



# The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

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THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LIFE, TRAVEL & ENTERTAINMENT IN ICELAND

Issue 06 - May 21 - June 3 - 2010

[www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is)

+ COMPLETE CITY LISTINGS - INSIDE!



CITY ELECTIONS

## DIVING IN WITHOUT A PLATFORM

Are Icelandic politics a joke?

According to recent polls, comedian Jón Gnarr and his "Best Party" now have the support of 36% of Reykjavík residents, which would give them 6 of city council's 15 seats. This is a party that openly parodies Icelandic politics, and does not seem to have any sort of platform or policy to speak of. Grapevine met up with Jón to try and find out what they plan on doing with all that support. We're asking ourselves: *When politics is a farce, do you vote for the joker?*

PLUS

**POLITICS**

"The Big Four"  
Interrogated

**LIES**

Ross Beaty and  
his Magma Energy  
are lying liars

**ERUPTIONS**

Who's going off  
next?

**SHOPPING**

We just love  
Kolaportið

**TRAVEL**

Chillin' out in the curvy East,  
freakin' out in the jagged South





## Reykjavík, I love you

### Haukur's 24<sup>th</sup> Editorial

It's true, Reykjavík. I love you. You're not even bringing me down or anything. I just love you. Thanks for being all you are.

You know, I think you're awesome for all sorts of reasons, and even though we often have our differences, I suspect my feelings for you will never really change. And what couple doesn't quarrel from time to time?

You are rainy, and you are constantly windy. You keep my feet in a constant state of wet, soggy awfulness. You are an ugly, sprawling town, and you are often mean and unforgiving. And I think you are beautiful, and love you with all my heart.

I love your people and your wet streets, the way you smell of trees sometimes and walking around you at night, exploring weird neighbourhoods I never even knew existed.

I love your music. Your musicians and your bands; your concerts and your clubs. I love that I can go out every single night of the week and catch performances from totally different, totally awesome acts on all of them. Some of your music is of course pretty horrible, but most of it seems honest anyway. I love that.

I love your food, even the awful stuff. I love that it's there. You have some really nice restaurants, you know. Furthermore, those of your inhabitants that I've gotten to know in the eight or nine years since I moved here from Ísafjörður (a town I love equally, if not more) are all very skilled chefs – and they love to throw dinner parties. These people are a credit to you, Reykjavík, as they would be to any town.

I love your overpriced, under-supplied grocery stores. Whenever I grocery shop abroad all that variety freaks me out and I have no idea what to buy so I just end up getting beer (yes, Reykjavík, other cities have beer in their grocery stores. You should maybe look into doing that).

I love your tiny airport. It's cute, and it connects you to the rest of the island, and it makes sure the ocean view from downtown isn't blocked off by any of those tall and ugly that have been sprouting all over you like so many pus-filled pimples.

I love your art, and your artists. Some of the art

is really, really good – and most of the artists are excellent company, smart and thoughtful people.

I love your vagrants, your punkers and your fancy rich people that think that class may be purchased.

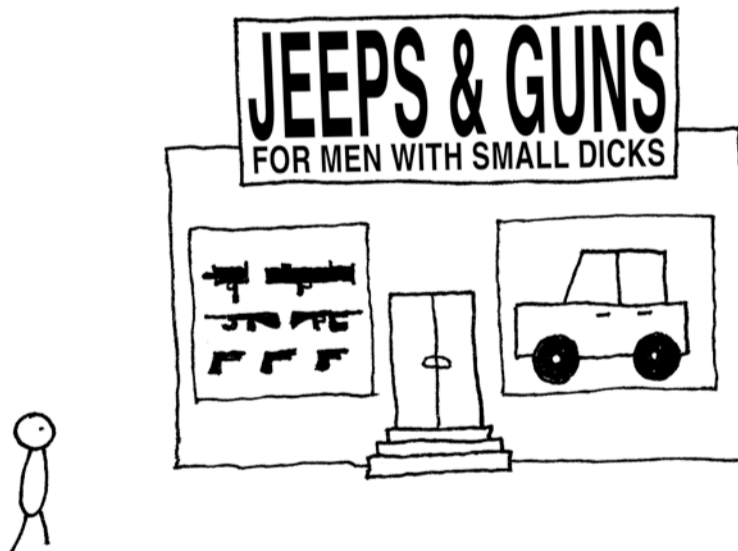
I love your immigrants. I am one myself. We all try and come together and do our best to enrich you with our different outlooks and cultures. I know you don't want to be a drab monoculture anyway, right? I know you love your immigrants, Reykjavík. They love you right back.

There's so much more. But I've gotta go.

I love you, Reykjavík.

One last thing: We really shouldn't be selling off (or giving, really) our natural resources to folks that very blatantly lie to our faces, and have been caught doing that repeatedly. It seems so obvious.

### Comic | Hugleikur Dagsson



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www.hordursveinsson.com  
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### TRACK OF THE ISSUE

#### Sóley

#### Theatre Island

ssoolleeyy

Download Theatre Island  
at [www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is)

Pianist and singer Sóley Stefánsdóttir has been playing her heart out with Seabear for the past few years, and has now branched out on her own. She just released her debut album, Theatre Island, and is touring in support of it with... Seabear. They are a big happy family indeed. Her album is full of sweet, dreamy acoustic tunes, which transport one into fantasy children's novels and dark magical forests.

You guys need to get that album, stat. Unless you only like dubstep or something. In which case you should go buy some dubstep tracks. Anyway, as a teaser Sóley has graciously offered to provide us all with the album's title track, a really beautiful melancholy tune about a dreamlike voyage. It's totally worth the listen, and if her elven voice doesn't melt your icy heart, then you are made of stone. But treat the tune with care – it has been lodged in our collective brains for a month now. Good thing it's all awesome and stuff.

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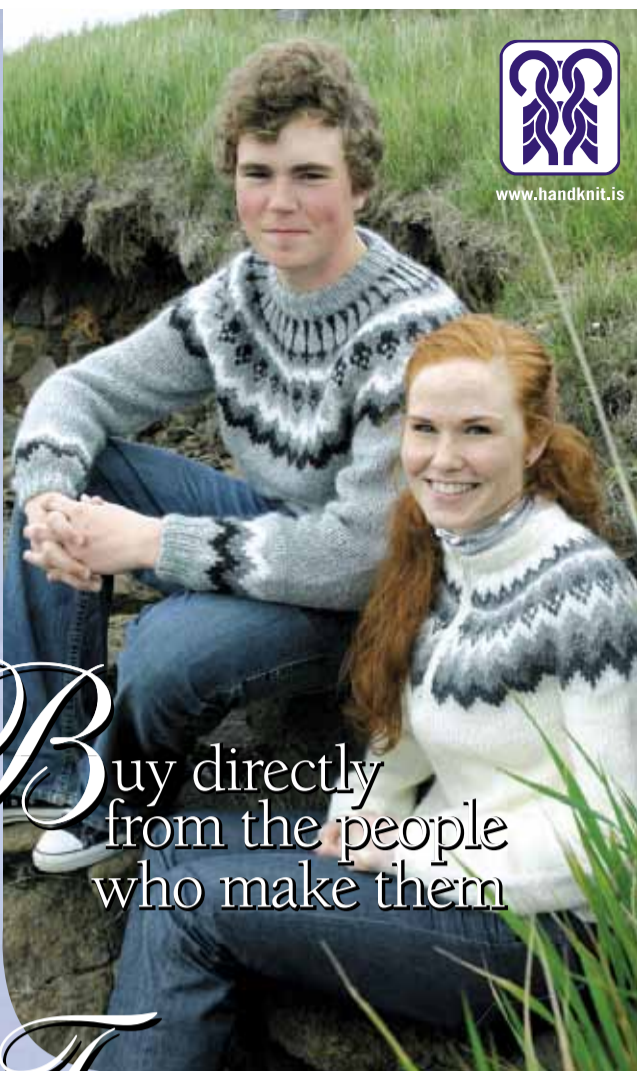


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## Sour grapes and stuff

Say your piece, voice your opinion, send your letters to: [letters@grapevine.is](mailto:letters@grapevine.is)

### 4 Letters

Dear Sirs:

I am writing you to find out how I can write the poor gentleman who had to put his horses to sleep, in the article, "We Are Drowning In Ash". His name is Finnur Tryggvason. I wish to send him my condolences and how terribly sorry I am for his misfortune. It is obvious from the photos that those horses were adored and were beautiful, and I cannot imagine a more awful thing to have to do than to put them to sleep. If you could forward me his email, or his physical address, so I could send him my thoughts, I would appreciate it. I live in Anchorage, Alaska, and have volcanoes close by to where I live. We had Mt Redoubt erupt last spring, and I had to keep my 3 cairn terrier dogs inside.

I am so sorry for all the suffering of your people in Iceland regarding the volcanic eruption. I hope that the livestock losses are not great, and are minimal. I extend my friendship and prayers to those hurting, and that I wish them to know that there are those in the United States who are praying for them, and that they are not going through this experience alone.

Very truly yours,  
Rebecca T Janelli

Dear Rebecca,

Thank you for your letter and for your concern. We have received several letters like yours since the eruption made world news, and we must say that each and every one of them is very touching, as these are heartfelt and emphatic missives that sorta make one believe there is hope yet (the fact that pretty much not a single human was harmed by the eruption is beside the point - it's the thought that counts).

We can't really give you Finnur's address (curious folks may read the article in question on our website), but maybe he'll stumble upon this issue and drop us a line.

In any case, thank you and everyone else who's written in with their concerns and worries. They mean a lot, and make clear that we should all strive to care more about one another and offer warm thoughts across oceans during times of trouble.

LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVE

Will be studying listfræði at HÍ next year. YOU ARE A VALUABLE RESOURCE, SIRS AND MADAMS. And I enjoy reading you after being yelled at by bosses and art dealers and various wealthy people.

David Nogman

Dear David,  
Why are y'all getting yelled at by so many folks? We don't know what you do, but it sounds like coming here for school will be a welcome change. Icelanders never yell at each other. Ha.  
Plus, all the wealthy people here are getting put in jail or have Interpol warrants out for their arrest. It's pretty funny, at least if you work at a listings magazine and don't have a nickel to your name. LOVE YOU TOO!

Editor:

I'd always wanted to visit Ijsland (blame Jules Verne for that), and finally took the opportunity for a few days this month. I didn't get out of Reykjavik very much, but your wonderful city and its people were a thrill. I have a new hip, and central Reykjavik's size and navigability were perfect for me...not to mention the food and very good Ijslandic beers. I was saddened to read in your recent issue that your government seems to spend more time hunting down cannabis than rogue bankers (boy, does that sound America-local!), but it didn't keep a fellow (we're both in our mid-60s) in a downtown bar from slipping me a very nice bud. I'll be back...and, by the way, I loved Mehdi Assem's letter in that particular number.

Arthur Wicks  
Seattle

Dear Arthur,

Thank you for your most awesome letter.

Now, Did Jules Verne spell it 'Ijsland'? How odd. Anyway, we are glad you enjoyed your time spent over on our island, and that you managed to score some bud, even though that's to-

### MOST AWESOME LETTER

A buncha POLAR BEER for your thoughts

We're not gonna lie to you: we really love us some beers. Some folks would call it a problem, but beer never gave us any problems. In fact, over the years, it's solved most of 'em. A frosty glass of cold, frothy, bubblicious, golden-tinted beer has consistently failed to let us down. In the immortal words of the once-reputable Homer J. Simpson: "Mmm... Beer..."

Now, since we're real pleasant and giving folks here at the Grapevine, we thought we'd share some wonderful POLAR BEER with you, our readers. Not only that, you're also getting the gift of social life with it. So here's the deal: our most awesome letter of each issue (henceforth, or until the good people of POLAR BEER decide they don't want to play along anymore), we will be providing our MOST AWESOME LETTER scribe with twelve frothy POLAR BEERS, to be imbibed at a Reykjavik bar of their choice (so long as that bar is either Bakkus or Venue). If y'all's letter is the one, drop us a line to collect. Give us your worst: [letters@grapevine.is](mailto:letters@grapevine.is)



### MOST AWESOME LETTER:

I usually dont get up early in the morning being a night owl by nature but i made an exception this morning and got out of bed before 6 a.m....driven out of bed is more like it as i was having a nightmare...dont gettem to often but when i do if i go back to sleep i just fall right back into the same damn nightmare right where i left off so fuck that shit i hit the deck had some kinda breakfast then got onto the computer.

I had received a letter from a freindly computer egghead warning me not to open up any emails from Landsbankin 'The Icelandic National Bank' the bank i do my meager business with. Evidently...so i was informed ...some cyber hood or gang is sending folks emails posing as Landsbankin in order to phish peoples bank info and as a bonus you get a free virus in yr computer that fucks it up like some kinda cyber sypth or clap.

Welcome to the 21st century i thought to myself. I had already grasped what Bill Burroughs was onto about words or the WORD being a virus that mutates and evolves. I stopped getting flu shots years ago...last time i had a flu shot it gave me the flu...flu viruses, biological viruses are quick to mutate and evolve...if we concoct a shot to block a strain of flu the virus eventually figures out how to get past it...it mutates...it evolves...spanish flu, monkey flu, bird flu, goat flu, pig flu, flu flu and so on.

Guess what? This is the way it works in the cyber world as well...yeah i'm gonna hack you up bitch!!! cyber hood drools on his keyboard concocts a computer flu that will eventually eat his own computer...Matrix? Ha!!! Just wait and see what happens when the virus gets into his brain/biological computer...welcome to the 21st century where we rely more and more on computer technology. We are advancing so fast in this game many of us thought the whole thing was gonna collapse year 2000 sending airlines, satellites, rockets, communication systems into a state of chaos.

I was so stoned on new years eve 2000 that i thought to myself ' This is so cool. ' I climbed up on the largest hill in Reykjavik just before midnight to have the best possible view when all hell breaks loose but alas midnight passed by with nary a bang nor whimper.

Maybe i will live to see the great cyber plague, the collapse of so called modern civilization, the development of telepathic communication wiping out the word and the lie...perhaps even a cure for aids the birth of a new sexual revolution...i think that's what they called it back in the sixties hahaha!!!!!! Evolution, revolution...who thinks up this stuff? THE BIG BANG theory....

The Cosmic Orgasm...Le Petite Morte...all this is way to much to think about. My biological hard drive only has so many bytes and i need all of them just to walk, breathe, make coffee, tie my shoes etc.

Do let me know if you hear about any new viruses. I'd like to know before it outsmarts us...mutates, evolves...Jeeeeeeeeee is it possible that WE are a virus!?\* Ok, Ok...i gotta cut this out now...i need to chill, kick back and defrag.

Michael Odin Pollock  
Brother M

[www.myspace.com/michaeldeanodinpollock](http://www.myspace.com/michaeldeanodinpollock)

Dear Michael,

As anyone can tell you, immunisations will give you a little flu. Maybe you just have a shitty immune system? Anyway, you should probably get more sleep. You seem a little opposed to legal pharmaceuticals, so may we suggest some nice herbal tea?

But listen man, we love the rant. It still sounds like you've been reading too many William Gibson novels. There is probably a long way to go before all the TechWars and CyberPlagues and interweb hoodlums take over all our lives (unless Facebook is planning a new widget or something), so don't be so freaked out all the time. Chill out with some free beer instead.

BTW, Isn't this like the second time you score free beer off us? Good job, Pollock!

tally wrong and just as bad as doing heroin and WON'T SOMEONE PLEASE THINK ABOUT THE CHILDREN!?! Anyway, you'll be happy to know some of our banksters are now in shackles. No bankster-coke for them anytime soon

Thanks for the interesting "interview" with Anna the landi girl. A good read. Despite what Anna may have said or believed, distilling is most definitely illegal, even for personal use. Fermenting is a much greyer area however. As best as I have been able to deduce from the laws, it's technically illegal to brew anything over 2.25%, but if you ring up the police and ask, they will tell you that it is OK to brew, but not to distill. And selling is definitely out, regardless.

Law aside, if you're interested in continuing the theme in your next, or future issues, tomorrow night (Monday 10 May) Fágun, the icelandic home brew society, (Or fermentology society really, we make wine and cheese and jogurt and things too) is having one of their monthly meetups. It's at Vínbar, from 8pm.

Of note is that on May 1, we had the first ever icelandic home brew competition, with

31 different beers entered into two categories, with a judging panel including both icelandic brewers and wine tasters, along with cheese and coffee connoisseurs and even a guest brewer flown in from Norway. We'll be discussing the results a bit more, and some of the beers will be available for tasting, which should be good fun.

Sorry for the short notice, but I only picked up the new grapevine yesterday.

If you want more info about fágun, you can head over to [www.fagun.is](http://www.fagun.is)

Cheers,  
Karl P

Hey Karl,

thanks for the correction, smartass. DJÓK! Anyway, your club sounds interesting as hell. We'll make sure to try and cover it sometime, if we ever manage to sober up from all that illegal landi.

Dear friends,


I can no longer remain silent on the very pressing subject that is the selling off of Iceland's nature.

I hereby challenge the government of Iceland to do everything in its power to revoke the contracts with Magma Energy that entitle the Canadian firm complete ownership of HS Orka. These are abhorable deals, and they create a dangerous precedent for the future. They directly go against necessary and oft-repeated attempts to create a new policy in the energy- and resource management of this nation.

Warmly,

Björk Guðmundsdóttir

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# Wake Up Reykjavík!



## MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT

The Social Democratic Alliance is the only political party that offers a concrete action plan to create jobs and fight unemployment in Reykjavík. It is time for the City to wake up, assume leadership and use all means to secure employment and speed up the economic recovery process.

### The Social Democratic Alliance will:

1. Lead a drive in innovation
2. Create growth by renovating the older quarters of Reykjavík
3. Arrange and implement a coordinated growth effort along with the neighbouring municipalities
4. Double maintenance work and increase construction projects
5. Support growth in the green sector

We must also support those who are currently seeking employment. It is crucial that they stay socially active. Otherwise, their situation might cause them severe emotional damage.

**Did you know that the unemployment rate in Reykjavík is highest in the age group of 16-24?**

**Did you know that the Social Democratic Alliance is the only party that has actively engaged foreign Reykjavík inhabitants in setting the political agenda?**



Learn more at [xsreykjavik.is](http://xsreykjavik.is)



Vekjum Reykjavík!



Politics | Municipal Elections

# The Big Four Answer For Themselves

*But not really. They eventually might, though.*

## Words

Haukur S. Magnússon & Paul F. Nikolov

## Photography

GAS

Us at the Grapevine love the city of Reykjavík. It is surely our favourite city. We believe it is one of the best places in the world to do a lot of the things we like doing. Why else would we live here?

Since we love it so much, we certainly care about what goes on here, too, and how the place is run. And guess what, a week from now we'll be voting fresh new city officials in office. This in mind, we thought we'd get representatives from "THE BIG FOUR" (Iceland's "mainstay" political parties, those that have been around for a long time and are all part of our "political establishment") to answer some questions about their platform, their parties and their intentions if voted into office. After all, we are read by a bunch of folks that will be directly affected by the elections' outcome, and who will be casting their votes for some of them come Election Day.

So we called all of them up, and all of them were quite enthusiastic to be interviewed. Oh they had some quips. We said: "Can we please do this by phone, as we tried the e-mail thing for the national elections last year and all the answers came in way too late, and they were all way too long." Some of them responded: "No, let's do this by e-mail." To which we responded: "Alright, so long as you promise to turn in before our deadline, and if you promise to keep your answers super brief – a paragraph at most."

"No problem," they said.

Well, the results are in. Or not, really. At the time of writing, the only person whose answers we have is Einar Skúlason, the chair of the Progressive Party's municipal team. Dagur B. Eggertsson,

son, chair of Samfylkingin's, answers just made a \*BLINK\* sound in our inbox – alas, we are now past our deadline, so we can't really print them. Our printers get super angry if we are late turning in our issues, so there just needs to be a cut-off point. All of them knew the deadlines they had to work with, and all of them said they would respond in time.

Anyway. Below you may read the answers from good ol' Einar, and the questions we posed to the rest of them. We will be posting the other parties' answers on [www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is) as soon as they come in (if they come in at all), so keep your eyes glued to that space to read those parties' misadventures to y'all.

ONE LAST THING: there are several other parties running in the 2010 Reykjavík municipal elections. Besti flokkurinn ("The Best Party" – [www.bestiflokkurinn.is](http://www.bestiflokkurinn.is)) is fairly well represented in our feature, where we try and squeeze a platform and some sort of policy out of their leader. Frjálslyndi flokkurinn ("The Liberal Party" – [www.xf.is](http://www.xf.is)) are also running again, and former FF man Ólafur F. Magnússon is running under the moniker Framboð um heiðarleika og almannahagsmuni ("Campaign for honesty and public interest" – they don't seem to have a website). Then there is Reykjavíkurframboðið ("The Reykjavík campaign" – [www.reykjavikurframbodid.is](http://www.reykjavikurframbodid.is)), which is an independent campaign "for the interests of Reykjavík-dwellers". The Grapevine loves small, independent parties and campaigns, and we urge you to check out their platforms. ☺

## Einar Skúlason X-B – The Progressive Party

Interviewed by Paul F. Nikolov



Why should the average Reykjavík voter choose your party? What does it offer that the other parties do not, in terms of platform, policy, integrity and skill - i.e. what do you hope makes it the discerning voter's party of choice? Keep in mind that the other parties will likely respond to this question in a similar manner to yourselves. Why should we choose you over them?

Well for one, we don't see a need to raise taxes, nor a need to raise the cost of services beyond what inflation requires. We have a three-year plan that was passed in city hall, and we want to stick to that. Also, we would like to allow people to affect how things are discussed. We are proposing a law whereby if 5% of city residents—regardless of age, we could be talking about 14-year-old students here—sign a petition asking city hall to bring up a matter for discussion, then we would be obliged to address that matter.

What have the Progressives done for the city that makes you proudest?

Children and teenagers having better chances to take part in recreational activities. During the last election, we proposed a discount card for recreational activities ("frístundakort"), which gave parents 25,000 ISK per year for recreational activities. We want to increase that amount to 40,000 ISK, as inflation has hit a lot of families hard. Also, I think it was very important that my predecessor, Óskar Bergsson, helped Hanna Birna become mayor. I think that after conflicts within city council, and the switching back and forth of majorities, this move created peace within city hall at last.

To what do you attribute the Progressive Party's abysmal polling numbers?

The Best Party. I'm pretty sure they're taking support from everyone. I actually expected more praise for our renewal, for our change of politics and policies. I was pretty surprised when that didn't happen. I suppose it takes a long time to earn trust back, more than a few months or maybe even a few years.

Do you think people trust the Progressives?

Probably more so in rural areas than in urban ones. I understand it, though. In the past, the leadership of the party has taken a decidedly different direction than the grassroots. Support for the Iraq invasion is a great example of this. I'd say over 90% of Progressives were against supporting the invasion, yet (former Minister of Foreign Affairs) Halldór Ásgrímsson signed on to it. I think this is because the leadership was more caught up in creating a harmonious coalition with the Independence Party, and forgot the wishes of the people. My intention is to make the leadership and the grassroots one and the same. This is basically my last chance to do that.

Do you believe the media has focused too much on conflicts within your party?

Yes. I think it's natural for people to disagree. In fact, I think it's a certificate of good health for party members to disagree with each other. It's good to have discussions on issues. It's when parties appear unanimous that I think it's cause to worry.

I want to give you a chance to clarify what you meant when you said that if a "þjóðstjórn"—where all parties share power in city hall, instead of there being a majority and an opposition—were to occur in Reykjavík, you wouldn't like to see Hanna Birna as mayor. It's nothing personal. I also wouldn't want to see Dagur (Eggertsson, Social Democrat candidate for mayor) or even myself as mayor in the event of a þjóðstjórn. If we had that kind of a situation, we would need a non-politically-affiliated mayor. If we're creating a totally equal power-sharing system, it would be too complicated and unrealistic for there to be a mayor from one of the parties.

## Questions for the Independence Party

By Haukur S. Magnússon



Why should the average Reykjavík voter choose your party? What does it offer that the other parties do not, in terms of platform, policy, integrity and skill - i.e. what do you hope makes it the discerning voter's party of choice?

The other parties will likely respond to the above question in a similar manner to yourselves. Why should we choose you over them?



Reykjavík is an extremely inconvenient city for those that prefer walking, biking and public transport to automobiles. One of your campaign promises before the last municipal elections was "improved public transport" -- why weren't you able to keep that promise? Is there a chance we'll see a coherent, sensible bus schedule, bike paths and more localised recycling facilities in Reykjavík if you get elected this time around?

How would you account for the fact that Mayor Hanna Birna has an approval rating about twice that of her own party?

Do you stand by your party member Vilhjálmur Vilhjálmsson's comments that "Golfing is a great past time for the unemployed"? Was he misinterpreted or did he really mean to say that? Why the golf course, anyway? There are lots of previously committed-projects on the backburner due to diminishing funds — how do you justify 230 million ISK for building a golf course?

To be honest (and I hope you won't get offended), The Independence Party isn't doing so great these days (to be fair, neither are the other parties). A lot of people want to blame 2008's economic collapse on your policies and officials, for instance. No one seems very excited about believing in you nowadays. Do you feel like you lost the voters' trust? Why do you think that happened? How do you propose to regain your position as Iceland's most popular and trusted party, and do you foresee that being an arduous task?

## Questions for the Social Democratic Alliance

By Haukur S. Magnússon



Why should the average Reykjavík voter choose your party? What does it offer that the other parties do not, in terms of platform, policy, integrity and skill - i.e. what do you hope makes it the discerning voter's party of choice?

The other parties will likely respond to the above question in a similar manner to yourselves. Why should we choose you over them?

A lot of your campaigns, past and present, speak

about defending our welfare system. In concrete terms: how do you plan to do that?

Your current platform speaks a lot of the need for decent city planning. Yet Reykjavík transformed into a sprawling monster over the last two decades, most notably while your very party was in power. To what can we attribute this newfound love for city planning, and what are your immediate plans to implement it when in office?

Recent poll results indicate that the voters of Iceland have lost a lot of faith in the Icelandic party system, its politics and its officials. This includes your supporters (or former supporters). Why do you think this is, and how do you plan on winning the public's trust back?

Your platform states that "welfare and jobs" were the best way out of our current economic hardship. In all honesty, this sounds like an empty slogan or catchphrase, something that could have been uttered by every party in every campaign of the last few decades — so much politispeak. How is it not? What is the plan?

## Questions for the Left-Green Party

By Paul F. Nikolov



Why should people vote VG? What sets you apart from any other party? I don't just mean in the sense of ideas or attitudes - what specific things would you do, that no other party would do?

To what do you attribute the current poll numbers, with regards to VG?

Many believe, as Progressive MP Eygló Harðardóttir pointed out, that VG is responding to the Magma Energy buy out late in the game. How exactly did VG fight the initial sale of share of HS Orka, and what did the party do after the sale was approved?

When VG was in the ruling majority, what happened to some of the party proposals, such as a better mass transit system, a better recycling program, and more affordable kindergartens?

With the right-left-right swing between majorities in city hall in the recent past, do you believe people have good reason to be wary of "The Big Four"?



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# Never Give Up

The Grapevine talks with Freyja Haraldsdóttir about disability rights in Iceland



In March of 2007, Iceland signed (but did not ratify) the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. One of the guiding principles of the convention is respect for “individual autonomy, including the freedom to make one’s own choices.” Self-determination is one of the underlying principles of the Independent Living Movement (IL) which emerged out of the U.S. in the 1970s. Disabled people were argued to be the most knowledgeable about their own needs. Direct payments became a cornerstone of the Movement so that disabled people could freely choose and manage their own assistance, rather than relying on the state-managed services about which disabled people have little say or control. However, direct payments are still not an official service option in Iceland. The situation for disabled people in Iceland regarding self-determination remains stubbornly out of step with much of Europe and North America.

In recent years an IL Movement has emerged in Iceland. Among their goals is to make direct payments and user-led services a reality for all disabled people, if they so wish. The Grapevine asked a key figure in the Icelandic IL Movement—Freyja Haraldsdóttir—for some of her thoughts on what IL means, the importance of direct payments, and her concerns for the future. Freyja is one of the founding members of SSL (Samtök um sjálfstætt líf—The Independent Living Movement in Iceland) and is also a member of a work group whose goal is to start a co-operative for user-controlled personal assistance run by disabled people. She is currently studying social pedagogy at the University of Iceland.

Can you explain what is meant by independent living, direct payments and user-controlled services? Why are these things important for many disabled people?

Independent living really just says that the society should make it possible for disabled people to live just like non-disabled people. Instead of using the service that the service system offers, with direct payments you get some amount of money that you ‘cost’—if we can think of it that way—and then you can choose yourself how you spend the money or in what way you want to use it to have some assistance. So you can have your own company and hire your assistants. Or, like in Sweden, Norway and elsewhere, you can go to this co-operative which is owned by disabled people and they will help you to take care of the payments, and offer peer support and courses—both for the employer and the assistants. You can also go to some private companies and have this kind of support there. So you really just choose how you want to have it.

I think first of all the existing service for disabled people, like it has been through the years, is based on the medical understanding of disability. The system is complicated and is led by professionals who really believe they know what’s best for service users and their families. And they take little account of the rights and needs of the users. The service providers are also assessing the needs, they are providing the service, and they are paying for it—so that explains a lot. So that’s one thing. And I think knowledge about the United Nations Convention and independent living has not been spread out enough, either to disabled people and their organisations or professionals.

**You mention a lack of knowledge and understanding. What factors are important in raising awareness of these issues?**

Disability studies has been really important with this. Disabled people are becoming louder and they are becoming more eager to have personal assistance and they are starting to say what they

think—which is a good change—and starting to participate in research. A lot of effort has been put into study and research on independent living, and it has altered disabled people’s lives, their way of thinking and how they feel about themselves. All this is really precious knowledge, which I believe is not used enough.

When I was 18 years old, I went to this conference that was held for people with the same impairment that I have. At that time I was really scared of the future; scared of not getting assistance and scared of what would happen and where I would end up. But I went there and I saw people who were in the same position that I am in, and they had their personal assistants and they were working on studying and had moved away from home, and had gotten married and had children and were just living the same life as all other people. There I realised that if they could, then I should be able to, so that really gave me a lot of strength.

So when I came back home, we started working on getting the direct payments. I think for one and a half years there was nothing—there was no progress—they didn’t listen, they didn’t want to know what I really wanted; they kept telling me there were some great group homes I should look at. No matter how many times I said ‘No, I am not interested, that’s not what I want,’ they kept pushing me. I knew that if I would accept that, I would be sharing assistance with others. Then I would always have to ask other people if it is ok for me to go to the shop, or go to school or wherever. I know people who live this way here in Iceland; some of them sit the whole day sometimes waiting for someone to assist them with such small things that it’s really, really sad. And they don’t get to decide whether they eat dinner at 5 o’clock or 9 o’clock and they don’t decide when they go to the toilet, and they don’t decide when they go shopping. I mean, it’s just not living, it’s just being.

Then I met an advocate who had been assisting a young disabled man who lives independently in his home. So when the advocate came with me to a meeting it was harder for the Regional Office for the Affairs of Disabled People to not give me something that another man had. The advocate just said what he wanted to say and he didn’t care what the Office staff thought of him. And that’s really important. When you have been in this business for many years you start to behave like they want you to behave, really. And you don’t say the things you want to say because you’re afraid that they will get pissed off and give you even worse services. So what I did was just assess my own needs. And that’s how it is today. And I don’t have it 24-7 even though I need it. You always get less than you ask for.

**Do people scale back their expectations because of these frustrations?**

I feel that this is what is happening to many people now. They wait and wait and people start to give

up. You don’t have any energy left to fight for it anymore. You just get so tired, even though you know the importance of it and that your life maybe sucks quite a lot because you don’t have the assistance. People still are just giving up because they make it so difficult. I believe it’s important for disabled people to have the opportunity to know more about their human rights, the social understanding of disability and have peer support in the process of getting direct payments and personal assistance. The demand for independent living must come from disabled people themselves because we are the only ones who know exactly how we want it done, so to accomplish that we need to be aware of our rights and be empowered by each other. ☺

JAMES G. RICE AND FREYJA HARALDSDÓTTIR  
JULIA STAPLES

## The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

was adopted in December 2006. As described by UN Enable, the Convention is a ‘paradigm shift’ in the attitudes and treatment of disabled people, from “viewing persons with disabilities as ‘objects’ of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing persons with disabilities as ‘subjects’ with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society.” Of particular importance regarding the Independent Living Movement is Article 19, subsection a.) which states: “Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement.”

Iceland signed the Convention and its Optional Protocol on March 30, 2007. However, as of May of 2010, Iceland has ratified neither. To ‘sign’ the UN Convention “indicates the intention of a State to take steps to express its consent to be bound by the Convention and/or Optional Protocol at a later date.” **Ratification**, in contrast, is somewhat more meaningful as it “legally binds a State to implement the Convention and/or Optional Protocol, subject to valid reservations, understandings and declarations.” While signing the Convention is a step forward, signatories are bound to nothing more than ‘intentions.’ Though Iceland does join the ranks of other notable foot-draggers such as the United States— and 59 others signatories—let us aspire to be like the other 85 nations who have ratified. If Vanuatu, Niger, Mali, Jordan, Ecuador, and Bangladesh among others can, what are we waiting for?

For more information about the Convention and its Optional Protocol, consult <http://www.un.org/disabilities>.

For those of you who prefer your information in a more concise format, try: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convention\\_on\\_the\\_Rights\\_of\\_Persons\\_with\\_Disabilities](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convention_on_the_Rights_of_Persons_with_Disabilities).

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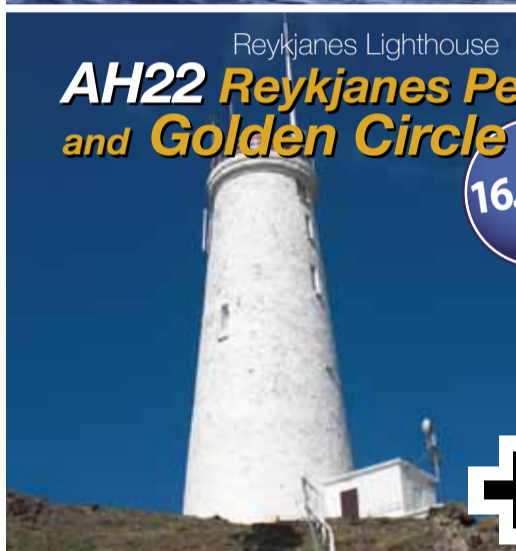
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Analysis | Egill Helgason, Political and Social Commentator



## Terrified Politicians

Icelanders are heading into their second elections since the economic collapse of October 2008. In April of last year, we had the parliamentary elections where the left won a resounding victory—since then we have what is nominally the most left wing government in the history of the republic. But then the government is in a way a victim of circumstance: It is difficult to run generous left wing welfare policies in a state that is practically bankrupt. The government is thus forced to follow a strict program dictated by the International Monetary Fund, stipulating how it should cut down the huge budget deficit and repay foreign debt.

So in the course of a year, the present government has become almost as unpopular as the former right/centre government that presided over the economic collapse, which was ousted after the so-called Pots and Pans Revolution of January 2009. The general feeling in the country is that politics are useless, political parties are corrupt and politicians mendacious and irrelevant.

### Reykjavík as crown jewel

Politics are not helped by the fact that the political parties—save for the socialist Left Greens—had a very cosy relationship with the financiers who bankrupted the country. Politicians acted as cheerleaders for the bankers, who repaid them with donations into party coffers and money gifts to individual politicians, parliamentarians and members of the Reykjavík city council. There are demands for several politicians to resign because of this, but so far they have resisted. Thus, Icelanders' disgust with traditional politics keeps on growing.

The municipal elections on May 30th arouse no passion in the population. The elections are held all around the country, in townships large and small, but the greatest prize is Reykjavík. Reykjavík was always the jewel in the crown of the Independence Party, which has dominated Icelandic politics since the 1920s.

For decades the party reigned supreme in Reykjavík with a clear majority in every elec-

tion. The leaders of the party were brought up in Reykjavík politics; they almost invariably were mayors of Reykjavík before they went on to become party leaders and prime ministers. This was, for example, the story of Davíð Oddsson, the strong man of Icelandic politics for the last three decades. He graduated from the law faculty of the University of Iceland, was mayor of Reykjavík, party leader, PM and, lastly, head of the Central Bank of Iceland—a position which has strangely been used to reward politicians on their way to retirement.

And this was exactly the path of Geir Hallgrímsson, a leader of the Independence Party, a generation older than Davíð Oddsson. He ended up in the luxury of the Central Bank, a black modern building towering over central Reykjavík and a rest home for political veterans. But then Geir never had to deal with an economic collapse, so his competence was not really tested.

### Losing Reykjavík

For the Independence Party, Reykjavík was also the lynchpin of a system of patronage where people got jobs, housing, permits, and different rewards based on where they stood in politics. If you wanted to enjoy the benefits of life in Reykjavík you had better support the Independence Party—and so it was for a long time.

This started changing in 1994 when the left wing parties in Reykjavík managed to mount a challenge to the Independence Party in the guise of Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, a tough feminist, then a member of the so called Women's List. At that time a person of extraordinary self confidence, she seemed the first politician to be unfazed by the power and the traditions of the Independence Party which up to that point had been a source of inferiority complexes on the left wing.

Under Ingibjörg Sólrún the left managed to hold on to Reykjavík for three consecutive elections. This was not excessively due to the success of their policies, for the demographics have also changed. Many conservative voters have moved to outlying towns such as

Garðabær and Seltjarnarnes where population is more uniformly affluent and where the Independence Party can rely on a sound majority every time there is a vote.

So in Reykjavík the Independence Party can no more count on winning a clear majority—those days have passed. After the last elections, after some very complicated manoeuvring, the party managed to form a city government with the quite marginal Progressive Party. The present mayor, Hanna Birna Kristjánsdóttir, has done quite well; she has a decisive personality, manages to distance herself from unpopular decisions, and is mostly free from the scandals that have shaken the nation. No wonder she is being named as a future leader of the party, and in due time, Prime Minister.

But at the same time her party is deeply unpopular. It is blamed for the corruption, recklessness, deception and lack of regulation, which led to the collapse of the economy. Party leader, Bjarni Benediktsson, has extremely low approval ratings. He is perceived as having been too close to the financiers who plundered the country. The party's VP, Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir, was recently forced to resign because of huge loans her husband, a former handball star, received when he was an employee of the Kaupthing bank.

### Every-party hurts

The situation is not much better in the other parties. The social democrats, now leaders of the government, were also in government at the time of the collapse. The aforementioned Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir was then Minister for Foreign Affairs and party leader. Since she was forced to leave politics her successor and present PM Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir has seen her approval ratings plummet—she is now mostly linked to enforcing unpopular IMF policies and a deeply unpopular application to join the European Union. She is not referred to as Holy Jóhanna anymore.

Even the Left Greens, who had no part in the collapse of the economy, are suffering. The party is divided between loyalists who support party leader and finance minister Steingrímur J. Sigfússon and his pragmatist, pro-IMF policies, and a more militant, anti-globalist, anti-EU faction, led by Ögmundur Jónasson, who was Minister of Health for a short while until he decided to leave the government. The party, which looked so cohesive in its long years of opposition, is now in total disarray.

### Comedy with a spark of danger

In Iceland, Reykjavík elections have always been a big deal, a test of strength between left and right. But now the situation is different. People generally dislike the political parties; in a way they seem pitiful. The parties have looked very cowed during the election campaign; they are handing out their balloons, flowers and hot dogs, but the general feeling is that they feel ashamed of themselves. It has been very difficult to get the party faithful to volunteer for election work. Within the par-

ties there is great resentment against politicians who took money from the financiers and who are still clinging on to their seats.

This might be a great atmosphere for populists and demagogues, but surprisingly their kind has not really showed up on the political scene, not yet anyway. Instead Reykjavík now has a party led by Jón Gnarr, Iceland's most popular comedian. The party calls itself Besti flokkurinn, "The Best Party".

Jón Gnarr is a phenomenon in Iceland, a man who speaks volumes. He has created television shows, movies, radio programs, penned books and articles—always with a spark of danger in it, Jón Gnarr's jokes often seem to be on the verge of madness. Not everybody finds him funny, but he has a strong cult following. As a person he gives the feeling of being rather obsessive; this latest venture of his has been described as being Kaufmanesque—in the vein of legendary US comedian Andy Kaufman.

### The best party?

The Best Party is formed around Jón Gnarr. Most of the other members could be categorized as artistic types, belonging to a crowd you could find hanging around in Reykjavík's more fashionable bars and cafés. Many of them have links to Icelandic pop star Björk. Number two on the list, Einar Örn Benediktsson, used to be a member of the Sugarcubes.

The Best Party has no real policies to speak of. They want to put a polar bear in the Reykjavík 'domestic animal' Zoo. They demand that Alþingi becomes free of drugs before 2020. They want to do all kinds of things "for idiots." The parody is basically that the other parties are so boring that you can't vote for them.

At the time of writing, polls indicate they might get up to 36 percent of the vote. That would give them six members on the Reykjavík council. This represents a total collapse for the old parties. They do not know how to react. Do you answer a joke like this without becoming ridiculous yourself? Or is this a joke: what will Jón Gnarr and his friends really do if they get elected?

Well, they will have to attend a lot of meetings. The inner council meets once a week, the larger council meets every two weeks. There are a lot of committees dealing with all aspects of Reykjavík life. There is an unwieldy bureaucratic system for a city this size. There is practically no money to speak of; basically all the parties agree that the school system and welfare programs have to be protected as tax revenues go down. There is little room left to do funny or nice things. So after the election it is possible that Jón Gnarr's joke might turn out to be a bit long-winded. ☺

EGILL HELGASON  
JULIA STAPLES

Opinion | Íris Erlingsdóttir

## The Limits Of Money



"Money can't buy me love." John Lennon/Paul McCartney.

I can understand a father working two jobs to support his family, a mother sacrificing her time to ensure that her children don't starve. But once you're assured a basic subsistence (adequate food, shelter, and clothing), how much of your time can you sacrifice to your job before the impact on your family's well-being becomes negative? Where is the point of diminishing returns?

Apparently, we answered this question in the wild times leading up to the *kreppa*.

According to a recent study ([www.rannsoknir.is/rg/english/](http://www.rannsoknir.is/rg/english/)), Icelandic children and teenagers are happier now than they were when we were the richest country on Earth. Although the researchers aren't entirely sure why this would be, they theorise that parents are able to spend more time with them, and less time working, shopping, travelling, schmoozing, and trying to impress one another.

"Economic prosperity may come and go; that's just how it is," Warren Buffett's son Peter writes in his new book *Life is What You Make it: Finding Your Own Path to Fulfillment*. "But values are the steady currency that earn us the all-important rewards."

And what were the values we were teaching them? That the ridiculously expensive clothes we bought for them could make up for the times we couldn't spend with them? That the evenings on the town with our co-workers were more important than quiet evenings together? That money is the measure of all things?

Fortunately, our children seem to be wiser than we are. To be sure, some learned their lessons well, and will have one helluva time establishing some sense of balance and self-worth now that the money is gone. "Entitlement is the worst thing ever, and I see entitlement coming in many guises," Peter Buffett writes. "Anybody who acts like they deserve something 'just because' is a disaster."

But our kids understand that, although the world may be a hostile place, they'll always be alright as long as they have their family and friends. For most of our country's existence, we were alone in the world, for all intents and purposes. All we had was one another. Nearly all of us have been raised in a very egalitarian manner—we went to the same schools, ate the same foods, watched the same shows, listened to the same music, and lived the same lives. We all cheered the Icelandic handball team in the 2008 Olympics. We are all glued to the screen every year when the Icelandic entry in Eurovision performs. We all feel a rush of pride every time an Icelandic singer, actor, or writer makes the big time.

I suppose, too, that this is why the Black Report hurts so bad. It shows the dark side in each of us; it makes us ask, "What if I had the opportunity? Would I have acted differently?"

Our nation is healing, children first. Now that our demons are out in the open, we can fight them together. Like our children are teaching us, we re-establish our internal compasses and recalibrate our society's true worth. We didn't really need all that money, but—more than ever—we really need

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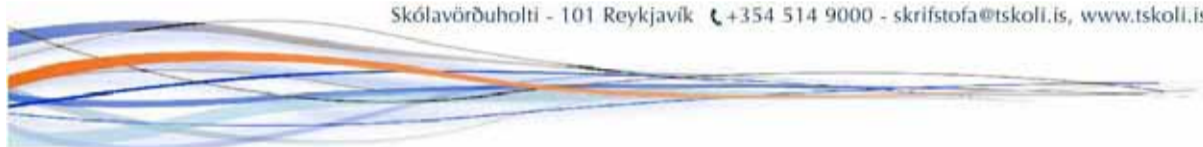
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Fire is needed by the newcomer  
Whose knees are frozen numb;  
Meat and clean linen a man needs  
Who has fared across the fells.\*

The Icelandic Sheep,  
Keeping the people alive since 874 AD.

\*From the Hávamál, 1300 AD





## The Erupting Insurrection

*Is Eyjafjallajökull an anarchist volcano?*

By one swift, decisive act, it has paralyzed Europe's airline industries for almost a week, delayed 64 thousand flights (and counting), affecting millions of travellers, reminding a whole continent that geography and distance still exist, while lessening the airlines' carbon footprint by an amount equal to the annual output of several smaller states combined, and possibly hindering the meagre 1% economic growth expected in the EU zone in 2010. Surely Eyjafjallajökull ("Ay! You fergot la yoghurt!" or just EJ for short) is an anarchist.

In the severely underreported student uprisings throughout California last October, one of the novelties in their published materials was the declaration, rejuvenated from the sixties, to 'demand nothing': occupying and paralyzing universities throughout the state the students declared they made no particular demands, no structural reforms: 'a free university in the midst of a capitalist society is like a reading room in a prison; it serves only as a distraction from the misery of daily life.' (Communiqué from an absent future" After the fall – Communiqués from Occupied California). Published February 2010). Instead, paraphrases the volcano, we seek to channel the anger of the dispossessed tourists and airline workers into a declaration of war.

### A PRECISE OPERATION

Now, sorry for the harsh interpretation—it was the radical students in California who spoke of war and which went surprisingly unnoticed by the global media. EJ is far more sophisticated in its approach, not saying a word, so not a word can be misinterpreted. As is quite evident from its course of action it means no harm to people. This is a precise operation, designed for maximal effect in the following three ways:

1. To bring a huge industry to standstill for as long as possible, considered good per se, by radical volcanoes, as economic growth in a capitalist system equals strengthening hierarchies, while
2. thus revealing to the general population who relies on the services involved how vulnerable it is, this system taken for granted by as all, supposedly serving our needs, economic and otherwise—laughing in the face of globalisation and opening up a gap in the veil of alienation, society's wilfully enforced ignorance of its actual truths and
3. delaying global warming catastro-

phe for a day or two.

All this amounts—or so the theory motivating the volcano obviously goes—to a wake-up call.

In the face of that wake-up call, the volcano would hope that collateral damage, such as underpaid workers in Kenya, in the UK and elsewhere losing their jobs, will channel their frustrations into a demand for radical change, a system sustainable to humans and the rest of life, that would make livelihood and human dignity independent from whimsical market conditions and unsustainable means of travel.

### MASKED ACTIVISM

As other anarchist activists before it, the volcano does not reveal its face—even underneath the hood of its smoke it shows only a mask, its three craters resembling a distorted version of Munch's Scream, according to some interpreters. Having no particular face, no identifiable person or organisation behind it, the volcano stays out of reach of counter-strikes or retaliation. Unlike, for example, France's Tarnac 9, the group of young anarcho-communists who in 2008 were arrested on the basis of suspicion that they had written The Coming Insurrection (officially written by 'the Invisible Committee', available in English translation here)—a booklet urging action to interrupt the flows of capital more or less precisely the way EJ currently does, though never hinting at any action of such volcanic magnitude.

For those interested in events, the eruption is already far more interesting than parliament's 3,000 page report on Iceland's financial crisis, or even its appendix on ethics. There are those who would like to see the volcano as a mercenary mountain on the state's payroll. They cite the fact that the Nordic heathen society's high-priest and Sigur rós collaborator, Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson, did invoke a curse against the UK and Holland for the unsettled IceSave accounts, over a year ago. After the ritual he concocted this rhyme in English:

"In London town this lying clown  
our land he drowns and shatters.  
Gordon Brown is going down,  
his good renown in tatters."

Proponents of this theory will also find support in the fact that the €00 million losses that the ashes cause the airline industry alone—daily—

already amount to approximately the whole unsettled IceSave debt. This, however, is merely so much nationalist propaganda, belittling the autonomy of independent actors and thwarting the volcano's more radical and far-reaching agenda under a screen of natural mysticism and foreseeable over-interpretation of coincidence. No, this mountain may address all those who hear it, but it acts only in its own name, in defiance of all hierarchies and orders, a defiance underlined in the details of its calculated side-effects: deployment of arms to Afghanistan gets delayed, while soldiers on their way back home on leave make a detour on train and ferry.

### A POTENTIAL STALIN LIES DORMANT

The event is ongoing and remains open for interpretation. Perhaps come next week, it will not be amusing at all. Geologists tell us nothing about what lies ahead, but musicologists insist that if this piece is composed, the first two acts clearly have the structure of a prelude and there must be more to come. Behind the corner the more easily pronounceable Mt. Katla lies dormant, less of an anarchist, more of a potential Stalin, purges and all. Its eruption might mean the end of Iceland. Last time it erupted it meant the end of monarchy in France, which most of us have come to appreciate.

Not that being stuck with your family for an extra week in Tenerife is any laughing stock, let alone calling out the Navy for your rescue. Googling "I hate Iceland" already gives 147,000 results, dwarfing "I love Iceland" and its meagre 46,000 hits. Then again, anarchists have never really been strong in popularity contests. As of yet—unlike September 11, 2001—the last time airlines were interrupted on a comparable scale—this catastrophe has not become a deadly one, and the activist volcano shows no sign of fascist tendencies. The event remains nearly as virtual as a computer meltdown and its potential just as real. As long as that's the case, I feel mildly proud of my place of origin. Never mind the people or its politicians: this tectonic intersection is intelligent and daring.



HAUKUR MÁR HELGASON

We are afraid the lovely James might be jinxing us by playing the guessing-game like this. It's still a damn fine read.



## The Unusual Suspects

Which of Iceland's volcanoes could blow next?

With the current eruption at Eyjafjallajökull rumbling on relatively steadily, producing an ash cloud that continues to wreak havoc with European air traffic, I thought it may be interesting to take a look at some other potential troublemakers living on this island. After all, Iceland is a land formed almost entirely by volcanic processes, and there is on average an eruption every 3 to 4 years—there's hardly a shortage of potentially active volcanoes.

### Trusty ol' Hekla

First in our line-up is Hekla, the infamous Icelandic 'gateway to Hell'. Beautifully conical from one side and similar in appearance to an upturned boat from the other, with a penchant for producing spectacular fire fountaining fissure eruptions, Hekla is a magnificent looking mountain. But it has produced some quite large explosive eruptions—in particular 1104 AD, and more recently a smaller but no less spectacular eruption in 1947.

Since 1970, Hekla seems to have settled into a pattern—quite an oddity in volcanology, a science where nothing is ever predictable—and has produced a relatively small eruption almost exactly every 10 years. The last of those was in 2000. On its own, this would be less than convincing, but measurements show that pressure within the mountain is currently higher than prior to the 2000 or 1991 eruptions. You could really consider Hekla primed to blow. It's also an odd beast because it produces no real earthquake activity until immediately (an hour or so) prior to an eruption, so when we see the ground shaking here, we know something is up.

### Grímsvötn builds pressure

Our next suspect is Grímsvötn, a well-hidden volcano whose favourite tool of destruction is the jökulhlaup (glacial outburst flood). Buried below the enormous Vatnajökull ice cap, Grímsvötn is unlikely to mess with air traffic any time soon because all that ice will probably stop much ash from escaping very far, but such sub-glacial eruptions have a history of aggression against bridges and other structures.

Grímsvötn's crater contains a lake lying beneath the ice, made of water melted by natural geothermal heat. Unlike most volcanoes, which may produce a jökulhlaup due to ice melting during the eruption, it's thought that this lake can naturally overflow, and this release of pressure can trig-

ger an eruption. Whether the jökulhlaup comes before or after the eruption, though, they can often be pretty damn big. And right now? Well, as with Hekla the internal pressure is pretty much at pre-eruption levels, and the sub-glacial lake is also approaching its maximum height. You might only see an eruption here on the news, due to its remote location, but it should still be quite a spectacle.

### Biblical Katla

Our last volcano of interest is the one everyone seems so worried about at the moment—the legendary Keyser Söze of Icelandic mountains, Katla. Katla sits right next to Eyjafjallajökull, is much bigger, and history shows that it probably has some kind of linkage to its neighbour—the last three times Eyjafjallajökull erupted, Katla followed suit within a couple of years. With a general historical trend of 1–2 eruptions per century, and the last confirmed (and quite sizeable) eruption in 1918, you could argue that we're 'overdue' a Katla eruption. The volcano itself is capable of producing all sorts of dangers. The enormous 934 AD Eldgjá fissure eruption originated from the Katla volcanic system, and the 1918 eruption produced both an enormous eruption plume (which in today's world could have a major impact on air traffic) and an unimaginably huge jökulhlaup, which washed icebergs the size of houses down onto the plains below.

So what's the current state of affairs? Who's the prime suspect for our next volcanic crime? Frankly, I think it's unlikely to be Katla. I don't think anyone is denying that Katla needs to be kept under close watch, but right now it's showing little sign of stirring as a result of the Eyjafjallajökull eruption. Hekla and Grímsvötn, on the other hand, are both showing signs of more or less being 'ready' to go. Chances are that neither of them is going to be particularly dangerous (unless you're right on top of them!), but my money says that one of them will be our next guilty party...

JAMES ASHWORTH  
JULIA STAPLES





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# EUROPEAN TOUR 2010



LÉTTÖL

Photo: S. S. S.



Feature | Besti Flokkurinn

# What Are You Voting For, Reykjavík?



Grapevine  
attempts  
to find out



By Haukur S. Magnússon  
Photos by Hörður Sveinsson



Here at the Grapevine, we are all big fans of Jón Gnarr and his co-medic stylings. We were amused when we learned he was putting together a ‘parody party’ for the upcoming municipal elections, and we enjoyed a lot of his initial media appearances in promotion of it. We were furthermore delighted to learn that some of the people running with him are artists that we know and like, and who’s work we’ve appreciated throughout the years. It’s called Besti flokkurinn (“The Best Party”). It was all in good fun.

Then the polls started coming in, and we learned that it was even conceivable that a joke party would win the elections, taking in as many as six city council chairs out of fifteen. A party without platform or policy; a celebrity-lead, vague minded collection of folks whose intentions were totally unclear was going to win Reykjavík’s majority vote. All of the sudden it seemed kind of scary. “What if they win?” we asked ourselves. Will they privatise the city’s welfare system and sell our power plants to Monty Burns? Will they reinstate the draft? How are we supposed to know?

So we did what we usually do when we get curious – we got all proactive and called up the good man. He was happy to give an interview, which you may read below. Over the course of two hours, we tried to wrestle a position and platform – anything concrete – from the man. Below is an edited transcript of our conversation. We are still unsure of what to think.



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Issue 6 - 2010

[www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is)

**16**  
May

**1**  
June

*The Moral Dilemmas of David Byrne\**



**You fall in love, but all your friends hate  
him or her.**

**Do you**

**A) Get new friends**

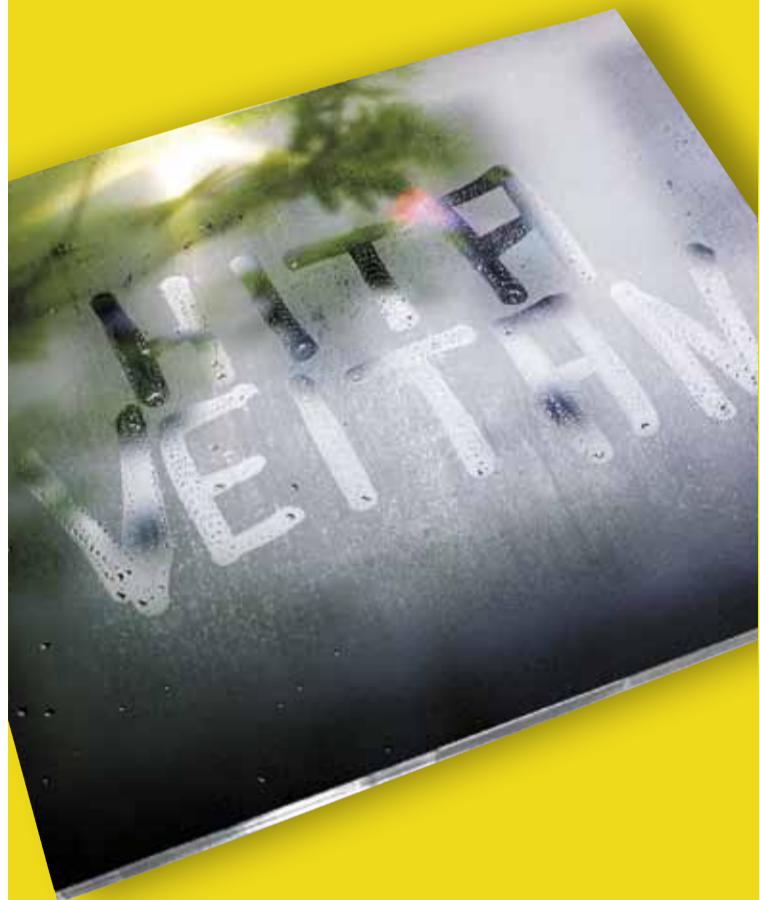
**B) Suggest that your lover change their  
personality**

**C) Keep the two worlds separate**

\*There's some public art in Reykjavík you need to see. The artist is David Byrne, singer and songwriter of the band the Talking Heads. His outdoor kiosks, located all over the city centre, offer multiple choice questions to passerby, but this isn't your run-of-the-mill trivia. They pose uncomfortable and often funny moral questions, paired with images of old-school cameras that suggest the viewer's decision is being monitored. To learn more, check out David's website—you can find a map of the exhibit sites and listen to a recent Icelandic radio interview with David about his project - [www.davidbyrne.com](http://www.davidbyrne.com)



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# MUSIC

## CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN MAY & JUNE

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How to use the listings  
Venues are listed alphabetically by day.  
For complete listings and detailed  
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### 21 FRI

**Apótek**  
0:00 DJ Aki. Beer for 550 ISK.  
**Austur**  
23:00 DJ Bogi  
**Bakkus**  
21:00 DJ Benson  
**Celtic Cross**  
01:00 Live music.  
**De Danske Kro**  
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00  
**Dubliner**  
22:30 Live music.  
**English Pub**  
22:00 Live music.  
**Hemmi & Valdi**  
22:00 Local DJs  
**Hressó**  
22:00 Live band - Silfur.  
01:00 DJ Bjarni  
**Jacobsen**  
18:00 Live DJs  
**Karamba**  
23:45 Danni Deluxe  
**Prikið**  
10:00-12:00 Pub Quiz  
**Rósenberg**  
21:00 KK-Band  
**Sódóma**  
22:00 The Authorities (punk/surf)  
Bacon Love Support Unit (conservative dubfunk) & The Way Down (alt rock).  
**Thorvaldsen**  
0:00 DJ Tender  
**Venue**  
21:00 Tamarin/(Gunslinger), Reykjavík!, and more. Part of Maíhem.

### 22 SAT

**Apótek**  
22:00 Toggi. Entry: 500 ISK.  
0:00 DJ Aki. Beer for 550 ISK.  
**Austur**  
23:00 DJ Jónas  
**Bakkus**  
21:00 DJ Della Rosa  
**Barbara**  
22:00 Eurovision Glitter Night - duo  
DJ Glimmer  
**Celtic Cross**  
01:00 Live music.  
**De Danske Kro**  
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00  
**Dubliner**  
22:30 Live music.  
**English Pub**  
22:00 Live music.  
**Hressó**  
22:00 Live band - Dalton  
01:00 DJ Bjarni  
**Jacobsen**  
18:00 Live DJs  
**Karamba**  
23:45 DJ Ívar  
**Prikið**  
12:00-18:00 Clothes Market  
22:00 Moonshine. Offer: A beer and a shot for 750 ISK together.  
**Rósenberg**  
21:00 Gæðablóð  
**Sódóma**  
23:00 Weapons (rock), Cosmic Call (indie), and more.  
**Thorvaldsen**  
00:00 DJ Tender  
**Venue**  
21:00 AMFJ, DLX ATX and friends.  
Part of Maíhem.

### 23 SUN

**Austur**  
23:00 DJ Bogi  
**De Danske Kro**  
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00. Beer 500 ISK after 19:00.  
**Dubliner**  
22:30 Live music.  
**English Pub**  
22:00 Live music.  
**Jacobsen**  
18:00 BenSol's Sunday Session  
Deep house, lounge, house, disco music and a film

**Prikið**  
12:00-18:00 Clothes Market  
Addi Intro & party to 05:30!  
**Sódóma**  
AIDS fundraiser.  
**Venue**  
21:00 Útidúr, Me the Slumbering Napoleon and others. Part of Maíhem.

### 24 MON

**Bakkus**  
21:00 Movie Night / TBA  
**De Danske Kro**  
Live music. Shots for 400 ISK. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00  
**Dubliner**  
22:30 Live music.  
**English Pub**  
22:00 Live music.  
**Prikið**  
22:00 Fortune teller. 2 glasses of red wine with cheese for 1000 ISK. DJ Kareem Abdul Jabbar  
**Rósenberg**  
21:00 Misery & Eyvi.

### 25 TUE

**De Danske Kro**  
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00  
**Dubliner**  
22:30 Live music.  
**English Pub**  
22:00 Live music.  
**Prikið**  
22:00 Playstation football/Soccer tournament with DJ Gauti. 350 ISK beer for participants.  
**Rósenberg**  
21:00 Gæðablóð

### 26 WED

**De Danske Kro**  
Pop music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00, Beer 500 ISK after 19:00.  
**Dubliner**  
22:30 Live music.  
**English Pub**  
22:00 Live music.  
**Karamba**  
21:00 Bring A Friend Day  
**Prikið**  
22:00 Summer Jam - Rotweiler, Emmsjé Gauti, Diddi, DJ Moonshine and more. BBQ, etc.  
**Rósenberg**  
21:00 Svavar Knútur  
**Sódóma**  
22:00 Deep Purple coverband.

### 27 THU

**Bakkus**  
21:00 DJ Einar Sonic  
**De Danske Kro**  
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00  
**Dubliner**  
22:30 Live music.  
**English Pub**  
22:00 Live music.  
**Hressó**  
22:00 Live band - Penta.  
**The Icelandic Opera**  
20:30 Ólafur Arnalds  
**Jacobsen**  
18:00 Live DJs

**Karamba**  
22:00 Sir Dance-A-Lot  
**P**  
Multi-Instrumentalist Sammi MCs. Happy hour between 21:00-22:30.  
**Prikið**  
22:00 100 ISK game continues - Beer and shots for 100 ISK for just one minute 4 time between 21:00 - 01:00.  
**DJ Addi**  
**Rósenberg**  
21:00 Gogo Yoko  
**Thorvaldsen**  
Free salsa lessons from 20:30-21:30.  
21:30 Salsa music.

### 28 FRI

**Apótek**  
DJ Fannar  
**Austur**  
23:00 DJ Símon  
**Bakkus**  
21:00 DJ Gisli Galdur  
**Bar 11**  
**Celtic Cross**  
01:00 Live music.  
**De Danske Kro**  
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00  
**Dubliner**  
22:30 Live music.  
**English Pub**  
22:00 Live music.  
**Hressó**  
22:00 Live band - Silfur.  
01:00 DJ Elli  
**Jacobsen**  
18:00 Live DJs Thorvaldsen  
00:00 DJ Kristján  
**Karamba**  
23:45 DJ-Ófull  
**Prikið**  
V.I.P weekend. Jenni & Franz perform a Guns N' Roses tribute. Danni Deluxe.  
**Rósenberg**  
21:00 Memfismáfian  
**Sódóma**  
22:00 Pestilence (death metal), and many other bands.,  
**Thorvaldsen**  
0:00 DJ Kristján

### 29 SAT

**Apótek**  
DJ Fannar  
**Austur**  
23:00 DJ Jónas  
**Bakkus**  
21:00 Hunk of a Man  
**Celtic Cross**  
01:00 Live music.  
**De Danske Kro**  
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00  
**Dubliner**  
22:30 Live music.  
**English Pub**  
22:00 Live music.  
**Hressó**  
22:00 Live band - Silfur.  
01:00 DJ Elli  
**Jacobsen**  
18:00 Live DJs  
**Karamba**  
23:45 KGB  
**Nordic House**  
16:00 God Morgen, Hjarte: Billie Holiday songs in Norwegian.  
**Prikið**  
Eurovision showing on big screen, beer for 400 ISK during. DJ Benni

### Music & Entertainment | Venue finder

<b>Amsterdam</b> Hafnarstræti 5   D2	<b>Celtic Cross</b> Hverfisgata 26   E4	Þorvaldsenstræti 2   E3
<b>Apótek</b> Austurstræti 16   E3	<b>Dillon</b> Laugavegur 30   F5	<b>Nýlenduvörurverzlun Hemma &amp; Valda</b> Laugavegur 21   E4
<b>Austur</b> Austurstræti 7   E3	<b>Dubliner</b> Hafnarstræti 4   D3	<b>Næsti Bar</b> Ingólfstræti 1A   E3
<b>B5</b> Bankastræti 5   E3	<b>English Pub</b> Austurstræti 12   D2	<b>Óliver</b> Laugavegur 20A   F5
<b>Babalú</b> Skólavörðustígur 22   G5	<b>Glaumbar</b> Tryggvagata 20   D2	<b>Ölstofan</b> Vegamótastígur   E4
<b>Bar 11</b> Laugavegur 11   E4	<b>Highlander</b> Lækjargata 10   E3	<b>Prikið</b> Bankastræti   E3
<b>Barbara</b> Laugavegur 22   F6	<b>Hressó</b> Austurstræti 20   E3	<b>Rósenberg</b> Klappastígur 25   E4
<b>Bjarni Fel</b> Austurstræti 20   E3	<b>Hverfisbarinn</b> Hverfisgata 20   E4	<b>Sódóma Reykjavík</b> Tryggvagata 22   D3
<b>Boston</b> Laugavegur 28b   F5	<b>Jacobsen</b> Austurstræti 9   E3	<b>Sólón</b> Bankastræti 7A   E3
<b>Café Cultura</b> Hverfisgata 18   E4	<b>Kaffi Zimsen</b> Hafnarstræti 18   D3	<b>Thorvaldsen</b> Austurstræti 8   D2
<b>Café Paris</b> Austurstræti 14   E3	<b>Kaffibarinn</b> Bergstradastræti 1   E4	<b>Vegamót</b> Vegamótastígur 4   E4
<b>Balthazar</b> Hafnarstræti 1-3   D2	<b>Karamba</b> Laugavegur 22   F4	<b>Venue</b> Tryggvagata 22   D3
	<b>NASA</b>	



**Rósenberg**  
21:00 Memfismafian  
**Sódóma**  
23:30 Óli Ofur & Oculus  
**Thorvaldsen**  
00:00 DJ Kristján

**30 SUN**

**De Danske Kro**  
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00 Beer 500 ISK after 19:00.

**Dubliner**  
22:30 Live music.

**English Pub**  
22:00 Live music.

**Jacobsen**  
18:00 **BenSol's Sunday Session**  
Deep house, lounge, house, disco music and a film

**Karamba**  
23:45 **Maysun's Boardgames**

**Prikið**  
22:00 Hangover cinema presents **Mad Max.**

**Rósenberg**  
20:30 **Stand Up: The Diary of Anne Knút**

**31 MON**

**Bakkus**  
21:00 **Movie Night / TBA**

**De Danske Kro**  
Live music. Shots for 400 ISK. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00

**Dubliner**  
22:30 Live music.

**English Pub**  
22:00 Live music.

**Prikið**  
21:00 Fortune teller. 2 glasses of red wine with cheese for 1000 ISK. **DJ Blush.**

**Rósenberg**  
21:00 **Svavar Knútur**

**1 TUE**

**Dubliner**  
22:30 Live music.

**English Pub**  
22:00 Live music.

**2 WED**

**De Danske Kro**  
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00 Beer 500 ISK after 19:00.

**Dubliner**  
22:30 Live music.

**English Pub**  
22:00 Live music.

**3 THU**

**De Danske Kro**  
Live music. 2-for-1 beer from 16:00-19:00

**Dubliner**  
22:30 Live .

**English Pub**  
22:00 Live music.

**Kaffi Zimsen**  
17:00 Ólafsvaka 490 ISK beer night.

**Jacobsen**  
18:00 **Live DJs**

**Karamba**  
23:45 **Misery DJ**

**P**  
Multi-Instrumentalist **Sammi** MCs. Happy hour between 21:00-22:30.

**Thorvaldsen**  
Free salsa lessons from 20:30-21:30. 21:30 Salsa music

**Outside Reykjavík**

**Akureyri Sjallinn**  
May 22 - 0:00  
Klikkað Greyfaball  
**Ísafjörður**  
Edinborgarhús  
May 26 Eivör Pálsdóttir  
May 27 Skúli Þórðarson

**Húsavík**  
Gamli Baukur  
May 21 DJ Unnur  
**Selfoss**  
800 Bar  
May 22 - 23:00 Skítamóral  
May 23 Splash Party - DJ Óli Geir, Haffi Haff and friends.

**Seyðisfjörður**  
Skaffell  
May 22 - 22:00  
Þórir Georg & Drekkja (Michael Anderson)

**REYKJAVIK ARTS FESTIVAL**

**May**

**21**

**Kimmo Pohjen - Solo**  
**Nasa - 21:00**  
Finnish musician described as the Jimi Hendrix of the accordion plays an unforgettable one man show.

**22**

**Lecture: Kati Gausmann & Ingo Fröhlich**  
**Kling & Bang - 14:00**  
Addressing the history of Torstrasse 111, how it evolved and the way in which it affected Berlin and international artists in that place.

**Visual Performances**  
Visual artists and musicians pair up to perform a weekend of studio concerts to present a visual and musical feast with a chance of meeting the artists in their studios.  
See www.listahatid.is for full schedule.

**24**

**Megas**  
**Háskólabíó Concert Hall - 21:00**  
Iceland's acclaimed musician holds a grand concert. Ticket: 5500 ISK

**26**

**Where Is The Line?**  
**The Icelandic Opera - 20:00**  
Mezzosoprano Ásgerður Júníusdóttir & pianist Jónas Sen perform unique covers of well know Björk songs and other Icelandic artists. Tickets: 2900 ISK

**27**

**Brothers**  
**The National Theatre of Iceland - 21:00**  
An eccentric dance piece about men. Performance also on May 28. Tickets: 3400 ISK

**29**

**Reading at Writers' Homes**  
**Various Locations - 17:00**  
An chance to get up and close with eight different authors at their homes. Price: 1000 ISK. See www.listahad.is for full listing.

**30**

**Orquesta Chekara Flamenca**  
**The Icelandic Opera - 20:00**  
Combining flamenco dance with the al-ala music of Morocco. Tickets: 3500 ISK

**June**

**1**

**Malleus, Incus, Stapes**  
**Kjarvalsstaðir - 20:00**  
Elísabet Indra Ragnarsdóttir leads a symposium on contemporary music. Free.

**2**

**From the Gates of Hell to the Courts of Europe**  
**The National Centre for Cultural Heritage - 20:00**  
Concert comprising of 18th century music, coupled with Icelandic literature from the same period. Tickets: 2500 ISK

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**3**

**Ryk Á Book**  
**The Icelandic Opera - 20:00**  
Benni Hemm Hemm, Alisdair Robert and The Reykjavík Wind Ensemble. 2900 ISK

**4**

**Vortex Temporum**  
**The Icelandic Opera - 20:00**  
Njúton and the Formalist Quartet perform contemporary pieces and world premieres. 2900 ISK.

**Ongoing**

**Downtown Reykjavík**  
Reality Check, an outdoor exhibition curated by Æsa Sigurjónsdóttir.  
**The Free Lutheran Church**  
**Sunday Morning Concerts - 11:00**  
Performances of Schubert's best known lieder. Performances will be held on May 23 & 30. Tickets: 2000 ISK.

**Gerðuberg Cultural Centre**  
**Breiðholt - At The Moment**  
May 16 - June 30  
An exhibition of photographs by Friðgeir Helgason. In collaboration with the Reykjavík Arts Festival  
**Breiðholt - In The Beginning**  
May 16 - June 30  
An exhibition of photographs by Friðgeir Helgason. In collaboration with the Reykjavík Arts Festival

**Kling & Bang**  
**Maria Dembek & Robin McAulay**  
Pinhole photography exhibition.  
May 15 - 13 June  
**The National Theatre of Iceland**  
**Falling In Love With My Kitchen Aid**  
May 20 - June 5  
Part theatre, part circus performance based on the works by visual artist Ilmur Stefánsdóttir. 3400 ISK.

**The Living Art Museum**  
**CharlieHotelEchoEchoSierraEcho**  
May 16 - June 26  
German artist duo Rosen & Wojnar exhibit their work.



**Roaaarrrrg!**

*Biskupstungur field in Reykholt*

*Free*

What happens when the descendants of Vikings decide to get together in a field and reenact the battles of their ancestors? Visit Reykholt on the 22 and 23 to find out. Fifty or more actors will stage battles in full Viking attire. It should be a sight to behold. If you're a peaceful Viking, you can also take a tour of the rest of the "realistic" Viking town that'll be erected over the weekend, including crafts, and, hopefully, food. If you want to come prepared, watch The Raven Flies, an Icelandic viking film from the '80s. Bring your wooden sword (for ornamental use only) and pick a side to roar for. **SO**

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haha  
haha  
varí**

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# Sódóma REYKJAVÍK

- 7. maí:** Nokia on Ice Festival: DJ Mike Sheridan (DK, electro) and DJ Margeir (house)
- 8. maí:** Nokia on Ice Festival: Samúel Jón Samúelsson Big Band (big band), Snorri Helgason (indie/folk), Cliff Clavin (alt rock), Who Knew (indie), Of Monsters and Men (acoustic/folk), Hoffman (rock), Miri (indie) and DJ Mike Sheridan (electro).
- 12. maí:** Króna (pop/indie)
- 13. maí:** Hip Hop vs. Rock: Ástþór Óðinn, Stjörnuryk, Orri Err, Nögl, Narfur and No Matches
- 14. maí:** Kimi Records present: Stafrænn Hákon (alt/ambient/rock) and Snorri Helgason (indie/folk)
- 15. maí:** Árstíðir (acoustic folk)
- 20. maí:** Mikael Lind (electronic/experimental), Matthew Collings (electro-acoustic)
- 21. maí:** The Authorities (USA) (punk/rock/surf), Bacon Love Support Unit (conservative dubfunk), The Way Down (alt rock).
- 22. maí:** Weapons (rock), Nolo (lo-fi indie), Cosmic Call (indie)
- 27. maí:** Úlfaldi úr Mýflugu Festival Warm-up
- 28. maí:** Pestilence (NL) (death metal)
- 29. maí:** Óli Ofur
- 4. júní - 6. júní:** Tattoo Festival

Sódóma Reykjavík Tryggvagata 22, 101 RVK  
[www.facebook.com/sodomareykjavik](http://www.facebook.com/sodomareykjavik)  
[www.twitter.com/sodomarvk](http://www.twitter.com/sodomarvk)

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Age limit: 22



# MUSIC & ARTS

## CONCERTS & EVENTS IN MAY & JUNE

**16** - **1**  
May - June



**After a party your boss generously offers to drive a group of children home who have no other way to get there...he's quite drunk.**

**Do you:**  
**A) Suggest the children spend the night**  
**B) Cross your fingers and hope for the best**  
**C) Call another driver or the police and risk getting fired**

### Moral Dilemmas by David Byrne

City centre

Free

You may find yourself in another part of the world, and if that part of the world happens to be Reykjavík, there's some public art you need to see. The artist is David Byrne, singer and songwriter of the band Talking Heads. His outdoor kiosks, located all over the city centre, offer multiple choice questions to passerby, but this isn't your run-of-the-mill trivia. They pose uncomfortable and often funny moral questions, paired with images of old-school cameras that suggest the viewer's decision is being monitored. To learn more, check out David's website—you can find a map of the exhibit sites and listen to a recent Icelandic radio interview with David about his project. But don't just let the Talking Head tell you what it's all about. Go see it for yourself. **SO**

**23**  
May



### Blinded By The Light

LUMEN - Reflections on the Nature of Light

National Gallery of Iceland  
 Admission 2500 ISK

If you could look at music, what would you see? And if you could hear light, what would it sound like? If you want to find out what having synesthesia is like, head to the National Gallery for LUMEN, a multi-sensory show presented by the Reykjavík Arts Festival. Lasers, lightbulbs, and fire will light up the performance, and the collaboration by musicians Ensemble Adapter and visual artist Halldór Úlfarsson will feature new and "classic" contemporary musical compositions. With all its fancy-schmancy genre bending, it promises to be electric. **SO**

**22**  
May



### Magical Mystery Tour!

Trip To The Unknown with Kolli Kvlt

Bakkus ☺ 17:00

Free

If you're into the idea of being put on a bus and driven out of the city to a secret destination by a complete stranger (bind, gag and blindfold yourself for extra LOLs), then have we got the event for you! Artist, musician and all around cool kid around down Kolli Kvlt (of Retrön infamy) will be taking 50 lucky people on a mind expanding (and maybe altering?) trip this Saturday. Meet up at Bakkus and get a cheap beer and perhaps a free summer drink and then head off... somewhere. Once there, you'll get an art exhibit, performances by Kolli and designer-slash-performance artist Mundi, music by Quadruplos and food and drinks. Bus comes back at 22:00. Unless you're chicken! **RL**

**27**  
May



### The Weight Of Darkness Is Upon Us

Ólafur Arnalds album release show

Icelandic Opera ☺ 20:30

1800 ISK

Ólafur is a hell of a busy guy. He tours almost constantly, his work has been commissioned by the Wayne McGregor Ballet Company and the Icelandic Dance Company, he records nearly everything that pops into his head and just gives it away like goldfish at a carnival. But believe it or not, the freshly released '... and they have escaped the weight of darkness' is only his second full length album. He will officially open the cage door for the dove next Friday at a homecoming show after quick tour, in the majestic setting of the Icelandic Opera House. Go hear his latest blend of classical, pop and electronic in all its glory. **RL**

**28**  
May



### Dooooooooooooom

Pestilence, Wistaria, In

Memoriam & more

Sódóma ☺ 22:00

2000 ISK

Wash up those metal-hands for a night of thrashing and teeth-gnashing, kids! Dutch death metal veterans Pestilence are heading off on a lengthy North American trek and they are making a pit stop in Reykjavík on the way. Provided they aren't ash-blocked of course. The night will also be jam packed with some of the biggest names in local metal bands, including Wacken Metal Battle winners Wistaria, homegrown heroes In Memoriam and a healthy dose of black metal, care of Atrum. The up-and-coming newbie band Gruesome Glory from Akureyri will start the night, and should have no problem holding their own against the big kids. Uuuuuurrrrrgh! **RL**



20 - 23  
May May

# MAYHEM

## Á VENUE

20.-23. MAÍ

### Maihem at Venue!

Cosmic Call, Reykjavík!, DLX ATX, Útidúr & more

Venue ☺ 21:00

Admission 500-1000 ISK, Free for DJ sets

You know what is really cool? Long weekends. Yes. If you don't like long weekends, get the hell out of town! But I digress. Monday is a day off and that means we're all going to go even more apeshit than we do on a regular weekend and max out our credit cards on partying. The good folks at OkiDoki and the new club Venue (in what was formerly Club 101) will be helping us out with this by throwing a TOTALLY AWESOME concert series!

Kicking off on Thursday night and rocking hard until the wee hours of Monday morning, the place will be full of great music: Sing me Sandra, Caterpillarmen, Sudden Weather Change, AMFJ, Captain Fufanu, Me the Slumbering Napoleon, Jungle Fiction... the list goes on and on. All shows cost 500 ISK except Friday night at 1000 ISK. If you are a bit short and you just want to dance, each night will end with free DJ sets from the likes of Dans Hans and Sykur. It's going to get messy! **RL**



### Megas

Háskólabíó Concert Hall ☺

21:00

Admission 5500 ISK

Megas is in a league of his own. Here in Iceland, very little more than his name needs to be said for people to know it's a big deal. The writer, poet and musician is a cult unto himself. He was banned on Icelandic radio for writing purportedly Satanic and definitely satiric lyrics, collaborated with experimental-goth band KUKL and a very young Björk and was namedropped by The Fall in their epic song 'Iceland'. He has released over forty solo and collaborative albums and six books. For one night only, as part of the Reykjavík Arts Festival, the legend will perform with a string quartet, a children's choir and a rock band and run the gamut of his work, as well as new songs written by his son, Þórður. Go. **RL**

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### Soap Box Beauty Contest

Mr. Gay / Herra Hommi

The National Theatre ☺

21:00

2500 ISK

Forget about waxing your chest. Sharpen your wits boys! Magnús Guðbergur Jónsson, organizer of the event and last year's winner of the Mr. Gay Iceland title, says this beauty contest will skip the swimsuits. "You don't have to have any muscles to compete. It's more about how you can sell your idea onstage."

The winner of this event will move on to represent Iceland in the Mr. Gay Europe contest, and raise awareness worldwide about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered issues. Event contestants will voice their thoughts on gay rights, and answer questions on what they would like to see Iceland teach other countries. Over his past year as Mr. Gay Iceland, Magnús's main goal was education. It could be better in Iceland, he told the Grapevine, but this open-minded little country could still teach the world a lot about what it means for all citizens to have equal rights in society. Any gay Icelandic male 18 or older can enter the contest. Just drop Magnús a line on Mr. Gay Iceland's Facebook site, or you can email mr.gay\_iceland@ymail.com. DJ Glimmer and friends will be on hand to entertain. **SO**

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## Thomsen & Thomsen

15. maí – 29. ágúst 2010

LJÓSMYNDASAFN  
REYKJAVÍKUR  
Reykjavík Museum of Photography



Listalátíð 15. MAÍ - 29. AÚGÚST  
í Reykjavík 2010  
REYKJAVÍK ARTS FESTIVAL

GRÓFARHÚS 6th floor · Tryggvagata 15 · 101 Reykjavík · [www.photomuseum.is](http://www.photomuseum.is)  
Opening hours 12-19 mon-fri, 13-17 weekends · **ADMISSION FREE**



### It's Time To Get Yr. Skúli On

Skúli Þórðarson

Hornið, Hafnarstræti ☺

21:00

Free

Now, here's a fun and excellent event that you probably had no idea about. Skúli Þórðarson is a troubadour (he also performs in a band - Skúli Mennski & Grjót - check out their jean-clad CD if you can find it) that has a striking and powerful voice, some excellent guitar playing skills and writes these gorgeous lyrics. He's also a very tuneful songsmith. Think Tom Waits, think Dylan, think Megas. OK, that sounds like a horrible cliché, but Skúli is not. Promise.

So, this winter, he has been throwing these monthly, intimate concerts in the tiny basement of Hornið. They are all life-affirming and exciting in their own way. Check this one out if you can - you shan't regret it. **HSM**

15 - 29  
May August



### The Family Album: Thomsen & Thomsen

Reykjavík Photography Museum

Free

Peter Thomsen Senior studied photography in Germany in 1935, was drafted as a military photographer and subsequently fled back to Iceland but was imprisoned in England for desertion. After his release, he returned home and worked as an industrial photographer. In this exhibit, the last of his works were snapped in 1973, when Peter Thomsen Junior was born. Picking up after his grandfather, he took up the camera and became known for a series of construction photography. Seen through the eyes of two different generations, this beautiful exhibit is a conversation on the changing landscape of modern Reykjavík and the inhabitants within it. **RL**

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# MAP

## Places We Like

### 1 Prikíð

Bankastræti 12

Prikíð is one of those places that shape-shifts. It's a warm café lined with photographs of its senior frequenters on weekdays, a hung-over hangout on weekend afternoons, and during nights it's filled to the brim with what remains of Iceland's hip hop scene. Go there in daytime for the cheap burgers; enter at night for some OTT hip-hop debauchery, old skool and the latest bangers alike. SKK

### 2 Café d'Haiti

Tryggvagata 6

The first time I entered this exotic little joint, meaning to buy myself a take-away espresso, I ended up with two kilos of fresh and roasted coffee beans due to some language complications and way too much politeness. Since then I have enjoyed way-too-many wonderful cups of Haitian coffee, but they're always as nice, so the two kilos were definitely worth it. SKK

### 3 Karamba

Laugavegur 22

Downtown hotspot Karamba is a colourful and eclectic bar on Laugavegur with a comfortable atmosphere, typically great music and a chill crowd. This is a good place to relax or to do some serious drinking or to relax. Plus, their decors are done strictly by Grapevine-friendly artists, such as Lóa (who does our comics), Huggleikur Dagsson and Bobby Breiðholt (who's done a lot of nice illustrations for us); they are truly a sight to behold. CF

### 4 Hemmi og Valdi

Laugavegi 21

The "colonial store" Hemmi and Valdi is a cosy hangout that has advanced from being a toasty retreat, where one can score cheap beer and have a quiet chat, into being a chock-full concert venue and an all-night party place. And believe us, the atmosphere is brilliant. SKK

### 5 Tíu Dropar

Laugavegur 27

If you're sick of all the arty cafés, filled with Sigur Rós wannabes browsing Facebook on their Macs – go to Tíu Dropar. It's a back-to-basics Icelandic café that hasn't changed its interior since the sixties. Really proves the old adage "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Plus, the coffee's great and so are the pancakes. SKK

### 6 Sódóma Reykjavík

Tryggvagata 22

Newly opened Sódóma on Tryggvagötu is already a hit with party crowds and gig-goers alike. An extensive venue, filled with reasonably priced beverages and reasonably good looking people. Some of Iceland's finest musical ventures have played in recent months, and their schedule looks promising too. Also, make sure to visit their men's room for a glance at the "Pissoir of Absolution". JB



### 7 Babalú

Skólavörðstíg 22

Located on the second-floor of a quirky little building on Skólavörðustígur, Babalú is an inviting, quaint and cosy café serving up a selection of tea, coffee and hot chocolate along with delicious baked goods and light meals. Food and drink aside, Babalú boasts colourfully decorated and super-comfortable surroundings and a genuinely friendly and likeable staff. CF

### 8 Habibi

Hafnarstræti 18

This small restaurant offers up a concise menu of delicious Arabic cuisine, from shawarma to kebabs and falafels. The staff is really friendly and accommodating of requests to kick up the spiciness or tone it down if the customer so desires. Habibi seriously hits the spot after hours of partying (or any other time of day) so it's convenient that the place is allegedly open until 6 a.m. Friday and Saturday (although their advertised opening hours are sometimes not adhered to). CF

### 9 Grái Kötturinn

Hverfisgata 16a

Super relaxed and cozy diner/café below street level. This place makes the best hangover breakfast ever (the truck!) and any-other-day breakfast as well. It's a nice and relaxing place to eat and increase your caffeine intake and chill with friends or with some reading material. CF

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### 10 Ban Thai

Laugavegur 130

Even though the service at Ban Thai may get a little flaky, the food is always to die for and the place also offers a very pleasant dining atmosphere that puts you right in a comfortable Thai sorta mood. It's really Reykjavik's only "fancy" Thai restaurant. Ban Thai has remained a true Reykjavik treasure for the longest time, and is truly one that should be celebrated.

### 11 Bakkus

Tryggvagata 22 - Naustarmegin

A new and welcome addition to Reykjavik's bar scene, Bakkus serves up reasonably priced beer, a really impressive selection of international vodkas and an atmosphere unlike any other in town. An eclectic mix of patrons, regular live music and movie nights keep this place interesting and always inviting. Expect dancing on tables and to-the-death foosball battles. CF

### 12 Kisan

Laugavegur 7

This store is incredibly cool. It's stocked with really unique and quirky clothes, outerwear, accessories and handbags, plus they have an adorable section of kids clothes, kitschy vintage toys and books and even interior design items. Wicked place; definitely worth a visit. CF

### 13 Sægreifinn

Geirsgata 8

Down by the Reykjavik harbour, Sægreifinn fish shop and restaurant is a pretty unique establishment. The menu features various fish dishes (including most of the "crazy Icelandic food" you'll want to tell your friends you had) and a rich portion of some pretty good lobster soup tasted. Good food and welcoming service make this place a must-try.

### 14 Kolaportið

Tryggvagata 19

Reykjavik's massive indoor flea market is a wonderful place to get lost for a few hours, rummaging through stall upon stall of potential treasures. There are heaps of used clothing, knitwear and other yard-sale type goods from decades of yore, and a large food section with fish, meats and baked goods. Check out the vintage post cards and prints at the table near the army surplus. CF

### 15 Hressó

Austurstræti 20

You know, Hressó is basically the only place I go for coffee. Why? Their coffee is decent to excellent, but their forte is surely their wonderful patio, where you can enjoy the spring breeze in the sun, wrap yourself in a blanket beneath an electric heater in January and at all times: smoke. They boast of quite the prolific menu, and they've finally removed Nickelback from their playlist. Thank you, Hressó! SKK

### 16 Grænn Kostur

Skólavörðustíg 8b

Serving healthy organic vegan and vegetarian food for well over a decade, Grænn Kostur is the perfect downtown choice for enjoying light, wholesome and inexpensive meals. Try any of their courses of the day, or go for the ever-pleasing spinach lasagne.

### 17 Basil & Lime

Klapparstígur 38

Despite what the name might suggest, Basil & Lime offers up well made, unpretentious Italian food at laudably moderate prices. Their tempting menu begs for repeat visits. Start by trying staple courses such as the Chicken Fusilli and the Langoustine Tagliatelli.

### 18 Korníð

Lækjargata 4

How about filling your face with cakes at the delightful Korníð. They taste so good, you would gladly push your own mother over for even the slightest of sniffs. Not a sweet tooth? Well, try their delectable sandwiches then; we recommend the egg and bacon ciabatta! At only 590ISK plus all the Píta sauce you could dream of. What more can one ask for on a lunch break? JB



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# ART

GALLERIES & MUSEUMS

## COCKTAIL PLEASURES AND VISUAL STIMULATION

How to use the listings: Venues are listed  
alphabetically by day. For complete listings  
and detailed information on venues visit  
www.grapevine.is

## OPENING

May  
21

### RAFLOST Festival

Hafnarhúsið - 13:00-17:00

Lectures dedicated to a number of artists  
taking part in the RAFLOST festival  
(Icelandic Festival of Electronic Arts).

22

### Grand Finale - RAFLOST Festival

Útgerðin - 21:00

Exhibiting the work of Haraldur Karls-  
son, Juan Parra, S.L.Á.T.U.R., Martinka  
Bobrikova, and more.

27

### Artist's Talk - Friederike von Rauch

Hafnaborg - 20:00

Friederike discusses her work and career  
as a photographer.

28

### Starfrænn Hákon

Havari - 17:00

A performance of his sideproject 'Per  
Segulsvið', comprising of music, poetry &  
short stories.

### Guy Maddin's 'Tales from the Gimli Hospital'

Háskólabíó - 20:00

Presented with Q&A.

29

### Sites Workshop

Hafnaborg - 14:00

Children's workshop where they will  
explore the museum concentrating on  
sites where form and atmosphere are  
produced. Free & open to everyone.

## ONGOING

### Arbæjarsafn / Reykjavík City

Museum

1 September - 31 May

#### Winter Program

This open-air historical museum offers  
guided tours Monday, Wednesday, and  
Friday at 13:00.

### Art Gallery Fold

Photography exhibition of the volcanic  
eruptions in Iceland this year, which  
brought photographers from all over the  
world to capture them. Ongoing all summer.

### The Culture House

Permanent Exhibition:

#### Medieval Manuscripts

February 3 - ongoing

#### Icelanders

Exhibit featuring a selection of photo-  
graphs from the book "Icelanders" by Un-  
nur Jökulsdóttir and Sigurgeir Sigurjóns-  
son.

March 28 2009 - September 2010

#### ICELAND :: FILM

Traces the evolution of Icelandic filmmaking,  
exploring myths versus modernity.

March 10 - ongoing

#### The Nation and Nature

Thirty-minute film about the relationship  
between humans and nature. Film plays  
continuously during open hours.

### Ási Art Museum

Ólöf Nordal

Models, a series of photographs inspired  
by the story of a man preserved in a  
glacier, and his son who discovers him  
Gallery. Ongoing until June 6.

### The Library Room

12 August 2009 - ongoing

#### National Archives of Iceland - 90 years in the museum building.

Commemorating the 100th anniversary of  
the Culture House.

### The Dwarf Gallery

Ongoing

An independent art gallery with ongoing  
exhibitions. It's located in an old base-  
ment. Do you really need to know any  
more than that?

### The Einar Jónsson Museum

Permanent exhibition:

#### The work of sculptor Einar Jónsson.

#### Gallery Ágúst

Equivocal the Sequel  
Contemporary photography by Katrín  
Elvarsdóttir. Runs until June 26.

### Gljúfrasteinn Laxness Museum

Gljúfrasteinn was the home and work-  
place of Halldór Laxness (winner of the  
Nobel Prize for Literature in 1955).

### Hafnaborg, Hafnarfjörður

Sites - Friederike von Rauch

May 16 - June 20

The German photographer exhibits her  
work.

### Hamraborg, Kópavogur

Pórgunnur Guðgeirsdóttir/Hogga

Art exhibition in the assemblyroom of the  
Left Green movement. Ongoing until May  
30.

### Havari

Ongoing

Exhibiting work from The Icelandic Love  
Corporation, Sigga Björg, Hugleik Dags-  
son, Lindu Loeskow and Sara Riel.

### is

Sigurður Guðmundsson

Situations and other photo works from  
1970-1982. Ongoing until June 19.

### Kling & Bang

Erling T.V. Klingenberg

A collection of Klingenberg's work, in-  
cluding self-portraits. Ongoing until June  
20.

Maria Dembek & Robin McAulay

Pinhole photography exhibition.  
May 15 - June 13

### National Gallery of Iceland

Cindy Sherman - Untitled Film Stills

American photographer Sherman plays  
with female film fantasies in self-portraits.  
Runs until September 5th.

Edvard Munch

Prints in the collection of the National  
Gallery. Runs until September 5th.

Strides

A selection of the Gallery's collection  
from the 20th and 21st century. Perma-  
nent exhibition.

### The National Museum

Permanent exhibition:

#### The Making of a Nation

Heritage and History in Iceland is intend-  
ed to provide insight into the history of  
the Icelandic nation from the Settlement  
to the present day.

Ása Wright - From Iceland to Trinidad  
Collection of objects that belonged to the  
adventress Ása Guðmundsdóttir.

#### Embroidery of Life

Embroidery by Guðrún Guðmundsdóttir,  
inspired by old manuscripts  
Permanent exhibition

#### The Nordic House

10 April - 30 September

#### Land Of Experiments

Interactive exhibit based on scientific  
contraptions from Tom Tits Experimen-  
tarium in Sweden. Play!

### Ráðhús Reykjavíkur

Dulín Himintungl

Kim Linnet exhibits her 360° panorama  
photos of Iceland.

### Reykjavík 871 +/- 2

Permanent exhibition:

#### The Settlement Exhibition

#### Reykjavík Art Museum

Hafnarhúsið

May 28, 2009 - August 29

#### Erró - Portraits

March 18 - May 23

#### Erró - Portraits - Women from North Africa

### Reykjavík Maritime Museum

The Coast Guard vessel Óðinn

The Óðinn took part in all three Cod Wars  
and is open for exhibition.  
Permanent exhibition.

### Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum

February 12 - ongoing

#### Who is who?

February 15 - ongoing

#### A Moment with Sigurjón Ólafsson

### Reykjavík Museum of Photography

Thomsen & Thomsen

An exhibition of portrait photographs and  
views from Reykjavík, from two different  
times and two photographers. Runs until  
August 29.

## OUTSIDE REYKJAVÍK

### Akureyri Art Museum

Straumur / Burðarás

Ongoing til 27 June.

Exhibiting new works by various artists.  
Part of the Reykjavík Arts Festival 2010.

### Rýminu, Akureyri

#### Aftursnúið (Dance show)

May 22, 23 & 28. Starts at 20:00.

The performance follows two individuals  
and their attempts to tackle uncertain  
situations, taking on the world after it has  
been turned upside down. 1500 ISK.

### The Icelandic Settlement Centre,

Borgarnes

#### The Egil Saga/ Settlement Exhibition

In these exhibitions The Settlement Cen-  
tre tells the sagas of Iceland's settlement  
and Egill Skallagrímsson, Iceland's most  
famous viking and first poet.

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# ART

## GALLERIES & MUSEUMS

### Biskupstungum, Reykholt

#### Viking Festival

May 22-23

A weekend filled with reenactments, from staged fighting to craft making, basically all that is viking.

### Skatfell Centre for Visual Art

#### Triology

Julia Wenz & Christian Eickhoff work together, creating an audio-visual experience.

### Ásgeirs Emilsson's Art and Life

Ongoing til 30 June.

Shedding light on the extraordinary artist and opening a window into his unique mind. Part of the Reykjavík Arts Festival 2010.

## Outside Reykjavík | Venue finder

### Keflavík

Suðsuðvestur  
www.sudsudvestur.is  
Hafnargata 22  
230 Reykjanesbær  
421-2225

### Hafnarfjörður

Hafnarborg  
www.hafnarborg.is  
Strandgata 34  
220 Hafnarfjörður  
585-5790

### Borgarnes

The Icelandic Settlement Centre  
www.landnam.is  
Brákarbraut 13-15  
310 Borgarnes  
437-1600

### Stykkishólmur

Vatnasafnið / Library of Water  
www.libraryofwater.is

### Akureyri

Akureyri Art Museum  
www listasafn.akureyri.is  
Kaupvangsstræti 12  
600 Akureyri  
461 2610

### Populus Tremula

poptrem.blogspot.com/  
Kaupvangsstræti 12  
600 Akureyri

### Kunstraum Wohnraum

Ásbayggð 2  
600 Akureyri

### Mývatn

Mývatnstofa  
Hraunveggi 8  
660 Mývatn  
464-4390  
www.visitmyvatn.is

### Egilsstaðir

Sláturhúsið  
Kaupvangi 7  
700 Egilsstaðir  
470-0692

### Seyðisfjörður

Skatfell  
www.skatfell.is  
Austurvegur 42  
710 Seyðisfjörður  
472-1632

### Hveragerði

LÁ Art  
www listasafnarnesinga.is  
Austurmörk 21  
210 Hveragerði  
483-1727

## Art | Venue finder

### 101 Gallery

Hverfisgata 18A | E3  
Thu-Sat 14-17 and by appointment  
www.101hotel.is/101hotel/101gallery/

### Artótek

Tryggvagata 15 | D2  
Mon 10-21, Tue-Thu 10-19, Fri 11-19, Sat and Sun 13-17  
www.sim.is/Index/Islenaska/Artotek

### ASÍ Art Museum

Freygata 41 | G4  
Tue-Sun 13-17

### Árbæjarsafn

Kistuhylur 4

### The Culture House

Hverfisgata 15 | E4  
Open daily 11-17  
www.thjodmenning.is

### Dwarf Gallery

Grundarstígur 21 | H6  
Opening Hours: Fri and Sat 18-20  
www.this.is/birta/dwarfgallery/dwarfgallery1.html

### The Einar Jónsson

Eiriksgata | G4  
Tue-Sun 14-17  
www.skulptur.is

### Fótógrafi

Skólavörðustígur 4a | F4  
www.fotografi.is

### Gallery 100°

Bæjarháls 1  
www.or.is/Forsida/Gallery100/  
Open weekdays from 08:30-16:00

### Gallery Auga fyrir Auga

Hverfisgata 35 | E4

### Gallery StartArt

Laugavegur 12B | E4  
Tue-Sat 1-17  
www.startart.is

### Gallery Ágúst

Baldursgata 12 | F4  
Wed-Sat 12-17  
www.galleriagust.is

### Gallery Fold

Rauðarástígur 14-16 | G7  
Mon-Fri 10-18 / Sat 11-16 / Sun 14-16  
www.myndlist.is

### Gallery Kling & Bang

Hverfisgata 42 | E5  
Thurs-Sun from 14-18  
this.is/klingogbang/

### Gallery Turpentine

Ingólfstræti 5 | E3  
Tue-Fri 12-18 / Sat 11-16  
www.turpentine.is

### Gerðuberg Cultural Centre

Gerðuberg 3-5  
Mon-Thu 11-17 / Wed 11-21 / Thu-Fri 11-17 / Sat-Sun 13-16  
www.gerduberg.is

### Havari

Austurstræti 6 | E3

### Hitt Húsið

- Gallery Tukt  
Pósthússtræti 3-5 | E3  
www.hitthusid.is

### i8 Gallery

Tryggvagata 16 | D2  
Tue-Fri 11-17 / Sat 13-17 and by appointment. www.i8.is

### Living Art Museum

Skúlagata 28 | F6  
Wed, Fri-Sun 13-17 / Thu 13-22. www.nylo.is

### Lost Horse Gallery

Vitastígur 9a | E3  
Weekends from 13-19 and by appointment on weekdays.

### Hafnarborg

Strandgötu 34,  
Hafnarfjörður

### The National Gallery of Iceland

Frikkirkjuvegur 7 | F3  
Tue-Sun 11-17  
www listasafn.is

### The National Museum

Suðurgata 41 | G1  
Open daily 10-17  
natmus.is

### The Nordic House

Sturlugata 5 | H1  
Tue-Sun 12-17  
www.nordice.is/

### The Numismatic Museum

Einholt 4 | G7  
Open Mon-Fri 13:30-15:30.

### Reykjavík 871+/-2

Aðalstræti 17 | D2  
Open daily 10-17

### Reykjavík Art Gallery

Skúlagata 28 | F6  
Tuesday through Sunday 14-18

### Reykjavík Art Museum

Open daily 10-16  
www listasafnreykjavikur.is

### Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum

Sigtún  
Hafnarhús  
Tryggvagata 17 | D2

### Kjarvalsstaðir

Flókagata | I7

### Reykjavík City Theatre

Listabraut 3

### Reykjavík Maritime Museum

Grandagarður 8 | C3

### Reykjavík Museum of Photography

Tryggvagata 16 | D2  
Weekdays 12-19 / Sat-Sun 13-17 - www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is

### Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum

Laugamestangi 70

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Puffin season							
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9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	
			10:00	10:00*			
13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00
			14:00	14:00*			
		17:00	17:00	17:00			

\*10:00 and 14:00 departures from July 1<sup>st</sup> to August 10<sup>th</sup>

### November 1<sup>st</sup> - March 31<sup>st</sup>

Friday	Saturday	Sunday
13:00	13:00	13:00

Winter schedule

### Other adventures at sea

Puffin Tours May 15<sup>th</sup> - August 15<sup>th</sup>

Midnight Whale Watching June 15<sup>th</sup> - July 31<sup>st</sup>

Sea angling May 1<sup>st</sup> - August 31<sup>st</sup>

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Jamie Oliver's Diary

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REVIEWS

## Frango e Arroz, e Tudo de Bom

Portuguese-speaking food in Reykjavík

One thing that first struck me about Reykjavík's food-scene is the plethora of ethnic selection. For such a small city, this place offers a world-tour of restaurants that rivals other cities of comparable size. That being said, some countries are more amply represented than others (I'm looking at you, Thailand), so it's nice to see a couple of new countries step up to show 101 what their homeland gastronomy is all about. Let's all extend a warm Food Page welcome to Portugal and Brazil!



## Piri Piri Is Hot, But Is It Hot Enough?

Nestled down near the harbour (Geirsgata 9), Piri Piri is marked with a rooster as iconic to Portuguese eateries as the golden arches are to McDonalds. Inside it's a clean-lined, spacious place dominated by roomy booths lining the walls and featuring a sprawling playground with goodies to keep the kiddies entertained whilst their parents get down to the more serious task at hand: Eating chicken.

The menu boasts quite a few ways to take your chicken—whole, halved, quartered, topping a salad, etc. My lunch date and I opted to share a whole chicken with a choice of two sides (2640 kr.); we went with black-eye bean salad and tomato rice, but plain white rice and French fries are also available. Having become accustomed to puny chickens (compared to the super sized variety native to North America), we were optimistic the portion would fit our appetites. Once the food arrived—rather quickly—we were wishing there was a third person to help us out. It turns out a whole chicken is a lot of food no matter the continent!

While Piri Piri's menu states that

their chicken is "glazed with hot piri piri sauce," I found myself feeling lied to. Don't get me wrong, the chicken wasn't bland ole breast meat but it's a painful stretch to call the glaze "hot". It did, however, have a pleasant hint of barbecue flavour that was nice but not overpowering or blackened. The bird was accompanied by a fresh yogurt-like sauce and a red sauce that delivered more of a bite. Try mixing the two together for a mouth-watering combination. The sides were nice, though they suffered the same ill-fate as the piri piri glaze, I'm afraid. The black-eye bean salad was a nice cold accompaniment and the tomato rice, while a really great texture and consistency for a cold rice dish (i.e. it's not dry) could have benefited from maybe a pinch of salt or maybe just more of the flavour that was trying to distinguish the grain from its plain white cousin.

For the incredible price Piri Piri is a place I plan on going back to, either with two other people or with a hungrier guest. It's good, simple chicken. 🍴

✍ CATHARINE FULTON  
📷 JULIA STAPLES

### Piri Piri

Geirsgötu 9

**What we think:** Good, simple chicken

**Flavour:** Could use more piri piri

**Ambiance:** Casual, clean

**Service:** Friendly and helpfully honest



## Food & Drink | Venue finder

### 3 Frakkar

Baldursgata 14 | G4

Aktu Taktu

Skúlagata 15 | E6

Alibaba

Veltusund 3b | D2

American Style

Tryggvagata 26 | D2

Argentína Steak-house

Barónstígur | F6

Austurlanda-hraðlestin

Hverfisgata 64A | F5

Á Næstu Grósum

Laugavegur 20B | E4

B5

Bankastræti 5 | E3

Bakkus

Tryggvagata 22 | D2

Ban Thai

Laugavegur 130 | G7

Basil & Lime

Klapparstíg 38 | E4

Babalú

Skólavörðustígur 22A | G5

### Balthazar

Hafnarstræti 1-3 | D2

Bæjarins Beztu

Tryggvagata | D3

Brons

Pósthússtræti 9 | E3

Café Cultura

Hverfisgata 18 | E4

Café d'Haiti

Tryggvagata 12 | D2

Café Loki

Lokastígur 28 | G4

Café Paris

Austurstræti 14 | E3

Café Roma

Rauðarárstígur 8 | G7

Deli

Bankastræti 14 | E5

Domo

Pinghóltsstræti 5 | E3

Einar Ben

Veltusundi | E2

Eldsmíðjan

Bragagata 38A | G4

Fiskmarkaðurinn

Aðalstræti 12 | D2

### Geysir Bar/Bistro

Aðalstræti 2 | D2

Garðurinn

Klappastígur 37 | F4

Glætan book café

Laugavegur 19 | F5

Grái Kötturinn

Hverfisgata 16A | E4

Grillhúsið

Tryggvagata 20 | D2

Habibi

Hafnarstræti 20 | E3

Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar ("Bullán")

Geirsgata 1 | B2

Hílla Bátar

Ingólfstorg | D2

Hornið

Hafnarstræti 15 | D3

Hótel Holt

Bergstaðarstræti 37 | G3

Humarhúsið

Amntmanstígur 1 | E3

Hressó

Austurstræti 20 | E4

### Icelandic Fish & Chips

Tryggvagata 8 | B2

Indian Mango

Frakkastígur 12 | F5

Jómfrúin

Lækjargata 4 | E3

Kaffi Hljómáland

Laugavegur 21 | E4

Kaffifélagið

Skólavörðustígur 10 | F5

Kaffitár

Bankastræti 8 | E4

Kaffivagninn

Grandagarður 10 | A1

Kofi Tómasar Frænda

Laugavegur 2 | E4

Kornið

Lækjargata 4 | E3

Krua Thai

Tryggvagata 14 | D2

La Primavera

Austurstræti 9 | D2

Lystin

Laugavegur 73 | F6

### Mokka

Skólavörðustígur 3A | E4

Nonnabiti

Hafnarstræti 9 | D3

O Sushi

Lækjargata 2A | E3

Pisa

Lækjargötu 6b | E3

Pizza King

Hafnarstræti 18 | D3

Pizza Pronto

Vallarstræti 4 | E2

Pizzaverksmiðjan

Lækjargötu 8 | E3

Prikið

Bankastræti 12 | E3

Ráðhúskaffi

Laugavegur 11 | E2

Santa Maria

Laugavegur 22A | F5

Serrano

Hringbraut 12 | H3

Shalimar

Austurstræti 4 | D2

Sifur

Pósthússtræti 11 | E3

### Sjávarkjallarinn

Aðalstræti 2 | D2

Sólón

Bankastræti 7a | E3

Sushibarinn

Laugavegur 2 | E4

Sushismiðjan

Geirsgötu 3 | B2

Swarta Kaffi

Laugavegur 54 | F5

Sægreifinn

Verbúð 8, Geirsgata | B2

Tapas

Vesturgata 3B | D2

Thorvaldsen

Austurstræti 8 | D2

Tíu Dropar

Laugavegur 27 | E5

Tívoli

Laugavegur 3 | E4

Vegamót

Vegamótastígur 4 | E4

Við Tjómína

Templarásund 3 | E2

Vítabar

Bergþórugata 21 | G5





## Brasilia Is Meaty, Hearty, Heavy

If you've walked past Brasilia (Skólavörðustíg 14) then you know it's not shy about its ethnicity. Proudly engulfed inside and out in the green and yellow of Brazil's flag, the place is screaming "I'M A BRAZILIAN RESTAURANT, GODDAMNIT!" And a huge Brazilian restaurant at that. The place is sprawling, so it's a real shame that the tables were largely vacant when my date and I went for a bite of lunch.

That sentiment persisted upon ordering the mixed croquette's (1200 ISK) to start with and were presented with an assortment of breaded and fried nibbles that would be perfect to share over a few beers in a more well attended bar. Included in the mix were a chilli and cheese blend, breaded and fried; shredded chicken, corn and spices, breaded and fried; spiced beef in a lighter baked envelope that reminded my date of her mama's home cookin'; and segments of hot-dog in a fried batter that immediately made my date and I exclaim "Pogo's!" (that's brand-whore for 'corn dogs'). The shredded chicken was our favourite, though all together it was just too much fried bar food with which to start a meal; perhaps if it was shared among a larger group the story would be different.

Moving on to the main courses, I initially chose a fish dish but was informed upon ordering that the fish is delivered fresh every afternoon, so I would have to return during the dinner hours for my first choice. On the recommendation of the waitress I settled on the chicken and rice (1890 ISK). My date was helplessly drawn to a mysterious dish called Meat House (1870 ISK). I don't blame her. Really, how could anybody of sane mind turn down the promise of a house of meat?

Well, the meat house was a bit of a dud. After such a heavy starter it turns out that a layer of spiced oxtail topped with a hefty

### Brasilia

Skólavörðustígur 14

**What we think:** Mixed bag

**Flavour:** BRAZIL!

**Ambiance:** Casual, clean

**Service:** Super friendly and hospitable



portion of melted mozzarella is a bad idea. Starters aside the dish was just slightly off. Sure it tasted like cheese and meat, but there was nothing really marrying those two components into a cohesive dish. The meat house was sided with a nice fresh salad, though, and the parsley dressing drizzled on it was a hit.

My chicken and rice was more of a success than my date's meal. The chicken pieces were very tender and flavourful, as was the rice upon which it sat. Strewn with soft strips of bell pepper and other veggies, it really was a nice and filling meal. Strangely the food on one side of my plate contained more spices and juices from cooking than the other half and was, therefore, better than the minimally seasoned portion. Points off for lopsidedness.

Still, it was all nice enough. The entire dining experience could benefit from the infusion of some more customers; eating alone in such a large space is lonely however friendly and hospitable the wait-staff. Being able to order my first choice of dishes would have been nice too, and I'm not sure why fish can't be delivered before lunch. 🍴

✍️ CATHARINE FULTON  
📷 JULIA STAPLES

### EAT AND DRINK:

#### 3 X BOOZE

##### 1 BAKKUS

Bakkus is quite possibly the most wonderful bar in town. They've got great selection of vodka, plus all the usual suspects of beer, wine, spirits, and you can down them all on your way to pure mayhem intoxication while surrounded by the works of local artist Davíð Órn Halldórsson. So it's cultured.

Tryggvagata 22

##### 2 HEMMI & VALDI

For a more relaxed drinking atmosphere check out Hemmi & Valdi. It's as cosy as drinking in your Grandma's house, but with a bunch of strangers and, often, some really great bands, all squeezed in to drink with you.

Laugavegur 21

##### 3 VENUE

Venue is a good place to drink for two reasons: 1) they serve alcohol and 2) the lights on the ground leading up to the bar are kinda like a catwalk. Walk like you mean it when you go for that next beer. Work it! Stomp it out! Smeyes!

Tryggvagata 22

#### 3 X POST-DRINKING EATS

##### 1 NONNABITI

The suitability of Nonnabiti as a post-drinking bite is attested to by the hoards of drunkards who pack the tiny eatery in the late (and early) hours. Massive sandwiches filled with salty, savoury, greasy, cheesy fillings—it makes drunk folk happy.

Hafnarstræti 9

##### 2 GAMLA SMÍÐJAN

This place serves up a shockingly delicious pie no matter the time of day or the amount of alcohol you've consumed, but you can likely eat more of it after pounding a few back. You won't regret it.

Lækjargata 8

##### 3 BÆJARINS BEZTU PYLSUR

Hotdogs are almost the perfect food for a person under the influence. First of all, there are no clumsy utensils required for those less dextrous occasions and, secondly, they're cheap so you can afford one or two with the change in your pocket after blowing the rest of your dough at the bar.

Hafnarstræti 18

#### 3 X LOBSTER SOUP

##### 1 FISKFELAGIÐ (THE FISH COMPANY)

Their lobster soup will leave you absolutely speechless. So rich and creamy with the most delightful hints of Asian curry flavours. You won't just be talking about it days later, you'll be dreaming about it.

Vesturgata 2

##### 2 SÆGREFINN

There's a reason this casual little fish shop down in the harbour is packed most of the time—they serve up some fine seafood, with the crown jewel being their lobster soup. Get it with a nice spear of whale meat and you're set.

Geirsgata 8

##### 3 VIÐ FJÖRUBORÐIÐ

Við Fjöruborðið specialises in Icelandic lobster. They know how to prepare it masterfully. They make a mean lobster soup. If I were a lobster I'd want to be made into a soup by Við Fjöruborðið.

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You are called Jón Gnarr and Icelanders know you well, but most of our readers do not. So tell us, who is Jón Gnarr?

Er, well. I am a self-educated artist that has been involved in various projects. I have done acting, writing, directing, worked in advertising and created a plethora of comedy shows. And I've starred in some feature films.

I guess I think of myself as a sort of think tank. I think a lot. My head is like an airport, like Heathrow. It's never off; there's always someone coming or going, but no one stays, because I am very forgetful. I am a self-made man, and I have never ever taken the conventional path to anything—I have no formal education.

**"I have always been a rather shocking character"**

At age eleven I gave up on school. I refused to learn the multiplication table, Danish—pretty much everything I couldn't see a practical use for. I wanted to be a circus clown. When I was thirteen I had dropped out of school completely and was sent to a boarding school for delinquents and troubled teens at Núpur in Dýrafjörður. I had a lot of peace there and room to do my own thing. At age fourteen I was an active member of many international organisations that were being founded at the time, the Campaign For Nuclear Disarmament, Black Flag, Greenpeace—I joined a lot of radical organisations and even was part of a letter writing campaign to jailed anarchists. I had a lot of free time to delve into that stuff. Your artistic output has always been rather avant-garde and on the edge. How have you managed to gain the mass appeal that you have, with [comedy troupe] Fóstbræður, [radio show] Tvihöfði and your other assorted projects?

When I was a kid, I read a book with the letters of Franz Kafka. I loved him. I read The Trial and Metamorphosis, and also this book of letters. In it—and this deeply affected me—he says that the purpose of art, or what makes it important, is to unsettle us, to shock and surprise us and to make us think. To evoke feelings that we were maybe unaware of. I have always been a rather shocking character, ever since I was a kid. It has always been part of my personality, to shock. As a four year old, I used to go up to people on the bus and ask if they had been fucking. "Are you always fucking?" I'd ask, and my mother would have to rush me out.

I consider myself an artist, and I am my own subject. I am the only thing I have to work with.

There have been very harsh responses to almost everything I've participated in. When I was with Tvihöfði, and with Fóstbræður, we used to get sued a lot, even though the stories rarely made it to the media. When Fóstbræður [a very popular sketch show on Stöð 2] was showing, the station had a record number of unsubscriptions. In the station's history, there have never been as many subscription cancellations—folks were doing it to protest the show. And Tvihöfði never measured high in the listener polls, actually. The other stations had a much bigger following.

Frankly, I was very surprised by the fol-

*All systems are against creative thought, because they are fully formed and positioned on a shelf, and proud of it. It's how they survive.*

lowing Næturvaktin got. I had thought it was the type of show that would only be appreciated by a small, smart crowd that 'got it'.

**I want to try it all**

You are often regarded as an Icelandic counterpart to Andy Kaufman, in that the whole of society seems to be your stage, and the audience is often unsure of whether you are joking or not. A case in point would be your 'Catholic phase' [for a period, Jón claimed he was a born-again Catholic, and he wrote many, many op-ed columns discussing his newfound faith, often sounding disturbingly 'born again']. In this light, a lot of what you've been doing with Besti flokkurinn seems to make sense—anyone can run for office, and if they do they will get media-time and a chance to stir up things. Is your campaign really some sort of subversive, public performance art?

I've never really been a big fan of Andy Kaufman. I like some of what he did, but he was never a favourite. So I can't really answer that. Ehrm. Yes, there's no connection in my mind.

But could you be categorised as "in the same vein" as Andy?

Yes, categorisation. I am against that. We are such a clever species of animal, we love defining everything. I like depriving people of that

sense of wellbeing they derive from that—any sense of wellbeing really—and make them feel uncomfortable. Not that I want to hurt anyone. I just hate being categorised, placed in a shelf. That's one of the things I am enjoying about Besti flokkurinn.

I also really enjoyed being Catholic, especially how it got on so many peoples' nerves. That was really fun. Especially people of my generation, folks that have made up a very firm opinion on faith and religion. The Catholic Church is THE ESTABLISHMENT in the world, really, no state or nation in history has survived longer than they have. It seems to have this foundation that works, and that is one of the things that fascinated me about it. Did you ever believe in it? Was it all a performance designed to get a reaction, or did you sincerely count rosaries and stuff?

No, well, I never got that deep in. Everything I'm doing with Besti flokkurinn, it's all backed up by research and facts. Even though some people think it's nonsense—it isn't. I just like to try a lot of things, you know. If you are a straight man and you want to experiment with having sex with another man, it doesn't mean you need to be marked for life as gay or bisexual or whatever. You don't need to be placed in some shelf or category, even though that makes it easier for society to deal with you.

People should do what they want to, in the heat of the moment. And I, uhm, I have vacancy on this earth for eighty some years, and I want to try it all so I can form an opinion of it, without borrowing someone else's.

As for the basic tenets of Catholicism; the existence of God and that he materialised in Jesus Christ and did all sorts of crazy things... well. For example, one of the founding beliefs of Catholicism is that of parthenogenesis; that the Virgin Mary was just out walking and all of the sudden got impregnated by the Holy Ghost. I don't believe that. It's nonsense, it's illogical, and it makes it hard for me to affirm the Nicene Creed. I don't believe it, I can't help it.

I can believe that Jesus existed and can agree that he was an important man. But whether he did everything that's credited to him, I don't know. And there's no way to find out. But as for religion, there are a whole lot of smart people that have been involved with religion over the years; it would be dumb to dismiss it.

I have never had anything to revert to. I have no education, I've got nothing. I can't go back to being a sailor if my career fails. And I've always had to use myself as a subject for my thoughts and projects. I got paid 15,000 ISK for each column I wrote for Fréttablaðið, and it during was a period of my life that I was interested in Catholicism. But I could just as well resign from the church right now. It has no meaning in my life anymore.

**Dead and vapid discourse**

Are Besti flokkurinn's platform of "transparent corruption", absurd pet projects, etc., the "ironic" generation's way of saying that's what you stand against, that it's something you would never do? Is it—as one would maybe hope, seeing that you seem to be winning the election—a reaction to the fact of how political speech has become polluted and diluted, how politicians' honesty and integrity are public laughing matters that no one takes seriously?

Political discourse is all dead and vapid. Yeah, yeah. I've never been interested in governance or politics. I am very much opposed to the idea that someone out there can interfere with my life and the thought angers me. None of this politics thing has ever interested me. I've never watched Silfur Egils [local political talk show] or listened to talk radio. I don't even know the politicians. I met [Independence Party leader] Hanna Birna on the set of a TV show and I had no idea who she was.

All these people, these politicians, have never been on my horizon, yet they've had a tremendous impact on my life. And then there are the businessmen that have in effect given me the chance to work with what I want to work on. Jón Ásgeir [Jóhannsson, banker and head of Baugur] is one of them and he seems to own Stöð 2, where I have been given numerous opportunities to work and create, albeit on take it or leave it terms. I don't own the copyrights to anything I've created. Jón Ásgeir does.

And that's the way our society works—you have an idea you want to execute, and you need funding for that. I have never gotten a chance at [state broadcasting agency] RÚV, which is supposed to support Icelandic culture. But that institution is in the hands of politicians—they control it, and stagnation serves them well, because life and movement are... the system is always against creative thought. All systems are against creative thought, because they are fully formed and positioned on a shelf, and proud of it. It's how they survive.

Creative thought threatens them. It threatens the school system, which begins by teaching us that creative thought is worthless

until you are an adult. You will need to spend the best years of your life learning about someone something someone else created, then you can go do something. Not everyone fits into this model, which creates the need for concepts and "problems" that need defining, which brings us to psychiatrists and psychologists.

**Fucking the system**

And I think... Wait, you were asking about the party? Well. I've listened to all the empty political discourse, but it's never touched me at all or moved me, until the economic collapse. Then I just felt I'd had enough of those people. After the collapse and its aftermath, I started reading the local news websites and watching the news and political talk shows—and it filled me with so much frustration. Eww! So I wanted to do something, to fuck the system. To change it around and impact it in some way. I went to Austurvöllur and protested during the pots and pans revolution, but it felt pointless to me. I didn't really feel any need to scare Geir Haarde—he's just a grown man that was sick. I don't feel rage against anyone really. Not the bankers either.

This political world of ours is formed by some sort of co-dependency that's ingrained in our society because there are so few of us. If you are an insane alcoholic that doesn't know how to interact with others, you aren't ousted from politics—they'll make you an ambassador somewhere, or form a committee for you to run. That's how our politics works.

In Sicily they have a strong system, a mob system, where everyone has a family name with which they can be identified. By that, everyone knows who you are, which village you are from and who your uncle is. But over here, you're maybe called Einar Guðmundsson and no one has any idea who you are. And this is where the political parties come in as

*My father was a cop, and a big communist supporter. He was a police officer for 45 years, and was never promoted or earned rank, because he belonged to the wrong political party. That's how our system works, in a nutshell. Every problem is solved through nepotism. You need to know people to get things done. Iceland must be a horrible country for immigrants.*

nice substitutes—they form these alliances that are sort of patriarchies and feudal systems, descending from the system we had in the 12th century. We have the same four parties, the socialists, conservatives, farmers and social democrats, they occasionally change names or split up but at the core remain the same systems of feudal privilege that we've always been governed by.

My father was a cop, and a big communist supporter. He was a police officer for 45 years, and was never promoted or earned rank, because he belonged to the wrong political party. That's how our system works, in a nutshell. Every problem is solved through knowing someone, through nepotism. You need to know people to get things done. Iceland must be a horrible country for immigrants [laughs].

As for the political lingo... it's sometimes said that politicians in the US are superficial. That's wrong. To succeed in politics in the US, you need to be very smart, or at least to have someone working with you that is. Over here, you can just trudge forward like a bull without any regard for anything... and still make it. Like Bjarni Ben [head of the Independence Party] said that my party's following bore "a sad witness to the fact that maybe the parties failed in establishing 'a living telephone connection' with the voters..." What a bunch of empty hogwash? What does that even mean? He is the head of the nation's largest political party, and this is what he has to say? These phrases they're using, when conversation is turned into 'a living telephone connection' and people become 'individuals' and everyone accepts it as some authority?

I am plainly tired of all this empty BS, and Besti flokkurinn is in a primitive way protesting against it.

*After the collapse and its aftermath, I started reading the local news websites and watching the news and political talk shows—and it filled me with so much frustration. Eww! So I wanted to do something, to fuck the system. To change it around and impact it in some way.*

**On being a simpleton**

As a potential voter of yours, and someone who is likely to take your party seriously, I still have to think: "How can I know what they really want to do?" You have no platform, so I can't know.

This is something I'm confronted with every day now. This morning I wrote an article about making Iceland a haven for electric cars, for turning it into an electric car haven. I believe we need to stop importing oil and use electricity. That's my opinion, but of course I wrote the article with lots of intentional faux pas in it, I wrote it like a simpleton. I like appearing as a simpleton [laughs very loudly], like when I gave a speech at the University of Reykjavík and shouted that I had risen from the ashes like the bird Felix. I was just waiting for some blogger type to correct me on that. That gets the party press and exposure, and as soon as they do, I can stand aside, laugh and let the facts or essence of what I was saying do the talking.

We still have three weeks until elections [when we conducted the interview] and we might well print a platform. I am just sort of improvising and playing it by ear now. I think this is very fun. I did publish a piece that was a sort of manifesto for the party, no joke, and I am sort of improvising and trying to carry on from that.

So you foresee potentially introducing a platform before the election? All of your campaign is regarded as a joke thus far.

Well, our platform has been revealed pretty much, directly and indirectly. Of course it's relative, what's a joke and what's not. Comedy is very temporal; today's joke might be tomorrow's pressing issue. I don't consider the polar bear idea a joke—polar bears are widely considered an endangered species, and I honestly believe it would be better to store those that make it over in a zoo, rather than executing them on sight. It's not farfetched—there are polar bears in zoos all over the world.

As for placing a toll on the people of Seltjarnarnes [a municipality next to Reykjavík] when they want to enter the city, I only think of it as normal that they would have to contribute to our city's funds, as they use a lot of our services—we put out their fires, for instance. At a time when we have to cut back on our services due to lack of funds, they—the richest community in Iceland—brag about paying the lowest taxes in the country.

**A cultural revolution**

Are you saying that you support progressive taxation policies, that the wealthy should pay higher taxes than the poor? This is a common platform for socialist parties...

Well, I don't know the taxing system, it's very complicated. If it were up to me, no one would pay any taxes. I don't like paying taxes, I am always in debt to the tax office and I've been badly hurt by the system. It's unfair and I want to change it.

I was attempting to define you politically, to associate you with an ideology. What you said could easily be summed up in a platform.

I just think it's natural that the people of Seltjarnarnes should pay for the services they're receiving.

But do you envision—to make some people's lives easier—making a platform? A policy that you swear to follow.

Ehrm. I can imagine doing that.

Let's take that tax system as an example. There are phrases, like lowering taxes for the worse off, and increasing them for the richies. It would be very nice to do that. But what we really need is to re-think the taxing system. It is one of the most stagnant systems in this country. But it's not alone. It's all dead. The tax office is dead, the customs office is dead. RÚV is dead. These are the institutions that make up the foundations of our society, and they are all dead. Bleeceh.

Are you, in all seriousness saying that you would like to restructure and organise society from the bottom up?

Yes.

Are you calling for a revolution?

Yes. I am calling for a cultural revolution.

Is that a realistic goal? Is your candidacy a part of it?

Yes. I hope we undergo a cultural revolution here; that we start experiencing ourselves as a nation in a new way. And I have some ideas on that. As with the nation's independence. I feel it is being threatened. We need to reaffirm it, which is where something like switching over to an electric car system would come in. To define and underline our uniqueness, to creatively lead in some aspects. There is potential there – we could serve as an example for the rest of the world.

**'The Wire' as yardstick**

A lot of the "unconventional" parties that we've had in Iceland have, once in office, wound up either aligning with some of the Big Four parties [see page 6], or disintegrating. How do you envision Besti flokkurinn's future?

Say we managed to secure 2–4 candidates, I would take it all very seriously, I would ensure city politics run smoothly and I would advocate for my polar bear plan [enter a long, rambling speech about various odd party objectives, polar bears, tulips, bankers on parole, etc. etc.] ...

But would you consider forming a majority alliance with another political party? Anyone in particular? Anyone you would not work with? I would not work with the Progressive Party, and I hope that party just up and leaves and ceases to exist, at least in Reykjavík. But I don't know. I don't really know the people running, and I don't really differentiate between parties. It depends on the people. If I am hanging out at the Left-Green office and we are all talking about The Wire and all of them agree that it is the best show ever made, and then someone from the Independence Party shows up and they haven't heard of The Wire, I know who's fun, and I know who I'd rather work with.

Still, if you compare, say, the Independence Party and the Left-Greens, they are very different parties with very different platforms and policies. One is for privatisation and private enterprise, while the other runs a leftist, socialist platform. Leave aside if the members are fun or not, but you must admit that these are two very different ways of viewing society, and unhinged power to either of them would surely impact Reykjavík massively.

Well, yeah. I would, yeah. If we're talking about us getting four candidates in... If we get the majority we would just take the reins and control everything. And put running the city in the hands of skilled professionals. I think the city as an entity and structure is perfectly capable of running itself without the help of politicians. They spend half their day working for their party interests anyway.

**An anarchist in disguise?**

Still, this is important. If people are to vote for you, even if they buy into the whole irony and dismantling of politics post-modernism thing, they still must be able to discern what you stand for, and how you will handle certain things. For instance, I was in city hall when the Independence Party and the Progressives voted for selling the city's shares in HS Orka to Magma Energy [read more about that elsewhere in this issue].

The sale was very much in line with the Independence Party platform, and it was heavily opposed by the Left-Green counselors, in keeping with their platform and outspoken policy. I do not want my government selling off or privatizing Iceland's resources, and if I am to vote for you, I need to know where you stand on that issue. And many others. They are important, polarizing ones!

It would be easy for me to say "Left-Greens are the only party I will work with." Is that true?

No, but I could say it. Just to say it. And then tell people later on that I'd been joking, that I'd rather work with the Progressives. That's what politicians do. But I think... Policy? What can I say. We are sort of an "independence party" [laughs]. Our ideology aims at securing our independence. That we don't wind up as tenants in our own country.

I have said that Besti flokkurinn is an anarcho-surrealist party, combining the best bits of anarchism and surrealism. And it's always been my political conviction, really, anarchism and surrealism. But if I went and said that on Stöð 2 news or on a talk show, that we are an anarchist party, then the public would place a different meaning on us. "This isn't Jón Gnarr, this is some sort of crazy anarchist party," they would say. Maybe it's just Gnarrism?

And on the political compass, anarchism is to the left. But I am against a hegemony that dictates what one should do. Banning things. Banning strip clubs and internet access. I can't sign on that. What's it to me if someone wants to spend their time on in strip clubs or smoking crack or surfing the web for pornography. I think the political parties in Iceland are at such a dead end. They are done. ☹



Dr. Gunni's History Of Icelandic Rock | Part 17

## Purrrkur Pillnikk – The Most Active Band Ever!



Ahh... 1981. The best year in Iceland's rock history. At least for me, a 15 year old who's life music had taken over completely. Bubbi Morthens and his Utangarðsmenn—the most popular band in Iceland—were already passé for forward thinking dudes like myself. My early idols Fræbbblarnir, with their simple bar grip Ramones-inspired punk pop, just weren't doing it for me anymore. Now it was time for "deeper" stuff, so I turned to Joy Division and their Icelandic counterpart Peyr, as The Fall and Purrrkur Pillnikk.

In 1981 it seemed like every garage had a band rehearsing in it. The feel was similar, I guess, to what happened in Iceland after The Beatles broke in the sixties. After a period of stagnation and disco pop in the late seventies, suddenly everybody wanted to be in a rock band (or punk/new wave band to be more precise).

In the Menntaskólinn við Hamrahlíð college, which was already famous for being the breeding ground for bands like Spilverk Þjóðanna and Stuðmenn, future Sugarcubes Einar Örn Benediktsson and Bragi Ólafsson along with two friends wrote and rehearsed nine songs in an afternoon in May and played them live for their fellow students the day after. The band, Purrrkur Pillnikk, was to become the most active band in Iceland's music history.

The early songs were short and fast, with clever lyrics. In less than a month, the band had already recorded their debut 10 song 7" EP, *Tílf*. The band's statement—as well as the era's statement—was

1. Purrrkur Pillnikk – Doing their great alienation and agony stuff at Hótel Borg in 1981.
2. Purrrkur Pillnikk – Ekki enn – the band's masterpiece.

rendered in the song *Tilfinning* ("A Feeling"), a 52 second glorious blast of jazz-punk: "It's not about what you're capable of, it's about what you do."

Gramm Records was founded purposely to release PP's debut EP, but went on to become the main indie label in Iceland for most of the early eighties, or until *Smekkleysa* was founded by the same people in 1986. Gramm soon opened a record store where you could get super hip records from labels like Rough Trade and Crass. PP played incessantly. Einar's stage act was provoking, he was all over the place, screaming and challenging the audience, while the other guys stood gravely staring at their instruments, still learning how to play them.

Einar Örn had already been "punk" since 1977 (he had lived in England with his parents). He had helped with The Stranglers' and The Clash's concerts in Reykjavík (1978 and 1980) and acted as the manager of Utangarðsmenn. In the summer of 1981, he accompanied Utangarðsmenn on an ill-fated Scandinavian tour that would end the band 3 months later with fistfights and near-starvation. When Einar returned to Iceland there was no way Purrrkur Pillnikk would do the old songs again, so the band set out to write new material. In August they went to England and recorded the classic *Ekki enn* ("Not Yet") LP in 50 hours at Crass' Southern Studios.

The album was released in November and sold well (at least for this kind of music), shifting 1500 copies. The songs were longer, more complex, and the lyrics were powerful and thought provoking as ever—alienation and agony being the main ingredient. The album's longevity is obvious; it went and scored #46 last year in a "Best Icelandic albums ever poll."

In early 1982 the band set out to re-

cord more new songs. "It's our pleasure to make records," Einar said in an interview. "We always lose money making records, we do not stand or fall with our next record." It was to become *Googoo-plex*, a set of two 12"s, "disco-style". Musically and lyric-wise the 13 new songs did not add much to PP's palette, but the album included the band's best known song, *Augun úti*, much later used by Gus-Gus in the song *Forever*.

Purrrkur Pillnikk had supported The Fall in Iceland in 1981 and in spring 1982 the band travelled to England to play 11 gigs with Mark E. Smith and co. After returning the band set out to play more, but as often happens with Icelandic bands, the country's tiny population and limited opportunities were wearing their stamina down.

PP's last ever gig was in late August of 1982, where the band played five new songs in a medley called *Orð fyrir dauða* ("Words before death"). PP's death twitches could be heard on two post-humous releases, *No time to think*, a 4 track 7" sung in English, and *Maskínan LP* ("The Machine"), a collection of live recordings. It came out two years after the humble beginnings in MH. To their credit, Purrrkur Pillnikk have never made a comeback and probably never will. It was a spur of the moment thing.

✪ - DR. GUNNI

By Dr. Gunni, based on his 2000 book *Eru ekki allir í stuði?* (Rock in Iceland).

Music | Live Review

## The Rhythm Got Them. Eventually



Amadou & Mariam  
Retro Stefson

Laugardalshöll, May 12th, 2010

It started with the biggest group hug I've ever seen. I strolled into the rather sparse arena and up to the front of the room and quickly saw that the dance floor was full, but everyone was parted like the Red Sea. Retro Stefson bounced around onstage, in a breakdown of their infectiously danceable song *Senseni*, leading a clap-along and a countdown. Before I could even get my hands into rhythm with the crowd, they yelled "four, three, two, one!" and the parted audience rushed towards each other, arms akimbo, teeth grinning and shouting wild and joyfully, into each others' arms. Too stunned to process the heart-warming sight in time to take part in it, the only natural reaction was to start dancing. Then the song ended, and that was their time.

WTF?

After the quickest, most efficient set change I've ever seen, the guests of honour were graciously escorted onstage by crewmembers as their band set the tone with a low-down groove. The crowd then proceeded to... sit perfectly fucking still for the first seven songs. Despite the well-blended bluesy African beats and indie pop overtones, spectacular light show and numerous clap-alongs, the Reykjavík Art Festival elite kept their knees tightly crossed and their hands gently folded across their laps. Except for a handful of folks dancing to the extremities of the stage and all the way at the back of the room, it was about as crazy as an Amish funeral. Mariam suddenly left the stage, aided by a crewmember, but it was actually only for a very awesome costume change.

Suddenly, one brave woman with no shoes on strayed from the small group of dancers to stage-right and danced her way into the large, barren space between

the stage and the first row of seats. Within moments she was joined by a second woman. Then I turned my head to the left and beheld a glorious sight—the kids from Retro Stefson went to the back of the room, gathered all the dancers and were dancing their way down the aisles with a massive conga line in tow. In a split second, everyone was up on their feet and the seated audience had their view blocked by the wall of gyrating, writhing, sweaty people.

FTW!

The clap-alongs became more intense and frequent. All the French-speaking audience sang along at the top of their lungs. People of every age and persuasion danced with each other with a primal genuineness, smiling and spinning and grinding around the floor. Friends hugged, lovers kissed, strangers held hands and moved freely. It was one love, baby.

After a nice lengthy set full of stellar beats and beautiful singing, the audience unanimously demanded more from this band that had come all the way from Mali to play the opening ceremonies of the festival. They ended the night with massively extended versions of three more songs, including their wonderful love song *Je Pense à Toi* (I'm Thinking of You), during which Mariam affectionately caressed her husband's head and neck, both of them smiling in complete puppy love with each other. It was enough to give a hardened cynic the vapours. ✪

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Music | Album Reviews



**Carpe Noctem**

Carpe Noctem

carpenocticeland

A great debut from one of Iceland's most promising metal bands

Black metal may be Satan's music but the only I time got scared listening to Carpe Noctem's excellent debut was at the beginning of Metamorphoses Maleficarum, where Iceland's leading religious zealot is heard screaming at his flock.

Carpe Noctem sing in Icelandic and our beloved language fits this music perfectly. I was delighted to notice song names like *Vargsfæðing* and *Skálholtsbrenna*. The music is straightforward and the guitars form a massive wall of sound that I liked. I thought the songs were too much alike though. The singer switches between low growling and high pitched screaming and does his job well. However, the drum sound is disappointing and dull.

All in all, this is a great debut and I'm looking forward to hear more from these guys. They may look and sound mean and evil but my guess is that they're just creative little orphans dying to be heard.

✂ - BIRKIR FJALAR VIDARSSON



**Jón Tryggvi**

Silkmjúk er syndin

jontryggi

The music is as grey and washed out as the album's cover

At school, most people would go mental over Indie or the latest dance music. However, there was always someone who would glide around acting like a 40-year old, saying they were into the likes of Nick Drake and Jeff Buckley, saying that the music "spoke to them" about their lives (what, having an argument with your mum and dad?)

And this basically sums up *Silkmjúk er syndin*. Citing the Drakester & the Buckster, Dire Straits AND the Chemical Brothers among his influences, Jón Tryggvi has created something that strips any vitality from the above and leaves behind a hideously vapid, watery nonsense. The whole album screams "I'm playing old style acoustic pap to show my world-weariness and gravitas." Still, if you want an excruciating slow death by mid tempo organ solo, then go right ahead.

✂ - BOB CLUNESS



**Who Knew**

Bits And Pieces Of A Major Spectacle

wellwhoknew

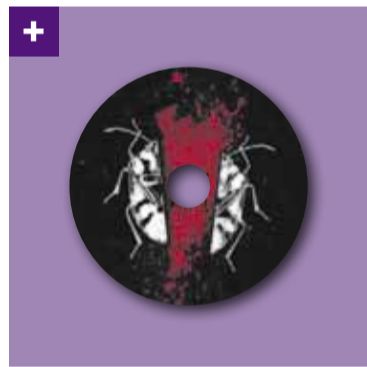
Who Knew? I certainly didn't ...

Ever since Jakóbínarína disappeared, Iceland has been crying out for a rousing INDIE ROCK band to rally behind. OK it hasn't, but it certainly looks like Who Knew are applying for the job with their debut album.

The first thing you notice when you listen to the thing is how similar the songs sound and feel. This is probably due to more than half the songs being in the same key of A (or as professional musos call it, "the drunken anthem key"). Their sound too is a sort of hideous Manbearpig chimera of all the main indie sounds going at the moment. The head of Wolf Parade, the lungs of Clap Your Hands Say Yeah!, the left bollock of Black Kids, etc.

This should all sound horrible and derivative. But the album is propelled along by the sheer force of its own self-confidence and positivity, as well as some sterling work on the bass and drums. So no prizes for original outstanding work, but definitely a winner for the hop along indie anthems this year.

✂ - BOB CLUNESS



**Logn / Manslaughter**

Split

lognmusic / manndrap

One band is focused as all hell but as a consequence, the other one feels bereft of it.

Exploding out of the gate in true Nasum fashion, both guns grinding, with an evil yet instantly memorable main riff. To make a long story short, every Logn song, save for one, slays and impresses with remarkable ease. For a debut recording that is essentially a demo, really—their oldest member is 16—it's a frighteningly focused and well executed effort and the majority of the music is not only promising, but simply fucking good. My only proper complaint is the blandness of the vocals.

Manslaughter's focus is lacking, which is evident in how the songs end, or the lack of direction as to how they should finish them. Too many parts just fizzle out into nothingness, which leads me to believe these compositions and recorded efforts are not serious. Manslaughter is made up of members from distinguished scene bands like

Plastic Gods, Muck and Severed Crotch. They are no strangers to good stuff, but you cannot really tell from this. No doubt we can have fun with this in a live setting, but I'll rarely go back to this on CD.

✂ - BIRKIR FJALAR VIDARSSON



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Literature | Short story

God Returns To Iceland pt. 2:

# Ghosts of Pompeii

The Lord thought about Pompeii and wondered why he did not do this more often. From the perspective of infinity, the days all tended to roll into one, but this was one he could remember clearly.

In the early morning, he had observed a group of children setting fire to an anthill just outside of Herculeaum. There seemed to be no purpose to their activity, other than hearing the sound the insects made when they burst. Perhaps this was the sum of all human endeavour, and the Lord wanted to play too.

He lit up the sky and all those underneath it. Snap, crackle, then pop. Flesh melted away and the bones made a pleasing sound when they cracked in the heat.

One might be forgiven for thinking that it was in retribution for the anthill that the children of Pompeii were reduced to cinders. Not so, for from the perspective of heaven there was very little difference between the two. Others surmised that it was because of its greed that Pompeii was destroyed. There was some truth in this. If there was something the Lord detested, it was greed. This was not because of any notion of right or wrong, indeed he cared as little for one as for the other. The Lord's dislike for greed was purely aesthetic. Greed rarely created anything; it left nothing behind by those who succumbed to it.

The Renaissance Italians had killed each other over access to land and gold, to be sure, but they also competed in sculpture, in painting, in every form of art. The Sistine Chapel had endured long after personal fortunes and their owners were ground to dust. The petty kings of Germany had schemed against each other, but their attempts to outdo one another also took the form of musical appreciation. To this day, whenever the Lord listened to a recital of Mozart's Requiem, even he felt compelled to believe in the possibility of an afterlife for creatures who had created something so enduring. Not only the Italians and the Germans and the French had created something that could be called culture, even the English had something approaching it in between their colonial exploits.



But these Icelanders had never created anything. They were competitive to a fault, but they only competed in the collection of money and the consumption of alcohol. They bragged about both, but were good at neither. Their buildings were a reflection of their bank accounts, vast and empty.

A more patient God would have waited to find out what happens to materialists stripped of material things, to see if they would repent and turn on to a better path. But this was not a patient God. He was a creator God, impulsive and intemperate. He had created mankind in his own image, curious and at times cruel, but always with the ability to dream. He could not stand a people without imagination.

When the Pompeiians gave up on trying to outdo the Greeks in terms of culture and turned to the pursuit of money instead, he grew bored with them. As it turned out, their demise was far more interesting in visual terms than their existence had been. Though not as enduring as feats of creation such as Mount Everest or Kilimanjaro, the Lord still thought of the pillar of smoke rising out of Vesuvius as one of his major works, a wonderful piece of performance art.

But how to do away with Iceland? Volcanoes were his weapon of choice when it came to destroying civilisations, and he had placed plenty of them in the vicinity for precisely this purpose. Still, the idea of repeating himself bothered him. He had unleashed the fires in Iceland once before, and even that had not been much of an improvement on the Vesuvius eruption. Was it true which the philosophers said, that his best works were behind him? It was all well and good to destroy cultures through sound and fury, but he was past that now. He wanted a more mature offering. He wanted it all to signify something.

He thought long and hard on the

subject, but nothing came to him. Nothing refused to turn into something. This had never happened before, and for the very first time, he felt old. He needed inspiration. That's all that was missing.

God decided to explore his canvas. Like most visitors, he found much to admire. It was not quite as polished as the White Cliffs of Dover, or as meticulously crafted as the Greek Islands, but it had a certain rough charm to it. Iceland had been created during one of his more experimental phases. He had to admit that though he hadn't put much thought into it at the time, the outcome had been better than he expected. The wild combination of styles that reminded some of a granite Sahara and others of the moon convinced him that the country might be worth keeping.

It was when traversing the east coast of Iceland that the original composer of words, the one whom some claimed was the word itself, was at a loss for things to say. His highlands, which he now recalled he had put precisely there to be out of harms' way when the humans came, had been partially ruined. The vandals had dug dams in them and poured mounds of concrete over until there was nothing left to view but the collecting of króna. This was precisely why he detested greed so much.

The earth started trembling under the Lord's feet. He would have run the remains of the island into the sea then and there, had not the mountains silently reminded him that his quarrel was not with the land, but its inhabitants. He had to erase them somehow, without damaging the canvas. ✚

✚ VALUR GUNNARSSON  
ILLUSTRATION BY INGA MARÍA  
BRYNJARSDÓTTIR

Article | Conference

# Barbara Ehrenreich Is Coming!



American New York Times columnist and best-selling author, essayist, feminist, and activist Barbara Ehrenreich will be the keynote speaker at the Icelandic Networking Conference, which will be held May 27-29 at Bifröst University. Widely considered one of the greatest, most provocative social critics of our times, Barbara is the author of 16 books, including Nickel and Dimed, which won the Los Angeles Times Book Prize and was named one of the decade's top ten works of journalism by the Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute at NYU. Another speaker at the conference is Sigríður Benediktsdóttir, one of the authors of Alþingi's investigative report into Iceland's bank and economic collapse.

Barbara is renowned for her campaign for women's rights. She holds a Ph.D. in biology from The Rockefeller University, but early on dedicated her critical and research skills to writing. She was a regular contributor to Gloria Steinem's Ms. Magazine, is a columnist for The New York Times, Time magazine, Harper's, The Nation, and is a frequent and popular TV talk show guest. She is widely regarded for her biting, witty writing style; she has been called "the Thorstein Veblen of the 21st century," and The London Times called her the Jonathan Swift of the 90s for her sharp insights and exposes of the excesses and injustice borne by those on capitalism's underside.

In writing Nickel and Dimed, Barbara—inspired in part by the rhetoric surrounding welfare reform, which promised that a job—any job—can be the ticket to a better life—decided to join the millions of Americans who work full-time, year-round, for poverty-level wages. But how does anyone survive, let alone prosper, on \$6 an hour? To find out, Barbara left her home, took the cheapest lodgings she could find, and accepted whatever jobs she was offered. Moving from Florida to

Maine to Minnesota, she worked as a waitress, a hotel maid, a cleaning woman, a nursing home aide, and a Wal-Mart sales clerk. She lived in trailer parks and crumbling residential motels. Very quickly, she discovered that no job is truly "unskilled," that even the lowliest occupations require exhausting mental and muscular effort. She also learned that one job is not enough; you need at least two if you intend to live indoors, and demonstrated in often heart-wrenching details how employers and managers often manipulate and take advantage of workers' poverty and desperate circumstances.

In her latest book, Bright-sided, Barbara exposes the crippling downsides of the "positive-thinking" industry: personal self-blame and national denial used – at the cost of clarity, common sense, and realism – to brush off poverty, disease, and unemployment to rationalize a system where all the rewards go to those at the top. The theme of this year's Networking Conference – Empowering Women is Courage, Communication, and Change of Mind. Sigríður Benediktsdóttir, the other keynote speaker, will discuss courage in the wake of the events leading up to and causing Iceland's economic and bank collapse. In addition to the keynote speakers, thirty other women will speak at the conference on various issues.

The Networking Conference, which was founded by Dr. Herdís Þorgeirsdóttir, professor of law, is by far the most popular and influential conference that takes place in Iceland. It was first held in 2004; in 2008 the conference was attended by 500 women. The conference agenda and registration, as well as information about lodging, is available at [www.bifrost.is](http://www.bifrost.is) ✚

✚ IRIS ERLINGSDÓTTIR  
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Opinion | Bob Cluness

## Rock Da Vote! (or maybe not...)

 I always make sure, against my better judgement, to take every opportunity to assimilate myself with Icelandic customs and culture. Attend a Þorablót? Been there, chewed on the gristle. Handball game? One of the first phrases I learnt was "Áfram Ísland!"

Another thing I was truly looking forward to was taking a chance to vote in my first election. The Reykjavik city council elections are taking place on the 29th May, and although unable to vote in National elections as I am "unclean" and not an Icelandic citizen, I believed I was eligible to vote in the municipal elections. I even saw this as an opportunity to act more of an arsehole than usual and doorstep the members of the political parties at the polling stations with an array of questions such as:

**To the Independence Party:** What are your current views on moving the domestic airport as they seem to change with the weather? And is it true that Bjarni Ben's chin is hollow and he uses it to store food in the winter months?

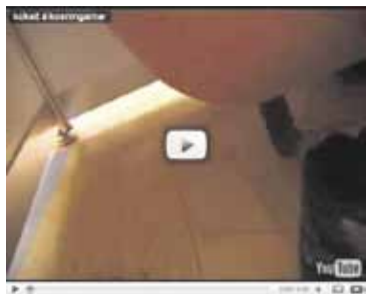
**To the Progressive Party:** Your leader has all the charm and beauty of an illegal seal cull. What is your position on improving the local transport situation?

**To the Social Democrats:** It's nice that you have Lady Gag a's mum as your leader. Is she going to bring an album out soon?

**To The Movement:** Why do you all look like a total bunch of freaks?

But then a calamitous piece of bad news... This damn paper, the one that you're reading, goes and informs me that I won't be able to vote after all! It seems that for foreign people to vote in municipal elections, they must have lived in Iceland for 5 years UNLESS you are from a Scandinavian country, then it's only 3 years! Apparently, this is down to something called the Nordic passport union, a treaty designed to allow freedom of movement, rights of residence and voting rights for citizens of Scandinavian countries. What? Are you actually trying to tell me that the Finns are somehow more important than moi? All they do is drink vodka, eat smoked moose, get depressed and bore everyone about how interesting Mika Hakkinen is. I can do all that AND my stories are much funnier.

But what's wrong with Iceland having this rule you may ask? Surely it is the right of each country to designate its own rules

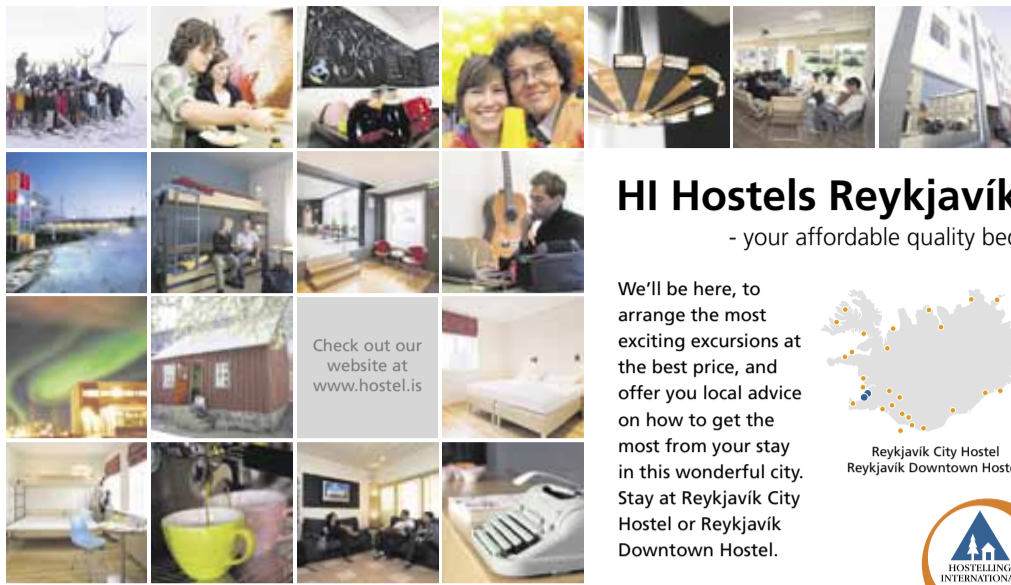


*"She has politely refused to make a protest by wiping her arse on the ballot and filming it"*

as to who is able to vote. And in Iceland they will likely explain that they have this rule in place because of "the very close ties that we have with our Scandinavian brothers abroad" blah, blah.

Well here is the interesting bit. Over the years, the rest of Scandinavia has gone with the times and granted equal voting rights to all foreign residents, not just Scandinavians. And as Denmark, Sweden and Finland are part of the EU, the 3-year residence rule has been abolished for all EU citizens. So while the rest of Scandinavia has realised that many other nations are just as important as their close neighbours, Iceland is still lumbering with the idea of two legs good, two legs with blonde hair and a voice that goes "Schmurgen, Jurgen, Bork!" is better.

But thankfully my wife is an apathetic nihilist of the purest kind and she has offered to use her vote for the party of my choosing (she has politely refused to make a protest by wiping her arse on the ballot and filming it). This poses the intriguing question. Just whom WOULD I actually vote for? In some ways it's like choosing between herpes, syphilis and gonorrhoea. None of the main parties seem to have the vision, integrity or the balls to do anything other than blame foreigners, take the money and scream "more smelters!" Perhaps I should go running into the welcoming bosom of Jón Gnarr's Best party. They may be a joke, but at least I can laugh at them without needing to break down into tears of despair... ☹



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# The Hawkers And The Foragers

Kolaportið is an ecosystem of used goods

## Words

Stephanie Orford

## Photography

Julia Staples

*"I've seen flea markets here and there, but nothing like this. I mean, I would call this a market, a marketplace."*



Kolaportið, Reykjavík's one and only flea market, is a chaotic writhing mass. Every species occupies a niche in this harbour-side warehouse: vendors of all stripes, and buyers to match. Some are shedding old things while others are gathering them back up. It's the perfect venue to play cultural ecologist, studying how everyone does their part to make the flea market work.

## The hawkers

Perhaps 40 or so vendors occupy Kolaportið on any given weekend. Among the used goods sellers, there are three major classes. Some regular sellers are professionals. They buy from the real raw second-hand places like Góði Hirðirinn and the Red Cross store, then mark up their wares for sale every weekend.

Other vendors, like Ásta Ólafsdóttir, are at Kolaportið just for a day or a weekend. "I'm cleaning out my storage room," Ásta explained. She's making enough from selling, she said, to make the stall rental worthwhile for the weekend. It's a good way to wring a few last Króna from your old items on their way out.

And then there are the vendors whose selection of wares follows no rhyme or reason. "Some people sell just junk. Really old stuff," said Ásta.

Ingibjörg Magnúsdóttir began selling like Ásta did—cleaning out her closet. But the project rapidly snowballed into a hobby. Soon Ingibjörg began attracting

repeat customers. "They collect books. They collect knives, razors, bottle openers." Now she picks out items and saves them for her regulars.

## The foragers

The market attracts anyone who's hunting for a bargain. Kolaportið was even featured in the internationally acclaimed Icelandic film 101 Reykjavík—the characters got a deal on a tacky artificial Christmas tree. Jóna Ásgrimsdóttir, part-owner of Kolaportið, says customers range from "poor people to the bishop. People like you and me, and famous people. Mainly Icelandic."

The sections of the market draw different customers. Younger people gravitate to the used clothing, Jóna explained, but the grocery section of the market is frequented by older people, perhaps because younger generations aren't very familiar with some of the traditional Icelandic products.

Porsteinn Hallsson, a young man selling potatoes, had experienced the same phenomenon. "Younger people eat rice," he laughed, suggesting that perhaps his customers were mainly older because younger people don't have as much patience for boiling potatoes.

## The environment

Kolaportið, which turns 21 this year, is a refreshing contrast to those vintage shops along the main drag. You know you're

in the wrong place if they use the word "vintage" to describe their merchandise in the first place. Their wares represent only a select sliver of the broader world of used goods, so for those of us who get a thrill from pawing through mounds of used things in search of The Find, they're a little boring. There's no hunt, and the price mark-up reflects that. Despite their beautiful collections, shopping at these places feels like cheating.

Meanwhile Kolaportið lays the whole kit n' caboodle in your lap whether you like it or not. It's like walking through a kaleidoscope of junk.

In some ways, however, Kolaportið is a little tamer than a classic flea market. Icelanders don't really bargain, and there's even a restaurant with tables so shoppers can rest their feet. Guðmundur Björn Sveinsson, one of the many sellers of dried Icelandic fish, said Kolaportið is straight-laced and well-organised. "I've seen flea markets here and there, but nothing like this. I mean, I would call this a market, a marketplace," he said. "It's a little step higher."

*Kolaportið is open on Saturdays and Sundays from 11:00 to 17:00.*

## Kolaportið: A Sampling

**Sweater Store:** Long underwear, plastic necklaces, and traditional Icelandic patterned sweaters, hats, bibs, baby clothes, dog clothes.

**Victoria's Secret Store:** Zebra print bra, peace sign hoodie, Tender Whisper body lotion, candles that look like rocks, Talking Brick Game portable electronic game, Fashion Forms shoulder pads.

**Joe's Garage Sell & Buy:** Strumpamir (Smurfs) 4 DVD, Algjör Sveppi og leitin að villa DVD (a kid's adventure), Night At The Opera by Queen on vinyl, Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em by MC Hammer on CD.

**Candy Shop:** Brjóstsykur hard candies, Sport Lakkris, coconut-covered chocolate cylinders, giant fruit gummies.

**Fish Market:** Red seaweed, dried haddock, rotten shark, smoked halibut, cured salmon, fish balls, horse meat sausage, smoked whale meat, hanged lumpfish and cod.

**The Junk Part Of Kolaportið:** Mushroom statuette, slotted spoon, cassette tape of "Aerobic Dancing," Tarzan comics (in Icelandic), book of sex positions with full-colour photographs, 6 pairs mega-platform pumps, tin of marbles, cardboard box full of romance novels, baby Snugli.

# Let The Farting Commence!

artFart starts the fart

*The good people behind the artFart festival will be writing us occasionally this summer, giving a sneak preview this year's programme and some insight into the inner-workings of producing an independent arts festival in Iceland.*

For those that have not yet become acquainted, artFart is an international, contemporary arts festival that takes place in Reykjavík every August. Since 2006, artFart has taken up residence in theatres, galleries and alternative spaces across Reykjavík to present a programme of performance events that provide a space for artists and audiences to come together and celebrate contemporary performance here in Iceland.

As an independent festival, we pride ourselves in being Iceland's foremost presenter of both homegrown and international contemporary performance, and seek to represent the work of artists that may otherwise remain massively underrepresented in this country.

There is a fast-growing wave of new homegrown artists, and an unprecedented level of interest from international groups offering an awesome array of performance delights. artFart, armed with a tiny budget and a penchant for punching above its weight, is lining up a series of miniature art-world coups to accommodate them all.

It is still very early days in the artFart 2010 calendar. Although preparations for securing funds are now moving healthily into their final phase, the process for programming and scheduling the three-week event is still very much an open field.

There are a few insider secrets that I am at liberty to share, however.

I can reveal that artFart's 2010 headquarters will set up camp in an enormous warehouse space down by the harbour. The space is called Útgerðin and will host many of the indoor works, workshops, and talks taking place at this year's festival.

The theme of this year's festival is 'alternative spaces' and part of this focus has led to the creation of a specific artFart programme entitled The Reykjavik Public Space Programme: a series of performance events dedicated to the exploration of contemporary performance practices that use public space as a platform.

Excitingly for the artists of Iceland, part of this initiative includes a selection of workshops, all led by established European artists. Even more exceptional is that these workshops will be free of charge and applicants will be selected on the basis of their artistic motivation and interest, rather than by the size of their wallets.

Alexander Roberts







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Travel | East fjords

## East Winds Blow Good

Hugging the curves of the edge of the world



There is a very small window of time between the winter and summer seasons when hitting the road in a sketchy vehicle is ideal in this country. Winter driving is a nightmare with the ever-changing and unpredictable weather conditions. Summer can feel a bit crowded. But for a few weeks towards the end of April and into early May, a Tour De Iceland is a stunning experience in solitude.

The focus of this journey was the East fjords, possibly one of the most wonderfully unsettling areas of Iceland. In order to take our sweet time through our tour, a mad-dash to Höfn was made on the first evening, apparently driving through an ash cloud and into a dark blue doomy sky.

Waking up in Höfn is a pleasure. The mountains loom over the harbour-town to the north, with southern views of the very edge of the world. Although they are desperately lacking a bakery or lunch spot that isn't part of a mini-mall, they have one of the greatest little pools in the country, which opened last year. No matter how cold or windy it is, climb to the top of the waterslides for the view onto Vatnajökull.

### The hills are alive with the sound of effing music

Next began our long, leisurely trek through the East fjords. It got pretty awesome pretty quickly. For starters, we somehow landed one of the

clearest, sunniest and warmest days one could hope for, given the timing. The sea to the right of us shimmered like silver, clouds shadowed onto the pure white snow still on the mountains and the wind rustled around the car. And then came the reindeer.

We spotted three herds before Lón, the car-commercial-esque road that hugs the cliffs along the coast before getting into the East fjords proper. It is quite uncommon to see them so far south. Each herd was bigger than the next, some of them casually kicking it in the road. This left us with little recourse than to simply pull over and hang out with them. Good times.

After holding our breaths through the majesty of Lón, we started hitting up the various towns of the area. The weather clouded over around Djúpvogur so we came into this sleepy little fishing town to stretch our legs and see a man about a horse, so to speak. Spotted locals eating pylsur. Very appropriate.

In Breiðalsvík, I was put to the task of practicing my very limited Icelandic comprehension skills by asking directions to a restaurant from the only visible locals, two rather elderly women. They were cool. We lunched at Kaffi Margrét, a restaurant attached to a lovely wooden guesthouse with a chicken coop and a ridiculously cute dog. The meal hit the spot and they made some of the best hot chocolate ever.

### Just emotions taking you over

Then shit got kind of real. As we wound in and out through the increasingly steep and acute fjords, the enormity of the landscape started to bear down, impressing just how miniscule and powerless we were against nature. Maybe driving through that ash cloud had residual effects. Regardless, looking at the massive rising mountains, the snow and clouds, indistinguishably white, and feeling a distorted perception of distance and time, something happens to you. You really have to just shut up and look around.

### "It's big, but it has no soul"

After reeling our way out of the fjords, it was just a stone's throw to Egilsstaðir, where my cohort somehow suspected we would find a better time than in the town I was rooting to go to — Seyðisfjörður. With my driver still sceptical, we started chugging up the mountain pass towards the 700-person strong fishing town. We rounded the final curve and saw rays of sun creeping down the fjord onto this sparkly little toy-town and my friend began to ohh and ahh. I told him so.

Upon our arrival we settled into a charming hostel housed in the former hospital and hit our second pool of the day. Seyðisfjörður's pool is indoors, but no less exposed to the elements. Huge vertical windows along each side of the

*"Looking at the massive rising mountains, the snow and clouds, indistinguishably white, and feeling a distorted perception of distance and time, something happens to you"*

building give the perfect feeling of swimming right between the fjord and their dry-sauna in the basement was a pleasant surprise.

We ended our day's journey with excellent pizza at the Skaftfell restaurant and art centre. After quite a few pints and no other customers around, we struck up conversation with the establishment's owner, Nikolas, and a pair of locals. My friend asked Nikolas why Seyðisfjörður was so much nicer than Egilsstaðir, even though the two towns are so close and the former is so tiny. "It's big," he said, "but it has no soul." Enough said.

Then we got shitfaced. 🍷

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# Romping Through Lava Fields

An ATVenture



A walk through customs and a small wait for suitcases at the Keflavík International Airport plus a dip in the Blue Lagoon just about sums up the Reykjanes peninsula for many tourists who then hop on a bus to Reykjavík. But that's glossing over the incredibly vast expanse of lava fields certainly worth closer inspection.

South Iceland's Eyjafjallajökull may have the limelight today, but there are over 100 volcanic craters and thirteen different lava fields on the Reykjanes peninsula. And what better way to romp through the rocky terrain than by ATV—all terrain vehicle.

This adventure begins early morning at Reykjavík's Iceland Excursions office, where we caught a bus to the Blue Lagoon. When we arrived, Kjartan Sigurðsson from ATV Adventures was waiting for us in the

parking lot. ATV Adventures works with Iceland Excursion's schedule to get you on a tour and back in time to catch a bus back to Reykjavík or on to Keflavík airport, which can be quite convenient.

After a short ride with Kjartan, we arrived at their home base in Grindavík. With his brother, Jakob Sigurðsson and father Sigurður Óli Hilmarsson, they got to work outfitting us for the trip. A warm blue jumpsuit, boots, gloves, helmet and we were set.

## GETTING THE GRIP OF IT

I put my finger to the lever and with a small jolt my ATV took off down the street. A driver's license is required to operate the vehicle, but on tandem rides, the father-son-trio told me they have had everyone from age four to eighty.

With my eye on the yellow vehicle in front of me, I focused on keeping up with the group of some obviously experienced ATV drivers. "You're doing great," Sigrún Harpa Einarsdóttir told me when we stopped. "For someone who has never driven an ATV," she added.

That was nice of her to say, I thought, as I continued struggling to keep the ATV going straight, which seemed to be an effort against its will. As I approached particularly rugged lava rocks I cringed in anticipation of bottoming out. But the tires took them on, no sweat, and I began to relax.

Finally, I got the grip of it when I fully realised that I was driving the ATV rather than the ATV driving me every which way on the uneven lava. It was that simple.

## A 360° LAVA-SCAPE PANORAMA

Between Fiskidalsfjall (Fish-valley-mountain) and Húsafell (House-mountain), we climbed up to a nice lookout where we got off our ATVs to take in the panorama lava-landscape stretching in all directions, the result of thirteen different eruptions in the area from 250 to 10,000 years ago.

Below us in the distance was the Blue Lagoon, slightly masked by the thick white steam rising from the geothermal plant. Kjartan told me many of their guests bathe in the lagoon's geothermal waters before or after the ATV trip. Note: Although the ATV pick-up and drop-off is at the Blue lagoon, the price of entrance is not included in the trip.

To the left of the lagoon, at the foot of Þorbjarnarfell (Thor-bear-mountain) was a small cluster of trees they called, Selskógur (Mountain dairy-forest). Trees are especially uncommon given that area is covered with lava rock, which is suitable for little growth except moss. "We tell people if you get lost in a forest in Iceland, you just have to stand up," Sigurður joked.

## SPEEDING, SHIPWRECKS AND SOUP

Looping down the hill, I took on the rocky path with more confidence. When we reached the bottom, we continued on a gravel straightaway towards the ocean. Reaching 40 kilometres, what a liberating rush it was to race through the wind.

We were heading to the ocean to check out a shipwreck. The rusty brown ship had been ripped in two and thrown onto the shore, the bow in one direction and the stern in the other. Before a proper harbour was built in Grindavík, a large number of ships fell victim to the ocean's powerful waves. Along with the rich history of shipwrecks is an equally

incredible story of Iceland's Rescue Team, which has saved at least 260 people off this small stretch of coastline since 1930.

After the tour, we went to Bryggjan for some lobster soup. It was a small cosy restaurant on the wharf, looking out on the harbour. As we chatted over lunch, I found out that there is far more to Reykjanes than Keflavík Airport, the Blue Lagoon and seemingly endless lava fields.

Their longer ATV trips include a number of other attractions. There's Gunnhver, a muddy geothermal hot spot. And, Valahnúkur, location of Iceland's first lighthouse and a great lookout to Eldey (Fire Island), home to the world's biggest gannet colony. Not to mention, they take people to a bridge crossing between America and Europe.

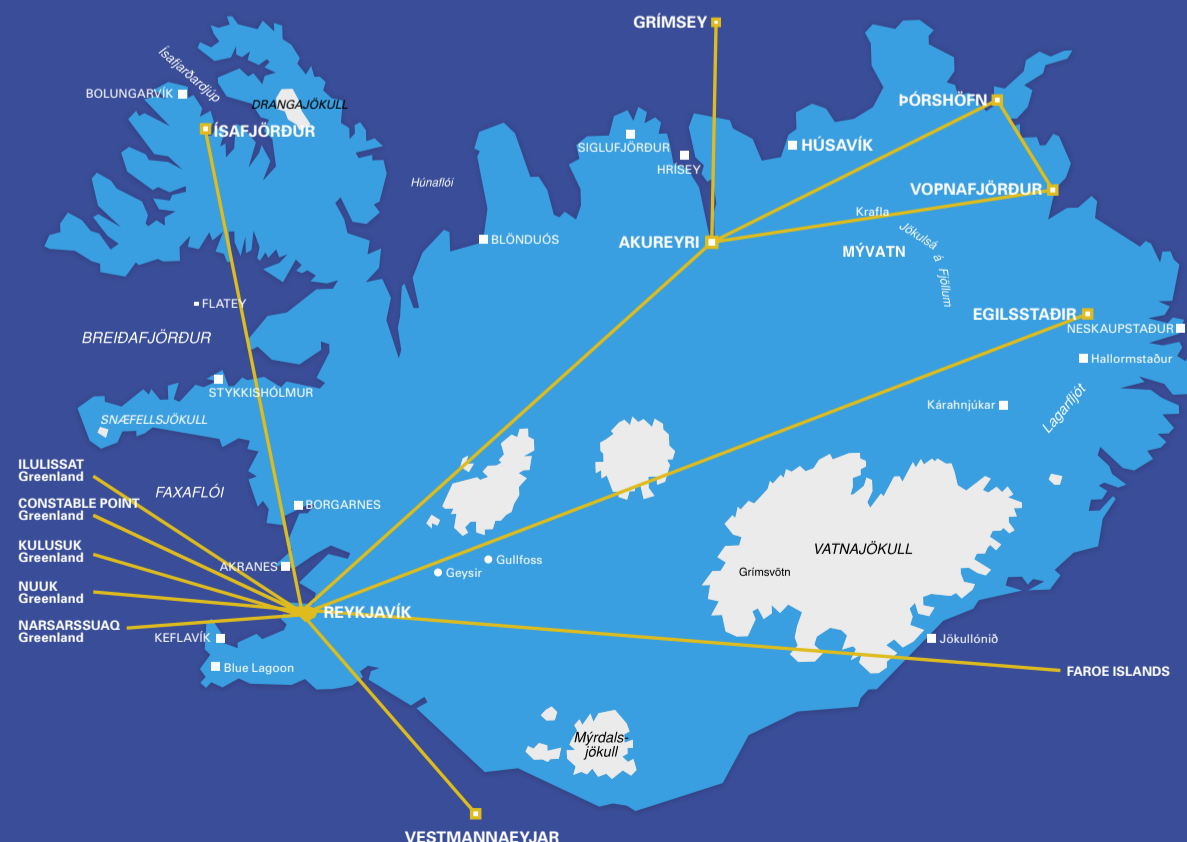
While their longer trips are pricey, they sure seem packed with far more of what Reykjanes has to offer than my tour allowed for in an hour. Still, as we raced back to their garage, I was pretty content with the ride and pleased with the family's personal touch. ♡

ATV Adventures' "Panorama Tour" costs 9,900 ISK. There are more elaborate, more expensive tours available.

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# Art Love-In

Villa Reykjavik to host galleries from all over Europe



*In July, the art world will come to Reykjavik, and some musicians too. Commercial galleries from all over Europe are uprooting their shows and transplanting them around the city. The event, Villa Reykjavik, will be free to the public from July 9 to 31.*

Karol Sienkiewicz, a co-organiser of the event was here in Reykjavik researching a guidebook, to come out in June, for visitors of the event. He says Villa Reykjavik is partly "about the topography. It's about moving from one place to another, physically." For the thirteen participating galleries, which hail from cities including Paris, Berlin, London, Warsaw, and Milan, packing up and shipping off to Reykjavik will be a major geographical move, although maybe not so much for it, Iceland's participating gallery.

About half the galleries have chosen the artists they will exhibit. These will be everything from performance art by William Hunt through London's IBID Project gallery, to a bust of an eruption survivor in Martinique made entirely of volcanic ash, by Rafat Bujnowski of Warsaw's Raster Gallery.

### NOT AN ART FAIR

As well as allowing the incoming art world to experience displacement and the new eyes that come with it, the event's main organisers, Michal Kaczynski and Lukasz Gorczyca, wanted to show that commercial galleries can be just as artistically valid as public galleries. For example, Karol says, in Warsaw Raster gets very few local customers and makes their sales mainly at art fairs in other cities. That means that when they're at home "they are making projects, they research art history, doing the stuff that the museums usually do," says Karol.

Villa Reykjavik isn't an art fair, the event's promotional material emphasizes. Although art will certainly be for sale at the cluster of exhibitions, the main point of the show is art for art's sake.

After they held the first version of this event in 2005, called Villa Warsaw, Reykjavik lured Michal and Lukasz for a second round. They fell in love with Reykjavik after several trips to the city. It was Reykjavik that inspired them to create the event.

But don't expect this festival to become an annual thing. "It's more

spontaneous, I think. That's the way that Raster Gallery operates. It was more like, Reykjavik is so much fun, it's such a great place. Why not do something here?"

And indeed, Reykjavik responded with open arms. The Centre for Icelandic Art, Kling & Bang Gallery, and several other Icelandic institutions here have helped the project onto its feet.

### A PERFECT AUDIENCE

This year's event will be quite different from Villa Warsaw, which was only a few days long and held in an abandoned house in the middle of Warsaw. Villa Reykjavik will be almost a month long, and will dot the city with galleries, rather than cramming them all into one space. This year's event will also be much bigger. Opening week starts July 9 and will feature about two events per day, including live music, artists' lectures, and performances.

The people of Reykjavik will also help make Villa Reykjavik a totally different animal from its predecessor. "The people are very creative," Karol says of the people of Reykjavik. "Not just the artists, but all the people. They sing in choirs, they paint, they really attend architectural events, they really understand art, and that's fantastic. I think that also that's the perfect audience for our project."

Though they want to make the most of holding their event in Reykjavik, Karol and the other organisers don't want to "exoticize" the place to their visitors. There are several popular misconceptions about Reykjavik that Karol has personally confronted that he wants to make sure don't deter visitors. He finds the conception that Icelanders are reserved is "totally not true. I find that the people are so friendly, open minded, easy-going that it's so easy to make friends. I was so surprised, in a good way."

This visit to Iceland also blew other preconceptions out of the water. On the weather, he says, "It's not so cold." About the prices? "It's not that expensive"—a point prospective visitors will be happy to hear. "I was told the only thing I would afford here was the hot dogs, which actually are great." Thankfully, visitors to Villa Reykjavik probably won't have to live on hot dogs for the whole festival. Unless they want to. ♡

# Magma Energy Lied to Us

Let's cut to the chase. The opacity of Icelandic business and politics has done the country, as a whole, no favours. Much hand shaking and back scratching has gone on behind closed doors and such secluded business environments have proved themselves to be breeding grounds for lies, corruption, fraud, swindling, and downright thievery.

With Icelandic bankers being held in local prisons and wanted by Interpol and the once celebrated "outvasion Vikings" having their pants sued off by the Americans, now is a time to usher in a new, honest era of business in Iceland in an effort to get the country and its economy back on track and to restore the trust of the mass populace in the system.

### Enter geothermal corporation Magma Energy of Canada

In the summer of 2009 Magma Energy developed an interest in Icelandic energy company HS Orka. As we explained at length in our October 2009 issue, HS Orka was largely owned by FL Group, the investment company of one Jón Ásgeir Jóhannesson (the previously mentioned legally entwined outvader), the municipality of Reykjanesbær (an Independence Party stronghold and loyal donor of funds to the party) and a couple of other municipalities on the Reykjanes peninsula on which Keflavik airport sits.

At that time Magma Energy had created a shelf company in Sweden to skirt Icelandic laws forbidding non-EEA companies from owning any stake in the country's natural resources and snatched up 43% of HS Orka in two separate transactions in July and October. Geysir Green Energy maintained 55.2% of the company and a couple of surrounding municipalities held on to less than 2%.

### Lies, lies, lies, lies, lies, lies, lies

On September 16, 2009, Magma's founder and CEO Ross Beaty was asked by the Grapevine to respond to the suspicions of some that his company was in Iceland to take advantage of the country's economic turmoil. He told us "I would suggest that is ignorance and complete nonsense. It's just because they don't know what we're all about and they don't understand the world that we live in. We're not in Iceland for any such reason. We're in Iceland because it has opportunities for long-term benefit where we can deploy capital and we can improve the condition of an Icelandic company for the long term. We would be interested in Iceland under any circumstances, absolutely, even two years ago [in 2007] it would have been unchanged."

Eight months later, on May 5, 2010, Ross Beaty told online investment newsletter Hera Research Monthly "We would have been farther along had [the global

economic crisis] not happened, although we may not have had opportunities that we took advantage of. For example, going into Iceland was strictly something that could only have happened because Iceland had a calamitous financial meltdown in 2008."

On September 16, 2009, we asked Ross Beaty if Magma had its eye on a majority stake in HS Orka, to which he replied "no, we do not plan on getting a majority. I have no interest in fighting Icelanders, particularly the government, over what is proper energy policy in the country. The government said they would accept Magma going to a 50.0 % interest so long as Icelandic interests had the other 50 %. So that's neither minority or majority, it's a rather awkward business position but certainly something that we feel can be workable and we certainly will be striving to achieve, but not increase beyond that. That's something that we think should be acceptable to the Icelandic government and, we hope, the people of Iceland."

The Grapevine followed that up by asking if Magma planned on making any further acquisitions in Iceland, to which he replied "No we don't. No we don't."

### Lies, lies, lies, lies, lies, lies, lies

On May 17, 2010, Magma Energy issued a press release stating the company is "pleased to announce that it has signed an agreement with Geysir Green Energy ehf ("GGE") to purchase all of GGE's stake in Iceland geothermal company HS Orka hf ("HS Orka") resulting in Magma's stake increasing to 98.53%."

On May 19, 2010, the Grapevine called up Ross Beaty to ask him a couple of questions about the recent goings on and he rushed off the phone saying "I'm just going through a tunnel and I'm just about to jump onto an airplane."

Are there tunnels on route to Keflavik now?

Iceland is in serious need of honesty and transparency. These massive deals that put private control of the country's natural resources in the hands of foreign firms and are only made public knowledge as the i's are being dotted and the t's crossed will do nothing for restoring the faith of the Icelandic people in their politicians and businessmen. Neither will politicians crying foul after the fact.

It would be nice if politicians acted in the best interest of the electorate and businessmen actually worked transparently in the long-term interest of the economy. How about we all get started with just a little honesty? ♡

CATHARINE FULTON

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## “Just Dancing”

An attempted interview in one of Iceland’s dens of inequity

In March, the Icelandic parliament voted in favour of the so-called “strip law” banning “naked exhibitions as a profession.” Wondering how employees in those “restaurants” feel about this, I set off to a strip club, Óðal, to interview the staff there. In a completely empty bar (it was a week-day) that—except for the stage—could have been any ordinary nightclub, I met an opinionated bartender and a charming girl in a skimpy outfit who both agreed to talk to me.

What struck me the most is that nobody seems to know what the law means. So far, girls are not allowed to strip completely naked, so the law would technically not change anything unless the parliament invents a new definition of nudity. That also means nobody knows what is going to happen when the law comes into effect. The employees of Iceland’s strip bars might be thrown out at a moment’s notice or they might just continue dancing, stripping down to their undies and serving their costumers’ needs.

Asked what he thinks about the new law, the Eastern-European bartender said it made him feel like back in the old communist days of his home country, where “people were drowning in all kinds of useless rules and regulations.” He went on to wonder whether shutting down Iceland’s four strip clubs (yes, there are four of them) was as crucial as people are trying to make it out to be, and whether there weren’t other, more pertinent problems in Iceland at the moment.

Talking to the admittedly charming stripper with her sweet smile (who also hails from Eastern Europe), the answers I got were about as uninformative as they could get. The following is a transcript of our non-conversation:

**How long have you been in Iceland?**  
5 or 6 months.

**Why did you come here?**

I just came here to work. My friends are working here and I wanted to join them.

**Do you like it?**

Yes, I like Iceland.

**And how is working here?**

Good. It depends on the days. When there is a lot of customers, it’s fun. Otherwise it can get a bit boring.

**So you like your work?**

Yes.

**Have you worked as a stripper before, in your home country?**

No, this is my first job as a stripper. At home, I worked in an office.

**Did you get bored with that?**

No, I just wanted to change and improve my English.

THE STRIPPING DEBATE CONTINUES! We still wish the Feminist Association of Iceland was more willing to engage in discourse on the subject. Their missive in last issue was kind of drab, and conversation-ending. Get on it, association!



**Why did you decide to do stripping?**

Because my friends have been working with this job for a long time. And when I came here, I didn’t speak very good English and I just knew a few words. And now every day, I can practice my English when I speak to the costumers. For this job, I need English. If I just sit here with a stupid smile, I don’t make money. Also, I just like dancing.

**How are the costumers? Are they mostly Icelanders or tourists?**

Mostly foreigners. Sometimes, Icelanders come here. But in a normal week, there are more tourists. During the weekend, we get some Icelanders as well.

**Are the costumers nice?**

Not like that. Sometimes, some nice costumers come around, but not every day.

**But they’re not rude or anything?**

No, they’re not.

**How long are you planning to work here?**

I don’t know. Just for a while.

**Do you work every night?**

Usually, yes. It’s very short working hours; I’m off the whole day.

**Does someone tell you how to dance and talk to the costumers? Are there rules for that?**

My friends taught me how to do this, the dancing and stuff. And when it comes to talking to costumers, it’s different every time. Some costumers have a lot of questions; some just want to talk about their lives.

**Are there sometimes problems with costumers?**

The other day, some drunken customer came here. We have security for that. The costumers can’t ever touch you. This is just a normal job, nothing bad or nasty about it, you know.

**How many girls work here?**

3 to 6.

**Have you heard about the new law in Iceland that will ban strip clubs?**

Yes, this is a stupid thing. If they close the strip clubs I’ll just go to another country. I don’t wanna go back to my home country, though.

**You would go to another European country?**

Yes, but only if the strip clubs close. My Icelandic isn’t good enough for a normal day job. And I don’t want to work at Bónus or something like that.

**Why do you think the law is stupid?**

Because in a normal week, every normal club here is closed. And then, the tourists come here just to have a drink or listen to music, not necessarily to check out the girls.

**But there are other pubs that are open during the week.**

(Shrugs)

**So you don’t think stripping is something bad?**

No, not at all. For example, when guys buy a private dance, they just sit in a sofa and the girl is dancing, that’s all. There’s no prostitution or anything like that.

**Are you against prostitution?**

Yes, definitely.

**So you think this is just dancing?**

Yeah, that’s all.

**When you give private dances, you’re never naked?**

No, not here. But in other countries, of course private dancers can get naked.

**Would you be okay with getting naked?**

Yes, because the customer can’t touch me. So if he likes me, why shouldn’t he look at me? I’m just dancing. ♡

✍ SOPHIA VAN TREECK

📷 JULIA STAPLES

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## Art In Translation

### Words

Shauna Laurel Jones

### Illustrations

Karlotta Blöndal from the series Alphabet



From May 27 to 29th, around sixty people from twenty-one countries (eruptions permitting) will gather at the Nordic House and the University of Iceland to talk about art, language, globalisation, and... Jerry Seinfeld. What should he sound like dubbed in Norwegian? That's what Svein Høier of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology wants to know. French artist Claire Artemyz wonders why some people get tattoos in languages they can't understand. And Professor Yoko Ima-Izumi is coming all the way from the University of Tsukuba in Japan to tell us how Godzilla films have been "misdubbed" for American audiences.

Lest you think the Art in Translation conference is all fun and games, let me assure you that these people mean business.

Many of the questions these scholars, students, artists, and professionals will address are similar to questions I've been pondering since moving to Iceland several years ago as an art historian. To name a few: is there art that can't be adequately "translated" from one culture to another for reasons of language or local knowledge? How do globalisation of the arts world and arts discourse affect artists and professionals linguistically, and how are small language communities adapting (or not) to new demands? What are the respon-

**Events:** Friday, May 28, 20:00 – Háskólabíó. Guy Maddin's Tales from the Gimli Hospital (1988), presented and with Q&A by collaborator and composer Matthew Patton.  
Saturday, May 29, 16:00 – Nordic House. God morgen, hjarte (Good morning heartache): Billie Holiday in Norwegian. Annjo K. Greenall (vocals), Vigleik Storaas. <http://conference.inotherwords.is> for ticket information.

## An international conference on language and the arts



sibilities and challenges of those who are translating art history and theory from an internationally dominant language to an internationally marginal one, or vice versa? While issues like these have long been talked about, taught, and theorised in the literary arena, few scholars have systematically investigated these topics when it comes to visual art, music, film, theatre, and performance.

Yet through multiple conversations with colleagues and friends in Iceland and elsewhere, I've come to see that—of course—I'm far from the only one ruminating on the relationships between the big wide art world and wee little countries like Iceland with wee little languages like Icelandic. On a number of occasions, I have mused with fellow writers on the difficulty of translating theoretical texts written in English into Icelandic; it's not just that many foreign terms have not been codified—a problem not limited to arts vocabulary—it seems that some concepts themselves are easier to express in other languages. One artist told me that part of the problem lies in the

lack of a well-honed semiotic tradition in Iceland (admittedly, I don't have a well-honed understanding of semiotics in general, so I can't be the judge). And a publisher of art books with international distribution recently expressed a concern that is not his alone, namely, that some non-native speakers write in English at a level or in a style not in keeping with their true scholarly competence. I suspect that it's sometimes more complicated than a matter of pride that certain scholars opt out of writing in Icelandic and finding a skilled translator.

I have a vested interest both professional and personal in the success, however it's measured, of Icelandic artists and arts professionals. Positive things are happening: Listfræðafélag Íslands, the Icelandic Association of Art History and Aesthetics, has awoken after a long period of dormancy, and current president Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir has led the coordination of colloquia addressing various professional concerns. The Reykjavík Art Museum held a recent event bringing together a large

number of players in the art scene to hold roundtable discussions on what has happened in the past decade and what we can work on for the future. The Art in Translation conference is my drop-in-the-bucket contribution to sparking a greater dialogue about conspicuous and subtle linguistic aspects of the arts in Iceland. Extending this dialogue to include individuals across the globe grappling with similar concerns will only broaden our nuanced understanding of our circumstances here and how to face them productively and conscientiously. 🍷

*Art in Translation will be held—rain, shine, or ash—at the University of Iceland and the Nordic House, May 27–29. All events are open to the public and free (with the exception of a film screening; tickets may be purchased in advance). Check out the website, <http://conference.inotherwords.is>, for the schedule of diverse lectures, performances, and other highlights. For further information, email conference manager Shauna Laurel Jones at [info@inotherwords.is](mailto:info@inotherwords.is).*

## Mad Skills

## A few words about the surprising qualities of sucking really hard



Recently I read on the news that a man, one Kenny Strasser, had successively duped the producers of numerous TV-programmes into putting him on the air on the premise that he was a master in the art of the yo-yo. When put on the air, however, Kenny got found out: He had no yo-yo skills. And while madly swinging his yo-yos, beating himself over the head, bruising his genitalia and trying to "fake it", Kenny claimed he had no muscle memory, and therefore perhaps the yo-yo was not anything he'd ever master. Sorry.

Now, lying to people is easy. Claiming talent is something (almost) everyone is capable of. But things tend to get a bit more complicated when we're pressed to prove our talents—when we're made to bring forth our yo-yos

and perform a perfect "Buddha's Revenge", a "Reverse Double-or-Nothing" or—my God!—an "Elephant's Trunk". Then we either put our money where our mouths are or we fold. Which is why most people don't go around faking mad skills they don't possess. They don't want to get called on.

When it comes to the arts, proving talent or skill isn't so straightforward though. Sure, you don't really fake the cello anymore than the yo-yo (although there's more tolerance for avant-garde weirdo shit in the cello-world than the yo-yo world—and yes, breaking a cello while masturbating and drinking your own urine can be faked)—but the same does not go for the creative compositional arts. These days you can fake a painting. You can fake a song. You can fake a movie or a

play. And you can fake a poem.

This is because creative art isn't necessarily based on skill per se—or even talent. Creative art is mostly performed on instinct, it's created in a hinter-dimension, a subconscious and brought forth into the conscious world where the artist either uses his or her cognitive skills to "finish" the piece or throws it away before diving back into the hinter-dimension for new more interesting stuff. And there's no perfect, or even imperfect, way of judging it objectively. There's no Turing-test for creative arts.

Yet most creative art forms require other kinds of ambition—other ways of "proving" one's dedication to (and love for) the art form, which are also hard to fake. If you want to write a novel you need boatloads of patience. Just writing a hundred pages that

seem semi-coherent is an arduous task for a lazy person. If you want respect in the visual arts you go to school—often you have to stay there for years! A modern composer doesn't get the time of day until he's finished a doctorate. Even a lowly singer/songwriter has to invest in a guitar—or worse, a piano.

Nothing of the sort applies to poetry. A poet needs no qualification. There are no schools and the only required investment is paper and pen. And if you can't afford paper and pen you can always borrow your mother's laptop. There's nothing obviously discernible about a poem that says it's "good" or "bad"—not since we dropped metre and rhyme, in any case. It's now all a matter of taste and taste is a superbly dubious and fleeting concept.

This results in two things.

On the one hand poetry attracts everyone who wants to be an artist without having to strain themselves too much. Every lazybone, wannabe, poseur and charlatan who wants part of the (perceived) "glamour" of being an artist, becomes a poet. Simply because it's the easiest art to get away with faking.

On the other hand, for those willing to embrace it, it may provide greater possibilities for creation—casual or stringent, oblivious, spontaneous, uneducated, stupid, banal, kitschy, experimental, nutty—without any outer guidelines or official framework to tell us what constitutes a "true" poem and what doesn't.

And still telling which is which will be well nigh impossible. 🍷



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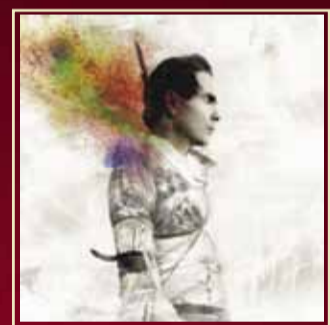
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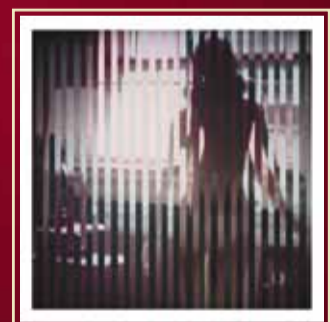
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**PAGE 4**

“I can no longer remain silent on the very pressing subject that is the selling off of Iceland's nature.”

Björk (yes, that Björk) speaks out against the Magma Energy deal.

**PAGE 6**

I actually expected more praise for our renewal, for our change of politics and policies. I was pretty surprised when that didn't happen. I suppose it takes a long time to earn trust back, more than a few months or maybe even a few years.

The Progressive Party's Einar Skúlason is surprisingly frank. He also scores many points for being the only politician running that cared enough for Grapevine readers' votes to answer our questions on time

**PAGE 10**

“The Best Party has no real policies to speak of. They want to put a polar bear in the Reykjavík ‘domestic animal’ Zoo. They demand that Alþingi becomes free of drugs before 2020.”

The municipal elections are getting Kanye'ed and Egill Helgason is on the case.

**PAGE 12**

“Hekla and Grímsvötn, on the other hand, are both showing signs of more or less being 'ready' to go. Chances are that neither of them is going to be particularly dangerous (unless you're right on top of them!), but my money says that one of them will be our next guilty party...”

James Ashworth tries to jinx us all by playing guess-the-eruption. Gee, thanks.

**PAGE 18**

The Grapevine called up Ross Beaty to ask him a couple of questions about the recent goings on and he rushed off the phone saying “I'm just going through a tunnel and I'm just about to jump onto an airplane.”

There are no tunnels on the way to Iceland's int'l airport. Magma Energy's Ross Beaty is a lying liar. Do you trust him to manage Iceland's resources responsibly?

**PAGE 25**

“He went on to wonder whether shutting down Iceland's four strip clubs (yes, there are four of them) was as crucial as people are trying to make it out to be, and whether there weren't other, more pertinent problems in Iceland at the moment.”

Sophia van Treeck gets a view of the stripping ban from the inside.



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