

The Reykjavík Grapevine



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Best before May 17

Step Right Up To Be President!

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On the Cover

The field of candidates for Iceland's June 1 presidential election has been whittled down from 81 to 11, still the choice isn't an obvious one. Polling results have sent candidates on a rollercoaster ride in recent weeks and we still have a ways to go until the big day. Our cover photo illustration captures the seeming game of chance at hand.

Meet the candidates and make your choice on pages 12 to 15.

COVER ARTWORK:
Sveinbjörn Pálsson



Editorial Yes, It Matters

WORDS Catharine Fulton,
Editor in Chief

F And then there were 11. The upcoming presidential elections are fast approaching, with less than a month now until ballots are cast and the next resident of Bessastaðir is revealed. Eleven candidates are on the ballot — a marked drop from the 81 individuals who registered online to signal their intention to run — and in this issue, we aimed to present each of their thoughts on the presidency in order to help voters decide who to support.

One commenter on a recent news article about the latest polling wrote, "It doesn't matter. A president is useless." (Hey, Röbert, thanks for the engagement!) The thing is, though, that once it matters it really matters. Iceland need not look too far back in history to remember times when the presidency mattered — it wasn't that long ago that a president used their constitutional authorisation to deny signing a law from the Parliament. In fact, they did it three times. Someone with that power matters.

And we may not need to look too far into the future for a time it will matter again. The president represents Iceland on the world stage. At a time when the world feels like it's in absolute shambles, how does Iceland want to be represented?

The presidency isn't meant to be a political role, but I sure as hell wouldn't want my head of state smiling, waving and glad handing alongside other world leaders who stand in direct opposition to the values and morals that this country claims to uphold — and no, those morals and values are not the dog whistle immigration policies the unelected prime minister claims are of top importance for the nation.

It feels very much like the world is at a tipping point. I'd like to see Iceland elect a president that will represent the people and help keep the country on solid footing, on the right side of history.

But what do I know?
I can't even vote. ■

Contributors



CATHERINE
MAGNÚSDÓTTIR

Catherine studies culture and literature in Iceland and came to the Grapevine for the internship but ended up freelancing for the magazine. When she's not trying to reconnect with her Icelandic roots, she's usually watching video essays or attempting to finally come up with that one good story idea that she can actually finish writing.



JÓHANNES BJARKI
BJARKASON

Jóhannes Bjarki is a Reykjavík local, straight out of Grafarvogur. Having been active as the frontman of the post-punk band Skoffín and in the post-dreifing art collective, Jóhannes is fascinated by the Icelandic music scene. Among his interests are politics, history and pop culture.



IRYNA ZUBENKO

Iryna is a Ukrainian journalist working at the cross-section of media and technology for the past five years. While still figuring out what to do in life, Iryna's love of travelling, unspoiled nature and Scandi design has brought her to Reykjavík. One day she'll write a non-fiction book.



REX BECKETT

Rex Beckett has been a fixture in the Reykjavík culture scene for over a decade as a longtime music/art writer and as former synthpunk diva Rex Pistols. They are currently working on a series delving into the influence of Garfield on queer millennials.



SHRUTHI BASAPPA

Shruthi Basappa traded the warmth of Indian summers for Arctic winds of Iceland. She's a food enthusiast masquerading as an architect at Sei Studio and loves obsessive attention to detail. When not leading our Best of Reykjavík food panel, Shruthi can be found trying to become a Michelin restaurant inspector.



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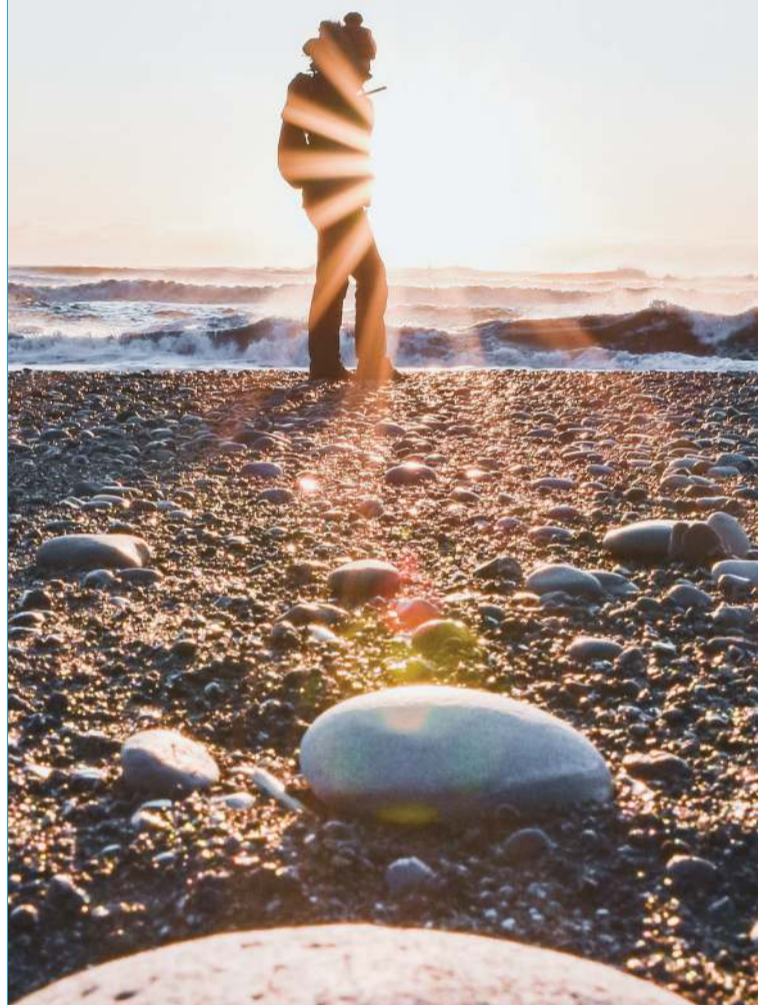


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What The News!? The Heat Is (Still) On

A look at some of the news making headlines in recent weeks

WORDS The Reykjavik Grapevine
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Things are still burning hot over on the Reykjanes peninsula. The volcanic eruption that began March 16 is still going strong – well, not really strong, but lava spewing out of a single eruptive crater east of Sundhnúkur. At the same time – and most interestingly – the rate of magma flowing into the reservoir beneath Svartsengi, which has been feeding the eruptions and dike intrusions in the region since late 2023, has remained steady.

Analytical models employed by volcanologists estimate that inflow of magma into the reservoir is greater than the outflow feeding the eruption. The Icelandic Meteorological Office notes that “As long as the magma continues accumulating in the Svartsengi reservoir, the likelihood for a significant escalation in the eruptive activity in Sundhnúkur crater row increases.” Escalation could take the shape of new eruptive fissures in the area, the enlarging of the currently active eruptive vent, or the formation of new dike

intrusions in the area.

Though lava flow has been slow, it’s been steady enough to create towering new fields of lava that have managed to crawl up and over the defensive walls erected around the town of Grindavik. On April 26, Jóhanna Malen Skúladóttir, natural disaster specialist at the Icelandic Met Office, said in a conversation with national broadcaster RÚV that ground uplift near Svartsengi has slowed down, similar to the events leading up to previous magma shifts.

Contractors are currently working on restoring the defensive berms near Grindavik, while another eruption is imminent.

STUPID IS AS STUPID DOES

The threat of increased volcanic activity, rough terrain and constant gas pollution isn’t enough of a deterrent to those wanting to see the eruption up close and personal. Authorities and search and rescue volunteers operating in the vicinity of the eruption have had to turn away people wanting to venture into the lava field to feel the heat.

Suðurnes Police Commissioner Úlfar Lúðvíksson said in late April there have been instances of people – mostly foreign tourists – wanting to hike to the eruption site. At least some have managed to evade search and rescue crews, as a couple of hikers were spotted on a web camera in late April walking on the new lava.

After years of consecutive eruptions, it shouldn’t need to be repeated, but here we go: Do not walk on the lava! The seemingly hard and secure surface is likely a thin crust insulating the still molten lava below. Just stay away.

All that said, a steering committee has been formed to discuss how to open the area around the eruption safely. In addition to members of the police, and search and rescue, the committee includes members of the Icelandic Tourist Board and representatives of the tourism industry. In fact, it’s chaired by a representative of the tourist board. Because nobody is better suited to make objective decisions about the safety of opening the eruption site than wealthy business owners who have a vested financial interest in seeing it opened.

How much will the Tourist Board or its members be chipping in financially to maintain or build new berms in the area – or is it a case of the financial burden of the eruption falling on the taxpayer so businesses can benefit?

BUT WAIT, THERE’S MORE!

We’d be remiss not to rhyme off the top news stories of recent weeks without mentioning Atli Örvarsson’s BAFTA win. The noted musician and founder of the INNI record label took home a statue for scoring the television series *Sílo*. The show was good, but Atli’s music was great. Go give it a listen. Congrats, Atli! ■



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Do Shit

Paying It Forward (To Yourself)

The Útlendingur's ongoing guide to getting shit done

WORDS Catharine Fulton
IMAGE Art Bicnick

currently amounts to 15.5% of one's gross wages, but that doesn't mean *you* are setting so much aside for the future (unless you're self-employed, then it's all on you). The employee contribution is 4% and then the employer kicks in the other 11.5%. By contributing to a pension fund monthly, you're earning your right to a lifelong pension once you retire. Those who find themselves disabled and unable to work can also collect a monthly pension. Monthly pension payments are also paid out to the spouse and minor child of a fund member who dies.

Focusing on the most common occurrence – making it to retirement age and collecting a lifelong monthly pension from there on, Jóney clarifies that those with their pension at Lífeyrissjóður Verzlunarmanna can begin drawing monthly payments from 60 years old. The minimum age varies by pension fund, and the age that is typically considered “retirement age” in Iceland is 67.

“If you start to draw your pension at 60, you obviously get a lower pension than if you would start at 67 because you will get it for a longer time,” Jóney clarifies. “So the amount decreases based on how many months before 67 you start receiving your pension.”

The amount one receives monthly is also dependent on how much they paid into the fund while working. So those who work full-time hours will eventually receive higher monthly payments than those who have been less active on the labour market.

At this point I can read your mind, fellow útlendingur: but what if I'm not living in Iceland when I reach the

ripe old age of 67?

Well, there are a couple of scenarios that could play out here. According to Jóney, those who are not citizens of a European Economic Area member state or the United States do have the option of getting their pension refunded upon leaving Iceland. For those who move away from Iceland without touching their pension, Jóney says to make sure your contact details are always up to date with your pension fund.

“It's very important to keep your details up to date in ‘my pages’ or the equivalent with your pension fund,” Jóney advises. “We send notices to people at 65 years old and again at 67 reminding them that they have pension entitlements. But if we don't have contact information, we aren't able to do that; so it's crucial to keep your details current.”

Another very important aspect of this retirement savings scheme is the personal pension savings.

“This is optional, but we always say that choosing personal pension savings is like getting a 2% raise,” Jóney explains. “You choose to have your personal pension savings with a bank or a fund and choose to save another 2% or 4% of your gross salary. Then the employer has to contribute another 2%, so it's kind of insane not to use that opportunity.”

It would seem that Iceland's immigrant population is insane (but we knew that – we moved to Iceland, afterall). According to a recent study from the Central Bank, the vast majority of immigrants in Iceland are *not* contributing to personal pension savings. Get on it, my fellow foreign friends! ■

Pensions.

Hey, wake up, it's not *that* boring!

In fact, if you really think of it, knowing that you're putting money aside now to sustain you in your third act is pretty exciting. But it's also a little confusing. Sure, it's a percentage deducted from your monthly paycheck, but how much is being deducted, how much is your employer chipping in and when will you see that money again?

Thirsty for answers, we turned to Jóney Gylfadóttir, a pension agent at Lífeyrissjóður Verzlunarmanna, to tell us more about the wild and wonderful world of pensions.

“All employees and self-employed people are required by law to contribute to pension funds,” Jóney explains. “So from 16 years old, if you are in the labour market by then, and until you are 70 years old you have to pay into a fund.”

The legally-mandated payment



Word Of The Issue

What The Fokk Are You Looking At?

The Grapevine's guide to sounding Icelandic, one word at a time

WORDS Derek Allen
IMAGE Adobe Stock

love a good F-bomb when they drop something, are running late to work or accidentally hurt themselves?

However, what a lot of people don't know is that fokk is not an English loan word – it's a homegrown Icelandic word.

Before I proceed, it's important to point out that fokk used the way described earlier does indeed seem to come from English. Other swears used in Icelandic – like andskotinn or djöfullinn – don't have readily apparent English roots.

That being said, fokk can also mean something along the lines of “mess” or “disarray” or even “poorly done work.”

For example, one might say: Ég fór til læknis af því að allt var í fokki. (I went to the doctor because everything was messed up).

One could argue that this isn't even that far off from English, as one could say “I went to the doctor because everything was fucked up,” but the use of “fuck” as a noun in and of itself isn't a thing. You would see this more in conjunction with certain prefixes or suffixes such as “cluster-” (clusterfuck) or “-up” (fuckup). In Icelandic, fokk is more of a state of being.

Unless you don't go outside, you will hear tons of Icelanders generously using the word fokk.

Icelanders, especially younger ones, are keen on using this at times that English speakers would use the word “fuck”. Because who doesn't

With all that said, I hope that you found this to be fokking helpful in terms of getting your Icelandic out of fokki. ■

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On The Fringes

Fire Up Your Lightsaber And Become One With The Force!

The local force wielders present their Saber Academy for enthusiastic Padawans

WORDS Catherine Magnúsdóttir
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

Do me a favour and imagine this intro flying off into a galaxy far, far away: Lightsabers! Not just a popular toy or “an elegant weapon for a more civilised age.” It turns out you can learn to effectively swing the glowing blades (sound effects optional) right here in Reykjavík, exuding all the otherworldly prowess of your favourite Jedi or Sith. It’s the perfect opportunity to nerd out while increasing your physical activity. In my crusade to curate the creative circles of this town, I have sought out local masters Steinar Smári Hrólfsson and Anna Reneau, and have learned much in the ways of the force. Or, you know, how to build up a Saber Academy.

I meet up with Anna and Steinar, the trainers at the Saber Academy Reykjavík, curious about how one even starts a club like this and what goes into the pursuit of lightsaber fencing. “This whole thing sort of began when I started collecting lightsabers,” Steinar tells me. “I did YouTube videos about it, kind of semi-blew up with that, and eventually started to do flow-art online, which is more akin to something like baton-twirling or poi – but with lightsabers. I did a lot of that on my own until I met Anna.”

Anna originally began her lightsaber training with groups in her home state of Kentucky, seeking out other enthusiasts to “lightsaber with” – apparently it’s a verb, too – every time she moved. “After about a year of lightsabering just the two of us, we figured it was time to open up a club and see if we could find some like-minded people,” she says.

The process itself was rather painless; the guidelines are essentially the same for most non-profit clubs here in Iceland. Saber Academy Reykjavík officially started practising

last summer, receiving their official club designation last winter. Since then they have partnered with a club in Germany that serves as the headquarters of Saber Academy International.

As for the actual lightsabering, the academy primarily focuses on the prequel era of Star Wars (episodes

and apply the rule of cool to all of it rather than the reality of it,” Steinar explains. “We are not a combat group. We are not teaching actual combat techniques or sword fighting. It’s a very cooperative thing, with two people looking good together rather than trying to beat each other. Though, of course, you can sell the idea that you’re trying to kill each

thing of value, something cool.”

“It’s a huge passion project,” he continues, “a fully non-profit thing – actually more of a losing money thing – but it’s just for the fun of it. I always loved Star Wars, always loved the fantasy of it.” With the help of friends in Switzerland, Steinar was even able to create his own saber which he has been selling for about a year now.

Anna, too, reiterates her passion for the hobby, “It’s just something I’ve always enjoyed, pulling together nerds and making a community – though I’m much more about the physical act of doing lightsaber than about collecting. I’m not a collector like Steinar, I have maybe three that I care about! Though it’s been great to have enough lightsabers to share and teach new people and get them into the hobby. We’ve been really blessed with our members so far and I look forward to seeing them get better and better.”

The academy is currently working toward hosting bi-monthly beginners workshops, the completion of which would grant students with a certificate, allowing them to come along on trips abroad, visit other academies and conventions, and present their show-fighting skills. ■

As for the actual lightsabering, the academy primarily focuses on the prequel era of Star Wars (episodes I - III) and the stunt coordination and choreography work of Nick Gillard.

I - III) and the stunt coordination and choreography work of Nick Gillard. The forms – of which there are a few within Star Wars lore – are only described up to a certain point. While there are elements of fencing and martial arts to the craft, Steinar and Anna liken the actual practice more to a dance.

“You kind of take real life martial arts

other.”
Once new students progress through the basics to pick up some more specific moves, they are free to combine them at will to create something that looks and feels good. “It’s a lot of fun. It gets you this almost instant gratification,” Steinar says. “You can come to 10 classes and already feel like you have some-



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Side Hustle

From The Office To The Dance Floor

Kolbrún Birna Hallgrímsdóttir Bachmann combines a routine 9-to-5 with a DJ career

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

"We wanted to hear more women in music in the clubs," says Kolbrún Birna Hallgrímsdóttir Bachmann as we meet at an empty Röntgen bar, where she's a regular DJ. By day, she navigates legal meetings, but come evening, she's in her element mixing beats.

Kolbrún Birna Hallgrímsdóttir Bachmann, 29, a lawyer

I'm the Data Protection Officer for the City of Reykjavík. My side hustle is DJing with my friend Glódís. We call ourselves DJ GLÓKOLLUR – a combination of our names – Glódís and Kolla, or Kolbrún. We started DJing about two years ago at Röntgen because Glódís' husband Steinþór was only booking female DJs for the whole month. We decided we wanted to be one of them.

Steinþór taught us at their home to start with. We took it very seriously and practised a lot. We mostly play house, techno and also some girly pop songs – basically, just music that we ourselves would like to dance to.

After our first gig, we just started walking into places, saying, "We're always DJing, why don't you book us?" acting like we knew what we were doing. We got two or three gigs just in the second week of DJing. We were really putting ourselves out there to begin with.

We mostly always work as a duo. Sometimes it happens that Glódís can't make it, or I can't make it. For example, tomorrow, my friends are

opening an art show for Design-March and I'm DJing alone. Glódís and her husband run the restaurant Skreið, so DJing is also a side hustle for her.

CREATIVITY MEETS TURNTABLES

In my line of work, my mind is very stimulated in an academic way. It's very structured – law is just that way. It's not very creative. DJing is for having more fun; it's a creative outlet for me.

We mostly play on weekends and sometimes Thursdays, so that works fine with my job. Also, I only work a half day on Fridays [because of stytting vinnuvikunnar, or a shorter work week], so it works well if I'm doing an afternoon gig. So far, it hasn't happened that my gigs collide with my job, but it has happened that I played with Glódís on Thursday and then had to come to work at eight o'clock the next day and still had all the songs repeating in my mind during meetings.

The people who work in my office all know about my DJ gig. It's very cute. When we meet in the cafeteria, they ask me about my gigs. A group of them came to see me play once. I've been making playlists for them when they have birthday parties. They're all very supportive.

FROM LEGAL BRIEFS TO SICK BEATS

I love music and people, so combining these things, and creating the atmosphere and energy you want in a space is my favourite thing. Also, I enjoy playing something silly and being silly with it, doing something out of the ordinary, because my other work is so strict. DJing is more of a free thing.

I don't play gigs that I don't think are fun. We did that for a couple of gigs, just because we wanted to say yes to everyone who asked us. That was less fun, but we were practising and finding what types of gigs and music we wanted to play. Because this is just a side gig, it lets me pick and choose and be more specific about what I want to do.

I would say I'm an extrovert, but I also really need my quality time alone. For me, it's all about balance. Also, because I don't drink alcohol, sometimes, when I was out at bars, I didn't feel like I fit in or like I was supposed to be there. When I'm DJing, I have a role. I need to be there. It helps me ease into it – I'm here with a purpose.

The money I get from DJing is money I allow myself to spend just on living and having fun. I get well paid for my other job, so that income goes into more practical things. The DJ money is more of an extra – like a bonus.

HOW TO BE A DJ

The first thing, for us at least, was to get as much music as possible. We used to say, "If we're not the best, at least we have good music. That's going to save us." Knowing that you have at least 10 hours of songs, even if you're playing for two or three hours, is also a bit of a safety net. So, find as much good music as you can, categorise it and then practise at home. There are a lot of tutorials on YouTube or TikTok – they help a lot. Don't be afraid to fail because you don't have to be perfect. You'll practise and get better over time. ■

DJ GLÓKOLLUR is playing at Prikið on May 8 and Röntgen on May 24. For more upcoming gigs, follow them on Instagram: @djglokollur

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The Food Cellar was founded in May 2016 and is now 8 years old. For that reason, we have created this "compilation album".

We have compiled our all time favourite dishes that we feel stand out from more than 150 dishes that have been created over the years. All of these dishes have a personal meaning for us and we are truly honored to be able to share them with our guests in this way.

The Food Cellar has been through a lot in the past 8 years and a lot has changed. The essence of the restaurant has however always remained the same – good food, good music and good service.

For us, food and music are an inseparable whole that forms our slogan

"Food for the body, music for the soul"

and so we thought it would be ideal to offer this special birthday menu in the form of a six song compilation album from us to you.

Under the Sea – Samuel E. Wright
Scallops – cauliflower, chili, hazelnuts

Smoke on the Water – Deep Purple
Smoked Arctic Charr – horseradish, spiced bread, skyr

Born in the USA – Bruce Springsteen
Beef Ribs – mac 'n' cheese, parmesan, mushrooms

Bragðarefir – Prins Pólo
Tuna Tataki and Tiger Prawn – estragon, egg, ponzu, wasabi

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Migrant Moguls The Japanese Entrepreneur Making Iceland Sweeter

Kenichi Noda brought Japanese strawberries to Iceland, with plans to introduce even wider range of Japanese foods

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

It's a Friday afternoon in April, but a space in the Ocean Cluster House in Reykjavik's Grandi district is buzzing with people. Entrepreneurs, embassy representatives and the media are all waiting for a special event to begin – a strawberry tasting. The berries at the centre of the spectacle travelled to Iceland all the way from Japan. Here, they were planted and harvested, promising to be among the sweetest strawberries ever tasted.

“This is my first time growing strawberries,” admits Kenichi Noda, COO at strawberry grower iFarm, in his opening speech. “But I’m confident I can grow strawberries that taste great.”

With a background in human resources and career development at Fujitsu, Ken, as he prefers to be called in Iceland, admits he was

burned out by corporate culture in Japan. “I wanted to feel excited,” he says. “My business partner invited me to set up this company. I’ve always wanted to work overseas some day. That’s my dream come true.”

SWEET SWEET BUSINESS

iFarm was established in November 2022 in Japan, with the Icelandic subsidiary founded in May 2023. The company became the first resident of the Iceland Eco-Business Park in Helgúvík, co-founded by the Iceland Ocean Cluster. The park aims to offer facilities for a thriving circular economy in Iceland.

“People often ask me why we do business in Iceland,” Ken says, explaining that it comes down to a combination of proximity to Europe, affordable energy prices and renewable energy resources. “We can operate sustainable systems with zero CO2 emissions,” he says. “Investing in a sustainable future is important. We should create production systems with minimal environmental impact in Asia, too.”

The tasting event on April 12 marked the first harvest of Japanese strawberries grown in Iceland. The seedlings used for this harvest were imported directly from Japan. It took 10 days for them to arrive and, according to Ken, the courier service has never handled similar deliveries before. Having arrived in Iceland in the middle of December, the seed-

lings were initially very weak, but they eventually recovered and started growing day by day.

Next year, the company is hoping to start production from seeds. The monthly production volume of iFarm is expected to grow from 70 kg to 500 kg by 2026.

SAVOURING ICHI-GO

During the presentation, Ken admits that when talking about his business, one of the most common questions he gets is, “Why Japanese strawberries?”

Producing over 160,000 tonnes of strawberries annually, Japan is the 11th largest grower worldwide, but when it comes to consumption they rank first. But it’s not just about numbers. Japanese strawberries, or *ichigo*, are very different from strawberries from other countries: they are very sweet, have a good acidity balance and softer skin.

The variety grown in Iceland is “Beni Hoppe,” sold under the brand name “ICHI-GO.” The name, as Ken explains, comes from “Beni” meaning beautiful red and ‘Hoppe’ standing for a Japanese idiom that describes a taste that melts in your month.”

Beni Hoppe is the latest strawberry variety to meet Japan’s Seed and Seedling Law to be allowed for export to Europe and America.

According to Ken, what makes iFarm different from existing strawberry producers on the market is their commitment to quality. iFarm doesn’t use any chemical pesticides. Strawberries are harvested in the morning and delivered directly to the consumer the same day. “Icelandic greenhouse strawberries cannot be harvested year round,” he

has already acquired know-how, allowing them to grow Japanese rice in Iceland, with plans to start in October.

Ken believes that there are many similarities between his home country and Iceland. “Both Iceland and Japan are island countries. They have similar character,” he says.

We want to try growing other Japanese foods in Iceland.

explains. The Japanese strawberries will be harvested all year.

iFarm is planning to start sales of strawberries in June, with starting prices of ICHI-GO Diamond at 13,000 ISK per kg. Lower classes of strawberries – those that might not be perfect in shape or size – will be offered from 5,000 to 8,000 ISK per kg.

THINKING AHEAD

Together with two business partners who are currently in Japan trying to raise extra funds, Ken hopes to expand the range of Japanese products grown in Iceland beyond strawberries. “We want to try growing other Japanese foods in Iceland. For example, Japanese rice,” says Ken. “We’d like to use Japanese rice to make Icelandic sake.”

It’s not just words – the company

Moreover, Ken shares that Iceland is becoming more popular with Japanese tourists, including students. However, most Japanese students don’t opt for continuing education in Iceland as even for a part-time job that would help them to sustain themselves during their studies, they would need a work permit. iFarm will be working to change this, facilitating more opportunities for Japanese youth in Iceland.

“Next time, I want to set up a business with Icelanders. Iceland is a small country and Japan is a small country. It only makes sense for us to collaborate,” says Ken.

“One of the things we want to do is open a Japanese restaurant. Of course, we’d use Icelandic fish and the Japanese rice grown in our factory,” he says of iFarm’s future plans. “We already have the dessert – our strawberries.” ■

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Presidential Feature

Introducing The Next President

Ten candidates lay out their presidential goals and motivations

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason & Presidential Candidates
IMAGES The Reykjavik Grapevine Archives, Julia Staples, Art Bicnick & Kristinn Ingvarsson Ásdís Rán Gunnarsdóttir

Nota bene, people! There are 11 candidates in the running for the presidency. Ten of those fine folks replied to the Reykjavik Grapevine's questionnaire and they had a lot to say! Read a selection of their responses over this extended feature spread and then go to Grapevine.is for the candidates' full and uncut responses. Vote responsibly, friends.

On the first day of 2024, President Guðni Th. Jóhannesson put on his best suit to deliver a New Year's address. Though Guðni had planned this for months, few, aside from his family and a handful of aides, knew the address to be his last. President Guðni announced he would not seek reelection.

Before being elected in 2016, Guðni didn't seem a likely candidate for the office. A historian and university professor, he was planted in the limelight during the Panama papers scandal which implicated former prime minister Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson, who continues to serve as an MP, and Independence Party MP Bjarni Benediktsson, who has since ascended to the prime minister's office. Guðni was a regular talking head on various media outlets, presenting a voice of reason, logic and trust that cut through the noise of the scandal.

His calm level-headedness resonat-

ed with the people, as reflected in his electoral victories – he garnered 39.1% of the vote in 2016 and 92% when re-elected in 2020 – and his consistently high approval ratings during his nearly eight years in office.

Not that Guðni's tenure has been without scandal. Controversy came to the fore when, in 2017, he expressed his disdain for pineapple on pizza. The issue, dubbed Pizzagate, sparked a light-hearted global backlash against the president. Despite a local electorate of Hawaiian pizza lovers, the scandal didn't diminish Guðni's popularity.

SO, WHO'S NEXT?

When the president announced his decision at the start of the year, no obvious successors sprung out of the woodwork. Perennial candidates like the peace-loving Ástþór Magnússon – who has pined after the presidency since 1996 – and conspiracy theorist Axel Pétur Axelsson tossed their names in the presidential hat early in the process. More "serious" candidates – who have since seen the most success in pre-election polling – bided their time.

Then, one by one, the candidates emerged.

Running for the office of the Icelandic presidency is pretty straightforward. Candidates are independent; they need to be an Icelandic citizen over the age of 35; and they need to collect at least 1,500 individual endorsements in the online government portal island.is to be eligible for the elections.

That low threshold saw the number of candidates balloon to 81 by the time endorsement signatures were coming due – and that doesn't

include the dozens more who had accidentally signalled their intention to run when attempting to log in to the portal simply to endorse their candidate of choice. When the Grapevine's editorial team contacted potential candidates for a questionnaire, one admitted to us rather sheepishly, "It was just a joke."

In a survey conducted by Prósent in April, only four candidates were polling higher than 5%. Halla Hrund Logadóttir led the race at 28.5%; Baldur Þórhallsson was second at 25%; former prime minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir had 18%; and Jón Gnarr rounded out the front-runners at 16% support. All other candidates measured at less than 5%.

Presumably not joking about their aspiration to move into the presidential residence at Bessastaðir are the 11 candidates who submitted their requisite endorsements and are now officially on the ballot for the June 1 election. Ten of them responded to the Grapevine's questionnaire ahead of our publication deadline.

Here is what they want voters to know.

ARNAR ÞÓR JÓNSSON, 52
Attorney

Why do you want to be president?
Icelandic democracy is in serious decay. To restore it and defend it, we need a concentrated effort. The grassroots has to be reinvigorated and weak representatives must be replaced by strong and courageous representatives who work not for themselves but for the people of Iceland.

If elected, what would be your first order of business as

president?
To put a cross on the church at Bessastaðir.

What are your views on the presidential veto powers?
The president has this right according to the constitution, but this should be used only in emergencies, i.e. whenever a legislation threatens to breach the constitution, transfer state powers to foreign entities, etc.

What are your thoughts on constitutional reform?
As a liberal, I am not wholly against constitutional reform, but think that any reform should be done very carefully so that no rights and freedoms are lost. As a conservative, I think we should respect every provision that has proved good and useful, and not change unless we are certain we have found a way to improve.

Which former president would you aspire to emulate and why?
George Washington, for his bravery, his mild manners, his legacy.

ÁSDÍS RÁN, 44
model and business woman

Why do you want to be president?
I have faith that the presidential office could be used well in service to the nation – much better than it has until now – and I believe I could do great things for the nation as president.

Why should people vote for you rather than another candidate?
As a candidate, I will not make empty promises with political nonsense, but you can think of me as a woman who is not afraid of rising up when things get difficult, who articulates

her views. A woman who understands the struggle of everyday life and believes in the great possibilities of us all as well as instilling hope for old and new generations.

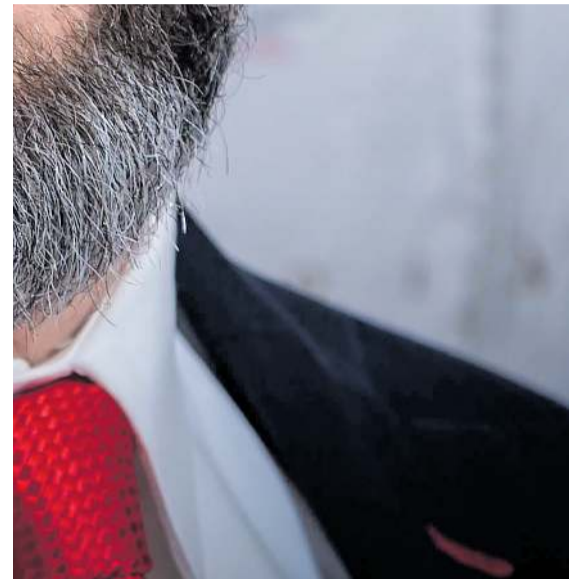
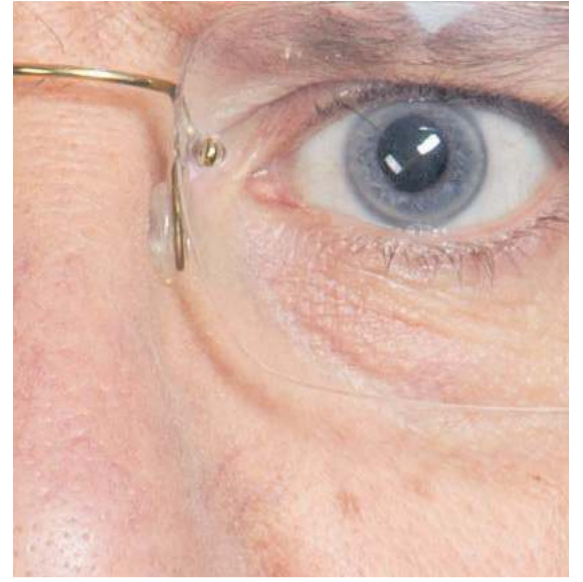
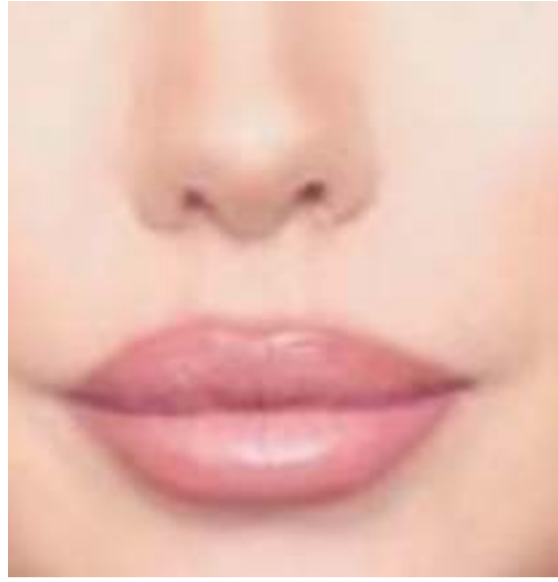
There's no single recipe for a president, each and every one brings its special strength, passion and exciting innovations to the table. I think it would be fantastic marketing for Iceland to vote a woman like myself to the office, whereas alongside my modelling career I have operated as Iceland's unofficial ambassador in my work abroad these last few decades and have participated in various business endeavours as well as representing Iceland in interviews and events.

My theory is that we don't need more politicians, academics or powerful people in the presidential office.

What is not the role of the president?
The president should not participate in party politics and it is not their role to introduce new legislation, but they need to confirm it and have veto powers according to the constitution, calling for a national referendum.

What are your views on the Presidential veto powers?
The president is our only popularly elected representative and the nation's safety valve in dire circumstances. We need to keep these powers within the presidential office and have the opportunity to use them in special circumstances.

What are your thoughts on constitutional reform?
In light of the global developments happening over these last few decades, I think some details of the constitution could be updated. However, it's completely in the hands



ident Of Iceland

of government to look into these things.

If elected, how do you envision your interactions with other heads of state?

All interactions with heads of states should comply with the office's rules. My role, however, relates more to impressing them, educating them about our country and nation and appearing positively as Iceland's representative.

ÁSTÞÓR MAGNÚSSON WIÚM, 70, founder of Peace 2000

Why do you want to be president?

I want to mobilise Bessastaðir to cultivate peace and democracy. The president should serve as the nation's impartial unifying symbol. I have no ties to political parties, nor have I worked with them and thus I'm able to serve as the nation's objective ombudsman at Bessastaðir. The President of Iceland should get a new role as an international spokesperson of peace and human rights.

Multiple academics in the field of peace agree with me that Iceland could be a leading figure in peace and the development of democracy in the world. If Icelanders would heed the call, a new and positive employment sector could be established which would bring thousands of Icelanders blooming opportunities in the future.

Why should people vote for you rather than another candidate?

There are only two options, peace or war. Through 28 years of advocating for peace, I have proved that as president, I will try everything to reach a peace agreement with Russia and prevent a nuclear attack

which military specialists believe is imminent. If you decline the peace candidacy, you are throwing your vote on the fires of war and sending a clear message to the authorities to continue purchasing munitions with your taxes.

In 2016, in the coming presidential elections, in a live broadcast by RÚV, I warned that we would enter a war with Russia within a few years if we didn't abruptly stop and mobilise Bessastaðir to peace, among other things. The nation did not listen and voted militarist. Now we are at war with Russia. Today, Icelandic authorities are spending the nation's taxes to purchase munitions and funding the war against Russia. The consequences of these events, along with the government's policy to accommodate a supply depot for the U.S. in the war against Russia, lead to Iceland becoming one of the first targets if a nuclear war breaks out, which many military specialists warn could happen soon. While NATO soldiers are situated in a nuclear bunker at Keflavík Airport, the Icelandic nation is exposed like the public was in Hiroshima in the last century.

What is the role of the president and how will you fulfil it?

The nation needs a president who unites vision, honesty, patience and perseverance. My criticism in 1996 on politics, the financial system and military participation scared the influencers of old Iceland and unified to distort my image and make myself and my message unbelievable in the public mind. My words of warning about the imminent economic collapse, which at the time were met with negativity, proved to be true. Additionally, the game of illusion surrounding the war in Iraq has been exposed.

By restlessly continuing for 28

years through much adversity, I have demonstrated that I have the strength the president needs to pursue issues and keep at bay the forces that want to manipulate the power of parliament, governance or media, protecting the special interests at the expense of the nation.

Unlike the so-called "unpolitical" political scientists who soar around on the election machines decorated with the bootlickers of special interests, I am running on my own merits and without the support of the upper class or the media elite of the financial vikings. I don't belong to any political party and have never worked with any of them. I will stand guard at Bessastaðir as the safety valve the nation needs to protect the interests of the whole.

Which former president would you aspire to emulate and why?

I will not look in rear-view mirrors. Through peace treaties, my task is to do everything I can as president to prevent Icelandic society being eradicated.

BALDUR ÞÓRHALLSSON, 56 professor of political science at the University of Iceland

Why do you want to be president?

Human rights are being threatened – basic human rights – on both sides of the Atlantic, including women's rights and the rights of LGBTQ+ people. Democracy itself is under threat and misinformation and hate speech are massive challenges. Unrest is prevalent in Europe and the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean is heartbreaking. I strive to focus on international issues and that we become successful in the society of nations. That's why my husband and I decided to heed the

call loud and clear in deciding to run.

Why should people vote for you rather than another candidate?

I believe that we can unite the country and nation into one whole. I want us to focus on what unifies us. I will always, as I have done until now, guard human rights and secure our interests abroad. Additionally, I want us to be a leading force among nations in the issues of children just as we lead on issues of equality.

What is the role of the president and how will you fulfil it?

The president is the nation's unifying symbol. There is a direct relationship between the nation and president, free of intermediaries, and the president needs to always, without exception, keep the national interest foremost in his mind. The president should respect parliamentary democracy in all general terms and he is to ensure that the country has an operational government based on Alþingi's will. In my mind, the president should be the guardian of the social contract; the principles we have agreed upon and have served us well.

The president holds a power of agenda in Icelandic societal discourse. We want to use the president's power of agenda for the sake of unifying topics which the president prioritises and specifically adopts.

Additionally, it is imperative that the president represents the nation abroad. The president needs to support the authorities and guard the nation's interests in the international community. The president can open many doors abroad – both for politicians and the people in the country. We should use the presidential office to open doors and bring people

together.

In our opinion, the president should emphasise the human rights of all his fellow citizens, support those who are worse off, and emphasise the issues of children and young people.

In what circumstances do you think is appropriate to use presidential veto powers?

The President needs to assess and value every instance of whether a law limits the civil rights of people, is a burden to society, and whether the law is irreversible. Then, the President needs to assess and value whether the law infringes upon the freedom of speech, religion, vocation, or the rights of minority groups or others in the society. My position applies to whether or not the President agrees with the legislation.

Additionally, the President needs to constantly keep a good relationship with the people in the country, but he needs to be capable of assessing whether parliament and the people agree.

Using the Icesave negotiations as an example. Whether or not the president agreed or disagreed, he was bound to bring the case before the people because the president reasoned that the agreement would be a burden on the nation and future generations. In such cases, the nation needs to have the last word.

A second example: It would not be an option to enter the European Union without a referendum, regardless of the president's opinion. It is also not an option, in my opinion, to confirm the establishment of a military without a referendum. Personally, I am against the establishment of a military. We are a military-free nation and should continue being one.



If you have a spouse/partner, how active do they envision themselves during your time at Bessastaðir?

Felix and I want to use Bessastaðir for the benefit of children and young people. Both of us have worked towards human rights for over 30 years and Felix has specifically worked for the rights of children and adolescents. We want to use this experience. We know the feeling of not being able to be ourselves and enjoy all the opportunities our good society offers.

Felix and I were startled by the news that only 4% of disabled children in Iceland participate in organised sports – and we know that the income and background of parents have a say in children's active participation in organised sports in society. There, we must do better.

Another worrisome issue is the distress among young people. We want to participate in eradicating distress which certainly does not need to be there. We believe that it is appropriate that the president initiates bringing together the different groups working together for the wellness of children and young people.

HALLA HRUND LOGADÓTTIR, 43, Director General at The National Regulatory Authority

Why do you want to be president?

I have a deep passion for Iceland and its interests. As I reflect on the role of the president, I see an opportunity to contribute to our nation's wellbeing. My goal is to explore avenues for collective growth, both locally and internationally, with a focus on fostering unity and always prioritising the public good.

I believe that cooperation – a cherished value in our Icelandic heritage – is essential for our continued progress. It's imperative that we work together to uphold and cultivate these principles.

My academic journey and professional experience, both domestically and internationally, have granted me valuable insights into various facets of governance, education, and diplomacy within the realms of political science and international cooperation. I am passionate about sharing and celebrating the richness of Icelandic culture and innovation. In Brussels, I had the privilege of organising one of our largest cultural festivals abroad.

During my time at Harvard, I was deeply involved in advanced studies

and practical initiatives concerning environmental and energy policy, critical to our nation's future. In Togo, my involvement in educational projects highlighted the crucial role of solid community foundations for progress, reinforcing my understanding of infrastructure's importance in achieving development goals. Additionally, through establishing the international gender equality initiative, Project Girls for Girls, I worked to empower women from over 20 different countries by developing skills and creating strong networks.

My experiences have shaped my approach to leadership – one that values inclusivity, collaboration, and the deep rooted belief that we must preserve our environment and cultural heritage for future generations. As president, I intend to use these lessons to foster cooperation across the country, engage diverse stakeholders, and focus on the public interest.

Why should people vote for you rather than another candidate?

I am not affiliated with any political party and have never participated in party politics. My candidacy is grounded in the values of cooperation and participation, which have been crucial for our nation. I see myself as a representative of the public in this election, a true advocate for the people of our country. I bring extensive and diverse experience gained through my professional work and education, both domestically and internationally. There is a national desire for a president who possesses a broad range of experiences, can engage in dialogue with everyone, regardless of their background, and can unite different generations and diverse groups within our society. I aim to be a strong team player for the entire nation.

If elected, what would be your first order of business as president?

To listen to people and support communities across the country.

What are your views on the presidential veto powers?

I believe that the president must handle their powers with caution and respect parliamentary democracy. However, it is important for the president to ensure the nation's access to decision making in very particular circumstances.

If elected, how do you envision your interactions with other heads of state?

My goal is to amplify opportunities that benefit Iceland's best interests.

I see the presidency as a platform to enhance Iceland's stature internationally. In office, I would focus on strengthening our diplomatic relationships, advocating for sustainability, peace, and equality, and defending the interests and values of our nation.

HALLA TÓMASDÓTTIR, 55 CEO of the B Team (on leave of absence)

Why do you want to be president?

I believe that Iceland can be an impressive role model regarding peace, prosperity and the wellbeing of people and the planet. A small nation can have influence far beyond its size. I would like to take part in that process.

Why should people vote for you rather than another candidate?

I think that the Icelandic people might vote for me because I am a people's person and a doer. I love interacting with people and hearing what they have to say. I have repeatedly turned words into action in issues relating to education, equality, and environmental and social responsibilities.

I think that the president can play an important role in opening discussions about fundamental issues that are not "party-political" – issues that are of key importance, like the effect of social media on the mental health of young people; the development of Iceland as a tourist destination; the importance of cooperation between arts and sciences; the role and development of Artificial Intelligence; and so on and on. I think that a democratic society must have a forum for public discussions. The president is in a prime position to create such a forum.

I know that I can do this. It is the logical continuation of my job with the B Team for the past six years. Earlier, I was one of the founders of the "Anthill" that organised the National Assembly in November 2009. There 1500 randomly selected representatives of the Icelandic nation worked together in the wake of the financial collapse to discern what values and principles to rebuild our society on. It was a memorable and beautiful event. The values that emerged were "Integrity, Equality, Justice, Respect and Responsibility." I see these as the "moral compass" that Icelanders have chosen. This compass should set the course for the development of society.

If elected, what would be your first order of business as president?

I would host a National assembly, akin to the one in 2009, to set the nation's moral compass. I would take care to involve both young and old, all generations should be heard.

If elected, would you put a cap on how many terms you would foresee yourself serving?

I believe that it is not healthy for leaders to be in power for a long time. Power can negatively affect even the well-intended. I think the three terms should be the limit.

What are your thoughts on constitutional reform?

I agree with the notion that the Constitution needs to be amended. In 1944 it was adopted on the assumption that a thorough revision would take place at the earliest convenience. Some important amendments have been made, especially regarding human rights, but much still needs to be done. Some paragraphs of the Constitution are archaic and almost unintelligible.

I regret that the process to initiate a thorough revision of the Constitution in 2010 came to a halt. It was a remarkable democratic process that aroused international attention.

HELGA ÞÓRISDÓTTIR, 55, Head of Persónuvernd (on a leave of absence)

Why do you want to be president?

I believe I could be a very good president. I am passionate about the interests of the Icelandic nation. I've worked as a public interest lawyer for 29 years, most recently as the head of Persónuvernd for approximately eight years. I speak English, French and Danish, and I have great experience of international cooperation. I have worked in an international environment and have organised international conventions and seminars around the world. Because of my experience and knowledge, I decided to step forward for the Icelandic nation and run to serve this important and respected office well for the Icelandic nation, both at home and abroad.

Why should people vote for you rather than another candidate?

In my work, I have demonstrated honesty, determination, and integrity. I am warm and objective, since I've never participated in politics. I have also shown that I am unafraid of making difficult decisions and standing behind the nation when necessary. In those instances, my experience is of good use.

I am also of the opinion that the nation should be guaranteed a say when it comes to decision-making in the most important issues concerning it. This applies to our most important resources and human rights. If it is clear that parliament doesn't reflect the nation's will, as president I will intervene and allow the nation to decide by calling on a referendum.

What is the role of the president and how will you fulfil it?

The president has a formal role in the country's governance. He has the power to deny legislation as well as having political influence. The president also serves an important role in the promotion of Iceland abroad as well as working on diverse tasks for the community. He is the guardian of many organisations, including being perceived as the nation's unifying symbol. The president needs to know his society and needs to be culturally literate.

I will serve the presidency as the

representative of the country, nation and Icelandic culture. As a lawyer, I am well accustomed to all the formalities the president should attend to. My experience of international cooperation, being linguistically skilled, and having lived abroad, would be of good use when receiving foreign guests visiting the head of state and during the president's travels around the world. It has also proved useful in my work to care about people and be able to put myself in others' shoes. These are features I believe a president needs to have in order to do his job and bring citizens together for a better society. I would also use the president's voice to support the Icelandic language, a continuation of the country's good education, and highlight the necessity of supporting foreigners who want to live here and care for the welfare of the elderly.

In what circumstances do you think is appropriate to use presidential veto powers?

The nation should govern. If MPs pass laws concerning our most important resources (such as the fisheries and energy) or human rights, and if parliament's decision does not reflect the will of the nation, as president I will intervene and allow the nation to decide by calling on a referendum.

What are your thoughts on constitutional reform?

The current constitution has served its role well and its foundational values have held. In addition, the renewal of the human rights chapter in 1995 was a good and necessary step. However, certain customs have formed in the execution of the constitution which would need to be better reflected in it. For example, it needs to be stated more clearly if the president does not uphold certain activities.

If elected, how do you envision your interactions with other heads of state?

Pleasant! It would be my pleasure to receive foreign heads of state and strengthen the cultural ties between countries. A nation does best among nations by meeting others and comparing each others' experiences. Learning from each other and promoting more opportunities for Icelandic enterprise, culture and a blooming society.

JÓN GNARR, 57, independent artist

Why do you want to be president?

I believe I could be of use in that office and that I have the necessary experience and abilities.

Why should people vote for you rather than another candidate? Because I am the right man for the job. I have a very unique relationship with this nation built on friendship, respect and trust, which I think are priceless attributes for the tasks that await us.

What is the role of the president and how will you fulfil it?

The president of Iceland should be an honest person who can mirror Icelandic reality. He needs to be someone who listens to people and hears what they are saying.

What are your views on the presidential veto powers?

It is an emergency power which should be used in absolute moderation. If I would use those rights, I would do so in close consultation with experts.

In what circumstances do you think is appropriate to use presidential veto powers?

When a gap forms between the



parliament and the people, as happened during the Icesave case or if Alþingi intended to implement something that goes against my conviction such as capital punishment. However, I greatly respect democracy and don't have much faith in dictatorship or totalitarian actions.

KATRÍN JAKOBSDÓTTIR, 48,
candidate to the office of the
President of Iceland

Why do you want to be president?

I strive to work towards the improvement of Icelandic society and I believe that with my experience and knowledge I could do that as the President of Iceland.

Why should people vote for you for president rather than another candidate?

I believe my experience, both from my political leadership positions and within Icelandic culture, would be useful in serving the nation at Bessastaðir.

My experience of bringing together disparate groups towards common goals and dealing with difficult challenges while serving the nation will help me work towards acting as a unifying force for the nation. My experience and relations on the international level will allow me to be successful in increasing Iceland's influence, honour and respect in the society of nations. Moreover, my roots lie in Icelandic culture and language, which are important attributes for the President of Iceland to have.

What is the role of the president and how will you fulfil it?

The role of the president is first and foremost being the nation's representative, promoting that every citizen of the country experiences themselves as part of the nation. He needs to be a unifying force, confident in speaking to the whole nation and on its behalf. These are times of

great change and we are facing new challenges which can test our cohesion. Under these circumstances, the role of the president is to build bridges between different opinions, working against polarisation to protect the foundational values which Icelandic society is based on; democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Iceland's size on the international level is not measured in population or hectares but the influence we exert.

It is the president's role to grow Iceland's influence, honour and respect in the society of nations. The president needs to make sure that Iceland's influence reaches far and wide as well as demonstrating initiative in protecting the nation's interests. That is how we utilise the diverse opportunities we have in different fields.

If elected, what would be your first order of business as president?

I would purposefully work towards increasing the cohesion within society and work against the polarisation which has started to form. The strength of Icelandic society lies in the fact that all of us can be different individuals, with different opinions, values and life experience, while belonging to the same national unity.

Our history as a nation demonstrates that we do best when rowing in the same direction, all with our own methods, regardless of where we come from. We are facing new challenges that test our cohesion. The president should be a unifying force which promotes cohesion in favour of the society, including diversity so that the things which separate us can enjoy themselves.

What are your thoughts on constitutional reform?

I think that changes to the constitution are long overdue and in the past 10, 15 years – a lot of work and deliberation has been put into its revision. Unfortunately, Alþingi has not had the opportunity to acquire a



wide consensus, but I put forward a bill of change in the last term which was not passed. Regardless, I believe all the previous work will lend itself to reforms and I will speak for such reforms if I become president.

Which former president would you aspire to emulate and why?

I believe Icelanders have been successful in choosing their presidents and I am inspired by every president I've witnessed in my life, that is Vigdís, Ólafur Ragnar, and Guðni.

STEINUNN ÓLÍNA ÞORSTEINSDÓTTIR, 54, Actress

Why do you want to be president?

I seek the presidency because of the public's encouragement that the presidential office should be occupied by an impartial person who can check and balance the politics, as is stated in our constitution, which references a so-called semi-presidential government. I am honest and interested in the welfare of others and know I have the ability to stand behind people in good and bad times. I am unafraid of challenges and am not scared of conflict if it should arise.

Why should people vote for you rather than another candidate?

Because the public's interests are also my interests. I have no political connections, do not come from the lines of public officials and have no business interests to protect. I will never use the office for my personal gain or to serve special interests, but rather will work with integrity for our country and everyone living in it.

What is the role of the president and how will you fulfil it?

The president's role, apart from official duties listed in the constitution, include, in my opinion, being a warm friend, who shows the public moral support and if necessary, protect it from legislation which threatens the public's and country's interests.

If elected, what would be your first order of business as president?

Inviting the public to a picnic on the Bessastaðir estate. A moment of togetherness with young and old.

What are your thoughts on constitutional reform?

I support a new constitution like the majority of the nation, as it unequiv-

ocally protects the interests of the country and nation .

If elected, how do you envision your interactions with other heads of state?

I envision good and peaceful interactions with those nations which respect human rights, environmental protection and peace efforts. Icelanders should choose their friends diligently.

Which former president would you aspire to emulate and why?

I would seek to adopt all the best things which Vigdís Finnbogadóttir and Guðni Th Jóhannesson stood for, but I am also confident in assessing the nation's will if required and refuse to confirm legislation and call on a referendum like Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, if necessary. ■

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Háskólabíó
4.000 ISK

We've now begun the eight month of watching the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians by Israeli forces in real time over our phones and every day it feels more surreal. The global movement of protest against this horrific slaughter is loud and strong here in Iceland, and this huge star-studded benefit show will ring out in solidarity. Heavyweight artists including Ásgeir Trausti GDRN, Una Torfa, Emmisjé Gauti, Lay Low, previous Eurovision delegates Systur and so many more will take to the stage and raise their voices for freedom and justice and an end to the genocide. **RX**



MSEA "OUR DAILY APOCALYPSE WALK" LIVE
Thursday May 9, 20:00
Tjarnarbíó
3.900 ISK

Last September, Reykjavík-based Canadian artist MSEA released her stunning fourth album immediately garnering popular and critical acclaim. The oeuvre *Our Daily Apocalypse Walk* is a musical journey through her lockdown dream journals from the initial COVID-19 era, weaving together sensuous and ominous poetry with lush and haunting melodic textures. Now more than half a year later, she's brewed up an equally stunning album release show worthy of the album's drama. Joined by a nine-piece band, dancers, stage design and visuals to blow your top off, this show is gearing up to be one for the books. **RX**



SINGING EARTH: BARRETT MARTIN & DUKE GARWOOD
Friday May 10, 20:00
Kex Hostel (Gym & Tonik)
4.000 ISK

When beloved American singer-songwriter Mark Lanegan died in 2022, it sent shockwaves through the world of rock music that still rattle to this day. His 2013 double-bill at Fríkirkjan is still mentioned with wistful nostalgia by Reykjavík's true rockers. His former Screaming Trees bandmate Barrett Martin and collaborator Duke Garwood continue to embody his legacy, and are now coming to deliver a truly rare event full of music, storytelling, and short film screenings. **RX**



Celebrating Art

Exploiting Misunderstandings

Icelandic Art Prize recipient Amanda Riffo has a vision

WORDS Rex Beckett
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

details having to juggle the short turnaround for creating the exhibition conflicting with her work in the film industry, in which she's also well established. "It's more like a 200% job, not 50/50."

Luckily for the potential financial woes of career clashes, House of Purkinje – curated by Sunna Ástþórsdóttir – was fully funded by the Icelandic Visual Arts Fund, the same organisation who granted Amanda the Icelandic Art Prize.

The prize was established by the Icelandic Visual Arts Council in 2018 and was awarded this year on March 14. Amanda's victory marks the first time a person of foreign origin based in Iceland wins the prize exclusively for a solo exhibition.

However the accolade has less nationalistic significance for Amanda than one could presume.

"I'm not used to winning prizes at all, so there's two levels for me," she explains. "First there is getting this prize in Iceland and the other is getting a prize for an exhibition I did. Of course, it's very special because I live here but I'm not from Iceland. Also to have this recognition for my art rather than something else is very important for me."

Amanda's duality of feelings around the prize reflect similarly to her "way of thinking" that runs through all her art, a particular intrinsic outlook stemming from her own ophthalmological experiences that inform her

literal worldview.

"It's close to exploiting all kinds of misunderstandings. For example, I notice something and I misunderstand it and this misunderstanding will still be kept in my memory even if it's remedied. I like to experiment with what I see basically because my eyesight is terrible. It's a bit like psychedelia without psychotropics."

These visual misunderstandings – she tosses out a whimsical example of mistaking a flock of sheep on the horizon for a giant white cat – along with a fascination for the eye as an organ and a metaphor, have become a through line of her unique practice and output.

I like to experiment with what I see basically because my eyesight is terrible. It's a bit like psychedelia without psychotropics.

"It's maybe cliché to say, but it's a bit like the window you have to the exterior, like the most obvious sense of understanding what's around you. It's a very funny organ, because the way it works is complex, but at the same time so basic and magical."

Somehow the pairing of the last two adjectives seems like an apt

description of Amanda herself. A truly genuine person with an earthy demeanour whose inner world and thought process are enchantingly variegated. It's perhaps these qualities that do not make her haughty about the award.

"When you've been doing art all your life, and you do an exhibition and you get rewarded for that... To get a national art prize for this exhibition meant a lot for me, forgetting that we are in Iceland. But there are other experiences that would have made me feel validated in this career."

Amanda's future plans currently include an experimental "lab" exhibition with artists Nermine El Ansari and Deepa Iyengar this summer

at Ásmundarsalur, followed by an art research residency in Tokyo for several months. Neither of these stretch further ahead than the end of the current year.

"I cannot see too far – literally," we both burst out laughing. "I'm short-sighted, but not short in vision!" ■



Presidential
Opinions

Anybody Can Run For President

...and that's exactly who's running

Words: Jón Trausti Sigurðarson
Image: Art Bicnick

The office of President of Iceland is a peculiar one. When Iceland won independence in 1944 the constitution the Dane's had given their colony a few years earlier was hardly amended. The word "King" was simply crossed out and replaced by "President." Just like the king, the future sovereign of Iceland, though elected, would be purely ceremonial, holding no political powers whatsoever.

Since a president would not be born into the role, some articles were also added to the constitution on how to elect the president and laying out the minor qualifications for a candidate. These qualifications turned out to be: 35 years of age, Icelandic and that at least 1500 people had commended the person to run for office, in writing. Lastly, the elections would only have one round, not two, so whoever wins, can do so with a rather low percentage of the vote. Where these matters are concerned, the constitution has not been changed since.

In 2004, Ólafur then shook up the Icelandic constitution by refusing to sign a new law, which shattered the previous assumptions held about the constitutional power of the president. So the sovereign/figurehead/retiree turns out to potentially be something else.

Somehow, this did not trigger constitutional reform. However, it did open up questions about what else a president might have the power to do.

This remains to be seen, because — as tends to happen with constitutional law — whenever somebody holding office thinks of trying to do something previously thought illegitimate, it might actually become legitimate only by the merit of the president having done that thing. These things include stuff like giving people exceptions from the laws, granting them amnesty and so on.

Sitting president Guðni Th. Jóhannesson has not done any experimentation with the powers of the office. Though very popular, he also kind of appeared out of nowhere in 2016, when he was frequently on national television commentating on the ongoing political crisis of April

2016, in which then prime minister Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson was forced to step down amid being named in the Panama Papers scandal. Because of the simple fact that he was there, that he was articulate and knowledgeable about the office of the president, being a Professor of history at the University of Iceland, he ran and was elected that same spring.

With only 1,500 commendations required to run — even though the population has more than doubled since 1944 — almost anyone who's willing to put the hours in, can run for office. Given that there are enough candidates, this means that a candidate with a low share of the vote can become head of state. Maybe it's time to change the constitution, but that somehow hasn't happened yet. You can ask the former prime minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir about that — she abandoned ship at Alþingi to run for president and, being the most recent person in a position to do something about the constitution, she must have something to say on the subject.

BACK TO THE MATTER AT HAND

The 2024 presidential elections are just around the corner. With 11 people on the ballot, it is looking like the 1980 election all over again. It's quite likely that the winner will move into Bessastaðir having secured just 25% to 35% of the vote.

The polls so far indicate there are two classes of candidates: The below 10 percenters and the above 10 percenters. In the latter category there are four candidates.

There is the former prime minister Katrín, 48, who held that office from 2017. While many expected her entry into the race to make it a non-competition, that has not been the case. It seems that many people don't think this shift from prime minister to president is an appropriate maneuver. There is also the fact that she's thought to have been rather ineffective as prime minister, getting little else done than holding the tumultuous coalition together.

Strangely also, as the long time head of the only nominally socialist party in Iceland, polls indicate that the richer you are, the likelier you are to want to vote Katrín for president, meaning that the core voting base that got her into Alþingi is no longer interested in what she's selling. It

is hard to argue, however, that she would not be competent as president, since as prime minister she has been able to be rather undisputed and popular, while saying little and doing less — a more fitting attribute for the presidency.

Next up is University of Iceland political science professor Baldur Þórhallsson, 56. Baldur is best known to the voting public as a political commentator and because he ran for parliament as a member of the Social Democrats in 2009. Otherwise he seems to lack the charisma of his long time partner Felix Bergsson, causing voters to have a hard time imagining him as the country's head of state.

Comedian and former mayor of Reykjavík Jón Gnarr, 57, has perhaps the most interesting and diverse CV of the front runners. Perhaps to many people's surprise, he proved to be a competent mayor from 2010 and 2014. Apart from the fact that the guy is funny, he's also a good talker and has great charisma. Yet, many people seem to think he's not "serious" enough for the prestigious job as the head of state, which could spell his doom in this race.

The last candidate in the major league is the almost completely unknown Halla Hrund Logadóttir, 43. For the voters, her main appeal seems to be the fact that she is not one of the other three frontrunners. While her career has been distinguished — for the past years she's served as the head of Iceland's National Energy Regulatory and previously held a teaching position at Harvard — it's still a rather brief career and she's by far the least known front-running candidate.

All in all, it is likely that any of these four candidates would probably do a good enough job as president. None of them seem very likely to test the office's constitutional limits, which is probably a good thing, both because that was never supposed to be the president's job and because of the political uncertainty such maneuvers would create.

Yet, while those who hold the office only really have to be able to do two things (smile and wave), it is safe to say that it's time to get the constitution up to date. It's also time to encourage better candidates to run for the presidency (or any office, for that matter) — but maybe in a country of 380,000 people that is too much to ask. ■

Smiðjustigur 10 / Klapparstigur 16, 101 Reykjavík
Artists Björn Roth, Dodda Maggý, Finnbogi Pétursson, Haraldur Jónsson, Hulda Stefánsdóttir, John Zurier, Katrín Elvardsdóttir, Kees Visser, Monika Grzymala, Páll Haukur Björnsson, Rintaro Hara, Rósa Gísladóttir, Sigurður Guðjónsson, Steina, Woody Vasulka, Þórdís Erla Zoëga
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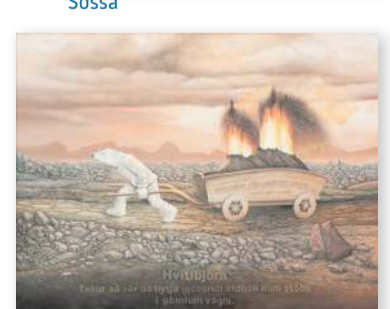
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Film Feature **Illusions Of Pleasure**

Director Sigurður Anton Friðbjósson has already four features up his sleeve – now his latest title is on the big screen

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Joana Fontinha & Supplied stills

“I think it’s also going to be like a generational thing. Older people might be kind of shocked. But young people, we’re used to this. I mean, movies today are pretty...” director Sigurður Anton Friðbjósson, or Toni, trails off, searching for the right word as we sit down for a chat at 12 Tónar on a chill afternoon. His newest feature film, *Einskonar Ást* (*Skinny Love*), explores themes of both physical and emotional intimacy. Just days away from its premiere, it’s likely to get people talking.

“I’ve been making movies for decades,” Toni says. “Filmmaking is my full-time job,” he continues, contemplating whether he should diversify his pursuits with a more stable source of income. “I probably should [do something else on the side], but I don’t have children or anything like that. I can manage to have it as a full-time job – at least for now.”

While Toni didn’t follow a traditional path of going to film school, his passion for the industry dates back to high school years. “I did pursue the media direction in high school,” he says. It was also in a high school classroom that he learned how to operate a camera and met a lot of people who would become collaborators on his future projects – “for example, the guy who is my director of photography today and has been for many years.”

Einskonar Ást brings to life a story of Emily, who, in addition to her day-job at a record store, produces sexual content online. In her early twenties, Emily navigates a series of firsts, exploring her own sexuality, facing anxieties about her future, rela-

tionships and her line of work. Toni emphasises that Emily’s character is intentionally devoid of grand decisions and profound understandings, highlighting the complexity and uncertainty of young adulthood.

TAPPING INTO TIMELY THEMES

“The inspiration came from a lot of directions. When I write a movie, it’s a collage of many different things I want to do and say,” the director explains.

Toni’s exploration of online sex work is not entirely new territory. In 2015, he delved into a similar theme with a movie *Webcam*. Though not a sequel, *Einskonar Ást* has one character that crosses over from his previous work. “They’re in the same universe,” Toni shares.

Work on the film began in the autumn of 2021, in the midst of the pandemic. According to Toni, there was a boom in Icelanders engaging in sex work online during that time. He decided to revisit the subject through the lens of today, examining the shrinking taboo and increasing openness around the subject, but also adding an extra layer – a story of young adults working through a long-distance relationship.

“I didn’t have covid, but someone I lived with did, so I was in a month-long quarantine,” he recounts. “That’s when I started writing the script and I wrote for seven months.” The movie was shot a few months later, after which it spent an additional year and a half in post-production before its April 19 premiere. Toni admits that the film could have been finished a few months earlier, but cinemas often don’t want multiple Icelandic movies running simultaneously. This frequently results in months of waiting to secure a suitable release slot.

out with how it is and what it is not,” Toni says, adding that actress Edda Lovisa also helped by providing costumes and decorations.

CASTING THE LEADS

“It was difficult to find her,” Toni says of the actress that plays the lead role of Emily. “I had to go through the work of every single young actress in Iceland.” At the time, Krístrún Kolbrúnardóttir had just graduated from the acting school, with *Einskonar Ást* marking her debut on-screen performance.

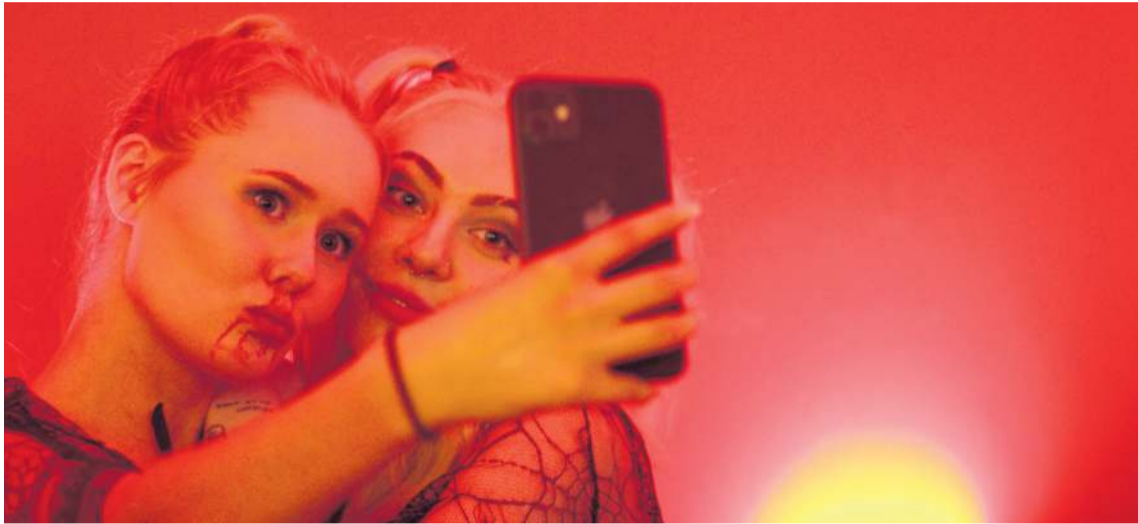
I wanted it to be really easy-going. You’re just seeing a short glimpse into the life of these people.

The inspiration for the love story between Emily and Katinka largely stemmed from Toni’s own life experiences and the experiences of those around him. Regarding the OnlyFans aspect, he notes, “I did some research and one of the main actresses, the one who plays Kría, was one of the most famous Icelandic OnlyFans accounts for a couple of years. She could help

While Toni claims Krístrún was “onboard immediately,” the actress recently shared her initial concerns in an interview. “Once I asked her, she said yes right away,” the director notes. However, Krístrún admits she couldn’t resonate with Emily’s line of work and wondered if this risqué material was the right way to launch her career.

PULSE & POESÍ

The Nordic House



"I've got a talent to spot people and how they're going to be in the movie and also what type of people I want to work with," says Toni. "I'm not one of those really tolerant people about being around people I don't like." Having worked with amateur or first-time actors before, he emphasises that all lead actresses jumped in the project without hesitation and were "a dream to work with."

Speaking about the role of Katinka, portrayed by performer and actress Magdalena Tworek, the director explains, "When I wrote the screenplay, the nationality of that character wasn't set in stone." The Polish talent was a deliberate choice after the director saw some of her work. "I found a video from one of the plays she did and she was great," he says. Her positive reputation within Icelandic arts circles made her a compelling fit for the role of a geochemist, driven to Iceland by a relationship.

The score for *Eyskonar Ást* was crafted by a local band Kvikindi, known for their mix of dance, dance pop and cyber pop genres. According to the director, collaborating with the band was a delight. "They watched the movie and then sent a demo. They got the style of the movie immediately, but also delivered some surprises. It was just perfect,"

he says.

MUMBLECORE INSPIRATIONS

"It's supposed to be, first foremost, an enjoyable film. It's not supposed to be a difficult film to get through," says Toni. "Hopefully, people can relate to at least portions of it, either to their own life or people around them or whatever."

Rather than showing his characters as those being able to make big decisions, pivot or adapt, Toni focuses on details. "I'm a huge fan of mumblecore movies," he says, citing the 2013 film *Drinking Buddies* as an example that inspired his approach.

Mumblecore is an indie film movement that emerged in the early 2000s, characterised by low-budget productions and naturalistic acting. Rather than relying heavily on plots, mumblecore movies focus on dialogue and mundane events and conversations of everyday life.

"I wanted it to be really easy-going. You're just seeing a short glimpse into the life of these people. It's not a grand story," Toni explains.

"People have referred to my movies as Icelandic mumblecore. Usually, they haven't meant it as a compliment but I've taken it as a compli-

ment because that's my inspiration," he smiles, adding that *Eyskonar Ást* is more traditional compared to most mumblecore movies.

"I love writing dialogue and having actors say the lines on the page. So, it's not improvised like mumblecore movies," he clarifies. "I wanted to do something in the vein of my first two movies, like a dramedy – funny, but also dramatic."

"I write, direct and edit the movie," shares Toni. "Usually, I write, direct, edit, produce, colour grade – I do a bunch of things." Thanks to a larger crew and budget this time around, the director could concentrate on three key components of movie making. Multitasking on the film didn't come across as a challenge for him. "I've been editing since I was a kid. I love the process," he says. "But I love directing and writing as well."

Stories of young people in Reykjavík have been dominant in Toni's work – a common feature the director agrees exists, though not deliberately. "I live in Reykjavík and I'm a young person (or at least I was a young person) and I don't have a bigger imagination." ■

Eyskonar Ást is screening at Sambío theatres.

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C

Centre Map

We're here to fill you in on our personal favourite places around town – and a few to consider avoiding.

Dining

1 NAPOLI
Tryggvagata 24
We love places that do one thing and do them damn well. This takeaway place is a case in point. Napoli offers sourdough Neapolitan-style pizzas with a menu to match – think margherita, quattro formaggi, parma, calzone – plus vegan options and magnificent sandwiches. Look out for their lunch offer, every day from 11:30 to 15:00. JT

2 GAETA GELATO
Aðalstræti 6 & Hlemmur Mathöll
Gaeta Gelato is at the centre of a heated ongoing debate at the Grapevine office about who makes the best ice cream in the country. For those keen on the deep tastiness of Italian gelato, this place is IT. They are also located right smack downtown, so you can take that icecream for a stroll – we suggest a stroll to their other location for another scoop. JT

3 PLANTAN
Njálsgata 64
This cute little neighborhood cafe is 100% vegan and does a few things right: their soup of the day menu updates every week and uses seasonal produce, they mastered the plant-based cheese bun recipe to perfection, and this might be the most hearty vegan brunches in town. Look out for the daily bun and coffee deal, it truly is like a warm hug. IZ

5 CAFÉ BABALÚ
Skólavörðustígur 22
This quirky café hangout is a great choice when you're looking for a cozy, chill experience. Decked with kitschy decor and plush chairs, the café is perfect for a refuge from an instant shower of rain. If you're looking to snuggle up with a book and a good cup of coffee, look no further. JB

6 BAN THAI
Laugavegur 130
The absolute GOAT – as they say – in Thai cuisine in Reykjavik. Ban Thai's menu is dotted with little symbols of chili, denoting the spice level of each course. You're welcome to order a level-5 chili course, but do so at your own risk. JB

7 GRÁI KÖTTURINN
Hverfisgata 16a
This no-nonsense downtown staple has been serving Reykjavik dwellers quality breakfast food since 1997. Tucked away in a cute cellar, the diner boasts retro Icelandic design charm, while its menu is far from outdated. Pancakes, bagels and frying oil all have their special place at Grái Kötturinn. As Grái Kötturinn closes at 14:30 every day, it's not a place for nighthawks, but early-birds. JB

8 CHICKPEA
Hallveigarstígur 1
This Mediterranean-inspired restaurant is a great place for a quick bite. Servings are generous and the

food nutritious, meaning you'll go full well into the day. They do wraps, falafels, and all kinds of salads exceptionally well. Prices aren't extremely steep, but nothing to write home about either. JB

9 KRÓNAN
Hallveigarstígur 1 & more locations
If you're ever in a pinch while looking for something cheap to eat if you're downtown just go to Krónan and pick out some flatkökur. Flatkökur goes great with everything. Be it the Mediterranean/Icelandic fusion of lathering some with hummus, or turn it into a poor-man's pizza with pizza sauce and cheese. Honestly, the flatkaka is an empty canvas for you to paint your wildest dreams on. JB

10 JÓMFRÚIN
Lækjargata 4, 101 Reykjavik
Icelanders may have a love-hate relationship with the Danes, but let's be honest, who can resist craving a delicious smørrebrød every now and then? If you get what we are talking about, there's no better place in town for an authentic Danish smørrebrød than Jómfrúin. This family-run restaurant specializes in serving Danish and Scandinavian dishes, and to top it off, it boasts a fantastic outdoor terrace where you can relax, sip a beer and complain about politics overlooking the Icelandic parliament. IZ

Drinking

11 APERÓ VÍNBAR
Laugavegur 20b
A wine bar that is both opulent and accessible? Yes please. The small team at Aperó remember the orders of regulars and make first-timers feel like regulars. If you know what you like, Aperó will tick your boxes; and if you're new to wine, the sommelier will soon unite you with your ideal glass. CF

12 KEX HOSTEL
Skúlagata 28
The former biscuit factory now serves as a trendy hostel, with a bar, restaurant and a live concert space. There's always something going on, and if not, it's a great spot to grab those after-work drinks. With a rotation of foreign tourists who stumble onto a heavy metal show happening in the restaurant, you're always bound for an enjoyable experience. JB

13 KAFFIBARINN
Bergstaðastræti 1
There are no correct words to explain just how iconic Kaffibarinn is in the local bar scene. It's the perennial hangout for the who's who of Reykjavik, welcoming everyone from members of Blur to curious passers by and everyone in between. Kaffibarinn is an establishment in and of itself. JB

14 VITABAR
Bergþórugata 21
If you're staying in Reykjavik more than a few days, you ought to find

your own dive bar – this is ours. It seems like the time froze at Vitabar, but we love it that way. People come for their famous blue cheese burger, but stay for a few pints and delicious fries. Sometimes I wish Vitabar discovered craft beer, but I go back nevertheless – for a late night bite and Thule on draft. IZ

15 VÍNSTÚKAN TÍU SOPAR
Laugavegur 27
There are a few bars in Reykjavik that have learned how to do wine right, and Vínstúkan Tíu sopar, although located in the middle of the chaos and tourist buzz of Laugavegur, is one of them. Craving Pét-nat? In the mood for orange wine? Ready to explore small Slovenian wineries? You name it – the bar's staff will be ready to come up with suggestions that will suit any pocket. Don't get me started on their small bites to pair with wine – I'm already dreaming about their grilled peppers and torched broccoli with salted lemon. IZ

Shopping & Activities

16 BÍÓ PARADÍS
Hverfisgata 54
Sometimes the smell of popcorn fills the air of Hverfisgata, as if beckoning you to come inside. You succumb and find yourself in the cutest art house cinema with colourful posters on the walls and vintage-looking bar straight outta Wes Anderson movie. There's always a film screening and you rarely need to book tickets in advance, so enjoy the old school walk-in experience and one of the best Happy Hours in town. IZ

Random Spots

17 EINARGARÐUR
Laufásvegur 79
This little green space nestled into the curving juncture of Laufásvegur and Gamla Hringbraut is an oasis in the city. Exposed to full sun seemingly all the time, it's a peaceful spot to stroll through, climb trees, luxuriate on the grass or toss the ball for your four-legged friend. Don't do that last thing, though. It's not allowed. CF

Be Warned

18 101 BISTRO
Austurstræti 3
The bistro on the corner of Ingólfs-torg and Austurstræti that has a plaque outside saying, "Come in and try the worst [insert popular food item] that one guy on Tripadvisor said we had", or something like that. It's a trap, do not go there. That plaque has been in the same spot ever since Hrunið. RG

19 SBARRO
Austurstræti 17 & Vatnsmýrarvegur 10
"What is this shit?" is how Greil Marcus famously opened his review



of Bob Dylan's 1970 album in Rolling Stone. It is appropriate here. It looks like pizza, it is sold as pizza, it's priced like foie gras, but it tastes like salted shit. Avoid. RG

20 REYKJAVÍK FISH RESTAURANT
Tryggvagata 8
Our beef with this place has to do with their "plockari" (Traditional Icelandic Fish Stew). Taste wise, there is nothing wrong with how Reykjavik Fish makes their "plockari", the problem is that the volume you get for the price is unacceptable; a tiny cast iron pan of fish stew for 2.690 ISK. An outrage. RG

21 PHO VIETNAM
Laugavegur 3 (Multiple locations)
If you like rat shit, look no further than Pho Vietnam. Its parent company, Vyprif, was sued by the Reykjavik Health Inspection for the improper storage of food. During the health authority's visit, rat droppings, vermin carcasses, and evidence of human habitation in the storage was found. Eugh. AVOID. RG ■

13

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13

Wine bar & food

VÍNSTÚKAN TÍU SOPAR

13

PHOTOS FROM ICELAND
Skólavörðustígur 22

RADAR

MAY 2024

01. Open Decks Vinyl Edition 02. Orwell B2B Bruderjakob 03. Sweaty Records 04. UNME: Ryan James Ford w/ Tatjana b2b DJ Gulli DJ LaFontaine b2b Tæson Jamesendir b2b MARÍA

09. Joshlane 11. Verksmíðjan w/ 2Peace, Funktion Einar, Project Hysteria, SHH! 12. Sunday Club 16. The Love Mountain w/ friends

18. Obscure Shape w/ LaFontaine b2b Jamesendir 22. Open Decks 24. Betonage w/ Creatures [UK], OBI, Nightshock, Stanlee b2b Kollmixx, Hettlaes b2b Lunox

25. After Eight w/ Ása Kolla MARÍA + KrBear 26. Sunday Club 31. Suburbass

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A



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11

APÉRO
GASTRO | WINE | BAR

HAPPY HOUR 16-19 | @APERORVK

15

Forsetinn
BAR • CAFE • BISTRO

Open from 10-22
In the heart of Reykjavík

F

FREYJA
BISTRO PUB

SUN - THU 11AM TO 1AM | FRI - SAT 11AM TO 3AM

Cocktails - Beers - Food - Dance - Live Music - Private Parties

G

Klappið app

The official ticketing app for public buses in the Reykjavík capital area

Search for "Klappið" in the App Store or on Google Play.

KLAPP

New In Town **Freyja Pub** ★

FRAKKASTÍGUR 9, 101 REYKJAVÍK

Something refreshing has been happening in the local bar scene over the past months – the blossoming of new drinkeries east of the Klapparstígur clusterfuck. One such fresh drinkery is Freyja Pub, a vibrant little bar co-owned by two besties creating the kind of place you go to make some friends and have some laughs. With their blend of nostalgic and modern vibes plus an ambitious programming lineup, we can almost forget that the house used to be our favourite ramen place. Also, it seems poised to be a new hub for standup comedy. Mark us down.

OPENING HOURS:
Every day from 11:00 to 1:00



B

FOOD HALL & BAR

PÓSTHÚS

PÓSTHÚSSTRÆTI | 101 REYKJAVÍK

HAPPY HOUR
16:00 - 18:00
PÓSTHÚSSTRÆTI 101

Events

03.05-16.05.24

Concerts, comedy, movies and other happenings that defy categorisation

If you're putting something on for the general public, send us a line to: events@grapevine.is

Saturday May 4
Smátíðni #2: Hátíðni Fundraiser
 18:30 12 Tónar
DIMMA
 19:00 Bæjarbíó
Devine Defilement, Vampíra & Skuld
 19:00 Gaukurinn
Bensöl & Thor
 23:00 Kaffibarinn
Heart Attack! Drag Night
 21:00 Kiki Queer Bar
Önnu Jónu Son Album Release Show
 20:00 NASA
 / Parliament Hotel
UNME: Ryan James Ford & Guests
 21:00 Radar
DJ Sóley Bjarna
 22:00 Röntgen

Wednesday May 8
GusGus
 20:30 Gamla Bíó
GusGus Afterparty
 21:00 Kaffibarinn
DJ Low Fat Melk
 22:00 Röntgen

Thursday May 9
Laddi & Band
 20:00 Bæjarbíó
Sakana & Ghostorchid
 21:00 Kaffibarinn
DJ Styrmir Dansson
 22:00 Röntgen
MSEA Album Release Concert
 20:00 Tjarnarbió

Saturday May 11
Slacker Essentials, KUSK & Óviti & Juno Paul
 19:30 12 Tónar
GDRN
 20:00 Harpa (Eldborg)
GusGus Afterparty
 23:00 Kaffibarinn
Daníel Hjálmtýsson
 19:30 LEMMY
 DJ Sakana
 22:00 Röntgen
Soffía & Pétur Ben
 21:00 SKY Bar

Wednesday May 15
Sindri Sparkle Standup & Book Launch
 21:00 Gaukurinn
DJ Ómar E
 21:00 Kaffibarinn
Bjarni Sveinbjörnsson & Band
 20:00 Múlinn Jazzclub
Vinyl Wednesdays: DJ No Service
 22:00 Röntgen

Friday May 3
DJ lub og gus
 21:00 12 Tónar
Tina Turner Tribute Show
 20:00 Bæjarbíó
Freyja Comedy Showcase
 20:00 Freyja Pub
Apocalypstick Drag Kabaret
 21:00 Gaukurinn
Hipsumhops
 20:00 Háskólabíó
Simon (fknhdsm)
 23:00 Kaffibarinn
Saktmóðigur, Snowed In, Tuð & Æð
 20:00 LEMMY
DJ Tæson
 22:00 Röntgen
Vökvum blómum #2
 19:30 Smekkleysa
Inki Album Release Concert
 20:00 Tjarnarbió

Sunday May 5
Sunday Classics: Cage, Takemitsu
 16:00 Harpa (Norðurljós)
DJ AnDre
 21:00 Kaffibarinn
Æthereal Arthropod, Ctrl Freq, Flaaryr & More
 19:00 Mengi

Friday May 10
K.E.S. x ROBO
 21:00 Freyja Pub
Herra Hnetusmjör 10th Anniversary Show
 20:00 Harpa (Silfurberg)
Silva & Steini
 20:00 Hannesarholt
Blóðmör, Vampíra & Juno Paul
 20:00 ÆDNÓ
GusGus Afterparty
 23:00 Kaffibarinn
Singing Earth: Barrett Martin & Duke Garwood
 20:00 Kex Hostel (Gym & Tonik)
Hausar Presents: Friction (UK)
 22:00 Radar
Young Gaudí
 22:00 Röntgen

Sunday May 12
Vox Feminae 30th Anniversary Concert
 14:00 Harpa (Hörpuhorn)

Thursday May 16
Kliður Choir
 20:00 Elliðaárstöð
Long Knife (US), Dauðýflin, Gaddavír & More
 20:00 Gaukurinn
Una Torfa & Symphony
 20:00 Harpa (Eldborg)
Ivan Medved
 21:00 Kaffibarinn
Alexjean.DJ
 22:00 Röntgen

Monday May 13
Fu Kaisha
 21:00 Kaffibarinn

Tuesday May 14
DJ Vala
 21:00 Kaffibarinn
Pub Quiz
 20:00 Röntgen

Event Picks



SMÁTÍÐNI #2
 Saturday May 4, 18:30
 12 Tónar 2.500 ISK
 / pay what you can

When the eclectic D.I.T. collective Post-dreifing held their first Hátíðni festival in 2018, it set the stage for the artists who would come to define the local grassroots music scene for years ahead. To make Hátíðni happen each year, their Smátíðni warm-up shows help raise the funds to make it all happen. Go catch newcomers HáRún, Kóka Kóla Polar Bear, Samosa and RAMS, and get ready for a great summer. RX



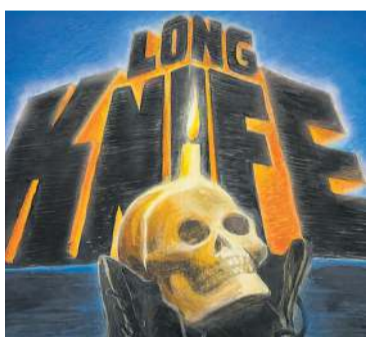
ÖNNU JÓNU SON ALBUM RELEASE SHOW
 Saturday May 4, 20:00
 NASA / Parliament Hotel
 6.990 - 9.990 ISK

Known around town for his entrepreneurial and philanthropic endeavours, and known online for making Elon Musk eat his shorts, Haraldur Thorleifsson has made his indelible mark on our society. Under his musical moniker Önnu Jónu Son he makes beautiful heartfelt singer-songwriter music that taps into the most vulnerable parts of his existence. This album release show will be unlike any other and a true testament to music as a tool of survival. RX



KLÚRÓVISION
 Saturday May 11, 21:00
 The National Theatre Cellar
 5.500 ISK / pay what you can

Eurovision's a real shitshow this year, eh. If you're not into genocide and you're down to boycott of the show this year, the KLÚRÓVISION ("lewd-o-vision") variety show will deliver all the glitter and campy entertainment of the contest while supporting human rights. Proceeds will go to the Iceland-Palestine Association who provide humanitarian aid funding to UNRWA. RX



HRYGGJANDI DANSLEIKUR #1: LONG KNIFE (US) & MORE
 Thursday May 16, 20:00
 Gaukurinn 2.000 ISK

Hardcore fans really take dancing to another level. At this "heartbreaking dance performance," Portland hardcore band Long Knife will bring their raw old-school eighties sound to Gaukurinn. Joined by locals Dauðýflin, Gaddavír, Svartpoka and newcomers Nuclear Armed Hogs, you'll never see or be in a dance performance quite as heartbreaking as this one. RX



HAUSAR PRESENTS: FRICTION (UK)
 Friday May 10, 22:00
 Radar
 3.990 ISK

Since throwing open their doors and plugging in the decks late last year, the folks at Radar have been slaying the dancefloor with their bookings. Now UK underground D'n'B icon Friction will roll in to drop the beats. Friction is truly a marquee name and a good get for this burgeoning club. Bjarni Ben, Croax and Night-shock will warm up the decks and the whole night will have your feet happily swollen the next day. RX



Hús fundur /
 Narfi Þorsteinsson



04.05/01.06

Art Exhibitions

Gallery openings, happenings, showings and pop-up exhibitions all around the capital region

Opening

GALLERY PORT

Narfi Þorsteinsson – HÚS FUNDUR
Pizza boxes, plastic bags, nails, earbuds and shoe horns make up some of the found objects the artist collected in homes to create this mixed media exhibition of brand new works.

Opens May 4
Runs until June 1

HAFNARBORG CENTER OF CULTURE & FINE ART

Time and Time Again

Works focusing on various manifestations of time by three international contemporary artists, Arna Óttarsdóttir, Amy Brener and Leslie Roberts.

Opens May 11
Runs until August 18

HAFNARHÚS (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

Iridescence – IUA Graduation Festival

Over 70 students graduating from the Iceland University of the Arts from multiple departments exhibit their final works.

Opens May 11
Runs until May 20

THE LIVING ART MUSEUM (NÝLÓ)

Tracing Roots – Thin Filaments and Porous Forms

Graduation exhibition of MFA students of the Department of Fine Art from the Iceland University of the Arts. Eight artists present their grad-

uation projects marking two years of studies, research and practice.

Opens May 11
Runs until June 2

SÍM GALLERY KÖRÞÚLFSSSTAÐIR

Ólöf Erla Bjarnadóttir – Leir-andi

Retrospective exhibition of ceramic works showing diverse works spanning the artist's forty year career. The opening will also feature a book launch of her works.

Opens May 4
Runs until May 18

Ongoing

ÁSMUNDARSAFN (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

At Hand

Sculpture
Runs until September 1

ÁSMUNDARSALUR

Annarsflokks – Erindrekar

Design works
Runs until May 15

Pétur Geir Magnússon – Continuum

Interdisciplinary, mixed media
Runs until May 15

1+1+1

Group exhibition, experimental design works
Runs until May 5

BERG CONTEMPORARY

Kees Visser & John Zurier – Where We Are

Paintings
Runs until May 11

THE EINAR JÓNSSON SCULPTURE MUSEUM

Brynja Baldursdóttir & Einar Jónsson – Be-coming

Sculpture, mixed media
Runs until August 25

GALLERY FOLD

Heima er best

Group exhibition, mixed media
Runs until May 18

Bórunn Bára Björnsdóttir – Surtsey Vulkaninsel

Paintings
Runs until May 31

GALLERY GRÓTTA

Ragnar Hólm – FANTATÖK

Paintings
Runs until May 25

GALLERÍ KVERK

Anna Júlía Friðbjörnsdóttir – RÍM

Installation, mixed media
Runs until May 25

GALLERY SKILTI

Sirra Sigrún Sigurðardóttir – Misseri

Installation
Runs until June 15

GERÐARSAFN (KÓPAVOGUR ART MUSEUM)

Sóley Ragnarsdóttir – Queen of Hearts

Mixed media, installation
Runs until July 21

Bór Vigfússon – Numbers, places

Site-specific installation
Runs until July 28

GERÐUR

Works of sculptor Gerður Helgadóttir

Permanent exhibition

GLERHÚSIÐ

Sigrún Hrólfsdóttir – Spell

Installation, mixed media
Runs until June 6

HAFNARBORG CENTER OF CULTURE & FINE ART

Jewellery:object – Sculpture for the Body

Jewellery works
Runs until May 26

HAFNARHÚS (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

Vitamin-D

Group exhibition, mixed media
Runs until May 5

Gambit – Erró, Chronicler of Current Affairs

Paintings, collages
Runs until May 12



National Gallery of Iceland
Fríkirkjuvegur 7
The House of Collections
Hverfisgata 15

Baráttan um gullið Going for gold

100 ára afmæli Félags íslenskrar gullsmiða
100th anniversary of the Association of Icelandic Goldsmiths

listasafn.is



Finnur Jónsson (1892-1993), *Armband með landvættum / Bracelet with Land Spirits*, 1985, LÍ-M10

Listasafn Íslands
National Gallery of Iceland

24.4.–
9.6.2024

Art Picks



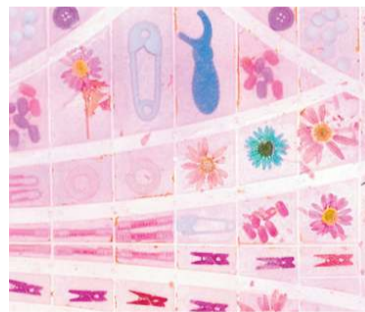
Annarsflokks – Erindrekar
Runs until May 15
Ásmundarsalur

Don't you ever kinda wanna be a duck? Like you know when you're speedwalking home in the rain, lamenting the cold and wet, and happen across some ducks just straight chillin' on the roadside giving zero fucks. And you think to yourself, "damn, that looks nice." The eider farmers and designers of Studio Erindrekar have created a new line of garments using secondary eiderdown as the key ingredient, which are now on display in Ásmundarsalur. Go check out which duck-drag will best suit you. RX



Iridescence – IUA Graduation Festival
May 11 – 20
Hafnarhús (Reykjavík Art Museum)

Of all the incredible natural wonders Iceland has to offer, the most underrated and completely free ones are clouds. Few more so than nacreous clouds, or in Icelandic glitský, ice-crystal laden swaths that shimmer like oil slicks under the sun. This speech-snatching phenomenon lends its name to the Iceland University of the Arts' annual BA graduation exhibition, where over 70 students from across six departments will show the shimmering results of their weathered studies. The IUA graduation shows are always a highlight on the art calendar, so don't miss this fleeting display. RX



Time and Time Again
May 11 – August 18
Hafnarborg Center of Culture & Fine Art

What is even "time"? Is it even a thing? It is both friend and foe, intangible but undeniable, an albatross and a cypher. Frankly, time is a pain in the tuches. In this exhibition, artists Arna Óttarsdóttir, Amy Brener and Leslie Roberts each take the subject into their own hands and put time to the test. With their individual approaches including painting, text-based works, and sculpture, each widens the lens on this whole time business and unpacks how it affects their art. If one is lost, they can look and they will find art, time after time. RX

Reykjavík Art Museum

One museum Three locations

Hafnarhús
Tryggvagata 17
101 Reykjavík

Kjarvalsstaðir
Flókagata 24
105 Reykjavík

Ásmundarsafn
Sigtún
105 Reykjavík

Open daily
listasafnreykjavikur.is
artmuseum.is

Art Exhibitions 03.05-16.05.24

Gallery openings, happenings, showings and pop-up exhibitions all around the capital region

If you're putting something on for the general public, send us a line to: events@grapevine.is

THE HOUSE OF COLLECTIONS
Ásgrímur Jónsson - Flight From Volcanic Eruptions
 Paintings
 Runs until April 14

Resistance: Interplay of Art and Science
 Interdisciplinary group exhibition
 Permanent exhibition

HÖFUÐSTÖÐIN
Shoplifter/Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir - Chromo Sapiens
 Installation, colourful whole body experience
 Permanent exhibition

18 GRANDI
Andreas Eriksson - Real Time
 Paintings, progressive exhibition
 Runs until December 2024

KJARVALSSTAÐIR (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)
Borghildur Óskarsdóttir - Heed
 Mixed media, installation
 Runs until June 9

Kjarval and the 20th Century: When Modernity Anchored
 Paintings, drawings
 Runs until December 2024

KLING & BANG
Andri Björgvinsson - Monophthong
 Sound installation
 Runs until June 2

Tara & Silla - They Removed a Plank of Wood from their Pocket
 Installation
 Runs until June 2

LG // LITLA GALLERÝ
Halldór Árni Sveinsson - Honest Working People
 Paintings
 Runs until May 12

LISTASMIÐJAN SLIP-PBARINN
Jóna Dögg - Málverk
 Paintings
 Runs until May 16

LISTVAL
Harpa Árnadóttir - Shadowfall - the journey to the light
 Paintings
 Runs until May 18

MOSFELLSBÆR ART GALLERY
Hanna Dís Whitehead - Attributes
 Sculpture, mixed media
 Runs until May 17

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ARTS
Jewellery
 Craftworks
 Runs until May 5

Katla Einarsdóttir & Una María Magnúsdóttir - Messages
 Graphic design

Runs until November 2024
At Home in the Design Museum
 Over 200 examples of Icelandic design from 1900 to the present
 Runs until March 2026

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND
Coincidentally, We See Abstractly
 Group exhibition, generational works
 Runs until May 26

Anna Rún Tryggvadóttir - Multipolar
 Sculpture, installation
 Runs until September 15

Steina - Borealis
 Sound & video installation
 Runs until September 15

Bóra Sigurðardóttir - Iron, Flax, Coal, and Chalk
 Paintings, drawings
 Runs until September 15

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ICELAND
From The Collection: Creative Hands
 Historical tapestries, textile works
 Runs until May 5

NORDIC HOUSE
Architecture, Alvar and the City
 Children's art, dioramas and models
 Runs until May 15

REYKJAVÍK MARITIME MUSEUM
Heimir Freyr Hlööversson - We are Earth, We are Water
 Video installation
 Runs until December 2024

REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Press Photographs of the Year 2023
 Photography
 Runs until May 18

THE SCULPTURE ASSOCIATION GARDEN
Sigrún Gyða Sveinsdóttir & Rannveig Jónsdóttir - Of Late
 Sculpture
 Runs until May 5

SIGURJÓN ÓLAFSSON MUSEUM
Pura - Home & Away
 Paintings
 Runs until May 12

The Gift of Children
 Reliefs and Portraits
 Runs until September 24

From Various Sources
 Sculpture, mixed media
 Runs until September 24

WHALES OF ICELAND
Vera Paluskova - The Souls in the Arctic
 Paintings
 Runs until May 15

PULA
Guðmundur Thoroddsen - Drifts
 Paintings
 Runs until May 19



Featured **Skúli Craft Bar**
 Laugavegur 20b

While the cocktail craze continues to sweep the local drinking scene, the craft beer bar has maintained its power. Amongst the stalwarts is the beloved Skúli, one of the first proper craft bars to post up in our fair burg. Located a stone's throw from Alþingi, the bar's elusive alleyway entrance opens into a large and warm room full of delicious brews from home and abroad. They always have something new on tap, with their wide-reaching brewery collabs, ensuring every beer-thirsty guest will get nicely soured. RX

Happy hour:
 Every day from 12:00 to 19:00
 Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK ■

Sæta Svínid
 ICELANDIC GASTROPUB

HAPPIEST HAPPY HOUR IN REYKJAVÍK

Happy HOUR
 15-18

BEER 1.090 KR. COCKTAILS 1.890 KR.

SÆTA SVÍNID / Hafnarstræti 1-3 / Tel. 555 2900 / saetasvinid.is

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Appy Listings

Some Of The Happiest Hours In Town

If your bar has a happy hour, email us on events@grapevine.is with the details.

101 HOTEL
Wednesday to Saturday from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 1.390 ISK, Wine 1.590 ISK

12 TÓNAR
Every day from 14:00 to 19:00
Beer 1.100 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

AMERICAN BAR
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 1.100 ISK, Wine 1.300 ISK

APÉRO
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

BÍÓ PARADÍS
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

THE BEER GARDEN
Monday to Friday from 15:00 to 18:00
Beer 950 ISK, Wine 1.100 ISK

BODEGA
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

BRAVÓ
Every day from 16:00 to 1:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

BREWDOG
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00 & 22:00 to 00:00
Beer 1.290 ISK, Wine 1.490 ISK

BRÚT BAR
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.160 ISK

DEN DANSKE KRO
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer & Wine 1.550 ISK 2-for-1 offer

FJALLKONAN
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00
Beer 1.190 ISK, Wine 1.390 ISK

FORRÉTTABARINN
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 950 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

FORSETINN CAFÉ
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00
Beer 990 ISK, Wine 990 ISK

FRÖKEN REYKJAVÍK
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.100 ISK

GAUKURINN
Every day from 17:00 to 21:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

HOTEL HOLT BAR
Wednesday to Saturday from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.350 ISK

THE IRISHMAN
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00
Beer 950 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

JÖRGENSEN KITCHEN & BAR
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 950 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

JUNGLE COCKTAIL BAR
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.100 ISK

KAFFI LÆKUR
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00 & 22:00-23:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

KAFFIBARINN
Every day from 15:00 to 19:00
Beer 950 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

KAFFIBRENNSLAN
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

KALDI BAR
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 950 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

LOFT HOSTEL
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00
Beer 990 ISK, Wine 1.400 ISK

ÖLSTOFAN
Every day from 15:00 to 20:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

PETERSEN SVÍTAN
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

PRIKID
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00
Beer 800 ISK, Wine 1.500 ISK

RÖNTGEN
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

SÆTA SVÍNID
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00
Beer 1.090 ISK, Wine 1.390 ISK

SATT RESTAURANT
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

SKÚLI CRAFT BAR
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

SLIPPBARINN
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00, late happy Monday to Thursdays from 21:30 to 23:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

SPILAKAFFI
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, no wine

STÚDENTAKJALLARINN
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00, until 21:00 on weekends
Beer 850 ISK, Wine 1.090 ISK

TIPSÝ
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
50% off select cocktails

UPPSALIR BAR
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00
Beer 850 ISK, Wine 850 ISK

VEÐUR
Every day from 14:00 to 19:35
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 900 ISK

VINSTÚKAN TÍU SOPAR
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00
Buy one wine bottle, get two courses (any price)

VOX BRASSERIE & BAR
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

* We do our best to keep these prices current, but prices are constantly changing. Inflation, amirite!?

THE PUFFIN BLANKET

100% WOOL

EVERY ITEM TELLS A STORY

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MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART Garðatorg 1
210 Garðabær

AT HOME IN THE DESIGN MUSEUM

200 DESIGN OBJECTS FROM THE ARCHIVE

WWW.HONNUNARSAFN.IS Open Tue-Sun 12-17

Cheap Eats

Here are some sweet meal deals that'll fill your tummy and without draining your bank account.

APÓTEK
Soup of the Day
1.990 ISK all day, every day

ARABIAN TASTE
Falafel Roll
1.790 all day, every day

BÆJARINS BEZTU
Hotdog and soda
990 ISK all day, every day

DEIG
Poor Man's Offer: filled bagel, doughnut & drink
1.850 ISK weekdays after 10:00

DRAGON DIM SUM
Lunch Offer: choice of any two dumpling baskets
2.790 ISK every day except Sunday, from 11:30 - 14:30

HAMBORGARABÚLLA TÓMASAR
Tuesday Special: burger, fries & soda
1.990 ISK all day on Tuesday

HLÖLLABÁTAR
Lunch Offer: Choice of any sub and soda
2.195 ISK every day until 14:00

ISLENSKI BARINN
Soup of the Day
1.950 ISK all day, every day

LEMON
Combo of the Month: large sandwich & juice
2.390 ISK all day, every day

MAI THAI BISTRO
Lunch Offer: daily curry meal
2.290 ISK weekdays between 11:00 - 14:00

NAPOLI PIZZA
Lunch Offer: choice of menu pizza or sandwich
1.890 ISK every day from 11:30 - 15:00

PÍTUBARINN
Veggie pita sandwich
2.090 ISK all day, every day

REYKJAVÍK ROASTERS
Breakfast menu & sourdough toasts
580 ISK - 1.800 ISK, all day, every day

SHALIMAR
Curry in a Hurry Lunch Special
1.790 ISK weekdays from 12:00 - 15:00

ZORBIAN HOT
Chicken shawarma wraps & falafel wraps
1.690 ISK all day, every day

* We do our best to keep these prices current, but shit's outta control. Let us know if you spot a sweet deal: grapevine@grapevine.is

You can pick up your copy of The Reykjavík Grapevine in Krónan all around Iceland!

KRÓNAN

Music News



Composer Atli Örvarsson Wins BAFTA Award

On April 28, Icelandic composer Atli Örvarsson received an award at the annual British Academy Film Awards for his music featured in the TV series *Silo*. In his acceptance speech, Atli noted that working on the show had been a dream project and thanked director Morten Tyldum for his support. Atli has worked on numerous film scores, with his mu-

sic setting the tone for Hollywood blockbusters and television series. Originally from Akureyri, Atli has played a pivotal role in establishing his hometown as an international hub for recording film scores. He was among the founders of the music label INNI in 2019. This is Atli's first BAFTA award. JB



Ægir Sindri Bjarnason First Awardee Of The Prins Póló Memorial Fund

Musician Ægir Sindri Bjarnason was named the first recipient of the Prins Póló Memorial Fund. The fund was established in 2023 to commemorate the late Svavar Pétur Eysteinson, who died of cancer in 2022 at 45 years old. Ægir Sindri will receive 1,000,000 ISK to support and manage the DIY music space R6013, the venue Ægir founded in 2017 and where he has put on countless concerts where divergent genres meet. R6013 has served as the hub of grassroots and underground

music, fostering a sense of intimacy between performers and guests. The memorial fund reasoned that "the project is an entrepreneurship motivated by drive, idealism and vision. It supports many artists and grassroots music by platforming musicians. [...] The project is in the spirit of Svavar and brings together musicians through music events open to all genres and accessible to all generations." JB



Icelandic Music Centre Formally Opens

Following the music bill passed before Alþingi last year by Minister of Tourism, Trade and Culture Lilja Dögg Alfreðsdóttir, work started to establish the Icelandic Music Centre – an umbrella institution incorporating the functions of the multiple, disparate organisations of the Icelandic music industry. On April 23, the Music Centre was formally inaugurated with an opening ceremony in their new offices at Austurstræti. The Music Centre takes up

the mantle as the cornerstone of the Icelandic music scene and industry. Its role involves bringing together special interest groups, providing support and education for musicians, helping develop the music industry and introducing Icelandic music to global audiences. Additionally, it oversees the newly founded Music Fund, a consolidation of the now defunct music, music recording, and export funds. JB
Photo: Cat-Gundry Beck



Does it go to eleven?

Kiasmos Returns

The influential Faroese-Icelandic electronic duo will end their hiatus with th

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

THE 5-TO-9 BEFORE THE 9-TO-5

for a bit and you start missing what you were doing before. It ebbs and flows."

It's difficult to gauge the exact influence minimalist electronica duo Kiasmos has had on the international techno and electronic music scene. Their ingenious combination of classical, electronic and rave music has been prevalent in their works since their 2014 debut *Kiasmos* – a distinct amalgamation that imitators soon fought to emulate.

Behind Kiasmos is the multi-hyphenated team of Janus Rasmussen and BAFTA-winning Ólafur Arnalds. With blooming individual careers as musicians and producers, Janus and Ólafur have always made it clear – as they do to this day

"It was always supposed to be a side project," Ólafur emphasises. "When this had become the main gig and we were constantly touring, I was like, 'Eh, no. I want to go back to the other place.'"

I've learnt that in order to make something sound great, you have to put a lot of hours into it.

– that Kiasmos was never meant to be their 9-to-5. Despite their best efforts, their act became immensely popular, translating into worldwide tours with less time to work on their solo material.

Wanting the freedom to dip in and out of collaborations, Ólafur notes a renewed interest in his solo material. "It became much more interesting for me to work on my own stuff. You want to enter a collaboration, get something out of it and then go back home and use what you learned," he reasons. "If you're always collaborating, you need the outlet to use all this knowledge you're learning and the inspiration you're receiving from the other party."

Seven years after the release of the EP *Burst* and a self-proclaimed hiatus, Kiasmos is ready to release the EP *II* on July 5 via Erased Tapes.

"We were playing a lot of shows and the same material for a long time," recalls Janus of the pair's pre-hiatus touring schedule. "We'd lost interest in half of the songs we were playing. But it happens with things like these. Then you want to do something else

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the release of *II*

ITCHING FOR TECHNO

Kiasmos hinted at a comeback with the release of their EP *Flown* on March 26. News of the forthcoming record broke in April when the band announced a slew of European and North American shows. Their tour kicks off with a hometown show at Gamla Bíó on May 27.

For Ólafur, ending Kiasmos' seven-year stasis transcended both will and want. "You have to find the *need* to do it. It's not just about interest or willingness," he says. "There was never a point in time when anybody could tell us to write another Kiasmos album. And one day, we showed up to the studio. The day came when we found that we needed to make some electro music."

during my shows. It's somewhere in between. It's dance, it's euphoric. It's loudness and dance. I'd started to miss those moments. It's not easy to obtain that atmosphere, in my opinion."

KIASMOS WIDESCREEN

As concerted album production started in 2021, Ólafur admits to being in the dark about the state of contemporary dance music because of the pandemic. He cites artists such as Fred Again and his production of more uptempo club music influencing Kiasmos' record. "Subconsciously, we started making faster music. So the more recent songs are clearly influenced by that."

We'd lost interest in half of the songs we were playing.

Interestingly, Ólafur can pinpoint the exact hour of that need, calling back to a live performance session he participated in with the French music company Cercle. The video of that performance features Ólafur and his band playing in Hafursey, near Katla volcano. "We did this shoot up in the highlands," he starts, later commenting on the debilitating cold the musicians were exposed to. "I decided to sneak in one Kiasmos song ["Blurred"] into my setlist. It was so much fun that I decided to go home and make some Kiasmos."

For Janus, the intricacies of Kiasmos' live shows spurred his return. "A Kiasmos show is a very special mood, something I can't replicate

Besides including faster music than previous releases, *II* is also more sonically substantial. Its sound design is fuller, with more frequencies for the listener to chew on. Every song is a miniature epic, substantiated by the duo's quintessential piano use, tapestries of strings, and the anchoring drums and basslines.

While Janus and Ólafur attribute their increased music quality to more careful attention to detail, the album highlights the musicians' deep understanding of production and writing. It's the result of decades of honing their craft and developing their individual styles, which coalesce harmoniously on their new album. "I can't always say why things sound better. You've just done it

for so long, you're making better sounds," Janus explains.

MASTER OF THEIR CRAFTS

However effortlessly it comes to Janus and Ólafur, it's by no means perfunctory work. "I've learnt that in order to make something sound great, you have to put a lot of hours into it," Ólafur explains. "It's not enough to make a beat, layer some bass and then walk away. You have to create the beat, write the bass line and then spend five days nonstop in front of the computer, fixated on every little detail on those two tracks. And suddenly, you have a moment, after an excruciating amount of time, of 'Right, there we have it.'"

The duo's creative process extends its shelf life past the finished album release. Kiasmos' approach to creativity is a sober reminder of the malleability of music: things aren't over until you say they are. Following the final mixing and mastering, the pair still needs to prepare their live shows.

"The album tracks are written to be listened to at home. Then you take it to a 3,000 capacity club and you just want to host a rave. You need to change the song and find parts that work for clubs. I really enjoy that, I think that's a very creative process," Ólafur concludes. ■

Kiasmos are set to perform at Gamla Bíó on May 27. The band's second LP, *II*, is out on July 5. Listen to their EP *Flown*, out now. Get your tickets to Kiasmos' hometown show at senalive.is



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Offline Welcome To Hermigervill's Record Corner

The many pitfalls of the streaming era for Icelandic music buffs

WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle
 IMAGE Joana Fontinha

Towards the end of December, 2023, I found myself at 12 Tónar on a Thursday – a reliably good night to be there. A tenet of the Reykjavik music scene, the record shop/café/bar consistently hosts vinyl DJ nights, where one can expect obscure and exciting tracks being spun.

THE 70S ICELANDIC SYNTH RECORD THAT NEVER WAS

On that particular night, recognizable musician Sveinbjörn Thoraensen (a.k.a. Hermigervill), was behind the turntables. As he began his set, he announced to the room that he received a test vinyl of his latest record that very day which he wanted to share with us.

His record, *Switched-On Iceland*, comprises covers of classic Icelandic songs using 70s techniques and monophonic synth, featuring a consort of additional instrumentation such as drums, guitars, violins and flutes, performed by Sveinbjörn. The sleeve pays homage to the 1968 record *Hljómar II*, by the iconic and eponymous band.

These synth-forward covers of Icelandic classics are not a new concept for Hermigervill. In fact, *Switched-On Iceland* is the third in a series, the first two being *Plays Icelandic Pop Classics* from 2009 and *Plays More Icelandic Pop Classics* from 2011.

After hearing the record, I awaited word of the vinyl's distribution, or upload to a music streaming site. Then on X, formerly Twitter, Hermigervill shared the following after the vinyl debut: "I'm trying to show

a little defiance against Spotify, so it will be exclusively on SoundCloud for a while to begin with."

However, by March he had backed down, posting that, "My defiance disorder has given in to the facts of reality, so here is the new album on Spotify in all its glory."

I was curious to know what changed.

There are definitely plenty of reasons to be hesitant towards releasing music on Spotify. Thom Yorke has been vocally resistant to Spotify because of low artist payment, while Neil Young publicly boycotted Spotify for two years in response to the service platforming Joe Rogan's podcast. Upon his catalogue's return, he also expressed firm discontent, as per a *Pitchfork* article, with the audio quality of Spotify.

ICELANDIC MUSIC ON SPOTIFY

Curious about his thoughts, I sat down with Sveinbjörn to discuss releasing music in today's streaming-centric world.

"It ended up on Spotify, but you know, I'm trying to resist," Sveinbjörn says. I was deeply curious about specifically hearing an Icelandic perspective about streaming music. If one is trying to gain listeners outside the country, it is exponentially easier to distribute music through streaming platforms.

On a personal note, being half-Icelandic and raised in the U.S., Spotify was instrumental in me finding and connecting with Icelandic music. It's how things are trending – in 2019, Owen Tyrie for the Reykjavik Grapevine noted that "90% of music sales in Iceland [are] through Spotify". But, there's another side to the streamer that you perhaps only notice if you have a wildly extensive 1960-80s Icelandic record collection.

"I have deep problems with Spotify," Sveinbjörn states. "Not only for my music, but for music that I listen to. Because, again, I listen to old stuff. And there's problems with availability. Of course people say, 'everything is on Spotify!' But in the end, not everything is on Spotify."

"The whole two top shelves, it's all

Icelandic stuff," Sveinbjörn says, gesturing at his vinyl library. "And then these three big cases of Icelandic 7-inches, 45rpms. Not even half of this is on Spotify. And the material that is on Spotify? The masters are wrong or they're badly digitised. We don't have a massive back catalogue of old Icelandic stuff. And then people are listening to it, believing what they're hearing is original – it's not."

"I've dedicated my life to this era of Icelandic music history. And I see it being misunderstood. I see it being misrepresented," Sveinbjörn concludes emphatically.

THE RECORD CORNER

Luckily, Sveinbjörn has taken steps to remedy the problem. The YouTube channel "Hermigervill's Record Corner" has 48 videos, all high-quality transfers of Icelandic records. "It's letting people hear stuff that they are not able to hear. It's a lot of private presses that are never going to be put on Spotify, ever."

For most audiophiles, vinyl will always be the reigning medium. Its significance cannot be understated, evident through its renewed international popularity, increased sales and further fixture into Reykjavik's community by events such as Record Store Day and 12 Tónar's vinyl DJ sets.

Concurrently, Spotify facilitates the discovery of music for global audiences. Although possible, it's hard to envision the success of Icelandic artists like Laufey and Daði Freyr without the distribution of their music mainly through algorithmically beneficial tools. However, underground or legacy artists operating in smaller markets like Iceland are not obvious benefactors of streaming services' global dominance. And so, here we are, at a meet-in-the-middle spot of Hermigervill's Record Corner. ■

Listen to *Switched-On Iceland* on Soundcloud, or, you know, Spotify. *Plays Icelandic Pop Classics* and *Plays More Icelandic Pop Classics* are on Bandcamp. The *Switched-On Iceland* vinyl will be coming one day, stay informed with @Hermigervill on X and Instagram.



Track By Track

Soulful Sass

GDRN's *Frá Mér Til Þín* is a master class

WORDS Guðrún Ýr Eyfjörð
IMAGE Supplied by artist

Guðrún Ýr Eyfjörð, known as GDRN, has been one of Iceland's most celebrated pop stars in recent years. On March 22, the artist released her third solo LP. Characterised by thick bass, bouncy beats and infectious melodies, *Frá Mér Til Þín* is a masterclass in blue-eyed soul.

ÞÚ SAGÐIR

Making this song was so much fun. I think it took me and Þormóður, who produced the album with me, probably around an hour making it from A to Z. I guess you could say that this song is probably my first ever diss track. The song starts with a catchy and a bit aggressive bass line which sets the tone for the rest of the album.

UTAN ÞJÓNUSTUSVÆÐIS

We keep going with a little bit of sass. This song follows a story about a person who is telling someone that they will not be getting back together and that next time they'll try to contact, they will definitely be out of service.

When we recorded the song I could only hear the voice of the amazing singer and songwriter Unnsteinn Manuel in the chorus. He hopped on board and the song instantly became so good. Thank you Unnsteinn! Magnús Jóhann the magician made the epic synth line, so thanks to Magnús as well. This is my first released song to include a co-producer. I started recording the bass line and some drums and then took it further with Þormóður. I'm really proud of this song.

NÆR

This is one of the first songs written for this album. The lyrics tell a story about someone who is captivated

by another person and wants them to come closer. I wrote about gravity, light speed and the planetary ring system so you could call this song a space jam.

Á NÝ

Minimalist pop song with a hint of RnB and a cool synth line. Do I need to say more?

HÁSPENNA / HIGH VOLTAGE

163 BPM, thank you very much. A really high energy song with so many cool elements in it. To be honest, I would need a special article just to explain this song.

SKILJA

The word "skilja" can mean a couple of things. It can mean "understand," "perceive" and "divorce." This song is about how you want to let go of your past and differences in your relationship so that you can take a step forward and understand each other better. Beautiful guitar solo in the end by Reynir Snær. This song is just a very successful feel-good song.

PARÍSARHJÓL

When making this album I had just gotten out of maternity leave so I was full of inspiration and ideas after becoming a parent. I was so excited to make new music and I think you can kind of hear the excitement in the song itself. Þormóður was so amazing in helping me get the vision of this album where it is today. This song is about how your world is turned upside down and your emotions go round and round like a ferris wheel when facing this new chapter in your life.

ÆVILANGT

This is a really personal song that I wrote to my son about how my love for him will last for a lifetime. Motherhood is such an amazing experience and it gave me so many ideas and inspirations to write this album. ■



Opening Gates

Downtown Culture Centre lönnó Lowers The Bar

lönnó opens its doors for metal band Blóðmör on May 10

WORDS Francesca Stoppani
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

Inspired by the practices of other venues like Græni Hatturinn in Akureyri and Bæjarbíó in Hafnarfjörður, Agnes implemented a system where lönnó takes 20% of ticket sales. It allows artists to take control of their events while minimising financial barriers and ensuring a range of distinct events. The underground metal scene has taken an immediate interest in this venue revamp, as Blóðmör is gearing up to host an exciting gig at lönnó on May 10, showcasing their music and their new member lineup. The show will also feature pop-punk act Juno Paul and Vampíra, the winners

Vampíra taking the top spot in 2024. For Vampíra, this concert marks another milestone in their breakthrough journey into the Icelandic metal scene – the first was opening for Devine Defilement at their European tour's kick-off show on May 4. "Óðinn [Rafn Jónsson Snædal, Vampíra's vocalist] and I have known each other for quite a few years now, since Blóðmör first started getting recognition. He was only about 12 years old then and has been a big fan of the band since. Now, we get to share a stage at lönnó, which is awesome," says Blóðmör guitarist Haukur Valdimarsson. ■

Times are changing in Reykjavík's live venue scene. Under the guidance of new event manager Agnes Hlynisdóttir, the longstanding auditorium lönnó promises to regain its status as a thriving space for culture. Having managed and booked local dive bar LEMMY since 2021, her work has constantly been guided by her passion for music, the arts and culture.

"Getting the opportunity to revive lönnó as the culture house and concert venue most people are longing for is a super exciting challenge," Agnes says. Her vision is to make the venue more accessible to diverse artists and audiences, departing from the traditional model of upfront payments and exorbitant fees.

Getting the opportunity to revive lönnó as the culture house and concert venue most people are longing for is a super exciting challenge.

of this year's Músiktilraunir contest for emerging young bands. In fact, Músiktilraunir is the connecting thread of the lineup. All three acts participated in the competition, with Blóðmör winning in 2019 and

Blóðmör plays their first headline show on May 10 at lönnó, featuring performances by Vampíra and Juno Paul. Tickets are 3,000 ISK available at tix.is.

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Food

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Sjávarpakkhús is well worth the drive to Stykkishólmur

WORDS Shruthi Basappa
IMAGES David Maupile & Ana Rebelo Pinto

up to Stykkishólmur, a mere two hour drive from the capital area, and you'll see why. Of all the places in Iceland where one could run a seafood-centric restaurant, this area of Breiðafjörður is the most well-suited.

If you look at a map of Iceland and you see a bay separating the capital area from the wispy, fingered fringes of the West? That is Breiðafjörður. And that shallow bay, with its archipelago of teeny islands scattered

SEAFOOD EVERYTHING

Stykkishólmur is dotted with jewel box-like timber houses, pristine examples that betray the wealth of its former occupants, but their careful restoration serves as a sign of the wealth of the current occupants. Sjávarpakkhúsið, too, is a respectfully restored twee little house that overlooks the town's pride: the harbour and Súgandisey. Walking into the restaurant is an

Iceland is perpetually going to be known as the land of fish and even better lamb. Walk down any street, anywhere in the country and chances are that you are minutes away from a fish of the day offer, or a seafood restaurant that actually has just the one token seafood dish. Not Sjávarpakkhúsið, though. The name means "Seafood Packaging House" – which incidentally, it was for a while – and the restaurant now honours both its memory and its seaside location by serving seafood and only seafood.

It almost seems like harakiri, serving just seafood. What about those who want to eat some meat? Or none! You know, choice?! But head

Everything is appropriately aquatic, from the old photographs on the walls, to little flourishes like anchors and hooks.

like rice grains in the ocean makes for a rich aquatic life. Even if you haven't stepped foot in Stykkishólmur or this region, chances are you've had a taste of the area if you've tried local mussels or scallops being served in Reykjavik eateries.

immediate respite from the biting cold north winds and the soothing moody blues and greys of the tasteful interiors subtly hint at the treat that awaits you. Everything is appropriately aquatic, from the old photographs on the walls, to little flourishes like anchors and hooks.

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Only Restaurant

A small piano is tucked away close to the bar, in case you feel like being the evening's entertainment.

The dining room seats just about 30 odd people and is often a mix of local diners and passers through. The low ceiling height of the intimate spacing succeeds in creating that enviable, chic private dinner vibe, which is further heightened by the candle light and early summer gloaming.

The menu is simple; a study in its no-nonsense presentation of small dishes, big dishes and sides. Thankfully, they have steered away from the "plates to share" madness that has gripped the capital – one I hope we recover from soon. The wine menu is small, but on trend with a mix of traditional and natural wines. Cocktails focus on house made syrups and infusions from local ingredients and even the teetotaler is willingly accommodated.

My partner and I made a beeline for the tasting menu, eager to try as many dishes as we could. And the 10,900 ISK price tag for six courses almost seems too good to be true.

Things are off to a crackling start: fried to order, barely sweet soðbrauð (traditional fried bread, reminiscent of kleina, sans cardamom) are served with in-season lumpfish roe. The glistening peachy pearls are all pop and crunch, an unexpected but successful pairing with the warm bread. The scallops – the pride of Breiðafjörður – are served cubed, in the shell, a Nordic take on ceviche with a bright herb oil and a ponzu-kombu dressing. Rounding things off were piping hot deep-fried cod cheeks smothered in a rhu-barb barbecue sauce. We devour every single bite, marvelling at the simple yet beautifully constructed plates, delighting over the warm bread, arguing over the proportion of cream cheese to roe (more roe please!), and debating who should get the last piece of cheek. A crisp, young Riesling from Sybille Kuntz (2200 ISK) works splendidly over the course of the meal.

As we wait for our mains, we can

overhear our next table neighbours. It is clear that one of them is a regular and her guest is a first-timer. A true ambassador for the restaurant, you could hear her describe the dishes on the menu to her guest, check with the owner about specifics and masterfully guide her dining companion to try new things he seemed to be on the fence about. At our own table, my daughter was refusing to share her dish of lightly smoked arctic char tartare (2890 ISK). I did manage to sneak a bite of the flatkaka "crisp" – a playful chip and dip situation.

By now our mains have arrived. First up is a lightly smoked trout, with chunky green apples and shaved fennel, blanketed with a wasabi sauce that tasted more green than expected, perhaps from the wasabi leaves? My partner and I are divided; the fresh bits and bobs don't seem to lift the dish, well cooked as it is. Perhaps it is the many iterations of this same formula that has become commonplace and our palates are jaded by its predictability. A head scratching slow cooked cod dish (4350 ISK) with Feykir cheese and

It takes more than a healthy lashing of guts and a generous sprinkling of madness to open a restaurant away from the capital area that serves exclusively local seafood.

caramelised onions for dinner on another occasion had us similarly amused and wondering if the Italians do indeed know what their seafood-cheese fuss is about.

In any case, the kitchen quickly regains our interest with the wolffish. In this case, spotted wolffish sits on a celeriac puree that is neither stodgy nor too watery. Bronzed slices of the fish are bathed tableside in a creamy horseradish sauce studded with more of that lumpfish roe we simply can't seem to get enough when in season. A simple fish-veg-

etable-sauce formula may seem predictable, but this dish is proof of why it works. With this plate, the chef also honours balance, keeping that green herb oil to a whisper and letting the sinus clearing sharpness of the horseradish shine.

As we await dessert, we look around to find the restaurant packed. Many travelling couples are also enjoying the tasting menu, several clearly in town specifically to dine at Sjávarpakkhús (it's a small place, and I'm a keen listener, shhh). It makes sense given the reputation the restaurant has garnered. It takes more than a healthy lashing of guts and a generous sprinkling of madness to open a restaurant away from the capital area that serves exclusively local seafood.

DELICIOUS DETOUR

Sjávarpakkhúsið is aware of its off-the-trodden path reputation and is helpful and flexible when it comes to reservations. An accommodation I imagine is harder to make during peak travel season. I urge you to make that reservation and keep it.

At a time when dining out is increasingly expensive, here is an establishment that takes its commitment to its community and environment seriously – they even have a Nordic Swan certificate for their operations – and reflects that same honesty in its pricing and service.

For longer than is justifiable, I'd put off dining here, citing excuses like distance and convincing myself I'd already tried the seafood from the area. Don't be me. Drive to Stykkishólmur – a truly warm experience awaits. ■

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Travel Feature

Chasing Birds In The Snow

In Flateyri, birdwatching is done a bit differently

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Atli Freyr Steinsson

It's Easter break and I see photos of friends around the world wearing dresses and enjoying picnics. But here in this tiny village in the Westfjords, this March day feels like being trapped in a snow machine. I've heard that, even in milder weather, Flateyri has a feeling of desolation, haunted by its harsh past and the lingering memory of the deadly avalanche. Now, that emptiness hangs heavy over the village. There's not a single person on the street and, as our car slowly rolls through in the search of an open place to grab some food, I can't decide whether there's a calming or rather ominous feel to it.

"Bird!" I scream, opening the car window.

This is how my visit to Flateyri takes a turn — one where I chase eider ducks, golden plovers and 11 other birds native to Öndarfjörður in the dead of winter. The real birds are wintering in warmer climates, but I can still embark on Flateyri's mural bird walk.

SETTING OUT

I set out with absolutely no idea what to expect.

The first bird that catches my attention while still in the car is an

oystercatcher — you cannot mistake it with anything else. Even amateur birdwatchers like me would recognise that blazing orange beak. The mural of the bird in question adorns a house on the edge of town along Flateyri's main street. It overlooks the snowy area with its watchful eye.

I get out of the car, snap a few photos of the bird and start walking in hopes of finding lunch next. Flateyri's main street, Hafnarstræti, houses the entirety of the village's culinary scene — a total of three eateries. Gunnukaffi is closed for Easter, but right next door Vagninn is not only open, they're boasting a guest cook for the day. Though unremarkable from the outside, Vagninn is bustling with people, namely artists and local celebrities, who, like me, are visiting the Westfjords for the annual music festival in neighbouring Ísafjörður. All are taking refuge from the weather outside, hoping for a bite to eat. My guest-cooked burger hits the spot and so does the atmosphere of the place. Even in this snowstorm, it's full of life, plus there's beer on tap.

I zip up my jacket and tuck in a few layers of clothes before going out again. It's not even that cold, but the biting wind makes those first few seconds out the doorway rather uncomfortable.

Just a few steps away, in a bookstore dubbed Iceland's oldest, I find a map that reveals the nature of my snowy quest. There are 13 birds and a secret nest hidden on the walls of Flateyri, and I am determined to find them all. Or, at the very least, give it my best shot.

THE BIRD GALLERY

With a map in my hand, I venture out into the cold. Snow hasn't stopped falling for a few hours, severely limiting visibility. Distinguishing between the sidewalk and the road is becoming a challenge. As I plod through the village, I wonder if the residents are huddled inside watching TV or they've left entirely, only to return with the arrival of more favourable weather.

As the snow swirls around me, I pause to observe a mural depicting a majestic spói (Eurasian whimbrel) that decorates the wall of a local public school.

A golden plover, or lóa, typically indicating the arrival of spring, rests motionless on the building's side, the surrounding garden buried under snow. Take a step left and you spot a whooper swan, its white feathers contrasting with the black wall it decorates. A swan is the largest bird that lives in Iceland and has a lifespan that can reach 25 years.

In just a few minutes, I admit my shoes are wet and I gladly climb back into the confines of the car, dedicated to continuing the bird walk in a lazy traveller mode. From time to time, I glance onto the map, but thanks to Flateyri's compactness, I can just cruise street by street, stopping whenever another feathered mural catches my eye.

A black-tailed godwit looks back at me from a wall of a residential house, but the snowstorm obscures its legs, fading them into the white-out. It's up to your imagination to fill in the missing elements. Nearby, on

a blue house, a snow bunting takes my breath away. This tiny creature breeds farther north than any other land-based bird, demonstrating incredible resilience and adaptability. A great cormorant has made its home on the wall of Flateyri pool, where time seems to have stood still for at least a few decades. The swings on the playground hang still under a heavy blanket of snow. How long until the next kids play here? As I count the birds in my head and then on the map, I realise I probably won't be able to find all of them, especially the bonus — the secret nest must be hidden beneath the heavy snow that makes approaching many buildings difficult.

Just as I'm about to leave Flateyri, a tiny tail catches my eye on a building resembling a garage or an electrical

birds project, Jean Larson. Naturalised Icelandic citizen, Jean splits her time between the United States and Iceland, spending a considerable amount of time in Flateyri over the past 14 years.

"I fell in love with Iceland," shares Jean, as I call her one afternoon — early morning for her in the U.S. "We spend quite a bit of time up there — we come and go."

"It's beautiful, enchanting and magical," Jean says of Flateyri. Being raised on a big body of water in northern Michigan and having lived in a small village in France, small communities aren't a new thing for Jean and her husband. "We both love nature and smaller communities. It just fit."

The real birds are wintering in warmer climates, but I can still embark on Flateyri's mural bird walk.

facility. The rest of the bird is completely buried under the snow, but I'm determined not to give up. I use my hands to shovel the snow away, feeling the cold seeping through my mittens. Finally, there it is — a tiny Eurasian wren.

INSIGHTS FROM THE ARTIST

A few weeks after my visit to Flateyri, still fascinated by my entirely birdless birdwatching adventure, I reach out to the person behind the Flat-

Together with her husband, Jean bought a house in Flateyri about 10 years ago. "I'm a painter, so I needed a place to work and I was able to get a hold of the little building that has the raven on it. That's where the birdwalk started." Initially, she just wanted to decorate a blank wall in her studio. "Ravens are my favourite birds," she says. "It seems like they follow you around. They're just wonderful creatures."

The venture sparked the interest of many locals who would pass by and



offer walls of their houses to the artist.

"This was something I was just doing for myself and for my building, but once there was interest, I thought, 'Well, why not?'" Jean says. She adds that the Flateyri community accepted her family with open arms, so giving back felt only natural.

In the summer of 2021, Jean painted 12 other birds around town, naming the collected works the Flatbirds project. The only stipulation for the project was that the bird had to live in Önundarfjörður. "We haven't really seen many puffins there. So I didn't want to put a puffin in," she smiles.

"What I wanted to do was make it

so that the birds were placed not in obvious places, but so that people would get out of their cars and walk around the village," Jean explains.

"Some people asked for a particular bird, others just let me do what I wanted to do," says Jean, adding that she was happy to accommodate requests whenever possible and didn't feel they interfere with her art. Local children picked the bird to adorn the local pool, for instance. "I think sometimes you gotta let that go. Because this wasn't really about me, this was more about a village that I love."

Soon, visitors to Flateyri were intrigued by the project. "People would stop by and ask 'How many

birds are there?' I'd say, 'You're gonna have to go find them. I'm not going to tell you,'" laughs Jean. Once the project was completed, Jean, together with a bird specialist, did a guided walk, stopping by each mural and sharing insights about the birds.

Whether equipped with a map or simply strolling around, it's highly improbable that one would overlook Flateyri's bird murals. But finding the hidden nest is a quest not for the faint-hearted. Even the village kids required more than one try.

"Just get out and wander around," advises Jean. ■

Follow along the Flatbirds project on Instagram @flatbirdsfateyri

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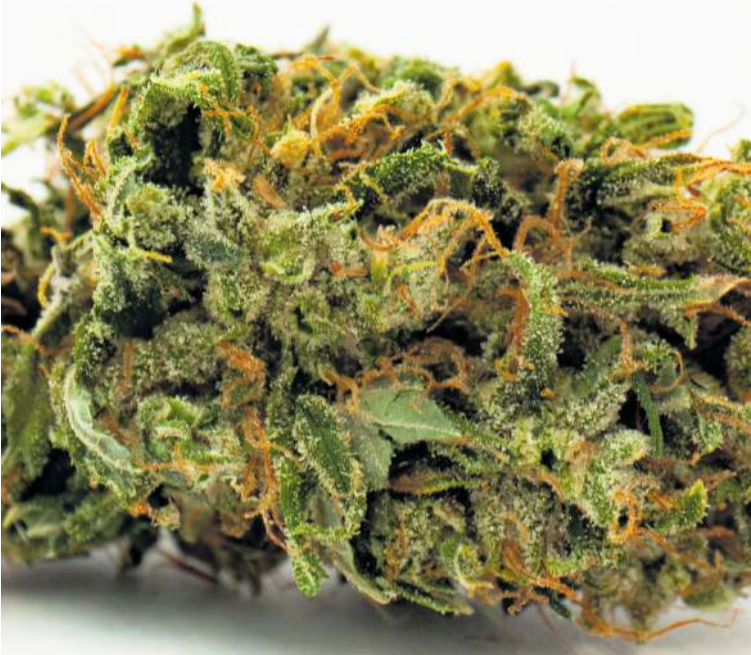
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Travel

Cursed In Witch Coun

Hexed and stressed at the Icelandic Sorcery Fest

WORDS Rex Beckett
IMAGES Asta Harbo Nielsen

questions, like “what if you spun that wheel 360° towards the cliff’s edge and yeeted into the valley?”

On a grey April morn, I began my trek towards the small town of Hólmavík full of a nascent sense of dread that I just couldn’t shake, like the Fiat in my rearview with its high beams on at midday. I was headed to the first edition of the Icelandic Sorcery Festival, a new multifaceted event including workshops, lectures, historical reenactments, a tattoo convention and music – all within the theme of ancient Norse sorcery traditions.

I was truly looking forward to it after having interviewed festival organiser Hrafnhildur (Habba) Guðjónsdóttir, whose vibrancy and passion instilled in me a sense that this would be a small but marvellous experience. However, I was plagued with the “b” effects of the road-slog and just barely made it through the mountains without Thelma & Louise-ing myself. (Gotta stay alive, if for no other reason than spite.)

Arriving at the village in the early afternoon, I was surprised to see no signage for the festival at the entrance of Hólmavík nor much indication of anything happening anywhere. I meandered down to the harbour where I located the event’s epicentre, the Museum of Icelandic Sorcery & Witchcraft. In front of it was a small field, where the Viking reenactment group Rimmugýgur were to set up a historical village for guests to walk through.

Although the festival’s primary participants had made their way up in the previous days, seemingly little had been done to get this historical village ready. As I approached, I saw the shells of half a dozen would-be Viking tents still laying on the damp ground. “Glasgow Willy Wonka experience” drifted through my mind. Strolling up to the small assembly of folks mingling I offered a “góðan daginn” or two, which were promptly and silently rebuked by mildly suspicious airs and averted eyes.

“Oi! Shut up!” Were the first words officially spoken at the festival by



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entry

organiser Habba along with museum director Anna Björg Þórarinsdóttir, who had now arrived in the field where the crowd had gathered to hear the opening speech. Whilst they were roughly the same words I'd been telling my intrusive thoughts all day, it didn't exactly set the scene of a welcoming event ahead. The two, along with Strandabyggð county mayor Þorgeir Pálsson, gave a very short and informal greeting to the crowd that could hardly be called a speech, and could hardly be heard for lack of amplification.

I swiftly made my way to Pakkahúsið in Café Riis, where the lectures were to take place over the course of the weekend. The opening lecture was by Albert Björn Shiell – a friend whom I greatly respect and looked forward to learning more about his field of expertise – on Icelandic plant magic. While interesting and eventually lively, it was a bumpy start seemingly due to nerves, feeling as though he was speaking to those already in the know.

At the end, feeling not much more edified and a lot more anxious, I bolted out of the café like my skeleton was jumping out of my skin, back into my rental car and straight to the guesthouse – an incredibly beautiful old farmhouse suffering from a sudden water cutoff – where I locked myself in my room and decided that I did my best and tomorrow's another day.

After a surprisingly great night's sleep, I decided to begin the second day by exploring the Strandir region and cruised my way across the fjord to Drangsnæs, another classic old fishing village not entirely dissimilar to Hólmavík. The entire region is a hot-spot of Iceland's sorcerous history, where a great many of the witch-hunts and burnings took place. However I'd only gone in search of a hot tub where I could boil like a potato, not burn like a witch.

By the time I got back to Hólmavík in the mid-afternoon, the Viking village was already being dismantled, nearly fully down with most of the canvas

tents and wooden beams lying in the rained-out muddy field. I wandered into the area and over to the small group taking things down, including two of my fellow guesthouse dwellers, and inquired if it was all over. 'Twas, apparently. I ventured back into Café Riis to see if the lecture in Pakkahúsið was (ahem) packed. 'Twas, apparently!

It was then I realised that I'd not even gone to the heart and host of the festival yet, which houses a treasure I'd long been wanting to see. I treaded over the Museum of Icelandic Sorcery & Witchcraft and finally all my anxious energy converted into a great deal of excitement and wonder. The small but punchy main exhibition is a collection of historical artefacts and staged figures, which are riveting, hilarious and horrifying.

The crown-jewel I was seeking were the *nábrók*, or necropants – literal corpse britches – a recreation of a pair of the most haunted leggings one could ever get. Yes, even more than LuLaRoe. Historically made from the bottom half of a corpse, skinned in one fell swoop and worn with a coin in the ballsack, I couldn't tear my eyes away from the astonishing replica of the wildest get-rich-quick scheme in Icelandic lore. I was completely fascinated. And mildly nauseated.

Still feeling a tad queasy, I made my way up to the town's community centre where the musical portion of the festival was taking place. Having sadly missed the previous night, including the festival's post-show bonfire ritual, which I truly regretted, I resolved to stay the course of the night. Early acts Taranau and Wolfenmord delivered powerful sets to the sparsely filled room. Viking folk legends Krauka opened up the mediaeval pit with a daisy-chain circle dance and organiser Habba's incantation folk band Vévaki cast spells over the whole crowd.

Sitting from my comfy spot in the back, watching the crowd experience this highly spiritually charged music, it occurred to me that it was

all something oddly akin to attending a Christian rock concert. These artists perform music not only inspired by but directly invoking the names of deities and powers in which they believe, many of them with traditional musical arrangements for the time of said deities being commonly worshipped. It was slightly uncanny.

Before the final act of the night took to the stage, I saw a friend searching through the crowd for a place to be antisocial and I beckoned them to come be alone together. We gradually began discussing our shared sense of alienation at the festival, and they posited that "the Viking reenactors, metal people and hippies" were clashing. The vibes were off, we agreed. Perhaps we should have kept our mouths shut, as closers Kælan Mikla seemed to then be cursed by technical issues beyond repair, but they gave it their all during the few songs they could play.

On the final day of the festival, I spent time wandering through the town, taking in the better part of a workshop, and finally managing to break the ice with some of the participants. I enjoyed how the town of Hólmavík is goth af, with absolutely haunted houses and gloomy vistas peppered by industrial debris and architectural decay. As I concluded that my time at this ritual was over, I went to see my beloved necropants one last time, peering at the revolting toenails and questioning their veracity.

Prior to the festival, Habba had effused to me about how the festival would be a welcoming, friendly atmosphere and that she had essentially no worries about it all going off without a hitch. While the festival's core close-knit community seemed to be riding high, there definitely seemed to be a gate. It wasn't necessarily kept, but it was a heavy one to push open. My own cursed anxiety kept me from pushing it until the very end.

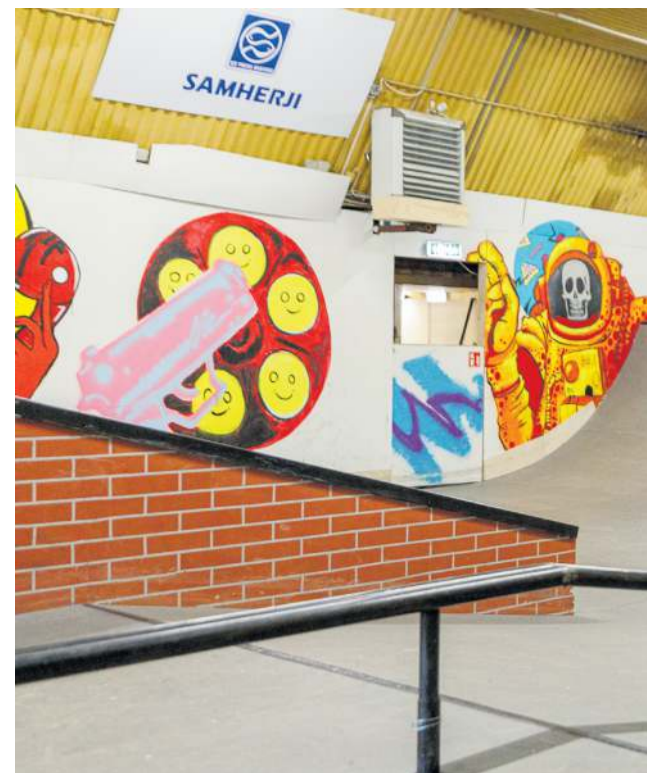
Hopefully at next year's festival my curse will be lifted. Hopefully there won't be a gate to push open. ■



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Islanders

One Man's Passion Project

After shredding snow and ripping pipes worldwide, Eiki Helgason brings the joy of skateboarding back home to Akureyri

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Art Bicnick

Eirikur Helgason, better known as Eiki, is one of the most famous Icelandic pro-snowboarders in the world. After years of living abroad, travelling the world and breaking 20 bones, he's back in Akureyri, where in addition to running a few businesses together with his brother, he built and runs Braggaparkid – an indoor skate park, with the country's only bowl.

I'm from a farm outside Akureyri, so I wasn't really involved in the town scene. But my parents were always trying to help me find my sports interests – I tried everything and didn't like anything. Then I tried athletics and I was pretty good at it. But I didn't like practising and having to come to practice at a certain time. So, I stopped that pretty quickly.

Finally, I found skateboarding.

It was a sport I could do for myself on my own terms. And I love that about it. I started skateboarding first. When I already knew some tricks, it was easy to start snowboarding – it's essentially the same thing, but you're strapped in.

I sacrificed my summers for the winter.

I still make a living off snowboarding. But now I have two kids and try to do everything around here and plan my snowboarding trips more. I need two or three trips a year. I try to plan wisely and make the most of the time so I'm away as little as possible.

It's not going to be a money-maker, but I can at least have it for myself, my friends and the kids to enjoy.

I got pretty good fast at snowboarding. And then I got my first sponsor. That took me the snowboarding way. Skateboarding, however, has always been my hobby, and I plan on keeping it that way.

PRO RIDER PLANTS FAMILY ROOTS

When I was 16, I moved to Sweden to go to a snowboarding school. I was there for four years and during that time, I started getting contracts and living off snowboarding. Before that, I worked two jobs in the summer-time, from morning until midnight, so I could spend the winter snow-

I kind of made my name established in the scene. So, I don't have to do all the stuff I used to do. With social media, the world has become one, so it doesn't matter if I'm travelling to meet people. People can always find me.

KEEPING AKUREYRI SKATE SCENE ALIVE

When I came back to Iceland after living abroad, I needed something to do when the weather was bad. I looked around for a spot and tried to open a skatepark together with the town. They didn't want to do any-

thing like this. I thought, "Okay, I'll do it by myself." Then they said they'd be ready to help if I did it myself. I found the place, rented it, started building and opened the first half. I went to the town and said, "It's up and running, looking good. A lot of kids are buying passes. Can you help?" They answered, "No."

I kind of expected it anyway. Now, we run like a business, like a gym. It's a stupid business – it's good for my heart instead of my wallet.

I like doing it by myself, though. I can be in charge of how it runs and what the rules are. I've been a pro snowboarder for a while now. I guess this is just one way of giving something back. I want this and, of course, many other kids want this too. It's not going to be a moneymaker, but I can at least have it for myself, my friends and the kids to enjoy. You're allowed to spend money on your hobbies, but it's good I don't have a sports car as a hobby. That would be way more expensive.

The skatepark is open every day. Those aged 16 and older can buy a pass for a month, half a year or a year granting them 24/7 access to the house. There are cameras, so if I scan a card, I can see that this guy came up at this time, and if something was broken, I can look it up on

cameras. But everyone has been really supportive of all the rules, like no alcohol, of course. I would end up in a disaster right away. I just put my trust in grown-ups.

I have free skateboards, free scooters, free helmets. You can just come and the entrance fee is 2000 ISK. I try to keep my prices low because I want everyone to be able to enjoy it.

I try to do two courses a month – one scooter and one skateboarding beginners class. Also, on the first Wednesday of every month, we have an adult session in the evening. People can come whenever it suits them during those two hours, and we are here to give pointers and help out. People that always wanted to start can come, as can people that used to skate and want to start again. It's not a course, but you can come, hang out, try to skate, I can hold your hand if you want. It's more like a helping out session.

[Before Braggaparkid opened,] skateboarding culture was kind of dying. I've been skateboarding for 26 years, so I've been in two waves. Now is the third one – kids can do it every day all year long. Scooter kids are the ones keeping my business alive – 90% of visitors 16 and younger are scooter kids. But once you go 16 and older, 90% are



skateboarders, it's usually when they transition.

During the first year, I sold 120 season passes, which is nice. But, like with a gym, you stop coming once you buy the season pass. Parents prefer buying ten-time passes now. However, grown-ups, 16 and older, buy the season pass so they can have access to everything. The pass for a year costs 50,000 ISK.

THE RAMP ARCHITECT

This was a steel building factory. When I got the house, it took a month and a half to clean the place first. The owner said we didn't have to pay the rent while cleaning because the place was very dirty.

I'm pretty good with my hands. We built the first part pretty quickly; it took maybe two months, mostly because I needed the money to buy more materials. We opened the first one and did the other one way slower. It's way harder to build a bowl.

But then Reykjavík called. They saw what I was doing here and called to ask if I could build them a skatepark on Miðbakki. I built it for them. The earnings I made there went to finish the other half of my skatepark here – the only bowl in Iceland. It took a side gig to finish my side gig.

We had flooding here one year ago. The ocean just came here in the middle of class. It was fall and we had 40 centimetres of ocean here.

I worked two jobs in the summertime, from morning until midnight, so I could spend the winter snowboarding. I sacrificed my summers for the winter.

First thing I did was call the people and tell them to pick up their kids. Then I was trying to save everything I could, trying to get it up high. Of course, water from the outside is not an insurance thing. We used crowdfunding and managed to get enough money to buy new plywood. We managed to fix this without losing money. But it took time, stress and work.

BETWEEN PASSION AND PROFIT

I like designing stuff – creating something in my mind and making it a real thing. I changed the skate-shop to make some money out of

the skatepark. The cruise ships park here at the two main ports, so the passengers always walk towards the skatepark. That's why I opened a kiosk gift shop – where tourists

can buy souvenirs. For this summer, I'm changing the entrance into a gift shop as well. There's more money in that than in skateboarding. Hopefully, I can get myself through the winter with the gift shop.

I design my own souvenirs. I try to focus on Akureyri and the northern part of the country because every other gift shop has souvenirs with Iceland and Hallgrímskirkja. People that come here don't go home with a Reykjavík magnet. It doesn't make sense.

I'm always doing something. I have way too many ideas. There's not enough time – that's my problem. ■

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Musings

I'm Therapissed

Charlie may be a joke, but mental health is no laughing matter

WORDS Charlie Winters
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Mental health is important and therapy is fucking expensive. You might be finding it difficult to get the help you need in Iceland. As a mentally broken, financially broke individual, I too have struggled but today I will share my own experiences with therapy in Iceland so you can get the FASTEST results for the CHEAPEST price. Time to speedrun therapy. Let's go.

First let's talk about style. You got your psychologists who talk to you about you being sad, and psychiatrists who dole out those sweet sweet drugs to get you through the day.

On the psychology side, there's the classic Freud movie therapy where they sit you down and ask about your parents. There's art therapy where you make reflective creations. But I can't draw for shit and nothing crushes my ego quite like a horrifying attempt at a self-portrait. There's crystal therapy, where they lay you down, get some rocks and ask you to dream. My mom thinks it turned me gay (that isn't a joke). And finally, you have the purest form of Icelandic therapy: going to the pool and waiting naked in the changing rooms so you can trauma dump the first person you make direct eye contact with. The latter I do not recommend.

Regarding getting access to psychiatry in Iceland, that can be a lot harder. I personally know the struggle of being on a waiting list to see a psychiatrist for over a year. This is because the three psychiatrists that probably inhabit the island are busy (keep calm and remind yourself that this is still the most doctors per capita). You could also go to Kleppur, or "get the Klepp," as I like

to say. For those not in the know, Kleppur is the Icelandic equivalent of Arkham Asylum back in the day. I didn't even know it was a big deal until people started audibly gasping when I told them I was visiting. The stigma is bullshit and Kleppur does good work. Getting the Klepp should not be a big deal.

It's important to remember that while I am a joke, mental health is not. People struggle with these invisible issues every day and it can be difficult, so here are some of the places that have been able to help me.

The Red Cross Helpline at 1717 is wonderful and just a phone call away. I've never had problems with them and they listen to whatever I want to spew on about patiently, even at 2 a.m. They can also help get you in touch with and find other resources to help you. Call them, it's free.

The University of Iceland Counseling. If you're a student, the university offers free counselling and if not there's also therapy given by psychology students for cheap. We're talkin' like 2,000 ISK a session level cheap. The psychology students are a little green, but (good news) if they fuck up, they fail the class. Samtökin 78: If you're queer and sad, the National Queer Organisation of Iceland offers counselling on site or online.

Support Groups: Even with a small population, there are support groups for almost everything in Iceland and it's only one Google search or Facebook search away.

Good luck, and I'll see you in the waiting room. ■

You've been sitting in this ugly room for roughly an hour. You've rambled about your problems at work and personal life. Five minutes before your appointment is up the therapist asks you about your relationship with your father. You scream. This isn't helping and it's going to cost a fortune.

Hi, Charlie here, and if you're anything like me, you need therapy.



Letters **The Selfless Dedication Of Volunteers In Iceland's Reforestation Efforts**

There's a lot of hard work behind Akureyri's forests

WORDS Rebekka Kristín
Garðarsdóttir
IMAGES Supplied/Skógræktarfélag Eyfirðinga

Ed Note: In response to Iryna Zubenko's recent travel article on Akureyri's Forest Lagoon (Zen In The Trees, Vol. 21, Issue 4), the Grapevine was contacted by the good people at Skógræktarfélag Eyfirðinga, the region's forestry association, to shine a light on the decades of hard work that went in to planting and growing the forest that the lagoon benefits from.

In the heart of Iceland's Eyjafjörður region stands a living monument to the strong sense of social responsibility that characterised the nation for generations. A small and sparsely populated country such as ours has always relied on active participation in volunteer work and, for over a century, the organised reforestation of Iceland has benefitted from this.

Among these stalwarts is the Forestry Association of Eyfirðingar (Skógræktarfélag Eyfirðinga), the oldest working forestry association in the country. With a legacy spanning generations, they oversee 11 forest plots in Eyjafjörður, each a testament to the enduring commitment towards sustainable land management, combating climate change and contributing to biodiversity conservation.

Education is a cornerstone of the association's work. They offer workshops, guided tours, and educational programs for schools and community groups, aiming to instill a sense of environmental responsibility and foster a deeper connection

to nature. By engaging people of all ages, the association empowers individuals to become stewards of their environment, ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come.

What began as a humble effort in 1936 has blossomed into a thriving ecosystem in Vaðlaskógur. This forest is home to some of the oldest trees in the area and a wide variety of tree species. It now lends shelter to the renowned Forest Lagoon and provides the beautiful backdrop and identity to the development, which soon will include a hotel as well. While the entrepreneurial efforts are being celebrated, let's pause for a moment to pay tribute to those vol-

unteers who planted and tended to the forest. Their selfless hard work transcends personal gain, embodying a profound sense of duty towards future generations. They were the true entrepreneurs. ■

Pictured is how the now lushly forested site of the Forest Lagoon looked in 1980.



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Potent Quotables

Fokk is not an English loan word – it's a homegrown Icelandic word.

Learn another useful Icelandic word on page 6

Law is not very creative. DJing is for having more fun; it's a creative outlet for me.

Meet Kolbrún Birna Hallgrímsdóttir Bachmann, DJ by night, on page 9

I believe that Iceland can be an impressive role model regarding peace, prosperity and the wellbeing of both people and the planet.

Meet the people running for president on pages 12-15

My defiance disorder has given in to the facts of reality, so here is the new album on Spotify in all its glory.

Hermigervill explains his analogue preferences on page 28

The crown-jewel I was seeking were the *nábrók*, or necropants – literal corpse britches.

Rex Beckett went to a sorcery festival and lived to tell the tale on pages 34-35

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