

THE 

# REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

Issue 10 | 2022 | [www.gpv.is](http://www.gpv.is)

*"I Live  
A Really  
Normal Life"*

Björk on new album 'Fossora', coming home and whether she's a 'cool mom'

## Terrorism

Or is it?

## Airwaves

Coming soon to a certain city near you

## Snorri Helga

New music with a nostalgic touch

## Ice climbing

We did it so you don't have to



COVER PHOTO:

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Earrings: Örr  
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Makeup: Sunna Björk Erlingsdóttir  
Nails: Sojin Oh  
Assistance: James Merry & Jon Albert

# First



11: Unlikely Duo  
14: Best Of: Libraries  
15: Bagels And Bathing With Snæi Jack



20: Through Sigurður's Lense  
22: Icelandic Horror  
24: Brynja 'Repeats' Herself



26: Auður's Quakes  
28: Food—But In Vestmannaeyjar  
31: The Microgreens Dealer

## EDITORIAL



Photo: Baldur Kristjánsson

# A Memorial: The Prins That Understood Us

When we at The Reykjavík Grapevine heard the news that Svavar Pétur Eysteinnsson, best known as Prins Póló, had died, we didn't really know what to say. As always when a loved one dies, it felt unreal—a harsh reminder of how fragile and short life is. Svavar Pétur was only 45 years old. He had been battling cancer since 2018.

Although Svavar Pétur died young, he was incredibly prolific in his short life. His humorous views on life punctuate his music. He managed to master the everydayness and elevate it to the verge of true magic. His music was always original and unorthodox in its simplicity and his lyrics were the true gem. He is one of the few Icelandic musicians who truly understood this odd nation. The complexity, the banality, the hardness and just the small moments that make us so human.

As Prins Póló, Svavar focused on the reality of things. It was always humorous, but never at the cost of everyday Icelanders, even when musing about drunk sailors, people who failed Danish lessons in college, and so on. Sometimes it was tragic-comical, like when he sang, "Life, are you kidding?" which became a national anthem and a saying among Icelanders. In his song, "Læda slæda," he sings about the frustration of mundane Icelanders on the verge of losing their temper but

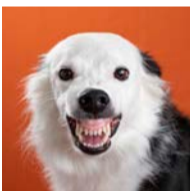
eventually letting everything just slide instead of facing their feelings. It's a deeper analysis of the Icelandic mentality than you think.

Although Svavar Pétur was beloved as a great musician, people tend to overlook the fact that he was truly one of the great poets of his generation. He began writing as a journalist in the mid-2000s and showed very early on that he was both a uniquely talented writer as well as a skilled humourist. It was at that time that he met his wife, Berglind Häsler, another brilliant journalist. He was also a graphic designer and put that talent on display through his visual art. His Prins Póló persona is masterful, with its name nodding to the most popular candy bar in Iceland, the Polish Prince Polo chocolate biscuit.

Svavar Pétur was a multi-layered artist disguised as a warm, humorous musician. He was a wonderful and rare reflection of Icelanders and that's just one reason we love him so much; he brought out the best in us.

Rest in peace, dear friend. We will always appreciate your art, and cherish your understanding and your humour. Our hearts are crushed. You will be missed.

**Valur Grettilsson**  
Editor-In-Chief



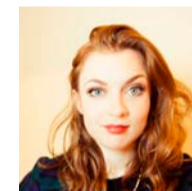
**Polly** is a hard-working journalist by day and an enthusiastic ball-catcher by night. A five-year-old dachshund mix with an IQ of a five year old human, Polly is Chief Morale Officer at the Grapevine, and a regular contributor to the Grapevine Newscast on YouTube. **Voff!**



**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.



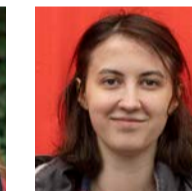
**Josie Anne Gaitens** is an arts worker, musician and writer from the Scottish Highlands. She was once erroneously referred to as the Queen of Scotland by a Malaysian newspaper and has been falsely using that title ever since. In addition to her Grapevine duties, she is currently on a mission to have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



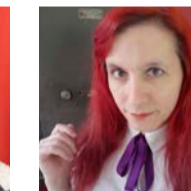
**Iryna Zubenko** is a Ukrainian who has been working on the cross-section of media and technology for the past five years. While she is still figuring out what to do in life, this time her love for travelling, unspoiled nature and Scandi design has brought Iryna to Reykjavik. One day she'll write a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



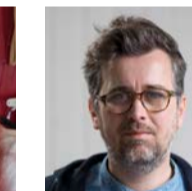
**Catharine Fulton** is a writer who has been involved with the Grapevine for many years—possibly too many—serving as journalist, food editor and news editor before settling on copy editor. When not wielding her red pen she's often found opining on Canadian politics (professionally), and bitching about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



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



**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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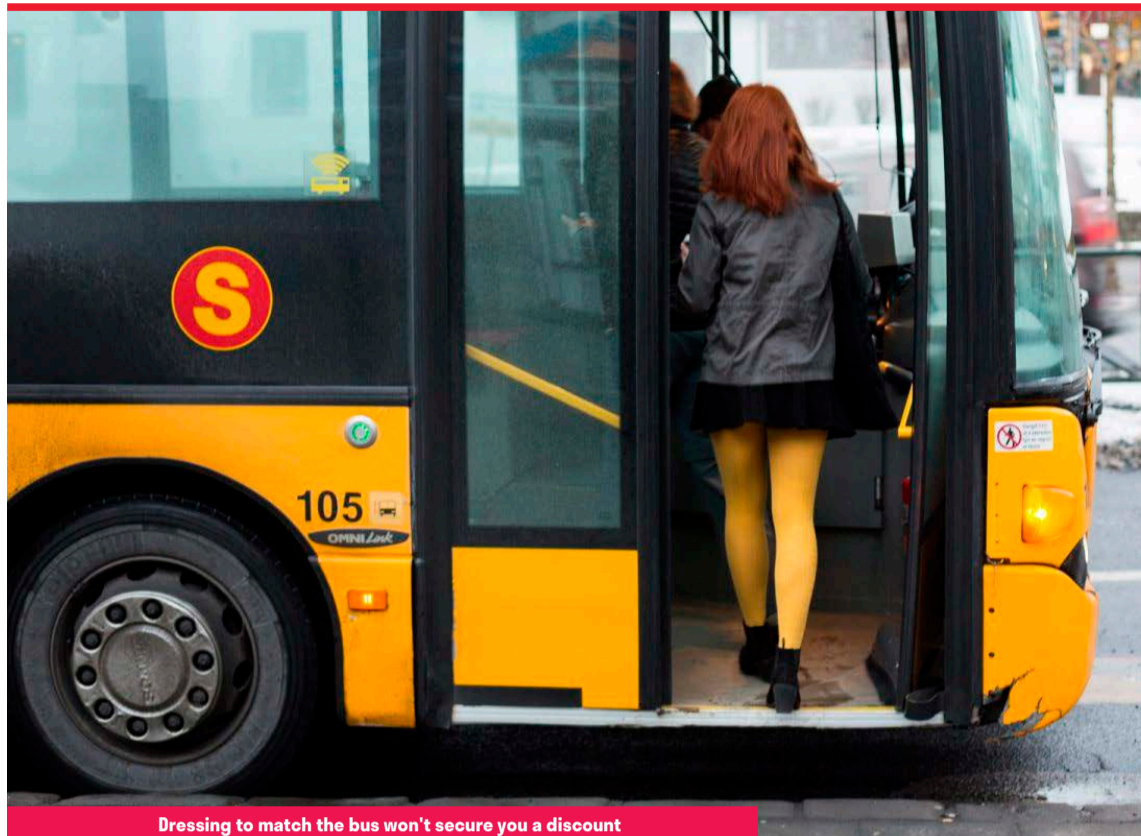


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## What Are Icelanders Talking About?

The people have spoken

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

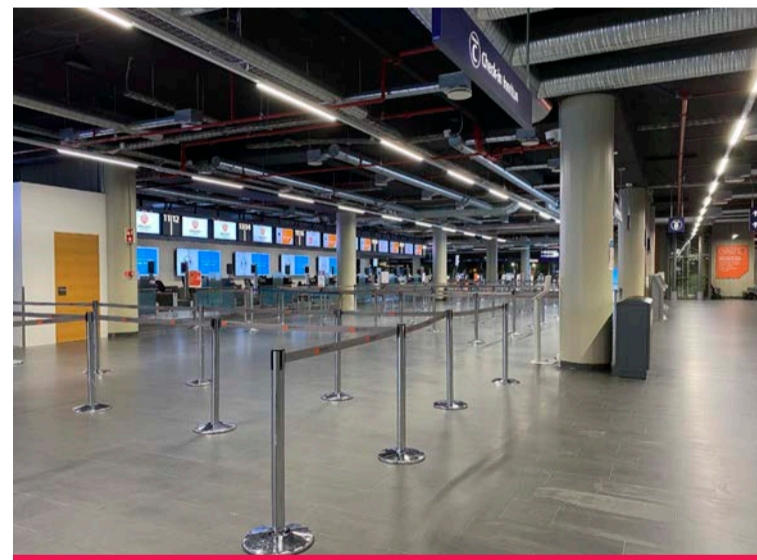
**NEWS** The top story on Icelanders' minds these days is the capital police's **ongoing terrorism investigation**—a case that gets stranger with each new revelation. One aspect of the aftermath of the 3D printed weapons bust generating particularly heated debate is Minister of Justice Jón Gunnarsson capitalising on the case to **push for equipping police with increased investigative powers and tasers**. Both ideas have been introduced in Parliament before and shut down, but Jón is likely hoping that the public being terrified of a thwarted terror attack will boost support for the measures. Criminologists in Iceland are pointing out that expanding police surveillance powers and giving them more weapons won't make the public safer. Jón better act fast—the case is already shaping up to be not as great a threat to public safety as it once appeared to be.

Svavar Pétur Eysteinnsson, perhaps better known to our readers by the stage name **Prins Póló**, **passed away** September 29th after a four year battle with cancer. He was 45-years old. Over the days that followed, Icelanders posted their favourite tracks by this supremely talented musician, but also remembered him for his eye as a graphic designer.

The price of **capital area bus fares went up** on October 1st, by a whopping 12.5%. Strætó, the bus company owned by Reykjavík area municipalities, said that they either had to raise fares or cut services, as operational costs had been climbing from the energy crisis in Europe and the continuing COVID pandemic. The Children's Ombudsman was quick to point out that Reykjavík City Council's majority promised that primary school kids (those aged 16 and under) would ride for free; instead, the price hike applies to all riders 12 and over (younger children ride free). Further, netizens discovered what many bus riders

already knew: that the majority of the board of Strætó don't even use the bus. And how come no one ever questions the "profitability" of running water, electricity, or other public services? We may never know.

What else? Hm, not sure, oh wait that's right—we had a **bomb scare at our only international airport**. Air traffic to and from Keflavik was shut down for about four hours on September 29th as the Coast Guard, the police, and bomb specialists searched a UPS plane from Germany on its way to the US. After hours of searching, no bomb was found and planes were allowed to take off and land again, but they did find "a suspicious package" which contained... fireworks. And "facsimiles of handguns," which probably means, you know, toys. Better safe than sorry! 🍷



On the plus side, no queues. On the downside, no planes



## Lunch

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## Dinner



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# Terrorist Plot Foiled

Justice Minister looking to expand police powers

Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine**

Photo: **Visir.is**

Last month's arrest of four Icelandic men in their twenties, two of whom are still in custody, on suspicion of conspiring to commit a terrorist act has brought a swift response from the government. Amongst those responses is the re-introduction of a bill with the purpose of creating "preemptive investigation" powers for the police.

## Far-right extremists, most likely

The men in question had reportedly been manufacturing firearms using 3D printing technology. In raids in both Kopavogur and Mosfellsbær on

September 21st, police seized dozens of firearms and thousands of rounds of ammunition. At a press conference the day after the arrests, police said they had been investigating these men for weeks, and that the suspects were planning to attack certain government offices. They added that they are still investigating whether these men have ties to extremist groups abroad.

Sources close to Stundin say the men are linked to Nordic far-right extremist groups. In addition, sources close to Morgunblaðið say that police found "fanatical propaganda" during their search of the locations where the men were arrested that idolised child killer

and far-right terrorist Anders Breivik and other extremists of that nature.

## Pre-emptive investigations?

In an interview with RÚV, Minister of Justice Jón Gunnarsson said that while the matter was shocking, he praised the police for their careful investigations and swift response.

He added, however, that this case underlined the importance of passing a law that would allow police to conduct so-called "pre-emptive investigations". This is a controversial measure that Parliament has rejected in the past, which would give the police the power to begin investigations of individuals before they are suspected of committing or conspiring to commit a crime. He said that such legislation is "exactly what is called for" 🇮🇸

### ASK AN EXPERT

## Q: Why Do We Call Potatoes That?



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

If you have any passing familiarity with Icelandic, you likely know that the word for "potato" is "kartafla." Given how ubiquitous this vegetable is in Iceland, chances are it's a word you've encountered a lot. However, we recently discovered that there's another word for it, "jarðepli," which literally translates to "earth apple," which is also what they call potatoes in French and Dutch. So how come you see the former word but almost never the latter? Naturally, we asked Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson, professor emeritus of Icelandic at the University of Iceland, for the real scoop:

"Icelandic has two words for 'potato'—jarðepli, which is a compound made of domestic material, jarð-'earth' and -epli 'apple,' although it is presumably based on a foreign model (perhaps the Dutch aardappel)—and kartafla, which is a loanword adapted from the Danish kartoffel. The first records of both words stem from the mid-18th century, when Icelanders started growing potatoes. Up to around 1880, jarðepli seems to have been the more common of the two, but since the beginning of the 20th century, kartafla has been the main word and jarðepli has been gradually disappearing from use. It is impossible to say why kartafla took over. Maybe jarðepli was considered misleading, making false connections to epli, but it can also be pointed out that a number of other neologisms for vegetables and fruits have not been a big success, such as bjúgaldin (literally 'bow-fruit') for banana, the commonly used word being banani, and glóaldin (literally 'glow-fruit') for orange, the commonly used word being appelsína—and many more." 🇮🇸

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



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# The Prison Experience

Finally, a cheap rental option in the city! At only 50,000 ISK (355 euros) per month, this room seems like a steal. Is this the first indication of a healthier and more affordable rental market in Iceland? Wait, no shower. Ah, we see.

Now, this superb apartment is located in Breiðholt (think: the Brooklyn of Reykjavik but like way, way less cool), and not only that, it's close to Mjóddin shopping centre—a true cultural highlight. For some unknown reason, they don't mention that the cinema is also close by. Perhaps because if you're going for this apartment, you're not likely to be throwing money away on movie tickets.

The room is just under 10 square metres in size. Which is twice the size of a prison cell if you're in isolation. See, already winning!

And just like in prison, you have to share the toilet with others. Luckily though, you don't have to share the shower with anyone—because there is none.

To keep yourself clean you will either have to buy a gym card—which we're totally sure you can afford, at 99,000 ISK per year—or an annual pool pass, a bargain at just 40,000 ISK.

There's also the option to just not shower at all. We don't recommend it, we're just stating it's a possibility and we totally understand if you want to give up completely. In fact, why not stage a silent protest where you just stink your landlord out. It's a whole new level of activism. 🇮🇸

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

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**Björk - Fossara**  
**Out now!**  
Our one and only, Björk, offers one more mind bending album showing that she's still searching for something great, something in depth. Björk has never been out there to please everybody, and it's safe to say that she doesn't compromise here either. The album is an acquired taste for beginners (the best in life are always like that), and for fans this will be nothing less than a festival for the ears with unexpected twists and turns. **VG**



**krassasig - krassasig**  
**Release date: October 28th**  
The only thing the Reykjavík Grapevine has been waiting for with more excitement than the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the first EP from the immensely talented musician, krassasig. And unlike Jesus returning, the album is finally here! krassasig offers fantastic pop melodies on this release, with instant classic hits like 'Einn dag í einu' and new songs that are bound to be massive hits like 'Práðlaus'. Be warned though, this is addictive stuff. **VG**



**CYBER - NO CRY**  
**Release date: October 21st**  
If you love driving alone in the night blasting music, you're gonna loooove this one. This fast paced, angsty song is packed with emotion and for some reason triggers a need for speed. A strange way to process emotions, but satisfying nonetheless. Stick to the speed limit though! **KW**

# The 1949 NATO Riots

Tear gas deployed for the first time

**Words:** Iceland has been a part of NATO for as long as most generations can remember, and will likely stay there for some time to come. Even the sole existing political party that used to call for Iceland's withdrawal from the organisation—the Left-Greens—have more or less abandoned this platform point. We might not have our own military, but we regularly welcome other NATO countries to conduct air and sea surveillance and combat drills here. It would seem we're more or less OK with NATO.

**Photo:** **Valgerður Tryggvadóttir - Arnaldur Grétarsson & Family**

But it wasn't always this way. It used to be a very divisive issue, and once even led to an all-out riot breaking out in front of Parliament.

## Fear of a red planet

Iceland had been occupied by the British military, and then warmly visited by US forces throughout most of the Second World War. Icelanders had always prided themselves on their political neutrality and their lack of an army, so when that conflict drew to a close, a lot of people expected things to go back to normal.

That would not be the case as far as one man was concerned: then-Foreign Minister Bjarni Benediktsson—not to be confused with the current Finance Minister of the same name, who is also the great-nephew of this previous Foreign Minister, although both are members of the Independence Party. We'll let you draw your own conclusions on political nepotism.

A staunch anti-communist, this Bjarni Benediktsson believed Iceland would need NATO's help in defending itself against the Red Menace, and began the push within Iceland's government to join NATO.

## The kettle boils over

The matter was brought to a Parliamentary vote on March 30th of 1949. Several hundred protestors convened on the parliamentary building, which was already surrounded by many pro-NATO (and pro-Independence Party) counter-protestors.

At first, things were relatively peaceful. But then, a leading member of the People's Unity Party began telling the

crowd that their chair was being "held hostage" within Parliament. And that's when things got crazy.

Rocks and eggs were thrown at Parliament. Windows were being broken. It looked like the leftists were going to storm the building. And they might have, were it not for members of the Independence Party joining forces with the police to beat back these protestors violently. Tear gas was deployed for the first time, and would not be used again until 2009.

## Things cool down

Since then, while there has always been an anti-NATO movement of some kind or another in Iceland, it has never enjoyed a great deal of popular support, and likely never will.

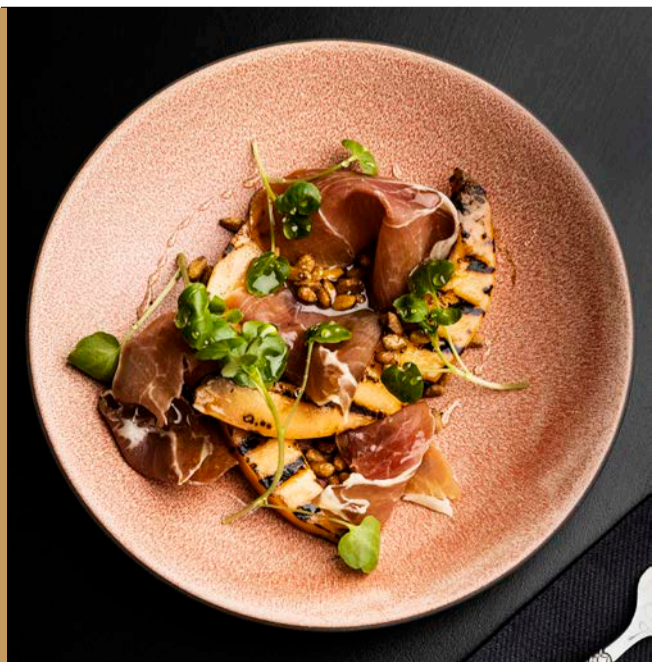
The US military base in Keflavík, once the seat of NATO's power in Iceland, was decommissioned in 2006. However, it never fully went away, and the US military has been slowly building it back up. And we still have to tolerate fighter jets buzzing over our rooftops, and warships parked in our harbours, at least a few times a year.

For what it's worth, Russia has yet to make any sort of move to annex Iceland. Whether or not NATO is to thank for that is impossible to tell. **GV**

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# Stameccan





# ving Queen

## Björk's eagerly awaited new album is an ode to family, community and home

WORDS: JOSIE ANNE GAITENS PHOTOS: VIÐAR LOGI

**On** a chilly Friday afternoon in late August, in an otherwise empty Reykjavik restaurant, Björk Guðmundsdóttir is having trouble focussing. "My eyes are going all over the place looking at the people, I can't concentrate," she complains jovially, getting up to switch seats. Finally comfortable, she leans forward to indicate she is giving her full attention. "I'm with you," she says.

Björk's new album, 'Fossora' is her first in five years—the longest period of time she has gone without releasing an album since her first solo record, 'Debut'. It has also come out at a time of stark contrasts and upheaval for both the artist and the world at large. In the intervening period since 2017's 'Utopia', Björk has gone through the loss of her mother, her daughter leaving home—and the small matter of a global pandemic.

### Riding out the pandemic

"It was actually amazing for me, because I could just stay at home. I didn't pack my suitcase for two years or more, which is the longest since I was like, sixteen," Björk says of her experience of the Covid-19 pandemic, almost guiltily.

"There wasn't that much of a lifestyle change here. I would be lying if I said otherwise, because the album is so much about that period," she adds. "I had so many friends who knew people who passed away or who were stuck in one room for months, and we didn't have any of that."

Björk was lucky, she says. Lucky to be in Iceland, where restrictions were less harsh and outbreak numbers lower, lucky to be near her kids and loved ones, and lucky because she had a whole new album to create.

"For me, it was perfect timing," she explains. "I was writing."

### "Like chocolate pudding"

But Björk resisted the urge to engage in overwrought pandemic productivity. While many of us fretted over how to spend our new-found time with knitting projects and sourdough bread, the artist took the time to do something she has never previously indulged in—slow down.

"Everybody was like, 'Oh, this is the weirdest time ever. How can I at least try to turn it into something?' Probably my biggest weakness is I put too many things on my plate," Björk says emphatically. "And so I decided to not do that and just write the album."

For those—and there are many—who picture her as some kind of mythical elf creature, imagining Björk just kicking back at home might be inconceivable, but the musician insists her Covid life was relatively mundane.

"I was just really relaxed," she says. "I was hanging out doing normal things and cooking and sort of partying—you know, living room raves." Björk laughs "We all did that, right?"

This relaxed approach explains to a certain extent why 'Fossora' came together slowly. "I would only write when I felt really inspired," Björk says. "My gift to myself during this time was not to be a workaholic."

Despite the novelty of it, switching to this slow and measured approach to writing only delighted the artist: "I loved it, I really loved it. It felt like chocolate pudding every day."

### Homecoming

Another result of creating a pandemic album is that the supporting musicians and collaborators it features are almost entirely

Icelandic, or Iceland-based. This is somewhat unusual for an artist who has spent much of her life living, at least part of the time, abroad, working with artists of all kinds across the world. But from another perspective, it is not surprising at all; Björk very much sees herself as a homebird, and considers being thought of as an Icelandic musician as "very important."

"I was in a band when I was a teenager," she says, of her early punk career. "And I was the one out of all them who wanted to stay at home." She smiles at this. "Which is a very funny contradiction. It's funny how life works."

Despite finally leaving the country at 27 and having spent a significant part of the last three decades elsewhere, Björk is adamant that Iceland is, and always was, home.

"I'm always in Iceland half the time," she insists. "Still, when I meet Icelanders, they always say, 'Oh, I thought you lived abroad.' But the thing is, when I'm here, I don't go to openings or big things—I just go to little bars and meet my friends. It's a kind of under-cover lifestyle."

Now though, with her daughter having graduated from school in Brooklyn and flown the nest, Björk has finally sold her home in New York, and sees herself being more permanently based in her home country from now on. It's an idea which obviously excites her—there is visible joy and relief as she talks about it.

"It's a new chapter in my life where I'm just here," she says. "I've got all the boxes unpacked. Everything I own is in Iceland."

### The Icelandic album

Beyond just living in the country, Björk clearly

sees herself as firmly embedded in the Icelandic musical community, as evidenced by who she has chosen to work with on 'Fossora'. Local underground band Side Project, who are part of the post-dreifing community of artists, appear on the second single, "Ovule", alongside Iceland Symphony Orchestra percussionist Soraya Nayya, who provided grounding timpani beats. Soraya, who is one of many musicians from the orchestra to be featured, also performs the distinctive tubular bells on Björk's lament for her mother, "Ancestress".

"We spent a lot of time in [Soraya's] percussion basement," Björk says of the arrangement process. "It was fun—like a playground."

Björk's albums are often conceptually tied to a particular sound or instrument, and 'Fossora' is no different. In contrast with the high-pitched, breathy flutes of her previous release, 'Utopia', this record is grounded by Gameleon Gabber beats and weighty bass clarinets. While putting the album together, Björk regularly took her fellow musicians to her summer house just outside of Reykjavík to rehearse. One can only imagine the experience of overhearing six bass clarinets booming across the Icelandic countryside.

Even the more international elements of the album were funnelled through Björk's Icelandic context. 'Fossora's distinctive beats were produced by Indonesian duo Gabber Modus Operandi, whose work was also the themetrack to Björk's aforementioned living room raves. The pair collaborated with Björk remotely—via Zoom calls. It seems even an ethereal, world-renowned artist was not immune to the ubiquitous Zoom meeting during lockdown.

### Family Affair

The track "Ancestress" also features vocals from another significant guest musician: Sindri Eldon Þórsson, Björk's son. In fact, both of her children lend their voices to the album, with Björk's daughter, Ísadóra appearing on the poignant "Her Mother's House"—tackling the subject of her leaving home head on.

It's notable that what Björk is processing in this work—themes of maturation, empty nest syndrome, the grief of losing a parent—are common elements of life, especially for women. Through her brutally honest lyricism, she displays herself as sandwiched between two generations, with her kids on one side and her mother on the other. Despite the universality of the situation, it

"I'm the sort of musician who gives so much of myself"

"It's good for me to start from a fresh point."



feels like quite uncharted territory; there is relatively little artistic output that deals with these particular experiences.

"Both my kids are grownups now," Björk acknowledges. "With that and my mother gone it definitely feels like a new phase in our family, which I find very interesting. I'm very curious about that period of life."

### Finding the moment

This is the first time Björk's children have appeared on her records, despite the fact that Sindri is now an established musician himself. But having herself experienced the pressure of releasing music and appearing in the spotlight at a very young age—she was only 11 when her first album was released—Björk held back from showcasing her kids until the moment felt "right."

"I wonder why I did that for the first time now," she ponders, before laughingly half-answering herself, "Sometimes you don't know why you do things!"

"I think it's because my younger one is grown up now, I can deal with them both as equals," Björk goes on. "I don't know what word to use—they're all kind of ugly—but my fame, I guess—it has affected my kids."

She puts the word 'fame' in inverted commas in her voice, screwing up her face in distaste. "It sort of sucked a lot of the time," she says honestly. "But I felt at least with my work, it should be about meeting them as equals."

Nevertheless, Björk felt anxious about including her children in the process and thrusting them into the limelight of her very real 'fame.'

"It feels good, but I was worried till the end," she admits. "I kept asking them both, 'Does this feel ok? Are you sure about this? You can pull out at any time.' But they are both very happy with it. They felt it was something we should do."

### Cool mom?

Sold out stadium concerts, world-wide success, featuring her kids on her 10th studio album... It's all pretty impressive, but does this really make Björk a cool mom? She giggles at the suggestion. "You'd have to ask my kids," she says.

She confesses, however, that Side Project are "sort of more friends of my daughter, really," and that she sometimes "gatecrashes" their hangouts. She recently saw them play downtown on Culture Night and describes the experience with glee.

"They're the continuation of the sort of music I love—experimental electronic music," Björk says, her eyes lighting up with the memory. "So I mean—I was in heaven. Standing there, with a jar of white wine, in some garden, listening to Side Project. I was like—my life is wonderful!" She bursts into peals of laughter "It's everything you need. And then, boom, fireworks!"

While that does all sound pretty cool, Björk thinks that there is something more inherently Icelandic about hanging out with older relatives. "In Iceland, the generations drink together," she says. "You'll get drunk with your grandfather."

"That's considered 'shock horror' in London or New York," she explains, laughing again. "But I don't think it's because we're particularly nice people. It's more of a necessity. There's not many of us, you naturally meet other generations at a concert or a poetry reading or whatever."

Björk continues, more seriously now. "I actually really like that about Iceland, that it's such a small village and you have to deal with it. All the shit that you've done over your lifetime—the good and the bad—it's just there."

"So," she concludes, joking again. "In that sense, I have partied with my kids, yes. Does that make me a cool mom?" She smiles. "Not necessarily. I have tried to give them space, too. To not be too much."

### It might be private

Again, for those outside of Iceland, it might seem totally bizarre to imagine an artist such as Björk just turning up to a casual neighbourhood concert. If you google 'Björk's house,' a picture comes up of a hunting lodge on Vestmannaeyjar, with the caption, 'This is Björk's house. The country where its located is called Moose Gay Moose Tits. This is where Björk lives.'

When I tell her this, Björk is amused and perplexed. "Ok, weird," she chuckles. To be clear: this is absolutely not where Björk lives. But getting her audience to understand the relationship between the two sides of her identity—Björk the mystical, whimsical creative artist, and Björk the extremely private, easygoing homebody—has always presented a challenge.

"I've always just lived a very normal life, that was very important for me," she says. "I go to the shop, I buy food, I come home and cook it."

It's a far cry from the life of whimsy and glamour her fans might expect, but Björk is adamant that she is entitled to a quiet private life.

"I did some things in the beginning that I'm still benefiting from now, because I'm very persistent," she explains. "Like, I never do autographs in Iceland. I never do photos. And everyone in Iceland knows this, so they leave me be."

While Björk makes it clear that she loves her fans, and appreciates their support of her work, she is grateful for the hard lines about her personal life that she laid down early in her career.

"When this all happened to me in the 90s, it was before the internet," Björk says. "So it was like, you're either a celebrity or you're not, and if you are a celebrity, people get 24/7 access to you. And I was like, no! That's not fair!"

"I'm the sort of musician who gives so much of myself," she continues. "I'm always writing music, I'm always writing lyrics, I'm always releasing stuff."

"That's my way of being generous," Björk says, with feeling. "But you coming and bothering me in the supermarket? Fat chance!" She makes a downward motion with her hand to drive the point home: "That's where I draw my line."

### Begin again

It seems clear that in her 50s, child-free and divorced, deeply rooted in Iceland but with her head still in the clouds of her unbound creativity, Björk might have found her way into a groove that works. She writes by walking around, recording herself singing, and coming home with a melody that she then arranges.

"That is always more time consuming, because it sometimes takes weeks for me to do a string arrangement or a clarinet arrangement," Björk explains. "And then obviously, it's the rehearsals. And then you change the arrangements depending on what you hear. So with all this is and then obviously the beats it's a long, long process."

That long process is nearly up for 'Fossora', however, and soon a new cycle will emerge—of performances, tours, and many, many interviews like this one.

At the beginning of our conversation together, I had to make a confession. Embarrassingly enough, I admitted that 'Fossora' is the first Björk album I have listened to. To my relief, she is delighted.

"I'm quite excited. I've done quite a few interviews in my life," Björk says, her eyes twinkling with the ironic understatement. "It's good for me to start from a fresh point."

In some ways, the idea of starting from a fresh point epitomises 'Fossora'. It is post-Covid, post-grief, post-parenthood. A new identity is being formed, which for Björk takes place, conceptually, "somewhere cosy in the ground, with the mushrooms." Somehow, even with her 10th album, Björk always knows exactly how to rip it up and start again. ♡



'Fossora' is available to purchase for worldwide delivery at [shop.grapevine.is](http://shop.grapevine.is)

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## A! Performance Festival

November 6th - 9th - Akureyri - Free

In November, Akureyri invites all culture lovers to join A!—the eighth edition of the annual and international performance art festival. A! will showcase performances both from aspiring and well-known artists. It's the only festival in Iceland that focusses solely on performance art and has previously drawn crowds of over 2000 people! It'll take place at multiple venues in Akureyri so it's the perfect way to explore both the festival and city. [IZ](#)



## Radical Kitchen Strikes Back!

October 23rd - 18:00-22:00 - Andrými - 500 ISK minimum donation

Every second Sunday of the month Bollywood Iceland and Andrými bring 'Radical Kitchen' to Reykjavík. 'Radical Kitchen' offers a selection of vegan, vegetarian, omnitarian and keto foods, making it an event no foodie can miss. You can join in as a cook, eater, or helper. "Come Hungry, Eat Happy, Go Full," reads the event description and we couldn't agree more. [IZ](#)

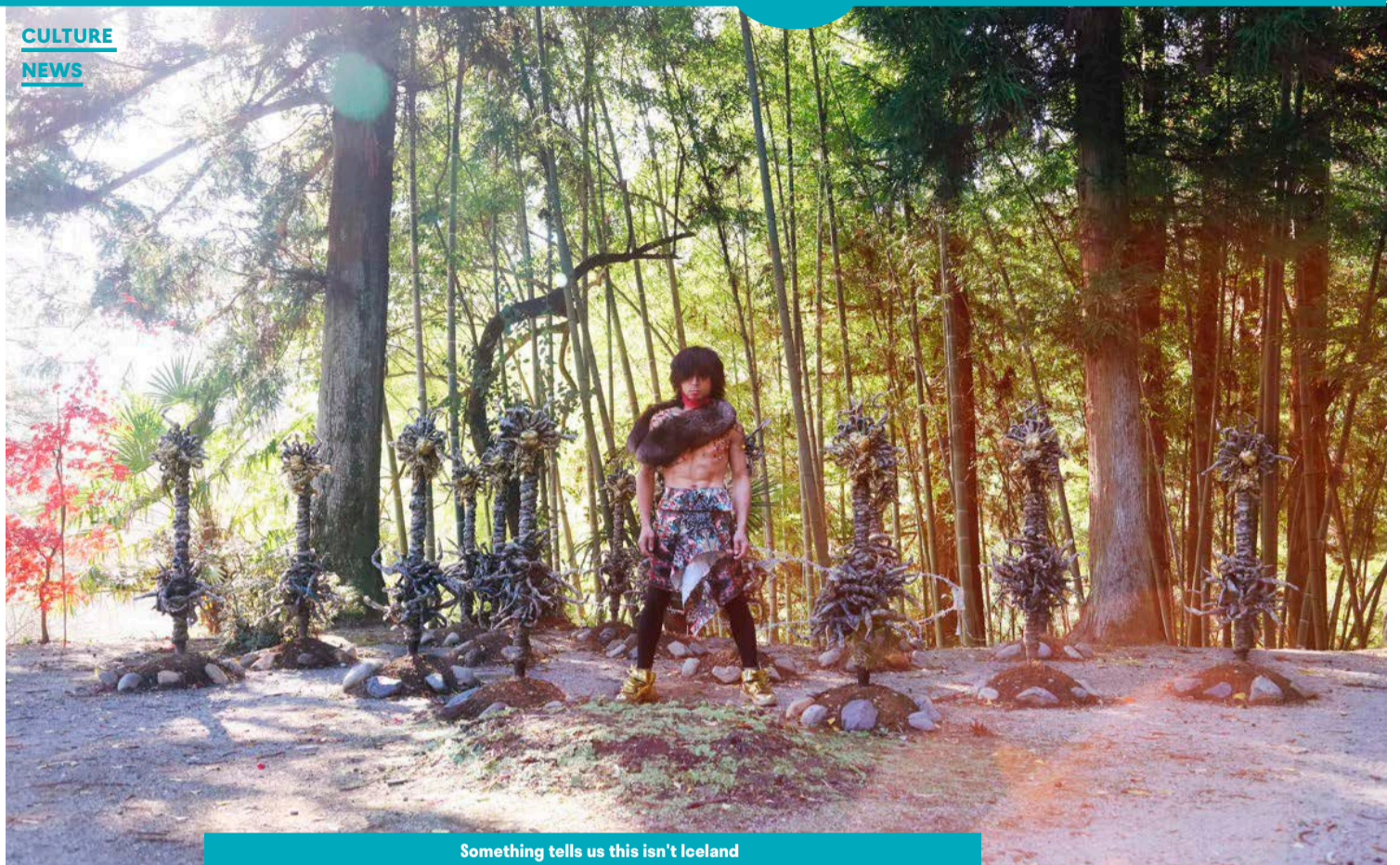


## Torg Art Fair

October 14th - 23rd - Korpúlfstaðir

If your Tinder bio says "art lover," but you can't remember the last time you actually went to a museum, we've got you covered. The largest artist-run art fair—Torg Art Fair Reykjavík 2022—is coming to town this October. It offers 50 exhibiting artists, a sneak peek into a global art scene and a chance to dive deeper into the Icelandic art community. Check it out. [IZ](#)

## CULTURE NEWS



Something tells us this isn't Iceland

# Soul Brothers

Natsuki Tamura & Halldór Lárusson bring the magic

Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine**

Photos: **Satoshi Matsui & Sophie Bey**

Icelandic percussionist Halldór Lárusson will again be joining forces with musician, artist, jeweller, and all-around renaissance man Natsuki Tamura on October 8th at Mengi for a performance that is sure to delight and captivate attendees.

While Halldór is a traditional western drummer and percussionist, Natsuki utilises everything from traditional Japanese instruments to modern electronics to create sound sculptures that have delighted and confounded listeners for years.

So how did these two get together?

## Fresh winds

"Actually Natsuki and I met in 2019, because we both participated in Fresh Winds, which is an arts festival that takes place in Garður in Reykjanes," Halldór tells us, referring to the very tip of the southwest Iceland peninsula. "I participated as the Icelandic musician and he was one of the artists from Japan. We just kind of understood each other from the first moment."

From that first meeting, the idea to collaborate was born. The start of the coronavirus pandemic scuppered plans to perform in France in the summer of 2020, but they remained in contact, and Natsuki was eager to return to Iceland.

"He kind of fell a little bit in love with Iceland, which was very strange because the weather was extremely bad," Halldór recalls, recounting Natsuki's visit over New Years of 2019 into 2020.

## Anything goes

The choice to perform at Mengi came naturally, and not just because of the floorplan.

"I think Mengi is kind of an open, open space," Halldór says. "And what I mean by that is like, everything is allowed. Like Natsuki, because it's very difficult to categorise him because he's a painter. He's a sculptor. He's a jewellery designer and maker. He's a musician.

And I don't think he knows what he is."

The music itself is nearly impossible to define, if Halldór's description is anything to go by.

"I mean, it's really not traditional music," Halldór explains. "It's quite experimental. It's also quite improvisational. And for this particular performance, we are using some traditional Japanese instruments, but Natsuki has a lot of electronics also. So he's combining those two by hand, and what I will do is use a very traditional Western drum kit, and I'll explore what I can do with that. So basically, anything can happen."

## Soul brothers

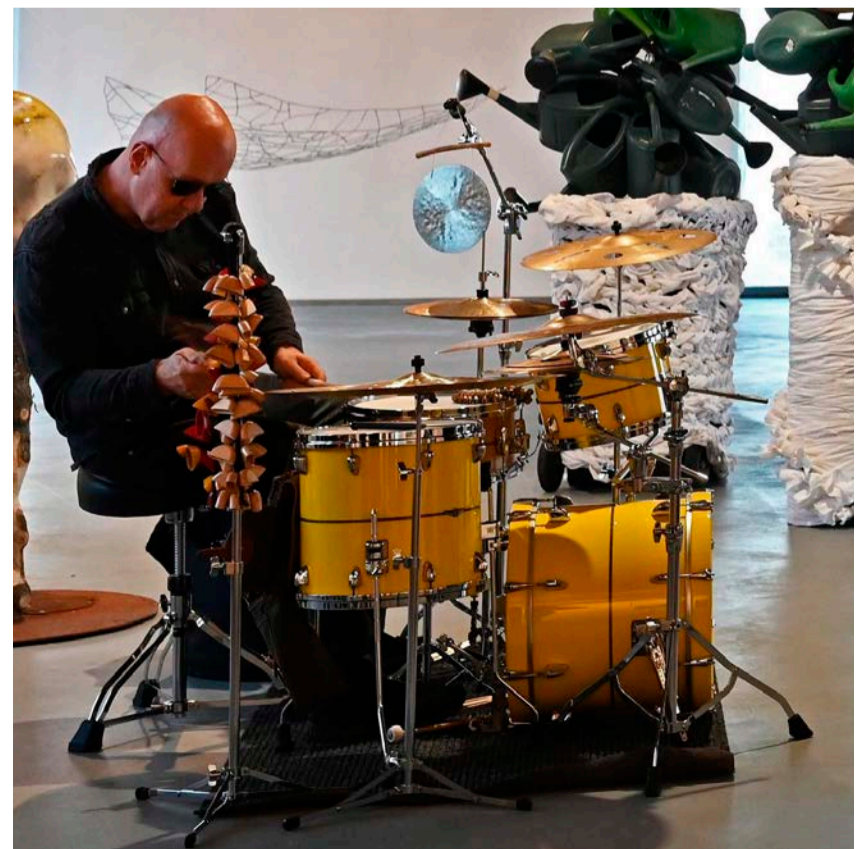
I can't help but wonder what drew these two people of such different backgrounds together. Not even Halldór is really sure.

"That's kind of a mystical part," he

says. "It's really difficult to say what it was. It was kind of just like ... yeah, we just kind of got drawn to each other. And when we started to play, I mean, it's not like we talk and decide what we're gonna do. We just play. So it's kind of approached from mindless states, not a thinking approach. And we just always click, like, he's my brother from another mother or something."

He continues: "That's the beautiful thing in music and art in general because it kind of unites people and cultural backgrounds and nationalities. It just doesn't matter."

When asked what attendees to the performance should expect, Halldór is succinct. "Prepare for adventure," he says. [G](#)





Standard rock pose at Iceland Airwaves

# Good Old Airwaves Is Back

Iceland Airwaves returns to Reykjavík after a 2-year hiatus

**Words:** Iryna Zubenko  
It's been almost three years since the last Iceland Airwaves festival warmed up November nights in Reykjavík.

**Photo:** Art Bicnick  
Running between the gigs, discovering a new band playing in a church, making friends from all over the world...No, you're not dreaming—"Good old Airwaves is back downtown," says Festival Director Ísleifur Þórhallsson.

It's not news that the world has changed since the last Iceland Airwaves hit up Reykjavík back in 2019: global pandemic, political turmoil, economic recession—the list goes on. Ísleifur cannot hide his excitement that in 2022 the festival is going ahead, despite everything. "We're just incredibly happy that we can finally do the festival," he says.

Ísleifur's company, Sena Live, acquired Iceland Airwaves in 2018. "We only managed to do the festival twice after taking over," he shares. "We had started a lot of work of changing the festival and getting a handle on it. The festival is awesome, the experience, the lineup and everything, but it's always challenging to make it work financially. We were on our way to getting to grips with it. So it was really difficult not

being able to do it, trying to just keep it okay through the pandemic. But we got through it."

## Same strategy, same energy

Ísleifur shares that the organisers had already made some big changes to the festival in 2018-2019. In 2022, they are basically keeping the same strategy. "We went back to the roots," says Ísleifur. "We stopped chasing big bands, we stopped having some big venues booked, we took it downtown."

The downtown festival venues are staying the same this year: Reykjavík Art Museum, Gamla Bíó, Iðnó, Fríkirkjan, Gaukurinn and Húrra. "We can feel that Airwaves creates a lot of energy in Reykjavík. It creates a willingness to participate and join the festival. So we have created concepts that are called partner venues and partner events," says Ísleifur. "Basically, we can't add any more venues. But if a venue wants to do their own thing and just limit access to wristband holders, they can do that and we promote it as a part of the official schedule."

## Wednesday night is out

Normally a four-day festival, Iceland Airwaves 2022 has been streamlined to three days. "We took out the Wednesday," Ísleifur says. "We watch really closely how many people are out at the festival and we saw that a remarkably small share of the people who bought tickets went out on Wednesday."

Wednesday was traditionally IA's warmup night, with fewer venues open and bands playing. Taking it out seemed like a rational idea, Ísleifur says: "I think for us to do the best possible festival, we can do a little bit less and stop doing everything that is unnecessary."

Alongside removing superfluous aspects of the festival, Ísleifur and his colleagues are excited about new innovations that they are introducing for 2022. "We are starting a thing called the Airwaves Center," he shares. "We have never sold our own food or drinks or had any sort of centre for our guests. So many of them have been roaming around during the day, trying to find something to do here and there downtown. But this year, we are going to have our own centre in the old Kolaportið, now called Hafnarþorpið."

Festival attendees will be able to get a wristband, buy merch or grab some food and drinks at the centre. Additionally, there will be off-venue programming from the afternoon and into the evening. "I think it's great that the festival will finally have a centre for our guests to hang out, talk, mingle, just chill and enjoy some off-venue programming before the official programming starts and all the venues open," says Ísleifur. The Iceland Airwaves Center will be open from noon to midnight, Thursday through Saturday.

## Icelanders vs tourists

There is a stereotype spreading around Reykjavík that no Icelanders actually go to Iceland Airwaves. Ísleifur laughs: "I think Icelanders just have to realise how fun Airwaves is! A lot of Icelandic people somehow think that Iceland Airwaves is not for them, they think that it is something else. I would just encourage people to give it a chance."

"We're really happy about how many people from abroad fly in just to experience Iceland Airwaves," he adds. "But we would always like to see more Icelanders at the festival. I mean, Icelanders just have to go downtown."

One thing that Airwaves is doing differently this year is selling more affordable day passes. "I think this is especially good for Icelanders, young people and all kinds of people who may just feel that it's too much of a commitment to go out three days in a row," Ísleifur says.

## The 2022 lineup

The Iceland Airwaves lineup this year is made up of some exciting Icelandic and international names. From aspiring local artists like Gugusar, BSÍ, and Inspector Spacetime to renowned acts including Briet, Sóley and Ham, Iceland is of course well represented. The international presence includes breakthrough British artist Arlo Parks and Ukrainian electro-folk band Go\_A.

Ísleifur enthuses over the lineup: "I'm excited about Arlo Parks, Metronomy, Amyl & The Sniffers, Röyksopp, Nation of Language, Porridge Radio, and from Icelandic artists, I'm really excited about Laufey and HAM, Kusk, Una Torfa. I'm also looking forward to seeing Reykjavíkurdætur," he says.

## Live music post-Covid

The topic of live music post-Covid will become a focus of discussion at the Iceland Airwaves conference, a satellite event hosted during the festival. "I think the whole live industry globally is dealing with the aftermath of COVID day in and day out," shares Ísleifur. "First of all, costs have gone up a lot. A lot of people in the music industry gave up and found other jobs. Ticket sales are pretty far from being back to normal, they are weaker and very unpredictable."

In the midst of the pandemic, instead of the usual Iceland Airwaves, the festival hosted a livestream event, 'Live From Reykjavík.' In 2022, even though the festival is returning in full swing, it will keep some of the virtual features. In particular, four or five of the main venues will be streamed online, free of charge. Ísleifur is confident that people will appreciate this feature.

## Festival buzz

"The way we envision Iceland Airwaves is that you can just walk into any venue without knowing in advance who's playing. But know it's going to be great!" says Ísleifur, adding: "What people love about Iceland Airwaves is running

between the venues, finding new bands, giving recommendations to their friends, getting tips and just discovering stuff."

Iceland Airwaves kicks off in just a month, on November 3. "We can all sense excitement for the festival building up right now. There's no downtown like Reykjavík," Ísleifur concludes. And we cannot disagree with him. 🍷

Join Grapevine's team at Iceland Airwaves 2022 on November 3-5.

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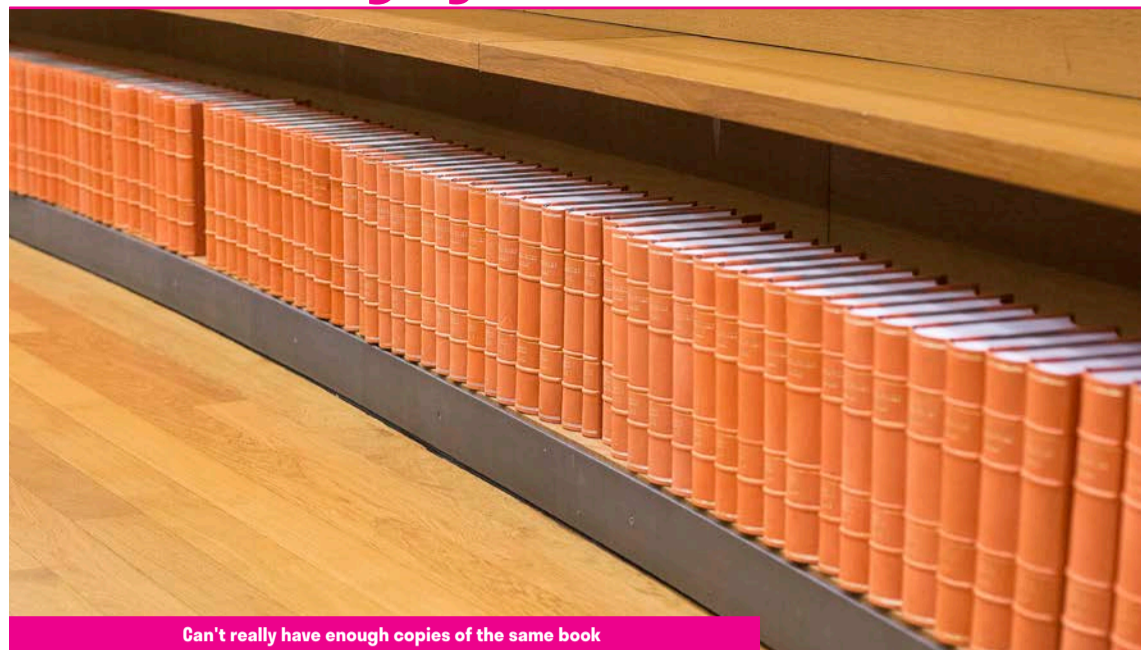
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Can't really have enough copies of the same book

## Inside Reykjavík's Best Libraries

Grapevine's bookworms go on a library haul

Words: **Iryna Zubenko, Valur Grettilsson** Photos: **Art Bicnick**

*It's not news that Icelanders like to read. It's also not news that books in Iceland are damn expensive. Locals use a variety of public and university libraries around the country on a daily basis, and some even for work—isn't a library the oldest (free) co-working space after all? While we still have to go a long ways to be able to compete with Finland and splurge state budgets on Independence Day presents like a new fancy library (google Oodi if you have no idea what we are talking about), we do have some nice ones!*

### The Library at Kópavogur

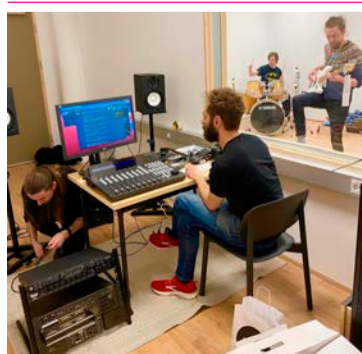
Hamraborg 6a, 200 Kópavogur



The Library at Kópavogur is both a fine library as well as a fantastic adventurous world for children. Not only can they access another world through the literature, but also there is a whole ground floor just for children with many activities. What's more, children can read out loud for trained dogs; the program is especially designed for children who have a hard time reading, but everyone is welcome. On top of that, if you want to write, there is an impressive and well-established writing workshop there. Outside is a huge inflated jumping mattress if you get bored of writing or reading. And if you need inspiration, look no further: Gerðuberg, one of Iceland's most ambitious art galleries, is right next door. **VG**

### Culture House Úlfarsárdal

Úlfarsbraut 122 -124, 113 Reykjavík



We're taking a small chance here, but at first look, this library seems

outstanding, despite the fact that it hasn't been open for long. It's part of the recreational centre in the new neighbourhood of Úlfarsárdalur and is open until 22:00 in the evening, meaning that it's an excellent place to go if you want to play a board game or just clear your mind after a long day. But what we truly love here is that there is also a fantastic new pool outside, perfect after a long read.

There is also a whole music studio there if you want to make your rock star dreams come true. I mean, why not? **VG**

### Grófin City Library

Tryggvagata 15, 101 Reykjavík



Since this library is the closest to Grapevine's office, it has served as a refuge for our writers working behind deadlines on many occasions. With six floors, the library is very spacious and if you're lucky enough, you might get a seaside view. A nice bonus: the library has a decent record collection you can listen to on their record player. Reykjavík Tool Library also has a presence in the building, with a self-service rental space on the first floor offering everything from bakeware to screwdrivers. **IZ**

### National and University Library

Arngrímögata 3, 107 Reykjavík



Opened in 1994, The National and University Library is the largest and, supposedly, the most advanced library in Iceland. It boasts a wide range of services and facilities, like special study and work areas, and group workrooms. It's also home to a large collection of early manuscripts, which is pretty darn cool if you're into that nerdy kind of shit. While the library is mostly used by students and academics from local universities, it is still a public access library, so peasant folk like us are also welcome to pop inside. **IZ**

### Bookmobile

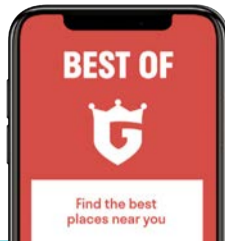
Multiple locations



If the idea of a traditional library bores you out, but you still want to rent a book, then make sure to check out the Bookmobile, aka 'The Chief.' The Bookmobile has its home base in Kringlan, and goes around the city every weekday between September 1th and June 30th, stopping in 30 different locations. One can also pre-book the Bookmobile to visit your kid's pre-school or other institutions. Maybe even your office? Not that we're dropping hints... **IZ**

October 7th—November 3rd

# In Your Pocket



Reykjavík Map

Places We Like

Best Of Reykjavík

## Perfect Day

Dance, jive & have the time of your life



Words: **Josie Anne Gaitens** Photo: **Art Bionick**

### Snæi Jack

*Snæbjörn Helgi Arnarsson Jack wears many hats—broadcaster, musician and community organiser, to name but a few. His perfect day in Reykjavík involves inclement weather, the best lunch deal in town, and a sneaky rooftop spot.*

### A-type ideals

I have set an alarm for seven because I want to be a Type A person. But of course I snooze it. I wake up every hour until ten when I finally get to my feet, make some nice coffee and have skyr for breakfast. I just learned recently that skyr is cheese.

Once I've finished I go to the pool. My favourite is Sundhöllin because it's the closest one to my house. I go straight to the steam bath, then the cold pot. I'm not exercising, I'm just getting my blood circulating. I run into a very dear friend, maybe even one I haven't seen in a long time, but we silently agree not to talk to each

other, because it's the unspoken rule. The social contract is that the pool is a place of rest. Sometimes resting means speaking to friends. Sometimes resting means not speaking to friends.

### An honest meal

When I get out, there is a new issue of Bændablaðið waiting for me. I leave the pool and the weather is grey. It's going to rain later.

It's noon and I go to Vitabar to have my lunch. I get the vegetarian blue cheese burger. It's such an honest place. They have Thule on tap.

I see two of my old teachers who are on lunch break from Tækniskólinn. I have nice memories of them. I don't speak to them. It just warms my heart to see them.

### Seeing the city

I walk past Hallgrímskirkja, and I sneak into the elevator to the top floor, just to get a brief overview. Reykjavík is still there. The bells ring, hurting my

ears.




I meet my friends at Kolaportið. I buy Söl. We pose as documentary filmmakers and take a boat trip to Engey. Because I'm curious.

When we get back we go to Deig to have a Poor Man's Offer. I see one of the staff and they ask me how I'm doing. And I say that I'm not doing that well, that I have to do lots of things. They fill up a bag with pastries, give it to me and say, "I believe in you." It's that perfect, you know.

### Wine and wind-down

The rain starts. We head towards ríkið, but on the way we see a little door, and because we're full time pranksters and trespassers, we walk in there and get onto the roof.

At ríkið we buy two bottles of Côtes du Rhône and take bus number 11 to Grötta. We drink wine and put our feet in the tiny little hot pot until it's dark and we're all super wet from the rain. We take the last bus back and go to 12 Tónar. Everyone is there and there is someone nice doing really lovely DJ work. Finally, I go home and watch Beserk with my girlfriend. 🍷

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Vermouth Menu

**PHOTOS FROM ICELAND**

Skólavörðustígur 22

**Wine bar & food**

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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

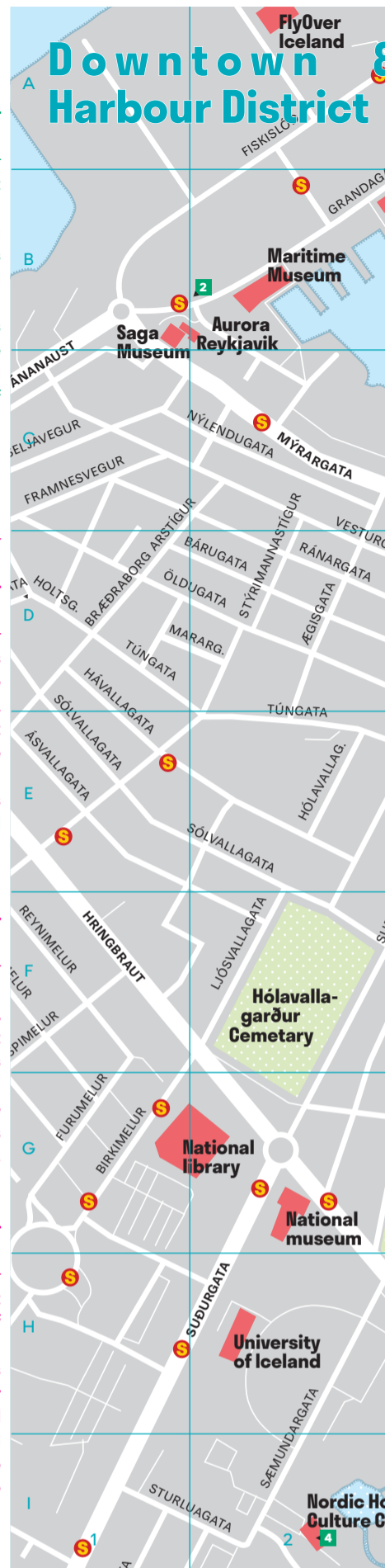
Tryggvagata 22

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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**New In Town** ☆

**Hafnartorg Gallery**

Geirsgata 17



Hafnartorg Gallery is our newest Mathöll (food hall) in Reykjavik. We can never have enough. The location is stellar—it's located close to Harpa Concert Hall and offers outstanding restaurants where you can have both a pretty fancy meal or a nice taco to go. The interiors are gorgeous and the atmosphere has a unique casual and fine dining combination. **VG**

**D**  
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Skólavörðustígur 15

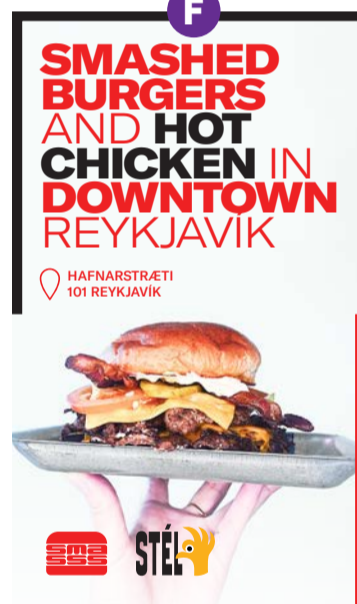
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**F**



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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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CLOTHING  
Ingólfsstræti 5  
101 Reykjavík

**WASTELAND**  
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Staring into the distance in a graveyard is crucial to being a folk musician

repeating myself, [and] didn't know how to express my thoughts. I didn't really connect with that voice anymore because it's a different part of your brain that you use when you're not speaking in your native language. I just needed to change," he says.

This change involved going back to writing and performing in Icelandic, a choice that has clearly worked for him and his music, as he hasn't felt the need to write in English since.

### Teamwork

Having previously worked with other Icelandic artists such as Sindri Már Sigfússon of Sin Fang, as well as having written music for film and theatre in the past, Snorri is familiar with collaboration. For his own tracks too, working with others is an integral part of the creative process. After writing and recording the basic track, Snorri takes his work to his band or collaborators, changing the initial piece, adding layers to it and creating a more rounded picture to try and get the best out of the initial idea. This might explain some of the pop elements that appear in his discography despite the fact that Snorri thinks of himself predominantly as a folk musician.

In terms of visual layers, Snorri also values the accompanying work of other artists, like the individual drawings for each track of the 2017 album 'Margt býr í þokunni', by Þrándur Þórarinnsson. The album was particularly folk-oriented as

the songs were directly based on Icelandic folklore.

The music videos released for two of the tracks on his new album, "Ingileif" and "Hæ Stína", likewise feature visual distinctions as well as teamwork. Using the rediscovered 16mm camera of a friend, Snorri created videos depicting simple scenes of walking through parts of Reykjavík, casual daily routines and interactions. All of this is seen through the natural filter of old technology, creating another level of nostalgia.

### New Perspective

With the recent release of 'Viðihlið', Snorri Helgason says he now has a lot more free space on his mind again and is ready to change things up by writing songs for other performers. Taking himself out of the equation, as he puts it, writing songs from someone else's perspective and not being the singer provides a new sense of space, something he feels excited about.

Though with the new rush of freedom comes the occasional moment of panic. Luckily in Snorri's case, that means writing a Christmas song we can now look forward to. 🍷

You can listen to Viðihlið on Spotify now.

## Looking Back While Moving Forward

Snorri Helgason revisits the past

Words: Catherine Magnúsdóttir Photo: Art Bicnick

Singer-songwriter Snorri Helgason's new album 'Viðihlið' delves into notes of nostalgia, rooted in the artist's own retrospective on the last fifteen years of his career as well as impressions of his youth. Both audibly and visually, Snorri offers an easy and 'kósi' look back, through the lens of a 16mm camera and fairly simple but timeless tunes. But Snorri isn't just focussed on the past: he's also looking forward to new projects and collaborations.

### Keeping record

Snorri started out his active music career 15 years ago, with the band Sprengjuhöllin. In 2009 he then went solo for a while, before starting the band 'Snorri Helgason' in 2013. Combining elements from all of these times, Snorri utilises his knack for indie-pop tunes to work through themes of nostalgia for his most recent release. What started out as two separate EPs has now come together for one eight-track album under the title 'Viðihlið'. And a vinyl one at that. "I always make vinyl, I'm just old-school like that", Snorri says, although it's not just a nostalgic thing for him. It's also a matter of

having physical proof of his work. "I didn't think it was done until I had something in my hands. Just to be able to start thinking about something else I need to see something physical." Which has practical benefits for the creative process on the one hand and adds to the indie-folk-pop aesthetic on the other. A nice extra to the steady process of digitisation. Snorri himself just moved his entire catalogue to Sony Music for further digital distribution but that also enabled him to go through all his work again, allowing for some retrospection.

### Inner voice

A noticeable shift, when going through Snorri's discography, is his choice of language. His first solo albums, aimed at a wider market and in hopes of worldwide release, were written and performed in English. However, after touring central Europe for some time "living in a van, eating shit food and just losing money" the singer-songwriter felt he had run out of gas. In part because he wasn't writing music in his native language.

"I felt like I hit a wall, like I was

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## EVENT PICKS



### ★ Extreme Chill Festival

October 6th to October 9th - Multiple times at multiple venues - 4.900 to 11.900 ISK

The guardians of electronica in Iceland, Extreme Chill, have their yearly festival for the first time since the pandemic started. This year's line-up reflects all the best that is happening in electronic music in Iceland, and across the world. From local artists like Grapevine

Music Award winner Sóley, to big international players such as Austrian producer and guitarist Fennesz and Kenyan artist KMRU, the expansive list of acts has us thrilled. The festival planners have dared to say that it's their best lineup ever! Not that we don't believe them, but in this age of misinformation it feels like a good opportunity to check out those facts for yourself. That said, we at the Reykjavík Grapevine can confirm that this is a pretty impressive lineup, so look out for your favourite journalists being extremely chilled. **VG**

## October 7th—November 3rd

# Upcoming Events

Send details of your event to: [events@grapevine.is](mailto:events@grapevine.is)

This month is packed with so many great events that we can't possibly fit them all! Check them out on [events.grapevine.is](http://events.grapevine.is) and don't hesitate to add yours!

### Friday October 7th

**Lunchtime Jazz**  
12:15 Borgarbóksafnid Grófinni  
**New Instruments - Nordic Music Days Workshop**  
14:00 Listaháskóli Íslands  
**Doomcember: Halveksia, Múr, Grafnár**  
20:00 Gaukurinn  
**Anna + Nina in concert**  
20:00 Háteigskirkja  
**Sycamore Tree**  
20:30 Fríkirkjan  
**Brynjar Daðason**  
21:00 Mengi  
**Hair - Sing-along party**  
21:00 Bío Paradís  
**Inspector Spacetime**  
21:00 Kex Hostel

### Saturday October 8th

**Let's chat and play games in Icelandic!**  
11:30 Reykjavík City Library  
**Lunchtime Jazz**  
12:15 Borgarbóksafnid Grófinni  
**Super Natsuki Tamura & Halldór Lárusson**  
21:00 Mengi  
**Mighty Bear**  
21:00 Dillon  
**Mugison**  
21:00 Bío Höllin, Akranes

### Sunday October 9th

**Hammm Sound Therapy**  
11:00 Reyjavík Edition Hotel  
**Tónlistarkaffi: Lennon - McCartney**  
15:00 Borgarbóksafnid Grófinni  
**Nanoon of the North - Screening**  
17:00 Bío Paradís  
**Radical Kitchen Strikes Back!**  
18:00 Andrymi  
**Thurston Moore Group**  
20:00 Hljómahöll  
**Gadus Morhua Ensemble**  
21:00 Mengi

### Wednesday October 12th

**Pinquins (NO)**

12:15 Salurinn Tónlistarhús  
**Let's chat and play games in Icelandic!**  
17:30 Reykjavík City Library  
**Siggi String Quartet**  
20:00 Gamla Bío  
**Party Karaoke**  
21:00 Sæta Svinið

### Thursday October 13th

**Alice Guy - Screening**  
19:15 Bío Paradís  
**Pumpkin Spice Concert**  
20:15 Mál og Menning  
**Bára Gísladóttir & Skúli Sverrisson**  
20:30 Mengi  
**ADHD**  
21:00 Húrura  
**Aldubáran (FO)**  
22:00 Gamla Bío

### Friday October 14th

**Ensemble Adapter (IS/DE)**  
17:00 Gamla Bío  
**Torg Art Fair**  
18:00 Korpúlfsstaðir  
**Reykjavík Chamber Orchestra**  
20:00 Gamla Bío  
**Ingibjörg Turchi & Hróðmar Sigurðsson**  
20:30 Mengi  
**Drýslar**  
21:00 Kex Hostel  
**Mugison**  
21:00 Hljómahöll  
**Oscar Jerome, Ash Walker, Ari Áreluis**  
21:00 Kex Hostel

### Saturday October 15th

**Duo Harpverk**  
17:00 IÐNÓ  
**Caput**  
20:00 IÐNÓ  
**Laddi og Eyþór Ingi**  
20:00 Bæjarbíó  
**DJ Óli Dóri**  
20:00 Kex Hostel  
**Back to the Future - Party Screening**  
21:00 Bío Paradís  
**Sandrayati**  
21:00 Mengi



### ★ Fundraiser for the Highlands

October 19th at 20:00 - Gamla Bío - 7.990 ISK

The Icelandic Environmental Association will hold a fundraiser for the Icelandic highlands or the Highlander's Festival in Gamla Bío on the 19th of October. The night will be filled with the best artists today, with the biggest name being the world-famous Of Monsters And Men. But, there is a catch—there are only 500 tickets available. Don't walk, run. **VG**



### ★ Nordic Music Days

October 11th to October 15th - Multiple Venues - Multiple prices

Nordic Music Days have been organised since 1888, so by now you can be sure that these planners know how to create an incredible music experience. The festival travels between the Nordic countries, and Iceland's hosting it this year. This festival is for those crazy classical lovers with mohawks and chains in their noses who rock out to some seriously disciplined chamber music. **VG**



### MUSIC NEWS

After talks that took place early in the year, it's now official: Icelandic music is more or less not in the hands of Icelanders anymore, but instead belongs to massive music monster **Universal Music Group**. The company bought **Alda Music** for 1.7 billion ISK (US \$12 million). Alda was originally founded by internationally known composer **Ólafur Arnalds**, former Quarashi member **Sólvi Blöndal**, and it owns the distribution rights to most Icelandic recorded music. News of the sale received a mixed reaction from Icelandic musicians, with some lamenting the loss of the rights of Icelandic music to an international company, while others felt optimistic that the sale will increase the exposure of Icelandic music abroad. Whether this comes to play out, only time will tell.



#Metoo is rocking the **Icelandic Symphony Orchestra (ISO)** after conductor **Bjarni Frimann Bjarnason** revealed on Facebook that he was raped when he was 17 by the orchestra's former musical director **Árni Heimir Ingólfsson**. Bjarni was a student at the time of the assault, and working for Árni Heimir at the ISO. Bjarni Frimann informed the orchestra's manager as well as other directors about the situation when he began working for the orchestra in 2018, but accuses them of hiding and silencing the situation. Árni Heimir has publicly apologised and is no longer working with the orchestra. The ISO has launched an internal investigation into its directors' handling of Bjarni Frimann's allegations.



Beloved musician, artist, farmer and family man **Svavar Pétur Eysteinnsson**, better known as **Prins Póló**, died at the end of September at 45 years old. He had been diagnosed with an advanced stage cancer in 2018. Prins Póló was also a dear friend of the Reykjavík Grapevine. Svavar is survived by his wife, **Berglind Häsler**, and their three children. The Grapevine is sending our deepest condolences to his family, friends and loved ones.

**Alice In Chains - Rokkmessa : DIRT 30 ára**  
22:00 Húrura

### Sunday October 16th

**Hammm Sound Therapy**  
11:00 Reyjavík Edition Hotel  
**The Red Shoes - Party Screening**  
21:00 Bío Paradís

### Monday October 17th

**"The Mystery Mic" - Comedy Night**  
20:00 Gaukurinn

### Wednesday October 19th

★ **Fundraiser for the Highlands**  
20:00 Gamla Bío  
**Party Karaoke**  
21:00 Sæta Svinið  
**Post-dreifing Label Night**  
21:00 Kex Hostel

### Thursday October 20th

**Fríða Dís - Lipstick On - Release concert**  
20:00 Hljómahöll  
**Quiz Night**  
20:00 Kex Hostel  
**Dana Jessen & Jesper Pedersen**  
20:30 Mengi

### Friday October 21st

**Vök - Release Concert**  
20:00 Gamla Bío  
**The Alternative Assembly (cabaret)**  
20:00 Gaukerinn  
**Afrika 20:20**  
21:00 IÐNÓ  
**Babies**  
21:00 Kex Hostel  
**Ingourious Bastards - Party Screening**  
21:00 Bío Paradís

### Saturday October 22nd

**Let's chat and play games in Icelandic!**  
11:30 Reykjavík City Library  
**Brothers (Opera)**  
20:00 Harpa  
**Gummi Jóns Afmælistónleikar**  
20:00 Háskólabío  
**Showtunes & FILTH! - Disney Edition**  
20:00

### Sunday October 23rd

**Hammm Sound Therapy**  
11:00 Reyjavík Edition Hotel

### Tuesday October 25th

**Pumpkin Carving with Power Tools**

12:00 Gerðuberg City Library  
**Kyrja Debut Show**  
20:00 Kex Hostel

### Wednesday October 26th

**Party Karaoke**  
21:00 Sæta Svinið

### Thursday October 27th

**Kenney Jones & The Jones Gang**  
20:00 Háskólabío  
**Good Thursday at selected musea**  
Extended opening hours

### Friday October 28th

**Bjartmar og Bergrisarnir**  
20:00 Bæjarbíó  
**Hanna Gadsby**  
20:00 Háskólabío  
**The fifth Element - party screening**  
21:00 Bío Paradís

### Saturday October 29th

**Hocus Pocus - International Children's Film Festival Reykjavík**  
17:00 Bío Paradís  
**Steinalda**  
21:00 Mengi

### Sunday October 30th

**Hammm Sound Therapy**  
11:00 Reyjavík Edition Hotel  
**The Addams Family - International Children's Film Festival Reykjavík**  
15:00 Bío Paradís  
**It Follows - Black Sunday Screening**  
21:00 Bío Paradís  
**Neonme Release Show**  
21:00 Mengi

### Monday October 31st

**The Shining - Halloween Party Screening**  
21:00 Bío Paradís  
**Monday Jazz**  
21:00 Kex Hostel

### Wednesday November 2nd

**Madama Butterfly (Opera)**  
19:00 Bío Paradís  
**Party Karaoke**  
21:00 Sæta Svinið

### Thursday November 3rd

**Halli, Jón og Góí**  
20:30 Salurinn Tónlistarhús  
**Mugison (Gamli inngangurinn á Laugardalslauginni)**  
21:00 Laugardalslaug, old entrance



**Alicja Kwade**  
*In Relation to the Sun,  
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## A Life, Curated

At 80, Sigurður Guðmundsson Is Just Getting Started

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



Sigurður Guðmundsson shows no interest in slowing down. “There’s no such thing as retirement as an artist—not for me, anyway,” he says with humour.

At 80, Sigurður has spent the vast majority of his life as a nationally, and internationally, celebrated artist. Until the pandemic he was regularly based in China, and has also spent considerable time in Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands. Nevertheless, he sees Iceland as playing an integral role in his work and identity.

“I am very connected to Icelandic nature,” Sigurður confirms. “I was very homesick in the 1960s, and I used this to develop my melancholic feelings, which I use in both my writing and my work. I think melancholia is one of the usable substances for creating artwork; it’s one of the ingredients of the soul.”

Sigurður developed this signature streak of melancholia in his early photography work, ‘Situations,’ which saw him interacting in frame with natural and unnatural objects in unexpected and bizarre ways. In one, he perfectly balances a stick on his head while digging himself into a large hole. In another, his head is hidden entirely by a large paving slab as he crouches on the pavement. In addition to the homesickness he was experiencing for his native land, he identifies this inclination to lean

towards the mournful as also being distinctly Icelandic.

“What I have completely inherited from my Icelandic culture is the poetic aspect of melancholia,” Sigurður says. “Even though I am a visual artist, artists from my generation are quite literary-minded.”

### “A different kind of museum”

Admirably productive and prolific, Sigurður’s latest project has been *Ars Longa*, a “different kind of art museum,” that he has founded in the East Iceland town of Djúpvogur with fellow artist Þór Vigfússon. Þór and Sigurður were drawn together by appreciation of each others’ art (Sigurður describes Þór as “the artist’s artist”), as well as common interests in decentralising curation and supporting many forms of art creation. While the ultimate outcome of this idea is still wonderfully amorphous, this year *Ars Longa* officially opened as a contemporary art museum.

“*Ars Longa* is another way of doing an art museum,” Sigurður explains. “We’re not saying we’re better—we’re certainly not richer,” he laughs. “But we want another way of selecting artists, which is not based on being successful, rich and famous.”

### The long and winding road

*Ars Longa*, and life in Djúpvogur in general, is at the centre of Sigurður’s focus these days. In addition to his famous egg sculptures at the village harbour, Sigurður is also working on an installation called ‘poetry lane’ which will involve collecting 150 contemporary and classical poems from all over the world, and having them carved into rocks which will be placed around the town to create routes and swarms, ultimately leading to the top of hill that overlooks the harbour and surrounding area.

“Ancient Chinese, Persian and Japanese poems, William Shakespeare and Sylvia Plath, Laxness of course,” Sigurður lists. “But grassroots and present-day poets as well. And at least a 50/50 split between male and female poets—that’s easy to do.”

It certainly seems easy to Sigurður, who approaches art and life with the steely interest, enthusiasm and vitality of someone a quarter of his age. He continues explaining the poetry lane with passion, with words that seem to take on a greater meaning in the context of a long and artistic life.

“It’s not a line actually,” Sigurður says, staring off into the middle distance as he imagines the scene. “There could be 20 stones in one cluster, so the path will twist and wind. It will always be a work in progress. But you will always see a way out. The path will lead you there.”

“There’s no such thing as retirement as an artist”



★ **Egill Jónsson & Ásmundur Sveinsson - After the Blizzard**

Until February 19th - Ásmundarsafn

Several factors bring the works of sculptors and visionaries Ásmundur Sveinsson (1893-1982) and Unndór Egill Jónsson (1978) together. Sveinsson lived and worked in the era of modernism, with all its developments

and technologies. Jónsson is part of a generation that tries to undo the excesses of previous generations. While there is great juxtaposition to be found there, their work includes more commonalities than one might think. Wood plays a big role in both of their art, as well as mobility and movement. They also draw inspiration from the same well; nature. The exhibition carries the name of one of Sveinsson's paintings that hasn't been preserved, but does capture the context of this exhibition; the storm refers to the many changes of the 20th century that Sveinsson's captures in his work, while Jónsson's displays the struggle of disintegrating these changes made by previous generations. **KW**



★ **Sigurður Guðjónsson**

Opens on October 20th - Runs until February 19th - Hafnarhús

Sigurður Guðjónsson is one of Iceland's leading video artists in the contemporary art scene. Sigurður's works bring together image, space, and sound. Focussing on the function of equipment, he uses rhythm, repetition, and boundaries to blur the boundaries between mechanical and human. **KW**



★ **Jóhannes S. Kjarval - First Snow**

Until December 31 - Kjarvalstaðir

As one of Iceland's most beloved painters, Jóhannes S. Kjarval left behind a large oeuvre that is a big part of Iceland's cultural heritage. Inspired by nature, his work depicts landscapes, creatures, and Icelandic natives, often placed in Iceland's nature. **KW**



★ **Guðjón Ketilsson - Jæja**

Until January 15th - Listasafn

The Icelandic word 'Jæja' doesn't have a lot of meaning until someone puts it into context. Inspired by the linguistics of this, Guðjón took the same approach to the works on display in this exhibition. Taking objects that don't have a lot of value on their own, he artistically places them into a fresh context, giving them new value. **KW**

October 7th—November 3rd

# Art Exhibitions

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

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## Opening

### REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - HAFNARHÚS

**Down North: North Atlantic Triennial**  
This travelling exhibition is made in collaboration with the Portland Museum of Art (USA), Bildmuseet (Sweden), and the Reykjavík Art Museum. Around 30 artists from all over the world show new works that are inspired by the changes society has been going through; covering topics such as climate change and the ecosystem in the arctic.

- Opens on October 13th
- Runs until February 2nd

### GALLERÍ LISTVAL

#### Halldór Ragnarsson - Here, Now, & Maybe Later

Halldór Ragnarsson is mostly known for his text-based works that are inspired by his approach of the philosophy of language. Often biographical, he creates text based situations on canvas, wood, and paper, thus exploring how different uses of language can alter experiences, moods, emotions, and art, and how art in turn can alter language.

- Opens on October 29th
- Runs until November 13th

## Ongoing

### LÁ ART MUSEUM (HVERAGERÐI)

#### Gary Hill - Sums & Differences

Works of Gary Hill, Steina and Woody Vasulka are brought together for this exhibition. It aims to present the commonalities and divergence between their earliest works, and the way the three of them differently interpret the immaterial and the physical. While highlighting their mutual exploration between sound and image, this collaborative exhibition also contains additional new pieces that reflects each of their artistic development, with work spanning several decades.

- Runs until December 18th

### ÁSMUNDARSALUR

#### Vættartal - Pantheon

Artists Matthías Rúnar Sigurðsson and Arngrímur Sigurðsson teamed

up with musician Kraftgalli for this joint exhibition. The two artists bring together their paintings and stone sculptures inspired by Icelandic mythology, while Kraftgalli created the exhibition's soundscape. Arngrímur's art covers many styles, but his work is mostly inspired by fantasy and old literature whereas Matthías' sculptures explore the boundary between man and animal, shaping stones into characters, and carving sculptures out of granite, gabbro, and basalt.

- Runs until October 23rd

### REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY

#### Elvar Örn Kjartansson - The System

Kjartansson seeks to illuminate the invisible system behind the modern amenities that we tend to take for granted. Since 2016 he's been visiting business and public places in Iceland to take pictures of their various spaces. The system consists of what makes up its infrastructure such as institutions, service companies, buildings and anything else that ensures society can run from day to day. His work excludes human beings; they come and go, while the system remains

- Runs until December 11th

### MUSEUM OF DESIGN & APPLIED ART

#### 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

#### Master Milliners in residency

During their residency at the museum, Anna Gulla and Harper—both master milliners—are working with materials tied to the hatmaking trade; fabrics, leather, felt, and straw. Combining steam and wooden moulds with locally sourced materials, natural furs, fibres, and leather, they experiment with traditional methods in the creation and

design of hats and outerwear.  
• Runs until November 30th

### 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

### CAFÉ PYSJA

#### In The Name of Hallstein

Modern master-sculptor Hallstein Sigurðsson's career spans almost seven decades. His work has found its way into many public spaces and museums over Iceland. This exhibition and multimedia project aims to give visitors an overview of his career by taking works from across his long and productive career.

- Runs until November 27th

### 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

### GALLERÍ UNDIRGÖNG

#### Well-being

Visual artist Edith Hammer created

a new and powerful work drawn directly onto the gallery's wall. This is what she is most known for, large and powerful works on walls and paper. Her work is often autobiographical and 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

- Runs until October 23rd

### BÓKASAFN HAFNAFJÖRÐUR

#### Kitsch: Reykjavík | Berlin | Itoshima

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.

- Runs until November 23rd

### KJARVALSTAÐIR

#### Jóhannes S. Kjarval - First Snow

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.

- Runs until October 23rd

### HVERFISGALLERÍ

#### Steingrímur Eyfjörð - Wittgenstein? & Society for Living Folk Religion

This exhibition marks Steingrímur's

third solo exhibition at this gallery. This time his work explores the writings of philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, and contains fragments of images and text referring to Icelandic folklore. Connecting the philosophical with the historical, he explores the common understandings of mankind; that what exists in reality could also be a fabrication of our imagination. In the exhibition Steingrímur plays with different dimensions, colour perception, and the power of imagination.

- Runs until October 29th

### REYKJAVÍK MARITIME MUSEUM

#### Fish & Folk - 150 Years of Fishery

Through visuals, objects, photographs and film, this permanent exhibition covers 150 years of Iceland's fishing industry.

- Permanent exhibition

### EINAR JÓNSSON MUSEUM

#### Einar Jónsson

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

- Permanent exhibition

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART      GARDATORG 1 210 GARDABÆR

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Director Elvar Gunnarsson next to a ghostly face in the window

## The Hatching Of The New Icelandic Horror Film

Elvar Gunnarsson's first feature is not your typical horror comedy

Words: **Iryna Zubenko** Photo: **Art Bicnick**

Director Elvar Gunnarsson had never thought he would do a horror film. And yet, his directorial debut, horror comedy 'It Hatched', is out now in Icelandic cinemas. "I like horror films. But I was probably betting on something else," admits Elvar. He talks about the struggles of a first-time director, the inspiration behind the film, and why it's absolutely fine that not everybody would get his work.

### Unleashing of the demon

'It Hatched' starts in a rather straightforward way, following main characters Pétur and Mira on their journey from Nashville, Tennessee to Iceland, with plans to open a guesthouse. But once they arrive in Iceland, things start to get weird.

"Their plans are soon altered. A demon starts harassing them, giving them night terrors," shares Elvar. "Soon after that, Mira lays an egg, which hatches into a healthy infant. Then they have to deal with the tallest task so far—parenting," Elvar says, adding: "Basically, it's just a film about bad communication."

Elvar co-wrote the story together with Ingimar Sveinsson and Magnús Ómarsson. "Maybe somewhere in

the beginning we felt that it was a typical horror film, but pretty soon we started to find it way too amusing for it to be extremely serious," he says.

### Making of

Most of the film was shot in 2015-2016 in the beautiful Westfjords, followed by almost six years of post-production and a pandemic-infused delay of the release.

The camera work in 'It Hatched' deserves a special mention—Elvar for sure knows how to frame a good shot: be it a view over the remote fjord or something mundane like sunny-side-up eggs. He experiments with angles, light and music (remarkably, most of which he composed himself). Faded colours prevail throughout the movie, immediately making you think that the events take place back in the 1970s. "It's timeless in a way, but it happens in the present time," Elvar explains.

### A pinch of honesty

"Honestly, I think it's not a film for everybody," Elvar says. "We are referencing B movies, and that's something that not everybody will get." B movies are low-budget films, often associated with bad acting

and poor special effects. 'It Hatched' was particularly inspired by movies Elvar enjoyed as a teenager, including films by Italian directors such as Dario Argento and Lucio Fulci and Japanese Kōji Wakamatsu.

"I've always found the seriousness of cinema pretty silly," Elvar admits. "We take things extremely seriously as filmmakers." Sticking to the boundaries of a particular genre was never set to be his approach. "That's an opinion I had growing up. I think it's a movie for the teenage me. I'm not really concerned with general comedy buffs or horror buffs."

Interestingly, despite being an Icelandic production, 'It Hatched' was shot in English. "It's partly practical," says Elvar. "It's not a government-funded film, therefore, it has to make money somewhere."

"Making a movie without actual funding was a difficult task altogether," says Elvar. "But probably the most difficult thing about making the film was just sticking to it."

### Getting the movie out there

"The reality is that most films don't make it out there," says Elvar. "I made a movie from nothing. And it's out there on a global scale." He notes that the movie is not breaking records in the Icelandic cinemas and is instead doing better internationally: "In the US, it's out on Apple TV, Amazon, Hulu and so on. It's doing way better there than in Iceland."

Despite the relatively small splash 'It Hatched' has made in its country of origin so far, it's an amusing, multi-layered story that won't leave you indifferent. As for the director, what's next on the cards for Elvar Gunnarsson? "I really want to do something extremely Icelandic," he says. 🍷



Netflix and chill?



A focus on textiles binds the centre's projects together

## Bridging The Past And The Future With Textiles

How the Icelandic Textile Center is keeping traditions fresh

**Words:** Iryna Zubenko  
In the scenic seaside in northwest Iceland lies Blönduós, a town that may seem unremarkable at first sight.

**Photo:** Icelandic Textile Center  
However, Blönduós is home to the Icelandic Textile Center, a makerspace and innovation centre with ambitious goals and a manifold structure. "What keeps everything together is the textile focus," says project manager Katharina Schneider.

### Why Blönduós?

"Historically speaking, it's an important region for textiles," says Katharina. Northwest Iceland is a sheep farming region: over 90% of the country's wool is processed in Ístex wool washery in Blönduós. The Icelandic Textile Center was founded here in 2005, in the same building as Kvinnaskólinn, a former women's college.

"The Center is doing a variety of very different projects," shares Katharina. From running the TextileLab and organising events, it also collaborates on research projects important for the region. "There's always a focus on fibre, textiles, wool, traditional crafts, the digital future and building a bridge from one to the other," Katharina explains.

Director of the Icelandic Textile Center, Elsa Arnardóttir adds: "Once a year, we have a knitting fest—that's a whole week of knitting courses. We

have local, national and international teachers, a lot of lectures and activities connected to knitting on the weekend, as well as a market for yarn."

### Unique textile lab

The centre's TextileLab was opened in May 2021. "This is the very first textile lab in Iceland," Katharina says. The lab is a part of the Center's international collaboration with CENTRINNO, a four-year research project funded by Horizon 2020.

The lab includes two Tc2 digital looms, a felt loom, laser cutter, laser printer, digital embroidery machine and knitting machine. You can visit the lab for free, but there is a fee that applies for using the lab's equipment, some of which cannot be accessed anywhere else in Iceland. "It's for makers, scholars and just the local community—anybody who is interested in making, creating and innovating with textiles," says Katharina.

### Ós Textile Residency

"We also run an art residency, which has been quite successful," shares Katharina. "We host up to fourteen people every month, coming from all over the world."

Katharina and Elsa agree that people coming to do an art residency have really versatile backgrounds, not necessarily in textiles at all. "I think what people

sometimes don't realise is how diverse the field of textiles really is," Katharina says. "It could be a biologist, it could be somebody working with microfibre, a sheep farmer working with wool and handicrafts. It's so diverse, and that makes it so special."

In 2022, the art residence programme includes artists from Canada, Sweden and the Faroe Islands. "The international community that we have here in a small, rural, isolated village is quite special," says Katharina. Within the residency, the centre also organises an exhibition, usually at the end of the month, and every Wednesday there's an open house, so everyone interested can come, see and try the equipment.

### Repurposing Icelandic wool

One of the recent projects developed within the Icelandic Textile Center is

'Felt'—a collaboration between design studio Flétta and textile designer Ýrurari. The objective of the project is to find use for leftover Icelandic wool by repurposing offcuts from Icelandic wool manufacturers with a needle felting machine at the centre's TextileLab.

The project started in the summer of 2022 when the designers conducted experiments at the TextileLab with different leftover wool that otherwise would be sent abroad for re- or down-cycling.

"The reason we went to the TextileLab to work on the project is because they have a variety of machines that are only available there. We specifically wanted to work with the felt loom, a needle felting machine. It is very valuable for us to have access to new technology in order to test out ideas and develop new techniques in the creative environment of the Textile Lab. After our stay at the TextileLab we have decided to invest in our own needle felting machine to continue developing the project," says Birta Rós Brynjólfssdóttir, designer at Flétta.

The pieces made at the TextileLab within this collaboration will be on display at Reykjavík's Epal gallery until October 11.

### Plans for the future

With only six employees currently involved in running the Icelandic Textile Center, Elsa and Katharina hope the team will be able to expand in the future to bring more value to the Centre. "I think knowledge transfer and new skills are really important in what we are doing," says Elsa.

"It's a very complex institution with a lot of very interesting things going on. And, of course, opportunities for makers, scholars and all kinds of people with a focus on textiles to come, invent, explore and bring their project to life," sums up Katharina, confident that the Icelandic Textile Center is there to help.



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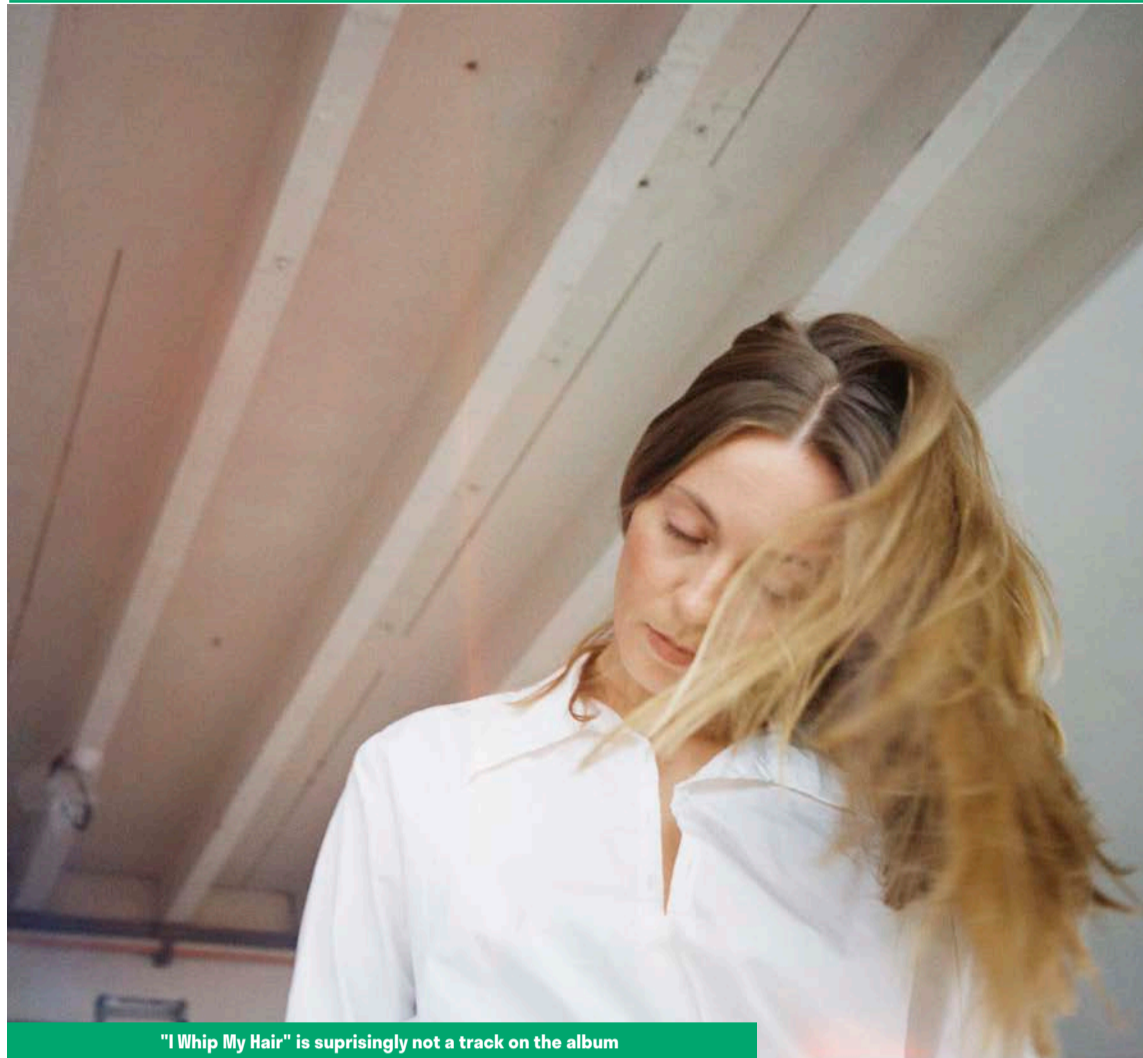
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## Track By Track

The Reykjavík Grapevine 24  
Issue 10—2022



"I Whip My Hair" is surprisingly not a track on the album

## 'Repeat'

Brynja talks us through her debut album

Words: **Brynja Bjarnadóttir** and **Josie Anne Gaitens** Photo: **Julia Beyer** and **Kaja Sigvalda**

### Info

*Budding pop singer-songwriter Brynja will soon be blessing us with her debut album, 'Repeat.' Inspired by contemporary themes such as climate anxiety and social justice—as well as that familiar old chestnut, love—it's truly an album for our times. We asked Brynja to give us a sneak peak behind the songs before 'Repeat' is released later this month.*



### Fight

You know that feeling at the start of something new, when you feel like everything is possible, the road ahead is wide open and you know exactly where you're heading? That's the energy in this song. I wrote it in the first week of my audio engineering studies.

The world I was about to enter is quite male dominated, but I decided to take a leap and claim my space.

### Change

As an individual how can you make changes in this big world? Start with yourself and chances are you'll affect the people around you. Together we create new norms.

### Easy

It ain't always that easy.

### My Oh My

A song about despair. Feeling like you're lost in a maze you built yourself. Not knowing which foot to put forward, or how to start getting your shit together.

### Inherit

Generations repeat past generations' mistakes.

### Breathe

Life can feel like an endless game of catching up. How can you be successful, live up to society's expectations, live according to your values and have fun—all at the same time? What do you do when your values don't align? My aim to be environmentally friendly often seems to go against other goals.

### What Scares Me

I interviewed people from around the world asking them a simple question: "When thinking of climate change, what scares you?"

### Inhale

Inhale is a peaceful reminder to calm down. Take a moment to breathe. Although life can be tough, it's incredible how much can happen in your head. You are the creator of your own happiness.

While making the album I shared a studio with a group of musicians in Den Haag. It warms my heart to have captured their harmonies on this one.

### Be Alright

No matter how bad things get you

can always bounce back. This too shall pass. The darkest nights will dawn, it will be alright.

### Light Headed

A song about rare moments of pure bliss. The moments you're not worried about taxes, dirty laundry or what to eat for lunch. Moments where you are fully present and full of joy.

When writing this song I asked a bunch of people, "what is your favourite memory?" They'd reminisce and I'd watch their faces light up and eyes sparkle. I dare you to try this.

### Tropical

My grandpa died at the age of 91 shortly before covid hit. It was my first real experience with death. Although I was incredibly sad I still knew this was the way of life. After 91 years of a healthy, happy life, dying surrounded by your family seems like the ideal way to go. This experience left me with questions about the soul and body, our existence and purpose.

### Repeating

One day my heart will stop beating. The cycle repeating.

### Aftur & Aftur

We are literally stardust floating around in space. My everyday problems seem quite insignificant when I'm reminded of that. This song is me accepting that I don't have the answers to everything, and I don't have to.

This song just would not come out in English. For non-Icelandic speakers, you are forced to accept that not everything is meant to be understood. Some things will forever remain a mystery. ♡

'Repeat' is released worldwide on October 20th. Single "My Oh My" is available to stream now.



If your bar has a happy hour, email us on [events@grapevine.is](mailto:events@grapevine.is) with the details

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Discount or a free appetiser.

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**FORRÉTTABARINN**  
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**KOFINN BAR**  
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Beer 600 ISK,  
Wine 1000 ISK.

**LOFT**  
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.  
Beer 860 ISK,  
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**LÓLA FLORENS**  
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Wine 1000 ISK.

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Wine 890 ISK

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

**UPPSALIR BAR**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.  
Beer 750 ISK,  
Wine 900 ISK.

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

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

Wine 990 ISK.

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Every day from 12:00 to 19:00.  
Beer 900 ISK,  
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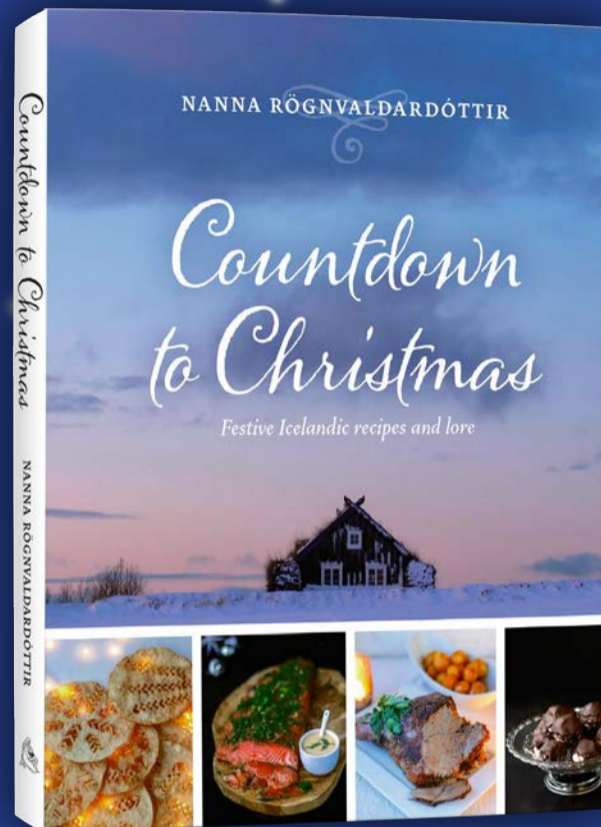
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## Books



We're not exactly chess buffs but we're pretty sure Auður is losing

# Navigating Life Through Meaning

Auður Jónsdóttir writes her own self

Words: **Valur Grettisson** Photos: **Art Bienick**

Auður Jónsdóttir established herself as one of Iceland's best writers of a new generation when her novel, 'The people in the basement' ('Fólkið í kjallaranum') was published in 2004. Auður uses the idea of family often in her novels and she is always looking for meaning, no matter what she is writing. We talked to her about writing, translations and the burden of being a grandchild of Iceland's only Nobel Prize winner in literature. And, of course, how she accidentally found herself in neuroscience while navigating her own epilepsy.

Auður's newest book translated into English is the novel 'Quake' (2015), which is about a mother with epilepsy who finds herself on the ground after a seizure. She loses her memory and needs to puzzle her life back together. This might seem like a dark and horrific premise, but it used to be Auður's own reality.

### Epilepsy while holding a newborn

"I lived in Berlin for a few years and wrote the book there," Auður

says. "I had also just become a mother, and therefore old concerns crept up on me, like what if I were to have a seizure while holding my own child." Despite the fact that Auður hasn't had an episode in a little over two decades, the anxiety was still there, lingering in the back of her mind.

"My other thought here was to write a novel from the protagonist's point of view, which perhaps resulted in a more experimental narrative," Auður adds. The author was able to draw on her own experiences of having seizures as a child, which often left her fragile and disoriented when she returned to consciousness.

### Writing your own self

"It took me a while to find the story though," Auður explains. "But one day, I was at a newspaper stand in Berlin and I found this odd philosophical article about neuroscience where it was stated that the human brain actually adapts memories to our own psychological state, and somehow makes us the star of our own narrative."

Auður pauses for a moment,

laughs quietly, and then adds: "This was just a pure scientific article, about how we write ourselves and how we process adjusted memories to that narrative."

But Auður found an interesting thread in the article, that rhymed with her own thoughts. And what she took out of it was unexpectedly violent. "It was this symbolic idea about the relationship between body and mind, and how your body's incapacity can be perceived almost as an external attacker."

She explains that when she had these seizures it was not only a violent experience but one that filled her with shame. Whilst seizing she would foam at the mouth, and for a teenage girl to piss herself, well, let's just say it was mortifying.

### The patriarchal shadow

Auður's past is interesting, to say the least. She worked in Flateyri, in the Westfjords, the year after a devastating avalanche fell on the town in 1995, claiming 14 lives. A devastating toll for a small nation and a tiny village. Auður was working in a fish factory and wrote about the experience in her critically acclaimed novel, 'Ósjálfrátt,' almost two decades later. But her novel, 'The people in the basement' is perhaps the most defying

"Writing isn't limited like science, there are no rules."



never the shadow that has always loomed over her career, her grandfather, Halldór Kiljan Laxness, the author of *Independent People*.

“I always downplayed his effects on me when I was younger, in interviews like this, but of course I was scared. The world of literature in Iceland was very male-dominated at the time and my grandfather was the epitome of it,” she says.

Auður says that what shaped her the most at the time was journalism, something that she still has one foot in, as she has written for media for the longest time besides writing novels. She even wrote a remarkable book about the legal status of journalism in Iceland. The book is brilliantly titled—though difficult to translate. The direct translation into English would be ‘The freedom to suffer’, but in Icelandic, this word (*Þjáningafrelsið*) rhymes with the word meaning freedom of speech (*Tjáningafrelsið*)—a cleverly crafted play on words which evokes the challenges journalism faces in Iceland and beyond.

Auður’s work in journalism also freed her from her grandfather’s burden in a way. These days, few Icelanders think of Laxness in the context of Auður, or even try to compare these authors, as Auður has a very unique and different voice from her grandfather.

### Rare English translations

Interestingly, Auður’s books have been translated into most languages, but English is not often among them. Her new novel, ‘*Quake*’ is a rare insight into Auður’s work in English.

“For some reason, it seems that it’s harder to get novels trans-

lated into English,” Auður says. But when it comes to Germany or France, it’s very different. When Auður is asked why this is, she guesses that one of the reasons is fairly simple: “For example, in Germany, there is just more interest in the world. You can feel this in many ways in Germany, how the media emphasises global issues for instance,” she says. The literary market in English is also very competitive and publishers are perhaps not always thinking about the artistic value. Publishing a writer from such a small country is not always a chance that publishers are willing to take.

### Hooked on meaning

“Icelandic literature is incredibly diverse for how small Iceland is,” Auður says of literature in her home country. “The voices are very different and Icelandic authors are unafraid of experimenting.” But Auður wants more diversity, and says that she is excited about immigrant voices in Icelandic literature.

But in the end, Auður is simply looking for meaning. “I have always used writing as a tool to understand myself and the world,” she explains. “Writing isn’t limited like science, there are no rules, and the context is often found in writing. I’m literally hooked on the meaning, it’s my freedom and somewhere there, you can find the essence of the soul.”

*‘Quake’ and other novels by Auður are available in our online shop: [shop.grapevine.is](http://shop.grapevine.is)*

book that she has written. There she tackles alcoholism in her own family, and at the same time, the hypocrisy of the ‘68 generation. She has written about her beloved grandmother, Auður Laxness, but



Auður: clearly a woman of many talents



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## Food



# Desert Island Dishes

## MATEY Food Festival Proves Vestmannaeyjar Is The Food Capital Of Iceland

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

Think of Icelandic food culture and few things spring to mind—not all of them pleasant. Sheep heads, salted cod, fermented shark, brennivín; for centuries food consumption in Iceland reflected the reality of living on an isolated wind-blown island in the middle of the north Atlantic where very little survives, let alone thrives.

However, there are some obvious misconceptions about this time in Icelandic culinary history. Despite the hardship of life and the lack of variety of food available, the challenging conditions forced our ancestors to be incredibly creative when it came to foraging, harvesting, preserving and enjoying food. What's more, the quality of certain Icelandic produce—fish being the obvious contender, but there are more—is unparalleled. The special knowledge and techniques required to get the best out of Icelandic ingredients has been quietly lost over the last 100 years with increased imports and the eventual arrival of microwave meals.

At the forefront of a new resurgence of interest in returning to some of these culinary traditions is Vestmannaeyjar restaurant Slippurinn, and its head chef and co-owner, Gísli Matthías Auðunsson. He is also one of the main architects behind a new and exciting food event: MATEY Seafood Festival, which is set to be an annual occasion, bringing together food purveyors, restaurateurs and diners.

### Pilgrim's journey

On Gísli's invitation we travel to Vestmannaeyjar to check out the festival, and the burgeoning food culture developing on Heimaey. In the surprising sunshine of early September, the trip from Reykja-

vik is glorious. It also has the feel of being a pilgrimage of sorts. As Gísli Matt's star has continued to rise in the last few years, with the release of the Slippurinn cookbook, TV appearances and a glowing BBC article to name but a few key moments, Vestmannaeyjar has begun to form an identity as the food destination of Iceland.

It's an odd location for such a thing in some ways—the archipelago is about a three-hour journey from the capital, and bad weather can make getting there at all a challenge in the winter months. However, it can also be seen as a microcosm of the best of Icelandic food culture. The islands' volcanic past and extensive shoreline combine to provide the perfect environment for plants, seaweeds and fungi, and there is fresh fish galore.

It's the latter that MATEY Seafood Festival seeks to celebrate. The four-day event is a collaboration between local restaurants, food producers and business, with the aim of honouring the islands' intrinsic link with the ocean and the nourishment it provides. The main attraction this weekend is the hosting of five international guest chefs at four Heimaey restaurants, all delivering multiple-course meals with a focus on seafood and other local produce—and we're here to try them all.

### Nice to be Næs

Our first stop on day one is Næs, Slippurinn's sister restaurant. It has the cosy, down-to-earth atmosphere of a steadfast local spot. Tonight it is

home to guest chefs Fjölla Sheholli and Junayd Juman of Honey Badger in Brooklyn, New York, which describes itself as a “wild to table restaurant,” with a strong focus on foraged ingredients.

Fjölla and Junayd—who, dressed impeccably, are somehow cooking, plating and serving all at once—immediately bring the drama with a three-part entrée that consists of a homemade vegan walnut ‘cheese’, a candied fish, and a flower. Fjölla explains to us to eat the flower first, and enjoy the sensations it creates. “It will even make your tap water effervescent,” she says, and I am deeply sceptical. But god, she is right! The native American flower contains similar chemicals as Sichuan peppercorns, numbing your mouth but also heightening certain tastes. As introductions to a meal go, it's a pretty wild ride.

Our meal continues at a gallant pace, with excellent wine pairings to match. Highlights include a reworking of the famous Slippurinn eggs—a dish that appears in some form or another on Slippurinn's menu every year. At this time of year fresh

guillemot eggs are out of season, so the chefs employed the use of chicken eggs as a stand-in to create a creamy, savoury custard, still served in the brilliant blue guillemot egg shells. They are as much a joy to look at as they are to eat.

### If you like piña coladas...

Already dangerously full, we trot across the road to Slippurinn,

# sumac

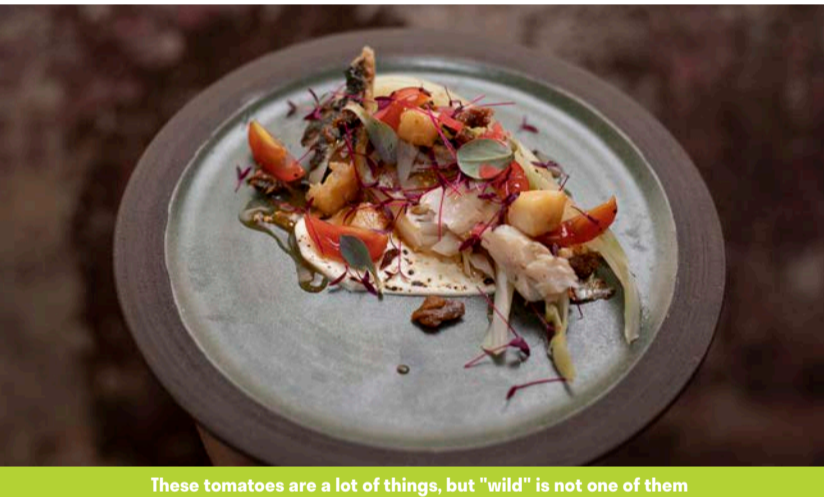
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White chocolate and brennivín: the devil's combo



These tomatoes are a lot of things, but "wild" is not one of them

which is humming with activity. The guest chef here is a little more locally sourced: Leif Sørensen, a New Nordic pioneer and previously the force behind Michelin-starred Faroese restaurant Koks. He and Gísli Matt are long-time collaborators, and their individual identities shine through the dishes they present us with. The first course, a dish of beautiful raw cod crudo—but served ice-cold, almost like a granita—has Leif written all over it, whereas a tray of different seaweeds, treated so that they can be consumed like bar snacks, showcases Gísli's creative approach to foraged ingredients.

The drinks pairing, curated by David Hood, is expertly thought out, and includes a special angelica beer created by Vestmannaeyjar brewery Brothers Brewery. David's cocktails are also not to be missed: there is a version of a pina colada, made with foraged pineapple weed, that is so convincingly coconutty that it's hard to believe something else hasn't been added. It's the tabasco-aged brennivín and carrot number that David has designed especially for MATEY that gets our top score however, with its inspired lick of white chocolate on the rim.

### ...And getting lost in the rain

Unbelievably full—in both the English and Icelandic senses of the word—we roll into bed with the promise of a foraging session with Gísli the next day. To my disbelief he is true to his word and, after a small interlude where we join the

ing is disappointingly mediocre, consisting of standard low-range bottles that provide no thrill.

### A Gott ending

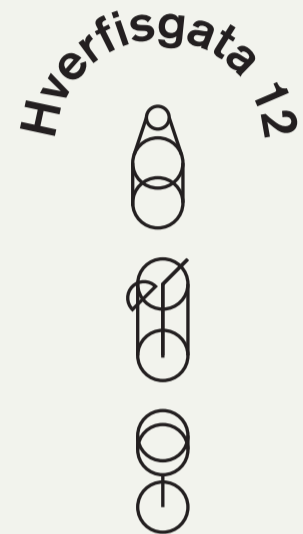
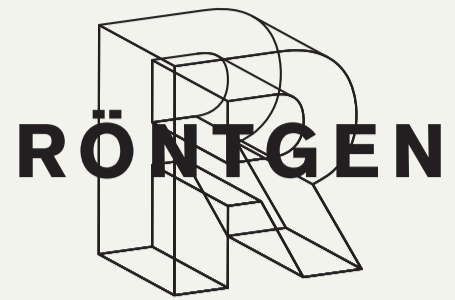
Finally, and at this point with great difficulty, we arrive at the last restaurant of the weekend. It's Gott—by name and by nature—and the guest chef is the wonderful Chris Golding from London. He warmly invites us into the kitchen and talks us through the dishes. A cheeky, scribbled note on the whiteboard reminds people, "don't be a dick," and it seems, from the outside at least, like this advice is being followed. The kitchen staff are all smiles, and despite the fact that the restaurant is stowed out, the service is impeccable—a rare treat in Iceland.

Chris's creations are also a delight. His are by far the most generous portions of the lot, and each dish shows deep thoughtfulness and respect for his ingredients. Amongst the various courses he somehow manages to deliver a whole sushi platter, and his dish of white fish cooked beautifully en papillote is the best example of letting food speak for itself. With this level of freshness and quality, the less messing around the better. I leave Gott fully convinced by the concept of MATEY Food Festival, and vowing to return next year—hopefully with a little more room for dessert. 🍷

Accommodation provided by Puffin Nest - [puffinnest.is](http://puffinnest.is)



Gott's kitchen: a well-oiled machine



Happy hour / 4–7pm  
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# Travel



## (Ice) Climbing Our Way To The Top

You know what they say, pics or it didn't happen!

Words: [Emma Ledbetter](#) Photos: [Emma Ledbetter](#) & [Ryan Newburn](#)



**Distance from Reykjavik:**  
165 kilometres

**Experience provided by:**  
Ice Pic Journeys  
[icepicjourneys.is](http://icepicjourneys.is)

Gingerly holding a rope in one hand and two ice axes in the other, I lean backward over an icy crevasse. I force one boot-clad foot toward the edge, checking to confirm my crampons are piercing the ice. I manoeuvre my other foot in a similar way, then repeat.

### Right, left. Right, left.

"Remember earlier when I said I'm afraid of heights?" I say jokingly to my ice climbing instructor, Mike Reid. He nods—just as I miss a step and completely lose contact with the vertical ice wall. The belay rope functions just as Mike promised it would, and I'm yanked upward—hard—by the harness around my waist. "This is why," I mutter.

Once my feet are safely on a narrow strip of ice at the bottom of the crevasse, I breathe a sigh of relief and look skyward. A camera shutter clicks, capturing what I'm sure is my grimace. "Smile!" says Ryan Newburn from behind the lens.

### Let the journey begin

Located about two and a half hours southeast of Reykjavik, Sólheimajökull is arguably one of Iceland's most popular glaciers, and for good reason. Its proximity to other famous landmarks on the South Coast makes it a convenient spot for tour groups and intrepid adventurers alike. And, with its photo-worthy crevasses just a few minutes from the parking lot, Sólhei-

majökull was ideal for our ice climbing goals.

Ryan and Mike, co-founders of the adventure company Ice Pic Journeys, choose locations around Iceland that will result in the best photo packages, which are included in all of their tours. The pair—both trained glacier guides and talented photographers—don't typically guide together, but their chemistry as business partners and friends is undeniable. Ryan, the "ideas guy," snaps away on his Canon while Mike describes the history of Sólheimajökull and gives me a safety briefing.

We joke around all the way onto the glacier until Mike finds a suitable place for us to begin climbing. He's the logistics man in the duo, which is evident when he begins carefully tying knots and explaining ice climbing technique.

### Into—and out of—the glacier

At our chosen crevasse, I watch as each person in a neighbouring group takes their turn rappelling down the wall and then using ice axes to clamber back up. When it's my turn—after I've slipped my way to the bottom of the wall—I attempt my escape. It's harder than it looks, and I notice one of the other tourists sniggering. "Hey, it's not easy!" I retort.

Just as I'm getting frustrated, Mike changes his approach. Undoing some knots, he scrambles, spider-like, to

the bottom of the crevasse and begins instructing me from the ground up, offering pointers on each aspect of my technique. He shows me how to leverage my weight as I swing the ice axe, piercing the wall with a downward motion, and how to stomp my crampons so I'm climbing more with my legs than my arms.

Soon, I've scaled the wall and tapped the carabiner at the top like a bell. Ryan takes another photo and gives instructions for me to pose.

After another practice run up the wall, it's time for the real deal. Mike and Ryan each climb out of the crevasse, and I follow. Just as my tired arms are about to give up, I crest the top of the wall and collapse. Mike poses with a thumbs up and I give an exhausted but triumphant smile.

### One! More! Time!

As we remove our crampons and walk back to the car, Mike and I review elements of technique. "I want you to come away feeling like ice climbing is achievable," he says. "Too many people do it once without learning properly and think it's too hard, so they never try it again."

I would do it again, I decide, as I relax into the heated passenger seat, sore and more than a little damp from ice melt. I feel delirious with a strange mix of exhaustion, energy, and pride that I conquered a 3-metre ice wall. And, thanks to Ice Pic Journeys, I have pictures to prove it. 📸



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## The Islanders

WELL, YOU ASKED

Jæja!



Words: **Valur Grettisson**

### Is there any wildlife in Iceland?

Yes; birds, mice, rats, arctic foxes and a whole lot of birds. That's kind of it. If you go to the east, you will perhaps find some reindeer in the highland. But the most interesting creatures are obviously the drunk Icelanders that you will find doing their odd mating dance late on Friday and Saturday nights. Remember to bring binoculars, as it can be dangerous to be up close and personal when it comes to those predators.

### I've heard that names always have meaning in Iceland, what do your name and last name mean?

The most common understanding of my first name (Valur) is that it means falcon. But the name is a bit more ominous than that. If we go back to paganism, Val means untimely death. For example, Valhalla means palace of death (Val/death - halla/palace). Valkyries mean the chant of death. Now, my last name though, Grettir, literally means ugly face or an ugly mug. So, in short, my name is untimely death, son of an ugly face. If you're feeling sorry for me, don't, this is not the worst translation for an Icelandic name. For example, my oldest son's name could be like this in English: King Ugly-Face Son Of Death—or Ólafur Grettir Valsson, for convenience.

### Is it true that Icelanders can have a whole discussion by just using Já, jú and Jæja? And what does it mean?

Já means yes, jú means the same. And yes, we can have a meaningful conversation, more or less, with these three words. Jæja is hard to translate but can have a lot of meaning. The magic here is in the tone. If you inhale and say já, for example, you're in shock over whatever the other person just said. You can then add jæja with a questioning tone, and that can mean, "tell me more," or, "that is incredibly interesting." You can even threaten the other person using the word jæja if you put the right attitude into it. Add jú, or even jújú, and you can schedule a doctor's appointment, a trip to the theatre or determine what to buy for dinner.



## Einar Sigurður Einarsson

### The Microgreens Dealer

**Words:** In an inconspicuous shipping container down by Heimaey's harbour in Vestmannaeyjar, Einar Sigurður Einarsson conducts his work. Step inside the metal box and you are transported to a high-tech world of LED lights and trays upon trays of tiny plants. You'll hear of Einar referred to as a 'dealer' in restaurant kitchens all over Heimaey, and while his workspace does give off some Breaking Bad vibes, what Einar does is completely legal—although perhaps unusual. Einar grows microgreens.

**Photos:** But what even is a 'microgreen?' "It's just the first two leaves of a plant," Einar explains succinctly. "The seeds have all the energy ready for the plant, and they put it into this first stage. All the minerals and vitamins are in there."

**Art Bicnick** It turns out that almost any edible plant or herb can be a microgreen. Dill, cress, coriander, mustard, basil—Einar grows them all, and supplies restaurants across the south of Iceland with trays of living greens to use for their dishes. "Restaurants always want tiny things," he says. "Tiny salads, tiny carrots. It's an aesthetic."

But microgreens are more than just a pretty garnish. "You only need to eat 400 grams of microgreens compared with one kilo of broccoli to get the same level of nutrition," says Einar.

He started out in this unique trade because of a friend, the late actor Stefán Karl Stefánsson. "I always say he's the father of microgreens in Iceland," Einar says. "When he moved back home from the USA, he didn't bring clothes in his bags, just microgreen seeds. He'd seen these types of plants in America and started to do some experiments with them, which led to the first microgreens company here."

Stefán sadly died of cancer in 2018. A picture of him hangs in Einar's grow lab, looking over the plants and the work Einar is continuing. "We're trying to keep his ideas and visions alive," Einar tells me.

Einar and his wife and business partner, Ingunn Þóra Einarssdóttir, aren't Vestmannaeyjar natives, only moving to Heimaey four years ago. While they are happily settled, they do agree their location presents challenges.

"We didn't know anyone when we first came here," Einar says. "I always say we had just one plan, and that's no plan," he adds with a grin.

Ingunn jumps in to provide some correction: "We lived in Kopavogur, and we wanted to move away from all the traffic," she clarifies.

"We were looking at Hveragerdi or Selfoss or Borganes, somewhere maybe one or two hours away from Reykjavik," Einar continues.

"But we were also talking about Denmark, because I had been working there a lot as a gardener, so I was trying to get the family there. But I always say we went to the middle. Between Iceland and Denmark: Vestmannaeyjar."

Once a week, Einar loads up his van with trays of fresh microgreens and takes the early morning ferry to the mainland, where he spends the whole day driving between different customers. "It's not a complicated process to make microgreens," he says. "But if you are going to have every tray perfectly ready at the right time every week—that's a little more tricky."

Despite managing this difficult balancing act, Einar sees growing microgreens—or anything for that matter—as being a beneficial process. "Microgreens take such a short time, it's really nice," he says. "It's such a soul-friendly thing to do, and it's so good for your wellbeing to have plants around."

*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)*



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