



The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

ice2ave



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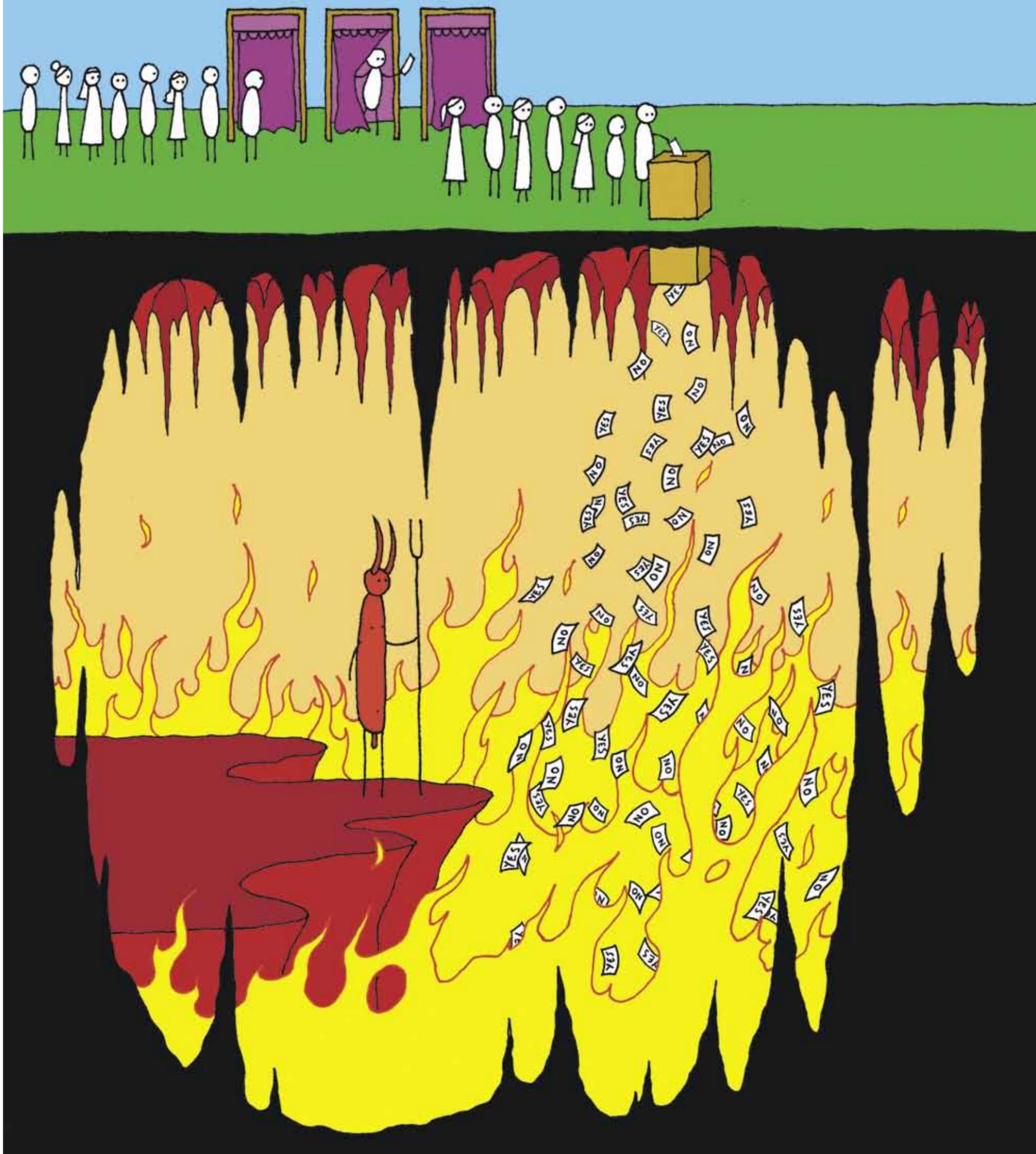
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LIFE, TRAVEL & ENTERTAINMENT IN ICELAND

Issue 01 - January 8 - February 4 - 2010

www.grapevine.is

+ COMPLETE CITY LISTINGS - INSIDE!

YOU'RE DAMNED IF YOU DO AND YOU'RE DAMNED IF YOU DON'T.



Editorial | Haukur S Magnússon



Haukur's 19th Editorial

"No comment"

I have nothing to say for now. There is enough editorialising in this issue already. Seriously, it's packed – go read it. Like in our first issue of 2009, we tried to assemble a large cast of folks to comment on what just happened, and what it means for them.

The opinions expressed are not opinions of the Reykjavík Grapevine – a magazine can't really have opinions, is the Grapevine's opinion – but they are all honest opinions, formed by good, honest people. And they make for a damn good read. Go find out for yourselves – the paper should contain enough material to keep you occupied well into 2011.

Now, I am going to go lie in some corner and whine about Icesave for a while. Happy New Year, thanks for everything, keep on truckin', free Mumia, jamming is brilliant; so long and thanks for all the fish.

2009 in Pictures

JULIA STAPLES

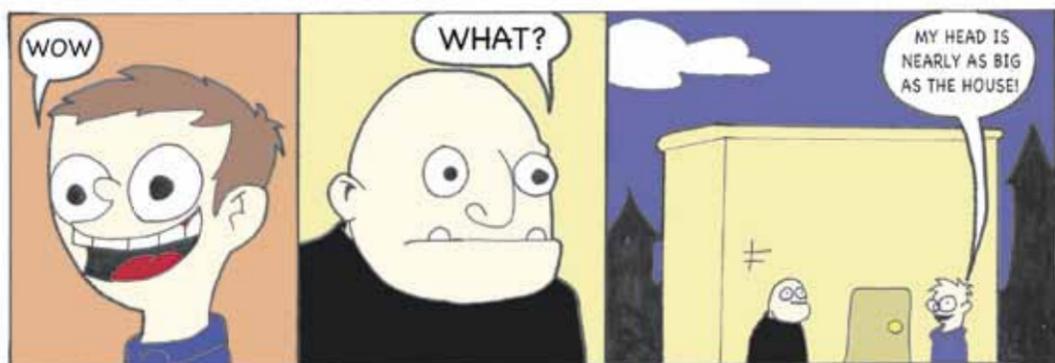


These images are from a series titled "Home". They summon up feelings about a distant idea of home and one that is deteriorating. They are all taken this past summer in Rhode Island, USA, one of the places that was home to me in my adolescence.

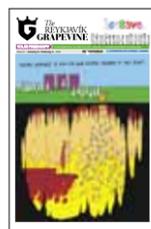
JS



Comic | Lóa Hjálmtýsdóttir presents:



Our resident comic artist, Lóa Hlin Hjálmtýsdóttir, is currently teaching a group of awesome teenagers a course on the art of creating comix. We thought it would be a great idea to run the best of her students' output in our issues. For this issue, we welcome Alfreð Hrafn to the ranks of GV comic artists. Alfreð is a pretty cool guy, he was born in 1997 and his favourite comics come from the DC Comics imprint. We might add that he has been drawing comix for the last three years. Welcome aboard, Alfreð!



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Hugleikur Dagsson

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

Kimono

Tomorrow

kimono

Download the track of the issue at www.grapevine.is

Local alt-rock legends kimono certainly scored a lot of points in a lot of places with their latest release, Easy Music For Difficult People (available RIGHT NOW from your favourite record store or through gogoyoko via Kimi Records!). The album received critical acclaim pretty much everywhere it was reviewed, and topped several year-end list (including some you may read in this very issue); the general verdict seems to be that EMFDP is kimono's most consistently rewarding offering yet.

Lucky you, then, that the band has agreed to donate one of the album's premier compositions as our free track of the month. The track is exemplary of EPM4D and its gratifying soundscapes – hear for yourself and download it now!



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RE-24 - 12:30
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All Year
SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT 12:30-18

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RE-62 - 21:00
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Winter
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SAT 09-18

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RE-80 - 09:00
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All Year
SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT 09-19

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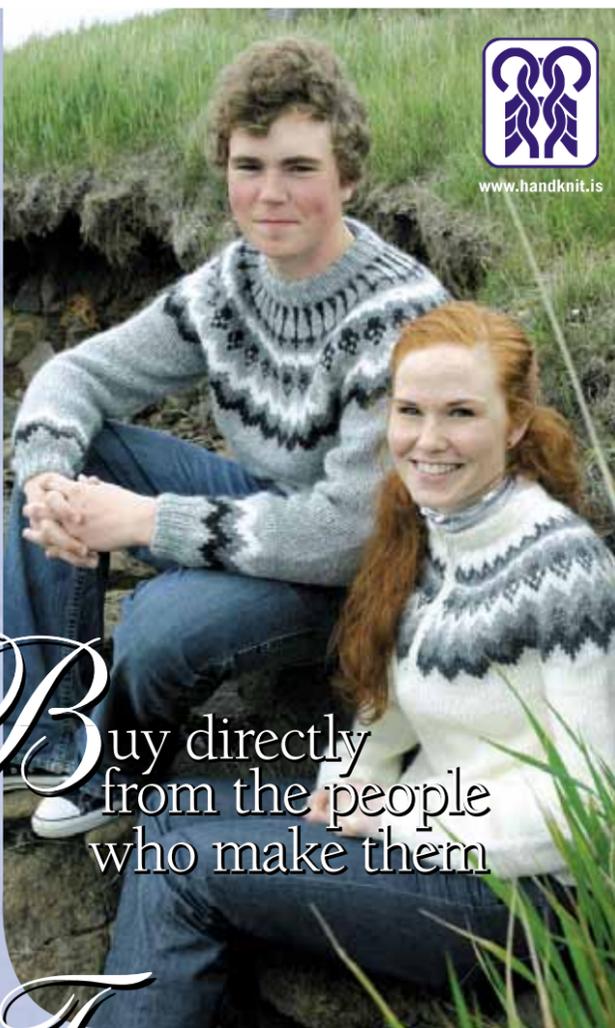
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4 Letters

Dear Grapevine,

I am grieved at the way Iceland is being treated. I cannot believe that if Scotland had its independence and its own voice, we would treat a neighbour and friend in this way.

My wife and I have happy memories of our fortnight in Hafnarfjörður. We exchanged houses and vehicles with an Icelandic family and we visited the interior of your great country.

Maybe one day we will work together in a Northern Alliance with Iceland, Greenland, the Faroes and our other Scandinavian neighbours and friends. And away from Brussels and London.

Your readers might want to pay a friendly visit to our best Independence for Scotland web site: <http://www.scottishdemocraticalliance.org.uk/>

Yours sincerely,
Michael Hamilton

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your letter. We are happy to hear you enjoyed your fortnight in Hafnarfjörður, and working in a Northern Alliance with you Scots sounds hella cool – every single Scotsman I've ever shared a pint with has been real cool (btw – do you know Olaf Furniss? Tall handsome guy, curly mass of hair. He is awesome!). Have your people contact mine, keep your lawyer on the line – let's do this!

Hello, I was reading your latest paper with the information about the Icelandic santa's, a bit child friendly but ok. About Giljagaur, there is an adult translation for that. "að gilja konu nággrannans" means to do your neighbors wife. It is the old meaning of the word. Any way thought you wanted to know, keep up the good work.

Jón Helgi

Dear Jón Helgi,

thank you so much for passing on this pertinent information. Does this then mean that Giljagaur wants all our wives? Or our neighbours wives? That certainly changes our view of the guy.

Dear Grapevine,

I wanted to drop you all a quick line or two to thank you for another year of publications. When we are in Iceland we are always sure to pick up a print copy. Even though we are stuck in Gettysburg, PA, USA, for most of the time, we can still download the PDF version. This year I caught up with all the back-catalogue of issues, so I have them all in a directory on my Mac's hard-drive. I have just had time, in between holiday preparations etc., to take a quick look at the Christmas special. The Encyclopedia of Icelandic Holidays... terrific! I will have to transpose that onto my iPhone calendar so I can stay current.

Our next trip over to Iceland is just days away. We are taking possession of our new summer house, ironically in the dead of winter. We fell in love with Iceland just over three years ago. A decision to try and buy a summer house was made well before the Kreppa. Our dream of owning one became possible, due to the exchange rate. This year we took three trips over in order to make it a reality. We are so excited.

Originally we stopped over on our way to the UK, where most of my family resides. We just fell in love with Iceland as a place. Since then we have, in turn, fallen in love with the

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

Now, since we're real pleasant and giving folks here at the Grapevine, we thought we'd share some of that wonderful FREYJA BEER with you, our readers. Until the end of days (or our FREYJA-sponsorship program, whichever comes first), we will reward one **MOST EXCELLENT LETTER** with a case of the Freyja. You read right. A full case of Freyja. At your disposal. For drinking (and did we mention that Freyja is pretty much our favourite beer these days? Because it is. No lie!).



MOST AWESOME LETTER:

Hello Haukur,

As a person interested in the financial fate of Iceland, as we all are, may I be so bold as to outline a possible solution to the present crisis: Use the big green houses to grow high grade marijuana.

Yes, it sounds like a joke, but I am actually quite serious. The government would have to pass a bill to legalise the stinky weed, and we would have to employ some of those jail birds who have recently had their harvests confiscated for their knowledge and skills.

I am not a cannabis smoker and I do not personally condone drug taking of any kind. I do believe there are health risks and possibly some psychological risks associated with smoking cannabis... we could get into a long debate about why alcohol is legal, but that is not the point of this proposal.

With this proposal, we simply advertise Iceland as a 'Free Weed State' and sell bags of Northern Lights to the tourists. I am confident that tourism will double and the sales of the weed will undoubtedly put the country on the road to recovery quicker than you could say 'Skin up'.

Alternatively, we could just sell chunks of our nature to foreign power companies so there is no nature left for our children.

I am hopeful that this idea will be taken seriously, but I am afraid it will only be met with fearful closed minds who think that it is the devil's weed and that it will start raining fire and brimstone. Let's face it, it probably will rain fire and brimstone anyway.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this, if you are in the neighborhood and fancy a cup of tea, just pop by.

TaDa
Tony

Hey Tony,

y'know, in all seriousness, this might actually be a pretty good idea you're espousing here. There's not a fucking chance in hell it'll be entertained by the powers that be for even a second, but that's the case with most novel ideas anyway.

One often wonders what would happen if we made cannabis legal overnight. Our experience with how Icelanders take to fads and novelties leads us to imagine that the whole country would be stoned out of its collective mind for a month or so, before growing bored with it and moving on to the next foot massage unit or yo-yo or something. It's hard to imagine a lot of cannabis-causalities hopelessly laying around like driftwood all over 101. Alright, your idea just won you some beer. We hope you're happy. If uhm... the government reads this and decides to go for it, we'll happily give you a second one.

people, culture, language. We are trying to learn Icelandic, but it is tough going (we'll get there though).

We just want to be able to get by in conversation, and understand what is being said. Anyway, I wanted to thank you guys for what you do throughout the year. Here's wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Cheers!

Paul H

Hey Paul,

you did what now with your iPhone calendar? And the summerhouse and the what now? Who's in the UK? Where are my pants!?! WHAT IS GOING ON HERE!?!???

Anyway. Thank you for your letter dude. It's always nice to learn someone's reading the stuff we're writing (or at least looking at it in a thoughtful manner), in fact, it's triple-nice. It's also good to hear you've scored yourselves a summerhouse. Keep on keepin' on!

Dear Grapevine,

what are the best places to smoke weed in Iceland? that is to say, the places to most successfully and fully enjoy and perhaps to even amplify the effects of a good toke of Iceland's finest agricultural product.

and heck, while you're humoring me, what are the best places to satisfy ones munchies after wards?

High Tidings,
anon

Dear anon (if that IS your real name), we suggest doing it at your house, as it taking

the devil's weed is highly illegal in Iceland. Or maybe at Tony's house – he seems into it.

Also, any place that would successfully amplify the effects cannabis smoking is likely far removed from any place you can purchase 'munchies'? In fact, you shouldn't be smoking anything at all. You should seek help with the good lord Jesus and try and come to terms with who you are.

That said, we are told that Öskjuhlíð can be alright if you're staying in the city. There's even a gas station nearby that sells pylsur with shrimp salad on them, and that nice chili ketchup.

Dear Sir,

There are an awful lot of citizens of other western countries who will be very happy at the decision of your president. We feel that our governments have sold out to financial interests at the cost of the everyday citizen. Iceland could help show the rest of us by not lying down to intimidation and threat.

Pat Ruane
Cork, Rep. of Ireland

Dear Pat,

This is an interesting point you raise. Initially we were devastated by our president's decision, as we were frankly just fucking sick of the whole Icesave debate and hoping to get on with stuff in 2010. But it's clear there are many interesting sides to this whole debate, and the one you point out is perhaps turning out to be the most engaging one. The everyday citizen has indeed taken the backseat to financial interests for far too long. So thank you for pointing that out.

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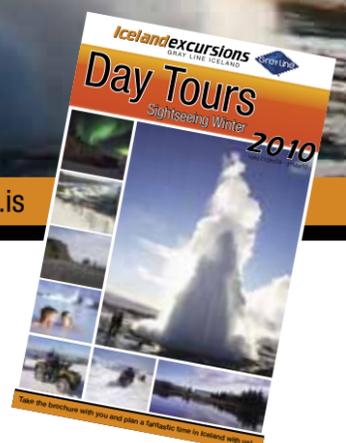
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The
REYKJAVÍK
GRAPEVINE
PRESENTS

2K9 Round Up Bonanza Extravaganza Madness!

“What Stood Out, Then?”

As the year drew to a close, Grapevine flipped through its stuffed contacts list and sent out a bunch of e-mails, made a bunch of calls, to people we thought could provide us with an interesting take on 2009—what they learned, what happened, why, when, where and how? And how.

We gave those folks free reign, pretty much, inviting our correspondents to talk about what they wanted. We imagined all these good folks put together might help us learn what it meant to be an Icelander in 2009; reading through the results, we can't help but agree with ourselves. There are some pretty hefty, eye-opening thoughts expressed right here.

Some people wrote us long letters (such contributions can be identified by a cool looking envelope-symbol), and some of them we called and sorta interrogated on what they had to say (these are marked with an old-school telephone image). All of them had interesting things to say about the year 2009 and the community we inhabit, whether they amount to complaints, condemnations, revelations or (in at least one case) exonerations.

Not all of the people we contacted responded, and not all of those who responded were willing to share their thoughts (we are especially annoyed that so few of our female friends were up for the task—it feels kinda shitty to present the year from a mostly male perspective). Nevertheless, we feel that the following commentary combines to provide a unique perspective on the messy year we just left behind, and what may lie ahead. Enjoy!

2009 | Andri Snær Magnason, Writer

On The Brink Of Something



A lot of people had expectations that we would see new political parties or MPs that would be different; there were expectations of an immediate revolution in our mindset, that all of the sudden we would see a new humanity, free from corruption, partisanism and political cliques. This did not happen.

In many ways, 2009 was still an interesting year. People were very open to ideas and the National Assembly of November, which the media tried to talk down as if it intended to present a plan to right everything, instead of accepting its findings as a gift or a contribution to our discourse, which it was.

Through Silfur Egils we heard a lot of people that offered solutions, words of warning or prophecies. "If you do this, you will go bankrupt and Iceland will be a pariah nation, if you do the exact opposite you will go immediately bankrupt..."

With dramatic outcries like that on both sides, it became hard for the public to sense what really mattered. This is among the reasons why big and important issues that one would have liked to participate in and debate, like Icesave and so many others, wound up in firmly in party lines and died there. The dualistic form every issue was forced into made it impossible for the public that will be affected by them to participate.

On the other hand, this was maybe the year of the virtual kreppa. Just as the bubble that preceded the collapse had grown immense, the kreppa sort of grew into its own bubble. It wasn't nearly as grave as the international media and many locals depicted it to be. Our birth rates went up, while mortality rates stood still—in the scope of human history it is unusual that such a period is thought of as one of hardship.

We are still on the brink of something, though. If the kreppa reached a low point in 2009, it wasn't a kreppa strictly speaking, rather an important change. But time will tell.

Right now we are experiencing a lot of impatience regarding political transformation, and I think a lot of it has unrealistic grounds. Such transformations happen over decades, time has told.

There are positive aspects that raise my hopes. We can observe some tightly knit grassroots foundation being formed; Data-market is proposing principles of public transparency and the National Assembly calls for a more active and direct democracy. Regardless of how these experiments fare in the long run, we can still see a large base of grassroots operators forming, one that has been shaping up over the last decade.

You could say that in certain ways the situation now is akin to that of 1809, when Jörundur Hundadagakonungur ["The dog days king"] arrived in Iceland and gave Icelanders the gift of freedom, something that everyone should have been rather pleased with. He offered freedom and a draft that said every man was equal. His message was immensely radical for the times, even more radical than the French Revolution. It appealed to the 90% of the country that were devoid of property, living in poverty. Yet the people laughed at his advances. "What does he mean, all men are equal?"

At that time, our officials said that no true Icelander desired independence. Jón Sigurðsson was but a baby, as was the Icelandic independence movement.

It seems we are going through the same course of events now. We've seen the pin-

stripe suited men in their Range Rovers run everything into the ground, still a lot of us feel that companies should be run by exactly these men, as if they are somehow—despite what experience has taught us—the best at running companies? It doesn't matter a thing that they are responsible for some of the biggest failures in human history.

It took Icelanders a hundred years to realise they wanted freedom. One hundred years of poems and resolutions and articles to understand that a poor man should have the same power to vote as the rich man. I hope our current shift in attitude doesn't take a hundred years, but the situation now is similar to what it was in the beginning of the 19th century. Our whole system came crashing into the arms of the state, and it was suddenly the nation's task to decide what to do with it. But before people realised what had happened, they grew upset with all this new power and decided they didn't want it, that it was communistic of them to have all these powers. Thus it was deemed the best solution to write off the debt and hand the power again to the men and their Range Rovers.

2009 was thus the year that the people received all the power but didn't want it, didn't know to use the opportunity to do something historic—to handle things differently—the political class couldn't muster up the energy to do something idealistic, because they were just focusing on clearing the rubble.

What really happened last year, then, was that every large business in the country fell into the hands of the banks, who in turn were turned over to the state. We could have experimented, tried new things; we could have thrown a national assembly on how to run these businesses, and where they went wrong in the first place, we could have decided how to run our society. But no such idea was entertained. ASÍ [Icelandic Confederation of Labour] rather wanted a new aluminium smelter and entered into an agreement with the people that caused all the chaos, the neo-libertarian advocates of SA [Confederation of Icelandic Employers].

From this perspective, 2009 was clearly a year of disappointment. We have a labour movement that has no ideological imagination or vision. They prefer focusing on unemployment rates—as if Iceland were a chicken farm, not a community—measuring our productivity in tonnes while ignoring the ideologies and methods that caused those unemployment rates. They are prepared to hand over our resources to reckless people, as long as a thousand workers can get short-term employment. They may have temporary success in creating jobs, but if they do not change their modes of thinking we are destined to go full circle, while losing our natural resources and along with them, our future employment opportunities.

Basic statistics tell us this: we bring ashore 1–1.5% of all fish that is caught in the world. This alone should be enough to comfortably sustain a nation of 300.000. We play a very large part in feeding the world, and doing it well is a big and important task. We welcome more tourists per person per year than most nations in the world, and that alone should go a long way towards sustaining our society. We produce five times more energy per person than most of our neighbouring countries—again, that alone should comfortably sustain us, yet we still manage to mess it up.

However, if we don't squander away all of these posts, we should be able to recover from our current problems relatively fast. 🍷



News | Paul Nikolov

The Year In Brief

JANUARY

January will be most memorable for the protests in front of Alþingi that raged on Austurvöllur throughout the month, as Icelanders furious at the collapse of the banks demanded that the coalition of the conservative Independence Party and the Social Democrats step down. Prime Minister Geir H. Haarde resigned that month, and an emergency coalition consisting of the Leftist-Greens and the Social Democrats was formed. Almost literally on his way out the door, then Minister of Fisheries Einar K. Guðfinnsson legalised whale hunting, adding yet another example of conservatives leaving a mess behind for others to clean up.



FEBRUARY

Iceland's new government garnered international attention for a number of reasons. Within Scandinavia mostly, the talk focused on how this was the first leftist government in Iceland's history. Elsewhere, media outlets were more interested in Prime Minister Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir as the first openly gay head of state in modern times. On the home front, Icelandic corporation Baugur applied to enter the "moratorium" process in Reykjavik, which offers protection from creditors. Meanwhile, whale hunting drew perhaps more ire from Icelanders than ever before, as whale watching groups and labour unions deplored the practice. The month closed on a happy note, though, as then Central Bank chairman Davíð Oddsson was forced to resign from his post.



MARCH

In this month, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) began to stretch its roots into Iceland, as it advertised for applicants in its then soon-to-be-opened Icelandic office. Talks about joining the European Union began to gather steam, as foreign media suggested in numerous op-eds that such a move could only benefit the country. Most Icelanders remained opposed to the idea. Fox News, always quick to push people's fear buttons, warned Americans not to travel to Iceland because the people here are "very, very angry", while adding, "Single guys, there's a lot of hot women, all broke. So you might have a shot." Proving that Fox News is as classy as it is journalistically accurate.



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Iceland's President Trolls Europe Here we go again...

Our illustrious president, Ólafur Ragnar "Epic Lulz" Grímsson, decided to purge himself of his reputation as Icelandic Venture Capitalist Cheerleader Numero Uno and vetoed the Icesave bill, thereby referring the bill to national referendum.

The president, citing among his reasons the overwhelming opposition to the bill in two separate opinion polls, and the 50,000 signatures on an online petition calling for the bill's veto, issued a statement, saying in part, "It is my sincere hope that this decision will lead to permanent reconciliation and prosperity for the people of Iceland, at the same time laying the foundations for good relations with all other nations and by the way I TROLL UUUU LOLOLOLO :D:D:D:D !!!1!"

The veto comes at a strange time, to say the least. Forgotten was the Prime Minister's own conditions to Gordon Brown, among them that the Icesave deal would not be an admission of legal obligation, and that if the burden of payment proved too much to bear, Iceland would expect re-negotiations with the UK and Holland. The Icesave law was never meant to be written in stone, yet the veto seems to pretend that it was.

Despite the veto, it should be noted that a) there are no laws on how a national referendum is conducted (although at the time of this writing, that is being worked out, and a referendum could be held as soon as 20 February), and b) Article 26 of the Icelandic constitution, which allows veto powers to the president, states that a vetoed law is actually in effect until a referendum is held that defeats the law by simple majority. The Prime Minister emphasized this point to the international media, and has sworn that the ruling coalition will hold, despite the set back.

One interesting bit of news: remember how 70% of the nation was opposed to the Icesave deal? Yeah, well, now only 41% agree with the president's veto. This

might be an excellent example of "be careful what you wish for" regret. At the same time, another Gallup shows that 67% of Icelanders would rather see the government create a new Icesave law for parliament to vote on, rather than create a national referendum. For the average Icelander, a referendum isn't the point; a new deal is.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention a point that some in the foreign media seem to have overlooked - even if a referendum does kill the Icesave law, this DOES NOT mean that we are not going to pay. It means that we are going to re-negotiate. No matter what side of this issue you're on, it's an important point to drive home.

Also of note: the conservatives - who fought long and hard for the bill's defeat - don't actually want the president to have any veto powers, and have held that position ever since one of their own bills was vetoed in 2004. The conservatives are also not that crazy about national referendums, having strongly opposed them with regards to the Kárahnjúkar dam project, and the Iraq War. A source close to the Social Democrats that the Grapevine spoke to said that the bill's defeat was actually the last thing the opposition wanted - now they'll have to deal with the possible negative economic consequences of the law's defeat by referendum. The referendum itself may cost about 200 million ISK. This may very well be their last shot at credibility.

The one thing certain in the year to come: Icelanders sick of hearing about Icesave will have to live with the subject for at least another year, not to mention some of the grimmer results that could follow. ♡

✍ PAUL NIKOLOV
☒ HÖRDUR SVEINSSON

A Year Of Reckoning



One word in particular can be used to sum up the atmosphere in Icelandic society in the year 2009. That word is: reckoning.

During the past year there has been a political and a moral reckoning taking place in Iceland. This reckoning has been the effect of the catastrophic economic collapse that happened on the island in the autumn of 2008.

The most important element of this reckoning was the pseudo-revolution that took place in Iceland in January. This revolution led to the end of the coalition government of the Independence Party (Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn) and the Social Democrats (Samfylkingin).

Following the premature end of this coalition, Samfylkingin formed a temporary, minority government with the left-wing party Vinstri Græn (Leftist-Greens) until elections were held in April, where these two parties received a majority to form a new coalition government.

This left-wing government was historical in the sense that it was for the first time since Iceland received its independence from Denmark in 1944 that a left-wing, majority government had been formed.

This was interpreted as the consequence of the reckoning with the right wing policies of Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn, which many believed were one of the main causes of the Icelandic economic collapse of 2008.

This interpretation entails the belief that the collapse had been caused by a small group of greedy, immoral oligarchs that had bought up most of Icelandic companies and been allowed to mismanage them in a reckless way. The financial deregulation and the hands-off policies of the government of Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn, as well as a very weak financial services authority, allowed these oligarchs to run wild and do as these pleased, and were understood as being the consequence of the crude type of capitalist ideology that Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn had implemented during its eighteen years in power.

However, the followers of Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn argued that the collapse of the Icelandic economy did not show that capitalism was bad, but only that the particular capitalists that bought up Iceland had not properly used the freedom granted to them by the capitalist policies of Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn. It had therefore not been shown, they claimed, that capitalism as such had failed in Iceland. Furthermore, Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn could not take responsibility for the actions of the oligarchs even though the party had been the political entity most responsible for the creation of the system that collapsed.

Whoever is right, there was this strong reckoning between right wing and left wing politics during the year. Currently the left is winning, since the left-wing parties form the present government. But that might change since it is a historical anomaly for Iceland to have a left-wing government in power and the polls show Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn is gaining strength again.

This debate can be seen as one side of a more general, moral discourse that has been ongoing in Iceland, about the business methods used by this small group of oligarchs; methods that most people agree were a part of the cause of the economic collapse.

The general stance is that the condemnation of these methods is apolitical: Most people, right or left, agree that they are immoral and unjust. In this moral debate it has been the majority of the general public against the oligarchs who have tried to answer for their ways of doing business.

The most notorious aspect of the business model of the Icelandic oligarchs is the incredible amount of money they borrowed from the Icelandic banks—banks they themselves often owned large stakes in.

The bankrupt holding company Baugur, for example, leaves a debt of more than 300 billion Icelandic krónur. While Milestone, another bankrupt holding company, owes around 100 billion krónur that were mostly borrowed from the bank Glitnir, which the company partly owned. Then there is Exista, tottering on the brink of bankruptcy. Exista was the biggest creditor and shareholder of Kaupthing bank. Most of these debts will be written off by their creditors, since the loans were either unsecured or the assets used to secure them—most commonly the shares in the banks—are now worthless.

The sky-high loans to these large holding companies only form one side of an even murkier tale, since smaller companies and individuals could often get loans from the Icelandic banks without putting forward any pledges. In many cases these companies and individuals received these so-called "bullet loans" because the banks offered them to the customers or the employees of the banks. They did not stand a chance of losing anything if they decided to take the loans: The only party who took any risk was the bank itself.

Ordinary, everyday Icelanders did not have access to loans like these, and it has made them angry to learn all the stories about the business practices of the banks and oligarchs, and how common they had become prior to the collapse. This has led these people—certain businessman and bankers—to be considered as public enemies number one in Iceland over the past year, and it is almost certain that some of these people will serve prison time for the crimes they committed.

So the reckoning I initially mentioned is, first and foremost, a reckoning between the general public of Iceland, the people who did not belong to the economic or the political elite and who cannot be blamed for the collapse, except indirectly at most, and the people who governed the country into the mess it is currently entrenched in.

As I write this, it is not foreseeable what the end result of this reckoning will be, since the events that led to collapse are still being looked into by the 'Special Prosecutor' hired to do so, and a special committee that is investigating it from a more academic, analytical standpoint. Icelanders can only rest assured that the answer to the question: "What happened and who will be punished for it?" has been and is being looked into. But we are a pretty long way from having a satisfactory answer. That will probably take years; the reckoning has only just begun. ♡

Ingi F. Vilhjálmsson, is a journalist at the newspaper DV in Reykjavík

The Year In Brief

APRIL

The music hall in Reykjavík, which had been delayed construction since the previous fall, managed to land an agreement for funds to continue construction. Protests against the Ministry of Justice, calling for changes to refugee law, began to gather momentum. Squatters occupying vacant houses in the city (which were actually owned and slated for demolition to make way for larger, more modern buildings) battled with police throughout the month. Parliamentary elections held at the end of the month saw the emergency coalition of the Social Democrats and Leftist-Greens voted into power with a majority of 34 of 63 seats.



MAY

The month began with a visit from David Lynch, who pledged to usher in an era of great good fortune by teaching Icelanders all about Transcendental Meditation. Financial Times journalist and novelist Roger Boyes releases his book "Meltdown Iceland," covering the bank collapse on the overheating of the economy. Iceland's new government reaches an agreement to, among other things, apply for Iceland's admission to the EU. Refugee issues continued, including at least one hunger strike. Unemployment reached a peak in this month, as 12,000 Icelanders became either unemployed or under-employed. Iceland also managed to win second place in the Eurovision Song Contest, thanks to Jóhanna Guðrún and her song "Is It True?" Parliament resumed.



JUNE

The Dalai Lama visited Iceland, and told Icelanders in attendance at a lecture he gave that he has optimism about the future of Tibet. The initial Icesave deal was approved, immediately sparking protests inside and outside of parliament. Tourism continued to climb as foreigners took advantage of the depressed currency. Renowned corruption-hunter Eva Joly, who was appointed by the Icelandic government to investigate the causes of the bank collapse, began to speak publicly about her frustration in dealing with Icelandic authorities. Former Kópavogur mayor Gunnar I. Birgisson resigned under charges of corruption and nepotism.



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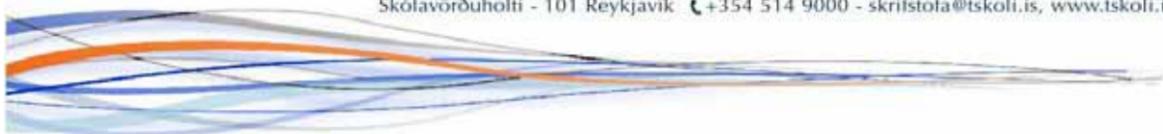


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2009 | Egill Helgason, Political and Social Commentator



Cleaning Up The Mess: The Legacy Of The Pots And Pans Revolution

WORDS BY **EGILL HELGASON**

PHOTOGRAPH BY **JULIA STAPLES**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY **LÓA HJÁLMTÝSDÓTTIR**

Noted political and social commentator Egill Helgason has hosted Iceland's main political debate show, *Silfur Egils* (now showing on RÚV, alongside his literary program *Kiljan*) for many years. Through his shows and his blog on local news aggregator *Eyjan.is*, he is undoubtedly a major influence on Icelandic discourse and is known for his sharp, often hard-hitting analyses of current affairs – especially in the aftermath of October 2008's economic collapse.

For the next months, Egill Helgason will be writing us a column detailing his take on and interpretation of the preceding month's events. The Grapevine is proud and happy to welcome Egill as a contributor to the paper. We feel his insights will prove an exemplary contribution for international audiences and new Icelanders that are interested in following the local discourse on a deeper level.

Read **RIGHT ON** for his extended introductory column, which should tell you some things about 2009, in the spirit of this issue.

Later this month we will see the one-year anniversary of the pots and pans revolution that shook Reykjavík in January of last year. This miniature revolution started peacefully, with people banging saucepans and cooking pots, but ended in street riots, fires and tear-gas.

As is often the case with revolutions, it was a small incident that sparked the events.

Parliament was reconvening after Christmas. Everybody expected it to make a major effort on the crisis. But the government of conservative Prime Minister Geir Haarde was as ever disconnected from the populace—now we even have the verb of "Haardering" in the Icelandic language, meaning basically to keep your head in a pile of sand—so the parliament started the new year by discussing a bill proposed by a young and rather silly politician of Haarde's party, calling for alcohol to be sold in supermarkets.

Maybe a large issue for some, but by most this was perceived as being a symbol of how far the political class had alienated itself from reality and, with a peculiar mixture of liberalism and cronyism, handed power to cliques of bankers and financiers, many of them originating in the grey zone between politics and business.

Icelanders, a nation more given to grumbling than manning the barricades, were suddenly out in force, expressing their total discontent with a political system that had led the nation down the way of ruin. The highpoint of these events, just a year ago, was the burning of a huge Christmas tree, given to Reykjavík annually by the city of Oslo as a token of goodwill.

As the tree went up in flames, the

police brought out their teargas canisters—a turn of events unheard of in Iceland.



"Now we even have the verb of 'Haardering' in the Icelandic language, meaning basically to keep your head in a pile of sand."

In Iceland it is referred to as a revolution—"bylting" is the Icelandic word. It surely toppled the government of Geir Haarde, which drifted with all senses shut into the collapse of October 2008, all the time claiming that the problem was rather one of image—a misunderstanding of the Icelandic economy—than substance. "Incompetent government" was a popular slogan during these days.

The Social Democrats, a junior party that had entered the coalition government with Haarde's Independence Party in 2007—The Independence Party having led the government ever since 1991—took fright after a party meeting in the basement of the Na-

tional Theatre was literally mobbed one night. The Social Democrats then proceeded to form a government with the socialist/environmental Left Green party, which actually can trace some of its origins all the way back to the Icelandic Communist party that formed in 1930.



This is, at least on paper, the most left wing government in Icelandic history, referring to itself as a government of Nordic Welfare. The Prime Minister is Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir—often referred to as Holy Jóhanna—chosen at the time of the pots and pans revolution because she is thought to be incorruptible and is also a figurehead of welfare politics. But it soon transpired that the strong man of the government, the real fighter, is Steingrímur J. Sigfússon, Minister of Finance, the leader of the Left Greens, a prematurely bald country boy who entered parliament at a very young age in 1983. Sigfússon has spent most of his political life as a member of the opposition and many were waiting for him to retire—as is also the fact with Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir.



But then, by this strange turn of events, he is now in the position of the most influential man in the government, the man who is everywhere, doing the fighting, putting out the fires, cleaning up the mess, earning grudging respect, but not necessarily becoming more popular.

Maybe the government's chosen slogan isn't good enough. It is very difficult to dole out Nordic Welfare in a country that is almost bankrupt. The government has in fact seen no other option but to follow the prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund

to the letter, in fact it shares its power with the IMF governors. Many of the hardest left-wingers in government have been forced to change their ways; they have even accepted an application to join the European Union, total anathema to the Left Greens until recently. And most of the party has been forced to campaign for the acceptance of Icesave, the reimbursement by Icelandic taxpayers of money lost through savings accounts in several European countries.

"Cleaning up the mess," is a phrase that Sigfússon uses frequently.

A revolution devours its children. This can be said of the government that came into power through the pots and pans revolution, which seemed full of promise for a few months last year but now looks weak and full of contradictions. It has three major problems it has not managed to tackle:

1. The terrible household debt, aggravated by the total collapse of the currency, lowering of housing prices and the strange Icelandic phenomenon of loans being indexed to the rampant inflation (while pay and savings are not).

2. The question of what to do with the companies that have fallen into the hands of the government and the banks. Included are many of the nation's major companies, as well as the large holding companies that owned practically everything at the time of the boom. All the latter companies are now bankrupt, with a horrible ratio of debt.

How do you redistribute the wealth of a society that has collapsed? Even the fishing industry, once again the pillar of the economy, is riddled with debt, brought on by speculation with fishing quotas where huge sums have disappeared into offshore accounts.

Despite its left-wing credentials the government seems to be set on doing this in a very old guardish way, through the partially restructured banks—now nominally in the hands of foreign creditors—but in reality run by Icelandic lawyers and economists, many of whom are linked to the former elite, which was the problem in the first place.



The most famous instance is Jón Ásgeir Jóhannesson of Baugur fame, who in the heyday of the Icelandic 'venture Vikings' owned many famous brands on the high streets of London. But this was built on his empire of supermarkets in Iceland, which his family still has control of. Jón Ásgeir's

total debt is thought to be about 1,000 billion ISK; he is surely one of those who bankrupted the nation, but there is talk that he might hold on to his supermarkets if he manages to negotiate his debt, which is only a fraction of the mess he has left behind.

And, to add insult to injury, Jón Ásgeir still controls most of the privately owned media in Iceland.



3. Icesave... This is a word that instills dread—and perhaps boredom—into the hearts of Icelanders. Icesave has now been furiously debated for more than a year. Originally this is the moniker—thought brilliant at the time—of savings accounts founded by Icelandic bank Landsbanki in the UK, Holland and Belgium. At the time foreigners had almost stopped lending money to the Icelandic banks, so they devised a scheme: we will offer fabulous interest rates, and we will be able to fund ourselves by the money flowing in.

"And one day Icesave just closed down, its web pages disappeared; at the Icesave offices no one answered the phone. It was, in short, a scam."

Except there was no backup plan. If the Icelandic bank went bankrupt, there was nobody to guarantee the deposits. The Icelandic insurance fund was empty. And one day Icesave just closed down, its web pages disappeared; at the Icesave offices no one answered the phone. It was, in short, a scam.

Our neighbouring countries—even our friendly Nordic neighbours—soon decided that it was up to Icelanders, our government and taxpayers, to reimburse the holders of these savings accounts, individuals, municipalities, charities, up to a certain sum. Maybe this is not unfair. But the sum of money is so vast compared to the Icelandic economy that this might even spell doom for the recovery of the country, which, though proud and enterprising, has the population of Wichita, Cardiff or Murmansk.

Icesave has dominated local political life since the collapse. For Icelanders this has turned into a nightmare, the feeling is a bit like in the film *The Exterminating Angel* by Luis Bunuel, where a group of people are stuck in a room without really understanding why they cannot get out.

Shortly before New Year, Parliament passed a bill saying we should

Politics | 2009

pay. This was the second bill, now referred to as Icesave 2, the first one having been declined by the British and the Dutch. At the time of writing, the nation had just learned that President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson declined signing the bill – thereby effectively vetoing it and subjecting it to a national referendum.



As Grímsson pondered his move, he must surely have looked into the burden of debt, to the constitutional ramifications of his signature, but also to his own legacy. Grímsson, a real political animal who used to be the chairman of the socialist People's Alliance up to the early nineties, has managed to become the only president in the history of the Icelandic republic who is actively unpopular and a figure of ridicule. Many of his sayings during the boom years are now a source of embarrassment and he and his wife, wealthy socialite Dorrit Moussaief, are said to have become groupies of the financiers, the so-called 'venture Vikings'.



Indeed, shortly after news of his veto (and subsequent news of harsh reactions by Dutch and UK governments), loud and strongly worded calls for his resignation had already started echoing through local discourse.

Grímsson's veto might spell the end of the present left-wing government—ironically, as he comes from the left wing himself—but it might also turn into a constitutional crisis as Icesave goes back and forth from the government, to the parliament and then to the president, hitherto a symbolic figure in the vein of the Scandinavian monarchs in their Lego palaces.

“Grímsson, a real political animal who used to be the chairman of the socialist People's Alliance up to the early nineties, has managed to become the only president in the history of the Icelandic republic who is actively unpopular and a figure of ridicule.”

The moment of truth should come on February 1st, when a special committee, appointed by Alþingi, will deliver a 1.500 page report on the collapse. The members of the committee are still held in a measure of respect by the public, but it must be noted that two of them are also members of the old guard: one being the parliamentary

ombudsman, the other a judge of the High Court who, as a law professor, used to do a lot of work for the former government. The third is a relatively unknown Harvard-trained economist.

The chairman of the committee was quoted last year as saying that he would have seriously bad news for the population. Even so, many dread that the findings will be, maybe not a white-wash, but that they will be so muddled as to be an endless source of interpretation, strife and spin.

Those who have most to lose from the report have already organised themselves. In one of the most bizarre twists Icelandic politics has seen, former PM, former Central Bank manager, the force behind the privatisation of the Icelandic bank system—and, some say, architect of the collapse itself, Davíð Oddsson—was made editor of Morgunblaðið, formerly the most prestigious newspaper in the country.

In a matter of weeks the paper turned into a vehicle for Oddsson and his cronies, the subscribers disappeared in droves and now little remains of the old prestige. This is not only a battle for political power, but also for what will be written in the history books.



What then about the legacy of the pots and pans revolution?

In a way, it reminds one of T.E. Lawrence, who in the early pages of The Seven Pillars of Wisdom talks about the fate of his own revolt in the desert. The old guys came back and stole the revolution. After the burning of the Oslo Christmas tree things quickly fell back into place. Parliamentary elections were held, and the old political parties—the ‘four parties’ as they are called in Iceland—basically held out. We got a left-wing government but it is not doing things very differently from what the old government would do. Iceland is subject to a strict IMF program; most of the government's moves are forced.

Icesave has yet to boil into riots. Up until now the protests in front of parliament have been muted; the strongest sign of protest being a list of signatures against Icesave 2 with a sizable part of the electorate putting their names on it. Taxes have been raised on the better off—very few people are really rich in post-collapse Iceland—so we might yet see the upper classes coming down to rattle their jewellery down in Austurvöllur square, in front of Alþingi.

This doesn't seem likely, though. For now, the nation seems rather settled in its grumbling ways; a cloud of depression and discontent hovers over the country. But mood changes can be swift in this Nordic place where the arctic night now holds the reins. This is a great change from the silly euphoria of the boom years, with all its imagined victories on the stage of global finance. Many now say that the best we can do is to keep on fishing and churning out aluminium from our smelters; that this is a good enough vision for the future. Even the IMF talks about Iceland being a production economy for a long time, while debts are being paid.

But, it has to be admitted, that for the young people of this country this seems to be a rather gloomy outlook. ☹

2009 | Haukur Már Helgason

The score of 2009



Prestissimo

“Andóf” is Icelandic for resistance. As so much of Icelandic's abstract vocabulary, it originates among seafarers. Once an open boat had arrived at its destination on open sea, and the sailors had laid their lines, two men in back kept rowing against the stream to keep the boat put. Thus andóf is not meant to change a situation, but to work against a current for the sake of the status quo.

Most of last winter's andófsmenn may not have wanted to simply support the status quo with their action, but that may be all the movement did. Effectively, the protest movement's demand now seems to have been: Stop us or we might do something. And the state obeyed, did what it could to hold back a people scared of its own potential and called an election.

Through a change in government, the republic held. So far, no constitutional convention has been announced. The new government is making some left-wing amendments, reinforcing taxes on wealth that were abolished to make Iceland a ‘capitalist's paradise’ as one banker phrased it in his recent memoirs. Fundamentally, though, everything remains the same: As soon as the banks, nationalised in autumn 2008, had been relieved of their losses, the socialists re-privatised the profitable parts of their business—swiftly, even without hesitation. As 70% of Icelandic business is de facto bankrupt, this means that private interest will determine their fate, and not public interest—they are already beyond political debate.

Adagio

Total national debt amounts to 28 billion. This is not incomprehensible, you only have to divide with the population to realise the meaning of the figure: one way or another each of the country's 300 some thousand inhabitants must donate 96 thousand worth to pay these debts. Of these, 37 thousand will be collected from each by the state, through taxation, cuts in services and other measures, while the rest will be privately collected, through higher prices, lower wages—any means of exploitation will do. In a country with no tradition of sacrificial ceremonies, co-dependency with the debt holders is likely to become a silent, shameful part of everyday existence, breeding contempt and resentment.

Financial minister Steingrímur J. Sigfússon may very well be right that ‘Iceland will get out of this’, thanks to what is often mislabelled as ‘hard work morals’ but is better described as a tradition of obedience. Whereas the right wing employs analogies with seafaring, Sigfússon refers to farming: the farmers thought they could spend their days on the town! There exists another left, which never adhered to the cause of making everyone a worker, but in freedom, as the opposite of forced labour. There also exist honest people in the right-wing constituency who really thought that capitalism meant hard work would bring rewards. Both groups are now disillusioned to the point of apathy. At the end of a messy year, in a heap of stale words, this one thing remains clear: no matter who is in charge, a great number of Iceland's inhabitants will be considerably less free to choose what to do with their time for at least the next decade or two, than they would have been if that psychotic monster neoliberalism hadn't run amok.

Rubato

It was not the collapse that was catastrophic, but the build-up and the blindness. A country blindly adhered to the outrageous dogma that if money only had its way, good things would follow. Whatever would not come about through sheer monetary magic would then be taken care of by the inherent greatness of Icelanders, by way of racial magic. The economic collapse merely unveiled the scale of the intended exploitation.

Protestors stood up to the shame of the past decade and helped cover up the gap of impossibility by bringing about an election. Through a quixotic effort the andófsmenn kept the island in place. As acceptance sets in and words lose their effectiveness, the voluntary leaders of last winter's uprising turn into nagging eccentrics again. The new captain's promises to distribute the rowing demanded from each fairly, according capabilities. To make new oars for those who have none. That the sailors will be kept alive and breeding. That their offspring will be nurtured and taught to row as well. And so, those with oars keep on rowing, rattling their oars to celebrate the New Year beneath fireworks in the fog. An Icesave approaches on larboard, please steer past it, will you ...

What else happened in 2009? Michael Jackson died. His Neverland ranch was dissolved and auctioned, too. ☹

2009 | Valur Gunnarsson, Journalist / Writer

2009: The Year of Revolution



Ol' Karl Marx said that history always repeats itself; the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. Commentators particularly loved repeating that phrase after the collapse of the Soviet Union. But this is Iceland. We do things differently.

Previously, the only event in Icelandic history to be called a revolution took place in the summer of 1809. An English soap salesman and a Danish adventurer named Jorgen Jorgensen came ashore in the midst of the Napoleonic Wars, took over the undefended island and announced that Iceland was now free and independent and a national flag showing three fish on a blue field would be introduced along with human rights and such. They were soon escorted away by the Royal Navy and Jorgen was called the “Dog Day King” by bemused locals in honour of his roughly two months in office. Over a century later, the event was turned into a stage farce by Jónas Árnason.

The revolution of 2009 certainly had its farcical elements (singing, dancing, everything said by ex-PM Geir Haarde). But in the background was a national tragedy, eighteen years of economic mismanagement by the Independence Party which led to the economic collapse of 2008.

After the Revolution

Were the events of January 2009 a true revolution? Iceland seems, despite everything, to have been pretty responsibly run for the past year, which is in itself revolutionary. However, no one is happy with the outcome. Inevitably, the Independence Party now blames the ruling Left Coalition for the effects of the economic collapse, conveniently forgetting that the whole disaster happened on their watch. Now taxes must be raised and public spending cut down. Everyone from sailors to filmmakers, parents to seniors, denounce the government as each group must in turn suffer cuts, blaming the one pulling the trigger rather than the one who loaded and aimed the gun.

Many of the leading protesters of January have already left the country while the main architect of the collapse, former PM Davíð Oddsson, is busy rewriting history as the new editor of Morgunblaðið. The same people who bankrupted the country are still largely in charge of their indebted business empires. On the face of it, little has changed.

The Rainbow Revolution

And yet, something did happen in January 2009. Not quite like Red October 1917 or the first Bastille Day in 1789, but something of consequence nonetheless. Perhaps it can best be compared to the colour-coded revolutions in Eastern Europe, where people rose peacefully to eject elected leaders who were doing the country harm and could not be gotten rid of in any other way.

The people of Iceland showed, for once, that they could and would take matters into their own hands. Everything that has happened since has been a direct consequence of January. The election of a new Icelandic government last spring, following Obama's oath of office on the very day the Icelandic Revolution started, inspired hope of a brave new world for many.

Then, everything got bogged down. Over here it was Icesave, whereas Obama has had to spend most of his time arguing with reluctant countrymen about the benefits of health care rather than changing the world with broad strokes.

The Big Squeeze

By December, the beacons of hope that were lit (and frequently extinguished by police) on Austurvöllur last January had grown ever dimmer. The biggest surprise of the aftermath of the revolution was not that people felt let down. Expectations are raised and not everything can be changed overnight. Nor was it all that surprising that the Independence Party has largely succeeded in rewriting history to their own benefit. As the name implies, this is precisely what they do best. No, the biggest surprise came in the run up to Christmas, when shopping seemed as busy as ever. With prices at a record high, rising unemployment, tax increases and wage cuts, this should be the most expensive Christmas yet for punters. But that did not deter them. Even before the collapse, Icelanders had to pay more than anyone else for most products, and yet its consumerism was unparalleled. Now they have to pay even more. With longer working hours than most countries, I had always assumed that Icelanders were being squeezed to the limit. It must have come as a pleasant surprise to the happy few who control the monopolies to see their countrymen can be squeezed quite a bit more. Longer hours, worse pay, pricier

products. This is the promise of a new year.

It's going to be a cold January once the credit card bills start coming in. Hopefully, things will heat up a bit in February, when the long promised report on the reasons for the crises is due to be published. That might not only be the fulfilment of the hopes of January 2009, but also the nation's last hope for justice.

If this too fails to deliver, we can expect stories set in our times to be more tragic than farcical. ☹

News | Paul Nikolov

The Year In Brief

JULY

As support for the initial Icesave deal waned, support for the conservative Independence Party grew to being the strongest in the country. Parliament voted to apply for EU membership. Some new cases of swine flu were confirmed in Iceland. A top-secret document neatly outlining the identities of 205 international entities in receipt of individual loans exceeding €5 million (the largest of which totalling €250 million) from Kaupping was leaked to the internet July 29th via WikiLeaks.



AUGUST

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed an agreement with Chinese authorities to take part in the EXPO 2010 in Shanghai, and parliament continued to cobble away at Icesave. Not a really eventful month, except for the fact that the normally reserved Prime Minister wrote a column for the Financial Times. There she said that Icelanders were willing to make sacrifices to rebuild the economy, but added, “Iceland will not be deterred from resolving issues that stand in the way of economic reconstruction at home and confidence-building abroad. It is to be hoped that the people of large countries such as the UK and the Netherlands are aware of the lasting impact their governments can have on small countries such as ours at a time of great distress.”



SEPTEMBER

Iconic Icelandic protester Helgi Hóseasson died at the age of 89. The shadowy group known as Skapofsi continued to vandalize the homes of Iceland's captains of finance. The Skapofsi group is still at large and occasionally sends out messages with photos of its latest conquests. Political party Civic Movement was forced to re-invent itself after an embarrassing inter-party e-mail was leaked to the media, revealing back-talking and bickering that ultimately led to MP Práinn Bertelsson leaving the party altogether. But the top story of the month was former Central Bank chairman and legendary conservative politician Davíð Oddsson being named the co-editor of newspaper Morgunblaðið, while over 40 journalists were fired from the paper. The move gained international attention, scorn from journalist unions at home and abroad, and cancelled subscriptions by the hundreds.



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

8 FRI

Austur
22:00 Live DJs.
B5
22:00 Live DJs.
Bar 11
22:00 Matti.
Café Rósenberg
22:00 Mogadon.
Celtic Cross
01:00 Live Music.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
23:00 Live Music.
Háskólabíó
19:30 The Icelandic Symphony
Orchestra: Vínartónleikar III.
Hemmi & Valdi
22:00 Local DJs.
Hressó
22:00 Ímynd, DJ Fannar.
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 DJs Nino and Dramatík.
Óliver
22:00 Ladies' Night.
Prikið
22:00 DJ Addi Intro.
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Live DJs.

9 SAT

Austur
22:00 Live DJs.
B5
22:00 Live DJs.
Bar 11
22:00 Biggi Maus.
Café Rósenberg
22:00 Mogadon.
Celtic Cross
01:00 Live Music.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
23:00 Live Music.
Háskólabíó
17:00 The Icelandic Symphony
Orchestra: Vínartónleikar IV.
Hemmi & Valdi
22:00 Local DJs.
Hressó
22:00 Penta, DJ Fannar.
Kaffibarinn
23:45 Sexy Lazer.
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 DJs Nino and Dramatík.
Prikið
22:00 DJ Danni Deluxe.
Salurinn
17:00 Víkingur and Ran Dank.
Sódóma
21:00 Agent Fresco, For A Minor
Reflection, Who Knew, Útidúr.
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Live DJs.

10 SUN

Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 Movie Night.
Prikið
23:00 Hangover Cinema presents
2010.

11 MON

Café Rósenberg
22:00 Arnar.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
Kaffi Zimsen
21:00 Best Friends Day. 2 for 1 beer.
Prikið
21:00 Wine and Cheese Night: 2
glasses and cheese for 1,000 ISK.

12 TUE

Café Rósenberg
22:00 Arnar.

Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
Óliver
22:00 Live Karaoke with Raggi
Troubadour.
Prikið
22:00 DJ Gauti.

13 WED

Austur
21:00 Live Jazz.
Café Rósenberg
22:00 South River Band.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
Sódóma
22:00 The Global Battle Of The
Bands SEMI-FINALS.

14 THU

Bar 11
22:00 Kreppa Night. Beer for 450
ISK.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
23:00 Live music.
Háskólabíó
19:30 The Icelandic Symphony
Orchestra: Young soloists.
Hressó
22:00 Jogvan og Vignir.
Kaffibarinn
23:45 Hunk of a Man.
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 Ólafsvaka night. Beer for 490
ISK.
Óliver
22:00 Ingó Veðurguð.
Prikið
22:00 Coxbutter.
Sódóma
22:00 The Global Battle Of The
Bands SEMI-FINALS.
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Mojito night. Mojitos for
1000 ISK.

15 FRI

Austur
22:00 Live DJs.
B5
22:00 Live DJs.
Bar 11
22:00 Biggi Maus.
Café Rósenberg
22:00 Tom and Clave.
Celtic Cross
01:00 Live Music.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
23:00 Live Music.
Hemmi & Valdi
22:00 Local DJs.
Hressó
22:00 Silfur, DJ Bjarni.
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 DJs Nino and Dramatík.
Óliver
22:00 Ladies' Night.
Prikið
22:00 Kocoon.

Salurinn
21:00 Dalvík's Men's Choir with
Matti Matt and Rock Band: Queen
and The Beatles.
Sódóma
22:00 The Global Battle Of The
Bands SEMI-FINALS.
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Live DJs.

16 SAT

Austur
22:00 Live DJs.
B5
22:00 Live DJs.
Bar 11
22:00 Matti.
Café Rósenberg
22:00 Tom and Clave.
Celtic Cross
01:00 Live Music.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
23:00 Live Music.
Hemmi & Valdi
22:00 Local DJs.
Hressó
22:00 Napóleon, DJ Bjarni.
Kaffibarinn
23:45 Alfons X.
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 DJs Nino and Dramatík.
NASA
00:00 Óli Ofur.
Prikið
22:00 DJ Danni Deluxe.
Salurinn
17:00 New Year's Concert Auður.
Salurinn
21:00 Dalvík's Men's Choir with
Matti Matt and Rock Band:
Queen and The Beatles.
Sódóma
22:00 The Global Battle Of The
Bands SEMI-FINALS.
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Live DJs.

17 SUN

Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 Movie Night.
Prikið
23:00 Hangover Cinema presents
Clerks 1.
Salurinn
13:00 Sounds of the jungle.

18 MON

Café Rósenberg
22:00 Mamiko & Hilmar.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
Kaffi Zimsen
21:00 Best Friends Day. 2 for 1 beer.
Prikið
21:00 Wine and Cheese Night: 2
glasses and cheese for 1,000 ISK.

Music & Entertainment | Venue finder

Amsterdam Hafnarstræti 5 D3	Dubliner Hafnarstræti 4 D3	Nýlenduvörurverzlun Hemma & Valda Laugavegur 21 F5
Apótek Austurstræti 16 E3	English Pub Austurstræti 12 E3	Næsti Bar Ingólfstræti 1A E5
B5 Bankastræti 5 E4	Glaubar Tryggvagata 20 D3	Óliver Laugavegur 20A F5
Babalú Skólavörðustígur 22 F5	Grand Rökk Smiðjustígur E5	Ölstofan Vegamótastígur F5
Batteri Hafnarstræti 1-3 D3	Highlander Lækjargata 10 F3	Prikið Bankastræti F5
Bar 11 Laugavegur 11 E5	Hressó Austurstræti 20 E4	Rósenberg Klapparstígur 25 F6
Barbara Laugavegur 22 F6	Hverfisbarinn Hverfisgata 20 E5	Sódóma Reykjavík Tryggvagata 22 D3
Bjarni Fel Austurstræti 20 E4	Jacobsen Austurstræti 9 E3	Sólón Bankastræti 7A E4
Boston Laugavegur 28b F6	Kaffi Hljómáland Laugavegur 23 F6	Thorvaldsen Austurstræti 8 E3
Café Cultura Hverfisgata 18 E5	Kaffi Zimsen Hafnarstræti 18 E4	Vegamót Vegamótastígur 4 F5
Café Paris Austurstræti 14 E3	Kaffibarinn Bergstræðastræti 1 F5	
Balthazar Hafnarstræti 1-3 D3	Karamba Laugavegur 22 F6	
Celtic Cross Hverfisgata 26 E5	London/Reykjavík Tryggvagata 22 D3	
Dillon Laugavegur 30 F6	NASA Þorvaldsenstræti 2 E3	

19 TUE

Café Rósenberg
22:00 Kristinn.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.

Óliver
22:00 Live Karaoke with Raggi
Troubadour.
Prikið
22:00 Óli Hommi.

20 WED

Austur
21:00 Live Jazz.
Café Rósenberg
22:00 Þóra Björk.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
Prikið
22:00 Dóri DNA.

21 THU

Bar 11
22:00 Kreppa Night. Beer for 450 ISK.
Café Rósenberg
22:00 Árstiðir.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
23:00 Live Music.
Frikirkjan
21:00 Ragnheiður Gröndal.
Háskólabíó
19:30 The Icelandic Symphony
Orchestra: 20th Century Classic.
Hrésso
22:00 Troubadour Böddi and
Davið.
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 Ólafsvaka night. Beer for 490
ISK.
Óliver
22:00 Ingó Veðurguð.
Prikið
22:00 Krúsi DJ.
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Mojito Night. Mojitos for 1000
ISK.

22 FRI

Austur
22:00 Live DJs.
B5
22:00 Live DJs.
Bar 11
22:00 Óli Dóri.
Café Rósenberg
22:00 Rokkabillyband Reykja-
víkur.
Celtic Cross
01:00 Live Music.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
23:00 Live Music.
Hemmi & Valdi
22:00 Local DJs.
Hrésso
22:00 Dalton, DJ Elli.
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 DJs Nino and Dramatík.
Nordic House
21:00 Wildbirds and Peace
drums.
Óliver
22:00 Ladies' Night.
Prikið
22:00 Franz og Kristó, DJ Addi
Intro.
Salurinn
21:00 Björn Thoroddsen Guitarfest.
Sódóma
22:00 The Global Battle Of The
Bands - FINALS.
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Live DJs.

23 SAT

Austur
22:00 Live DJs.
B5
22:00 Live DJs.
Bar 11
22:00 Biggi Maus.
Celtic Cross
01:00 Live Music.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
23:00 Live Music.
Hemmi & Valdi
22:00 Local DJs.
Hrésso
22:00 Ímynd, DJ Elli.
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 DJs Nino and Dramatík.
Prikið
22:00 Danni Deluxe.

Salurinn
21:00 Björn Thoroddsen Guitarfest.
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Live DJs.

24 SUN

Café Rósenberg
22:00 Big Band.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
Hafnarborg
20:00 Trio Reykjavík New Years
Recital.
Langholtskirkja
20:00 Eivor Pálsdóttir.
Prikið
23:00 Hangover Cinema presents
Roadhouse.

25 MON

Café Rósenberg
22:00 Regin Fyrri.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
Kaffi Zimsen
21:00 Best Friends Day. 2 for 1 beer.

26 TUE

Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
Óliver
22:00 Live Karaoke with Raggi
Troubadour.
Prikið
21:00 Wine and Cheese Night: 2
glasses and cheese for 1,000 ISK.

27 WED

Austur
21:00 Live Jazz.
Café Rósenberg
22:00 Mamiko & Hilmar.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.

28 THU

Bar 11
22:00 Kreppa Night. Beer for 450
ISK.

Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
Háskólabíó
19:30 The Icelandic Symphony
Orchestra: Sögusinfónían.
Hressó
22:00 Jogvan og Vignir.
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 Ólafsvaka night. Beer for 490
ISK.
Óliver
22:00 Ingó Veðurguð.

29 FRI

Austur
22:00 Live DJs.
B5
22:00 Live DJs.
Bar 11
22:00 Gunni.
Celtic Cross
01:00 Live Music.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
23:00 Live Music.
Hemmi & Valdi
22:00 Local DJs.
Hressó
22:00 Jogvan og Vignir, DJ Bjarni.
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 DJs Nino and Dramatík.
Óliver
22:00 Ladies' Night.
Sódóma
22:00 Dark Music Days.
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Live DJs.

30 SAT

Austur
22:00 Live DJs.
B5
22:00 Live DJs.
Bar 11
22:00 Óli Dóri.
Celtic Cross
01:00 Live Music.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
23:00 Live Music.
Hemmi & Valdi
22:00 Local DJs.
Hrésso
22:00 Dalton, DJ Bjarni.

Kaffibarinn
23:45 Hunk of a Man.
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 DJs Nino and Dramatík.
Prikið
22:00. V.I.P. DJ Krúsi.
Sódóma
22:00 Dark Music Days: Danfél
Bjarnason.
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Live DJs.

31 SUN

Café Rósenberg
22:00 Poetry night with music.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
Prikið
23:00 Hangover Cinema presents
Thinner.

01 MON

Café Rósenberg
22:00 Blúsfélag Reykjavíkur.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
Kaffi Zimsen
21:00 Best Friends Day. 2 for 1 beer.
Prikið
21:00 Wine and Cheese Night: 2
glasses and cheese for 1,000 ISK.

02 TUE

Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
Óliver
22:00 Live Karaoke with Raggi
Troubadour.
Salurinn
20:00 Nordic Affect.

03 WED

Austur
21:00 Live Jazz.
Café Rósenberg
22:00 Bjarni Snæbjörnsson.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.

04 THU

Bar 11
22:00 Kreppa Night. Beer for 450
ISK.
Café Rósenberg
22:00 Matti Sax.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
23:00 Live Music.
Kaffibarinn
23:45 Retox Party.
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 Ólafsvaka night. Beer for 490
ISK.
Óliver
22:00 Ingó Veðurguð.

05 FRI

Austur
22:00 Live DJs.
B5
22:00 Live DJs.
Café Rósenberg
22:00 Menn ársins.
Celtic Cross
01:00 Live Music.
Cultura
22:00 House DJs.
Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.
English Pub
23:00 Live Music.
Hemmi & Valdi
22:00 Local DJs.
Kaffi Zimsen
22:00 DJs Nino and Dramatík.
Óliver
22:00 Ladies' Night.
Thorvaldsen
22:00 Live DJs.

Den Danske Kro

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* Tuesdays *

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* Wednesdays *

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13 - 16
Jan. Jan.

The Global Battle Of The Bands

Sódóma Reykjavík ☺ 21:00 - 13th to 16th of January
Preliminary round of the Global battle of the Bands

The first round of the local Global Battle of the Bands preliminaries will commence on Wednesday. The contest will take over Sódóma for three nights, promising to fulfill every garage band's wet dream is up for grabs, as the winners will receive a trip to the UK and get to compete in the final rounds of the competition. This is a great opportunity for young bands to come forth and showcase their stuff, but seasoned veterans are also encouraged to enter - every act is free to enter so long as it can perform two original compositions. Bands interested in joining the competition can send along their info to gboiceland@gmail.com, but those interested in taking the proceedings can do so at Sódóma for a mere 500 ISK admission fee. Every competition night will start at the timely hour of 21:00. **MZ**



16
Jan.

ÓLI OFUR @ NASA

NASA ☺ 23:30
1.000 ISK

Reykjavík isn't exactly the Ibiza of the North. Well, not until last year, maybe, when it started claiming its status as a techno fortress. So-called 'club nights' are getting more popular by the day, where some imported DJ or other demonstrates his awesomeness accompanied by several of his Icelandic colleagues.

Things are about to change, though, as Óli Ofur is claiming his throne as the techno king of Iceland and for the first time on our native ground an all-Icelandic DJ leads a genuine "club night"! Óli is a known cat in the DJ industry and has diligently avoided clichés and repetitions in his music, instead building up his own groove ambitiously. So believe me, this night will be legendary. **SKK**



13
Jan.

Faust

Borgarleikhúsið

Faust is awesome. It's probably one of the most famous theatrical pieces of all time. Written by Goethe in the 18th century, the piece has long been considered one of the best of all time. However, old pieces they can sometimes benefit from a little revamping to make sense in a modern context. And that is exactly what theatrical group Vesturport has done with Faust this time around. Bringing a whole new take on the old drama - featuring original music and lyrics by Nick Cave and Warren Ellis!

This isn't the first time Vesturport have done this sort of thing. Older works they've already tried their hand at reworking include Romeo and Juliet, which garnered international praise, and Georg Büchner's classic Woyzeck. The show will premiere on the 13th of January and tickets can be bought online at midi.is or at Borgarleikhúsið.



Oki Doki # 13

Sódóma Reykjavík ☺ 21:50
Agent Fresco, Who Knew, Útúrdúr and For a Minor Reflection

Those looking for some rock and action this first weekend since the holidays should consider heading to Sódóma on the ninth to witness one of the first concerts of the year. Now-seasoned rockers Agent Fresco promise to blast our economic worries to pieces headlining a solid bill of local rock acts that includes indie outfits Útúrdúr and Who Knew?, as well as post-rock revisionists For a Minor Reflection, who will share their eerie and epic stage presence. Admission is set at 1.000 ISK and the night is scheduled to begin at 21:50 (although our experiences with Sódóma stage-times give reason to think that highly doubtful). Stage diving is allowed, but every third headbang costs 50 ISK.



15
Jan.

The Icelandic French Movie Festival

Háskólabíó and Regnboginn

Now here's a reason to celebrate! The tenth annual Icelandic French Film Festival starts on January 15th, and will last until the 28th. The festival is sponsored by the French and Canadian embassies, but other contributors are Græna Ljósið, Sena and Alliance Française. The festival's programme looks promising as hell, with them premiering ten new francophone films from all over the world (crazy places like Canada, Algeria, Tunisia and, of course, France). For instance, opening film Le Petit Nicolas was a box office hit in France and was seen by more than five million folks over there. That's a lot of people. Other prominent films up for scrutiny are Louis Michel, directed by Icelander Sólveig Anspach, Le Premier cri and Khamsa. More info will be made available later at www.af.is - go look at it soon!

The End

Hafnarborg - January 9th

Ragnar Kjartansson's The End is finally in Iceland! The show opens in Hafnarborg on January 9th and will run until March 7th and features paintings the self-described incurable romantic made during his infamous stint at the 53rd edition of the Venice Biennale. At the Biennale, Ragnar painted a portrait of a young man in a swimsuit smoking cigarettes and drinking beer day after day, everyday. The goal was presenting a tableau vivant to the viewers, and that goal was certainly reached, garnering acclaim from publications such as the New York Times.

In addition to this live performance, a video installation was displayed in a separate room showing Ragnar and a collaborator playing an ambiguous country music arrangement. The paintings that accumulated in piles around the Icelandic Pavilion in Venice can now be seen in Hafnarborg and will likely give viewers an impressive impression of Ragnar's performance.

SVT



REVIEWS



Farewell to Forks

A few looks at the local culinary scene and few of my favourites as my stint as the Reykjavik Grapevine food critic draws to a close.

The cover girl of the Icelandic culinary year was certainly McDonalds, the fast food chain that left the country in November. And in many ways, it stands for a lot of things that happened: The economically dim times casting a shadow over our dinner plates and speeding up the constant cycle of openings and closings of restaurants, the fast food obsession of the nation, and the rise of the local raw materials—if in this case in the shape of tasteless slop.

Luckily enough, the rise of the local ingredients has also meant more and more fine dining, with restaurants celebrating the local produce, more shopping possibilities and new food products launched. The overall quality of produce found on grocery store shelves remains as low as ever, while the prices have been rising steadily. My wish for 2010: Consumers start voting with their wallets. Then again, it may be hard with an empty belly.

For the eaters-out, the economic crisis also offers an opportunity. Several new ethnic kitchens have opened for business: the Nepalese Kitchen, Syrian Ali Baba, Brazilian Brasilia, Balkanese Balkanika and a handful of noodle places add a metropolitan feel to the frozen capital. In addition, the various high end places in town that used to cater for businessmen and their prey now turn to travellers as their previous clientele are gone with the wind, many of them offering better value than

before. It may just pay off to pay a bit extra on the main street tourist eatery prices and take out your fancy pants.

And where do I spend my own money? For grocery shopping, Melabúðin in Vesturbær, farmers market Frú Lauga and the deli Búrið form my holy trinity.

For the liquid gold, I like the Holtagarður branch of Vínbúð for their selection and the Austurstræti branch at quarter to closing time for its delirious atmosphere. If it is out for drinks, Bakkus offers a refreshing selection of vodkas.

For best burgers in town, I head to Hamborgarabúllan. For cheap and good lunch, I like Ostabúðin, even if it is often very busy. My foreign guests I tend to take to Sægreifinn for its eccentric atmosphere and famous lobster soup.

For breakfast, I like the hidden gem Grái Kötturinn for its food and atmosphere—but not for its coffee. For that I go to café and roastery Kaffismiðja Íslands. For chocolate cake, I dream of Argentína Steakhouse.

Finally, for the best food in town, I go to Dill in the Nordic house that serves bistro style lunch and heavenly 5-course-dinners (with champagne, please!) by the chef Gunnar Karl Gíslason.

Verði ykkur að góðu!
 ♡ - SARI PELTONEN

EAT AND DRINK:

PLACES WE'LL MISS FROM 2009

1 SEGURMO
 Grapevine's pick for best restaurant of '09, Segurmo at Boston (the bar, not the town), run by chef Númi Thomasson, closed its doors after a ridiculously successful year in business. There is now another similarly themed restaurant at Boston that is very fine in its own right, but we'll still miss Segurmo.

2 KAFFI HLJÓMALIND
 Hip and organic co-op café Hljómalind closed its doors on the main street for real estate related reasons. Whilst the search for a new locale continues, we can but hope to see Hljómalind open for business again – soon.

3 MCDONALDS
 Nah.

NEW AND GOOD IN 2009

1 DILL RESTAURANT
 Chef-sommelier team Gunnar Karl Gíslason and Ólafur Örn Ólafsson opened their first restaurant at the Nordic House this year, going straight to the top of the local culinary scene with their local and seasonal New Nordic Food menu. The Nordic House

2 FISKIFÉLAGIÐ
 With ingredients from all over the world taking centre stage, Fiskifélagið (or "Fish Company") is a fun addition to the Reykjavik restaurants. Their Around the World menu comes recommended. Vesturgata 2

3 ALI BABA
 Sweet Syrian style shawarma, kebab and falafel by Ingólfstorg. One of the best takeout places in town. The Arais Maria portion does the trick every time. Ingólfstorg

4 BALKANIKA
 Another new ethnic kitchen, Balkanika serves authentic Bulgarian for a fair price. Vitastigur

3 X RECENTLY OPENED

1 BRASILIA
 The latest ethnic eatery in town, Brasilia offers South American flavors—including a horsey take on the Brazilian national dish Feijoada—and decent prices for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Skólavörðustigur

2 THE NOODLE WARS
 Skólavörðustigur was just not big enough to room two noodle places. Noodle Station quickly built a loyal following but has had to lock its doors for now—stir(fry)ing rumours about a Battle of the Woks. It a warzone out there, but if you really need a bowl Núðuskálin is still stands. Skólavörðustigur

3 POTTURINN & PANNAN
 Having quietly operated on Brautarholt for almost 30 years, Potturinn & Pannan is now serving up mid-priced, easy-going food in the city centre. The menu features local ingredients, pizza and pasta. Skólábrú

For full restaurant and food listings and venue finder visit www.grapevine.is for detailed information.

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Food & Drink | Venue finder

3 Frakkar Baldursgata 14 F9	D6/E6 Bæjarins Beztu Tryggvagata E6	Grái Kötturinn Hverfisgata 16A G7	Jómfrúin Lækjargata 4 E6	Pisa Lækjargötu 6b E6	Sushibarinn Laugavegur 2 F7
Aktu Taktu Skúlgata 15 K8	Brons Pósthússtræti 9 E6	Grillhúsið Tryggvagata 20 E5/E6	Kaffi Hljómalind Laugavegur 21 G7	Pizza King Hafnarstræti 18 E6	Svarta Kaffi Laugavegur 54 H8
Alibaba Veltusund 3b E3	Café Cultura Hverfisgata 18 G6	Habibi Hafnarstræti 20 D5	Kaffitár Bankastræti 8 F6	Pizza Pronto Vallarstræti 4 D6	Sægreifinn Verbuð 8, Geirsgata D5
American Style Tryggvagata 26 E5	Café Loki Lokastígur 28 G9	Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar ("Bullán") Geirsgata 1 D5	Kaffivagninn Grandagarður 10 D1	Pizzaverksmiðjan Lækjargötu 8 E6	Tapas Vesturgata 3B D5
Argentína Steakhouse Barónstígur I8	Café Paris Austurstræti 14 E6	Hilóla Bátar Ingólfstorg D6	Kebabhúsið Austurstræti 2 E6	Prikið Bankastræti 12 F6	Thorvaldsen Austurstræti 8 E6
Austurlanda-hraðlestin Hverfisgata 64A H7	Café Roma Rauðarárstígur 8 J9	Hornið Hafnarstræti 15 E6	Kofi Tómasar Frænda Laugavegur 2 F7	Ráðhúskaffi Tjarnargata 11 D7	Tíu Dropar Laugavegur 27 G7
Á Næstu Grösom Laugavegur 20B G7	Domo Pínghóltsstræti 5 F7	Hótel Holt Bergstaðarstræti 37 F7	Krua Thai Tryggvagata 14 D5	Santa Maria Laugavegur 22A, F7	Tivolí Laugavegur 3 F7
B5 Bankastræti 5 F6	Einar Ben Veltusundi E6	Humarhúsið Ammtmanstígur 1 E7	La Primavera Austurstræti 9 E6	Segafredo Lækjartorg E6	Vegamót Vegamótastígur 4 G7
Bakkus Tryggvagata 22 D3	Eldsmiðjan Bragagata 38A G9	Hressó Austurstræti 20 E6	Lystin Laugavegur 73 H7	Serrano Hringbraut 12 I3	Við Tjörnina Templarasund 3 E7
Basil & Lime Klapparstígur 38 G7	Fiskmarkaðurinn Aðalstræti 12 D6	Icelandic Fish & Chips Tryggvagata 8 E5	Mokka Skólavörðustígur 3A F7	Shalimar Austurstræti 4 E3	Vitabar Bergþórugata 21 H9
Babalú Skólavörðustígur 22A G8	Geysir Bar/Bistro Aðalstræti 2 D6	Indian Mango Frakkastígur 12 G6	Nonnabiti Hafnarstræti 9 E6	Sjávarkjallarinn Pósthússtræti 11 E6	
Balthazar Hafnarstræti 1-3	Garðurinn Klappastígur 37 G7		O Sushi Lækjargata 2A E6	Sólón Bankastræti 7a F6	

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MAP

Places We Like

1 Deli

Bankastræti 14

Getting a good slice of pizza on the go can be an utter ordeal. If you're not careful, you'll frequently wind up paying good money for a cardboard wafer that has been sitting in a heater box for a week. Not at Deli, however. Their slices are consistently awesome and fresh, the topping selection is intriguing and tasteful and, best of all, they're really cheap.

2 Grand Rokk

Smiðjustígur 6

The only 'real' bar in town, no doubt. In downtown Reykjavik it's hard to rumble into a pub not crowded by musicians or artsy folks, but this one is an exception. Whether it's 4AM on a Friday or 5PM on a Monday you'll see the same flock of John Does, taking a break from their daily routines, enjoying a shot 'n' a brew. If you want to witness an earnest Icelandic 'Cheers' or a 'Moe's' - this is the place. Oh, and on weekends, they play host to some awesome concerts, too. SKK

3 Havarí

Austurstræti 6

Even before it opened, Havarí was everybody's favourite new music and design store. Headed by Svavar Pétur and Berglind of Skakkamanage, the shop shills the musical goods of Kimi Records, Borgin Hljómplötur, gogoyoko and Skakkapopp as well as posters, art, design products and clothing. The stop is only open until January 12 so check it out while you can! CF

4 Krua Thai

Tryggvagata 14

This is the best affordable Thai food on offer in Reykjavik. Rice is always fluffy, the spicy kick is just right and the spring rolls are always crispy cylinders of deliciousness. The servings are hearty too, so you're bound to leave satisfied. CF

5 Glætan - Bókakaffi

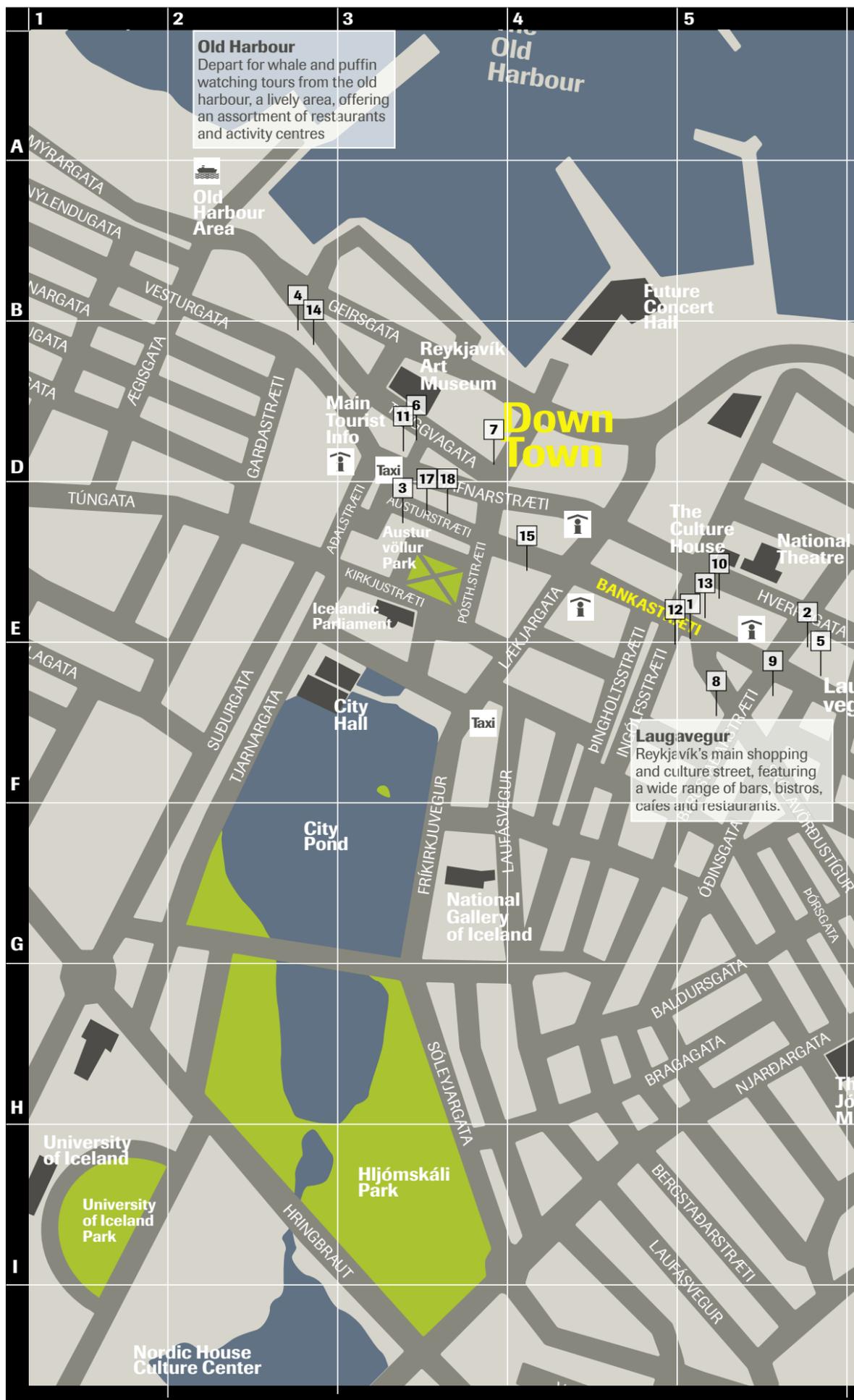
Laugavegur 19

Glætan - Bókakaffi is a great café with a domestic feel. It's somehow always a convenient choice for whatever you're doing when you come across it. I am always happy to step into this comfort zone and simmer down with an excellent cup of espresso and one of the books in their selection. Glætan, roughly translated, means a tiny ray of light, something this nice little café definitely is. AJ

6 Sódóma Reykjavík

Tryggvagata 22

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



7 Kolaportið

Tryggvagata 19

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

8 Kaffifélagið

Skólavörðustíg 10

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

9 Kaffibarinn

Bergstaðastræti 1

Weekends are somewhat overrated at Kaffibarinn if you ask me. Don't get me wrong, they can be brilliant if you're completely pissed, the DJ is fresh and the crowd is full-blooded, still the weekdays are better. It doesn't matter when you pop in, you're always treated like a pal rather than a customer, and you should always expect get caught in some shenanigan, whether it's a crazy Monday bender or a wacko Tuesday... well... bender. SKK

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THE ENGLISH PUB

Austurvöllur





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

10 Grái Kötturinn

Hverfisgata 16a

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

11 Bakkus

Tryggvagata 22 - Naustarmegin

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

12 Prikið

Bankastræti 12

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

13 Kisan

Laugavegur 7

This store is incredibly cool. It's stocked with really unique and quirky clothes, outerwear, accessories and handbags, plus they have an adorable section of kids clothes, kitschy vintage toys and books and even interior design items. Wicked place; definitely worth a visit. CF

14 Café d'Haiti

Tryggvagata 12

The first time I entered this exotic little joint, meaning to buy myself a take-away espresso, I ended up with two kilos of fresh and roasted coffee beans due to some language complications and way too much politeness. Since then I have enjoyed probably way-too-many wonderful cups of Haitian coffee, but they're always as nice, so the two kilos were definitely worth it. SKK

15 Hressó

Austurstræti 20

You know, Hressó is basically the only place I go for coffee. Why? Their coffee is decent to excellent, but their forte is surely their wonderful patio, where you can enjoy the spring breeze in the sun, wrap yourself in a blanket beneath an electric heater in January and at all times: smoke. They boast of quite the prolific menu, but I'd reconsider the playlists to tell you the truth, too much of Nickelback really hurts. SKK

16 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. CF

17 Austur

Austurstræti 7

Sleek and shiny, this new restaurant and bar is a straight-up boutique hot spot for stylish kids and trendy professionals alike. Appropriate for formal business meetings but casual enough for the roll-out-bed-at-5pm crowd, they serve up ample, satisfying, modern dishes at reasonable prices. This is also one of the rare places to get a full breakfast all day long! It's really fucking good too. RL

18 Jacobsen

Laugavegur 22

Jacobsen is owned by some nouveau riche Swedes, and has been providing a non-stop party over the last few months. Besides its importing foreign big-shot DJs and other niceties, it is probably most appreciated for its loooong hours; it doesn't matter if you stop partying at 2AM or way-too-much AM, Jacobsen is always forking out shots and cocktails. SKK

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ART GALLERIES & MUSEUMS

COCKTAIL PLEASURES AND VISUAL STIMULATION

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

OPENING

JANUARY

9

ASÍ Art Museum
Porri Hringsson - Paintings
Exhibit featuring paintings by the well-known Icelandic artist Porri Hringsson. Ongoing until January 31.

9

ASÍ Art Museum
Jóhannes Dagsson - Firnindi
Exhibition consisting of photography and video dealing with landscape as fiction. Ongoing until January 31.

9

Café Karólína
Chakra
Exhibition by Anna Gunnarsdóttir. Ongoing until February 5.

9

Reykjavík Art Gallery
Tenebrous Flesh
Exhibition featuring paintings by Bjarni Sigurbjörnsson. Ongoing until January 24.

14

Hafnarhús
Erró - Astronauts
Erró's 1974 - 1981 series dedicated to space exploration. Ongoing until March 14.

16

Hafnarborg
The End
Exhibition by Ragnar Kjartansson that was presented as a tableau vivant in Venice. Ongoing until March 7.

16

Hafnarborg
Prism
Exhibition by Ingunn Fjólá Ingbórsdóttir featuring modern two-dimensional surface painting that shifts the viewers' perception from the visual to the physical. Ongoing until March 7.

17

The Culture House
A Year in Postcards
Exhibition by Vera Sölvadóttir and Jarþrúður Karlsdóttir following up on

their yearlong performance of sending a postcard a week to a random stranger abroad. Ongoing until March 7.

18

Gerðuberg
This is what the children like!
Exhibition of the illustration of newly published children's books. An award is given for the best illustration. Ongoing until March 15.

18

Gerðuberg
"It sounded as if the harp was weeping"
Exhibition of puppets used in a presentation of some episodes from Völsungasaga. Ongoing until March 15.

30

Kjarvalsstaðir
Kjarval - Insights: Warrior Maidens and Ships of Fancy
Exhibit featuring Kjarval's drawings and sketches of warrior maidens and boats. Ongoing until April 25.

ONGOING

Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculptur Museum

Permanent Exhibition:
The Shape of Line.
A new retrospective of works by Ásmundur Sveinsson. The exhibition focuses on abstract works from 1945 onwards.

01 May 2009 - April 30
RHYTHM- Ásmundur and Our Age
This exhibition showcases contemporary artists that tackle similar issues as Ásmundur did in his time, but in a context of a new age.

The Association of Icelandic Visual Artists
January 4 - January 29

Frost
Exhibition by Hafdís Ólafsdóttir featuring photographs capturing winter's beauty.

The Culture House
Permanent Exhibition:
Medieval Manuscripts
28 March 2009-January 17

A Look into Nature - the Story of the Icelandic Museum of Natural History
07 December 2009 - February 26

Newcastle - New York - New Iceland

The Library Room
Permanent Exhibition:
National Archives of Iceland - 90 years in the museum building.
The Einar Jónsson Museum
Permanent exhibition:

Art | Venue finder

101 Gallery
Hverfisgata 18A | **F6**
Thu-Sat 14-17 and by appointment
www.101hotel.is/101hotel/101gallery/

Artótek
Tryggvagata 15 | **D5**
Mon 10-21, Tue-Thu 10-19, Fri 11-19, Sat and Sun 13-17
www.sim.is/Index/Islenka/Artotek

ASÍ Art Museum
Freygata 41 | **G10**
Tue-Sun 13-17

Árbæjarsafn
Kistuhylur 4

The Culture House
Hverfisgata 15 | **F6**
Open daily 11-17
www.thjodmenning.is

Dwarf Gallery
Grundarstígur 21 | **H8**
Opening Hours: Fri and Sat 18-20
www.this.is/birta

The Einar Jónsson Museum
Eiriksgata | **G9**
Tue-Sun 14-17
www.skulptur.is

Fótógrafi
Skólavörðustígur 4a | **F7**
www.fotografi.is

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

Gallery Auga fyrir Auga
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www.startart.is

Gallery Ágúst
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www.galleriagust.is

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Rauðarástígur 14-16 | **J9**
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www.myndlist.is

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Thurs-Sun from 14-18
this.is/klingogbang/

Gallery Turpentine
Ingólfstræti 5 | **F7**
Tue-Fri 12-18 / Sat 11-16
www.turpentine.is

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

Hitt Húsið - Gallery Tukt
Pósthússtræti 3-5 | **E6**
www.hithusid.is

i8 Gallery
Klapparástígur 33 | **G7**
Tue-Fri 11-17 / Sat 13-17 and by appointment. www.i8.is

Living Art Museum
Vatnsstígur 3 - **G7**
Wed, Fri-Sun 13-17 / Thu 13-22. www.nylo.is

Lost Horse Gallery
Skólástræti 1 | **F6**
Weekends from 13-19 and by appointment on weekdays.

Hafnarborg
Strandgötu 34, Hafnarfjörður

The National Gallery of Iceland
Frikirkjuvegur 7 | **E8**

Tue-Sun 11-17
www listasafn.is

The National Museum
Suðurgata 41 | **C9**
Open daily 10-17
natmus.is/

The Nordic House
Sturlugata 5 | **C11**
Tue-Sun 12-17
www.nordice.is/

The Numismatic Museum
Einholt 4 | **K9**
Open Mon-Fri 13:30-15:30.

Reykjavík 871+/-2
Aðalstræti 17 | **D6**
Open daily 10-17

Reykjavík Art Gallery
Skúlagata 28 | **H6**
Tuesday through Sunday 14-18

Reykjavík Art Museum
Open daily 10-16
www listasafnreykjavikur.is

Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum Sigtún
Hafnarhús
Tryggvagata 17 | **E5**
Kjarvalsstaðir
Flókagata | **K11**

Reykjavík City Theatre
Listabraut 3

Reykjavík Maritime Museum
Grandagarður 8 | **C3**

Reykjavík Museum of Photography
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The Lost Horse Gallery
 14 November 2009 - ongoing
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 Exhibit featuring new drawings and paintings by Sigurður Þórir Ámundason, an artist who has also produced various large murals in downtown Reykjavík.

Mokka
 11 December 2009 - January 14
Portrait
 Abstract portraits by Sæþór Örn Ásmundsson.

The Numismatic Museum
 Permanent exhibition:
 The Central Bank of Iceland and the National Museum of Iceland jointly operate a numismatic collection consisting of Icelandic notes and coins.

Ráðhús Reykjavíkur
 Permanent exhibition:
 Dúlin Himintungl

Kim Linnet exhibits her 360° panorama photos of Iceland.

Reykjavík 871 +/- 2
 Permanent exhibition:
The Settlement Exhibition
Reykjavík Art Museum
Ásmundarsafn
 2 May 2009 - April 30
Rhyme
 Works by Ásmundur Sveinsson and Contemporary Artists.

Reykjavík Art Museum
Hafnarhús
 28 May 2009 - August 29
Erró - Portraits
 January 7 - February 21
D15 - Dodda Maggý
Reykjavík Art Museum
Kjarvalsstaðir
 9 May 2009 - January 15
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 7 November 2009 - January 31
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 21 November 2009 - January 31
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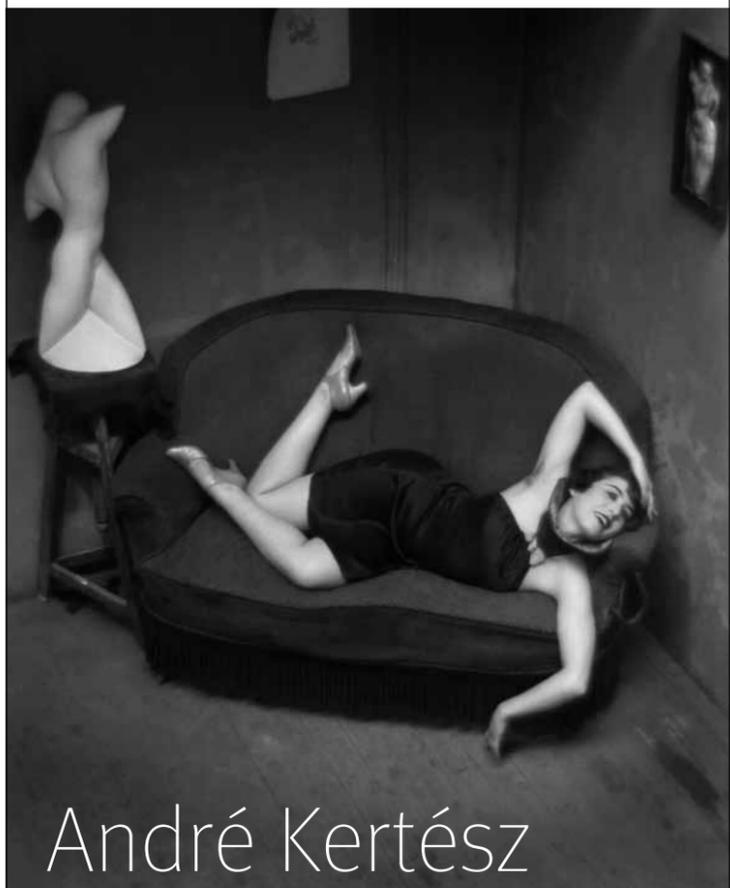
The Reykjavík Museum of Photography
 26 September 2009 - January 17
André Kertész - MA FRANCE



A Year in Postcards
The Culture House

Halldór Ragnarsson does it all. The 28 year old artist has had four solo exhibits both in Iceland and abroad, participated in numerous collaborations, published two poetry collections all while playing bass with the amazing Seabear. He's gone and done it again.

The ASÍ Art Museum presents Halldór Ragnarsson's exhibit "Saxófóinn eða Kontór" displayed in Gryfjan. The installation is based on drawings he's worked on in southern Italy this fall, along with cigarette packages he's collected and smoked in the last year. Curious about the results? Check it out! LP



André Kertész
Ma France

26 September 2009 - 17 January 2010

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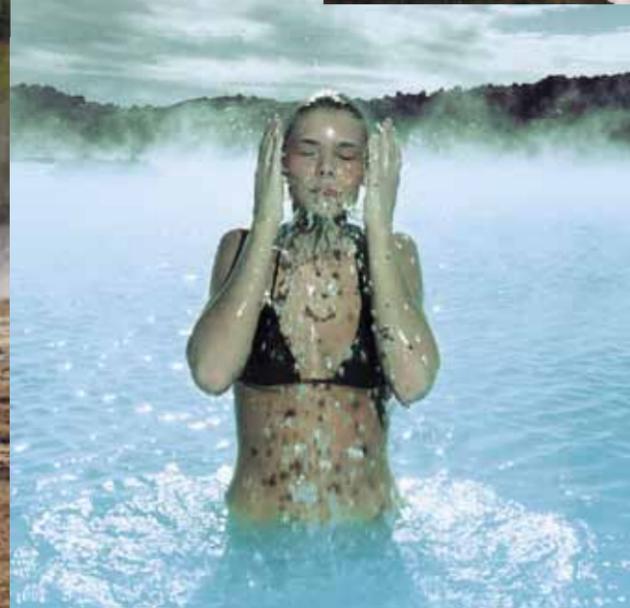
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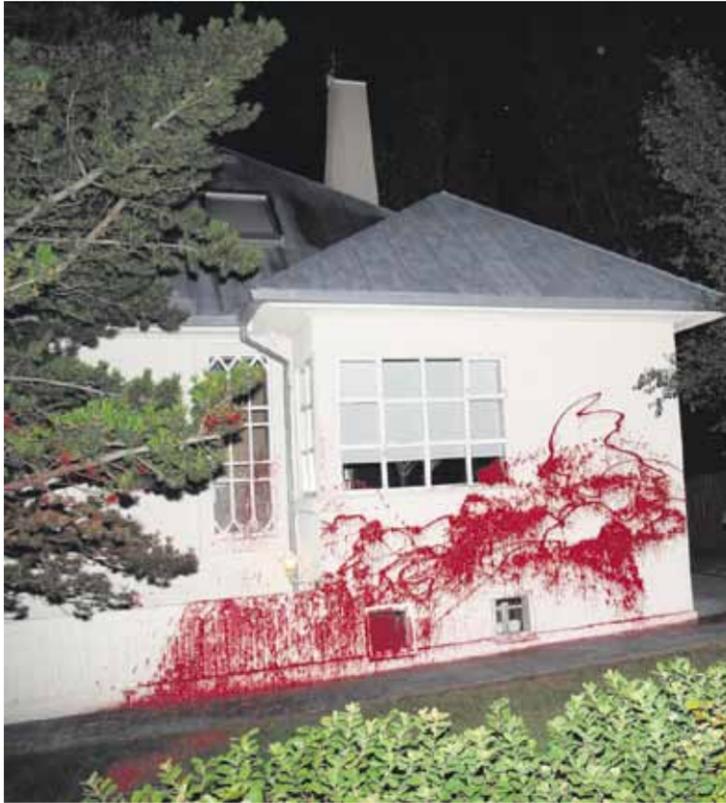


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Article | Marc Vincenz

From Exploding Range Rovers to Knitted Mittens? 2009: Iceland's Big Year in International Meltdown, CNN-Breaking-News-Style



'Iceland is no longer a country. It is a hedge fund.'

—Man from the IMF supposedly speaking to Michael Lewis, *Vanity Fair*, March 2009

During this past year it seemed every international journalist in the world had a gripe with Iceland. Many, such as *Vanity Fair*'s Michael Lewis or the New Yorker's Ian Parker, claimed insider knowledge; others relied on hearsay of an even more dubious nature; but then, the possible demise of a first-world nation (No. 1 on the UN Development Index just a year earlier) was certainly worthy of international headlines. In 2009, elves and huldurfólk were not getting much attention.

Virtually all the major media had a stab: The Times, The New York Times, The Financial Times, BBC, CNN. Every week something new unfolded: the first openly gay Prime Minister, the departure of McDonalds, open season for whales, WikiLeaks' secret banking documents, Davíð Oddsson as editor of *Morgunblaðið*; the list goes on. For many of us 2009 has been like knowing you have terminal cancer and every doctor you consult has an alternative theory: IMF or no IMF? Icesave or Iceslave? EU or no EU? Euro, Dollar or Krona? There are enough theories, counter-theories, conspiracy theories to fill the entire university library, and there's not a single expert who hasn't had a whirl.

And the numbers the international media has bandied around like boomerangs: a popular one is 504% debt over GDP—although Michael Lewis maintained that 'Iceland's debt is 850 percent of G.D.P.,' and that 'its people are hoarding food and cash and blowing up Range Rovers for the insurance.' Which is it? 504 or 850? As recently as December 26, the *Daily Mail* stated, 'Glitnir owes Royal Bank of Scotland £500 million,' and that Glitnir's creditors are claiming in excess of £20 billion—bear in mind folks, she's only one of the three lumbering reptiles—3.8 billion Euros for Icesave seems a pittance in comparison. So how much—in total, does Iceland really owe?—and to whom?—and why? When some of us are scratching together ISK 1000 to buy the special at *Hamborgarabúllan*, it truly makes your head spin. Give a journalist a number and they'll turn it into a golden cow.

In an article from December 3, also in the *Daily Mail*, Mary Ellen Synon writes: 'The Icelanders may have been scared out of their wits last year, but they...have decided that the most valuable thing they have left is their independence. They are not willing to trade it, not even for the possibility of a bail-out by the European Central Bank.'

In a podcast for the BBC World Service, Sigrún Davíðsdóttir, a London-Icelandic,

maintained that: 'Icelanders are knitting their way out of the downturn.' Around Christmas 2006, she overheard men in black discussing taking over an airline, but two years later, she was drinking tea made from wild berries while admiring her friend's recycled-curtain handbags. She quotes an old Icelandic proverb: 'Necessity teaches a naked woman to spin,' and suggests that the *kreppa* has become a 'timely reminder of thrift' and good old fashioned values. It has been said before, but perhaps if the Alþingi learned how to knit, they might approach their decisions with a little more... thrift?

Roger Boyes' 'Meltdown Iceland' is one of numerous 'Iceland in *Kreppa*' books that came out in 2009. In contrast to Michael Lewis' hypothesis that Iceland fell due to arrogance, Boyes, a correspondent for *The Times*, concludes that Iceland jumped head-first into a global economic culture which it had no way of comprehending. He maintains that the Icelandic business community is somewhat akin to a society run on African tribal lines: 'There is a feeling that there are more chiefs than Indians...the will of the state can easily be replaced by the will of the political clan.' He proposes, in fact, that Davíð Oddsson did not understand that you need to modernise the political system before you modernise the economy.

For months after Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir's PM appointment, media all over the world were extolling her as an icon in world politics; not only that she is a woman, but particularly in the fact that she is non-hetero. *Iceland Review*'s own Jonas Moody wrote a piece in *Time Magazine*: 'Iceland Picks the World's First Openly Gay PM'. It was suddenly as if the Age of Obama was synonymous with the Age of Aquarius, and the corrupt, ego-centric white-male-Milton-Freidman-world was coming to an end. As if that weren't enough, the World Economic Forum hailed Iceland as the most gender-egalitarian society in the world—it had much the same pungent whiff as President Obama winning the Nobel Peace Prize.

And how does the international media feel about Iceland now? Well, they know about its potential as a green, geothermal, non-carbon emitting once-upon-a-time first-world country. Generally I would say, they're baffled—stupefied, and, just like the rest of us, rolling into the dawning of the Age of Aquarius with their pants down and nowhere to pee. In the legendary words of Frank Zappa:

'Don't be a naughty Eskimo / Save your money, don't go to the show / Well I turned around and I said oh, oh oh / And the northern lights commenced to glow / And she said, with a tear in her eye / Watch out where the huskies go, and don't you eat that yellow snow.'

As my grandmother often said, 'For heaven's sake don't believe everything you read,' and, bless her, she used to read the *Daily Mail*.

2009 | Örvar Þóreyjarsón Smárason, Musician / Poet



A year that began with a strange sense of hope, almost like a twisted wet dream, gradually but with steady acceleration descended into a dark wet hole (I won't say abyss)—a suffocating mud-bath. And like an amateur magician, the horse-traders of the Icelandic clan-system clumsily, but with good success, diverted our eyes from the things that mattered: the new constitution and the much needed drastic re-thinking of, well... pretty much everything.

Yes, January was a trip-and-a-half, but today it seems as far away as the glow of childhood Christmas. But out of the mundane things that stand out for me from the year that followed are first of all the total lack of changes in the Icelandic government's policies on social issues such as immigration and environmental issues, despite giving of the illusion of a left-wing/greenish coalition.

The unbreakable suction that Iceland seems to have to the IMF's nips is a mystery of nature, especially since the fund has started to act like an apathetic hamster mother getting ready to ready to eat its squiggly pink young, because it's easier than ignoring it.

Another point of hot-pot chitchat has been Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir's fall from grace, which has been a particularly strange spectacle. Within a few moments she went from being the great future hope of the ever-blue eyed Social Democrats to something resembling a raving hermit.

And in the spirit of the traditional hot-pot banter I'm going to pretend that Davíð Oddsson's muscle flexing as editor of *Morgunblaðið* and the collapse of *Borgarahreyfingin* were not unexpected (but I won't spend words on Icerave, other than the fact that it is a hugely underrated compilation of the best Icelandic rave, hardcore and dance music of 1992).

Sadly, these are the things that come to mind when scrolling over the year. Dreaming on a fluffy cloud of teargas made me complacent; instead of a constitution we got constipation and even though I would never have believed it at the time, January with its sweet smell of expectancy, unmitigated energy and the deafening clattering of pots and pans now seems like a fairy tale or some 60s myth.

2009 | Þorvaldur Gylfason, Professor, Economics

2009 – Highs and Lows



2009 ended less well than it began. At the beginning of the year there were realistic hopes that Iceland could, with a little help from its friends, pull itself rather quickly and painlessly out of the crisis triggered by the collapse of the banks the year before. The application for EU membership in mid-year signalled that Parliament was at last willing to try to clean up its act by proposing to submit to the discipline required of EU members. Apparently, however, the government mistook the IMF's willingness to go along with a postponement until 2010 of tough spending cuts and tax hikes for a sign that the crisis was perhaps not as deep as was feared at first. The government allowed the reconstruction of the failed banks to drag on. The pointless and protracted squabbling in Parliament on the Icesave deal with the UK and the Netherlands derailed necessary reforms. The delays have practical consequences. For one thing, the relaxation of the stringent capital controls that were promised to be temporary has been put on ice with no relief in sight.

For the most part of 2009, the reconstruction program supported by the IMF, the Nordic countries, Poland, and the EU was held hostage by an incompetent and corrupt political class which, as the National Audit Office disclosed just before the year ended, had received huge chunks of money from the failed banks and other, in many cases undisclosed, sources. The year ended in eerie uncertainty about whether the President would sign the Icesave bill or not. If he doesn't, expect a bumpy ride ahead.

2009 | Anarchist Collective / Organisation

Aftaka

The economic collapse entailed a rebellion that reached its peak in January and brought the authorities a fear of losing power. It brought the confused public a fear of full-scale riots and chaos. It brought the police a fear of losing control of the situation. It brought the right-wing a needless fear of fundamental changes, but brought the left-wing a hopeless hope for fundamental changes. To us—who never shouted "Unfit Government!" rather "Lethal Government" (by that meaning all governments)—it brought a timely smile, a hateful grin and the tiniest fighting chance for decent confrontation.

The elections in the spring managed to kill a part of the rebellion, at least for a while. But certainly not all of the resistance was pacified and a lot of the collapse's and rebellion's results come up in our mind when we reflect on the year of 2009. We could mention the squatting of Vatnsstígur 4, the voting booth shitter and the forceful protests against the government's refugee policies, the systematic attacks on the property of business people and politicians, the ever-worsening financial situation of energy and aluminium companies, and indoor conflicts between the police and the authorities. And all the analysis and critique that has gone on since the collapse. We could mention all possible symptoms of the worsening status of the predominant system, ideological as well as practical.

But what clearly sticks out is the left-wing government's exposure of its own nature. And not the nature of left-wing governments but the violent nature of all authorities. Its work and behaviour so far have proved the theory stating that it does not matter what political party one votes for, the government always wins. It warms up our heartstrings to hear people who are unfamiliar with us cursing all possible forms of authority. It is a sign proving what our struggle has accomplished, and that if those in power continue their business-as-usual, it is not so unlikely that decent and militant confrontation will occur sooner or later—here on this island of forced pacifism.

Like Chumbawamba said: "Nothing ever burns down by itself / every fire needs a little bit of help."

2009 in Pictures

© HÖRÐUR SVEINSSON



2009 | Q&A



Professor Hannes Hólmsteinn Gissurarson On 2009

One of the Grapevine's most locally discussed features of 2009 was our interview with Political Science professor and Independence Party ideologue/Davíð Oddsson advocate Hannes Hólmsteinn Gissurarson. Entitled 'The Architect Of The Collapse?' the 3,700 word conversation detailed his stance on ideological responsibility Iceland's recent economic collapse, its apparent causes and what could be done to rectify the situation (our favourite quote: "[...] the tycoons, aided by the President of Iceland, acquired ownership of all the media in Iceland—except for the Grapevine—and simply secured total media power over the country").

We would be lying if we said we particularly agreed with Hannes' interpretation of the world, but we would also be lying if we said it didn't interest us. In that spirit, we asked him to name us the high- and low points of 2009.

What were the highpoints of 2009?

Davíð Oddsson's brilliant speech at the biannual general meeting of the Independence Party in the spring of 2009, where he answered his critics, cogently and convincingly. It is the height of injustice that the only man who warned against the expansion of the banks, both publicly, and more strongly privately, and against their reckless behaviour should become a scapegoat in the aftermath of the bank collapse.

Davíð Oddsson is the only person who comes with flying colours out of the Icelandic debacle. He is the only one who resisted the oligarchs that contributed so much to the downfall of Iceland. Well-known (or notorious) media personalities like Egill Helgason, for example, did not want to take sides in the 2004 struggle between Davíð Oddsson and the oligarchs about the control of the media; they said publicly that the court cases against the oligarchs were "boring."

And the low points?

The Icesave-agreement, which the Icelandic leftist government made in 2009 with the British and the Dutch governments. It was in fact not an agreement; it was a full-scale surrender to the British and the Dutch. Why should Icelandic taxpayers undertake responsibility for the transactions of private individuals abroad, beyond what is clear and written into law and international treaties? Why could matters of doubt or interpretation not be referred to courts, either in Iceland or in England?

The British were not held culpable for their outrageous behaviour during the banking crisis when they refused to save only one British bank, namely the one owned by Icelandic Kaupthing; and when they put (on a government website) Landsbankinn on a list of terrorist organisations, alongside Al Qaeda and the Taliban. It is clear that the British caused much of the damage, or fall in the worth of the Icelandic banks.

Another low point was the violence that drove the former government (a spent force as it was) from power at the end of January. Iceland should be ruled by reason, not violence.

A third low point was that the International Monetary Fund turned, in Iceland, out to be a hand collector for the British and Dutch governments (in the Icesave-controversy), instead of serving its original and constitutional purpose.

HAUKUR S MAGNÚSSON

2009 | Ari Eldjárn, Comedian / Copywriter



2007 Wasn't Such A Bad Year

Icelanders' national identity changed a lot in 2009. It was the year Icelanders went from craving the outside world's attention to getting hugely worried about outside attention. This was the year that concepts like "the international community" suddenly became known—I don't remember hearing that one before, and it has never meant a thing to me. It was the year that our national identity shifted completely and went upside down—from "Iceland, best in the world," to "Iceland, barest in the world"

I am unsure how it can be summed up in a word. Until now, the best thing Icelanders knew was when they were mentioned in the international press. 2009 was the year Icelanders really started worrying about bad press. It's a key factor behind most of what's been discussed this year. Everyone keeps saying the same thing; they say we're out of touch with the outside world, "the international community"... it's like a new motto. Few people realise what being in a community with other nations entails, really, but now no one knows where we stand, in regards to Scandinavia or the whole outside world.

It was a year of great distrust. The entire nation grew tremendously sceptical towards each other. Still, not a lot seems to have changed. I hear Christmas shopping didn't go down at all this year and is pretty much the same as in 2007. But the discourse changed a whole lot.

Lastly, I would like to note that I don't think 2007 was such a bad year at all. It's like we decided in 2009 that 2007 was a sort of ground zero for our woes; we keep bringing it up, comparing everything to it, using it as a curse word. "The year we all went mad." I really don't think it was that bad a year for regular people. They don't need to worry about having bought too much stuff then or whatnot. I really don't think anyone did. ☺

2009 | Dr. Gunni, Journalist / Musician



Bored Of Being An Icelander

One maybe expected some change, as there was a revolution in Iceland. In retrospect it maybe wasn't anything. The Independence Party left office and the Left-Greens came instead, then everyone stopped being angry. Nothing happened. Then we humped on Icesave for around ten months, so you really just stopped following the news or expecting anything. Right now I hope that the Icesave bill gets vetoed and Europe goes crazy, invades Iceland and takes over. I have grown bored of being an Icelander; maybe it's fine to just call the whole thing off.

Everything has just been kind of ridiculous. You would have thought that in a situation such as this one everyone could just unite in rowing our little boat to safe shores. Instead, everyone continues paddling their own pathetic little cause, so our boat just goes in circles and the whole nation gets seasick.

To retain your sanity you turn off all the media—radio, TV, internet—everything. And when you dare turn it back on and they start yapping on about Icesave you'll turn to the zombie-pop station and listen to Lady GaGa.

It was easy being angry at the Independence Party. All of the major players from the collapse are rooted there, and you really want to kick their arses. Now they are back with their yapping and expect us to believe everything will be totally great if we just hand the reigns back to them. So I don't know. Mainly, I'm tired.

Looking back to January of 2009, when the shit hit the fan and everything was happening, those were some spirited times. I read over what I wrote back then—I blogged like a maniac. I blogged about New Iceland and exciting new ways of doing things and blah blah blah... then reality took over, the cold, dark Icelandic winter and Christmas stress and somehow... let's just say I'm glad the year is over. The whole of it went towards this Icesave bullshit, which is only really the tip of this whole iceberg. Everyone just keeps going crazy over everything without us ever reaching any sort of conclusion.

You could add that I've wanted to somewhat blindly stand behind [Minister of Finance, head of the Left-Green party] Steingrímur J. Sigfússon and back him up. I still haven't lost faith that he knows what he's doing. He isn't the one that sank the boat, and he seems keen on rowing forward. ☺

2009 | Dóri DNA, Student / Rapper / Comedian



The Same Kickbacks & Knickknacks

I learned this year that money is a joke and if you have it, you should spend it immediately.

Was I surprised by anything? Yes, how forgetful Icelanders are. The whole hate-song Icelanders sang in front of Parliament was forgotten and suddenly it was alright to have Davíð Oddsson editing the most prestigious newspaper and all of the sudden we have people claiming that "finally the right person is manning the decks," while we were very evidently making fools of ourselves globally.

I was surprised that partisan party politics could prevail in a crisis like this, and that everyone has a gleam in their eyes and wants to better position when it's evident that a national government of all parties working towards the same goals must be formed. Everyone knows that if we could just agree on some very basic things, we could ride out smoothly. I am surprised that people are so intent on maintaining the party lines and the party system.

The politician of 2009 is clearly Minister of Finance Steingrímur J. Sigfússon. He took on the hardest and worst government post there is and is daily subject to a shitstorm of allegations and accusations, yet manages to stand firm while doing a good job. We still need a leader, someone that will talk courage into the people, and I am not talking about a master of rhetoric here. Someone with novel, forward thinking ideas, ambition and charisma. Someone that can get the people behind him, and to realise what they truly want. And one thing's for certain, it ain't [Independence Party chairman] Bjarni Benediktsson.

As for our generation, we've done nothing. We've been spectators to this spectacle, maybe banging on pots and pans to express our rage, but that's the extent of it. Our generation has no representative or proponent anywhere in the nation's power structure. Oh, there are young politicians, but they somehow manage to be and act older than the oldest of the old politicians. How I look forward to the day when our generation can step up with its voice—not the one spoon-fed to it from birth, but the one it has been slowly developing over the years. Legalising cannabis, looking forward, thinking

forward—open, not closed.

Hopefully, this generation will step out of the current ruins of Iceland. We maybe have two terms left of the rotted woollen socks of the old generations. But who knows. Maybe our ideals will fall flat and we will all fall into the same old partisan party politics that have plagued Iceland for decades. The same old arguments, the same kickbacks and knickknacks. I still maintain a hope that from the rubble of this mess we're living through a voice of a new generation will sound, clear and strong. It can happen. ☺

2009 | Paul Nikolov, Grapevine.is News Editor



Iceland's Year in Politics



This past year in Iceland has probably been most memorable on the political front. The usual stories that get us international headlines—whaling, music, anything about green energy—all took a back seat to the January Revolution. After months of weekly protests, often to the derisive laughter of others that Icelanders have no stamina for sustained protest, the centre-right coalition of the Independence Party and the Social Democrats was forced to dissolve. A couple of months later, when new elections were held, Icelanders voted a leftist government into power, for the first time in the history of the republic.

Those were heady times, weren't they? After nearly two decades of bowing to the nearly feudal stranglehold the conservatives had over the country, the Icelandic people said, "No. You ruined us; you have revoked your right to rule." But more than just a shift from right to left was the hope that now, having seen what can be accomplished, the average Icelander would finally realise the real advantage of living in a small, tight-knit community—that direct democracy can happen. This was underlined when a new party comprised of a collection of activists, the Civic Movement (Borgarahreyfingin), at the time of the spring elections only a few months old, managed to win four seats in parliament.

Hope was certainly alive and well. This was months before the Civic Movement would end up dissolving after an embarrassing e-mail leak revealed inter-party bickering that led to one of their MPs leaving and the party re-inventing itself (at least in name, anyway), and months before opinion polls showed that the majority of Icelanders would, in fact, vote the conservatives back into power if parliamentary elections were held again.

Breathtaking hypocrisy

I'll repeat what I said in the news story I wrote on the Icesave bill: the hypocrisy of the Independence Party is breathtaking. Watching the final vote streamed live to my browser from government television, and seeing one conservative after the other pour scorn and ridicule on the people cleaning up the mess the conservatives made, was truly rage-inducing.

Speaking of which, the economy has also been a sort of partisan banner, with conservative opponents frequently citing it as an example of the leftists' incompetence. That is, if you ignore the fact that since the leftists came to power, unemployment has dropped (taking a modest rise in recent weeks though), taxes still remain the lowest in Scandinavia even after tax hikes were passed, and Iceland's economic rating by international financial institutions such as Fitch has been steadily if modestly rising.

Troubling trends

Of course Icesave and the economy weren't the only stories on the political front. Some troubling trends in the area of immigration and refugee rights have come up as well. Cries for reform in refugee law have been getting stronger with each passing month, and will likely not abate. Apparently, people fleeing totalitarianism and war aren't exactly keen on being deported without their cases reviewed, being sent to notorious human rights violators in Greece with little reason given by Icelandic authorities beyond "because we can." Minister of Justice Ragna Árnadóttir doesn't seem too motivated to do anything about refugee law, but it certainly has been interesting seeing

parliamentary reactions. Or the lack thereof.

Remember Paul Ramses, the Kenyan asylum seeker who was deported to Italy in 2008, separated from his wife and infant child here in Iceland? Remember the public outcry that rightfully arose from this, and the politicians who spoke openly about what a horrible thing this was? Yeah. Many of those same politicians were the ones who rejected a bill that I co-submitted which would have made the changes to refugee law that would have kept Ramses in Iceland. I guess these MPs have gotten more consistent, as they haven't uttered a word about refugee law reform now.

Another revolution?

Human trafficking, on the other hand, looks like it's finally getting the attention it deserves. Members of parliament recently approved a resolution to legislatively protect women of foreign origin from domestic violence, and police started focusing a lot more attention on human traffickers. We can only hope, then, that they'll also be extending their efforts into educational campaigns, informing buyers of women (in particular, guys who like to go to strip clubs) that they are taking part in a nightmarish practice. We'd hate to think the police would actually be inconsistent; giving great attention to the demand side of drugs, but virtually ignoring the demand side of human trafficking.

The year to come is certainly going to be an eventful one. While the Icesave bill was passed into law on the second to last day of the year by a wafer-thin majority of 33 MPs to 30, the president held off on signing it right away. The following Monday, he announced he had vetoed the law, referring to national referendum instead. Cue one furious government (the news was just as much a surprise to them as it was the rest of the world), a dumbstruck opposition, a seething mad foreign press erroneously declaring that Iceland intended to refuse to pay, and a nation left with finding out what it means when you get what you ask for. At the time of this writing, only 41% of the nation agrees with the president's veto. Tentative plans schedule the referendum to take place on the 20th of February. Unless and until the law is killed by simple majority, the current Icesave law still stands. Even so, 2010 will - to the greatest dismay of the Icelandic people themselves - in all likelihood be dominated by Icesave. God help us. ☺

News | Paul Nikolov

The Year In Brief

OCTOBER

Leftist-Green MP Ögmundur Jónsson resigned from his post as Minister of Health, citing irreconcilable differences with regards to the Icesave deal. This led to tensions running high within the party, but in the end the waters calmed for the time being. Representatives from Icelandic, British and Dutch authorities signed an agreement over Icesave, over a year after the collapse of Landsbanki. Meanwhile, parliament's opposition parties continued to battle the basic precepts of the deal, citing among other things the unusually high 5.5% interest rate to be paid on former depositors' returns. Also grabbing international headlines McDonald's closed its doors in Iceland, saying it was unlikely it will ever return.



NOVEMBER

Cases of swine flu began to increase into the double digits. Lonely Planet's Best in Travel 2010 named Iceland among the top ten Best Value destinations for tourists. The National Assembly—a bold experiment in direct democracy—was held this month, drawing in thousands of Icelanders to submit ideas on where the country should be headed, what makes the country distinct, and what issues are most important to the average Icelander. Corruption, according to both Icelanders polled and according to foreign observers, was on the increase.



DECEMBER

Tensions rise as the youth groups of both ruling parties, the Young Social Democrats and the Young Leftist-Greens, strongly criticize proposed cuts to the country's social welfare system, most notably cuts to maternity leave. Public dialogue with regards to foreigners ends on a mixed note: while the Ministry of Justice has decided that creating a think tank designed to see how far they can supervise Iceland's foreign residents and still stay within the law is the answer to the human trafficking problem, a resolution is submitted in parliament calling for legislative changes that would give greater protections to foreign women who fall victim to domestic violence. A new article appearing in USA Today goes down a list of countries "poised to be where the action is" in 2010, and names Iceland among them. But the biggest story of the month—if not the year—is Icesave. With 70% of Icelanders polled in two separate polls opposed to the Icesave bill's passage, and nearly 50,000 signatures gathered on an online petition urging the president not to sign it into law, months of bitter wrangling within the halls of parliament lead to a squeaked-by victory for the bill, 33 MPs in favour and 30 against.



The president in a move that surprised gamblers the world over, effectively trolled the international community and vetoed the Icesave bill, referring it instead to national referendum. Prime Minister Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir countered that according to Icelandic law, the Icesave deal is still in effect until a national referendum is held that defeats the law by simple majority. She emphasized that the government will honor its commitments, and that the ruling coalition will hold. 2010 promises to be a year possibly as tumultuous as 2009; maybe even more so. ☺



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2009 | Pawel Bartozsek
Mathematician / Teacher
at Reykjavík University

Not A Lot To Celebrate



What I notice the most is that a lot of nationalism, even chauvinism, has been spreading over the country. One could see it relatively early in the year, and it becomes very apparent in regards to the whole Icesave debacle. The prevailing attitude may be likened to that of a person that breaks into a garage, steals a car and totals it, along with many others, on the way out, then claims that it's all the fault of the garage's lax security, and that the road rails weren't strong enough.

Hardheaded Icelanders have managed to present this idea that everything that happened is Gordon Brown's fault, or the foreigners' fault, or lax EEA regulations' fault. I think this is a questionable interpretation of our woes. I think our only defence should be that we cannot really afford paying these amounts, or that they are simply too high. To maintain with a straight face that we are in no way responsible for Landsbankinn's debt is absurd. We could ask ourselves what we would think if a British bank went heads up and the UK government announced every Brit's savings account was safe while telling us we couldn't get anything. It is very doubtful that we would take such declarations lightly.

I am flabbergasted by the party play that went on around the Icesave affair. I find it hard to believe that if any other party—except for maybe The Movement [formerly The Citizen's Movement]—would be handling Icesave any different than the current government is. I feel the parties that filibustered and opposed the deal the hardest are just trying to score political points, which is understandable to a point. Still, nobody is going to play hardball with the international community on this one. We have had some insights into our international ranking, with our failed bid for the UN Security Council. It is... very poor. It is perhaps understandable that people would initially react by claiming that the world is being mean to us, and we hate it anyway, but it's not likely to go on forever. Perhaps Iceland will be like the US post-9/11, we'll see a few years of harsh reactions before settling down into sanity anew.

If we go in the opposite direction, however, I am very afraid. I sometimes worry about things like the EEA agreement, not that the members will oust us, but that say Icesave goes wrong and we wind up in a business war. A large part of our economy is based on interactions with other nations, and they could absolutely squeeze us dry if that were in their interest.

Looking at 2009 from my perspective, being a right-winger—and a pro-EU one at that—there aren't many things to celebrate. Of course, we did apply for membership and I do applaud that, but it doesn't seem like our application is faring well at the moment. These guys, Davíð Oddsson and his friends, they played their cards well at the Independence Parties' latest national convention and have, if anything, tightened their grip on the party. While their leadership is not direct, and not unquestioned, I do believe that the editor of Morgunblaðið has a lot to say about what goes on in the party. This is my estimate of the political climate on the right wing. ☹

2009 | Þórður Snær Júlíusson, Journalist

An Invitation To Historical Forgery



The first thing that comes to mind about 2009, as a sort of milestone event for the year, is the hiring of Davíð Oddsson as editor for Morgunblaðið. It can reasonably be likened to a banker being appointed to the Supreme Court to rule on his own case. Fittingly, the historical analyses that have been appearing in Morgunblaðið over the past few months seem to be put forth by a man that has a great interest in how history is written, and that it will be written a certain way—entirely ignoring on how far from reality those writings are.

Aside from that, Davíð has never worked a real job in the media, and thus has neither the knowledge nor the experience to lead any part of it. It is unfair to the journalists of Morgunblaðið to work under a man that knows the answers to most of their questions, but neither can nor will answer them. As a former employee of Morgunblaðið I find it very sad to witness how the newspaper has evolved over the past few months, and the circumstances its able professionals are forced to work in. Alas, private companies can hire whomever they want to hire.

Another great point of interest is the information we obtained on how insurance company Sjóvá was handled. Its former owners seem to have treated the company like a piggy bank; one they eventually found new use for as a garbage bin once it was all emptied out. The results were that the state had to supply Sjóvá with 16 billion ISK. That is an incredibly high amount when you consider the fact that their claims reserve fund once amounted to around 22–23 billion ISK. They nearly managed to empty it. Investor group Milestone, who owned Sjóvá for two years, managed to increase the company's debt by 40 billion ISK in that time. During these two years, the shameless owners didn't hesitate to reimburse themselves 19 billion ISK in dividends. The investigation in Sjóvá's affairs and the Special Prosecutor's raid on their premises last summer are thus clearly one of the year's main events.

Lastly, I would like to mention the bankruptcy of DeCODE Genetics in November as a very memorable event, especially in a historical context. When DeCODE stock went up for bids on the so-called Grey Market around a decade ago, it marked the start of the Icelandic public's first stock trading-gold digging adventure. Respected people appeared in the media telling people that not buying DeCODE stock would be a grave mistake. Likely, no Icelandic government in history has gone as far for any company as the one that ensured DeCODE exclusive permits to a database made up of the nation's collective medical histories—adding to that a \$200 million state guarantee. Even though both the database and the state guarantee eventually fell through, the state's promise of both ensured DeCODE's then VP, the young business-hero Hannes Smárason, was able to register the company to the US NASDAQ-market. DeCODE is to this day the only Icelandic company that has been listed there. As trading commenced, their stock was valued at \$30, but quickly plummeted to next to nothing. For the past few seasons, they were valued well under a dollar. ☹

2009 | Íris Erlingsdóttir, Journalist / Writer

The Humbling of Iceland



In 2009, Iceland became the poster child of the global economic downturn. The precipitous collapse of Iceland's banks and the ensuing popular overthrow of the Independence Party-led government were seen as possible precursors of the fall of Western civilization.

Fortunately, the situation in Iceland (and elsewhere) has stabilized—at least for now—and already we are forgetting what exactly led to the kreppa in the first place. Was it the result of fraudulent investment schemes created by foreign film-flam artists like Bernie Madoff? George Bush's fiscal irresponsibility? Hank Paulson's decision not to rescue Lehman Brothers? The market's irrational exuberance?

Certainly not the policies of Iceland's Central Bank by Davíð Oddsson, the harebrained business practices of the New Viking raiders, the complete failure of Icelandic regulators, the government's incompetence, or the absence of sound lending guidelines at the banks. And certainly not the system of nepotism, cronyism, and political patronage that came to define the business atmosphere in Iceland.

As a result of this collective amnesia, we are already seeing the rats emerge from their holes to point the finger at those who have been stuck with the task of cleaning up their mess. Oddsson is back in the public eye as the editor-in-chief of Morgunblaðið. The Independence Party is again polling as the country's most popular political party. Kaupping refuses to permit outsiders to take over the business empire of Jón Ásgeir Jóhannesson. The banks are still run by much the same people who caused this mess in the first place.

The cockiness that characterised Icelanders during the good times has been replaced by anger, more directed at the post-party cleaning crews than the political and financial "elite" whose reckless actions have seriously compromised Iceland's sovereignty.

The world has changed, however. The cockiness that characterised Icelanders during the good times is gone. Iceland's sovereignty has been compromised as a result of the reckless actions of this "elite." I am not referring to the movement to have Iceland join the European Union. I am referring to the fact that the positions of authority and nearly all of Iceland's treasures have been—or soon will be—handed over to foreigners.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been placed in charge of restructuring of Iceland's economy. The investigation of the financial crimes that led to the kreppa is led by Eva Joly, a Norwegian-French politician. The genetic research firm deCODE—which was probably the best known Icelandic company abroad—was sold in bankruptcy liquidation proceedings to a consortium of American investment funds. The right to exploit geothermal energy in Reykjanes was sold for a pittance to a Canadian company.

Despite all of this, however, there are hopeful signs. The kreppa has given rise to a truly independent media—from the website Eyjan to bloggers such as Daði Rafnsson's Economic Disaster Area, and Lára Hanna Einarsdóttir—to challenge the privileged class monopoly on the news. A new political party obtained seats in the Alþingi. A national assembly (Þjóðfundur) was held to try to reach a consensus on how to rebuild our broken society. The Icelandic people have refused to allow the British and Dutch governments to force them to pay for the sins and omissions of the bankers and their own regulators. The outflow of workers had stopped, for the most part, and the unemployment rate is slowly descending. The first prosecutions appear imminent.

Now that the crazy days of the 00's appear to be behind us, we have an unprecedented opportunity to redefine ourselves. We've been humbled in 2009, but it's still not clear whether we learned our lesson. ☹

2009 in Pictures

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Looking Back On Another Fine Year Of Music Fuck year-end lists, here's our year-end lists...

We sorta abhor year-end lists over here at Grapevine HQ. At least when it comes to making them. That has always been a task, and whatever we've come up with in the past has in retrospect usually struck us as forced, rushed and ill thought out. Plus, being the ADD kids we are, we tend to change our minds every five minutes: "The Arcade who now? Fune-what? The best album of 2004 was totally Kanye West's College Dropout. No, wait; it was Blood Brothers' Crimes. Oh, forget it."

ANYWAY, regardless of our feelings on the matter, year-end lists are always pretty popular, and we must admit we do enjoy perusing them as, eh, years end. They help one discover neglected gems, albums that passed by without a sound or one just plain never heard about, especially when those lists aren't all uniform, vague and heavy on the U2. Fucking U2.

So we decided to compile some year-end lists of our own. And who better to consult about what's going on in the world of music than the musicians themselves? No one, that's who (at least since most critics all started regurgitating P4K's listery)! So we went ahead and contacted some of Iceland's finest musicians and asked them to write us lists on what had been tickling their ears all year.

You may imbibe the results of that in these following pages. Some musicians wrote a sentence or two about each item, some made fun lists of their favourite concerts or the best places to pick up girls, some numbered their lists, others refused to – it's all in there.

And, yeah, we had our very own bunch of awesome music critics make up lists of their 2009 favourites, too (OK, we admit it, making lists can be sorta gratifying and fun. And no one consulted Pitchfork, swear to dog!).

In the immortal words of the great John Cage: Happy New Ears.

2009 | Concerts

ARTISTS PICK THEIR TOP 5 CONCERTS OF 2009

Lilja Kristín Jónsdóttir (Bloodgroup)

TOP 5 MEMORABLE CONCERTS OF 2009

Bloodgroup – Iceland Airwaves 09! (The most fun gig in the world!)

XXX Rottweiler – Iceland Airwaves 09 (Classic hits and crazy action!)

Miri – Kaffibarinn, sometime this summer (Can't remember when, but I do remember that they were great and they smiled through the whole show)

Me, The Slumbering Napoleon – Sódóma

Reykjavík last summer (incredibly fresh)

Mugison – Rotterdam, December 19th

(Stand-up comedy and a concert at the same time – it can't go wrong)

Arnjóttur Sigurðsson (living legend)

Egill S – at Hafnarhúsið.

Haukur Gröndal with Narodna Muzika – at the Reykjavík Jazz Festival.

Kimono – At NASA, Iceland Airwaves

Skúli Sverrisson & Sería – Þjóðmenningarhúsið

Stereo Hypnosis – release concert no.2 at Sódóma Reykjavík.

Benedikt Reynisson (Skátar)

TOP 5 CONCERTS OF 2009

1. Ghostigital @ Batterið, Iceland Airwaves 2009

2. Amiina & Seabear @ Bæjarbrú, 28. júlí 2009

3. Gus Gus @ Nikita garden, 26. september 2009

4. Reykjavík! @ Nasa, Iceland Airwaves 2009

5. Caterpillarmen @ Grand Rokk, Iceland Airwaves 2009

Örn Ingi Ágústsson

(Skakkamanage, Seabear, etc)

A Hansen's at Grand Rokk

Entombed at Sódóma Reykjavík

Micachu And The Shapes at Karamba

Sumargleðin tour in Hvammstangi

Yo La Tengo in Berlin

Berglind Häsler

(Skakkamanage, Létt á bárunni)

1) Yo La Tengo in Berlin

The best concert I've seen, period.

2) Reykjavík! and Sudden Weather Change,

Herðubreið in Seyðisfjörður

It isn't often that one gets to slumdance with the mayor.

3) múm at HAVARÍ

I missed their show at lónó, but got this cosy hangover concert instead.

4) FM Belfast in Grundarfjörður

I haven't lost it like this at a concert since I saw The Prodigy in my heyday.

5) KK & Ellen and all the rest from this wonder-

ful Icelandic Von Trapp family at Herðubreið,

Seyðisfjörður

Most of all, I would like them to adopt me, really.

In Áki Ásgeirsson

(S.L.Á.T.U.R.)

(1) Stelkur – February 11th at Hafnarborg

The band Stelkur from the East of Iceland performed unforgettable compositions by Charles Ross, the Icelandic nation's secret weapon.

(2) S.L.Á.T.U.R. – September 5th at the Nordic House

Performed compositions by the main proponents of artistic aggression in Icelandic music.

(3) Kría Brekkan – Helgileikur, December 23rd in the Christmas Village by Laugavegur

The piece was performed in a musical vending machine made to look like a nomad's hut, where Kría connected the audience to the holy umbilical cord of the mother of god.

(4) The pots and pans revolution – January 2009 at Austurvöllur

A few hundred people banged pots for several days in a spontaneous Icelandic rhythm. Unfortunately, some unscrupulous parties brought drumkits and foreign, cultural Samba rhythms for the last few days.

(5) Monika Fry ová – Open Springs, February at Listaháskóli Íslands

International cooperation in a loaded and high strung inter-arts display from Friend Of Iceland Monika – who danced on the tip of chaos.

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ARTISTS PICK THEIR TOP 5 INTERNATIONAL ALBUMS OF 2009

Pórir Georg Jónsson

(My Summer As A Salvation Soldier, Gavin Portland, Deathmetal Supersquad, etc)

1. Cult Ritual – Cult Ritual

2009 has been an exceptionally good year for those into Hardcore punk. I can't remember the last time I've been as excited about this many Hardcore records in one year. But the Cult Ritual album is the best of them all. Black Flag worship mixed with artsy noise experiments played in a way only a modern hardcore band could.

2. Blacklisted – No One Deserves To Be Here More Than Me

Blacklisted is another Hardcore band that really pushed the boundaries this year. Even though this album for the most parts is a logical next step for them, it surprised and amazed me how cohesive and near spotless it is.

3. Animal Collective – Merriweather Post Pavilion

What's there to say about this album? It's probably going to be on everyone's, list and it deserves to be there. Animal Collective has always been ahead of the curve, but this surpassed all my expectations.

4. Intelligence – Fake Surfers

Garage rock/punk is obviously the big trend these days and as a result of that we got a lot of cool garage-y albums this year. This one is the best in my opinion. It's daring and out there, but playful and accessible at the same time.

5. Urban Blight – More Reality

Hard as nails Agnostic Front influenced Hardcore from Canada. It's raw, pissed off and intense. They may not be the most original band around but what they do, they do better than almost everyone else around.

Haukur Viðar Alfredsson

(Morðingjarnir)

1. Ladyhawke – Ladyhawke

I know, I know, it came out in 2008. But hey, I first heard it in 2009, and it's the best!

2. Prodigy – Invaders Must Die

For me, getting a new Prodigy album – let alone such a good one – is like for your dad getting a new Steely Dan record.

3. Lily Allen – It's Not Me, It's You

Juuuuust a little worse than her début, but still great. Lily snorts all these other British bimbos up her nostrils.

4. Fear Factory – Mechanize

Future-Metal for 15 year-old boys. And middle-aged fatties. Is released this February – but has long since leaked.

5. The Decemberists – The Hazards of Love

This is the Decemberists' worst record yet, but it's still good. And it was a bad year for records.

Snorri Helgason

(Sprengjuhöllin, solo)

Dirty Projectors – Bitte Orca

Girls – Album

Julian Casablancas – Phrazes For The Young

Richard Howley – Truelove's Gutter

The Pains Of Being Pure At Heart – The Pains Of

Being Pure At Heart

Birkir Fjalur Viðarsson

(I Adapt, Gavin Portland)

Code – Resplendent Grottesque

Moutheater – Ornament

Napalm Death – Time Waits For No Slave

Propagandhi – Supporting Caste

Pulling Teeth – Paranoid Delusions | Paradise

Illusions

Öm Ingi Ágústsson

(Skakkamanage, Seabear, etc)

1) Dinosaur Jr. – Farm

2) Polvo – In Prism

3) Immortal – All Shall Fall

4) Sonic Youth – The Eternal

5) Behemoth – Evangelion

Benedikt Reynisson (Skátar)

1. Dirty Projectors - Bitte Orca

2. Micachu - Jewellery

3. Bill Callahan - Sometimes I Wish We Were an

Eagle

4. Flaming Lips - Embryonic

5. Animal Collective - Merriweather Post Pavilion

Tanya Pollock (Weirdcore,

Anonymous)

1. Dirty Projectors – Bitte Orca

2. Micachu – Jewellery

3. Bill Callahan – Sometimes I Wish We Were an

Eagle

4. Flaming Lips – Embryonic

5. Animal Collective – Merriweather Post Pavilion

Lilja Kristín Jónsdóttir

(Bloodgroup)

(no order)

Animal Collective – Merriweather Post Pavilion

Antony And The Johnsons – The Crying Light

Bill Callahan – Sometimes I Wish We Were An

Eagle

Dirty Projectors – Bitte Orca

John Fruiscante – The Empyrian

Haukur Heiðar Hauksson

(Dikta)

1) Silversun Pickups – Swoon

2) Brand New – Daisy

3) Florence and the Machine – Lungs

4) Andrew Bird – Noble Beast

5) Bat For Lashes – Two Suns

Hallur Kr. Jónsson (Bloodgroup)

1. John Frusciante – Emyrean (By far the best

international release of the year)

2. Fever Ray – Fever Ray

3. Bat for lashes – Two suns

4. Flaming Lips – Embryonic

5. Röyksopp – Junior

Sindri Már Sigfússon (Seabear,

Sin Fang Bous)

1. Fever Ray – Fever Ray

2. Dirty Projectors – Bitte Orca

3. Grizzly Veer – Veckatimest

4. Anthony And The Johnsons – The Crying Light

5. Animal Collective – Merriweather Post Pavilion

2009 | Birkir Fjalur Viðarsson

Metal And Hardcore In 2009



The year in Metal? In order to kick the ol' brain cell bundle into gear I got in touch with my friend to compare notes. He assured me that nothing noteworthy had happened beyond the Sororicide reunion and Sólstafir releasing their best work to date. In Hardcore, a handful of bands were formed, a plethora of shows were played to often-unenthusiastic crowds, and various releases came out shrouded in "secrecy" thus never really seeing the light of day. As in: they were released but pretty much only those "in the know" knew about them or knew where to find 'em. Indubitably quite common in the metal seen as well.

In terms of proper releases, there wasn't a lot to dip your toes in. Sure, it was hard (in a good way) to keep up with bands premiering demo tracks or studio recordings intended for future releases, because there were so many of them being posted on-line all the time. But very few bands offered anything tangible and a good portion of them seem to be flukes or projects that hardly play live at all.

Naturally, I've probably forgot to mention some "releases" so obscure only the local message board warriors heard about them. Bastard released Dementia and Filth, which you can now obtain a copy of at their shows. You can also download it at Gogoyoko. Claim to fame: funny song titles.

Carpe Noctem is a really good modernised (but not sterilized) Black Metal band that, like any other Icelandic BM band, doesn't play out much. They released a self-titled CD, without bothering to include information on their MySpace as to how and where to get the damn thing. Of course. Claim to fame: a member of the band used to play in Thunder Lesbians. Naturally.

Legendary Death Metal band Sororicide reformed for a couple of shows and even released an EP, Deathless, that collects three songs from the old days that are hard to find. Thus, it wasn't a bad idea at all. Let's hope they write new material, because these guys (some of whom may now be found in pompous indie pop bands) outshredded the mighty Entombed a few months ago, during the latter's second trip to Iceland, which was not such a triumphant one.

Gordon Riot released the uneventful yet nicely executed Dirt 'n' Worms. It's been getting nice reviews, so check it out. I was never too keen on the young people's Kerrang! in them but they seem to be moving away from it, and that's a good thing.

The now dysfunctional Munnríður barfed out the hard-birth Ásdís Rán EP, named after the Playboy hopeful model. She didn't like the honours. The release didn't impress her, nor did it me.

Retrön's Fantasy Metal meets computer game soundtracks meets Fucking Champs won over a healthy number of people this year. Their CD Swordplay And Guitarslay is attention worthy. An ambiguous effort, musically and visually, to say the least.

Wormlust became the talk of the über-underground town with the release of demo and a split with Ireland's Haud Mundus. An impressive Black Metal project with twisted ambience securing it in the modern yet mysterious and dark spectrum.

Myra's album never saw the light of day. As good as it'll be I suspect the members of the band just imagined their trip to the studio. Three greats, Beneath (who played Wacken, mind you), Gone Postal and Severed Crotch are all working on new material. Same can be said about the never-will-die Changer. Good stuff expected from each one. Atrium's Opus Victim EP is still being worked on even though recordings started long time ago. The demos sound rad.

This years Cinderella story is Sólstafir. A band that's been like a Jumbo Jet in turbulence year after year has finally arrived. If you thought Masterpiece Of Bitterness got good reviews, they pale in comparison to the praise Köld is getting. Not only that. Sólstafir is reaching heights no Icelandic metal band has done on international level.

The 2009 edition of annual boozefest Eistnaflug (Flight of the Testicles) on the East Coast of Iceland boasted the biggest crowd yet; an

amazing feat for a solid event that by now is legend. Too bad people support the booze industry with more heart than the bands themselves. Oh well.

All in all, '09 was a good year for Icelandic metal. Even though these online promos and snippets leave a lot to be desired, the material holds a lot of promise. And the metalheads upped the ante in regards to show quality. Their events were better booked, promoted and organized than ever before.

The punk/hardcore seen saw a fair bit of noteworthy releases but none as good as Death Metal Supersquad's Dead Zeppelin. So simple, gut wrenching, raw and catchy. Just get it. The label releasing it, Paradisarborgar Plötur was involved with majority of 2009's releases, house shows, etc. Releases included Eðli amarra demo (noisy, dirty and aggressive), Dys' Andspyrna (important hxc driven metallic punk with socially aware, do-good rallying anthems), Tentacles of Doom's Dansað við lík (80s post punk inspired, like a cross between The Wipers and X but more lose and chaotic). Fuck. They are selling it cheap, so buy this batch before they are out of print forever.

Two young bands took the cake as the most active ones. The very young Logn impressed people with their savage and grinding fury, backed by intricate drumming. Not only that. Barely had the band been formed when they had a split out with Manslaughter (not so impressive, but fun), dozens of shows under their belts, two t-shirts... Quite impressive. They are already working on new recordings.

The second young-ish band is Muck, though their climb has been a gradual one. Their first release, Vultures, showed the boys effortlessly scoring a soundtrack for angst and misery, albeit not the tightest one ever. The subsequent demo sees them improve in all areas. The future looks bright for one of Iceland's best up 'n' coming bands.

Celestine threatened to release something, demos were made that shows the band at its most raging while retaining the rough and organic heaviness of their last outing. Raw and unruly enough for the hardcore crowd, yet heavy and tight enough for the metalheads, the band's future looks interesting.

Gavin Portland's heavily delayed Hand In Hand With Traitors, Back To Back With Whores still hasn't seen the light of day. I hear the no-show of this impressive collection of songs, recorded by Kurt Ballou (Converge) in his God City studio, is largely due to the bands independent stance and stubbornness. Or so I've heard.

Hark came out of nowhere with a stellar demo of noisy and nasty Metalcore of the mid 90s best calibre. Find my review in a GV back issue for a more thorough inspection.

Bummer is another new band that released the super obscure Noise demo. A punk band in its own right, but mind the shoegaze influences and not so subtle Joy Division and Beat Happening ones, aided with a very lonely and winter-y feel. It's pretty special.

Akureyri's Buxnaskjónar kept impressing me with the Þriðja heimstyrjöldin home recordings. It's a reassuring feeling to have our very own sarcastic and tongue in cheek punk pricks band that doesn't sound million miles away from early to mid period Against Me! or the Ergs.

And the chameleon in this year's bunch must be the new and eclectic full length from Morðingjarnir, Flóttinn mikli. I'm still digesting this collection of songs, which is all over the place. Finally the band is getting the respect they deserve and crossing over to the mainstream, if such a thing is imaginable on this island. Even though I've yet to make a verdict on this record, it deserves the talk it's getting. Everybody seems to know about it. Which is an amazing feat in and of itself.

A few bands were left out of this article, as I tried to focus mainly on bands that released something and were prolific in their own way. Rest assured, there were other acts that shined.

Feel free to peep my blog, www.halifaxcollect.blogspot.com, for a bunch of the '09 bands that were busy in the on-line listening party department.  Birkir Fjalur Viðarsson is one of Grapevine's fine music critics. He also pounds.

ARTISTS PICK THEIR TOP 5 ICELANDIC ALBUMS OF 2009

Pórir Georg Jónsson

(My Summer As A Salvation Soldier, Gavin Portland, Deathmetal Supersquad, etc)

1. Tentacles of Doom – Dansað við lík.

Tentacles of Doom are my favourite band around. It's as simple as that. Dark and melodic post punk influenced by the proggy side of 80s hardcore. Cannot recommend this enough.

2. Kimono – Easy Music For Difficult People.

Kimono just get better and better with every album they release. Some might think that losing a bass player would create a gap in their sound, but it's quite the opposite. Kimono have never sounded this good.

3. Me, The Slumbering Napoleon – The Bloody Core Of It

Kids playing noisy indie rock. Makes me think of Polvo, Harvey Milk and I'm being good. Heavy and aggressive and really awesome.

4. Dys – Andspyrna + Ísland brennur

Iceland's anarcho punk legends. A "new" EP recorded about five years ago, but finally released this year with their first album added on as bonus tracks. If you're into punk rock, this album is a must.

5. Sólstafir – Köld

The definitive Icelandic metal band. On this album they take their sound to a new level, stepping further away from their Black Metal roots and in a more gothic direction. I'll be very surprised if this album doesn't end up on a lot of peoples list.

Haukur Viðar Alfredsson

(Morðingjarnir)

1. Signy H. – This Is How I See It

You'll only find this on-line (and you'll have to do some searching), but this material thrashes everything else that was released this year.

2. Dr. Gunni – Inniheldur

"Taka í rass, taka í rass, allir voru að taka einhvorn í rass!"

3. Buxnaskjónar – Þriðja heimsstyrjöldin

Iceland's most promising punk band. And they can't buy liquor for another four years.

4. Bloodgroup – Dry Land

This one took a while to grow on me, but it's great. Less party action than before, but better sounding, better singing and more grown up.

5. Kimono – Easy Music For Difficult People

Nerd-rock for middle-aged mini-celebs. This is kimono's most solid offering. Their best? Possibly.

Berglind Häsler

(Skakkamanage, Létt á bárunni)

1) múm – Sing Along To Songs You Don't Know

2) kimono – Easy Music For Difficult People

3) Prins Póló – Einn Heima

4) Egill S – Egill S

5) Bloodgroup – Dry Land

Snorri Helgason

(Sprengjuhöllin)

Egill S – Egill S

Hjálmar – IV

Hjaltalín – Terminal

Sigga Toll & Heiðurspilar – Á ljúflingshól

Snorri Helgason – I'm Gonna Put My Name On

Your Door

Birkir Fjalur Viðarsson

(I Adapt, Gavin Portland, Grapevine writer)

Blood Group - Easy music for difficult people

Death Metal Supersquad – Dead Zeppelin

Dr. Gunni – Inniheldur

Kimono – Easy Music For Difficult People

Solstafir – Köld

Arnljótur Sigurðsson

(living legend)

Berndsen – Lover in the Dark

Egill S – Egill S

Haukur Gröndal – Narodna Muzika

Stereo Hypnosis – Hypnogogia

Tyft – Smell The Difference

Öm Ingi Ágústsson

(Skakkamanage, Seabear, etc)

1) Kimono – Easy music for difficult people

2) Nölo – No Lo Fi

3) Prins póló – Einn heima EP

4) Sudden Weather Change – Stop! Handgrenade

In The Name Of Cribdeath 'Nderstand?

5) Skátar – Goth báðum megin

Benedikt Reynisson (Skátar)

1. Kimono – Easy Music For Difficult People

2. Bloodgroup – Dry Land

3. Sudden Weather Change – Stop! Handgrenade

In The Name Of Cribdeath 'Nderstand?

4. Koi – Sum of All Things

5. Steve Sampling – Milljón mismunandi mann

Bóas Hallgrímsson (Reykjavík!)

(TOP 7 – no order)

Ben Frost – By The Throat

Hildur Guðnadóttir – Without Sinking

Morðingjarnir – Flóttinn mikli

múm – Sing Along To Songs You Don't Know

Prins Póló – Einn heima

Snorri Helgason – I'm Gonna Put My Name On

Your Door

Sudden Weather Change – Stop! Handgrenade In

The Name Of Crib Death 'nderstand?

Sykur – Frábært eða Frábært

Lilja Kristín Jónsdóttir

(Bloodgroup)

Bloodgroup – Dry Land (but of course)

Hjálmar – IV

Skátar – Goth Báðum Megin

Sudden Weather Change – Stop! Handgrenade In

The Name Of Cribdeath 'Nderstand?

Sykur – Frábært eða Frábært

Haukur Heiðar Hauksson

(Dikta)

1) Dikta – Get it Together :)

2) Ourlives – We Lost the Race

3) Lights on the Highway – Amanita Muscaria

4) Ólafur Arnalds – Found Songs

5) Svavar Knútur – Kvöldvaka

Hallur Kr. Jónsson

(Bloodgroup)

1. Bloodgroup – Dry Land (The best album of the

year)

2. Sykur – Frábært eða frábært

3. Skátar – Goth báðum megin

4. kimono – Easy Music For Difficult People

5. Hjálmar – IV

Tanya Pollock

(Weirdcore, Anonymous)

Björk – Voltaic

Hermigervill – Leikur vinsæl íslenzk lög

Kimono – Easy Music For Difficult People

Ruxpin – Where Do We Float From Here

Weirdcore – Weirdcore2 Compilation



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GRAPEVINE STAFF PICK THEIR TOP ICELANDIC ALBUMS OF 2009



Bob Cluness

- 1) Ben Frost - By The Throat:** This man has probably created the first true soundtrack of the Kreppa and possibly one of the most vital releases to come from Iceland in the past couple of years. And brave, honourable Iceland responded by trying to deport him! No wonder the poor bastard looks so pissed off all the time.
- 2) Kimono - Easy Music For Difficult People:** When I reviewed this, I don't think I gave it justice as to how immediate this album is when you first listen to it. It's truly a brilliant indie rock album.
- 3) Bloodgroup - Dry Land:** They took their base electro sound and added several new levels of pop brilliance.
- 4) Sólstafir - Köld:** Primordial, seething with epic aggression, and just sounded brilliant. This beat the crap out of all the other metal releases and took all their money for a laugh.
- 5) Sudden Weather Change - Stop! Handgrenade in the name of crib death 'nderstand?:** Beating kimono to the worst album title of the year, they were full of infectious energy and punky enthusiasm. It just made me feel old listening to it!

Ragnar Egilsson

"I didn't hear enough good Icelandic records in 2009 for a top 5. I can muster a top 3."

- 1. Hildur Guðnadóttir - Without Sinking**
- 2. Ben Frost - By The Throat**
- 3. Kimono Easy Music For Difficult People**

Sindri Eldon

#1: Plastic Gods - Quadriplegiac

Horrifying and tasteless, just what Iceland deserves.

#2: Foreign Monkeys -  

It rocked.

#3: TONIK - Form Follows

Solid as a cock.

#4: Weapons - A Ditch In Time

How could you not like this album?

#5: Retr n - Swordplay & Guitarslay

You need to turn it all the way up first, and then it will blow your mind.

#6:  lpa - Jahli ya

I'm high right now just thinking about it.

#7: Egill S - Egill S

An album that can be both disappointing and excellent at the same time deserves mention.

#8: Hjaltal n - Terminal

Not as good as it should be, but not as bad as it could be.

#9: STEED LORD - Truth Serum

"I'm a dirty dirty dirty dirty millionaire" - enough said.

#10: Agent Fresco - Lightbulb Universe

It's very well organised.

Florian Z hlke

- 1) Sudden Weather Change - Stop! Handgrenade in the Name of Crib Death 'nderstand?** I remember how impressed I was by their dissonant but huge post-core sound - first at Airwaves 2008 then on their record in the spring of 2009.
- 2) Muck - Vultures** A very good, dark and heavy hardcore/punk/metal record by a very young band that hopefully has its best to come.
- 3) Bob Justman - Happiness and Woe** I am still greatly enjoying the melancholic and touching, but never desperate, songs of Bob Justman. Elliot Smith's successor seems to be Icelandic.
- 4) M m - Sing Along To Songs You Don't Know** There is nothing to complain about here: really nice Icelandic pop music.
- 5) AMFJ - Itemhlj d & Veinan** A dark, disturbing drone experiment - roaring and intriguing - rather than a classical record. On top there are cool electronic remixes.

Haukur S Magn sson

1. Summer As A Salvation Soldier - N ytt EP
2. Ben Frost - By The Throat My 3. Sudden Weather Change - Stop! Handgrenade In The Name Of Oppression & Alcohol
4. Hildur Gu na - Without Sinking
5. Go-Go Darkness - Go-Go Darkness
6. m m - Sing Along To Songs You Don't Know
7. Deathmetal Supersquad - Dead Zeppelin
8. Mugison -  trekun
9. Kimono - EM4DP
10. Snorri Helgason - I'm Gonna Put My Name On Your Door

J hannes Kjartansson

- m m - Sing Along To Songs You Don't Know
Hjaltal n - Terminal
Sykur - Fr b ert e a Fr b ert
Tonik - Form Follows
dj. flugv l og geimskip - Rokk & r leg l g

GRAPEVINE STAFF PICK THEIR TOP INTERNATIONAL ALBUMS OF 2009



Bob Cluness

- 1) The Horrors - Primary Colours:** I was one of probably only 45 people who heard their 1st album (note: It was truly shit). This made it all the more remarkable that their follow up was so spectacular. Singlehandedly sparking the Krautrock revival and possibly the best guitar sounds since My Bloody Valentine.
- 2) Fuck Buttons - Tarot Sport:** the sound of a million angels off their face on E, in an Ibiza nightclub. On Mars....
- 3) Sunn O))) - Monoliths & Dimensions:** the history of man from Neanderthal to space flight in four loud, apocalyptic stages.
- 4) Manatees - Icarus, the Sunclimber:** Possibly one of the biggest HOPEKRUSHER albums I've heard in ages. Sounded so oppressive, it made my ears cry.
- 5) Zola Jesus: The Spoils:** The best of the hy-nagogic lo-fi pop to come from the US this year. Nika Danilova's vocals sounded so haunted, like a ghostly apparition on fuzzy tape.

Ragnar Egilsson

- 1. HEALTH - Get Color**
- 2. Girls - Album**
- 3. Bat For Lashes - Two Suns**
- 4. Washed Out - Life Of Leisure**
- 5. Fever Ray - Fever Ray**
- 7. Nosaj Thing - Drift**
- 7. Hudson Mohawke - Butter**

Sindri Eldon

#1: Kent - R d

Their best album ever? It's quite possible.

#2: Silversun Pickups - Swoon

Where the nineties never end, but in a good way.

#3: Animal Collective- Merriweather Post Pavillion

Yeah, good choice Sindri, real fucking original.

#4: Sparks - The Seduction Of Ingmar Bergman

The weirdness continues.

#5: Electric Six - Kill

The awesomeness continues.

Florian Z hlke

1) Thrice - Beggars

Thrice evolved into a very good alternative rock band long ago, even managing to record a set of concept EPs (The Alchemy Index) without becoming awkward. Beggars is their latest and catchiest album, it brings more exciting details with every listen - Epic!

2) Gallows - Grey Britain

Somehow I overlooked this amazing young band's d but two years ago, but Grey Britain's raw, ag-

gressive, honest hardcore punk made me a fan of these heavily tattooed Brits.

3) Ruiner - Hell Is Empty

Hell is Empty is so emotional, so honest that it gives me shivers down my spine with every listen. This is how hardcore should sound, but doesn't any more since Modern Life Is War split up.

4) Behemoth - Evangelion

Maybe the best Death / Black Metal band around - and fortunately a non-fascist one.

5) Rise and Fall - Our Circle is Vicious

Into Oblivion was evil, downtuned and good; Our Circle is Vicious, adds more experimentation, more variety and better songwriting to Rise and Fall's metallic hardcore - and thus makes it one of my top five records 2009.

Haukur S Magn sson

1. Japandroids - Post-Nothing
2. Converge - Axe To Fall
3. Jay Reatar - Watch Me Fall
4. jj - jj no 2
5. A Sunny Day In Glasgow - A Sunny Day In Glasgow
6. A Place To Bury Strangers - Exploding Head
7. Bibio - Ambivalence Avenue
8. Jay Z - Ill
9. Fever Ray - Fever Ray
10. Phoenix - Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix
11. Dinosaur Jr. - Farm
12. Atlas Sound - Logos

J hannes Kjartansson

- Tiga - Ciao
Data - Skywriter
Vitalic - Flashmob
Boys Noize - Power
Moderat - Moderat
Joakim - Milky Ways
The Whitest Boy Alive - Rules
Zombie Nation - Zombielicious
Jori Hulkkonen - Man From Earth
The Bloody Beetroots - Romborama
Fukkk Off - Love Me Hate Me Kiss Me Kill Me
Kings of Convenience - Declaration of Dependence

GRAPEVINE STAFF PICK THEIR TOP OTHER STUFF OF 2009



Bob Cluness

BEST GIG MOMENTS OF 2009

Klink, Celestine and Retr n @ Dillon, Oct '09: One of the few times recently that I've been truly terrified for my life. It was a truly mental moment of crushing live metal.
M nus and HAM, Friday night @ Eistnaflug, July '09: Was a great night for music but I don't remember much about that. This was because I performed my only Good Samaritan act of the year and acted as a human shield to two metal heads in wheelchairs so they could watch at the front of the crowd. They had a great time, while I got 500 moshers going all Drum and Bass on my kidneys and spine. For two hours. Refreshing!

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2010...

In the rock/metal universe, you're probably going to hear a lot from power trio Ghost Aircraft. They just released their debut album over Christmas and will probably be the standard bearers for that post hardcore sound in 2010. And the debut album by Severed Crotch should be lacerating our eardrums as well.

In the Electro world, 2010 sees the debut from Captain Fufanu, while Pedro Pilatus (the solo project of Retro Stefson's Logi Pedr ) should be getting a lot more attention.

Finally look out for the debut release from Dan el Bjarnason in February 2010 from those folks at the Bedroom community. It will finally make you like neo-classical music. Honest, I swear!

Bergr n Anna Hallsteinsd ttir

Top 5 Artists To Watch In 2010

1. Ojba Rasta
2. Sykur
3.  lafur Arnalds
4. Skelkur   bringu
5. Stereo Hypnosis

Ragnar Egilsson

"Make your own new next big thing in 2010 mix and match genre terms! Get your fix of the hottest prefixes and suffixes! Watch them take temporary root in 2010!"

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| 1/2: | 2/2: | Congratulations! You have now grown your very own musical chimera! Now unleash the beast on the world, watch it tear the blogworld apart for up to three weeks before it's abominable heart is pierced with snark and it gives up the ghost on a ten minute special on BBC2. |
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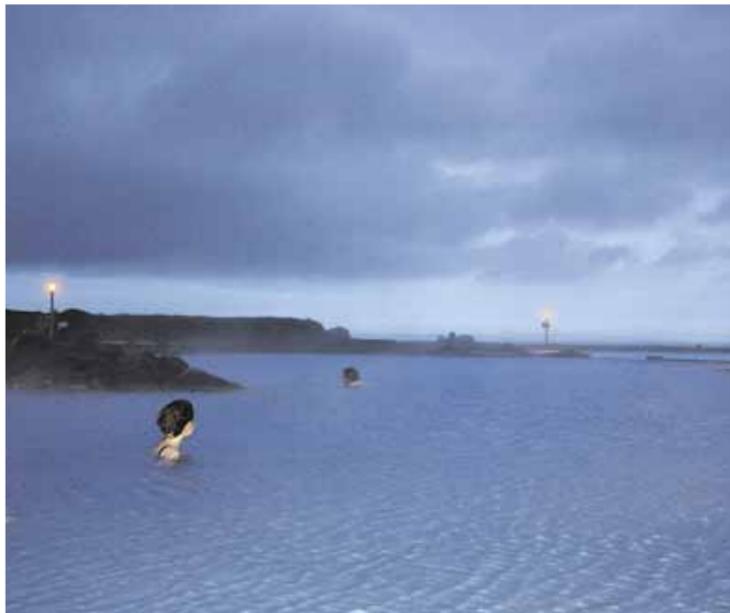
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Travel | Mývatn



Northern Exposure

From Reykjavík to Lake Mývatn and back in 12 hours or less.

Boarding a plane at the Reykjavík airport has all the pomp and ceremony of catching a city bus: no gates, no magic wands, no taking my belt or shoes off. After a few minutes of waiting in the lobby with other red-eyed passengers, an attendant simply points outside and we all trudge out towards the prop plane waiting at the door. Within minutes we're seated in a plane cramped with over-sized luggage, businessmen and their newspapers, children and their cries. "So many people going to Mývatn," I thought to myself. Oh, how wrong I was.

A flight between Reykjavík and Akureyri is like losing your virginity: a slightly terrifying and surprisingly short experience. Bouncing and dipping, the blue and gold plane hardly had time to reach cruising altitude before starting its descent.

Rabbi, Air Iceland's Lake Mývatn day tour guide, met us on arrival, introduced himself warmly, and guided us toward the minivan which would be our trusted chariot for the rest of the day. A couple stops later our fellowship

was complete: the photographer and I, an Italian couple, a German couple, an American mother and daughter and a lone Japanese tourist.

After enjoying the sight of Akureyri by night, Rabbi sped the van along to our first serious destination: Goðafoss. By the time we arrived the sun was just rising and the view was impressive: 12 metres of cascading water cradled between snowy banks with a silver moon to top it all off.

From Goðafoss Rabbi headed towards Lake Mývatn on practically deserted roads. Named for the billions of flies that hatch here every summer, the lake attracts dozens of different bird species that come here to feast yearly. Those birds, in turn, attract thousands of tourists. But during our visit the region was entirely devoid of pesky flies, annoying tourists, or gorging birds.

A well-deserved lunch followed at a nearby restaurant overlooking a vast volcanic landscape. Here too it seemed as if our 10-person party made up the majority that day's patrons. As the

meal wound down, Rabbi pointed out the window at a lone figure stretching his legs on a rocky crag. We quickly paid our bill and made our way down the hill where, to our surprise, we found Stekkjastaur, one of the Yule Lads, tinkering around. During each of the twelve days before Christmas a different Yule Lad keeps vigil here, waiting for neighbourhood children to come by and chat. But during our visit there were no children in sight and as far as I could tell there was no neighbourhood either. This didn't seem to bother Stekkjastaur, who busied himself with pulling women from our group on to his lap and posing for pictures.

Next stop: Hverarönd, a highly active geological area with bubbling sulphur mounds as far as the eye can see. Here too we were alone, strolling through the steam with red mud caking thickly on our shoes.

At this point Rabbi was hurrying us along. There were only a couple hours left and we'd yet to see the star attraction: the Lake Mývatn Nature Baths.

The single employee at the reception table smiled as we pulled in: we were his only customers. For an hour and a half the ten of us steamed, swam, bathed, showered, relaxed and chatted in perfect serenity as if we'd rented the complex for a private party.

I asked Rabbi why, given the natural beauty and attractions of the area, we'd seen so few other visitors.

"Tourists don't realise that there are more things to do here in the winter, not less," he said. "It's beautiful here in the winter. It'd be great to see more visitors come."

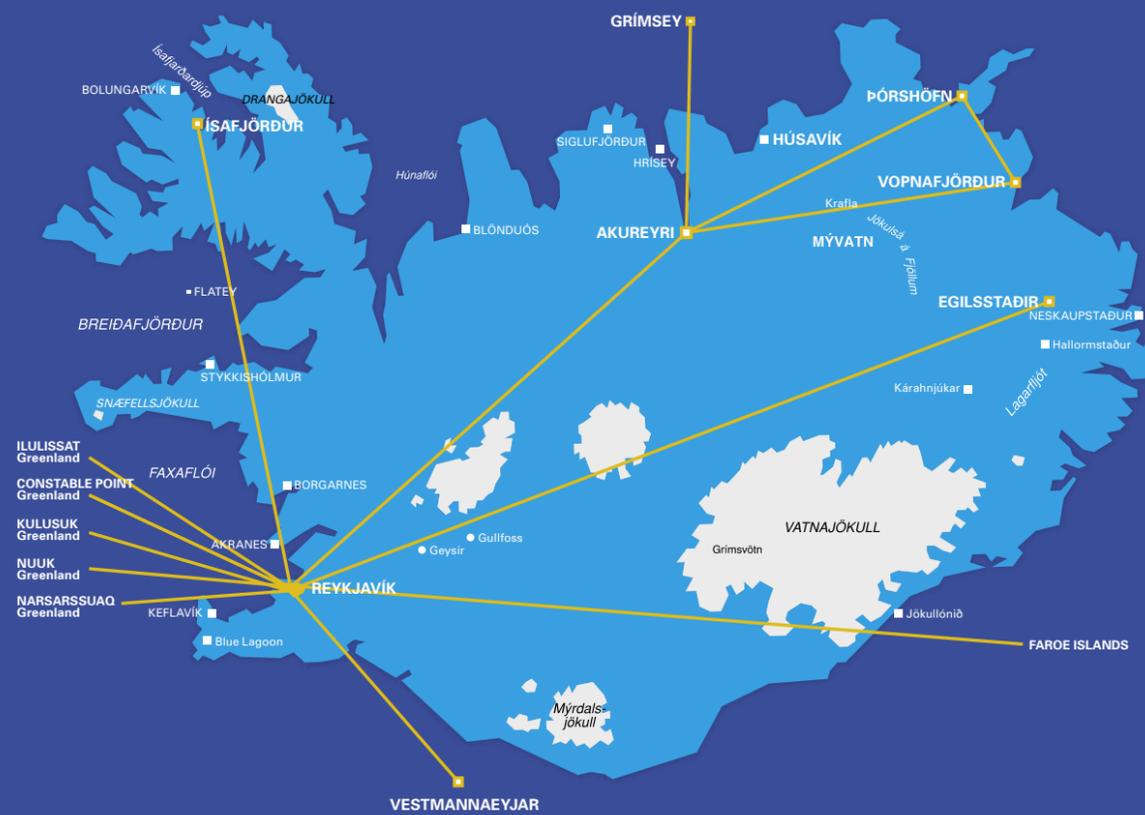
Driving back to the Akureyri airport I had to agree with Rabbi, it was beautiful here. But I couldn't help wondering if more visitors might shatter that special experience of bundling up with a group of perfect strangers and trucking around a barren landscape without another soul for hundreds of kilometres around.

"A flight between Reykjavík and Akureyri is like losing your virginity: a slightly terrifying and surprisingly short experience."

MICHAEL ZELENO
BJÖRK THORGRÍMSDÓTTIR

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A Year Of Waiting, Undercurrent, Countdown, Festivals And No Revolution

The 2009 artworld discussed, somewhat

The Grapevine somehow managed to convince two of its favourite people from the local artworld – prominent artist Haraldur Jónsson and fellow prominent artist-slash-Living Art Museum director Birta Guðjónsdóttir – to engage in discussion about Icelandic arts in the year 2009. The following is a very abridged account of their discussion.

-2009 was a year of great transformation for Icelandic society and has been called the year of waiting and the year of great disappointment, where people built hopes of certain societal changes that were impending, and that have yet to appear at the time of writing.

In the field of visual arts, a lot of fermentation took place, manifestos were released, exhibitions were thrown and all the festivals went on even though support from both private and public sectors was cut back considerably. For the field we are here to discuss, one could say it needed to consider a new reality, demands of renewal and reconsideration. Is this assumption correct?

Birta Guðjónsdóttir: Yes, very much so, since an idea still exists that the arts should somehow “precede the present” – that it is obligated to save the world via preventive measures, anticipating events and responding to them before they happen.

I experience 2009 as an introspection year for the arts – and not just in Iceland – with questions if artists could have announced doomsday sooner...

Haraldur Jónsson: I think this has been a year of intermission or of waiting, a year where the Icelandic nation suffered a nervous breakdown and experienced the numbness that follows. As if that weren't enough, The Living Art Museum was closed for studies and re-organisation for most of the year, and so was Kling & Bang.

But what happened? The saucepan revolution, that was maybe artistically speaking the biggest visual art installation, a regular Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk that provided images that are branded into our consciousness by now, like the Oslo tree being brought down and burned. In symbolic terms, it was like our very own 9/11, a very iconic course of events that had many visual aspects.

THE ARTIST OF 2009

BG: Another thing I feel relevant in this context is when Goddur, Guðmundur Oddur, provided a quick analysis of the visual symbolism that many protestors used, the symbolism of the anarchists that marched under black flags and covered their faces. Many novel concepts and ideas were introduced to the nation in a relatively short time.

HJ: Discourse around the arts and their connection with our so-called reality got a big push with entities such as [on-line magazine] Nei. and others, a certain interactivity was introduced. The entire revolution, its aftermath and the events leading up to it could be viewed as grand installation and happening. These were some key factors one was very aware of throughout the year, as well as dragging around remnants of the boom years – the under-construction Music Hall is an example.

Speaking of Goddur's analysis and his lecture at Hafnarhús, I felt that it was perhaps jumping the gun. It is odd to analyse an event as it is happening.

BG: Indeed, it is odd, but in a way it was also a case of striking the iron while it's hot. I think it was very positive. One can assume that, say, artists or anthropologist that have studied history know these symbols, but the public does not and one sensed in conversation that people were thankful for the insight, while local history was being created.

As for the saucepan revolution and its symbolism; the acts of destruction and vandalism had an interesting way of escalating, from being playful-slash-serious at first, ultimately reaching a plateau that produced what I think are some of the best artworks of 2009; the paint that was spattered over bankers' houses. It was like a test, crossing the threshold of destruction, a primal scream.

-Is Skapofsi, the activist group that declared responsibility, then collectively the artist of the year?

BG: I suppose so, for the risk of sounding totally banal. Such happenings – the paint spatter, the voting booth defecator – they may be interpreted in an artistic context, and they do evoke some very interesting thoughts if you approach them in that manner. They are moving and defy convention and definition; they aren't strictly political acts, nor are they strictly works of art – they are both and they are neither. Maybe these are the most interesting ways in which art and daily life collided in 2009? The acts are certainly provoking, and they force ones inner rebel into dialogue with ones sense of morality and anger, and curiosity.

A part of what is interesting to me about the new level of activism in Iceland is the discussion it evokes about the crossing of the private/public threshold. It is interesting that at the same time the personal space of the bankers was violated against with paparazzi photos in gossip magazines such as *Séð og Heyrt*, they can now not be touched.

BETTERING REYKJAVÍK

-How about the field of art itself. What significant things went on in 2009?

BG: I feel it was a year of art festivals, so to speak. It displayed thoroughly that people prefer a diverse range of culture, and the times of one or two festivals being able to serve everyone are behind us. I remember a time when one could have attended every concert, theatrical performance and art exhibition in Reykjavík – this is now impossible and I think that this contributes to a better quality of life.

One festival I was really impressed with was the ArtFart festival; many of the participants are newly graduates from art school and some of them are still studying. It is a very cross-disciplinary festival that displays the works of people that have in many instances explored different regions than the market-arts inhabit. It was an exciting festival.

HJ: As for stand-alone exhibitions,

I greatly enjoyed the fact that Ásmundur Ásmundsson displayed his hole at Hafnarhús during the middle of the revolution. The piece was a very in your face manifestation of the turmoil we were experiencing, it was a turd on the base of the bubble years. He dug a deep hole in Klambatrún, filled it with concrete and displayed the negative, the hole of the bubble – a hole in the soul of the nation. The timing was great, too.

BG: A pretty geeky thing that stood out and felt important to me regarding the arts was that our new Minister of Education changed the name of the ministry to 'Ministry of Education and Culture'. I felt that was important and symbolic for a nation that is in part characterised by its culture and national heritage.

There were lots of things that stood out. I also liked the attitude presented in festivals like Sequences, where all emphasis was put on keeping up spirits and energy with ambition and diligence – an urgency to create a bridge between the local and international scene in the field of time based arts.

HJ: Indeed. Sequences managed to bring over international talent despite the situation over here and the whole program seemed very energetic, even though I only witnessed a small part of it. There was less money, yet more drive somehow. Almost an Airwaves-feel to it.

BG: Then there are some things that come to mind because of my various practices in the field. Such as the fact that there was a whole lot of debate coupled with very little actual knowledge on the writing and publishing of a five volume tome on the history of Icelandic art in the 20th century. The discourse has all happened in small cells while very little information is trickling out from the institution that is behind the book, The National Gallery of Iceland, and its writers and editors.

HJ: They initially presented the project saying that there was to be a symposium regarding how to approach our art of the 20th century, where each volume's editor would answer questions and engage in a dialogue with the artistic community. That did not happen – it seems the work happened in a tomb, that it is shrouded in secrecy and silence. It's funny to think that writing of Icelandic art history in the 20th century is being performed in a similar way to the investigation in the bank collapse.

In my opinion, this must be some sort of anachronism.

A LACK OF EDUCATION

-For the general public, arts discourse maybe became most conspicuous in two cases in 2009; the discussion led by Ásmundur Ásmundsson and others about artists and the arts being in need of critical introspection in light of the bubble years and subsequent collapse, and then the outrage over Ragnar Kjartansson's trip to the Venice Biennale, which garnered objections for being a ritzy and expensive act in harsh times, sponsoring an artist to “drink beer and smoke cigarettes for six months.” A lot was written on both subjects...

BG: Well, these are valid questions and topics of discussion, just like anything else our tax money goes towards, but also because it is the first time in a while that the public in Iceland pays attention to such events as the Biennale and our contribution.

When Ragnar's work was being criticized in media, we could have

done with the press treating it like it does every other case, where one point of view is presented and then the opposite one. There is something vital missing in Icelanders' basic art education that made it hard for some to understand what Ragnar was trying to do, and there was a lack of interest among the media in presenting every side to the story.

HJ: It's a good thing Ragnar's model was wearing a Speedo – I'd hate to imagine the local talk if he'd been posing naked for six months. It seems Icelanders have some strange conceptions of art – to many of them; it's confined to being a painting in a frame. I've never painted anything, and then I've had folks coming to my shows asking where the paintings are. Ragnar's statement will fortunately cause a lot of controversy, while something like Yoko Ono's Peace Tower gets everyone ecstatic. To me, this brings some really troubling and interesting ramifications.

Could you name some highs and lows for 2009 regarding the artworld?

HJ: To me, it actually starts when the cables from Channel 2 were cut by flames during the Kryddsild broadcast on December 31st 2008, that was a crucial and historical rupture between media reality and the actual situation in the country. Those first stirs of the saucepan revolution, where the melting pot started boiling together a big Gesamtkunstwerk. This was a huge artistic experience all over downtown Reykjavík, with flames burning bright in every corner. There were some illuminating sparks during the year, but still the atmosphere was rather static. 2009 was the year of the countdown.

BG: I feel it was a year of undercurrent, of undertow, a year of preparation for the arts, were drafts were being made and foundations were being laid... I have no idea what; maybe they're no masterpieces. There was an undercurrent though. It wasn't a very eventful year in the artworld... To me there isn't one particular exhibition/event that sticks out.

HJ: No, that's true. A stone cold estimate doesn't bring up any revolutions in the artworld.

-One final question. Say you encounter a time traveller five years ago that tells you of his plans to visit 2009. He wants to check out some nice shows. Where do you tell him to go?

BG: Uhm...

HJ: Well...

-Alright, let's say a foreign friend had written you a letter last year. He's coming to visit, and he has time to see one exhibition. He's really depending on your advice...

BG: Well, I might take him to the monster exhibition in Bildudalur...

HJ: I would take him for a swim in the ocean, and then to Austurvöllur, to engage in some refreshing Icelandic protesting.

BG: There were no major breakthroughs in the arts this year. Although some artists undoubtedly made personal breakthroughs. This year was more like lava bubbling under the volcano. ☺

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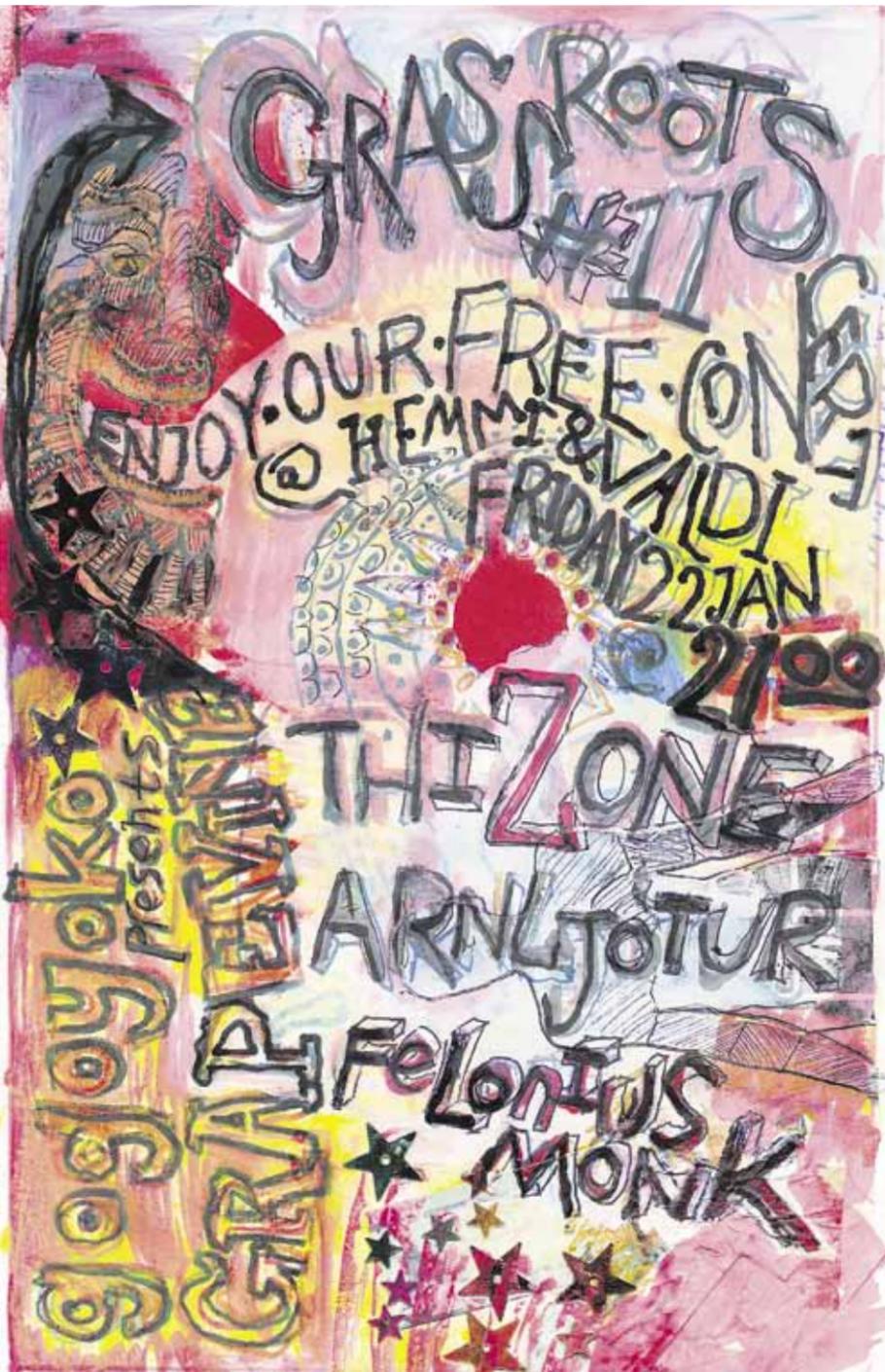


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Whooping It Up In 2009

Grapevine Recaps All Yesterday's Parties

For Icelanders, 2009 was in many ways a god-awful year. Still, there seems to be a hidden link between grim nightlife, gruesome partying and a bad national temperament-rate. So it's easy to assert that Grapevine's favorite pastime – getting shitfaced – had a strong year. A lot of new venues, bars and clubs opened up, and a lot of them went belly up, and in this endless turbulence of opening parties and bankruptcy wakes we stumbled upon some true gems. Alcohol-serving, debauchery-friendly gems.

It's a strenuous task to sum up every shindig triumphs of the year, so we'll have to make do with mentioning only the crème de la crème extravaganzas.

CONSTANT PARTY-THROWERS

First, let's look at the constant parties through the year. Grapevine's winner of the best bar of 2009, *Karamba*, started off with a blast, where experienced hooligans hoofed it alongside their youngster protégés 'til their heels were sore, but as summer drew to a close, the DJs started becoming looser and when a certain kid's birthday-tunes became one of their hottest crowd-pleasers, the seniors seemed to disappear completely, leaving the floor to jumping high-school chums.

Fortunately, *Bakkus* came to the rescue, bringing their notorious afterparties to the table. Once the clock turned 1AM (or 5AM) the good people at Bakkus would lock their doors, pull the drapes and distribute ashtrays, New York-style. Even loudening the music. So, you can imagine how boozy things got.

Festival-wise, things started off rather slow in 2009 as ludicrous concepts such



as 'the January-Detox' and other such nonsense tends to impede things. But as the sun started honoring us with its presence for more than three hours per day, people started itching for a good, carefree bender. Although yours truly wasn't present at the Easter giant in the depravity league, its attendants have bugged me with idiotic stories of the great *Aldrei Fór Ég Suður* festival of 2009: How they got stuck in a locked cab with a Robert de Niro-like boozed up maniac behind the wheel, how they ended up pants-less in some random house or how they received their best-ever blowjob in the trunk of an SUV. So yeah, things took a turn over Easter.

FESTIVAL MAYHEM

After the post-Easter hiatus, the 24-hour sunlight lead to the crazy *Seyðisfjörður*/

Norðfjörður festival combo of *Eistnaflug* and *LungA*. I'd rather not put the glory of the uncrowned wingding king and queen of the East fjords into words but their reign consists amongst others of impelled sea-swimming, underage sex-orgies and a great consumption of alleged narcotics.

As autumn fell, it was as toxic fumes started swirling over the city, inebriating every inhabitant and in the haze we diligently survived the stupor of *RIFF*, *Sequences* and *Iceland Airwaves*. What begun as fancy champagne-sipping fêtes slowly morphed into uncountable smoky afterparties. Don't get me wrong though, this glorious season of muddle is Christmas for us nightlife strongholds – but once the fumes clear, the hangovers last until the actual Christmas.

Finally, we have the big wrap-up: *New Year's Eve*. It's always sort of a disappointment; however realistic you are about the night being overestimated there's always the longing for an epic New Year's tale lurking at the bottom of your heart. The bars were battling for the crowds this year, as every venue advertised more than ever the crazy bash that was going to take place within their perimeters. I avoided being stuck in a bar, so I witnessed a lot of home-cooked craziness, but in the end my companions couldn't resist peeking into Bakkus' first foray into the world of New Year's mania. And it was undeniably a great way to end the party mayhem of 2009 in a champagne pit full of whacks breaking their New Year's vows in a ritual-like frenzy, lighting flares and popping pills. Good Riddance. ☘

Opinion | Art

The Meaning Of Chaos

So much for post-modernism. What next?



As I said last issue: To understand anything, you must understand everything.

In early 2009, I went to an exhibition at the Norwegian National Gallery. The exhibit was devoted to Munch's painting *Det Syke Barn* (The Sick Child). Not only did they show various versions of the picture, but they also exhibited other works from the 1880s in general, other paintings by Munch that dealt with the artist's fascination with sickness and death, and other works that portrayed the dying. A whole room was devoted to the history of medicine during the period. The point was clear: the only way to truly understand a work of art is to understand everything around it, the whole world view of the times at the time of its creation.

Once you start looking for something, you find evidence of it everywhere. A review of *The Oxford History of Western Music* in *The Economist* reads: "We are presented not with a miraculous chain of great composers producing timeless masterpieces from nowhere. Rather, musical works and stylistic movements are presented in context so that, for example, the origins of the dynamic style of Mozart and Haydn are shown to lie in Italian opera buffa rather than in the architecturally static idiom of Bach and Handel."

Acknowledging a master's influences is not exactly a groundbreaking idea. The notion that the artist is impacted by everything, including politics, social issues, even the medical science of his day is, in the current climate, almost revolutionary.

What I am getting at owes more than a little to chaos theory. Let's recap.

The most popular illustration of Chaos Theory is what is known as The Butterfly Effect. A butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil will put in action a tiny current that eventually becomes a tornado in Texas. Locally, we might say that a pebble falling thrown off a mountain could spur an avalanche.

This might be hard to live with, but this is actually how we live our lives. There are moments, such as starting a new job, graduating or getting married, where we realize that nothing will be the same from now on. But every day is filled with little decisions that determine the course of the rest of our lives. The most obvious example is going out on a Friday night, where we may meet someone who will change everyday thereafter. Icelandic bars might be seen as one big drunken example of chaos theory, much more so than for example dating sites, where everything is at least intentional.

There is no master plan. When set in motion, things are often propelled by various unintended forces and have unforeseen consequences. There is no

one directing anything, but that doesn't mean no one is responsible. Quite the opposite. Everything impacts everything else, so the people who make the biggest decisions affect the whole game, whether they intend to or not.

For Icelanders today, such a theory makes sense. Many refer to a "kerfisvilla," a systemic failure, in Iceland's economy. Wherever we localise the initial cause as Milton Friedman's lecture in 1984, Davíð Oddsson coming to power in 1991, the privatisation of the banks after 1999, it is obvious that the results have been far reaching. They altered not just the course of the economy, but even how almost the entire nation thought and acted. It should be equally obvious that none of this was inevitable, that things could have gone in a myriad of different directions. As, indeed, they can today.

Freedom, from the communes to the banks

The implications of this are far reaching, especially in a small society. How we act every day has potentially far-reaching consequences. Someone who runs a company sets the game rules for a large number of people, who in turn influence friends and relatives. People were constantly asked to overstep their moral boundaries, until these eventually faded away. In this way, the free market ideology reached everywhere in the space of two decades and eventually led to collapse.

The core ideal of libertarianism was the idea of personal freedom, something they borrowed from the hippies while shedding all the tiresome peace and love business. The idea of freedom was eventually taken to mean that nobody had to take any responsibility for their actions. You could, say, advertise unhealthy food to children, but the children, or their parents, were responsible if they bought it. You could advertise bogus accounts, but responsibility for putting money into it lay with the consumer. Eventually, this meant you could lie, but if someone believed you, the fault was entirely theirs. Chaos theory takes the opposite view. Since everything is influenced by everything else, the responsibility must lie with the liar.

So, we move from nothing matters, to everything matters. Post-modernism has run its course. It took a hit on 9/11, and eventually collapsed completely with the banks. We need new ideas for a new age. ☘ - VALUR GUNNARSSON

Poetry | Eiríkur Örn Norðdahl

The Death Of A Poem

Poetry is a culture heavily impregnated with the idolisation of poets. Popular knowledge of poetry stops where the anecdotes about poets end and the poetry begins. We remember Rimbaud as the original rockstar, vomiting all over the Paris culture elite. We remember Ginsberg as the mad fairy who blew people in parties and undressed on stage. Li Po as the alcoholic who drowned while trying to embrace the reflection of the moon in the river. Sylvia Plath for being suicidal. Ted Hughes for being her husband. Gertrude Stein for her dinner parties. We remember poets for being crazy, for being loners, bitter or ecstatic, for their failures more than their victories, for their eccentricities more than their attempts at finding common human traits. Not counting a few sound bites etched into the mental gravestones of our mutual consciousness ("I saw the best minds of my generation" ... and "I am large, I contain multitudes" and the like) we hardly ever touch on their poetry.

Having soon spent a decade in Icelandic

literary cliques I can confirm that this is not limited to the society of dead (famous) poets. Literary enthusiasts gossip about living poets and writers, big and small, like there's no tomorrow. And culture-reportage in Iceland usually consists of asking a writer or artist what his or her "dream-weekend" might be, what they have in their pockets, or chit-chat about politics and social matters that may or may not have anything to do with the artist's subject matter. What you soon realise when you first get interviewed for a book you've written is that the reporter in question will, in 9 cases out of 10, not have read your book. Even the critique, the reviews in the newspapers or other media, is inherently focused on the writer's person: he or she has grown, he or she has lost his or her touch, he or she is venturing where no he-or-she has ventured before, he or she is old-fashioned, he or she is revolutionary. He or she should've taken more time. The list of clichés is longer, but as it induces involuntary vomiting in the columnist, I will stop here.

The French literary-critic Roland Barthes wrote a famous essay in the late sixties

entitled "The Death of the Author". In the essay Barthes railed against the idea that we read the text in the context of its author. The text should be free from whoever the author is, says Barthes, and in fact there is no actual "author", only a "scriptor" who produces the work but does not explain it, does not have the (sole) right to unentangle his or her symbolic efforts—or indeed any other part of the work.

This may be a creative way to approach a poem, although perhaps a bit fundamentalist for most people's taste. A poet's life may be relevant to his or her work, either the methods of composition or his or her maternal relationship—whatever it is. Reading is a free world. And poets should maybe not be the ones deciding what readers see in their works or how they should be read. But I am confident that most of my fellow poets would be overjoyed if the media, when discussing the life, methods and opinions of the poet, would be so kind as to do so in the context of the contents of the poet's pockets. ☘



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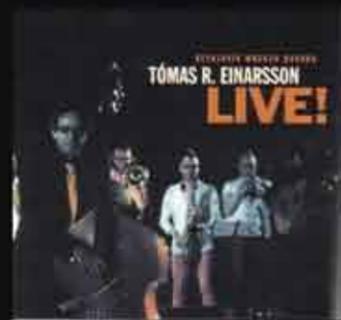
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PAGE 28:

It's a good thing Ragnar's model was wearing a Speedo - I'd hate to imagine the local talk if he'd been posing naked for six months.

Haraldur Jónsson and Birta Guðjónsdóttir discuss the year in Icelandic arts and swimwear.

PAGE 30:

...how they got stuck in a locked cab with a Robert de Niro-like boozed up maniac behind the wheel, how they ended up pants-less in some random house or how they received their best-ever blowjob in the trunk of an SUV.

Yeah, Easter in Ísafjörður sounds alright.

PAGE 10:

In a matter of weeks the paper turned into a vehicle for Oddsson and his cronies, the subscribers disappeared in droves and now little remains of the old prestige. This is not only a battle for political power, but also for what will be written in the history books.

Egill Helgason's inaugural column for the Grapevine is a pretty darn good read...

PAGE 20:

Davíð Oddsson is the only person who comes with flying colours out of the Icelandic debacle. He is the only one who resisted the oligarchs that contributed so much to the downfall of Iceland. Well-known (or notorious) media personalities like Egill Helgason, for example, did not want to take sides in the 2004 struggle between Davíð Oddsson and the oligarchs.

...so is Hannes Hólmsteinn Gissurarson's commentary on 2009.

PAGE 26:

Horrifying and tasteless, just what Iceland deserves.

And Sindri Eldon's number one Icelandic record of 2009 is...



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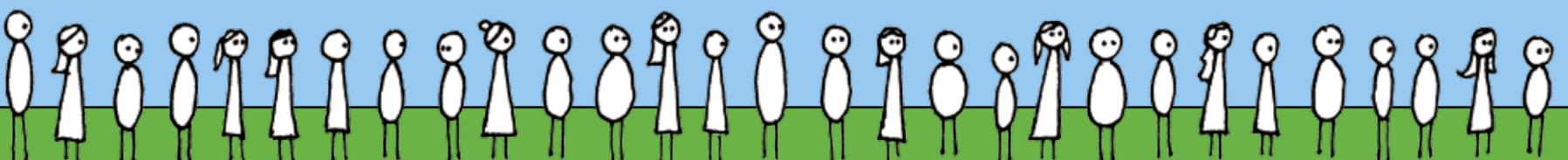
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