



The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

www.grapevine.is

YOUR FREE COPY >> THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LIFE, TRAVEL & ENTERTAINMENT IN ICELAND

IN THE ISSUE Issue 14 • 2011 • September 9 - 22

COMPLETE CITY LISTINGS - INSIDE!

▶ **COMMERCE**

Iceland's WONDERFUL tolling and taxing system explored

▶ **FOOD**

Everyone loves it. Because YUM!

▶ **FILM**

Crispin Hellion Glover is a very, very cool guy

▶ **POLITICS**

We welcome our Chinese overlords!

▶ **TRAVEL**

We gathered some berries and visited Vopnafjörður



Meet HAM

Nutritional Facts

Serving Size 666 Megatonnes
Servings Per Container ONE

Amount Per Serving	% Daily Value
Awesomeness 100%	
Flesh 666	
Óttarr 0g	666%
Sigurjón 0g	666%
Flosi 0g	666%
Addi 0g	666%
S. Björn 0g	666%
Betrayal 0mg	666%
Grief 9mg	
Death 3g	
SWANS 1g	666%
Abba 1g	666%
Freddie Mercury 1g	666%

RAWKmasters HAM are one of Iceland's most beloved (and best, goddamnit) bands, yet you've probably never heard of them! EVERYONE CHILL THE EFF OUT, WE GOT THIS! **PAGE 16**



On the cover: Sigurjón Kjartansson and Óttar Proppé from HAM

Photo by: Hörður Sveinsson
www.hordursveinsson.com

Special thanks: Alí kjótvinnsla

WHY DO WE KEEP LIONISING THAT WHOLE SMEKKLEYSA GANG?

Haukur's 46th Editorial



Hi,
I hope all you readers out there are well and good. Fall is fast approaching and with it comes the typical darkness and doom and gloom and stuff (eventually), but I

personally find that all that darkness, doom and gloom provides a nice counterweight to all the happy-crappy million hours of daylight that summer subjects us to.

Yes, I am not unfond of winter. I sorta love shivering in its dark and cold embrace. And then I also love when it finally leaves. I try and love everything. I can't always do it, but it's not a bad thing to attempt. I suggest y'all try it.

Now. As we were laying out this current issue of your Reykjavík Grapevine, I found myself wondering (as I am wont). This time, I wondered: "Why do we keep lionising that whole Smekkleysa/Bad Taste gang and its generation? Why are we putting HAM on our cover, and why have our covers or features so often starred esteemed persons of that group? People like Björk, Jón Gnarr and Sigtryggur Baldursson, to name a few. Why has our 'HISTORY OF ROCK' series featured a bajillion entries about stuff that happened between 1980 and 1985, while 1970–1975 only got a couple of articles?"

"Why are we holding that generation and its supposed legacy in such esteem?" I wondered. "Indeed, are we holding that generation and its supposed legacy in such esteem?" I wondered. "What about our own?" I wondered. "Shouldn't we be featuring some current band on our cover, like, I don't know, Reykjavík! or something?" I wondered [snicker].

I tried answering my own questions. A lot of the decisions about what we feature and why are my own, after all. "Of course, the generation that this group we keep featuring belongs to is coming of age and to power now," I thought, "and they are probably very keen on cementing their place in history and documenting their purported influence. Indeed, some of them, like Dr. Gunní, write for us. This might be influencing our actions and decisions. And, lest I forget, these people are the people I grew up admiring and reading about in various alt-publications, that must factor in somewhere, too," I thought. "Also," I thought, "tourists love them. And we are a tourist magazine."

"I remember when I was growing up," I further thought, "the generation that was then at the peak of its power and cultural influence (and still sort of is, except now their power is mainly political), 'The '68, SUMMER OF LOVE' generation, they were very unabashed about tooting their own horns and making all sorts of claims to greatness. They went around asserting that they created rock and roll, love, sex and most other things, and also that they perfected all of those things. Those self-important

fucks."

And I thought: "I remember not buying those self-serving assshots' shtick when I was a kid, and I'm not buying it now. But perhaps I and we have been buying into a different generation's shtick and attempts at image making, the one that's now sort of 'in power'?"

"No," I thought. "Maybe," I thought. "If so, it's important we remain vigilant and try to separate mythmaking attempts from reality, and remain critical."

That gang and generation is probably spearheading a reassessment of their cultural influence and importance (who wouldn't!). And while they're doing it, it's important to remember that neither did they invent any particular wheels nor did they redesign them in groundbreaking ways. But they did get up to some cool stuff, and they did make some good points, just like their predecessors in the summer of love did before them.

The Bad Taste/Smekkleysa gang, for instance, actively practiced and promoted a methodology and ideology that should be an inspiration to us all (and definitely is to myself). The mode of thinking and doing things they promote is an inclusive, egalitarian and rational one if I am not mistaken; it is inspired by punk rock and DIY, hell it often-times IS punk rock and DIY. At their best, they emphasised doing things for themselves and by themselves, on their own terms; rejecting restrictive and/or suppressive societal values and paradigms.

They might not have always lived up to those ideals, but at least they had them, and at least they strived for something.

An oft quoted cliché from that time and that gang—one that certainly served as an M.O. for the Smekkleysa group, goes: "It isn't what you can, it's what you do that matters" [fun fact: this sentence was uttered by then-Purrrkur Pillnikk, later Sugarcube and eventual Ghostigital-er Einar Örn Benediktsson in Friðrik Þór Friðriksson's seminal 1982 rockumentary, 'Rökk í Reykjavík,' which portrayed, mythologised and defined that generation at a crucial time].

Now, this cliché and this spirit is definitely something us at Grapevine can get behind. We have always aimed to be inclusive, liberal and DIY, and that is not going to change anytime soon.

What I am trying to say is this: by covering the Smekkleysa gang and its members we are not claiming they perfected anything and that everything is downhill from there. We are not saying that they are the epitome, crux or linchpin of Icelandic art, culture, music or anything else. We are not idolising or holding anyone in reverence, and indeed many of them might well be self-serving assshots.

No, we mainly feature some of these folks because a lot of what they do is kinda cool, or at least bears paying attention to. Furthermore, the idea is sort of maybe to underline the good parts of their spirit and ideology, so that they may be an inspiration to ourselves. A motivation to act out, to create,



TRACK OF THE ISSUE

Dauð hóra HAM

Download at www.grapevine.is

1...2...3... and RAWK! HAM are BACK! And they are as powered up and fist driving as they were when they released their last album – IN 19-FUCKING-89!!! In celebration of the release of their much, much, much overdue second album, we are frothing at the mouth to give you all this neck-breaking new track. The title means "Dead Whore" but don't let that fuck you up. It's really just their self-assessment. What is important is that these guys can still write some incredibly good, super-hard and tremendously fun rock-metal. The simple and slow two-chord hook line is so stripped down, leaving nothing to the imagination, exposing all the gritty, dark bowels of their bass and singer Sigurjón's booming bellow. It's nostalgia for many and new to others, but bottom line, it's fucking good. **RL**

to do more and better and with a greater frequency. If we are lionising anything, it is the spirit of DIY, confidence, independence and irreverence that some of those people tried to live by, with some great results (like uh BJÖRK) and some maybe not so great.

We need to be all disrespectful and irreverent and confident, we need to make and create our own, so that we, too, may one day champion ourselves and our own musicians in print and piss all over our younger siblings and our kids and what they think is important.

As for HAM, they just plain fucking rock. God-damnit.

Oh, and by the way, older generations, when it's time to shove you all into old folks' homes, we will surely keep in mind how you cut down on all those education and preschool (and senior citizens') programmes when you were in power.

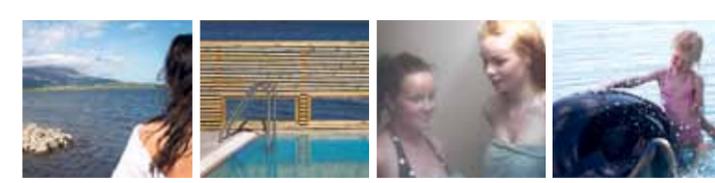
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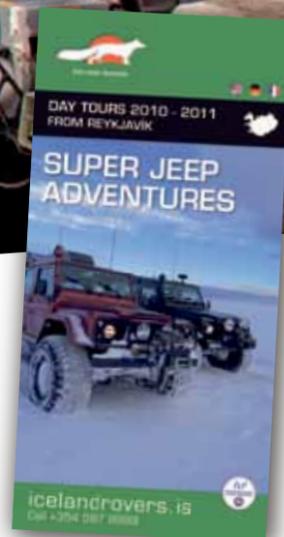
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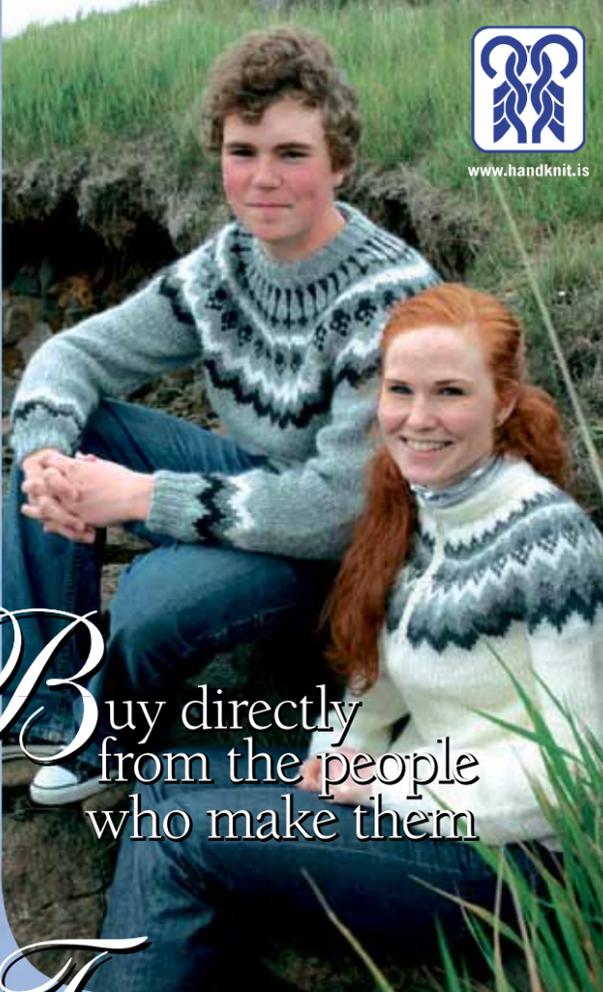
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There's prize for all your **MOST AWESOME LETTERS**. And it's a scorcher! No, really! It's a goddamn scorcher is what it is! Whoever sends us **THE MOST AWESOME LETTER** this issue will receive **A FRIGGIN GOURMET FEAST FOR TWO** at **TAPAS BARINN**.

Did you hear that? Write in and complain about something (in an admirable way), win a gourmet feast at one of Reykjavik's finest? **THIS IS THE DEAL OF THE CENTURY IS WHAT IT IS!**

What's in a 'lobster feast'? Well, one has to assume that it has lobster-a-plenty. Is there more? Probably, but still... Gourmet feast? Wow! **DON'T PANIC** if your letter wasn't picked **AWESOME LETTER**. There's always next month!

Now, if you're in the market for free goodies next month, write us some sort of letter. Give us your worst: letters@grapevine.is



MOST AWESOME LETTER:

Dear Grapevine,

a word from the precarious position of an gourmet immigrant. Coming to Iceland I was prepared for trying some, lets say, unusual food, such as sheep face or cured shark, what I was not expecting is food to become one of my biggest challenges of living in this otherwise unique and truly admirable country. Circumstances led me into eating most of my meals in a cafeteria of a large nursing home. The menu is composed so it would serve practicality and the taste of some very old people, people who grew up chewing on dry fish for breakfast every day. In these 10 months that I have been living in Iceland I have shovelled down unseasoned boiled fish, mashed fish remnants, industrial gravy and endless amounts of boiled potatoes. Occasionally there is the "special" food on the menu, such as shark, skate, pickled testicles, whale fat and all the other delicacies. I respect the hard work that is required to feed up to 300 people every day, and the food is not bad, but my taste

buds come from the background of Mediterranean cuisine, so every day as I descend to the cafeteria for my daily fuel, my taste buds shrivel and hide. On the other hand, outside the cafeteria the food does not seem so hostile. Delicious roasted lamb, caramelized potatoes, great dairy product and of course the lobster. Now my frustration is next, due to the fact that I'm a beginner at Icelandic language, I have accepted my position as a proverbial "bottom feeder", immigrant on minimum vague, and I'm overcoming my challenge with traditional everyday Icelandic food. On the other hand, opportunity to enjoy some other, more satisfying traditions comes rarely, and lobster is as much an Icelandic tradition as is boiled Ysa. Would like to help me integrate that bit better and throw a party for my taste buds?

Regards
Lara

Dear Lara,

thank you for your letter and your kind words. Now. You're killing us here! As much as we would love to make a world's-tiniest-violin joke or a snarky first-world-problems remark, we just can't! Your accurately depressing description of the local daily diet commonly found in group home cafeterias had us groaning and gagging so hard. We appreciate how pragmatic and resigned to your gastronomic fate you are (for the most part!) but yeah. We're totally gonna throw you an awesome free meal here! You have effectively tugged our gastric heartstrings and we kind of feel like suckers, but whatever. It's safe to say YOU'VE EARNED IT.

Enjoy your meal and keep on rocking in the free world!

Dear Grapevine staff,

I read your insightful article on whaling in Iceland. Congrats for that one. Well done! Something wasn't quite right though. As I skimmed on I couldn't prevail an image haunting my mind. No, not the pic of the slaughtered whale you printed with the article. It was the naughty smile of the little old fellow in an ad holding up a whale stick on page 27 of the same Grapevine that featured the article (whaling was uncool etc.). Hence, it is not so much the article as its appearance in your paper which inspired me to get in touch. In fact I found a good few advertisements in your paper trying to lure tourists into having a grand time enjoying a fine whale steak. Oh yes, the prize for the Most Awesome Letter this very issue is a meal for two, a feast as you generously put it, at Tapas Barinn. Now the very same, very noble place I find on page 37 offering Minke Whale with cranberry-sauce. Now that I call style! I hope I'll win this one. I mean the little old men I mentioned featuring in the Moby Dick On A Stick ad is probably harmless, just as his phony smile is harmless. Just as harmless as all the pretentious activists and article scribblers (except me of course) who frequent his little pathetic fish bar down there by the old harbour. I wonder if the brave women and men who according to your article sunk two whaling boats next door afterwards called in and had an overprized Lobster Soup. But as you mentioned, that was in '86, back then when Lada Niva was still big in Iceland whereas now it seems mandatory here to own a Range Rover. I hope grandpa from the Moby's Dick place got one as well. Any-

way, well done not to place advertisement for whale meat on the same page with the article which avidly concludes that: 'whaling seemingly continues in opposition to the interests of Iceland'. Btw, 'seemingly' (??). Nice one!

With Best Regards
Don 3

Dear 'Don 3' (if that IS your real name),

thank you for your letter. Now, what can we say... you caught us!

The truth is, whaling and the consumption of whale meat in Iceland is a really divisive topic around here, amongst natives, immigrants and foreigners alike. We just can't all agree on it! And while we did run an article on whaling from a writer who is really not into the practice, with some really gory and graphic images, the opinions of our writers do not always fall into ideological line with our advertisements. Or even our editorial staff! You might have noticed a lot of ads for bars too? Well, we have contributors that are straight-edge teetotalers. Ads for clothing stores? There are fervent nudists among us. We try to present content that reflect a variety of uncensored opinions, likewise providing the options for people to try out everything this country has to offer and you know, like, make up their own minds, or something.

Take it easy, yo!

Hello-

I've been reading the articles in the Grapevine with much interest and am amazed at how much talk there is about sexual assault and rape. I'm an American who is living here over the summer, and I really wish there were more articles like this one back home- rock on! My only concern is that the language in the articles has been primarily man-on-woman. Rape happens person-on-person (in the sense that men rape men, women rape women, women rape men...), and I think your points could be furthered by using language that reflects that. Just a thought.

Cheers,
Jess

Dear Jess,

thank you for your letter, and your kind words. We're glad you've been digging it! We have a small country and community, but that's all the more reason for us to engage in discourse about it and try to create a new consciousness to go beyond these borders. We wish it were being spoken about more elsewhere too. You are totally right about the use of gendered language in some (but not all!) of the articles—we don't buy into gender binary nonsense. We don't censor our writers' words but we will totally let them know you brought this up and do our best in the future.

Thanks for calling us out on our bullshit! Love!

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preschia wrote: Tuesday, August 30, 2011 - AH100 Keflavik Airport to Reykjavik - One Way



"Absolutely no problem - good organization"

Beales wrote: Tuesday, August 30, 2011 - AH27 The Viking Horse & Golden Circle Afternoon



"We enjoyed this experience and would recommend to others. The horseback riding was very pleasant - the family run business is friendly and helpful and make a tasty lunch (cheap, but not included in the price.) They offer helmets, boots, overpants (to keep you from smelling horsey after the ride) and rainjackets in case of inclement weather so you are well protected. Don't worry if you haven't ridden before or in ages as it is a very gentle ride and the horses are well behaved. The afternoon tour shows you the diversity in the scenery of Iceland. The geysers were the highlight. Bring a camera!"

Matthaeus wrote: Tuesday, August 30, 2011 - AH11 The Golden Circle Afternoon



"Saw a lot in a little bit of time, which is what we were looking for. The guide was a little nutty but that kept things interesting. The sites were beautiful - such a contrast to Reykjavik. I do wish we could have spent more time at the stops, but then the trip would have been twice as long! It was nice to see the countryside, even if it was mostly through the bus window."

ERLIN wrote: Tuesday, August 30, 2011 - AH100 Keflavik Airport to Reykjavik - One Way



"Worked out really good."

Callahan wrote: Monday, August 29, 2011 - AH130 Golden Circle & Glacier Lake - NEW!



"There was only the bus driver who acted as our tour guide. He was an elderly gentleman (he said he was 77. I was unable to decipher what his name was when he introduced himself as we were driving out of town) His accented English was at times hard to understand. His sparse narrative while driving during the tour was ok. I was somewhat disappointed that we didn't have a separate tour guide. The places on the tour were

fantastic, the boat ride on the glacier lake went well, the bus was comfortable and the bus and the driver handled the rough roads well. It was the only tour we did during our 56 hours in Iceland and I believe that we saw the best there was to see in that short time. Thanks"

Beales wrote: Monday, August 29, 2011 - AH32 Landmannalaugar by bus



"We had booked four vacations through Gray Line for our visit to Iceland and all four were well run and enjoyable. Of the four, this was probably our least favourite although there was nothing actually wrong with the tour - it delivered on all it promised. I think we spent more time on the bus than actually exploring the sites. The highlight is definitely the dip in the springs. The day we went it was cold and rainy - the change area is quite a hike to the springs and humorous watching the tourists in bathing suits and parkas make their way along the boardwalk. The springs are very shallow and you need to practically lie down in the water to stay warm. Still, a great memory and lots of fun."

Banfich wrote: Monday, August 29, 2011 - AH101 Reykjavik to Keflavik Airport - One Way



"This was the easiest and most efficient shuttle service I have ever taken. Thank you Airport Express!"

Stobie wrote: Monday, August 29, 2011 - AH12 The Golden Circle Classic



"My family which included 2 teenagers found this tour very interesting and enjoyable. The encompassed every aspect that we wanted to see in Iceland and the tour guide and driver were extremely accommodating and friendly, answering all our questions and including some very interesting information about social aspects of living in Iceland. Very enjoyable tour!"

Sheehan wrote: Sunday, August 28, 2011 - AH19 Reykjanes Peninsula



"Gray Line is easy to book and to travel with and the online service is outstanding as are the local guides. The small size of this tour around the Reykjanes Peninsula was great - our tour guide was very knowledgeable, friendly and attentive to the varied

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interests of the members of the tour group. To stand in no man's land between the American and European tectonic plates was quite something and the striking coastline and thermal mud pools a bonus. To finish the day off soaking in the amazing Blue Lagoon with a glass of champagne was such a pleasure. I recommend this tour option. Lynne"

Andersson wrote: Sunday, August 28, 2011 - AH12 The Golden Circle Classic



"It was wonderful"

Bell wrote: Saturday, August 27, 2011 - AH35 South Coast & Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon



"A long day on the bus (14 hours), but fantastic scenery. Besides the glacial lagoon, two waterfalls, and a recreated early settlement house, we made unscheduled stops (because we were ahead of schedule) at a glacier face and a black sand beach with basaltic columns, near Vik, which were well worthwhile."

Fullford wrote: Saturday, August 27, 2011 - AH15 Iceland From Below



"The Iceland From Below excursion was lots of fun and very interesting. I was happy to be wearing my hiking boots, as well as the overalls, gloves and helmet provided by our tour guide. We had to crawl and squirm through some spaces, but the guide always asked if we were comfortable doing so. We wanted to experience as much as possible, so we enjoyed

doing it all."

Heikkinen wrote: Friday, August 26, 2011 - AH100 Keflavik Airport to Reykjavik - One Way



"All services were operated in a very good manner and therefore my rating will be 4 stars. Best regards!"

Koellner wrote: Friday, August 26, 2011 - AH100 Keflavik Airport to Reykjavik - One Way



"punctually, good service, good price."

LEE wrote: Friday, August 26, 2011 - AH110 Vatnajökull Voyager



"A wonderful experience n wld definitely regret if i had not joined the tour"

Alcock wrote: Thursday, August 25, 2011 - AH38 Snæfellsnes National Park



"This was my first visit to Iceland and the day tour with Iceland Excursions proved to be a great introduction to this beautiful country. The weather on the trip to Snæfellsnes national park was perfect and we were given many opportunities by our driver/guide to take pictures. She was both courteous and very knowledgeable - telling us many interesting facts about the geography and history of the region and Iceland in general. The highlights for me were the stops at Arnarstapi and Djupalonssandur in the early af-

ternoon. I highly recommend this excursion. Hugh Alcock."

Siebs wrote: Thursday, August 25, 2011 - AH172 Black and Blue



"Amazing! Caving in the lava tube was a lot of fun for both myself and my 15 year old son. The guides prepared us well and made the experience fun with their mix of sharing facts and storytelling. I was nervous about the snorkeling and the water temperature but there was no need. While my face was quite cold, the rest of me was a bit wet, but fine. The underwater views made it all worth it! Beautiful scenery in the valley after it was all over."

narita wrote: Thursday, August 25, 2011 - AH13 The Golden Circle Evening Tour



The tour guide was super !! 🇮🇸



Reykjavík | Welcome to!

Mayor's Address: WELCOME TO REYKJAVÍK



Dear reader,

Welcome to Iceland. Whether you're here for fun and travel or for business, I hope you'll enjoy a good time here and will get to know some locals. I would also like to make a special request that you spend a lot of money throughout the duration of your stay. Do not save on dining and drinking. Allow yourself some luxury. You deserve it, and it is good for the economy. I ask that you do not visit the retail outlets run by the Salvation Army (Garðastræti 6, 101 Reykjavík) or the Red Cross (Laugavegur 12, 101 Reykjavík). Even though they are fun shops, they are rather inexpensive. You should rather visit more expensive shops.

A lot of tourists that visit the country wonder why it is called Iceland, because—despite what the name might indicate—it isn't at all cold here. The average temperature in Reykjavík is 1°C. Nowhere in the world has better summers than Iceland. It might snow in the month of June, however. That is called 'a spring snowfall'. July is the hottest month. When it comes around you better have a t-shirt handy, because the temperature can reach up to 20°C. Weather.com often states a temperature followed with a "feels like" temperature. When

the heat in Reykjavík reaches 20°C, they will often say it "feels like" 15°C. That is probably due to something known as 'the wind chill factor.' No Icelander understands this. If we had this "feels like" feature in our weather reporting, we would say that it "feels like" 40°C whenever the temperature reached 20°C, without exception. This demonstrates the importance of 'mentality' and 'attitude.'

But how can it be that such a warm country came to possess such a frigid name? Yes, the explanation is simple: MISUNDERSTANDING. Ingólfur Arnarson, the first man that found Reykjavík, wasn't on his way here at all. He was en route to the United States of America, to buy grapes and other fast food that grew wild there in those days. He was very interested in food. And also homicide. On his way he noticed a cloud of smoke ascending to the heavens from an unknown country. His curious nature got the best of him, and he changed his course and set sail to Reykjavík (Reykjavík literally means "smoky bay").

As he disembarked his ship, he saw that the smoke was in fact steam rising from Reykjavík's many swimming pools. He was therefore quick in tearing off the suit of armour that he had worn

in case he'd encounter some Native Americans while picking grapes, and jumping into some swim trunks. After swimming a good 500 metres he sat in the hot tub and relaxed. After a fun chat with the locals he had forgotten all about America. Who needs to travel all the way to America to pick grapes when there's a shop on Laugavegur called Vínberíð (Vínberíð literally means: "the grape")? Ingólfur decided to settle here. He rented a small apartment along with his wife, Hallveig Fróðadóttir, who many claim was the daughter of Frodo from 'Lord Of The Rings.' Nothing has been proven about that, however.

One day Ingólfur and Hallveig were taking a stroll around town. They were walking their dog, who was called Plútó and was a Great Dane. It was a sizzling hot summer's day. It was long before the t-shirt was invented. They were both dressed in full suits of armour, with swords and shields and helmets and everything. They stopped by at Ísbúð Vesturbæjar in Hagamelur to get some ice cream and cool down. The story goes that Ingólfur asked the clerk whether she knew what the country was called.

She thought it was called Thule. Ingólfur felt that was a stupid name.

"No country can be called Thule," he said.

Outside the ice cream shop, a crowd had gathered. They had heard that foreign visitors were in town. A lot of those people were elves. Ingólfur then approached the crowd, raised his ice cream cone aloft and shouted:

"Henceforth this country will be called Iceland, because one can get the world's best ice cream here!"

Today we have a statue of Ingólfur. The statue depicts Ingólfur dying of heat, leaning on his dog. Don't be a stranger, be like Ingólfur!

Best regards,

Jón Gnarr
Mayor of Reykjavík

Comic | Lóa Hjálmtýsdóttir



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No Finger-Pointing

UK IFAW Director Rob Marsland talks about Iceland, whaling, and tourists



If you've spent some time in Iceland this past summer, you may have seen them: Volunteers in International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) T-shirts, handing out leaflets, accompanied by a person dressed as a whale's tail. This is a part of a new campaign started by the IFAW aimed at tourists who visit Iceland. However, as UK IFAW Director Rob Marsland explained to Grapevine, this isn't a campaign about shaming and scolding—this conservationist group has taken a whole new approach, and so far, it seems to be working.

The idea began some eight years ago, when Icelandic began 'scientific whaling.' At first, Rob says, IFAW did what they normally do: filmed whale kills and started a letter-writing campaign. But then they did an evaluation of this approach, and found they didn't get quite the result they'd hoped for.

"What we'd done is make Iceland circle the wagons," Rob says. "So we had a think, and decided that's not going to work. What we need to do is work within Iceland. Wagging the finger might make you feel good, but it doesn't work."

And so, after having a think, they tried a new approach: "Over the last eight years, we have tried to participate in a debate on the wisdom of whaling. It has been patient work, involving not being aggressive, and being reasonable."

Rob admits that he finds it "embarrassing" to see tourists eating whale meat. "The IFAW exists because members from around the world think that the work we do is fantastic. So I come here for eight years, and see the same people who support us adding to consumption of whale meat."

NORMAL RULES ARE SUSPENDED
By the best estimate the IFAW has at hand, 40% of minke whale meat is eaten by tourists, yet 90% of these same tourists are against whaling. How does that happen?

"My feeling is, you're on holidays," Rob explains. "Normal rules are sus-

"When you ask an Icelander 'are you for or against whaling?' the question that they hear is 'are you for or against Iceland?'"

ended. You think eating whale meat is part of the culture, so it won't make a difference if I eat it. So it's easy to have two different thoughts in your brain—I'm against whaling, and I'm on holiday so it's OK to eat whale meat—and that's where 'Meet Us Don't Eat Us' came from. We're not trying to tell tourists off. We're just trying to get them to join those two thoughts."

The campaign they launched has involved putting leaflets on Reykjavík Excursion buses, urging tourists "while dining in Iceland's great restaurants, consider what you're eating," the vol-

unteers downtown, and of course a controversial ad campaign that was set up in Keflavík airport.

As many may recall, the airport broke its contract with the IFAW to have signs up in the airport urging tourists not to eat whale meat—within weeks of the campaign being launched, airport management claimed they had been deceived, and would never have signed on with the campaign.

Rob's take on the matter is a bit different. "The bare bones of the facts are: we approached the airport, said we'd like to do some advertising, we showed them the advertising, and they very happily signed a contract from May to

September. Two weeks after campaign launched, they said they were very concerned about the content of the campaign and wanted us to take it down."

This confused Rob. The airport had seen the full ad campaign—as a series of published e-mail exchanges would prove—and had even offered a reduced rate. Rob believes complaints came in from minke whalers, and the manager felt compelled to act. As the IFAW's money was fully refunded, he takes this as an admission that there was a breach of contract, but he doesn't intend to sue. Instead, he wrote to the

manger, offering to conduct another campaign, while asking what sorts of changes the airport would like to see done to the ads.

IS IT WORKING?

The volunteers who have been handing out leaflets downtown operate within the heart of the capital, meeting tourists and Icelanders alike on street level. Over 100,000 leaflets were handed out in three weeks. So how have tourists—and Icelanders, too, for that matter—responded to the campaign?

Quite well, Rob says. "Lots of tourists have made the connection. That was the kind of messaging that we wanted. Not 'you're stupid for doing this' but 'do you really think you should do this?' Of course there've been some tourists who've said they're going to try whale meat, and that's their prerogative, but I think it's important that we've been able to engage."

Even the Icelandic response has been positive. "I've been surprised at the number of supportive responses. Not surprised that there have been a few who make it clear that they're not in agreement and support whaling. And very, very pleased that the number of people who displayed any anger about it has been very, very small. That's a sign that there's room for the debate."

ARE YOU FOR OR AGAINST ICELAND?

Rob believes that how the questions within the debate are framed has an impact on how they are answered. "When you ask an Icelander 'are you for or against whaling?' the question that they hear is 'are you for or against Iceland?' And I think Iceland's a fantastic place, and wouldn't be a part of any campaign that said Iceland was a bad thing. So what we've been trying to do is separate the idea of Iceland and whaling, and allow people to love Iceland but question whaling."

And questioning whaling is what Rob does. In particular, it's the economics of whaling that intrigues him: it doesn't seem to be able to make any money.

"Economics of whaling has always been a mystery," he says. There is a small domestic market for minke meat. Pre-2008, Icelanders who ate whale once a month comprised less than 3% of the population. Today, it's about 5%.

When fin whaling started, the waters muddied even more. "We were perplexed, because in 2008, the amount of fin whale meat being eaten in Japan was in decline, there is no fin whale meat being eaten in Iceland, and

yet here's [Kristján] Loftsson [the head of Iceland's sole whaling company] saying he's going to make lots of money. So it was confusing to us."

How does he do it? Essentially, it works like this: every few months, Kristján sends fin whale meat to Japan, where it sits in customs for 3 months while undergoing toxicity tests. Then it is sold to a company that Kristján himself owns. "I don't use the word 'exporting' for what he does with the whale meat," Rob says. "I call it 'transferring'."

A STOCKPILE OF SCIENTIFIC WHALE

Scientific whaling costs taxpayers considerable amount of money, not to mention the time and effort of the foreign office conducting PR and damage control. An economic report done on how much money could be made from fin whale meat showed that you would need a big market and a lot of effort. But that is all lacking. Instead, there's one whaler, killing a small number of whales, and not exporting that much, building up stockpile in freezers.

The fact that there are a small number of fin whales being killed in Icelandic waters, Rob believes, has no bearing on their purported status as critically endangered creatures. "Fins are internationally recognised to be a critically endangered species," he says. "To argue that it's OK to do whaling in Iceland is to have a very microscopic view of the world. Iceland is respected the world over for its scientific knowledge of the oceans. So for some to contend, 'Well, they're not endangered here' isn't very scientific."

Finally, Rob asks that we consider how that minke whale steak is put on a restaurant's plate.

"IFAW thinks that if an animal has to be killed, then it should be done humanely. The International Whaling Commission has had scientists working for years on ways to humanely kill a whale, and they've never been able to come up with one. If there were a slaughterhouse where cows were allowed to roam freely over a rugged terrain, and a man was sent in with a crossbow to kill them, it would be closed tomorrow."

Whether or not IFAW's softer, more friendlier campaign will have an impact on how much whale meat tourists eat remains to be seen. But if initial reactions are any indication, whale steaks may soon become endangered. 🐋

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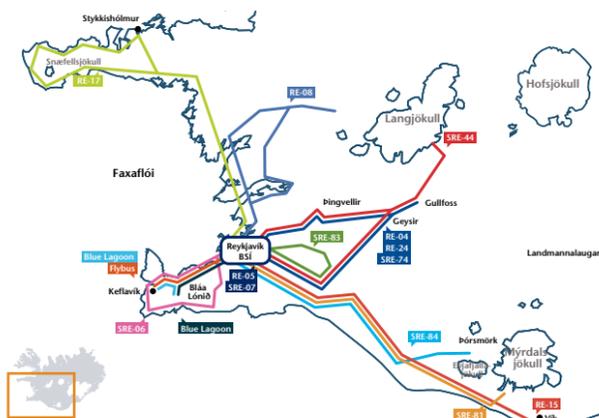
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Customs Is Cracking Down

...Honest people get mixed up in the fray



Bring up the Directorate of Customs in Iceland and you're liable to unleash a host of emotions ranging from frustration to anger. This government entity, which is responsible for, among other things, making sure that items entering the country are appropriately taxed, is perhaps the bureaucratic equivalent to the DMV in the States.

"Even thinking about the 'kilt for my wedding incident' I had with Tollstjóri [Directorate of Customs] still sends me in near apocalyptic clouds of rage and.... AAARGH!" Bob Cluness wrote on The Grapevine's Facebook page. He purchased a kilt from Scotland for 100.000 ISK, and when it arrived, he was surprised to learn that he owed Customs 50.000 ISK in duties (15% tax, 25,5% VAT, 550 ISK Post Office processing fee). "His kilt wound up costing five times more

than my dress," his wife Sigríður Harpa Halldórsdóttir tells me.

As Chief Superintendent of Customs Hörður Davíð Harðarson points out, the duty can be overbearing when it comes to smaller purchases. For instance, when someone buys a DVD for 1.000 ISK, it winds up costing 70 to 80% more by the time it's in the recipient's hands. If the purchaser hasn't already accounted for this mark-up, the letter from Customs informing them that they have actually purchased one DVD for the price of two is an unwelcome surprise.

Unfortunately, however painful it is, this is part of the reality of living on a small island that manufactures little apart from fish, lamb, and computer games. However, Customs does not have the right to tax everything that comes into the country, and it has come to The Grapevine's attention that the entity is perhaps overstepping its boundaries.

TAXING BIRTHDAY GIFTS? WTF!

A gift, for instance, is exempt from taxes if its value is less than 10.000 ISK, it is for a special occasion, such as Christmas, a birthday, confirmation, or wedding, and the sender has an address abroad. Wedding gifts can exceed 10.000 ISK, though.

Nonetheless, that didn't stop Customs from holding a package addressed to Ásta Sól Kristjánsdóttir, which contained a birthday gift for her infant son. "I got a letter from Customs saying they needed permission to open it. When I called them, they said the package had not been marked 'gift,' and that it was obviously not my birthday any time soon, strongly implying that I was trying to cheat the system because the package was addressed to me and not my son," Ásta tells me. "Finally the package arrived, but it was the week after my son's birthday."

What was most irksome about the situation was the fact that the people at Customs told her that the package had not been marked 'gift,' but when she retrieved it, she saw that it had in fact been marked 'gift'.

Others have reported similar experiences. They are legion.

Echoing this frustration, Antón Ame-neiro suggested jokingly (we think, jokingly) on the Grapevine's Facebook page: "Since reasoning and confronting the issue rationally doesn't help, I'm going to start asking my beloved friends and family to include insulting notes in their packages, something like, 'merry Christmas

you greedy pirates at Tóllhúsið, hope you choke on your hangikjöt, gleðileg jóll!' :)"

CRACKING DOWN ON PHONY GIFTS

Hörður explains that, unfortunately, because people have been trying to cheat the system by falsely marking their packages as gifts, Customs has had to step up their watch, thereby inconveniencing honest people.

"We noticed, if you look at, for instance, Barnaland.is, that there were lots of people—Icelanders living in Germany, Norway, Sweden—advertising that if someone put 10.000 ISK in their bank account that they would purchase clothes at H&M or something, and send the stuff to Iceland marked as gift," Hörður tells me. "We were stopping many, many packages per day; there were all kinds of things in packages marked gift," he says.

Hörður says Customs opens less than 1% of packages that come through the Post Office. He couldn't reveal exactly how they were targeting phony gifts, but he did say that they have been following things closely, and have had to inconvenience honest people by asking them to go to the Post Office to verify their gifts.

tify that it is yours when Customs asks you to pay taxes on it."

For instance, Jan Seven sent his Kindle to Germany for repair under warranty, where it was purchased for the equivalent of 22.000 ISK. When it came back to Iceland, Jan received a letter informing him that he owed 20.000 ISK in taxes. "I asked them if they could tell me how the tax was calculated, and I've been directed from one person to the other for two months now," Jan says in frustration. "It's a circle that never ends."

Refusing to pay nearly 100% in taxes, Jan had the Kindle returned to sender and is still waiting for an answer about how the tax was calculated.

CRACKING DOWN ON PREVIOUSLY SMUGGLED ITEMS

Though Hörður didn't know for sure what had happened in Jan Seven's case, he assumes that the Kindle was originally smuggled in without paying tax, and then when it went for repair, Jan couldn't prove that he had already paid tax on it.

This is another scenario that Customs has been cracking down on. "A year and half ago, Customs stopped allowing peo-

"Icelanders like to cheat—we don't want to pay."

"For birthday gifts, we look at people's kennitala [ID number, including birthday]; we're paying attention to these things. We're seeing people sending Christmas gifts as early as July. People are trying to trick us. We stopped a wedding gift the other day. We asked the couple to bring proof that they were getting married and then it turned out that they had been married for four years," Hörður tells me. "Icelanders like to cheat—we don't want to pay."

At the same time, he says it's unfortunate that regular, honest people have to be bothered by the increased surveillance. "But when people come and explain that this is a gift for their son's first birthday, we of course let the package go as a gift."

TAXING USED STUFF? WTF!

In addition to gifts, "used articles constituting an inheritance from abroad, excluding however vehicles or other motorised means of transport" and items sent for repair under warranty are also supposed to be exempt from tax.

Yet, as Malcolm Kenneth Fraser points out, this can be difficult to prove. "Say you forget your camera at your parents' house in the US, and they send it back to you, it is often impossible to jus-

ple to register their expensive computers and cameras before leaving the country," Hörður tells me. "What was happening was that people were going to America, buying an Apple computer for 300.000, getting back into the country without paying taxes, and then registering it in Iceland before their next trip to declare it legal. So, we've stopped letting people do this, and instead we ask people to show their receipt when they come back into the country."

Since Customs posted an infomercial on their website about how goods purchased abroad are taxed, he says that there has been an increase in the number of people who buy expensive cameras or computers declaring and paying the tax when they arrive in Keflavík instead of smuggling the items into the country. "It's much better to do it that way, so that the next time you go abroad, there's no stress of being fined when re-entering the country or sending it off for repair."

Continues on page 27

Words
Anna Andersen

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Red Flag Over Grímsstaðir?



The big Iceland media stir this last month was Chinese tycoon Huang Nubo's attempted purchase of 300 square kilometres of pristine Icelandic countryside in Grímsstaðir á Fjöllum, in the northeast of the country. Huang styles himself as a poet and adventurer, and although he worked for the Chinese government for a greater part of his career—as section chief for the Communist Party's propaganda department and administrator within the Construction Ministry—he maintains his intentions are motivated purely out of love of nature and his on-going investments in eco-tourism.

Numerous sources point out that Huang is clearly a party-insider. "His company, Zhongkun..." notes the Independent, "manages many of China's most famous tourist landmarks, such as Hongchun in Anhui Province and Zhongdian in Tibet." (One of his former government employers, the Construction ministry, is responsible for preserving historical sites, and it is implied that obtaining a contract to run state-owned tourist facilities can only occur with the 'right' connections—what Chinese businessmen call *guan xi*). Outside of China and Iceland, Huang also has projects in the works in Nashville and Los Angeles as well as in Japan.

An evil scheme?

In fact, the Independent intimates that this may not just be one man's ambition, stating, "Beijing is always looking for ways to expand trade links around the world; Iceland occupies a strategically important location between Europe and North America and could potentially function as a hub for Asian cargo should climate change open Arctic waters to shipping."

Quoted in Deutsche Welle, Jonathan

Holsag, head of research at the Institute of Contemporary China Studies, said, "While this project in Iceland might be a private initiative, it fits in a broader (Chinese) policy agenda to get hold of strategic assets abroad, ranging from land, over raw materials, to know-how."

President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson welcomed Huang's investment in Iceland, telling the Financial Times that at the height of Iceland's economic woes, Europe and the US abandoned his little Atlantic nation, but, "China and India lent Iceland a hand in many constructive ways..." He explained to the FT that he personally wrote to China's President Hu Jintao asking for help. "This," he says, "was a catalyst for last year's [\$500m] currency swap agreement between the two countries."

Cold War mindset?

Huang, listed by Forbes as China's 161st richest person, says he wishes to create a deluxe resort attracting over 10,000 tourists to his Icelandic wilderness, and plans to invest over 140 million Euros in Grímsstaðir over the next four to five years.

China's Xinhua News Agency criticised the international media for stirring things up. Fu Shuangqi ran with the headline "Cold War mindset behind conspiracy theory on China's overseas investment," and suggested that Huang's investment is entirely private and has nothing whatsoever to do with the Chinese government.

The FT asked the question why anyone—let alone a Chinese tycoon—would be interested in procuring a "desolate area of north-east Iceland...less still to invest another \$100m in building a luxury hotel and golf course," and noted that in a recent report for the European Council on Foreign Relations, François Godement and Jonas Parelló-Plesner

indicated serious concerns regarding China's overseas investment policies. "Crisis-hit Europe's need for short-term cash is allowing Chinese companies not just to strike cut-price deals but also to play off member states against each other—replicating a strategy China has already used in the developing world."

Recent history

Talking to the AFP, Huang explained that outside of the luxury hotel and golfing complex, he planned to use 'his land' "to unite two [nature] reserves...[creating] Europe's biggest nature reserve." Huang has stated on numerous occasions that he will ensure that his little slice of Icelandic nature will be treated with utmost of respect and care both environmentally and culturally.

Although the Grímsstaðir landowners have already signed a preliminary contract with Huang's company, the Icelandic government has yet to approve the project. Many Icelanders are firmly against a deal whereby 0.3% of the country—or, as stated by various media sources—the equivalent of the city of Hamburg, the state of Missouri, or a quarter of Hong Kong, might end up in foreign hands. Iceland's Minister of the Interior, Ögmundur Jónasson told the Independent: "it has not escaped my attention that the Chinese have been very active in buying Atlantic properties."

Could this deal possibly undermine Icelandic sovereignty?

Unlikely says Ben Chu of the Independent. As Chu points out, "Acquiring land does not give foreign nationals a right to do what they want with it...Meanwhile," he writes, "Iceland should note its recent history: it's often the investor, not the recipient of the cash, that stands to lose most when an ambitious deal is signed."

✂ Marc Vincenz

Opinion | Paul Fontaine

HERE WE GO ... AGAIN!

In Iceland, another potential investor arouses suspicion



It seems Iceland really can't catch a break. Where investment in the country used to be attractive during the boom years in the interests of growth (e.g., low corporate taxes, high interest rates), it lately seems that it's Iceland's financial anaemia that has drawn the interest of a different breed of venture capitalists—people hoping to cash in while the price tag is low and the government is starved for cash. The current situation puts Iceland in a much more difficult position for negotiation. Government officials seem skittish about serious haggling, as the conventional wisdom seems to be that the country needs money more than investors need to put money in it.

This can be seen in the way in which Alterra Power—formerly Magma Energy—used a loophole in the law to be able to invest in Iceland in the first place, openly and demonstrably lied about their intentions, and got a contract anyway. This continued with the arrival in the press of David Lesperance, a lawyer representing ten wealthy individuals who effectively wanted to buy Icelandic citizenship, in return for which they promised to invest their money in the country. Suspicions about some of the individual applicants put the deal on ice, but it likely won't be the last time someone returns with the same offer.

WHO IS HUANG?

This brings us to what seems to be the new front in investment in Iceland: China. Chinese company Hisjang Group approached the tiny municipality of Þórshöfn with a straightforward proposal—they want to ship 100,000 tonnes of fresh water from Iceland to China each year. The project would be lucrative, and have very little environmental impact, if it weren't for the fact that some officials doubt that Þórshöfn can even produce that much water every year.

Not so straightforward, and with perhaps greater environmental impact, is the case of Huang Nubo, a wealthy tourism entrepreneur who wants to pay 1 billion ISK for land at Grímsstaðir á Fjöllum to build an eco-friendly luxury hotel. He has made assurances that he will deploy a team to assess the least environmentally impacting means of raising such a hotel, and has also offered to forswear rights to water in and running through the area.

But not everyone is greeting the proposal with open arms. For one, the land he wants to buy isn't exactly a

garden patch. In fact, it's pretty huge, comprising about 0.3% of Iceland's landmass. Also, it seems Huang Nubo has been involved in some less-than-scrupulous business practices in the past. One China studies blogger wrote that Beijing Zhongdian Investment Corp, at the time controlled by Huang Nubo, "is notorious for cheating villagers whose land is developed for tourism and giving them very little of the hefty admission fees they charge tourists. The sites themselves are often developing in a way that is ugly and not culturally sensitive."

TOO CHUMMY?

Complicating matters is that many Icelanders believe he's a bit too chummy with some of Iceland's politicians. He is good friends with Hjörleifur Sveinbjörnsson, the husband of former Foreign Minister Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir. Huang Nubo and Hjörleifur have apparently been friends for a long time, and it has been reported that during a visit to Iceland last year, Foreign Minister Össur Skarphéðinsson lent him a ministry car for being shown around the country. Furthermore, at a press conference Huang Nubo recently gave in Beijing, reporting on his negotiation progress with Icelandic authorities, sitting in the audience was former MP Lúðvík Bergvinsson.

The Icelandic blog world has been on fire over Huang Nubo, with criticisms ranging from substantial to nationalistic. Minister of the Interior Ögmundur Jónasson has told the press that he wants to approach the matter cautiously—which is pretty much what he said before Lesperance and co. were shown the door. Being a savvy businessman, Huang Nubo is probably aware of the great public resistance that Magma and others were met with when they made their play for Iceland, and realises that time is of the essence. His awareness of this is made more apparent by the fact that at the previously mentioned press conference, he very publicly stated that he isn't pleased with how talks have been going, and that if things don't get moving soon, he may just nix the deal altogether.

Here again, we become aware of Iceland's position—needing money from others more than others need to give it money. The not-so-subtle urge for expediting matters may push authorities to approve the deal. Before that happens, they will have to convince the Icelandic people that this deal is good for the whole country, not just the government coffers. ✂

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AGENTS OF WORLD DOMINATION?

Dr. Nu comes to Iceland, and the nation once more explodes into quarrel



A Chinese gentleman wants to buy a big tract of land in the Northeast, and a central weakness of Icelandic politics is revealed. It is all about opinion. A government minister comes on television and starts talking about the Chinese who are buying up all the land in the world. The President enters the stage—he is extremely anti-EU and he says that all good people should be welcome in Iceland, not only Europeans. And so it goes back and forth—with everybody arguing.

A SERIOUS LACK OF OBJECTIVITY
But the aforementioned, China-fearing minister is incidentally the one who has to determine whether the Chinese gentleman should be allowed to buy this land. He should be looking at laws, rules and regulations, not fantasising about Chinese world domination. And the President fails to mention that Iceland is a part of the European Economic Area, and thus has adopted a large chunk of EU legislation. This stipulates that Europeans can buy land in Iceland and that Icelanders can buy land in Europe. There is no such agreement with China, no reciprocity—basically Icelanders are not allowed to buy land in China.

But this is the way politics work in Iceland. There are a lot of opinions, a lot of moulding facts to one's purpose, a fertile ground for conspiracy theories, a frustrated nation that can easily be played upon by demagogues, propagandists and political adventurers—but very little objectivity.

Our Nobel Prize winning novelist, Halldór Laxness, once wrote that Icelanders are almost immune to sensible arguments, preferring to fight over things that have little to do with the matter at hand and dwell on absolute trivialities.

AN AVERSION TO FACTS

There is even a certain aversion to facts. The last government before the crash spent enormous efforts to try to disprove that the tax burden of the lower classes had actually gotten heavier while the rich were paying less and less.

Before that, then-Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson actually closed down the National Economic Institute, because its findings differed with his own opinions. Thus, there was no independent authority to monitor the economy, only people with different interests—and opinions. This proved to be rather fateful when the economic system totally overheated and then blew up.

In this way everything is politicised and subjected to political haggling. The arguments about the Icelandic agricultural system—which is heavily subsidised and very archaic—have gotten to the point where the Minister of Agriculture claims that high tariffs are actually beneficial for the general consumer. An association of young farmers took out ads in the media claiming that EU membership would be harmful to Iceland to the extent

Another instance is a plan recently put forward on how to utilise the nation's natural energy resources, waterfalls and geothermal areas. This has been long in the making—many have cited it as a sort of a settlement that would allow us to harness our resources, free from strife. But as soon as the document was published it was evident this would not happen. Those who are on the side of industrialisation claimed it was far too restrictive, that this would destroy plans for energy plants that had been many years in the making. Preservationists on the other hand claimed that this would destroy far too many natural wonders. So the same fight continues, nothing has been settled, one almost wonders whether the much-awaited plan is worth the paper it is written on.

AN OPPRESSIVE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE

So, even if Iceland seems peaceful on the surface, the political debate is very quarrelsome and exhausting—sometimes it seems actually degrading to participate in it. Blogs have not necessarily made things better—they are often foul tempered and prejudiced. Citizens' initiatives, which flourished for a while after the crash, have come to little fruition. Trust in politics is minimal, but ideas about how to do things differently are not welcomed. For example, the interest in

minus 30°C. The place also has no special natural beauty. But in Grímsstaðir Huang wants to build a luxury resort, mostly for Chinese tourists, and even a golf course.

This is surely an interesting plan, but many have wondered: what is he really after, beside cold and solitude. These can actually be found in the deserts north of Beijing, which might not be so different from the landscape around Grímsstaðir.

THE YELLOW PERIL

So all sorts of speculation takes off. Even the respected Financial Times publishes an article linking this to nascent Chinese imperials, stating that this might be linked to plans to gain foothold in the North-Atlantic. Here we enter the realm of James Bond's 'Dr. No,' wrote The Independent. Grímsstaðir is a landlocked place, as far from any harbour as you can get in Iceland, so it is a bit hard to link this to imperialistic intentions, except if the plan was to turn it into a military installation at the touch of a button. We can picture this: Peaceful Chinese tourists with their cameras, suddenly turning into agents of world domination.

There we have an old motive all over again: The Yellow Peril. It is easy to fantasise about it. But China has been sending delegations to Iceland for many years and inviting lots and lots of Icelandic politicians and luminaries over. Our president has been especially active in this regard; he has gone to China six times in the last five years, but he almost never goes to Europe. But really not much has come out of this—except rather clichéd talk about the Chinese being very clever and thinking in the long-term (the way they manage their economy actually disproves this, with environmental catastrophes spreading all over China and a bubble economy that cannot possibly last).

Iceland does not have very much to sell to China, and of course the distances are long. There have been negotiations on a free trade agreement between the countries, but due to trade imbalances and the way the Chinese do business this is difficult to finalise.

ARE THE CHINESE BETTER FRIENDS THAN EUROPEANS?

So Huang's offer to buy this large tract of land came as a surprise. Instantly the affair became very politicised, it in fact caused a minor political explosion in the beginning of September. Interior Minister, Ögmundur Jónasson, was very sceptical; it was he who said that we must be wary of Chinese buying up all the land in the world.

Continues on page 34

"Blogs have not necessarily made things better—they are often foul tempered and prejudiced."

that young people from here would have to serve in a EU-army. A lot of time goes into debating nonsense like this—in some ways the media are to blame for not sieving out the more outrageous claims.

NO AGREEMENT ON THE RECOVERY

The latest debate is between the government and the opposition. The government claims that the country is on the road to recovery, pointing to statistics from the IMF—which has just left the country, less than three years after the meltdown of October 2008. The opposition seems to believe that the country is totally on the skids with no investment and people fleeing en masse to Norway. There is also a debate between the government and the president—a sort of a subtext to the whole thing—about who saved the country. In a place where politics are so partisan and the independent sources of information are so weak, this makes for a very hard tangle for the general public to unravel.

proposals by a constitutional committee suggesting democratisation and openness is strangely muted.

Some politicians actually thrive well in this atmosphere. It is strangely easy to manipulate public opinion. This does not seem to be the time for reason or level-headedness, so it is the masters of political gamesmanship who thrive, men like President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson and former Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson, who know every political trick in the book, but who might both be seen as lacking in sincerity.

A FARM IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

But back to the Chinese gentleman, Mr. Huang Nubo. He is buying what is the largest or second largest farm in Iceland. But that does not tell the whole story. The farm, Grímsstaðir, is far in the mountains of the Northeast, in a desolate area, desert-ified by the overgrazing of sheep, an unusually cold place for Iceland—with temperatures sometimes sinking below

Words

Egill Helgason

Illustration

Lóa Hjálmtýsdóttir

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“It’s No Coincidence We’ve Been Called The Ironic Generation”



HAM have a new studio album out, their first since 1989. Dr. Gunni, who was a member of the band for few months in 1988, sat down with bandleader and main songwriter Sigurjón Kjartansson to talk everything HAM.

Words Dr. Gunni
Photography Hörður Sveinsson

I guess you could call them ‘legendary.’ In any case, they’re more ‘legendary’ than most of the crap that is being sold as ‘legendary’ in these limp times of recycled pap. OK, OK, old fart mode off.

HAM is one helluva band and have been since day one. I first encountered Sigurjón Kjartansson (guitar, vocals, songwriting) in a bus going to Kópavogur from Reykjavik sometime in the spring of 1988. I had already released some music on my tiny indie label Erðanúmúsík, and Sigurjón wanted my help in releasing the first HAM single. “Sure,” I said. I don’t think I had even heard HAM at the time but Sigurjón was very eager and convincing. Nothing would come of that single, but we still hung out and got to know one another. He produced S.H. Draumur’s last record (S.H. Draumur is my band, as it were) and I rehearsed with HAM for a while and played guitar with them at exactly one show.

Now, twenty-three years later, the two of us are sitting at Café Haiti. HAM’s first studio album for twenty-two years has just been released upon the hungry masses. It’s called ‘Svik, harmur og dauði’ (“Betrayal, Grief And Death”). We’ll talk about that album later, but we should start by learning about Sigurjón as a young boy, and how he became interested in music.

GROUNDBREAKING SHIT FOR A SIX-YEAR OLD

“Music was always around me as a kid. My parents were very involved in music, conducting choirs and teaching it. We lived in Reykholt in Borgarfjörður until 1975, when we moved to Ísafjörður [Sigurjón was born in 1968]. I got my pop upbringing from my older brother Sveinn. He opened my eyes to Slade, which was groundbreaking shit for a six-year old boy. Just stunning stuff. The first record I owned was a Slade album.

When I was eight, I had developed an interest in disco, and I remained a huge disco fan until the age of twelve. For the Christmas of 1980 I hoped to get the new Helga Möller Christmas

album as a present, but Sveinn, always the important influence, gave me ‘Geislavirkir’ by [Bubbi Morthen’s seminal punk rock band] Utangarðsmenn instead. I had no interest in the album and told Sveinn I’d exchange it after the holidays, but he insisted I give the album a go. So I went up to my room and listened to the record with my headphones. Thus, what happened on Christmas Eve of 1980 is that I went from being a boy into being a man. I was spellbound by that album, and still am. In fact, I still own the same copy, and I still listen to it a lot.”

A PUNK-ROCKER IN ÍSAFJÖRÐUR

Under Utangarðsmenn’s spell, Sigurjón became a punk-rocker. Being a punk-rocker in small, small Ísafjörður (about 4,000 people lived there in 1980, which is more people than live there now) was a lonely existence.

“Sveinn owned a bass and an amp and played with some cover bands. He was such a good older brother that he didn’t mind me hanging out in his room, so I learned to play the bass by hanging out there and playing along to his records. I soon became quite good, and could correct Sveinn when he was playing the songs wrong. I quickly got fed up jamming along to Status Quo songs, or whatever, and started writing my own.”

“I eventually started dreaming of forming a band. And then I formed a band. My first one was called Andstæða (“Opposite”) and it was quite peculiar. It started out as a duet with me playing the drums and another guy screaming. It was very difficult to find someone to play with in Ísafjörður. I was capable on most instruments, and often I wished I could just clone myself and do everything. I eventually managed to train two guys into being fairly good bass players, but I never found a guitar player, so Andstæða never had a complete line-up. I envied young bands in Reykjavik that I read about in the newspapers.”



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			10:00*	10:00	10:00*				
13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00
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THERE WERE ONCE FOUR RECORD STORES IN ÍSAFJÖRÐUR

Sigurjón made connections and could keep up with what was going on in the big city.

"Bjarni Brynjólfsson, who is five years my senior, just like my brother Sveinn, was well hip to the world of punk and new wave. He was an only child and didn't mind hanging out with much younger boys, acting as a kind of wise old man to us imps. He organised bands like [legendary punkers] Peyr to visit Ísafjörður, and sang in a punk band called Allsherjarfrík ("General Freaks"). He knew [future Sugarcube] Einar Örn and brought Crass records from Grammið in Reykjavík [a historical record store that factors heavily in the making of The Sugarcubes and Bad Taste Records] to sell from a little shop he had in his bedroom. This place was my musical oasis. A bit later I visited Reykjavík and stopped by at Grammið, who started using me to ferry records back to Ísafjörður. When I met Einar Örn in the shop, his first question was always: When are you going back to Ísafjörður? So I brought parcels from Grammið to the Ísafjörður record stores. Can you imagine, at the time there were four record shops in Ísafjörður! Eplið, Póllinn, the bookstore and Sería. And Bjarni's bedroom on top of that.

When punk happened everything that had come before it was violently deemed obsolete.

"It was music's last revolution, I think, negative and angry. For years, I kept thinking: 'when is the next revo-

lution coming?' But it never came. Instead, music just became abridged. Parents and kids listen to the same music today. My sons and me have basically the same musical tastes, which is really silly. When I was listening to Purrkur Pillnikk or Discharged in the old days, my parents would ask me to turn down that racket. And today my sons ask me to turn it up!"

ENTER THE PROMISED LAND

Sigurjón says he is a record mogul in hiding. In Ísafjörður he released two cassettes on his 'Ísafjörður über alles' imprint; a compilation called 'Ísfizkar nýbilgju grúbbur (dauðar og lifandi)' ("New wave groups from Ísafjörður (dead and alive)") and a cassette by his own Ónýta galleríið ("The Defunkt Gallery"), an experimental "band", strongly influenced by the mighty Fan Houtens Kóko. In 1985 he finally left the small town and moved with his parents to

Reykjavík, or Kópavogur to be exact. In 1987, I decided to go on a short London trip to visit Bjarni Brynjólfsson, who was studying there. The Sugarcubes were taking their first steps at the time and Bjarni dragged me to see them at The Town & Country Club, where they were supporting Swans, a band I had never heard before. Seeing Swans had tremendous influence on me. The concert has been called the loudest gig to be played in London, ever. I was to-

Forming a rock group wasn't Sigurjón's first choice of creative outlet.

"Me and people like Óttarr and Jón Gnarr, whom I had gotten to know through mutual friends, always had the dream of making movies. I owned an 8mm camera with my uncle Þorgeir Guðmundsson, and we were always trying to make movies. At the time we were very much inspired by (art gang/rock group) Oxsmá, as they had made such great movies [for instance sci-fi short 'The Oxsmá Planet' and the rarely seen Icelandic hippie dramedy 'Suck Me Off Nina'].

In 1987, I decided to go on a short London trip to visit Bjarni Brynjólfsson,

"I am not a dictator in the band though. Most of the time, the other members know better than I what is a good HAM song."

Reykjavík, or Kópavogur to be exact.

"It took me some time to obtain footing. It was such a promised land for me. Being from the boonies, I had enthusiastically followed what was happening in the city, probably more so than most people living there. I had desired to live there for so long. I enrolled into MK ("The Kópavogur Col-

lege") and slowly fell in the circle that would become HAM. In the summer of 1985, I was had a job erecting fences with [HAM bassist] Björn Blöndal, and through him I got to know [HAM singer] Óttarr Proppé. They were from Hafnarfjörður."



HAM's first line up + Dr. Gunni play Tunglið on October 10, 1988.



Classic HAM in 1993.

tally amazed and came back full of inspiration. I told Óttarr that this was it. We should just stop this movie bullshit and become musicians. That happened to be right. We were nineteen years old and spent our days hanging out in coffee shops, always saying and thinking: 'We should be doing something!' When HAM had performed a few times, we said to ourselves: 'Ah, now we're finally doing something!' Óttarr and I have always felt like brothers in art. We have always had an inside pressure to be doing something. HAM is really the result of the fact that it is much easier to form a band than to make a movie."

BLOOD AND HORROR

The movie speculations did boil down to one short film, 'The Gay Killer.'

"It was shown once at some short film festival at Hótel Borg. I haven't seen it since, and it is probably forever lost by now. Jón Gnarr played an insane homosexual who lured men to his apartment to kill them. I might have played a pizza delivery boy or his boyfriend, I can't remember. In the end I was naked; he had tied me up and was busy murdering me with an electric drill. Björn Blöndal was the camera man. This was a big splatter film, with gore and all. We were much into the world of sickness. Mass murderers and serial killers were all the rage. Everything sick was in. It was very important to be sick. It was almost like a contest of 'who could be the sickest and view the sickest things'. It was the zeitgeist. It's no coincidence we've been called the ironic generation. All this got transmitted into HAM. We decided to make noise, and all the lyrics had to be about blood and horror."

MAKING FUN OF HEAVY METAL

HAM started rehearsing as a band at the end of 1987, and played their first concert at Tunglið (a club that has since burnt down) on March 10, 1988. Icelandic pop icons Sálín and Jóns míns were playing their first gig ever at a club in the basement. A big day for Icelandic music, indeed. The different periods of HAM can be split between the three drummers that have played with the band.

"We were just four in the beginning; me, Óttarr, Björn and the first drummer Ævar Ísberg. We made our first EP, 'Hold' with that line-up. There was a valuable unity in the band at this time, and we lost that unity for a while after. Ævar was a softer character than the rest of the band. He listened to Sting and liked Laurie Anderson way too much. He wore glasses and we didn't like that either, even though Óttarr also wore glasses too. In the end we got hot headed and thought we were too much of a rock band for Ævar's soft drumming. We let him go and he has been thankful to us ever since."

"We were making the album 'Buffalo Virgin' at the time and got Hallur Ingólfsson to drum for us. You can hear in 'Buffalo Virgin' that we weren't a functioning band at the time. Hallur came from a heavy metal background, which we thought was funny, as we had started to make fun of heavy metal. We had started to listen to The Cult and rock music like that, and wanted more 'rock' elements in our sound. No one else in our circle, the Bad Taste circle,

was thinking about metal or anything of the kind. Hallur played with us for a year, and we developed in a certain direction with him aboard. Songs like 'Animalia' were born at the time."

"However, Hallur had ambitions to write songs and of course I had no interest in that. I have always written the HAM songs. I am not a dictator in the band though. Most of the time, the other members know better than I what is a good HAM song. For every song we make, there are maybe ten that get tossed away. Often I have difficulties when presenting new songs to the band, because I am so afraid of their opinion. They have controlled me just as much as I have controlled them—and maybe that's the foundation of our quality. We have a very strict quality control."

THE FINAL NAIL IN THE HAM COFFIN

After Hallur quit in 1990, HAM found their third (and current) drummer in Kópavogur. A boy several years younger than the rest of the band, Addi.

"He was the final nail in the, ehm, HAM coffin. A great, powerful drummer, but with a simple style. He never shows off. Nobody in HAM ever shows off. At this time we were 100% in HAM. In 1991 we started planning a move to New York City, as there was nothing to be done in Iceland. In the spring of 1993, we finally went there and it was a kind of make or break situation for the band. It was a hustle. We played lots of small clubs, CBGB's twice, and got good feedback but we just couldn't stay in the city longer than six months, money wise. The Icelandic króna collapsed while we were abroad, so that shortened our stay, too."

"It was in the wake of this trip that I started wondering why everything worked much easier in the film industry than in the music business. At the time I was working with [fabled Icelandic director] Óskar Jónasson. It appeared to me that rock music was not a foundation that I could live off in the future, but that my chances could lie in films and the comedy business. I had watched a lot of TV in New York, and was influenced by things like Saturday Night Live and David Letterman. I got interested in exploring more fields. In 1994 me and Magga Stína [who was singer in the Bad Taste band Reptile] and Jón Gnarr started our first radio show, 'Heimsendir' ["The End Of The World"]. It had been apparent since we met that Jón and I would eventually do something together."

HAM IS DEAD, LONG LIVE HAM

HAM played what was supposed to be their last ever concert in June of 1994, with recordings from the show being released in CD form as 'HAM lengi lifi' ("Long Live HAM").

"I still wanted to make music, and to that end I operated my solo outfit Olympia for one year [an Olympia album and EP were released in 1994 og 1995]. Olympia was more pop than HAM, and OK as such. But in the autumn of 1995, I really couldn't be bothered with music anymore and dived headfirst into working on stage, in radio and television [his then projects included a staged production of Lazytown, the long-lived 'Tvíhöfði' radio show (with Reykjavík





Flosi and Óttarr having not so sober fun in New York City, 1989.



HAM play Tunglið to promote 'SAGA ROKKSINS 1988-1993' in 1993.



Sigurjón, Jóhann and Páll Óskar make Páll's debut album, Stuð.



HAM today.

Mayor Jón Gnarr) and the 'Fóstbræður' ("Blood brothers") comedy sketch show]. Music was far away in the distance for many years."

A German rock band, Rammstein, slowly got very popular in Iceland, not the least because people thought it sounded a lot like HAM.

"Record store employees made me listen to Rammstein as soon as 1997, and we presented the band to the nation through the Tvíhöfði radio show. So in 2001, when Rammstein came to play Iceland, there was a lot of pressure on HAM to return. We had kept in touch and Óttarr and I have met regularly for lunch all those years. So we thought, why not?"

HAM supported Rammstein in Laugardalshöll for a two show stint, playing for about 10,000 people in total. A sort of HAM legend had developed in Icelandic rock circles—maybe because of Sigurjón's daily presence on the radio and the enduring popularity of [aforementioned director Óskar Jónasson's] 'Sódóma Reykjavík', a 1992 comedy wherein HAM play a large part (it was recently voted the most beloved Icelandic film). The band's return was touted as the birth of the son of Satan, and the HAM legend still lingers on.

HAM ARE QUICK LIKE A GLACIER

"The comeback was fun, and in the aftermath I started relating again to this world. I thought that it would be fun to meet those entertaining men on a somewhat regular basis and engage in something creative together. A plan of sorts was laid out in 2006, when we performed again in public. In the five years since, the songs on the new album started to come forward. I have to be in HAM to be able to write HAM songs. We have to have a goal, like practicing for a concert, and we have to meet regularly for me to be in the mood for writing a HAM song. I couldn't write a HAM song in the Canary Islands! It's inbred. From being in HAM, a HAM song sprouts. We have maybe played twice a year for the last few years, and two new songs appear annually. Slowly we had readied a ten track album..."

And now, after twenty-two long years, a brand new HAM album is finally out! It's called 'Svík, harmur og dauði' and it is available for purchase on CD, vinyl and in various digital formats.

"It's a dark and dramatic album. What has always fascinated us is to

make dramatic and wistful music. But earlier we were just a group of twenty-two year old happy dudes, and couldn't really put it forth convincingly. Over the years I have matured and experienced lots of drama in my life. I think all this has found its way into the music. This kind of album couldn't have been made in 1989. We just didn't have the maturity or the experience. This is a dramatic album, and Óttarr's lyrics mirror all the drama.

The lyrics are not about our personal drama or experiences; they are inspired by the music. It's always like that. First comes the music, then the lyrics. I'm very content with this album. It took five years to make, but only three days to record. I have no idea if we'll ever make another album. There are no new songs. But who knows, maybe in 2016, five years from now. At least we have a title for a new album: 'Heimspekingurinn, fávittinn og hóran' ("The Philosopher, the idiot and the whore"). There must be a concept!"

KEEP DOING WHAT YOU LOVE

By now, many of Sigurjón's friends are deep in the business of running the city of Reykjavík, thanks to The Best Party's freak election victory. Does he regret not taking a more active part in The Best Party business with his friends?

"No! For a little while I wondered whether I should be more into it, but fortunately I didn't do it. When the election struggle was going on, my wife and me were having a daughter and then of course, I live in Kópavogur. I always thought that I was the one in Tvíhöfði with more political interest, but I was obviously very wrong!"

"I don't think I will ever go into politics. It's just way more constructive and fun to do what I do. To be creative in many fields. I am a screenwriter and producer for TV shows [currently 'Presan', season three and 'Ástríður', season two, both for Stöð 2], and I am developing various exciting things. I'm writing a movie, a horror film called 'The Girl And The Devil'. I am always doing something that's fun. I owe it to myself to be creative all day long, as I think I have the gift for it. You can definitely be a creative politician, like Jón obviously is, but the environment is very difficult, so the job takes up a lot of energy. You're being bothered all day long. It's a dilemma you face, and my choice was to keep on doing what I love." 🍷

WHY DO ICELANDERS LIKE HAM?

People like HAM because of their lightly absurd mix of coolness and humour. The group behind HAM is far reaching within the creative sector. It gathers a certain group, a kind of 'rock elite' for Iceland, which many people wish to partake in. Then, some people might like HAM because someone told them to.

Anna Margrét Björnsson, HARPA PR Representative



While most people make a clear distinction between what is supposed to be funny and what serious, Icelanders have never seen much reason to do so. So when HAM play their mixture of brutal rock 'n' roll riffs and witty lyrics that would get lost in any translation, Icelanders simply get it.

Páll Ragnar Pálsson, musician, composer



HAM is not a metal band—HAM is a leather band. This is the key to their popularity with the Icelandic nation. Because everyone wants to wear leather. It is embedded deep within our national spirit, and can be traced back to the time when leather was used for bookmaking. As a band, HAM call for leather. Even though they do not wear leather these days, it doesn't change anything about Icelanders' desire—they need their leather.

HAM is also a cheese. Cheese is best when it's gotten a little old and mouldy. Nothing is worse than unripe cheese—at the same time, nothings better than Gamle Ole mixed with fresh whitebread, butter and jam. Every Icelander knows this.

Last but not least, HAM is like mature sex. Youth's awkwardness and inexperience are left behind and replaced by trust. Anyone that's tried can attest: sex gets better as you grow older. HAM are at the peak of their maturity and experience, and the Icelandic nation is the fortunate lover.

Grímur Atlason, Iceland Airwaves Festival Director



Because HAM is simply the best rock band ever! They are good for every occasion; for drinking, for partying, for driving fast. Their music is upbeat, but still depressing, just like our nation.

Guðmundur Óli Pálmason, drummer, SÓLSTAFIR



Icelanders connect with HAM because of their music's heaviness and pathos. Sigurjón's father was a church organist, and I think that greatly influenced 'The Duke', as he is called. The dramatic sorrow—and the epic na-

ture—of the songwriting resonates with the extreme opposites presented by our seasons. We like HAM for the same reasons that Finnish people like vodka and saunas.

Icelanders seem to have a knack for spotting pretentiousness. And even though HAM certainly possess a certain constructed drama, the music's power and ferocity is sincere and real. That's how it is.

Birgir Örn Steinarrson, writer, musician, DJ



I suppose they think HAM are cool. The comedy 'Sódóma Reykjavík' plays a large part, I suppose. Movies have a way of building cults. I was at a lot of HAM shows back in the day, and people weren't exactly queuing up to attend. They've done things right since. They've aged very gracefully, their comeback was very tasteful and they've managed to build on their 'cult reputation' very nicely.

Ólafur Páll Gunnarsson, Head of Music, Icelandic State Radio (Rás 2)



Do Icelanders even like HAM? I remember when no one in Iceland liked HAM except for me and my friends. Now everyone loves them. I suppose it's a mix of many things. Their music sounds like metal at first listen, but lacks a lot of what makes metal 'metal'. It's a basic rock, with a drone, no power breaks. I think it's mainly HAM's persistent nature that has won them their place in Icelanders' hearts. They've been going at it for twenty-something years by now, and have managed to appeal to at least two generations in the process.

There are also other things. The bandmembers are all characters, and some of them are beloved comedians or public persons. But mainly, HAM are just awesome. And persistent.

Arni Sveinsson, filmmaker



HAM consists of men that have sort of been deputised by nature itself. They are born leaders, and now, when they've been doing this for what, thirty years? Twenty-five years? In any case, they have reached the stage and age where they don't need to try anymore. They are just naturally cool. They've always possessed it, this incredible, Old Icelandic SHERIFF POWER. You look at these men, you don't hesitate, you just know. They are self-appointed chieftains, you don't fuck with that.

Mugison, musician

WHY DO ICELANDERS LIKE HAM?



Picture this: An Icelandic television talk show in the early '90s. A young man is describing his life in Denmark, where he had been studying. Asked about how closely he had followed news from Iceland during his studies he says: "Well, somehow I thought that HAM was the most popular band in Iceland, since they were always being mentioned in Morgunblaðið. When I came home, however, I found this not to be true, no one knew what I was talking about."

Today is widely accepted in Iceland that HAM is the best band ever to ap-

pear in Iceland, never mind Sigur Rós or the Sugarcubes. In fact, people are known to proclaim loudly (when inebriated) that HAM actually is the best band to emerge in the World. Ever. This is relatively new, as you can infer from the quotation above. In fact, when HAM were active, in the late '80s (the first gig was in Lækjartungl in downtown Reykjavík, March 10, 1988—the following day Lækjartungl was closed for good) people generally didn't know what to think of the band. One reviewer for Morgunblaðið called HAM the most boring band of our times—already HAM was generating superlatives, but for all the wrong reasons.

The idea that HAM was well known and generally liked from the start is thus

obviously not true. Yes, there was a vocal core of people that loved the band from the start, but it took several years for people in general to understand what HAM was all about. The crowd that loved The Sugarcubes, Reptile and S/H Draumur mostly found HAM to be too loud, too aggressive and too ugly. One memorable incident was in October 1988, when Pere Ubu, those paladins of propriety, came to Iceland and HAM was supposed to support them in Tunglið (ex. Lækjartungl). When David Thomas heard HAM play at the sound check he refused the support. Even metalheads, who tend to like angry, ugly and loud music, didn't like HAM, they were too sloppy and had terrible dress sense.

Soon after HAM folded in the autumn

of 1993 a new generation of musicians and music fans started to appreciate the band and HAM became legendary. Their support of Rammstein was an eye opener for most of the rock fans in the Laugardalshöll-stadium, and later they were invited to play at Iceland's premier hard rock festival, Eistnaflug, in 2008.

So what is it people like about HAM? The short answer is: HAM is the quintessential Icelandic band, the distillation of Icelandic humour, black as sin. HAM is just like us when we are drunkhappy-loud and also just like us when we are drunkangry-sad and everything in between. You don't have to be Icelandic to enjoy HAM, but it helps. A lot.

Árni Matthíasson, journalist

HAM YEARS

1987: Sigurjón sees Swans in London. Forms HAM with Óttarr Proppé (vocals), Björn Blöndal (bass) and Ævar Ísberg (drums). The first HAM rehearsal takes place just before New Year's Eve.

1988: The first HAM gig, in March. The five track 'HOLD' 12" EP is released by Smekkleysa/Bad Taste in July. A video for 'Trúboðasleikjarinn' ("The Missionary Licker") is banned on national TV. It features Stefán Karl, punk band Fræbblarnir's drummer, swinging naked on a cross smeared in blood. Dr. Gunni joins on second guitar. In October, Pere Ubu's David Thomas refuses to let HAM support the band when they perform in Reykjavík, after witnessing their sound-check. Jón Egill Eyþórsson joins HAM after Dr. Gunni leaves.

1989: Drummer Ævar is fired for being 'too soft.' In protest, Jón Egill quits. Drummer Hallur Ingólfsson and guitarist Flosi Þorgeirsson join the band. HAM play the New Music Seminal in New York as part of Bad Taste's 'World Domination Or Death' masterplan. Bless, Reptile and poet Jón Gnarr appear as well. The 'BUFFALO VIRGIN' LP is released by One Little Indian in the UK. HAM supports The Sugarcubes on a UK tour. A drunk Flosi severely insults NME's left-wing scribe, Seething Weels, with one too many politically incorrect phrases. HAM's reputation with the UK music press is consequently deemed beyond repair.

1990: Arnar Geir Ómarsson, Addi, replaces drummer Hallur. HAM record a new album, 'PIMPMOBILE'. It is never released—the official reason is that it got lost when the US branch of Rough Trade Records went bankrupt. HAM hustle and play the Icelandic rock locals, often with bands like Sororicide from the then-burgeoning death metal scene.

1991 - 1992: Jóhann Jóhannsson [Apparat Organ Quartet, solo] joins on guitar and keyboards. He has already been with Sigurjón and Óttarr in the funk band Funkstrasse. Sigurjón plays the role of rock musician Orri in Óskar Jónasson's comedy 'Sódóma Reykjavík'. He writes music for the film—including a guitar riff that will later end up as the basis of Quarashi's hit song 'Stick 'Em Up'. HAM record new songs for the film with ex-Swans member Roli Mosiman. This includes HAM's most famous song, 'Partýbær'. Björk Guðmundsdóttir, Óskar's girlfriend at the time, plays organ in the song. Sódóma Reykjavík is premiered in October 1992. Legendary status ensues. HAM appear in the film as Helia. A documentary entitled 'HAM Í REYKJAVÍK' is released on VHS in a limited edition of 100 copies.

1993: Flosi quits. 'SAGA ROKKSINS 1988-1993' ("A History Of Rock 1988-1993") is released by Bad Taste in May. It is a compilation featuring songs from the 'Pimpmobile' and Sódóma sessions and the whole of the 'HOLD' EP. In June, HAM start their New York City tenure and play several shows, including some at CBGB's. A live recording of the CBGB gig is released on CD in 2001 as 'CBGB's 7. ÁGÚST 1993'. In New York, they meet Páll Óskar and Sigurjón and Jóhann wind up helping make Páll's first album, 'Stuð' when they return to Iceland that autumn.

1994: HAM decide to call it quits. In June they play their "last concert ever" at Tunglið. A live album, 'HAM LENGI LIFI' ("Long Live HAM") is subsequently released.

1995: Skífan releases 'DAUDUR HESTUR' ("Dead Horse"), a collection of songs from the Sódóma period.

2001: HAM come back to perform at two Rammstein concerts in Reykjavík. They also play on their own at the club Gaukur á Stöng. Recordings from that gig are released as 'SKERT FLOG' ("Curtailed Seizure"). A second HAM documentary, 'HAM—Lifandi dauðir' ("HAM—Living Dead"), premieres in December.

2006 - 2010: HAM return once more in 2006, (with Flosi but sans Jóhann) and now with a new song, 'Svíksemi' ("Deceit") that they premier on TV. The band is "back for good", performing once or twice a year, more often than not at the Eistnaflug metal festival in Neskaupstaður, or at Iceland Airwaves. New songs are added annually.

2011: A new studio album, with ten new songs is released!

WHERE TO FIND YOUR MEAT AND VEG



For those who don't feel like trolling the local restaurants but are similarly underwhelmed by the selection at their local pink piggy or yellow coin supermarket, here's a quick list of suggestions for raw ingredients.

VEGGIES

The cheapo markets may sell pig fodder vegetables but you have some recourse. Melabúðin (Hagamelur 39), the favourite from the west side of Reykjavík, a neighbourhood store that consistently offers fresh and healthy looking produce. The warehouse Stórkaup (Faxafen 8) isn't too bad either when it comes to vegetables, despite appearances. Otherwise you are best served at the pricey vegetable section at Hagkaup or Nótatún (many locations). General organic food can be found at Yggdrasill (Rauðarárstígur 10) and Maður Lifandi (Borgartún 24 and other locations). For pulses and grains, the Grandi location of the chain supermarket Krónan has been fairly consistent as far as variety and price goes.

FISH

For pre-made stews, marinated cod, fish balls and the rest you could do

worse than Hafid (Hlíðasmári 8), for people on a budget the frozen wholesaler fiska.is is your friend who are also to be found in the wonderful produce section at the Kolaportið flea market. Or you can use the walk back from the Laugardalslaug pool to drop by Fiskbúðin at Sundlaugavegur 12, a friendly neighbourly operation. Fylgifiskar (Suðurlandsbraut 10) is still a great option for high-end fish and seafood as well as some pre-marinated choices. The cheapest traditional fish store

"The coastline and rivers of Iceland are teeming with fish only to happy too be eaten by you"

seems to still be Litla fiskibúðin in the town of Hafnarfjörður (Miðvangur 41), although it's tiny and the selection is nothing to phone home about.

MEAT

For meat you can try Kjötkompaní (Dalshraun 13, Hafnarfjörður), which has a decent selection of meats and Kjötbúðin (Grensásvegur 48) offers a wide selection at comparatively good prices. For the more adventurous I definitely recommend Háls í Kjós (www.

hals.is) or any of the farms selling prime organic cuts straight from the farm, with tenderloin, rib eye, porterhouse, beef tongue, jerky and more. A full list of farms that sell directly to consumers can be found at www.beintfrabyli.is.

PROCESSED MEATS

Raw sausages and quality pickles were next to impossible to find in Iceland until immigrants came to the rescue. For sausages and pickles you have a number of small Polish neighbourhood

stores to choose from, such as Mini Market (Drafnafell 14) but the best place for cured and uncured sausages remains Pylsumeistarinn (Hrísateigur 47). On the same corner you have the farmers market Frú Lauga (Laugalæk 6). This is a fixed location for Frú Lauga but they do branch out to downtown Reykjavík on occasion. Great ground beef chuck, lamb, assorted smoked meats along with beets, blueberry jams and rhubarb straight from the source and mostly organic.

HOME AND WILD GROWN FOOD-STUFFS

Not that you'd need to buy your rhubarb—see if you don't know an Icelander with a surplus in their garden and take a tip from Icelandic kids and dip it straight from the ground into a bowl of sugar. Or use the chance the first weeks of September and go out picking blueberries and mushrooms. For mushrooms, www.nature.is gives tips on edible varieties and www.berjavinir.com lists good spots for wild bilberries (Google Translate is your friend here). Growing veggies outdoors is also an option in Iceland—potatoes, kale, carrots and rutabagas all do well here and herbs prosper in our warm colourful huts when there's sunlight to be had. If everything fails, the coastline and rivers of Iceland are teeming with fish only to happy too be eaten by you (www.nat.is/nateng/angling_in_iceland.htm) and you can always grab a gun and head out east to bag yourself a reindeer or goose (www.huntingiceland.com).

That's it for now but please let Grapevine know of any hot produce procuring tips we probably definitely have missed! ☺

✉ RAGNAR EGILSSON
✉ NATSHA NANDABHIWAT

STRANGE FRUIT



You are probably going to be hearing a lot of griping about Icelandic food trends in this mini-column, so I want to start off on a positive note.

I was hanging around my aunt's garden this weekend (as you do) and was flabbergasted to find that, not only is she growing the largest strawberries I have ever seen outside of a greenhouse, but she's growing a bevy of beautiful bright pink raspberries. Apparently everyone is doing it and I completely slept on it. And this was in addition to the usual carrots, kale, redcurrants and parsley in her growbox.

This led to a big discussion about the other things people have started to grow outside of greenhouses in Iceland. We now have barley growers like Ólafur Eggertsson with Eyrarþú in Þorvaldseyri and Júlíus and Jónatan Lindal in the far north of Skagaströnd, Haraldur Magnússon at Belgsholt in Melasveit and others. These must get close to supplying all the barley needs in Iceland as, come to think of it, I don't remember seeing imported barley in over a year. I even came across a barley breakfast cereal made from local grain (www.byggi.is).

Then there are the apple farmers, such as mad scientists Jón Guðmundsson in Akranes, experimenting with the outdoor cultivation of apples, pears, plums and cherries and Sæmundur Guðmundsson at Hella also with pears and apples as well as blackberries, huckleberries and other strangers to the Icelandic berry flora (no relation between the two men as far as I know). Both seem to be aiming for a commercial scale and the outlook seems good. Finally there's Á-Vöxtur, an interest group advocating fruit cultivation in Iceland that's working in collaboration with The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation.

Not to mention our many enterprising marijuana farmers, although I think they are still greenhouse bound for obvious reasons.

It's tempting to lay this on global warming but it's just as likely that these are due to access to new cultivars better suited to Icelandic climate and a growing interest in diversification among Icelandic growers.

Having come back to Iceland after living abroad, it's a pleasant surprise to see this rising trend in locally grown fruits, grains and veggies spilling out of the greenhouses. From the micro to the macro, whether it's my aunt one-upping me with monster berries to the farmers experimenting with new ideas on a commercial scale, the rewarding feeling of eating vegetables you have grown yourself can be extended from the individual to a national level. Not that this is necessarily rooted in patriotism. The slow food movement and the localvores have a tendency to nationalism and neo-luddism that can be a little off-putting. I'm not celebrating this for some obscure patriotic yeah Iceland reasons, but simply because it raises quality by not relying on damaging import procedures. This is a great thing because it results in better food. And who knows what the future may hold, I'm no expert but climate-wise I can't see why we couldn't experiment with pumpkins, sweet potatoes, courgettes—all of which I've seen grown with success in cooler climates. ☺




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Music | Dr. Gunni's History Of Icelandic Rock: Part 29

Stuðmenn's Disciples—The Joy-Pop Of The Eighties

In the eighties, Stuðmenn ("Funmen") were the most popular Icelandic band. These people had a solid track record from the seventies (in that decade they had made two wonderful Stuðmenn LPs, six amazing folk rock LPs as Spilverk Þjóðanna and two great folk-prog LPs as Pursaflokkurinn (see part thirteen of this series for further reading). In 1983, the band Stuðmenn returned with a comedy flick, 'Með allt á hreinu' ("On Top") and an accompanying soundtrack LP, their first album since 1977. Both the film and the album were very popular. An amazing 120.000 people saw the film in the cinemas. The tongue in cheek humour and lively, fun music had much influence on Icelandic pop bands for years to come.

DALLAS INSPIRED MUSIC

Dúkkulísurnar ("The Paper Dolls") from Egilsstaðir took their cue from Grýlurnar, an all-girl group that appeared in 'Með allt á hreinu' alongside Stuðmenn. However, Dúkkulísurnar never sounded like Grýlurnar and leaned more towards The Pretenders in style. In 1982, the first Músíktilraunir was organised, a "battle of the bands"-competition that still remains a springboard for young bands. The first band to win, DRON, faded away quickly, but for Dúkkulísurnar, who won in 1983, everything "happened very fast afterwards," as guitarist and main songwriter Gréta would later remark. Dúkkulísurnar got signed to Skífan, at the time one of two big "major" labels in Iceland, and in the summer of 1984 the first six-track EP came out. It included 'Pamela,' a hit song about a pregnant 15-year old who sings: "This baby was an accident, in my stomach like flares, I wish I were Pamela in Dallas."

Dúkkulísurnar's LP came in 1986 ('Í léttum leik' ("A Light Game")—the girls always hated the title) and included the band's second hit, 'Svarthvíta hetjan mín' ("My Black And White Hero"). Being in an all-girl group was nothing to build one's future on in 1986, so everybody "got serious" and enrolled into higher education. Dúkkulísurnar were laid to rest, but of course, like most other bands, the girls would play together again decades later.

The TV-show Dallas was obviously a strong influence on young people in the East of Iceland in the '80s, as the OTHER successful band from the region was Súellen (incidentally named in honour of Dallas' Sue Ellen). This was an all-boy band that played both '80s joy-pop and hairdo-pop. Súellen were an ambitious ball-group that owned both a PA-system and a Benz van. Súellen released some rarely seen cassettes, an EP and an LP in 1990.

WHO IS 'THE SIXTH COUNT'?

Greifarnir ("The Counts") were the major representatives of joy-pop. Their Cinderella moment happened in 1986 when they won Músíktilraunir. These guys came from Húsavík in the North and had partaken the previous year as Special Treatment. In the year between they had changed their name, recruited a singer/front man they found in a Verzlunarskólinn trade school musical (my partner in Poppunktur crime, Felix Bergsson) and had begun singing in Icelandic.

Greifarnir's victory got much media attention and the group's wild-west dreams now came true. The band played at a legendary two day festival called Listapopp in the summer of 1986. Listapopp had four British groups visiting the reef: Madness, Simply Red,



Lloyd Cole and the Commotions and Fine Young Cannibals. Three other Icelandic acts played as well (Rikshaw, Grafík and the Bubbi-lite troubador Bjarki Tryggvason) but Greifarnir were the only act that got an encore. Greifarnir cared a lot about their appearance and had a stuffed wardrobe, including long white coats. They hired a makeup and hairdo-lady called Íris, who toured with the band—"She's really the sixth member of the band," singer Felix remarked in an interview at the time.

Steinar Berg, the owner of the other big Icelandic "major" at the time, signed Greifarnir to his Steinar label. First up was a 12" EP called 'Blue Blood.' It came out before the Bank Holidays and included a tailor made smash hit for the weekend called 'Útihátíð' ("Outdoor Festival"). The song described Icelandic outdoor festivals in filthy details: "Badly drunk, in the woods. Where's the tent? I hope you're having fun!"

"Our publisher wanted lightness, summer mood and perky stuff and we complied. We want to make a name for ourselves before we go for deeper ideas," Felix said when the EP came out.

"ENTERTAINMENT"?

In August 1986, Greifarnir played for 20.000 people when Reykjavík celebrated its 200-year birthday with a big outdoor concert. Everything was broadcasted live on TV. Greifarnir nourished off this flying start for several years. More lightness was to be found on the next 12" EP, 'Sviðsmynd,' and the first LP 'Dúbl í horn' that came out before Christmas of 1987.

Post modernism with its limp "everything is equal" mindset was still far off, so Greifarnir were dismissed by some (including myself, of course) as lousy "entertainment"-band and not "real artists." This, naturally, rubbed Greifarnir the wrong way: "We take ourselves seriously and do our best. Still we're not reckoned with. Instead

people in the know are sucking up to groups that are much less successful than us," they peevishly said in 1987.

When Felix quit the band in 1989 to study drama, the rest kept on for awhile but then split. The band came back in 1996 and have kept at it ever since, usually without Felix, who only appears on special occasions. They are a popular ball group and fly a gigantic pair of underpants outside the clubs they play, just like they did when they were starting out in Húsavík.

Other notable joy-pop bands were Stuðkompaníð ("The Fun Company") that won Músíktilraunir in 1987 and included two sons of accordion-legend Örvar Kristjánsson; Skriðjökullar ("Glaciers") from Akureyri that had many popular tunes and released records with absurd titles like "Is Indriði abroad a lot?" and "This is an insult to the payers of radio fees." The decidedly un-PC Kátir piltar ("Gay Boys") from Hafnarfjörður, whose most popular song was about "Fat women" and Sniglabandið ("The Snail Band") that have been called "the poor man's Stuðmenn" by none other than the ever-snappy Bo Halldórsson. The peak of joy-pop was probably in 1988, when Músíktilraunir's top three bands all played joy-pop. These were Jójó (ehm... "Yo-Yo") from Skagaströnd, who won, Herramenn ("Gentlemen") and Fjörkallar ("Fun Dudes"). (Un)fortunately, none of them released any records.

Dr. Gunni

Photos:

1. Dúkkulísurnar as they appeared on the first EP in 1984.
2. Súellen's EP, probably as "eighties" as album covers get.
3. Greifarnir all dolled up on the cover of 'Sviðsmynd' (1987).

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Music | Reviews



Ofvitarnir
Stephen Hawking/Steven Tyler
www.pbppunk.com
Noise pop that does understand your troubles

I recently wrote a live review of Ofvitarnir, where I used words such as 'plebeian,' 'rough' and 'filthy.' This gave the impression that they were ordinary and one-dimensional. But after listening to their debut album several times, it's safe to say that this reviewer's ability to judge on first impression really ain't worth shit.

Of course 'Stephen Hawking/Steven Tyler' is an uneven, craggy sounding album, with the production squeezing the vocals almost out of existence. But amongst the debris of guitar fuzz and crashing drums, there are songs stuffed with melodies and hooks that switched open my memory boxes marked 'Early '90s indie rock that I love a lot.'

And underneath the quirky song titles, there's a real sadness borne out of frustration and cynicism going on, with songs like 'Jurassic Park,' about a man's faded hopes and dreams. It's a very angry mood that you really don't hear enough of from new Icelandic bands these days

✂ - BOB CLUNESS

While it seems that every album I'm listening to nowadays is trying to convince me that we're heading for a '90s revival (plaid shirts and Britpop underpants again? FUCK THAT!), some bands are already looking to start up the noughties revival. A perfect example is the second album from Hairdoctor, last year's 'Wish You Were Hair' (Hairdoctor is side project of FM Belfast alumni Árni Rúnar and his mate Jón Atli Helgason (AKA DJ Sexy Lazer)).

A mix of guitars, laptop beats and lo-fi synth grooves, it apes the early '00s sounds from Gorillaz to the Super Furry Animals or, when they go full on electro, what you'd get from the likes

of Robots In Disguise. They even seem to take on the vocal inflections of other musicians, such as Damon Albarn, and on the chorus for 'Tape In Tape Out.' But here's the kicker. Although the songs don't exactly set the world alight, the production values and use of differing sound sources means it's actually more sprightly and full of life than most of the current FM Belfast album. And if I were the other members of FM Belfast I'd think that was a bit cheeky.

✂ - BOB CLUNESS



Hairdoctor
Wish You Were Hair
www.gogoyoko.com/artist/hairdoctor

An example of a side project as a superior piece of trolling

Food | Festival

Reykjavík Real Food Festival

Much to the foodie's delight, the inaugural Reykjavík Real Food Festival will kick off this September 14 (and keep going until September 18). "Visitors will be able to feast on special festival menus at restaurants across Reykjavík, meet farmers at the market and experience Icelandic culture through various events and happenings," according to a festival press release.

In addition to more than thirty restaurants around town offering special menus and discounts during the week, there will be a food market in the patio area at Hressó from 12:00-16:00 on Saturday, September 17, and even a cupcake baking contest.

As far as we can tell, it's going to be a glorified version of 'Restaurant Week', which has been sorely missing from

Reykjavík's calendar. We sure hope so anyways. For more information, visit www.fullborgmatar.is.

✂ ANNA ANDERSEN

Continued from page 14

President Ólafur Ragnar answered saying that Iceland should be open to all good people—and that China had been friendly to us when all failed during the crises of 2008.

In an interview with Financial Times, he accused Europe of being downright hostile at the time and the US of having had zero interest. The President has always played up the possibility of doing business with Asia as an alternative to joining the EU. But the fact of the matter is that China made a currency exchange agreement for 500 million dollars after the crisis, whereas Iceland received a European funded bailout package from the IMF worth at least 2.1 billion dollars.

POET, POLAR EXPLORER, PARTY APPARAT-CHIK

Huang seems like a likable enough man. He is a part time poet, an adventurer who has climbed seven of the highest mountain peaks in the world, including

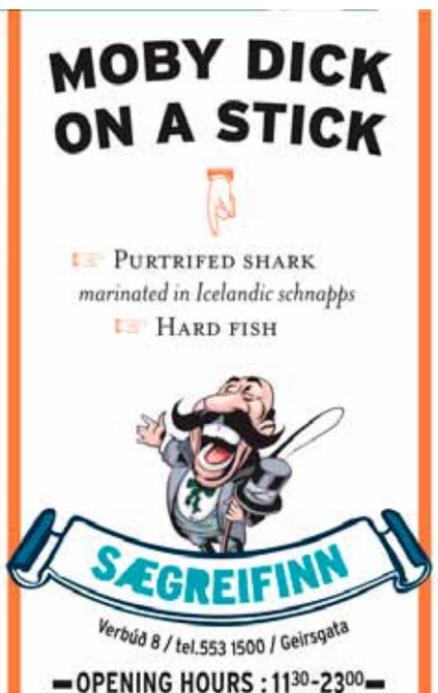
AGENTS OF WORLD DOMINATION?

Mount Everest, and ventured to both of the Poles. He has friends in Iceland, one of whom was a roommate of his during studies in Beijing. His company, Zhonkun Investment Group, specialises in tourism and real estate. He is one of the richest men in China, and he donates liberally to charity. But, of course, he was once a party apparatchik, working in the Ministry of Propaganda. No one in China gets anywhere without the approval of The State.

So what would he build in the remote north-east? It has to be mentioned that there is actually very little foreign investment in Iceland. Foreigners are not allowed to invest in the fishing industry, they have not really invested in tourism, they are hardly tolerated in the energy sector (as seen in the Magma-affair)—mainly the investments have been in large aluminium plants which could actually multiply in the next years, especially if the Left Green party were to leave government.

EUROPE AS THEME PARK
Huang's plans seem like an intriguing alternative. He has found a place that Icelanders rarely visit. There is a powerful glacial river running through the land—but Huang will not be allowed to harness its energy. He could not start sheep farming, for the land is overgrazed. Otherwise there doesn't seem to be much to do in Grímsstaðir, besides maybe enjoying bright summer nights or looking for the Aurora Borealis during winter.

In his latest book, French writer Michel Houellebecq draws up an interesting vision of the future. Europe is quite peaceful and prosperous, but it has been turned into a theme park for Chinese and other Asians who visit its museums, music halls, cathedrals and ruins. It might be interesting to view Huang's plans in this context... ✂



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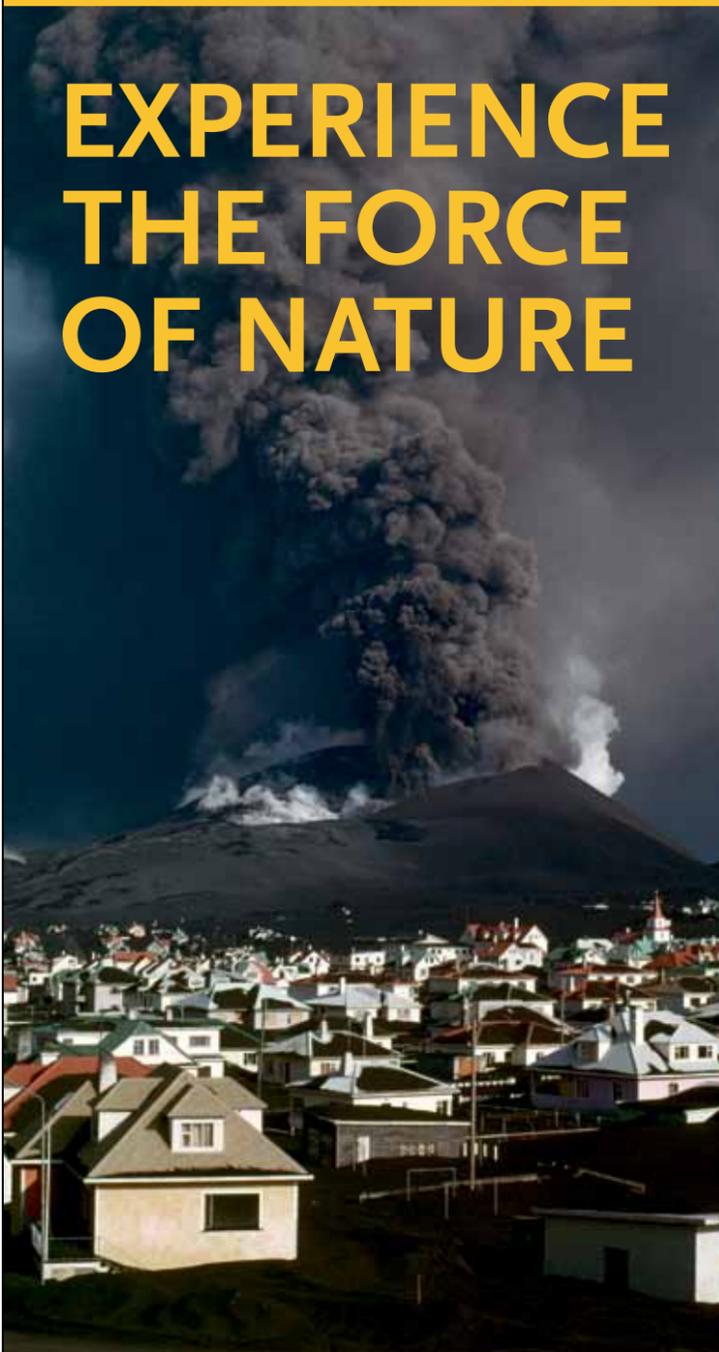
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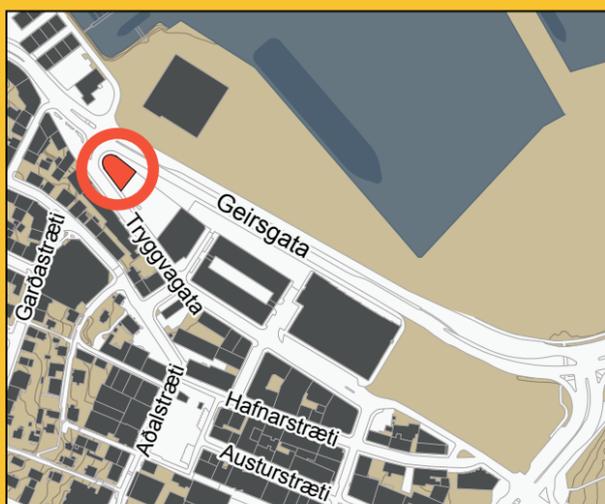


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You should have seen Sage's opener, B. Dolan. He looks EXACTLY like Sage. When the two appeared on stage together, it looked like some wrestling tag team getting in gear!

Sage Francis Struck A Nerve In The Listenership



Sage Francis ended his show at Sódóma Reykjavík last Saturday rapping while he surfed the crowd, lying on his back, supported by dozens of arms, with a motionless Sage suspended in the air, words emanating from his unseen mouth. It was a triumphant end to a wonderful show. Every line he said hit the target, every beat moved through the crowd like a wave on the ocean surface.

The first time I saw Sage Francis in the flesh was in 2001 and he was pressing himself against a window yelling: "Perform for me!" I was sitting inside, behind a typewriter, for reasons too secondary to this review to recount. Sadly enough I did not perform for him, which would have made for a better story. Francis was fresh out of a radio interview where he had shocked Iceland's shockiest shock jocks by giving shout outs to "all my inner child molesters." This was in 2001. I did not know who he was at the time, beyond him being a rapper that friends of mine really liked. He started his show last Saturday by introducing himself: "I'm Sage Francis, I'm in Iceland to fuck your kids." Some things never change.

Sage Francis' music did not enter my consciousness until October that same year when 'Makeshift Patriot' hit the internet. It was the first time I had heard someone articulate my own response to the destruction of the World Trade Center. Shock and sorrow at the horror and tragedy, mixed with a growing fear that the world was turning towards a period war and repression. I downloaded as much as I could and procured a copy of his 'Sick Of Waging War' album.

He came back to Iceland in 2002. But I did not see Sage Francis perform.

His show was on the same night as a Godspeed You! Black Emperor concert, my other overriding musical obsession of the time. For me it was like having to pick between The Beatles and Elvis. I went with Godspeed reasoning that it was more likely that I would have an opportunity to see Sage Francis in the near future. I ended up seeing them three times in the next calendar year. Last Saturday's gig, a decade later, was the first time I saw Sage Francis rap. It lived up to the wait. A show of beauty and power. Every head nodding in rhythm, facing Sage. Watching the crowd was like seeing a heart valve contract and open.

This was my first time seeing Sage Francis rap, but not the first time I saw him perform. In 2002 I went to Hampshire College in Massachusetts as an exchange student. That fall there was a huge spoken word poetry festival at the school and Sage Francis performed. The stage was out on a huge lawn in front of the library and the whole festival remains a beautiful, diamond-cut memory in my head. I lived in Providence, Rhode Island for five years, where he is from, and I saw him perform poetry a few times. The spoken word style sometimes comes through in Sage Francis' hip hop, and he has even put some poems on his records. He did 'Hopeless' off 'Personal Journals' and the second to last thing he did was a new spoken word poem about his recent experience of working with HIV infected kids in South Africa.

I should take a moment to mention B. Dolan, who opened up for Sage Francis. I would mention first act Ha Why too, but sadly I did not arrive early enough. B. Dolan, also from Rhode Island, also making a name for himself in the spoken word scene around the

turn of the century, put on a great show. He wore a hangman's noose like a tie and American flag sunglasses while rapping about topics ranging from the death of Ol' Dirty Bastard to Joan of Arc (who had a dildo named Jesus and wondered why Christ never came). He was not the headline attraction but he won the crowd over quickly, which formed into a semicircle with him at the centre, everyone waving in rhythmic unison like a time-lapse flower.

Sage Francis had no need to win the crowd over. Two thirds of the audience rapped along with him on every song (excepting the new ones). The rest, those who were not already true believers, fell in with majority. People listened with reverence. Those unfamiliar appreciating a new voice. The true believers feeling like they were at the source of the words they had been listening to for years. A decade ago Sage Francis had a reputation for being a wild man. Now he's calmed down. During last Saturday's show he talked about how he used to fizzing with energy. Hip hop, breakdancing, graffiti coursing through his veins. But then he said: "Do you know what I think is more beautiful than graffiti? Nature." Some things do change.

After Sage Francis had performed the track 'Makeshift Patriot', my friend leaned over to me and said: "Every single word on that song is just right. They just are right where they should be." Throughout his career Sage Francis has made a habit of putting words right where they should be. He did not put a word wrong at Saturday's concert. ☘

KÁRI TULINIUS
HÖSSI

Music | Reviews



Úlfur Kolka

Human Error

www.ulfurkolka.bandcamp.com

Middle of the road Hip Hop

The latest offering from the former Kritikal Mazz frontman and Ciphah alias sees him rapping in English, which is always going to be a slight risk when it's your second language, moreso than with regular 'singing.' And overall he does a decent job of it, leaning towards a more socially conscious style of hip hop not often examined by his Icelandic contemporaries.

However the music doesn't quite match his ambitions. Most of the tracks contain mid-tempo, simplistic 4X4 beats that rather stunts the flow of Úlfur's wordplay and makes the album feel a bit dated (did I hear him say "now it's 2003" on the track 'Tomorrow'?).

'Human Error' is a so-so album that does have the advantage of being free to download from his Bandcamp page. OK, you could pay 5 Euros to get it via Gogoyoko, but knowing human nature like I do, why would you want to do that?

☘ - BOB CLUNESS

Professionals, At The Top Of Their Game

GusGus conquer NASA for the nth time!



While their fifteen years of experience explain the on-stage swagger, it's remarkable to witness the influence GusGus have in the Icelandic club scene.

GusGus recently released a kind-of manifesto where they urged for concerts in Iceland to start earlier. This decision was partly so the concerts would cut less into the clublife and partly to allow the older section of the Icelandic music scenes to be done at a reasonable hour so they can get home to free the babysitter. But despite starting at the ungodly hour (for Iceland) of 10 PM, the house was filled to the rafters with party hungry fans. If anyone can usher in a change to the Icelandic concert landscape, it would be GusGus.

The show was infused with the usual potpourri of sportswear cologne and hipster BO. GusGus attracts a bizarrely diverse fanbase on an average night. But while the downtown rats were in attendance and there was a good twenty-year age spread, the 20-25 year old suburban fist-pumpers dominated the scene. I had to navigate the crowd carefully to avoid stray kids, who blinded by their ray bans in a darkened club, danced like broken homing missiles (although I started thinking they may have been on to something once the flood lights started lasering through my retinas).

GusGus sauntered on to the stage as the usual happy shambles of questionable fashion choices—their three singers being leaner, hairier and deci-

sively more bondage-friendly this time around. Urður was imposing and glorious as always, and looked, in her see-through dress and garters, like she was there to accept the award for 'queen of all fag hags' (which I'd award her if it wasn't for our recent Eurovision entry Hera Björk). Högni came on in a flowing overcoat and a mohawk stovepipe hat, midway through popping his shirt off to reveal a matching mesh shirt and bondage straps. Daníel swam around in a scarf like a drama major in a K-hole.

I was a little worried that Urður's singing wouldn't translate to the stage, as I've seen some recent live footage that wasn't too promising. But aside from her mic level being set too low, she hit the notes and sang from her heart, gut and other organs. So this must have been down to poor quality of the YouTube footage I saw. And there's no point in talking about Högni or Daníel Ágúst—they're among the best pop singers we have in Iceland.

I do miss seeing the core of the band, the producers Biggi Veira and Stephan Stephensen hidden being a stack of old synths like in the old days, but an electronic band needs less equipment these days, and the leaner approach is par for the course.

I will say that there are only four bands in Iceland that have mastered the art of drama in popular music. Only four bands that have properly gotten to grips with the swells, the tension, the calmando and crescendo. They are Sigur Rós, HAM, Páll Óskar and GusGus. Each from a different genre, each

with their own way of approaching it, but all know how to whip up a squall of heroic melodrama in the teenage heart.

GusGus are professionals at the top of their game. Simple as that. It may not be everyone's cup of tea, but if you have even the mildest appreciation for electronic music you should be able to appreciate the dynamics of their live performances.

On a side note, I thought of something while listening to 'Deep Inside.' Can I please put in an order for a thrash metal cover of this song? On the off chance that there are any metalheads reading this, would you pretty please make this happen? Stand in the way of my Slayertronica no longer. I need to hear this. ♡

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TIME STANDS STILL

Activists stuck in seemingly endless legal limbo



On Friday September 2, two men appeared in court in downtown Reykjavík. It wasn't their first time—and it probably won't be their last. If found guilty, the defendants, Haukur Hilmarsson and Jason Thomas Slade, face up to six years in prison, due to a peculiar action on their behalves that marks a turning point in Icelandic asylum-seeker affairs.

On the morning of July 3, 2008, Haukur and Jason darted onto the runway of Leifur Eiríksson International Airport in Keflavík, hoping to prevent a flight from departing, and deporting. Inside the plane, which was headed to Italy, sat one Paul Ramses, a Kenyan refugee. The two activists ran alongside the plane, and placed themselves in front of it—halting its takeoff.

It would be wrong to assume that anything has changed since 2008. Iceland may have seen an infamous economic collapse followed by a popular uprising and a new government, but for the two activists it must feel like time is standing still. Since their arrest at the airport, they have been stuck in a seemingly endless legal limbo, first charged for housebreaking and reckless endangerment and later thrown between all levels of the juridical system. Last Friday, the case's principal proceedings took place for the second time in Reykjavík's District Court, after the courts original sentences were ruled null and void by Iceland's Supreme Court.

THE ICELANDIC STATE VS. PAUL RAMSES

Paul Ramses and his wife Rosemary fled Kenya in 2008, afraid for their lives due to mass persecution against members of a political party that Paul was involved

with. Shortly after their arrival in Iceland, via Italy, Rosemary gave birth to a son they named Fidel, thereby establishing her right to stay along with the newborn. Paul, on the other hand, needed to apply for asylum. The Directorate of Immigration (UTL for short) refused to take up his case, and in April ruled for him to be deported to Italy. Paul wasn't notified until three months later, the night before he was to be deported, when he was arrested by Icelandic police and separated from his family—an act that violated both his rights to appeal UTL's decision and his son's internationally protected right to stay with his parents.

WHAT IS THE DUBLIN REGULATION?

UTL's decision to refuse Paul asylum was argued for by citing the Dublin Regulation, an agreement on asylum affairs implemented by the member-states of the Schengen Area. The Dublin Regulation permits authorities to deport asylum seekers to the first Schengen state they entered, but it does not oblige the state to deport the asylum seeker in any way—and, as a matter of fact, specially bids authorities to apply it in harmony with human rights conventions. However, UTL's official policy has been to start every asylum application process by checking if it can be outsourced to another Schengen state.

That sort of policy is certainly not to lighten the burden of states—such as Italy, Spain and Greece—that are located at Schengen's south and east borders and whose refugee policies have been heavily criticised by the likes of the UN Refugee Agency, Amnesty International and European Parliament.

According to Jórunn Edda Helgadóttir, MA student of international and

comparative law, The Dublin Regulation brings forward grossly defective rules that have allowed the Icelandic state to deport asylum seekers en masse by stating that "because everybody does it, we can too." This was indeed how Björn Bjarnason, then Minister of Justice, replied upon being heavily criticised for the deportation of Paul Ramses: "Of course there is nothing unlawful or wrong with employing this treaty, any more than other international treaties."

Such a statement is wrong, according to Jórunn as Iceland has validated the European Convention of Human Rights, in which it says that "no one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment," and that "everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life"—two of many law paragraphs that were not considered in the case of Paul Ramses. The focal issue at stake is "will," she says, as the "problem would never grow to be so huge if most governments weren't so willing to pass their duties and commitments on to other states."

"WE INTENDED TO SAVE HIS LIFE"

Back at the airport, Haukur and Jason were arrested and air traffic continued after a short delay. Interviewed shortly after his release, Haukur cut the crap when asked about his and Jason's motives. "We intended to save Paul Ramses life," he said, expressing worries that they had failed. Surprisingly, the next day, hundreds of people assembled by the Ministry of Justice and demanded Paul's return to his family in Iceland.

The pressure increased with daily demonstrations, petitions and parliamentary debates, as well national and international media attention—all of it to be diagnosed as "sentimentality" by

Minister of Justice Björn Bjarnason. But eventually Björn himself succumbed to "sentimentality" and overturned UTL's decision. Parallel to the aforementioned pressure, Paul's lawyer Katrín Theodórsdóttir issued a complaint to the Ministry, demanding material handling of Paul's asylum application from a humanitarian standpoint. Following the Ministry's ruling, UTL finally granted Paul asylum.

"...AND WE DID"

Today Haukur believes that although the impact of a single act of direct action is hard to measure, he and Jason actually saved Paul's life. And their action, he says, paved the way for what followed, as standing in front of a ministry or signing a petition requires much less effort than running in front of an aeroplane. In the aftermath, they claim, people were less afraid to protest.

At the same time he believes that The State's response to such actions, for instance by instigating serious court cases, is likely to keep newcomers from getting involved. "It is sad that people have to make such enormous sacrifices for such tiny changes," says Haukur and mentions Þorgeir Þorgeirsson, who spent ten years fighting—eventually at the European Council of Human Rights—against court sentences he received for his newspaper articles that decried and depicted police brutality in Reykjavík

THE ICELANDIC STATE VS. HAUKUR AND JASON

Haukur and Jason were originally charged with housebreaking and reckless endangerment. But once in court, the prosecutor brought forward two additional penalty clauses not included in the original charges, which he encouraged the judge to take into consideration. Such a move is not only illegal, but also in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights, which states that everyone charged with a criminal offence should be given adequate time and facilities in preparing their defence.

Despite protest from their defence lawyer, Ragnar Aðalsteinsson, who had to defend his clients unprepared for these new clauses, the District Court found the two guilty. Haukur was sentenced to two months in prison while Jason was given a 45 days probationary prison term, a ruling that the two appealed to Iceland's Supreme Court. And while the Supreme Court judges did agree with Ragnar regarding the illegitimacy of the District Court's ruling, they did uphold it. Instead of acquitting the two, the Su-

preme Court's judges made the unusual decision to send the case back to District Court, to start from scratch again.

According to Hrefna Dögg Gunnarsdóttir, law student and employee at law firm Réttur, the Supreme Court's ruling surely manifests that Iceland's uppermost court of law recognised the prosecution's illegal move. Yet the decision to grant the prosecution another chance crystallises the fundamentally different position of the prosecutor and the defence. And when viewed in context with the fact that by granting Paul asylum, UTL—and thus the Icelandic state—recognised the threat he faced if deported to Kenya, one has to wonder why the courts still question Haukur and Jason's actions.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?

"The purpose of the charge is obviously to suppress resistance," says Haukur. "I stopped hoping for an acquittal. Instead I use this case to learn how to analyse State Power, and to educate myself about this system and how it operates."

During the procedure last Friday, one could witness the findings of Haukur's studies as he delivered his disputation. One of the more interesting points he made regards the humiliation entailed in having to discuss important issues on The State's terms. While having ideologically argued for his actions he claims he was met with idiotic and irrelevant questions; while wanting to discuss an important topic as refugee policies surely is, he has been met with a debate about fences and police regulations.

Indeed, the prosecutor showed little or no interest in discussing the motives behind their actions, which usually is considered an important factor in criminal cases. Instead of entering an ideological dialogue with the defendants, his obvious aim was to get them jailed for a mindless and dangerous criminal act.

Haukur has given up hope for an acquittal, but will admit that a victory in court would serve as an exemplary beacon for future cases against political dissidents, not to mention the legal and bureaucratic amendments it could lead to. But these are not these fundamental changes he hopes for. "The impact of these kind of cases on the behaviour of State Power can certainly lead to minor reforms, but the knowledge we can glean from it can give rise to revolutions." ❧

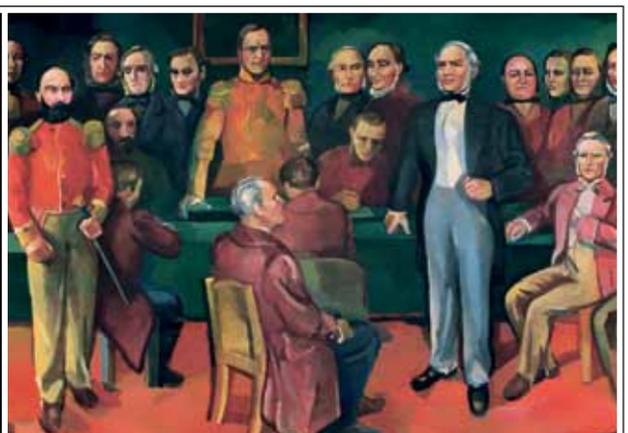
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work for upcoming performers to present and reflect their work and celebrate their get-together.

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CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

For the production format 'living room' we are looking for young artists from all artistic genres who would like to be part of a European flat-sharing community. Together with artists from

Portugal, Lithuania and the German speaking countries Austria, Germany or Switzerland, you form the flat-sharing community yourselves. The team of transeuropa2012 will choose the first flat mate; this person will autonomously decide which country the next flat-mate will be from, look through the applications of that country, talk via Skype with potential flat mates and finally choose one. Subsequently the two flat mates will jointly choose the third and fourth member of the flat share. Four weeks prior to the festival you move into an empty apartment in Hildesheim, in which you will live, work and perform.

How would you like to live and work together? How can you free yourselves from your conventional and familiar ways of living? How do the objects from the disbanded apartment influence you? What material will you collect to document your living together?

Apply with an English-speaking video (max. four minutes), in which you present yourself in your own flat. Upload it on a video sharing website and send the link to info@transeuropa-festival.de by September 30.

'Partner ship' is a cooperation of three young graduates of 'Theory and Practice' from the Academy of Arts in Reykjavík and three graduates of 'Cultural Science and Aesthetical Practice' from the University of Hildesheim. Together they will develop a piece researching on the conflict and friction within the fields of collective, scientific and artistic practice.

Theatre needs the body, needs the corpus. Theatre is a physical act through and through. It is when theatre professionals develop an interest in scientific questions that abstraction meets activism. But where to begin? Does theory come first or is it praxis that delivers the material out of which theory derives?

The first meeting of the group will take place in Reykjavík early in 2012. Rehearsals will start four weeks prior to transeuropa2012 in Hildesheim. ☘

HANNAH PFURTSCHELLER, PAMINA DITTMANN, MARLEEN WOLTER

Continued from page 10

IS THIS REALLY NECESSARY?

Many would naturally like the duties lowered, believing that it is unnecessary to hassle people like this about the purchase of personal items, but Hörður points out that it would be unfair to the stores in Iceland that are importing products from abroad, paying duties and VAT to sell them here. "If there are huge amounts being imported to Iceland every week without paying tax, that's making things difficult for Icelandic stores," he says.

But as all items are taxed regardless of whether or not they can be purchased in Iceland (like kilts), the philosophical underpinnings of the law are not about protecting domestic businesses. What it comes down to is simple. "The point of the tax is not to protect the stores in Iceland," Hörður says. "It's just money to the State. More than 30% of the State's income comes through Customs—tax, VAT and fees."

Will Customs relax? Probably not. So perhaps it's just time for a change of attitude. Instead of getting all worked up in a fit of hate, you could take Virgile Collin-Lange's approach of embracing Customs with love, which he extolled on our Facebook: "[I] love to pay taxes on the Xmas gifts I am receiving from abroad...Love the way they open the gift for me...print a price from amazon for me...Say good bye to the surprise effect...But what I love the

Customs Is Cracking Down

most is to pay the chocolate tax... Every time my brother sends me chocolate usually with other stuff..They disappear... Strange."

In case you're curious about the chocolates, they told him that "they sometimes

get rid of suspicious food people send." It was Leonidas chocolate [YUM!] and Virgile says it's happened at least twice. ☘

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Films | RIFF

From Venice to Reykjavik

We speak to RIFF programming director Giorgio Gosetti and check out some coming attractions...



"Social disease and a new energy coming from a new generation is quite visible in the films I've seen, but cinema continues to be have a avant-garde view of the new society we'll have to face. In a sense you can discover the roots of the crisis and the new hope of the Arab Spring in the films we have seen in the last two years. Documentarians are now ready to show us what happened and what will happen; fictional movies will use reality to help us understand more," says Giorgio Gosetti when asked about the way films have changed along with a changed world.

The films Giorgio is talking about have not always been seen by the masses. This is because Giorgio is a festival director and organiser, and thus views some 800 films each year. Giorgio Gosetti also happens to be the new programme director of RIFF, the Reykjavík International Film Festival. Welcome to RIFF, Giorgio!

RIFF's new programme director grew up in Venice, home to Italy's biggest film festival, and that's the festival he's at when we contact him. "I moved to Rome under the pretext of studying at the university; but the real goal was to discover the film community and find a way to be part of it. Like anyone, I dreamt of being an artist—in my case a screenwriter—but I got the chance to prove myself as a reporter and I thought it was the best way to get in contact with filmmakers and producers. But then I discovered how important is to know the cinema system in depth, and also discovered a certain talent in organising events and in programme festivals."

AN OLD-SCHOOL SALESMAN

But what is the job of the film festival programmer like? "A festival programmer is like an old-school salesman, he's always ready with his luggage, always moving from a market to another, looking for rumours, screenings and meetings. Every one of us sees at least 800

films over the year, in order to be up to date. You receive suggestions and DVDs, but you have to fight to make sure your favourite films get shown. You need to gain the trust of the filmmakers and everyone involved."

But how can we, the audience, trust Giorgio's tastes? The simplest way to gauge that is to ask him about his favourite films. "I can mention three films by three directors close to my heart: 'Barry Lindon' by Stanley Kubrick, 'Il conformista' by Bernardo Bertolucci and 'Le Havre' by Aki Kaurismaki," he says and adds the names of directors such as Sergio Leone, Ingmar Bergman and John Cassavetes to the mix.

"But how can we, the audience, trust Giorgio's tastes? The simplest way to gauge that is to ask him about his favourite films."

I ask him how the Venice festival is shaping up. He says it's too early to judge; the best films often come near the end, yet the films so far have been good. "Everyone was impressed by the quality of George Clooney's 'The Ides Of March,' and the emotions raised by the French film 'All Our Desires' ('Toutes nos envies'), but I could also mention films like 'Historias' by Julia Murat, 'Twilight Portrait' by Angelina Nikonova and the Argentinean 'El campo.'

'VOLCANO' AND THE THIRD OLSEN SISTER

At RIFF, Giorgio is in charge of New Visions, the festival's main category (it focuses on directors making their first or second feature film). And for the first time, there's an Icelandic film competing: Rúnar Rúnarsson's 'Volcano.' "I saw 'Volcano' in Cannes and was really impressed: he's a visionary in describing emotions and characters. I think he will be a prominent personality in European cinema and we are proud to host him in the New Visions' programme."

The beauty of film festivals is often the unknown, even the buffest of film buffs will be unfamiliar with most of the films in the New Visions category—the exceptions being 'Volcano' and 'Martha Marcy May Marlene,' which already made waves at Cannes and Sundance, and seems to be making a star out of its leading lady Elizabeth Olsen (a younger sibling of the Olsen twins, fancy that!).

But the trouble is that many of them are destined to remain 'festival films,' films seen only at festivals—and if you

miss one of the three screening RIFF offers, there often won't be a chance to view them later. Acquiring a DVD or illegally downloading them might even prove bothersome.

So what is the best way forward to make sure people have better opportunities in seeing independent and non-English speaking films? "This is the crucial question in the distribution all around Europe—and in the U.S. it is even worse," says Giorgio. "Festivals are responsible for offering an almost unique chance to many very talented filmmakers who are sometimes totally unknown by the larger audience. I think that in the future, the digital system will

offer a very different landscape and could be a major chance for art cinema. But the risk is that it will transform cinema into a very personal platform, in which you are pretty alone facing your choices, and cinema must be a collective experience, not just an extra click on the web. But just like with every revolution, you can't really imagine the consequences right now. Somewhere along the way, we'll have to take stock and shape the changes of the future." ☘

Words

Ásgeir H. Ingólfsson

Photo

Halldór Kolbeinsson

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PJ Harvey, Ceausescu and Limahl in a swimming pool

RIFF previewed



RIFF will commence on September 22 and go on until October 2. The schedule was still taking shape at the time of writing, but here are bits of the news that had already leaked out of RIFF headquarters:

Danish director **Lone Scherfig** is the guest of honour. She's directed films such as dogme flick 'Italian For Beginners' and Hollywood movies like 'An Education' and the brand new 'One Day.'

Documentary director **James Marsh** will also attend. He is best known for 'Man On Wire' and has recently directed 'Project Nim', which seems to be sorta like 'Rise of the Planet Of The Apes', apart from the sci-fi part.

Kevin Smith will not attend in person, but he will be here in spirit after a mid-

night screening of his horror film 'Red State.' After the show he'll do a Q & A through satellite from the US.

Romania will be this year's FOCUS COUNTRY. Romanian films have performed strongly at festivals over the last decade, and a Romanian film, 'The Death of Mr. Lazarescu', won RIFF's main award a few years back. The catchiest title of the new crop must be 'The Autobiography Of Nicolae Ceausescu,' at least as long as you like your dictators truly mad (batshit crazy, even).

In the music films section there are two adaptations of recent records. A collection of twelve short films based on the songs on **PJ Harvey's** 'Let England Shake' and **Spike Jonze's** adaptation of **Arcade Fire's** 'The Suburbs' (before becoming known as one of Hollywood's

most original directors, Spike worked on numerous music videos for the likes of Björk and Beastie Boys). Finally, **Gina Belafonte** will come and present a documentary about her father Harry Belafonte, called 'Sing Your Song'.

RIFF will participate with **Couch Fest Films** this year, where film buffs will show short films at home and invite guests over. But there are other unusual locations on offer. You will be able to see the classic 'The Neverending Story' in a swimming pool, and they say there is a screening in the centre of the earth. The details are sketchy but we're expecting a cave of some sorts (here's hoping they don't mean an active volcano).✂

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Picking Wild Berries In Iceland



Like many Icelanders, Guðrún Helga Sigurðardóttir was brought up picking berries. The activity of going out to the country to pick berries, called *berjamór* in Icelandic, is still practiced today though Guðrún says it's less common than it used to be when she was young.

Preferring to offer tours that aren't available from the big tour providers, Guðrún started taking people berry picking this summer. As a rule of thumb, the berry-picking season is August to mid-September, but because this June was particularly cold (yes, the coldest June since 1952), Guðrún told us the berries were ripe later than usual.

The trip began in downtown Reykjavík where Guðrún picked us up, and proceeded to drive us out of the city to find some ripe berry picking grounds. We had only been driving for about thirty-minutes when she pulled over to the side of Nesjavellir road, and we had arrived. It really doesn't take long to leave the bustle behind for expansive moss covered lava fields.

AN ABUNDANCE OF CROWBERRIES

Guðrún handed us each a recycled plastic tub that had originally contained Icelandic mjúkis ice cream (an ice cream worth trying), and we moseyed off on our separate ways, picking through patches of crowberries. Though it is tempting to grab the berries by the handful, Guðrún advised us that the big ones are better and that we should pick them one by one. "Leave some for the birds," she also called out a bit later.

We hadn't been picking for very long before it started drizzling, and we hurried back to the car (advice: never go out in Iceland without a raincoat). The rain, however, didn't put a damper on our trip. The weather in Iceland is notorious for changing from one moment to the next and as we drove on down Nesjavegur road, we seemed to be straddling the rain to our right and clear skies to our left.

While I was already quite proud of the stash of berries I had collected, Grapevine photographer Alísa's tub was practically empty. She had admittedly been eating them faster than she could collect them. By the way, there's no need to wash the berries before eating them (as long as you steer clear of dingle berry droppings), as they grow wild, pesticide-free.

A few kilometres later, we pulled over again at a beautiful small valley. This time before we set off, Guðrún offered us some delicious crowberry muffins that she had baked the night before, motivating us to step up our berry picking game.

Absorbed in the task at hand, I was struck by how peaceful it was there. Apart from the muted sound of berries dropping into my tub and a raven crying in the distance, there was a marked stillness around us. And that, I thought, is what the Icelandic experience is really about. Of course, it's also about the rain, and the rainclouds soon caught up with us, and we once again hurried off to the car (really, remember to bring your raincoat!).

A SMALL HAVEN OF BILBERRIES

We headed back in the direction of Reykjavík, making one last stop for the afternoon. Until then, we had been finding the occasional bilberry amongst the abundance of crowberries, but this stop turned out to be a small bilberry haven. The bilberry looks like a blueberry, and in Icelandic it's called "bláber," which translates directly to "blueberry," but it's actually a bit smaller and more flavourful than the blueberry.

Being bigger and juicier than the slightly bitter crowberry, the bilberry is definitely my favourite

of the two (wild strawberries are my favourite of Iceland's berries, but they are even more rare than the bilberry). With more self-control I might have been able to make an Icelandic "bláberjasúpa" (bilberry soup), but here I ran into the same problem our photographer was having, and very few of the bilberries I picked actually ended up in my tub.

I was surprised to learn that none of these berries are picked commercially and sold at the supermarket, so the only opportunity to get them is to go out and pick them yourself. Guðrún didn't know why they weren't sold at the market (instead we import expensive blueberries), but she figured it's because people simply pick them on their own. The crowberries are, however, picked for the purposes of making "Kvöldsol" (Evening Sun), which is Iceland's only home grown red wine.

Finally, our hands and tongues stained purple, we piled back into the car with our tubs full of berries, and headed back to the city where it was incidentally sunny and there were no signs of it having rained. My antioxidant-rich berries would soon become crowberry muffins ala Guðrún's recipe, which she gladly shared with us when we left.



It's A Blue Berry, Not A Blueberry!

Those blue berries in Iceland, which are called "bláber," are not blueberries. They're actually bilberries or bog bilberries. Both of which look like blue berries, but are slightly smaller and more flavourful to varying degrees.

Words

Anna Andersen

Photography

Alísa Kalyanova



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Is Vopnafjörður Iceland's Greenest Village?



There is no shortage of places in Iceland that are off the beaten track—some are just more off the track than others. Take Vopnafjörður, for example. A village of about 700 people on the northeast coast of Iceland, travellers on the Ring Road will likely miss it entirely. Getting there by car involves a rather long trek off the main highway and over the mountains through a narrow, winding pass. Or, you can take a plane from Reykjavík to Akureyri, and then a 19-seater Twin Otter prop plane that will have you singing “Peggy Sue” all the way over.

Upon arrival, our photographer Natsha and I were greeted by Magnús, an incredibly gregarious and eager guide who would accompany us every step of the way. Driving from the airstrip into the village, the smallness of Vopnafjörður is perhaps exaggerated by the sheer size of the fjord upon which it rests. Even in the dense fog, you can tell you're in the middle of a vast, wide-open valley that evokes something closer to the Wild West than the Settlement Era.

NOT SO BAD-ASS AFTER ALL?

The first question I had on my mind was: how did Vopnafjörður get its name? Meaning literally “weapons’ fjord,” which is indisputably a bad-ass name for a village, I supposed that it had at one point been a centre of sword and spear production back in ye olde Viking days.

“It's named after Eyvindur Vopni,” Magnús said. Oh, so it was named after some bloodthirsty, heavily armed Nordic settler who earned this nickname through his blast furnace temper and array of readily available weapons?

“No, I don't think so. I believe Vopni was actually his family name. I think there are a few still living in Iceland.”

Undeterred by reality's uncanny ability to disappoint, we pressed onwards. The first thing Magnús wanted to show us was the primary school which, I discovered, is at the very least on par with, if not exceeding, the quality of schools I normally see in the capital area. One feature that stood out to me, though, were the recycling bins in the halls of the school. Children as young as six are being taught to sort between paper, plastic and cans.

Now, this might very well be the case for other

schools in Iceland. Certainly, municipalities around the country have varying levels of green-ness. But Vopnafjörður, I discovered, has a history of environmentalism that goes from the Middle Ages to present day.

WASTE NOT, ETC.

An example of this would have to be HB Grandi, the fish factory that looms over the harbour. In terms of direct employment and the involvement of surrounding businesses, this company employs about half the village. Our tour began with a look at the process of making fishmeal. Sveinbjörn, the on-site shift manager, took us down to the control room to show us how this stuff is made.

I'm normally not very fascinated by modern industry of any sort, but as this man explained how waste water is used for the heating of different tanks, how the air is re-circulated and recycled, how every scrap of by-product is used in some way, I have to admit I was impressed. Fish factories are not known for being tremendous polluters, but they're not exactly the first thing that springs to mind when you think of “green” industries. In this case, though, Sveinbjörn was proud and passionate about the pains the company had taken to avoid wasting anything, and to keep the surrounding water and air as clean as possible. Was this a part of the town's cultural heritage?

It seems that might very well be the case. When we visited the village's cultural museum, Ágústa (originally from Reykjavík, but a resident of the village for the past 40 years), talked to us about the town's history. When I asked what was the most significant event in the town's history, her answer was immediate:

“It was when we got our first trawler,” she explained. Before then, all work was seasonal. You never knew where your money was going to come from, and so everything had to be scrimped and saved. With the arrival of a trawler, people could now work year round. They began to put time into fixing up their homes, making gardens and so forth. Indeed, Magnús chimed in that the arrival of HB Grandi had had much the same effect.

THEY STILL REMEMBER

The following day, we drove out to the Bustafell, a wonderfully preserved turf house farm farther into the valley. Björg, our guide for the early morning tour, had grown up on this farm, and her family had lived on this land since the mid-1500s. As she showed us the various rooms, kitchen and farm implements and their uses over the ages, she made a salient point about environmentalism and necessity:

“I think it's great that people are starting to think again about re-using things,” she said. “In the old days, everything was used. Even the ashes from the hearth were used, to clean floors or let the chickens have a dust bath, for example. When life is as hard as it was back then, you simply couldn't throw anything away.”

After saying our goodbyes and being driven to the airport, I considered that our modern life has only seemed to have given us the luxury of being able to waste, to throw things away that could still be used. In reality, of course, we only hurt ourselves in the long run by practising this lifestyle, however easy it may be to forget that. In Vopnafjörður, at least, it seems they haven't forgotten this at all.

Words

Paul Fontaine

Photography

Natsha Nandabhiwat

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It Is What It Is And It Is It

Getting to know Crispin Hellion Glover



A veteran Hollywood actor and established cult figure, Crispin Hellion Glover is an obsession to some and an enigma to all. Having built a career on small roles in big movies, such as his unforgettable part as George McFly in 'Back To The Future,' Crispin has used his blockbuster earnings to fund a cavalcade of independent, subversive projects that have landed him in the Controversy Hall of Fame (if such a hall existed). He has made over twenty books, recorded an album, personally funded, directed and produced two feature-length films, 'What Is It?' and 'It Is Fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE,' and created the 'Crispin Hellion Glover's Big Slide Show Parts

1 & 2'. He will be at Bíó Paradís on September 17 and 18, doing two screenings as well as conversing with the crowd. We got in touch with the man who once almost (but not quite) kicked David Letterman in the head to talk about his work.

IT IS NOT WHAT YOU THINK

Both movies you've directed have included or been created by people with apparent disabilities. How does this figure into your work? Is there a message you want to get across?

I am very careful to make it quite clear that 'What Is It?' is not a film about Down's Syndrome, but my psychological reaction to the corporate restraints

that have happened in the last twenty to thirty years in film making. Specifically, anything that can possibly make an audience uncomfortable is necessarily excised or the film will not be corporately funded or distributed. This is damaging to the culture, because it is the very moment when an audience member sits back in their chair looks up at the screen and thinks to themselves "Is this right what I am watching? Is this wrong what I am watching? Should I be here? Should the filmmaker have made this? What is it?"

What is it that is taboo in the culture? What does it mean that taboo has been ubiquitously excised in this culture's media? What does it mean to the culture when it does not properly process taboo in its media? It is a bad thing, because culture to not be able to ask questions leads towards a non-educational experience, and that is what is happening in this culture. This stupefies this culture and that is of course a bad thing. So 'What Is It?' is a direct reaction to the contents of this culture's media. My interest is to make films that cause questions or thoughts.

"Anything that can possibly make an audience uncomfortable is necessarily excised or the film will not be corporately funded or distributed. This is damaging to the culture"

Your second movie, 'It Is Fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE,' was written by and stars Steven C. Stewart. Who is he and how did you come to make this film?

I put Steve in to the cast of 'What Is It?' because of the screenplay he wrote for 'It Is Fine!' 'What Is It?' was going to be a short film to promote the concept of working with a cast mostly of actors with Down's Syndrome. When I turned it from a short film into a feature, I realised there were certain thematic elements in the film that related to what Steven's screenplay dealt with.

Steve had been locked in a nursing home for about ten years when his mother died. He was born with a severe case of cerebral palsy and he was very difficult to understand. People that were caring for him in the nursing home would derisively call him an "M.R." short for "Mental Retard." This is not a nice thing to say to anyone, but Steve was of normal intelligence. When

he did get out he wrote his screenplay. It is written in the genre of a murder detective thriller, but truths about his own existence come through much more clearly than if he had written it as a standard autobiography.

Steve wrote his screenplay in the late 1970s, and as soon as I had read it I knew I had to produce the film. Steven C. Stewart died within a month after we finished shooting 'It Is Fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE.' Cerebral palsy is not degenerative, but Steve was 62 when we shot the film. One of his lungs had collapsed because he had started choking on his own saliva and he got pneumonia.

BUCKING THE SYSTEM

You have a fairly unique way of presenting your work, in that you do not distribute screeners and only show your films by touring with them. Why is this?

The fact that I tour with the film helps the distribution element. I consider what I am doing to be following in the steps of vaudeville performers. I definitely have been aware of the element

of utilising the fact that I am known from work in the corporate media I have done in the last 25 years or so. It lets me go to various places and have the local media cover it. Since I funded the films myself, I knew that this is how I would recoup my investment even if it a slow process.

That being said, you have also been in some pretty huge Hollywood blockbusters. Do you see yourself as an outsider or a card-carrying member of both clubs?

Within the corporately funded and distributed film world, I see myself as an actor for hire and am grateful to that system to have made a living in it for about thirty years. 'Charlie's Angels' coming out was good for my acting career. I started getting better roles that also paid better and I could continue using that money to finance my films that I am so truly passionate about. I have been able to divorce myself from the content of the films that I act in and look at acting as a craft that I am helping other filmmakers to accomplish what it is that they want to do.

Both individualised systems of work and working within organised structures can have benefits. Corporate entities can have good reasons for existing. Right now corporatism seems to be having a lot of negative impact on the global culture at large, but this could change. 🍷

To find out more about Crispin's films, art and touring schedule visit Crispin-Glover.com.

You have largely made it a point in your career to work outside of the traditional industry, working outside of distribution deals and only holding select screenings which you are present at. You're a pretty big rule breaker. Is the rejection of the status quo a driving force for you artistically?

The point of touring in the way that I have has not been to break rules but to recoup. Most art-house filmmakers do not recoup on their investment and it has been very important for me to recoup. This has been the driving force and not breaking rules. In the last six years the most important thing for me

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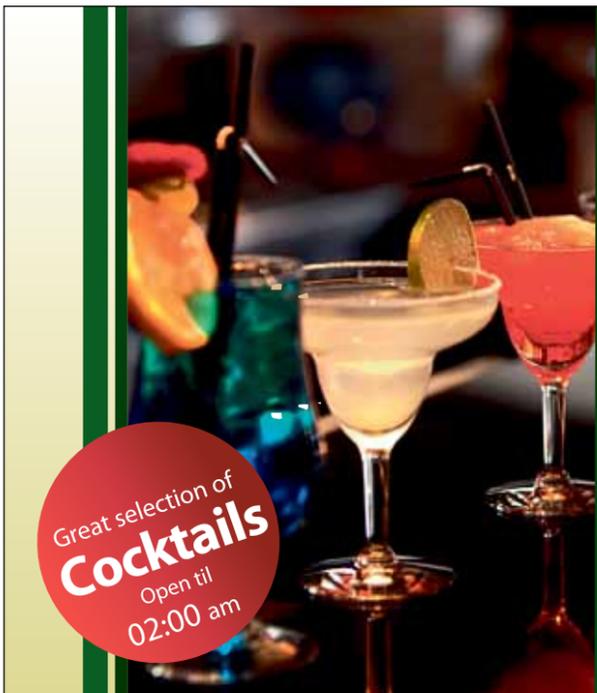
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The True Cost Of The Cold War



Born in the mid-seventies, I probably belong to the last generation to have a clear memory of the Cold War. As a child, I remember looking in the basement for a place to hide in the event of nuclear attack. This was more than just paranoia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it actually did come to light that the Russians had four nuclear missiles pointed at Reykjavik, ready to go off in the event of war.

Iceland in the 1980s, although firmly in the capitalist camp, had some noticeably Eastern bloc elements. It traded proportionately more with the Communist bloc than any other NATO country. Like most Icelanders my age, I grew up eating Polish chocolate, watching Czech cartoons and my parents drove a Lada. In return, the other side imported Icelandic fish to such an extent that the United States reportedly at one point considered buying up all of Iceland's fish exports to stop it from trading with the enemy.

THE DECLINE OF THE EMPIRES

In 1986, the leaders of the two superpowers met in Iceland to bring about an end to the Cold War. The Soviet Union was in

serious economic trouble by then; the US seemed to be doing somewhat better. Some people took a different view. A little film from Canada, 'The Decline of the American Empire,' was nominated as best foreign language film, but did not win. It was not this decline that was on everyone's minds.

In 2011, I find myself living in Canada. Some say it was an event that took place here, and not in Reykjavik, that marked the true beginning of the end of the Cold War. When Gorbachev, on a visit in 1983, walked into a Canadian supermarket and saw the variety of consumer products on offer for the general public and not just party apparatchiks, he knew the Cold War was lost.

THE COST FOR THE RUSSIANS

My girlfriend works in a crêperie along with people from all over the former Soviet Union: Moldova, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Russia itself. One is a brain surgeon, another a nutritionist, none can find suitable work in Canada but still feel they enjoy a better standard of living than in their native country. They are not political exiles as they might have been during Soviet times, but rather victims of a failed economic policy.

Meanwhile, the wealth of the motherland has been divided between a handful of oligarchs and the political system has slipped back into authoritarianism, if not outright totalitarianism, under Putin. Gorbachev's policies were a blessing for the people of Eastern Europe, but in Russia, the results are more mixed, which is why he is still generally idolised in most of Europe, but disliked at home

THE COST FOR THE AMERICANS

The bill for the end of the Cold War came later to America, but it was also high. Reagan argued that you could cut taxes and that this would stimulate the economy enough to not only make up for the tax cuts, but also provide additional revenue for military spending. This proved false, and a bad habit from the Reagan years was nonchalance towards public debt that is now costing the United States dearly.

True, the debt was brought under control by Clinton, but George W. Bush, inspired by Reagan, thought that debt did not matter as long as you won the war. Bush did not win his wars, but managed to run up a huge bill nonetheless. Had the Soviet Union not collapsed and the Cold War not been won, Reagan's presidency

would most probably have been viewed as a failure and the dangers of Reaganomics would have come to light earlier. Instead, the bill has to be paid now.

25 YEARS ON FROM HÖFÐI

In Montreal, I recently saw a comedy show, hosted by the Daily Show's John Oliver, called 'The Decline of the American Empire.' The idea of the United States being in decline has gone from art house cinema to mainstream comedy.

An apocryphal story tells of an Icelandic translator for a German TV crew at the time of the Höfði summit overhearing the Germans remark, upon seeing the state of the Soviet broadcasting equipment, that the Soviet Union had five years left, the United States, twenty-five.

I would still be mildly surprised if the United States would collapse before Christmas. A more conservative estimate would probably give them another half century before they finally give way to the Chinese. On the other hand, the Soviet Union collapsed far quicker than anyone, outside of the German TV crew, could have predicted in 1986. Twenty-five years on from Höfði, the state of the superpower that survived the Cold War seems more perilous than ever. 🍷

A Film Festival In Strangers' Houses in Reykjavik!

Hey! We are Couch Fest Films. We are an international short film festival that happens in strangers' houses on September 24. For 2011, we are giddy to be here in Iceland collaborating with the Reykjavik International Film Festival.

Couch Fest Films is not an online event, nor a broadcast event. We are a film festival that replaces traditional theatre venues with cosy, residential venues. So, on Saturday, September 24, 2011, each host house participating in Couch Fest Films around Reykjavik will present a unique programme of short movies that play on the hour from 11am-7pm. Festivalgoers are welcome to visit as many of the homes as they like. Admission will likely be 500 ISK per house, and 2,000 ISK for the entire day.

"Wouldn't it be awkward watching films with strangers' in someone's house?" It could be awkward. Especially if you are watching really crappy films. That's why we scrape every tube of the Internet and overcraft our defaulted travel budget attending film festivals to find the best mind-blowing films we can. We have attended some of the most established film festivals in the world—for example, the Seattle International Film Festival, CFC Worldwide Shorts Toronto, SF Shorts, SXSW, Melbourne International Film Festival, and New Horizon in Poland. And, as if spending months living off insomnia, GoGurt, and fruit leather wasn't enough, we also attend the more obscure film festivals, like the International Random Film Festival in Bór Zapilski, Poland, hoping to find a rare gem. But let's not forget the amazing people who engage with the festival that make it wicked good. We love seeing all the different backgrounds that come to the festival. We have had families, students and co-ops host. And, on any given couch, you can see bikers, students, parents, tourists, locals, kids, actors and filmmakers all sharing laughs, armrests and snacks.

In Reykjavik, the houses will be conveniently located near each other to encourage walking and biking, and allow the curious to experience several programmes during the day. A short intermission in the middle of each programme will allow viewers to discuss the films and socialise. Participants will have the opportunity to interact, share and discover new films and fellow lovers of film. Maybe you love film. Maybe you like the idea of sitting on your rump. Well, that's kind of what we like too. Thus was born the idea of Couch Fest Films.

Currently, we are still looking for some last-minute houses to host for our scrappy film festival. Drop us an email if you want to host, volunteer, sponsor or have any questions: propaganda@couchfestfilms.com 🍷

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"I am very careful to make it quite clear that 'What Is It?' is not a film about Down's Syndrome, but my psychological reaction to the corporate restraints that have happened in the last twenty to thirty years in film making."

Crispin Glover is coming! Get to know him!

PAGE 16

"I guess you could call them 'legendary.' In any case, they're more 'legendary' than most of the crap that is being sold as 'legendary' in these limp times of recycled pap. OK, OK, old fart mode off."

Dr. Gunni interviews HAM in some HOT OLD FART ON OLD FART ACTION!!!

PAGE 6

"Complicating matters is that many Icelanders believe he's a bit too chummy with some of Iceland's politicians."

Some Icelanders are suspicious of Huang Nubo's intentions. WHY WOULD THEY BE SUSPICIOUS OF HUANG NUBO'S INTENTIONS?

PAGE 31

"Getting there by car involves a rather long trek off the main highway and over the mountains through a narrow, winding pass. Or, you can take a plane from Reykjavík to Akureyri, and then a 19-seater Twin Otter prop plane that will have you singing "Peggy Sue" all the way over."

Grapevine goes Vopnafjörður!

PAGE 14

"Our Nobel Prize winning novelist, Halldór Laxness, once wrote that Icelanders are almost immune to sensible arguments, preferring to fight over things that have little to do with the matter at hand and dwell on absolute trivialities."

Egill Helgason writes about Icelanders' aversion to facts, among other things...

PAGE 10

"What was happening was that people were going to America, buying an Apple computer for 300.000, getting back into the country without paying taxes, and then registering it in Iceland before their next trip to declare it legal."

Yes, importing shit to Iceland is a bitter process.

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The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE iNFO



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

YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LIFE, TRAVEL AND
ENTERTAINMENT IN ICELAND

Issue 14 - 2011

www.grapevine.is



At the end of the summer after sheep have spent months grazing in mountains, it's time for the annual 'réttir'. That's when farmers on horseback go into the mountains to round up the sheep and lead them back into a fold—a circular enclosure surrounded by smaller enclosed spaces. Farmers and their families jump into the mix of sheep and separate their sheep into the smaller enclosed spaces. Remarkably, many farmers recognise their sheep from afar and even call them by name, but of course each sheep is also marked with a tag on its ear.

To see it is truly wonderful. And you should see it, but if you're not going to make it, you should at least go check out the exhibit called 'Réttir' at the Reykjavík Museum of Photography. There you can experience it vicariously through the photos taken by award-winning photographer Hjalti Sigfússon at the Haukadalsréttir in the Dalasýsla county over the last few years. His photos document the event—the farmers, the sheep and those who come to help or simply watch the event (which takes place the first Saturday after September 12 in that particular area).



FALL ERÍ FALL ERA

SÓLEY WE SINK
Sóley (from Sin Fang and Seabear) with her debut album. Out now on CD and 2xLP (LP with etching by Ingibjörg Birgisdóttir)



ADHD 2
So much more than an instrumental jazz album, contains traces of pop, rock, shoe-gaze and prog!



SNORRI HELGASON WINTER SUN
"Winter Sun is magnificent and his best album yet."
★★★★★
Dr. Gunnir / Fréttafélagið



MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN SEPTEMBER

PRESCRIBING WITH LOVE MUSIC FOR YOUR LIVE EXPERIENCE

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

FRI

- Bakkus**
23:00 DJ Pilsner
- Barbara**
22:00 DJ Kolla (maybe better known as DJ Dyke)
- Café Oliver**
22:00 DJs
- Café Rosenberg**
22:00 Andrea Gylfa
- Celtic Cross**
00:30 Live Music
- Den Danske Kro**
22:00 Live Music
- Dubliner**
22:00 Live Music
- English Pub**
21:30 Live Music
- Esja**
22:00 Lounge DJ
00:00 DJ Hlynur Mastermix
- Faktorý**
22:00 DJ Benson is Fantastic + live music TBA (big night!)
- Hressó**
22:00 Timburmenn followed by DJ Fúsi
- Hvíta Perlan**
23:00 DJ Markus
- Kaffibarinn**
22:00 Alfons X
- Prikið**
22:00 BLAZ REMIX KEPPNI, followed by DJ Árni Kocoon
- Thorvaldsen**
22:00 DJ Áki
- Trúnó**
22:00 DJ Atli Roadrage
- Vegamót**
22:00 DJ Símon

SAT

- Bakkus**
21:00 Brogan dance
22:00 DJ Árni Sveins
- Barbara**
22:00 Boys on Ice! DJ Barney Philly, Dream Bears, Friðrik Ómar & Jógvan, DJ Dramatík, Jennifer Hudson Obama. House opens at 22:00, BOYS only until 3:00. Ticket cost 1.000 ISK, sold at Trúnó



We All Get A Little Bit Weird Sometimes...

Bakkus
September 17, 21:00
Free

Damn, it's been a while since we've had a party from those freaky kids at Weircore! A year to be precise. It was on co-founder and artist Tanya Pollock's last birthday actually and weirdly enough so will this one, when Bix releases his new album 'Animalog'. Plus, it's not only a bash to celebrate hot wax and cool people being born, but also to remember the amazing life and work of Weircore co-founder Bjóssi Biogen. The much-loved music maker sadly passed away last February, but the party must go on! So Bix, and Tanya (as PLX), along with futuregrapher and DJ De La Rósa (a team-up of Sometime and Feldberg), will celebrate their dear friend and have a weird ol' time! Join the fun!



Boys On Ice!

For Boys Only :(
September 10
Barbara
1.000 ISK

We were looking through the upcoming events to see what kind of fun we could get up to in the coming weeks, and we came across one called, "Boys on Ice!" We were intrigued. Then we saw that DJ Barney Philly, Dream Bears, Friðrik Ómar & Jógvan, DJ Dramatík, and Jennifer Hudson Obama will be there, and with names like those, we were more intrigued. Well, the house opens at 22:00, but unfortunately for us gals, it's guys only until 3:00, so a good half of the office will just have to remain intrigued by the event description. But guys, do go have fun and tell us all about it. Tickets cost 1.000 ISK and can be purchased at Trúnó.

Café Haiti

21:00 Jussanam - Brazilian Jazz Sessions

Café Oliver

22:00 DJs

Café Rosenberg

22:00 Andrea Gylfa

Celtic Cross

00:30 Live Music

Den Danske Kro

22:00 Live Music

Dubliner

22:00 Live Music

Esja

22:00 Lounge DJ
00:00 DJ Hlynur Mastermix

Faktorý

22:00 House music night!

Harpa, Norðurljós

19:00 Hair rock musical - Make Love Not War, 3.950 ISK
22:00 Hair rock musical - Make Love Not War, 3.950 ISK

Hressó

22:00 Kvótakóngarnir, followed by DJ Fúsi

Hvíta Perlan

23:00 DJ Markus

Kaffibarinn

22:00 FKNHNSM DJs

Prikið

00:00 DJ Gísli Galdur

Salurinn

17:00 From Reykjavík to China: Sigrún Eðvaldsdóttir og Selma Guðmundsdóttir, 3500 ISK

Thorvaldsen

22:00 DJ Áki

Trúnó

22:00 DJ Óðæði goes wild

Vegamót

22:00 DJ Benni

SUN

Bakkus

15:00 Flea Market
22:00 Beer Whiskey Specials Night

Barbara

22:00 Queer movie and date night

Café Oliver

22:00 Sunday Jazz

Café Rosenberg

22:00 Bjarni Þór

Celtic Cross

20:00 Happy Hour & Game Night

Den Danske Kro

22:00 Live Music

Dubliner

22:00 Live Music

Faktorý

21:00 Live jazz, free entrance

Harpa, Norðurljós

19:00 Hair rock musical - Make Love Not War, 3.950 ISK

Prikið

22:00 Hangover Movie Night: Grand Theft Auto, free popcorn

Trúnó

21:00 Elín Ey and Myrra Rós, free

MON

Bakkus

21:00 Monday Night Movies: "Les demoiselles de Rochefort" (Jacques Demy 1967), free

Barbara

22:00 Chill out manic Monday

Café Oliver

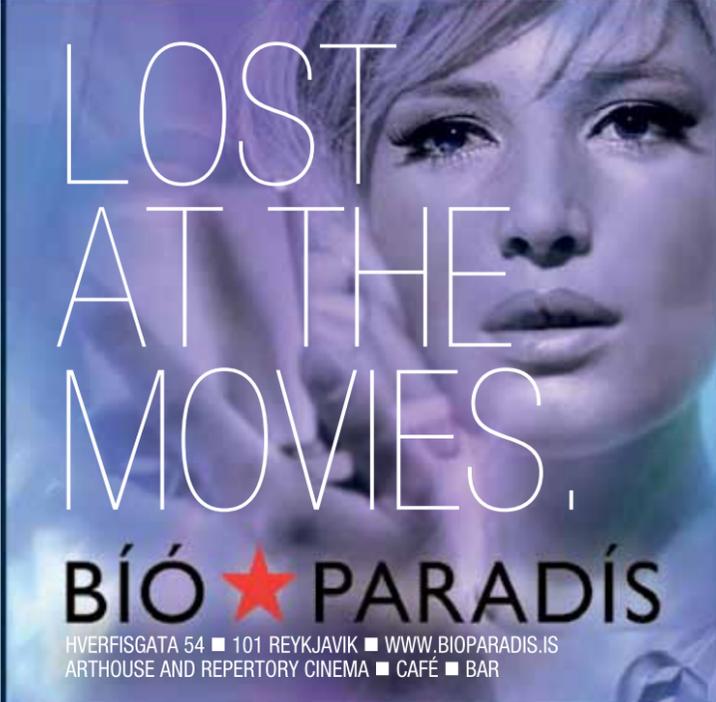
22:00 Margarita Monday

Café Rosenberg

22:00 Live Music

Den Danske Kro

22:00 Live Music



LOST AT THE MOVIES.

BÍÓ PARADÍS

HVERFISGATA 54 ■ 101 REYKJAVÍK ■ WWW.BIOPARADIS.IS
ARTHOUSE AND REPERTORY CINEMA ■ CAFÉ ■ BAR

Dubliner
22:00 Live Music

English Pub
21:30 Live Music

Esja
16:00 Happy Hour until 22:00

Prikið
22:00 DJ Hús

Trúnó
22:00 Monday madness - offers on coffee!

13 TUE

Barbara
22:00 Hipster night

Café Oliver
22:00 Live Karaoke

Café Rosenberg
22:00 Simon

Celtic Cross
20:00 Happy Hour & Game Night

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live Music

Dubliner
22:00 Live Music

English Pub
21:30 Live Music

Esja
16:00 Happy Hour until 22:00

Kaffibarinn
22:00 HalliValli

Prikið
22:00 Game Night

Trúnó
22:00 Untraditional Brownie Day, brownies on offer until they run out

14 WED

Bakkus
20:30 Pub quiz, cash prizes, cheap drinks, 500 ISK entry

22:00 DJ Harry Knuckles

Barbara
20:00 Electronic concert: Exos, TechSoul, Bypass, Futuregrapher & Tonik, free

Café Oliver
22:00 Live Music

Café Rosenberg
22:00 Stand-Up Comedy

Celtic Cross
22:00 Singalong Night

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Pop Quiz with Hreimur

Dubliner
22:00 Live Music

English Pub
21:30 Live Music

Esja
16:00 Happy Hour until 22:00

Faktorý
20:00 Classic pub quiz, free
21:00 Shelley O'Brien (CA), 1000 ISK

Harpa, Kaldalón
17:00 Pearls of Icelandic song 3.000 ISK

Kaffibarinn
22:00 Atli Kanilsnúður

Prikið
22:00 DJ Óli Hjörtur

Salurinn
20:00 Pasi Eerikäinen & Jón Sigurðsson: piano and violin concert, 2900ISK

Trúnó
21:00 Cosy concert, free

15 THU

Bakkus
22:00 Einar Sonic

Barbara
22:00 DJ Ódæði

Café Oliver
22:00 Ingó the Weather God

Café Rosenberg
22:00 Guðjón Rúdolf

Celtic Cross
22:00 Happy Hour & Live Music

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Oktoberfest

Dubliner
22:00 Live Music

English Pub
21:30 Live Music

Esja
16:00 Happy Hour until 22:00
22:00 Live music/playmofunk

Faktorý
22:00 DJ Danni Deluxe

Harpa, Eldborg
19:30 Russian masters, 2.000-6.500 ISK

Hressó
22:00 Troubadours Böddi and Davíð

Hvíta Perlan
21:00 DJ Randomystic

Kaffibarinn
22:00 HúsDJús - Alfons X

Prikið
22:00 DJ Benni B Ruff

Thorvaldsen
22:00 Salsa Night & Mojitos for 1000ISK

Trúnó
22:00 Brazilian night, offers on Caipirinha

Vegamót
22:00 DJ Danni

16 FRI

Bakkus
23:00 DJ Kári

Barbara
22:00 DJ Early

Café Oliver
22:00 DJs

Café Rosenberg
22:00 Brother Graff

Celtic Cross
00:30 Live Music

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Oktoberfest

Dubliner
22:00 Live Music

English Pub
21:30 Live Music

Esja
22:00 Lounge DJ
00:00 DJ Hlynur Mastermix

Faktorý
22:00 DJ KGB
23:00 Apparat Organ Quartet, 1500 ISK

Hressó
22:00 Dalton, followed by DJ Elli

Hvíta Perlan
23:00 DJ Símon

Kaffibarinn
22:00 Árni Sveinsson

Prikið
22:00 DJ Addi Intro

Thorvaldsen
22:00 DJ Jón

Trúnó
22:00 Feel good DJ gets you partying all night

Vegamót
22:00 DJ Jónas

17 SAT

Bakkus
21:00 Weirdcore album release with DJ De La Rósa, PLX, Bix, Futuregrapher, free

22:00 DJ KGB

Barbara
22:00 DJ Manny

Café Haiti
21:00 Jussanam - Brazilian Jazz Sessions

Café Oliver
22:00 DJs

Café Rosenberg
22:00 Svavar Knútur & the Karitas Girls Choir



AOQ Forever

Bræðslan festival

Faktorý, Smiðjustigur 6

September 16, 22:00

1.500 ISK

It was a long wait before Apparat Organ Quartet's first and second album... a hell of a long wait (eight goddamn years, goddamn it!) And they went into near hibernation while we waited, occasionally peeking their noses out of their dark, cosy studios to give us a show every other year or something. But since the blissful release of 'Pólyfónía' last December, it seems like they are playing all the time! It's so great! Let's hope it doesn't stop, but in case they are fickle creatures, go out and catch them do their synth-tacular magick at Faktorý next week. The super-fun DJ KGB will help get the party going and your legs warmed up to dance.

Celtic Cross
00:30 Live Music

Den Danske Kro
22:00 Oktoberfest

Dubliner
22:00 Live Music

English Pub
21:30 Live Music

Esja
22:00 Lounge DJ
00:00 DJ Bogi

Faktorý
22:00 DJ Logi Pedro
23:00 Kanill - House night, free entrance

Harpa, Kaldalón
17:00 Women In Icelandic Music, 3.000 ISK

Hressó
22:00 Timburmenn, followed by DJ Fúsi

Hvíta Perlan
23:00 DJ Geiri Flóvent

Kaffibarinn
22:00 Pabbahelgi - Benni B Ruff & Gísli Galdur

Prikið
00:00 DJ Árni Kocoon

LOVERS WANTED

This is not a fake prostitution ad!

'Við og við' is an open artist collective initiated by Alexander Roberts and Sigurður Arent Jónsson. They have been working together since the Summer of 2010 and create work with 'non-artists' to interrogate socio-political issues. 'Við og við' are in search of people to work with for their latest project and have written to The Reykjavík Grapevine for assistance.

Here is their letter:
Dear Grapevine Readers,

Are you in love? Do you love love? Then we would LOVE to hear from you. We are a tall, dark and handsome performance group looking for people who are in relationships (friendships, couples, lovers). Ideally these people should live in Iceland, but originally have come from elsewhere.

We are undertaking a research into love and migration in Iceland and we are looking for people who would like to talk to us. We enjoy trips to the theatre, meeting new people, and exploring the status of trans-nationality in Iceland.

If you fit this description, or know of any people who do, then email us on elskhugar@gmail.com

All responses will be confidential.
Thank you.
With love,
Við og við

laUNDROMAT
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steak sandwich Bearnaise
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except Mondays
www.gerdarsafn.is



Hönnunarsafn Íslands Museum of Design and Applied Art
Garðatorg 1, Garðabær
Tel. +354 512 1525
Open every day 12-17
except Mondays
www.honnunarsafn.is



Hafnarborg The Hafnarfjörður Centre of Culture and Fine Art
Strandgata 34, Hafnarfjörður
Tel. +354 585 5790
Open every day 12-17
Thursdays 11-21
Closed on Tuesdays
www.hafnarborg.is

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Route 40

To the Blue Lagoon

MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN SEPTEMBER

10
Sep



CHECK OUT AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL THIS WEEKEND

Subheadline joke about shrimps on barbies and Crocodile Dundee

Tungubakkavöllur, Mosfellsbær

September 10 at 23:00

With regularly scheduled games commencing only last summer, Australian Rules Football is taking a big step forwards in Iceland this weekend when the Norwegian national team pays Iceland a visit to play a friendly match against the Icelandic one. The Icelandic national team will be looking to reverse the results of last weekend's match between Iceland and Norway, which Norway won 1-0.

Iceland's team has been raising eyebrows for the past two years, since debuting on the international scene at the EuroCup 2009 in Samobor Croatia, with a respectable finish as the Bowl winners (9th overall). The national team followed up that success by finishing sixth at last year's European Championship in Denmark and Sweden.

This friendly match will serve as a great warm up for Iceland's participation in the EuroCup 2011 in Belfast next month. Come down, bring your family and friends, and enjoy a sport perfectly suited to the Vikings of the modern era! For more information check out the IceAFL's webpage www.andspyrna.is.

Salurinn
20:30 Multi Musica album release concert, 2500ISK
Thorvaldsen
22:00 DJ Jón
Trúnó
22:00 DJ Into The Night
Vegamót
22:00 DJ Símon

English Pub
21:30 Live Music
Esja
16:00 Happy Hour until 22:00
Prikið
22:00 DJ Hús
Trúnó
22:00 Tourist Appreciation Day, pronounce Trúnó in the correct manner and you get a 10% discount

18 SUN

Bakkus
22:00 Ping-Pong Beer Whiskey Specials Night
Barbara
22:00 Queer movie and date night
Café Oliver
22:00 Sunday Jazz
Café Rosenberg
22:00 Stefan Stefansson
Celtic Cross
20:00 Happy Hour & Game Night
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Oktoberfest
Dubliner
22:00 Live Music
English Pub
21:30 Live Music
Harpa, Eldborg
20:00 Gustavo Dudamel and the Gothenburg Symphony, 5.900-10.900 ISK
Faktorý
21:00 Live jazz, free entrance
Gerðuberg
14:00 Chris Foster and Bára Grímsdóttir direct two hours of Icelandic folk songs and traditional ballads, with a few from overseas as well, free
Prikið
22:00 Hangover Movie Night: *Staupasteinn sería 1*, free popcorn
Trúnó
22:00 The day after - heart break night

19 MON

Bakkus
21:00 Monday Night Movies: *Superargo contra Diabolocus* (Nick Nostro 1966), free
Barbara
22:00 Chill out manic Monday
Café Oliver
22:00 Margarita Monday
Café Rosenberg
22:00 Helgi Valur
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live Music
Dubliner
22:00 Live Music

20 TUE

Bakkus
20:30 Foosball Tournament
Barbara
22:00 Hipster night
Café Oliver
22:00 Live Karaoke
Café Rosenberg
22:00 Heiða
Celtic Cross
20:00 Happy Hour & Game Night
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live Music
Dubliner
22:00 Live Music
English Pub
21:30 Live Music
Esja
16:00 Happy Hour until 22:00
Kaffibarinn
22:00 HalliValli
Prikið
22:00 Game Night, DJ Hús
Trúnó
22:00 We love coffee, special offer on Queer cup of Joe

21 WED

Bakkus
22:00 DJ Óli Dóri
Barbara
22:00 Indie night
Café Oliver
22:00 Live Music
Café Rosenberg
22:00 Sævar Mass & band
Celtic Cross
22:00 Singalong Night
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Pop Quiz with Hreimur
Dubliner
22:00 Live Music
English Pub
21:30 Live Music
Esja
16:00 Happy Hour until 22:00
Faktorý
20:00 Classic Pub Quiz (Icelandic)
22:00 Benni Hemm Hemm, 1500 ISK
Kaffibarinn
22:00 Extreme Chill

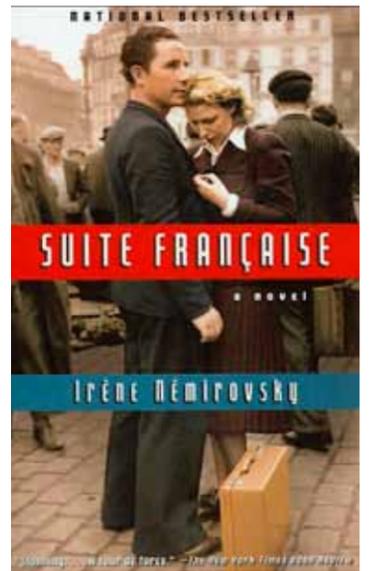
Prikið
22:00 DJ Emo Beats
Trúnó
21:00 Elín Ey and Myrra Rós, free

22 THU

Bakkus
22:00 DJ Make Dance
Barbara
22:00 DJ
Café Oliver
22:00 Ingó the Weather God
Café Rosenberg
22:00 Lára Rúnars
Celtic Cross
22:00 Happy Hour & Live Music
Den Danske Kro
22:00 Live Music
Dubliner
22:00 Live Music
English Pub
21:30 Live Music
Esja
16:00 Happy Hour until 22:00
22:00 Live music/playmofunk
Faktorý
22:00 DJ Benson is Fantastic
Hvíta Perlán
21:00 DJ Randomystic
Kaffibarinn
22:00 HúsDJús - Óli Ofur
Prikið
22:00 DJ Gísli Galdur
Salurinn
20:30 Jón Ólafs and guests play the music of Magnús Þór Sigmundsson & Jóhann Helgason. 3300ISK
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Salsa Night & Mojitos for 1000ISK
Trúnó
22:00 Wall Street Night, bartenders/brokers spin the wheel of fortune offering CRAZY offers for 20 minutes at a time. Drinks from 200 ISK
Vegamót
22:00 DJ Símon

ONGOING

Víkingakráin
20:00 Let's Talk Iceland: Comedy Show. 2200 ISK. *Everyday*
lónó
20:00 Cellophane Comedy show. *Thursdays*



"I Write on Burning Lava..."

Reykjavík City Library

September 7, 17:00

Free

Irène Némirovsky led a short but intensely fascinating life. The Ukrainian-Jewish born writer fled an unhappy upbringing to study in Paris and began writing at age eighteen, publishing more than a dozen novels before her life was cut short by the Nazis in 1942. In the two years prior to her untimely death, she was working on a remarkable novel, 'Suite Française' ('The French Suite'), whose manuscript her daughter Denise Epstein kept hidden and unread for nearly fifty years. It became a best-seller in 2004 and has finally been translated into Icelandic. Her daughter Denise will be here to open up an exhibit commemorating Irène's life and work and celebrating the release of her most elusive novel. Bibliophiles, Francophiles and history nerds are advised not to miss this.

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Box office » 528 5050 » www.sinfonia.is » www.harpa.is

A FULL LIST OF EVERY HAPPY HOUR OFFER IN IOI!

- B5**
Happy Hour every day from 17-19, beer and wine for 650 ISK.
- Bakkus**
Happy hour from 16-22, beer 400 ISK and wine glass 500 ISK.
- Bar 11**
Beers & shots for 450 ISK on Thursdays.
- Bar 46**
Happy Hour every day from 16-20, beers and shots are for 500 ISK.
- Barónspöbb**
Beer is 500 ISK until 19.
- Bjarni Fel**
Mojitos 750 ISK every weekend from 23:00.
- Boston**
Happy Hour every day from 16-20, two for one on beer.
- Celtic Cross**
Thursdays, lager for 500 ISK. Inquire about the malt beer punchcards.
- Den Danske Kro**
Happy Hour every day from 16-19, two for one. Shots for 500 ISK every Monday.
- Dillon**
Happy Hour every day from 16-20, two for one.
- Dubliner**
Happy Hour every day from 12-19, two for one Polar Beer and shot for 1000 ISK.
- Faktorý**
Happy Hour every day from 17-20, large Egils Gull 500 ISK.
- Hotel 101 Bar**
Happy Hour is daily from 17-19, all drinks are 50% off.
- Hótel Holt Gallery Bar**
Happy Hour every day from 16-19, beer and wine 50% off. Cocktail of the day is 50% off.
- Íslenski Barinn**
Every day, beer of the day for 650 ISK.
- Kaffibarinn**
Red wine special on Wednesday evenings at 600 ISK a glass.
- Kaffi Zimsen**
16:00-20:00 large beer and shot for 500 ISK every day.
- Nýlenduverzlun Hemma & Valda**
Happy Hour every day from 16-20, Viking Beers for 550 ISK.
- Óliver**
Happy Hour Fridays and Saturdays from 23-01, 3x1 cocktails.
- Obla Di Obla Da**
Happy Hour every day from 12-20, 500 ISK beers, 600 ISK shots and 800 ISK single + mixer.
- Prikið**
Happy hour on weekdays from 17-19, large beer 400 ISK. Buy four large beers, get free nachos.
- Trúnó**
Happy hour every day from 16-00, all beer and wine 500 ISK.
- Stofan**
Refills on beer 600 ISK all day.
- Pingholt bar (Center Hotel Pingholt)**
Happy Hour every day from 17-19 as of June 1 (currently every Friday and Saturday), all drinks are half off.

RUN A 101 REYKJAVÍK BAR? IS YOUR 'HAPPY HOUR' MISSING? HAVE THE PRICES CHANGED? DROP US A LINE AND WE WILL AMEND.

ART IN SEPTEMBER

COCKTAIL PLEASURES AND VISUAL STIMULATION

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

OPENINGS

- ASÍ Art Museum**
Hildur Hákonardóttir
September 17
Paintings by Hildur Hákonardóttir
Runs until October 9
- Gallery Túkt**
Hildur Evlavía
September 17
Solo exhibition by Hildur Evlavía
- Gerðuberg**
Game Works
September 10
Designers, craftsmen and artists present works inspired by games and amusement in one way or another
Runs until November 6
- Hafnarhús**
Bjargey Ólafsdóttir
September 10, 17:00
Choreography by the visual artist Bjargey Ólafsdóttir in collaboration with Reykjavík Dance Festival, Reykjavík Art Museum and Fringeberry.
- i8**
Roni Horn
September 22
Photography by Roni Horn
Runs until October 29
- Iðnó**
The Reykjavík International Literary Festival
September 9
20:00 Reading with authors: Bergsveinn Birgisson, Denise Epstein, Bjarni Bjarnason, and Herta Müller
September 10
22:00 Book bar and dance, Geirfluglar play at 23:00
September 11
20:00 Reading with authors: Oddný Eir Ævarsdóttir, Paolo Giordano, Pia Tafdrup, Nawal El Saadawi, and Eiríkur Örn Norðdahl
- Reykjavík Art Museum**
Kjarvalsstaðir
A New Art Emerges
September 10
What happens when a new paradigm in art takes over from another? Does one simply merge into another or are there conflicts and cross currents? The exhibition explores the exciting new art produced in this period and atmosphere on the cultural scene as a new art began to emerge in the first half of the century.
Runs until November 7
- Reykjavík - various venues**
Reykjavík Real Food Festival
September 14

A celebration of Icelandic food and food culture with a range of events that will rock your taste buds. Feast on special festival menus at restaurants across Reykjavík, meet farmers at the market and experience Icelandic culture through various events and happenings.

Runs until September 18

National Gallery of Iceland

Then And Now

September 22

The exhibition is an attempt to emphasise the main features of Icelandic Modern and Contemporary art. The exhibit is in connection with 'History of Icelandic Art, from late 19th century to the beginning of the 21st century, being published by the National Gallery of Iceland and Forlagið Publishers

Runs until December 31

The Living Art Museum

Grassroots IX

September 17

Exhibiting the works of Bryndís Björnsdóttir, Helga Björk Gyldadóttir, Irene Ósk Bermudez, Klængur Gunnarsson, Kolbrún Ýr Einarssdóttir, Kristín Rúnarsdóttir, Sigríður Tulinius, Sigurður Atli Sigurðsson

The Nordic House

Reykjavík Literature Festival

September 10

9:00 - 12:00 Seminar on The Sagas of Icelanders

12:30 - 15:00 Interviews with Vikas Swarup & Pétur Blöndal (EN), Paolo Giordano & Hjalti Snær Ægisson (EN), Matt Haig & Ari Eldjárn (EN), Ingo Schulze & Halldór Guðmundsson (DE), and Denise Epstein & Friðrik Rafnsson (FR)

15:30 - 17:00 Reading with Kristín Marja Baldursdóttir, Steve Sem Sandberg, Ísak

Harðarson and Horacio Castellanos Moya

September 11

13:00 - 15:30 Interviews with Nawal El Saadawi & Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, Horacio Castellanos Moya & Sjón (EN), Pia Tafdrup & Haukur Ingvarsson (DK), Sem-Sandberg & Aðalsteinn Ásberg Sigurðsson (SE), Kristof Magnusson & Ólafur Guðsteinn Kristjánsson (ISL)

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum

Hryggjarstykki (meaning "Backbone", referring to a lost medieval manuscript of Kings Sagas)

September 17

Exhibition of Svava Björnsdóttir's new sculptures, made of compressed paper, and selected sculptures of Sigurjón Ólafsson

Runs until November 27

Spark Design Space

Katrín Ólína

September 16

Graphic artist and illustrator Katrín Ólína exhibits her work, including a 4 x 6 metre rug

Runs until November 16

Bíó Paradís

CRISPIN GLOVER

September 16

The film 'It is Fine. EVERYTHING IS FINE!' and performance Crispin Hellion Glover's Big Slide Show Part 1, followed by a Q&A. Ticket costs 2.500 ISK

September 17

The film 'What Is It?' and performance Crispin Hellion Glover's Big Slide Show Part 2 followed by a Q&A. Ticket costs 2.500 ISK. A ticket to both evenings costs 4.500 ISK

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MAP

Places We Like

1 Grill Market

Lækjargata 2a

New in Reykjavík, Grillmarkaðurinn (The Grill Market) is renowned chef Hrefna Rósa Sætran's latest culinary venture. With a specially crafted grill made to withstand extreme heat, Hrefna and team will be serving up juicy Icelandic dishes to the carnivore's delight.

2 Húmarhúsið

Amtmannstígur 1

One of the oldest restaurants in the country, the lobster house is renowned for its lobster and also its impressive cognac lounge. Fine intimate dining.

3 Hamborgarafabrikkan

Höfðatún 2

Reykjavík's newest burger joint offers up some of the fanciest and craziest burgers in town. The restaurant, owned and operated by two local TV celebs, pulls off some adventurous takes on the classic meat-and-buns. Check out the 'Lamburger' and that crazy chicken breast thing that will make you want to try the whole menu.

4 Gamla Pósthúsið

Pósthússtræti 13

Gamla Pósthúsið is bistro-style restaurant that aims to offer a simple, yet satisfying menu. Try their curiously crafted sandwiches while surfing the net in the afternoon, or go for the entrée menu after 16:00.

5 Pingholt Bar

Pinghóltsstræti 5

Located in CenterHotel Pingholt, Pingholt bar is tucked away just outside of the mayhem that is Laugavegur on a weekend night. For a quieter evening, Pinghóltsbar is definitely worth a closer look. Show up between 17-19 for the daily happy hour.

6 Kaffi Zimsen

Hafnarstræti 18

Kaffi Zimsen is a laid back and cosy pub without a trace of pretension. The welcoming atmosphere is enhanced only by the excellent deals on beer that they offer several times a week. A good place to enjoy a nice drink in good company.



7 English Pub

Austurstræti 12

True to its name, the English Pub offers many different kinds of lager on tap and a whiff of that genuine UK feel. Try the famous "wheel of fortune" where one can win up to a metre of beer with a single spin.

8 Café d'Haiti

Geirsgata 7b/Verbúð 2

Now in a spacious new location, 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 whenever you feel like it, or indulge in beer and low-key concerts at night.

9 66° North

Bankastræti 5

Highly fashionable and highly practical, 66° Norður is a classic outdoors store in Iceland for everybody. Nearly every Icelander has a 66° sweater or two. Their quality apparel is made to last and keeps the elements out. You may also find their products in high-end stores around the world.

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,

Hafnarstræti 20, tel: 540 1313

The Icelandic Travel Market, Bankastræti 2, tel: 522 4979

Trip, Laugavegur 54, tel: 433 8747

Pharmacies

Lyf og heilsa, Egilsgata 3, tel: 563 1020

Lyfja, Laugavegur 16, tel: 552 4045 and

Lágmúla 5, tel: 533-2300

Coach terminal

BSÍ, Vatnsmýrarvegur 10,

tel: 562 1011, www.bsi.is

Domestic airlines

Air Iceland, Reykjavíkflugvöllur,

tel: 570 3030, www.flugfelag.is

Eagle Air, Hótel Loftleiðir, tel: 562-4200

Public transport

The only public transport available in Reykjavík is the bus. Most buses run every 20-30 minutes (the wait may be longer on weekends) and the price per fare is 350 ISK for adults and children. Multiple day passes are available for purchase at select locations. Complete route map available at: www.bus.is. Tel: 540 2700. Buses run from 07:00-24:00 on weekdays and 10:00-24:00 on weekends. Main terminals are: Hlemmur and Lækjartorg

Opening Hours

Bars and clubs: According to regulations, bars can stay open until 01:00 on weekdays and 05:30 on weekends.

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

10:00-16:00, Sun. closed. The shopping centres Kringlan and Smáralind as well as most supermarkets and tourist shops have longer opening hours.

Swimming pools: Weekdays 06:30-22:00 and weekends 09:00-17:00, although each pool varies plus or minus a few hours. **Banks** in the centre are open Mon.-Fri. 09:00-16:00.

Post Offices

Post offices are located around the city. The downtown post office is at Pósthússtræti 3-5, open Mon.-Fri. 09:00-18:00. Stamps are also sold at bookstores, gas stations, tourist shops and some grocery stores.

Café Loki in front of Hallgrímskirkja



Enjoy some solid homemade Icelandic food



HORNIÐ
Restaurant ~ Pizzeria

Hornið opened in 1979 was the first restaurant of its kind in Iceland, a restaurant with a true Italian atmosphere. Hornið is known for good food made out of fresh raw materials, good pizzas baked in front of the guests, good coffee and comfortable service.

Lunch offers every day
Open from 11:00 to 23:00



Restaurant Hornið - Hafnarstræti 15 - +354 551 3440 - www.hornid.is

LEGEND

EATING # DRINKING # SHOPPING

For a map of outside downtown Reykjavík visit www.grapevine.is or the Icelandic phonebook website www.ja.is

13 NEW IN TOWN



St. Paul's, Tryggvagata 16

Their slogan says, "since 1971" but this gourmet sandwich and soup bar is newly opened in downtown Reykjavík! And guess what! They serve bagels! Yes! Bagels! Not frozen bagels from Bónus! But freshly baked bagels! This may not sound like very exciting news to those of you privileged to live in a neighbourhood with a bagel shop around every other corner, but for those of us in Iceland where the bagel shop is non-existent, this is some very exciting news. Yes! Exciting! In addition to bagels, they also have a nice selection of sandwiches, wraps and soup, and everything is moderately priced too. So if you're looking for a quick take away bite to eat (seating is limited), you might want to check out St. Paul's, which is open for business weekdays from 10:00 to 16:00.



A DAY IN THE LIFE

Haukur Már Helgason

Hi and thanks for the offer.

This escaped me completely the first time.

The only problem is, my days are really uninteresting. Less interesting than anyone would imagine and than anyone would benefit from reading about. I hardly even eat, let alone attend concerts. On the rare occasion that I leave the periphery of my house and workspace at all I tend to go to the same café, every single time, not even a really good one, just because they allow smoking there. So ... you know. At first glance it doesn't seem very smart marketing to brag about this.

I'm finishing a film, yes. The details of post-production ... yesterday we realised the whole soundtrack was two frames off sync, and had to reposition and export the film once more, just when we thought we were all done. Or as all done as it gets. This should interest most people even less than the choice of typefaces for the film's credit list, or the route through which we process subtitles, which involves an outrageous number of stand-alone applications, each contributing its tiny bit to the final outcome.

I did buy a ten-trip card to the swimming pools this summer. And went twice. I would love to claim this as a habit, but that would be stretching it ... in both cases, though, I went early in the morning, eight-ish, which is definitely swimming pool prime time. But telling tales about the boyish games that half-naked senior gentlemen play in the locker room wouldn't be very gentlemanly at all.

Last weekend, though, my girlfriend and I went on a trip, aiming for one of those natural hot tubs, or domesticated hot springs, the natural hot spots that people bathe in, and are featured in every tourist guide ever published. I'd never been to one before, so this was definitely occasion for some excitement. After three or four hours driving we did find the place we had been told about, and it looked most awesome: if there's anything that beats nature, it's gentrified nature. The water is kept in place by stone walls erected long enough ago to be moss-grown and covered in flora that looks tropical in comparison with the barren surroundings. The heat of our hot springs, however, seems somewhat exaggerated. As does their liquidity: the little water there in this particular container was neither warm, nor was it in motion, but static, chilly and, as we realised once we decided that we had stayed in there long enough to say we did our best and stepped out, quite muddy. And we forgot to bring towels.

Of course this, however, is no fault of the country or its tourist guides, but rather bears witness to my lack of insight and know-how when it comes to living around here. Or anywhere else for that matter. Which is precisely why it seems both wise and polite to kindly refuse your offer.

Still, thanks a lot.

HMH



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10 Handprjónasambandið

Skólavörðustígur 19

The Hand-knitting Association of Iceland's official store, Handprjónasambandið, sells wool products of uncompromising quality. The store features pullover sweaters, cardigans and other woollen accessories.

Public phones

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

Internet Access

Most cafés offer free wireless internet access. Computers with internet connections are available to use at:

Ráðhúskaffi City Hall, Tjarnargata 11
Ground Zero, Frakkastígur 8, near Laugavegur 45

The Reykjavík City Library, Tryggvagata 15

11 Blue Lagoon Store

Laugavegur 15

Geothermal seawater spa The Blue Lagoon is a world famous healing spot as the water is rich with silica and sulphur that are extremely good for the skin. The natural skin care products produced from the healing minerals are sold at the downtown Blue Lagoon shop.

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 Sruli Recht -The Armoury

Hólmaslóð 4

For the fashionably adventurous, The Armoury is a sort of showroom/store for the designs of Sruli Recht and Megan Herbert, which are on display and for sale. This is the place to find useful products with personality, like brass knuckle umbrellas, whale penis wallets, whale penis shoes, typefaces, and scarves.

Public Toilets

Public toilets in the centre can be found inside the green poster covered towers located, for example, at Hlemmur, Ingólfs-tortorg, 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.

Raggi from the band Árstíðir is the unstoppable...

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ART

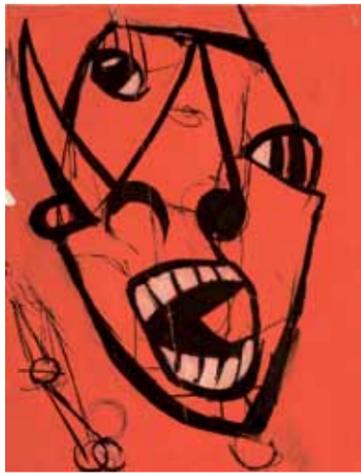
IN SEPTEMBER



Reykjavik Art Museum



Faster and Slower Lines
(Helgi Þorgils Friðjónsson,
Untitled, 1981)



Erró - Drawings



D21 -
Hildigunnur
Birgisdóttir



Christian Ludwig Attersee



Kjarval's oddITIES



A New Art Emerges (Sigurður
Guðmundsson, Still Life, 1968)

21 May – 4 September
**Perspectives – On the Borders
of Art and Philosophy**

3 September 2011 – 26 August 2012
Erró – Drawings

3 September – 6 November
Attersee – Dance in Shirt-Valley

22 September – 30 December
**Faster and Slower Lines –
From the Collection of Pétur
Arason and Ragna Róbertsdóttir**

22 September – 30 December
Tiger Butter

22 September – 20 November
D21 Hildigunnur Birgisdóttir

3 May 2010 – 15 January 2012
Kjarval – Key Works

10 September – 6 November
A New Art Emerges

10 September – 6 November
**Kjarval's oddITIES –
An Untold Story**

30 April 2011 – 15 April 2012
**From Sketch to Sculpture –
Drawings by Ásmundur Sveinsson**

30 April 2011 – 15 April 2012
Magnús Árnason – Homage

Hafnarhús

Tryggvagata 17
Open daily
10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Thursdays 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.



www.artmuseum.is

Kjarvalsstaðir

Flókagata
Open daily
10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

artmuseum@reykjavik.is

Ásmundarsafn

Sigtún
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Geirsgata 7b, 101 Reykjavík
tel: 661 5621 / 588 8484
Opening hours: 8.00 – 23.00

Tjarnabíó

Reykjavik Dance Festival

The Reykjavik Dance Festival first appeared on the dance scene in 2002, created by independent choreographers. Its aim is to bring modern dance to a higher level of visibility within society and introducing the independent dance choreographers currently creating work in Iceland.
Tickets cost 1.000-3.500 ISK

ONGOING

ASÍ Art Museum

The ASÍ 50 Years Anniversary

Runs until September 11

The Culture House

Bundle of words

Art exhibition series in the café and shop are new and older works by artist Ragnhildur Jóhannsdóttir who interlaces visual art, literature and poetry in an innovative way by using old texts and poetry books to create her works

Runs until November

Child of Hope - Youth and Jón Sigurðsson

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

On permanent view

Medieval Manuscripts - Eddas and Sagas

Some of Iceland's medieval manuscripts on display. Guided tour in English on Mondays & Fridays at 15:00

On permanent view

Millennium - phase one

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. Displaying books of Icelandic cultural history dating from the 16th century to the present. Works include oldest published versions of the Sagas, Eddic Poems, and more

On permanent view

Einar Jónsson Museum

Einar Jónsson

The museum contains close to 300 art works spanning a 60 year career: carvings from the artist's youth, sculptures, paintings and drawings. A beautiful tree-clad garden adorned with 26 bronze casts of the artist's works is located behind the museum

On permanent view

Galleri Ágúst

Picture Of Her

Portraits of women Hulda Vilhjálmsdóttir has been working on for the past few years. Her beautifully honest and almost naive approach to the painting has thrilled the guests of the gallery and she has a strong fan base in Iceland. Her women in the paintings are strong and have a story to tell, but it is the audience which needs to interpret the message

Runs until September 25

Galleri Fold

Marta Rosolska Photography

Runs until November 14

Oil paintings by Soffía Sæmundsdóttir

Runs until September 25

Oil paintings by Hrafnhildur Inga Sigurðardóttir

Runs until September 25

Galleri Tukt

Cultural exchange and the vision of foreign volunteers in Iceland

Open 9:00-17:00 on weekdays

Runs until September 10

Gerðuberg

New art Iceland 2011

An exhibition of oil paintings by the naive artist Ármann Kummer Magnússon in the Boginn exhibition area

Runs until October 16

Without consideration

An exhibition in the Cafeteria of pastels by Stefán Hermannsson

Runs until October 9

Stone - scissors - paper and the keys to heaven

An exhibition in the Collectors' Corner

Runs until June 22, 2012

Hafnarborg

In Between

The exhibition refers to the Curiosity cabinet, a Renaissance cultural phenomenon known to be the predecessor of modern public museums

Runs until October 23

Hönnunarsafn - Museum of Design

Our Objects - from the Museum's Collection

Objects acquired by the Museum since

its opening in 1998 will be put on display in the exhibition area. Objects include Icelandic and foreign furniture, graphic design, textiles, ceramics, and glass, to name a few

Runs until October 16

is

Robert Mapplethorpe

The gallery display its first exhibition of works by this photographer

Runs until September 10

Endless Longing, Eternal Return

Ragnar Kjartansson's works pushes himself and his audience to physical and psychological limits, suspending them in an ambivalent state of happiness and mourning, beauty and horror, humor and drama

Runs until October 16

Icelandic Printmakers' Association

Line of Sight

Watercolour exhibition by Derek Mundell (a Brit who moved to Iceland 35 years ago). Open everyday except Monday

Runs until September 11

Kling & Bang

Ripples (Gárur)

Exhibition by visual artists Anna Hallin & Olga Bergmann

Runs until September 18

Knitting Iceland

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

On permanent view

Latin Dance Studio, Faxafen 12

Guided Practica

Argentine tango, Sundays from 17:30-19:30

Register by phone 821 6929 or email tangoadventure@gmail.com, 500 ISK for students, 800 ISK for others. Six week courses are also available

The Living Art Museum

Literacy

Exhibition of works from the collection

Runs until September 11

Laufásvegur 14

HOMIES WHERE MY HEART IS

Monday-Friday from 15-18

Saturday from 12-16

Sunday PERFORMANCE and soup night at 20:00.

Open till september 11th

Mokka Kaffi

Duttlungar

The exhibition consists of portraits by Þrándur Þrándur Þórarinnssonar

Runs until September 22



MEET MIKILMEIR, THE MUSICIAN

Katrín Ólína exhibits at Spark Design

Space

Spark Design Space, Klappartígur 33

September 16 to November 16

Free

Icelandic illustrator Katrín Ólína will open an exhibit at Spark Design Space on September 16, featuring Mikilmeir, a magician with extraordinary powers. His world will be featured on carpets, t-shirts and silk screens, as well as hand drawings.

Self-labelled as a multidisciplinary designer, Katrín's work has ranged from designing porcelain, textiles and snowboards to animation and interior design. One of her interior design projects includes Cristal Bar in Hong Kong, where her art design was applied to the interior of the bar.

When talking about her work, Katrín refers to a "world that [she] is growing". Her designs involve a world of mysterious creatures and nature, in a "growing universe".

The exhibition is definitely worth checking out and this will be Katrín's first exhibition in Iceland since her last installation with Crymogea during Design March 2010. Her work will also be on sale there until November 16.

ART

IN SEPTEMBER



Erró Shows Off His Drawings

And recommends checking out Attersee too

Reykjavík Art Museum, Hafnarhús

Runs until August 26

1.000 ISK (admission also valid at Kjarvalsstaðir and the Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum)

So beloved is Erró that the Reykjavík Art Museum, Hafnarhús has a special sitting room dedicated to him. While the museum has a permanent Erró collection, this exhibit is different. Rather than a display of the collages that he is well known for, it's a display of his drawings—over 200 of them, which date back to 1944. There are also some cool videos featuring Erró in action, providing some insight into how he winds up producing his collages.

On the day before the exhibit opened on September 3, Erró gave the press a walking tour through his work and insisted that we walk through the Attersee exhibit as well. The exhibit features graphic works by the Austrian artist Christian Ludwig Attersee, which have been donated to the museum by Attersee and his gal-lerist and compatriot Ernst Hilger.

So definitely go check out Erró and Attersee, and when you're through, we recommend sitting down for a cup of coffee or some soup at the upstairs café, which has a fantastic view over the harbour.

National Gallery of Iceland

Femme - Louise Bourgeois

28 works by Louise Bourgeois, principally installations or "cells" and sculptures, but also paintings, drawings and textiles

Runs until September 11

Kjarval, from the collection of Jón Þorsteinsson and Eyrún Guðmunds-dóttir

Exhibition of cubist paintings by

Jóhannes S. Kjarval

Runs until September 11

Strides

Changes in Icelandic painting from the

late 1800s to the 2000s

Runs until December 31, 2012

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

BE YE WELCOME, MY GOOD FRIENDS!

Collection of carved Nordic drinking

horns

Runs until December 31

Ásfjall

Collection of Pétur Thomsen's photo-

graphs

Runs until October 2

Kurt Dejmo exhibition

Collection of Kurt Dejmo's photographs

Runs until October 2

The Nordic House

The Library

The collection centres on new Nordic

literature, both fiction and non-fiction.

The library lends out novels, academic

publications, audio books and more

On permanent view

Reykjavík Art Museum

Ásmundarsafn

From Sketch to Sculpture - Draw-

ings by Ásmundur Sveinsson

Runs until April 22, 2012

Magnús Arnason - Homage

Runs until April 22, 2012

Hafnarhús

Erró - Drawings

The exhibition consists of 180 drawings

Erró has done since 1944 until the present

day.

Runs until August 19, 2012

Christian Ludwig Attersee

The museum was gifted 63 works by

Christian Ludwig Attersee from

from 1970 - 2010. Most of them are on

display

Runs until November 6

Kjarvalsstaðir

Jóhannes S. Kjarval - Key Works

Runs until January 15, 2012

Reykjavík City Museum

Reykjavík 871 +/- 2 (The Settlement

Exhibition)

Archaeological findings from ruins of

one of the first houses in Iceland and

other excavations in the city centre,

open daily 10:00-17:00, 600 ISK per adult,

300 ISK for children (children under 12,

free) and 450 ISK per person in groups

(10+)

On permanent view

Reykjavík Maritime Museum

From Poverty to Abundance

Photos documenting Icelandic fishermen

at the turn of the 20th century

On permanent view

The History of Sailing

Iceland's maritime history and the

growth of the Reykjavík Harbour

On permanent view

The Coast Guard Vessel Óðinn

Display of vessel that took part in all

three Cod Wars

On permanent view

Baiting Bright Fishhooks

Exhibition about the Little Fishing

Book by Jón Sigurðsson, containing

guidelines to fishing equipment and

processing

Runs until December 31

The Herring Adventure

This exhibition explores the adventur-

ous herring era, using the photographs

of Haukur Helgason from 1953-57, the

short film of Sigurður Guðmundsson

from 1941 and various object related to

the herring fishing

Runs until September 18

The Call of Sagas

A exhibition from Finland about a

adventurous voyage in an open boat

from Finland to Iceland, honoring the

old viking shipping routes

Ongoing

The Watercolours of Ólafur Thorlacius

Ólafur Þór worked with the Icelandic

Coast Guard for many years as a

mapmaker. He is now retired and paints

beautiful watercolors in his free time.

Ongoing

Reykjavík Museum of Photography

50 Years Of Photography

An exhibition of photograph Marc

Riboud spanning 50 years of his career

as a photo journalist. His work has ap-

peared in Life, Géo, National Geographic,

Paris Match and Stern

Runs until January 8, 2012

Leifur Þorsteinsson exhibition

The fourth part of Leifur Þorsteinsson's

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of Iceland's most prominent artists in

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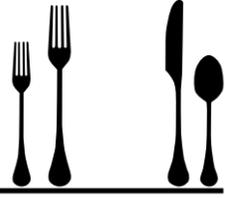
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LET'S SPLIT A SAUSAGE TART

Litli bóndabærinn
Laugavegur 41, 101 Reykjavík
G G G G G
What We Think: Small selection. Nice farmer's market vibe. Great pies.
Flavour: UK/Icelandic/N-European. Root veggies. Sage. Grain.
Ambiance: Grandma meets student (for a roll in the hay)
Service: Helping you help yourself

Litli bóndabærinn (like St. Paul's) is very much a one-person show. David, owner and sole employee (for the time being) is responsible for every aspect of the operation and is quite an attraction in his own right. Another British expat like Paul at St. Paul's, he is offering a distinctly British variety of small lunch offerings (Litli bóndabærinn's Facebook page claims it's a "wholefoods takeaway mini-bistro"). However, the sandwiches are not the main attraction as much as the out-of-this-world meat pie I was lucky enough to try there. But more about that later.

As I mentioned, David himself is a big draw. Luvvy and just a little OTT, I was carpet bombed with more casual sexual innuendo crammed into a five

minute conversation than I knew how to deal with. While this sort of thing could easily get obnoxious, David remains affable and charming and his playful and down-to-earth demeanour infuses the place.

As far as I know, there is no place in Reykjavík quite like Litli bóndabærinn. The food is all organic and locally grown for the most part, but not limited to vegan or raw food (although the chef and owner is a vegetarian he has no qualms about putting meat dishes on the menu). And if the operation can seem shambolic at times, it is not underpinned by an anarchist or collectivist philosophy like some of the other downtown coffee houses of the same suit. Instead a Northern European, down home charm seems to be the aim.

Not to say that the place isn't without its faults. The opening hours have been erratic and as charming as it may be to eat a sandwich from a saucer and drink soup from a paper coffee cup, the flatware would need to be stepped up. But Litli bóndabærinn is clearly a work in progress, and a brief talk with the owner revealed that he has ambitions to expand the business into wholesale produce and a larger menu.

For now Litli bóndabærinn is primarily a coffee house with a selection of small, tasty dishes. My companion and I both ordered the sandwich (650 ISK or a 950 ISK lunch offer with a drink

of your choice) and sausage tart (450 ISK). The sandwich was vegetarian with a salad and roasted organic vegetables. The thick whole-wheat bread was crumbly, and the oils from the vegetables loosened it up further and this made for a tricky eating experience. The flavour was strong and earthy and with a hint of sage and possibly fresh thyme but ended up having to be scooped up from the saucer in soggy lumps which was a slight annoyance.

The flaky tart stuffed with sausage meat and sage, layered with apples and currants was beyond approach. Hands down the best meaty tarty thing I've tasted in Iceland. The saltiness of the sausage stuffing and the tarty sweetness of the apples playing off each other very nicely. And at 450 ISK, it's very easy on the purse, especially considering the quality of the ingredients. It's only too bad that I can't guarantee its place on the menu, as the lunch items are changed up regularly at the proprietor's whim.

Litli bóndabærinn lacks in selection. At the moment, it's more of a coffee shop than a restaurant. But what they do have on offer is excellent, and the farmer's market vibe is necessary and commendable. ☺

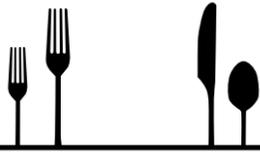
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REVIEWS



THE BAGUETTE SLINGER

St. Paul's

Tryggvagata 16, 101 Reykjavík



What We Think: Indulge in a good lunch sandwich without breaking the bank

Flavour: Anglo-Indian and French

Ambiance: Small and to-go

Service: Intimate, casual, good

Now, I am not a food snob. Food snobs probably make jokes like "the meal was less degustation than a disgustation" (do they?) and douse their morning quail egg omelette in Verjus and Lambda oil (probably not...). I'm guessing they won't find themselves at 4 AM last weekend, propped up on the fridge door trying to decide if that week old shrimp sandwich suspended in grey liquid might still be north of a stomach pump.

Now that I've razed your appetite, you can see why a lovely, Spartan sandwich place like St. Paul's could appeal to me and my doctor. It's a pity that it is, as of yet, only open for lunch service but I will take what I can get since I think we're all getting a little tired of the sloppy manwiches at Hlöllabátar/Nonnabátar and the cardboard of the American sandwich chains.

St. Paul's is a recent addition to the Icelandic sandwich scene started by Scouse drummer Paul Maguire—who's hip, greying and frizzy and looks a little like the third Blonde Redhead brother. It's a literal hole in the wall and only a little out of the way down the street from the Reykjavík Art Museum and within spitting distance of the harbour (not that you'll be doing much spitting). The kitchen is crammed up against the counter under a surprisingly high ceiling and felt like being inside one of those long, straight Tetris blocks that you could always find use for. Likewise, the tiny white tile kitchen somehow accommodates a large high-end stove and a length of cupboards. Sadly, those physics-bending properties don't extend to the seating that only rooms three and is propped up against the windowsill. Luckily there's always the option of taking it to go and having a seat on the pier.

The focus is on baguettes, along with a couple of types of wraps and a soup of the day. I had the figure-friendly Brie, jam and bacon combo (950 ISK), while the hired help had the coronation chicken wrap (890 ISK). And we both went with the basil tomato soup (890 ISK), heavy on the basil and marginally cooler than a pool of lava. My sandwich was rich but the redcurrant jelly cut through the creaminess, the bread was fresh and they didn't skimp on the Brie considering the price. The Indian-style corona-

tion wrap chicken in a chutney-yoghurt sauce (some guesswork about the exact ingredients) was a little slighter but made up for it with spicy goodness (not hot though)

My only gripe is the "Since 1971" (or whatever year it was). It's silly. I get that the owner is probably referencing the year of his birth, but this is false advertising and it grates.

It's not health food but the ingredients are fresh and filling. St. Paul's is a nice addition to the lunch scene in downtown Reykjavík, but I would like to see a more adventurous selection and I'm curious to see where they take it (may I at least recommend adding a Vietnamese sandwich to the selection while we're waiting for the first proper Bánh mì place? (I seem to be addicted to parentheses)).

✍️ RAGNAR EGILSSON
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Ratings run from zero to five Gs and reflect the overall experience of the reviewer. A fast food place will be compared to other fast food places and rated accordingly. Note that 2.5 Gs is not a failing grade—it means 'average'. A solid 5 Gs means 'as good as it gets'. Zero means food poisoning. You get the idea.



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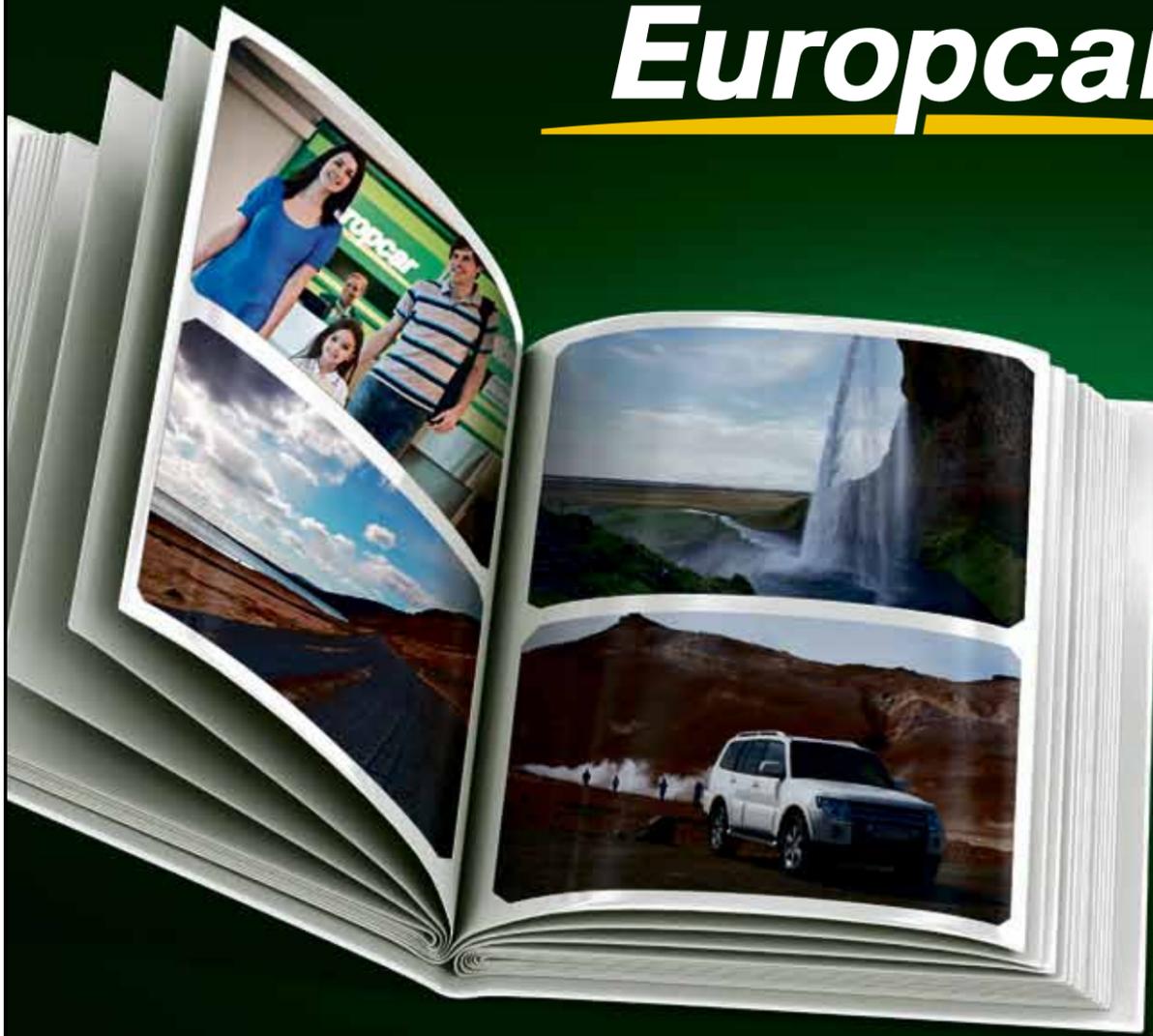
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