

THE 

REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

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The Optimist

First Lady of Iceland, Eliza Reid, on her new book, writing, and gender equality in Iceland.



Waking Up To War

News: A Ukrainian in Iceland discusses the invasion

Dark Music Days

Music: The festival returns to spook the spring

Vegan Bollur

Food: You thought vegans couldn't celebrate too?

Krauma

Travel: Escaping from the bleakness in a hot spa



COVER PHOTO:

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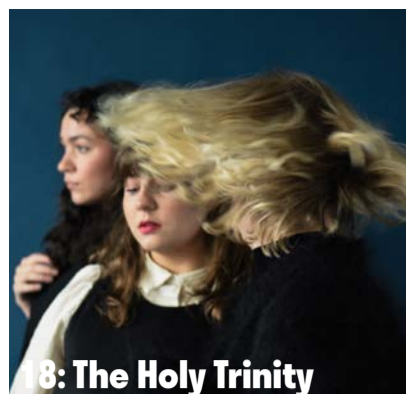
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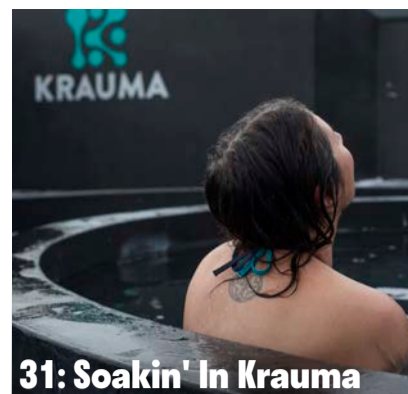
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Sing For Humanity

EDITORIAL A poet once told me, when you face extremes, either in real life or when writing fiction, approach it from the opposite direction. If you want to write about death, write about life. And when you're forced to write about war, write about peace. Because how does one approach the incomprehensible act of war? Should you try to understand its reasons or should you approach it as it is, as a senseless act? There is no good reason for war, but there are good reasons to embrace peace.

When I walked to work this morning (Thursday 3rd of March) with Polly who was sniffing all around, glad and without any worries about the world, I passed the office of the Russian embassy. There was red paint on the wall. Someone had splattered it on the west wall of the house, fueled with anger because of the Russian invasion into Ukraine. I saw a police car and two officers sitting in the car. They didn't seem to mind when I took photos of the damaged wall. Because that's part of my freedom, which I take often for granted. To document whatever I want and report on it.

I was saddened to see the damage to the house. That someone was so enraged that they felt forced to express their justifiable anger against the Russian government and their diplomats in Iceland, who have brought shame upon themselves with bizarre interviews where they recite lies from the Russian propaganda. But I also thought; Russians can at least wash this metaphorical blood off their house, but never the real blood off their hands.

I kept on walking down the street. The sun was rising, and the weather was unusually good after a season of cold storms. But as I approached the centre of Reykjavik, I saw more police cars. And I heard beautiful singing.

I passed the police cars and saw around 200 people standing outside of the residence of the Russian ambassador at

Garðastræti, a street that politicians are proposing to change the name of to Kænugarðsstræti – the street of Kyiv

But the people were not screaming angrily at the embassy, although they were within their rights to do so. They were not splashing red paint on the wall of the house. Instead, a choir was singing beautifully – although, ominous, sad songs. It was a hauntingly beautiful, and eerily harsh, reminder of the beauty of the world in extreme times.

The police were interviewed for Visir afterwards like often the case in the news. And even they were not untouched, as they said that the protests were not only peaceful but something that they had never experienced before. "I can't remember any protest like this. There was such beautiful singing," one officer said.

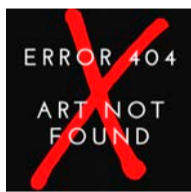
The only way forward is to unite us, not to meet violence with hate. It's to find the common ground of humanity. War is ignited through the indifference of human life.

We at Reykjavik Grapevine support Ukraine and call upon the Russian diplomats in Iceland to fight for the end of the war, not to sit inside their embassy, behind closed curtains. There is beauty out there, and today, they heard it. We will not stop singing for freedom and peace.

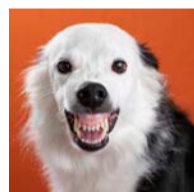
Valur Grettisson
Editor-in-chief



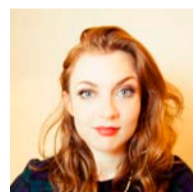
John Pearson, the Grapevine's culture editor, is a Reykjavik resident with professional backgrounds in live music events, broadcasting, scuba diving, journalism, engineering and underwater photography. We suspect that he just likes to collect job titles. He is a big fan of puns, alliteration and lists that have three things in them.



Art Bicnick, the Grapevine's video magician and photographer, is himself unphotographable. This is due to the fact that he consists mainly of stardust; a handy characteristic that enables him to float smoothly across rocky volcanic terrain, and through apparently solid objects.



Polly is a hard-working journalist by day and an enthusiastic ball-catcher by night. A five-year-old dachshund mix with an IQ of a five-year-old human, Polly is Chief Morale Officer at the Grapevine, and a regular contributor to the Grapevine Newscast on YouTube. Woof!



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



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



Catharine Fulton is a writer who has been involved with the Grapevine for many years—possibly too many—serving as journalist, food editor and news editor before settling on copy editor. When not wielding her red pen she's often found opining on Canadian politics (professionally), and bitching about Icelandic politics (for fun).



Shuruthi Basappa is one of Iceland's most knowledgeable foodies. She's covered local restaurants for years and has also been involved in various food competitions in Iceland, such as Food & Fun and more. By day, she works as an architect at Sei Studio.



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



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

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Hamarshöllin in better days

What Are Icelanders Talking About?

Headlines and bylines making waves

Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine** Photo: **Courtesy of hamarsport.is**

NEWS Iceland made international headlines last week by announcing that they were **lifting all domestic and border pandemic restrictions**. The news was so unbelievable to many of our readers that we've received numerous emails asking us if there was some kind of catch to the border rules—unvaccinated people will have to be quarantined upon arrival, surely? we were asked. But no, “no restrictions” means exactly that. Shortly thereafter, daily cases shot up by a couple thousand people, and hospitalisations broke previous records, at a time when the healthcare system is already strained, in no small part due to the number of hospital workers in isolation with the coronavirus. Which is probably all just a coincidence.

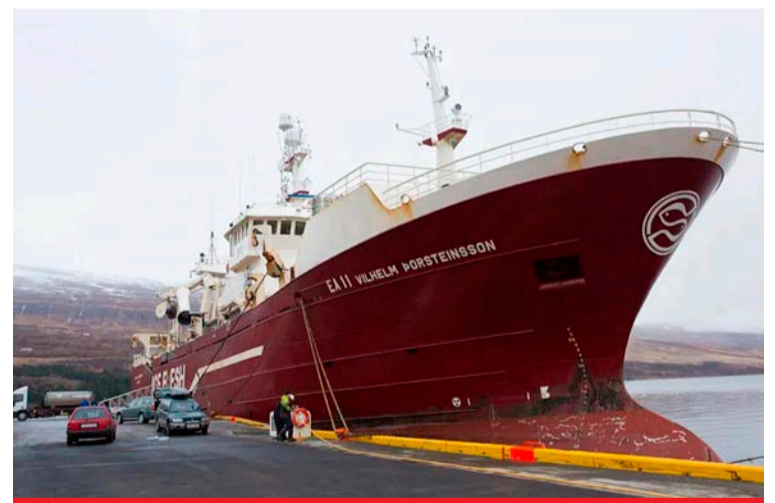
Pandemic news was quickly forgotten, however, as news of the **Russian invasion of Ukraine** broke in the final days of February. The most immediate response came from Russian citizens in Iceland, who organised protests that saw hundreds of people gather across the street from the Russian embassy in downtown Reykjavík. The Icelandic government has since blocked Russian aircraft from Icelandic airspace, and denied visas to Russian politicians and businesspeople. All Icelandic

telecoms are offering free calls to Ukraine. Missing in all this is that it has still not been decided, at the time of this writing, just how many Ukrainian refugees Iceland is going to accept, and when they will arrive. Stay tuned.

The ongoing case of **police investigating journalists who have covered Samherji** has taken a turn for the weird. As initially reported, the source material of communications within the so-called “Samherji guerilla division” that the reporters brought to light allegedly came from a stolen phone. However, Icelandic and international law prevents police from compelling journalists to disclose their sources. So

now they're trying a different tactic, contending that the phone contained pornographic material that was distributed amongst the journalists—which of course does not fall under source protection laws. Lawyers have dismissed these accusations as a total fabrication and a flimsy pretext for silencing reporters. It remains to be seen whether the police's gambit will work.

February has proven to be a particularly cruel month for **Icelandic weather**, with the past weeks seeing the country repeatedly pummeled with high winds, heavy snowfall and road closures across the country. Rescue workers have had their hands full, and while no one has lost their lives, Hveragerði did lose a beloved sports hall, Hamarshöllin. The townspeople have, though, banded together and volunteered their services to rebuild the sports hall anew. 🍷



An ill-fated Samherji ship (Photo taken from the Wikileaks Files)



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Solidarity forever

Iceland Responds To Russia's Invasion Of Ukraine

But are we doing all we can?

Words: On February 24th, the world woke to the news that Russia had invaded Ukraine. The news was saddening, horrifying, and frustrating to all of us. While Iceland is a NATO country, it has no military, and does not produce weapons, so the country has sought other ways to help out.

Andie Sophia Fontaine

Photo: Visir/Elisabet

The protests begin

Within hours of the invasion, Russian citizens in Iceland took it upon themselves to organise a protest in front of the Russian embassy in downtown Reykjavik. Those protests have continued daily since then, and their numbers have swelled to several hundred people opposed to the war.

The sanctions begin

Over the weekend that followed the initial invasion, the Icelandic government made the decision to close Icelandic airspace to all Russian aircraft. This was followed by revoking, and refusing the furthering issuing of, visas for Russian politicians, businesspeople, and other members of the Russian government.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfröð Gylfadóttir also intimated that matters might not stop there. Depending on how things play out, Iceland may enact further sanctions against Russia.

Telecoms and refugees

Every Icelandic telecom, from Nova to Vodafone to Síminn to Hringdu, announced that calls to Ukraine would be free for the rest of March at least. Charity drives have been in full swing.

Missing in all this is any formal decision on how many Ukrainian refugees Iceland plans to accept, and when they will arrive. The Directorate of Immigration has removed Ukraine from its list of so-called "safe countries", which determines which asylum seekers are unlikely to get international protection based on their country of origin.

Iceland is a small country with little international influence, but this has not stopped the country from taking action—at least, when it comes to a conflict in another European country.

ASK AN

Expert

Q: Why don't Icelandic people have family names?

Words: Iryna Zubenko
Photo: Sigurður Stefán Jónsson



You wouldn't mistake an Icelandic person for someone else. Their surnames give them away immediately, or rather the lack of them. Icelanders have a long tradition of using patronymic or matronymic names, but can you really say that there are no family names here? We spoke to Aðalsteinn Hákonarson from the Department of Name Studies at the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies to find out.

"The government of Iceland, before and after independence, has never come to the conclusion that the people of Iceland should have family names, and therefore, Icelanders have never been required to take up family names. Hence, an old custom of patronyms, and, to lesser extent, matronyms has survived in Iceland," explains Aðalsteinn. In 1925, a law forbidding the adoption of new family names was passed. "Before family names were banned, many people adopted family names and many of these are still used today. Even after 1925, people adopted family names because the ban was not enforced properly until 1991. Foreigners who move to Iceland bring family names with them. Around 80% of people in Iceland have patronyms or matronyms."

The Icelandic law on personal names states that one can use a patronym or a matronym as a surname; some even decide to use both. "A spouse can use their partner's family name when married, but they cannot replace their own patronym/matronym/family name with it. However, it is permitted to use your spouse's family name as a middle name in addition to your own patronym/matronym/family name."

LOST IN GOOGLE TRANSLATION

Iceland Falls Into Historically Deep Depression

A historically deep depression is sweeping Iceland. Pharmacies across the country are struggling to restock their Prozac supplies. Alþingi has shut down, with the Icelandic president taking refuge in a mental health retreat in Finland, aka "the happiest country in the world." "Depression swabs" have been introduced at Keflavik Airport in an attempt to limit the number of depressed people coming into the country. Those who have been in contact with depressed Icelanders are immediately put into a four-week quarantine at Landspítali, the national hospital.

Streets in Reykjavik are completely empty as locals hide inside their apartments, binge-watching 'Úfærð' ('Trapped') and snacking

on Pristur, the only food that can still be found on the shelves of Bónus. A new police squad has been created to guard the premises of Reykjavik and make sure the pandemic doesn't spread to other parts of the country.

These and a dozen more scenarios run through my head as I see the headline "Historically Deep Depression In The Maps" on visir.is. In reality, things are not as grim as my thoughts—it's just bad weather, again.

Google Translate got it both wrong and right this time: the Icelandic word 'lægð' means low, referring to low pressure, or atmospheric depression. **IZ**

Historically deep depression in the maps



Sögulega djúp lægð í kortunum



SMASHED BURGERS AND NASHVILLE-STYLE HOT CHICKEN IN DOWNTOWN REYKJAVIK

HAFNARSTRÆTI
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GODS OF ICELAND



Gullveig/Heiður & The Beginning Of The End Of The World

Is she a witch, god or a seeress? We have no idea

Words: It's probably not that shocking for any woman reading this to learn that the first person ever to be killed in Nordic mythology was a woman. And it's probably less news that the reasons behind that killing were, well, a bit unclear.

Image: Frølich

Gold-drunken end of the world

Gullveig (gold-drunken, or gold-powerful) is a mysterious woman that visits the Æsir and she follows the three famous witches of destiny, Urður (witch of the past), Verðandi (witch of the present) and Skuld (witch of the future). Those three witches are very famous in Nordic mythology, but Gullveig, not so much. Yet, she is the one that matters the most, because she marks the beginning of the end of the world.

Stabbed and burned

In short, Völvan (the narrator in the Edda Poems) describes the creation of the world and the richness of the gods

that had a pretty nice existence in peace. Well, until the three witches of destiny arrive, along with Gullveig. The gods are terrified of Gullveig, since they know that she is the beginning of the end of the world. So, they get the manly idea of solving all their problems by just killing her. Óðinn throws the first spear, and the other gods follow his lead. She is stabbed by all of them, but that's not quite enough for the Æsir, so they also burn her like a proper witch, just to make sure.

...and repeat

But Gullveig is no ordinary broad. She is reborn, even more powerful than before and sets her mind on seiðr/sorcery. The gods, being idiots, of course, think that the only logical solution here is to kill her again exactly the same way. Again she is reborn, and still, the gods don't get it. So they try again. She is stabbed and burned and the gods are absolutely shocked that the third time wasn't the charm. But, there is a huge change

though; Gullveig is not only reborn, but she has a new name now, which is Heiður (bright, or clear). And she is no longer a witch, but a full-blown all-knowing badass seeress/Völva. There is a difference. One uses sorcery, the other is a prophet.

But, why?

So, here is where things get tricky. Vanir, (also gods like Æsir, just from an older pagan religion fused into the Nordic mythology) decide to go to war with Æsir for what they did to Gullveig/Heiður. Nobody understands exactly why they would take such drastic measures, perhaps because she was Vanir herself, but some scholars have the theory that she was a magical being made by the Jötnar to arouse trouble among the gods. But either way, Vanir attacks Ásgarður. And there is a dramatic battle; cue Valkyries flying in slow-mo in Thor's Ragnarök.

Keyser Söze of the gods

But, the question stands; what in Hel's name is Gullveig/Heiður? One theory is that she symbolises greed and corruption, if the name gold-drunken/powerful didn't already give it away. But theres a plot twist. Perhaps Gullveig is not Gullveig, nor Heiður, but the goddess Freyja, who is actually from the tribe of Vanir. Cue meme of a head exploding, because we are exhausted and confused. ♡

Superpowers:

Can't die, a talented but evil witch...we think?

Weaknesses:

The first figure in the world to be killed, which leads to the war between Vanir and Æsir and eventually the end of the world.

Modern Analogy:

Keyser Söze

NEW MUSIC PICKS



Árný Margrét "Intertwined EP"

The Grapevine's favourite folk artist treats us to four more tracks of wist from the Westfjords. This EP features two previously unreleased songs, ("In Tall Buildings" and "Sometime"), and heralds her much-anticipated debut album, which is due later this year. Once more Árný Margrét's expressive vocal talent, and her knack for strong songwriting in the indie-Americana mould, point to her very real potential for international success. JP



Lord Pusswhip "Dansidans (Yves Thomas remix)"

How Lord Pusswhip isn't world famous by now is one of life's great mysteries. One of the most innovative artists in Iceland, he creates electronic soundscapes that turn your mind inside out while propelling you to the dance floor. This Yves Thomas remix marks a departure from the usual Pusswhip sound, evoking early-nineties Detroit through a dirty techno feel with harsh hints of industrial. ASF



Seabear "Parade"

Sindri Már Sigfússon and friends are back next month with their first album in ten years, and this track bodes excellently for what's to come. Seabear return with the sound for which they are best loved: cozy, intimate, imaginative indie folk. This is the aural equivalent of chatting with a good friend over a hot cup of coffee on a winter's morning. ASF

JUST SAYINGS

Að vera gráir fyrir járnum



Stop trying to bring the 800s back, Grandpa

This issue's idiom is actually related to the news of recent shootings in Reykjavík. "Að vera gráir fyrir járnum" ("To be grey with iron") means that you are well-armed. It's taken from the Viking sagas. If the Vikings had all the weapons, they often said that they were grey with iron, meaning they were fully prepared for a bloody battle. One small detail, but a pretty cool one nonetheless, is that Vikings also referred to their swords simply as steel or iron. So you would have cool sentences like; get out here before I grab my steel. This idiom is still often used in written languages in Iceland, for example in the news, when the Viking Squad (Iceland's armed police unit) is at the scene, they're gráir fyrir járnum. VG ♡

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The Optimist

First Lady of Iceland, Eliza Reid,
on her new book, writing, and
gender equality

WORDS Andie Sophia Fontaine
PHOTOS Baldur Kristján



Eliza Reid, the Canadian-born journalist and writer who ended up First Lady of Iceland after her husband, historian Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, was elected President in 2016, is probably the most approachable person in such a high office that you'll ever meet. Those who knew her "back when," this reporter included, can attest that she's still in many ways the same as she's always been: whip-smart, funny, gregarious, laid-back, and not shy to talk about her vulnerabilities.

But being First Lady obviously changes you in some ways, whether you want it to or not. You're not an elected official, but bear much of the responsibility that a head of state might, in the sense that you also represent your country to the world at large. You're placed in a position of privilege that most people will never experience. For some, that privilege can alienate them from others; for Eliza, it prompted her to seek out the stories of ordinary women in Iceland from a diversity of backgrounds, and present them in her latest book, 'Secrets Of The Sprakkar'.

It's hard to overstate what a page-turner this book is. Stories that are at times touching, hilarious, and harrowing, interspersed with Eliza's candid recounting of moments in her own life, and gently woven in with tales of some of the most famous women in Icelandic history, 'Secrets Of The Sprakkar' is more than a book to her. It's a mission, sprung from a familiar source.

Some baked, some wrote

"To be honest, there's a pragmatic answer to this," she tells me when I ask her what prompted her to write this book. "When the pandemic hit, everything shifted. Our routines shifted, and that often gives us pause to think, even though we don't intentionally go about doing that.

"For me, when the pandemic hit, the Icelandic Writers Retreat that I run was cancelled at the last minute. There are far fewer things to do as First Lady; far fewer conferences to open and events to happen. Somehow life kind of shifted, which meant that I was spending more time walking with

context of gender equality. The idea kind of grew from there."

When I mention how the book felt more like being spoken with than talked to, Eliza seemed relieved, saying she had hoped people would read 'Secrets Of The Sprakkar' feeling as though they were having a cup of coffee, or glass of wine, with her.

"I think there's a couple of things regarding the conversational nature of the book," she says. "I always wanted my voice there; I wanted it to be a relatable story. I spoke to so many different women in the book, who were sharing their own stories with me, that I feel it wasn't fair for me to not also share my points. I always wanted that personal dimension because that's just how I tell stories about facts and things, but I'm obviously in an incredibly privileged position here. So I have my own story as an immigrant in Iceland who ended up getting married to the head of state, but my story doesn't illustrate everything that there is to do with gender equality in Iceland.

"That was part of the reason why I tried to present as diverse a range of voices as I could in the book. It was really important to me to talk to regular people. When you think of who the leaders of gender equality in Iceland are, you think of all these names, and these weren't necessarily the people I wanted to talk to. I didn't necessarily want to talk to the spokesperson for this or that, or the head of this organisation, or the very first person to achieve something.

"I wanted more to talk just to regular people about how they experience life, within the context of different dimensions of society. One of the fun things—and one of the challenging things—was finding all the different people to talk to."

Passing the mic

That emphasis on diversity was important to Eliza from the start, and informed her process in deciding who to interview, and how. I pointed out that one often hears people talk about "the immigrant experience in Iceland", as if we all share the same experience, when in fact there are people whose nationalities, race, religion and sexual-

Iceland. I was a bit nervous about putting that in the immigrant chapter, because there are also a lot of locally born Icelandic women who need the services of the Women's Shelter, and not all immigrant women end up at the Women's Shelter. So I chose a woman who doesn't fit the stereotype of that; a privileged woman from a western country who said that, in some ways, she felt as though this quest for equality worked against her in her custody battle. I tried to draw attention to those situations."

Just say no to leading questions

Eliza's approach to 'Secrets Of The Sprakkar' would do an anthropologist proud. Rather than coaxing out a preferred statement on a subject with leading questions, Eliza approached her interviewees with the pure intent to tell their stories and surprise

"I don't have a grand national vision for the country. I just hope that I can do my part to make our society a better place for everyone."

preconceived notions.

"I tried to go into interviews knowing what I wanted to ask, but also with an open mind in terms of what people might answer," she says. "I hate it when I'm being interviewed and I can tell the person is just waiting for me to give them their one quote that they can use.

"So I tried to approach things with an open mind. One surprise was Elin, who runs the search and rescue team Brák, in Borgarnes. Because I thought, here's a group that's not 50/50; there are far more men who are volunteering in the search and rescue crew, and certainly more men who are running it, I thought that she might have some stories of misogyny.

"She didn't at all. She said that of all the things she's experienced, this was the most gender-blind institution.

a foreign audience, and I didn't want to introduce a book that said 'if you would just introduce laws that did X, then your country would be better'.

"I can tell the stories of people who may have benefited from legislation, but that's not the point of the book. And I hope that people's individual stories serve as inspiration for other people, so that we don't feel that working towards gender equality is something that should only be left to politicians; that this is something we can all be working towards in our society, and that it's something that's going to benefit people of all genders. That this isn't a women's issue, and this isn't an issue of women versus men; that everyone in society is going to benefit from increased equality."

Bigger isn't always better

On the subject of politics, it's important to point out that laws do not appear out of the ether; they come

from a philosophical position, and are doomed to fail without enough support at the community level. So what is it about Icelandic society, then, that has led to our level of gender equality?

"Our size is definitely an advantage, because we can see change happen faster," Eliza says. "I think a great example of that is if you look at the rights of the queer community. [Musician] Hörður Torfason was so abused by homophobia here, in the 80s even, that he moved away from Iceland, and now, we are the most open towards the LGBT community of all the OECD countries.

"That is because society decided this is something we needed to fix.

"Through activism by organisations like the National Queer Organisation of Iceland, we've seen a huge increase in the rights of individuals; most recently in the rights of the trans community, which we're still working towards and need to do more in. I think that shows that there's a will to do it, and we see the results from that more quickly here.

"I think role models are also important. Having a female president was important, having a female bishop of the National Church is important. Seeing women not just in political roles, which we're doing well in, but seeing women running companies, in the media, seeing women sporting heroes. One area where we can probably do better is in seeing women getting criticised more viciously in the media when they're coming forward and doing things. Obviously women are going to make mistakes, too, and we need to cut them some slack. Having a diversity of role models is important. I tried to illustrate in the book with these little vignettes that I have, examples of strong women from Icelandic history, some better known than others. We get momentum from that. I really think that as a society, we've passed the tipping point of 'is gender equality important' and are more at 'how are we going to achieve it?' It's important and healthy to have discussion and disagreement and debate on those issues. But I think the pendulum has swung in terms of mainstream discourse of what we're trying to achieve."

"When you think of who the leaders of gender equality in Iceland are, you think of all these names, and these weren't necessarily the people I wanted to talk to."

my kids to and from school. And when you're walking, you get all these ideas. I do have a writing and journalism background, but I didn't walk with a book in my belly, as we say in Iceland so often.

"One time when I was walking, it was around the time that [first female president] Vigdís Finnbogadóttir turned 90. We were all talking about it here, and one thought led to another. The idea was that here in Iceland, we talk about Vigdís' achievement as the first female president, but really, to outsiders, these achievements aren't known all that well.

"Somehow I had that spark of an idea that in a sense I'm an outsider; I'm an immigrant to the country. I can maybe paint a portrait of the country for people outside the country for things that are special or unique about Iceland. Not to say why Iceland is so great, or what other countries should be doing, but rather what it's like to be a woman in 'the world's best country for women', and in doing so, paint a portrait of the country within the

ity, for example, create vastly different experiences from one another.

"It was really important for me to bring that through in the book; that there's no cookie-cutter immigrant in Iceland, and no cookie-cutter immigrant experience," Eliza agrees. "Within that as well, to tread the line between acknowledging that, in general, there are unique challenges that women of foreign origin face in Iceland, that women who were born in Iceland do not face. But also, that not all immigrant women are victims of prejudice, misogyny and abuse, are exploited at every turn, and have no awareness of their rights. Specifically in the chapter when I talked about immigration and chose three different stories, I tried to use those stories to highlight the challenges but also the positive things that immigrants experience. I deliberately tried to choose people who might confound stereotypes."

She continues: "For example, I wanted to talk about someone's experience at the Women's Shelter in

When I thought about it, if you have to prove your mettle by jumping out of helicopters and swimming in the sea and climbing down cliffs, everyone probably knows that you're tough enough, whatever your gender is.

"Obviously, this is the story of one woman, and this is not to say that other women might not have experienced something, but I thought that was a really positive thing. It surprised me, but again, I tried to let people tell their stories and not try to shoe-horn them into a situation to say 'this person succeeded despite the fact that they were a woman and were fighting all the men'. Because that isn't the story for all of them."

Eliza also took care in how these stories were presented, to avoid patronising other countries who are dealing with their own struggles with gender equality.

"I'm also very cognisant of my position, so I wanted to avoid being too prescriptive of the book I wrote," she says. "I know this book is primarily for



“I see all these stories coming forward in the MeToo movement and I see people saying ‘oh my goodness, when will it end?’ I hope it ends in the sense that these situations aren’t happening anymore.”

What even is a role model?

Eliza is quick to point out that “role model” does not necessarily mean someone at the top of their field, widely known on a national or even international level.

“I think we’re all role models,” she says. “We’re not all internationally known or nationally known, but we’re known to people. We’re known to our families, we’re known to our friendship group, to our workplaces and places of worship. We can have a positive impact there, or we can have a negative impact there. If there’s one message that comes across, I want it to be that we can all make a difference, in small ways and in big ways.”

“We also need to speak up and elevate other people’s voices. I think speaking up also encourages other people to come forward. It’s so often that we might think ‘why am I going to say this when no one else has experienced this, or done this, and I’m just complaining’.”

“I feel reluctant even talking about this given how privileged I am. But when I read this piece in the New York Times about the strange role of being the First Lady—in which I wasn’t complaining about the incredible honour and privilege it is to serve in this capacity—but more just to draw attention to some of the preconceptions that people have about being identified primarily as somebody’s spouse.”

“After I wrote the story—which I hadn’t told anybody I was going to do except my husband—the night before it was going to air I couldn’t sleep. I

thought ‘why did I do this? People are just going to complain about me, I’m just asking for trouble’.

“And yet the feedback was so positive because, while not that many people end up married to a head of state, a great many people are married to someone who is professionally or otherwise better known than they are, which makes them known primarily in some instances known as someone’s spouse. A lot of people could relate to that, and it showed me, at least, that I shouldn’t be nervous about speaking up about something because some person I’ve never met before might possibly criticise me.”

Don’t read the comments

Naturally, there is still a lot of room to grow when it comes to gender equality in Iceland. Any woman who has ever dared share an opinion about anything, in a public space is likely very familiar with the shocking amount of pushback you can get for being A Woman With Opinions Online.

“As I pointed out in the book, women face a disproportionate amount of vitriol for any kind of comment that they make online,” Eliza says. “An example I used is this woman who made a very rapid comment about going to this town in the north of Iceland and didn’t like it. She didn’t recommend it, and however it was worded, she was met with just all kinds of threats and allegations that she reported to the police, they were so severe. I don’t think that would’ve happened if she had been a man.”

Room for improvement extends beyond the comment sections of articles too, of course, and few things underline that as much as the #MeToo movement. In the Grapevine’s previous cover story, we interviewed podcaster and activist Edda Falak, who pointed out that people erroneously talk about “new waves” in the movement when, to her, this is a continuous effort to fight sexual violence. Eliza very much agrees.

“Of course there’s room for improvement,” she says. “I am an optimistic person, and I always want to look on the bright side. I see all these stories coming forward in the #MeToo movement and I see people saying ‘oh my goodness, when will it end?’ I hope it ends in the sense that these situations aren’t happening anymore. But people are feeling more comfortable with coming forward now, and that’s a good thing. I want people to feel more comfortable sharing their experiences.”

Allies wanted

While the role that allies play when it comes to marginalised groups gaining hard-won freedoms is sometimes overstated, allyship is indisputably an important part of that fight. Eliza recognises this when it comes to gender equality as well.

“Having a lot of men support the idea of gender equality has been very important for how much we’ve achieved to date in this country,” she says. “Absolutely people who are committing crimes or doing bad things need to be called out, but there are a lot of male allies and men who are doing good things in this battle as well. I think we also need flexibility and an openness for people to make mistakes.”

This leads to her bringing up an example within the subject of trans liberation.

“When you talk about the trans community, for example, when we had a trans writer at the last Icelandic Writers Retreat, Ivan Coyote, they were talking about the use of pronouns,” she says. “Because a friend of mine misused their pronouns and was apologising profusely. Ivan said ‘Look,

I know when someone just makes a mistake, rather than when someone is deliberately choosing to ignore someone’s preferred form of address.’ I just remember this, because there was this nervousness like ‘I hope they don’t think this means that I’m transphobic because I’m not.’ But this also shows a position of privilege, that is this my greatest concern, that I might for one moment feel this guilt that I’ve used the wrong pronoun, rather than face misgendering 24/7? I think it’s indicative of cis peoples’ privilege.”

Eliza is also quick to correct herself when others present her with new perspectives. She recounts having given a speech on parental leave in Iceland, following which Eva María from Pink Iceland pointed out that she could have said “one parent gets three months, the other gets three months” instead of saying “mother” and “father”. Eliza accepted the suggestion readily, saying, “I always think of this, because it’s just the simplest thing and so easy to fix.”

You don’t have to be a chef to love to cook

One of Eliza’s best-known projects is the Icelandic Writers Retreat, a workshop for writing typically held once a year in Iceland. While they had to go virtual last year, Eliza and the other organisers fully plan on holding it in person this year, from April 27th through May 1st.

She quickly points out that this is not just an event for professional writers, nor even for those hoping to write for a living.

“The inspiration for the Icelandic Writer’s Retreat was to be inclusive, in the sense that we didn’t want people to feel as though they had to audition, or to qualify to attend,” she says. “I like to say it’s like, if you like to cook, and you go to Thailand for a week and take a cooking class. You might be a Michelin-star chef, or you might be someone who likes to tinker in the kitchen. You both learn something, because you’re both in a new location, and you both have the same passion. And it works. We get people who are full time writers, we get people who are writing in a professional context, people who are trying to break into the world of mainstream publishing, people who have no ambitions to publish anything but tinker in their diary, or are working on a memoir for their family. We don’t focus on the business of writing; we don’t have classes on how to get an agent, or how to get published. It’s just about the craft of writing.”

Trying not to be a politician

Like being president, Eliza sees being First Lady as being a unifying figure for the country; focusing more on ideals and goals rather than the politicisation thereof. It’s a line that needs to be trodden carefully, but one that Eliza follows with a simple goal in mind.

“I acknowledge that I’m not only not a politician; I feel like I ought to deliberately not wade into the specifically political fray,” she says. “One of the things that I think is great about Iceland is I’m writing a book about gender equality, and it’s not a super-sensitive issue here. I couldn’t avoid talking to any political people, but I tried to be diverse in terms of their backgrounds and not be specific about any parties.”

“I don’t have a grand national vision for the country. I just hope that I can do my part to make our society a better place for everyone.”

Happening

Find today's events
in Iceland!
Download our free
listings app - APPENING
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Android stores



An Album To Pray To

Salóme Katrín, ZAAR and RAKEL

March 25th - 20:00 - Fríkirkjan -
3,600 ISK

The holy trinity appear at Reykjavík's best ecclesiastical gig venue, launching their new collaborative album 'While We Wait' with the help of a host of musical friends. They'll play their new release in full, along with a selection of older tracks from each of them. Turn to page 18 to read our interview with Salóme Katrín, ZAAR and RAKEL on the making of the record. **JP**



Burlesque Bash

The Tutti Frutties

March 10th - 20:00 - Gaukurinn -
2,900 ISK

Now that you night-lifers can gather again to indulge in mutual close-proximity heavy breathing, you might as well find something worth panting over. Enter Gaukurinn! Where you'll find saucy frolicking and naughtiness a-plenty as The Tutti Frutties get you gasping all over the person next to you. Silver Foxy presents a line-up promising both veteran burlesquers and virginal newbies, including Vice Versa, Twinkle Starr and Pixie Day. **JP**



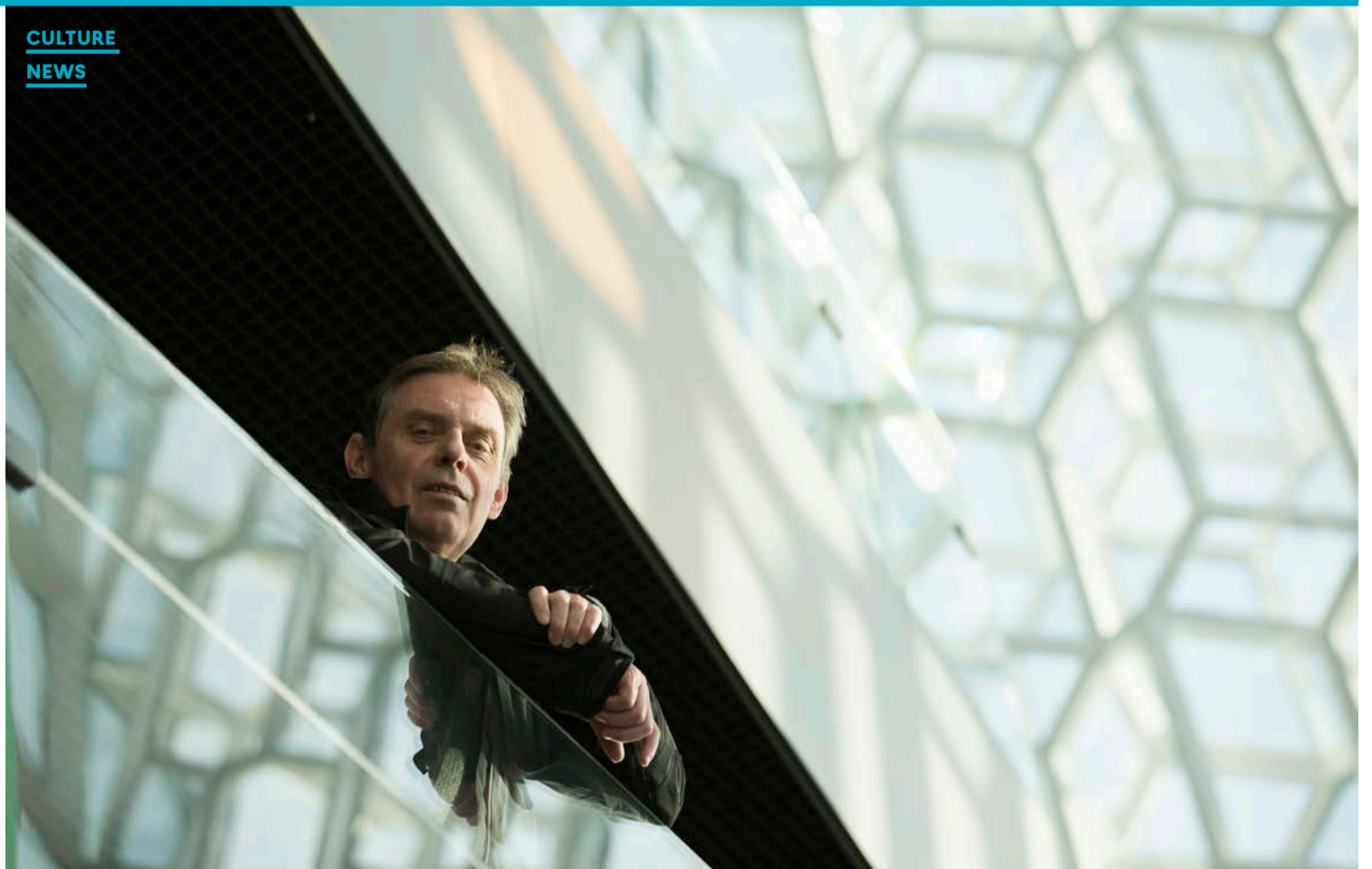
25 Years (Ok... 27 Now)

GusGus

March 18th & 19th - 20:00 & 22:30 -
Harpa - 5,990 to 12,990 ISK

The electronic music legends celebrate a quarter-century of existence with four separate shows at Harpa. Actually their 25-year anniversary was more like 2020, but due to pandemic shenanigans this live celebration has been hopping around the GusGus dairy like a frog in a sock. Hopefully—this time!—it will stay put. Mainstays of the collective Biggi and Daniel will be joined by (relatively) new recruit Margrét Rán, and other friends from the GusGus universe. **JP**

CULTURE NEWS



The Perception Of Dark Sounds

Iceland's most unusual music festival has begun

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

"The festival will be, in some senses, more technical and visual. Therefore we hope that the experience will be stronger and more in-depth," says Ásmundur Jónsson, the curator of Dark Music Days, the most intriguing music festival in Iceland. The festival has been held yearly since 1980, and was founded by the Icelandic Composers' Society. Its purpose is to give new composers a venue to experiment and introduce contemporary classical music to the public.

Brimming music festival

Dark Music Days is not your typical music festival; it's brimming with cutting edge performances. From Sóley Stefánsdóttir, who received this year's Reykjavík Grapevine Music Award for album of the year, to Anna Porvaldsdóttir, Iceland's most prominent contemporary composer and former cover star at The Reykjavík Grapevine. And of course, the unique Bára Gísladóttir, who often collaborates with famed composer and bassist Skúli Sverrisson

The curator newsworthy in itself

But the curator himself, Ásmundur Jónsson, is a chapter in the history of Icelandic music. The record company Smekkleysa was founded by The Sugarcubes, and one of the singers of the band, a certain Björk, became not only world-famous later on but always released her albums under the banner of Smekkleysa in Iceland. Other bands with the same record companies were Sigur Rós as well as Múm. In short, Dark Music Days is in the capable hands of a legendary force within Icelandic music.

The fourth try

Ásmundur accepted to curate the festival in 2020 but instead of proceeding as planned, the pandemic brought the world to a screeching halt...

"This is, in some sense, the fourth attempt

to start the festival," Ásmundur says. The festival was scheduled to be held in late January, and was pushed back by the pandemic. But Iceland has no restrictions for now, and it's time for culture to shine through the darkness of the world.

Some events have happened already though. The New York group Ice Assemble, who have often collaborated with Anna Porvaldsdóttir, held an online concert last year with the composers Anthony Braxton and Bergrún Snæbjörnssdóttir. They will perform the concert again—this time actually at the festival, and under very different circumstances—with Caput Ensemble.

Visual experience

Ásmundur says that one of the things guests can expect is not only an emphasis on the visuals of the music, but on sound quality as well.

"We are using technology more than often before, for example guests will experience the

music in 9.1 surround sound as well as quadraphonic sound. The visual aspects are also there, and quite complicated as well. This is a quality of sound and visuals that you don't often hear in live performances, and I want to emphasise that. I'm expecting a very strong experience," Ásmundur explains.

Breaking conventional ideas

Speaking from experience, Dark Music Days is quite unique and does not provide your usual concert experience. Concerts are not only highly experimental, with roots in contemporary classical music, but often break conventional ideas that some might have when it comes to music.

"I think this is true," Ásmundur agrees. "Dark Music Days is an experience for people that want to find, hear and feel something new. Something that they have never felt before."

"You can feel it quite well in Icelandic society right now, that there are a lot of new ideas coming up, and the new contemporary scene in Iceland is gathering international attention. Just as an example, there was a big article in BBC's Music Magazine about this wave in Iceland." 🐦

The festival is on now and runs through March 12th. Buy your tickets at darkmusicdays.is



Ásmundur muses the dark days to come



An NFT by Rachel Wood

New Frontiers of Technology

How artists in Iceland are using NFTs to change the landscape around them... forever

Words: **Josie Gaitens** Photos: **Eyrún Lydíá & Rachel Wood**

On March 11th, 2021, an artist, known to his online fans as 'Beeple', made history. His digital piece, entitled 'Everydays - The First 5000 Days' was listed by the prestigious auction house Christie's, and sold for a whopping sum of 69.3 million USD. While figures like this are not uncommon in high-level art, Beeple's work at the time certainly was. Why? Because what Beeple sold was an NFT.

NFTs, which stands for 'Non Fungible Tokens', are not the simplest concept to explain. Similar to cryptocurrencies, their existence and ownership is recorded via blockchains, and they cannot be replicated. NFTs can be memes, videos, paintings, digital art, music—in fact, more or less anything can be 'tokenised' and sold as an NFT, including, recently, tickets to the US Superbowl. These tokens are then bought and sold online using cryptocurrencies – which themselves are tokens that exist on a blockchain.

A record-breaking year

Confused? You're not alone. But while many of us balk at anything relating to cryptocurrencies, the rest are looking for ways to seize opportunities. It's undeniable that some individuals have become very, very rich from NFTs. Although their existence predates Beeple's work, his sale last March—which was the first time a major auction house listed a purely-NFT art piece—broke the record for most expensive NFT artwork sold. It also launched NFTs firmly into the mainstream, creating an

almost hysterical frenzy around them. A year into the global pandemic, with the accompanying impending sense of doom growing every minute, many of us were stuck at home with additional disposable income and time on our hands. Desperate for distraction and stimulation, NFTs offered a salve to myriad needs: creativity, community, thrill, money. In 2020 total NFT sales amounted to 94.9 million USD; in 2021 that figure was 24.9 billion.

In addition to their popularity with investors, NFTs quickly caught the attention of artists as a way to monetise their work. All over the world, creators who had relied on second jobs to pay the rent were finding themselves out of work and terrifyingly broke. Iceland, with its emphasis on tourism and the gig economy, was no exception.

New beginnings

At the beginning of 2020, Norris Niman, originally from Sweden, was working in Iceland as a guide, building up his photography portfolio and Instagram following on the side. Things were going well—until Covid hit. Like most guides in Iceland, Norris's job disappeared overnight.

"I read somewhere that you can call yourself a photographer when you make most of your income through photography. When I couldn't guide anymore, I wasn't making money anymore. I became a photographer by default," he jokes.

He wasn't the only one. Ryan

Wanaka Newburn was also living and working in Iceland as a guide, and had actually just launched his own glacier guiding company before the pandemic struck. However, like Norris, he saw the lack of tourism work as an opportunity to throw himself into his artistic practice.

"I think Covid allowed us the opportunity to decide if we're going to sink or swim," Ryan says philosophically, of himself and his photography peers. "For better or for worse, COVID really propelled me forwards."

Ryan remembers very clearly when he first heard about NFTs, in the spring of 2021. He'd just arrived back to Iceland from a trip and a group of fellow photography friends threw him a welcome-back gathering.

"We were sitting down and Dani Guindo mentioned NFTs. I didn't really know much about them. It sounded kind of intimidating to me at the time. Much like most people, I just thought 'This sounds overwhelming,'" he explains.

He changed his mind quickly after he saw another friend, Cath Simard had sold a single NFT photo for 16,000 USD. "I called Cath straight away," Ryan recalls. "I rang her and just said, 'What the hell is an NFT and how do I make 16,000 dollars on one of my photos?'"

Jargon galore

Cath introduced Ryan to the process of creating, or 'minting' his work to sell on one of the NFT platforms, as well as, crucially, advertising his pieces via twitter. It

turns out that Twitter is the main avenue for NFT creators, sellers and buyers to interact with each other – an online gallery community, if you will, with specific ways of conversing and jargon galore.

Ryan was one of the lucky ones—in the right place at the right time, as he explains it. The first pieces that he listed were snapped up by a renowned NFT collector, for 3 Ethereum (eth)—or the equivalent of 8,000 USD—each.

"Before this, I would get excited to sell a print for \$100," Ryan says.

Controversial currencies

But the attention around NFTs is far from wholly positive. NFTs, as well as the cryptocurrencies that they rely on, are incredibly energy-intensive. Ethereum, one of the most common currencies for purchasing NFTs, consumes the same amount of electricity as the entire country of Libya. Some estimates have put the carbon emissions of an average NFT at 211 kg—the equivalent of a two hour flight. One could argue that for photographers of Icelandic nature—an environment that is very much under threat due to climate change—there is an inherent irony in selling NFTs.

Photographer Rachel Wood disagrees. "I think the idea that the energy consumption of NFTs is so bad is not right, compared to other activities that you might be doing," she protests. "This is the very beginning, kind of like cars.

Yeah, they were horrendous, but now they're getting much better. I think that's gonna be the same thing with NFTs"

Ryan agrees, adding, "I find it really funny what carbon footprints people pay attention to, and what they choose not to pay attention to. They see people making money on this platform. So it's like, 'oh, well, we're gonna pay attention to that.'"

"Here to stay"

Ryan also sees possibilities for Iceland specifically in regards to the decarbonisation of NFTs going forward.

"There's a reason that Iceland has the largest Bitcoin mining platforms in the world right now," he says. "I think that Iceland is going to be a place to really spark some conversation about utilising this sort of renewable energy versus other energy that isn't so sustainable."

For those who were hoping that NFTs were a craze that would simply blow over, it's looking less and less likely. Later this year Ryan and some of his fellow NFT creators will hold Iceland's first ever NFT convention, which they hope will draw visitors from all over the world. Despite sales slowing in 2022, he is convinced in the longevity of the concept: "If you want my brutally honest opinion, even if the bubble bursts, NFTs are here to stay." 🍷



"NFTs are here to stay."

Farmers Market

ICELAND



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Mmmm! Falafel donuts...

Falafel Friday

Craving good falafel? Then these five spots are for you

Words: [Iryna Zubenko](#) & [Valur Grettisson](#) Photos: [Various](#)



Zorbian

[Hringbraut 119, Reykjavík](#)

Zorbian is relatively new in the market, but has already made some serious impact on the neighbourhood of Vesturbær. They offer wonderful falafels as well as more traditional dishes from the Middle East, and never fail to deliver a tasty dish. The restaurant is a little bit out of the way of downtown—roughly a 15-minute walk from the centre. The place is cosy and gives you the opportunity to check out the Vesturbær locals while you eat. [VG](#)

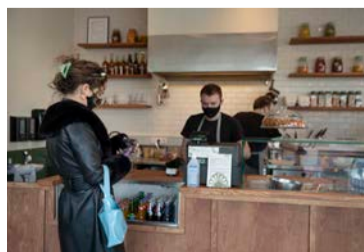
A good falafel is like a hug: warm, hearty, and satisfying. Falafel is the ultimate hangover food and a go-to meal on a night out. And while Reykjavík might not be the falafel capital of the world, the Grapevine team went out of their way to find some of the best examples of this simple comfort food in town.



Lamb Street Food

[Grandagarður 7, Reykjavík](#)

Despite the name suggesting the opposite, Lamb Street Food offers three options of vegan falafels wrapped in grilled flatbread. Located right at the old harbour area known as Grandi, LSF could be a good option for a lunch break after a long stroll along the seafront. “No place beats this one for value per króna spent”—reads one of the recent LSF reviews, and we know Tripadvisor reviews don't lie. [IZ](#)



Chickpea

[Hallveigarstígur 1, Reykjavík](#)

“A world-class falafel,” I'm told, Chickpea never disappoints. The family-run restaurant offers falafel in four types of sandwiches, served either in a flatbread or pita, and in falafel salad bowls. Plus there's a soup of the day. While it might be considered a mono-restaurant, Chickpea's falafel definitely wouldn't come across as traditional or boring. The team constantly tries to update the menu, integrating seasonal ingredients or an exotic touch, e.g. mango aioli. Beware: not all falafel sandwiches at Chickpea are vegan—double-check for added dairy. [IZ](#)



Mandi

[Veltusund 3b, Reykjavík](#)

Mandi is probably the most popular place in Reykjavík for falafel right now. And there is a damn good reason for that. The falafel is solid, although there are two versions of it. The one for Icelanders that don't like strong food, and the one that is really hot and can keep you warm for the rest of the day. Just ask for that hot sauce and they will serve you right up. [VG](#)



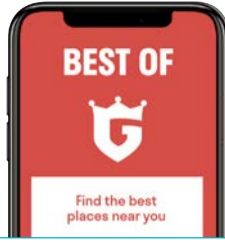
Arabian Taste

[Laugavegur 87, Reykjavík](#)

Unremarkable from the outside, Arabian Taste serves a selection of Syrian and Arabic dishes, including tasty falafel. You can choose between a falafel roll, Arabian falafel that comes with rice, or a falafel plate with hummus and salad on the side. Hot sauce or not? The choice is yours. Arabian Taste is located right on Laugavegur and is open until 11 pm on weekdays and until 2 am on Fridays and Saturdays, which makes it a perfect place to stop by before or after going out. [IZ](#) [G](#)

March 4th — March 31st

In Your Pocket



Reykjavík Map

Places We Like

Best Of Reykjavík

Perfect Day

Dance, jive & have the time of your life



Words: [Iryna Zubenko](#)
Photo: [Provided by Ása](#)

Ása Steinars

Ása Steinars is an Icelandic photographer and content creator. Her love for photography and traveling has taken her many places around the world, but her home is in Iceland. She is an editor and nature expert for *Vogue Scandinavia*. Here's how her perfect day in Reykjavík would play out.

Morning coffee downtown

I'm a late starter who loves a good sleep-in. When I wake up, I love going out straight away and heading downtown to grab a coffee. I live really close to Ingólfstorg, so often I go grab a coffee at either **Ida Zimsen** or **Kaffi Ó-le**. I love the cafes around downtown Reykjavík, so I don't mind staying for a bit to do some work or meet up with friends.

A quick ski workout

I love skiing, so for my perfect day, I'd head over to **Bláfjöll** for a few runs before lunch. I can't think of a better way to spend a morning. However, of course it depends on the weather. If conditions aren't right to ski, I might just stroll around the shops and enjoy being outside in Reykjavík.

Lunch at the town's hidden gem

I would stay downtown and meet up with some friends for lunch. One hidden gem that I really like is **Mama Reykjavík**. They have amazing vegan food and such great vibes. If not there, I really like **Kopar** with a view over the harbour.

Afternoon dip and a bit of extreme

After lunch, I'd continue to a pool. On a sunny day, I really like to go to Naúthólsvík to get in a cold water dip

as well. Or I head over to **Sky Lagoon** with my boyfriend for a romantic afternoon and maybe a glass of champagne. On the way back into town I would stop by **Perlan** for a quick ride on their zipline—that one is a lot of fun!

Sushi and cocktails on a night out

If I can choose any dinner I want I always go for sushi. It's by far my favourite food and I'm also such a big fan of Japan. I would probably go to **Sushi Social**, since they also have great cocktails, or perhaps **Gaia**, which just opened in the harbour.

Of course, ice cream

On the way home, my boyfriend would insist that we stop at **Gaeta Gelato** for ice cream and I certainly wouldn't object. Their ice cream is something else! 🍦

Vital Info



USEFUL NUMBERS

Emergency: 112
On-call doctors: 1770
Dental emergency: 575 0505
Taxi: Hreyfill: 588 5522 or BSR: 561 0000

POST OFFICE

The downtown post office is located at Hagatorg 1, and is open Mon–Fri, 09:00–17:00

PHARMACIES

Lyf og Heilsa, Fiskislóð 1, tel: 561 4600
Lyfja, Hafnarstræti 19, tel: 552 4045

OPENING HOURS - BARS & CLUBS

Under current pandemic restrictions bars can stay open until 21:00

OPENING HOURS - SHOPS & BANKS

Most shops: Mon–Fri 10:00–18:00, Sat 10:00–16:00, Sun closed
Banks: Mon–Fri 9:00–16:00

SWIMMING POOLS

Sundhöllin on Barónsstígur is an outdoor swimming pool with hot tubs. For more pools visit gpv.is/swim
Open: Mon–Thu 6:30–22:00, Sat 8:00–16:00 Sun 10:00–18:00

PUBLIC TOILETS

Public toilets can be found at Hlemmur and in the round kiosks on Ingólfstorg, by Hallgrímskirkja, by Reykjavík Art Museum, on Lækjargata and by Eymundsson on Skólavörðustígur. Toilets can also be found inside the Reykjavík City Hall and the Reykjavík Library

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Most buses run every 20 to 30 minutes
Fare: 490 ISK adults, 245 ISK children.
Buses generally run 6:00–24:00 on weekdays and 7:00–04:30 on weekends. For more info visit www.bus.is



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A

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Cocktails
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B



FÓTÓGRAFI
Souvenir shop
Skólavörðustígur 22

C

Wine bar
& food



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The Map

Get the bigger, more detailed version of The Reykjavík Grapevine City Map at your nearest hotel or guesthouse, with selections from our Best-Of awards, vital info, downtown bus stops and a wider view of the city.

Dining

1. Blackbox Pizza

Borgartún 26

Blackbox is a solid competitor for best pizza pie in the city. Thin crust, inventive toppings, delivery—what else could you ask for? We'd particularly recommend the Parma Rucola, which serves up all the parma ham goodness you could wish for. For those journeying outside the city, they've also got a location in Akureyri.

2. Chikin

Ingólfsstræti 2

This ain't your mama's KFC. No, Chikin—Reykjavík's first dedicated hot chicken and bao joint—manages to be at once both totally sophisticated foodie cuisine and also food that'll definitely fill the hole in your soul you usually quench with a spicy Twister. So grab some chicken with pickled daikon, shiitake mushrooms, miso mayo and lots of other delicacies.

3. Hosiló

Hverfisgata 12

A newcomer on the block who has certainly made a big stir! Hosiló is a small spot—seating around 30 patrons at full capacity—that offers an eclectic rotating menu of local fresh food. The offerings feature meals from around the world, from French cuisine to Northern Africa goodness, and much more.

4. Kaffi Laugalækur

Laugarnesvegur 74a

For many a young parent, the cafe stop at the end of a long stroll is the proverbial pot of gold. Kaffi Lækur is especially popular with new parents, with a special kids' corner for crawlers and drawers. The generously topped chicken and pesto 'litla gula hænán' and the 'shawaramabake' are our top lunch picks. Also, if you're keto, don't miss 'em,

5. Brauð & Co

Frakkastígur 16

First off—don't miss Brauð & Co's pretzel croissants unless you really don't want to have a spiritual experience. We also swear by their "snuður"—cinnamon bread rolls smothered with a sugary glaze. They take it a step further and stuff the classics with blueberries and whatnot, eliciting inappropriate satisfied moans. Get there early to snatch a warm one.

6. Snaps

Pórsgrata 1

Year after year, regardless of how many restaurants open and close, Snaps remains a timeless classic. Be it lunch, date-night dinner, lazy weekend brunches or a boisterous Christmas work party, Snaps is the perfect venue for a boatload of memories. Steady standbys include the deeply savoury onion soup (with a union of its own we suspect), the house-made fries with crispy rosemary that begs to be a meal on its own, and a textbook crème brûlée topped with an envious snap.

7. Hlemmur Mathöll

Hlemmur

Once a bus station and now a bustling food hall—we love a repurposed space. Hlemmur Mathöll is a classic in the Reykjavík dining scene, with everything from Vietnamese street food to delicious gelato to old school Italian pizza present. Yum.

8. Dragon Dim Sum

Bergstaðastræti 4

For those of us longing for dim sum in Reykjavík, cravings have often had to be satisfied with daydreams of visits past to dim sum houses of Chinatowns abroad. But then Dragon Dim Sum arrived with their fare, which is the perfect marriage between Icelandic ingredients and labouring of Asian dim sum passion. Don't miss their bao or shao mai, and don't worry, their carrot vegan dumplings are also sublime.

9. Lamb Street Food

Grandagarður 7

Pure Icelandic lamb with a middle eastern twist—that's what you'll get at this juicy local eatery where pure kebab is served up with no processed meat. For all you vegans though, never fear, the fresh made salads and hummus are equally wowing. This ain't your regular kebab spot.

10. Laundromat

Austurstræti 9

Have you ever wanted to have lunch and do your laundry in a public place? You're in luck. The Laundromat Cafe on Austurstræti is open (again) for business. Whether you want brunch, a sandwich, or a burger, they have a quality selection of food made to order. Their brunch ain't nothing to scoff at either,

11. Nauthóll

Nauthólsvegur 106

Just behind the University of Reykjavík overlooking the Nauthólsvík geothermal beach is Nauthóll, the definition of a hidden summertime gem. The restaurant is one of those places that downtown Reykjavík rats might call "too far away," but with the advent of public scooters, you can arrive there in style in but 15 minutes. Without hyperbole, there probably isn't a better outdoor view in the city than this place—and their Scandinavian fare is good too.

Drinking

12. Prikíð

Bankastræti 12

Prikíð is the bar version of the "I'm going to bed early tonight vs. me at 3 a.m." meme. At 22:00 you'll have a bunch of regulars relaxing at the bar sipping brews, but arrive at 3:00 and it's Project X. Their outdoor smoking area should be applauded too. Hang out long enough and you'll be sure to buddy up and find an afterparty.

13. Röntgen

Hverfisgata 12

If the cancellation of literally everything is damping your glamorous rock and roll style, Röntgen at Hverfisgata 12 will cure what ails you. This place—a relative newcomer—is already a stalwart in the bar scene, with a stellar atmosphere, great drinks and a lineup of the best DJs in Iceland. Just remember to raise a glass to the good doctor Wilhelm Röntgen (who discovered x-rays) while sipping your tipples.

14. Húrra

Tryggvagata 22

Húrra is BACK! ARE YOU SERIOUS? YES, WE ARE! After a despairing absence from the local scene, the beloved favourite has returned with a vengeance. Seriously—in the few weeks they've been open, the bar/venue has already had shows from heavyweights like Skrattar, Skóffinn and Mannveira. Stop by for vibes, alcohol and other fun things like that you know. Also, their bathroom renovation is pretty crazy.

15. Veður

Klapparstígur 33

This charming, low-key, hole-in-the-wall serves up some great cocktails and a dedicated crowd that has grabbed the heart of the Grapevine, even though we are a magazine and not humans. If you feel fine relaxing and chatting, it's still a nice and sophisticated bar, but they've also got an edge. Sometimes they play punk music. \m/

16. Íslenski Barinn

Ingólfsstræti 1a

Of the many nation-themed drinking



establishments in Reykjavík, The Icelandic Bar is the only one that is also a restaurant. Go there at night and maybe you'll meet an elf or Björk or something—that's all people know about Iceland anyway.

17. Mál og Menning

Laugavegur 18b

Wait, a new bar/music venue? Yup! And you thought the pandemic had destroyed all culture in this town. But never fear—Bókabúðir Máls og Menningar is here. There's live music most nights, from DJs to jazz, and during the day, the legendary Bókin is operating from the basement. Seriously—we anticipate this place will be a game-changer in the local cultural scene. Takk fyrir.

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New In Town ☆



Höfuðstöðin

Rafstöðvarvegur 1a, 110 Reykjavík

Höfuðstöðin is a new art and culture destination that opened recently in Reykjavík. The space will permanently house the monumental installation Chromo Sapiens by Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir, aka Shoplifter—an Icelandic artist based in New York. Höfuðstöðin also includes a cafe and a design store, with most of its furniture made from recycled plastic. [IZ](#)

Photo by Adam Flint

I

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HAFNARSTRÆTI 101 REYKJAVÍK

STÉL

18. Dillon

Laugavegur 30

A mix between grunge and classy, Dillon Whiskey Bar dominates their little stretch of Laugavegur. Crammed most nights with rockers, metalheads, and tourists looking for a place to mumble AC/DC songs into their beer, Dillon boasts a wide selection of over 100 whiskies and hosts some of Iceland's best hard rock bands on the weekends.

19. Petersen svítan

Austurstræti 12

The sun is finally out, which means it's time for your annual pilgrimage to Petersen svítan. Never been? Well, make sure to bring your sunglasses

because this place has one of the best views in Reykjavik and also very fashionable clientele. Look over the city and have a beer in almost entirely direct sunlight (!!!!!!!!!!!).

Shopping

20. Íslenska Húðflúrstofan

Ingólfsstræti 3

This classic shop caters to all styles, with a roster of artists that serve up everything from realism to new-school and more. We'd particularly recommend the hand-poked pieces by Habba (@habbanerotattoo). Not only are they gorgeously ornate in that straight-out-of-800-AD-way, but they might save you from spirits.

21. Nielsen Sérverzlun

Bankastræti 4

Way more than your average design store, Nielsen is filled to the brim with knick-knacks from all over, from gorgeous diaries to cosy towels and all the candles you could desire. Stop by, grab something for a gift and don't forget a little something for yourself.

22. Fótógrafi

Skólavörðustígur 22

Fótógrafi claims to have been one of the first photo galleries in town. While its interior is tiny, there's a surprising number of photos to be found inside. The pictures on display are mainly shot in Reykjavík or

elsewhere in Iceland and all of them have a slightly different, edgy take on the island, instead of adding to the abundance of touristy subjects.

23. Stefánsbúð/p3

Laugavegur 7

Stefánsbúð showcases local designers and second-hand high-fashion finds (hello 1990's Gucci!) as well as accessories from quirky international brands. Fun and zany, you don't know what you're going to find but you know it'll be exciting.

24. Lucky Records

Rauðarárstígur 10

Lucky Records is probably the biggest record shop in Iceland, with

shelves upon shelves of new and used vinyl and CDs on offer. If that's not enough, they're notorious for their expert staff whose knowledge goes far beyond the latest Björk or Sigur Rós offerings. In fact, it's best if you just let them take the lead.

25. Húrra Reykjavík

Hverfisgata 18A

This minimalist streetwear/athleisure store serves up a mixed selection of classic items and trendy cuts. They were massively hyped when they opened a few years ago and have stayed hyped because they know what they are doing and are damn good at it.

H

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Music Raised To The Power Of Three

Salóme Katrín, ZAAR and RAKEL reveal the potency of peel

Words:
John Pearson

Photo:
Kaja Sigvalda



"It's a grapefruit, actually," Raket Sigurðardóttir gently points out as we discuss a papier-mâché sculpture of a citrus fruit. To be fair it does look rather like a blood orange but, despite the name of the paper, becoming a Grapevine journalist doesn't involve a test in fruit identification.

It turns out the piece—by Auður Lóa Guðnadóttir—is called 'Three Ways To Cut A Grapefruit'. (If only there had been a clue in the name!) A photo of it adorns the cover of the album 'While We Wait', recently released by Reykjavík musicians Raket, Sara Flindt (aka ZAAR) and Salóme Katrín Magnúsdóttir.

Salóme Katrín picks up the fruity theme: "The grapefruit symbolises many things, and has this feminine energy to it. And the sculpture has these three little peels next to the grapefruit; that's the three of us. There's some sort of magic awesomeness. The power of three—us three. It's just perfect!"

Seven segments

This zesty trio have poured their collective feminine energy into this album, which features a pair of tracks from each of them along with a three-handed collaboration. "We had no idea what we were going into," Sara says of the album

recording process. "We just knew we wanted to make a record together, and we wanted to have two songs each."

The seven songs, while spanning a range of styles, sit well together as a coherent listen across the album. That's not necessarily a given in this kind of project, and the trio put it down to the musical and personal bonds they instantly formed when they met at Reykjavík's FÍH music school.

"Yeah, we've all played in each other's projects so we're in tune in that way. We spend a lot of time together musically," says Raket. "Also we work together a lot," she adds, referring to their decision to self-manage the record's release. "I think that probably does have an effect."

Pandemic project

A major influence on the album has been—predictably in these times—the pandemic. In fact, the idea for the project was sparked by a live stream back in the locked-down times of October 2020 when gigging in Iceland was virtually impossible—except, of course, virtually. The three friends set up in the venue Mengi, with no audience, and broadcast themselves online each playing their own compositions but also collaborating on other material.

Sara reflects: "I was just thinking, 'Why did we do that again?' And I remember now that we were craving to play a concert. We hadn't played for a year, and I guess we just looked at each other and said 'We need to do something together.'"

World tour (Denmark not included)

The album was released on the 25th of February, the same day on which all domestic and border pandemic restrictions were swept away in Iceland. So a

project born of anti-contagion measures came to fruition on the day that those measures were rescinded. Also on that day, Iceland suffered its record high in confirmed COVID infections since the pandemic began.

But the policy change has made it easier for Salóme Katrín, Sara and Raket to take the album out on the road, and scratch that live performance itch. This month they play Akureyri, where Raket grew up, and Ísafjörður, Salóme Katrín's old stomping ground, before a final date at Reykjavík's Frikirkjan. So they're not popping over to Denmark to play Sara's

hometown of Silkeborg? "Well thankfully we did receive some grants to make this record, but unfortunately they don't cover flying us all to Denmark," Salóme Katrín laughs.

Not having a label behind you can be difficult. But as these self-described "three little peels" learn to manage their own creative business, the feminine power represented by Auður's grapefruit is made real. They have created some remarkable music together, and are now becoming well-versed in taking it out into the world independently.

"And we're experts on fruit," Raket reiterates, just in case anyone had forgotten. 🍊

The trio will play at Turnhúsið in Ísafjörður on March 5th and Frikirkjan in Reykjavík on March 25th. 'While We Wait' is available now on the usual streaming services and the vinyl version will be available from mid-March.



gpv.is/music
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Event Picks



★ **Damon Albarn**

March 11th - 20:00 - Harpa - 7,990 to 14,990 ISK

English musician Damon Albarn—best known as the man behind Blur and Gorillaz—has conducted a long-running love affair with Iceland. Following the

realisation that the black sand over which he flew in his recurring childhood dream was an Icelandic beach, the next quarter of a century saw him

increasingly investing parts of his life in our North Atlantic rock. Now he is the proud owner of an Icelandic passport, and a luxurious home overlooking Mount Esja. It was from this picturesque base that he wrote his most recent solo work, the album 'The Nearer The Fountain, More Pure The Stream Flows'. Damon and his ensemble will play the album in its entirety, in what will be his first Icelandic concert in 23 years. **JP**



★ **Benni Hemm Hemm & The Melting Diamond Band**

March 10th - 21:00 - Mengi - 2,500 ISK

Former indie stalwart Benni deviated sharply last year into the experimental and the improvisational, as shown on his first album under the new flag of the Melting Diamond Band. The second—'Benni Hemm Hemm & The Melting Diamond Band II'—gets a full live outing at this release party, (see page 24 for more info). Expect the unexpected. **JP**



★ **Sóley presents Harmónik**

March 7th - 20:00 - Harpa - 2,900 ISK

Sóley Stefánsdóttir, recent recipient of a Grapevine Music Awards, turns her focus again to her ongoing Harmónik accordion project. This concert—with Hekla Magnúsdóttir on theremin, and Kristín Þóra Haraldsdóttir playing the viola—is part of the Dark Music Days festival, (see page 11 for more details). Expect spiky sounds and delightful dissonance. **JP**



MUSIC NEWS A seventeen-year-old Icelandic, **Konráð Darri Birgisson**, hit the jackpot when the master of hip-hop, Kanye West used a part of his song on his new album 'Donda 2'. The song's name is "Louie Bags" and it's pretty impressive. Of course, there is no way to deny it: Kanye changed the game with his original approach to the genre and single-handedly has shaped a new generation of musicians. Konráð is the son of a well-known Icelandic musician, Birgir Konráð Sigurðsson (Biggi Bix), and has been living in the US for years now.

March 4th — March 31st

Upcoming Events

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

Yay! No more pandemic restrictions! Don't hold your breath, though; we've been here before. So get out and enjoy the nightlife while you can. Here's how...

Friday March 4th

Forsmán, Svartpoka and Nornahetta
20:00 Gaukurinn
The Cartography of Time - Dark Music Days
19:30 Harpa
Just a Closer Walk With Thee - Dark Music Days
21:00 Harpa
Hipsumhaps, Dr. Gunni and Sucks To Be You, Nigel
20:00 Húrra
Friðrik og Félagar
20:00 Mál og Menning
Jór Saxophone Quartet
21:00 Mengi
SunSong
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Saturday March 5th

Le Bruit Des Moteurs - French Film Festival
21:00 Bíó Paradís
Oh My Goth
20:00 Gaukurinn
Svavar Knútur
20:00 Mál og Menning
Látun + Funky Lucky 7" DJ set
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Sunday March 6th

Solitaire - Dark Music Days
15:00 Harpa
The Reykjavik Chamber Orchestra - Dark Music Days
20:00 Harpa
Baldur og Jón Arnór
16:00 Mál og Menning

Monday March 7th

Mánudjass - Monday Night Jazz Jam
20:00 Skuggabaldur
Bring The Laughs
20:00 Gaukurinn
★ **Sóley presents Harmónik - Dark Music Days**
20:00 Harpa
Silja Rós
20:00 Harpa

Tuesday March 8th

Karaoke Tuesday
20:00 Gaukurinn
The Moonbow Project - Dark Music Days
20:00 Harpa
Ómar Einarsson Tríó
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Wednesday March 9th

Richard Andersson NOR - Múlinn Jazzclub
20:00 Harpa
Kolbeinn
20:00 Mál og Menning
Ingibjörg Turchi Tríó
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Thursday March 10th

★ **The Tutti Frutties - Burlesque**
20:00 Gaukurinn
Moses Hightower
20:00 Húrra
★ **Benni Hemm Hemm & The Melting Diamond Band**
21:00 Mengi
Hans Olding Quartet
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Friday March 11th

Apocalypstick Drag Kabarett
20:00 Gaukurinn
Ingi Bjarni Quintet - Múlinn Jazzclub
20:00 Harpa
★ **Damon Albarn**
20:00 Harpa
Sigg Flosa and Hans Olding
20:00 Mál og Menning
Mengi Lifi Reykjavik
21:00 Mengi
NOR Trio
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Saturday March 12th

Morpholith, PORT and Krownest
20:00 Gaukurinn
Iceland Symphony Orchestra - Children's Hour
11:30 Harpa

Dimma

19:30 Harpa
Ung Nordisk Musik
20:00 Mengi

Sunday March 13th

Barokkbandið Brák
16:00 Harpa
Duo Harpverk
21:00 Mengi
Ragnheiður Gröndal & Birgir Steinn
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Tuesday March 15th

Phil Doyle Duo
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Wednesday March 16th

The Chamber Music Club
16:30 Harpa
Björn Thoroddson & Unnur Birna
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Thursday March 17th

Iceland Symphony Orchestra - A German Requiem
19:30 Harpa
GG Blús
20:00 Mál og Menning
Þorgrímur Jónsson Quartet
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Friday March 18th

★ **GusGus**
20:00 & 23:00 Harpa
Sycamore Tree
20:00 Mál og Menning
Spaðabani, Soddill & Örlygur Steinar Arnalds
19:00 Mengi
Gaddavir, Celestine, Guðir Hins Nýja Tíma and Volcanova
19:00 R6013
Arnold Lugvig Quintet
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Saturday March 19th

Eistnaflug Festival Warm Up
20:00 Gaukurinn
★ **GusGus**
20:00 & 23:00 Harpa
Böss
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Sunday March 20th

Hildur Vala & Band
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Tuesday March 22nd

Óhaði Kórin (Kristján Hrnarr)
20:00 Mál og Menning

Andrés Þór Duo

20:00 Skuggabaldur

Wednesday March 23rd

Sigmar Matthíasson
20:00 Harpa
Baldvin Hlynsson Tríó
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Thursday March 24th

Flesh Machine
20:00 Gaukurinn
Iceland Symphony Orchestra - Mozart and Beethoven
19:30 Harpa
Hekla Magnúsdóttir & Lilja María Ásmundsdóttir - Lofthjúpur
21:00 Mengi
Óskar Guðjónsson MOVE Quartet
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Friday March 25th

★ **Salóme Katrín, ZAAR and RAKEL**
20:00 Frikirkjan
Umphrey's McGee
19:00 Harpa
Songs Of The Heart - Icelandic Opera
20:00 Harpa
Nýju Fötin Keisarans
20:00 Mál og Menning
Dr Gunni & Ingi Garðar
21:00 Mengi
Jóel Pálsson Quartet
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Saturday March 26th

Stína Ágústsdóttir
20:00 Harpa
Bliss
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Sunday March 27th

Kristjana Stefáns Tríó
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Tuesday March 29th

Lame Kid Dances Tango
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Wednesday March 30th

FÍH & MÍT Jam Session
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Thursday March 31st

Iceland Symphony Orchestra - Ein Heldenleben
19:30 Harpa
M'ANAM
20:00 Iðnó
Phil Doyle Quartet
20:00 Skuggabaldur



Our favourite house band/art collective these days is, of course, the incomparable **GusGus**. The band changed its tune a little bit for the Icelandic preliminaries for Eurovision when they performed the famous Icelandic tune "Is It True?", which ended up in second place in 2008 at Eurovision, originally by Jóhanna Guðrún. GusGus will be performing at Harpa on March 19th, where the whole gang (including past members) will reunite to play their biggest hits. It's safe to say that this will be nothing less than a historic moment in Icelandic culture, for few bands have as impressive a song-catalogue as well such a remarkable history.



More Icelandic composers are dipping their toes into the film business. Of course, Hildur Guðnadóttir won an Oscar, a Grammy and pretty well every other type of award it's possible to win (save an Olympic medal) for her scores for 'Joker' and 'Chernobyl'. But there's a new Icelandic composer in town. **Karlotta Skagfield** recently wrote the score for the new Netflix series, "**Vikings: Valhalla**". Karlotta said in an interview with Visir.is that she was initially recommended to Netflix by Icelandic composer Karli Óvarsson, who connected her with the team behind "Vikings: Valhalla". And from there, things began rolling. Just as a side note, the show also stars the fantastic Icelandic actor Jóhannes Haukur Jóhannesson, who was raised in the most beautiful town in the world, Hafnarfjörður (Hildur Guðnadóttir as well as the author of this piece is also from the same town). Jóhannes plays the complicated power-hungry character, Ólafur "Digri" Haraldsson, who later became the legendary king of Norway. **VG**

i8

Art

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Alicja Kwade
In Relation to the Sun,
i8 Grandi — 22.01.22–22.12.22



LMAO (get it?)

The Cure For Cabin Fever: Art!

A flurry of exhibitions this month and beyond

Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine** Photos: **Various**

All pandemic restrictions have now been lifted, both domestically and at the border, so if you've grown weary of yet another event being held on Zoom and are itching to mingle with the public again, your time has come. Likewise, if you'd delayed coming to Iceland for nigh two years now due to the border rules, you no longer have that excuse.

Lucky for you, there's a bunch of exhibitions going on this month and beyond that are definitely worth checking out, and appeal to seasoned gallery crawlers and art newcomers alike. Here's what March and beyond have in store.



Joey Keys: Turning

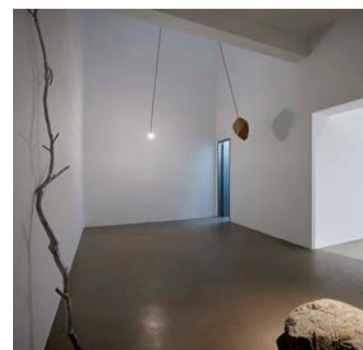
Gallery Port, March 5th to 17th

Definitely an exhibition for the more tactile-minded, Turning features an installation of sculptures made from oak. These pieces seek to explore “the idea of function and compromise around art objects, as well as the gallery space”, which is certainly well worth exploring in a town where some of the grander spaces are reserved for Iceland's more established galleries and museums, while the young upstarts have to make do with whatever space they can manage to scrape together. Worth a look!

Erró The Traveller

Reykjavík Art Museum Hafnarhús,
through March 27th

What can really be said about Erró that hasn't been said already? The pop artist is arguably the darling of Iceland's art history, and this exhibition focuses primarily on Erró's travels, which played an important role in the creation of his works over the years. Always eye-catching, provocative and compelling, viewing these works will give the visitor the slightest peak into the world as seen through the eyes of Iceland's most famous artist.



Alicja Kwade: In Relation To The Sun

i8 Grandi, through December 2022

Famed gallery i8 proudly announces a new location at Grandi, with a focus on single-artist, year-long

exhibitions. And it looks like they've chosen well, selecting Polish artist Alicja Kwade to be the star of the new space. Installation, sculpture, and work on paper—this exhibition has it all, all revolving (if you'll excuse the pun) around the fluid nature of time and space. In keeping with that, even the name of the exhibition itself can be expected to change over the course of the year. So to avoid confusion, whenever you choose to visit, just know it's the Kwade showing at i8 Grandi.



Santiago Mostyn: 08-18 (Past Perfect)

Gerðarsafn, through March 27th

Photography, all too overlooked as a medium of fine art as well as commercial and journalistic, is the centerpiece of this exhibition from Swedish-based artist Santiago Mostyn. Here, his photos cover his travels around Trinidad, Zimbabwe, Grenada, the United States, and Scandinavia, capturing moments of personal significance to the artist. Furthermore, his film work Drawing For Bellevue Estate will be shown. Shot entirely on the island of Tobago—incidentally, the inspiration for Robinson Crusoe's setting—the film explores the overlap between exploration and colonisation.



Ragnar Kjartansson: The Underworld Of Akureyri

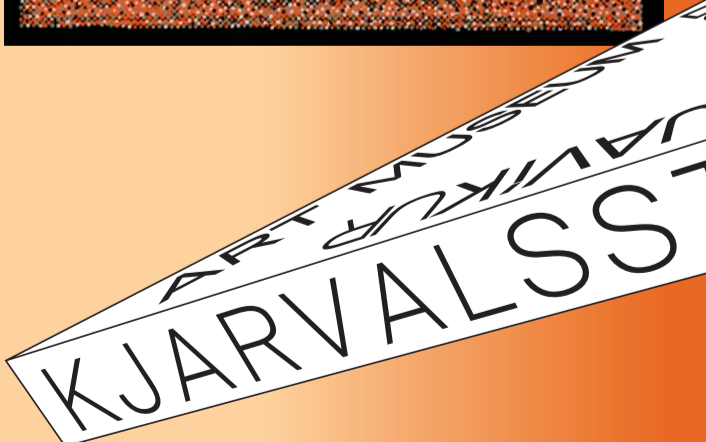
Icelandic Art Center,
through August 2022

Ragnar is one of Iceland's more internationally renowned living artists, having most recently made a splash with his touring video installation, Death Is Elsewhere. This particular exhibition adds a splash of snark right in the title: what kind of “underworld” can a town of just over 18,000 people possibly have? Expect this work to be more specific to the Icelandic character than some of his more internationally accessible works, as it explores the national spirit and the artist's place within it. “In Akureyri everything is a little bit more OK than in other places,” Ragnar says. Go see what he means by this. 🐾

29.01.–15.05.2022

Birgir Andrésson

As Far as the Eye Can See



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105 Reykjavík
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Art Picks

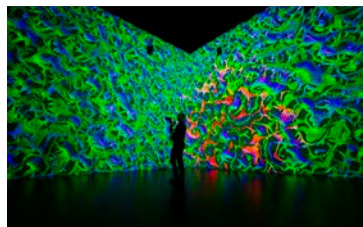


★ In Relation To The Sun

Until December 22nd -
i8 Grandi, Grandagarði 20

The good folk who brought you i8 Gallery have recently opened up a new exhibition space in Grandi, an industrial spit of land formerly best known for its fish and shipyards. Called i8 Grandi, (well, we all love a functional name),

it nestles over a couple of floors in The Marshall House, rubbing creative shoulders with like-minded organisations such as The Living Art Museum and fellow gallery Kling og Bang. The unique concept of this new space is to focus on year-long shows by single artists. The exhibitions will evolve while on view, allowing their creators to reflect how the passage of time alters their work and encouraging repeat viewings to observe those changes. This inaugural exhibition is by Alicja Kwade and encompasses installation, sculpture and work on paper. Its title—initially “In Relation To The Sun”—will change as the nature of the pieces on display evolves. **JP**



★ Circuleight

Until May 31st - Harpa

This immersive light and sound installation is inspired by elements of natural Iceland: lava, basalt, glaciers, water, flora, algae, microorganisms and volcanic gas. Visuals are provided by American arts organisation Artehouse, accompanied by an original score from Högni Egilsson. Circuleight is open from noon until 18:00 every day, and takes 20 minutes to experience. **JP**



★ Slurry Pump-Spreader

Until March 20th - Kling og Bang

Helgi Hjaltalin's latest solo show revolves around the media of sculpture, water-colour paintings and printmaking, often utilising images downloaded from internet searches. His work is connected historically to 20th-century pop art in that it challenges established values, creating parallels between what we consider “art” and popular or consumer culture. **JP**



★ Fluctuation / Light & Dark

Until March 31st - Mama Reykjavik

With only one prior exhibition under her belt, Anna Radacz has taken over this restaurant/community space to mount two separate exhibitions simultaneously. ‘Fluctuation’ features work inspired by last year's earthquakes and subsequent volcanic activity on the Reykjanes peninsula, while ‘Light & Dark’ explores Iceland's northern lights and the darkness that they need in order to exist. **JP**

March 4th — March 31st

Art Exhibitions

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

Send details of yours to: events@grapevine.is

Ongoing

REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Random Moments

The Museum of Photography has long been the repository of Iceland's photographic history, amassing more than 6.5 million film-originated images over the last four decades. In more recent years, digital techniques have allowed the creation of an image database to include text relevant to the image from publications. This exhibition uses the collection's search facility to conjure up combinations of images through text, allowing photographic moments to become related through particular words.

• Runs until November 19th

Betula Seasons

The downy birch, (*betula pubescens*), is the only native Icelandic tree that can form natural forests. It was decimated during settlement of the island as the appetite for wood as a fuel and building material went unchecked. Photographer and park ranger Elías Arnar has created a photography series documenting the tree through the various seasons, highlighting connections between human and tree to illuminate modern-day environmental issues.

• Runs until March 27th

GERÐARSAFN KÓPAVOGUR ART MUSEUM

Ad Infinitum

Icelandic artists Elín Hansdóttir and Úlfur Hansson work in Berlin and New York respectively, but have come together to create this installation exploring the borders between the art that we see, and that which we hear. Elín's approach is to create challenging immersive visuals, while Úlfur's specialism in audio creation leads him to create sounds specific to the space.

• Runs until March 27th

Past Perfect

Although he now lives in Sweden and was educated in the USA, artist Santiago Mostyn grew up in Zimbabwe and Trinidad and Tobago. This exhibition of photography and video media explores that experience, employing footage of historical events, politicians and cultural figures. Past Perfect is a landscape where stories of colonialism, slavery and personal experience converge.

• Runs until March 27th

HAFNARBORG CENTRE OF CULTURE AND FINE ARTS

A Few Thoughts on Photography - Vol. III

Photographer Hallgerður Hallgrímsdóttir explores how taking a photograph can seem so simple—“just the push of a button”—making the resulting image almost an objet trouvé rather than a creation. But creative it is; mysterious and emotional, with aesthetics and instincts coming into play. And yet, at the same time, the process of photography is decidedly rooted in the scientific.

• Runs until March 2022

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART

Bathing Culture

The outdoor geothermal pool is the most interesting public sphere in Iceland. A place where strangers cross paths and acquaintances meet, it is a source of wellbeing and a major part of everyday life for many. This exhibition traces the development of Icelandic bathing culture, showing how architects and designers, pool staff and the public have together shaped the story.

• Runs until September 25th

I8 GALLERY

Peace

Reykjavik artist Hildgunnur Birgisdóttir presents an exhibition of installations, sculptures and prints examining everyday items, such as computer buttons, plastic clips, and textile sprays. Through bringing our attention to such banal items—and overemphasising their familiarity—the artist celebrates the aesthetic poetry of objects normally considered quite prosaic.

• Runs until March 26th

EINAR JÓNSSON MUSEUM

Permanent Exhibition

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

REYKJAVÍK CITY MUSEUM

Settlement Exhibition

This permanent exhibition—where Viking ruins meet digital technology—provides insight into Reykjavik's farms at the time of the first settlers. Archaeological remains uncovered on site dating back to 871 AD surround you.

NORDIC HOUSE

Even A Worm Will Turn

The relationship between man and other creatures is probed by this exhibition, featuring work by Jaakko Pallasvuo, Viktor Timofeev, Josefin Arnell and Kolbeinn Hugi. Man names the other animals, imposes ideological and moralistic ideas on them, anthropomorphises them, assumes dominion and tries to influence their behaviour. How does all this affect interspecies relations?

• Runs until April 17th

REYKJAVÍK MARITIME MUSEUM

Óðinn Coast Guard Vessel

Take a guided tour around this former guardian of Icelandic waters.

Fish & Folk

Name a better duo than fish and Iceland. You can't. So come learn about the history of Icelandic fisheries from row boats to monstrous trawlers.

Melckmeyt 1659

Melckmeyt was a Dutch merchant ship that crashed near Flatey Island in 1659. Explore the wreck here, with two images of different origins against each other.

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - HAFNARHÚS

Erró The Traveller

Guðmundur Guðmundsson—also known simply as Erró—has arguably the highest international profile of any Icelandic visual artist. His activities have taken him all around the world. This exhibition—selected from work that he has donated to the Reykjavik Art Museum—is curated around a travel theme.

• Runs until March 27th

A Bra Ka Da Bra -

The Magic Of Contemporary Art

This exhibition aims to open the world of contemporary art up to a new generation. The titular magic word links magic and art in the wonder that both can conjure up in children and young people.

• Runs until March 20th

Snertitaug

Ásgerður Birna Björnsdóttir has created a remarkable body of work here, focussing on the flow of energy with light, electricity and particles the main conveyors of power. This exhibition observes the relationship between nature and technology, between the analogue earth and the digital world that we have created. All is intercon-

nected, and nothing happens without a cause.

• Runs until March 20th

CULTURE HOUSE

Treasures Of A Nation

The Culture House was built in 1909, and was the first purpose-built gallery in Iceland. Towering above the surrounding town at the time, it was a popular spot to take in the natural vistas which have inspired local artists for centuries. This exhibit brings together a selection of paintings from the National Gallery, all inspired by Iceland and created from the 19th century onwards.

• Runs until May 31st

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - KJARVALSSTAÐIR

As Far As The Eye Can See

Birgir Andrésson was a leading light in Icelandic art until his untimely death in 2007. Taking influence from all aspects of Icelandic life, legend and culture, he presented them in a unique and informed way, drawing admiration from both local and international art communities. This retrospective brings together more than a hundred of his works, including some from international and private collections.

• Runs until May 15th

GALLERY PORT

518 Aukanaetur

Eva Schram is a Reykjavik artist who works mainly in analogue photography, and darkroom processes. This exhibit, which is part of the Icelandic Photography Festival, is a reflection of the Icelandic wilderness. Her chosen medium is a type of obsolescent film that gives the subject landscapes a detached mystery, yet brings them closer to

the viewer.

• Runs until March 12th

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND

Staged Moments

This expansive exhibition features some 41 photographic artists. The work on show spans the time between the 1970s and the present day, and focuses on demonstrating the diverse use of photography as a creative medium. The exhibition also reflects less positive attitudes to photography as a creative medium, based on the inherent nature of the process as one of mechanical reproduction.

• Runs until May 8th

THE LIVING ART MUSEUM

Conversation To The Self

Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir lives and works in Reykjavik, studied art in New York and Los Angeles and focuses on video and performance art. To quote the gallery website: “Ásdís' works explore the intersection of magical realism and the wonders of nature through distortion, transformation and ritual. They have a hint of poetic and impending turmoil.” If that piques your interest, come down to Nýló to see for yourself.

• Runs until March 6th

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ICELAND

Straumnes

During the cold war the U.S. military operated a radar station at Straumnesfjall, a remote coastal location in the Westfjords. After the Americans left, the area was eventually cleaned up and left to regrow. Local photographer Marínó Thorlacius reflects the beauty of nature, captured among the residue of the abandoned military installation.

• Runs until May 1st

MUSEUM OF DESIGN
AND APPLIED ART

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210 GARÐABÆR

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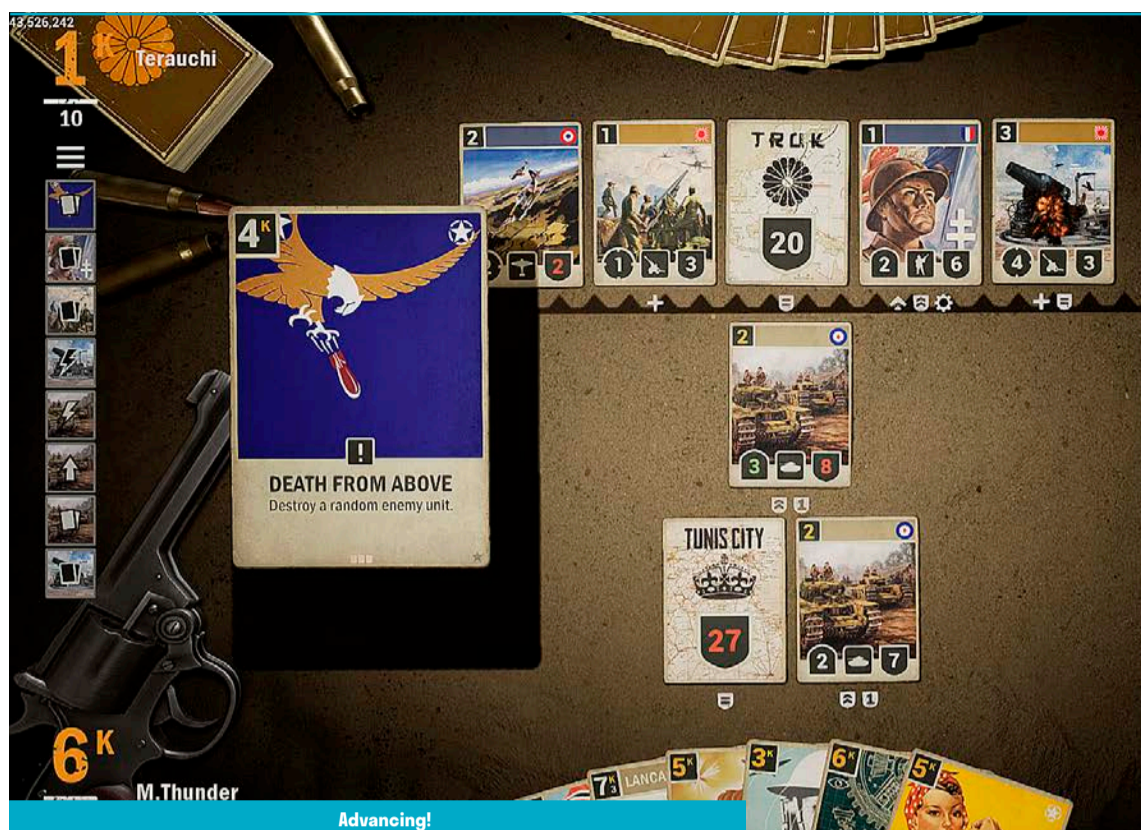
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Games



Gear Up For Battle, Card Game Style

Kards, a free-to-play game from 1939 Games

Words: [Andie Sophia Fontaine](#) Video stills: [1939 Games](#)

Collectible card games (CCG) are pretty hot right now in the world of video games, as the usually-table-top medium has made its way into the digital world. So it was fairly exciting to hear the news that 1939 Games, founded by Guðmundur and Ívar Kjartansson, formerly of CCP Games, have created a digital card game of their own.

Less exciting was finding out that it's based on World War 2. This is well-trod ground in both literature and in video games, and you always end up side-eyeing anyone who's super pumped to play the Axis powers. That said, given the vastness of World War 2, there's still a lot of potential for strategy, FPS and RPG games alike, so we decided to give it a whirl.

Visuals

Starting off, you're given the option to choose a player name. It'll pick your Steam account name by default, but you can enter whichever name you want. There's also an option to sign up for news in your email, which you can skip if you desire.

The visuals are pretty sharp and crisp, with some neat animations that didn't need to be included in

a card game, but are a nice touch, enhanced by the sound effects to add to the immersive experience.

Which side are you on?

The game is pretty simple on the face of it. You pick a nation's deck to start with, and can only unlock the other nations' decks by defeating them in battle. You have a headquarters with a set number of "credits"—each time you strike the enemy's headquarters, some credits are removed from the HQ, and you win when those credits reach zero.

You are dealt an initial hand of four cards, each of which have credit stats for defense and offense. Some of these are units like infantry, tanks and airplanes, but some of them are special effects cards or support cards that can either deal additional damage to enemy units or provide support to your own. Other cards provide special defensives, like smokescreen or anti-aircraft.

The battle begins

Fighting revolves around the front line. You advance cards forward and pit them against enemy cards on the other side of the line. Who

breaks the front line depends on the offensive and defensive stats of the cards played. However, each card deployed costs a certain number of credits, and you gain (or lose) credits in battle, so you have to choose carefully.

As the battle continues, you can expect the front line to move forwards and backwards many times, especially if you're new to the game. Don't let that bother you; think carefully about which units to deploy, when, and against whom.

Fighting Nazis

I chose the Soviet Union, who after a tough struggle ended up successfully defending Stalingrad and defeating Danzig (the city; not the singer), thereby unlocking the German deck—which I'll never be using—and crushing the AI-controlled Nazis.

This game is fun against the AI, but I suspect the real challenge comes from going against more experienced players online. Mercifully, there is no chat function apart from selecting a predetermined set of phrases to send to your opponent, none of them containing any slurs.

There's a good balance between pure RNG and strategy, which isn't easy to achieve in a CCG. This could easily be a game you could play with your friends and have a good time at it. But if you ever do encounter someone playing as one of the Axis powers, promise me you'll do your best to utterly destroy them. 🇺🇸

Kards is free to play on Steam.





Protest in front of the Russian consulate in Reykjavik

Waking Up To A War In My Home Country

Fear, disbelief and hope from Reykjavik

Words: **Iryna Zubenko**
Photos: **Tadas Maksimovas & Art Bicnick**

Thursday, February 24, 2022, might as well be the longest day of my life. I woke up to a message with a crying emoji from my friend. “She’s just stressed before her driving exam”, I thought, and continued to open another message—this one from my mom. The message was staggering: “How are you, we are at war”. I immediately opened Twitter and the first tweet I saw was a video of a missile exploding at Ivano-Frankivsk airport—just 133 km from my hometown, Lviv. (I didn’t know yet that even closer towns had been targeted).

We’re at war

What? How is this possible? This can’t be true.

But it was, and is, true. I know that the possibility of an invasion had been all over the media for a few weeks, but it was never predicted that the whole country could be under attack, not in any worst-case scenario. The world broke down that night. Diplomacy failed. Early in the morning of that Thursday, Russia invaded Ukraine, first targeting military bases and airports all around the country, then destroying civilian infrastructure, shelling kindergartens and sending missiles into residential buildings.

Just a few days ago, my friends and I were planning our spring break trips

and discussing normal things, like the latest TV series we’ve been watching and the best sourdough bread in town. After February 24, we’re discussing bomb shelters, fighting to spread true information online, and keeping our families safe. This feels surreal.

Observing the war from abroad feels even more surreal. I know I’m safe, but I also feel kind of helpless. Shouldn’t I be there? Will I have somewhere to go back to? Is everyone I love okay?

History repeats itself

I keep recalling the stories from WW2 my late grandma used to tell me. Our family home still has a bullet hole from that time. What if it is shelled again, but 75 years later?

It’s absolutely crazy how we now live in the most technologically advanced era, with access to information in mere seconds, modern medicine and whatnot, and yet, this is actually happening right in the middle of Europe. Women are giving birth in underground shelters, my peers are sacrificing their lives to stop Russian tanks from entering our cities, the Ukrainian capital Kyiv—home to more than 3 million people—is under attack from all directions.

While I continue to anxiously watch the situation unfold, I also feel immensely proud of everyone standing

up to our aggressor. My heart goes out to not only to the brave armed forces fighting on the front lines but to everyone who shows support, either on a state or individual level. At times like this, our power is in our unity—one can no longer stay apolitical. And I honestly think that the world is finally starting to realize that the threat of Russia is not only our problem, it can affect many more nations and many more millions of people. In the 21st century, there shouldn’t be a place for any kind of war, in any place of the world. It’s a lesson we should have learned from history, but somehow we failed.

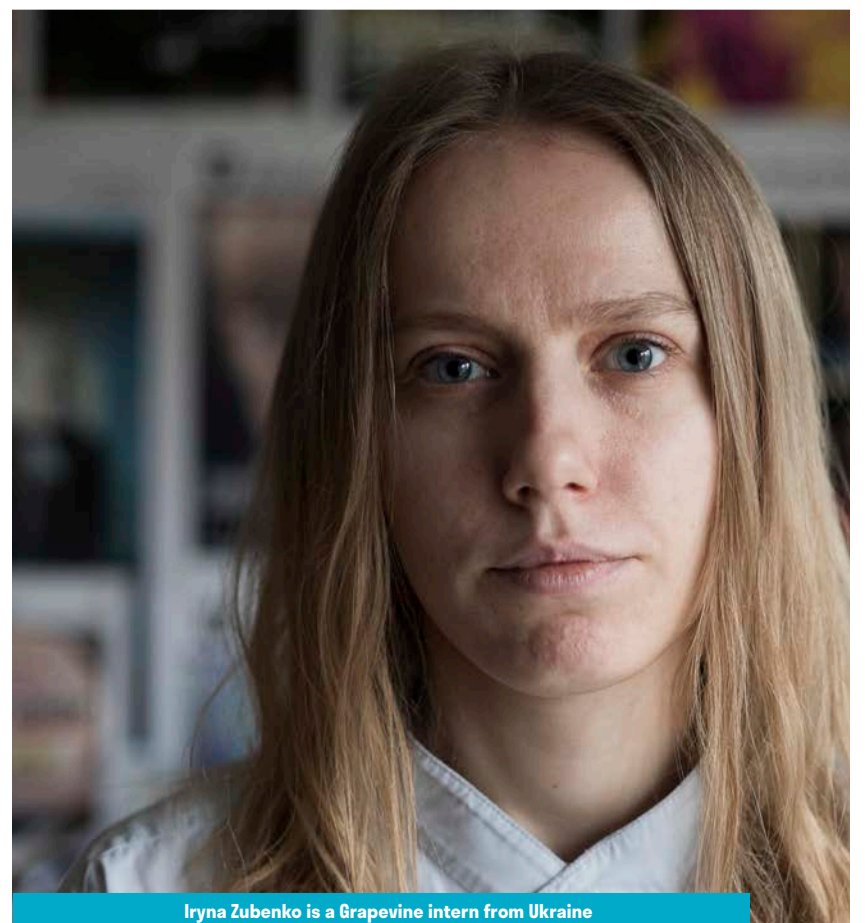
Our spirit is undefeated

Over the past few days, I’ve received messages from friends from all over the world—from Poland and Germany to the UK, Hong Kong and Australia. My apartment in the center of Lviv has become a temporary home to six refu-

gees from different cities. My friends are volunteering to help support the army. I talked to a friend the other day and she sounded desperate: “I need to find out where to buy 3,500 bullet-proof vests.” Today, she has already accomplished this, and will move on to another task. Even my dad, the biggest pessimist of all, remains optimistic—aside from continuing to work as a surgeon at a local emergency hospital, he’s ready to ditch his wine bar for Molotov cocktails.

No matter where you are watching the news today—whether it’s from a basement while air raid sirens blare out warnings of danger in your hometown or from the safety of Iceland—the unwavering Ukrainian persistence and our will for freedom is clear. It’s a reminder that democracy is still worth fighting for. As a cover of the ‘Daily Express’ recently declared: it’s the free world v. Putin now. 🇺🇦

“The world broke down that night. Diplomacy failed.”



Iryna Zubenko is a Grapevine intern from Ukraine

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Track By Track

The Reykjavik Grapevine 24
Issue 03—2022



Potentially the coolest photo to ever be in the Grapevine tbh

New Facets To The Melting Diamond

Benni Hemm Hemm introduces his latest set of composed improvisations

Words: **Benni Hemm Hemm & John Pearson** Photo: **Art Bicnick**

Info

When asked to tell us about his new album, Benni Hemm Hemm, (Benedikt Hermann Hermannsson, to his mum), couldn't have been more obliging. His job was to paint some word-images of the four tracks on "Benni Hemm Hemm & the Melting Diamond Band II", which he did beautifully. But then he also offered to do The Grapevine's job by writing the intro as well.

"I just found a description about the Melting Diamond Band which I'd written as a fake Grapevine quote," he told us. "God knows why I did that. Maybe you would like to see it and make it a real Grapevine quote?"

Urrrrmm yeah.... sure.

"The Melting Diamond Band is the latest live operation of Icelandic musician Benni Hemm Hemm. Somehow Mr. Hemm Hemm has found every drug addict ghost gang member on the streets of Reykjavik with a wisp of musical talent, and gathered them for this wonderful mess. These really are dangerous people, so stay away. How Hermannsson keeps this gang in

one place long enough to make a recording—let alone play like they do—is a miracle. But really; do stay away."

Bravo! And since you're on a roll, please do continue...

"This is the second in a series of Melting Diamond Band releases by Mengi Records which, like 'Church/School' before it, consists of recordings that are somewhere between compositions and free improvisation. They start with improvisation, which calls for more layers of improvisation and at some point the work takes shape and starts to dictate its own rules.

"BHH & tMDB II' has four tracks which are made in exactly that way. They have a will of their own, and to know more about them you will have to ask them."

Flying Messiaen

"The Messiaen is flying on heavy shots of thick strings. Stuck in the deliriously high ceiling of the gothic church. Escapes and narrowly passes the grey spirits and flies into the woods. The season is uncertain. Freedom is burdened with blurry fear."

Foxy Cha Cha

"Mud and darkness, smiles under melted snow. The water comes from the mountain, the mountain lives under the moon and nothing can move. Everything is stuck in its place. The mud is set. The darkness is here forever."

Galypso

"Choir is hidden between bricks with no time to worry about shopping. In Europe eyes are blinked, and the air straight over the heads of the guilty disappears with a sudden blow which makes the sky green, and the souls of still drivers fly away. The screams cannot be heard."

Mass

"A dance on wet ground. Light foot, heavy mud. Swings and voices, fire and screams choked. A gathering in the woods, a gathering in the church. Get the bodies in one place, all the muscles and fluids. All Mass." 🍷

Guess what? You can stream this album on all platforms. Lucky you.



Those shades deserve an honourable mention

Due to the effect of the pandemic on bar and restaurant operations, these happy hour details may change. Please check directly with the business before travelling.

A selection from

Every Happy Hour

in 101 Reykjavík

Get the complete Happy Hour listings!

Download our free app Appy Hour in the Apple and Android stores



AMERICAN BAR
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Beer 850 ISK,
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BASTARD BREW
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Beer 600 ISK,
Wine 750 ISK.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

JUNGLE COCKTAIL BAR
Daily except Tue 16:00 to 18:00.
Beer 800 ISK,
Wine 1000 ISK.

KAFFIBARINN
Every day until 19:00.
Beer 800 ISK,
Wine 800 ISK.

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

LAUNDROMAT
Every day from 20:00 to 22:00.
Beer 650 ISK,
Wine 1000 ISK.

LOFT
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
Beer 750 ISK,
Wine 900 ISK.

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

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

MIAMI
Tue 15:00 to 01:00.
Wed to Sat 15:00 to 19:00.
Beer 750 ISK,
Wine 990 ISK

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

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

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

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

SÆTA SVÍNID
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Beer 790 ISK,
Wine 890 ISK.

SESSION CRAFT
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00.
Beer 790 ISK,
Wine 900 ISK.

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

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

SPIKAKAFFI
Every day from 17:00 to 20:00.
Beer 750 ISK.

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

SUSHI SOCIAL
Sun-Thu from 17:00 to 18:00.
Beer 645 ISK,
Wine 745 ISK.

TAPAS BARINN
Every day from 17:00 to 18:00.
Beer 645 ISK,
Wine 745 ISK.

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

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



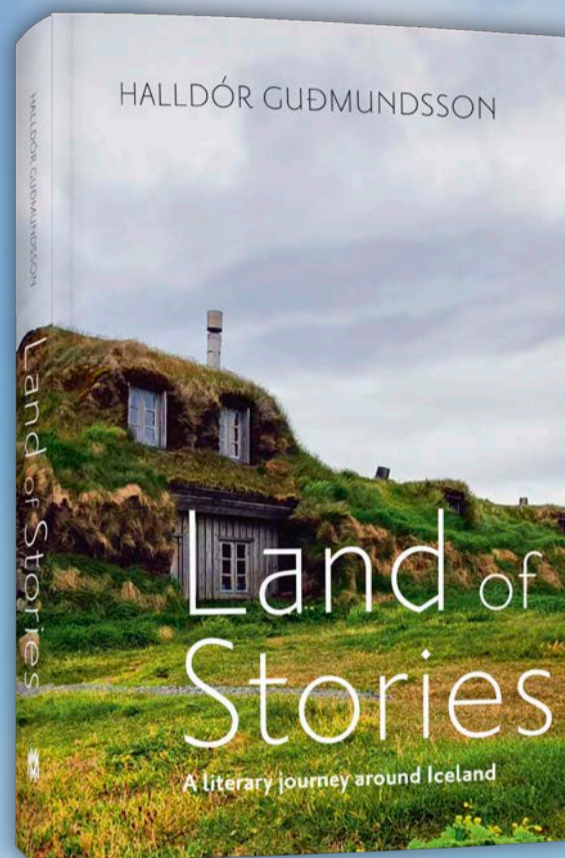
FEATURED DRINKING HOLE

LÓLA FLORENS
15:00 - 18:00
EVERY DAY
BEER 1,000
WINE 1,000
GARDASTRÆTI 6

Thrift store aficionados who like the idea of a glass of wine as they rummage should check out this little gem. When the Red Cross shop in that location closed after some 20 years, friends Íris Ann Sigurðardóttir and Svava Ástudóttir took the opportunity

to start a business that recognised the heritage of the charity shop, but with a twist. Íris Ann describes their creation as "a bit of everything we love... vintage clothing and vintage house decor, good wine, great coffee, savoury pastries from Coocoo's Nest and a bit of witchcraft entwined in the whole thing." **JP**

A LITERARY TOUR AROUND ICELAND



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1,500 ISK And Under

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- > Lamb tartar, chive mayo

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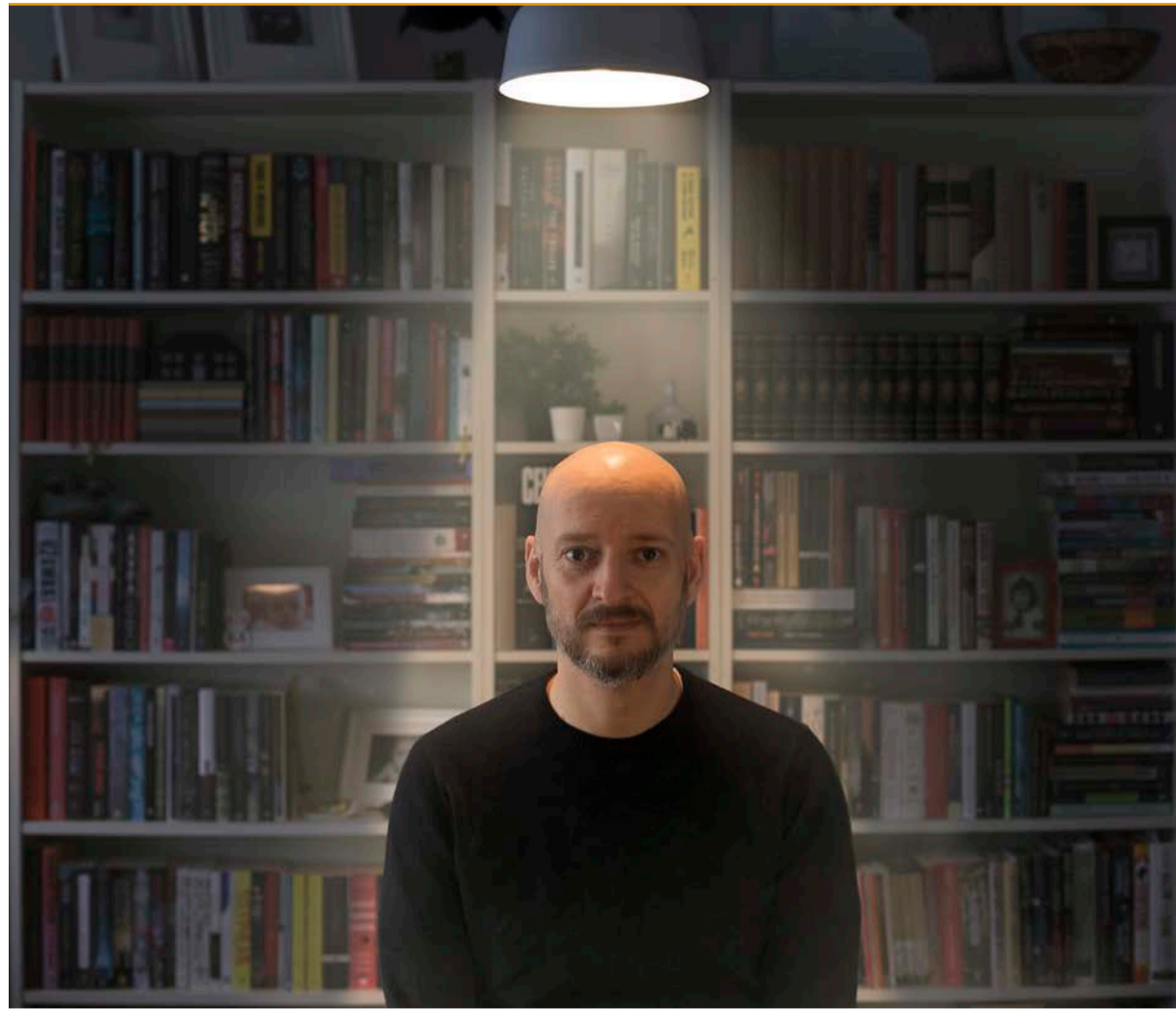
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Books



The Atheist & The Paranormal Thriller

Jóhann Þórsson's striking debut makes some scary waves

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

The marketing director of Sjóvá, one of Iceland's largest insurance companies, surprised the country with his remarkably strong debut novel earlier this year. 'White-sands' is a paranormal thriller with a dark noir detective atmosphere evoking films like 'Seven' and 'Silence of the Lambs. In short; it's merciless.

American bubble

Jóhann was born in Keflavík (now Reykjanesbær) but grew up in Israel, in a tourist town near the Lebanese border.

"I moved to Nahariyya when I was nine years old, and I think it's safe to say that it's a wonderful place to grow up," Jóhann says when asked about his upbringing. Jóhann's childhood was quite different from that of other Icelandic children. His father worked for the United Nations and regularly travelled to Lebanon and Israel. Jóhann's family later moved to Zagreb, Croatia, only a few years after a bloody civil war, though he says he was living in a very American bubble.

"I was in an American private school, [like the ones you'd] see in movies and TV shows," he explains. "It broadened [my] world in a very effective way," he adds. Interestingly, he says that he was only ten, then living in Israel, when he made a life-changing decision, becoming atheist. The reason wasn't really complicated, he says. "Why believe in anything

just because someone says you should?"

The plans we make

When Jóhann and his family eventually returned to Iceland he was, unlike most Icelanders at the time, fluent in English, which was like his first language.

Jóhann quickly found out that he was strong in math and science and went to university and studied molecular biology and genetics. "But in the end, I graduated in computer science," he says with a chuckle. "That's a good example of how life often turns out differently than expected."

Little did he know. After a short stint working for deCODE Genet-

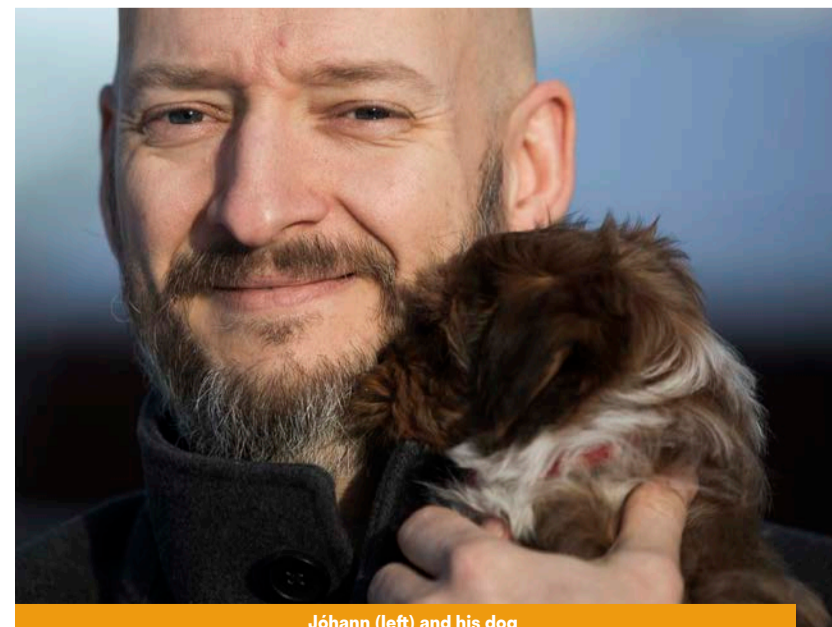
ics, he found himself running the marketing department at the biggest insurance company in Iceland, pursuing writing as a hobby.

Over a decade in making

It's clear when reading 'White-sands' that this is not Jóhann's first book and I ask him how many scripts he has hidden in a desk drawer.

"Well, I have been writing for a long time, and this novel has been in the making for around a decade. I haven't really published anything except when [submitting to] short story competitions," he explains.

And it's safe to say that Jóhann



Jóhann (left) and his dog

didn't even realise the strength of material he actually had in his hands when it was published by a small publishing house in the U.S. He sent his manuscript to some literary agents and finally found one. But the road was rocky. The book is a supernatural detective thriller, somewhat of an odd niche within the Scandi-Noir realm that Icelanders are expected to adhere to. Not only that, his main character, John Dark, is Black and located in an unnamed American city, not Iceland, although there are some connections with Iceland.

Agents pointed this out, it was odd that a white Icelandic was writing about a Black protagonist in America, and the book was written in English, not Icelandic. Fair enough Jóhann thought, while wondering why the character would have to be white. "We always assume that these protagonists are white, but there is no specific reason it should be like that."

Just to be sure, Jóhann had a close African-American friend in the US, to read over the book and help him shape the character. The result is more than convincing. John Dark is a remarkably well thought out character for a crime thriller like this. And it's not the colour of the skin that defines him in the story, but the loss of his daughter.

No world for children

The world of 'Whitesands' is conspicuously grim. This is a world where children do not fare well and adults are seriously broken. On top of that, the boundaries between the living and the dead are blurred. Without saying too much, John Dark investigates a brutal murder, while at the same time trying to find his lost daughter who disappeared without a trace a few years earlier. The detective is overburdened, only to spiral down in desperation. To complicate things even further, a serial killer might be on the prowl, and John is the only one who can stop him.

Jóhann says that he doesn't shy away from his influences. "Some writers try to read nothing while writing, but I take very strong influences from Jeff VanderMeer and movies like 'Seven' and Silence of the Lambs'. I like the dark horror atmosphere," he explains. And although the book has a dark atmosphere, this is a very different story from the others.

Visited a medium

Some of the strongest chapters in the book evolve around mediums and the otherworldly. I can't

help but ask Jóhann if he himself visited a medium while working on the book.

"I did, actually," he says. "I watched the people in the meeting, and how the medium acted," he explains. But it feels like Jóhann is trying to be polite when asked about the experience. As an atheist, he rejects the idea of mediums that can talk to the dead.

"If everybody in these meetings is aware that this is not real, then fine, but if you're there, believe this, and someone is profiting from that, well, I think it's a pretty grey area," Jóhann says.

There is no God

That said, it's a bit odd that a strong atheist is writing a supernatural novel, and not only that, God hardly appears in the book except for in the context of atheism, which is unusual when it comes to supernatural elements in entertainment.

Jóhann points out that ghosts are not really Christian phenomena in Icelandic history. And he is correct. We can go way back to Glámur the ghost that wrestled the Viking, Grettir the Strong, or to the ghost stories in the folklores of Jón Árnason. Religion doesn't often have anything to do with Mórar and Skottur (the Icelandic poltergeists). And Glámur, well, he was just pure f\$%ing evil. A pagan on top of that.

TV show in the making?

It doesn't come as a surprise that Jóhann is writing a sequel to the story. And it's even less of a surprise that he will probably move to a bigger publisher. He was contacted by another literary agent following 'Whitesands' publication and negotiations are ongoing about TV rights and such. After reading the book, this is a very obvious next step, for it's written in a very graphic way and the story is intriguing and well thought out paranormal detective story. On top of that, the emotional breadth is surprising.

Jóhann plans to write two more books about John Dark and his grim adventures in a world where supernatural beings may be lurking on the horizon. But after reading the book, it's not really the paranormal that sits with the reader, but longing to see John getting closure on personal matters.

The book has a strong narrative and offers a cruel and vivid world of violence and supernatural elements. So, don't read this one in the dark, unless you are prepared for a sleepless night. 🍷



Paranormal activity is a family affair

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Food



The chef in her natural environment

Bollur For Vegans (And The Lactose Intolerant)

They're not just for Bolludagur, you know

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

Bolludagur is typically held three days before Lent begins, and the hallmark of this occasion is the consumption of choux pastry filled with jam and whipped cream and usually topped with chocolate. They are delicious, decadent, filling, and although you may hate yourself and every life decision you made afterwards, you can easily sit down with half a dozen of these and inhale them.

Unfortunately, two groups of people are far too often excluded from this holiday: vegans and the lactose intolerant. The whipped cream, of course, is dairy, but choux pastries—arguably the tastier version used for bollur—are something like 80% butter.

While here in anno domini two thousand and twenty two you can probably find a bakery or two offering vegan bollur, nothing tastes better than something you bake yourself. Given that our previous recipe on how to make vegan kjötsúpa was a surprise hit, I'd like to share with you my recipe for making vegan, lactose-free versions of this Icelandic classic.

Start off by putting a can of coconut milk in your fridge the night

before. We'll come back to that soon enough.

As you dough

I would not recommend trying to make vegan choux pastry. Technically, it is possible, much like navigating a probe to land on a speeding comet is possible, but also exceedingly difficult. So instead of choux pastry—which comprise the more popular *vatnsdeigsbollur*—we're going instead here with a dairy-free version of *gerbollur*, i.e., dough that uses the magic of yeast to rise. And we'll be using metric measurements here—sorry, Americans. Make the conversions yourself until such time as your country drops your medieval, nonsensical system of weights and measures and joins the rest of us in the 21st century.

For this, you will need the following:

In one bowl, mix 250 grams of flour, 50 grams of sugar, and a little bit of salt.

In a saucepan, pour in 2 dL of your non-dairy milk of choice (I recommend oat milk) and 50 grams of non-dairy butter. Do not use *smjörliki*, as this can often have powdered

dairy in it. Use instead a non-dairy butter that is based on nut oils like cashews and coconut oil.

Heat up the milk just enough to melt the butter and then let it stand until it's cool enough to stick your finger in it without getting burned, but still warm. At this point, add two large spoonfuls of dry baker's yeast and another spoonful of sugar, mix, and let stand for about ten minutes.

Yeast loves sugar, and as it eats the sugar, it produces carbon dioxide (which makes dough rise) and will produce bubbles in this mixture after about ten minutes or so.

Must kneads

It's at this point that you gently add your dry mix to the wet, stirring continuously. You want this dough to be a bit sticky, but not so wet that it sticks to your fingers. Light and airy is the key here. Once it has reached this state, cover with plastic wrap or a wet cloth and let it stand for about an hour.

During this time, as the yeast continues to gobble at sugar and produce more gas to fluff up your dough, reflect on just how quickly you're going to eat these things

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hand mixer from a friend, if you can, to save yourself some time and shoulder pain.

It's done when it looks and acts like whipped cream. It's not brain surgery.

Jelly and chocolate time

By now, your dough balls should be ready to take out off the oven as light, fluffy rolls. Let those cool a bit. When cool enough to handle but still warm, cut them in half, hamburger-bun style, and separate the tops from the bottoms.

What kind of jam or jelly you use is really up to you. I would recommend using jam, as it still has bits of fruit in it and tends not to use gelatin, which is not vegan, and besides it is just objectively better than jelly.

The chocolate topping is easy enough to make. Just mix five large spoons of cocoa powder and one large spoon of powdered sugar, add a splash of non-dairy milk and mix together. It should be the thickness of your standard chocolate sauce.

Bollur: assemble!

Use a small spoon to add a small blob of chocolate sauce on top of each bollur top. The latent warmth should evaporate enough of its liquid to harden it.

While you're waiting on that, smear a generous amount of jam onto each bottom, followed by a generous dollop of whipped cream on top of the jam.

Finally, gently place the bollur tops on top of the cream-and-jamified bollur bottoms. You now have complete vegan and dairy-free bollur.

Enjoy!

You could eat them all by yourself in one sitting, save one or two for breakfast each morning for the work week, give them to the loves of your life, or share them with your co-workers. Either way, they are sure to be a hit you can enjoy any day of the year. 🍷

once they're done. Pace yourself; it's gonna take you a while to make these. You want them to last. Consider sharing them with others.

Once the requisite hour has passed, make roll-sized balls on a baking sheet on an oven rack while you begin to preheat your oven at 180°C. You should be able to make between 6 to 10 of these with the dough provided. Let them rise for another half hour, as the process of forming the doughballs will have squeezed some of the air out of them, and then put them in the oven for about 15 minutes.

Time for the cream!

So, first of all, I wouldn't shame anyone for simply popping down

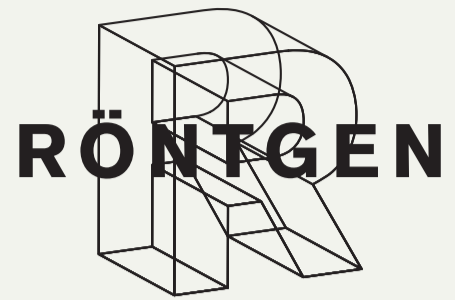
to the store and buying any kind of vegan/lactose free whipped cream in a can. But if you really want to make dairy-free whipped cream yourself, then this is what I recommend.

Take your can of coconut milk out of the fridge and open it up. You will notice, if your fridge works, that the milk has separated into a harder white substance and a watery substance. The denser substance is the fat, and that's what we're going to use here. Use the water for something else. Hell, drink it, for all I care. It is pretty tasty.

Drop the coconut fat in a bowl and add 30 grams of powdered sugar and a cap-full of vanilla extract. Now beat the crap out of it. If you do this by hand, like grandma used to, it's gonna take a while. So borrow a



Full disclosure: these are not the bollur Andie Sophia baked



Hverfisgata 12



Happy hour / 4–7pm
Beer / Wine / Cocktails



Travel

In Hot Water

Switching off from the world at Krauma spa

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



Distance from Reykjavik:
105 kilometres

Experience provided by:
krauma.is

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It's 2022. If you're not waking up in a cold sweat shouting, "holy mother of (insert preferred deity here)" every morning, then frankly, where have you been for the last two years? Horrifying conflicts, a global pandemic, corruption, poverty, capitalistic greed – and to add insult to absolute injury, Elon Musk is inexplicably, somehow, still a thing.

Listen, I'm just saying, it's a lot. All there is to do sometimes is to get into some extremely hot water and try, at the very least, to take care of your small, fragile, soft, human self.

It was with this goal in mind that we found ourselves rolling through gentle, snow covered hills between Borgarfjörður and Reykholt, towards Krauma. Steam rose unexpectedly from the landscape in haunting shapes. As the grit and hum of the city faded into the distance, I unclenched my fists, realising as I did so that I'd had no idea I was tensing them in the first place.

Geothermal Delights

Krauma prides itself on its curative hot waters, sourced directly from Europe's

most powerful hot spring, Deildartunguhver. The spring pumps 180 litres of 100°C water per second, which is also used to provide heating for West Iceland. At Krauma they mix the boiling water with cold to create a range of pools at different temperatures. Plus, there's a steam room, infrared sauna and a relaxation room with a wood-burning stove. On a Sunday afternoon the place was gently busy with half-submerged bodies and murmured chatter.

The friendly receptionists welcomed us with warm smiles and handed me a soft, white robe. It took all of my self control not to do it there and then, but we were instead ushered first to the restaurant, tastefully decorated and overlooking the beautiful steam-filled valley below. The menu was simple, a few each of starters and mains, the obligatory Icelandic lamb and fish options. The difference here is Krauma's dedication to sourcing the best quality local ingredients wherever possible. It's a difference you can immediately taste when you try the

food. In particular, the sharing platter that features cured and smoked goat and salmon – as well as the best feta cheese I have ever tasted in Iceland, from the same goat farm – is not to be missed.

Hunger thoroughly sated, and already a far cry from the frazzled versions of ourselves that had arrived an hour before, it was time to head to the pools. The changing rooms alone were a Zen experience, kitted out with Sóley Organics products that smelled divine. Stepping outside into the cold air was bracing, but you soon reach the warm, inviting waters. Lying back, prosecco in hand, it was impossible not to relax.

From hot to cold

If all of that lounging sounds a little too indulgent, there is always the cold pool for the deter-

minedly masochistic. I was dared to try it, and with my reputation on the line, I gingerly dunked myself halfway into the freezing pool. And no further could I get, instead sitting there for a minute, gasping and swearing silently. Despite the objective awfulness, I did feel incredible afterwards, all fresh and new and tingly. Most importantly, I won the dare.

The rest of the afternoon was spent in a blissed-out haze, flitting between the different hot pools. The relaxation room was also well frequented, with broad, comfy loungers and gentle spa sounds that were quiet enough not to

be obnoxious. Every so often I'd get chatting to one of the other guests in the pool, but people were equally happy to sit together in quiet companionship, with the sounds of the environment providing a peaceful ambiance. I quickly determined my favourite spot, right at the edge of the lowest pool. Resting my arms on the ledge I could gaze out across the landscape, spread in front of me like a pastoral painting.

Finally, happy, pink and deeply wrinkled like prehistoric prune, even I had to reluctantly admit it was time to leave. Heading to the car, I unconsciously took my phone out of my pocket and went to open Twitter before hesitating, protective of my new-found tranquillity. I returned the phone to my pocket. The world, I decided, could wait for a couple more hours. 🍷

"All there is to do sometimes is to get into some extremely hot water and try at the very least, to take care of your small, fragile, soft, human self."



Bubble bubble toil and trouble (and hot water)



Proof that Josie really did win the bet



A girl's gotta eat

Kill The Dictator Within

Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine**

Everyone has a little authoritarian streak. While taking command of your life, being decisive, and standing up for yourself is important, it's equally important to not overdo it. So you would do well to recognise the authoritarians from history that you share your astrological sign with, and do your best to avoid similar behaviour in your own life. We're always looking out for you, reader.



Andrew Jackson, America's 7th president, was a mean son of a bitch. He absolutely loathed the Indigenous people of the Americas, and made it his life's mission to kill as many of them as possible. Examine your prejudices, Aries, lest they consume you.



If you're Taurus, you likely already know that you share your sign with **Hitler**. What can we say? Don't be like Hitler.



Donald J. Trump shares this sign, and pretty much everything wrong with this guy can be chalked up to his inability to see any fault in himself. Learn to accept criticism, consider it carefully, and grow from your mistakes rather than deny them.



Gaius Julius Caesar has a problem: as a military leader, he applied military structure to the role of government, which did not exactly make him a popular guy, especially with those closest to him. And you know how that turned out. Rather than apply what you learned in old environments to new settings, learn the new environment you're in and how it functions in order to manage it best.



Benito Mussolini was nothing more than a bully who took advantage of historical weaknesses to gut-punch his way to power, and would end up hanging upside down from a light pole after getting brutally murdered. Be careful how you treat others as you make your way to the top, Leo; these will be the same people you meet on the way down.



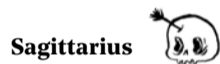
None other than **Genghis Khan** was a Virgo, a man who helped create and oversee the vastest empire in the history of the world through senseless brutality. This empire would later fracture, and then fall apart, and then disintegrate. Don't let your greed get the best of you; be more grateful for what you already have.



Hey guess what, **Vladimir Putin** is a Libra. That guy is in the news right now for being violent, duplicitous, and horrible. Don't let your position of power make you close yourself off from sympathy and understanding your limitations, lest you cause suffering to the same people you're supposed to take care of.



Few remember this but **Charles Manson** is not just in prison for murder, but also for his having manipulated a group of impressionable and misguided people to commit brutal acts on his behalf. Be aware of the effect your anger has on other people. It's fine to confide in others when you're upset, but treat people fairly; your true allies will stand by you without being manipulated.

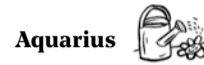


Joseph Stalin took the fledgling

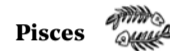
Soviet Union—at the time a political experiment with a lot of promise—and let his own paranoia get the best of him. Sometimes your predecessor has laid the foundations for good things in the future, and all you need to do is nurture those starts into something great. You don't necessarily have to erase all that hard work and start anew.



Al Capone was not a nice man. Mafiosi are often depicted with a cool veneer in modern media, but the fact is, they grow rich and powerful off the suffering of their community's most vulnerable people. Extend empathy to others, and resist the urge to get ahead at others' expense.



Nicolae Ceaușescu started out well, but ended up betraying everything he once stood for in order to further his own personal gain, which ended up being his undoing. Stay true to your principles, Aquarius, and don't let selfish temptations lead you astray.



Sorry to say but **Osama bin Laden** falls under this sign, a man raised in great privilege from a rich family, boosted by other powerful people (looking at you, CIA) who ended up dying violently. Stay humble, Pisces; your causes may be righteous, but you should carefully choose your methods.

WELL, YOU ASKED



Dog Olympics & Thoughts On Transplanetary Movement

Words: **Iryna Zubenko**

Is there any chance of adding dog frisbee throwing to the Winter Olympics?

Glad you asked. Our chief morale officer Polly would be super keen to join the dog frisbee team if the International Olympic Committee (IOC) decides to add it to their roster of sports. In fact, Polly has been practicing diligently through the winter months, (she hasn't missed a single training day in February) Much to her regret—and ours—the only Olympic sports that include animals at the moment are the equestrian events: dressage, three-day eventing, and jumping.

However, that doesn't mean that Polly and all the amazing dogs out there can't compete in other animal competitions. When it comes to disc dog, (yes, that's the official name of the sport), you can check out the Frisbee Dog World Championship, Skyhoundz World Canine Disc Championship Series, The Quadruped (long-distance frisbee dog competition), and others.

If you are up for starting a petition "IOC, Bring Disc Dog to Winter Olympics," I'd be the first to sign it!

When Earth is full of shit then where do we live?

Don't know about you, but I'd be quite ready to leave planet Earth should an opportunity arise. With a landscape very similar to Iceland, Mars does sound like a cozy place to settle (that is, if water wasn't an issue). One thing I'd suggest for any future transplanetary move—let's not allow plastic on the new planet, otherwise we'll be screwed all over.

COUNTRY SHOT by Art Bicnick



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