

THE 

REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

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Bending Sound Across Time

Hekla Magnúsdóttir has been championing theremin for years, and now she's starting to make waves overseas.



Flatus Lifir Enn

Fart jokes are always funny

Halldór Ragnarsson

The philosophy of art and language

Sigur Rós

Alexa, play "The Boys Are Back In Town"

Beer!

We drank all of it and it was great



COVER PHOTO:

Photo: Hörður Sveinsson
Make up: Kristjana Elva Kristjánsdóttir
Assistant: Vigdís Elfur Harðardóttir Önnudóttir

The photo was taken in a studio in Skeifan in Reykjavík. The idea was to capture the human as

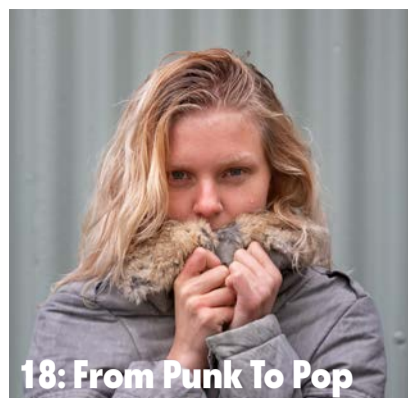
an instrument and the theremin that transforms the electricity and the waves from the human body when played. This proved to be a bit tricky, but in the end, Hörður managed to capture the magical movements of Hekla as displayed on the cover.



12: The Art Of Words

14: Hot Chocolate

15: Vaka Agnarsdóttir's Perfect Day



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22: Come On In, The Water's Lovely!

24: 'Don't Trust The Fish'



26: Dystopian Dreams

28: Beer, Beer, And More Beer

31: Warzone Banker

First

EDITORIAL



Photo: Art Blenick

It's Festival Season

It's that time of the year again; political mess, excessive tea drinking (yes, tea!), oppressive darkness and endless emails about lice in schools. And of course, festivals! Icelanders are enjoying the return of culture like nothing happened in the last two years. Iceland Airwaves is back like a mad king seeking to rule its empire again and even professional dancers are going ballistic—in an artistically synchronized way—at the Reykjavík Dance Festival.

And as if that's not enough, Hekla Magnúsdóttir has harnessed electricity, playing incredibly complicated and beautiful compositions without ever touching her instrument, like a goddamn superhero with mind-bending powers. Read all about it on **page 09**.

Icelanders are sitting at every other coffee house playing Fischer Random after the chess tournament in memory of the Fischer vs Spassky game, which took place at the end of October. Perhaps it was the anal beads, but people were unusually excited about the (w)hole affair. Sorry, we have no shame.

The book flood has started and although little of it is in English, you still can find new translations, like the pyroclastic

novel 'The Fires' by Sigríður Hagalín Björnsdóttir, who has enchanted the whole nation with her dark and witty takes on literature. Can't really have too much darkness and wittiness, in my opinion. You can find an interview with Sigríður on **page 26**.

Winter just isn't the same without a little mystery, and we have a decades-old artistic conundrum to present to you in this issue. Unfortunately, it's not about a long-lost painting by some old master—instead, it's about farts. Or is it?? Who's to know? You can read all about it on **page 26** and make your own mind up.

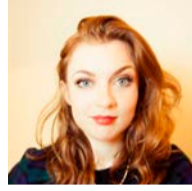
Enjoy our cold November, light a candle, drink that tea and stop sending us emails about lice. It's always too late anyway.

Valur Grettilsson

Editor-In-Chief



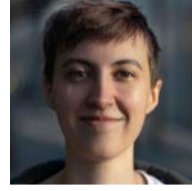
Kim Wagenaar has been here long enough to forget why she even got here in the first place. If she's not busy being a music manager, she's accidentally bumping into things or drinking bubbles somewhere laughing at her own jokes. Someone's gotta do it.



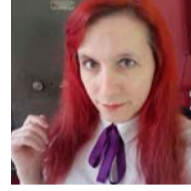
Josie Anne Gaitens is an arts worker, musician and writer from the Scottish Highlands. She was once erroneously referred to as the Queen of Scotland by a Malaysian newspaper and has been falsely using that title ever since. In addition to her Grapevine duties, she is currently on a mission to have a pint in every bar in 101.



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



Catherine Magnúsdóttir 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.



Andie Sophia Fontaine has lived in Iceland since 1999 and has been reporting since 2003. She was the first foreign-born member of the Icelandic Parliament, an experience she recommends for anyone who wants to enjoy a workplace where colleagues work tirelessly to undermine each other.



Valur Grettilsson is an award-winning journalist, author and playwright. He has been writing for Icelandic media since 2005. He was also a theatre critic and one of the hosts of the cultural program, 'Djöflaeyjan' on RÚV. Valur is not to be confused with the dreadful football club that bears the same name.

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Beautiful Hafnarfjörður, the scene of these ugly crimes

What Are Icelanders Talking About?

Proving no news is good news

Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine** Photos: **Art Bicnick & Press**

NEWS Iceland is a country divided. Not just along political lines, class lines, or ethnic lines, but also by **its relationship with cats**. Outdoors cats, to be specific. Cats being allowed outdoors is either a very natural and right thing to do (as the country's leading veterinary experts agree) or completely irresponsible and a threat to bird life that must be stopped at all costs. And by "at all costs" that can unfortunately mean killing cats. Most recently, **mink traps were found around Reykjavík harbour** that are confirmed to have killed at least one cat. "Hang on, are minks a problem in the city," you ask? No, they are absolutely not. These traps are clearly being left for cats, and are reminiscent of other methods people have used to kill outdoor cats, such as the poisoned fish cat killer of Hveragerói. For the record: the only endangered birds in Iceland are puffins, and those little buggers live on cliffs—not an area cats can reach easily for sure.

You thought you were done hearing about **coronavirus news** from us? Think again! The latest data shows that **174 people in Iceland have died of COVID in the first seven months of this year**. By comparison, 31 died in the first

year of the pandemic and only eight died last year. What gives? Well, despite how often you've heard or seen the phrase "post-pandemic", the coronavirus is still on its world tour, mutating faster than vaccines can catch up, and yes, it is killing people. At the same time, all pandemic restrictions have been lifted in Iceland since last February—which, by the by, coincides with a tremendous spike in coronavirus cases in the country. But what are we supposed to do, wear masks? Wash our hands??

Iceland's adult population has had to confront the ugly fact that

bullying is very much a part of youth culture in this country, and it's driving some children to attempt suicide. In a widely publicised case from Hafnarfjörður, a 12-year-old girl attempted to take her own life after years of relentless bullying from her classmates, other kids in town, and even kids from other schools. Horribly, the bullying continued even while she was hospitalised from her attempt. The case has prompted apologies from some of the bullies, as well as a fundraiser to grant the child and her mom a trip to Florida, but what remains unanswered is: what could the school have done to prevent this? What about the parents of the bullies? What can we all do better? 🍷

If you are experiencing low or suicidal thoughts, contact the Red Cross Helpline for free on 1717, or visit raudikrossinn.is/english



Icelanders are fundraising to send the child and her mother on holiday



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Power Struggle

Political Storm Brewing Within The Independence Party

Words: Valur Grettisson
Photo: Ministry Of Foreign Affairs

There are signs that a serious political storm is brewing within the Independence party as Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson, the Minister for the Environment, has decided to challenge the sitting chairman, Minister of Finance Bjarni Benediktsson, for the top seat of the party. The national party conference takes place during the first weekend of November and about 2,000 delegates are eligible to vote for the new chairman.

Votes dropped drastically

Bjarni became chair in 2009, after the complete failure of the banks in Iceland. However, during his 13-year tenure, the party has gone from receiving around 30-40% of the vote share in elections, to around 24-30%. Guðlaugur Þór has criticised Bjarni for this reduction—but, in Bjarni's defence, when he took up the position of party chair, there were only three other significant political parties

to compete with. Now there are seven others. Perhaps the golden age of big ruling parties like the Independence Party is simply over.

Controversial chairman

Bjarni has been controversial throughout his time as party chair. He has close personal and political ties with business life in Iceland, the extent of which was revealed by a data leak shortly after the banking crisis. His father, Benedikt Sveinsson, is also a powerful figure in the murky, intertwined worlds of big business and politics; he has been implicated in a number of political scandals, including the implosion of the government in 2017, as well as buying shares in a highly controversial sale of government-owned stock in Íslandsbanki this year...which his son oversaw. Bjarni has since stated that he had no idea that his father was one of the buyers.

Lean, mean, Campaign machine

The disastrous sale resulted in a report into the ministry's handling of the fiasco, which though completed, has not yet been released. Commentators have suggested that Bjarni may be trying to delay its publication until after the party conference is over. If he is able to do so, he may just weather this storm. However, Guðlaugur has serious potential here. He has strong ambition and a vicious campaign machine, as well as a lot of experience, both as a minister and as a member of Parliament. Whether that is enough to oust the top dog, Bjarni, remains to be seen. 🇮🇸

ASK AN EXPERT

Q: Halloween?

Words: Catherine Magnúsdóttir
Photo: University of Iceland

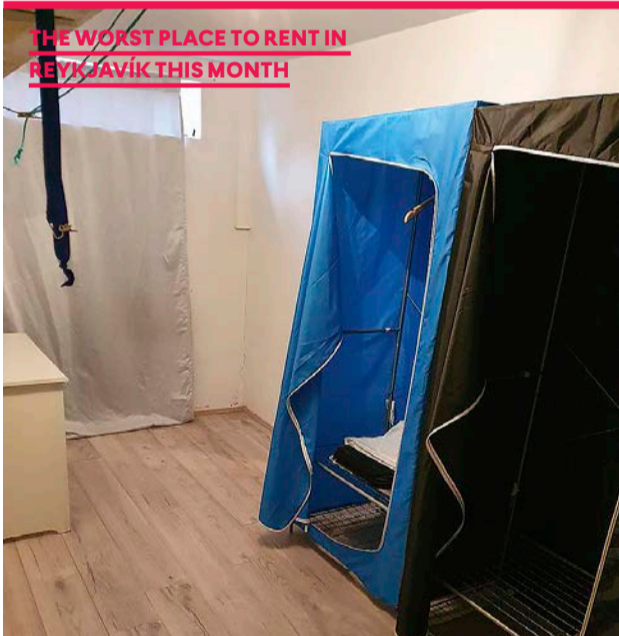


It's long been known that back in the day, the link between Iceland and its Celtic neighbours was pretty strong. Heck, a surprisingly high proportion of the Icelandic genome shows Celtic ancestry. Why then do we not see more Celtic traditions, like Halloween, celebrated in Iceland? We went to Terry Adrian Gunnell, a professor at the University of Iceland's Faculty of Sociology, Anthropology and Folkloristics, for an answer.

"The thing about Halloween that we need to remember is that people here always think about it as coming from the States. But the US originally got it from Irish immigrants. It's not a new festival, it's very ancient when it comes down to it. It takes place at the same time of year that the winter nights in the old system used to be celebrated," Terry explains.

Observed as a time of transition from one half of the year into the next, Halloween fits into a long line of festivals and traditions found across Europe and the Nordic countries. "It's the same in Ireland with the festival of Samhain and we have a number of saga accounts which talk about this being one of the main festivals of the year, often associated with women, and the idea of the Disablót," Terry says referring to the sacrificial holiday honouring the female spirits called Dísir.

Many pagan traditions and holidays eventually merged with Christian ones and in Iceland specifically, Ash Wednesday (Óskudagur) is often cited as the Icelandic halloween, as kids also dress up and ask for candy. "In Iceland a lot of people complain about people celebrating Halloween. Really, they should just remember that they're celebrating a very ancient old Norse festival and do something about that. I think it would be interesting to celebrate the Disablót, like in the old days and connect it to Halloween. But people haven't really been aware of it," Terry says 🇮🇸



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The ad for this month's rental reads as follows: "11 sqm rental room with a window. Access to a bathroom with a shower, and a washing area with a washing machine." Listen, we can't accuse them of being verbose, at least.

So, what is the monthly price for this rare gem that one can find in Jörfabakki in Breiðholt in Reykjavík city? Only 60,000

ISK! Look at the bright side here: if this would actually be an apartment and ten times bigger, the price tag would be 600,000 ISK. Which is around 5,000 US dollars. So count your tiny blessings!

The room also boasts an attractive tent/wardrobe—I mean, we might be kings, but not tsars! At least you have a shower and access to a washing machine. Not everyone in Breiðholt is that lucky.

We have to give it to the landlords that they are really selling the place. I mean, a window AND a shower! Just take my money! 🇮🇸

SMASHED BURGERS AND NASHVILLE-STYLE HOT CHICKEN IN DOWNTOWN REYKJAVÍK

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GREAT MOMENTS IN
ICELANDIC HISTORY



Flatus Lifir Enn

Probably the world's longest-running fart joke

Words: On the road between Reykjavik and the North stands a wall that should be entirely non-descript. The vertical expanse of concrete was erected in the 1970s to protect the nearby section of Route 1 from a small gravel mine situated at the foot of Esjan, on the windy shores of Kollafjörður. For the first part of its existence, nobody gave this wall a second glance.

Photo: Art Bicnick

But at some point—and exactly when is just one of the many contested elements of this story—a curious phrase appeared, spray painted on the wall's surface. “Flatus Lifir!” declared the words on the wall, in garish, bright-red letters.

The original paint job was covered up, but it quickly reappeared—this time as “Flatus Lifir Enn.” And just like that, a merry dance of public art, word play and mystery was born.

Farts or crabs?

But what does “Flatus Lifir Enn” mean? Well, it's not very clear. “Lifir Enn” translates to “still lives,” but “Flatus” isn't a word in Icelandic. People have speculated that “Flatus” was actually

intended to be the word “flatlús” (the Icelandic word for pubic lice), whilst others have argued that it is the latin word for flatulence. The issue with both of these ideas is that neither “crabs still live,” or “farts still live,” make much sense to spray paint on a wall.

Perhaps the meaning can be better ascertained by looking into the identity of the author of the artwork—but once again this is the topic of furious debate. The issue has been the subject of discussions on every kind of platform, from TV shows aired by national broadcaster RÚV, to threads on internet forum Reddit.

Theories abound

Even serious art critics have weighed in on the argument. Guðmundur Oddur Magnússon, professor at the Iceland University of the Arts, posits that the original creator of the work was the artist, Róska, and that the spelling of “Flatus” was intentional. In an interview with RÚV in 2017, he stated that the piece first appeared in the 1970s, at which time Róska was the only person that he was aware of engaging in graf-

fiti. What's more, Guðmundur said that Róska, “understands Latin, as she lived in Rome for decades.”

But other people have conflicting views. One theory is that Flatus refers to a popular 80s band from Akureyri. Another attributes the phrase to a local man from Akranes, and yet another to a group of teenagers on a camping trip in 1991 who stopped en route to scrawl the humorous words.

Art lives on

Whoever or whatever Flatus is or was, it seems as if both the words and the mystery are here to stay. What began as an unassuming scrawl has now inspired a series of different artists over the years, who have all leant their particular style to pay homage to the great words of the wall.

Most recently, Edda Karólína Ævarsdóttir, an artist from the FÚSK collective who trained in sign-painting in Scotland, adorned the wall with bright lettering and snaking pink tubes that cheekily hint to Flatus's potential intestinal meaning. So beloved is the graffiti to Icelanders that the project was even supported by the main hardware chain in the country, Húsasmiðjan, who provided Edda with the materials to paint the wall. And of course, once Edda's work has weathered and faded, another artist will take up the mantle and make sure that none of us dare forget: Flatus Lifir Enn. 🍷

NEW MUSIC PICKS



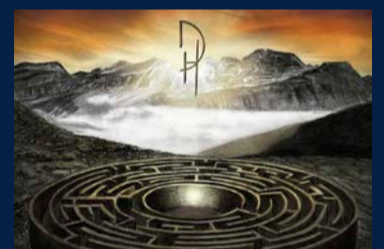
Pale Moon - Dopamine
(Out November 2nd)

Let's just say that Icelanders are not particularly big fans of dopamine. I mean, who needs body function and memory? But Pale Moon seem to be working with the other functions of dopamine in this song, in particular, the one that controls pleasurable reward and motivation. And, Pale Moon are doing a pretty nice job of delivering some with this short but enjoyable song. This is a nice indie banger for your miserable brain activity and you just might put it on repeat until you lose all body functionality as well as memory. **VG**



Linus - Supine
(Out November 16th)

Linus offers us a really nice three minutes of serenity, beauty and a good melody in his new song 'Supine,' which sounds like a fancy way of saying soup. Apparently it's more complicated than that, but being a simple minded person I don't really care. The song is a good indie track with an impressive soundscape. The structure is a bit predictable but it doesn't bother me, because, you know, I'm remaining supine. **VG**



Daniel Hjálmtýsson - Labyrinthia
(Out November 11th)

Daniel Hjálmtýsson has started with children's choirs and garage bands, the rest is history. On November 11th, his multi-year long passion for melodic and melancholic sounds will finally emerge into an official release—'Labyrinthia.' If you're into brutal and lyrical combos, this one is for you! This album might not be our favourite of the year, but if you're about to go on a long car drive with your parents and want to avoid awkward silence, play 'Labyrinthia.' **IZ**

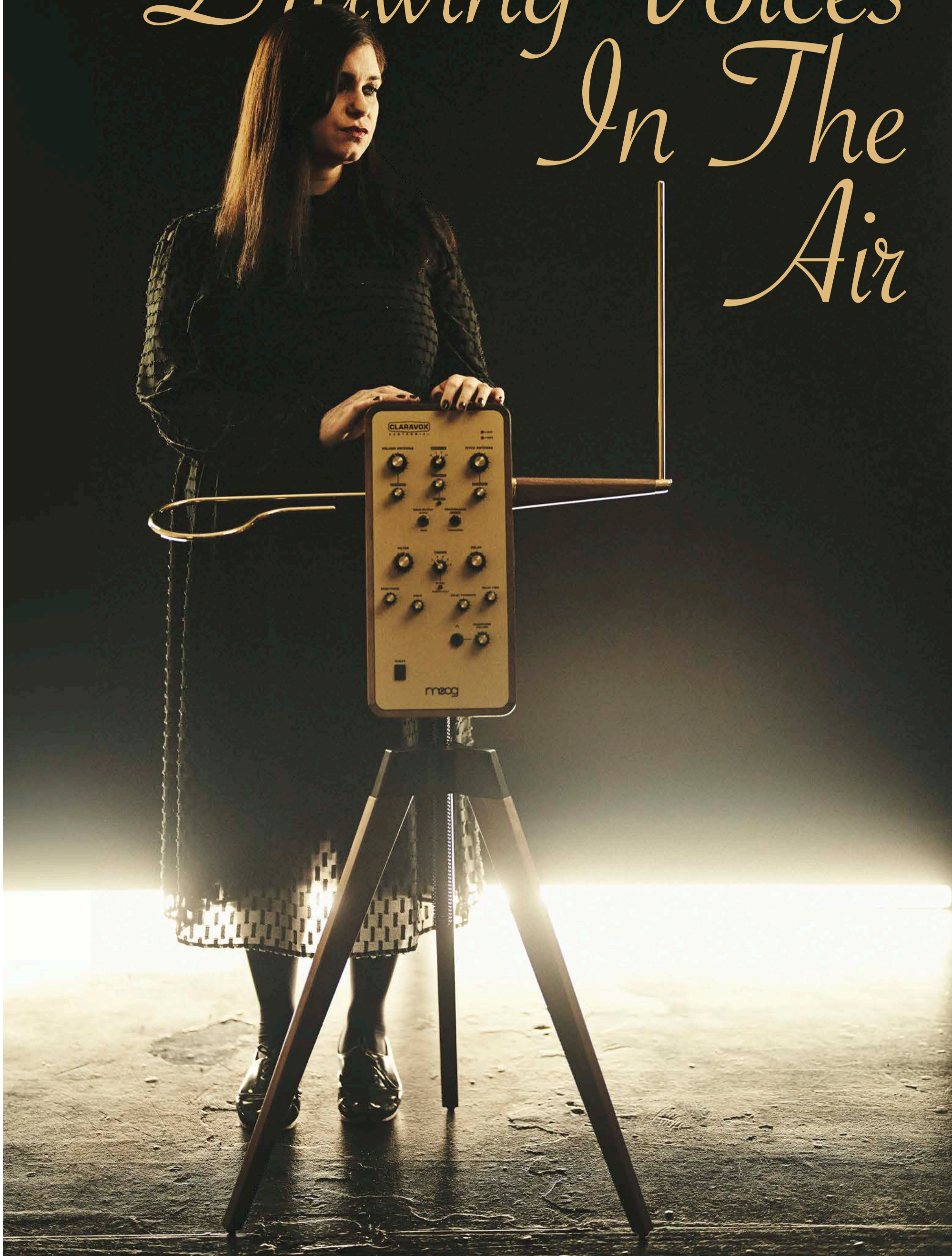
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Drawing Voices In The Air



Hekla Magnúsdóttir on her new album, the theremin, and the future

WORDS: **ANDIE SOPHIA FONTAINE** PHOTOS: **HÖRÐUR SVEINSSON**

Hekla Magnúsdóttir welcomes us into her charming home in Reykjavík, where we are immediately greeted by an adorable (albeit bitey) kitten named Vindur. She apologises for the kitten's impropriety, but we hardly notice the dashing and lunging of the little beast, as it's clear from the first few seconds of being in her home: an artist lives here.

For all her unique talent, it is difficult to find much coverage of her in the Icelandic press, but that may soon change with the advent of her new album *Xiuxiuejar* (Catalan for "whisper") which is already making waves in the press overseas.

How was this musician drawn to the theremin? What can it do that no other instrument can? And what magic will she have in store for us in the months to come?

Breaking the waves

The inspiration to even begin playing theremin came from her hearing the works of Clara Rockmore, a Lithuanian violinist and one of the first performers of the instrument.

"The sounds are just so unique," Hekla says. "It sounds both ancient and futuristic at the same time. It's like such a magical voice, and I was just very drawn to this sound."

When most folks hear theremin, it is usually within the context of B-movie sci fi or horror. Hekla recognises this, but saw the instrument's potential almost immediately.

"I feel like for being such an exciting instrument, it has been boxed in a lot into kind of gimmicky sounds," she says. "A lot of playing spooky, jokey stuff. But there's just so many more sounds to it than that, especially with plugins and pedals and changing the sounds in other ways. There are just endless possibilities. It's so exciting to hear something that you haven't heard before."

"[The new album is] really, really dark and cold and windy. But there's still some warmth in the sounds, enveloping you in a good way because the sunlight is increasing. It's just still very dark."

The collection

We are invited upstairs to see this instrument in action and count four different versions of the theremin in the cozy loft-like space: one of rich varnished wood with brass rods, another of white plastic in the shape of a UFO, and another very simple black box, but the one Hekla demonstrates for us with is a sleek, modern theremin with a much larger body than the others. It also has more knobs. That's about all the difference I can discern as an uninitiated person.

On the floor are numerous effects pedals, which help create some of the otherworldly

sounds one can hear on *Xiuxiuejar*—Vindur is especially fascinated with these.

There is a visual aspect to just watching a theremin performance that is undeniable. As one hand controls pitch and the other volume, the player almost seems to be drawing the music in the air, or performing a dance from an ancient, long forgotten and possibly extraterrestrial culture.

Hekla got her musical start with cello, so I asked if she found these instruments comparable in the sense that neither of them show the musician "press here for major C".

"The muscle memory of it is similar," she says. "It definitely helps to know how to play an instrument like that before. It's also just built so much on hearing because you're not touching anything. So it's just about listening very carefully."

Nothing compares to Moog

Hekla also points out that both cello and theremin are two instruments often compared to the human voice, but she isn't content to accept the waveforms that come out of the instrument alone—not all of the time, anyway.

In addition to the pedals—the bass distortion pedal, which "makes your stomach rumble," is one of the clear favourites—Hekla will also manipulate the sound at the source.

"You can connect it to an iPad and create your own sounds," she says. "You can also change the filters and the signal, the waveform, so it sounds more soft or less soft."

This brings to mind the early days of synthesizers, when pioneers such as Wendy Carlos were creating entire symphony orchestras out of manipulating sound waves with machines the size of Dodge Caravans. Yet here, Hekla is capable of

doing the same with a few more reasonably sized devices in a West Reykjavík home. That these theremins are made by synth pioneer company Moog only underscores this comparison.

Surf's up

Like a lot of trained musicians, for Hekla too there was a moment when music went from something she was studying to something that became purely fun, and for her that was her time in the psychedelic surf-rock band Bárújárn (the Icelandic word for

corrugated iron, a common material for older Icelandic homes, and literally means "wave iron").

"That was the first time I really felt like this could be fun," she says. "It's not like practising alone at home or something. But

I don't recall a moment thinking 'I want to make music.' I just never thought of not doing it."

While Bárújárn is no more (or on hiatus, depending on who you ask), Hekla's experience with the band would prove to be the impetus for striking out on her own.

How do you write sound?

She dove further into the theremin at the Icelandic Academy of the Arts, where she also studied contemporary music composition. On that note, I cannot help but ask: how does one write compositions for the theremin? Is there even sheet music for it? What does it look like?

Hekla is very pleased to show what these compositions look like and honestly, I don't know what else I expected. They look more like abstract expressionist works in themselves than musical notation. Swirls, stacks of horizontal lines, overlapping peaks and valleys, all of which undoubtedly make perfect sense to the performer.

Strangely, the longer you look at them, the more sense they make. Without even know-

ing how these drawings translate into hand positions for the theremin player, you can at least feel the mood of the composition they are meant to represent. It brings to mind the anecdote that Paul McCartney cannot read or write music, but does draw compositions. For all intents and purposes, musical notation is effectively "drawing music" anyway, so Hekla employing her own dots, lines, swirls and squiggles is not as unorthodox as one might at first think.

Evolution

Hekla released her self-titled debut in 2014, which was shortlisted by the Kraumur Music Awards as one of the best albums of that year. It's the album where Hekla first made her mark as a solo artist promising bigger and better things to offer the Icelandic music scene. Even so, it's an album she has difficulty listening to now.

"I listened to it today, and I have a hard time because it's so different," Hekla says. "I'm really just attempting new things and trying out lots of different sounds of what I can do with the theremin. So it was more of an exploration."

This exploration was not an easy time for Hekla, but in the end, it led to more satisfying results.

"I was so stressed out trying all these different things, just trying to find my voice," she says. "And then I finally found it. I was so relieved. And now I can use my voice."

This brings to mind a conflict I have often noticed between experimental musicians and their fans: the fans enjoy the earlier,

"I'm really just attempting new things and trying out lots of different sounds of what I can do with the theremin."

more free-wheeling works more, while the musicians are just happy to have finally found their sound. Has Hekla encountered this as well?

"I've gotten lots of good feedback from the new stuff," she says, after a moment's consideration. "I'm just also my own worst critic. I have a hard time listening to my stuff."

The horror

Hekla continued working in her own understated fashion, releasing her second album, *Á*, in 2018. It's on this album where one can truly hear Hekla beginning to expand the limits of what the theremin is capable of, but it was 2020 EP 'Sprungur' that really caught our attention.

"I was thinking more of entering some kind of alternate horror dimension or something," she told the Grapevine at the time about this EP. "I wanted it to be...like an imaginary horror movie soundtrack."

Xiuxiuejar, by contrast, she characterises as having "a January sound. Really, really dark and cold and windy. But there's still some warmth in the sounds, enveloping you in a good way because the sunlight is increasing. It's just still very dark."

Musicians can sometimes describe their music in obscure ways but trust us, this is actually a perfect description of the album. It is not just an album you listen to; you feel it, in your gut and in your bones, much like a dark, blisteringly cold winter day when all you want to do is curl up in a thick blanket and drift off to the sound of the howling wind outside.

How does one noodle on theremin?

Few musicians sit down with a stack of sheet paper and just write a new song; most new compositions come from playing around with random notes on an instrument until something sounds good. Amongst guitar players, this is often referred to as "noodling". I admit it's hard for me to imagine "noodling" on a theremin so I have to ask how her compositions come about. The answer: loops.

"I like to improvise some loop for a long time," Hekla says. "And then you just add

“It doesn't need to sound super polished and produced. I think that would just kind of kill the atmosphere of it.”

layers of notes. You can then make chords if you're looping like that. And if you use more than one looper, you can also change it into a different loop. It's really clever. So you end up like playing whole chords. It's a lot of fun to just turn on the theremin and the loopers and just start noodling around in the air. I usually start just playing really long notes, looping them on top of each other until there's the base layer, and then I just progress on top of that. Sometimes, I really get lost in the sounds.”

We don't need perfection

Some musicians will agonise over a single track for months or years trying to get the sound just right, to have it match exactly what they hear in their heads. Bruce Springsteen's "Born To Run," for example, took eight months to complete, in large part because of his own exacting standards. This is not Hekla's approach, because she

believes the "imperfections" are part and parcel of making a song or an album great. "I don't want it to sound perfect," she says. "There's lots of noise in the background and clicks and weird sounds that I felt were fine. It doesn't need to sound super polished and produced. I think that would just kind of kill the atmosphere of it."

In terms of the future of theremin, Hekla now teaches the instrument to children (she is doing her masters in music teaching), and has found many kids are eager to learn this fascinating instrument. So perhaps Iceland can expect a new generation of theremin virtuosi coming up.

For her own part, Hekla says she'd like to incorporate flutes into more of her

Way down in a hole

Returning to her new album, Hekla elaborates on it being a January album by going a little more into the concept within.

"The first song is called 'The Whole,'" she says. "Like, feeling whole. And the last song is 'The Hole,' like, deep into the hole. So it's kind of like a journey."

This definitely tracks with the experience of listening to *Xiuxiuejar*, which lures you in and leaves its mark on you, lasting long after the album has ended.

"The first song is kind of like a siren song inviting you to come into this cozy hole," Hekla continues. "At first it seems like it's gonna be nice down there. And then throughout the album, it's kind of like this journey as you dig deeper and deeper into the hole. You start realising that maybe it's not so nice down there after all. You begin to realise that the hole was just a terrible place in the end."

She says this last part smiling, so I feel the need to ask what inspired this concept.

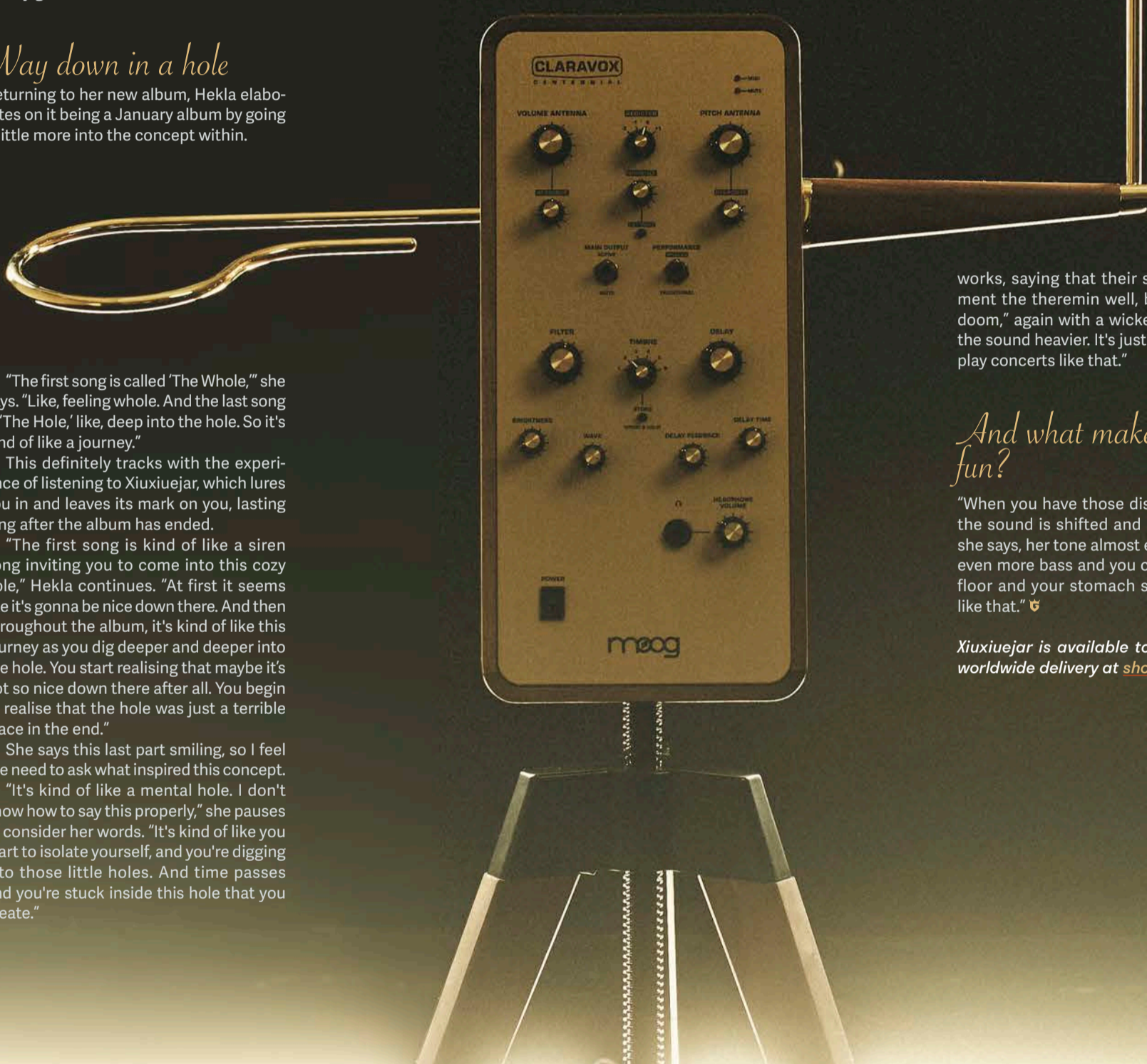
"It's kind of like a mental hole. I don't know how to say this properly," she pauses to consider her words. "It's kind of like you start to isolate yourself, and you're digging into those little holes. And time passes and you're stuck inside this hole that you create."

works, saying that their sounds complement the theremin well, but also: "More doom," again with a wicked smile. "Make the sound heavier. It's just so much fun to play concerts like that."

And what makes them fun?

"When you have those distortion pedals, the sound is shifted and pitched down," she says, her tone almost enraptured. "It's even more bass and you can just feel the floor and your stomach shaking. I really like that." 🍷

Xiuxiuejar is available to purchase for worldwide delivery at shop.grapevine.is



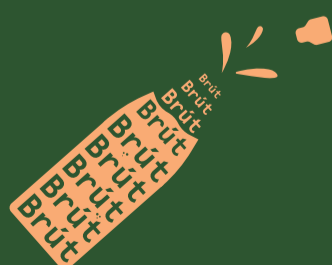
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Latin American Film Festival

November 19th - 27th - Bío Paradís
- Free

Yes, you've seen 'Narcos' on Netflix, okay. But what else can you say about the Latin American film scene? Luckily, the Latin American Film Festival is coming to town with a selection of the newest films from Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru and Mexico. Admission is free, so there's literally no excuse to miss it. Be there, or be square. [IZ](#)



Reykjavik Dance Festival

November 16th - 20th - Tjarnarbío -
Various prices

"Diversity is being invited to the party, inclusion is being invited to dance," says the official website of the Reykjavik Dance Festival, the 20th edition of which will take place at Tjarnarbío this November. This year, the event has partnered with the Lókal International Performing Arts Festival, offering a 5-day programme of performances, concerts, raves, workshops, and talks. Post-pandemic events, we are ready for you! [IZ](#)



Iceland Noir Literary Festival

November 16th - 19th - Reykjavik -
15,000 ISK

Moving away from just being a literary festival focused on crime fiction, the 2022 Iceland Noir Festival claims to celebrate "darkness in all forms." Just in time for the long winter nights! Headliners of the festival are the Prime Minister of Iceland, Katrín Jakobsdóttir and bestselling author Ragnar Jónasson, who have just published a crime novel together. Book-worms unite! [IZ](#)

CULTURE NEWS



Someone call 112, Sigur Rós are lost in the woods again

The Sigur Rós Machine

Kjartan Sveinsson on rejoining the band, new music, tour, and adulating

Words: Iryna Zubenko
Photos: Hörður Óttarson

Busy between soundchecking and the upcoming gig in Helsinki, Kjartan Sveinsson finds time for a brief call. These days, he's really into pottery and renovating his summer house—one might say he lives a rather relaxed life. In fact, after a ten-year hiatus, Kjartan is currently vagabonding around the world and playing sold-out arenas with the band that brought him fame, Sigur Rós.

Back in the business

In February, Sigur Rós announced multi-instrumentalist Kjartan had returned to the band after stepping out in 2012 to focus on personal projects. I wonder if rejoining Sigur Rós was like getting back together with a long-lost partner. According to Kjartan, it was much simpler than that.

"Me and [lead singer] Jónsi decided to work on some music together," he shares. "In a certain place in the process, we found that it would be best to make a Sigur Rós album out of what we were doing. That's the reason I came back—we just started writing music."

While Kjartan agrees that he does have a few personal projects lined up, he says, "There isn't that much time to do anything else while you're in this machine, which Sigur Rós is." Kjartan doesn't complain about the hectic schedule, though. "We are having fun. I don't think we would be doing this if we weren't."

Being back in the band combines a sense of nostalgia and novelty. "Musically, playing these old songs was like we played them yesterday. So easy to go back," Kjartan shares, adding that Sigur Rós is a more grown-up endeavour these days. "We are all older now and a bit more mature as well," he says. "We talk about our feelings and stuff like that if we need to."

Forthcoming album

Throughout the year, Sigur Rós dropped hints that a new album was in the

making. Initially planned to be finished last spring, the release has been put off until at least early next year. "These tours take up so much energy," shares Kjartan. "We were imagining we could maybe work on tour, but it doesn't really work like that."

What can we expect from the band's first studio album in a decade? "Our last album 'Kveikur' was kind of a rock and roll album," Kjartan says. "This one is very mellow and slow. We've got loads of string arrangements, we're kind of playing with an orchestra. It's not very percussive either. It's kind of slow and moody in a way."

Magic making

If you've ever listened to a Sigur Rós song, admit that you have thought at least once: "How do they even make this music?" Kjartan guides us through the band's creative process: "There's never been anyone bringing in an idea," he says. "It's always a jam." But when it comes to lyrics, things are a little bit more complex.

"Very often we use the method of just listening to the music and then trying to come up with something that either resembles what Jónsi is singing in Hopelandic [the name for his haunting, non-lyrical vocalisations] or trying to depict what the song is about emotionally," Kjartan shares. "Ultimately, it's always Jónsi who decides what he is going to sing. Which is fair enough—he has to express it. He always has the final word on lyrics and writes most of the lyrics."

'()' turns 20

In October, the band's third studio album '()', often referred to as 'Untitled' or the 'Bracket Album,' turned 20. To celebrate the occasion, Sigur Rós announced the album's reissue remastered by Ted Jensen, which includes some previously unreleased demos, recorded at Jacobs Studio in the UK.

"It was supposed to be the beginning of recording of the 'Bracket Album,' but we weren't that happy with it," Kjartan recounts. "I really liked those recordings. They're a bit different from what is on the album." The physical release of the remastered album is scheduled for November 25.

Tour life

The band is currently in the middle of the European leg of the tour. "I wouldn't want to do it for the next 20 years, but it's nice to go on a tour," Kjartan laughs. "It's already grown up and smooth. We're also used to it as well." He recalls visiting a farm in New Zealand and going back to Japan and Thailand as his favourites this time. "I really love being in Europe now," he admits. "It's nice to be able to go out and find nice coffee, beautiful streets and places."

Kjartan agrees that touring around the world is tiring. For him, finding ways to enjoy it and having routines is vital. "Try to wake up early, go somewhere. Have a healthy approach to the tour and the people you work with," he says.

Homecoming

Sigur Rós certainly needs no introduction in Iceland, but is their audience here? I point out to Kjartan that I have encountered Icelandic peers referring to the band as "something our parents would listen to" or even "a musical export." He laughs: "It's quite funny actually. We haven't released any music for such a long time and haven't been doing anything to promote ourselves. I think it's perfectly normal that the younger generation views us with a different attitude."

On November 25, Sigur Rós will end their tour in Reykjavik. "It's always good to end at home," Kjartan says. "There's kind of more pressure. Maybe we're just imagining it, but we always feel like we need to do an extra good job in Iceland."

What's next for Sigur Rós after the world tour and the upcoming album? Kjartan says he and the boys—Jónsi, Goggi and new drummer Óbó—just go with the flow, focusing on one project at a time and making music they like. "We're not really in it for the career," he smiles. [IZ](#)



Halldór, the dog whisperer

In The Beginning Was The Word

Halldór Ragnarsson searches for meaning through repetition

Words: “Do you see a paintbrush here?” artist Halldór Ragnarsson asks. He is buzzing around his studio in Skeifan, seemingly fuelled in equal parts by creativity, caffeine and ADHD. We hunt for the missing object, which I swear was in his hand just seconds ago, before he locates it beside the coffee maker. “Here!” he proclaims victoriously, holding the paintbrush aloft before shooting a side-long glance. “This is my life,” he says, with feigned resignation.

Photo: Art Bicnick

Halldór is in the studio putting the finishing touches on his newest collection of works in preparation for an exhibition at Listval Grandi. His pieces—in mostly neutral tones of grey, beige black and white, with occasional pops of ochre and red—hang around the room. He leans over one with great concentration, holding the newly-discovered brush loaded with yellow enamel paint. He places one drop on the canvas and steps back, satisfied. “That’s it,” he says.

A brand new space

Halldór explains that he has not long moved into this new studio. “It’s so funny how space decides the size of your paintings,” he says. “I’m doing more landscape stuff, just because of what the shape of this space is.”

Halldór’s pieces are varied but complimentary, incorporating different textural elements, from layered wood to thickly applied paint. Significantly, they all incorporate text in some form. The new exhibition, ‘Here, Now & Maybe Later’ covers pieces made over the last 12 months. “But in a way this has been a continuous theme in my works since maybe 2010,” Halldór says. “This period where I have been working with the meaning of language.”

Combine and conquer

Halldór arrived at visual arts in a round-about way. “I’m kind of a late bloomer,” he admits. “I started as a teenager doing weird, abstract work. But I didn’t even know if it was art, I was just scribbling. I didn’t have any formal art education.” Later, as an adult, Halldór decided to go to university to study philosophy

“It was through philosophy that I started to maybe understand what it [his art] is about,” Halldór adds. “But I’m still figuring it out. It’s of course about time and space...but I’m still wondering why it is I have to do art.” He waves his arms animatedly: “I have to do it, but I’m still wondering why!”

It was while he was undertaking his BA that a teacher suggested that he try

connecting his written and visual works. “It was so easy just to hear it,” Halldór says of this advice. “Like, ‘why aren’t you doing this?’ And I was just like, ‘yeah, why not?’” He laughs: “It was so obvious, you know?”

Over and over

“I’ve been stuck in this meaning of language ever since,” Halldór explains. “A lot of it is repetition to understand why a word is a word.”

“You say, dog, dog, dog, dog, dog, until it is a dog,” he says, gesturing towards his housemate’s mini pinscher, Zoe, who is bouncing around the room with a stuffed toy, matching her companion’s boundless energy. “You have to name things,” Halldór continues. “That’s how language starts, and because of the repetition, you will eventually understand. It’s like a common, shared thought.”

Halldór’s search for meaning is very personal, with many of the words and phrases he uses lifted directly from his diary. The expressions he chooses are relatively mundane—“I’m not saying things like, ‘I’m in love’ or ‘I miss you,’” he clarifies. Instead his work is adorned with many iterations of hand-stamped, written or spray-painted words that say things like, “in a moment there will be a pause.”

In this way, Halldór takes his specific personal experiences and processes them to become more abstract: “I’m looking at different feelings and moments and I’m maybe reflecting on them because I repeat many sentences in my work. It’s kind of like a mantra. I’m playing with time within the context of using language.”

A cleansing fire

Alongside his philosophy studies, Halldór’s Zen outlook on life can perhaps be attributed to an unlikely source. In 2016, the artist’s home and studio on Grettisgata burned down, destroying everything he owned—including his materials, equipment and artworks.

“The day after you don’t even have a wallet, you don’t have anything that says that you are you, you don’t have any money because it burned. And you’re in Kringlan with money you borrowed, wearing clothes that your friends gave you, buying your first pair of underwear. It’s surreal,” Halldór says of the aftermath of the fire.

And yet, despite the tragic nature of this event, six years on Halldór can see some kind of silver lining: “I lost everything in the fire, including loads of paintings and artworks of course. It was a horrible thing to go through, but it was also a very good thing,” he says.

“When this happened I had a show 100% ready, and it was supposed to be in a month. To get out of this trauma, I did all the work for the exhibition again. I re-did the repetitions, I did all the works

again by memory,” Halldór continues. “So the show in the end was probably better quality, because I had already done all this work. But I lost my mind a bit by doing it, I was a little bit weird for a while.”

Another outcome of the fire for Halldór is that he now finds it easier to part with his works when they are completed, and that his relationship with his finished artworks has changed and developed as a result.

“The beauty of art is that you make it and then it leaves you—it isn’t in your control anymore,” he says. “I think that’s what I learned through this process. Of course they’re like your little babies, your art. I work very slowly, and then—it’s just done.” He smiles, adding. “It’s a little bit like the fire, every time.”

Always looking, never finding

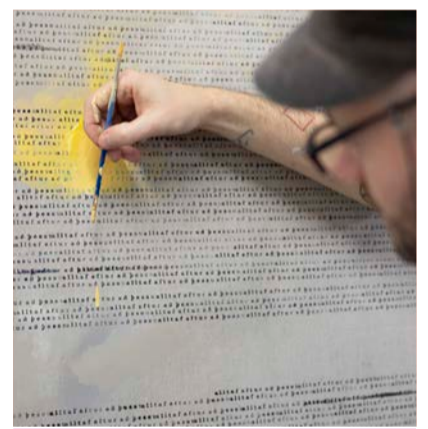
With the collection nearly finished and the exhibition drawing close, I’m interested in what’s next on the agenda for Halldór. “An exhibition is like finishing a book for me,” he explains. “You’ve finished a period, you just want to leave it behind and start something new. It’s from the exhibition where I take that next step.”

Whatever that next step is, Halldór is sure that it will still fall within the realm of constructing and deconstructing language, trying to use words to understand life and meaning. “I think I haven’t finished these exercises—or it’s more like research,” he says.

Despite all of our discussion about looking for meaning, Halldór doesn’t strike me as being particularly distressed by the fact that he hasn’t yet found the answer.

“If I would have found it I would probably not be doing the art,” he says quickly. “I admit it every day, honestly. I will be brushing my teeth and looking into the mirror and I will just think, ‘I don’t know anything.’ I’m a proud owner of knowing that fact. Through that you listen, you seek information.”

He cracks a wide smile. “They’re so boring, people who know the facts. There are no facts, in a way.”



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It's hot, and it's chocolate—what's not to like?

Pallett

Strandgata 75, 220 Hafnarfjörður



This one lies a bit further from downtown, but it's definitely worth the journey. Described on Instagram as a "quirky little coffee house run by two guys who like to bake and make coffee," Pallett has everything a good cafe should have: homemade baked goods, curated vintage pieces and three types of hot chocolate, depending on how dark you like yours. Perfect for weekends when you just want to curl up with a book, a cup of hot chocolate and forget about all the worries in the world.

Kaffihús Vesturbæjar

Melhagi 20, 107 Reykjavík



One more good coffee house right next to a swimming pool. Well, you just can't go wrong with a cup of hot chocolate after a few laps in Vesturbæjarlaug. A few years ago, Kaffihús Vesturbæjar won a Grapevine Best Of Award as Best People-Watching Spot, and this remains true today. Treat yourself to their delicious hot chocolate and carrot cake while watching beautiful people pop in after a splash in the nearby pool. Avoid rush hours (breakfast) as it gets very crowded over the weekend.

Systrasamlagið

Óðinsgata 1, 101 Reykjavík



If you're craving a hot beverage, but would love to try a healthier take on hot chocolate, our advice would be to check out Systrasamlagið. This organic cafe, run by two sisters, wants to bring sugar and additive-free nutrition to the general public. Here you can get a cup of cocoa with perhaps the largest selection of plant-based milks in Reykjavík. And, if you are in need of a serious spiritual boost, why not try a cacao ceremony? Systrasamlagið offers two types of ceremonial cacao from Guatemala. It's tasty and apparently good for your health! ♥

Reykjavík Hot Chocolate Crawl

The best places to warm up

Words: **Iryna Zubenko** Photos: **Áki Lind Árnason**

Decadent, indulgent, topped with marshmallows or whipped cream... There's nothing like a cup of steaming hot chocolate on a cold night. Luckily, Reykjavík has some great spots where you can cosy up with this warm seasonal drink. With the help of 101 resident and author of the @outandaboutreykjavik Instagram page, Áki Lind Árnason, we selected the best places in Reykjavík to get what Icelanders call a "heitt súkkulaði."

Mokka Kaffi

Skólavörðustígur 3a, 101 Reykjavík



Mokka is one of the oldest cafes in Reykjavík, and apparently the first one in town to get an espresso machine. It has been locals' favourite since 1958. Here, you can get the best combo—a cup of hot chocolate paired with their famous waffles. With or without whipped cream? The choice is yours. Be cautious: by trying it once, you might get hooked. Mokka also often hosts art exhibitions—overall, it's a great spot to taste the vibe of old Reykjavík and avoid looking like a tourist.

Plantan Kaffihús

Njálsgata 64, 101 Reykjavík



Plantan just opened its doors this summer, but it's steadily gaining popularity. This tiny coffee house is 100% vegan and offers weekly changing menus, including a different soup every day. The place is located right next to the oldest swimming pool in town, Sundhöllin. Imagine this: soaking in one of many Sundhöllin's hot pots and then getting a cup of hot chocolate paired with Plantan's baked goods on the way home? That's definitely on our autumn to-do list!

VARMA

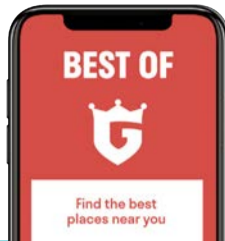
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November 4th—December 1st

In Your Pocket



Reykjavík Map

Places We Like

Best Of Reykjavík

Perfect Day

Dance, jive & have the time of your life



Words: [Iryna Zubenko](#) Photo: [Art Bicnick](#)

Vaka Agnarsdóttir

Vaka Agnarsdóttir is a member of Inspector Spacetime, the band that has quickly become a dance music phenomenon in Iceland. Their track 'Dansa og Bánsa' is so catchy, it gets even the most reluctant movers on the dancefloor. What does Vaka do when she's not making music? Today, she guides us through her perfect day in Reykjavík...

Breakfast pancakes

My perfect morning in Reykjavík would start with waking up, getting dressed and getting going. I like to begin my day by having some coffee and breakfast at Grái Kötturinn. They serve American style breakfasts. I am a huge fan of their pancakes, and they have certainly mastered their recipe.

Swimming pool relax

Going swimming at Sundhöllin sounds like a perfect way to spend the morning after a good breakfast. Relaxing in the hot tub or sauna, or taking a few laps in the swimming pool. I love going to Sundhöllin not only because it's a short walk from my house but also because of its nostalgic feel. I've been going to this pool since I was little, and it is nice to see that it still has its old spirit.

Hotdogs!

After spending some quality time at the swimming pool, having a hot-dog at Pylsvagninn is classic. After refuelling with some delicious hot-dogs, it would be nice to have a stroll around Reykjavík and maybe end at

an exhibition. I recommend going to Kjarvalsstaðir to see Jæja by Guðjón Ketilsson. As well as a great art museum, Klambartún also has a frisbee golf field. If the weather is nice, playing frisbee golf with a couple of friends is always a blast.

Movies and yummy food

Next comes a delicious dinner at Tapas barinn. I really enjoy their seafood dishes—the lobster is a must. After dinner, I would love to wind down with a beer and a movie at Bíó Paradís. I recently went to see 'Triangle of Sadness'. I would highly recommend it!

Cold beer to end the night

After a whole day of only doing pleasant things and eating good food, there's no other way to end a perfect day than with a cold beer or a cocktail at Spánski bar. 🍷

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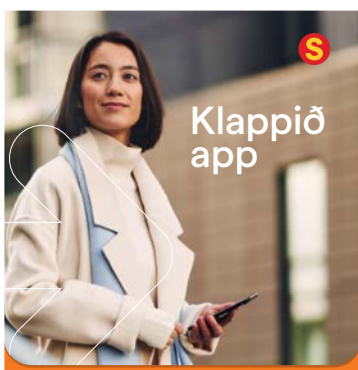
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Craft Beer
Vermouth Menu



PHOTOS FROM ICELAND

Skólavörðustígur 22



Wine bar & food

VINSTÚKAN
TÍU SOPAR

The Map

The City Map presents a selection of restaurants, bars and shops that received the 2022 "Best Of Reykjavík" award curated by our stringent panellists. Get the bigger, more detailed version of The Reykjavík Grapevine City Map at your nearest hotel or guesthouse.

Dining

1. Le Kock

Tryggvagata 14

The craft burger OG has never been better. No one toasts potato buns to crisp perfection like they do, or cooks patties to such medium rare goodness. Everything is made from scratch, including the condiments! This is gourmet fast food, with all of the attention to detail and none of the sacrifice on fun and flavour.

2. Flatey

Grandagarður 11

Educating a country beyond their diet of pizza-chain pies is no small feat, but that's exactly what Flatey sought to do when they burst onto the scene, and for that we applaud them. The Margherita continues to be a panel favourite; who can argue with milky mozzarella and tomatoes?

3. Fine

Rauðarárstígur 33

A panel favourite, Fine is a no nonsense, no frills, Sichuanese Chinese restaurant that steadfastly opens Reykjavík's mind's and palates to the regional cuisine. The Mala Chicken is a tingling explosion of flavour, literally, thanks to the sichuan peppercorn. For something simple yet exciting, we recommend the Hot and Sour Potatoes.

4. SONO matselíjor

Sæmundargata 11

Sono overlooks a wild-flower meadow and a spectacular view of the Reykjavík skyline. Languorous and idyllic, the menu too is shaped for slow savouring. The chefs look beyond Iceland for inspiration, while still showcasing seasonal, local produce in all its colourful glory. Foraged herbs, berries, fruits, stems, and flowers all feature on the menu, resulting in a fun affair that serves as a reminder that good vegan food goes beyond batter fried cauliflower.

5. Laundromat

Austurstræti 9

Laundromat offers a cool '50's-diner-meets-maximalist-library vibe, decorated with bright furnishings, maps and colour-coded books. It's great for families in general, but teens in particular like the fun decor, burgers and milkshakes. We especially love their vocal support for breastfeeding, as well as the fact that you can actually do laundry here!

6. Deig Workshop

Tryggvagata 14

Deig's 'poor man's offer' is as good as it gets on this abnormally expensive island. For 1100 ISK, you can choose from a handmade bagel with a filling of your choice, any doughnut or pastry from their selection, and a simple drink (coffee, juice or kokomjólk, basically). Even better, they open at 7 a.m., and the offer is valid every weekday, for as long as the bakery is open.

7. Sushi Social

Pinghóltsstræti 5

If you are a group of friends looking for a fun night about town, Sushi Social is the place to be. The menu is ideal for sharing—although, who'd want to share something as delectable as langoustine tempura. Order one—or several—of those colourful drinks with names that recall a tropical holiday to make a fun night even more festive.

8. Sumac Grill + Drinks

Laugavegur 28

Sumac is one of the few places that cooks lamb with none of that sous-vide nonsense. An unpretentious lamb rib, cooked on the grill, kissed with smoke and licked by flame is pretty hard to top. Sumac serves it with blistered grapes, fried almonds, a splash of thinned down muhammara and lentils. It's a dish you can't get enough of, and thankfully the restaurant hasn't dared to take it off the menu.

9. Borg 29

Borgartún 29

This is one of the more comfortable food halls to be at, with a wide variety of choices to please most anyone. "Almost every place makes small plates, which is excellent for sharing," observed one panellist. She's right, one can choose from sushi at Umami, to burgers at Yuzu, to grilled meats at Bál, to healthy skyr bowls at Svala.

10. Fish Company

Vesturgata 2a

For the definitive seafood experience in Reykjavík, you'd be hard pressed to find a better spot than Fiskfélagið. Their tasting menus are a great way to try the best Icelandic waters have to offer, from Atlantic cod served Japanese style, to harissa wolf-fish. The sushi platter makes for a great lunch while their fish of the day is usually a generous pan-fried dish with a luscious sauce.

11. Prir Frakkar

Baldursgata 14

This cosy, tucked-away restaurant has not let anything sway them from tradition—you'll spot everything from foal, to blackbird, to cod throats to plökkfiskur on their menu. Opened in 1989, the restaurant has been run by chef Úlfar Eysteinnsson and his family ever since. A visit to this place underlines that good old-fashioned Icelandic cooking can be all kinds of memorable.

Drinking

12. Röntgen

Hverfisgata 12

This place has it all. "It's crazy how it's continued to dominate the bar scene in Reykjavík," one panellist raved. "But it's just got so many elements. It works for every vibe, which is so rare for a bar." Despite only appearing on the downtown scene a few years ago, the place has already cemented itself among the nightlife legends.

13. Jungle Cocktail Bar

Austurstræti 9

"Jungle's vibe naturally caters to an early night crowd. It's stylish and airy, and, of course, they have the most innovative and delicious cocktails in the city," enthused one panel member. The panel also praised the bar's diversity—noting how attendees spanned all ages and demographics.

14. Kaffibarinn

Bergstaðastræti 1

Let's be real: there's a reason that Kaffibarinn is still here and full of dedicated regulars. At night, you'll find the crowd gets rowdy, the convos get interesting and the dance floor gets sweaty in the most wonderful way. "It's the obvious choice," said a panellist. "Who doesn't have some crazy story from closing time in the smoking area at Kaffibarinn?"

15. Gaukurinn

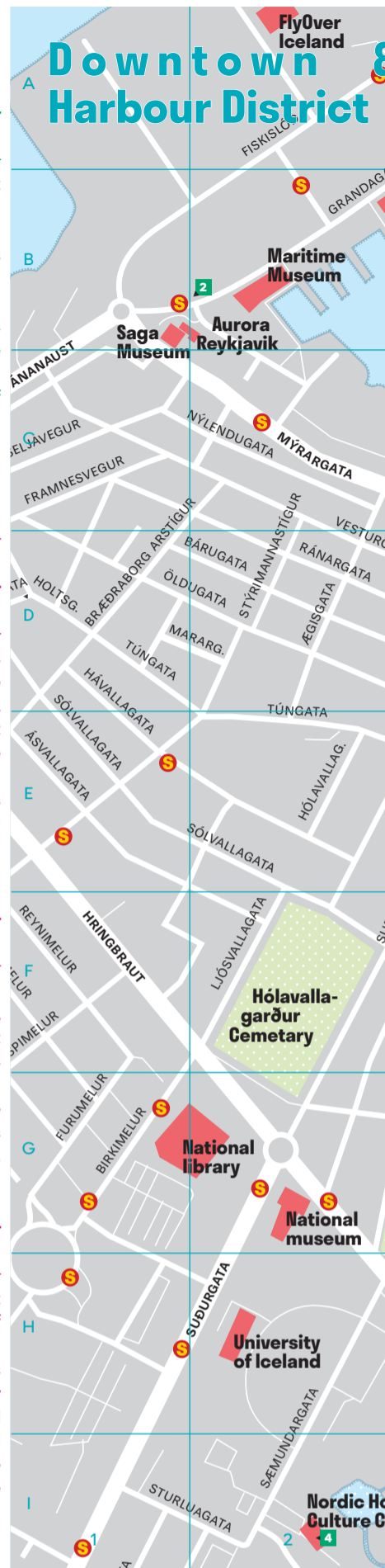
Tryggvagata 22

With dim lights, leather sofas, gender-neutral bathrooms and free tampons, this bar/venue is the preferred hangout for the unorthodox Reykvikingar. So if you're looking for like-minded peeps in the alt and queer scene, there you go. From heavy metal fests to quieter indie shows, this second floor haunt does it all.

16. Bravó

Laugavegur 22

Bravó: a dark room with amber-toned light, simple furniture, and cosy bohemian pillows. Their happy hour—perhaps the most prolific in the city—starts at 12:00 everyday and lasts until 20:00. Located in the



heart of Laugavegur, it's also a prime people-watching spot.

17. Óðinstorg

Óðinstorg

It's decided: Óðinstorg is the best outdoor drinking spot in Reykjavík. The new square was previously a parking area, but is now an open, airy, designed-for-those-lazy-summer-days paradise. You have good sun, good seating, Snaps, and Bodega, and serious mainland European vibes.

18. Session Craft Bar

Bankastræti 14

With its minimal appearance, stainless steel bar backed with dozens of taps and fridges full of beers canned and



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New In Town ☆



Plantan

Njálsgata 64, 101 Reykjavík

Plantan has been open for a few months now, but we couldn't just pass by without telling you about it. A new 100% vegan coffee house is always a good idea, and if it also serves food, that's just a win win for everyone. Plantan offers dishes of the day and soups served with freshly baked focaccia and hummus. We tried the butternut squash one, but are definitely coming back for the asparagus one as well. Beware: lots of people with laptops (us included), and it's closed on Mondays.

12

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Skólavörðustígur 15

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bottled, Session is a place that, while cozy enough, is made for serious craft heads. Whether you're hankering for a lip-puckering gose, or an IPA packed with more flowers than a funeral, Session has got your back.

19. Skuggabaldur

Pósthússtræti 9

A weekday bar is all about atmosphere. You want something lively but cozy, bustling without being jam packed, and above all else, full of good vibes. Skuggabaldur has perfected this delicate combo, with the best of Reykjavik's jazz scene showing up nightly to entertain patrons and make even a Wednesday memorable. Despite only opening last year, the bar has quickly become

a favourite with everyone from downtown artists to suburban folk.

Shopping

20. Yeoman

Laugavegur 7

2021 saw Yeoman being donned by international celebrities while also continuing her reign as the primary fashion tastemaker for Reykjavik women. "To talk about modern Icelandic style is to talk about Yeoman," one panel member said.

21. Lucky Records

Rauðarástígur 10

Lucky Records is the one-stop-shop for anything Icelandic music. They've got it all; new titles, CDs, rarities, vinyl, cassettes, second hand 12", 7" sections, you name it! Notably, the store is very in touch with the local underground. Basically any Icelandic release—no matter how big or small—will be sold there, and trust and believe, their shopkeepers will know them inside and out.

22. Hringekjan

Pórunnartún 2

Similar to a consignment shop, Hringekjan is a space where people can rent out spaces to sell their own clothes and accessories. It's the most eco-friendly way to keep your closet fresh, which, in light of our current world, is something

we should all be thinking about. "I don't know how they get such chic people to sell their clothes there," laughed one panel member. If you want something groovy this is the place to go."

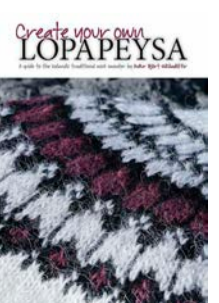
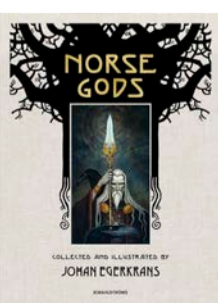
23. Apótek Atelier

Laugavegur 16

Apótek Atelier is quite new on the scene, but this small boutique has already made quite a splash. Created by designers Ýr Prastardóttir, Halldóra Sif Guðlaugsdóttir and Sævar Markús Óskarsson, Apótek Atelier blurs the line between studio and store, functioning as both the designers' workspace, as well as the place where one can purchase their wares.

I

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All That Glitters Is Girl



Brynhildur writes lyrics "to make some things make sense"

"I am coming from a punk background, and he is coming from a classical background," she says. "So being in a studio where the possibilities are endless, this was very exciting for the both of us."

Taking stock

"It's like me trying to make some things make sense," Brynhildur says of the lyrical content. "To work through the past year of my life: love and also loss, working on yourself, going to a psychiatrist. All this stuff I was going through and maybe many people go through before you have kids when you're like 20 something. Figuring out life."

I remark that this seems like pretty heavy stuff, but she offers an assessment of her lyrics that could easily be applied to life itself: "It's also just very humorous, and fun. I think there are some heavy songs. And yeah, we were trying to say something, but it's still silly and fun." 🍷

Ungfrú Ísland is out on Spotify, and Kvikindi will be performing at KEX Hostel at 22:00 on November 5th.

Brynhildur Karlsdóttir of Kvikindi promises fun

Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine** Photo: **Art Bicnick**

Brynhildur Karlsdóttir has had a lot going on in the Icelandic music scene. She has been a founding member and the lead singer of the punk band Hórmónar since 2016, who quickly became legends of the genre.

A 2019 graduate of the Icelandic Academy of the Arts, that same year she also teamed up with classical composer Friðrik Margrétar-Guðmundsson to form Kvikindi, a band that has defied any permanent definition—and they've certainly been making a name for themselves in Iceland. Their debut album 'Ungfrú Ísland' dropped in early October, and they will be playing Airwaves this Saturday at KEX Hostel.

But first things first: what is Kvikindi?

Real stuff

"We've been juggling many sentences," Brynhildur says of trying to define the act, "Dance, dance pop, cyber pop. Dance pop phenomenon is one of my favorites. We want to have a world around the band, if that makes sense. It's kind of like girly glitter. Also honest, talking about real stuff, but humorous."

A great example of this is the song Ókei, a single that made a real splash in the Icelandic media last year, and not just because of the catchy dance beat or the charmingly disturbing music video, but also because she dedicated the song to a friend of hers who had taken her life in the wake of a horrifying sexual assault case.

Putting that much of one's heart on the line is very much in keeping with what Brynhildur is all about, and the album itself managed the rare achievement of being a creation she has been mostly happy with.

"I often feel when I release something and I look at it, I'm like, I would have done this or that differently," she says. "But I was actually really happy with this album. I mean, of course, I hear everything, and there are maybe like two details I would like to change."

Brynhildur explains however, that the process of making the album "took way longer than we anticipated."

"We wanted to release it last year," she says. "But then, when I was listening to it I was like, 'Okay, this was just the amount of time it needed.'"

Endless possibilities

The differing backgrounds of Brynhildur and Friðrik have been a complimentary combination, and made Ungfrú Ísland what it is.

"We thought about it as a whole, and how we wanted the songs to feed into each other," Brynhildur explains. "Like in how some songs end on the same note that the next one starts on. We really thought about it as a whole, but also song by song."

This included experimentation with vocal effects, trying out what the studio is capable of, and drawing from their different musical origins.

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EVENT PICKS



★ GRAPEWAVES Podcast Recordings

November 3rd -5th, 12:30 - FREE - IA Center

GIN and tonic, coffee and crying in the bathroom at work, Iceland Airwaves and the Reykjavík Grapevine: some things are just meant to go together. And luckily for fans of the latter iconic duo, we're delighted to announce the return of GRAPEWAVES podcast, which brings all the buzz of the festival, delivered straight to

your ear holes every day. GRAPEWAVES will be released daily on all major podcast platforms from Thursday November 3rd to Saturday November 5th, and what's more, you can come and see it recorded live at 12:30 each day at the brand new Iceland Airwaves Center at Kolaportið! But even if this is far too early for those of you who might be nursing sore heads from the previous night's festivities, be sure to tune in to the podcast when it goes out every afternoon, as we'll be going over the best acts to watch out for, as well as perhaps announcing some secret sets...shhh. JG



★ Dead Herring Release Concert

November 19th - 1000 ISK - R6013, Ingólfsstræti 20

Whatever you're doing right now, stop it! There is a concert with the punk maniacs Dead Herring at R6013 venue on the 19th of November. The band is releasing their new album, 'Moodeater,' on the 4th of November, so you have some time to prepare mentally. But there is a golden opportunity here, because the ghostly theremin wonder, Hekla, is also playing. Read more about her in our feature in this issue. VG



★ Monday Jazz

Every Monday - FREE - Húrra

Do you find yourself snapping your fingers rhythmically all the time while playing an imaginary jazz bass line in your head? Us too! The only cure is obviously the delightful Mánudjass at Húrra, or Monday Jazz, for non Icelandic speakers. The next gigs might be on a Monday, but the music has a Friday feeling with a dash of Saturday. So snap away cool cats, because nobody's gonna do it for you. VG



MUSIC NEWS

One of Iceland's most iconic pop singers and actors, Egill Ólafsson, has had to resign from an upcoming reunion with his famous band, Stuðmenn, because of his Parkinson's disease. This was announced in a statement from the band at the end of October. The news comes as a shock for the Icelandic nation which has been so fortunate to enjoy Egill's immense talents for decades. Egill is not only a legendary musician but also one of Iceland's greatest actors, and this news raises questions about his forthcoming projects such as the movie 'Snerting,' directed by Baltasar Kormákur. We can only hope that his condition will not affect filming so we can enjoy his talents a little longer. VG

November 4th—December 1st

Upcoming Events

Send details of your event to: events@grapevine.is

This month is packed with so many great events that we can't possibly fit them all! Check them out on events.grapevine.is and don't hesitate to add yours!

Friday November 4th

Daniel Hjalmtýsson
18:00 Lucky Records
Party Screening: Mad Max Fury Road
21:00 Bio Paradís

Saturday November 5th

Let's Play Art
13:00 Kjarvalstaðir
November Plant Swap
14:00 Ásmundarsalur
Látún
17:00 Smekkleysa
Shesaid.so Iceland launch party
18:00 LOFT Hostel
Revenge of Calculon (UK)
21:00 Sirkus

Sunday November 6th

Many Languages of Art
13:00 Hafnarhús
Curator's Guide: After The Big Storm
14:00 Ásmundarsalur
Screening: Sigur Rós - Heima
17:00 Bio Paradís
Cécile Lacharme live
20:00 Frikkirkjan
Hríma
20:30 Tjarnarbío

Wednesday November 9th

Gleym-mér-ei: Lunchtime concert
12:15 Kjarvalstaðir
Music Bingo
17:30 Tjarnarbío
Screening: The Seagull
19:00 Bio Paradís
Cécile Lacharme & Snorri Hallgrímsson
20:00 Mengi
Party Karaoke
21:00 Sæta Svinið

Thursday November 10th

Pub Quiz with Davið Roach
20:00 KEX Hostel
Marína Ósk
20:00 Petersen Svitan
Floki Þorgeirsson
21:00 Húrra
Johanna Sjunnesson & Mikael Lind

21:00 Mengi

Friday November 11th

Geigengeist
20:00 Borgarleikhúsið
Hausar All-Stars
20:00 Húrra
Mugison Live & DJ KGB
20:00 KEX Hostel
Party Screening: Sin City
21:00 Gamla Bíó

Saturday November 12th

Screening: The Seagull
15:00 Bio Paradís
Screening: 40 Year Anniversary show: Rokk í Reykjavík
19:00 Bio Paradís
Abyssal/Sinmara/Barshasketh/Carcinoma
19:00 Gaukurinn
DJ Johnny Blaze & Hakki Brakes
20:00 KEX Hostel
Eyþór Ingi & Babies
21:00 Húrra

Sunday November 13th

DIY Christmas Sweater
13:30 Grófin City Library
Curator's Guide: Jæja
14:00 Kjarvalstaðir
Radical Kitchen strikes back!
18:00 Andrymi
The Father Figure in Children's Literature - Panel
20:00 Nordic House
Screening: Rollerball
21:00 Bio Paradís
Viviki, Hilmar, Umbra live
21:00 Húrra

Monday November 14th

★ **Monday Jazz**
21:00 Húrra

Tuesday November 15th

Screening: La Bohème
19:00 Bio Paradís

Wednesday November 16th

Gleym-mér-ei: Lunch time concert

12:15 Kjarvalstaðir
If You Meet a Bear - Writing Workshop
15:00 Nordic House
Reykjavík Dance Festival
20:30 Tjarnarbío
Party Karaoke
21:00 Sæta Svinið

Thursday November 17th

The Alternative Assembly
20:00 Gaukurinn
Tvíhöfði live
20:00 Húrra
DJ Psychotic Simon
20:00 KEX Hostel
Reykjavík Dance Festival
20:30 Tjarnarbío

Friday November 18th

Reykjavík Dance Festival
20:30 Tjarnarbío
Party Screening: Romeo & Juliet
21:00 Bio Paradís
Póstdreifing Label Night
21:00 Húrra
DJ Simon FKNHNSM
00:00 Húrra

Saturday November 19th

Things for Aliens - Family Workshop
13:00 Nordic House
★ **Album Release Concert: Dead Herring (with D7Y & Hekla)**
18:00 R6013
Latin American Film Festival
19:00 Bio Paradís
Reykjavík Dance Festival
20:30 Tjarnarbío
Hatari x Bashar Murad live
21:00 Húrra
Árstíðir live
21:00 KEX Hostel

Sunday November 20th

Vision Board Making
13:30 Grófin City Library
Háskolarinn: Beethoven's Mass in C major
17:00 Langholtskirkja
Latin American Film Festival
19:00 Bio Paradís
Reykjavík Dance Festival
20:30 Tjarnarbío

Monday November 21st

Háskolarinn: Beethoven's Mass in C major
19:00 Langholtskirkja

Tuesday November 22nd

Ensemble Masques
20:00 Salurinn

Wednesday November 23rd

Gleym-mér-ei: Lunch time concert
12:15 Kjarvalstaðir
★ **Music Bingo**
17:30 Tjarnarbío
Latin American Film Festival
19:00 Bio Paradís
Party Karaoke
21:00 Sæta Svinið

Thursday November 24th

Good Thursday
Extended opening hours at various museums
Latin American Film Festival
19:00 Bio Paradís
Pub Quiz with Davið Roach
20:00 KEX Hostel
Sycamore Tree live
21:00 Húrra

Friday November 25th

Party Screening: Robocop
21:00 Bio Paradís
Drag On A Dime
21:00 Húrra
Babies live
21:00 KEX Hostel

Saturday November 26th

Adventures of the Dog - Family Workshop
13:00 Nordic House
Dead Herring (with Grafnár, Hjalti Kaftu, Þóranna AKA Trouble)
19:00 KEX Hostel
After Eight
20:00 Húrra
DJ Gina Manic
20:00 KEX Hostel
Latin American Film Festival
19:00 Bio Paradís

Sunday November 27th

Latin American Film Festival
19:00 Bio Paradís

Monday November 28th

★ **Monday Jazz**
21:00 Húrra

Tuesday November 29th

Screening: Madama Butterfly
19:00 Bio Paradís

Wednesday November 30th

Music Bingo
17:30 Tjarnarbío
Party Karaoke
21:00 Sæta Svinið



Although this story hits close to home, we deemed it important to include, although we are not usually very interested in covering our own projects (so this falls into the hands of the editor-in-chief to write about). There are always exceptions, and this falls under that criteria. The women of the music industry are launching an Icelandic chapter of the renowned she said. so organisation during the 2022 Iceland airwaves festival and conference. Shesaid.so is an international community of women and gender minorities that aim to empower underrepresented communities towards a more equitable music industry for all. Of course, our best at the Reykjavík Grapevine office are behind this novel project, like Kim Wagenaar and Josie Anne Gaitens. If you caught this in time, the launch is taking place at Loft Hostel on November 5th at 18:00. VG



And talking about Airwaves: it's happening right now. Why are you even reading this? Go out, do something with your life, buy a ticket to the festival, and enjoy life, music and new people. There are wonderful new bands to discover and a lot of drinks to drink, and our journalists will be engaging in both and then writing about it, so look out for that online. On top of that, The Reykjavík Grapevine in collaboration with Iceland Airwaves will keep you up-to-date with our daily GRAPEWAVES podcast hosted by our good friend, Tim Pogo. You can find it on all of the usual platforms, as well on our website, grapevine.is. VG

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There are only two people in this photo

Beyond Language

Theatre Production 'Umbrá' Speaks to
Audiences Without Words

Words: **Josie Anne Gaitens** Photos: **Patrik Ontkovic**

Finding English-language theatre performances in Iceland has always presented a challenge, but a new production at Tjarnarbió seeks to bypass the issue of language altogether—by not including any. In addition to its lack of dialogue, 'Umbrá' ('Hríma' in Icelandic) is notable for the fact that the characters onstage are portrayed by detailed, hand-made masks.

"This is a great medium to tackle something so fragile," says 'Umbrá's creator, Aldís Davíðsdóttir. "Because there are no words you don't have to be very intellectual about it. You can just sit there with an open heart."

Another side to MeToo

The fragility Aldís references is in relation to the show's themes and subject matter, which explore difficult topics like sexual violence, isolation and aging. But Aldís wants to reassure audiences that the outcome is not all doom and gloom.

"It's also very humorous, the main character is a funny little lady," Aldís says. However, she is clear about the significance of the story, and the reasons behind her desire to bring it to the stage. "When the MeToo movement went global, we mostly got stories from women under 50," Aldís explains. "We know the violence did not start with us. So what about the older ones? What about the women who fought for our rights the first time round?"

Music to lead the way

Without a script to lean on, other elements of the performance—from costumes and lighting to the soundscape—take on greater importance. But musical director Sævar Helgi Jóhannsson feels that not focussing too heavily on the

responsibility of his role was crucial to his creative process.

"I tried not to worry too much about it," he laughs. "But the music is definitely such an important part of the project. It leads you through (the story) and tells you what to feel."

However, Sævar believes the success of 'Umbrá' boils down to the symbiotic relationship between the different parts of the play. "I think it's really an amalgamation of all things," he says. "All of the elements of this project came together so beautifully. So the music was also inspired by the actors, the stage design and everything else."

Despite this, 'Umbrá's unique constraints did throw up some challenges for Sævar and his colleagues. "The tough thing about this project is that, because there are no words and everything was so abstract, it was hard to make everything clear," he says. "I think

it worked out—I hope! But I also think it's nice that this way of doing things leaves room for interpretation, because then people can relate to the story on their terms."

Returning the shame

Aldís also recognises the importance of opening up stories for an audience, and feels that theatre is the perfect way to share that experience.

"It's a very old way of being together," she says. "What I think is most important about it is when people walk out of the theatre, they have the opportunity to say, 'Oh wow, that was a difficult story. You know actually, when I was a child...'"

"It creates a platform," she continues. "You can go somewhere. You can start your story after this story."

This goal is the driving force behind 'Umbrá's storyline, and while Aldís recognises that some elements of the play might be challenging for viewers, she hopes to deliver a sense of catharsis by exhuming her characters' experiences.

"I want people to walk away with a feeling of release," she explains. "We have a saying in Icelandic, 'to return the shame.' We hand back the shame of an experience to the person who gave it to us."



Sævar at work



★ Zanele Muholi

Until February 12th - National Gallery of Iceland

Zanele Muholi is an internationally recognised visual activist and photographer from South Africa. Muholi has been capturing the daily fight for rights of South Africa's LGBTQIA+ community for over a decade. This exhibition

shows over a hundred powerful photographs that, along with video works, provide insight into the life and struggle of these marginalised communities. Themes explored are identity politics, hate crime, rape, pride, resistance and unity—aiming to shed the negative stigma through positive imagery. In the series 'Somnyama Ngonyama', Muholi's self portraits address race, representation, and history through referencing historical South African events. The works represents Zanele Muholi's mission: "to re-write a black queer and trans visual history of South Africa for the world to know of our resistance and existence at the height of hate crimes in South Africa and beyond. KW



★ Árna Óttarsdóttir - soon, again

Runs until November 26th - I8 Gallery

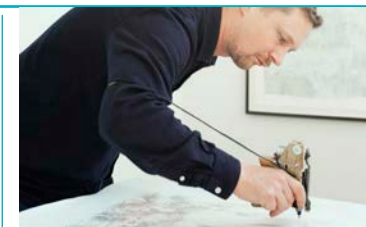
By transforming her daily thoughts and drawings from her notebook into textiles, Árna channels her lively and personal energy into her tapestries. You can see how she experiments with fabrics, colours, textures, and patterns in each of her works, exploring the different aesthetics the textiles offer. KW



★ On Display: Queer Above Others

Until November 20th - Living Art Museum

Curated by historian Ynda Eldborg and artist Viktoría Guðnadóttir, this exhibition highlights the growth of queer art and its presence within the museums current collection. It also shows new works created within this context by fourteen artists who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. KW



★ Linus Lohmann - Pacing

Until November 27th - Ásmundarsalur

Using handcrafted mechanical tools and ink, Linus creates large, layered dot drawings. Inspired by pointillism and fascinated by nature, optical perception, and contemporary & obsolete printing techniques, Lohmann produces intuitive landscapes and dissolved imagery, sometimes disguised, of the non-existing and newly invented. KW

November 4th—December 1st

Art Exhibitions

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Ongoing

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - HAFNARHÚS

Down North: North Atlantic Triennial
This travelling exhibition is made in collaboration with the Portland Museum of Art (USA), Bildmuseet (Sweden), and the Reykjavík Art Museum. Around 30 artists from all over the world show new works that are inspired by the changes society has been going through; covering topics such as climate change and the ecosystem in the arctic.
• Runs until February 5th

GALLERÍ LISTVAL

Halldór Ragnarsson - Here, Now, & Maybe Later

Halldór Ragnarsson is mostly known for his text-based works that are inspired by his approach of the philosophy of language. Often biographical, he creates text based situations on canvas, wood, and paper, thus exploring how different uses of language can alter experiences, moods, emotions, and art, and how art in turn can alter language.
• Runs until November 13th

LÁ ART MUSEUM (HVERAGERÐI)

Gary Hill - Sums & Differences

Works of Gary Hill, Steina and Woody Vasulka are brought together for this exhibition. It aims to present the commonalities and divergence between their earliest works, and the way the three of them differently interpret the immaterial and the physical. While highlighting their mutual exploration between sound and image, this collaborative exhibition also contains additional new pieces that reflects each of their artistic development, with work spanning several decades.
• Runs until December 18th

GLÉRHÚSIÐ

Haraldur Jónsson - Bráð

The work of Haraldur Jónsson, City Artist of Reykjavík in 2019, covers different sensory fields and echoes the echoes of classical art. His visual world is often aggressive and complicated as he follows paths no one

has previously followed, which led to his nomination for the Icelandic Art Prize in 2021.
• Runs until December 12th

REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Elvar Örn Kjartansson - The System
Kjartansson seeks to illuminate the invisible system behind the modern amenities that we tend to take for granted. Since 2016 he's been visiting business and public places in Iceland to take pictures of their various spaces. The system consists of what makes up its infrastructure such as institutions, service companies, buildings and anything else that ensures society can run from day to day. His work excludes human beings; they come and go, while the system remains.
• Runs until December 11th

Daniel Bergman - Falcons

Knowing the art is not only in the photos, but also in the work Daniel Bergman put in to photograph these birds of prey, adds another layer to this exhibition. Falcons are naturally camera shy and Bergman had to remain motionless for days at a time to get the perfect shot. The exhibition showcases a selection of these photographs published in his book about this journey, called 'Fálkinn.'
• Runs until January 1st 2023

MUSEUM OF DESIGN & APPLIED ART

Master Milliners in residency

During their residency at the museum, Anna Gulla and Harper—both master milliners—are working with materials tied to the hatmaking trade; fabrics, leather, felt, and straw. Combining steam and wooden moulds with locally sourced materials, natural furs, fibres, and leather, they experiment with traditional methods in the creation and design of hats and outerwear.
• Runs until November 30th

REYKJANESBÆR ART MUSEUM

Orbit/Ellipse

Gabriela Friðriksdóttir and Björn Roth approach the world of colouring books from a philosophical and creative perspective, musing on whether having to draw within the lines influences a child's creativity

negatively. The artists created their own colouring book that doubles as the exhibition catalogue and is available as a numbered art work. Breaking free from having to draw within the lines, they present their own coloured-in versions to explore boundaries by crossing them.
• Runs until November 13th

I8 GRANDI

In Relation To The Sun

i8 Grandi is a new exhibition space, the unique concept of which is to focus on year-long shows by single artists. The exhibitions will evolve while on view, allowing their creators to reflect how the passage of time alters their work and encourage repeat viewings to observe those changes. This inaugural exhibition by Alicja Kwade encompasses installation, sculpture and work on paper. Its title—initially "In Relation To The Sun"—will change as the nature of the pieces on display evolves.
• Runs until December 22nd

CAFÉ PYSJA

In The Name of Hallstein

Modern master-sculptor Hallstein Sigurðsson's career spans almost seven decades. His work has found its way into many public spaces and museums over Iceland. This exhibition and multimedia project aims to give visitors an overview of his career by taking works from across his long and productive oeuvre.
• Runs until November 27th

NATIONAL LIBRARY

Sir Joseph Banks - Iceland Expedition

Joseph Banks joined Captain James Cook on his first voyage around the world. Barely a year after they returned, he led the first British scientific expedition to Iceland in 1772, exactly 250 years ago. The National Library opens up an exhibition to celebrate the anniversary of his voyage.
• Runs until November 20th

KLING OG BANG

Elisabet Birta Sveinsdóttir - Myth-bust

Elisabet Birta Sveinsdóttir explores the symbolic world of visual culture and filmmaking and places it in a historical and contemporary context. As her art often addresses ideas of femininity and human nature, she utilises her own body and performance as method and material.
• Runs until November 13th

Bergur Anderson - Collected Ear-worms

Artist and composer Bergur Anderson explores the results the imaginary qualities of sound can find in interdisciplinary and spatial works, some of which are time-based—fabricating sound into material. His works have previously been shown abroad as well as in Iceland.
• Runs until November 13th

BÓKASAFN HAFNAFJÖRÐUR

Kitsch: Reykjavík | Berlin | Itoshima

Photographer Thomas Hoeren shows a different side of "kitsch". It's not cheap sentimentality, but rather the need for safety and security in one's private space. He documented how kitsch manifests in Reykjavík, Berlin, and Itoshima; three very different places with very different interpretations.
• Runs until November 23rd

BERG CONTEMPORARY

Pórdís Erla Zoëga - Spaced out

In Spaced Out, Zoëga displays three-dimensional light works that serve as a material reflection of an untouchable world that humanity visits on a daily basis without much contemplation. In her printed works on plexiglass, she addresses the existence of humanity in relation to nature in the digital age. It's an exhibition on reflection, cyberspace, and human existence in today's global warming crisis.
• Runs until November 26th

Sigurður Guðjónsson - Perpetual Motion

By observing forms and objects through light, motion, camera lenses, and perspective in an ex-

perimental way, Guðjónsson aims to reveal the energies they hold while they interact with the environment. A responding soundtrack has been created by musician Valgeir Sigurðsson specifically for the exhibition.
• Runs until January 21st, 2023

HVERFISGALLERÍ

Steingrímur Eyfjörð - Wittgenstein? & Society for Living Folk Religion

This exhibition marks Steingrímur's third solo exhibition at this gallery. This time his work explores the writings of philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, and contains fragments of images and text referring to Icelandic folklore. Connecting the philosophical with the historical, he explores the common understandings of mankind; that what exists in reality could also be a fabrication of our imagination. In the exhibition Steingrímur plays with different dimensions, colour perception, and the power of imagination.
• Runs until October 29th

EINAR JÓNSSON MUSEUM

Einar Jónsson

In 1909 Einar Jónsson—described on the museum's website as "Iceland's first sculptor"—offered all of his works as a gift to the Icelandic people, on the condition that a museum be built to house them. The resulting edifice, constructed just over the road from Hallgrímskirkja, now contains close to 300 artworks. There is also a beautiful garden with 26 bronze casts of the artist's sculptures to enjoy.
• Permanent exhibition

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART GARDATORG 1 210 GARDABÆR

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- 3 Tarot candle — *Þórunn Árnadóttir*
- 4 Pillow case — *Signý Þórhallsdóttir*

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Signý Þórhallsdóttir fyrir Rammagerðina



2

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3



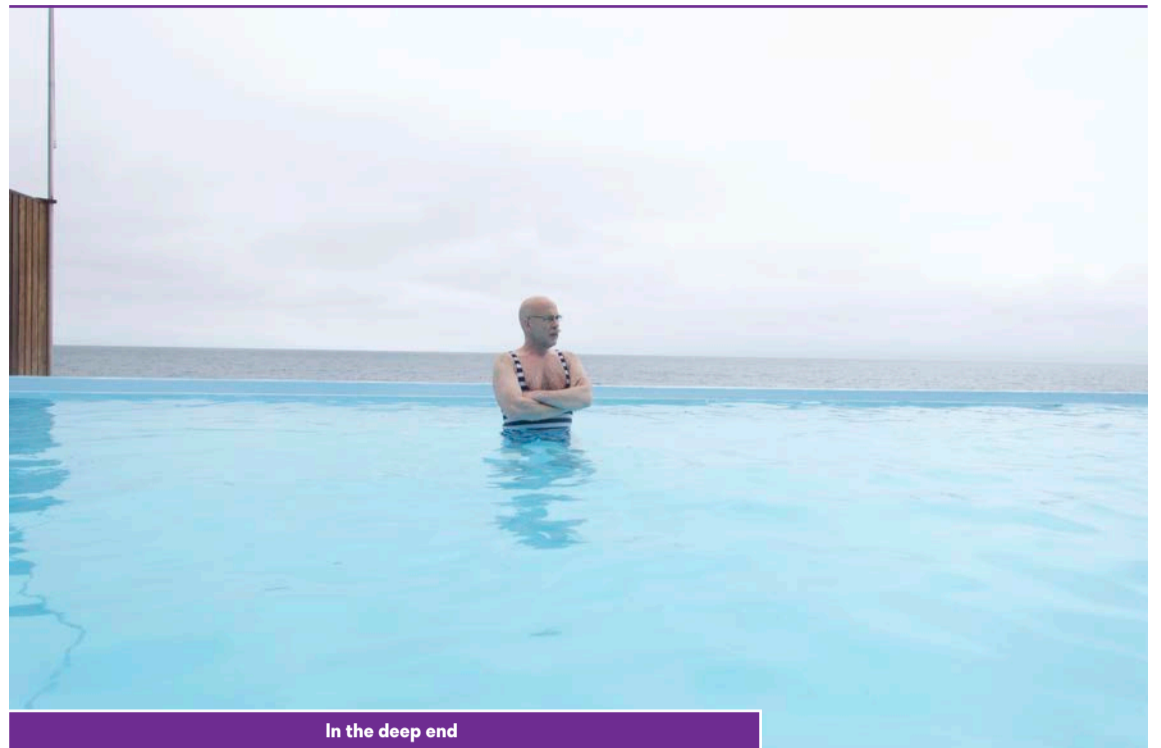
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In the deep end

Pool Stories

Director Jón Karl Helgason explores Icelandic bathing culture in a new documentary

Words: **Iryna Zubenko** Photo: **Spessi**

“The Finns have their saunas, the British have their pubs, the French have their cafes. We Icelanders have our swimming pools,” reads the description of ‘Sundlaugasögur’ (‘Swimming Pool Stories’). Above is a blue poster, an aerial shot of a person taking a dip. Everybody knows Icelanders love their swimming pools. But is there more to this story?

The big pool adventure

Swimming pools have a defining social significance for Icelanders. In an attempt to research the topic deeper, director Jón Karl Helgason took an adventure around the country, visiting swimming pools from Reykjavík to Patreksfjörður. “I think I went four or five times around the country,” Jón says. The work on the documentary began in the winter of 2013-2014.

“First, I would go to the swimming pool as a normal guest,” he says. “It’s so easy to get acquainted with new people in the swimming pool. You just tell them stories, and they tell you a story.” Once the initial trust was built, Jón started to bring a small camera to the pool. Oftentimes, he would have to come back a few times to get the shot he needed. Finding the people and stories for

the film was the most challenging part, he shares.

Meeting place for old and young

“When I was six years old, I went to the swimming pool every day. It was like my playground,” says Jón. He recalls his go-to swimming pool, Vesturbæjarlaug, having just one hot pot. Over time, more hot pots were added, and more activities started to be introduced at the facilities. “People found out that they could do a rehearsal in a swimming pool, they could do gymnastics, yoga, etc.,” says Jón. “Since I started the film, there have been more and more possibilities. That has been the change since I was young.”

Regardless of age, gender, or where they live, Icelanders in the movie are drawn to their swimming pool of choice. They could be commuting from afar for their kid to go to swimming classes for infants or going to a nearby pool just to catch up with old friends. For some, it is just an old but healthy habit—for others, one of the only available means of socialisation.

The people and their stories, especially the bonds they’ve made at the swimming pools, inspired

the movie. “In Þingeyri, there was a group of about 20-30 people that meet every day—they swim, they read stories, they look after each other,” shares Jón. “If somebody is not at the swimming pool, they immediately phone them and ask if they are ok.”

A man of many hats

After having been to almost every pool in the country, I wonder whether Jón has a favourite one. “Krossnes is beautiful. When you’re in there, you can see the horizon, the ocean and feel like you’re alone in the world,” he answers.

Surprisingly, while the documentary does feature stunning music by Ragnar Zolberg and beautiful aerial shots by Egill Aðalsteinsson and additional drone operators, Jón made most of the movie himself. “I have been in this business since 1980 as a makeup artist, stuntman, camera assistant, cameraman, editor, director and producer. I’m still going strong,” Jón laughs. “By filming, I found out that it’s best to do it alone because these are such personal stories that people are telling.”

“You can’t visit all the swimming pools as an Icelandic person. But a lot of people go to swimming pools,” shares Jón. “I thought maybe they would like to see what’s happening in other pools around the country.”

‘Sundlaugasögur’ is currently screening in Icelandic cinemas, allowing viewers to dip into life beyond their regular pool. For Jón, work continues—there are too many stories yet untold. “I am doing five other documentaries,” he says.

✎



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Track By Track

The Reykjavík Grapevine 24
Issue 11—2022



Next stop: Cool Town

'Ekki Treysta Fiskunum'

By Ólafur Kram

Words: Iryna Zubenko Photo: Hugji Ólafsson

Info

Ólafur Kram consider their latest album release 'Ekki treysta fiskunum' to be a culmination of everything that followed their win at the 2021 Músíktílaunir ("Icelandic Music Experiments"). After many hours of work recording at Sundlaugin studio, the result is a fresh, yet weird sound. We asked Ólafur Kram to guide us through the album, whose name implores us to 'never trust the fish.' Fun fact: try reading the band's name backwards!



Hótun

This song was written for mansplainers. It's a short song with upbeat rhythms and a fun melody, but the lyrics are meant to make you feel uncomfortable. Starting the album with the line: "What bug bit you in the head" is a great way to emphasise our surreal, tongue-in-cheek writing style. The song is

inspired by bossanova, perhaps a little akin to elevator music—but with an Ólafur Kram twist.

Aumingja Þuríður

A song about partying too much, being too hungover, and then doing it all again the next weekend. We allow ourselves to make fun of poor Þuríður, because we have all been her at some point.

Blúndustelpa

This is a weird but good one. The lyrics are about clothes—how clothes act as a sort of armour for us and how we use fashion to divert attention from our weaknesses to our strengths. Gothic, but in 5/4—how could you not love this song?

Gullinsnið

Quintessential Ólafur Kram. We let ourselves go wild, and it ended in a baroque-rap-rock song about a guy who has daddy issues and very low self-esteem but pretends to be really cool and confident. Make sure to listen until the end—you're in for a treat.

Kóngur á þurru landi

A surreal song about the city sinking into the sea, the fish taking over, and dreaming. The title of the album ('Don't trust the fish') comes from this song.

Silkiþræðir

Silkiþræðir is one of our cooler songs. The ambiguity of the lyrics, which portray communication issues and mind-reading troubles, contrasts the constant rhythm of the song, constant but building.

Listasaga

Am I in love, or just horny? The eternal question.

Höllin

An instrumental ode to the one and only höll—Sundhöll Reykjavíkur.

Drottningin

This song is an homage to all the queens in our lives, to the women artists and musicians that have influenced us through the years, Barbra Streisand especially.

Prinsessaaa

A song dedicated to Iðunn Gíga's little dog, Rjómi. And also to our first drummer, Alda—whose name is embedded in the lyrics for the second part of the song. We wanted to do a song that was almost like two songs together—and we think we did very well on that.

Eftirsöngur

A song about finding the people we miss in all the little things, the flowers, the sun, everything. You are everywhere, though you are nowhere, and I'm missing you. ♡

'Ekki treysta fiskunum' was released on October 21st and is available on Spotify and other streaming platforms.

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BASTARD BREW
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Beer 600 ISK,
Wine 750 ISK.

BÍO PARADÍS
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00.
Beer 850 ISK,
Wine 850 ISK.

BREWDOG
Wed-Sun
14:00 to 17:00.
Beer 990 ISK,
Wine 990 ISK.

BRUT BAR
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Beer 700 ISK,
Wine 600 ISK.
2F1 on wine and beer on tap

COOCOO'S NEST
Tue-Sat from 15:00 to 18:00.
Beer 1000 ISK,
Wine 1000 ISK.
Discount or a free appetiser.

DILLON
Every day from 14:00 to 19:00.
Beer 600 ISK,
Wine 850 ISK.

FJALLKONAN
Every day from 15:00 to 17:00.
Beer 790 ISK,
Wine 990 ISK.

FORRÉTTABARINN
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
Beer 800 ISK,
Wine 900 ISK.

GAUKURINN
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
Beer 800 ISK,
Wine 800 ISK.

ÍÐNÓ
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Beer 850 ISK,
Wine 850 ISK.

JÖRGENSEN KITCHEN & BAR
Weekdays
16:00 onwards.
Weekends
12:00 to 16:00.
Beer 750 ISK,
Wine 900 ISK.

JUNGLE COCKTAIL BAR
Every day from

16:00 to 18:00.
Beer 900 ISK,
Wine 1000 ISK
Cocktails 1600 ISK.

KAFFI LÆKUR
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00 & 22:00 to 23:00 on Tue-Sat
Beer 950 ISK,
Wine 1050 ISK.

KOFINN BAR
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00.
Beer 600 ISK,
Wine 1000 ISK.

LOFT
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
Beer 860 ISK,
Wine 950 ISK.

LÓLA FLORENS
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Beer 1000 ISK,
Wine 1000 ISK.

LUNA FLORENS
Tue-Sat from 15:00 to 18:00.
Beer 1000 ISK,
Wine 1000 ISK.
Discount or a free appetiser.

PRIKID
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
Beer 700 ISK,
Wine 1000 ISK.

PUBLIC HOUSE
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00 then 23:00 to 01:00
Beer 890 ISK,
Wine 890 ISK

PUNK
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
Beer 850 ISK,
Wine 850 ISK.

UPPSALIR BAR
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Beer 750 ISK,
Wine 900 ISK.

RÖNTGEN
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Beer 800 ISK,
Wine 900 ISK.

SÆTA SVINIÐ
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Beer 990 ISK,

Wine 990 ISK.

SKÚLI CRAFT
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00.
Beer 900 ISK,
Wine 900 ISK.
Happy hour includes four selected tap beers

SLIPPARINN
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Beer 500 ISK,
Wine 800 ISK.

SÓLON
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Beer 800 ISK,
Wine 800 ISK.

SPILAKAFFI
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00.
Beer 850 ISK.

STÚDENT-AKJALLARINN
Everyday from 16:00.
Beer 650 ISK,
Wine 850 ISK.

VEÐUR
Every day from 12:00 to 19:35.
Beer 800 ISK,
Wine 800 ISK.

ÖLSTOFAN
Every day from 15:00 to 20:00.
Beer 750 ISK,
Wine 800 ISK.



FEATURED DRINKING HOLE

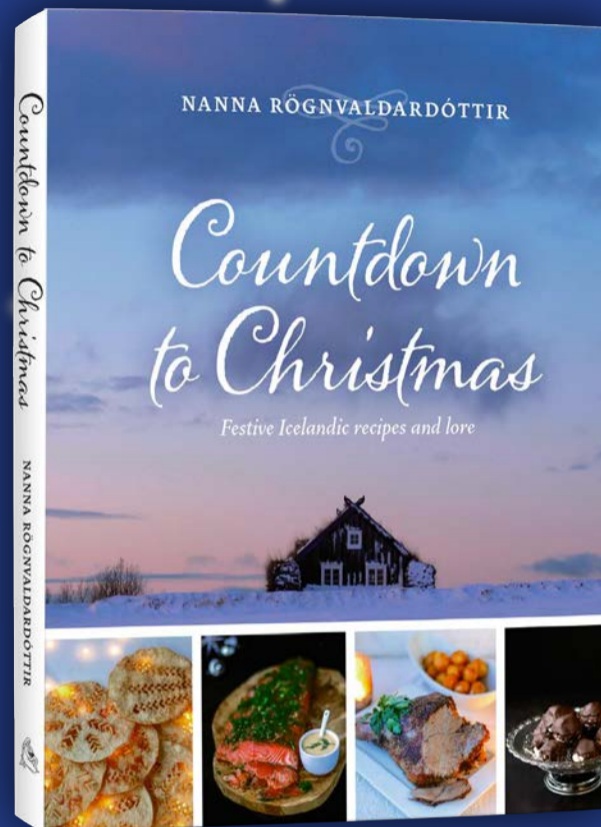
FJALLKONAN HAFNARSTRÆTI 1-3
15:00 - 17:00 SUN - SAT
BEER: 900 ISK
WINE: 1190 ISK

Now, if you feel like you have been crowned by the sun, covered by the snow and dressed in nature, you should definitely not go to the psychiatric ward, but to Fjallkonan! Mostly because the beer is only 990 ISK and a glass of wine is 1190, but also because you

might actually be Iceland's national icon, the Mountain Lady (Fjallkonan). Unlike the losers in the rest of Europe, the Fjallkonan has nothing to do with God or religion, only a badass lady with a huge sword wearing goddamn nature as a dress.

Pro tip, leave the sword at home or you might be arrested. **VG** 🍷

TIME OF JOY



Cheap Food

Here are some deals that'll keep your wallet feeling happy and full.

1,000 ISK And Under

Hard Rock Café -1,000 ISK
Every day 15:00 -18:00
Nachos, wings & onion rings - 990 ISK

Dominos
All day Tuesday
Medium sized pizza with three toppings

Tapas Barinn
Every day 17:00 - 18:00
Selected tapas half price

1,500 ISK And Under

Deig / Lo Kock
Week days 10:00 - 16:00
Doughnut, coffee & bagel -1,300 ISK

Hamborgara-búlla Tómasar
All day Tuesday
Burger, french fries & soda - 1,390 ISK

Gló
All day, every day
Bowl of the month - 1,290 ISK

Vegan option
Shalimar
Monday - Friday 12:00 - 14:30
Curry - 1,290 ISK
Vegan option

Sæta Svinið
Every day 15:00 - 18:00
Chicken wings - 1,190 ISK

Lemon
Every day 16:00 - 21:00
2f1 Juice +

sandwich 1,095 ISK
Vegan option

Uppsaliir
Every day 11:00 - 14:00
Burger & fries - 1,390 ISK
Vegan option

Noodle Station
Every day 11:00 - 22:00
Vegetarian noodles - 1,100 ISK

2,000 ISK And Under

Matarkjallarinn
Monday - Friday

11:30 - 15:00
Fisherman's fish soup -1,990 ISK

5,000 ISK And Under

Apótek
Every day 11:30 - 16:00
Two-course lunch -3,390 ISK
Three course lunch - 4,390 ISK

Brút
Weekends 12:00 - 16:00
Bottomless brunch - 4,900 ISK

Recipes and descriptions of traditional Icelandic Christmas dishes and baked goodies. Enjoy!

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Who needs books when we have the internet

The Writer, The Prophet

Sigríður Hagalín has gone from news to nightmarish dystopias

Words: **Valur Grettisson** Photos: **Art Bicnick**

If you live in Iceland, the odds are that you know exactly who Sigríður Hagalín Björnsdóttir is. As a well-known news reporter at RÚV, our national broadcaster, she often sits down with politicians or prominent figures in society as part of the show *Silfrið* and drills them for answers with her soft voice and calm personality.

But Sigríður has surprised most with her impressive writing career. She has written four books in eight years, all of which have been received well by critics and readers. Her voice in storytelling is, in some ways, starkly different from the person that we see in the news. Her first book was a horrific dystopia that asked a poignant question about Icelanders, and the result was darker than we cared for.

Non-fiction and journalism

But before we meet the writer, we have to talk to the journalist. I met Sigríður at her home, close to the Reykjavíkurtjörn pond. There she

has two cats, one border collie called Tíra, and a best-selling writer for a partner, Jón Kalman Stefánsson, who goes out for groceries while we talk about literature.

"I was always writing fiction as a kid," Sigríður says. "I wrote for the school newspaper but I didn't feel ready for it. It felt too big.

Besides, it was such bad writing, or at least that's how I felt about it at the time."

Non-fiction and journalism always fascinated Sigríður. This is not particularly surprising, given that her father, Björn Vignir Sigurpálsson, was

a well-known journalist at the conservative newspaper, *Morgunblaðið*.

Rejected by her father

"My dad gave me my first typewriter when I was 3 years old. When I got older, I wanted to work at *Morgunblaðið*, writing big features, so I headed to University to study history, as well as taking practical media classes," she explains. Sigríður did well in

school and the moment came to gain some real-world experience.

"My dad was actually overseeing hiring at *Morgunblaðið*, so it felt obvious to apply there. But my father refused to accept my application," Sigríður says: "It was a bit rough between us for a while after that," she adds with a chuckle. But she says that she understands the decision because her father provided her with a good lesson. "He said that if I was any good at this, I could work wherever I wanted, so I got a job at RÚV."

Give or take a few short breaks, Sigríður has remained at RÚV ever since, for around 20 years. However, these days, writing is taking up more and more of her time.

The thought exercise

Sigríður's first book, 'Eyland,' was published in 2016. The direct translation would be 'Island,' but the word in Icelandic has deeper connotations of isolation and loneliness. The book is a merciless dystopia that Sigríður wrote in one intense three-month burst. The story imagines what would happen if the wider world were to disappear, and Icelanders would have to stand alone without any

"I don't feel like I have a lot to lose here."



The book can easily be categorised as a disaster book where volcanoes in the Reykjanes peninsula destroy whole neighbourhoods—a real-life danger that Icelanders have to live with. But the book also draws a comparison between the volatility of the earth and the behaviour and emotions of humans, a metaphor that Sigríður says was no easy task to deliver.

“The hardest thing was to balance it right so it wouldn’t be a cliché,” she admits. “But there are interesting lines between the fires and the emotional life of people, of women, the power of the female body, of birth. It’s just so big.”

Not only that, only four months after the publication of the book, the eruption in Fagradalsfjall started, a volcanic station that hadn’t erupted for thousands of years. This obviously became quite the scene on social media as well as in traditional media. Did we have a prophet on our hands? Sigríður belittles such ideas. “Everyone saw what was coming,” she explains, but she had interviewed and conferred with the best geologist in Iceland before writing the book.

A feminist disaster book

There is no shortage of male writers who have written about volcanoes in Iceland, and even more corner the market when it comes to disaster fiction. Sigríður’s voice, and that of her female main character, provide a strength that partially explains why the narrative is so successful. On top of that, Anna, the main protagonist, is more of an anti-hero. In some ways, her super focus on geology is reminiscent of another interesting female character, that of Saga Norén from the Danish TV show, ‘The Bridge.’ But there’s another side to Anna, which is her love life—she’s embroiled in an affair

“I had been reading a lot of books about seduced upper-class women, like Anna Karenina and Madame Bovary and I liked this

theme about the destructiveness of love,” Sigríður says. “It can be a disaster of its own.”

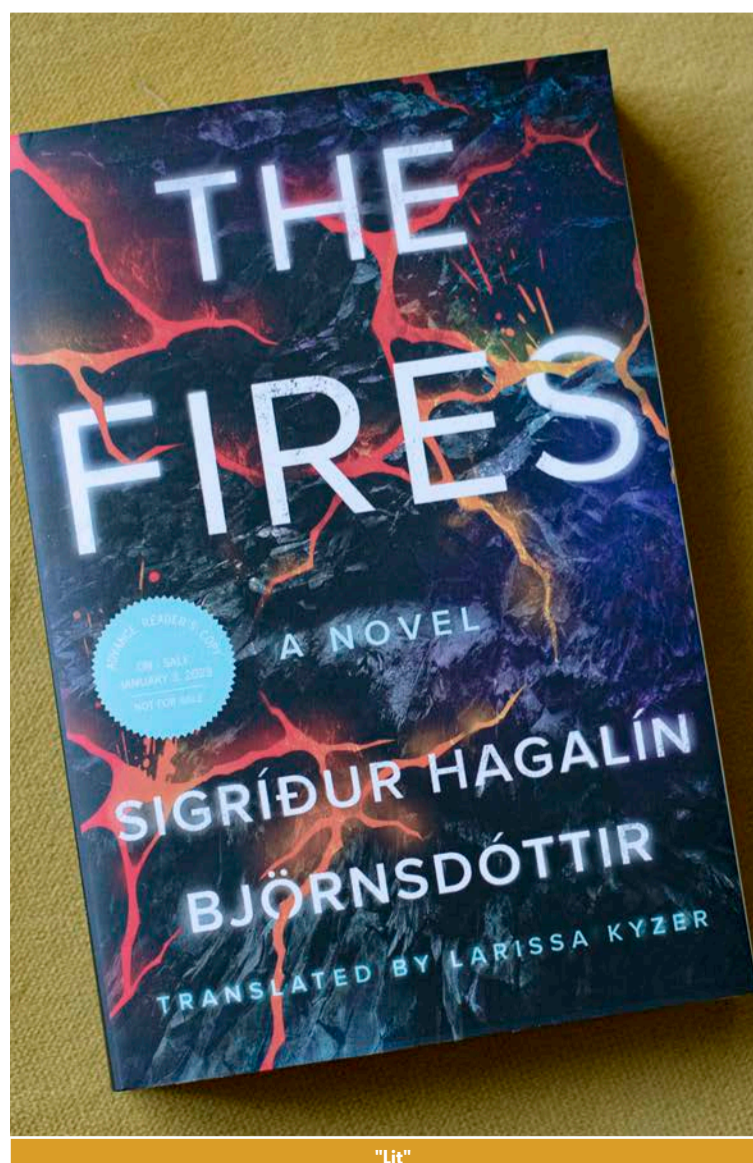
Courage or nonsensical?

It’s safe to say that Sigríður is a courageous author. Rather than follow the well-trodden path of realism in Icelandic literature, she is striking new ground with her unique take on dystopian and borderline sci-fi genres. Her newest book, which will be published in November, goes in a very different direction though. The story is about a middle-aged history professor whose reputation is destroyed in connection with a #Metoo scandal. Sigríður also uses the opportunity to tell a story about Ólöf ‘The Rich’ Loftsdóttir, one of the most powerful women in Icelandic mediaeval history, making this a historical fiction book.

When asked about this, if she feels brave in her writing, Sigríður simply answers: “Well, I don’t feel like I have a lot to lose here.”

She explains herself by adding that she doesn’t feel like she has any control over what she chooses to write about; her subjects choose her and take over her interest and imagination. “Perhaps this is not courage, but rather irrational behaviour,” she laughs, adding: “My novels come from ideas that grip me, but I feel that reality, or journalism, can only take them so far. Sometimes the only way to understand the world is the route of fiction.”

Sigríður Hagalín’s book ‘The Fires’ can be purchased in our online store: shop.grapevine.is



“Lit”

importation. How much food would we have? How would politics evolve? How compassionate would we be? Sigríður’s answer is realistic—and grim.

She explains that the idea for the novel had been with her since university. “The book was almost like a thought exercise, or a literature test tube,” she says. “I wanted to see what would happen to Icelandic society if it would have to stand alone, especially politically.

“I explained the book as an agricultural thriller, but my publisher asked me not to say that out loud ever again,” Sigríður adds, laughing. “Eyland’ was written before the recent wave of populism got its grip on global politics, but with eerie accuracy, it captures the sly fascism that can creep up on a nation and change everything for the worse in extreme situations. The book has been described as visionary and it’s even more relevant now than ever, with the alarming growth of food shortages and famine across the world, and the success of far-right political parties.

As everyone knows...

But we are ostensibly here to talk about Sigríður’s third book, and her first to be published in English, ‘The Fires,’ translated by Larissa Kyzer. Sigríður explains that the inspiration for the whole novel came from a simple quote.

“I saw this quote from a geologist, where she said, ‘As everyone knows, the magnetic north pole is a very sensitive place.’ She somehow assumed that everyone knew as much as she did, and she viewed the earth like an emotional being. That’s how the main protagonist, Anna, was formed.”

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Food



Booming Brewery Culture Finds A Home In The South

Ölverk's beer festival is a smash hit

Words: **Valur Grettisson** Photos: **Dagný Dögg Steinþórsdóttir**

If the small town of Hveragerði was a stock, you should buy two. A home to stunning nature, geothermal energy and a beautiful hot river that draws tourists and Icelanders alike, the addition of a new hotel/food court The Greenhouse has seen the town go from strength to strength. To top it all off, it now boasts one of Iceland's best beer festivals. And because we are self-sacrificing kinds of people, we decided to visit the festival, try out the Nordic beer and enjoy the music. Oh, the burden!

Drinking Viking style

Ölverk Beer Festival is held at the beginning of October, in traditional Oktoberfest fashion, and plays host to over 40 Icelandic, Greenlandic and Faroese beer producers. The event is now three years old, so basically way under the legal drinking age—unless you're Egill Skallagrímsson, who was allegedly an alcoholic at three. We're clearly going Viking-style here.

The festival takes place in one of Hveragerði's many greenhouses. The town has been utilising the abundant geothermal energy in the area to heat greenhouses for decades, allowing them to produce tomatoes, cucumbers and other exotic delicacies despite the decidedly treacherous climate. The glass-houses are the perfect setting for a beer festival, and a smart move from the brains behind Ölverk, Laufey Sif Lárusdóttir.

Hipster beards and the Faroes

On arrival at the festival we were given small glasses and told that we could taste the beers between four and eight in the evening. Meaning we had 40 brands of beers and liquors to taste, and only four hours to do it. We'll let you do the maths there. We were officially competing against the clock, as well as our livers.

The producers were set up on stalls all around the periphery of

the large greenhouse, with tables in the middle populated by men with hipster beards, who stroked their faces seriously while muttering intimidating things about yeast strains and attenuation. I, of course, had made the mistake of shaving before I arrived, standing out like an idiot who still drinks Becks like it's the 90s. Avoiding eye contact with the beer wankers at all costs, I found my way over to the booth of Faroese beer brand Föroya Bjór. Knowing that the warm people of Klaksvík wouldn't judge my bald face too hard made the first sip even sweeter.

A silver lining for horse-people

I next ended up at the table of Icelandic liqueur, Jökla; a creamy and lovely drink that was available by the bottle, as well as in small flasks. Out of curiosity, I asked the producer why the drink was sold in this format, and, of course, it's all to do with the rules around selling

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The beer enthusiasts gather...



...And some are more enthusiastic than others

Icelandic alcohol. For those who don't know, the government's regulations for how alcohol can and can't be sold in this country are at best, confusing, and at worst, bananas. Craft beer makers have long argued that they unfairly impact small producers and inhibit this industry. However, Jökla's producer did point out a silver lining to these fun-size flasks: "They're perfect for the horse-people," he pointed out. And he's not wrong. Anyone who goes horse riding in Iceland knows that a little warmth and kindness from a flask does not go amiss.

Fruity with a dash of bitterness

The selection at the greenhouse was overwhelming, but luckily I ran into a childhood friend who had tried it all. She was swaying a bit and talking incredibly loudly, but eventually she pointed me towards the best beer she had ever tasted. The table belonged to Brothers Brewery, the famed beer makers from Vestmannaeyjar. And my friend was right: the beer was a delightful IPA and possibly one of the best I tasted that day.

The variety of beers was astounding, and the themes were interesting as well. You could even have a beer called 'Hopppolla,' obviously influenced by the famous Sigur Rós song, Hoppaípolla. A fruity beer with a dash of bitterness. If you feel like I'm describing your life, then it's pure coincidence.

The Cosplayers

After the last call for tasting, the night schedule began, and this is

where the festival became truly impressive. The greenhouse was transformed into a concert hall and the lineup was bulletproof. Among the bands playing was the brilliant electro party band Sykur as well as a DJ set from FM Belfast. And of course, the kind-of Icelandic Hip-Hop, BlazRoca. People ran to the dance floor scream-singing 'Allir eru að fá sér,' which can be translated to 'Everybody is having a sip'. BazRoca used the opportunity to remind the audience that beer is fine, but no substitute for good old classic Cuban Rum.

Of course, late-night interviews are the best way to conduct journalism, when everyone is a bit tipsy. And this is when I met a wonderful couple dressed up like they just arrived from Munich Oktoberfest—which of course turned out to be exactly the case. Guðrún Steina and Svanþór Eyþórsson were taking their roles quite seriously.

"So you like to cosplay?" I think I asked. Luckily I got a burst of warm laughter and after a short conversation I found out that they live in my



Bottoms up!

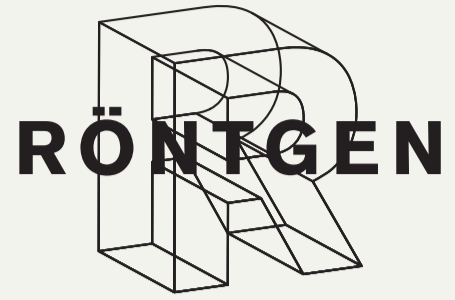
own old hometown, Hafnarfjörður. Which of course, we then had to celebrate.

A beer later I asked more about their costumes. I mean, fitting theme, but not a very Icelandic one. They explained that they are working in connection with a small brewery in the Reykjanes peninsula, Litla Brugghúsið. I had tasted the beer earlier in the day, and it was delicious. Svanþór told me that they were working in metallurgy during the day and brewing beer at night. This moonlighting story is a common refrain when it comes to smaller breweries in Iceland, but the couple underlined the fact that craft beer is not a business plan, but a passion.

The festival crowd was interesting as well for a middle-aged alcoholic like myself who has lived half his life in the centre of Reykjavik. The guests I met were mostly from the south, with the rest apparently all from Hafnarfjörður. Seems that the people of Hafnarfjörður have discovered this brilliant festival and made it their home from home.

Gem for beer enthusiasts

All-in-all, the festival is just one more triumph for the small town of Hveragerði. For two days, the house was packed with beer-loving Icelanders. It was notable, however, that there were few, if any tourists, at the festival. This came as a surprise, because this festival uniquely displays the best of craft beer in Iceland, as well as giving one a taste of the wonderful Faroe Islands and Greenland. In short, this is a gem for beer enthusiasts as well as those who want to experience the true culture of South Iceland. What better way to celebrate the booming brewery culture that is developing in the most northerly point of Europe than get all of the makers together under one roof and party like there's no hangover tomorrow? For us at Reykjavik Grapevine, this is officially in our calendar every year as a must-do experience in Iceland. 🍷



Hverfisgata 12



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Beer / Wine / Cocktails



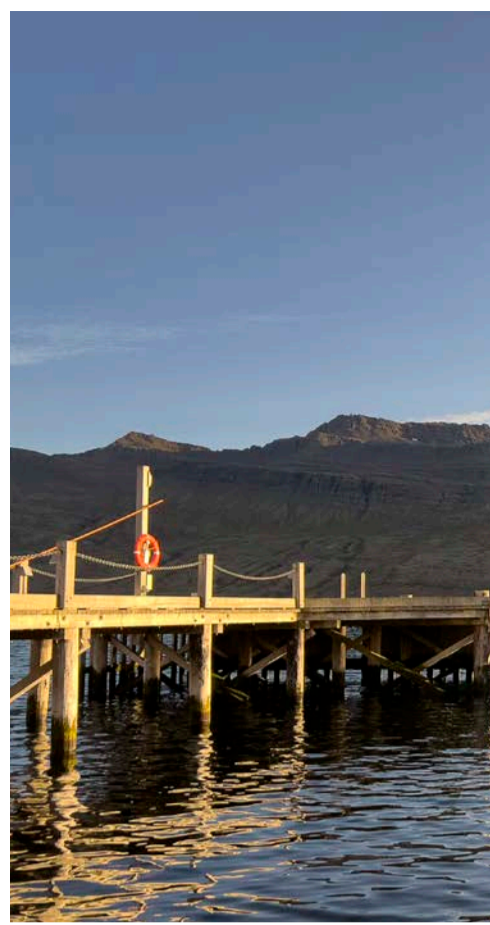
Travel



Eastern Delights

An autumnal trip to East Iceland reveals the best of the region

Words: **Josie Anne Gaitens** Photos: **Art Bicnick**



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Autumn is not so much a season in Iceland, but a feeling. Notably, the Old Norse calendar only had two seasons: summer and winter. That being said, when the tourist numbers dip and the days are still long but begin with a nip in the air, there is a brief period of time that feels like a shoulder season. Call it autumn if you like, but whatever you name it, it's the perfect time to go exploring.

With Route 1 relatively quiet, but little ice or snowfall likely until later in the year, these months are the best opportunity to take the long drive from Reykjavik to East Iceland—a region that boasts some of the best and most diverse sights in the country, but which definitely takes an irritatingly long time to get to from the capital. We're talking 9-12 solid hours in the car here. Fully prepared with playlists, snacks and travel pillows, we hit the road and headed east.

Welcome to wilderness

One benefit to the lengthy journey to the eastern part of the country is that regardless of whether you take the southern or northern route, you invariably spend the day passing by gorgeous landmarks and vistas. We opted for the southern road on

this occasion, and after zipping past famous waterfalls, black beaches and sea stacks, the towering, otherworldly cliffs of the east began to rise up beside us.

After a full day in the car, we were delighted to pull up to The Wilderness Center, our home for the night. And what a treat it was to be there. All of the Center's buildings—including the guest rooms—have been lovingly decked out in carefully curated and restored decor and ephemera. While that might sound kitsch, the result is genuinely homey and comforting. Host and owner Denni Karlsson goes to the length of travelling round abandoned farmsteads in the region to collect old doors, wood, and whatever else would otherwise be left to rack and ruin; it all finds a new home at the Center.

Back in the car...again

The next morning we woke early to enjoy a hearty breakfast, although sadly we were unable to make use of the Wilderness Center's delightful hotpot, as it was once again time to get back on the road. Our East Iceland bucket list was long—as was the distance between the items. There was no time to waste.

Luckily, our first point of interest was not too far away. Kárahnjúkar Dam is an impressive 193 metres tall and 730 metres wide. Its construction changed the Jökla river and surrounding area significantly, and was not without controversy. Undeniably, however, it's a pretty impressive piece of engineering, and worth the visit.

Bienvenue to Fáskrúðsfjörður!

It took another two hours of driving to get from Kárahnjúkar to our evening's accommodation in Fáskrúðsfjörður—it's important to be aware of just how vast this region is, and how far away different locations are from one another. However, Fáskrúðsfjörður was more than worth the journey. The charming little town has a remarkable and storied history. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the town was a hub for the thousands of French sailors who spent the summers fishing in the Eastfjords. By 1903 the fishermen even had their own hospital in the town, a building which has now been restored and converted into a beautiful hotel overlooking the fjord, with a picture-perfect wooden jetty.

Despite the cool of the late-autumn evening, the setting was too inviting to ignore, and we dared ourselves to take a dip in the freezing waters. Once the initial shock was over, the thrill of swimming in the cold sea was compounded by the low evening sun

lighting up the hills above us. Like most of East Iceland, it was astonishingly beautiful.

A meal worth driving for

Later, warmed up and dried off, we took yet another drive to Seyðisfjörður in search of a decent meal. We ended up in the restaurant of Hotel Aldan, and were pleasantly surprised by the thoughtfulness and sophistication of the menu. The majority of dishes are small plates for sharing, and so, to be fair in our judgement, we ordered them all—and incredibly, all of them lived up to expectations. Stand out plates included the reindeer tartar and fried baby potatoes, but the unique house cocktails featuring local

"the towering, otherworldly cliffs of the east began to rise up beside us"

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The Islanders



The fjord of Fáskrúðsfjörður



One of Aldan's many delights

Icelandic ingredients were also fantastic. Manager Dušky Merčák talked us through the menu with ease, demonstrating real expertise, while I nodded along enthusiastically, shovelling potatoes into my mouth at breakneck speed. Fortunately, we had caught the restaurant just in time; it closes over the winter months.

Full and happy, we drove through the newly minted autumn darkness back to Fáskrúðsfjörður. Although letting go of the summer can be hard, there's no better way to toast the idiosyncratic joy of cold days and dark nights than by filling them with good food, new places, and beautiful long drives through the Eastfjords. 🍷



Margeir Pétursson

A chess player turned businessman

Words: Margeir Pétursson has certainly lived an extraordinary life. A chess grandmaster, Icelandic Chess Champion, trainer of the Icelandic national chess team and an accomplished financier, his bank, MP Bank, became the only commercial bank in Iceland that survived the financial crisis of 2007-2008. In 2004, Margeir's interest in underdeveloped financial markets brought him to Ukraine, where he acquired a bank and resides until now. "I'm no stranger to crises," admits Margeir.

Photos: Iryna Vorobyova
"By education, I'm a lawyer. My first job was in a state bank in Iceland," he shares. "I left the bank to become a professional chess player. When I was travelling around, I met some bankers, and I got the idea that when I would go out of chess, I would create my own financial company. And I did that in 1995."

Following his successful banking career in Iceland and the Baltics, Margeir purchased a small bank in Ukraine—Bank Lviv. "For the last 10 years, I've been mostly in Ukraine," Margeir says.

Despite the ongoing war in Ukraine, Margeir admits that the bank is not doing too badly, primarily due to its location in the west of Ukraine. "We have a branch in Kyiv. But in 2006, I made the decision that we would not cross the Dnipro river. And that was an excellent decision," says Margeir.

"We are providing full services during the war, supporting our clients and the local economy. I think that's our contribution in the resistance to this terrible aggression by Russians," he says. He remains in Ukraine most of the time to support the staff: "I couldn't really expect them to work full force while I'm in a quiet place far away."

"I like Lviv. It's a beautiful historic city," says Margeir. "History is written on the walls here. Just taking a walk, looking at the houses is very interesting. In Iceland, we don't have such old buildings."

"Before COVID, I was going to Iceland almost every month, now it's less often. There are basically two things I miss while being away: the swimming pools and the fish," he shares, adding that, of course, it's also friends and family.

Despite being located at the opposite ends of Europe, Margeir says Icelanders and Ukrainians are not so different. "Life has been much easier in Iceland for a couple of generations. For Ukraine, the 20th century was just horrible. Now, when things were finally improving, we have this attack by Russia. It's unbelievable."

His banking career didn't stop Margeir from being involved in chess. "Many of my friends in Lviv are chess grandmasters or chess players," he says. "Ten years ago, together with my grandmaster friends here we created our own club—Lviv Grandmaster Chess Club." Before Covid-19, the club would gather at least every month.

"I've been the captain of the Icelandic national team now for two years," Margeir continues. "As a chess player, I'm no longer professional. But I really enjoy studying chess and following things. That was a bit ideal for me to be the coach, and, in general, we have reasonable results."

"Before the war, the bank was developing extremely well. Now everything is on hold, we can't get funds. Everybody's holding back, they say—'talk to us at the end of the war,'" says Margeir. "I think when this war is finally over, there will be a good time ahead for Ukraine. It depends on how the bank is developing, but I think I will be coming here at least."

The Islanders is our series where we interview interesting people in Iceland about their unique lives. Know someone we should speak to? Email: grapevine@grapevine.is

WELL, YOU ASKED

Soggy Buns and Closet Vegetarians



Words: Catherine Magnúsdóttir

Does Iceland have any sugar-free products, especially candies and other "sweets"?

Well, we do like a good sugar-rush here to run up mountains in the summer and not want to die in the winter darkness, but I suppose you can always go for Opal if that's your thing? That's those little licorice pastilles. Icelanders are pretty fond of licorice in general but they like to mix it with chocolate or ice cream, so tough luck skipping sugar there. Why would you want to avoid sugar anyway? Do you not like happiness? Killjoy.

Any vegetarians in Iceland?

Considering that meat and fish form the very backbone of Icelandic cuisine, not to mention culture and society, I'd say any vegetarians that do live here are probably closet cases. It's certainly possible to be a vegetarian in Iceland but it's a little 'hush hush' if you know what I mean. If you know where to go and how to ask you can get vegetarian options, although people here are rather discreet about it.

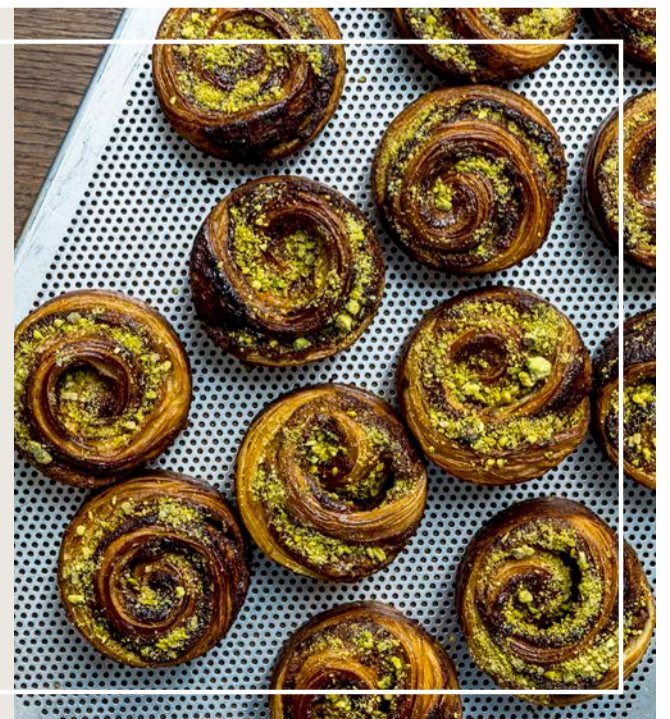
Is it true that there isn't any good bread in Iceland?

Best we can do is hot dog buns. Icelanders notoriously have no finesse when it comes to bread. Crust? Ha! Forget about that. Even the toast is soggy and somehow crumbly at the same time. I'm pretty sure I've seen French tourists faint when they came across what counts as a loaf here. And if it's not a white sponge of wheat you get a dark, dense rye brick that you could build a house with. 🍷



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“We always feel like we need to do an extra good job in Iceland.”

Sigur Rós' multi-instrumentalist Kjartan Sveinsson cannot hide his excitement about ending the world tour in Reykjavík. - P11



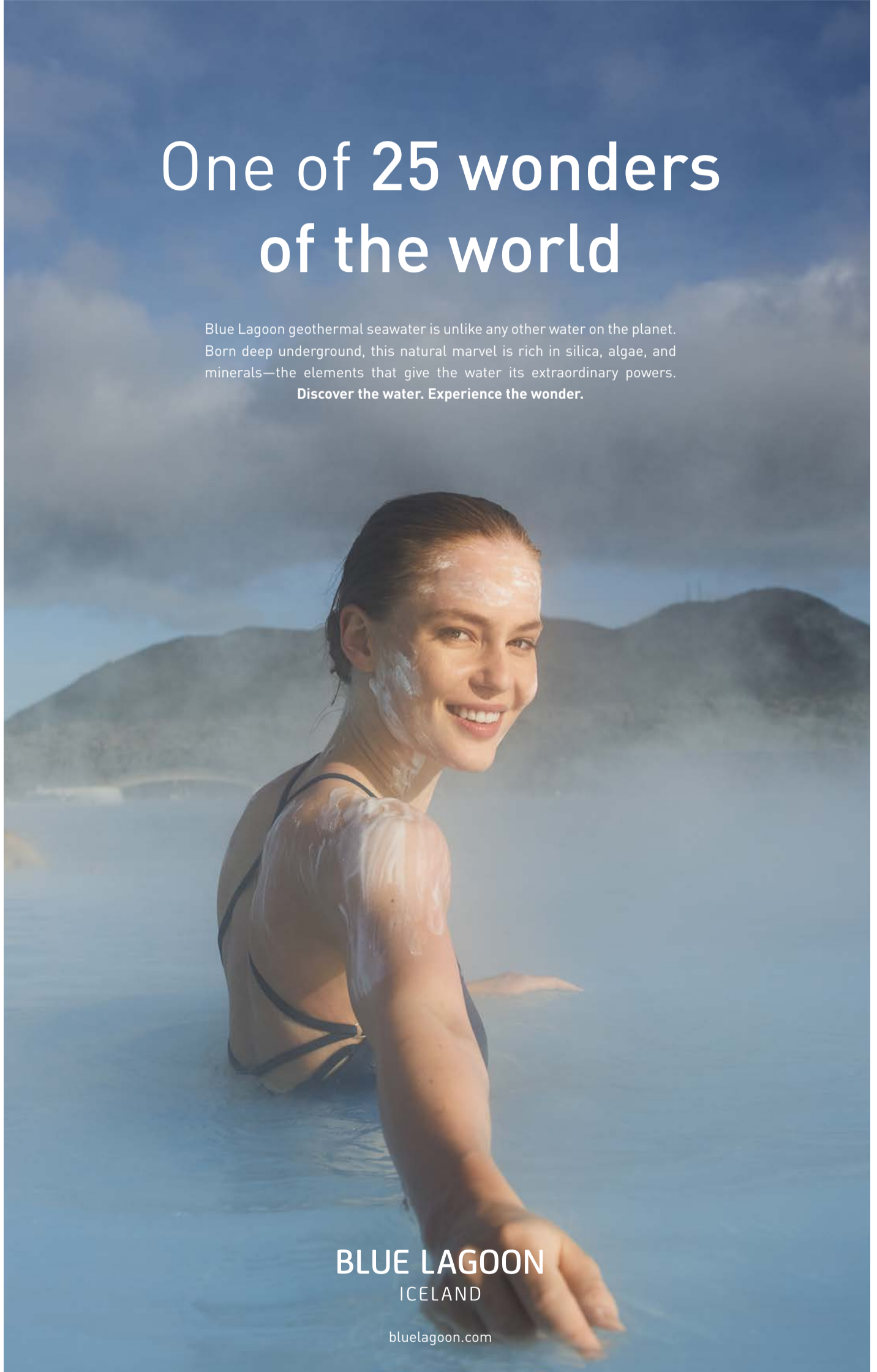
“We've been juggling many sentences.”

Brynhildur Karlsdóttir of Kvikindi on the band's dance / dance pop / cyber pop album. - P18



“I explained the book as an agricultural thriller, but my publisher asked me not to say that out loud ever again.”

Writer Sigríður Hagalín Björnsdóttir talks journalism, non-fiction and her first book in English. - P26



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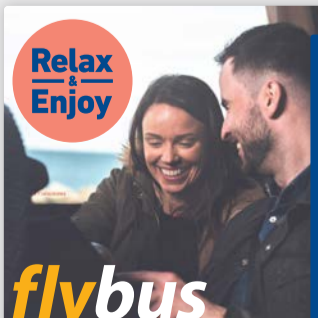
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