

The Reykjavík Grapevine



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Volume 21

Issue 02 2024

Best before March 1

The Reykjavík Grapevine Music Awards

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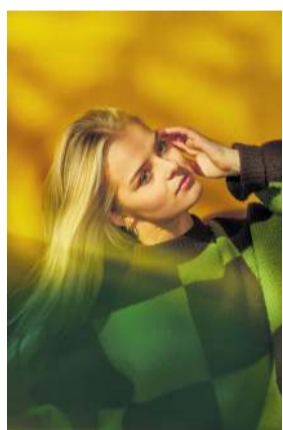
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On the Cover

gugusar takes home the Best Live Act award of The 2024 Reykjavík Grapevine Music Awards. The artist has been making headlines for a few years in a row, with first many comparing her to the nation's own Billie Eilish, then seeing her in every other gig in town. We finally succumbed and admitted there's no one whose live performances engage more and whose dance moves are more mesmerising. Read the feature on pages

12-14 to learn about what other Icelandic musicians you should be listening to this year.

PHOTO BY:
Axel Sigurðarson



Editorial Magic Of The Music

WORDS Catharine Fulton,
Editor in Chief

There's magic in music. Whether it's the enchantment of learning a new instrument, the excitement of attending a live show, or the thrill of stepping on the stage and sharing the sounds you've worked so hard on crafting with a waiting audience. Music is so intrinsically connected with our lives that hearing the opening note to a song can trigger a flood of memories and sensations your brain associates with the sound. It's wild, the power of music in our lives.

This year has seen a torrent of output from Icelandic musicians, who each left their mark on the scene in their own way. We experienced their artistic offerings through singles, EPs, albums and videos and through joining the masses – or sometimes just a handful of other people – for live shows.

For the annual Reykjavík Grapevine Music Awards, we once again assembled a panel of music experts whose knowledge spans genres and transcends trends to deliberate on and determine which artists, songs, videos and live acts stood out above the rest. Turn to pages 12-14 for the winners.

The world can feel like a sad and scary place sometimes. We read the news and watch on our screens as horrible atrocities are carried out around the world and then we sit here in Iceland while our politicians seem eager to make it all worse. In times like these, music can play a therapeutic role, serving as a brief escape, whether you're screaming out your feelings, singing away your anxiety or simply closing your eyes and listening in silence to give yourself some brief respite from the world at large.

Happy listening. ■

Contributors



CATHERINE
MAGNÚSDÓTTIR

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



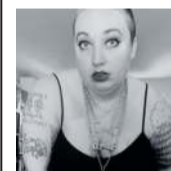
JÓHANNES BJARKI
BJARKASON

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



IRYNA ZUBENKO

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



REX BECKETT

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

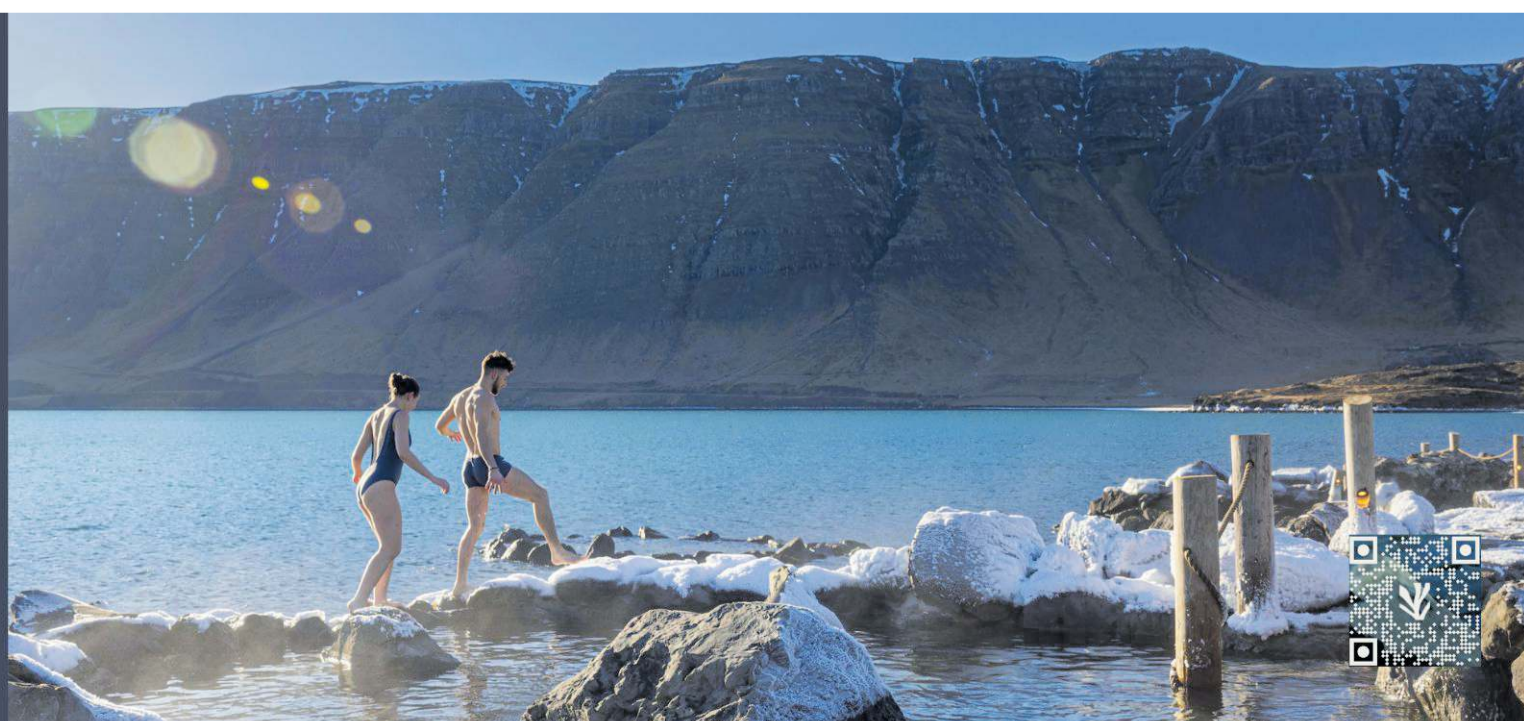


SHRUTHI BASAPPA

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

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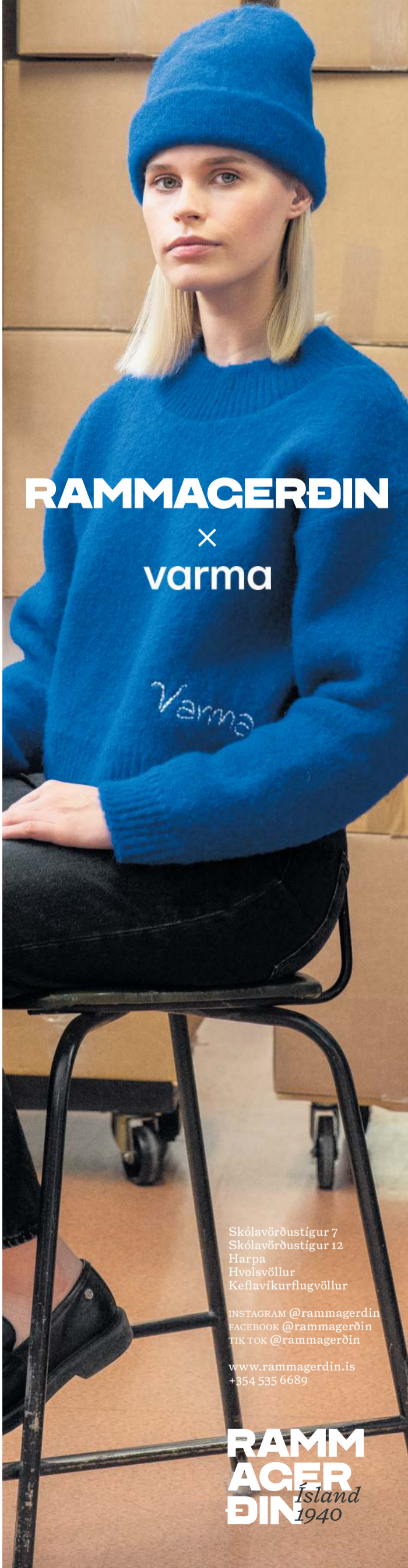


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What The News!? **Bjarni Ben Rails
Against Peaceful Pro-
testors**

A selection of headlines making the rounds in Iceland in recent weeks

WORDS The Reykjavik Grapevine
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

Foreign Minister Bjarni Benediktsson has been making headlines for weeks now over his stance on the Israel-Hamas war. Bjarni logged in to Facebook on January 19 to blow his dog whistle about a small and peaceful encampment that took root in Austurvöllur, the square in front of Alþingi, from Dec. 27, 2023, to Jan. 24.

There, Palestinians living in Iceland and supporters of a cease fire and for the government to help remove Palestinians from Gaza via family reunification, camped, slept and protested peacefully. Several Palestinian flags were erected around their tents to draw attention to the cause of Palestinian refugees in Iceland who want government assistance with family reunification.

Speaking with the Grapevine as the encampment was being dismantled, Palestinian national Naji Asar explained that he has spoken with the embassies of other nordic nations, who have all informed him that the Icelandic government needs to send a list of his family's names to the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt to permit them to cross and make their way to join him in Iceland. Naji has held a kennitala long enough in Iceland to be eligible for family reunification. Now he needs the government to listen.

"It's very hard. it's very cold," he said. "But we sit here to feel what

my family feels and what Mohammed's family feels. We sit here for justice, for peace, for a response. We will sit here forever."

"Palestinian people are already born as refugees. We've lived for 75 years under occupation. Anyone from Palestine who comes to Europe should be approved for refugee status. When people leave Palestine, we're looking for safety, for peace."

BACK TO BJARNI

On Facebook, Bjarni called the existence of the camp a "disaster", and lodged that it's "completely unacceptable that the City of Reykjavik has given permission for the camp on this sacred place between the statue of Jón Sigurðsson and Alþingi." The foreign minister goes on to remind those protesting – with permission from city authorities – that they ought to remember they're in a country that receives a large number of asylum seeker applications.

"The next thing that needs to happen in this issue is to tighten the rules on asylum seekers and harmonize what happens with neighboring countries," Bjarni writes. "Border control needs to be increased. The current system is completely out of control, both in terms of costs and the number of applications."

His post was criticised by Solaris, an aid organisation for refugees and asylum seekers in Iceland, as falling under the definition of hate speech in the penal code.

Bjarni followed up his social media ranting with unilaterally discontinuing Iceland's financial support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in

the Near East (UNRWA) on January 27.

Mohammed and Naji remain in front of parliament, without tents or shelter. Go show your support for them.

BUT WHAT ABOUT EUROVISION?

It is uncertain whether Iceland will participate in the Eurovision Song Contest in Sweden this spring, as musicians continue to call for Israel's exclusion from the annual event. The final decision on participation will be made after the conclusion of the national singing competition, Söngvakeppnin, in consultation with the winners.

The decision was announced following a protest on January 18 when over 500 Icelandic musicians signed a petition calling on RÚV to refuse to participate in Eurovision unless Israel is suspended from the competition.

Stefán Eiríksson, General Director of the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service (RÚV) as said that contestants applying for the national singing competition have expressed understandable concerns about the situation and referred to the situation in Gaza. These concerns have been conveyed to the European Broadcasting Union.

"They [the contestants] apply with the goal of contributing to Iceland's representation in Eurovision. They share concerns about the situation, just like us. This has been our preparation for Eurovision, and we have publicly stated that we plan to participate in Eurovision without any changes, but we don't know what the future holds," said Stefán. ■



The Reykjavik Grapevine

PUBLISHED BY
Fröken ehf.
Aðalstræti 2, 101 Reykjavík
www.grapevine.is
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Member of the Icelandic Travel Industry Association
www.saf.is

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Landsprent ehf.

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The Reykjavik Grapevine is published every month by Fröken Ltd.

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The Reykjavik Grapevine is distributed in and

around Reykjavik and at key locations along Iceland's route 1.

It is also available at all major tourist attractions and information centres around the country.

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On The Fringes

Calling All The Muses

Crafting comedy and crossing creative streams with Sindri Sparkle

WORDS Catherine Magnúsdóttir
IMAGE Art Bicnick

A poet, a painter and a drag queen walk onto the stage. Sounds like a set-up to an artistic joke until I fix the grammatical error: the poet, painter and drag queen walks onto the stage ready to bring some laughs, make you question yourself and probably learn something new! For this edition of my curious column searching for the quirkiest and quaintest of interests and the people behind them, I have sought out Reykjavik royalty, stand-up comedian and artist-of-all-trades Sindri Freyr Bjarnason – or as they translate it “Sparkle Sex-God Son of Bear. It doesn’t get much queerer than that”.

My initial idea was to talk to someone who does stand-up regularly. Seems like a fun thing to get up to. But having seen some of Sindri Sparkle’s shows, it quickly became obvious that there are a number of layers to their performances – like a sparkly onion – combining different ideas and even mediums to talk about their experiences and make the audience laugh.

“I’m a multi-disciplinary artist,” Sindri tells me. “I’m mostly doing stand-up and just generally performing right now, but I’m also a graphic designer. I studied painting, I write po-

etry, I do a lot of shit. I think that different pieces of art require different art forms. So, if I have something to say that doesn’t work in one, I’ll just move it over to a different thing. I’ve also noticed that writing for comedy and writing for poetry is pretty connected in my brain. So when I write poetry it’s kind of like notations for music and I can write the timing so I can get the punchlines.”

When asked about how they got into stand-up in the first place, Sindri recalls initially observing comedians from afar in their natural habitats, be that in TV specials or on comedy podcasts like “Icetrallia”, before delving a little bit more into the wild. “I started going to the live shows and I just listened to a lot of comedy. I listened to them but never really realized that I could do it. It wasn’t even something I really thought about. I just enjoyed stand-up and then later I was studying painting, listening to a lot of storytelling podcasts and realized that I could mix the two mediums. I started doing these paintings on curtains, telling stories and then unfurling the curtain and basically have these huge murals that you could look at, illustrating my story as I was going. Which got me into performing and eventually I just kind of accidentally started doing stand-up when I realized that I could.”

After consistently going to open-mics for months to practice material and taking on gigs at bachelorette parties to educate people on safe BDSM practices, Sindri presented their first comedy show, “You Have

Probably Already Seen Me Naked,” at the Reykjavik Fringe Festival in 2021. The title is in reference to a Nova phone company ad (“Allir Úr!”) that aimed to highlight body positivity (and sell Apple Watches) by dressing the models in nothing more but the techy wrist accessories. Sindri was one such model. Eventually Sindri started getting booked for other shows like Coney Iceland, Strip Lab and Apocalypstick, getting to inhabit different areas, mixing their stand-up work with more “traditional” drag elements like lip-syncing and performing parody songs. Sometimes they even educate the audience on some BDSM basics, stripping away some of the taboo and making it less difficult to talk about. For this year’s Fringe Festival they’re even tying it all together and whipping up “an educational BDSM musical.” You know, for some safe words on the topic and hopefully a bonding experience.

“Each medium has a different thing that it’s good for,” Sindri emphasizes again. “So a song will get stuck in your head and especially since I’m doing parody songs you already know the lyrics about to come but then subvert it and get your own ideas in. A lot of my songs are about how it’s okay to be you! And putting up visual images, like in the slideshows, really helps you kind of center yourself in that and you can create more of a punchline by showing what you’re talking about – putting everything together is kind of the trick. Not just doing one thing ever.” ■



Do Shit

Get Around Town In The Depths Of Winter

The Útlendingur’s ongoing guide to getting shit done

WORDS Catharine Fulton
IMAGE Art Bicnick

own, *sigh*) to buried in layer upon layer of solid packed snow.

Since Reykjavikurborg *does* send out snow ploughs for the roads, pedestrians also have the great displeasure of having to haul themselves up and over snow banks at every street crossing.

How is one meant to get around in a city so far north yet so ill-prepared for winter weather?

Take to the streets.

Pin on as many safety reflectors as you can without losing all dignity and walk down the middle of the streets instead of on the sidewalks. It’s so much easier than sticking to the sidewalks. Little to no ice, no uneven snow piles to roll your ankles on, no snow banks to climb over, no dog shit left by bad pet owners who think snow will make their fur baby’s business magically disappear.

As an added bonus, you’re far less likely to lose your life to ice sliding off rooftops when you’re in the middle of the road.

And if any drivers take issue, just tell them to take it up with city hall. ■

Winter is truly upon us, friends. Over the course of January, we’ve gone from a relatively snowless holiday season to heaps of snow, and seemingly constant wind storms. The sidewalks of 101 have also run the gamut in that time from clear, to icy, to gravel-covered (because the city only sent out gravel after most of the ice melted on its



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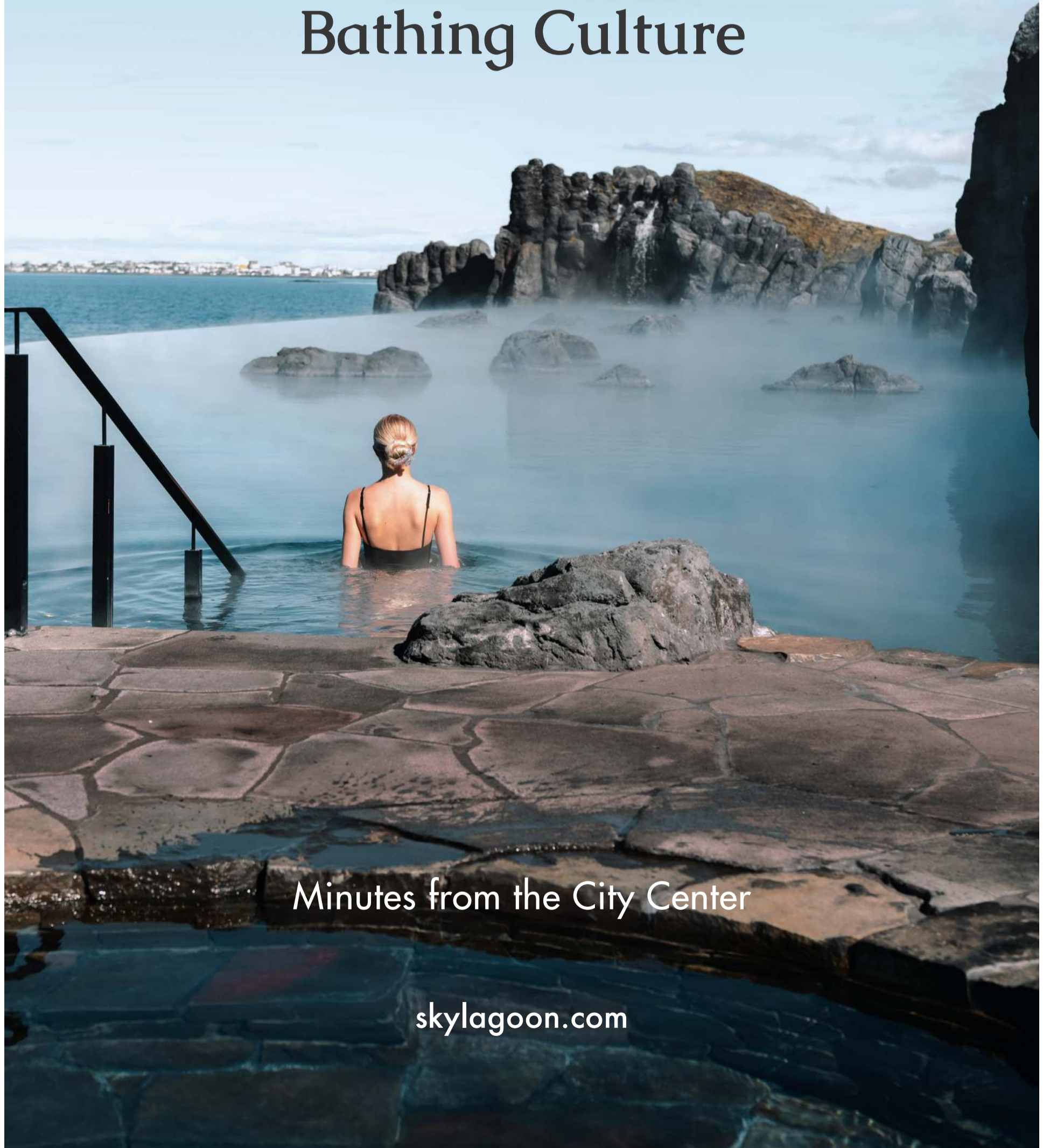
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Migrant Moguls **Innovating Geothermal And Boosting Other Women**

GeoSilica founder Fida Abu Libdeh on paving the way and shattering ceilings

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGE Supplied by Fida Abu Libdeh

Slowly but surely, Reykjavik is evolving into a melting pot – from the diverse language options at your supermarket checkout to an array of businesses run by “new Icelanders.” Meet Fida Abu Libdeh, founder and CEO of GeoSilica, who moved to Iceland from Palestine at the age of 16. From navigating the nuances of the Nordic mentality and culture to establishing an international food supplement company powered by an all-women team, Fida opens up about her victories and the challenges she faced along the way.

GV: HOW DIFFICULT WAS IT TO ADJUST TO THE NEW LIFE IN ICELAND WHEN YOU MOVED HERE AS A TEEN-AGER?

Very difficult, I'm still adjusting. It is a different culture and language. When I came, there were not many immigrants in Iceland, so there was no system. Up until today, the system is not perfect for immigrants at the critical age of 16-18. You are mostly on your own. You can apply for school, but you have to learn everything in Icelandic. You can do whatever you want, but you have to do it as Icelanders. There is no help to integrate at that age. I had a hard

time because I was at the age of going to college and having to study everything in Icelandic. It's a four-year college, but it took me 11 years to finish.

GV: HOW DID YOU GET THE IDEA TO START GEOSILICA?

The idea for GeoSilica originated when I was working on my final thesis in energy engineering at Háskóli Íslands. We were extensively studying geothermal energy and exploring ways to utilise it more efficiently. Iceland has been generating electricity from geothermal power for 50 years, but we always faced the scaling problem. The minerals extracted from deep within the earth cause problems as they cool down, particularly clogging the heat exchanger. In my thesis, I aimed to find a solution to the silica scaling problem by extracting silica straight from geothermal water.

We could produce around 80,000 pounds of silica yearly from the high-temperature geothermal power plants here in Iceland. If the idea was a success, I needed to find a way to utilise the silica, or I would be causing another environmental problem by extracting 80,000 tonnes of minerals and just dumping it. So I started researching what silica is and what it's used for, and found out that it's one of the most abundant minerals in the world.

I started researching the effects of silica on the human body and whether we can use it as a supplement. I learned it's a known food supplement, but not from geothermal sources. After graduation, my co-founder Burkni Pálsson and I decided to apply for a grant to see if we could finance our research on ways to extract silica from geothermal

power plants or fluids and produce health products from it. We received a grant for three years of support from the Technology Development Fund in 2012. It took us around four years to develop the GeoStep method, which is the groundbreaking method for extracting or mining minerals from geothermal fluids.

GV: HAVE YOU EVER FACED BIAS OR DISCRIMINATION BASED ON THE FACT THAT YOU ARE NOT FROM ICELAND ORIGINALLY?

Yes, of course.

Nobody will tell you to your face that they will not invest in you because they don't know who you are and don't trust you. But we don't see any foreign names on the boards of companies, we don't see investment in projects run by foreign women. It's not a personal thing. It's just that you invest in what you trust and you

industry was challenging. You always have to start by proving yourself again and again until people start listening to you. The research shows that there is bias against women in business, especially in investment. In the last two years, women received only 2% of all money invested in startups, with the rest going to mixed or male teams.

GV: IS THERE ANY SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR WOMEN OF FOREIGN ORIGIN STARTING A BUSINESS IN ICELAND?

We are trying to help other women of foreign origin through seminars, the W.O.M.E.N. Association, the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs, etc. The latter is a cooperation between the University of Iceland and the U.S. Embassy, where we help women develop their ideas. We are moving in the right direction. It's not as bad as it was. The older generation, or the women of foreign origin who have

We're a small startup, but I think we have one woman of foreign origin here at GeoSilica gaining experience every year. You don't have to be a huge company to have this social responsibility and effect on the community. You can do whatever you can. And my focus is on women, especially young women and women of foreign origin.

GV: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE OTHER IMMIGRANTS STARTING BUSINESS IN ICELAND?

Believe in yourself and carry on with whatever you believe. Extend your network as much as you can. That's how you gain trust. When 10 women know who Fida is, they will recommend her. So extend your network through the W.O.M.E.N. Association because, in my experience, they are always willing to help. And just follow your dreams. Of course, people will doubt you. Not just because you are of foreign origin, but also because you are a woman. Don't give up on yourself.

GV: LOOKING AT THE CURRENT SITUATION IN PALESTINE, DO YOU THINK ICELAND IS DOING ENOUGH?

No, not at all. I think at least they could allow these kids that are already in Iceland to stay. As a Nordic country, a peaceful country, Iceland could lead the change – send the Israeli ambassador back home or take a more aggressive action. We can see that the Icelandic population does not like how the government is acting. The government was elected thanks to their peaceful stance; they recognised Palestine as a state in 2011, so they should act accordingly. ■

We don't see any foreign names on the boards of companies, we don't see investment in projects run by foreign women.

do not trust in what you do not know. Nothing ever happens face-to-face. But you can see it in the numbers, you can see it in names, you can see it in role models. Where are the women of foreign origin? Why are they not ranking high in business?

What was most difficult for me was being a woman in the geothermal industry, not in business per se. Entering a new, mainly male-dominated

been here for a while, we are trying to help the new generation and give them the chance that we never got.

I spend a lot of time supporting women of foreign origin. I even give them a chance to evaluate their education at my company by gaining experience. Because if you have a degree, let's say from a university in Poland, it's not evaluated unless you have been working in Iceland for a while.

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A Word From
The Publisher

It's Always Been About Culture

How sound tourism policy will help Icelandic culture flourish

WORDS Jón Trausti Sigurðarson,
IMAGE Axel Sigurðarson

The Reykjavik Grapevine was founded back in 2003 by five young people. We didn't know what we were doing, but we knew what we wanted to do. We *wanted* to tell the story of what Iceland was, warts and all. We wanted to truthfully tell our readers what we thought was good about Iceland *and* what could stand to improve.

This applied foremost to art and culture – with a clear emphasis on music – and also society and politics. Something about telling Iceland's stories in English made it possible to put the goings on of our small nation into a larger context and, in doing so, reflect on them differently than one would do if writing in Icelandic.

We thought our magazine would only be read by the 300,000 or so tourists who visited Iceland each year back in 2003 and the roughly 10,000 foreign nationals who lived here, but we soon found out that this was not the case. To our surprise, the Icelandic population took to reading us, too.

In our mind, nothing is more important about a place than its culture.

Sure, people come to Iceland for other reasons, but were it not for the culture, visiting or living here would be an empty experience. It can even be argued that our culture is the reason the first tourist – English aristocrats with a keen interest in the Icelandic Sagas – came to Iceland in the 19th century.

Iceland has changed dramatically in the 20 years since we published our debut issue. This year we are expecting 2.5 million tourists, while in 2023 the number of foreign nationals living here reached 65,000 – almost 17% of the population. These two figures are linked, since many of those who migrate to Iceland end up working in the tourism sector. Both figures are also linked to our culture. First of all, more than half of the people visiting Iceland claim to do so because they are interested in Icelandic culture. Second, the influx of immigration has enriched our culture immensely. A case in point can be found among the list of nominees for the 2024 Reykjavik Grapevine Music Awards.

Immigration is good, but this increase in tourism has come with some costs – or let's call them growing pains. Iceland is a micro economy and all of our infrastructure and institutions are, in the grand scheme of things, small. If you apply pressure to one area, you'll almost immediately see the knock on effects elsewhere.

When it comes to music, you see the downside of booming tourism in the seemingly perennial problem of finding venues in which up and coming artists can perform. With tourism, rents and housing prices have soared in the past decade. This means that a low profit margin business like a live music venue for new artists is almost impossible to run in downtown Reykjavik. Even Mengi, where our Music Awards ceremo-

ny was held on Feb. 1, only persists because of the good graces of its well-to-do owner, who surely bleeds money keeping the lights on.

Another more gloomy downside of the tourism boom is the fact that the jobs created in the fast growing sector tend to be low income jobs, worked by people who just recently moved to Iceland.

It is of the utmost importance that Iceland enacts a sensible policy towards the future of tourism to avoid – and reverse – as many of the possible negative side effects of the sector's growth as possible. It's vital to ensure that tourism not only creates jobs and revenue, but that these jobs are well paid and that the revenue generated from an international interest in our culture benefits us all. This is not only to ensure that the people migrating to Iceland for work are financially sound, with enough leisure time and disposable income to participate in society beyond their jobs, but also to make sure that our culture, our artists and our musicians have venues to play in and people to play to.

At least, from where I'm sitting that seems preferable to the alternative of having zero culture and only low paying jobs. Right?

We are at that juncture in time where we can actually choose what role we want tourism to play in the future of Iceland – will it continue to be an industry benefiting a few, or an industry benefiting us all?

People want to come to Iceland for its culture and locals want to engage in a rich local cultural scene, so let's make sure we maintain a society where there is a time and place for culture both high and low. I mean, if we don't, the tourists who come here for our culture won't get their money's worth. ■

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Feature

The 2024 Reykjavík Grapevine

Celebrating the best that the local music scene offered

WORDS Catharine Fulton & Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGES Axel Sigurðarson

EPs and albums were released, videos were made, gigs were attended (albeit in an ever-contracting volume of live venues) and memories were made. Because that's what music — both listening to it on your own or going out to experience it in a throng of sweaty bodies — does. It creates memories and embeds them into your very soul.

In an effort to weigh and measure all the musical output and happenings of the past year, the Reykjavík Grapevine once again gathered a panel of some of the country's finest musical experts to sift through the vast output, so that together we can celebrate those whose music reached us, stayed with us and guided us through the year.

JUDGING THE YEAR IN MUSIC

Taking stock of a year — 12 months, 52 weeks, 365 days! — of musical output on this little island is no small feat. For a population of just 370,000 and change, there is a disproportionate amount of people moonlighting in songwriting or side hustling in a band. And many of them are producing creative, original and worthy compositions in their genre of choice.

Guided by music editor Jóhannes Bjarkason and his handy rubric, the panel this year deliberated on their potential nominations in each category before coming together to state their respective cases. There was a lot of heated discussion around the communal table at Grapevine HQ, as panellists Arnar

Eggert Thoroddsen, Hrefna (Habbi) Helgadóttir, Rósa Birgitta Ísfeld and Snæbjörn Helgi Arnarsson Jack espoused the virtues of one artists after another, and thought back on the year that was in releases and live shows.

After a rigorous selection process, rivalled only by the Nobel Prize, a panel of highly knowledgeable music experts came together to draft a list of nominees and, most importantly, determined the winners in each category.

1. ARTIST OF THE YEAR: LAUFÉY

After rising through the ranks of internet fame over the course of the pandemic, Laufey's global fan base now counts in the millions. With her album *Bewitched* (released September 8, 2023) Laufey broke Spotify's all-time jazz streaming record, garnering 5.7 million streams in one day. There's no denying that 2023 saw Laufey Lín Jónsdóttir propelled to international stardom. As one panellist noted: "Laufey has more monthly Spotify listens than Celine Dion!"

"Laufey completely conquered 2023," the panel agreed. "She has had a tremendous year."

It is the strides that Laufey took this year that the panel agreed were beyond compare. Her talent is undeniable, a lush mix of post-war era jazz, modest classical music and a dreamy sense of romantic pop.

Though she is based out of the U.S., her following in Iceland is massive, as evidenced by her upcoming back-to-back-to-back concerts at Harpa completely selling out the very instant tickets went on sale. "I feel like my initial reaction to Laufey was that 'she's big abroad,'" one panellist admitted. "But this year I saw again and again that I was absolutely wrong. She's absolutely huge in Iceland."

In deliberating, the panel agreed that it has been some time since an artist like Laufey has emerged — "a really big Icelandic artist" — and it's something to be celebrated.

RUNNERS UP
Daniil
Daði Freyr
Kári Egilsson

2. ALBUM OF THE YEAR: ELÍN HALL, HEYRIST Í MÉR

In a year that seems to have been dominated by output from female musicians, the panel agreed that Elín Hall's *Heyrist í mér* (released November 3, 2023) stood out for its ability to bridge genres and cut through the noise.

"I love this album," one panellist gushed. "I'm a really big fan."

But even panellists who weren't immediately smitten admit to being won over by Elín's offering upon realising its depths. "At first listen you might think it's another pop rock album, and she's singing about

heartbreak. But there are layers to it," the panel said. "Her vulnerability comes through even if you don't fully understand the Icelandic lyrics. She's very sincere."

The panel also raved about the cover art of *Heyrist í mér*, which depicts the singer overlaid with blood red creeping veins running from her head and down her chest.

The ability to emote so tangibly on her album may stem from Elín's background as an actor. She has been performing as Bubbi Morthens in the hit musical *Níu Líf* for the past year and is in rehearsals for the stage production of the musical *Eitruð Lítill Pilla* (Jagged Little Pill), by Alanis Morissette and Glen Ballard, which is set to premiere at Borgarleikhúsið in February 2024.

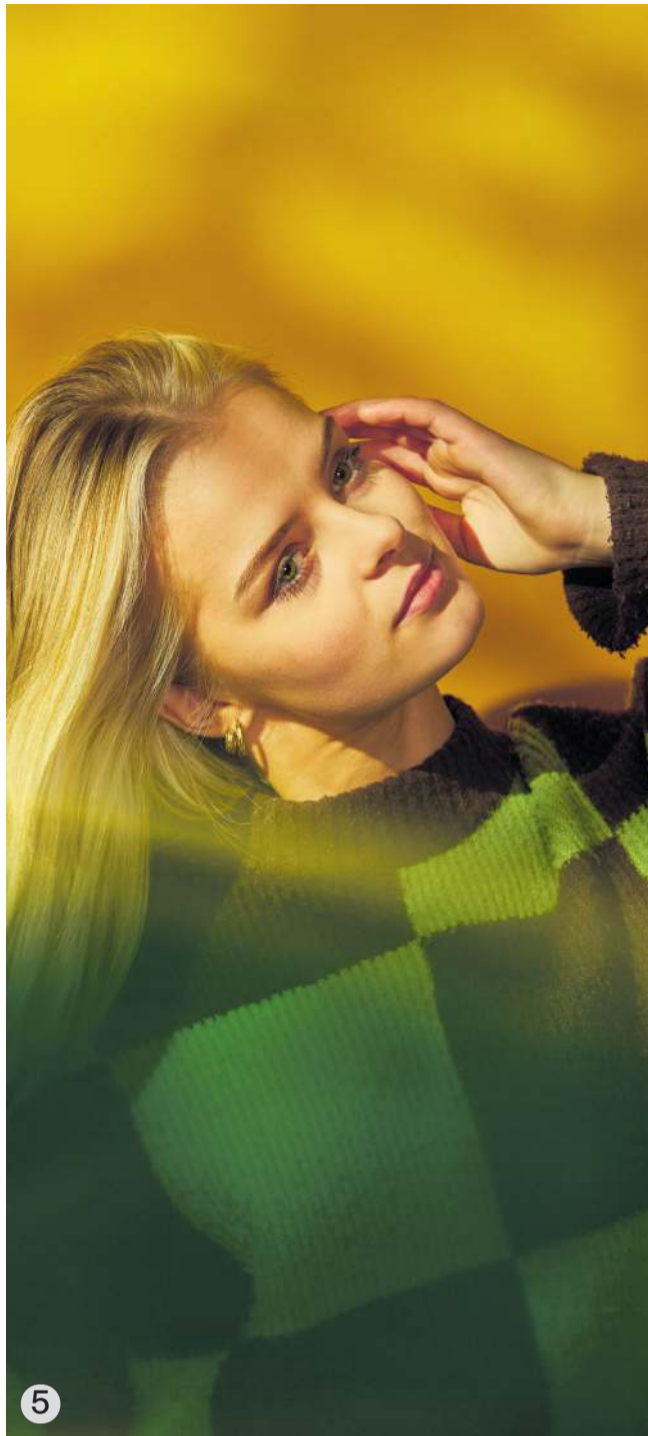
"Then also looking at the fact that she has been acting in the biggest musical in Iceland in the recent decades," the panel noted. "With that double whammy of her acting and music careers, she has presented herself as a very strong artist in general."

Her all-round strength as an artists hasn't gone unnoticed by the international press, who held events with Elín and showered her with favourable reviews after this year's Iceland Airwaves festival.

RUNNERS UP
Premiere - Neonme
Öðruvísi - Eva808
Bewitched - Laufey

And just like that, 2023 has come and gone. It was a productive year for Icelandic and Iceland-based musicians, with new artists taking their first tentative steps onto the stage, while a barrage of legacy bands — from Graveslime to Purrkur Pillnikk — made highly-buzzed triumphant returns.

Indeed the past year was marked by comebacks, a resurgence of the grassroots scene, spectacular female solo artists and a general air of things finally patching up post-pandemic — though themes of isolation continued to permeate the landscape.



ine Music Awards

3. SONG OF THE YEAR: “ÁSTARBRÉF” BY LÚPÍNA

What makes a good song? What elevates a good song to a song of the year? Lúpína's dreamy and silky smooth voice melds with electronic instrumentation on “Ástarbréf” to create a song that builds and layers and takes unexpected turns over the course of its three minute run, demanding repeat listens to better process what it was you just heard. And listen again we did.

It's a dreamy little ditty that morphs into a pseudo banger before returning effortlessly to where it began. It's wonderful.

“Ástarbréf” really stands out as song of the year,” the panel said. “It is so impactful, I only have to hear the name and it's immediately back in my head. Seeing Lúpína perform the song live this year was incredible – I was blown away.”

We'd recommend putting on some headphones, closing your eyes and just letting yourself go to this track. It'll be a magical experience.

The catchiness of “Ástarbréf” cannot be understated. As one panellist admitted “I only have to say the word ‘ástarbréf’ and I can hear the song in my head.”

RUNNERS UP

Bankastræti - Elín Hall
Hvít vín - Spacestation
Oral - Björk, ft. Rosalía

4. VIDEO OF THE YEAR: ICEGUYS, “KRUMLA”

Determining who would take home the Video Of The Year Award was the toughest task of the panel in this year's deliberations. Across the board, the panel lamented that it seems that music videos have largely gone the way of the dinosaur, replaced with videos of lyrics projected over trippy graphics, or the like.

The panel also noted that production value comes down to who has the most money to spend on putting their video together – is it fair to peg a DIY music video from an up-and-coming singer songwriter against Björk's latest visual feast?

Ultimately, the decision came down to impact. And IceGuys' video for “Krumla” has that in spades.

“I think the IceGuys video really stood out because it engaged and impacted you,” one panellist said. “It became a cultural moment in Iceland.”

The video, sees the recently formed boy band/super group – which comprises Árni Páll Arnason (better known as Herra Hnetusmjör);, Aron Can, Friðrik Dór, Jón Jónsson and Rúrik Gíslason – channel their inner Backstreet Boys, donning coordinating denim ensembles and executing nearly as coordinated choreography. They're dancing in a warehouse! They're dancing in front of a private jet! Woah! Now they're dancing in the rain *inside* the original warehouse!

Beyond the entertainment of watching the video, it also set off a wave of every young person in the country learning the choreography so they could dance along while watching. When was the last time a local music video did that?

“On its own merits, it's a very fun video,” the panel said. “It was an expensive leap of faith to try bringing the modern K-pop or boy band era back into the public eye and it paid off.”

“It's just so fun!”

RUNNERS UP

From the start - Laufey
Mouth of the face of the sea - MSEA
Yfir Skýin - Lúpína

5. BEST LIVE ACT: GUGUSAR

We at the Grapevine should have known from the output of the photographers we dispatched to Iceland Airwaves this year that gugusar would be taking home our award for Best Live Act. Despite instructions to fan out and capture as many gigs as possible, it seemed that all our shutterbugs converged on gugusar's set, sending in image after image of the 20-year-old singer frozen in the midst of one epic dance move or another, her neon wig swinging wildly.

“gugusar is one of the most fantastic live performers we've had in a long time,” the panel said. “She is absolutely world class and she's

ready to just become an internationally touring artist.”

Two panellists recall seeing a teenage Guðlaug Sóley Höskuldsdóttir and being admittedly impressed, but being absolutely blown away by her live performances at this year's Skrappt festival in Tórshavn and at Iceland Airwaves.

“She was next level,” they raved. “She's doing her crazy dance moves, but the way the power of the electronic production that she's doing blends so cleanly with her choreography feels like it's super thought out. It's amazing to watch.”

And beyond watching, seeing an artist on stage really getting into their own music and creating that lively atmosphere also makes the crowd dance along, upping the atmosphere of the entire show. We'll be jumping at our next chance to see gugusar – who the panel declared has “Taylor Swift vibes” – at her next live gig.

RUNNERS UP

Celebs
KUSK
Xiupill

6. YOU SHOULD HAVE HEARD THIS: MSEA

MSEA is one of those artists whose tracks you can listen to on Spotify and acknowledge that their vocals are dreamy and beautiful, but it's when you see them live that you realise that's 100% them – no au-

to-tune or tweaking necessary. She's wildly talented.

Since moving from Toronto to Reykjavík in 2017, Maria-Carmela Raso has been a prominent figure in the city's music scene. Under her artist moniker MSEA, she has lent her talents to chart-topping acts like Hatari and Kælan Mikla, while being active in the local grassroots community, both as a solo performer and a concert curator.

Did you give her album, *Our Daily Apocalypse Walk* (released September 15, 2023), a listen? If the answer is no, then we're here to tell you that you really should have. The artist's self-described “nightmare pop” will open your eyes to a genre that you may not as yet be familiar with.

“MSEA is incredible,” the panel said. “Her standard of creativity is amazing. It seems that everyone in the grassroots knows her, but if you would walk up to a ‘normal’ person, they may not have registered her – yet.”

Every panellist agreed MSEA is an artist who more people should make themselves aware of, both because of the amazing solo work she's producing and for her impact on the local music scene. “She's done the work and she's really establishing herself in the local scene,” they said. “She's established in the grassroots, so it's just a matter of time until she takes that next step.”

The You Should Have Heard This award is intended to acknowledge that sometimes the media doesn't



7



8

always get it right, and an excellent artist slips under the radar. Do yourself a favour and make sure MSEA doesn't pass you by.

RUNNERS UP
Kári Kresfeldur
Katrín Lea
Smjörvi

**7. ONE TO WATCH:
RÓSHILDUR**

You probably haven't heard of Róshildur. That's not some odd flex whereby we're implying that we know so much more about music than you. It's just a matter of fact — though the young musician released her four-track EP v2,2 in July 2023, hers is not yet a name on everybody's lips. "Yet" being the key word here.

On the EP, Róshildur marries her sultry and sweet vocals with layers and loops and time shifts to weave a genuinely intriguing piece of music. She almost manages to capture together the twee vibes of early noughties Reykjavík and bring them

effortlessly into relevance today. You can't help but feel it's something special.

"I think Róshildur is someone who is going to make big strides in the coming year or two, having released an EP this year," the panel foresees. "Her live set also seems really interesting. We want to see more from her."

We're anticipating seeing much more from Róshildur in 2024.

RUNNERS UP
Apex Anima
Sunna Margrét
Torfi

**8. SHOUT OUT:
PAN THORARENSEN**

A prolific driver of Iceland's electronic music scene, Pan Thorarensen is the co-founder and artistic director of the experimental Extreme Chill music festival, founder of the Space Odyssey record shop/clothing consignment store/music label on Skólavörðustígur, and just a

notable person about town.

But "notable person" doesn't bank you a Shout Out at the Reykjavik Grapevine Music Awards.

"Pan is a tour de force both in musical output and event management," the panel says. "In the culture environment as it is today, it's such a struggle to keep an event like Extreme Chill going, but he's been doing it and keeping it fresh for 15 years while being active in the electronic sphere for even longer. The scene he's created and his tireless support for more niche artists is so great for the city."

RUNNERS UP
Drengurinn Fengurinn
Upprásin

**MEET THE 2024 PANEL-
LISTS**

Jóhannes Bjarkason is music editor at the Reykjavik Grapevine. Having been active as the frontman of the post-punk band Skoffin and within the post-dreifing art collec-

tive, Jóhannes is fascinated by the Icelandic music scene. Among his interests are politics, history and pop culture.

Arnar Eggert Thoroddsen holds a PhD from the University of Edinburgh, where he carried out research on the social dynamics of Icelandic musicians under the supervision of Professor Simon Frith. He is the director of the undergraduate media and communication studies program at The University of Iceland. He is the author of three books on Icelandic music, writes music criticism for various outlets and teaches about music subjects. He is a regular pundit on music in radio and TV, acts as a speaker at conferences and is a member of various music juries and committees.

Hrefna (Habbi) Helgadóttir is strategic entertainment executive with over 10 years experience across the U.K., U.S., and Iceland. She is the Head of Marketing and International PR at Iceland Music. At Iceland Music, Habbi builds out campaigns pairing a well-designed online presence with targeted press; having secured coverage in RollingStone,

NME, TechCrunch, the Independent, IQ Live and all major publications in Iceland. She also co-hosts the MakeWorkWork a podcast about creating intentional workflows personally and for teams. It has reached #1 on the careers charts on Apple Podcast in Iceland and has listeners in over 60 countries.

Rósa Birgitta Ísfield is a force to be reckoned with in the realm of music. As a radio host, she brings charisma to the airwaves creating an eclectic playlist that resonates with a diverse audience. A nightlife participant, Rósa as dj de la rosa commands the DJ booth infusing energy into dancefloors with a magnetic mix of beats. Rósa has also enchanted audiences with her performances as a singer with the bands Feldberg and Sometime.

Snæbjörn Helgi Arnarsson Jack is a co-host of Ólátagarður, a weekly radio show that covers Icelandic grassroots music and culture. His background is in event and festival organisation as well as many other things like amateur gallery curation, performance art and ecological research. ■

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The Grapevine's Top Picks



WINTER LIGHTS FESTIVAL
Until February 3
All over Reykjavík

Even though it's nearly done, we cannot kick off our recommendations without the annual Winter Lights Festival (Vetrarhátíð). Taking place all over the capital area, the annual event makes the most of the seemingly endless darkness of winter by morphing it into a cultural touchstone of the bleakest months. Held up by its three main pillars – Pool Night (sadly over now), Museum Night and Lights Trail – there are over 150 events within the festival, with dozens of artists shaping the unique atmosphere. Some much needed light in these dark times. **RX**



KROSSFEST I
Saturday February 10, 18:00
Völvufell 17 (Stelpur Rokka)
1.500 ISK / pwy

Get ready, folks – only seven months until Norðanpaunk! You may argue that Iceland's best non-profit underground music festival is still a long way off, but you would be mistaken my friend, because the first step is fundraising. Since its inception, the regular pre-Norðanpaunk Krossfest shows have been crucial for making each edition of the festival happen and their first one of the year is a doozy. We've got SLOR, NORN, Svartpoka, Dauðnafn and something mysterious called Ramen x Blandípoka. Sounds delicious! Go get ready for the best punk party of the year with some of the best punks in town. **RX**



UPP OG KOMMANDI II
Saturday February 17, 18:00
Lemmy
Free, all ages

Back in December, Lemmy put out an open call for bands to come play. The downtown rock bar, that is, not the late great rock god. Flooded with overwhelming response, they got hit up by bands of all ages, backgrounds, and experience levels who are ready to come up and take over. Now on their second edition, the Upp og Kommandi ("up and coming") monthly concert series will present Reykjavík's hottest new bands. This edition will feature the diverse talents of Cloud Cinema, Líkami, Subdural, and Thorison. The series is ongoing at least through June, but who knows, maybe longer! **RX**



Happening

All In The Haus

The Hafnar.Concert Series keeps the community strong

WORDS Rex Beckett
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

nity across institutions and work together. Especially with local private venues and private venues that are struggling so, so much."

Having previously curated the PIKKNIKK concert series at The Nordic House over the summer of 2023, José Luis was already poised to continue on this track, applying their vision of equality and malleability onto this new programme. The first concert, featuring Elham Fakouri along with Þorsteinn Eyfjörð and Owen Hindley, included strong audiovisual elements throughout the night and set a solid precedent for what the series intends to offer.

"I'm very much interested in giving the artist freedom," José Luis says. "For everybody playing, you want to make sure that they will have a good audience and that they will have a good sound technician. And then I'm just like 'okay, what do you want to do? What do you want to present?' I personally have the interest

of making more audiovisual events, installations and mixing this cross disciplinary approach in the series."

They emphasise that their primary goal is to keep the platform accessible for everybody, regardless of origin or popularity, or ultimately even whether they are based in Hafnar.haus or not. While the hub is the core nugget and inspiration of the series, José Luis does not impart the slightest trace of gatekeeping.

"We have this wonderful community, but at the same time I wanted to not keep it only for Hafnar.haus," they say. "I think that institutions should be open and take care of their own people, but also be open to anybody who wants to come and take part. I'm trying to keep it very balanced. In pretty much all the shows with two artists, most of them have one Icelandic and one immigrant playing."

It's on this same principle of openness that Mengi was the most

logical venue for them to partner with, as it has been pivotal in binding communities together and welcoming newcomers.

"As an artist, Mengi has been a venue that has opened doors to me and to a lot of people," they say. "It's a very friendly place to have this community, so it's like, okay, let's help each other out. Let's just make it work. Both sides are very open to see what else we can do, how we can bring more life to Mengi and how we can bring the community of Hafnar.haus to strengthen each other. And just to keep each other alive."

With the series currently programmed until March 15 on a bi-weekly schedule, and with potential for it to extend for longer, the coming weeks will offer a diverse array of what their community thrives on – inclusivity, ingenuity, and incredibly good music. ■

Since throwing open its doors in September 2022, the multipurpose Hafnar.haus coworking and studio space has become a thriving hub for Reykjavík's creative communities. Possibly for none more so than the music community, with dozens of musicians and industry initiatives having made it their home base. The floors comprising the top half of the Hafnarhús art museum building are now the nucleus of some of our city's most vibrant and innovative musicians.

Celebrating this community and its infinite potential, the Hafnar.Concert Series launched last month creating an even larger platform for this community to build on. The new series is curated by José Luis Anderson, also known under the musical moniker Andervel, who teamed up with Hafnar.haus co-founder René Boonekamp and the venue Mengi to make it happen.

"Hafnar.haus needed a venue and Mengi needed programming," says José Luis, boiling down the basics of the nonprofit concert series. "We are a very tight community and we should keep the sense of commu-



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Side Hustle

The Football Player

Heiða's daily grind for the love of the game

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
 IMAGE Joana Fontinha

Heiða Ragney Viðarsdóttir can't imagine her life without football. A project manager by day and a defensive mid at night, it's ambition and a drive to compete that motivate Heiða. We caught up with her in a week when she transitioned from Stjarnan football club, where she had been for three years, to the more highly ranked Breiðablik. Here's how the athlete manages a daytime career while sticking to intense sports routines.

is semi-pro, many players aren't paid anything. More recently, players are basically getting pocket money.

If you go further down the leagues, the less likely it is for you to get any money out of it. I'm in the top league, so I'm pretty lucky that I'm actually getting paid. It helps that I'm getting money, but I'd still be playing even if I weren't getting anything. It's so different for the women's and men's leagues because some of the men's teams pay so much that the boys don't do anything else. I could never survive with just what I get out of football. It doesn't even pay my rent.

Heiða Ragney Viðarsdóttir, 28, a project manager

I work at the Institute of International Affairs at the University of Iceland. That's my main job. But I've been playing football since I was six. I've been playing throughout

WORK, PLAY, REPEAT

Being in school and playing football was a lot easier. You can control your time so much. If I was tired and

I could never do football just for fun in the division below.

school, then I went to America to get my bachelor's degree and when I moved back football was always on the side. It didn't start paying until I got older. Since the Icelandic league

wanted to sleep in, I would. But now, I work nine to four and I have to plan my whole day out. I have to put all my football clothes in a bag, take the stuff I need for work and plan my



meals throughout the day. I leave the house at nine and usually don't come home until around 19:30-20:00. I go straight to practice after work. That's my life.

I have practice at least five times a week. During the season, we have games once or twice a week, and then sometimes you have to travel for it. You're very restricted. You can't just go away whenever you want.

I'm really lucky with my job because they're flexible. It is demanding, but it actually hits when we're off-season. When I'm the busiest and I have to work from eight to eight, it's not football season. But when I apply for a job, I have to say, "Listen, I have this responsibility. I have to make it to these games and skip a few days from work."

FOR THE LOVE OF KICKS

The best thing about my side hustle is playing the sport I love. I get to see my friends every day. Not everyone can go somewhere and see people they like every single day. The negative part is obviously, you're really restricted. You have to

sacrifice a lot of things. I've missed out on social gatherings with school or work. You have to kind of pick and choose. I don't know when the last time I went on a holiday in the summer was because we play all summer.

I don't know when the last time I went on a holiday in the summer was because we play all summer.

Last year, my team played in the Champions League, so we went to Holland for a week and played against two really good teams. A girl who played against us is now being bought by Chelsea for the highest amount Chelsea ever paid for a women's player. It's crazy that we're playing in this semi-pro league and we got to play against some of the best players in the world.

LOVE IT OR QUIT IT?

I have a lot of friends who quit playing years ago; I've struggled with

it myself because this is taking so much of my time. You have to love it if you're doing it. People are very brave when they decide to quit a sport and pursue something else they want. Because you're so embedded in this, a lot of the time, it

takes courage to actually quit. This takes so much of your time that it's not worth it if you don't enjoy it.

I am very competitive and enjoy challenging myself. If football is not providing that for me, I shouldn't really be doing it. I could never do football just for fun in the division below. Not everyone feels this way, but I guess I'm too competitive. ■

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

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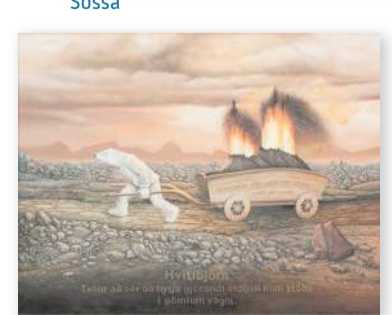
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Film Feature *Natatorium*: Where Family Bonds Crumble

Helena Stefánsdóttir's feature debut documents the silent scream of a dysfunctional family

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Art Bicnick

Following the Golden Globes and ahead of the Oscars, it might seem like January has been a particularly good month for international film releases. *Poor Things*, *Saltburn* or *Priscilla* probably popped up in your conversations with friends in the past weeks.

What will 2024 bring to Icelandic cinema? 2023 gave us *Godland* and solidified Iceland's position as a lucrative filming location, with not one episode but the entire season of *True Detective* filmed here. As I look for my first Icelandic film of the year, I have two options. One is a mainstream comedy that's already breaking box office numbers and the other is an unconventional psychological drama that's also a director's first feature film debut. I score a screener and ask a couple of friends to clear their evening plans — we're watching *Natatorium*.

Just a few days later, still sympathising with the film's characters and having many questions about unanswered plot points, I meet up with director Helena Stefánsdóttir. Helena has always juggled multiple roles in her career, so we start from the very beginning. How did she start making films?

FRAME CHOREOGRAPHY

A professional dancer, Helena also studied physical theatre in Paris. Shortly after completing her studies, she started making short films. "I

started to be inspired by framing or I wanted to do some framing," she admits as she tells her story. "Dance and movement in space is always what I'm most interested in. All of my films are kind of based on that."

Natatorium (Latin for a swimming pool) tells the story of 18-year-old Lilja, who stays with her grandparents while attending an audition in town. Despite mysterious family secrets and her father being against the idea, Lilja feels at home. The film takes place within the walls of one house in Reykjavík over the course of five days. "When people ask me what the film is about, I say it's about a dysfunctional family," Helena admits. As soon as the family members enter the house, they seem to be stuck. Gradually the viewer finds out why it was dangerous for the young teenager to stay with her grandparents.

While *Natatorium* doesn't explicitly evoke dance, after talking to the director, it becomes obvious that nothing in the frame is there without

a reason. "When I'm creating the frames, it's the movement of the actors in harmony with the camera and space that's important. I'm almost like a choreographer for the camera and for actors to move," she says. "There's no coincidence in whether a person comes from there and sits down there." "What firstly inspired me to start making films was Maya Deren," explains Helena, asking with curiosity if I'm familiar with the work of the Ukrainian-born avant-garde film-

Dogtooth, an early work of Yorgos Lanthimos, as important sources of inspiration. She adds: "The least of my inspiration is in my daily life."

A HOUSE OF SECRETS

The director confesses that writing a script for a feature film was completely different from writing a script for a short film. She started with developing characters and blending a few stories together.

This is a film about a dysfunctional family.

maker from New York who worked in the 1940s and 1950s. "She reminds me of myself. She was a dancer and used dance a lot in her films. Her movements in the frame are fantastic and also the way she edits. It doesn't make sense!"

Helena highlights the works of writer and neurologist Oliver Sacks and

"I've always been interested in abnormal human behaviour and things that are not accepted by normal society," she says. "I had a script for a short film about siblings, who were the same age, but they're half-siblings and they are kind of sexually attracted to each other. I thought maybe I can make this bigger and then started to combine different





ideas that I had." *Natatorium* started to take shape after Helena read a short story, "Swim," about a boy addicted to drowning from *Women in Strange Places: Stories* written by her friend Celeste Ramos, who interestingly, got inspired by one of Helena's films.

While the cast was meticulously chosen, one character that particularly stands out is Elin Helena Petersdóttir in the role of grandmother Áróra. "She's half-Icelandic and half-Finnish. She mainly acts abroad and has hardly ever acted in Iceland," Helena explains that Elin was typecast for the role based on a photo. "She also doesn't speak perfect Icelandic, which is great for me — she comes out a little bit more crooked," she adds.

It's hard not to notice how much weaker the male characters are in the film compared to the female ones — a grandfather playing a background role, an estranged father, a brother whose life is completely controlled by his mother, a scared boyfriend. "It wasn't deliberate," Helen admits. "It just happened that I write strong female characters. I always do."

Helena points out that certain things are still very gendered in society. Speaking of the grandfather, whose subtle role feels almost pitiful, she says, "He's a victim of abuse. If you're a woman and a victim of abuse, nobody would say, 'Why didn't you just leave?' We all know

that it's hard. It's harder to leave than to say, 'just leave.' We ask why he is there because he's a man." She continues that the same can be applied to the father — the viewer subconsciously questions why Lilja was raised by her father and wants to know where her mother is. "If she was raised by her mother, we wouldn't ask where's the father. It's just interesting to reverse the roles like that," she shrugs. "I think more filmmakers should do it."

me pondering. "I have footage with more answers," she says. But explains that after she watched the edit with the editor she decided not to give out too much information. "You can't deliver everything. I don't want to deliver everything. I want the audience to have questions and also make up their own answers."

Helena says that the viewer shouldn't rationalise *Natatorium* and think of a certain message. "I only want to speak to the senses,

I don't want to deliver everything. I want the audience to have questions and also make up their own answers.

HUNGRY FOR ANSWERS

Helena highlights that finding a producer was the biggest challenge of working on *Natatorium*. Her first producer bailed in the pre-production phase, after which she admits she considered quitting, too. "It's hard to find a producer for your first feature film. Especially since my film is not mainstream. It's not obvious that it's gonna sell. It's not based on a book, it's a story that nobody knows. I can understand that not many producers want to bet on that," she says.

Asked to explain the plot gaps — the past brother Kalli had outside the house, for example — Helena leaves

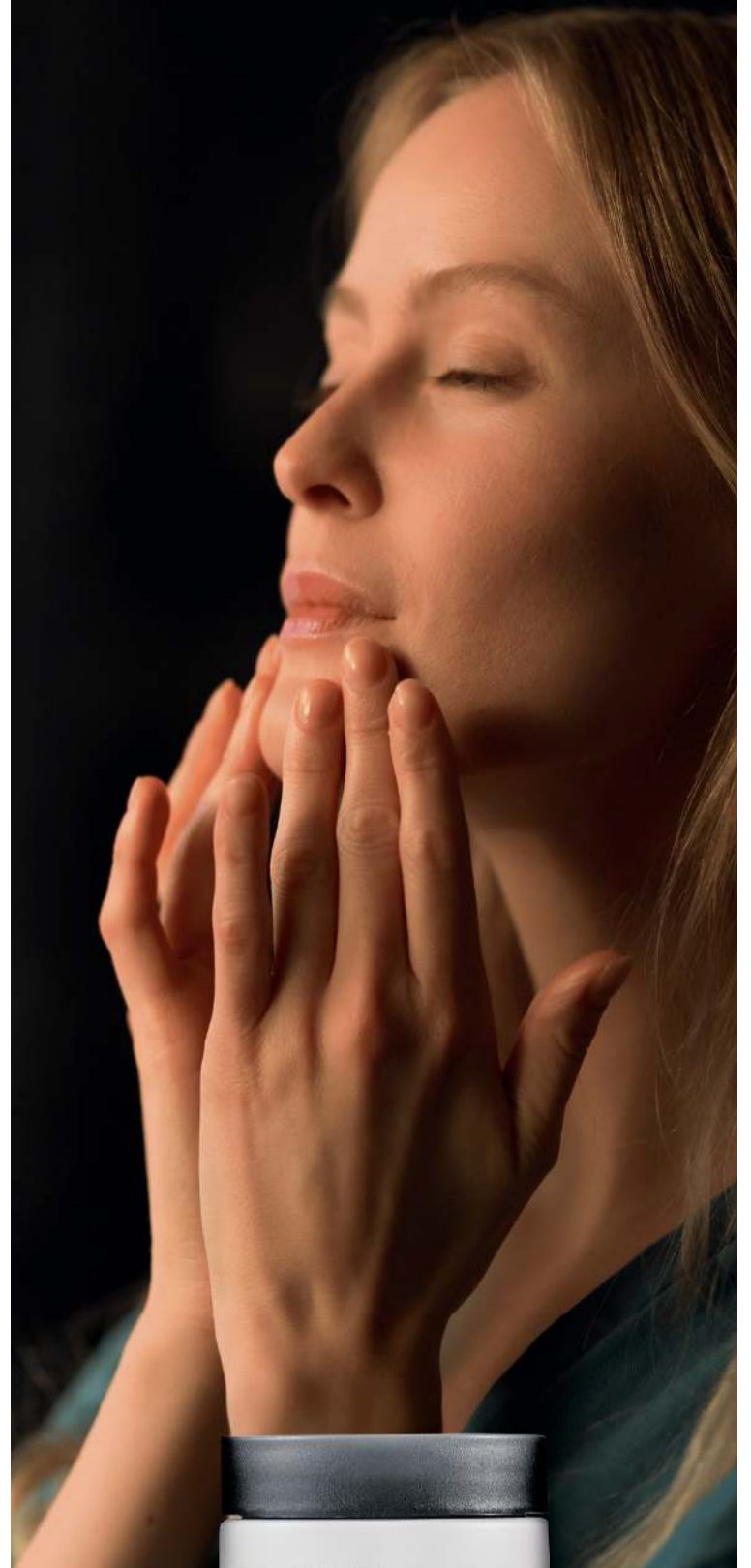
the hearts, the ears, the eyes and feelings, basically," she laughs. "The only message is that you take from it whatever you want to take from it."

Ahead of releasing her first feature film to the world, Helena remains calm. "I'm not stressed. I've done so many short films and been stressed so many times this time I'm more relaxed," she says. "But there's a little bit of fear," she smiles. ■

After premiering at the International Film Festival Rotterdam in January, *Natatorium* premieres in Iceland on February 23 and will travel to the South by Southwest (SXSW) in March.

nurture your skin's

**NATURAL
GLOW**



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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

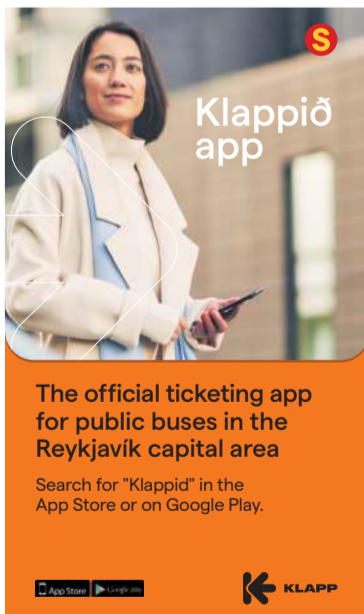
19 SBARRO
Austurstræti 17 & Vatnsmýrarvegur 10
"What is this shit?" is how Greil Marcus famously opened his review



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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11

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15

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F

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New In Town

Litli Barinn★

Ránargata 4a, 101 Reykjavík



While a few notable drinkeries extend east of the central downtown bar hub, far fewer options extend westward. Luckily, Litli Barinn has opened its doors just over the western threshold of downtown, offering a lovely new atmosphere to get one's libation on. Set in the lobby of hotel Local 101, the bar focuses on quality wines provided by a local supplier along with an all-local menu of small plates, served up in warm, simple and chic surroundings. This welcome addition to the neighborhood promises great things ahead.

B

FOOD HALL & BAR

PÓSTHÚS

PÓSTHÚSSTRÆTI | 101 REYKJAVÍK

HAPPY HOUR
16:00 - 18:00
FOOD HALL & BAR

Art Exhibitions

05.01-01.02.2024

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

Known as the “mother of Havarí”, artist Kristín E. Guðjónsdóttir celebrates the occasion of her 67th birthday with a new solo show of graphic works.

Opens February 2
Runs until February 29

KUBBURINN (ICELAND UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS)

Jette Dalsgaard – “care, care and care a bit more”
Exhibition of works inspired in part by Tibetan Buddhist Pilgrims who worship by circumambulating their temple, which should be practiced with body, speech, and mind.

Opens February 2
Runs until February 9

LISTASMIDJAN SLIP-PBARINN

Barbara Bestak – Life Between Beginning And End
Barbara's paintings capture the moments when people are going through difficulties which is also where she finds her happiness and life's purpose.

Opens February 8
Runs until February 22

NORDIC HOUSE

WASTELAND
In this ambitious and thought-provoking exhibition, Danish-Icelandic company Lendager explores the issues of waste production and conservation, presenting solutions and future concepts for how we can work with and respect for planetary boundaries.

Opens February 10
Runs until April 28

NÚLLIÐ

Veronika Katri – Realms Of Transformation
Oil paintings that flow between reality and imagination, transporting viewers to surreal worlds beyond time and space. Veronika meditates on the links between humans and nature, the corporeal and the mystical.

Opens February 2
Runs until February 4

PORTFOLIO GALLERY

Halldór Ragnarsson – Nothing At All

Sculptures and paintings exploring the philosophical ideas of emptiness and the questions and the boundaries between being and nothingness.

Opens February 3
Runs until March 2

SÍM GALLERY

Earth Layers
Artists Antonía Berg, Íris María Leifsdóttir, and Sarah Finkle showcase the effects of found raw materials such as bog iron and clay, painting with these on textile and ceramic as a way to engage with time as a critical element of the work.

Opens February 4
Runs until February 18

Y GALLERY

Bjarni Þór Pétursson – Facade No. 3
Bjarni's works dance on the border between everyday life and myth, reality and fiction, emptiness and meaning, man-made and divine.

Opens February 2
Runs until February 29

Ongoing

ÁSMUNDARSALUR

Hreinn Friðfinnson – Hulduklettur
Installation, sculpture
Runs until March 3

Sigurður Guðjónsson – Edda

Installation, mixed media
Runs until March 3

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)

Litka Paints Breiðholt
Paintings
Runs until February 10

GLERHÚSIÐ

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

HAFNARBORG CENTER OF CULTURE & FINE ART

Þór Sigurþórsson – 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

18 GRANDI

Andreas Eriksson – Real Time
Paintings, progressive exhibition
Runs until December 18

KJARVALSSTAÐIR (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

Hekla Dögg Jónsdóttir – 0° 0° Null Island
Photography, installation

Runs until February 29

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

KLING & BANG

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

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

Egill Sæbjörnsson and Infinite Friends of the Universe
Mixed media, installation
Runs until February 25

Some Recent Works – New Acquisitions
New works in the museum's permanent collection
Runs until February 25

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

REYKJAVÍK CITY LIBRARY (SPÖNGINNII)

Alejandro Suárez – Rusted Apocalypse
Installation, mixed media
Runs until February 23

REYKJAVÍK MARITIME MUSEUM

Heimir Freyr Hlöðversson – 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

Hugo Llanes & Agústa Björnsdóttir – So long and good night
Sculpture, mixed media
Runs until February 18

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

PULA

Ár•farvegur
Group exhibition, mixed media
Runs until February 18

Opening

ÁSMUNDARSAFN (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)

At Hand
Works by Ásmundur Sveinsson (1893-1982) meet works by a selected group of contemporary artists that come into contact with various craft-informed traditions, handwork practices, traditional skills and techniques.

Opens February 17
Runs until September 1

BERG CONTEMPORARY

Monika Grzymala – SONGLINES
Known for her large-scale installations, and hand-made paper works, Monika Grzymala's second solo exhibition at BERG Contemporary is based on a never-before-seen series of molded cotton paperworks.

Opens February 2
Runs until March 16

HAVARÍ

Kristín E. Guðjónsdóttir – 67

Art Picks



Halldór Ragnarsson – Nothing At All
February 3 – March 2
Portfolio Gallery

“Cause nothin’ from nothin’ leaves nothin’,” sings Gwen Guthrie in the 1986 one-hit-wonder cult classic “Ain’t Nothin’ Goin’ On But The Rent.” In his new exhibition, artist Halldór Ragnarsson challenges what nothin’ can leave, basing his new works around the concept of nothingness and the spaces in between. Is it possible to create nothing out of something, or something from nothing? Jean-Paul Sartre would also be having a field day with this one. I’d love to run into both him and Gwen at this exhibition, discussing their groundbreaking philosophies with the artist. RX



Earth Layers
February 4 – 18
SÍM Gallery Hafnarstræti

We live in a land where the layers of the earth are never too far from view. One needs only look across the bay at Esja to see the geological ridges of time. The artists in the group exhibition *Earth Layers* use the critical aspect of time as an element of their works made from found raw materials such as bog iron, Berunesclay from the Eastfjords, glacial clay from Svínafellsjökull. Together, Antonía Berg, Íris María Leifsdóttir, and Sarah Finkle explore transformation of body to nature to phenomenon, capturing something essential within the layers. RX



Why Is Iceland So Poor
Running until March 3
The Living Art Museum

Why does everything cost so ding-dang-doodly much? This is a question I ask myself nearly every day. I get crooked looks in the grocery store when I realise I’ve been muttering it out loud at the tomatoes. But seriously, what the fuck? Sæmundur Thor Helgason was on the same track when he started hounding Christmas shoppers at Kringlan for their thoughts on poverty, and the responses he got became the basis of this video installation work. Spanning across multiple screens in the gallery, there should be answers from the profound to the cockamamny. RX



Heimir Freyr Hlöðversson – We Are Earth – We Are Water
February 2 – March 2
Reykjavík Maritime Museum

In this video work, filmmaker, artist and multimedia designer Heimir Freyr Hlöðversson invites the audience to dive into the sublime beauty of the world. The piece employs technology to explore the intricate relationship between the micro and macro. From melting glaciers to immediate changes in ecosystems around the world, the piece provides a dreamy visual play with our ever-changing surroundings. IZ

Events 05.01-01.02.2024

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

Friday February 2

Silja Glømmi
21:00 12 Tónar
Apparat Organ Quartet & the Reykjavík Cathedral Choir
21:00 Dómkirkjan
Rafleiðsla: Hekla, Osmé, Sk-Ar, Sigrún & More
18:00 Elliðaárstöð
Elf Lyons & Ari Eldjárn
19:00 Gaukurinn
Áskell & Ewok
23:00 Kaffibarinn
Hermigervill (DJ set)
20:00 Kex Hostel
Ronja & Knackered
20:00 Mengi
DJ Óli Dóri
22:00 Röntgen
Layali Fairuz
20:00 Salurinn

Saturday February 3

Pellegrina Album Release Party
21:00 12 Tónar
Freaks of Funk
16:00 Forsetinncafé
Apocalypstick
21:00 Gaukurinn
Kári Egilsson Trio
16:30 Hannesarholt
Jónbjörn & Clicklounge / Seb Wildblood
23:00 Kaffibarinn
Breazy Daze, Tófa & Juno Paul
20:00 Kex Hostel
Heart Attack! Drag Night
21:00 Kiki Queer Bar
Litli Matjurtagarðurinn
20:00 Lemmy
Oyama & Possimiste
20:00 Mengi
Baba Karam
19:00 Nordic House
Winter Groove: Groove Galaxy x RADAR
21:00 Radar
Fusion Groove
22:00 Röntgen
Axel Flóvent
20:00 Salurinn

Sunna Friðjóns
19:30 Slippbarinn
Sunday February 4
Moulin Rouge With The Gender Benders
20:00 Gaukurinn
Chinese Wu Opera Show
19:00 Harpa - Eldborg
The Chamber Music Society & Kordo String Quartet
16:00 Harpa - Norðurljós
Bob Cluness
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Wednesday February 7

Diskótek Árna Sveinssonar
22:00 Kaffibarinn
Duets Night
20:00 Múlinn Jazzclub
Open Decks
19:00 Radar
We Are Eternal
21:00 Röntgen

Thursday February 8

Herra Hljóðgeymir
20:00 12 Tónar
A Salmon Nation: GDRN & FM Belfast (DJ set)
19:00 Gamla Bió
Comedy & Tragedy - Mighty Bear & Twitchy Love
21:00 Gaukurinn
Iceland Symphony's Open Rehearsals
10:00 Harpa - Eldborg
Sigríður Thorlacius & Ómar Guðjónsson
18:00 Hotel Holt
Álfbeat
22:00 Kaffibarinn
Pub Quiz
20:00 Kex Hostel
Blúsvinir
21:00 Lemmy
Drink'n'Draw
20:00 Loft
Harry Knuckles
21:00 Röntgen
Ljósið & Ruslið
20:30 Tjarnarbió

Friday February 9

Romain Collin & S.Carey
20:00 Hannesarholt
Led Zeppelin Tribute
18:00 & 21:00 Harpa - Eldborg
Atli Bollason

23:00 Kaffibarinn
Une Misère & Emmส์jé Gauti / DJ Ívar Pétur
20:00 Kex Hostel
BPM x RADAR: jadzia, ta dj ana, MARIA
22:30 Radar
DJ Glókollur
22:00 Röntgen

Saturday February 10

Los Bomboneros
16:00 Forsetinncafé
Flosi Album Release Show
21:00 Gaukurinn
DJ Óli Dóri
23:00 Kaffibarinn
DJ KGB
20:00 Kex Hostel
Party Unplugged
20:00 Lemmy
Kraftgalli
20:00 Mengi
House of Revolution: Valenteaze
21:00 National Theatre of Iceland
From Berlin with Love Anja Schneider (DE)
23:00 Radar
Benni B-Ruff
22:00 Röntgen
Una Torfa
20:00 Salurinn
Krossfest I: SLOR, NORN, Svartpoka & More
18:00 Völvufell 17 (Stelpur Rokka)

Sunday February 11

Cauda Collective x Eldjárn
16:00 Harpa - Kaldalón
Reykjavík Big Band
20:00 Harpa - Silfurberg

Tuesday February 13

Countess Malaise, Einakróna & Múr
20:00 Harpa - Kaldalón
DJ Júlala
22:00 Kaffibarinn

Wednesday February 14

CYBER Presents: Teenage Heartbreak
19:30 12 Tónar
Sweet Valentine: 50s Dance Party
20:00 Gaukurinn
Víkingur Ólafsson: Goldberg Variations
20:00 Harpa - Eldborg

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



Tölva Völva
February 2 & 3, 19:00
IDNÓ
Free

If you were ever taken on a road trip through the USA as a kid – or you've been to Vegas – you may have had the good luck of encountering a mechanical fortune teller. Zoltar was the most popular, albeit extremely problematic. At the Tölva Völva ("computer prophetess") extravaganza, the mechanical fortune teller will go digital and sentient, doling out the luck and charm to guests who just came to see dj. flugvél og geimskip perform. Maybe you're in need of some future predictions from a robot, maybe you just wanna mess with the interactive astronomy and tarot display, but either way, you'll get a good reboot. RX



Kári Egilsson Trio
Thursday February 15, 18:00
Hotel Holt
3.500 ISK

Amongst our nominees for Artist of the Year in the Grapevine Music Awards, Kári Egilsson has broken out over the past year and made a huge splash in Iceland's music scene. Impressing fans, critics and industry insiders alike with his classy and cool jazz-pop tunes, the young man also packs a whopping punch on the stage which will undoubtedly be the case on this night. Joined by Matthias Hemstock on drums and Nicolas Moreaux on double bass, the trio will play a mix of standards, pop and originals whilst you enjoy the smooth surroundings of Hotel Holt. A glass of wine is included in the price of admission too! JB



Ingibjörg Turchi Plays STROPHA
Wednesday February 21, 20:00
Múlinn Jazzclub (Harpa, Björtuloft)
3.900 ISK

When supremely talented bassist Ingibjörg Turchi released her sophomore album *STROPHA* last September, we were immediately hooked. Blending an intricate and lush mix of experimental, jazz and rock influences, the impresario and her band created a dizzying swirl of an album. In this rare occasion, Ingibjörg and her rag-tag bunch will rip out the entire album, bringing the tracks to the life they are best experienced in. If you're anything like us (and we assume you are), you will leave there saying one word: Wow. RX

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Events 05.01-01.02.2024

Concerts, comedy, movies and other happenings that defy categorization

Óskar Guðjónsson
20:00 Múlinn Jazzclub
DJ Ómar E
22:00 Kaffibarinn
DJ Brynja
21:00 Röntgen

Thursday February 15
Klemens Hannigan Album Release Show

19:00 Gamla Bió
Flying Elbows
21:00 Gaukurinn
Kári Egilsson Trio
18:00 Hotel Holt
King Lucky & Sammi Jagúar
22:00 Kaffibarinn
DJ Óli Dóri: Vinyl Set
20:00 Kex Hostel
Drink'n'Draw
20:00 Loft
Klaves
21:00 Röntgen
Valdimar Guðmundsson
20:00 Salurinn

Friday February 16
Guilty Pleasure
21:00 Gaukurinn
Víkingur Ólafsson: Goldberg Variations

20:00 Harpa – Eldborg
Young G&T
23:00 Kaffibarinn
Soffía, Karitas & Friða Dís
20:00 Kex Hostel
Jelena Ciric & Andervel
20:00 Mengi
Simon fknhdsm
22:00 Röntgen
FLOTT
20:00 Salurinn

Saturday February 17
Romain Collin

19:00 Hannesarholt
Hilmar Jensson & Jóel Pálsson
16:00 Forsetinncafé
Danni Bigroom & Björn Salvador (Nordic Voyage)
23:00 Kaffibarinn
Inspector Spacetime
21:00 Kex Hostel
Cloud Cinema, Likami, Subdural & Thorison

18:00 Lemmy
Ari Árelíus & Sucks To Be You, Nigel
20:00 Mengi
DJ KGB
22:00 Röntgen

Sunday February 18
Víkingur Ólafsson: Goldberg Variations
20:00 Harpa – Eldborg

Wednesday February 21
Brynja (Girls Gang)
22:00 Kaffibarinn
Ingibjörg Turchi
20:00 Múlinn Jazzclub
Apex Anima
21:00 Röntgen
Jelena Ciric
12:15 Salurinn

Thursday February 22
Iceland Symphony's Open Rehearsals
10:00 Harpa – Eldborg
Fu Kaisha
22:00 Kaffibarinn
Pub Quiz
20:00 Kex Hostel
Drink'n'Draw
20:00 Loft
DJ Jökull Logi
21:00 Röntgen

Friday February 23
Simon fknhdsm
23:00 Kaffibarinn
Mukka & Bear the Ant
20:00 Kex Hostel
Breazy Daze
21:00 Lemmy
Sonur Sæll
22:00 Röntgen

Saturday February 24
Magnús Jóhann
16:00 Forsetinncafé
Duvtales
23:00 Kaffibarinn
Kef LAVÍK / DJ Cousin Trouble
20:00 Kex Hostel
DJ Karítas
22:00 Röntgen

Sunday February 25
Sunday Classics: French Romanticism & Impressionism
16:00 Harpa – Norðurljós

Wednesday February 28
Síla Glömmi
22:00 Kaffibarinn
Día
21:00 Röntgen

Thursday February 29
Tómas Jonsson & Nico Moreaux
18:00 Hotel Holt
Eva Luna
22:00 Kaffibarinn
Día
20:00 Kex Hostel
Drink'n'Draw
20:00 Loft
Stjörnuljós
21:00 Röntgen
Stroke
20:30 Tjarnarbíó ■

Event Picks



Jelena Ciric
Wednesday, February 21,
12:15 - 13:30
Salurinn
Free

If you've been looking for a reason to get out of town – and by town, we just mean downtown Reykjavik – then plan a lunchtime excursion to Salurinn in Kópavogur for what is sure to be an incredible performance by the wildly talented Jelena Ciric. The singer-songwriter will be accompanied by Karl Peska on viola and Margrét Arnadóttir on accordion, and we're getting goosebumps just thinking about the beautiful sounds the trio will weave together. See you in Kópó. CF



Stroke
Thursday, February 29, 20:30
Tjarnarbíó
5.500 ISK

Stroke tells the true story of playwright, actress and clown Virginia Gillard's experience of and recovery from a stroke that turned her whole world upside down. Having once worked as a clown in hospitals in Scotland, Virginia takes on the persona of Cookie to reflect on and make sense of the experience. A production of Virginia and the Trigger Warning performing arts group, Stroke garnered rave reviews for its shows at Tjarnarbíó in 2023, so do not miss the opportunity to see it now. CF ■

See more at 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 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

BREWDOG
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

FORRETTABARINN
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 700 ISK, Wine 1.000 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 SVÍNIÐ
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

STÚDENTAKJALLARINN

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 Bío Paradís

Hverfisgata 54

Bío Paradís is so much more than just a movie theatre – a fact that's even more tangible since their bar underwent a massive renovation. Upgrading their concession stand into a full-fledged fancy bar with a retro classic cinema lobby feel, it takes the whole establishment to a new level. Along with their huge lounge area full of old couches and coffee tables, and the recent uptick in DJ sets from local musicians, it's a perfect vibe for starting an evening. Whether you follow it up with a movie or not, it's always a nice place to ease into the night.

Happy hours
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00
Beer 1.000 ISK,
Wine & Prosecco 1.200 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
1.690 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 ■

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Music News



Iceland's Potential Boycott of Eurovision 2024 Hotly Debated

There is ongoing contention between Iceland's National Broadcaster RÚV, musicians and fans surrounding the participation of Israel in this year's Eurovision song contest. Calls for RÚV to boycott the competition should the aforementioned country not be banned from competing started late last year. A petition signed by hundreds of Icelandic musicians in favour of boy-

cotting the competition was handed to RÚV director Stefán Eiríksson in December, while the Icelandic Association of Composers and Lyricists (STEF) advised members to not participate. As of printing, Israel has not been banned from the contest despite being on trial in the at the International Court of Justice for plausible genocide. **RX**



The Svavar Pétur Eysteinnsson Memorial Grant Opens for Applications

On September 29 2022, beloved musician Svavar Pétur Eysteinnsson passed away after a long bout with cancer. Known most prominently under his artist moniker Prins Póló, he was also a visual artist, food producer, farmer and entrepreneur whose endeavours carry on his legacy. The memorial fund in his name

was set up to bolster the projects of bold and imaginative artists and entrepreneurs who he championed so greatly in life. Applications for the third instalment opened on February 1 through Havarí and the fund will be disbursed on his birthday, April 26. **RX**



Grammy-Nominated Composer Romain Collin in Residency at Hannesarholt

Hailed as a visionary composer and jazz musician, Grammy-nominated pianist Romain Collin has set up camp at the Hannesarholt culture centre for a residency of unique concerts. Having begun on January 28 alongside GDRN, the French-American musician will continue his run of prestigious shows

accompanied by local jazz great Óskar Guðjónsson and prominent Bon Iver member S. Carey. His series of shows will conclude with the premiere screening of his film *FOS-S:Shapeless* which he made while living in a remote cabin near Selfoss during the winter of 2020. **RX**



Music Feature

Welcome To The Slam

Devine Defilement Releases *Age Of Atrocities*

WORDS Francesca Stoppani
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

does it," says Stebbi. The band's mantra is defiance, ignoring external suggestions to tone it down and opting for a sound that is "dumb, brutal and inappropriate."

In 2019, Ingó joined the lineup as vocalist just as the band was about to release its debut album. Describing the energy within the group as "disgusting and awesome," Ingó was drawn to Devine Defilement's unique brand of savagery. "We had enough of beautiful, depressive black metal and indie stuff," explains Stebbi, highlighting the need

and mixing.

"For mastering, we outsourced to a different guy, but we had the luxury of being able to take our time with the album," shares bass player Arek. The process was a collaborative effort, with each band member contributing to the evolution of the tracks in one way or another. "After a couple of years, we finally had a skeleton of what the album should be," Ingó adds.

Thematically, the album explores the "chronicles of human miseries," as

Devine Defilement has solidified its position as a flag bearer of the Icelandic heavy metal scene, preaching the unholy word of death metal specifically. Their latest release, *Age Of Atrocities*, not only marks a new chapter in the band's musical journey, it also introduces a new lineup, welcoming new guitarist Gummi, of Duft and Krownest fame.

SLAMMING 101

Initiated by Stebbi on drums and Árni on guitar, Devine Defilement dates to 2017. The band's vision was clear – to pioneer slamming death metal in Iceland. "Nobody did it at the time and still, nobody else really

The age of atrocities expands the whole time mankind has been around.

for something crude and heavy to complete the musical potluck of the local metal scene.

THE MAKING OF AGE OF ATROCITIES

Age Of Atrocities has been in the making since 2020, with most of the album materialising in 2023. In true Devine Defilement fashion, the band decided to undertake most aspects of production in-house, with guitarist Sjonni taking care of recording

the band explains, primarily through the eyes of the perpetrators. The concept evolved from initially planning an album centred around serial killers to a broader exploration of the atrocities committed by humans across different eras. "The age of atrocities spans the whole time mankind has been around," Ingó sums up.

DISSECTING THE TRACKS

Each track on *Age Of Atrocities* is

A UNIQUE GIFT SHOP IN THE HEART OF REYKJAVÍK
LAUGAVEGUR 12b theheartofreykjavik.com





Crew

an exercise in brutality, a macabre exploration of humanity's darkest and most taboo facets. The band provided insights into the inspiration and creation of each track, so in true DD spirit, let's dissect this album together:

1. **Summoning:** An atmospheric prelude, utilising a sound snippet from the newest movie of the Evil Dead franchise, setting the stage for the impending brutality.
2. **Wolf of Bedburg:** Drawing inspiration from the story of 16th-century German serial killer Peter Stumpp, the climax of the song is reached when he gets killed, dying a pretty gory death.
3. **Byzantine Blinding:** This track refers to the war crimes of the Ottoman Empire, and specifically the gruesome act of blinding a thousand enemies.
4. **Malformed Grin:** A visually vivid narrative, weaving a tale of revenge and justice, not for the faint-hearted. According to Arek: "If people didn't actually do this kind of stuff, we would not be here talking about it." Stebbi, who wrote the lyrics, shares an unsettling experience he had before getting his driving licence. A person attempted to rob him while he was on the bus. When he got home, he started writing lyrics out of anger. He imagined the attempted robber as a rapist and crafted a scenario where the victim retaliates by burning him alive.
5. **Labyrinth of Disfigurement:** Addressing abuse and the abuser's control, this track explores the emotional and psychological impact on the victim. Arek's vocals at the beginning are

aimed at exorcising the anguish associated with such abuse, representing a personal, rather than just an artistic expression. "I am screaming my guts out. I felt I was ready to bring this forward as a person, not only as a musician. I repeated that part over and over again until every bit of pain was out." The song is also about getting revenge and not understanding what revenge really means, "poignant and brutal" as described by Ingó. Then Stebbi concludes: "You want revenge. But do you really?"

I am screaming my guts out. I felt I was ready to bring this forward as a person, not only as a musician. I repeated that part over and over again until every bit of pain was out.

6. **All Arise:** Serving as an intro/interlude for "SCU (Slam Crew United)," featuring a mix of Sjonni's synth magic and a 50s cigarette ad sample.
7. **S.C.U. (Slam Crew United):** A tribute to the fans and the haters. It includes guest vocals from Trausti of False Majesty.
8. **Betrothed to Blasphemy:** Merging nu-metal, goregrind and death, the lyrics are inspired by the deeds committed by the infamous Jeffrey Dahmer.
9. **Embedded in Filth:** Featuring a humorous Jimmy Neutron sample, the song explores themes of (some) people not pulling their weight.

10. **Wraith:** A departure from the usual Devine Defilement sound, the track reflects on sentiments of depression and uselessness. It serves as Árni's farewell song. A beautiful and heart-breaking testament.

11. **SIC (Slipknot cover):** A tribute to Slipknot, showcasing intense vocals amalgamated from various one-run tracks.

All in all, Devine Defilement has even more ambitious plans for 2024, including shows in Oslo and

Czech Republic and at Deathfest Open Air in August. Some of the members are also organising Reykjavik Deathfest's Spring Slaughter on April 5 and 6. But most importantly, the release concert for Age Of Atrocities is on February 3 at legendary venue Gaukurinn! ■

Stay up to date with the band's future atrocities on Instagram at @devine_defilement. As Ingó puts it: "Horns up and welcome to the slam crew!"

M

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Music The Continuous Sounds Of *Quake*

In conversation with composers Páll Ragnar Pálsson and Eðvarð Egilsson

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Without accompanying music, an otherwise Oscar-worthy blockbuster would likely be considered a dud. Some opine that a cinematic score is inextricably linked to the film itself, unable to live independent of the glamour of the visual elements. Composer duo Páll Ragnar Pálsson and Eðvarð Egilsson beg to differ.

The release of their album *Skjálfti* via Sono Luminus in November is a challenge to that belief. With the release, Páll and Eðvarð decidedly sever the music from the eponymous film it initially scored — the 2021 *Skjálfti* (*Quake*) directed by Tína Hrafnadóttir — giving it a life of its own away from the silver screen.

When the duo had finished scoring the film, they simply weren't ready to stop. Instead, they ventured onwards, augmenting the short musical cues written for the film.

PLUGGING CORDS

Of rock-band Maus and electronica outfit Steed Lord respectively, Páll and Eðvarð met at the Iceland University of Arts during Eðvarð's musical studies. As a teacher, Páll assumed the role of Eðvarð's instructor, guiding him through the

studies and ultimately his dissertation piece.

When the assignment of scoring *Skjálfti* was handed to Páll, Eðvarð was an obvious choice of co-conspirator. "Initially, I got the project and wondered if he should come in as an assistant or something," explains Páll. "But that changed right away into a 50/50 collaboration."

It makes sense, as both artists are established composers in their own right, with considerable experience under their respective belts. Sharing a similar musical background in pop-music and collaborative band environments, the pair was adept at synchronising their ideas.

"We spoke the same language. Which was convenient because we were quick..." Eðvarð says before pausing. "I won't say that we finished each other's sentences, but we had similar ideas right from the start." Páll continues. "It was like a lot of cords were plugged. Our collaboration was effortless."

The team's shared background allowed them to envision the

explains Eðvarð.

The album's writing and recording process was a homegrown affair. Majority of the instrumentation is supplied by Páll and Eðvarð, with additional performances by their partners, soprano Tui Hirv and cellist Unnur Jónsdóttir.

Skjálfti plays with textural sounds, with ample moments of tension and dissonance keeping the listener occupied. One of the more interesting musical techniques utilised is the concept of concealment, where one instrument seamlessly blends into the next, creating groupings of continuous movements. "It's endless erosion of bounds between instruments, so the total soundscape transforms into one entity," Páll describes.

That singular entity is so outstanding, it garnered the attention of the committee behind the HARPA Nordic Film Composers Award. Páll and Eðvarð were nominated for "Best Score" at the 2023 awards, with the panel describing their work as "a subtle masterpiece."

It's endless erosion of bounds between instruments, so the total soundscape transforms into one entity,

soundtrack as much more than a film score. For the album, they breathed new life into the film's short musical cues to grow each into independent songs. "The element of the band experience ties back into our decision. We think in terms of records. You want to condense everything," says Páll.

A HOMEGROWN AFFAIR

After ending up with a number of individual pieces for the film, Eðvarð says they then wanted to "see how far we could take it." The pair had secured a publishing deal with American record label Sono Luminus earlier in the process. "It led us forward and we had a defined goal,"

Award recognition seems to follow Eðvarð around. He has found himself nominated for the same award this time for his score on the Estonian documentary *Smoke Sauna Sisterhood*. The accolades will be handed out in Berlin in February. As for what the future entails, Páll and Eðvarð are positive about further collaboration, continuously sending ideas back and forth. "We're always on our way to start something. We wanted to finish this project first and then look ahead," concludes Páll. ■

Listen to *Skjálfti*, available on streaming services, or get yourself a physical copy in record shops or online.



Review The Hot Iron Of Desire

Julian Civilian gives us all the feels

WORDS Rex Beckett
IMAGE Provided by artist
Annahita Asgari

Could this feeling last forever? Like, forever ever?

For Julian Civilian, aka Skúli Jónsson, it sure seems to have, as is evident in his latest single “Þú strauja hjarta mitt” (“you iron my heart”). The duet with his wife and love of his life, Sigyn Jónsdóttir, is a sonic testament to the power of eternally crushing on your long-time partner.

Following the release of his refreshingly funny indie-rock track “Fyrirmyndarborgari” (“a model citizen”) last autumn, this second single off his yet to be announced upcoming album continues to serve the super catchy, high quality guitar-based pop music that so many folks have been missing. No shade at all – yours truly writing this is an elec-

tronics only artist. But still, we love a guitar, and Julian Civilian is up there in the local ranks of those bringing it back in full-force.

with the harmonies. Having provided backing vocals on several of his songs since 2019, her inclusion at the forefront seems like a natural move for the pair and, frankly, feels like she might be a more consistent member of the ensemble.

The track is rounded out by his long-time partner-in-crime collaborator Helgi Pétur Hannesson on drums and was recorded, produced and mixed by Albert Finnbogason, who also added some tambourine for good measure.

While the fast-paced track delivers quite a strong punch – the kind of song you could blast on a long drive – the duo’s voices are both gentle and lilting, perfectly complimented in their warm tones and clear deliv-

ery. The hooky synth line that pops between the verses and over the chorus rounds out that exceptional state of big gushy unstoppable feelings and being lost in a sweet fantasy.

His new single was auspiciously inspired by one of his kindergarten students during an arts and crafts session. After making a pink heart out of fusing beads, the wee urchin held it up to Skúli and asked “Will you iron my heart?” This unintentionally – yet devastatingly – romantic question conjured in him the idea that the right person will melt the tiny pieces of your cold heart together, fusing them with warmth and love.

Having been kicking around with sporadic releases since 2016, he is now poised to release his first proper LP since his 2019 album *Grand Slam*, and with these first two singles being so damn catchy and emo in their own ways, there’s a sense this could be his real breakout.

So be warned: If you are not already in crush-mode or deeply in love, this song might make you wish the thousands of pink beads in your heart were being crushed by the hot iron of desire. ■

There’s a reason they call it a crush: it flattens you. The overwhelming feels for this person who has set your heart ablaze rolls you out like a fruit roll-up on a hot day. You don’t eat, you don’t sleep, you do nothing but think of them.

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Restaurant Review

The Safety Of Kastrup

Now in a permanent space, this Nordic bistro won't ruffle any feathers

WORDS Shruthi Basappa
IMAGES Joana Fontinha

started as a brief affair with Scandi sandwiches at Hverfisgata 12 where Dill once was and Hosilo now stands, Kastrup then moved to Klapparstígur for a tiny bit, taking their smörre loving diners along for the ride. When they finally opened in a secure location overlooking Arnarhóll, many rejoiced.

cloths, or maybe the sense that the two restaurants share a similar customer base. However, the similarities end there.

The fit out is chic and warm, with plenty of plants, a Nordic palette of natural wood tones and diffused lighting and a rotating carousel of

Well, they do say they are a Nordic bistro and I suppose if you add Nordic to anything, it instantly elevates the price – and expectations.

Kastrup opened with the kind of quiet fanfare that leans on the regulars seeking them out. What

If you walked into Kastrup and felt you were in La Primavera, you're not alone. Perhaps it's the white table-

artwork by artists established and upcoming. It's the kind of place that curiously attracts a certain kind of diner: the bankers in suits, the cor-



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porate luncheon ladies, the pre- and post-theater older crowd that always orders a bottle of wine or two. I don't think I've ever seen anyone younger than 30 here!

Kastrup is open for lunch and dinner, and has of late started serving weekend brunches as well. Notorious for their "most expensive burger" in Iceland, a justification they broke down in local media pointing to the rising costs of running a restaurant in Reykjavik, they nevertheless balanced that pretty quickly with their fish of the day lunch offers.

BISTRO ADJACENT

Kastrup's menu reads much like a bistro offering anywhere: a small, simple, casual menu. The price is where the bistro similarities end. I remember dining here not long after they first opened over a year ago, thinking to myself how steep the prices were. Well, they do say they are a Nordic bistro and I suppose if you add Nordic to anything, it instantly elevates the price — and expectations.

Rave reviews of their lightly assembled smörre from their locations prior aside, dinner was a new ball game. That first meal left us wanting more — better service, better food, better everything. Unsurprisingly, I'd been avoiding a meal here until I'd heard rave reviews from many.

Kastrup has in the past year learned the in's and out's of their new digs better. Service is attentive and friendly and the food is sharper.

SIMPLICITY IS SUPREME... OR SAFE

The lunch menu is usually a smattering of several different kinds of open face sandwiches, a salad or two, fish of the day and the trusty hamburger.

Despite its nordic bistro ambitions, the smörre are often classic renditions of tried and tested classics. If you are expecting inspired takes, a la Barr in Copenhagen, don't. This isn't an entirely unfair comparison given that the price of a sandwich is essentially the same at both places. However, open faced sandwiches in

restraint is one of the few things I appreciate about Kastrup. Granted it was two bites, but our two bites each had at least three whole anchovies.

Kastrup does often get their steaks right. Mine was a touch over medium rare, but I put that down to my finicky-ness more than anything. At

Notorious for their "most expensive burger" in Iceland, a justification they broke down in local media pointing to the rising costs of running a restaurant in Reykjavik, they nevertheless balanced that pretty quickly with their fish of the day lunch offers.

the city, although on the rise, tend to be faithful. Why that is, when there is an ample customer base that travels to the Danish capital frequently and has seen the evolution of this humble sandwich type is a mystery.

That said, the smörre at Kastrup is assembled with a light hand, with ingredients that reveal careful selection. The shrimp (3690 ISK) are especially lovely. Briny and bright, just enough microgreens keeping it from veering into salad territory and the brioche they often use, is a nice buttery foil to the simple crustacean.

You might encounter that brioche again at dinner. Recently, they served them with some excellent salt-packed anchovies (3190 ISK). At most other places, I'd have expected this dish to arrive with some kind of mayo squiggle. But not here and that

8900 ISK, it is also nice to get the whole meaty affair — a little jug of bernaise, fries and the meat, — rather than the silly affair where one has to order all the components separately.

Is Kastrup a safe restaurant? In many ways, yes. It does not ruffle any feathers when it comes to the food and often confounds you when you compare what is on your plate vs what you pay for it. But is it comforting in that only the familiar is comforting right now? Also, yes. ■

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Travel

Escaping The Grey

On a mission to get lost in a lush wilderness under glass

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Art Bicnick

Greenhouse manager Elías Óskars-son meets me at the door, slightly surprised by my interest. He welcomes me and Art Bicnick, who can't hide his dissatisfaction with the limited daylight, into the greenhouse. Rows of cherry tomatoes in yellow, red and various shades of green greet us, making me feel like

they do in Holland," Elías explains. "Because of the latitude, they have a lot more light outside, so they do not need so much light [inside the greenhouse]. Also, our electricity costs a lot less. In Europe, for example, in Denmark, they stopped growing in the light because of the electricity costs."

We'd make more money by selling admission to look at bananas than by actually growing them.

a kid in a candy store — an admittedly healthy one. Baby aubergines are nestled next to rows of robust bell peppers and vibrant green cucumbers. Planted apart from the other crops, the Icelandic ghost peppers wait for their time to be harvested. The contrast with the dreary weather outside is stark. And don't even get me started on the smell.

EXPERIMENT IN BLOOM

While I can't take my eyes off the colourful veggies — they're much nicer looking than what you'll find at your local Krónan or Bónus — Elías explains that we are at an experimental greenhouse. This is where students of the Horticultural School do practical work. For instance, they can try growing an unusual vegetable or run other experiments, like a recent attempt at different levels of CO2 input in tomatoes. The produce grown inside greenhouses is then used by the students in the kitchen. Nothing goes to waste and, contrary to popular belief, nothing here is for sale.

The students and the staff have also been experimenting with the amount of light in the greenhouse. "We use a lot more light here than

During his time managing the greenhouse, Elías saw that practically anything can be grown here — from cantaloupe melons to spaghetti squashes, which he personally finds the most unusual of the students' experiments.

Unlike me, Elías isn't surprised that the greenhouse's cacao tree bore a single fruit this year. "It's because it is only seven years old," he explains. "It takes them that long to mature from seed to giving fruit." He hopes for more cacao fruits next summer as the tree had lots of flowers and there's a chance they got pollinated.

I ask Elías if it's true that the harvested fruit has been turned into chocolate by the Omnom factory. "Yes. It was okay," he answers unamused.

THE EVER-CHANGING BANANA TALE

If you've spent some time in Iceland, you might have heard that Iceland has the largest banana plantation in Europe or is even Europe's biggest exporter of bananas. Of course, no one has ever tried those mythical Icelandic bananas; the whole story is shrouded in mystery. Does Iceland

It's one of the gloomiest days this December — just past noon, yet outside is as dark as if it were eight in the evening. It won't get any brighter today. Rain pours down on the highway, making the road nearly invisible, while gusts of wind make the car sway as we hurtle away from the capital. There will be many more days like this, but in Iceland, you learn to adapt to the weather.

Despite the darkness of the Icelandic afternoon, I'm craving a splash of colour. While many Icelanders I know are hibernating in the warmth of Tenerife during this period, I use my press pass to find the closest version of that near Reykjavik. Today, I'm at the greenhouses of the Horticultural School in Reykir. The school is part of the Agricultural University of Iceland and has recently made headlines for cultivating and harvesting Iceland's first cacao fruit — singular. But if you look outside the window, you won't underestimate such an achievement.

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export them all? Why Iceland, out of all places? Is it even true? Luckily, I have Elías ready to dispel these myths.

“You know how the stories always change,” Elías sighs as I bring up the topic. “We do not export bananas. We do not grow bananas for commercial use. We do not sell bananas.” He explains that the reason Iceland even has bananas is because of a five-year-long trial in the 1950s. “The trial wasn’t successful in the sense that we found out that we cannot do this commercially because it costs too much. It takes 18 months for that cluster there to form,” Elías says, pointing to a banana tree with tiny unappealing fruit. “You’re lucky to see a cluster of bananas because usually we do not get any at this time of the year.”

It’s as dark inside the banana greenhouse as it is outside – instead of relying on light, the greenhouse

uses heat, maintaining a temperature of 20 degrees Celsius all year round. “Today there is probably not enough light for plants to photosynthesise,” says Elías as we speak about the challenges of growing bananas in this northern climate.

“We can say that this is the biggest banana plantation under glass,” Elías clarifies. “And it is the biggest

in dismay. “When bananas are so cheap in the shop, this would never work.” He bends his fingers counting how expensive it would be to grow bananas in Iceland commercially – starting with labour expenses, electricity, heating, water, fertilisers, etc. It would take 18 months to grow a cluster of bananas that would cost around 5000 krónur to sell.

an open day in April, just in time for the summer, about 5,000 visitors stop by.

SEEDS OF GRATITUDE

“People who come here are always fascinated by bananas but we have a lot nicer oranges,” Elías laughs as he continues our excursion through the greenhouse and we pass by ripened oranges and pomegranates that gracefully weigh down the branches of their trees.

Asked if there’s anything that’s absolutely impossible to grow in Iceland, Elías doesn’t hesitate for a moment. “No, we can grow anything that we can grow under glass,” he says. “We have clean water, geothermal energy and affordable electricity. We can grow whatever, but there needs to be a market for it.” Unlike the students, who are always ready with new experimental ideas, Elías is confident that mastering what Ice-

land is already good at – like growing tomatoes and cucumbers – is the way to go.

I agree – I might not have tried the mysterious Icelandic banana today, but I certainly snacked on tomatoes right from the vine – and oh, how flavourful they were. Elías’ colleague Börkur told me I can take home anything I harvested, so the colourful tomato mix soon ended up in a panzanella salad, baby eggplants turned into Ottolenghi’s pasta alla norma and the ghost peppers will wait in the wings to spice up some of my winter meals.

I couldn’t leave without doing anything in return – so at the greenhouse managers’ request I planted some carrot seeds. When you attend the next open day, savour my contribution of crunchy carrots, nurtured by geothermal energy. They’re a humble reminder that some things do grow in Iceland. ■

Despite the darkness of the Icelandic afternoon, I’m craving a splash of colour.

plantation of bananas in Europe, because the Canary Islands are not in Europe. They are in Africa.”

Could an Icelandic banana one day be an everyday find in a local grocery store available on par with African bananas? Elías shakes his head

“We’d make more money by selling admission to look at bananas than by actually growing them,” Elías laughs. “Have you considered that?” chimes in the ever-silent Art Bicknick. “We get so many guests, but we don’t charge,” Elías is quick to answer. When the greenhouse hosts



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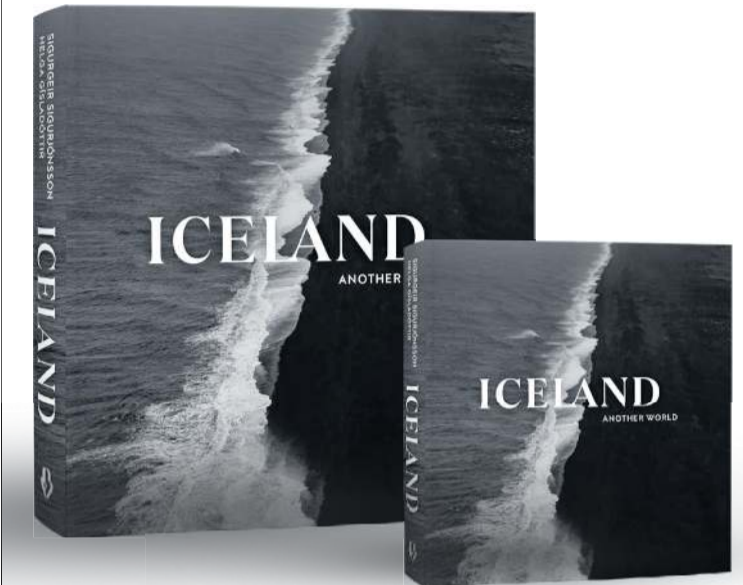
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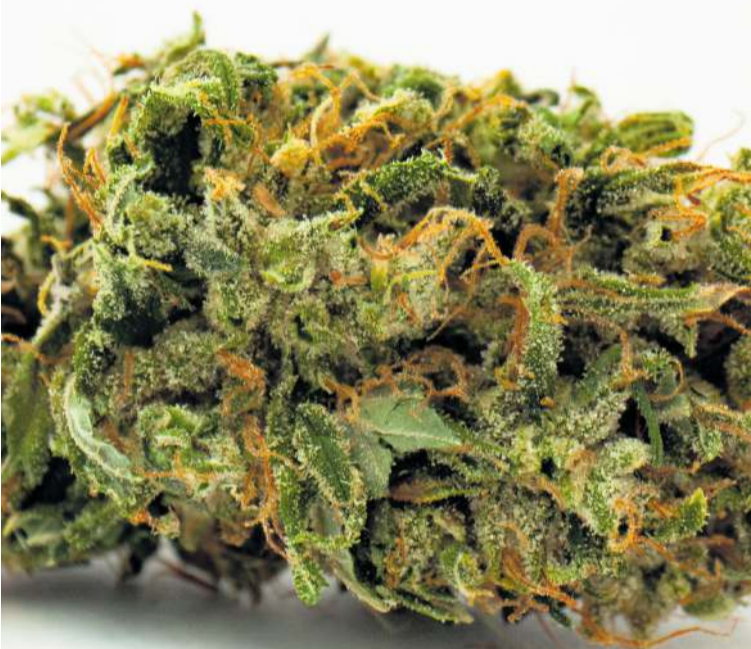
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Islanders Meet The New Mayor

From journalism to politics, Einar Þorsteinsson pledges a new chapter for F

WORDS Iryna Zubenko
IMAGES Joana Fontinha

“Trust me, I’m a reporter,” reads the mug Einar Þorsteinsson is holding in his office overlooking Tjörnin on a gloomy January afternoon. However, Einar is no longer a reporter – these days, he’s wearing much bigger shoes as the mayor of Reykjavik. A fresh face in Icelandic politics, Einar’s political career began practically overnight. Or so it seems – in fact, he postponed taking office for 18 months, opting to learn the job from his predecessor, Dagur B. Eggertsson, Reykjavik’s longest-serving mayor, who left this very office earlier in January. Can Einar’s journalistic past prepare him to effectively run a city? Will we see any radical changes in the capital during his tenure? Einar is optimistic, however only time will tell.

I started very young in journalism – working on the radio at RÚV. Serving the public as a journalist quickly became my calling and has been my goal throughout my professional career. In U.S. politics, they always say, “he entered public service.” We don’t really have a word for that

here. We go into politics. But for me, it’s public service.

After eighteen years in journalism, I decided that my time was coming to an end. I had done many of the things that I wanted: I had been in radio, television, doing investigative journalism, and then the talk shows, political news programs and the candidates’ debates for all the elections year after year. I had the feeling that it was enough. At that time, I was 43 years old and decided, “Let’s open a new chapter.”

I entered into politics quite unexpectedly. I’ve never been affiliated with any political party or imagined

process more and more polarised. You need someone to build bridges and speak with a cold head and a warm heart, addressing the problems that we’re facing and trying to depolarise the political environment. I believe people both need and want that.

When you’re covering society, you’re talking to people about what’s happening in their lives. Sometimes, people are being treated unjustly. You’re reporting it, people talk about it, but you don’t feel like you’re really doing anything. If you want to change society, you have to go into politics. That was my feeling as I went along.

It’s not an easy task to run Reykjavík right now.

myself going into politics. But then I saw that the Progressive Party, Framsóknarflokkurinn, which is the central party, can work with both sides. For me, it was a very big factor. When you’re a journalist, you always have to take notice of both sides in every topic and be fair and balanced. As a centre politician, you can work with people from the right and from the left. Being in the middle is very important in today’s politics, where we see the democratic

I ran for a party that had not been successful in the last term, with no city representative and no city councillors. It was a big project to establish a campaign and run, but we did it. We got the best election result this party has ever had in Reykjavik and now the first mayor, which is odd because we are one of the oldest parties in Iceland.

We have a coalition government



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here – political parties are running for 23 seats in the city council. After the election, the leaders of the political parties negotiate and try to find ways to work together. The four political parties forming the coalition then split responsibilities between themselves. Historically, the strongest party usually gets the mayor's seat.

We ran with the message that we needed a political leadership change in the city hall and people came by the thousands. The mayor, who just stepped down had been a mayor for 10 years. We made a deal that he would serve the first 18 months and then I would take the remaining 30.

I felt that it was a responsible way to split the term because I had never been a city councillor before. This is the biggest company in Iceland; we have many employees and provide a very important first-touch service to many citizens. You have to know what you're talking about to run a company like that. You have to earn trust as a leader.

FIRST HEADACHES

During most of our time here, we've been trying to fix the budget. It was in a much worse state than we thought. If we have an unsustain-

able budget, we cannot improve the services and grow. That's been my main task. My vision is that we need to fix the basics – clearing the snow, for example. People need to get around the city easily, especially children, elderly people and people with disabilities. Then the garbage system. This is just something that needs to work. We shouldn't have to be talking about that over a cup of coffee, wondering why they're not picking up the trash.

No one's born to do anything. Every leader is shaped by the challenges that they're faced with. As the current mayor, I step into a situation where we're in a housing crisis in the whole capital area. We need affordable housing for people from Grindavík, housing for immigrants, and housing for groups of refugees coming here. We have a growing population. We need more space for children in preschools and kindergartens.

It's hard for me to evaluate what kind of a mayor I will be. I just hope I will be judged fairly on the basis of my promises and actions. I'm very humble towards this task – I know I don't have all the solutions myself. You always have to work with others. It's not an easy task to run Reykjavík right now. But I hope my leadership and cooperation with the majority

and the minority in the city council will provide us with a better city in 2026.

REYKJAVÍK THAT LISTENS

Having worked closely with Dagur for the past 18 months, I think I know this job pretty well by now. But it's a busy job. You have to go around the city every day, meeting people, giving speeches and going into new situations where you have never been before. As a former journalist, I'm kind of a curious type. I like to meet and chat with people.

I'm having town hall meetings where I'll ask, "What do you like about your neighbourhood? What do we need to fix? And what do you want me to do?" I'm just opening up my persona, and I want to listen to the people because I feel that the City Hall needs to listen.

PUBLIC TRANSIT, COMMUNITY AND ROTTEN SHARK

The only way to grow as a capital area is to create the Bus Rapid Transit system. If we don't do that, cars will be useless, because we will be stuck in traffic. We need the BRT, but

I do not use public transport often. In this period of my life, I have to drive one of my daughters from Seljahverfi to Garðabær in the morning because the public transport between the two places and the school is not good. This is the reality for so many families in Reykjavík.

I use the swimming pools and the green areas in my neighbourhood a lot. In each period of your life, you use the city in a different way – when I was younger, I used to go to the bars downtown, now I'm in the period of life where I'm using green areas and playgrounds a lot. I have a 16-year-old, a 10-year-old and a two-year-old. Picking a movie for movie night is really hard.

What I love about Reykjavík is seeing everything that's going on in the neighbourhoods – the social activities of the parent groups related to the schools and sports clubs. It's awesome. Now, when we go into Þorablót, the whole community comes together, eating very strange food like the rotten shark. There's a sense of community and I like being a part of it.

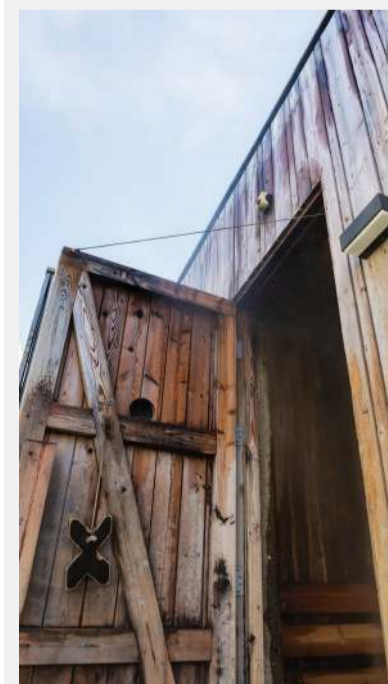
IZ: As the mayor, could you ban rotten shark?

EP: No, definitely not. We will never ban that. ■

I felt that it was a responsible way to split the term because I had never been a city councillor before.

Comparing running a city to being a minister or being in the parliament where they're proposing legislation and starting many initiatives, we are closer to the people. I love being able to make decisions that truly change the lives of the people in Reykjavík. It's a good feeling to be in direct contact with the citizens and listen to them. This weekend, I'm going to Grafarvogur and Breiðholt.

we also need bike paths and infrastructure for privately owned cars and lorries around the city. This is the task that the Progressive Party put in place in 2019. The chairman of my party led that work, trying to have a joint coalition between all the mayors in the capital area to figure out how we can fix the traffic, reduce emissions and save people's money. Public transport is a key factor here.



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Musings

What A Drag

A maiden voyage into the wild and wonderful world of drag

WORDS Charlie Winters
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

The lights are burning straight into my eyes. One wobbly step at a time I click-clack onto the stage like a drunk flamingo. The undeniably queer audience roars in support. I look stunning and, more importantly, no one can tell my panties are rising up so high it feels like I'm being wedged. I have no idea how I got here, but I'm performing in a drag show.

Hi, I'm Charlie, and I am proud to say that alongside being a public menace I am now officially a drag queen. I recently had the amazing opportunity to perform at the Gaukurinn under the drag name "Sissy Fuss." And since I've already gone through the arduous process of pulling myself up by my thigh highs, I'm here to give you the tea on what it's like to do drag (at least from the male perspective).

Firstly, let's turn to the ancient texts to understand what it means to drag. According to Wikipedia, drag is the art of exaggerated gender performance. Femininity, masculinity and everything inbetweenity meld together as performers cross-dress, strip and tear apart a varie-

ty of gendered boundaries, often while lip syncing to Lady Gaga. Of course, this is the simplest breakdown of this art form and just as I'm not straight because I kissed a girl that one time, I am also not an expert on drag just because I put on heels once. The performances can vary from a Dracula impersonator slowly turning into Elvis Presley to an emotional play about young women discovering their lesbian sexuality and giving birth to a dildo – neither example is a joke. Shit's wild. Shit's great.

If any of that sounds like your cup of tea, it's time to march yourself down to Kiki or Gaukurinn (the two largest queer venues in the country). Other places have regular drag shows as well, but you'll have to go digging around. If you're tired of voyeurism and want to get in on the action,

though, that few Queens can contain the woman within.

I learned the hard way that a drag show doesn't start on the stage. It starts in the shower, shaving every inch of your hairy man body. The show goes on by shoving your now sliced-up but buttery-smooth fat ass into the tightest corset, panties and kinky little maid outfit the market has to offer. You stack on layer after layer of makeup till your face looks like a wedding cake. Tucking...dear god, the tucking... I didn't even know my penis could do that. You then strap on the most ankle-breaking heels imaginable. I'm telling you, guys, Reykjavik is cold enough when you're wearing a jacket – I have a newfound respect for the women rocking tights and skirts in this weather.

Just as I'm not straight because I kissed a girl that one time, I am also not an expert on drag just because I put on heels once.

the best place to start is at an open drag night. Some are organised during Reykjavik Pride, where newly hatched drag queens are let loose on stage to flap their wings for the very first time. I was lucky in that I was able to secure a mother, a drag queen who would guide me. After much blackmailing, Sparkle took me under her wing. She did warn me

But once you get on that stage there's nothing like feeling that inner femininity taking over. Heels, skirt, makeup, the works. The suffering was all worth it. I look amazing. All I can do is hope I won't get my wig snatched. As my body moves to the rhythm of the music I smile, for yes, I do imagine that Sissy Fuss is happy. ■



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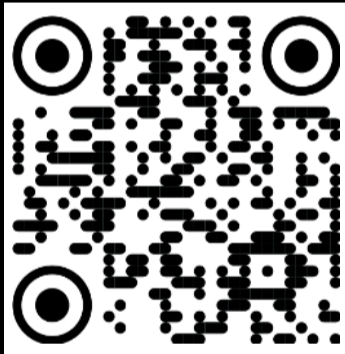
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Well, You Asked

Beautification Only A Thrall Would Love

The Grapevine's finest answers your most pressing questions

WORDS Catherine Magnúsdóttir
IMAGE Art Bicnick

is no plan, there never was a plan and there never will be a plan as to how the city should be laid out and everything gets mushed together on a whim of "hey, wouldn't that individual piece look good?" But hey, I hear if you sneak the guard a treat you get extra basketball time on Skólavörðustígur.

mountain, write a crime novel, do the laundry, get the bikes out, go for a swim, go to job number one, pick up the kids, record an album, walk the dog, job number two, go to a concert, grab a drink, go shopping, do some knitting, take a roadtrip, no sleep only do. Quickbeforetheendlessnightreturns!!!

MY HUSBAND FOUND THE LIGHT LEVEL AT NIGHT IN JUNE HARD TO SLEEP THROUGH. HOW DO YOU COPE WITH THE SEASONAL LIGHT LEVELS?

WHAT IS A THRALL?

I'm gonna go out on a limb here and assume you don't mean the World of Warcraft character. Now, how do I put this gently... Slaves. They were slaves. Vikings went raiding and stole people. Thralls didn't have rights and were at the whims of their owners. Sometimes it was a punishment, sometimes it happened to a person under financial duress for a time but the kidnapping was very much a thing. Hot take of the day: Vikings often did bad shit. ■

WHY DO ALL THE CITY BEAUTIFICATION PROJECTS END UP LOOKING LIKE A PRISON YARD?

Once I get out of the initial spiral of losing my sense of time, reality and all meaning it's quite nice, actually! So much to do when you have endless light! How do you think Icelanders hold down so many careers and still do outdoorsy stuff? Everybody becomes manic! Let's go climb a

Not a fan of the concrete collection of "cell chic" or "bespoke block beauty"? Well, to each their own. But yeah, I think it's because there



Last Look IMAGE Art Bicnick

Be happy...play music



Tónlist er fyrir okkur öll



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1966



Potent Quotables

We don't see any foreign names on the boards of companies.

GeoSilica founder Fida Abu Libdeh talks about the realities of building business in Iceland as an immigrant on page 8.

We are at that juncture in time where we can actually choose what role we want tourism to play in the future of Iceland — will it continue to be an industry benefiting a few, or an industry benefiting us all?

Grapevine's founder and publisher Jón Trausti Sigurðarson discusses how the current tourism policy puts the country's culture in danger on page 10.

We have this wonderful community, but at the same time I wanted to not keep it only for Hafnar.haus.

José Luis Anderson talks about curating the Hafnar.Concert Series at Mengi on page 15.

I've never been affiliated with any political party or imagined myself going into politics.

Reykjavík's brand-new mayor, Einar Þorsteins-son, talks about learning to run a city and his hopes for the capital on page 34.

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