



# *The* REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE



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THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LIFE, TRAVEL & ENTERTAINMENT IN ICELAND

IN THE ISSUE Issue 7 • 2011 • **June 3 - 16** 2011

+ COMPLETE CITY LISTINGS - INSIDE!

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OH NO!

Iceland:  
Successfully  
trolling the rest of the  
world since (at least) 1000 BC

People usually don't fret when Iceland's most active volcano, Grímsvötn, starts spewing a little lava. After all, it happens every few years—volcanic activity is a fact of life on our remote rock in the North-Atlantic, and has been since way before any life forms made it there. When Grímsvötn did its usual thing last week, however, people got pretty spooked... and who can blame them, what with last year's Eyjafjalladoodadodahecronöküll troubles and all? We report what went down, and share some interesting eruption truths. **Page 19**



## The Reykjavík Grapevine

Hafnarstræti 15, 101 Reykjavík  
[www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is)  
[grapevine@grapevine.is](mailto:grapevine@grapevine.is)

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**EDITOR:**  
Haukur S Magnússon / [haukur@grapevine.is](mailto:haukur@grapevine.is)  
**JOURNALIST:**  
Anna Andersen / [anna@grapevine.is](mailto:anna@grapevine.is)  
**EDITORIAL:**  
+354 540 3600 / [editor@grapevine.is](mailto:editor@grapevine.is)  
**ADVERTISING:**  
+354 540 3605 / [ads@grapevine.is](mailto:ads@grapevine.is)  
**PUBLISHER:**  
Hilmar Steinn Grétarsson / [hilmar@grapevine.is](mailto:hilmar@grapevine.is)  
+354 540 3601 / [publisher@grapevine.is](mailto:publisher@grapevine.is)

#### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

James Ashworth  
Haukur Már Helgason  
Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson  
Paul Fontaine  
Madeleine T.  
Anna Solé Sans  
Marc Vincenz  
Bob Cluness  
Vanessa Schipani  
Valur Gunnarsson  
Birkir Fjalal Viðarsson  
Ragnar Egilsson  
Egill Helgason  
Sindri Eldon  
Ellen Blumenstein

#### EDITORIAL INTERNS:

Maroesjka Lavigne / [maroesjka@grapevine.is](mailto:maroesjka@grapevine.is)  
José Angel Hernández García / [jose@grapevine.is](mailto:jose@grapevine.is)  
S. Alessio Tummolillo / [alessio@grapevine.is](mailto:alessio@grapevine.is)

#### ON-LINE NEWS EDITOR

Paul Fontaine / [paul@grapevine.is](mailto:paul@grapevine.is)

#### ART DIRECTOR:

Hörður Kristbjörnsson / [hoddi@grapevine.is](mailto:hoddi@grapevine.is)

#### DESIGN:

Páll Hilmarsson / [pallih@kaninka.net](mailto:pallih@kaninka.net)

#### PHOTOGRAPHER:

Hörður Sveinsson / [hordursveinsson.com](mailto:hordursveinsson.com)

#### SALES DIRECTOR:

Adalsteinn Jörundsson / [adalsteinn@grapevine.is](mailto:adalsteinn@grapevine.is)

Guðmundur Rúnar Svansson / [grs@grapevine.is](mailto:grs@grapevine.is)

Helgi Þór Harðarson / [helgi@grapevine.is](mailto:helgi@grapevine.is)

#### DISTRIBUTION MANAGER:

Þórður Guðmundur Hermannsson

[distribution@grapevine.is](mailto:distribution@grapevine.is)

#### PROOFREADER:

Jim Rice

#### PRESS RELEASES:

[listings@grapevine.is](mailto:listings@grapevine.is)

#### SUBMISSIONS INQUIRIES:

[editor@grapevine.is](mailto:editor@grapevine.is)

#### SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES:

+354 540 3605 / [subscribe@grapevine.is](mailto:subscribe@grapevine.is)

#### GENERAL INQUIRIES:

[grapevine@grapevine.is](mailto:grapevine@grapevine.is)

#### FOUNDERS:

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

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Illustration: Sveinbjörn Pálsson  
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 **The Reykjavík Grapevine**  
Issue 7 – 2011

## 2

**Editorial |** Haukur S. Magnússon

# WTF! FISHING QUOTA SYSTEM?

## Haukur's 41st Editorial

Four years ago, I wrote and researched a monstrous article that probably none of you read ('The Crazy World of the Quota System (somewhat) Explained', issue 11 2007). You likely didn't read it because it purported to be an exploration-slash-explanation of 'the crazy world of Iceland's fishing quota system', it was really long and technical at times, and Iceland's fishing quota system is not a very interesting topic to most of you (in fact, most of you have probably stopped reading by now).

(Sidenote: if you are an Icelander and the fishing quota system isn't interesting to you, more power to you, but do keep in mind that—regardless of the 'creative industries' (i.e. CCP's) contribution—fisheries and how they are managed are pivotal to how life on this island will evolve, and by ignoring this you are basically ignoring every other issue that your might or should care deeply about. It all goes back to fishing).

However, as an Icelander, not being interested in the fishing quota system, how it works, who it benefits, who it affects negatively and how it does all those things is fairly understandable. It has been a heavily debated point of contention for this nation for well over two decades, and it is usually discussed, no, shouted about in a most boring, technical, complicated and obfuscated manner. A complex, million year old argument that people like to engage in by shouting unclear technicalities and odd sounding words at one another? Sign me up! But not really.

Why am I bringing this up? Well, Iceland's government is currently trying to restructure the quota system in an ostensibly revolutionary manner. The proposed change is far removed from what the parties in charge promised in their campaign literature and speeches, but it seemingly still goes further in changing the controversial system towards something that might at some point prove superior to the one we have been embroiled in for far too long.

I say 'seemingly' since no one appears very sure of what it means exactly, and the opposing parties in this debate (the government and The Federation of Icelandic Fishing Vessel Owners, respectively) are both fighting heated PR campaigns to ensure their interests—the government wants people to think that it is keeping its campaign promises and being all hardcore (because this will maybe make people vote for it again) and TFOIFVO wants people to think the sky will fall if the system is changed (because it will mean this ultra-rich-ultra-powerful interest group will stand to lose a lot of its money and power, which is funny because if there's one thing they've proved repeatedly over the last few decades is that they are horrible businessmen that deserve neither money nor power).

I won't claim to fully comprehend the quota system, and I won't claim to fully comprehend the implications of the proposed bill (again, finding a neutral assessment of it is really difficult, because—like in so many cases nowadays—the only people that seem to care have much vested interest in how it is perceived. We need a journalist, stat!). However, I will make some claims about my own position, based on what I have learned from being raised in a small fishing community and also from following news and stuff, and also having my fishing captain grandfather yell at me about it. In Q and A form. Right now. It's what I think.

#### Is a fishing quota system necessary?

Of course! There is a limited amount of fish in the ocean (despite what you might have heard), and if we plan on going about harvesting it for food and profit, we will need to ensure that we don't, like, catch every fish out there. That might render fish extinct! Of course we need to control how much is caught annually, and we need to do this based on sound scientific research and evidence.

#### What's wrong with the current fishing quota system?

Nothing much. But then, so much. The problem isn't that we have a system to control how much fish we fish, the problem lies in the execution.

#### What's wrong with the execution then?

Well, firstly, the way the quota was handed out in the beginning is, at best, suspect. Perpetual rights to uncaught

fish in the ocean were handed over to fisheries and vessels in the early eighties based on previous years' 'fishing experience'. If you wanted to start your own fishery after that, you had to buy or rent quota from the folks it had been allotted to initially.

#### Didn't that make quota disproportionately valuable compared to caught and processed fish?

Yes, but that maybe wasn't a problem. Until 1990, when they made the quota into a tradeable, mortgageable asset, effectively creating a 'stock market' for the sale and renting of fishing quota. Picture this: you own a fishery and some trawlers. And a lot of debt. Their total value is x million ISK, and your total debt is double that. You now suddenly have an intangible asset ("the right to catch, process and sell an x amount of fish annually) that you were given in the early eighties and that you may now mortgage, rent or sell for very tangible rewards. This is your personal property; the fishermen, workers and community who contributed to the 'fishing experience' that earned you the quota in the first place have no claim to it. You may do with it as you will.

#### And I am free to sell, rent or mortgage it as I will? I can sell it sans boat or fishery or staff?

You sure can! In fact, you can sell it without paying off the debt of your fishery, which will be unable to function without the quota and will have to rent overpriced quota in order to operate, maybe from the very people you sold it to!

#### And I get to keep the money?

Yeah. Pretty much. It isn't heavily taxed. There's now a nominal 'resource tax', but it's... not very high. You can sell that quota and move to a warmer climate, leaving the community that fostered you to wither away. Or! You can invest in Reykjavík real estate development, shopping malls and banks (interestingly enough, almost none of the infamous 'quota sellers' went on to invest in the communities that fostered them!) You can even use it to buy a bank and transform it into a hedge fund if you want! In fact, neoliberal mogul Hannes Hölmsteinn Gissurarson has remarked many times that making the quota into a tradeable asset was a prerequisite of the financial bubble we all know and love (in the aforementioned article: "It has created a lot of capital, and is one of the explanations for the accumulation of capital abroad [...] the fish stocks [that] were a common good before, and therefore valueless, as all common goods are, became a private good, and got valuable").

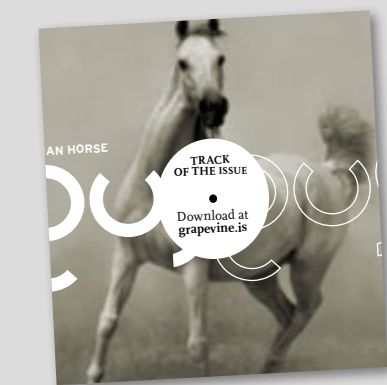
#### Sounds great! I've also heard that this makes fishing more efficient, as the quota accumulates to those best fit to management, and thus creates more value for society. What a great deal!

Well, define value. I keep thinking back to 2007, when a couple of Norwegian officials visited Iceland to investigate the transferable quota system (Norwegians already have a fishing quota system, their quota's just not 'transferable'). There had been a lot of pressure in Norway to adopt the Icelandic system of tradeability, and these guys were sent here to research if it was a good idea.

After travelling the country for months, conducting their research, they were interviewed by RÚV radio show Spégillinn on their way home. They were asked: "Will you recommend Norway adopt our system?" Their reply: "No. While we have discerned that it does create a lot of capital, and we are interested in capital, we are also interested in keeping our small fishing towns populated. We feel that is efficient and valuable, too. If we were to recommend it, we would make sure that quota trading would be limited to larger fisheries and vessels selling to smaller ones, as it seems to have accumulated in a few large fisheries in Iceland. And this seems to have had a negative effect on your fishing towns".

#### So what you're saying is...

A system to control how much fish we catch is very important. Creating an intangible, yet tradeable, rentable and mortgageable commodity is not. It might appear efficient



#### TRACK OF THE ISSUE

### GUSGUS ARABIAN HORSE SAMPLER

Download at [www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is)

It appears the verdict is in: with 'Arabian Horse', beloved electro legends GusGus have crafted a masterpiece of a record, with mesmerising tunes, stomping rhythms and some hypnotic melodies. Folks are already claiming it's 2011's strongest ALBUM OF THE YEAR contender thus far (with only FM Belfast on the horizon posing a threat when 'I Don't Want To Sleep' drops).

Indeed, Grapevine reviewer Ragnar Egilsson calls it "a perfect anthemic pop record" in his five star review, which you may read on page 24 of this issue. At the Grapevine offices, we've been blasting 'Arabian Horse' since we got our advance copy a few weeks ago—and we're not the least interested in changing the playlist or turning it down yet.

For this issue's TRACK, we decided to ask GusGus master Biggi Veira to make us a medley of the album, so all you readers can hear what the fuss is about. Biggi sat down and seamlessly mixed the ten 'Dark Horse' tracks into a smoothly flowing sampler. Download and listen up, preferably on some nice headphones.

to harvest and process all our fish in a single monstrous and automated freezer trawler, but it really isn't! By that same logic, it would be extremely efficient if all Icelanders lived in a single apartment complex in Breiðholt (how much would we save on heating and transportation costs? A lot!).

#### So what's being changed now?

I'm not sure. Maybe we'll have an article on it in our next issue. Maybe not.

#### URGENT CORRECTION!!!

We've made a huge mistake. In last issue's super awesome GUIDE TO EVERY BAR IN REYKJAVÍK, we erroneously reported the prices of 'Beatles-bar' Obladi Oblada. We also neglected to mention the fact that they indeed have a pretty awesome 'happy hour' every day of the week, and that it starts earlier than any other 'happy hour' we know of.

The correct prices for Obladi Oblada are as follows:  
BEER: 650 ISK // SHOTS: 650 // SINGLE + MIXER: 900  
HAPPY HOUR: 500 ISK beers, 600 ISK shots, 800 ISK single + mixer.

They also asked us to tell you that they regularly host some legends of Icelandic music (last week they had Engilbert Jensen!) playing Beatles-tunes in their own style. Every Thursday has the reportedly excellent house band performing along with special guest stars. "It is a must-visit for every fan of the Beatles or good music", they say. Sorry for our errors, Obladi Oblada. We have spanked the reporter in question.



ÍSLENSKA  
**HAMB  
ORGARA  
FABRIK  
KAN**  
2010

## BE SQUARE AND BE THERE

Gullfoss and Geysir are surely a must-see in Iceland, but neither is something you eat. That's why we have 13 brilliant and creative hamburgers at Hamborgarafabrikkan (The Icelandic Hamburger Factory).

Hamborgarafabrikkan would eat Hard Rock Café for breakfast, but since there is no Hard Rock Café in Iceland we eat our original Lamburger with the wonderful Icelandic lamb.

The Reykjavík Grapevine awarded Hamborgarafabrikkan the **"Best Specialty Burger 2010"**. It made us happy. Because we aim to please. That's why we only use 100% fresh high-quality ingredients, directly from the Icelandic nature.

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# Sour grapes and stuff

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

## 4 Letters

### MOST AWESOME LETTER:

I want congratulate you and Grapevine for all articles about Medhi case. Really great! I hope with all my heart that his case will be solved soon. It is really so sad! I feel me bad for him.

When my case will be solved completely (I still am waiting for my work permit and for the Parliament decisions- also my daughter had not the same answers than me) , when everything will be solved and I hope it will be until beginning June, I will turn my page open for support other cases like Medhi case . It will turn a page for changes in UTL.

Dear Colleagues of The Reykjavik Grapevine

I posted to the essential proof of "worldwide children are brainwashed", and "correspondings of the United Nations and Japan." But the article was not normally seen. I would like to apologize for you.

Please visit the repaired website: <http://st-nagaya.jp/doom1.pdf>

Yours sincerely,

Nagaya Osamu

Dear Nagaya,

thank you for your nice letter. Worldwide children are brainwashed indeed. Those kids! We can't really understand your article as its in Japanese, but maybe some of our readers do and will write back to inform us? That would be cool! Japanese speaking readers—do your worst!

Dear Rebecca,

i don't know your direct email address, so i hope this will find you - somehow.

I have read your piece on how rapes are treated in Iceland. It was very brave of you to include your personal experience, to tell the world that you are one of the victims. Dear, you don't know how lucky you are: you have been raped only once, by the person you did not know. If you decided to make charges, it would be quite easy to prove it was a rape.

I had been raped by my (ex?) husband many times before i decided to make charges against him. And so the police did the questioning - first me, than him. He said i wanted it every single time, that i was purposely making him horny with perfumes and that i just made it all up cos i want the custody. And so my case is standing somewhere (i don't remember the name of it, some gæsla), and the lawyers need to decide if it will go to the court or not. That was last October - nothing had happen since. So everything is fine (on the paper).

You can imagine what could be said (made up) about my mental health when i had let the same man to rape me so many times. The courts are of course far busier with more important cases than of one crazy foreigner whom no one believes anyway. Well, needed to say, the police believed me, and there were some really wonderful guys who are on my side, they had even disciplined my (ex) husband so well he did not raped me again anymore (for who needs rape when there are so many other forms of violence).

Maybe you think i am weird to tell you my story, but you had inspired me: i just thought that if you decide to put some victims together, maybe our voice would be louder (even louder than your family name) and maybe we could achieve something. Of course, i don't expect any miracles.

Anyway, thanks for reading

Dearest you,

reading about your plight and struggle is hard, as was reading Rebecca's story, as is reading every single account out there of the brutal violence and injustice that our society for some reason seems to condone.

### MOST AWESOME LETTER FREE GRAPEVINE TEE HEE HEE!



We've got a new prize for all your MOST AWESOME LETTERS. And it's a scorcher! For this issue, whoever sends THE MOST AWESOME LETTER will receive a cool new Reykjavik Grapevine T-shirt, featuring the majestic G that adorns our cover. So you should make sure to keep writing us fun and/or interesting letters.

This new Grapevine tee surely is the shiznit (whatever that means)! It was designed by our very own art director man, Hörður Kristbjörnsson, and it's good for posing in front of a mirror, impressing folks with your impeccable taste or picking up men or women of all ages (no minors). DON'T PANIC if your letter wasn't picked AWESOME LETTER. You can still get a tee for a low, low price over our website, [www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is)

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

By the way my concerts in June

Café Haiti - Each Saturday - 21:00 - June - 1.000 kr entrance fee

Thank you so much,

Best Regards,  
Jussanam

Dear Jussanam,

Wow. That's a nice letter to get, especially on such a sad occasion. Thank you for writing it, and for enriching our culture with your

Our hearts go out to you, and to our Rebecca, and to everyone else that's been raped, molested, harrassed or otherwise abused.

This needs to end. Now.

Thanks for your letter, and for sharing your experience. Hopefully it will open some eyes.

LOVE

Re: The Reykjavik Grapevine Newsletter May 2011  
hello grapevine!

i am always very happy to receive news from you, even though i dont live in Iceland at all. i guess to me Icelandic news are a good barometer for some sort of possibilities in this world.

i wanted to be in touch with you for a while as i am launching now my nomadic label, dedicated to various musicians around the world, this week - its named PETITES PLANETES - and it's here for you: <http://petitesplanetes.cc/>

you might remember someone wrote an article about my work while i was invited for the last RIFF, this past september - <http://www.grapevine.is/Art/ReadArticle/Its-My-Responsibility-To-Focus-on-Unknown-Bands> - and while i was in the country, i did a few films with local musicians - from Retro Stefson to Pascal Pinon to Sin Fang to Gyda & Kria Valtysdottir... and then i met up with Olof Arnalds in NY, and its the movie and soundpiece which opens my new project <http://petitesplanetes.cc/volume/olof-arnalds> all the other films will be online soon, in the next 2 months

so, if you have time to have a look, an ear, and maybe even mention it on your website at some point, i would be very happy

i hope you enjoy, and good almost summer to you

Vincent Moon

Dear Vincent Moon (!),

wow, though. We're all flattered. An artist we admire subscribes to our newsletter? That's pretty cool! We should subscribe to yours in turn. Do you have a newsletter?

Anyway, yes, we'll try our best to help you publicise your new label. It seems like a great idea, and the videos we've seen thus far have all been excellent. And thank you for your nice letter, too. Good almost summer back!

DO YOU HEAR THAT, READERS? VINCENT MOON SUBSCRIBES TO OUR NEWSLETTER! WHY DON'T YOU?

When king of universe talk to a person, he familiars to secret of universe; he knows what thing belongs to him. He gets calm. He knows everything belong to him in this world and the other world. He lives without any stress in this world. He can talk to king of universe and enjoy from him. King of universe loves him and he loves him too. Mohammad Farnush  
<http://iccpsew.webs.com>

Dear Mohammad,

thank you for your letter. It's really sort of wonderful.

music and your joy.

We look forward to the day your case will be completely solved, as well as Medhi's case. We also yearn for the day Medhi and other asylum seekers won't have to suffer UTL and the government's seemingly random and painstakingly slow decision-making processes (unless they're dating an MP-spawn, in which case the decision-making process quits being random and slow).

Also drop by our office whenever you feel like it for your free tee-hee-hee.

re: whaling article

As a vegetarian and animal-rights supporter I applaud Sigursteinn Másson's advocacy against whaling. I do not, however, find it strange that tourists might go directly from a whale-watching tour to a feed of whale meat at a local restaurant. Many tourists who are thrilled to go horse-riding here are probably very happy to go off to fill up on animal protein immediately afterwards, maybe even colt meat, and people who think it's wonderful to enjoy a farm-stay holiday or to take their kids to the petting zoo wouldn't think twice about a steak or hamburger for dinner.

Unlike the animals in a little fabel I wrote a few years ago, published in an anthology by the Svenska institutet, animals in our all-too real world don't share telepathy, don't know we are out to kill them, don't know we are laying waste to our common biosphere and can't fight back. There is no hope for the whales or any other wild creatures. Or for us.

Kristófer Jónatansson

Dear Kristófer,

thank you for your letter. Although, it's kind of depressing, really. Man, you got us all bummed out. No hope? Gosh, that's harsh!

Look, it might seem like humans as a collective or species have never really solved any of their mutual problems or reverted from any of the cruel and barbaric behaviour that somehow defines us. But we have, though! Really!

Look at it this way: you are doing it right now! With your support of animal rights and vegetarianism! You are a beacon of hope, you are the change you want to see. Perhaps the rest of us will catch up with you one day, perhaps not, but the way to win your cause support means hyping it to oblivion, not downplaying it. Right?

Thanks again for your letter. And good luck. And hope and change and stuff.

Hello. More than 30 years, collect newspapers on paper and I have over 6000 different titles. Many would be glad if you send me a newspaper to my collection. I wish you much health, happiness and professional success. My mailing address is: Yordan Kirilov, Tzar osvoboditel 14, Ihtiman 2050, BULGARIA

Dear Yordan,

thank you for your letter. We will surely send you something for your collection. And we return your wishes of health, happiness and professional success.

If any of you readers reading this have any cool newspapers or magazines to share with our friend Yordan, then you should send him some, too. It would make his day, and what's better than making someone's day? NOTHING, that's what.

# Reykjavik

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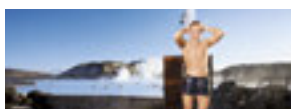
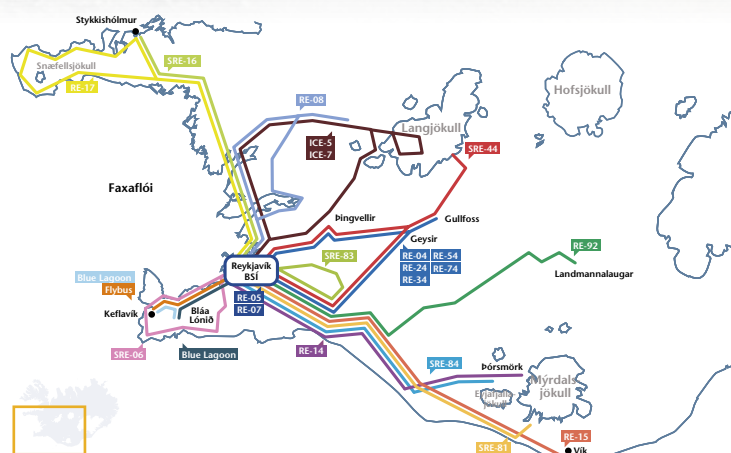
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# ICELAND’S POLAR BEAR POLICY

*Minister for the Environment Svandís Svavarsdóttir interviewed*

**The fourth polar bear in three years landed in Iceland last month. This one swam ashore in Iceland’s remote Westfjord region and was spotted roaming the countryside of Hælavík. Much like its predecessors, the bear was promptly shot and killed.**

While polar bears have never been welcome in Iceland, they have until recently been a rare visitor. When the pair arrived in 2008, it had been two decades since a polar bear stepped foot in the country. As the polar ice cap melts, however, an increasing number of polar bears are drifting south via iceberg and inevitably some of them wind up swimming ashore to Iceland. Given that these majestic creatures are now considered an endangered species by countries like the United States and Canada, Iceland’s actions have been quite controversial.

In response to the latest killing, members of The Best Party stepped up their private campaign to bring a polar bear to the zoo. The government, however, has left many wondering about the official game plan. In the following interview, Minister for the Environment Svandís Svavarsdóttir explains Iceland’s polar bear policy and discusses the viability of alternatives.

**Iceland killed another polar bear last month. Can you explain the rationale behind killing the bears that wind up swimming ashore to Iceland?**

The law says that polar bears are protected unless they pose a threat to humans or livestock. That threat has been cited in cases of polar bears that have been shot. Polar bear landings in Iceland have been rare in recent decades; when a bear was spotted in Skagi in 2008 there had not been a sighting on land for over 20 years. It is therefore not a common occurrence, and always causes a stir and calls for quick action by local authorities.

**Who has the final say when it comes down to it? Who says, okay we have to kill this polar bear?**

It is in the hands of local authorities responsible for people’s safety. Three of the four bears killed in Iceland this century have been shot by local police,

## Words

[Anna Andersen](#)

## Photo

[Hörður Sveinsson](#)

which have the authority to do that if they judge it to be a threat. One was shot by a local farmer, which spotted an animal near a small town, before authorities arrived on the scene.

**What about international pressure to stop killing polar bears? For instance, the US has put the polar bear on an endangered species list. How do you feel about that?**

Polar bears are endangered, mainly because of the long-term threat to their sea-ice habitat due to climate change. The conservation of polar bears is governed by the International Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears, which is administered by the five nations whose territory is inhabited by polar bears: Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Norway, Russia and the USA. There are some estimated 22.000 wild polar bears in the world; yet, hundreds are killed every year in a legal way under the confines of that agreement. In that context it is clear that the fate of stray polar bears in Iceland has no effect on the survival of the species, although we can and should have concern over the individual animals that come ashore here.

**Some argue that they should be tranquillised and shipped off to Greenland. Is that an option? Have Iceland and Greenland communicated on this?**

The Ministry for the Environment has contacted authorities in Greenland regarding this option and commissioned an expert group to study that option, as well as others. Greenlandic authorities allow the hunting of about 50 polar bears in East Greenland each year, which they deem to be a safe limit for the stock. They have told us that they fail to see the rationale behind shipping stray polar bears alive from Iceland to Greenland, given that this is a rare occurrence and has no effect on the species and its survival. Less than 1% of the bears of the East Greenland



stock that have been shot in the last decade have been killed in Iceland. If stray bears are shipped back alive, we would have to ensure that they would be transported away from a threat of being legally shot in Greenland.

The expert group concluded that the chances of catching a polar bear alive were highly uncertain due to a number of circumstances. It requires that the bear can be quickly contained so it poses no threat, that a trained crew with a tranquiliser gun arrives quickly on the scene in a helicopter, that the bear does not enter the sea after being hit with a tranquiliser, and that it can be quickly put in a robust cage. Then it needs to be checked if the bear is healthy enough for a long transport (two of the three bears did not fit that bill) and then it needs to be transported quickly over a long distance.

**What’s the plan for the next polar bear landing then?**

The local authorities will make the first call. People’s safety must come first. An action team of relevant authorities will be called together in the event of a bear sighting to coordinate efforts. If local authorities deem the bear not to be a threat and the animal is contained alive within a safe parameter, attempts can be made to catch it alive and ship it to Greenland. It must be noted, of course, that the expert team concluded that the chances of a successful rescue operation are highly uncertain.

**What do you think of ‘The Reykjavík Polar Bear Project’, which is against killing the bears and claims to target yourself and Prime Minister Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir?**

I welcome grassroots movements that

show concern for the environment and wild animals. We need more of them and we need stronger environmental NGOs in Iceland. Of course, I would like them to study the context and challenges that a successful polar bear rescue operation faces.

**So do you think Jón Gnarr can successfully bring a polar bear to the zoo?**

He can if he wants to. The logical way to go about this is to ask one of the five countries that have polar bear populations, or foreign zoos, about the animal and then prepare a spacious and safe den for it. It seems like an odd way to get an animal for a zoo to wait for a stray bear that could come next month but perhaps not for another decade or two. And then hope that a mission to catch it alive succeeds. And then start preparing a decent den—nobody wants to see a majestic animal like a polar bear confined in a small cage.

But of course the Mayor of Reykjavík also promised to break his campaign promises. He will be a man of his word in one way or another. 🐻

## The Reykjavík Polar Bear Project

The Reykjavík Polar Bear Project is a non-profit headed by Best Party Mayor Jón Gnarr, Best Party Manager Heiða Kristín Helgadóttir and arctic law expert Húni Hallsson. While Jón Gnarr campaigned on the promise to bring a polar bear to the zoo, the group officially launched the project, [www.reykjavikpolarbearproject.org/](http://www.reykjavikpolarbearproject.org/) after the latest polar bear was shot and killed in Iceland’s remote Westfjord region two weeks ago.

The goal is raise 300 million ISK to build a polar bear sanctuary at The Reykjavík Zoo & Family Park and arctic research centre to study the impact that global warming is having on the area. “As polar ice melts, the polar bear’s habitat shrinks and older bears are ousted”, Best Party Manager Heiða Kristín Helgadóttir said. “The bear that came this May, however, was far younger than usual, which speaks to the gravity of the situation. This one could definitely have been rehabilitated”.

## More Asylum Seeker Woes

**We need to get this mess under control ASAP**

Last issue we reported that Iranian asylum seeker Mehdi Kavyanpoor had walked into the Red Cross building and threatened to set himself on fire if his case—in limbo for seven years—was not resolved. Unfortunately, there are now more asylum seeker woes to report.

After the Directorate of Immigration refused to grant him political asylum in Iceland, Palestinian asylum seeker Mousa Sharif Al Jaradat went on a five-day hunger strike, and then slit his wrist in a suicide to attempt.

When Mousa called the Grapevine

office on May 24, he told us that he fled Norway four months ago, after receiving death threats from the Mossad. He began a hunger strike that day, after learning that authorities were going to send him back to Norway. Days later he tried to take his life.

In an interview with local newspaper DV, Mousa said he lost his right eye in a bombing by the Israeli Defense Forces when he was fourteen years old. Backing his claims, Mousa had documentation from the Saint John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem.

“A signed letter by ophthalmologist Humam Rishmawl stated that Mousa was repeatedly prevented from getting hospital treatment due to being listed as an army rebel”, DV also reported. “In the doctor’s letter it was requested that Mousa be allowed to leave so that he could receive proper treatment”.

Political asylum—the kind that Mousa and Mehdi are after—has been

granted sparingly in Iceland. Until 2008, only one such case can be found on record. Furthermore, as Paul Nikolov reported on [www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is): “According to the latest statistics from the Red Cross, most asylum seekers in Iceland come from Muslim countries such as Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. However, between 2006 and 2009, 57.1% of asylum seekers who were granted refugee status were self-identified Christians—only 20% were Muslim”.

Mousa, much like Medhi who was put into a mental institute after his suicide attempt, is now in custody. 🇮🇸

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# INSPIRED BY ICELAND?

*Was ‘the pots and pans revolution’ imported by Spain?*

Iceland and Spain are about as dissimilar as chalk and cheese. However, the two nations have lately found they might have a thing or two in common. Namely, they have come to share a common point of view about their politicians: That they are rubbish.

So, if in the fall of 2008 most Icelanders rose up against their corrupt political class, three years later (better late than never) the Spaniards mimic those claims against their politicians. Since May 15, thousands of people have taken to the streets in a wave of demonstrations all over the country. The main demand: A real democracy.

## HOW TO COOK AN ANGRY RIOT

The easiest way to cook a fresh dish of annoyed citizens is to mix the proper ingredients into the pot.

First of all, add a big dose—a really big dose—of unemployment. Icelanders tend to get upset about their unemployment rate (around 7%) but perhaps they don't know that in the country where Cervantes was born, the situation is a bit worse. In Spain, the overall unemployment level reaches 21%, which means that five million people, who should be earning their bread and butter every morning, instead kill their time in the park feeding pigeons. What's more, that rate grows to 45% amongst people under 25, the highest recorded unemployment rate for young people in any developed country.

If this is not enough, the average lucky Spaniard (that strange animal in danger of extinction who is able to find a job) has to deal with another beast; work that is insecure and poorly compensated for, especially for younger generations that in many cases are forced to live with their parents until the age of 35.

By now you might be wondering what politicians are doing to overcome that unsustainable situation. Well, not much. They are precisely the great social cancer in the eyes of the people rallying in the streets. Most of the political class seems to be more concerned about helping bankers instead of common people and an important number of politicians from the two main parties—right wing Partido Popular and socialist PSOE—are suspected of being corrupt, and furthermore most of them are still holding their public offices in a matter-of-fact way (more than a hun-

dred politicians that were seeking election on May 22 were also under judicial investigation, most of them belonging to PP and PSOE).

## WHERE IT ALL STARTED

One of the biggest problems citizens have when they are surrounded permanently by political scandals, corruption, incompetent politicians and greedy, unscrupulous bankers, is they tend to view this situation as natural and eventually get used to it.

A spark is needed to wake up people from their sleep. In this case it came from an old Frenchman called Stéphane Hessel, who at ninety-three years, has managed to encourage citizens to a peaceful insurrection with his bestselling pamphlet titled Indignez-vous! ("Time for Outrage!"). This old member of the French resistance and Holocaust concentration camp survivor has reached the youth with his passionate writing about the risks of being indifferent to political issues, urging a non-violent insurrection against the powers of capitalism. The Spanish youngsters, seduced by Hessel's words and with the Icelandic revolution as a model (or their idea of it), have woken up and taken to the streets.

This is the way Democracia Real Ya! ("Real Democracy Now!") was born; a group of citizens fed up with the system, who organised a mass protest on May 15 in Sol, a centric and well-known square in Madrid. But surprisingly the movement didn't stop there, since people decided to stay camped for the whole week, until municipal and local elections on May 22. The gathering became more and more massive, people rallied against the politicians and the bankers under the motto "we are not goods in the hands of politicians and bankers", many people were showing Icelandic flags, chanting: "We want to be Icelanders!" and "If Iceland could, Spain can!". And suddenly, the miracle happened and the rallies spread and became international, with demonstrations in many cities all over the world such as Brussels, Edinburgh, Tokyo, London or even Reykjavík, where Birgitta Jónsdóttir made an emotive speech supporting the Spanish rebellion.

## PRESS EQUALS POLITICS

One of the funniest and peculiar features about Spanish press is its close ties to the main political parties and



large corporations. All the main newspapers in Spain belong to big media groups, each of them supporting a specific party. Independent journalism is almost non-existent. So it's not difficult to guess that most news are biased and focused on propaganda, in an elegant, sort of post-modern way.

Thus, readers can find different impressions depending on which paper they have in their hands. If for the left wing press the rallies mean the anger of the people with the well-known corruption problem of the right party, the press related to the latter claim that it's a movement against the incompetence of the socialist government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. If the people are particularly critical with them, they are only a group of young ruffians and anti-system Bolsheviks.

But nothing is further from the truth, since Democracia Real Ya! states that they are a "non-partisan citizen gathering created and encouraged by Internet and social networks [...] whose unique purpose is to promote open discussion among all those who wish to become involved in the preparation and coordination of joint actions". This movement

consists of the unemployed, pensioners, mothers who want a better future for their children and all sorts of citizens that have something in common: their weariness with the current political and economic system. It's not a rally against a particular government, but an outraged shout against corruption, manipulation and fake democracy.

Toñy García, a 53 years old woman participating in the demonstrations, says: "There are a lot of people but they truly have everything well organised. There's not a drop of alcohol here nor flags related to any party, they pick up the rubbish and keep everything clean, not giving any reason for the police to intervene. They are acting in an intelligent way". Her sister Tere adds: "We are determined not to be sitting there doing nothing. We aren't animals going to the slaughterhouse".

## AND NOW...

The regional elections on May 22 ended with an overwhelming victory of the right-wing Partido Popular over PSOE. That is funny if we consider all these people were fighting for great changes and then the most conservative party

got elected; this seems, to say the least, strange. Samuel González, who has followed the events from the beginning, tries to explain this: "We have to take into account two things. One is the capacity for self-criticism of the left wing voters, that don't doubt in punishing their own party if they do things wrong. The other one is the lack of sensibility against the corruption from those on the right".

Whatever, a feeling of deception has appeared in a part of 'The Outraged'. "The election results show that most people are only concerned with their own welfare rather than a common purpose. This is a sign of absolute short-sightedness", says Lucía Tórnero, a young journalist I spoke to.

But there are also a few who believe that change is still possible and won't resign, like Juana, who thinks that "there's something special in the air in Sol, something that must not be stopped; that makes you think everything is not lost".

JOSÉ ÁNGEL HERNÁNDEZ  
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Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson, a former leader of the Icelandic Social-Democratic Party partly resides in Salobrena, Granada, where he voted in the local elections, and his party (PSOE—Partido Socialista Obrero Español) won an overall majority

News | Maybe local?



# THE POLITICS OF FAILURE?

What’s happening in Spain? What’s happening all over the world?

Normally, local elections in Spain are not big news. Compared with the desperate revolt against tyrants in the Arab world now being acted out on our TV-screens, it looks like small fries.

It is hardly big news if an opposition party makes some gains when a two-terms ruling party has manifestly failed to deal effectively with a major economic crisis, causing massive unemployment and general economic hardship to the people.

One peculiar local result merits attention. In Valencia, the Conservatives offered the voters a list of candidates where all ten in the top seats had been indicted before the elections in a court case, accused of major corruption (for defrauding the public, accepting bribes and falsifying accounts). The crooks won by a landslide. Our own Icelandic Conservatives could easily put up such a list of candidates. Would they win? **WHAT IS THE FUSS THEN?** Well, it is not only that although the ruling party was justly punished, the opposition did not win by a landslide, far from it. Rather it is because a sizeable segment of society, the young, the poor and the excluded, didn’t vote at all.

**WHY?** A frontpage photo in El País says it all. A young man, standing by a protest sign in La Puerta del Sol in Madrid, where hundreds of thousands of people gathered before the elections to vent their frustration, wore a T-shirt with the following statement printed up front: JUVENTUD SIN FUTURO: SIN CASA,

SIN CURRO, SIN PENSIÓN—PERO SIN MIEDO (youth without future, without an apartment, without work, without pension—but without fear).

**WHY VOTE**—if you think it doesn’t matter at all? If you have no confidence in any of the political parties? After all, political parties are the basic instruments of a functioning democracy. But why vote, if you think the political parties are—behind different facades and slogans—all the same?

Well, then—democracy isn’t working—is it? And that is the plain truth and the main lesson of the Spanish elections: Democracy is in crisis. The neo-conservative ideology of the omnipotence of so called free markets has ruled the world for three decades, and has during its rule rendered democracy itself almost impotent. Why vote, if the financial elites that own this world have the power to dictate to politicians what is permissible, and what is not, for the state to do?

For the past thirty years, the neo-con ideology has ruled the world. Its basic postulates—omnipotence of the markets and impotence of the state—are simply incompatible with democracy. This ideology is in practice the political theory of plutocracy—the dictatorship of international capital.

The Economist recently published a survey on the super-rich and the rest of us. Here is their conclusion: The richest 10% control 83% of the world’s assets. Within the elite, the super-rich 80 thousand individuals or so (out of 7 billion humans on EARTH), control the vast majority of the world’s assets. Al-

“The Economist recently published a survey on the super-rich and the rest of us. Here is their conclusion: The richest 10% control 83% of the world’s assets”

though 90% of the world’s adults share between them 17% of total wealth, more than 50% of humanity own nothing at all.

**FINANCIAL WEALTH**, as opposed to the income generated by the real economy, has during those thirty years grown to become more than ten times the world’s GDP. It is, incidentally, the same ratio as the Icelandic banks’ growth beyond our GDP! This vast wealth is controlled by a tiny international elite—although predominantly American. The neo-con ideology is about their rights to profits, to the exclusion of any state action to redistribute wealth. It excludes democracy. And it confronts social democracy, which is about equality. Why then not vote against the plutocracy?

The US originated international financial crisis was caused by the bottomless greed of this financial elite being let loose on the WORLD without the democratic state reining it in through legislation, regulation and supervision. When their avarice had pushed the financial system to the brink of bankruptcy, the state came to the rescue and bailed the bastards out on the presumption that the System had grown “too big to fail”.

Taxpayers had to pick up the bill. With too much debt in their accounts,

many nation-states became dependent on “financial markets” to refinance their debt. Then the owners of capital insisted on risk surcharges on their interest, making the cost of debt-servicing unsustainable. Again, taxpayers have to pick up the bill. So the order of the day is this: Increase your taxation and cut your social expenditures. Money talks, as the Americans say. The “financial markets” have spoken. Why then vote?

**THE WELFARE STATE** is under a continuous onslaught by the forces of international capital, which are using state treasuries as a risk-safe object for their profiteering. The welfare state is the product of many decades of democratic action by people, who wanted to tame “the wild beast” of capitalism and create, through “people’s power”, a stable and just society.

Now all of this is being challenged by the forces of reaction. Is there a new generation ready to take up the challenge? That is what the young and excluded in la Puerta del Sol were groping for. But before they can hope for any success they must for sure learn one hard won lesson by heart: “Know thy enemy”! ☹

JÓN BALDVIN HANNIBALSSON  
EL PAÍS



## A LETTER FROM BARCELONA

Is Iceland Inspiring Revolutions?

The sun is rising in Plaça Catalunya, Barcelona. Some people are still sleeping while others try to prepare breakfast for everybody in Comissió de cuina (“kitchen’s commission”). Maybe it is trend topic on Twitter, but it is difficult to see lots of people during the morning or in their sleeping bags during nights. It seems that all ‘The Outraged’ want is a democratic regeneration, as spoken by the platform Real Democracy Now (DRY). The truth is that thousands of young people have been camping out in various city squares around Spain; the blame placed on the economic crisis is, however, in their opinion not the most important point. They ask for a better democracy and that’s why they put their attention to Iceland; and not only for its inspiring democratic movement of late, but also because of the “nei” that citizens said about paying for the mistakes from a private bank.

This last Friday (May 27) it seemed a pitched battle. At 7 am, while people were still sleeping, Mossos d’Esquadra (the Catalan police) and local police ganged up to try and “clean” the square to prevent possible damages if F.C. Barcelona were to win the Champions League against Manchester Utd. the day after [Barcelona won]. They have started to remove tents, computers, posters, food, gas and other things from the camp. The worst part is that 121 people have been injured, 84 of them part of ‘The Outraged’ group. The authorities insist on their intention of “it was just to clean” but ‘The Outraged’ (“los indignados” in Spanish) claim it’s closer to an eviction.

In Barcelona, the square of protest is divided in three symbolic areas: Tahrir, Iceland and Palestine, and in several corners where protestors attempt to organise logistics, communication, lectures and scheduled assemblies. Commissions ask for what they need via Facebook or Twitter, and indeed it seems that social networks are playing an important part in revolutions. Every day at 7 pm, people are invited to meet at Plaça Catalunya and participate in an assembly for being able to discuss different topics. Although there are some interesting proposals, others tend be on the sillier side, like abolishing Parliament.

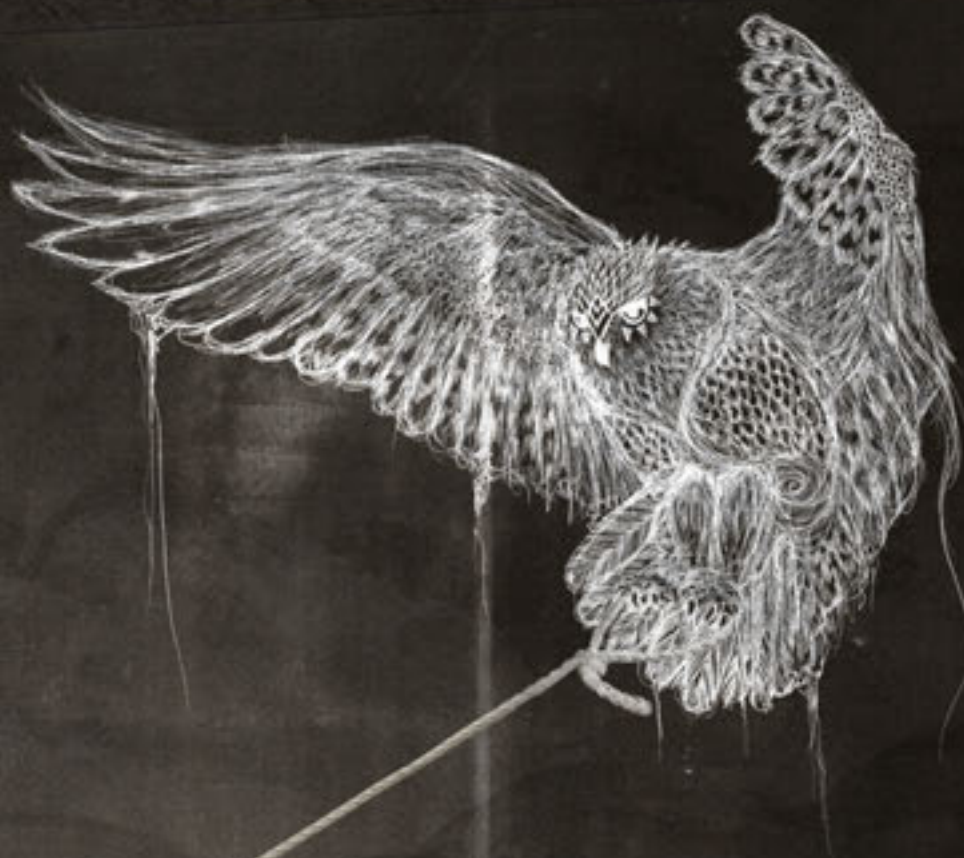
It’s thus hard to tell if this is the way. It’s said that people in their twenties shouldn’t be wasting their time protesting in the squares instead of studying; nevertheless the protests reiterate the fact that what we have here is not democracy not only “because politicians and banks are a team” but also because of the dominant, two party political system (the conservative party [PP] and the socialists [PSOE]) that vehemently resist any change or restructuring of the system.

By now, ‘The Outraged’ have started wondering if football might be more important to Spain than democratic change. ☹

ANNA SOLÉ SANS  
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# Sticking Together And Fitting In

Foreign mothers talk about the Icelandic experience



It's been noted many times that Iceland is a country that treats children well. Many new arrivals have remarked on this point, often citing the amount of social services devoted to kids, as well as the existence of babies in carriages left outside cafés while their moms sip lattes, content in the knowledge that no one is going to snatch their child here. Iceland really is a children's paradise.

But how well can you utilise the services available when you don't speak the language, the websites have little or no information in English, and there aren't any locals who can really help you out? You do what most immigrants do around the world—you turn to other immigrants.

A SUPPORT GROUP OF SORTS

This is exactly what Sinéad McCarron had in mind when she created a group called Iceland's International Parents Group. "I think there's a need for it", she told me. "It really helps out in dealing with the language barrier. A lot of people seem to think that since everyone speaks English here, it should be no problem figuring out what you need to do as a foreigner with a child in Iceland. But there's a real lack of resources in terms of information available in English. Of course, it's easier if you have an Icelandic partner, but not everyone has one. So this is a support group of sorts".

Although she emphasises that Icelandic parents are welcome—especially in being able to explain to the foreign parents what their resources are—when I stopped by to pay a visit to the group there were no Icelanders present. Although to be fair, at the time of writ-

ing the group is only two weeks old. In that short span of time, the group has already attracted over 140 members and counting. For now, the group uses a Facebook page (search for 'Iceland International Parents Group') but Sinéad says she hopes to get a website up soon.

As with any group of immigrants, you can find the dual desire to band together and support each other, while at the same time wanting to reach out and connect with the locals. For example, while these parents will share what they've learned with each other, they've also talked to the local library about having a children's day, where they could explain what books and songs their children are being taught.

The moms—there were no dads around on this day, either—hail from England, Poland, Ireland, Germany and the US. Some of them are new arrivals, some have been here for years; some of them have Icelandic partners, others don't. But all of them had plenty to say about their experience so far in Iceland.

Holly, originally from England:

"I've been in Iceland for four years now. It was originally only supposed to be for six months, but then I met my current boyfriend. There's a lot of stuff I miss, things I don't hear about from the papers. But someone will post something on the group's Facebook wall, and that way I don't miss out. I have loads of Icelandic friends—my boyfriend is Icelandic—but the most important thing for me has just been knowing there are other people in the same position. I think Icelanders are very tight-knit. Of course it makes a difference having an Icelandic

partner, but it's hard to socialise with Icelanders. Until you get a drink in them, that is".

"I think speaking Icelandic has been the biggest challenge for me. It's not easy to do when you have a child. I honestly can't pronounce half the words. Not even my boyfriend can understand what I'm saying sometimes. The biggest advantage, though, would have to be how child-friendly this country is".

Anja, originally from Poland:

"Everyone here speaks English, and yet I have a hard time finding any information for parents in English. I have two kids here. At first I was stuck at home, which made me depressed. Now I can speak Icelandic—that's the main thing that made a big difference in my life. I think maybe interpreters make people lazy about learning the language. They hang out with other Polish people, where they only speak Polish together, everything they read is in Polish. The funny thing about language is, even though I speak Polish to my child, he answers me in Icelandic. He understands the Polish, you know, but prefers to speak the language here. Yeah, I'd agree that the main advantage here is how child-friendly it is. You try finding changing tables in a shop in London. Here, I find changing tables in cafés, little toy corners in banks. It's nice".

Angela, originally from Germany:

"I think Icelanders don't get in touch with you if they don't have to. They're open to a certain point, but you'll find that the open ones are the ones who spent some time living overseas. I've been here 14 years, and I have almost no Icelandic friends. I'm the one who has to call them if I want to get together and socialise. I think this is maybe because they're shy. Sometimes they're rude, but I think for the most part, when they meet a foreigner, they're unsure about what to do in this situation. I'm the one who has to start things".

"The biggest challenge for me is the fact that I don't have my family here. My mom came for two weeks once, but all my family live abroad. Another thing is, the Icelandic system sort of punishes you financially if you want to stay home with your child for more than a year. Your benefits get reduced. It's good for a child to have a mother stay home longer. I was a little disappointed about that. On the plus side, it is a very child-friendly country. I just wish my child had more opportunities to play with other children".

"I think speaking Icelandic has been the biggest challenge for me. It's not easy to do when you have a child. I honestly can't pronounce half the words. Not even my boyfriend can understand what I'm saying sometimes. The biggest advantage, though, would have to be how child-friendly this country is"

Karen, originally from the US:

"I've been here 19 months. My husband is British, and works for CCP. I agree Icelanders can be very anti-social. When I go to my child's school, the Icelanders won't even look me in the face. I have to sort of force myself upon them, and I do greet them in Icelandic. I went out once with a group of Icelanders. They knew I spoke English, but no one said anything to me. It's like they wanted nothing to do with me. Having said that, the parents that I've gotten to know through activities outside of school, like soccer or gymnastics, they're more open. So are the ones who've lived abroad.

"The most challenging thing for me is that there's really no stay-at-home-mom culture. I wanted to be a stay-at-home mom, but I had no choice but to put my child in day care. The isolation and the ignorance are also a problem. You can't get information in English easily, and I don't just mean the legal stuff; I mean things like activities that are going on. That's one of the things that's so good about this group, hearing about things like this. As far as language goes, I find that while Icelanders speak English to me, they will speak Icelandic to my child. On the plus side, it is really safe here. You don't have to worry about someone snatching your child or something".

Jessie, originally from the US:

"I moved to Iceland last January. What I really like about it here is that Icelanders regard their children as assets to the country. Strangers have actually congratulated me on the street for having a child. It's a nice feeling in contrast with back home, where people might look at a child as another mouth to feed. Here, they really value children. I'm from New York, and that's a very transient place. People are always coming and going, so it's more social, people open up more. Here, I think people have their set groups that they socialise with. You have to sort of force yourself into those groups if you want to socialise with Icelanders".

Krystal, originally from the US:

"I've been here nine years, and I feel almost embarrassed speaking English to my son".

Melvina, originally from Poland:

"I think the experience a foreigner will have in Iceland depends on what you're used to. Coming from Poland, I think the social services for children here are great, but a friend of mine from Switzerland thought they were a joke. The most difficult part is learning the language, definitely. But I'm also shy, so maybe the problem is mostly me. My husband is Icelandic, and I think it's probably easier for us who have Icelandic partners, but I can understand every side of the situation. I think the connection we all have here, with each other, is that we're here because we want to be. If you decide what you want to do, you can do it".

Sinéad, originally from Ireland:

"I came to Iceland three years ago. My husband is Icelandic, and his family helped out a lot. It's sometimes a different story with the CCP wives, who come here with their non-Icelandic spouses. They get almost no help finding resources, and the language barrier is a huge problem. When I've brought this up before, some Icelanders have said to me, 'Well, learn Icelandic then'. Icelanders do speak English to my child, though. One great thing about this country is that there are a lot of breastfeeding rooms, but even when there aren't, people don't make a big fuss if you decide to feed your child in public. But at the same time, our kids have international friends. That's why we see Icelandic parents are welcome to join our group. I feel positive, overall. I'm not just living my life for me anymore. I've got a smile on my face".

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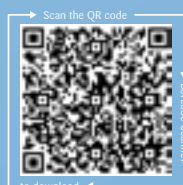
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Have you given any thought to Iceland's fishing quota system? Do you think it's something worth spending your thoughts on? Or is it all worthless pap that grown-ups should worry about. TELL US.

# A CIVIL (COD) WAR?

Many people find the subject impossibly boring, but it is always simmering under the surface of Icelandic society. Many do not understand it, but others are totally obsessed by it. We are talking about fish—or more specifically, the system under which Icelanders manage their fisheries. Now things are coming to a head with the government's proposals to transform the system.

### THE COD WARS

"Life is saltfish", is an old Icelandic saying. And it is true that Icelanders have been very dependent on fish. There was an economic boom connected to the great herring fishing in the early 20th century, commonly referred to as "the herring adventure". This finally collapsed in 1967 due to overfishing, and the result was a severe economic crisis with ensuing unemployment and emigration.

And possibly the greatest moment of our small republic was when we had the better of the British in a series of "cod wars", lasting from 1948 to 1976. There, we managed to drive a huge British fleet of trawlers from the waters around Iceland and establish a 200 nautical mile economic zone around Iceland.

### FISHERIES AND THE WEAK KRÓNA

One of the main tasks of Icelandic politics has been to diversify the monotonous industries of the country. In the sixties, aluminium was seen as the alternative, and it still is to some. Tourism is of course a growing industry, but the most interesting experiment was when Iceland was to become an international financial centre. This succeeded for a while. In 2007, it was noted that when fishing quotas were cut severely it had no impact at all on the Icelandic stock market. People truly thought that Iceland had entered a new phase—that we were no longer a nation of fishermen. A year later the banks came tumbling town; now these dreams of financial glory just leave a bad aftertaste.

So we are basically back to fishing and society has had to adapt to that. For example the Icelandic króna's exchange rate is now impossibly low for the general population of Iceland. But for the fisheries this is very beneficial. The fish fetches a high price in foreign currencies. This makes it possible to

### Words

Egill Helgason

### Illustration

Lóa Hjálmtýsdóttir

service all the foreign debt amassed in Iceland during the boom years. A change is not foreseeable in the nearest future. So money is rolling into the fishing industry, while many other parts of society are suffering.

### THE ORIGINS OF AN UNPOPULAR SYSTEM

So why change the system now? The left wing government, which came into power after the crash, promised to make very ambitious changes to Icelandic society. It was going to right old wrongs. One of these is the quota system on which the fisheries are based. In the beginning it was set up to manage dwindling stocks. In the early 1980s Icelanders, after an extensive modernisation of the fleet, was fishing up to 400 thousand tonnes of cod every year. In the last years it has sometime been as little as 130 thousand tonnes. In some ways higher prices make up for this, fish is now an expensive commodity—it is not sold anymore, frozen into a block, to be consumed in American prisons.

The quotas were allocated to fishing vessels, so their keepers became the ship owners, not the fishermen themselves or the towns where the fisheries operated. After a piece of legislation, that no one seemed to notice at the time, the fishing quota became transferable which started a lively business—vessel owners, large and small, started selling their quotas. Soon they started falling into fewer hands, now a few dozen people "own" most of Iceland's

fishing quotas. This pitted neighbour against neighbour, the solidarity of the fishing towns was broken—suddenly the man next door had become fabulously wealthy from selling his quota, which up to then had been a common good for the society. The quota might then have been transferred to another town—leaving the townspeople without work and income, their houses gradually becoming worthless.

### NEOLIBERAL AGENDA

So this was not only a question of preserving the fishing stocks, there was also an economic neoliberal—agenda, even though few realised this at the time. It was claimed that by this quasi-

ed so that the ship owners could take out ever higher loans. As a result, the fishing industry is mired in debt, the total sum is about 500 billion ISK—in reality creditors are the de facto owners of much of the industry.

But there has always been a catch. Firstly, the laws on fishing state that the stocks are the property of the nation. Secondly, using quotas as collateral for borrowing is forbidden. But this has simply been ignored—and now we have a huge system that is terribly hard to unwind.

### A BIT OF FEUDALISM

There are many sources of discontent within the system. One is that the fishing towns have suffered. Another is that many ship owners actually do not fish the quotas themselves, but rent them out at high prices to fishermen who do not have quotas. Up to 42 percent of the quota is rented out in this way. So in this aspect the system is almost feudal. Very little of the money sees its way into the coffers of the government. There is a resource tax, but it has always been nominal. In a recent article it was compared to renting a flat in Reykjavik for 100 Euros per month. Some attempts have been made to patch up the system, for example by augmenting the fisheries of small boats close

to the coast. But this in turn has been changed into quotas—with ever growing complexity.

### MUDDLED PROPOSALS

So now there might be time for a show-down. The government made lofty promises when it took over, but now its proposals seem very confusing—they come as a disappointment to many. This is a compromise between the Social Democrats, who have been of the opinion that the quotas should be gradually taken over by the state and then rented out, and the Left Greens, who favour a system that is more regionalistic. Gen-

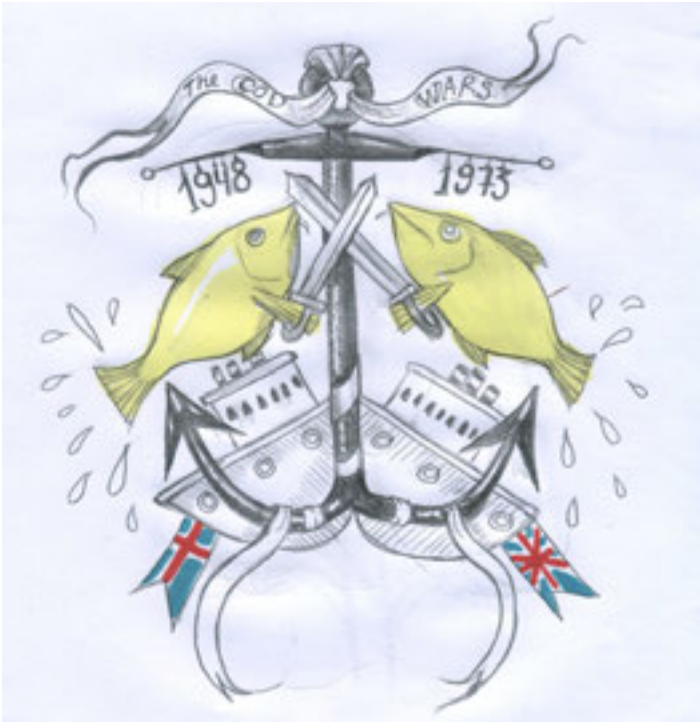
erally in polls, more than 70 percent of the nation is against the present system. Most people seem to favour more radical changes than the government proposes.

But there is strong opposition. The Federation of Icelandic Fishing Vessel Owners is maybe the most powerful lobby group in the country. They have access to parliamentarians, trade unionists and local politicians who tremble before them. They are also very strong in the media. Two of the largest newspapers are on their side. The leadership of the right wing Independence Party, traditionally the largest party in Iceland, is against all change, even if many party members might be vehemently against the quota system. And the banks, which have a stake in much of the fisheries through loans, are using their clout behind the scenes, claiming that any changes would be disastrous for the economy. There is talk of expropriation, nationalisation and Mugabe-like policies.

### BEST SYSTEM IN THE WORLD?

Some claim that we have the best fisheries system in the world. Most of the ship owners would of course say so, but also some politicians and academics. It is sometimes compared to the failure of EU fishing policies. Still the Norwegians and the Faroese have a different system with quite good results. There is a widespread sense that great injustice was perpetrated when the quotas were given out—and with the ensuing speculation. Thus, almost overnight, a new overclass was created. The fisheries have amassed a lot of debt and the stocks haven't really grown. There is also a UN Human Rights Commission ruling from 2008 stating that the quota allocation system is discriminatory and thus unlawful.

This matter has been like a festering sore on the body politic for more than two decades. Sometimes it seems it might disappear, but it has a way of popping up again—most often before elections. Napoleon Bonaparte once said that men will fight more determinedly for their interests than for their ideals. We might be in for a bitter fight over the quotas—not a cod war this time but a civil cod war—but while most of the population wants to overturn the system, power definitely favours the capitalists. In fact, most likely they will prevail. 🍷





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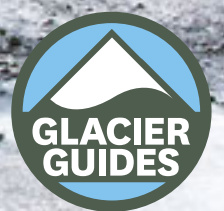
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# How Icelanders Eat

## Part one: *Canned peas, liquorice and ice cream*



The other day my girlfriend and I had a craving for sushi. Ok, so this isn't Tokyo. You're not going to get a Ginsu knife-wielding chef plucking a live salmon from a tank and segmenting it to death right in front of you; still, Icelandic fish is among the best I've eaten—raw or otherwise. Cut that Icelandic salmon 4 mm thin, spice it up with a dab of wasabi, a slice of pickled ginger, and you have perfect sashimi. Great Aunt Freyja winced and sighed. Although I'll give this to her: she managed to force down three pieces plus a California roll. Possibly it had something to do with the hot sake. Still, I know Aunt Freyja would rather have half a sheep's head or hangikjöt (smoked lamb) with Ora peas any day of the week.

A buyer for Bónus once told me that his bestselling vegetables were canned peas. And not just any old canned peas. Ora brand is the leader by a long shot. If you've shopped here, you'll surely have noticed that neon yellow label. You can rest assured that they grace most ta-

bles where a roast lamb is being served for Sunday lunch. Quite likely you'll get a dollop of sweet canned red cabbage and if you're lucky a smattering of jarred beetroot or maybe a pickle to go along with it.

Katrín, my friend Siggí's mother, has told me the story about her first apple umpteen times. It was Christmas 1943. A handsome British soldier hailed her down and handed it to her as he pinched her rosy cheeks. "Apples and oranges smell of Christmas", she sighs dreamily. And bananas? She was over thirty (bear in mind she didn't travel abroad until ten years later).

Solla (Sólveig) Eiríksdóttir, possibly Iceland's best-known health food guru, explains how Icelandic eating habits changed quite suddenly in the '70s:

"When fast food first reached our shores—hamburgers, pizzas, fried chicken in tubs—it was as if the nation, having been starved of all their trans fats and carbohydrates, went quite Kentucky Fried mad. The traditional

diet was fish throughout the week, rice pudding on Saturdays, roast lamb on Sundays, and piles of potatoes with every meal. All this fuelled the hard working Icelander through his bitter winters. More comfort meant more efficient heating, better homes, which meant you didn't need all that stodge and excess fat; so when cheap fast food reared its head, it went straight to the waistlines and worsened the general health. I've been an advocate for healthy food ever since".

We all know the dictum, "You are what you eat". Solla narrows her eyes when I ask her if she has ever observed what your average Icelander stuffs into his Bónus shopping bag. "Course, it's the same all over the world", she says. "Make it quick. No time. Many young families are living on Cheerios and TV dinners. I understand it though. To eat healthy in Iceland is not cheap".

But, then again—and I'm sure Solla would agree—the body is a temple; so eat less, but eat well. Easier said than

done, especially if you have a craving for horsemeat sausage.

"Sixty years ago, there was no selection in the shops at all", says Margrét Sigfúsdóttir, Head of Hússtjórnarskólinn, Reykjavík's Domestic Studies College. "You could always get fresh fish, lamb too—if you had the money; but when I was a little girl you couldn't even get spices: just salt, pepper, bad curry, bay leaves, old onions, and if you were lucky, a couple of sticks of cinnamon. Back then, people ate simply but they ate healthy. Fish was boiled, sauce was a bit of melted lamb fat. Vegetables were carrots, Swede, turnips, cabbage, perhaps a little seaweed".

"When I was an au pair in New York in the '60s I ate my first bell peppers, my first corn-on-the-cob. The vegetable selection in Iceland can't compare with London or New York, even now; but it's come a long way. In the '60s and '70s, more and more international influences arrived. Now, of course, there's hardly a town in Iceland that doesn't boast its own Thai restaurant".

"But one thing I can't understand", I ask Margrét. "Why is the fruit and veg selection in Icelandic supermarkets still so poor? I mean there are daily flights to New York, London, Frankfurt. Are Icelanders not interested in artichokes and Shiitake mushrooms and nectarines and fresh white asparagus?"

"No, I think many of us are interested. Icelanders are well travelled. Personally, I think it's the Icelandic supermarket chains. They're thinking of the bottom line. They don't want to risk sitting on vegetables that only sell occasionally. It's a small market and some tastes are still rather traditional".

I think what Margrét says may be true—to a certain extent. I resolve to discuss this later with the supermarket chains themselves; yet, I do know that many of the older generation balks at garlic, turn their noses up at rocket, and grumble at broccoli. An olive isn't even in it. But Ora peas? Ora peas seem to hit the spot every single time. I have an Icelandic friend who lives in Florida who flies in cartons of the stuff. Says he can't stand those Green Giant peas they sell in the States.

Margrét tells me that before the arrival of the potato in the mid 1700s, Ice-

landers struggled desperately to feed themselves. Some infants were weaned on rich mare's milk, as their mothers just didn't have the constitution to nurse.

"The best place to live back then was probably Breiðafjörður. You had fair farming land, good fishing. Sea birds were abundant, and at some stage, Icelanders have eaten them all (and their eggs). In Breiðafjörður you also had seal and the occasional whale".

"What about pork? Beef?"

"There wasn't the right infrastructure or buildings for pigs. Pig farming came much later. Cows were mostly kept for their milk, which was essential in the Icelandic diet. The sturdy Viking sheep could pretty much take care of itself. That's why lamb is still a very regular feature on most Icelandic menus. In latter years, Danish trading ships delivered luxuries like flour, coffee, salt, spices; but of course, it was all so dear. Icelanders made do with what they had. They pickled meat in whey. That's where the whole Þorramatur tradition comes from. They had skyr, which is a fantastic protein source; and, of course, they smoked fish and meat alike. Much of these foods are still part of the old customs. One loves what one grows up with".

And then there's the question of all that candy and ice cream. Icelanders just adore it, particularly anything with liquorice in it. There are those who visit an ice cream shop every single day of the week. On a Friday night—even in winter—they're lining up outside the door for a bit of soft, milky delight with liquorice sprinkles.

During the course of our conversations, I ask both Margrét and Solla, "What's this thing about Icelanders and candy and ice cream?" They shrug, they roll their eyes—slightly disapprovingly.

"Beats me", says Margrét. "Possibly a substitute for something else", says Solla.

I don't dare ask what, but I swear I'll get to the bottom of it. 🍌

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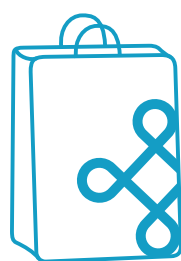


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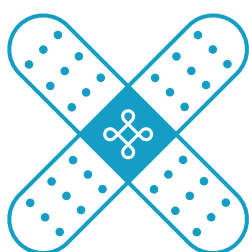




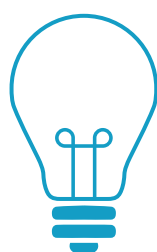
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# OH NO!

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## GRÍMSVÖTN 2011

Farmer Erlendur Björnsson and his wife Þórunn Júlíusdóttir were in Reykjavík celebrating their son's high school graduation when the subglacial volcano Grímsvötn began erupting on Saturday evening. “We were eating dinner when we got the message and we simply thought, ‘Grímsvötn, that’s nothing. It has erupted over the last few decades and we’ve never had any ash’”.

While Grímsvötn is Iceland's most active volcano, its eruptions have typically been small and short-lived. Not overly concerned, Erlendur and Þórunn left Reykjavík just after midnight, got back to their farm Seglbúðir at 3:30 AM, and went to sleep. In retrospect they said they were fortunate to get back that night while it was still possible to see through the ash.

The eruption turned out to be ten

times larger than the 2004 Grímsvötn eruption, and it produced more ash in the first 24 hours than the entire forty day long Eyjafjallajökull eruption, which just one year ago paralysed air traffic and stranded travellers all over Europe.

When they awoke the next morning around 7:30 AM, it was absolutely pitch black outside, Þórunn told me. Their farm, which sits just southwest of Kirkjubæjarklaustur—80 kilometres from the eruption site—was pummelled with thick ash and, unfortunately, they had just put their flock of 200 sheep out for the summer, as is custom after lambing season.

### ASH BLOCKS OUT THE SUN

Iceland's Route 1, which goes full circle around the island, was closed from Sunday morning until Tuesday evening between Vík and Freysnes, a 145-kilometre stretch in southeast Iceland where the ash was at times so thick that the sun didn't shine.

“It was something you had been told about, but didn't believe”, Erlendur told us. “People talk a lot about the 1918 when Katla erupted; it is said that people crawled—they couldn't walk—they crawled. I can tell you on Sunday it was like that”.

Erlendur explained to us that there is a specific Icelandic word to describe

this darkness. It's “öskumyrkur”, which translates to “ash darkness”. While it is sometimes used to describe a dark Icelandic winter night, that darkness pales in comparison to the darkness that ensues when ash blocks out the sun, stars and lights.

While Erlendur described the eruption as a “medium sized Katla eruption”, he also noted that today Iceland has a rescue team, which distributed masks and goggles to everyone in the area and stayed to help clean up the mess after the eruption quieted down.

We knew very well what he was talking about for we foolishly drove into the ash on that Sunday morning. Passing through Vík just before authorities closed the road on Sunday morning, we experienced first-hand what was probably as close to the doomsday evangelist Harold Camping had envisioned on May 21, the evening that Grímsvötn erupted. We were prepared for the ash to fill the car and seep into every nook and cranny, but we were not prepared for the hazy brown surroundings to turn pitch black as the ash blocked out the sun entirely.

“It feels like being snow-blind”, Grapevine photographer Maroesjka Lavigne said uneasily as she navigated the car into darker territory. We made it within a few kilometres of Kirkjubæ-

*“Erlendur explained to us that there is a specific Icelandic word to describe this darkness. It’s ‘öskumyrkur’, which translates to ‘ash darkness’. While it is sometimes used to describe a dark Icelandic winter night, that darkness pales in comparison to the darkness that ensues when ash blocks out the sun, stars and lights”*

jarklaustur when we could no longer see even one road marker ahead of us. Stopped in 'öskumyrkur', there was no choice but to call Iceland's rescue team.

### THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY WORRIES

A French man we had met earlier driving from Kirkjubæjarklaustur back to Reykjavík had strongly advised us against continuing on our trip. He was in here scouting the country for a French tourism company, and would be returning home with a negative impression of Iceland as a viable tourist destination. “I can sell snow, I can even sell rain, but I just cannot sell ash”, he said matter-of-factly.

The recent eruption was the latest in a series of crises to test the resolve of

Icelanders in the past few years. First it was the collapse of the banks and the Icesave dispute with the Brits and the Dutch. Then it was the difficult-to-pronounce-eruption that left thousands of travellers, like the infamous “I Hate Iceland” guy, stranded and Iceland's hotels empty.

So the Icelandic government was understandably worried about the eruption's impact on the tourism industry. Iceland's president, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, was harshly criticised for speaking overdramatically when Eyjafjallajökull erupted last year, and the Icelandic Travel Industry Association quickly sent a press release urging the media not to overdramatise the Grímsvötn eruption.

“It's too much”, said Anna Þóris-

#### Words

Anna Andersen

#### Photography

Maroesjka Lavigne





dóttir, who was with a group of hikers descending Vatnajökull glacier when the Grímsvötn volcano began erupting beneath the glacier. “We can explain one eruption, but an eruption year after year? People are just going to stop coming”. Unable to drive west, Anna and the hikers headed east, full circle around the island, to return to Reykjavík two days later. In the northeast, they faced snow and icy roads, which even in Iceland is not your everyday summer weather.

At the same time, the Smyril Line ferry made its first trip of the summer from Denmark to Seyðisfjörður, an artsy fishing village in the Eastfjords of Iceland. Its 600 passengers found themselves stuck in the small town, pop. 668, where grocery stores were out of milk for two days due to roads rendered impassable by non-eruption related weather conditions.

**THE ASH SUDDENTLY LETS UP**

Meanwhile, Iceland’s volunteer rescue team could be counted on, and we were guided to a community house in Kirkjubæjarklaustur where the Red Cross was looking after about a dozen others who became stranded in the ash that Sunday morning. They pointed to a stack of mattresses and suggested we make ourselves comfortable.

Local residents and volunteers Páll Ragnarsson and his wife, María Guðmundsdóttir, had made a big pot of asparagus soup and an assortment of

*“Looking for shelter, some sheep fell into trenches and died. Others went temporarily or permanently blind from the ash.”*

open-faced sandwiches for everyone. The clock read 1:30 in the afternoon, but everything else pointed more to 1:30 in the morning. “I thought I would have time to knit today”, María said pointing to her bag full of unfinished work, “but we’ve had about 50 people, counting nurses and the rescue team, come in and out”.

Then just as we had prepared to spend the night, the wind died down, the hazy brown landscape reappeared and a local policeman informed us that we could drive back to Reykjavík. “But hurry”, he said.

This was a relief for farmers who had just let their sheep and new lambs out for the summer before Grímsvötn began erupting. Among them were Jóhanna Jónsdóttir and her husband, Pálmi Harðarsson, who have 300 sheep at their farm Hunkubakkar. “It was really difficult to hear them crying ‘baaa’ while we were inside”, Jóhanna told us. “We couldn’t do anything; it wasn’t possible to go outside. It was so dark that when you put out your arm, you couldn’t see your own fingers”.

While Jóhanna and Pálmi didn’t lose any of their sheep, other farmers were

not as fortunate. Looking for shelter, some sheep fell into trenches and died. Others went temporarily or permanently blind from the ash.

**GRÍMSVÖTN SUBSIDES**

Ultimately it’s not travellers or tourists who faced the brunt of the eruption, but Iceland’s farmers, who have to deal with the ash. With the exception of southeast Iceland, the country was largely free of ash, and those travellers who were briefly grounded in Reykjavík were granted free admission to museums and swimming pools to ease the inconvenience it caused them.

Despite having spent the entire day cleaning, Jóhanna Jónsdóttir was in good spirits when we met her at Hunkubakkar late Wednesday evening. She had taped windows and sealed doors with damp towels, but the ash still made its way into her house and the twenty guesthouses she operates. She anticipated vacuuming through the weekend (so they can probably be booked by now at [www.hunkubakkar.is](http://www.hunkubakkar.is)).

Jóhanna, who relies on the guesthouses to supplement what she said

was otherwise meagre income provided by sheep farming, wasn’t worried about the impact that this would have on tourism. “Some might cancel, but if anything, more will come out of curiosity”, she said. “I’m full of hope and happy to have the rain”.

As The Economist reported on May 28: “ICELANDAIR, the island nation’s national carrier, has been quick to put on a happy face in the wake of this week’s eruption of the Grímsvötn volcano”.

They based this on a press release sent from the airline: “Curious visitors have already begun to flock to the area, eager to check out the affected area and see the ash for themselves. However, they will have to hurry because the efficient ash clean-up operation is already progressing quickly and local residents hope life in the southeast will be back to normal very soon”.

When we left Hunkubakkar, Jóhanna was getting ready to host seventeen fire fighters who were in the area to help spray houses down, for if the wet ash settles it becomes a stiff cement-like paste. To help with the cleaning efforts, the government also put to work Iceland’s unemployed, which are at 8.3 percent today compared with 1 percent before the economic crisis hit in 2008.

Harold Camping may have been right about earthquakes commencing at 18:00, but the rest turned out to be a bunch of hokey-pokey. While Þórunn and Erlendur were hit by more ash

**Did Doomsday Hit Iceland?**

The 89-year old evangelist Harold Camping predicted that the world would come to an end on May 21. So aggressive was his campaign that the ads even appeared frequently in Icelandic newspapers.

Specifically, Harold predicted that the world would begin to shake at 18:00 and then the chosen ones would be zapped up to Heaven, leaving the rest of us to presumably burn in hell (after a year or so in purgatory). Citing reports that everything was fine in New Zealand and Tonga, which would have been among the first doomsday victims, Visir was quick to report: “The World Is Still Here”.

Then at 18:00 in Iceland, in an ironic twist to the DOOMSDAY story, the Icelandic Meteorological Office picked up increased seismic activity coming from Grímsvötn, Iceland’s most active volcano. Hours later the subglacial volcano was erupting full force, sending a plume of ash 15 kilometres into the air.

When the world did not end, Harold Camping released a statement explaining that he had actually just been five months off. Apparently doomsday did in fact start on May 21 as a "spiritual coming" and it will culminate in the real doomsday on October 21.

So maybe Grímsvötn goes beyond those two days of ash-bother? We'll find out soon enough.

than they had expecting, they took it in stride. “We want to emphasise that this is not doomsday”, Þórunn told us. “This is simply nature at work, and nobody died”.

Thus, life on a volcanically active island goes on. 🌋

**Icelandic Volcanism: Where, Why & How?**

By James Ashworth

Iceland sure has been in the global news a lot this past year or so and a lot of that has been to do with volcanoes. So why does this little country, stranded in the middle of the North-Atlantic, have so many volcanoes and why are they so damned troublesome for the rest of the world? I was lucky enough to cover the Eyjafjallajökull eruption for Grapevine last year and following the recent eruption at Grímsvötn I’ve been drafted to try to answer the many volcano-related questions that may be whizzing through your head. So hold onto your hats, ladies and gentlemen, for this whistle-stop tour through the complex science that is Icelandic volcanology...

**WHY IS ICELAND EVEN THERE, ANYWAY?**

Iceland looks like a very lonely country, stuck most out of place amongst a sea of, well, sea. So why has it sprung up right there, of all places? To answer this question we must strip back the watery layer and take a good look at the ocean

floor.

When we do so, we see that the island of Iceland is located on the crossing place of two major linear features. The first of these is a huge rift, running roughly north to south, splitting the Atlantic in two. This is the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, a zone where two of the plates comprising the Earth are spreading apart, creating new land as they do so. In this case we have the North American plate on the west side and the Eurasian plate to the east. The ridge itself is slightly raised from the surrounding ocean floor, but nowhere near the water surface, so this alone cannot explain Iceland’s prominence.

For this we must turn to the other feature—a raised strip of ocean floor running between the Faeroe Islands and Scotland to the southeast and Greenland to the northwest. What caused this? Well, the current belief is that it is due to a so-called ‘hot spot’. The exact reasons for hot-spot formation is still very much under debate in

the scientific community, but the basic fact is that there appears to be an area of anomalous heating under one spot on the crust, in this case under one part of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. This causes more volcanism—and in turn, more land production—along this section of the ridge. It is believed that as the plates spread apart along the ridge, the greater production at this point caused a raised ridge to form as the plates moved away from the hot-spot.

But what about Iceland itself? Honestly I don’t think anyone is quite sure why Iceland sits so high above that ridge. For some reason, more land is being produced faster now than in the past and this has allowed an island to form above the surface of the ocean. What it does mean, however, is that that hot-spot still resides beneath Iceland and this can account for much of the country’s volcanism.

**A VOLCANO IS A VOLCANO, RIGHT?**

Not necessarily. On a basic level most

people would consider a volcano as a hole in the ground that erupts liquid rock, or magma—called lava once it reaches the surface. But there is actually a vast range of different volcano types, all with different eruption styles and hazards that come with them. Most volcanically active areas of the world are typified by one or two types, but Iceland is rather unique in that it possesses almost the full range of types.

The type of eruption a volcano produces—and by extension therefore the type of volcanic edifice formed—depends largely on the type of lava produced. And this in itself depends mostly on where the lava comes from. Without going into too much detail, the explosivity of an eruption is generally related to how viscous (thick) the lava is.

Think of the volcanoes in Hawaii, for example. A good example of typical hot-spot volcanism, the activity here most often comes in the form of spectacular fountains of glowing orange

lava erupted from a crater of elongated fissure (collectively known as the vent). The lavas here have very low viscosity—in other words they flow very easily—and are generally named ‘basalts’ due to their chemical composition. Small bubbles of gas within the lava can escape easily and they essentially propel the lava high into the air. Over the years, the lava spreads a long way from the vent, resulting in large, flattish volcanoes that we typically refer to as ‘shield volcanoes’.

Taking a step up from Hawaii we can look at a volcano like Sakurajima in southern Japan, which has been erupting virtually every single day for decades. This volcano produces more viscous ‘andesite’ lavas, which trap gas bubbles within them. Very simply, these bubbles grow in size while trapped in the thick magma, eventually bursting at the surface, often resulting in an explosion of glowing fragments of lava. Volcanoes such as this tend to produce more ash and can cause more prob-





lems for air traffic (something fresh in our minds after last year). They usually form steeper-sided peaks, similar to the typical conical volcano image you may have in your head.

At the top of this simplified scale come the ‘rhyolite’ volcanoes, which have very thick lavas that are very resistant to flowing. A typical rhyolite volcano (if there is such a thing!) could perhaps be something like Chaiten in Chile. They tend to erupt lavas in the form of domes (which also occur at andesite volcanoes), rather than spectacular explosions. However, these domes are often unstable and may then collapse, producing the fearsome ‘pyroclastic flow’—an avalanche of rock, debris and hot gases. Rhyolite volcanoes often feature enormous craters, or ‘calderas’. Explosions may result in some cases from rhyolitic activity, although they are not common. However, some of the largest eruptions in history have been of this type—think of the infamous Yellowstone, USA...

#### SO HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO ICELAND?

As I hinted at earlier, Iceland has a bit of almost everything crammed all into one place! Let’s look at last year’s Eyjafjallajökull eruption as an example, shall we?

The first stage of the eruption, which breached the narrow strip of exposed land between Eyjafjallajökull and Mýrdalsjökull glaciers, was a small (but rather photogenic!) fissure eruption. It was somewhat similar to the sort of eruption you might see in Hawaii—a long crack in the ground, producing towering fountains of glowing basalt lava and sending rivers of molten rock pouring down the mountainside. These lava flows even had lava falls, showing how easily they could flow. A spectacular ‘tourist eruption’, the first stage didn’t really provide much of a threat to anyone.

About a month later, however, things changed. No sooner had the fissures calmed down, but a new one opened—this time on the summit of the volcano, directly beneath the glacier ice. This time the lava was much different (andesite—explaining why this happened requires an article of its own) and this produced a much more explosive eruption. This high explosivity, aided by the lava coming in contact with cold melting ice from the glacier, produced the now-infamous ash cloud that shut down air space across mainland Europe. While ash this fine and troublesome is possibly quite unusual for an Icelandic eruption, explosive activity is really rather common.

In fact, glaciers play a major role in Icelandic volcanism. In past times, when the entire country was buried under ice, the weight of the ice was enough to constrain many eruptions and prevent them from breaking through it. Most of the long ridges and flat-topped hills (‘tuya’) you may see as you drive around the country are the result of volcanism constrained by ice. Additionally, as mentioned previously, the water produced as it melts can cause explosions—something responsible for even lavas that are traditionally less explosive producing quite violent eruptions. Take the latest activity at Grímsvötn—a basaltic eruption, if it had taken place under plain air it would probably have been quite benign. But because of fragmentation due to all that ice and water... well, you’ve probably already seen the result!

“But what about the rhyolite volcanoes”, I hear one or two of you ask? Well, if you visit one of the huge calderas like Askja you are standing inside what is known as a ‘caldera’, which are often formed at least partly as a result of very large rhyolite explosions. And if

you are lucky enough to visit the Landmannalaugar area, those fantastic yellow and orange colours are caused by exposed rhyolite rocks. In fact there are even exposed rhyolitic lava flows and domes in this area if you look for them.

And you know what the most confusing thing is? Most volcanoes in Iceland are in fact ‘volcanic systems’, with a pronounced ‘central volcano’ with a long ‘swarm’ of fissures branching off from it. This is the result of different types of volcanism within the same system—often more explosive at the central volcano and more gently effusive along the fissures. Despite this, the source of the lavas for each eruption in each system is more or less the same. Such diverse volcanism even within a few square kilometres poses something of a dilemma for scientists eager to understand what is going on and makes Icelandic eruptions arguably even harder to forecast than most!

#### WHAT'S NEXT FOR ICELAND?

It is clear that Icelandic volcanism is tremendously varied. It’s impossible to tackle in any detail in such a short space (believe me, I could go on for days, but I suspect there wouldn’t be anyone left reading by the end), but I hope I have at least managed to touch on some things that may pique your interest.

In terms of what exactly Iceland can expect in the future, no-one really knows. Volcanoes cannot be well predicted, only roughly forecasted. To this end, however, we can say that in the long term it will most likely be ‘more of the same’. Iceland is a growing country and it will continue to be volcanically active for a long time to come. There will be some large eruptions and plenty of smaller ones too. Some will

#### Monday, May 23

Road 1 remains closed. Wind picks up and produces what is called a “öskubylur” or “ash blizzard” near the town Kirkjubæjarklaustur. US President Obama leaves Ireland a day early to avoid being grounded by the ash. KLM and British Airways cancel hundreds of flights.

### Desert Island Destruction

#### My Top 5 volcanic eruptions anywhere, ever

By James Ashworth

Listing one’s top five eruptions, anywhere, ever, is hard work. I mean, just how do you rate an eruption, anyway? By duration, or the number of deaths, or just the sheer scale of it? I really don’t know. So, I’ve just picked five eruptions that are always memorable to me—important for one reason or another. I hope that’ll do! So, in no particular order...

#### Mt. St. Helens, USA, 1980

Starting it off with a famous one—how very cliché. This one has a place in my list because it was one of the eruptions that captured my imagination early on and is at least partially responsible for my interest in volcanoes. It ‘only’ killed 57 people, which was frankly a miracle, but the images of that volcano exploding sideways are iconic within the field. It was also very important in our understanding of how volcanoes can collapse, triggering a lot of very important research, much of which is still extremely valuable. Lessons were learnt from this one that will be taught for years to come.

#### Pinatubo, Philippines, 1991

Another modern one and also rather famous. The second largest eruption of the 20th century erupted ash up to 34 kilometres into the air, reducing the mountain’s height by almost 300 metres. The ash and aerosol particles released from Pinatubo circled the world, resulting in an average global temperature drop of 0.4°C. Good evacuation plans and monitoring by a team of Philippine and American volcanologists undoubtedly saved thousands of lives, although more than 800 people were still killed, largely as a result of roofs collapsing under the weight of ash and rain water. The images of the massive ash column from this eruption never fail to stagger me and serve as a stark reminder of the power of nature.

#### Laki, Iceland, 1783-84

Now for an Icelandic one. The Laki fissures, thought to be part of the Grímsvötn volcanic system, erupted for eight months between 1873 and 1874. Much of the lava erupted in massive fire fountains, reported to be

up to 1.4 km in height and spewing out a total of 14 cubic kilometres of lava in total. The lava itself did relatively little damage, but the gases emitted killed much of Iceland’s livestock. This resulted in the deaths of about a quarter of the Icelandic population. Worldwide it is estimated that around 6 million people may have died due to the Laki eruption—many of them due to short-term climatic change triggered by the eruption, which brought about famine, drought and crop failures. Despite happening a long time ago, there is nothing to say that this will not happen again—rather sobering.

#### Unzen, Japan, 1991

Pinatubo may have stolen all of the limelight in 1991, but another eruption in the same year is just as big a deal for me. Unzen, located in southern Japan, had in 1792 produced a large pyroclastic flow that triggered a megatsunami, which claimed the lives of an estimated 15,000 people. The 1991 eruption was much more modest (although not small!), but again produced a pyroclastic flow. This time 43 people were caught in its path, including legendary French volcanologists and filmmakers Maurice and Katia Krafft. Especially poignant since I have visited this volcano, it serves to remind me that no matter how well you think you understand something, it can always come back to bite you.

#### Yellowstone Caldera, USA, 640,000 years ago

What list would be complete without good old Yellowstone? If ever you don’t find volcanoes terrifying enough, you can always look here. Eruptions like Pinatubo and Laki seem enormous, but they pale in comparison with Yellowstone, which has produced several massive explosive ‘super-eruptions’ during its lifetime. During the last such event, the caldera ejected about 1,000 cubic kilometres of rock—compare that to Laki! The Yellowstone caldera (crater) is about 55 by 72km in size, which is frankly hard to comprehend. Its history of destruction is offset rather by the immense beauty and rich ecosystems now contained within the caldera. Having visited Yellowstone three times, it is safely one of my favourite places... but at the back of your mind you always know that at some point it will almost certainly happen again...

#### Tuesday, May 24

The eruption is de facto over in the evening and Road 1 is reopened. Icelandic Prime Minister Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir releases statement: “Our geoscientists say that the eruption is waning day by day and that the problems arising in our neighbouring countries as a result of volcanic ash should be resolved quickly”. Hundreds of flights remain grounded in British airspace. Ash is expected to reach Germany late Tuesday evening, early Wednesday morning. Ryanair’s CEO Michael O’Leary sends test flights into the “high ash concentration zone” and concludes that it is “perfectly safe” and that “there is nothing up there.” He accuses Civil Aviation Authority of incompetence.

produce beautiful, glowing fountains and some... well, Europe would be well advised to have contingencies in place in case of another Eyjafjallajökull! 🌋

#### Wednesday, May 25

Rain falls in the southeast and the cleanup effort begins. President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson visits ash-affected residents and farmers. Bremen, Hamburg, Berlin, and Hannover briefly close their airports on Wednesday morning. Flights resume to normal later that day.

#### Saturday, May 21

Grímsvötn confirmed erupting at 19:00. Ash plume reaches 15 kilometres in height. It can be seen from Reykjavík.

#### Sunday, May 22

Road 1 is closed between Vík and Freysnes. Ash falls so thick in some areas that the sun is completely blocked out until 14:00. This is described as “öskumyrkur” or “ash darkness”. Flights are disrupted in Iceland.





# Volcanology? That’s from Star Trek, right?

By James Ashworth | Photo by Anna Andersen

Sigh. If I had a penny for every time someone has made that joke when I tell them I study ‘volcanology’ (or worst still, ‘vulcanology’) then Iceland would not be in debt right now. And neither would I. So allow me a few minutes, if you will, to persuade you that yes, volcanology is a real science and no, it’s nothing to do with pointy-eared science fiction characters!

### WHO STARTED STUDYING THESE THINGS?

The beginnings of volcanology as a science can perhaps be traced back thousands of years. Back in 79 AD, Pliny the Elder recorded the series of events leading up to the huge eruption of Italy’s Mt. Vesuvius, which of course famously decimated the Roman town of Pompeii. His nephew, Pliny the Younger, took over after his uncle died from gas inhalation. Their letters are considered so important to the field of volcanology as a whole that they have a major type of eruption named after them—so-called Plinian events.

In the following centuries little advance was made due largely to religious beliefs, but some important observations were made such as the first recording of a pyroclastic flow (a fast-moving flow of hot gases, ash and rock most commonly generated by explosive eruptions or collapse of certain features). However, it would not be until perhaps the mid-20th century when the science of volcanology would really begin to take off.

### THE BEGINNING OF THE BEGINNING

The first major building block came in the form of Plate Tectonic theory, which gathered large-scale acceptance within the scientific community during the 1960s. This divided the Earth’s crust into many large ‘plates’ that drifted about on the surface, presumably driven by forces within the Earth. New crust was created along some edges and old

crust was pulled (subducted) down into the Earth along others. In some areas two plates simply slid past each other. These three types of ‘plate boundary’ explained many types of geophysical and geological activity including earthquakes of different kinds, mountain formation and of course volcanology.

As the science grew, more detailed explanations began to arise as to why certain volcanoes developed at certain places. Explosive volcanoes were often constrained to areas where subduction was taking place, whereas volcanoes producing more fluid lavas and spectacular fire fountains were often found on or near boundaries where new plate was being constructed. However, there was still one great riddle—why were some volcanoes right in the middle of plates?

### IS IT HOT (SPOT) IN HERE, OR...?

An explanation for these isolated volcanoes was proposed in 1963 but it was not until some years later, following the general acceptance of Plate Tectonic theory, that more detail was put in place. The general idea was that there was a ‘hot spot’ on the Earth’s surface, for whatever reason, which was causing melting where there shouldn’t be any and therefore triggering volcanism. In fact, coupled with plate tectonics, it appeared that the hot spot was not fixed to the plates—rather, their origin was somewhat deeper. As the plates moved on the surface, the hot spot remaining in one location, creating a chain of volcanoes on the overlying plate. Perhaps the most famous example of this is the Hawaiian Islands, lying right in the middle of the Pacific Ocean—far from any plate boundary—but there are many others worldwide.

In fact, this hot spot theory can be used to explain much of the volcanism in Iceland, too. Here the hot spot lies almost directly beneath a constructive plate boundary, so rather than creating an isolated area of volcanism it instead



supplements the activity already going on along the ocean ridge.

### BUT WHY DO THESE HOT SPOTS EXIST?

Truthfully, we don’t really know. There are many theories, one of which is generally far more convincing than the rest. The generally accepted proposal is for ‘mantle plumes’—rising columns of hot material within the Earth’s mantle (the layer beneath the crust). But there is still a lot of argument as to why exactly they are there and even where they originate. Some believe they begin near to the Earth’s core while others believe they are much shallower. Further work is needed to answer these questions and that work will itself surely raise more questions than it answers—the ongoing cycle of scientific research continuing as ever!

### BUT WE REALLY KNOW A LOT NOW, RIGHT?

Well, we certainly know a lot more than we did 50 years ago. However, we just keep figuring out new things. Stuff that was practically taken as being scientific fact some decades ago is now proven to be wrong. For example, when Mt. St. Helens blew up so spectacularly in May 1980, collapsing and blowing out a whole side of the mountain, we thought that was an isolated incident. But the more we look at other volcanoes worldwide, the more we see that this is actually a relatively common event.

Far from being of interest to just the scientific community, such advancements in the science can actually bring huge benefits to the general public, too. As we learn to better understand volcanoes we also learn to better prepare for eruptions and to guess at what they may do in the future. Indeed the science of volcano forecasting and prediction is a rapidly advancing one

and I feel privileged to be able to work within that field. From next year I hope to be working on Sakurajima volcano in southern Japan, where some stunning science is being done—they have even developed a system that can predict regular eruptions with a good degree of accuracy. This is something we would never have dreamed about some years ago!

The science of volcanology is an imperfect one. Volcanoes can never be perfectly predicted or fully understood, but we can try. And try we must, because with a growing global population, more and more people will be exposed to the hazards associated with volcanoes. Now, more than ever, volcanology is truly at the forefront of protecting the public in many countries—something many Icelanders will be all too familiar with. 🍷

# Killer Volcanoes: A Comparative History

By Valur Gunnarsson | Photo by Anna Andersen



Which country starting with the letter ‘I’ has caused the most international havoc due to volcanic eruptions in the modern age? As you may have surmised, this is indeed a trick question, for the answer is not Iceland, but Indonesia. In 1816, when Europe and North America were just starting to recover from the Napoleonic Wars (the US and Canada, not to be outdone by the Europeans, had also taken part and fought each other), both

continents suffered through natural disasters which very much resembled a nuclear winter. This was not due to a revenge-bent Bonaparte smuggling some sort of steam driven dirty bomb out of St. Helen, but rather because of a volcanic eruption on the other side of the world.

The year before, Mount Tambora went off on the island of Sumbawa in what is now Indonesia, the biggest vol-

canic eruption for 1300 years, with the result that 1816 became known as the “Year Without Summer”. Temperatures went down and harvests failed in the biggest famine of the century. The Irish suffered greatly as usual during disasters, and even the peaceful Swiss experienced riots on an unheard of scale. It is estimated that 200.000 people died as a result in Europe alone. In North America, people fled their initial settlements close to the coast and moved inland.

### VOLCANOES AND BICYCLES

The eruption has several other unforeseen consequences. Since there was no hay to feed the horses, a German by the name of Karl Drais invented the precursor to the modern bicycle. The Americans were equally inventive, and one of the volcanic refugees from Vermont, Joseph Smith, came up with Mormonism during his trip west. Equally spectacularly, in Switzerland, a girl named Mary Shelley was forced to stay indoors with some of her friends and wrote Frankenstein, the first modern horror novel.

However, the volcanoes of Indonesia had not had their last say. In 1883,

the island of Krakatoa exploded, creating the loudest noise in modern history (sorry to all you Manowar fans). The blast was heard all the way to Australia, and the event caused temperatures to drop all over the world, not recovering fully until five years later. At least 40.000 people are said to have died as a result, although some estimates put the figure at three times as high.

### VOLCANOES AND REVOLUTIONS

If an Indonesian volcano created a postscript to the Napoleonic Wars, an Icelandic one may well have been its preface. In 1783-84, Lakagígur (Laki), close to the village of Kirkjubæur, erupted for a whole eight months. The result has gone down in Icelandic history as the ‘Mist Hardships’, due to the sun being blocked from the sky. Half of all livestock and a quarter of the population died. The Danes even thought about moving the remaining population to Jutland, out of harm’s way, and on some days you kind of wish they had. But they didn’t, which is why we are still here to worry about volcanoes.

The repercussions of the ‘Mist Hardships’ reached far outside of Ice-

land. It led to famine as far away as Japan and about a sixth of Egypt’s population died. The total death toll is estimated to be around six million, making it the deadliest eruption on record. The greatest historical consequences, however, were to be found in France. The poor harvests in the years after 1784 led to increasing discontent and may have been a significant contribution to the Great Revolution of 1789 breaking out.

Even this might not be Iceland’s most historic eruption, however, for some scholars believe that the Hekla eruption of ca. 1000 BC and the resultant fallout contributed to the general decline in Bronze Age cultures of the time, not least in Ancient Egypt. Add to this the spot of bother airlines have been having for the past two years, and it really seems that Iceland might be the most dangerous earthquake island. Then again, others think that the Lake Toba eruption in Indonesia about 70.000 years ago left only around 10.000 human beings alive. Not even our President, quite given to doomsday predictions, would prophesise an Icelandic volcano doing this. 🍷



# Gig Long, Party Hard!

(But not too late, I have to get up early)



Another day, another slice of grim apocalyptic action that is life in Iceland. While Grímsvötn's eruption took a firm grip of the country by the balls and the airport was closed, one casualty of this was the cancellation of the long awaited Caribou gig at NASA on Sunday May 22. Ticketholders were generally devastated upon learning about the cancellation, as it was a highly anticipated show. So why was it that I then felt a sense of relief when I found out it was cancelled?

Don't get me wrong. I like Caribou's music and was hyped on the idea of seeing them play. But that was until I realised the show was supposed to start at 22:00. "Oh great [resigned groan] another fucking late gig".

You see, 'school night' concerts in Reykjavík have become a drag because of the ludicrous times they start. In most cities in the civilised world, a concert during the week will usually start between 19:00 and 20:00 and you'd be out and eating your kebab by eleven. But Reykjavík has to be different. With a 22:00 start and the usual delays a gig will easily run until the venue closes at 1am. For most regular people that have to do boring things (you know, like get up for work, or take care of their kids) this is a major ball ache. And heaven

forbid if you live outside 101, because public transport closes at 23:00, meaning you either get a taxi or have a friend drive you home. So frankly, you start to see gig going as something that's not really worth the bother.

Bemoaning this state of affairs to my friend Gylfi, he had an interesting explanation for it all. The thing was, he explained, that many moons ago when Gaukur á stöng (now Bakkus/Sóðóma) was the main live venue in town, it had to have a restaurant license for it to be open till 01:00. This meant that it was supposed to 'serve meals' til 22:00, whereupon it would then start showing live music till closing time at one. This, he reasoned, was why gigs now start so late during the week.

But are bands and musicians must be happy playing into the wee small hours? Apparently not, it seems. Just about every musician I've talked to about this, especially those who've played outside of Iceland, hates having to play so late. Not surprisingly, many musicians also have day jobs and families too.

So, if bands hate playing so late, just start earlier you say. And herein lies the crux of the problem. They can't, they say. If you start at 20:00, people won't turn up until later. It seems that people

are 'used' to the late openings and won't turn up early.

Forgive me if I'm wrong, but that just feels that we're just pandering to a minority who think it's cool to be still sucking away on a beer on a Tuesday at 01:15. If a band like Agent Fresco, Retro Stefson or FM Belfast played at NASA at 22:00, are you saying nobody will turn up? Of course not, the place will be full to the rafters.

But I really think venue organisers and bands need to start banding together on changing this mindset. Because right now we're effectively are almost creating a form of cultural apartheid, where live music is but the sole reserve of a chosen few who deign to live in 101 Reykjavík and don't have stuff to do with their lives, while the unfortunate sods who live out there in the real world, either make do with the scraps or pay through the nose for the same experience. And for a city that supposedly prides and 'inspires' itself on the quality of their live music, that's totally nonsensical.

Now excuse me, I have an early start tomorrow... 🍷

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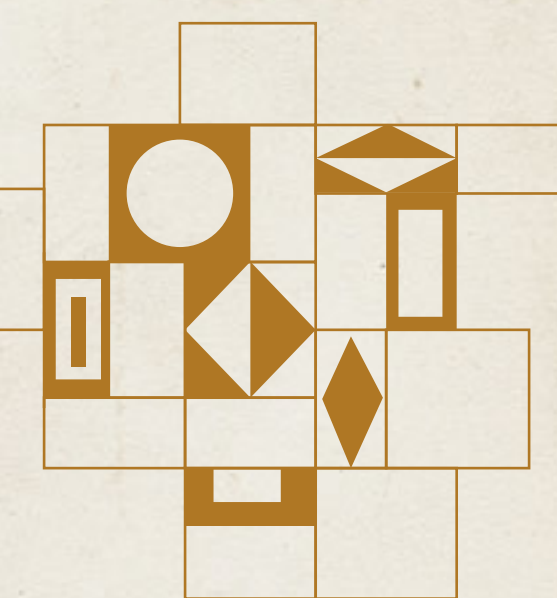
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# GUSGUS

## ARABIAN HORSE



A perfect anthemic electronic pop record.

The year 2010 was one of transition, with too many bands shuffling around indecisively.

This year seems it will be more of the same, with the off-the-mainstream music still finding its footing while the dreamlike, stripped-down, sliced-up, '85-'93 inflected sound pulses and drones in the hands of Animal Collective's dilated pupils.

Last year GusGus seemed equally unsure of where to take their sound, which culminated in '24/7' (2010) which, while not without its charm, proved too cold and unwelcoming on the whole. But this summer, from a tangle of disembowelled '80s cassette mixes, 'Arabian Horse' rises steely-eyed, eclipsing the sun with its flaxen mane, dumping mounds of steaming passion and professionalism.

During a time for electronic music where half of the bands are faceless, nameless or don unpronounceable names, there's something refreshingly barefaced about GusGus. They wear a decade of experience on their sleeves, which shows both in the extreme atten-

tion to detail in the production and their shamelessly indulgent nostalgia for the early '90s pop music that (presumably) shaped them.

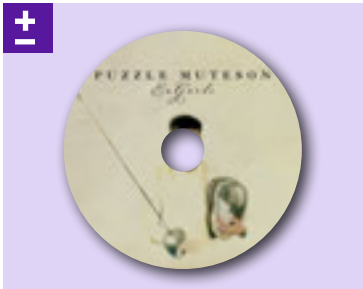
Whatever happened between '24/7' and 'Arabian Horse', GusGus have let the light in. There is still an element of arctic winds and dusky clubs but they have let in a ray of a sound bright, honest and soulful. If '24/7' was bitter, 'Arabian Horse' is bittersweet.

'Selfoss' opens the album, a trippy ambient song stroked to a noisy finish and topped off with a Balkan swing. I can confirm that 'Selfoss' went down great with a foreign audience tripping their minds off on magic mushrooms (which is the first and last time you will hear me use 'Selfoss' and psychedelics in the same sentence as the real-life Selfoss should be avoided like the plague when you're on anything stronger than paracetamol).

'Deep Inside' continues the ambient balkandelia, working in familiar GusGus territory but building towards something new and operatic. Högni Egilsson from the Hjaltalín is paired up for the first time with original member Daniel Ágúst, Högni's voice is low and hoarse, fairly reminiscent of early Sting or even Seal.

'Over' starts off a little decadent with a 'We R Who We R' soundalike beat and all three singers on duty but just as they're about to go off the edge into full-on raver nostalgia Daniel Ágúst pulls the reigns with a tight and clever chorus.

'Within You' is by far the strongest song on an otherwise excellent record, a melodramatic string section, haunting vocals from Högni, light but very effective touches in the production and a falsetto refrain somewhere between 'Walking On A Dream' and the 'Never-ending Story' theme. Echoes of Unfinished Symphony, Hercules and Love



## Puzzle Muteson

## En Garde

 Puzzle.Muteson

Has to get a little older and dig a little deeper

Affair, Jamie Woon.

'Magnified Love' is the album's dance hit—sleek, dirty and tight—with bitching synth maracas and Daniel's voice veering into Bono territory (in cadence more than timbre).

The album concludes with strangely tropical-sounding musical saw in 'Benched'. The flourishes of accordions and saws, as short and non-essential as they seem really add a new dimension to GusGus's sound and serve to draw out the individuality of the songs that otherwise would risk getting lost in the synth loop that pounds like a leitmotif through the whole record. More of this please!

Old fans will have a short "huh" moment before being pulled into familiar territory. The new sound could potentially pull in a lot of new listeners, the timing couldn't be better as far as I can hear with a lot of listeners looking to bands mining that Euro-synth-pop sound. And it's weird how endearing those kitschy electro-pop songs have turned out to be. '100% Pure Love' by Crystal Waters would have made me cringe back in '95 but now I would dance to it in a heartbeat. Maybe all that the Euro-techno needed was to age like blue cheese.

Good things come to those who wait, GusGus have crafted a perfect anthemic electronic pop record—it is both their most mature record to date and one that could easily introduce them to a larger audience (\*cough\* America \*cough\*). While the Icelandic horse, like the Icelandic music scene, is known for being tough, small, sturdy, resourceful, practical, hairy and cute, GusGus have chosen the 'Arabic Horse' as their mascot—sleek, proportional, graceful, beautiful, refined and treading the sands of time like it ain't no thing.

## ♣ - RAGNAR EGILSSON

distinguish from each other. It created an awfully pleasant atmosphere for my drinking-dulled mind and growling stomach to float around on that Sunday, but upon closer examination, the album seemed to lack the emotional depth and complexity I look for in the soft style that characterizes Puzzle's sound.

Since this is his first album, I am certainly willing to give Puzzle another try next time around. In fact, after listening to 'En Garde', I will actively look out for his next album because I truly believe he's got something inside him waiting to emerge. He's just got to get a little older and dig a little deeper.

**♣ - VANESSA SCHIPANI**





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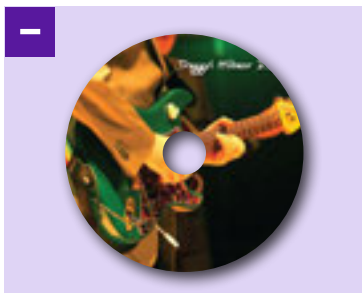
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### Music | Reviews



#### Tryggvi Hübner

2.0

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Ambitious elevator music

Tryggvi Hübner is an accomplished guitar player. He's tactful, tasteful and many other positive adjectives that end in -ful. And he's skilled as a motherfucker. But here's the kicker: his ambitious and dynamic record is so harmless and diluted that it goes by without you noticing, making Mannakorn sound like the Melvins in comparison. Nine instrumental originals and two covers, including Free's 'Wishing Well' do little to put fire under this particular ass.

This is music scored for advertisements geared toward pensioners looking into retirement plans. There's not much else to say about it unless you want to talk about individual performances (which all are amazing) by his schooled comrades that make up his band or if we desire to dissect the production. But I won't, because you can already predict how it all goes. Music this lush and controlled poses no challenge for the listener, and at the same token it is not very comforting either because there's nothing to grab onto. With not a hint of ambiguity and absence of any gusto it fizzles out into obscurity.

✎ - BIRKIR FJALAR VIÐARSSON

## Dead Reckoning

*The Vebeth collective take you for a ride to rock's dark side..*

#### Two Step Horror: Living Room Music

The sound is big, cavernous and ghosting, recorded in the biggest hall in the world and drips with reverb. It all feels light, mysterious and occasionally very sensual.

#### Dead Skeletons: Dead Magick I & II

Not perfect, but a decent soundtrack for tripping nonetheless

It's been a busy time recently over at the local leather-clad sex 'n' death collective, commonly known as Vebeth. The last month has seen two releases from artists within the collective, both exploring the darker side of rock with varying results.

First up is 'Living Room Music' from Two Step Horror, who are the duo of Þórður Grímsson and Anna Margrét Björnsson. Using '50s rock sounds as their music substrate (most evident on tracks such as 'Wray' and 'Dusty Strands'), they meld more contemporary sounds such as shoegaze and dream pop on top. You can really hear this on tracks such as the opener 'Ambeth' and 'Song For You', which feels more like The Cocteau Twins performing the soundtrack to a David Lynch movie. You can almost imagine yourself wearing leather gloves while cruising the night streets looking for something bad to get up to.

If Two Step Horror is all about sex/ David Lynch, then Dead Skeletons are all death/Jim Jarmusch. The creation of Henrik 'Singapore Sling' Björnsson and Jón Sæmundur (aka artist Nonni Dead), their album 'Dead Magick I & II' is the latest in the psych rock continuum that started with the Velvet Underground/13th Floor Elevators, passing through Spacemen 3 / The Black Angels / Brian Jonestown Massacre. They've also shovelled on a



heap of eastern mysticism and sounds to the point it literally creaks from the weight of the symbolism.

The first and third section of the album is rather enjoyable. 'Dead Mantra' is a gleeful realisation of The Crystals performing a sky burial on Iggy Pop, while 'Dead Magick I' is a beautiful coda of nature sounds with booming Tibetan trumpets. However it sags badly in the middle, with tracks such as 'Dead Magick I' not making the cut, while lines like "Come to my world of death" (on 'Psychodead'), are mumbled with a real lack of conviction. Also, at nearly an hour and 15 minutes long, it make the likes of Agent Fresco's album feel like The Minute-men's 'Paranoid Time EP'.

✎ - BOB CLUNESS





So who the frak is Jóhann Jóhannsson? He's an accomplished Icelandic musician, a self-taught composer with seven solo albums and seven movie soundtracks under his belt, as well as having been a member of several successful Icelandic bands, including HAM, Lhooq, Unun, Evil Madness and Apparat Organ Quartet. He has most recently completed his eighth full-length solo album, the audio half of a collaborative work with acclaimed American indie filmmaker Bill Morrison. We spoke to him about the film and found him to be a calm, erudite and soft-spoken man in his early forties. Read on for speculations and comments on cathedrals, being foreign and Margaret Thatcher.

**You don't live in Iceland anymore, right?**  
That's right. I live in Copenhagen.

**For a while, I take it?**  
I've been there... five years now.

**Working in music?**  
Yes, uh...

**In what capacity?**  
I make my own solo albums, film and theatre soundtracks and all kinds of

side projects. Bands, Apparat and others, but the focus has definitely been on my own solo stuff. A lot of my time has gone into movie soundtracks lately.

**Anything you're particularly proud of?**  
I've got 'Miners' Hymns' coming out at the end of May. It's an entirely musical film, that is to say there's no dialogue, just music. The music was written before the film, and footage edited to be in time with the score. It was a far more collaborative effort than most film soundtracks, where the music is written afterwards to compliment the film. It's great to be involved from the very beginning like that; it's very rare for that to happen.

**Yeah, I was going to ask you about that Bill Morrison project, how it started. So it started with your music?**  
We were asked to collaborate by Durham International Festival, the British Film Institute and (multi-format production agency) Forma. They called us and asked if we wanted to do something together, something concerned with archival footage from coal mines, and anything related with the North-

ern English coal industry and the culture surrounding it. I was most excited about getting involved with the brass. There's a rich brass culture in the English industrial North; every town has its own brass band manned by local coal miners. It's a tradition that dates back two-hundred-plus years. The mines were, of course, closed in the 1980s after the General Strikes; Thatcher closed them all...

**...the whole 'union-buster' thing...**  
...right. This was very traumatising for the entire region, causing deep rifts in the society due to unemployment, but the brass bands are still there. The piece, 'Miners' Hymns', is a sort of requiem for that entire culture. Well, of course, the people are still alive...

**...it's a requiem for a civilization.**  
Yes. It's a requiem for an industry, for an entire way of life. It's also an homage, a celebration.

**There was never a question of utilising anything other than brass, then?**  
Yes... but the cathedral also has a huge organ that I was very excited to use, and I mixed it with a whole lot of electron-

ics, synths and guitars and such. I loved the idea of filling this ancient gothic cathedral with massive guitars. I actually made use of some of the archival reels Bill [Morrison] used for the film, all those documentaries and newsreels he found in the British Film Institute and local archives. They're mostly atmospheric sounds from the mines that I spliced into the electronic sounds.

**How did the premiere go? What did the locals think?**  
There were two shows. The church was packed for both of them, largely with people who are deeply connected to the material. It was very... emotional. People liked it. There were a great many senior citizens there, people who would probably never go to a Jóhann Jóhannsson concert. It pleased me greatly to receive praise from these people. It was very moving, especially in light of the responsibility [Bill Morrison and I] were shouldering. We're foreigners, both of us...

**...yes, I was just going to ask you, because you're Icelandic and he's American...**  
...exactly. It was something we talked about a lot, coming from abroad to cov-

er a very sensitive subject. The closing of the mines, and all that. Thatcher is, of course, much despised in the region, still...

**...uh...**  
...heh. Right. As she is in other places... but it's a very emotional, very sore subject there. In fact, any time you address a topic integral to a society not your own, something you're not personally familiar, it is important to approach it with respect, modesty, a certain amount of humility. I was very conscious of that, but the logic behind [Forma & BFI's] decision when they asked us to do this is perfectly sound: that any British artist would be too close to the issue to address with any modicum of detachment; he would too quickly become entrenched in his opinion. Maybe it's something only a foreigner can address. ♡

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At this very moment, celebrated Spanish-Icelandic artist duo Libia Castro and Ólafur Ólafsson are representing Iceland at the 54th International Art Exhibition—La Biennale di Venezia 2011. Showing at the Venice Biennale is of course a great honour for every artist; indeed most of Iceland’s finest have participated on the nation’s behalf over the last decades. We thought some of you might be interested in knowing what the pair are getting up to in Venice, so we got kind permission from the Icelandic Art Center to print this conversation with the pair that appears in the official Biennale literature. To learn more about the Venice Biennale and Iceland’s participation in it head on to [www.cia.is](http://www.cia.is), otherwise read on and enjoy.

**Ellen Blumenstein:** You come from dance and painting [Libia] versus multimedia [Ólafur]; your influences range from (neo-)concretism to conceptualism, institutional critique, and relational aesthetics, to name just a few.

**Libia Castro:** Yes, I finished my bachelor’s degree in painting and Ólafur his in multimedia. But when we met in the master’s programme, I started exploring multimedia and Ólafur delved into painting. Knowledge of painting was important for both of us in the development of our early environments and for our photography and video work, too.

**Ólafur Ólafsson:** Yes, we had differing artistic backgrounds as a result of our studies and obviously different cultural backgrounds as well. We found it exciting to learn about and from each other. I had good teachers in the multimedia department at the Icelandic Art Academy and the conceptual aspect was strong. The school was poorly equipped in terms of audio-visuals, though, so any experiments in that direction were low profile. When Libia and I started working together, we wanted to merge the physical and the concrete, the conceptual and the contextual. This brought us to environments where we could experiment with these different elements and approaches.

Words

Ellen Blumenstein

*“All our works involve people and their living conditions, and they include social matters and political awareness.”*

**EB:** I intuit that finding each other as a Spanish-Icelandic couple and artist duo with different cultural and political backgrounds was not so much the trigger for the multifacetedness of your work, but an effect of this joint interest on a very visible level. Would I be right in describing this diversity as a major common ground, on a deeper level than your obviously similar interests and aesthetics?

**L+Ó:** Yes, it’s also an attitude towards life, and a desire to listen carefully, even if it doesn’t fit the average format...

**EB:** I’d argue that this open-endedness defines your position towards each other, towards the art context and towards the “real” world better and more comprehensively than any attempts to name your influences, interests, and sources could do.

**L+Ó:** True, but on the other hand we question those influences. Our practice is a result of our living conditions and without understanding this it would be misread. We have been inspired by the avant-gardes of the 20th century, such as Dada, surrealism, conceptualism, arte povera, and the situationist/interventionist movements. From the Icelandic context we feel a direct influence from Fluxus, live Art and Dieter Roth. To be based in the Netherlands was also important. Friends like Jeanne van Heswijk, Bickvanderpol, Lara Almarcegui, Jeroen Jongeleen, Marc Bijl, Noline van Harskamp, Rosella Biscotti, Wendelien van Oldenburg, and architects, thinkers, and cultural producers such as Emiliano Gandolfi, Lucia Babina, and their collective Cohabitation Strategies, come from different age groups and were part of our scene, which at different times shared with us the possibility of socially committed or critical forms of art.

**EB:** I would describe your field of interest in the broadest sense as a political one—but this ranges from gender relations to identity politics or subjectivity, to the civic arena, (immaterial) labour, migration, and more.

**L+Ó:** All our works involve people and their living conditions, and they include social matters and political awareness. Why do you say “but”? These subjects are all treated in the discourses of emancipatory philosophies, and as such they are all directly interconnected. An art that tries to reflect on these matters needs to develop a vision in dialogue with them.

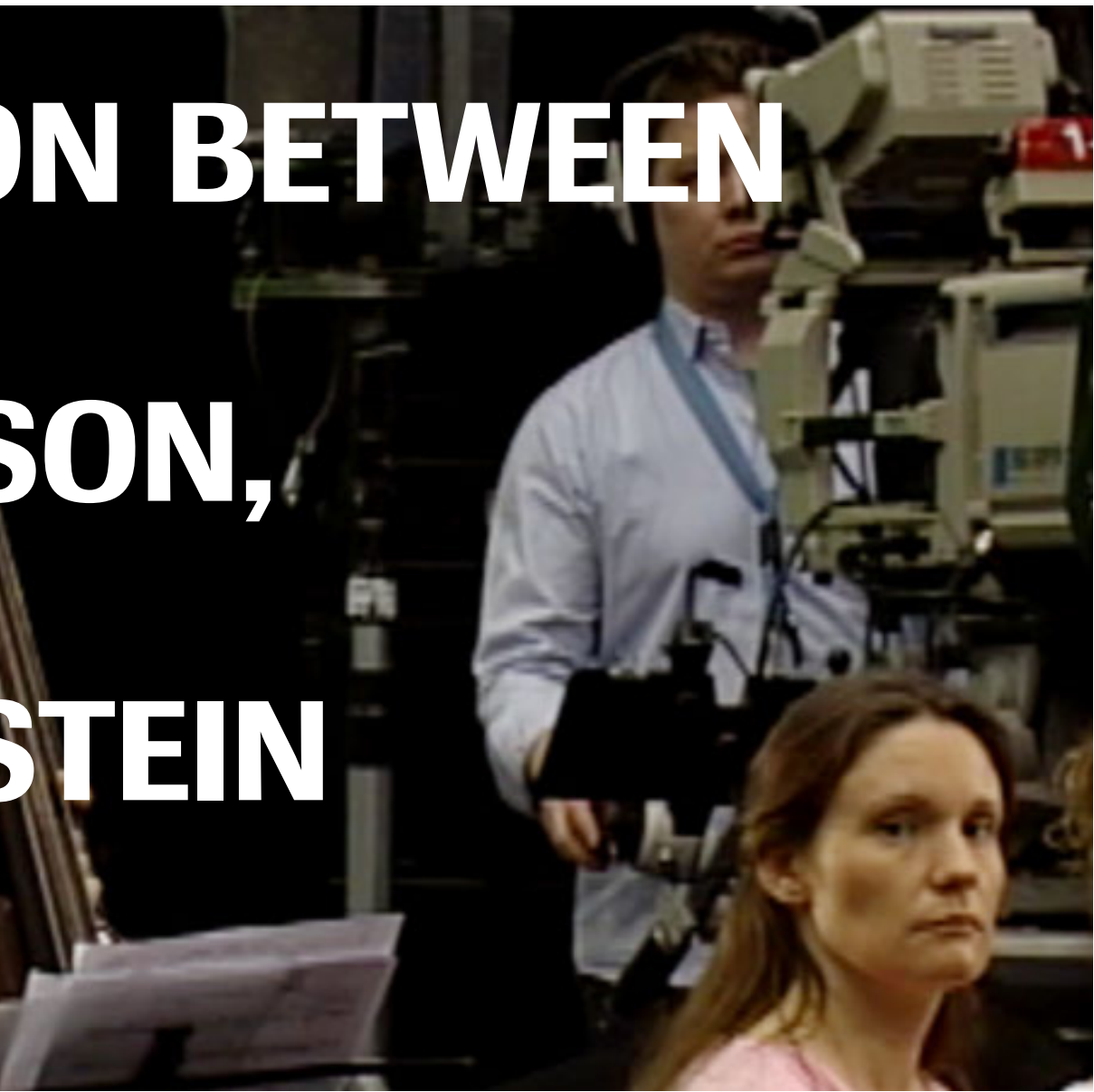
**EB:** I was connecting my remark with a “but” because I find it significant for your work that it is fed more by an involved/committed attitude towards the world that surrounds you than by a specific political concern. These are obviously two possible but different approaches which I am trying to isolate in order to clarify yours. I would like to know more about the way in which you establish this dialogue between philosophy and art.

**LC:** We’re drawn to emancipatory questions, utopias, movements, philosophies; it’s the idea of emancipation and the wish to understand (or simply engage with) the human condition and its paradoxes, its beliefs, dreams, and desires, and the “real” material, economic, social, and historical conditions that shape (our) society and culture and (our) conflicts. We translate these aspects into the artistic context we participate in, and we want to reflect on them from an experimental perspective.

**EB:** Tell me how you decide on the issues you examine.

**L+Ó:** We come to our subjects through our work, through dealing with questions that bring up other questions, desires, or ideas. A Buddhist would say, “we are trapped in samsara”. The issues are all interrelated with the work, our life, and other people’s lives (and societies). The internal questions the work poses also determine how to proceed. The sites to which we travel and work in are also important. Indeed, our projects always have an investigative character and for us they only make sense if they can be placed in relation to life and the





# ON BETWEEN SON, STEIN

in-between of art and life. We examine questions about our context, our time, our background, and our possible future. These questions are a continual redefinition. We work intuitively. The first research phase can be focused or quite expansive—it depends. We might get lost somewhere only to come back with something substantial that caught us.

**EB:** I'd like to get hold of a certain expansiveness I sense in your work, to trace the source of your strategy of deliberately juxtaposing topics, influences, and materialities, and of re-referencing previous works of yours. I am especially thinking of your early environments, like your project at Platform Garanti in Istanbul, '20 minus Minutes' (2003). One project, 'Your country doesn't exist' (2003, ongoing), for example, came out of this exhibition—and you have decided to develop a new form of it for Venice now.

**LC:** Our early environments were sensual, informal, sculptural, and conceptual models for exhibitions as situations. We questioned the context, expected forms, and frame of the given space, but

also entered into an open dialogue with its immediate surroundings. To reflect on the "now", we wanted to create a layered situation and sensitise it. The idea was to set up an open fieldwork to zoom in on some particular aspects and work on them in depth. The environments were the starting point for an approach we then pursued in subsequent works.

**ÓÓ:** Juxtaposing those elements you mention is a game of giving a new significance to familiar signs. On the one hand we reveal their constructedness according to a set of rules and values, and on the other create a space for transforming them into another relational order. This took us to Brecht's 'Verfremdung', and to the tremendous changes Duchamp brought about by inventing the ready-made and opening up new levels of perception.

In '20 minus Minutes' and the other environments the viewer is immersed in this initially disorienting space which prickles the senses and simultaneously addresses the concrete and the symbolic space. Many elements are "estranged" through their new role or relation to the space or to each other and ask for an

engagement with a somewhat disconcerting and at times dissenting setup.

**LC:** The aspect of re-referencing is a nomadic approach; it's a way to rework earlier projects in relation to a new site, and it enables us to link aspects that originally related to a different site with the new environment, both formally and in terms of content.

'Your country doesn't exist', for example, is a work that originated in the laboratory of the environments and has since developed its own trajectory. The environments were our studio, which moved from place to place; there are other works that came from this context. We were interested in working in and out of a space under its given conditions, and in generating concrete links between different spaces. 'Your country...' was intended to travel, to examine different territories, and pass through different languages. While always staying the same, the work changes each time through its manifestation on site; it's like a mirror.

Continues over

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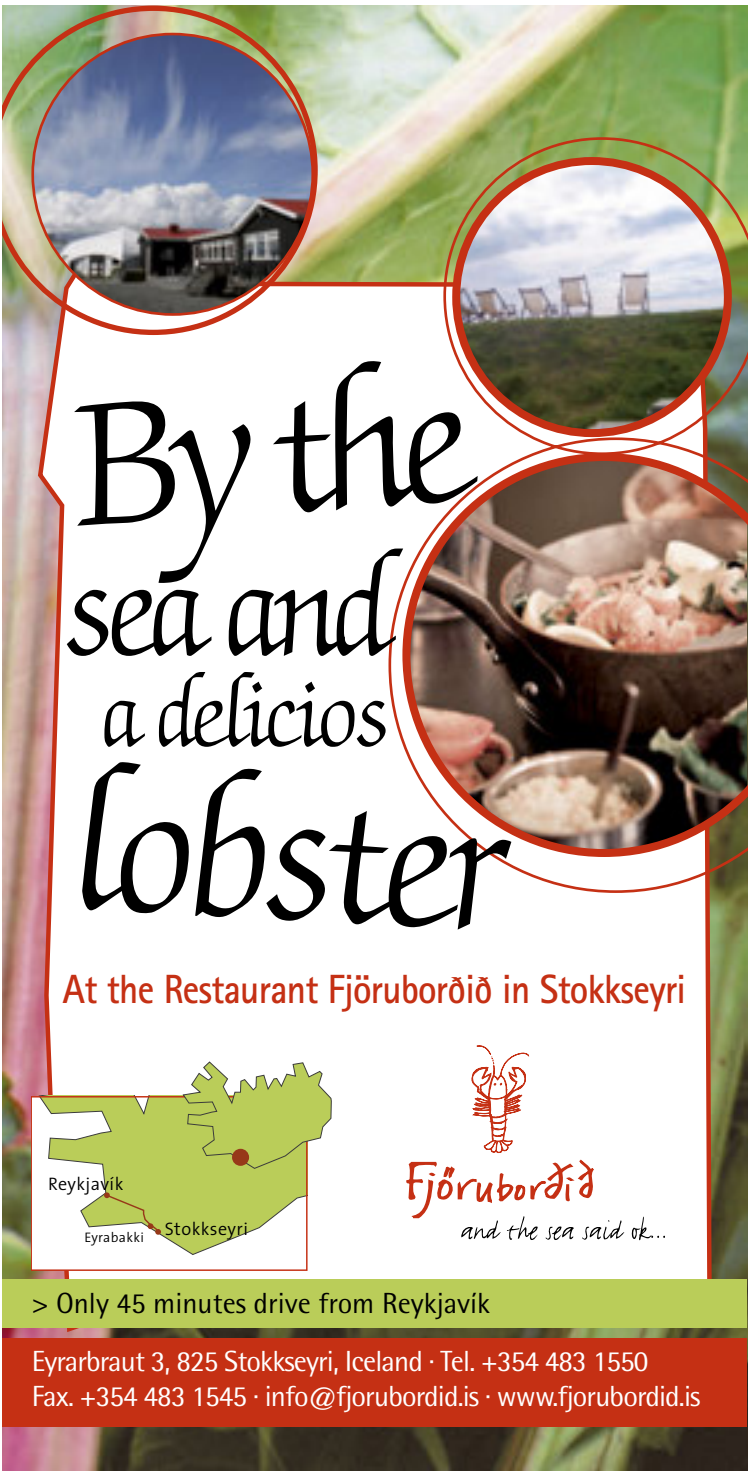
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**EB:** Are there any threads running through your work, or patterns that reappear in different projects?

**LC:** You could say that there are two main paths which feed into and question each other. One is an interventionist approach, appropriating and reinventing given structures. The other observes, maps, and portrays reality.

**L+O:** Our slide carrouseles, which were always developed as part of our environments, map places and portray people in their lived-in surroundings. Since the environments themselves were always a synthesis of us encountering the place, the slide shows introduced a distance into their immediacy and concreteness. They enabled us to ask questions about a particular reality and how it could be represented, and they paved the way for the later video works. All our videos are portraits, documents of performances or actions/interventions. The portraits are either of people working or giving testimony about their situations and living conditions. The documents of intervention-performances record us or others performing a public action.

**EB:** Let me come back to your interest in the concept of "estrangement" which as we know was developed by Bertolt Brecht. His approach to theatre was always closely connected to participation and the transmission of a clear message—which you would probably define differently for your practice. Curiously, his term 'Lehrstück' is translated to English as "learning play". The literal translation, though, would be "teaching play". Here we are with the relationship between learning and teaching again.

**L+O:** Yes we have been inspired by Brecht's ideas, but also by other artists who have furthered them in different ways. We like the radicalism of Brecht's vision, with its participatory concern and use of distancing devices to reflect on the ideological construct of capitalist reality.

**EB:** I wonder if you see any parallels in your work to the didacticism of Brecht.

**L+O:** No, we don't. There is a didactic aspect we play and work with, at least in some of our projects, but Brecht had a rather authoritarian idea of didacticism that we don't have.

**EB:** Humour and play are important strategies in your work.

**L+O:** Yes, humour and play are very important indeed. They are relativisers; they are subversive and destabilising aspects, and that is how we use them. They are existential factors we can include. They can free us from constraints, and undermine hierarchies and reorder them.

**EB:** You have made critical work on social and political subjects, but you have also worked directly with political activist groups. How does this relate to your artistic practice?

**ÓÓ:** We work first and foremost in dialogue with the art context, but our practice is very often enriched by ideas from other fields. Working with political activist groups is a way of deepening our knowledge of social and political issues, and of bringing some of their experience into our work. For 'Avant-garde Citizens', for example, we joined De Bezoekersgroep, a group of people who regularly visit undocumented migrants imprisoned at the detention centre at Rotterdam Airport. We joined the group twice to attend a mass at the detention centre. Officially they were helping the priest to arrange the chairs, hand out the songbooks, and so on, while actually they established communication between some of the people and their lawyers and/or family and friends, or just listened to their stories or answered their questions. Those were weird experiences in which we witnessed oppression, manipulation, pragmatism, post-colonialism, patronisation, hope, and despair.

**EB:** Your relation to your collaborators on the one hand, and to the audience

on the other, is an issue you renegotiate constantly. One ongoing relationship, for example, is to the composer Karólína Eiríksdóttir. She composed the music for 'Caregivers' and 'The Constitution of the Republic of Iceland' (2008/2011)—which you will also present in Venice—and she is also composing the music for the new version of 'Your country doesn't exist'. This relationship is special, for sure, but you have also collaborated with a choir, with activists, asylum seekers, illegal immigrants, caregivers, lobbyists, ministers—the list is long. Could you go into more detail about the role these different individuals play in your work processes and how far they shape the final work?

**ÓÓ:** People are our inspiration and our muses. Our friend Herman Kerkhof, for example, is a Dutch jeweller (fifth generation), clock restorer, gardener, cyclist, passionate provocateur, lover of people, and the instigator of chance meetings—the more absurd the better. He performed in a few of our early works and for a while he was probably the person who had seen most of our works in various places in the Netherlands and in Spain, Iceland, Istanbul, and Belgium—apart from us. At first we didn't collaborate much with other art-

*"We work first and foremost in dialogue with the art context, but our practice is very often enriched by ideas from other fields. Working with political activist groups is a way of deepening our knowledge of social and political issues, and of bringing some of their experience into our work."*

ists. We were in dialogue with them, for sure, and that was and is very important for us. But for our projects we worked with people who were not art professionals and whom we met by chance. We met Chucci and Asdrubal in Havana, for example, when we started working on our project '... no te creas cosas' for the 8th Havana Biennial in 2003. Chucci and Asdrubal were hanging out at a gas station where we stopped to buy rum, so we started talking. We showed them some of our posters, and in return they invited us to a party. They became our assistants, and we also collaborated with their families and friends. They were the ones who introduced us to the local saying "no te creas cosas" which means "don't be smug about yourself", and we picked that up as the title for our work, like we often do.

The idea for 'The Constitution of the Republic of Iceland' was motivated by our professional dialogue with Karólína Eiríksdóttir. From working with her we have learned how our concepts hooked up with our collaborators' ideas and vice versa—in regards to time, space, abstraction, and engagement.

**EB:** On the other hand, there is the audience. Susanne Leeb writes in her essay that "your works are not participative in the sense that the audience would be directly involved in an activity", but that within them you debate the role of the spectator by confronting different spheres with one another. I agree with her, and would like to follow up the idea of the status of the viewer rather than the collaborator. As mentioned earlier, you traverse differing social spheres—by entering public space, by opening up the art space to other social groups than the art world, by creating ambivalent objects or situations that function in different worlds, by producing a piece for television, to name only a few—and thus make your work accessible to wider audiences.

**ÓÓ:** We try to create different ways into the work. Because who is the art audience? Some of our latest videos are now being shown in universities, film festivals, NGOs, and activist websites and events. To a certain extent these audiences read the work differently from the art professionals. We are happy with that and want to connect to those different readings. For our MFA in Groningen we wrote a 'Viewer's Manifesto': "Dare to be open. Dare to look. Dare to

see. Dare to feel. Dare to touch. Dare to get surprised. Dare to be critical. Dare to disagree. Dare to look beyond. Dare to go too far. Dare to not get anywhere. Dare to experience".

**EB:** There is the project 'Uterus Flags', in which you hung chains of those typical festive chains of flags across whole sections of different cities and thus inserted a carnivalesque moment into everyday street life.

**LC:** Like 'Your country doesn't exist', the 'Uterus Flags' intervene into public space. They appropriate the well-known festive ritual of decorating the streets with triangular flags on a chain, as Daniel Buren has done. Formally, they play with repetition, because the abstracted figure of the female sexual organs is a triangle too. They go back to a basic form, to a strong signifier. When researching for the project, we investigated medieval heraldry and found out that it has almost no female symbols. The 'Uterus Flags' have something primitive and timeless about them, something Dionysian, as fertility rituals have. But while Dionysus is a male energy/god, this is female (sexual) energy brought to the street. The flags are a celebration of the female through an abstract representation of the sexual organs. The ones

we have done up to now are gentle because of their colours, but they are also orgiastic and sometimes even disturbing to passers-by. I find it funny and sensual to see them flapping in the wind. We heard endless comments about them from all kinds of people, ranging from really erotic, hot stuff, to witty remarks and giggling recognition, to serious anger or aggression. Some people even cut them down. Predictably, response in Italy has been the loudest and most proactive so far. The work triggered a broad discussion. The press reported, and there were several letters to the editor for or against the work.

**EB:** You said elsewhere that your works are often site-related. If I apply this term to your sound works, how would you say that they reflect an interior environment? Perhaps you could talk about this in relation to the new version of 'Your country doesn't exist' in the city space of Venice. The piece will be a performance recorded on video and audio, and will result in both a video and a separate audio work.

**ÓÓ:** It's a site-related recording, since it will also capture sounds from the city, and this environment will directly affect the recording. Rather than talking about space, we prefer to talk about context; we're interested in creating our works in relation to sites. Maybe our audio works are more related to context than site. 'Living Room Reading - The Episode of Hrut and Mord Fiddle', for example, reflects on Iceland as a site, and its construct through the centuries until today. The text that is read, the position it holds, and the foreign voice reading it, contrast with the site, though they are still part of it. For us site-relation is an attitude to perception or communication rather than a means in itself.

**EB:** Relational aesthetics is a term that the French art critic Nicolas Bourriaud coined in the 1990s to describe artistic practices which emphasise "human relations and their social context" (Bourriaud, Relational Aesthetics p.113)—key protagonists being Rirkrit Tiravanija, Philippe Parreno, Pierre Huyghe, or Carsten Höller. But to me their projects oftentimes merely serve to highlight a social/communal activity within the art context—instead of questioning the relation between the art, its presentation, and the viewer on a more structural level. I'd say that your practice goes way beyond that, because it assesses the configuration of the audience and constructs the exhibition installation from there.

**L+O:** Yes, you could say something like that. ☘



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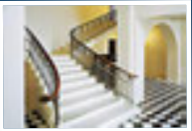
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# Immersing In A River Of Relaxation

*Geothermal bathing at Mt. Hengill*



Roll up for the magical mystery trip to probably the only place on earth where your nose hair will freeze while your nipples and bum are safe and warm in a river of hot natural water, flowing directly from the core of the earth. Welcome to the hot springs in the beautiful valley of Reykjadalur.

**FIRST THINGS FIRST**

To prepare for our adventure there are a few things to take into consideration. First, keep in mind that the trip involves

hiking to get to the springs, which means that being in good shape is recommended for our intrepid explorers—it's a great time for that bacon-and-nacho free diet (however, the hike is fairly low-intensity, so unless you go around in a walker, you'll probably be fine).

Then, we must not forget to wear proper clothes: a warm coat, water-proof pants, a good pair of hiking boots, a swimsuit (of course), and clean undies for when we change after the hot bath. It's wise to dress in layers so that we can take them off as we get warmer and start sweating during the hike. Think of this excursion as a kind of strip poker game, you begin with many layers of clothing and finish almost naked, while preserving your dignity.

Finally, we must be sure to have enough snacks and water for more than two hours of hiking, although

we should not be too worried about this because our nice tour providers brought everyone a tasty packed lunch.

**HELLO HENGILL!**

Equipped and ready, our trip begins at Laugavegur 11, embarking from the Arctic Adventures main office. The bus ride to the hot springs takes forty minutes on Iceland's main ring road, Route 1, before we turn off at the small town of Hveragerði. From there it's one kilometre by dirt road before we are finally able to get off the bus and admire Mount Hengill, which rises up before us.

The terrain is quite plain at first but after a while there are several difficult slopes, some of them full of stones and gravel that can be slippery if one doesn't pay attention.

The landscape changes dramati-

cally depending on the season. In the winter it's completely white and almost impassable due to snow, but when the sun arrives a nature explosion surrounds us: dried and green grass, aromatic flowers, a bit of mud now and then and Vivaldi's 'Spring' playing on continuous loop...

After an hour and fifteen minutes of walking, we arrive at our destination. A stream of warm crystal clear water welcomes us with open arms, making the trip well worth the effort and every callus acquired.

**FEELING LIKE A LOBSTER**

The best part of the trip has come. It's time to immerse ourselves in the cosy hot water and relax, a pleasure well deserved after the long hike. It's difficult to describe the wonderful feeling you get while lying in the warm


water, watching the beauty of nature all around you. A light cloud of white steam emerges from the river and adds a romantic, dream-like appearance to the scene. Bravo!

Did you enjoy that? I hope so, because now it's time for drama, for the most dangerous and tragic moment in our adventure; yes, in the end, you have to get out of water. It's normal, for almost all humans, to fear going from 40 degrees to 3 in a millisecond. But the trick is to do the deed as fast as you can. If not, you run the serious risk of suffering from hypothermia.

After you are dressed again the return is dead easy. The path is nearly all downhill and a feeling of well-being possesses you. Therein is the magic of Mt. Hengill and its hot springs; you end your hike with a big smile on your face. A highly recommended trip. 🐾

**Words**  
[José Ángel Hernández](#)

**Photography**  
[José Ángel Hernández](#)



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# Into The Ocean

*A tour of Cape Ingólfshöfði's history and wildlife*



“Puffins start breeding at around four to five years of age and remain with the same mate for life. These birds are the ideal of monogamy in the flesh; divorce rarely occurs, and when it does, it's usually because the pair failed to produce young after trying for several years.

My gloveless hands clutched the cold metal railing of the tractor-drawn hay cart as we drove into the sea towards Ingólfshöfði, an isolated cape located south of the Vatnajökull glacier. From a distance, a vast ocean seemed to separate us from our destination. In reality, it was a thin layer of water that the tractor's burly tires easily traversed.

GAGGLES OF GIGGLES

In late April, the six-kilometre drive through a wet, black sand desert to Ingólfshöfði, though scenic, was a cold and bumpy one. The bumps, however, produced mostly giggles over grumbles from me and my travel mates. We could see Ingólfshöfði's silhouette in the distance, and its elusiveness kept us inquisitive and happy.

The only way to get to Ingólfshöfði is via amphibious vehicles or tractors (so don't try to drive there in your rental, even if it's a 4x4). For the past decade, Sigurður Bjarnason, a retired farmer of the area, and his family have been driving gaggles of tourists out to the cape daily during the summer using their nifty tractors. Due to Sigurður's increasing age, his son Einar has taken over most of the tours with his wife Matta.

HUMBLED BY HISTORY

Though I usually prefer travelling on my own to guided tours, I was pleasantly surprised by Einar's tour of Ingólfshöfði: he did not herd the group like cattle, nor did he make cheesy jokes that aimed to please the dull-brained masses. He provided information about the history and ecology of the cape in a relaxed, straightforward manner and came equipped with a monocular through which we could all gaze at seabirds. We spent about an hour and half on the

cape and walked about 2–3 kilometres following the cliff ledge.

Before Einar mentioned it, I had no idea Ingólfshöfði was named after the first permanent settler in Iceland, Ingólfur Arnarson, who spent a few winters on the cape in the late 800s before moving to Reykjavík. When Ingólfur and brother-in-law Hjörleifur Hróðmarsson first saw land on their voyage from Norway, Ingólfur threw his high-seat pillars (a pair of wooden poles that symbolized the status of head of the household in Scandinavian houses) overboard and vowed to settle where the gods brought them to shore. It took three years for Ingólfur's slaves to find the pillars in the bay of what is now Reykjavík.

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

During the summer, thousands of nesting seabirds call Ingólfshöfði home, especially puffins and Great Skuas, which is one reason why many tourists travel to the cape on Einar's tours. Before heading out, Einar warned us that we might not see puffins this early in the season. In late April, only the males have come to shore to clean out their old nests, a burrow usually situated at the edge of a sharp precipice. After cleaning, the males line the newly excavated nests with a fresh layer of plants, feathers and seaweed. The females, who are courted and charmed (and impregnated) on the rough waters of the north Atlantic Ocean, come to land around mid-May, when they have to find their mate amongst a bustling colony of other puffin couples.

MONOGAMY AND MURDER

Puffins start breeding at around four to five years of age and remain with the same mate for life. These birds are the ideal of monogamy in the flesh; divorce

rarely occurs, and when it does, it's usually because the pair failed to produce young after trying for several years. Some of its neighbours on Ingólfshöfði, like the Great Skua, sabotage the puffin's romantic lifestyle by murdering its children. With a wingspan of up to 140 cm, Great Skuas are much larger than puffins and find their young quite tasty.

Known to fly at the head of humans or other intruders approaching its nest, the Great Skua is a feisty parent. While on Ingólfshöfði I felt as though they were watching me closely as I paraded around their home. (The puffin, however, remained oblivious to our presence until someone got too close.)

After climbing up a steep-ish sand dune, Einar guided the group along the cliffs of Ingólfshöfði that faced the open ocean. In the corner of my eye, I caught a glimpse of a silly little bird flapping its wings vigorously in an attempt to make it to the edge of the rock ledge. With its natural tuxedo and colourful beak, puffins are not that difficult to spot. Before plummeting down to the ocean below, the puffin remained still just long enough for all of us to get a closer look at him through the monocular, which my bird-crazy eyes enjoyed immensely.

On our way back to the tractor, I spotted the skeleton of a bird stripped bare to the bones lying in the grass, its bright orange and black beak giving away its identity. Despite their comical name and appearance, I was reminded while on Ingólfshöfði that puffins are real, live animals, susceptible to the grips of Skuas, starvation and disease. Seeing them in their natural habitat, they became much more than the caricature tourism companies portray them to be. For this, I have a newfound respect for puffins; for tour guides, too, and their fancy monoculars. 🐦

Words  
Vanessa Schipani

Photography  
Maroesjka Lavigne



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# The (Hidden) Wonders Of Reykjanes

*The Reykjanes Peninsula as seen NOT through a bus window*



“The Reykjanes Peninsula is much more than a highway and the Blue Lagoon. It’s the beautiful landscapes and dense history that can be found in the area if one does a little more searching.

Words  
S. Alessio Tummolillo

Photography  
Maroesjka Lavigne

“Have you ever been to the Reykjanes Peninsula?” our tour guide asked. I thought to myself: “Of course, I took the scenic drive from Keflavik International to Reykjavik and even went to the Blue Lagoon twice”. He gave me a smirk, and as if reading my mind stated, “And I don’t mean just the drive down the high way and the Blue Lagoon. There is more to Reykjanes than that”. With those words, we were off.

The first notable stop was at an area where the remnants of dried cod (also known as skreið) were hanging. The edible parts were being shipped to Nigeria. Here we learned that salting and/or drying the fish, as opposed to freezing it or selling it fresh, allows for 90% of the fish to be utilised, the liver being used to make cod liver oil and other parts to make fertiliser, whereas only 30% is used when freezing the fish. This was a nice introduction to somewhere we would stop later in the trip, the Salted Cod museum.

**NATURAL BEAUTY**  
When we arrived at Krýsuvík, things started to pick up. First we discovered the beautiful lake Kleifarvatn,

the biggest lake in Southwest Iceland. The lake covers an area of 10 square kilometres, and reaches a depth of 97 metres. This breathtaking river is unique in that it does not receive water from any river, but is created solely by ground water and rain. It maintains its massive size despite the fact that there is a rift, the same rift that in 2000 caused the lake to lose 20% of its surface. Since then, the rift has decreased in amplitude, allowing the lake to return to its former glory, to the delight of scuba divers and trout fishers alike.

We moved on to Seltún, which alone made me wonder how this tour could be such a hidden gem. The hot springs at Seltún are some of the most stunning I’ve seen in Iceland. The area was originally going to be used to harness the geothermal energy for electricity, and some of the boreholes created by these feats have exploded, notably one in 1999, the explosion forming a crater 30 meters in diameter.

**BACALAO AND VIKING HISTORY**  
With the exception of the walk between the Eurasian and North American continental tectonic plates (it felt

good to be home again, may I add) the tour took a more cultural and historical turn. First, we visited Grindavik, a fishing town and the home of the joint Salted Cod Museum and the Earth Energy Museum. The Salted Cod Museum provided insight into Iceland’s once staple export, and how it has evolved through the ages. For example, how rowboats were used for a thousand years, which limited fishing to within 3 miles of the shore. This changed with the advent of newer boats and machinery, and by 1930, there were only 171 rowboats in use. The Earth Energy Museum, housed in the same building, provided history of how Iceland was formed, and how geothermal energy has been used in the country.

We then visited the Íslendingur, a hand-made Viking ship that in 2000 sailed from Iceland to Canada and the United States in honour of Leif Eiríksson’s discovery of North America, 500 years prior to Christopher Columbus. In the building where the Íslendingur rests there is also a brief history of the Vikings and their way of life.

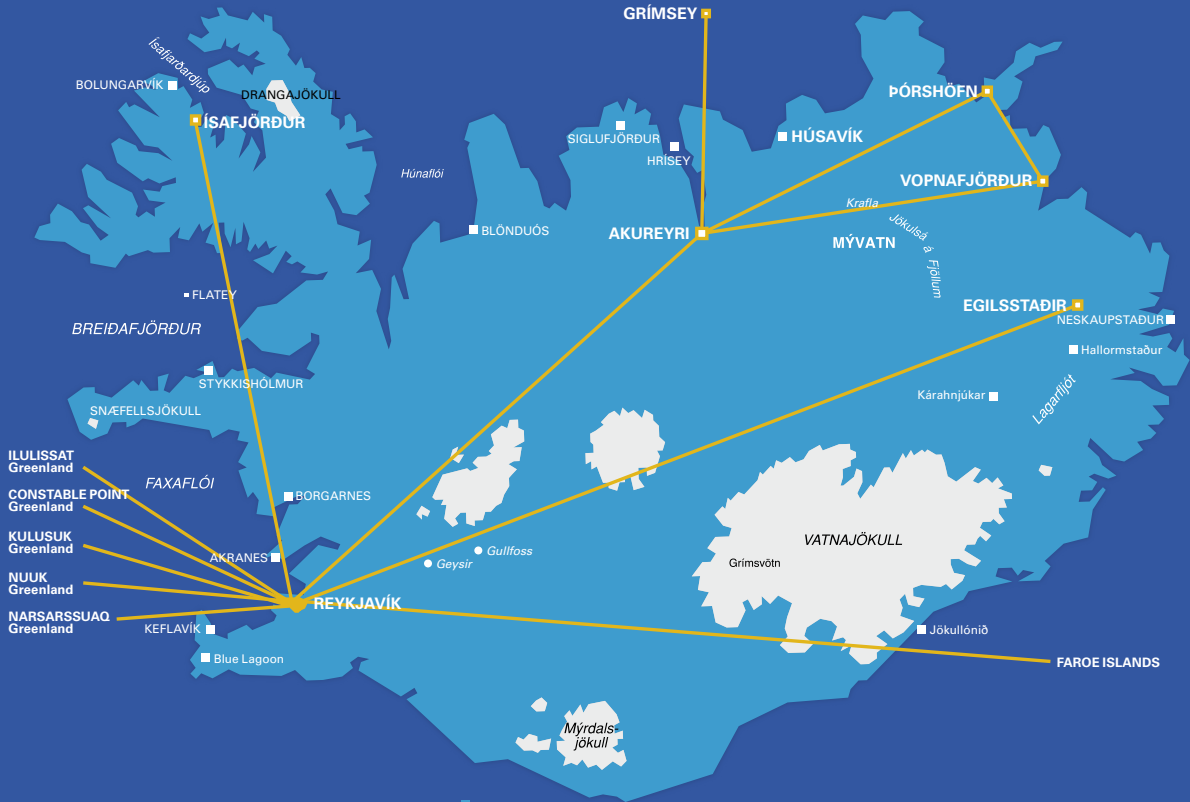
**THE BLUE LAGOON: SPRING BREAK 2011**

Finally, the trip ends at the ever-popular Blue Lagoon, where after witnessing these hidden beauties and learning about the history of Salted Cod and its importance to Iceland, it was nice to bathe in the blue waters. If you’re lucky, there will be a frat party bumping around the lagoon bar, complete with techno music and raucous Americans. But only if you’re lucky. If you’re worried about the beer that is spilled in the Lagoon from these frat parties and how they keep it clean (as I was), common bacteria does not thrive in the conditions of the lagoon, and the water is changed every 40 hours.

Aside from the places mentioned, we also visited the previous NATO base, stunning bird cliffs, as well as Reykjanesviti and Gunnuhver, the oldest lighthouse and largest steam crater in Iceland, respectively. There are a lot of things in Reykjanes that go under the radar of tourists, but are very much worth seeing. It is far more than a highway and the Blue Lagoon. It’s the beautiful landscapes and dense history that can be found in the area if one does a little more searching. And the location for a rockin’ college party. 🍷

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With their propensity for obesity and economic mismanagement, one could be forgiven for thinking of the Icelanders as little Americans. Conventional wisdom would indeed suggest this. While the Scandinavians are busy constructing their welfare states full of equality and general contentment, the Icelanders prefer giving all their money to a select few for them to squander away. The same can be said of culture.

We know little of what goes on in Oslo or Stockholm or Copenhagen, but every inane trend from the US gets picked up and misunderstood and recycled. Or does it?

The first Icelandic rock bands were formed in the early 60s in Keflavík, in the shadow of the US military base. Much has been made of the influence of Armed Forces Radio and the US soldiers in Iceland. Just as American sailors supposedly handed out blues records to youngsters in Liverpool, so the Yanks stationed here, confined to their base, brought rock and roll to Iceland.

BEATLEMANIA AND PUNK



American influence was no doubt considerable. Nevertheless, the bands here all tried to sound like the Beatles. American trends, such as folk or acid rock, only arrived in the '70s, if at all. The UK was the place locals went to for their record buying. In fact, Merseybeat was the dominant form here almost until the end of the '60s. The reasons for this are manifold. Some point to the similarity between Liverpool and Keflavík or even Reykjavík as harbour towns. More importantly, perhaps, Iceland lacks the diverse underground scenes of the city the size of New York or Los Angeles. Essentially, people here just wanted to dance, and this was much easier to do to "Beatle music" than to 15 minute organ solos. Quite possibly, the very proximity of the base and the disputes surrounding it may have led people to want to look elsewhere.

The next major music wave to hit Iceland also came from the UK. This time it was punk, and instead of trying to emulate their heroes, like the '60s bands had done, the Icelandic punks went their own way and arguably surpassed their role models. Icelandic punk was inspired by events in London, but the result was purely Icelandic. Without it, there would be no Björk and probably no Sigur Rós either.

THE SAMI SPRINGSTEEN



This is where Icelandic music differs considerably from its neighbours in Scandinavia. Punk was more important here and stretched out into the mid-Eighties. Also, we never really discovered Bruce Springsteen. Springsteen first toured Scandinavia in 1981 and soon inspired a host of imitators. The Nordics took to heartland rock, in Norway there was Åge Alexandersen and in Sweden there was Björn Afzelius and a host of others, some who had been around for a while but now suddenly started wearing cropped t-shirts and tight bluejeans. Even Kim Larsen in Denmark had his Springsteenesque elements, if not the biceps.

This was not just imitation, though. Americana strikes a deep chord in the north. Drive an hour outside of Oslo, and you can see people sporting cowboy hats. In northern Sweden, the raggare drive their hotrods as if permanently suspended in some twilight version of Grease, and the area of Östergötland is known as Finland's Texas. Even the Sami have their own brand of country or even gospel joik, as can be heard at the annual Easter festival in Kautokeino.

ICELANDIC COWBOYS



Despite the best efforts of Icelandic cowboy Hallbjörn Hjartarson, Americana is mostly miss-

*"The first Icelandic rock bands were formed in the early 60s in Keflavík, in the shadow of the US military base".*

ing from the local countryside. One might think that tales of the true West would strike a chord with Icelandic farmers, but perhaps the comparison just sounds silly for men on tiny horses rounding up docile sheep in hilly lava fields.

In fact, this is the general Icelandic attitude towards Americana, country & western, as well as the '80s heartland rock of Springsteen, John Mellencamp and others, mostly looks silly to the Icelandic. Sure, people like Johnny Cash, but for his last underground phase, not his Stetson days. Rockabilly does have its admirers, but this is largely ironic as well as cyclical. You don't get the diehards of Northern Scandinavia, blissfully unaware of the latest retro trends. Icelanders, like everyone else, are influenced by America. But not so much by Americana.

NORWAY'S WILD WEST, SWEDEN'S HEARTLAND



In Norway, interest in country music is still growing, with nine major festivals every summer, attracting between 10-30.000 people each. Stories from the Norwegian countryside, usually sung in a strong provincial dialect, are accompanied with Americanized Western music. Yet many complain that they do not get the same amount of respect that jazz and blues festivals receive. "At most larger festivals, you see politicians attending opening ceremonies, but not so in the country ones", says Kristin Solli, who holds a PhD in country music, to Aftenposten newspaper. For many, C&W festivals are primarily associated with drunkenness. As are most Icelandic country balls, though without the country music.

In Sweden, heartland rock lives on in Linköping's Lars Winnerbäck, who is widely popular in his homeland as well as Norway, and plays traditional rock and roll with honest and sometimes biting lyrics about Sweden's small towns as well as its cities. We never really had that here. Bubbi certainly went through some Springsteen-ish phases, but honesty is not really his strong suit, and he has long since lost any connection with the working man. Some of his imitators, such as Rúnar Þór (although not taken very seriously), probably came closer. And then there was Bjartmar Guðlaugsson, who wrote rock-pop tunes with sharp social commentary in the '80s and was popular for a while. Iceland's finest lyricist, Megas, although heavily influenced by Dylan, is too much of a poet, provocateur and satirist for mainstream rock, more ancient sage than working class hero.

COUNTRY BALLS AND COOLNESS



The Reykjavík scene is cool, sarcastic and often quite original. It is aware of trends in London and even New York, but it does not delve into New Jersey or Texas or the vast Midwestern hinterlands of the US. Other Icelandic towns, apart from Keflavík, are mostly too small to develop their own unique musical identity, at least for any length of time. Aspiring musicians make their name in Reykjavík. So what do Icelandic country folk listen to, then? Mostly, they just like to dance, and traditionally the best way to make a living out of playing music in Iceland is to hire a bus and travel around the countryside playing top 40 hits to inebriated audiences at balls (the infamous "sveitaball"). Some

bands, such as Stuðmenn or Sálín, became big enough to be able to do both, attract the dancing crowds but yet play their original material. With enough hits, the boundary between country ball and full on concert became erased for some, but these were rarely the cutting edge bands.

So where does this all leave us? We still have the Reykjavík underground, where originality is highly prized but the attention of the bar crowds can be hard to maintain. Then we have the country balls (you can find versions of this in Reykjavík), where the attention span is pretty much irrelevant.

HEARTFELT COOL?



The post-punk emphasis on originality has given us some pretty great music, some of which has been exported to the outside world. In this, we have done better than the more traditionalist Norwegians, although Sweden has a vibrant music scene largely ignored here.

The quest for something different has saved us from countless bands sporting Stetsons and steel guitars and singing about the simple things. Yet, there is a downside. In the '70s and '80s, when people first started writing lyrics in Icelandic, some very interesting stuff happened. This looked set to develop into all sorts of directions. Then Björk (no slouch as a lyricist herself) happened, world-wide success suddenly became a possibility, and the Icelandic lyric receded into the background.

Ironically, it is the pop bands, courting local success, that tend to sing (their mostly silly love songs) in Icelandic, whereas more serious musicians who can't make a living domestically tend to opt for English. In neither case is there much emphasis on lyrical content. Now, if someone were to combine Americana's love of heartfelt lyrics with Reykjavík cool and originality, it might be a very interesting prospect indeed.

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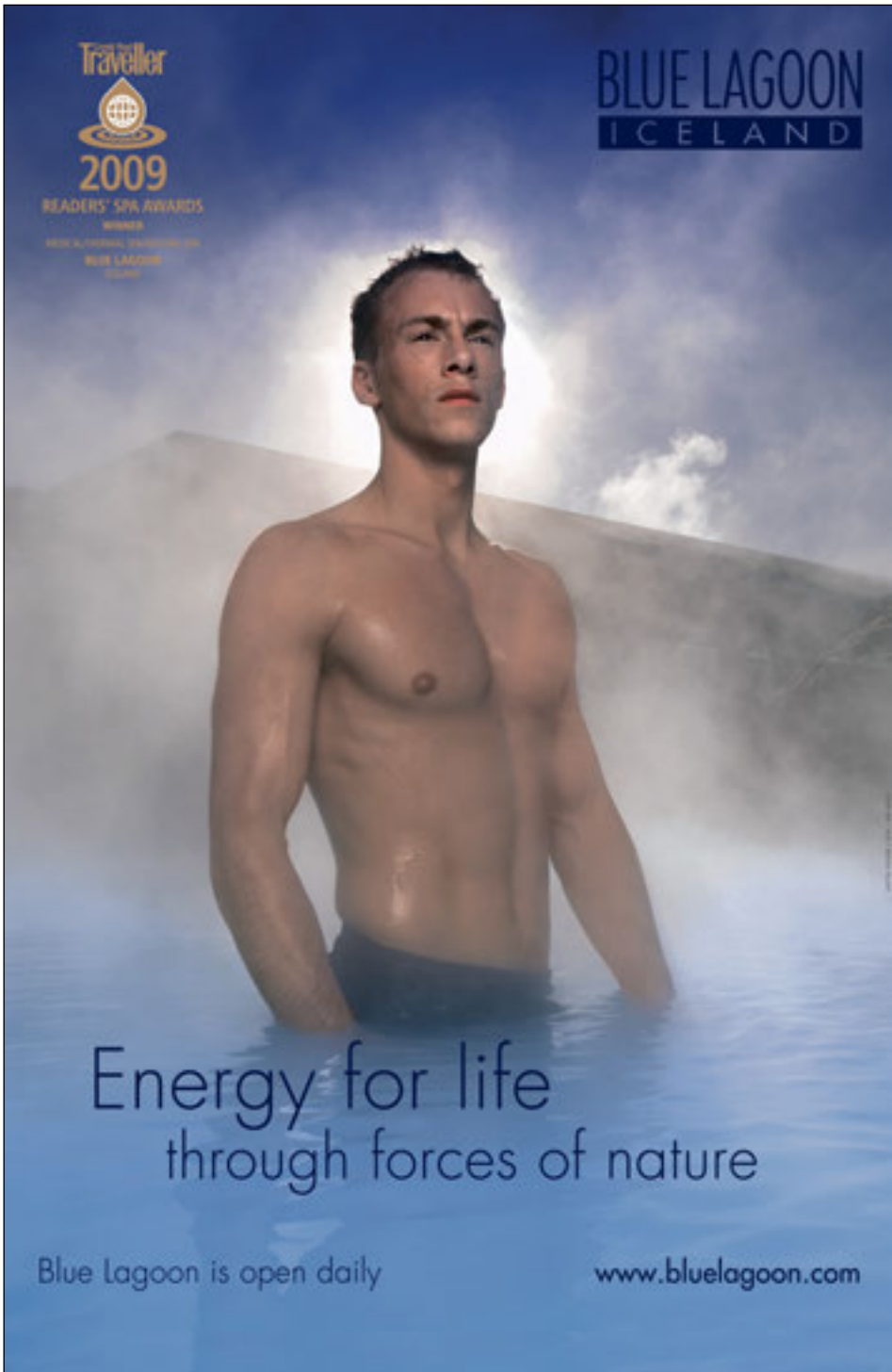
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# The Universal Project Of Whale-Watching In Húsavík



A few years back fate brought me to Húsavík, a small town in northern Iceland. Fate? Well, friends were getting married close by, it was friendship that brought me, but I had a mini-revelation there, the whimsiest little epiphany. Húsavík is a pretty little town, with pretty little houses, and during the summer it's crowded with tourists. You might have been there. I heard more Italian and French than Icelandic there.

Life centres around the harbour, where once upon a time they must have caught fish, but now offer whale watching tours. The harbour has been organised as its own little world, attractive sign-posts pointing this way for tickets, that way for dining—they have stuff that looks like amusement, along with restaurants and cafés in the plural, which is more than could have been said about any small town in Iceland less than two decades ago.

### THE REVELATION

I sat there and observed the people boarding, unboarding, dining—members of the professional classes with their spouses and offspring—and thought to myself: this is what money is for. It was a revelation of the sort that neoliberal pundits hope we all have at one point or another: this is what money is for.

My great-grandfather saw money for the first time when he was eleven years old. Money as our daily means of exchange, something we all use and are aware of, is a very recent thing. Still during the first decades of the twentieth century it was more common in Icelandic municipalities that the

same company would employ you as a worker, and handle the groceries, while taking care that you earned a little less than you spent. Your wages and your purchases would be kept in the company's register, leaving actual money in the hands of the owners. Keeping you in debt made sure you wouldn't leave.

In the 18th century, when Iceland got its own prison, now the seat of government, the first people to be locked up were the drifters. Locked up and forced to labour for the growing town's first industrial enterprise. Even today wandering—wandering without some sort of capital, be it financial or social—is considered hazardous to our street-number-based societies, as can be seen by the way European countries, Iceland included, treat members of the Roma population.

### THREE WAYS TO TRAVEL

Before the advent of money there were three ways to travel: you could go around with an army, looting your way through the world—or as a thief, observing the same logic on a smaller scale. You could go around as member of a church or a convent, in the certainty that other churches or convents would greet you and treat you kindly, as you would one day treat someone else in return. Members of the aristocracy could rely on a little bit of both as well as on the hospitality of their benevolent peers—not the ones who would rather get rid of you. The moral logic of greeting and treating a traveller kindly is noted in the Icelandic Viking verses Hávamál, but implicitly reserved to upper classes—thralls are a different category, spoken of but not directly addressed by the poet. Your third option

would be to go around begging. Three options: Steal, observe ritual, or beg. But only money, and the purchases with which our daily lives are now saturated, was the tourist made possible. French and Italian families could finally spend their idle time in Húsavík and see some whales.

Sitting by the pier in Húsavík I thought to myself: this is magnificent. This is absolutely wonderful. How deliciously absurd that this is even possible—not only technologically, but socially: that with a bank note or an electronic stripe in your pocket you can whimsically go around the globe and rest assured that you will suffer neither hunger nor thirst, nor lack a place to stay. And you don't even have to be polite, let alone observe religious ritual.

### TWO ATTITUDES TOWARDS TOURISTS

So much for the glory of capitalism. Everyone is an anti-capitalist now, also the neoliberals of old—ask anyone about Davíð Oddsson, Hannes Hólmsteinn, Styrmir Gunnarsson and their legacy: currently they spend their days blogging, inventing curses against global capitalism, 'bad capitalists', and greed. Right-wing or conservative capitalist critique comes in two flavours that can be detected by their attitude towards tourists.

There are those who detest the whale-watchers in Húsavík. They will find it tasteless, plebeian, offensive, that such ignoramuses can step on an airplane, notice nothing on the way except the boarding signs and whatever DVD they watch on board, catch a ride or rent a car to Húsavík, hop on board a boat, watch whales—those mundane

albeit large swimming meat containers—and act as if they own the place, without being even slightly interested in the locals, the sagas or the latest town council disputes. The other, more affluent, sort consists of those who like the idea of tourism, practice it themselves from time to time, but do so on the presumption that the tourists are the sorts of persons they could imagine inviting to their own living room. They assume sameness, that wherever the tourist comes from, he is not a total stranger.

### SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT

What the Left, however, has in common with the now almost universally despised libertarians, is admiration for the wonders of this minimal alienation: you don't have to be nice to be entitled. The rights of money are observed in the way all rights should be—the difference between a right and a permission is precisely this: a right is something you neither work for (and no, no one really every got rich from work, keep your myths in your pocket, please) nor have to prove by displaying intelligence, kindness or any other virtue—you neither ask for it nor earn it, since it is not granted: once declared, a right is simply yours. Our current challenge, the ongoing challenge of modern times, is this: how to make the liberty of the whale-watchers in Húsavík—their independence—independent from arbitrary factors such as property?

Whatever they've told you in the last two decades, there is a leftist utopia: it is where anyone is considered entitled to a lot of things, anywhere, at any time—where you don't have to like a person to grant him or her what is

already his or hers. This universal entitlement is already nominally secured in the UN Declaration of Human Rights, which includes not just the right to life, to shelter and nourishment, free speech etc., but the right to receive education and enjoy culture. The charter is quite a radical document, once fully observed. The leftist emphasis on justice and equality is not supposed to be a step backwards from mobility, but precisely the universalisation of mobility.

So how do you tell whether an anti-capitalist project is an emancipatory project deserving the honourable label Left, or the conservative people-should-stay-where-they-belong-and-observe-good-old-values sort of thing? Currently this method is valid: Once such a project has been declared by a government, you observe the languages spoken at the country's main sites of attraction. If a growing number of the people who go whale-watching in Húsavík, say, come from countries with a lower GDP than Iceland, if you hear Hindu, Arabic and Swahili more often, year by year, someone is doing something progressive. Something progressive such as deciding that from now when people from sub-Saharan Africa make enquiries about tourist visas to Iceland, they get a reply. If this is not the case, and the whale-watchers stay thoroughly OECD, then whatever sort of socialism is going on, sorry to say: it's just not the progressive sort. 🍷

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#### PAGE 18

Looking for shelter, some sheep fell into trenches and died. Others went temporarily or permanently blind from the ash.

There's lots of tasty volcano coverage in this issue... yum!

#### Page 24

And it's weird how endearing those kitschy electro-pop songs have turned out to be. '100% Pure Love' by Crystal Waters would have made me cringe back in '95 but now I would dance to it in a heartbeat. Maybe all that the Euro-techno needed was to age like blue cheese.

The new GusGus album is apparently pretty great

#### PAGE 06

"Greenlandic authorities allow the hunting of about 50 polar bears in East Greenland each year, which they deem to be a safe limit for the stock. They have told us that they fail to see the rationale behind shipping stray polar bears alive from Iceland to Greenland, given that this is a rare occurrence and has no effect on the species and its survival."

Minister for the Environment Svandís Svavarsdóttir explains Iceland's polar bear policy

#### PAGE 10

The crooks won by a landslide. Our own Icelandic Conservatives could easily put up such a list of candidates. Would they win?

Former leader of the Icelandic Social-Democratic Party Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson looks at similarities between the happenings in Spain and Iceland.

#### PAGE 27

There's a rich brass culture in the English industrial North; every town has its own brass band manned by local coal miners. It's a tradition that dates back two-hundred-plus years. The mines were, of course, closed in the 1980s after the General Strikes; Thatcher closed them all

Composer Jóhann Jóhannsson just completed a really interesting project!

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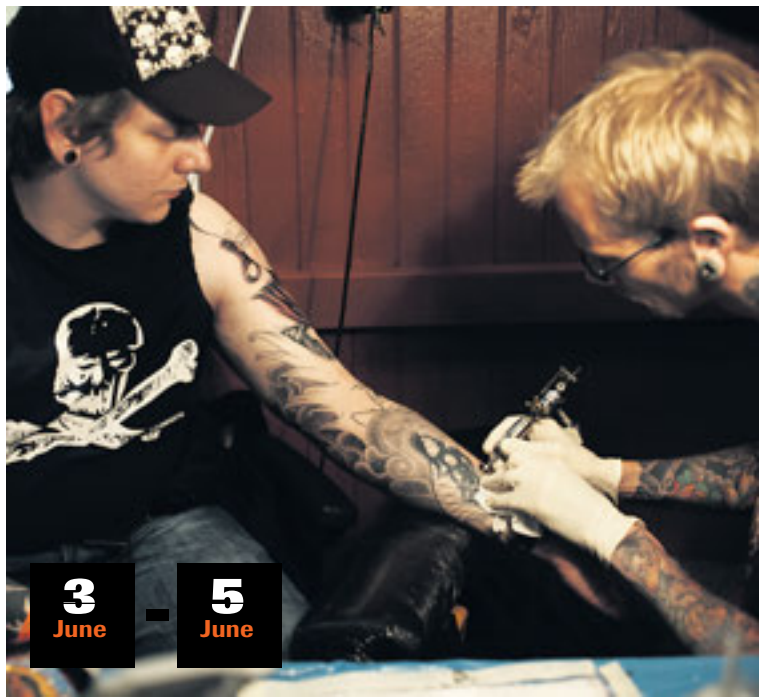
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#### 3 FRI

**B5**  
00:00 DJ Leifur  
**Bakkus**  
22:00 DJ Einar Sonic  
**Barbara**  
00:00 DJ Lingerine  
**Boston**  
22:00 Fridfinnur  
**Café Oliver**  
22:00 Local DJ  
23:00 Girls Just Wanna Have Fun, 3  
for 1 cocktails for ladies  
**Celtic Cross**  
01:00 Live Music  
**Den Danske Kro**  
22:00 Live Music  
**Dubliner**  
22:00 Live Music  
00:00 Live Music  
**English Pub**  
21:30 Live Music  
**Esja**  
23:30 Tapas & White Wine night  
**Faktóry**  
23:00 Valdimar & Jón Þór  
Free  
**Hressó**  
22:00 Jakob Smári followed by DJ  
Fúsi  
**Kaffibarinn**  
23:00 DJ Kári  
**Prikið**  
00:00 DJ Addi  
**Salurinn, Kópavogur**  
20:00 Jazz and Blues Concert 2900 ISK  
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13:00 Tattoo Festival  
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**Legend,** 1000 ISK  
**Thorvaldsen**  
00:00 Music from 80s, 90s, and today  
**Trúnó**  
22:00 Local DJ  
**Vegamót**  
22:00 DJ Jonas

#### 4 SAT

**B5**  
00:00 DJ Leifur  
**Bakkus**  
21:30 Hyphae Concert  
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Performances by: **Skurken, Tonik,**  
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**Plat, Steve Sampling, Murya** and  
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22:00 DJ Dans Hans  
**Barbara**  
22:00 DJ Manny, Haff Haff, and  
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**Boston**  
22:00 Biggi Maus  
**Café Haiti**  
21:00 Jussanam - Brazilian Jazz  
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22:00 Local DJ  
23:00 Girls Just Wanna Have Fun, 3 for 1  
cocktails for girls  
**Celtic Cross**  
01:00 Live Music  
**Den Danske Kro**  
22:00 Live Music  
**Dubliner**  
22:00 Live Music  
00:00 Live Music  
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**Esja**  
23:00 DJ Bogi  
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20:00 DJ Andrés Nielsen  
00:00 DJ Árni Sveinsson  
**Prikið**  
00:00 Dj Árni Kocoon  
**Sóðóma**  
22:00 Tattoo Gig  
Live music from **Texas Muffin, El**  
**Camino, and The 59'ers,** who will  
be performing with **Daniel August**  
**(GusGus)** and **Krummi (Minus),** 1000  
ISK  
**Thorvaldsen**  
00:00 Music from 80s, 90s, and today  
**Trúnó**  
22:00 Barbara Grand Opening Party  
**Vegamót**  
22:00 DJ Danni Delux

**Faktóry**  
21:00 Live jazz  
**Prikið**  
22:00 Hangover Movie Night - Free  
Popcorn!  
**Trúnó**  
All Day: Cosy Time

#### 6 MON

**Bakkus**  
21:00 Movie Night : Rake! Jónsdóttir  
presents "Boy Meets Girl"  
**Barbara**  
21:00 Showing Season 2 of the Real  
L-word  
**Café Oliver**  
22:00 Margarita Night  
**Den Danske Kro**  
22:00 Live Music  
**Dubliner**  
22:00 Live Music  
**English Pub**  
21:30 Live Music  
**Prikið**  
21:00 Dj Hús & Þórður Nikka Red  
Wine & Cheese for 2, 1000 ISK

#### 7 TUE

**Café Oliver**  
22:00 Live Karaoke  
**Den Danske Kro**  
22:00 Live Music  
**Dubliner**  
22:00 Live Music

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SEE LISTINGS IN THIS SECTION  
MAY - SEPTEMBER / DAILY



## A FULL LIST OF EVERY HAPPY HOUR OFFER IN IOI

**Bar 11**  
Beers & shots for 450 ISK  
on Thursdays.

**Barónspöbb**  
Beer is 500 ISK until 19.

**Boston**  
Happy Hour every day from  
16-20, two for one on beer.

**Den Danske Kro**  
Happy Hour every day from  
16-19, two for one. Shots  
for 500 ISK every Monday.

**Hotel 101 Bar**  
Happy Hour is daily from  
17-19, all drinks are 50%  
off.

## Íslenski Barinn

Every day, beer of the day  
for 650 ISK.

**Laundromat Café:**  
In May, Happy Hour every day from 22-01, two for one on beers.

**Óliver**  
Happy hour every day from  
23-01.

**Prikið**  
Happy hour every day from  
17-19, large beer 400 ISK.  
Buy four large beers, get  
free nachos.

**Stofan**  
Refills on beer 600 isk all day

---



*Hallgrímskirkja church, Skólavörðuholti*

June 4, 17:00

3500 ISK

Flétta is composer Haukur Tómasson's new work based on a collection of Icelandic poems about Icelandic nature. Haukur, with his classic and exciting sense of rhythm, puts music to these poems sung by Schola Cantorum and the Hallgrímskirkja Motet Choir. It can be described as an ode to the beauty of nature, making this piece an authentic journey through the four seasons and a delightful experience for the audience.

**English Pub**  
21:30 Live Music

**Kaffibarinn**  
22:00 DJ HalliValli

**Prikið**  
21:00 DJ Óli Hjörtur Game Night

**Bakkus**  
20:30 Pub Quiz! 500 ISK to play, cash prizes  
22:00 **DJ Creature of the Night**

**Café Oliver**  
22:00 Live Music

**Den Danske Kro**  
22:00 Live Music

**Dubliner**  
21:30 Live Music

**English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music

**Faktóry**  
22:00 **Forgotten Lores & Endless Dark**

**Nasa**  
19:00 **Steelheart**, 3500 ISK

**Prikið**  
22:00 **DJ Krúsi**

**B5**  
22:00 **Sjonni's** friends w/ Live Music

**Bakkus**  
22:00 **DJ Einar Sonic**

**Barbara**  
21:00 Live Music

**Boston**  
22:00 Pætur

**Café Oliver**

22.00 Inigo Veburguio

**Celtic Cross**  
22:00 Rock and Roll Grunge  
Night

**Den Danske Kro**  
22:00 Live Music

**Dubliner**  
22:00 Live Music

**English Pub**  
21:30 Live Music

**Esja**  
23:30 Tapas & White Wine night

**Faktóry**  
22:00 Útidúr and friends + Dj  
Danni Deluxe

**Hressó**  
21:00 Agent Fresco

**Kaffibarinn**  
21:00 DJ Hús - Sexy Lazer

**Laugardalshöllin**  
20:00 The Eagles (USA) 14900 ISK

**Prikið**  
22:00 DJ Gay Latinoman

**Sódóma**  
21:00 Nolo, Nori, and Vigri 1000 ISK

**Thorvaldsen**  
20:00 Salsa Night

**Tjarnarbíó**  
20:00 The Warsaw Pact  
(Varsjárbandalagið) 1500 ISK

**Trúnó**  
20:00 Queer beer Night

**Vegamót**  
22:00 DJ Jonas

**B5**  
00:00 DJ J-oyay-o  
**Bakkus**  
00:00 DJ Walkie Talkie (USA)  
**Bar 11**  
21:00 The Vintage Caravan  
**Barbara**  
00:00 Surprise DJ

**Boston**  
22:00 Kari

**Café Oliver**  
22:00 Local DJ  
23:00 Girls Just Wanna Have Fun,  
3 for 1 cocktails for ladies

**Celtic Cross**  
01:00 Live Music

**Den Danske Kro**  
22:00 Live Music

**Dubliner**  
22:00 Live Music  
00:00 Live Music

**English Pub**  
21:30 Live Music

**Esja**  
23:00 DJ Bogi

**Faktóry**  
23:00 Dj Joni & Viktor (SE) + DJ  
Svenni Swingmaster

**Hressó**  
22:00 Penta Band followed by live DJ

**Kaffibarinn**  
23:00 Hunk of a Man a.k.a Maggi

**Legó**

**Prikið**  
00:00 Dj Gísli Galdur.

**Thorvaldsen**  
00:00 Live Music from 80s, 90s, and today

**Trúnó**  
20:00 Homojito Madness

**Vegamót**  
22:00 DJ Símon

**B5**  
00:00 DJ Simon

**Bakkus**  
00:00 DJ KGB

**Barbara**  
00:00 Surprise DJ

**Boston**  
22:00 Unnur Andrea



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HEART OF THE CITY

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history from settlement  
to present day.



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**OPENING HOURS:**

**Summer**

(May 1st – September 15th)  
Daily 10–17

**Winter**

(September 16th – April 30th)  
Daily except Mondays 11–17



Suðurgata 41 · 101 Reykjavík · Tel. +354 530-2200 · www.natmus.is

**Numismatic Museum**



The Central Bank and National Museum of Iceland jointly operate a numismatic collection that consists of Icelandic notes and coins, foreign money from earlier times, especially if mentioned in Icelandic sources, and more recent currency from Iceland's main trading partner countries. A selection from the numismatic collection is on display in showcases on the ground floor of the Central Bank's main building.

Situated in the Central Bank's main building in Kalkofnsvegur 1, Reykjavík.  
Open Mon.-Fri. 13:30-15:30. Free admittance.

**MUSIC**  
**CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN JUNE**



**New Kids In Town**

June 9

Laugardalshöllin, Engjavegi 8, 104 Reykjavík

From 14.900 ISK

The Eagles are pying to Reykjavik. Woohoo! How lucky are we, the iconic American band has decided to begin its world tour in the Icelandic capital! So we can enjoy one of the most magical experiences in life: Listening to 'Hotel California' live. And all this for the reasonable price of 14.900 (the cheapest ticket). It's true, for that price you may expect them to play the wonderful song two hundred times, at the very least. Anyway, if you are a wealthy man or if you don't want to die without having seen this legendary band of geriatrics, get your tickets to see them play at Laugardalshöllin on June 9. JH

**Café Haiti**

21:00 Jussanam – Brazilian Jazz  
Sessions, 1000 ISK

**Café Oliver**

22:00 Local DJ  
23:00 Girls Just Wanna Have Fun, 3 for 1  
cocktails for ladies

**Celtic Cross**

01:00 Live Music

**Den Danske Kro**

22:00 Live Music

**Dubliner**

22:00 Live Music

**English Pub**

21:30 Live Music

**Esja**

23:00 DJ Bogi

**Faktóry**

22:00 Dj Karius & Baktus w/Djezus

**Hressó**

22:00 Dalton Band followed by Live DJ

**Kaffibarinn**

00:00 Alfons X

**Mosfellsbæ**

22:00 Legend at Músmos Festival

**Prikið**

00:00 DJ Danni Deluxe

**Sóðoma**

23:00 Green Lights & Útidúr, 1000 ISK

**Thorvaldsen**

00:00 Music from 80s, 90s, and today

**Trúnó**

22:00 Local DJ

**Vegamót**

22:00 DJ Benni

21:00 Bakkus Movie Night : **Arna Sigrún Haraldsdóttir** presents  
"Fearless Freaks"

**Café Oliver**

22:00 Margarita Night

**Café Rosenberg**

21:00 Sigurður Páll Árnason

**Den Danske Kro**

22:00 Live Music

**Dubliner**

22:00 Live Music

**English Pub**

21:30 Live Music

**Prikið**

21:00 Dj Hús & Þórður Nikka  
Red Wine and Cheese for 2, 1000 ISK

**14 TUE**

**Bakkus**

21:00 Foosball Competition

**Café Oliver**

22:00 Live Karaoke

**Den Danske Kro**

22:00 Live Music

**Dubliner**

22:00 Live Music

**English Pub**

21:30 Live Music

**Prikið**

21:00 Dj Ýr  
Game Night

**15 WED**

**Bakkus**

21:00 Robot Disco pt. 5

**Barbara**

21:00 Pub Quiz

**Café Oliver**

22:00 Live Music

**Den Danske Kro**

22:00 Live Music

**Dubliner**

22:00 Live Music

**English Pub**

21:30 Live Music

**Kaffibarinn**

21:00 Extreme Chill Music - Klive,  
Plat, Oléna Simon, DJ AnDre,  
Beatmakin Troopa

**Prikið**

21:00 Dj Krúsi

**Trúnó**

21:00 Pub Quiz

**16 THU**

**B5**

22:00 Sjonni's friends w/ live music  
01:00 DJ Johann

**Bakkus**

00:00 Dj Árni Sveins

**Barbara**

21:00 Icelandic Party with surprise DJ

**Boston**

22:00 Kari



Always cheeses and red wine  
offer on Wednesday evenings

www.facebook.com/kaffibarinn

No photographing allowed



**12 SUN**

**Bakkus**

15:00 Flea Market  
e-mail bakkus.bar@gmail.com if you'd  
like to participate

**Barbara**

20:00 Video Marathon

**Boston**

22:00 Hellert

**Café Oliver**

22:00 Salsa Night

**Den Danske Kro**

22:00 Live Music

**Dubliner**

22:00 Live Music

**English Pub**

21:30 Live Music

**Prikið**

22:00 Hangover Movie Night - Free  
Popcorn!

**Trúnó**

21:00 Local DJ

**Vegamót**

22:00 DJ Danni Delux

**13 MON**

**Bakkus**



MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN JUNE

28

June



Caribou Return To Iceland!

NASA by Austurvöllur

June 28

3800 ISK

Just kidding. In our last issue, Caribou commented on how a show in Iceland just seemed to never work out. And blast it all, a volcano erupted the day before their arrival, stopping all pights in and out of Iceland. But never fear! The show will go on. If you already bought your ticket to the May 22nd show, you can use it at the June 28th show. If you can't make the date, call up [midi.is](http://midi.is) at 540-7800 before or on May 30, and your ticket will be refunded. SAT

16

June



Remembering Eva Cassidy

Salurinn, Hamraborg 6, 200 Kopavogur, Iceland

June 16

3300 ISK

Singer Jóhanna Guðrún pays tribute to the late American artist Eva Cassidy. In her short career, Eva captured the attention of the audience with her moving interpretations of blues, folk and pop songs; and her version of the classic 'Over The Rainbow' became a hit in the nineties. Almost Pfteen years after her death, Icelandic vocalist Jóhanna Guðrún remind us of Eva's lovely, charming and powerful style. Jóhanna is well known for representing her country at the 2009 Eurovision Song Contest in Moscow, where she wound up in second place with the song 'Is It True?'. JH

- Café Oliver
- 22:00 Ingó Veðurguð
- Celtic Cross
- 22:00 Ladies Night
- Only female singers
- Den Danske Kro
- 22:00 Live Music
- Dubliner
- 22:00 Live Music
- English Pub
- 21:30 Live Music
- Esja
- 23:30 Tapas & White Wine Night
- Faktóry
- 22:00 Motor City Drum Ensemble

- Hressó
- 22:00 Tímurmenn followed by DJ Fannar
- Kaffibarinn
- 23:00 DJ KGB
- Prikið
- 21:00 Dj Anna Rakel & Ýr
- Salurinn, Kópavogur
- 20:00 Eve Cassidy Tribute - Jóhanna Guðrún 3300 ISK
- Thorvaldsen
- 20:00 Salsa Night
- Trúnó
- 21:00 Surprise DJ

- Vegamót
- 22:00 DJ Hannes

ONGOING

Restaurant Reykjavík

20:00 Let's Talk Iceland: Comedy Show.

2200 ISK. Everyday

lðnó

20:00 Cellophane Comedy show

Thursdays

Grapevine Top 6 Most Played tracks during the making of this issue

- 1 GusGus
- Within You
- 2 FM Belfast
- We Fall
- 3 Ellý Vilhjálms
- Ég veit þú kemur
- 4 Sepultura
- Slaves Of Pain
- 5 Mumford & Sons
- Little Lion Man
- 6 Fools Garden
- Lemon Tree

Music & Entertainment   Venue finder		
<div>Amsterdam</div> <div>Hafnarstræti 5   D4</div>	<div>Dillon</div> <div>Laugavegur 30   F7</div>	<div>Næsti Bar</div> <div>Ingólfstræti 1A   E5</div>
<div>Austur</div> <div>Austurstræti 7   E4</div>	<div>Dubliner</div> <div>Hafnarstræti 4   D4</div>	<div>Óliver</div> <div>Laugavegur 20A   F5</div>
<div>B5</div> <div>Bankastræti 5   E4</div>	<div>Esja</div> <div>Austurstræti 16   E4</div>	<div>Ólstofan</div> <div>Vegamótastígur   F5</div>
<div>Babalú</div> <div>Skólavörðustígur 22   F5</div>	<div>English Pub</div> <div>Austurstræti 12   E4</div>	<div>Prikið</div> <div>Bankastræti   E5</div>
<div>Bakkus</div> <div>Tryggvagata 22   D4</div>	<div>Faktóry</div> <div>Smiðjustígur 6   E5</div>	<div>Rósenberg</div> <div>Klapparstígur 25   E6</div>
<div>Bar 11</div> <div>Hverfisgötu 18   E5</div>	<div>Ölsmiðjan</div> <div>Lækjargata 10   E4</div>	<div>Sódóma Reykjavík</div> <div>Tryggvagata 22   D3</div>
<div>Barbara</div> <div>Laugavegur 22   F5</div>	<div>Hressó</div> <div>Austurstræti 20   E4</div>	<div>Sólon</div> <div>Bankastræti 7A   E5</div>
<div>Bjarni Fel</div> <div>Austurstræti 20   E4</div>	<div>Bankinn</div> <div>Hverfisgata 20   E5</div>	<div>Thorvaldsen</div> <div>Austurstræti 8   E4</div>
<div>Boston</div> <div>Laugavegur 28b   F6</div>	<div>Kaffi Zimsen</div> <div>Hafnarstræti 18   D4</div>	<div>Trúnó</div> <div>Laugavegur 22   F5</div>
<div>Café Paris</div> <div>Austurstræti 14   E4</div>	<div>Kaffibarinn</div> <div>Bergstraðastræti 1   E5</div>	<div>Vegamót</div> <div>Vegamótastígur 4   F6</div>
<div>Celtic Cross</div> <div>Hverfisgata 26   E5</div>	<div>NASA</div> <div>Þorvaldsenstræti 2   E3</div>	<div>Vestur</div> <div>Tryggvagata 20   D3</div>
<div>Den Danske Kro</div> <div>Ingólfstræti 3   F5</div>	<div>Nýlenduðöruverzlun Hemma &amp; Valda</div> <div>Laugavegur 21   F5</div>	

New bar menu

Rib-eye mini burgers

Duck confit dumplings

Tandoori tiger prawns

Pizza with yellow fin tuna

Lobster spring rolls





Happy hour

2 for 1 offers daily from 4-7 pm

Viking beer · white & red wine

Bombay sapphire · cocktail of the day

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Children 0-6\* FREE

\*Children with adults



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Icelandic BIRD MUSEUM



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Reykjavik Old Harbour

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Children 0-6\* FREE

\*Children with adults



Experience Icelandic Art and Design

Kópavogur Art Museum-Gerðarsafn

Hamraborg 4, Kópavogur  
Tel. +354 570 0440  
Open every day 11-17 except Mondays  
[www.gerdarsafn.is](http://www.gerdarsafn.is)

Hafnarborg The Hafnarfjörður Centre of Culture and Fine Art

Strandgata 34, Hafnarfjörður  
Tel. +354 585 5790  
Open every day 12-17 Thursdays 11-21  
Closed on Tuesdays  
[www.hafnarborg.is](http://www.hafnarborg.is)

From Reykjavík

ROUTE 40

Art&Design

Hönnunarsafn Íslands Museum of Design and Applied Art

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[www.honnunarsafn.is](http://www.honnunarsafn.is)

Bus nr. 1 runs Route 40

To the Blue Lagoon

Den Danske Kro

• Mondays •

Shot's night - all shots ISK 400.-

• Tuesdays •

Live music and Beer Bingo night

• Wednesdays •

POP-QUIZ night (special offer on drinks) & Live music

• Thursdays •

Live Music / Scandinavian nights

• Fridays •

Live music / Sing-along nights

• Saturdays •

Live music / Sing-along nights

• Sundays •

Hangover & Live music night Really good prices on drinks

Ingólfsstræti 3 · 101 · Reykjavík  
[www.danskis.is](http://www.danskis.is)

ART

GALLERIES & MUSEUMS IN JUNE

COCKTAIL PLEASURES AND VISUAL STIMULATION

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

OPENINGS

Gerðuberg Culture Center

June 3  
Gagn og gaman  
Exhibition of works produced by children who took part in 'Gagn og gaman' craft and activity courses in the period 1988-2004  
Runs until 28 August

Hafnarborg, Hafnarfjörður

June 4  
14:00 Bright Days - Treasure Hunt  
June 4  
16:00 Bright Days - Sculpture Walk & Talk  
Tour around the centre of Hafnarfjörður with a guide

Hönnunarsafn

June 9  
Our Objects - from the Museum's Collection  
Objects acquired by the Museum since its opening in 1998 will be put on display in the exhibition area. Objects such as Icelandic and foreign furnitures, graphic design, textiles, ceramics, and glass, to name a few  
Runs until october 16

An exhibition of Christmas cards, trees, decorations, etc., in the Collectors' corner  
Runs until June 30

Connected  
Exhibition about the connection between people and technology  
Runs until June 24  
'Þorablót'  
Aðalheiður S. Eysteinsdóttir recreates the scene in this traditional Icelandic late-winter feast which takes its name from the Old Norse month of Þorri (mid-February to mid-March) and centres on food prepared in the old style  
Runs until June 19

Hafnarborg, Hafnarfjörður

Ingenuity  
Exhibit by Einar Thorsteinn  
Runs until June 19  
Life and Art Without Boundaries - JBK Ransu and Guðrún Bergsdóttir  
Part of the Art Without Boundaries Festival, presenting the art of people with disabilities and promoting collaboration between disabled and non disabled artist  
Runs until June 19

Hafnarhús

Erró - Collage  
Runs until August 21

is

Karin Sander Guestbook  
Highly polished chicken eggs, reflecting wallpieces, and machine-made precision miniature replicas of people invite us to shift our perspective in the way we see things  
Runs until June 4

Kjarvalsstaðir

Jóhannes S. Kjarval - Key Works  
Runs until January 15, 2012  
Jór! Horses in Icelandic Art  
Runs until August 21  
Workshop  
Open and informative workshop for children and families in connection with the exhibition Jór! Horses in Icelandic Art. Make a reservation in advance by email: [fraedsludeild@reykjavik.is](mailto:fraedsludeild@reykjavik.is)  
Runs until August 21

Kling & Bang

Silent Room, Silver Room  
Collection of Claus Carstensen's newest mixed media painting  
Runs until June 26

Knitting Iceland

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

The Living Art Museum

Carl Boutard  
An exhibition displaying Boutard's work, which is closely related to nature, science and language  
Runs until July 3

Art listings continue after center spread ...

Happy Birthday Bragi!

Gallerí Fold, Rauðarárstígur 14-16,

Runs until June 12

Free

Famous Icelandic painter Bragi Ásgeirsson celebrates his 80th birthday with an exhibition that displays sixty-nine of his works. There will be no clowns, no magicians and no chocolate cakes, but visitors at Gallerí Fold will find a good sample of the peculiar and fascinating technique of Bragi, one of the most important artists in Iceland whose paintings leave no one indifferent. Don't delay or you will have to wait another year until Bragi turns 81. That's too much! JH

STEP INTO THE EXPERIENCE at Cinema No2

THE ERUPTION! Eyjafjallajökull

ICELANDIC NATURE FILMS Shows from noon - night: Hekla, Thingvellir, Thórsörk, Thjórsárdalur and Greenland kayaking  
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Rvk Museum of Art

VÍKING

Best little concert venue in Akureyri

CONCERTS:

Fri. 3. Jun. Bang Gang  
Sat. 4. Jun. Jon Jonsson  
Fri. 10. Jun. Dundurfrettir/Classic Rock Tribute  
Thu. 16. Jun. Andrea's Bluesmen  
Sat. 18. Jun. Eivör  
Sun. 19. Jun. Eivör

Græni Hatturinn

THE GREEN HAT AKUREYRI

For further informations on upcoming events and concerts go to: [www.facebook.com/graenihatturinn](http://www.facebook.com/graenihatturinn)

Gerðuberg

Christmas is coming...



OUTSIDE REYKJAVÍK

IN JUNE

OUTSIDE MUSIC

3 FRI

Græni Hatturinn, Akureyri

22:00 Bang Gang concert

4 SAT

Græni Hatturinn, Akureyri

22:00 Jón Jónsson concert

9 THU

Græni Hatturinn, Akureyri

21:00 Rögnvaldur Gáfaði & Gísli Einarsson

10 FRI

Hof Menningarhús, Akureyri

20:00 Hárið (Musical), 3950 ISK

Græni Hatturinn, Akureyri

22:00 Dúndurfréttir 'Best of Concert'

11 SAT

Hof Menningarhús, Akureyri

20:00 Hárið (Musical), 3950 ISK

Græni Hatturinn, Akureyri

01:00 Dúndurfréttir 'Best of Concert'

16 THU

Hof Menningarhús, Akureyri

20:30 Útgáfutónleikar Bubba Morthens & Sólskugganna

3900 ISK

OUTSIDE ART OPENINGS

Akureyri Art Museum

June 3

Within the Rose - Retrospective

Exhibition of paints created by awarded artist Kristín Gunnlaugsdóttir

Runs until June 26

Viking Village, Hafnarfjordur

June 16

16:00 Viking Festival 2011

At the Viking Festival 2011 you are transported back to the time of vikings. There will be music, crafts, archery, and viking cuisine

Runs until June 20

Skjaldborgarbió, Patreksfjörður

June 10

Skaldborg Film Festival

Twenty new Icelandic Documentaries will be on display. A chance for documentary enthusiasts and filmmakers to come together. At the end of the festival, the best documentary at the festival will be chosen by viewers

Runs until June 12

OUTSIDE ONGOING ART

Fjörúhúsið, Hellnar (Snæfellsnes Peninsula)

Fiskur Sirkus

Collection of Spaniard Eduardo Perez Baca's paintings

Runs until June 30

Gamli Baukur, Húsavík

15:30 Comedy show about Iceland

Everyday

The Ghost Centre, Stokkseyri

Night at the Ghost Museum

Do you feel like a scary night in the Fisherman's hut inside the Ghost Centre? Only for brave people!



SKJALDBORG FILM FESTIVAL 2011

Skjaldborgarbió, Patreksfjörður

June 10 - 12

Free

Documentary enthusiasts and blm-makers rejoice! The Skjaldborg Film Festival has come around again for its 5th year. Go to the festival's hometown of Patreksfjörður in the Westfjords for the screenings of twenty brand-new Icelandic documentaries (including GV scribe Haukur Már Helgason's documentary on the RVK9, 'Ge9n')—stay for the legendary partying. The films shown over the festival's three days are documentaries that you might not get a chance to see in Reykjavík, so do take the chance. Skjaldborg looks to respect documentaries of all kinds by giving them an audience. In the end, the top film will be chosen by viewers like you. **SAT**

**Ghosts and spirits of the South**  
Guided tour for groups -of ten people or more- through the lowlands south of Selfoss where many a ghost, spirit and other spiritual beings live

The Icelandic Settlement Centre, Borgarnes

The Settlement Exhibition

It tells how Viking sailors left Norway and settled in Iceland

The Egils Saga Exhibition

The exhibition concentrates in one of the most famous of all the saga heroes, Egil

Laxness Museum, Mosfellsdalur

Gljúfrasteinn was the home and workplace of Halldór Laxness (winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1955)

On permanent view

LÁ Art, Hvergerði

Images of Þingvellir from various artists. Runs until August 21.



Do You Like Fish?

Fjörúhúsið in Hellnar (Snæfellsnes Peninsula)

Runs until June 30

Free

The idea of a circus full of strange bsh may have you thinking of a new Tim Burton pick. Yet, 'Fiskur Sirkus' has nothing to do with it. It's actually an awesome exhibition by Spanish artist Eduardo Perez Baca, who after falling in love with an Icelander, moved from his native Granada to Reykjavik many years ago. Since then, he has devoted much of his time to capturing his vision of Iceland in his magic drawings. In this case, 'Fiskur Sirkus' is a collection of hand drawn postcards featuring the local marine fauna. **JH**

Pompei of the North, Westman Islands

Excavations project at the site of 1973 volcanic eruption on the island of Heimaey

Reykjanes Art Museum, Reykjanesbær

On permanent view

Safnahús Museum, Westman Islands

This museum has mounted birds & fish, an aquarium, as well as a variety of rocks and minerals on display

Skaftfell

New exhibition opens on June 17

Sláturhúsið

Concert June 11. Check for updates at slaturhusid.is

Suðuðvestur (Keflavík)

Slíður (the heart is a lonely hunter)  
Collection of enigmatic 3D works by artist icelandic Margaret H. Blondal  
Runs until June 5

Outside Reykjavík | Venue finder

Keflavík

Suðuðvestur  
www.sudsudvestur.is  
Hafnargata 22  
230 Reykjanesbær  
421-2225

Borgarnes

The Icelandic Settlement Centre  
www.landnam.is  
Brákarbraut 13-15  
310 Borgarnes  
437-1600

Stykkishólmur

Vatnasafnið / Library of Water  
www.libraryofwater.is

Akureyri

Akureyri Art Museum  
www listasafn.akureyri.is  
Kaupvangsstræti 12  
600 Akureyri  
461 2610

Græni Hatturinn  
Hafnarstræti 96  
600 Akureyri  
461-4646

Kunstraum Wohnraum  
Ásabyggð 2  
600 Akureyri

Mývatn

Mývatnsstofa  
Hraunvegi 8  
660 Mývatn  
464-4390  
www.visitmyvatn.is

Egilsstaðir

Sláturhúsið  
www.slaturhusid.is  
Kaupvangi 7  
700 Egilsstaðir  
470-0692

Seyðisfjörður

Skaftfell  
www.skaftfell.is  
Austurvegur 42  
710 Seyðisfjörður  
472-1632

Hveragerði

LÁ Art  
www listasafnarnesinga.is  
Austurmörk 21  
210 Hveragerði  
483-1727



Kung Fu • Brekkugata 3 • Akureyri • Sími: 462-1400

TEN THOUSAND FINGERS



More than ten thousand fingers have played beautiful music on this piano, since it arrived in Eyrarbakki village in 1871. It was brought across the Atlantic on a large merchantman, then hauled into a small fishing boat and rowed ashore, where four strong men carried it into the village in a terrible rainstorm. But you can touch it now in the Húsið museum in Eyrarbakki.



HÚSIÐ Á EYRARBAKKA

The Southcoast Museum

Open May 15th - Sept. 15th: 11 - 18. Other times by arrangement. | www.husid.com





www.goya.is

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Goya Tapas bar    Kaupvangsstræi 23    Akureyri    519 7650









6

7

8

9

10

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

If you have an iPhone, check out the cool Locatify app in the AppStore. It's got a FREE guided audio tour of the downtown area, courtesy of your pals at Grapevine.

NEW IN TOWN

Víkingakráin

Hafnarstræti 1, 101 Reykjavík



This establishment's proprietors really go the distance when it comes to the Viking theme. They don't stop at the way the waitresses are dressed, but go on to the restaurant's architecture and its fixtures, such as the boat on display (!). The menu even sticks to the Viking theme as far as possible, offering food such as fish soup, lamb with vegetables and potatoes; they even have vegetarian options for those Vikings who prefer not to indulge in the pleasures of cooked flesh. If you're planning on just going out for a drink, Víkingakráin has you covered there as well with their Viking bar, which won't make you delve any further into your bank account than most other bars in Reykjavík. Might be a first stop for those who just arrived in Reykjavík and want to get their first taste of the Viking way of life.

Up Town



EARLY MORNING >

LUNCH >

MID-DAY >

AFTERNOON >

HEAT OF THE NIGHT >

### 11 Café Óliver

Laugavegur 20a

If you like trendy party-types who dance like crazy to a lively mix of music where glamour is all that counts, the stylish Óliver is the nightclub for you. Check out Óliver's live karaoke nights on Tuesdays. If you don't suffer from stage fright you can go on stage and sing your favourite song accompanied by the local troubadour.

### 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.

### 12 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.

### 18 Kolaportið

Tryggvagata 19

Reykjavík'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.

### 13 OSUSHI

Lækjargata 2a

Great place to satisfy your craving for raw fish and vinegar rice. The selection on 'the train' is wide and varied and the atmosphere is relaxed. Also, the colour-coded plates make it easy to keep tabs on your budget while scarfing down your maki and nigiri.

### 19 Den Danske Kro

Ingólfsstræti 3

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

## A DAY IN THE LIFE

Nanna Árnadóttir

### What's up, Nanna?

Workin' my merkin to the ground, man (disclaimer: I don't have a merkin). Got my day job, my freelance work and doing rewrites for my debut novel cum tourist manual, 'Zombie Iceland', at night. It's about a group of misfits surviving a zombie outbreak in Reykjavík, all the while explaining Icelandic culture and history in footnotes and featuring Icelandic music in a Zombie Apocalypse playlist.

Well after I've tended to my merkin, only joking I still don't have a merkin. Why do I keep talking about merkins? I want to say that I run down Ægissíða so I'm in shape for a major world-ending event, but since I learned how to use a gun I've gotten lazy. Usually I'm cross stitching at Tíu Dropar drinking coffee and eating a pancake with whipped cream and rhubarb jam.

Well I have extravagant and sophisticated tastes so I like to eat at Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar, it coats my skin in meat love and the coffee shake makes my thighs sweat.

Petting cats that pass me on the street. The nicest cats to pet in Reykjavík usually live in Vesturbær, also, cats outnumber humans 12 to 1 in Vesturbær (I have no factual data to back this claim).

Skulking around Nexus, the dark and dingy underbelly of Reykjavík's nerd community, where you can admire Star Wars paraphernalia, peruse graphic novels and potentially embarrassing fantasy erotica, not that I would know anything about that.

I don't usually go out because I'm a loser and spend most nights watching old B rated horror films with my pabbi (dad) or discussing Seinfeld while we look at underground bunkers online. When I do go out though, I go to Bakkus because it smells like secrets.

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Raggi from the band Árstíðir is the unstoppable...

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Live soccer  
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THE ENGLISH PUB

Austurvöllur

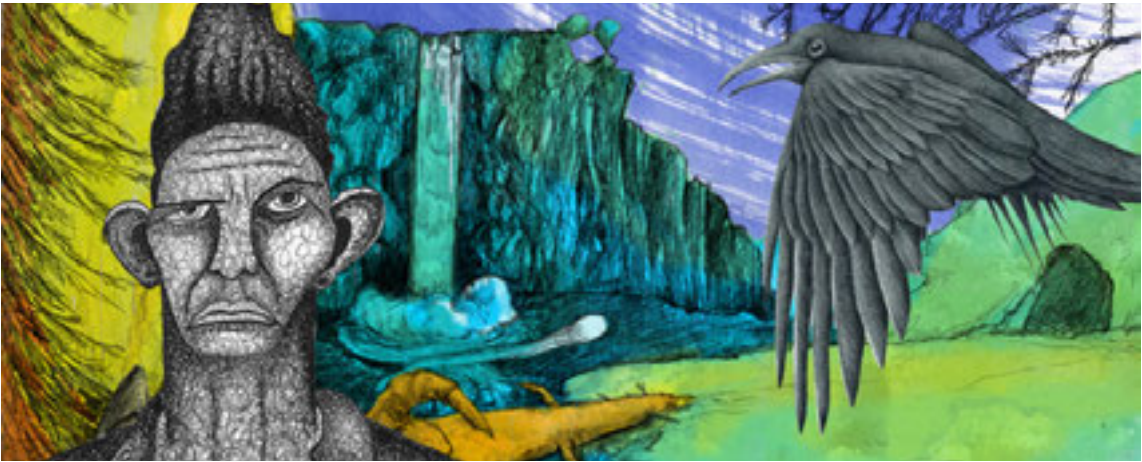






ART

GALLERIES & MUSEUMS IN JUNE



I Wonder, You Wonder, We Wonder For The YouWonders!

The Lost Horse Gallery, Hverfisgata 71

Runs until June 17

Free

There is a world, a wondrous world that not many are aware of where Wewonders roam. A few, brave artists have tried to recreate these creatures through sculpting, drawing, and other means. These artists call themselves Þiðundrin, or the You-Wonders. The Youwonders, which is comprised of artists Ninna Þórarinsdóttir, Inga María Brynjarsdóttir and Þórey Mjallhvít H. Ómarsdóttir, do their best to recreate these creatures that are drawn up by the human imagination. You can Pnd these attempts at the Lost Horse Gallery, at an exhibition entitled 'The Wondrous World of the Wewonders' between 14:00 and 17:00 every day except Monday. It would be wise to call ahead to make sure the exhibit is open, call: 868-6087. SAT

the National Museum  
Runs until September 1  
**Don't Touch the Ground**  
Exhibition on the games of 10 year old children  
Runs until July 24  
**The Nordic House**  
**The Library**  
The collection centres on new Nordic literature, both fiction and non-fiction. The library lends out novels, academic publications, audio books and more  
On permanent view  
**Open Spaces**  
Young artists from Nordic countries final exhibition  
Runs until June 5  
**Restaurant Reykjavik**  
**Let's Talk Iceland Comedy Show**  
Daily, 20:00, 2200 ISK  
**Reykjavik Art Museum**  
**Ásmundarsafn**  
**From Sketch to Sculpture - Drawings by Ásmundur Sveinsson**  
Runs until April 22, 2012  
**Magnús Arnason - Homage**  
Runs until April 22, 2012  
**Tomi Ungerer - Posters and Drawings**  
Tomi is an award winning illustrator known for his social satire  
Runs until July 24  
**Perspectives - On the Borders of Art and Philosophy**  
Comprehensive exhibit that represents the breadth and diversity of styles and artistic media pursued in Iceland today  
Runs until September 4  
**Reykjavik City Museum**  
**Reykjavik 871 +/- 2 (The Settlement Exhibition)**  
Archaeological findings from ruins of one of the first houses in Iceland and other excavations in the city centre  
On permanent view  
**Reykjavik Maritime Museum**  
**From Poverty to Abundance**  
Photos documenting Icelandic fishermen

at the turn of the 20th century  
On permanent view  
**The History of Sailing**  
Iceland's maritime history and the growth of the Reykjavik Harbour  
On permanent view  
**The Coast Guard Vessel Óðinn**  
Display of vessel that took part in all three Cod Wars  
On permanent view  
**Reykjavik Museum of Photography**  
**Valdís Thor**  
100 photographs on display  
Runs until June 29  
**Reykjavik Citizens - Photos from a working man**  
Karl Christian Nielsen's exhibition depicts photos of every day life between 1916 and 1950  
Runs until August 28  
**Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum**  
**Sigurjón Ólafsson's Pillars & "Icelander"**  
Runs until August 28  
**Skafffell**  
**Kate Woodcroft and Catherine Sagin**  
The work of collaborative group Catherine Sagin (thus named after Catherine Sagin won a fencing bout 10-8 at the opening of an exhibition) will be featured  
Runs until June 15

**Bió Paradís, Hverfisgata 54**  
**All times are approximate**  
**Movies listed have English subtitles**  
  
**Friday June 3**  
18:00 66/23 North West  
20:00 Thicker Than Water  
22:00 Reykjavik Whale Watching Massacre  
**Saturday June 4**  
18:00 The Big Rescue  
20:00 Under the Glacier  
22:00 Pearls and Swine  
**Sunday June 5**  
18:00 The Secret Spell

20:00 ICE-SAR  
22:00 Mr. Bjarnfredarson  
**Monday June 6**  
18:00 Dis  
20:00 Back Soon  
22:00 Astropia  
**Tuesday June 7**  
18:00 The Quiet Storm  
20:00 101 Reykjavik  
22:00 ShanghaaingDays  
**Wednesday June 8**  
18:00 Remote Control  
20:00 Dreamland  
22:00 Devil's Island  
**Thursday June 9**  
18:00 Children  
20:00 Parents  
22:00 Dramarama  
**Friday June 10**  
18:00 Eleven Men Out  
20:00 Children of Nature  
22:00 Heima by Sigur rós  
**Saturday June 11**  
18:00 Sky Palace  
20:00 The Sea  
22:00 Jar City  
**Sunday June 12**  
18:00 Benjamin Dove  
20:00 The House  
22:00 Dream of the Way  
**Monday June 13**  
18:00 Seagull's DLaughter  
20:00 Brim  
22:00 The Good Heart  
**Tuesday June 14**  
18:00 Angels of the Universe  
20:00 Noi the Albino  
22:00 Honour of the House  
**Wednesday June 15**  
18:00 Tears of Stone  
20:00 No Bone No Skin  
22:00 White Night Wedding  
**Thursday June 16**  
18:00 The Icelandic Dream  
20:00 Cold Trail  
22:00 Hullabaloo

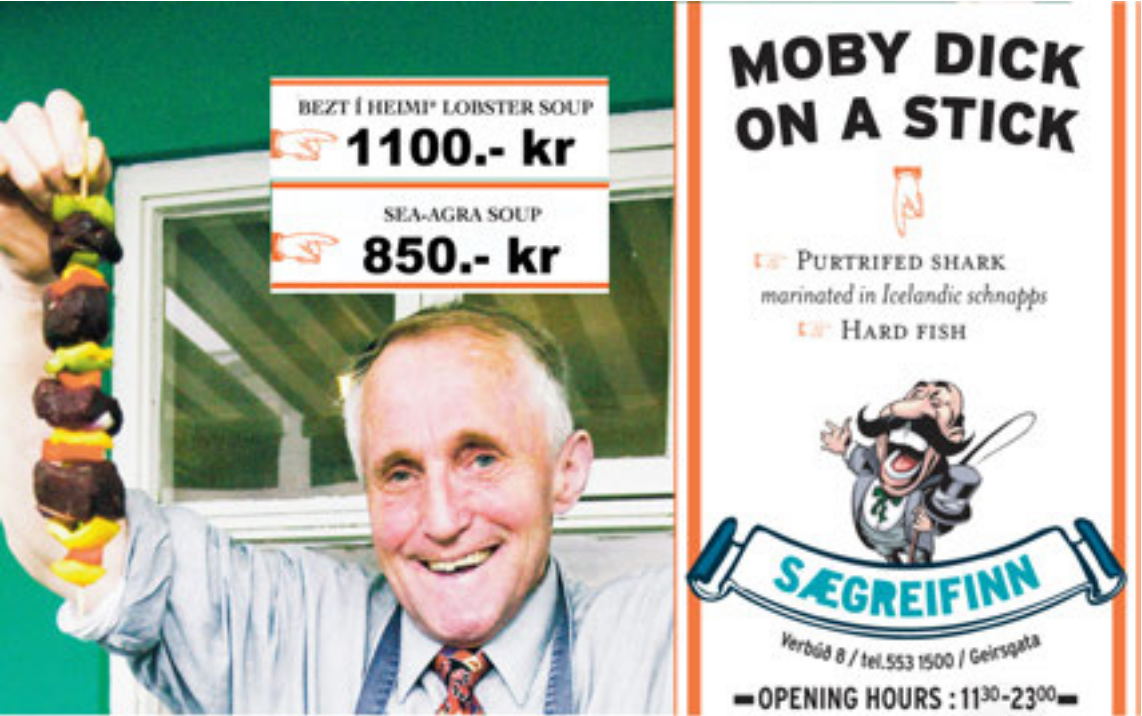


THE VIKING : INFO

Laugavegur 1 • Reykjavik • 581 1250  
Hafnarstræti 3 • Reykjavik • 551 1250  
Hafnarstræti 104 • Akureyri • 4615551  
Adalstræti 27 • Isafjörður  
Eden • Hveragerði  
email: theviking@simnet.is



GEYSIR





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Restaurant Hornið – Hafnarstræti 15, 101 Reykjavík – t. 551 3340 – [www.hornid.is](http://www.hornid.is)



## GRILLED FISH, MEAT AND VEGATALES.

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cucina italiana

**UNO – cucina italiana is an Italian restaurant located in central Reykjavík. Experience a fusion of Italian and Icelandic flavours served in a casual and vibrant environment.**

### Must try dishes

#### Mink whale carpaccio

Mink whale carpaccio with fennel, cabbage, parmesan cheese and lemon oil.

#### Lobster tail and tiger prawn Linguini

Linguini with tiger prawns, Icelandic lobster, rucola and cherry tomatoes in shellfish sauce.

#### Grilled salmon

Grilled salmon with Icelandic barley, grilled vegetables, radishes, dill, toasted almonds and sage butter.

#### Grilled minke whale

Grilled minke whale with „Brennivín“ glaze, rosemary potatoes and grilled vegetables.

#### White chocolate skyr panna cotta

With Limoncello gel and oat crumble.



### Our kitchen is open

11.30 – 23.30  
Sundays to Thursdays and

11.30 – 24.00  
Fridays and Saturdays



**See you soon ... A presto**

**UNO | Hafnarstræti 1-3 | 101 Reykjavík | Tel. 561 1313 | [uno.is](http://uno.is)**

# ART

GALLERIES & MUSEUMS IN JUNE



### Be One With The Environment

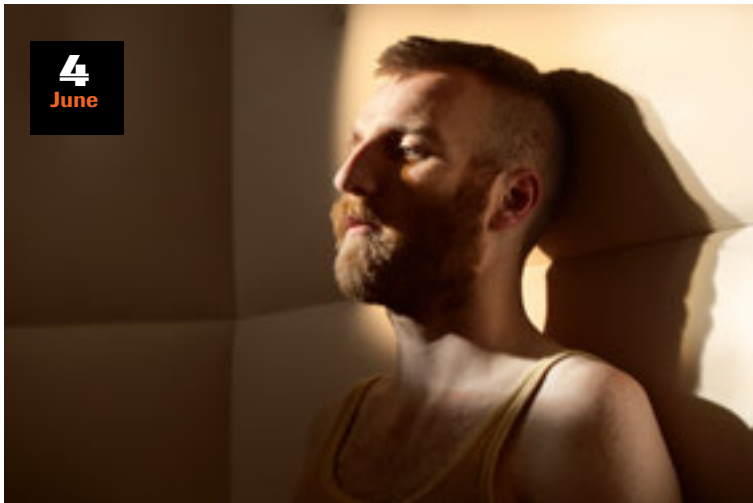
*The Living Art Museum, Laugavegur 26*

*Runs until July 3*

*Free*

Or go visit Carl Boutard's exhibit at The Living Art Museum, where he has created sculptures specifically for this installation. Carl's pieces are often connected to nature, science, and language. In some pieces on display, he has taken plants from his every day environment, cast them in bronze, and made art out of them. These abstract pieces are worth seeing, so go feel the connection between artist and nature. **SAT**

**4**  
June



### Solaris 2.0

*Harpa–Silfurberg, Ingólfsgarður Austurbakki 2*

*June 4, 20:00*

*3.500 ISK*

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the publication of Krakow writer Stanislaw Lem's novel 'Solaris', and this should be celebrated. Luckily, the masterful Ben Frost and Daniel Bjarnason have created an ambitious project doing just that, with the help of one of Poland's leading orchestras, Sinfonietta Cracovia. And, guess what: they're bringing it to Harpa!

'Music For Solaris' was premiered at the Unsound Festival in Krakow last year (and then staged at Unsound New York in April) to critical acclaim. Now we're getting it in Reykjavík, and this is exciting.

For 29 string players, two percussionists, prepared piano, guitars and electronics, 'Music For Solaris' has its beginnings in both Lem's original novel and Andrei Tarkovsky's 1972 Plm adaptation. The story behind it, as explained on Ben's MySpace (!) goes that he was never satisfied with the original score for Tarkovsky's Plm. "I always felt that Russian composer Eduard Artemyev's score compounded the external, science fiction elements of the story rather than exploring the internal, the human."

After composing the music, however, Daniel and Ben were no longer interested in screening Tarkovsky's adaptation to it. "At the same time the idea of a blank screen also troubled me", says Ben, "[b]ut as soon as Brian [Eno, who selected Frost as his protégé in the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative] saw the screen in the Krakow cinema, I could see his mind started ticking over the problem too, and a few days later he laid out this elegant visual solution that mirrored everything we were trying to get at aurally".

Brian along with Nick Robertson came upon the elegant solution of manipulating Tarkovsky's original, turning single frames of the Plm into a slow moving slide show that looks as if the images are "melting" together. It is an ambitious feat to change the music, and an equally ambitious venture to change the Plm itself to suit the new music. But do you expect anything less from some of Iceland's best, coupled with Brian Eno?



Art | Review



## Enter The Monsters Club...

A group of local artists take a journey to the heart of darkness

Modern society and culture often promote the idea that human monsters are twinkle-eyed, almost supernatural geniuses, affably quoting Wilde and Nietzsche while disembowelling people in the most convoluted way imaginable. Of course, the reality is that most ‘monsters’ are repressed, delusional, almost pathetic creatures that are only gods inside their own heads. Yet they walk and talk among us undetected. See that person sitting next to you while you read this? Yup, right now they might be thinking of ways to use your skin as a dress.

This idea of the ‘monster’ inside us all was what a group of artists and dancers led by Erna Ómarsdóttir were looking to explore at this year’s Reykjavík Arts Festival. Despite being a renowned dancer in her own right, I was more aware of Erna’s work with sex bin death metal pop band Lazyblood (fellow Lazyblood-er, Reykjavík!’s Valdimar Jóhannsson was also performing). But it was safe to expect that this piece would be pushing a few boundaries.

Arriving five minutes late, the performance was already at full tilt (apparently in theatre land, a 19:00 start means that it actually starts at 19:00). This meant an interminable game of catch up as I tried to decipher what the hell was going on. The first half saw a series of slightly disjointed visual set pieces that seemingly aspired to explore the realms of the monsters deep in our psyche. There seemed to be a lot of inspiration from horror celluloid going on. Stage twins Lovísa Gunnarsdóttir and Sigríður Níelsdóttir, with their long hair, knee length socks, and sudden jerking movements, resembled a cross between the dead girls from ‘The Shining’ and the killer ghost from The Ring, while Erna herself, with her bedraggled bedclothes, psychotic eyes and highly suspect mothering tendencies, definitely had a touch of Joan ‘Mommy Dearest’ Crawford about her.

In terms of the dancing, you could tell who were the professional and non-professional dancers, which meant some scenes were more memorable than others. The definite highpoint though was the danse macabre between Valdimar as death and Ásgeir Magnússon as his victim. It was especially graceful, reminding me of the

exquisite torture a cat renders upon a

**What:** We saw Monsters  
**Where:** National Theatre  
**When:** May 20, 2011

mouse before killing it. Now this being a piece about the heart of darkness those monsters occupy, you’d expect some explicit imagery to portray this. Naturally, ‘We Saw Monsters’ had a director’s cut full of symbolism that would make any torture porn addict’s knees tremble. There was masturbation with a scythe and rubber hands, copious nudity, transvestism, simulated incest, death, gore and body mortification. Perhaps I’m a dead-eyed misanthrope inured to such things, but for some reason this didn’t shock me that much, especially when placed in context with the likes of De Sade and Herman Nitsch. What did unsettle me though was a five second period when the music cut out, giving way to the orgasmic heavy breathing of Lovísa and Sigríður in the throes of some intersister rutting. Cue heavy squirming in my chair.

While the dancing and visual scenes took a little effort to understand, the music (provided by Valdimar) propelled the piece along nicely. With atonal radiophonic electronica, hard industrial sounds, EBM death metal, and sweeping operatic ambient, it provided an abundance of atmosphere that soothed and battered you in equal amounts.

The show ended with a Grand Guignol finale as the characters embarked on a religious themed orgy of self-destruction at an altar that was reminiscent of the endings to Peter Greenaway movies in the ‘80s with its emphasis on death, decay and the limits of the flesh. It was all designed to pound and overload the senses as they burned up in heaven (or hell depending upon your viewpoint).

“We Saw Monsters” was bewildering, punishing and definitely a little fucked up. But you can pretty much say the same thing about our society’s monsters.

**BOB CLUNESS**  
**NANNA DÍS JÓNSDÓTTIR** / SNOOP-AROUND.COM





## Whale Watching and Puffin island

Take part in an adventure at sea into the world of whales and sea birds all year round from Reykjavík.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Des
			9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00			
						10:00*	10:00*				
13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00
						14:00*	14:00*				
					17:00	17:00	17:00				

\*10:00 and 14:00 departures from 1 July to 10 August

### Other adventures at sea

**Puffin Watching** May 15<sup>th</sup> - August 15<sup>th</sup>  
**Midnight Whale Watching** June 15<sup>th</sup> - July 31<sup>st</sup>  
**Sea Angling** May 1<sup>st</sup> - August 31<sup>st</sup>  
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The only kitchen in Reykjavík open to **23:30** on weekdays and **01:00** on weekends



## Two restaurants on the upper part of Laugavegur explored



### “This establishment is truly a labour of love”

Only a handful of cities around the world can boast wearing the Nepalese jewel in their culinary crown, and Reykjavík is fortunate to be one them. Kitchen Eldhús opened at Laugavegur 60 a little over two years ago and it has consistently remained one of my top downtown dining choices. Proprietor and executive chef Deepak Panday offers a menu that caters to a variety of tastes and appetites, with an emphasis on the healthy Newari cuisine that is indigenous to the Kathmandu Valley. The indiscriminate tongue often mistakes Nepalese cuisine as Indian, a common fallacy, as they share many of the same spices and rices, as well as sharing a common political border. Rather than heavily sauced meat typical of a northern Indian Mughal style kitchen, Newari cuisine is praised for being delicate and slightly milder with a more distinctive, wide palette that spares not one taste bud. Spices are indispensable to the Newa way of life, with most dishes consisting of a combination of methi (fenugreek), besar (turmeric), jeera (cumin seeds), dhaniya (coriander), jwano (carom seed), lahsun (garlic), aduwa (ginger), khursani (chilli powder), Nepali sunp (dill), and tejpat (bay leaf).

#### Kitchen Eldhús

Laugavegur 60a



Kathmandu is particularly famous for the ‘Mo: mo’, a type of dumpling that originated from Tibet and popular as a fast street food (1.490 ISK). My partner and I began with this fresh specialty served with a tomato and poppy seed chutney, and the Beignets de Aubergine, a fried eggplant round filled with a cheese and tamarind sauce (1.990 ISK). We could have stopped here, as our mouths already arrived at nirvana. We were given a private table on the second floor, and were completely at ease with the ambiance of our surroundings. This was our first time away from our newborn, and so we expected a nervous evening tethered to our telephones and staring at clocks. Quite the contrary. The relaxed but refined interior warmed by a gentle melody played on the wooden flute subdued all anxiety. Our entrees arrived, and I savoured every bite of Achari Salmon, a spicy steak marinated in mustard, fennel, chillies, and anis (3.590 ISK) and served with a

Nepalese Pilau (890 ISK), rice cooked with cashews, almonds, raisins and coconut, and Peshwari Naan (490 ISK). Perhaps I should have paired a wine to complement this, as the list was rather extensive for Icelandic standards, but a Nepalese chiya worked just as well. Once again, we finished more than satisfied, and without room to spare for dessert. One day I will save room for Juju Dhau, the king of yoghurts, one day.

Without compromise, Deepak prides himself in offering the healthiest food available, with each of the twenty five dishes made to order fresh, and adjusted for any specific dietary concerns as suggested by the menu. Each bite evidenced that this establishment is truly a labour of love for Deepak and a culinary asset for Iceland. Kitchen Eldhús serves lunch weekdays from 12-14:30, and dinner seven days a week from 17:30-22:00.

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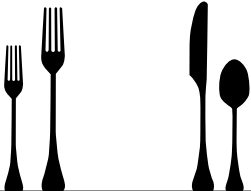
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“Why should I return for a soggy potluck and some frozen fries?”

Since opening, I was apprehensive to do more than peek into the window of a downtown restaurant reduced to the lowest common denominator, which might be expected if it were attached to a petrol station and 200 km from the next watering hole, but this is Laugavegur, Iceland’s main shopping street and there is nothing to entice me to walk through the front door except a sign that reads “Tasty: smakkast betur”. I was not even certain that food was actually being served yet, since the place was dark and empty, but to my chagrin, a tug on the door revealed that Tasty was open for business. Now, I was going to let this experience simmer until the next issue, but I have a feeling that Tasty may not be around that long. This place is in serious trouble. I hope the two employees have a back up plan, or maybe a plot involving mutiny.

Opening its doors just months ago, the owner solicited us insisting that Tasty was ready for review. Seriously? Then this place is in deeper water than I thought; a kitchen nightmare desperately in need of a Gordon Ramsay fix. Listen, I will save you the humiliation and address the obvious. Heed my advice: a restaurant is a labour of love. Owners just starting out should be involved with every detail of the operation. Wake up, break a sweat, or give up and stay at home.

Tasty

Laugavegur 60



First, reconsider the name and slogan “smakkast betur” (“tastes better”). Better? Better than what?

Second: Know the business you are really in: Food + Ambiance + Service = Experience.

I walk into a lifeless dungeon of dismal music, sit at a sticky plastic table and feel compelled to order a beer. The server says the alcohol order did not come this weekend. You are located downtown and have no excuse for three days of an unstocked bar. Change the menu, or send someone to the shop. Next, I order the marinated leg of lamb served with ciabatta, mushrooms, grand salad, and a side of fries (1.800 ISK). I am served what appears to be a burger on a burnt Bónus bun and a bowl of fries. The photograph is a bit too generous. Perhaps it should have shown the gristled excuses of lamb bits inside or soggy sponge of the bun below. At least the mushrooms were good. The server never saw or heard of ciabatta bread. When confronted with the piece of burger lettuce I was served, the cook made good on the grand salad.

Apparently this business venture was approached without any industry experience. Enrol in a course or do some research. Go dine at other restaurants! Why is their formula working? Obviously you are not interested in upscale dining, and that is fine, but you can afford a bit of charm and still keep the prices low. Look around at the fast casual market and ask what differentiates your burger experience from your neighbours? I can walk three blocks and have one of the finest burgers in town for the same price. Why should I return for a soggy potluck and some frozen fries? Cutting a fresh potato into chips is cheap and easy and could be a starting point. You also have location to your advantage, now follow up with ambiance.

I am so bored with this opportunist mentality of seeking a harvest without ploughing. If you want to make money, then import the next portable sauna or trampoline craze to Iceland and stay out of the kitchen. A restaurant should be opened out of passion and not profit. As the old joke goes: the quickest way to get a million krónur in the restaurant business is to start with two million.

MADELEINE T  
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