



# The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

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**IN THE ISSUE** Issue 6 • 2012 • **May 18 - 31**

**+ COMPLETE CITY LISTINGS - INSIDE!**

#### EUROVISION

It's happening again...

#### SHOPPING

Everyone is **CRAZY** about Bauhaus!

#### MUSIC

Lots and lots of music!

#### HISTORY

GusGus bid a dramatic farewell to Nasa

#### TROLLS

They are everywhere!

**SIGUR RÓS**  
**Back in blur**

In the wake of a four-year hiatus—amidst rumours of a slow fade and even a possible split—Sigur Rós are stepping back into the limelight with their sixth full-length album, scheduled for release at the end of May. We sit down with the band to discuss the past and present of Sigur Rós. P20

# THE REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

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Photo by:  
 Lilja Birgis



Editorial | Anna Andersen

## OUR SUMMER IS HERE!

Anna's 7th Editorial



It may have snowed last week, but summer is here at The Grapevine. It started about two weeks ago and it will continue all the way into October.

This means that we'll be printing these papers every other week—twice as fast as we normally do. This also means that we'll have more space to pack in all of the exciting stuff that happens here, in what must be one of the smallest big cities out there.

With just under 200,000 people, Reykjavík certainly is productive. It's only May and already we have two big music festivals. As this paper hits the streets, the new Reykjavík Live Festival (see Listings pullout inside) is winding down, and then come end of the month there's the second annual

Reykjavík Music Mess (see page 24). These will be followed by one million other festivals and event, and they won't be limited to Reykjavík; the whole country is in on the madness.

By the end, it'll probably be cold and dark and rainy, but there will still be plenty happening. The Icelandic summer appears to be just bursting at its seams with Iceland Airwaves now spilling over into November. So do come and enjoy it, but be sure to bring your raingear (not your umbrella though; they don't work on this island).

As for us, we'll do our best to keep you informed and then we'll probably go crawling to our caves. Until then, happy summer!

TRÖLL by Gísli Darri



They are also afraid of lipstick

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Say your piece, voice your opinion, send your letters to: [letters@grapevine.is](mailto:letters@grapevine.is)

## Sour grapes & stuff

### MOST AWESOME LETTER:

HI, I AM A NEWFOUNDLAND FISHERMAN AND TODAY MY GRANDDAUGHTER AND I FOUND A LETTER IN A BOTTLE THAT WAS THROWN OVERBOARD OFF ICELAND ON NOVEMBER 19, 2009. MY GRANDDAUGHTER WOULD REALLY LIKE TO CONTACT THE LITTLE GIRL WHO SEND THE LETTER ( BY WAY OF HER FRIEND'S FATHER WHO IS ALSO A FISHERMAN ). HERE IS THE INFORMATION WE HAVE.

THIS CHILD IS NAMED LARUS AND WENT TO A PLAYSCHOOL CALLED HOLT IN INNRI, NJAROVIK. HE/SHE WOULD BE 5 NOW AND WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE KNOWING THE BOTTLE WITH THE NOTE MADE IT ALL THE WAY TO NEWFOUNDLAND, CANADA.

I HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO REACH THIS PERSON, BUT PERHAPS YOU COULD HELP. THANKS, DAVID BOYD

### MOST AWESOME LETTER

#### TWO FREE PAIRS OF WOOLLEN SOCKS!!!!

There's a wonderful new prize for all your **MOST AWESOME LETTERS**. What kind of prize, you ask? THE BEST KIND OF PRIZE THERE IS: **FREE WOOLLEN SOCKS! TWO PAIRS OF FREE WOOLLEN SOCKS!**

Yes, this lovely prize will keep your feet warm and cosy throughout your stay in Iceland and in any subsequent places you might go that sometimes get cold. And these aren't just any old woollen socks either, these are the **colourful, wonderful, extra-long kind from Geysir** (for inspiration, why not go check them out at the Geysir store on Skólavörðustígur before you write your AWESOME LETTER?).

Congratulations to whoever had MOST AWESOME LETTER for this issue, you should drop us a line at [letters@grapevine.is](mailto:letters@grapevine.is) and enquire how you collect your free socks! And if you're in the market for some socks come next issue, why not write us a wonderful reader letter to that same address. Like Axl Rose said: "It's so easy!"



YOU MAY CHECK OUT MY WEBSITE FOR CONTACT INFO

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Dear David Boyd,

This is awesome. This is so awesome that you have just won yourself TWO PAIRS of WOOLLEN SOCKS FROM GEYSIR (one for yourself and one for your granddaughter, perhaps). Wow, we thought everything we threw out to sea ended up in Greenland or some island of trash like the Great Pacific Garbage Patch (AKA the Pacific Trash Vortex), which floats around the Pacific. Anyways, we have so many questions! Like, what did the message say?

To clear up: Larus from Holt í innri Njarðvík is definitely a boy. No little girl in Iceland could possibly be called Larus. In Iceland, girls are not allowed to have boy's names and boys and not allowed to have girl's names. There is actually a special Naming Committee that oversees all of this. However, if you are

a boy that feels trapped in a girl's body, you can have gender corrective surgery after undergoing a series of interviews that are meant to determine whether or not your feelings are merited (it's a bit more complicated than that, of course. You can read more about it on page ten, where we interview Anna Kristjánsdóttir, the first Icelander to undergo sexual reassignment surgery. Her story is fascinating and inspiring).

ANYWAY. We're not sure how to reach him/her, BUT it's actually probably not too difficult. We are a fairly small country and if she really is called Larus, well then there certainly aren't more than one of those at school (and even if it's a boy called Larus. There are not a lot of people in Innri Njarðvík). Hopefully one of Larus' relatives will spot this letter and pass it on! Let us know if they do, and remember to write us about the woollen socks!

Dear Grapevine,

I just returned home from a trip to your island. We had a fantastic time, but I would like to point out one aspect of our trip which left us (the majority of our party) feeling...well... a bit violated. It is the practice of having your guests strip nude in front of other people in order to swim in the geo-thermal pools. An older Icelandic woman even had the audacity to show me where the soap was. I am a clean person, who bathes regularly and being subjected to this made me feel horrible. Where can Americans who are not used to stripping nude in front of other people swim in Iceland and have you all considered how this infringes on our rights to be modest and in several cases our religious beliefs?

Sincerley,  
Shirley Tatum, San Antonio Texas, U.S.A.

Dear Shirley Prude Tatum,

If you don't feel comfortable showering before taking a dip in our swimming pools, we kindly ask you to stay out of them. People like you are ruining our swimming pool experience. Nobody wants to swim around in somebody else's filth. It just totally grosses us out.

As the signs in the showering area CLEARLY show, you must wash all six-body parts before entering the pool. In case you missed them, it's simple; they are all of the ones that grow hair.

Bottom line, we Icelanders take great pride in our personal hygiene, and our right to have clean pool water trumps your right to be prude and your right to worship The Swamp Thing or whatever entity it is that forbids you to shower in public.

Seriously, though, is that in the Bible somewhere? Did the same Lord who allegedly created all of our wonderful bodies (you should see some of those bodies He worked on, they look frickin' GREAT. Praise unto Him) declare somewhere in His scripture that they were EVIL and to be hid away for all eternity? That doesn't sound like Him at all. Frankly, it seems ludicrous to suggest that the same omniscient, omnipotent entity that once declared: "Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him

lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him." (Leviticus 24:14) would find something shameful about the human body (or about showering in public for that matter) that He created in His image.

THAT SAID, we hear you can probably shower behind a curtain in a few select pools, like Laugardalslaug and at The Blue Lagoon. But you should still stay out of our pools, prudey.

Good day!

I was disappointed to see that the Grapevine's bad advice column, Don't Ask Nanna, was not included in this month's issue. Does that mean it's no longer a feature?

-John Evicci  
Dracut, Massachusetts  
USA

Dear John Evicci,

Thank you for your letter. It's nice to hear from our readers, especially when they enjoy what we're writing. That said, we enjoy angry letters too. They are pretty fun to read and answer. We imagine the Don't Ask Nanna column makes some people laugh while it makes others, such as Miss Shirley Tatum with her phobia of the human body, squirm in their seat. Perhaps the next letter we get with regard to Nanna will come from a poor tourist who followed her bad advice to prison. Anyways, to answer your question: The Don't Ask Nanna column is definitely still around and she's on page 24 in this issue. Enjoy!

If anybody has a question for Nanna, she'd love to give you some bad advice. Her email address is [Nanna.arnadottir@gmail.com](mailto:Nanna.arnadottir@gmail.com).

Come back and visit us soon!

Ms Ásta R. Jóhannesdóttir  
Honourable Speaker of Althingi,  
Parliament of Iceland

Dear Madame Speaker,

I am aware that there is a proposal in the Icelandic Parliament calling for the government to formally acknowledge

the genocide of Armenians committed by the Ottoman Empire in 1915. (\*1)

Born in Paris, I am a descendant of survivors of this genocide. I am sincerely touched by this Icelandic proposal which is another friendly step helping Armenians to their mourning period. A genocide drives out death and replaces it by murder and dehumanisation. A genocide breaks the human chain of transmissibility, death being the natural link which joins generations to each other. (\*2) I also would like to recall that Assyrian-Arameans and Pontic Greeks of the Ottoman Empire were victims of the genocidal program of the Young Turks Government too. (\*3) This genocidal program was not based on muslim religion but on a racial ideology called pantouranism. (\*4)

The Armenian, Assyrian-Aramean and Pontic Greek mournings will really begin when Turkey recognizes these 3 genocides : as in 1970 Willy Brandt kneeled in front of the Warsaw Monument dedicated to the Victims of Nazism.

Lastly, I would like to take the opportunity with this e-mail to acknowledge that in Iceland there were three Armenian Archbishops living during the XI century. Their names were Petrus, Abraham and Stephanus and they are quoted in Íslendingabók of Ari Thorgilsson Frodi (1068-1148). Sincerely yours.

Nil Agopoff,  
- Historical Consultant of the Armenian National Veterans and Resistant Association of France (ANACRA)  
- Member of the Board of Directors of UCFAF (Union culturelle française des Arméniens de France founded in Paris in 1949)

Dear Nil Agopoff,

thank you for your letter. It's hard to disagree with anything you say or make light of it at all. So we won't. Hopefully, Alþingi will pass this worthy proposal.

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REYKJAVÍK 14, May-- Incumbent president Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson at the launch of his campaign last weekend, where he immediately dived into the offensive. Among other things, ORG accused the media of taking sides—against him, and in favor of one of his seven opponents: Þóra Arnórsdóttir. PHOTO: SIGTRYGGUR ARI / DV

## News In Brief: May Edition

Just when we thought we had heard the last of the **Worm of Lagarfljót**, a former FBI agent showed up searching for the mythical creature. We're not sure if he was successful, but we would probably have heard about it if he had been.

Then there were some rumours that Iceland would play **Planet Vulcan** in the next Star Trek movie. This wouldn't be the first time that Iceland stars in a Hollywood film, and it certainly won't be the last. At least two Hollywood films, Darren Aronofsky's **'Noah'** and Ben Stiller's **'The Secret Life of Walter Mitty'**, will be filmed here this summer and fall.

Back on Earth, Iceland continues to negotiate its **accession into the European Union**. If we join, the government has requested that we be exempt from setting our clocks forward for European Summer Time on the grounds that it would cause "unnecessary confusion and unpleasantness."

The European Union may be ready to give us that, but unless an agreement can be reached in the current **mackerel**

**dispute**, it will likely move forward with an import trade ban on all Icelandic and Faroese fish products.

Icelanders are among the **least likely of western Europeans to use condoms**, according to a survey conducted by the University of Akureyri. Well, it could be worse; Iceland is also the **second-best country in the world to be a mother**, according to data compiled by Barnaheill ("Save the Children").

The capital area bus service company Strætó hf. announced that they will be **lengthening bus service hours**, and increasing the frequency of passing buses. So you can expect more busses starting June 3.

With double the mass transportation, Reykjavík Mayor Jón Gnarr believes that it would be realistic for the capital area to **ditch its cars completely**: "This will naturally be a tremendous change for people living in the capital area. It will reduce air pollution and lead to a decrease in car traffic, and maybe give people the realistic option of **not driving their cars**, but

using only mass transportation."

In more serious news, two asylum seekers from Algeria, aged 15 and 16, were **sentenced to 30 days in prison** after arriving to Keflavík with false passports. Many were up in arms over this. The Icelandic Government Agency for Child Protection pointed out that Icelandic children would never have been sentenced for the same crime. Minister of the Interior **Ögmundur Jónasson** said that this situation underlined the importance of reworking existing laws on asylum seekers. Read more about this on page 18.

Speaking of legislation, a bill providing clearer **protections for transgendered people** in Iceland has been submitted to parliament and aims to become law this June. Read more about this as well as an interview with the first Icelander to undergo sexual reassignment surgery on page 10.

On the election front it looks like incumbent President **Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson** is neck and neck with opponent **Þóra Arnórsdóttir**. While Þóra is taking a break

from her campaign to give birth, however, Ólafur has gone on the offensive, claiming that she would be **"dangerous"** for the country.

Speaking at the European Cities Against Drugs (ECAD) conference in Ireland, Ólafur also shared his thoughts on combating drug use amongst kids. He prescribes: **one hour of family time per day**, participation in sports, and abstaining from alcohol until age 18.

Meanwhile, **Selfoss** clearly doesn't read news about Kópavogur (or our news in brief), which was plagued by seagulls last month when dried meat pellets were used to fertilize a field. Yes, Selfoss **made the same mistake and the birds descended on Selfoss...** 🍷

### Trivia Question!

Which country sent the greatest number of tourist to Iceland in 2011?

Germany  
France  
USA  
UK  
Denmark  
Spain

Turn to page 24 for the answer. Hint: It was not Belgium.



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## Vegetarians Beware!

You'd think these foods were safe to eat, but no...



So, you're visiting Iceland for the first time, and you want to experience as much of Iceland's culture as possible, which means trying some classic Icelandic edibles. If you're vegetarian, you'll skip some traditional dishes like fish and lamb. But there's always skyr and Icelandic cheese to keep your protein intake high... or is there?

Are you familiar with rennet? It's an enzyme used in dairy products to make milk coagulate. It is typically produced in the stomachs of young mammals, which use it for the same purpose, to digest their mother's milk. As this rennet is taken from the stomachs of dead animals, it is not vegetarian, and renders any product that is made with it non-vegetarian.

As a vegetarian, you might know this and try to avoid such products—though vegetarian rennet is sometimes used as well. The problem is that the package does not have to state whether the rennet that is used is vegetarian or made with animal enzymes (at least here in Iceland). The ingredient to look for in Iceland is "ostahleypir," but if you don't get in touch with the producers themselves, you won't know for sure whether your favourite cheese is vegetarian or not.

So which Icelandic products are actually made with rennet?

Skyr is a popular dairy product invented by accident hundreds of years ago. It's sold in all kinds of flavours, from vanilla to caramel. Although it appears to be yoghurt, it is actually a type of soft cheese and tastes a bit sour. As it is very low in fat it is excellent for a healthy diet. It also contains more protein than regular yoghurt as the water in the milk is strained off.

For hundreds of years skyr has been made with rennet. The largest dairy producer, Mjólkursamsalan (MS), does not use a coagulant in their production of skyr (which includes skyr.is). However, the second largest producer of skyr, KEA, still produces it this way. So, if you really want to stick to your vegetarian diet, don't eat KEA skyr.

The second dairy product that is produced with rennet on a large scale is cheese. You can find an abundance of various cheeses made in Iceland in the refrigerated aisle at any grocery store—from gouda to mozzarella to cheddar.

We checked with MS, which confirmed that they are using animal rennet for most of their cheeses: "The ones that are without animal rennet are our cream cheeses, but they are without rennet or ostahleypir altogether." In fact, even their sour cream is made with rennet, and, even more surprisingly, it also contains gelatine.

So if you love cheese, but want to scrap rennet, you should avoid any product made with ostahleypir. To keep your diet vegetarian, you might have to turn to organic producers, such as Biobú, which tend not to use animal rennet. But still, always check before consuming. 🍷

## So What's This Bauhaus Thing I Keep Hearing About?

Well, you'd think that it were a modernist masterpiece by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe or Walter Gropius judging by the hordes of people who went to see it on opening day. But no, it's a supersized hardware store called Bauhaus, which has outlets in sixteen countries. A whopping six percent of Iceland's total population visited the store on opening day, purchasing goods for over a billion krónur. That is about eight million dollars, six million euros or, in British terms, an arseload of dosh. That's one reason Iceland has been abuzz about Bauhaus; the other is that it's not often that the undead rise from their grave.

### CONSUMERS AREN'T BRAINLESS ZOMBIES, YOU LATTE-SIPPING ELITIST!

I wasn't saying that the twenty thousand hardware store aficionados are undead, but that this branch of Bauhaus is. It was originally supposed to open in 2008, but because Iceland went straight to financial hell that year, plans were put on hold indefinitely. Since the financial crash, it has been referred to as the German Ruin, the Abandoned Farm, and the Haunted Mansion, as it sat derelict on top of a prominent hill on the outskirts of the city.

### WAS IT LIT UP AT NIGHT BY FORKED LIGHTNING ACCOMPANIED BY THUNDER THAT SOUNDED LIKE THE CACKLING OF A THOUSAND EVIL GRINS?

It wasn't so much Dracula's Castle as it was a big box of sadness to remind everyone who drove by that a lot of money was spent before the crash on things that came to nothing. Near Bauhaus is perhaps the most depressing of such sights: the desolate, barely inhabited Úlfarásdalur neighbourhood, which looks more like a set for an especially bleak zombie apocalypse movie than a place to live. But then, seemingly out of nowhere, Bauhaus rose from the dead. It's an unconventional marketing strategy, but there is nothing that will ensure that a whole nation knows about you like becoming the metaphorical gravestone of its financial system.

### WOULDN'T THAT KEEP PEOPLE AWAY? WHY DID THE HORDE DESCEND ON THIS SYMBOL OF ECONOMIC DEVASTATION?

Despite having become an indelible signifier of bad times, Bauhaus is still a foreign retailer and therefore new and shiny. This is certainly not the first time that Icelanders have gone a bit overboard when a new store of foreign origin enters the market. Just this past

winter Icelandic consumers welcomed the mildly stylish Swedish clothing chain Lindex like it was the second coming of Zombie Coco Chanel.

To understand how six percent of the inhabitants of a country can be

*"Living in Iceland means you are always an ocean away from anything new and different."*

induced to swarm the opening of a German hardware store, you have to remember that the nation of Iceland is like a sad polar bear, adrift in the North Atlantic, hungry for novelty. Living in Iceland means you are always an ocean away from anything new and different. So when an exotic, foreign store arrives on these shores, Icelanders greet it with the bewildered excitement of a starving polar bear chancing upon a Midsummer's Night orgy.

### MIDSUMMER'S NIGHT ORGY, YOU SAY. I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU COULD INTRODUCE ME...

No, but you can experience what it feels like to be a lonely polar bear or the last survivor of a zombie apocalypse by wandering amongst the hundreds of bathroom products, tarpaulin and industrial lubricants in the twenty two thousand square metre store. That is, converted to English measurements, big enough to have an orgy in without anyone noticing. In the easternmost corner. On the Solstice. Tell them Grapevine sent you. 🍷

KÁRI TULINIUS  
EYÞÓR ÁRNASON / DV

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# Being Transgender in Iceland

*Iceland has not always been this liberal, Anna Kristjánsdóttir tells us*



**Iceland is known for its liberal attitude towards gay people—it was in fact the first European country to recognise same-sex unions in 1996 and adoption by gay people in 2006, and then it was the first to elect an openly gay head of state in 2009. But how does Icelandic society respond to transgender people? Is it just as supportive?**

The transgender community is certainly not as prominent as the gay community. However, transgender people seem to have gained more recognition, and if a bill sent to Alþingi this March becomes law Iceland could become number one in terms of transgender rights in the Nordic countries.

## BEING ICELAND'S FIRST TRANSGENDER PERSON

The situation was, however, not all that rosy twenty years back. Anna Kristjánsdóttir was the first Icelandic person to undergo a sexual reassignment surgery, or SRS, sixteen

years ago. She has been divorced for 28 years and has three kids with her ex-wife and six grandchildren.

all other nations in terms of attitudes toward transgender people in the late '80s, but at first it was a struggle there as well," she says.

*"It's the attitude that matters, and the Icelandic attitude is good. For single people, for gay people and now it is becoming increasingly better—if slowly—for trans people too."*

Although she was in her early forties when she made the transition, Anna had been thinking about it for many years. "I don't think it happened in such a radical way," Anna says. "I'd been dreaming about it all the time, since I was a kid, as I was never satisfied with my gender."

Anna's search for help from the Icelandic medical community in Iceland, which began in the 1980s, was entirely unsuccessful. "At first, the reactions were negative, from all over Iceland," she says. "You can say that I was forced to move away in the end, because I didn't get any help here in Iceland."

She thus relocated to Sweden in 1989. "Sweden was ahead of

"I was a member of the Swedish Transsexual Society at the time, but it wasn't until 1992, when I got help from a doctor in Uppsala, that everything became much easier. I went through a SRS in April 1995."

## ACCEPTANCE COMES SLOWLY

Anna moved back to Iceland in 1996 and began searching for work. "I sent out seventy job applications before I got a job—and it was in some cases clearly because of what I had done," she says. "I was the only transgender person in Iceland at that time and that's probably why I got mainly negative attitudes from people. I kept on trying though."

While it took a long time, Anna says attitudes are changing due to the growth of the transgender community in Iceland, which she estimates at around 50 people today. "I believe that gay legislation in 1996 played a big role in changing points of view for our community as well. In 2007, we founded the society Trans-Iceland, which was part of getting more acceptance from the outside," she says. "Around 2005/2006 attitudes really seemed to change, partly because more people came out. The healthcare system adopted a much more positive stance on transgender issues, which made it much easier for us."

Incorporating such a huge change in her personal life given her role as a mother has also been challenging. Anna acknowledges that it was a difficult phase for the kids, but that things have again become better and that at least one of them is very positive about her today. A beautiful anecdote underlines this: for his mother's sixtieth birthday, her oldest son

wrote on his Facebook that he was "very proud of the woman his father has become."

## SEEKING TRANSGENDER RIGHTS

While things are looking up in Iceland due to the bill on transgender rights, which would make Iceland number one of the Nordic countries in terms of transgender rights, the situation is far from perfect. "I think that today Iceland is at the same stage as Germany, the Netherlands and the UK when it comes to attitudes," she says. "In all these countries you can of course still find discrimination." Last month in Reykjavík, for instance, a transgender person was beaten up in a men's restroom by three men who did not approve of his use of the toilets.

Anna is nevertheless optimistic. "It's the attitude that matters, and the Icelandic attitude is good. For single people, for gay people and now it is becoming increasingly better—if slowly—for trans people too," Anna says, smiling. ☺

## WHAT'S IN THE PROPOSED LAW ON TRANSGENDER RIGHTS?

The proposed law's objective is to guarantee that transgender people are treated equally before law according to human rights and fundamental freedoms.

If it is passed this June, Landspítali National University Hospital of Iceland will be required to have a team of specialists on Gender Identity Disorder (GID). The team will include psychiatrists, psychologists and endocrinologists, and its role will be to diagnose and treat individuals with GID.

The Minister of Welfare will employ an expert committee on GID, including two doctors and one lawyer, appointed by the minister. The committee will serve a four-year term.

After an individual diagnosed with GID has worked with the team of doctors at Landspítali and confirmed their new gender with the expert committee, the committee will notify The National Registry. The individual will then be permitted to change their name according to their new gender

(note: In Iceland, males must take male names and females must take female names as recognised by a special Naming Committee).

An individual who is registered in The National Registry but undergoes a sexual reassignment surgery (SRS) while living abroad can request that the National Registry change their name in their database. The National Register will assess the application, including whether the name change and/or correction of sex have been authorised by competent authorities or courts.

An individual who has changed genders will be guaranteed the same rights as people of this gender enjoy.

In the case that an individual decides to return to their previous sex, they may seek help from Landspítali's team of doctors, which will review the application and potentially revoke the gender change (this is very rare).

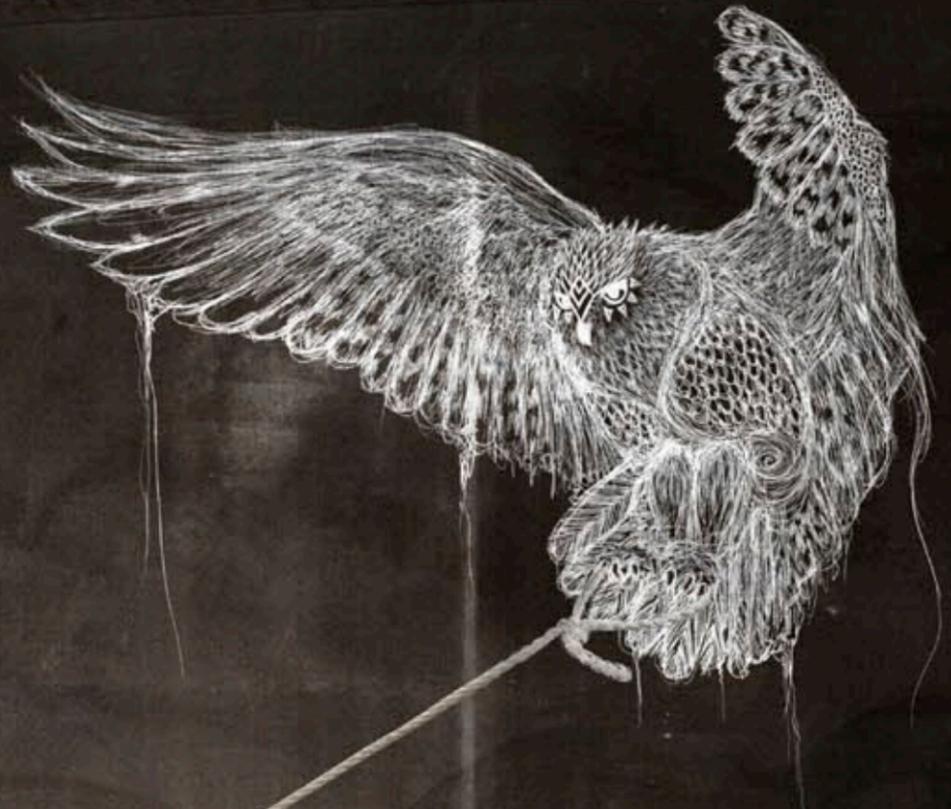
The proposed law will be voted on this June 27, 2012, on the anniversary of the Stonewall Riots.

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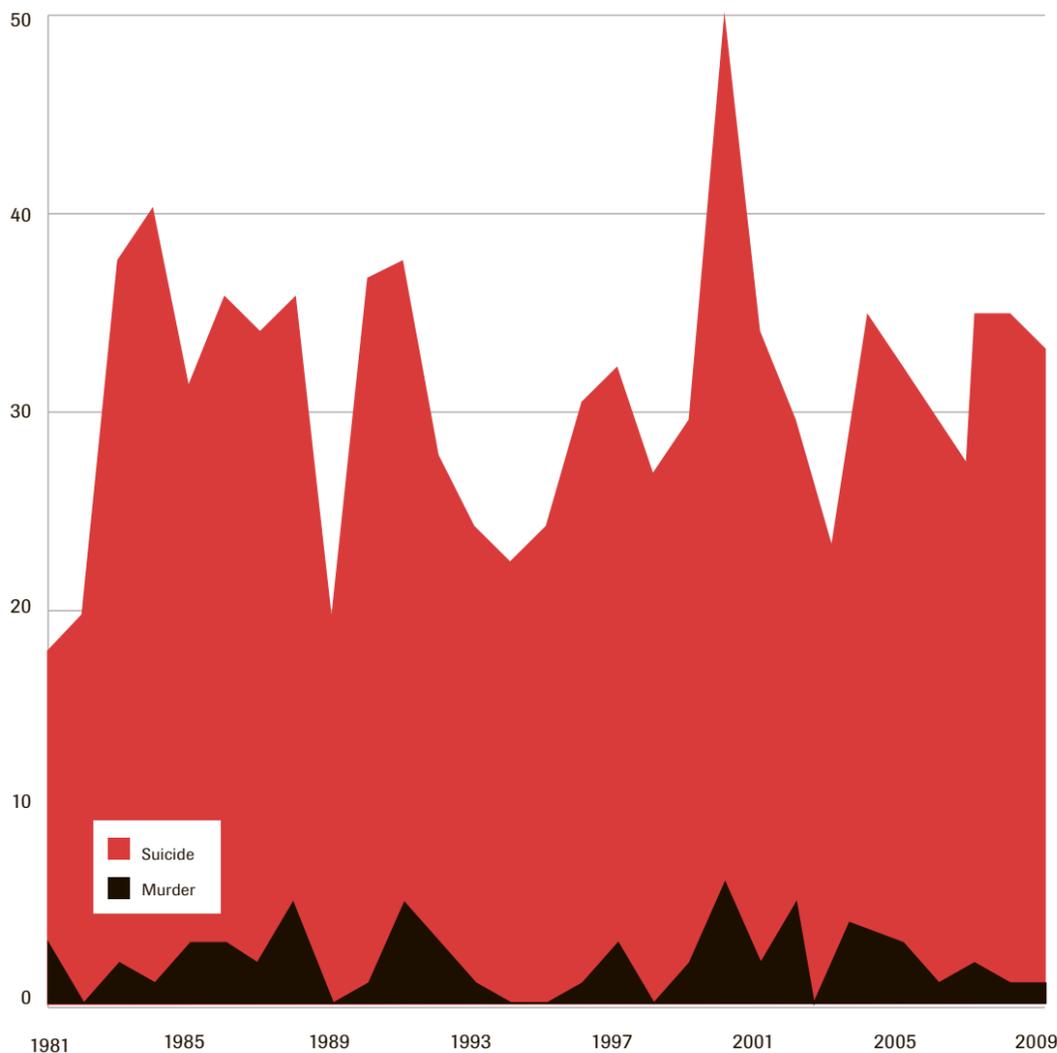
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Iceland | Crime

# Murder And Suicide Through The Ages



**Iceland saw its first official murder of 2012 this February. A 22 year old man showed up to a police station claiming to have done something awful. Given his history of drug offenses, the police saw reason to investigate. That's when they found a woman, twice his age, lying on the floor of his home, having been stabbed to death**

Murder is a relatively rare event in Iceland. There are on average two deaths attributed to murder every year, according to data collected by Statistics Iceland over the last three decades. That's less than one

per 100,000 inhabitants, which is amongst the lowest murder rates in the world.

Perhaps it's simply difficult to kill given that handguns are illegal? Well, this may very well be part of the reason that murders are so rare, but it doesn't stop a far greater number of people from taking their own lives. There are on average 33 self-inflicted deaths reported per year, according to data collected during this same time period. It should however be noted that suicide is a rather taboo subject in Iceland and such deaths are rarely reported in the media.

While suicide and murder seem like unrelated enough events, per-

haps there is a common underlying cause—something pushing people over the edge—as these rates loosely rise and fall at the same time, both peaking in 2000 with six murders and 55 suicides. Then again, perhaps it's merely a coincidence. 🍷

ANNA ANDERSEN

Opinion | Smári McCarthy

## Shocking Solutions To Unclear Problems



In October 2007, a Polish man named Robert Dziekański landed at the Vancouver airport tired and confused after a long flight. After spending many hours waiting for his mother to meet him in the baggage area—a secure area that she couldn't enter—he became agitated. Bystanders couldn't help him, as he spoke no English. The local police wound up shooting him a total of five times with their electroshock weapons, resulting in his death.

There has been an ongoing discussion in Iceland about whether the police should be allowed to carry electroshock weapons. Such weapons generally shoot out needles connected to wires, through which high voltage, low current electricity is pumped into the target. In most cases, receiving such a jolt causes people to lose voluntary control of their muscles and fall to the ground. But sometimes—if the victim has a certain range of heart or lung problems, for instance—the shock may be lethal, for instance due to cardiac arrhythmia leading to cardiac arrest or ventricular fibrillation.

Between 2001 and 2007, Amnesty International recorded 150 deaths due to electroshock weapons, most of which occurred as a result of irrational use of force—such as in Robert Dziekański's case. As the supposedly non-lethal weapons appear to be lethal, some countries, such as Germany, have banned them.

I have no qualms with police carrying electroshock weapons, such as Tasers, but under certain conditions. Firstly, police who choose to carry electroshock weapons should be subject to them once a month, via a trial shot. This is to ensure that they are fully aware of the force involved, and also to guarantee that the weapons are non-lethal.

Secondly, I'd suggest that if the police get to carry "non-lethal" weapons, the general public also be allowed to do so, under the same conditions. This is mostly to put the public on equal footing with the state, and to prevent the police from being flippant about abuse of power.

Finally, it would be useful to have at least fifty insulation suits available to the public per Taser in circulation, during peaceful protests, as a defensive measure for people who are exercising their right to free expression.

You see, there is not a single society in the history of mankind that has been improved by increasing the amount of

violence the state applies to its people.

When police are armed, it serves to give them the upper hand against violent domestic enemies of the state and to ensure public safety. The discussion in Iceland is dominated by the idea of organised crime in the form of motorcycle gangs. I know little about these motorcycle gangs, but I think I have a reasonable expectation that if people are com-

*"What is the threat that can be solved by electrocuting people? Drunk people on Laugavegur?"*

mitting crimes that could be deterred by Tasers, it would be equally possible to arrest the criminals in question and bring them to justice.

If the worry is that the gangs are violent, well, the Icelandic police force already has lots and lots of guns. You'd be surprised. They have H&K MP5 sub-machine guns, H&K G36 assault rifles, Glock 17 pistols (which have no safety toggle by the way, just a drop catch to prevent accidental discharge), Steyr SSG 69 sniper rifles, Blaser R93 sniper rifles and Mossberg 500 shotguns, for instance. They should be able to handle a couple of gangsters—heck, they should be able to handle a minor war. The fact that they don't ordinarily carry them around is a good thing.

So we are forced to ask ourselves: If the supposed organised crime syndicates are not the actual problem, then from whom does the threat come that is to justify further arming of the police force? And weapons that, due to their "non-lethal" quality, are frequently used by police to enforce their whims rather than the law.

The answer is not obvious. Protests in Iceland have mostly been peaceful, and almost without exception have escalated only when police have aggravated the situation. What is the threat that can be solved by electrocuting people? Drunk people on Laugavegur?

When the police explain the threat model, we can start a civilized discussion about whether it is justifiable. Until then, it is not, and even floating around the idea of arming the police is ludicrous. 🍷

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# A TIME OF CONFUSION

## Iceland and the rest of the world – Part II

In part I of this series, 'Iceland and the rest of the world,' I traced the history of Iceland from its time as a poor Danish colony to becoming independent, hosting a US military base and becoming Americanized—while still doing business with the Soviet Union—to the nation's brief stint as world financiers buying up all of the shops on the High Streets of the UK. Since the 2008 crash, much has changed, not the least Icelanders' attitudes towards other countries.

It could even be said that this quite large, but sparsely populated, island in the north has been set adrift on the world seas. Icelanders are at the moment very confused about where to look in global politics. True, Iceland applied to join the European Union in the summer of 2009, but negotiations have been very long winded, partners have yet to start discussing the crucial chapters on fisheries and agriculture, and the whole thing now seems quite hopeless.

### NATIONALISM VS. THE EU

With the euro crisis and the rise of extremist politics, not to mention a dispute with Iceland over profitable mackerel fishing, the European Union does not seem very alluring. In fact, latest polls show that a great majority of Icelanders are against joining the EU and many favour ending the negotiations. If the talks are concluded, however, there will be a referendum, possibly in 2013. Most likely the outcome will be a resounding no.

Iceland has long been suspicious of foreign powers. Nationalistic sentiments are rife—and some politicians are quite adept at playing upon them. The left wing movement in Iceland has long been more nationalist than socialist. Thus opinions about the EU can be quite extreme, with some opponents comparing the EU to the Soviet Union or the Third Reich. One of the claims is that the EU would take over Icelandic resources, mainly energy and fish, and thus we would end up being a colony of Brussels.

In some ways this is a rerun of the debates about the US bases in the '50s and '60s—then the largest and most divisive political issue—but this time nationalist forces on the left and the right have joined together, their real leader being President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, who is now fighting for his fifth term on a very nationalistic ticket.

### THE GREAT POST-CRASH ISSUE

Another reason for the unpopularity of the EU is the Icesave issue. When the Icelandic banks collapsed in 2008, the parliament passed emergency legislation that put most of the losses on the backs of foreign creditors who had lent money to the banks. This could not have been done otherwise; Iceland simply did not have the money to prop up the banks. Thus foreign creditors

suffered losses amounting to almost 10,000 billion Icelandic krónur. For the most part these were German banks which, in fact, accepted these losses quite gracefully.

But one obligation stood out and this soon became the overriding political issue of the post-crash era. When the Icelandic banks first ran into trouble in 2006, they couldn't really borrow any more money. So they found a solution—considered ingenious at the time—which involved founding online savings accounts in neighbouring countries that offered very tempting interest rates. Landsbanki bank's so-called Icesave accounts in the UK and Holland became especially popular.

EU will likely become more unpopular still (although that verdict will perhaps not be so terrible, as it is now clear that the former Landsbanki has funds to meet most of the Icesave obligations).

### THE DULL SCANDINAVIANS

Many Icelanders think the Scandinav-

*"We have nothing to learn from Scandinavians as we are better than them in every field."*

This gave the banks a few more seasons to live, but the question of who would pay if the banks collapsed went unanswered. Somehow the Icelandic and the UK financial authorities managed to evade this issue (after the crash it came out that insiders had already in 2006 known that the collapse of the banks was inevitable). In October 2008, Landsbanki bank went bust, and the UK and Holland governments pointed at Iceland and said, you have to pay! The EU followed suite and so did Iceland's supposed best friends, the Scandinavian governments.

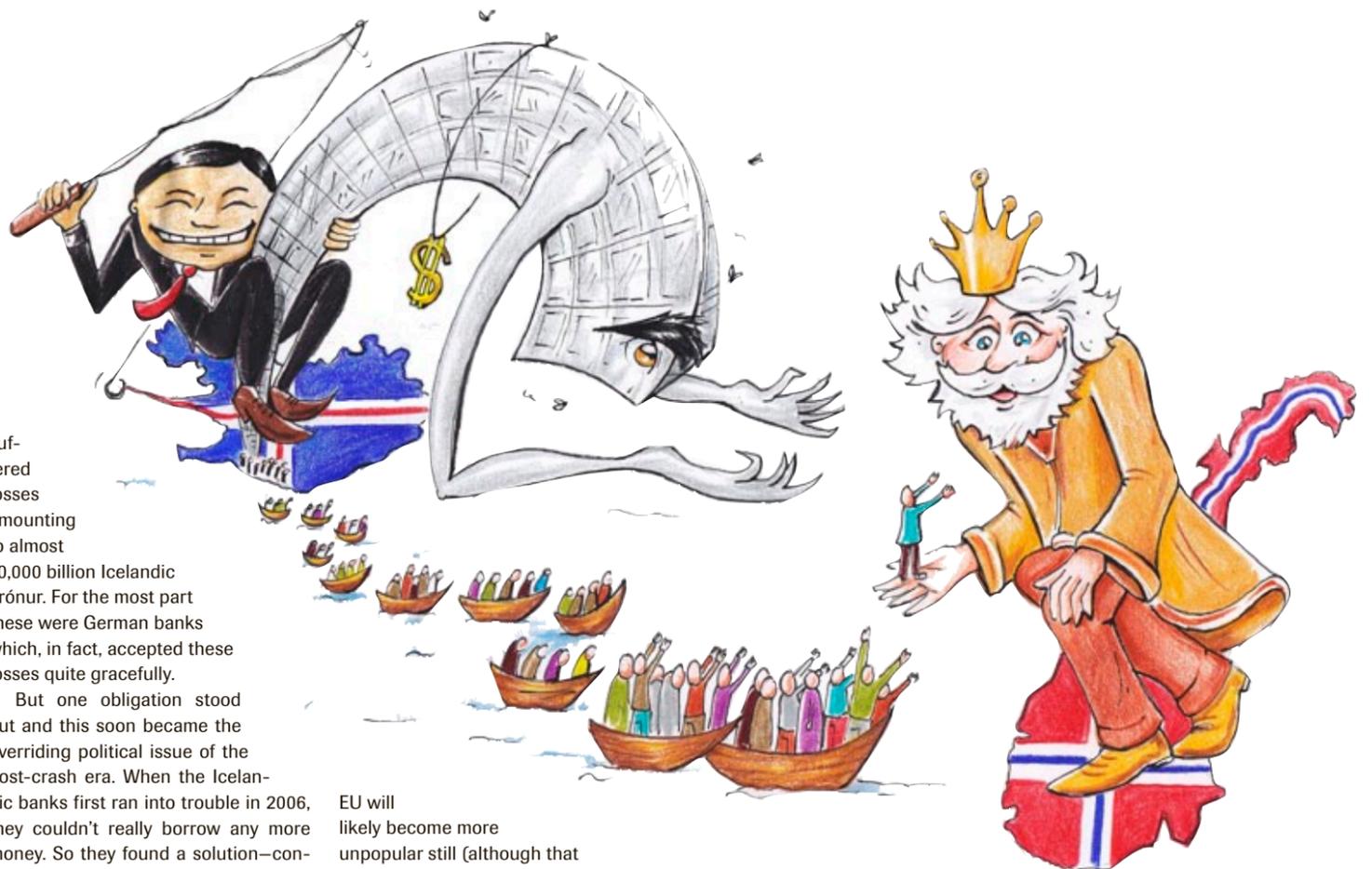
At the time this seemed like an exorbitant sum and many Icelanders felt that they shouldn't pay for the excesses of bankers and the stupidity of politicians. However, Iceland was under great pressure from the UK, Holland and Europe. Two times the government signed agreements to pay and these were passed by parliament, but then vetoed by President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson who was by then taking a more active part in politics than any president before him. Both agreements were then voted down in referendums.

Now the issue is before a special court, convened through the EEA agreement, which is like a part EU membership for Iceland and Norway. If this court rules against Iceland, the

vian countries failed us at the time, even if they put up a lot of the money, which was eventually used to rescue Iceland through the International Monetary Fund. But then, at the time, Scandinavians had grown very fed up with the arrogance of newly rich Icelandic financiers who seemed to think that Scandinavians were slow and dull witted. A report by the Icelandic Chamber of Commerce in 2006 stated frankly: "We have nothing to learn from Scandinavians as we are better than them in every field."

Things have changed since then. Scandinavia now appears as a beacon of stability. Icelanders tend to be far more volatile and excitable than the Scandinavians. Icelandic politics are for example very quarrelsome, which is a far cry from the consensus driven politics of Scandinavia. So in a time when there is much anger and mistrust, Scandinavia looks better than before, not least Norway with its great oil wealth. A lot of Icelanders have been going there over the last few years in search for better paying jobs.

It is said that the inhabitants of Iceland originally came from Norway, fleeing King Harald the Fair-haired and his over-taxation. Now it seems they would gladly join Norway again, and there has even been speculation about Iceland



joining a federation with Norway or adopting the Norwegian króna. Admittedly, the Norwegians do not seem very interested.

### ENTER THE CHINESE

After the crash Icelanders started looking for friends in new places. President Ólafur Ragnar had long been cultivating relations with China, going on visits and receiving Chinese dignitaries. Some say that he has been to China more often than he has been to the EU. Ólafur Ragnar has been quoted saying that China showed friendship in times of peril, while other countries treated Iceland unfairly. That is his version of what happened, and he no longer hides the fact that he is an opponent of the EU.

This has come to a head with the attempts of a Chinese billionaire, Huang Nubo, who tried to buy a large tract of land in northeast Iceland to build a resort for Chinese tourists. This land is really in the middle of nowhere; it is mostly mountains and desert sands. Building a resort there seems like an outlandish idea. Huang's proposal to buy the land was turned down by the Minister of the Interior, but now he is trying to lease it for a long time. This has given rise to much speculation about his real intentions with some wondering if they have to do with China's drive toward the Polar region. Although the area is totally landlocked, some wonder if the Chinese intend to build a listening post or an airport, which would not be under Icelandic rule, and even that this will develop into a fully fledged colony with Chinese growing rice in the Icelandic north. Some of this sounds like it could be coming straight out of a Bond movie.

### THE NEW NORTH

In Iceland, especially among those who are opposed to EU membership, it is popular to speak of the New North. The

idea is that as the Polar Seas open up with global warming there will be great opportunities in oil, mining and transportation. Iceland lies on the periphery of the Polar region and has no real claims to its resources. But if a shipping route open up, Iceland would be on the way and plans have been drawn up to build a transit port in the northeast of Iceland. The Chinese would probably have to be involved, for most of the traffic would come from there, but monitoring this traffic and ensuring its safety would be beyond the means of such a small country. This would have to involve a larger entity, like the EU or even the US. Some old admirers of the US even dream that these changes will bring the Americans back to Iceland, which they abandoned in 2006.

Those who advocate for the New North even have ideas of forming an alternative union to the EU with members such as Norway, Greenland, Canada, and perhaps other northern countries. Canada's role in this scenario is interesting as a sizable part of the Icelandic population emigrated there in the late nineteenth century. There has also been talk of Iceland getting rid of its unstable króna and adopting the Canadian dollar, called the loonie. We don't know what the Canadians themselves think about this, as they haven't really been asked. Perhaps this shows how confused Icelanders are about their place in the world. ☺

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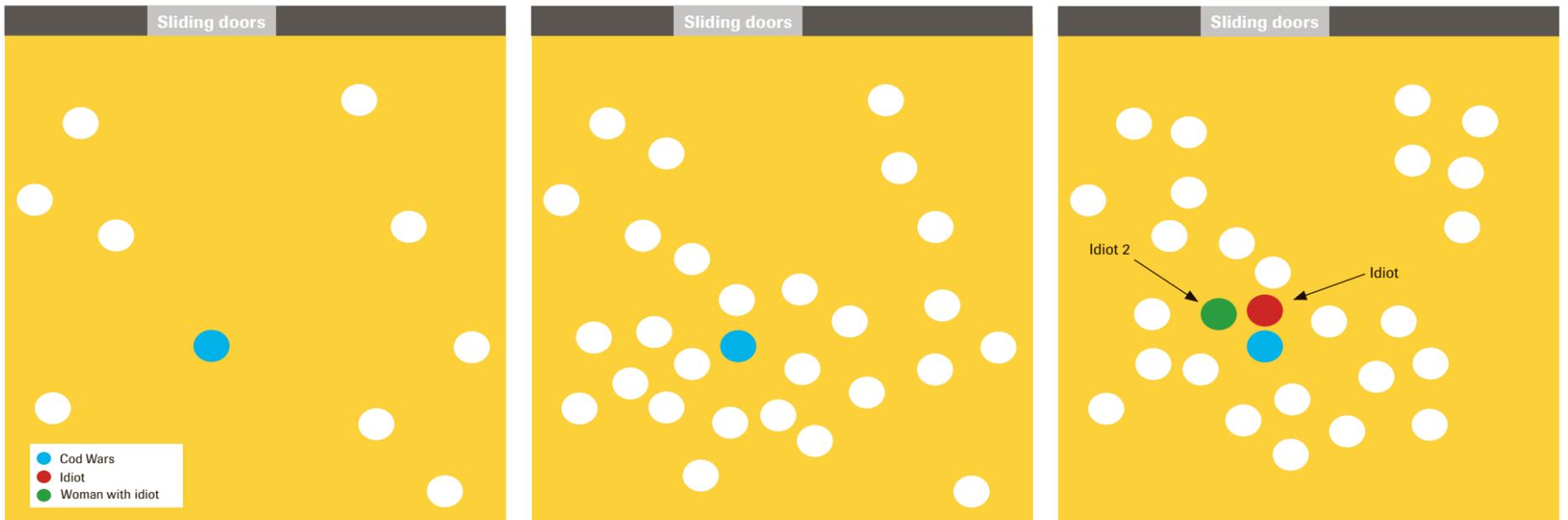
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# ICELANDERS INVADE YOUR PERSONAL SPACE

An expat from the United Kingdom takes on Icelandic mannerisms



While waiting for a friend at the Keflavík airport I experienced a classic demonstration of Icelandic behaviour. The arrivals space at the lovely 'Kef' is now fairly typical of the genre, if somewhat smaller: there's a large sliding door where the arriving passengers emerge, squinting and scanning the crowd for their loved ones. The open space where said loved ones wait would probably hold around five hundred people rock-concert style, or comfortably around fifty Japanese or English people if their personal space rules were not infringed.

I got there very early and stood somewhere just off-centre in the open space. There were five or ten other people there—most of them lingering towards the front, a few at the front corners and the remainder randomly scattered (See diagram 1). So there I stood, patiently waiting and doing

what any good nerd does these days: checking my Twitter feeds and reading The Guardian on my smartphone. All in the world was good. My plan to get there early and chill out was working just fine.

As time went on, people started to fill the space, until most of it was occupied and there were obvious walkways between the human obstructions (See diagram 2).

Then the inevitable happened: people starting using the walkway directly in front of me and I was being treated as the human equivalent of a wall: something to graze against or to bump. I was standing, as you'd expect someone to stand, using a smartphone: holding the phone around sternum level with one hand, whilst gently caressing it er, sorry, scrolling with the other hand. This meant that the phone was sticking out maybe ten centimetres from my body.

#### CLEARLY TOO MUCH FOR SIGGI

This was clearly too much for Sigggi and his pals to handle. As they were walking past me, my finely-tuned proximity alarms were going off like mad and warning me of impending collisions, of people

walking straight at me and that if I didn't get out of the way a collision would happen.

A couple of years living in London taught me the gentle give-and-take dance that the people in cities in real countries develop, that Brownian motion of being in close proximity whilst not invading other people's space. However, I decided to carry out a small experiment to see what would happen if I fought the Brownian motion instinct and just stood my ground.

Well, the bumping got worse. The people coming past me were walking straight through the space occupied by my phone. They were clipping it with their arms and nearly knocking it out of my hand. I found I had to hold it tightly for fear that I would actually lose grip.

Then a glorious thing happened. The actions of one man demonstrated so clearly the collective instinct of Icelanders when it comes to thoughtfulness, consideration for other people and social awareness.

#### 'AH-ROO-GAA! AH-ROOOOO-GAA!!!'

This man, who was wearing worn-out sports clothing, scruffy black sneakers, a cheap gold necklace

and unwashed hair, stood directly in front of me, with his woman at his side. The distance from the front edge of my phone to the centre of his back was round ten centimetres (See diagram 3).

So not only was Captain Cretin completely blocking my view, he was also seriously invading my personal space. He'd obviously planted himself there because he wanted a clear view of the arriving travellers and it didn't even occur to him that he might have been blocking someone's view.

The proximity alarms in my head were now screaming: 'Ah-ROO-GAA! Ah-ROOOOO-GAA!!!' But, no. I stubbornly stayed where I was and made the sacrifice of my comfort for the sake of social science. I decided it would be interesting to see what Captain Cretin would do next.

He surpassed himself. He was so keen to get a good look at the arriving people that he was bobbing and weaving a lot to get a better view. A quick glance confirmed why he needed to do this: yet another peasant farmer had planted himself right in front and blocked his view.

In the course of his bobbing he actually backed into me. Several times.

#### PERFECTLY NORMAL BEHAVIOUR

In a country where social history is measured in units larger than nanoseconds this offense would have prompted gushing apologies and made him realise that he was standing way too close to me. But, no. Our superhero did nothing whatsoever. It clearly didn't even register with him and that's the interesting point: he saw nothing wrong whatsoever with what he was doing. To him it was perfectly normal behaviour.

He wasn't trying to be rude, boorish or ignorant; he was just standing there, waiting for someone. If he'd wanted to be rude, he would have done something rude by his standards: he would have pulled out a handkerchief, loudly blown his nose, examined the product and put the handkerchief back in his pocket.

An unusual event? No. I've lived here long enough to know that this is typical behaviour, not just for white trash and didn't-learn-it-in-school seventy year old taxi drivers, but typical behaviour even for apparently civilised people in business suits. ♡

#### Words

Cod Wars

#### Illustrations

Reykjavík Grapevine



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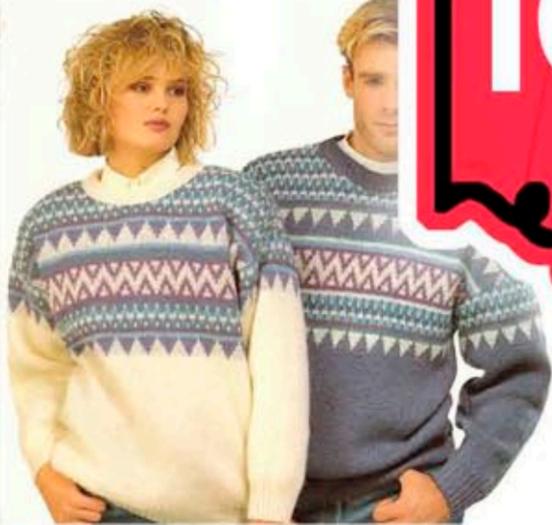
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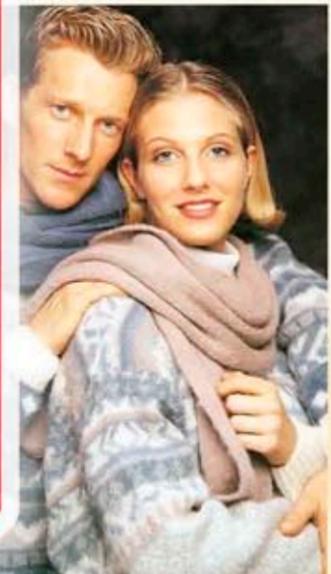
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# ICELAND'S COURTS JAIL TEEN REFUGEES

*Maybe Iceland is the best in the world at that too...*



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**At the same time as Iceland's media revelled in its news last week about Iceland being on of "the best country in the world for children," it became known that two Algerian boys, aged 15 and 16, had been sentenced to thirty days in prison in Iceland. Their crime? Using forged passports to travel to Iceland in search of asylum.**

The ruling has been criticised by many, including UNICEF, which stated that it violated the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Government Agency for Child Protection, which noted the systematic racism implied in the ruling. "If these children had been Icelandic, they would never have been sentenced to prison for forgery," Agency Director Bragi Guðbrandsson told the State Broadcasting Service RÚV.

While this particular event received attention due to the boys' youth, less attention has been given to an obvious pattern in the Icelandic state's way

## Words

Snorri Páll Jónsson Úlfhildarson

## Photography

Julia Staples

of dealing with asylum seekers who enter the country with illegal documents, either in their search for asylum in Iceland or on their way to doing the same in another country. Namely, despite the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (CRSR), which states that refugees can be excluded from penalties for forgery, the State systematically finds refugees guilty of forgery and sentences them to prison.

## A MISINTERPRETATION

When an asylum seeker is caught entering the country with a forged passport, two opposing conventions meet. On the one hand, Iceland's penal code states that forgery is punishable by up to eight years imprisonment and that stronger penalties should be considered if the forged document is used as an official paper. On the other hand, the UN CRSR—first agreed upon in Geneva in July 1951—states that its member states should not punish refugees for illegally entering or staying in the country if they come directly from a country where their lives or freedom have been threatened.

The wording, "directly from a country" has, however, proven problematic. As Hrefna Dögg Gunnarsdóttir, a MA law student who wrote her thesis on this par-

ticular paragraph of the convention and its relevance to Iceland, pointed out in a radio interview on station Rás 2 last week, it should not be understood literally. If it is interpreted literally, refugees coming to Iceland can never fit that description and are there-

*"Many of those fleeing wars, human rights violations, persecution and repression, are simply not in a position to acquire legal documents"*

fore never granted protection. The literal meaning, as Hrefna pointed out, would put all responsibility on the states that share borders with the country from which a particular refugee originally escapes, and this would go completely against the aim of the convention, which is for member states to share the responsibility.

Furthermore, many of those fleeing wars, human rights violations, persecution and repression, are simply not in a position to acquire legal documents, as the spokesperson for the UN Refugee Agency's Regional Office for Baltic and Nordic countries Hanne Matiesen pointed out on an interview with radio show Spjallinn on May 14. Requesting passports can in some cases further

endanger their lives, whereas in other cases, Somalia for instance, the legitimate authorities needed to issue such documents do not even exist.

## A LAWYER BUT NO DEFENCE

Looking through the archive of Icelandic court rulings, the Icelandic state's pattern of interpretation is clear: an asylum seeker is arrested by the border police and is then—in most cases not more than three or four days later—brought to court, where he or she "unambiguously acknowledges" his or her violation. Then he or she is sentenced to thirty days in prison and typically fined roughly 100 thousand ISK to cover his or her lawyer fee. According to the rulings, the decision to imprison them for thirty days is based on case law—one that gets stronger with each sentencing.

One of the names that frequently pop up while reading through the court rulings is Unnar Steinn Bjarndal. A district lawyer who works at the Keflavík-based law firm LS Legal, he has represented asylum seekers in more than twenty published forgery cases since 2008. Among his past clients in court are the two Algerian boys, as well as Henry Turay—

## A HARSH REALITY

In an interview with newspaper Fréttatíminn on May 11, one of the Algerian boys, Adam Aamer, said that he had no idea what was happening in court and he said that his lawyer had told him to answer "yes" to every question. Seventeen-year-old Amin Naimi from Afghanistan, who was also represented by Unnar in April this year, told Fréttatíminn: "The lawyer did not explain anything to me. He just told me that I would have to sit in prison for thirty days, but that I would only have to spend 15 [days] there because I am a foreigner. Nothing else. I first met him the day before the trials and spoke very briefly with him."

Unnar confirmed that he usually does not have the chance to speak with his clients until the day of the trials when they have already been interrogated by the police and confessed to using a forged passport. Even though any conversations with the police, before a defence lawyer enters the picture, are not supposed to have any weight in the criminal case itself, Unnar admits that this has an indirect impact. "It is, for instance, hard for them make a complete U-turn in their stand regarding the charges if they have already, during the case's earlier stages, acknowledged the violation," he told me.

It seems that the cases of Adam and Amin are not an exception, but part of a pattern that is far from limited to the courts and their unwillingness to consent to international agreements. The defence lawyers in these cases—who according to the Codex Ethicus for the Icelandic Bar Association, should above all "promote justice and prevent injustice" and "safeguard [their] client's interests"—seem to be equally as unwilling to try out these international agreements and instead advise their clients to just say "yes."

That is a harsh reality for people, sometimes children, fleeing poor and conflict-torn countries as Sierra Leone, Congo and Nigeria, and recently war-torn countries like Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan. But it spares the courts all complexity and gives the lawyer an easy extra 100 thousand ISK. Maybe Iceland is also the best country in the world for that? ☹



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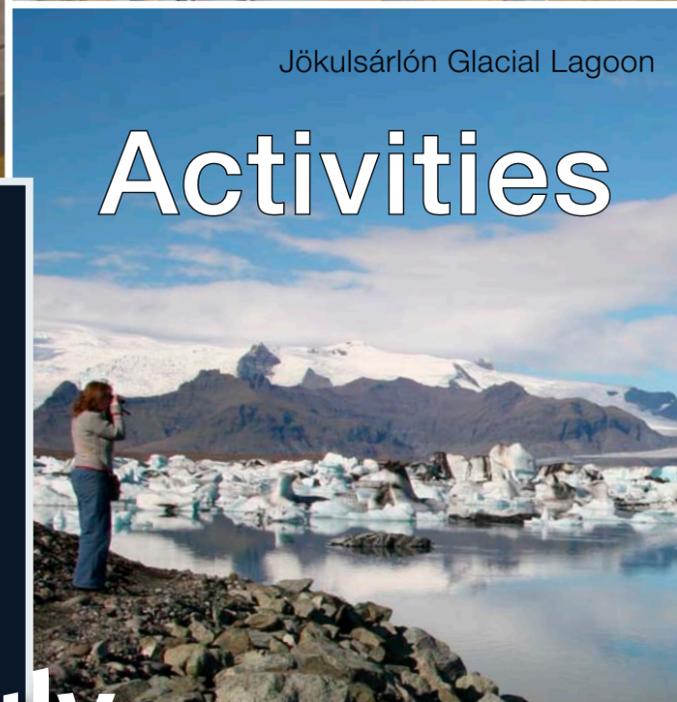


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# THE BOYS A

**‘Valtari’—Sigur Rós’ much-anticipated sixth-release—is risky.**

**Not that the band hasn’t, in its 18-years-active, established itself as a creative juggernaut of sorts, and cultivated an insatiable fan base. But ‘Valtari’ is risky in the way all matters of the heart are risky. Because it is uncalculated. Because it is driven by—devoted to—an abstract sentiment. Because it is blind to anything but the stars.**

**‘Valtari’ is also the record that nearly wasn’t. During over three years in labour, the group abandoned the project at least three times before giving it its final audition, the push that led to the definitive scheduling of the album’s release on May 28.**

**For when it comes to releasing music, Sigur Rós offers us only that which comes organically to the band—regardless of, but not despite (as ‘Með suð í eyrum við spilum endalaust’ proved) the material’s marketability. It is in this way that ‘Valtari’ emerges as a testament to the band’s fierce creative independence, not only in content but also in process. Because apparently even the world’s most successful artists struggle with knots in their imaginations, and to this creative loyalty, ‘Valtari’ is likewise a tribute.**

**In the attic of lðnó, I sat down with Jón Þór Birgisson (“Jónsi”) and Georg Hólm (“Goggi”) to discuss how the band navigated the creative riddle of their impending release.**

**A lot of the preemptive commentary about ‘Valtari’ has characterized the album as a homecoming, a sort of ‘return to ambience.’ As though the last album had been a weird mutation, and now you’re somehow going back...**

**Jón Þór Birgisson:** back to basics.

**Right. Do you think of the record that way at all? As a harking back, maybe to ‘()’ or ‘Ágætis byrjun’?**

**Jónsi:** We didn’t really think of it like that.

**Georg Hólm:** That was not the point of departure, at least, when we were making this record.

**Jónsi:** It just developed that way. But we had had this idea for many years to make an ambient record—like purely ambient, somehow.

**Some of the recordings on ‘Valtari’ go back as far as six or seven years...**

**Georg:** Yes. And at the time they weren’t necessarily thought of as belonging to this record. They were just some recordings, some ideas. It wasn’t until 2009 that we had our first session, specifically intending to make this record.

**Jónsi:** We’ve given up three times since then, I think.

**Georg:** Yeah.

**Jónsi:** Starting, stopping, putting things aside.

**What made you decide then to finally release the record? Or to do it now?**

**Jónsi:** We just had enough material. And when we listened to it again after getting many years of distance from it, we realised that we actually had a record on our hands.

**Georg:** And that it was maybe better than we had thought.

**Given that the material was developed over such a long period of time, and that it was maybe not originally conceived of as a whole, was it a challenge to make the pieces fit together?**

**Georg:** I think that was maybe the most difficult part of the record, really. Because it was all so different. So we had to somehow mold it all together.

**Jónsi:** We took a few months, just now, to finalise it, and then something just came over it.

**Georg:** Some kind of wholeness.

**There’s a quote on the band’s website where you say, Georg, that this is the only Sigur Rós record you lis-**

**ten to at home, at your leisure. Why is that?**

**Georg:** This is maybe not the first record that I’ve listened to at home. I said that just in conversation with our manager, after we had just finished the record. I was telling him that I was really happy with it, because this was a record that we had given up on several times. And personally, before we came together for that final session, if you can call it that, I had in my head just sort of written it off. I just thought: no, we’re not going to finish this album. We’ll just throw it out, in its entirety.

**You couldn’t untangle it.**

**Georg:** Right. I wasn’t understanding it. But I stand by what I said, that sometimes when I’m driving my car or when I’m sitting at home and I’m alone—which, however, isn’t often—then I like putting it on. There’s something about it... there are all sorts of images that come up in my head. But maybe it’s also just that I’m so tired of the other stuff, you know, that I wouldn’t necessarily go and listen to.

**Jónsi:** I think there’s something strange about listening to your own music.

**Georg:** It’s so self...

**Jónsi:** Indulgent.

**Georg:** Exactly.

**Jónsi:** ‘Oh, damn this is good.’

**Georg:** Extremely weird.

**Jónsi:** ‘Listen to that solo!’

**You hear of a lot of hip-hop artists doing that. I think Kanye just sits at home listening...**

**Jónsi:** To himself. (Laughs.) Right. It’s just that you listen to it so much when you’re making it. In the studio a whole year goes into listening to the same songs over and over again. So you do get sick of it in a certain way, it just becomes one big mash. But maybe when you’re older you do pick up these records again and listen to them.

**Georg:** I think it has to do with the memories too. And maybe also that you’re still thinking critically about the songs.

**You don’t have any distance from them.**

**Georg:** Exactly. But for example I listened to ‘Von’ the other day, because it was being re-released on vinyl, and I just needed to do a test-drive, to check the sound quality, nothing else. And suddenly I started really enjoying the music. It occurred to me that this was a damn good record. Just, really good. Sounded better than I remembered.

**Is it different when you perform the songs live? Harder to get sick of**

**them that way, because it’s an experience that’s different each time?**

**Jónsi:** That just depends on how much you drink.

(Laughter.)

No, but sometimes it can be tedious and sometimes it feels like a job but usually it’s incredibly fun. To play in new places for new people. People give you a certain energy. It’s just fun playing for an audience if everything is as it should be: if there’s good sound on the stage and we are in good spirits. Then it’s incredibly fun.

**Georg:** It does depend a lot on mood. If there is the right kind of atmosphere on stage it can be fun to play any song, really. But then there can be...

**Jónsi:** There can be days when everything is bad.

**Georg:** A bad concert or just a bad song in the middle of a concert.

**Jónsi:** If the sound is bad then it’s just absolute hell.

**What else are you listening to, for enjoyment?**

**Jónsi:** I’ve been listening a lot to the radio show, Morgunstund með KK, [on Icelandic National Broadcasting Service (RÚV), an NPR equivalent]. I don’t wake up that early but I listen to it online, almost everyday. Listen to it and read the papers. That’s really nice.

**They play vinyl on Fridays.**

**Jónsi:** Exactly. It’s great. Also my boyfriend has been working with Julianna Barwick, so that’s been playing at home a lot. There’s no getting by it. But it’s quite nice, of course.

**Georg:** I’m trying but I can’t think of anything.

**Jónsi:** You just listen to Sigur Rós.

(Laughter.)

**Georg:** There is one song I have been listening to a lot: “The Book of Love.” It’s actually a cover song by Peter Gabriel, I found out. I didn’t know it was a cover, I just thought it was Peter Gabriel. But I discovered it by accident, went out for a run the other day and it came on shuffle and since then I’ve been completely hooked. Incredible song. That’s what I’ve been listening to these days.

**Jónsi:** One song.

(Laughter.)

**Georg:** Yes, just one song. I’m sort of bad with music. I somehow just end up listening to the old classics. Like Led Zeppelin or something.

**Jónsi:** My boyfriend Alex has also been working with Sin Fang, so I’ve been listening a lot to him, to his new album.

**Georg:** That’s a nice way to discover something new.

Words by Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir  
Photography by Lilja Birgisdóttir

# WE'RE BACK IN TOWN

**Jónsi:** He is really good at finding new stuff. Meanwhile I just listen to Morgunstund með KK.

**Is there any truth to the rumour that there is an already-made follow-up to 'Valtari'?**

**Georg:** That's just a fabrication.

**Jónsi:** It's so strange that Fréttablaðið just published some rumour without talking to us. I just think it's weird.

**Georg:** We are always working on music, though. But we're not necessarily recording anything.

**What about the rumour that Kjartan had quit. Do you know where that came from?**

**Georg:** No. I don't know where that came from. There is always something like this, someone supposedly quitting some band somewhere.

**But it is decided that he will not play on the tour this summer.**

**Jónsi:** Yes, I think that's almost completely certain... I think he's not going to play with us live.

**Georg:** No.

**Jónsi:** He was on 'Valtari' with us. I think he's just tired of touring.

**Georg:** Yeah.

**Jónsi:** Wants to do something else. Spend his time on something else. A lot of time goes into the tour.

**Georg:** Which is maybe not exactly the most productive time.

**Jónsi:** No. And not necessarily creative, either.

**Georg:** Exactly.

**Jónsi:** A little bit draining, naturally.

**It must take a certain toll on your family life also, especially when you have children that are stuck in Iceland.**

**Georg:** Absolutely. You have to always sow it all together somehow.

**Jónsi:** Like Goggi has three children. It's hard to go away for such a long time.

**Georg:** I'm used to it. Sailor's life.

**Jónsi:** It is definitely a sailor's life, going on tour. (Laughter.)

**Must have been nice for Kjartan when you toured with Amiina, to be able to have his wife with him.**

**Jónsi and Georg** (emphatically): Yes.

**Jónsi:** Damn nice.

**Georg:** Very lucky.

**Does that have something to do with how this four-year hiatus evolved? The fact that most of you were having babies. Or did it have more to do with your solo project, Jónsi?**

**Jónsi:** Both, I think.

**Georg:** Yes, all of the above. After the tour ended in 2008, it was sort of decided to take a year off. That was the goal. But then right away, if I remember correctly, by March of 2009 we were in the studio starting this record. Which was actually just one month that we were in the studio and then we went back to being on vacation. But we have been making this record, in reality, on and off since. And we've played a lot together. Even while Jónsi was touring, you know, when he came home during breaks we dragged him into the studio. So we were always developing something. But just less than usual. I don't know, there was really no reason to go on tour. No record or anything like that, so really it just seemed natural somehow. So much else to do, also.

To what extent do you let others into the collaborative effort that is Sigur Rós? Especially when it comes to composing, are you entirely exclusive when the four of you sit down to write?

**Jónsi:** Yes, I would say so.

**Georg:** At least for the foundations of the songs. It would be very strange, I

*"We have become a bit more open, maybe. Just in terms of letting different people work with us. Learning to trust. We're such bumpkins at heart; we never trust anyone, no one is trusted."*

think it has never happened that someone has composed a song with us. I don't remember it ever happening, at least. Actually, maybe it did happen a little bit when we were on tour many years ago and composing 'Ó'. Amiina were always with us on stage, and some of those songs just came about in sound checks.

**Jónsi:** That's right.

**Georg:** But I think in most cases when it comes to the core, the foundations of the songs, it's just us four. And then maybe recently we've been letting people get a little bit closer.

**Jónsi:** We have become a bit more open, maybe. Just in terms of letting different people work with us. Learning to trust. We're such bumpkins at heart; we never trust anyone, no one is trusted. But I think it's mostly that you start letting people in and let someone do something and we're just never happy with it.

**Maybe you also just have a strong sense of how you want to do things.**

**You want to have control over what you're making.**

**Jónsi:** Yeah I guess it is also that. That we're just controlling.

**Georg:** We are actually very controlling.

**Jónsi:** Difficult to work with.

(Laughter.)

**Georg:** I think we are getting better though.

**Jónsi:** Yeah, we're a little bit looser with age.

**Georg:** More carefree.

**Has Sigur Rós' success had an effect on your lifestyle when you are in Iceland? What I mean is, has your environment here changed at all?**

**Jónsi:** It's mostly just the tourists who stop us.

**Right. You said something to that effect in a recent interview with Q magazine. In fact you also apparently said that the tourists were the worst thing about the crash here in Iceland.**

**Jónsi:** Yes, Goggi was furious about

this. They were saying that we hate tourists.

**Georg:** It was a total misunderstanding. We were talking about the recession in Iceland, and I said—maybe to answer your question from before—with regard to the crash and whatnot, that maybe we have felt the effects of it less because our daily bread comes from abroad. So maybe we haven't felt it as much. And then we stopped talking about that and [the interviewer] asked me what it was like living in Iceland, whether we get stopped much on the street. And I said no, that it was mostly only tourists that did that. And in some kind of jest it got twisted into that we can't stand tourists. I don't know exactly how he did it, but in any case it was a big misunderstanding.

**I want to ask you how you feel about being interviewed. You have something of a reputation for being... well, there are a few epic examples where things didn't go so well for the poor journalist.**

(Laughter.)

**Georg:** Yes, or us.

(Laughter.)

**Right. So how do you feel about being interviewed?**

**Georg:** I think it's just fine. It depends on the day. You can land in some terribly weird interviews, you know. Just like, seriously weird. But you're probably thinking of that NPR interview. That was kind of a funny moment. I think we had just come out of some 14-hour flight.

**Jónsi:** We had just come from Japan; had just landed in New York and were driven right up to some radio station.

**Georg:** Totally fried in the head.

**Jónsi:** I don't remember exactly what the questions were, but it was something like...

**Georg:** It was just awful. Really pointless somehow, and it was something like 8:00 in the morning.

**I remember it being very superficial. He was asking you guys about 'hopelandish' and things like that.**

**Georg:** Yes, exactly.

**Jónsi:** It was painful for us and for him.

**Georg:** But if you look at the interview as a whole, it's not really as terrible as it looks when they cut it down. But that beginning is of course really bad. Nobody really knows who should start answering, because everyone is somehow not totally present, and not really listening.

**Jónsi:** We've actually discovered that when we are four in interviews it's terrible.

**Georg:** Yes.

**Jónsi:** It's best when we are one or two. But in general it's just a big myth. We have this stamp on us now that we're really difficult in interviews and photo shoots. Which is actually really nice, because then everyone is always on their toes, everything happens much quicker.

**People are well prepared.**

**Jónsi:** Exactly. Which is just great, for us.

**Georg:** When we were first starting out we freaked out a little bit, because photographers would want to have us for three, four hours, changing clothes and...

**Jónsi:** Doing poses and stuff.

**Georg:** That's just not us. We don't feel comfortable doing any of that. So for that reason we were maybe... we seemed somewhat difficult, because we were pushing back a lot, resisting. I remember one time a photographer just walked out, furious. That wasn't the last time either.

**Jónsi:** That was for Dazed and Confused.

**Georg:** They threatened to never write about us in their paper again. They were so mad at us. But that was just because we had been there all day and we had to put on this and that and then I remember the final straw for Kjartan came when the photographer asked him to open his mouth a little bit.

(Laughter.)

**Georg:** He just felt like some cheap whore. He freaked out. But it's understandable, in retrospect. The photographer, he's trying to capture some moment.

**Is the summer tour really about promoting 'Valtari'? You're playing a lot of festivals, I wonder if the record will work in that setting?**

**Jónsi:** These festivals are just a kind of circus.

**Georg:** It doesn't really work to play much of 'Valtari' there.

**Jónsi:** No, it's too quiet. You can't really play this kind of album at a festival, with Rihanna in the next tent. It's hard when you don't have the space. But we're going to try and play something off the new record.

**Georg:** Yes, some percentage of the album will be on the tour this year.

**Jónsi:** It will most likely be when we have our own concerts, in our own environment, that we will play more of the new record. It just has to be that way, these festivals are just like that.

**Have you started practicing for the summer tour?**

**Jónsi:** Yes, we've started planning a little bit. We don't know exactly how it's gonna be or how it's gonna end but we've started thinking about it. Goggi is even having nightmares.

**Georg:** (Laughing) Yes.

**Jónsi:** Regarding the tour.

**Georg:** I have literally been having nightmares.

**And what happens?**

**Georg:** I just get nightmares where I walk on stage and don't know a single song.

**Jónsi:** People start booing and you just back off the stage.

**Georg:** I'm just like, 'whoops,' and walk off. But no, we have started thinking about the summer a bit.

**Jónsi:** We decided to meet up just the three of us to sort of run through the songs and see whether we still know them. We haven't really played any of this in four years. But muscle memory is incredible, when it kicks in. It's always there, somehow. You just need to dust it off a bit. ☺

Music | Mess

## A Fine Mess We're In...

*The Reykjavik Music Mess returns to muck around with our ears and other senses as well*



Ahh, the arrival of summer. In Iceland this usually means several things—longer days, leaves on the trees, people walking around in t-shirts, and this year, more snow!

But weather aside, we have not one but TWO summer music festivals on our May calendar. The inaugural Reykjavík Live festival will be wrapping up as this paper hits the streets, and then on May 25–26, we welcome the second annual Reykjavík Music Mess, which sounds like it's going to be a leaner and meaner affair than last year.

Festival organiser and Kimi Records maestro Baldvin Esra Einarsson says lessons have been learned. "The first year was too big," he explains. "Basically festivals are supposed to start small and then slowly grow, but Reykjavik Music Mess #1 was too big for a first edition alternative music festival."

With one festival under his belt and a smaller line-up this year, Baldvin is looking forward to The Mess: "The line up is put together from lesser known acts, but it is in no way worse, artistically. We're also set for the weekend of Eurovision as a viable alternative for the few people that don't watch Eurovision. People like me!"

BOB CLUNESS  
KIMI

Music | Interview

# The New Local Hotshots: Tilbury



**One of the hotly anticipated local acts at this year's Music Mess is Tilbury. Originally founded by Þormóður Dagsón as a solo project in 2010, Tilbury is now a band with members hailing from groups such as Hjaltalín, Valdimar, Sin Fang and Amiina. Their debut single, "Tenderloin," which can be found on their newly released debut album 'Exorcise,' has been creating buzz that's impressive, even for our local music scene.**

**So Þormóður, you started off as a solo project called Formaður Dagsbrúnar. When did it change from that to the shining act we see before us now?**

I remember feeling embarrassed and ashamed after performing as Formaður Dagsbrúnar with my cousin and guitarist, Örn Eldjárn. I knew it wasn't good enough and I knew it could sound better. That was two years ago and in the meantime Örn introduced me to Kristinn Evertsson who he had been studying composition with at the Iceland Academy of the Arts. Kristinn had been experimenting with synthesizers and electronic sounds and when we

invited him to our rehearsal studio and played the songs I knew right away that we were on the right track. Shortly after that we got together with bassist Guðmundur Óskar Guðmundsson and drummer Magnús Tryggvason Eliassen and it all came together nicely. It was a quite a long process, but fruitful.

**Icelandic music is known for collaborations/side projects, yet Tilbury has been described as a bit of a 'super-group.' How do you see yourselves as a unit? Are you like the Traveling Wilburys at all?**

We are a busy bunch, involved in other projects, but we really enjoy playing together when we meet. I bet the Traveling Wilburys had assistants and companies that organised their practice schedule. We on the other hand have Google Calendar. And it works great. And since we are talking about the Traveling Wilburys, I have to say Wravelling Tilbury's.

**Good name! You're named after the short story 'Tilbury' by Þórarinn Eldjárn and your single, "Tenderloin,"**

**contains some lovely footage from the film of the same name. What is it about this story that draws you all to it?**

I saw the 'Tilbury' film when I was about eight years old and some of the scenes had a strong impact on my fragile little mind. And growing up I wasn't really sure that the memories I had from the film were from an actual film or just a weird nightmare. It wasn't until much later that I found a clip from the film on YouTube that I had it confirmed.

I'm also fascinated by how Þórarinn Eldjárn combines this strange Icelandic folklore with the wartime period in Iceland, a period when British and American cultures collide with a rather primitive Icelandic culture. When those fine looking and well-mannered men came to this isolated country, all dressed in uniforms, a whole new world was revealed to the Icelandic nation—a cleaner, more sophisticated and cool world, along with all the candy and upbeat music.

**Your debut album has some touching, alt-pop sentiments, yet it's named 'Exorcise' and has a cartoon of a wartime**

**couple represented by ectoplasmic goo. So you feel that underneath such civility and sweetness in society there is a lot of nastiness trying to get out there?**

I like bittersweet melodies. And I like films by David Lynch, where there is often a sense of some demonic undercurrent creeping beneath a pretty surface. We wanted to capture this mood on our album, to have a melody imply something sweet and then the lyrics or soundscape imply something completely different. The "exorcism" on the album is a sort of catharsis, like most honest music is; it's healthy to get it all out.

**For those who are wavering about going to the Reykjavík Music Mess, whom would you recommend (apart from yourselves) that they should go and see?**

I'm really looking forward to seeing Cheek Mountain Thief. And it's always a pleasure to see Snorri Helgason.

BOB CLUNESS  
ALÍSA KALYANOVA

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# The International Up-And-Comer: Man Made



**Nilas Marr, who performs under the moniker Man Made, is one of the foreign acts appearing at this year's Reykjavík Music Mess. Born into a heady rock pedigree (his father is guitarist Johnny Marr of The Smiths and Modest Mouse), he's performed with the likes of Broken Social Scene and Bright Eyes. With one EP under his belt, he's looking to see if 2012 will be his year.**

**So Nilas, there may be some people out there who aren't sure who you are, so this is the moment for you to shine and tell us a bit about yourself. Don't be shy now...**

Well I'm Nile, and I'm from Manchester, and I write songs and perform as Man Made. I'm not sure how to answer this one really. It feels like I should say something like, 'and I like long walks on the beach'...

**Now we can't get away from saying that you have a famous dad in the form of all 'round guitar god Johnny Marr. That must have been useful for guitar lessons. How helpful has he been in realising what you want to do musically?**

We don't actually play together that much at all. Both of us are so busy, so I really taught myself how to play. Though my dad joining Modest Mouse was a pretty important event for me. I think being a teenager growing up in that American scene made me who I am today. I think it especially shaped my music tastes, and what I like to play. So I think that ultimately was the main influence for me musically.

**You've managed to play with the likes of Broken Social Scene and Bright Eyes. How did that all come about?**

One of the best things about being part of the 'music biz' is that it makes the world a very small place. Any time Bright Eyes play it's like a family reunion. So it was really just a bit of fun, everyone's hanging out and catching up and that kind of thing just happens. It's a really cool trait of American bands I think.

With Broken Social Scene, they're one of my favourite bands. I was going to their shows when they were on tour; I'd turn up early to make sure I was around to hang out and I snuck backstage and introduced myself. It was a trip. I kept doing that for a few shows of the tour and on the last day, I'd gone down early to see them play in London, and Kevin Drew was talking to me about their song, "Anthems for a Seventeen Year Old Girl," my favourite song of ALL TIME. Anyway, he knew that I liked it, and he just asked me if I wanted to play it with them that night.

**Your debut EP last year was composed, performed and recorded entirely by yourself. Was this a case of necessity, or were others unable to provide what you wanted musically?**

I don't think it was that considered at all, really. I write all the songs, and at that point had only played gigs on my own; it just seemed like the right idea at the time. I wrote the songs with a full band set up in mind anyway, and doing it on my own just saved me explaining things more than anything. When I get back from Iceland, I'm finally getting around to making another EP, and I'm doing that with some friends of mine, so I'm really looking forward to that. ♪

✍ BOB CLUNESS  
📷 DANIEL ROBSON

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From Viðey to Skarfabakki	11:30	12:30	13:30	14:30	15:30	16:30	17:30	18:30
From Reykjavik Old Harbour to Viðey		12:00						
From Viðey to Reykjavik Old Harbour				15:30				

Winter (on Sat. and Sun. from 16 Sept. to 14 May)

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**Disclaimer:** This is The Grapevine's BAD ADVICE column. It's where Nanna Árnadóttir answers questions from our readers about traversing the Icelandic cultural jungle. She is usually nice, but really rather bad at giving advice...

Hi Nanna,

I got a bad cold and my nose is running almost non-stop. Knowing that Icelanders consider it rude to use tissues in public (why the hell? No Icelander could answer that) and my brain is all filled up by yellow snot, following the Icelandic habit of sucking it all up there, I dunno what to do with the rest? Run out in middle of conversations to blow it, simply let it float, or use my coat sleeve as tissue supplement?  
Grateful for advice,  
Red-nosed Paindeer

ingar" who worked tirelessly with legally above-board business ventures. They contributed something of value to the world in order to bring our country the glamorous spoils that are a byproduct of sound investments. Monuments like the phallic Smáralind and cars like the Hummer. Frankly I'm perturbed that you are getting any financial aid from the government at all to further your education. Are my taxes paying for this? It's not my responsibility to pay for your luxurious student life style. Why don't you get a job, mooch!  
Nanna

Hi Nanna,  
I'm in Iceland for another day and a half. What is the funniest non-touristy thing to do in Reykjavik?  
Thanks,  
Done With Touristy Stuff

Dear Red-Nosed Paindeer,

First, why is it rude to blow your nose in public in Iceland? All things that are in or on your body are disgusting once they leave your person, not just snot. Look at hair, for example. I like my hair, I might even love it, but as soon as there is a strand or twenty populating the shower drain and I have to fish it out so it doesn't block the pipes, hair becomes hands down the grossest thing in the world. The same goes for snot, piss, poop, sweat and blood. Even genital secretions are fine as long as consenting adults view them in private, but the public doesn't want to see that expelled from you... pervert!  
Here's my advice, let the snot just drip, flood your chin until you disgust everyone around you and get sent home. Then get better sicko! And don't go outside again until fluids have stopped gushing out of you.  
I hope you don't die of the flu,  
Nanna

Hi Nanna,

I'm a student and I'm really struggling with the kreppa, student loans aren't getting me far and I'm already living as cheaply as I can. I started dumpster diving for food recently, which is a lot easier given how cold Iceland is, it really helps keep the food from going off in the trash. But even so I need more ways to save money. Any tips?  
Best Regards,  
Pinching Pennies

Hi Pinching Pennies,  
Listen you have no one to blame but yourself for your poverty. You aren't homeless (that I know of), and you are eating, so why are you complaining? What you need to do is to look towards some of Iceland's greatest economic role models for inspiration. People like the Icelandic "útrásavík-

Dear Done With Touristy Stuff,  
I guess, since I'm not a tourist I can just tell you what I would do for fun on a day off. First I would kill a whale with my bare hands, then start the next Icelandic indie band sensation in my parent's basement and make millions, and then to finish off the day I'd give 12 really well hung elves blowjobs.  
Have fun!  
Nanna.

Dear Nanna,  
Who should I vote for in the upcoming Presidential election?  
Worried Voter

Dear Worried Voter,  
I find that when you are in doubt you should always vote for the person whom you are most interested in having sex with. I think we both know that with that strategy sexy bad boy, S. Valentinus Vagnsson, AKA the 72-year-old who tried to blow up parliament because he couldn't find the prime minister's house, has got this baby in the bag. I know that people are saying that the intelligent, well-rounded and feminist powerhouse Þóra Arnórsdóttir is a shoe-in, but I say she's too obvious. Why try to bring a fresh perspective and balance to the presidential post when we could watch Valentinus' explosive shenanigans.  
He's the Bomb! Vote Valentinus!  
Nanna

**Got a question for Nanna and need some bad advice? Email [nanna.arnadottir@gmail.com](mailto:nanna.arnadottir@gmail.com) and you might get an answer published in a future issue.**

**Trivia question answer from page six:**

The United States of America, of course! But, Germany was a close second.

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13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00
		14:00	14:00	14:00	14:00		
		17:00*	17:00	17:00	17:00	17:00*	
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## Get Your Drink On!

*What you need to know about a night on the djamm*



All too often visitors like yourself can be seen wandering the streets of Reykjavík in your hiking boots at around nine or ten o'clock on a Friday or Saturday night. As most stores have long since closed by that time, we assume you're curious to see the so-called party capital of the north in action. If that's the case, do yourself a favour and read this manual first.

To save money, groups of friends tend to drink at home before going out on the "djamm" as they like to call it. In fact, partygoers rarely head downtown before midnight so you might as well take a nap and then come back out later to see what all those guidebooks are talking about. Then you might also want to down an espresso or two because you'll be up until at least four; Icelanders like to drink themselves silly.

### WATCH OUT FOR TRÚNÓ

As the night progresses you might find yourself cornered by a stranger who feels the need to express their deepest secrets. This is called trúónó. The female version of trúónó usually takes place in the bathroom. Here in the pleasant atmosphere of a public toilet, women of varying degrees of familiarity will open their hearts and tell you things you probably do not want to hear. You will probably—depending on your level of intoxication—sympathise and offer a similar story in exchange or you may choose to simply agree that yes, he is a total douche.

The experience is somewhat different for men. It can happen anywhere and involves rare displays of affection and/or hugging followed by more drinking with amped intensity. This small window of time is often used to bring up old grudges and resolve them. The reason for trúónó is thought to have something to do with Icelanders' centuries-old tradition of bottling up their feelings. In fact, you can even find examples of trúónó in the ancient Icelandic Sagas. There's that one time when Gunnar and Njáll of Njáll's Saga go on trúónó and

bury the war hammer. It's true! Look it up. When you find yourself the target of unnecessary trúónó, don't panic! Simply wait until the perpetrator's beer is empty and he or she will go to the bar, kitchen or tent to replenish it, leaving you ample time to make your escape.

### PREPARE FOR DJAMMVISKUBIT

Now if you're reading this on Sunday afternoon after a night or weekend of wild, Icelandic-style drinking-till-dawn, you are probably experiencing a very common form of hazy depression. The symptoms of which include but are not limited to: self-loathing, guilt, regret, and embarrassment. Basically you feel like shit, yet you lack a single, perfect word to describe your condition.

Dear readers, we have such a word! The feeling you are experiencing is what Icelanders call djammviskubit. This is pronounced: (jam-wisk-oo-bit). It is the combination the Icelandic word for party ("djamm") and the word for guilt ("samviskubit"). As if the psychological symptoms of djammviskubit weren't horrible enough, they are accompanied by physical symptoms such as pounding headache, nausea, strange bruises, extreme thirst, and in rare cases (hell who are we kidding) the presence of an unknown entity in your bed.

Do not—under any circumstances—check your bank account in your fragile condition. Call a friend and eat some greasy food, or go to the movies or a swimming pool. These are all popular healing rituals among Icelanders who will mostly be fine by the time Monday rolls around. Then it's about putting our nose to the grindstone and just like that Loverboy song we're all "working for the weekend" again. Come Friday, we wash, rinse, and repeat. Welcome to Iceland, we'll see you on the djamm! 🍷

✍️ B.R. NEAL  
📷 JÓI KJARTANS

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# Requiem For A Scene

*GusGus bid farewell to Nasa*



As Nasa is closing its doors on June 1, it was with great grief that I walked through the lobby of the soon to be demolished concert venue to see GusGus perform one last time. More than any other Icelandic band, GusGus has made the place their home base for the past six years, one where I've experienced countless hours of their bombastic bliss.

## SOUL MECHANICS

As I made my way inside, Margeir—arguably the slickest looking DJ in the country—was warming up the crowd. He left his turntables around 11 o'clock and the familiar sound of GusGus's pumping tech house began to throb its way through the speakers while the band's logo was projected onto the curtain. Then the logo gave way to real time video footage of the men hidden behind it: the group's soul mechanics, Biggi Veira and President Bongo. They were knob twisting hard behind an array of computers, synthesizers and other gadgets, and the footage was drenched in multi-coloured psychedelic

filters. The spectacle was very trippy and visually impressive to say the least.

The curtain fell and the group's three singers, Daniel Ágúst, Högni and Earth, came on the stage. Greeted by a massive applause from the sold out house, they began performing the title song from their latest release, 'Arabian Horse.' With "Disappear into the dust," Daniel Ágúst mournfully sang in elongated notes and I couldn't help wondering if he was singing about the imminent closing of the venue. Dandy as always, he waved his arms and floated around the stage like a peacock during mating season.

## SHE'S THINKING OF ME

The show's set list consisted mainly of material from their latest album and among the highlights were Högni's passionate performances of "Within You" and "Deep Inside." He expressed himself mostly with his hands as his face was often hidden behind his long blond hair as if he were Cousin Itt from the Addams Family.

Earth is the de facto house diva of Ice-

land and she absolutely nailed "David," which has got to be one of the sexiest songs in the history of Icelandic music. Just the stuttering synth line that opens it sent a tingle through my spine and her sultry vocals cooing "I am thinking of you" made me feel like she was singing direct-

*"He expressed himself mostly with his hands as his face was often hidden behind his long blond hair as if he were Cousin Itt from the Addams Family."*

ly to me (full disclosure: I have never met Earth, though for obvious name-related reasons I sometimes like to fantasize that the song is about my humble self).

## BLITZKRIEG ON THE SENSES

By this point the feeling of grief I had upon arriving had turned into one of celebration. The beginning of "Add This Song" was a full on Blitzkrieg on the senses. The bass drum kicked you in the stomach with each beat and strobe lights

on steroids bombarded your pupils. If anybody in the audience had a faint hint of epilepsy they probably would have had a seizure. You could feel the wobbly bass and trance-y synth lines on your skin and then Daniel's soulful voice cut through it all and added the emotional core at the

and just stood there like a statue in the middle of the stage while the lighting guy went berserk on his rig and the porno-fied pulsating bass line blared away. We, the audience, had witnessed a visual and sonic extravaganza and though I'm still sad about the death of Nasa, it couldn't have had a better wake. 🍷

DAVID ROACH GUNNARSSON  
ALISA KALYANOVA

## SCHEDULE

### Whale-Watching Tour Duration: 3 hours

The tour includes a stop by Puffin Island 15th May - 20th August

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		16:55	16:55	16:55			

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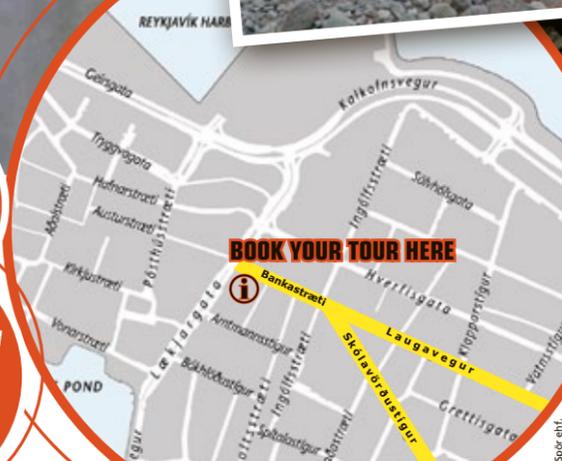
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Note: The accompanying photo is Wim's reenactment of the cover to Purrkur Pillnikk's famous 7" 'No Time To Think'.

## HE HEARTS ICELANDIC MUSIC!

*Dr. Wim Van Hooste celebrates Rokk í Reykjavík's 30th birthday along with his own 40th*

**Belgian physicist Dr. Wim Van Hooste is arguably Icelandic music's biggest fan and greatest supporter. Upon overhearing the Sugarcubes' "Birthday" on the radio in 1987 Wim became fascinated with the band and the country it came from, soon taking to collecting books about Iceland and following the local music scene closely. This fascination has brought him to Iceland many times since and, in 2006, led him to found what has become the internet's foremost resource on Icelandic music, his rigorously maintained DIY blog 'I <3 Icelandic Music' ([www.icelandic-music.blogspot.com](http://www.icelandic-music.blogspot.com)).**

Due to his close connection to the country and its music, Wim decided to celebrate his milestone 40th birthday in Reykjavík...by throwing a grand mini-music festival celebrating the thirty-year anniversary of legendary rockumentary 'Rokk í Reykjavík' (but of course!). And you are invited! We spoke to Wim about the show, music and life.

### AN EXTRAVAGANT NIGHT OF ROCK 'N' ROLL CELEBRATION

Besides celebrating his 40th, Wim says the idea with the concert is to "bring old and new bands together: three generations influenced by or featured in 'Rokk í Reykjavík.'" He further explains the concept: "I booked eight bands, including two who appeared in the original movie, Q4U and Fræbbblarnir. They are headlining the festival, supported by great bands like Hellvar, Mörðingjarnir, Æla, Sudden Weather Change, Mosi Frændi and the Dr. Gunni band—who are playing together for the first time in years, celebrating the decade anniversary of their seminal LP 'Stóri hvellur.'"

That sure sounds like an extravagant night of rock 'n' roll celebration, but there's more! As Wim reveals: "There will be two super-secret surprise acts, one of which is the once-in-a-lifetime reunion of a band featured in the film. I can't tell you who they are, but it is most definitely a very exciting reunion for all fans of 'Rokk í Reykjavík.'"

Wim's idea for this ambitious project was born last year, as he was following the Iceland Airwaves festival from his home in the small village of Kemzeke. "I missed Airwaves for the first time in seven years, and I had a lot of time to

think about returning to Iceland and doing something unique. The planning has gone well, but the whole thing is of course only possible because of the help of all my musical friends I've made by following the Icelandic music scene for 25 years."

### A BJÖRK T-SHIRT FOR EVERY DAY

We talk about how his love for Icelandic music grew since first encountering the Sugarcubes in 1987, how it came to define him and what he thinks sets it

apart. "While attending university, I had seven Björk t-shirts, one for every day of the week. Pretty early on my fellow medical students started calling me 'the Icelander' or 'the Viking.'" Wim says, laughing. "I think what makes the Icelandic music scene unique is the collaboration and interaction of all the different bands and the DIY mentality. I think that it springs from the fact that Iceland is an island with a small population. You have to do things yourself here, and believe in yourself. Moreover because of inflation, eruptions and jökulhlaup risk, Icelanders are obligated to make quick decisions..."

The discussion turns to 'the average Icelandic music fan,' who keeps visiting Iceland in greater numbers, either for events like Iceland Airwaves or just to lounge around in 12 Tónar and Smekkleysa while keeping an eye out for Jónsi. "For years the Icelandic government neglected the fact that a lot of tourists, especially the young ones, came because of the music of The Sugarcubes and, later, Björk. Or maybe they didn't want to hear about the success of this strange bunch," he wonders out loud. "But this has changed lately. As for the fans, most people I know are devoted to a particular Icelandic band, artist or label, but some of them will dig for more."

*"While attending university, I had seven Björk t-shirts, one for every day of the week. Pretty early on my fellow medical students started calling me 'the Icelander' or 'the Viking'"*

date frequently," he says, "but I don't only focus on new trends or artists. I like to go into the history of the music, uncovering hard-to-find materials. In the beginning it was a lot of copy/paste work, but now I try to bring something personal to the posts. I also strive to post correct information on the site, avoiding the stereotypes, outdated or incorrect information and wrongly spelled Icelandic that is so prevalent in the mainstream media."

Wim says his love of Icelandic music goes well together with his job as an MD, although he no longer wears his Sugarcubes T-shirts to work or blasts KUKL from the office stereo. His list of favourite Icelandic musicians is far too long to print, but he says his first love, The Sugarcubes, and every related band (KUKL, Purrkur Pillnikk, Tappi Tíkarass, Þeyr, Grindverk and Ghostigtal) are always in his highest regard. "I would like to recommend two albums," he says in closing. "The best album for learning Icelandic is Dr. Gunni's album for children—and parents—'Abbababb!' And the best album to study Icelandic grammar is Sigur Rós' 'Von', which was my background music in the winter of 1998-99 in Akureyri." 🇮🇸

### THE FIRST <3 IS THE STRONGEST

An avid collector of all things related to Icelandic music, Wim fosters ambitions of one day creating a museum out of his vast collection. "The biggest part is items by Björk, with 150 CDs, 50 vi-

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Music | Eurovision

# ICELAND WILL DEFINITELY WIN EUROVISION THIS TIME!

*Just like last time, and the time before that...*



From the beginning of Icelandic Eurovision times (1986), Icelanders have been from 75% to 100% sure that the nation will win the song contest. This happens every year, so we have been disappointed on a yearly basis.

It goes like this: First the quality of the Icelandic song is trumpeted to high heavens. It is without a doubt the best song of the contest. The Icelandic media tells tales of some foreign betting offices placing our song at the very top. We also get news of legions of foreign Eurovision freaks claiming our song is their favourite. When the harsh reality dawns on us after the contest we find a way to explain away our loss. For instance: It's all cliquishness—the Eastern countries only vote for each other! Or: Our song was too good/modern for those stupid European countries that are years behind us in pop quality evolution!

This cycle of hope/disappointment was especially strong the first time we competed in the contest with Magnús Eiríksson's "Bank of Fun," performed by the shiny Icy Trio. Before the contest, the nation thought it had basically already won the contest and that it would only be a formality to go and collect the prize. When we came in at 16 (out of 20 nations), we were furious. The winner that year was Sandra Kim, a 14-year-old singer from Belgium. Her young age was obviously the only reason she won. We would have to top that novelty: "We should send two pregnant women next time to get the attention we need," one guy from the Icelandic Eurovision Committee remarked.

In 1986 we were also very angry at the other Scandinavian countries. There we were, doing this stupid song contest for the first time, and they only gave us three points in total! And we gave them lots of points! Silly Sweden even got 12 points from us!

Our biggest fear isn't losing though; it is winning. The nation's economy would collapse if we had to host the show. Where would we stage it? At Harpa? At the giant airplane hangar in Keilir?

Words  
Dr Gunnir

Photographs  
Press



It is this mix of hope, fear and disappointment that makes Eurovision so thrilling for us. The streets are totally empty during the contest. In 1999 we almost won when Selma sang "All Out of Luck." She was beat at the last minute by some Swedish hag; I was so worked up that I almost knocked myself out by banging my head against the wall.

This year we send Greta Salóme, an elegant newcomer, accompanied by Jónsi (not of Sigur Rós), who competed in 2004. She sings "Never Forget," which she wrote and composed. The chances of winning are sky high and God might even have a hand in it, if we win. As Greta said in an interview, she thanks God for winning the Icelandic pre-contest. So with God on our side, I'd say it's 100% sure that Iceland wins this time! We better prepare Harpa or the hangar for 2013.

Still, I wouldn't be surprised if silly Sweden wins with that super catchy "Euphoria" song. ☹

### EUROVISION PREDICTIONS

1. Sweden: I have long been a sucker for cheesy, anthemic trance music. Harkens back to my raving days, dancing under the stars in the New Zealand wilderness.

2. Russia: Um, need I explain? Dancing Grandmas with bad teeth. Anything that makes me laugh out loud goes at least in the top ten.

3. Netherlands: A song with instruments and fully clothed, non-gyrating women playing them, something different indeed!

And finally, my prediction for Iceland in this year's Eurovision... I am thinking, just, you know, without much real insight or knowledge, that Iceland will get tenth place. Just because, that's why.

- Bergún Anna Hallsteinsdóttir

As Eurovision is mostly about futile, vapid political gestures of solidarity and friendship between nations whose diplomatic relations need bolstering for one reason or another, I feel I can safely say that the winner will be the result of a collection of sympathy votes.

Greece and Ireland have both suffered tremendous financial woes of late, mostly due to corruption and incompetency running rampant in their respective governments. Yet, they have managed to maintain a rather 'victimized' image, while Iceland's troubles have painted an image of its people as being greedy, short-sighted and unwilling to shoulder blame. For these reasons, I feel that Greece and/or Ireland will place in the top three. Russia is a likely contender for the top three as well, with its combination of political power, nuclear weapons, and the novelty of picking a group of old Otyak women yelling over a house beat for this year's number.

Meanwhile Iceland, having once again picked a tepid and forgettable turd of a song even by Eurovision's standards, and having failed to make any real friends on Europe's political stage, will, as usual, trail somewhere in the 15-25 range.

- Sindri Eldon



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# Capturing The World

*Hreinn Friðfinnsson's House Project returns home*



Some works of art take longer to finish than others. And some are perhaps never finished. Hreinn Friðfinnsson's House Project is a case in point. The story begins a hundred years ago, in the summer of 1912. That summer, a character in Þórbergur Þórðarsson's novel 'Íslenskur aðall,' ('Icelandic Aristocracy,' published in 1938), built a house inside out. The character, Sólon Guðmundsson, is based on a real person who lived in Ísafjörður, but "we know next to nothing about him," Hreinn Friðfinnsson told me over the phone from Amsterdam, where he has lived for the past forty years. "He was a common worker at the start of the twentieth century, an eccentric outsider, but in Þórbergur's mind outsiders were the Icelandic aristocracy."

**Words**  
Ásgeir H. Ingólfsson

**Photograph**  
Hreinn Friðfinnsson / i8

## BUILDING A HOUSE INSIDE OUT

What captured Hreinn's attention was the house, called Slunkaríki. "A house built inside out—that was the concept I

*"So, when I had scraped enough money together, I found a professional carpenter and we drove into the lava fields; it was important to build the house where no other man-made structures were visible"*

wanted to play with," he told me. "You could say that in this way you turn the whole world on its head." And that is what Hreinn did in the summer of 1974, when he built a house inside out in the lava fields near Hafnarfjörður. "It's a small wave to Sólon," he says, and then recalled the building process in more detail. "This was when I didn't really have a penny to my name and needed to borrow all over the place. So, when I had scraped enough money together, I found a professional carpenter and we drove into the lava fields; it was important to build the house where no other man-made structures were visible. We left the car and hadn't really walked that far before we were all of a sudden

at the edge of this crater—and we knew this was the place."

After the house was built, it was photographed, and this became the

real artwork. "It was built to be photographed," Hreinn says. "So we built it, took pictures, and then we just let it be, and it has just stood there, abandoned." Hreinn himself didn't visit it again until the early 2000s. "By that time there were a number of holes in it. They were gun-made; a shooting association had a cabin nearby," Hreinn says. Otherwise it was in pristine condition until the turn of the century; no vandalism had been committed.

## RETURNING IT OUTSIDE IN

The little house in the lava would however not be his last house. In 2009, Hreinn was asked to build a second house in a French sculpture park, and

this time it would be different. "I had long toyed with the idea of turning the house back around, into a normal state. The house had been open to the world so long, so when you turn it inwards, it takes with it all its history," Hreinn says.

"The first house itself never became a sculpture or official work of art; it was just a house hidden in nature where random travellers might encounter it," he says, "but in France the house became a sculpture in a sculpture garden. You can't enter it, but you can look around it, and you can look through the windows and see what's inside. There are pictures on the walls and a copy of the first house as well as a model of a third house. There is also an unusually big asteroid found in Argentina, in Campo del Cielo." Hreinn explains: "By having the asteroid there I reach as far as I can to take something from the outside world and put it inside the house."

## CAPTURING THE WORLD

Finally, the model of his third house, which could be seen floating around in the second house, premiered at Hafnarborg in Iceland this month. It has no walls. It's simply a 3-D graphic—an outline of the original house in the origi-

nal size, at the place where the original house stood. "Those boundaries between inside and outside have served their purpose. It's sort of a question; it doesn't have walls, there is no shelter, and you can be both inside of it and outside of it. You can ponder it; unlike the first, this house makes no statement," he says. And what statement did the first house make? "It captures the whole world, except for itself. It turns the world on its axis."

I wonder if the ghost houses left behind by the bubble years have altered the meaning of his house, but he brushed that suggestion aside: "There are no political connotations. Perhaps there is a philosophical meaning, threads that can be spun in all directions." And thus concludes the story of the three houses—for now. Or five, if you include the original that Sólon built and the fictional one Þórbergur wrote about. And now those houses will return to a book published by Crymogeia, and an exhibition in Hafnarborg, an art gallery in Hafnarfjörður. ☘



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**Difficulty:** 1 out of 5.

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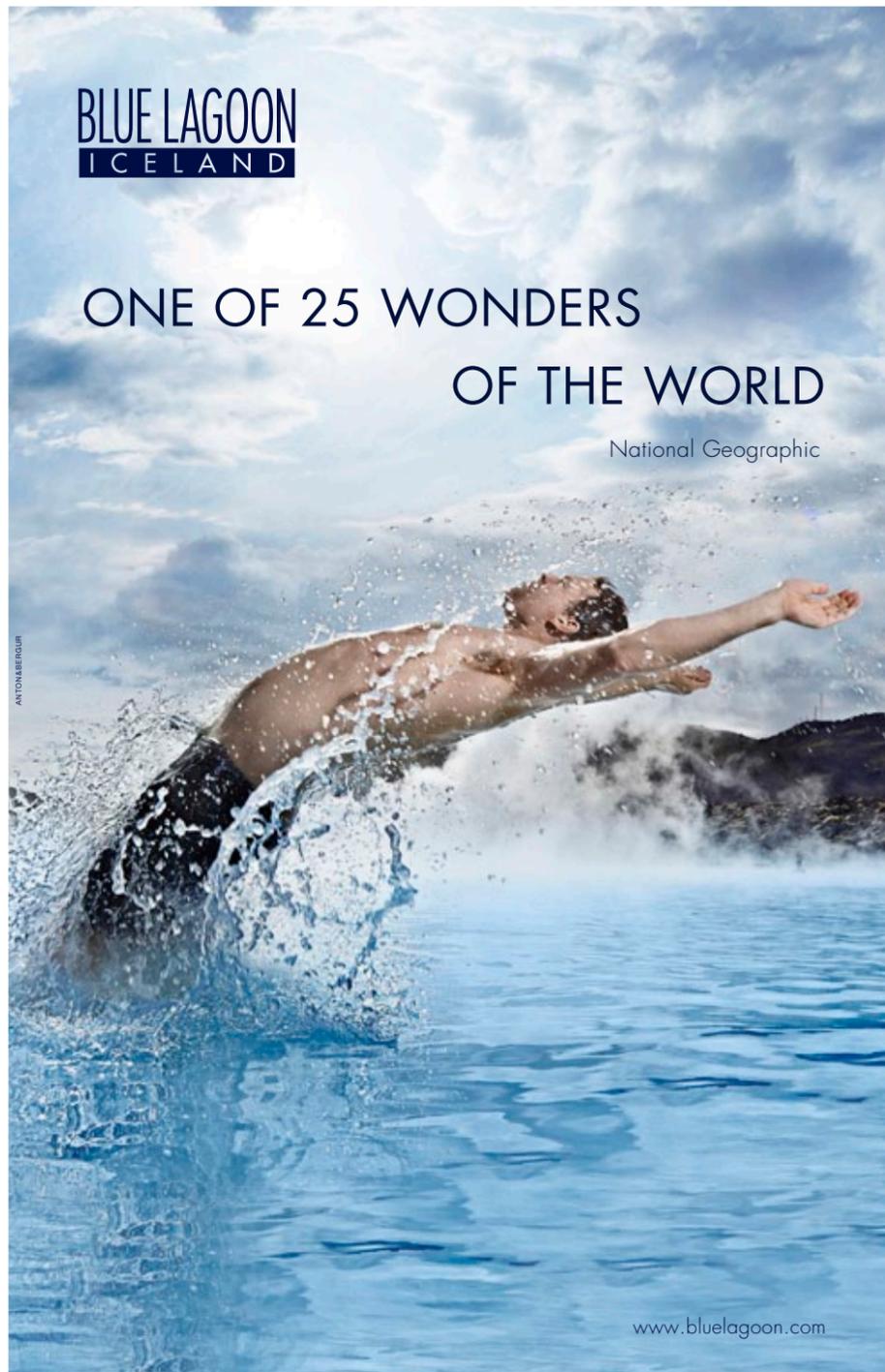


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Fashion | Interview

## Digital Attacks In Reykjavík

*We Snoop Around at Sig Vicious*

Equipped with a computer, Siggeir Magnús Hafsteinsson began his career as a graphic designer fifteen years ago. Since then, the artist who is better known as Sig Vicious has worked for a number of companies and runs his own advertising agency working for large clients like Coca Cola distributors Vífilfell and telephone company Íslands-sími. He makes use of a colourful palette, and his work often features elements of pop culture, politics and humour. We visited Sig on an overcast Sunday morning to learn more about what drives him.

### DID YOU TAKE INTEREST IN DESIGN AT AN EARLY AGE?

Well, when I was thirteen I had an Atari computer and was a part of a computer clique. I started drawing in a program where the resolution was 480x320 and you could choose from 16 colours. I didn't do well in school, so I spent a couple of years working at a bakery and the shipyard, but I took interest in design again in my early twenties.

### DID YOU WIND UP STUDYING GRAPHIC DESIGN?

No, I'm completely self-taught. I wanted to become a graphic designer and I knew that I had to learn how to use Freehand, a program that some designers used back then. I went to Siberia for three months in 1997 and used my time

there to master Macromedia Freehand completely. When I returned, I got a job and started working on brochures and stuff like that. Lets just say I have grown to what I am today; you are always learning and developing as an artist.

*"Some of my early work isn't very good when I look at it now. The first thing I made was a flyer for a fashion show at Hótel Borg; it was epically ugly."*

Some of my early work isn't very good when I look at it now. The first thing I made was a flyer for a fashion show at Hótel Borg; it was epically ugly. I made it in Photoshop and used something called difference clouds—I was very happy with this at the time.

### ARE YOU INFLUENCED BY OTHER PEOPLE'S WORK?

Well, I'm inspired by a lot of things, but it doesn't play directly into my own work. I take a lot of interest in street and graffiti culture, even though I'm not doing it myself.

### YOU'VE RECENTLY DESIGNED SOME EVE-ONLINE SPACESHIPS. TELL ME ABOUT THOSE...

Yeah, so first I took a couple of old photographs from Reykjavík and superimposed them with spaceships from Star Wars. Then I wanted to develop the

idea further using more original material, so I got my friend Oscar Bjarnason to take photos and used ships from the EVE-online game as models.

I have actually received a bit of feedback from the EVE community; they say that the scale of the ships is incorrect. However, they should know that this is art, not EVE reality!

### WHAT DO YOU FIND MOST FUN ABOUT BEING A DESIGNER?

I most love making vinyl covers because I am typically given a lot of artistic freedom. I like to ask for two or three keywords, but other than that I can do whatever.

### WHAT ARE YOU DOING NOW AND WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

Well I'm working for a commercial agency. Of course I like to work at a small company, as an artist, but you cannot live exclusively by making flyers and vinyl covers. I've done projects for big companies like HP and Nike in the past, and this kind of work is very different in terms of project size and pay. I think I will be doing this as long as I have the freedom to create. 🍷

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# On The Road With Shorts&Docs

*To Höfn í Hornafirði and back again*



**After wrapping up in Reykjavík, the Shorts&Docs festival took to the road, journeying all the way to the hamlet Höfn í Hornafirði in southeast Iceland. In a lovely small Höfn cinema called Sindrabær, twenty-five films from the festival were to be screened for locals over the course of a single Saturday.**

Jumping at the chance to tag along, my friend and I set off in a car full of films, refreshments, cameras and people. Festival press officer and Höfn native Brynja Dögg Friðriksdóttir began telling us stories about her hometown, which is actually partially built on an old landfill. The town's name translates to "harbour," and it is traditionally a fishing village, which also thrives on tourism today.

It somehow felt appropriate that our little car full of films was making its way to an area in Iceland that has featured in a number of feature films like 'Tomb Raider,' James Bond classics 'A View To A Kill' and 'Die Another Day,' 'Batman Begins' as well as the TV series 'Game of Thrones.'

## GLACIERS AND GEOTHERMAL HOT TUBS

Four hours from Reykjavík, we made our first stop at Vatnajökull glacier to see Jökulsárlón, the glacier lagoon. We got out of the cramped car to stretch our legs, and were greeted by a flock of seals swirling around the lagoon. Brynja Dögg—who used to work at the lagoon—gave us a personal guided tour, apparently well in practice after all of these years. "You might notice that some icebergs in the lagoon are bluer than others," Brynja told us. "That's because they have been underwater. The water fills the cracks of the icebergs, which gives them this appearance."

"The lagoon," she said, "it's always changing." In the car Brynja Dögg continued to tell us about glacial areas, and twenty kilometres outside of Höfn we stopped at another one called Hoffell-sjökull. Surrounded by great nature, a cute little outhouse and an outdoor shower, we got a chance to dip into geothermal hot tubs located at the foot of the glacier.

## DEEP-FRIED HOT DOGS AT KELABÚÐ

When we finally arrived to Höfn on Friday night, we were feeling pretty hungry. By the harbour we

found a diner apparently famous for their deep-fried hot-dogs—called Kelabúð. The owners, who have run the shop since 1991, were fortunately both there late and welcomed us to eat.

"I've never tasted this hot dog," said owner Hrafnkell Ingólfsson, better known as Keli. "But our customers love it. They say it's the best hot dog in the world."

Excited about tomorrow's events, we checked ourselves into Hotel Höfn for a good night's sleep.

## ENOUGH STONES TO FILL A SWIMMING POOL

Before the festival started on Saturday, we couldn't resist checking out the Huldusteinn Rock Museum. A sign on the front door read, "Call us if you want to enter the museum," but luckily the door suddenly opened up, and a cheerful lady invited us in.

She turned out to be Vigdís Vigfúsdóttir who, along with her husband, had collected every rock in the museum. A few years ago they bought an old swimming pool and transformed it into a museum. Viewing the colourful collection in this very strange setting was both brilliant and hilarious,

### Words

Ása Baldursdóttir

### Photography

Nanna Dís

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#### SCREENING DAY PAR EXCELLENCE

After a lovely lunch at Kaffihornið restaurant, we rushed to Sindrabær cinema to prep the screenings for the day and night ahead. The programme consisted of Icelandic shorts, Polish shorts and various documentaries. The atmosphere was filled with excitement when the first guests arrived for the first screening of the day. A lot of smiling faces came out of the room, and some stayed for the next show as well. All in all around forty people came, which the Shorts&Docs organisers considered a great turnout.

At around eight o'clock we took a short break from the screenings to eat dinner at Húmarhöfnin, a local restaurant specializing in various lobster dishes. Höfn was referred to as the lob-

ster capital of Iceland in every brochure we had seen, so we were excited to taste and experience a nice dinner while in town. Every summer the locals put on a Lobster Festival, and this restaurant was formally opened during this festival in 2007. The place is known for serving whole lobsters and is located by the harbour with a view over the shipyard.

Festival Director Heather Millard said that they plan on taking the festival to more rural areas next year. After enjoying the best lobster we have ever had, we finished the night off by attending the 22:00 screening. 🍷



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## Icelandic Outlaws Get The Bollywood Treatment

**A story set in eighteenth century Iceland, based on a classic play about a romance between outlaw Fjalla-Eyvindur (“Eyvindur of the mountains”) and rich widow Halla, which is based on real-life events, may become the first Icelandic Bollywood movie. That is, it will feature Indian actors and Hindi dialogue, singing and dancing,**

Director Arnar Sigurðsson stresses that the film is still very much in development, but its concept trailer, which opened the recent Indian film festival, has already drawn considerable attention. He already has some Bollywood experience, having worked there for half a year, originally as an assistant director. “It was when ‘Slumdog Millionaire’ came out, a Western movie that uses themes and settings in India,” he tells me. “So everyone was looking for the next crossover and I was asked to give the ‘Western view.’”

Still he doesn’t think Fjalla-Eyvindur will be too hard on Eastern eyes. “I don’t have to change anything in the story for it to make sense to Indians. The realities of 18th century Iceland aren’t that far away from present day realities in some places in India. It will be in Hindi, but it’s not technically Bollywood as it’s not shot in Mumbai. But we want to use that Bollywood tradition of celebrating every emotion, which sometimes strikes Western audiences as overly melodramatic,” he says.

It’s not all about India though. “It’s much more about Iceland than India to me,” he says. “Perhaps it’s an attempt

to open up what Icelandic culture is, rather than narrowing it down. The fact many feel it’s a bit crazy raises interesting questions. We feel making pictures that look to Hollywood or Europe as a standard is the most natural thing in the world, so why not India? And this is a certain exercise in exoticism—do we view films differently based on the form they’re put in? Do we allow ourselves to enjoy things we’d sneer at in another context?”

But Arnar stresses that this shouldn’t be just a gimmick: “Of course there is a certain built-in artistic irony. But I want to put this together with honesty and integrity. And I haven’t found anybody

*“Many feel Bollywood is very kitsch. But in many ways we treat Icelandic nature the same way—with a lot of drama. And in a way the Inspired By Iceland advert was really the first Icelandic Bollywood film.”*

in India that finds the project strange at all. Taking a good story that has proven itself over centuries and making it in Hindi is the most natural thing in the world to them.”

Having been abroad for a good part of the last decade, he says it’s strik-

ing how concerned Icelandic artists are with being Icelandic artists, rather than just artists. “I don’t really feel like participating in projects that will narrow down what Icelandic culture is. I’d much rather open it up,” Arnar says.

### INSPIRED BY BOLLYWOOD

The singing and dancing will certainly be most foreign to Western audiences. “Many people here think of the song and dance as opposites to the story, an interruption to the plot,” Arnar explains. “But I believe it’s essential to the plot. The song and dance emits the emotion that the love is so strong they’re ready to give up a privileged life and go hide in the mountains. And after every song and dance scene, the mood changes and there is a shift.”

And Bollywood may not be as far removed from Iceland as we might think. “Many feel Bollywood is very kitsch. But in many ways we treat Icelandic nature the same way—with a lot of drama. And in a way the Inspired By Iceland advert was really the first Icelandic Bollywood film. The approach they took, with people dancing within well known tourist locations and enthusiastically emitting their joy—that was very much like Bollywood does it. Icelandic nature has been made so kitsch that it’s already a big Bollywood drama.”

The music in the trailer is Icelandic and while most think it’s impressive, Arnar isn’t sure that he has found the perfect musical way of bridging the gap between these two worlds. “The aim is to have both Icelandic and Hindi music—music that works within both

worlds. That’s not easy and it’s one of the reasons this development process will take time. I’ve been looking into this with some Icelandic musicians; it doesn’t matter if the musicians that perform the final music will be Icelandic or Indian, what matters is that it works within both worlds. We’re trying to put two things together that have not met before and try to find harmony. But Icelandic rhyme singing and Indian mantras are not really too far apart. There is kinship there.”

### MOVIES ON FACEBOOK

He admits that there’s added pressure with such early attention, but sees the benefits of having a dialogue with the audience at such an early stage. “Films are using social media much more before they actually shoot. Look at ‘Iron Sky’ [a film currently showing in Reykjavík, which revolves around Nazis fleeing to the moon], which began as a poster in 2007. Then they used crowd sourcing to budget the film. This is what many producers are starting to look at. We might not need the gatekeepers anymore—those who decide what is a good idea and not. Now you can speak to the audience directly.” That dialogue has already started and those who want to participate can find “Fjalla-Eyvindur og Halla” on Facebook or check out the film’s website, [www.loveoutlaw.com](http://www.loveoutlaw.com). The concept trailer can be found at both locations. 🍷

ASGEIR H. INGÓLFSSON  
STILLS

Art | Festival

## Watch Out! Duck!

“Why is she wearing a duck costume?” Who hasn’t heard this question thrown out there at least once in their lifetime? Various occasions demand that we wear a duck costume, and just the other day there was such an occasion. It was May 12, Global Day of Action, and the person wearing the costume was a marching member of the To Have and To Need movement of artists in Berlin. Elaborate, large letters were carved out for the march, with each one of the artists in the movement carrying one to collectively spell ‘Haben und Brauchen’ (“To Have and To Need”). Posters with the movement’s demands were also brought along. The demands of the movement all relate to the arts’ diminishing autonomy within the confinements of neoliberalism, where art is taken advantage of, along with its essential role to be at the heart of ‘the commons.’

In transitional times, art wants to be acknowledged for its capabilities of bringing forth changes in society. As soon as such demands are made, they seem to be incorporated into the art world’s idea of itself. Different ways are found to express this notion of art, many of which can be seen at the currently on-going seventh Berlin Biennale. This year’s curator, Artur Zmijewski, has set out to prove the truly effective nature of art through different means, ranging from inviting the Occupy movement to occupy a museum, thus giving them enough white wall space to express themselves, to setting up different kinds of congresses that address real social and political issues in real settings.

Upcoming in Reykjavík is an art festival that aims, yet again, to address urgent issues for the sake of the commons. The curator, Jonatan Habib Engqvist, is setting up an international visual art project that will open up existing borders in order to create an unexpected dialogue between the artists themselves as well as the various Nordic art institutions taking part. Through this dialogue, Jonatan wants to extend the established categorisation of culture and identity by creating a so-called third space, which Homi K. Bhabha defines as an “interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative” space of new forms of cultural meaning. This, as Jonatan states in the introduction text to the festival, might create the setting for “revolutionary happenings.” Jonatan therefore believes that it is with the proper Nordic funding system and within the terms of the cultural art institution that the tools will be provided to open up such relevant issues, all under the title of (I)Independent people.

The aforementioned duck in the May 12 demonstration is the anomaly that gives us another idea of the big picture. An artist wanted to make herself more individually present in the demonstration, by relating to the colour scheme of the movement—the duck costume was black and white as were the movement’s written demands. This gesture and the response it garnered can be seen as a reminder of the limited breathing space the art world tends to allow itself when it takes up arms to implement change. Art too easily succumbs to the model laid down by what it intends to critique, instead of operating on terms that would actually ignite the change which would give it reason to yell: Watch out! Duck!

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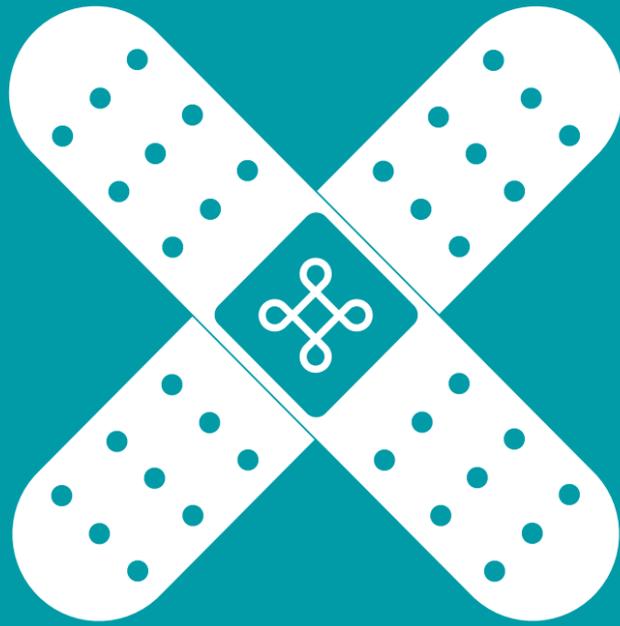


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# Exploring Hlíðar - From Its Bums To Its Beach

*How Reykjavík got to be what it is, part VII*



The area in Reykjavík called Hlíðar (“Hills”) is made up of six smaller neighbourhoods: Norðurmýri, Hlemmur, Holt, Suðurhlíðar, Öskjuhlíð and Nauthólsvík. While ten thousand people call Hlíðar home, the 3.3 square kilometre area is not exclusively a residential one.

Norðurmýri was the first planned neighbourhood to be built outside of the city centre. It was 1935 and the existing urban plan was already too small for Reykjavík's growing population. The houses in Norðurmýri are characterised by their concrete facades—some of which were covered with sea-shells—a technique that architect Guðjón Samúelsson developed while working on the National Theatre on Hverfisgata—to protect the houses against the harsh weather conditions in Iceland. As State Architect of Iceland, Guðjón Samúelsson designed many notable buildings, such as the main building at the University of Iceland, Sundhöllin swimming pool, Landakot Roman Catholic Cathedral, and Hallgrímskirkja church.

## BUMS, JUNKIES AND ARTISTS

Not far from Norðurmýri is Reykjavík's main bus terminal, Hlemmur. Before the bus evolution, the area had for centuries an important, yet different, travel-related role as the main water-well for the horses of those travelling to and from Reykjavík. A statue of two horses stands there today in a memory of the water-well and the horses that served us. For many Icelanders, however, Hlemmur immediately conjures up images of bums and drug abusers, who did a lot of hanging out there in the '80s and '90s. This scene was depicted in Ólafur Sveinsson's 2002 documentary called 'Hlemmur,' which follows some unfortunate homeless people who spend most of their time in and around this bus station. The soundtrack to the film is composed and performed by the Icelandic rock group Sigur Rós, who some of you might know.

Not far from Hlemmur, at Flókagata 17, you'll find a house called Englaborg

designed by the modernist architect Gunnlaugur Halldórsson. Built in 1942 for the artist Jón Engilberts, Englaborg is one of very few houses in Iceland that have been built specifically to be an art-

*“Hlemmur immediately conjures up images of bums and drug abusers, who did a lot of hanging out there in the '80s and '90s.”*

ist's working and living space (another example is the Einar Jónsson Museum on Skólavörðuholt). On the same street, you will find Kjarvalsstaðir, the first museum in Iceland built specifically for art. It was built between 1966–1973 in honour of one of the greatest Icelandic artists of the twentieth century, Jóhannes S. Kjarval (1885–1972).

Kjarvalsstaðir is adjacent to a green park called Klambratún, which served as farmland until World War II. Today it is a fairly popular place for picnics, playing volleyball, football or guitar during the summer. Although the farm Klömbrur, from which the park gets its name, does not stand there today, one does not need to go far to find a farm in Hlíðar. One such farm, Þóroddsstaðir, dates back to the '30s when it was built to meet the growing need for milk and meat during the Great Depression. It is one of few farms from that time that can still be found in the city.

## THE PEARL

Perhaps Hlíðar's most visible landmark is The Pearl, a dome atop large water tanks, located on a hill called Öskjuhlíð. While one might be tempted to think that the structure was designed by someone that had OD'd on Sci-Fi movies, the idea dates back to 1930. It was Kjarval, the aforementioned artist, who

proposed the building of a mirror-covered temple in Öskjuhlíð, the idea being to bring the northern lights closer.

Nine years after Kjarval's grand ideas, or in 1939, the first geothermal

water tank was built in Öskjuhlíð. The location was almost chosen by default, as the top of the hill at Öskjuhlíð is 61 metres above sea level, which was enough to provide sufficient water pressure for high rises. When the first geothermal tank was built, an architectural competition was held to design something around it. Nobody won, as all of the ideas were too outrageous and costly. Several more competitions were held in the following decades, but none of the ideas were ever fully realised. The Pearl was finally opened in 1991, 61 years after the idea of the mirror covered temple was introduced.

## ARTIFICIALLY HEATED BEACH

Although the geothermal tank was not much to look at, it had some pleasant side effects. Hot water ran from the tanks to the ocean at Nauthólsvík, through a stream that soon became a popular bathing spot amongst residents in Reykjavík. However, it was closed in 1983 after becoming a bit too popular, especially during the weekends after bars closed. A few years earlier, two architects were serious about the idea of using hot water to build a tropical zone in Nauthólsvík—a tropical paradise with a hotel and shopping centre, among other things. This idea was unfortunately never realised. Today the hot wa-

ter coming from the water tanks is used to heat up the ocean in Nauthólsvík, making for a popular beach year round. Nauthólsvík has become a popular place to go sea swimming, which has become a fairly popular sport in recent years.

Öskjuhlíð itself is also full of history. It has for a long time been a meeting place for lovers, dealers, climbers, and airplane enthusiasts who go there with binoculars to watch airplanes take off and land. In 1930, a large rocky part of Öskjuhlíð was moved to build the harbour in Reykjavík. The rocks were moved via train on a railway—the only that has ever existed in Reykjavík. Then, during World War II, the British military was posted up in Öskjuhlíð and one can still find evidence of this military presence. In fact, they make a perfect playground for Öskjuhlíð's rabbit population, which was begun at some point when proud owners of pet rabbits ditched them there. They have since multiplied like, well, rabbits.

Take a walk through the neighbourhood and you will definitely find something that amazes you. If the weather bothers you, you can sit in the hot tub at Nauthólsvík, enjoy the art at the Kjarvalsstaðir museum, take a bus from Hlemmur to someplace else, or just close your eyes and imagine yourself in the tropical paradise that never materialised! ☺

## Words

Gerður Jónsdóttir

## Photography

Alísa Kalyanova



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**PAGE 10**

"I was the only transgender person in Iceland at that time and that's probably why I got mainly negative attitudes from people. I kept on trying though."

Anna Kristjánsdóttir tells us what it was like to be the first transgender person in Iceland

**PAGE 16**

"The proximity alarms in my head were now screaming: 'Ah-ROO-GAA! Ah-ROOOOO-GAA!!!"

Don't Icelanders understand the concept of personal space?

**PAGE 42**

"Earth is the de facto house diva of Iceland and she absolutely nailed 'David,' which has got to be one of the sexiest songs in the history of Icelandic music."

We attend the last ever GusGus show at NASA :{

**PAGE 8**

"A whopping six percent of Iceland's total population visited the store on opening day, purchasing goods for over a billion krónur. That is about eight million dollars, six million euros or, in British terms, an arseload of dosh."

Kári Tulinius explores the symbolic significance of Iceland's biggest hardware store

**PAGE 24**

"What you need to do is to look towards some of Iceland's greatest economic role models for inspiration. People like the Icelandic "útrásavíkingar" who worked tirelessly with legally above-board business ventures. They contributed something of value to the world in order to bring our country the glamorous spoils that are a byproduct of sound investments. Monuments like the phallic Smáralind and cars like the Hummer."

Nanna is back with some bad advice.

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# LISTINGS



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Issue 6 - 2012

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# HÖRÐUR SVEINSSON

## Music Flood

*Photographer Hörður Sveinsson has been documenting the local music scene over the past eight years. Starting April 24, he is showing off some of his most recent work at the Reykjavík Museum of Photography. Runs until June 5.*

*FM Belfast by Hörður Sveinsson*

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SOLPERSIGNET/09/12

# MUSIC

## CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN MAY



### Mugison Makes Mugimusic

May 18 and 19  
Hvítahúsið (Selfoss) and NASA  
2000 ISK

Musician Örn Elías Guðmundsson, better known as Mugison, will play two back-to-back concerts this month. He says he is on his way west for the summer and wants to have a little city-fun before he goes. On May 18, Mugison and friends will play Hvítahúsið in Selfoss to make up for the fact that, "Selfoss got cheated when we took the ring [around Iceland]." The day after, the band will make their way to NASA in downtown Reykjavík. Mugison will be his own opening act, playing his instrument called the Mirstumentíð. Tickets go on sale on May 10 at 15:00. Don't miss this chance to get your moogie-boogie on!

### PRESCRIBING MUSIC WITH LOVE FOR YOUR LIVE EXPERIENCE

**How to use the listings**  
Venues are listed alphabetically by day.  
For complete listings and detailed information on venues or to add your listing, visit [www.listings.grapevine.is](http://www.listings.grapevine.is)

## 18 FRI

**Austur**  
22:00 DJ Gunnar  
**B5**  
22:00 DJ Jonas

**Bakkus**  
22:00 Halli Valli & Svenni  
**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Live Music  
**Esja**  
22:00 DJ Hlynur - DJ Bogi  
**Faktorj**  
22:00 DJ Laura Jones  
**Frú Berglaug**  
18:00 Reykjavik Live Festival  
**Gaukurinn**  
18:00 Juliet's November  
19:00 Dorian Gray  
20:00 Morning After Youth  
21:00 Morgan Kane  
22:00 Caterpillarmen  
23:00 Endless Dark  
00:00 Reykjavík!  
01:00 Kimono

02:00 Ensími  
**Glaumbar**  
22:00 Rvk Soundsystem  
**Hemmi og Valdi**  
21:00 Grapevine Grassroots  
**Hlaðan**  
21:00 Texas Muffins  
**NASA**  
22:00 The Final Club Event  
**Exos Gholt - AJ Caputo - A.T.L. - wa.m.m**  
**Prikið**  
22:00 Marlon  
22:30 Þórunn Antónía  
23:00 Gísli Pálmi  
00:00 DJ Pedro (Retro Stefson)

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### Rokk í Reykjavík - Version 2.0

May 24, 20:00  
Gaukurinn  
Guests will be asked to donate 1000 ISK to 'Save Ice Bank' to produce a DVD/CD of this event



### Spice Up Your Life With 'Kanil'

May 18, 23:00  
Faktorj  
1000 ISK

You should most definitely move your ass to Faktorj on May 18., because DJ Laura Jones will be hitting the turntables as a special guest of the infamous Kanill DJ ensemble. After releasing the single 'Love in Me', Jones has become one of the most sought after DJs in Europe in a matter of months, performing in several of the top-notch electronic Venues in the UK. DJ Gavin Herlihy, another young musician hailing from the UK, will also perform, along with select members of the Kanill crew.

In 1982, Friðrik Þór Friðriksson set out to document the punk and new-wave scene in Reykjavík. The resulting documentary and its accompanying double album of the same name became instant classics and are mandatory study material for any lover of Icelandic music. At Gaukurinn on Thursday, May 24, Belgian Doctor William Van Hooste is holding a celebration of both his birthday and the thirtieth anniversary of 'Rokk í Reykjavík'. The tribute concert will feature bands from the original movie like Fræbbblarnir and Q4U as well modern rock bands like Sudden Weather Change, Æla, and Morðingjarnir paying tribute to the soundtrack that helped define Reykjavík as the centre of cool. More information and a complete set list is available at <http://rockinreykjavik.blogspot.com> This event will be filmed so dust off that leather jacket and Rokk in Reykjavík!

## 19 SAT

**Austur**  
22:00 DJ Danni Deluxe

**B5**  
22:00 DJ Simon

**Bakkus**  
22:00 DJ KGB

**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Live Music

**Faktorý**  
23:00 Retro Stefson

**Frú Berglaug**  
16:00 Reykjavík Live Festival

**Gamli Gaukurinn**  
18:00 Elín Helena  
19:00 Why Not Jack  
20:00 Mont  
21:00 The Wicked Strangers  
22:00 The Crystalline Enigma  
23:00 Alchemia  
00:00 Trust The Flies  
01:00 Plastic Gods  
02:00 Brain Police

**Glaubar**  
22:00 DJ Margeir

**Græni Hatturinn**  
21:00 Kiriama Family

**Harpa Concert Hall**  
14:00 Family concert - Maximus Saves the Ballet

**Hemmi og Valdi**  
22:00 Yoda Remote

**Prikið**  
22:00 Emmsjé Gauti  
22:30 Berndsen & Hermigervill  
23:30 Diddi Fel  
00:00 Hunk Of A Man (Maggi Lego)

## 20 SUN

**Esja**  
22:00 DJ Hlynur

**Gaukurinn**  
18:00 Alan  
19:00 Heima World  
20:00 Myrra Rós  
21:00 The Saints of Boogie  
Street: Leonard Cohen Tribute Band  
22:00 Svartur á leik (movie)

**Glaubar**  
22:00 Svartur á leik (movie)

**Prikið**  
22:00 Svartur á leik (movie)

## 21 MON

**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Pub Quiz

**Prikið**  
22:00 DJ The Third

## 22 TUE

**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Live Music

**Danske Kro**  
21:00 Live Music & Beer Bingo Night

**Prikið**  
22:00 Eurovision Night & DJ Svenni



### Skjaldborg VI: Iceland's Premiere Documentary Film Festival Returns

Patreksfjörður

May 27-29

Free

"My favourite moment at Skjaldborg was at an after party," Gunnar Þorri Pétursson shares on the film festival's website. "It was deep into the night and silence was descending, but then Huldar Breiðfjörð [Icelandic novelist and filmmaker] says: 'He has started the show.' And we all turn around and see that the sun is coming up again."

At the end of May, for the sixth year in a row, the Skjaldborg Documentary Film Festival will set up in Patreksfjörður, a small town in the Westfjords. The full schedule wasn't ready when The Grapevine went to print, but we got advance word on seven films. Last year's winning director, Steinþór Birgisson, returns as a producer and co-screenwriter with 'Reimt á Kili' ("Haunted Trails"), a story about two brothers and their death, which has been debated for over 200 years.

Then the theme of last year's winning film, 'A Rural Priest,' returns in another film: Grímur Hákonarson's 'Hreint hjarta' ("Clean Heart"). This time the priest works in Selfoss and the surrounding areas, and the film focuses on the less visible work that the priest does. It also deals with the priest's personal demons.

In what seems to be the Icelandic version of 'Bigger Stronger Faster', there will be a film called 'Hrikalegir' ("Steve Gym"), telling the tale of Iceland's oldest bodybuilding fitness centre, which has been active for four decades. We get to know bodybuilders that were once famous, but are now forgotten, and we get a peek into a world of muscles that is hidden to most.

Director/guitarist Loji brings us 'Ljóðræn heimildamynd' ("A Poetic Documentary"). Yes, that's the title, not just a description, and it documents a year in the life of his band Sudden Weather Change.

Then there are 'Fjallkonan Hrópar á Vægð' ("Cry for Mercy"), about the struggle to keep Icelandic fields green, and 'Líf og sjóðir' ("Life and Funds"), a film about the history of Icelandic pension funds. The latter may not sound terribly interesting until you consider all the scandals those pension funds were part of during the crash, so maybe there's more to this film than meets the eye.

There are certainly more films to come. Last year, films were shown from morning to evening for two whole days. This means the schedule can be quite hectic, not to mention there are after-parties to attend and short trips to take around the area. You can read more about last year's festival on the Grapevine website, but I'll say it was one of the best weekends of my last year. So go enjoy a weekend of interesting films, good people and the unpredictability of the Icelandic summer.

And for the first time the festival will be truly accessible to foreigners who don't understand Icelandic too well, since all the films will be shown with English subtitles. -Ásgeir H. Ingólfsson

ESJA

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# MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN MAY

## 23 WED

**Bakkus**  
 22:00 Harry Knuckles  
**Café Rósenberg**  
 21:00 Trío Glóðir  
**Dubliner**  
 20:00 Pub Quiz  
**Edrúhöllin**  
 20:00 KAFFI, KÖKUR & ROKK & RÖL Tilbury and Nóra

## 24 THU

**B5**  
 22:00 Jógvan and Vignir Snaer  
**Bar 11**  
 21:00 BB & The Bluebirds - Live DJ  
**Bakkus**  
 22:00 Einar Sonic  
**Café Rósenberg**  
 21:00 Varsjárbandalagið  
**Esja**  
 22:00 Partyzone Lounge Session  
**Faktóry**  
 22:00 DJ Logi Pedro, Dream Central Station and Evil Madness  
**Gaukurinn**  
 22:00 Rock in Reykjavik 2.0  
**Glaumbar**  
 22:00 Eurovision Night  
**Hressó**  
 21:00 GogoYoko Concert  
**Prikið**  
 22:00 Eurovision Night  
**Vegamót**  
 22:00 DJ Danni Delux

## 25 FRI

**Austur**  
 22:00 DJ Danni Deluxe  
**Bakkus**  
 22:00 DJ Davíð Berndsen  
**Bar 11**  
 21:00 Tilbury - Live DJ  
**B5**  
 22:00 DJ Einar  
**Esja**  
 22:00 DJ Hlynur-DJ Bogi  
**Faktóry**  
 22:00 DJ KGB & Reykjavik Music Mess  
**Harpa Concert Hall**  
 19:30 Iceland Symphony Orchestra - Romeo and Juliet  
**Hemmi og Valdi**  
 22:00 Dj Maggi Mongoose  
**Café Rósenberg**  
 21:00 Myrra Rós - Elín Ey & Co  
**Vegamót**  
 22:00 DJ Benni B Ruff

## 26 SAT

**Austur**  
 22:00 DJ Gunnar  
**Bakkus**  
 23:00 Oli Dóri  
**Bar 11**  
 21:00 Muck and Mammút  
**B5**  
 22:00 DJ Jonas  
**Café Rósenberg**  
 21:00 KK & Maggi  
**Esja**  
 22:00 DJ Hlynur Mastermix  
**Faktóry**  
 23:00 RVK Soundsystem - Reykjavik Music Mess  
**Gaukurinn**  
 21:00 The Crystalline Enigma, Ophidian I, Blood Fued and Aeterna  
**Glaumbar**  
 20:00 Eurovision Live and DJ Atli  
**Hressó**  
 22:00 Ljósvalki- M-Band - Retrobot  
**Nasa**  
 20:00 Páll Óskar Eurovision Party  
**Prikið**  
 20:00 Eurovision Main Night and DJ Egill



### Buika Melts the Ice at Harpa

June 3, 20:00

Harpa, Eldborg

4900 ISK

As part of the Reykjavík Arts festival, Buika will seduce Iceland with her own sultry blend of blues, soul, flamenco, and jazz. The daughter of political refugees from the African nation of Equatorial Guinea, Buika draws inspiration for her music from her colourful upbringing in a gypsy neighbourhood on the Spanish island of Mallorca. The New York Times writes, "luminous...magnificent...superb!"

**Vegamót**  
 22:00 DJ Gunni

## 27 SUN

**Austur**  
 22:00 DJ Maggi  
**B5**  
 22:00 DJ Jonas  
**Faktóry**  
 23:00 Utidur - Karius&Baktus  
**Glaumbar**  
 22:00 DJ Seth  
**Harpa**  
 21:00 Bryan Ferry  
**Hressó**  
 22:00 DJ Frigor  
**Prikið**  
 22:00 DJ Gunni Stef  
**Vegamót**  
 22:00 DJ Danni Deluxe

## 28 MON

**Harpa**  
 21:00 Bryan Ferry  
**Prikið**  
 22:00 DJ Bob

## 29 TUE

**Café Rósenberg**  
 21:00 Ómar Einars  
**Prikið**  
 22:00 DJ Anna Brá

## 30 WED

**Bakkus**  
 23:00 Live DJ

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**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Live Music  
**Hressó**  
22:00 Live Jazz  
**Prikið**  
22:00 DJ Gay Latino Man

## 31 THU

**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Bjarni Snæbjörnsson  
**Faktorý**  
22:00 DJ Danni Deluxe  
**Glaumbar**  
22:00 DJ Einar  
**Harpa Concert Hall**  
20:00 Yann Tiersen in Concert  
**Hemmi og Valdi**  
21:00 Geimsteinn Showcase  
**Hressó**  
21:00 Gogoyoko Concert Series -  
Snorri Helgason  
**Vegamót**  
22:00 DJ Símon

check out

listings.grapevine.is



### Catch The Tail End Of The First Reykjavík Live Festival Ever

Runs through May 20

Gaukurinn, Glaumbar, Prikið, Frú Berglaug

4990 ISK for the festival pass, tickets at [www.midi.is](http://www.midi.is)

This year a brand new festival called Reykjavík Live kicks off the summer festival season. The festival's organiser Franz Gunnarsson says it started off as a small event, but then took on a life of its own: which is now a five-day event with more than 50 artists taking the stage at Gaukurinn, Glaumbar, Prikið and Frú Berglaug starting each evening at 18:00.

The festival lineup includes bands like Agent Fresco, Valdimar, Retro Stefson, Brain Police, Bloodgroup, Kimono, Reykjavíki, RetRoBot, Ojba Rasta and many more. "Artists like Legend, Tilbury and Kiriya Family release debut albums around the festival," Franz says. "And there is always a buzz around established bands that don't play that often, like Brain Police and Ensími."

And on top of all that, you can relax before or after the concerts in the hot tub at Sundhöllin swimming pool, to which your wristband gets your free entrance. After all of the music, the festival ends on Sunday night with the screening of the Icelandic hit film 'Svartur á Leik' ('Black's Game'). With such a big selection of excellent bands, food, drinks, and other fun, it can be tough to choose who to see and where to go, but you certainly will not go wrong for the weekend.

## ART IN MAY

### 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](http://www.grapevine.is). Send us your listings: [listings@grapevine.is](mailto:listings@grapevine.is)

## OPENINGS

### ASÍ Art Museum

May 19  
**(I)ndependent people**  
Cartography exhibition curated by Jonatan Habib Engqvist. Further information on [www.independentpeople.is](http://www.independentpeople.is)

### Hafnarhús (Reykjavík Art Museum)

May 19  
**(I)ndependent People**  
Independent People asks if and how collaboration can operate in negotiation between contesting ideas and desires,

and yet allow for unplanned action. This large-scale collaborative takes place at a cluster of museums, galleries, artist-run spaces and institutions in the capital area. Focusing on visual art from the Nordic region, the exhibitions are conceived as an opportunity to establish and instigate a discussion around the relationships between international and Nordic networks from the perspective of collaborative and artist-initiated processes.

May 24  
17:00 Curator's talk with Jonatan Habib Engqvist and participating artists. In English.

### i8 Gallery

May 19  
**Silvia Baechli & Margret H. Blondal - Open; Wait**  
Exhibition about each of the artists' approach to shaping space. It provides a polyphony of rhythms and different orientations that can be elusive and entangling. Open; Wait is an abstract conversation about reality, and a hard

look at the void.

### National Theatre of Iceland

May 21  
12:00 until midnight **Ragnar Kjartansson - Bliss**  
Bliss is a single shot, twelve-hour long video work that repeatedly stages the final three-minute aria of Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro as performed in real time by Kjartansson, opera singers, and a live orchestra at Performa 11. The screening will be the premiere of this new piece and will be part of the Reykjavík Arts Festival.

### The Nordic House

May 19  
The Nordic House will host two exhibitions in connection to **(I)ndependent People**, the visual art project of the Reykjavík Arts Festival. Superflex contributes to the exhibition with the series of four hypnosis sessions, entitled The Financial Crisis, which operate as a kind of European sub-conscious from the basement of the Nordic House. Superflex describes its

# Den Danske Kro

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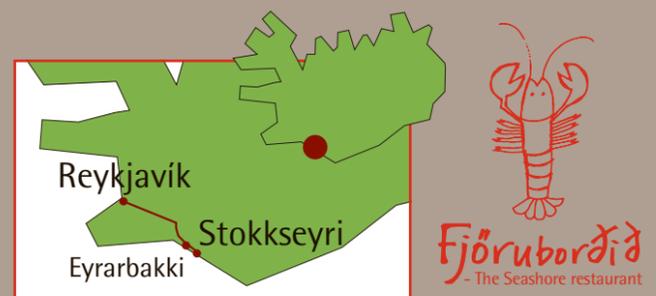


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**C**

# MAP

## Places We Like

### 1 Hressó

Austurstræti 20

You know, Hressó is basically the only place I go for coffee. Why? Their coffee is decent to excellent, but their forte is surely their wonderful patio, where you can enjoy the spring breeze in the sun, wrap yourself in a blanket beneath an electric heater in January and at all times: smoke.

### 2 Laundromat Café

Austurstræti 9

At the Laundromat Cafe you can do laundry, drink a beer and have a grandma read to your children all under one roof. This kid-friendly restaurant opened last spring in Reykjavík and prides itself on its full menu, cool concept, 5,000 books (that you can buy or trade), board games, and up-to-date newspapers and magazines (including a WALL OF GRAPEVINES).

### 3 Humarhúsið

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.

### 4 Grái Kötturinn

Hverfisgata 16a

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

### 5 Den Danske Kro

Ingólfsstræti 3

The Danish Bar is located on Ingólfsstræti, just off Laugavegur where Q Bar once stood. The bar serves up Danish favourites, such as open-face smørrebrød sandwiches, Danish Tuborg beer and Aquavit schnapps. How to ask for a large beer in Danish: "Hej, jeg vil gerne have en stor øl, tak".

### 6 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.

#### Useful numbers

Emergency number: **112**

Medical help: **1770**

Dental emergency: **575 0505**

Information: **118**

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

BSR: **561 0000**

#### Tax Free Refund

**Iceland Refund**, Aðalstræti 2, tel: 564 6400

#### Tourist information

**Arctic Adventures**, Laugavegur 11,

tel: 562 7000

**City Centre**, Aðalstræti 2, tel: 590 1550

**Iceland Excursions - Grayline Iceland**,



### 7 Boston

Laugavegur 28

Like an older sibling to the fabled (now deceased) Sirkús, Boston is a warm and mellow second-floor bar on Laugavegur that plays host to the arty party crowd. The baroque wall dressings and deep, rich coloured décor make this bar feel pretty swank, but Boston also serves up some reasonably priced food earlier in the evening, so it's not too swank.

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**, Vatnsnýrargvegur 10, tel: 562 1011, www.bsi.is

#### Domestic airlines

**Air Iceland**, Reykjavíkflugvöllur, tel: 570 3030, www.flugfelag.is

**Eagle Air**, Hótel Loftleiðir, tel: 562-4200

### 8 Þingholt Bar

Þingholtsstræti 5

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

#### 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.

### 9 Spúútnik

Laugavegur 28b

This super hip vintage shop in the heart of downtown is quintessential to Icelandic fashion trends. Ranging from classic, national pattern sweaters to some of the craziest throwback fashions from eras we thought we were glad to see gone, Spúútnik can make a pair of flowered, day-glow parachute pants seem like a smart buy.

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.

Raggi from the band Árstíðir is the unstoppable...

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**E**



**LEGEND**

# EATING # DRINKING # SHOPPING # ADS

For a map of outside downtown Reykjavik visit [www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is) or the Icelandic phonebook website [www.ja.is](http://www.ja.is)

**13 NEW IN TOWN**

**Þýski barinn (The German Bar)**  
Tryggvagata 22  
We have a German bar in town! This is good because the English, Danish, and Icelandic Bars were getting lonely. Þýski barinn has snatched up the prime space at Tryggvagata 22 where Bakkus used to be. If you have a hankering for that German Biergarten feeling, well this is the closest thing you'll find in Reykjavik. The bar boasts a large selection of beer on tap and has a great wheat beer brewed especially for them. If you're a large group of rowdy football fans, this may be the place for you.



**A Day In The Life**  
**Alda Sigmundsdóttir**

**What's up, Alda?**  
Hi! Well, I've got a book coming out very soon. It's called The Little Book of the Icelanders, and is all about the quirks and foibles of the Icelandic people and what it's like to live in their midst. I originally published it independently as an eBook, but the concrete version is being published by Forlagið. I'm also putting the finishing touches on an eBook of Icelandic folk legends translated into English, which includes a chapter on the historical and cultural basis of those legends and Icelandic storytelling in general. That should be available for Kindle and through Smashwords sometime in the next few weeks. I'm completely fascinated by the shifting paradigm in publishing these days and the opportunities opening up to authors via indie publishing – so much that I've just launched a new blog on the subject on my website, [www.aldasigmunds.com](http://www.aldasigmunds.com).

**EARLY MORNING >**

I get up, have breakfast, then flip open my laptop and check my Iceland Weather Report Facebook page and my Twitter account. I quickly surf the main news sites in Iceland and decide which fascinating tid-bits I can put into English to share with my non-Icelandic-speaking social media followers that day. I then generally plant myself on the sofa to start working. I have a cushy job. Literally.

**LUNCH >**

If I meet someone for lunch, I normally suggest meeting for sushi. I like Osushi in Pósthússtræti because the conveyor belt sushi idea just never gets old. I'm also a big fan of Jómfrúin for lunch. Their open-face plaice sandwich is a perennial favourite.

**MID-DAY >**

By this time I've usually been working for a few hours so my brain is a little fried. The best way to reboot is to get some fresh air and/or exercise. That's why I'm either at the gym (followed by a soak in a hot tub at the Seltjarnarnes pool) or out for a walk or bike ride around Gróttu, on Seltjarnarnes.

**AFTERNOON >**

Back at work on the sofa. Or I may meet a friend for coffee. I love Kaffismiðjan – makes me feel like I'm a cool bohemian hanging out at a café in Berlin. I also love the patio at Kex in the summer. In fact, Kex is an awesome place for just about every occasion.

**HEAT OF THE NIGHT >**

Heat of the Night – I don't drink very often and the Reykjavik nightlife scene usually leaves me feeling depressed, so I tend to avoid it. Usually I just hang out at home with my favourite guy (my husband), engrossed in our latest TV obsession (currently the Danish show Borgen). Failing that, it's a movie and dinner (in that order) – ideally some flick that's showing at Bíó Paradís, Reykjavik's most excellent art house cinema. Dinner would be pizza at Saffran, if we're going casual, or Grillmarkaðurinn, if we want a bit more swank.

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**10 Cintamani**

Bankastræti 7  
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**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 Reykjavik City Library, Tryggvagata 15

**11 ÁTVR (Liquor store)**

Austurstræti 10a  
In Iceland, alcohol isn't sold in the grocery shops (that stuff in the shops that looks like beer—it isn't beer. Trust us). You can buy alcohol in the state-owned liquor stores named ÁTVR, usually referred to as Ríkið ("The State"). One store is located in the city centre. Opening hours for the downtown one are: Mon.–Thu. 11:00–18:00, Fri. 11:00–19:00, Sat. 11:00–18:00.

**Swimming Pools**

There are several swimming pools in Reykjavik. The one in 101 Reykjavik, 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 Kolaportið**

Tryggvagata 19  
Reykjavik's massive indoor flea market is a wonderful place to get lost for a few hours, rummaging through stall upon stall of potential treasures. There are heaps of used clothing, knitwear and other yard-sale type goods from decades of yore, and a large food section with fish, meats and baked goods.

**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 Reykjavik Art Museum, Lækjargata and by Eymundsson on Skólavörðustígur. Toilets can also be found inside the Reykjavik City Hall and the Reykjavik Library.

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EGGERT PÉTURSSON	LAWRENCE WEINER

Opening hours: Tuesday - Friday, 11-5pm, Saturday, 1-5pm.  
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# ART

## IN MAY

projects as tools, models or proposals that can be actively utilised and modified by their users. In this context, the tool is hypnosis, mediated through a video installation. Superflex is Björnstjerne Christiansen, Jakob Fenger and Rasmus Nielsen.

**Learning Site** A group consisting of Rikke Luther and Cecilia Wendt worked with the writer Jaime Stapleton to create a contemporary scenography which describes its practice as a platform for dialogue between people from various disciplines, practices and backgrounds with a common interest in learning. Their projects learn from, and respond to, the dynamics of local cultures, environments, resources and economies. Learning Site explores the relationship between facades and value, by redefining buildings in the city that have been left to wither after the financial crisis, turning them into banks that deal in alternative forms value.

May 24

### Art In Translation

Art in Translation is a three-day international event where scholars and artists of all kinds deal with texts through lectures, exhibitions, concerts, and performances. The aim is to create an interdisciplinary forum to explore the connections between language and various art forms. This year the emphasis is on creative writing. In connection to the conference an exhibition of Icelandic book arts will be mounted in the Nordic House as well as an exhibition of artworks by Calum Colvin.

May 25

### Harpa

#### 19:00 - How to Become Icelandic in 60 Minutes

Join for a comical theatre performance about all kinds of aspects of Icelandic culture.

scripts 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

### The 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

### Gerðuberg

#### Stone, scissors, paper and the keys to heaven

The exhibition Steinn, skæri, pappír og lyklar að himnaríki features Icelandic stones, scissors of various shapes and sizes, paper (in the form of biblical pictures and bibles) and keys, some of which (who knows?) may unlock the doors of heaven itself.

Runs until June 22

### Gullkúst Helgu

#### Is Life Salted Fish?

Salome Fannberg is known for using unusual materials for her work, especially Icelandic seaweed and wool. This exhibition shows her dreams and hopes during her journey of the last 4 years. The artwork is her way of showing the Icelandic way of life, a raw image of the little island in the north.

Runs until May 28

### Hafnarborg

#### Hrafnkell Sigurðsson

Exhibition of new work by Hrafnkell Sigurðsson, mostly from 2011 and 2012, displaying photography, video and wall mounted sculptures.

Runs until May 28

### Hafnarhúsi

#### Erró - Drawings from 1944-2012

The exhibition consists of over 200 drawings Erró has done since 1944 until the present day.

Runs until Aug 19

### i8 Gallery

#### Silvía Baechli & Margrét H. Blöndal - Open; Wait

Open; Wait is a multi-part conversation that begins between the sculptures of Margrét H. Blöndal and the drawings of Silvía Baechli. Minimal gestures accumulate to become an installation that gently manipulates the territory in front of us.

Runs until June 30

### Kjarvalsstaðir (Reykjavík Art Museum)

#### Tàpies - Image, Body, Pathos

Exhibition of Catalan artist Antoni Tàpies' oeuvre. Paintings on canvas and wood from 1958 to present.

## ONGOING

### The Culture House

#### Islande - Israel

Exhibition by French artist Anne Herzog as part of the art exhibition series at the café and shop.

Runs until May 29

### Medieval Manuscripts Eddas and Sagas

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

On permanent view

### Child of Hope - Youth and Jón Sigurðsson

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

On permanent view

### Medieval Manuscripts - Eddas and Sagas

Some of Iceland's medieval manu-



### Collective Memory In Seyðisfjörður

The Skaftfell Centre, Seyðisfjörður

Check [www.skaftfell.is](http://www.skaftfell.is) for opening hours

Free

The Skaftfell Centre in Seyðisfjörður reopened their Collection centre this month and added a new selection of 'narratives' for your viewing pleasure! The project, entitled 'The Narrative Collection', was conceived in 2011 and is pretty impressive, to say the least. The idea behind the artwork was to record and collect narratives from the inhabitants of Seyðisfjörður, to give a bigger picture of the community as a whole. The short videos and interviews act as a great documentation of the passing of time in the small community that is Seyðisfjörður. We think this sounds like a very wholesome and great project! Head to the East for a map of memories.



### Become Icelandic In No Time

Harpa

May 19-June 30

3900 ISK

Are you sick of feeling like a tourist everywhere you go? Feel like you don't know anything about Iceland apart from Björk and Skyr? Want to die of shame every time you tell the shopkeeper "sorry, you don't speak Icelandic?" Don't worry; there is a solution to your woes! On May 25, Harpa will start running a show that claims to teach you just how to become an Icelander. The show 'How to Become Icelandic in 60 Minutes', performed by Bjarni Haukur Thorsson and directed by Sigurður Sigurjónsson, pokes fun at multiple aspects of Icelandic culture. Everything is on the table; from the financial crisis to the isolation of the countryside. Sound like fun? Then head to Harpa for this theatrical comedy and transform yourself into an inhabitant of beautiful Iceland! Check [www.harpa.is](http://www.harpa.is) for details of additional shows.

Runs until May 20

### 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](mailto:tangoadventure@gmail.com), 500 ISK for students, 800 ISK for others. Six week courses are also available.

On permanent view

### Museum of Design - Hönnunarsafn Islands

#### Loop Language

An exhibition of new works by six Icelandic designers who all express themselves through knitting. The works exhibited are made within a certain framework and testify to the designers' full artistic freedom for expression which does not stoop to perceived laws of market and fashion. Curated by designer Steinunn Sigurðardóttir.

Runs until May 20

### 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.

### 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 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 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.

On permanent view

### The Watercolours of Ólafur Thorlacius

Ólafur Þór worked with the Icelandic

Coast Guard for many years as a map-maker. He is now retired and paints beautiful watercolors in his free time. *On permanent view*

**Reykjavík Museum of Photography**

**Hörður Sveinsson: Music Flood**  
Hörður Sveinsson has in recent years become known for his photographs of Icelandic pop culture, both as press photographer for Grapevine and Monitor as well as an independent photographer. He has photographed many bands and artists e.g. Björk, Sigur rós, Mugison, Ham, Of Monsters and Men, Retro Stefson and Lay Low. *Runs until June 5*

**Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum Milestones: Sigurjón Ólafsson's Key Sculptures**

Exhibition with some of Sigurjón Ólafsson's key works from different periods of his prolific career as a sculptor. The earliest work on the exhibition is a newly acquired relief of two sisters which he made at his first year at the Royal Academy of Art in Copenhagen. This relief has not been exhibited in Iceland before. *Runs until: Oct 1*

**Spark Design Space**

**A Salon show** is being prepared at Spark containing selected projects from the past as well as a few new things we can not resist. *Spark is open during the transformation.*

**Skaftfell, Seyðisfjörður Re-opening of The Collection Centre**

In collaboration with the Icelandic Centre for Ethnology and Folklore, Skaftfell will be showing a collection of short videos. The purpose of this is to collect narratives from all the inhabitants of Seyðisfjörður in 2011 and 2012 to give a bigger picture of the community.

**Slátturhúsið, Egilsstaðir**

Check [www.slatturhusid.is](http://www.slatturhusid.is) for latest shows

Art | Interview

# INTERDEPENDENT PEOPLE

*Jonatan Habib Engqvist on the joys of collaboration*



In a country where the most treasured work of literature is a novel called 'Independent People' and centres on a man obsessed with self-sufficiency, it is pretty daring to present a show called '(I) independent People,' and have it be about the opposite of independence. But Swedish curator Jonatan Habib Engqvist is doing just that: his multi-venue exhibition, which makes up the visual arts component of this year's Reykjavík Art Festival, focuses on collaboration, or putting the "I" in parentheses. In an interview, he told us more about the philosophy behind the exhibition, the artwork that will be on view, and how he sees this year's show in relation to previous large-scale exhibitions in Iceland.

**PERFORMING COLLABORATION**

**Why focus on collaboration?**  
Well, this particular project has been a collaborative project from the beginning because there are so many institutions involved. Stepping in as curator, I had two options: to work through the tough process of trying to make things happen by accommodating different desires and contracts, or I could turn that into the concept itself. It's a way of surviving.

But I also think what is interesting about the Icelandic art scene is the fact that it is very dependent on the artist's initiative and collaborative practice. Abroad, Kling & Bang and The Living Art Museum are what people know about the Icelandic art scene. So it also made sense to focus on collaboration here, because it is so deeply rooted

**Are the artist-run spaces involved in the creative process?**

Yes...if you look at Kling & Bang, for example, they are actively participating in the artistic processes of the works that they're exhibiting; it's not just that they have a venue, and an artist comes and puts on their show.

**What kind of artists will be featured?**

The artists I have invited are all artists who are interested in day-to-day politics—in what's going on around them, in how what they are doing relates to what people are thinking in general, and to what they, themselves, are thinking. And this is also part of, how should I put it, not having the artist genius, but instead creating situations where we're working together, producing knowledge for the sake of sharing it with others, rather than owning it.

**INVESTIGATING "NORDIC"**

**Is the Nordic emphasis of the show tied to the funding, or is there another motivation behind it?**

It's because of the funding... I was originally just as reserved about it as anyone else; I thought, 'Nordic, what's that? We live in a global art world; there's no such thing as geographically-marked artistic production today.' Then I thought, rather than trying to show Nordic collaboration, we should create Nordic collaboration. We could collaborate in looking at our common history, which is the idea behind the seminar that is taking place.

**What are your goals for the show?**

One thing that is important to me ...it's like a relay race; in 2005 Jessica Morgan and Björn Roth did the visual art focus, with this big show on Dieter Roth, flying people across the country; there was champagne everywhere. Then in 2008, it was Hans Ulrich Obrist and Ólafur Eliasson who did this Experiment Marathon, parachuting superstars, brain surgeons and whatnot into the museum. I think one task was to connect this big art exhibition to the local art scene and make something that also matters to the artists here. 🐸

**Words**  
S Anne Steinberg

**Photography**  
Alisa Kalyanova



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*To the Blue Lagoon*

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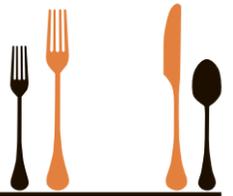
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## Beach Nourishment

### Nauthóll Bistro

Nauthólsvegur 106, 101 Reykjavík



**What We Think:** I may be coming down a little hard on them, but that's because I think they are very close to getting the balance just right. They're doing a lot of things right; they know how to make a diner feel special, but the mix was a little too wild and bug-eyed at times, even for me.

**Flavour:** The styles are all over the shop. Mostly Italian, Japanese and Scandinavian but by way of California if that makes any sense. Still impressed by their willingness to take some risks on the menu.

**Ambiance:** Beautiful view, but the crowd was the usual Night of the Living Bourgeois. But if we're going to hold that against them then we might as well close down all of Reykjavík.

**Service:** Great service; the server switched to English with ease the moment she noticed one of us didn't speak Icelandic and she went out of her way to provide information about the menu and ingredients.

**Price:** (2 people with drinks): Approx. 17-20.000 ISK (that's if you go for an all-out 3 course menu; those who I know usually go there for the smaller courses).

Nauthóll is a rare type of restaurant where the majority of year-round customers are Icelandic. And small wonder, since it's ten minutes walking distance from the nearest hotel and thirty minutes walking distance from downtown. But it also happens to be located by one of Reykjavík's favourite summer hang-outs, the artificial beach Nauthólsvík, and near the start of a popular jogging route stretching into Elliðaárdalur to the east. With a table on the window-side, we spent the time looking over the sea and the 1940s army barracks, as well as rooting for a black rabbit trying its damndest to dig through a nearby hill for no good reason.

What can I say about the food? Parts of the menu are part of the regular scheduled New Nordic broadcast, but they do allow themselves a couple of creative flourishes and mix in a good deal of Japanese and Italian influences—enough to give guests at nearby Hotel Natura a reason to venture beyond their hotel restaurant, Satt. Not that I have anything against Satt, but as they say, variety is the spice of life...you know, like sazón goja is the spice of Puerto Rican food.

Aside from the usual á la carte, Nauthóll offers a brunch that I've heard great things about, prix fixe sushi with wine on Thursdays, and a flaming nipple tassel buffet on Mondays (one of these weekly deals is a lie—guess which one). Since my wife needs raw fish and seaweed the way Rush Limbaugh needs opiates and racism, we went gunning for the sushi Thursday (12 pieces for 1990 ISK).

Her sushi offered a few pleasant surprises: tiger shrimp, sweet potato, salmon, coconut, and chicken (not raw... pfff...pansies). So it's safe to say the sushi was on the California end of the spectrum. I was ready to jump all over it when I heard what was in it, but it actually turned out all right.

My first course was the buckwheat in a spicy oregano tomato sauce, enoki, crunchy seaweed, dried mango and pineapple (1690 ISK). Somehow, this dartboard cluster fudge came together

in a perfectly nice starter—although I'd urge them to not push their luck in the future with those dried mangoes.

My date's main course was a lamb ropa vieja (3690 ISK). The usual glaze, roasted parsnip and dill didn't fail to make an appearance, but the simple act of shredding the slow-cooked lamb added something to the dish. Not the best I've had in Reykjavík, but definitely worth recommending.

Last time I tried veal Milanese was after ducking through a doorway in Rome while trying to ditch a gang of belligerent R.A.S.H. skinheads in San Lorenzo peddling subpar hashish. So I decided I was probably due for a slice that wasn't salted with tears of terror. Nauthóll chalked up points for great fresh pasta and homemade pasta sauce, but went rogue with the veal itself; the slice was too thick and the bread crust wasn't quite crispy enough. I'd still call the veal Milanese at Nauthóll a success and recommend you give it a try. Definitely passes the Olive Garden test with flying colours, but at 4490 ISK I'd expect it to be a little more faithful.

The desserts were an updated version of the classic Icelandic oatmeal crumble "hjónabandsæla" called "berjasæla" (990 ISK) and a warm apple tart with five-spice ice cream (990 ISK). Both came on a base that resembled something between soft shortbread and a sponge cake. I don't even know if that description makes sense, but since pastry is not really my strong suit I'm going to go with it. Although I've seen five-spice ice cream before, I was quite impressed to see Nauthóll risk it and to their credit, both desserts were delicious (if not mind-bendingly brilliant).

At this point the sun was finally setting (22:00) and the black rabbit had burrowed its way half way to bunny hell so we strapped on our running shoes and jogged home...only kidding, we drove home and flopped on the couch to watch some old Peter Jackson movies.

RAGNAR EGILSSON  
 ALÍSA KALYANOVA

# REVIEWS



## Màs Organica. Màs Sensual. Màs Salad Bar.

### Kryddlegin Hjörtu

Skúlagata 17, 101 Reykjavík



**What We Think:** Good value organic salad bar. A refreshingly simple fish and couscous dish. Great view. Variable soup quality. Good choice for a quick lunch, but don't expect to have your minds blown.

**Flavour:** Fresh-tasting amalgam of Middle Eastern and Central American cuisine, but nothing that would freak out your health-conscious auntie.

**Ambiance:** They seem to be doing good business, but the atmosphere was pretty bland and laid-back. I did notice a group of bongo players settling in when we were leaving so maybe I should have stuck around for that.

**Service:** Self-service.

**Price:** (2 people with drinks): Approx. 6000 ISK

Kryddlegin hjörtu is perfectly located with a sweet view of Esja in all her mountain glory (914 metres, but who's counting!). It is wedged between the Indian Embassy on the left and the social security office on the right, which strangely enough sort of sums the restaurant up perfectly—sort of ethnic and very affordable.

The menu at Kryddlegin hjörtu couldn't be simpler: salad buffet and a rotating selection of soup at 1790 ISK during lunch and 1990 ISK at later hours or a stable selection of two main courses, an oven-baked fish with couscous or a lasagne (both at 1990 ISK).

The focus is squarely on the lunch hour, but it was still surprising to see them closed for business during weekends and closing at 21:00 on weekdays.

So what does the place look like? Remember that Martin Bashir documentary about Michael Jackson? Remember that bit in the Vegas shopping mall where he goes shopping for furniture? By the looks of the interiors at Kryddlegin hjörtu the king of pop found time to float by on a cloud of Lorazepam to give some pointers. It's minimal but all over the place and serving affordable health conscious food—this is where Steve Jobs would have gone during his Hare Krishna days. The fact that the place takes its name from the Icelandic translation of 'Like Water for Chocolate' by Laura Esquivel, that perennial favourite of the Scandinavian housewife, is just the icing on the cake.

What else do you need to know? Well, the place looks like they'd employ servers but the deal is that you grab a seat, pay-at-the-counter and help yourself. If you opt for the soup, bread and salad (as most do) then you'll be given one bowl that you will have to reuse, even if you wish to sample all the available soups. While they do it to avoid a pile up of bowls with half-eaten soups, it is undeniably annoying for those who want to try more of what's on offer. However, I found that asking nicely can remedy that quite quickly.

I had the soup and salad and my date had the fish with couscous. With it we had Fuller's Organic Honey Dew, which seems to have become a mandatory part of the selection at all organic restaurants in Europe. We went on a Tuesday so the soup selection was Mexican "salsa soup," coconut-curry, fish and mushroom.

The quality of the salad bar is the main reason I would call their prices reasonable. The salad bar offers two

spreads, a delicious spiced garlic butter and a hummus made on location with home-made tahini and organic chickpeas, freshly-baked bread (mostly the dense gluten-free kind, which my date liked but I am a lot less fond of), different types of vegetables (all organic too, not that I can tell the difference anyway), rice, nuts, beans and so on. The salad bar alone is enough to fill up on and that's not including the four soups.

I had heard good things about the soups, but I must say I was a little underwhelmed. The coconut-curry turned out to be a pretty basic Thai green curry, heavy on the kaffir lime and scrumptious. The Mexican-style "salsa soup" was decent and generous with the chicken. The fish soup was some kind of brown, wimpy goop and didn't appeal to me at all. I refused to try the cream of mushroom soup as cream of mushroom should be limited to Warhol prints and is never fit for human consumption.

I tried my date's fish on couscous (turns out dining with a food critic gets old really fast) which was excellent, though far too heavy on the fresh cilantro but fresh with a nice spicy crisp on top.

I recommend the fish on couscous, the spreads, and the Thai green curry soup if they're serving it on the day you go. I like my breads light and fluffy so those didn't really do it for me, but a lot of people seem to love them so you should try for yourselves.

The only real downside was that the owners found out I was there to review the place and hovered over the table like cartoon vultures explaining every last ingredient on the menu (remember what I said about dining with food critics?).

✍️ RAGNAR EGILSSON  
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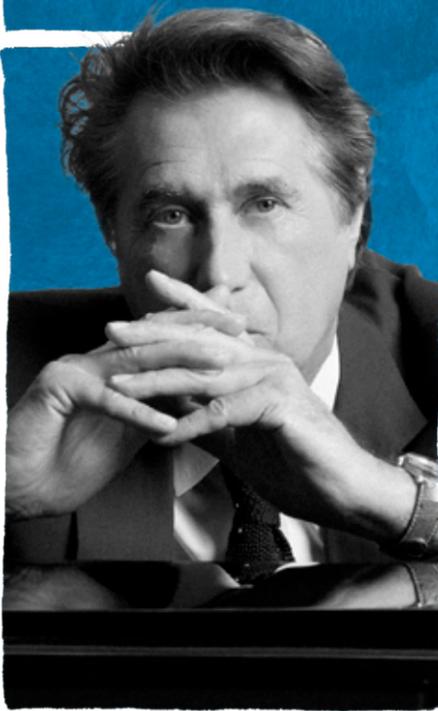
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IC-98. Institutt for Degenerert Kunst. Jóna Hlíf Halldórs-  
dóttir & Hlynur Hallsson. Kling & Bang. Learning Site  
(Rikke Luther & Cecilia Wendt) with writer Jaime  
Stapleton. M.E.E.H. Nomedas & Gediminas Urbonas + MIT  
4.333. Melissa Dubbin & Aaron S. Davidson. No Gods  
No Parents (UKS). NÝLÓ + Archive of Artist Run Initiatives.  
Raflost & Steina. Sofia Hultén & Ivan Seal. Superflex.  
The Artist Formerly Known as Geist. The Awareness  
Muscle Team. The Leyline Project (Steingrímur Eyfjörð  
& Ulrika Sparre). Elin Strand Ruin and The New Beauty  
Council (NBC), Thérèse Kristiansson + Mariana Alves  
& Katarina Bonnevier. Torpedo. Útúrdúr. Wooloo.

**Venues include:** Reykjavík Art Museum - Hafnarhús, National Gallery of  
Iceland, The Nordic House, NÝLÓ The Living Art Museum, Kling & Bang,  
The Icelandic Sculptural Association, i8 gallery, ASÍ Art Museum, Höfði,  
SÍM and many more.

See full festival programme at  
[www.artfest.is](http://www.artfest.is)

**Listahátíð í Reykjavík 2012**  
Reykjavík Arts Festival 18. maí-3. júní