

# The Reykjavík Grapevine



Free copy

Volume 21

Issue 03 2024

Best before April 5

## Ben Frost's Scaffolding Of Sound

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## On the Cover

After a seven-year hiatus, Australian transplant Ben Frost released his new album *Scope Neglect* (Mute Records) on March 1. The album release will be accompanied by a Reykjavík gig on April 3 at IDNÓ. Rex Beckett sat down with Ben to discuss his creative process, juggling multiple projects and where the new work stands. The cover photo is a previously unreleased shot from a press photoshoot for *Scope Neglect*.

PHOTO BY:  
Topper Komm

STYLING BY:  
Andrea Helgadóttir



## Editorial Eye On The Prize

WORDS Catharine Fulton,  
Editor in Chief

**Y**ou know, 20 issues into this gig editing the Reykjavík Grapevine and I still haven't gotten a hang of writing the editorial. By the time I've read over every word going into the issue and considered all the topics, events and angles being covered, I find I just don't have a hell of a lot to say.

I have a ton to say between issues and we spend a great deal of time around GV HQ discussing issues and current events, arguing for change and critiquing those in positions of power. Then print day comes along and I stare at a blank computer screen completely at a loss about what to write down. Could that issue be remedied by simply not leaving my editorial to the eleventh hour? Most likely.

But, upon further consideration, this inability to pinpoint a single issue du jour is just a symptom of the times. We are so inundated with news and reactions and information and commentary on a daily basis that something that has you up in arms one day is pushed from your brain and superseded by the next big story to hit the airwaves the next day. It's an exhausting recipe for apathy and inaction.

It's so inspiring, then, to meet people who *are* passionate and active and doing something to make a mark on the world or at least the community around them. People who are keeping their focus on a cause that is important to them and keeping up the fight even in the face of government inaction, hurled criticism, red tape or other potential roadblocks.

Before the time comes around to write another editorial, I'll be trying to be more like them. ■

## Contributors



CATHERINE  
MAGNÚSDÓTTIR

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



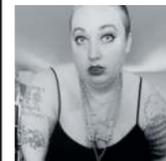
JÓHANNES BJARKI  
BJARKASON

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



IRYNA ZUBENKO

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



REX BECKETT

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



SHRUTHI BASAPPA

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

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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK  
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BEST SPA  
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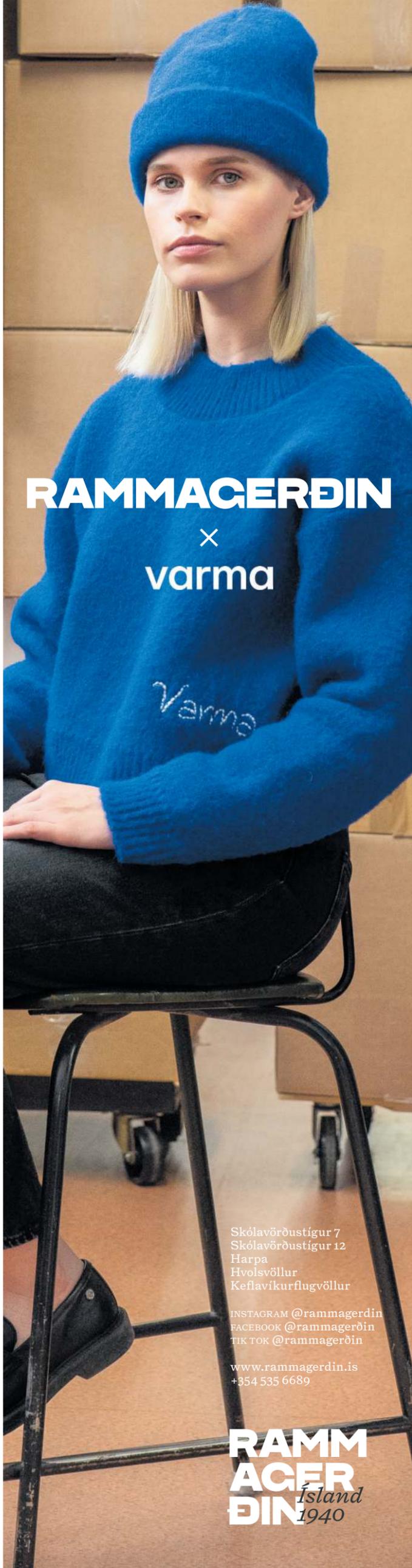
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What The News!?

# Look At Us Grow!

A selection of news making headlines in recent weeks

WORDS Catharine Fulton  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

registered as women and 173 registered as neither. Also, an impressive 75,884 inhabitants are of foreign origin – that's just shy of 19%. The average age of the populace is 38.2, meaning Icelanders are slightly younger than the OECD average. No wonder we look so damn good.

#### MEANWHILE IN GRINDAVÍK

Residents and business owners from Grindavík were given the green light on Feb. 20 to return to the town 24/7 to tend to their properties. That's not an indication that the town is safe, though, and Police Chief Úlfar Lúðvíksson has stressed repeatedly that those entering Grindavík do so at their own risk. He has also warned against spending the night in town.

Hörður Guðbrandsson, chair of Grindavík trade union Verkalýðfélag Grindavíkur, didn't mince words in describing his thoughts on the reopening. "I think it's completely stupid to allow people to stay there," Hörður told national broadcaster RÚV. "The town is practically falling apart, with no cold water, almost no hot water and a sewage system that people haven't tested under pressure, and a cracked town that is [still] being investigated for cracks, but not yet worked on. I have a lot of doubts about this."

A new emergency siren system has been installed and tested in Grindavík and around the Blue Lagoon and Svartsengi Power Plant, so any sudden eruption will be accompanied by a whole lot of noise.

#### GROUND RISE GALORE

Everyone's favourite volcanologist, Þorvaldur Þórðarson, has been pondering the state of the nation of late and urging the government to make preparations for the unlikely event of an eruption blocking Reykjanesbraut, the main artery connecting the international airport to Reykjavík and beyond.

In addition to the ongoing inflation being measured under Svartsengi on the Reykjanes peninsula, where a magma reservoir has been feeding recent eruptions in the area, satellite imagery shows land rise in other parts of the country, including under Vatnajökull glacier. Þorvaldur questions if the reason for the land rise is the existence of a mantle plume beneath the country, centred to the east of Vatnajökull.

If that theory were to prove true, Þorvaldur said the result would be increased volcanic activity and larger volcanic eruptions throughout Iceland.

#### A WHALE OF A TIME

Finally, Kristján Loftsson, owner of Iceland's one and only whaling company Hvalur hf, has applied for a new licence to hunt fin whales beginning in the summer of 2024. He's seeking a licence for the next five to 10 years. Heck, "why not?" seems to be the entirety of Hvalur's business plan, so as disappointing as this is – and as many protests as it will spawn – it's entirely on brand for Kristján. ■

It finally happened, people. This quirky little island in the North Atlantic is growing up. Iceland's population has officially passed 400,000. In fact, there are now 400,399 of us living on this semi-habitable rock. What a time to be alive.

Breaking down the ballooning population, it looks like men are the most numerous gender – there are 207,391 people registered as men in the country, compared to 192,835



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# ONE OF THE FOOD WONDERS OF THE WORLD

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# Get An Abortion

Do Shit

The Útlendingur's ongoing guide to getting shit done

WORDS Catharine Fulton  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

and the rights and obligations of healthcare providers.

to invite you for an appointment on another date.

"If you are determined to seek a termination, you should contact us as early as possible," explains Dr. Kolbrún Pálsdóttir, the department head of Kvennadeild (the women's department) at Landspítali University Hospital. "At six weeks it's less complicated and much easier for the women. It's more like a normal menstruation; less bleeding and less painful."

"Protocol is that we must confirm intrauterine pregnancy before we start the termination process," Kolbrún explains. "We are not really able to confirm a pregnancy until you are about six weeks pregnant, but you can call as early as you'd like and we will call you back and book an appointment according to your situation."

**M**uch like wrangling your annual tax return or figuring out how to register your kid for extra-curriculars, navigating the health care system in Iceland can be tricky and frustrating and, sometimes, rage inducing.

The majority of abortions carried out in Iceland are medical. The pregnant person typically takes one pill orally in the presence of a doctor or nurse at the Kvennadeild, and is sent home with four pills to be inserted vaginally 48 hours later. The procedure changes around nine weeks of pregnancy, though, as the pregnant individual will return to the hospital for observation after inserting the second round of pills. This is to monitor them in case of excessive bleeding.

Kolbrún says that most people are then booked in for an appointment within 10 to 14 days after making contact with the hospital.

But if there is ever a time when you don't need the extra stress of research or trial and error it's when you find yourself pregnant. If you are a pregnant person planning on carrying a foetus to term, then your first stop should be your neighbourhood Heilsugæslan, where you will be paired with a midwife to oversee your care. Nota bene: you are in control, so if you don't like the care you receive from your assigned midwife, it is your right to request another midwife to take over your care.

Terminations performed after 12 weeks may require higher doses or additional rounds of medication.

Terminating a pregnancy is not a decision people tend to make lightly. Kolbrún points out that there are counsellors and social workers available to speak with about the procedure and its potential mental or emotional toll.

But this column isn't about that. It's about walking you through the process of procuring an abortion.

However, the first step if you believe you could be pregnant is to confirm your assumption via a test, which can be bought in the toiletries section of most grocery stores or at any pharmacy. To book an appointment with Kvennadeild, call 543 3600. You will be prompted to leave your name, kennitala and phone number so that a nurse can call you back within three business days. They will call any time between 10:00 and 15:00

It bears mentioning that an abortion is a free service performed for anyone with an Icelandic kennitala who has already been registered with Sjúkratryggingar Íslands, the national health insurance – this happens automatically after six months residency in Iceland. Termination is also available free of charge for those registered as refugees, regardless of when they arrived in the country. People who have not yet been registered with the health insurance system will be liable to pay for all medical services out of pocket. A medical abortion performed at any time up to the 22nd week will cost 150,000 ISK, while a surgical abortion will cost 500,000 ISK. ■

It is legal in Iceland to request an abortion up to the end of the 22nd week of pregnancy. The entirety of the Termination of Pregnancy Act, No. 43/2019, is available online in English for those seeking a deeper understanding of their exact rights



# Everything Is Geggjað

Word Of The Issue

Sounding Icelandic, one word at a time

WORDS Catharine Fulton  
IMAGE Adobe Stock

receipts or express your emotions, only to hear Icelanders having full conversations with a single word in a specific intonation.

One word that's good to know (or, at the very least, fun to know) is geggjað. It's awesome. No, really, it literally means "awesome."

Are you looking at something cool or amazing or impressive? Exclaim, "Vá! Geggjað!"

Did you ask someone at work a question and they actually gave you a helpful answer? Thank them with a "Geggjað! Takk!"

Got some bad or annoying news? Grumble out a sarcastic "Ugh. Geggjað."

It works in so many scenarios.

What's more, toss a "ur" to the end of the word and you've got "crazy". Just think of all the conversations you can single-wordedly react to with geggjaður in your arsenal. Entire worlds are opening. Your life is about to change. Geggjað! ■

**L**earning Icelandic is hard. There are all these cases and genders and rules that even the Icelandic teachers can't explain the reasoning for. It can be frustrating. And it all feels more frustrating when you're learning long and verbose sentences to order coffee, ask for



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Side Hustle

# A Crime Writer With A Day Job

A closer look into the double life of Yrsa Sigurðardóttir

WORDS Iryna Zubenko  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Many writers start writing as a side pursuit, with most of them trying to quit their day jobs as soon as their writing career takes off. Yrsa Sigurðardóttir, who initially emerged as a children's writer and then moved on to become the country's most prominent crime novelist, didn't follow that path. Despite her books being translated into more than 30 languages and a few of them being adapted into movies, Yrsa has continued working as a civil engineer. "This is just so much a part of who I am," she says, jokingly complaining that she no longer has an assigned desk at the office after recently reducing her hours at the engineering firm Verkís.

**Y**rsa Sigurðardóttir, 60, a civil engineer

It has changed. The writing used to be the side hustle. But now writing is the main job and engineering is my side hustle.

This is what I studied. In 30+ years since I graduated, I have worked

mainly in the construction side of things – project management, procurement, conflict resolution and that type of thing. My job is not so much the design, but the actualisation of the design.

I've worked on a number of power plant projects, both in design management and construction management. But when the publication started abroad, I'd go a lot abroad to launch books or go to festivals. I felt like I wasn't doing anything well. I didn't have time to do my job as well as I wanted and I was always stressed with the writing. So, I had to cut down. I had to face the reality that I couldn't do as much as I wanted and stopped working on these really big projects that require a lot of effort. What I do now is come in and help with various projects that other people are working on.

I had started to decrease my hours before the pandemic, but when COVID-19 came I was working from home. It's quite comfortable to do it from home when you're not working full-time – you don't have to spend time going to the office and back. But once everything was returning to normal, I just continued working from home and realised that you slowly fade out. It's really important to be in the office and visible be-

cause I found that slowly my work input was less and less required because people forgot I was there. Now I'm working on trying to get back to being in the office half of the time. My New Year's resolution is to be here half a day and then write in the afternoon.

## REALITY CHECK

I don't *need* this job to sustain myself. It's more to sustain my brain. Writing is a very lonely job – you're at home with your characters. I need the social aspect of a job and to work with a team and other people. At least for me, this is very important and it keeps me more grounded with reality, with the real world, not to be always just inside your made-up world and the pages that you're writing.

I've never gotten writer's block. I think it's because there's no stress – if I don't write a book, then I'll just go back to working full-time. It takes away the pressure.

At my house and at my job, the writing doesn't really matter. I don't get any slack because I'm a writer so that I can do a worse job than somebody else. At home – I'm the mother and the wife. It's a little bit like living in two worlds – with the writing,

the travelling, meeting readers and other writers being one world, and the other world being my home and my day job.

## KEEPING THE CREATIVE SPARK ALIVE

People tend to think that engineering is not a creative field, which is so far from the truth. Creativity is not only about the arts, it's a much wider concept. Many of the things that are done in engineering are highly creative, although restricted within safety standards. It's a really creative and a very fun job.

My favourite thing is working with people and working on a team. The thing that also makes engineering fun, is that you're always working on a project. You're not working on the same thing always and forever – you work on a project and the project has a beginning, a crescendo, it rises and then it has to wind down. One of the things with projects is that they are always unique. It's never completely repetitive. I love to always be working on something new. It keeps you motivated.

I wish there were more hours in the day, so that I could work more and still maintain the same level of writing. The one thing that I don't like is

having to do timesheets. I really hate bureaucracy in any form. I understand that it is required, but I just don't like it.

I've gotten lots of pointers for my stories at work. For example, in the book *The Prey*, the idea for the radar station in Stokksnes was suggested by someone who had worked there on a control system. It was the weirdest place – totally isolated and a great setting for a book. In my books, I don't shy away from tech and I can easily get information that I need on various aspects of radio signals and all kinds of things.

## WORD OF ADVICE

I think what would help young aspiring writers that are working on their first attempt at a novel would be to try to maintain the focus. It's so easy to give up when nobody's waiting for your book. And the hardest one is the first one. First of all, to finish it and also to find a publisher, which is a whole lot more difficult than when I was starting out. ■

Want to share how you're making ends meet? Email us at [grapevine@grapevine.is](mailto:grapevine@grapevine.is) with the subject line "Side Hustle." We'll happily keep your identity anonymous.



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On The Fringes

## Crazy For Crochet

Slow down and try not to lose the thread

WORDS Catherine Magnúsdóttir  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

I thought I'd go easy on myself and my readers in this edition of my quest for happy hobbies and intriguing interests. Find something nice, something cosy, you know? I noticed a bunch of people crocheting around me and figured I'd find out what's up with that. I didn't think I'd find Tinna Þórudóttir Þorvaldsdóttir – crochet queen of Iceland – and that we'd end up chatting in her studio surrounded by eye-catching patterns. Tinna has published books on the craft and her Instagram profile and YouTube channel show off her colourful crocheted creations. I quickly found myself “hooked,” you might say. But how did Tinna pick up the needle and why and how has crocheting become so freaking trendy?

**T**inna's origin story into the textile arts starts fairly simply. She was taught needlepoint, knitting and crocheting by her great-grandmother. “I just did it for a hobby at first,” she says. “In college I would knit socks for all my friends. When I lived in Barcelona I didn't have a heater so I made a big blanket – stuff like that.” One fateful Facebook post of one of her projects (a light series with bells) caught the attention of Icelanders, though. “I ended up having women from all over the country calling me

from places like Höfn and Akureyri, just on my home line, asking for help.” This then led to leading classes and eventually writing a book when Tinna realised there hadn't been a proper crocheting book published in Icelandic in about half a century. *Póra - heklbók* was published in 2011 and reached the second spot on the national best-seller list.

“I think they only printed about 500 copies at first and had to rush to print more,” she says. “So, the yarn ball got rolling from there. Now I've published four books; for one of them I was the editor, the other three were just my patterns. Then I started publishing online and, from 2014 on, I went to do crochet work full time. Next year it'll be 10 years. I bought a house with crochet money! Who would have thought?”

Expanding beyond the Icelandic market via the internet was certainly a boost. Tinna's crocheting videos helped keep more than a few people sane while stuck at home during the pandemic – although covid wasn't the first spike in textile art and crafting popularity that Tinna has seen in the last years. “The first spike was really after the crash here (2008) – everybody was knitting. My mom knit all the Christmas presents that year, it was a very back to basics thing to do.”

“I think that when you have a crisis people tend to go back to the basics,” she says. “And now we're also always on our phones, always in a hurry, everything is so fast. Crocheting forces you to slow down. It is not fast! It's repetitive and meditative. A bit like hand yoga. And you're pro-

ducing something and end up with a final product that you're hopefully very proud of and it's useful and I love that.”

Tinna mostly focuses on crochet patterns, taking inspiration from her surroundings, at home or when travelling. She shows me a piece based on her azulejo kitchen tiles, for instance. “I do a piece and then I write up the instructions,” she says, “basically as a manual, so other people can copy it. I don't sell what I crochet because there is no money in that. But I like being versatile in my patterns, so you can play with it yourself. I try to do what I call interactive patterns. I want to spark creativity. Different designs that you can arrange as you want in any size you want.”

The hobby has brought Tinna in contact with people all over the world. Her team of testers – “because you have to test the patterns and there are calculations involved” – is spread across Australia, England, India, Spain and the U.S. And then there's all the connections she's made with other enthusiasts around the globe. “It's so gratifying,” Tinna tells me. “I make something here, in some basement studio in Iceland, and then there is somebody making it again in Jakarta and maybe they have a totally different take on it and it becomes a type of conversation of colours and threads and it's really heartwarming.” ■

You can find Tinna's work on YouTube @TinnaThorudottirThorvaldar, Instagram via @tinnahekl and on Facebook Tinna's Crochet Club [FBfacebook.com/groups/TinnaCrochetClub](https://www.facebook.com/groups/TinnaCrochetClub)



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# Oh My Dog! This Is Not A Drill: Vegan Hot Dogs In Akureyri

If Akureyri can't be the northern capital of Iceland, could it be the vegan hot dog capital?

WORDS Iryna Zubenko  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

recent trip to Akureyri that Pylsuvagninn á Akureyri has not one, but seven vegan hot dog options on its menu. I didn't waste time.

## THE STORY

Located on the main street of Akureyri, Pylsuvagninn á Akureyri is hard to miss — its tacky yellow design pops up from afar, contrasting with a bright pink ice cream shop just across the street. Similar to Reykjavík's Bæjarins Beztu, the stand says "SS pylsur" for the country's most popular sausages from Sláturfélag Suðurlands. Polish immigrants Agnieszka Kujawska and Tomasz Kujawski bought this hot dog stand ten years ago and despite selling sausages from a local supplier in North Iceland in the beginning, due to customer demand, they succumbed and switched to SS.

"On the first day we opened, I prepared some toppings like tomato, cucumber, salad, typical hot dog toppings served in Poland," says Agnieszka. "But I only sold one hot dog like that." Slowly but surely, she was learning what makes a truly Icelandic hot dog — the importance of adding two types of onion and specific sauces. "After a while, I also

learned that people from Reykjavík don't want the cocktail sauce in their hot dog, meanwhile here, everyone wants it. Right now, even by the accent, I can tell who's from where and who wants which sauce based on that," she laughs.

The idea of adding vegan hot dogs to the menu was born because Agnieszka's daughter-in-law is vegan and her son was always asking for vegan hot dogs for her, emphasizing that they would be popular among visitors. "At first, I made a 'vegan' hot

dogs (plant-based sausage, onion, ketchup and mustard), Pylsuvagninn á Akureyri offers a vegan hot dog with pickles, a summer-only offer with fresh vegetables, a popular after-party bite with baked beans, a hot dog with pickled red cabbage and two options that come in a black bun — the vegan black sheepdog and the vegan volcanic dog with onions, sriracha, jalapenos, ketchup and mustard.

"When the volcano erupted, we wanted to introduce something new,

with two types of cheese, plus nuts and rhubarb jam — a delicacy not for the faint-hearted.

"The locals and the tourists stick to the classic hot dogs, but vegetarians and vegans like trying new things," answers Agnieszka about the most popular plant-based hot dog on her roster.

## THE VERDICT

Having waited years to get my hands on a vegan "pylsa," I'm ecstatic. I devour my hot dog with a plant-based sausage and pickles in record time. The perfectly toasted bun melts in my mouth, the sausage is juicy with a satisfying texture, and the zesty pickles hit the spot. The only downside is eating a hot dog outside in below-zero temperatures.

I know I'll be trying the volcanic hot dog next, but we are short on time, so I might as well just move to Akureyri. ■

Taste vegan hot dogs at Pylsuvagninn á Akureyri on Hafnarstræti. The hot dog stand is open until 17:00 on most days (unless the weather is terrible) and until 23:00 in the summer.

"Eina með öllu," ("one with everything") is something I have never said while living in Iceland. Yet, it's probably the most common phrase you'd hear at any local hot dog stand, the most famous one being just around the corner from the Grapevine's HQ. Being plant-based most of my adult life, the only time I even had a hot dog out in this country ended up being an empty bun with sauce and crispy onion. Laden my FOMO over never getting a "pylsa" when it seems like it's "hot dog o'clock" for literally everyone else, I was elated to discover on a

Having waited years to get my hands on some vegan "pylsa," I'm ecstatic.

dog with tuna and vegetables, but my son corrected me that it's not really vegan. I've done my research and learned that it has to have a vegan sausage and toppings," Agnieszka admits her mistake.

## THE MENU

The tuna hot dog stayed on the menu, but 100% vegan options were added. In addition to classic hot

so we came up with a black bun with an addition of bamboo charcoal," says Agnieszka. "The buns are made here in a local bakery."

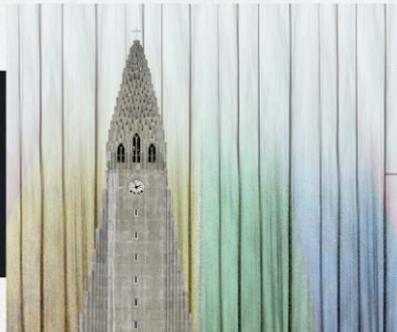
For those who don't eat meat or fish but allow dairy products in their diet, there are a few more options on the menu — a hot dog with potato salad, cheese, fried egg, or blue cheese. The latter one mixes ketchup, cocktail sauce, remoulade and mustard

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# Feature The Hidden Scaffolding Of

Inside the architecture of *Scope Neglect*

WORDS Rex Beckett  
IMAGES Baldur Kristjánsson

The new album in question, *Scope Neglect* (Mute Records), hits the world simultaneously with the release of this magazine (March 1), purely by coincidence, and is Ben's first studio album in seven years. He will premiere the album live in a hometown show on April 3 at IDNÓ.

That's not to say that the past seven years have been quiet for the Australian-Icelandic musical polyglot, internationally renowned for his distinctive style of experimental composition, numerous albums and scoring works for dance, film and stage. Within the time since his previous studio album, *The Centre Cannot Hold* (2017), Ben spent over four years working on the music of two Netflix series (German sci-fi thriller *Dark* and period-piece mystery *1899*), three years working on his third collaborative installation with Richard Mosse and Trevor Tweeten called *Broken Spectre*, and presented two sound installations of his own in Athens and Arkansas. He's a sometimes member of the iconoclastic band Swans, while dotingly raising his three children and — whenever he has the chance — swimming in the sea.

## THE DEATH RATTLES

"I don't want to repeat myself and retrace any of those steps," says Ben when we meet again at his studio on an unseasonably balmy and bright February morning. "That, for whatever reason, is pretty important to me. The last thing I want to spend my energy on is like making something that just feels like an extension of old ideas."

With the work on both Netflix series coming to an end just as the COV-

ID-19 pandemic hit, and shortly after Ben moved his studio to his Reykjavik home, the stasis period the world went into provided him with 18 months to mess around making new music.

"Really, a lot of it was just kind of the death throes, like I had to sort of write my way out of that stuff and exhaust it or something," he says. "I probably didn't recognise it as clearly previously, where there's this moment where you're gonna write a new album. And then you sit down, and you start writing the new album. And a year later, you're like, 'everything that I just did for the past year is complete shit.' But you have to do that. That's the point. You have to purge."

## Trying starts from being willing to fail.

Once emptied, Ben returned to his old faithful practice of refilling his tank — enlisting new collaborators and changing the locale of where the groundwork would take place. Collaborations and relocations are a prominent trait of Ben's career, wherein the process of creating new circumstances to work in, with new people to work with becomes the blueprint for the creative work.

"I increasingly feel my role as an artist is creating a situation that I have to sort of navigate through," he says. "It's like I've got these people and I have this place and I have this time and it's like that. Whatever that is, that's going to be the thing. There's a possibility that the thing is not good — that's happened before.

Reaching out to somebody you've never worked with before, I'm risking the possibility that it's going to be an absolute fail. The trying starts from being willing to fail."

## THE UNDERLYING CONNECTIONS

For *Scope Neglect*, the process started back in 2022 when Ben reached out to guitarist Greg Kubacki from U.S. mathcore band Car Bomb over Instagram to pitch the idea of working together. Ben booked 10 days that November at Berlin's Candybomber Studios in Tempelhof Airport with producer and engineer Ingo Krauss, and flew Greg over to join him in the studio to lay down some tracking.

"We'd never met before," he says. "Without really understanding why I'm really drawn to this person, I've reached out to him. I said, 'Hey, I'm making this new record. Do you want to be involved?' And he was like, 'Yeah.' And I'm not questioning why he's saying yeah. But when we actually started to look at it, he really respects what I do. And part of the reason that I love what he does is because we are coming from very similar places."

The auspicious blend of Ben's experimental compositional style and Greg's distinctive guitar work became the crux of how the record would eventually unfold — a frantic idiosyncratic progression of meditative intensity that still defies my

own vocabulary after numerous listens. Although their works in the broad sense fall into distinctly different wheelhouses, their underlying modus operandi for creating music turned out to be far more similar than either of them even knew from the start.

"I've definitely found it to be true that if you are drawn to somebody's work or they're drawn to yours, there's a pretty high probability that you have quite a lot in common creatively and a lot of it is unseen on the surface," he says. "It became very quickly evident throughout discussions when we first met that he's a huge electronic music fan. For [Greg], everything comes back to Autechre and Aphex Twin ... It's like this constructivism and weird kind of way he's making this music is born out of the way of listening to fractured rhythm and broken melody and super heavily produced layering of sound. You can hear it immediately in the music, but you wouldn't necessarily see that without knowing."

With this newfound connection and understanding, they got down to business with Greg playing over foundational tracks Ben provided as guidelines that wouldn't necessarily make it into the final mix. Much of what Greg heard while recording were compositions Ben made to assist the function of the process rather than defining the outcome.

"A huge part of that record is about rhythm, so a lot of what I was doing in the studio was background in order to get Greg to feel comfortable performing," he says. "He comes from a band that works with a drummer and other humans around him.

"I feel like I'm living in a time where my attention is being pulled in several directions," says Ben Frost, languidly slouching against the wall. It's a horrid stormy night in the middle of January and we have met in the din of a popular downtown Reykjavik bar ostensibly to discuss his upcoming album. The weight of the world looms like the gloaming of the candlelight on the tables. "I feel distracted. I feel kind of unnecessarily anxious."



# Ben Frost

So coming into a situation where I'm playing some super ambient passage but then asking him to play the way he plays, those two things are out of step with one another in a way that is really confrontational as a performer. So in order to get him into the space, where he would play in a certain way, I was bringing a lot of elements into the recording that you don't actually hear at all."

At this point, he beckons me over to the monitors and opens the penultimate track of the album, "Tritium Bath," an seven-plus minute long entrancing banger laden with pummelling guitar surges and gentle disorienting plucking. After a few seconds, he switches to a proto-version of the track that Greg heard while recording, a pugilistic polyrhythmic drumbeat with an even more dizzying overlay of scattering plucked strings.

"They literally do not exist in the final form of the music," he says with subtle glee as he switches between the tracks. "They were just there as this kind of scaffolding to build the thing. But then once I had him there, I knew I would delete everything. It's like this sort of paper maché thing where you pop the balloon."

## THE TOOLS OF METAL

Ben's penchant for the tools of metal music genres has always been a signifier of his work. With *Scope Neglect*, the outcome of his collaboration with Greg brought this into a new focus.

"What I really get from that music is how it's meditative in spite of the abrasive nature of the sound," he says. "Through the pandemic

period, there was a lot of time not leaving the house, sitting around. I think a lot of the music I was maybe playing around with in that moment had these really horizontal, long lines. Very meditative. When you think about how metal works — I'm reaching here — but the way metal works is that there's an acclimation that occurs."

Ben connects this form of acclimation similarly to long form durational music such as Terry Riley, Alice Coltrane, Indian music and West Coast minimalism. What emerged for Ben was creating music with this durational form requiring acclimation, but created with the tools of metal, more or less.

"There have also always been things about metal in a really broad sense that stopped me going all the way in," he goes on. "I mean, have you ever read Metallica lyrics? I didn't think they were great when I was 13, let alone 43. So that part doesn't work for me. I really wanted to make something that had these longer shapes and that sort of lingers longer. But at the same time, I didn't want to make music that was this ambient study."

## THE ENERGY OF SPACE

Long ambient study-like music is not so far from the realm of Ben's environs since making his home in Iceland nearly 20 years ago. Born and raised in Melbourne, Ben moved to Iceland in 2005 and fell in with the crowd of artists on Valgeir Sigurðsson's Bedroom Community label, with whom Ben released three of his defining albums — *Theory of Machines*, *By the Throat* and *Aurora* — before signing to Mute Records in 2014.

Bedroom Community artists were also some of his most notable early collaborators, such as the 2011 album *Solaris* with Daníel Bjarnason, as well as projects with Nico Muhly, Tim Hecker, Björk and Valgeir. Ben had his own studio at Valgeir's Greenhouse Studios in Breiðholt for 15 years before moving his studio to his downtown home in 2019.

"Architecture has kind of an energy to it, right?" he posits about the move. "I think the longer you spend in a room, at some point it just kind of gets tapped out. That's not to say it's tapped out forever. It was tapped out for the person that's in there. And so it just felt like it was the right moment to try something new, which in the end actually turned out to be

come this thing where I go out and I do things and I bring them back here to finish them or to finesse them. There's not a lot of recording involved. Most of that happens elsewhere. The documentation, if you will, happens elsewhere. This has become more of a space to coalesce ideas or pull things together."

## THE STATELESS ARTIST

Ben's penchant for relocation seems to come from a cellular-level sense of dislocation. Describing his idyllic childhood in Australia as "a dream," he nonetheless was acutely aware from his youth that something about his presence in the land of his birth was off.

**But then once I had him there, I knew I would delete everything. It's like this sort of paper maché thing where you pop the balloon.**

quite prescient because the pandemic hit six months later."

The sudden global turn of events that followed Ben's studio move brought further realisations about the role of location in his own creative process. In addition to his inclination to find new locations and people when beginning a new project, it dawned on him that his needs had changed entirely.

"It sounds silly, but I don't need a studio," he says. "The way my work has evolved over the years has be-

degree burns because look at me. People who look like me are not supposed to live there."

Like so many people who end up choosing to make Iceland their home or their destination-du-coeur, it was a physiological reaction with this country that resonated with Ben. After a childhood of chronic allergies and profuse sweating, going for a hike in Iceland and neither sweating nor wheezing was a revelation.

"I remember really, really, really strongly the first experiences I had and just being so focused with this awareness that there's grass everywhere, and I'm fine," he says. "That's definitely faded with time and become less prevalent as a reason to be here. But initially it's a very physical reaction. Just this feeling of calm. The other side of that coin is that still to this day, 20 years later, shopping in Bónus is no less depressing today than it was then."

Still, even with having citizenship for over a decade and speaking the local language with a native fluency that puts other long-time immigrants still struggling with the language to shame, the assignment of a nation to his artistic identity is not a straightforward proposition.

"There's no escaping the fact that, as far as the Icelandic music industry is concerned, I don't exist," he shrugs. "But then I also don't exist in Australia. It's not keeping me awake at night, but it's definitely palpable. There'll come a point in about two years where I will have lived here longer than I haven't. So does that make me more Icelandic than Australian? I don't really have any huge nationalistic feelings in either direc-



tion, or any direction. I think nationalism is kind of stupid. That being said, I've definitely found it to be the case that other people tend to make that decision for me."

THE MUSSELS ARE GONE

The topics of nationalism and troubling geopolitical events concurrently happening continuously rear their heads on both our encounters. Even within the music, although most of his works are non-lyrical, Ben's attention to the state of the world emerges if nowhere else than in the titles. Ben's collaborations with artist Richard Mosse have thrown him into the thick of some

genuinely dangerous environmental and sociopolitical conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in the Brazilian Amazon forest. Needless to say, he's seen some shit.

"I worry about the future and I know I'm not the only one at all," he laments. "When it comes to watching the great tragedy for our generation, where the boomers got to see things get better throughout their entire life, we get to watch everything get worse. I have children to raise and I catch myself so often making these nostalgic statements to them. But more often than not, it's not: when I was your age, it was way

tougher than it is for you. It's: when I was your age, it was so much better."

The name of the album *Scope Neglect* comes from an environmentalism term to describe a particular type of cognitive dissonance when it comes to how people are fed information about the impact of environmental disasters and what is required to solve them. The example of donating money to clean birds affected by an oil spill is the one he presents. It's pretty bleak.

"Not to belabour a point that's been made by many people, but we're failing," he goes on. "Kids are growing up in a shell of this society that was

given to us. Growing up in a bowl of discarded mussels. We ate the mussels. The mussels are gone and they're in the shells."

THE EAR OF THE BEHOLDER

The album's title, along with the similarly dark and quintessentially Ben-esque track titles like "The River of Light and Radiation", "Load up on Guns, Bring your Friends" and "Unreal in the Eyes of the Dead," don't necessary denote what the album means, per se.

"I don't want to dictate how it's supposed to be read, obviously," he says, "but I think there's no question for me that in the process of writing new music and the process

you make that space, and you widen that space out, in my mind you're allowing an audience more room to place themselves inside that void. I think audiences are far smarter than a lot of people give them credit for. The ability of the human brain and plasticity of this organ to bridge gaps and to make logic where there is none. I think that whilst that's not for everybody, there is a pretty sizable contingent of humans, myself included, that want that challenge and actually really thrive on it."

THE FULL SCOPE OF THINGS

With this trust in his audience, Ben is now building the live release show for *Scope Neglect* for the April 3 show at IDNÓ in Reykjavík, where he

**When you make that space, and you widen that space out, in my mind you, you're allowing an audience more room to place themselves inside that void.**

of making a record, which takes a long time, I'm reading and listening to things, and I'm talking to people, and I'm seeing the news and all the same shit that everyone else is doing. Inevitably, all of those things are sort of running in parallel to the process of making the record. I think I have always considered that those things have to be connected in some way. Like, it's kind of dishonest in a way to make a record that's ignoring the circumstances in which it is made."

Where the circumstances in which the record was made were bleak and the circumstances of its release are no better, Ben's true faith in audiences and music listeners is unwavering.

"I have as much faith now in the kind of the thirst for experience of an audience as I ever have," he says emphatically. "People do have attention spans and they do want to listen and they do want to be immersed. A lot of this conversation is as though the kids today don't listen. And it's like, 'fuck off.'"

Although Ben knows his own music is challenging, he is unequivocally opening a gate rather than keeping one.

"For me, the most interesting thing that anyone can do for me as a listener is force me to bridge a gap between two ideas," he says. "Whether it's two opposing rhythms or counterpoints in sort of melodic terms, or rhythmic terms, or whatever. When

will be joined by Greg and audiovisual artist Tarik Barri.

The process is much like reconstructing the album all over again and creating an entirely new experience of the music. The process of evaluating and parsing out details of what sounds and elements actually matter in the live context has brought Ben to another phase of the album, in a sense.

"I had to learn everything I made and I had to build everything that I was hearing," he says. "I didn't keep any presets from the recording process. It's like, 'oh shit, how did I do that again?' But then it also becomes [a question of] 'well is the way this thing sounds actually important?' I think the essence and nature of the thing is the same, but the specificity of how all of it feels the same is gone. It's new."

What exactly that essence is he cannot quite put his finger on; he is still too close to the process.

"I struggle with that idea," he says. "I can tell you way more easily that about *Theory of Machines*, or *By The Throat*, or even *Aurora* – 10 years ago, thank you very much – because I can kind of look at it with a bit of distance when I'm not in it anymore."

Someday, when Ben pulls back and sees the full scope of things, I hope he won't neglect what an incredible feat this album is. ■

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## The Grapevine's Top Picks



REYKJADOOM  
March 8-10  
Gaukurinn

Doomcember becomes Reykja-Doom Fest 2024, promising even a more ambitious lineup, featuring doom metal bands from the local and international scene. Local Kælan Mikla, CXVIII, Kvelja, MC Myasnoi, Múr and others will be joined by Konvent (DK), Dread Sovereign (IE) and Moonstone (PL) for what the festival organisers call a "testimony of heaviness." And, of course, there's no better venue for all things dark and gloom than Gaukurinn. IZ



SNJÓFEST  
March 14-March 17  
Reykjavík & Bláfjöll Ski Resort

It seems like every country with snow has some kind of a snow fest and this time around, Iceland is throwing its own. Taking place at Bláfjöll Ski Resort and multiple locations in Reykjavík, including Bíó Paradís, Röntgen and Kaffibarinn, SnjóFest is set to bring together not only ski pros, but everyone who enjoys a good time. On the programme: parties, ski equipment testing, snow cinema and panel discussions. Ski, have fun, repeat? IZ



REYKJAVÍK EARLY MUSIC  
FESTIVAL  
March 26-28 2024  
Harpa

At the end of March, Harpa will host the country's first edition of early music festival, bringing together local and international musicians, specialising in historical performance practice. The programme with four evening concerts over three festival days is curated by artistic director and violinist Elfa Rún Kristinsdóttir. A few names from the lineup: Polish baroque orchestra Arte dei Suonatori, a superstar violinist Rachel Podger and Iceland's leading early music ensemble Barokkbandið Brák. IZ



## Art Different But Connected

Jumping between worlds at Gallery Port's latest exhibition

WORDS Catharine Fulton  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

appearance and destruction. While it may at first glance seem to clash with the cartoon figures that define Baldur's work or the colourful embroidery of Loji's practice, there is a red thread connecting themes of disappearance, death and nostalgia – even if the individual works on display may seem to be worlds apart.

"It was Arni [Már Erlingsson, co-owner of Gallery Port] who had the idea of doing this exhibition with Loji, Baldur and I," Claire explains of how the three established but seemingly disparate artists came to be exhibiting together. "There's no curator, it's us artists meeting and just making something up and bringing what we have – it's a very joyful and fun process."

What Claire brings is a large-scale photo installation that is both curved and suspended from the ceiling in the centre of the space. "So when you enter the exhibition, you see one side of it," she explains, "but you

have to walk around to see the full image. Once you come to the other side, you see the inside of the photograph and it's another image. So it's really playing with 2D and 3D and trying to make photography more of a fluid medium."

At Gallery Port, Claire hopes her installation and the works of Baldur and Loji come together to create a

experience – like jumping from one visual world to another."

"It is going to be fun to see very different artworks together and realise that art can take you in so many directions and to so many different places," she says, "and the pieces being next to each other just makes your mind travel even more." ■

### It's us artists meeting and just making something up and bringing what we have – it's a very joyful and fun process.

memorable experience. "Like maybe they'll feel like they're being pulled in different directions," she says. "Or they realise that even though the art works are very different, they stand on their own, and looking from one artist to another is a very joyful

"Lost Track" opens at Gallery Port's new location at Hallgerðargata 19-23 on March 2 at 16:00 and runs until March 27. The gallery is open Wednesday through Saturday from 11:00 to 17:00 or by appointment

"It feels like our practices will meet and maybe also clash," Claire Paugam says of her upcoming exhibition at Gallery Port. "Maybe a part of our practices will get lost on the way, maybe meeting other pieces that are very different will reveal a new side of the work or a new perception of the work."

Claire will be exhibiting alongside Baldur Helgason and Loji Höskuldsson at the newly relocated Gallery Port from March 2 to 27. Titled "Lost Track", the show brings together the three very different artists to display their work and allow the viewer to draw comparisons or simply dwell in the differences.

Originating from Paris, Claire is not a new name on the Icelandic arts scene. Since graduating from Iceland University of the Arts in 2016, she has been active in curation and exhibiting, culminating in her being awarded the Icelandic Art Prize Motivational Award of the Year in 2020 for her "ambitious and powerful contribution to the arts."

Claire's contribution to "Lost Track" is a contemplation on ageing, dis-

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Books

## The Magic Of Multilingual

A new children's book highlights the power of languages

WORDS Catharine Fulton  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

languages represented by students in the sixth grade and it was found that 60 languages were represented – just in one grade!

Alondra Silva Munoz and Helgi Silva Þorsteinsson are familiar with the linguistic diversity of the country, not only because Alondra immigrated from Chile to Iceland and brought her mother tongue with her, but because the two share a three-year-old son who is growing up with two cultures and two languages.”He

pled it with their own knowledge, and wrote a children's book on the wonders of speaking multiple languages.

### THE PLOT

*Töfrandi fjölytngdur heimur Áka Tahl-el* or *Áki Tahl-el's Magical Multilingual World* tells the story of a six-year-old boy who speaks both Icelandic and Spanish at home. Áki is transitioning from playschool to elementary school and is finding himself frus-

**The more languages he speaks, the more friends he can make and the more he can bring people together.**

actually took a long time to start speaking Icelandic,” Alondra says, “he struggled a lot with it, mostly because we were speaking Spanish to the largest extent in our home – he has the most exposure to that language. When he started leikskóli (playschool) he almost didn't know any Icelandic and he felt really frustrated. And we felt like the school did not see him as his full potential.”

With a background in intercultural communications and experience teaching bilingual kids, Alondra was frustrated by some of the attitudes and comments being made about her son's language progression. So Alondra and Helgi harnessed some key points and teachable moments from their son's experience, cou-

trated about languages – sometimes he cannot find the right words or has trouble being understood. The book runs through the range of emotions often experienced by multicultural children anywhere, but centres the story on Iceland, where the education system and social perceptions are not always open to Iceland-born children not having mastered Icelandic from their first word.

Eventually, in elementary school, Áki Tahl-el is playing with his Icelandic-speaking friends when a new classmate arrives from Colombia speaking no Icelandic. Being multilingual, Áki Tahl-el is able to speak with this new classmate and his other classmates, using language

It may come as a surprise to some, but Iceland is an increasingly multicultural country. Roughly 18% of the nation is now made up of immigrants, their diversity adding welcome life and colour to the fabric of the country. So great is the diversity in some Reykjavík neighbourhoods that it was in the news mid-February that one Reykjavík school was celebrating all the lan-



# Qualism

as a tool for inclusivity and winning football matches (you'll have to read the book for that plot point).

"He realises that this is like a type of magic for him," Alondra says of the protagonist. "Reflecting more on the experience, he realises that [languages] are not just magical for football, they are for everything. He starts to realise that the more languages that he speaks, the more friends he can make and the more he can bring people together."

## THE DIY APPROACH

Determined to bring their story to life and not wanting to compromise on the message, Alondra and Helgi took the self-publishing route. They wrote the story, which is presented in both English and Icelandic, and brought on illustrator Verónica Pinto, who worked remotely from Colombia to bring Áki Tahiel's world to life on the pages.

Working with an illustrator abroad meant having to teach her about Icelandic aesthetics. "I had to explain everything," Alondra recalls. "I had to take screenshots of the clothes that kids wear here, because I wanted the kids to feel like they couldn't relate not only with the story, but also with the visuals."

In the end, the couple was left with a colourful, multilingual book that they printed in 100 copies.

"They're almost all gone," Alondra says, a twinge of pleasant surprise in her voice. "We have I think around

six left and two of those are for the library in Hafnarfjörður. So we really have just four books left. It's been wonderful, just happening through word of mouth."

"One hundred copies sounded like a lot," she continues. "I had worried that no one would be interested, then what am I gonna do with this book? I'd have a lot of paper stacked in my garage or something! But it was so well received."

## I had worried that no one would be interested.

### REVISE, REPRINT, REIMAGINE

With stock all but depleted, Alondra and Helgi have set their sites on a reprint. They're revisiting and revising the story while waiting for a response to their application for a development grant from Rannís.

"If we receive the grant, we are going to improve this story, the manuscript, and we are going to translate it into more language pairs. So it's going to be English and Icelandic, Spanish and Icelandic, and Polish and Icelandic," Alondra explains of the couple's goals. "Then we are going to create educational materials at the end of the book. One of them is going to be a glossary of terms around intercultural learning, because people are always asking, 'Oh, how do you say 'inclusion' in Icelandic?' So we're going to in-

clude a glossary with definitions and translation, as well as some small lessons and learning outlines for teachers or parents to use with their children while reading the story. So they can analyse it and talk about it in the classroom."

Beyond bringing more books like Alondra and Helgi's into the hands of teachers and parents, much needs to be done to improve social services and education for children, whether solely Icelandic speaking

or multilingual. "We need to improve the infrastructure, we need to make sure that we are providing services for children," Alondra emphasises. "Schools put a lot of demands on children to have a certain level of Icelandic, but at the same time, the services are not available for them to do that. If you take speech therapy, for example, it's just one specialist, and the common denominator that you keep hearing is children being put on a waiting list for two years, three years, four years — and the program only receives maybe 10 people every year. So it's not sustainable." ■

Beyond being an education tool, Áki Tahiel's Magical Multilingual World is a heartwarming story. Copies can be found to borrow from Móðurmál Library and hopefully soon in more languages.

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EXHIBITION OPENING

## Bernard Alligand

An exhibition of works by the French artist Bernard Alligand will be open in Gallery Fold from the 2nd to the 27th of March



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## Film Feature Don't Mess With A Chamber Orchestra

Sigurjón Kjartansson reunites with his “brothers in comedy” for a debut feature film

WORDS Iryna Zubenko  
IMAGES Art Bicnick  
& Supplied stills

“It’s taken me a lot of time to grow into films,” smiles Sigurjón Kjartansson as we sit in the lobby of Reykjavík’s old cinema Gamla Bíó, which coincidentally serves as the setting for his film debut. Having shaped the Icelandic comedy and TV scene for years through the *Fóstbræður* sketch comedy show that has become a cultural phenomenon and popular series like *Ófærð* (*Trapped*) and *Katla* in his portfolio, one might have expected him to make films years ago. Sigurjón admits he was at peace with the idea of never making a movie, until everything fell into place just right for *Fullt hús* (*Grand Finale*) to take shape.

“It kind of just happened,” says Sigurjón. While television has always been more of his medium, he had an idea of making a TV series around the subject of a chamber orchestra for years but somehow never developed it. “I just loved the idea. A friend of mine who worked with a rock band once went on tour with a classical orchestra,” he says. “Sex, drugs, and rock and roll? It was no different in classical music.”

When producers Örn Marinó Arnarson and Þorkell Harðarson from Markell Productions, approached Sigurjón with the idea of him writing

and directing a film, it didn’t take him long to decide. In fact, it only took one car ride.

“I got the whole idea for the movie as I was driving to my hometown of Selfoss,” he says, specifying that it was during the drive over Hellið. The producers’ only wish was for the movie to take place in a confined space — their own trademark. That’s when Sigurjón’s old idea came into play. “I then thought about the old chamber orchestra idea, but a movie this time, so I needed a plot. And I plotted it on my way home. It’s a 50-minute ride.”

### LAUGHING THROUGH CHAOS

*Fullt hús* takes a viewer on a 92-minute laughter-filled journey; a delightful farce skillfully crafted by Sigurjón. “You could look at it as an episode of *The Muppet Show*,” he says. “It doesn’t take itself seriously at all. But if you want to dig, it is a movie about an abuse of power. We see this cellist who’s abusing *his* power

left and right. And then something happens,” Sigurjón pauses and smiles. “Then you could say his power is being abused. But only for the chamber orchestra to realise that they had the power all the time.”

With the cast featuring Helga Braga Jónsdóttir, Hilmir Snær Guðnason and Ilmur Kristjánsdóttir, there are plenty of familiar faces for Icelandic cinephiles to enjoy. “I am very proud of this casting and I’m grateful that all these great artists wanted to be

Music has played an important role in Sigurjón’s life — he’s been a member of rock band HAM since 1988 and continues doing music until now. Despite his heavier roots, classical music also has a special place in Sigurjón’s heart. But besides dabbling in violin at the age of 7, he’s not classically trained and neither are most of the actors. It turns out pretending to be a member of a chamber orchestra is a doable feat, though it did call for some training. “We had classically trained

### You could look at it as an episode of *The Muppet Show*.

in my film,” says Sigurjón, not shying away from the fact that the cast is composed of his long-time friends and collaborators, including his comedy partner Jón Gnarr. “These are the people I know. We have had creative dialogue so many times, so it felt like a comfort zone for me and all of us to walk into this and figure things out together.”

musicians on set with us and at least some of the actors got some training from professionals,” Sigurjón explains. “But during the shooting, it was very funny to hear the actual violins being played, it didn’t sound very nice at the time. Of course, they had the playback, but if you take that out, it sounds kind of crazy.”





#### A TV VETERAN TAKES ON DIRECTING

The director refers to the shooting period of *Fullt hús* as “cosy.” With most of the scenes shot in one venue – using multiple locations inside Gamla Bíó and a shooting timeline of 22 days, this project seems a little different from what Sigurjón knows from TV. “I never felt that I was being pressed for time. Of course, I come from television, where we shoot like crazy – seven to 10 pages a day. There was no pressure like that here,” he says.

Despite being a first time director, Sigurjón admits that working on a big team for a TV series has many similarities – both are very collaborative in nature. “Showrunning TV series is not very different from what I’m doing here,” he says. “You always have the freedom – whether you are working with other people or yourself.” Sigurjón speaks of working with the producers and the team as highly productive. “When I came up with one draft, they [the producers] came up with notes and some really good ideas that I could use. We were all together – the producers, the editors, the cameraman and the actors, of course. I’m used to collaboration, so I welcome it when I’m working on my stuff.”

A movie fan himself, Sigurjón refers to himself as being raised in Ísafjarðarbíó – the local cinema of Ísafjörður in the Westfjords. “With this movie, I am making a movie I wanted to see. Like everyone should do.”

### I wanted to thrill the audience with laughter and suspense.

A careful eye might see a lot of influences in *Fullt hús* – from Brian De Palma to Alfred Hitchcock. “Of course, there are influences that have shaped me since I was a kid. And the comedy thing is just something I have known – it’s in my blood. It is a farce and there’s no shame in making this movie a farce.”

One thing that Sigurjón points out, without giving much away, is a shift in the third act of the movie. “It turns into a kind of thriller,” he says. “I wanted to thrill the audience with laughter and suspense.”

#### COMEDY STRIKES BACK

*Fullt hús* (which translates literally to “full house”) lives up to its name and has been performing impressively at the box office, with over 12 thousand tickets sold in four weeks – a nota-

ble achievement for Iceland. “We premiered in the most terrible time ever, the end of January, which is almost unlivable here,” laughs Sigurjón. “I’m very happy to be able to give people some joy during those tough months.”

The film’s hilarious plot, cringe-worthy suspense with a hint of deeper issues could be one reason Icelanders have been flocking to the cinema. Another factor might be the audience’s desire to reunite with their favourite characters from *Fóstbræður*, the show that captivated Icelandic comedy in the late 1990s. “Of course, a lot of the old *Fóstbræður* “brothers” are working with me on this movie. But no, it doesn’t have to mean that we are getting back the old *Fóstbræður*,” Sigurjón clarifies.

“It’s a kind of comeback for me in comedy,” he adds. “I have the feeling that this one is gonna be a keeper. It has legs, I hope.” ■

See *Fullt hús* in cinemas around town: Sambíó, Smárabíó and Laugarásbíó.

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# Centre Map

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

## Dining

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Drinking

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Shopping & Activities

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

## Random Spots

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

## Be Warned

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

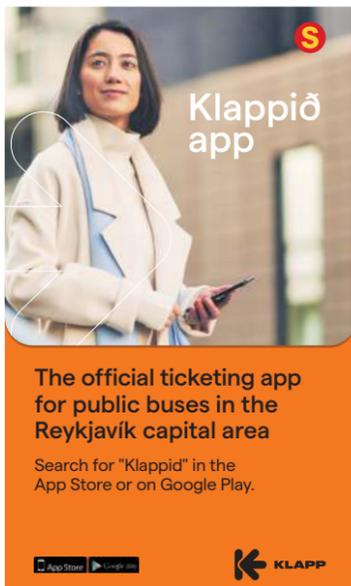
**19 SBARRO**  
Austurstræti 17 & Vatnsmýrarvegur 10  
"What is this shit?" is how Greil Marcus famously opened his review



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

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

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



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**15**

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New In Town

# Indian Curry House\*

Vesturgata 12

Since 2007, the good Indian Curry House has been famously keeping the town of Akureyri sated with delicious flavours. Needless to say, even with our own share of Indian-fare, we were getting a bit jealous here in Reykjavik (the one and only capital of the North). But no more! For a much anticipated downtown location has opened for the capital area to enjoy! Their new take-away shop on Vesturgata offers a tight menu of their famous dishes, like their scrumptious butter chicken and lamb thalichathu, plus combos for dinner. The wait has been worth it.

**OPENING HOURS:**  
Monday to Thursday & Sunday from 17:00 - 21:00  
Friday & Saturday from 17:00 - 22:00



**B**

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# Art Exhibitions

# 01.03–05.04.2024

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

## Opening

### GALLERY FOLD

**Þorstein Helgason – DIRRINDÍ**  
After a long career in architecture, Þorsteinn Helgason turned his attention entirely to art. His expressionistic abstract works are characterized by joy of colour and rhythmic structure.

Opens March 2  
Runs until March 23

### GALLERY PORT

**LOST TRACK**  
Artists Baldur Helgason, Claire Paugam and Loji Höskuldsson show new works created specifically for

this joint exhibition.  
Opens March 2  
Runs until March 27

### HÖFUÐSTÖÐIN

**ARTOPIA**  
Single day art market featuring the works of up and coming local artists. You can meet the artists and learn about their craft before buying your new collectibles.

Sunday March 3, 13:00

### KJARVALSSTAÐIR (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

**Borghildur Óskarsdóttir – Heed**  
The exhibition sheds light on Borghildur Óskarsdóttir's fruitful and multifaceted career, artistic approach and work spanning six decades.

Opens March 9  
Runs until June 9

### KUBBURINN (ICELAND UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS)

**Camilla Cerioni – HYLÐÝPI**  
HYLDÝPI, the Icelandic translation of abyss, is an immersive exhibition where the audience can listen and observe, not just by standing, but by moving and experiencing the space.

Opens March 1  
Runs until March 15

**Sunneva Ása Weissshappel – Amid the Silence**  
Amid the Silence is research on performance and conceptual (art) gestures, performativity of painting and sculptural installation. Reflecting on elements of femininity, power struggles and the exhibition space.

Opens March 1  
Runs until March 15

## Ongoing

### ÁSMUNDARSAFN (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

**At Hand**  
**Sculpture**  
Runs until September 1

**ÁSMUNDARSALUR**  
**Hreinn Friðfinnsson – Hulduklettur**  
Installation, sculpture  
Runs until March 3

**Sigurður Guðjónsson – Edda**  
Installation, mixed media  
Runs until March 3

**BERG CONTEMPORARY**  
**Monika Grzymala – SONGLINES**  
Paperworks, mixed media  
Runs until March 16

**THE EINAR JÓNSSON SCULPTURE MUSEUM**  
**Brynja Baldursdóttir & Einar Jónsson – Be-coming**  
Sculpture, mixed media  
Runs until August 25

**GALLERY SKILTI**  
**Sirra Sigrún Sigurðardóttir – Misseri**  
Installation  
Runs until June 15

**GERÐARSAFN (KÓPAVOGUR ART MUSEUM)**  
**Ordinary Places**  
Photography, group exhibition  
Runs until March 31

**GERÐUR**  
Works of sculptor Gerður Helgadóttir  
Permanent exhibition

**GERÐUBERG (REYKJAVÍK CITY LIBRARY)**  
**Anne Herzog – Anne Herzog Andy**

**Warhol**  
Photography, mixed media  
Runs until April 6

**GLERHÚSIÐ**  
**Atli Ingólfsson – Algerving / Totaphor**  
Composition-based works  
Runs until March 24

**HAFNARBORG CENTER OF CULTURE & FINE ART**  
**Þór Sigurbórsson – Pointers**  
Mixed media  
Runs until March 24

**Jónína Guðnadóttir – Tidemark**  
Ceramics  
Runs until April 29

**HAFNARHÚS (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)**  
**Vitamin-D**  
Group exhibition, mixed media  
Runs until May 5

**Gambit – Erró, Chronicler of Current Affairs**  
Paintings, collages  
Runs until May 12

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

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

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

**I8 GALLERY**  
**Ragnar Kjartansson – Mother and Child, Gin and Tonic**  
Paintings  
Runs until April 20

**I8 GRANDI**  
**Andreas Eriksson – Real Time**  
Paintings, progressive exhibition  
Runs until December 2024

**KJARVALSSTAÐIR (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)**  
**Kjarval and the 20th Century: When Modernity Anchored**  
Paintings, drawings  
Runs until December 2024

**KLING & BANG**  
**Sirra Sigrún Sigurðardóttir – Different Resolutions**  
Interdisciplinary works  
Runs until April 7

**THE LIVING ART MUSEUM**  
**Why Is Iceland So Poor?**  
Group exhibition, mixed media  
Runs until March 3

**LISTVAL**  
**Ragnhildur Weissshappel – Baptism by Sugar**  
Sugar-based artworks  
Runs until March 2

**Thomas Pausz – Hide & Seek**  
Paintings

Runs until March 2  
**MOSFELLSBÆR ART GALLERY**

**Giíta Hammond & Lara Roje – Við sjóinn**  
Photography, mixed media  
Runs until March 8

**MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ARTS**  
**Katla Einarsdóttir & Una María Magnúsdóttir – Messages**  
Graphic design  
Runs until November 2024

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

**NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND**  
**Resistance: Interplay of Art & Science**  
Interdisciplinary, art for children  
Permanent exhibition

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

**NORDIC HOUSE**  
**Under the Polar Ice**  
Mixed media, interactivity, workshops  
Runs until March 31

**WASTELAND**  
Installation, mixed media  
Runs until April 28

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

**REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY**  
**Stuart Richardson – Undercurrent**  
Photography  
Runs until April 21

**THE SCULPTURE GARDEN**  
**Megan Auður – Barricades**  
Installation  
Runs until April 7

**SIGURJÓN ÓLAFSSON MUSEUM**  
**Pura – Home & Away**  
Paintings  
Runs until Spring 2024

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

**Y GALLERY**  
**Bjarni Þór Pétursson – Facade No. 3**  
Installations  
Runs until March 23

**PULA**  
**Lilja Birgisdóttir & Ingibjörg Birgisdóttir – Fated**  
Paintings, mixed media  
Runs until March 31

## Art Picks



**Open Call**  
Until March 15, 2024  
Gallery Kannski  
Free

Gallery Kannski is holding an open call for artists or groups interested in exhibiting in the artist-run space. The annual shout out for artists seeks artists eager to engage with Kannski's main gallery, the community centre nearby, or the outside area with the greenhouses. If you're an artist wanting to exhibit your work, or you have a proposal for a curation project, direct your browser to gallerykannski.com to apply before midnight falls on deadline day. CF



**Ragnar Kjartansson – Mother and Child, Gin and Tonic**  
Until April 20, 2024  
i8 Gallery  
Free

Reykjavik's enfant terrible, Ragnar Kjartansson is exhibiting a series of new paintings at i8 Gallery. Known for his medium-spanning works, Ragnar has created a series of still life paintings that explore the spectacle of life by alluding to the action of the person just outside the frame. As Ragnar's 2009 Venice Biennale collaborator Páll Haukur Björnsson writes of the paintings: "Objects that in themselves have obscure meanings are perfectly significant within the ideological fantasy that is the artist." CF



**Jóna Hlíf Halldórsdóttir – ORÐ IÐ (become, become, become)**  
Until June 23  
Neskirkja  
Free

If you're as much a sucker for typography and wordplay in art as we are, then this exhibition of Jóna Hlíf Halldórsdóttir's work is right up your alley. The artist's trademark is in presenting text as texture, playing with shadow and dimension of cut out letters. The exhibition consists of selected text works and sculptures that Jóna Hlíf has created in recent years. CF



# Events 01.03–05.04.2024

Concerts, comedy, movies and other happenings that defy categorization

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

## Friday March 1

**Beer Day with DJ Herra Hljóðgeymir**  
16:00 12 Tónar  
**CULT of the Alien Invaders**  
20:00 Gaukurinn  
**QuartetES**  
19:30 Harpa – Kaldalón  
**DJ Óli Dóri**  
20:00 KEX Hostel  
**Fusion Groove**  
23:00 Kaffibarinn

## Saturday March 2

**DJ Óli Dóri**  
21:00 12 Tónar  
**Olli Soikkeli**  
16:00 Forsetinncafé  
**Organ Matinée: Steinar Logi Helgason**  
12:00 Hallgrímskirkja  
**Ástvaldur Zenki Traustason**  
16:00 Hannesarholt  
**DJ Hristo**  
23:00 Kaffibarinn  
**Cap'n Rasty's Skiffle City Rockers**  
20:00 KEX Hostel  
**Fókus & GulaR Baunir**  
21:00 LEMMY  
**15 Years of Moonshine Recordings: Radikal Guru x Eternal Roots**  
22:00 Radar

## Sunday March 3

**Sunday Classics: Guitar music from South-America**  
16:00 Harpa – Norðurljós  
**Jökull Logi**  
22:00 Kaffibarinn  
**Hafnar.Concert: Magnús Jóhann**  
20:00 Mengi

## Monday March 4

**DJ Júllala**  
22:00 Kaffibarinn  
**Minimal Monday**  
19:00 Radar

## Tuesday March 5

**Upprásin: Mukka, Fókus & MC MYASNOI**

20:00 Harpa – Kaldalón  
**Pub Quiz**  
20:00 Röntgen

## Wednesday March 6

**Terrordisco**  
22:00 Kaffibarinn  
**Ulrik Bisgaard Quintet**  
20:00 Múlinn Jazzclub

## Thursday March 7

**Sean McLoughlin**  
20:00 Harpa – Kaldalón  
**Snæfríður Ingvarsdóttir & Band**  
18:00 Hotel Holt  
**Jónbjörn (Lagaffe Tales)**  
22:00 Kaffibarinn  
**ATM Trio**  
21:00 Le Kock  
**Back to School Burlesque**  
20:00 LEMMY

## Friday March 8

**ReykjaDoom Fest 2024**  
18:00 Gaukurinn  
**Ljóðið lífi: Art-Song Festival**  
20:00 Hannesarholt  
**Herbert Guðmundsson**  
21:00 Háskólabíó  
**Sticky Records Presents: Ízleifur**  
21:00 IDNÓ  
**Sameheads, Sick Knee's & Sucks to be you, Nigel**  
20:00 KEX Hostel  
**DJ Frímánn**  
23:00 Kaffibarinn  
**Student Cellar Comedy Cabaret**  
20:00 Stúdentakjallarinn

## Saturday March 9

**Tango for One**  
16:00 Forsetinncafé  
**ReykjaDoom Fest 2024**  
18:00 Gaukurinn  
**Ljóðið lífi: Art-Song Festival**  
17:00 Hannesarholt  
**DJ Ingvar Lucky**  
20:00 KEX Hostel  
**DJ Óli Dóri**  
23:00 Kaffibarinn  
**Little Matjurtargarðurinn**  
20:00 LEMMY  
**The Ghost Choir**  
20:00 Mengi  
**Hermeth & Tæson**  
22:00 Radar

## Sunday March 10

**Ljóðið lífi: Art-Song Festival**

14:00 Hannesarholt  
**Big Band Marathon**  
13:00 Harpa – Kaldalón  
**Sunday Classics: Gadus Morhua**  
16:00 Harpa – Kaldalón  
**Músiktilraunir 2024**  
19:30 Harpa – Norðurljós

## Monday March 11

**Silja Glømmi**  
22:00 Kaffibarinn  
**Músiktilraunir 2024**  
19:30 Harpa – Norðurljós

## Tuesday March 12

**Músiktilraunir 2024**  
19:30 Harpa – Norðurljós

## Wednesday March 13

**DJ Brynja (Girls Gang)**  
22:00 Kaffibarinn  
**Músiktilraunir 2024**  
19:30 Harpa – Norðurljós  
**Gammar**  
20:00 Múlinn Jazzclub  
**Open Decks**  
21:00 Radar

## Thursday March 14

**Nýdönsk**  
20:00 Bæjarbíó  
**Kári Egilsson Duet**  
18:00 Hotel Holt  
**DJ Retronaut**  
20:00 KEX Hostel  
**Árni Sveinsson's Easter Disco**  
22:00 Kaffibarinn  
**Overtun**  
20:00 LEMMY  
**Sterling Drake**  
20:30 Ölver  
**Dia b2b Lilja**  
21:00 Radar

## Friday March 15

**Nýdönsk**  
20:00 Bæjarbíó  
**DYS, Börn & Duft**  
20:00 Gaukurinn  
**DJ Pabbi**  
20:00 KEX Hostel  
**SnjóFest DJs**  
23:00 Kaffibarinn  
**Tina Dickow & Helgi Jonsson**  
20:00 Harpa – Eldborg  
**Hafnar.Concert: Sinis + Ásgeirsson Dúó**  
20:00 Mengi

listasafn.is

National Gallery of Iceland  
Fríkirkjuvegur 7  
The House of Collections  
Hverfisgata 15  
Home of an Artist  
Bergstaðarstræti 74

## Egill Sæbjörnsson and Infinite friends of the Universe



Egill Sæbjörnsson (1973). From the book *When Egill met the Troils* and took them to Venice, 2017. Property of the artist.



Listasafn Íslands  
National Gallery of Iceland

## Event Picks



**Viktor Orri & Álfríður Erla – POEMS**  
album release show

March 16, 20:00  
Fríkirkjan  
4.900 ISK

Viktor Orri Arnason and Álfríður Erla Guðmundsdóttir host the release concert for their album *Poems* and it promises to be a dreamy night of piano, vocals and a string quartet. Add to that lineup that the event is happening in Fríkirkjan – arguably Reykjavík's most relaxing venue – and you're guaranteed a wave of swoon-worthy sounds. Don't sleep on this chance to experience two of Iceland's most talented artists. CF



**Roundstone in Concert**  
March 21, 20:00  
Mengi  
2.500 ISK

New band Roundstone is dropping an EP, *Sometimes I think about you* all of the time, and invites you to their album release show at Mengi. With Dominic Scott on vocals and piano, and an impressive lineup of individuals supporting him in the band, Mengi will be rich with good sounds and good vibes. CF



**NeoArte Synth Festival**  
March 22-24, 19:00  
The Nordic House  
Free

The NeoArte Synthesizer of Arts festival has been held annually in Gdansk, Poland, since 2012 and now it's coming to Reykjavík. The three-day event features concerts, art installations, performance, panel discussions and more, all exploring the connections between various creative mediums. Bring the kids – there will be workshops on creating contemporary music just for them. CF

## D-vítamín

26.01.–05.05.2024



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# Events 01.03-05.04.2024

Concerts, comedy, movies and other happenings that defy categorization

- Saturday March 16**  
*Nýdönsk*  
 20:00 Bæjarbíó  
*Alexander Grybos*  
 16:00 Forsetinncafé  
*Viktor Orri & Álfheiður Erla: POEMS Album Release*  
 20:00 Frikirkjan  
*DJ KGB*  
 20:00 KEX Hostel  
*Símon fknhdsm*  
 23:00 Kaffibarinn  
*Zara Larsson*  
 20:00 Harpa - Eldborg  
*Músiktilraunir 2024*  
 17:00 Harpa - Norðurljós
- Sunday March 17**  
*Sunday Classics: Clarinet & Piano*  
 16:00 Harpa - Norðurljós
- Wednesday March 20**  
*DJ Júllala*  
 22:00 Kaffibarinn  
*Kári Egilsson*  
 20:00 Múlinn Jazzclub
- Thursday March 21**  
*Bleeding Volcano*  
 20:00 Bæjarbíó  
*Mozart and Bruckner - Iceland Symphony Orchestra*  
 19:30 Harpa - Eldborg  
*Sigríður Thorlacius & Guðmundur Óskar Guðmundsson*  
 18:00 Hotel Holt  
*Þorsteinn Eyfjörð*  
 22:00 Kaffibarinn  
*Flying Elbows*  
 20:00 LEMMY  
*Roundstone*  
 20:00 Mengi
- Friday March 22**  
*Jóipé & Króli with USSEL (DK)*

- 20:00 Gamla Bió  
*Featurette (CA)*  
 20:00 KEX Hostel  
*Elísabet & Tæson*  
 23:00 Kaffibarinn  
*Slacker Events Presents: Ruby Francis*  
 20:00 LEMMY
- Saturday March 23**  
*Lukas Kletzander*  
 16:00 Forsetinncafé  
*Syngjum Saman*  
 14:00 Hannesarholt  
*Björn Leo & Steinberger*  
 23:00 Kaffibarinn  
*UPP OG KOMANDI III: Proximity, Nuclear Nathan & More*  
 18:00 LEMMY
- Sunday March 24**  
*Sunday Classics: Double Bass & Piano*  
 16:00 Harpa - Norðurljós  
*DJ Óli Dóri Sunday Vinyl Selection*  
 22:00 Kaffibarinn
- Monday March 25**  
*Concert For Palestine: virgin orchestra, Jónfrí, Sóðaskapur & more*  
 21:00 Gaukurinn
- Tuesday March 26**  
*Reykjavík Early Music Festival*  
 19:30 Harpa - Norðurljós
- Wednesday March 27**  
*HAM*  
 20:00 Bæjarbíó  
*Reykjavík Early Music Festival*  
 10:00 & 19:30 Harpa - Norðurljós  
*DJ Andre*  
 20:00 KEX Hostel

- DJ Hendrik*  
 22:00 Kaffibarinn  
*Hist og*  
 20:00 Múlinn Jazzclub
- Thursday March 28**  
*HAM*  
 20:00 Bæjarbíó  
*Reykjavík Early Music Festival*  
 19:30 Harpa - Norðurljós  
*Ingi Bjarni Skúlason & Band*  
 18:00 Hotel Holt  
*KrBear*  
 22:00 Kaffibarinn
- Friday March 29**  
*alexjean dj*  
 20:00 KEX Hostel
- Saturday March 30**  
*Hróðmar Sigurðsson*  
 16:00 Forsetinncafé  
*Náriðill Presents...*  
 20:00 Gaukurinn  
*DJ Lilja*  
 20:00 KEX Hostel  
*Bensól B-day Party*  
 23:00 Kaffibarinn
- Sunday March 31**  
*Maggi Lego*  
 22:00 Kaffibarinn
- Wednesday April 3**  
*Ben Frost: Scope Neglect Live*  
 20:00 IÐNÓ  
*Hillgrove Band & Orchestra with Skólahljómssveit Grafarvogs*  
 18:00 Harpa - Norðurljós
- Thursday April 4**  
*Eyþór Ingi*  
 20:00 Bæjarbíó ■

## Event Picks



**HAM at Bæjarbíó**  
 March 27, 20:00  
 Bæjarbíó  
 7.990 ISK

HAM is like old wine – 36 years in and still jamming and thriving. One of the country's most influential and most liveable bands will get together for a gig at Bæjarbíó in Hafnarfjörður. There has been much discussion about whether HAM falls into the rock or metal category, so maybe you could check them out and help us decide? Oh, and HAM's vocalist and lead guitarist Sigurjón Kjartansson has just made a movie. Read all about it on page 18. IZ



**Éostre 2024**  
 Friday March 29, 20:00  
 Gaukurinn  
 2.500 ISK (3.000 ISK at the door)

With spring in the air, the season of fertility is upon us and for that we must give thanks to the thirsty spirits. Icelandic goth fairy superstars Kælan Mikla, up-and-coming post-punk group virgin orchestra and Danish darkwave group Torch come together to praise to Éostre, the pagan goddess of fertility. Along with an Easter egg hunt replete with prizes, show up in your gothiest Easter best and hopefully quench your thirst. RX ■

See more at [events.grapevine.is](https://events.grapevine.is)



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Appy Listings

# Some Of The Happiest Hours In Town

If your bar has a happy hour, email us on [events@grapevine.is](mailto:events@grapevine.is) with the details.

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

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

**AMERICAN BAR**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00  
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

**APÉRO**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00  
Beer 950 ISK, Wine 1.100 ISK

**BÍÓ PARADÍS**  
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00  
Beer 1000 ISK, Wine & Prosecco 1200 ISK

**BJÓRGARÐURINN**  
Every day from 15:00 to 19:00  
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 900 ISK

**BODEGA**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00  
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 900 ISK

**BRAVÓ**  
Every day from 12:00 to 20:00  
Beer 750 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

**BREWD OG**  
Every day from 15:00 to 17:00 & 22:00 to 00:00  
Beer 1.290 ISK, Wine 1.290 ISK

**BRÚT BAR**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00  
Beer 700 ISK, Wine 750 ISK, 2F1 on wine and beer on tap

**DEN DANSKE KRO**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00  
Beer 750 ISK, Wine 750 ISK

**FJALLKONAN**  
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00  
Beer 990 ISK, Wine 1.190 ISK

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

**FORSETINNCAFÉ**  
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00  
Beer 990 ISK, Wine 990 ISK

**FRÖKEN REYKJAVÍK**  
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00  
Beer 990 ISK, Wine 1.100 ISK

**GAUKURINN**  
Every day from 16:00 to 21:00  
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.100 ISK

**HOTEL HOLT BAR**  
Wednesday to Saturday from 16:00 to 18:00

Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.350 ISK  
**THE IRISHMAN**  
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00

Beer 850 ISK, Wine 850 ISK  
**JÖRGENSEN KITCHEN & BAR**  
Every day except Thurs. 16:00 to 18:00, Thursday 16:00 to 20:00

Beer 890 ISK, Wine 1.100 ISK  
**JUNGLE COCKTAIL BAR**  
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00

Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.100 ISK  
**KAFFI LÆKUR**  
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00

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

Beer 800 ISK, Wine 900 ISK  
**KAFFIBRENNSLAN**  
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00

Beer 850 ISK, Wine 900 ISK  
**KALDI BAR**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00

Beer 950 ISK, Wine 950 ISK  
**LOFT HOSTEL**  
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00

Beer 990 ISK, Wine 1.350 ISK  
**LÓLA FLORENS**  
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00

Beer 1.200 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK  
**ÖLSTOFAN**  
Every day from 15:00 to 20:00

Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK  
**PETERSEN SVÍTAN**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00

Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK  
**PRIKIÐ**  
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00

Beer 800 ISK, Wine 1.500 ISK  
**PUNK**  
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00

Beer 850 ISK, Wine 950 ISK  
**RÖNTGEN**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00

Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK  
**SÆTA SVÍNID**  
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00

Beer 1.090 ISK, Wine 1.390 ISK  
**SATT RESTAURANT**  
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00

Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK  
**SKÚLI CRAFT BAR**  
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00

Beer 900 ISK, Wine 900 ISK  
**SLIPBARINN**  
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00

Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK  
**SPILAKAFFI**  
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00

Beer 1.000 ISK, no wine or cocktails  
**STUDENTAKJALLARINN**

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00  
Beer 710 ISK, Wine 850 ISK  
**TIPSÝ**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00  
50% off select cocktails

**UPPSALIR BAR**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00  
Beer 750 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

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

**VINSTÚKAN TÍU SOPAR**  
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00  
Beer 1.300 ISK, Wine 1.600 ISK

**VOX BRASSERIE & BAR**  
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00  
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK



## Featured Prikid

Bankastræti 12

Sometimes you just need the comforting warmth of a familiar favourite. Even if it's your very first day in Reykjavík, the downtown institution Prikid draws one into its good graces almost immediately. From friendly staff and regulars to the charming mid-century diner atmosphere topped off with their usually chill hip hop playlist, it has a deeply cosy anachronism that makes a cold one taste extra fresh. The bar was recently renovated to become a single-level establishment, but don't call it a downsize, cause it's more delightful than ever.

Happy hours  
Every day from 17:00 to 20:00  
Beer 800 ISK,  
Wine & Prosecco 1.500 ISK ■

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

## Cheap Eats

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

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

**ARABIAN TASTE**  
Falafel Roll  
1.590 all day, every day

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

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

**DRAGON DIM SUM**  
Lunch Offer: choice of any two dumpling baskets

2.190 ISK every day except Sunday, from 11:30 - 14:30

**GLÓ**  
Bowl of the Month  
2.290 ISK all day, every day

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

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

**ISLENSKI BARINN**  
Soup of the Day  
1.850 ISK all day, every day

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

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

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

**PÍTUBARINN**  
Veggie pita sandwich  
1.990 ISK all day, every day

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

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

**ZORBIAN HOT**  
Chicken shawarma wraps & falafel wraps  
1.490 ISK all day, every day ■

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

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# Music News



## Bashar Murad Releases Video for "Wild West"

Palestinian musician Bashar Murad released a music video for his song "Wild West" ahead of his participation in the finals of Söngvakeppnin, Iceland's Song Contest. The video was directed by Baldvin Vernharðsson. Bashar says about the video: "Wild West" is about the desire to escape and experience everything the world has to offer. The song is about my journey from Palestine to Iceland." The Söngvakeppnin finals

will take place on March 2, but Iceland's participation in Eurovision is still uncertain. Over 500 Icelandic musicians signed a petition calling on RÚV to refuse to participate in Eurovision unless Israel is suspended from the competition. The final decision on participation will be made after the conclusion of the national singing competition in consultation with the winners. IZ



## Músiktilraunir Kicks Off Yet Again

Músiktilraunir, which has been the main musical platform for new bands in Iceland since 1982, is back for its 2024 edition. The competition will be held in Harpa on March 10-16 and will bring together 43 upcoming bands representing different genres from pop to jazz to hip hop and everything in between. Twelve

bands will come to the capital to battle it out with 31 Reykjavik-area bands. Each of the participants is performing three songs, meaning that Músiktilraunir will give us over 100 fresh Icelandic songs! IZ



## LungA To Host Its Final Edition In July

LungA Art Festival has announced that this year will mark its last edition. After 25 consecutive years, the festival, which takes place in Seyðisfjörður every summer, will come to an end due to a lack of funding and a heavy workload. "We're ending the festival with the hopes of some-

thing new being created in its place by the younger generations," said LungA organizer Þórhildur Tinna Sigurðardóttir. You can visit one last LungA in the East fjords on July 15-21. IZ



Music Feature

# Reykjavík's Best Witch

Kælan Mikla to Headline ReykjaDoom Fest 2024

WORDS Francesca Stoppani  
IMAGE Einar Jarl

the badass trio Kælan Mikla leading the charge alongside Danish doom goddesses Konvent. We caught up with synth witch and back-vocalist Sólvieg, who, together with Laufey and Maggy (vocalist and bassist, respectively), conjures the magic of Kælan Mikla from some ethereal realm hidden in the space continuum.

THE ONLY ALL-FEMALE EXPORT BAND IN ICELAND

Rewind: it's 2013 and three friends have just won a poetry slam. But

export heavy band.

Back in the day, they were all about that raw, untamed sound. But as they've grown, so has their sound and their style. Their sound today is a carefully crafted symphony. "We started out when we were 18," Sólvieg explains. "Now our music is more composition-based." All their songs are inspired from stories happening in the real world, while folding in a lot of visual expression. In this way, Kælan Mikla invites the audience to interpret the music however they would like.

We are so lucky to still be friends. Sometimes, we make time on our days off to rent a cabin in the woods and just be together.

instead of stopping at just that, they turn their winning poem — titled Kælan Mikla — into a killer song and decide, "Hey, let's start a band!" Fast forward 11 years and they've dropped four albums and toured like there's no tomorrow, even sharing stages with the likes of The Cure and Pixies. At the moment, Kælan Mikla is the only Icelandic all-female

With different musical tastes and styles, the trio blend their vibes into something totally fresh, whether they're cooking up new tunes or playing with artists like Chelsea Wolfe, whom Kælan Mikla will join on an early summer European tour later this year.

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es

"We are currently working on our new album and the goal is to have at least one new song we will play during the tour with Chelsea Wolfe." Talking about collaborations, the trio always wanted to go out on tour with The Cure. "They didn't invite us...yet!", laughs Sólvieg. Robert, if you're reading this, you know what to do.

tion of their growth alongside the venue's evolution over the years. "We really grew up in Gaukurinn," Sólvieg says. "It's great to see how we and the place have evolved throughout the years."

During this year's ReykjaDoom Festival, Kælan Mikla are particularly excited to see fellow bands Múr

cholic poetry," Hörður continues. "They have this unique atmosphere that has made them as big as they are. No wonder they have played at more foreign rock/metal festivals than most Icelandic bands. They'll be the perfect conclusion for our festival."

The ReykjaDoom organizers have a couple of things planned later in the year, including the fourth edition of Hellirinn Metalfest. With a focus on accessibility and inclusivity, the free entry Hellirinn Metalfest aims to make heavy music available to all ages.

Besides playing at ReykjaDoom Festival, Kælan Mikla has a busy schedule ahead, including a DJ set at Prikid on March 28 and a concert with Virgin Orchestra and Torch (DK) on March 29. They show no signs of slowing down. As Sólvieg puts it, Kælan Mikla are all about creating their own universe and inviting fans to get lost in it. So, grab your ticket to their unique cosmos and enjoy the ride! ■

## We haven't performed for so long. There's going to be a lot of passion in us.

"At the very beginning, when we started touring, I just sent messages to people and venues on Facebook," Sólvieg recalls. Kælan started their export career travelling with a rented van, hosted by friends or crashing on the sofas of acquaintances. Now they are touring in big buses with big bands and performing in big venues. Moreover, the band has a very active fanbase; someone in Japan makes oil paintings of Laufey and they even have an Instagram fan account. "I'm still always surprised about how willing people are to come to the shows. I love the dedication," Sólvieg says.

The advice Sólvieg would give to emerging musicians is to always be able to have fun and enjoy what you are doing: "We are so lucky to still be friends. Sometimes, we make time on our days off to rent a cabin in the woods and just be together."

FEMALE DOOM APOCALYPSE

For Kælan Mikla, playing in their homeland and at Gaukurinn holds profound sentimental value, making the occasion not just a concert but a cherished tradition and a celebra-

and Volcanova play. "We haven't performed for so long. There's going to be a lot of passion in us", says Sólvieg of their upcoming headlining gig.

"Metal music has always been one of the most male-driven music genres out there. Having other genders partake in the heavy scene has only made it more varied and creative," shares Hörður Jónsson from the

## The band has a very active fanbase; someone in Japan makes oil paintings of Laufey and they even have an Instagram fan account.

ReykjaDoom crew. Despite progress, they acknowledge the need for continued efforts to promote diversity onstage. "The best thing we can do is to make the bands that are active feel welcome."

"As someone who knows them from their earlier days, it has been amazing to see Kælan Mikla grow with their music, aesthetics and melan-

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**Festival Time**

# If You're Looking For A Reason To Go North

The joke that became Iceland's coolest festival has a monster 20 year anniversary

WORDS **Eliás Þórsson**  
IMAGE **Ásgeir Helgi Þrastarson**

For 20 years, the place to be each Easter hasn't been mass in Hallgrímskirkja, or a reception in Bessastaðir. It's a fishy smelling warehouse in the Westfjord capital Ísafjörður, some 400 km from the coast of Greenland. That warehouse is the venue for the music festival Aldrei fór ég suður (I never went south), which borrows its name from a Bubbi Morthens song about a man unable to join the great 80s migration of Icelanders toward the capital.

"I was playing a festival at ICA in London in 2003, and playing such a prestigious venue made me think that was the moment when I'd become world famous," says Aldrei fór ég suður founder Örn Elías Guðmundsson, better known by

his artist name Mugison. "My dad, who shared my optimism about my impending superstardom, had come all the way from Ísafjörður to see me play at this momentous occasion. As it turned out, rather embarrassingly, he was one of the very few who did."

To deal with the disappointment, the two turned to the healthiest way to face your misfortunes. "The best thing to do in a tragic situation like this one is to get drunk and blame everyone else for your failures and in this case it was this terrible festival" says Mugison. "I had a hopeless five in the afternoon slot, didn't get paid and I wasn't even allowed backstage. As a joke, my dad and I decided to plan our own festival based on our principles and our rules."

They were going to start a festival where everyone was treated equally. Where no band, regardless of stature, got a longer slot, everyone was paid the same and nobody would be barred from the backstage beer. As his father had recently moved to Ísafjörður, the pair decided that the town located a few kilometers south of the Arctic Circle with a population of just 2,600 souls would be the perfect locale for their festival.

"We found it hilarious to have a festival over Easter because quite

frequently the weather makes it impossible to fly to Ísafjörður at that time of year," says Mugison. The alcohol-fuelled joke might have remained just that if not for a chance encounter in Reykjavík a few days later with now world renowned artist Ragnar (Raggi) Kjartansson.

"I was just getting to know Raggi at the time and we ran into him at Sirkus, which was the main bar for artist types at the time," recounts Mugison. "He found our idea hilarious and rather amazing and, him being the amazing, beautiful guy he is, who everyone loves, he started convincing all these musicians to perform. Before we knew it we had a whole lineup of amazing artists, which included the guys from Sigur rós playing country. So in a sense, he turned this joke born out of frustration into a reality."

That reality hit the next day during their hungover drive to Ísafjörður. They had a 16 act lineup for a festival that had no venue, no money and not even a soundsystem. But what you do in a small town at the edge of the world when faced with an unexpected situation is improvise, get help from the locals and work it out. The venue they found could hardly be a better representation of life in the Westfjords – a warehouse that,

when not festival central, stores fish. From the beginning, Aldrei fór ég suður has been made possible by the local community coming together to make it happen. There is no entry fee and the locals donate their time each Easter to run concessions and help out where and how they can.

"In many ways, this is a family festival or maybe rather a family reunion," says Mugison. "People who moved away years ago come with their teenagers and people crash at their great uncle's house."

As Mugison points out, such a small town can only receive so many people and an internationally known act such as a Justin Bieber wouldn't be able to attract the crowds he could elsewhere because there simply would be nowhere to house attendees.

The lineup for the 20 year anniversary is rather interesting in that regard, as it includes Of Monsters and Men – arguably Iceland's biggest music export of the past decade – as well as a number of the country's biggest artists.

"We are sounding our birthday trumpets and many of the acts will be

old friends of the festival who have played before and everyone should be able to find something to their liking. It's gonna be the bomb," says Mugison. ■

Aldrei fór ég suður is happening March 29 to 30 in Ísafjörður. Check Aldrei.is for news and announcements as the festival approaches.

*Are you going north this Easter? Maybe this lineup – being debuted exclusively here in the Grapevine! – will be enough to lure you to Ísafjörður for some free festival fun.*

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- Of Monsters And Men
- The Music School Trumpet Band
- Mugison
- GDRN
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Music  
Video

## Cell7's Epic Alter Ego

The veteran rapper harnesses tech in her latest video

WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle  
IMAGE Provided by Cell7

adding, "it doesn't need to cost half a million [krónur] for a video." They laugh as they elaborate on the fun process of tweaking the video in real time at home, while Johann notes that "things that used to take days and weeks are now done on an app on your phone."

In addition to the excitement around the video, Ragna is excited to break this new technology in to the Icelandic music scene. Bringing up this newness of it all, the two address the elephant in the room: "Of course, now if people see anything I think the tendency is to always think, 'oh it's some new AI thing,' like it is just a buzzword. A lot of new visual things [are put] into an AI category," Ragna articulates. "I feel like there is a certain hesitation with regards to technology and probably a fear of everything looking the same."

Johann notes that the announcement about OpenAI's new text-to-video model "Sora" came the same day of their video release. The tech is opening many new doors, while sparking endless debates surrounding the use of AI in visual media.

But is it Cell7? Ragna acknowledges that the new video and song are a departure from her previous musical output. "We're like 'is this Cell7? I don't know,'" she ponders before continuing excitedly, "and then we're like 'fuck it, yeah of course!' I'm multi-layered, so why the hell not!"

"Cell7 is ever-evolving, doing whatever I think is cool," she says.

"U-N-I" isn't the beginning and end of Cell7's flirtation with technology. A peek at a forthcoming video reveals another digital rendering of Ragna that is equally as entrancing.

"The uncanny valley moments can be there," Johann acknowledges, "that's up to anyone to decide." So, go decide. ■

*All My Friends* by Cell7 is slated for release at the end of March. Watch the music video for "U-N-I" online now.

Innovative and rebellious, Ragna Kjartansdóttir is a legendary figure of the Icelandic hip hop and rap scene. The artist known as Cell7 continues to cut her own path with the release of "U-N-I", off her forthcoming album *All My Friends*. It's an enticing track that finds the artist trading in rapping for singing. Accompanying the single is a music video starring a "metahuman" alter ego of Cell7, brought to life using Epic's Unreal Engine.

Created in collaboration with Johann Reynisson, using tech notably employed recently by *Barbie* and *The Mandalorian*, Cell7's "metahuman" is a mesmerising (and slightly haunting) eyebrow-less, majorly-freckled persona that holds the viewers gaze for the duration of the video and refuses to break it.

For the love of tech Though together for 2.5 years, "U-N-I" marks the pair's first formal collaboration, as well as an opportunity for them to incorporate their "day jobs" into a joint endeavour. Johann brings experience from his career in the gaming industry and computer graphics, while Ragna brings her expertise in music and performance.

"We are happy to be doing this with the resources we have," Ragna says,



Musical  
Space

## Live From Lækjartorg

DRIF's radio tower is broadcasting the Icelandic electronic scene to the world

WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Hljómtúrninn ("the sound tower") is the freshly coined moniker for the small tower in Lækjartorg that once upon a time served as a ticket stall and kiosk. Now, it is home to DRIF: an electronic-music radio station that entered the scene in June 2023. After getting started with weekly DJ sets at Prikkið, DRIF's acquired the tower and ushered in a new chapter in their own space, which they've adorned with posters, a video camera to record sets, vinyl stacked and strewn around, coffee and sofas. Founder and towermaster Atli James, 23, (who releases music under Jamesendir) wants DRIF to boost the signal of a new generation of electronic musicians in Iceland.

Each week, DRIF streams live audio and video of sets from the tower, posting them to YouTube after the fact in an act of preservation that also helps amplify the DJ sets to the furthest corners of the globe. Atli James explains that "people can just stumble upon it, algorithms take it wherever and hopefully someone sees it." He even shared that this is how he found inspiration and new DJs in his youth.

NYC-based DJ Word of Command has already found DRIF through YouTube. After reaching out to say he liked what DRIF was doing, he

came out to Iceland to play a set in February. DRIF's early Prikkið sessions had a similar effect, drawing in the ear of Vienna-based DJ Samuel who was passing by while in Reykjavík last year during the EVE Fanfest. The Austrian DJ has struck up a mutual venture with Atli James, where they've gone to each other's cities to play sets. Notably, the night of our interview, Samuel is in town to play a set at the release party for Atli James and collaborator LaFontaine's new Lím Label.

### SONIC FUSION SCHEDULE

Many DRIF DJs host recurring shows at the tower. DJ Melerito De Jeré (also known as Juan M. Melero of Xiupill and PELLEGRINA fame), hosts a show focused on non-club music, with a new guest every week. When asked what he liked about DRIF, he praised it as "a space with an amazing potential to expand knowledge, art and culture. This city lacks spaces where artists can go to just chill and enjoy music in a less formal way."

## Towermaster Atli James wants DRIF to amplify the newest generation of Iceland's thriving electronic scene to the world.

Another group putting the space to use is Plútó, the decade old DJ collective and radio show formerly housed at the now off-air Útvarp 101. At Hljómtúrninn, Plútó continues to explore their genre of boundary-pushing, underrepresented electronic music. As Plútó mainstay Gunni Ewok says of this new venture, "hopefully more people will get inspired by the shows on DRIF and help the scene grow while still staying connected to the roots."

### PAYING RENT

In addition to electrifying the airwaves, DRIF has begun hosting monthly events at Radar — the next one is slated for March 8. The events serve not only to bring the music outside the tower, but also as a means to make some money — leasing a tower from Reykjavíkurborg isn't free!

Asked what he envisions for the future of DRIF, Atli James underscores the need to just keep it going for now. "I want to last until summer," he says. "When it's warmer and brighter we can start having the windows open and making more events." He points out "now we need to be holed up in the tower because it's so cold and people don't really know walking past that there's anything going on in there."

Summarising what DRIF is for him, Atli calls it "a window into the Icelandic electronic music scene." That's figuratively spot on for those abroad and watching videos online

of Reykjavík-based DJ sets. But it's also true for those who happen to be strolling through Lækjartorg and finding themselves curious about what's happening in that iconic tower. Just peek through the window and witness the re-burgeoning Reykjavík electronic scene. ■

DRIF streams on [drif.live](https://drif.live), posting their weekly schedule on Instagram @drif.live, and recorded sets on YouTube under @drifradio



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Food

# Will The Fun Never Stop

Food & Fun returns to bring more international flavour to Reykjavík

WORDS Ragnar Egilsson  
IMAGES Provided by Food & Fun

Why fly to some exotic locale to try the local cuisine, when foreign chefs can come right to you. Will eating out at all those Reykjavik restaurants end up costing more than a flight abroad? Of course it will, but just put

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it on the company card and hope for the best, or max out your student loans, or get a second mortgage. Bottomline: it's going to be fine.

of international chefs to Reykjavik to take the helm of a local restaurant and craft one-off festival menus. This is really the only part of the proceedings that your average diner

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D?

looking for a bite to eat will have any contact with, but the festival also involves a competition, wherein the chefs compete to create a three-course meal using Icelandic ingredients.

Through the years, the festival has served the local restaurant community well, by helping forge international contacts and shaking people out of their routines with a little friendly competition. In a way, Food & Fun became a type of harvest festival (and party) for Icelandic chefs.

Another purpose of the food event was to boost local tourism during the off-season, which is why Food & Fun used to be spearheaded by Icelandair, the Icelandic lamb council and the Icelandic tourism board.

A lot has changed since those heady days of 2005 to 2015. The Icelandic tourist economy doesn't quite need the steroid injections it used to as Icelandic nature seems to be doing the heavy lifting in the PR department, with volcanos either drawing people in or scaring them away. The restaurant scene has also matured, with Michelin stars won and lost, ambitious concepts emerging and sturdy restaurant chains forming that have thus far managed to weather the lower-demand months.

#### BUT WILL IT LEAVE ME FULL?

The role of Food & Fun in the local food scene seems a little less clear in 2024. Sure, there is a small group of people who eat at Reykjavik's fine dining restaurants more than twice a year and are eager for the novelty. But that crowd is more savvy now

and would expect bigger names to grace us with their presence. Granted, the star of the celebrity chef doesn't shine quite as bright as it used to and the moment where an average foodie could rattle off the names of up and coming food auteurs seems to be behind us, but people still seek out new and exciting dishes — it's just not the personality cult it used to be.

Unfortunately, this year's roster leaves a lot to be desired. The lineup consists of 16 white dudes with folded arms, representing restaurants few will have heard of. Among the restaurants you may have heard of are flashy magnets for the nou-

resented at Food & Fun these days. The kind of places where people in 2018 would go to flaunt their wealth by spending thousands of pounds on wine and wagyū.

The only exception would be Michael Rafidi, who is the chef and owner of the Michelin-vajazzled Albi in Washington D.C. He will be visiting the restaurant Sumac on Laugavegur. Rafidi is representing his family's Palestinian cuisine which shares Levantine roots with the Lebanese themed food of Sumac. Albi's menu consists of familiar mezze staples which have been given the fine-dining twist. It will be interesting to see what Rafidi will bring to the table. ■

Through the years, the festival has served the local restaurant community well, by helping forge international contacts and shaking people out of their routines with a little friendly competition.

veau riche in London's Mayfair district like Hide and Sexy Fish (seriously), with those guest chefs neither running nor owning their respective restaurants. The second of those two Mayfair spots got justly ridiculed for its over-the-top decor and ludicrous name in a laugh-out-loud review from The Guardian's Marina O'Loughlin back in 2015 and there hasn't been much talk about Sexy Fish since. This sums up the type of restaurateur you're likely to see rep-

The Food & Fun 2024 edition runs from March 6 to 10 at various locations throughout downtown Reykjavik. Book your tables at [foodandfun.is](http://foodandfun.is)

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Travel

## Zen In The Trees

Iceland doesn't have a lot of forest, but there's a hidden gem in at least one

WORDS Iryna Zubenko  
IMAGES Art Bicnick

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Art Bicnick and I are here to visit Forest Lagoon.

### A VERY HOT DISCOVERY

Forest Lagoon, or Skógarböð, opened its doors in May 2022 and almost 200,000 visitors. Natural baths aren't a new concept in Iceland, in fact, there's one in almost every corner in the country. But, until Sigríður María Hammer and her husband Finnur Aðalbjörnsson turned their land into a thriving business, providing a haven for both locals and tourists to relax in the region, there wasn't one in the North. "Once we were walking around here, and saw this land for sale – 250 acres that go all the way up to the mountain and then down to the ocean. We decided to buy it, because it's just magnificent land. Iceland has approximately 3% forest, so this is quite a lot of forest in that matter," says Sigríður, as we sit in the Lagoon's cosy bistro.

Initially, Sigríður and Finnur didn't have plans to use the land for a nature baths project, but when hot water was discovered during the construction of Vaðlaheiðargöng, the tunnel that allows for a shorter travel time between Akureyri and Húsavík, the idea started to materialise. "When they were drilling the tunnel, they found hot water within the mountain that wasn't supposed to be there. It was quite a surprise," Sigríður explains.

The discovery of the hot water caused considerable delay for the construction work of the tunnel. "The construction workers were actually working just in speedos, because it was 50 degrees inside," says Sigríður. "Ever since the tunnel was finished, this water has basically been going into the ocean. Nobody was doing anything with it. What a waste."

The 50-degree water, rich with oxygen and minerals, wasn't suitable

for heating houses. Finnur, who's a contractor and has worked on many infrastructure projects in the area, first thought of the idea of building a nature bath. However, the problem was that the hot water vein lay approximately three kilometres from what is now the Forest Lagoon. The project sounded ambitious but very costly.

"For many years Akureyri has been a town where people stayed one night and then just travelled further on to Lake Mývatn," says Sigríður, telling me how she and her husband embarked on a mission to change this. "After many negotiations, we got everyone on board and they [local municipalities], decided to help us with putting all the water into pipelines to restrain and to take it here."

### DIVING INTO COMFORT

I change into my swimsuit in the shower area, which is equipped with both open public showers and individual shower cabins for those who aren't used to the Icelandic bathing customs of showering naked. A good shower is essential, highlights Sigríður – the water in Forest Lagoon is free from any chemicals, including chlorine. The only thing Forest Lagoon adds to the water is cold water, exchanging it a few times a day to stay free from bacteria.

In the shower, I discover that Sóley Organics shampoos and shower gel products are being used here – a small detail but a pleasant surprise for me personally, as these are the exact products I use at home. I later find out that the Lagoon is already working on its own bathing products with a local producer from the North.

I'm happy to discover that you can walk into the lagoon through a passageway directly next to the changing area, without the need to expose yourself to the cold. There's a separate inclined passageway for those using wheelchairs. With

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**A**kureyri is being swept by a snow storm.

For a few hours on a night in late February, it feels like Iceland's second largest town has turned into a tiny snow globe. The wooden houses in the central area, usually bright and colourful, are now blanketed in white, with an occasional candle flickering in every other window serving as a reminder of life inside. Parked cars, including one belonging to Lögreglan, are buried under the snow's weight. Kids are throwing snowballs, making me nostalgic for my childhood. How weird would it be if I joined them in a snow fight?

Things feel cold and heavy, but just a five minute ride away lies an oasis nestled in the trees. Long overdue,



of them

private changing rooms, inclusivity and accessibility is taken seriously at every step of the experience.

#### READY FOR A "PINE" SOAK

Designed by Basalt Architects, the firm behind the Blue Lagoon and GeoSea nature baths, Forest Lagoon boasts a sleek wooden exterior that harmonises seamlessly with the surrounding forest backdrop. The inclusion of individual trees planted inside the pool adds to the feeling of being immersed in the forest ambiance.

Forest Lagoon consists of two pools – one around 38 degrees Celsius, and the other slightly warmer at 41-42 degrees Celsius. For those who love extreme contrasts, there's also a cold tub that I decide to skip, despite Art's many attempts to convince me to check it out. The in-pool bars offer a variety of drinks to match every taste – from smoothies and slushies to an assortment of local beers and cocktails. Safety of

the visitors when it comes to drinking inside the bath is taken seriously – you're only allowed to purchase four alcoholic drinks and will be denied access if you reach your limit.

I opt for a piña colada from one of the pool bars and think to myself, "Where else could I enjoy a cocktail while being immersed in a warm bath?" Iceland's other lagoons

and the Hlíðarfjall ski resort lighting up at dusk.

According to Sigríður, the proximity to Vaðlaskógur forest not only distinguishes Forest Lagoon from a myriad of other hot spring pools in Iceland, but serves a practical purpose – sheltering the pool from wind gusts. "Other lagoons sometimes have to regulate the water because

## Iceland has approximately 3% forest, so this is quite a lot of forest.

come to mind, but what sets Forest Lagoon apart from them, besides being surrounded by an actual forest, is the presence of benches and tables made of rock throughout the pool area. It doesn't clutter the bathing experience. Instead, it allows you to pause for a moment, set down your drink and take in the view – the Eyjafjörður fjord stretching below

it cools down if the wind is blowing too much," she explains. "Sometimes they even have to close. We've never even had to regulate water more than 1-2 degrees."

A freestanding Finnish sauna with a large panoramic view over the pool, allows bathers to truly soak in the experience – admire the surround-

ings, or simply close their eyes, meditate and indulge in the relaxing experience. As I step inside, the sound of a conversation in Finnish greets me – a Finn in the sauna is a genuine mark of quality.

#### PLANNING AHEAD

Off-season, Forest Lagoon takes pride in hosting events tailored more to the local community, including inviting local bands and musicians for pool concerts. On one occasion, a band even performed from the rooftop of the sauna, creating an uproar among visitors who swayed in the pool, some of them as wrinkled as prunes.

"We believe in this area," says Sigríður, her eyes sparking with motivation. "It's beautiful and there's so much potential there."

As tourism in Iceland is experiencing a second record-breaking year in a row, the problem of insufficient infrastructure becomes more and

more visible, especially in the North. Together with her husband and business partner, Sigríður already has another project in the works. "For our next project, we are building a hotel – right here, 90 metres south from the lagoon," she shares. The 120-room hotel is set to open by 2027 and connect to Forest Lagoon through an infinity pool.

Open daily from 10:00 to midnight, Forest Lagoon allows you to unwind while savouring the scenery all-year-round – overlooking the greenery of a rare Icelandic forest and observing its diverse bird life in the summer or watching snowflakes melt in the water in the winter, just like I did. A frosty sunrise or a pink sunset? You name it.

And just imagine watching the northern lights here. ■

Forest Lagoon can be accessed by car or a free shuttle from Akureyri. For details, visit [forestlagoon.is](https://forestlagoon.is)



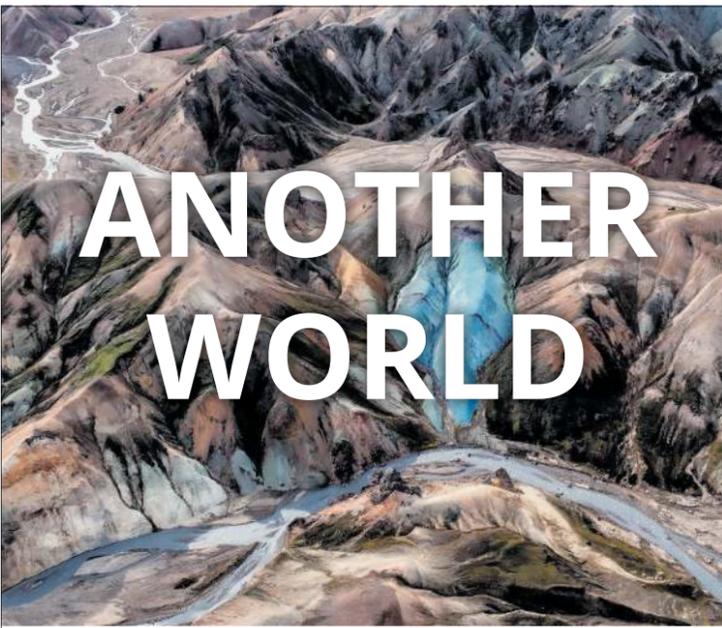
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We Tried It

## Walking Through A Phallus

It's all about the dicks at Iceland's weirdest and wildest museum

WORDS Catharine Fulton  
IMAGES Art Bicnick

tons' you'll pass before arriving at your destination.

Upon learning the sad news in early February that Icelandic Phallogical Museum founder Sigurður Hjartarson had passed away at 82 years old, it seemed only fitting that we would venture out from the Grapevine offices — conveniently located just 80 m from the penis museum — to check out the massive (not that size matters) collection he amassed.

### The living room got increasingly full with amputated phalluses

away that place is from the Phallogical Museum. There's a joke in there about men who earnestly believe their pecker to be the centre of the universe, but it's funnier to think that a museum dedicated to penises and penile parts is the centre of Reykjavik.

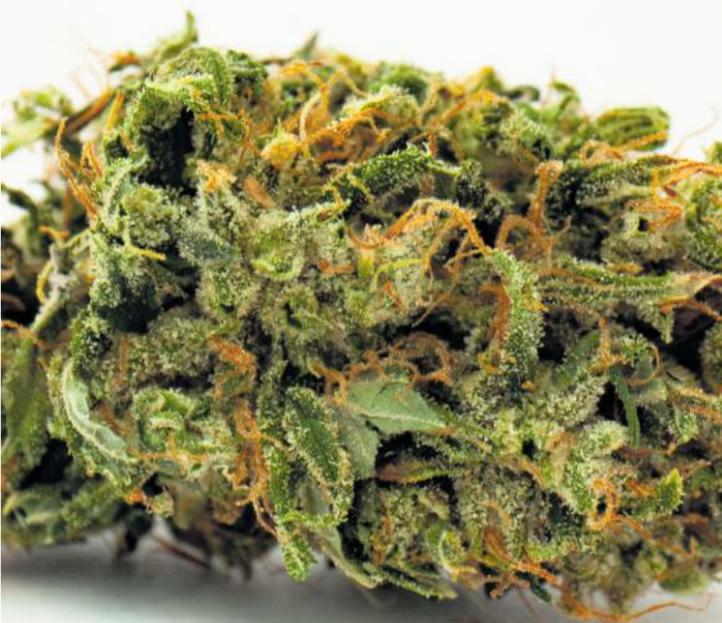
#### HOW IT STARTED

Walking down the stairs into the expansive subterranean museum, visitors are treated to a recording of Sigurður's voice welcoming them to the museum and explaining how it came to be. "The living room got

**H**ow does one measure distances in different places around the world? In some places, it's as simple as kilometres or miles. Or maybe by minutes, or proximity to landmarks or by how many Tim Hor-

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# Phallic Wonderland

increasingly full with amputated phalluses, and finally my wife told me I could not keep them at home anymore," stood out as a reminder that perhaps a partner that leaves dirty dishes in the sink isn't such a bad thing in the grand scheme of things.

Sigurður's fascination with penises began when he was given a cattle whip as a child that was made from a bull's penis. Over time, he began collecting paraphernalia and was gifted whale penises from whaling stations. All the while, he worked as a highschool teacher, teaching history and Spanish.

A proper museum was opened in Reykjavík in 1997, but the collection was displayed in Húsavík from 2004 to 2012. At that point, penises and penile parts were shipped back to Reykjavík for display, where they are to this day.

## HOW IT'S GOING

It's a wild experience, walking into the penis, museums' relatively new location in Reykjavík's Hafnartorg shopping district. A long corridor of collected and donated penis-related art lines both sides of the long corridor visitors walk on route to the museum proper. It's a far cry from the single-room set-up the collection previously filled on Laugavegur. It's slick and professional.

Before entering the exhibition, guests arrive at the Phallic Café, where creamy drinks and penis shaped waffles are among the delicacies on offer. The area – notably teeming with pairs and groups of women at the time of our visit – is inviting, whether sitting down for a bite or simply browsing the souvenirs on offer – Groucho glasses with a penis in lieu of a nose, aprons adorned with penises and t-shirts emblazoned with the slogan "It's

All About Dicks" stood out as must haves. Venturing into the exhibition, the signage on the wall – pointing the way with a penis instead of an arrow – directs visitors to the first room, housing casts of the penises of the silver medal winning 2008 Icelandic handball team, as well as the disembodied members of a number of deer from the United States, Iceland, Poland and other European nations. Mood lighting is provided by lamps crafted out of bull testicles.

The members of the famous Icelandic horse are also on display. Their penile preserves are far less cute than the animals are in real life.

A visit to the museum is an educational experience, to be sure. For example, we learned that what rodents lack in penis size, they more than make up for with their large testicles. It's also clear that the staff

on the walls like trophies in stuffy hunting lodges.

In addition to the visual displays of penises, scrotum and penile bones, museum imparts an impressive amount of information on the courting and mating habits of each animal featured. It's all surprisingly interesting to navigate.

Moving beyond the wild animals, visitors find themselves in a part of the exhibit displaying the curators bowtie, codpiece and other paraphernalia crafted out of the penis skin of a sperm whale. This is followed by displays of carved sculptures of penises, including a bronze phallic amulet from 1st century France, a winged phallus from Pompeii and a carving of Osiris's penis. This area is accompanied with information on various historic rituals, folklore and practices centred around fertility and penises.

## Icelandic horse penises are also on display and are far less cute than the animals are in real life.

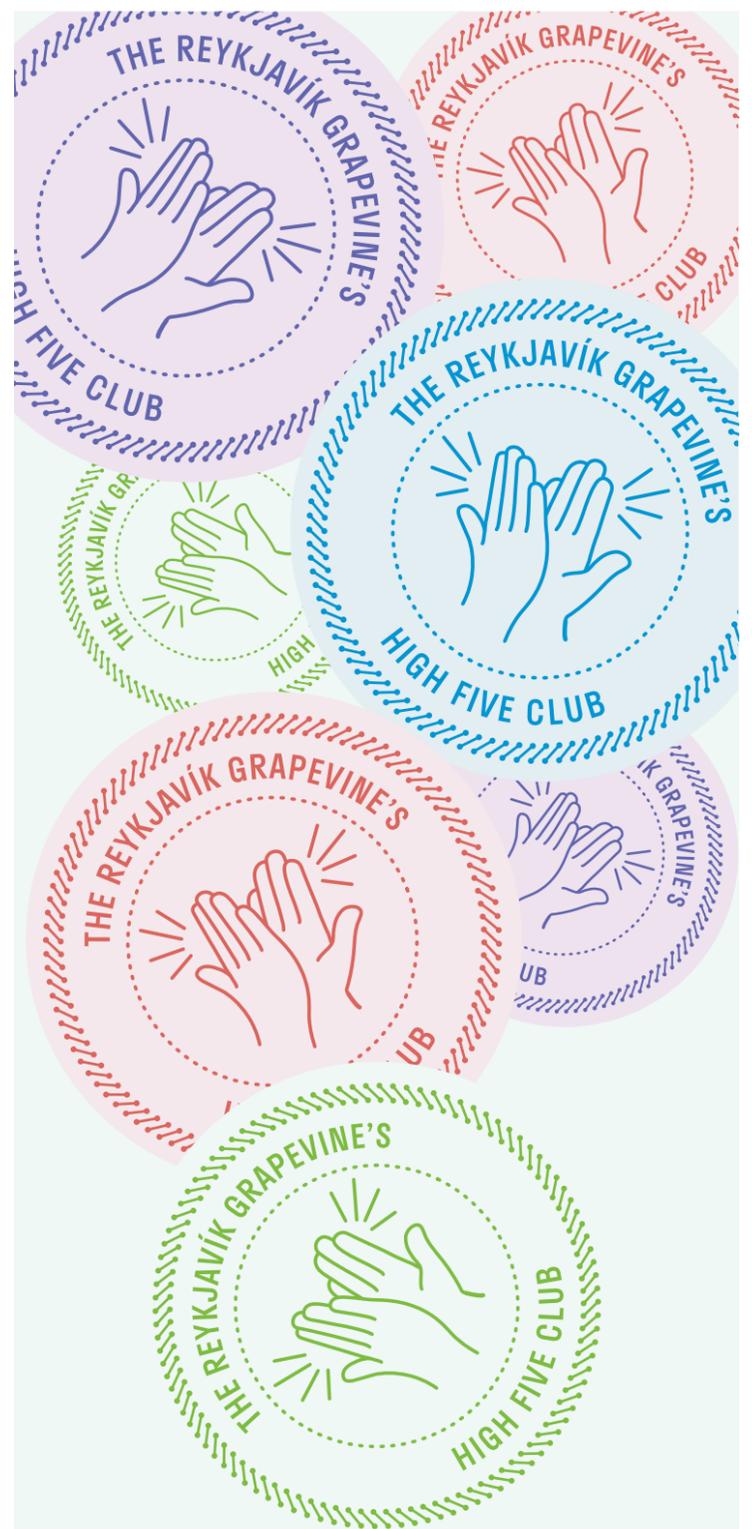
of the penis museum has a great sense of humour – as evidenced by signage apologising for a ruminant construction that reads "we are growing."

The fact, as told by Sigurður, that walrus have the largest penal bones of all animals is quickly forgotten when entering the next room, displaying samples in increasingly larger containers, displaying the phalluses of a narwhal, killer whale, sperm whale and blue whale. Whale erections – which visitors learn have refractor muscles that serve to hold the penis inside their mate's body – are mounted on wooden blocks

The exhibition ends with a display of phalluses of mythological creatures. The troll probably should've seen a doctor while alive, and it's to everyone's benefit that the Yule Lads don't come down from the mountain in the nude. The penis of the Ghost of Snæfell is ghostly, indeed,

## UP AND AT'EM

Sigurður should be immensely proud of the collection he amassed in life and the legacy that stands to his perseverance now. The Icelandic Phallogical Museum – being the centre of everything in Reykjavík – is well worth a visit. ■



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Islanders

# The Student Has Become The Teacher

Derek Terell Allen moved to Iceland to learn the language – now he teaches it

WORDS Iryna Zubenko  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

I first heard about Derek Terell Allen after my first ever Icelandic class at The Tin Can Factory, one of the language schools in Reykjavík. An American teaching Icelandic? Really? Given the difficulty of mastering this language and realising how far most of the students in my class were from achieving that goal, I was intrigued. How did Derek go from learning languages on his own to becoming a teacher and attending polyglot conferences worldwide? We caught up with him between classes to hear his story.

I've always loved languages. When I was 13, I started learning Dutch. I've always been a fan of Top Model. I was raised watching America's Next Top Model. I discovered they have the show in other countries and decided to watch Holland's Next Top Model. They were always screaming and crying, and I was like, "Okay, well, what's going on? I want to know." So, I started teaching myself Dutch.

That was the first language I ever tried to study on my own. I was reading books and talking to people on the internet. Then, one thing led to another and I got onto Icelandic.

When I was in high school in the U.S., we talked about what we wanted to do after high school. I knew I wanted to go to university and move abroad. That's why I pursued Icelandic – so I could get into an Icelandic university and make things easier for myself. I studied Icelandic as a second language for my bachelor's degree and Translation Studies for my master's.

pocket because people still don't think I speak Icelandic because I'm Black. Be ready to tell people, "Hey, I speak Icelandic," or "Would you be able to speak to me in Icelandic?"

What I found most helpful was just doing what I wanted. People often say, "Listen to music, watch TV, read, etc." Those things are important, but, for example, Icelandic music is

so much meaning.

I learn something new in English and Icelandic every day. I want to learn idioms and proverbs, so I've been studying them. There are two books – *Íslensk orðtök* and *Íslenskir málshættir*. I'm only reading the first one because it takes me forever to read, but I'll get into the second one after I finish this one.

I don't know if my English has gotten worse, but my friends from the States have said, "Derek, you have an accent." Sometimes, I feel that I say certain things weirdly. I didn't have that kind of problem seven years ago.

I also speak intermediate Dutch, a little bit of Yoruba and Hungarian, plus a little bit of Hebrew. I would love to learn Urdu and Slovak. I used to be pretty good at Slovak, but then I forgot it after I came back from Slovakia. I can speak a tiny bit of Spanish, Mandarin and I guess Danish, in the way Icelandic people say they speak Danish.

## DEREK'S CLASS

At The Tin Can Factory, we have courses A through E and 1 through 7. Most of my time, I've been teaching A-E, which are preparation courses, mainly for those whose mother language doesn't use the Latin alphabet, like Arabic or Persian, or people coming from places where the edu-

will surprise you. My favourite thing about the job is meeting people with different backgrounds and stories. Some have tragic stories, but they're still coming here and doing their thing. I love meeting all these people.

I know that students in the school have sometimes been surprised that I'm a teacher. I remember one time, I was teaching and then noticed an older gentleman in the hallway. He looked as though he'd been struck by lightning. I could see on his face that he was astonished. He didn't believe that I was a teacher. Society looks at me and says, "He can't possibly be Icelandic. He can't possibly speak Icelandic." I get that reaction from students sometimes. Some people might be a bit apprehensive at first, like people always are when meeting a new teacher. But then, after one class, they are just like, "Okay, he gets it." They're not worried.

## HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

Iceland is home, for sure. Not that I would *never* want to move elsewhere. I also look at Washington State as home, in a sense, but I still moved. My identity is very complicated, but I definitely feel at home here. I don't feel like a foreigner, even though technically I am. I feel very Icelandic in my heart.

## The hardest thing about learning Icelandic is actually the native Icelanders, because they're so quick to switch into English.

I'd never left the U.S. before I travelled here for the first time. But I've always been a global citizen type of person.

After my studies, I worked at a student organisation called the National Union of Icelandic Students, better known by its Icelandic name – Landssamtök íslenskra stúdenta (LÍS). I was actually the president – the union's first president of colour. Then I started working here [at The Tin Can Factory]. But it wasn't that quick – I had a period of unemployment and then working a survival job. Then I got this job and now work more or less full-time hours here.

## BITING THE LANGUAGE BULLET

There's no shortcut to learning Icelandic. The main tip I would give is just to be persistent. The hardest thing about learning Icelandic is actually the native Icelanders because they're so quick to switch to English. If you look different, they will assume you don't speak the language. It's really important to stand your ground. Even to this day, I always have some phrases in my back

more like rock or alternative, and I'm more into R&B, soul or hip hop. They don't really have that as much in Iceland. I'm not going to start listening to music I don't like just because it's Icelandic. Find what you like – whether it's reading, listening to music, or doing an activity of some kind – and stick with it if it helps you learn.

It took me about two years to learn Icelandic. I don't know if I was fluent, but I felt comfortable. I still made errors, but I was talking enough and people wouldn't have to switch to English.

## BEYOND THE BOOKS

There are so many things that they don't teach you in the books. The books tend to teach you the whole sentences – the full, long-drawn-out version of things. But in real life, people want to get the words out and they're very quick. I remember when I first landed in Iceland, I went to Joe & The Juice and an employee said, "Afrít?" All I knew was "Má ég bjóða þér kvittun?" (Can I offer you the receipt?). I didn't know about "afrít" and that one word conveyed

## I don't feel like a foreigner, even though technically I am.

cation system is very different. There's a curriculum, but we're not bound to it – you're always welcome to put your spin on it. When it comes to tips on teaching Icelandic, I would say abandon all preconceived notions that you have about people because of where they might come from or who they might be. People

I like the feeling of community and the feeling of relative safety here. I'm not saying that things don't happen and that everybody's your best friend. But I walk around at night and I'm not afraid. I don't care to talk to the police, but I'm not afraid to perse. I'm more afraid of the weather than the people. ■



## Musings Blue Lagoon 2: The Lost World™

The evolution of luxury tourism is just one eruption away

WORDS Charlie Winters  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

by a lava flow. So, if the inevitable does happen and the Blue Lagoon is destroyed, I propose a revolutionary idea: Blue Lagoon 2: The Lost World™. Here are some of the amenities it can offer.

Heated pools? A thing of the past my friends. The trademark blue water of the eponymous lagoon comes from subterranean geothermal water and is run through a power plant and then dumped out the back door for you to wade in. This keeps the water hot. But at Blue Lagoon 2: The Lost World™ these pools will be superheated by dumping lava directly into the pool. They only have to

steaming alongside cerulean waters as fumes swirl around you and your chest feels like it's going to collapse. Magnificent.

The current Lagoon boasts two restaurants, one aptly named Lava and the other Moss. For Blue Lagoon 2: The Lost World™; these two restaurants will be combined into a singular Lava restaurant – the flowing molten rock will help the seamless melting together of the establishments. The chefs will have to cook directly over the ash pile that is now the restaurant, but the entire affair can surely be spun and packaged as a “rustic” or “natural”

**T**he azure waters wash over you. The innate healing properties of ancient silica cleanse your body and soul. For a moment it feels as though the ground around you is shaking as the water bubbles. Fissures form in the landscape as lava seeps out of the cracks. The Blue Lagoon is about to be Blue La-gone and by God is it glorious.

If you haven't been living under a molten rock for the past couple months, you'd know that volcanoes have been poppin off on the Reykjanes peninsula. Unlike the more touristy eruptions of years past, the more recent events have been devastating for local infrastructure and the town of Grindavik.

But worry not, the Blue Lagoon is open for business! They've repeatedly reopened their facilities after repeatedly having to close or evacuate. To be clear, they're open with the blessing of the authorities, but you do have to take the alternative road to the facility now since the main one was swallowed up

**If there is nothing salvageable from the OG Blue Lagoon, Blue Lagoon 2: The Lost World™ will be a tourist attraction that is simply a smoldering ruin.**

change their website a little; “Some people came to the water for healing. Others for pleasure. But all who came, left with...” severe third-degree burns.

It's important to remember that when molten magma spews onto the surface it isn't just hot, it also fills the air with toxic fumes. Everything from carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulfide, sulfur dioxide and hydrogen halides. For a luxurious new experience, these could be gathered and pumped directly into saunas. You'd have to enter with a gas mask (which could be provided for a generous rate), but just imagine the luxury of

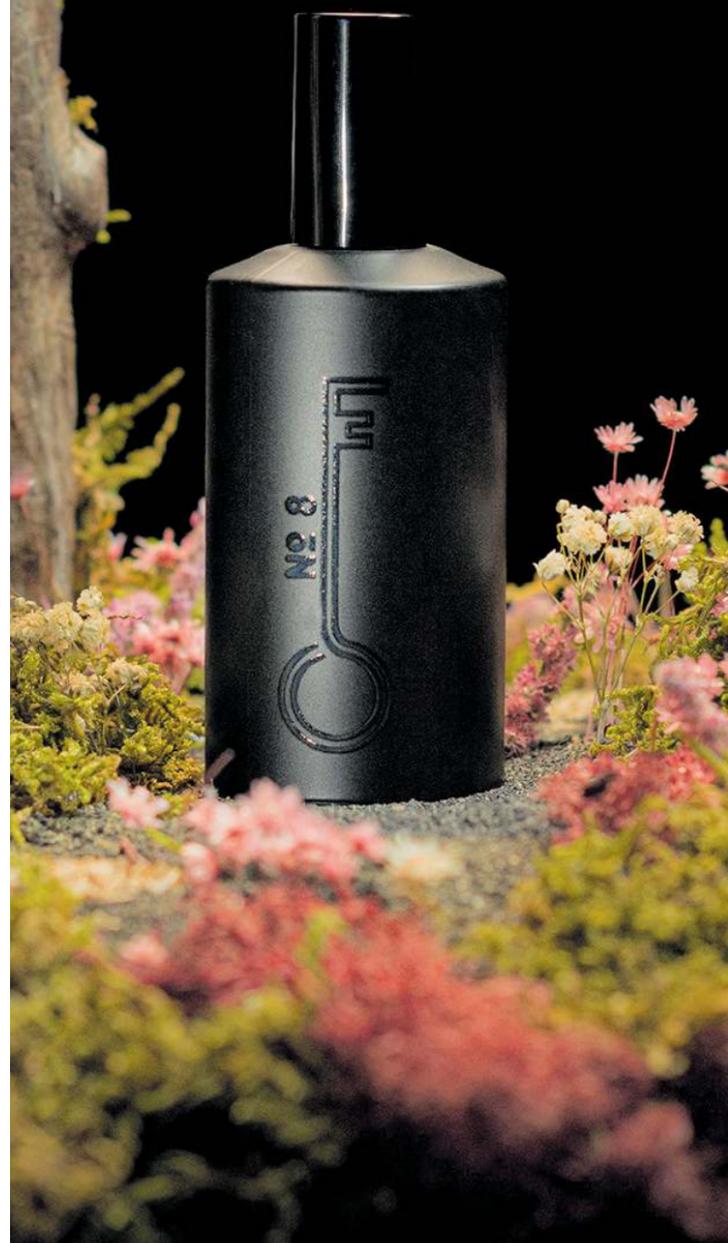
form of cooking. I mean they pawn power plant runoff as a luxury, so the marketing team clearly knows what they're doing.

Finally, if there is nothing salvageable from the OG Blue Lagoon, Blue Lagoon 2: The Lost World™ will be a tourist attraction that is simply a smoldering ruin. They can open up a gift shop nearby selling the charred remains of the old facility. Sadly, that means we'll have to listen to the tourists who visited Blue Lagoon boast about visiting before it all burned to the ground. “The second one isn't anything like the original.” Buncha prudes. ■

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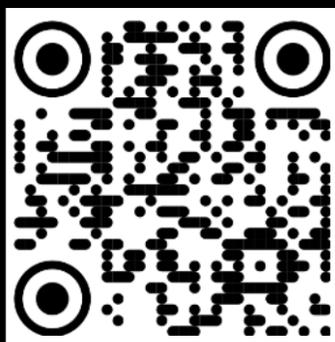
## SEE

# What's on

## AT OUR HOTELS

Get ready for a fantastic time at Center Hotels! We have a bunch of lively events coming up.

Be sure to check out what's happening so you don't miss the fun!



Horrotropes

# Fantastical Fortunes

Don't fear your fortune (or do, it's up to you)

WORDS Charlie Winters & Catherine Magnúsdóttir  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

The Dark Lord Skuggamyrrkur's armies are beating down the forces of light. We are on the brink of collapse. In our moment of desperation, we turn to the Oracle of the Sun. What say they of days to come.



**ARIES**  
(March 21 - April 19)

This month you'll face challenges head on. Blade in hand the many tendrilled servants of the Dark Lord stand no chance. The hordes will seem endless but... wait... I think... they have a cave troll!



**TAURUS**  
(April 20 - May 20)

Dark Lord? You'll have never 'eard of em'. You been in the caves swimmin' in endless pile' o' gold. Yer biggest problem will be 'em thieving Goblins. Keep 'em out, I'd say.



**CAPRICORN**  
(December 22 - January 19)

Capricorns, your talent has always been patience. And sometimes that's a virtue, but the Dark Lord has shit to do - he can't wait for you to be freed from your crystalline prison. Get going, Capricorn, Skuggamyrrkur will be waiting!



**AQUARIUS**  
(January 20 - Feb 18)

With Uranus coming out of retrograde this month it's time to move on. Darkness, lightness, it doesn't concern youness. Aquarius, this month you will board the ship and join your people in the lands of Elysium. Let the mortals burn. Beauty is timeless.



**PISCES**  
(February 19 - March 20)

Keep your eyes open this month, Pisces, your empathy does not extend to all lifeforms. Living furniture? In this secret lair? They're hungrier than you'd think.



**VIRGO**  
(August 23 - September 22)

Virgo your extensive plans are normally fine, but this month it's all going to shit. The thirteen goblins you've hired to raid the Dwarven dungeons will drive you insane. Just keep it together and try not to kill them yourself.



**LIBRA**  
(September 23 - October 22)

You seek balance in all things Libra, but this month that will be tested. Will you choose to align yourself with the Otherworldly Octopus Overlords or the Council of Eleven Elevated Elves?



**SCORPIO**  
(October 23 - November 21)

You'll feel your inner Scorpio take over as you become even more secretive. The Sorcerers of the Secret Enclave will invite you to share in secrets. The choice is yours, but know that they are as secretive of their secrets as their name suggests.



**SAGITTARIUS**  
(November 22 - December 21)  
Sagittarius, keep your eyes on the prize. This is not the month to start doing sidequests. The dragon will not wait for you to get shit done. Take aim and don't fucking miss.



**GEMINI**  
(May 21 - June 20)

This month you'll find yourself immersed in ancient tomes in the Forgotten Library trying to discover the secrets of eternal life. Be careful, Gemini, more than crusty librarians lurk those halls.



**CANCER**  
(June 21 - July 22)

Cancer, your intuitive nature leaves you open to new experiences. You alone will hear the whispers emanating from the Orb of Aeons. They will keep talking about sponsorship deals. Do not trust them.



**LEO**  
(July 23 - August 22)

Alright bigshot, you gotta reel it back. We all know you're the prophesied king according to the Mad Fairie of the Glade, but this month try keeping that ego under wraps. And do not pull out the Sword on a first date.

Well, the Oracle of the Sun just spewed a crock of shit. There's nothing in here to help us defeat Skuggamyrrkur. Alright lads, good luck to you, I'm headed to Elysium. ■



Well, You Asked

# A Bumpy Road Ahead

The Grapevine's finest answers your most pressing questions

WORDS Catherine Magnúsdóttir  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

**WHY ARE SPEED BUMPS THE MOST TERRIBLE THING IN ICELAND?**

They might drag the driver's attention away from their phone screen for even a second when they realise, if ever so briefly, that they should probably check if that bump was asphalt or a person. This is a call-out post specifically for Icelandic drivers btw. Watch. The Fucking. Road!!

**IS THE BLUE LAGOON OPEN? MIGHT IT BE AT THE END OF JUNE?**

Well, if the Blue Lagoon isn't Blue La-Gone due to waves of fire-rum-

blings in the area these days, my best guess is that they will be open sporadically throughout the coming months. Going with the lava-flow, so to speak. As with most Icelandic endeavours, the Blue Lagoon is both stubborn and prone to improvisation, so for a while at least they might be able to work around the...situation. Just keep checking the website for now. Just don't be blue if your visit doesn't work out. And hey, maybe by June they'll have a new (red) hot stone massage treatment and more steam rooms!

**WHY ARE THE GAY BARS FULL OF STRAIGHT SPECTATORS THESE DAYS? THE SUPPORT IS NICE BUT WHERE IS THE COMMUNITY GOING FOR TOGETHERNESS?**

Straight lookie-lous at gay bars have always kind of been a thing, to be

honest, though keep in mind that you can't tell from the outside who is straight, bi, pan, trans, ace or anything in a seemingly "straight" coupling. Erasure ain't a joke. And while the knee jerk reaction might often be to question "why do the straights need this place, too?" the fact is, you don't actually know how straight a person is and why they seek out the feeling of safety at queer spaces. Inclusivity is our lifeblood, friend. But to go into the second part, I found what works for me currently is seeking out individual events rather than one specific location. I have my personal favourite, Gaukurinn, which isn't specifically a gay bar, but is a very inclusive place. You can also check-out the burlesque shows and stuff from Q-félagið!

P.s. if someone really is an ogling creep, you can always ask security to give them the boot, that's kind of what they're there for. ■



Last Look IMAGE Art Bicnick

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## Potent Quotables

**Geggjað is awesome. No, really, it literally means “awesome.”**

The Grapevine teaches you Icelandic (one word at a time) on page 6.

**There’s no escaping the fact that, as far as the Icelandic music industry is concerned, I don’t exist.**

Ben Frost elucidates on his new music, the state of the world and his sense of belonging on page 10-12.

**He starts to realise that the more languages that he speaks, the more friends he can make.**

Alondra Silva Munoz and Helgi Silva Þorsteins-son celebrate the magic of multilingualism in their new children’s book. Read up on page 16-17.

**The best thing to do in a tragic situa- tion like this one is to get drunk and blame everyone else for your failures.**

Mugison tells the tale of how Aldrei fór ég suður got its start on page 28.

**Society looks at me and says, “He can’t possibly be Icelan- dic. He can’t possibly speak Icelandic.”**

Derek Terrell Allen shows other language learn- ers how it’s done (literally – he’s a teacher) on page 36.

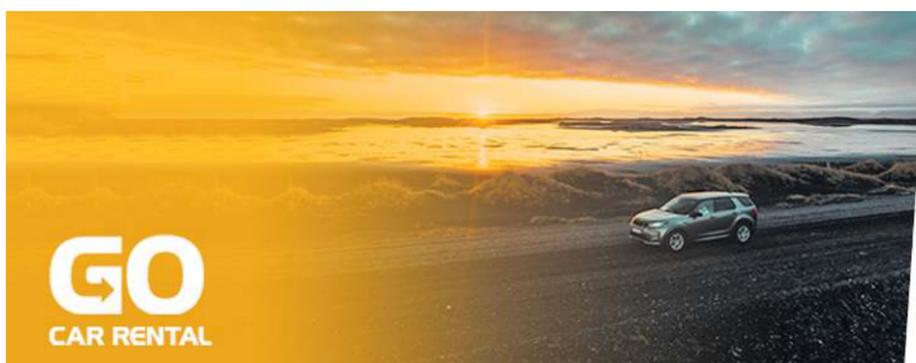
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