

“All the News
That Fits on the Page”

VOL. III . No. 2

REYKJAVÍK, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2005

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The Reykjavík Grapevine

ICELAND SUPPORTS WAR IN IRAQ

“16% is a lot, considering we are a small country” explains Prime Minister Ásgrímsson

In a foreign affairs move so bold and decisive it got the attention of the entire nation, former Foreign Minister (and current Prime Minister) Halldór Ásgrímsson ingeniously streamlined the foreign relations process by eliminating the tedious and often unsatisfactory step of putting decisions before parliament first. In addition, this move has shown great foresight: a full 16% of the country now backs the decision to go to war with Iraq, and it only took 20 months to convince them. This well-spring of support in such a short time has been very encouraging for the ruling party. “You can’t say we don’t listen to the voice of the minority anymore, can you?” said Ásgrímsson.

To further strengthen the Atlantic Alliance, the Prime Minister has handed President Bush a written statement promising full Icelandic support for the invasion of a country of his choice, the blank space to be filled out at the President’s discretion.

Khatami-Ásgrímsson summit meeting in Switzerland

President Khatami of Iran, upon hearing that Iceland would back a potential invasion of Iran, immediately requested an audience with Icelandic Prime Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson. A summit meeting is to be held in Switzerland this month. “Our fate is in your hands,” he said to Icelandic reporters before boarding the plane to Geneva.



Fashion-conscious and combat ready

The Grapevine platoon are gearing up to take part in military operations in Iraq but remain unwilling to settle for the drab, dreary and (let’s face it) depressing olive green or beige that soldiers in the region often wear. For this reason, they’ve put together these prototypes of weapons they will be using in the field of combat. “This is a great day for fashion,” said one designer. “Finally, we can show that we can combine sassy patterns and urban combat maneuvers.”

Protest Cancelled Due to Lunch

A group of protestors who had planned on assembling in front of parliament to voice opposition to Iceland’s support of the war in Iraq discovered at 11:30 this morning that it was 11:30 in the morning. “Lacking any reasonable amount of time to prepare before noon,” said one would-be protestor, “we had no choice but to postpone the demonstration and go to Ruby Tuesday’s.” The group is still sorting out their schedules for the rest of the week amongst themselves, but they seem optimistic about demonstrating sometime next Thursday, provided that weather forecasts remain favourable.

Kim Il Jong Congratulates Iceland

Kim Il Jong, the “Dear Leader” of North Korea, told a group of reporters at a statue unveiling in his honour: “I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Prime Minister of Iceland for demonstrating what true leadership is. A true leader will demonstrate that he can make decisions by himself. A true leader also knows what is best for his country - in fact, he knows the people better than they know themselves, as my father used to say.”

MP’s give themselves a raise

The Icelandic parliament has recently passed a law which states that they will now start receiving their pensions on the day they get elected to parliament. This will be in addition to their regular wages as MP’s. “This is done in order to make it easier for parliament members to leave politics. We’re sure the people will support that,” an Alþingi spokesman said.

Robber asked to give some money back

An armed robber made away with a five thousand krónur bill from a Shell gas station in Garðabær, and attempted to make his escape by calling a taxi. He was arrested by police and sentenced to give half the money back, which was later commuted to giving a quarter of the money back. The taxi driver was fired as a warning to others.

Seem too ridiculous to be true?

***For the real story,
see inside***

D E C L A R A T I O N

The Invasion of Iraq — not in our name

We, citizens of Iceland, protest in the strongest possible terms against the Icelandic authorities' support for the invasion of Iraq by the United States of America and the "coalition of the willing" in March 2003. With their declaration of support, the Icelandic authorities violated Icelandic law, international law — and Icelandic democratic tradition.

The decision to support the invasion was made unilaterally by the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Iceland, without prior discussion by Iceland's Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs. This is mandatory under Icelandic law, which says that all major foreign policy issues shall be discussed by the committee. This decision has not been debated, much less approved, either by the parliament or by the Government of Iceland.

Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has described the invasion by the United States and its allies as not being in accordance

the REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

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Reykjavík
Winter Lights Festival

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The Reykjavík Grapevine crew

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On your left is a declaration that was printed in
The New York Times on the 21st of January 2005.
Donations from the Icelandic public paid for its publication.

It's printed in real size here,
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LETTERS

Complaints, criticism, suggestions, praise, money in new, unmarked bills, anything at all: Contact letters@grapevine.is or send your mail to: The Reykjavik Grapevine, Hafnarstræti 15, 101 Reykjavik

Dear Mr. Gunnarsson,

Paul knows you. Say hello to Paul. Paul, say hello to David. Paul: "Hello David." And try the link again. It should be working.

Greetings! My name is Amia Srinivasan, and I'm a second-year student at Yale University in the U.S., though I studied and continue to live in London. Over New Year's I had the good fortune to spend some time in Reykjavik with my family, and was really blown away by the natural beauty and unique culture of Iceland. While I've lived in and visited many countries in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas, Iceland really took my breath away. Outside of the modern art museum there, I chanced upon a copy of the Reykjavik Grapevine, and immediately read it cover to cover--I found it fresh, sharp, and amusing, and was thoroughly impressed by your young venture.

All the best,

Amia Srinivasan
Yale University

Aye, forget Asia, Europe (the rest of it), the Middle East and the Americas. The Reykjavik Grapevine is all you need.

Hi,

I was reading my Grapevine and noticed the article about Nightmare Before Christmas/Martröð á jólanótt (page 19). How do I get tickets to see this show? Where is it playing? I planned on trying to go to the 23.Jan show. Also, thanks to Paul Nikolov for the awesome politician quiz. I took the quiz and I was Steingrímur Sigfússon (no surprise). Thank you.

James Barlow
Sandgerði

Sorry man, it's over now. Maybe they'll make a film of it someday.

Hi, can you send me information about this jiu jitsu? Takk Birna

Take opponent, squeeze throat until head turns purple and he starts singing "The Final Countdown" by Europe. Repeat.

Dear Editor:

I was so moved by the ad in the New York Times I did not know what to do; the website listed had no contact address, and only the link to your publication had a contact on it.

It is so nice to know that Icelanders enjoy living in a vital democracy and that one can be proud to be an Icelander. I have only one question: How can I be one too?

Mickey Davis
Professor of Law
Cleveland State Univ.

Come over, play a game of chess, leave wait 30 years, break some international law, and you're half there (or here). Look forward to seeing you around.

A friend gave me this address, and I'd love to find out who in Iceland even knows me! I saw the issue of Grapevine that had something about the ten or so Americans who would be forgotten in ten years (or was it already forgotten - I don't have the paper in front of me). Anyway, this is from snow-bound Manhattan, hope to hear from someone there. Tried to check out www.grapevine.is but could not access it.

Peace,
David

David McReynolds
david.mcr@earthlink.net

I will start by saying I am half-Icelandic and half-African American. I am glad to see that two children can speak their mind, however uninformed and uneducated they sound. I am also appalled at how these two youngsters do not know that non-white people fought, bled and died so they would have the chance to be so ignorant. I know that when they say "we" they refer to a minority of "white" people that do not realize that African people along with Asian people helped build the United States with hard slave labour (yes, the Asians built railroads that connected the east to the west and the Africans farmed the lands that made the south so rich), and to simply say "we just do not want them around" is not good enough.

White America did that with the American Indian. The tribes that were not completely wiped out by this genocidal force were given an "area to stay" "because they were born there" Mighty white of them! This separatist ideal did not work then and it will not work now. If this minority of separatists doesn't think so, then maybe they should have their own reservations where they can inbreed amongst themselves, revert into deep depression, rampant alcoholism and then we will see how they feel about it in years to come. Lest I forget; they already have a lot of those, they're called trailer parks.

Frank Lárus Sullivan

I think and hope most Icelanders are.

Some belated response to Chris Shillock's article in the December issue, "Why the Bush regime will bomb Iraq but never ban abortion."

Chris,

With all my heart I hope you are right about "the dangerous game" they're playing with Southern Fundamentalists and the backlash. On the other hand you would think that lying to the American people about WMD and too many other things to mention would have caused a backlash as well. Watching Bush et al this election I began to wonder, "What does this guy have to DO to lose? Kick a dog? Rape a toddler on prime time?" Moore may be right about the baseball statistics but I don't know...Anyway the piece was great, really enjoyed it.

Chris,

In the Grapevine piece the analogy between American attitudes to the war and the psychology of an abused woman is worth mining a little further, and your characterization "fascism lite" towards the end of the article reminds me of Arendt's famous remark about the banality of evil.

Again, I think you'll find it useful to read the two books of George Lakoff in order to get more insight into the two, usually competing, 'frames' of mind of many Americans. Bush may be a charismatic imbecile but Karl Rove and Grover Norquist are highly intelligent borderline personalities (aka psychopaths) as insightful as Machiavelli.
Tom Shillock

It makes Brave New World and 1984 look like bedtime stories, doesn't it? Personally I think I am going to retreat into the mindless world of Porno for a while were I can't see the world upset about tsunamis, as if millions haven't been dying in Africa for a long time.

Sharol

PS - For a little-known perspective on what we are doing in Iraq, take a look at this one:
<http://www.gene.ch/genet/2004/Oct/msg00040.html>

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by Valur Gunnarsson

BOMBING-STARVATION-BOMBING:

Why don't the Iraqis love the US?

When I first went to Saudi-Arabia in the summer of 1991, they hailed me as liberator. Granted, they mistook me for an American. These days, if Europeans are mistaken for Americans in the Middle East, they tend to be shot on sight. This says something about the results of US policy in the past decade and a half. After the end of World War Two, when the European powers retreated from the Middle East, the Americans did not waste time in taking their place. This was, by and large, seen as a good trade off by the local populations. The Americans weren't obsessed with colouring the map pink or blue, as were the British and the French who had come before. The belief that the US was a new type of Great Power seemed justified when, in 1956, The British and French, in a final bid to reassert their dominance, invaded Egypt with Israeli assistance. Not only did the US not take part in the invasion, it forced their allies to withdraw.

The Cold War divided the Middle East, with the US and the USSR pouring arms into their client states. But, unlike previous "protectors," the US did not keep a large standing army in the region. US support for Israel angered many Arabs, and US marines were killed in Beirut and even in Germany. Still, when the US forces entered Kuwait 1991, it was seen, by most Arabs, as a good thing. Why may explain why I was met with feelings of friendship and gratitude on the streets of Riyadh.

Taking a tip from Stalin? Sure, Kuwait was carved out of the Ottoman Empire by the British for oil reasons. And the Emir is not the world's most democratic leader. But, the people of Kuwait were not doubt better off without Saddam than under his control. And Saddam's invasion of Kuwait was a clear example of one country attacking another. The US attack on Iraq in 1991 was, as these things go, a just

war. However, the US Army stopped at the border of Iraq, only to resume its offensive more than a decade later. Having encouraged the Iraqi people to rise up against the dictator, the Americans now stood by as the rebels were massacred by Saddam's forces. A historical parallel could be the Red Army stopping on the Vistula in 1944. As the population of Warsaw rose up to get rid of their oppressors, Stalin ordered his troops to wait while Hitler's forces levelled the city and massacred the Poles. Only after the Nazis had re-established control did the Russians take the city. It has often been supposed that Stalin made his decision to make the Poles more pliant in the aftermath of the war, having been bled to death by Hitler. Surely, the Americans would never do such a thing in the Middle East.

Memories from another era
But just as the Red Army did not abandon territories it had liberated,

so the Americans did not leave the Middle East. US soldiers in the neighbourhood of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, the starvation of Iraq and intermittent bombings, the continuing occupation of Palestine by US supported Israel; all these factor combined to breed resentment, then hatred. The hatred simmered, then exploded. Now, the US keeps a large standing Army in the Middle East, guarding

the oil supplies they had previously sold willingly. And it is no longer safe for Westerners to walk the streets of Riyadh, as I once did. Back in 1991. But that was during another era.

Grapevine will be back on the streets on March 11th. It'll be the 20th issue so far, and the last Grapevine I'll edit. For now. Until then...



Maurizio

Us and them

By Sy

Western Civilisation thinks in term of binary opposites. There's black and white, left and right, men and women, us and them, truth and lies. This was particularly apparent during the Cold War. There was red and blue, East and West, communists and, well, peace loving democrats. Us and them. Our truth, their lies. Then, in 1989, it all collapsed. The wall came down. There was no them anymore. So who was the Us? What was the U.S.? Along with the Berlin Wall, Western thought virtually collapsed overnight. Nobody understood what

the thinkers were thinking anymore. The thinkers didn't even know what the hell they were thinking. Everybody was quoting each other quoting each other. The poets wrote about poetry rather than about the world. Nothing made sense. The whole of Western civilisation was disappearing into a bottomless pit of Post-Modernism. And then, September the 11th happened. We had an enemy again. There was a them again, and an us. A good and an evil. But, somehow, the line between truth and lies are not that apparent any more.

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DO DEBTS ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO STUDY?



Gundl

The Icelandic Parliament passed a bill last December that allows state universities to increase their annual registration fee by nearly 40% from the previous year. This marks a departure from the past, when the State encouraged students to pursue university education in two ways: Firstly by not charging an admission fee, and secondly by making student loans available to students through the Icelandic Student Loan Fund (LÍN). As the number of university students has increased by nearly 50% in only six years, financial issues regarding the funding of universities have become more pressing.

"It Encourages Them to Appreciate Their Studies More"

Government MP Drífa Hjartardóttir, who has long experience with administering education at all levels in Iceland, is of the opinion that: "students should pay a greater proportion of the cost of their own university education than in the past. It is important that students pay a reasonable part of their own education because it encourages them to appreciate their studies more, and to work harder." Opposition deputy MP Mr Atli Gíslason of the Left-Green

Movement begs to differ. "All talk of fees encouraging the students to work harder suggests that students are not taking their studies seriously at present. Our basic policy on this issue is that the right of equal educational opportunities should be guaranteed, regardless of students' personal finances. Any increase in registration or admission fees at the University of Iceland is contrary to our policy." Mr Gíslason says there are no two ways about it; fees of any kind "discourage people from studying at the university."

Relying on Banks rather than Books

Ms. Hjartardóttir argues that the student loan fund will soften the blow for students. "The Iceland Student Loan Fund will continue to assist students in their educational pursuit, and prevent students who have limited financial capabilities from being denied university education on the grounds of poverty." It is true that the amount itself that students need to pay for 'registration' or 'admission' is still not high considering many countries.

However, those who protest the increase say that the 'so-called registration fee' should be called by its real name – admission fee. This increase in the registration fee looks like a sign that the government is trying to rid itself of its commitment to providing free university education. In the meantime the students suffer. LÍN does not lend money for registration nor do students get money from LÍN until they have received their first-term marks. Instead they rely on banks to tide them over.

What do the candidates have to say?

Four hopeful candidates are currently running in an election for the rector's position at the University of Iceland that takes place March 10th. So what opinions do they have on the issue of student fees?

Professor Ágúst Einarsson, head of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration



declined to comment. On his election campaign website, however, he states that he is "against charging undergraduates." His opinion is different when it comes to graduates, as he states on his website: "A moderate fee may be suitable at certain departments at the University. The most pressing issue for the university is to get more funding from the government; similar to the financial support universities in the Nordic countries receive. I was first to point this out in public some ten years ago." That said, rector Páll Skúlason stated in an interview, published on the university's website on October 26th 2003 that Professor Einarsson was instrumental in the move to adopt school fees at the graduate level at the university.

Professor Einar Stefánsson, former dean of Faculty of Medicine,



says: "University students in most countries do not pay for their graduate studies. Further, I am of the opinion that the state should allocate more money for university education. Currently, the Nordic countries and the USA spend more than double the amount of money in percentage of GDP than Iceland does." Professor Stefánsson speaks of Iceland's position in a European context. "Universities must adapt to progress. Our graduates are competing in a labour market of some 400 million people. No half

measures will do to ensure the competitiveness of our students and our country. University fees would definitely discourage students from studying."

Professor Kristín Ingólfssdóttir, deputy head of Faculty of Pharmacy,



says: "I denounce the idea of charging students a fee for studying at the university on the grounds that university education should be affordable to all. Should it become necessary in the future to charge students, an agreement would have to be made with LÍN to accommodate such changes. In any case, society would have to pick up some of the tab for university education anyway as it also costs society to extend affordable loans to students." Ingólfssdóttir would like to see a fundamental change at the university. "The government needs to acknowledge the importance of university education. Instead of bickering about the school fees, we should be turning our attention towards developing the curriculum and expanding research." Ingólfssdóttir is not just the only female candidate, but in fact the first female candidate ever to run for this position.

Professor Jón Torfi Jónasson from the Faculty of Social Sciences and a scholar on education and educational theory,



expects society to pay for university education at undergraduate and graduate level – not individual students. "Society has agreed upon fostering university education," he explains. "This agreement is now being challenged in some places. In my capacity as a rector, I would advocate the importance of university education for the reason that university education is a vital catalyst for progress in today's modern society." Professor Jónasson feels it is acceptable to charge some students. "Demand for education at all levels has increased steadily and the university should be allowed to accept fees for certain types of continuing education, as companies can clearly gain from sending their professionals to us for knowledge update for which they should be prepared to pay."

by Stefán Helgi Valsson



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KÁRAHNJÚKAR:



Colder Than Portugal and a Long Way From China

Before construction started, Kárahnjúkar dam in the highlands of eastern Iceland was highly controversial. But the Environment Minister overturned the Planning Authority's rejection of the environmental impact statement, and the project was put out to tender. Three of the six companies who applied subsequently withdrew their offers, on the basis that the project was too risky. The Italian firm Impregilo tendered for a substantially lower amount than the others; their offer was accepted, and work at the site began not long afterwards. But so far the project has been one disaster after another.



One Fatality So Far

One important issue revolves around safety issues in general and training qualifications of foreigners working at the site. All workers at power plant sites must work to a standard agreement, part of which states that the workers must have qualifications approved by the Icelandic authorities. Impregilo is unwilling to comply with these rules, instead saying that most of their overseas workers are highly experienced and that long experience makes up for lack of formal qualifications. And there was a fatal accident at Kárahnjúkar last March.

Sleeping Rough

Accommodation provided by Impregilo for its workers was substandard for a long time. Two people shared a small room, there was no communal area, and the cafeteria was too small, both as far as kitchen staff and Kárahnjúkar workers were concerned. Conditions have now improved, but some of the new buildings are still prone to frost and leakage. Even the new dining area, which was heralded at the time as a vast improvement, was criticized at a recent site visit by Impregilo executives from Italy. While it was still in the planning stage, in a time of increasing unemployment, the authorities promised that dam construction would provide jobs for Icelanders. And, although Impregilo said they would employ some of their previous employees who had experience of working on dam sites, the Icelandic government promised the Confederation of Icelandic Labour that the ratio of Icelanders to foreigners would be approximately 80:20.

A Long Way from China...

This, however, is not the case. Impregilo itself now employs only about 100 Icelanders out of 1100 employees. Impregilo says that Icelanders do not want to work there and the turnover is very high, but one reason for this could be that much higher salaries are paid for similar work elsewhere. Other European workers do not stay

long either, so Impregilo are now resorting to bringing in workers from outside the EU, primarily China, much to the anger of the Icelandic trade union movement. Because they receive a much higher salary than they would do back in China, and because they would have to pay the prohibitive cost of a flight back to China themselves

if they decided to leave before the end of the 5.5 month contract, Chinese workers are more likely to stay.

...And Somewhat Colder than Portugal

Approximately 150 Portuguese employees also work on the site, recruited through an employment agency in Portugal subcontracted by Impregilo. These employees at one point were stuffing newspaper in their shoes because they had not been provided with adequate footwear. Allegations are now afoot that the Portuguese receive lower wages, as Impregilo has not been deducting the full amount of tax from their salaries because the Portuguese have to pay tax back in Portugal. Landsvirkjun has also contracted out some of the work to a few other Icelandic companies, one of which, Arnarfell, employs virtually only Icelanders while Fossværk employs 20 foreigners out of a total staff of 110. Neither Arnarfell nor Fossværk have difficulty recruiting and keeping workers, which perhaps says something about Impregilo.

by Lowana Veal

News in brief

Halldór Not Worried

Prime Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson remains undaunted by the results of a recent Fréttablaðið poll showing that respondents consider him the least trusted person in politics, second only to Foreign Minister Davíð Oddsson. Oddly enough, Oddsson was also shown to be the most trusted person in politics. Only 3.8% of respondents said the same about Prime Minister Ásgrímsson, who said that polls are always going up and down "but this is something that we'll sail through."

Copywriting "Iceland"

Reaching across party lines, Leftist-Green party chairman Steingrímur J. Sigfússon and Progressive party member and acting Foreign Minister Geir H. Haarde both agreed that the food market chain "Iceland" should not be allowed to copyright the word "Iceland" in European Union countries. Steingrímur also pointed out that Baugur owns most of Iceland (the food market chain) and recommended the government encourage Baugur to withdraw its intentions to copyright "Iceland."

Sex With 287

A new American research report which studied the sex lives of young people found that the average teenager has sex, indirectly, with 287 other people. The study concludes among other things that this points to a grave danger of the spread of sexually transmitted diseases among young people. Infectious disease specialist Dr. Haraldur Briem commented on the study, saying that using a condom was "the only protection." About 2000 Icelanders every year contract chlamydia.

US Military to Compensate Icelanders

After hearing both sides of a case concerning a breach of a labour contract, the Reykjavík District Court ruled that the United States military must pay 20 to 30 Icelandic employees of the NATO base 120 to 130 thousand krónur each. Many Icelandic workers from the NATO base have complained that different aspects of their contracts, such as overtime, were not honoured by the base. The case was held up for some time as questions arose over whether grievances should be filed with the base or the Foreign Ministry.

The Suðurnes Cat Plan

Officials in Suðurnes have devised a new way of managing stray cats. Every cat owner will register their cats and receive a "permanent mark" that the cat must wear at all times, at a cost of 15,000 krónur. If a cat is caught and has a county-issued tag, the cat is released. If the cat doesn't have a county-issued permanent mark, the cat is kept for up to a week before being put down unless claimed by its owner. The owner will then be charged 1,400 krónur per day that the cat was held in addition to a flat 5,000 krónur care fee. For more on why this plain is wrong, go to <http://www.grapevine.is/?show=newsstory&id=133>.

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“Grant me two coins, one to buy bread and sate my hunger, the other to buy a flower and enjoy the beauty of life.” As a student in the city I have sought out ways to live a luxurious life despite my meager income. Eating is a primary need so let’s begin with grocery shopping. Bónus, Krónan and Europris are all supermarket chains that cut down the cost of running their stores to a bare minimum and consequently are able to offer comparatively low prices. These stores can be found all over the city. Drinking beer is no primary need, (It isn’t? Now they tell me –ed.) but I’m adding it to the list anyway. Many bars have special beer offers, but those are hard to pinpoint because the landscape of cheap beer is an ever-changing one. Some places usually have low prices, for example Nelly’s Café and Kaffi Vín. Gaukur á Stöng offers beer for 290kr. for students all winter, and I have heard of three beers for 1000kr. at Kaffi Kósý. The key to getting cheap beer is to keep your eyes and ears open.

Now on to other needs: I just love treasure hunting and clothes shopping at the flea markets. The biggest one in Reykjavík is **Kolaportið** at Tryggvagata. There you can find an all-Icelandic food section, used books, homemade Icelandic crafts, used and new CDs, videotapes, clothing, garage sales, exotic products from all over the world and much more. Kolaportið is open on weekends. If you want an all Icelandic knitted sheep’s wool sweater, then you just might find one at a reasonable price at Kolaportið or at the used clothing shops run by the charities **The Red Cross** (Laugavegur) and **The Salvation Army** (Garðastræti). I

would also like to recommend two fairly new and exciting weekend flea markets. One is located in the backyard of the bar Sirkús. There, many of the Sirkús regulars sell all kinds of stuff, but mostly their unique second-hand clothing. The other one is situated at the artists’ haven and gallery Klink og Bank. There you can find used and new clothing, garage sales, T-shirts, live music and they have all kinds of happenings. Some artists sell their products there and hairstylists even offer haircuts. The great thing about this market is that anyone is welcome to bring his or her own stuff to sell, free of charge.

The Tiger stores at Laugavegur and Kringlan sell stuff at only two prices: 200kr. and 400kr. There you can buy all kinds of small stuff like stationery, toiletries, jewelry, lighters, candles, pottery, batteries, make up, underwear, socks, etc. Góði hirðirinn at Fellsmúli sells used furniture and household items. All the profits go to charity. You can get good furniture at very low prices and some antique items. I once got a beautiful cupboard there for free.

If you like gardens and museums, then The Botanical Garden of Reykjavík is ideal for a calming stroll. The National Gallery of Iceland offers free admission on Wednesdays. And last but not least – my favourite – The Garden of Einar Jónsson. Containing some beautiful sculptures by Einar Jónsson, the garden is situated near Hallgrímskirkja with an entrance from Freyjugata. It is always open and admission is free. There you can just about feel that the best things in life truly are free.

VALENTINES DAY SPECIAL



Give your love a perfect gift while in Iceland and join this romantic Valentines Day special. The tour starts with a nice evening tour of the city of Reykjavik, where you can enjoy seeing the city at night, the tranquil harbour and the people bustling around. Topped by a romantic evening dinner in perfect settings, in the restaurant "Kaffi Reykjavik", for a romantic 3-course meal and an aperitif.

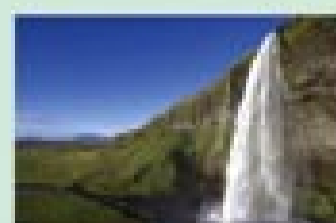
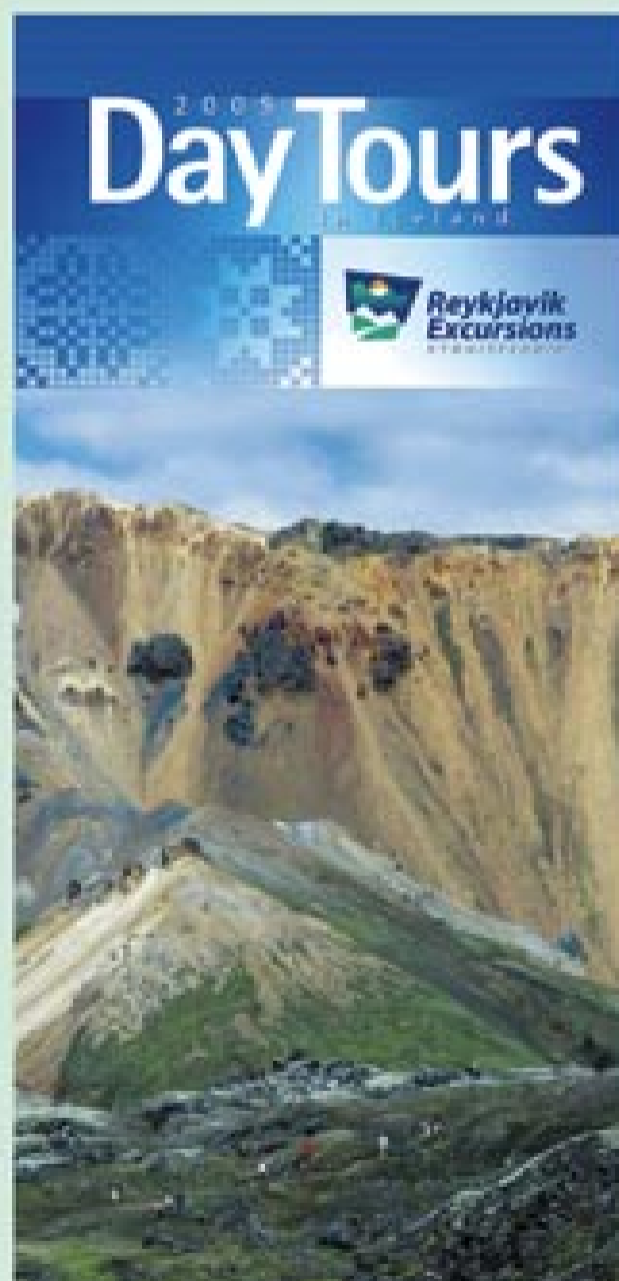
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THE TYRANNY OF DISTANCE

As an islander at the edge of the inhabitable world, I have a natural need to explore other countries. I have wanderlust in my marrow. In order to know myself I need to be a nobody. That is impossible in Iceland, where it feels everyone knows everyone.

It used to be terribly expensive to get away from here. There were only flights available through one airline and a ferry that only sailed during the short summer to Denmark and Norway. This has all changed in the last few years and we as a nation don't see ourselves as isolated as before, but the rest of the world does. I have lived in New Zealand, and that is at the end of the world as I know it, but Iceland is right between Europe and America. It is closer to New York than L.A. is. But we are still under the spell of the tyranny of distance.

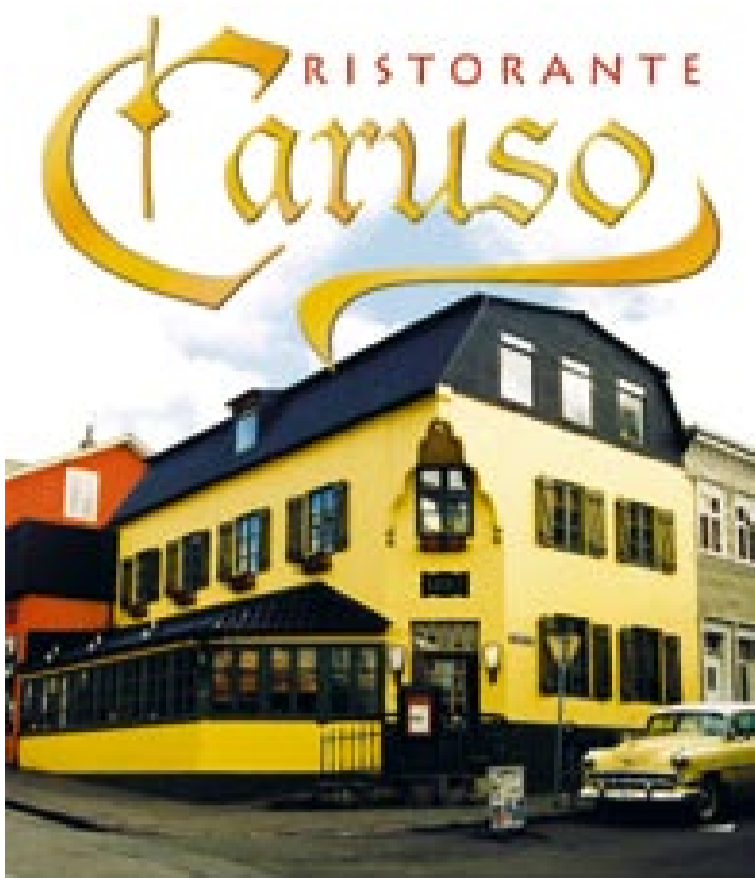
What I discovered on my journeys in cyberspace was that as much as we make fun of the ignorance of the North Americans, we are no better. We are simply ignorant in different areas. I see us as high tech aborigines, and we don't know how to deal with how quickly we moved off the dirt floors to the techno houses.

When I jumped on the wave into the interspace of the Internet, my life changed forever. I became part of a much greater world than I had imagined possible. I discovered a medium to travel without going anywhere. I learned to use the Internet to work with people from all over the world, to create something new, but most importantly, I have learned that I don't know anything even if I am made to believe I do. I realized that I didn't know much about world poetry except the few poems people had been inspired to translate to Icelandic. It totally blew my mind to see poets from Indonesia, Japan, Colombia or the States perform. Words fly through the air like samurai swords, shouts and laughter around the slam.

The Internet is my muse. I am a part of a world of action poets and artists. These people have come into my life through the gateways of the Internet and inspired me to be me, all the way; a high-tech aboriginal Viking on rollerblades.



by Birgitta Jónsdóttir



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Learning Icelandic the Easy Way. Can It Be Done?



The very first phrase I learned in Icelandic was "the gramophone is on the table." It's not something I have had much cause to say in Iceland, or indeed, anywhere. The reason I know this sentence is not because my lessons began thirty years ago or because I work in a retro hi-fi shop with an unusually large Icelandic clientele; it's down to the fact that I first dipped my toe into this vast linguistic ocean of declension, gender and endings courtesy of Linguaphone.

The company famed for teaching millions a new tongue by asking them to "listen, repeat and understand" first published its Icelandic course in 1965. That's a remarkable fact given that very few people chose to visit the country back then, and even fewer sought to learn its language. Nonetheless, the books and tapes have been published ever since and have presumably sold in increasing numbers; unfortunately (and despite my course having been reprinted in 1994), not much has really been updated since those early days when new speakers were asked to proudly locate their record players.

Can Casual Conjugation Lead to Anything More?
 The Linguaphone course, consisting of two course books, fifty lessons and four cassettes (cassettes!) is as dense as it is thorough. For a native English speaker like myself, technically untutored in the ways of grammatical terminology, being asked to determine the difference between the nominative, genitive and accusative on more or less the first page is disheartening. Horrifyingly, it took nearly as long to determine what those terms meant

in English as it did to start casual conjugation. So, my efforts to find the ultimate tutor continued.

The Terrifying Undergrowth
 Icelandic for Beginners is by Stanislaw Jan Bartoszek and Anh-Dao Tran (if two individuals with such apparently non-Nordic names can master the language well enough to teach it, then I should be able to manage more than a fractured "talar þú ensku?"). This book acknowledges from the outset that Icelandic has "a lot of grammar", and does its best to lead you through the terrifying undergrowth of irregular verbs and possessive

pronouns. There's an accompanying recording too, offering practice on the finer points of pronunciation.

Modern and Proudly Ancient
 Better still is Daisy L. Neijmann's Colloquial Icelandic, a much-respected book and CD package which does a fine job of untangling the rules and exceptions of this unique language, as modern as it is proudly ancient. Why ég tala but við tölum? This book explains the "U-shift" almost poetically: "a's in Icelandic are allergic to u's, and break out into ö's or u's as soon as any u gets too close!" Armed with this charming metaphor, Icelandic peculiarities soon appear less strange than some of the oddities that we don't allow to trouble us in English; why "goose" and "geese" but not "moose" and "meese"?

Going Native
 Useful as Colloquial Icelandic is, it was somewhat eclipsed when I found a real life genuine Icelander of my very own. At the hairdresser's here in Edinburgh one day, I found my locks being cut by someone with an accent that I placed vaguely as Scandinavian. Upon further investigation, I discovered that Áslaug was here from Reykjavík for a couple of years, and yes, she would be delighted to help me learn her language. She may be Scotland's only hairdressing linguist, and I am delighted to report that she performs each role extremely well. Takk fyrir, Áslaug!

by Darren Adam



MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS

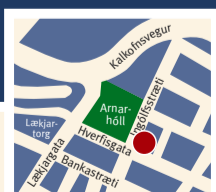
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THE PRICE OF HESITATION

How Delayed Reactions Kept Iraq Off the Agenda for Over a Year

By PAUL F NIKOLOV

"In politics, an organized minority is a political majority."
- Jesse Jackson

On March 18, 2003, a decision was made that could have meant the end of the political careers of then Foreign Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson, then Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson and maybe even the end of the decades-long conservative majority in parliament. The decision in question regarded the then imminent invasion of Iraq.

Davíð Oddsson said, in a statement quoted on the White House webpage (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/news/20030326-7.html>):

"The United States now considers its security to be gravely endangered by the actions and attacks of terrorists and because of various threats from countries governed by dictators and tyrants. It believes that support from this small country makes a difference...The declaration issued by the Icelandic Government on the Iraq dispute says that we intend to maintain the close cooperation we have had with our powerful ally in the West. First of all, this involves flyover authorization for the Icelandic air control area. Secondly, the use of Keflavik Airport, if necessary. In third place, we will take part in the reconstruction of Iraq after the war ends. Fourthly, we expressed political support for Resolution 1441 being enforced after four months of delays."

A clear declaration of national support, to be sure. There was



only one problem: the nation itself was never asked.

En route to Iraq

US military planes had been landing in and flying over Iceland on their way to Iraq as early as February 19, 2003 as part of a routine agreement with the UN. But how Iceland became a member of the “coalition of the willing” is a matter still being debated.

During meetings of the Foreign Affairs committee in the winter of 2002 to 2003, Iraq was only mentioned twice. On neither of these occasions was the possibility of supporting any military action against Iraq ever discussed. When member of parliament Þórunn Sveinbjarnardóttir asked Halldór Ásgrímsson on March 21, 2003 how Iceland ended up in the “coalition of the willing,” he responded by saying the decision was made after a meeting between officials in the Foreign Ministry and the Prime Minister’s office three days previous. In other words, the decision was made without consulting parliament.

This should have been everyone’s cue - the opposition in parliament, the press, the people themselves - to jump up and demand answers. Instead, the issue was quietly forgotten for over a year and wouldn’t receive any serious attention until January 5, 2005, when the results of an IMG Gallup poll conducted the previous December revealed that 84% of those surveyed did not want Iceland to be a part of the coalition. Will the fervent, albeit very late, reaction now surfacing in parliament and in the media have any effect, or is the point moot?

Morally supporting war

Ásgrímsson, among others, has said that the Iraq question “was discussed



“I don’t think anyone realised the significance until much later.”

- President of Journalist’s Union Róbert Marshall

many times in the Foreign Affairs committee and in parliament in the winter of 2002 to 2003.” Ásta Möller, vice MP for Davíð Oddsson, reiterated this same position to Grapevine:

“There had been discussion about Iceland supporting the coalition forces before the invasion. Our part was political support, and to allow military aircraft to land in and fly over Iceland on their way to Iraq. We are a part of NATO, but as we don’t have any troops, ours was more of a moral support.”

Iceland, although in the coalition, does not have an army. With no Icelander in danger of being killed in combat, any sacrifice made in supporting the war might not have seemed so great. After all, all we were doing was letting planes land and take off here, as they do all the time.

No smoking gun

President of the Journalist’s Union Róbert Marshall adds that the media bill brought before parliament in May of 2004 was also a contributing factor in keeping Iraq ignored:

“The decision was made shortly before the elections in parliament. Then came the elections, and all the attention that the media bill received, which might partly explain why no one paid attention to the Iraq issue. But there had always been rumours going around. Things escalated when [MP in Ásgrímsson’s Progressive party] Kristinn Gunnarsson spoke up, saying Iraq was never discussed in parliament or in the Committee of Foreign Affairs, then another member spoke up, and the matter began to rear its head.”

When asked why he felt the press didn’t react sooner, he said, “There were protests, statements made in newspapers, but I don’t think anyone realised the significance until much later. Now, when there are no weapons of mass destruction, it starts to look like something that it wasn’t necessary to get involved in. It was something I’d been thinking about for a long time, but we couldn’t see how we would get into the story; we didn’t know who would talk. The Progressives started talking on their own. If it wasn’t for them, we probably wouldn’t be talking about this now.”

Media bill or war

Hans Kristjánsson, chairman of the Movement for Active Democracy - an organization formed in response to the media bill which bought a full-page anti-war declaration in the New York Times - agrees:

“When Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir ran for Prime Minister in 2003, she said the first thing she would

do would be to get Iceland out of the coalition. But in a televised roundtable discussion the night before the elections, with members of the press and leading politicians all talking and debating various matters, the subject of Iraq never came up once. We began to focus more on the Iraq issue after the media bill controversy began to quiet down in July. We had always been discussing Iraq, but we didn’t want to split up our energy.”

“Reactionary commie losers”

On September 15, 2004, Oddsson and Ásgrímsson changed places; the former became Foreign Minister and the latter Prime Minister. Government policy remained unchanged. Then came the news on December 1, 2004 that the Movement for Active Democracy was raising money to buy a full page in the New York Times for their declaration entitled, “The invasion of Iraq - not in our name.” Suddenly, the issue reared its head again. Davíð Oddsson, in an address to parliament, showed uncharacteristic emotion when he said that the only people against Iceland’s support of the US led invasion of Iraq were “afturhaldskommatittir,” which loosely translates as “reactionary commie losers.”

In January of 2005, with the results of the Gallup Poll made public, the Movement’s ad appearing in the New York Times that week, and more members of parliament - particularly from the Social Democratic and Leftist-Green parties - demanding answers.

Making Sense of the Chaos

An Icelandic Nurse Recalls Her Time in Baghdad

Guðbjörg Sveinsdóttir, a psychiatric nurse, was invited to Baghdad in May 2003 by the International Red Cross (IRC) to evaluate the condition of mental health care in Iraq. During her time, she also visited Kurdistan and Basra. Ms. Sveinsdóttir shares her experiences in Iraq with Grapevine:

“Like everything else in the country, the state of mental health services in Iraq was chaotic. Saddam Hussein had officially denied the existence of mental health problems in Iraq, so the level of care was not very developed, to say the least. The IRC had one mental hospital in Baghdad staffed by a few local doctors. Resources were very limited and I don’t think they’ve improved.

“The biggest mental health problems we were facing were post traumatic stress disorder and depression. The war, the sanctions, the looting, the escalating violence - all these things compounded made life pretty unbearable for many people. Of course, it wasn’t as bad then as it is

now.

“There were so many things I saw and experienced which impacted me deeply while I was there, especially the children. When the water system broke down in Baghdad, the streets were flooded with dirty water. Children were outside bathing in it. I saw people standing in very long lines waiting all day for food and gas. One thing I remember very clearly was when I was in the city of Kerbala, a very beautiful city. I talked to some of the American soldiers there. They were very young, very inexperienced and they didn’t have a clue about the culture. I spoke to many, and they all seemed very unprepared to be there.

“But I’ll also never forget the tremendous strength a lot of Iraqi people showed. It was very moving. While most thought things would not be getting better any time soon, they did believe things would get better some day. They were just sick of being occupied, whether by Saddam or by the Americans.

“If the IRC ever returns to Iraq, I think I would probably go back. My experience there was very tense, but it was also very remarkable.”

Iraq: A Timeline:

3000 BCE: The city of Babylon arises in the region that is now Iraq.

August 1920: British forces, having already taken over much of Iraq, struggle to seize control over Fallujah. In the ensuing battle, over 1000 British and Indian troops and around 10,000 Fallujans die.

October 1932: Iraq becomes an independent state.

June 1979: Saddam Hussein becomes Iraqi president through a coup d’etat.

August 1990: Iraq invades Kuwait. Saddam Hussein would later say, in court, that he did this to control the price of oil.

January 1991: UN Security Council passes Resolution 678, approving military action against Iraq.

March 1991: Iraq accepts

UN terms for cease-fire and UN sanctions are imposed. Official reports of Iraqi casualties are reported between 20,000 and 35,000.

1991 - 2003: As a result of sanctions and intermittent air attacks, anywhere between half a million and a million Iraqis die.

September 2002: US President George W Bush, in an address to the UN, pushes for military action against Iraq.

February 2003: US military aircraft on their way to Iraq stop in Iceland

Feb 15: Day of global protest against war in Iraq, including hundreds of Icelanders, who march on parliament.

March 18 2003: A statement of support for the US-lead invasion of Iraq from then Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson appears on the White House webpage.

March 20 2003: US-lead military operations begin in Iraq, with Iceland listed as a member of “the coalition of the willing.”

March 21 2003: Member of parliament Þórunn Sveinbjarnardóttir asks then-Foreign Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson how Iceland ended up in the coalition of the willing. His response is that this happened in a conversation between officials in the Foreign Ministry and officials of the President three days earlier.

April 2003 - May 2004: Apart from several opinion pieces debating the pros and cons of supporting the US-lead war effort in Iraq, the media is largely silent on the issue

January 2004: Discovery of “mustard gas shells” by joint Icelandic-Danish team in southern Iraq turns out to be erroneous.

June 2004: Movement for Active Democracy formed

October 2004: Movement for Active Democracy calls for resignation of the ruling party or vote of no confidence

January 5 2005: According to a Gallup poll conducted at the end of 2004, 84% of Icelanders do not want Iceland to be in the “coalition of the willing.”

January 9 2005: Össur Skarphéðinsson, chairman of the Social Democratic party, says that both Foreign Minister Davíð Oddsson and Prime Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson broke the law by signing Iceland into the coalition without bringing the question before the public or members of parliament.

January 11 2005: IMG Gallup announces after a meeting yesterday that they stand by the results of the poll. Halldór Ásgrímsson, Davíð Oddsson and Minister of Justice Björn Bjarnason each respond to the poll by saying that it was vague and the questions

From "Baghdad Burning,"

<http://riverbendblog.blogspot.com/>

The United States has ended its physical search for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq, which was cited by the first administration of President George W Bush as the main reason for invading the country, the White House has said.

Why does this not surprise me? Does it surprise anyone? I always had the feeling that the only people who actually believed this

Baghdad Blogs

An aid worker, three Iraqis, and a US soldier on the Net

war was about weapons of mass destruction were either paranoid Americans or deluded expatriate Iraqis- or a combination of both. I wonder now, after hundreds and hundreds of Americans actually died on Iraqi soil and over a hundred-thousand Iraqis are dead, how Americans view the current situation."

From "Healing Iraq,"

<http://healingiraq.blogspot.com>

"One problem [in the Iraq elections] was the special ink that voters have to dab their fingers with. Many Iraqis were concerned that insurgents would catch them on their way back to Baghdad and recognise people who had voted.

Some resourceful Iraqis had already devised several methods to get rid of the stain. One of these is to paint your fingers with skin lotion before you enter the polling station, wipe your finger clean immediately after voting and before the ink dries, on returning home dip your finger in boiling detergent and rub it repeatedly."

From "Free Iraq,"

<http://abutamam.blogspot.com/>

"PS: "In the run-up to Iraq's elections, the State Department's

spokesman this week ticked off the final markers of progress: 130 planeloads of voting materials had landed in Iraq, including 90,000 ballot boxes and 60 million ballots — a flurry of up to 15 flights a day to Iraqi airfields." - MSNBC.com, January 29, 2005

There are about 25 million Iraqis, and about 15 million of them are eligible to vote (many are indeed boycotting it). What will they be doing with the extra 45 million ballots?"

From "Dahr Jamail's Iraq Dispatches,"

<http://dahrjamailiraq.com/weblog>

"Earlier today while I was in the al-Adhamiya district of Baghdad the US base there was mortared 8 times. We heard it just after finishing huge plates of kebabs at a sidewalk restaurant. After finishing the meal an old woman came to our table and asked if she could take our leftovers.

He took two plastic bags and began dumping our half eaten salads and extra bread into them. She thanked us and blessed us, then began to shuffle off...Abu Talat and I both quickly walked over to her and gave her a small wad of Iraqi Dinars. We walked back to the car not saying a word about it."

From "My War,"

<http://cbftw.blogspot.com/>

"So my AG looks over at me and with a mischievous smile says, "Watch this!" and then he starts chanting: "U-S-A! U-S-A! U-S-A!" over and over again, next thing you know all these little kids, 100's of them, started chanting U-S-A!! Over and over again, each time a little louder. We were both laughing and thought this was all funny until I saw the reaction on the older people's faces on the side of the road. They didn't look too thrilled about that, once I immediately noticed that, I said, "Dude, that's not cool! Make them stop yelling that shit!" But it was too late, these kids were having too much fun chanting U-S-A! Next thing you know I saw an older middle eastern lady wearing all black pick up a rock and throw it at us, which of course started a huge chain reaction of rock throwing at us. We got out of that neighborhood in a hurry after that. Lesson learned."

Minister of Justice Björn Bjarnason reacted by saying, "I don't intend to take part in this game that doesn't make any difference."

The collapse of the Progressives

As the controversy started to heat up, members of Ásgrímsson's

Progressive Party began to distance themselves from the Prime Minister, including Vice Chairman Guðni Ágústsson and former Minister of the Environment Siv Friðleifsdóttir. Support for the Progressive party, which was at 17.7% in the May 2003 elections, has plummeted to 8% as of February 1, according to a Fréttablaðið poll. The party's national convention will be held at

the end of this month. What will this mean for Ásgrímsson and his party? Are the Progressives splitting in two?

"I think that the Prime Minister's control over the Progressive party is pretty secure," says Marshall. "I wouldn't worry about him being ousted, but I do think he's not having a very good time right now.

It's difficult to say what will happen - it appears that nothing will. But if they don't clear this matter up, people will remember this in the long run. When you leave things unclear for this long, you give your opponents an opportunity."

Making a molehill out of a mountain Möller disagrees, saying, "There already have been repercussions. I wouldn't say that this matter is off the table in Icelandic politics, but it's certainly off to the side. If we think of a subject as a hill or a mountain, this subject is going downhill. It's past now, and I think the Iraqi elections took the heat out of this matter for the whole world. Now is the time for all parties to focus on the reconstruction of Iraq."

So far, the only casualty of the Iraq controversy has been Marshall himself. After erroneously reporting that the decision for Iceland to support the US led invasion was made before March 18, 2003, Marshall resigned from his position as reporter for television station Stöð 2. Whether or not any resignations from politicians involved in this controversy are forthcoming remains to be seen.

If anything is to be learned from this, it could be that the chance for the press, members of parliament, and the people themselves to question the decisions made by elected officials should be taken quickly. This controversy could have been investigated thoroughly from the very start - instead, over a year went by before anyone took the matter seriously. Whether this issue will quietly disappear or result in consequences for those involved is anyone's guess. However, as Róbert Marshall told us, "I don't think it's ever too late for the news to have an effect. Just look at Watergate. The break-in happened in 1972. Nixon was re-elected, and the Watergate story didn't actually get him out of office until August 1974. Things like this can happen over time."

"If we think of a subject as a hill or a mountain, this subject is going downhill" - Ásta Möller, vice MP for Davíð Oddsson



unclear.

January 13 2005: Halldór Ásgrímsson says on an interview on RÚV, "I am quite sure that Icelanders support developing democracy in Iraq, the elections there and the reconstruction which lies ahead."

January 20 2005: It comes to light that Iraq was only mentioned twice during meetings of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the winter of 2002 to 2003. At neither one of these meetings was the possibility of Iceland's support for the war effort in Iraq ever discussed.

January 21 2005: Pétur Gunnarsson, the office manager of the Progressive Party, offers his own explanation as to how Iceland ended up as one of the nations in the coalition that invaded Iraq, saying that Iceland was added by the US as a "public relations move."

January 22 2005: A full page statement from the Movement for Active Democracy appears in the New York Times yesterday entitled "The Invasion of Iraq - not in our name".

January 23 2005: Reuters erroneously reports that

Iceland is no longer on any list of American allies of the war in Iraq.

January 25 2005: Halldór Ásgrímsson admits on television station Stöð 2 that he allowed military aircraft on their way to Iraq to stopover in Keflavík in February 2003.

January 26 2005: Jón Ásgeir Sigurðsson of "Spegillinn" confirms on radio station Rás 1 that after speaking with officials for the US State Department, the White House, and the National Security Advisor that Iceland is still in fact a part of the coalition of nations supporting the US-

lead war effort in Iraq. Iceland is even still listed on the White House's own webpage concerning the nations in this coalition.

Today: Over 100,000 Iraqi civilians, half of whom are women and children, have died as a result of the invasion. Over 1600 coalition forces have lost their lives. Aid workers continue to be kidnapped and/or executed on a weekly basis.

Planning your own incursion into the Middle East?

Come on now - quit frontin'. You know you want it. But you best not go unprepared. After all, how are you gonna distinguish between peace-loving surrenderers and terroristic cockblockers out to burn you to death and hang your carcass from a bridge? Take a tip from the Pentagon and fly over your designated ass-kickin' zone with these flyers that the US military dropped over Iraq before the invasion. For more samples, go to the link below. Clip and save!

<http://www.centcom.mil/galleries/leaflets/showleaflets.asp>



Wondering what you're looking at?

Don't be. If you flip the page back, you'll see that these panels down here are the back sides of the flyers that you should clip out and drop over any ass-kickin' zone that you plan to invade. Don't be shy. I know you wanna. So much oil, so little time. Get dem scissors, bitch, and get ta clippin'!

The Coalition wishes no harm to the people of Iraq. The Coalition is here to end the oppressive rule of Saddam and his regime.

Any unit that chooses to use weapons of mass destruction will face swift and severe retribution by Coalition forces. Unit commanders will be held accountable if weapons of mass destruction are used.

FOR YOUR SAFETY
Abandon your weapons systems. Whether manned or unmanned, these weapons systems will be destroyed.

RELIGION WITHOUT GOD



A fundamental mistake in the presentation of religions or spirituality is the presumption that a Supreme Being, better known as "God," is essential. What this rather loaded term has generally implied is a Person or Conscious Being that acts in the function of Creator, Judge or Final Arbiter of our actions, is the repository of all that is Ultimate Good, and has a Final Resting Place for those who obey said Beings' terms and conditions (sometimes known as rules or commandments) as a precondition to entry into His (generally, and unfortunately, it is a "he") "Paradise/Heaven"

This definition fits the descriptions of God as given by the three major monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), along with their offshoots, and two of the other "world religions": Zoroastrianism and, with some important reservations, Hinduism. But Confucianism, Shintoism, Taoism and, the main subject of this article, Buddhism, do not fit into such a category and might be more accurately called "God-less paths."

Science of the Mind

Buddhism has survived for over 2500 years providing immeasurable comfort, support, wisdom and compassion while never insisting upon belief in a God. It has been variously described as being more a "science of the Mind" or a "path of Awakening" than a religion and continues to confound those who insist directly or indirectly that a "religion" must contain a "God".

So what is Buddhism then, and how can it be approached? The simplest

answer might be contained in one of Buddhism's most famous stories. When asked by a local King if he was a God, since he was so revered and beloved by all who came in contact with him, the Buddha answered, "No."

"Are you a saint then?"

"No."

"Are you a demon?"

"No."

"Then what are you?" asked the King.

"I am awake," the Buddha simply said. Buddhism, then, is all about waking up.

What Makes a Path a Path?

But how is it possible that a "Godless path" can become so widespread and grant its "believers" spiritual comfort while speaking constantly of "suffering", denying the existence of a soul and asserting that everything is connected to everything else through a timeless, beginning-less and endless procession of causes and conditions?

What made Buddhism spread,

what made this path "a Path" was its assurance that each of us can become enlightened too, if only we learned to see things as-they-really-are (yatham-bhutam). This "seeing", this dynamic experience of Ultimate Reality is, in fact, Truth itself. And that must be actualized by each person individually, through practices collectively known as "meditation" but known in Sanskrit (the literary language of Buddhism and Hinduism) as bhavana, or, "mental cultivation".

Experiencing Complete Freedom

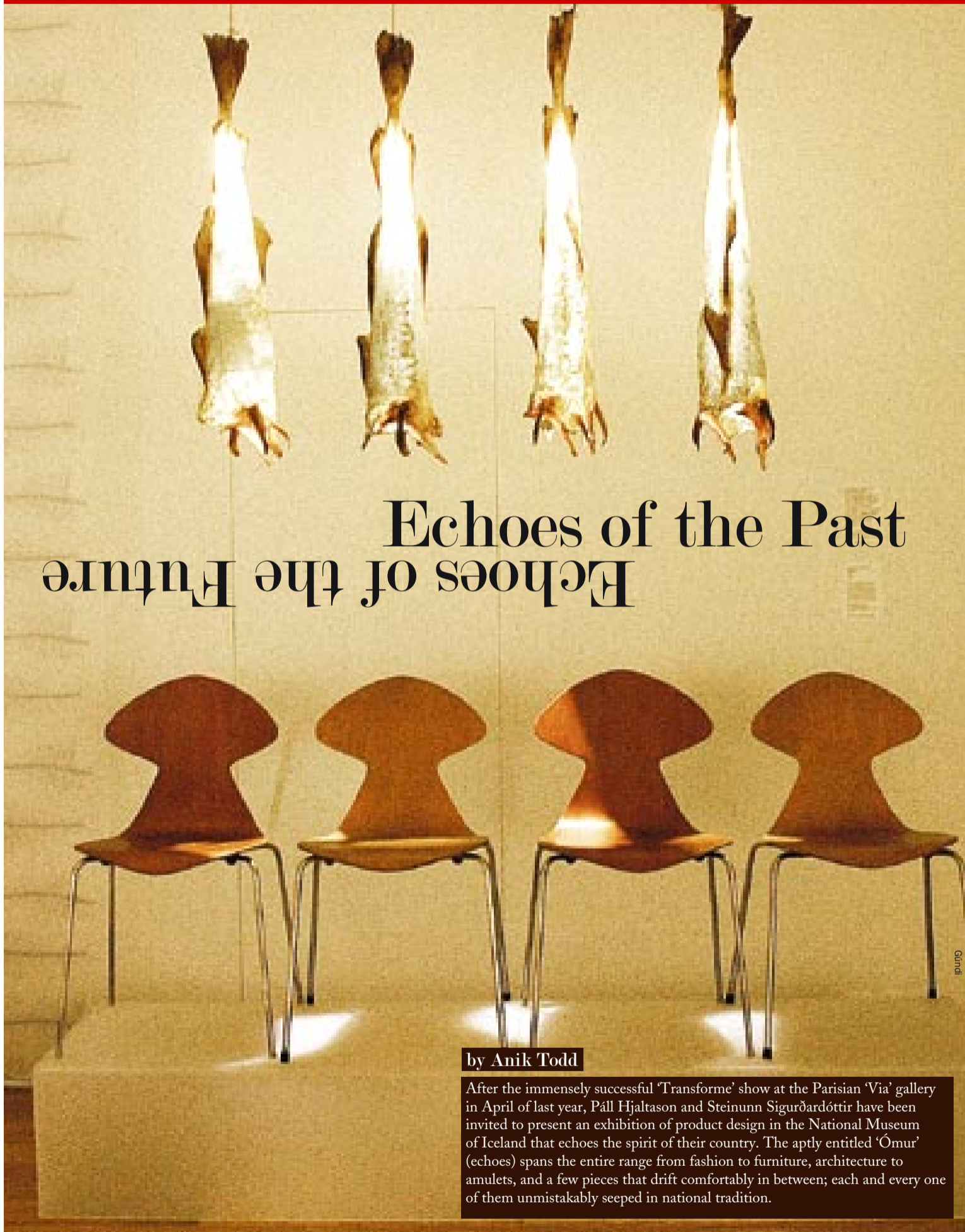
In the most basic terms, Buddhist meditation can be divided into calming (s'amatha) and insight (vipas'yana). We cannot begin to understand the infinite complex of causes and conditions that make up who we are without first calming down the constant babbling that takes place within us. Once this is achieved to a stable degree, we can then move into careful observation of the constant flow within us. How everything, starting with our bodies

themselves, the sensations, our feelings and the thoughts connected to those feelings, comes up, stays a little while and then fades away. This process of arising, temporarily staying and passing can be said to apply to all things, animate or inanimate. It is an infinite flux, a vibrant impermanence that initially threatens our limited "self" but eventually offers us complete freedom.

In practical terms, we can actually experience this intimately, loosening our attachment to the habitual patterns that keep us tied into our own private little neuroses. We can gradually free ourselves from the process of solidifying around one particular pattern we call "me" and learn to actually change ourselves. We can experience the utmost freedom; a liberation sometimes described as a "pure awareness." Living always in this experience is Awakening, and we can all have glimpses of this if we want. And no need for any mention of "God" to begin...

Rev. José M. Tirado is a poet, writer and Green activist. He is also a Shin Buddhist priest teaching in Iceland. www.thepathofmyexperience.com

GRAPEVINE **IN** your pocket



Echoes of the Past Echoes of the Future

by Anik Todd

After the immensely successful 'Transforme' show at the Parisian 'Via' gallery in April of last year, Páll Hjaltason and Steinunn Sigurðardóttir have been invited to present an exhibition of product design in the National Museum of Iceland that echoes the spirit of their country. The aptly entitled 'Ómur' (echoes) spans the entire range from fashion to furniture, architecture to amulets, and a few pieces that drift comfortably in between; each and every one of them unmistakably steeped in national tradition.

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GUIDE TO THE CITY CENTER

This pullout has all the information one might need, so for a safer journey, pull it out and put it in your pocket.

CAFE'S

1. Segafredo

By Lækjartorg
McDonalds has departed from the centre of Reykjavik and instead Italian chain Segafredo has arrived, which isn't a bad trade-off. You can smoke indoors, which gives you a nice continental feel, the staff is Italian and the prices are in Euros as well as krónur. Although Segafredo isn't one of the more expensive places, you wonder whether knowing how much things cost might ruin your vacation.

2. Ráðhúskaffi

City Hall
With view over the city pond, Ráðhúskaffi is situated inside the City Hall. Coffee and great cakes as you enjoy the view. Free internet access for customers and, in the lobby of City Hall, you'll find a big 80m² model of Iceland.

3. Grái Kötturinn

Hverfisgata 16a
Grái Kötturinn is across the street from the National Theater and is very small and very popular in the early hours of the day. A good place to start a day the British way, with eggs and bacon and other traditional breakfasts on the menu. The lunch menu is also inviting, but somewhat pricey.

4. Café Paris

Austurstræti 14
Situating in the heart of the city with a view over Austurvöllur, spacious, popular and usually full in the afternoon, Café Paris is international like the city it's named after. In the mornings it is more quiet and a hangout for philosophers and artists. Offers you light meals and the opportunity to sit outside when the weather is nice.

5. Mokka

Skólavörðustígur 3a
An Icelandic tradition since 1958, Mokka is the oldest café in Reykjavik and the first one to make coffee with an espresso machine. The walls are covered with art for sale and, though seats are usually filled by loyal customers, every now and then you'll catch a glimpse of the owners, a really nice and friendly couple in their seventies who have owned the café since its inception.

6. Feng Shui

Laugavegur 42b, by Frakkastígur
Inside the Feng Shui house is a café called "Teahouse of the August moon". The café just recently opened and they serve organic cakes, biscuits and the largest selection of tea in town. Try the waffle biscuits and have a Kashmir tea latte.

7. Svartakaffi

Laugavegur 54
Read the newspaper, have a cup of coffee, have a philosophical conversation with your cigarette and enjoy the specialty of the house, soup in a bread. Aim high, it's not on the ground floor.

8. Tíu Dropar

Laugavegur 27
A very nice "grandma" style café. It's not that apparent from the street, being in on the bottom floor, but is actually bigger than it looks. They serve traditional treats such as hot chocolate and waffles, but grandma is also known to come up with new delicacies, such as the Snickers cake, and you can even try her latest work in progress.

9. Kaffitár

Bankastræti 8
The café has a different colour on every wall. It's small but has good coffee and tasty side dishes. It's one of these places that make you want to sit down and watch daily life go by on one of downtown's busiest streets, or simply just to read the newspaper.

10. Te og Kaffi

Laugavegur 24
Te og Kaffi actually manufacture the coffee for quite a few of the cafés in Reykjavik apart from running their own cafés. Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of the place is its staff. Most of them have actually served on the Icelandic coffee-making team. Njáll came in 4th in the

international championship in Trieste this year. Jónína made freestyle champion, with her "Cup of Culture" mix, which includes orange and white chocolate among other things. Have one.

BARS & BISTRO

11. Sólon

Bankastræti 7a
Named after (in his own opinion, at least), Iceland's greatest man, Sólon is a pretty crowded nightclub on Friday and Saturday nights. It seems to have more lives than one, however, since in the day it's a fairly artsy coffeehouse and in the evening (weeknights) they have a decent menu. You can get a three course fish of the day meal for under 2000 krónur, or try the delicious fish and meat mixed sticks.

12. Café 22

Laugavegur 22
Has recently undergone a major facelift. The top floor is now dedicated to artist Jón Sæmundur, aka Dead, whose Dead label can be seen on quite a few people these days. Downstairs is a decent bistro (try the Gringo), whereas the middle floor houses a dancefloor. Open until the wee small hours, and a great place for a late night drink for those who want drink along with a less trendy (and perhaps more cool) crowd. Be warned, though, they do charge 500 krónur entrance after 01:30.

13. Kaffibarinn

Bergstaðastræti 1
Kaffibarinn is Cool Reykjavik, itself on having more artists per world, and the crowd here seem musicians, actors and writers rather famous. Blur's Damon Albarning it was cheaper than buying the director of the film 101 Reykjavik in the film.

14. Sirkus

Klappastígur 30
"Welcome to the Jungle! We go with tropical palm trees on the welcome to the party that never ending any time soon. Usually or want to be students of the Icelandic musicians and other members floor, for whatever reason, look

15. Nelly's

Dinghólsstræti 2
The cheapest beer in Reykjavik drinkers as well as expats. Trout covers though. In the weekend large dancefloor on the upper floor midnight on weekends.

16. Veganót


Vegamástígur 4
Wants to be the inspo to be set up, flaunt it and enjoy the view there, and the fittest, or at least Kitchen open every day until 2am brunch. Try the lobster pizza.

17. Kaffibrennsli

Pósthússtræti 9
One of the largest selection of few bars in Reykjavik where you after midnight on weekends. C they are generous with the refills.

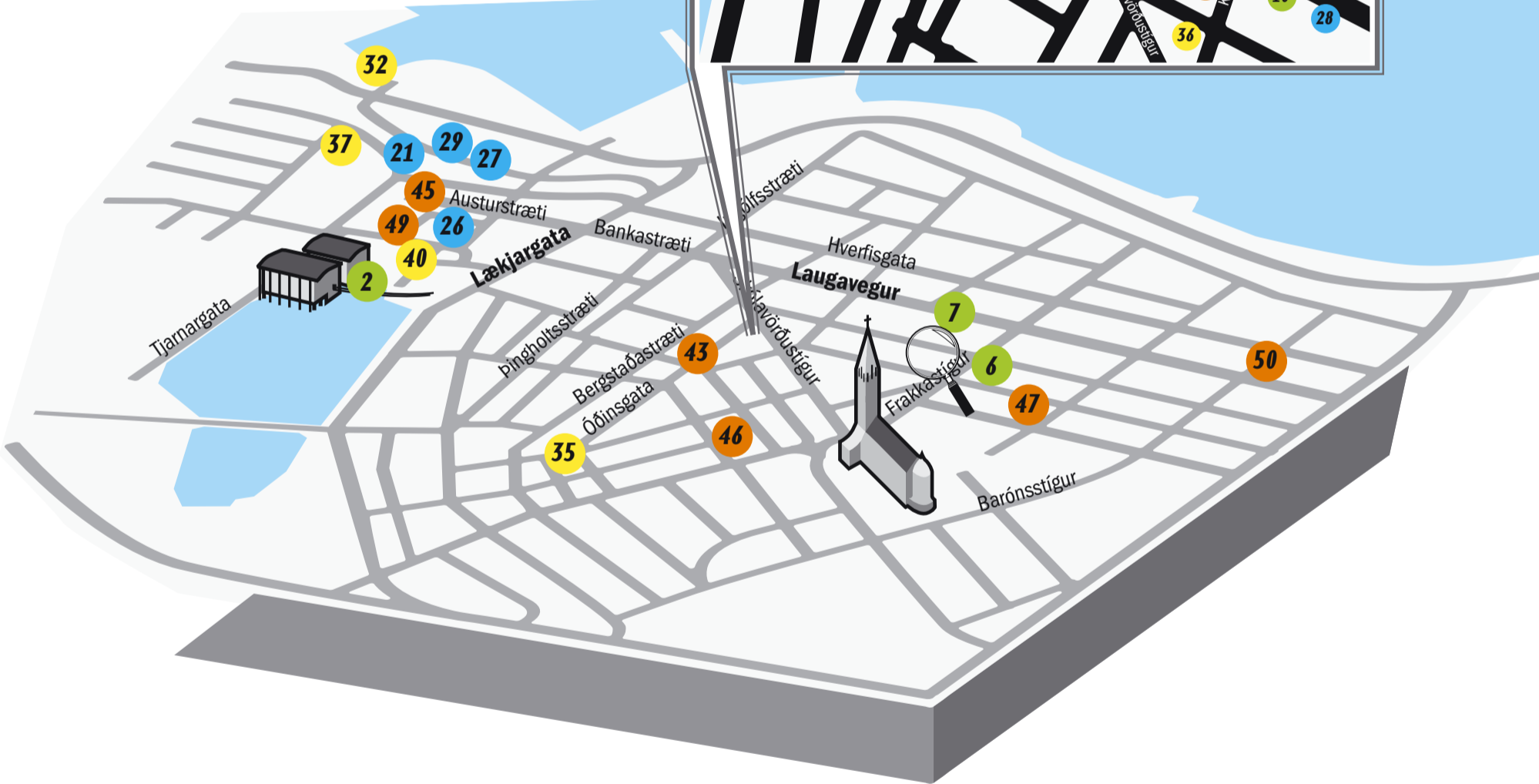
18. Rösendberg

Lækjargötu 2
Perhaps the closest we have to walls. People go there for conversation than dancing. The place tends players include Outsider legends band Misery Loves Company.



SPOT THIS
Eimskip logo

If you stand outside Pósthússtræti 2 and look up, you'll see a scary looking symbol. Don't worry, this is not, in fact, the headquarters of the Icelandic Nazi party, but the former headquarters of the shipping company Eimskip, founded in 1914, and hence predating Nazism. The Swastika is a Nordic sun symbol, probably originally descended from India. Nazism never really caught on in Iceland, and the symbol was retained by the company, although in the postwar years they would cover it up when entering foreign ports. The building is currently under construction and will soo



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Museums

ASÍ. Art Museum, Freyjugata 41, 511-5353
 Árbæjarsafn Folk Museum, Kistuhylur 4, p: 557-1111
 Ásmundarsafn, Sculpture museum, Sigtún, p: 553-2155
 Culture House, Hverfisgata 15, p: 545-1400
 Einar Jónsson, Sculpture museum, Einarsgata, p: 551-3797
 Gerðarsafn, Kóparvogur Art Gallery, Hamraborg 4, p: 551-3797
 Gljúfrasteinn, Mosfellsdalur, p: 586-8066
 Hafnarborg Art Gallery, Srandgata 34 Hafnarfj, 555-0080
 Hafnarhúsið, Reykjavík Art museum, Tryggvagata 17, p: 590-1200
 Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Hlemmur 5, p: 590-0500
 Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum, Flókagata, p: 517-1290
 Museum of Medical History, Neströð 170, p: 561-1016
 National Gallery of Iceland, Frikirkjuvegur 7, p: 515-9600
 Nordic House, Sturlugata 5, p: 551-7030
 Reykjavík City Library, Tryggvagata 15, p: 563-1750
 Reykjavík Elestrivity Museum, Rafstöðvarvegur, p: 567-9009
 Reykjavík Museum of Photography, Tryggvagata 15, p: 563-1790
 Reykjavík Zoo & Family Park, Engjavegur, p: 575-7800
 Saga Museum, Perlan Óskjuhlíð, p: 511-1517
 Sigurjón Ólafsson Sculpture Museum, Lauganestangi 70, p: 553-2906

Galleries

101 Gallery, Hverfisgata 18a
 Gallery Kling og Bang, Laugavegi 23, p: 822-0402
 Gallery Fold, Rauðarárstígur 14-16, p: 551-0400
 Gallery Hnoss, Skólavörðustígur 16, p: 561-8485
 Gallery i8, Klapparstígur 33, p: 551-3666
 Gallery Meistarar Jakob, Skólavörðustígur 5, p: 552-7161
 Gallery Skuggi, Hverfistaga 39, p: 511-1139
 Gallery Smíðar og skart, Skólavörðustíg 16a, p: 561-4090
 Gallery Tukt, Pósthússtræti 3-5, p: 520-4600
 Handverk og Hönnun, Aðalstræti 12, p: 551-7595
 Kirsuberjatréd, Vesturgötu 4, p: 562-8990
 Safn, Laugavegur 37, p: 561-8777
 The Icelandic Printmakers Association, Tryggvagata 17, p: 588-7576

Other

Klink og Bank, Brautarholt, p: 822-0402
 Salurinn Concert Hall, Hamraborg 6, p: 570-0400
 Tónlistarþróunarmiðstöð (TPM), Hólmahlóð 2, p: 824-3002

Theaters

Icelandic Dance Company, Listabraut 4, p: 588-0900
 National Theatre of Iceland, Hverfisgata 19, p: 551-1200
 Reykjavík City Theatre, Listabraut 3, p: 568-5500
 The Icelandic Opera, Ingólfsstræti, p: 511-6400

Restaurants

3 Frakkar, Baldursgata 14, p: 552-3939
 Café Opera, Lækjargata 2, p: 552-9499
 Hornið, Hafnarstræti 15, p: 551-3340
 Jómfrúin, Lækjargata 4, p: 551-0100
 Maru, Aðalstræti 12, p: 511-4440
 Pasta Basta, Klapparstígur 38, p: 511-2238
 Sjávarkjallarinn, Aðalstræti 2, p: 511-1212
 Tapas, Vesturgata 3b, p: 551-2344
 Tjarnarbakkinn, Vonarstræti 2, p: 562-9700
 Tveir Fiskar, Geirsgata 9, p: 511-3474
 Við Tjörnina, Templarasund 3, p: 551-8666
 Vox Nordica Hotel, Suðurlandsbraut 2, p: 444-5050

Við Tjörnina, Templarasund 3, p: 551-8666
 Vox Nordica Hotel, Suðurlandsbraut 2, p: 444-5050

Cafés

Bleika Dúfan, Laugavegur 21, p: 517-1980
 Café Paris, Austurstræti 14, p: 551-1020
 Café Roma, Laugavegi 118, p: 562-0020
 Feng Shui, Laugavegur 42b, p: 551-8686
 Grái Kötturrinn, Hverfisgata 16a, p: 551-1544
 Kaffivagninn, Grandagarður 10, p: 551-5932
 Kaffitár, Bankastræti 8, p: 588-0440
 Mokka, Skólavörðustígur 3a, p: 552-1174
 Ráðhúskaffi, City Hall, p: 563-2169
 Segafredo by Lækjartorg main square.
 Te og Kaffi, Laugavegur 27, p: 533-6262

Café, Bar and Bistro

Ari í Ögri, Ingólfsstræti 3, p: 551-9660
 Bar 11, Laugavegur 11, p: 511-1180
 Café 22, Laugavegur 22, p: 511-5522
 Café List, Laugavegur 20a, p: 511-1420
 Café Victor, Hafnarstræti 1-3, p: 561-9555
 Dubliner, Hafnarstræti 4, 511-3233
 Gaukur á Stöng, Tryggvagata 22, p: 551-1556
 Glaumbar, Tryggvagata 20, p: 552-6868
 Grand Rokk, Smiðjustígur 6, p: 551-5522
 Hressingarskálinn, Austurstræti 20, p: 561-2240
 Hverfisbar, Hverfisgata 20, p: 511-6700
 Jón Forseti, Aðalstræti 10, p: 551-0962
 Kaffi Kúltur, Hverfisgötu 18, p: 530-9314
 Kaffibarinn, Bergstaðastræti 1, p: 551-1588
 Kaffibrenslan, Pósthússtræti 9, p: 561-3600
 Leikhúskjallarinn, Hverfisgata 19, p: 551-6010
 Litli ljóti andargunn, Lækjargata 6b, p: 552-9815
 Nasa, by Austurvöllur, p: 511-1313
 Nelly's, Þinghólstræti 2, p: 551-2477
 Mojito, Austurstræti 16, p: 575-7905
 Pravda, Austurstræti 22, p: 552-9222
 Prikið, Bankastræti 12, p: 551-3366
 Pósthúsið, Pósthússtræti 13, 562-7830
 Rex bar club, Austurstræti 9, p: 552-55
 Rósenberg, Lækjargötu 2, p: 551-8008
 Sirkus, Klapparstígur 30
 Sólun, Bankastræti 7a, p: 562-3232
 Thorvaldsen bar, Austurstræti 8, p: 511-1413
 Vegamót, Vegamótastígur 4, p: 511-3040

Fastfood

Bæjarins bestu, Tryggvagata, p: 894-4515
 Bernhöftsbakari, Bergstaðastræti 13, p: 551-3083
 Eldsmiðjan, Bragagata 38a, p: 562-3838
 First Vegetarian (Á næstu grösum), Laugavegur 20b, p: 552-8410
 Hlílli, Ingólfsstorgi, p: 511-3500
 Mama Taco's, Lækjargata 8, 551-5513
 Nonnabiti, Hafnarstræti 11, p: 551-2312
 Pizza 67, Tryggvagata 26, p: 561-9900
 Pizza Pronto, Vallarstræti 4, p: 517-5445
 Reykjavík Bagel Company, Laugavegur 81, p: 511-4500
 Vitabar, Bergþórugata 21, p: 551-7200

...continued from pg. 17

A woollen raincoat cased in transparent plastic, ice cubes in the shape of Iceland, (Klakinn, as they call it), a sphere of lava as a mobile dwelling for hidden people. Each piece with one foot in heritage, the other gazing bravely towards its Internet-assisted future, whether figuratively or literally, and frequently with a healthy dose of dry, Nordic humour.

The curators see it as an experiment in presenting the Icelandic people, the culture they come from and where they are heading; a pride and passion frequently mixed with a certain amount of discomfort, which the designers have harnessed and turned to their advantage. Drying fish is not a sight that evokes the most pleasant of emotions in the average islander, (Valur, I spelled it that way intentionally... how witty, huh?) [Very –ed], but when re-interpreted as a lighting device, the outcome is remarkably beautiful. And while you're there, the museum's permanent collection is worth a look. After decades of being shifted around various attics in Reykjavík, it has been housed since September in its recently refurbished location, documenting the entire history of the island's settlement in various media and a vast array of impeccably preserved artefacts.

'Omur' is showing until May 1st in Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, Suðurgata 4. Entrance is ISK 600, or free on Wednesdays and for those under 18.

VOICES IN THE WATERFALLS



Rúri represented Iceland at the 50th Venice Biennale 2003 with the multimedia installation Archive – endangered waters. The work is finally displayed in Reykjavík at the National Gallery of Iceland, and will be until the 13th of March. The work contains 52 waterfalls that we have almost lost, have lost or will lose through dam building. Rúri has recorded the voice of each waterfall and when you pull out the image from the archive the waterfall speaks to you.

"I have never experienced as much warmth and kindness at an opening of my work before. It was as if the child within came bursting out in people when they got in touch with the artwork. People often feel joy around water, perhaps the sounds from the waterfalls opened a space for that in them.

I have also heard that people in France cried at the exhibition when they realized what the work was telling them, that most of these waterfalls will be no more."

Decorating Vesuvius

When asked what is ahead for her, she said, "I am preparing work that will be a part of a new sculpture-garden in the mountainsides of Vesuvius, Italy. I am also working on two sculptures that I have been commissioned to do for a museum in Germany."

Some artists have a unique access to the collective consciousness and their work speaks to everyone because it contains levels of truth and vision we all can relate to. Rúri's works have a mythological sense to them. She is a modern mythmaker.

In works like The Gate, a memorial for missing persons, The Rainbow at the Leif Eriksson Air Terminal in Keflavík and her masterpiece Archive – endangered waters, she makes that quite clear.

Blue Gold

What was the inspiration for the show Archive – endangered waters?

"Nature without doubt. I respect nature deeply, I connect with her. Whenever we do something to her, it affects all of us. Each nation has the duty to treat their environment and nature with full responsibility and respect. This planet and its whole biosphere is our joint responsibility. There is an extra dimension to our planet that most Icelanders are not aware of because of the abundance of water we have. It is the fact that water has become the blue gold on our planet. Pure water is a very fragile aspect of the planet's biosphere. If the mentality of power and greed is put aside then it becomes clear what really matters; water and nourishment, not oil."

The Child within Comes Bursting Out

What sort of reactions has the exhibition gotten?

by Birgitta Jónsdóttir

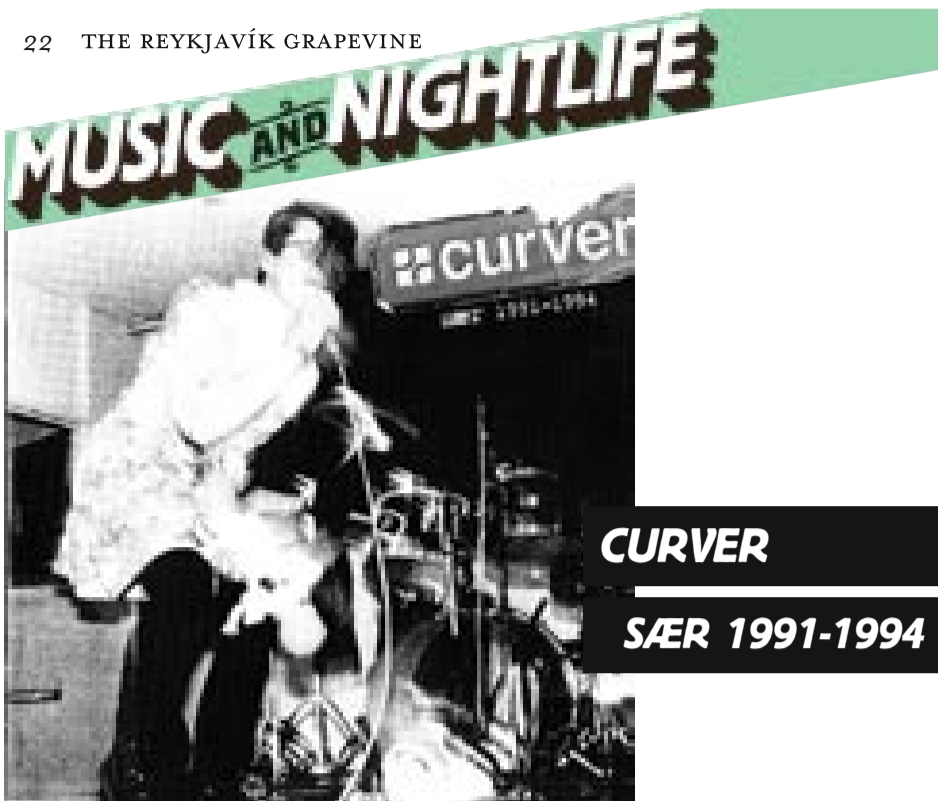
Retrospective

"One of Iceland's most respected and versatile artists, a "renaissance man" in the true sense of the word."

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CURVER
SAER 1991-1994

Sea Change He's turned everyday things like eating hamburgers and tidying his room into a form of art, but it was through his not so everyday music that Birgir Örn Thoroddsen originally made his mark. His debut album, Haf, is very much a product of an era that saw the emergence of alternative acts such as Maus and Stilluppsteypa who, at the time, sounded like nothing heard in the local music scene before. Under his Curver moniker, he was very much at the forefront of this new wave and has carried that momentum ever since, although more as a multi-artist than a musician these days.

In celebration of Haf's ten-year anniversary, the album was re-released at the end of last year along with tracks from several compilations and one previously unreleased. Clocking in at 80 minutes, the resulting album, titled Sær 1991-1994, is complex and abrasive, even ear-piercing at times, but with elements of a certain pop-sensibility that seems to follow Curver around wherever he goes. Above all

it's the work of an ambitious and intrepid, if slightly naive, teenager realizing his potential and searching for new ways to achieve it.

Throughout the 17 songs featured on this album, Curver thrashes out some sonorous guitar riffs in the vein of My Bloody Valentine and Sonic Youth while his computer provides the beats and background noises. In fact, Curver isn't simply a one-man band but a collaboration, if you like, between man and machine, as noted in the informative liner notes. Some of "the band's" earlier work is especially noisy and almost brutal while the songs on Haf lean much further into a dark, distant and more cold direction, with a conscious nod to The Cure, Joy Division and even Slint, to name a few. Obviously, a decade (or more in some cases) has passed since these songs originally saw the light of day but that only adds a bit of nostalgia to an already charismatic album that's always worth a closer inspection, especially if you missed the first time.

by Ární Viðar

Heard thru
the Grapevine

Sex Division, an 80's theme New Wave Ska band, are currently recording their debut album in their hometown of Keflavík. Another Keflavík band, punkers Flá, are also in the studio. Is the cradle of Icelandic rock set to reclaim the throne as the music centre of Iceland?

Singapore Sling are still looking for a drummer after the departure of Þórir. Their new bass player is a girl named Blífi. Þórir will continue to sit in with the band, though, which plans to make its return to the Reykjavík stage in the middle of February.

60's guitar heroes The Shadows are rumoured to be coming to Iceland to play a concert next summer. Meanwhile, Plaid will be playing along with Addi Exos at Gaukurinn on 4th, and Converge are playing at the Cave on the 9th. They played Íðó last year and happen to be Allí the ad man's favourite band.

Presidential favourites Trabant are due with an album out at the end of March. The music has been described as "amoral, sodomitic electro-pop." Some are already betting on this as the album of the year.

albums

FEBRUARY

Nýdönsk – Skynjun / Santiago – Chase the Bird / Fræbblarnir – Dót / Búdrýgindi – Juxtapós / Brain Police – Electric Fungus / Antlew/Maximum – Time, Money & Patience / Hæsta hendin – Hæsta hendin / Igore – 9 Lif

For most of the year, the Icelandic record industry is in a deep slumber until the bright and blinking Christmas lights send it into a frenzy in the true spirit of the season. Here's a quick look at eight of the seemingly endless list of albums released in the later stages of 2004:



Nýdönsk are the latest in a line of major 90s pop bands to join forces with the Icelandic symphony with their new album, **Skynjun**, documenting a concert held at the end of last year. Instead of tinkering with the classic hits, already carved into people's minds, the quartet (along with the 80 piece orchestra) mostly opts for some of its lesser-known material and deserves credit for not taking the easy way out. I've never been a fan of Nýdönsk or this overly

theatrical splicing of pop with classical music but the two outfits in question are probably as harmonious as possible while having fun at the same time. It carries out to the audience and ultimately those listening to the album so I'm sure the old fans will be happy although new ones will hardly be won over.

Santiago's second album, **Chase the Bird** sees the band chasing decent melodies rather than birds. Unfortunately, they prove hard to get a hold of, leaving the band and listeners alike feeling confused. With hints of jazz and country the album reaches its peaks during the more sombre moments but the flirtation with contemporary adult music seems somewhat strange given the relatively young age of a band capable of so much more.



So while Santiago seemingly make music for their elders, maybe it's up to the old warhorses to satisfy the kids. Being Iceland's first proper punk band **Fræbblarnir** obviously blew a lot of them away back in the late 70s but their new album, **Dót** is unlikely to have a similar effect. The band sticks to what it knows, which isn't a lot actually, but enough to cook up a lightweight punk dish that goes down without any problems.

The four members of **Búdrýgindi** weren't even blinks in their fathers' eyes when Fræbblarnir were at their peak, but still know a thing or two about producing good, catchy punk rock songs. Even if its success sparked envy from certain quarters, the band's energetic debut, **Kúbakóla**, was highly entertaining to say the least and its successor, **Juxtapós** finds the teenage sensations in similar territory. They've naturally matured over these past two years but the youthful exuberance in Búdrýgindi's tongue-in-cheek approach is still there to be enjoyed.

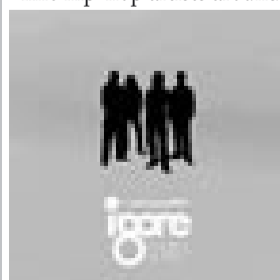
Brain Police is another rock band but this time with a capital R. They've been riding high since recruiting singer Jenni for their eponymous second album and **Electric Fungus** keeps the momentum going with the band's mighty sound reaching a new level. Driven by an immense force (which the actual songs basically serve as outlets for), unless you're into this heavy stoner-rock thing, there isn't all that much in the Brain Police arsenal for you.



But maybe you're into hip-hop and if that's the case you could do a lot worse than checking out **Antlew/Maximum's** first album, aptly titled **Time Money & Patience**. The duo has clearly put plenty of thought into their work and manage to produce a solid, if slightly conventional, record with the inclusion of such illustrious artists as Sage Francis adding extra weight.

There are also plenty of guest stars featured on **Hæsta hendin's**

self-titled debut, namely some of Scandinavia's most prominent hip-hop artists. Frontman Erpur Eyvindarson was of course the genre's poster-boy when his band, XXX Rottweiler, came bursting onto the scene a few years ago. Up until then, Icelandic hip-hop had mainly stayed underground and appears to be heading back down there after much of it being labelled "unprofitable" by the bigwigs. This effort hardly encourages second thoughts from the industry, but then again that may well be in the best interest of the many fine hip-hop artists around the country.



Let's just hope they don't follow the path of **Igore**, a strange little creature growling "master" to the hand that feeds it while at the same time craving an identity of its own. The quartet also appears to be caught in two minds between the lure of commercial success and being true to their own artistic beliefs, vaguely present even though mostly through the gifted musicians recruited for the occasion. For the time being Igore's approach falls short

of success in both categories with the band already down to the last of the nine lives referred to in the album title.

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TEABAGS & TUNES

“When I play music, I am playing around like a child,” says Sigríður Nielsdóttir as she lifts her legs and pretends to play the Casio with her feet. She selects the flavour of her tea by closing her eyes and picking a teabag from a little wooden box. She is the kind of old lady who has the wisdom of age but is still young at heart. Within three hours she has told me more about the history of Germany than my German grandparents have in their entire lifetimes.

In fact, some of the lyrics to her songs date back to her childhood in Denmark, when at the age of eight or nine, Sigríður started writing rhymes as gifts for her family. In 1949 she came to Iceland to work as a housemaid for a year, “but somehow I’m still here,” she says. As soon as her daughters had grown up, she began recording music in her flat, playing the Casio and singing. The huge amount of cassettes she bought at the record store Japis soon

attracted the interest of the manager who persuaded Sigríður to release her songs on CD and sell them. By that time she had gathered 240 melodies.

Family, Dwarfs, Hitler and Bush
“Famous? Perhaps I am. I never tried to be,” she says. Although her CDs are being sold as far away as Japan, and Slowblow invited her to contribute two songs to the Nói Albínói soundtrack, Sigríður has

never given a concert, and insists she never will. Last December, her songs were being performed live by members of Múm, Slowblow and Kitchen Motors at a concert at the Opera. “It was MARvellous, wasn’t it!” She shines a big happy smile and gets so excited she becomes hyperactive, meddling around in her kitchen.

In rapid succession she mentions her family, dwarfs, Hitler and Bush and how peaceful the earth would be if everyone had relatives in other countries. She herself finds peace and a purpose in her music. “I am very much alone, but I am never lonesome, because I can play music whenever I want.” Making up a tune usually takes her four or five hours, but the real difficulty is finding a title for it. Sometimes she thinks about it night and day.

Never Marry Anyone You Don’t Really Love

At the moment she is working on her fortieth album. As she plays it to me, she makes up a little love story that connects the tunes. “A boy is on his way to a date – can you hear how light his steps are? I think he is dancing on the streets...” she says as she imitates his walk. Her new Casio is the playground of her dreams. Though she creates a lot of sound effects by herself, it provides a good deal of inspiration. “A lot of the sounds on the Casio are interesting, but have the wrong name. This one, for example, is definitely not a bagpipe!” It does, in fact, rather resemble a piano. Before I leave she gives me one final piece of advice: “Never marry anyone you don’t really love,” she says as I walk out the door.

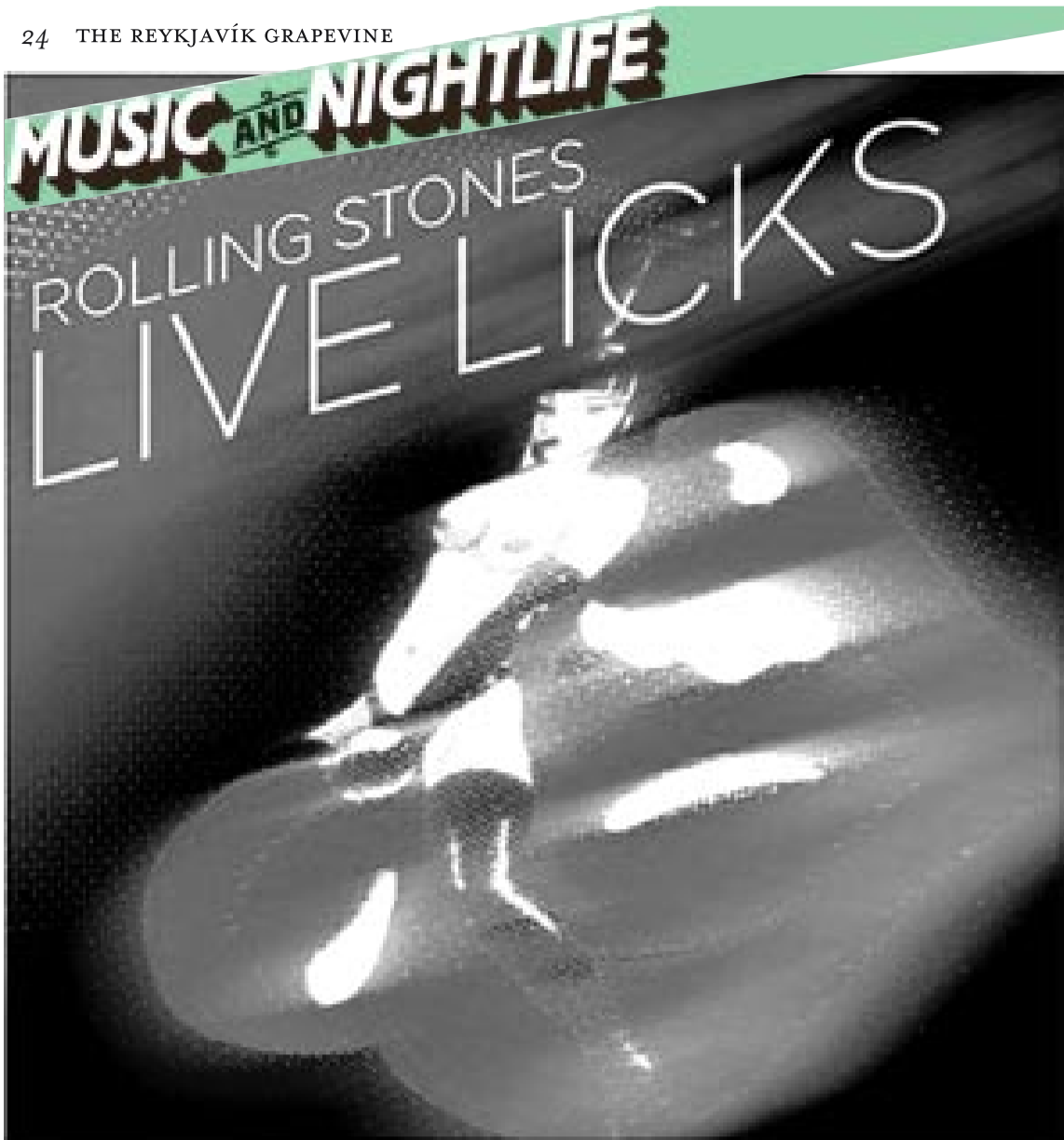
by *Julika Huether*

Dillon

Rock Bar

-live music

Dillon, Laugavegi 30, p: 511-2400



From the get-go you might have to dig deep to find a reason to buy this CD. It isn't until track 6 on "It's Only Rock n Roll" that the band really comes to life and starts shootin' from the hip. It becomes obvious that a little more objectivity and ambition is needed in the Stones camp regarding live releases. I have bootlegs that, as usual, blow the official live CDs out of the water.

Charlie's Good Tonight

Charlie is brilliant and right on the button as usual. Track one on CD2 is the hottest version of "NEIGHBOURS" I have ever heard! Now this one makes this trip worthwhile, fantastic drum work, full throttle Chuck-Berryish guitars and bass like stampeding rhinos. Then BAM they fall on their face with a lame ass version of the great rock song off Exile on Mainstreet "Rocks Off."

Next up is "Can't Ya Hear Me Knockin." The intro to this song by Keith Richards on the original version is one of the best guitar licks/intros in rock n roll history. When you hear it you can imagine flames shootin' out of his ass, but all we get on this version is a little smoke.

Where's Rubin When You Need Him?

Track 9 brings us to "Rock Me Baby." I still say I would love to see the Stones get down to the basics and hire Rick Rubin or Jack White and make the kinda cut-the-crap-back-to-the-roots CD I know they are capable of. I have heard enough studio bootlegs to know that the Stones are still a badass blues band, but this version of "Rock Me" just ain't giving me a hard on and if you gonna mess with this blues classic on an official live CD you better dig up somethin better than this!

Mick, where the hell is the fantastic Chicago Blues Harp I know damn well you can play!?! Now Keith, he's doin' some tasty guitar work and the rest of the band is cookin' pretty good, but then Ron Wood comes in with some shit (awful tone & tasteless solo) that's definitely killin' my dick. Muddy Waters used to stop his band if somebody hit a bum note and tell the guilty party to stop it because it was hurting his dick!;

Not to Be Messed With

A great reggae song with Keith on vocals is "You Don't Have To Mean It" that I'm sure I'd be raving about if I smoked a couple of his Jamaican brand cigarettes. Last but not least by a long shot is a shit hot version of "EVERYBODY NEEDS SOMEBODY TO LOVE" with the Great Solomon Burke as guest singer; the whole band is kickin' ass and I can just see in my mind the party really gettin' out of hand now, tables & chairs flyin' everywhere, snacks whipped around the room like confetti and one gal dancin' with her panties on her head as Live Licks comes to an end. Completists/Collectors will buy this, people who went to see The Stones on the Live Licks Tour will want this for a memo, but hardcore fans won't mess with it at all.

by Mike Pollock

**HURTING MY DICK:
A Review of the Rolling Stones**

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RUNNING A CAFÉ THE NON-CAPITALIST WAY



"We were tired of being neutral, tired of pointing out the failures in the society. We wanted to get inside and do things our way," says Ásgeir, one of the owners of Hljómalind. The name of the café comes from the legendary record shop that used to be in the same house. It's co-operated by seven people, who all own equal shares. They work by the guidelines of fair trade, which means that everyone gets paid a reasonable amount of money that will enable them to support their families and live a decent life. Any surplus income goes to charity.

"Why Not Sell Coffee?"

Helena, another of the owners, informs me that the original idea was to open up a culture/art-centre where all kinds of art could blossom. "But a centre like that needs a cash flow to keep it going so we thought, "Why not sell coffee?"

The place is covered in artwork. On one wall is a piece made by a graphic designer, all the tables have some kind of doodles on them, and the windows are painted by an artist. Every Wednesday night conversationist group Náttúruvaktin is going to have an open discussion about their agenda. Thursday nights are movie nights where arty and documentary films will be shown and Saturday nights are concert nights.

A Coffee Shop with a Manifesto

"Last week we had a panel discussion every day during lunch break and at the end of the week it was crowded,"

Ásgeir and Helena tell me. They had Dada Maheshvarananda, a professor of freedom studies, over from America to talk about free trade and explain the philosophy behind the concept. Ásgeir says that one of the purposes for opening a café is

to "show people that there are other ways, other than the capitalist way, to run a place like this." Hljómalind café is unique in our city. It's organic, it's non-smoking and it has a manifesto.

by Ilmur Dögg Gísladóttir



Elwis Has Left the Building

Our first encounter with Café Victor was a traumatic experience. We entered the place late one Monday evening in December 2002, after having attended the first of Nick Cave's two excellent concerts in Reykjavik. We decided against having a beer when we saw a large sign over the bar advertising their "Christmas special": gingersnap cookies and the traditional Icelandic "blanda", which consists of Egils orangeade and the classic Icelandic drink "Malt", a sweet malt extract, also from Egils. When we tasted our beverages, we instantly knew that something was not right. A chat with the bartender revealed that our "blanda" did not, in fact, contain any Malt at all, but something called "Black Elwis": a German drink that is, as the bottle label claimed, the first bottled beverage to combine alcohol-free beer and cola and tastes even worse than it sounds. "Does the German propensity for evil know no bounds?" we thought, as we staggered out, dazed and confused.



Desperate Middle-Aged People and Large Tuxedo-Clad Birds

So it was with some trepidation that Grapevine's correspondents entered Café Victor, situated close to Ingólfstorg square in downtown Reykjavik, one stormy night in January 2005. But we were soon put at ease by the relaxed and unpretentious surroundings and by the fact that Black Elwis was nowhere to be seen. Café Victor is a casual and modest place, known for its hamburgers and sandwiches, which turns into a hunting ground for desperate middle-aged people by night. We sat down by an impressive painting of a large, tuxedo-clad bird whose accusing stare dissuaded us from ordering any of the chicken dishes on the menu.

Muscular, Shaven-Headed Waiters

First up was Café Victor's creamy seafood soup: an incredibly tasty and rich tomato-based soup with an assortment of delicious fresh seafood that outclasses many of the seafood soups we have tasted in much more expensive restaurants. A very pleasant surprise and highly recommended. The deep-fried mozzarella sticks, served with basil aioli, were pleasant but probably work best as a beer snack rather than a part of a full meal. The service

was casual and friendly, although we sensed that our muscular and shaven-headed waiter wouldn't hesitate to snap us like twigs if we stepped out of line. Therefore we didn't dare to make a fuss when we had to wait for a considerable amount of time before ordering the main courses.

Black Elwis Comeback Special!

The fish of the day was well worth the wait: monkfish (a particular favourite of ours), pan-fried, served on risotto, with snap beans, feta cheese and sun-dried tomatoes. The fish was juicy and not overcooked and the risotto had a very pleasant white wine flavour. Feta cheese is an overused accompaniment, but did little to distract from the overall effect. The spaghetti carbonara with bacon, garlic and parmesan cheese was tasty, if a little dry, and the grilled lamb with potato wedges, fried vegetables and wild mushroom sauce was excellent. The meat was tender and juicy and the sauce was so good that we only wished that there was more of it. All in all, a very enjoyable gastronomic experience, made all the more pleasant by the fact that it was so unexpected. Let's just hope that Black Elwis won't make any comeback specials in the near future.

by Ölvir Gíslason and Kjartan Guðmundsson

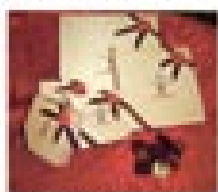
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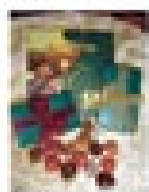
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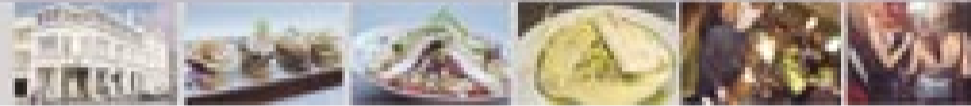
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AMERICAN DIPLOMACY AND THE DECLINE OF DEMOCRACY

The entire Icelandic government gets killed off in some inexplicable terrorist act. The only man left standing is the agricultural minister, who assumes the reins of power. The US Army is about to leave the country. But as a war is impending somewhere far away, the new Prime Minister tries to negotiate support for the war in exchange for keeping the Army here.

A nightmare scenario? Well, yes, and also the subject of a new play, *American Diplomacy*, written and directed by aspiring young playwright Þorleifur Arnarsson. Give or take the terrorist act, the situation is actually more plausible than you might think. When Grapevine tried to find out last summer who was responsible for governing the country when the Foreign Minister was away and the Prime Minister was in hospital, it turned out it was none other than agricultural minister Guðni Ágústson, number three in line as head of government.

Torturing Prime Ministers

"It's a political tragicomedy," says Þorleifur. "We are lucky enough to have in the leading role the actor Hjálmar Hjálmarsson, who used to do spoof news on radio for seven years, so he has the necessary experience. Every morning we go over the latest news and see what we can work into the play." This may very well be the most political play to make its way onto an Icelandic stage in quite some time, but Þorleifur has directed political stuff before. His dramatisation of Orwell's 1984, where he locked up the actors in a cell for the night to

get them in the right mood, left no one who saw in unmoved. And he also directed the play *Pentagon*, a collection of 5 mini plays, four of which were by aspiring young writers such as Eiríkur Norðdal and Haukur Már Helgason, and the fifth was by Australian Vanessa Badham. "Most of the segments were very political. Haukur Már's piece was about a couple of philosophers who kidnap a Prime Minister and torture him while discussing Socrates' theories on violence."

Missing Australians

Vanessa Badham also figures in the current play, although more by her absence. "I flew to Australia to meet her. She was going to write a play that I was to direct called *American Diplomacy*. Then one mishap followed another and she was unable to do it. I was left with a grant from the Ministry of Culture and a play, so there was nothing for it but to write the damn thing myself." The art of directing theatre is not, contrary to popular belief, an inherited craft but an acquired one. But even if it were, Þorleifur would have the right pedigree. His father is renowned actor Arnar Jónsson,

who most recently played legendary bishop Jón Arason in the National Theatre's *Öxin og jörðin*, and his mother is Þórhildur Þorleifsdóttir, who recently directed the City Theater's *Hýbýli vindanna*. But he grew up around politics as well as the arts.

"My father was arrested once in 1962 for writing socialist slogans on a NATO ship. He was locked up during the day, but the jailer let him go during the evening as he had to attend a theatre rehearsal that night."

Bloggers in jail

But Þorleifur is set to make it in the theatre in his own right. And his opinions are all his own too. "What we are witnessing now is the decline of democracy, as the major corporations assume more control of the individual. As we speak, the first blogger is being sued by Apple corp in the United States, even though the constitution there is supposed to be protecting his right to free speech. It's this decline of democracy that I'm afraid we're seeing the beginning of here." And yet Þorleifur still sees cause for optimism: "Despite everything, we did see some progress in the 20th Century. Oppression of women or minority groups is no longer tolerated to the extent that it was 50 years ago. So some things can actually change for the better."

American Diplomacy is premiered at Borgarleikhúsið on February 24th.

by Valur Gunnarsson



Ray
Opens Friday 18th February

Heroin Addict, Womanizer, Musical Genius

Before the Beatles, there was Ray Charles. Staring Jamie Foxx, straight off his excellent performance in *Collateral*, as the man himself, with Kerry Washington as his wife, and Aunjanue Ellis and Regina King as his back-up singers/mistresses. Ray spans the start of Ray Charles' career in the fifties until the mid-seventies, with plenty of reflection on his childhood, how he went blind, his childhood poverty, and rise to fame.

At just over two and half hours Ray is a reel too long and you notice. The film feels episodic, as it flashes back and forth from Ray's childhood to adulthood. At times I was able to pre-empt its continual use of fade-to-white or fade-to-black approach, giving it look and feel of a made-for-TV movie. Ray had me bobbing in my seat with the original music recordings and performances. Jamie Foxx does a brilliant job lip-synching and creating the character that is Ray Charles: heroin addict, womanizer and musical genius. The script by Taylor Hackford and James L. White tries to reflect the good and the bad of Ray Charles' life, but is sugarcoated and refuses to delve deeper into his psyche. The tribute and tacked-on ending feels rushed and left me somewhat disappointed.

by Cara Harvey

Hedging your bets on Bonaparte



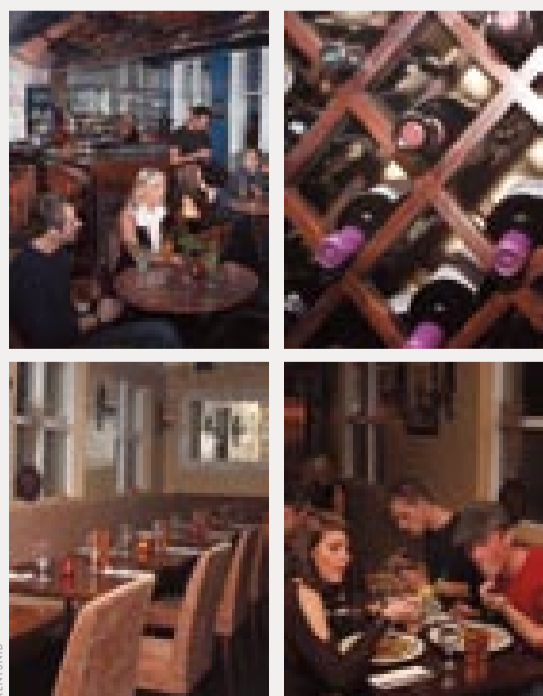
Rome, June 1800. Napoleon has just invaded Italy. During the action the Austrian General Melas is reported to have defeated Napoleon and the consequent celebrations are likely to be attended by Queen Marie Caroline, wife of the Neapolitan king, daughter to the Empress of Austria and sister to Marie Antoinette, the beheaded queen of France. This is the backdrop to Puccini's *Tosca*. Baron Scarpia, the much-feared Chief of Police, is based on a real-life Sicilian figure, and Cavaradossi and Angelotti are supporters of the liberal group hoping for Napoleon's victory.

Tosca is among Puccini's most popular operas. The music is complex and catching. There is poetic beauty in the lover's duets between *Tosca* the singer and Cavaradossi the painter. That beauty is contrasted by the roughness of the police officer Scarpia, who tries to deceive *Tosca* in order to win her love. The leading role of *Tosca* is performed by Elín Ósk Óskarsdóttir and chorus of 36 people participates in the performance.

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Sun. 20. Feb. 19.00
Fri. 25. Feb. 20.00
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Sun. 6. Mar. 19.00
Sat. 12. Mar. 19.00

by Birgitta Jónsdóttir



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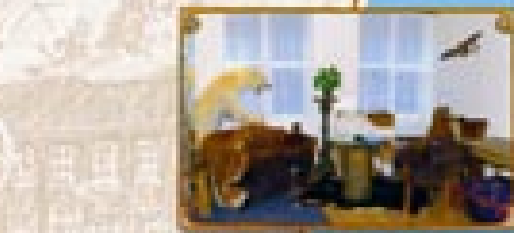
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THE WESTMAN ISLANDS: The Atlantic Stopover for Puffins, Pirates and Superstar Killer Whales

The Westman Islands are Iceland's frontier to the south. The island of Heimaey is the largest populated island off the coast of Iceland, and has a thriving community of almost 5000 people. This manages to support two local papers and even a TV station. It takes half an hour by plane to get there from Reykjavík, or almost three hours with the ferry Herjólfur from Þorlákshöfn on the southern coast. A tunnel is planned to finally end their relative isolation, although a group of enterprising university students suggested a zeppelin might be more economical.

The Westman Islands often seem far away from mainland Iceland, and while Iceland was for most of its history peaceful if poor, the Westmans have another story to tell.

English and Turk Invaders

The islands first appear in written history when the first settler of Iceland, Ingólfur Arnarson, chased runaway slaves there. The rebellious slaves had killed his blood-brother Hjörleifur, and Ingólfur slaughtered them to a man. As the slaves came from Ireland in the west, they were called Westmen, and the islands still bear their name.

The islands are also the only part of Iceland to have endured violent foreign invasion. In the 15th century, the English came to Iceland to trade and occasionally to raid. They kidnapped one governor of Iceland and killed another, and bought local children, which gave rise to the contemporary legend that Icelanders gave away their children but sold their dogs dearly. Their headquarters were on Heimaey, where they built the fortress Skansinn which still remains. But after a war with the Danes and the Hanseatic League in 1468-73, the English withdrew.

A more violent invasion was the "The Turkish Raid" in 1627. Actually, this was launched by Algerians, Moroccan-converted Europeans and commanded by a Dutchman. But as the captives were taken to Algeria, then a suzerainty of the Ottoman Sultan in Constantinople, the raid was blamed on the Turks. It was not until the 1970s that a contemporary law stating that any Turk found in Iceland should be killed on sight was withdrawn. Thankfully, this was never enforced.

The Turks killed and captured some 400 people, most of these from Heimaey, and burned down the church and the warehouse. Ten years later, 27 of the captives were ransomed back to Iceland. The place where the Turks came ashore is still called "Ræningjatangi", or robber's peninsula.

Volcanoes and Flying Spiders

The next tragedy to befall the island was in 1973, when a sudden earthquake devastated the town. Fortunately, the fishing fleet had

remained in port the night before due to bad weather, and all but one of the inhabitants, who decided to break into the pharmacy rather than flee, managed to escape to the mainland. When the lava cooled it had increased the island in size by more than 2 square kilometres, and the town was quickly rebuilt. The remains of the ruined houses are borne witness by the odd chimney sticking out of the lava hills here and there. In some places the lava is still warm enough to bake bread on, and this is occasionally done for the benefit of visitors.

An earlier ocean bed eruption in 1963 created the island of Surtsey, the world's youngest island, just off the coast of Heimaey. Few human beings are allowed there as geologists are studying its development for clues to the origin of life on earth. Its first permanent settlers were spiders who apparently glided to the island on their cobweb parachutes.

Puffins and Celebrity Killer Whales

The most famous animals to inhabit the Westman Islands, however, are the puffins, which migrate to the islands every spring to breed. They are considered a delicacy and are hunted by brave cliff-hangers, whose tiny summer cabins are visible on the cliffs. But the puffins are dear to the heart as well as the belly of islanders. Pufflings who get lost as they try to migrate south in the autumn are helped in finding their way, and the Aquarium also doubles as a puffin hospital in the summer. The aquarium itself is small but well worth a visit.

But all other attractions were briefly overshadowed by the appearance of Keiko the killer whale, star of the Free Willy movies. Originally born in these waters before he went off to Hollywood and stardom, he was escorted back home in a USAF Hercules upon retiring from the movie industry. After scientists had spent considerable time trying to teach him to hunt fish, he was released into the wild and immediately headed for Norway, where he died, as so many stars do, at the age of 27.

Death and Religion

Perhaps it is history that leads to the close relationship the islanders seem to have with death, or perhaps it's just the fact that death is an inherent part of any seafaring community. The Westman islanders still account for about 15% of the fishing of most of the major species found in the waters around Iceland. On the day that I was there this January, an exhibition about funerals, presented by the town priest, was opening in the Landlyst museum. Afterwards, the attendants retreated to the church to watch a documentary on photographing corpses. The church in question is a replica of a Norwegian wooden church, presented by the people of Norway in 2000, celebrating the 1000th anniversary of Christianity in Iceland.

Religion has long been a big part of island life. Mormonism caught on here in the late 19th century, and around 200 Mormons eventually immigrated to Utah. A monument

in Herjólfssdalur valley was later built in their honour.

More recently, in the 1990s the Christian group Betel gained notoriety throughout Iceland for its burning of rock CDs, but not everyone was convinced of the group's merits, and their leader emigrated north.

And Finally, A Good Party

But the islanders also know how to party. In 1874, they were unable, due to bad weather, to attend the celebration held at Þingvellir when Iceland received its first constitution. Instead, they held their own shindig, which has been reprised every year since and has become the country's biggest outdoor festival, attracting thousands of people from all over Iceland and the country's biggest live acts the first weekend of every August.

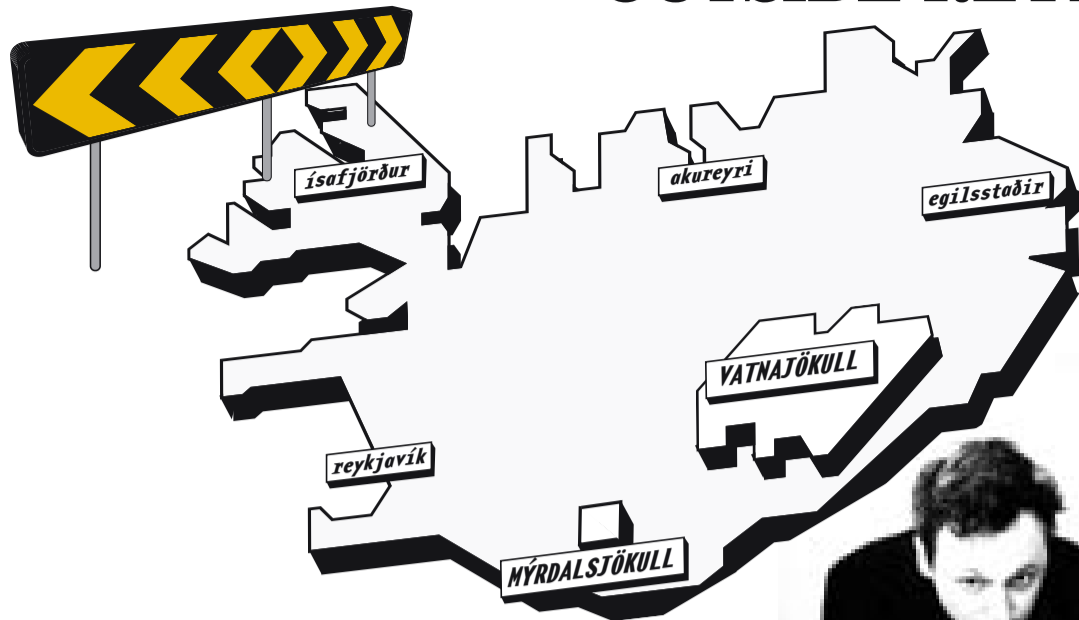
At the opposite end of the year, in January, a smaller festival called "Allra veðra von" ("Expect Any Kind of Weather"), is held indoors. It is a battle of the bands in which aspiring

rockers from all over Iceland and the Faroe Islands compete. This year, it was won by a group called Armæða, although two girl bands, one from Kópavogur, and the other a local group called "Sigyn" (named after Norse demon Loki's wife), also put in a strong showing.

The day after a good night out on the island, you can go for some hair of the dog and a pizza at local chain Pizza 67, Thai at Prófasturinn or Balkan at Lanterna. Or you can punish yourself some more with a "djúpsteiktur Akureyringur", a deep fried hot dog and fries with cheese on top, all served in a bun. As you wander about town, you'll see all the friendly faces you saw the night before, most of them seemingly in the same state as yourself. And you'll feel a part of these fair islands.

by Valur Gunnarsson





More Money than You'll Ever See Again

I am standing outside the Art Museum of Akureyri along with the curator. The northern wind is blowing gently but, being the northern wind and this being just below the Arctic Circle, even a gentle breeze makes its presence felt. The curator rings the doorbell, but no one seems to answer. The museum security, due to arrive at 12, is not here yet, so we withdraw to the warm locales of Cafe Karólína and wait for their arrival.

The reason for the curator being stripped of her powers to open museum doors is not due to a demotion on her part, but rather to the fact that inside are considerable valuables. The valuables are neither portraits of halfsmiling Italian chicks, screaming Norwegians or marble statues of Michael Jackson and Bubbles, but 100 hundred million krónur in cold, hard cash.

Warriors of the Wallet

The cash is part of an exhibition called Warriors of the Heart by Iranian-born American artist Ashkan Sahih, and bears the subtitle "100 Million in Ready Cash and Tibetan Chanting." If nothing else, it lives up to its name. The cash is kept in glass display cases in various amounts, in total adding up to the titular round figure. The chanting is a playback tape, and there is also plate with incense on the floor.

But that is not all there is to it. As the curator goes off to curate, I am left alone in one of the two rooms constituting the exhibition. But not for long. Sigurður, one of the two security guards, comes in unarmed, but with a disarming smile, and offers me a guided tour. Who am I to refuse?

He tells me that he has guarded both banks and museums before, but this is one of the tightest operations

he's ever run. In fact, most banks don't have as much money in their vaults as there is here. As he points out, with all the plastic going round these days, it's rare for huge sums of cash money to be kept in any one place at any one time. Some of it was lent by the Central Bank of Iceland, but not all of it. As yet, they haven't disclosed where the rest of the dough came from. Some of it is freshly printed, but quite a few of the batches are in unmarked bills. This, surely, makes the temptation all the greater.

Money is more tempting than art

"It is more tempting to steal piles of money than works of art which it would be hard to resell," says Sigurður, "but Akureyri is one of the few places where you could have an exhibition like this. Everyone knows everyone, and it's hard to disappear into the crowd. Down south, they have more people, and more drug problems." Down south is what Akureyrians tend to call Reykvikians.

Drugs are in fact another part of the exhibition. On the wall, pictures of persons in various states of intoxication stare with varying degrees of lucidity at the loot. These are not your usual collection of creatures of the night, but normal people (whatever that means) on their first high. "None of them got

addicted," Sigurður explains, "it was all regulated by doctors."

Who is to judge?

There is one more room, hidden behind curtains, and easily missed by guests not enjoying the expert guidance of Sigurður. Inside is a row of hospital beds. "No matter how much money we have, some things are unavoidable for everyone, such as death," Sigurður says. In a small room leading in from the beds is another, with a wheelchair and a television showing a program about how to paint. Money withers, life withers, perhaps art is the only thing that's truly eternal.

All the works in the exhibition are for sale. The price for a batch of money is the displayed amount plus 25%. The case is included. But is money on display a work of art? Is it a satirical comment on our obsessions, a postmodern take on the real values in the art world or simply a shortcut to selling out? "Whether this is art or not is not for us to decide," says Sigurður. We leave that, dear reader, to you.

by Valur Gunnarsson

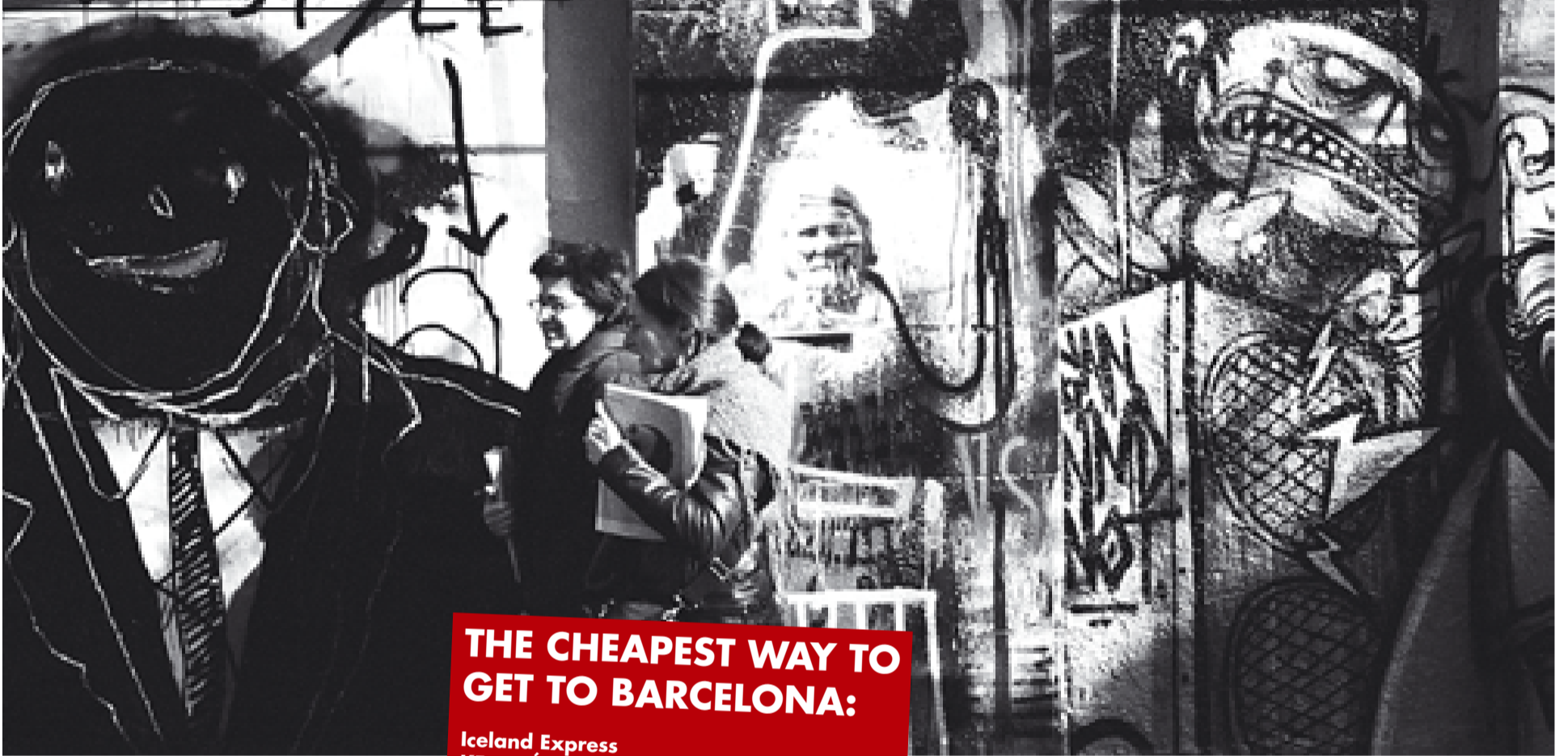


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portlög beint á milli Mál og Menningu

by John Boyce



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Grapevine consumer service note:
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**BARCELONA:
Great Scenery,
Tragic History**

A Sophisticated European Metropolis

A part of modern Barcelona's allure is its multiple identities, the second city of Spain, the capital of Catalonia, the economic powerhouse of the peninsula and a sophisticated multicultural European metropolis. Through the vicissitudes of history and the repeated suppression of Catalan, Barcelona has acquired a random bilingualism that largely remains thirty years after Franco's death, the undoubted resurgence in Catalan tempered by huge immigration from South America and other parts of Spain.

Home to over seven million people, with a huge industrial base and a massive Barcelona-based tourist trade, Catalonia subsidizes the rest of the country with millions of euro each year. Though Catalan nationalism has no militant equivalent of the Basque Country's E.T.A., Catalans are, understandably, pressing for ever more autonomy from Madrid, a demand that has received a generally

sympathetic hearing from the current socialist government. For the opposition, Aznar's centralist Partido Popular, this amounts to nothing less than creeping secession and has fuelled their fears that in the fullness of time Barcelona will add yet another personality to it already multiple identity, the capital of an independent European state.

Rambling Raval

If you should go astray one day on la Rambla, Barcelona's principal tourist thoroughfare, and land at the feet of a midget sitting on a shiny steel bucket who offers you, for a price, naturally, your hallucinogenic heart's desire, then you have probably wandered into Raval.

Diplomatically described by one guidebook as "a little rough around the edges", Raval is home to the bohemian set, all manner of victimless crime and is possibly the most police-patrolled part of the city centre.

In times past the Chinatown of Barcelona, Raval is a sprawling

working class barrio separated from more famous neighbourhoods, such as Barri Gothic, by La Rambla.

In recent years the area has become a glorious ethnic hodgepodge with the Arab population increasingly dominant. Wander in on a Sunday afternoon to check out the unlicensed market and the good-natured game of tag between the marketing miscreants and any one of Barcelona's three different police forces. Or enjoy the bizarre spectacle of 37 traditionally dressed Arabs playing improvised volleyball amid the sirens and the catcalls. But hurry while it's still there! A combination of a central location, cheap property prices and abandoned lots have those pesky developers sniffing round and it may not be long before radical chic Raval becomes as overpriced and over-hyped as its more fashionable guide book neighbours.

by John Boyce

A Brief History

Tucked between the Spanish central plain and the south of France, with Andorra for a pillow, Catalonia is the wealthiest and most powerful autonomous region in the Iberian Peninsula.

But it wasn't always thus for the province and its dominant capital, Barcelona. After declaring itself independent of the Frankish empire in the 11th century, Catalan monarchs arranged a political marriage with the neighbouring kings of Aragón, and Barcelona became the metropolis for an empire that stretched across the Mediterranean, kicking off what became known as the Catalan golden age. And that's when it all started to go terribly wrong.

War and Black Death

A serious bout of Black Death decimated the city in the 1300s and the region had barely recovered when the Kings of Aragón had the temerity to switch political horses, cozying up to their other regional neighbour Castilla, leaving Catalonia firmly out in the cold.

Colonial cutthroat Christopher Columbus, blundering into the Americas, delivered the next near fatal blow, drawing trade from the Mediterranean to the Pacific, almost bankrupting Barcelona in the process. Just when they thought things couldn't get any worse, France pilfered another chunk of Catalonia in the continent wide 30 Years War (1618-48, although the war between France and Spain didn't end until 1657). Barcelona then proceeded to back the wrong nag in the Spanish War of Succession (1700-1714). The eventual victor, the Bourbon king Felipe, duly took his revenge, abolishing regional autonomy and banning the writing and teaching of Catalan.

Anarchist and Fascist

The province and its capital finally caught a break in the 19th century when a ban was lifted on its trade with the Americas and Greater Barcelona launched one of the earliest industrial revolutions in Europe. Barcelona grew rapidly, was forced to demolish its medieval walls in the 1850s and had doubled in size by the 1920s.

This decade saw a resurgence of a phenomenon almost unique to Barcelona in the 20th century, anarchism, in the form of the radical trade union the C.N.T. After a wave of successful strikes, employers hired assassins to eliminate hundreds of union leaders.

Civil war and the Franco dictatorship returned Barcelona to smothering isolation, with Catalan and even the notion of Catalonia ruthlessly repressed.

The death of Franco in 1975 and the reestablishment of regional government in the seventies finally reintroduced Barcelona to the world and it quickly set about establishing itself as the cultural and tourist capital of Mediterranean Europe.



BARCELONA Picks

Compiled by John Boyce

DIETRICH: C/ DEL CONCELL DE CENT, METRO Universitat

If high class drag's your bag, Dietrich revives the lost art of café theatre seven days a week in glam surroundings. Admission free.

ENCANTES MARKET: METRO Glories

Desperate for an exhaust pipe for your second-hand Ford Capri or some black and white Slovakian pornography, then look no further than Barcelona's oldest open-air flea market, open Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday till two. Bring a wheelbarrow.

EUSKAL ETXEA. PLACETA MONCADA, METRO Jaume

The unpronounceable name tells you Basque cuisine is on the menu, in an eerie cavern-like atmosphere. Specializes in fish and calves, a stones throw from the Picasso museum.

BARCELONA PIPA CLUB, PLACA REIAL, METRO Liceu

Perhaps the only authentic smoking club in the city. During the day you can get your fill of politically incorrect pipe smoke. Late in the evening it transforms itself into one of the city's most laid back all-night boozing joints.

LA PALOMA, C/ DE TIGRE, METRO Universitat

An institution in Barcelona for over a hundred years, La Paloma kicks off with the cha-cha-cha and the can-can before moving on the tango around midnight, and if you are up for it there is the frenetic bongo lounge till dawn. Admission 5 euro.



Landsvirkjun
- er lakkjart Þjóðminjasafn Íslands

The most beautiful women in the world

The National Museum of Iceland has reopened its galleries. Come and see our new and dynamic exhibition "Making of a Nation – Heritage and History in Iceland". The exhibition reflects the nation's valuable and vigorous history and culture in an informative and inspiring way. After feeding on culture, try our fabulous coffee shop and pick up something unusual from our Museum Store.




ÞJÓÐMINJASAFN ÍSLANDS
National Museum of Iceland

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ANGELO

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WATSON THE VICTOR

Does terrorism pay off in Iceland?

Captain Paul Watson, self-proclaimed "Ocean Warrior" and founder of Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, used to be Iceland's Public Enemy #1. His agents attacked Iceland's fishing industry in an unprecedented terrorist attack in October 1986, when they sabotaged a whaling station and sank two ships; half our whaling fleet. The damages were conservatively estimated at \$8 million at the time. The Prime Minister vowed in public that "all efforts will be made to get the people who are responsible prosecuted for this inhuman act", but the government of Iceland – always "willing" to combat terrorism in distant continents – has yet to press charges.

When Paul ventured to Iceland in 1988, offering himself up for trial, the State was suddenly keen to dismiss the matter and simply deported the defiant Ahab as quickly as possible. Yet he admitted to and took full responsibility for the sabotage in front of a prosecutor. Watson left Iceland laughing his

perpetrator; the active agent involved in the attack? "No," he responded, "but I am responsible for all activities undertaken in the name of Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. I give the orders." The prosecutor then asked him, "Did you give the orders to sink the ships?" and the suspect confessed, "I did." As if all

being held for questioning.

Mr. Ocean Warrior

What's more, once Mr. Ocean Warrior (starving for media attention) had verified that Iceland did not intend to prosecute him, he offered to call on the ones who did in fact do the dirty work and have them come over to face trial. Motion denied. The prosecutor's attitude being something like, "No, Mr Watson, you don't tell us what to do; just get the hell out of the country and don't come back for at least five years, please." Justice served.

The government of Iceland didn't dare prosecute, for it would have brought international media attention to whaling, an unpopular industry at the time. This would have hurt the nation's fish exports.

"The State's major action against the leader of an organization that had declared itself at war with Iceland seems to have been trying to serve him whale meat."

silly marine-pants off. What's worse: the bastard wrote a book in which Icelanders are perhaps accurately portrayed as slow-witted, timid and gullible.

Slaughter on the High Seas?

His book: Ocean Warrior: My Battle to End the Illegal Slaughter on the High Seas, describes how Watson was interrogated in Iceland. He was asked if he himself was the

this wasn't enough, Watson claims to have threatened the prosecutor that "we intend to sink the two other ships at the first opportunity." Yet nothing was done; the State's major action against the leader of an organization that had declared itself at war with Iceland seems to have been trying to serve him whale meat in the cafeteria of a "most comfortable jail", in which he was

Soon after Watson's visit, Iceland admitted defeat and abandoned whale hunting. But when it came to invading Afghanistan and destroying Iraq, the government was steadfast, loyal and true. That does not appear to be the case on home ground. Klemenso@simnet.is

by Klemens Ólafur

THE BIG PICTURE: A Controversial Documentary Festival



Did Lee Harvey Oswald kill Kennedy? Did we really go to the moon? Is there a cover-up regarding UFOs? Did the US government carry out the 9-11 terrorist attacks? Are western governments involved in the global drug trade and money laundering? Did George W. Bush become president through massive election fraud? Are we constantly being lied to by our governments and mass media? What is the nature of reality? How important is the truth? Do we avoid it because it may disturb us? Is it perhaps more important to conserve the established world view? Are certain illusions necessary to justify our way of life? What if the information flow is really under elite control? Perhaps the public has been allowing the establishment to manifest their distortions as historical truths that few would challenge without facing public outrage and ridicule.

From February 19th to 27th a documentary festival will be held at Snarrót, the radical centre at Garðastræti 2. About 30 hard hitting documentaries will challenge the world view of all those who dare to attend. The aim of the festival is to give people an opportunity to access controversial information that receives little or no attention by the mainstream media. The program can be found at www.gagnauga.is.

by Þórarinn Einarsson

Wednesday, February 21th	Wednesday, February 21th	Wednesday, February 21th
19:00 The Phoenix	19:00 The Phoenix	19:00 The Phoenix
20:00 Being Julia	20:00 Being Julia	20:00 Being Julia
21:00 Closer	21:00 Closer	21:00 Closer
22:00 Son of the Mask	22:00 Son of the Mask	22:00 Son of the Mask
23:00 Hitch	23:00 Hitch	23:00 Hitch
Thursday, February 22th	Thursday, February 22th	Thursday, February 22th
19:00 The Phoenix	19:00 The Phoenix	19:00 The Phoenix
20:00 Being Julia	20:00 Being Julia	20:00 Being Julia
21:00 Closer	21:00 Closer	21:00 Closer
22:00 Son of the Mask	22:00 Son of the Mask	22:00 Son of the Mask
23:00 Hitch	23:00 Hitch	23:00 Hitch
Friday, February 23th	Friday, February 23th	Friday, February 23th
19:00 The Phoenix	19:00 The Phoenix	19:00 The Phoenix
20:00 Being Julia	20:00 Being Julia	20:00 Being Julia
21:00 Closer	21:00 Closer	21:00 Closer
22:00 Son of the Mask	22:00 Son of the Mask	22:00 Son of the Mask
23:00 Hitch	23:00 Hitch	23:00 Hitch
Saturday, February 24th	Saturday, February 24th	Saturday, February 24th
19:00 The Phoenix	19:00 The Phoenix	19:00 The Phoenix
20:00 Being Julia	20:00 Being Julia	20:00 Being Julia
21:00 Closer	21:00 Closer	21:00 Closer
22:00 Son of the Mask	22:00 Son of the Mask	22:00 Son of the Mask
23:00 Hitch	23:00 Hitch	23:00 Hitch
Sunday, February 25th	Sunday, February 25th	Sunday, February 25th
19:00 The Phoenix	19:00 The Phoenix	19:00 The Phoenix
20:00 Being Julia	20:00 Being Julia	20:00 Being Julia
21:00 Closer	21:00 Closer	21:00 Closer
22:00 Son of the Mask	22:00 Son of the Mask	22:00 Son of the Mask
23:00 Hitch	23:00 Hitch	23:00 Hitch

www.gagnauga.is

MOVIES : LISTINGS : february 11 - march 10



Hverfisgata 54
Phone: 551-9000
www.regnboginn.is

PREMIERS:

11. feb. Flight of the Phoenix / Being Julia
18. feb. Closer
25. feb. Son of the Mask
4. mar Hitch

Still running:

Finding Neverland, Sideways
Assault on Precinct 13, Sea Inside



Laugarás
Phone: 553-2075
www.laugarasbio.is

PREMIERS:

25. feb. Son of the Mask
18. feb. Ray
3. mar Hitch

Still running:

Meet The Fockers, The Aviator
Sjóræningjar á Saltkráku (dubbed)
Búi og Símon (dubbed)



Smáralind
Phone: 564-0000
www.smarabio.is

PREMIERS:

11. feb. Flight of the Phoenix / Being Julia
18. feb. Closer
25. feb. Son of the Mask
4. mar Hitch

Still running:

Finding Neverland, Sideways
Assault on Precinct 13, Sea Inside



Hagatorg
Phone: 530-1919
www.haskolabio.is

PREMIERS:

18. feb. Ray
25. feb. Les choristes/Kórinn
4. mar Phantom of the Opera

Still running:

Meet the Fockers, Million Dollar Baby, The Aviator, Alexander
Un long dimanche de fiançailles (A very long engagement)
Ocean's Twelve, Tais toi/Ruby & Quentin (Grjóthaltu kjafsti)



Álfabakka 8
Phone: 587-8900
www.sambio.is

PREMIERS:

11. feb White Noise
25. feb Constantine
4. mar Phantom of the Opera

Still running:

Meet the Fockers, Alexander
Team America: World Polic...
National Treasure
Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events, The Incredibles

with the UN Charter, making it illegal under international law.

Iceland has never had an army of its own. The Icelandic parliament refused to declare war on Germany and Japan in 1945, which was the condition for becoming a founding member of the United Nations. As a founding member of NATO in 1949 Iceland specifically stated that it would not declare war on another nation.

The Icelandic ministers' decision to support the invasion of Iraq is a blemish on Iceland's political history and a setback for democracy in Iceland. It is in breach of the traditions of the Althing (Iceland's parliament) – the world's oldest national legislative assembly. All opinion polls have shown that the vast majority of Icelanders oppose the Icelandic ministers' support for the invasion of Iraq (84% in the latest national poll).

All opinion polls have shown that the vast majority of Icelanders oppose the Icelandic ministers' support for the invasion of Iraq (84% in the latest national poll).

We apologise to the Iraqi people for the Icelandic ministers' support for the invasion of Iraq.

We demand that Iceland be immediately removed from the list of invaders in the "coalition of the willing".

Iceland has enjoyed friendly relations with the United States for a long time. That relationship has been based on mutual trust and frankness.

We therefore consider it our duty to make these views known – to the United States of America as well as other nations.

The Movement for Active Democracy in Iceland | Sjafnargata 6 | 101 Reykjavik
www.thjodathreyfingin.is

Over 4,000 Icelanders made donations to publish this declaration. As a proportion of the national population, this would be equivalent to 4 million Americans taking part.



Reykjavík
Winter Lights Festival

COMPLETE WINTER LIGHTS
FESTIVAL LISTINGS INSIDE

Stuffed with stuff

"It is important that students pay a reasonable part of their own education because it encourages them to appreciate their studies more."

Drífa Hjartardóttir, MP. ,
PAGE 6

"I do not think he (The Prime Minister) is having a very good time right now."

Róbert Marshall, former
Channel 2 reporter,
PAGE 14

"If we think of a subject as a hill or a mountain, this subject is going downhill,"

Ásta Möller, vice MP for
Davíð Oddsson,
PAGE 15

"Some things can actually change for the better."

Þorleifur Arnarsson, theatre
director,
PAGE 28

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