



The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE



Issue 14 × 2013

September 13 - 26

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THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LIFE, TRAVEL & ENTERTAINMENT IN ICELAND

SCHOOL

Summer is officially gone :(

WEATHER

Actually, summer never came...

TRAVEL

Take a hike!

MUSIC

Snorri Helgason has an autumn album for you!

FUNGI

Behold! The phallic cemetery dweller!

RAGNAR AXELSSON

Exposing RAX

You might not know him, but as an Icelander/someone remotely interested in the topic of Iceland, you almost certainly have enjoyed his work. Ragnar Axelsson—RAX—has spent the past few decades furiously documenting people and places in Iceland and the Arctic, embarking on long solo journeys, often putting himself in harm's way to get that perfect shot. In this issue, we meet the man behind the camera, and learn what's driving him on...



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Editorial | Anna Andersen

WHEN RAX TOOK MY PHOTO

Anna's 31st Editorial



"Oh, it's rough being famous in Iceland. Can't even escape into the mountains without being followed by the paparazzi and appearing on the front page of the newspaper," I posted on my Facebook not long after moving here in '09.

It probably goes without saying that this was a tongue-in-cheek post. I had barely been in the country for three months and I was hardly famous, yet. I really just happened to be hiking a mountain called Hengill as Morgunblaðið photographer Rax flew past and snapped a photo.

When I mentioned it to him the other day, he recalled that he had just been out flying for fun when he spotted us looking like a row of ants on the mountains. Upon returning to Reykjavík he learned that we were spending the winter and spring training for Iceland's tallest peak, Hvannadalshnjúkur (2,110 metres), and that

was enough to give his impromptu photo some context for the paper.

So that's the story of how the renowned RAX took my photo, and how I made it onto the front page of one of Iceland's main daily newspapers.

I remember being rather amused when I saw it, as it probably wouldn't have been front-page material in any of the other cities that I had lived in, and certainly not in Los Angeles, where I had spent the last four years studying.

Everything in Iceland seemed so refreshingly simple and down-to-earth like this, which is definitely a big part of what's keeping me here today (despite the terrible weather (see "Betrayed By The Jet Stream: How one nation's happiness in summer hinges on a fluke," page 10)).

Also part of what's keeping me here is the

fact that there are, contrary to what I posted, seemingly endless possibilities of escaping into the mountains, away from the paparazzi and civilization altogether (See mountaineer Ari Trausti Guðmundsson's "Hiking in Kerlingarfjöll: The Home Of Giants" on page 50 for some a nice hike in the highlands).

Sometimes I get the sense that Icelanders take this for granted, not all Icelanders of course, but some of the ones making the big decisions, the ones who for instance decided to all but dismantle the Ministry for the Environment not too long ago.

We have to realise that the decisions being made today will have a permanent effect on the future long after we're gone. Building a road through the Gálgahraun lava fields is not something that you can undo. Damming the Þjórsá river and drying up waterfalls is not something you can undo. You just can't undo these things.

Take it from Rax, who has spent the last thirty or so years documenting majestic landscapes that he fears might not be around for future generations to enjoy (see "Getting To Know A Known Man," page 21).

"When you've travelled all around the world, you come to realise how stunning this country is and how valuable that beauty is. A stupid man observes the world through his window. There are too many people like that, talking down to those who are trying to point out how valuable the landscape is," he says.

"There's no point in holding a grudge against what has already been done, one has to accept and forgive. But in the future, we have to bear in mind what sort of a treasure Iceland is, and...you would never scrawl all over Mona Lisa."

Rax preaches forgiveness and of course we can't go around seething with rage every minute of the day, but at a time when some of Iceland's most impressive nature is being put on the chopping block, perhaps some more vigilance is in order.

TRACK OF THE ISSUE



Snorri Helgason – "Autumn Skies"

Download NOW at www.grapevine.is

April may be the cruellest month for T.S. Eliot, but for Snorri Helgason, it's September that rolls in the real melancholy. This new track off his brand-spanking new album, 'Autumn Skies', was written to match the turning of the leaves, the grey of the clouds, the ceaseless wind and rain that blow through the heart when it has been broken. Even if you are deeply in love, this beautiful track will make you want to commiserate over a warm cup of tea.

Read an interview with Snorri Helgason on page 28!



Hafnarstræti 15, 101 Reykjavík
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grapevine@grapevine.is
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Editor In Chief:
 Haukur S Magnússon / haukur@grapevine.is

Editor:
 Anna Andersen / anna@grapevine.is

Editorial:
 +354 540 3600 / editor@grapevine.is

Advertising:
 +354 540 3605 / ads@grapevine.is
 +354 40 3610

Publisher:
 Hilmar Steinn Grétarsson / hilmar@grapevine.is
 +354 540 3601 / publisher@grapevine.is

Contributing Writers

Ari Trausti Guðmundsson
 Björn Teitsson
 David Roach
 Inge A. Kvikvik
 Ingibjörg Rósa Björnsdóttir
 Kári Tulinius
 Lawrence Millman
 Mark Asch
 Óli Dóri
 Parker Yamasaki
 Paul Fontaine
 Snorri Páll Jónsson Úlfhildarson
 Sveinbjörn Þórðarson
 Sylvain Verstricht

Journalist

Larissa Kzyzer / larissa@grapevine.is

Editorial Interns

Tómas Gabriel Benjamin / gabriel@grapevine.is
 Adrienne Blaine / adrienne@grapevine.is
 Jonas Kellermeyer / jonas@grapevine.is
 Katarína Landström / katarina@grapevine.is
 Kristján Leitma / kristjan@grapevine.is

Art Director

Hörður Kristbjörnsson / hordur@dodlur.is

Design:

Hrefna Sigurðardóttir / hrefna@dodlur.is

Photographers:

Alisa Kalyanova / www.alisakalyanova.com
 Magnús Anderssen / www.magnusandersen.co
 Nanna Dis / www.nannadis.com

Sales Director:

Aðalsteinn Jörundsson / adalsteinn@grapevine.is
 Helgi Þór Harðarson / helgi@grapevine.is

Distribution manager:

distribution@grapevine.is

Proofreader:

Jim Rice

Listings:

listings@grapevine.is

Submissions inquiries:

editor@grapevine.is

Subscription inquiries:

+354 540 3605 / subscribe@grapevine.is

General inquiries:

grapevine@grapevine.is

Founders:

Hilmar Steinn Grétarsson,
 Hörður Kristbjörnsson,
 Jón Trausti Sigurðarson,
 Oddur Óskar Kjartansson,
 Valur Gunnarsson

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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').



On the cover: Ragnar Axelsson (RAX)
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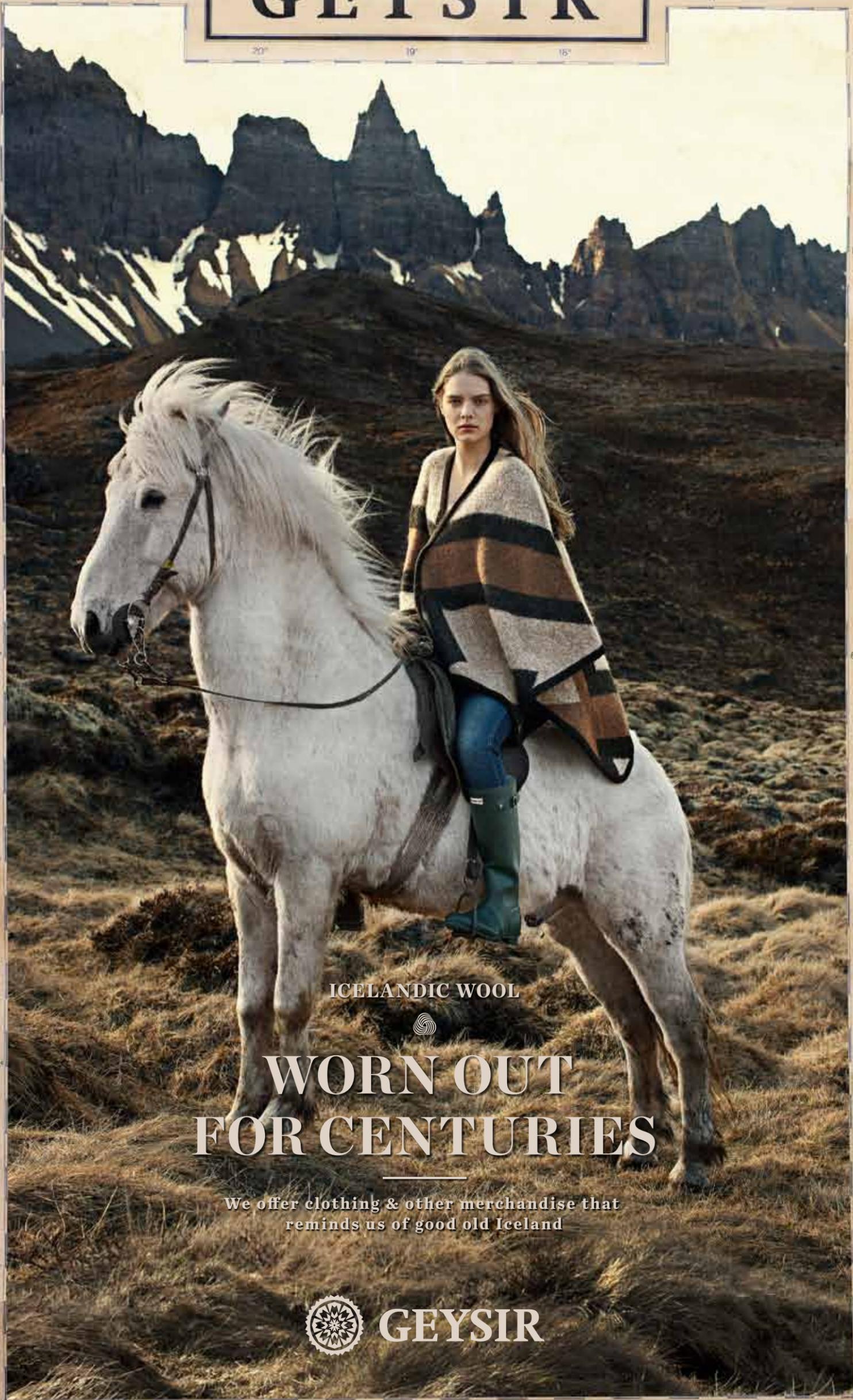
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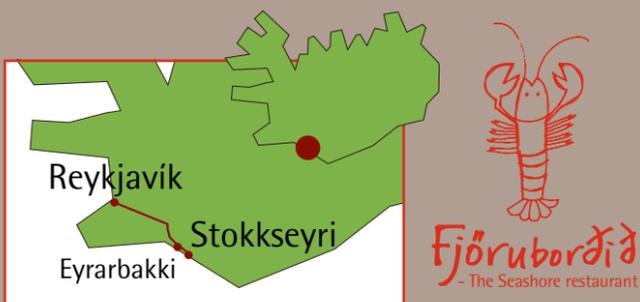


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Sour grapes & stuff

MOST AWESOME LETTER

Dear Editor,

Iceland is a beautiful place. There is no doubt in my mind that this wild landscape is one of the most unique amongst those that I have encountered over the course of the summer. In the past four months, I have covered hundreds of kilometers. I have walked from sea level to 3000 meters. I have seen the ocean and the sea, the rolling green hills of Ireland, the dry panoramas of Corsica, the snow-capped peaks of the Vercors, and the massive fjords of Norway. I have walked across barren lava fields in Bäsar, stood jaw agape in its canyons, surrounded on either side by thousand-year-old glaciers spilling their blue gold through the valleys. The millions of tons of volcanic debris encountered on my hikes were a humbling experience. The roaring of the breaking ice in the Jokulsárlón glacier lagoon made me appreciate the powers of fire and ice and the role they play on this island to a whole new degree.

Yet through all of these incredible experiences, the memories, and the wonderful people encountered, one common point repeatedly stood out in a glaring fashion: tourists. And although I have been a foreigner in all of the places that I have visited this summer, I am ashamed to be associated with these hordes of individuals who pile out en masse onto the trails. Time and again, no matter their origin, they leave the wilderness with scars in their wake. These fans of ecotourism, covered from head to toe in crisp Gore-Tex and gear they do not even know how to use, are simply too posh to follow one of the first rules of Leave No Trace: stay on the trail. Apparently, it is more important to keep those fancy pants as clean as the day they were bought than pay heed to the signs indicating rehabilitation zones. They would prefer to further erode a muddy trail rather than walk through a puddle.

This negligence takes its toll on the fragile alpine environment. As the audio guide on the Reykjavik Excursions bus put it so justly, the pillow-like green moss "looks so sad" when it has turned brown and died from one too many trampling

individuals. Although I follow the Leave No Trace principles as much as possible, at times it becomes impossible to determine where the "real" trail lies. From afar, it begins to look more like a messy road than a pristine wilderness landscape.

Initially, I was shocked and offended at the bluntness of some of the rangers, even at the end of what must have been a hectic season. Now, I think I understand their pain and frustration a little more. I simply hope that a change in mentality will occur, sooner rather than later.

Erika

Dear Erika,

Between you and our last issue's most awesome letter, we are amassing a veritable collection of tourists-taking-tourists-to-school! Hopefully you're not ashamed of every last one of them – we are pretty certain that many of your fellow travellers are very conscientious about the fragility of our environment. There are hundreds of international volunteers that come to Iceland every year with non-profits like Seeds and Worldwide Friends to lend their hands to environmental protection and restoration campaigns.

Some of them wear Gore-Tex, too, for the convenience and all. It's also really fun to say: Gore-Tex.

Thanks for eloquently and thoughtfully expressing concern for the protection of this place. We sure care about it a lot, too!

Love,
The Grapevine

Hi there people,

I am Esli Tapilatu, a social graphic designer from The Netherlands currently working on a very nice project called Capital of happiness. In this project i search for stories about happiness worldwide. And for this project i will visit New York, Ulanbataar, Ghana, Tokio, and (tatatatataaaaa) Reykjavik.

There is one thing, i don't know anybody overthere, yet. But i am looking for stories, big ones, small ones. Touching, stories that make you laugh. Do you have any tips to connect to the Reykjavik people? I will visit the city in February but i want to plant some seed in advance. I am looking forward to hear from you and if you have a nice story to share, feel welcome to mail me.

Best of luck.
Esli Tapilatu

Dear Esli,

Firstly, we are very curious what a social graphic designer is? Are there anti-social graphic designers? Do they alienate their co-workers and work alone in dark caves? Are you all about the party?

Secondly, we're a little jealous that you get to travel to all these cool places to collect stories about happiness when us journalists usually only get to travel to talk about misery and pestilence. Lucky you! We certainly do have many local readers who would gladly share some happy stories with you though.

We will put any folks in touch with you who want to spread the joy.

Keep on smiling!
The Grapevine

YOUR PRIZE FOR THAT MOST AWESOME LETTER OF YOURS IS: A THREE COURSE MEAL WITH WINE AND A COCKTAIL AT BORG RESTAURANT

Now. Whoever wrote this issue's MOST AWESOME LETTER gets a prize. And it's a pretty great one. A three course meal for two at BORG RESTAURANT, including a glass of wine and a cocktail apéritif! So as you can see, the greatness of this prize knows no bounds. BORG was just awarded best place to go for a cocktail and their chef is apparently one of those TV-rockstar type chefs that are always up to something delicious (without being a dick about it, we hear). Lucky, lucky winner! And if you for some reason didn't write this issue's MOST AWESOME LETTER, you can always try for next time. Just write us at letters@grapevine.is



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At The Edge Of The Future?

Kjarninn Plans To Do Journalism Right And They Won't Print A Word Of It!

— By Paul Fontaine



Magnús Andersen

Last month, a new weekly magazine called Kjarninn (“The Core”) was launched. This weekly magazine may feature fewer articles than you’d expect to find in your typical news publication, but the articles are more of the “long form” variety, covering subjects ranging from the overlap of business and politics, the drug underworld, and foreign policy. But you won’t find it on your doorstep, in your mailbox, or for sale in any store. Kjarninn is a fully digital magazine.

The two guys who started it—Þórður Snær Júlíusson and Magnús Halldórsson—believe that this is the future of Icelandic media. Both used to work for media giant 365 Media, but made the decision to leave earlier this year. This was for many reasons, although “the final straw,” Þórður says, is when he learned that 365’s owner, Jón Ásgeir Jóhannesson, sought to have Þórður fired for writing an article that was critical of IP Studium, a company owned by Jón Ásgeir’s wife, Ingibjörg Pálmadóttir.

The Grapevine caught up with the two at their downtown office to get their thoughts on why they believe this to be where we’re headed and why existing models of journalism are on the wane.

What is Kjarninn trying to do that no one else is doing?

▸ Firstly, we’re trying to do more in-depth journalism, to take just a few stories and do them really well instead of trying to touch on everything. And we’re trying to take advantage of the technological advances that have been here over the past few years. And thirdly, we’re creating jobs for ourselves. Like Maggi said, we’ve been talking about trying to do something in this field ourselves that we can run in the way we see fit. The worst that can happen is we fail, and then we’ll do something else.

I take that to mean you think there’s a lack of long-form journalism in the Icelandic media.

▸ I would say so, definitely.

▸ We have some entities in broadcast journalism that are more in depth, like [RÚV’s roundtable discussion show] Kastljósið, but I think that’s about it. In the Icelandic media in general, I think it’s been lacking for quite some time.

Although the lack of investigative reporting has been a global trend in the media, do you think there are any particularly glaring reasons for it in Iceland?

▸ Financial reasons would probably be the biggest reason. There’s not a lot of money put into the editorial departments. I also think it’s a marketing thing. When you’re trying to get advertisers and generate revenue, it can be very difficult to do longer, more in depth pieces. So I’d say this is a risky business.

▸ I think as well that both the print and online media are trying to create more headline-attractive news stories, and generate more clicks to make them more sellable to the advertisers.

▸ We believe, on the other hand, that niches can be very attractive for advertisers. We think that the advertising world in Iceland will be changing rapidly over the next two to three years, as the digital and online media market will be getting bigger. If you have 20–40,000 people reading your digital magazine once a week, it can be a very interesting place for advertisers.

That does make sense. Choosing the digital format for publication does make distribution virtually limitless.

▸ And it’s way cheaper. That’s one factor. Another factor is the advertising industry in Iceland is lagging behind what’s happening in Europe. Digital advertising in Europe is about 22% of the whole cake, whereas in Iceland, it’s about 8 to 9%. Something’s bound to happen in Iceland as well. We tend to be a little bit behind the curve, but someday we have to catch up.

▸ We’re on top of things when it comes to gadgets.

▸ At the end of this year, half of the households in Iceland will have an iPad. At the end of last year it was one-third. So it’s growing quite rapidly.

So in some ways, Iceland is behind the curve, but in other ways, it’s way ahead of the curve.

▸ I think that’s true. We’re quick to buy the gadgets, but we listen to more radio than any other Scandinavian country, we still watch linear TV more than anybody else. We still read much more print media than any other country around us. So the adaptation of how to use the media in different ways is something that takes us a little longer to catch up with.

That’s really interesting because that seems to indicate a discrepancy between form and content, that Icelanders are quick to adopt new forms, but not necessarily new content.

▸ If you look at things like radio and linear television, it’s on the decline in Iceland. But for some reason I can’t explain, it takes a lot longer here for changes to happen.

▸ Also, this can be changed very rapidly. Icelanders are buying 1,200 to 1,500 tablets, mostly iPads and iPhones, per month, and if this trend continues, in 12 months time, about 60% of households in Iceland will have tablets.

▸ Younger people aren’t using media in the same way as media has been used in the past. So when we look at the decline of print media, I think part of the problem is that the media is not adapting to new

users. I’ve been working at a newspaper for years, but I haven’t gone downstairs to pick up a newspaper in quite a number of years. I read them all on my iPad or, before then, on their websites.

I think that it’s also worth mentioning that people’s involvement in the media has been much greater. People can google things now, and that helps make sure the media keeps their facts straight. I think in that aspect, all media is bound to become better, because it’s much easier for them to be caught doing something they shouldn’t be doing.

How would you describe the state of Icelandic media today?

▸ I think we’re in the middle of some very big changes in the Icelandic media as a whole. I think [national broadcasting company] RÚV will be changing the way they work over the next two or three years. These are very interesting times. I think that we are a small company, but that we have a very important role at the beginning of these changes in the media sector.

Speaking of RÚV, incidentally, we recently saw Progressive MP Vigdís Hauksdóttir, who also chairs the Budget Optimisation Committee, make some veiled threats about making deep cuts to RÚV. Have either of you experienced politicians trying to directly influence the content of the media?

▸ Well, politicians are always going to try to influence how you write about them, but I’ve never experienced a politician going out of their way to an abnormal degree to do so. But I’m not particularly worried that the Progressive Party will try to influence RÚV to the degree that she implied. I’m sceptical of that happening.

She chairs this committee, and hails from the party leading the government. These remarks of hers don’t worry you at all?

▸ I don’t think an Icelandic politician would follow through on those threats. I think Iceland is mature enough to be past that. If we’re not past that, we’re in deep trouble, but I have to believe that we’re past that.

I’ve heard from a number of Icelandic journalists that they feel the market is starting to consolidate. Do you get this impression as well?

▸ I think it has in the last few years, yes. The biggest privately-owned media company in the country [365] now has 60–65% of the advertising revenue. And when you have to rely on the advertisers and the subscribers to pay for the media, that’s a lot of consolidating.

Given that climate, do you think there can be actual competitive journalism in Iceland?

▸ That’s what we’re banking on, because technology has evaporated huge costs of printing and distributing. We can write, print and distribute a weekly magazine for a fraction of the cost of printing and distributing a printed-paper. We can do this with six people in this small office when just a few years back you’d need a lot more money. So that’s what we’re banking on, that the Icelandic people will embrace this new technology and start using it to get their news.

NEWS IN BRIEF

by Parker Yamasaki



It’s back-to-school month! A time for the re-emergence of the alarm clock, of brown bag sack lunches, and of making new friends. **On September 4, Prime Minister Sigmundur Davíð met with President Obama in Sweden to discuss the Nordic region’s relationship with the United States.** Apparently things are just peachy, as Sigmundur confirmed afterwards that Obama is in fact a “really likeable” guy. That’s despite Obama making jokes about Sigmundur wearing mismatched shoes. Yes, he wore one dress shoe and one Nike trainer.



What was that about unwanted surveillance? Oh, no not you Obama. We’re talking about Laugardalslaug. This past month, **Laugardalslaug reported that they catch some not-so-slick swimmers trying to cop photos of the notable swimming hole three to four times a week.** According to the pool’s rules, photographs of the grounds require permission by the sports and leisure authority and the photographer must be accompanied by a member of the pool’s staff at all times.



In other surveillance news, Iceland was in Facebook’s recently published report revealing the names of every country that has requested information about its citizens via the social website, how many accounts were accessed, and what percentage of those accounts yielded useful information. While some countries were notably nosier than others (the U.S. topped the list with a whopping 12,000 requests made regarding nearly 21,000 accounts), Iceland is not so innocent. According to the report, **sometime within the first 6 months of 2013, a single government request was filed regarding information about one Icelandic citizen.** And, according to the report, that information proved useful in the investigation, brandishing Iceland with a 100% success rate.

Continues over

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So What's This Over-priced Rental Market I Keep Hearing About?

Words: Kári Tulinius | Illustration: Inga María Brynjarsdóttir

As Jimmy McMillan, founder of New York's The Rent Is Too Damn High Party, who released the album 'The Rent Is Too Damn High (vol. 1),' often points out: the rent is too damn high.

I Take It The Songs On The Album Are About High Rent.

Yes, they include "When You Can't Pay Your Rent," "Rent Party Christmas," "R.E.N.T." and "Land Lord Listen Up." Since January 2011, the average rental price has risen by 22.8% in Iceland. The area worst afflicted by high rental prices is the older part of Reykjavík, the area roughly within postcodes 101, 105 and 107. A number of factors make this part of town desirable enough to make people grudgingly willing to put up with the high rent.

The Answer Is Hipsters, Right? They Always Ruin Everything.

Part of the reason, yes, is that it is considered cool to live in that part of the city. But that is for the perfectly sensible reason that if you want to enjoy some of the nicer pleasures of city life, cafés, bookstores, theatre, restaurants, bars, swimming pools and bakeries, all within easy walking distance, the older part of town is your best bet.

I've Seen All Of These Things Elsewhere In Reykjavík.

They are all over, but very spread out. Most of Reykjavík was built after cars became common property. So the city has low population density, which means that it is easy and convenient to get around by car, but everything is quite far apart. Conversely, if you are driving around the older parts of Reykjavík, you have to deal with a nightmarish web of one-way streets and parking metres.

And Then You Get Eaten By Giant Hipster Spiders?

No, but living in that part of the city without a car is rather easy. So what you lose in rent expenses you can make up by not having a car. Younger people tend not to have cars anyway, are more likely to care about living close to bars, and are more likely to rent rather than buy. But there is one other big factor that brings young people to that part of town: higher education. The University of Iceland, parts of the Icelandic Academy of the Arts, and Reykjavík University are all there.

Who! Dorm Parties Are The Best! Quick, Someone Hand Me A Beer Bong.

There are almost no dorms. Most student housing is in the form of small apartments for families or for a few occupants. Many students choose to live with family, but those who are unable to, or simply wish to leave home now that they are adults, have to rent.

So It's Not Hipsters Who're To Blame, But Students?

That is simply one factor. Financial and political institutions have made decisions in the past that now push prices up. There used to be an extensive system of social housing that was dismantled in 1998 by the Independence Party and Progressive Party government as part of long-standing government policy to encourage homeownership, rather than renting. Earlier this year, Gylfi Snæbjörnsson, the president of the Icelandic



Federation of Labour, said there is a need for 25,000 apartments in social housing, but that only 4,000 exist, down from 11,000.

Politicians! I Knew It, It's Always Them. Them Or Spiders.

Again, that is only one factor. Another aspect is that housing mortgages can mean up to 40-year loans. That means that if you earn enough to qualify for one, your monthly mortgage payment will be far lower than what you would pay in rent—often by 30–50% less. That results in people choosing to buy their own apartments fairly early in life, which removes apartments from the rental market.

Easy Loans, Now There Is Something I'm As Comfortable Blaming Things On As Blaming Hipsters.

There is also the lack of accommodation for tourists. The rapid increase in tourism to Iceland has left the hospitality business lagging behind. This has meant that tourists often rent apartments while here. Since it is much more lucrative to rent to a large number of

short-term occupants than one long-term, a lot of the rental places are turned into tourist accommodation.

"The only solution is to bomb the city to the ground and start again."

So The Solution Is More Hotels?

No, because hotels get built in the same areas of the city where people are seeking to rent. This only pushes people out, which increases rent in the newer parts of Reykjavík. The only solution is to bomb the city to the ground and start again. If that is too radical a solution, then perhaps building more student accommodation and social housing will help. Though of course if tourism collapses, people can always live in the empty hotels.

by Parker Yamasaki



Speaking of one in 320,000, a French woman named Jessica Decap recently reached out to the Icelandic public in search of her Icelandic half-brother. Apparently back in 1968 Jessica's father was working as an electrician in Iceland where he impregnated a woman who may or may not be named Gugga. The news was broken to him after he had returned to France, and the child was never sought out. Now, four and a half decades later, Jessica has taken up the task of finding her Icelandic half-brother, guided by a telegram that describes the boy as "tall." So next time you're out and about, keep an eye out for Jessica's tall, half-French half-brother.

And good looking out, Icelandic public! Back in July a certain Icelandic policeman gained notoriety after a civilian video of his brutal arrest of an intoxicated woman circulated the internet. **On August 30, he was officially charged with assault by the State Prosecutor's Office.** The Icelandic public knows that no one deserves to be dragged through the street in such a psychedelic pair of pants despite what they say to anger you.

Perhaps she was just letting out a little frustration over a recent study by the Association of Academics revealing that men have on average 8.4% higher salaries than women in jobs that require degree requirements. And that's just small potatoes compared to the 27% average salary gap between genders in state and municipal jobs. So, ladies, let your boo take you out to dinner tonight.

Speaking of "boo," Reykjavík Mayor Jón Gnarr has revealed

Continues over



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Weather | Shitty

Betrayed By The Jet Stream

How One Nation's Happiness In Summer Hinges On A Fluke

— By Ingibjörg Rósa Björnsdóttir



Gulli

The weather. It's a source for endless conversations by the water cooler, in taxis, in the elevator, at your doctor's office. Yet, there's really only so much to say: it's either "good" or it's "bad," period. Or is there?

Given that everybody's feelings are subjective, it's basically impossible to come to a scientific conclusion about whether or not the weather is good or bad, but Market research company MMR gave it a good shot this August when it carried out a survey on how happy or unhappy Icelanders were about the weather this summer.

Overall, the study revealed that 44.9% of Icelanders were somewhat or very happy with the weather this summer, compared to 96.3% last year. Breaking the results down by region, 86.6% of the people living in Northeast Iceland were happy with their summer weather while only 57% of residents in the Northwest and mere 38.2% of people in the Reykjavík area were happy with this summer. And the people living in the Southwest either had the worst summer or are really sensitive because only 28.4% of them were happy with this year's summer weather. That says a lot, doesn't it?

Blame The Weatherman

Yep, the weather sucked. It sucked so much that people were taking their frustration out on the weather people! "I was getting fed up in June because people can be quite rude, calling or sending us mail to complain and complain, stopping us in the streets even," says Elín Björk Jónsdóttir, one of the meteorologists at the Icelandic Met Offices.

We meet over a cuppa in downtown Reykjavík at the end of August, and it perhaps goes without saying that wind and rain bang the windows and it's looking terribly autumn-like outside. Elín says people have calmed down since June. Either they've managed to soak up the sun somewhere during summer or have stopped fussing over it, hoping for a good autumn instead.

What might surprise people is that the summer of 2013, in the south and west,

was not that bad compared to 1961–1990, the period commonly used for comparison. "But yes, it looks as if this summer is slightly colder than the previous summers, at least here in Reykjavík," she says. "The biggest difference however is that there's been much less sunshine than we've gotten used to in the past decade or so."

She explains that the summer of 2013 was pretty much like the summers were when her generation was growing up, in the '80s and '90s, when the south and southwest part of Iceland mostly had mild but wet summers and the north and northeast got most of the sun and the heat. However, for the past decade, the south and west of Iceland have seen rather warm and unusually sunny summers year after year. Meanwhile, the summers on the other half of the island have only been mediocre at the most. This year, it turned right around.

"It might mean that this good spell in the Reykjavík area is over for a while," she says, "but it's not a long enough period to have significant impact on our records." Then again, she says, the weather is unpredictable and a bad summer now does guarantee a good or bad summer next year.

Poor Weather Memory

Then there's perspective. Although the summer was a bit of a shock, Elín says the people of Reykjavík might also be complaining because they measure the Icelandic weather against the weather in Scandinavia, or even Spain. "People travel much more now and after enjoying a few nice summer days in the other Nordic countries, they come home and expect the same here," she says, noting that when the weather in Iceland is bad it's typically good in Scandinavia and Great Britain due to the jet stream.

So, officially the temperature in Reykjavík this summer was below average, just a tad compared to the official 30 year period of '61–'90, but a quite a bit if compared to the past decade. "It's also the lack of sunshine and all the humidity that causes people to feel as if the summer weather was horrible. But also, Icelanders' weather-memory really isn't that good," Elín chuckles and adds that most people seem to only remember last summer's good days, or even just the best day, and then hope for a whole summer like that.

"People need to remind themselves where they live and tone down their expectations," Elín says, glancing at the greyness outside the window.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Continued

that he will announce whether or not he plans to run for re-election on October 31, which is Halloween, of course. Recently, two polls returned results that showed overwhelming popular support for him taking on a second term. But do the polls align with what is best for the people? The answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind.



And if it's not careful, it might just get tangled up in one of the Iceland's newest windmills. Earlier this month, the national power company, Landsvirkjun, signed an agreement with two engineering firms to raise more windmills in Iceland. The company is optimistic that wind power could be a third significant source of energy for Iceland, trailing behind hydropower and geothermal power. May the force be with you, Landsvirkjun.



The Reykjavík Environmental Planning Committee is feeling the force too. On August 28 they advanced a proposal to change the name of one of Reykjavík's streets that ends with the suffix 'höfði' to 'Svarthöfði,' the Icelandic translation of Darth Vader. And who better to accompany the proper honouring of Darth than...mini-Darth! The proposal includes a second suggestion to change one of the street names that ends with '-kinn' to 'Anakinn.' Way to go, nerds of Iceland. Now climb out of that trashcan and get back to class.

The Summer Sucked



As we are called The REYKJAVÍK Grapevine, we're going to concentrate on the weather in Reykjavík. And basically, it sucked this summer. June's average temperature was 9.9°C, which is 0.6° lower than the average temperature in June for the past ten years. What's more, there were only 121.7 hours of sunshine, which is 90 hours less than the average for June in the previous decade. As if that weren't enough to put a damper on things, there was 30% more rainfall than usual and a record number of rainy days since June 2003.

Reykjavík's summers are sometimes slow to start so everybody was crossing their fingers for July, but that turned out to be a total flop as well as it was the coldest July in Reykjavík since 2002, with an average temperature of only 10.6°C,

1.4 degrees lower than average temperature in July over the last decade. There was 40% more rainfall than the average July over the last decade and in fact, July hadn't seen so much rain since 2002. Thanks to the last ten days of July, there turned out to be a whopping 164 hours of sunshine, though that's still 37 hours less than the average in July for a whole decade.

After one good spell at the end of July, hopes were again crushed in early August with a rather disappointing bank holiday weekend. And on it went, windy and wet throughout the month. In fact, it was 1.2 degrees colder than what we've been used to in Reykjavík in the past ten years.

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School | Back to...

Yr Ass Is Mine, Freshman!

Is Hazing Archaic And Harmful, Or Just Plain Fun?

— By Tómas Gabríel Benjamin

At the start of each school year, seniors at upper secondary schools get a chance to welcome new freshmen in a hazing ceremony called ‘busun,’ or ‘tollering.’ Although this Icelandic rite of passage has been around for centuries, it has recently come under scrutiny. Last year the Icelandic ombudsman for children (yes, we have one of those) suggested that schools receive students in a more positive and friendly manner than hazing them.

The rituals and traditions vary from school to school, but they generally involve scaring and humiliating the freshmen. I remember being hazed in Menntaskólinn í Reykjavík, where seniors banged loudly on windows and doors before shepherding the new flock out to the front yard. There the older students made us perform all sorts of degrading activities such as flailing in the moist grass as if we were beached whales, doing push-ups on top of people of the opposite sex, and eating bananas from other students’ zippers. The ritual culminated with us being thrown into the air, after which seniors had to afford us the same respect as other students.

A Closely Observed Affair

Speaking to the rector of my former school, Yngvi Pétursson, he tells me that the hazing is closely observed by school authorities. Senior students are given thorough instructions as to what they can and can’t do during the day of hazing, and he can’t recall any accidents happening since he joined the school board in ’95. He says the whole affair is enjoyed by seniors and freshmen alike.

Karen Björk Eyþórsdóttir, the president of Menntaskólinn við Hamrahlíð’s student council, says that freshmen were all beaming with happiness after this year’s hazing. The affair involved telling the freshmen how unimportant they were, and performing a fake sacrifice of a loud-mouthed freshman who spoke out of turn. The students were then made to drink blood-coloured mysa (milk serum) shots, and were smudged with Vaseline and bronzer. At the end of it, the freshmen were covered in so much glitter that they looked like they had just come off the set of Twilight.

Before any hazing can take place in MH, the acts all have to be approved by Karen’s council, which in turn works closely with the rector to ensure that nothing gets out of hand. The hazing ritual, she says, is only one hour out of an entire week that is dedicated to making new students feel welcome to the school. During this week the various clubs hold presentations and offer students a

chance to become active in their extracurricular activities.

Not All Fun And Games

Although he has no personal grievances after being hazed at MH this year, Arnaldur Ingi Jónsson questions the power dynamic between senior students and freshmen, believing things to sometimes go too far. “I didn’t mind getting Vaseline and toothpaste in my hair, or drinking the mysa shot, but some people are not okay with those things,” he says. “I’ve heard of cases where students were practically forced to do things they were fundamentally opposed to. I don’t want to abolish hazing, but some parts of it could really be improved.”

Other people are not as forgiving of this phenomenon. When Olga Lísa Garðarsdóttir was appointed the rector of Fjölbrautaskóli Suðurlands a year ago, she decided to ban hazing outright. She could not justify continuing the practice after witnessing numerous incidents that were only a hairsbreadth away from bearing serious consequences. “It’s humiliating for the freshmen, and also poses serious risks of leaving lasting psychological scars,” she says.

Olga believes that allowing hazing validates a certain kind of bullying. Some of her students were not pleased to miss out on the chance to haze others, but they have not been so motivated as to confront Olga about the issue. The only response she has received has been praise from parents and teachers, as new students are now met in a friendly fashion with a series of concerts, stand-up comedy and free food.

Other schools have followed in FSu’s footsteps and banned hazing rituals, including Fjölbrautaskóli Suðurnesja, and most recently Fjölbrautaskóli Garðabæjar. Only time will tell if this is a trend that will catch on in the other schools of Iceland, or if hazing will remain a part of the curriculum.



Illustrated by Inga María Brynjarsdóttir



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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*			
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Students: 1—Government: 0

The Student Council Take On The Government And Wins

— By Larissa Kyzer

For University of Iceland student council representatives, María Rút Kristinsdóttir and Jórunn Pála Jónasdóttir, the start of the fall semester has been spent largely outside of the classroom. “It’s good that the first week starts easy,” Jórunn confides. “I’ve only been able to go to class one day so far.”



Magnús Andersen

As the chair and the student rights and loan officers respectively, both María and Jórunn have been dedicating the majority of their time to an ongoing legal dispute between the student council and Iceland’s government-run student loan fund, LÍN. The issue at stake is a recent change in the eligibility requirements for part-time students who want to receive loans.

As of last year, Icelandic students only had to register for 18 credits in order to receive loans from LÍN (a full-time course load at the University of Iceland is 30 credits). In June, however, LÍN announced that in response to government-mandated budget cuts, the new requirement—effective immediately—would be that students register for 22 credits.

María says that this decision meant that approximately 2,000 students—many of whom attend classes part-time because they are raising families, juggling employment, or have learning disabilities—will not qualify for loans this year. Without other financial resources or time to prepare for the requirement change, many of these students would simply drop out, María predicts. “They will not get very good jobs,” she says, and as a result, many may have to apply for government assistance. “We have to think about the future,” she says. “It’s better to have people studying than to have them on benefits.”

The Court Rules

The student council, led by María and Jórunn, decided to take LÍN to court over the matter—the first time in Icelandic history that a student council has sued a government institution. And in a rather surprising turn of events, the district court ruled in the students’ favour. According to the decision, it was not legal for LÍN to change the loan requirements with so little warning. For nearly two weeks after the court decision, however, none of the requirements were reversed. “We have three weeks from the date of the decision to appeal, or 15 days to implement the changes,” explains Guðrún Ragnarsdóttir, the managing director at LÍN.

Guðrún says that she understands some of the students’ frustration. “I know that they didn’t have much time to prepare for this,” she says. “Neither did we. We didn’t expect further budget cuts.” When the additional cuts were announced, she says, the LÍN board explored multiple options for reducing their spending other than raising the credit

requirement. However, the board felt that all of these other options—such as reducing funds for students studying abroad—would have been too burdensome on specific groups of borrowers. “It was a simple mathematical exercise,” she says. “This was the least radical solution.” Moreover, she says, raising the credit requirement was a way to return to the “core concept of the student loan fund. It is meant for students who are attending school full time,” she says. “If we need to make cutbacks, then it is best to go back to the original idea behind the fund.”

From the student council’s perspective, however, this decision reflects both a lack of research into the consequences of changing the credit requirements, as well as a disinclination to involve students in the decision making process. And there is a precedent for student involvement: the LÍN governing board is actually comprised of four government-appointed officials and four students representing Icelandic student associations. María and Jórunn say that the student board members were not made privy to prelimi-

nary discussions about the requirement changes, that only the “political participants” were invited to these meetings. “We were only given three days to prepare for the full board meeting,” they said. “We got there and they said ‘this would be the decision.’ The students had no say.”

For Now, That Is...

María and Jórunn say that they were prepared to negotiate and suggest that there were several other ways in which LÍN could effectively reduce its budget. Students could be made to apply for only one semester’s loans at a time, for instance, thereby ensuring that they were only borrowing money that they actually needed. At the very least, they hoped to lower the new credit requirement to 20 credits a semester instead of 22. They insist that the student council is not against implementing some changes in the application process: “We understand that there is a need to downsize the government’s budget and were willing to look at other possibilities.”

In the wake of the court’s decision, María and Jórunn were frustrated by what they perceived to be LÍN’s blatant disregard of the ruling, but they have been heartened by the response from their fellow students. “There is a lot of solidarity about this matter,” María says. “Students are stopping me in the hall and saying thank you. We are going through some uncertainty now, but it really matters that we stood up and didn’t take this silently.”

The day this issue went to print, LÍN decided that they would comply with the district court’s ruling instead of appealing the decision. The new credit requirement will not go into place for the current academic year, but it is very likely that it will be implemented in the future. “This is a change that is going to take place,” Guðrún says. “It is only a question of when.”

“The student council, led by María and Jórunn, decided to take LÍN to court over the matter—the first time in Icelandic history that a student council has sued a gov-

ernment institution.”

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Guðrún disagrees that the students were left out of the decision process. “We held preliminary meetings with government ministers to see what options were available. Once the options were in place, we presented them to the full board. Everyone was given three days notice, which was in accordance with the board’s governing procedure.” She also says that the students were presented with other options for reducing the LÍN budget, such as lowering the cap on how much total

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International Students 101

Who Are These People And What Are They Doing Here?

— By Larissa Kyzer

Summer, if it ever really arrived in Iceland this year, is drawing to a close. As the air gets crisper and the days get shorter, school is starting once again. And there are a lot of new faces around the University of Iceland these days. International student enrolment has been on the rise since 2001, when only 411 foreign students were in attendance. As of this year, 8% of the university's total enrolment, or 1,152 students, are from foreign countries and many of the international students enrolled today are not just spending a semester or two here, but studying in full-time, degree-earning programmes.



□ Kristján Leitma

The Germans

Germany has sent more students to the University of Iceland than any other country since 2002, and a total of 137 German students are enrolled this semester. Poland has the second highest number of foreign students (82), followed by the United States (74), Denmark (64), and France (60). Students from the other Nordic countries are well represented, but many come from further afield: 31 Chinese students are enrolled this year, 34 come from Lithuania, and 33 from Canada.

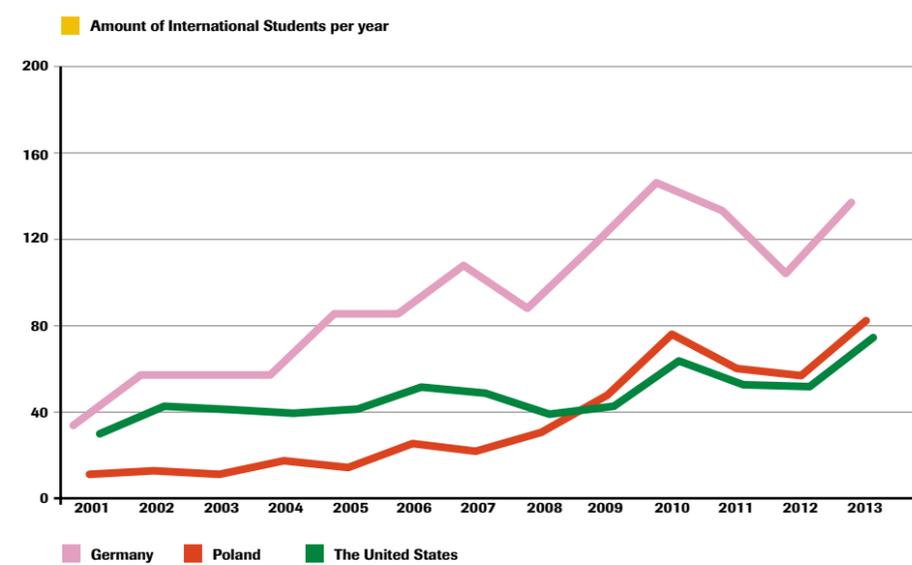
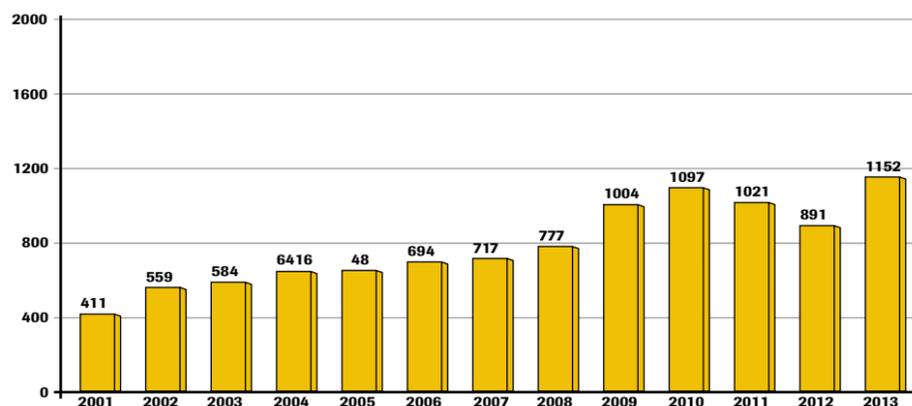
"Germany has sent more students to the University of Iceland than any other country since 2002"

And the international demographics have also changed a great deal in the last decade or so—several countries which did not enrol any students at the University of Iceland in 2001 now regularly send at least a few students to study in Iceland each year: in 2013, there are three Columbian students, seven students from both Estonia and the Philippines, three Austrians, and seventeen students from India.

Studying Icelandic

International students are enrolled at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. According to data from the 2012 academic year, the highest enrolments of foreigners at both levels is, perhaps expectedly, in the School of Humanities, which houses the Icelandic and Comparative Cultural Studies Department. There, 319 international undergrads are enrolled in Icelandic and 40 in the graduate programme, making it the most popular programme amongst international students. The School of Engineering and Natural Sciences also has high international enrolments—there are 103 undergraduates in this school (54 of whom are studying Earth Sciences) and 86 graduate students (37 of whom are studying Life and Environmental Studies).

International students are also found peppered about a variety of other programmes: for undergraduate studies, there are two enrolled in Social Work, one each in Odontology, Food and Nutrition, and Religious Studies, and six in Electrical and Computer Engineering. International graduates are also found in Law (7), Linguistics (25), and Sport, Leisure Studies, and Social Education (2).



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Four 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 2009, Haukur S. Magnússon's first year as editor. Read on from some reflections from the man!



Remembering 2009

— By Haukur S. Magnússon

My first issue as editor of the Reykjavík Grapevine was also the magazine's first issue of 2009. These were urgent times. The dazed shock that Iceland's TOTAL ECONOMIC COLLAPSE left the nation in was wearing off, and we were slowly starting to grasp the magnitude of what had happened, and the immense tasks we faced in the immediate (and, as it turns out, not so immediate) future.

Those who were around during that time will remember that basically everything was in a state of flux and uncertainty. Did we have a government? Did we have a working currency? WTF happened? WTF is going to happen? Is whatever happened someone's fault? And if so, whose? In the case of the Grapevine, we also had to ask ourselves: Do we still have advertisers? Can we still afford to print the thing? Will we go under, like so many of our peers already have?

Any self-respecting publication—even a lo-fi tourist magazine—knows that the most important part of its job is to ask questions (and attempt to come up with answers, through JOURNALISM), and there certainly was no

shortage of those. Taking a seat in the editor's chair at the start of December 2008, I knew Grapevine and its contributors had their work cut out. Oh, of course we could have just slid into empty tourist-mag reportage (featuring waterfall-photo essays a plenty), but as a reader and journalist for Grapevine I had come to hold it to a certain standard. I took the job because I was first and foremost a fan of the Grapevine, and I would be damned if I would be responsible for defiling its legacy and letting it slide into boring complacency and pay-for articles about elves and spas and puffin shops (those were around then, too).

Imagine my surprise, then, when I showed up for my first day of work to an empty office. "Where is the staff?" I asked no one in particular. "You're looking at it," replied Grapevine's publisher Hilmar. To survive the economic collapse, the magazine needed to resort to a few austerity measures. They included moving into a tiny office, decreasing the circulation by 5,000 (from 30,000 copies per issue to 25,000) and greatly decreasing the number of in-house staff. We no longer had a journalist, or

that other journalist. Or an assistant editor. We no longer had a lot of things.

"Oh well," I thought. "We'll figure something out." And we did. Through the tireless efforts of freelancers and interns and what in-house staff we had left, we managed to publish some pretty awesome and revealing stories during that first post-collapse year as we furiously tried to understand what had just happened and what was about to happen (we also kept a close eye on local music, art and culture, as we always have). And we had a blast while doing it!

I like to think we kept up the standard under some difficult circumstances, although that's for others to judge.

Now, we published some pretty memorable stuff in 2009. First of all, I'd like to mention the year's first issue, where we joked about our austerity measures on the cover (tagline: "We are only broke on money"—a quote from artist Gabriela Friðriksdóttir), while inside we surveyed almost anyone who would talk to us (some pretty cool people responded, too) about "What we had/what to expect." Read-

ing the issue and people's analysis and predictions now, five years later, is both revealing and fun—it also provides some sort of idea of what being around then felt like.

As we made our February issue, the streets were raging with protest-action. We had spent all of January documenting that stuff, and some of our documentation appears in the issue, including an interview with two cops who were on the other side of the protest lines (a lot of what we did simply went on-line, because everything was happening so quickly). For our cover, we decided to deck out Davíð Oddsson and Geir H. Haarde in martyr gear (we thought their pleas for sympathy were pathetic), a tribute to Muhammad Ali's Esquire cover.

One of my favourite articles we've ever run appeared in our April issue. In 'The End of Neo-Liberal Neverland,' philosopher/writer Haukur Már Helgason explored "the re-colonization of the Icelandic nation" in a masterful way. It is heady stuff and great analysis—and I got to put my friend Dalí on the cover! It holds up to this day.

We got to interview a lot of cool peo-

ple in 2009. We talked to David Lynch (who did a self-portrait for our cover), the Reykjavík anarchist contingent (read Catharine Fulton's excellent feature on that), rising artist Ragnar Kjartansson, Hannes Hólmsteinn Gissurason ("The Architect of the Collapse") and Milos Forman!

But it wasn't all interviews. Paul Fontaine wrote what was probably the first comprehensive account of the Icesave matter (in English at least), we made our first ever BEST OF REYKJAVÍK issue and then, in what was probably the year's most important story for us, we examined Iceland's FIRE SALE in our October issue, shining a needed spotlight on stuff like Magma Energy (now Alterra Power)'s attempts to purchase energy company HS Orka at a discounted price. I like to think those efforts mattered in the long run, and got some people to pay attention that maybe otherwise wouldn't have.

So many fun articles that year. I might be biased, but I suggest if you have time on your hand you go download all the 2009 pdfs from our website and take some time to read them. I at least would totally enjoy doing that.



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The Man Behind The Camera

—By Ingibjörg Rósa Björnsdóttir | Photos By Magnús Andersen

We meet at Café Babalú, one of Reykjavík's cosier coffee shops. Full of old furniture and cluttered with books and kitsch ornaments, it seems like the perfect place to meet the legendary Rax—not because he's old, but because over the past 30 years he's become such a familiar figure to Icelanders that in many households he is almost thought of as a favourite uncle.





Rax is renowned in Iceland for embarking on solo journeys that readers sometimes get a glimpse of through “Morgunblaðið’s” pages, where he has often displayed otherworldly images of the North—gorgeous, composed photos that often tell a story all on their own, with little or no text to accompany them.

But despite his celebrated status, most Icelanders know little of Rax except what they can glean through his photography and documentaries. He prefers to stay out of the spotlight, letting his work speak for itself. “I hardly know who Rax is myself, because in a way, I am two men,” Ragnar Axelsson—Rax—says, grinning and pointing over his shoulder at his invisible other self. “He’s a pretty good friend of mine, but I often feel as if he’s somebody else. Sometimes I can’t stand him, but I know deep down that he’s a pretty nice guy.”

As we walk up the stairs to Babalú, Rax mentions that he’s going sea bathing right after the interview. “I’ve recently started doing that, and love it. It awakens your entire body,” he says, explaining that after a snowmobiling accident in Greenland, he experienced back pain and felt his left arm getting slightly limp. “After I started going into the sea, it got better. I can’t explain it, but it’s as if a power rushes out to your limbs.”

We sit down opposite one another with our lattes, which Rax absolutely insists on paying for, reasoning that he might be ‘the last gentleman in Iceland.’ He makes himself comfortable, slinging his legs over one arm of the worn-out armchair, before leaning back to tell me about his childhood summers at Kvísker, a farm in the remote Örafi region in East Iceland. There he helped the farmers—brothers renowned in Iceland for their scientific documentation of the area—measuring the ice, counting birds, collecting bugs, flies and plants, and documenting for the sake of natural history. All the while, Rax was, of course, also skulking around with his trusty Leica.

“I was always looking at the birds, watching them flying overhead. I could lie on the ground and watch them for three or four hours straight. I became obsessed with photographing them, as well as the people—the characters in the area. But I was extremely shy; I snapped a photo when no one was looking and was terribly ashamed of it. I guess that still lingers within me.”

His shyness is perhaps slightly noticeable in the way he speaks during our conversation. Despite his friendly demeanour, he seems a little bit on edge, suddenly bursting out with what he wants to say at intervals. Sometimes it’s borderline incoherent, as if he puts more effort into turning his thoughts into words than forming sentences with a clear beginning and end.

But maybe he just doesn’t have a way with words the way he has with pictures. “I didn’t know it for the longest time, but I’m dyslexic, so I automatically think about everything in images. I see pictures in everything,” he explains. Still, he has never allowed the condition to hold him back and he reads a lot, especially scientific stuff, which he’s had an active interest in since his childhood.

A Restless Family Man

His obsession with birds sparked an interest in being able to fly on his own, leading him to train as a pilot when he reached adulthood. At that time, he says there were hardly any jobs for pilots in Iceland, and what jobs there were didn’t pay particularly well. With a young daughter to take care of, he started an apprenticeship as a photographer and got a job at “Morgunblaðið.”

“I trained with photographer Ingibjörg Kaldal whose father, Jón Kaldal, was Iceland’s greatest portrait photographer. I learnt a lot from studying his work. But Ingibjörg closed down her studio before I finished, so I don’t have any certificate,” he says.

Upon discovering that Rax is a family man with three children and four grandchildren, I confess my surprise, as the image of him that I’d constructed through his published work was of an independent loner who takes long, solo journeys to the Arctic to capture the right shot, a man too absorbed in his calling to maintain steady relationships with other people.

“Rax is a bit of a loner, and he’s often absent minded, but he’s very focused when he’s working,” he says, speaking of himself in the third person. “He can’t stand to lose, so he never gives up. If he has to catch something on film, he won’t stop ‘til he has it. That’s how focused he is.”

Nonetheless, it is surprising to learn that someone who travels as much and as far as Rax does, often putting himself in danger, manages to maintain a family life back home. “I have calmed down a bit,” he says, “but I used to be extremely restless—I can’t really understand why my wife didn’t throw me out long time ago!” On his early expeditions, he would sometimes be away for weeks with no means of contacting his loved ones to at least confirm that he was alive.

“I know I worried my family, and I feel guilty about that. I’ve been trying to make amends, but still, I wouldn’t have achieved what I have if I hadn’t behaved like that.”

Protected By An Invisible Force

Rax still maintains a day job at “Morgunblaðið,” a job he says he still enjoys, although it has changed through the years. “Photographers don’t go on journeys as much as they used to, which is a shame,” he says with a hint of sadness.

“I was always very keen on going to Greenland. I was fascinated by the heroic adventure stories I had read about the Arctic explorers. They were such cool guys and I always wanted to be like them. So I went to Greenland for the first time in 1979, but it was a bit of a disappointment. I went to Kulusuk, and I only really saw drunk people there, no heroes. But then I reached other places in Greenland and saw how grand and beautiful these people were, and when they’re out on the ice, under tough circumstances, they’re so incredible that they make James Bond look like a total wimp! That’s when I can’t help but be proud of knowing them,” Rax tells me.

“One of my friends there, a bear hunter, is so magnificent. I sometimes just sit on the sled and watch him, watch his eyes and the way he carries himself out there on the ice. He’s vigilant about everything; he knows what’s going on around him in a way that an ordinary man couldn’t understand. He sees the weather; he’s just amazing.”

Rax has travelled to Greenland at least once a year ever since that first trip, staying 4–5 weeks each time, travelling far and wide, snapping photos. “Greenland is like a magnet, it pulls you in. Sometimes, I’ll return with frostbite and feeling exhausted, promising myself I’ll never go back, but within a few days, I’ll be longing for it again. There’s something magnificent about that place.” He admits having sometimes gotten into such dangerous circumstances there that he had to rely on his friends, the hunters, to save him.

“I’ve been caught in crazy weather, jumping from one ice floe onto another as the ice breaks. I thought it was awesome fun at the time, but afterwards I realised that perhaps it wasn’t very clever

of me,” Rax jokingly frowns. “I just didn’t want to miss the opportunity for a great photo, that’s how competitive I am. Somehow, I always manage to feel safe—I never get scared until afterwards. You grow to understand that the nature is your friend, as long as you don’t defy it too much.”

Rax’s death-defying behaviour started at an early age. As a little boy visiting his grandparents in the hamlet of Djúpvogur in East Iceland, he and his cousins played underneath the cliffs close to his grandparents’ house. “No one dared to let their children play there except my grandmother. She could see hidden people, and she told me that I’d be all right there, since the hidden people would look after me. And I was comfortable being there. I can’t explain it, but I could sense that I was being protected,” he says. “And still today, when I’m on these journeys, I feel as if someone is looking after me. I sense it and relax. The key is to stay calm.”

As he says this, Rax slowly realises that his anecdote might come off as strange to non-believers, and looks at me timidly. “Now I’ve told you something I’ve never said out loud before,” he says. “I’ve never talked about this.”

The Ice Is Sick

By now, Rax has come to know Greenland and its hunting societies very well. He’s interested in scientific literature about the Arctic, and enthusiastically documents the ongoing changes there with his camera. He says he’s fully aware of the course being played out in the Arctic, but claims his work has no agenda, that he’s simply showing people reality. A student of his work can attest to this: although his photos and books tell certain stories, his personal opinions don’t shine through, neither in images nor text.

“I try to let things float by in front of me, as they are,” he says. “I try to show these people in a respect-

I try to show these people in a respectful way, these grandiose people from a culture of hunters, so that others can see their world and then decide whether they like it or not."

ful way, these grandiose people from a culture of hunters, so that others can see their world and then decide whether they like it or not. I believe they deserve respect because they’re leading a life so different from what the rest of us know. Some outsiders criticise them for hunting bears, but then turn around and eat beef, which comes from animals that are slaughtered too. There’s definitely a bit of inconsistency there.”

Rax says he is very aware of global warming, adding that his friends, the bear hunters, knew about it way ahead of the rest of the world. “They sensed it long before anyone else did,” he says. “Through the years, as I was observing my friend, the hunter, I noticed that he was looking around, sniffing in the air, making observations to others in his group, as if something were amiss. When I asked what was wrong, he uttered the most beautiful thing: ‘The big ice isn’t well, something’s wrong.’”

The hunters patrol the same areas year after year, and they notice the changes, Rax explains. The ice

cap that was once 50 centimetres thick is now so thin that they can see through it. “This is something that you can’t see in the photos, as the ice still looks white. You can’t see how thin it has become,” he says.

Rax has started documenting the melting ice of the Arctic for his next project, the growing blue puddles scattered across Greenland. “I’m getting a bunch of people, some big names from all over the world, to write about global warming. I will combine their writing with colour photos of the meltwater,” he says.

He’s really worried about what’s happening in the Arctic, not least for the sake of his children and grandchildren. “We have only one home, one Earth, and we can’t be selfish and damage it and just say ‘whatever,’ to our children. We have to stop just talking about this and do something,” he says.

Lowering his voice, he shyly admits that he’s actually working on a second book. “I’ve just finished writing a children’s story that focuses on this subject, to inspire children to hold respect for the planet.” He recalls how he saw all kinds of features in rocks as a child, and later in icebergs, which he now tries to capture on film. And that’s how his idea for the story came about. “It’s about two snowflakes that get separated and are stuck in ice for thousands of years, one in Iceland, the other in Greenland. But now they’re running out of time to be united before the ice melts.”

This book will not be decorated with Rax’s images. He says he wants it to feature illustrations, adding that he’s no good with a paintbrush. “I’ve always loved looking at paintings and examining painters’ techniques. In some ways, my photos are my versions of paintings. I try to capture similar features in the landscape that I believe many of the landscape painters I look up to did, such as Kjarval [Iceland’s most famous landscape painter].”

Exciting Times Ahead For Greenland

As an outspoken environmentalist, Rax clearly has an opinion about the Inuits’ ways of hunting polar bears and seals, methods that are widely derided by western societies. He says it’s easy to condemn, but in order to understand the hunters’ circumstances, it’s necessary to stand in their shoes and experience what they do.

“I’ve never participated in the hunting, I never hunt. It’s painful to see a magnificent creature being killed; my heart aches when I witness that. But I understand why it has to happen and try to respect that the Inuit are at least hunting for a living. They eat the meat and use or sell the skins. My hunter friend, who I’ve followed closely for years, once said to me: ‘We are not the defining factor in the existence of the polar bear. It is rather you people, you pollute so much.’ I think he might be on to something there.”

It turns out that this is something that Rax is truly concerned about. He tells me about an article he recently wrote on the pollution of the east coast of Greenland, and relates how a third of the polar bears there are neither male nor female.

“The polar bear is at the top of the food chain, so it must be the pollution in the sea, coming from the rest of the world: plastics, PCBs and what have you. And then the people there eat the bear meat and now there’s been a massive increase in cancer incidents in the area.” Pollution is the biggest threat in the eyes of the Inuit, who feel as if the outside world should first clean up its own backyard before they start criticising the people of Greenland.

Continues over



Photo by RAX, from his book



Photo by RAX, from his book

2009. Although it's popular to condemn western societies for imposing their culture on more "intact" cultures such as the Inuits in Greenland, Rax speaks calmly of Greenland's prospects, smiling again and as optimistic as before.

"I think these are exciting times. The young people there are very bright and well educated and very concerned about their country. They are also very strongly connected to nature; they're part of it, especially those living in the villages. But I think they want to see changes, new kinds of industry and work. All of Earth's valuables, metals, gems and oil, can be found in Greenland, so in that regard, it's one of the richest countries in the world," he says.

"Corporations from all around the world are queuing up for permits for mining there. I just hope that the people of Greenland can cope with the attention and won't be fooled. However, pollution inevitably follows mining and when that starts, it will be the first time in history that the people of Greenland pollute their own country themselves. It's inevitable that the hunters' societies will change, that there will be fewer hunters around."

Rax wonders what Greenland is going to look like in 40 or 50 years time. "Will there be a Chinese village in one fjord and an American or Canadian village in the next? If the ice cap melts away, it's certain that everything will change there," he says. "It's a huge country."

He says his Inuit friends have discussed these matters with him and asked for advice about what to do. "I've told them

that I can't interfere, it's not my place to tell them what they can and can't do. But I tell them that if they love their country, they should think of it as theirs and not allow it to be treated in a way they don't like."

Greenland Vs. Iceland

This topic brings us back home to Iceland, where there's been a heated debate for decades about whether our nation should harness all of its natural resources, and what would give us more revenue in the long run— selling our green energy to foreign aluminium producers or selling foreign tourists access to Iceland's pristine landscape.

I ask Rax for his opinion, a man whose life work consists of capturing the magic of intact landscapes and nature in its rawest form. Are we being fooled into sacrificing our nature? He sighs deeply before answering. "There's no point in holding a grudge against what has already been done, one has to accept and forgive. But in the future, we have to bear in mind what sort of a treasure Iceland is, and...you would never scrawl all over Mona Lisa." Rax pauses and shakes his head.

"The debate must not be a tug of war between two sides," he says. "That's just childish and stupid. People need to try and understand each other's perspectives. Those who are fond of Iceland the way it is and see value in its beauty have been branded as guerrillas by their opponents, which is just not right. When you've travelled all around the world, you come to realise how stun-

ning this country is and how valuable that beauty is. A stupid man observes the world through his window. There are too many people like that, talking down to those who are trying to point out how valuable the landscape is. And it's as if these people don't follow what's going on in the world, never reading about what is happening in other countries, choosing instead to patronise those who do. Some people just don't seem to be bothered; I often feel that's a characteristic of Icelanders, not being bothered about anything."

This is the first sign of negativity Rax displays through our talk, and he quickly brushes it off. He's also getting restless and fidgety. He reaches for an acoustic guitar that's tilted against the wall and starts playing a soft Beatles tune, as he tells me he can't really play the guitar. He just learned a few chords when he was recovering from a hemorrhagic stroke in 2004. "I couldn't fall asleep at night. I was scared of falling asleep, so I played the guitar until I couldn't keep my eyes open any longer."

Although the incident scared him quite a bit, it only slowed Rax down for a short period. After fully recovering, he's as energetic as ever and remains passionate about his projects. He's nowhere close to relaxing or retiring, even though he enjoys spending time with his four grandchildren.

"They call me 'Afi hrekkjusvín,'" ("Granddad, the bully") he says proudly, as we part ways.

BEHIND THE MOUNTAINS

RAGNAR AXELSSON



Ragnar "Rax" Axelsson's third book, 'Behind the Mountains,' was published on August 23. The photos and the text tell the story of a farmer in South Iceland who, along with other farmers in the area, spend a week every fall gathering their sheep in the southern highlands before winter sets in. The area, Landmannaafretur, features spectacular, raw landscapes that the farmers have to cross on foot or by horse. Rax has joined the farmers every year since 1988, documenting this annual event which started as chore, but has become so integrated into the farmers' life that even those who have quit sheep farming continue to embark on the difficult trip every autumn just for the experience.

Rax is a renowned for documenting life in the North. In 2004, he published his first book, 'Faces of the North,' portraying people and animals in Iceland and Greenland. His second book, 'Last Days of the Arctic,' was named one of the best photography books of 2010 by the Sunday Times in Britain and the German Die Welt. 'Last Days of the Arctic - Capturing the Faces of the North,' a documentary about Rax and his photography, was released in 2011 and has aired on television across Europe and America. Rax's work has appeared in publications such as Life, Newsweek, Stern, GEO, National Geographic, Time and Polka Magazine, and it has been displayed at exhibitions in nearly 30 countries.



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Wig Rituals And Dancing Curtains

By Sylvain Verstricht



© Kurt Van Der Elst

Reykjavík Dance Festival

August 23 - September 1

www.reykjavikdancefestival.tumblr.com

I have little doubt that Lunch Beat is the best dance party in Reykjavík. For me, that's when the Reykjavík Dance Festival truly began. I was struck by the beauty of those attending the lunchtime dance party at Reykjavík's Hafnarhúsið on day two of the festival. It wasn't by their physical appearance, but their energy, and nobody was embarrassingly drunk, which was a nice change in this city.

That night, I woke up from a nap just as the Culture Night fireworks were going off. I put on my shoes and walked down the street towards them. It is how I most enjoy them—not standing there giving them my undivided attention, but treating them as though they were something that just happened, like a rainbow or the Northern Lights. It is by putting them in the background that they flirt with the magical.

A Rocky Start

From the first show I saw at the festival, it was clear that they were not going to do things conventionally. For Margrét Sara Guðjónsdóttir's *Soft Target Installed*, the audience was positioned in the middle of the space while the four dancers stood in each corner of the room.

This setup built anticipation, as it was impossible for us to see all around the room, that the show would give us a sense of excess. Unfortunately, all dancers would perform the same movement in synchronicity, so that this feeling got negated. In this case, it would have been more effective to be indeed more conventional about it and perform it on a standard stage with a single performer. Since then, I have learned that this is how the first version of the show was performed.

Soft Target Installed was however clearer in its undertakings than Erna Ómarsdóttir and Valdimar Jóhannsson's *To the Bone*. It opened with a ritual involving gross wigs as a tool of worship, the dancers demonstrating a primitive obsession with hair. Then it moved into a talk show format where the performers discussed their work. Italian choreographer Caterine Sagna had done something similar with *Relation Publique*, in which she took the piss out of artists being expected to translate affect into intellect for audiences. Here it came across as an inside joke.

Like a lot of dance shows that use humorous spoken word, *To the Bone* seemed insecure, too concerned with being understood

and likeable. This is especially unfortunate since its most powerful moments reached Lynchian proportions of eeriness as performers stood in the background motionless, unexplained.

Heine Avdal and Yukiko Shinozaki's *Borrowed Landscape*, most notable for taking place in *Bónus*, also suffered from a lack of concision, though each segment felt legitimate on its own. The most compelling section during my shopping experience was an audio interview with one of the cashiers, which humanised the often-overlooked service workers.

Then Everything Turned

As soon as I walked into the room for Sissel M Björkli's *Codename: Sailor V*, I knew something was different. The space was tiny, barely big enough to seat fifteen. It was filled with smoke and bathing in the bluest light, blurring the edges between everything. It was already its own little world.

When Björjli would look into the audience, the lights would turn red, creating her alter ego. Her movement was childlike in its awkwardness. Submitting to imaginative play, she was able to turn an office chair into a spaceship, making us believe that she was an anime character exploring some distant planet. And she was able to do so because she fully committed to her premise.

The team behind *Borrowed Landscape* showed more unity with their theatrical production, *Nothing's for Something*. It opened with a ballet reminiscent of Disney's *Fantasia*, but with curtains instead of brooms. Six side curtains were each suspended in the air by six huge helium-filled balloons. They would slide and swirl across the floor to the sound of classical music.

The synthetic fabric would rub against itself, creating humorous sounds, like a high-pitched wind through a small opening. Dancers' colourful costumes would sometimes make an appearance from behind the curtains, but then would get swallowed back up by these mystical creatures. In the

second section, dancers appeared in a series of static tableaux. Their outlines were then projected onto the back curtain, which magically animated them through its own movement. For its finale, eight balloons were left to float around the space. As they emitted breathing and sniffing sounds, they appeared to be alien entities, conscious, yet disembodied.

Expectations ran low at free events at the Reykjavík Dance Atelier. However, during the Performance Marathon, two Swiss women came out of nowhere to charm the audience. Léa Moro and Désirée Meul performed *About You*, a duet that began with a name-based memory game as Moro braided Meul's hair. Soon, it was their bodies that became intertwined, leading to a series of comically awkward movements.

In the most hilarious section, they ascribed given names to movements. The relationship between the two might have been arbitrary but, depending on the movement, it came across as though they liked some people a lot more than others. It proved that, no matter what some might believe, dance communicates just as much as words.

Dance Me To The End Of The Festival

It turns out that the reason Meul and Moro were in town was because their teachers, Deufert & Pliischke, were closing the festival with *ANARCHIV #2: second hand*. First, audience members were asked to write down the answer to five personal questions on the white clothes of the dancers. Then the performers launched into a dance that appeared democratic in its simplicity and refusal of a dramatic structure.

For the last half-hour, the audience was asked to replicate the movements based on instruction cards. In the simplicity of the gesture of the non-initiated, the dance found its meaning. Similarly, the festival found its footing in its second half, though the international artists might have shone a bit brighter than the locals.

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Book Review



The Perfect Landscape By Ragna Sigurðardóttir

By Mark Asch



Art is a contested space in 'The Perfect Landscape.' Public sculptures are graffitied over, a bucket of red paint is sloshed on a museum wall, windows are smashed at an installation, and art experts x-ray and scrape at their gallery's new marquee acquisition, discovering a hidden painting just beneath the surface.

'The Perfect Landscape,' originally published in 2009, is the fourth novel by former Morgunblaðið art critic Ragna Sigurðardóttir and the first to be translated into English (by Sarah Bowen and released by Amazon Crossing last autumn as part of its foray into the Icelandic translation market). Ragna seems to have bestowed some of her own backstory on her heroine, Hanna, an art historian educated and apprenticed on the continent who returns to Iceland at the start of the book (much like the author, a decade prior). Hanna takes a job at a project space within a municipal gallery, and Ragna follows her thoughts in present tense narration always alive to body language and ulterior motives—Hanna's fencing hobby makes an ever-ready metaphor for her advances and retreats, always en garde through social interactions as fraught as any canvas.

The status of an oil painting, "The Birches," given to the gallery by a donor their boss is cultivating a relationship with, soon becomes the after-hours project of Hanna and a handsome coworker who believe it to be a long-lost late-'30s landscape by the renowned Guðrún Jóhannsdóttir (seemingly modeled on Nína Tryggvadóttir). Questions about its mysterious provenance lurk literally just below its surface, but the primary milieu of 'The Perfect Landscape' is not the world of high-stakes international art forgery, but one more prosaic, if just as tense: the overlapping responsibilities, misleading job descriptions, axes of communication, back-channel workflow and territorial pissing of a small office. And in a small country, too, as repatriated Hanna also contends with her culture shock ("There is more stress here than in Amsterdam, despite the lack of punctuality"). But Hanna's wariness begins to thaw with Iceland's winter.

Perception is a key theme: a coworker's eye ailment is a key plot point, and though it leads to some

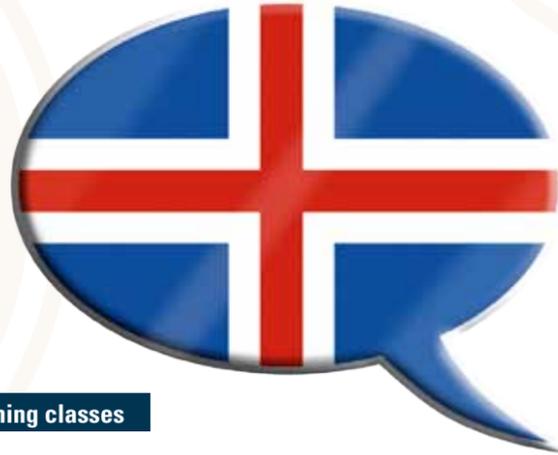
forced drama, it's also one of many moments when new information leads to subtle but definite shifts in Hanna's understanding of others. Perception is reality, up to a point: parallel chapters, set during the banking boom, trace 'The Birches' through an art market where paintings, like other investment assets, become status symbols of inflated value. At the gallery, an art restorer scoffingly quotes a recent newspaper ad: "Wanted: a Kjarval painting, in beautiful colors." Ragna also muses on aesthetics, considering forged art's subjective value to its anonymous overpainters even as Hanna and the reader receive a crash course in the engrossing technical details of art authentication.

Ragna's specialist knowledge is one of the book's chief pleasures: her recounting of the logistics of art-show logistics and professional networks is instructive and absorbing. She has Hanna reflect sentimentally on the nostalgic value, personally and nationally, of figurative painting, but also locates '30s abstract painters and contemporary conceptual artists within their movements with the same easy authority that allows her to blend invented and historical art figures.

At its best though, 'The Perfect Landscape' is a dividend of Ragna's intense attention to the present tense—an attention she herself may wish us to think of as essentially painterly. Early in the book, Hanna sits down on a bench in the woods below Perlan and remembers how, "[f]ive hundred years ago, Leonardo da Vinci wrote about the nuances of light in nature, about sunlight dappling on leaves, on the surface of running water. How smoke rising from a bonfire in a forest cleaning has a bluish tinge against the dark background. Such as this forest floor. The smoke is bluest if the timber is dry and if the sun's rays reach it, Leonardo wrote, and his words capture a fleeting moment from long ago."

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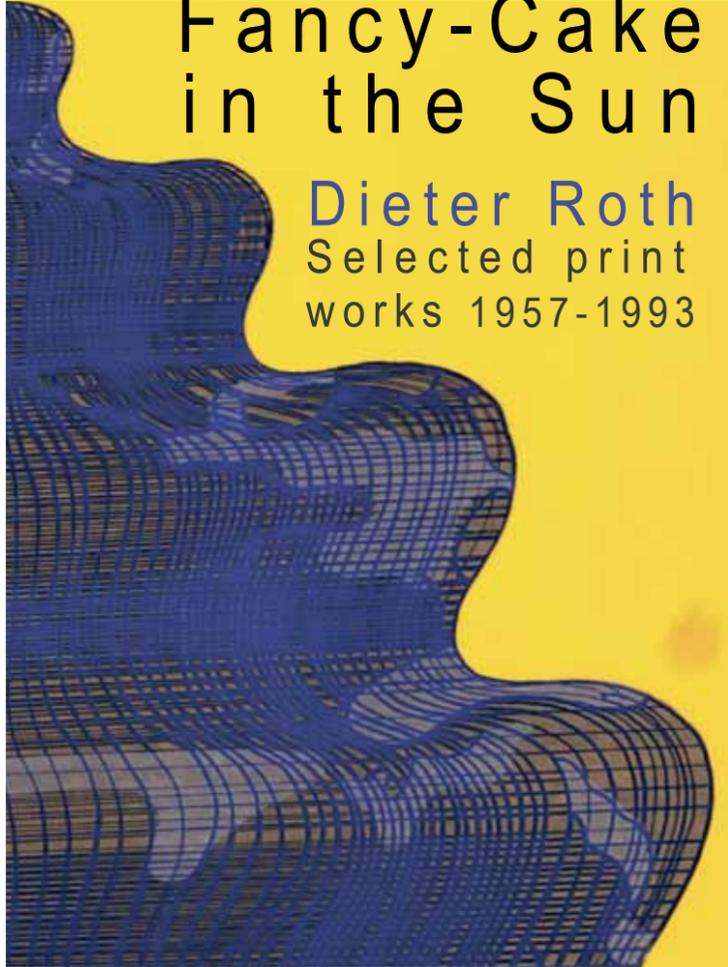
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A New Icelandic Dream

RIFF's opening night filmmaker Róbert I. Douglas is back, with a wider perspective

By Mark Asch



Still from 'This Is Sanlitun'

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www.riff.is

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September 26–October 6.

There are a couple of reasons why a film about Anglo expatriates in Beijing is a perfect choice for the opening night selection of the Reykjavík International Film Festival on September 26. 'This Is Sanlitun' is the first new film in eight years from Icelandic-Irish filmmaker Róbert I. Douglas. And its similarities to his first film, the 2000 hit 'Icelandic Dream,' should prompt local audiences to reconsider their relationship to economic ambition, a decade-plus on.

Structurally, 'This Is Sanlitun' could almost be a track-changes version of 'Icelandic Dream.' Call it "Global Dream." Both chart the ups and downs of a deluded-underdog entrepreneur, investing his dreams of life-changing wealth and fame in the import-export of an extremely dubious product; both 'Icelandic Dream's' Toti and 'This Is Sanlitun's' Gary are also divorced dads learning, on a delayed curve, to be present parents for their pre-teen children. In this case, Gary (Carlos Ottery) is a beer-fond English washout who arrives in Beijing with a sample case, not of Icelandic Dream's Bulgarian cigarettes but of a North Korean hair-growth tonic called "Gro-Up." This is also the message he must heed before he can maintain a relationship with his child, played by Róbert's own mixed-race son.

These geographical and cultural wrinkles suggest what is new about 'This Is Sanlitun,' named for the Beijing address around which much of the action takes place. Róbert, reached over Skype from the Toronto International Film Festival where the movie just had its world premiere, allows the resemblances, but is quick to point out that they're only half of the story. "Times change, setting changes, but the fundamentals are the same: I'm interested in the theme of people looking at the next-door neighbour and thinking, 'They've got it better...' It's a story that you're comfortable with, but you still have something to think about with it." Róbert elaborates on the biggest new thing that the template allows him to think about: "I made 'Icelandic Dream' right before the whole Icelandic financial boom and I'm making this movie while China's on top, about Westerners coming from countries that are down." Seen that way, 'This Is Sanlitun' depicts the optimism of turn-of-the-century Europeans continuing unchastened under slightly altered circumstances.

This Is Post-Crash Cinema

While Iceland and China currently circle each other with mutual sociopolitical

interest, the impetus for this film was more personal. Róbert moved to Beijing several years ago when his now ex-wife got a job in the Icelandic embassy; he stayed on to be near their son.

It's been eight years since his last film, the sports-and-sexuality comedy 'Eleven Men Out,' a gap which he attributes to the collapse of the Icelandic economy which took much of the public and private film-funding apparatus down with it. "At a certain point, I just got frustrated and tired," Róbert says, and he and his friend Carlos Ottery, who stars as Gary, simply began filming. From these very improvisatory beginnings, in which Gary chases hopeless business leads and is blithely buffeted by an unfamiliar culture, the film arose.

'This Is Sanlitun' is thus a return to the low-budget style and mockumentary format of 'Icelandic Dream' as well. As the new film's titular shout-out to 'This Is Spinal Tap' indicates, Róbert is a huge Christopher Guest fan. He also finds a great deal of "freedom" in the mockumentary style, which allows for characters to explain themselves to the camera, compounding the sympathy and comedy arising from their lack of self-awareness. Gary's determinedly sunny self-assessments are poignantly out of step with, for instance, the carpet-like toupee he dons before a Gro-Up sales meeting.

The Expat Experience

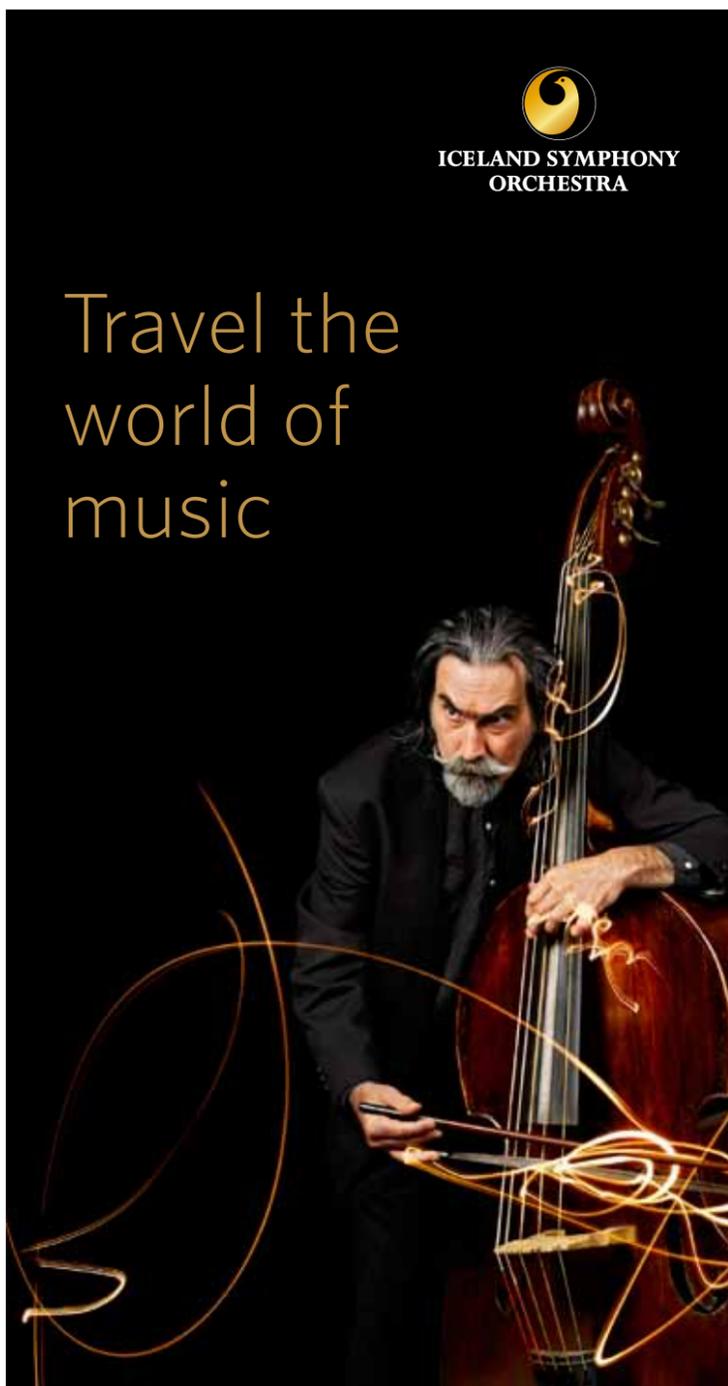
'This Is Sanlitun' is Róbert's first film in English and although it received some Icelandic funding, he hesitates when I ask him there is anything specifically Icelandic about it. The film features what he calls "inside jokes" for Icelanders—a Chinese character refers throughout the film to an unseen Icelandic wife, and even advises Gary that "it will all work out"—but Róbert describes the film as more for Western audiences in general. "It's the whole experience of being an expat in Beijing," he says.

Indeed, the themes of migration

and assimilation—contemporary and universal, not the least in Iceland—are very much present in 'Sanlitun.' A late father-son bonding scene in World Park—the Beijing attraction featuring replicas of the wonders of the modern world, like the towers Eiffel and Pisa—shows an Englishman's hopes and emotional connections transported to the other side of the globe. More consistently, and comically, there is Frank (Chris Loton), an Aussie trust-fund layabout who bosses Gary around with dubious ad hoc explanations of what constitutes authentic immersion in Chinese culture: he explains away a slice of pepperoni pizza as exotic cuisine "not for Western palate." (According to Róbert, a friend of Loton's auditioned for the film in response to a classified ad, "and Chris came along for a laugh, to hang out and have a beer. He was making jokes, making fun of his friend, and we thought, 'He's actually funnier...'")

Róbert adds that he was conscious of treating these themes, "probably even more than the movie sets itself up to be. None of the Chinese people in the film are from Beijing—a Chinese audience would pick up on that. Everyone is an outsider; Beijing is the promised land."

He illustrates this point by running down the accents of the film's Chinese characters (talk about assimilation...): Momo, for instance, the young woman who becomes obsessed with "teacher Gary" when he takes over her English class, "is obviously from the South." Such conversations, about what a Chinese audience would take away from the film are more than just academic: Róbert and his producers are hopeful of opening the film theatrically in China early next year, having already received some interest from the local press. Róbert attributes this to the novelty of the film's subject: the foreign expatriate experience in China. The phenomenon of being between cultures is apparently something to which people of all cultures can relate.



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Save The (Movie) Date

Why we are looking forward to this year's RIFF

By Mark Asch



Still from 'The Salvation Army'

The tenth annual Reykjavík International Film Festival runs from September 26 to October 6. Check riff.is for a full programme, and don't forget to pick up the September 27 issue of the Grapevine for a full preview, with reviews and interviews. In the meantime, you might want to consider freeing up your schedule...

Stopovers

Local audiences get early peeks at notable films making an Icelandic stopover during their run through the international arthouse festival circuit. Among those taking the metaphorical cinematic Flybus to the Blue Lagoon: 'Only Lovers Left Alive,' a vampire film starring Tilda Swinton is the latest by longtime RIFF favourite/hipster Jim Jarmusch; 'Blue Is the Warmest Color,' an emotionally and sexually realist coming-of-age coming-out drama which won top honours at Cannes. Other titles will be fresh off buzz-building appearances in Toronto.

Guests Of Honour

Three noteworthy auteurs are scheduled to appear at RIFF alongside their latest films, plus two hits apiece from their back catalogues. Swedish director Lukas Moodysson will show his new teen punk story, 'We Are The Best!'; France's Laurent Cantet brings his US-set girl-gang story 'Foxfire'; and American neoclassicist James Gray screens his period drama 'The Immigrant' (starring Marion Cotillard, speaking apparently flawless Polish).

Rising Stars

While these bigshots are celebrated, emerging filmmakers will vie for the coveted Golden Puffin. The ten fiction films in competition hail from nine different countries. Notable amongst them is Abdellah Taia's 'Salvation Army,' the first Arab film to feature a gay protagonist.

Hot Docs

Documentaries always comprise a large element of the film slate. This year's selection of brain-filling non-fiction cinema includes, but is by no means limited to, sociopolitical reportage on life during wartime ('My Afghanistan: Life in the Forbidden Zone') and the hidden costs of aluminium ('The Age of Aluminum'), as well as chronicles of indie rockers on tour ('The National in 'Mistaken for Strangers'), and essays on the politics of cinema (Slavoj Zizek in 'The Pervert's Guide to Ideology').

Northern Highlights

RIFF's showcase of native films includes Guðmundur Arnar Guðmundsson's short 'Whale Valley,' which received a special citation at Cannes this May. It's about two brothers in the titular area north of Reykjavík, living through unexpected personal upheaval.

Destination Cinema

RIFF continues its tradition of unconventional, very Icelandic locations for special screenings. On September 28, the annual "Swim-In Cinema" will spotlight a "family-friendly classic" at Laugardalslaug's indoor pool; October 2 marks the return of "Cave-In Cinema," a cave tour outside Reykjavík with a film screening on-site (filmgoers are advised to dress warmly). And on September 29, the Icelandic director Hrafn Gunnlaugsson will welcome guests into his incredible junk-sculpture "Recycle House," between Sæbraut and the water, for a viewing of his controversial 1980 film The Father's Estate.

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Lovers Come And Lovers Go

But Snorri Helgason Has Found Some Good Friends

By Rebecca Louder



Album Release Show

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Summer never really came to Iceland this year. Instead, the weather sort of skipped right from spring to autumn. For Snorri Helgason, it's been permanent autumn since last October when he and his band (also named Snorri Helgason) started working on their third full-length album 'Autumn Skies.' Now on the shelves in the season of its name, the album marks a major shift for Snorri's creative process. Namely, having his band members, Sigurlaug Gísladóttir, Guðmundur Óskar and Magnús Tryggvason Elíasen, involved in the process before it even began.

What was going on when you wrote this album?

S I don't think I can get away with saying anything else but that this is the cliché break-up album that every singer-songwriter makes. It's very obvious when you listen to the album, I think.

It is really melancholy. What was it like writing during the break-up state?

S It was tough in a way, but it was also easy because I had a lot on my mind. Sometimes when everything is okay, there's nothing going on in your head. So while it was a really tough thing to go through, it gave me a lot to say.

The other good thing is that my band members are my three best friends. They were around when I started the relationship that the album is about and with me throughout it. Now I get to finish the process with them. The very night the break-up happened, I went to meet two of my band mates to moan and whine. It's a very personal and difficult thing. I'm very lucky that the people I hang out with

are my favourite musicians in the world. **In terms of the sound of the album, it seems a lot bigger.**

S That was a deliberate decision. There aren't many instruments playing at once so I wanted everything to have space in the arrangements of the songs. We decided from the beginning that we wanted to try to keep it simple.

It's simple, but also very lush, like a big velour couch.

S [Laughs] Yeah, that's what we were going for!

How do you feel about the result?

S I'm very happy. Guðmundur Óskar and I produced this album and I've never done that before. That's the biggest thing I learned from making this album—that we can do that. It was easy and it was fun. Of course we had Gunn Tynes of múm who mixed it and helped it all come together, but the basic stuff, we did all by ourselves.

The album is about to come out. What are you up to now?

S I'm already working on new stuff, but it's very much in the beginning stages. I did a little bit of recording this summer in Nashville and in upstate New York. I went on a trip around the US two days after we finished this album and I knew I was going to Nashville. I really wanted to record there so I was writing really fast on the way and then I got to record with a friend of mine, Aaron Roche. I think I'm going to use those songs for my next album.

So I guess following the natural progression, your album themes are going: love, break-up, the road?

S Yeah! [Laughs.] I guess so. Then hopefully eventually it's going to be the settling down album, the family album. A house and a couple of kids. And of course, the drug album. I still have to make that one.

On And Off The Venue

By Óli Dóri and Davíð Roach

First of all, we hope you read our last column and followed our advice about getting your **Iceland Airwaves** ticket because the festival announced this week that the 15th annual event is officially sold out. It seems that the festival only gets bigger with every year, attracting a record number of foreigners last year. In fact, the majority of passes were sold to foreigners for the first time in the festival's history.

This year, the German technocratic quartet **Kraftwerk** will close the five-day music feast in the **Harpa's Eldborg** hall on November 4 with their 3D show that has been touring the world's finest museums this year. Other notable non-domestic acts are US indie giants **Yo La Tengo**, hype-gathering British garage duo **AlunaGeorge**, and a Swedish psychedelic afrobeat tribe called **Goat**.

But those who didn't get a ticket don't need to panic. There are tons of free off-venue concerts around downtown Reykjavík for the duration of the festival. Almost every café, bar, restaurant and shop in 101 Reykjavík is turned into a concert venue and some of our fondest Airwaves memories are of seeing bands like **Hot Chip** play off-venue in a tiny record store.

One of the bands playing Airwaves this year, **múm**, just released their sixth album this week. It is their first album since 2009 and marks the return of singer/cello player **Gyða Valtýsdóttir** who quit the band over a decade ago and the album is full of beautifully rendered and glitchy electronic pop. It's in our opinion their best album since their 2002 '**Finally We Are No One**,' and one of the frontrunners for the best Icelandic album of the year so far.

Last but not least, there is a new noteworthy band from Reykjavík, not playing Airwaves, called **VAR**. They have put out two beautiful songs that remind us a little bit of **Sigur Rós**. **VAR** are **Myrra Rós Þrastardóttir** and **Július Óttar Björgvinsson** who have been playing music together in various forms over the years, such as Myrra Rós's solo project. "VAR is a shelter for the sounds that were always floating around between us," they say on their newfound Facebook page. Check out the song "**Hve Ött ég ber á**."



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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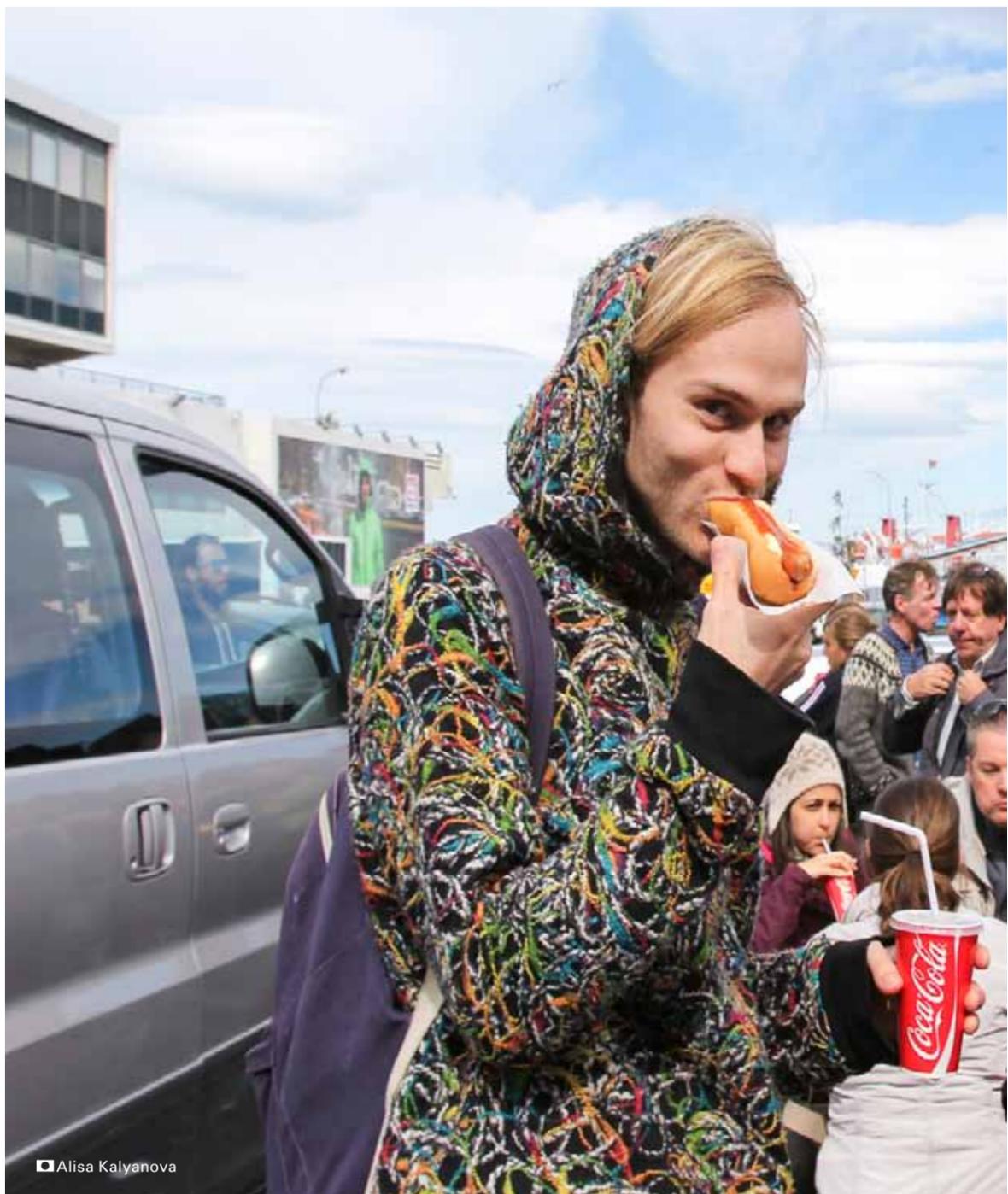
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On A Date With Úlfur

Smell Ya Later, Rvk!

by Rebecca Louder



Alisa Kalyanova

It's a bittersweet thing when a beloved local talent leaves our black shores. On the one hand, they're usually going off to pursue their big dreams and quite often end up producing work that make us proudly say things like, "They're from Iceland! I used to hang out with them at Bar 11!" On the other, it sucks not to be able to call them "local" anymore.

Last month, musician Úlfur Hansson, a.k.a. Úlfur, joined those ranks by packing up his gear and moving off to Oakland. The formerly local artist formerly known as Klive headed there to do an MFA in Electronic Music & Recording Media at Mills College. Before he left we decided to send him off with a permanent reminder of home in the form of a new tattoo. However, things didn't go quite as planned.

Temporary Tattoo Plans

I met up with Úlfur at Reykjavík Ink, which had graciously offered us a quick spot to give him some art. He was comfortably planted on the couch with his laptop open on a screen full of seemingly random, jagged lines forming odd geometrics. Turns out it was letters. "It's actually a font I created with a programme I made for my album, 'White Mountain,'" he said, toggling onto another window of plain text where different numerical values created different letters (sort of like C-Sound, for any sound nerds out there). His plan was to get a

letter tattooed on his left elbow-pit, stretching it just over to his bicep and lower arm.

Unfortunately, tattoo artist Jason Thompson was less convinced of the idea. "For starters, it's too big for me to do in an hour, but if I try to do it smaller it's just gonna look like shit," Jason said, bluntly but sympathetically. "You should just get something small and funny." Unmoved by the suggestions of a slice of pizza or the outline of Iceland, Úlfur gave a disappointed grin and said we should maybe just forget it. "I don't want to get something stupid just for the sake of getting something," he said, wisely. "It's permanent."

Jason graciously offered to get it started so Úlfur could come back to get it done, but of course his moving off to Oakland three days later put the kibosh on that plan. After a couple of quick jokes about the notoriously rough reputation of Úlfur's new city, Jason offered him a good recommendation for a shop in San Francisco. The tattoo dream lives on.

Dating On The Fly

Although that plan was salvaged, we were still left standing on Frakkastígur not ready to send him off without a goodbye present. Like all good daters, the Grapevine likes to plan ahead but now we had to improvise! "What are you really going to miss about Reykjavík that you know you won't be able to get over there?" I asked. "A pylsa," he answered, lighting up with pre-emptive nostalgia.

We walked down the just-begun construction wreckage of Hverfisgata chitchatting about his family background and how it influenced his various projects. His father is the acclaimed violinmaker Hans Jóhannsson, who acted as supervisor for Úlfur's graduation project from the Iceland Academy of Arts Music Department wherein he built an electroacoustic harp from scratch. The instrument, called OHM, was awarded the President's Innovation Award and a grant from Rannís in February 2013, and then went on to feature in a composition Úlfur wrote called "So Very



Strange," which won the International Rostrum of Composers Under 30 award last June. The latter comes with a pretty sweet prize, too.

To The Victor Go The Spoils

"I will get to compose a piece for the Radio France Philharmonic Orchestra which is so exciting," he said with unbridled enthusiasm. "I have never composed for an orchestra

“...but that’s not the same. There’s nothing like a pylsa!”

before and that’s something I’ve really, really wanted to do.” The 25-year old can now add that to the list of being a bassist for Jónsi and in the hardcore band Swords of Chaos, releasing two solo albums of experimental music, composing for a dance piece and composing for visual art by artists like Lilja Birgisdóttir and his own sister, Elín Hansdóttir.

He’s also delivered a TEDxReykjavik talk and held an instrument-building workshop at the LungA art festival. Among other things.

We finally arrived to Bæjarins Bestu, the place he thinks he’ll miss when he’s off living the Californian dream. The queue was pretty long, with a large group of rather frazzled tourists ahead of us, but some rare sunny weather helped keep our conversation going. We turned to the topic of LungA, where he and a highly talented group of young performers improvised the opening performance in Seyðisfjörður’s iconic blue church. “Improvising live is completely different than playing something you know and that’s what makes it fun,” he said. “We had no idea how it would turn out, but luckily people seemed to like it.”

Multi-potential modesty

Despite all his past creations, he’s not the kind of artist who seems to have any preferred medium or method. Rather, he embraces multi-potentiality and wants to challenge himself to make as many things as possible. “I don’t think I just want to be a bassist or an instrument builder or a composer or any one thing,” he said. “I want to try so many things. I want to do it all.”

As is also generally the case with such prolific and accomplished

creators, he is modest nearly to a point of being oblivious to his own success. This is hardly something to call a fault but rather an enviable quality for so many people whose creative energy is often distracted by the mere notion that a public exists. Úlfur is just doing what he does and does not seem overly concerned with public reception, which is perhaps why he is so easily able to share his work in the public sphere.

Pylsur 4 Lyfe

Finally, we got our hot dogs—two with everything and two cokes—and moved out of the line to stand by the dumpster in the parking lot and eat in pure class. I told him that when he got to the States, he would have an overload of amazing food options: better ethnic dining, farmers’ markets, In-N-Out Burger and, of course, the classic American hot dog. “Yeaaaaah,” he said with a bit of a whine, “but that’s not the same. There’s nothing like a pylsa!”

Although he would miss the little treats, he was no more maudlin than that about moving away. “It’s time,” he said. “I really need to move out of here just for myself and for my creativity. I’ve known for a while that I needed to go. But anyway, I’ll be back at Christmas. That’s in like, four months!” Maybe he can get his elbow-pit tattoo done then.

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OPINION



Snorri Páll is a word-craftsman, occupied with socially useless production.

When There Will Be No Seagull... The Most Challenging Question Of Our Times

By Snorri Páll Jónsson Úlfhildarson



“The seagulls claim the site, the pigeons vanished from the city, no one knows where to or if they were murdered, if they even escaped, but the seagulls get better and fatter on the scraps of Reykjavík residents, hot dogs and bread.”

These are the words of Milla—the protagonist of Kristín Ómarsdóttir's novel of the same name—as she describes the all but sublime atmosphere surrounding a small shed in the centre of Reykjavík, just behind the building where these lines were in fact proofread. For a few hundred krónur, the shed and its servants offer the town's very best refreshments, which are particularly enjoyable, as Milla notes, when the oily aroma fills your car.

Despite its cross-class popularity—and not to belittle the former saxophone player Bill Clinton—if anyone is properly equipped to write an honest tourist-brochure-review of this particular hot-dog-stand, it's much less a person than a whole species: the seagull.

During the first eight months of this year, almost 6,000 seagulls have been institutionally slaughtered in Reykjavík. That's quite a number. It's equivalent to the population of Akranes, it's how many people ran ten kilometres in the recent Reykjavík Marathon, and it's a little less than half the student body at the University of Iceland.

But who maintained that 6,000 were enough? Nobody. Thus, further shootings are on the drawing board—quite pleasant and titillating plans for all the gunmen involved.

While a large proportion of those thankless birds have experienced their

last breath down by the pond, an even larger number have been executed in a place called Álfsnes. Not far from Reykjavík's beloved mountain, Esja, stands this smaller yet equally mighty mountain.

When viewed from the road just outside Mosfellsbær, the mountainside greets one in the most typical green and grassy manner. But there are at least two sides to every saga—and oh, how different the other side is, decorated with the finest textures and detailed patterns, glowing and glittering in magical blend of at least all the rainbow's colours.

Such mountains are most commonly referred to as garbage piles. This one is built out of Reykjavík's waste and wastrels. Thereto the seagulls rally—no less than to the hot-dog-stand on Tryggvagata—to feast and fatten up on this pile of plenty made by his pinioned brother.

In this sense, Mount Álfsnes is a sign of balance between the man and the seagull—a symbol of harmony—the yin and yang of this inter-species relationship—built solely to remind us of the nucleus of our surplus civilization: Where there is man, there is seagull.

But when seeing such an absolute truth being ridiculed by the above-mentioned mass-murders, one might wonder whether this war against the seagull is above all a manifestation of man's self-hatred. Why would one so systematically strive to exterminate one's own brother?

‘The Picture of Dorian Gray’ by Oscar Wilde might bring in some understanding. The garbage-mountain and its societal function are a parallel to the novel's famous painting, whose model—the ever young and beautiful Dorian—is able to live out his wildest vices in a seemingly infinite continuum thanks to the painting's magical function, without falling victim to a slightest sign of ageing.

But the magic doesn't come without costs. And just like Dorian's unsuccessful attempt to hide his lifestyle's destructive impacts materialising on the painting, the festivities on top of the garbage mountain bring some unwanted attention to the social defecation playing hide-and-do-not-see in Álfsnes. By its mere existence, the seagull exposes the wasteful and destructive nature of the current civilization.

While I suggest no solutions, it's worth noting that when Dorian Gray eventually annihilates the painting, he simultaneously brings to an end his own existence. This brings me to what is certainly the most challenging, futuristic question of our times: When there will be no seagull, will there be man?

Cemetery Erections

By Lawrence Millman



□ Magnús Andersen

Beatrix Potter could not find the courage to draw one. Charles Darwin's daughter Etty destroyed all the specimens she could find, "lest they corrupt the morals of the maids." Visit the old Reykjavík cemetery this fall, and you'll probably find several of the phallic-looking objects in question thrusting up from the ground and smelling like ripe carrion.

Oh well, you might think, at least they died happy.

The presumably happy objects are fungi rather than the virile members of dead male Icelanders. Specifically, they're fungi that have the not inappropriate Latin name of *Phallus impudicus*. The Icelandic name, 'fylubollur,' is just as appropriate—it means "stinky male genitals." The English name is Common Stinkhorn.

The Common Stinkhorn is not common in Iceland. Indeed, the only place where it's been documented is the old Reykjavík cemetery. Fear not: it's not interfering with the eternal rest of a prominent Icelander by digesting him or her. Rather, it's digesting wood chips and woody debris in the vicinity of the graves.

The stinkhorn starts as a white entity known as an egg. At the right time, the egg will break with a sound that French botanist Jean Bulliard compared to a pistol shot, and then the phallic part will emerge. In an hour or two, the fungus will reach full height. Reputedly, its growth is so dramatic that it can lift up 150 kg of asphalt.

The carrion-like smell comes from the gleba, a coating of green mucus at the top of the fungus. This smell,

which is usually offensive to people, is irresistible to flies. And that's the point: the gleba houses the fungus' spores. Flies land on it and either eat the spores or carry them off on their feet, thus creating the possibility of another stinkhorn generation.

The first Icelandic stinkhorns were documented as recently as 1990. But the species has existed elsewhere for millennia. In Europe, it was believed to have aphrodisiac powers, giving the men who ate it powerful erections. It was also used to cure rheumatism, epilepsy, gout, and skin cancer. In certain tropical countries, the gleba was spread on young women on the assumption that it would make them fertile.

But I don't recommend that you collect the fungus for any of the aforementioned reasons. Nor do I recommend that you collect it so that you can show it to your friends and have them say "gross." Instead, simply admire it. And let it continue its life as a citizen in good standing (so to speak) in Reykjavík's oldest cemetery.



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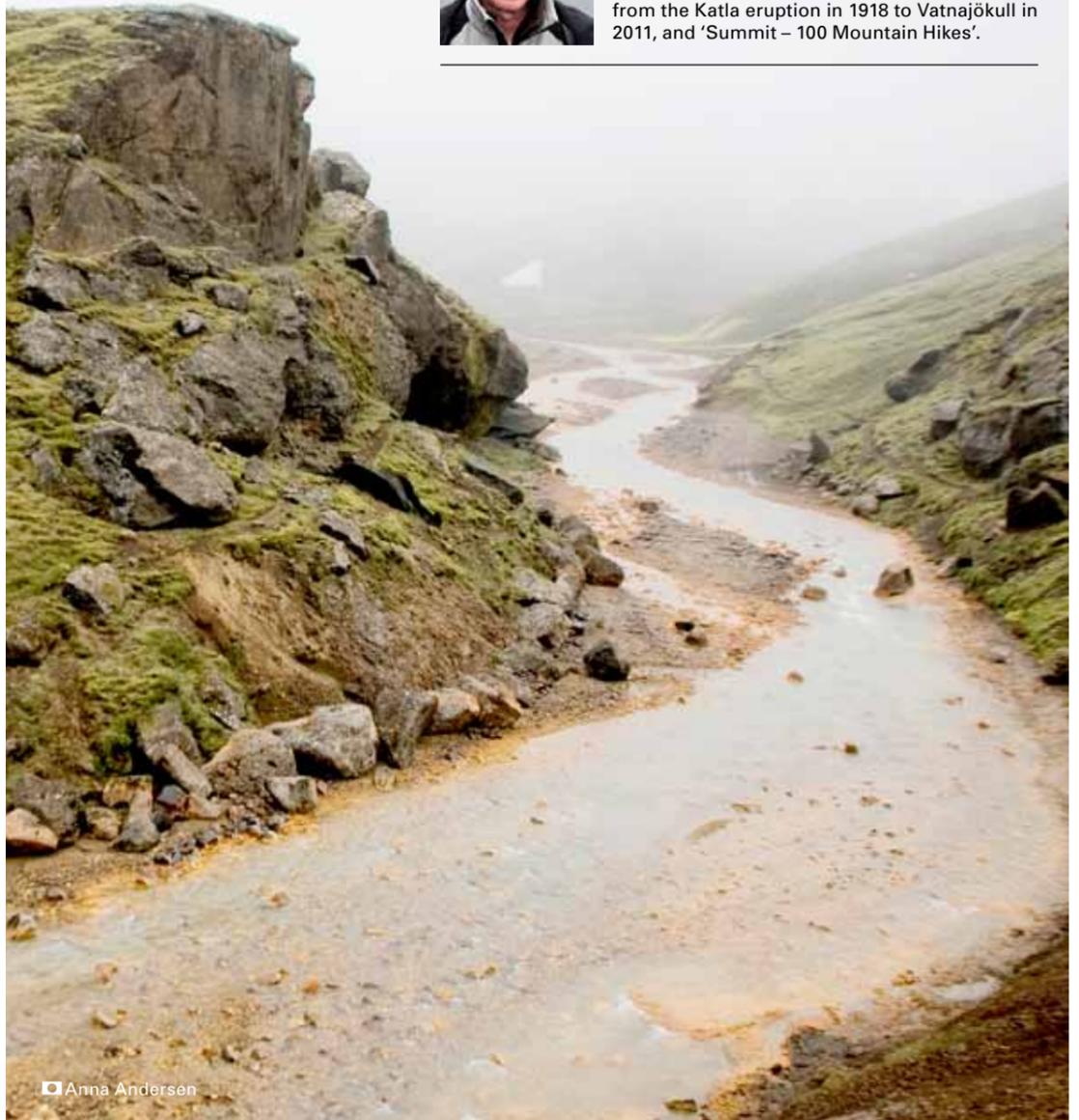
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1 Kerlingarfjöll

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Ari Trausti Guðmundsson is a trained geophysicist and mountaineer who has written a number of books from short stories and poetry to fiction. His most recent English language books are 'Focus on Iceland,' a road guide for tourists, 'Magma,' a book documenting Icelandic volcanoes from the Katla eruption in 1918 to Vatnajökull in 2011, and 'Summit - 100 Mountain Hikes'.



© Anna Andersen

Hiking in Kerlingarfjöll

The Home Of Giants

by Ari Trausti Guðmundsson

The fine group of peaks known as Kerlingarfjöll were named after a high rock pillar that is said to be a female troll who was turned to stone as she was hit by daylight back when her kin roamed the country. The massif is colourful and rich in contrasts with its peaks and valleys, glaciers and snowfields and all that lively geothermal activity that serves to make the area so interesting.

The mountains—roughly 1,100-1,500 metres tall—are part of a large, local centre of volcanic activity that has been around for a long time but is probably extinct by now. The main peaks cluster around the stately Loðmundur (to the west), Snækollur (the middle—and highest—peak) and Fannborg (to the east).

There is a travellers' service centre at the foot of the mountains (more info at www.kerlingarfjoll.is). Those who wish to stay there can choose between made-up beds, sleeping bag accommodations and camping. While they do sell food on site, you'll need to bring supplies if you plan to hike, and don't forget to bring a swimsuit if you want to hit up the outdoor geothermal baths.

The very top

There are about twenty hiking routes awaiting you in Kerlingarfjöll. Eight of them are marked. Their length ranges from one to 50 kilometres. Descriptions may be found at the service centre website—a

map is also available there (and in some of the tourist information centres in towns around Iceland).

Snækollur is an easy climb, mostly on snow, and the view is extraordinary (if you are lucky with the weather). In a nutshell, it is a short, steep snow climb in very interesting surroundings that lead you to one of the best panoramic viewpoints in Iceland. Its name means "rounded head of snow."

You can either drive to the end of the track, past the service centre, up to Keis/Jökulgarður (ask for information at the service centre) or (better!) hike along the road past the impressive Árskarðsgljúfur canyon. When you reach the road's end, at about 1,050 metres above sea level, head for the pass between the chest-shaped Fannborg and the Snækollur group, or—if it is late summer—head for the small pass between Snækollur (1,488 metres) and the low peak next to it (Vesturnípa).

The climb is steep and largely on snow and hard snow (firn) with

“
 Sometimes when everything is okay, there's nothing going on in your head. This gave me a lot of fuel.
 ”

dwindling glacier ice underneath it. In spring, and especially during summer, crevasses can pose some danger—you'll have to judge whether to rope up or not. From

Check www.vegagerdin.is or www.safetravel.is where a map indicates which highland roads are open—or closed.



Reaching The Centre Of Iceland

Kerlingarfjöll are the first of the highland mountains to be connected to the lowlands via a road, back in 1939. Only open in the summer, the Kjalvegur highland route (F35) is a coarse gravel road with one small, shallow stream to ford as it branches to Kerlingarfjöll. Most cars, except for the tiny ones, maybe, can make the journey. Otherwise, scheduled buses stop at Kerlingarfjöll during summer.

The first part of Kjalvegur is bleak and stony, but the vistas are beautiful in decent weather: the large Langjökull ice cap, the multi-summitted Jarlhettur row of peaks and Bláfell ("the Blue mountain"), home of giants and ptarmigans, both of which are pretty elusive.

You might stop at the big cairn, or rather heap of stones, called 'Beinakerling' ("Bone Hag") and throw a stone in for good luck. In centuries past, some people used such structures to place naughty poems, wrapped around a bone, under a stone. You won't find many of those nowadays, unfortunately. The panorama view from Beinakerling is stunning: from Lake Hvítárvatn, which once had many floating icebergs, to the majestic, glaciated Mt. Hróttfell (1,396 metres) and Kerlingarfjöll, still quite far away. A short visit to the old hut at Hvítárnes by the lake is a worthwhile endeavour.

Looking north of the Kerlingarfjöll mountains, a huge white dome called Hofsjökull dominates the view. Hofsjökull is the third largest ice cap in Iceland. At about 890 square kilometres in area, and up to 700 metres thick, it contains 230 cubic kilometres of ice weighing over 200 billion tonnes, making it one big ice cube!

It conceals a central volcano set with a deep caldera. Three lava flows are known at the ice cap margins, but little is known about its past activity. Nothing can be seen of the volcano except for small, sharp peaks (nunataks) that stick through the ice, Hásteinar and Tanni.

The ice cap and the nunataks are rarely visited and would present themselves as difficult and complex goals for experienced mountaineers. Hikers will have to make do with the immediate surroundings of the ice cap, but getting there involves route finding and fording many rivers.

mid to late summer, the very top of Snækollur is snow-free. Still, trails are commonly at hand, both in the snow and at the peak, because it gets a lot of traffic. The ascent time is about 1.5 hours and the elevation gain is 640 metres. Some very anxious mountaineers have scaled the top in 20–25 minutes and skied down, but you should refrain from attempting that.

The fuming valleys

Another short hike, one without a summit to finish off, allows one to witness first-hand the powerful interaction between ice and colourful geothermal activity.

Two valleys cut into the mountains, teeming with small and large geothermal openings. Both tempt hikers and photographers alike. From the end of the track (Keis/Jökulgarður) you have a splendid view over the lower Hveradalur valley, with its fuming steam vents, boiling mud pots and hot brooks close to snow and glacier ice slopes

and banks. You either start your hike up there, or drive back to a parking lot at about 900 metres above sea level and head on from there.

There are two popular variations to this hike. The shorter one (1.5 kilometres—one hour) is called Hveradalaklif-Snorrahver. You follow a marked trail and pass so many interesting sights (many of them close-up) that you will probably stay for much longer. Take care close to the hot spots! The longer hike (eight kilometres—three to four hours) elevates you by 150 metres, and is very rewarding. It is called Efri Hveradalahringur, and is an unmarked trail (ask for directions and map at the service centre if needed).

After any hike, a dip into the heavenly hot outdoors pool is a perfect end, or you may check the other facilities at the "baðhús." And if, after all this, you still have time and interest, familiarise yourself with some of the other hikes in the area.

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© Inge A. Kvikvik

Horsing Around

Life At Steinsholt

By Inge A. Kvikvik

In the kitchen at Steinsholt, Kari Torkildsen is stirring up a delicious lamb soup. She and her husband, Gunnar Marteinnsson, are the owners of Steinsholt Riding Tours. They are making sure everything is ready for the company of thirteen Danes that they are expecting.

Meanwhile, their toddlers, Magnús Örn and Jóhann, play with their matchbox cars on the floor. Not unlike most Icelanders, they don't seem to need a proper road to drive; in fact their cars hardly need a road at all, leaping enormous gaps straight from floor to kitchen table with ruthless precision. They play utterly oblivious to the poor souls trying to conduct an interview through language barriers, mutton stewing and reckless driving, accelerating, tire squealing and crashing sounds. Boys will be boys.

Kari manages to keep the boys away from the food, a soup made entirely of ingredients from the farm, including the mutton. She prepares this for the tourists who come year round, usually on a quest for the most exquisite of the Icelandic horseback riding experiences.

Under a mystical skyline

Steinsholt Riding Tours is a small family business located in Selfoss region, just over an hour's drive east of Reykjavík. People from all over the world come here to experience Icelandic horseback riding at the farm, which also offers room and board.

Kari and Gunnar give their guests a true piece of Icelandic tradition, and an experience to remember, with good help from their beloved horses and their incredible surroundings. The scenery is stunning—the singing birds, sleepy dogs and playful horses setting the pace, with the mystical volcano Hekla's ever-changing presence seemingly hovering out in the distance.

The Steinsholt farm

The farm of Steinsholt has been part of this landscape for centuries, rooted in the Middle Ages, when Þorbjörn Laxakarl ("Thor-Bear Man of Salmon") claimed all land of the Þjórsá valley and Gnúpverja district as his own. Soon after, his brothers-in-law, Ófeigur Grettir ("with-a-frown") and Þormóður Skapti ("with-a-spear"), arrived in Iceland and he gave them the entire Gnúpverja district. After the adoption of Christianity in Iceland, according to records from the late 12th or early 13th century, a church was built in Steinsholt and the farm remained church property until 1891, housing pastors or their widows. The family who bought Steinsholt from the church still lives there. Steinsholt is now the home of three generations, the current farmers and their children, along with the now-retired last generation of farmers, all in all ten people. Presently, two farms are run on the premises, a cattle farm along with Gunnar and Kari's horse farm of Gunnar, which provides accommodation to tourists.

While Gunnar has been involved in local politics, among other things, as mayor of the Skeiða- and Gnúpverjahreppur municipality, Kari has slowly but surely built the horse touring and guiding business since 2000. Originally from Norway, with a background in agronomy, Kari moved to Iceland with the dream of working with horses and living on a farm. "It is a peaceful life. You get to be out in nature a lot, and there is always something to do on a farm. You won't get bored," Kari reassures us.

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Inge A. Kvivik

Groundhog Day

The riding and guiding season lasts from around May until September. After that, Kari and Gunnar usually enjoy a well-deserved vacation in October, and then they keep the farm in shape throughout the winter, getting ready for the next season. This means trading horses, feeding sheep, riding horses, feeding chickens, shoeing horses, mending fences, looking for horses, looking at horses, painting barns, removing stable muck, breeding horses, leaning on tractors, chewing on straws, you know, the usual farm stuff. Some say there is no downtime when it comes to managing a farm, and to an urban socialite strung out on lattes, it may very well seem like voluntary Groundhog Day. Then again, the same can be applied to any bustling city-life or suburban commuting reality.

There is no traffic. No fuss. No exposure to brain-drained conversations on the bus, no paying a fee for absolutely everything you want to do—and no people, almost. There is only nature, wind (and weather in general, lots of weather) and animals.

Getting To Know Them

At any given time, Steinholt plays hosts to between 80 and 90 horses. According to Kari, about 50 of those are riding horses. This means that they are carefully trained to handle a variety of variously (un)skilled riders, and carry them on trips along the aforementioned scenic countryside.

"The most important thing is that you can trust the horse. Being a small company we have extensive knowledge of all our horses. We personally choose the horse to suit the skill of each rider here. This ensures a better experience," says Kari.

If you live at Steinholt for a while, you can get to know the personality of the horses quite well. They are definitely a cool crew—eating, sleeping standing up and horsing around all the time.

"Horses are somewhat like people. For them to be good riding horses, it's important that they get the right relationship to humans early on. They are often rebellious until they are about 13–15 years of age. After that, they are usually like "Okay, then. I'll carry you and behave," Kari laughs. "So, getting good rid-

ing horses is a long process."

The Smell Of Memories

The horses spend their time outdoors, or in their stable. The stable is a warm, kind of cosy place with lots of hay and a pungent smell (that you'll eventually grow fond of). Here they eat, sleep, train, scratch each other and neigh impatiently while waiting for their next mission.

"Depending on the wishes of our guests, we accommodate horse trips from one hour up to eight days on horseback. In the summers we go on lots of longer rides with groups of up to sixteen persons, away from the farm for days. We ride through the day and stay at huts or mountain cabins for the night," Kari explains.

On the long trips the horse to human ratio is about three to one. This ensures that every guest has an energetic companion as long as possible, and also that the horses get their rest.

"It is very important to ensure the welfare of the horses, for their own good, but also for the quality of the experience," says Kari.

Herd Up

This makes sense. After all, the horses are the ones that make the experience. That's why Kari and Gunnar make sure their horses get nutritious food, good exercise and proper care. And a fulfilling social life, even! Horses are herd animals, and have a distinct hierarchy within the group. They seem to also form bonds individually, often going in a smaller group and basically just hanging out.

The Icelandic horse is a distinct breed that has evolved due to the isolation on the island. Their ancestors were mainly Nordic races like the Norwegian Nordlandshesten and Fjording races, and also the Shetland pony. They came to be a very strong, hardy and friendly breed. The Icelandic horse is a so-called "five-gaited" breed, known for its sure-footedness and ability to cross rough terrain. As well as the typical gaits (in Iceland known as "fet" (walk), "brokk" (trot) and "stökk" (gallop), the breed is noted for its ability to perform two additional gaits, namely "tölt" and "skeið" (pace). In tölt, the footfall pattern is the same as the walk, but fast. Tölt is like the cat-burglar-in-a-hurry gait, in the sense that it looks kind of like the horse are very swiftly and stealthily hurrying away from something. At least some people think so (okay, at least one person thinks so: me, the writer of this. Check it out on YouTube. I'm serious!).

According to Kari, skilled riders have a good chance of experiencing tölt at Steinholt. Many of their best horses are experienced tölters, so the possibility is definitely there.

"Our longer staying guests get to experience different horses. Gunnar is an expert in finding a suitable horse and every guest gets a handpicked horse to best suit his or her abilities," she explains.

Riding at Hekla's feet

Kari believes in the notion of running business in a small scale. At Steinholt you may experience an intimacy with Icelandic nature as well as culture, in the sense that you visit something closer to that of a farm than that of an institutional tourist facility. What you get here is the real deal, from the mutton to the mountain. On that note, do not for a minute confuse Hekla's elusive spell with something out of a fairy tale. The 4892 feet high strato-volcano is one of Iceland's most active volcanoes. Fortunately for the farm of Steinholt, its proximity is close enough to marvel in the volcanoes powerful presence, but sufficiently distanced to feel at ease even if a major event should occur.

Steinholt was one of the first companies to start up horse rentals and tours in the proximity of Hekla, and they in turn get customers that want the thrilling sensation of horse riding with a volcanic twist. "Some people come because of Hekla and some people are scared to come because of Hekla. Fortunately, we aren't too close," says Kari.

Jóhann & Magnus Örn Saga

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained," is written in Njál's Saga. When the sun appears over horses grazing outside and a delicious scent spread throughout the house from the mutton stew brewing on the stove, what is gained by tourists visiting Steinholt is obvious.

Speaking of venturing, the boys Jóhann and Magnús Örn are now making their way to play outside, yet more horsing around is to come. But then again, what is life without the shenanigans? Some day all this will be theirs. Not a bad prospect at all.

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Clumsy Bodies And Cold, Expressionless Eyes

A description of the Icelandic people in 1902

By Sveinbjörn Þórðarson



The following passage appears in 'The Living Races of Mankind: A popular illustrated Account of the Customs, Habits, Pursuits, Feasts & Ceremonies of the Races of Mankind throughout the World' by Henry Neville Hutchinson, John Walter Gregory and Richard Lydekker. Published in 1902, the book adheres to a pseudo-scientific ethnology popular at the time and contains descriptions of the many 'races' of mankind, including the "Icelandic race."

"It is somewhat difficult to present a correct description of the Icelander. In physical characteristics he does not compare favourably with his fellow Scandinavians. The face is round or square rather than oval; the forehead often rises high; the malar bones stand out strongly, while the cheeks fall in. Perhaps his most characteristic feature is the eye, which is nearly always hard, cold, and expressionless.

The stony stare has caused the women to be described as generally ill-featured. The co-

lour is clear grey or light blue, seldom brown, and never black. The younger people have a fresh, pink-and-white complexion. The hair has seldom the darker shades of brown, but in different persons shows all shades from decided red to pale yellow. The Icelanders have thick, clumsy bodies, apparently too long and heavy for the legs, which, if short, are sturdy, while the feet are large and flat. The tread is heavy and the gait ungainly, although women, when young, are sufficiently light-footed and graceful.

The people are reserved and dignified in their intercourse with each other as well as with strangers, but cannot be described, with some hasty observers, as morose. However distant in appearance, the temperament is really both cheerful and even animated, combined with a frank, unstudied manner, which, however, often betrays an almost excessive self-esteem. Their directness in criticising and ridiculing other people's weaknesses has,

“

The Icelanders have thick, clumsy bodies, apparently too long and heavy for the legs, which, if short, are sturdy, while the feet are large and flat.

”

in fact, created an impression that they are boorish and ill-natured. They have strength of intellect, joined with penetration and shrewdness.

Lovers of liberty, hospitable, truthful, they are exempt from most vices, except the national failing—drink. In their secluded, insular home they have preserved many usages and traditional beliefs, betraying in this respect a conservative spirit comparable to that of the Hindus. The Icelanders have emigrated largely during recent years, and the energy, industry, and intelligence they display in American cities and other places are highly creditable to them."

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STUFFED WITH STUFF

Issue 14

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P.8



This only pushes people out, which increases rent in the newer parts of Reykjavík. The only solution is to bomb the city to the ground and start again."

The rent is too damn high. Period.

P.14



As the chair and the student rights and loan officers respectively, both María and Jórunn have been dedicating the majority of their time to an ongoing legal dispute between the student council and Iceland's government-run student loan fund, LÍN.

The student council took the government to court. And won. For now.

P.26



I made 'Icelandic Dream' right before the whole Icelandic financial boom and I'm making this movie while China's on top, about Westerners coming from countries that are down.

Róbert I. Douglas tells us about his new film 'Sanlitun,' which will open the Reykjavík International Film Festival this year.

P.49



The Icelandic name, 'fýluböllur,' is just as appropriate—it means 'stinky male genitals.'

For some reason, these phallic fungi can only be found in the Reykjavík cemetery.

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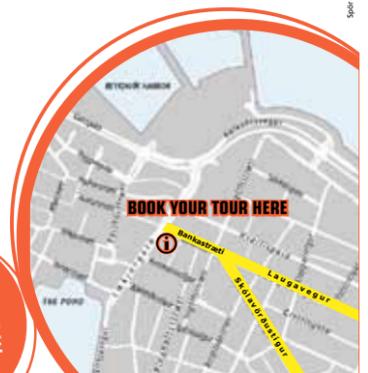
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Issue 14 - 2013

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Your essential guide to life, travel and entertainment in Iceland



ADVERTISING



Calling All Lunatics!

Cult of Luna

Gamli Gaukurinn | September 21 | 23:00 | 2,500 ISK

Swedish post-metal band Cult of Luna hails from the heavy metal Mecca of Umea. The band was formed in the '90s, back when musicians had to record their demos on analogue tapes instead of just sharing GarageBand AAC files on Dropbox. Following the release of their latest album, 'Vertikal,' CoL has decided to grace Icelanders with their wicked presence. In case you are more metal than post, super stars Momentum, Gone Postal and Angist will warm up the stage that fine evening. TGB

MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE

September 13 - 26

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 September 13

Boston
22:00 Tommi White & Positive Vibrations Live
Café Rosenberg
21:00 Tónelskir Læknar
Den Danske Kro
20:30 Tryggvi / Biggi
Dillon
22:00 DJ Andrea
English Pub
17:00 Raggi / Aggi
Glaumbar
22:00 Oróljótur & Lord Pu\$\$whip: Friday The 13th Show
Harlem
22:00 Solaris Sun Glaze / Benni B-Ruff
Harpa
20:00 LEVELELEVEN
Hressó
21:00 Hressó Fringe Night with Retrobot / VJ Fúzi
Kjarvalsstaðir (Reykjavik Art Museum)
12:15 Trió Reykjavík
Lebowski Bar
22:00 DJ Rúndrés
Prikió
22:00 Ara Braga Band & Gay Latino Man

Saturday September 14

Bar 11
21:00 Logn & Kælan Mikla
Boston
22:00 DJ Katla
Bravó
23:00 RVK Soundsystem's Reggae Night
Café Rosenberg
21:00 KK Band
Den Danske Kro
21:00 Ingi Valur / Hjálmar & Dagur
Dillon
22:00 DJ Andrea
English Pub
21:00 Addi / Ingi Valur
Gamli Gaukurinn
21:00 In The Company Of Men Album Release
Harlem
22:00 Terrordisco / Kid Mistik, Yamaho & Exos
Harpa
19:00 How To Become Icelandic In 60 Minutes
Hressó
21:00 7-9-13 / VJ Fúzi
Kaffibarinn
22:00 FKNHDSM
Lebowski Bar
22:00 DJ.OK
Prikió
22:00 Benni B-Ruff

Sunday September 15

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Tryggvi
English Pub
22:00 Addi
Harpa
14:00 Pearls Of Icelandic Song
Harpa
15:00 Sound of Brass
Harpa
20:00 'Þú Getur!' Charity Concert
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Sævar Markús
KEX Hostel
20:30 Magnús of the Month
Lebowski Bar
22:00 Haraldur Einars

18
September



Abandon All Worries, Ye Who Enter Here Kristján Hrannar Album Release Concert

The Culture House | 20:00 | 2,500 ISK

Singer-songwriter Kristján Hrannar has been active in the music scene for a while, having been formerly associated with the band 1860. Now he has spread his wings and begun his solo career, releasing his debut album 'Anno 2013.' The album features electro-pop overlaid with jazz-like piano tunes, and Kristján's soothing voice. Listening to it is a sure way to calm your quivering heart, and we sure hope he will have the same effect live. The charming Einar Lövdahl will warm up the crowd before Kristján makes his grand debut. **TGB**



FALK Off FALK ÜBER EVROPA TOUR 2013 Fundraiser

Gamli Gaukurinn | 21:00 | 1,000 ISK

Sometimes no matter how loud you shout it seems hard to get noticed. After years of battling in the industrial trenches, fighting hurdles like incorrect comparisons to Nine Inch Nails, noise artists AMFJ and KRAKKBOT are taking their sideshow on the road. Under the header of their self-established label, FALK, they'll be hitting a bunch of cities in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands on ten days of total mayhem. Come out and help them raise funds for their tea-and-honey supply - ten days of screaming will make them very, very hoarse! **RL**

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Monday September 16

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Hjálmar & Dagur
English Pub
22:00 Ingi Valur
Harpa
20:00 French-Icelandic Friendship
Orchestra Inaugural Show
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Krystal Carma
Lebowski Bar
22:00 DJ AB
Prikið
22:00 DJ Hús

Tuesday September 17

Café Rosenberg
21:00 Silla & friends
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Roland
English Pub
22:00 Tryggvi
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Viktor Birgis
KEX Hostel
20:30 KEXJazz
Lebowski Bar
22:00 Haraldur Einars

Wednesday September 18

Bar 11
23:00 Vök / Halleluwah
Boston
22:00 Live Jazz
Café Rosenberg
21:00 Thin Jim
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Hreimur
English Pub
22:00 Hjálmar & Dagur
Frikirkjan
19:30 Snorri Helgason Release
Concert
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Terrordisco
Lebowski Bar
22:00 Jesús
Prikið
22:00 Maggi Lego & Trommuhei-
ladiskó

Thursday September 19

Boston
22:00 DJ Herra Gott
Café Rosenberg
21:00 Alma Rut & Band
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Magni
English Pub
22:00 Einar A
Harpa
19:30 Iceland Symphony Orchestra
Performs Bach & Beethoven
Iðnó
21:00 1860 Release Concert
Kaffibarinn
22:00 HúsDJús with DJ Kára
Loft Hostel
21:00 Jazz Night
Prikið
22:00 DJ KGB

Friday September 20

Boston
22:00 DJ KGB
Café Rosenberg
21:00 Síðasti Bærinn í Dalnum
Den Danske Kro
20:30 Ingi Valur / Andri
Dillon
22:00 Ste McCabe / DJ Andrea
English Pub
17:00 Raggi / Hjálmar & Dagur /
Eypór Ingi & co
Harpa
20:00 Michael Jackson Tribute Show
Hressó
21:00 DJ Elli
Harlem
22:00 Marc Romboy (DE) / FM Bel-
fast DJs
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Alfons X
Lebowski Bar
22:00 DJ KATZ
Prikið
22:00 DJ JAY-O

Saturday September 21

Boston
22:00 Formaðurinn
Den Danske Kro
21:00 Tryggvi / Hjálmar & Dagur
Dillon
22:00 DJ Andrea
English Pub
21:00 Hjálmar & Dagur / Addi
Gamli Gaukurinn
23:00 Cult Of Luna
Harlem
22:00 Pedro Pilatus / RVK DNB #002
Harpa
14:00 Michael Jackson Tribute Show
Harpa
19:00 How To Become Icelandic In 60
Minutes
Harpa
20:00 Nýdönsk featuring John Grant
Hressó
21:00 DJ Elli
Kaffibarinn
22:00 DJ Pabbi
Lebowski Bar
22:00 DJ Anna Brá
Prikið
22:00 DJ Kocoon

Sunday September 22

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Ingi Valur



Art-Core Logn & Kælan Mikla

Bar 11 | 23:00 | Free!

Everything is cyclical – fashion, politics, and especially music. So it's not so surprising that after a few years of quiet cutesy-pie bands, shiny polished electro and organic finger-plucking folk dominated the local sphere, things were about to get gritty and byzantine again. Hardcore band Logn have been stoically shredding it up since they were too young to get legit gigs, and continue to rise now in their legal years. Playing along with them are newcomer poetry-punk band Kælan Mikla, who are dark, mysterious and full of piss and vinegar. Both bands will make you want to read, paint and wish for an adolescence do-over. **RL**



Summer Starts Now 1860 Release concert

Iðnó | 22:00 | 2,500 ISK

Well, it's getting darker, no doubt about that. Summer has waved goodbye and life is starting to take place inside our cosy little shells. But there's a spark of light burning inside that is bringing a rather warm spirit to our hearts: 1860 are about to release their first album 'Artificial Daylight'. The title seems perfectly fitting for the season and so do the songs. A little bit melancholy, some lightly strummed guitar and atmospheric sounds. This is all it takes to make this evening a remarkable one for every fan of sunny-sounding folk-pop. Enjoy! **JK**

English Pub
22:00 Addi
Harpa
14:00 Pearls Of Icelandic Song
Kaffibarinn
22:00 DJ Z
Lebowski Bar
22:00 Haraldur Einars

Monday September 23

Café Rosenberg
21:00 Valur Gunnarsson Record Re-
lease Concert
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Hjálmar & Dagur
English Pub
22:00 Addi
Kaffibarinn
22:00 DJ Dauði
Lebowski Bar
22:00 DJ AB
Prikið
22:00 DJ Árni (SE)

Tuesday September 24

Café Rosenberg
21:00 Arnar Dór & Guests
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Roland
English Pub
22:00 Ingi Valur
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Krystal Carma
KEX Hostel
20:30 KEXJazz
Lebowski Bar
22:00 DJ.OK
Nordic House
20:00 Classical Chamber Music
Concert
Prikið
22:00 Berndsen

Wednesday September 25

Café Rosenberg
21:00 Hljómsveitin Funn



Lebowski BAR

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KERBEL JIRÍ THÝN JOHN STEZAKER
KARIN SANDER KARLOTTA BLÖNDAL
KRISTJÁN GUÐMUNDSSON LAWRENCE
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ART

OPENINGS AND ONGOING

September 13 - 26

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

Bío Paradís

September 19

European Film Festival

Concerts, party, DJs, and of course lots of films.

Runs until September 29

Hitt Húsið

September 21

Ugly Icelandic Turquoise Things

An exhibit by up and coming artist Morgan Mead.

Runs until October 5

Kunstschlager

September 14

Leitin að Gullrefinum

Two Danish artists, Malte Kagenberg and Lauritz Nymand Svendsen, open their exhibition ("The Search for the Golden Fox"), the concept of which is a laboratory-born fox that can shapeshift at will.

Runs until September 28

Reykjavík Art Museum -

Hafnarhús

September 14

Žilvinas Kempinas: Fountains

Lithuanian artist Žilvinas Kempinas installed reels of magnetic tape that ripple like waves with the help of industrial fans.

Runs until January 5, 2014

September 14

Tomas Martišauskis: Creature

Lithuanian artist Tomas Martišauskis translates the notion of traditional sculpture by translating a sculptural object into various mediums.

Runs until January 12, 2014

September 14

Icelandic Video Art 1975 - 1990

This exhibition explores the first steps taken by Icelandic artists to use video as an artistic medium. The works shown were first exhibited in Iceland between 1980 and 1990 and only a few have been shown since then.

Runs until January 19, 2014

Reykjavík Museum of

Photography

September 12, 12:00 - 18:00

Pipelines

The Japanese artist Gentaro Ishizuka has been photographing pipelines since 2011. The exhibit combines industrial construction with the beauty of nature.

Runs until November 5

Stúdentakjallarinn

September 15, 20:00

Pulp Fiction Hangover Cinema

Hung over? Why not head on over to Stúdentakjallarinn and chill?

September 18, 20:00

Pub Quiz

It's time to show off all of that obscure trivia knowledge you have stored up in that noggin of yours.

September 19, 20:00

Electro workshop

Six electro bands come together and make music together. Interested parties can join in on the magic.

September 22, 19:00

Wayne's World I & II Hangover Cinema

Double feature for the hung-over.

Poka

September 21, 16:00 to 18:00

Pór Sigurþórsson has a mixed-medium exhibition focusing on how we view nature today through the computer screen.

Runs until October 20

Ongoing

101 Art Gallery

The works of Guðrún Vera Hjartadóttir, Hilda Hákon, Sigurður Guðmundsson, Steinunn Þórarinsdóttir and Jón Óskar are on display in the lobby of 101 Hotel.

On permanent view

Anarkía

Sólskin Um Hánótt

Famous painter Sævar Karl showcases nine recent paintings that draw inspiration from abstract-



Back To The Future
Exhibition Icelandic Video Art From 1975-1990

Hafnarhús | September 14 - January 19 | 1,200 ISK

Video art has become common to us since its invention in the mid-sixties. It started to spread all over the world and also to this icy island far up north. This exhibition presents a complex overview about the development of this modern art form by taking a look at the Icelandic way of using a new technology and the circumstances under which this took place. Although they were mainly created between 1980 and 1990, most of the works shown have not been exhibited yet, so it really is time travel in a way. So head over and take a look at this to experience the spirit of our video art pioneers. **JK**

expressionism.

Runs until September 28

Umbrot

Anna E. Hansson has an exhibition called 'Umbrot' ("Layout") which features paintings of used handbags that have been discarded. It examines the extraordinary that is found the mundane, and gives voice to cherished items that have been rejected and replaced.

Runs until September 29

Árbær Museum

Guided tour in English through this open air museum consisting of twenty buildings. Happens daily at 13:00. Admission 1,100 ISK.

On permanent view

ART 67

The Ukrainian artist Serhiy Savchenko is the guest artist of the month.

Runs until September 30

ASÍ Art Museum

SEVEN - NINE - THIRTEEN - The Science Of Drawing

Sigrún Eldjárn is a visual artist, writer and an illustrator, known for her children's books. This exhibition concentrates on her drawings on wood, paper and cotton.

Runs until September 29

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

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 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

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 Nordic light.

On permanent view

Gallery Sign (Skilti)

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

Hafnarfjörður

One Big Art Gallery

Artist Ingvar Björn Þorsteinsson, in collaboration with the town council, has installed nine 3d art pieces in downtown Hafnarfjörður. Visitors can pick up free 3d glasses in Sófistinn café and local banks.

Runs until September 30

Hverfisgallerí

Artist Guðný Rósa Ingimarsdóttir has an exhibition with a selection of her drawings.

Runs until September 14

i8 Gallery

Works on Paper

30 artists explore the medium of paper conceptually and literally as both a subject and/or object.

Runs until October 12

Icelandic Printmaker's Association (Íslensk Grafík)

Næstved

Danish artists from the graphic workshop, Næstved, exhibit their works. The show is open from Thursday to Sunday.

Runs until September 22

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

Kling & Bang

An exhibition by Ragnar Þórisson of large-scale paintings. The exhibit is untitled and free.

Runs until September 15

Knitting Iceland

Whether you are a beginner or pro, you can come knit every Thursday, 14:00 - 18:00.

On permanent view

Living Art Museum

TREE/Difficulty of Freedom/

Freedom of Difficulty

Research project investigating the process of making art. The concept derives from the French literary group OULIPO, which was founded in 1960.

Runs until September 26

Latin Dance Studio, Faxafen 12

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Argentine tango, Sundays from 17:30-

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Reykjavík

September 13 - 26

Keep it in your pocket

Two Weeks

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

15

SEPTEMBER

You So Totally Can Philanthropist Party

September 18, 20:00 **DROPPING AUTUMN SKY** Say goodbye to summer and howdy doody to fall with the release of Snorri Helgason's newest album, 'Autumn Skies.' The album release concert is at Fríkirkjan, and admission is 2,500 ISK. So don't let changing seasons get you down and take a little piece of the autumn sky with you!

September 21 **THE TRIED AND TESTED Nýdönsk** has been playing for twenty-six years and still have a big enough following to sell out a concert at **Harpa**. No worries though, they have a second gig at 23:00 with a few tickets left. **John Grant** joins them, too!

September 20-22 **WORKSHOP FOR THE ANONYMOUS** Experienced speakers from the US and Iceland come together to talk about giving up the drink and how to manage family life. Don't be afraid of popping over to **Von** at **Efstaleyti 7** to see what the fuss is about.

Until October 30 **THIS IS NOT ADIDAS Rebekka Erin Moran** explores the sports identity surrounding this catheter culture. Her exhibit, which can be seen 24/7 in the window of the **Wind And Weather Gallery**, uses an Adidas jacket, plaster, "a freedom leg bag" and urine. Free entry!

19 - 29
SEPTEMBER

In Darkness In Darkness
Continental Cinema



European Film Festival
Bío Paradís 700 ISK per show

If you'd like to see some of the best films the European continent has to offer, consider yourself lucky. This fall, Bío Paradís is hosting a film festival showing twelve new films from all over Europe. Everyone is invited to the opening on September 19, which not only offers the chance to see three great movies for free, but also free beer, wine and food. The festival's guest of honour is the Polish director Agnieszka Holland, whose Oscar nominated film 'In Darkness' will be screened with audio-captioning for the visually impaired. **AKL**

Pú Getur Charity Concert

20:00
Harpa From 3,500 ISK

The non-profit organisation Pú Getur! ("You can!") works with the mental health community to de-stigmatise the condition of those living with all varieties of battles-in-the-head, as well as to empower and educate them through support groups and outreach programmes. All this good work takes money so they're throwing a charity gig. Volunteering their talent is a line-up of some of the best and brightest of Icelandic musicians, including Högni from Hjaltalín, Rúnar Eff, Súma, Nýdönsk, Ari from Eldjárn, the Queer Choir, Páll Óskar, and many others. So pop on over to enjoy some great music and put in a few kronur to make a real difference in peoples' lives. **TGB**

All September **THE GOGGLES, THEY DO EVERYTHING!** The town of Hafnarfjörður commissioned artist Ingvar Björn Þorsteinsson to install nine 3D art murals all over the downtown area. If you pop into **Súfistinn** or the local banks, you can get free pair of goggles and enjoy seeing **Yoda, Chuck Norris, Kim Jonh-Un** and **Björk** in all of their 3D glory!

September 8 - 29 **ANARCHY AND HANDBAGS Anarkía Gallery** features **Anna E. Hansson's** first private exhibition **Umbrot**. It questions consumerism's obsession with buying new things with paintings of old discarded handbags.

September 12 - November 5 **PIPES ARE PRETTY** Japanese artist **Gentaro Ishizuka** presents perhaps the most bizarre show to grace the **Reykjavík Museum of Photography**; pictures of pipelines from all over the world. Oh, and it's free, too!

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Hafnarstræti 104 • Akureyri
Adalstræti 27 • Ísafirðurdur

e:info@the viking
www.theviking.is



The Official Tourist Information Center

Aðalstræti 2 • 101 Reykjavík
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A

The best selection of Icelandic design in the oldest house in Reykjavík, Aðalstræti 10.



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www.kraum.is



B

Café Loki in front of Hallgrímskirkja



Enjoy some solid homemade Icelandic food
Open 9-21 Mon-Sat and 11-21 Sundays

C

MAP

Places We Like

Food

1 Snaps Bistro

Óðinstorg, Þórsgata 1

This recent addition to Reykjavík dining has quickly become a popular spot for folks with a fine palate and a modest budget, offering a small menu of courses made from local produce with a carefully selected wine list. It's also a cool hangout for artists and musicians. Make sure to get there early - they take reservations until 18:30 but after that it's a free-for-all!

2 Bergsson Mathús

Templararsund 3

Offering an electric selection of fresh and healthy flavours, this new addition to casual downtown dining prides itself on the use of local and seasonal produce. From their ingredient list they turn out Middle Eastern, Soul Food, vegetarian and vegan dishes that are perfect when you need more than a snack, but less than a full horse.

3 Icelandic Fish & Chips

Tryggvagata 8

Not your average fish'n'chips joint, this healthy restaurant uses only organic vegetables and quality fish products to serve their fancy take on a fast-food classic. The spiced 'Skyronnaise' sauce is a special treat, and their clean, casual location by the harbour is full of charm.

4 KEX Hostel

Skúlagata 28

KEX Hostel is the darling of Reykjavík hipsters and professionals and their visiting peers from abroad, drawing crowds daily. With its great views and cheap accommodation, excellent dining and choice beer selection - along with an abundance of exciting events - you don't have to wonder why.

5 Kolabrautin

Harpa, Austurbakki 2

Serving up an artful menu of neo-Nordic cuisine by an award-winning head chef, this Grapevine favourite offers an unbeatable combination of great food and a stunning view. Their bar staff are among the best in town and should more appropriately be called 'mixologists' for their finely crafted cocktails.

Drinking

6 Café d'Haiti

Geirsgata 7b/Verbúð 2

Nestled in one of the former fishing warehouses of the old harbour, Café d'Haiti is surely one of Reykjavík's best cafés (and this is no mean feat, as the city has some nice coffee on offer). Go there for an excellent cup and some delicious light snacks during the day, or indulge in beer and low-key concerts at night.

Useful numbers

Emergency number: **112**

Medical help: **1770**

Dental emergency: **575 0505**

Information: **118**

Taxi: Hreyfill-Bæjarleiðir: **588 5522**

BSR: **561 0000**

Tax Free Refund

Iceland Refund, Aðalstræti 2, tel: 564 6400

Tourist information

Arctic Adventures, Laugavegur 11,

tel: 562 7000

City Centre, Aðalstræti 2, tel: 590 1550

Iceland Excursions - Grayline Iceland,



7 Stofan

Ingólfstorg, Aðalstræti 7

Voted the best place to read a book in the Grapevine Best of Reykjavík awards 2012 and 2013, this old-timey coffee house is something straight out of a Carl Larsson painting. A perfect place to spend the day sitting on their antique furniture and sipping delicious drinks, both alcoholic and otherwise.

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 Lág-

múla 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 Loftleiðir, tel: 562-4200

8 Mokka Kaffi

Skólavörðustígur 3a

Mokkakaffi was founded in 1958 by couple Guðný Guðjónsdóttur and Guðmundur Baldvinnssyni and the place still in the same family. It is one of the oldest cafes in Reykjavík and the first cafes in Iceland to introduce Italian coffee making. Besides Italian coffee, hot chocolate and waffles, there are regular art exhibitions in the café.

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-

9 Harlem

Tryggvagata 22

This super hip bar has the super unique signature of being handpainted by sixteen local artists and designers. So naturally it's really big for the art crowd! Come by any night for one of the many excellent DJs in their roster or regular events like karaoke and NBA screenings. Cheap drinks and good times abound.

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

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D

New In Town



13 Humans of Reykjavik

[f humansofreykjavik](https://www.facebook.com/humansofreykjavik)

Inspired by the sensational photography blog that started three years ago in New York, Humans of Reykjavik is a new blog that captures street portraits of the most unique individuals that inhabit the town. Every photograph is paired with a quote from the person. Be sure to check out their blog on Facebook! **KL**



Venue Finder Music & Entertainment

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

Museums & Galleries

- | | |
|---|---|
| ART67
Laugavegur 67 F7
Mon - Fri 12 - 18 / Sat 12 - 16 | The Nordic House
Sturlugata 5
Tue-Sun 12-17
www.nordice.is |
| Ásgrímur Jónsson Museum
Bergstaðastræti 74
Mon-Fri through Sept. 1 | Reykjavík Art Gallery
Skúlagata 30 E7
Tuesday through Sunday 14-18
www.artmuseum.is |
| The Culture House
Hverfisgata 15 E5
www.thjodmenning.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 |
| The Einar Jónsson Museum
Eiríksgröta G6
Tue-Sun 14-17
www.skulptur.is | Reykjavík City Library
Tryggvagata 15 D3
www.borgarbokasafn.is |
| Galleri Ófeigur
Skólavörðustígur 5 E5
ofeigur.notando.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 |
| Hafnarborg
Strandgata 34, Hafnarfjörður
www.hafnarborg.is | Reykjavík Maritime Museum
Grandagarður 8 B2
www.maritime-wv.museum.is |
| Hannesarholt
Grundarstígur 10 E5
www.hannesarholt.is | Reykjavík Museum of Photography
Tryggvagata 16 D3
Weekdays 12-19 / Sat-Sun 13-17
www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is |
| Hitt Húsið
Gallery Tukt
Pósthússtræti 3-5 E4
www.hitthusid.is | Saga Museum
Perlan, open daily 10-18
www.sagamuseum.is |
| Hverfisgallerí
Hverfisgata 4 E4
www.hverfisgalleri.is | Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum
Laugamestangi 70
www.lso.is |
| i8 Gallery
Tryggvagata 16 D3
Tue-Fri 11-17 / Sat 13-17 and by appointment. www.i8.is | SÍM
Hafnarstræti 16 D4
Mon-Fri 10-16
www.sim.is |
| The Icelandic Phalological Museum
Laugavegur 116 F8
www.phallus.is | Spark Design Space
Klapparstígur 33 E5
Mon-Fri 10-18
Sat 12-16
www.sparkdesign-space.com |
| Kirsuberjatréð
Vesturgata 4 C2
www.kirs.is | Wind & Weather Gallery
Hverfisgata 37 E6
Open daily 09-02
www.windandweather.is |
| Kling & Bang
Hverfisgata 42 E6
Thurs-Sun from 14-18
www.this.is/klingogbang | POKA
Laugavegur 25 E5 |
| 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 | |

Shopping

- 10 Aftur**
Laugavegur 39
Aftur is Bára Holmgeirsdóttir's fashion label that has been established since 1999 and specialises in making clothing from recycled clothes. Local celebrities such as Björk and Sigur Rós have worn Aftur's clothing. The shop carries other exclusive brands. Come here for truly unique pieces.
- Public phones**
There aren't many public payphones in the city centre. The tourist information centre at Aðalstræti 2, City Hall, Kolaportíð, 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:
Ráðhúskaffi City Hall, Tjarnargata 11
Ground Zero, Frakkastígur 8, near Laugavegur 45
The Reykjavík City Library, Tryggvagata 15

- 11 KronKron**
Laugavegur 63b
If it's cutting-edge, international big name designers you are in the market for, then this store will be to you what Willy Wonka's factory was to Charlie. Fully stocked in the chicest young names in fashion and some one-of-a-kind local designs too—the shoes are not to be missed!
- 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.

- 12 Lucky Records**
Rauðarárstígur 10
All freshly set up in their brand new, huge location just next to Hlemmur, this is hands-down the finest record store in town. Crate-diggers will marvel and fawn over their selection while the lay music listener can easily pop in to pick up the latest from their favourites. Live music and DJs are regularly scheduled for live entertainment.
- 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.

T-SHIRTS
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LUNDINN

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HORNIÐ
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Lunch offers every day.
Open every day from 11.00 to 23.30
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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 BURGER: VITABAR



It was only a matter of time until Vitabar would take our 'BEST BURGER' prize. After all, those guys have been serving up their cheap, delicious, no-fuss burgers to the praise of Reykjavík's most hardcore burger lovers for decades without ever faltering in quality, raising their prices beyond what's appropriate to pay for a burger or becoming hopelessly hyped and crowded. They are a constant: all good, all the time.

Located at Bergþórugata 21



BEST PLACE TO ENJOY A ZEN MOMENT: TJÖRNIN



It's a common saying in zen practice to "keep your mind like calm water." Since that is exactly what Tjörnin ("The pond") is (except on some of the most astonishingly windy days), it's the perfect spot to accept what is and feel relaxed and at peace. Those ducks know what we're talking about.

Located outside City Hall



BEST SHOP FOR HIGH FASHION: KRONKRON



Anyone who has fallen under the impression that "high fashion" is synonymous with minimalistic designs for major prices needs to stroll over to KronKron. This high-end shop is refreshingly colourful and pattern-happy. The stockings that hang on the centre display could easily double as art pieces, the same goes for most of the clothes in there. KronKron imports established brands like Marc Jacobs, Vivienne Westwood, and Bernhard Wilhelm. For their third straight year, we give this fancy fashion shop our highest honour!

Located at Laugavegur 63b

A HUGE SELECTION OF ICELANDIC BEER

73 RESTAURANT

~ HOME OF THE EPIC ~



Awesome Icelandic fish, incredible steaks and Epic burgers along with a huge selection of Icelandic brew.

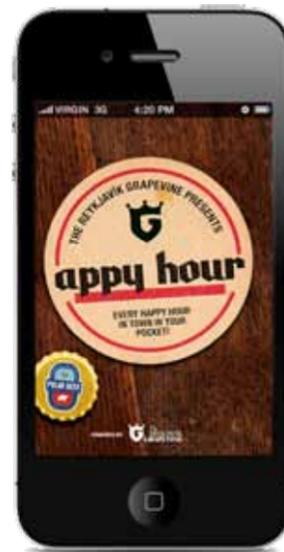


73 Restaurant | Laugavegur 73. | tel: 555 73 73 | www.73.is

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 1000 ISK.
- Einar Ben**
Every day from 18:00 to 20:00.
Beer 590 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.
- Gamli Gaukurinn**
Every day from 21:00 to closing.
Beer for 500 ISK.
- Glaumbar**
Every day from 21:00 to closing. Beer 390 ISK.



Download the FREE Grapevine Appy Hour app!

Every happy hour in town in your pocket. Available in the App store and on the Android Market.

- Harlem**
Every day from 17:00 to 22:00.
Beer 550 ISK, wine 700 ISK.
- 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, Wine from 1290 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.
All drinks half price.

- Hótel Plaza Bar**
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Beer 500 ISK.
- Íða 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. 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 to 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 -

19:30. Register by phone 821-6929 or email tangoadventure@gmail.com,
On permanent view

Museum of Design and Applied Art

Chance Encounters - Toward Modernity In Iceland Design

The exhibit focuses on the introduction of modernism in Icelandic domestic interiors from the 1930s to the 1980s.

Runs until October 13

Mokka Kaffi

50 years ago, artist Haukur Dór opened his first exhibition at Mokka in 1963, now his paintings are coming full circle.

Runs until October 17

The National Gallery

Ups And Downs

This exhibition explores the career of Dutch artist Kees Visser, who has been closely linked to the evolution of Icelandic art in the 1970s and 80s.

Runs until October 27

Passage 2011

In 2011 the artists Thomas Huber and Wolfgang Aichner pulled a red boat over the approximately 3,000 meters over the Alps. The vessel and the documentation of the journey, will be on display at The National Gallery.

Runs until October 27

The National Museum

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

Nordic House

Qanga

This exhibition features works from comic books 'The First Steps' and 'The Ermine' by award winning Greenlandic artist Nuka K. Gottfredsen.

Runs Until September 22

The Old Harbour

Iceland Expo Pavillion

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

On permanent view

Reykjavik Art Gallery

And Now For Something Completely Different

Icelandic painter Hjalti Parelus exhibits 15 new paintings that have not been shown previously. The technique is new to the artist, and the motives are all about the shape of the female body.

Runs until 30 September

Reykjavik 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 30

Reykjavik Art Museum -

Kjarvalsstaðir



Meta Sculpture Tomas Martišauskis: Creature

Hafnarhús | September 14 - January 12 | 1,200 ISK

Is there such a thing as an "authentic" copy? This is what the Lithuanian Tomas Martišauskis explores with his exhibition 'Creature,' which takes a single sculptural object and replicates it in various mediums. However, the original object will not appear in the exhibit... or will it? Whoa, mindfuck. It all depends on how interpret the authenticity of the copies presented. **AB**



Find all art listings
online
listings.grapevine.is

Icelandic Art 1900-1950: From Landscape to Abstract Art

An overview of Iceland art across five decades.

Runs Until September 22

Reykjavik Art Museum - Hafnarhús

Erró - Graphic Art 1949 - 2009

A grand collection of Erró's graphical works. Curator is Danielle Kvaran.

Runs until September 29

The Reykjavik City Library

Wandering Ghost

The German artist Moki, exhibits illustrations from his book, 'Wandering Ghost,' in the library including a special wall piece.

Runs until October 31

Reykjavik City Museum

Reykjavik 871 +/- 2: The Settlement Exhibition

Archaeological findings from ruins of one of the first houses in Iceland and other excavations in the city centre.

On permanent view

Reykjavik 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 Reykjavik 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

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.

On permanent view

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum

De Profundis

A collection of sculptures by Sigurjón Ólafsson and the paintings of his contemporaries. As the title points out, beneath the smooth surface of the works lies the turbulence and anguish of the Cold War tensions.

Runs weekends until December 1

SÍM (CIA)

From One To Another

Þórey Eypórsdóttir has worked as an visual artist, gallery owner, speech therapist and psychologist. Her exhibition displays mixed media.

Runs until September 25

Spark Design Space

Anatomy of Letters

Sigríður Rún explores ancient Icelandic letters by imagining them as organisms with their own particular anatomies.

Runs until September 30

Wind and Weather Window

Gallery

Das Ist Keine Adidas

An installation of an Adidas jacket, plaster, freedom leg bag, urine by Rebekka Erin Moran.

Runs until October 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.

On permanent view

Poka

Longing To Be Loved Or Destroyed

An exhibit by Habbý Ósk 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

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Mystery Trip Made The Night

Forréttabarin

Nýlendugata 14, 101 Reykjavík

What We Think:

Simple and small, yet fresh and totally on the money.

Flavour:

Southern European, new Nordic cuisine.

Ambiance:

Casual, “gastro-pubbish,” perfect for a late night snack with drinks.

Service:

Friendly, accommodating.

Price for 2 (with drinks):

11,800 ISK.



Forréttabarin literally means “the bar of starters.” It is situated close to the harbour in an abandoned warehouse of some sort. The decor is rugged, yet stylish: spacious with high ceilings and big windows. Similar to the tapas approach to dining, the restaurant serves small simple courses with few, but well chosen, ingredients. These courses are somewhere between a meal and a snack, something to please the palate along with your glass of wine.

My companion and I thus decided that it would be an ideal place to go on a Friday night—to have a few drinks accompanied by some lovely food. We chose to take the chef’s mystery trip, which consisted of four dishes and

dessert. This was very fairly priced at 5,900 ISK per person (most single dishes are priced between 1,500–1,850 ISK).

Our first destination was a beef carpaccio topped with croutons, parmesan cheese and a few dollops of green pesto. The course was pleasing: the carpaccio was thin as air, the parmesan was fresh, and the pesto made from scratch.

The next stop, a take on the classic bacon-wrapped dates and scallops, was a bit more daring. The fried baby scallops were crisp on the outside and mouth-wateringly tender on the inside. Parma ham was used instead of bacon, bringing a delicious textural contrast to the crispiness of the scallops. The dates were very finely cut and sweet—creating a nice balance of savoury and sweet.

Tandoori-chicken with mango-chutney and Greek yoghurt came next. The classic combination was perhaps a bit out of place. The chicken was nicely seasoned and had a spicy crust but unfortunately it was a bit dry. The yoghurt offered a nice cooling effect.

The star of the night was without a doubt the fourth course: fried cod with pork belly, chorizo and parsnip purée. This was a delight in every sense of the word. The cod was perfectly cooked, still flaky on the inside and crisp on the outside. The pork belly was dripping with salty, fatty, porky goodness. Bits of chorizo are never harmful, its oil adding another flavour to the dish, which was all in

all harmonious and full of flavour. A sprig of lemongrass was also present, and should not be underestimated. I would say this is one of the best dishes I’ve tasted in Reykjavík.

For dessert we had the chocolate cake with ice cream, with a set caramel crust in the middle. The cake was quite good, soft in the middle with strong notes of dark chocolate. The caramel brought a nice texture to the dish, broken into pieces to add a bit of crunch to each bite. The cake was not too heavy, which is often more difficult to accomplish than it sounds. It was very fine way to finish off a very pleasant meal.

Although the prices for individual dishes at Forréttabarin are a bit high compared to the likes of Tapas Barinn or Tapashúsið, we thought it was totally worth it. The service was friendly and accommodating, describing each course thoroughly and making sure we were pleased with the tempo of the meal. The wine list has some safe bets, and it is very refreshing that Forréttabarin serves the Icelandic beer Kaldi on tap. Four kinds of Kaldi no less!

In the end, my companion and I agreed that Forréttabarin made our evening. Dividing expectations by the results is a good formula for rating restaurants, and Forréttabarin came out well ahead.

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Potentially Great, But Not Just Yet

MAR

Geirsgata 9, 101 Reykjavík

What We Think:

New place with high hopes, but needs to adjust its aim

Flavour:

South American, southern European

Ambiance:

Casual fine dining

Service:

Young staff, but very professional

Price for 2:

(no drinks): 16-18,000 ISK



MAR is a relatively new place situated next to the harbour, which explains the name "Ocean." The menu is inspired by South American and Southern European cuisine and as stated on MAR's website it is "designed to deliver fresh and uplifting dining experience, unique to the harbour area."

As I understand, the restaurant is owned by whale watching company Elding and caters largely to tourists who eat lunch prior to, or following their whale watching excursions. However, my companion and I came around to taste their dinner menu, which consists of five starters, ten main courses (a bit much) and four dessert options.

We sat down and at once noticed

the custom-made tableware designed by Guðný Hafsteins and graphic designer Siggí Odds—a nice touch. As we waited for our starters, we received a complimentary amuse-bouche, a *plâche ceviche*. Although beautiful in its presentation, the amuse-bouche proved uninteresting. The normally citrusy and fragrant ceviche was quite bland and the taste of pickled onion was too dominant. It needed a bit of seasoning, and perhaps some heat. Fresh chili could have done the trick.

To start with, my companion had the creamy lobster soup with fried langoustines and herb cream (2,500 ISK) and I had fried scallops with pumpkin purée, spinach and beech agaric mushroom salad (2,200 ISK). The soup was rich and creamy with large pieces of langoustine. It was well-seasoned and proved exceptionally tasty. The scallops were perfectly cooked and the pumpkin purée was very pleasing, although the scallops themselves could have done with a touch more seasoning. The spinach and mushroom salad did little for the dish and seemed a bit out of place.

For our main course, my companion had the filet mignon with chimichurri, grilled corn and pepper sauce (5,750 ISK) and I had duck breast with creamy savoy, buttered oranges and red wine sauce (4,900 ISK). My dining companion, a native of Buenos Aires, was pleased with the filet mignon, cooked to tender perfection, but thought the chimichurri needed some work as it was lacking in both heat and acidity. The portion

could have also been a bit bigger. Although the duck breast was well cooked and delicious, it sat on a slaw of creamy savoy cabbage, which was quite odd and did not do the dish any favours. Nicely cooked carrots and pieces of broccoli were also present, although their presence was not essential. The red wine sauce was very good, but all in all there were too many things on the plate. The buttered oranges were very nice and there should have been more of them.

For dessert, my companion chose the chilled coconut soup with fruit (1,350 ISK) and I decided on the triple chocolate mousse, brownie and banana-split ice cream. The fruits were fresh and went nicely with the coconut soup, which could have had a bit more coconut flavour. The triple chocolate mousse was also nice, presented perfectly on a plate with a brownie still moist and a very pleasing banana split ice cream with bits of crunchy dark chocolate. Lovely.

All in all we were pleased with our meal, but not blown away, not by a long shot. Although it has great potential, MAR needs to work on some nuances. The prices of their main courses for instance suggest that they want to be taken seriously, but the breadbasket suggests otherwise. And in the words of renowned chef Pierre Koffmann: "the bread is essential to the success of a restaurant." Maybe they just need one final push to be called a great restaurant.

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- Visit Akureyri and coastal towns for culture and cuisine.
- Watch seals up close in Vatnsnes peninsula.
- Do a guided horse riding tour and try out tölt, the special gait of the Icelandic horse.

- Visit the northernmost point of Icelandic mainland, Hraunhafnartangi.
- Whale watching is a must, from Húsavík the whale watching capital or Dalvík, Ólafsfjörður and Akureyri.
- Take a guided tour to the Queen of Icelandic Mountains, Mt. Herðubreið.
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4 Hrísey

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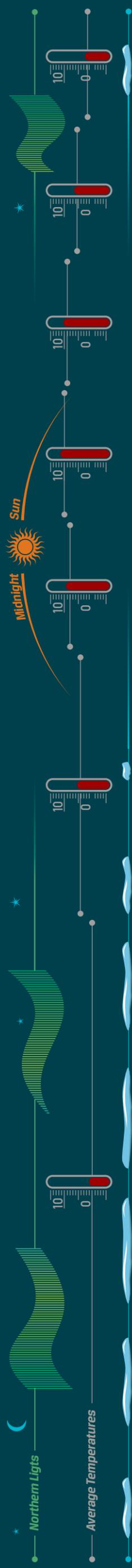
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