scene. That said, we cannot take its existence for granted. The presence

of such venues and cultural landmarks are assets to the tourism industry, and more importantly, are valuable in themselves. But we should keep in mind the ghosts of optimistic development that now linger, uninhabited and unsightly on the outskirts of Reykjavík, those construction projects that were never occupied, or never completed in the first place.

Eager optimism in any industry is like a disease with late blooming symptoms. You only recognise it after it is too late to do anything about it. In order to thrive, the City of Reykjavík must proceed with caution, think bigger-picture while still crediting the individual—think contextually—and learns to evaluate things in non-monetary measurements.



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GusGus Bid Farewell To Faktory



© Hörður Sveinsson

by Davíð Roach Gunnarsson

11
AUGUST

Faktory

<http://gusgus.com>



The Sunday night in question was special and historical for few different reasons. It was GusGus' first concert at Faktory and it was GusGus' last concert at Faktory. It was Sunday night and it was the last night Faktory would be open to the public.

There is a lot of history in the low-ceilinged concert venue on the upper floor of Faktory. It has hosted thousands of concerts in the more than ten years that it has operated as a live music venue, in some form or the other. Before it was called Faktory, the club was called Grand Rokk, a place where many bands who are now among the most popular in the country—bands like Hjálmar and Retro Stefson—took their first steps towards the limelight. A lot of memories have been made there, a lot of good times celebrated.

Anxiety

The crowd this evening was anxious and the excitement in the air was palpable before the band took stage. Suddenly, all of the lights were turned off, so you couldn't see the stage. Shadowy figures appeared behind an array of music making machines and you could hear the lush strings and staccato synth notes of "Within You," the biggest hit from GusGus' 2011 album 'Arabian Horse.' Then lights went on and Högni crept onto the stage and started pouring his guts out through the microphone. The delivery was intense, and his soulful singing often hovered just behind or ahead of the beat, which just added to the charm.

Daniel Ágúst joined him on stage

for "Arabian Horse," dressed in a swanky white suit and all amped up. Nobody holds a long note quite like Daniel Ágúst, and he often does so with his eyes closed and so much feeling that you can see the vein in his forehead pulsating. It took a bit of time for the crowd to get shaking, but by the forth song, "Deep Inside," the crowd started moving and the room heated up like a sauna. I threw my sweater under the nearest table and my notebook out the metaphorical window.

At some point it was as if the audience had turned into a blobby mass, one living, breathing, but mostly sweating organism that pulsed in euphoric unity. It's a vibe that certainly couldn't be replicated in a larger, fancier venue. Like Harpa.

Crescendo

GusGus used the opportunity to play a few new songs that all sounded fresh, but one of them stood out. I've heard it once before, six months ago, at their Sónar Festival concert, but it still resonated with me and gives off the impression that it will probably be the first single for GusGus' upcoming album. It's immensely catchy with beautiful vocal harmonizing by the two singers and a chorus steeped in dance music/DJ culture nostalgia: "Do you remember the days/When we started to crossfade."

Though most GusGus songs rely heavily on melody and pop hooks, dance music is all about the craft of crescendos, and Biggi Veira and President Bongo know that inside

out. Their sound palette is not very big: mainly squelchy bass, white noise hiss, bright synth tones and drum fills, but they put it to maximum effect, pushing each element to a breaking point in glorious build-ups and inevitable explosions to huge cheers from the crowd. GusGus also brought with them their own sound and lighting system, turning the rather lo-fi venue into a sonic and visual hi-fi. The band's lighting guy plays an integral part in the set, sometimes piling on streams of strobe lights and turning the band members into moving silhouettes.

By the time the groove of 2007 hit "Moss" began wafting from the speakers everybody was high on love, and I banged my head so hard that I probably scattered sweat from my hair over half a dozen people. Daniel Ágúst performed the song with vigour and assurance, turning to Biggi Veira and President Bongo and waving his hands at them like he was conducting an electronic orchestra. Then it was encore time and after a few minutes they came back, and Biggi Veira thanked the crowd and the venue and condemned Reykjavik City Council for its lack of balls in standing up to developers and protecting cultural institutions like Faktory and Nasa. They performed instrumental "Selfoss" before adding the last song of the evening, "Add This Song," where everything was turned up to eleven and your senses were soaked in overwhelming joy.

Faktory's Final Moments

After the concert I was a sweaty mess in dire need of a shower, but since it was Faktory's last night I stuck around to see what would happen, cooling myself down outside the bar.

The cops came soon enough, as the legal closing time for bars in this fair city of ours is 1AM on Sundays. After giving a warning, the 5-0 left and then the music was put back on while Faktory's resident DJ, KGB, ran to his apartment to get his equipment. Soon, the party back in full motion.

The place was crammed with people and every table and chair was used as a dancing platform—you could sense that these young wildlings were not willing to

give up their favourite party spot to greedy developers this easily.

KGB pumped his eclectic party mix and the public sang along, poured beer into and onto their faces, and started smoking cigarettes inside; the overall mood was a strange mix of sorrow and celebration. The only thing that could possibly stop this party was state-sponsored force, which arrived in the form of ten policemen around 3 AM, one of whom ran into the DJ booth to prevent another song from being played.

The lights came on, and Faktory was finished, but at least it went out with style and a modicum of resistance. It lives on in our collective cultural consciousness.

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All The Rage

Grísalappalísa's album release concert at Faktory

by Adrienne Blaine



Magnús Andersen

Emerging upstairs at Faktory for the Grísalappalísa album release concert was like entering a man cave: hazy lights, musky smells and low growls issued from the front of the room. The scene was overwhelmingly male.



Faktory

<http://grisalappalisa.bandcamp.com>

The lack of females was surprising since vocalists Gunnar Ragnarsson and Baldur Baldursson are regulation Icelandic hotties. But don't let the sweet-faced baby photo on the cover of Grísalappalísa's 'ALI' album fool you; this is angry music.

As the sound began to swell, I realised that just as females often berate males to share their feelings but turn heel as soon as they unleash their inner demons, there are few women who tolerate angsty discordant shouting about some chick named Lísá. Luckily for the all-male band, a few female attendees were clearly willing to sooth their masculine woes.

The primal shouts and percussion started raging and a wave of caveman energy surged through the crowd, polished by the '80s style backing featuring a nonchalant saxophone. Young men pulsed to the beat, as if it were their lifeblood.

Even to a non-native speaker it was obvious the Icelandic lyrics spoke to these men on a deep emotional level or at least a deeply drunken one. Chants of "Grísa! Lappa! Lísá!" rose up periodically and whipped the crowd into a testosterone-fuelled frenzy.

At one point a man stuck his hand into the speakers in an attempt to connect with the music quite literally. He wore a pimp style fur coat and a fedora. When he wasn't sloshing his gin and tonics over his neighbours he held up a burning joint to the band like a ritualistic offering.

A bare-chested man held his torn shirt in his hands and thrashed to the music, while Gunnar and Baldur looked crisp in contrasting black and white ensembles: white tuxedo shirt and skinny jeans versus black sparkles and suspenders. Grísalappalísa consists of effortlessly stylish men, emanating equal parts rage and charisma.



In between jumping up and down and sneering on stage, Gunnar would enter the crowd, which rush to meet him. His style as a front man was more jovially insane than Baldur, who brooded darkly in the background. The two represent a nuanced yin and yang of apathy and conviction reflected in the music.

"When he wasn't sloshing his gin and tonics over his neighbours he held up a burning joint to the band like a ritualistic offering."

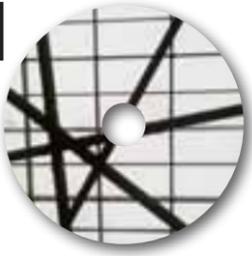
The songs blended well from one to the next and when I wasn't edging away from the mini-mosh pit or the half-hearted crowd surfers, it was easy to embrace the orchestrated chaos. The concert ended with a defiant feedback loop that lost its effect when the band obligingly returned to the stage for a final bow at the crowd's behest.

Although I could not personally reap the group therapy rewards of affirming my own masculine crisis, the Grísalappalísa experience is one I will not soon forget. Playfully transgressive and aggressive, Grísalappalísa live is all the rage.



Album Reviews

+



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A tease of a song

Normally I wouldn't take part in what they call in the trade an InstaReview, where you write a review based on a single listen of an album or song. Ideas and aesthetic judgments on a record can vary wildly after repeated listening. Songs tend to open up and reveal their hidden treasures to those who persevere and exhibit patience. Or the record can turn out to be a steaming pile of cack and you curse the stars for putting yourself through that torture

With this in mind, I'm going to play 'Aquarium,' the latest release from kimono for the first time and type down my immediate thoughts as it plays.

A single track spanning 20-minutes, 'Aquarium' starts off with a relaxed, simple metronomic rhythm of rimshot and ride cymbal. The guitars of Gylfi and Alison barely puncture the air as the arpeggio sounds and notes they gently pluck wash and fold over each other.

kimono are taking their time. It has the feeling of a warm Sunday evening spent outside with the equipment playing in the open air, no one around, the only audience a lowering sun and some birds. Everything barely ebbs and flows in the energy level department. It's not until over five minutes in that the drums change rhythm ever so subtly that you don't notice it at first.

Halfway into 'Aquarium', there's a change in mood and energy, as the drum style changes and the guitar take on a more direct approach. It's still fragile in its structure, but we're seeing formations of simple riffs and note lines appear for the first time.

As we approach the last act of the track, things start taking on what we would call the "classic" kimono sound. Heavy tom-action coupled with guitar harmonics and gentle riffing. But despite the raising of energy levels, as we reach the end of the song kimono refrain from going into climax mode, with everything going hell for leather. Rather, they sustain the song 'til it feels like it's going to burst, before gently bringing everything back down to calm peace, finish. Fade out. There's no manly rock payoff or release of tension in the old-fashioned sense. Tantric prog rock, in other words.

On initial listening, 'Aquarium,' is definitely a tease of a song. Its come hither style brings you in and builds up expectations, but doesn't let you have what you want. Instead it dictates your level of aural enjoyment on its own terms, preferring not to waste its life-force on someone who might not appreciate it.

Some people would pay good money for a relationship like that.

✂ - Bob Cluness

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It's A Celebration!

By Óli Dóri and Davíð Roach Gunnarsson

Every once in a while we like to indulge in a bit of shameless self-promotion and we are doing so now for a very good reason, so bear with us.

On July 21 last year, we launched *straum.is*, on which we have since published 400 stories documenting the music scene and hopefully helping people discover a new favourite band or two. This summer, the site branched out into the English language column that you're reading right now in this fine publication and so we would like you, dear reader, to come to our first birthday party. It'll be held at Harlem on August 22, when we turn exactly 1 year, 1 month, and 1 day old. Some of our favourite local artists will be playing and yours truly will be DJing. The party starts at 21:00 on that Thursday and there will be some free beer for those who show up early. So join us in a celebration of music and life!

Last year also marked the birth of Iceland's only contemporary pure disco band, Boogie Trouble. The band that's prompted lots of ass shaking at their concerts this year are now going on a hiatus because some of their members are seeking higher education across the

Atlantic. So they will be throwing a goodbye concert on August 17 at Gamli Gaukurinn. Supporting them is a roster of bands with at least one thing in common: Bjór, Babies and Bárufjárn. Yes, they all start with the letter "B." Given the b-theme, people whose name start with a "B" will get a discount on the entrance fee, but the rest of the alphabet should certainly show up as well.

Finally, you should note that Markús & The Diversion Session released a new EP in Lucky Records on August 15 and the first single from it, "Decent Times," is way decent. Reminiscent of Pavement, with some hazy guitar strumming and Markús' voice floating effortlessly atop in a style cross between Stephen Malkmus and Beck in his quieter moments, it's catchy '90s lo-fi slacker rock at its best. And we are immensely digging the post-chorus mini keyboard solos courtesy of Steini Teaque (of Moses Hightower fame). If we ever get some sun in the final stretch of summer, this would be the perfect song to loaf around to in a public park.

straum.is has been active since last summer, with writers Óli Dóri and Davíð Roach documenting the local music scene and helping people discover the best new music. It is associated with the radio show *Straumur* on X977, which airs every Monday evening at 23:00.



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Come For The Glaciers, Stay For The Video Art

Artist residencies are springing up all over Iceland, and more international artists are visiting each year. Jacqueline Breen finds out what they're finger-painting...

Words and photos by Jacqueline Breen



Most people in Skagaströnd fish. There are some marine biologists, some others working the gas station-slash-burger joint and two friendly women in the post office. And, for now, there is one video and performance artist orchestrating an international dance lesson across the World Wide Web.

Most people in Skagaströnd fish. There are some marine biologists, some others working the gas station-slash-burger joint and two friendly women in the post office. And, for now, there is one video and performance artist orchestrating an international dance lesson across the World Wide Web.

Emily O'Connor recently landed in Skagaströnd to undergo a one-month artistic residency. Stepping off the little bus on Iceland's windy north-west coast, the 26-year-old Australian looked around and thought: 'Wow. Ok.'

"I'm just walking along the street laughing all the time because it's so good," she says of her new home. Skagaströnd is a coastal fishing and trade port, and the artistic residents have nestled in to an old fishing plant. On her first day Emily charged up the nearest mountain and stared out at a moody, changeable ocean. "I've never had such a physical and emotional reaction to a place as I do here," Emily says, grinning and shaking her head. "I can't explain it. The landscape just does something to you."

The residency run-down

Roughly three hundred artistic types like Emily land in Iceland each year to undergo residencies,

drifting in from Australia, America, India and everywhere else. The two biggest residencies are SIM, in Reykjavík, and Nes, in Skagaströnd, and there are smaller ones scattered all over the place.

The idea is to offer living and working space for artists to meet new people, form new ideas and produce all kinds of work. Residencies usually last between one and six months, and although most artists pay a fee, some receive grants to cover costs.

Some residencies request finished art works, and encourage artists to contribute by hosting open days or workshops. Others simply offer space and time to think and create. The bigger residencies are great for collaboration while smaller ones, like Herhúsið in Siglufjörður (which hosts just one isolated artist at a time), are better for quiet contemplation.

Creating dialogue

"We have a boom in residencies right now," says Kristjana Rós Guðjohnsen, who works at Visit Iceland. Within that marketing machine, Kristjana works to promote art and culture. She reckons there are roughly 11 residencies running at present, but says that the number fluctuates—their

popularity is growing, and informal artist-run initiatives can pop up quite quickly. Kristjana has worked at Reykjavík's SIM and is an artist herself, so she knows her way around a paintbrush. These days she has her own studio in SIM, just one floor below the foreigners.

"SIM is just one big apartment downtown," Kristjana says, "and the house is packed." Iceland's oldest residency, SIM opened in 2002 with just one resident. Today it welcomes thirteen international artists each month. The residents live on the fourth floor, and there are 44 studios below for both international and local artists. In this tiny glittery galaxy of creativity, and an ideal place for local and international artists to hang out and talk shop. "It can be really nice to go upstairs and just talk to the residency artists," Kristjana tells me. "They're very welcoming, there's no door—you just go upstairs and say hi."

This, of course, was all part of the plan—SIM was designed to create dialogue. "It's better today, but Iceland used to be quite isolated," Kristjana says. Founders Ingibjörg Gunnlaugsdóttir and Áslaug Thorlacius conceptualised the residency as an outstretched hand to the outside world. "It was a huge asset for artists and also society to get foreign artists to come to Iceland and learn from each other," Kristjana continues. The residency holds artist talks at the beginning of each month and exhibitions at the end, and Kristjana says local artists and local everythings turn up interested and supportive.

Well, duh...Iceland's appeal

Ask anyone why they chose to come to Iceland and they're likely to point at anything, in any direction, and say "well, duh." Ask the artistic residents and they'll do the same, but went into a bit more detail for us. The dramatic landscape made everyone's list, and totally seduced British fine artist Emma Stibbon. "The preoccupying theme to my work is landscape in transition," Emma says, and here she has plenty of volcanoes, glaciers and transatlantic rifts to keep her canvases full of dramatic black-and-white sketches.

Emily O'Connor liked the island's isolation. "I didn't want it to be another Sydney project," she says of her dance piece. She could feasibly create the same work back home in Australia, but wanted to expand her horizons, artistically and geographically. And, of course, residencies help ease the Icelandic strain on the wallet. Artists are rarely rolling in króna, and residencies make affordable what might be otherwise impossible. "It really gives artists a great opportunity to be here on a budget," says Emma Stibbon. Like many travellers she fell hard for Iceland on her first trip, but recognised that love don't come for free. A one-month residency at Listhús in Ólafsfjörður was, for Emma, financially within reach.

And it seems the residencies are good for Iceland's wallet as well; their contribution to tourism

revenue is significant, and growing. The small scale's easy to see: "Well, the artists all buy plane tickets!" says Kristveig Halldórsdóttir, who, along with Alda Sigurðardóttir, runs the Gullkistan residency in Laugarvatn. The bigger picture is harder to quantify, but the trickle-down effect is obvious: more activity means more people buying more things across Iceland. Kristjana from Visit Iceland says that almost 40% of international visitors cite art and culture as their key reason for coming.

Selling it to the world

It's a funny old world, economically. Art and culture normally struggle in tough financial times, so I was surprised to find that many of the residencies opened their doors after 2008. These artists just want to tell me about the bright side of 2008. "During the crisis the krona fell 50%, and that meant it was easier for foreigners to come," says Kristveig from Gullkistan. Kristjana also sees a silver lining painted around the economic cloud, and says the crisis reenergised Icelandic creativity. "Before the crisis people were too busy, and time was money," she tells me, "and now all of a sudden artists had an opportunity to do things they couldn't do before. The creative industry has actually blossomed after the crisis."

All this might be old news to the average Icelander. Many are familiar with the residencies because they themselves often wind up in the frames. A resident artist in Skagaströnd recently directed an interactive theatre piece staged by the townspeople, and local children can now make a mean kite thanks to a residency workshop. In fact, Emily's worried her new neighbours are already arted out. "I've got to ask some of them to be in my piece," she tells me. "I'm worried they're all just thinking 'oh, another bloody artist.'"

For now the residency coordinators are brainstorming ways to work better together, and there are various plans for expansion. Kristveig and Alda are working to secure Gullkistan in a permanent home in an old school building, and the Nordanbal crew at Hrísey is hosting artists celebrating Akureyri's 150th anniversary this year. The residencies' profile is on the rise politically as well. Kristjana's position at Visit Iceland was only created earlier this year, which suggests Iceland's image-makers see some real potential in this whole 'art' thing.

And they say creativity is contagious. Skagaströnd's mayor recently took his kids along to Nes for that kite-making workshop, and said the residencies were inspiring his neighbours to embrace creativity. Who knows—it might not be too long before all those Skagaströnd fishermen start whipping up video art in their spare time.



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Why I Wrote 'Tales Of Iceland'

by Stephen Markley



When I picked up my first copy of the Reykjavik Grapevine while on a tour of Iceland, I had this staggering, overwhelming thought that went something like: "Quit your job, move to Iceland, never look back, and write for this wonderful rag full-time." So taken was I with the country of Iceland in all

its beauty, friendliness, charm, and ceaseless winking wit, that throughout my trip I had this unformed urge to just move there and see what happened.

Alas, I had bills and friends and a career back in the States, so instead I wrote a travelogue called 'Tales of Iceland or Running with the Huldufólk in the Permanent Daylight,' which juxtaposed a detailed account of my adventures (and misadventures) with my friends Trin and Bojo with all the great stories we heard during our travels. This included but is not limited to: meeting a raging drunk Kiefer Sutherland, interviewing Jón Gnarr, hiking glaciers, drinking, women, drinking, socio-political and economic commentary on the island nation, hidden people tours, and drinking. Not knowing what I'd write or how I'd even begin, I ended up with a document that simply proved to myself what a potentially life-shaping experience it can be to travel to a place you never before could conceive of in your imagination.

Since then, Trin and I have teamed up to turn the 'Tales of...' brand into a series. Right now, we're in Quito, Ecuador, gathering interviews and experience in one of South America's most interesting and often overlooked countries. Our ambitions for these books are simple: we want them to be entertaining as hell, riotously funny, occasionally offensive, dark, hopeful, dreamlike, challenging, and a quick way to inspire people to get out and travel. Even if it doesn't inspire them to travel, maybe it will inspire them to see the world in a different way.

As I write early on in 'Tales of Iceland,' these books are not intended as travel guides. Travel guides and travel gurus are virtually everywhere, overflowing bookstore shelves (or Amazon servers, I guess). What we're trying to get at is the peculiar, hilarious, unyieldingly strange and wonderful underbelly of modern travel, warts and all.

Of course this means acknowledging that we may be full of shit and as soon as a big corporate publisher comes along and offers us 3,000 USD and a lifetime supply of skyr in exchange for the trademark we will sell out faster than an Icelandic banker (boom!). But for now these are books coming straight out of my brain, gleefully profane and meant for raw consumption. Hopefully, we will

soon add other writers to the mix. Hopefully, we will soon sell many more books. Hopefully, we will soon be placed on the watch list of autocratic regimes from Russia to Venezuela because we really love free expression—it helps you talk about politics, history, justice, environmental rights, and penis jokes.

The Grapevine was kind enough to include an excerpt from Tales of Iceland, which will give you an idea of just what exactly this book about Iceland is all about.

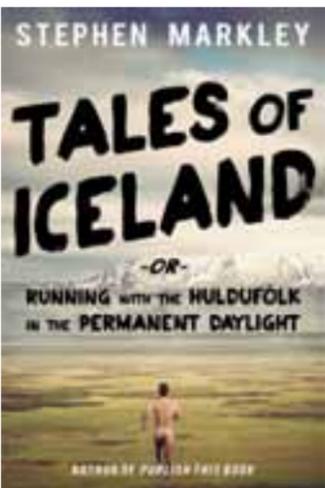


Illustration: Sigga Rún

Chapter 1

Why Iceland

Why anywhere? It's unclear how the places we wish to travel get stuck in our heads as destinations on a kind of epic, global to-do list—most of which will never get done before worms are sucking out our eyeballs. I know that stored in my imagination I have a panoply of countries, cities, vistas, monuments, spider holes, canteens, hallowed grounds, and myriad other Planet Earth destinations I'm always telling myself I'll get to eventually. God help us if interstellar travel ever works out and suddenly we add multiple planets and solar systems to that to-do list in our to-be memory.

With Iceland, however, I remember the exact moment I decided I had to get there. I was in college and Quentin Tarantino was on Late Night with Conan O'Brien raving about his New Year's Eve experience in Iceland. "Supermodels working at McDonald's," was the phrase that understandably stuck with me. Previously, I knew basically nothing about the country except that its capital city was Reykjavik and it wasn't as cold as Greenland.

[This is the one piece of knowledge-that-shouldn't-count-as-knowl-

edge everyone retains about Iceland: that the Vikings switched the names of Greenland and Iceland in hopes of tricking everybody as to which place to call home. Historically, this is probably kinda-sorta accurate in the superficial, elementary school-level way—as roughly accurate as, "The founding fathers were all great men."]

Tarantino—spastic, emphatic, and on Conan to promote the release of a film he'd produced that served the sole purpose of allowing viewers to watch young people get sadistically tortured to death—planted a bug in my brain that never wormed its way out. I was a college kid who enjoyed getting drunk and attempting to sleep with beautiful women, so how could his endorsement not stick?

[Sooo much has changed since those days. For instance: Now I have this weird patch of hair that grows out of an otherwise hairless quadrant of my abdomen and I'm terrified to shave or pluck it for fear it will expand or coarsen. It's a totally different world.] That movie he was promoting was called Hostel. I remember sitting in the theater watching this film where outlandishly beautiful women lured young kids into torture chambers to get their thumbs cut off and their

thighs drilled full of holes and their eyeballs pulled out of their sockets. As they screamed, I kept thinking to myself in icy-cool-blue lettering with mist rising around the edges: lcccccce-Laaaaaand.

After that, a whole bunch of shit happened.

I graduated from college, I traveled the country, I moved to Chicago, I got a job, I published my first book, I quit the job, I traveled some more, I wrote more books, I saw Hostel II. Through it all, I never really considered traveling to Iceland; it just sat in the back of my mind, unrealized. It's strange the way that opportunity arises in life, the way forces can coincide and align. Here is the unremarkable story of how I ended up actually going to Iceland, but first you have to know about a couple of friends of mine, who will both go by bastardized versions of their last names.

[Although I'm about to do a really terrible job of protecting their identities, and by the end of this you should easily be able to Facebook both and follow them on Twitter.]

"You're not leaving us in suspense are you, you sonofabitch?"

—Trin, to Bojo when Bojo said aloud that he wasn't sure if he would take a shower in the morning.

To understand my friend Trin, it's really best if you've seen the two NBC sitcoms 30 Rock and Parks and Recreation. Trin is kind of a hybrid of Rob Lowe's Chris Traeger, and Jon Hamm as Liz Lemon's two-episode boyfriend: this incredibly handsome dude with black hair, bright blue-gray eyes, a concoction of dark Greek and Italian features, strong build, resplendent smile.

[Of course I'm comfortable enough in my sexuality to call another guy's smile "resplendent." I also have a Sarah McLachlan song on my iTunes—"World on Fire"—so eat me.]

Like Jon Hamm on 30 Rock, he's this handsome guy who just does not understand that his handsomeness gives him great advantages in life. From women to work to socializing, the indefatigable aura of swoon produced by the red-giant star of his handsome carries him across the universe with rainbows trailing. He never seems to understand that it's not normal for a guy to walk into a bar and have every attractive woman stumble over themselves to talk to him. He just can't comprehend that for the rest of normal-looking-guy humanity, smiling resplendently won't cause panties to dissolve in moisture across a 50-mile radius.

Yet the great (or terrible, depending on your perspective) thing about Trin is that his good looks do not manifest in his personality as arrogance and entitlement and cruelty the way they can in certain people. Like Chris Traeger, his optimism and love of life are the two most prominent qualities to his personality. He's just a really, really nice guy. A really nice guy, who played center for his high school football team, studied engineering at Georgia Tech and worked as a consultant for IBM. To be sure, all this could be totally obnoxious. Everyone knows a person who's just too annoyingly kind and great and perfect to the point where you think it's either bullshit and he's a child molester or, even worse, not bullshit. Luckily (or unluckily), Trin has just enough of an edge to round him out. He's funny but in that really weird way that makes a person refreshingly normal. For instance, his farts smell like the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust, and he giggles every time he births one.

In 2011, Trin decided he needed to try something new; he'd been at his job at IBM for five years, and he got to the point where, "I was either going to keep going along, heading down that path or I was going to try to do something I always wanted to do." He

went to his supervisors and told them he wanted to quit, and they gave him a seven-month leave of absence instead—as if that had nothing to do with dropping that resplendent smile, the stupid, beautiful fuck.

“We should have told them we’re not typical cruise-ship D-bags. We’re on-land D-bags.”

—Bojo, on how we better could have seduced two cruise ship dancers we met in a coffee shop, who, we figured, were probably only impressed by good-looking D-bags on their cruise ship.

I don't think I exchanged more than five words with Bojo during the first six months I knew him. The guy is preternaturally quiet even when surrounded by his best friends. At parties, he can blend into the conversation and stand without saying a word for so long that you wonder if he's had a stroke. For someone who enjoys talking out of his ass so much that it's kind of a waste my mouth is located on my face, this is beyond my ken. Our mutual friends and I often wonder what he's thinking about in these moments, if he's actually deep in thought about the ether-bound mysteries of the universe or if he's just humming in his head to the Rawhide theme, “Bojo-Bojo-Bojo! Bojo-Bojo-Bojo! Bojooooo!”

But then you get to know the kid and slowly discover that not only is he an incredibly intelligent guy, but he also has that weird sense of humor, with an innate ability to say something so perfectly goofy and irreverent at the exact right moment. I always tell him that he likes to save it up, to say nothing for two hours of a five-hour car ride and then hit you with the off-the-cuff remark at the precise moment you're least able to resist it. Taking it back to NBC sitcoms, he's Costanza making the one crack at the boardroom meeting, throwing up his hands, and leaving the room. He also recently grew a full, dark, jealousy-inducing beard, which one of my female friends in Chicago observed made him my second hottest friend (guess who took first?).

Bojo, also an engineer, worked in the suburbs of Chicago for a manufacturer, designing parts for big industrial firms like Caterpillar, which is about as outside of my understanding as IBM consulting or not speaking for an hour. His commute from the city took an hour there and an hour and a half back. This kind of daily slog meant he woke at 6 a.m. and rarely got home before 7 p.m. One can only keep up that kind of schedule for so long before either going crazy or marrying someone awful and moving to the suburb where he works. So Bojo applied to grad school and decided on the MBA program at Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh. This meant he too would be quitting his job, and it just seemed clever to quit before the summer began to join Trin for a few months on his trip. After an exhaustive search (you will quickly learn that these two are into researching things “exhaustively” before plunging in, which only begins to define the wonderful differences in our personalities), they found a cheap flight to Reykjavik on Icelandair.

Enter Markley

Unlike Bojo and Trin, I wasn't quitting a job or going back to school. I'd been underemployed for a year or more, was in the middle of working on my second and third books simultaneously and had just lucked into the fattest fiscal windfall of my life when I sold the movie rights to Publish This Book. Without going into the biography of this period too much, I'll say that I basically used the cash to 1) stop scrapping for freelance gigs to focus on book writing for as long as I could and 2) take as many pretty girls out on dates as I could possibly fit into waking hours.

[This had its benefits and drawbacks. For instance, it got expensive

to have four dates in a week, plus two weekend nights on the town that lasted till 4 a.m. in order to find fodder for more dates. It only dawned on me that I was going to blow through this relatively meager movie money way too fast when I bought an extremely pretty 41-year-old divorcée (who clearly was an adult person who made more money than me) \$100 worth of casual drinks on a Tuesday night.]

I also wanted to use the money to take a trip somewhere I'd never been before, and when Bojo and Trin mentioned that they'd bought tickets to Iceland, I flashed back to that long-ago endorsement from the producer of Hostel. Within a few weeks I'd found a \$600 ticket on Icelandair.

What This Book Is Not

Before we get to our story, we have to go over a few things this book is not so that no one is upset when they begin to understand that I have no recommendations for Reykjavik fine dining, nor do I understand how to say, “Which way is the potato farm?” or any other Icelandic phrase. I know nothing about Iceland other than what I've gleaned from my travels and read on the Internet or in this archeologically fascinating education-informatensil of our near past called a “bok.”

[My editor says the correct spelling is “book” but we will have to agree to disagree.]

This is not a guide. I know no other routes in Iceland other than the one I took, and I know no other destinations and sights other than the ones I saw.

If I had to classify this, I'd call it travel lit with a distinctly Markleyian flare—“Markleyian” being the definition of any weird little fucking thing that comes into my head stirred with narrative and sociopolitical whining.

There will be stories that have nothing to do with Iceland. There will be vastly inappropriate jokes about body functions and functions the body was never intended to undertake, and many of these will not be all that funny if you weren't there.

This is also not a “backpacker's guide” to shit. I did not live in Iceland for six months. I didn't even have a backpacker's backpack. I had a little rolly-type suitcase my mom gave me several years ago, which I wheeled around loudly over cobblestones looking very mom-like. My actual backpack I'd just gotten for free from a friend, and it drew me only because of its sheer number of pockets. For some reason I find multiple pockets a very attractive feature of a backpack, especially because my actual backpacker's backpack, which I've lugged around on so many previous trips, is this Osprey with just one massive pocket for everything, so all your clothes, books, toiletries, and other possessions just end up in a savage muddle. Though they sell a lot of merchandise, I would gladly enter an Oxford-style debate to argue that Osprey doesn't know dick about backpacks.

I took a 2½-week trip and, let's face it: if you're a debt-loaded postgrad in this uncertain economy you probably have to parcel out your travels uneasily and even 2½ weeks seems like a luxury of gargantuan proportions.

So if you've bought this book, just know that it will be a little foul. It will not teach you anything about Iceland that you can't look up on Wikipedia. It may make you laugh, but people who claim in the first chapter that the reader will laugh are usually assholes. My hope is not only that somehow, somehow this becomes the indispensable book that cool people read before or during a trip to Iceland, but that perhaps it inspires more people to travel to Iceland. All I can say with full credibility is that I went to Iceland and kind of fell in love with the place. This is how it happened.

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On A Date With:
Svavar Pétur Eysteinnsson

The Vegan Sausage King Of Iceland

by Rebecca Louder



Magnús Andersen

A large glob of water keeps dripping out of someone's rain-gutter onto my head as I huddle in a doorway, waiting for my mid-morning date, Svavar Pétur Eysteinnsson. Moments later, a large burgundy jeep swoops into the parking spot ahead of me and out pops the man of the hour, smiling and chipper as a farmer about to pick the morning crop.

Appropriately enough, we are meeting at the new Óðinsgata location of the organic, fresh-from-the-farm specialty store Frú Lauga. Svavar makes a quick half circle to the trunk of his car and opens it up to reveal two crates full of his latest success: Bulsur vegan sausages. Not only does he shop here, but they are one of the four local shops that sell the meat-free links, and today they're getting a delivery.

Meatless pursuit

Of course, up until recently, most people knew Svavar for producing entirely different creations. Namely music, as a member of the band Skakkamanage and as front man for weirdo-pop darlings Prins Póló, various graphic design ventures plus having been co-proprietor of the dearly departed Havarí book and design shop. Then suddenly, he turned his attention to sausages. "I went vegetarian last year and I quickly got a craving for sausages," Svavar tells me, while helping to unload one of his crates of shrink-wrapped non-meat. "The problem is I hate soy, so I couldn't really have any of the meatless sausages available. So I decided to make my own."

Thus he launched into almost a year of trial and failure in recipe making, he tells me, ambling around the shop eyeing the day's crop and exchanging pleasantries with another person delivering their wares. "I tried many different things to get the consistency and flavour right, and it really took a lot of time," he says, but doesn't recall a test batch so terrible he had to spit and rinse.

The result? A Coeliac sufferer's dream sausage: a mix of barley, beans, almonds, chia and flax seeds, with no traces of potato, soya, gluten or egg. He walks over to a shelf and grabs a bag of barley from Móðir Jörð, an organic farm in Vallanes. "This is what I use to make Bulsur," Svavar states with determination. "I love this stuff. This farm is so great."

Svavar seems particularly at home in this extremely small shop, perhaps due to the fact that it was one of three locations that sold his

first batch of sausages. "I thought I had delivered enough to last a week or two," he says, "but they sold out in two hours. Between ten in the morning and noon, all three stores were sold out." His eyes are wide in joyful bewilderment. It's as though the reality of it has still not sunk in, even though his batches have progressively increased from 40kg to 600kg in one month in order to meet the demand.

the best, it has such a good flavour," he says passionately. Indeed, these pudgy, auburn-coloured fry-em-ups have really consumed all of his creativity.

"I spent the past two years working in a studio, sitting down, and I really felt the urge to do work that involved standing and using my hands," Svavar explains how he redirected himself towards honing a new craft. "One thing that sparked this was sitting in my studio looking at a stack of unsold Skakkamanage CDs and thinking, come on!"

Creation is its own reward

He says that this new venture has so completely taken him over that he has put graphic design entirely on ice (except for designing Bulsur labels), and doesn't even really have the desire to make music (sorry, fans!). He seems slightly bashful to admit that he had to force himself to take a couple of weeks off at the end of summer to finish up the next Prins Póló record, scheduled for a fall release.

But altogether, he doesn't see this change as a drawback. "It doesn't make a difference if I'm making an album or a poster or sausages, it's just about creating," he says. "I'm the same person, and the urge to create comes from the same place. It's just a different outcome." He is also receiving so much feedback about his product—"It's nice to hear the good, but it's important to hear the bad"—that he's even getting the urge to implement a culinary experimentation kitchen in his own home.

And all this because he went vegetarian? Well, yes. "Changes in life are good for you because they help you come up with new ideas. Move houses, quit your job, quit smoking, quit drinking, quit eating meat," Svavar says. "When you quit something, you start something new. If you've been doing something for a long time, get rid of it and you will find new things in life."

Nodding happily, he looks over to his left and points to a bag of spelt buns. "I just discovered these recently. They go really well with Bulsur."

"With a CD, maybe a few people buy it but they have it for a long time. With sausages, more people buy it but they... recycle it a lot quicker."

You can't digitise food

He and his wife, Berglind Häsler also of Skakkamanage and Prins Póló, now spend four or five days a week making Bulsur at the Esja food processing facility, renting the time, equipment, technical and culinary support. I point out that the technical process of making the sausages is not so different from recording a studio album. "That's kind of true!" Svavar laughs. "There's a similarity to it, but what's really different is how people consume the product. With a CD, maybe a few people buy it but they have it for a long time. With sausages, more people buy it but they... recycle it a lot quicker."

Svavar walks past the barley and picks up a box of Saltverk Reykjaness's flaky sea salt, which is handcrafted in the Westfjords using a 200-year old artisanal method. Again, this is another product he swears by for making Bulsur. "This salt is really

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LET'S DANCE

The Reykjavík Dance Festival 2013 is almost here!

Words by Rebecca Louder – Photos curtesy of Reykjavík Dance Festival



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Katrin Deufert & Thomas Plischke let the audience get playful in ANARCHIV#2: second hand.

At the end of the month, our fair city will be inundated by performance. Since 2002, the Reykjavík Dance Festival has been the single most important time of year for Iceland's independent professional dancers and has contributed to the vast growth and expansion of their work.

Operating on a purely local level for its first few years, the festival had a couple of re-toolings until they landed on a model that truly fit. Since last year, the event

is curated by different artistic directors, and this year it is spearheaded by multi-platform performers Erna Ómarsdóttir and Valdimar Jóhannsson. It is also partnered with the Lókal International Theatre Festival for the second time and shares the same social space.

This year's edition stands out for having the highest number of international performers involved in the festival. Although the festival is primarily made by and for the local freelance dance community,

the growing number of foreign guests allows them to make better outside connections, build collaborations and fit into the context of the European dance community.

Among the international performers are Deufert&Plischke from Germany, bringing a piece entitled 'ANARCHIV#2: second hand' which Thomas Plischke says allows the audience to play along with them, but never forces them into participation. The Brussels-based Dane Mette Ingvarsten will perform



Diederik Peeters confuses and misdirects with his paranoia-inspired piece, Red Herring.

'Evaporated Landscapes', a piece comprised of ephemeral elements subject to factors like temperature, lights, body bass and mechanics. Heine Avdal and Yukiko Shinozaki, the Swedish-Japanese couple who go by the name Fieldworks, will deal with uncertainty, immediacy and humour in their piece 'Borrowed Landscapes', performed in the Bónus grocery store.

Back with our locals, there will be several much anticipated premieres, including 'Scape Of Grace' by Saga Sigurðarsdóttir, 'Soft Target Installed' by Margrét Sara Guðjónsdóttir and 'To The Bone' by Erna and Valdimar's company Shalala. The latter will also act as an introductory performance for the 'Black Yoga Screaming Chamber', an ongoing installation by Erna and Valdi found at various locations until September 1, which will bear some loud and intense fruit.

This festival is the local dance community's answer to Iceland Airwaves: it's just as cool and jam-packed full of amazing talent, and you don't have to wait in long queues! So take the week off work, drop the kids off with the grandparents, devote one week of your life to performance art and enjoy!



The Surprised Body Project by Franscesco Scavetta & Wee creates complex metaphors using human bodies.

Dance Festival Social Club

While the festival's artistic director's hands are spilling over with curatorial work, next year's pre-selected directors, Alexander Roberts and Ásgerður G. Gunnarsdóttir, a.k.a. Choreography Reykjavík, are in charge of setting up the SUPER SOCIAL SPACE, a type of pop-up outreach space where the dance community and the non-dance related public can converge.

Taking place in Dansverkstæðið, a dance and choreography space attached to KEX Hostel, the space will be open for the

festival's ten days with a slew of free events – workshops, lectures, performances, dancing, and nightly parties. "It's kind of like a magic trick or a con where we're using DJs, free publications and free food to get people into the space," Alexander says, "then we try to confront them with contemporary dance and choreography."

He says this approach is a targeted response to the feeling that the Reykjavík dance community is an opaque, exclusive

world where non-dancers see no room for themselves. His and Ásgerður's company have been making a push over the past year to include different types of people into their works and he says this is an attempt to bring people in on another level.

So head over for breakfast and the Morning Clashes series, an evening meal and a Choreography For Dinner, or a late night drink and some rowdy dancing. They welcome everyone with open arms and jazz hands.



The Guy In The Fur Coat Shitting His Pants

Diederik Peeters returns to Iceland

by Rebecca Louder

Diederik Peeters rejects the notion of being a minor cult celebrity in Iceland. Despite the fact that the claim was made by none other than Erna Ómarsdóttir, one of the artistic directors of this year's Reykjavík Dance Festival and Diederik's former collaborator, he laughs it off as a "loving exaggeration." Nonetheless, even the festival's managing director, Tinna Lind Gunnarsdóttir, says, "Icelanders remember him as the guy in the fur coat."

If this was not intriguing enough, Diederik is coming back to Iceland at the end of the month with a performance that will span two partnered festivals — the aforementioned Reykjavík Dance Festival and the Lókal International Theatre Festival. His piece, 'Red Herring,' thoroughly blurs the lines between the two mediums of performance for a production that is as confusing as the title proverbially implies.

Man in a black box

Diederik started his career on an entirely different track from the hybridization of dance and theatre, studying visual arts and harbouring musical aspirations. "It's all a terrible mix-up," he says, "but since I'm no good at any instrument, and much better in pulling faces, I somehow ended up doing what I'm doing now." This meant a gradual shift from mainly doing video work and installations to doing strange performances in galleries, outside of the usual staged context.

Eventually, he decided to set some boundaries for himself and took his works into the "black box" we call theatres. "When I was making these weird, difficult to categorise performances, it was very cool but also very tiring," he says. "That's when I said, okay I'll get acquainted with all the elements of the stage world—sound, lighting, etc. I'm still figuring it out myself, but have high hopes to find out someday soon now."

Ten years ago, he met Erna Ómarsdóttir while the two were working with theatre director Jan Fabre in Belgium. This led to her asking him to perform in her piece 'We Are All Marlene Dietrich FOR,' a work commissioned by the Iceland Dance Company, which earned him his local reputation. "My role in it involved me doing a kind of parody of John Lennon's 'Imagine' while wearing that ridiculously big fur coat," Diederik laughs. "We were hanging out at Sirkus a lot and I guess my dancing style caught some eyes."

Man against the music

His involvement in that work also led

to Erna extending a personal invitation to him to come back for the festivals this year. "She hasn't even seen my new piece but she knows I don't do crap," he says. What he is bringing to the stage is a creation that can simply be described as a duet between a man and a soundtrack. "Since I don't actually know how to make performances, I decided to take the liberty to fool around with the typical tools of the stage in order to find out how to use and to misuse them," he says. "For me set, sound and light are equally important tools as text or performers."

As his previous piece focused on the dramatic possibilities of a set, in 'Red Herring' he focuses on the aspect of sound. "The sound imposes itself as a character, almost physically, to the point where it tries to take over the show," he continues. "Quite annoying actually..." Diederik's dance partner—the sound—will be controlled by sound-designer Lieven Dousselaere who was also part of the production of Erna's 'We Are All Marlene Dietrich FOR' and a regular collaborator with her and her partner, Valdimar Jóhannsson.

Lieven stays at the back of the theatre space trying to keep control an entire cockpit of buttons, LED-lights and faders. "Although we've performed the show over 20 times now, it's still a physical battle for him to make it to the end of the performance alive, so to speak," Diederik says. "It's equally hard for me to keep my head above water. I really enjoy making things so tremendously complicated that it becomes almost impossible to avoid mistakes. It's a form of self-sabotage that I'm quite fond of."

Man is paranoid and confused

Aesthetically, the show is highly influenced by cinema, which Diederik says is a much stronger reference point for him than dance or other forms of performance. "The general atmosphere of the stuff I do is often considered quite cinematic," he says. He openly admits stealing the term "red herring" from the well-known plot device that acts as a false clue, diverting attention away from the true culprit

or solution. Citing names like Tati, Hitchcock and Bunuel, he says the show takes cinematic cues in terms of the sound and lighting as well.

Conceptually speaking, he delved into aspects of humanity that suffer greatly from false clues. "Over the last couple of years, I somehow developed a perverse interest with intense mental states or psychological conditions where reality presents itself differently," Diederik says. "In that sense, paranoia was kind of a starting point. If one suffers from it, it's probably very annoying, but if you take it out of its clinical context it's very funny to watch someone just shitting themselves for nothing."

"I really enjoy making things so tremendously complicated that it becomes almost impossible to avoid mistakes. It's a form of self-sabotage that I'm quite fond of."

Using the idea of a person vulnerable to becoming distressed over figments of the imagination, he folded the use of sound as a trigger to increase paranoia. "To quote good old Luis Bunuel," he says, "sound triggers the imagination more than image."

He also seems comfortable making his audience a little paranoid before they arrive at the theatre. "I quite like to get confused myself; I find it an exciting and inspiring state of mind. And so I can't help myself to start confusing the audience as soon as possible," he says. "Let's keep it at this: knowing that the term Red Herring refers to a false clue, maybe the title doesn't have anything to do with the show at all, and is only there to put you on the wrong track." Audiences may be misdirected, but are unlikely to be disappointed.

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Hollywood Dreams Come True

Things are going A-OK for director Baltasar Kormákur

By Valur Gunnarsson

Baltasar Kormákur just could be to Icelandic film what Björk is to Icelandic music. In the same way that Björk made Icelandic music known outside of the country, Icelandic film has slowly been reaching out to an international audience—and nobody has made it farther than Baltasar.



Christian Schulze

Baltasar is currently in Berlin, filming the pilot for an HBO series called "The Missionary." The story commences in East-Berlin in 1969 and continues into the '70s. The director himself actually visited East-Berlin once in the '80s. "I was on a trip with my drama class, just before the Wall came down. We had been partying and I was very hung-over when we crossed the border and looked nothing like the picture in my passport. I was arrested in customs and the whole class had to wait while things were sorted out. When we finally entered East-Berlin, it seemed as if the sun disappeared behind the clouds and the food tasted kind of strange," he says.

Love in the '90s

Sometime after his release from East German detention, Baltasar started his career in earnest, playing Romeo on the Reykjavík stage and then becoming the leading man in several Icelandic films. Born to a Spanish father and Icelandic mother, he had a whiff of exoticism

about him and was one of the major heart-throbs in Iceland in the '90s. His first film as director, '101 Reykjavík' from 2000, starred Spanish actress Victoria Abril and became an international success of sorts.

It was around this time that he sold his shares in Kaffibarinn, the bar which he owned with Damon Albarn of Blur and where much of the film is set, and turned to domesticity, marrying supermarket chain heiress Lilja Pálmadóttir. He also largely abandoned acting and turned full time to directing. This means long periods away from home. "My son Pálmi is here with me on set, so I try to bring these things together. It's not always easy to be away for four or five months at a time, but you cannot complain about being able to do what you want to be doing," he says.

Nr. 1 in America

Baltasar's first English language film was 'A Little Trip to Heaven' in 2005, starring Forest Whitaker, which he made in between Icelan-

dic films such as 'Jar City,' based on the book by best-selling crime fiction writer Arnaldur Indriðason. His first American-produced film was 'Inhale,' starring Diane Kruger, but his big breakthrough came with 'Contraband' in 2012. This was a remake of an Icelandic film that he himself starred in, with Mark Wahlberg now in the leading role. Despite receiving mixed reviews, the movie went straight to number one at the American box-office on its opening week.

"I was offered more money than many people get in a lifetime to do 'Fast and Furious 7,' and it is more difficult than I would have thought to say no when these kinds of offers start coming in."

In a position now to do what he wanted, Baltasar decided to return home to make 'The Deep,' a film based on a play about the true story of an Icelandic sailor who spent a night in the freezing ocean swimming to land after his ship went down. His next film is 'Two Guns,' starring Wahlberg again, along with Denzel Washington. The film will premiere in the autumn, but before that, Baltasar has his Berlin story to complete.

The return of spy films

Parts of Karl-Marx Allee have been made up to look like they did in 1969, with period cars and people in period dresses. The sight is considerably different than what one is used to seeing in other period pieces from the shiny '60s. "When you remake a period, you are not just remaking that period but also the one that came before," says screenwriter Charles Randolph. "Not all the cars in 1969 were new, and in some ways East Berlin at the time looked more like the 1940s."

The series starts with a failed escape attempt over the wall itself, which has been rebuilt in Budapest on the site of the show's main set. "There were four generations of Berlin Wall and they all appear in the series," says Randolph, whose father was a missionary who helped to smuggle people to the west. "My father wasn't involved with the CIA, but I know the atmosphere well. This was the time

when spy organisations were no longer only gathering information but also taking direct action," he adds, and agrees that the ongoing "War on Terror" might be one reason why spy films seem to be making a comeback.

Vikings in space

Baltasar's next film after all this will be 'Everest,' about a real life mountaineering expedition that went tragically wrong. This will also allow him to spend time at home: "We can probably shoot most of it on Icelandic glaciers; I don't think there is enough oxygen on Everest itself to make it there." The film will star Christian Bale, who was last seen in Iceland in 2005 when he was making 'Batman Begins' (where Iceland also stood in for Tibet).

Among his other planned projects are a sequel to 'Jar City,' a television series based on the popular Icelandic computer game EVE Online, and a long awaited epic set in the Viking Age. "I want to show the Viking world in a way that it has never been seen before. No Icelandic director so far has had the budget to do this properly. At the Viking Alþingi, or Parliament, for example, thousands of people came together but so far we've only gotten to see a few tents on screen."

Turning down more money than you'll ever make

Other projects he has declined. "I was offered more money than many people get in a lifetime to do 'Fast and Furious 7,' and it is more difficult than I would have thought to say no when these kinds of offers start coming in. What is appealing is to be able to get the budget to make big films that also have content, such as "Everest," even if you get paid less. I want to make interesting films that also appeal to an audience. I never wanted to make just hardcore arthouse films and when I direct for the theatre I also want to reach people, rather than do a political one man show in a basement that no one sees." Baltasar indeed still directs for the Icelandic National Theatre, which is where he started his career over 20 years ago.

"When I was growing up in a Reykjavík suburb in the '70s, I had some dreams that hardly seemed likely to come true. People would have laughed if I told them I wanted to be a director in Hollywood," he says. Producer Steve Levinson adds: "Perhaps Baltasar will make it fashionable to go to Iceland to look for directors."

Which is more or less what Björk did for Icelandic music.

Backyard Babies

By Valur Gunnarsson



August is your last chance to see the cavalcade of classic Icelandic films that have been playing at Bíó Paradís this summer. Especially worth seeing are two films—'Heima' and 'Backyard'—that capture the local music scene in the last decade.

For many, the music of Sigur Rós conjures up images of the Icelandic countryside, magnificent mountains and peaceful fjords. It's somewhat ironic that initially they primarily appealed to big city folks, whereas country-dwellers in Iceland preferred the more dance-friendly, less cerebral concerts given by mainstream pop bands with sól ("sun") in the title (such as SS Sól, Á móti sól or Sóldögg). 'Heima' ("At Home") from 2007 documents the attempts of the ethereal elves to bring their music back home. The locals at first seem puzzled by the latté-drinking, lopapeysa wearing post-rock superstars but are soon won over. The setting is fantastic and the music is sublime. A darker undercurrent in the film is the damming of the highlands, which was vigorously protested by the band. Perhaps one day 'Heima' will be seen as a vital document, not just of a great band at the peak of their powers, but also of these isolated communities before the dams of modernity burst.

Whereas Sigur Rós set off to explore the countryside, 'Backyard' keeps its heart firmly in 101 Reykjavík, revolving around a concert held in somebody's backyard on Culture Night in 2009. It is perhaps the ultimate cinematic document of the 'krútt' ("cute") generation of Icelandic musicians who grew up in the shadow of Björk and Sigur Rós, where originality was key and international fame was just around the corner. Múm are the biggest stars here and Retro Stefson the brightest hope, but it is perhaps the band Reykjavík! that gives the best performance, rocking out fiercely and at some point attempting to eat their microphones. FM Belfast closes the show surrounded by fans on all sides, some of them only in their underwear in keeping with the lyrics, which prompts the band to do the same. Like the music, the film is low-key, intimate and charming, a sort of 'Rock in Reykjavík' film of this new generation

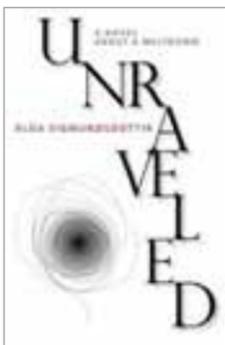


Unraveled

By Alda Sigmundsdóttir



Review by Larissa Kyzer



'Unraveled,' the debut novel of seasoned journalist, translator, author, and blogger Alda Sigmundsdóttir, opens on the brink of calamity—the sort of world-changing upheaval whose warning signs, in retrospect, seem so obvious, but which completely elude those involved until it's much too late. The year is 2008, and Frida Lowe, the wife of a British diplomat, has just returned to Iceland after 12 years' absence. Struggling with the ghosts of her difficult childhood, the last-gasps of a failing marriage, and a pervasive lack of confidence, Frida's own personal meltdown coincides with the kreppa, the financial crisis which crippled Iceland's economy and sent the entire nation into its own bout of soul-searching and regeneration.

For Frida, the past is, as the saying goes, but a prologue to the growth and change that her future promises. And so, much of the novel's first chapters are spent in flashback, examining the defining moments in Frida's life which have led her to her present situation. This backstory is not strictly necessary from a narrative standpoint, but it is so richly realised that it creates a genuine intimacy with the character, a context which allows the reader to see all of her behaviour in a clearer light. Alda takes the same approach with the historical elements of her novel: a pivotal scene takes place just after the two airplanes were flown into New York City's World Trade Center. This event obviously sets about serious historical consequences, but in the context of the novel, it also has a profound impact on Frida and her relationship with her husband. With this gift for hindsight, 'Unraveled' can be forgiven for occasionally veering from its present-day plotline into melodrama, although even these unexpected twists are grounded in retrospective revelations. Looking backwards, everything falls into place.

Playing narrative tragedy off of so recent, so fraught, and so controversial an historical moment is an ambitious project to be sure, but Alda handles it with balance and clarity, and no wonder. Not only did she spend six years good-naturedly providing non-Icelanders with a window into Iceland's culture and political landscape via her beloved blog The Iceland Weather Report, she has also published 'Living Inside a Meltdown,' a collection of interviews with Icelanders about the financial crisis. Moreover, as an Icelander who spent over 20 years living outside the country, Alda has a unique perspective—she, like her main character Frida—can be both inside of Icelandic society and also maintain a bit of distance from it. This gives her writing—from her humorous essays on the Icelandic character ('The Little Book of Icelanders') and her retellings of traditional Icelandic folktales ('Icelandic Folk Legends'), to this, her first novel—a welcoming quality, an awareness that certain truisms (or generalisations, depending on your perspective) about the Icelandic character are helpful to have explained.

Occasionally, these snappy factoids (ranging in topic from Icelanders' insistence on hygienic bathing rituals and their predilection for arriving at the last minute, to the renowned independence of Icelandic women) read a bit awkwardly, although Alda appears to be in on the joke: "You're giving me the Icelandic Tourist Board spiel," Frida teases, after being warned about the unpredictability of Icelandic nature. "Oh, sorry," comes the reply. "I forget that I'm not showing a foreigner around."



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Raping And Pillaging

On why we should view 'Viking Culture' with more than a pinch of salt

by Tómas Gabríel Benjamin



Icelanders are taught that they are descended from blue-blooded Norse lords who fled from King Harald because they would not abide by his tyranny and crippling tax rates, instead opting to settle Iceland. Celebrating this allegedly noble lineage, we claim to have Viking blood coursing through our veins and use every opportunity to remind the world of this.

We give our companies, drinks, streets and gyms Viking names, and just before the economic crash we attributed our international financial success to the aforementioned Viking heritage. But isn't this a bit grotesque? Weren't Vikings infamous for raping and pillaging their way through Europe? Why is their bloody history and heritage constantly celebrated in a secular and peaceful society?

Setting sail

I embark on a voyage to discover more about historical Vikings, who they were, what they did and what Iceland's fascination with them means. My first port of call is the office of Viðar Pálsson, researcher at the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies and lecturer in history, medieval studies and legal history at the University of Iceland.

Viðar is quick to point out that the Old Norse manuscripts we have on Vikings were not written by contemporary authors. The hit and run raids conducted by the Nordic pirates had all but completely gone out of fashion by the end of the 11th century, when Scandinavia fully converted from paganism. Not even the grandchildren of Vikings were alive to tell the Christian scholars Saxo Grammaticus or Snorri Sturluson about the pagan culture they so famously documented in the 13th century.

Overly romanticized ideal

"Seeing the 'Viking age' as a particularly heroic age, and promoting certain ideas of it that are not necessarily true, is a later product of the Age of Enlightenment, around

1800," Viðar says. "The source material is shaped and reshaped to the extent that you can be very sceptical about there being anything ancient about it." In other words, authors wrote and interpreted Viking culture to suit their own political agenda, and our modern ideas of the noble savage Viking were manufactured many centuries after the last Viking raids occurred.

Asked who the Vikings were, historically speaking, Viðar says they were a group of pirates who used clever tactics to gather treasure, cattle and slaves at a minimal risk. They were good at what they did; they operated an impressive navy, and were often hired as mercenaries by kings and nobility. Those same people would also engage in commerce, make settlements, and live normal medieval lives as farmers. Only a small number of Norse people would go on these raids, and it is very doubtful that many of these pirates came from Iceland.

Nothing is true, everything is permitted

As Viðar animatedly describes the period when Viking raids were common, it becomes apparent that there is reason to not take any of our sources as absolute truths on the subject. Take for example the myth that Icelanders are descended from the noble freedom-loving lords of Norway. "Iceland was settled by many different kinds of people," Viðar says, "some perhaps chieftains, but most were just normal people." And the abysmal reputation of Vikings raping and pillaging comes from their contemporary victims demonizing their attackers.

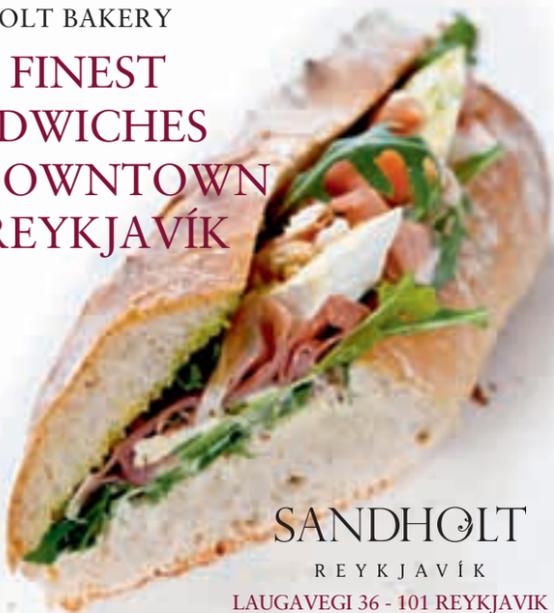
So where does this leave us Icelanders? Is cultural nihilism the only way forward? Not necessarily. Even if we can't be sure about the authenticity of our stories, or how old they are, they are still ours. The idea of Vikings having been explorers, settlers and mercenaries still holds a certain appeal, and our medieval fares are still very entertaining events, even if we have to accept that a lot of the gaps in sources are filled in with modern ideas.

"The sources are shaped and reshaped to the extent that you can be very sceptical about there being anything ancient about it."

Modern Iceland has a lot of exciting tourist attractions. There is a rich and diverse musical scene, and a delicate nature filled with unbelievable scenery. Vikings are very appealing, but they are not Iceland's only attraction. We can call our streets and beverages Viking-themed names, erect statues to celebrate famous Viking adventures, and dress up to put on a show as 'Vikings.' But let's just remember that even if our sources were inspired by reality, they are not to be taken as historical facts.

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National Formality-Deficiency?



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I am by absolutely no means proper. In fact, the concept of formality scares me. Just typing out the word gives me chills and fills me with an inexplicable need to write this piece like a job application. Formality. It terrifies me. Formal conversations are not the main issue here, as I am lucky enough to have learnt English systematically and as a second language, which means I can usually pull off a good bluff when it comes to formal speech. Besides, if I find myself out of my depth I can always feign ignorance and play the “I didn’t know better, it’s my second language”-card. It works either way.

On the other hand, formal events are considerably trickier to fake. First of all, my whole body stiffens up and loses control over its joints as soon as I see a suit, let alone when I have to wear one. I look more uncomfortable in a suit than Don Draper in a clown costume. Furthermore my formal self is undeniably dull. A suit makes me lose the ability to talk in whole sentences or say anything of interest to anyone.

A suit makes me a boring stuttering halfwit. My only escape is the nearest bar, which usually yields exactly the same results. Because of this admittedly irrational fear I have managed to go through life without the slightest understanding of suits. My mum bought me one when I graduated from college and since then it’s only served as a reminder of younger, leaner and more carefree times.

I hate the thing.

Outstanding vs. Conforming

As goes for most character flaws of mine, I, rightly or wrongly, attribute this formal handicap to my nationality. I believe that compared to the English we Icelanders are terrible at formality. The English thrive best in suits. They’re one of the very few nations in Europe that still insists on school uniforms, and that seems to teach people formality from a very young age. I can count on one hand the instances I’ve had to wear a tie whilst English people wore one every day of the school lives.

This insistence on uniformity, coupled with their history of class and aristocracy makes the English the world champions in formality. By comparison, Icelanders, men in particular, are cavemen. Icelandic women can pride themselves on an elegant and graceful traditional outfit but us men have no history of formal wear. In fact, our national Hátíðarbúningur (English: “Ceremonial costume”) was designed in 1994. It’s younger than me! It was designed as a pragmatic, modernised and formal alternative to the traditional costume it replaced.

It seems to be the consensus that we sorely needed something formal. A notion that is easily understood when you actually see what it replaced. The traditional male costume is about as ceremonial as our national drink Brennivín, and as graceful as our national sport Glíma. It is

“This insistence on uniformity, coupled with their history of class and aristocracy makes the English the world champions in formality. By comparison, Icelanders, men in particular, are cavemen.”

most certainly beautiful, colourful and fun—especially the silly woollen hat that comes with it—but it was deemed way too informal to ever be worn outside The National Museum or in period plays.

Scampering Scots vs. Us

Having recently attended a Scottish wedding I got a real firsthand experience of what effect a good national outfit can have on people. I fell in love with the outfit and the pride attached to it. Scots are a proud bunch, but even prouder when sporting the Highland Wear. Perhaps as a Pavlovian response to the emasculating nature of wearing a skirt, the kilt wearing Scot seems to spend the majority of his time bragging about Hadrian’s Wall and Scotland’s continuing superiority over the English.

Another brilliant skirt wearing reflex is the Sgian-dubh, which is a small—most of the time fake—knife tucked into the sock and gives the outfit another confusing but an entertaining dimension. Unfortunately, I don’t think the same applies to our Hátíðarbúningur. Whilst I do find it elegant and smart, its formality still frightens me. Besides, it doesn’t fulfil its purpose of instating pride in its wearer. It’s black and conforming and neither feels important nor exclusive enough to justify its status as a national outfit.

Thankfully though, we still have the old quintessentially Icelandic costume somewhere in the basement of The National Theatre. My suggestion is we dig it up and embrace our formality-deficiency. It’s bound to spark new life into our confirmations, weddings or Christmas parties. Instead of meagrely talking about the weather we can spend our time wrestling, boasting about our Viking roots and moaning about the Danish.

Let’s be more like the Scots. It certainly sounds like fun to me.

Festival of Sacred Arts

Hallgrímskirkja Reykjavík

August 16th–25th

2013

From primal waters to celestial abyss

Olafur Jóhann Ólafsson

FROM THE FESTIVAL PROGRAM:

FRIDAY AUGUST 16TH

7 pm

Opening ceremony in Hallgrímskirkja

Music - Art exhibition - Dance

Sigríður Soffía Nielsdóttir dancer, **Björn Steinar Sólbergsson** organist, Chamber choir **Schola cantorum**, String ensemble, **Hörður Áskelsson** conductor and **Douglas Cleveland** organist from Seattle.

Free admission!



7 pm

Art exhibition opening: VATN

Guðrún Kristjánsdóttir is the visual artist of the Festival of Sacred Arts 2013.

The artwork VATN is an ode to water in our surroundings and religious life and is placed in the choir stalls and in the foyer. A part of this piece is a musical piece by composer **Daníel Bjarnason** played on stones by **Páll** from Húsafell.



SATURDAY AUGUST 17TH

5 pm

Cleveland and Kairos

A fateful time at the organ

Organ virtuoso **Douglas Cleveland** from Seattle performs Mozart, Saint-Saëns, Guilment and more.

Admission: 2.500 ISK (Students half price)



SUNDAY AUGUST 18TH

8 pm

Arvo, Adam and Agaton

Concert in honor of Arvo Pärt

Participants:

Schola cantorum

Festival String Ensemble

Soprano: **Tui Hirv**

Baritone: **Fjölínir Ólafsson**

Conductor: **Hörður Áskelsson**

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TUESDAY AUGUST 20TH

9 pm

Magnificent Muhly!

"7 x 2 and rev. Mustard"

British concert organist **James McVinnie** plays Nico Muhly in combination with organ works by Bach, Gibbons, Duruflé and others.

Admission: ISK 2.500 (Students half price)



WEDNESDAY AUGUST 21ST

8 pm

Saxophones and organ

Sigurður Flosason (saxophones) and **Gunnar Gunnarsson** (organ) perform hymn music by Þorkell Sigurbjörnsson in their own arrangements.

In collaboration with the Reykjavik Jazz Festival.

Admission: 2.500 ISK (Students half price)

THURSDAY AUGUST 22ND

8 pm

Trumpet and organ

Festive sounds

Stephen Burns, America's leading trumpet player, is a special guest at the Festival of Sacred Arts.

On the program is Telemann, Vivaldi and others.

Stephen Burns trumpet (Chicago), **Douglas Cleveland** organ (Seattle).

Baldvin Oddsson trumpet (b. 1994) is a special guest at the concert.

Admission: 3.000 ISK (Students 2.500 ISK)

Ticket also valid for 10 pm concert



10 pm

The other side

Ari Bragi Kárason trumpet and **Eyþór Gunnarsson** piano join their forces.

In collaboration with the Reykjavik Jazz Festival.

Admission: 2.000 ISK (Students half price)

FRIDAY AUGUST 23RD

9 pm

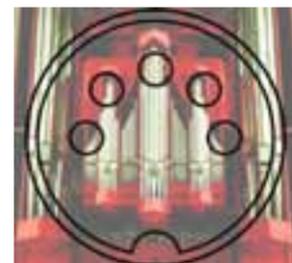
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The adventures of Carol and Veronica – Part 2

By Carol Devine

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© Carol Devine

I can't believe I am in front of the silent, even beautiful, volcano Eyjafjallajökull. You'd never know the chaos it wrought three years ago. Today it's a powder blue sky winter day. I'm here with my nine-year-old, Veronica. She remembers I was stranded far away once and I remind her it was because of this volcano's ash.

We're about 120 kilometres outside of Reykjavík, a lovely drive on Route 1. Our tour of south Iceland includes volcano stories, perhaps inevitably. Restless Iceland is covered in volcanoes that erupt on average every four years.

Spectacle

This 1,666 metre high volcano under the ice cap isn't obvious. It's an "icing sugar snowy mountain," says Veronica. Below is a pastoral, red-roofed farm.

Eyjafjallajökull, meaning "island mountain glacier," is one of Iceland's 30 active volcanic systems. It awoke in February 2010 and touched my life, worrying me but making me feel alive. The eruption was preceded by thousands of small earthquakes that volcanologists monitored closely.

"Icelanders would come watch it. It was amazing spectacle, especially in dark," our guide Helgi Jón Davíðsson says.

Eyjafjallajökull started spewing ash by April 14, 2010. Hundreds of locals were evacuated.

When it erupted I was in Uganda, checking my flight on the Internet. I was confused to read that Schiphol airport in Amsterdam, my transfer airport to Canada, was closed.

I could never have guessed this eruption "shut Europe's skies," causing a knock-out effect globally. Nobody knew how long it would take for the ash to clear. Airports were crowded with people fighting for flights. I criss-crossed Africa catching planes home.

Now I'm here in Hvolsvöllur outside the Eyjafjallajökull Visitor Centre. Its publicity says, "Like the volcano in our back yard, we proudly erupt...the Þorvaldseyri Visitor Centre—a fascinating, family-run exhibit about the massive Eyjafjallajökull volcano."

The family farms cattle but since 1960 it also grows grain crops. On their centre's sign is a 2010 image of that same red-roofed farm but with ominous billowing smoke pouring from the volcano.

"People were evacuated for three days to a nearby village. They were allowed to return once daily to check their animals. They drove

into a wall of darkness; ash: they could only see three to four metres in front of the car," our guide tells us. "An extremely fine material landed on everything. People had to really clean their houses when they returned."

Iceland was minimally affected. Keflavík airport only closed for six days while millions were stranded in Europe and beyond. Apart from inconvenience and financial loss, there was little suffering overall.

Voldemort

Eyjafjallajökull last erupted in 1821, blowing ash for months.

Disaster or acts of nature, depending on magnitude, can also bring opportunity. At the Centre and along this road shops sell bags of ash. Veronica picks up two pitted liquorice black lava rocks and puts them in her pocket.

Helgi Jón says, "Nearby is Hekla, it is a very active, powerful volcano. At the time of the 1104 eruption people knew nothing of geology. They thought hot things were from hell, the devil."

Hekla has had at least twenty eruptions since 1104.

We drive towards Vatnajökull, Iceland's largest glacier. Our guide says, "That's Katla." It is in the distance. I feel he is wary of this volcano. Is it my imagination or do we speed as we cross its path? Helgi Jón says "Katla" as if fears speaking its name, like Harry Potter's villain Voldemort. Eyjafjallajökull's eruptions are

nant of a crushed bridge from a 1996 eruption and flood.

"You can read Iceland's history in the land," Helgi Jón says. "We are driving over lava from the 1784 eruption."

Gloomy

Now we're in the lava desert. As sun is lowering, we walk on endless black and brown lava from old and new eruptions.

Veronica marvels at Helgi Jón's story of how hard it was for people and horses to cross lava. Now moss grows on the rocks like carpet, but it's still a moon-like and jagged walk. Helgi Jón notes a benefit—improved soil from volcanic ash. There's good farming in Iceland now.

If any nation adapts to change, it's Icelanders. They live with Mother Nature's beauty and beasts.

"Now we have high tech seismology and know about moves in the earth's crust," says our guide.

Eyjafjallajökull's message to me is that we must expect the unexpected, be alert and take better care of the Earth, regardless of nature's plans. Keeping 'death over your shoulder' can mean awareness of immortality and doing meaningful things, like taking this trip.

Veronica writes in her made-in-Iceland Tulipop journal. The cover is the cartoon character Gloomy. "Gloomy is daring, adventurous and above all brave. She lives at the base of

"Now we have high tech seismology and know about moves in the earth's crust," says our guide.

reportedly followed by Katla erupting, its "Angry sister." Katla's 1918 eruption produced five times the soot of Eyjafjallajökull. Since 2010, Katla only had a minor sub glacial eruption.

"It will erupt; it is a matter of time. In July 2011 there was a little flood following a small eruption that washed the road away. We are going over a temporary bridge," he says. Helgi Jón's tone is also one of respect for nature.

Some past eruptions caused horrific flooding, famine and catastrophe. Skaftáreldar in 1783–1784 blew and produced a 580 square kilometre lava field. Eruptions created icebergs the size of multi-story buildings, crushing and flooding all in its wake.

All we can see crossing the massive field in our minibus is lava soil. We also visit a rem-

the Jam-Jam volcano," the description says.

Veronica can imagine this as we stay at a wonderful farm in Hali, amidst volcanoes. The next day she hikes fearlessly across the spectacular blue Svínafellsjökull, a nearby glacier tongue.

"You're brave like Gloomy," I tell Veronica. She smiles.

In Reykjavík we stroll on Skólavörðustígur street. Veronica admires the volcanic rock jewellery.

At the art supply store Litir og föndur we buy tiny bags of black lava rock cut into beads. "Let's make necklaces," Veronica says. Good luck charms.

Icelanders live with volcanoes. We all do.

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LINE.



After Eyjafjallajökull

The eruption-scarred landscape of Fimmvörðuháls is a theme park for hikers

by John Rogers

Fimmvörðuháls is an old hiking trail in Southern Iceland that's flanked by two glaciers, Eyjafjallajökull and Mýrdalsjökull. The name means "five cairns pass," and whilst the original cairns are no longer used, it remains a well-marked path popular with natives and visitors alike. Between June and August each year, the summer weather allows hikers up past the dramatic Skóga river to the highlands, passing through snowscapes and a volcanic area before descending into the idyllic Þórsmörk nature reserve.



© Nanna Dís

In recent times, Fimmvörðuháls had a brief spell of worldwide notoriety during the Eyjafjallajökull eruption. The route was declared impassable for several days as volcanologists monitored lava flowing towards Þórsmörk; once it was reopened, many took the opportunity to walk its 22km length and check out the volcano in action.

Thousands of hearty tourists walk Fimmvörðuháls annually, arriving from Reykjavík or nearby Skógar bearing hiking poles, water bottles, assorted box-fresh hiking gear and technical clothing. For the uninitiated, the correct attire can be an expensive business—walkers need to be warm and waterproof, but also able to easily shed and stow layers should the sun come out, ruling out most conventional clothing for one reason or another.

Thankfully our tour company, Icelandic Mountain Guides, is used to such dilemmas and offers boot hire to those who call ahead, as well as raincoats and loaned equipment, requiring first-time hikers only to dress comfortably and sensibly. The company has been running for fifteen years and is used to catering to groups of varying experience, grading the difficulty of each trip from one to five. We note with trepidation that Fimmvörðuháls ranks a four on the scale.

The omen

After missing the bus due to a lack of signage at BSÍ (the bus leaves from the front taxi rank, not the

coach stop), we catch another and arrive at Skóga a few hours later. Our group comprises two international visitors, myself, Grapevine's photographer, and our Icelandic guide, Anna. We introduce ourselves in the sunshine, and after a perfunctory check of footwear, clothing and food & water supplies, we set off slowly up the high stairway to the right of the waterfall. A bright rainbow appears in the spray, like a good omen for the day.

The path climbs past the Skóga-foss waterfall viewing platform into a rolling green landscape, skirting the riverbank. Waterfalls come thick and fast—some are long, elegant streams that plummet into fissures far below; others cascade down over several steps, and others still are wide walls of foam that send cool mist onto our faces.

The first moment of difficulty comes when the path rises into a series of sandy ledges over a drop into the river. One precarious step has no support, and our guide helps us over. There seems no obvious way forward, but we zigzag up a steep section of scree hillside. Far below, some smashed planks lie in the rocky riverbed, serving as a timely reminder of the dangers at hand.

After a long plateau littered with boulders and glacial debris, the next landmark is a high footbridge over the Skóga river, but the steps on our side are completely missing. "Did you see them back there?" asks Anna, and I realise those planks were in fact the stairway in ques-

tion, plucked from this spot by a swell of post-eruption floodwater. Eyeing the rusting metal struts, we climb some makeshift rungs, ducking through the railing to cross.

An island in the clouds

On the other side, we're met by a chilly highland breeze and a rocky plain stretching out before us. Eyjafjallajökull looms to the left, graceful and silent. She's an awe-inspiring sight—a vast, oddly alien protrusion from the earth, haloed by ash and mist like an island in the clouds.

The road forks, and our guide decides we should take the faster path. Although the gradient is easier, the terrain gets rougher, requiring concentration at every turn. I almost miss an icy mural that clings to a distant cliffside—out here, nature is quite the artist, and we pass many sculptural formations of eroded snow, dried lava and windblown sand that wouldn't look out of place in a contemporary gallery.

At an elevation of about 1000 metres, two tent-shaped metal shelters roughly mark the halfway point, and a line of yellow poles mark the way across a series of ash-dusted snowfields, sandbanks and rocky outcrops. Each peak feels like a small triumph until we see the next one: "there's always one more," smiles our guide.

A couple of hours later, we reach the area of the eruption. Magni and Móði, named after the

"Eyjafjallajökull looms to the left, graceful and silent. She's an awe-inspiring sight—a vast, oddly alien protrusion from the earth, haloed by ash and mist like an island in the clouds."

sons of Thor, are two new craters that spewed forth a mass of lava, creating a twisted black vista that stops abruptly where it solidified. The freshly formed rock is still hot to the touch, and sulphurous steam seeps from the ground everywhere as we pick our way through the living landscape.

Into the valley

The high pass to Þórsmörk offers a spectacular view over the mountain range ahead, with hazy peaks stretching into the horizon in grays, greens and purples. After eight hours of walking, the descent presents some of the most challenging and tiring terrain of the hike. At one point, the trail becomes a series of alarming ledges on a vertical cliffside with a chain bolted into the rock for balance; another particularly steep shale bank has a rope hanging down the decline, without

which it would be unsafe to pass. Finally comes a narrow, uneven, vertigo-inducing stretch of path with no support at all and sheer drops on either side—a terrifying few seconds for anyone with an aversion to heights.

However, Anna is reassuring and encouraging throughout, stressing that such features should be taken with care, and that a slow, comfortable pace is preferable. She interprets her role more as a technical guide than a narrator of the geography and scenery. As we approach the sheltered, leafy valley of our Básar pickup point, the timer hits the ten-hour mark and the sky starts turning to a deep, rosy pink. We top up our water bottles from a freshwater stream then slump into the seats of the home-ward bus, aching and glowing from an unforgettable day in the majestic Icelandic wilderness.

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L E M Ú R I N N

The Presence Of A People: Icelanders In 1900

by Vera Illugadóttir & Helgi Hrafn Guðmundsson

In the last decade of the 19th century a young Englishman named Frederick W.W. Howell travelled extensively in Iceland, visiting parts of the country that were overlooked by most other travellers and taking priceless photos of the island and its inhabitants. Here is the preface to a book he wrote about his trip called 'From Icelandic Pictures Drawn With Pen And Pencil (1893)' and photos of some of the Icelandic people that he met:

““But didn't you find it very cold?” is a question so often asked the writer, that he fears there are many intelligent Englishmen yet to whom Saga Land is little else than an ice-bound, ice-clad, ice-capped isle, save where Hekla's flames or Geysir's floods have pierced the crystalline crust! To such, these pages will come with special interest, revealing the wealth of historic lore and the fulness of mountain beauty possessed by Iceland. And even the snowfields themselves, in the hot bright summer days, be-

come dazzling fairylands, while the wild-flowers at their feet can rival those of many a Switzer Alp. There are few countries in which such great changes of scenery occur within a compass so limited. From pasture to desert, from peak to sea, from ice to lava is often a transition for which an hour may suffice. It is true that monuments of antiquity are conspicuous only by their absence; but the presence of a people with the language and many of the customs of a thousand years ago is a monument of itself....”



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“ I have never been anywhere underground that matches the grandeur and impact of this place.

- Sunday Times

“ Standing inside a volcano is a strangely emotional experience.

- The Guardian

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- CNN

Inside the Volcano

Journey towards the Center of the Earth



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- Tour departures: 8:00 / 10:00 / 12:00 / 14:00
- Maximum 14 people in each tour
- Duration: 5-6 hours (up to 1 hour inside the volcano)
- Minimum age: 12 years
- Fitness level needed: Moderate. No knowledge of hiking or climbing is required.

Price: ISK 37,000 per person

Book now at insideTheVolcano.com or at your nearest Tourist Information Desk.



Extensive safety procedures are followed at all stages of the tour and visitors are accompanied by specially trained guides at all times. All equipment and processes have been tested extensively and approved by the administration of Occupational Safety and Health in Iceland.


INSIDE THE VOLCANO
InsideTheVolcano.com

Page 12



"We have been running a mosque in Iceland for ten years now, and nobody is complaining about it. We have not bred any terrorism or made any problems for anybody, so I don't think that will change. The only thing that will change is the building."

When it comes to the mosque debate, Sverrir Agnarson of The Association of Muslims in Iceland has faith in the facts.

Page 24-27



"Each visitor to Iceland is not just a self-sustaining entity walking down the street. It's another human to feed, to clothe, to transport, and notably, to shelter."

Read how local supply stacks up to foreign demand in the battle over Reykjavík's downtown development.

Page 34



"With a CD, maybe a few people buy it but they have it for a long time. With sausages, more people buy it but they... recycle it a lot quicker."

Rebecca Louder goes on a date with musician turned Sausage artisan, Svavar Pétur Eysteinnson.

Page 42



"Seeing the 'Viking age' as a particularly heroic age, and promoting certain ideas of it that are not necessarily true, is a later product of the Age of Enlightenment, around 1800," Viðar says. "The source material is shaped and reshaped to the extent that you can be very sceptical about there being anything ancient about it."

History scholar Viðar Pálsson informs the latest Icelandic identity crisis. But we're still tough right?

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Issue 12 - 2013

www.grapevine.is

YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LIFE, TRAVEL AND ENTERTAINMENT IN ICELAND

CULTURE 101



Culture Night ("Menningarnótt")

City Centre | August 24 | Free!

Only in Iceland could you collect a third of a country's population for an arts and culture event in the downtown area of its capital city. After this night there will be no doubt in your mind that Iceland hosts more creativity in tiny little Reykjavik than most countries do in their entire population. Peruse the program which lists nearly 600 events and keep an eye out for the hundreds of unregistered events that pop up... who knows, you could be a part of one of them! The creativity here is contagious! **AB**



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MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE

August 16 - 29

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

Friday August 16

Boston
22:00 DJ KGB
Café Rosenberg
21:00 Skúli Mennski & Band
English Pub
22:00 Gunni / Addi & Co.
Frikirkjan
20:00 Mats Gustafsson
Gamli Gaukurinn
22:00 Erpur / Sesar A / Addi Exos
Hallgrímskirkja
19:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Opening Ceremony
Harlem
21:00 DJ Pedro Pilatus / Bjúddarinn 2013
Hressó
22:00 VJ FúZi
Kaffibarinn
22:00 DJ Kári
KEX Hostel
22:00 Gym & Tonic: Gadios
Prikið
22:00 DJ Jay-O

Saturday August 17

Bar 11
23:00 Angst & Blood Feud
Boston
22:00 DJ BenSol
Café Rosenberg
22:00 The Midnights
Dillon
22:00 Why Not Jack / DJ Krummi
English Pub
22:00 Danni / Biggi and Maggi
Gamli Gaukurinn
22:00 Boogie Trouble / Bárúján / Babies / Björ
Hallgrímskirkja
17:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Cleveland & Kairos Organ Concert
Harlem
22:00 Benni B-Ruff / KVIKSYNÐI #6
Harpa
20:00 Joshua Redman Quartet
Hressó
22:00 Span / VJ FúZi
Kaffibarinn
22:00 DJ Casanova
Prikið
22:00 DJ Pedro Pilatus

Sunday August 18

English Pub
22:00 Dagur and Hjálmar
Hallgrímskirkja
11:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - High Mass
20:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Concert in Honour of Arvo Pärt
Hannesarholt
16:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Music Seminar On Music Of Arvo Pärt
Harpa
16:00 Icelandic String Instrument Concert
Nordic House
15:00 Pictures, Dreams - Improvisation Concert
Prikið
22:00 Kristinn Pálsson

Monday August 19

Café Rosenberg
21:00 Edda Borg
English Pub
22:00 Addi
Gamli Gaukurinn
22:00 Open State
Hallgrímskirkja
10:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Children's Art Workshop
18:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Vesper Evensong & Glockenspiel
KEX Hostel
21:30 Gym & Tonic: Jól Pálsson
Quintet
Prikið
22:00 Reggae Monday / DJ Katla

Tuesday August 20

Café Rosenberg
21:00 Sigurður Flosason
English Pub
22:00 Ingi Valur
Hallgrímskirkja
18:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Vesper Evensong & Glockenspiel
21:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - James McVinnie Organ Concert
Kaffibarinn
22:00 DJ Ívar Pétur under the influence of Andri Snær Magnason
KEX Hostel
20:30 KEXJazz
Prikið
22:00 Orang Volante



Fabúlos Sounds And Chalk Dust Fabúla's Rough & Sweet & Rumble Concerts

Menntaskólinn í Reykjavík | August 17, 19, 21 | 3,950 ISK

Fabúla decided to go back to school, the most famous secondary school of Iceland that is. She is not there to brush up her algebra though, but to host a set of wondrous concerts with her band. Not really a newcomer in the business, this contemporary pop, jazz and folk-loving lady has been working on her music for almost two decades. And this just in! There will be video installations of Icelandic nature by Helena Stefánsdóttir and Arnar Steinn Friðbjarnarson. Art for all senses - we promise! Tickets are available at the Lækjartorg tower and at the tourist information centre on Aðalstræti 2. **KN**

Photo: Páll Eyjólfsson

29 August

All The Musicians Of The World Unite I, Culture Orchestra: Seven Countries, One Chord

Harpa | 19:30 | 2,300 - 4,500 ISK

Harpa is the venue for anything big. Doesn't an orchestra of 100 people from seven different countries in Eastern Europe and Caucasus sound big enough? We thought so too. Don't wipe away the look of amazement from your face just yet, because the performers are all between just 18 and 28 years old. The orchestra's main concept is that no matter where we are from, music will break the barriers of language. Or as Michael Jackson and his friends put it best: "We are the world." **KN**

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Wednesday August 21

Boston
22:00 Ari Bragi & Co.
Bravó
20:00 Melancholica Festival (A Celebration Of Sad Songs)
Café Rosenberg
21:00 Sigurður Flosason
English Pub
22:00 Raggi
Hallgrímskirkja
12:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Schola Cantorum Lunchtime Concert
18:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Vesper Evensong & Glockenspiel
20:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Þorkell's Hymns Saxophone & Organ Concert
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Krystal Carma
KEX Hostel
20:00 Síminn Concert / Úsland & Jean Louis
Prikið
22:00 Gunni Ewok

Thursday August 22

Bravó
20:00 Melodica Warm Up Concert
Boston
22:00 DJ Þórunn Antonía
Dillon
22:00 The Pollock Brothers Record A Live Album
English Pub
22:00 Ingi Valur and Tryggvi
Hallgrímskirkja
18:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Vesper Evensong & Glockenspiel
17:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Trumpet & Organ Concert
22:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts/Reykjavík Jazz Festival - Trumpet & Piano Concert
Harlem
22:00 Straumur Birthday Party
Hressó
21:00 Jam Session
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Housekell
Nordic House
17:00 Brother Grass Piknikk Concert
Prikið
22:00 DJ Katla

Friday August 23

Boston
22:00 DJ Kári
Café Haiti
16:00 Melodica Acoustic Festival Reykjavík
Café Rosenberg
12:00 Melodica Festival
Dillon
22:00 Tabula Rasa
English Pub
21:00 Raggi / Dagur & Hjálmar
Hallgrímskirkja
18:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Vesper Evensong & Glockenspiel
21:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Electronic Organ Concert
Harlem
22:00 Live Funk / DJ Katla / Tagträumer² (DE) & Steindór Jónsson
Hressó
22:00 Gunna Óla Rock Quartet / DJ Solid
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Simon FKNHNSM
Prikið
22:00 House Band & Southern Comfort

Saturday August 24

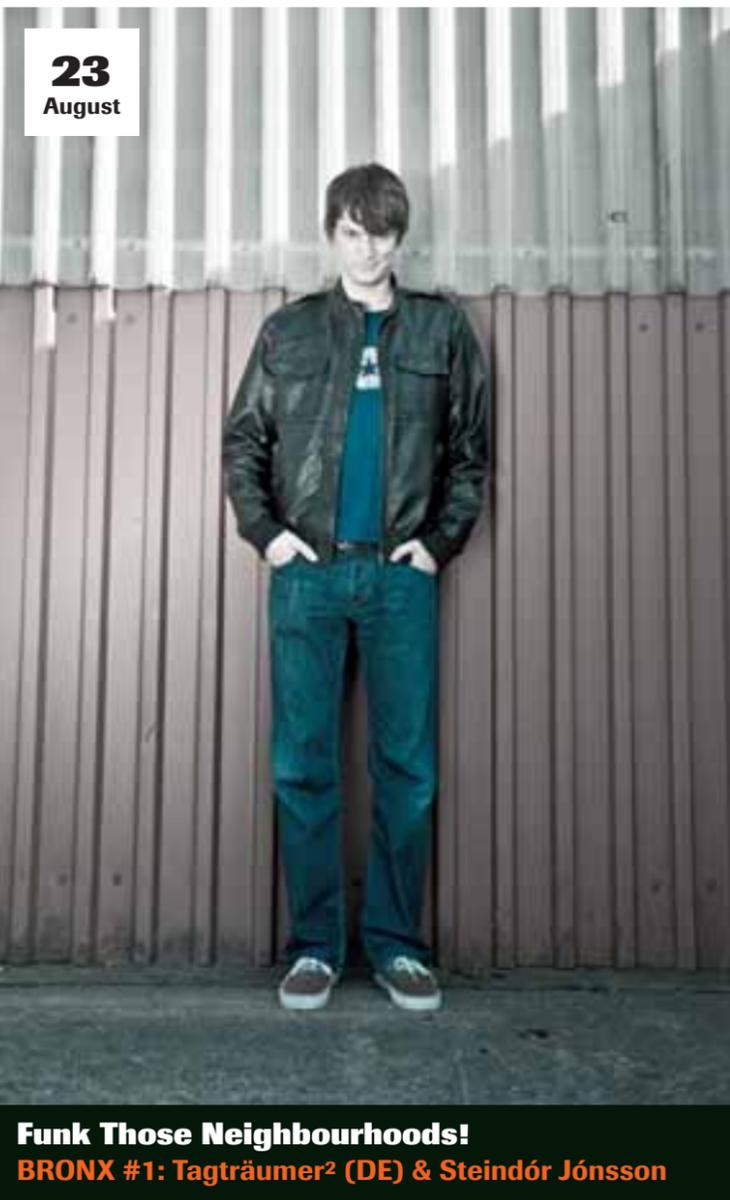
Bar 11
23:00 Skálmöld & Co.
Boston
22:00 DJ Herra Gott
City Centre
09:00 Culture Night
English Pub
21:00 Gunni / Böddi & Co.
Gamli Gaukurinn
22:00 Plastic Gods
Harlem
22:00 Super Flu (DE) & Samaris / Ghozt & Björssa Brunahana
Hallgrímskirkja
15:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Tómas Guðni Eggertsson & Children's Choir
15:40 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Organist Björn Steinar Sólbergsson
16:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - The Hallgrímskirkja Motet Choir
17:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Hljómeyki Chamber Choir
17:30 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Organist Mattias Wager
18:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Sofiachurch Choir (SE) & Orchestra
18:30 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Accordion Player Jón Þorsteinn Reynisson & Organist Jón Bjarnason
19:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Two Generations Of Trumpet Players
19:30 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Vox Feminae & Reykjavík's Girl's Choir
20:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - Organist Mattias Wager Improvisational Concert
Harpa
20:00 Monika Brodka
Hressó
22:00 Lady Dána & The Softtones / VJ Fúzi
Kaffibarinn
22:00 DJ Kári & Alfons X



Folk Yeah! Melodica Festival

Old Harbour & Café Rosenberg | August 23 - 25 | 15:00

If you're more acoustic than electric, more analogue than digital, keep an ear out for the Melodica Festival which is set to dock in Reykjavík with 70 songwriters including 15 international artists from the far seas. This year folks will colonise Café Rosenberg and the budding artistic haven that is the Old Harbour. Special performances are planned for Reykjavík's Culture Night on the 24th as well. If there was ever a prime time to don a sailor cap or your team Zissou gear, this weekend would be it! **AB**



Funk Those Neighbourhoods! BRONX #1: Tagträumer² (DE) & Steindór Jónsson

Harlem | 22:00 | Free!

Putting aside all old borough rivalries, the open minded folks at Harlem are not afraid to let a little bit of the Bronx walk in and set up a club night. No gang fights there! BRONX #1 has the honour of hosting the world-conquering DJ Tagträumer² from Berlin as their special guest. Then local house and techno producer Steindór Jónsson will take people down to the depths of electronic music. Time to Tag(träumer²) along, this is as deep as it gets. **KN**



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Reykjavík will be vibrant and full of life this summer. Numerous events and activities will be ongoing all around the city.

Merry merchants will greet you on every city street. You can choose to go with the flow of the latest fashion trends in **the Lighthouse Village** or treat yourself to delicacies at the **Restaurant Village**.

Our **Summer streets**, Laugavegur and Skólavörðustígur are closed to car traffic until the 5th of August.



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MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE

KEX Hostel
22:00 Culture Night Concerts: Me-gas & Jupiters
Loft Hostel
16:00 Culture Night Concert Extravaganza
Nordic House
18:00 Culture Night Artwrite
Prikið
22:00 Benni B-Ruff

Sunday August 25

English Pub
21:00 Danni
Hallgrímskirkja
11:00 Festival Of Sacred Arts - High Mass
Prikið
22:00 Sævar Markús

Monday August 26

English Pub
21:00 Gunni
Kaffibarinn
22:00 DJ Dauði

Tuesday August 27

Café Rosenberg
21:00 1860
English Pub
22:00 Raggi
Kaffibarinn
22:00 DJ Ívar Pétur
KEX Hostel
22:00 KEXJazz
Prikið
22:00 Sour Tuesdays With Berndsen

Wednesday August 28

Boston
22:00 Lucky Records Night
Café Rosenberg
21:00 Árni Heiðars Quartet
English Pub
21:00 Danni
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Alfons X

Thursday August 29

Bar 11
23:00 Leiksvið fánaleikans
Boston
22:00 DJ BenSol
Café Rosenberg
21:00 Brother Grass
English Pub
21:00 Ragnar
Harpa
19:30 Seven Countries, One Chord - I, Culture Orchestra
Harlem
22:00 Plan B / Rhythm Box Social
Reykjavík
Hressó
21:00 Blues Night
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Steindór Jónsson
Loft Hostel
20:30 Ben Salter
Prikið
22:00 DJ KGB



17 August

Sunshine, Moonlight, Good Times, Boogie! Boogie Trouble's Goodbye For Now Concert

Gamli Gaukurinn | 21:00 | 1,500 ISK

Bands, beers and ballroom shoes! Just when we got to get so excited about the disco sweethearts of Boogie Trouble, they are breaking our hearts and fleeing the country. Miss Keyboards goes to London and Mister Guitar moves to Sweden. We are not completely boogieless though, if their recordings have gone according to plan. The anticipated album should come out by the end of this year. Just grab all your buddies and see them at Gaukurinn. Since Boogie Trouble will be joined by the bands Bárufjárn, Babies and Bjór anyone whose name starts with a 'B' gets a discounted ticket price. **KN**



24 August

Murdering Eardrums Is Cultural Plastic Gods

Gamli Gaukurinn | 22:00 | Price TBA

If your idea of a good cultural night involves sipping tea all prim and proper over a rerun of Downton Abbey, then this gig is not for you. This is a concert aimed at all the doom and drone fanatics residing in Iceland that await to be woken from the slumber of the banality of every day existence with guttural screams, crazy guitar showmanship and heavy drums. Also, it is PG's last show as one of the band members is leaving Iceland, so cast of your shackles and party like your life depends on it! **TGB**

Photo: Guðný Lára Thorarensen

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ART

OPENINGS AND ONGOING

August 16 - 29

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

Opening

All over Reykjavík

August 23

Reykjavík Dance Festival

Spirit of dance takes over the city for ten days. Three types of tickets available: Lovers pass 14,900 ISK, Friends pass 9,900 ISK and First Date single tickets 2,200 ISK.

Runs until September 1

August 28

LÖKAL

International theatre festival happening in Reykjavík!

Runs until September 1

Árbær Museum

August 18, 13:00 - 16:00

Rural Traditions Day

The helpful staff at Árbær open air museum will introduce people to the old rural traditions of and work in Iceland. It is possible to assist the museum workers with the days of yore house work.

ART67

August 29, 17:00-19:00

Pink Ladies

The Pink Ladies will be painting Reykjavík pink and will put on an exhibit in ART67.

Runs until August 31

Artíma Gallerí

August 18, 15:00

Artist Talk on Museumsstúck

An installation built as part of the open-air festival "Undir Berum Himni".

Kling & Bang

August 17

Ragnar Þórisson

Ragnar opens a solo exhibition of new large-scale paintings. The exhibit is untitled and admission is free.

Runs until September 15

Poka

August 17

Longing to be Loved or Destroyed

Habbý Ósk opens an exhibit on human behaviour and relationships. The exhibition consists of photographs, sculpture and a video piece where candles are in the forefront.

Runs until September 15

Ongoing

ART67

Margrét Hasdes Hauksdóttir

Featured artist, Margrét Hasdes Hauksdóttir, exhibits a series of oil paint landscapes.

Runs through August 31

Bíó Paradís

Cool Cuts - Icelandic Cinema with English Subtitles

Between June 14th and August 31st Bíó Paradís will screen six Icelandic films with english subtitles. The films include White Night Wedding, Sigur Rós's Heima, Children of Nature, Either Way, BackYard and Noi the Albino. To find out more about these movies check out Bíó Paradís's website.

Runs until August 31

The Culture House

Medieval Manuscripts, Eddas, and Sagas

It includes principal medieval manuscripts, such as Codices Regii of the Poetic Edda, Prose Edda, law codices and Christian works, not forgetting the Icelandic Sagas.

On permanent view

Child of Hope - Youth and Jón Sigurðsson

Exploring the life of Icelandic national hero Jón Sigurðsson, made especially accessible to children, families and school groups.

On permanent view

Millennium - Phase One

A selection of pieces from the collection of the National Gallery displaying a variety of works by Icelandic artists in the last two



Enter The Musical Octagon Remembering Hljómskálinn

Hljómskálagarður Park | Until August 25 | 14:00-19:00

The eight-sided Hljómskálinn ("Musical hut") that rests by the Reykjavík pond has a long and colourful history. Celebrating its 90th birthday, artist Berglind Jóna Hlynsdóttir and Guðmundur Steinn Gunnarsson put together an exhibit where they get Hljómskálinn to tell its own story in pictures and recorded sound. The aim is for guests to come away with a strong sense of Hljómskálinn's identity in this experimental retelling of the hut. There are special live performances on August 16, 24 and 25. **TGB**



360° Iceland Sagafilms' Iceland Expo Pavillion

The Old Harbour | Every Day | 10:00-22:00 | 10 Euros

If standing on top of a glacier, scuba diving to the bottom of the sea or standing next to an erupting volcano sounds far too extreme for your sensibilities, consider stepping into Sagafilms' Iceland Expo Pavillion, which simulates these experiences with 360° movie projection all from the safety of a temperature regulated building. With five screens to focus on you're guaranteed an excellent view. And the film's score composed by Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson rounds out the experience with surround sound. The film is shown every half hour. Your virtual adventure awaits! **AB**

centuries.

On permanent view

The Library Room

The old reading room of the National Library displays books of Icelandic cultural history dating from the 16th century to the present day. Works include the oldest published versions of the Sagas, Edda Poems and more.

On permanent view

Lightplay

Dramatic watercolours by Derek Karl of Iceland's ethereal light.

Runs until August 31

The Einar Jónsson Museum

The museum contains close to 300 art works including a beautiful tree-clad garden adorned with 26 bronze casts of the artist's works is located behind the museum.

On permanent view

Gallerí Ófeigur UPPÍMÓTI

An exhibit by Gugga, two years in the works, she uses oil and canvas to explore the magnitude of Icelandic waterfalls. Her work is bold and she captures the clarity of the unique

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Jeanine Cohen
Guðjón Ketilsson
Kristinn E. Hrafnsson
Guðný Rósa Ingimarsdóttir
Magnús Kjartansson
Harpa Árnadóttir
Sigtryggur Bjarni Baldvinsson
Hildur Bjarnadóttir
Sigurður Árni Sigurðsson
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ART ONGOING

ART ONGOING

- continued -

Nordic light.
On permanent view

Gallery Sign Skirt

36-year old Alison Willoughby displays a new large-scale piece. The photographic work is a playful inverted take on the cultural iconography of the British Kebab Shop and will appear as an illuminated signage on the exterior of the gallery itself.
Runs until December 20

Hafnarborg

Eiríkur Smith - Existence

The fourth exhibition in an ongoing series spanning the wide artistic career of Eiríkur Smith. The exhibition focuses on works from 1968 to 1982.
Runs until August 25

Hallgrímskirkja

Beating Time

A set of translucent photographs by Jo Yarrington adhered to the four clock faces of Hallgrímskirkja's Bell Tower. The photographs were taken on Iceland's Outer Ring Road and reference Eadward Muybridge's sequenced action photos of a conductor's hands, also titled 'Beating Time.'

Runs until September

Hverfisgallerí

Guðný Rósa Ingimarsdóttir

Drawings by Guðný.
Runs through September 14

i8 Gallery

Belief

Ólafur Elíasson's exhibit, Belief, is an exploration of natural phenomena and perception. His work often combines design, architecture, and science to create thought-provoking work and spaces.
Runs August 17

The Icelandic Phallogical Museum

The museum contains a collection of more than two hundred and fifteen penises and penile parts belonging to almost all the land and sea mammals that can be found in Iceland.
On permanent view

Knitting Iceland

Come and knit at Laugavegur 25, 3rd floor, every Thursday, 14:00 - 18:00.
On permanent view

Kunstschlager Kunstschlager

An Object Lesson

Exhibit opening of fascinating Austrian artist, Mercedes Muhleisen, that includes among other elements, "a boneless entity longing for objecthood and a constipated philosopher leading herself into a mental odyssey."
Opens August 3

Latin Dance Studio, Faxafen 12

Guided Practica

Argentine tango, Sundays from 17:30-19:30. Register by phone 821 6929 or email tangoadventure@gmail.com, 500 ISK for students, 800 ISK for others. Six-week courses are also available.
On permanent view

Living Art Museum

The 6th Volume

An exhibit created and compiled by Katrín Inga Jónsdóttir Hjördísardóttir Hirt. The 6th Volume presents works and writings chosen by Katrín. She personally sculpted several hundred "gratitude sculptures," and offered them to artists, writers, and theorists in the field of visual arts in exchange for participation in her exhibit.
Runs until August 25

Mokka Kaffi

Wall Carpets

Amy Erla Zoega exhibits a series of pieces inspired by tapestries.
Runs until September 5

Museum of Design and Applied Art

Chance Encounters - Toward Modernity In Iceland Design
The exhibit focuses on the



From The Top, With Passion! LÓKAL International Theatre Festival

City Centre | August 28 - September 1 | 2,000-9,900 ISK

When you receive money both from the City of Reykjavík and the state of Iceland, you can have all sorts of fun. Like, put up a theatre festival. Like, the sixth time. The city truly lightens up as there will be a great deal of performances, which the locals at LÓKAL describe as epic. Acts hailing from Norway, Canada, Finland and Iceland (surprise!) will put themselves in the shoes of Bertolt Brecht, winners & losers, tiny guy and a morbid cook. **KN**

introduction of modernism in Icelandic domestic interiors from the 1930s to the 1980s. It will feature well-known designs that have emerged from the modernist movement of the 20th century and made their way to Iceland.
Runs until October 13

The National Gallery

Sara Riel - Memento Mori

This museological comparative study examines the relationship between museums and their depictions of life and death.
Runs until August 25

Treasures

During the whole summer three distinct exhibitions will be dedicated to the collection of the NGI, which possesses nearly 10.500 works, foreign and Icelandic, dating from the 16th century to the 21st. Under the common heading - TREASURES - 19th and early 20th Icelandic painting and drawing
Runs until August 25

The National Museum

I Can't Bring Myself to Retreat

This exhibit features thirteen people expressing their views and feelings in pictures and quotes. Some are young, others older, but all have in their own way played a part in LGBT life in Iceland.
Runs until November 25

Icelandic Silverwork

Various silver items that have been made in Iceland over the last 150 years. A Part-Time Silver Smith, a separate exhibition, will run simultaneously and display a silversmith's workshop from the turn of the century.
Runs until December 31

Sigfús Eymundsson Photography

A pioneer of Icelandic photography, an exhibit that taps into the cultural heritage of Iceland.
Runs until January 2014

The Making of a Nation -

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

The Old Harbour

Iceland Expo Pavillion

Every day from 10:00 to 22:00, Sagafilms projects a film of Icelandic scenery inside their Iceland Expo Pavillion which provides a unique 360 degree movie experience.
On permanent view

Reykjavík City Library

The collection centers around new Nordic literature, both fiction and nonfiction. The library lends out novels, academic publications, audio

books and more.

On permanent view

Reykjavík Art Museum - Ásmundarsafn

Tales From the Vault - Sculpture Inspired by Literature

A collection of Ásmundur Sveinsson's sculptures tied together by a common literary thread. The exhibit presents key works inspired by Icelandic folklore, myth, and poetry.
Runs until December 13

Reykjavík Art Museum - Kjarvalsstaðir

Icelandic Art 1900-1950: From Landscape to Abstract Art

An overview of Iceland art across five decades. The exhibit is comprised of four elements: Romantic and Radical 1900-1930, Landscape 1930-1950, The Human Scale 1930-1950 and New radicalism and the beginning of the abstract 1940-1950.
Runs until September 13

Reykjavík Art Museum - Hafnarhús

Erró - Graphic Art, 1949-2009

For the first time the general public are able to view Erró's graphic art spanning half a century.
Runs until August 13

Interval

An olfactory exhibit by Huginn Þór Arason and Andrea Maack, the two have collaborated to create a perfume intended to embody the smell of the museum of the future.
Runs until September 1

All State

A sound installation in the elevator of Hafnarhús. Theresa Himmer's "All State" uses old elevator tracks to create a six-hour long mechanical soundtrack of the elevator experience.
Runs until September 1

The Sound of a Bugle in a Shoebox

A retrospective of performance work by Magnús Pálsson, an avant-garde artist inspired by a love of and participation in Icelandic theatre. The exhibit develops over a week of live performances, including a premiered work by Magnús himself.
Runs until September 30

Reykjavík City Library

Myndarlegt

Helga Lára Haraldsdóttir's new exhibition Myndarlegt (Handsome) showcases texts and photos that have been photoshopped. The show is meant to inspire people of all ages to think about concept art, especially with regards to every day phenomena and our language.
Runs until August 20



The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

IN YOUR POCKET

WHAT'S INSIDE

Reykjavík Map | Happy Hour Guide | DIY Celebrity Walk | Best Of Reykjavík | Practical Info

Reykjavík & Surrounding Area

August 16 - 29

Keep it in your pocket

Two Weeks

The Grapevine picks the events, places and what to experience in the next two weeks

Weekdays
AUGUST

The Secret Geothermal Garden
High-Tech Tomatoes



August 29 OH BROTHER Brother Grass has the end of summer blues, as it is their last concert for a while. But they are not going to cry about it as they are too busy having crazy times on stage at **Café Rosenberg** with their blues and folk tunes. 2,000 ISK.

August 18 POETIC LICENSE What do the American poets Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson have in common with the Swedish duo Madeleine Östlund and Alf Häggkvist? **"Pictures, Dreams" Improvisational Concert at the Nordic House** consists of 12 Songs inspired by three poets. Starts at 15:00, free with Jazz Festival Pass or 1,000 ISK.

August 29 HARLEM SHAKE At 22:00 **Harlem's Rhythm Box Social** will feature a series of indie concerts with bands inspired by the 80s NYC scene. See **Captain Fufanu, AMFJ, Two Step Horror** and **pál vetika's** version of the Harlem Shake.

August 22 FUCK IT WE'LL DO IT LIVE The **Pollock Brothers** will be putting on a hell of a show at **Dillon**, and recording it for a future album! How sweet is that? Be a part of the making of. The gig starts at 22:00 and there is free entry!

Friðheimar Greenhouse Café & Shop
Reykholt in Bláskógabyggð 12:00 - 14:00

Walking inside Friðheimar Greenhouse is like entering a high-tech secret garden complete with geothermal pipes, imported bees and tropical flowers. Prepare to shed some layers in the 25°C greenhouse heat. Horticulturist Helena Hermundardóttir and her family own two renovated greenhouses dating back to the 1940s. Drop-in visitors are welcome to enjoy tomato food and drink (tomato shots anyone?) in their bright cafe and purchase "food souvenirs" from their little shop until the end of the month. Tour groups are welcome all year round. **AB**

Photo: Megan Blaine

16
AUGUST

Hip To The Groove
Football Fundraiser



Bjúddarinn 2013
Harlem 22:00

Bjúddarinn is a fundraising event for the amateur football team Mjóðm ("Hip") that is filled with Icelandic band members. The line-up includes DJ Margeir and Högni from Hjaltalín, Kippi Kaninus, Markús & the Diversion Sessions, and Icelandic stand-up group Mið-Ísland. There are also more events, including a painting auction, and surprise guests. So don't miss the opportunity to support these musical football guys and let them keep smiling and kicking balls! **TGB**

Photo: Matthias Arni

August 17 LIGHT THE CANDLES Go to the gallery opening of **Habbý Ósk's** candle based exhibit **Longing To Be Loved Or Destroyed** at **Poka** 16:00-18:00. This mood lighting could be perfect for a romantic date, just make sure you don't get burned!

August 20-25 GIRL POWER! KÍTÓN stands for Women in Music in Iceland (Konur í Tónlist á Íslandi) and they are on a mini-tour in West and North Iceland. Ladies night out!

August 18 PEACE OUT Download an official meditation MP3 and join the **Global Peace Operation** in a **Synchronized Peace Transmission** to Egypt at 15:00.



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B

Café Loki in front of Hallgrímskirkja



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C

MAP

DIY Celebrity Walk

By Kaisu Nevasalmi

We know you all were pretty upset to learn that it wasn't actually the real Ryan Gosling who made headlines a few weeks ago by getting his car crashed on Sæbraut. Don't worry. There are plenty of celebrities that did come over to Iceland and got up to all sorts of silly behaviour. And guess what? We, Your Friends At The Grapevine, are here to help you get over your Gosling-blues, girl. How? By helping you create your own little DIY walking tour that covers most, if not all, of the wonderful, shiny Hollywood stars that have gotten up to CRAZY ANTICS in Reykjavík!

1 Emma Watson

Ban Thai, Laugavegur 130

In 2012 Emma Watson was in Iceland filming of movie 'Noah.' With four of her friends, she stumbled upon our 'Best of Reykjavík' Thai restaurant Ban Thai. At least we know she wasn't eating puffin, if we can trust the Letterman interview, where she acted all indignant and horrified at the idea of eating delicious puffin. At Ban Thai, be sure to touch all the tables and chairs inside the restaurant, because we can't confirm exactly which ones she used (it will probably still smell like daisies and unicorns, though).

2 Björk

Boston, Laugavegur 28b

Well, Boston, what is so special about you? Oh, right, you're the second incarnation of that super hip club Sirkús, where Björk herself used to party! Or at least there was a scene for her video shot there. Or was it that she used the toilet there once? Too bad the club closed down at 2008. We heard that they were pretty luxurious, those toilets at Sirkús. Anyway, she's been known to spin the decks at Sirkús.

3 Tom, Katie & Suri

Sushi Samba, Þinghótsstræti 5

This is apparently where Iceland's biggest ever celebrity scoop, like, ever, happened. The one and only Tom Cruise enjoyed a magical dinner with his then wife Katie Holmes and their daughter Suri. Wait a minute! Wasn't it like just before Katie decided to divorce Mr.

Useful numbers

Emergency number: 112

Medical help: 1770

Dental emergency: 575 0505

Information: 118

Taxi: Hreyfill-Bæjarleiðir: 588 5522

BSR: 561 0000

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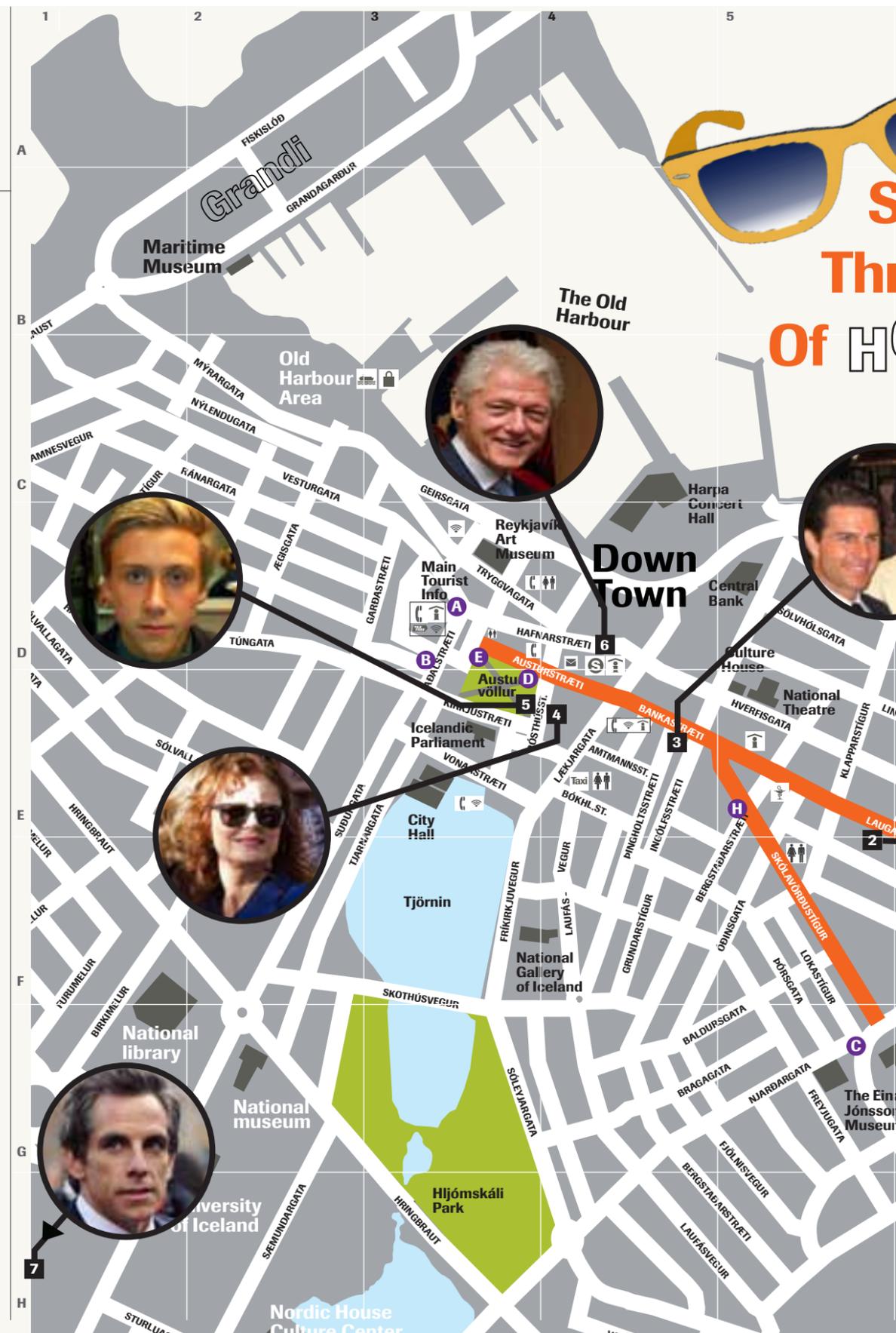
Iceland Refund, Aðalstræti 2, tel: 564 6400

Tourist information

Arctic Adventures, Laugavegur 11,

tel: 562 7000

City Centre, Aðalstræti 2, tel: 590 1550



Scientology? That doesn't seem magical at all. Crikey! At least the sushi is good. Compare the tabloid photos to the venue itself and see if they've changed since last year.

4 Susan Sarandon

Hotel Borg, Pósthússtræti

Susan Sarandon is here! Or at least she was a month ago. Shame on you and your stalking skills, if you

didn't manage to spot her in the streets of 101! This Rocky Horror Picture Show star might have come for a visit after she heard of Ryan Gosling's adventures around town. Or maybe she just came over for that lovely rain we've been enjoying this summer? Nevertheless she was seen enjoying breakfast at Hotel Borg. This scoop is brought to you by the

Grapevine snoops at Hotel Borg.

5 Ryan Gosling (?)

Bush in front of Hotel Borg

This is where Ryan Gosling was seen peeing late at night during one of those drunken nights in downtown. Oh wait. Maybe it was one of those infamous Ryan Gosling look-a-likes after all. Damn it, those motherfuckers are

Iceland Excursions – Grayline Iceland,

Hafnarstræti 20, tel: 540 1313

The Icelandic Travel Market, Bankastræti

2, tel: 522 4979

Trip, Laugavegur 54, tel: 433 8747

Pharmacies

Lyf og heilsa, Egilsgata 3, tel: 563 1020

Lyfja, Laugavegur 16, tel: 552 4045 and

Lágmúla 5, tel: 533-2300

Coach terminal

BSÍ, Vatnsmýrarvegur 10,

tel: 562 1011, www.bsi.is

Domestic airlines

Air Iceland, Reykjavíkflugvöllur,

tel: 570 3030, www.flugfelag.is

Eagle Air, Hótel Loftleidir, tel: 562-4200

Public transport

The only public transport available in Reykjavík

is the bus. Most buses run every 20-30

minutes (the wait may be longer on weekends)

and the price per fare is 350 ISK for adults and

children. Multiple day passes are available for

purchase at select locations. Complete route

map available at: www.bus.is. Tel: 540 2700.

Buses run from 07:00-24:00 on weekdays and

10:00-24:00 on weekends. Main terminals are:

Hlemmur and Lækjartorg

Opening Hours

Bars and clubs: According to regulations,

bars can stay open until 01:00 on weekdays

and 04:30 on weekends.

Shops: Mon.-Fri. 10:00-18:00, Sat.

10:00-16:00, Sun. closed. The shopping centres

Kringlan and Smáralind as well as most

supermarkets and tourist shops have longer

opening hours.

Swimming pools: Weekdays 06:30-22:00

and weekends 09:00-17:00, although each

pool varies plus or minus a few hours.

Banks in the centre are open Mon.-Fri.

09:00-16:00.

Post Offices

Post offices are located around the city. The

downtown post office is at Pósthússtræti 3-5,

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D

See Reykjavík Through The Eyes of HOLLYWOOD Tourists



Photos by: Georges Biard, MTV Movie Awards Press Room, GAS, Jay Tamboli, Josh Jensen, Barbara Kinney, Jiyang Chen



everywhere! Oh well, there are worse things to have around.

6 Bill Clinton
Bæjarins Beztu, Hafnarstræti 17
Fame attracts fame, we all know that. One of the best hot dog stands in Europe got its greatest visitor ever in the history of hot dogs, when the President of United States, Bill Clinton, decided to stop

for one steaming, cigar-shaped dog. Being the trendsetter he is, he didn't go for the traditional "eina með öllu" (one with everything), instead ordering a simple hot dog with mustard. Since that day in 2004 this has been known as the "Steaming Clinton."

7 Ben Stiller
Ægisiða (off map)

Actor Ben Stiller was enjoying a peaceful walk on Reykjavík's west side in 2012. The actor gazed into the distance and saw how the world would come to an end in 2525. He then shrugged, continued his sunbathing and sentimentally took a couple of snapshots of the sunset, which he then posted to his Twitter-feed.

open Mon.–Fri. 09:00–18:00. Stamps are also sold at bookstores, gas stations, tourist shops and some grocery stores.

Public phones
There aren't many public payphones in the city centre. The tourist information centre at Aðalstræti 2, City Hall, Kolaportið, entrance at Landsbankinn and in Lækjargata. Prepaid international phone cards are recommended for int'l callers.

Internet Access
Most cafés offer free wireless internet access. Computers with internet connections are available to use at: Rádhúskaffi City Hall, Tjarnargata 11

Ground Zero, Frakkastígur 8, near Laugavegur 45
The Reykjavík City Library, Tryggvagata 15
The National and University Library, Arngrímsgata 3

Tourist Information Centre, Aðalstræti 2
Icelandic Travel Market, Bankastræti 2
Reykjavík Backpackers, Laugavegur 28

Swimming Pools
There are several swimming pools in Reykjavík. The one in 101 Reykjavík, Sundhöll Reykjavíkur, is an indoor one, located at Barónsstígur. That pool features a nice sunbathing area and some outdoor hot tubs. Opening hours: Monday to

Thursday from 06:30–22:00, Friday from 06:30–20:00, Saturday from 08:00–16:00, and Sunday from 10:00–18:00.

Public Toilets
Public toilets in the centre can be found inside the green poster covered towers located, for example, at Hlemmur, Ingólfstortorg, by Hallgrímskirkja, by Reykjavík Art Museum, Lækjargata and by Eymundsson on Skólavörðustígur. Toilets can also be found inside the Reykjavík City Hall and the Reykjavík Library.



18 Gangleri Outfitters

Hverfisgata 82
The power duo Vaidas & Óskar started out as party buddies until they discovered their joint passion toward outdoor living. This passion grew to become Gangleri Outfitters, the outdoor equipment shop and rental in the city centre, which opened its doors with a bang on June 17. They rent out and sell everything that an unequipped traveller might need in Iceland: tents, hiking boots, sleeping bags, cooking gear, fishing sets... you name it! Even if you have all you need for your adventure, it is worth to stop by and ask for tips, as these guys are really helpful.

Venue Finder Music & Entertainment

- Amsterdam** Hafnarstræti 5 | D3
- Austur** Austurstræti 7 | E3
- B5** Bankastræti 5 | E4
- Bar 11** Hverfisgötu 18 | E5
- Bjarni Fel** Austurstræti 20 | E4
- Bíó Paradís** Hverfisgata 54 | F6
- Boston** Laugavegur 28b | F6
- Bunk** Laugavegur 28 | E5
- Celtic Cross** Hverfisgata 26 | E5
- Den Danske Kro** Ingólfstræti 3 | E4
- Dillon** Laugavegur 30 | F6
- Dolly** Hafnarstræti 4 | D3
- Dubliner** Hafnarstræti 1-3 | D3
- English Pub** Austurstræti 12 | E3
- Gamli Gaukurinn** Tryggvagata 22 | D3
- Glaumbar** Tryggvagata 20 | D3
- Harlem** Tryggvagata 22 | D3
- Hressó** Austurstræti 20 | E4
- Kaffi Zimsen** Hafnarstræti 18 | D4
- Kaffibarinn** Bergstræðastræti 1 | E5
- Kaldi Bar / Café** Laugavegur 20b | E5
- Kofi Tómasar Frænda** Laugavegur 2 | E5
- Loft Hostel** Bankastræti 7 | E5
- Mánabar** Hverfisgata 20 | E5
- Ölsmiðjan** Lækjargata 10 | E4
- Ölstofan** Vegamótastígur | E5
- Prikið** Bankastræti | E4
- Reykjavík Beats** Hverfisgata 46 | E5
- Rósenberg** Klapparstígur 25 | E5
- Stofan Café** Ingólfstorg | D3
- Thorvaldsen** Austurstræti 8 | D3
- Vegamót** Vegamótastígur 4 | E6

Museums & Galleries

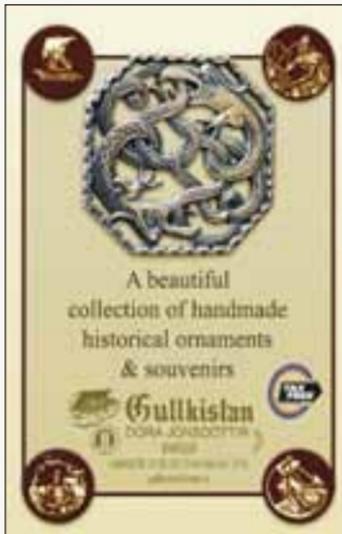
- ART67** Laugavegur 67 | F7
Mon - Fri 12 - 18 / Sat 12 - 16
- Ásgrímur Jónsson Museum** Bergstræðastræti 74
Mon-Fri through Sept. 1
- The Culture House** Hverfisgata 15 | E5
www.thjodmenning.is
- The Einar Jónsson Museum** Eiríksgröta | G6
Tue-Sun 14-17
www.skulptur.is
- Galleri Ófeigur** Skólavörðustígur 5 | E5
ofeigur.notando.is
- Hafnarborg** Strandgata 34, Hafnarfjörður
www.hafnarborg.is
- Hannesarholt** Grundarstígur 10 | E5
www.hannesarholt.is
- Hitt Húsið** Gallery Tukt Pósthússtræti 3-5 | E4
www.hitthusid.is
- Hverfisgallerí** Hverfisgata 4 | E4
www.hverfisgalleri.is
- i8 Gallery** Tryggvagata 16 | D3
Tue-Fri 11-17 / Sat 13-17 and by appointment. www.i8.is
- The Icelandic Phalological Museum** Laugavegur 116 | F8
www.phallus.is
- Kirsuberjatréð** Vesturgata 4 | C2
www.kirs.is
- Kling & Bang** Hverfisgata 42 | E6
Thurs-Sun from 14-18
www.this.is/klingogbang
- Knitting Iceland** Laugavegur 25 | E6
www.knittingiceland.is
- Kunstschlager** Rauðarárstígur 1 | G8
Mon-Sat from 15-18
www.kunstschlager.com
- Living Art Museum** Skúlagata 28 | E7
Tue-Sun 12-17
www.nylo.is
- Mokka Kaffi** Skólavörðustígur 3A | E5
www.mokka.is
- The National Gallery of Iceland** Frikirkjuvegur 7 | F4
Tue-Sun 11-17
www listasafn.is
- The National Museum** Suðurgata 41 | G2
Open daily 10-17
- www.natmus.is**
- The Nordic House** Sturlugata 5
Tue-Sun 12-17
www.nordice.is
- Reykjavík Art Gallery** Skúlagata 30 | E7
Tuesday through Sunday 14-18
www.artmuseum.is
- Reykjavík Art Museum - Hafnarhús** Tryggvagata 17 | D3
Open 10-17
Thursday 10-20
- Kjarvalsstaðir** Flókagata 24
Open 10-17
- Ásmundarsafn** Sigtún
Open 10-17
www listasafnreykjavikur.is
- Reykjavík City Library** Tryggvagata 15 | D3
www.borgarbokasafn.is
- Reykjavík City Museum composed of Árbæjarsafn** Kistuhylur 4
Open daily 10-17
- Settlement Exhibition Reykjavík 871+/-2** Aðalstræti 17 | E3
Open daily 10-17
- Reykjavík Maritime Museum** Grandagarður 8 | B2
www.maritime-vv museum.is
- Reykjavík Museum of Photography** Tryggvagata 16 | D3
Weekdays 12-19 / Sat-Sun 13-17
www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is
- Saga Museum** Perlan, open daily 10-18
www.sagamuseum.is
- Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum** Laugamestangi 70
www.iso.is
- SÍM** Hafnarstræti 16 | D4
Mon-Fri 10-16
www.sim.is
- Spark Design Space** Klapparstígur 33 | E5
Mon-Fri 10-18
Sat 12-16
www.sparkdesign-space.com
- Wind & Weather Gallery** Hverfisgata 37 | E6
Open daily 09-02
www.windandweather.is
- POKA** Laugavegur 25 | E5

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 Level 1 - 3

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Best Of Reykjavík

Every year around the beginning of July, we make a BEST OF REYKJAVÍK ISSUE celebrating some of what makes Reykjavík-life worthwhile, posting some good entries into a hopefully never-ending discussion. The primary purpose of BEST OF REYKJAVÍK is celebration! It's about big-upping stuff, giving mad props to it and patting it on the shoulder. The following are some nice tips we pulled from BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2013 which you can read in full at www.grapevine.is



BEST COFFEE TO-GO: LITLI BÓNDABÆRINN



This take-away joint on Laugavegur is really one of the most delightful places to pop into on any daily stroll. They brew up some real mean coffees, making a point to use only the highest quality beans, and if you go there a few times they remember your order. It also helps that their owner, David, is one of the most charming individuals who changes the experience of grabbing your morning java into a complete laugh-riot. David has also singlehandedly introduced savoury pastries into the snacking landscape, so make sure to grab a veggie-sausage roll or lamb pasties if you can—they are in a league of their own!

Located at Laugavegur 41



BEST PLACE TO GO FOR A JOG: ÆGISSÍÐA



Once again we've voted Ægissíða best place to go for a jog. With the ocean on one side and beautiful houses on the other, this coastal path in 107 Reykjavík is hard to beat. If you're not super hardcore about your workout, you can stop along the way to admire the old fishing station there and read the information placards about the area and its history. And, like we said last year, if you're feeling really good, you can run all the way to Nauthólsvík and take a dip in the hot tub.

Located in Ægissíða



BEST RECORD STORE: LUCKY RECORDS



Now in its huge new digs on Rauðarástígur, Lucky Records is likely to win BEST RECORD STORE for all perpetuity. It's not just the great selection of records that makes Lucky the best, it's also the store's personality, which has only gotten better since the move. Many of us are devoted customers and we are so proud to see them doing great things. Luck really is on their side.

Located at Rauðarástígur 10

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A GUIDE THAT FUCKS YOU UP

A list of every Happy Hour in 101 Reykjavík

- 101 Hótel**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Beer 475 ISK, wine 645 ISK, cocktails from 1000 ISK.
- Austur**
Thursday to Saturday from 20:00 to 00:00. Beer 550 ISK and wine 550 ISK.
- B5**
Every day from 17:00 to 22:00. Beer 550 ISK, cider 700 ISK, wine 550 ISK.
- Bjarni Fel**
Monday to Friday from 21:00 to 23:00. 2 for 1 on all tap drinks, Beer for 445 ISK.
- Boston**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00. Beer 500 ISK, Wine 500 ISK.
- Bunk Bar**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00. Wine 700 ISK, Beer 2 for 1 900 ISK.
- Celtic Cross**
Every day from 17:00 to 20:00. 2 for 1 on Gull and Polar for 900 ISK.
- Den Danske Kro**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. All Draught Beer 950 ISK and wine for 900 ISK.
- Dillon**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00. 2 for 1 Beer 850 ISK.
- Dolly**
Tuesday to Saturday from 17:00 to 20:00. Beer 500 ISK and wine 500 ISK.
- Dubliner**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00. 2 for 1 beer Tuborg 1000 ISK.
- Faktory**
Monday to Friday from 17:00 to 00:00. Gull and Tuborg beer 500 ISK.
- Glaumbar**
Every day from 21:00 to closing. Beer 390 ISK.
- Harlem**
Every day from 17:00 to 22:00. Beer 550 ISK, wine 700 ISK.



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- Hilton Hotel Bar**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. All drinks half price.
- Hótel 1919**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. 2 for 1 beer 1000 ISK, white wine 1590 ISK, Red wine 1290 ISK, Cocktail of the Day 2190 ISK.
- Hótel Holt Gallery Bar**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. Beer 550 ISK, Wine 695 ISK, Cocktail of the Week 950 ISK.
- Hótel Natura**
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00. HA!l drinks half price.
- Hótel Plaza Bar**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Beer 500 ISK.

- Iða Zimsen**
Every Day from 19:00 to 22:00. All bottled beers 550 ISK.
- Kaffi Kompaníð**
Thursday to Sunday from 16:00 to 18:00. 2 for 1 beer 850 ISK, wine 700 ISK.
- Kaffi Zimsen**
Every day from 17:00 to 21:00. Beer 550 ISK.
- Kaldibar**
Every day from 17:00 to 20:00. 2 for 1 on beer and wine.
- Kiki Queer Bar**
Thursdays from 20:00 to 22:00. Beer 450 ISK, wine 600 ISK.
- Kolabrautin**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Beer 450 ISK, Wine 700 ISK, Cocktails from 1000 ISK, Champagne glass 1500 ISK.
- Lebowski Bar**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. 2 for 1 beer 900 ISK and wine for 1100 ISK.
- Loft Hostel Bar**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00. Beer 500 ISK, cider 500 ISK, wine 700 ISK.
- Micro Bar**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Draught Beer 500 ISK.
- Miðgarður Bistro bar**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. All drinks half price, Beer 500 ISK, Wine 600 ISK.
- Nora Magasin**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Viking Beer for 500 ISK, House Wine for 600 ISK.
- Prikið**
Monday to Friday from 16:00 to 20:00. 2 for 1 Viking 750 ISK, Viking Classic 850 ISK.
- Roadhouse**
Friday and Saturday 22:00 - 23:00. 2 for 1 Beer 895 ISK, Wine 895 ISK.
- SKY Bar & Lounge**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Beer 500 ISK, Wine 800 ISK.
- Slippbarinn**
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00. Beer 500 ISK, Wine 500 ISK, selected cocktails 950 ISK.
- Stofan**
Every day from 17:00 to 20:00. Beer 650 ISK and Wine 800 ISK.
- Tapashúsið**
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00. All beer and wine half price.
- Uppsalar - Bar & Café**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. 2 for 1 on all drinks except cognac.
- Pingholtsbar**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Beer 500 ISK.

ART ONGOING

— continued —

Reykjavík City Museum Reykjavík 871 +/- 2: The Settlement Exhibition

Archaeological findings from ruins of one of the first houses in Iceland and other excavations in the city centre, open daily 10:00-17:00, 1.100 ISK per adult, 650 ISK per person in groups (10+) and free for children 18 and under.

On permanent view

Reykjavík Maritime Museum From Poverty to Abundance

Photos documenting Icelandic fishermen at the turn of the 20th century.

On permanent view

The History of Sailing

Iceland's maritime history and the growth of the Reykjavík Harbour.

On permanent view

The Coast Guard Vessel Óðinn

This vessel sailed through all three Cod Wars and also served as a rescue ship to over 200 ships.

On permanent view

75th Anniversary of the Seaman's Day Council

An exhibit celebrating the 75th anniversary of Seaman's Day by telling the story of the Day from its first envisionment to current celebrations.

Runs until November 30

The Reykjavík Museum of Photography Horse With No Name - Spessi

Spessi took portrait photographs of numerous bikers during his travels and exploration of the biker culture in the United States from 2011 to 2012.

Runs until September 15

Wild Cats - Sunna Ben

Fragments of the ever-growing photography collection that Sunna Ben has accumulated from carrying her camera with her day and night for the past seven years.

Runs until September 10

Saga Museum

A Viking Museum that intimately recreates key moments in Iceland's history, giving a compelling view into how Icelanders have lived for more than a millenium. From the time of the earliest settlers, history is brought to life in a unique and exciting way with life-like figurines.

On permanent view

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum De Profundis

A collection of sculptures by Sigurjón Ólafsson and the paintings of his contemporaries. This group of artists are known today as "trailblazers of modernism" in Iceland. As the title points out, beneath the smooth surface of the works lies the turbulence and anguish of the Cold War tensions.

Runs until September 1

SÍM Gallery

Manual For A Lanscape

Four international artists in residence interpret human relationships to Icelandic nature through various media.

Runs until August 28

Spark Design Space

Anatomy of Letters

Sigríður Rún explores ancient Icelandic letters by imagining them as organisms with their own particular anatomies. She has just received the Art Directors Award of Europe in the student category, one of the most distinguished graphic design awards in the world.

Runs until September 30

Wind and Weather Window Gallery

Claudia Hausfeld - A Self Portrait

This exhibit focuses on the character and life of houses. The aim of the window gallery is to connect art in the urban setting of Reykjavík with the people on the street.

Runs until August 30

Volcano House

The exhibition gives a brief overview of Iceland's geological history and volcanic systems, and there are superb photographs of volcanic eruptions and other magnificent aspects of Icelandic nature. A large collection of semi-precious rocks and minerals from around the country are also on display.

On permanent view

MANUAL FOR A LANDSCAPE

Consult The Manual Manual For A Landscape

SÍM Gallery | Until August 28 | 17:00 - 19:00 | Free

If there were a manual that told us how to interact with Icelandic nature, what would it say? The international artists in residence at SÍM Gallery answer this question with various manual or hand-made art pieces ranging from found-art displays to tintype portraits. Manuals can both simplify the complex and complicate the simple. See how Thais Graciotti from Brazil, Minna Kurjenluoma from Finland, John Steck Jr. from the US and Karen Stentaford from Canada interpret human relationships to the Icelandic landscape. Hopefully we don't wait to consult this manual until the landscape has been broken. **AB**



Find all art listings
online
listings.grapevine.is



Queer Eye For The Icelandic Eye I Can't Bring Myself to Retreat

The National Museum | Until November 25 | 1,200 ISK

This exhibition provides insights into the life and struggles of LGBT people in Iceland over the years, as described in their own words at different times. They recount the ways in which they learned to face their own feelings, and recall different stages in the campaign for human rights for LGBT people. Each individual has his or her own view of the world. Different voices unite in harmony - accompanied by photographs of the people who speak. Thirteen people express their views and feelings in these Snapshots of Queer History. Some are young, others older, but all have in their own way played a part in LGBT life in Iceland. **TGB**

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North Iceland

Akureyri

Akureyri Center for Visual Arts
Anamnesis/SILENCE - Janne Laine & Stephen Boulter

Ongoing until October 6

Stephen Boulter is a part of the kitsh movement and Janne Laine from Finland uses photogravure techniques. The exhibition opens on August 17 at 15:00.

Deiglan

On The Border Of Two Worlds

Ongoing until September 14

Exhibition of artist Frimann Kjerúlf.

Ketilhúsið

Stolen Feathers

Ongoing until September 15

Exhibition of artist Þórdís Alda Sigurðardóttir.

Flóran

Næturbrótt - Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir

September 30

Exhibition Næturbrótt (Night Stride) is put on by visual artist Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir.

Græni Hatturinn

Tilbury

August 16, 22:00

Icelandic indie pop band released their album "Exorcise" last year that ended up being one of the best sold albums in Iceland in 2012.

Björn Thoroddsen

August 22, 21:00

Björn is a solo guitarist who picked up the instrument when he was 10 years old. Being a bit older now he masters genres from pop to jazz and blues to rock.

KÍTÓN concert

August 23, 21:00

KÍTÓN stands for Women in Music in Iceland (Konur í Tónlist á Íslandi). Musicians Hafdís Huld, Védís Hervör, Ragga Gröndal and Lára Rúnars tour around Westfjords and the North part of Iceland. They combine their musical backgrounds, which include jazz, folk and electronic influences. Tickets are 2,000 ISK.

Retro Stefson

August 29, 22:00

Retro Stefson makes a stop in Akureyri.

Kaffi Ilmur

Visiting the Saddler

August 20, 21:30

Svava and Bjarni introduce the audience to the history of Akureyri and Icelandic culture through stories, songs and samples of local delicacies. Before the show starts, Kaffi Ilmur has dinner on offer. Be sure to book seats before showing up.

Akureyri Botanical Garden
ÁLFkonur (Women's Photography Club) - LYSTSEMDIR

June 28 - September 3



Fire & Ice

Jökulsárlón, Vatnajökull Region

August 24, 1,000 ISK, Free For Children Under 12

Iceland may be known for its ice, but its the fireworks Icelanders just can't get enough of and what better place to show them off than in Iceland's characteristically icy landscape? For the 13th year Vatnajökull's glacial lagoon will glow with 150 candles and thirty minutes of fireworks when fire meets ice. This collaboration between the Hornafjörður search and rescue association, Jökulsárlón boat trips and the Vatnajökull is a spectacular juxtaposition that increasingly attracts thousands of visitors each year. All proceeds go to the Hornafjörður search and rescue association so we can all appreciate Iceland's elements safely. **AB**

An eclectic group of photography enthusiasts, ÁLFkonur are in the habit of taking photos of everything that concerns them.

Municipal Library of Akureyri
Elfbooks

Every week, Monday through Friday

Exhibition by artist Guðlaugur Arason.

Bárdaldal

Kiðagil

Camper's Festival

August 17 - 18

Camper's Festival at the guesthouse Kiðagil, which is right off the Ring Road. The weekend festival includes activities for the whole family, such as horseback riding and games.

Dalvík

Byggðasafnið Hvoll á Dalvík

The North In The North

June 2 - March 1 2014

An exhibit about Greenland and its history. There are several artifacts from Greenland on display.

Grenivík

Grenivíkurgleði

August 16 - 18

Grenivíkurgleði is a local family festival with something to do for all ages.

Hjaltadal

Hólar Festival

August 16 - 18

The Hólar celebration in Hjaltadal. Celebrating old traditions, pilgrimage walks with a dip of cultural events.

Hjalteyri

Verksmiðjan á Hjalteyri

The Fixed & The Volatile at Verksmiðjan

Runs until August 24, 14:00 -17:00

The Canadian and Scottish artists combine video, sound and paintings at Verksmiðjan. Installation created by Richard Ashrowan, Pat Law and Nick Kuepfen.

Húsavík

Gamli Baukur

"Lets Talk Local" Comedy Show

Every day at 15:30

A daily hour-long comedy show at 15:30. The show is presented in English and takes listeners on an entertaining and informative journey through Húsavík.

KÍTÓN concert

August 25

Women in Music in Iceland concert. See Akureyri listing for full description.

Ólafsfjörður

Blueberry Days

August 16 - 18

Blueberry Days is the 15th annual art and music festival. Events range from 0 to 3,500 ISK. Festival pass is 5,500 ISK.

Raufarhöfn

Melrakkaslétta

The Sléttuganga Hike

August 17

A 27 km guided hike with a diverse and interesting route. Departure 9:00 from Raufarhöfn - No registration

THE HOUSE AT EYRARBAKKI



Árnessysla folk museum is located in Húsið, the House, historical home of the Danish merchants built in 1765. Húsið is one of the oldest houses in Iceland and a beautiful monument of Eyraryakki's time as the biggest trading place on the south coast.

Today one can enjoy exhibitions about the story and culture of the region, famous piano, shawl made out of human hair and the kings pot, are among items. Húsið prides itself with warm and homelike atmosphere.



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Sauðárkrókur

Loðskinn

Gæran Music Festival

August 16 - 17

At the Gæran Music Festival genres vary from rap to folk and everything in between. Performers include Tilbury, Úlfur Úlfur, Valdimar, XXX Rottweiler Hundar, Kontinuum, Hymnalaya and Jónas Sigurðsson.

Siglufrjörður

Kaffi Rauðka

KÍTÓN concert

August 24

Women in Music in Iceland concert, see Akureyri listing for full description.

East Iceland

Egilsstaðir

Sláturhúsið

Icelandic Movie Days

Ongoing Until August 28

All summer long Sláturhúsið hosts free showings of must-see Icelandic movies, every night from Monday - Thursday at 20:00.

All over town

Ormsteiti

August 9 - 18

A harvest festival with carnival, song contests, pet beauty pageants and other funky activities that you won't find inside city perimeters. We hear Lazy Town will also make an appearance!

Seyðisfjörður

Skaftafell Center for Visual Art

Bananas

June 17 - August 26

In this evolving exhibit, Danish artists group A Kassen explores the connection between Icelandic nature, bananas and aluminium, as the artists in residence at Skaftafell from June through July.

South Iceland

Hafnarfjörður

Hafnarborg

Existence - Eiríkur Smith

June 29 - August 25

This exhibition of Eiríkur Smith's oil paintings, watercolours and drawings from 1968-1982 deals with metaphysical questions of existence and reality.

Hella

Harvest Family Festival

August 17

This family festival has something for all ages.

Hveragerði

LÁ Art

The Landscape of Time

June 9 - September 15

The exhibition showcases two Icelanders Ásgrímur Jónsson and Arngunnur Ýr, artists from very different eras, and explores how they saw the world differently.

Blossoming Days

August 16 - 18

This culture and family festival is an annual event in "Blossoming Town" of Hveragerði, known for its health-centric culture and artistic community.

Keflavík

Reykjanes Art Museum

"Við Geigvænna Mar"

Ongoing Until August 18

A collection of art drawing inspiration from the harsh nature found around the Reykjanes peninsula.

Pabbi Minn Er Róinn

All summer

A part of the museum's boat collection, featuring more than 20 boats and accessories.

Brúðir Konu Meyja

All summer

A collection of dolls wearing an assortment of outfits, including the traditional Icelandic national costume.



The Berry On Top

Blueberry Days Festival, All over Ólafsfjörður

August 16 - 18, Events: Free! - 3,500 ISK. Festival pass 5,500 ISK.

Have you tasted the plump Icelandic blueberries yet? Now there is more than just blueberries to taste, as it is the time for the music and art festival Blueberry Days of Ólafsfjörður to take place again. Known for his performances with the local elves known as Sigur Rós, the pagan Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson is one of the stars of the opening concert. And when the Saturday night fever kicks in one can enjoy songs by Úr Höndum Blóma, which have been composed to the poems of Pálmi Örn Guðmundsson. **KN**

Photo credit: Guðný Ágústsdóttir

Mosfellsbær

Gljúfrasteinn

Aftanblík Trio

August 18, 16:00

Singer Gerður Bolladóttir, cellist Victoria Tarevskaia and pianist Katalin Lorincz.

Jane Austen Concert

August 25, 16:00

Concert based on the work of Jane Austen. Soprano Þórunn Elín Pétursdóttir, mezzosoprano Lilja Dögg Gunnarsdóttir, and pianist Daði Sværriðsson

Reykholt

"Tvær úr Tungunum"

August 17

This event's name means "two of tongues" and involves various activities in Reykholt/Aratunga.

Vatnajökull

Jökulsárlón

Fireworks Show

August 24

This 13th annual fireworks show at Jökulsárlón in the Vatnajökull Region, known for its icebergs, creates a unique colour experience.

Westman Islands

Pompei of the North

On permanent display

Excavation project at the site of the 1973 volcanic eruption on the island of Heimaey.

West Iceland

Borgarnes

The Icelandic Settlement Centre

The Settlement Exhibition

On permanent display

A thirty minute-long multi-media exhibit that provides insight into the settlement of Iceland, from the first man to step foot on the island, to the establishment of the world's first parliament, Þingvellir. Admission is 2,400 ISK.

The Egils Saga Exhibition

On permanent display

Located in the stone-walled basement of the Centre, this exhibit leads visitors through the colourful saga of Egill Skallagrímsson, one of Iceland's first settlers and greatest heroes.

Galtarviti

Lighthouse

Ragnar Kjartansson

Open all summer

Galtarviti in collaboration with Slíjm sf. invites people to view an exhibit born from Ragnar Kjartansson's residency at Galtarviti. Getting to the lighthouse can be tricky, but their website offers a lot of good suggestions www.galtarviti.org.

Ísafjörður

Bræðraborg

KÍTÓN concert

August 21

Women in Music in Iceland concert, see Akureyri listing for full description.

Patreksfjörður

Sjórnáningjahúsið

KÍTÓN concert

August 20

Women in Music in Iceland concert, see Akureyri for full description.

Stykkishólmur

Vatnasafnið / Library of Water

Water, Selected

On permanent display

"Water, Selected" is an ongoing exhibition with twenty four columns filled with glacier water from all over the country.

To Place

On permanent display

"To Place" is an audio exhibit offering insight into the Icelandic psyche, where you can listen to recordings of people talking about the weather.

Danish Days Festival

August 16 - 18

This annual festival celebrates Stykkishólmur's history as a Danish trading post.

Súðavík

Melrakkasetrið

KÍTÓN concert

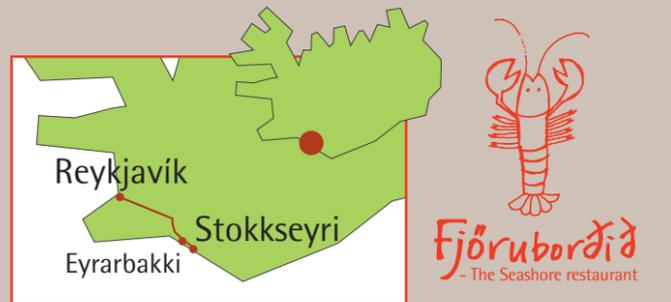
August 22

Women in Music in Iceland concert, see Akureyri listing for full description.

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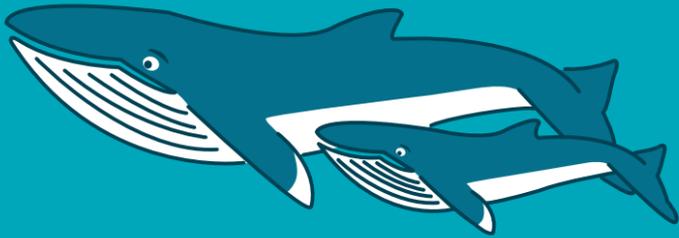
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Forget hamburgers and greasy fries—this is a terrific spot to set yourself right after a hard night's drinking. Step aboard the fruit express and order your meal at the juice bar, which coincidentally looks a bit like a metro station with its white-tiled pillars and industrial lamps. But the distinguishing factor

would have to be the fruit baskets lined up on the counter, including one filled with Pink Lady apples, my crunchy favourite.

(Fun fact: Pink Ladies mature on the tree for 200 days before picking. For more arguably useless information, check out the walls of this otherwise inviting establishment).

The menu is relatively simple: sandwiches to eat and fresh-pressed juice or skyr-based smoothies to drink. Early birds can also opt for oatmeal porridge or yoghurt.

Their most popular sandwich is the Chickencado (chicken, avocado, tomato, pesto), which sounded pretty good to me. My lunch date ordered the Chango (chicken, mango, peanut sauce, chilli), but only because it was the only sandwich that didn't contain pesto. To drink, I decided to try a Honey Bunny (passion fruit, pineapple, orange) while my date went for a small Indian Flirt smoothie (Vanilla-flavoured skyr, banana, cinnamon, apple). Then, before I could stop myself, I ordered a ginger cappuccino out of sheer curiosity.

Our juice and smoothie were pressed and mixed before our eyes and arrived in what seemed like seconds. Mine was zesty and refreshing; my sister's sweet and slightly exotic. Be warned: portions are quite smaller than the astronomical sizes we first-world consumers are used to. However, this has got to be a step in the right direction in terms of health and waste-management—I can't imagine that anyone would really want a gallon of carrot juice anyway. The only downside is the price:

990/790 ISK for a mug/teacup-sized serving is pretty steep.

Our sandwiches were ready shortly after we were seated, in paper and plastic packaging that must have been scientifically designed to be hard to open. Bring an engineer to help you unwrap it, because you'll only end up getting frustrated and tearing the packaging half to bits.

Despite technical difficulties, the sandwiches are reward enough: a mass of juicy ingredients squeezed between two slices of crunchy grilled bread. The Chango was nutty and spicy and the Chickencado just as tasty, with that sumptuous mushy texture only a ripe avocado can produce. The finishing touch was a dusting of coarse sea salt that added just the right amount of oomph. Highly recommended as a light meal or snack.

As for the ginger cappuccino, I can happily announce that Lemon has succeeded where others have failed. Maybe I've had too many bad experiences with weirdly flavoured coffee (I will never again be tempted to try gingerbread or pumpkin flavoured coffee and neither should you), but I was caught completely off guard by this totally drinkable combination! Neither too bland nor too overbearing, I might even order it again the next time I stop by—probably sooner than later.

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Opening hours:
Mon - Thu: 11:30 am - 1:00 am
Fri - Sat: 11:30 am - 3:00 am
Sun: 11:30 am - 1:00 am

What We Think:

Hipsteresque features, good prices, very modern, very positive.

Flavour:

French-Asian fusion, bistro, tapas/mezze.

Ambiance:

Easy going, laid back. Intoxication above average (which can be seen as positive/negative).

Service:

Friendly, accommodating.

Four course menu for two

(no drinks): 8-10,000 ISK



Nora Magasin opened earlier this year under the ownership and guidance of celebrity chef Völfi Snær from the next-door Borg Restaurant. Unlike Borg, however, its objective is to offer a casual bistro atmosphere where guests can relax, have a drink and a bite to eat.

My companion and I visited Nora on one of those rare, sunny summer evenings in Reykjavík when it's warm enough (approx. 15 degrees) to sit outside. In keeping with the excitement of those evenings, most of the seats outside the restaurant were filled when we arrived, either by tourists wearing their Cintamani fleece wear, or sunburned Icelanders wearing

shorts and T-shirts. As the place does not take reservations, it was clear from the start that the service here would be laid-back but friendly, and the hipster devil was in the details: the cocktails were ushered out in charming, glass jars. Keeping good tempo on food, the staff did perhaps fall a bit behind on drinks, but then again, it was very, very busy.

The appetizers and small tapas courses were obviously quite popular, as most guests were always snacking on something while drinking from their jars. And understandably so: these small dishes are well-presented, most of them easy to eat with your hands, and also very fairly priced—which is true of the whole menu. The cuisine at Nora consists of some kind of French-Asian fusion, not surprisingly, perhaps, since the head chef, Akane Monavon, is half-French, half-Japanese.

For starters we chose the lobster tempura (1350 ISK) and the 'Come-on-ber't' (950 ISK). The lobster was very well cooked and the addition of sumac was quite pleasing, though the dish could have done with a touch more seasoning of salt. The addition of a cold salad of veggies including carrots and corn was perhaps a bit odd but not displeasing. The Camembert cheese was oozing after being set aflame tableside—very theatrical and impressive (no worries, the fire burns out in a matter of seconds). It was seasoned with rose pepper and served with a delicious crusty baguette and a berry emulsion. I stress that the bread should not be underestimated, it is the very key to the success of this dish—which is hereby recommended to all.

For the main course we ordered the fish of day (priced humbly at 1750 ISK) and a Szechuan-style duck breast (3690 ISK). The fish, which was a fried tusk, was beautifully presented,

colourful and vibrant. The tuskfish was perfectly cooked, flaky on the inside while keeping its shape—as it should—with a smear of fresh basil pesto on top. It was served on a small bed of green salad and topped with strips of pickled red beets and fresh-picked butter fried potatoes, onions and carrots.

The Szechuan duck breast was served on a hot plate, which meant that it continued to cook tableside. This presented a problem. Although very delicious, the duck was perfectly cooked when it arrived, crisp skin yet pink on the inside, but dry and overcooked at the latter stages. It was served with coarsely mashed potatoes on a bed of red peppers (a peculiar choice) alongside dipping sauce made out of soy, sesame oil, orange zest and honey (a complementary mix). It was all-in-all an OK dish, which perhaps needs some refinement.

For dessert we had the chocolate lava cake (850 ISK) and the cardamom crème brûlée (850 ISK). The lava cake had a hint of anise/licorice taste, which was nice. The cake was a bit heavy though and a bit too 'wheat-y' perhaps. The crème brûlée was light and airy, the sugar-coating crisp like glass—as it should be. The cardamom was a nice touch. Very pleasing.

Overall, my companion and I had a very fine evening. Nora is pretty much doing what it set out to do. The atmosphere is relaxed, the service is nice and the drinks are good. Not to mention, it is very fairly priced. Nora is essentially answering the long-standing demand for a proper bistro, 'gastro-pub' if you will. For a few drinks and a taste of French-Asian fusion without needing to declare bankruptcy, Nora Magasin comes highly recommended.

 BJÖRN TEITSSON
 AXEL SIGURDARSON



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