

THE 

# REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

Issue 09 | 2022 | [www.gpv.is](http://www.gpv.is)

## HELPING PEOPLE WHO CAN'T HELP THEMSELVES



AS THE NUMBER OF TOURISTS IN ICELAND REACHES RECORD-HIGHS, SEARCH AND RESCUE VOLUNTEERS ARE ON-CALL FOR IT ALL

### Volcano!

You're too late, it's over

### Girls Rock

Mammút, Kælan Mikla and co. show the boys how its done

### Inki

Making music behind bars

### Hvammsvík

We don't have to hate Hvalfjörður anymore



COVER PHOTO:

Photo: Norris Niman

Photographer Norris Niman took this photo of search and rescue volunteers at the recent Meradalir eruption last month. ICE-SAR teams—consisting of unpaid volunteers—manned the volcano round the clock, protecting visitors and providing support to those who needed it.

# First



08: **Movie Magic**

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## EDITORIAL



Photo: Art Bionick

# We're Gonna Be Fine... Right?

Iceland is booming. Tourism has reached incredible heights after a tough year where the first three months were shut down in COVID restrictions. Tourism numbers are expected to reach 1.7 million this year—not far off pre-pandemic levels. Even our volcanoes are behaving pretty well, although the last volcano was surprisingly short-lived. But then again, it was a nice fifteen minutes. We do know that the volunteers in the Icelandic Search and Rescue teams are relieved to have some rest. You can find all about that on page 8, where our writer Emma Leadbetter observed the daily routines of these remarkable people, who show up every day to keep us and our visitors safe.

Lava flow wasn't the only thing on the increase in the past month, however. Book sales are also skyrocketing, according to the director of Forlagið, the biggest book publisher in Iceland. And what's more important, tourists are buying more Icelandic books than ever. You can read all about it on page 26.

Festivals and concerts are returning. Iceland's finest film festival, RIFF, will be screening an eclectic range of art-house cinema for Icelanders and visitors alike (P.11). Finally some rest from overrated superhero nonsense and the war-worshipping propaganda of Top Gun. Cutting edge experimental music festival, Extreme Chill (P. 12), returns this winter, offering the

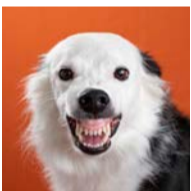
best of Icelandic electronic music combined with interesting foreign artists.

Home-grown cinema is also on the up. One of Iceland's most beloved novels of the past decade, 'Reply To A Letter From Helga,' has been adapted as a movie. Ása Helga Hjörleifsdóttir directs this bittersweet love story that tells you more about the Icelandic heart than most literature in Iceland. Find more out on page 22.

Amidst the joy of a return to some kind of normality, there are threats looming around the corner. The economy is not too hot these days. But when is it? Politicians are misusing their power in the good, old fashioned nepotism way. The Minister of Justice is trying to pass a new immigration bill—for the fifth time—that has been rejected every single time before (p.6). But that's politics for you. And to be fair, we have far fewer problems than many other countries in the western world when it comes to these things.

There is a reason to be optimistic in Iceland. We feel like we are on the brink of something new. Only time will tell if that future will be good or not.

**Valur Grettilsson**  
*Editor-In-Chief*



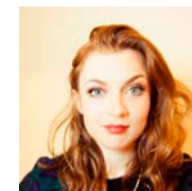
**Polly** is a hard-working journalist by day and an enthusiastic ball-catcher by night. A five-year-old dachshund mix with an IQ of a five year old human, Polly is Chief Morale Officer at the Grapevine, and a regular contributor to the Grapevine Newscast on YouTube. **Voff!**



**Kim Wagenaar** has been here long enough to forget why she even got here in the first place. If she's not busy being a music manager, she's accidentally bumping into things or drinking bubbles somewhere laughing at her own jokes. Someone's gotta do it.



**Emma Ledbetter** was once the only person on a group tour of Iceland's south coast, which made her fall in love—a little bit with the guide and a lot with Iceland. She has a microbiology degree from WSU, so she is legally obligated to say "Go Cougs" to anyone wearing crimson and gray, and morally obligated to tell you she loves bacteria.



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



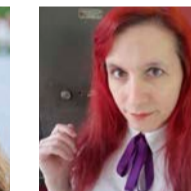
**Iryna Zubenko** is a Ukrainian who has been working on the cross-section of media and technology for the past five years. While she is still figuring out what to do in life, this time her love for travelling, unspoiled nature and Scandi design has brought Iryna to Reykjavik. One day she'll write a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



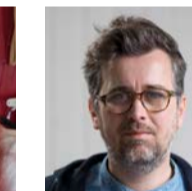
**Catharine Fulton** is a writer who has been involved with the Grapevine for many years—possibly too many—serving as journalist, food editor and news editor before settling on copy editor. When not wielding her red pen she's often found opining on Canadian politics (professionally), and bitching about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



**Asha Edmondson** studies and takes on just about everything back home in the States. From communications to dance to psychology to sailing, there is almost nothing she hasn't tried. An intrusive thought of "What if I spent my summer in Iceland?" turned into reality, bringing her to the Grapevine.



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



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

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RIP Meradalir (August 2022 - August 2022)

## What Are Icelanders Talking About?

You couldn't stop the discourse if you tried

Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine**  
Photos: **Art Bicnick & Wikimedia Commons**

**NEWS** Hey, did you hear the news? **The eruption is over!** Yeah we're just as surprised as you are. Truth be told, we were really counting on the Meradalir eruption to last more than two weeks for a variety of reasons, but mostly because it was just so spectacular to witness. Don't worry though—we're a country literally sitting on a fault line. There will be more volcanoes, sooner or later.

An alleged **sexual assault at the Polytechnic School of South Iceland** has many people talking right now, and not just because of the nature of the details of the reported crime, but the school's response to it. Initially, the principal of the school made some statements to the press that the matter was difficult for "both parties", warned against "the courtroom of the street", and said that the accused would not be barred from school unless proven guilty of a crime. After widespread public outcry, that decision was reversed, with the accused having to stay off campus until investigations conclude.

**Inflation in Iceland is expected to hit 10.5%** for August, and collective

bargaining negotiations between unions and management are right around the corner. You know what that means: fun times ahead! That fun is already getting started as the chair of the Central Bank—a man who makes about 2 million ISK per month—is warning working class people not to set their expectations too high in terms of cost-of-living pay rises. Guess if you want to put food on the table, you should just try harder to secure a high-ranking government job that it is nigh impossible to get fired from.

The decades-long debate over the domestic airport rages on, as it has come to light that Vatnsnýri, the wetlands in the south of Reykjavík upon which the airport is built, could be enough land to house anywhere from 20,000 to 25,000 people. This is big news, considering the limited viable land in Reykjavík and the ever worsening housing shortage. In fact, most Reykjavík residents have long been tired of having a domestic airport in the centre of town, and not just because of the land use; planes flying in and out are constant source of noise pollution, and many have argued that the airport would be better situated outside of town—like in most other European capitals. However, people who live in the countryside enjoy the convenience of being able to drop right into the centre of town and not have to take a 15-30 minute bus ride to get into Reykjavík from an airport. For now, the issue remains deadlocked. 🍷



It's a bird! It's a plane! It's a serious misuse of limited land resources!



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## Dinner



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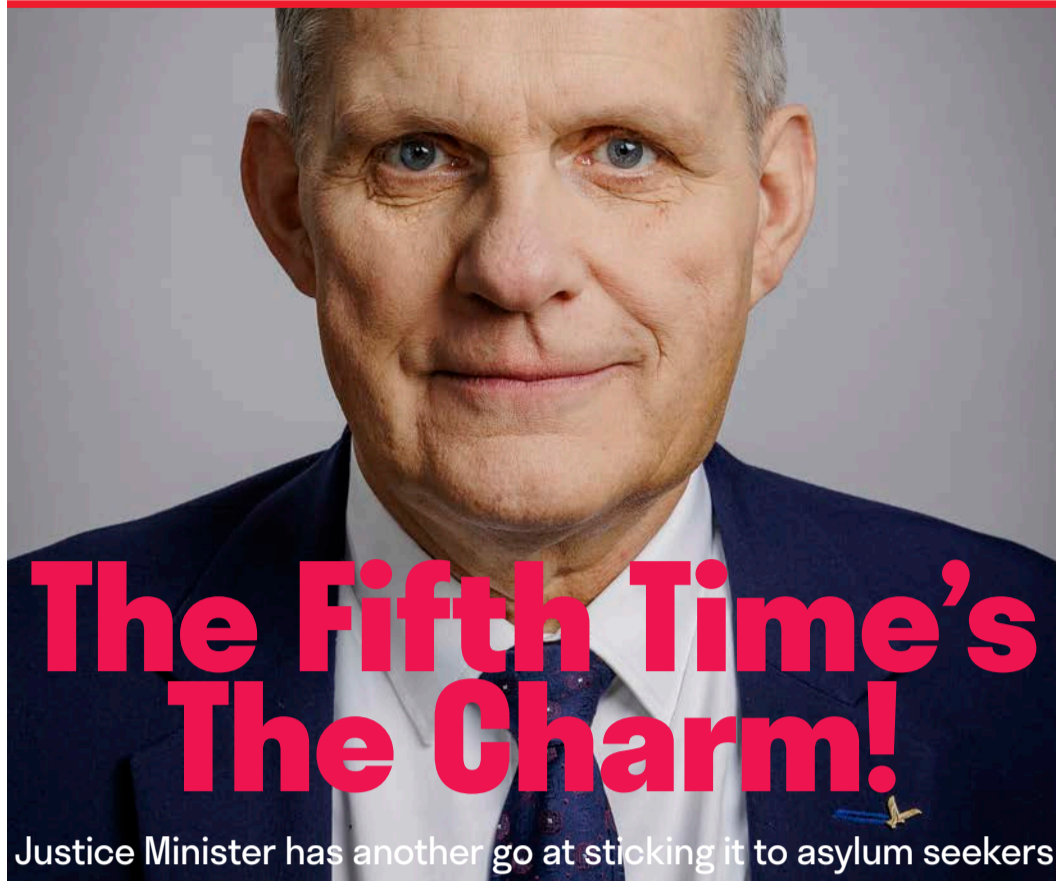
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# The Fifth Time's The Charm!

Justice Minister has another go at sticking it to asylum seekers

**Words:** Minister of Justice Jón Gunnarsson will try once again to pass a controversial bill that would make broad changes to the Law on Foreigners, RÚV reports—albeit with some revisions from the previous attempt.  
**Andie Sophia Fontaine**  
**Photo:** althingi.is

This will mark the fifth time the bill, originally crafted in 2016, is being submitted by the Independence Party.

## Cooperate with your deportation

As reported, the bill in question aims

to expand police powers, mandate compulsory medical procedures, and give veto rights to the chair and vice chair of the Immigration Appeals Board, amongst other stipulations.

The revised bill will not include provisions related to COVID, but will still include severe restrictions on the personal freedoms of asylum seekers. For example, Article 7 states that an appeal application for international protection will be terminated if not only an applicant, but also individuals connected to an applicant's case,

engage in “uncooperative behaviour” that causes delays in the processing of the case.

## Ignoring fundamental rights

Attorney Claudia Ashanie Wilson with Claudia & Partners Legal Services told the Grapevine that many of the provisions included in this bill are designed to further restrict the rights of those applying for asylum, singling out particular nationalities.

“Immigration authorities have a duty to not send someone to a country where their life, security and liberty would be in danger,” she said in part. “You cannot make that assessment unless you examine the case on its merits. Classifying applications that have been withdrawn and resubmitted as a ‘repeat application’ creates a situation that could violate the principle of non-refoulement; that is, that you cannot send someone to a country where they face imminent danger. This is one of the fundamental principles of refugee law, and it’s something I fear the Icelandic government is ignoring with this bill.”

## Last failed in June

Objections to the bill, in whole or in part, have already been issued by Amnesty International, the Icelandic Red Cross, UN Women in Iceland, and the Icelandic Human Rights Centre, amongst others.

While the bill failed to pass last June and was withdrawn, the Minister did promise he would attempt to pass the bill again in the autumn session. ♡

### ASK AN EXPERT

## Q: Why Are Icelandic Houses So Colourful?



**Words:** Asha Edmondson  
**Photo:** Ragnheiður Kolka Sigurjónsdóttir

We went to Sigurjón B Hafsteinsson, a professor in the University of Iceland’s Faculty of Sociology, Anthropology and Folkloristics, for an answer.

“Icelandic architecture is based on an anarchist tradition that thrived here for 1100 years,” says Sigurjón.

Houses in Iceland used to look a lot different than they do now and emphasised individuality.

“From the Settlement period to the 20th century, Icelanders built their houses with turf, timber and stone. Each house was built with anarchist principles and practice along with utilitarian and practical premises according to needs and aesthetic values of individual families,” says Sigurjón. “Consequently, each house was unique and the houses were not subject to any regulations.”

“At the turn of the 20th century, building and planning laws emerged, which meant that Icelanders gradually lost the authority to build as they pleased,” Sigurjón explains. “Now, no one can construct a house in Iceland without being forced into a submissive position towards bureaucratic authorities.”

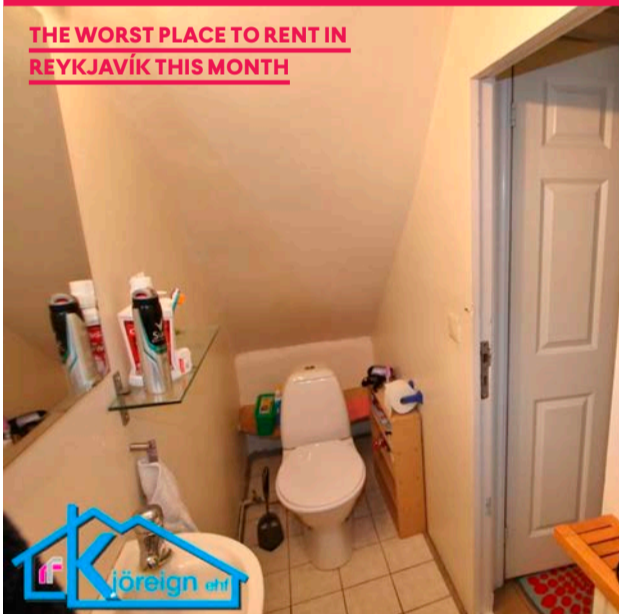
Despite the implementation of rules and regulations that dwindled individual architectural freedom, Icelanders still found ways to make their houses unique and personal.

“The anarchist tradition of architecture did not completely leave Icelandic architectural practices,” says Sigurjón. “The colouring of houses is one remaining trace of that anarchist culture.”

“Having said that, there are other factors that have been proposed by scholars and others, like psychological responses to weather conditions, traditions from abroad, class distinction etc., but the anarchist theory is the most interesting one [to me]!”

While there might not be a strong consensus in the scientific community about why Icelandic houses are so colourful, at the Grapevine we agree on one thing: they look great! ♡

### THE WORST PLACE TO RENT IN REYKJAVÍK THIS MONTH



Type: Room in shared apartment  
Size: 15 sq m  
Cost per month: 170,000 ISK  
Available at: [housinganywhere.com](https://housinganywhere.com)

## Hope You Don't Need Your Liver

The state of the Icelandic rental market is unavoidably bleak. With demand far outstripping supply, even the direst of bedrooms get swooped up in a second, and Facebook groups are full of heart-breaking posts from students, foreign workers and single parents desperate for a place to stay.

While most landlords in Reykjavik are not objectively bastards, there are definitely those who have used the worsening crisis to make a quick dime out of human suffering, or at the very least to allow them to rest on their laurels when it comes to property maintenance. Because if you have an issue with something, what does it matter? There are a million other yous queuing up to take your place.

While this month's property isn't the worst of the worst, it certainly won't be sitting at the top of anyone's dream home list. Situated in a basement apartment, the slightly-subterranean room (we can't emphasise this enough—it's just one room) looks like a living room in the advertise-

ment photos. Indeed, it probably was once a living room, before the landlords decided that it was far better to cram another poor bill-paying sucker into the space, rather than give their tenants anywhere to relax or socialise. Who really has time to 'live' anyway, when you're working round the clock to make enough money for your capitalist overlords?

And work you must, for despite the crummy looking kitchen, the shabby and unkempt garden and the miniscule shared bathroom, this room is rented for the staggering price of 170,000 ISK. That's more than 2 million ISK for a year's rent. For a room. If you're wondering what else 2 million ISK can get you, it's just about equivalent to the price of a human liver on the black market. Which is totally chill, of course. Who needs a liver when you've got a nice, cosy room to not-live in? Sleep tight. JG ♡

# SMASHED BURGERS AND NASHVILLE-STYLE HOT CHICKEN IN DOWNTOWN REYKJAVIK

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# Great Moments In Icelandic History

## President Refuses To Sign Law

**Words:** The president of Iceland used to be a largely ceremonial position. All we ever expected of our heads of state was to carry themselves regally, take foreign dignitaries to Gullfoss and Þingvellir, and put their signature on the laws Parliament passed. A law not signed by the president would either need to be put up to public referendum or be withdrawn, but no one ever really worried about this, because the president was not regarded as a political office so much as a symbolic and ceremonial one.

**Andie Sophia Fontaine**

**Photo:** Wikimedia Commons

Those were simpler times, and they would come to an end in 2004.

### Paper wars

Back in the early 21st century, there weren't a lot of options in the Icelandic media landscape, and the most popular newspaper of the day was Morgunblaðið, a daily paper with a fairly obvious conservative bent that favoured the Independence Party. The Prime Minister at this time was Davíð Oddsson, a former Morgunblaðið correspondent himself and the chair of the Independence Party.

However, there was a new kid on the block: Fréttablaðið, a newspaper that was not only daily but also, unlike

Morgunblaðið, free of charge. It was owned by the company 365 Miðlar, the CEO of which was a man named Jón Ásgeir Jóhannesson.

Arguably Iceland's first tycoon, Jón Ásgeir owned retail outlets, real estate companies, and a media conglomerate. Fréttablaðið was starting to perform really well, especially with a staff of hungry reporters who, unlike Morgunblaðið, actively questioned the conservative government. You probably see where this is going.

### Davíð strikes back

The greatest sin a tycoon can commit is use his wealth to question political authority. The rich and powerful are supposed to be BFFs, after all, and Davíð was none too pleased with how Jón Ásgeir's paper was threatening his beloved conservative mouthpiece, Morgunblaðið. So in his capacity as chair of the ruling government party, he drafted a bill that, while ostensibly designed to prevent media monopolies, was clearly designed to break up 365 Miðlar and shut down Fréttablaðið.

Polling showed some 80% of the population opposed the bill, but being tabled by the ruling coalition, it sailed right through anyway, passed comfort-

ably, and landed on the president's desk for his signature.

### No signature

Only the president at the time, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, refused to sign it. The unthinkable had happened, and being well aware of the poll numbers about this bill, Davíð opted to withdraw the bill rather than put it up for public vote.

Many accused Ólafur Rangar of taking a political position—he was once not only an MP but also the chair of the parliamentary group for the People's Alliance, a left-wing party—and, as mentioned, presidents were not supposed to be political. They were supposed to look great in livery collars.

### The fallout

The move was also bold because it was a presidential election year. While Ólafur Rangar was re-elected with 85.6% of the ballots, a lot of blank ballots were submitted, and voter turnout was a bit lower than usual, which could have been the result of disgruntled conservatives.

Ólafur Ragnar would exercise his veto powers two more times—in 2010 and 2011, both in connection to the failed online savings bank Icesave (the subject for a whole other article). He would continue to be re-elected until 2016, when he opted not to run again, having been in office for 20 years.

In 2009, Davíð Oddsson became co-editor of Morgunblaðið. ♡

## NEW MUSIC PICKS



**Jónsi - Sounds of Fischer. Vol 1**  
**Release date: September 16th**  
Jónsi (Sigur Rós), Sindri (Sin Fang) and Kjartan Holm have created a collaborative album for their Fischer brand, together with Alex Somers. It's the kind of music that takes you away to a distant memory only you can describe, smell and revisit, resulting in an almost meditative experience you didn't know was possible to achieve through sound alone. Pay a visit to the Fischer shop to complete the experience! **KW**



**Brynja - My Oh My**  
**Release date: September 22nd**  
It may sound cliché to say, but Brynja's new album has us saying "my oh my" throughout every track. It's poppy, it's whimsical, it's relatable, it makes a statement about society—so basically there is something for everyone, whether or not you've heard of Brynja before. It's the perfect anytime soundtrack, whether you're blasting it as your main character theme song or letting it play softly in the background. **EL**



**GDRN x Magnús Jóhann - Tíu Íslensk Sönglög**  
**Release date: September 16th**  
Icelandic music powerhouses Magnús Jóhann and GDRN have teamed up for this simple, essential album of classic Icelandic songs. Magnús's sensitive piano playing melds perfectly with GDRN's soft, rich vocals. The whole thing feels like a hug for your ears. Play it on repeat this autumn. **JG**

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# "IT'S LIKE

## The Volunteers Keeping Iceland Safe

WORDS: Emma Ledbetter PHOTOS: Emma Ledbetter



**I**n a second-floor room in a nondescript industrial building by Grindavík's harbour—notable only for a handful of red and neon yellow emergency vehicles parked on the street—search and rescue workers plot their movements for the day.

Small cracks in the calm facade of the room reveal the chaos beneath: a woman knits in front of a row of computer monitors, only to be interrupted by a phone call. She hurriedly keys data into a program before returning to her knitting as if nothing happened. It seems like a normal office space, and it almost is. Save for the bank of monitors showing nine different live cameras of the Meradalir eruption site, you might not realise lava is spewing out of a fissure in the earth less than 15 kilometres away.

People drift in and out of the room, glancing at a live map of the terrain, shaded dark tan where cooled lava from last year's eruption at Geldingadalir has covered the surface of the valley. Cartoon Lego figures show the locations of official personnel: black uniforms for police officers, orange

the emergency personnel.

A brown box outlines part of the map. "That's the danger zone," explains Bogi Adolfsson, chairman of Þorbjörn björgunarsveitarinnar, the local search and rescue unit. Anyone inside those lines risks encountering toxic gases and boiling-hot lava, the two most serious threats the volcano presents. Hovering around the border of the danger zone are those red-and-blue-clad search and rescue volunteers, poised for action at a moment's notice.

### Meet the team

Slysavarnafélagið Landsbjörg (ICE-SAR) is the national search and rescue association, composed of 95 units spread out across the country comprising thousands of volunteers. Think of them as 'regular' people—who just happen to have two years of training in first aid, navigation (the old-fashioned way, with a compass and map), mountaineering, and more specialised disciplines like air or sea rescue. Nurses, plumbers, parents, bankers, event organisers, farmers—search and rescue takes individuals from all walks of life and crams them together in various risky environments until they're a team.

As the name implies, ICE-SAR's volunteers are not paid for their time. Each unit receives a small amount of money from the government for

Volunteers believe that their fellow workers—and the people they're called to help—make the job worth doing. Regularly put in dangerous situations and often finding themselves caught in bad weather, the teams are strengthened through their community bonds.

"It's like a cult," says Halla Emilía, a nursing student and Þorbjörn björgunarsveitarinnar volunteer. Search and rescuers, no matter their backgrounds, are brought together by their love of nature, community, and helping people who cannot help themselves, she says.

Volunteer Anna Filbert knows this better than anyone. Despite commuting daily from north of Reykjavík, she has melded into the team on site at Meradalir. "Even across the genders and generations, we mix so well," she says of her ICE-SAR peers.

### Danger by land, sea, and sky

Search and rescue volunteers are the backbone of Iceland's civil defence. They are on-call for any and every incident outside a populated area—from the beautiful yet deadly Reynisfjara beach to the dynamic and uninhabitable Highlands, and, of course, the recent string of eruptions on the Reykjanes Peninsula. Police rely on these dedicated volunteers to help locate missing people—and sometimes bodies—when the need arises.

**"We know how people are going to act. They can't hide from us now."**

vests for scientists, and red and blue jumpsuits for search and rescue volunteers. There are no cartoon tourists on the live map, perhaps dressed like they ransacked an outdoor equipment store. There would be too many to count—a thousand or more at any given time—and they would obscure

larger pieces of equipment, but volunteers pay for much of their own gear, including backpacks and uniforms. Most financial support comes from fundraising—either through selling fireworks in the leadup to New Year's Eve or collectible ICE-SAR figurines throughout the year.

The number of tourists visiting Iceland this year is on track to exceed pre-pandemic levels, and with the return of tourism has come a dramatic spike in accidents in Icelandic nature. An unfortunate downside to Iceland's wild beauty is that many areas have not been developed for large numbers



# "A CULT"

alive—by the 1,000° Celsius lava. That has not happened yet, but it's on everyone's mind. As the lava from last year's eruption cools, it is displaced by fresh lava from the new eruption, meaning if someone fell through the cooled crust they could hit fresh, scalding lava. The volunteers have said it before, and they'll say it ad infinitum: don't walk on the lava.

"We can't rescue them when they're on the lava," says Bogi, the Þorbjörn chairman. Even if the lava is cooled,

ing Guðmundur Þ. Þórisson, because ICE-SAR can't enforce the rules that are meant to prevent problems they'll ultimately have to solve.

## A year to prepare

Last year's eruption at Geldingadalir took search and rescue workers by surprise—not because they were unprepared for a natural disaster of this sort, but because they didn't

**"It's amazing how many problems a little volcano causes."**

it's too sharp and dangerous for search and rescue workers to operate on. If an accident happens on the lava, they'll try to rescue you, but they might not be too happy about it. While some parts of the Fagradalsfjall area are more accessible than others, "it's not a convenient place to get injured," he says.

"We can fix an ankle, but we can't fix a human life," one volunteer explains.

Thankfully, this eruption has resulted in mostly mundane injuries; the majority of calls are people who have twisted ankles on the rock field, fallen on the switchbacks, or simply underestimated the strenuousness of the nearly 15-kilometre trek through the mountains.

The rapidly-changing weather, however, makes rescues much more unpredictable. Even though the eruption site is just a stone's throw away from Grindavík, there can be completely different weather in the two locations, vacillating between rain, wind, fog, and sun all on the same day. After leaving the warm eruption site, people get cold quickly, which compounds their exhaustion and turns an already difficult hike into a dangerous one.

The weekend after the eruption started, bad weather conditions forced authorities to close the site for this very reason. However, that wasn't enough to stop determined tourists from making the trek. Two groups got lost in the fog, leading to an all-hands-on-deck search, including deploying the Coast Guard helicopter. "Helicopters don't help much in thick fog," says Bogi. Ultimately, volunteers resorted to thermal cameras to track down the lost visitors.

"It's amazing how many problems a little volcano causes," says Anna. Not only has it created physical problems for those visiting, social ripples have also been felt throughout the area. Traffic has increased significantly in the small fishing village of Grindavík. Search and rescue volunteers, many of whom are at the site or on call daily, are getting exhausted themselves.

Volunteers have limited power to control the situation, which still resides largely with the police. They do not have the authority to enforce the ban on children under 12, nor can they make someone turn around if they aren't dressed properly. "It's frustrating," says volunteer-in-train-

know how people would respond to such an event. "All the frustration and surprises happened last year," says Bogi. "We know how people are going to act. They can't hide from us now."

Fortunately for volunteers, last year's eruption occurred at the tail end of Iceland's pandemic restrictions, meaning the visitors were mainly restricted to those already living in Iceland. This year, though, foreign tourists were out in full force at the volcano. Parking lots were filled to capacity, causing many to leave their vehicles along the roads and walk in traffic to reach the trailhead.

Throughout the eruption, which lasted just over two and a half weeks, the number of visitors ticked steadily higher, reaching nearly 7,000 people on some days. With this many people, rescue crews never anticipate 100% compliance with safety rules. "We'd be disappointed," Bogi says. "We set our expectations at 75% and try to be satisfied with that."

At any given time, 40 search and rescue workers were either at the eruption site or prepared to get there at a moment's notice. Beyond Þorbjörn, which is the closest unit, teams from Reykjavík, Akranes, Keflavík, and elsewhere around the country were on standby as well. "It's not just an 'us' problem," Bogi says. "It's a national problem."

Most natural disasters don't give as much warning for crews to prepare.



of tourists, so many visitors fail to realise the risks of certain activities. Search and rescue volunteers have filled this gap with accident prevention campaigns, installing signage and educating visitors about how to stay safe in Iceland's wilderness. From sea to sky and everywhere in between, they must determine where the danger lies—which often occurs only after something tragic happens to a foreign visitor.

Practices that are common sense for Icelanders are not always intuitive for tourists. Many people do not realise how quickly the weather can change here, leading them to dress inappropriately. SAR volunteers will be the first to tell you never to wear a

cotton base layer—always wear wool or synthetic material—and to pack more food than you think you might need. And, of course, stay away from cliffs, water, and (this one should be a no-brainer) lava.

## Little volcano, big problems

While photographers, curious passers-by, and die-hard volcano enthusiasts are on a mountain staring at plumes of smoke and rivulets of lava, search and rescue volunteers are creating contingency plans for anything that could possibly go wrong.

Most obviously, someone could get burned—really more like boiled





The volcanic activity on Reykjanes isn't expected to end with this eruption, so rescuers have time to plan and prepare for the next 'tourist eruption'. With every working shift they get more efficient—but also more exhausted.

### Start of shift

As the work week draws to a close on a Friday afternoon, search and rescue volunteers Matthías Þór Rafnkels-son and Eðvarð Atli Bjarnason arrive from the neighbouring town of Vogar to start their shift at the base in Grindavík.

They start their vehicles—two red and yellow all-terrain buggies emblazoned with search and rescue logos and already covered in a thin layer of mud—and prepare for the drive to Meradalir. They've clearly rehearsed this dance a dozen times: check the buggies, don a motorcycle helmet and thick padded gloves, and stock medical bags with equipment for burns and sprains.

"We have to get gas," Eðvarð tells me over the roar of the engine as we buckle in. I'm expecting an industrial-type gas station, the kind where municipal vehicles fill their tanks. Instead, we roll up to the N1 station on Grindavíkurvegur, waiting in line behind others heading up to the eruption. The buggies—not to mention Matthías and Eðvarð's brightly coloured uniforms—draw attention, and a few people pull out their phones to take photos.

"You're like celebrities," I observe to Eðvarð. "Kind of. They don't really know what to do around us," he says. From Grindavík, it takes volunteers about 45 minutes to drive to the eruption site. We follow a fleet of other vehicles on the main road to the eruption, turning on blue blinking hazard lights as we approach the bumpy hiking trail. Matthías, who is leading our two-buggy caravan, waves hikers to the right so we can pass. Most people hustle out of our way, assuming we're heading to an emergency. Others freeze and stare at us, unsure what to do. Matthías honks the horn. There's no emergency yet, but he doesn't intend to waste time.

### Prep, wait, respond

We check the eruption's gas levels with an orange handheld device, which lets out a few quick beeps as the program initiates—nothing to be concerned about, merely a sign that it is working correctly. A man approaches. "Is it

safe?" he asks in English. Once Eðvarð confirms that it is, the man walks away, relieved.

SAR volunteers are the main point of contact for volcano visitors. If you don't come with a tour group—or even if you do—the confident-looking people in neon jumpsuits seem like the right ones to answer your questions. "We get a lot of stupid questions... and some not stupid ones," Eðvarð says. No, they can't turn on the northern lights. Yes, the gas levels are currently safe.

Matthías and Eðvarð scan the hundreds of people sitting on the hillside. Everything seems to be well, at least for now. Matthías sips an energy drink; he's been at the eruption all week, he says by way of explanation. I understand immediately.

As we drive back along the trail, Eðvarð points out a man in a short-sleeved shirt and slacks—no backpack or extra clothes—making his way carefully over the rock field toward the volcano. "We might need to pick him up later," Eðvarð says.

There's a small turn-out at the base of the switchbacks where they park the two buggies. "Now we wait," Eðvarð says. It was sunny at the eruption minutes ago, but it's raining now. After a short but bone-chilling wait—Matthías and Eðvarð joking as they stand in the rain, me shivering because my hiking clothes aren't meant for standing around (I understand why

people struggle to prepare)—we get a call. Eðvarð gives me a hand signal and we hop in the buggy.

They manoeuvre up the switchbacks with practised efficiency, causing rocks to roll under the wheels and tourists to scatter. A woman is exhausted on the ridgeline and needs a ride down the mountain. Being exhausted on any other long hike—Laugavegur, for instance—could be a death sentence. Thankfully, the volunteers are already here and ready to respond quickly, no matter the reason.

The exhausted woman is waiting with three other ICE-SAR volunteers as we approach. On the trail, I see the man in short sleeves making his way back toward the parking lot, damp but not in any distress. "Look, he's okay!" I shout over the engine to Eðvarð. He smiles.

### Follow us out

I return to the volcano the next day—unaware, for now, that this trip will be the last, as the volcano fell into dormancy just two days later. This time it is late in the evening. As daylight fades and the moon starts to rise over the fiery crater, my coworker and I make our way by faltering headlamp light back to the trail, heading homewards.

I stop at a search and rescue vehicle parked on the ridgeline overlooking the volcano and lean against the door. "Thank you for being out here," I say to the shadowed face in the car. "Our pleasure," the ICE-SAR volunteer replies with a fist bump.

After a short hike, we reach our car parked on the rocky back road, now illuminated by light from the same search and rescue vehicle. "Just making sure you made it back," the volunteer says, their face still in shadow. "You can follow us out." We drive behind them down the trail to the main road, knowing that as our night ends, theirs has only just begun. 🍷



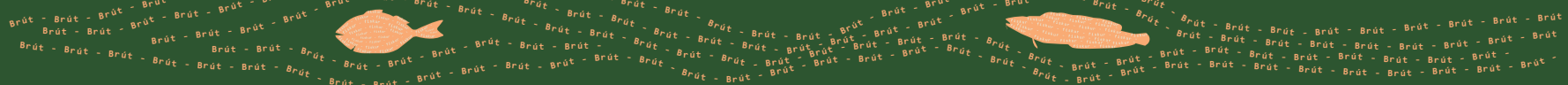
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**So Long, Farewell**  
Jono Duffy - *Do You Miss Me Yet?* - J

September 11th - Tjarnarbíó - 2,900 ISK

Having travelled beyond the shores of this barren rock in the middle of the Atlantic, Jono Duffy is back with stories of why he left (two years ago to the day) for France. It's exactly what we've come to know and love from this award-winning comedian. This stand-up special is for one night only, so be sure you buy tickets in advance on [tix.is](#)! **EL**

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**Wet 'n Wild!**  
RIFF - Swim-In Cinema

September 30th - Sundhöll Reykjavík - 3,400 ISK

The Reykjavík International Film Festival is back, baby! This much-loved gathering of film enthusiasts is just what we needed to usher in autumn. RIFF's ever-popular swim-in cinema is a gift that keeps on giving, this year with a screening of "The Truman Show." This psychological comedy may hit a little too close to home, but the hot pot setting should take your mind off of it! Maybe this will teach us all to go with the flow. **EL**



Can't wait to watch this Charlie's Angels reboot

## Riff It Up And Start Again

Reykjavík International Film Festival proves arthouse cinema has a home in Iceland

Words: **Josie Anne Gaitens**

Photos: **Emma Ledbetter**

Cannes, Berlin, Venice... Reykjavík? Our petite, northern city might not be the first to spring to mind when it comes to cinema, but for 19 years now the people behind the Reykjavík International Film Festival (RIFF) have been doing their darndest to alter that perception.

"The idea was to change cinema culture in Iceland," RIFF founder and Festival Director, Hrönn Marinósdóttir says of the festival's origin. "We start thinking about what kind of city Reykjavík is. It's not like Berlin, Cannes and Venice, which are old cities. Reykjavík is a young, vibrant city. So we also wanted to have that focus, sort of in the spirit of the city itself."

### Blood on the mirror

Over the last two decades, RIFF has more than met those goals, consistently presenting a programme that is fresh and engaging, with a smattering of more unusual events to entice non-cinema goers. Like their annual 'Swim-In Cinema' screenings that sees public pool Sundhöllin transformed into a unique screening room.

"The whole swimming pool is staged," RIFF's Press Officer, Erna Kaaber explains, gleefully. "If it's a horror film then when you go to the bathroom there will be blood leaking down the mirrors."

In addition, RIFF has continued to champion young talent with its 'New Visions' competition, where first and second-time directors compete to be awarded the coveted golden puffin—it is Iceland after all.

Despite its success as an organisation, the team at RIFF are not content to rest on their laurels and bask in the glory of their accomplishments. Instead, as the festival moves towards its 20th anniversary, they are focussing on the development of their Industry Days programme, inviting filmmakers from across the world to come together in Reykjavík.

### Reykjavík the film city

"Another big goal of the festival is to introduce Iceland as a film country, and Reykjavík as a film city," Hrönn says.

"Industry Days, at their core, are about supporting the Icelandic film industry," Industry Days Manager, Emma Romeijn says. "One of the main ways it does that is by facilitating connections, the fact that we bring people together both from here and abroad."

"Film is just such a powerful medium," Hrönn concludes. "It's how news was told in the old days. It's how we see the world. It's visceral."

"It involves all your senses," Erna agrees. "Vision, sound—with a good director you can almost smell what's on screen."

### Big screens, not laptops

"And it's a collective experience," Emma adds. "I think there's a reason why we're still going to see films on the big screen and haven't fully replaced it with our laptops, because it is about what you experience on the screen, but it's also about the conversations you have with other people afterwards. When you leave the cinema, go into the lobby, get a drink and start discussing what you just watched, that's part of it. You don't get that sitting at home."

### GRAPEVINE X RIFF PICKS

*With a programme of over 70 films across 11 days, we won't blame you if reading the RIFF brochure leaves you feeling daunted. In order to help you navigate the extensive list of cinema and events on offer, here are the Reykjavík Grapevine and RIFF's top three not-to-be missed moments of this year's festival.*

### Into The Ice

October 4th at 08:00

Do you love going to the cinema, but just wish the experience was a tad colder? Well boy howdy, has RIFF got the perfect movie-going experience for you! Depart from Reykjavík by bus at 8am, and after a bit of sightseeing en route, you'll be taken into the heart of Langjökull, Iceland's second largest glacier to watch "Into the Ice," directed by Lars Ostfeld. The documentary is about Greenland's melting ice sheet and includes jaw-dropping footage of the director descending 200 metres into the glacier. Pretty cool.

### Eternal Spring

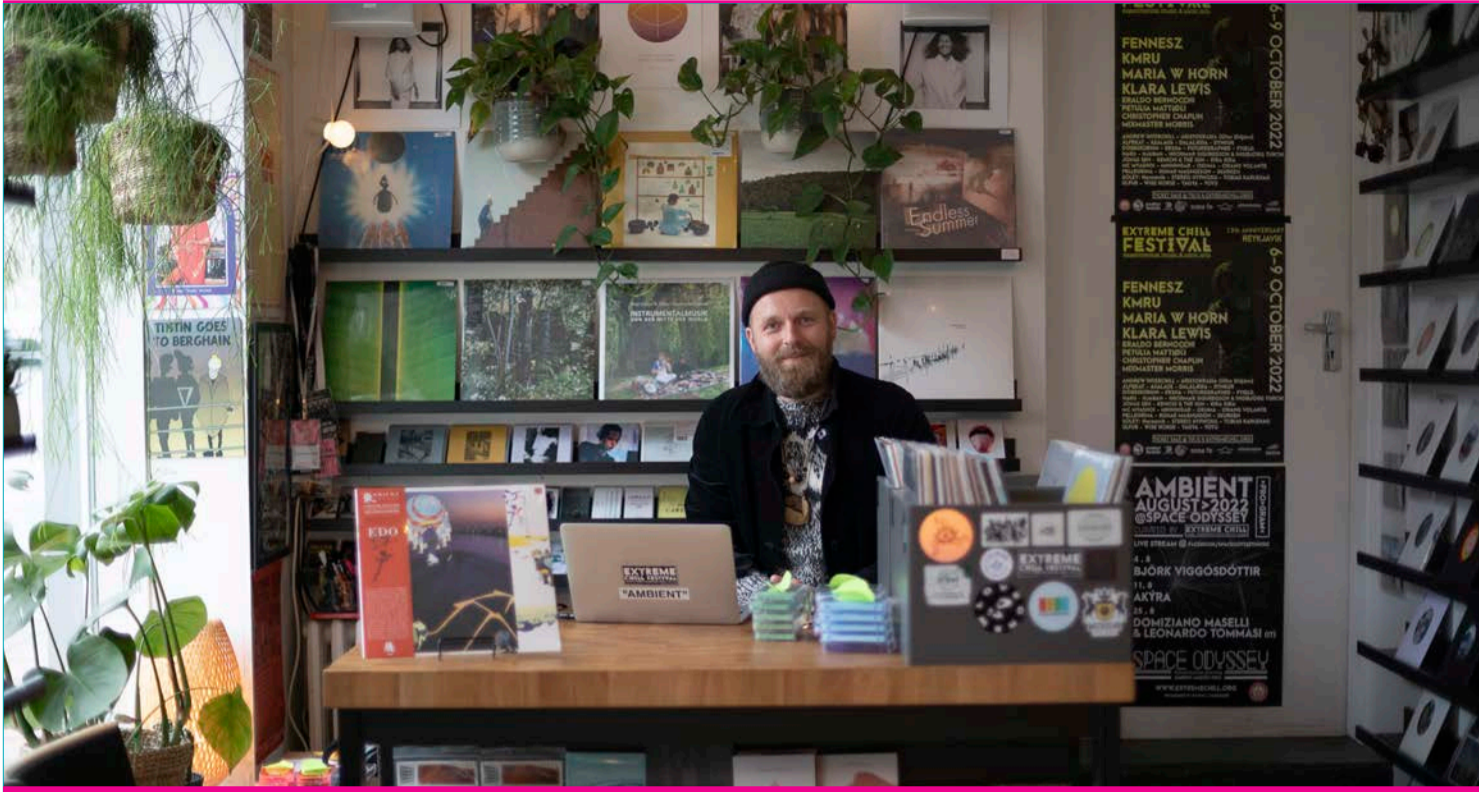
October 5th at 17:30

Half documentary with present-day footage, half animated fictionalised account, "Eternal Spring" tells the story of spiritual group Falun Gong and their hacking of Chinese state TV in 2002. The combined result is an engaging examination of freedom of expression. Director Jason Loftus will join Reykjavík Grapevine and other panel guests to discuss press freedoms in Iceland and beyond, and how the idea of freedom of speech is considered in the 21st century.

### Girl Gang

October 7th at 17:30

Part of RIFF's 'A Different Tomorrow' selection, "Girl Gang" follows the life of 14 year old influencer, Leonie, as she navigates the trials and tribulations of life in the social media spotlight. Following on from the film, Reykjavík Grapevine will host a panel discussion with guests including the film's director Susana Meures, about how social media is impacting us all today. **👉**



Doesn't this man already have enough on his plate?

# What's Cooler Than Being Cool?

Extreme Chill Festival is a celebration of subculture specificity

**Words:** Extreme Chill Festival co-founder Pan Thorarensen sure has a lot of plates spinning. Sitting in latest venture, Space Odyssey—a record store, venue and vintage clothing shop on Skólavörðustígur—he exudes calm and warmth while listing his various projects. In addition to the shop, the festival, and the record label that underlines them both, he is also programming music for iconic Reykjavík venue, Sirkus, which has recently reopened. “And I’m a musician myself,” he adds with a smile. With so much going on, it’s a marvel he’s so serene.

**Photo:** Art Bicnick  
“It started when I was a teenager,” Pan says of his life-long, ever-evolving musical escapades. “I was making music in the Icelandic hip-hop scene in the beginning.” Pan was a member of famed hip hop crew Twisted Mindz, making beats and travelling with the band internationally at a young age to places very much unlike Iceland, like Tokyo and New York.

Pan’s ability to travel outside of Iceland and purchase records abroad

had a big impact on his musical journey, and ultimately made him kind of an expert when it came to experimental and electronic music in Iceland.

“It was really hard to find the stuff, of course,” he explains. “But we travelled a lot. We went to underground record shops in New York and were buying a lot of music there. New stuff that nobody had back home.”

“It was a lot harder than it is today,” he laughs. “Now because of Spotify and so on it’s really easy to discover something.”

“When people don’t know the lineup I’m really happy”

## Family affair

As a result of his growing record collection and interest in the unusual, Pan’s own musical tastes began to change and widen, as he

was exposed to a community of musicians beyond the local Reykjavík scene.

“I was always producing beats that were a little bit different from what people were doing here in Iceland,” Pan says. “Over the years I became more and more experimental with my music, and ultimately I started creating electronica music. Of course, at that time

there were no computers—it was all hardware.”

Eventually Pan teamed up with his father, Óskar Thorarensen, and the father-son duo began making music together. While this might seem like the ultimate uncool move, Pan’s father happens to be a legend of electronic music in Iceland, whose band Inferno 5 were one of the first electronica acts in the country. In other words, pretty cool.

“I remember in the house when I was young, it was Kraftwerk, Brian Eno, Cluster, Harmonia... all this krautrock stuff, that was my childhood music,” Pan says. “It was quite unique.”

## What's in a name?

Pan and Óskar called their musical project Stereo Hypnosis, and in 2009 they had the wild idea to have a concert in Hellissandur, Snæfellsnes.

“It was free entrance. We had Myspace at the time and were trying to promote it there, to get people to come over,” Pan says. “But we were really surprised, over 150 people came to what was basically a joke—or more of an art performance,” he corrects himself.

With the event being such a success, the following year they returned to West Iceland for the first ever iteration of Extreme Chill Festival. They named the festival after a compilation series Pan and Óskar had started to make of underground electronica music.

“This is the key,” Pan says, of the mixes (which are now available online—although not many know this). “In addition, we had these Extreme Chill nights at Kaffibarinn for years, so when it came to naming the festival it just made sense.” It seems fitting, as well, that the name itself represents an oxymoron. How can something chill be

extreme? Pan smiles: “it can mean a lot of things.”

## There's no place like home

Over the years Extreme Chill has moved, grown, and gone through many changes. From small town venues in places like Hellissandur and Vík í Mýrdal, to overseas showcases, and even a cop riot thrown into the mix, the festival has now landed in what was probably always its spiritual home: Reykjavík, which Pan wryly describes as, “the electronic music capital of Iceland.”

“We came here because I felt like Reykjavík needs this,” he explains. In addition to being easier for those who might be interested in electronic music to stumble across—compared to being based in the middle of the Icelandic countryside—Pan also feels like there is a real gap in the Icelandic musical calendar for a festival like Extreme Chill.

“With Sónar gone, and Iceland Airwaves focusing more on pop music, we’re the one festival that is doing electronic music in Iceland,” he says.

“It’s an honour to be doing that,” Pan continues. “To take care of everything electronic here. It’s amazing.”

## A decade of change

Pan clearly takes his role as guardian of electronica very seriously, and the calibre of the artists playing at this year’s festival reflects that. From local Icelandic artists like Grapevine Music Award winner Sóley, to big international players representing various electronic music genres, such as Austrian producer and guitarist Fennesz and Kenyan artist KMRU, the expansive list of acts has Pan thrilled. “It’s our best lineup ever,” he says—and not for the first time.

“I met someone the other day who told me, ‘Wow, [the lineup] is amazing,’ Pan says proudly. “But on the other hand you have people of course who say, ‘I don’t know any of these artists.’ He grins: “When people don’t know the lineup I’m really happy—I know it sounds crazy. I tell people, just google it and listen. I know it will be fantastic.”

Thirteen years of Extreme Chill mean that the landscape that the festival takes place in is very different, and yet Pan is sure that it’s here to stay.

“Ten years ago everyone looked at me like I was a lunatic,” he says. “They said, ‘electronica music, ambient music, what’s that?’ And now, today, it’s so popular. Everybody loves it.” He tilts his head and his smile widens. “Everything is so changed, and it’s really good.”

*Extreme Chill Festival takes place from October 6th - 9th, 2022. More information and tickets available via [extremechill.org](http://extremechill.org)*



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## Don't Disown Us

Here's our favourite Bónus

Words: **Asha Edmondson, Iryna Zubenko, Bónus Review**  
Photos: **Bónus Review**

Whether you think of yourself as a pro home chef or you're most comfortable microwaving frozen dinners, you'll find yourself in a grocery store at some point. As such, chances are you've found yourself in one of Bónus' signature bright yellow buildings, branded with a hot pink smiling pig. With the help of famed Instagram account, Bónus Review, we chose our favourite Bónus' to help you pick your next grocery spot.

### Skútvogur - The OG

Skútvogur, 104 Reykjavík



If you're a history-buff, this is the Bónus for you! Opening in 1989, the Skútvogur Bónus is the Bónus that started it all. Boasting a portrait of the founder Jónhannes í Bónus at the entrance, you almost feel like you're entering a museum instead of a grocery store. Despite its small size, it's worth the pilgrimage for history.

### Smáratorg - The King of the Bónuses

Smáratorg, 201 Kopavogur



This Bónus is so big, you can easily imagine you are walking through

an average American grocery store. Listening to the 'Shopping at Bónus' Spotify playlist gracefully curated by the Bónus Review, move lazily across the aisles and take your time: Smáratorg Bónus has a lot to offer. With 23 checkouts available, you will almost never have to wait in line. There's a huge sign in front of the store with the opening hours, almost saying to you: you simply can't miss this one.

### Spöngin - The Hidden Gem

Spöngin 9, 112 Reykjavík



If you're trying to hide from your ex or you want to go to the store the morning after a messy night out and you don't want to be seen, this is the Bónus for you. Off in its own hidden corner of Reykjavík, the Spöngin Bónus serves as the perfect place to do your shopping without the potential of running into someone you know. Aside from this obvious win, the Spöngin Bónus has a covered entrance, nice layout, and is conveniently located next to an ice cream shop.

### Kringlan - The Wildcard

Kringlan 4, 103 Reykjavík



Our opinions on this one differ. While this Bónus definitely doesn't have the best layout, it is still impressive how much they have fit into the small space. The most obvious con—the bread section is located behind the checkout, which causes an adrenaline rush for introverts like us. Overall, this particular Bónus is pretty convenient, but timing is everything—enter at your own risk unless you want to be squashed like sardines.

### Grandi - The Best View

Fiskislóð 2, 101 Reykjavík



This Bónus allows you to arrive in style. Boasting a spacious entrance, it allows you to shake the rain off or show off your outfit before entering. Picnic essentials like coal, disposable grills and flowers (yes, we consider this essential—your romantics) are on display in the entrance. Without much exaggeration, we can say that this Bónus basically has an ocean view—so if you want to grab a quick snack before you go to watch the sunset at the harbour, Grandi Bónus has got your back! Worst case scenario, if you can't find anything good, you can pop across the street to Krónan. 🐷

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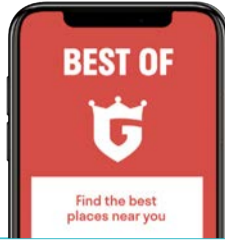
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September 2nd—October 6th

# In Your Pocket



Reykjavík Map

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Best Of Reykjavík

## Perfect Day

Dance, jive & have the time of your life



Words: Iryna Zubenko Photo: Art Bicnick

### Aurore Pélier Gady

*Aurore Pélier Gady has traded the bustling streets of Paris for quietness of Reykjavík, bringing French delicacies to Iceland in her very own fine pastry shop—Sweet Aurora Reykjavík. In addition to making state of the art desserts, she obviously loves animals and knows how to dream big. Just look at her perfect day!*

### Dreaming of longer days

In my perfect world, days would last 48 hours instead of 24 hours, because there are way too many things I wanna do!

I would wake up in my perfect summerhouse on the borders of Reykjavík, after a nice 12-hour sleep with my dog Uki licking my face as my very own alarm clock device. Then I would go out for brunch (in my perfect world brunch is available all week) to get

some eggs Benedict at Coocoo's Nest. Alternatively, some perfect boyfriend would cook for me and I'd get breakfast in bed instead.

### Sled rides and cuddles

Now is time to exercise a bit and get some air. I'm gearing up my dog sled team (in my perfect world I would have not one but eight huskies and malamutes), led by Uki and go for a ride in the open, between glaciers and mountains. The ride would end up in a big cuddling session and playing in the snow.

### Picnic by a waterfall

The dogs deserve a rest, it's sunny and warm, so we decide to go for a horse ride in the forest with my friends Deborah and Axelle and have a picnic cooked by Slippurinn restaurant, right in front of the waterfalls.

### Reykjavík-Paris shenanigans

We would have a massive barbecue in the countryside, cooked by my chef friends Ingo, Euan and Laetita, and I would have baked a giant French pastry buffet. All my close friends and family from Reykjavík and Paris would be there, and all the dogs of course! We would have an outdoor bathtub full of French natural wines selected by Olivia, just like we do back home in the winemakers' parties.

### Late night jazz

Then the dinner would turn into a big jazz jam session in a barn under the stars, singing with Lou Tavano and my musician friends from Paris. Maybe Gregory Porter would appear to sing a duet and make my day and everyone would join in and dance? We would finally all lie down, warmed up by a bonfire, and watch the northern lights show above, as I look back and reminisce about this perfect 48-hour day. 🍷

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**TÍU SOPAR**

# The Map

The City Map presents a selection of restaurants, bars and shops that received the 2022 "Best Of Reykjavík" award curated by our stringent panellists. Get the bigger, more detailed version of The Reykjavík Grapevine City Map at your nearest hotel or guesthouse.

## Dining

### 1. Le Kock

Tryggvagata 14

The craft burger OG has never been better. No one toasts potato buns to crisp perfection like they do, or cooks patties to such medium rare goodness. Everything is made from scratch, including the condiments! This is gourmet fast food, with all of the attention to detail and none of the sacrifice on fun and flavour.

### 2. Flatey

Grandagarður 11

Educating a country beyond their diet of pizza-chain pies is no small feat, but that's exactly what Flatey sought to do when they burst onto the scene, and for that we applaud them. The Margherita continues to be a panel favourite; who can argue with milky mozzarella and tomatoes?

### 3. Fine

Rauðarárstígur 33

A panel favourite, Fine is a no nonsense, no frills, Sichuanese Chinese restaurant that steadfastly opens Reykjavík's mind's and palates to the regional cuisine. The Mala Chicken is a tingling explosion of flavour, literally, thanks to the sichuan peppercorn. For something simple yet exciting, we recommend the Hot and Sour Potatoes.

### 4. SONO matselíjor

Sæmundargata 11

Sono overlooks a wild-flower meadow and a spectacular view of the Reykjavík skyline. Languorous and idyllic, the menu too is shaped for slow savouring. The chefs look beyond Iceland for inspiration, while still showcasing seasonal, local produce in all its colourful glory. Foraged herbs, berries, fruits, stems, and flowers all feature on the menu, resulting in a fun affair that serves as a reminder that good vegan food goes beyond batter fried cauliflower.

### 5. Laundromat

Austurstræti 9

Laundromat offers a cool '50's-diner-meets-maximalist-library vibe, decorated with bright furnishings, maps and colour-coded books. It's great for families in general, but teens in particular like the fun decor, burgers and milkshakes. We especially love their vocal support for breastfeeding, as well as the fact that you can actually do laundry here!

### 6. Deig Workshop

Tryggvagata 14

Deig's 'poor man's offer' is as good as it gets on this abnormally expensive island. For 1100 ISK, you can choose from a handmade bagel with a filling of your choice, any doughnut or pastry from their selection, and a simple drink (coffee, juice or kokomjólk, basically). Even better, they open at 7 a.m., and the offer is valid every weekday, for as long as the bakery is open.

### 7. Sushi Social

Pinghóltsstræti 5

If you are a group of friends looking for a fun night about town, Sushi Social is the place to be. The menu is ideal for sharing—although, who'd want to share something as delectable as langoustine tempura. Order one—or several—of those colourful drinks with names that recall a tropical holiday to make a fun night even more festive.

### 8. Sumac Grill + Drinks

Laugavegur 28

Sumac is one of the few places that cooks lamb with none of that sous-vide nonsense. An unpretentious lamb rib, cooked on the grill, kissed with smoke and licked by flame is pretty hard to top. Sumac serves it with blistered grapes, fried almonds, a splash of thinned down muhammara and lentils. It's a dish you can't get enough of, and thankfully the restaurant hasn't dared to take it off the menu.

### 9. Borg 29

Borgartún 29

This is one of the more comfortable food halls to be at, with a wide variety of choices to please most anyone. "Almost every place makes small plates, which is excellent for sharing," observed one panellist. She's right, one can choose from sushi at Umami, to burgers at Yuzu, to grilled meats at Bál, to healthy skyr bowls at Svala.

### 10. Fish Company

Vesturgata 2a

For the definitive seafood experience in Reykjavík, you'd be hard pressed to find a better spot than Fiskfélagið. Their tasting menus are a great way to try the best Icelandic waters have to offer, from Atlantic cod served Japanese style, to harissa wolf-fish. The sushi platter makes for a great lunch while their fish of the day is usually a generous pan-fried dish with a luscious sauce.

### 11. Prir Frakkar

Baldursgata 14

This cosy, tucked-away restaurant has not let anything sway them from tradition—you'll spot everything from foal, to blackbird, to cod throats to plökkfiskur on their menu. Opened in 1989, the restaurant has been run by chef Úlfar Eysteinnsson and his family ever since. A visit to this place underlines that good old-fashioned Icelandic cooking can be all kinds of memorable.

## Drinking

### 12. Röntgen

Hverfisgata 12

This place has it all. "It's crazy how it's continued to dominate the bar scene in Reykjavík," one panellist raved. "But it's just got so many elements. It works for every vibe, which is so rare for a bar." Despite only appearing on the downtown scene a few years ago, the place has already cemented itself among the nightlife legends.

### 13. Jungle Cocktail Bar

Austurstræti 9

"Jungle's vibe naturally caters to an early night crowd. It's stylish and airy, and, of course, they have the most innovative and delicious cocktails in the city," enthused one panel member. The panel also praised the bar's diversity—noting how attendees spanned all ages and demographics.

### 14. Kaffibarinn

Bergstaðastræti 1

Let's be real: there's a reason that Kaffibarinn is still here and full of dedicated regulars. At night, you'll find the crowd gets rowdy, the convos get interesting and the dance floor gets sweaty in the most wonderful way. "It's the obvious choice," said a panellist. "Who doesn't have some crazy story from closing time in the smoking area at Kaffibarinn?"

### 15. Gaukurinn

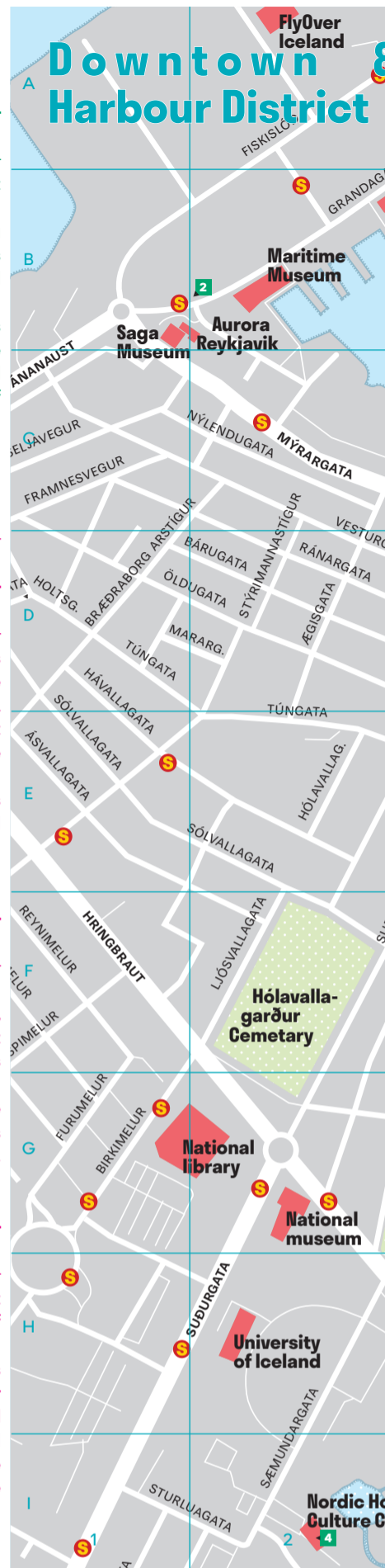
Tryggvagata 22

With dim lights, leather sofas, gender-neutral bathrooms and free tampons, this bar/venue is the preferred hangout for the unorthodox Reykvikingar. So if you're looking for like-minded peeps in the alt and queer scene, there you go. From heavy metal fests to quieter indie shows, this second floor haunt does it all.

### 16. Bravó

Laugavegur 22

Bravó: a dark room with amber-toned light, simple furniture, and cosy bohemian pillows. Their happy hour—perhaps the most prolific in the city—starts at 12:00 everyday and lasts until 20:00. Located in the



heart of Laugavegur, it's also a prime people-watching spot.

### 17. Óðinstorg

Óðinstorg

It's decided: Óðinstorg is the best outdoor drinking spot in Reykjavík. The new square was previously a parking area, but is now an open, airy, designed-for-those-lazy-summer-days paradise. You have good sun, good seating, Snaps, and Bodega, and serious mainland European vibes.

### 18. Session Craft Bar

Bankastræti 14

With its minimal appearance, stainless steel bar backed with dozens of taps and fridges full of beers canned and

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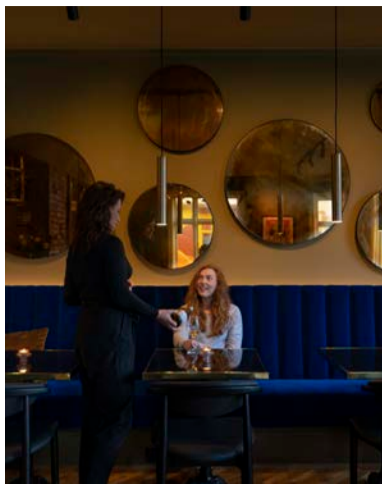
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**New In Town** ☆



**Apéro**

Laugavegur 20B

Wine sure is having a moment in Reykjavik, with delightful little spots serving hyper-local, organic, and interesting vinos popping up all over town. Charming Apéro, with its well-curated offering of regional wines sourced directly from vineyards and makers, and knowledgeable but approachable sommeliers, is a welcome addition to the scene. Located smack dab in the middle of downtown but tucked away enough to feel cosy and exclusive, it's the perfect place for a secluded date, a gentle post-work rendezvous or a delicious trúnó. Chin-chin! **JG**

**D**  
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Skólavörðustígur 15

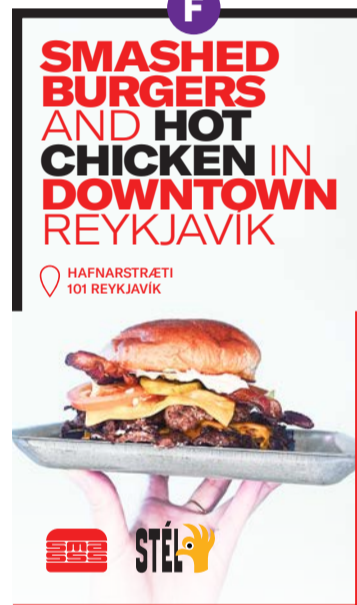
**E**



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**F**



**SMASHED BURGERS AND HOT CHICKEN IN DOWNTOWN REYKJAVIK**

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bottled, Session is a place that, while cosy enough, is made for serious craft heads. Whether you're hankering for a lip-puckering gose, or an IPA packed with more flowers than a funeral, Session has got your back.

**19. Skuggabaldur**

Pósthússtræti 9

A weekday bar is all about atmosphere. You want something lively but cosy, bustling without being jam packed, and above all else, full of good vibes. Skuggabaldur has perfected this delicate combo, with the best of Reykjavik's jazz scene showing up nightly to entertain patrons and make even a Wednesday memorable. Despite only opening last year, the bar has quickly become

a favourite with everyone from downtown artists to suburban folk.

**Shopping**

**20. Yeoman**

Laugavegur 7

2021 saw Yeoman being donned by international celebrities while also continuing her reign as the primary fashion tastemaker for Reykjavik women. "To talk about modern Icelandic style is to talk about Yeoman," one panel member said.

**21. Lucky Records**

Rauðarástígur 10

Lucky Records is the one-stop-shop for anything Icelandic music. They've got it all; new titles, CDs, rarities, vinyl, cassettes, second hand 12", 7" sections, you name it! Notably, the store is very in touch with the local underground. Basically any Icelandic release—no matter how big or small—will be sold there, and trust and believe, their shopkeepers will know them inside and out.

**22. Hringekjan**

Pórunnartún 2

Similar to a consignment shop, Hringekjan is a space where people can rent out spaces to sell their own clothes and accessories. It's the most eco-friendly way to keep your closet fresh, which, in light of our current world, is something

we should all be thinking about. "I don't know how they get such chic people to sell their clothes there," laughed one panel member. If you want something groovy this is the place to go."

**23. Apótek Atelier**

Laugavegur 16

Apótek Atelier is quite new on the scene, but this small boutique has already made quite a splash. Created by designers Ýr Prastardóttir, Halldóra Sif Guðlaugsdóttir and Sævar Markús Óskarsson, Apótek Atelier blurs the line between studio and store, functioning as both the designers' workspace, as well as the place where one can purchase their wares.

**I**



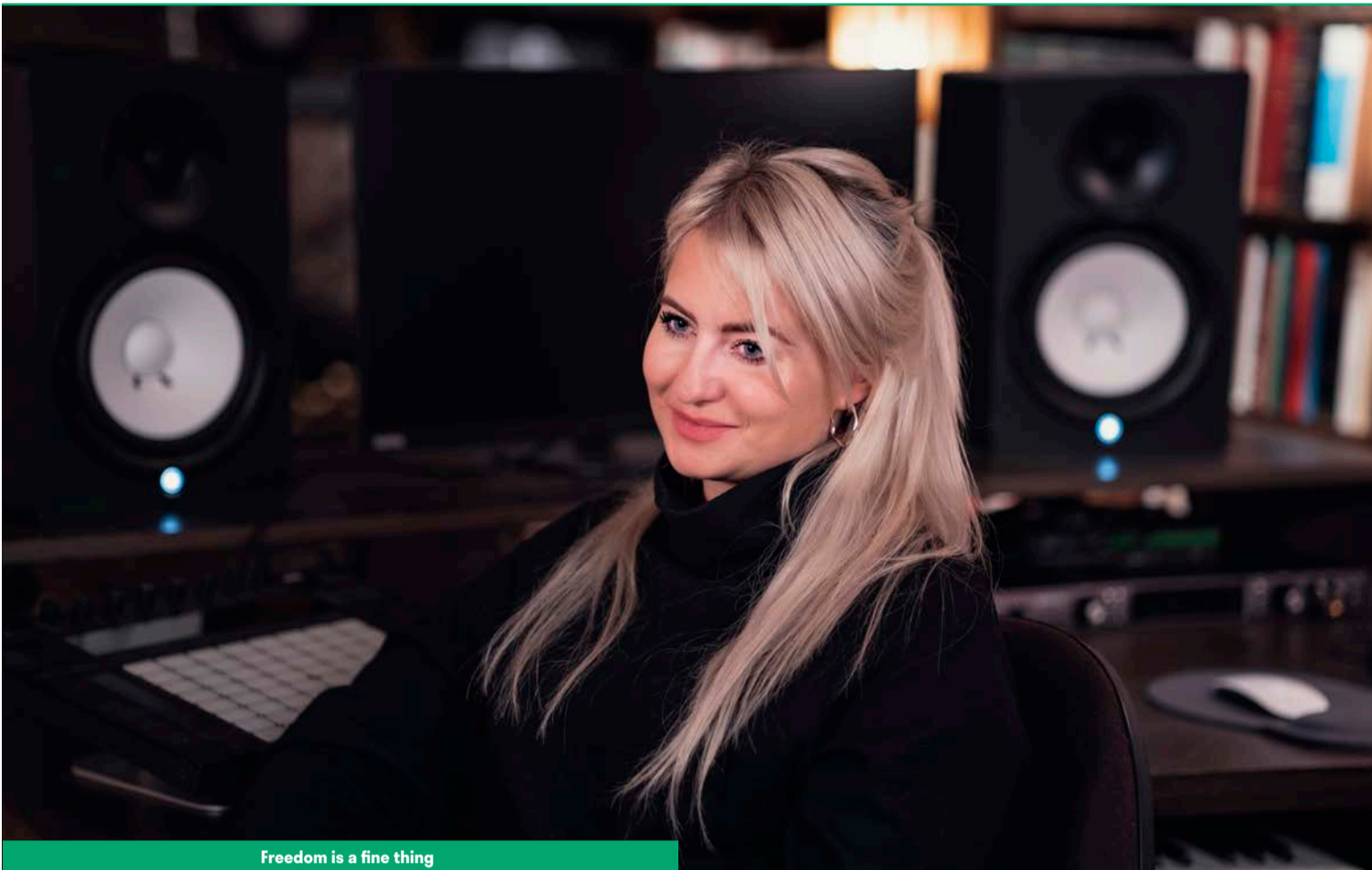
KAFFIBARINN

Happy  
Cocktail  
Hour

**H**

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**WASTELAND**  
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Freedom is a fine thing

## Dancing Behind Bars

Exploring the relationship between entertainment and imprisonment

Words: **Asha Edmondson** Photo: **Stefán Pálsson**

Musician Ingibjörg Friðriksdóttir's newest release, 'Brotabrot', explores the complex relationship between entertainment and imprisonment, calling into question the morality of the wildly popular true-crime genre.

By blending interviews with former prisoners with dance-worthy electronic music, Ingibjörg—who goes by the stage name Inki—poses this question and urges us to think more critically about the entertainment we consume, specifically in relation to those who are incarcerated.

### California roots

While attending the Mills College Center for Contemporary Music in California, Inki became involved as a producer on the 'San Quentin Mixtape,' the first album released from behind bars in the United States. Working on this project opened her eyes to the world of imprisonment and gave her insight that most lack.

"That's when I got interested in this relationship that people who aren't in prison have with this world that they never experience or see that much," Inki says. "I was wondering about this relationship between entertainment and imprisonment. It's a complicated relationship because it's obviously important that these stories are heard, but people are making money off of their stories."

Using her background with the San Quentin project, Inki decided to make her own art to under-

stand this complicated relationship. "This is how I got the idea to make a dance-hit song blending these two elements together. This is entertaining music with very dramatic stories from prison," she explains.

### Storytelling

Inki interviewed several former inmates from the Icelandic Women's Prison. However, when the prison was in commission, so few women were imprisoned, men were often placed in the women's prison as well. Inki used friends, family, and social media to help her find people to interview.

"It's a different vibe if an artist comes to someone from the governmental or prison system side," says Inki. "So I knew I had to ask around to see if anyone knew someone because Iceland is so small."

Inki was able to find several former inmates who were willing to share their stories for the project.

"I think people like to tell their stories," says Inki when asked why she thought people were willing to participate in the project.

### Juxtaposition galore

The album is a slow burn, ending with a big dance-hit titled "Love of my life, bad guy." All of the titles in the album are quotes taken from the interviews used in the song and almost tell a short story of their own.

"A lot of people go out to dance to forget," says Inki. "I like to think about people on the dance floor dancing to forget to the tune of true prison stories."

Listening to the album does feel a bit emotionally jarring. You are captivated twice. At first, you are joyful and having a great time listening to electronic music. Then, you listen to the interviews

overlaid on top, and you almost feel guilty for being so joyful, but then you're captivated by the stories being told.

### Closing the gap

It's very easy to distance yourself from prison and make assumptions that you will never be connected to imprisonment.

However, Inki realises the fallacies in this assumption.

"People feel disconnected to the possibility of ever being in prison or knowing anyone in that position," says Inki.

In her interviews, Inki focused more on the more mundane aspects of imprisonment, including smells, outdoor time (or the lack thereof), and other daily aspects of life. Inki believes it is easier for people to relate to these stories, in turn, dismantling assumptions.

"Imprisonment is relevant to everybody," says Inki. "It should be relevant to everyone how we as a society decide to punish people."

Through this project and the San Quentin project, Inki grew close to some of the people she interviewed and worked with.

"Doing this project, you are asking people to trust you with their stories, so you have to trust them," Inki says about working with the former inmates.

### Moving forward

Inki is already working on her next project, 'Thoughts Midsentence,' an album she will be producing and singing on, the first single, "Playing with fire" will be released September 30th. For the first time, we will get to hear Inki tackle songwriting with her own voice.

You can listen to *Brotabrot* on Spotify now.

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**Alicja Kwade**  
*In Relation to the Sun,  
to Sequences of Events,*  
i8 Grandi — 22.01.22–22.12.22



## Rainbow Clouds Inspired By Iceland

Ceramic artist Anna Wallenius on her love  
for pastels and clouds

Words: **Iryna Zubenko** Photos: **Art Bienick**

“I’ve never seen such fluffy clouds before,” says Anna Wallenius, smiling at me through the screen from her workshop in Hvalfjörður. Behind her are shelves of freshly made clay sculptures yet to be painted all shades of soft-hued marshmallowy colours. With her dog snoozing by her side, it seems Anna has found her zen. But it hasn’t always been this way.

### Reinventing herself

Originally from Finland, Anna tried many jobs before finding her vocation in ceramic art. She studied business and design and lived in China and Japan before settling in Iceland’s countryside. “I was working in a design company in Helsinki. Everything was good, but I just really wanted to make something with my hands,” she says. “To get away from the computer and negotiation rooms.” After her first trip to Iceland, Anna was hooked—this was it. She applied to study ceramics at Reykjavík’s Myndlistaskólinn and moved to Iceland.

### Dreamy landscapes

A lot of shapes in Anna’s sculptures, including her most famous project, ‘Rainbow Clouds,’ are inspired by just watching the view outside. “Hvalfjörður is magical,” Anna says. “There are wonderful misty valleys and mountain peaks with snow. It’s just really nice.”

“Most of my inspiration comes from nature because it is so strong here in Iceland,” she shares. “Every day, when I walk outside with our dog or drive a car, I am usually amazed.”

### Softness of form

The Icelandic weather, however, often presents challenges for Anna’s process. “I like to sand all

of my works outside before final firing,” she says. “Sometimes I’m sanding them in the rain and wind, sometimes in super nice sunshine.”

Getting a surface as smooth as possible is essential. “It’s about playing with the medium, the hard clay, and getting it as soft looking as possible. I feel accomplished when I see someone who wants to hold my sculpture.”

### Pastel candies

A pastel colour palette—baby pinks and blues, low saturation yellows—defines Anna’s style. She’s currently working on a new sculpture family, where the same colour palette will be preserved. “I haven’t yet revealed it, but I made the prototypes already,” says Anna. “It’s inspired by candies. Pastel-glazed, bright coloured candies.” She adds: “I’m going to glaze them, so they pop up a bit more. I’m also planning to use silver and gold to give them a spark.”

A chocolate eater herself, Anna agrees the new project was inspired not by a particular special candy but mostly by their peculiar shapes. “I work with shape. I was just playing around and noticed that this reminds me of candy,” she says, adding: “Also, I really wanted to do a piece that can be put on the wall.”

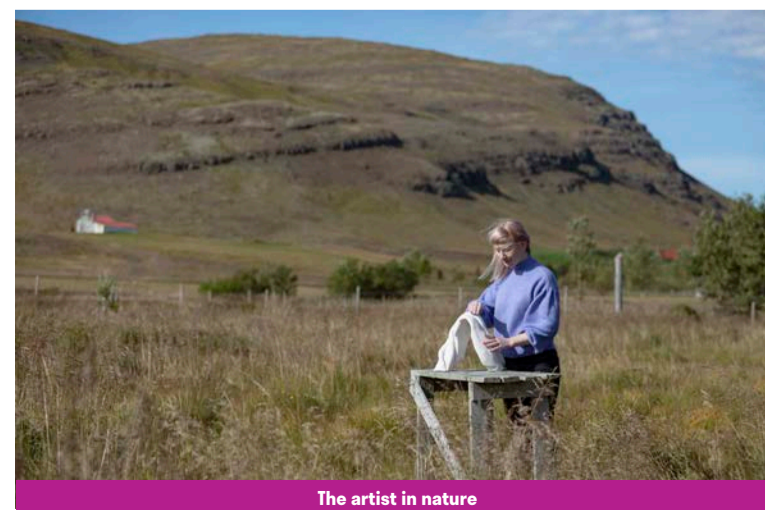
### Bigger pieces underway

Anna believes her art is undergoing a transition at the moment. “I have started more with a concept,” she says. “I think this comes from my design background. I’ve been thinking of the concepts and building ideas. Now, I am going more into detail. I’m going more into finding the form first, like with the candy, and then thinking about the concept.” She pauses for a second: “Maybe art doesn’t always need a concept?”

At the moment, Anna’s works are on display at the Listval gallery at Harpa and The Ode To gallery in Stockholm. Some of her rainbow pieces are available for sale at the Gerðarsafn museum shop.

“I hope that in 10-20 years from now, I do not want to make these anymore,” Anna admits pointing at the rainbow sculptures. “I think I want to make bigger and bigger items. I started small, but I really want to make big things.”

“Most of my inspiration comes from nature because it is so strong here in Iceland.”



The artist in nature

09.04.–29.9.2022

# The Power of Erró Images

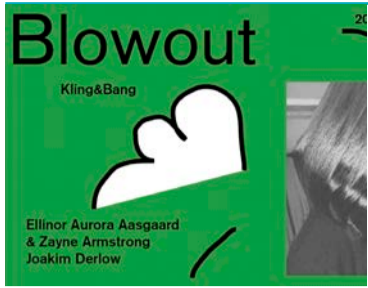
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**★ BLOW OUT**  
Until September 24th - Kling og Bang

Joakim Derlow together with artist Ellinor Aurora Aasgaard and Zayne Armstrong present new paintings, audio sculptures, talk-

what drives their scenographic approach to sculptures and storytelling. Their new works allude to entertainment culture and along with individual consumption, referring to the degeneration of Western culture.

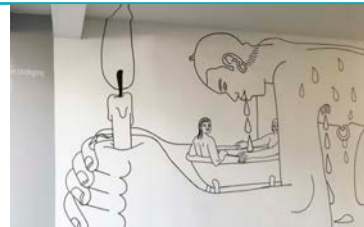
Through his extensive background in military and observation techniques, Joakim tells a story of fragmented nature though

himself, found items, drawings, and objects. It's up to the viewer to put the narrative together. Joakim's new works are based on the historical context of driftwood and its connection to Grettir Ásmundarson folklore. His art is a witty reaction to the misunderstandings non-natives could experience hearing Iceland's local folklore. **KW**



**★ Intruders**  
Until September 30th - Reykjavík Maritime Museum

Aiming to raise awareness about global pollution and the waste that is being released into our oceans, the exhibition has visitors interact with the marine environment and pollution. Strange animals, made from paper, plastic, and other waste that can be found in the waters, threaten to take over; sharing a daunting but very real message. **KW**



**★ Well-being**  
Until October 31st - Gallerí Undirgöng

Edith Hammar's large, powerful, and often biographical work depicts experiences and images regarding gender, relaxing, and socialising. Casual yet utopian, she creates a portal into a safe dimension where everyday objects take the space and where viewers can explore their desires and fantasies. **KW**



**★ Kitsch: Reykjavík | Berlin | Itoshima**  
Until November 23rd - Bókasafn Hafnafjörður

Photographer Thomas Hoeren shows a different side of "kitsch". It's not cheap sentimentality, but rather the need for safety and security in one's private space. He documented how kitsch manifests in Reykjavík, Berlin, and Itoshima; three very different places with very different interpretations. **KW**

September 2nd—October 6th

Art Exhibitions

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Ongoing

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - HAFNARHÚS

**Erró: The Power of Images**  
Erró is undoubtedly Iceland's best-known visual artist. The Reykjavík Art Museum is custodian of nearly 4,000 pieces of the artist's work after he began donating them in the 1980s, and this exhibition of more than 300 of them is the most extensive showing of Erró's works ever seen in Iceland. Videos, graphics, and collages—with larger works in public spaces, and paintings of all scales—showcase Erró's eclectic appropriation of imagery from every possible domain.  
• Runs until September 29th

ÓFEIGUR ART GALLERY

**Sigurþór Jakobsson - 60th anniversary exhibition**  
In honour of his 60th anniversary, Sigurþór Jakobsson opens a modest exhibition at Ófeigur Art Gallery on Skólavörðustígur 5. A small compilation of Sigurþór's work will be on display with the oldest being from 1963, and the latest from 2022. The exhibition covers prints, drawings, collages, monoprints, watercolours, lithographs, and oil paintings.  
• Runs until September 11th

CITY LIBRARY IN GRÓFINN

**Utopia**  
Alda Ægisdóttir takes you into the enchanting realm and exotic world of microorganisms. Though small by nature, Alda uses different mediums to expand them into large and diverse sculptures. Inspired by cells, nature, plants, bacteria, and insects, she offers a window into the small world that can barely be seen with the naked eye.  
• Runs until October 22nd

MUSEUM OF DESIGN & APPLIED ART

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

designers, pool staff and the public have together shaped the story.  
• Runs until September 25th

**Virtual waters**  
Taking a philosophical approach to the Iceland bathing culture, Hrund Atladóttir describes diving into water as entering another dimension full of contradictions. In connection with the museum's current 'bathing culture' exhibition, this work challenges viewers to dive into this dimension through virtual reality and experience the effect water can have on perception.  
• Runs until October 23rd

REYKJANESBÆR ART MUSEUM

**Orbit/Ellipse**  
Gabriela Friðriksdóttir and Björn Roth approach the world of colouring books from a philosophical and creative perspective, musing on whether having to draw within the lines influences a child's creativity negatively. The artists created their own colouring book that doubles as the exhibition catalogue and is available as a numbered art work. Breaking free from having to draw within the lines, they present their own coloured-in versions to explore boundaries by crossing them.  
• Runs until November 13th

i8 GRANDI

**In Relation To The Sun**  
i8 Grandi is a new exhibition space, the unique concept of which is to focus on year-long shows by single artists. The exhibitions will evolve while on view, allowing their creators to reflect how the passage of time alters their work and encourage repeat viewings to observe those changes. This inaugural exhibition by Alicja Kwade encompasses installation, sculpture and work on paper. Its title—initially "In Relation To The Sun"—will change as the nature of the pieces on display evolves.  
• Runs until December 22nd

i8 GALLERY

**Eyes Like Ponds**  
Ryan Mrozowski shows his signature systematic approach to his art through a series of paintings and

sculptural wall works. Taking botanical subjects, he explores topics like presence, absence, and perception resulting in abstract, visual and linguistic puzzles. His language paintings explore both digital and analog methods, paying homage to the old and new.  
• Runs until October 8th

NATIONAL LIBRARY

**Sir Joseph Banks - Iceland Expedition**  
Joseph Banks joined Captain James Cook on his first voyage around the world. Barely a year after they returned, he led the first British scientific expedition to Iceland in 1772, exactly 250 years ago. The National Library opens up an exhibition to celebrate the anniversary of his voyage.  
• Runs until November 20th

GLÉRHÚSIÐ

**Voyage - Berghall**  
Glérhúsið is a brand new exhibition space that recently opened at Vesturgata 33b in Reykjavík. Berghall are Olga Bergmann and Anna Hallin and their most recent collaboration includes a new video exhibition called "New Wilderness", accompanied by various sculptures and drawings. "Voyage" aims to inspire an active dialogue between art and its environment. Open on Sundays.  
• Runs until September 18th

HVERFISGALLERÍ

**Inner Space**  
Three-dimensional wall works, reliefs, and a colour palette ranging from untreated wood, to principal colours, to neon. Belgian artist Jeanine Cohen's solo exhibition explores the effect colours and shapes can have on our spatial experience. While each piece is a stand-alone work of art, she uses the exhibition space to stimulate a collaborative dialogue between them.  
• Runs until September 29th

KJARVALSSTAÐIR

**Stitches and Threads**  
Local artists explore and confront social issues, the poetry of everyday life, and the tenderness of nostalgia through embroidery and use of needlework. The exhibition focuses on this sub-discipline within textile art, and where some honour its heritage traditionally, others approach it via progressive mixed media experiments.  
• Runs until September 18th

**Heads from Clouds**  
Jóhannes S. Kjarval, one of Iceland's most beloved painters, is known for his portraits and artistic interpreta-

tion of Icelandic nature. He started his career in 1923 and won the heart of the nation when he started depicting the "common people". The connection he establishes between his portraits and Icelandic nature is something he is still known for today.  
• Runs until September 28th

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND

**Some Recent Work**  
The museum showcases a selection of new works that were gifted over the past four years, reflecting the complexity of contemporary Icelandic art. While many topics are explored through various media, systems and repetitions are the selection's guiding principle.  
• Runs until October 2nd

NATIONAL GALLERY

**Liðamót / Ode to Join**  
Margét H. Blöndal's exhibition honours connections. The title refers to the result of movement when three or more joints come together. Ode to Join consists of drawings made with powdered pigments and oil, and three-dimensional works that were made within the space of the museum. Each individual work of art is intended to work in combination with the surrounding pieces, becoming almost a symphonic poem where all are joined together.  
• Runs until October 2nd

**Jewellery of Dieter Roth**  
Mostly known as a visual artist, musician, poet, thinker, and trailblazer, Dieter Roth's creation of innovative jewellery is often overlooked. This exhibition showcases his unique and experimental approach to jewellery-making and bears witness

to his unconventional methods that make him the versatile artist he is known as today.  
• Runs until September 23rd

REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY

**Site**  
Exploring unidentified places where humans once roamed, Gissur Guðjónsson forms his own landscapes and, through photomapping and arranging, corrupts the viewer's perspective. His photography takes you on a journey to the homes of things people no longer see use for.  
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**Einar Jónsson**  
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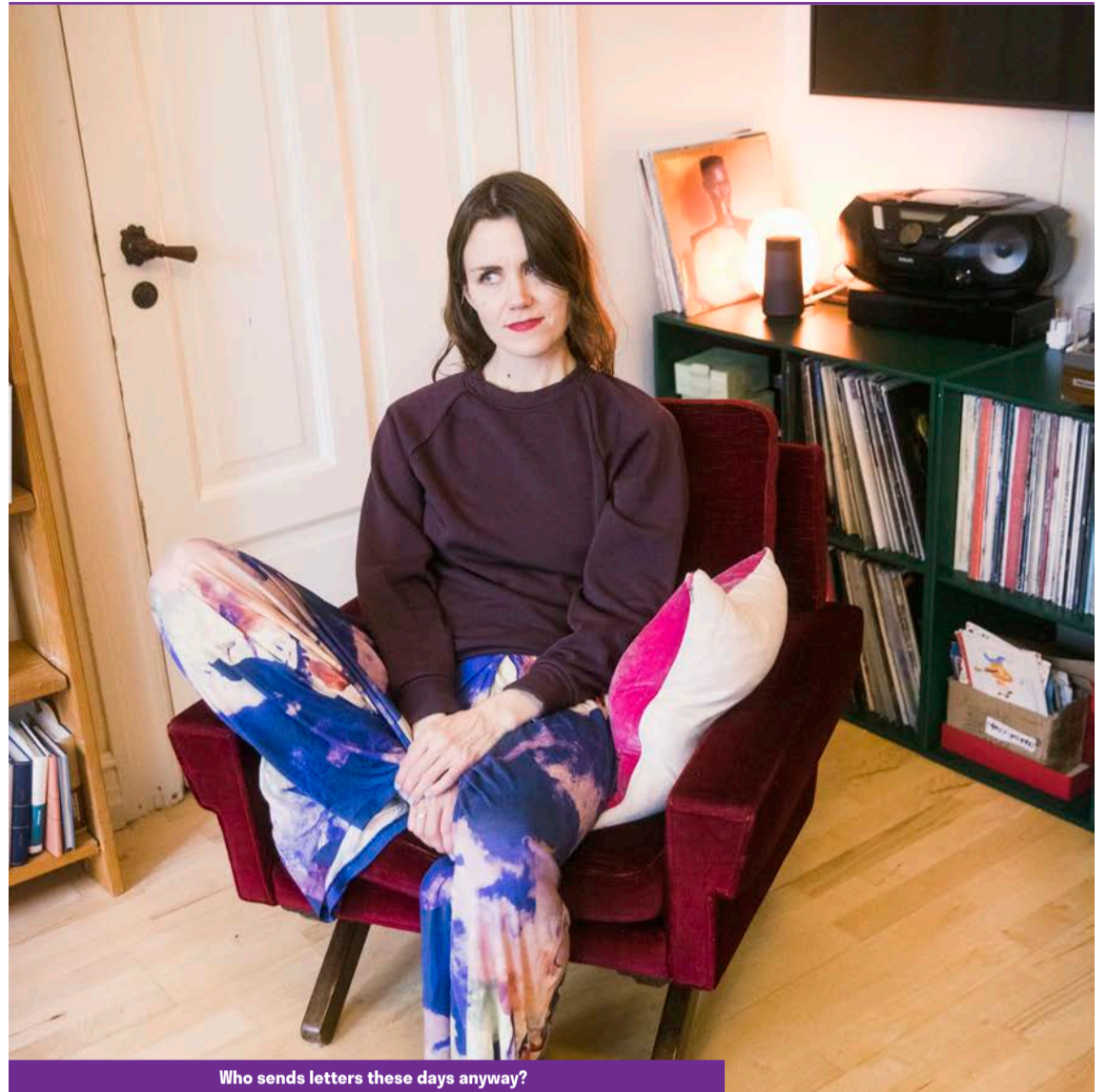


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Who sends letters these days anyway?

## The Human State Is Epic

The legendary novel, “Reply To A Letter From Helga,” is now a feature film

Words: **Valur Grettisson** Photo: **Elín Guðmundsdóttir**

“Reply To A Letter From Helga” (Svar við bréfi Helgu) has a special spot in the hearts of Icelanders. Published in 2010, the novel is just 106 pages long, but it seems to capture the entire human experience of love and regret through an explosive narrative about farmers in the notoriously isolated Strandir area sometime around the Second World War.

The story begins with a farmer, Bjarni, replying to Helga’s letter, decades too late and trying to express his regrets to his former lover. The novel is brilliantly written by Bergsveinn Birgisson, a doctor in nordic studies, who has a unique way of combining literature and research, as showcased in another of his works, the brilliant historic novel “The Black Viking.”

Now, “Reply To A Letter From Helga” has been filmed and is bound to be one of the most exciting cine-

matic events in Iceland this year.

“This story is about how emotions are epic,” says Ása Helga Hjörleifsdóttir, the filmmaker who brought this incredible story to life. This is Ása Helga’s second feature film, following her critically-acclaimed debut “The Swan,” which was based on Guðbergur Bergsson’s coming-of-age story about a young girl finding herself in the Icelandic countryside.

Adapting “A Reply to Helga’s Letter,” for the screen takes courage, considering how strong a connection Icelanders have with the novel.

“The beauty about this story, is that everyone who has read it feels like they own it in some ways,” says Ása Helga. Worried book lovers can rest easy, though. Bergsveinn himself collaborated on the screenplay, along with Ása Helga and Ottó Geir Borg. The story they love is in capable hands.

Ása Helga says that the story got her attention as a possible film a few years ago. “When I read it first, way before I thought it would result in a film, I immediately felt a connection with the story. It’s unique for its broad strokes of feelings as well as its unique settings in the most rural place in Iceland,” Ása Helga explains. “It’s about epic feelings, and just how the human state can be so immense.”

The film is also making waves thanks to its all-star cast. Hera Hilmarsdóttir plays Helga after a string of international successes in the film “Mortal Engine” and on AppleTV’s “See,” starring Jason Momoa.

Bjarni is brought to life by Þorvaldur Davíð Kristjánsson who, like Hera, made a name for himself internationally, honing his craft at Julliard, and Oxford University, while earning a reputation as one of Iceland’s best film actors.

Ása Helga says that it was a privilege to work with them, adding that they are emotionally brave actors. “They are capable and ready to dwell in the grey area of feelings, and there was complete trust between us,” she says.

*The movie premieres September 2nd it will be subtitled in English at Bíó Paradís.*



Þorvaldur Davíð in his role as the farmer, Bjarni



Ása Dýradóttir is ready to rock

## Celebrating Women In Rock, By Accident Or Not

Mammút and Kælan Mikla are setting up a feast for music lovers

**Words:** Iryna Zubenko  
**Photo:** Art Bionick

When Rokk í Reykjavík announced an all-male lineup for their upcoming show this year, it sparked a discussion in the Icelandic media and across society. While everyone agreed that hosting a gig without a single female band is a rather absurd thing to do in 2022, some went a step further. “Girls need the same access to this awesomeness. That’s why it’s weird when a concert like this happens,” says Mammút bassist Ása Dýradóttir. So her band, together with other female performers, decided to put on their own gig the same weekend that promises to be a hell of a night.

### A long-held dream

“We had planned on putting on a show at Gamla Bíó this fall, in order to play songs from our newest album ‘Ride the Fire’ live, in a mix with our other albums,” says Ása. “We had wanted to play a back-to-back show with Kælan Mikla for a long time and asked them to join us. When the announcement of Rokk í Reykjavík was public, with tons of bands (many of our friends and favou-

rites) allegedly portraying the cream of rock music in Reykjavík, and not one of them was female, we decided to ask the great female-led bands Börn and Gróa to join us.”

Kælan Mikla are currently on tour in Europe, but they managed to drop us a line and share their excitement about the gig. “The upcoming concert with Mammút, Gróa and Börn is a dream come true! It’s not about anything other than having fun and enjoying the music we all have created through the years,” they said.

### A planned coincidence

“Our gig at Gamla Bíó takes place the same weekend as Rokk í Reykjavík, but even though we’re making an undisputed statement in light of that gig, it’s not a male vs. female argument we want to spark since that takes the spotlight away from what we’re creating: a fest of sound and vision, that really has nothing to do with gender,” says Ása. “But the lineup surely emphasises the depth and variety of female artists in the Reyk-

javík indie/rock music scene. The gig celebrates women in rock, by accident or not.”

Band members of Kælan Mikla agree that their upcoming concert is not a statement nor protest: “It was indeed sad to read how some people feel about the Icelandic rock scene. But this event inspired us to finally set up a show we have been longing to do for years!”

### Concert programme

The September gig promises new tracks and old favourites from Mammút and Kælan Mikla. “We want to play so many songs but we can only do like an hour. It’s very hard to choose. But we’re going to do a very good personal ‘best of’, what we think is most fun to play,” shares Ása.

Kælan Mikla will be performing their new album along with some of their greatest hits from earlier albums.

Both bands have slightly different styles, and Ása is excited to see what kind of audience comes to the show. “Kælan Mikla are in the goth scene and we’re more indie rock. Even though we are friends and we know each other, we have quite diverse listener groups, so it’s gonna be very fun. I’m really interested to see who’s coming,” she says.

### Choose your rock gig

“It’s going to be much more fun at Gamla Bíó. It has never happened before and will probably never happen again,” says Ása. “It’s gonna be a night to remember.”

“Our show is the day before the Rokk í Reykjavík, so if people want to, they could attend both. We would love to see Gamla Bíó fill up and encourage everyone who is interested to attend because this will be a hell of a night and a rarity to manage to get all four busy bands together,” Kælan Mikla say. “We have looked up to Mammút since before we started Kælan Mikla. Musically, we grew up together with Börn and love to see Gróa continue creating such amazing things. We all really look forward to setting up this show!”

*Mammút & Kælan Mikla, supported by Gróa and Börn, will play at Gamla Bíó on September 16th. Tickets are available at [tix.is](https://tix.is)*



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## Track By Track

The Reykjavík Grapevine 24  
Issue 09—2022



Pretty futuristic, right?

## Green Beans And Catfish Sprinkled With Ambient

Futuregrapher explains his new albums

Words: Valur Grettisson/Árni Grétar Photo: Provided by Futuregrapher

### Info

*The visionary tech-nerd and electro musical genius Futuregrapher has released not one, but two world-class ambient and electronic albums. "Geirþjófsfjörður" (Fjord of Geirþjófur) and "Grænar Baunir" (green beans) may not seem the obvious choice of names for cutting-edge experimental electronic albums, but Futuregrapher is always full of surprises—even after two decades on the frontlines of the genre in Iceland. We asked Futuregrapher, a.k.a. Árni Grétar, to walk us through the albums track by track.*

### Geirþjófsfjörður

Released on Neotantra



#### 1. Einmanna

I'm sometimes lonely. I sometimes miss people/places when I'm writing a sad song. It's only in the moment, so it's not bringing me down afterwards. It's good to miss something.

#### 2. Gufudalur

I always have strong feelings about the countryside in Iceland, but the name Gufudalur, might be translated as a steam valley in English. And my girl Perla was there also when she was young because her grandmother was working there. Magical place.

#### 3. Næturhvíld

I love sleeping/dreaming. My dreams are vivid. And many times I sleep with music on and they help me to create the mood.

#### 4. Sálarflakk

I believe I have a soul that lives in my body. My body is like a machine or a temple. And I believe our souls can travel without the body.

#### 5. Tjaldur

I have made many DX7 tracks and this is the longest. And it contains field recordings from the shore in Drangsnæs where Tjaldur, the bird, comes visiting me. You hear him in the track.

### Grænar Baunir

Released on Móatún 7



#### 1. Gular Baunir

My friend from the US laughed when he saw these in a can and it says 'Yellow Beans'. "It's just maize, man!" But those cans are vivid in my memory from my family kitchen in Móatún 7 in Tálknafjörður.

#### 2. Beauty of Trill

Contains a sample of Worf talking to Jadzia Dax. Jadzia Dax was a joined Trill and I, like Worf, had a crush on her. I watch Star Trek every week.

#### 3. Steinbítur

When I was working in Þórsberg (a fishing factory) or as a seaman on a boat, my life was a catfish. It's

a song written for them—all the catfish.

#### 4. Patreksfjörður DX7

It's my other fjord. There is my family's land, which I inherited from my mother. She grew up there. DX7 is one of my favourite synthesizers. I've had many throughout the years.

#### 5. Ránargata 23

This is the place where my friend and mentor Bjössi "Biogen" lived. We had many great nights there. I miss him dearly, but I know he is here with us and he lives in our world with his music. That's forever. I recorded this track when my brother Gunnar Smári was sleeping at my place. He was talking to my boy Jói and I just recorded this when they were chatting.

#### 6. TX81Z-Valencia

This was a piece written on the TX81Z synth. The title comes because I had just watched my team Arsenal beat Valencia in a European semi-final game and I recorded the track after it. Sometimes emotions and feelings are high after a sports match so it's good to transform it into music or art.

#### 7. S3200 Ghost

When you are working on a sample in a hardware sampler you begin to hear the ghost in the machine. The soul of the sample becomes alive. This is the title. My main sampler is Akai S3200 and this was recorded on it.

#### 8. Grænar Baunir

My favourite. I can eat grænar baunir with a spoon. Great stuff. Important in my youth as a side dish with my mom's steak. The artwork is an artistic ode to one of my favourite bands, Can.

#### 9. Bajor

Written after re-watching Star Trek DS9. Bajor was the homeworld of the Bajoran people and one of my favourite characters is Bajoran. I empathise with them in many ways.

#### 10. Langafi

Contains a sample taken from a radio interview with my great-grandfather Sveinn Jónsson where he and my great-grandmother were talking about elves and ghosts. He lived on the land I own now with my family. I never met him. But he loved Icelandic tobacco like I do. 🍷

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Beer 990 ISK,  
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**BRUT BAR**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.  
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2F1 on wine and beer on tap

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

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

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

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

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

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

**JÖRGENSEN KITCHEN & BAR**  
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Weekends  
12:00 to 16:00.  
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Wine 900 ISK.

**JUNGLE COCKTAIL BAR**  
Every day from

16:00 to 18:00.  
Beer 900 ISK,  
Wine 1000 ISK  
Cocktails 1600 ISK.

**KAFFI LÆKUR**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00 & 22:00 to 23:00 on Tue-Sat  
Beer 950 ISK,  
Wine 1050 ISK.

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

**LOFT**  
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.  
Beer 860 ISK,  
Wine 950 ISK.

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

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

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

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

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

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Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.  
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Wine 900 ISK.

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

**SÆTA SVÍNID**  
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.  
Beer 990 ISK,

Wine 990 ISK.

**SKÚLI CRAFT**  
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Wine 900 ISK.  
Happy hour includes four selected tap beers

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**SÓLON**  
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Beer 800 ISK,  
Wine 800 ISK.

**SPILAKAFFI**  
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00.  
Beer 850 ISK.

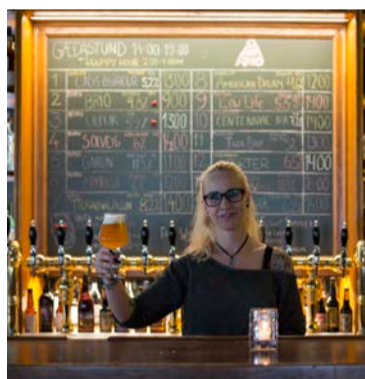
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Every day from 17:00 to 18:00.  
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Wine 745 ISK.

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

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



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beers to meet the demand of thirsty patrons. There is plenty of space outside to enjoy your sips on that rare sunny day, making Skúli a popular summer spot. On darker days they make sure both the candles and playlist are lit. We almost don't want to share it, but they even have an old arcade machine in the back. Hush! **KW** ♡



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Selected tapas half price

**Dominos**  
All day Tuesday  
Medium sized pizza with three toppings

**1,500 ISK And Under**

**Deig / Le Kock**  
Week days 10:00 - 16:00  
Doughnut, coffee & bagel -1,300 ISK

**Hamborgara-búlla Tómasar**  
All day Tuesday  
Burger, french fries & soda - 1,390 ISK

**Gló**  
All day, every day  
Bowl of the month - 1,290 ISK

Vegan option

**Shalimar**  
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Curry - 1,290 ISK  
Vegan option

**Sæta Svinið**  
Every day 15:00 - 18:00  
Chicken wings - 1,190 ISK

**Lemon**  
Every day 16:00 - 21:00  
2f1 Juice +

sandwich 1,095 ISK  
Vegan option

**Uppsafir**  
Every day 11:00 - 14:00  
Burger & fries - 1,390 ISK  
Vegan option

**Noodle Station**  
Every day 11:00 - 22:00  
Vegetarian noodles - 1,100 ISK

**2,000 ISK And Under**

**Matarkjallarinn**  
Monday - Friday

11:30 - 15:00  
Fisherman's fish soup -1,990 ISK

## 5,000 ISK And Under

**Apótek**  
Every day 11:30 - 16:00  
Two-course lunch -3,390 ISK  
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## Books



Egill Örn, also known as Eagle Eagle

### Booming Interest In Icelandic Books

Icelandic translations are selling uniquely well, but print media still faces challenges

Words: Valur Grettisson Photos: Elin Guðmundsdóttir

“The summer has been very good in general when it comes to selling books, but we haven’t sold this many translated Icelandic books over the same period since 2019,” says Egill Örn Jóhannsson, Executive Director of Forlagið, the biggest book publisher in Iceland. Book sales have been skyrocketing over the past few months, and nobody seems to have a particularly good theory regarding why. Icelanders—and visiting travelers—just seem to be reading more. Normally the best time for selling books in Iceland is always around Christmas—the so-called Christmas Book Flood. But this unexpected summer increase in book sales is very welcome to publishers like Forlagið.

#### Crude humour helps

When it comes to tourism, the selection is pretty obvious. “We sell a lot of books by Brian Pilkington, children’s books, traditional photo books—and also pompous novels,” Egill Örn explains laughing. “But we are also seeing a lot of uptick in sales of Huggleikur Dagsson’s comics for example,” he adds.

Asked if Huggleikur is not too controversial for tourists, Egill Örn says he doesn’t think so. “I think travellers are interested in modern Icelandic humour, this crude dry humour we are known for.”

#### French fancies

Unsurprisingly, the year started slowly when selling books. The

world was still under the confines of the Covid-19 pandemic. But it seems like Icelanders, as well as tourists, are getting back on track. Tourism numbers are almost back to pre-pandemic levels, but even this doesn’t fully explain the boom in book sales. When asked for his take on matters, Egill can’t really offer a simple answer.

“In general, when it comes to fiction, interest in Icelandic literature is growing,” he says. “Icelandic literature has been doing quite well internationally, but extremely well in France in the past few years, for example.”

Egill says that he expected this to be a temporary situation, but we have seen Icelandic writers in bestseller lists in France again and again. Perhaps a trend that is spreading—do we dare to say it—like a virus.

#### Audio vs visual

Although there are positive signs all around, there is still a deeper threat looming for book publishers both here and internationally.

“Whatever we feel our potentials are as a literature nation, the interest in translations in the world seems to be going down in general,” Egill explains. The reason is fairly simple: books are now competing with incredibly diverse forms of entertainment, everything from video games to the whole internet, social media and streaming services. It’s simply harder to grab people’s attention and time, and the day isn’t getting any longer to make room for extra activities.

Nonetheless, there are signs that the interest in a good story isn’t really diminishing. For example, Icelanders have warmly embraced audiobooks, while they are not as interested in e-books.

Egill Örn is both very glad and sceptical when it comes to audiobooks. It means that more people have the opportunity to “read” books, including those who struggle with traditional books, perhaps due to a lack of time or difficulty reading. But audiobook access is also following the same and very controversial business model as streaming platforms like Spotify. While it’s incredibly user-friendly, it doesn’t give writers or publishers much to live on.

#### Writing into the future

Despite these concerns, Forlagið has a very ambitious programme to sell Icelandic literature abroad and has succeeded in an impressive way over the past decade at least. Egill Örn says he can be content—up to a healthy point.

“First of all, we have succeeded beyond our wildest dreams in finding foreign markets for Icelandic books, and the future is bright when it comes to younger authors,” he says.

“Over the past 3-4 years we have been seeing a lot of good young authors finding their own markets and most importantly, new young readers,” Egill continues. While it might not be clear exactly what’s behind the recent craze in book sales, Egill is clear: the future for Icelandic literature is bright. 🍷

You can find Brian Pilkington and Huggleikur Dagsson’s books in our online store: [shop.grapevine.is](http://shop.grapevine.is)

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# Icelandic Love Stories

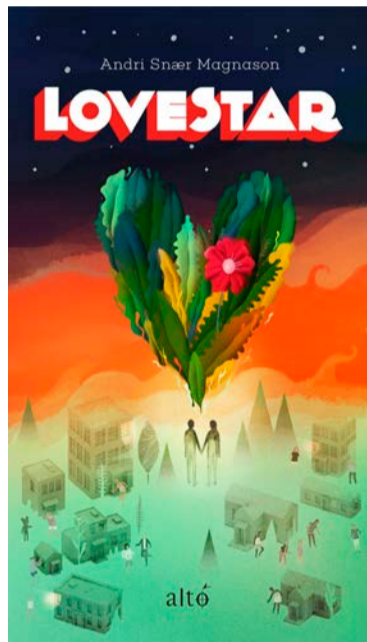
There is nothing simple about Icelandic romance

Words: **Emma Leadbetter, Josie Anne Gaitens** and **Valur Grettisson**

*Icelanders are perhaps not the most romantic people in the world, but underneath our cold exterior, our amorous hearts still beat loudly to the rhythm of our Viking ancestors... or something like that. Icelandic authors have written excellent love stories over the decades, but it's worth bearing in mind that the Icelandic love story is never simple. Most often there are sheep around, even a deadly virus, and at its worst, an overwhelming futuristic nightmare. With that caveat, here are our favourite Icelandic love stories.*

## LoveStar

Author: **Andri Snær Magnason**



Fun fact: Icelandic author, Andri Snær Magnason, saw social media coming miles away. Not only that, he predicted what a degenerated self-promotion meatmarket it would be, and how it would come to rule our lives. His book, LoveStar, detailing all of this was published in 2002 and was a smash hit, not only because it is brilliantly written, but because it combines sci-fi and a love story. The novel is about the couple Sigríður and Indriði and the overwhelming power of the company called LoveStar (\*cough\*—Facebook) that has conquered the world, restrained love and marketed death. Sound familiar? We know. Read it. Thank us later. **VG**

## Svar við bréfi Helgu / Reply to a Letter from Helga

Author: **Bergsveinn Birgisson**



Reply to a Letter from Helga is probably the most sophisticated Icelandic erotic love story to date. However, some of these romantic moments happen between the main protagonist, the farmer Bjarni, and one of his sheep. We don't want to give too much away,

but we promise it's better than you think. The story is about the lost love, and the regrets we have on our deathbeds when we ask ourselves why we didn't sacrifice everything for love. It's a short novel, only 106 pages long, but it contains the most explosive narrative about love ever seen in Icelandic literature. It's also recently been made into a movie! **VG**

## Tímaþjófurinn / The Thief of time

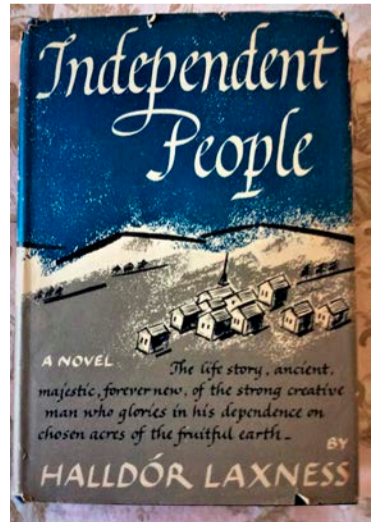
Author: **Steinunn Sigurðardóttir**



Every good Icelandic love story should begin with a dramatic death, as this one does, where one lover walks off into the frozen night, never to be seen alive again. It only gets stranger from there as author Steinunn Sigurðardóttir weaves an intricate web of love affairs, personal tragedy, and world travel—all while defying a sense of space and time. Written in beautiful poetic language and verse, Steinunn reflects the inner feelings of protagonist Alda Ivarsen who lives a seemingly ageless life beyond the confines of her socially-acceptable existence as a school teacher. **EL**

## Independent People

Author: **Halldór Laxness**



Hear me out. While on first reading it might not seem like Halldór's masterpiece has any love in it to speak of, look at it from a different angle and it could be the most significant Icelandic love story of all time. Protagonist Bjartur

doesn't love his wife, his daughter, his colleagues, and he definitely doesn't love god. But what he does love are his dog and his sheep. By jove does he love those sheep. Let this book remind you that it's totally ok to put your love ahead of everything else in your life, including the material needs of your family and friends. Ah, romance. **JG**

## Mánasteinn - Drengurinn sem aldrei var / Moonstone - The Boy That Never Was

Author: **SJÓN**



We weren't joking when we said Icelandic love stories were complicated, but Moonstone - The Boy That Never Was, takes this to a whole other level. The story is about a young gay man in the midst of the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918 in Iceland. The protagonist is completely rejected by the conservative society of Iceland, not only because he is gay, but also because he's dealing with learning difficulties. He becomes a prostitute which connects him with an obscure underworld hidden away from polite society. Romantic, right? Well, it's not like you think. This unique story is an ode to cinema, technology and hope. It's about the strong need for belonging and the importance of dreaming—portrayed in a steam-punk kind of a way. **VG**

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## Food



Jón Mýrdal taking a rare break from mopping

## The Almost Fishmonger Who Launched a Restaurant

Jón Mýrdal's journey from mopping  
floors to fishmongering to high-end res-  
taurateuring

Words: **Valur Grettisson** Photos: **Emma Leadbetter**

There is no simple way to explain Jón Mýrdal, one of Reykjavík's most prolific restaurant moguls. His varied CV includes experienced hunter, stand-up comedian, TV star, musician, journalist (we used to work together in the mid-2000 in that environment) and finally a restaurant entrepreneur—and almost a fishmonger.

### A lot of experience

Jón has been responsible for highly successful bars and restaurants, like Röntgen, Skuggabaldur, Messinn and the legendary bar and concert space, Húrra. While he has moved on from most of these ventures, apart from Skuggabaldur, he has now embarked on an interesting collaboration with another successful chef and restaurateur, Stefán Melsted, who was previously involved in the fantastic bar Snaps, among others. Now they are running the newest talk of the town, Kastrup.

### Pop Up Restaurant

"We met when I was at Röntgen and I had this space where Dill used to be, and I didn't really know what to do with it," Jón explains. Jón, being the human equivalent of the energiser bunny, offered Stefán the space to launch a pop-up restaurant. Stefán

studied in Copenhagen in Denmark, at Hotel D'Angleterre, and specialises in the famous Danish smørrebrød. The pop-up was a smash hit.

### Do you really want to be a fishmonger?

"I was always mopping the floor at Röntgen the morning after, so Stefán and I got to know each other quite well," Jón says. And no, it's not surprising that Jón was mopping the floor the morning after the wild parties at Röntgen. He is also the embodiment of the Icelandic work ethic.

"But the moment I realised that Stefán made sense is when I asked him about a space that he owned, because I wanted to open up a store there. I wanted to be a fishmonger," Jón explains so seriously that I literally burst out laughing while interviewing him.

Jón acknowledges the absurdity of the statement with a grin: "I'm quite an impulsive person, as you know."

While Stefán did offer him the space and said that the idea might work, he ultimately asked, "But do you really want to be a fishmonger?"

To be fair, Icelanders have a pretty deep appreciation for fishmongers, being an honest fish nation. Still, Jón realised fishmon-

gering wasn't a path he wanted to go down. However, this interaction with Stefán cemented the relationship between the two men.

"I realised that Stefán was a no-bullshit man, and I liked that," Jón says.

### Straightforward and quality materials are key

After repeating the pop-up concept at Bar Ananas at Klapparstígur, Stefán and Jón realised that there was some serious interest in their idea. Their next step was simple: finding a nice space. They eventually found it on Hverfisgata, under 101 Hotel.

Kastrup opened up in March, just at the end of COVID-19 restrictions and has already established itself with a host of regular customers.

"Although we follow the Danish philosophy when it comes to cuisine, we're just focusing on keeping things simple and big. No nonsense, just good wine and beer, real portions and a solid experience," Jón says.

While it's clear that the idea is a straightforward one, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that this is not your typical restaurant. Take, for instance, the fresh scallops from Breiðafjörður. The mollusks are paired with humble french fries—a down to earth move, making high-quality and seemingly exclusive produce seem diner-friendly and approachable.

Kastrup also offers succulent salmon—never sourced from fish farms, according to Jón. The vegetables, if not available in Iceland, are imported from Paris, where they are handpicked.

"At the end of the day, it's always about the quality of the raw ingredients," says Jón.

Asked what's next, Jón has a simple answer: "We're just preparing to evolve the menu for the winter, and then we'll see." 🍷

Kastrup is at Hverfisgata 6, 101 Reykjavík.

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Mathölls madness has gripped this city

# All Under One Roof

Food halls are Reykjavík’s new dining obsession

Words: **Josie Anne Gaitens** Photos: **Timothée Lambrecq**

If you have traversed downtown Reykjavík in recent months, you will have undoubtedly noticed multiple areas of construction disrupting the city. What might surprise you is just how many of these building sites are the locations of new mathölls—food halls in English. This rapidly growing global dining trend has not passed Iceland by, and Reykjavík will soon boast two more food hall options—making for a total of eight—in a city of only 120,000.

## Gig economy culture

Our obsession with food halls reflects our changing attitudes to dining. For our parents’ generation, a meal out was a special occasion and the significance of the experience was reflected in the service, the environment, and the price. Think heavily starched white napkins and credit cards slipped inside leather bill holders to conceal hefty price tags. Transformations in the way we work, socialise, parent, travel and prioritise our spending have resulted in a casual dining culture that mirrors other sweeping social changes, like the gig economy. Food halls provide an eating experience that meets many of the same criteria as those that drive interest in apps such as Uber and Noona: fast service, low prices and an abundance of choice.

For Iceland specifically, this approach to dining makes a lot of sense. Food halls provide a conve-

nient way to feed a lot of people quickly and efficiently in a relatively small space. With 1.9 million tourists expected to visit the country in 2023, this is an issue the country can’t afford to ignore. Mathölls have even popped up outside of the capital, with two opening last year in south Iceland, one in Hveragerði and another in Selfoss.

## A taste for all?

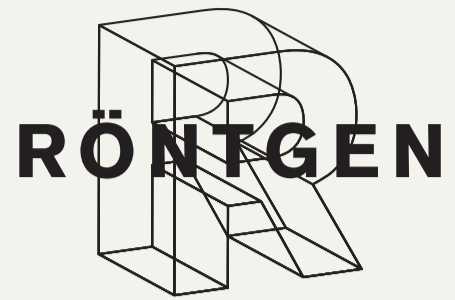
There’s something undeniably fun about the food hall experience, when done right. It’s thrilling to rock up to somewhere with a group of friends of an evening, without a care in the world about confirmed numbers or arriving in time to make your reservation. With many different restaurants on offer it’s easy to find something for even the pickiest eaters, and the relaxed

atmosphere means that spontaneous social interactions can occur with friendly neighbouring tables. Some food halls even go for the full-on canteen approach, with large communal tables where strangers sit side by side.

The downsides, however, are pretty blatant. The noise level in these places can quickly become overwhelming, as large groups of people mill around shouting orders, looking for tables, and just generally trying to be heard over the din of scores of other diners all doing the same thing. Forgoing dedicated waiting staff means that the table cleanup job is generally relegated to one or two despondent looking bussers, who are inevitably overwhelmed by the expanse of abandoned plates and pint glasses littering every surface. While there is no pressure to keep a reservation, there is also the flip side of there being no way to reserve a table, resulting in people hovering hawk-like next to you as you eat, so that they can swipe your spot the moment you step away.

Still though, the building works continue and the food halls just keep coming. Iceland has a history of taking an idea and running with it far beyond where it seems reasonable to stop (see also: puffin shops, the 2008 financial crash, the entire history of the vikings). Whether food halls are a trend here to stay, or just another bubble waiting to burst remains to be seen.

“The noise level in these places can quickly become overwhelming.”



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# Travel



## Hvammsvík: Where time stands still

### Swimming in the fjord of Whales

Words: **Anna Margrét Björnsson** Photos: **Saga Sig**



**Distance from Reykjavík:**  
50 kilometres

Just 40 minutes from Reykjavik city centre, in the gorgeous landscape of Hvalfjörður, lies Iceland's latest thermal baths experience. A peaceful cove and home of former WOW Air CEO Skúli Mogensen and his partner, interior designer Gríma Björg Thorarensen, Hvammsvík now offers a new and unique experience to Icelanders and tourists alike.

The water levels and temperatures at Hvammsvík Hot Springs fluctuate with the tides that wash in and out of the quiet fjord from the North Atlantic ocean. What also sets this thermal bath experience apart is its location far from the madding crowd; you really have to take a special, albeit short, journey to get there.

#### Fjord lost in time

On my trip to Hvammsvík, the August weather was exceptionally beautiful with clear blue skies and quiet seas. Hvalfjörður means "whale fjord" and Iceland's only whaling station is still located there. During World War II it was also the site of a naval base used by the British and American navies. The area is dotted by the ruins of that time.

The road skirting Hvalfjörður was much-travelled until the late 90s, when a tunnel opened running under the mouth of the fjord, shortening the trip considerably. The rest of Hvalfjörður almost stood still in time, cut away from traffic, remote, quiet, framed by mountains, green pastures and indigo waves.

This air of tranquillity and remoteness carries visitors all the way to Hvammsvík and the unassuming stretch of road marked "private" where you park your car and walk down towards the main building, built in WWII barack style and actually constructed on top of naval base ruins. Beyond it are eight different pools and a steambath right by the black sandy beach, a nod to Icelandic bathing culture fused with modern design and artwork. Arriving at Hvammsvík on this picture-perfect Sunday morning I was struck by its serenity, a feeling that stayed with me throughout my visit.

#### Design in harmony with the surrounding nature

Sustainable modern solutions merge with ancient bathing methods at Hvammsvík. Reykjavik Energy used to own the land and drilled for geothermally heated water at the time. "The old pool called Gamla Laugin has existed here for over 30 years and many people remember sneaking into it for a dip," Gríma explains. "We used it a lot whatever the weather. It's so incredible being in a hot pool on the beachfront and how different the experience can be, the differing tides, sunshine or a crazy storm, or starry skies and northern lights."

The more time she and Skúli spent at the beach, the more convinced they became of developing the area and the geothermal waters further while still taking care to keep any development

in harmony with the surrounding nature.

"Skúli has been very ardent in sketching up all kinds of ideas throughout the years and he's been immersing himself in the design of the pools themselves and their surroundings while my role was to design the interiors and every detail," Gríma tells me. "But the whole thing merged into one because we've spent countless hours together on this project, particularly for the last two years and of course, we've had amazing architects and contractors to help us realise our dream."

She further explains that the hot water from the geothermal borehole is mixed with two-thirds seawater, so guests are literally bathing in warm seawater. "There's constant flow-through and at night we increase the flow of seawater, which means they [are cleaned] naturally without any detergents used."

#### Float in warm seawater with a seal looking on

Their aim in opening Hvammsvík, Gríma says, was to create a unique experience in nature, keeping things small and in harmony with the surroundings and maintaining a personal service.

"There's so much wildlife in Hvammsvík, which we respect greatly. It's incredible to float in a warm pool on the beach and see curious seals swimming towards you. There are also plenty of eider ducks and a wide variety of other birds.



"One of our pools is a tidal pool and it disappears when the tide comes in. It's amazing to relax in a 38-degree hot pool and then feel the cold salty ocean flow over the edge and slowly cool it down. It's this ever-changing aspect of the baths that never ceases to surprise our guests and we've tried to attribute this also to the interior design. We've also created our own special scent, our own ceramics, the artwork and Storm Bistro and Bar which we've just opened."

#### Seawater signature

Adding to the interiors are some truly special pieces of art. Skúli is one of Iceland's most avid collectors and the interiors at Hvammsvík are adorned with the works of Ólafur Eliasson, Birgir Andrésón, Shoplifter, and more.

"The biggest compliment I get from people is that it seems that the building and the baths have always been here," Gríma says, proudly. "The colour palette of the interiors is as raw and rustic as the surrounding nature and I used materials sourced from the close surroundings, such as using sand, seashells and stones from the beach for the flooring."

To complete the Hvammsvík experience, the baths offer weekly Wim Hof sessions, free paddle boarding and a simple but rather wonderful menu to indulge in following your swim at the small restaurant and bar spearheaded by top chef Hinrik Carl Ellertsson. The menu includes algae shots, a seafood

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## The Islanders



# Brynjar Karl Birgisson

## The Lego Kid On Growing Up

**Words:** In many ways, Brynjar Karl Birgisson is your average 19 year old. He studies at a menntaskóli, where he is learning to play bass guitar. He loves classic rock: ACDC, Guns and Roses, Deep Purple—to day he is wearing a Whitesnake hoody. He lives with his mum and stepdad, in a separate basement apartment where he and his girlfriend hang out, do school work and watch movies.

**Photos:** But Brynjar also has another identity: the Lego kid. In 2015, aged 12, he completed the world's largest Lego replica of the Titanic, a feat that took 11 months, 120 tubes of glue, and more than 65,000 Lego bricks to complete.

**Emma Ledbetter** "I started to take notice of Lego when I was four or five years old," Brynjar says. "When you're a kid you just want to create, and you start to imagine 'just how big can I build something?'"

A trip to Legoland sparked something serious in young Brynjar. "I remember looking at the old Millennium Falcon," he says. "It just kind of gave me inspiration to do something similar. Because if they could do it, surely I could too."

Not many people might have felt the same burst of confidence as Brynjar, but he was determined. Already fascinated by steam locomotives and history, when it came to decide on what his big project should be, the Titanic was an obvious choice.

"The idea was to have it the same scale as a Lego person," Brynjar explains. "So if you put a Lego figurine on my ship, it's equivalent to someone who's roughly 175cm tall."

"My grandfather is a former engineer, so he used this idea to calculate the dimensions. When it came out that it would be 6.33m long, it stopped me for a minute. But I didn't hesitate for long, because Lego was the only thing on my mind. All I wanted to do was build—that

was my mentality."

When Brynjar's mega model was complete, it was first displayed in Smáralind mall in Kópavogur. From there it started to gain national—then international—attention. Brynjar and his ship were invited to Sweden, Norway, Germany and eventually, the US, where the model now resides. The experience had a profound impact on the young builder.

"I already knew that Lego was big when I was building the Titanic," Brynjar says "But I didn't know it was something that could put you on the world stage. I didn't know about the whole community aspect."

"It's nice to find a community that you have something in common with—it doesn't matter if it's Lego or another subject," he continues. "And also, that helped me a lot because of my Autism."

In fact, Brynjar credits his experience of showcasing the Titanic model with changing his life. "I can see a big difference from when I was younger in how I speak and portray myself," he says. "I learned how to be more social, and I just feel better about myself and how I can talk to people. When I was building the Titanic I had no interest in anybody."

Although Brynjar acknowledges that people's perception of him is somewhat frozen in time, while his own personal hobbies and interests have changed, he has only gratitude to express when it comes to his time in the media. "I'm glad to be the Lego kid," he says. "And I'm privileged to know that I've gone so far in life because of it."

*The Islanders is our series where we interview interesting people in Iceland about their unique lives. Know someone we should speak to? Email: [grapevine@grapevine.is](mailto:grapevine@grapevine.is)*

WELL, YOU ASKED

## Weather Or Not, There Will Be A Volcano



Words: **Asha Edmondson**

*All questions are stupid if you ask us.*

### I'm coming to Iceland at the end of September, how will the weather be?

As a weather forecast, the most useless thing in Iceland. The only certain forecast is there is a 100% chance you will endure all conditions. You should expect rain, cold, wind, sun, (minimal) heat—to be honest I wouldn't be surprised if actual cats and dogs started falling from the sky. Supposedly the average temperature is about 8.5°C, but averages mean nothing in Iceland. Your best bet is to ignore what the forecast says (it will be wrong) and wear more layers than you think necessary.

### How long will the new volcano last?

Call me a psychic, but I think the new volcano will last until August 22, 2022. I know my prediction has mind-boggling accuracy, but what can I say, maybe my true calling is to be a volcanologist. Sadly for all volcano-enthusiasts, Meradalir got annoyed with all of the stupid people making dumb decisions near her, so she gave up. But don't be too upset that you missed her, scientists think this is only the start of more volcanic activity.

RIP Meradalir 22/08/2022.

### Swimming in lava will kill me, but it would be a pretty cool legacy to leave behind. Is it worth it?

You might make a few news headlines with this stunt, but it might not be the smartest or most comfortable way to go out. Lava's temperature is around 1,170°C, making for what we'd assume to be a rather painful scorching. Also, the search and rescue teams are already overwhelmed dealing with other dumb dumbs making stupid choices and this stunt would definitely only make their day more difficult. I'd suggest you just set up a green screen and make your own home movie of swimming in lava; you'll be free of burns and the search and rescue team would have an easier day. Who knows, this might launch your film career.

soup, and dried fish with dulse, as well as a variety of open-faced sourdough sandwiches and vegan options of course. Then there's the swim-in bar and an excellent wine selection.

Further attention to detail includes a heavenly grassy seawater signature Hvammsvík scent, which is infused in the change areas' soaps and shampoos. Those who just can't bear to leave can stay longer in one of the cabins on site, each stylishly appointed by Gríma in keeping with the rest of the Hvammsvík experience.

### Ocean goddess

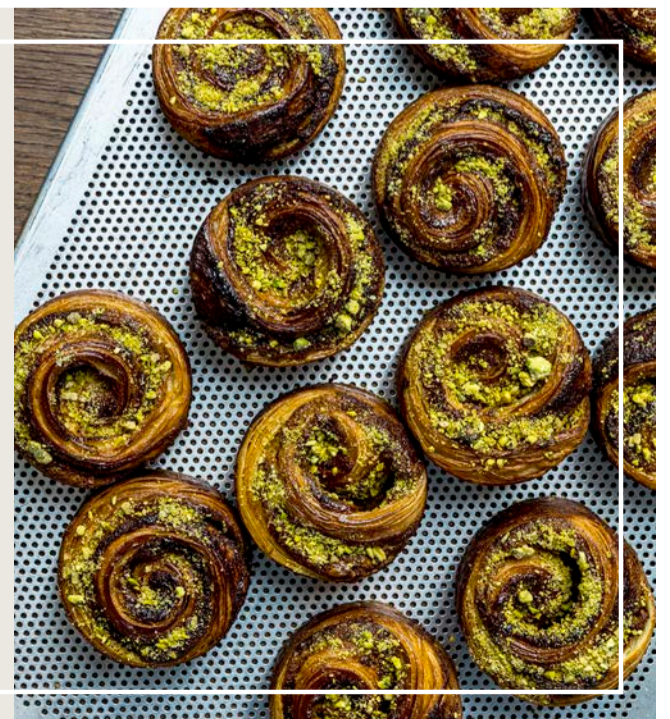
My experience at Hvammsvík was of utter timelessness. I spent the whole day immersing myself in the different pools, floating in the buoyant seawater, observing the clouds and an occasional bird streaking across the sky, absorbing the mountainscape and the ebb and flow of the tide. I braved the cold ocean for brisk dips between soaking in the warm baths and let the sunlight on my face and the soft seawater do its magic whilst occasionally sipping on algae-fused fruit juice.

When I finally emerged, mostly due to hunger, it was almost six o'clock. I'd spent six hours in the ocean without even noticing the passage of time. My skin was soft, my body tingled, my mind was an oasis of calm and I felt like an ocean goddess. I can't wait to return.



*hugge*

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**“I like to think about people on the dance floor dancing to forget to the tune of true prison stories.”**

Musician **Ingibjörg Friðriksdóttir** on entertainment and imprisonment, which she explores in her newest release, 'Brotabot' - **P18**



**“The gig celebrates women in rock, by accident or not.”**

Mammút bassist **Ása Dýradóttir** on the lineup at Mammút and Kælan Mikla's upcoming concert - **P23**



**“I didn't hesitate for long, because Lego was the only thing on my mind.”**

**Brynjar Karl Birgisson** on his life since he became the “Lego Titanic” kid seven years ago - **P30**

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